

Ireland's Lakelands Region

Ireland's Lakelands and Inland Waterways is the region stretching from Belleek to Limerick centred on the waterways of the Erne, Shannon-Erne and Shannon. The region and its activities – including angling – are promoted through the "Lakelands & Inland Waterways Initiative" which is a partnership between Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, with assistance from tourism bodies, local authorities and the agencies responsible for fishing in Ireland.

Ireland's Lakelands region comprises a wide range of different river, lake and canal systems providing a perfect habitat for many of Ireland's fish species. Coarse fish (bream, roach, rudd, hybrids, tench & perch) are present in vast numbers throughout the system and coarse anglers have the opportunity to pursue their quarry in a natural and wild environment with relatively little angling pressure. Coarse angling takes place throughout the year but the main activity occurs between April and October and good bags of fish are possible throughout this period. Pike too are present throughout the system and are fished for all year round and there is always a chance of a fish over 10kg no matter when or where you are fishing. They tend to be found in greater concentrations in sheltered bays and river mouths in the October – April period when many of the larger fish are caught. During the summer months they can become more dispersed and can provide great sport to anglers fishing lures or with the fly. Brown trout, while present all along the main stem of the system, are generally only fished for in the larger loughs with the bulk of the angling activity taking place from April to June. The mayfly hatch is the key period and the timing of the hatch varies from lough to lough so the angler needs to be tuned in to angling reports to make sure to get the best of the fishing.



Given the abundance of good fishing, it is no surprise to learn that there are numerous angling centres along the length of the system, each providing the angler with access to top class fishing. These angling centres have the services such as angler friendly accommodation, tackle shops and guides that are essential for getting the most out of any angling trip and they form a good base from which the angler can explore the surrounding area. A brief description of the main angling centres is given overleaf and it should serve to acquaint anglers with the variety of fishing that is available. More detailed angling information for all of these centres and up to date angling reports are available on Inland Fisheries Ireland's dedicated angling website www.fishinginireland.info or on the Northern Ireland angling website www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling.

Ireland's Lakelands can be divided into four separate zones, each with its own distinctive character:

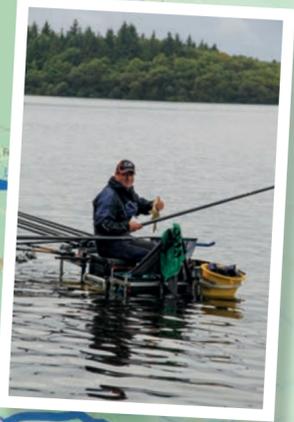
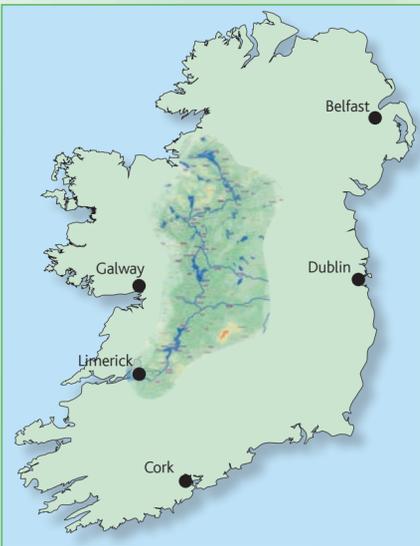
Zone 1, the northernmost section, comprises both Upper and Lower Lough Erne. The Lower Lough is a broad expanse of water which is over 18km wide at the northern end of the lake, becoming much narrower towards its southern end. It is primarily known for its brown trout fishing which peaks during the mayfly hatch in May/June. The Upper Lough is very different in character and is made up of a number of secluded bays and channels interspersed with numerous small islands. It is highly regarded for its coarse fishing and is a popular match fishing venue with hundreds of match pegs available around the lake. It also has superb pike angling with numerous 10kg+ fish recorded every year. Upstream of Lough Erne, the Shannon-Erne Waterway is a navigable canal that links the Erne system to the Shannon system as it flows through rolling hills known as 'drumlins'. Drainage from these hills has led to the formation of the hundreds of small lakes for which this part of Ireland is famous and all of which contain good stocks of coarse fish and pike.

