



TONY DAVIES-PATRICK

ISLAND TREASURES Part 2

It's back to Gran Canaria for Tony this month as he returns to catch fish for the cameras. He also tries out a new venue where, in the searing heat, he struggles to find a spot to fish. But will the carp that supposedly live there make his day?

I was standing beside a huge lake in Italy, when suddenly my iPhone beeped to signify that a text had been received. The message was from my good friend Dave Beecham in Gran Canaria, asking when I would return to the island, not just for the fishing, but more because he'd enjoyed our time together so much during the first short trip in 2010 that it would be great just to see me again. Sadly I was tied up with filming in Italy and then due to film in Holland, so I sent a text back saying 'Sorry, but hopefully later in the year.' It wasn't the first time that Dave had contacted me since that trip, but each time I was either busy with work or Dave was busy with clients at his Carp Gran Canaria holiday business.

A month later, another call from Dave came through on my iPhone, but this time I was

busy filming alone on a wild and deserted big lake in France. I finally returned home from a very successful French trip and decided to make arrangements to fly out to Gran Canaria, so that Dave and I could fish together for the last week of July. It wasn't the best time of the year to arrive, slap bang in the middle of the heat of summer, but it was the only time of year I could make it; besides, it would hopefully allow me to add some special extra video footage for the latest and sixth DVD in the series entitled Globetrotter Wild Carp, due for launch in late autumn 2011.

The dates were set and the flights were quickly booked. Before long I was kissing Ayleen goodbye, and then flying yet again across the Atlantic in search of the sun. I hate to think just how many air miles I've actually clocked up since birth!





ABOVE Island Treasure; Tony with an incredible-looking mirror carp, photographed during the warm orange light of first dawn.

LEFT What an amazing view! Fishing a large bay on the northwest arm of Chira.

The plane landed in Las Palmas airport, and as I stepped on to the tarmac I felt cool air and moisture against my skin – it was raining! In late July!

Eventually I checked through passport control, and as I rushed ahead of the other passengers, I looked up at the digital readout to see which number carousel I needed to collect my luggage, and I was one of the first passengers to reach the no.2 luggage carousel. The next 15 minutes passed, by which time every empty spot around the carousel became packed with passengers waiting for baggage, but I wasn't too bothered because I already occupied the prime spot right in front of the flaps where the first suitcases were already slowly sliding past. An hour later, there were only four people left, all from the same flight as mine, yet none of us had seen our luggage pass by on the conveyor belt.

I eventually walked over to the lost baggage desk, only to find three other passengers from the same flight as mine moaning about no luggage. 'Oh no!' I thought to myself. This was all I needed to happen on the first day of arrival, especially when I realised just how much camera and sound equipment, including Steadicam, shoulder harness, professional Vinten tripod, Lowepro bags filled with extra gear, and all my clothes were locked inside the big Samsonite suitcase. Now it was possibly lost in transit!

The only saving grace was the fact that my main camera/video and sound gear, plus expensive lenses, etc. were packed inside my large video bag (all 35kg of it!) that I'd carried on as hand luggage. Yes, my hand luggage actually weighed 15kg more than my 20kg main hold suitcase! The reason why I could do this was the fact that easyJet do not weigh hand luggage and have no weight limit, as long as the maximum dimensions are 56x45x25cm. I was carrying my

professional Kata BP-502 backpack, which holds an enormous amount of camera equipment, even my HP Pavilion DV5 laptop computer. When on my back it looks more like I'm carrying six months of rations on a Himalayas expedition!

Earlier that same day at Gatwick, one of the female ground crew had stopped me boarding the plane, thinking that I was carrying far too much hand luggage. She asked me to kindly fit it inside the tiny, square, barred 'size-limit' box. There was no way I was going to board that plane without my main filming equipment, so with a bit of squeezing and shoving, the bag slid inside the cage. I turned to her smiling, and her look of amazement that I'd fitted an elephant inside an ant hole was a sight to behold. The only problem then was that my bag was stuck inside it, and the complete easyJet stand fell over as I fought to rip my prized bag from its grip! Suddenly it popped out, and with sweat dripping from my brow I ran down the aisle just in time to board the plane before it took off. I'd been astute enough to remove the laptop from the bag prior to placing it inside the size-limit box, but I also hoped that my delicate cameras and expensive lenses inside the bag hadn't been damaged.

So there I was, now sweating with worry, while standing behind a small window at the Las Palmas lost-luggage desk, filling out a claims report, when the woman behind the desk asked for the tiny torn-off boarding pass slip that I'd been handed at Gatwick. I couldn't find it in my pockets or rucksack...

