

A guide to Fox lake on the Abbey complex, Picardie, France

FOX - 1. This swim is a great choice during the warmer months as there's a great choice in terms of depth of fishable water, ranging from 3' in the margins down to the right, down to 18.5' out in the middle. There is also a large resident silkweed bed that juts out into the lake from about 15yds either side of halfway off the no fishing bank and extends some 50-60yds out in front of you. The shallow area mentioned gets far more attention from the fish than 99% of the visiting Anglers realise and is well worth some form of prepping/prebaiting during the first 24-48hrs of your stay! There is a small area 10yds out from where the 2 banks meet that is 4.5' deep that continued to produce fish right up until the Fox Carp Experience show last November when it did a 52.10lb in temperatures below 6C, so they'll feed there right up until the Winter time! My spot for the middle rod would be to aim at the first small shrub right on the water's edge along the no fishing bank, this is almost at the halfway point at a range of approximately 65yds, there is a small deep hole about 2 rod lengths off this mark that is at a depth of 12'. Failing that, if you use the same bush as a marker, drop a bait on an area no more than 25-30yds out, where there's a lovely silt gully which goes right across the front of the swim from left to right at the bottom of the marginal shelf, this is very deep compared to the surrounding lakebed, nearly 19', as opposed to the 13'-16' around it! The best marker I could find for the left hand rod was to line up with Peg 18 on the far bank and the either count 1 or 4 (small) trees to the left and fish a rod at 1 of these, a range of 75yds suited both best!

2-5. This is the start of the 'easy' water on Fox, the central strip of the main body of the lake is pretty featureless and flat for the most part (think, surface of the moon!! loads of sand/silt with a few tiny gravel patches dotted around) and therefore it's far more about bait placement and application as there aren't too many holding features. The area is also very uniform in terms of depth, shelving off gently from the margins until you are 35yds out where it'll hit a standard 14-16' right the way across to the far bank! A lot of the fishing here will be at range, basically as close to halfway as you dare to go! The upside is that the guys in 15-17 opposite will (or at least should be, fishing far closer to their own bank). IF THERE IS NOBODY OPPOSITE No.2, the hottest mark is at 112yds (place the tip of your rod level with the middle tree behind your swim and walk your lead out to the portaloo at the end of the track, job done) simply use the 'round' bush in Peg 16 as a marker and then spread your other 2 rods 5yds either side of that! Pegs 3, 4 and 5 are all fairly similar in that they have a gully running away from them into the lake at a range of 35-45yds out, fishing just into or past this has produced a lot of fish during the past season, although my suggestion for these 3 swims would be to fish all my rods dead ahead at varying ranges of 45, 60 and 75 yds and then adjust them accordingly if you start to receive regular action at a given distance.

6. This swim commands a great view of the lake, from here you can keep a watchful eye on everything! It also covers a great patch, not necessarily the biggest but an area the fish frequent as they travel in/out of the main body or in/out of the small bay at the top of the lake. 6's water is also close enough to the Plateau to the left to pick up passing trade from there too! The one downside to 6 is if 14 is occupied as it can get a little cramped where the lake bottlenecks before going round into the bay?! I fished this swim extensively during the Winter and mapped it in some detail using the mighty VDrone baitboat and it's Camera and unearthed 1 or 2 little gems!! As I'm not a big Fox fan, feel free to know my secrets lol... Fish your left hand rod in line with the 4th tree to the right of swim 13 at a range of 55-60yds, this is just under the pylons if you want to gauge the distance and will drop you on a large gravel area about 8yds across, that seemed devoid of weed all season where the shelf met the lakebed proper. I had 2 markers for my middle rod, the first was to aim at the red bush dead opposite on the far bank at a distance of 70-75yds or (and this gets VERY COMPLICATED!!!!) if you stare at the 'rectangular' shadow for the small copse on the lake in front of you, you will notice a point where it meets the shadow for the rest of the treeline as it heads off down the lake, if you place a bait where these two meet, there is a large boulder and a piece of collapsed brick wall on the lakebed and this proved to be incredibly productive through my session. Through the Camera you could see huge patches of crushed shells, scrape/flanking marks in the bottom and troughs in the silt that could only have been made by one thing!! Oh the wonders of modern technology lol! My right hand rod was either fished just off this as well or aimed at Peg 16 and used as my long rod and fished just a gentlemanly distance short of halfway.

