THE RAMBLERS MAGAZINE
Britain's walking charity

walk

ISSUE 90 SUMMER 2026 **£4.95**



NATIONAL TRAIL
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EMAIL walkmag@ramblers.org.uk
WEBSITE ramblers.org.uk/walk
ADVERTISING
Nancy Simpson Advertising Manager 020 7420 7820

WALK MAGAZINE TEAM
Editor Elyssa Campbell-Barr
Art Director Phil Tristram
Chief Sub Editor Wendy Watts
With thanks to Alison Lawn, Cheryl Freedman, Janis Cross
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POST Central Office (as above)
Ramblers Scotland The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh EH8 8DL
Ramblers Cymru Tramshed Tech, Unit 3, Goodsheds Lofts, Hood Road, Barry CF62 5QT
PHONE 020 3961 3300
WEBSITE ramblers.org.uk
EMAIL ramblers@ramblers.zendesk.com
FACEBOOK facebook.com/ramblers
INSTAGRAM instagram.com/ramblersgb
LINKEDIN linkedin.com/company/the-ramblers

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Welcome to walk



The official opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path in March (see p10) got the nation talking about walking, with wall-to-wall (or coast-to-coast?) media coverage of the Ramblers' involvement in creating the world's longest managed coastal walking route. Congratulations and thank you to thousands of our volunteers who've been involved over the past 25 years to make this audacious idea a reality. Read the eventful tale of the path's creation on p16.

The development of England's coast path shows what wonderful things can be achieved when politicians prioritise public access to nature. Sadly, we know that millions of people miss out on the wellbeing benefits of being active outdoors because paths are unusable. That's why our new Access Denied campaign calls on governments to end the years of neglect of Britain's path network and make access to nature a right, not a luxury. Turn to p9 to find out more and support the campaign.

Paths are vital to the nation's health and happiness, so the Ramblers' Britain's Favourite Path competition is back for 2026 to give them the recognition they deserve. Meet celebrity judge JB Gill on p28 – and don't forget to cast your vote in July.





Where we've been Editor Elyssa enjoying spring walks in Holywell, East Sussex (top), and Outwood, Surrey

Elyssa Campbell-Barr **Editor**

ON THE COVER



'Being able to walk out in nature is incredibly important, not least because of the physical and mental benefits,' says pop star and presenter JB Gill. 'I love being on a walk and reconnecting with everything that's around me, taking in that scenery.' One quarter of boy band JLS, who found fame on the 2008 series of *The X Factor*, JB is now a familiar face from TV programmes such as *The One Show*, *Strictly* and *Songs of Praise*. He is also a farmer, rearing turkeys and pigs on his Kent smallholding, and has presented farming shows for CBeebies and Channel 5. 'Like many landowners and farmers, public rights of way run through our land, so we have a duty to look after those, to maintain them and welcome as many people as possible to the countryside,' he says. As a champion of countryside access, we're delighted that JB is on our judging panel for our 2026 Britain's Favourite Path competition. Get to know him and his wife Chloe on p28, and find competition updates at **ramblers.org.uk/britainsfavouritepath**.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: KHALIQ ARIF

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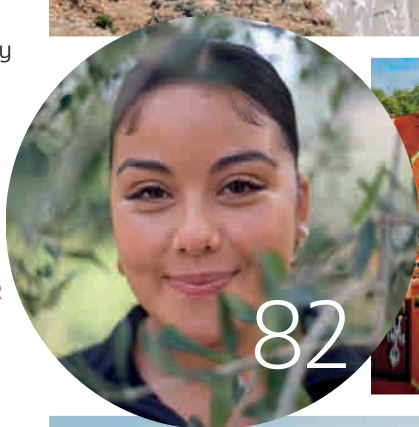
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THE VIEW FROM HERE

Robin Hood's Bay, North Yorkshire

WHERE The North York Moors, and Yorkshire and Cleveland Heritage Coast.
MAPS OS Explorer OL27; OS Landranger 94.
ABOUT Robin Hood's Bay lies between Whitby and Scarborough, halfway along the coastal section of the Cleveland Way National Trail. As of this spring, this picturesque fishing village is also on two other National Trails: the almost-completed King Charles III England Coast Path (see p16) and the newly upgraded Coast to Coast Path, both of which were officially launched in March.

Although there's no known connection between this village and the Sherwood Forest outlaw of the same name, Robin Hood's Bay does have a history of lawlessness. In the 18th century it was reputedly the busiest smuggling destination on the Yorkshire coast, with its sheltered coves and narrow alleyways making ideal places for concealing contraband.