"I'm sorry, sir, we cannot complete the form or locate your baggage if you do not have the boarding pass slip."

That tiny piece torn off the boarding pass is not normally needed once you've been seated on the plane, but here I was many hours later, fumbling inside pockets to locate that same scrap of paper! Suddenly it dawned on me that I had all my details on the easyJet email, so I switched on the iPhone and opened thee details on the screen, and then shouted through the small glass sliding window to tell her my full flight details. ...▶

"WITH SWEAT DRIPPING FROM MY BROW I RAN DOWN THE AISLE JUST IN TIME TO BOARD THE PLANE BEFORE IT TOOK OFF"



ABOVE 'Window with a view.' The scenic vista from Dave Beecham's apartments looking over the northwest arm of the lake.

"The baggage from that flight is on carousel no.5 sir, not 2."

"What?! You mean that I've been standing for over an hour in the wrong place? I and others checked the overhead display and it showed no.2 for our flight!"

"I'm sorry sir, but maybe you should check no.5..."

I looked at the others standing in a huddle around me, all filling out lost-baggage claim reports, then we all sighed in unison and ran towards carousel no.5. I prayed that it would be there – and lo and behold, my large and lonely green Samsonite suitcase had been trundling along the conveyor belt a hundred times, waiting patiently for me to grab it.

I gave a big sigh of relief to finally be on my way with all my baggage intact, and Dave had a good laugh about my airport exploits. I was to stay at Alison and Dave's home on the coast that first night, and so in order to relax after the flight they took me to their favourite bar, followed by a slap-up Chinese meal.

The following morning, after filling up the boot with food, water and beer supplies from the local supermarket, Dave and I drove inland on the long and winding road to Lake Chira. Unfortunately, Dave's 4WD Jeep was in the garage undergoing repairs, but Dave's wife, Alison, had kindly loaned us her shiny brand new car. I don't think she realised what a week of fishing adventures across the island's rocky and mountainous terrain actually meant, or she would have never handed over the keys!

There are two main routes to the lake, both snaking through spectacular and rugged mountain landscapes. Outside the passenger window the rock faces climbed into the clouds, while on the driver side the edges plunged over steep ravines. There was only a frail metal barrier between us

and the precipice, but more often than not there was no barrier at all to prevent us from flying into oblivion at 60mph. Dave pulled hard on the steering wheel for the hundredth time as the vehicle lunged heavily from left to right, and then he looked over to me and grinned.

"No problem Tony, I've driven this route a million times and could do it blindfolded!"

His confidence failed to prevent my stomach from tightening into knots as we sped round another blind bend into the path of an

oncoming truck. The tyres span on loose gravel and spat out stones that disappeared over the rim of the canyon. Without even bothering to touch the gear stick or brakes, we hurtled past the truck with only inches to spare. Dave didn't even seem to notice my hand gripping the door handle and my right foot stamping on an imaginary passenger-side brake pedal! The road eventually crested a high saddle in the mountains and Dave slowed the car for a few seconds to provide us a momentary glimpse of a patch of blue, shimmering like a moving

vale in the valley far below.

The surface of Lake Chira is situated at an altitude of 875m and is fed by a number of small seasonal streams, including the Arguineguin. The dam wall was first built in 1953 and completed in 1964, to form a 45.2-hectare reservoir and 10 square miles of watershed. Holding 5.64 million cubic metres of water when full, and plunging to depths of 42.5 metres at its deepest point, this lake is one of the largest on the island. It was primarily built to provide water for crop irrigation.

I had initially thought that like last year, we were to be spending the first few nights sleeping in the luxury of one of Dave's lakeside apartments, but instead we were going to be sleeping rough beneath a pair of umbrellas covered with mosquito netting. The fully-furnished and equipped apartments are set in truly beautiful surroundings on a private section of a northern arm of the lake, with stunning 360° vistas that take your breath away. I must admit that I had loved staying in the apartments, but this luxury does tend to spoil you a bit, and also tempts you to stray from the rods on

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cool evenings; so, being a hardened pair of seasoned carpers (cough!), we opted to sleep under the stars.

