

## **Disclaimer**

This book is designed to provide general information on carp fishing holidays in France. It is made available with the understanding that it is based on the author's and publisher's experience and reflects their opinions. It is not the purpose of this document to provide you with all the information you may possibly require when choosing or not to take a carp fishing holiday in France. You are advised to consult books, brochures and websites on the Internet for supplementary information.

Every effort has been made to ensure that facts in this book are accurate. However, mistakes can happen and so you are advised that this book is intended as a general guide only and not as an ultimate source of information. Information is current as far as can be ascertained at the date of production, but laws and legal requirements change and websites close. Therefore you should check all facts for yourselves.

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## **Introduction**

If you've ever been tempted to go on carp fishing in France, then this ebook is for you. It's intended to give you a general guide as to what you can expect from venturing abroad for a fishing holiday. It covers practical aspects like travelling to and within France, what sort of fishing equipment you're likely to need, what sort of lakes and facilities you will find at the venues, what wildlife you might meet and what to do if you fall ill or have an accident. It's based on both experience and research, and its intention is to provide an entertaining introduction to the carp fishing in France.



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## 1. Just what's the big deal about carp fishing in France anyway?



There's no denying it. France has got an excellent reputation for carp fishing? For a start, it's got a lot of lakes. In particular, areas such as Solgne, Dombes, Haute-Saône, Brenne and Limousin are veritable lake districts, due to their geology. Sologne has 3,200 lakes, Haute-Saône has a plateau called 'Mille Étangs' ('Thousand Lakes') and Limousin has 12,000 hectares of water.

Fishing in France for foreigners got going in the 1980s, thanks to a few intrepid anglers like Paul Regent and Kevin Maddocks. Paul Regent was the first English angler to fish the colossal Saint Cassien lake in Var, between Nice and Cannes, and certainly the first to report catching a fish there. It was a 35 lber and it made the cover of CAA Magazine in 1984. Paul, who owned a coach company, started to offer fishing holidays (Regent coach trips) at Saint Cassien in 1985. Kevin Maddock had a trip with Paul Regent, and other well-known anglers such as Rod Hutchinson and Shaun Harrison followed suit. Names like these fishing in France soon brought the idea to the fishing public's attention. (Interestingly both Rod Hutchinson and Shaun Harrison went on to establish their own bait production companies. Rod came up with trendsetting flavours such as Monster Crab, Scopex and Megaspice and Shaun has introduced Chili Chocolate, Fruity Trifle, Rahja Spice and Spicy Crab into his brilliant Quest baits line.)

Der Chantecoq (often referred to simply as Lac du Der) was the next lake to hit the headlines. Joe Taylor (of J and K Tackle) spilled the beans about this superb lake, the largest artificial one in Europe at 4,800 hectares. (Incidentally, it's also a famous congregating point for European Grey Cranes on their summer and winter migrations between Scandinavia and Spain. They're the ones that fly over our house.) Then came Salagou, Chanty and Orient, and by the early 1990s the English carpers were invading France on a large scale. Spain began to attract anglers too, but France stayed the most popular destination.

All of Saint Cassien, Salagou and Der Chantecoq are manmade lakes, dating from the 1960s, that notorious era of ripping up railways, building with concrete and creating reservoirs. Three villages were destroyed to create der Chantecoq (Chantecoq, Champaubert-aux-Bois and Nuisement-aux-Bois – what beautiful names they all had). All that remains of them now is Champaubert's church, perilously close to the water's edge. However, these necessary evils have their silver lining in the form of being great carping venues. And thanks to them, carp fishing in France is something every English angler knows about and, hopefully, wants to do. In fact, the vast majority of *étangs de pêche* (fishing lakes) in France are human made.

It's easy to forget that carp weren't always fished for fun. In fact, it's a relatively recent phenomenon, and French people are still puzzled by it. The idea of 'no kill' fishing is baffling to them.

It's on a par with using a tranquillizer gun instead of a real gun when you go hunting, and letting your wild boar run free once you've caught him. Putting a perfectly edible fish back into the water after going through all the effort of catching it, *c'est fou* !

France is particularly well suited for carp fishing because carp are native to continental Europe - it's their home ground. The weather is warm so on average carp grow faster than in the UK and northern Europe. Because of the huge number of lakes, fishing is much less pressured on them than in the UK so fish are healthier and less stressed. An extensive network of *pisciculture* (fish farming) exists in France so that lake owners can find quality carp from fairly locally to stock their lakes.

