



King Salmon  
photo courtesy of:  
Craig Baker

On March 27, 1964 a massive earthquake rocked south central Alaska. The earthquake did little damage to the islands, but triggered a series of tsunamis. The fourth and largest wave crested at 35 feet above mean low tide as residents evacuated up Pillar Mountain. Kodiak's waterfront and central business district were all but destroyed and villages also suffered extensive damage. Once again, Kodiak went about the business of rebuilding.

#### Seafood Industry on Kodiak Island

Since the early 1800s, Kodiak's economy has been based primarily on the fishing industry. The advent of Russian occupation and the introduction of salt paved the way for commercial salmon harvesting. The first salmon cannery was built on the Karluk spit

in 1882 to take advantage of the huge sockeye runs. By 1889, five canneries were operating at the mouth of the Karluk River. Intense competition led to the expansion of commercial fishing into other species of salmon. The fishery slowed when shore plants and the fishing fleet were badly damaged by the 1964 earthquake and tidal wave. As part of the effort to rebuild the industry, one of the immense emergency cargo carriers from World War II known as Liberty Ships arrived in Kodiak in 1965. Renamed "Star of Kodiak" the ship has been used as a cannery and for frozen seafood processing and has become a Kodiak landmark.

Today a thriving, year-round commercial fishing industry is the economic engine that drives Kodiak. It is the largest port for the State of Alaska and consistently ranks as one of the top five fishing ports in the US for volume and value (381 million pounds and \$106 million respectively). Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2007 estimates show fishing crews harvested about 28 million salmon. Kodiak Island is home port to more than 3,000 vessels and some of Alaska's largest trawl, longline and crab vessels, up to 150 feet long. There are 19 seafood processing plants and canneries. Area residents hold more than 1000 commercial fishing permits and approximately 2000 are employed harvesting or processing seafood.

The 2006 crab season yielded over 60 million pounds of crab (Red and Golden King, Snow/Opilio and Tanner/Bairdi) worth \$115 million dollars. Now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year, Discovery Channel's popular TV series "Deadliest Catch" captures the dangerous working conditions for the crews during crab season on the

Bering Sea. One vessel, the Cornelia Marie, lists Kodiak's St. Herman Harbor as its home port and was one of the primary ships showcased in the 2006-2007 season. Owner Cornelia Marie Devlin has worked in the fishing industry since 1979 and will work on the boat during the summer out of Bristol Bay, where it serves as tender for the yearly salmon run. Owner and Captain Phil Harris has been working in the fishing industry for 30 years and Captain of the Cornelia Marie for 15 years; his two sons are part of the five-man crew.

The annual Crab Festival in May provides an unforgettable venue for an astonishing variety of activities, some unique to Kodiak. The blessing of the fishing fleet is also held at this time.

#### Salt Water and Fresh Water Sport Fishing

The waters surrounding Kodiak Island are known for world-class fishing and yield a variety in abundance. Unlike the mainland of Alaska where fishing boat charters may need to make long runs out for miles to catch their limits or fishermen sometimes resort to combat fishing off the shoreline, captains in Kodiak find the fish on their GPS systems in close proximity to town and fish in shallow waters. Fishing can be a family sport and Kodiak captains know how to work with first time fishermen to help them achieve their lifelong dream of catching a trophy size fish.

Referred to as 'combo fishing', charter operators will put in a full day making every effort to help clients hook their limits for halibut, salmon, rockfish, lingcod, black bass, herring and an occasional octopus or shark. King salmon weigh in at 30 to 60 pounds while halibut are a staggering 40 to 400 pounds. Halibut and king salmon start in February, sockeye and chum in May, coho and pink in June and lingcod around the first of July. Unlike other prime fishing areas, Kodiak Island has no size restriction and the highest bag limits.

See our Kodiak Island Travel Directory for experienced Fishing Boat Charters. Blue Dory Lodge and Charters, Fish 'n Chips Charters, Island Angler Charters, Kodiak Island Adventures, Runnamuck Charters and True North offer half day, full day or all-inclusive weeklong charters at reasonable rates that include equipment, bait and lunch. All charters provide a heated cabin and restroom.

Fresh water fly fishing on Kodiak offers sportsmen a fighting chance at steelhead and rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and all species of salmon, and is commonly considered "the best fishing in the world." Nearly 350 streams in the Kodiak Archipelago have been identified by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as annual salmon spawning waterways.

Dolly Varden are good all year long, rainbow and steelhead trout year round except for a few soft months in April, May and June. King Salmon begin entering the river systems in mid-April, followed by sockeye and chum, then pink; coho finish their run in mid-October. Check with the operator to see what is provided as part of the package or for a nominal fee. There are several sport outfitter stores in Kodiak ready to supply the basics. Packages can include weeklong lodging, saltwater and freshwater fishing as well as ATV excursions to remote areas; see our Kodiak Travel Directory for Salty Fly Safaris for experienced ATV fly fishing excursions.

A sport fishing license is required and must be in the possession of all persons 16 years of age or older while sport or personal use fishing. Licenses and king salmon tags may be purchased from vendors, by mail or online at [www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license](http://www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license). The daily license fee for non-resident is \$20 plus \$10 for a king salmon tag.

Fish should be properly vacuum-packed and flash-frozen; captains and lodge hosts work directly with

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