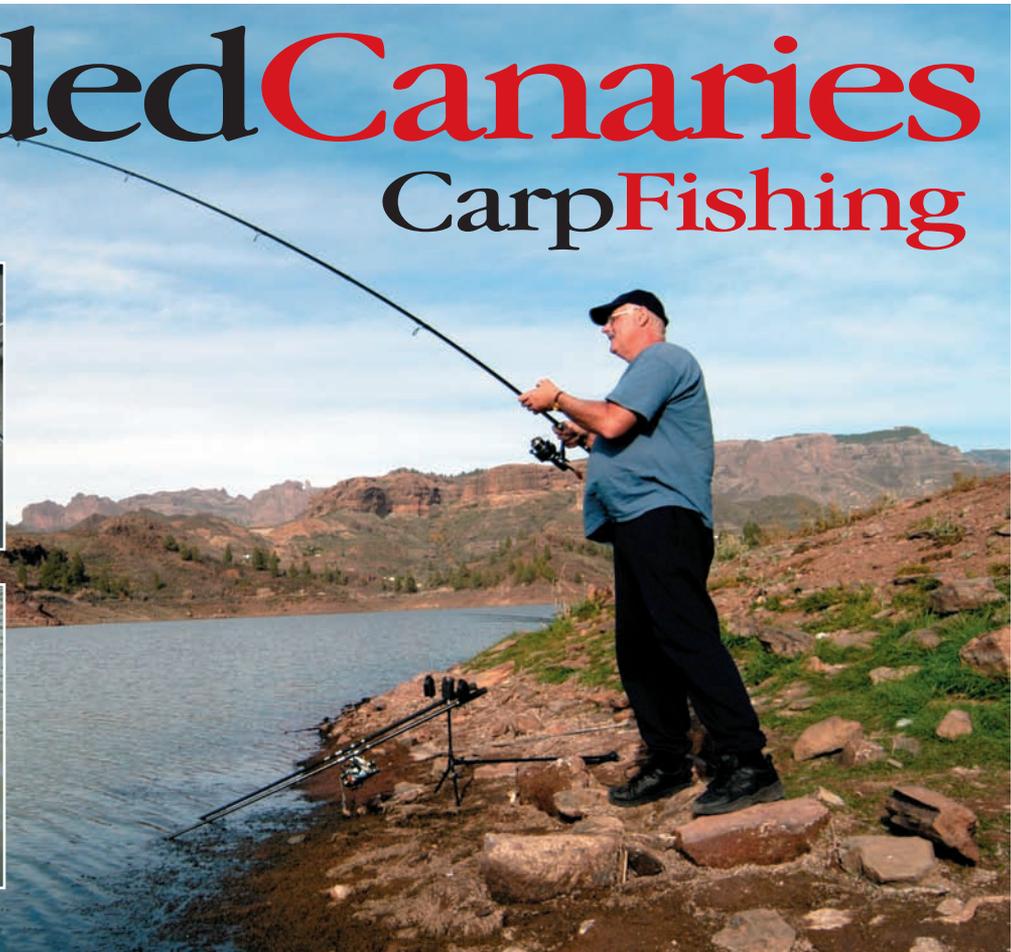


Guided Canaries Carp Fishing



Around 30 million years ago volcanic activity at the bed of the Atlantic Ocean led to the formation of the Canary Islands. My understanding is that this had nothing to do with continental drift, so the islands have always been isolated from mainland Africa some 150 miles or so away. With little in the way of freshwater on the islands, what few small mountain lakes there are have been dammed for crop irrigation, and with no rivers to talk of or migratory fish to run them, there should be no fish life in these lakes at all.



Despite this, many of them are full of big carp, large mouth bass, and some small catfish species. Just who put them there is anybody's guess, and quite frankly few local people seem to care, (though it is likely that the carp were introduced in fairly recent times to inhibit weed growth through the effects of their feeding activity clouding up the water). Not much attention is paid locally to the fish in these mountain lakes. However, for outsiders visiting the islands it could be a totally different matter altogether.

Main pic: Dave Devine in action.

Inset top: A small bass caught whilst spinning.

Inset bottom: Phil releasing the carp back into the water.

Far left: 25-pounder safely in the net.

Phil Williams Guided Canaries Carp Fishing



The lakes of Gran Canaria have seen some specialist carp angling attention over fairly recent times. In particular Embalse de Chira which was dammed around 30 years ago, with a surface area when full of around 170 acres. For a while Chira was one of the 'must visit' venues on the international carp scene with fish in excess of 50lb (22.5kg) authentically caught, and sighted specimens in excess of 60lb (27kg) rumoured. Then the bubble burst, or should I say became grossly deflated. A series of very dry years sent water levels on the island plummeting. I remember looking in sheer disbelief, as little as three years ago, at what was left of some of the lakes. One in particular, which is close to the coast where I used to fish for bass, was little more than a turbid green puddle at the base of a steep ravine. As a result carp numbers and carp fishing went into decline. But to be honest, in comparison to other European carp venues, interest amongst potential visitors may well have declined for other unrelated reasons anyway.

