

**Right:** Save some car space by forwarding some of your bait in the post  
**Below:** Removing one or both rear seats gives lots of added space



# Getting it right

**Shaun Harrison takes a look at the things you need to know if you're intent on taking a drive-and-survive fishing trip to the Continent.**

**I** only ever did it the once and would certainly not get myself into the same situation again.

I was about to embark on an early season trip to France and suddenly realised the gear was not going to fit in the car! It was an absolute nightmare scenario trying to decide right at the very last minute before setting off what I was going to leave behind and what I definitely couldn't afford to leave behind. It had been a situation which was so easy to fall into.

Bernard Sisson and I had a week booked through Angling Lines at Remy, near the mighty Orient in France. We had even got together on a couple of occasions prior to the trip to make all the usual sorts of plans. You know the type of thing. I guess at the end of the day it's really just an excuse to

get together and talk about the forthcoming carp onslaught we all anticipate before a trip.

Everything was looking good right up until the moment Bernard turned up in his Range Rover to collect me and my gear. It soon became pretty obvious that we had both gone completely over the top with everything. No way in a month of Sundays were we going to fit in two lots of tackle and bait. There we were on my drive, sadly well aware that we were going to have to make sacrifices with the bait and tackle we had both thought we needed. I remember turning to Bernard and saying: "How does everyone else manage it in normal sized cars?"

It very much became a case of "If you leave 10 kilo of bait behind - I'll leave 10 kilo behind", and so on.

Since that day I have

made sure I have utilised every last area of space when travelling overseas and paid particular attention to sensible packing. The last

thing you want when a long way from home is to be without a bit of kit or alternate bait you really need.

## Bait

With a little forward thinking there are many issues which can be resolved. I think the biggest problem both Bernard and I had was the amount of bait we had packed. We are both bait 'users' and like to catch carp which are obviously feeding upon the baits. I much prefer to catch carp over beds of bait than on just a few



Essential (by law) to have a Breakdown Triangle

scatterings - I feel I have not only got them feeding and caught them because they wanted to eat the bait, but also I have given the fish a little bit of something back.

Most bait companies will post bait on for you. I send a lot of bait to France for my customers. Not having to carry bait with you can save loads of space in the car. So long as you have an address to send it to where there will be someone to sign for it at the other end it's no problem, and the cost is so reasonable it's hardly worth the extra strain on the car filling it with heavy bait.

### Just in case

There are bits of kit we carry around which we really don't need two lots of. Certainly you need to equip yourself with enough gear to be able to fish completely independently, but when you start scrutinising your gear a lot of the emergency, just-in-case items you carry you will probably find your mate carrying too. Things like first aid kits, spare torches, spare alarms, spare cameras, extra cooking utensils... the list goes on. Chances are you will be able to make quite a space saving there.

### Dummy run

I would very much try and get together the day before the trip for a bit of a pre-load. This is the only way to guarantee you aren't going to be in a flap moments before you are due to set off on your adventure. It seems

such basic advice, but having worked behind the counter in an angling shop for 25 years before doing what I am now, I heard all sorts of nightmare stories of fall outs before the trip had even started. Fortunately, in my and Bernard's case, we don't do falling out.

### Getting on

This is another major issue which often occurs. You may think you get on with someone really well, but semi-living with them for a week in another country can be a totally different matter. Be warned, it can lead to a most unpleasant week's fishing, as well as a very miserable drive home.

Make sure you have fished in the UK with someone before going and fishing a week away from home with them. I must admit there aren't many anglers I would be confident to ask about sharing a trip; in fact I do quite a few of them alone these days. This saves having to try and find two swims within reasonable distance of each other and makes moving much less of an ordeal when you only have yourself to think about.

### Extra space

There is one thing you can do which will give you a massive amount of bonus space in your car and that is to remove the back seat. It may sound a little drastic but most cars just have a few bolts holding the back seat in place. With the seat out, not

only do you gain the space taken up by the back of the seat, you also save a large chunk of space where the base of the seat was - in effect you get a secondary footwell.

