

It's been a long-standing ambition of ours to fish for carp on the River Ebro in Spain and on the St Lawrence River in Canada. Well, fishing the Ebro finally became a reality for us and a trip was planned to Mequinenza for some winter carping. We'd heard so much about how good the winter carp fishing is on the Ebro that we couldn't wait to get started.

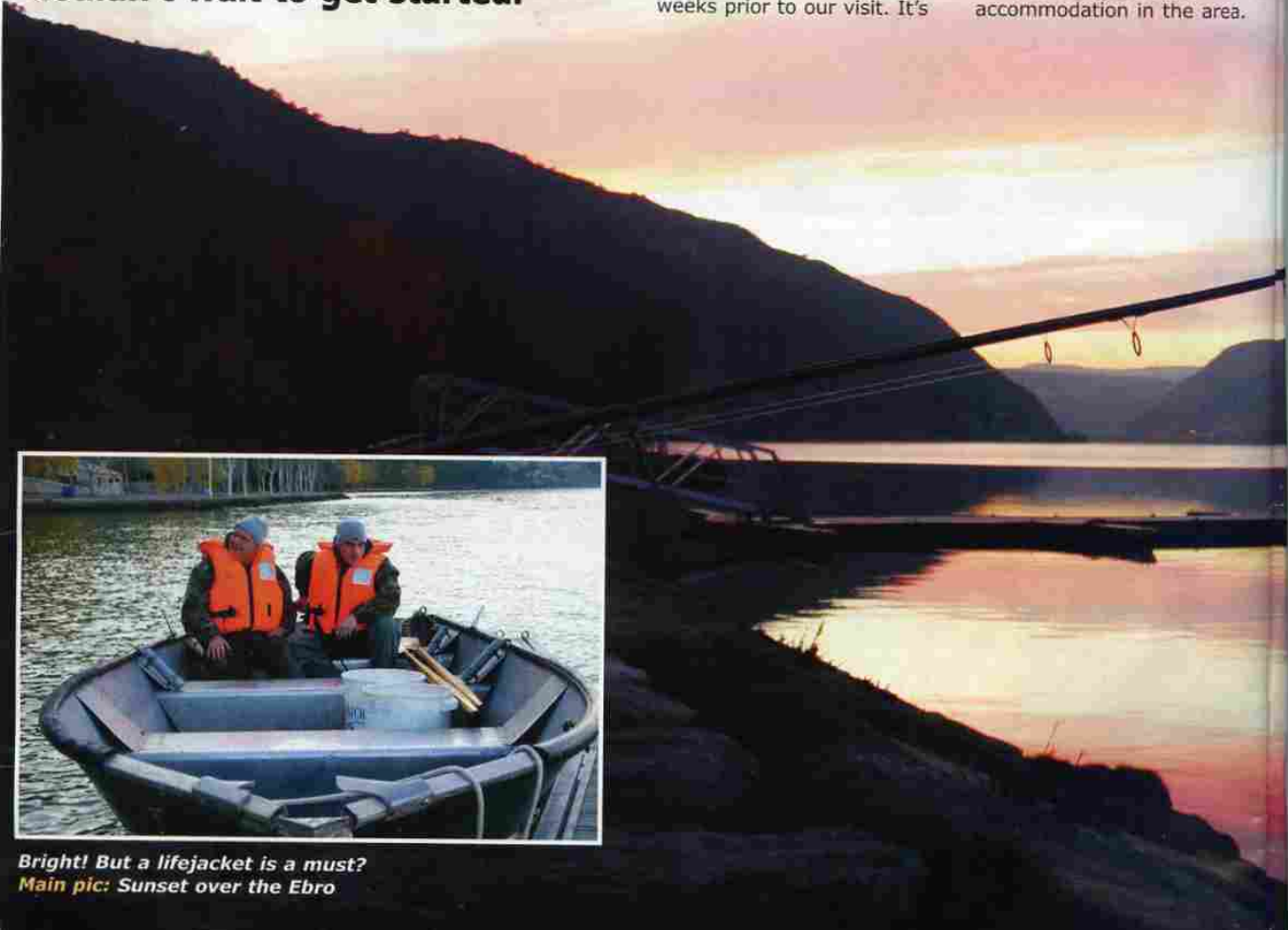
Record 68lb 2oz common

Mequinenza is in the north eastern part of Spain in the area of Aragon not far from Barcelona. It's located by the confluence of the Segre and Ebro. The town of Mequinenza is famous for its excellent fishing, which includes Carp, Catfish, Zander and Black Bass. Anglers come from all over Europe to fish the Ebro and Segre mainly for the large numbers of carp and very big catfish that are resident there. The carp are mostly commons. There are mirrors present but it's rare to catch them. The carp range from doubles and twenties up to the record of 68lb 2oz, caught by a German three weeks prior to our visit. It's

not uncommon to catch many 20s, 30s and 40s, with a 50 or 60 a possibility. The winter carp fishing is excellent as the cats are dormant at this time of year and it's not so busy.

