

## **Probably the best family venue in France**

**Article Written By Stephen Ulph (From Essex) – August 2008**

When in October 2005, the dreary October days were getting me down. I persuaded my better half that we look for a late autumn break in France. I have made the spring trip with pals for several years and have been lucky enough to catch a few big girls, but here I was looking for somewhere different.

Although her in doors likes the outdoors she does like her home comforts. So the most important aspect of this trip was a nice villa, secondary a lake with a few kippers. There were also my two boys to entertain, 8 and 13 at the time and all though they would fish for a couple of hours that was the max.

When trawling though the Internet I found what I was looking for a villa with a lake (as opposed to a lake with a villa) and so started my French affair with **La Couarde**.

The beginning of that 1<sup>st</sup> visit was entertaining by itself. My sons had a rugby tournament in Essex on the day we were travelling and my youngest made it to the final! So if you can imagine flying down the M20 towards Dover in the pouring rain with two very muddy boys and all the complements to an October fishing trip we were in a real state. Our fellow passengers on the ferry that night had very strange looks on their faces.

We arrived at La Courde, which is in the countryside about 45 mins north of Limoges. About 6 hours from the north coast ports, at about 2am so we did not even bother unloading the car we found the bedrooms and got our heads down.

The next morning we awoke to the glorious French October sun and we started to appreciate what I believe to be the best family fishing villa in France.

La Couarde is the French home of Ashley & Paula Walker. My first impressions of dealing with Ashley were very good. His friendly, helpful attitude is very refreshing nothing being too much trouble.

When you arrive at La Couarde the first thing that hits you is the impeccable taste. From when you walk in and are greeted by a couple of bottles of wine (Not cheep plonk either) to entering the well-decorated bedrooms.

Everything is spotless but with a warmth that makes you feel at home. This is really a home from home and you immediately relax into the La Couarde spirit.

The property is up the hill from the lake which Ashley has stocked with carp up to 40+ and cats to over 60. There is space for 3 anglers on the lake but two is better.

There are no Poison Chat in La Couarde so the only visitors you will have are the coypu or the variety of birds that frequent the area. The night is fantastically quiet no road noise at all and on clear nights the stars are stunning.

That first trip produced 8 carp and considering we fished 4 rods 2 each and really only fish evenings and some morning (The beds being that comfortable) it was not a bad result.

Back to the villa and the really cool stuff! In the basement Ashley has created his games room. Included down there is a full size pool and table tennis table, darts board, video games and this year he has added an air hockey table and plumbed in sky, I challenge anyone to be bored at La Couarde.

This year we found out Ashley had a cancellation in the Aug school hols and we of course jumped at the chance.

We could now fully appreciate the outside of the villa the boys spent a lot of time in the pool and the evening games of boules in the shaded pitch with the appropriate glass of wine were very memorable. They have of course a BBQ and all the outside games you can imagine.

There are things to do around the region (To be honest we have not done that much exploring) we visited nearby villages and have driven out a few times but with so much to do on site it really is not needed. The local Intermache is about 10 mins drive and there are a couple of restaurants around that area also.

OK you get the idea that the villa is tops. This year was the 1<sup>st</sup> time I have fished France in high summer and I was a little dubious how I would fare. La Couarde came up trumps. In the week we fished we caught 40 fish for just over 1000lb an average of 25lb per fish and we did not have any of the big carp out. Generally we fished a few hours in the mornings and evenings and only two nights (which were not that productive) in the whole week, my wife caught her first 30

The boys and wife were only fishing a couple of hours in between playing in the pool and sun bathing and I had around 30 of the 40 caught so I was well pleased. The fish are in great condition and Ashley insists on guests using fish care products and supplies large unhooking mats for use round the lake. Bait is available if required, as are bikes and items of tackle.

La Couarde is not a difficult water but you need to think about your angling to have the best results. Slack lines and back leads to keep the line down definitely help. Bait wise we have used Mainline baits on all occasions we have visited the venue and they have always done the biz, but I am sure any good food source boilee would be fine.

Fishing to the far margin around half way across worked well. There is a slightly deeper channel running down to the sluice gates and the cats definitely favour the sluice corner.

It was strange this year as we had a run on that rod almost the same time every day and everyone was a cat.

La Couarde has everything you need for a relaxing week away and I would recommended it to anyone we are really looking forward to going back.