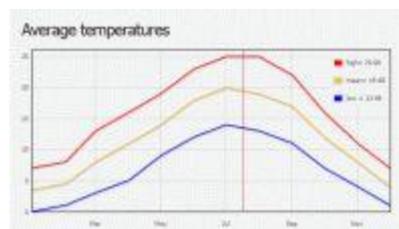
## 2. But why go to France?

As we've just seen, it's got the lakes! It's also easy to get to from the UK by car (via ferry or tunnel) or plane. It's abroad, which makes your holiday more interesting, but it's not scary. Even if you don't have much French the chances are you'll get by just fine. Many French people have reasonable English and it only takes a couple of French words from you to open them up. Anyone who so much as tries to speak the language will impress them. And you already know some French. More than a quarter of English words are derived from French ones, thanks to William the Conqueror. À la carte, apéritif, ballet, blasé, café, clique, dressage, fiancée, gauche, gîte ... ring any bells? You are well equipped to get by in France. (We'll be issuing some vocabulary ebooks very soon so check back regularly to [www.findthelake4.me](http://www.findthelake4.me) and pick up your free copies.)



*A smile is international and goes a long way to helping communications.*

France is a large country. There's over half a million square kilometre of it, and it's twice the size of the UK. With seven different climate zones, there'll be a part of it to suit every taste. As a very rough generalisation, the further south you go, the hotter it will be in summer and the milder in winter. However, the continental effect in the centre of the country means hot summers and cold winters. It's wetter along the coasts and drier inland too. Many areas have quite violent summer thunderstorms. We're in Creuse, which is in Limousin, and fairly central. Average temperatures range from around 3 degrees Celsius in winter to 20 degrees in summer, with extremes going down to minus 10 and highs up to mid 30s.



Above is Chris's map of seasonal temperatures for Creuse.



*Check out the average temperatures for the area you're interested in going to. A short-term forecast on a website in April is not much help for a fishing trip in June!*

France has a good network of autoroutes (motorways) so travel within the country is good. Expect congestion on Saturdays in summer (July and especially August) as these are the traditional times that French people go on holiday. More about this later. France is well served by airports too, making fly and survive holidays an easy option.

The country is famous for its food and wine, and they are good. There's also a wide range of scenery and architecture which makes the experience of spending time there rewarding.

### 3. How do I get there?



Travelling to France by car is the most popular choice since crossing the channel either by ferry or tunnel isn't too much of an ordeal. It also means you can bring plenty of equipment with you. Most low cost airlines fly to France, which has airports spread throughout the country, making fly and survive an option. Many fisheries offer a paid airport pick-up service, but if not you'll need to hire a car the other end if public transport isn't an option. Make the booking in advance to be sure that there will be a vehicle available for you.

There's a tendency these days for people to travel armed only with a sat nav in the car. Bear in mind that not all satnavs can cope with small rural roads in France. They don't think they exist and will simply dump you at the nearest point! Plan your route in advance and print out the directions. Look at a map. A road atlas may seem archaic but they're indispensable when you're heading into rural regions.



*A lot of venues will give directions on their websites. Take a look at those and print them out to take with you.*

Eurotunnel info: <http://www.eurotunnel.com/>

Ferry route info: [http://www.ferry-to-france.co.uk/route\\_planner.html](http://www.ferry-to-france.co.uk/route_planner.html)

Airport info: <http://www.france-airport-guide.com/>

There are companies that will sell you a complete travel and fishing holiday package, such as Angling Lines. <http://www.anglinglines.com>

#### 4. What's it like travelling by car in France?

Provided you remember to drive on the right, then it's not really a problem! Roads are generally good and signage is clear.

There are some rules you need to be aware of.

