

Fun Fishing In The Dordogne

By David Hall

David Hall has just returned from a brief, but fun-packed fishing holiday in France. But this wasn't the kind of holiday one normally associates with France. This was fun for all the family, with fish aplenty in a beautiful lake, reserved for you. David explains...



I've known Steve Kelly since he was a wee slip of a lad and his dad Mike even longer. So when Mike telephoned to tell me Steve had opened a guesthouse in the south of France with a lake attached, I kind of feared the worst. I had that mental picture of a hole in the ground, with a few big lumps swimming around and bivvies everywhere.


"Do you fancy going over?" asked Mike, "Mark Pollard has been over and bagged up, he thinks it's fantastic." Now Polly's a match angler and he definitely wouldn't be sitting behind a set of buzzer bars. So I asked the obvious question: "What's in the lake?"

"Everything," replied Mike. "Bream, loads of skimmers, roach, rudd and carp, some of the carp are quite big – up to 20lbs. The last time Mark was there he had 100lb. In fact, he is going out there again in a couple of weeks."

Two weeks later Mike and I were standing at the Ryanair check-in desk at East Midlands airport. "Don't bring any kit," Mike had said. "Steve's got it all there including bait. By the way, all you'll need in the way of clothing is a couple of polo shirts and a pair of shorts." So all we had with us was a couple of overnight bags. One and a half hours later we touched down at Limoges airport, where Steve was waiting for us with his Land Rover

to drive us the 40 kilometres south to Les Blancs – our home for the next few days.

The Dordogne is a very rural part of France and if you can imagine France in the shape of the UK, only bigger, then Limoges is kind of where Exeter would be. Of course, we are much further south than we would be in the UK and this was reflected in the weather. Daytime temperatures were between 28 and 30 degrees, warm by anybody's standards. Two things struck me as we made our way to our destination. First there is hardly any traffic on the rural roads and second, France seems to be made up of hundreds of



DH unhooks a small skimmer watched by future French World Champions.

tiny hamlets. The countryside is spectacular and everywhere is so clean.

It took us around 40 minutes to arrive at the tiny hamlet of Les Blancs, which is no more than a few stone farm cottages, but the gardens are all beautifully laid. The whole place looked a picture and there at the end of the lane was our cottage. It was all stone and very French but, even better, the first thing that strikes you is the lake; set in five acres of mature woodland, it's a picture and it's all ours for the next few days. When Steve, an airline pilot and his wife, Emily, bought the house it was derelict and access to the lake was almost impossible.

Fish were crashing around in the lake and the crickets were in full voice.

The house has now been fully renovated, trees have been felled, paths put in and barbeques built. It really is a credit to their endeavour. The house sleeps six people, with two double bedrooms and two bed settees in the living room. It's a lovely rambling old place with a huge storeroom, which is now the home of Steve's fishing larder. Here he houses a multitude of fishing tackle and bait, namely sweetcorn and pellets.

We had a wonderful evening with Steve, Emily and their two kids Alfie and Stephanie. Mark Pollard and his wife Tracy and their kids joined us along with his pals John and Jackie Ingram, who live over

there. The evening was warm and the wine and food was wonderful. Fish were crashing around in the lake and the crickets were in full voice. If this is rural France you can put me down for more of this – and I haven't caught a fish yet.

Because it gets light at around 6.30am and doesn't get dark until around 9pm, there was no rush to start. Mike and I had the house to ourselves, so a full English breakfast was the order of the day. Around 10am we started to put a few bits of kit together for the 50-yard walk I had to the swim I had chosen. I tackled up a float rod, 3lb reel line, a size 14 barbless hook and a 2AAA waggler with a single No8 shot down the line.

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As you can see,
it's not a long walk
from the house.

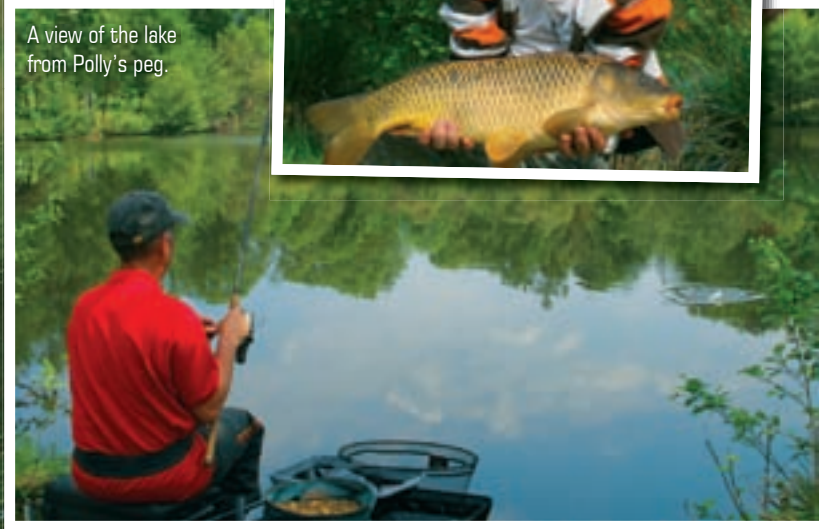
Home for the
next few days



Alfie with a
rather nice
common.



A view of the lake
from Polly's peg.





Polly showing off.



Sophisticated? I don't think so, but why complicate things, the lake is hardly fished, in fact only guests are allowed to fish it.

I started to catch skimmers from the off, just loose feeding sweetcorn. Straight away they started to come up in the water, the nice thing was they were starting to get bigger. I love catching silver fish and before very long, roach and rudd joined the skimmers. This was real fun fishing, the kind of fishing kids love and all in a wonderful environment. Polly, John and the kids turned up around noon. Polly looked as if he was going to fish a National, he had so much kit, John was somewhat more relaxed. Mike and I decided it was time for a little French bread, some cheese and a rather nice glass of chilled local white wine. Polly, on the other hand, was emptying the lake, both on the feeder and on the pole, with fish after fish coming to the net. I won't bore you with what we caught – the pictures do that.

The evening followed the same pattern as the previous night. The kids played happily by the lake, the older more sensible adults (supposedly) ate too much and got drunk, then wallowed in the warmth of a summer evening that people in that part of France take for granted. Everything about the place cried out 'family.' Security isn't an issue; there is hardly anybody there. The fishing is great, the house is wonderful and the surrounding area has so much to offer – the Dordogne valley with

its castles and medieval towns. Richard the Lionheart is said to be buried there. There are markets galore, an abundance of restaurants and everything moves at about five miles an hour.

The next day followed the same pattern as the day before: get up, eat breakfast, fish, eat lunch, drink wine, fish, eat dinner, drink wine and go to bed. You could keep that routine going for quite some time. You will have gathered by now that Steve and his family don't live at the house, but they are around most of the time. They bought the house to do precisely what they have done, to turn it into a guesthouse. But now that it's finished I think Steve wishes they lived there, it really is lovely. My only regret is that we visited it so late in the

year. It will probably be September before this article appears in print, a little late in the season and the kids are back at school. But there is always next year and the place certainly isn't going to go away.

All too soon it was time for Mike and I to return to the UK, where it was raining. It only took 90 minutes to go from 30 to 14 degrees.

If you fancy finding out more about this wonderful place then go to www.funfishingindordogne.com – everything you need to know is there. I promise you if your kids like fishing, this will be a childhood memory they will never forget. As for me, I loved it. Thanks Emily and Steve.

The fishing is great, the house is wonderful and the area has so much to offer.