



# Cyprynews

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## *Stuck in Spain*

*By Scott Rowson*

It was mid-March when I landed in Spain for two months of guiding on the Ebro, where I was going to help my good friend Paul Fagan, who is the owner of Ebro Fishing Dreams. Normally, I would be working in Carp Corner (tackle shop) but due to us having an extension built, and us being quiet, the owner Nick kindly gave me a few months off which worked well for me as Paul was fully booked until the end of April. After that I was due to go on my own fishing adventure to Orellano!

As soon as I landed we were sorting tackle and bait, etc. loading it into a trailer at his base in RibaRoja, and the next day we were on our way upriver towards the Caspe area. Paul, having been living there for about 15 year, knew the area very well and we were soon driving down dirt tracks in the middle of nowhere until finally we came to the river. It was pushing through very hard, and rising, but we hadn't got any clients for a couple of days so we set up camp in the hope that the river would start to drop before they came.

Unfortunately when we awoke in the morning the river had risen a few feet and basically gone round the back of us, cutting us off! Luckily, we had a Shogun there, which we had to use to get the trailer out – and a steel tow rope to get the van out! I'm still not sure how we managed it, with the water being 18 inches deep and just pure mud underneath, but after a couple of hours struggling we were back on the road.



Within an hour we pulled up in a swim I knew very well (which I'm not going to name, lol) which had a long sharp drop down to the water so that there was no chance of it flooding. It was also very deep in the margin, making it a good swim if the river was up. Anyway, we set up camp and the next day Paul picked up

three clients from the airport and within a couple of hours they were fishing.

Initially, the three lads from South London wanted to fish for cats, so we put out the rods using an elastic band system with a rock instead of a lead – which works a bit like a lead-clip system where the rock comes off on the take – and three 21mm pellets for bait. If I remember correctly, they only had one take that day but it resulted in a 100lb plus fish, which was a very good start!

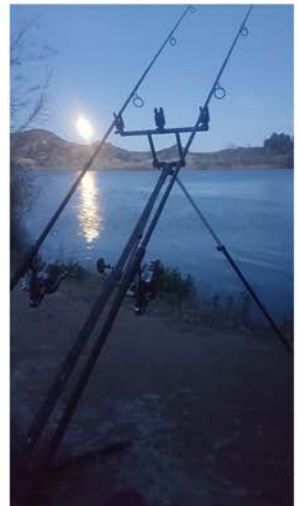


The lads had already chosen to stay in a local hotel rather than bivvy up with us so after they went it was my chance to get a couple of carp rods out for a few hours! Bait wise, you can't go wrong out there using Halibut pellets and a small popup, snowman style, just to take the weight out of the pellet. Terminal tackle, and especially rigs, do not have to be complicated out there; you just need to use a good strong hook because you are always in with a shout of hooking a big cat on carp gear (I use a size 2 or 4 curved hook from Ridge Monkey).



Within a few hours I had my first carp on the bank, a nice mid 30. Then, one hour into the darkness, I hooked into a big cat, which I had on for about an hour before finally landing it.

I didn't bother weighing it – I just estimated it at around 100lb. After that, I reeled the other rod in and went to bed.



Obviously, when I was over there, there was a lot in the news about COVID-19 but in the week I had been there it seemed like it was getting more serious. Where we were fishing we had no phone signal, or Internet, so really we were cut off, except when Paul went to town to pick up the lads from the hotel.

On the second day, when Paul had picked the lads up from their hotel in town, he had spoken to his wife Debbie who told him it was getting serious and Spain might soon go into lockdown. We thought surely we were safer out here in the middle of nowhere – and they wouldn't ban fishing, would they?



Back to fishing: over the next couple of days the lads landed quite a few catfish, around seven, I think, with the biggest being just under 150lb and six of them being over the 100lb mark. Personally, I was only fishing for a few hours but I did manage a lovely upper 30 carp and also lost a big cat due to a snag.

End of the week, just as the lads had gone to the airport, news got through to us that Spain had gone into lockdown and fishing had also been banned! Obviously, calls had to be made to cancel people's trips out there because at the time people were still fishing in the UK and flights were still running as normal.

Driving back to RibaRoja that day, I couldn't believe how quiet the roads were, and the small towns we drove through were deserted. It was really spooky to be honest, nothing like our lockdown now back in the UK, you just didn't see a soul! I stayed at Paul's for a few days just to see what was happening. It soon became apparent that things were getting serious back in the UK, so with all fishing banned and all clients cancelled, I decided to get a flight home.

When I got to the airport, even that was a weird feeling. Everything was closed and there was only one flight that day. The airport was eerily quiet with Spanish police telling everyone to keep apart, even husbands and wives. I just sat in silence, silently praying to be on that plane and heading for home.

Sitting on the plane I felt a sigh of relief as I knew I would soon be airborne on the way back home but then to top off my turmoil of a day we were informed that there would be an hour delay. I wondered whether I was going to actually make it home. Had flights been stopped to the UK? Was I going to be stranded? We were informed that Spanish air controllers were self-isolating so there was less staff than normal, but there was no way I could settle until I was up in the air on the way back.

Thankfully, the air hostess brought the drinks trolley out, which I always look forward to. I proceeded to have a few vodkas (as I'm a bad flyer anyway, lol), but today I had good reason! Eventually, after what seemed an eternity, I was on my way home!

Once I got back home I started to realise how widespread the virus had become and the degree of fear for a lot of small businesses, especially tackle shops, etc. Also for fishing businesses abroad who have no income at all now everything is cancelled, and they will not receive any help.

Be safe!