1. You need a red warning triangle (*un triangle de signalisation*) in case of breakdown. This is to be erected 25 metres from the broken down vehicle on the carriageway you are on to warn traffic approaching from behind.
2. You need a fluorescent reflective vest (*gilet fluorescent or gilet réfléchissant*) in case of breakdown. The driver must wear this when he / she gets out of the car. It's not obligatory to have a vest for every passenger, but it's something you could consider for personal safety.
3. By 1st July 2012 every car needs to have an *ethylotest* (self-breathalyser test kit). This is to be used by the driver if you think you may be over the limit. There will be a fine of between €11 and €17 euro if you are stopped by police and found not to have one (from 1st November 2012). They are available from pharmacies, starting at around €1.25. It is possible that motorway service stations will stock them too.
4. You need to bring your car ownership and insurance documents with you.
5. You need to carry your licence with you when you are driving.
6. You need a complete set of replacement bulbs for your lights.
7. You must have headlamp beam adaptors.
8. You must have a GB sticker on your car if this isn't shown on your numberplate.
9. You must not use your mobile phone when driving. Fine of €1,500.
10. You must not watch films when driving. Fine of €1,500.
11. Radar detection gizmos are illegal. At present the law regarding GPS systems that have this information on them is muddled. Technically they're outlawed, but you'll need to be stopped and have your GPS checked by a gendarme for them to find this attribute. The French government has told French GPS software manufacturers that the radar warnings are no longer to be included and their attitude that this will filter through to all GPSs in time.

For a full and completely updated list of necessary documents/equipment for your car, check a relevant website such as those of your insurer, the AA or the RAC, or one dedicated to travel in France such as <http://www.go-to-france.co.uk/pages/Driving.htm>.

## 5. Are autoroutes expensive to use?



France's autoroute system consists largely, but not entirely, of toll roads. There are stretches that are state-owned and so not subject to tolls. The word *péage* denotes the sections that you have to pay to use. It's also the word for the toll booth. The charge is very roughly €1 per 10 miles (16 km) but this is a very approximate guide. You have to balance the cost of using these fast, direct routes against the time and fuel you'll save. Alternative routes will take you through endless towns with 50 km/h speed limits on single-carriageway roads.

You can pay the tolls by cash (usually), credit or debit card or by means of a charging sensor, Liber-T. This is only the best option if you will be doing a lot of regular motorway driving in France.

Signs at the *péage* indicate which payment method a particular booth will take. A green arrow above the lane leading to it means that all payment methods are accepted. A blue rectangle denotes that only credit or debit cards are accepted and the letter T in orange indicates this is Liber-T charging lane.

At busy *péages*, there may be around ten different lanes to choose from. Watch out for people switching lanes at the last moment, and on the other side keep an eye out as the multiple queues have to funnel into just two or sometimes even only one lane.

The speed limits on autoroutes are:

- Under normal conditions - 130 km/h (80 mph)
- In rain or wet road conditions - 110 km/h (70 mph)
- In heavy fog or snowy/icy conditions - 50 km/h (30 mph).
- Around cities or at other busy points, the 130 km/h is often reduced to 110 km/h.



*If you have to use your wipers you are certainly in rainy conditions and the lower speed limit applies.*

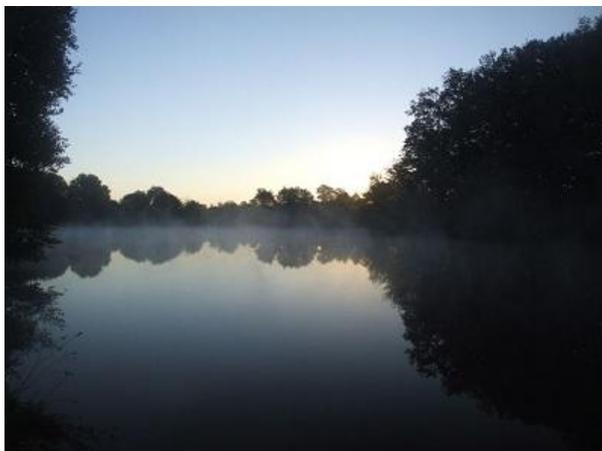
Even autoroutes get clogged on Saturdays during July and August. The services are crowded too. Avoid using them between midday and 2 pm because this is when all French people will stop for lunch.

A good website to find out more about French autoroutes is [www.aboutfrance.com](http://www.aboutfrance.com).



*bring your own toilet roll and watch out for dog poo on the grassy areas.*

## 6. How do I find and choose a lake?



As we've already seen, France isn't short of lakes and 99.9% of these have their own website. Go online. The information is out there so set aside some time and get surfing.



**TOP TIP:**

*If you're thinking of booking your lake independently, then a good starting point is our excellent directory of fishing lakes in France: <http://www.findthelake4.me>. This site will enable you to filter down the hundreds of venues by your personal requirements and can present a summary of the venues for head to head comparison.*

However, if you prefer to buy a complete holiday package, then start off at <http://www.anglinglines.com> and pay particular attention to Alder and Notaire's Lakes!

