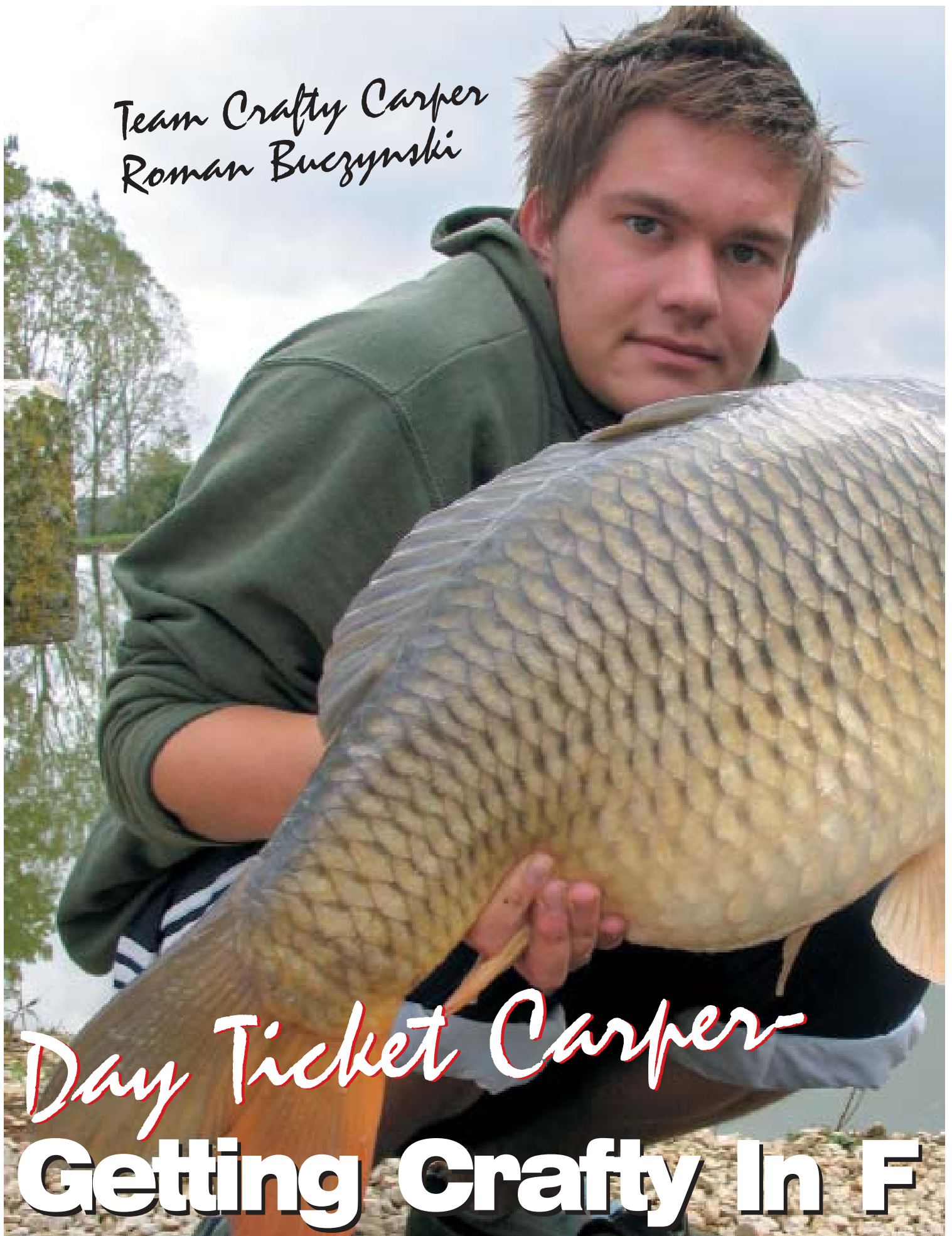


*Team Crafty Carper
Roman Buczynski*

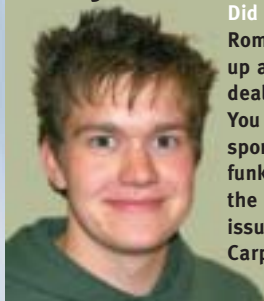


Day Ticket Carper

Getting Crafty In F

Angler Profile

Name: Roman 'Gel Boy' Buczynski
Age: 20
Home Town: Halifax, Yorkshire
Occupation: Student
UK PB: 32lb 12oz



Did you know?
 Roman has just sewn up a sponsorship deal with L'Oreal. You should see him sporting an even funkier hairstyle in the forthcoming issues of Crafty Carper.