With personal baggage restrictions on holiday charter flights of 15kg (33lb), and around 20kg (44lb) on scheduled flights, getting all you need over to the Canaries is not the same as loading up a camper van and heading off across France or Spain. With so much gear required, particularly in terms of bait and feed, and so little opportunity to buy anything locally to assist with carp fishing other than luncheon meat and sweetcorn produced for the table, packing can become a frustrating compromise. Then you have to get your equipment from the airport to the

lake which means either car hire or a taxi, and some of the most "interesting" driving conditions I have encountered anywhere in the world, particularly if, like me, you don't like heights!

The first time I visited Chira was back in the mid-1980s using a hire car. It was one of those situations when you instantly know you have made a wrong decision but can do nothing to get yourself out of it. The road was simply too narrow and the drops too severe to turn the car around. It was like taking the world's biggest white-knuckle ride – once it starts, there is damn all you can do about it until it gets to the end!

Reports on the Internet quoted Chira as shrinking to as little as 20 acres and large numbers of carp fatalities as a result. I personally can't comment on that. What I can

say is that around the start of 2004 it contained plenty of water and plenty of carp in the 20-30lb (9kg-14kg) bracket. In fact, it had 'recovered' to such a point that carp fanatic Dave Beecham set up a home and business on Gran Canaria offering a carp guiding service. The implications of this are several. For Dave himself there needs to be the confidence of a long-term future for the venture, and for the carp fanatic with a fancy for the spectacular mountain lakes of Gran Canaria, it is simply an opportunity not to be missed (either in its own right fishing every hour that's available to you, or to combine with a family holiday without having to pack anything other than what any 'normal' holidaymaker might fill a suitcase with).

Quality tackle, bait and

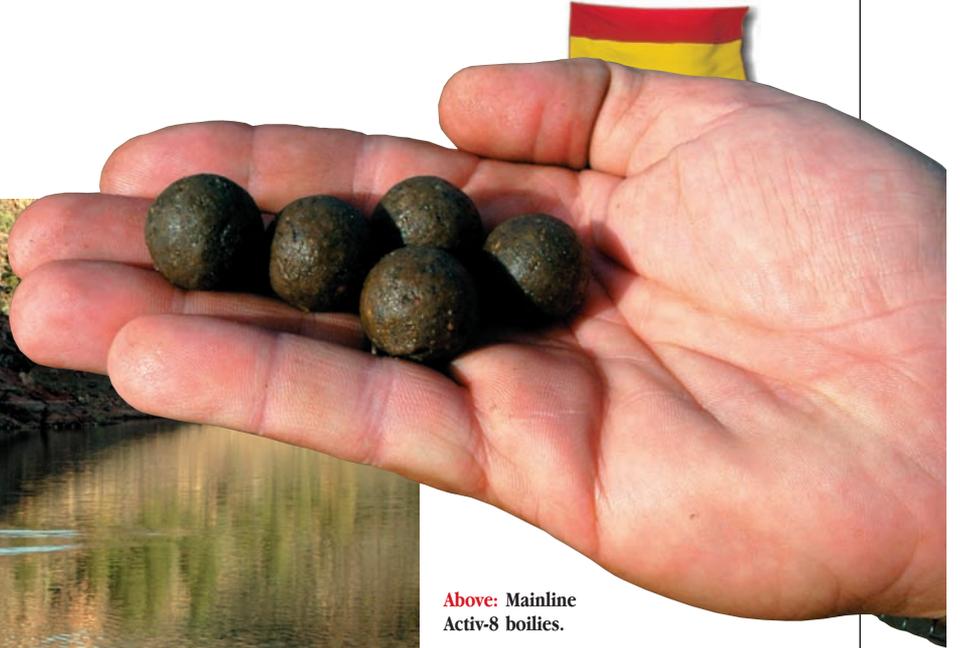


Far left: The first carp on the scales.

Left: A hooked 20-pounder at the surface.

Below: Dave Beecham and the 4WD.





Above: Mainline Activ-8 boilies.

Left: Carp topping at Chira.

transportation, plus food, drink and local knowledge are all provided for at €65 (approx £45) per person per day is the going rate. Dave Devine and I recently visited the Canaries to fish the offshore reefs for Amberjacks – a visit dogged by windy weather. So with no freshwater tackle with us, we were typical examples of the kind of carp angler Dave Beecham is aiming to cater for.

We actually saw the advert for the carp fishing down at the harbour while we were sorting out our boat trips, but didn't give it another thought until one evening, after a particularly 'bumpy' day afloat and purely by coincidence, Dave Beecham was chatting with the people on the next table to us at our hotel. We listened in on the conversation and very quickly picked up on the fact that they had

taken at least one carp in the 30s and several 20s earlier that day. That put our windswept efforts out on the boat well and truly into perspective, so the booking was made.

