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Britain's walking charity

walk

ISSUE 91 AUTUMN/WINTER 2026 **£4.95**



Opening up the outdoors

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Welcome to walk



As autumn arrives, this issue of **walk** brings you a bumper crop of information and inspiration for staying safe and warm through the colder months. Enjoy a cosy cuppa on one of our top tearoom trails (p30). Refresh your winter walking wardrobe with our gear reviewers' recommendations of the best hiking trousers (p66), And don't miss our *Masterclass* on first aid for walkers (p74) – it might just save your life.

We'll warm your heart, too. Be inspired by actor Caroline Quentin finding lifelong solace in nature (p28), and by Pritpal discovering the power of walking to help her cope with blood cancer (p65). Our cover story *Belonging outdoors* (p18) highlights the Ramblers' outreach work in communities that have the least access and face the most barriers to getting active in nature, proving that simple strolls can be truly transformative.

Walking is wonderfully easy, accessible and affordable, yet too many remain locked out, lacking the local paths and support that could help them enjoy the outdoors on foot. Access Denied is our campaign to change that. Read our campaign update (p9) and please get involved in our autumn of action.





Where we've been Editor Elyssa enjoying recent rambles near Alfriston, East Sussex (top) and along Cornwall's Caradon Trail

Elyssa Campbell-Barr **Editor**

ON THE COVER



'We're learning useful skills, spending time outdoors and, most importantly, helping people enjoy the countryside,' says Pendle Ramblers path maintenance volunteer Mark Chung, pictured on the left of this issue's cover, alongside (l to r) fellow volunteers Mark Dimbleby, Simon Worrall and Ramblers programme manager for paths, Sophie Redmond. For four years, the team has worked with Pendle Borough Council to help keep the countryside around the Lancashire borough safe and welcoming. They've installed over 140 gates, constructed steps and bridges, installed signage, cleared vegetation and improved drainage. 'The work is all about keeping the countryside accessible,' says Mark – a vital message as the Ramblers ramps up its Access Denied campaign (p9) and strives to get more communities walking (p18). 'There are benefits for us as volunteers, too,' Mark adds. 'Physical fitness, improved mental health, and the satisfaction of doing a good job for the community.'
Read more about the Pendle team on p13.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: CRAIG CHARTERS

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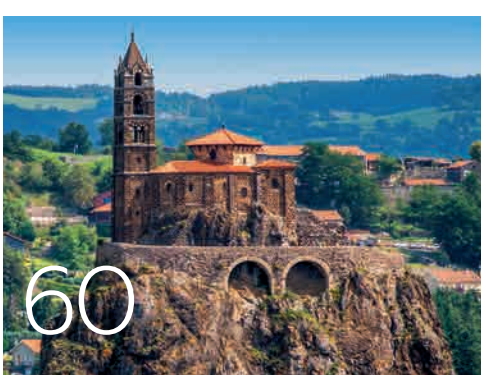














walk
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THE VIEW FROM HERE

Hassness House, Buttermere, Lake District

WHERE The shores of Buttermere in the Lake District's Western Fells.
MAPS OS Explorer OL4, OS Landranger 89.
ABOUT Celebrating its 75th anniversary as a National Park in 2026, the Lake District is one of Britain's most beloved walking destinations. The breathtakingly beautiful landscapes here draw almost 18 million visitors a year, many keen to tackle iconic fellwalks or follow in the footsteps of literary luminaries including William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter. **lakedistrict.gov.uk**

In the quieter Western Fells, on the edge of Buttermere, sits Hassness House – the white building in this photograph. Belonging to walking holiday specialists Ramble Worldwide, it's their exclusive base for Lake District getaways, offering wonderful walks from the doorstep. **rambleworldwide.co.uk/hassness-house**

This year, Ramble Worldwide marks 80 years since being founded as the commercial arm of the Ramblers' Association, and 50 years as an independent tour operator. Today, it offers adventures across six continents, while remaining true to its not-for-profit ethos and passion for the outdoors.

A new book, *Ramble the World*, celebrates Ramble Worldwide's 80 years as walking holiday specialists. Order from **bit.ly/RambleTheWorldBook** (suggested donation £22).



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Front foot

Campaigns and news from the world of walking



Fighting for fair access to nature

The Ramblers' Access Denied campaign continues at pace, calling on Britain's governments to expand and protect our path network and make access to nature a reality in every community.

Since we launched in March 2026, almost 12,000 people have pledged their support online, calling on politicians to recognise access to nature as a right. We've also been flooded with testimonies from walkers across England, Scotland and Wales telling us how vital being active outdoors is for their health and wellbeing.

One supporter told us that walking 'has been the single most important feature throughout my life, through ups and downs, illnesses, injuries and much more'. Another wrote that walking 'returns me to my default setting, makes me feel happy and gives me a sense of perspective'.

But we can't reap the many benefits of walking without places to walk – and this means having high-quality paths close to where people live.

Local paths are lifelines

Walkable local paths connect people with green space, fresh air, and better mental and physical health. But years of political and financial neglect have taken a huge toll on our path network, meaning millions are cut off from nature. Jane from Brynmawr in Blaenau Gwent told us: 'We'd all love to be able to step out of our front door and just go, but there are no connected, safe paths anymore.'

In April, thousands of people wrote to the secretary of state for the environment, food and rural affairs, calling for the Access to Nature green paper to be urgently brought forward for England. Meanwhile, Ramblers supporters in Scotland and Wales took action by writing to their local political candidates ahead of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd elections in May.

Promising progress

Our campaigning is already bearing fruit. Our call for a Scottish Paths Fund was included in the pre-election manifestos of both the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Greens. We're keeping the pressure on the new SNP government to fulfil this pledge.

In Wales, the new government's 'first 100 days' plan is a promising backdrop for the campaign, recognising the need to tackle health-based inequalities – which we know walking can do.

In England, a fresh government under the leadership of new prime minister Andy Burnham presents a golden opportunity to demand action to ensure everyone is able to get outdoors. As mayor of Manchester, Burnham supported efforts to help more people enjoy nature close to home, such as the Green Spaces Fund and Greater Manchester Ringway walking route. Just a year ago, he launched the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the North, stressing the need to 'make sure everyone has a nature-rich green space near where they live', and pointing out that: 'Nature matters to all of us – for our health, our wellbeing and the future of our communities. But we've seen decades of decline that can't go on.'

We wholeheartedly agree, Andy!

Get involved in our campaigning work

This autumn, the Ramblers will be rolling out campaigning activities across Britain – with opportunities to get involved both in person and online. We will be sharing details in the coming weeks: follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/ramblers) or Instagram (@ramblersgb) for the latest updates. And if you haven't already joined the campaign, sign up today at **ramblers.org.uk/access-denied** and we'll keep you abreast of all the campaign news and actions.

NEWS IN BRIEF



WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP

The Ramblers has teamed up with leading social enterprise Places for People to launch 60 new wellbeing walks throughout England and Wales. The partnership will train volunteer walk leaders in communities where the organisation has housing schemes or leisure centres, helping more people enjoy the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of regular group walks.



LOTTERY LATEST

We had a terrific response to the launch of the Ramblers Weekly Lottery in the last issue of **walk**. A huge thank you to everyone who has entered – and congratulations to those of you who have already won one of our cash prizes! For your chance to win up to £10,000 every Friday while supporting our vital work, sign up today for just £1 a week at **ramblers.org.uk/play**.



FIRST AID ON FOOT

The Ramblers has partnered with Safety First Aid to launch a bespoke first-aid kit. It contains everything you need to treat scrapes, stings and minor injuries when walking, plus blister plasters, a tick remover, hand warmers and other items. For every kit purchased, 50p goes to the Ramblers. Order from **firstaid.co.uk/first-aid-kit-for-walkers-ramblers** using code WALK10 for a 10% discount. Read more about first aid for walkers in *Masterclass*, from p74.



Sharing the benefits of walking with politicians in Edinburgh (above) and Cardiff (right)

Stepping into politics

A job in politics is rarely a walk in the park – unless the Ramblers invites you on a lunchtime stroll! After May's elections for the new Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd, Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru invited parliamentarians from all parties to join them for a ramble to talk about walking.

In Edinburgh's Holyrood Park, the Ramblers Scotland team – including director Brendan Paddy and president Chris Lawlor – welcomed minister for mental wellbeing, public health & sport Maree Todd MSP (SNP), Finlay Carson MSP (Conservative) and Yi-Pei Chou Turvey MSP (Liberal Democrats), alongside researchers from the Scottish Greens and staff from Historic Environment Scotland.

A few days later, Ramblers Cymru led new Senedd members on a sunny stroll around Cardiff Bay. Angela Charlton, director of Wales, and Rebecca Brough, policy & public affairs manager, were joined by several new Senedd members, including Paul Rock MS (Wales Green Party), Anna Nicholl MS (Plaid Cymru) and Anthony Slaughter MS (Green).

The events were great opportunities for us to highlight the Ramblers' work and chat to politicians across the political spectrum about the vital role that walking plays in the health, wellbeing and economies of Scotland and Wales.



Hayton Woods victory

The Ramblers has won a lengthy legal battle over access to paths in Hayton Woods, Cumbria. The case centred on whether a four-month interruption to public access during the foot-and-mouth outbreak of 2001 could prevent rights of way being established. A 2025 legal ruling in the Ramblers' favour was upheld by the Court of Appeal in May, and the Supreme Court ended the matter in July by refusing Roxlena Ltd permission to appeal. Thanking all involved, Ramblers paths manager Sophie Redmond said it was 'a victory for everyone who values access to nature.'



Strawberry Line is the cream of British paths

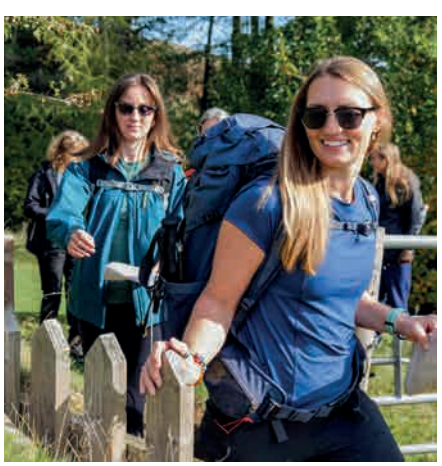
A stretch of the Strawberry Line near Winscombe, North Somerset, has been crowned Britain's Favourite Path 2026, following a public vote organised by the Ramblers and supported by players of Postcode Lottery. The traffic-free route, which forms part of a 32km/20-mile trail from the Mendips towards the coast, beat seven other finalists – including the runner-up, the Lake District's Buttermere Circular – to take this year's title.

The route of a former railway that once carried locally grown strawberries, the path is now enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users and horse riders. Its transformation and maintenance are the work of dedicated local volunteers.

Amanda Jane Baldwin, who nominated the path and wins £200 of Cotswold Outdoor vouchers, said: 'It's accessible in all weathers, it goes on for miles, it's an absolute pleasure to walk on. It's beautiful and I appreciate the nature all around me.'

Now in its third year, Britain's Favourite Path celebrates the importance, beauty and diversity of our trails. 'Local paths are lifelines – they connect people with green space, fresh air, and better mental and physical health,' said Rachel Mulrenan, campaigns manager at the Ramblers. 'The Strawberry Line path is a fantastic example of how local communities can benefit from paths being opened up and expanded.'

Walking the YHA way



The 2026 YHA Festival of Walking is set to be the biggest ever, and the Ramblers is delighted to once again be an official partner. Running until 11 October, the programme includes guided walks from more than 50 YHA youth hostels across England and Wales. The YHA is encouraging participants to 'step up' their walking knowledge, whether that involves learning new outdoor skills or building confidence on challenging terrain. Events include women's safety-focused sessions, Nordic walking tasters and sessions to build navigation and route-planning know-how. Book at **yha.org.uk/festival-of-walking**.

NEW ROUTES



FURNESS ON FOOT

The Furness Haematite Trail is a recently revived and extended 39.5km/25-mile circular walking route exploring the iron ore mining history of Cumbria's Furness Peninsula. Beginning at Barrow-in-Furness Dock Museum, it connects more than 20 mine sites. As well as the six trail sections, try shorter loop walks devised by volunteers from Furness PathFix. **furnesspathfix.org.uk/haematite-trail**



CENTENARY STROLL

The Centenary Way: High Blue Hill Route is a scenic 8km/5-mile trail through picturesque Cotswold countryside and the Gloucestershire villages of Notgrove, Salperton and Hazleton. Created to celebrate 100 years of the countryside charity CPRE, which was founded in 1926, it's the first route in a planned wider Centenary Way series. **cpreglos.org.uk/centenary-way**



TRIPPING ALONG THE GIPPING

Suffolk's Gipping Valley River Path has fully reopened after major improvements and repairs. Thanks to robust new boardwalks and footbridges at Creeting St Peter, and bank repairs, widened paths, accessible ramps and a bridge upgrade at Sproughton, walkers can again enjoy the full 27.5km/17-mile riverside route between Stowmarket and Ipswich. **bit.ly/GippingVRP**

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Double support for Drumchapel

Ramblers Scotland is improving the Drumchapel Way, an 8km/5-mile circular walking route on the northwestern edge of Glasgow, thanks to a government-funded grant and support from a local distillery.

Ramblers Scotland is delighted to have been awarded £40,000 to enhance the trail. This funding comes from a £1.5 million city-wide programme, backed by the UK Government's £150 million Pride in Place Impact Fund and delivered by Glasgow City Council to support communities most in need.

A further boost has come from staff at local whisky maker Edrington, who recently completed an Edrington Stride challenge walk (above). Their fundraising, matched by The Robertson Trust and Edrington's Giving More programme, will help us resurface the worst sections of the Drumchapel Way. In a community affected by economic hardship and health inequalities, this accessible route is a vital asset for wellbeing, social connection and access to nature close to home.

Find out more
Read about the Ramblers' work with the Drumchapel community in our feature *Belonging outdoors*, from p18.

Glen access action

Ramblers Scotland has been campaigning to protect walkers' access to four popular Munros in Glen Lyon, Perthshire.

Thousands of people signed our petition, after the North Chesthill Estate again told visitors to 'walk elsewhere' throughout September and October. This had echoes of autumn 2025, when the estate installed signs (photographed by Iain Cameron) reading 'No walking we are stalking', affecting access to Càrn Gorm, Meall Garbh, Càrn Mairg and Creag Mhòr. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code says landowners can ask the public to use alternative routes during deer stalking on specific days and in specific locations, but



we're not aware of any other estate in Scotland issuing such restrictive advice.

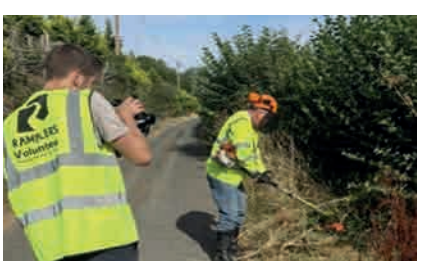
With support from ScotWays and Walkhighlands, we've been seeking action from Perth & Kinross Council and NatureScot, and urging walkers to report access problems. Follow updates at **ramblers.org.uk/glenlyon**.

Path safety stars

The Ramblers' new safety training for path maintenance team leaders and volunteers launches this autumn. A huge thanks to all the volunteers who helped develop the training resources, including:

- Martin Bradford and Orleton Footpath Maintenance Volunteers (pictured)
- Keith Weller from the Bath Ramblers Maintenance (BRAM) Team
- Mark Chung and the Pendle Ramblers path maintenance team (see above right).

Their support and expertise have helped us create engaging and practical training materials. If you're a path volunteer, look out for more details soon.



VOLUNTEER SUCCESSES



PENDLE PATH PODCASTERS

The Pendle Ramblers path maintenance team works in partnership with Pendle Borough Council, Lancashire, to carry out an array of path improvement projects, including heavy-duty work rebuilding steps, installing bridges and replacing stiles with accessible gates. The *Grey Matters More* podcast recently joined them on the job to hear about their volunteering – listen at **greymattersmore.buzzsprout.com**.



ENJOY AN EARLEY WALK

Berkshire's Loddon Valley Ramblers recently finished signposting the 5.6km/3½-mile Lower Earley Green Corridor Trail. Passing through woods, meadows and parks, it has transport links that make it ideal for leisure walking and active travel. The waymarking was supported by Earley Environment Group and Earley Town Council. **lvra.org.uk** (click 'footpaths').



BALSAM BUSTERS!

In July, volunteers from Ramblers partner Lateral (pictured) joined Kingston Ramblers to help clear Himalayan balsam from paths in Six Acre Meadow, south-west London, preventing the invasive plant from blocking paths and undermining riverbanks. Thanks to the Lateral team for their support. Find out about the Lateral Health Plan on p64.

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Seaside strolls

Ramblers groups across England organised dozens of celebratory free walks this summer to mark the official opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path. Discover this record-breaking trail – and learn about the Ramblers' 20-year involvement in its creation – at **walk.ramblers.org.uk/king-charles-lll-coastal-path**

Royal recognition for volunteers



Guests at the Royal Garden Parties in May and June included two exceptionally dedicated Ramblers volunteers. Pictured above at Buckingham Palace is Wellbeing Walks leader Grace Namwanje, who helps her Dudley community – including migrants and refugees – to improve their health through walking. We chatted to Grace about the life-changing impact of her volunteering on local people dealing with depression, chronic illness or social isolation in the summer issue of **walk** (*Stepping out with our volunteers*, p22).

John Andrews, a champion of walkers' rights for over 50 years, attended the Royal Garden Party at Edinburgh's Palace of Holyroodhouse. As an access volunteer for Perth & Kinross Ramblers and Ramblers Scotland, John has helped protect and reopen routes across Angus, Fife, Perth & Kinross and Stirlingshire. Previously, his research helped reclaim historic paths in Suffolk and supported a landmark Court of Appeal case in 2015, strengthening walkers' rights. His impact was summed up in his nomination: 'John exemplifies integrity, perseverance and service – an outstanding volunteer whose lifelong dedication has transformed access to the countryside for all.'

Opening the way in Carmarthenshire

Volunteers in Carmarthenshire are helping to keep paths open and accessible as part of Ramblers Cymru's ongoing Pathways Partnership Project with Carmarthenshire County Council. Since April, they've taken part in three 'Snip and Stroll' sessions and a path action day with council rangers. The work has cleared 4.2km/2½ miles of paths, while 12 new steps installed near Pumsaint provide safer access to the River Cothi.

Funded by the county council and The National Lottery Community Fund, path activities are continuing across the county. The new phase, Adopt a Path, encourages volunteers to take responsibility for a particular path by visiting it three times a year and reporting problems, helping to keep Carmarthenshire's rights of way network open for everyone to enjoy.



Get involved
Follow Ramblers Cymru on Facebook or Instagram for info on upcoming activities.

QUICK Q&A



George Blacker
is a walk leader and trainer based near Glasgow

What's your volunteering role?
I'm a volunteer instructor on Ramblers Scotland's Next Steps courses in Glasgow and Ayrshire, helping participants gain walk-leading and navigation skills. My wife and I are also walk leaders with Eastwood Ramblers in Glasgow's outskirts.

What do you do when not volunteering?
I normally do three walks a week with my wife. We also like to hike abroad, along Madeira's *levada* trails and in the Austrian Tyrol.

What motivates you to volunteer?
Initially, it was the lack of walk leaders across many Ramblers groups. I like to think I've some knowledge that I can pass on. It's a pleasure to be involved with the Next Steps courses, and through them I've made many friends.

What's your proudest achievement?
The success of Next Steps is something all participants should be proud of. Credit, too, to the other volunteer instructors and Ramblers Scotland staff.

Where is your favourite walk?
My favourite mountain is the Cobbler (Ben Arthur) in Arrochar, Argyll and Bute. This hike has a mixture of everything, especially if you take the scrambling route.

What's always in your backpack?
A map in case of no phone signal, compass, whistle, first-aid kit (with tick removers) and two torches. I also carry a multitool, which can tackle most problems on trails.



ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES

NEW KIT ROUND-UP

STAYING SAFE

Proviz Reflective Active Gilet

£34.99, provizsports.com

British brand Proviz specialises in high-vis and reflective outdoor clothing, with a hiking range that includes jackets, rucksacks, hats, scarves and even dog coats. This lightweight, windproof and water-resistant gilet (available in men's and women's sizes) will help ensure you're visible from all angles – an ideal addition to your autumn/winter walking kit.





Garmin inReach Messenger Satellite Communicator

£250, garmin.com
Available from Cotswold Outdoor

This rugged, lightweight little device switches seamlessly between wi-fi, mobile phone and satellite signals, so you can stay connected even on remote trails. It offers up to 28 days' battery life, GPS location sharing and the option to send an SOS message to Garmin's 24/7 response centre.

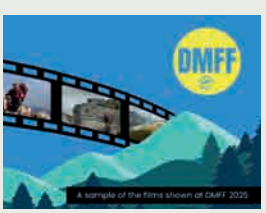


Lifesystems Tick Survival Kit

£12.99, lifesystems.co.uk

Our changing climate means ticks are on the rise in Britain. Minimise the risk of bites – and tick-borne Lyme disease – with this handy kit, which includes tick repellent (containing 20% Saltidin) that provides up to eight hours of protection, sterile wipes, and a credit card-sized tool for removing ticks safely.





WATCH

Dundee Mountain Film Festival

20-21 November, dmff.co.uk

Founded in 1983, this annual celebration of the great outdoors includes cinema, exhibitions and talks. Don't miss speeches by renowned climbers Tim Emmett and Dave MacLeod, and breathtaking films that are sure to inspire future adventures.



VISIT

The Line, east London

the-line.org

This public art trail connects the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park with The O2, following waterways and the line of the Greenwich Meridian along the way. Explore about 8km/5 miles of art, nature and heritage, with details and playlists on the excellent website.



READ

Where To Go When: Hiking

£22.99, Lonely Planet

Looking for ideas for your next ramble? Discover 96 trails worldwide – and the best months to walk them – in this gorgeous guide. From pilgrimage routes to mountain treks, each hike features inspirational photography, along with information and maps to help you plan your trip.

Your winter master plan

Cotswold Outdoor's experts explain how to choose your cold-weather walking kit, from shoes and clothes to equipment

Having the right gear makes all the difference on winter rambles – but it's easy to get it wrong. Cue soggy clothes, boots that slide around in mud, and hikes cut short. So, we asked the experts at Cotswold Outdoor for their tips on selecting the shoes, clothing and gear to keep you comfortable and dry in chilly season.

Footwear

'I'd recommend a mid or full boot rather than a shoe, to provide sturdy ankle support. A pair with a waterproof membrane such as Gore-Tex is essential for keeping your feet dry. An aggressive tread on soles allows for outstanding traction in deep snow or mud.'
Anna Flynn, Newcastle store

'Sturdy leather boots are great for fending off mud. Smooth leather is easier to clean and, when waxed, will take care of you for many seasons. Don't overlook cleaning boots during the winter, or they won't last. A rinse with a hose or in the sink will do; wait for them to dry, then apply wax.'
Ben Walmsley, Bath store

'I personally go for a mid boot, for more stability when the ground is a little softer. With all walking footwear, the correct size and characteristics to match your foot are imperative to ensure maximum comfort.'
Ian Grout, Chertsey store

Clothing

'The item I come back to in colder months is a merino base layer. Merino has excellent wicking qualities, which helps regulate temperature, and it's hypoallergenic and feels soft against skin. An ideal base layer should fit snugly but not be restrictive. As a rule of thumb, the colder it is, the thicker the base layer.'
Anna

'Be bold and start cold – after 15 minutes of walking, you'll have built up a lot of heat. Try putting on as many layers as make you feel comfortable, then take one off.'
Ben

'I love the Arc'teryx Beta AR waterproof jacket [pictured], which has a Gore-Tex membrane. There's nothing riskier on a long or technical hike than being cold and wet; this jacket ensures I'm neither.'
Ian

Equipment

'Keep hand warmers in your bag for an easy way to boost body temperature; you can put them in a fleece pocket or in your boots, too. And a hot lunch is a great morale booster on a long, cold hike – so take a backpacking stove and a dehydrated meal.'
Ben

'Trekking poles introduce two additional contact points with the ground to enhance stability, allowing me not to focus on my footing and enjoy the surroundings. In terms of height, I aim to have my arms at a 90° angle to maximise power transfer. Brands have different locking mechanisms so I'd recommend trying a few in store.'
Anna

'I can't do without having the interior of my rucksack packed away in a dry bag. If it pours with rain halfway through a hike, I know the contents will stay dry.'
Ian









COTSWOLD outdoor

For all your outdoor kit needs, visit **cotswoldoutdoor.com**. Don't forget, you save 15% as a Ramblers member (T&Cs apply). Simply show your membership card or Walk magazine in store, or sign up to the 'Explore More' loyalty scheme at **cotswoldoutdoor.com**



Belonging outdoors

The North Wales Walks for Women project teamed up with our Ramblers Scotland Community Champions in the Cairngorms

Across England, Scotland and Wales, dozens of groundbreaking Ramblers projects are supporting communities who are underrepresented in the outdoors. Discover how this vital work is transforming people's lives and creating lasting benefits

As Britain's walking charity, the Ramblers strives to improve participation among communities who have the least access and face the most barriers to getting active outdoors. By bringing our walking expertise together with local insight, we're tackling the issues that hold people back from enjoying the benefits of walking.



Steps to adventure

Drumchapel Adventure Group, Glasgow

Glasgow has some of the highest health inequalities in Scotland. Men in the most deprived parts of the city can expect to live 15.4 years less than those in the least deprived – a shocking statistic, and a good reason for the Ramblers to focus support there.

Residents in Drumchapel, in the north-west of the city, told us about a defunct council-run outdoor activity group, which they missed. So, Ramblers Scotland's community development officer, Jeannie Cranfield, collaborated with organisations across Drumchapel and began leading monthly walks to help seed and grow a new walking group. The aim was to build local people's skills and confidence in the outdoors, so they could provide rambles for their community and be safe in the hills.