A chunky Les Vincons carp.



Make sure you have all your paperwork organised, and readily to hand, on your trip to France. Don't forget your passport!



In France you have to pay road tolls on the autoroutes – make sure you have some money or a credit card handy when you're travelling.



Make sure you have a good idea of where you're travelling, as some signs can be misleading. I nearly always get lost!



Some of the basic stuff you may need before commencing a journey abroad will include items such as a GB sticker, warning triangle, Eurolights and spare bulbs.

Fishing Abroad

Thousands of UK anglers take the short trip across the Channel every year, but how do you go about choosing a venue from all those holiday adverts, and make the safe trip over to a foreign country? Even though I have spent a lot of time fishing abroad, and especially in France, I have decided to dissect and analyse my session step-by-step, to bring you the ultimate very crafty beginner's guide to fishing in France.

Choosing a Venue

There are literally thousands of venues available to fish in France, from the huge rivers like the Rhone and massive reservoirs, such as the Orient and Salagou, to smaller lakes that are equally as productive. For the purpose of this feature I am going to focus on one of the many 'Drive and Survive' holiday



venues run by Angling Lines. I decided to choose Angling Lines as they have an excellent reputation and have a huge selection of different waters; something to float every angler's boat!

A 'Drive and Survive' holiday is perfect for every carp angler's first expedition to France, offering you the security of being able to fish a lake of your choice without the hassle of obtaining permits, but also giving you the chance to experience a bit of adventure, such as driving to your destination and having your vehicle parked up within easy distance in order to shop and explore the local area.

As I only had 48 hours to experience my 'Drive and Survive' holiday, I decided to choose a venue called 'Les Vincons'. The 12-acre lake is situated five hours from Calais and is heavily stocked with carp. Les Vincons is situated in a very rural area of France and the lake is actually located on a boar farm; conveniently there is also a superb purpose-built fisherman's lodge on site, giving the angler a chance to fish in excellent comfort!

Top tips on how to choose a venue

- 1** Decide on how far you would like to travel to get to your destination.
- 2** Choose a suitably-sized lake, one containing the stamp of fish you would ideally like to catch.
- 3** Are you just fishing, or is it a family

holiday? If it's a family holiday then amenities, and a region of France with plenty on offer are a must.

- 4** If in doubt contact www.anglinglines.com or ring 08712 00 44 66.

Perfect Preparation

The key to any successful fishing trip is in your preparation, and it is vital you prepare correctly for your French trip. There are two ways of getting across to France, the Channel Tunnel and the ferry. Of the two, the latter is by far the cheaper option. It couldn't be easier to book your tickets, especially if you utilise the Internet. What I would recommend you do is have a look at www.speedferries.com

These catamaran-style boats leave from Dover but are significantly cheaper and faster than your traditional Sea France and P & O Ferries. The only difference is that the speed ferries sail to Boulogne rather than Calais, which really doesn't make a difference to travelling and is well worth the saving you make on ticket bookings.

Travelling in France

As you all know, in contrast to here in the UK, driving in France is undertaken on the right-hand side of the highway; don't get too worried though, as it really isn't as bad as you think! Driving in France is really simple as long as you follow these simple guidelines:

- It is compulsory to place converters on your headlights to ensure that your dipped beams do not dazzle oncoming traffic; these can be purchased on the ferry on the way over.
- Your car must display a GB sticker at the rear end of the vehicle.
- You must carry a warning triangle, in case of an accident or breakdown.
- A spare set of bulbs is also recommended. The total cost of all these items came to just over £30 when we purchased the goods on the ferry.
- The paperwork you must carry with you when on the road in France is as follows: driving licence, vehicle registration document, insurance certificate, and some form of ID.
- Obviously a good set of directions and a comprehensive map of France are a necessity when travelling.
- Make sure you have some euros on you, as unfortunately you have to pay on some of the motorways. These road tolls are known as the peage.
- Remember not to speed on the motorways, as speeding can result in a large penalty in France!
- Remember to take out European roadside cover, just in case anything should go wrong with your vehicle



We finally arrived at Les Vinçons.

abroad. Similarly give your car insurance firm a ring to confirm that you are insured to drive abroad.

– All the service stations in France are excellent, and are dotted closely along all the autoroutes. Gazole is diesel and Sans Plomb is unleaded.