Tailor-made packages

Our trip was booked with the Bavarian Guiding Service, which is the longest-established guiding company in the region. It was originally formed in 1988, but since 1992 has been owned solely by Peter Olschlager. Peter (who is an angler himself) is a very friendly and helpful guy who's built the business up to form the largest infrastructure of staff (who all speak English) and accommodation in the area.



*Bright! But a lifejacket is a must?
Main pic: Sunset over the Ebro*

Winter carping i

By short-session experts Barry & Ben Oconnor

Accommodation ranges from a campsite with wooden bungalows, to luxury apartments, plus, they have some riverside houses to let. Although you can fish from the banks, Bavarian Guiding Service has 46 power boats that can be hired to give you the freedom to fish anywhere on the Ebro or Segre rivers. All the fishing tackle was supplied in our carp package. This included two rods, reels, pods, alarms, nets, mats, scales, leads and chairs. We took our own end tackle but you can buy it from the on-site tackle shop. Bait can be supplied, but it's advisable to pre order it. The boilies are Carp Company's Icelandic Red Caviar and Cranberry or their Aminol Acid. There are

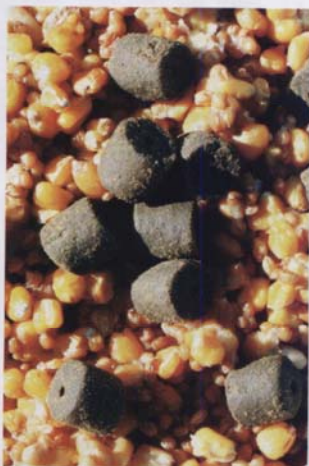
This 42lb 3oz common fought like a cat



The licences were ready and waiting for us



n Spain



We baited with maize and halibut pellets



38lb 9oz of wild Ebro carp



Peter The Owner Of Bavarian In The Middle And Jason Our Guide On The Right



Our apartment was top right

tons of these going in so it makes sense to use them. Halibut pellets are also used as hookbaits and for freebies. Baiting up was done with maize. With seven skilled and experienced English-speaking guides at your disposal it would be difficult not to catch. Fishing packages can be tailor-made to suit your own personal requirements.

Meeting the guide

Our flight, which is not included in the package, was from Stanstead to Zaragoza flying with Ryanair on a very low-cost fare. The flight took just over two hours. We were

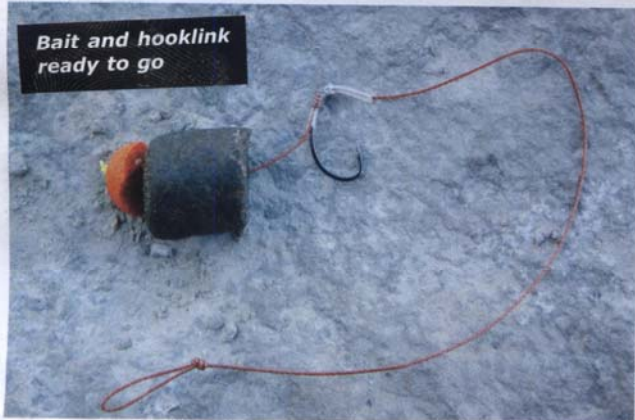
met at the airport and driven to our apartment in Mequinenza overlooking the Segre. As our partners were coming too, we thought we'd better book a luxury apartment and that's exactly what it was, luxurious. All our fishing tackle, bait and licences had been delivered to our apartment and our guide Jason arrived later with his son George to discuss our fishing plans. Jason is an English guide who has fished The Ebro system for nearly ten years and has caught many carp and cats. We'd arrived late evening so in the morning Jason showed us how to

work the boat. Unfortunately due to heavy fog we couldn't go out in it. We had a minibus at our disposal so Jason took us to a spot where we could fish from the bank. Nothing was caught but we put this down to the fact that we couldn't get out in the boat to bait up. The next day was no better as gale force winds lashed the water creating three-foot waves.

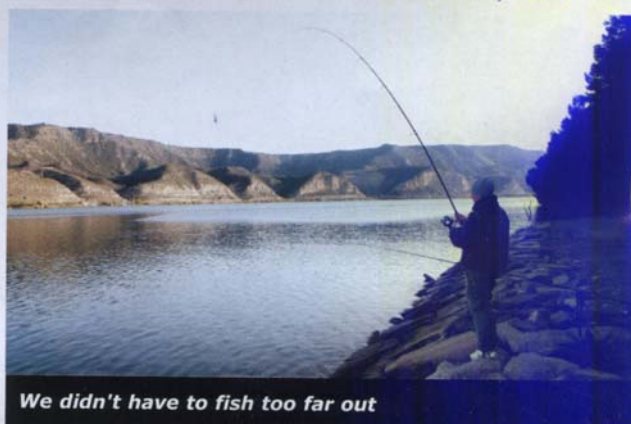
Big baits and strong hooklinks

Finally the weather relented and we got out fishing. The sun was out and it was quite warm, unlike England. Jason took us to a spot that he