Zone 2 of the system takes in the upper Shannon region including Loughs Allen and Key and is centred on the bustling town of Carrick on Shannon. Both Loughs Allen and Key are large waters offering good general coarse and pike angling. The River Shannon itself takes a sprawling course in this area, frequently broadening out into a number of shallow, interconnected, mini loughs such as Loughs Boderg and Bofin. There is so much water in this area that much of it is rarely fished by anglers and most of the fishing tends to be concentrated on the areas with better access.

Zone 3 encompasses Lough Ree and the middle Shannon with the town of Athlone at its hub. Lough Ree itself is a mixed fishery with something to offer the coarse, pike and trout angler and quality catches are a possibility for all disciplines. Seasonal movements of fish in and out of the lough can provide anglers with an opportunity to target vast shoals of coarse fish at the right time of year. Pike are never too far away from these shoals and so pike anglers can partake in the bonanza too. The River Shannon becomes narrower in this section and the shallow lakes are replaced by islands and backwaters which tend to be fish holding areas in themselves. Both the Royal and Grand Canals intersect with the Shannon in this zone offering the coarse angler a more intimate style of fishing than the main river channel.



Zone 4 is the final zone of the Lakelands region and is dominated by the long narrow expanse of Lough Derg. Similar in many respects to Lough Ree, Lough Derg is a mixed fishery which can provide all angling disciplines with quality fishing. At the northern end of the lough, Portumna has long been a base for coarse anglers and its angling festival has attracted anglers from all over Europe. The lower part of the lake is famed for its early hatch of mayfly which bring the trout up in good numbers during May. Last but not least, the lough is also a highly regarded pike fishery with numerous fish over 10kg recorded each year and it is the home of many competitions including a popular yearly pike fly fishing event.



Angling Centres

Below is a list of the primary angling centres in the Lakelands area starting at the top of the system in Enniskillen and working south. Each centre has, over time, developed the key infrastructure needed to support anglers during their visit to the region.

Enniskillen

Lough Erne is an exceptional mixed fishery with something to offer the coarse, trout and pike angler alike. Enniskillen, strategically placed between the Upper and Lower sections of the lough, is the perfect base for exploring the wealth of angling available. It is a popular destination for match anglers as there are over 500 pegs available at various locations around the lake including the Broadmeadow, Dolan's Ring and Scotch Shore stretches. With such an abundance of angling water it is no surprise that angling festivals are held regularly throughout the year including the Waterways Ireland Classic in May and the LAIW World Pairs competition during September. Pike anglers will also find a huge amount of water to explore with pike over specimen size available throughout the system. The fly fishing for brown trout on Lower Lough Erne can also be very good, particularly at the time of the mayfly hatch in May/June and evening sedge fishing in the following summer months. Fishing is best from a purpose built angling boat fishing on the drift with a team of two or three flies fished in front of the boat.

Belturbet

Belturbet, situated on the N3 road from Dublin, is the perfect base for anglers seeking to explore the sprawling expanse of Upper Lough Erne. The lake here is a haven for pike anglers in particular as its numerous bays, inlets, backwaters and channels provide a huge variety of angling ground. There are over 20 smaller lakes dotted around the town which also provide good pike fishing. For coarse anglers, there are noted stretches downstream of the town at Clowninny, Foalies and Derryvoney amongst others. The Belturbet Anglers have a nice stretch in the town for trout fishing on the river. There are also two noted stretches on the Shannon-Erne Waterway itself, at Aghalane Old Bridge and McCabe's farm.

Ballyconnell/Bawnboy

Ballyconnell is the first town on the Shannon-Erne Waterway upstream of Lough Erne and along with Bawnboy provides access to a number of first class coarse angling venues. Foremost amongst these are the noted lakes Garadice, Brackley and Bunerky which have all proved exceptional match fisheries



in the LAIW World Pairs competition held in the area. All these lakes are also noted pike angling venues.