7. This swim has all the attributes of 6 but you can become 'cut off' by it and 8 if you're not too careful! Again it is one I'd avoid if 14 was occupied but if the point opposite is empty you can again intercept any Carp that are moving from one side of the lake to the other. Marks of note are quite straightforward, the big casters among us (or bait boat users) take aim at the small 'xmas' tree which is on the bank just to the left of 14 as you look at it. Place 1 rod straight at it at a range of 80-100yds and then simply place your L/H and R/H rods 5-15yds either side of it! It is worth noting that this is a good swim for zig fishing and has consistently produced fish 'up in the water' over the past couple of seasons.

8. Has a few extra bits and pieces to aim at as the topography of the lake starts to change to the left of this swim! The gully I mentioned previously is present as are numerous sand/gravel patches at around 40-60yds out to the left as the Plateau area begins to take shape. Way out in front is another gully that leads away from the Plateau and heads back down the lake past 14 to 17. I would aim my left hand rod 6 tree to the right of 13 and fish this at a range of 30-40 yds, my middle rod always worked best when aimed at the 8th Poplar in from the right of the far bank ahead and at a range of 70-85yds and my right would again be aimed at the 'xmas' tree shaped bush near 14 and fished at a similar distance, longer if 7 or 14 were empty!

9. Is the first swim where the Plateau is present. A lot of your fishing here is at a much shorter range, I would suggest maybe 20-50yds max?! This swim also has form for zigging if that's your thing? The fish tend either to move around the edges of the Plateau in the deeper water during colder periods or during the evening or early mornings during the Summer. There is a lovely deep area just out in front and I'd be inclined to find the drop off and fish my right hand rod here at a distance of no more than

30yds, you should find a depth of between 15.5-17'. My middle'd be straight ahead on the Plateau in 11-12' of water, please bear in mind that Crays have trouble burying themselves in sand as it collapses on them but they love gravel and these areas maybe worth avoiding in the shallower water?! There is a very small spot worth finding close in that's worth locating in this swim for your left hand rod.. If you follow the line of the bushes that border the left hand side of 9 out into the lake at a range of just over 10yds, you will find a large hump in the lake bed that rises to 5' under the surface, it's very noticeable as the surrounding depth is 8' shelving off to 11' just behind it, this is another excellent Summer ambush point!

10. Gives access to an area of the lake that gets rammed with Carp during the warmer months! All 3 rods should be angled off to the left in here. It is a notoriously weedy section of the lake, containing both Canadian pondweed and Silkweed in copious amounts, you have been warned!! I have to be honest and say I've never bothered to map this section of the lake as it is quite shallow and I didn't want to make too much noise whilst fishing it. However, if you wander down the bank past the line of small bushes to your left, there is a small path that'll take you down to the water's edge and from here you should be able to spot exactly where you need to be! If you look just to the left from here and about 5-10yds out you'll normally see a large clearing in front of the first large tree where the Carp seem to love to hang out, that's spot No.1 for the left hand rod. Then it's down to you as to how you go about placing the middle, it's either a roll up the trousers (strip off to your shreddies!!) chuck waaaay down to the left or an easy sail in the toy boat to the area just in front of the inflow pipe, this is easily baited by walking round and doing it by hand and has produced some massive fish including Humpty (twice) last season! That is probably my banker for Peg 10 as it's one of the quietest areas of the whole Complex generally as nobody bar the odd car'll disturb the fish and they love getting in there.... Just make sure that you move the ever present Cray pot out of the way prior to fishing it or you may have some issues lol!! PS It's over 3' deep just 18 inches off the pipe so they get in REALLY close here! As for the right hander, the water narrows between you and Peg 11 opposite here to form the small bay and the fish seem to favour moving into the area straight down the middle, so just find a clear spot and fish a small pva bag and a scattering of bait out to a range of 35yds..

11. Funny little swim this, it doesn't have a lot of water to go at all and is definitely one that I'd ignore if 10 was taken and vice versa however.. Funnily enough, if 10 is empty then it can access the same spots from a better angle giving much better line lay to them! I'd place my left hand rod on either 10's left hand spot or fish it to a blatant patch that's in front of the bushes halfway between 10 and the inflow pipe. My middle rod would go straight to the inflow pipe in the same manner as before and 2 known marks in 11 are to fish your right hand rod either 5yds off the first little bush back towards you from the pipe or 5yds out from the first little bush to your right, one of the few opportunities at Abbey to get one up close n personal!!