With split back seats, you can remove just one of them if you only need to gain a little extra space. For what it is worth, my car hasn't had one of the back seats in place for two years! I have left the two-seater there, but completely removed the mini third seat. This gives me very easy loading of rods

**"One thing which isn't essential but I would strongly urge you to do is make sure you arrange European breakdown cover."**

and umbrellas, etc. without things draping over the seats. I like to leave the main part of the seat in place on the other side to act as a barrier to stop things tumbling around.

### On French soil

There are a few essentials which you have to do before driving onto French soil. For obvious safety reasons your headlights in your car are designed to point away from the on-coming traffic. Once you start driving on the opposite side of the road you will be dazzling everyone. Make sure you fit a tape kit (available at the ferry terminal if you forget to sort it before).

European law also requires you to display a GB sign on the rear of your vehicle. These are available in all car accessory places and many supermarkets, so there is no excuse. You will also need a breakdown triangle kit. Again, these are a legal requirement and can be found in most car accessory shops.

You will need to contact your insurance company to arrange car cover whilst over there, similarly make sure you have some health cover for yourself.

One thing which isn't essential but I would strongly urge you to do is make sure you arrange European breakdown cover. I had a close shave a few years back, but fortunately the Land Rover managed to limp back to the ferry in the sort of way only a Land Rover could! It was the last time I risked a trip without cover. The thought of being stuck somewhere you don't fully understand the language to me equates to a potential massive bill.

### Travel

I can't stress enough how alert you need to be at all times whilst driving in France. Particularly when you



You must display a GB sticker



Tax disc holder - ideal for toll road receipts



Map, TomTom, phrase book and dictionary – absolute essentials for travelling in France

Now, it is absolutely essential you keep this ticket safe. Don't simply leave it on the dashboard as it can blow around, fall down a vent or simply get mislaid. You are going to need this ticket when you get to the next set of barriers. I put a tax disc holder on my sun visor for this type of thing. I get in the car, pop the ticket in the holder and drive off. There is no need for fumbling around in pockets or looking under seats trying to find a ticket.

**Language**  
To this day I regret not paying as much attention to the words I was supposed to be learning during French lessons at school as I did my female French teacher's bum in tight jeans! I'm sure had she walked around with words on her bum I would have spoken much better French today. I remember that bum much clearer than I remember any of the words on the blackboard.

Because of this I would never dream of travelling to France without an English/French dictionary and a English/French phrase book. Don't expect the French to speak English – many of them won't. I keep telling myself I really should try and relearn French, but knowing my luck I will end up with another nice French teacher to put me off concentrating.

**Maps**  
I appreciate in this day and age many of you will have satellite navigation systems to help you along your way. Don't rely on these 100%. Things can go wrong. Make sure you have a back-up map with you, too. The Michelin map is by far the best I have seen and would always make sure I have one with me. It is often easier to look at a large map page when looking for something in particular than it is programming your TomTom, etc.

are darting out to the shops first thing in the morning. Believe me, it is so easy and indeed natural to pull out on to the road and drive on the same side as you do at home. I have done it myself – be warned!

One little tip here is to put a sticker in the centre of the steering wheel, the windscreen or the rear-view mirror with a arrow pointing to the right, indicating which side you should be driving on and which way to go around a roundabout. You need to put it somewhere where it will really annoy you – that way it is likely to sink home. This may sound like childish advice but I can assure you there are a lot of English anglers each year with smashed up motors who wish they had done just that.

**Toll roads**  
Toll roads are something we aren't particularly used to here in the UK, but you are almost certain to come across them in France. You will pull up at the barriers and have

to get out of the car (unless your passenger can reach the ticket box on their side) and go remove a ticket from the machine on the left. This will raise the barrier allowing you to drive through.



Below: This French common is one of nicest carp I ever caught