

An Introduction To Freshwater Fishing

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Fishing

has been a part of life for mankind for thousands of years. Originally motivated by hunger, there is a rich vein throughout history depicting man's pursuit of fish. Nowadays fishing is a multimillion pound business with an endless number of tackle manufacturers and bait producers.

In the last 30 years alone there have been some massive leaps forward in bait and tackle development. With the realisation of products such as carbon replacing cane and fibreglass in rod making and monofilament lines being joined by braided lines and invisible fluorocarbons, things are constantly moving forward. Bait especially has seen one of the biggest revolutions of all time, the boilie. A boilie is little more than a small mouth sized ball of flour, powdered grains and proteins with flavours and colours. These balls are then boiled to create hard skinned and pest resistant baits. The original pioneers of these baits secretly set about working out what a Carp might want to eat and then quietly, over the course of months and years, went on to wean fish onto them while further experimenting and developing along the way. Nowadays boilies are the mainstay of modern day Carp angling and the variety of choice is incredible.

There

are many interesting fish species to be found in England, Scotland and Wales. I'm sure all of you may know the names of one or two of our native fish and might have even briefly enjoyed fishing during childhood? The angler doesn't just have the pleasure of fishing alone, but more often than not one gets to enjoy some of the most breathtaking scenery that the average rambler may not venture far enough to see.

The

innate pleasure at being so close to nature is immeasurable and most anglers will often confess to doing a spot of bird watching during an inactive spell. To experience the landscape changing with the seasons and enjoy catching the different fish that coincides with each time of year is all very much a part of the joy of angling.

Fishing

is something that can be enjoyed by young and old alike, and yes, plenty of women go fishing too, it is there for us all. It will get you out on the coldest, most dreary of days where you will experience the many different shades of the countryside around you. Whether upon a sun baked day or in the grip of a heavy frost, the committed fisherman will always be out after his quarry.

I will now take you on a brief journey through angling today and give you a feel as to what you can expect. I will tell you of the different species of fish that you are most likely to encounter on your travels and the waters and venues in which to find them. I will

also outline some of the important things that you should know and address before heading out for the first time.

Before
you go…

A
Fishing Licence

Before
you head out fishing for the first time you must obtain a rod licence. Licences are issued by and on behalf of the Environment Agency, and it is essential that you have one.

Here
is a tariff explaining the different types of licence and their relevant cost.

Category

Non-Migratory
Trout and Coarse

Salmon
and Sea Trout

Full
Season

£23.25

£62.25

Junior

£5.25

£31.25

8
Day

£8.25

£19.75

1
Day

£3.25

£6.75

You
will see that there are two options for each category.

A
non-migratory Trout and Course licence - This allows you to fish
anywhere in the United Kingdom for any species of fish excluding
Salmon and Sea Trout.

A
Salmon and Sea Trout licence – This allows you to fish anywhere
in the United Kingdom for every species of fish including Salmon and
Sea Trout.

Obtaining
your licence - You can obtain your licence at any local Post
Office or buy one on the internet from the Environment Agency
(see link bellow)
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/fish

Important
note - Always have your licence available for an on the spot
inspection by an EA bailiff. If you fail to produce a valid licence
you may be liable for prosecution and could face a hefty fine of up
to £2500!

What
type of venue to choose…

A

Club Membership or Day Ticket?

Before

you go fishing you must also seriously consider your choice of venue. It is a sad fact of a fisherman's life that you cannot simply walk up to the bank of any river or lake and begin to fish in earnest as someone will almost always own the water.

What

you need to do is make enquires as to whether your chosen area is a Day ticket, or Season ticket venue. The best way to find out this information is at your local tackle shop or of course by approaching an angler who is already fishing there.

To

follow now is a guide to the different types of fishery available to you:

General

Day ticket waters

You

will find that some rivers and most canals will be run on a day ticket basis whereby you are charged for a ticket on the bank by a bailiff that enables you to fish until nightfall. A day ticket should only cost you around £2 to £5 depending on the venue. There is rarely a need to buy a ticket in advance but you should still check to see if this is the case.

Season

ticket waters

You

will find that most lakes and some rivers will be run on a season ticket basis where you will need to obtain a ticket that allows you the right to fish your chosen venue for the whole year or season. You will have to make a one off payment to obtain your ticket and will then be regularly asked to produce it by a club bailiff.

You

can expect to pay as little as £20 for a ticket but some clubs can charge up to and above £1000 to fish their most prestigious private venues!

Specialist

Day ticket waters

I have included this section as well as there are a number of these specialist day ticket waters cropping up all over the country. The reason these places differ from general day ticket waters is that they are purposefully heavily stocked with large numbers of huge fish.

These

venues are often man made and are tightly regulated and expensive places to go fishing. It is often the case that the only species to be found in these venues will be Carp and you can expect to pay up to as much as £15 per rod for a single days fishing!

Catches

can be immense and the size of individual fish available can run up to and above 40lbs! They are good places to learn about angling and how to play and handle big fish. They can be noisy places that attract huge crowds and are thus best avoided if you want a peaceful day#s fishing.