Bang on time the next morning he was there again at the hotel, the big 4WD loaded up to the hilt with gear ready to go. The drive up into the mountains would take around an hour and a half. Plenty of time to quiz him about prospects and the driving conditions which have been greatly improved by the construction of crash barriers in recent times. I only had to shut my eyes once as we rounded one particularly narrow bend and suddenly there at the side of the car door was around 2000ft of nothing all the way down to the valley floor.

Despite a personal best carp of 52.6lb (23.8kg) from a French lake and a UK pb of 39lb (17.8kg) Dave rates these Canarian lakes as without equal for the visiting angler simply by virtue of the average size of the carp they contain and the consistency with which they fish. A typical Chira carp will pull the needle down to around 25lb (11.4kg), and no eyebrows will be raised if it goes

past 30lb (14kg). His own pb for the lake is 46lb (21kg), with the best by a customer going 39lb (17.8kg). Best single day bag by one person has been seven fish, and best combined catch for the day is 13 fish. And while some of the other 17 lakes on the island are thought to contain bigger individual fish, stats like that are not to be sniffed at.

Adding to the attraction of Chira is the access you have both in terms of getting the 4WD vehicle close to the best fishing spots, and then the granting of permission from the land owners who are working with Dave to widen the scope of the package by offering accommodation to those who might want more than a few isolated days to fit in with other holiday requirements.

We arrived at the lake to find the first rays of the sun beginning to appear over the surrounding mountaintops, and carp topping as far as the eye could see. It can get cool up in the mountains, particularly in December, so we'd been warned to bring along fleece jackets. But we were clearly not going to need them. Year round sunbathing temperatures are what allow these fish to pile on the

Far left: 25-pounder going into the weighing bag.

Left: Boilie Hair Rig.



“A typical Chira carp will pull the needle down to around 25lb (11.4kg), and no eyebrows will be raised if it goes past 30lb (14kg)”



Phil Williams Guided Canaries Carp Fishing

pounds and hit those target weights with such ease. Three of us fishing with three rods each should give some sort of a result.

As for the outfits themselves, these were 12.5ft 3-3.5lb test curve Dimag rods teamed up with Shimano Baitrunner reels loaded with 15lb main lines tipped off with a 30lb bs rubbing length to combat abrasion from the rocks, particularly around the margins. Hair rigs baited with Mainline Activ-8 boilies and more catapulted in as feed duly completed the picture. Baits in the water and it's time to sit back and relax in the sun, helping yourself to chilled drinks until lunchtime when barbequed chicken, pork, potatoes and a salad is provided. All very civilised. But what of the fishing?

We had previously agreed between ourselves that the first fish to each setup should be taken by the person whose gear it was that the fish had fallen to, after which that person would drop out until every one had caught. Then if more fish came along it was every man for himself. The first alarm to sound out was mine, though typically I was emptying my



Dave Devine and his 25½lb mirror.

bladder behind a rock at the time. With the 'job' only half done, I had to dash back to the bank, grab the rod, and connected with what felt like a weighty fish about 40yds out over a shallow plateau. After a spirited struggle the fish finally broke surface a few yards out

“In the weighing sack it took the needle around to 23lb (10.4kg), a weight that falls into the average category. Pity the same isn't true of fishing back home”



Bottom left: A panoramic view of Chira.

Left: Phil Williams and a 23lb Chira mirror.





before being guided into Dave's waiting net.

In the weighing sack it took the needle around to 23lb (10.4kg), a weight that falls into the average category. Pity the same isn't true of fishing back home. That was me out of the equation, so I took a walk around the lake with a light telescopic spinning outfit which picked up a few small bass. On previous visits I had taken along a five-weight fly rod that was great for the bass, but not intending to fish the lakes, I hadn't bothered packing it this time around.

My fishing partner Dave was next on, having flipped a coin with Dave Beecham's other customer, Rick, a matchman from Merseyside who was also staying at our hotel, and it was my pod again that supplied the action. This time a 25½-pounder (11.5kg), again on the rod closest to the dam. The shallow bank top where my baits were positioned seemed to be the spot on the day, although on previous days, the centre swim had provided the bulk of the action.

With nine rods to go at and only an hour left to go, Rick was



Left: My three-rod setup.

beginning to feel the pressure. Dave Devine didn't help matters by telling him to look on the positive side and think of it as nine rod hours instead, adding how it would be impossible to blank. When the final whistle came, Rick was asked which rods he wanted to leave fishing 'until the death' while the others were packed away. Not surprisingly he chose to stick with the ones that had produced the two earlier fish. But sadly the hat

trick didn't come. That's the way carp fishing goes. Once the baits are in, there is little else you can do other than wait. Even at Chira, on the odd occasion, blanks can occur, though the stats show this to be an unlikely conclusion. ●

Dave Beecham can be contacted on: (0034) 617 977 289
His website is located at
www.canarysafaricarpfishing.com

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