There has been a fishing community here for more than 1,000 years, but these days, tourism is bigger business. The quaint cobbled streets, sandy beach, stunning views and independent shops and eateries make it a huge draw for visitors. For long-distance walkers, this is also the place to drop a Cumbrian beach pebble and dip your toes in the North Sea after walking 306km/190 miles across northern England on the Coast to Coast route established in the 1970s by legendary rambler Alfred Wainwright.

Discover the Coast to Coast Path National Trail
Scan the QR code for more inspiration in our new online guide

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK

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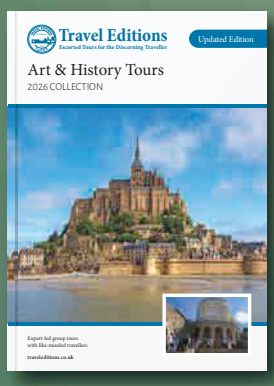


Agatha Christie On The English Riviera

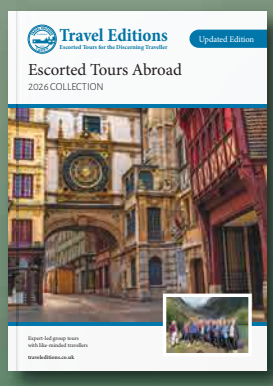
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Front foot

Campaigns and news from the world of walking



Millions across Britain cut off from nature

The Ramblers' new Access Denied campaign, launched in March, calls on Britain's governments to expand and protect our path network and make access to nature a reality in every community.

Years of political and financial neglect have taken a huge toll on our paths. Across Britain, millions of people are cut off from nature because the paths that connect them to it are missing, blocked or unusable.

Access to nature is a right

Research shows that access to nature is also deeply unequal. In England, more than one in four adults don't have green space within 15 minutes' walk. In Scotland, the wealthiest communities have access to twice as many paths as the least well-off communities. And in Wales, a staggering 50% of all paths are blocked, not signposted, or both.

It shouldn't be this way. Recent polling by the Ramblers found that a massive 84% of Britons agree that access to nature should be a basic right. And providing this access is increasingly recognised as a simple, cost-effective way to improve public health. Walking outdoors is linked to improved mental health and fitness, and reduced stress. Yet the communities that would benefit the most are often those with the least access: studies consistently show that people living in more deprived areas are less likely to have access to nearby green spaces. Meanwhile, research by the Health Foundation revealed an average gap of 19 years in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in England, Scotland and Wales.

Campaigning for a healthier, happier nation

Unlocking access to nature for everyone, whether for a walk or other outdoor activities, isn't just a 'nice to have'. It's essential to tackling many crises we face as a society, not least by helping to improve our health and increase social connection. Launching our campaign, Tom Platt of the Ramblers said: 'Local paths are lifelines. They connect people with green space, fresh air, and better mental and physical health. Right now, we need those things more than ever, which is why our new Access Denied campaign asks our hundreds of thousands of supporters to call for urgent political action.'

We're asking our politicians and decision-makers to protect and expand our path network, so everyone – regardless of where they live in Britain – can benefit from access to nature. Specifically:

- **In England**, we're urging the Westminster government to publish an Access to Nature green paper and a clear timetable for taking forward the recommendations.
- **In Scotland**, we're urging the new Scottish government to commit to a £50 million Scottish Paths Fund.
- **In Wales,** we're urging the new Welsh government to increase the funding for paths and access to £24 million.

We're also asking all Ramblers members to get involved and support our Access Denied campaign. Please add your voice to the thousands demanding urgent political action to improve access to nature, and look out for more ways to get involved in the coming months.

Tell our governments that access to nature is a right

Join our call for improved access to nature at **bit.ly/Access-To-Nature-Is-A-Right** – or simply scan this QR code

NEWS IN BRIEF



VITAL VICTORY FOR HAYTON

In May, the Ramblers won a major legal victory in a long-running fight to protect public access to paths in Hayton Woods, Cumbria. Judges at the Court of Appeal upheld a 2025 ruling that a four-month pause in public use during the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak did not cancel long-established public rights of way. This is great news for local residents and sets a vital precedent that will safeguard paths throughout Britain. Pictured outside the court with Ramblers staff members Sophie Redmond (left) and Matt Hall (right) is Eugene Suggett, for whom this was the final case before retirement after an incredible 38 years leading on the Ramblers' legal casework.