Game

fishing Waters

Game

fishing venues will be home to stocked or migratory fish such as Salmon, Rainbow and Brown Trout. For general, affordable game angling, you will find a multitude of fisheries available to you in the form of purpose stocked Rainbow Trout lakes and reservoirs.

Should

you wish to pursue our native Brown Trout in a more natural setting then you should seek out one of the beautiful streams or rivers that are dotted throughout the United Kingdom. However, expect to pay more for the privilege of fishing in these more exclusive venues.

Lastly,

there are a handful of waters, predominantly in Scotland and Wales that offer Salmon fishing. These waters are privately run and often have long waiting lists of anglers eager to fish them. Due to the sparseness of these venues and the cost of the migratory fish in question you may have pay a lot of money to fish just one session.

Important

note, if you wish to take a fish home…

I shall begin by saying that it is almost always compulsory to keep any fish that you may catch from a game fishing venue. However, the complete opposite will usually apply upon all of the other types of fishery that you visit. If your intention is that you wish to bring home a free meal from any non-game angling water then you must carefully check with the fishery owner beforehand.

I should tell you now that it will be near on impossible to for you find a season ticket or specialist day ticket venue owner that will allow you to take their fish home for the pot. Fishing is big business and fishery owners pay vast amounts of money to stock their waters with prime fish. This in turn offers the paying angler a far greater chance of catching a large fish, and is exactly the reason that an owner can command such high rates to fish their venue. It is for this reason alone that they would not take too kindly to you taking their expensive fish home and would probably prosecute you if you tried!!!

If your aim is to catch coarse fish for the pot then I would strongly recommend you head for a general day ticket water such as your local canal or river. Fish stocks will inevitably be far lower than the aforementioned waters, but you should still be able to get in amongst species such as Pike and Perch that are notably best suited to the pot.

What you should do is check with your local Environment Agency office as to which species they will allow to be taken and which stretches of river or canal are suitable. Taking fish from any British waterway is illegal without prior permission and you can face a fine into the thousands should you ignore this.

Learning
to catch Course and Game fish…

I intend this article to be a simple introduction to fishing and wouldn't dare begin to try and divulge the multitude of information required to make this a beginner's guide. Whether you are serious about starting fishing or merely showing a passing interest, I would strongly recommend that you read a book guide to angling. This does not have to cause you any expense as your local library will have plenty of fun and informative books for you to read. I would recommend that you begin with either a beginner's guide to course angling or game fishing, obviously depending upon which type of fish takes your fancy.

Please don't be fooled into thinking there are any short cuts in fishing, mastery only comes from a continuously built up knowledge and hours of on the bank practice. In the future, once you have got a firm grasp of the basics, you may decide to pursue one particular species of fish. Should this be the case then you may then turn to specialist books which are also readily available.

Not

only are there are different types of rod and reel for coarse or game fishing situations, but also specific items intended for different species within those categories! For instance, a lightweight float fishing rod that you may use to catch a small Perch would surely break under the strain of a larger species such as a Carp or Pike. The same applies for if you were to use a light Trout fishing set up to catching a Salmon, it simply would not cope with the job.

Fishing

has a nasty reputation of being an expensive pastime. For this reason you need to carefully consider the species of fish that you wish to catch before buying any tackle. You can buy what are described as multi purpose or special offer sets, but please don't, as you will be wasting your money on low quality kit that will undoubtedly fail when you need it most!

It

is imperative that you visit a reputable tackle shop and speak with a knowledgeable member of staff whom can advise you as to the tackle you need for any given situation. Any tackle dealer worth their salt will gladly give you the time and help needed in selecting the kit that you need, if they don't, take your business elsewhere.

Once

you have decided upon the type of fish that you wish to pursue, you can look forward to putting your new found knowledge into practice. You can experiment with different baits and lures and get to know the waters that you are fishing. From there on it is always worth buying a weekly or monthly magazine such as Anglers Mail, Improve Your Course Fishing or Trout & Salmon. These will always contain useful articles about each species of fish and the best bait or lure to be using for them at any given time of year. One thing that is often said about angling is that you never stop learning. This is very true, especially in the field of Carp fishing where modern advances in tackle hit the scene almost on a weekly basis!

Now

it's down to you to decide the style of fishing that you wish to adopt. Ideally you should go to various venues and see what goes on. Speak with anglers and ask them about their chosen pursuit and why they enjoy it. Visit a tackle shop and take in the sights and smells of the vast array of tackle and baits and read as much as you can about the area of angling in which you are most keen to see if it is for you.

Lastly

I should talk about etiquette, how you should adhere to act in any given fishing situation. There is an unwritten code among anglers that depicts that they should respect one another and any other uses of the waterways. There is also much emphasis upon wildlife conservation and anglers should always take their litter home with them and even gather other rubbish that they may find lying around.

Fishing

is a most wonderful pastime and something that any angler will highly recommend. It can be as little as an occasional summer's jaunt to

as much as a fully fledged absorbing lifetime pursuit. Make it what you will but do give it a go as you may never look back!!!To discuss this article visit the fishing forum on <http://forum.downsizer.net/viewforum.php?f=27>