

Winter Fishing Destinations, Plan Your Trip Now  
by Steve Welch

Most of you wouldn't dream of planning on a late February, early March fishing trip but this is the time of year that I go down to Kentucky Lake. I like to hit the first little warming trend that we have. You have to be ready to drop everything and go when you get a favorable weather report. I am looking for about three or four days where we have had full sun and fifty-degree weather and light winds. No upcoming cold fronts or rain. I prefer full sun this early in the season. Most fishermen would look for fronts to change the barometer but early in the year full sun and no wind is much better.

Anytime you go down to Kentucky Lake wind is a huge factor all the big fish live out in the middle of the lake on the deep ledges and you can't hover over them with anything over a ten mile per hour wind. Another reasons why you have to be ready to drop everything and go. A favorable wind report.

The resorts down there on the water won't open until nearly April so I stay at the Fish tale Lodge if I am fishing down at Big Sandy area near Paris Tennessee. It is a new lodge and very nice and close to the Paris Landing boat ramp and the food at the Paris Landing Resort is excellent.

If I am fishing up by the dam then I stay at the Colonial Motel just outside Draffenville Kentucky. A stop at the Catfish Kitchen is a must.

Since Kentucky Lake flows from south to north I opt to go down to Big Sandy this early to get the warmest water I can get. I believe fifty degrees surface temperature triggers the fish to start pulling up on top of the ledges that they have been relating to all winter. Ledges are the keys to catching good fish anytime you go down to Kentucky Lake. I prefer fishing anywhere from twelve to twenty feet of water on the sharpest drop I can find.

The fish aren't looking to go into the bays yet and they are bunched up out in deep water so this is a plus. Everyone goes down to the power lines and drifts but spider rigging isn't for me. I prefer to run and gun and fish many brush piles by hovering over them and tight lining a jig hooked on a ten foot long pole. I have about fifty brush piles out in twenty feet of water and can return to any one of them anytime I want by using the GPS waypoints that I have entered.

Anyone who hasn't gotten on the GPS bandwagon is truly missing out on the best invention since the depth finders hit the scene. Kentucky Lake has no visible structure and you must get used to fishing off your depth finder and using many marker buoys. I go down early in the year when it isn't crowded so it isn't unusual for me to throw out ten buoys on brush in a small area. All these are preprogrammed waypoints. I can then create a little milk run and fish all ten without fear of some other boat picking up my buoy.

The main reason I go this early is bigger fish, which increase my chances of getting a three-pound fish. I have caught a lot of two-pound crappie down there and now expect to catch two or three on every trip along with numerous fish weighing over a pound.

The tackle that I take down are plenty of eighth ounce hair jigs and Southern Pro umbrella tubes and Midsouth super jigs as well as tensile jigs. I spool my poles with four-pound test Stren Sensithin hi-vis. why such light lines. I get less twisting and you can get a lighter jig down deeper on the lighter line. If you can feel a sixteenth ounce jig in twenty foot of water you will get more bites than you would if you were to use the eighth ounce but if the wind gets up you better have the heavy ones with you. I use a custom-made nine-foot pole that is a little stiffer than you can buy over the counter. If I set the hook on a deep fish they aren't getting away.

Next month I will tell you about another good early season fishing destination. Lake Arkabutla, Tunica Lake and Old Towne Lake. All just a short drive from the casino's at Tunica Mississippi.

I am doing many of the fishing and boating shows so stop in and see me.

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