





A photograph of two anglers in a small, light-colored wooden boat with a dark green stripe, fishing on a calm lake. The anglers are wearing waders and caps. The boat has the name 'An Dourgi Kozh' written on its side. The background is a dense, green forested hillside under a cloudy sky.

# *Rustic* BRITTANY CHARM

Anglers and walkers will find this region of France an absolute delight »

Brittany looks similar to the rolling hills of Devon or Cornwall.





A rainbow taken on a dry and hooked right in the scissors.

**W**ITH its rugged coastline and beautiful sandy beaches, France's Brittany region has long been a favourite with British tourists. Inland, it's rolling green fields and quietly grazing cattle give it a pleasant, rural charm not unlike parts of Devon and Cornwall. There are also plenty of rivers to explore – beautiful little streams, often quite rocky, with a good head of wild brown trout plus salmon and sea trout, if you get the rain.

Brittany comprises various regions – the best known, perhaps, being Finistere. It is France's westernmost point jutting out into the Atlantic, the name coming from the Latin *Finis Terrae*, translated into English as 'end of the earth'.

Even if you haven't actually been there you've probably heard its name read out during the shipping forecast, broadcast on Radio 4. Well you would have done until a few years ago when the shipping zone was renamed Fitzroy thanks to a complaint from the Spanish who, seemingly, also use the name.

### Rustic dwellings

Outside the major towns such as Brest or Quimper, the latter famous for its ceramics, the region is festooned with all manner of rustic stone-built dwellings in various states of repair. Many have been sympathetically restored, often by outsiders from various parts of Europe who appreciate Finistere



The free-rising rainbows readily take nymphs and dries.



### Ginger Hopper

**Hook:** Size 12 medium weight wet fly

**Thread:** Brown

**Rib:** Pearl tinsel

**Body:** Ginger fur

**Legs:** Knotted cock pheasant tail fibres

**Hackle:** Brown cock hackle



for its timeless charm. More than a few have turned these properties into self-contained Gites – which can be rented as a holiday let by tourists. For my money this is a far better option than a hotel, especially if fishing and walking is your thing. For someone preferring a temperate climate the region is idyllic. It's pleasingly unspoilt with plenty of narrow twisting roads to keep you on your toes.

### Lac du Drennec

Travelling east from the airport at Quimper you reach the Amoria Region National park, which stretches from Finistere's coast to its hilly interior. There you will find two trout lakes including Lac du Drennec situated a few kilometres from the town of Sizun.

The lake is stocked with rainbow trout up to 4lb or so while there's a reasonable head of wild brown trout, which are able to spawn in the streams feeding the lake. Both species grow well in Drennec due to prolific invertebrate life along with a profusion of small coarse fish from minnows to roach, though there are no perch.

### Boat or bank available

My host on this particular trip was Philippe Dolivet. Having for a number of years been editor of French flyfishing magazine *Plaisirs de la Pêche*, Philippe now makes his living teaching and guiding anglers both in France and also in Ireland – a place he considers his second home.

The lake may be fished either from bank or boat and Philippe owns a couple of boats, one of which can be hired by visiting anglers

along with a powerful electric outboard. His main boat can also be hired but only with Philippe as guide. His boats were actually built in Ireland and as such are ideally suited to lake fishing where a nice steady drift is so important for loch-styling.

We actually took both of Philippe's boats; his friend and fishing companion Christian Kervoern in one, Philippe and me in the other, which was a fully kitted-out 19-foot Sheelin boat. The idea was to switch over after lunch so that I could get photographs both within a boat and then boat to boat for wider shots of the lake and any fish being played. The former I got after only a few minutes as Philippe was soon into a lively little rainbow, which snaffled a Drennec Woodcock. This particular pattern is one Philippe tied specifically for the lake. With its hare's fur body and hackle and tail of woodcock body feathers it's a subtle looking fly that proved very effective throughout the day in a variety of conditions.

I plumped for the dry fly for no other reason than that Philippe was using nymphs. It didn't seem to matter as the fish were happy to take both often only a few feet from the tree line.

