

FISHING IN BAHRAIN





The water surrounding Bahrain is shallow. Many land reclamation projects are underway. Coral reefs lie close to the island, many along the eastern and northern sides of the island. Over 300 species can be found in Bahrain's waters. Some types of tropical fish include angel fish, parrot fish, barracuda, grouper and clown fish. In the spring, sting rays can be seen sunning themselves on the sand banks. Oil drives Bahrain's economy, but fishing remains an important industry in Bahrain. Fish is both exported and used for domestic consumption, including shrimp, finfish, crabs, lobster, rabbit fish and cuttlefish. The most important fishery in Bahrain is the shrimp fishery.

More than 200 species of fish have been identified in the waters surround Bahrain. If you fish from shore, you might catch tropical varieties, such as butterfly, angel and parrot fish, clown fish, barracuda or grouper. Fishing from one of the ever-changing sandbars or offshore a few miles by boat, you will have the opportunity to catch a variety of larger game fish. Varieties include tuna, sea bream and various species of shark. It is also common to catch barracuda and grouper when fishing offshore.

In addition to overfishing, the waters near Bahrain have been heavily polluted. In an effort to restore fish stocks in the area, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have joined together to conserve marine resources and develop fisheries. Measures have been taken to increase fish size and protect endangered species. Additionally, debris and trash have been removed from the coral reefs surrounding Bahrain.

In 1998, there were 2 274 fishing boats in Bahrain, an increase of 242 fishing boats compared with 1988. These were mainly fiberglass boats (85 percent), with the rest made of wood (15 percent). There were 1 590 fishing boats less than 25.9 ft in length; 525 fishing boats measuring from 26 to 35.9 ft, and 159 fishing boats of more than 36.0 ft.

The fishing sector is classified into full-time, part-time, occasional and recreational fishermen. The number of full-time fishermen increased from 2 533 in 1978 to 4 202 in 1988. Of these, 4 202 full-time fishermen in 1998, 1 655 were Bahraini, while 2 547 were foreign. In addition, in 1998, there were 568 part-time fishermen (all Bahraini), 573 occasional fishermen (471 Bahraini and 102 foreign), and 1 487 recreational fishermen (all Bahraini).

There are two major fish markets in Bahrain: Manama Central Market, and Jidhafs Market. In 1998, Manama Central Market accounted for 64.7 percent of the total landings, while Jidhafs Market accounted for 12.6 percent of total landings.

Total fish landings in Bahrain have almost doubled since 1980 (from 5 115 t in 1980 to 9 849 t in 1998). Landings peaked in 1996, at 12 940 t. This increase is primarily due to the increase in harvest of secondary fish species. Local landings for 1998 were composed primarily of shrimp (2 530 t; 25.7 percent), rabbitfish (*Chimaera monstrosa*) (1 523 t; 15.5 percent), and crab (1 017 t; 10.3 percent).