Word of mouth is always good too. Ask fellow anglers if they've been to any good lakes that they would recommend.

Things to bear in mind when selecting your lake are:

- Location in France: this will affect the distance from port/airport and climate
- Cost: what's your budget?
- Fish type and general size range: are you after cats or carp? Sterile or fertile fish (see point 8)? Do you want to catch one giant or are you looking to get a good catch of 30s and 40s? Bear in mind the couple of trophy fish in a lake with little other stock in it will take quite a hammering week in, week out.
- Catch record: is this a runs lake? Does it fish consistently? How many fish usually end up on the bank in a week? Read feedback from other anglers.
- Ensure that there are a good range of carp at the lake, not just one or two trophy fish that will get hammered week in and week out
- Lake type (i.e. stream fed or quarry) and size: see below.
- Lake size and how many swims: this will depend on how many in your party
- Accommodation: choose the type and size for your party (see point 9).



*find the lake on Google maps. That way you'll see its exact location and also what is in the immediate proximity.*

## 7. What lake to choose? Stream fed or gravel pit type.



Stream fed - open - lakes are much more likely to keep a good water flow all year round. So even if there's a prolonged dry spell, like there was in 2011, the water level won't drop and the fish won't be stressed. Fish will also tend to hang around the stream inlets since this is where food is washed in and so this might make it easier to find a good spot to fish to.

Closed lakes in disused gravel pits, or quarries or specially dug standalone ones can have water level problems during summer. They might also need aerators, especially at night when the vegetation in the water is producing CO<sub>2</sub>, and these can be noisy.



*Try and choose a lake with features, such as an island, a promontory, overhanging trees etc, so that you have a feature to fish to.*

## 8. Sterile or fertile fish?

There's a growing trend for stocking sterile - triploid - fish in lakes. The big advantage is that these fish don't want to breed so they don't take a break from biting to spawn. You'll catch them all year round. They grow faster and keep their condition all year. Also, you won't be catching baby carp rather than the nice big ones you came to get!

## 9. Can I take the family?



There are a lot of venues that cater brilliantly for family fishing holidays. These provide roomy *gîtes* (cottages or house) as accommodation rather than smaller lodges, caravans or cabins. Unless you're a family of anglers, the non-fishing members will want something to do. A good plus point in that case is a swimming pool. Do check what sort it is. Above-ground pools, i.e. the pump-up types or the ones with plastic linings supported by a metal framework don't need planning permission or incur additional household tax so are the most popular. However, they're generally not very big and involve climbing a steep ladder to get into or out of, so these can be drawbacks. In-ground pools will be bigger and easier to use.

As well as the pool, kids will need some space to run around in, preferably secure. Bear this in mind.

Look at what local attractions there are. Many venues will list these on their websites but surf the net anyway to see what you can find. There's plenty to do and see in most of France.

Some venues will have animals on site, always a plus point with kids, and sometimes adults. For example, we have a smallholding with alpacas, llamas, sheep, goats and pigs, chickens and turkeys as well as pet animals - cats, dog, rabbits, guinea pigs.



Many *départements* produce special tourist guides for families which offer discounts or even free entry for children. Ask the lake owner or at the local tourist office about one of these holiday *passports*.

## 10. Can I bring my pet with me?

Legally venues can't refuse to accept your pets. However, they are not necessarily welcome or appropriate (particularly on venues that are farms with livestock). Lake owners are entitled to charge for them, ask for a substantial security deposit and also impose rules and regulations concerning whether these animals are allowed into the accommodation or not, whether they are allowed off their leads on the property etc, so this is definitely something to discuss with the venue owner before you make your booking.

Animals need a passport to travel from the UK or Ireland to France. Your vet will issue this. The animal will need to be vaccinated against rabies. This vaccination must be given well in advance of

your date of travel that the level of antibodies can be checked to see that is sufficient before you set off. If the level is too low, the animal will need another dose of the vaccine and another blood test.

Prior to your return to the UK or Ireland, usually within 36 hours, your cat or dog needs to be treated for ticks by a vet so this must be scheduled into your holiday. You will need to find a veterinary surgery and book an appointment for this when you got to France.

Check what the exact requirements are with your vet or the relevant government department in your country.