Ballinamore/Keshcarrigan

Ballinamore and Keshcarrigan are renowned for their abundance of coarse angling waters. There are over 40 lakes in the immediate vicinity of these two towns, thus providing the angler with plenty of opportunities. Close to the town of Ballinamore, lakes such as Bolganard, Corgar, Drumlonan and Corduff are all well known specimen waters for bream and tench, whilst the noted match venues at Lough

Scur and Garadice are also close by. The area is also well known internationally as a top class base for pike angling, particularly for those fishing from float tubes as the number of small lakes with limited access are perfectly suited to this form of fishing.

Carrick on Shannon

The Shannon-Erne Waterway joins up with the River Shannon just south of Leitrim village and about 7km further downstream, situated on the N4 road from Dublin lies the busy town of Carrick on Shannon. It is the primary hub for those wishing to fish in the Upper Shannon area,

giving easy access to Loughs Allen and Key along with a number of venues on the main river channel. There is good coarse fishing in the town itself on the stretch known as 'The Mudflats', which is regularly used for angling matches. There are also hotspots upstream at Leitrim Bridge & Hartley Bridge and downstream at Jamestown & Drumsna. There are a number of smaller lakes close to the town with a wheelchair friendly facility at L. Bran. A little further afield, scattered around the towns of Mohill and Dromod are another group of lakes known for their fine tench and bream

fishing. All the waters in the vicinity of Carrick on Shannon contain pike and there is also some good trout fishing in Drumharlow Lake during the mayfly hatch (May/June).

Roosky/Tarmonbarry

Between the towns of Roosky and Dromod the Shannon becomes narrower in profile only broadening out significantly to form the shallow Lough Forbes. There is limited access to shore fishing in this area and use of a boat is essential to access some of the swims. Upstream of Roosky and only accessible by boat, Pigeon Island is a well known venue with a number

of angling pegs available fishing into depths of up to 9 meters for quality bream. Downstream of this, in the town and at the weir depths to 1 or 2 meters make float fishing an option. Lough Forbes, also accessible by boat only, is a very productive pike angling venue, particularly during the winter months. At Tarmonbarry there are angling stretches both upstream and downstream of the village with bream and roach the main target species. Upstream of the town on the river is Lough Bodergh which has some fine pike fishing with many fish over 10kg caught while boat fishing.

Lanesboro

Lanesboro is located at the northern end of Lough Ree and is famed for the hot water run-off which attracts and concentrates fish when hot water is being released from the power station. Huge shoals of migrating bream are also known to congregate here particularly during the March-May period. All this makes Lanesboro something of a big fish hotspot with both specimen bream and tench featuring regularly in angler's catches over the years. Access is very good all along the river bank and there are facilities for wheelchair anglers. However it should be noted that there can be some competition for pegs at the height of the season. A little further afield of Lanesboro at Kilnacarrow (upstream) and 'The Cut' (downstream, boat

access) there are productive stretches with the possibility of good bags of bream. Lanesboro is also a good base for pike anglers looking to fish the northern part of Lough Ree, a lake capable of producing very large pike. The lake also has some good trout fishing, particularly during the Mayfly hatch in the months of May & June.

Athlone

Situated on the M6 Dublin to Galway road and right in the centre of Ireland, Athlone has long been a hub of angling activity in the midlands area. It's position at the southern end of Lough Ree gives the pike angler or the more adventurous coarse angler access to the southern part of the lough and to the inner lakes area near Ballykeeran which are accessible from the main lough through a narrow channel. The primary coarse angling venues close to Athlone are all on the main river channel downstream from the town. The Meadows, Long Island, Clonoun and the 'Long Shed' are all on the western bank and are well established fishing venues with all the main coarse species present.

Ballinasloe

Ballinasloe is situated on the River Suck which joins the Shannon close to Shannonbridge. The Suck is known both for it's large shoals of bream and for it's top class pike fishing, regularly producing pike over

10kg. Downstream of the town there is a noted coarse fishery at a kink in the river known as Coreen Ford as well as at Creggan and Culligh. Upstream of Ballinasloe the river forms the Suck Valley as it flows through the farmland of Co's. Roscommon & Galway. Access can be difficult outside of the sections close to the bridges at e.g Ballyforan, Ballygar, Athleague, Castlecoote and Donamon, all of which produce specimen pike regularly. The river is liable to flood for large parts of the winter months making fishing difficult during these periods.