We stopped briefly at his lakeside tackle store to collect some rods, pods, bedchairs, and bait, before driving the short distance to a swim located further along the northwest arm. To get to the swim meant negotiating through a forest of giant head-height cacti plants. The narrow shoulder-width dirt path that cut through its prickly heart was difficult enough wearing only shorts and sandals, but doing the same while carrying a ton of bait, water, fishing gear and camera equipment was akin to a naked Tsunami wrestler trying to avoid skin puncture on a board of sharp nails. But the camel tour was worth the effort, because once our rods were set up and baits rowed out, it was time to sit back, open a cold beer, and admire the view. And what an amazing view it was. This part of the northwest arm opened to a large, beautiful bay flanked by rocky outcrops and rows of marginal reeds. Dave opted to fish to the edges of reeds that lined the margins of the western shore, while I opted to fish to the edges of the vertical cliff face on the eastern shore.

While I was setting up I noticed the wind-blown floating weeds in the margins begin to rock and roll as a decent carp showed its presence while feeding on a shallow bar. I decided to cast one balanced tiger nut rig onto the sloping edge of this same underwater bar, a second rig in deep water where there had been a rock fall at the base of the cliff, and a third at the apex of a point jutting out from the long line of cliffs, where the bay opened out to the main section of lake. No action came on the first night, so I moved the marginal rig next to the point, and swapped the tiger nuts for boilies.

I'd not had enough baggage allowance to bring my favourite mega-hard big Deception boilies from England, so was forced to use what Dave had available.



ABOVE The carp were definitely eating our free offerings.

BELOW One of Tony's mirrors is returned to the lake and rests awhile in order to recover.

Unfortunately, most of these were bags of small and very soft Nash boilies, but he did have some tubs of harder Solar pop-ups, so I chose to use these as hookbaits; in the meantime I hung the others in a carp sack to dry out. I dropped the pop-ups on a short 4ins rig in water twice the depth as the tiger nut rigs, so was surprised after reeling in the following day to notice that one of the boilies was missing from the Hair and the other had been scraped badly by terrapins. I was also surprised that apart from a small carp to Dave, the fish had hardly showed, not even rolling off the normally productive point areas.

Dave disappeared on the second morning, only to return some time later when he began talking in excited tones, describing what he had just witnessed in the adjoining northeastern arm. Apparently it was full with rolling and crashing carp! Later that afternoon we were due to drive to another lake called Embalse de la Pinos (Pine Lake), on a different part of the island, for a meeting with the landowner, so we stopped off at the arm en

route to gauge whether it was worth making a move after the meeting. Most of the fish activity had ceased by the time we arrived, but there were certainly more carp moving than we'd seen in the past few days on the adjoining arm. On our return from the meeting, we decided to fish through the night in the original deeper bay, but then to pack up at first dawn and move with light gear (a pair of rods each and a lightweight chair) on to the shallower northeastern arm to hopefully arrive during prime feeding time.

Pine Lake is around 800m long and 200m wide at the main dam wall, narrowing gradually to around 150m at the shallower eastern end. My first glimpse of this beautiful reservoir was from a high viewpoint beside a narrow mountain road in 2010. I could only view the central section of the lake, nestled inside a steep-sided valley filled with Canary Island Pines (*Pinus canariensis*). At that time we both talked of the possibility of it containing carp, and an old bass-angler friend of Dave's had whispered sightings of big carp during his past trips to this lake. However, we didn't fancy trekking down the steep rocky ravines with no paths to reach the lake and carrying all our carp gear, so it was put on the back burner.

In recent months Dave and his wife had been working behind the scenes trying to obtain permission to fish there, and now my latest trip coincided with the first meeting with the landowners. It was a long and winding drive over the mountains from Chira, but it was truly worth it. We had arrived early, but eventually the owner and an associate drove up to the series of large barred gates, which marked the entrance to his very private estate. We weren't prepared for what we saw; after a short drive through the gates there was a large bar/restaurant building, with stunning vistas over the water. Our first sight of the entire lake, shimmering invitingly beneath a hot sun, simply left us awestruck. This place was amazing, and combined with the facilities already in place, would make the absolute perfect place to open up a carp holiday business. Carp Gran Canaria, also known as Costa Del Carping, already had a well-established holiday business with holiday apartments based at Lake Chira, but the amazing Pine Lake now offered a separate avenue for Dave and Ali – that was if we could persuade the landowner that it was a good idea!

With greetings and formalities over, we ... ▶





ABOVE Dave with a beautiful heavily-scaled mirror.

