



GUILTY PLEASURE

A relaxing soak in a free-standing roll-top bath at Hilton Park House near Clones is the ideal post-snorkelling treat. The country house has six guest rooms, some with four-poster beds, in a beautiful setting with lakeside walks, pleasure gardens, a walled garden and herbaceous border. Inside the stately home there are open fires, drawing rooms, antiques and lots of books. Guests can have dinner — meet in the drawing room for drinks before tucking into dishes made with tasty treats from the garden including fresh herbs, edible flowers, salad leaves and lavender ice-cream. You can also go boating, fishing, swimming or cycling on the grounds (bikes are provided).



CHEAP KICK

“The light between the ricks of hay and straw was a hole in heaven’s gable...” So wrote Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967), who was born in Monaghan and whose life and work are evoked at the Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen (patrickkavanaghcountry.com; €5). Guided tours are available, or use the Patrick Kavanagh Trail Guide (70c) to find 16 different sites in the county which inspired or are connected to the poet — including the farm at Rocksavage, where he wrote the above lines in *A Christmas Childhood*.

bog standard

Monaghan hosts the Irish Bog Snorkelling Championships next weekend. It’s the perfect excuse to visit, says

YVONNE GORDON

SET THE MOOD

Monaghan is the Drumlin County, and it’s near the foot of one of these tiny green hills that I find myself sliding down a grassy bank into a watery trench. I’m about to try Bog Snorkelling — where competitors snorkel along a 60m track in a peat bog using flipper-power to complete the course in the fastest time possible. Today though, it’s a relaxing experience — it’s sunny, the water is warm, the mud soft underfoot. You can’t see much underwater, but the setting is beautiful. There are water lilies and wild flowers, water hens in the undergrowth, white butterflies, birds singing and cows mooing. It’s great fun, and apparently bog water is good for your skin and hair too...



TOP TIP

Get off the main roads to see the drumlins dotted around the landscape. You’ll stumble across lakes, forests, heritage sites, farm shops and pretty crossroads all over the county, too. Check out our 10 great reasons to visit Monaghan on independent.ie/travel.



INSIDER INTEL

Carrickmacross Lace dates back to 1820 and was used in Princess Diana’s wedding dress. Drop into The Carrickmacross Lace Gallery (carrickmacrosslace.ie) in the town’s Market Square to learn about its history and perhaps buy a piece of your own. You can also arrange a (free) lace-making demonstration in advance to see the intricate stitching and learn how the unique creations are made.

GLITCHES: You can only try bog snorkelling during the Irish Bog Snorkelling Championships next weekend. This is its seventh year and you’ll need to be fast to win — the record is 1 minute 24 seconds. Get in early too — the trench gets muddier as the day goes on.



GET ME THERE

The Irish Bog Snorkelling Championship (irishbogsnorkelling.com) takes place next Saturday, September 12 at Alice’s Loft & Cottages in Doohamlet. Entry costs €20 and proceeds go to Castleblayney Juvenile Hurling Club. Camping is free and there’s a barbecue, beer tent and bouncy castle too. B&B at Hilton Park House (hiltonpark.ie) starts from €90pps (April to September; weekends October to March). Dinner is €55 per person (guests only). See also monaghantourism.com.