Shannonbridge/Banagher

As it flows between Loughs Ree and Derg, the River Shannon enters its middle course and is punctuated by a series of islands, eddies and backwaters, all of which provide some very interesting and relatively under-fished angling venues. Upstream of Shannonbridge there are swims at Clonmacnoise, Devinish Island and the backwaters at Cappaleitra and Long Island. Just downstream of the town, the stretch at the power station is well known for attracting shoals of coarse fish and

particularly for it's tench fishing. Further downstream towards Banagher, the River Brosna and the Grand Canal join the Shannon at Shannon Harbour and coarse fishing can be excellent in the vicinity, while the Brosna also has some good brown trout fishing. Bullock Island and its associated backwater is located upstream of Banagher and is best accessed by boat. This secluded venue can provide super tench fishing and the deep water close in to the island produces good bream, roach and hybrid fishing. The town section in

Banagher is a good match venue with room for up to 18 anglers and further downstream there is good coarse fishing at Inishee and a stretch known locally as the 'Chicken Run'. There are also extensive match stretches at Meelick which are regularly used for angling festivals.



Portumna

Portumna is located on the River Shannon at the northern end of Lough Derg and offers fishing waters which have a proven track record being home to a long running angling festival. Fishing can be top notch both during spring and also in October as shoals of roach and hybrids leave the waters of Lough Derg and move upstream into the river around Portumna. From June through to September the river returns to normal with a more even spread of species, including some bream. There are several prime angling hotspots, (a number of which are official match stretches), located on the river Shannon itself and the northern shores of Lough Derg. On the river there are two stretches up and downstream of Portumna, known locally as the lower 'town stretches' or Roger's Island and upper ESB stretch called Fairyhill. On the Galway bank further upriver there is the 'Salmon Run' and the 'Old Sheeben' stretch which are back to back with a shared access road. Lough Derg itself has become renowned for its quality bream & hybrid fishing and large bags can be taken from remote shores and islands on the lake. The shoreline is rocky and an angling platform will help ensure comfortable fishing.

Mountshannon/Scariff

Lough Derg is also noted for its quality brown trout fishing



and most of the trout fishing activity takes place around the villages of Mountshannon and Scariff on the south western shores of the lake. The season opens in March but the height of the fishing is during the mayfly period which traditionally happens earlier on L. Derg than on the other great loughs. Anglers wishing to fish the mayfly here should keep an eye for reports of fly towards the end of April. All traditional mayfly patterns will work but the lake is famous for it's fall of spent gnat in the evening so be prepared for a late night if you happen to hit it right.

Killaloe/Ballina

The scenic villages of Killaloe and Ballina are divided by the River Shannon at the southern end of Lough Derg and are a perfect base for exploring this half of the lake. Bream and hybrid fishing can

be very good, particularly when fishing from one of the islands on the lake and boat access can be arranged locally. There is a stretch of shoreline at Twomilegate that can fish well for bream, roach and hybrids, particularly during the evening and night. Pike angling is also very popular in Lough Derg and numerous 10kg + fish are caught each year. International pike angling competitions are held regularly and the quality of the pike fishing always attracts top class pike anglers from around Europe.

O'Briensbridge

At O'Briensbridge there are two established coarse fishing stretches, one on either side of the bridge. The first section is upstream of O'Briensbridge as far as the E.S.B. (Electricity Supply Board) Dam, a distance of about 1.5kms. The water here is between 6 and 8

meters deep and has a strong current close to the dam but is slow flowing further downstream. This section has about 30 well maintained swims. Species here are roach, hybrids, perch and bream. The banks are high but fishable all year round. The lower section is situated down river from the village and is used as a match venue for the local clubs. There are approximately 35 natural swims. Species here are the same as up river. The water is slow flowing with depths ranging between 3 and 8 meters. The lower section has produced specimen pike over the years.