BELOW Dave with another big mirror.

were shown around the fully-equipped restaurant, and even though there was still ongoing work to finish on the building, it was almost complete and ready to open for business. The four of us then strolled down the cactus-lined path leading to the shoreline. The lake simply set my heart racing just to think what might lurk in its secret depths. One very important factor relayed by the landowner was that this lake hadn't been emptied for at least 20 years, possibly 30 years, which is very rare for any reservoir to avoid for so long on the island, and it meant that there was plenty of time for carp to grow big in an undisturbed environment. Before long, smiles were exchanged, handshakes shared, and the deal was almost finalised. We were given permission to fish the lake and agreed to start a short session on Wednesday, ending on Friday when I was due to fly back to Gatwick. The owners relocked the big entrance gates and drove off in a cloud of dust, leaving both Dave and I grinning like Cheshire cats. We'd done it! Now the most difficult job was ahead of us – to find out if this lake actually held big carp, indeed, if it even held carp at all.

We had a few nights to kill before Wednesday, so we made the long winding journey back to the northwestern arm of Chira, fished through the night (Dave landed a couple of beautiful medium-sized mirrors), and then moved at first dawn to the northeastern arm. We could hear numerous carp moving in the bays and marginal shallows, so we quietly positioned a pod with a couple of rods each, then cast out our rigs and catapulted a scattering of free offerings.

As the sun rose behind the mountains and chased away the mists of dawn, it didn't take long to realise that the swirls, ripples and slaps did not originate from feeding carp, but from groups of male fish chasing bigger and heavier females. The carp were spawning!

There must have been hundreds of carp moving in the muddy waters at the north tip of the arm, and so we remained in position, hoping that at least a few fish were still hungry after a night of active and amorous behaviour.

A faint noise over the ridge behind us grew louder and louder, until a huge yellow vehicle trundled past us. Its massive tyres slowed to a crawl and then stopped only inches from the margins where Dave's left-hand baited rig lay. The

giant bulldozer reversed noisily as a huge-toothed bucket was lifted above its cabin, and then lowered again as the gears clunked into forward power, scraping the heavy metal bucket along the ground until it slammed hard into the mountainside. The impact was like an explosion, and sent tremors across the bay to shake the very earth beneath our feet. The bulldozer slammed several times more into the hillside, with soil and rocks spinning in every direction, until it reversed onto the tarmac and then disappeared back over the horizon, carrying half the mountain in its teeth. The reaction from the carp was almost instantaneous, as line after line of bow waves erupted throughout the long arm. Within minutes the arm became completely devoid of carp.

We fished on into the heat of the day, and even though a few carp eventually moved back along the shallows, it was obvious that

they were mainly small males and also not in a feeding mood. By late dusk we were back beneath our umbrellas in the big bay at the northwestern arm, peering through the mosquito netting at the angry insects buzzing beneath the stars. At midnight a gorgeously scaled big mirror sucked in my treble tiger nut positioned near the distant point at the opening of the bay, and then shortly before and after dawn Dave was in action with a brace of medium-sized carp.

Early Wednesday morning we packed up our gear, except for the dinghy. With so much gear to cram inside the small car, Dave, in his infinite wisdom, thought it would be a good idea to leave the dinghy inflated and strap it to the roof. The journey to Pine Lake was scary to say the least, especially when on numerous occasions a strong blast of wind threatened to blow the dinghy upright and drag the car straight over the precipice of a mountain cliff! We both agreed to deflate the dinghy before attempting the return route.

The line of iron gates (supported by large pillars across the driveway) to Pine Lake were all closed and double-locked with robust chains and padlocks. A large group of tourists were gathered outside the entrance of the property and milling around the edges of the rock face, clicking cameras, trying to capture a frame of the spectacular mountain views. It was like a scene from the *Dallas* series, or *Falcon Crest*. The small parking place was chock-a-block with parked vehicles and pink bodies, and the group travel guide lifted his nose to look down on us, pointing dramatically back the way we'd come, as if this spot was his own private area not to be trespassed by mere vagabonds like us, dressed like '60s hippies at a Vietnam convention.



His look of disgust showed in his eyes as Dave completely ignored his threats and parked our car inches from his toes.