Info for the Irish Republic: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/pets/>

Info for the UK: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/>

## **11. What will be provided on a drive/fly and survive fishing holiday?**

The facilities you can generally expect to find are:

- Toilet
- Shower
- Cooking facilities
- Food storage area
- Eating area
- Fridge for food
- Freezer for bait
- Washing machine
- Power sockets to recharge batteries for bait boat, phone, camera etc

In other words, you'll get the essentials for keeping yourself fed and clean. It varies from venue to venue of course, so check out the information you're given by the lake owners. If something is crucially important to you, e.g. washing machine, then make sure the venue has it before you book.

Most venues will offer equipment hire so if you're short of space in your car or are flying, you can avail of this service. They will most likely sell boilies, groundbait and parti mix. Enquire before you book if this is important consideration to you.



*solar powered battery rechargers that you can use at your swim are a very good investment.*

## 12. What equipment should I bring with me?



As a rough guide, you will most likely need:

- 2 or 3 rods, depending on how many you're allowed to use at the lake
- Rod pod
- Bite alarms
- Fish safe end tackle
- Forceps, disgorgers
- Carp Antiseptic
- Large, padded carp mat
- Landing net that's big enough to accommodate large carp and not damage them
- Scales
- Weighing tripod
- Bedchair
- Wet weather gear
- Fishing umbrella
- Camera
- Head torch and torch
- Bait

Also, if you're camping:

- Bivvie
- Sleeping bag
- Blanket, pillow etc
- Camping stove, cooking implements if you're self-catering



*Check your equipment before you leave in case it needs maintenance.*

### 13. Can I use a bait boat?



This depends on the venue so check before you leave to save you packing it and transporting it unnecessarily. Some lake owners hire out bait boats, and there are also companies in the UK that rent them out. Check out, for example, <http://www.baitboathire.com/>.

### 14. Why all the fishery rules?

On their websites, venues will often list their rules. These usually relate to such things as the amount of rods you can have, the type of rigs that are permitted, the sorts of bait that are or aren't allowed, whether you can night fish, what time you can arrive at the venue, when you need to be gone etc. Read them. They are all there for a reason, generally fish welfare and security, and generally because of bad experiences in the past. You have to appreciate that the lakes and fish are the owners' livelihoods and so they are entitled to control how they are used. And don't forget exactly how valuable a single large carp is. It can be worth several thousand euros. As well as being a stunning fish, it is a significant investment and merits your careful treatment.

Arrival times are there to allow the fishery team time to prepare the accommodation and carry out grass cutting and other maintenance tasks after the last party has left. You're in a hurry to start fishing, that's understandable, and reluctant to leave, but please remember the other side of the equation!



*If you're running early, stop off at a café for a while.*

### 15. No one minds a few fag ends and teabags round the place anyway, do they?

Of course people will mind. Lake owners take immense pride in their property and keep it in the very best condition. The chances are you won't find any litter of any sort when you arrive. And that's how you should leave the place. Teabags and fag ends take a lot longer to decay than you might think, added to which ingest cigarette ends have been implicated in carp deaths. Don't drop litter at your swim or anywhere around the lake, end of story. The lake owners will do a final clean before the

next customers arrive, but you can't expect them to remove all your rubbish, do your last bits of washing up and untangle discarded line from trees .

Clean up after yourself.

Out if interest, here is a list showing how long it takes various frequently discarded items to biodegrade naturally:

- Apple core, banana peel, orange peel - up to 1 month
- Matches - 6 months
- Fag ends - 6 months to 2 years
- Newspaper - up to 1 year
- Small scraps of paper (chewing gum wrappers etc) - up to 1 year
- Chewing gum - 5 years
- Milk carton - 5 years
- Nylon fishing line - 50 to 100 years
- Tin can (food) - 50 to 100 years
- Drinks can - 150 years
- Plastic bag - 100 to 500 years
- Glass bottle - 4,000 years
- Battery - 8,000 years

Makes you think, doesn't it?



*Take all your bottles to a bottle bank. You'll find them in every supermarket carpark, as well as in every village and town.*

## 16. Is there any dangerous wildlife in France?



Some of it may look slightly weird e.g. *loirets* - large grey dormice, the giant black hamsters of northern France and *ragondins* (coyupu) with their large orange teeth. However, it will all leave you well alone. There are some bears and wolves in the Pyrenées, but only a very small number and it isn't a part of France renowned for its fishing lakes anyway! Generally visitors to France are delighted to see so many birds of prey and wild animals. There are a lot of deer and wild boar, which

are the main game of hunters in the winter months. Both types of animals are shy and, in the case of boar, are extremely unlikely to attack you unless cornered. If you chose a rural spot, you'll probably hear woodpeckers, cuckoos, nightjars, owls and nightingales.