12. Has more water than any other peg at Abbey. Primarily all you have to go at though is the Plateau in front. This area is normally very clear though and doesn't suffer too badly with weed at any time of the season! To the left hand side you can fish the gully that goes around the edge of it and a bait placed here will normally produce the goods. The main plus point of 12 is that you can spread a bed of bait over a wide area and get the fish to feed confidently.. The downside is that during the warmer periods, it can also see a lot of activity from Ronnie n Reggie!! Expect to find average depths of 10-12' dropping down in places to 15-17' around the boundary of your water.

13. Is another personal favourite, another that gives you your own 'private' bit of water as it's at the head of the small bay with no one else to your left and the other 2 banks in front of you both being no fishing ones! Once more there are plenty of features in this swim with a lot of the more noticeable ones being clearly visible from the bank. If I had to choose one method to catch Carp for the rest of my days it'd be stalking and with this in mind I set out last season to sort a couple of close in spots on 1 or 2 of the lakes and it's not something Abbey lends itself to, however Peg 13 presented me with 4 or 5 crafty places to drop a bait when it was quiet (as you are NOT permitted to fish outside of marked swims usually!!). So.. If you take aim at the large tree right in the corner of the lake where the far bank begins (45 degrees out to the left!) and drop short by 20yds you'll find (and be able to see) a large gravel area approx. 5yds across in 8-10' as the bay shallows up. Your middle rod HAS TO GO 25yds to the right of the tree, if you look closely at the far bank you will see a small worn patch in the grass that leads to the water's edge and no more than 5yds out in 4-5' of water here is a pukka spot that'll benefit nicely from 1 or 2kg of pellet and a handful of chops every morning for the first 2 or 3 days of your trip before boating a small pva bag and a fresh helping of pellet across to it, if I had to guarantee a bite from anywhere on the Complex during this guide, it'd be from here between may-august, no question!!!! I would then either place the right hand rod 10yds to the right of this in front of the 'long' bush where there is an identical spot or swim it further round and get a mark on the first small bush in from the point (approx 15yds) and then drop a rod 25yds short of the bank on this line as there is a very deep channel that the fish (almost) exclusively use to enter/exit this shallow bay. The bay's average depth is between 6-10' with the channel along the short no fishing bank dropping down between 14-16'. This peg is also a good bet in the run up to and/or after spawning as the majority of the fish will do it in this bay!

14. Somewhere I never really spent much time purely because I like to get comfy and 14 n 15 don't allow me to get the house up level lol! This is a noted Winter peg though as it allows you to fish lots of deep water without any effort! The best spots are all within 40yds of the bank here, including the deepest part of the lake, a huge hole in the margins between here and 15 that drops down to 22' at it's max. There is also a gully that forms just short of the hole and continues after it all the way down to Peg 17, this is (give or take) 27yds off the bank. I'd have a rod just shy of the deep hole to pick up any fish that follow the channel out of 13 and round in front of 14, my middle rod'd be 40yds straight out ahead and my right hand rod would be placed just 25yds straight out in front of the 'xmas' tree to the right of the swim.

15. Non starter for me I'm afraid guys.. The bank here is about 35 degrees and I just couldn't contemplate wetting a line in this swim!! It does produce though and as far as I can gather it's short range stuff that'll again produce the goods. Rods placed either side of the gulley in close should see you getting amongst a few during your stay!

16-17. Please see the earlier review of 2-5 for info on this section of the lake.. It's very uniform and it'll all be about bait placement and your baiting strategy as to what's hot n what's not! Again though, I wouldn't neglect the gulley close in as well as edging your left hand rod up towards the edge of the silkweed bed that tails off as 18's water blends into 17.

18. This is pretty much a mirror image of Peg 1, there is a 14.5' deep gulley that dips briefly to 16' running away from you up the no fishing bank. It starts about 30yds off the fishing bank and runs for approx 20yds up towards halfway. At the halfway point, you will see 2 small bushes right on the water's edge and there is a spot here that's only 4.5' deep that is the equivalent to the shallows in 1 that will produce fish at all times when it's warm! Again the best method is to walk round there and bait up by hand. To sum up, left hand rod to the deep gulley along the bank, middle to the 2 little bushes and use the right hand rod as a roving one, my personal choice would be to take aim at the first tree in the gap to the right of Peg 1 and drop a bait just short of the Silkweed bed at a range of about 60-70yds. So, that's Fox. I hope this will help you all and just maybe one of the suggested spots that proved so productive for me last season'll turn up a whacker for one of you?! Like I say, these are just very brief guides to cover where I've been and how I went about it and things may well have changed since but there is a chance that it'll save you having to thrash the water to a foam (which is definitely something you'll all want to avoid on Fox!) and give you the odd pointer along the way. Tight lines..