WIDENING WELLBEING WALKS

Great news about Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, our free, short, accessible group walks that help people in England to get active and boost their mental and physical health. There's now no cost to partner organisations – such as local authorities, NHS trusts, charities and leisure centres – who want to establish a Ramblers Wellbeing Walk in their community. If there isn't already a group in your local area, we can support you with setting one up and training your walk leaders. To find out more, email **wellbeingwalks@ramblers.org.uk**.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW TRUSTEES

The Ramblers' General Council AGM in April saw the appointment of three new elected trustees: Yvonne Reddick, David Rogers and Florence Orban. They replace retiring trustees Gavin Baker, Mark Chung and Rowan Williams. Robin McLaren was also appointed as a trustee for Ramblers Scotland, succeeding Mal Dingwall-Smith.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES



King opens his namesake coastal path

The official opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path by His Majesty on 19 March was fantastic news for walkers and shone the media spotlight on the hard work and dedication of Ramblers volunteers. If you tuned into BBC TV or radio news on that day, you probably heard Jack Cornish, the Ramblers' director of England, discussing the transformational impact of the path, and the new access rights it has created for walkers by the coast. More than 170 other media outlets also reported on the Ramblers' involvement in the project.

Over two decades in the making, the new 4,300km/2,700-mile national trail is the longest managed coastal path in the world. It was developed from an idea that was originally suggested by Ramblers volunteers in the early 2000s, and thousands of our members have been involved in surveying, mapping and opening up the route over the past 20 years.

Find out more
Read the eventful story of the King Charles III England Coast Path's creation in our feature on p16

Toolkit to take the lead

Thanks to funding from the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust, the Ramblers has been working with seven global majority community groups in London and Greater Manchester, delivering walking workshops and learning about the barriers that block groups from leading walks for their communities.

Using these insights to identify gaps in the information we provide, we've created a Community Walk Leader Toolkit to help new and existing walk leaders. The resources include videos and tips to give communities the skills, knowledge and inspiration to establish and lead group walks.

There are significant inequalities in access to walking, with public rights of way concentrated in the wealthiest areas. Working alongside communities whose access to the outdoors is restricted, we're breaking down the barriers that prevent people from being active in nature.



Toni Murphy, founder of Touch Grass, one of the community groups involved, explained: 'One of the biggest barriers to getting out walking and outdoors is just the confidence. Not knowing where to go, not knowing the rules.'

Gemma Twitchen, programme lead for walk leadership at the Ramblers, said: 'This toolkit will help current and aspiring walk leaders develop the skills and confidence to lead walks in their communities.'

Get involved
Visit **ramblers.org.uk/community-walking-group-toolkit**



The Ramblers is once again searching for Britain's Favourite Path – and we need your help. This year's judges include JLS and *Strictly* star JB Gill (see p28) and new Ramblers Scotland president Chris Lawlor (see p65), as well as Ramblers Cymru ambassador and disability activist Bethany Handley, Ramblers president Amar Latif, aka The Blind Adventurer, and TV presenter and mental health champion Matt Johnson (ambassador for our competition partner Postcode Lottery). They're narrowing down the thousands of entries to a shortlist of eight. Look out for the finalists on our website and social media from 1 July, and cast your vote by 31 July.

Now in its third year, Britain's Favourite Path shines a spotlight on our wonderful, but often neglected path network. The

Last year's winner: the path along the Hartland Peninsula in Devon and Cornwall

2025 competition reached 13 million people through press coverage and social media, raising awareness of the importance of paths and the Ramblers' vital work in developing and protecting them. We're delighted that this year's competition is supported by Postcode Lottery. Thanks to funds raised by Postcode Lottery players, the Ramblers has received over £26 million in funding since 2015 to help protect and champion Britain's paths and green spaces.

Get involved
Vote for your favourite path from 1 July:
ramblers.org.uk/britainsfavouritepath



Getting Out There!

The Ramblers' Out There Award is back for 2026. It's a free, friendly and fun two-day training course that gives 18- to 26-year-olds a grounding in outdoor skills. Places are available at locations across England, Scotland and Wales every weekend until September.

Sign up now
Learn more and book your place at
ramblers.org.uk/out-there-award

RAMBLERS WEEKLY LOTTERY

Lottery launch

We're excited to be launching the Ramblers' Weekly Lottery, a new way to support our work to protect paths and open the way for everyone. Enter for just £1 a week for your chance to win £10,000 and other cash prizes in the weekly Friday draw. Improving access to nature, plus the possibility of a great prize – it's a win-win!

