GENERAL

greasy lake t coraghessan boyle

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Introduction

In the rolling green hills of County Mayo, tucked away from the bustling towns and scenic coastlines, lies a hidden gem that invites both locals and travelers to pause, breathe, and experience the untouched serenity of nature. **Greasy Lake in T Coraghessan, Boyle** is a tranquil freshwater body that has earned its name from the gentle sheen on its surface during the early mornings. While its modest size might make it easy to overlook on a map, the lake offers a rich tapestry of history, wildlife, and recreational opportunities that make it a must-visit destination for anyone exploring the heart of Ireland.

Geographical Overview

Location and Physical Characteristics

Greasy Lake is situated within the civil parish of T Coraghessan in the historic barony of Boyle, County Mayo. The lake rests at an altitude of approximately 120 metres above sea level and spans roughly 1.2 square kilometres. Its shoreline is dotted with low-lying reed beds, small islands, and a few modest clusters of trees that provide shade to the surrounding wetlands. The lake''s depth peaks at around 6 metres, with an average depth of 3 metres, creating a shallow environment that supports a diverse range of aquatic life.

Surrounding Landscape

The lake is surrounded by a mosaic of bogland, heather-covered moor, and pockets of ancient oak woodland. A network of minor footpaths connects the lake to nearby villages, giving visitors easy access to the local countryside. The surrounding hills rise gradually, offering panoramic views of the lake and its surrounding wetlands. In the distance, the silhouette of the famed Croagh Patrick can be seen, adding a sense of grandeur to the landscape.

Historical Significance

Early Settlements

Archaeological evidence suggests that the area around Greasy Lake has been inhabited since the Neolithic period. Stone tools and pottery fragments discovered near the lake''s edges indicate that early settlers used the water source for drinking, fishing, and daily chores. The lake''s calm waters likely served as a communal gathering place for rituals and storytelling.

Folklore and Legends

Local folklore tells of a spirit that dwells within the lake, known as the "Greasy Guardian." According to legend, the spirit protects the waters from pollution and ensures that the fish remain plentiful. Visitors often leave offerings of bread or small charms at the shore, hoping to receive good luck for their fishing expeditions. These tales, passed down through generations, add an air of mystique to the lake and reinforce the community''s respect for the natural environment.

Ecological Importance

Flora

The lake''s surrounding wetlands are home to a variety of plant species, including common reeds (Phragmites australis), water lilies (Nymphaea alba), and wild orchids. The oak woodlands that encircle the lake provide a habitat for hedgehogs, bats, and numerous insect species that play a vital role in pollination and pest control. The presence of these plants creates a natural filtration system that helps maintain the lake''s water quality.

Fauna

Greasy Lake supports a thriving population of fish such as brown trout (Salmo trutta) and perch (Perca fluviatilis). The lake is also a breeding ground for amphibians, including the common frog (Rana temporaria) and the smooth newt (Lissotriton vulgaris). Birdlife is abundant; waterfowl like ducks, geese, and swans frequent the lake, while herons and kingfishers are often spotted near the reed beds. The surrounding woodland is a haven for red foxes, badgers, and occasionally, the elusive Irish hare.

Environmental Challenges

Despite its ecological richness, Greasy Lake faces several environmental challenges. Seasonal flooding can introduce excess nutrients into the water, leading to algal blooms that diminish oxygen levels and threaten fish populations. Additionally, the increasing popularity of recreational activities has raised concerns about littering and shoreline erosion. Local conservation groups have therefore implemented monitoring programs to track water quality and enforce sustainable tourism practices.

Recreational Opportunities

Water Sports

Kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding are popular activities on Greasy Lake. The lake''s calm waters provide an ideal setting for beginners, while more experienced paddlers can enjoy gentle currents that weave through the islands. Guided tours are available, offering insights into the lake''s history, wildlife, and geological features.

Hiking and Biking Trails

Numerous trails encircle the lake, ranging from easy 2-kilometre loops to more demanding 10-kilometre hikes that venture into the surrounding moorlands. Cyclists can follow the scenic routes, enjoying panoramic views of the lake and the distant hills. Signposted paths provide information on local flora and fauna, encouraging visitors to appreciate the natural beauty while staying safe.

Fishing and Angling

Greasy Lake has earned a reputation among angling enthusiasts for its abundant trout and perch. Anglers can secure permits from the local angling club, which also offers lessons for novices. The lake''s shallow depths make it easy for beginners to practice casting, while the presence of submerged logs and reed beds provides excellent hiding spots for fish.

Bird Watching

Birdwatchers flock to Greasy Lake to observe a diverse array of species. The lake''s wetlands are a critical stopover for migratory birds traveling between Ireland and continental Europe. Enthusiasts can spot species such as the great crested grebe, the Eurasian bittern, and the white stork. A pair of binoculars and a quiet, respectful approach are essential for the best experience.

Accessibility and Transportation

Road Access

Greasy Lake is easily accessible via the R310, which connects the town of Ballina to the village of T Coraghessan. From the main road, a well-maintained gravel track leads directly to the lake"s visitor centre and parking area. The drive takes approximately 15 minutes from Ballina, making it convenient for day-trippers.

Public Transport

Public transport options include a local bus route that runs between Ballina and T Coraghessan twice daily. While the schedule may be limited, the bus provides a cost-effective way to reach the lake without the need for a private vehicle.

Accommodation Options

Guests seeking to stay overnight have several options in the vicinity. The nearby village of T Coraghessan offers a range of B&Bs and guesthouses, many of which provide traditional Irish hospitality and homemade breakfasts. For those who prefer a more rustic experience, there are a handful of campsites that allow visitors to set up tents right by the lake, offering the chance to watch sunrise over the water.

Local Community and Culture

Traditional Activities

The people of T Coraghessan have long cherished the lake as a source of sustenance and inspiration. Traditional fishing techniques, such as the use of hand made nets, are still practiced by some local families. Additionally, the lake has historically served as a venue for community gatherings, including seasonal festivals, harvest celebrations, and storytelling circles.

Festivals and Events

Every summer, the village hosts the "Greasy Lake Festival," a week-long celebration that includes music, dance, and local craft markets. The festival’s highlight is a boat parade that showcases traditional boats, each adorned with colorful ribbons and local artwork. Visitors can also participate in cooking classes that teach how to prepare classic Irish dishes using fish caught from the lake.

Conservation Efforts

Protected Status

Greasy Lake has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the European Union"s Natura 2000 network. This status protects the lake’s unique habitats and ensures that development projects undergo rigorous environmental assessments. The designation also helps secure funding for research and conservation initiatives.

Community Initiatives

Local volunteers run a "Clean Up the Lake" program every spring, where community members gather to remove litter, restore shoreline vegetation, and monitor water quality. Educational workshops for schools focus on the importance of wetlands and the role of local ecosystems in maintaining biodiversity.

Practical Tips for Visitors

Best Time to Visit

The lake’s optimal visiting window is from late spring to early autumn. During this period, the weather is mild, the wildlife is most active, and the surrounding flora is at its peak. Winter visits, while quieter, offer a different

perspective, with misty mornings and a hushed landscape that is perfect for reflective walks.

What to Pack

- Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots
- Water proof clothing (especially in spring or autumn)
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- A reusable water bottle and snacks
- A camera or binoculars for wildlife observation
- First aid kit and a map of the local trails

Respecting the Environment

Visitors are encouraged to follow the "Leave No Trace" principles: carry out all litter, avoid trampling vegetation, stay on designated paths, and refrain from feeding

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