We had been provided keys by the landowner, so I strolled like a king up to the towering iron gates and began to fiddle with the giant padlocks. Suddenly everyone in the crowd stopped what they were doing and turned to face us. I quickly unlocked the padlock, swung open two of the six big gates, waved Dave's car through, and then reclosed the gates and padlock. The crowd on the other side just stood there in silence with their jaws dropping, and by now the cheeks of the guide were flushed purple with embarrassment. We both chuckled and then drove down the big gravel track leading to the property, feeling like Bobby and J.R. Ewing coming home to Southfork. Our second sight of the lake was no less awe-inspiring than the first, and the views simply left us lost for superlatives. It is truly a wonderful place that provides glorious vistas in all directions, yet being surrounded on all sides by steep-sided mountains, it also provides a lovely feeling of complete seclusion. But it wasn't the mere feelings about this huge acreage of land as far as the eye could see that inspired our emotions, it was the fact that it was completely private with its own big lake that had never been carp fished – and we held the keys to the treasure! It was now our chance to find out if this amazing jewel of blue water stretching out below

us also held hidden treasure beneath its dark depths.

Our first task was to take a closer look at the lake itself, so we left the car parked next to

the derelict restaurant and strolled down the steep rocky path leading to the shoreline. Before long we came to the conclusion that to drive Alison's shiny new car across rocks and scrape it past a line of giant cacti plants would ruin a good marriage. If we were to fish the lake without the need of a later visit to the divorce courts, it would mean carrying a mountain of equipment and supplies for half a mile down a mountainside track. One hour later our initial euphoria on viewing the lake had waned, only to be replaced with a bundle of frustration. To reach almost every decent-looking section of the lake meant traipsing across an obstacle course of prickly shrubs, spiked cactus plants, gorse bushes, and millions of other

"A FAINT NOISE OVER THE RIDGE BEHIND US GREW LOUDER AND LOUDER, UNTIL A HUGE YELLOW VEHICLE TRUNDLED PAST US"

plants that threatened to puncture our knees and ankles. There was enormous potential in some very carpy-looking zones, but it would take weeks of cutting narrow trails to the shoreline to make fishing viable, and we just didn't have the time.

Eventually we found one fairly open place tight to the main dam wall, where the shoreline was covered with an area of fine gravel and it was free from cacti or prickly ground vegetation. It was our only possible option. We strolled back to the car and quenched our thirst under the blinding sun, trying to come to a decision. We could possibly drive the car halfway down the track, but any further would

rip the low-level plastic spoiler clean off the car – and Ali wouldn't be too pleased! Our only other option was to ferry everything by hand down the steep rocky terrain to the dam end. We had a mountain of supplies –

food, water, fishing and filming equipment, and we calculated that it would take beyond nightfall to move it all from car to lakeside. There was also a distinct possibility that we'd blank on this first try at fishing the lake. It was already obvious to us that the lake wasn't heavily stocked with carp, and with only a few days left before I needed to fly back to the UK, it meant that much-needed video footage of fighting carp for inclusion in the *Wild Carp* DVD would be sadly lacking. Another option entered my head, and that was to fish Pine Lake for one night, and if by morning we'd seen signs of big carp,

ABOVE Dave relaxes beside the northeastern arm of Chira.

BOTTOM Tony with a pin-scaled mirror caught at first light during foggy conditions.

no matter how few, we'd stick it out until Friday. If not, we'd pack up and return to Chira for the last two nights, so as to ensure a higher chance of capturing big carp on rod and camera. However, if the fish weren't playing ball, neither of us relished the thought of carting every item of equipment back up the mountain on the first morning.

In the end we decided to place all the water, drink, ice boxes and food beneath the shade of the restaurant building, leave most of the bulkiest and heaviest equipment, including bivvies, inside the car, and sleep beneath the stars for the first night. Even so, it still took five trips down the dangerous escarpment carrying loads on our backs, before we collapsed in a heap beside the dam wall, sweating profusely and gasping for a drink.

"Open a beer, Dave, I'm dry as a sandstorm!"

"We've left them in the icebox, Tony. Be a lad and fetch me one as well, my old mucker."

I looked back up the mountainside and squinted through the heat haze, feeling the sweat stinging my eyelids. As Meatloaf always said, 'Heaven can wait!' I sat on the bedchair getting my breath back, and then remarked:

"We've forgotten something else..."

"Like what, Tony? We've got all the rods and pods and enough bait until morning."

"We still need to climb back up to fetch the dinghy, pump it up, and carry it back down here."

And so, with reluctance, off we went like mountain goats to fetch the dinghy, for without it we'd not be able to explore this big lake and find spots to drop or cast baits. Dusk finally arrived to find us all set up with our rods out and sitting back on the bedchairs, relaxing and enjoying a beer or two. Our earlier investigations in the dinghy had revealed that due to the very high water levels, most of the margins surrounding the entire lake were filled with submerged prickly plants and gorse bushes. Luckily,

the position where we had chosen ... ▶



to fish overlooked the deepest sections of the lake, and most of the bottom was clean and weed-free beyond 15ft. Also, we placed markers at the very edges of submerged trees on the far bank and a slope at 18ft, 25ft and 45ft, which meant that any hooked fish could be pulled directly towards us away from danger, and we could resume the fight in deep snag-free water.

