

Cruise & Fish in Ireland 01

Fishing from a boat makes a lot of sense. The two major river systems – Shannon and Erne – cover hundreds of miles and create dozens of massive lakes and much of the bank fishing is inaccessible – unless you are afloat!

An Irish cruiser holiday can be anything you want it to be, from serious angling to pottering about in quiet backwaters. But one thing is certain, you will have the chance to tackle some of Ireland's biggest bream, tench, roach and pike without walking a yard.

I have been fortunate to explore the Shannon, up and downstream from Banagher, and the thrilling Erne waters of Upper and Lower Lough Erne by cruiser.

The River Shannon in Ireland and The River Erne in Northern Ireland, combine to create Ireland's favourite cruising destination and the hundreds of moorings along the waterways offer the freedom to tie-up where you please.

There is one crucial point if you decide to hire a cruiser; at the time of booking your holiday, explain that it is a fishing holiday and insist on a being given a 12ft boat instead of the piddling little tender that is a standard accessory.



At least it will be big enough to transfer two of you, plus all of your gear and groundbait, safely to an out-of-the-way spot along the shoreline. It might even be large enough to fish from and that opens up even better prospects.

Last July and friend of mine, John May from Bristol, went boat fishing at the northern end of Lough Derg near to Portumna and had unbelievable fishing.

Instead of taking the usual shore option, he plumbed the depth carefully from the boat until there was 12 feet of water (so he could floatfish with a waggler comfortably) and anchored.

John placed a large float as a groundbait marker – at the same time dropping several large balls quietly over the edge - then moved off a short distance and secured his boat with big weights at either end.

“It is unlikely I will ever achieve the same results”, the building company boss, who goes, sea, trout and coarse fishing, said. “At the end of the day my pal and I had around 450 lb of bream, roach, hybrids and perch – without counting three large pike caught as we trolled out into the lake.

“I got fed up groundbaiting and it was one of those days when it didn’t matter what feed went into the lake the fish simply kept coming. It must have been a race to the hookbait, which was mostly double red maggot or corn, with roach making the running for the early part of the session until the bream arrived en mass”.

To keep a count, John and his friend dropped a piece of corn into a bowl for every fish caught and must have had quite a pile because they ended up with four keepnets full of fish and found it impossible to lift them from the water.



WHERE TO GO

If you start your cruise from Knockinny on the Erne system in Northern Ireland you will have the opportunity to explore Upper Lough Erne and Lower Lough Erne.

Upper Lough Erne is dotted with hundreds of idyllic islands brimming with natural beauty and scenic delights and plenty of angling spots. Lower Lough Erne, a vast

expanse of shimmering waters, stretches from Belleek to Enniskillen, with the better coarse fishing close to Enniskillen.

Sailing through the magnificent Shannon-Erne Waterway (and there are dozens of places to fish here for roach on the pole and waggler) will bring you to Leitrim in the south, where the Shannon meets the Boyle River with Lough Key at its source. Next downstream in Carrick-on-Shannon, one of the oldest angling holiday centres in the whole of Ireland, and still a contender in for outstanding bream, tench and roach fishing.

Downstream, the Shannon slowly widens, flowing through lough after lough, into the mighty Lough Ree as it glides southward. The river ambles on to Banagher, the ideal centre for exploring the lower Shannon and Lough Derg, the largest lake on the waterway system. Many good harbours and small towns are to be found on Lough Derg as well as a number of excellent places to eat.

Book your next Irish angling holiday with the specialists – 0151 342 4744

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