Play the lottery
See p40, or visit **ramblers.org.uk/play** to enter today

NEW ROUTES



TREK THE TEIFI

Launched in April, the Taith Dyffryn Teifi/Teifi Valley Trail follows the River Teifi 134km/83 miles from its source in the Cambrian Mountains and through the Cors Caron National Nature Reserve, woods and farmlands to the coast at Poppit Sands. Local Ramblers members played a key part in developing the route.
teifivalleytrail.wales



UP ON THE ROOF

The Roof of England Walk is a 301km/188-mile circular route through the upper reaches of the North Pennines National Landscape and UNESCO Global Geopark. Starting in Appleby-in-Westmorland, ramble the spectacular countryside of Cumbria, County Durham and Northumberland over 14 days, or pick a section for a day hike.
roofofenglandwalk.org.uk



HAMPSHIRE HARBOUR TRAIL

The Langstone Loop circular trail around Langstone Harbour in southeast Hampshire offers 22.5km/14 miles of flat, peaceful paths for all the family. Enjoy great coastal views, wildlife galore, the Hayling Ferry, free parking, and education boards along the trail that bring its rich nature and heritage to life.
langstoneloop.org.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

VOLUNTEER SUCCESSES



GREAT GATHERING

Ramblers members from across Scotland enjoyed walks, talks and socialising in and around Pitlochry, Perthshire, at the annual volunteer-led Gathering festival in April. Thanks to Blairgowrie & District Ramblers for hosting and organising a packed programme of rambles to local landmarks, including the Loch Faskally Salmon Ladder, Black Spout Waterfall and Rumbling Bridge.



HEXHAM'S STYLISH STILES

Hexham Ramblers' longstanding path maintenance group has branched out into stile repairs over the past year, guided by the expertise of member Brian Place and with support from Northumberland County Council. 'The work is surprisingly satisfying and is improving access to many footpaths in the Hexham and Tyne Valley area', reports group member Julia Forster.



CLEVELAND CUSTODIANS

As well as walking the Cleveland Way in 2026, Yorkshire's Midlife Hikers have also adopted a section of this National Trail. They're custodians of Section 24 – Scalby Mills to Hayburn Wyke – as part of a scheme run by the North York Moors National Park Authority. Responsibilities include patrolling at least three times a year, litter picks, minor repairs and maintenance, and reporting problems.



Waymarking the Cumbria Way

The Cumbria Way is now easier and safer to walk, thanks to Lake District Area Ramblers and a range of partners. Local Ramblers volunteers have worked with three highway authorities and bestselling outdoor writer Paddy Dillon to add clearer signage to the route, with new waymarkers.

The scenic trail wends its way 112km/70 miles across the Lake District between the Cumbrian towns of Ulverston in the south and Carlisle in the north.

Special offer
To celebrate, Cumbrian outdoor brand INOV8 is offering members a discount on jackets: see p15



Next steps in Scotland

Ramblers Scotland's Next Steps courses help our volunteer walk leaders to learn more about skills such as walk-planning, map-reading, navigation and dealing with emergencies. They're also a great opportunity to pick up top tips about walking kit, local wildlife and even the best walkers' cafés. The practical, outdoor training is delivered to small groups by experienced Ramblers volunteers.

Find out more
ramblers.org.uk/next-steps-scotland

Station celebration

If you're travelling from Sheffield Station, look out for a new plaque (on the pillar nearest Superdrug) commemorating a birthplace of rambling. In September 1900, GHB Ward brought 13 walkers together here to travel to Edale for a 20-mile hike around Kinder Scout — a journey that led to the formation of the first working-class walking group, Sheffield Clarion Ramblers. This January, a group of local ramblers and guests with connections to the Clarion Ramblers gathered to view the plaque, share stories and enjoy a walk around 'the outdoor city'.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, PADDY DILLON

Advancing accessibility

Five years ago, thanks to the support of an anonymous donor, we established the Ramblers' Path Accessibility Fund (PAF) to support projects that make paths more accessible. The fund awards grants to schemes that open up the outdoors to people with reduced mobility. Here are three of its latest successes



Essex
Cymbeline Meadows is one of Colchester's most valued green spaces, rich in wildlife – including otters, kingfishers and water voles – and sited on the 22.5km/14-mile Colchester Orbital walking route. And now parts of the 74-hectare site are accessible to wheelchair users for the first time. This is thanks to the PAF, along with the hard work and persistence of Rowena Macaulay, disability equality campaigner and founder of Walk Colchester; Jem Warren, volunteer with the Ramblers' Hike Essex group; and Aaron Ashwood, healthy & active environments officer at Colchester City Council.

