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Tullamore and District Angling Club

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27 Henrietta Street, Tullamore. Co. Offaly
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Fishing is free of charge on the Grand Canal.
This guide covers an 18 km-long section of the Grand Canal, west of Tullamore from Ferbane to Rahan. Quiet and rural, the canal passes through a unique landscape en route to the River Shannon.

The canal is well known for the quality of its bream and hybrid stocks. Perhaps not coincidentally, the canal here also supports an abundant pike population, with some fish to over 9kgs (20 lbs). Indeed, the canal at Rahan has been developed as a pike fishery, with large numbers stocked in recent years. These have augmented the already plentiful stocks of fish present. Regular pike angling competitions are held along this stretch, and it has been used as a heat venue for the National Pike Championships, which is organised and run by the Irish Federation of Pike Angling Clubs.

While no permanent swims have been incorporated into this section, virtually the full length of the canal is fishable. Road access is excellent, and large sections of towpath are driveable, although care should be taken if driving along the towpath, due to marshy conditions after rain. Occasionally laybys are provided for car parking.

The canal banks are lined with tall, dense reed beds in many places. The reeds provide refuges for young fish while also providing vantage locations for predatory pike all along the canal. These reeds also provide a diversity of substrates on which coarse fish can deposit their egg masses during spawning.

Grand Canal
The water in this section of canal is relatively clear and static or very slow flowing. The canal corridor supports a wide diversity of aquatic and marginal plants that harbour myriads of fish-food insects. This section is characterised by the presence, along both banks, of tall, continuous reed beds. The vegetation is carefully managed and does not pose an obstruction for anglers. Boat traffic density along the canal is moderate.

Fishing Tackle and Bait
Unless you are specifically targeting pike, pole tackle is the most productive fishing method. Float fishing with a small waggler can also prove effective. It is recommended that, beginning a session, the angler targets the middle of the canal, approximately 6 to 9m from the bank. Baits should be fished on the bottom. Small amounts of groundbait should be introduced at the start of the session, between four and eight small balls, and loose feed thereafter. The most productive baits include maggots, worms and sweetcorn. Fish with No. 4 or 8 elastic, 1.4kg main line to a 0.9kg hook length, for small to medium sized fish. Heavier grade elastic, together with stronger line and hook length will be required if bigger bream and tench are encountered. Around Ferbane most of the bream do not go above 4lbs, therefore, a medium to light set up using all methods is required. Hook sizes should be from 12 to 20 depending on the size of bait used. If a good shoal of bream or hybrids are encountered, a good supply of groundbait laced with casters, dead maggots, sweetcorn, and chopped worm will be needed.

Good pike are available in the canal. A roving approach, continuously covering new water should maximise sport. A wide range of techniques will work including dead-baits or artificial lures. Fly fishing for pike can also be productive. Basic pike tackle incorporating suitable wire trace should be employed whatever method is used.

For advice contact Ann Coyne, Secretary of the Tullamore and District Angling Club at Tel: +353 (0)87 9231211.

Fish Stocks
The Grand Canal between Rahan and Ferbane supports excellent stocks of mixed coarse fish and pike. Species present include roach, bream and their hybrids, Rudd, perch, gudgeon and the occasional tench may also be captured. Bream to 1.8kg (4lbs) hybrids to 1.4kg (3lbs) and roach to 0.5kg (1.25lbs) should form the bulk of coarse angling catches. Excellent stocks of pike are found throughout the section. The majority are in the 2 to 3kg (5-7lbs) bracket. Double figure fish are abundant, and pike in excess of 9kg (20lbs) are regularly caught.
Pollagh / Rahan Stretch
From Tullamore town take the Birr Road (N52) for approx 6 km to Screggan and take a right turn for a further 5 km to where the road joins Corcoran’s Bridge at Rahan (see map 2). This section can be great for pike fishing. There are large sections of driveable towpath between Pollagh and Rahan.

Ferbane Stretch
Travel through Tullamore town on the N52 for approx 10 km to Blue Ball and take a right onto R357 for about 3.5 km to where the road crosses over the canal at Gallen Bridge (see map 1). The towpath is driveable from lock 32 to McCartney Aqueduct. This area is generally good for bream.