– Avoid Paris at all costs; the traffic and complicated road network can make travelling around the city very stressful!

Other considerations

Before making your journey across France it is recommended to take out some travel insurance, as well as an E1.11. These can both be obtained from the Post Office and at the same time you can pick up your euros without a commission charge. Don't forget your passport either!

Provisions

France is famous for its food and wine, therefore maintaining your provisions shouldn't be a problem. It follows that you can afford to leave all your food at home! Supermarkets such as Leclerc, Intermarché and Champion are fantastic and I love spending time looking at shelves and picking foods to try out. It's worth taking note that shops in France generally close between the hours of 1230 and 1430, so some little places can look like 'ghost towns' during these times of the day.

Fishing!

Fishing doesn't come cheap these days and obviously you have been waiting and thinking about your foreign fishing expedition for a long time. So your fishing tackle and bait preparation has to be thought about the right way. There is no point spending hundreds of pounds on a nice holiday and only a few pounds on fishing essentials. I'm not saying that you should spend the earth and upset the missus whilst doing it, but basically you should try to make the most of your trip, as you may only have a week in which to do the business.

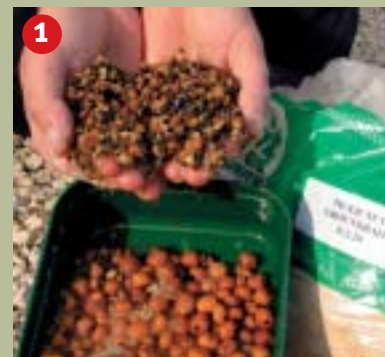
Now, back to the session. With all the theory taken care of, let's see how I got on with the trip.

The trip started off from my home in Halifax. With the equipment loaded (with two sets of gear for 48 hours), we were on our way down to Dover. By leaving enough time spare and planning our journey, we were sure to reach our pre-booked ferry in time. We arrived at Dover



Look out for signs like this indicating where the nearest supermarket is situated.

French Tiger Nut Groundbait



Tiger nuts are an excellent bait wherever you go, especially in France. I like to mix tigers with hemp products.



When making any sort of tiger nut groundbait I use the Bait and Feed Company's Tiger Nut Groundbait.



Keep adding the Tiger Nut Groundbait and mixing it evenly through the bait mixture so it becomes malleable.



Your final groundbait mix should ball up really well, and on entering the water should break up and cloud the area.

in good time; I much prefer taking a night-time ferry as it's quieter and gives you a chance to get an hour's sleep, especially if you have a long journey ahead of you.

We were soon disembarking at Calais, and the first few miles out of Calais zapped all our concentration levels up as we accustomed ourselves to the right-hand side driving, whilst at the same time navigating the car in the right direction. As usual the adrenaline was pumping as another adventure began.

Sticking closely to the map, as well as the directions we'd been given by Angling Lines, we made our way around Paris. Most people know that navigating Paris can be a nightmare and it's recommended to stay away from the city, especially during working hours. Unfortunately a lapse in concentration for just a minute had us lost, adding an extra hour to the journey! Back on the right road again, and morale was high once again. I had planned the trip so that we would be arriving at the lake in the morning, therefore giving us a full day in which to fish and get our kit organised.

On the last few miles to Les Vincons, I was amazed to see how different and beautiful the region was. I was told (by Bridget Keep of Angling Lines) that this was indeed a very special place, and when we arrived at Les Vincons I wasn't disappointed. We were greeted by the Bouchot family, who told us (in their very good English) about the lake and lodge we were staying at. The lodge at Les Vincons was amazing and the traditional building, complemented by sprawling ivy, made the little lodge look more like something from a fairy tale.

The customary walk around the lake to survey the situation was duly completed, and it was obvious which swims we would need to get in. Thankfully there were some fish showing just in front of the lodge, which was exceptionally handy, as the lodge was more like an hotel. It didn't take long for some rods to be positioned. I had been told that Les Vincons carp can be very co-operative and it wasn't long before the rods started rattling off.

French Tactics

The majority of these 'Drive and Survive' Pay lakes are very much the same size as typical English venues, so the tactics employed on such venues can be the same as the ones that you use in the UK. However there are a few considerations that you must take into account, the first of which is that many of the lakes in France have large populations of crayfish and poisson chats; the latter are very similar to little catfish, but both of these critters can devastate a fishing session! These pests will whittle down an offering in minutes, leaving you fishing with no bait! You can use a variety of precautions to protect your presentation, including using rock-hard big baits.