knew would produce carp. Our plan was to fish from the bank and use the boat to bait up. Jason explained that it would be best to fish one area during our stay and keep the bait going in. Each day Ben took the boat there while Barry drove round with all the gear. Jason got there early everyday to make sure no one went in the swim. You're allowed to fish from 6am until midnight. We hurriedly set up while Jason baited up the swim with maize and pellet for us from the boat. Our rigs consisted of a 4oz lead (because of the current) set up running-rig style, with an eight-inch length of either Kryston 35lb Quicksilver or the coated 45lb Quicksilver Gold, tied to size 6 Mugga hooks or Carp Company Super Strong hooks. The strong hooklinks were needed because of the rocks and snags that abound in the river. We also used Wychwood Extremis 40lb Snag leaders. Hookbaits were 22ml halibut pellets topped with an Ice Red Caviar/Cranberry boilie. We



Bait and hooklink ready to go



We didn't have to fish too far out

did vary this by putting half a Carp Company High Viz Cranberry pop-up on the pellet or a Bankside Pure Shrimp Hooker. We made up several small PVA net bags of crushed Ice Red boilies, crushed Halibut pellet, Oysta Crunch groundbait and soaked them in Minamino. These were attached every time we made a cast.

First Ebro carp

We were fishing at about 40 yards in twenty six feet of water! Ben was the first to open his account on the Ebro and by his actions we could see he was battling to control the fish. It was fighting like mad! It was his first Ebro common and weighed 21lb 5oz. Because the carp are always swimming in the current they're very fit and strong. It wasn't long after that Barry had a screaming take and he too was into a powerful carp. He now understood what Ben meant about the carp being hard-fighting as the one attached to his line was darting all over the place. Finally it was subdued and went into the net. It weighed 26½lb. The arduous fight seemed to belie the carp's weight. We caught a few more carp, mostly twenties, but as night drew in we began to feel hungry. We went back, had a shower and

went off to taste the culinary delights of the Bella Vista restaurant. The food in this restaurant, which is owned by Bavarian Guiding Service, is first class. So much so that we had dinner and a few beers there most nights.

PB common

Jason was already in the swim when we arrived the next day. While we were setting up our rods, he boated out more maize for us to fish over. During the course of the day we caught steadily, most notably a 28¾lb common. Whilst we were sitting chatting, one of Ben's rods was away. The fish tore off forty to fifty yards of line from the spool and Ben couldn't do anything to stop it. Was it a cat? Finally it was under control and being guided back towards the bank. It was kiting left and right to gain its freedom but Ben got the better of it and brought it over the net. We could see it was a big carp as it wallowed in the net. Jason duly weighed it and called 42lb 3oz. This was Ben's PB common and what a scrap it gave him! It was in perfect condition. We packed up at around seven o'clock in the evening, as we did most days. We had caught during the day so there was no

point fishing late into the night.

A memorable session

Around mid afternoon on the second-to-last day, Barry had a take which again peeled line off the reel at an alarming rate. After the initial run the fish turned and tried to make the sanctuary of a boat jetty. Barry had to firmly guide the fish away from the jetty and certain disaster. It was now swimming up and down in the deep margin and we could see it was another good common. A few minutes later it kissed the spreader block and was safely in the net. This one weighed 38lb 9oz. Another hard-fighting Ebro common,

one of many we had over the period we spent fishing at Mequinenza. After a poor start because of bad weather, we finally got among the carp and had a truly memorable session. We believe our fishing was exceptional because of the dedication by the Bavarian Guiding Service team and the knowledge of our guide Jason. As the Ebro is so vast and this was our first visit, we may have struggled to find fish without his help. We caught 21 carp, one forty, four thirties and the rest twenties in the four days that we fished. If it hadn't been for the weather we would have caught more. We've already planned a return visit.

Win ^{with} CARP-TALK

Peter at the Bavarian Guiding Service has kindly offered to give a four day winter fishing trip to Mequinenza to one lucky reader and a friend. This includes airport transfers, accommodation, licences, tackle and a boat. It does not include flights, bait or a guide. So get entering and be lucky, we only wish we could enter it.

To be in with a chance of winning this great prize, email carper@btconnect.com marking the subject box 'Bavarian Guiding Service'. Alternatively write to 'Bavarian Guiding Service Competition', Carp Fishing News Ltd, Newport, East Yorkshire, HU15 2QG.

Either way, don't forget to include your name, email address, telephone number and full postal address.

All entries received by 16th January 2008 will go into the draw.

The first name drawn gets the prize. Offer ends at midnight on 16th January.

Looking back

- Make use of a guide for at least two days.
- Hire a power boat.
- Don't attempt to go out in the boat in bad weather.
- Use strong end tackle because of the snags.
- Pre order your bait. You'll need it.

If you would like to do some winter fishing for wild hard fighting carp on The Ebro system, then we can thoroughly recommend The Bavarian Guiding Service. They are a very professional company. Contact Mike Boyce on 08458900113 or email him at mike@spanish-catfish-ebro.com he will be happy to help you. There is also a website at www.spanish-catfish-ebro.com

The view across the river