

Carp Fishing in France

Never Ignore the local knowledge

Human nature kicks in with us carp anglers when its near time to get the gear packed up and ready for that journey across the channel. We inevitably look at the catch reports from the venue to see what bait is working, pop ups, bottom baits, how`'s it fishing, etc etc. and we set off with a sense of hope and optimism that this fishing trip will be the best ever

Like many enthusiastic carp anglers I have been making the yearly pilgrimage to various venues in France to try and catch the "big uns" not easily accessible to us mere mortals in the UK. Now the most important word in that sentence is "try". Many anglers come to France in the sure and certain belief that the 40 – 50lber carp is a mere formality. The more level-headed carp angler these days has come to speculate that all that hype in the media and the glossy TV presentations over the years may just have been a little bit misleading.

Maybe 10 years ago you could rock up to a venue and have a blinding week or at least a "red letter" day. From my perspective, I have personally found that angling at any French venue big or small has been getting somewhat harder and lakes more pressured. So is it me? Have I become a lazy angler? Are the fish getting more wary? Was it the bad luck in the draw? Oh, it must the venue is overfished or overfed, or too much bait went in last week, weather / water conditions maybe!

These seem to be the realities of French carp angling these days. We all want to catch and I have been there and mused as above and all these various thoughts have raced through my limited mind at the time.

Here is classic example of how fickle my carp angler's mind can be. About 8 years ago I booked onto a large commercial well-known French carp venue. The first week I went there was a total blank, nothing! Then a year later on the same lake I caught the only 50lber to come out that week and I was amongst 30 other anglers over 5 lakes on both occasions. So what was this miracle difference that landed the catch of the week? Frankly I cannot exactly remember! Yes, I know what rig I used and what bait I preferred then. The one thing I did remember of note was that the on-site bailiff had made suggestions and, at my ripe old age of 58 years when I'd been angling ever since I could stand up, I still wasn't too proud to listen and learn and that seems to be the rub of it. You can know how to make all the fancy rigs, have all the fancy baits, but without the practical ability to embrace local angling conditions it may all be for nothing.

If you're coming home on the ferry thinking maybe I should have done this or that, well frankly why didn't you! Try everything you probably don't normally do. When its hard work it's you that needs to put the work in and hope the results bear fruit. At least you can come away from a venue with the comforting knowledge you tried everything, you tried your best. Self-disappointment with the quantity or weight of fish caught should drive you, not deter you. Learn from your endeavours as it's not like you can pop back next week for another go!

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All I know today, now, I do not turn up to any venue with any preconceived ideas. Local knowledge on, say, a small venue, normally being the proprietor / bailiff, is an extremely valuable source of information, but of course YOU have the ultimate decision on tactics at the end of the day.

Since my “enlightenment” 8 years ago the value of local knowledge has been re-enforced with my many trips abroad particularly at Les Vaux. Chas the owner of the venue is a true carp angler and that has proved invaluable for fishing at this venue. With many years’ experience and having tried every tactic on his own lake, this is a location where if you dismiss the local advice, your catch rate may suffer. Now I’m not saying Chas is some sort of carp angling guru, but having fished this venue the local knowledge was extremely valuable at banking some beautiful carp.

As I see it, we English carp anglers think we know all the tactics and as enthusiastic as we all are and with an entire massive carp angling industry behind us, we think we may know best! When it comes to fishing in France I don’t think so. The “locals” in France laugh at our size 8 hooks and 2-3 oz leads and 20lb hook link material. Yes maybe there is a time and a place for that set up in France, but angling in France normally requires a step up in rig power. Remember, the average French carp angler is looking for 50lb+ fish. Not what we’re used to catching in the UK!

I’m not writing this article / blog to persuade you to change everything you do, nor am I going to preach to you on what rig set up or bait you use, but I urge you to try to think outside the box when in France. Counter intuitive to those normal UK tactics has worked time and time again for me on French lakes.



One of my favourite captures at Vaux a beautiful mirror at 45lb 8oz. Chas the owner has most of his stock photo documented and this was a new capture, the first time this carp had been on the bank in many years. Maybe the sudden downpour in the middle of hot august day was the luck required; I like to think it was my new homemade vanilla chocolate spice boilie recipe.