Jeannie started leading walks in October 2025 and by March 2026, participants had formed themselves into Drumchapel Adventure Group – which now has 20 members. Ramblers Scotland volunteer Dave Pullan, a mountaineer and outdoor instructor, has delivered group training sessions in hillwalking safety, maps and navigation.

In this area of low car ownership, one of the biggest barriers to exploring Scotland's stunning landscape is a lack of transport. However, a successful application for a small grant from the Get Active Glasgow Fund has enabled the group to hire vehicles.

'They are now off adventuring in the hills and loving it!' reports Jeannie.

PHOTOGRAPHY: BETH CHALMERS





Connection and confidence

Wellbeing Walks, West Yorkshire

A friendly chat over a cuppa, a gentle stroll through a local park and the chance to meet new people might seem like simple things. But in communities such as Mixenden in Calderdale and Armley in the west of Leeds, where residents experience above-average levels of unemployment, poor health and economic disadvantage, they can make a real difference.

Through a partnership with Living Streets, with funding from West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), the Ramblers has worked alongside local organisations to offer free Wellbeing Walks that reflect residents' needs and interests. In both Mixenden and Armley, we've trained local people to lead welcoming strolls through neighbourhood green spaces, helping others discover the benefits of regular rambling close to home.

Successful walking programmes begin with listening. Training has been adapted for different learning needs; trusted local partners – including Bradford Trident, Evergreen Active CIC and community groups – have introduced new participants; and every walk begins with time to chat over a brew, supporting people to take that first step.

The result is more than a series of walks. Friendships are forming, confidence is growing and local people are developing the skills to lead walks themselves, creating a culture of walking for their communities.

With continued support from WYCA, Living Streets and local partners, Ramblers community development officer Diane Simcoe hopes many more people will have the opportunity to experience the physical, mental and social benefits of walking together.



MAUREEN

Wellbeing Walker, Armley

'I had two strokes two years ago, which affected my right leg. So, to maintain my lifestyle and keep my mobility, I wanted to do a walking club. I was a bit apprehensive before I came, because I didn't know anybody. But the group are so lovely and welcoming.'



ANDY

Chair, Drumchapel Adventure Group

'This is turning out to be a well-organised and ambitious group of keen, enthusiastic walkers, who have embraced the opportunity to once again get out safely in Scotland's breathtaking landscapes. I thought these days had gone for me, as our previous local outdoor group dissolved over 15 years ago. Now we're back, creating more great memories and photos, with lots of new members who just can't get enough. Being out on the hills as a group has bonded us and is priceless in terms of improving our physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. I get the feeling we're at the start of a wonderful journey.'

Trailblazing together

Community Champions, Scotland

Stepping into an unfamiliar outdoor activity when you've not long arrived in a country can feel daunting. Many people who are refugees, seeking asylum or from Global Majority communities are keen to enjoy the outdoors, but face barriers to getting started. They may not have anyone to walk with, not know where to walk, or worry about not having outdoor clothing or equipment.

Ramblers Scotland's Community Champions programme takes a gradual and supportive approach. It starts with a simple conversation about walking and the opportunities available, followed by an invitation to join a welcoming, pressure-free introductory walk. These easy, inclusive sessions help participants build confidence, meet others and discover that walking is for everyone.

Now in its third year, the programme is going from strength to strength. Six Community Champions are taking part across Glasgow and Edinburgh, while three new recruits are expanding its reach to ›



Our 2026 cohort of Community Champions

Inverness and the Highlands.

Building trust and confidence takes time. By walking alongside people, listening to their experiences and offering ongoing support, the programme helps participants feel comfortable taking their first steps outdoors.

Supported by players of the Postcode Lottery, the scheme is already creating lasting change. Two former Community Champions have qualified as Lowland Leaders and are now employed as community trainees, helping even more people discover the benefits of walking and creating a diverse new generation of outdoor champions in communities across Scotland.

ADETUTU

Community Champion

'The Community Champions scheme has been such a joy. It's about more than the miles – it's about making everyone feel welcome on the trails. I've met Ramblers walk leaders who have been incredibly supportive and keen to help me improve my skills. Our Community Champion meetings are a balance of fun and troves of learning. The scheme is giving me confidence. My ability to get lost is legendary, so I'm still working on my navigation skills, but I can see steady improvements. The training, support and resources have been fantastic, and I'm already using what I've learned with my own community group.'

Finding their feet

Walks for Women, North Wales

Despite living among some of Britain's most spectacular landscapes, women in North Wales often lack the confidence, skills or social support to enjoy walking outdoors. In less well-off areas, a complex combination of economic, health and social challenges can make it harder to be physically active or get into the countryside.

Ramblers Cymru's Walks for Women project helps break down these barriers by offering welcoming, women-only walks that develop confidence while building fitness and outdoor skills. Led by Ramblers regional officer Olivia Evans, the regular free rambles are a supportive space where women can make friends, explore local landscapes, and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of being active outdoors.

Launched last year, with funding from Actif North Wales, Walks for Women developed a partnership with Working Denbighshire's Barod ('Ready') scheme for people struggling to find work or training. A few young walkers travelled to the Cairngorms – their first time away from home – for a memorable and empowering ramble with our Ramblers Scotland Community Champions (see above), and some recently completed the Ramblers' Out There Award.

This year, Walks for Women has expanded into a new partnership with the North Wales Women's Centre in Rhyl. The sessions now welcome women of all ages, with more than 50 already taking part. The addition of training in walk-leading and navigation is giving participants the confidence and know-how to continue the project for years to come.



Lacey puts her new map-reading skills to use in the Cairngorms

LACEY

'I struggle with my mental health and I'm on the autism spectrum. [Walks for Women] opened my mind to a lot of things and pushed my boundaries... It's definitely an amazing opportunity.'



Carmella (left) and Nicky (second left) on the first Slough interfaith Walk & Chat this summer

Discovering common ground

Community partnerships, Slough

In Slough – one of England's most ethnically diverse boroughs – the Ramblers is helping people of different faiths to connect, discover local green spaces and build confidence to walk together.

Helped by a 'microgrant' from the Slough Faith Compact, Ramblers community development officer Nicky Wilson worked with five local organisations – a mosque, church, Hindu temple, Sikh school and interfaith event – to explore how walking could bring people together. More than 100 people shared their views.

Their biggest barriers to walking were lack of time, having no one to walk with, being unsure where to go and worries about personal safety. Almost 90% wanted more walking activities in Slough, with particular interest in history, nature and women-only walks. About a third were keen to join interfaith walks – 'a great way to bring people together', said one.

This project builds on the success of the Ramblers' partnership with Slough's Jamia Masjid & Islamic Centre where, with funding from the Julia Rausing Trust, we've trained four volunteer walk leaders. The mosque now runs JMIC Walking Sisters, a welcoming weekly group.

We've also supported the Sisterhood Community group set up by Slough resident Carmella-Khadijah, whose regular rambles attract up to 60 women of all ages. Several of them recently completed Ramblers walk-leader training.

This summer, Nicky and Carmella led their first interfaith Walk & Chat in Slough's Herschel Park. Next steps are to secure further funding, so we can increase participation, reduce inequalities in access to nature, and support more communities to discover the power of walking together.



HANEEZA

Ramblers-trained volunteer walk leader

'I'd been feeling kind of down, but these walks got me going again. They gave me energy and a real sense of purpose. I get as much out of leading them as everyone who joins, and now I have new skills to help other people.'

And there's more...

Funded by Dudley Council for Voluntary Service, our **Migrant Connect Project** in the **West Midlands** centres around a supportive weekly walk that offers relief from anxiety, trauma and the stress of everyday challenges for people newly arrived in Britain.

In **Islington, London**, we're working with **Octopus Community Network** – with funding from the **Julia Rausing Trust** – to run free weekly neighbourhood hikes.

Pathways Partnership Carmarthenshire, a collaboration between Ramblers Cymru and **Carmarthenshire County Council**, has seen local volunteers surveying more than 2,500km/1,550 miles of public rights of way across the county and improving 5km/3 miles of paths. It's now entering a new 'Adopt a path' phase – see p15.

In **Edgware, London**, we're working with the **Stonegrave Community Trust**, a resident-led charity, to offer free Ramblers Wellbeing Walks to local people.

We're also delivering some of our **2026 Out There Award** skills courses for young adults in partnership with organisations that support under-represented communities to get out walking – such as **Queer Out Here**, **Wanderers of Colour** and women's group **Blossom CIC**. ■

Over to you

Your membership of the Ramblers helps to make all these projects – and many more – possible, supporting people to come together, connect with nature and lead healthier, happier lives. We'd love to take the benefits of walking into even more communities, so please help us with a donation – go to **donate.ramblers.org.uk/donate** or call 020 3961 3232.

Your view

Have your say – and you could win a great prize!

STAR LETTER



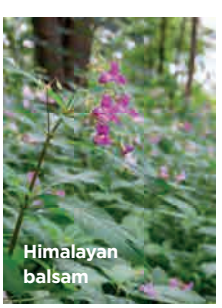
The view from Beamsley Beacon, Yorkshire Dales, taken by Michael on a recent Ramblers walk

Finding my feet

I love being outdoors and am less in demand by my family these days for childcare or household repairs. Casting fate to the wind, I joined the Ramblers. The initial walks were with very friendly, chatty and pleasant folks. Many had travelled through similar decades to me, and they unfailingly sought to find out something of my journey. Despite being familiar with Yorkshire, I've gained intriguing new knowledge through these walks. I was surprised, too, at the stamina of my new chums, giving me both hope for my own resilience while also alerting me to shortfalls in my fitness – quickly improving! I chose not to attach myself to a particular group – helpful in gaining wider exposure to members and a variety of settings. I also got the gossip (in a good way!) about other groups being faster, slower, larger, smaller, etc. Is rambling a good thing for an older solo male? Absolutely! It's a way of meeting new people, seeing lovely countryside and developing fitness, physically and mentally. Get a decent pair of walking boots, good quality socks, comfortable, loose-fitting cotton-rich trousers, a not-too-heavy jacket, hat and an inexpensive backpack. Happy rambling!
Michael Lowry, Yorkshire

Knotweed no-no

Thanks for the interesting *A-Z of Path Maintenance* article (*Masterclass*, summer 2026, p74), with lots of useful information and tips that my local group will be putting into practice. However, in the section on clearance, you stated that volunteers may pull up Japanese knotweed. I sincerely hope that they do not, since this leads to its increased propagation, which is illegal throughout the UK. Japanese knotweed is a highly invasive plant, which can only be safely controlled by targeting its deep rhizome root system using systemic herbicides. This typically takes three to four years and has to be done professionally. I wonder if you intended to say that volunteers pull Himalayan balsam, since this is also an invasive and problematic plant. It has tall fleshy stems, pink flowers and shallow roots,



Himalayan balsam



Japanese knotweed

and so it can indeed be kept under control by pulling and uprooting from the base of the stem. Perhaps you could provide photos of the two plants for readers to identify them?
Naomi Brightmore, Cardiff Ramblers
Thanks to all the readers who contacted us about Japanese knotweed. Read Environment Agency advice on dealing with this problematic plant at ***bit.ly/Gov_JapaneseKnotweed***

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

Tell us via Instagram or Facebook using #RamblersMyView, email walkmag@ramblers.org.uk or write to us at the address on p3. Letters may be shortened for publication.

The art of rambling

I was a secondary school art and photography teacher for 20 years, during which I qualified as a mountain leader due to my lifelong passion for walking. A longstanding Ramblers member, I left teaching to pursue outdoor instructing and creating artwork inspired by the natural world and landscapes. I now deliver a range of workshops and programmes, from DofE to navigation courses, art and photography workshops, and also sell a little of my art (**learnshawartist.co.uk**). The mental health benefits I gain, not just from walking, but also stopping to observe what is around me, are very powerful, so I'm currently focusing on sharing the endless positives to be had from walking and sketching outside.
Louise Earnshaw, Lincolnshire



The right way

In the last **walk**, some contributors misused the word waymarker when referring to arrows or other indications of routes for walkers. In fact, these are waymarks — ie 'small signs along the route of the path' (as the Ramblers' website correctly states) to guide users. Waymarkers are the people who put them there.
Chris Hall, Ramblers vice-president



Devon delight

Three of us from Kendal Ramblers recently completed a 160km/100-mile circular walk in South Devon. A new route established by South Hams Ramblers, the South Hams Way [**southhamsway.org.uk**] covers a variety of well-marked paths, including part of Dartmoor and the coastal path. On Dartmoor we met two of the group responsible for the route, who took the photo attached on Ugborough Beacon.
Alison Jones, Cumbria





Ancient ways

I've just walked the [605km/376-mile] Great Chalk Way from the English Channel to the Norfolk Coast along public rights of way that have existed for thousands of years. As is traditional for coast-to-coast walkers, I took a pebble from the beach at my starting point, Lyme Regis, and carried it past hillforts, tumuli, stone circles and long barrows to drop it into the North Sea at the finish. That we can still walk through Old Sarum to Stonehenge, Woodhenge and Durrington Walls, The Sanctuary, West Kennet Long Barrow, Avebury Stone Circle and other sacred sites is very special. These ancient paths are as old and important as the monuments they connect. I felt emotional as my stone went into the sea at the site of Seahenge. I had truly been walking in the footsteps of our ancient ancestors.
Graham King, Dorset

Read Graham's blog of his walk at **grahamslongwalk.wordpress.com**

Problematic pebbles

In your summer magazine (*The View From Here*, p7), you mention taking a pebble from a beach when walking the Coast to Coast National Trail. Taking stones, pebbles or sand from a beach is technically illegal under the Coastal Protection Act of 1949. This is designed to prevent coastal erosion and protect natural sea defences. They provide mini ecosystems for nature. Those caught removing large amounts can face fines of up to £1,000. The Coast to Coast is a popular trail. As on Mam Tor, Derbyshire [where stone stacks are discouraged], stones are best left where they are.
Ray Spink, Nottinghamshire

In the LOOP

I've spent a number of enjoyable weekends this year walking the London LOOP. The LOOP (London Outer Orbital Path) is a 241km/150-mile circular walk around the outskirts of London, divided into 24 sections.



I discovered that 2026 is the 25th anniversary of the LOOP being fully waymarked and opened as a route, and thought this milestone worth a mention. There's so much to love about the LOOP – gorgeous views and beautiful countryside, as well sights of historic significance, including the Wilberforce Oak in Section 3, Farthing Downs in Section 5 [pictured], the Shot Tower in Section 9 and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in Section 19.
Nik Mortimer, Bedfordshire

Trim trails

I have been a member of the Ramblers for a few years and have also volunteered for path maintenance. I like walking obscure paths, so come across various problems: usually overgrown brambles, hawthorn, blackthorn and ivy, so I carry secateurs and even a folding saw. Fine when walking alone, but in a group I'm sometimes left behind. Trim as you go. If more Ramblers cut back overgrowth (instead of just complaining about it), it would benefit everybody who loves the countryside.
Nigel Polding, by email

WIN! A HIGHLANDER NOVAR RUCKSACK

The writer of our star letter wins a Novar 50+5L Rucksack from Scotland-based outdoor equipment company Highlander (£95, **highlander-outdoor.com**). The rucksack was named 2026 Best Value Rucksack for Multi-Day Treks by *The Great Outdoors* magazine. It offers generous, expandable storage without compromising on comfort. Its adjustable back system, padded hip belt and practical pocket layout help distribute weight and keep your essentials organised on the move. Durable, versatile and ready for changing weather conditions, the Novar 50+5L is a dependable companion for walkers tackling everything from countryside trails to a weekend of walking and longer hiking adventures.



HIGHLANDER



Hot spots and honeypots

From overcrowding on Yr Wyddfa to erosion in the Peak District, some of Britain's favourite landscapes are struggling to keep pace with their own popularity. It's high time to prioritise investment in paths and green spaces – and not just those already well trodden

WORDS MATTHEW JONES

On any sunny weekend from Easter to late September, the most popular paths on Yr Wyddfa (Mount Snowdon) host a steady stream of walkers, all keen to test themselves against a proper mountain – maybe their first – and take in one of Britain's finest views. It's proof that more people than ever want to get outdoors, get active and experience special landscapes.

When walking tourism is well-managed, with decent bus services, parking, rangers and signage, a landscape like this can benefit the nation's health and boost rural economies. The trick is making sure that the infrastructure keeps up with the enthusiasm.

A summit under strain

Yr Wyddfa is Britain's busiest mountain. Visitor numbers have more than doubled since 2012, with over 600,000 people now making the ascent every year. That's good for people's health, good for local businesses, and good for the case that walking and the outdoors deserve serious long-term investment.

It does, inevitably, add pressure to the environment. Litter is a persistent issue, as are out-of-control dogs around nesting birds and livestock. Following two exceptionally busy seasons post-pandemic, ecological surveys found footpath erosion had worsened noticeably.

Eryri National Park Authority's response has included campaigns to



This image and below: path restoration aids walkers while protecting the landscape at Mam Tor



Visitor numbers to Yr Wyddfa have more than doubled since 2012





Main pic: Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon), Britain's busiest mountain; above: parked cars at Pen y Fan in the Brecon Beacons

educate visitors and better signage pushing the AdventureSmart safety initiative at popular trailheads. There have been large-scale path improvements, too – on the Watkin Path and Allt Maenderyn (South Ridge), for example – to attempt to disperse walkers away from the most heavily trodden tracks. Pen y Pass car park now has a pre-paid booking system in peak season, and there are more Snowdon Sherpa park and ride buses to ease pressure on limited infrastructure. It's a solid start, though there's clearly more investment needed to match demand.

Cascades of concern

A similar pattern plays out 150 miles south in Bannau Brycheiniog (the Brecon Beacons), where the area known as Waterfall Country was quietly withdrawn from official promotion about a decade ago, to protect its sensitive ecology and the communities living there. It didn't stay hidden. Word spread anyway – driven partly by social media, as well as the wild swimming boom – and the area now receives north of 300,000 visitors a year.

This extra footfall has placed added pressures on the landscape. Waterfall Country has become a honeypot, when in fact it's a prime example of a delicate site that isn't suited to mass footfall due to its relatively remote location, limited infrastructure and steep, narrow paths. This creates a gap between visitor expectation and reality.

Joanna Maurice, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park visitor destination management officer, says their response has included stationing 'meet and greet' staff at Cwm Porth car park and providing practical safety demonstrations, while working to get clearer guidance about the terrain, its sensitivity and its risks into online spaces and web searches.

Peak popularity

Overtourism isn't confined to Wales. In Derbyshire's Peak District, the Moors for the Future Partnership has spent recent seasons airlifting soil and laying reclaimed flagstones onto Mam Tor's summit path to combat erosion from its popularity with walkers. This protects the peat blanket bog – a huge natural carbon vault that also filters water to reduce flood risks in the valleys and provides vital habitats for endangered moorland birds.

When budgets get tighter, these projects get more difficult to fund. The Peak District National Park Authority's grant from central government has been cut by more than 50% in real terms in the past decade.

Phil Mulligan, CEO of the Peak District National Park Authority, says: 'The cuts mean there are not as many rangers or volunteers out and about as we would like, and some maintenance and repair work of trails and infrastructure gets delayed or >

isn't possible.' There are other negative impacts. 'We've had to scale back some of our most impactful engagement work with younger people and those from diverse backgrounds who may live close to the national park but don't access it,' Phil explains.

One solution is collaborative effort. In June 2026, the British Mountaineering Council, Peak District National Park Foundation and outdoor brand Rab teamed up to carry out a major restoration project at the famous Dark Peak destination of Stanage. Volunteers transported over eight tonnes of aggregate – more than 300 individual 25kg bags – by hand on steep terrain to reinforce worn and eroded climbing landings beneath popular gritstone routes.







Footfall fallout

Meanwhile, at Windermere in the Lake District, tourist footfall is degrading shores and reedbeds, and affecting water quality. Analysis by geospatial climate specialists Map Impact has linked peak tourism periods with increased algal blooms, driven partly by human wastewater entering the water system; an estimated 60-70% of the lake's total phosphorus load originates from human sources. The proliferation of harmful blue-green algae and bacteria such as E. coli impacts the ecosystem, recreational lake users and local communities alike.

The pattern seems similar everywhere, with minor variations: creeping damage to fragile terrain and wildlife, litter, traffic and parking pressure, and safety risks that put strain on rescue services. The honeypots aren't usually the problem; it's the gap between visitor numbers and visitor infrastructure and education.

Managing the masses

When investment does arrive, it can work wonders. On Skye, visitors to the Fairy Pools rose from about 13,000 a year in 2006 to well over 180,000 by 2019, causing severe verge parking, and access problems for mountain rescue vehicles. A charity, the Minginish Community Association, partnered with the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland to build a 140-space car park and off-grid toilet block, funded by roughly £800,000 from the Scottish Government and local fundraising. It opened in 2021 and the parking revenue has since funded staff, a defibrillator and further path and conservation work. Not every issue has been solved, but it's a genuine model for turning popularity into a sustainable asset, rather than a liability.

Back in North Wales, Gwynedd Council is consulting on a visitor levy of about £1.30 per person per night for most accommodation (75p for campsites and hostels) throughout peak season. This would help fund amenities such as public toilets and car parks, as well as path maintenance, signage, bins and rangers. Many councils are struggling to fund such services, despite the proven economic value of nature-based tourism. In Gwynedd, Dr Rhys ap Gwilym of Bangor University estimates tourism already accounts for about 10% of the economy and 15% of its jobs. Early estimates put potential annual revenue from a Gwynedd visitor levy at about £6 million, ring-fenced for tourism infrastructure. Though it needs careful consideration, it presents an intriguing model.

Loving the outdoors

None of this means the answer is fewer visitors full stop. That would fly in the face of everything walking does for the nation. A report for the Ramblers by the New Economics Foundation values the wellbeing benefits of the path network in England and Wales at more than £2 billion, adding more than 3,000 healthy years of life to the population.

The Wales Coast Path, for example, generated £16 million for the Welsh economy in its first year alone, with 2.8 million people walking part of the route. The recently opened King Charles III England Coast Path is expected to deliver similar economic benefits.

The Ramblers' Access Denied campaign (see p9) makes a persuasive case that the real issue isn't overtourism, but under-investment in the wider path network. There are about 225,200km/ 140,000 miles of public rights of way across England and Wales, and over 26,000km/ 16,000 miles of core paths across Scotland. If more of this network were properly maintained, signposted and promoted, it would go a long way to spreading footfall more evenly and easing pressure on existing honeypots.

Under-investment has led to lost paths, blocked routes and missing signage that prevent millions from enjoying the countryside on their own doorstep. The campaign's demands are tailored across Britain. In England, a call for government to publish a Green Paper on access to nature. In Wales – where half of all paths

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, ANDREW WOODHOUSE – SKYE COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Clockwise from left: the Ramblers' Out There Award boosts young people's outdoor knowledge; a volunteer clears litter on Yr Wyddfa; local MSP Kate Forbes opens new visitor facilities at Skye's Fairy Pools in 2021

are either blocked or unsignposted – action on underfunded local authorities; in Scotland, a proposed £50 million Scottish Paths Fund to close the gap in path provision between wealthier and more deprived areas.

The Ramblers is also helping people discover new places to fall in love with. The Britain's Favourite Path competition (p11) shines a spotlight on little-known routes, as well as renowned trails. And new online guides present appealing alternatives to hiking hot spots in Eryri (**walk.ramblers.org.uk/snowdonia-without-the-queues**) and the Peak District (**walk.ramblers.org.uk/ramblers-peak-district-walks**).

Education is another part of the solution. The Ramblers' Out There Award was created because many younger people said they lacked the confidence to start walking: they didn't know anyone to go with, weren't sure where they could walk, and worried about safety. The award helps 18-26-year-olds take those first steps, meet other walkers, and build outdoor skills and confidence along the way. It's less about correcting behaviour and more about opening the door a little wider.

Responsible recreation

Those of us who want to walk without adding to overtourism can enjoy green spaces on our doorstep, visit honeypot sites out of season or midweek if possible, travel by public transport if it exists, seek out less popular paths or views, and always follow the Countryside Code or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Rather than responding to the issue of hiking hot spots by urging people to stay away, their popularity should be treated as a compelling reason to invest in walking infrastructure. This is the case the Ramblers is making more loudly than ever. ■



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WALK + TALK

Caroline Quentin

Britain's treasured landscapes and nature have been a lifelong fascination, inspiration and salvation for the actor and presenter turned author and artist

INTERVIEW REBECCA SWIRSKY

What are your earliest memories of being in nature?
I grew up in suburban Surrey: Reigate. From my bedroom window, I could see Colley Hill and the Pilgrims' Way with its ancient woodland and chalk path going up, the light changing over the hills. On my seventh birthday, I was given a red and green bike. My sisters and I would get into the open air as much as possible. Those glorious memories of flying under beech trees, stopping by a bank of green for a Tizer, and the exhilarating freedom of being outside with no adults. It felt like the biggest adventure imaginable.

I was forever putting things in matchboxes. Bracket fungi, for example – I was crazy about them. I'm sure some were poisonous, but generally I was left to my own devices. I used to put caterpillars in matchboxes. Sometimes they would make a cocoon, then a butterfly would come out. I was ten years younger than my next sister, so I spent a lot of time on my own. When you're little, you notice things; you spend time on the ground, among bugs and beetles. Much time was also spent in my garden, and I would sing to the local thrush in the summer evenings. I adored this bird; it would sing as the sun set and rose. There was no traffic noise in those days – the sounds were clear – and it was the most wonderful birdsong.

How can the natural world support us through life's transitions?
For me, every transition has been supported by nature. As a child, when my mother was ill, nature supported me; when my divorce began, nature supported me; when I lost a couple of babies, nature carried me. I can't imagine my life without my hand being held by nature. Rivers, sunlight, the birds, trees, all the growing things – they are integral.