Canals

The Royal and the Grand canals connect the city of Dublin to the Shannon system and both contain good stocks of coarse fish along with some pike. The Grand Canal joins the Shannon at Shannon Harbour and there are fish throughout its full extent with noted angling stretches at Ferbane, Edenderry and Prosperous. The water in this canal is very clear and that can make fishing difficult unless the angler adopts a stealthy approach or chooses to fish during the dusk to dawn period. The Royal Canal joins the Shannon at Clondra and there are noted angling hotspots around Abbeyshrule, Mullingar, Enfield and Leixlip. The water in this canal is cloudier and the fishing can be better as a result.

Legislation & Licences

Because the Lakelands area covers both Ireland and Northern Ireland, different rules will apply to angling depending on which jurisdiction you are in. Anglers are advised to make themselves fully aware of the different rules and regulations that apply before any fishing trip.

In the Republic of Ireland, the fishing is managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland and as a general rule angling for coarse fish, pike and brown trout is free on most of the waters in the Lakelands. However, there are some waters in the midlands region that do require a permit and more information on this can be found here: www.fishinginireland.info/midland-permit.htm. Fishing for salmon or sea trout requires a state licence but these species are generally not found in the waters covered in this brochure. A full list of angling regulations as they apply to the Republic of Ireland can be found here: www.fishinginireland.info/regulations.htm.

In Northern Ireland fishing is controlled by a number of different bodies but the waters covered in this guide are under the remit of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). A licence is required to fish for both coarse and game fish and this licence must be purchased in advance of fishing. Details on licences, rules and regulations can be found on the following website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling.

Guides & Chillies

There are a number of specialised angling service providers that operate in the Lakelands area and can help you make the most out of your trip to the region. Whether you are just looking to hire a boat for a day's fishing or you are looking to spend a week's guided coarse fishing in angling oriented accommodation, there are professionals on the ground that can help. A full list of service providers is available on the following websites: www.fishinginireland.info/guides/index.htm or www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling.

Tackle Shops

There are tackle shops in all of the angling centres mentioned in this guide. They are very important to the visiting angler as they can offer up to date local knowledge as to where fishing is best and what methods are working. There are too many shops to list in a brochure this size but an up to date list of them is available at the following link: www.fishinginireland.info/tackleshops/index.htm or www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling.

Flooding

Flooding can affect the whole of this system but can particularly affect the Shannon system during the winter or

during prolonged periods of heavy rain. In winter, the river often floods into the surrounding fields for weeks or months on end. This creates a unique habitat known as the 'callows' which are important wildlife sanctuaries. When in full flood, many of the swims listed in this guide will be inaccessible even when using a boat.

Access

Anglers should seek permission from farmers when crossing farmland to access swims, ensuring that gates are closed and that fences are not broken or damaged. Care should be taken with crops and livestock. Vehicles should be parked in designated areas and in such a manner that they do not cause obstruction.

Leave No Trace

Anglers should fish responsibly and sustainably – where possible use single barbless hooks and practice no-weight, "in the water" catch and release.

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Be considerate of others
3. Respect farm animals and wildlife
4. Travel and camp on durable ground
5. Leave what you find
6. Dispose of waste properly
7. Minimise the effects of fire

Other Attractions

While angling may be an important part of your trip there are plenty of other reasons to visit the Lakelands area. Golf, cycling, cruising and walking are just some of the outdoors activities that can be enjoyed in the area while historical highlights such as Clonmacnoise or the recently refurbished Athlone Castle will appeal to the more culturally minded. Also, with numerous bars, cafes and fine dining restaurants throughout the Lakelands area you won't be short of somewhere to spend the evening. The best way to keep up to date with all the attractions in the area is by logging onto our dedicated site: www.discoverireland.ie/lakelands.

Errors & Inaccuracies

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is accurate at the time of printing, no responsibility will be accepted by the partner agencies for any errors or inaccuracies therein and they shall have no liability whatsoever.



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