Crayfish Conundrum

To keep the crayfish and poisson chat at bay I like to use this rig. It is based on an idea used by Steve Briggs to good effect over the last few years on the Continent.



1 Crayfish are commonplace in the majority of French lakes. They can be a total nuisance as they claw your baits.



2 The crayfish activity can be pretty savage at Les Vincons as illustrated here. The durable pop-up got trashed!



3 Plastic baits, tiger nuts and plugged hookbaits are excellent at keeping the crayfish and poisson chats at bay.



4 To construct the rig, push two bits of silicone onto a length of coated hooklink. I'm using a combi link here.



5 This rig is a favourite of Continental angler Steve Briggs. Push the silicone along a size 6 Fox Series 5 hook.



6 Push the next piece of silicone up the shank of the hook. Being careful not to damage the braid on the hooklink.



7 The two bits of silicone should be spaced like this along the shank of the hook. Basically, a double blowback.



8 Mount two tiger nuts and a plastic Enterprise boilie onto the hair and fish the rig with a Fox anti-tangle boom.

“You really cannot take enough bait with you to France – so don’t scrimp and save on the essentials!”

Glugged baits, tiger nuts, shrink-wrapping baits, meshing hookbaits, or more conveniently using the popular plastic baits that are now available on the market are all other options.

Baits for France

After travelling so far and spending so much money on your holiday, you really want to be equipped for whatever situation arises. I have highlighted how important it is to protect your hookbaits from the dreaded pests, but you must also try to remember that other nuisances such as bream, tench, roach and catfish may cause problems, so you need to have enough bait to hopefully ward off these fish. Something I am aware many anglers overlook when then they go to France for a trip is the increase in the relative size of the fish they are angling for. Basically, bigger fish will eat more food, therefore you really cannot take enough bait with you to France – so don’t scrimp and save on the essentials! One thing that I am convinced of on every water I ever fish is that quality bait results in quality fish, even more so after reading Tim Paisley’s material on the subject. My favourite bait for fishing abroad has to be Active Maple 8; I can find no fault in this bait!

At A Glance

Name: Les Vincons.

Location: Five hours from Calais near the historic town of Bourges.

Stock: Hundreds of fish ranging from singles to 36lb. The average size of fish is upper-doubles and low-20s.

History: The lake is sited on a typical French working farm that breeds wild boar and grows cereal.

Ticket availability: Contact Angling Lines for details.

Price: From £245 per week, per angler, based on two anglers and two non-anglers, for exclusive use of the lake and lodge, including ferry crossing.

Night fishing: Yes.

Close season: No.

Boats Allowed: No.

No of Swims: Six.

English-speaking: Yes.

Accommodation: Yes; an extremely comfortable bankside lodge, a gite is also available to book on the farm. Toilet and shower facilities also available. A swimming pool is also available, literally a stone’s throw from the lake. Other details: Bait from Angling Lines can be arranged to be at the lake before you arrive.

Rules: Three rods only, and only professionally prepared particles are to be used on the lake.

Very Crafty



To feed small pellets accurately down the margins I like to use a large baiting spoon to scatter them... Very Crafty!



Richard cooking in the lodge...ultimate comfort.



Sunset at Les Vincons.

