

# **Last-Minute Truman Lake Trip Proves Successful**

by Lee Keck

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For some reason, my best fishing trips are typically those made with little pre-planning. In fact, that was exactly what happened a few years ago when Outdoor Guide Magazine Editor Bob Whitehead and I loaded up his vehicle for a quick overnight trip to Missouri's Truman Lake.

The plan, that happened a few years ago, called for us to head to Truman Lake's Sterett Creek Marina, spend the night in their comfortable motel and devote the following morning fishing with veteran guide Steve Blake. We were then to head home that afternoon after a mere six or so hours of fishing.

Just two weeks earlier, our fishing trip was not on our agendas. Travelling to Truman Lake was not even discussed until the trip was about a week away.

Unlike most of our adventures, this particular trip went off without a glitch. In fact, the next morning found us baiting our hooks and waiting for the first crappie bite by 7 a.m.

Our fishing guide had barely stepped into his fishing seat and lowered a lively minnow into the lake when he quickly hoisted a plump ten-inch crappie into the boat. Using long crappie rods, it was easy to set the depth. He said most of the fishing action in recent weeks had come from a depth of about eight feet which was nearly the length of the rod.

"As you can see, these are healthy fish, even though we're looking for something a bit larger," Blake said while tossing the fish back into the lake. "Most of our keeper crappies measure between ten and 12 inches in length, though we often catch fish that are even bigger."

According to Blake, the crappie fishing had been good for recent weeks. The toughest part was locating these fish. Once found, he said it was relatively easy to catch a limit of quality crappie.

During our first hour on the water, it seemed like we needed to keep moving. We would often catch one or two fish at a sunken brushpile. Then, the crappie well seemed to dry up.

"I don't usually have a great deal of success until the sun warms the water," he explained. "Within an hour or two, we'll start catching these fish in better numbers."

Blake continued catching fish by going from sunken brushpile to brushpile. Each spot we stopped seemed to produce a crappie or two. Whitehead and I, too, would occasionally add a fish to the livewell. Finally, Blake had an idea.

“I know a little spot over here by the dam that often holds quantities of crappie,” explained the 67-year-old guide. “We can often catch a dozen or more fish from this spot, and the larger ones are usually among them.”

Once again, this last-minute decision proved to be a wise choice. Within minutes, all three of us were landing quality crappies nearly constantly.

After landing a couple of dozen or so crappie, Whitehead suggested we try our luck landing a few white bass. Besides, we had now reached our 15-crappie-per-person lake limit. We hoped the white bass fishing would prove to be as productive as the crappie action.

With more than 30 years of experience on this lake, Blake knew exactly where to locate these fish. Most all came from the underwater humps and ridges near the marina.

Though our white bass efforts were met with slower action, it was obvious that these fish were here. It was merely a matter of waiting until they started feeding. Within our remaining few hours, we managed to land a decent catch from this area.

Blake was a bit disappointed that we were unable to stay later into the early evening. He says that is when the big hybrids usually make their appearance. Still, it was obvious by the huge pile of fish awaiting Blake’s fillet knife, we had plenty of fillets to bring home.

Blake does about all his guiding out of the Sterett Creek Marina. He can be reached by calling (660)525-0692.

“The good white bass action will continue well into fall, and anglers have a pretty good chance of landing a few five-pound-and-larger hybrids during an outing,” he explained. “The crappie fishing actually gets even better as the weather stabilizes.”

According to Blake, Truman Lake is one of the rare year-round crappie fisheries. There are relatively few days during the year when anglers are not hauling crappie from these waters. Though summer crappie fishing can be good, he says winter action can even be better.

“I actually have some of my best success during the winter months,” he added. “Though a fisherman might have to bundle up a bit for warmth, we land some really nice crappie during the winter.”

Sterett Creek Marina is a little over an easy three-hour drive from St. Louis. The marina offers a campground, store, restaurant and comfortable lodging facilities, as well as all the fishing amenities most anglers require.

Anyone seeking more information about the marina or lodging facilities can give them a call at (660)438-2280.