Where do you get your zest for life?
My mother had bipolar and, while I don't, I am a volatile compound. My equilibrium comes from nature. Having left school at 16, without university, I love to learn and understand. I'm relentlessly interested and nosy about how a seed grows, how they're different from one another. That's why I paint them. This year, I've joined the Royal Academy of Arts, the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery with the intention of devoting myself to the serious art of looking. I may take a diploma in art.

Which do you prefer: talking to plants in your gardens or humans on set?
Oh, plants and trees! I'd rather talk to a tree than almost anybody in the world. I love our native trees – our beeches, oaks and apple trees. My favourite is the Katy apple – my mother's name. They look like the red apple in Snow White, and taste deliciously tart and juicily sweet.

What's been your most sublime experience while walking?
Walking along a coastal point in Cornwall, I saw a pod of dolphins – more than I'd ever seen before – bubbling and glistening in a glorious sunset. It was so breathtaking, so absurdly beautiful, that I burst into tears, as if the world was about to end for







Clockwise from above: Teign Gorge, Devon; Caroline is fascinated by fungi, like these amethyst deceivers and fly agaric toadstools; the National Gallery in London; Whitesands Beach in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE

› COUNTRY WALK?
The walk from my Somerset bungalow, over the fields, down to the woodland and back. Everything changes with the seasons. It's outside my door, so I can walk to the walk.

› CITY WALK?
London's St James's Park is full of the most absurd, ridiculous birds: a clutch of moorhens, coots, mandarin ducks, grey herons, geese and pelicans, which exist on an island in a lake.

› VIEW?
Any valley view in Devon where the mist is slowly rising – either it's been a warm day and cold night, or the other way round. If you stand still for five minutes, you see the tops of pines and firs, then the mist lifts like a striptease. Voilà, the valley revealed!

› POST-WALK TIPPLE?
I like water from a small hand-held bottle on the walk, then a good cup of builder's tea after.

› PIECE OF KIT?
I live in the South West, so a Barbour or raincoat – you need to be prepped for the showers.





this largesse of beauty. There's something wonderful every time you get out; a divine moment to cherish, such as a toadstool or amethyst deceiver (I also collected these in matchboxes). As well as the sublime pod of dolphins, it's important to recognise and celebrate the tiny moments of immense joy.

What was the standout moment from filming your Channel 4 series *The UK's National Parks*?
On Dartmoor, I met a glorious group of DIY guerrilla moorland healers. These brilliant women had knitted and crocheted tiny egg-cup-cosies, into which they were placing small pockets of sphagnum moss. These mini-nests were then 'planted' where soil had washed away or had no nutrients, forming new microcosms. As I was helping, the sun came out and spread itself. Wonderful.

What are your thoughts on national parks making places more accessible?
We're the luckiest nation in the world with our landscapes. National parks are one of our greatest resources – particularly so given our expanding obesity, depression and other health crises. Yet many people don't know about them or can't enjoy them, and that's wrong. Whether it's by improving wheelchair access or ensuring better group access for people with learning disabilities, we have to help people get there.

In Scotland [where there's a general right of access to all land], the attitude is 'the lochs and mountains are ours'. In the rest of Britain, it's more 'us and them'. My book includes a chapter on landowners and the divvying up of the countryside to the aristocracy [largely through the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries], and how we used to have common grazing land. The Brecon Beacons [Bannau Brycheiniog] National Park is a brilliant example of helping people access paths, as is the Pembrokeshire Coast. Ultimately, the more we know how to love our places of beauty, the happier and better we will be.

Do you walk to get 'unstuck'?
When I can't walk and be outside, or near trees, I get depressed. There's an absolute correlation. Half an hour of digging the plot, or looking at the sky, or hearing the wind, alters my mind. My mental health is intimately connected to nature.

Has living in the countryside accelerated your love of nature?
Two years ago, we moved house from an orchard and large garden to a tiny, rented bungalow and rid ourselves of a mortgage. I'm fortunate that the people I rent from live on the same land, but let me cultivate the garden, which is roughly half an acre. I can grow veg and flowers. I'm surrounded by sheep, hills and beautiful beech trees.

Starting a new chapter made leaving everything behind easier. I'm 65, and I don't want to be smothered or held back by places or possessions. I'm learning that I need freedom. I want to travel lightly and far, to go walking where and when I want with a knapsack on my back, not worrying about property. I'm about to start filming in Kilkenny, Ireland, for two months, making a new drama series called *Last Resort*. It's about a retired librarian devoted to crime fiction, who decides to investigate an apparent family tragedy. I'll have weekends off, which I'll spend painting and walking.



Caroline's new book is Drawn to Nature *(£20, Frances Lincoln). You can stream her 2023 series* The UK's National Parks with Caroline Quentin *from Channel 4*

PHOTOGRAPHY: © CHANNEL 4, GETTY IMAGES

TEN PLACES

Tearoom trails

Make a beautiful walk through fiery autumn leaves or sparkling winter frosts even more enjoyable with a stop-off at a cosy café for a warming cuppa and a tasty treat. Our ten recommended tearoom rambles offer both landscapes and menus that change with the shifting seasons. How many have you tried?

WORDS PHOEBE TAPLIN



1 York Walls, North Yorkshire

ABOUT A 3km/2-mile circuit around the top of York's city walls is the ultimate walk through time, exploring the city's many-layered history: Romans, Vikings, Normans, medieval monks... And York is as full of cafés as a Yorkshire fat rascal bun is with dried fruit and cherries. You can sample these at the city's branch of Bettys Café Tea Rooms, one of the most famous cafés in Britain and a scone's-throw from the route. Or stop at SOPHiE, a coffee-shop-cum-cocktail-bar built into the tower by Skeldergate Bridge. It has a riverside terrace and serves everything from gourmet hot chocolate to bergamot-flavoured local gin.
WALK IT The Wall Trail has lots of steps but is easy to follow and a great way of reaching York's famous sights. It passes the Minster, with its stained-glass saints and angels, the ancient 'bars' or gateways, and 13th-century Clifford's Tower, which is almost all that survives of York Castle. (20% off entry if you arrive without a car.)
FIND OUT MORE yorkwalls.org.uk





2 Grizedale Forest, Cumbria

ABOUT Home to the UK's first forest-based sculpture park, Grizedale has a large collection of site-specific art. Amid dense fir trees, with no sound but rushing water and high-pitched goldcrests, find a moss-covered drystone wall by Andy Goldsworthy (left), or Saad Qureshi's *Flight*, resembling giant dragonfly wings. Café Ambio, in the middle of the trees, offers legendary fruit scones.



WALK IT The Visitor Centre and website have maps of forest trails. Climb to the top of Carron Crag for views to distant Morecombe Bay.

FIND OUT MORE forestryengland.uk/grizedale/walking-trails-grizedale

3 The Isle of Portland, Dorset

ABOUT The sail-dotted turquoise sea and wild white-stone cliffs, with coastal flowers and rock-hopping ravens, have a Mediterranean feel. Four miles long and half a mile wide at its narrowest (6.5km by 0.8km), Portland is tied to the mainland by a narrow causeway and the natural phenomenon of Chesil Beach. A rewarding circuit from the village of Easton through sculpture-filled Tout Quarry to the red-and-white-striped lighthouse at Portland Bill ends back at the White Stones Art Café Gallery for fresh cakes and fruit-filled smoothies.



WALK IT Take one of the regular year-round buses from Weymouth to Easton, from which a short stroll brings you to the King Charles III England Coast Path, which loops round past the lighthouse. Autumn is ideal for watching birds and late-flying butterflies. Look out for huge, wide-winged gannets diving into the waves at 100km an hour and red admirals fluttering through the disused quarries that are now a flower-filled nature park.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/PortlandCafeCircuit



4 Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire

ABOUT The Welbeck Estate is close to the limestone gorge, caves and Ice Age rock art at nearby Creswell Crags. Pop into the free gallery and museum in The Courtyard at Welbeck to catch contemporary art and one of England's finest collections of family portraits. The award-winning Harley Café next door serves seasonal options such as mushroom-and-Stichelton burgers, lemon curd French toast and lots more.



WALK IT The 4km/2½-mile Harley Art Trail starts and ends near two horse sculptures outside the café. Combine this with the 5km/3-mile Creswell Caves walk, through hedges rich in rosehips and blackberries.

FIND OUT MORE welbeck.co.uk/visit-us/estate-walks/





5 Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

ABOUT On the eastern edge of the Norfolk Broads, Great Yarmouth is a classic seaside town with colourful beach huts, museums about the herring industry and a prize-winning pier. The town itself, although no longer as grand as it was in its fish-fuelled heyday, has hidden gems like the wood-panelled Elizabethan House. In the Venetian Waterways, a public park opened in the 1920s, you can stroll past bridges, canals, thatched gazebos, flowering borders, and the newly revamped Little Venetian Café on an island in the boating lake. The menu of brunch-able 'croffles' and flatbreads includes specials like Eton mess French toast with fresh strawberries.

WALK IT The area has varied landscapes to explore: marshes, beaches, rivers, lakes and dunes. In winter, a largely accessible stroll around town and seafront has options for sheltering from changeable weather.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/GreatYarmouthWalk

6 Balloch, West Dunbartonshire

ABOUT This easy-going 9km/5.6-mile walk along the shores of Loch Lomond passes the site (now a vague mound) of old Balloch Castle, medieval home of the Earls of Lennox. At the end, enjoy views from Cameron House, a turreted baronial mansion in hundreds of acres of wooded grounds. It's now a luxury hotel, where you can book ahead for exceptional afternoon teas. Brews include Ceylon ginger, Italian almond, and rose, marzipan and mint.



WALK IT The loch is a magnet for wintering waterbirds and the parkland for fieldfares. After tea, stroll back or catch the hourly bus 305/306 from Duck Bay.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/BallochCastleWalk





7 Caersws to Llanidloes, Powys

ABOUT Explore the 16km/10 miles of hilly countryside, with bracken-framed views, that lie between Caersws railway station and the market town of Llanidloes. Hiraeth on Llanidloes' Long Bridge Street offers a warm Welsh welcome. The name means (roughly) 'bittersweet longing for a lost homeland' and the menu offers inventive twists on classics, including a 'Welsh Beauty' pizza: a rarebit base topped with sautéed leeks and fig chutney.

WALK IT This walk is part of the 360km/224-mile Severn Way, Britain's longest riverside walk. Here the route takes in hilly woods and panoramic sheep fields. Llanidloes has a statue of river goddess Sabrina and a half-timbered market hall. Bus X75 runs from outside Hiraeth back to Caersws.



FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/CaerswsLlanidoesWalk

PHOTOGRAPHY: © PETER CREED, ALAMY, © FORESTRY ENGLAND CROWN COPYRIGHT, GETTY IMAGES



8 Stromness, Orkney

ABOUT Orkney's second-largest town has spectacular coastal walks and flocks of migrating seabirds arriving each autumn. From late October, Orkney's grey seals have their pups. The smell of hot pastries and fresh coffee, baked and roasted onsite, lures passers-by into Stromness Coffee, where the high-ceilinged rooms of a former bank also house the Vintage Paper Company.

WALK IT Nearby, past old stone houses on picturesque paved streets, is Stromness Museum with a 5,000-year-old human figure carved from whalebone. Amble round the shore for views to the volcanic island of Hoy. Look for redshanks, eider ducks, guillemots and rarer birds arriving for winter.



FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/StromnessWarebethWalk

9 Kingham to Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire



ABOUT Once the bluebells and foxgloves have faded, Foxholes nature reserve comes into its autumn glory, with caramel-coloured leaves, 200 species of fungi and seven types of bat. This winding wooded route also features grand manor houses, ancient churches and a fine farm café near the halfway point. Bruern Farm offers tasty locally sourced lunches for hungry walkers: rainbow wraps, wild venison meatballs and freshly baked pastries.

WALK IT Follow the Oxfordshire Way before branching off to the farm shop café. Towards the end, stroll through Wychwood Wild Garden among saffron-yellow weeping willows and russet swamp cypress. There are buses and trains between both ends of the walk, but not regularly, so do plan ahead.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/KinghamShiptonWalk



10 Dinefwr Park, Carmarthenshire

ABOUT Clifftop Castell Dinefwr near Llandeilo was once home to the powerful Lord Rhys, who presided over a blossoming of Welsh music and poetry. Strolling through crisp leaf-fall in the bronze and amber woods works up an appetite for a refreshing pot of tea at Pitchfork & Provision in Llandeilo, with its own independent artisan bakery, loaf cakes and tangy Pitchfork Cheddar. Don't miss the gooey bara brith.



WALK IT There are 800 hilly, historic acres to explore at Dinefwr Park, with lichen-draped oaks (some almost as old as the castle) a boardwalk and wooded medieval deer park. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown designed a walk to showcase the ancient trees. In autumn, you can hear rutting deer, drumming woodpeckers, and even tawny owls hooting at dusk.

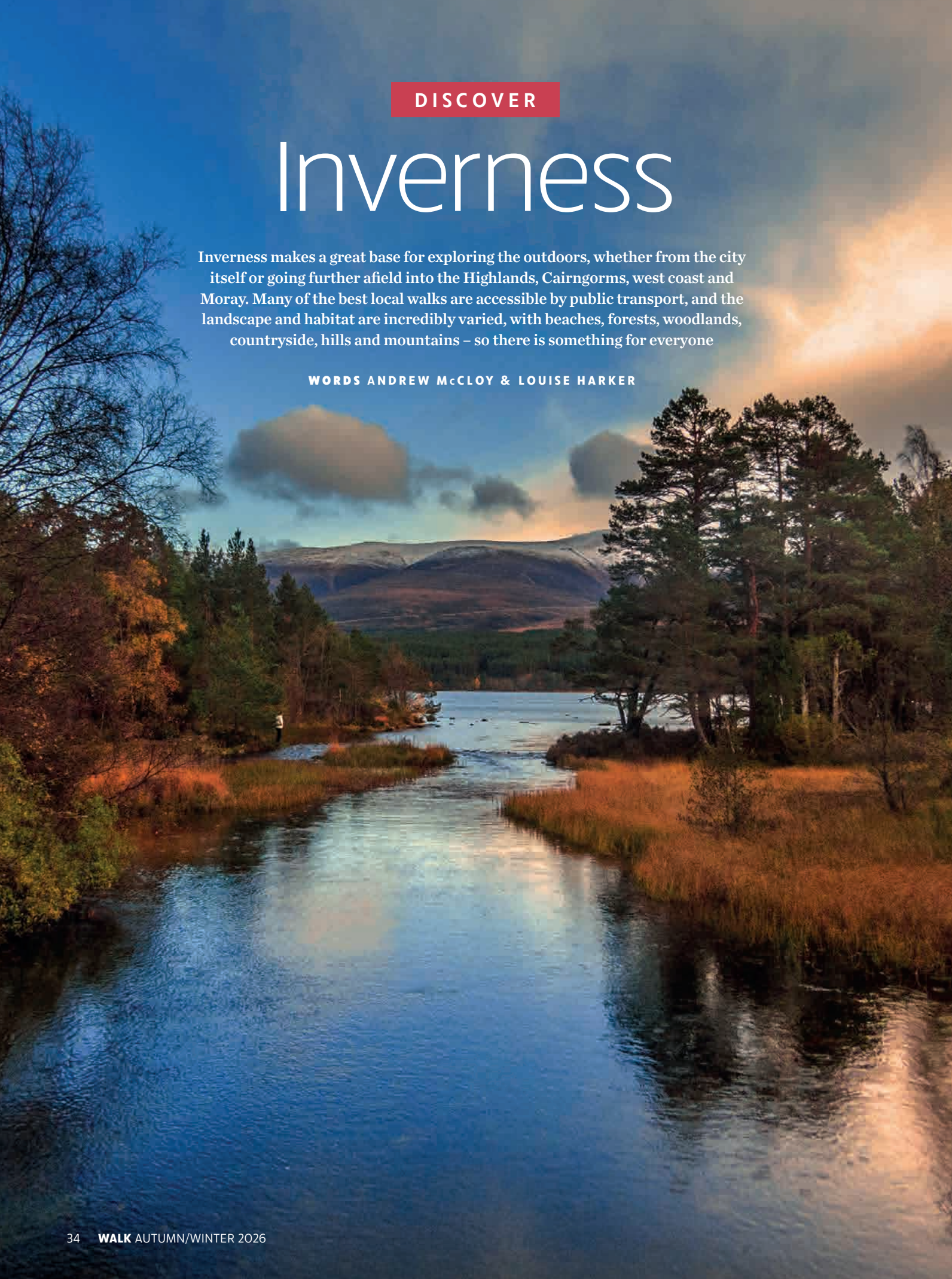
FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/LlandeiloWalk

DISCOVER

Inverness

Inverness makes a great base for exploring the outdoors, whether from the city itself or going further afield into the Highlands, Cairngorms, west coast and Moray. Many of the best local walks are accessible by public transport, and the landscape and habitat are incredibly varied, with beaches, forests, woodlands, countryside, hills and mountains – so there is something for everyone

WORDS ANDREW McCLOY & LOUISE HARKER



LOCAL EXPERT

Louise Harker

Inverness Young Walkers



'I've lived in Inverness for about five years. I moved up here during lockdown and as soon as it eased, I completed the Ramblers' Out There Award, became a member and now lead walks with Inverness Young Walkers. Being so close to nature is one of my favourite things about living here, and when I work from home I always try to escape for a few minutes for a walk in a nearby forest.'



Step into history

Culloden Battlefield, east of Inverness, has a very good visitor centre and you can walk around the battlefield, go into Culloden Forest or along to Clava Cairns Bronze Age cemetery.

Best walkers' café

Jammy Piece beside the Caledonian Canal in Inverness, but make sure you go early as their scones often sell out. (**facebook.com/jammypiece91b**)



Wonderful wildlife

Try dolphin-spotting at Chanonry Point on the Moray Firth. Go two hours after low tide and you are likely to see bottlenose dolphins feeding just 10-15 metres off the shore.

Seasonal must-do

Eden Court is Inverness's local independent theatre, and at the end of the year they'll be putting on the usual fun panto and Christmas markets.



Top event

As well as Highland games at various locations, the Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championship in Carrbridge in October is a very enjoyable competition – and you also get to taste the porridges!



Spectacular views

Craig Phadrig is a small hill on the western edge of Inverness with gorgeous views over the Beauly Firth to Ben Wyvis (our local munro), and the Fyrish monument, near Alness, which featured in the latest series of *The Traitors*.

Favourite walk

Along the Caledonian Canal from Muirtown Locks to Clachnaharry and Merkinch Local Nature Reserve, all within Inverness itself.



Superb walkers' pub

The Black Isle bar in the centre of Inverness serves locally brewed beer and craft ales, as well as wood-fired pizza.



Awesome activity

There is wild swimming at Lochs Morlich and Achilty; always go with someone else, wrap up warm and don't stay in too long.

Marvellous open-air museum

Newtonmore's Highland Folk Museum has 35 reconstructed buildings showing how Highland communities once lived.

Over to you...

Tell us why we should discover your local area at **walkmag@ramblers.org.uk**

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

YOUR SHOTS

The best photos from our 'sea views' competition

DOG DAYS IN STAITHES, NORTH YORKSHIRE BY ALASTAIR SMITH



PLOCKTON, JEWEL OF THE HIGHLANDS BY STEPHEN HALL



SAND, SEA AND FOSSILS ON THE YORKSHIRE COAST BY CARYS TEW



WALKING ON THE CLIFFS NEAR BARNSTAPLE, DEVON BY NIKOLETA SIDIROPOULOU



ROYALTY FOR THE DAY ON CASTLE ROCK, DEVON BY VANESSA HODGE



WALKING ALONG THE PILGRIM'S WAY, NORTHUMBERLAND BY NICK LAMBERT



STILLNESS OVER SOUTER, SUNDERLAND BY MICHELLE MAINE



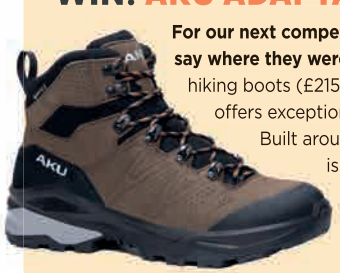
ISLAND OF KERRERA, INNER HEBRIDES BY FIONA TAYLOR



DESCENDING TO SCRATCHY BOTTOM ON THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH, DORSET BY BRIAN AKEHURST



WIN! AKU ADAPTA NBK GTX HIKING BOOTS



For our next competition, we'd like your photos of 'rest and refreshment' – don't forget to say where they were taken. The sender of our favourite wins a pair of AKU Adapta NBK GTX hiking boots (£215, **aku.co.uk**), available in men's or women's sizes. This lightweight boot offers exceptional comfort and protection for long walks on easy-to-moderate terrain. Built around AKU's Elica Natural Stride System, the asymmetric Vibram sole design is shaped to support a more efficient, natural walking action on uneven ground, while the premium nubuck upper, with a full rubber rand, adds protection against scuffs and trail abrasion. And the Gore-Tex lining provides waterproof, breathable performance in varied conditions.

HOW TO ENTER

*Enter using our online entry form at **ramblers.org.uk/walkcompetitions** or send your photos with your name, address and contact details to: Your Shots, **walk** magazine, the Ramblers, 13 Dirty Lane, London SE1 9PA, by 29 October 2026. Entries may be used in Ramblers publicity. Full T&Cs online.*

WALKING BOOTS FITTED AND CUSTOMISED

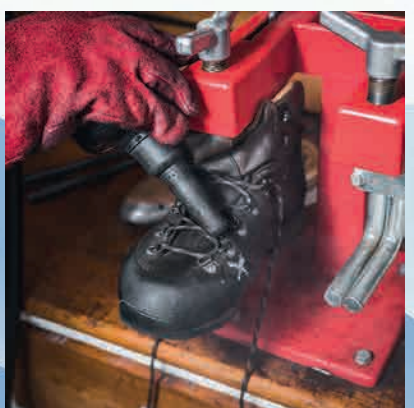
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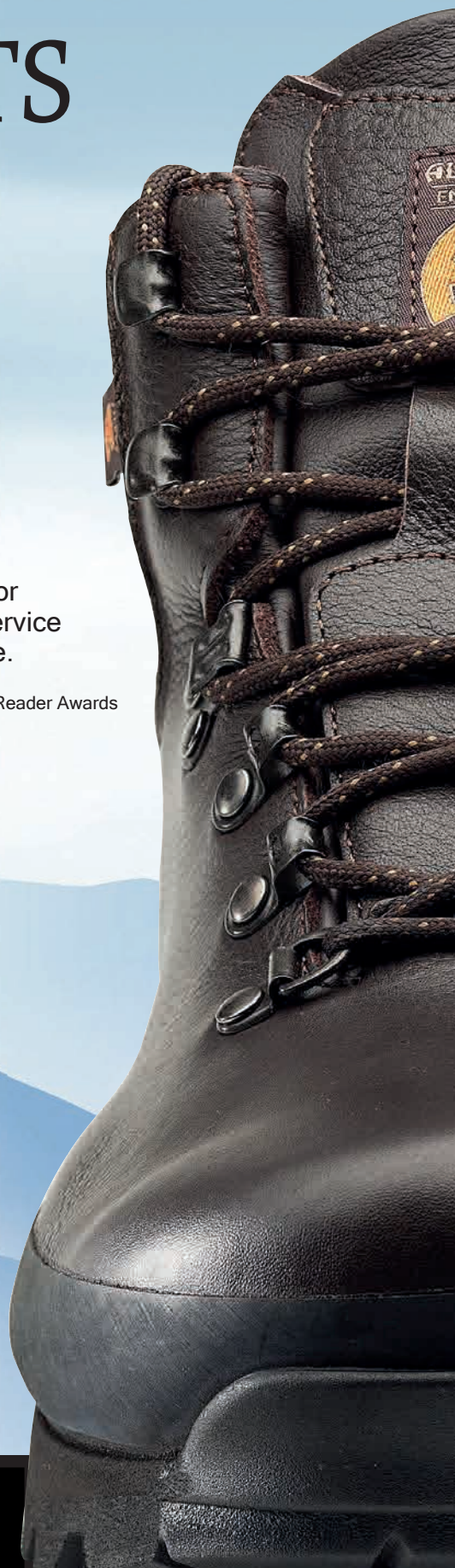
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ramble worldwide

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Holiday highlights



Northern Lights & Snowshoeing Delights Cruise

This exclusive 14-night winter cruise combines Fred. Olsen cruising with snowshoeing and winter trekking in Arctic Norway. Expect winter conditions and deeply rewarding days ashore!

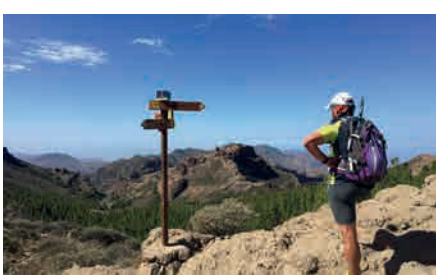
Departs: 28 Feb 2027
Price: from £3,499pp based on two sharing, excluding flights.



Winter Trails of Mont Blanc: Snowshoeing Around Chamonix

Guided by experts, you'll take on a series of progressively more demanding walks on this seven-night adventure, climbing to superb viewpoints and crossing high alpine valleys.

Departs: 6 Jan and 10 Feb 2027
Price: from £2,999pp based on two sharing, including flights.



Gran Canaria Guided Walking

Spend a week exploring the remarkably diverse landscapes of this captivating volcanic island, unveiling hidden gems while rambling through its unique terrain.

Departs: Various dates Nov and Dec 2026, and Jan and Feb 2027.
Price: from £2,049pp based on two sharing, including flights.