Changes include ramps replacing steps onto a bridge, a new two-way, self-closing gate and an unnecessary gate replaced by a simple gap. A boardwalk has also been extended, and finished with self-binding gravel to avoid a boggy dip.

Speaking about the transformation at a recent Ramblers Footpath Forum, Jem Warren said: 'All these changes open our green spaces to people who were previously excluded. And they send a clear message: access to nature shouldn't depend on your mobility, your confidence, or the equipment you use.'

Southampton
This new two-way, self-closing accessible gate has transformed accessibility to West End Copse, a popular area of woodland in Southampton. Funded by a PAF grant, the gate has replaced a narrow, chicane-style opening at the Old Ivy Lane entrance, so it's now easier for people with pushchairs, wheelchairs and other mobility aids to enjoy the copse. It's part of a programme of improvements, including upgraded signage, stream clearance and step repairs, with path improvements to come.





Hampshire
Following another successful PAF bid, Hampshire's ever-busy Romsey Ramblers have replaced two more stiles with accessible gates. The group worked for two days in February's inclement weather to remove dilapidated, unstable stiles and install the new gates, improving countryside access for walkers between Michelmersh and Braishfield.

QUICK Q&A



Les Mildon
volunteers with Hampshire's Romsey Ramblers

What are your volunteering roles?
I'm chair, footpath officer, walking environment officer, maintenance team lead and walk leader for Romsey Ramblers, and Hampshire Area access officer.

What motivates you to volunteer?
A mantra learned in my teens is: 'The more you put in, the more you get out.' When our sons joined the Scouting movement, I became a volunteer for 35 years, needing no more motivation than seeing the immense benefit the young members gained. On joining the Ramblers in 2019, I quickly became a walk leader before getting into other roles. Seeing the benefit that rambling brings to our members motivates me to lead walks and improve rights of way.

What's your proudest achievement?
Being runner-up in Test Valley Borough Council's Volunteer Awards 2023 for my work with both Scouting and the Ramblers is high on the list. I'm also proud of our three successful bids to the Path Accessibility Fund (see left).

Favourite places to ramble?
I'm happy anywhere in the countryside. I'm fortunate to live in the Test Valley, which has beautiful villages, tranquil woodland paths, open farmland with great views, and the River Test itself.

What's always in your backpack?
First-aid kit, antibacterial gel, snack and drink, tick-remover tool, whistle (as yet unused!), secateurs, ICE [In Case of Emergency] cards, and a register of walkers if I'm leading. I use the OS Maps mobile app for navigation.

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ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES

NEW KIT ROUND-UP

PARTNER PRODUCTS

INOV8 VentureLite jacket

£115 (including discount), inov8.com/ramblers

Breathable, ultra-lightweight and fully waterproof and windproof, INOV8's VentureLite jackets for men and women are a great addition to any walker's kit. The Cumbria-based brand is celebrating partnering with the Ramblers to improve the Cumbria Way (see p12) by offering a £60 discount at **inov8.com/ramblers**, with £20 per sale going to the Ramblers.





Hypershell X exoskeleton

From £709, uk.hypershell.tech

A Hypershell X robotic exoskeleton is a wearable device that uses sensors, smart algorithms and precise motor assistance to help the wearer move. Think of it as like an e-bike for your body, helping you hike further, faster or longer, with less fatigue. Ramblers from MAD Walkers and Manchester Weekend Walkers were impressed trail-testing them in the Goyt Valley this spring.

HJ Hall Technical Rambler Coolmax socks

From £12, hj.co.uk/ramblers-socks

HJ Hall's Technical Rambler socks are now available in cooler materials and shorter styles for summer. The trainer sock offers lightweight cushioning in a soft, cotton Coolmax fibre blend, with mesh ventilation zones. For each pair sold, 50p goes to the Ramblers.





WATCH

Our Land

ourlanddocumentary.com; limited cinema release this summer

Who are the owners and stewards of our land, and who has the right to explore it? In this documentary, meet activists from the 'right to roam' movement fighting for greater access, and hereditary landowners who consider themselves the rightful custodians.



VISIT

Pentlands Open Studios Art Trail

15–16 August 2026, Edinburgh

Each year, artists invite ramblers to explore their network of studios on the edge of the Pentland Hills. This summer's trail has 25 artists exhibiting in 12 venues, all reachable through walks in the upper valley of Edinburgh's Water of Leith.



