

ICE FISHING DEER CREEK

By TubeDude

**Elevation: 5417 ft. - Dam Height 235 feet - Length 1304 ft. - Surface Area: 2965 acres
Volume Capacity: 193,614 acre-feet - Max. Depth: 137 ft. - Avg. Depth: 65 ft.**

State Park Operating Hours: Summer: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Winter: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Open year-round with no holiday closures.

Park Location: Deer Creek is 10 miles south of Heber on Highway 189.

Address Inquiries To: Deer Creek State Park P.O. Box 257
Midway, UT 84049 (435) 654-0171
<http://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/deer-creek/>

Or: Utah State Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 146001 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6001 801) 538-7220

Maps and Brochure: (Click on links below)

[Deer Creek Overview Map](#) [Great Horned Owl Campground Map](#) [Chokecherry Campground Map](#)
[Deer Creek Trail Map](#) [Island Day Use Map](#) [Main Day Use Map](#)
[Rainbow Bay Day Use Map](#) [Wallsburg Day Use Map](#) [Deer Creek State Park Brochure](#)

DEER CREEK WINTERS

Deer Creek winters seem to be different every year. Some years there might be a prolonged "Indian summer"...with nighttime temps barely down to freezing and warm sunny days through much of November. Other years the snow starts flying and the lake begins to chill toward freezing by mid-November. Some winters there is a complete ice cap over the whole lake before the end of December. Other years there is no ice at all...or at least not enough for ice fishing at any time during the winter.



Deer Creek is deep and it does not always freeze over. This picture was taken in early January, from the island area. That is the tip of the island in the upper right corner. Fishing from a float tube in mid-winter is like ice fishing. Vertical presentations in deep water, using small jigs tipped with bait.

Let's arbitrarily say that Deer Creek winters begin around November 1. Actually, a lot of the fish are already in winter mode before then. Perch are usually at least 40 feet deep and smallmouths might be even deeper. The difference is that perch will often bite if you find them and smallies don't bite much at all in the colder months. Only rarely is one caught by ice anglers from Deer Creek.

As long as the water stays open...unfrozen...there will be some rainbows near the top as well as much deeper. They feed on zooplankton and daphnia. Those food tidbits tend to stay deeper in winter. But it is not uncommon to find some rainbows splashing on the top...especially early in the morning. Bank trollers continue to catch a few on worms or bottle baits. Trollers get them wherever their sonar tells them to fish.

Walleye tend to stay near their food supplies. If they want fresh perch, they have to move deeper with their groceries. But even during the middle of the coldest ice-covered winters there will occasionally be walleyes caught in water less than 30 feet deep...usually on worm-tipped jigs being fished for perch or trout. There are not many walleyes caught from Deer Creek during the winter on purpose.

Walsburg Bay is a favorite with Deer Creek ice anglers. Once you get on the ice at the launch ramp you can head out in several different directions. Some like to go directly across the opening of the bay to fish off the steep rock walls...on the way to Rainbow Bay. Others fish the walls further up inside the bay. Still others go toward the far east end...to drill over shallow flats or the old creek channel. All are good at one time or another.

Rainbow Bay is another popular ice fishing venue. There are several spots around the bay that can hold perch, trout and even the occasional walleye. All but the trout will usually be down near bottom...in 30 to 40 feet of water. There will be trout near the bottom too but sometimes they suspend shallower. It pays to have sonar to tell you where to present your lures for the suspenders.

Further north, the island offers several good spots. Follow the trails and look for previous holes...preferably with blood around them. But this is an area where the fish tend to move around a bit so be prepared to use your sonar to look for them.

Deer Creek is deep. It takes longer for a deep lake to freeze up. But the upper end, around Charleston, is shallower and is usually the first part of the lake to freeze. The Provo River comes into the lake at the state park area and the channel goes westerly across the lake...before making a bend southward.



This winter rainbow was taken through the ice across from Charleston, along the old Provo River channel in about 10 feet of water. The Provo River inlet is off to the upper right of the picture. Midway is in the background...looking north across the upper end of Deer Creek.

When water levels are high enough to keep the fish comfy...at least 10' deep...there is usually good fishing for the rainbows. A lot of them will be footlong recent planters. But there are plenty of nice fat teen-inchers to be had as well. When they are "in", it can become a small city out there.

Still other Deer Creek ice nuts drive around to the Heber Creeper terminal...at the reception center...south of Midway. They walk down the tracks and out onto the ice. Then hunt up the river channel. There are some good sized rainbows and a few decent browns caught there every year.

Almost any common ice fishing jig will work in Deer Creek. And almost any color that works on any other Utah water will catch fish. Also, you can tip your lures with a piece of nightcrawler or use waxworms, meal worms, shrimp or anything else the fish will bite. The tough part is finding the fish and then making a good presentation at the right depth. Having some experience and good sonar will help.



Two limits of average sized Deer Creek winter rainbows.