

GET READY FOR FRANCE

FANCY SOME OF THAT FRENCH CARPING? TONY HAS A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU MAKE YOUR TRIP A SUCCESS

Over 700 years old!

Top tips!

1. Research as much as possible and choose the correct venue for you.
2. Prepare correctly – don't turn up under-gunned.
3. Have a budget and stick to it.
4. Book exclusively if you can – it's far more enjoyable.
5. Add a breath box to your list of yellow reflectives and triangles, etc., as of July this year!

The French commercial carp fishing scene is now well underway for the year with lakes booked up week in week out for the spring, summer and autumn months, and the thought of large carp puts fire in the bellies of English carp anglers!

I like to go over to France as often as possible which, like the rest of you I'm guessing, isn't often enough. Family and work commitments along with rising fuel and food costs can put pressure on fishing trips. However, if you are one of the lucky ones, getting in early can be a real edge. The lakes usually start taking bookings from the beginning of April and if you can book during this month you stand a good chance of finding the fish very catchable before the angling pressure builds up. It can be a gamble at any time, though. The downside of April is you could find the weather is still quite nippy. May is also a great month, but if there is a hot snap the fish could be spawning on your week. The fish could also spawn in June, when it's likely the hot weather has kicked in, and the weights are lower after spawning. Effectively it's

a bit of a lottery. For me it's spring, April and May, or my second choice would be late autumn, pretty much a parallel to the good times in the UK.

Which venue?

Well, this depends on what you want, your angling ability, etc. I love big lakes. At home I fish large reservoirs of anything from 65 to 1000 acres, so a large French public lake is my ideal venue.

However, I also like the social side of carp fishing and enjoy fishing lakes of 10-20 acres, but 10 acres is my minimum and I'd have to book exclusively with only two or three friends!

Here's one for you, and some readers probably won't believe this, but I don't want to catch carp of 70lb-plus... yet! I'd prefer to build up to catching that fish of a lifetime (which a 70lb carp certainly is, no matter what you read) and

hopefully I have a fair amount of lifetime left yet. Living in Cornwall I'm not blessed with forties dotted all over the county, so I'm more than happy to go to France and have the chance of catching 40lb-plus carp. I'm more interested in the unknown than the size of fish, but if I'm on a social trip I'll catch whatever swims my way! Maybe one day I'll get an invite to Rainbow for that fish of a lifetime!

Rigs

A lot of anglers think they need size 2 or 4 hooks and 35lb hooklinks, etc. for France. In reality, unless you are planning a trip to an extreme lake or river where stepped-up tackle really is needed,



The naked chod works like a hinge stiff rig in reverse



When using pop ups, tie them on using floss – essential when using a chod rig

CE

Loaded and ready for the off



I take a good selection of hookbaits, and Bait Tech particles are great for this type of session



Take frozen bait in a poly box with ice packs – stays frozen for days if needed



ability and the confidence factor that comes with it. It's a piece of cake to tie with very few components. Also, although the chod rig is very popular in England, it's really under used in France so that on its own could make the difference between a good or great session.

Bait

Many anglers take far too much bait and end up carting it home again. Okay, so you

lugging around heavy buckets of particles I may or may not use. It takes up loads of space and it weighs a ton, which will certainly push up the fuel cost. In this situation I use Bait Tech's particle range. It's perfect really, sold in bags rather than jars so takes up less space, and all prepared ready to use. If any of it isn't used it can be taken home for use another time. I usually take a mix of hemp, chilli hemp, parti mix, maize and tigers. Maize seems to be particularly good in the spring.

I'm no different in France than at home when it comes to hookbaits. My homemade Blackcurrant specials and Pineapple Juicy Fruits are more often than not my first choices. One of these fished over a mixture of different sized Cell and New Grange boilies and/or particles have had my spools spinning well in recent years. I definitely believe that a small bright hookbait that oozes attraction is a real benefit as the fish wake up from the cold depths of winter.

Preparation

When planning a trip abroad, to France or elsewhere, do plenty of research and think about what you're comfortable with. If you like fishing the margins on small lakes and this is your strongest side, don't book a venue where long distance casting or boat work is needed. If, however, you fancy a change and want to have a crack at something different, then practice casting at home and make sure your kit can cope. A chap I know went under-gunned and under-prepared, and came home with a blank! He enjoyed the week, but let's not kid ourselves: we go to catch carp of an average size much larger than what we are used to at home!

This year I booked a lake exclusively with three friends. It's a smaller lake than I'm used to but it was a social trip with the hope of catching a few nice ones. The lake itself has to remain unnamed because that's what the owner requested! It's as close to an English estate lake as you can get,

very silty and shallow, and dates back to the 14th century, possibly earlier! The stock is a mix of originals approximately 60 years old and new carp, the largest of which go over 50lb. The lake also has a 50lb-plus common, which in my eyes is a fish of a lifetime. The week went well; we landed 85 fish and that 50lb common put in an appearance!

The largest mirror of the trip at 48lb



The lake's big common at just over 50lb



then the general UK setup works a treat. I've recently started using the naked chod rig. I used to use a normal chod rig with leadcore but having recently banned leadcore on my local lake, I've switched and use the naked choddy in conjunction with fluorocarbon main line. I use Gardner Mirage, which is tough as old boots and sinks beautifully to the bottom. The knot strength is superb, but as with all fluorocarbons casting any sort of distance can be tricky.

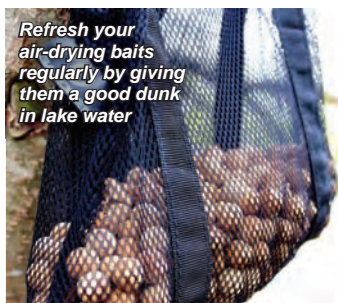
I especially like the mechanics of the naked chod working like a hinge stiff rig in reverse. Of course the main benefit is its presentation

don't want to run out halfway through the week, but where a budget is concerned taking 10-20kg too much can make a big difference to the overall cost. Fishing for one bite at a time is the way I like to go, unless I'm fishing a lake where sitting over lots of bait is the going tactic.

Readymades are not for me; fresh frozen is the way forward. Some venues have freezers for keeping bait fresh, but if not take your bait over in a poly box with freezer blocks, which will keep boilies frozen for at least 24 hours. To keep boilies fresh use air dry bags. A good tip is dunk the air dry bag in the lake water once a day to refresh and rehydrate the boilies. This will keep them in much better condition and keep them far more attractive to the carp, rather than feeding rock-hard 'bullets' later in the week.

I normally prepare my own particles, which I get from Kent Particles, but when planning a trip over the water I don't want to be

Refresh your air-drying baits regularly by giving them a good dunk in lake water



It didn't rain, it poured