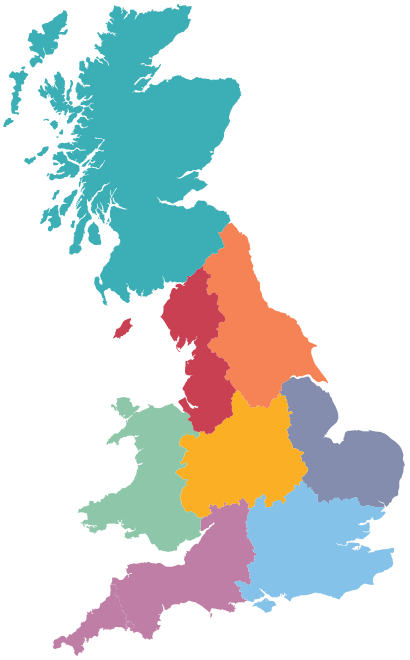
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES



Ramblers Routes

Britain's best walks from the experts

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY



SCOTLAND
CRAIL TO PITTENWEEM, FIFE

NORTH WEST
WAUGH'S WELL & ROOLEY MOOR, LANCASHIRE

NORTH EAST
THE GUARD HOUSE WAY, MULGRAVE ESTATE, NORTH YORKS

WALES
BEDDGELERT, ERYRI

MIDLANDS
WHIXALL & FENN'S MOSS, SHROPSHIRE

EAST
WANDLEBURY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

SOUTH WEST
DUNKERY BEACON, EXMOOR

SOUTH EAST
BOLDRE, NEW FOREST

HOW TO USE YOUR ROUTES

Walk information

Distance, ascent, type of walk and estimated time, based on a pace of roughly two miles an hour, or slower if over hilly terrain.

Our experts

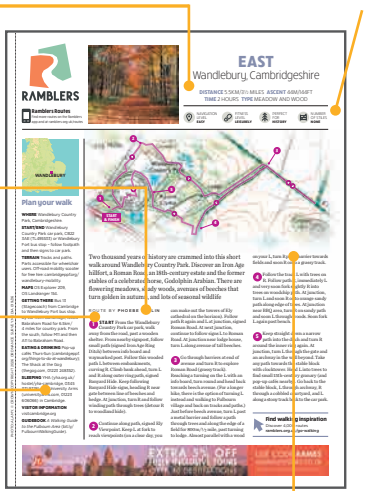
Routes are checked by our experts before publication.

Directions

Left and right are abbreviated to L and R.

Plan your walk

Information on public transport, maps and guidebooks, accommodation and eating and drinking options. Find nearby Ramblers groups by searching for the route location at **ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/ramblers-groups**.


RAMBLERS
EAST
Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire
Plan your walk

Maps

Follow the route line between the numbered waypoints in the direction indicated. A dashed line indicates an alternative to the main route.

Grades

Navigation levels are graded **NOVICE, EASY, MODERATE** or **TECHNICAL**. Novice and easy routes follow clear paths or features, and require only basic map-reading skills. Moderate and technical routes require map and compass skills, suitable clothing and equipment, and may include pathless stretches across open country.

Fitness levels are graded **EASY, LEISURELY, MODERATE** or **STRENUOUS**. Easy walks are suitable for families and wheelchair users. Leisurely and moderate routes can include rough terrain and sustained ascents and descents, and need a reasonable level of fitness. Strenuous routes are physically demanding, with steep climbs.

Always take the relevant OS map with you, or get the GPX route from our website or app. Check the online version for any route changes and additional information, too.



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SCOTLAND
Crail to Pittenweem, Fife

DISTANCE 12KM/7½ MILES **ASCENT** 59M/193FT
TIME 3 HOURS **TYPE** COAST

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **FAMILIES**
NUMBER OF STILES **2**



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear coastal walk in the East Neuk of Fife.

START Balcomie Links Hotel, Crail (NO615081).

END Tollcross bus stop, Pittenweem (NO546026) (for bus back to Crail).

TERRAIN Paths (sometimes uneven) and pavements.

MAPS OS Explorer 371, OS Landranger 59.

GETTING THERE Trains to Leuchars followed by bus 99 to St Andrews and 95 to Crail.

EATING & DRINKING The Shoregate, 67 High Street, Crail KY10 3RA (theshoregate.com, 01333 451815); The Waterfront, 18 Shore Street, Anstruther KY10 3EA (anstruther-waterfront.co.uk, 01333 312200).

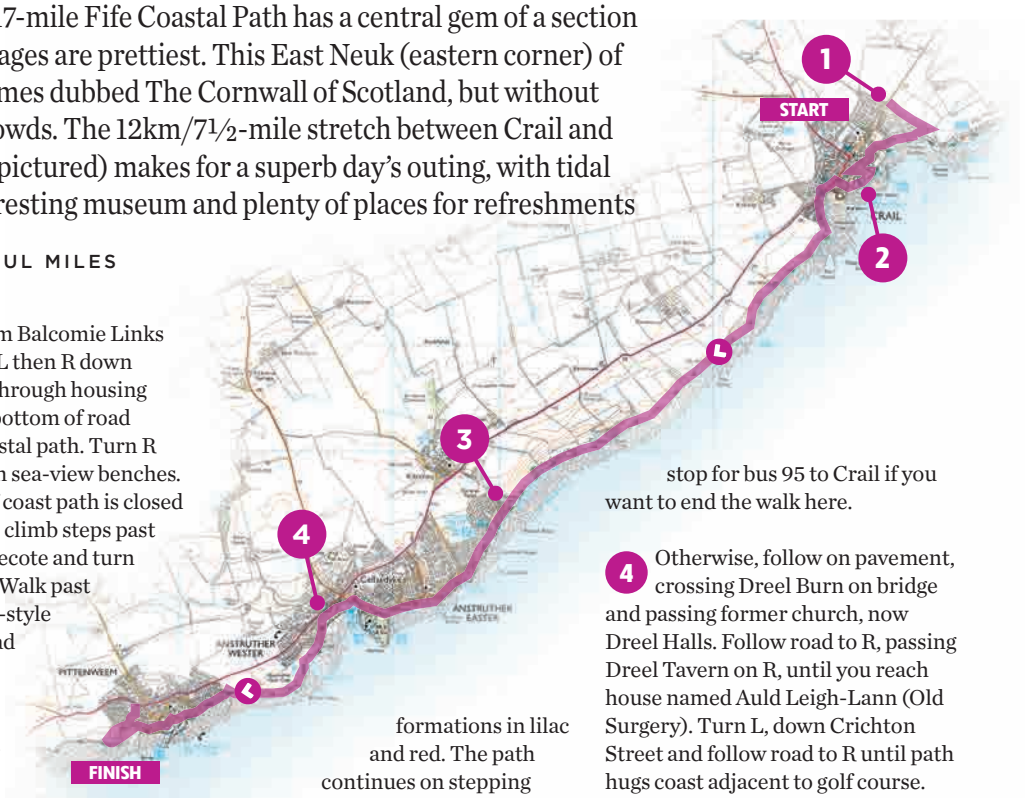
SLEEPING Balcomie Links Hotel, Balcomie Road, Crail KY10 3TN (balcomielinkshotel.com, 01333 450237).

VISITOR INFORMATION Crail Museum & Heritage Centre (seasonal), 62-64 Marketgate South, Crail KY10 3TL (crailmuseum.uk, 01333 450869).

GUIDEBOOK *Fife Coastal Path* by Sandra Bardwell and Jacquetta Megarry (£15.99, Rucksack Readers, ISBN 978 1913817008).

The 188km/117-mile Fife Coastal Path has a central gem of a section where the villages are prettiest. This East Neuk (eastern corner) of Fife is sometimes dubbed The Cornwall of Scotland, but without the tourist crowds. The 12km/7½-mile stretch between Crail and Pittenweem (pictured) makes for a superb day's outing, with tidal pools, an interesting museum and plenty of places for refreshments

ROUTE BY **PAUL MILES**



1 START From Balcomie Links Hotel, turn L then R down Pinkerton Road through housing estate. Bear L at bottom of road and then R to coastal path. Turn R through park with sea-view benches. A short stretch of coast path is closed due to erosion, so climb steps past 16th-century dovecote and turn L on Nethergate. Walk past handsome Dutch-style houses. When road bisects, keep L of chapel-like Royal British Legion building, heading towards harbour on Castle Walk.

2 Walk beside walls of former castle. The waymarked coast path turns R up Shoregate but it's more interesting to walk down to the harbour, passing Crail Harbour Gallery and Tearoom, and turn R just before sandy beach (swimmable at high tide), up steps, towards house 41 then L, following Hen's Ladder, a steep pedestrian walkway edged with historic homes. Exit onto Westgate. Turn L. After about 100m/328ft, turn L by bus stop, following sign for Fife Coastal Path. Turn L on West Braes towards sea, with views back to harbour on your L. Follow to end of road and turn R onto footpath across low cliffs. (Path here not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.) Caiplie Caves are beautiful sandstone rock formations in lilac and red. The path continues on stepping stones at one point where it's at – or below – sea level at high tide. Keep following with sea on your L until Cellardyke.

3 Continue on road to old harbour, once known as Skinfast Haven. Keep on road with former fishermen's houses on either side. Cellardyke merges into Anstruther. Bear L on East Shore, where there is a sculpture and benches on seafront. Continue following road beside sea and new lifeboat station (under construction). Pass Scottish Fisheries Museum, cafés and pubs on R. Keep on pavement with sea on L. As main road turns R, continue ahead on narrow, cobbled Castle Street and turn R on Wightmans Wynd. Turn L onto High Street, passing The Bank pub. Opposite is stop for bus 95 to Crail if you want to end the walk here.

4 Otherwise, follow on pavement, crossing Dreel Burn on bridge and passing former church, now Dreel Halls. Follow road to R, passing Dreel Tavern on R, until you reach house named Auld Leigh-Lann (Old Surgery). Turn L, down Crichton Street and follow road to R until path hugs coast adjacent to golf course. The sandy bays here are easy to access. Continue walking on path beside links, up steps at end, turn L along edge of field and then beside houses on cliff edge. Pass fishing harbour and 400-year-old Gyles House (pictured above). Keep following seafront, reaching a picturesque row of houses opposite sea wall. Continue onwards, up and over the headland to tidal pool, with play area and public toilets on clifftop. Turn R onto road and follow signs to main road. At main road, turn R to Tollcross bus stop, opposite West End Bar, and take service 95 back to Crail.

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NORTH WEST

Waugh's Well & Rooley Moor, Lancashire

DISTANCE 12KM/7½ MILES **ASCENT** 382M/1,253FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** MOOR AND VALLEY

NAVIGATION LEVEL **MODERATE**
FITNESS LEVEL **MODERATE**
PERFECT FOR **HERITAGE**
NUMBER OF STILES **1**



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk at Waterfoot, Lancashire.

START/END Cowpe Road car park, Waterfoot, Rawtenstall BB4 7AL (SD835218).

TERRAIN Lanes, moorland tracks and paths, old railway. NB Don't walk this route in misty or inclement conditions.

MAPS OS Explorer OL21, Landranger 103 and 109.

GETTING THERE Regular TransDev bus service 464 (linking Accrington and Rochdale) passes end of Cowpe Road (traveline.info, 0871 2002233). Free car park off A681 in Waterfoot, between Rawtenstall and Bacup. Turn for Cowpe at mini-roundabout and 'Health Centre' sign and car park is on right. More parking off Millar Barn Lane.

EATING & DRINKING The Firepit Restaurant, Rawtenstall (next to steam railway station), BB4 6AJ (thefirepitrestaurant.co.uk).

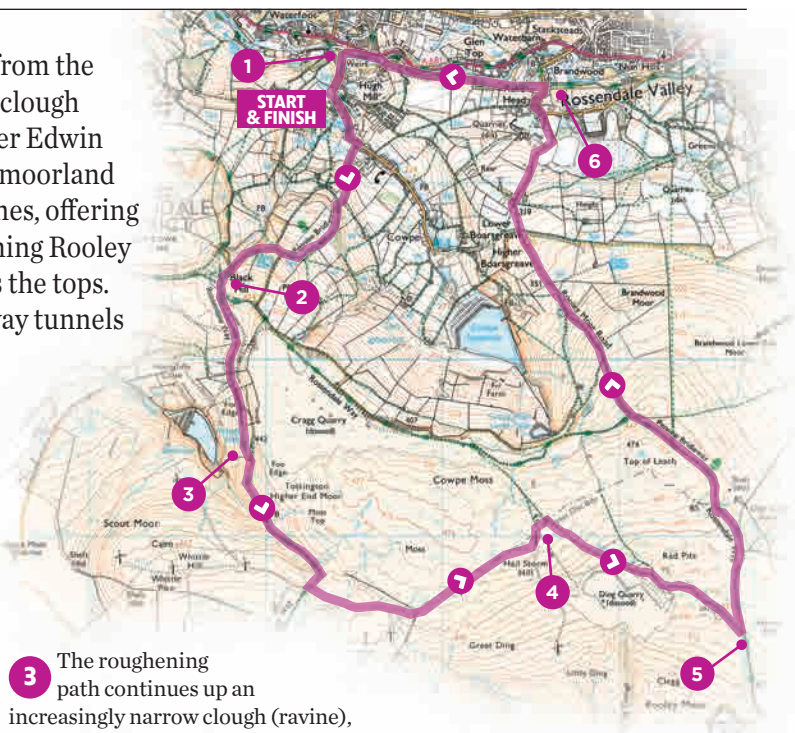
SLEEPING Chapel House B&B, Rossendale, BB4 7LH (cloughfoldchapel.co.uk, 07547 711500).

VISITOR INFORMATION visitlancashire.com

GUIDEBOOK *Walking in Lancashire* by Mark Sutcliffe (£14.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1786310033).

Rise up the Pennine Bridleway from the deep Irwell Valley to a secluded clough where renowned Victorian writer Edwin Waugh tarried. Progress to vast moorland domes and towering wind turbines, offering immense views and the astonishing Rooley Moor Road cobbled track across the tops. Return through renovated railway tunnels beside the lively River Irwell

ROUTE BY **NEIL COATES**



1 **START** Head up Cowpe Road, passing Health Centre (L). Shortly fork R, rising past industrial units, then sloping pastures and housing. In another 450m/¼ mile reach Brookland Terrace set back on R. Double back (fingerpost for Top of Leach) in front of houses; then L between garages ('Tippett Farm'). This part-concreted track is the Pennine Bridleway (PBW). At fork beyond livestock units, bear L (bridleway board) behind woodsheds up the twisty, stony track (PBW posts). Beyond a wide gate the climb eases. Keep along PBW, presently passing through a bridlegate (ignore track R) to reach a track junction at a wide crest, old tramroad embankment and PBW fingerpost.

2 Cut diagonally across the main track (leaving PBW) onto a softer, reedy way (head towards nearest windmill), passing a lone stone gatepost. Progress beside the ruinous wall (R) and merge ahead onto part-concreted reservoir road. Fork L in 200m/656ft onto level grassy path (Rossendale Way). Pass the ruins of Foe Edge Farm, then proceed past Waugh's Well and memorial to the 19th-century Lancashire dialect writer and poet Edwin Waugh.

3 The roughening path continues up an increasingly narrow clough (ravine), passing small waterfalls (great views back over reservoir). Shadow the broken wall (R) to twin stone gateposts; here bend R to the nearby service road to Scout Moor Wind Farm. Turn L, then fork L in 475m/1,558ft. Head to the farthest, highest windmill (No.25 beside doorway) at a sharp-R bend in this strange landscape. Leave the roadway here; pass L of the turbine along boggy track to the nearby ruinous stone shelter.

4 Turn R along the tramroad embankment (path soon narrows – persevere ahead past more ruins) for 500m/1,640ft to reach lip of abandoned Ding Quarry. Drop just a few paces into the near edge of this, then immediately bear L on rough, reedy, damp track. In 120m/394ft slip L just before deep ponding up steep, short path to join the wide access roadway ahead-L (initially uphill) out of quarry. Follow south-eastwards to junction (750m/2,460ft) with astonishing Rooley Moor Road, a Victorian cobbled moorland highway.

5 Turn L, joining PBW north across high moors. In 1.5km/nearly 1 mile reach sheep pens and a fork. Keep R (for Stacksteads) down steepening track, which becomes tarred at tall aerial. Continue downhill and keep L at the terraced cottages onto Rakehead Lane.

6 In 250m/820ft, cross an old railway bridge and immediately turn L onto the tarred cycleway. Follow this through several (lit) tunnels to a lane. Keep ahead (cycleway) above river back to start.

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NORTH EAST

The Guard House Way, Mulgrave Estate, North Yorks

DISTANCE 7KM/4½ MILES **ASCENT** 182M/597FT
TIME 2 HOURS **TYPE** COAST & FARMLAND

NAVIGATION LEVEL **NOVICE**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **VIEWS**
NUMBER OF STILES **1**



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk from Runswick Bay to Lythe.

START Runswick Bay Bank Top car park (NZ806161).

END Lythe Common (NZ846130).

TERRAIN Field paths and cinder track. You may encounter cattle.

MAPS OS Explorer OL27, OS Landranger 94.

GETTING THERE X4 bus between Whitby and Loftus (arrivabus.co.uk) serves both Runswick and Lythe. Parking on Lythe Common and opposite the Runswick Bay Hotel.

EATING & DRINKING Lythe Community Shop café and tea garden (facebook.com/lythecommunityshopltd; 01947 893983).

SLEEPING Runswick Bay Hotel (therunswickbay.com, 01947 841010); you can also rent the Old Guard House (mulgrave-estate.co.uk/holiday-cottages, 01947 893239).

VISITOR INFORMATION mulgrave-estate.co.uk/mulgrave-walks

GUIDEBOOK *Historic Walking Guides: Whitby, Robin Hood's Bay & Staithes* by Paul Chrystal (£11.99, Crécy Publishing, ISBN 978 1919327419).

The Mulgrave Walks are three new waymarked routes on Lord Normanby's Mulgrave Estate. Using a combination of freshly created permissive paths and formerly neglected rights of way, walkers can explore previously inaccessible corners of this lovely area. The Guard House Way is the shortest of the three routes, and you can link it with the Cleveland Way along the coast for a circular walk



ROUTE BY **JOLY BRAIME**

1 START Looking down Runswick bank with the car park to your L, turn R through the waymarked gate, walking behind the bus stop and parallel to the road. Cross fields and a wooded gully to reach the former Whitby–Loftus railway line. Follow the cinder track past three elegantly overgrown bridges.

2 Just after the third archway, take a signed track to the R. Go through the gate, then turn R to work your way around the edge of the field. At a cattle grid, turn R onto a surfaced vehicle track.

3 Just after a second cattle grid, cross through a gap in the hedge on your R (easier than using the stile) and follow the field edge around to the R. At some duckboards, turn L through a gate. Walk up the field edge then look for a gate halfway along the top edge of the field. Go through and continue up the field edge. At the top, turn R and follow the field boundary along.

4 Turn L over a stile at the end (signposted Lythe) and walk up towards the road. In front of you is the Old Guard House itself. Now a holiday let, this was once the entrance to a Cold War-era military bunker occupying the suspiciously man-made hillock behind it.

5 Cross the road and go straight on through the hedge. Follow the signposted path through the fields, passing Barnby Howe farm to the R and Upton Hall to the L.

6 Emerging onto Goldsborough Lane, you have a choice. The final fields of the route are home to a handsome herd of pedigree Holsteins, so if you're not keen on cows, you can take the road (turn R onto the lane, follow it up to the main road, cross over to the larger verge, then turn L and follow it into Lythe village). Otherwise, cross the road through the gate and turn R. Follow the signed path through several fields, along the back of Phipps Farm and past a couple of old barns. Look for a gate at the side of the tennis courts, and follow the ginnel through to the village hall and Lythe High Street. The bus stop to Runswick is across the road on the R and the common car parking is to the L.

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WALES
Beddgelert, Eryri

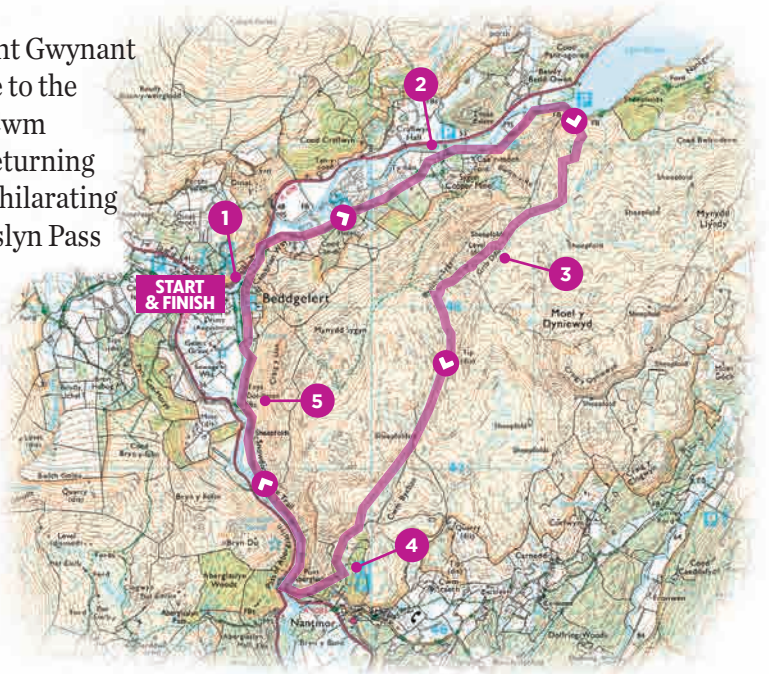
DISTANCE 9KM/5½ MILES **ASCENT** 306M/1,004FT
TIME 2½ HOURS **TYPE** MOUNTAIN AND RIVERSIDE

NAVIGATION LEVEL **MODERATE**
FITNESS LEVEL **MODERATE**
PERFECT FOR **INDUSTRIAL HISTORY, VIEWS**
NUMBER OF STILES **1**



From pretty Beddgelert, the Nant Gwynant valley leads to Llyn Dinas, home to the mythical red dragon. Climb to Cwm Bychan for grand Eryri views, returning on the Fisherman's Path – an exhilarating rock-cut trail along the Aberglaslyn Pass

ROUTE BY **JEN & SIM BENSON**



Plan your walk

WHERE River and mountain circuit from the picturesque village of Beddgelert.

START/FINISH Beddgelert Bridge, LL55 4YB (SH590481).

TERRAIN Lane, valley and mountain path, some rocky and steep sections with steps.

MAPS OS Explorer OL17, OS Landranger 115.

GETTING THERE Train to Porthmadog, then the S4 bus to Beddgelert (sherparwyddfa.wales). By road, take the A498 from Porthmadog to the A4086 and Capel Curig, or the A4085 from Caernarfon. Use 7 Cae Morys car park (LL55 4YW).

EATING & DRINKING Glaslyn Ice Cream & Pizza (glaslynices.co.uk, 01766 890339); Bistro Hebog, Beddgelert (ybistroynyrhebog.com).

SLEEPING National Trust cottages and riverside camping on the Craflwyn estate (nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays, 0344 800 2070). Beddgelert's hotels include luxury Tŷ Afon – River House (tyafon.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Eryri National Park (eryri.gov.wales). Beddgelert Information Centre on Canolfan Hebog, LL55 4YD.

GUIDEBOOK *100 Classic Country Walks* by Jen & Sim Benson (£14.99, National Trust, ISBN 9780008773144).

IMPORTANT The Fisherman's Path section at the southern end of the Pass of Aberglaslyn traverses above the river and involves some easy scrambling. It may be impassable if the river is high and we'd advise against this route in very wet or windy weather. You can avoid this section by using the A498 from Nantmor to point 5.

1 START From the old stone bridge over the Afon Colwyn in the village centre, cross to the south side and turn L, following Stryd Smith Road to a footbridge over the confluence of the Colwyn and the Glaslyn. Cross the bridge and bear L on the footpath, staying L of the houses. Go through a gate onto a minor road, turning R and following the road past Cae Du campsite to reach Sygun Copper Mine. Copper has been extracted here since the Bronze Age and the tunnels run deep into the mountain. Self-guided tours available (paid entry).

2 Bear L past the copper mines entrance and follow the road to a path on the R just before the road bridge. Follow the path through a gate and continue to Llyn Dinas with stunning views up the Nant Gwynant valley – the pointed summit of Yr Aran hides Yr Wyddfa on the L and Moel Siabod looms in the distance. Follow the path R of the llyn and bear R at the next junction, walking uphill away from the lake. This stony path climbs onto the mountainside, passing the remains of mineworks undergoing reclamation by nature. The path curves to the R and follows a small valley uphill to a path junction and signpost.

3 Turn L, signed to Aberglaslyn, following the path across the rare upland heathland to the next path junction, and cross the ladder stile. Look out for grayling butterflies and birds including wheatear and whinchat. Start to descend, following the path down Cwm Bychan, passing old mine machinery and eventually walking through woodland to the National Trust Nantmor car park.

4 Turn R in the car park, walking uphill on a narrow, rooty path through woodland, then down to the river at the Pass of Aberglaslyn. Turn R, following the Fisherman's Path upstream. Some parts of this trail are cut into the rocky river gorge, offering superb views of the rushing, turquoise water. There are steps and a couple of places where handholds have been added for reassurance. Continue upstream to the level crossing.

5 Cross the tracks of the Welsh Highland Railway, which runs for 40km/25 miles between Caernarfon and Porthmadog, then turn L and cross the footbridge. Turn R, taking the path back to Beddgelert. You can divert to the L across the field to visit the statue of Gelert, the faithful but doomed hound of folklore. When you reach Beddgelert, turn L on Stryd Smith Road to return to the bridge.

