

# St Christophe

**ANGLING LINES**  
THE LARGEST CHOICE OF CARP VENUES

When talking to David Keep some months ago, he asked if I would like to visit one of the venues on the Angling Lines books with a view to doing a review. When I asked David if he had any recently-included venues, or something of the lesser-known variety, he recommended St Christophe, and said it fitted the bill perfectly for Carp Addict readers.

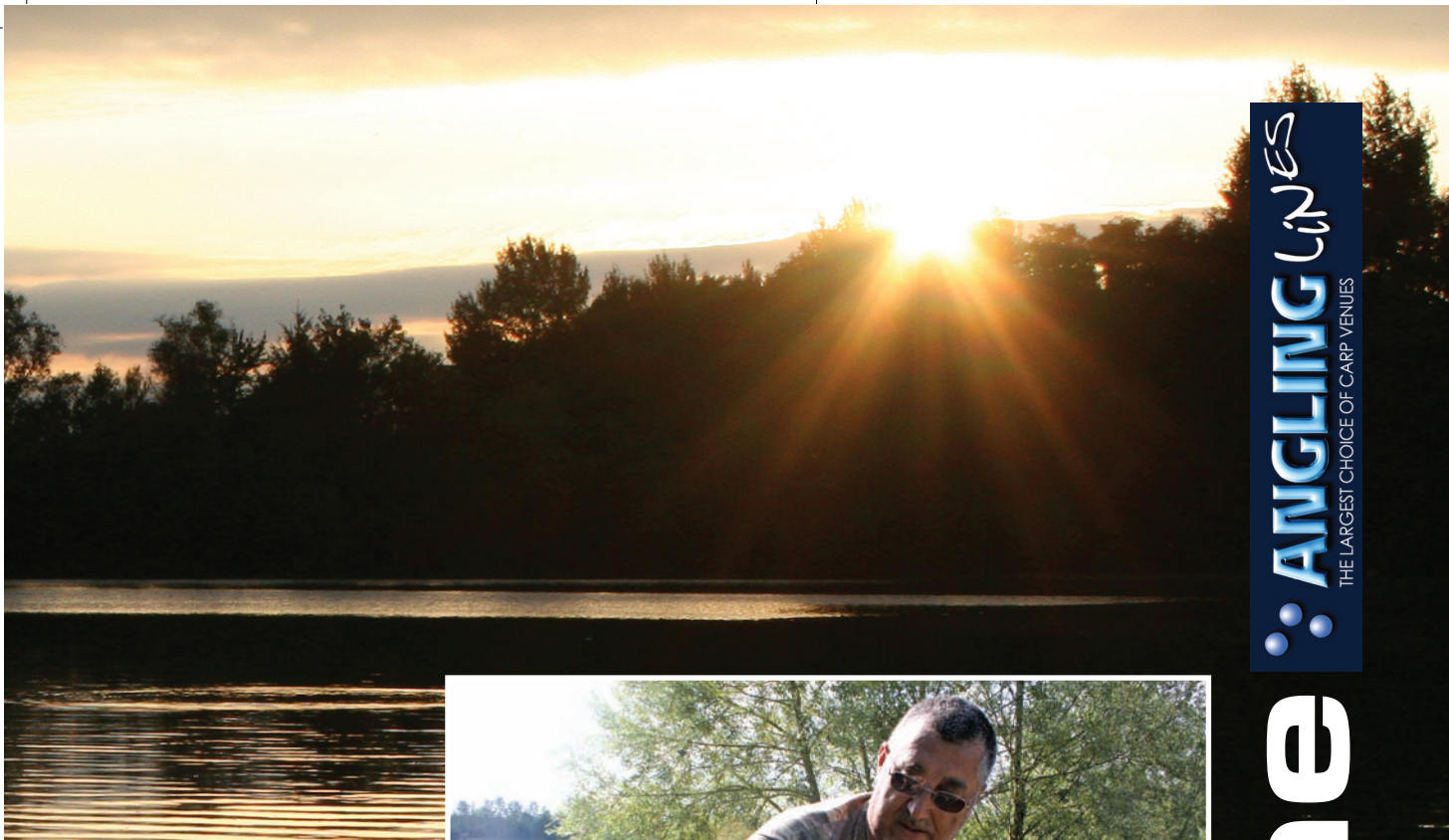
It all sounded good. Standing at an impressive 35 acres, it was nice to know that St Christophe wasn't the typical 10-15 acre lake most of us would normally expect, and with a reported very good head of large fish it posed a mouth-watering prospect. Wanting to keep it real and without any special considerations made on our behalf, I decided to do the review as if I were an Angling Lines client, and booked the trip going purely by the recommendations and information made available to me by Angling Lines. So I visited the website and gleaned all the information I could from there without doing any further research.

Quest Baits, run by Shaun Harrison, supply direct to the proprietors of St Christophe, and realising that the fish would be familiar with the Quest Baits products, I contacted Shaun. I chose to take 5kg of the Special Crab, and 5kg of the Liver in 16mm, because when talking to Shaun, it transpired that the lake had previously been fished by French, Dutch, German and Belgian anglers in the main and I presumed that most of these would have used boilies of 18mm and above, and as Shaun confirmed this to be the case, I wanted to do something a little different. Shaun is a great guy and he was extremely helpful. Soon, 10kg of frozen boilies were arranged to be delivered to me a few days prior to my trip.