READ

My Body is a Meadow by Bethany Handley

£20, Headline

Poet, activist and Ramblers Cymru ambassador Bethany has always loved the outdoors, but becoming a wheelchair user in her twenties locked her out of many landscapes. This is a passionate argument for inclusive access to nature and removing barriers on paths.



England's coastline, one step at a time

After a quarter of a century of campaigning, planning, negotiations and construction, the King Charles III England Coast Path is officially open. Read the eventful story of this new 4,345km/2,700-mile National Trail around the entire coast of England

WORDS ELYSSA CAMPBELL-BARR & KATE CONTO



Walkers enjoying the dramatic clifftop coast path in East Sussex. Right: Weymouth Bay, Dorset

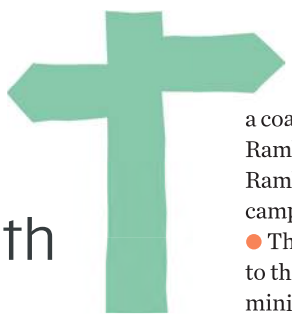
Walking beside the sea has been a national pastime for centuries. The invigorating, health-giving benefits of ocean air, combined with dramatic views, unique wildlife and the natural playgrounds of our beaches, make the coast an irresistible draw for people of all ages and backgrounds.

But at the turn of this century, more than a third of England's coastline was inaccessible. Where coastal walking routes did exist, they were often fragmented, poorly managed, unsecure due to erosion, or veered erratically inland. Many were along permissive paths, rather than public rights of way, and so had no legal protection.

Throughout the 2000s, the Ramblers has campaigned for a public right of access to England's entire coastline. Now, thanks in large part to our volunteers' tenacity and hard work – in partnership with Natural England, landowners and local authorities – we're delighted that the King Charles III England Coast Path is complete (well, almost!), and open for all to enjoy. Its development has been a 25-year rollercoaster ride of ups and downs, twists and turns, as our timeline reveals...

Seaboard strolls

Sample a section of the King Charles III England Coast Path this summer. Find inspiration in Ten Places (p30), Ramblers Routes (p39), and online at bit.ly/KCIIIECP



The England Coast Path timeline

2000

● The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) receives Royal Assent, granting the public the right to legally access mapped areas of open countryside in England and Wales, including mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land.

● Meanwhile, Dave Hitchman of Essex Area Ramblers sets out to walk the entire Essex coast, but struggles to access many parts. 'We haven't got any mountains or moor in Essex. And they've left most of the coast out of the CRoW Act,' he points out.

2001

● Dave presents a motion to fellow Essex Area Ramblers committee members, to support an Essex Coast Path campaign.

2003

● Essex Area Ramblers submits the case for a coast path to Ramblers GB. It calls for a route around the entire English coast.

2004

● Essex Area Ramblers brings a motion to Ramblers General Council proposing a coast path around the whole of England. Ramblers in other areas are supportive, so Ramblers GB agrees to run a national campaign and petition the government.

● The Labour government is sympathetic to the idea, so we press Alun Michael MP, minister of state for rural affairs, for legislation. We call for a 'corridor of access': a unique model designating the coastal margin between the coast path and the sea as open access land.

2007

● Standing on the White Cliffs of Dover, David Miliband, Labour secretary of state for the environment, formally announces the creation of the England Coast Path. 'We are an island nation. The coast is our birthright, and everyone should be able to enjoy it,' he declares.

2009

● The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places duties on the secretary of state and Natural England to create a route around the entire English coast, with additional 'spreading room' (the coastal margin) for people to enjoy. The Act gives the public a new right to walk on beaches, along cliffs and around estuaries in England, following the line of the path. The initial timeline for completion is 10 years.



2010

● The general election brings the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition government to power, putting the coast path in jeopardy. Some politicians consider the project too complicated and expensive, particularly in the era of austerity.

2012

● The first section of the England Coast Path to be officially opened, around Weymouth Bay in Dorset, is unveiled by Conservative environment minister Richard Benyon, in time for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics sailing events. Benyon says: 'Opening up miles of English coastline like this will allow thousands of people to better enjoy this spectacular natural environment and help support local economies by encouraging tourism. I want to see more people walking in and accessing our countryside as I know the value such activity has for our health, for our economy and for the spiritual uplift and wellbeing that comes from being out and about.'