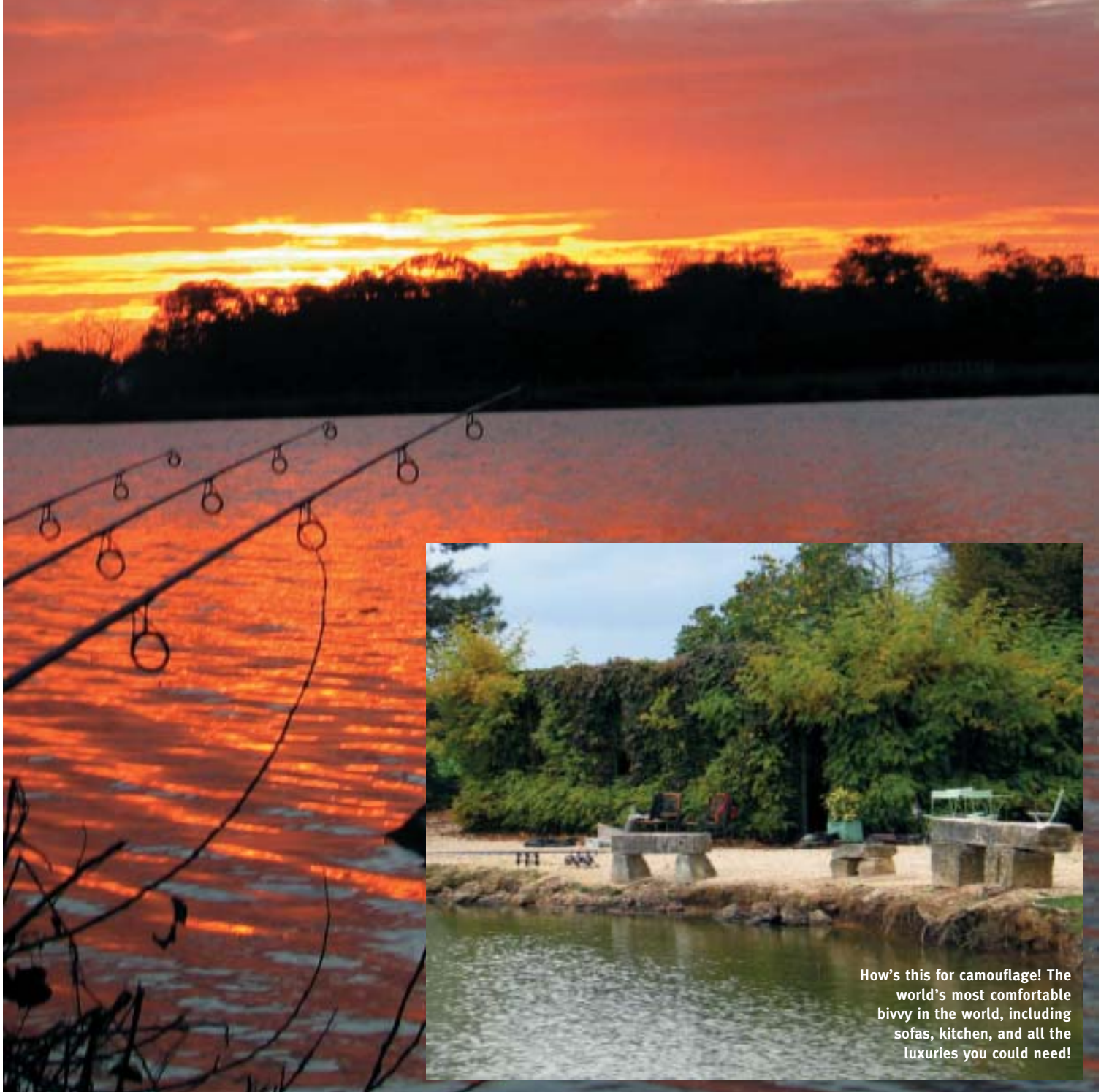
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The wild boar having it large in the field next to the lake!



The gite that is also available from Angling Lines.



How's this for camouflage! The world's most comfortable bivy in the world, including sofas, kitchen, and all the luxuries you could need!



Action came thick and fast at Les Vincons – two fish at the same time!



Playing another Les Vincons carp.

A shot of the open water at Les Vincons.

Meet Roman at The Carp & Coarse Show on 1st and 2nd April 2006

Very Crafty



By getting out in the chesties, in the shallow lake I could find harder areas of the lakebed and present my baits and rigs perfectly... Very Crafty!

Extra Curricular Activities!

What better way to introduce the lady in your life to carp angling than taking her to a pretty French venue? With a week at your disposal it is sometimes nice to have a break away from the fishing and visit the local area, and try to soak up the atmosphere and the vibe of French life. For example, at Les Vincons it is possible to watch wild boar running around in the next field while you fish...a truly surreal experience. Similarly the very picturesque town of Bourges is only 60km away, and the typical rustic French villages are literally minutes away from the lake, making Les Vincons perfect for a family holiday.

Conclusion

Les Vincons is a truly amazing place and with only 48 hours at my disposal I feel I didn't give the place the full attention it deserved. The fishing was excellent; between two of us we landed 28 carp up to a weight of 26lb. The local area was idyllic, especially the fact that the venue is set on a working farm, and it really makes the place a special place to be. For the first timer's trip or seasoned campaigner's jaunt on a 'Drive and Survive', I would wholeheartedly recommend Les Vincons. I will definitely be returning in the future.

Roman Buczynski



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THE LARGEST CHOICE OF CARP VENUES

For further details about trips to France contact:
www.anglinglines.com or ring 08712 00 44 66

Rods on the deck...let's get stalking the Les Vincons carp.