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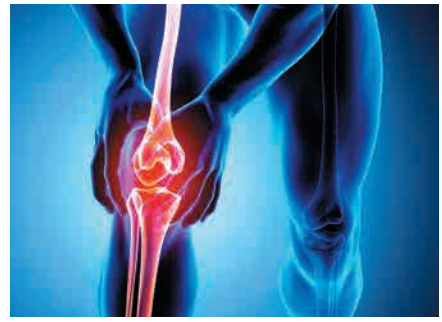
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MIDLANDS

Whixall & Fenn's Moss, Shropshire

DISTANCE 12KM/7½ MILES **ASCENT** 5M/16FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** MOSSLAND AND TOWPATH

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **EASY**
PERFECT FOR **VIEWS & HERITAGE**
NUMBER OF STILES **NONE**



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk from Whixall to Fenn's Moss.

START/END Morris' Bridge NNR free car park, Whixall SY13 2RT (SJ493354).

TERRAIN Towpath, exposed mossland tracks, old railway. (Dogs must be on a lead.)

MAPS OS Explorer 241, OS Landranger 126.

GETTING THERE From A41 town bypass south of Whitchurch, follow lanes (signed B5476 for Wem) via Tilstock village. Turn at the Horseshoes pub and look for brown NNR signs beyond Hollinwood, then Welsh End. By train, you'll need to take a taxi from Whitchurch station, 10km/6 miles away.

EATING & DRINKING Waterside Café (whixallmarina.co.uk, 01948 880701); The Horseshoes Inn (facebook.com/TheHorseshoesInn).

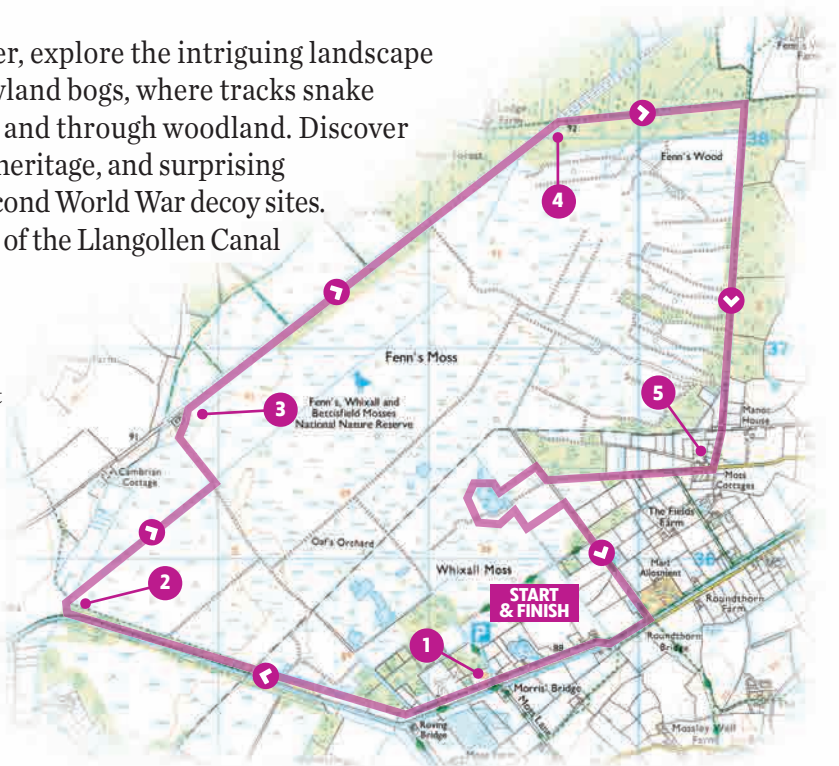
SLEEPING The Moorhead B&B (themoorhead.co.uk, 07886 869314). B&Bs in Whitchurch.

VISITOR INFORMATION themeresandmosses.co.uk for trail maps, especially the History Trail followed in point 5.

GUIDEBOOK *Shropshire: 40 Heritage & History Walks* by Derek Houghton (£6.99, Pocket Mountains, ISBN 978 1916739048).

On the England/Wales border, explore the intriguing landscape of one of Britain's largest lowland bogs, where tracks snake across mossland, past meres and through woodland. Discover peat-cutting and old railway heritage, and surprising history from bog bodies to Second World War decoy sites. There's also a tranquil stretch of the Llangollen Canal

ROUTE BY **NEIL COATES**



1 **START** Join the towpath, canal on your L. In 1km/⅔ mile divert R to the Mammoth Tower, from which are revelatory views across the National Nature Reserve and to the distant Welsh mountains. Return to the towpath and continue west (canal L) for another 1km/⅔ mile.

2 At the information boards just before an L-bend, turn R down wooden steps onto a wide dirt path beside a deep, watery ditch, progressing out across the colourful mossland. In about 1km/⅔ mile you'll reach a wider cross-track (with 'No Access' path ahead). Turn L along this (one of the tramroads that served the busy peat-diggings here, which ceased in 1990). Near the edge of the bogland are the gaunt remains of Fenn's Old Works. This is where some of the peat was processed and baled for horticultural and other uses, exported by train on the adjoining old railway.

3 Turn R along the route of the old railway, with the vast expanse of Fenn's Moss to your R beyond the fringing birchwoods. The long, straight trackbed is a good place to spot birds, wildflowers and butterflies in season.

4 In just over 2km/1¼ miles, at the sharp corner of woodland, fork R (well marked with information boards) onto a dirt track and follow this through the lovely mixed pine and birch woods to reach more information boards in 1km/⅔ mile (where the woods end on your L). Here, turn R along the grassy ride (line of old tramroad) that skims south alongside Fenn's Moss pinewoods (L). Woodland fringe gaps open views (R) across the landscape, where Second World War flammable Starfish decoy sites were placed. Stay on the main track to reach a gate onto a surfaced lane, then advance past the housing to reach a T-junction.

5 Turn R, walking past more houses to a junction in 200m/656ft. Keep straight ahead on the tree-lined track, past a secluded house then along the continuing gated track onto the mossland. At the major staggered path crossing (another 200m/656ft), turn R to find Trail Post 8 (100m/328ft). Here, turn L, then go R at Post 7 (200m/656ft) to closely circle the large mere (L) anticlockwise (keep L at Post 6). This is where three Iron Age and early Bronze Age bog bodies were found by Victorian peat diggers. Reaching a major T-junction, go L (different Post 7). In another 150m/492ft (passing bench en route) turn R on the wide track (Orange Trail waymarks) to reach the canal at Marl Allotment and Roundthorn Bridge. Turn R along the towpath (canal L) back to the car park.

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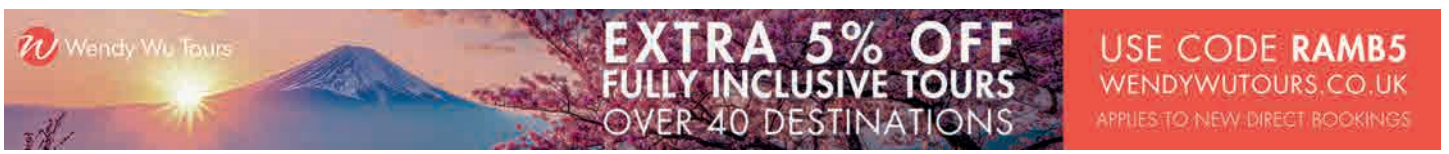


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EAST
Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire

DISTANCE 5.5KM/3½ MILES **ASCENT** 44M/144FT
TIME 2 HOURS **TYPE** MEADOW AND WOOD

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **HISTORY**
NUMBER OF STILES **NONE**





Plan your walk

WHERE Wandlebury Country Park, Cambridgeshire.

START/END Wandlebury Country Park car park, CB22 3AE (TL495533) or Wandlebury Fort bus stop – follow footpath and then signs to car park.

TERRAIN Tracks and paths. Parts accessible for wheelchair users. Off-road mobility scooter for free hire: cambridgeppf.org/wandlebury-mobility.

MAPS OS Explorer 209, OS Landranger 154.

GETTING THERE Bus 13 (Stagecoach) from Cambridge to Wandlebury Fort bus stop. By car from Cambridge, follow Babraham Road for 6.5km/4 miles for country park. From the south, follow M11 and then A11 to Babraham Road.

EATING & DRINKING Pop-up cafés Thurs-Sun (cambridgeppf.org/things-to-do-at-wandlebury); The Shack at the Gog (thegog.com, 01223 248352).

SLEEPING YHA (yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-cambridge, 0345 371 9728) and University Arms (universityarms.com, 01223 606066) in Cambridge.

VISITOR INFORMATION visitcambridge.org

GUIDEBOOK *A Walking Guide to the Fulbourn Area* (bit.ly/FulbournWalkingGuide).

Two thousand years of history are crammed into this short walk around Wandlebury Country Park. Discover an Iron Age hillfort, a Roman Road, an 18th-century estate and the former stables of a celebrated horse, Godolphin Arabian. There are flowering meadows, shady woods, avenues of beeches that turn golden in autumn, and lots of seasonal wildlife

ROUTE BY **PHOEBE TAPLIN**

1 **START** From the Wandlebury Country Park car park, walk away from the road, past a wooden shelter. From nearby signpost, follow small path (signed Iron Age Ring Ditch) between info board and waymarked post. Follow this wooded path L between embankments, curving R. Climb bank ahead, turn L and R along outer ring path, signed Banyard Hide. Keep following Banyard Hide signs, heading R near gate between line of beeches and hedge. At junction, turn R and follow winding path through trees (detour R to woodland hide).

2 Continue along path, signed Ely Viewpoint. Keep L at fork to reach viewpoints (on a clear day, you can make out the towers of Ely cathedral on the horizon). Follow path R again and L at junction, signed Roman Road. At next junction, continue to follow signs L to Roman Road. At junction near lodge house, turn L along avenue of tall beeches.

3 Go through barriers at end of avenue and turn R to explore Roman Road (grassy track). Reaching a turning on the L with an info board, turn round and head back towards beech avenue. (For a longer hike, there is the option of turning L instead and walking to Fulbourn village and back on tracks and paths.) Just before beech avenue, turn L past a metal barrier and follow a path through trees and along the edge of a field for 800m/½ mile, past turning to lodge. Almost parallel with a wood on your L, turn R past a barrier towards fields and soon R onto a grassy track.

4 Follow the track L with trees on R. Follow path R, immediately L and very soon fork slightly R into trees on woodchip path. At junction, turn L and soon R onto orange sandy path along edge of trees. At junction near BBQ area, turn R on sandy path and soon L through woods. Soon fork L again past bench.

5 Keep straight down a narrow path into the ditch and turn R around the inner ring again. At junction, turn L through the gate and an archway in the wall beyond. Take any path towards the stable block with clocktower. Head L into trees to find small 15th-century granary (and pop-up cafés nearby). Go back to the stable block, L through archway, R through a cobbled courtyard, and L along a stony track back to the car park.

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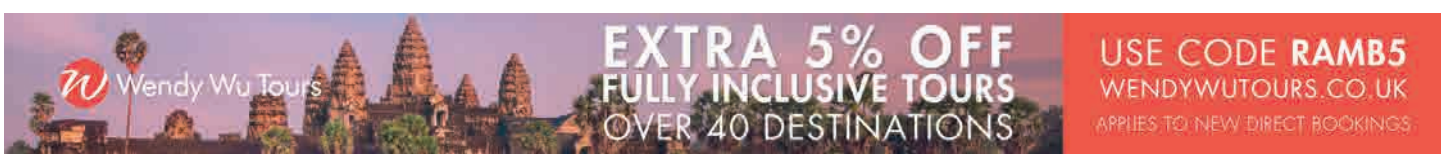


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SOUTH WEST
Dunkery Beacon, Exmoor

DISTANCE 7KM/4½ MILES **ASCENT** 343M/1,125FT
TIME 2½ HOURS **TYPE** HILL, COUNTRYSIDE

NAVIGATION LEVEL **MODERATE**
FITNESS LEVEL **MODERATE**
PERFECT FOR **VIEWS & WILDLIFE**
NUMBER OF STILES **NONE**



Plan your walk

WHERE Dunkery Beacon on Exmoor, Somerset.

START/END Webber's Post car park, north of Dunkery Hill, Luccombe, near Minehead TA24 8TB (SS903438).

TERRAIN Tracks, paths, roads, some (optional) walking through heather with rough ground and trip hazards.

MAPS OS Landranger 181, OS Explorer OL9.

GETTING THERE Nearest bus stops are on A39, 3km/2 miles away. Turn off A39 (east of Porlock, west of Minehead) to West Luccombe and Horner. Go through Horner and take a R, car park will be on R.

EATING & DRINKING Horner Tea Gardens, Minehead TA24 8HY (facebook.com/HornerTeaGarden).

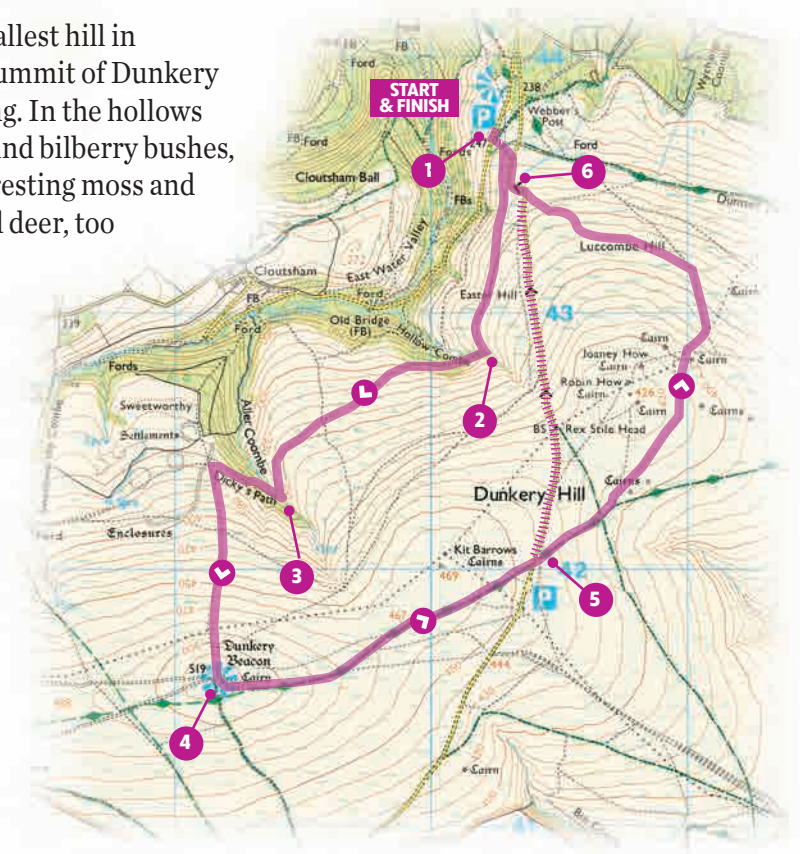
SLEEPING Porlock Vale Campsite, Holt Ball Farm, Luccombe, TA24 8SZ (porlockvalecampsite.co.uk, 07860 921007). The Crown Hotel, Exford, TA24 7PP (crownhotelexmoor.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Porlock Information Centre, Vale Yard, High Street, Porlock TA24 8PU (porlock.co.uk, 01643 863150).

GUIDEBOOK *15 Short Walks on Exmoor* by Steve Davison (£9.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1786311900).

As you might expect from the tallest hill in Somerset, the views from the summit of Dunkery Beacon to the coast are stunning. In the hollows and valleys of this walk, you'll find bilberry bushes, polypody ferns and lots of interesting moss and lichen. Look out for passing red deer, too

ROUTE BY **DAVE HAMILTON**



1 **START** Take an immediate R turn from car park onto road. Take first L, through a gap in the bank onto unmarked track, between gorse bushes. (Path might not be marked on maps.) Cross footpath, keep heading south. Step over the brook – path will become a little steeper. Follow lovely section with wide open views. Path will begin to dip to another small brook with stepping stones.

2 From Hollow Coombe, the path heads up. Look for views over the sea and birds of prey overhead.

3 Cross at little waterfall and continue on the hillside path. Look out for a path that heads up and L at an acute angle. This section is steep and the most challenging part of the route.

4 With the memorial plaque behind you, take the L fork (to the L of the toposcope – panoramic viewpoint indicator) onto the Macmillan Way. The seaside town of Minehead is ahead. The path plateaus for some time before it heads down to the road.

5 The easiest route is to follow road L all the way back to the car park. This is the best choice in bad weather. Alternately, for an off-road route through winding deer tracks, cross the road, taking the public bridleway towards Huntscott. The path is rough with a steep decline. After 400m from road, take the L fork: a narrower track uphill. This feels no more than a deer track in places, but keep the faith and stick to it. It is unlikely you will encounter other walkers on this section. At an intersection of a few similar narrow paths, go straight on, onto a well-trodden path which has diverged from that marked on OS maps. Turn L at T-junction onto permissive path. When path forks, take the (upper) LH fork. The path meanders through heather and looks like a narrow animal track at times. Keep on heading north-northwest, towards the wooded valley, until you meet the road.

6 On the road, take a R and head downhill. Drivers are generally considerate to walkers here, as most of them are returning walkers themselves! Take the L bridleway away from Brockwell. Turn R at crossroads on the path. Once you come out onto the road, take a R to car park where you began.

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SOUTH EAST
Boldre, New Forest

DISTANCE 8KM/5 MILES **ASCENT** 42M/138FT
TIME 2½ HOURS **TYPE** VILLAGE, RIVER, WOOD, FARM

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **WILDLIFE**
NUMBER OF STILES **1**



Plan your walk

WHERE A circular route from the village of Boldre through Royston Woods Nature Reserve in the New Forest.

START/END The Red Lion pub, SO41 8NE (SZ314981).

TERRAIN Lanes, footpaths and bridleways.

MAPS OS Explorer OL22, OS Landranger 196.

GETTING THERE Buses from Southampton, Lymington, Hythe and Brockenhurst to Red Lion stop, Boldre Lane. Brockenhurst station, 5km/3 miles away, has direct trains from London Waterloo, Winchester, Southampton, Bournemouth, Poole and more. By car, head south on A337 from Brockenhurst towards Lymington, turn L onto Rope Hill to Boldre. Park near pub or by Boldre Church.

EATING & DRINKING The Red Lion, Boldre (facebook.com/theredlionboldre, 01590 700212).

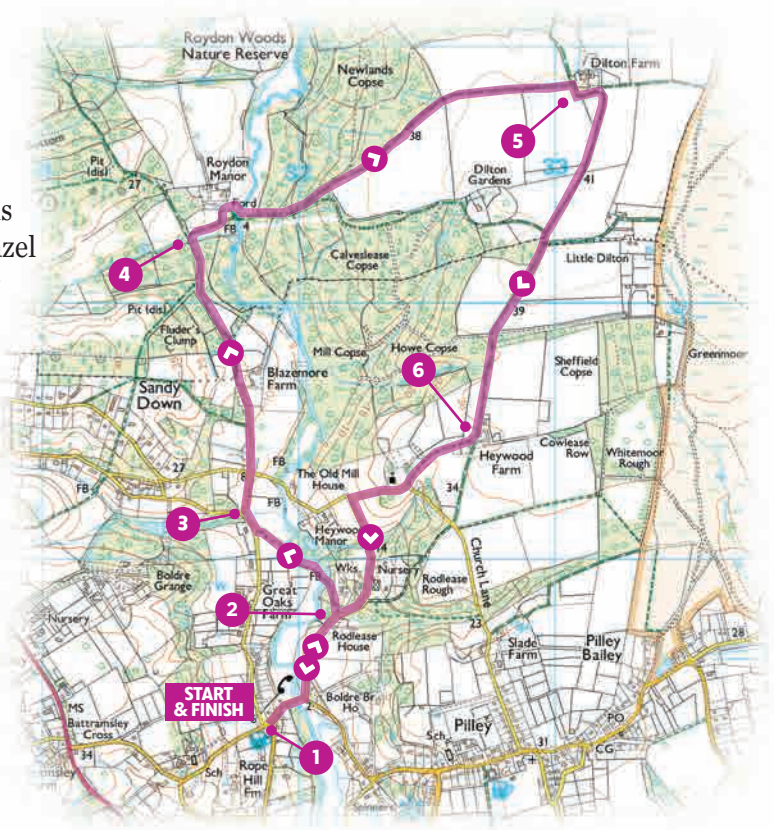
SLEEPING The Huntsman (thehuntsmanofbrockenhurst.com, 01590 622225).

VISITOR INFORMATION thenewforest.co.uk/visitor-info/local-information-points

GUIDEBOOK *Hampshire & The New Forest Year Round Walks* by Vicky Fletcher (£9.99, Countryside Books, ISBN 978 1846743610).

A family-friendly circular route beginning in the tiny New Forest village of Boldre, crossing the Lymington River and heading up to Roydon Woods Nature Reserve. Managed by The Wildlife Trust, this ancient woodland of conifer and hazel is home to herds of deer and plenty of fascinating fungi during autumn

ROUTE BY **NATALIE LEAL**



1 **START** With the Red Lion pub to your R and a small green to your L, take the road straight ahead signed to Boldre Church. The lane soon goes over an old stone bridge crossing the Lymington River. Once over the bridge, the road splits. Go L following Rodlease Lane past Boldre Bridge House.

2 When you reach a footpath leading to some waterworks, turn L and then L again at the waterworks, following the footpath that crosses a bridge into a meadow. Follow the footpath R, through a gate and across the next meadow and then over a stile. Continue to follow the footpath through the next meadow to reach a gate leading to a quiet lane. Turn R.

3 When you reach the first junction on the lane, bear R, then at the following junction keep straight ahead. Continue walking straight ahead ignoring a bridleway on the L. The lane soon ends and becomes a bridleway heading into Roydon Woods. Continue straight ahead into The Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve and ignore the first bridleway off to your L as you walk. When you reach a bridleway on the R, follow it through the gate.

4 This path leads you to a large wooden bridge back over the Lymington River. Cross the bridge and follow the bridleway as it leads gradually uphill to reach a signpost, then continue straight ahead towards Dilton. At the gate leading out of the nature reserve, continue straight ahead, walking towards a farm.

5 At the farm, follow the bridleway signed R past large metal cowsheds, and then R again taking the bridleway signed for Church Lane. Once past the open fields, ignore the R and then L bridleways and instead continue straight ahead along the broad stony track.

6 When you reach Haywards Farm, take the footpath R past the cottage. The footpath leads to a large car park behind St John the Baptist Church. When you reach the lane, turn R, heading past the church. Follow the lane downhill, then turn L at the junction. Continue along this quiet lane all the way to the bottom, then go R back over the stone bridge across the river and back to the pub/start point.

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THE BIG WALK

Go with the flow

Running from the Cambrian Mountains to Cardigan Bay, the Teifi is one of Wales's longest rivers – and among its most culturally significant. Its fortunes have floundered in recent years, but a new source-to-sea trail puts this regal river back on the map

WORDS SARAH BAXTER

With a mile to go, I pause to gaze over the yawning blue estuary, feeling that familiar sensation: the mix of triumph and regret you get at the end of a good, long walk. But there's something else, too. A sort of motherly pride? 'There she goes,' I think, 'heading out into the world, all grown up.'

For days, I've been following the River Teifi, known as the 'Queen of Welsh Rivers'. We met in the remote Cambrian Mountains, where she emerged as a babbling pipsqueak amid the bare hills, rocks and tussocks. I followed her all the way here, to watch her gorgeously disgorge into Cardigan Bay. For the Teifi – one of the longest rivers wholly in Wales – it's been a journey of 75 miles; one she's been making since the Ice Age. For me, it's been a slightly more meandering 83, along a route newly launched this spring.

The Teifi Valley Trail (or Taith Dyffryn Teifi in Welsh) was first envisioned decades ago. When I catch up with Kay Davies of Lampeter Ramblers before my walk, she recalls being involved back then. But the proposed route wasn't ideal ('too much road, not designed by walkers') and was ultimately shelved as attention was diverted to the Wales Coast Path.

However, for Kay – a stalwart Ramblers volunteer and the Teifi Valley Trail's modest driving force – the idea never went away. 'Trails have the potential to take us into the heart of the countryside, inspiring us to go to those lesser-visited areas – like this,' she says.

A valley reinvigorated

Inhabited since Neolithic times, the Teifi Valley was long central to Wales's cultural history, wool industry and fishing trade. These days, it's something of a backwater whose stories seem forgotten. Its factories are shuttered, its legendary salmon stocks depleted, its waters threatened by pollution, its towns challenged.

Take Lampeter. 'It was a thriving market town,' Kay tells me. 'But since the loss of a vital rail link, a decline in agriculture, the collapse of fishing tourism, savage local authority cuts, and now the loss of the university [Wales's oldest, which ceased undergraduate teaching in 2025], it's withering before our eyes.

'Although outdoor leisure is not a panacea, it does provide opportunities,' she



continues. 'With local authority backing and grant-assisted funding, people can bring about beneficial change, no matter how small. There's a niche in the Teifi Valley to attract those with a desire to discover less touristy, quieter environments. We have much to offer, and a steady stream of walkers staying over and passing through will make a difference in our towns and villages. It's all money into local business.'

Kay hasn't created the trail on her own, of course. It's a proper people's path – the result of local Ramblers groups, Walkers are Welcome communities and footpath associations along the river working together towards one goal. 'There's this binding common denominator in the walking fraternity that seems to hold people together,' explains Kay. This shared purpose has seen teams of volunteers out and about, clearing, checking, testing, waymarking, and now maintaining and promoting the route.

Hiking through history

I certainly appreciate all their hard work as I set off on my journey. The trail has been designed in sensible stages that mostly start and end where there are buses, shops and inns. Such is the case with stage one, which begins in the village of Pontrhydfendigaid, the 'Bridge of the Blessed Ford', where the Teifi is first properly crossed.

This stage, unlike the others, is a loop, because no buses make the journey up to Teifi Pools, the remote upland lakes from which the river springs. It's a dramatically desolate place, and I'm glad to have a few freshly minted fingerposts guiding me through. The river doesn't seem to want to stick around up here either; soon we're dropping to a land of softer green, making a pilgrimage to the 'Westminster Abbey of Wales'.