### Lake size

When full, Lac du Drennec has a surface area slightly greater than 110 hectares – that's approximately 270 acres in old money. This makes it a nice size to fish, especially as only electric motors are allowed on the lake. It's small enough to get around comfortably and explore all the bays and arms while still »



### Woodcock

**Hook:** Size 12-14 barbless

**Thread:** Brown

**Rib:** Silver wire

**Tail:** Woodcock fibres or similar

**Body:** Hare's fur

**Hackle:** Woodcock body feather



### Killer

**Hook:** Size 12 heavy weight wet fly

**Thread:** Red

**Rib:** Copper wire

**Tail & hackle:** Brown partridge

**Body:** Hare's fur

**Thorax:** Red UV micro Straggle

*“When full, Drennec has a surface area slightly greater than 110 hectares – that’s 270 acres...”*

Drifting close to islands and tree lines was productive.







Two pound fish fought like they were twice their weight.



The rainbows are fully spotted yet very clean and silvery too.

*“Given the right conditions Drennec trout are free-rising and will readily take nymphs and dries.”*

Time for a rest and snack – are you sure this isn't Ireland?

large enough to provide some good long drifts and, just as important, space for the fish to grow on.

It was built in the early 1980s to supply the northern part of Finistere and has matured beautifully with large sections of its perimeter cloaked by mature trees.

It's fed by a couple of rivers including the Elorn, a noted trout river also enjoying a reasonable run of salmon. On its eastern shore, tucked away behind a stand of trees is Au Lac – a quaint, perfectly situated restaurant offering exceptional food but at a surprisingly affordable rate, even considering the euro pound exchange rate.

### Flies to try

Given the right conditions Drennec trout are free-rising and will readily take both nymphs and dry flies – in fact, many of those that work on UK reservoirs. Hoppers in various colours are well worth trying as is a Hare's Ear Shuttlecock. Diawl Bachs and Crunchers are also very effective though Philippe has a few favourites that you might not have encountered before.

Soon we were all catching, sporadically it's true but enough to keep us busy. Christian was next, picking up a nice fish, also on a nymph hooked in open water. Unfortunately there wasn't much of a hatch, just a few small buzzers, so for the first part of the day there were few risers for us to target. That said, the fish were happy to come blind often in small bursts.

### Tough-fighting fish

As so often with rainbows they were travelling in small pods. Whatever the strain though they were lovely fish, very heavily spotted while still being silvery, if that makes







The strain of rainbow is uncertain but the quality undeniable – fully finned and well proportioned with plenty of spots!

sense? They also fought extremely hard and on more than one occasion we were convinced that a 4lb fish had been hooked only to discover much later in the fight that it was little more than half that size.

Though Lac du Drennec is quite shallow, 20 metres deep at most, fish are often found quite close to shore. Even though there's a track around the lake the tree-lined banks provide both cover and a plentiful supply of small terrestrial based creatures, which fall onto the water's surface.

### Difficult conditions

Although the fishing was enjoyable the changeable breeze did complicate things. One minute we would be drifting along on a nice ripple the next there would be a shower after which the wind dropped away to nothing.

If the calm stayed long enough we could

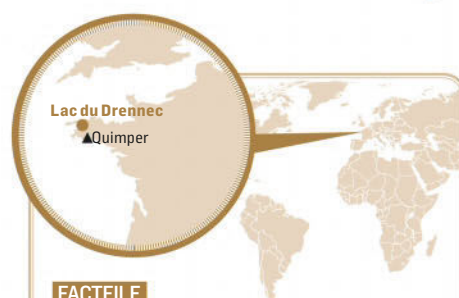
switch to smaller flies and target individual fish but this rarely happened.

To illustrate just what can happen on the lake during one calm spell we dropped upon a large number of fish feeding close to the bank. I can't say the fishing was easy but it provided Philippe and me with 30 minutes or so of great sport on small dry flies

As ever fishing is all about the prevailing conditions. I'd chosen June for my trip to Finistere particularly because it offered the best time for a fly hatch and for some great evening fishing on dry fly. The weather had other ideas though and a sudden drop in temperature as the light faded put an end to our day.

Given what the weather had thrown at us it had actually been a very enjoyable day's fishing. If there was one minor disappointment it was that not one of us managed to wrinkle out a Drennec brown

trout. Right from the off Philippe was sure we would, especially when drifting close to trees overhanging the lake. But it was an odd day with mixed conditions and an unpredictable, changeable wind direction, which was probably why the brownies weren't in a taking mood. That said I'd love to return to Drennec sometime soon. I just hope Philippe will be better at organising the weather. 🐟



### FACTFILE

## Lac du Drennec

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For rustic charm look no further.



*Strong rainbows bored deep under the boat, testing tackle to the limit.*