That was our theory anyway, but by first light we'd not had a chance to try out our plans. Not only had we not had a single bite, but also we'd not seen a single carp leap, roll, or even make a ripple on the surface. Our hopes of finally finding a lake free of the dreaded terrapin epidemic had also turned sour, for ominous-looking tiny heads had been popping up to the surface at regular intervals. Reeling in the boilies on most rods revealed the sad truth of stripped rigs, although they'd not yet found the boilies or tiger nuts placed in 45ft of water.

By mid-morning the warm sun had still not revealed the presence of a single carp. Dave and I looked at each other, and then came to the same conclusion. There had been a strange feeling about the lake the previous evening, and that strong feeling had still not left us. As beautiful as the water looked, it was as if there was no life in the lake. This was, of course, not true, for we'd already seen occasional small shoals of bass swim past in the gin-clear water. But there was this ominous feeling that the lake was devoid of carp. As mentioned, close friends of Dave had already witnessed the presence of big carp they reckoned easily exceeded 30lb, but they were anglers of other species, and often a 15-20lb carp can seem to be a monster-sized carp in the eyes of a trout or bass angler. And even if there were huge carp present in Pine Lake, it might only be a small group of three or four specimens, and to catch one would probably take weeks, or even months, to find, never mind capture some in front of the video cameras at the drop of a hat. I loathed the thought of packing up and moving back to Chira, for Pine still held that certain

NEXT MONTH

Don't miss next month, when Tony begins another series as he travels on a globetrotting tour across Europe in search of the unknown. He begins on the huge, untapped and wild mountain lakes of Italy, later to cross the Swiss Alps to the lowland lakes of Holland, and then back to the beautiful carp pools of England, before finally tasting adventure at previously un-fished big waters of France. Filled with highs and lows, the heartaches and pain, the hopes and aspirations, meeting the unknown head on, until he finally reaches his goal!

BELOW Dave with the final carp of our session.

magic of the complete unknown, and to film one in the clear water would be perfect; but logic got the better of me. A return to Chira would definitely provide us with a far better chance of action, even with the slow fishing and spawning activity of earlier days. If I hadn't been in Gran Canaria making a film, I would have definitely stuck it out for another two days and braved a blank, but my mind was more focused on obtaining extra carp footage before my flight. We both stood up and stared at the water.

"What do you think, Dave? Shall we stay or make a move back to Chira?"

"I feel the same as you, Tony. I don't fancy carting all this lot back up the hill, or driving across the island again, but without a doubt Chira will provide the carp action we crave for."

A few hours later, we both stood beside the car parked on the brow of the hill overlooking Pine Lake, now packed again to the brim with our equipment and food. Despite that ominous feeling, there was still something at the back of my mind nagging me, and it was saying there were a few hidden monsters swimming down there in that beautiful expanse of water.

"We'll do another session Tony, when we've got more time at our disposal and without the added pressures of needing to perform with carp in front of the cameras. No doubt you'll be back to the island soon – and I insist!"

"Yes, and in the

meantime, Dave, while I'm back in England, any spare time that you get, I want you to spend at this water, if not actually fishing, at least walking around the lake or searching in a boat. The sighting of a couple of lunkers is going to provide all the incentive we need to put in the extra rod hours."

Those last few nights spent on our favourite bay on the northwestern arm of Lake Chira came to be my happiest and most memorable spent on the island. Weather patterns changed hourly, from excessive midday heatwaves to freezing night fog. We even suffered hailstorms! Dave said it was the craziest and most changeable weather he'd ever experienced in almost two decades on Gran Canaria, an island that normally enjoys a gloriously warm and fairly stable climate year-round.

Back on Chira the fishing proved difficult and unusually slow to begin with, but a simple change in the hookbait got things moving. We decided to reel in all the tiger nut rigs, and then cut the ends off every one until they were of a similar size to the broken offerings we'd been including in free piles of mixed particles inside the bait buckets. The reaction from the carp was almost instant, and during those last two days spent in Gran Canaria, we both fought with and landed a string of fish that reminded us what this island is famous for – incredible-looking, heavily-plated mirrors that look like no other carp on this planet! Viva España, viva Gran Canaria – I'll be back! **TDP**