France is not officially a rabies-free zone, but the most recent cases of rabies have all involved imported pets rather than infected native animals. Should happen to get bitten by an animal, you should to a doctor or hospital as soon as possible to get medical advice.



*Keep all food off the ground in and around your swim and/or bivvie so as not to attract small rodents.*

### **17. How about nasty insects?**

No worse than England generally. The scariest looking are hornets, but the European species aren't aggressive, just noisy as they thrum past. Asiatic hornets are moving into the country from the south. These are more aggressive but as yet numbers are low and most *départements* have measures in place to deal with nests of them when found.

Ticks can appear in the warmer months. These are small blood-sucking critters. You should remove them by unscrewing them as opposed to pulling them straight out to avoid leaving the head behind. This can go septic. In certain areas of France the small red strain of ticks carries Lyme's disease. If you are bitten by a tick, then as with animal bites, seek medical attention.

But don't panic. I've lived here six years and not had a tick bite yet. They much prefer the animals. Insect repellents will deter them, as will wearing wellies when walking through long grass.



*Invest in a tick removing hook. You can get these at pharmacies for a few euros.*

### **18. Will a food package be available?**



This depends on the fishery you choose since not all provide meals packages. Ideally, when you make your enquiry as to whether such packages are available, you should ask if the fishery has a

*permis d'exploitation* and a *licence petit restaurant*. This latter means the venue is legally registered to provide food and alcohol and that the owners have received obligatory training in food hygiene. Having a *permis* also means that the venue will almost certainly be insured against food poisoning, so should you fall ill by this means you can expect to receive some compensation. There are a lot of places that are doing meals 'illegally'. While this may not seem to be a big deal, you're entitled to expect that the venue is operating correctly under current laws.



*Do book your meal package well in advance and let the lake owner know of any special dietary requirements e.g. intolerance of certain foods, vegetarianism etc. They may or may not be able to accommodate those and can advise you accordingly.*

### **19. Is the time the same?**

France is one hour ahead of the UK i.e. in winter GMT+1 (which equals Central European Time - CET), and in summer BST+1 (CET+1). The clocks go forward on the last Sunday in March and back on the last Sunday in October, the same as in the UK.

### **20. Will I be affected by hunters if I'm there during the hunting season?**

France is a nation of hunters. The season for *grand gibier*, large game (deer, boar) runs from mid-September to mid-February. Especially at the start of the season, you might hear a lot of shooting going on at weekends. Needless to say, hunting is very strictly regulated and you're not in any danger. Hunters do occasionally shoot each other, it's true, and more often their dogs, but such incidents are very rare and so far no anglers have been affected!

In some areas of France boar can be hunted all year round, and the season for *petit gibier*, small game (mainly game birds) extends longer than the large game season.

## 21. Are there likely to be many nuisance fish in the lake?



Conscientious lake owners will keep a careful control of any nuisance fish that may arise. *Poisson chats* (literally 'cat fish', but not the same as Welsh catfish, which are *silures* in French) and American crayfish are the most likely ones, but aren't found in every lake.

## 22. Can I eat any crayfish I catch?

Most of the crayfish you're likely to come across are nuisance species - American invaders such as signal crayfish, Louisiana crayfish etc. The native French species are protected, although very limited fishing for them is allowed and the dates and extent of this fishing period depends on the *département* you're in. It can be as little as one day or as long as a few weeks.

This website, [http://www.fedepêche53.com/peche\\_pratique/ecrevisses.pdf](http://www.fedepêche53.com/peche_pratique/ecrevisses.pdf), has info about the species of crayfish, but your best bet is to ask the lake owners what their policy towards crayfish is.



*Barbecued crayfish are delicious.*

## 23. What happens if I get ill or have an accident?



If the lake owners are on site or local, contact them first. Why? They'll be able to tell you where the nearest *pharmacie* (chemist's), doctor and hospital are. In France, GPs are generally less hands-on than their English equivalent in that, for example, they don't do blood tests and only give vaccinations after they have first given you a prescription to go and buy what's needed at the *pharmacie*. In contrast, the staff at *pharmacies* are more proactive, and can give very sound advice on a lot of medical problems. The lake owner may be able to suggest where you should try first.