2013

● In June, Richard Benyon suggests plans to extend coastal access could be abandoned in the face of government >







spending cuts. At the Royal Cornwall Show, he describes the coast path project as using 'a sledgehammer to miss a nut'.

- The Ramblers seeks endorsement for the coast path from deputy PM Nick Clegg and secures the support of the National Trust, British Mountaineering Council and South West Coast Path Association, among others. We also whip up political interest by hiring an ice cream van (pictured below) and taking it to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Houses of Parliament. Our van gives out ice creams to MPs and their staff while promoting the benefits of the coast path project.
- In July, Richard Benyon blocks the inclusion of the Isle of Wight in the England Coast Path, as the wording of the Marine and Coastal Access Act excludes islands from which it isn't possible to walk from the mainland.
- In August, the Ramblers formally challenges this decision, threatening a judicial review. The island's Ramblers group, supported by the Isle of Wight Council and Chamber of Commerce, says it would be an injustice if it were the only coastal English county excluded from the recreational and economic benefits of the coast path.
- October brings a campaigning victory, as Richard Benyon agrees to review the decision to exclude the Isle of Wight from the coastal path. Shortly afterwards, Benyon leaves Defra and returns to the back benches. The government announces a revised timetable for the coast path work.





Clockwise from left: Isle of Wight Ramblers protesting; the Seven Sisters, East Sussex, where the path officially opened in March; Pier Head, Liverpool; walkers in Polperro, Cornwall; a KCIIIECP waymarker in Suffolk

2014

- Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg confirms the government's commitment to 'ensuring that the path is completed by 2020 by allocating extra funding'. Despite the difficult economic climate, the government recognises the path's potential for regenerating coastal areas and boosting seaside economies and communities.

2015

- Defra minister Rory Stewart confirms protected funding to complete the coast path by 2020. Ramblers members around England play a huge part in developing the trail, helping with surveying, mapping and path upgrades.

2018

- A European court judgement on how Natural England must assess the impact of coast path proposals on environmentally protected sites creates additional work, slowing the path's development.

2019

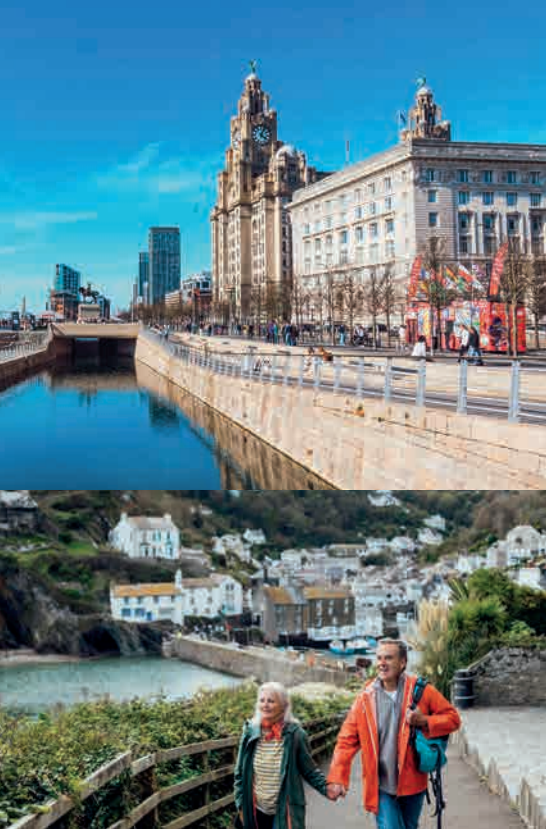
- Natural England data demonstrates the value of the England Coast Path to lives and livelihoods, with people taking more than 29m walks along the coast and putting £350m into coastal economies in just six months.

2020

- The Covid pandemic slows progress on coast path works.

2021

- The cost of timber, steel, cement and other construction materials soars due to Covid disruptions and a stuck container ship blocking the Suez Canal.



2023

● Defra announces that the England coast path will be 'fully walkable by the end of 2024'.
● The coast path is officially named the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIIECP), to commemorate the King's coronation. But, three years after the target finish date, fewer than half of the sections have been completed.

2024

● Isle of Wight Ramblers are back in campaigning mode, this time protesting an inland diversion of the coastal path around Osborne House.

2025

● By December, about 70% of stretches are officially open, and many others have only short unfinished lengths.

2026

● By March, 100% of proposals for the coast path route have been submitted to the secretary of state. The King Charles III England Coast Path is officially opened by the King himself at the Seven Sisters in East Sussex, becoming Britain's newest National Trail.