Founded by Cistercian monks in the 12th century, Strata Florida was once the country's second most important place of worship (after St Davids Cathedral in Pembrokeshire), and a custodian of Welsh culture. Generations of medieval Welsh princes were buried here, along with Dafydd ap Gwilym, one of Wales's greatest medieval poets. It's also associated with the *Brut y Tywysogion* (*The Chronicle of the Princes*) – one of the most important >

sources of Welsh medieval history before the conquest of Wales by the English crown.

Now, Strata Florida lies in quiet ruin. Only the handsome arch of the old west doorway stands tall, framing the hills behind, a tantalising hint of the abbey's former scale. This looping stage, a satisfying ten-ish mile yomp, makes a good day walk if you don't have time to cover the whole trail. But I'm carrying on, via the Teifi's peat bogs and gorse-bright slopes, traffic-less lanes and bleating hills.

It's a largely moderate undertaking, nothing too strenuous. I feel lucky, gambolling along, my only concern being where to pick up lunch. I think of the women who walked here before me: the wool-gatherers who trudged traditional 'woollen paths', bending to collect scraps of fleece they could spin and weave for extra income. Or those who hauled heavy loads of peat down the hills, carrying it in baskets on their backs, so their hands were free to knit while they walked. What a 21st-century treat to walk here for pleasure alone.

Local heroes

And the Teifi Valley Trail is truly a pleasure; not only the bucolic valley itself but also the unexpected finds within it. In Tregaron, as I finish the day with an excellent shepherd's pie and chilled glass of white at the Y Talbot hotel, I learn of local hero Henry Richard, a tireless campaigner on Welsh issues and anti-slavery, and founder of the Peace Union, a forerunner of the United Nations. His statue stands in the square outside. But, as Richard was a stalwart of the temperance movement, he's been placed with his back to the pub!

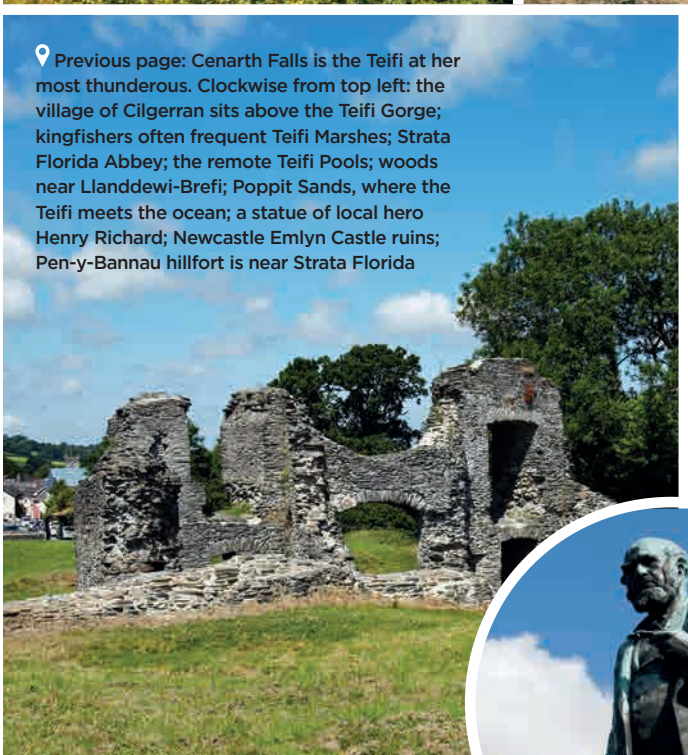
In Llanddewi Brefi (if the name seems familiar, it's where Matt Lucas's Dafydd was 'the only gay in the village' in the BBC's *Little Britain* in the early 2000s), I get a glimpse of old Teifi life. This little outpost, once at the nexus of Roman roads, was a self-sufficient community with its own carpenter, stonemason, cobblers, millers, weavers, barbers and saddlers – all gone now. It's also where, at a 6th-century synod, St David himself is said to have miraculously raised the mound on which the current church sits. As a local puts it to me, in one of two remaining pubs (there used to be 12): 'Raising a hill? One of the most unnecessary miracles in Wales!'

I'm not walking beside the river now. There's a reason this is called the Teifi















Previous page: Cenarth Falls is the Teifi at her most thunderous. Clockwise from top left: the village of Cilgerran sits above the Teifi Gorge; kingfishers often frequent Teifi Marshes; Strata Florida Abbey; the remote Teifi Pools; woods near Llanddewi-Brefi; Poppit Sands, where the Teifi meets the ocean; a statue of local hero Henry Richard; Newcastle Emlyn Castle ruins; Pen-y-Bannau hillfort is near Strata Florida

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, © TEIFI VALLEY TRAIL









DISTANCE The Teifi Valley Trail is 133.5km/83 miles, walkable in eight days.

MAPS The trail is covered by OS Explorer maps 185, 198 and 199. GPX files and a Teifi Valley Trail guidebook are available from the Teifi Valley Trail Association (**teifivalleytrail.wales**).

GETTING THERE The T21 bus runs to Pontrhydfendigaid from Aberystwyth, which has direct trains to Birmingham. The 585 (Aberystwyth-Lampeter) and 460 (Cardigan-Newcastle Emlyn) are useful.

ACCOMMODATION The Y Talbot is a friendly inn in Tregaron (doubles from £70; **ytalbot.com**). The New Inn in Llanddewi Brefi is an old-school pub, where landlady Yvonne serves legendary faggots (£65 per person per night; **newinnllanddewibrefi.co.uk**). Llanybydder's Gwesty Cross Hands Hotel has six elegant rooms (doubles from £108; **crosshandshotelllanybydder.co.uk**). Newcastle Emlyn's Emlyn Hotel is right by the river (doubles from £84; **emlynhotel.co.uk**). Atmospheric rooms are available at Cardigan Castle (doubles from £110; **cardigancastle.com**).

FURTHER INFO **teifivalleytrail.wales**, for the route; **discoverceredigion.wales**, **discovercarmarthenshire.com** and **visitpembrokeshire.com** for the surrounding area.

Valley Trail. Sometimes the route takes me up to ridgetops and hillforts, the river distant or out of sight. But at other times we're on intimate terms, and I'm close enough to spot posing egrets and even an otter slinking through the shallows.

After leaving the town of Newcastle Emlyn, where a ruined castle presides over a river loop, I soon arrive in Cenarth, encountering the Teifi at her most thunderous, frothing over the broad Cenarth Falls. I'm too early for the coracle museum, but a plaque on the pub wall commemorates these artful fishers in their one-man boats and the 'millions of salmon' they once caught.

Only a handful work these waters now. I certainly don't see any as I squeeze through the Teifi Gorge with the river at its tightest, deepest, most densely wooded and most magically silent. Stepping gently over tree roots, cocooned in this timeless tunnel of blue-green, I think back to my conversation with Kay. 'For me, walking is the antidote for all sorts,' she'd said. 'It provides emotional and spiritual wellbeing, social, physical and mental health. It helps put things in perspective and clears the mind.'

From source to sea

The meadows below Cilgerran were once a rowdy quay, where slate was taken down from the quarries to Cardigan. As I make my own way to the port, one of the busiest in Wales in the 1800s, there are no such signs of industry – just trees and dappled sunshine, a boardwalk through the reedbeds of the Teifi Marshes Nature Reserve and, finally, the bulwarks of Cardigan Castle rising from the banks. From Cardigan it's only 8km/5 miles more, beyond the 12th-century abbey ruins at St Dogmaels, to Poppit Sands, where the river disappears for good into the Atlantic.

As I watch her merge with the sea, she still seems a regal beauty. And while her once queenly status is a little diminished, that's about to change. In May 2026, the Living Teifi: People and Nature Together project launched, thanks to £1.4m of National Lottery Heritage funding. This conservation collaboration acknowledges the significance of the Teifi, combining scientific research with the history and lived experience of local communities. Restorations will work for both wildlife and people. The new Teifi Valley Trail feels like a significant step in that direction. ■

DESTINATION

Cévennes heaven



In the remote heart of France's Massif Central region, the Stevenson Trail offers dramatically shifting landscapes, intriguing history and architecture, rare flowers and birds – and the company of donkeys. Follow in literary footsteps to discover one of the country's best-kept secrets

WORDS ANNABEL STREETS

Blue hills roll on and on in the distance. On either side of us, there are endless fields of wildflowers – orchids, poppies, brilliant blazes of yellow broom. The air sparkles with the sounds of woodlarks, nightingales and cuckoos. We walk in astonished silence, speaking only to point out yet another variety of orchid, or to murmur that this wasn't what we expected.

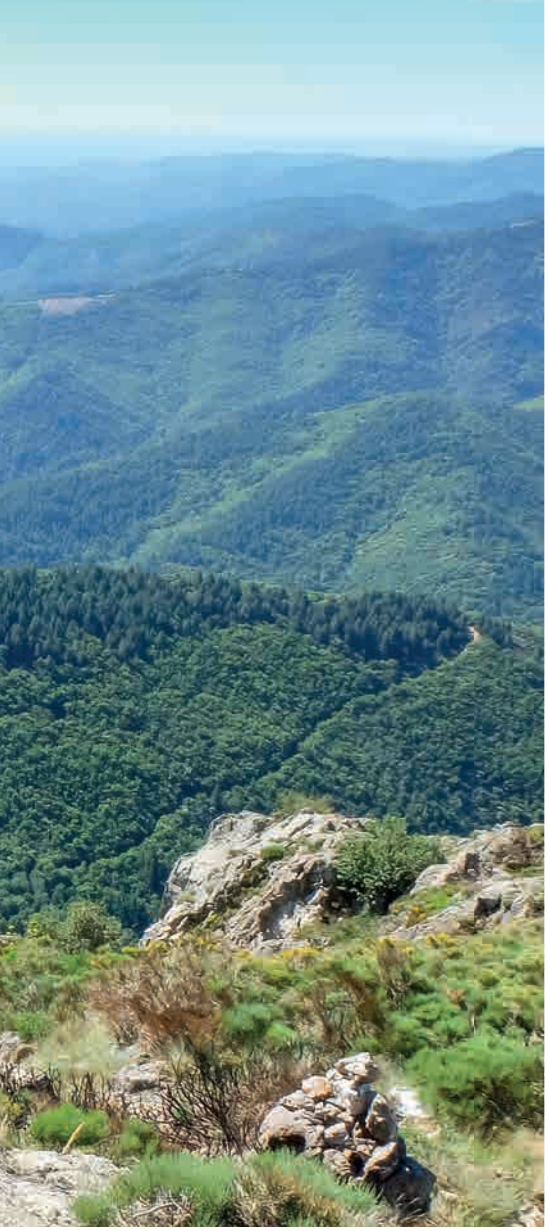
My husband and I are walking the Chemin de Stevenson – or in English, the Stevenson Trail. This 272km/169-mile route is the GR70, part of France's extensive network of long-distance walking routes known as Grandes Randonnées – 'great hikes'. The trail begins in the pilgrimage city of Le Puy-en-Velay before traversing the volcanic uplands of the Haute-Loire and then dropping into the deep forests of the Lozère, and finally crossing the wild, remote mountains of the Cévennes National Park.

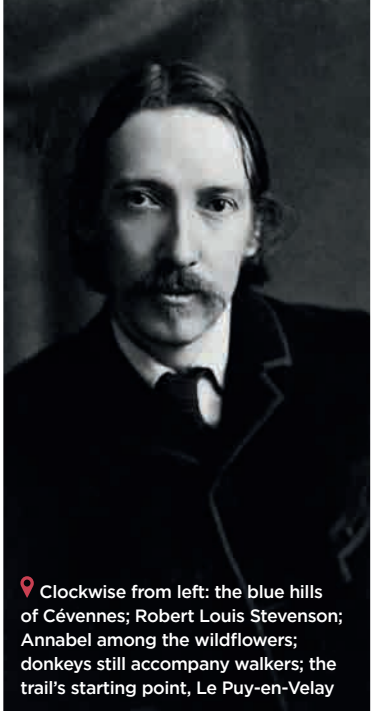
It follows the route once taken by the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson. He walked it in 1878, with a donkey called Modestine, then wrote about it in his book *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*. Today the trail is mainly walked by French hikers, some of whom pay to have a donkey to accompany them. This turns out to be an absolute highlight: nothing kindles conversation like a donkey.

Indeed, Le Stevenson (as the French affectionately call it) is the most sociable trail I've walked. Dining is usually home-cooked and communal, and our fellow walkers are keen to hear about all things British, from Liverpool's football team and the Royal Family to fish and chips and – of course – Le Brexit. My rusty French is frequently put to the test.

Blooms and rooms

For our first three days, we walk through the Velay, where the air is heavy with the scent of wild narcissi. Crops of puy lentils







Clockwise from left: the blue hills of Cévennes; Robert Louis Stevenson; Annabel among the wildflowers; donkeys still accompany walkers; the trail's starting point, Le Puy-en-Velay





and rye grow from the fertile black earth. We pass through empty hamlets where wobbling calves peer at us from ancient barns. But it's the rolling wildflower meadows – a sea of white and gold – that entrance us most.

Every evening we stay somewhere different: a guesthouse in Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille; a *roulotte* (like a shepherd's hut) in Le Bouchet-Saint-Nicolas; a farm in Langogne. Generally, our host cooks, and serves at a long communal table. Donkey anecdotes are regaled. The weather is debated. The host's cooking is (rightly) praised. Many of us carry Stevenson's book, which contains this infamous description of the region: 'One of the most beggarly counties in the world... cold, naked, and ignoble, scant of wood, scant of heather, scant of life.' This, too, is hotly discussed.

There are images of Stevenson and his walking companion everywhere. Quotes from *Travels with a Donkey* are inscribed on noticeboards, while many houses are named 'Chez Modestine'. Fellow ramblers tell me this is France's only continuous through-hike that's associated with a writer.

Bonjour et bon appétit

For the next three days we follow winding paths through mossy, silent woods of beech and pine. We cross clear streams on tiny stone bridges, stepping stones or wooden planks. We picnic in wildflower meadows that twitch and buzz with a million insects, stretching into pastures featuring honey-coloured cows with huge horns and doleful eyes – these are Aubrac cattle, which have grazed here for centuries.

There are few villages, but frequent encounters with fellow walkers ensure that we never feel alone. 'Bonjour, bonjour!' we shout at our new friends as we come across them napping amid buttercups and cowslips or picnicking on cheese-stuffed baguettes. Nor do we ever get lost, or have the need to walk while glued to a moving dot on our phones: like all GR routes, the trail is superbly waymarked.

At Laubarnès, we spend the night in an isolated gîte. At Le Bonnetes, we stay in a restored farmhouse, spectacularly sited on a slanting hill overlooking the River Lot as it meanders through woods of birch, cherry and chestnut. The houses here (and indeed across the entire walk) are architecturally intriguing, constructed from enormous, rust-coloured rocks with elaborate stone roof ridges.

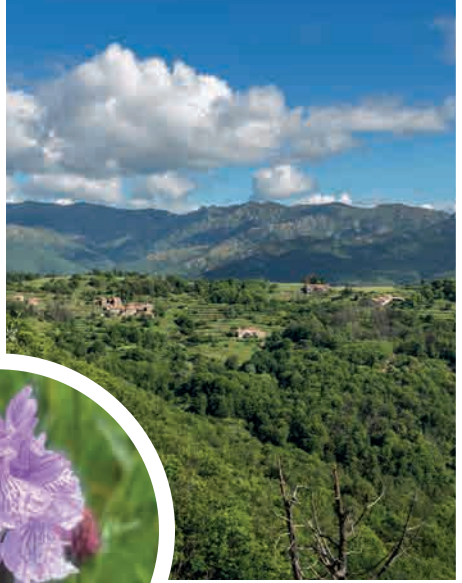
Over supper of pork with prunes, followed by chestnut cake (the *châtaigne* – a small chestnut – is a regional speciality, which is also used to make a liqueur that's mixed with sparkling wine to create a delicious chestnut kir), our host explains that the GR70 has revived this area. 'You walkers brought these dying villages back to life,' he says. 'Now there are jobs and the houses are being restored.' >

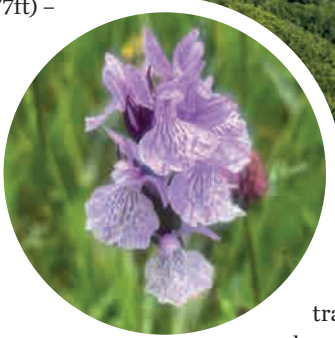
The French Highlands?

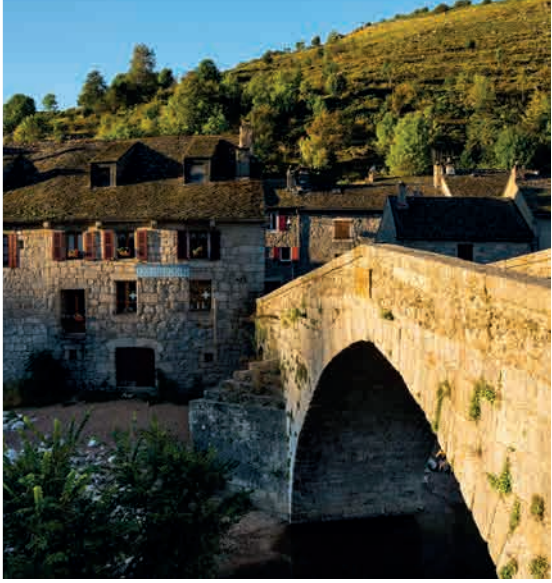
Our final two days take us into the Cévennes National Park, a Unesco Biosphere Reserve. We climb to the top of Mont Lozère (1,700m/5,577ft) – a treeless, boulder-strewn plateau of heather and burnt broom, where a ferocious wind whips at our hair and tugs at our anoraks. We stagger through a curtain of mist, with Stevenson's words – 'like the Scottish Highlands, only worse' – ringing in our ears. Wolves once roamed the Cévennes, famously devouring both livestock and people, and a hungry wolf wouldn't be out of place today.

Despite the bleakness, there is mystery and magic here. Up to 200 standing stones, thought to have been used for religious and ceremonial occasions, rise from the plateau. Each granite menhir looming mysteriously out of the grey haze makes us feel we have stepped into an Arthurian legend.

And when the mist clears, the views are epic, stretching to the Mediterranean. Stevenson may have found this place savage and inhospitable, but for us, it's atmospheric and exhilarating.







From left to right: wild orchids abound along the trail; the route passes through the Parc Naturel Régional des Monts d'Ardèche; the town of Le Pont-de-Montvert

From the summit, our track descends through slopes of wild tulips, then spicily aromatic pine forests. As we walk southwards, the flora changes: wild roses, yolk-yellow vetch, black locust flowers, lavender and thyme typify this warmer, drier terrain.

We spend our last two nights in Le Pont-de-Montvert, a 17th-century town that's rich in history (look out for the protestant temple and cemetery) and bisected by the River Tarn. We stock up on local cheese, chestnut cake and Cévennes honey at the tiny street market. Later, on the terrace of the local bar, chestnut kir in hand, we watch swallows scissoring through the air and catch up with our fellow walkers, some of whom have been lucky enough to get a room at the Auberge des Cévennes – the original inn where Stevenson stayed in 1878.

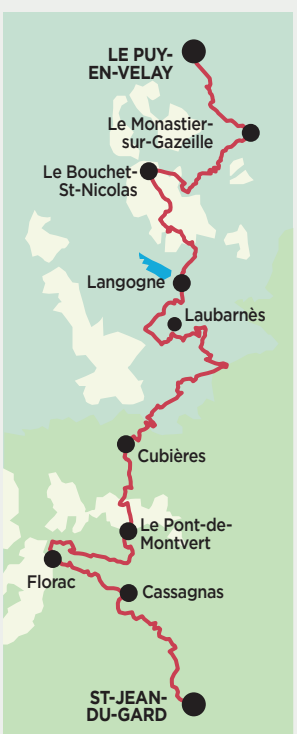
Robert Louis' legacy

This is where many walkers leave the trail. Others hike another day south to Florac, or the full three days to Saint-Jean-du-Gard – the official endpoint for the GR70, and where Stevenson sold his donkey. And some head west towards the Gorges du Tarn and the GR736. We give ourselves a rest day, but can't resist going back into the national park for a final amble. We plot a circular trail, climbing back to the plateau. Gazing into the distance, we can see for miles, with no roads, houses or pylons. We agree that one of the reasons we love this walk is the absence of man-made detritus.

We wander through chestnut forests and along drovers' tracks, where the verges bristle with butterfly orchids, wild lilies and rock roses. And then, around the corner come our new friends – a couple we've dined with most evenings – leading their long-eared donkey. A joy of this trail is being part of a community that meets, repeatedly, on foot.

We walkers may have brought new life into the abandoned villages of the Cévennes, but the real credit must go to Robert Louis Stevenson, who first walked this magnificent trail, and whose account of it continues to provoke and inspire in equal measure. ■

Annabel Streets is the author of 52 Ways to Walk *and* The Walking Cure *(£10.99 each, Bloomsbury).*



Walk it!

TIME/DISTANCE Approximately 272km/169 miles over 12 days for the full trail, or 115km/71½ miles over six days for a shortened route. Annabel walked an eight-day version of about 160km/99 miles. The trail is suitable for walkers with average-to-good fitness levels. It includes rural tracks, forest trails, mountain paths and quiet country roads, with some inclines.

GETTING THERE Eurostar to Paris, then train from Gare de Lyon to Lyon, and two further trains to Le Puy-en-Velay (about 7 hours of travel, plus transfers). For the return, local bus to Montpellier, then fast train to Paris and Eurostar to London. EasyJet flies to Gatwick and Manchester from Montpellier, which is the nearest international airport to Saint-Jean-du-Gard.

WHEN TO GO Between April and October. May, June and September are generally best; July and August can be hot.

ACCOMMODATION Traditional inns/auberges and country accommodation. Highlights include the Auberge des Cévennes at Le Pont-de-Montvert and the Gîte de L'Escoutal.

FURTHER INFORMATION Annabel travelled with Macs Adventure, which offers three Stevenson Trail trips of varying lengths including accommodation, some meals and a luggage service – see **bit.ly/Macs_StevensonTrail**. Or organise your own trip – see **gr-infos.com/en/gr70.htm**.

