



European Union
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Sperrin Mountains – Northern Ireland

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Introduction

Located in North West Northern Ireland along the border with the Republic of Ireland the Sperrins are the largest and least explored mountain range in Northern Ireland.



The Sperrins encompasses a largely mountainous area of 1181km² of great geological complexity with an abundance of natural heritage resources, such as lakes, rivers, valleys and forests. The area is a largely untapped eco-tourism resource.

Eco-Tourism in The Sperrin Mts

The Sperrin Mountains is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and contains many Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites and therefore any tourism development should be sustainable in terms of impact on the environment, impact on the visitor experience and long-term management and maintenance.



Through the RAMSAT project we aim to establish 'tourism hubs' in partnership with the local community to create compelling experiences for visitors and also improve the vibrancy and sustainability of rural communities.

Eco Tourism in Practice

Eco-tourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel. Far and Wild is a community interest company based in Derry, Northern Ireland, who have piloted a number of eco-tourism initiatives in the Sperrin Mountain region.



A community interest company (CIC) is a type of company introduced by the UK government in 2005 that want to use their profits and assets for the public good. Far and Wild offer a number of eco-tourism tours and holiday breaks in the Sperrins.



Wild Atlantic Salmon Kayak Tours

The rivers of the Sperrin Mountains are closely linked to the story of the Atlantic salmon with many local myths and folklore associated with the salmon. Far and Wild have developed 'Wild Atlantic salmon kayak tours' which allow visitors to experience the river environment and also learn about local culture and traditions.

Through these eco-tourism trips visitors can discover the living traditions of the river and its communities. More support is required to develop these type of valuable tourism experiences further.



Moonlight Kayaking Trips

Another example of an eco-tourism experience, Far and Wilds moonlight kayaking trips happen on or around the full moon. Participants get to take a journey down the river systems of the Sperrin Mountains to the Foyle Estuary and surrounding coastlines to experience nature at its most peaceful.



As animals tend to forage at night the moonlight kayak is the ideal time to view them. The trip starts at twilight to allow visitors to get the last of the sunset on the horizon before moonrise. There are also a number of dark sky locations in the North West of Ireland where it is ideal to view celestial activity.

Cycle Sperrins Tours

Far and Wild also offer 'Cycle Sperrins' guided cycling tours tracing the ancient routes of settlers back to the Bronze Age. Each route offers progressive distances and options to complete longer or shorter journeys with overnight accommodation in the heart of communities through the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Included on Far and Wild 'Cycle Sperrins' guided tours are the areas of outstanding natural beauty, iconic archaeological sites, angling rivers, foraging and local food producers, pre-Christian and Christian monuments all offering a mix of Eco-Tourism and Cultural Tourism.

Our Eco-Tourism objectives for RAMSAT

- Create Tourism Hubs in partnership with the community, involving local people to ensure a warm tourist welcome is always offered.
- Recruit and train local volunteers to become tourism champions and local guides.
- Review approaches used in other best practice Green/Blueway and open space projects & develop agreed processes and protocols
- Consult and assess opportunities for rural communities, people, organisations and businesses to develop eco-tourism tours and experiences to meet the expectations of visitors & support the development of existing tours and experiences.
- Encourage the development of outdoor activities using all our natural resources in a sustainable way and improve access opportunities in the area through establishing new permissive pathway agreements and public rights of access.



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Thank you!

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Questions welcome



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