With all the gear packed and St Christophe plugged into the sat/nav, I set off with my old buddy, John O'Driscoll, for a week-long session, not really knowing quite what to expect. After three hours or so on French soil, we left the A26 motorway and swept down through the glorious







countryside of the champagne region, passing familiar place names such as the close-by Lac du Der Chanteqoc and Lac Amance, situated around the Foret d'Orient area.

With the voice of John Cleese from my sat/nav indignantly telling me "turn around when possible... face your vehicle in the opposite direction to the direction in which it is currently directed...now!", we found the entrance gate on our second sweep through St Christophe village. With the A26 carrying us almost all of the way, we had arrived in good time, a little after 9am. Although we were unexpected at that time, the owners of the lake were there to greet us, but not before their very large, bristle-faced pointer, Roy, introduced himself to us. He's a real character that one. As we were to discover, he's a very likeable dog that will visit you to say hello on his daily tour of the lake. The owners were extremely friendly and pleasant too, and, after sitting down for a cup of coffee with them, we were pointed in the direction of our swim for the week, on Peg 9.

No sooner had we arrived, a mobile shop delivery van turned up and the lake owners explained that it was a regular service and that the van came every day at around 9am. Nice touch, we thought. No need to leave the lake for those essential food items such as bread, milk, ham and cheese, and the obligatory orangina, of course. Result! No interruptions to the fishing for irritating shopping trips for me then. I should also say at this point, a half mile up the road, I noticed that there was a kebab restaurant and later in the week a visit to that was firmly on my list of things to do, and what a treat it was too. On top of that, the French owners remain on-site



for much of the time and offer extra services including snacks like pizzas or chicken and chips, as well as drinks and bait, and if all of that isn't enough, the nearest supermarket is around five miles away.

Now, moving along before I give you all the impression that I'm totally obsessed with food, there is a stone-built toilet and shower block near the main entrance which is a clean, modern building with an English style toilet and a large modern shower. There's also a fridge/freezer for the use of the anglers and electricity points provided to recharge leisure batteries and bait boat batteries etc.

St Christophe is a lovely old gravel pit, but I must confess here, that as we passed by it along the main road, my initial view of the lake wasn't exactly inspiring. It appeared to be nothing more than a big, open pit, but how wrong I was. Although the roadside bank and a small part of the bank alongside the entrance is perhaps a little sparsely covered in trees and vegetation, the remaining bankside is mature and actually very pleasant. First impressions, eh! A well maintained track runs around the entire lake providing good access to all swims, and especially where I'm concerned, with my back problems, it was a very welcome benefit to have the car and trailer parked right behind our swim.

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We spoke to a few of the other anglers on the lake, who were from Belgium, Holland and Germany, and one guy from the UK, and were told that the past two weeks had seen some very difficult angling with very little being caught. After two days we had witnessed this difficulty for ourselves, and apart from one Dutch guy, Johan, banking a lovely 26lb fully-scaled, nothing else had visited the banks. I had watched the water carefully for those two days and had hoped that the fish would tell me exactly where they wanted the bait, and they duly obliged. I sorted out a spot right on the money, just where they wanted it and within a few hours I banked my first fish. I had chosen to fish with the Quest Baits Special Crab, whilst John fished with the Liver, and

presented as snowman rigs, they began to do the business for me. Several fish followed from this one spot, whilst all the other rods remained quiet despite our best efforts. A very welcome 37lb'er was followed by a lovely 39lb 12oz mirror, and after a couple of days on this spot I had racked up a number of good fish, with a couple of high 20s and a further brace of 30s, but my buddy's rods remained quiet.

We took the decision to fish all of the rods at the same range, as the fish appeared to be reluctant to move from the central area but still it was just the one rod that produced fish. A stonking take had me scrambling for the rod in the small hours and after a manic battle in the margins that had





me hanging on desperately, I landed what appeared to be a very good fish, 'perhaps a 40-plus', I suggested to John. On attempting to lift it from the water it became very clear that it was most definitely a 40 at least. Peeling back the mesh, a huge framed fish with massive shoulders was revealed, and all doubt was removed. Up on the scales she registered 50lbs 6oz and I was on cloud nine. A fifty at last, after all those years of trying.

With the photos done, it was back to the bivvy to chill out. I was totally relaxed, still enjoying the euphoria of the moment, when the same rod kicked into action once more. After a few brief minutes, which left me in no doubt as to the great size of the would-be bait thief, the hook pulled. I looked upon that quite philosophically as it would seem a little bit greedy to bemoan my ill fortune after the capture of the 50.

John finally banked a fish the next day, a mirror of 27lb-plus and thankfully, at last, he was off the mark. I had been feeling more than a little sorry for my old mate as he was having such a tough time of things, but now he could feel a little happier about his lot. John had now sorted out a productive spot for himself, and was about to embark on a run of fish that would see him bank a lovely fully-scaled and a 30-plus before the carp gods rewarded him for his patience with a magnificent fish that made it just past the magical 50lb barrier.

We had done exceedingly well under the circumstances, as other anglers had continued to struggle with the lake being under par. To say that we were pleased with our results would be a massive understatement, and we realised that we were perhaps a little fortunate, but we feel that we had angled well and duly reaped the rewards. We both concluded that St Christophe is a very nice, well run venue that has a lot going for it, and it's certainly somewhere that we'd like to return to again in the future. But for the time being, our next mission was to take part in the World Carp Classic on Lac D'Orient, 21 miles down the road, on the following Monday morning.

So after we had packed our gear away and paid a visit to the shower, we bade our lovely hosts farewell and set off on the next leg of our crusade, where we could only dream to be as successful as we had on St Christophe.



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