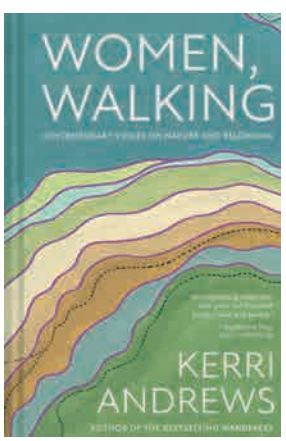
PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, HARALD BIEBEL/FAFO/MACS ADVENTURE

READS FOR WALKERS



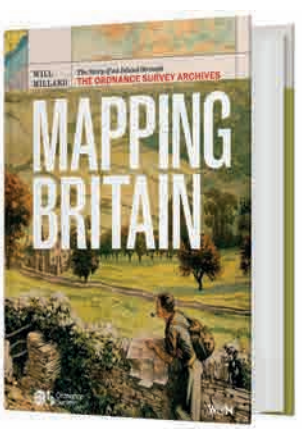
Brilliant books for walkers

From Britain's history through OS maps to a deep dive into our most overlooked ecosystem, as well as a collection of thought-provoking essays by women walkers and a fresh look at the seasons, these all make fascinating reads



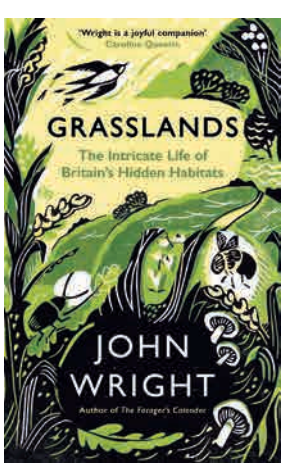
Walking as a radical act

The act of walking in media, literature and life has often been depicted in the same way: able-bodied, white and mostly male. *Women, Walking* is a radical collection of essays from women writers including author Kerri Andrews that seeks to challenge this. With ongoing conversations around climate, gender politics and access, it offers crucial insights into modern topics of debate. *Published by Batsford Books.*



Walking through Britain's history

Mapping Britain by Will Millard explores the story of Britain through nearly three centuries of Ordnance Survey maps. From lost villages and secret smuggling routes to royal commissions and wartime secrets, this richly illustrated volume reveals how our landscapes and communities have evolved, offering insight into our past, present and future. *Available from 1 October at os.uk/shop*



Explore our grasslands

Join one of our best-known naturalists as he uncovers the beauty and diversity of Britain's grasslands. From meadows to mires to heathlands, in *Grasslands* John Wright reveals the history of how our grasslands came to be, the life that can be found there, the part they play in our natural heritage and what can be done to save what is left of Britain's most overlooked ecosystem. *Published by Profile Books.*



Wonder of the seasons

In *The Hidden Seasons*, navigator and author Tristan Gooley teaches us how to explore the signs of the seasons, giving rich insights into our turning year. In his words: 'When we know what to look for and what it means, seasonal moments that were once hidden shine brightly.' *Mudlarking* author Lara Maiklem says this is 'a book to savour month by month.' *Out now in paperback, published by Hodder & Stoughton.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

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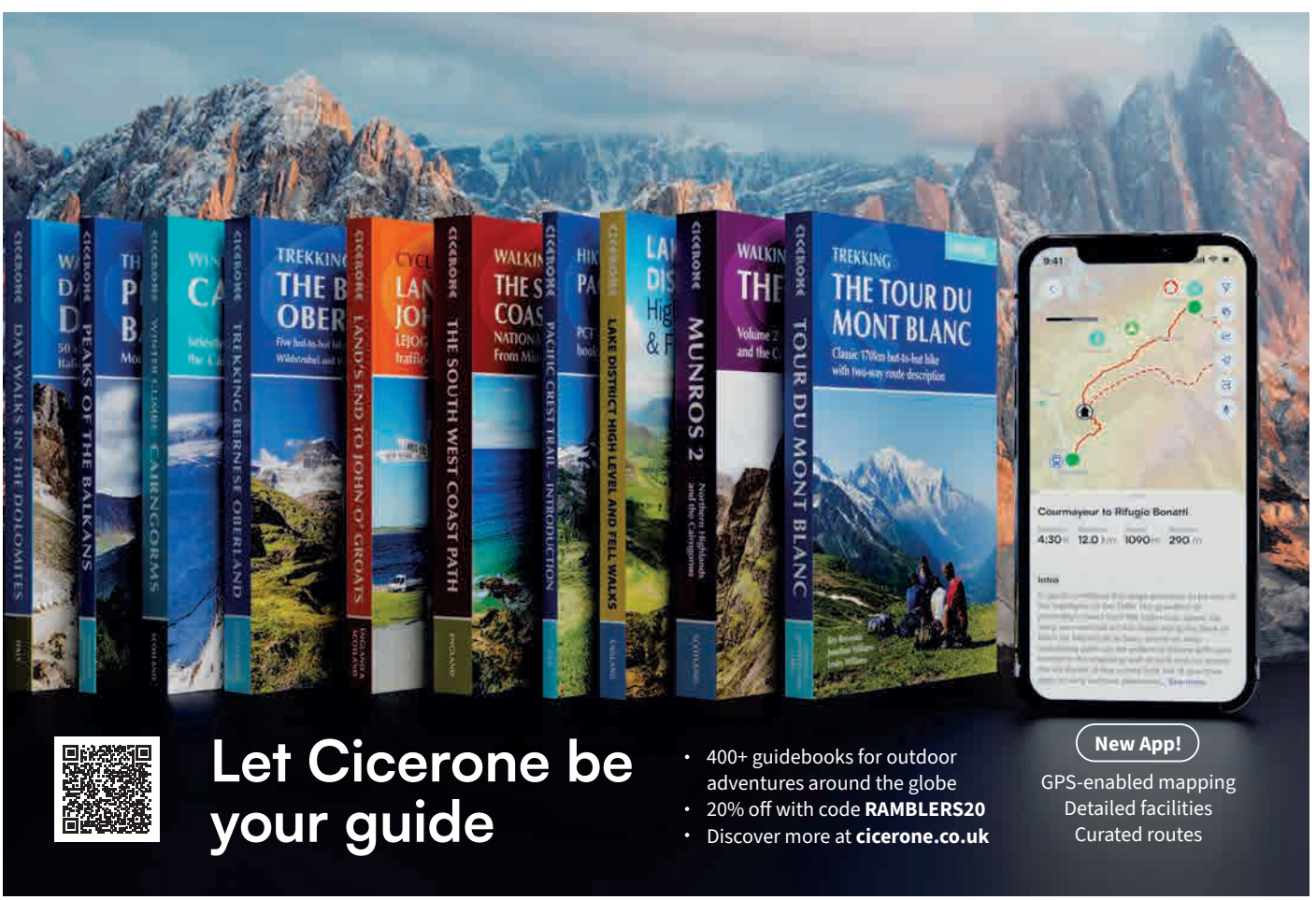
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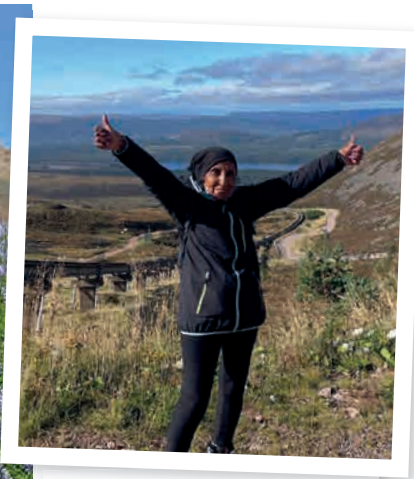


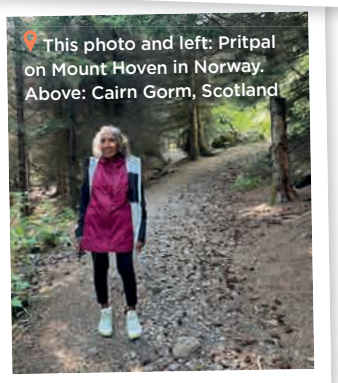
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This photo and left: Pritpal on Mount Hoven in Norway. Above: Cairn Gorm, Scotland

Pritpal Kaur

For lifelong hiker Pritpal, walking has become a form of meditation and medication that's helping her cope with cancer

At 75 and living with blood cancer, I never thought I'd still be hiking up mountains, but here I am, walking, climbing and feeling more alive than ever. It's a form of meditation for me.

I've always loved walking. When I was growing up in India, walking was just part of life. After dinner, the whole family would go out together, chatting and stopping off for ice cream. We'd walk again in the morning, before the day got too hot. Nobody called it exercise – it was just something we did, and it made me happy. The sound of the night insects, the cool air after the heat of the day. That's where my love of walking began.

When I came to the UK in the 1960s, walking stayed with me. Life was busy with children, work and everything else, but walking always gave me a sense of peace. My husband was my inspiration as he's also a big walker. He never liked sitting still! He would always say: 'Come on, let's walk there,' even if it was miles away.

For our honeymoon, we even went hiking in Scotland. Everyone else went somewhere hot and glamorous, but not us – we were climbing hills in the mist and rain! That's when I fell in love with the mountains. Later, Snowdon became our special family tradition. Every year we'd go as a family, climb to the top, eat our Indian roti and chickpeas. It didn't matter how tired we were, the view from the top always made it worth it.

Finding my strength

When I was diagnosed with myeloma three years ago, everything changed for a while. I was scared and thought my walking days might be over. But walking actually gave me strength again. It helps me manage my health, my mind and my spirit. When I'm outdoors, I feel full of energy. The pain disappears. I don't feel anything hurting me when I'm walking. My family laugh when I say that, but it's true. When I walk, I feel light, strong and alive.

It's hard to explain, but when I'm outside, I feel close to God. Maybe it's the fresh air or the quiet, but I feel like God is with me. I love the wind across my face – it wakes me up. I love the sun warming my skin, and even the rain makes me smile. I don't mind any weather; every kind has its own beauty. I love seeing little birds flying about, sheep grazing on the hills, or wildflowers growing by the path. Sometimes I stop just to watch them. The colours, the smells, the sounds – they fill me with peace.

Last year, my daughter and I went to the Cairngorms and trekked 17km [10½ miles] at Bynack More. It was a long day, and we came back in the dark. My legs were shaking, but when I looked up, the stars were shining so brightly, I thought: 'This is what it means to be alive.' I said a quiet prayer of thanks right there. I even braved a night of camping, and the next day we walked another 10km [6 miles]. I didn't feel tired; I felt energised.

We also went on a cruise to Norway and Iceland, and I found more walks to do. We hiked at Mount Hoven, surrounded by snow and mountains. The air was so fresh and clean – it felt like medicine. I remember standing there, breathing it all in, thinking how lucky I was to still be able to do this.

Every step is a gift

Walking has taught me patience and gratitude. It has taught me to slow down, to notice small things: the light through the trees, the way the wind moves the grass. It's taught me that strength doesn't come from muscles, but from faith and determination. When people ask me how I cope with my illness, I tell them: I walk. Walking is my meditation, my prayer, my way of healing. When I feel down I go for a walk and it clears my head.

I would advise anyone to start walking. You don't have to go fast or far. Go outside, feel the wind, look at the sky, listen to the birds. Every step is a gift. Walking hasn't just changed my life; it's given me back the joy of living. I couldn't imagine life without it.

INTERVIEW: MINREET KAUR



GEAR ON TEST

Great strides

Thinking of getting new walking trousers for the new season? Our experts share their buying advice and top picks to help you choose the right pair

WORDS JEN and SIM BENSON

A great pair of walking trousers is one you barely notice you're wearing. Providing protection against sun, wind, rocks, brambles and insects, they should stay put without being tight, restrictive or getting in the way while you walk. Look for handy pockets, vents and other features that work for you, too. And remember the three Fs...

Fabric

The composition, weight and weave of a fabric determine how it feels and performs during use, from freedom of movement and protection against weather and undergrowth to regulating moisture and temperature. Polyamide (nylon) and polyester offer quick-drying comfort and durability, usually with added elastane for stretch. Cotton is tough, breathable and often feels more pleasant to wear, as well as being naturally biodegradable, but it's generally heavier and takes longer to dry. Unlined, lightweight trousers are a versatile, year-round choice – wear as a single layer in warmer weather or with base layers and waterproofs in winter.

Check that fabrics are free from harmful 'forever' chemicals known as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), once ubiquitous in durable water repellent (DWR) coatings on outdoor clothing and equipment. All trousers featured here are PFAS-free. Also check for bluesign certification, which assures responsible production. Some fabrics feature Insect Shield technology, which works by bonding permethrin insecticide to the fibres. While it's considered harmless to humans, the

SEARCH FOR SAVINGS

All our reviews show the RRP, but look out for sales, special offers and Ramblers discounts to bag a bargain

PHOTOGRAPHY: CRAGHOPPERS (MAIN IMAGE)

Women's choices



Mountain Warehouse Monte Cargo Hiking Trousers

£59.99 *mountainwarehouse.com*
Size range: UK4–24

These quick-drying, stretchy trousers feature two zip pockets and handy side leg pockets. The durable cotton-polyester blend ripstop fabric has UPF50+ UV protection – it's on the heavier side, so not ideal for hot weather walking, but a good value, versatile choice for the cooler seasons. Overall, these are comfortable and unrestrictive, but the fit is on the small side so you may need to size up.



Montane Mossa Softshell Pants

£100 *montane.com*
Size range: UK6–18 in short, regular or long leg lengths

Designed for protection and comfort on technical mountain terrain, the practical and versatile Mossa Pants are made from Montane's lightweight yet durable and abrasion-resistant Granite Flex recycled nylon fabric. There's enhanced articulation throughout for excellent freedom of movement and a low-profile waist belt for comfort under a harness or hip belt. With comfortable hand pockets and a zipped lateral thigh pocket for keeping valuables secure.

Jack Wolfskin Hikeout Pants

£80 *jack-wolfskin.co.uk*
Size range: UK6–18 in short, regular or tall lengths

Combining stylish looks, superb comfort and great weather protection thanks to Jack Wolfskin's TEXASHIELD CORE fabric, these lightweight trousers have a tough but stretchy nylon and elastane outer with a polyester lining. Two zipped hip pockets and a hidden zipped thigh pocket ensure secure storage. The fit is excellent – unrestrictive around the waist, hips and knees but with a tapered ankle. Great value, versatile trousers for travel, mountain adventures and everyday walking.



Haglöfs L.I.M Fuse II Pant

From £90 *haglofs.com*
Size range: 68–94cm waist

A tracksuit-style option, these are lighter and more relaxed than a classic trouser but without sacrificing features. A stretch waistband offers beltloop-free comfort under a rucksack hip belt, while drawcord adjustment at the ankles ensures a snug fit. Handy zip pockets at the hip and thigh provide easy-access secure storage. Finished with reflective details for low-light visibility, the Climatic Lite fabric is soft yet durable and protective.



insecticide is indiscriminate and also highly toxic to cats, so we'd suggest these are best saved for walking in areas with a high risk of disease-carrying biting insects.

Fit

Check the fit during sitting, standing and stepping up and down, as well as walking. Multi-panel construction, an articulated cut through the knees, elasticated waist and areas of breathable and stretch fabric all help to ensure comfort and freedom of movement. Look for stretch or adjustment at the waist and ankles for a customisable fit.

Features

A range of pockets, including some with zip fastenings, allows easy access to essentials and secure storage for valuables. Vents add breathability and cooling airflow, and reinforced panels in high-wear areas improve durability.



Columbia Skien Valley Cargo Hiking Trousers

£90 *columbiasportswear.co.uk*
Size range: XS–XL

Light and airy trousers that don't feel bulky despite their eight pockets (including zips for valuables and large cargo pockets), drawcord adjustable waist and ankles. With UPF50 sun protection, sweat-wicking fabric and Insect Shield technology (see p66), they're a good choice for summer walking in areas with high-risk biting insects. Packable, comfortable, good value and ideal for travel.

Men's choices



Rab Incline Vapour-Rise Pants

£130 *rab.equipment/uk*
Size range: UK8–16

Rab's two-layer Vapour-Rise softshell fabric offers all-in-one temperature regulation, moisture management and protection for long mountain adventures. These are made from the latest update of the fabric – a closely woven Matrix shell and soft, sweat-wicking fleece lining. They're soft and comfy, warm when it's cold but highly breathable, with great freedom of movement. Finished with four zipped pockets, a harness/pack-friendly waistband and adjustable ankle cuffs. We'd like a range of leg lengths.



Craghoppers Kiwi Pro Cargo Trousers

£75 *craghoppers.com*
Size range: 30–42in waist in short, regular or long lengths

Kiwi trousers are established classics; this version uses a light, recycled nylon/elastane mix fabric. They feel tough and protective, with double-layered fabric on the seat and knees, reinforced heels and a PFAS-free water-repellent treatment called H2OShield. There are three zipped pockets plus two big, poppered cargo pockets and belt loops. Sized slightly small and a little rough initially, they soften up with wear.

Arc'teryx Gamma Pant

£180 *arcteryx.com*
Size range: UK2–20 in short, regular and tall lengths

Combining the technical credentials demanded by days in the mountains with comfort and style for everyday use, the Gamma Pant justifies its price tag by being exceptionally versatile and hardwearing. The abrasion-resistant, breathable, recycled nylon softshell has a soft brushed lining and a good amount of stretch for comfort and freedom of movement. Features include three zipped pockets, ankle adjustment and a belt for customising the fit.
Available at Cotswold Outdoor



Ayacucho Adventure Softshell Trousers II

£70 *cotswoldoutdoor.com*
Size range: 30–40in waist in short or regular lengths

Good-value trousers designed for cooler conditions or higher altitudes. The combination of a tough softshell outer and soft, brushed inner is durable, protective and comfortable. The recycled nylon/elastane-mix fabric is abrasion-resistant, stretchy and water-repellent. Cut for full movement, they cope well with the bigger steps and scrambles typical of mountain terrain. With three zipped pockets, an adjustable waist, belt loops and cuff adjustment.
Available at Cotswold Outdoor





Fjällräven Keb Trousers

£200 *fjallraven.com*
Size range: UK6–22 in short, regular or long lengths and curved fit

Big on budget but these tick all the boxes when it comes to year-round walking trousers. The award-winning Keb teams G-1000 recycled polyester and organic cotton fabric with lightweight stretch panels and reinforced high-wear areas for superb comfort and durability. Great features include two comfortable handwarmer pockets and two generous pockets, mesh-backed ventilation zippers, calf zips and ankle adjustment. Can be waxed for weatherproofing. A classic for serious walking.
Available at Cotswold Outdoor



Keela Where Nature Leads Insect Shield Trousers

£79.95 *keelaoutdoors.com*
Size range: 28–44in waist

Lightweight nylon and elastane mix trekking trousers, the fabric is stretchy with an active, articulated fit that allows good movement, but is sized slightly small. Three zipped pockets and belt loops. Part of a collection supporting the National Trust for Scotland's conservation work. Durable and good value, they're treated with Insect Shield technology (see p66) so are best for summer walking in areas with high-risk biting insects.



Sherpa Tarcho Cargo Pants

£80 *sherpaadventuregear.com*
Size range: S–2XL

These cargo pants are super light, with a relaxed jogger style. The main fabric is a cotton/polyester mix, which feels great – soft, breathable and best suited to warmer walks and drier climates. The cut and fabric allow unrestricted movement, ideal for walking, climbing or yoga. The feature pockets are ripstop nylon and add contrast to the style. No belt loops, just a comfortable elasticated waistband with a chunky drawstring as backup.



Rab Torque Mountain Pants

£110 *rab.equipment/uk*
Size range: 28–40in waist in short, regular or long lengths

Lightweight with an athletic cut and great freedom of movement. With tapered lower legs plus ankle zips that make them easy to get on and off. Made from stretchy, weather-resistant nylon softshell, they're light enough for summer and tough enough for winter, with four zipped pockets, an elasticated waist and belt loops. Rab recently achieved B Corp Certification, recognising the highest standards of social and environmental performance.
Available at Cotswold Outdoor

OUR EXPERTS



Sim Benson is an outdoor author and photographer with an environmental science background. He is a kit expert and has spent more than 15 years working, testing and reviewing in the outdoor industry.



Jen Benson is an outdoor adventure writer and researcher with an MSc in sport and exercise medicine. She is happiest when she is outdoors, and is passionate about exploring Britain's wild places on foot.

Salomon Outerpath Utility Pants

£110 *salomon.com/en-gb*
Size range: S–2XL

Regular fit, tough polyester cargo trousers with five pockets, cuff adjustment and a webbing belt. The fabric is weatherproof without being overly warm, and slightly stretchy. The two features we love are the internal phone pocket on the right thigh, which stops your phone bouncing around, and the fixed belt that sits flat under rucksack straps and can't get lost. An ideal mix of casual outdoorsy style and genuine walking function.





INOV8 Venture Pant

£95 *inov8.com*
Size range: XS–2XL

INOV8 draws from its trail-running heritage with these light, stretchy and supremely comfortable trousers. Cut for excellent freedom of movement, with articulated knees, stretch cuffs and an elasticated waist belt, they don't ride up or feel restrictive. The nylon/elastane mix fabric is a tough and weather-resistant softshell, with an athletic cut that's fitted but has space for a base layer. Excellent lightweight walking or cold-weather running trousers.



Klättermusen Gere 3.0 Pants

£260 *klattermusen.com*
Size range: XS–2XL

Super tough and designed for performance in challenging environments, these nail the brief with all the pockets (six) and features (vents, adjustable cuffs, boot hooks) you could need. The protective fabric is Ultramid Bio-Mass Balanced Polyamide (sustainable nylon) with elastane for stretch; they feel stiff initially but soften with use. The expense is justified by durability, ethical production and superb function, but they're heavy – so best in cooler weather.

WALKING ESSENTIALS

Walking must-haves

Discover luxurious mohair socks that offer perfect comfort, an app that brings local history to life for walkers anywhere and the secret to choosing boots that really fit your feet



Hyper-local history

Walking app Mosey brings to life the history of wherever you're walking. Triggered by your location and delivered as audio, Mosey offers a totally unique and screen-free way to enrich your rambles and hikes. The memory feature connects dots across multiple walks and creates richer context the more you use it. Simply press 'Begin', put your phone in your pocket and set off. It works like walking with a friend who happens to know everything about a place and points things out as you pass them. There's no need to plan a route: begin where you are – Mosey follows you, not the other way round. Start exploring for free, then from £3.99 a month. **mosey-app.com**



Scan to download

Perfect socks

Made in Britain and based in the Cotswolds, Corrymoor Mohair Socks are renowned for their durability, comfort and moisture-wicking properties. Ideal for walking and everyday wear, their luxurious British-made socks are long-lasting, odour-resistant and available in 13 different styles to suit every need. The most popular design for walkers is the Companion, with a reinforced heel and toe that make them perfect for hiking! See the full range at **corrymoor.com**



Boots that banish pain

When choosing a new pair of boots, bear in mind that badly fitting footwear can lead to knee and back pain, callouses and even nerve damage. Pain is also often caused by an underlying biomechanical dysfunction. Footmap can help, offering a free assessment worth £150 at retail partner stores. After analysing your data, its experts can suggest footwear and a medical care solution. Show this article to get £50 off any shoes you buy when you visit. **foot-map.com**



Ask the experts

Whether you've got a question on gear, health or paths, our panel is here to help

OUR EXPERTS



Sim Benson is a photographer and **walk** gear reviewer. He has a huge amount of walking and outdoor industry experience.



Jen Benson, **walk** gear reviewer, is an outdoor writer and photographer with an MSc in sports and exercise medicine.



Dr Jo Maher, an NHS GP in Sheffield for more than 20 years, is a public health advocate and trustee for Living Streets.



Gemma Twitchen is programme lead for Walk Leadership at the Ramblers, working to improve outdoor access so everyone can enjoy nature at its best.

Over to you...
Send your questions to walkmag@ramblers.org.uk



HEALTH

Progress with Parkinson's

My husband, 75, has Parkinson's. With medication now easing his symptoms, can he safely return to rambling?
Nessa Johns

Dr Jo Maher As a movement disorder, Parkinson's disease can be frustrating, especially for people used to being active. Exercise is essential to managing the condition; Moving Medicine has gathered evidence that it can help with everything from reducing tremors and avoiding falls to improving sleep: **bit.ly/MovingMedicine_Parkinsons**. Simple exercises will support your husband's daily activity and his return to rambling. Parkinson's UK has advice on exercises for balance, coordination and strength: **bit.ly/ParkinsonsUK_Exercise**, and We Are Undefeatable also has great resources: **bit.ly/WeAreUndefeatable_Parkinsons**.

A chat with the group walk leader beforehand about what he can manage will be helpful. It's best to start with a very easy walk, wearing supportive shoes and taking poles just in case. Ramblers Wellbeing Walks (**ramblers.org.uk/wellbeing-walks**) are a good option for building strength and confidence before returning to regular group walks. The rest of the group don't need specific details of his condition, but their support will be beneficial as Parkinson's can knock someone's confidence. People with a movement disorder may have increased energy needs, so your husband may want to have a light meal before the walk and pack extra snacks as he builds up to longer hikes.

GEAR

Heart smart

A couple of members of our Ramblers group have a pacemaker. In an emergency situation, should a first aider carry out CPR on someone with a pacemaker or not? Also, would it be worth our group fundraising to buy a portable defibrillator for walks?
Lorraine C



Dr Jo Maher Pacemakers regulate the heartbeat during rest and exercise. People with one have much to gain from being active outdoors with a supportive group, feeling safe and knowing emergency help is accessible. Cardiac arrests while exercising are rare but, if one occurs, knowing how to respond swiftly is vital. Rapid action with effective chest compressions doubles survival rates – and, yes, you should do CPR on someone with a pacemaker. Training builds people's confidence to act – the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and St John Ambulance offer certified in-person courses. There's online training on the BHF website (**bit.ly/BHF_OnlineCPR**), but it isn't a substitute for practical experience. A portable defibrillator is a worthwhile goal, if you can raise in the region of £1,000 and carry an extra 2kg on group walks. Bear in mind, too, that users must be properly trained, and portable devices need the same upkeep as mounted community ones, including pad replacement and servicing.
NB BHF currently has applications open for free community non-portable defibrillators: **bit.ly/BHF_FreeDefibrillator**



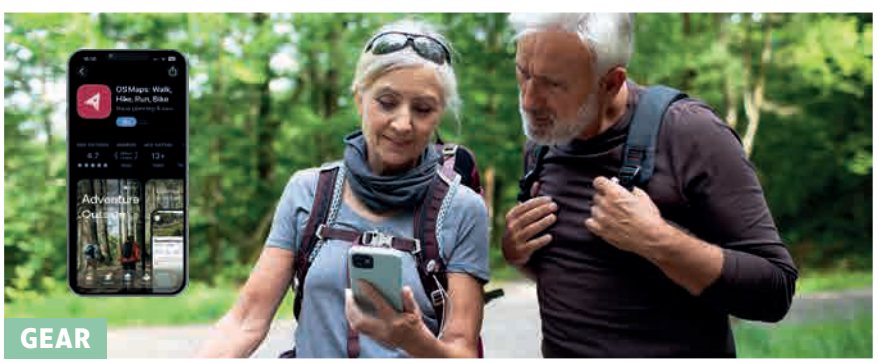
GEAR

Equal footing?

In your *Gear on test* on lightweight walking boots (spring 2026, p71), the reviews are divided into 'women's boots' and 'men's boots'. Does gender have any relevance when it comes to feet?
Linda Moore

Jen and Sim Benson While every foot is unique, biological sex has a strong influence on foot size and structure. In 2019, *Nature* published a study of 1.2 million foot scans, collected using 3D technology in retail and clinic settings throughout Europe, Asia and North America, which confirmed statistically significant differences in mean foot widths, arch heights and heel widths between the sexes. Based on their findings, the study's authors recommend that footwear be developed differently to account for sex-based differences.

Walking boot styling is more subjective, and often more gendered. However, many boots – particularly full-leather models – look similar throughout the range, even when the fit is sex-specific. Foot sizes and shapes vary widely between individuals, though, so we'd always recommend trying on several pairs to find one that's a comfortable and supportive fit for your feet.



GEAR

Get appy

I recently downloaded the OS [Maps] app for my phone. Can you recommend any training to help me get the most from it?
Judith Perle

Gemma Twitchen The OS Maps video guides (**osmaps.com/guide/4/video-guides**) are a good starting place for building confidence with digital navigation. There are seven videos, each under 2½ minutes, on themes including creating your own routes and finding ready-made ones. The Ramblers has also produced a series of short videos on navigation – including one called 'How to use your phone to navigate' – you can watch them at **ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/beginners-guide-navigation**.

If you know a Ramblers member or other walker who's already a dab hand with map apps, why not ask if they'd be willing to share some tips with you? Alternatively, look for a navigation or map-reading course that includes the use of apps such as OS Maps alongside traditional map skills. There are training providers throughout Britain. An online search for 'walking navigation training' should bring up courses in your region, or go to **eventbrite.co.uk** and search for 'navigation' in your location.

GEAR

Perfect pockets

I prefer to walk without a rucksack, so would like a waterproof jacket with a pocket big enough to hold an OS map and another to carry waterproof overtrousers. What would you recommend?
Andrew Currie



Jen and Sim Benson A range of pockets is a great thing in a jacket. We recommend either the Craghoppers Lorton II (pictured, £160) or Berghaus Cornice 2.0 (£285). Both brands also offer other options with multiple pockets. If you're able to visit a shop to try them on in person, take your map and overtrousers with you to check the fit.