If there's no one to ask, and it's urgent, then you should go to a hospital. If you don't know where the nearest one is, call the police on 17. They will advise you.

If you need an ambulance to come out in an emergency, the number to call is 15 for the nearest Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence (SAMU) unit. SAMU is a special emergency service. Its ambulances are manned by medical personnel and equipped with resuscitation equipment.

You can also call the local fire brigade (*sapeurs-pompiers* or *pompiers*) in an emergency by dialling 18. In France, the fire brigade and public ambulance services are combined, and the *pompiers* are equipped to deal with accidents and emergency medical cases.

If you need an ambulance for a non-life-threatening matter, you should contact the municipal ambulance (*ambulance municipale*) service. There are also private ambulances in most towns providing a 24-hour service. You'll find them *Ambulances* in the *pages jaunes* (yellow pages). The staff of these ambulances are trained to provide first-aid.



*If you are currently on medication, always take the packet with you if you need to go to a doctor or hospital so they can see what you are taking. Be sure to advise them of any allergies to drugs too.*

## **24. What insurance do I need to take out?**

Travel insurance is always a good idea so you're covered if your ferry is delayed or cancelled.

Breakdown cover is also wise, especially if you have an older or temperamental car. There is an excellent website here <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/driving-abroad> that gives you advice on what to do regarding insurance, breakdown cover, accidents and car hire for when you're abroad.

And you'll also need your EHIC - European Health Insurance Card. This card ensures that you get the same access to public sector health care as nationals of the country you're visiting. You will be reimbursed if you have to pay for medical attention.

For info on the EHIC see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=509&langId=en>



*Make up a folder for all your insurance documents and keep them together.*

## 25. Can I drink the tap water?

Double check with the lake owner, but all of mainland France is on mains water so it should be safe to drink. The water bill for a household has information concerning the water quality on the reverse. This should be displayed by law at venues that offer meal packages, but if it's not, then ask to see it. Many French people continue to drink bottled water which is available in all grocers, supermarkets etc.



*You can always buy water purification tablets (comprimés de purification de l'eau) to use in your drinking water if you are still doubtful about it.*

## 26. Can I buy British food at the supermarket?

A lot of larger supermarkets will have a *rayon anglais* (English shelf) where you'll find staples like tea-bags, marmalade, digestive biscuits, gravy powder and peanut butter for example. Items like Weetabix, cornflakes, tomato ketchup and baked beans (*haricots à la sauce tomate*) are pretty mainstream now and you'll find them on the shelves with French food in the majority of food shops. Milk is generally long-life over here, but pasteurised milk is available although more expensive. It's labelled as *lait frais*.

You won't find English type bacon rashers but *lardons* (chopped bacon) tastes just as good. Sausages, *saucisses*, tend to be spicy and not popular with kids. *Knackis* are hot-dog sausages, more or less.

However, do be a little adventurous and try some French food while you're in the country. It's not for nothing that France has a reputation for good eating. In particular, try local specialities from the market. Ask the lake owner for the names of regional goodies.



*Ask the lake owners or at the local tourist office about any regional specialities. And do visit the local market if you can.*

## 27. Can I use my credit card everywhere?

The vast majority of shops take credit cards these days. Some may have a minimum limit. Eurocheques and Travellers Cheques aren't generally accepted.

The fishery itself may well not be able to accept credit cards for bait or meal purchases etc. Check with the owners in advance.



*Remember to order your euros from you bank in advance.*

**28. It's OK to get drunk, isn't it? I mean I'm on holiday, aren't I?**



Yes you are, but drinking and fishing don't always go together well. If you're can't handle a fish with the care and respect it deserves, then bring your rods in and stick with the bottle. It's not fair to the stock.

The *permis d'exploitation* (see question 18) gives the holder the responsibility to ensure that no anti-social drunken behaviour takes place on their premises. They are entitled to take whatever action they see fit to control it.

And bear in mind you're next to water. In some European countries, alcohol is involved in 50% of drownings.

**29. Who's going to mind if I smoke pot?**

It's illegal to possess pot in France. Don't put the lake owner in an awkward position by doing something illegal on his or her property. Be sensible.

**30. OK, thanks for all the information. So ... should I go carp fishing in France?**

YES!



## List of photos

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