GEAR

Hydration inspiration

I'd like a large-capacity hydration bladder (2 litres or above) that doesn't contain plastic. Can you suggest any made from alternatives, such as stainless steel?
Name and address supplied

Jen and Sim Benson Compared with soft thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU) bottles and bladders, stainless steel containers are heavier and bulkier. But they last longer, don't give liquids a plastic taste and are much easier to clean. To carry about 2L in one bottle we'd suggest Klean Kanteen's stainless steel 1.9L Wide Bottle (£34.50, **kleankanteen.co.uk**) or Chilly's Big Mouth insulated 2L stainless steel bottle (£60, **chillys.com**) – the latter keeps drinks hot or cold. Alternatively, two 1L bottles, placed in either side of your rucksack, can give better weight distribution – Sigg's Shield ONE (£22.99, **sigg.com/en-gb**) is non-insulated and leakproof. If you don't mind a plastic drinking tube, you can turn most stainless steel bottles into a hydration system using a converter kit, such as the Source Convertube Adaptor (£25.99, available from Amazon and some outdoor retailers).

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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MASTERCLASS

First aid for walkers



Accidents on walks are rare, but knowing what to do when something goes wrong could be a lifesaver. From packing a first-aid kit to dealing with illnesses and injuries in remote locations, learn how to be prepared and deal with emergency situations

WORDS GEMMA TWITCHEN, RAMBLERS PROGRAMME LEAD FOR WALK LEADERSHIP

When you head out rambling, first aid probably isn't uppermost in your mind – and rightly so. Walking is one of the safest and most accessible outdoor activities you can do.

Nevertheless, illnesses and accidents do happen, and you don't want them to catch you out. Thankfully, most incidents are minor, but it's important to have some basic first-aid knowledge and equipment.

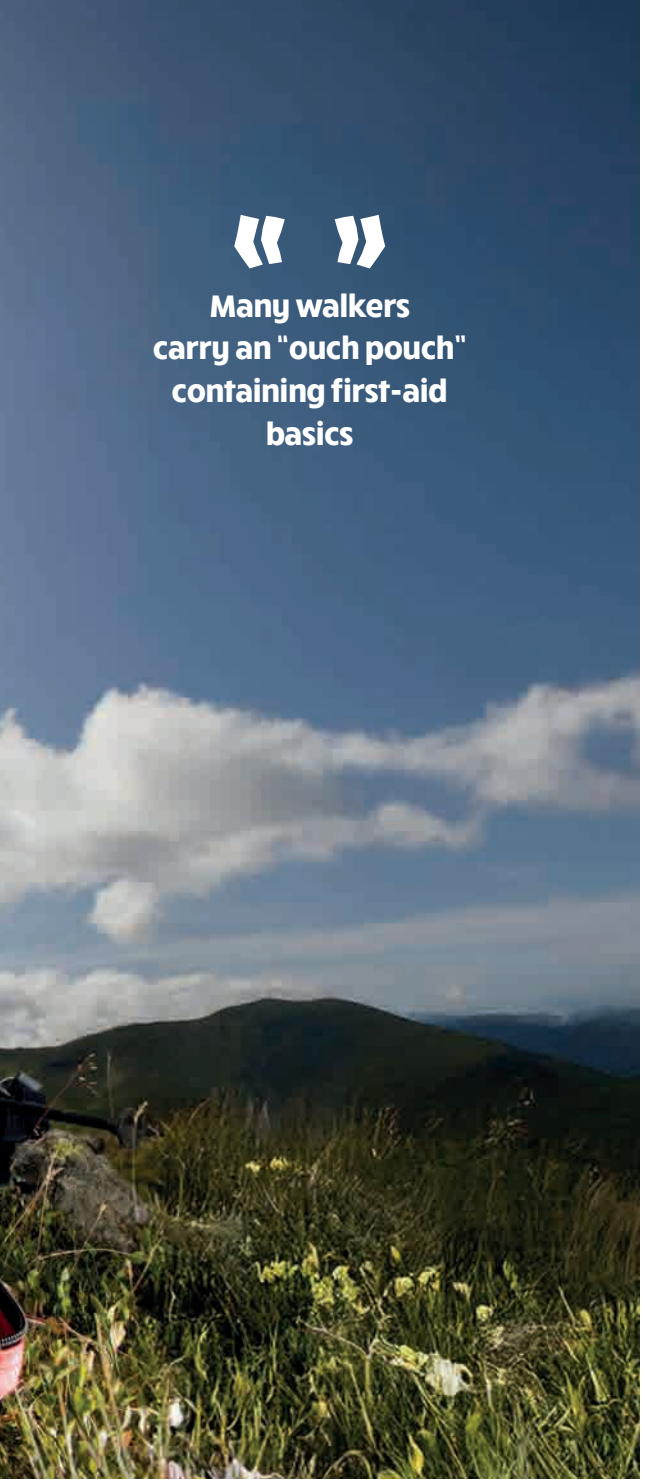
Perfect preparation

If you're walking as part of a group, walk leaders and participants all have a responsibility to ensure they are prepared. Whatever the season, landscape and weather conditions, there are practical measures everyone can take before and during the walk to help mitigate risks.

Check weather forecasts – and the Mountain Weather Information Service (**mwis.org.uk**) if appropriate – and only head out if conditions are safe and all walkers are suitably attired. Slips and falls on muddy or slippery terrain are among the most common incidents requiring first-aid treatment (see panel, right), so choose footwear with good grip suitable for the conditions and watch your footing for slippery spots, especially during or after rainy, icy or snowy weather. Using walking poles can further help reduce your risk of slips and falls.

It's not compulsory for Ramblers walk leaders to have a first-aid qualification, but they need to be prepared, informed and able to manage incidents responsibly – so some first-aid knowledge is useful. It's helpful to have a trained first aider on any group walk, and it's essential on a strenuous or technical-graded walk. The first aider doesn't have to be the walk leader; it could be another member of the walking group.

If you're leading a walk, you must carry a first-aid kit. Some walk leaders have their own, while many groups have shared kits



Many walkers carry an "ouch pouch" containing first-aid basics

that are restocked regularly and passed between walk leaders.

Many walkers also carry their own personal 'ouch pouch' so that they can administer their own first aid to any minor injuries. This typically will include items such as plasters and blister plasters, antiseptic cleansing wipes, a tick remover and any personal medication that they may require.

Avoid packing a heavy medical bag or any items you don't know how to use, so you're not carrying unnecessary weight. And check your first-aid kit at least every six months, replacing any used, out-of-date or damaged items. ›

ICE cards

In Case of Emergency (ICE) cards give you quick access to someone's contact details in an emergency. Order them for free from the Ramblers (**bit.ly/IceCardsOrderForm**) to distribute to walkers in your group. Alternatively, develop your own on a key fob, or ask walkers to store their ICE information on their phone (find out how to do this by searching online for 'set up ICE on [model of phone]').





First aid for path maintenance

Ramblers path maintenance groups have different first-aid requirements to group walks, as their work can involve sharp blades, power tools and heavy lifting. Find out more in our Path Maintenance Handbook, available at **ramblers.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-resources.**

Incident facts and stats

- Incidents requiring first aid are rare, occurring on just 1% of Ramblers group walks
- Most incidents are minor. The emergency services are called in only 14% of cases
- The most common incidents in Ramblers walks are trips, slips or falls, often caused by muddy or slippery terrain, stiles, tree roots or uneven ground
- 60% of incidents are near misses or minor injuries. When first aid is administered, it is mostly to treat cuts and grazes
- 11% are medical incidents, such as someone feeling faint or having a seizure
- Animals involved in incidents on Ramblers group walks have included cows, dogs, horses, sheep, cats, insects and even a llama.





First aid in action

Marion Archer of Hambleton Strollers Wellbeing Walks in North Yorkshire explains how the group provided first aid to a walker.

Incident 'We were a group of about ten people, crossing an urban street. One woman, aged about 75, stumbled over the curb and fell, putting weight onto one hand. The result was pain in her wrist indicating a possible break, plus mild shock.'

Taking action 'The injured walker was cared for and reassured, while kept sitting for a while with her wrist supported. One person left to fetch a car as we were near to the parking. In the meantime, we knocked on the door of the house next door and the injured woman plus one walk leader and a friend stayed there until the woman was collected by her husband, whom we'd managed to contact.'

Group management 'The other walk leader managed the group and reassured them that the situation was being handled. Soon after, they were able to continue the walk.'

Outcome 'The injured walker went to the nearest urgent care centre, where she learned that she had sprained – but not broken – her wrist. In time, she went on to recover well.'

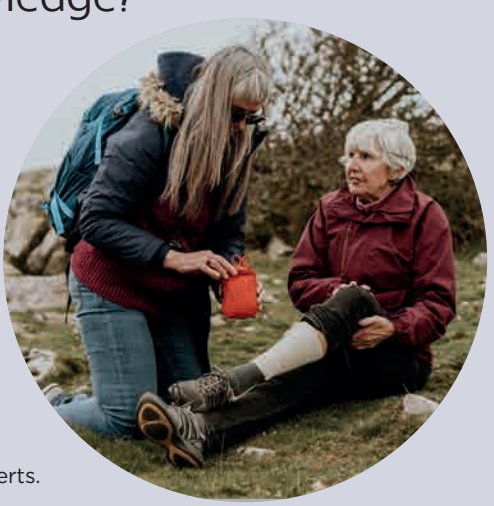
Follow-up 'The incident was reported to the organisation that manages our Wellbeing Walks. Walk leaders added more warnings about watching out for pavement edges.'

After an emergency

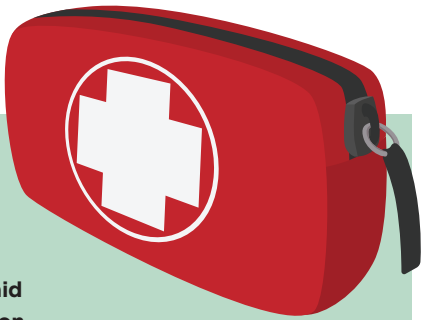
Any injury can cause a strong emotional response, but this may not hit you straight away. Look after yourself, rest, and speak to family, friends or other walkers about what happened if you need to. Check in with the injured person/group if you can.

Want to brush up on your first-aid knowledge?

- Complete the **Ramblers' Preventing & Managing Incidents e-learning module** – find out more at **ramblers.org.uk/first-aid-training**
- **Attend an in-person first-aid course** (taking advantage of discounts available to Ramblers members and volunteers, if possible) to gain hands-on practice to increase your skills, knowledge and confidence
- In-person first-aid training is preferable, but **online resources** can also be helpful. The **British Red Cross** and **St John Ambulance** have videos demonstrating first-aid techniques, including how to treat injuries commonly incurred while rambling; visit **redcross.org.uk/first-aid/learn-first-aid/videos** and **youtube.com/@stjohnambulanceorg**. The NHS website also has useful information on dealing with common accidents and emergencies: **nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/first-aid**
- Join a free Ramblers online first-aid session – see **bit.ly/RamblersEvents_WalkLeadership**. Each includes expert advice from two outdoor first-aid experts.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK



First-aid essentials

The contents of your first-aid kit will depend on the season, terrain, length and difficulty of your walk. Here's a checklist of items that may be useful.

Shorter or easier walks:

- **Latex-free plasters** – for minor cuts and grazes
- **Blister plasters** – to promote healing and protect from further friction
- **Disposable gloves** – to help reduce the risk of infections when dealing with bodily fluids
- **Antibacterial cleansing wipes** – for cleaning wounds, and cleaning hands before dealing with cuts and grazes
- **Wound dressings** – to cover and protect a wound to reduce infection
- **Instant ice pack** – to reduce swelling from bumps, strains or knocks. Also helpful for pain relief
- **Triangular bandage** – for use as a sling for an arm, wrist or shoulder injury
- **Zinc oxide tape** – for wound dressings or binding an injured finger or toe to provide support
- **Bite/sting relief** – to reduce irritation and pain
- **Tick tool** (eg Tick Twister) – the easiest way to remove a tick to minimise the risk of infection
- **Tough-cut shears** – to cut clothes to access an injury
- **Tweezers** – to remove thorns or splinters
- **Foil blanket** – to help keep an injured or unwell person warm
- **Face shield with a valve** – to protect from potential infections if performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Plus, for longer, technical or remote walks:

- **Cohesive bandage** – a self-adhesive bandage that securely holds a dressing in place
- **Thermometer** – to help monitor body temperature in an injured or unwell walker
- **Skin closure strips** (eg Steri-Strips) – to close small cuts
- **Eye pads** – to protect the eye in case of injury
- **SAM** (structural aluminium malleable) **splint** – a mouldable temporary splint for sprains and suspected breaks
- **Group shelter** – to keep the casualty and group warm, safe and dry until help arrives.

Reporting incidents

If there's an accident or incident on a Ramblers group walk or Wellbeing Walk that you're leading, let us know by completing and returning an incident report form – bit.ly/RamblersIncidentReportForm – as soon as possible. Serious incidents should be reported within 24 hours.

Emergency response

Knowing what actions to take while out walking could save someone's life.

- If you're close to a road or vehicle access point, call **999** and ask for an ambulance. **In a remote place where an ambulance can't reach you, call 999, ask for the police and then ask for lowland or mountain rescue, depending on your location. In a coastal area, ask for the coastguard instead.**
- **The rescue service will need to know exactly where you are.** The **What3Words (W3W)** geocoding system allows them to pinpoint your location within three square metres, even on remote trails, using three random words (for example, the summit of Scafell Pike is ///originals.craftsman.escape). Download the What3Words app before your walk and ensure you give the words accurately.



- Alternatively, provide a **map grid reference**, which you can find using a GPS device or app, or from a paper OS map
- **If you have a weak phone signal, you can send a text to 999.** To use this service, you must have previously registered your phone with the emergency services by texting REGISTER to 999 and following the prompts. **A text message to 999 can get through with low signal**, whereas a phone call cannot.

Whichever way you contact rescue services, you'll need to provide:

→ **Your location** (What3Words/grid reference, or longitude and latitude, plus a description)
→ **Details about the incident and the casualty, including the suspected injury or illness and any existing medical conditions**
→ **The number of people in your group**
→ **Your mobile phone number**
→ **Any other details to help identify your group**

The emergency call handler will talk you through how to help keep the injured person safe and as comfortable as possible.

If you need to administer first aid, do so without putting yourself in danger. On a group walk, others could help by keeping the rest of the party safe or calling emergency services.

walk directory

To advertise, or for information on publication dates and classified advertising specifications, please call walk classifieds on 020 7420 7820 or email nsimpson@therivergroup.co.uk

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UK DESTINATIONS & ACCOMMODATION

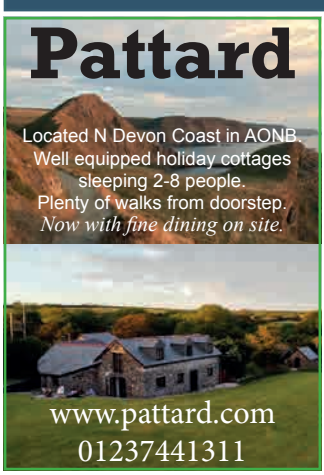
Scotland





Devon









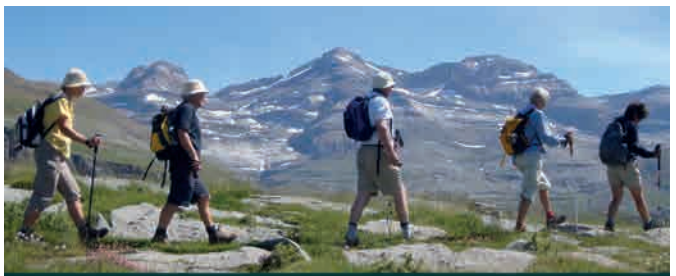
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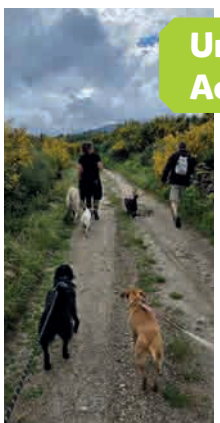
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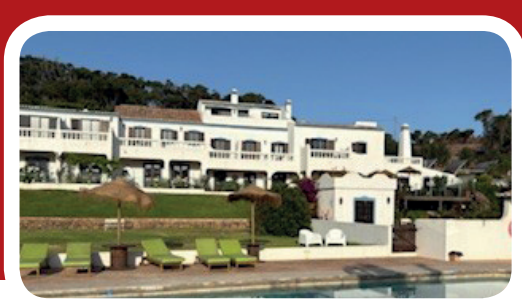


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Rest stop

Take time out to tackle our walkers' crossword and identify the mystery location

WHERE WAS I?

Did Robbie Williams sing in celebration of this gorge-crossing by an old mill, in a contradictorily named town?
Challenge set by Carol Hall

No prizes – this one's just for fun. Find the answer at **ramblers.org.uk/competitions** from December.



Over to you...

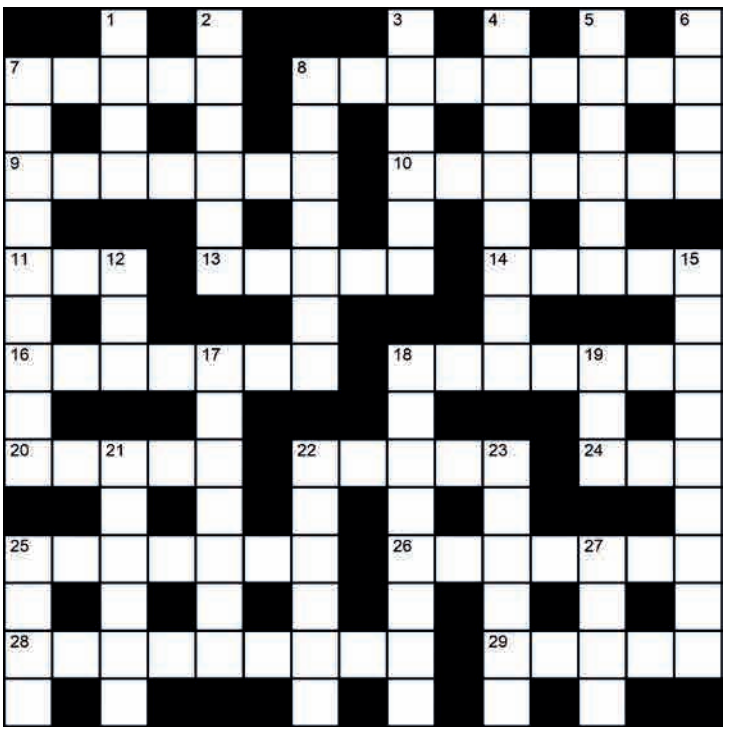
Send your 'Where Was I?' challenges, with a large image, a short clue and the answer to **walkmag@ramblers.org.uk**
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The sender of the first correct crossword entry drawn after the closing date will win a Tarcho Full Zip Fleece (worth £120) and Roll Top Back Pack (worth £110) from Sherpa Adventure Gear. A small brand with a big heart, the company provides a day of school for a Nepalese child for every item sold – with more than 1.8 million days provided so far. And its Tarcho collection weaves Nepalese heritage, colour and meaning into every piece. The Full Zip Fleece comes in a range of colours for men and women. Made in Nepal from 100% recycled yarn with an anti-pilling, moisture-wicking finish, it delivers dependable warmth and comfort. Also designed and made in Nepal, the 100% nylon Roll Top Back Pack combines lightweight strength with long-lasting wear, making it ideal for outdoor adventures and everyday use. **sherpa adventuregear.com**





Autumn/Winter 2026 crossword clues

ACROSS

7/16 Where, in East Sussex, King Charles III inaugurated the England Coast Path (5,7)

8 It's linked to Grange-over-Sands by the Cistercian Way – and sailor all at sea! (3,6)

9 Norfolk market town on Weaver's Way and Marriott's Way (7)

10 Prize draw... starts with an auction item (7)

11 Name of iconic tower on Thames Path – box-office feature (3)

13 Mammals seen eg off Blakeney Point, Norfolk (5)

14 In short, county location of Robin Hood Way (5)

16 See 7 Across

18 ____ Point, western end of Jurassic Coast – right inside coombe, perhaps (7)

20 Irish county town's good in soil management (5)

22 Canal enclosures that give access to fields? (5)

24 A conical hill, eg ___ of Glencoe, appears in map, aptly (3)

25 Site of a National Nature Reserve in the Broads will, oh, possibly include hospital (3,4)

26 To maintain body fluid he'd try a brew (7)

28 One who'd freely help a target of our Step Up Step Out programme? (9)

29 Rural roads in Castlewellan estate (5)

DOWN

1 Bedfordshire river I have briefly left (4)

2 Moves slowly by degrees – at 2.54cm intervals? (6)

3 Thickened skin from too much walking? Sounds heartless! (6)

4 No stoic, I mixed a rehydrating drink (8)

5 Ted ran around Dartford's river (6)

6 Whirlpool in flooded Dyfed (4)

7 The main dwellings for a village of Northumberland Coast AONB (9)

8 Important wetland sites ... shown in anagram Sarsens (7)

12 In short, it protects paths and open spaces – in Trossachs (3)

15 A Surrey SSI and nature reserve – helps ease workout (9)

17 Weathering caused by the elements – or noise, perhaps? (7)

18 The route changed for our course in outdoor skills for young adults (3,5)

19 Navigational aid in semaphore! (3)

21 Rill we confused for Lancashire river (6)

22 Mountains in County Limerick contributing to Donegal teetering! (6)

23 Col between peaks appreciated by equestrian? (6)

25 South coast town ___ into view? (4)

27 Poole Harbour peninsula – near collapse! (4)

Summer 26 solutions now online at **ramblers.org.uk/competitions**

How to enter the crossword

Email scanned entries with your name, address and telephone number to **walkcompetition@ramblers.org.uk**. Alternatively, post the completed crossword to the address on p3. Competition closes on 14 December 2026.



Lucy Shepherd

The intrepid explorer and TV presenter on sidestepping lions, the magic of the Arctic and why retaining your sense of adventure helps build mental resilience

INTERVIEW REBECCA SWIRSKY

Where would you wake up on your perfect day?
In a tent by a loch on the west coast of Scotland, the sun shining, forest and mountains sprawling behind me.

What's your favourite walk?
Crib Goch is a Grade 1 scramble in Snowdonia, which takes about five hours. With Welsh wilderness stretching for miles, a steep drop either side and fresh air in abundance, I'm a huge fan.

Who would be your ideal walking companion?
My small, feisty mini Jack Russell, Sami. She'll sometimes travel with me in a rucksack.

Filming your latest series in Africa, what took you by surprise?
Ridiculously, we didn't plan for how many thousands of lions there'd be, nor how unbelievably rich with life the Serengeti is! Abundant with antelope, it's lion paradise. Multiple times we almost stepped on lions as they slept – we used the wind as a defence mechanism (if you're downwind, they'll know you're there). At night, they roared a metre from our heads. A lion pressed a foot on my tent as I lay wide-eyed in the dark. I felt he could hear my heartbeat as I lay thinking: 'My poor mum and dad, I've pushed this too far now...'

What's your favourite terrain to explore?
I love all topographies. But, with the right kit, the Arctic is otherworldly. On my first expedition, I was told: 'When you go home, a fragment of your soul will stay forever in these wild places.'

Why is adventuring so worthwhile?
Surprisingly, unnavigated areas – much of which is tropical rainforest – do still remain. Exploring isn't about conquering, it's about connection, telling stories. Getting out of our routine is useful, otherwise we stagnate. As children, we had the innate spirit to explore and be curious.

How does adventuring help with everyday life?
On an adventure, emotions are extreme; you're terrified or intensely happy. You learn that fear gives clues, heightens senses and helps you be more prepared. In 'normal' life, anxiety turns to smaller things. Becoming used to fear helps you put day-to-day anxiety back in proportion.

How does one build mental resilience?
It's easier to build resilience while adventuring, as curveballs happen so often. At home, it's about making a conscious effort to be a bit uncomfortable. Regularly doing small yet hard things builds resilience. Taking an actual physical step forward helps you mentally configure your next step. So, just getting outside at the start of the day makes the day better.

At 23, you became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Is inspiring young female adventurers important to you?
Yes. I released a trailer for my new show and a dad of a six-year-old daughter messaged me, frustrated her class weren't learning about women explorers. Yet there are so many: Nan Shepherd, Isabella Bird, Amelia Earhart, Freya Stark...

You met the late Jane Goodall – did she inspire you?
Jane was incredibly feisty. She knew her mission: to protect wildlife and land. She kept her message simple, showing what's possible through her impact. She had a great quote: 'It actually doesn't take much to be considered a "difficult woman" – that's why there are so many of us', meaning don't try to pigeonhole women.

Were there clues to your career in your childhood?
Yes! I loved being in trees, hearing people say, 'Don't go there!' I began filming with my dad's camcorder when I was 10. With my friends, Harry and Daisy, I made comedies, battle dramas – and Tarzan! I began winning cash prizes as no one else was entering children's video competitions, and it went from there. Today, I love filming my adventures.

How can parents foster the spirit of adventure?
Let children do their thing. Freedom is important because you can live in your own little world. Let them use their initiative. We were allowed to roam on holidays in the west of Scotland. I went to hospital with broken arms, burns and massive splinters, but that was part of being a child. If you're curious and enthusiastic on a walk, your kids will want to be involved.

Stream Lucy's series Secret Amazon *and* Secret Africa *on Channel 4, and read her debut book* Into the Wild *(£25, Michael Joseph).*

PHOTOGRAPH: LUKE RADCLIFFE CHANNEL 4 SECRET AFRICA

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