This momentous achievement is testament to the dedication and hard work of hundreds of Ramblers volunteers. It shows what can be achieved when politicians and decision-makers prioritise people's access to nature. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

Facts and stats

● At **4,345km/2,700 miles**, the King Charles III England Coast Path is the world's longest managed coastal path.

● It has taken **19 years**, seven prime ministers and £28m to create this new National Trail.

● The route includes many stretches of coastline that were previously inaccessible to the public because the land was unstable, unsafe or landowners weren't obliged to let people pass through. The **Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009** changed this, enabling access along the coast.

● Natural England has negotiated with over **25,000 landowners** and **occupiers** to create the trail, without legal action or compensation. Only 2.5% raised objections. 'We take the time to bring people with us on what is a fantastic vision,' says project lead Neil Constable of Natural England.

● The coast path creates a new land designation, the **coastal margin**, shown in pink on OS maps. This is generally the land between the path and the sea, where people can walk, run, use mobility aids, or pause to watch wildlife, picnic or take photos.

● **Uniquely, the path can move when the coastline changes** because of erosion, cliff falls or rising sea levels. Called **'roll back'**, this provision future-proofs the route. For instance, in February 2026, intense rainfall caused a landslip near Charmouth in Dorset and the coast path plunged down the cliffside. After negotiation with path partners, the 15-metre roll-back provision was put into place, and the path was reopened to walkers within weeks.

● Technically, the King Charles III England Coast Path is currently almost **90% complete** – view the full map at **bit.ly/CoastPathProgress**. Work is well underway on most remaining stretches, but the Ramblers and others are still campaigning for access to two sections: through a Ministry of Defence site near Lulworth Cove in Dorset, and on the estate of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, which, ironically, was gifted to the nation by the King's great-great-grandfather, King Edward VII, in 1902!

Coast path champions

The King Charles III England Coast Path couldn't have been created without the expertise and dedication of hundreds of Ramblers members who became coastal access volunteers, walking and surveying the coast and liaising with Natural England and landowners to determine the best route for the path. They include:
Inga Chapman, who dealt with complications around a golf course, flood defences and industrial land to develop the coast path around Rye Harbour in East Sussex.
Ian Brodie and **David Kelly**, who



helped plot the route safely around salt marsh and other potential dangers in the Lake District and Lancashire, and untangled competing access rights between common land and new coastal access.
David Howarth and **Mike Slater** (pictured) of Isle of Wight Ramblers, who successfully fought for the island to be included and are still battling to resolve access issues around Osborne House.

Your view

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

STAR LETTER



Camí De Cavalls coastal path, Menorca

Steps to better health

I have mental health challenges and my husband has high blood pressure. We both find walking beneficial to help our medical conditions. I found an old copy of **walk** in our library magazine swap and it has inspired us to take our hiking to the next level. We are off to Seaton, Devon, to do the South West Coast Path, then a city break in Cambridge where we will investigate The Backs along the River Cam. We also plan to walk the Camí De Cavalls coastal route in Menorca. We look forward to joining the Ramblers and reading more. Who knows where the next article will lead us?

Lisa Prince, Oxfordshire

Calderdale – the way to go

I was surprised your article *Discover Calderdale* (spring 2026, p32) contained no reference to the Calderdale Way. There's an excellent website (**visitcalderdale.com/the-calderdale-way**) where you can see the route's history and recommendations for walking it. I used Todmorden as my base to complete the trail with two friends over four enjoyable days. There is a mixture of fields, woods and canal paths as well as moorland and a short diversion to the iconic Stoodley Pike monument [pictured]. Literary-minded walkers will recognise pretty Heptonstall, Ted Hughes's 'Black village of gravestones', where his wife Sylvia Plath is buried in the churchyard.



Rosemary Pitt, Cumbria

Top of the maps

At Milton Keynes Ramblers' website (**mkramblers.org.uk/walks.php**), we include map links to help walkers locate starting points. Streetmap (**streetmap.co.uk**) has advantages over other mapping sites: when zooming in or out, the map style changes in stages, from a detailed street view, to OS Maps (1:25,000 or 1:50,000), to road atlas. Its street view is useful for finding the starting footpath, and the site can also convert co-ordinates. The Cornwall-based company was severely impacted by Storm Goretti earlier this year. I would encourage other walkers to use Streetmap to help secure its future.

Len Barrows, Buckinghamshire

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.

Pics mixed

I was delighted to see my photograph 'Admiring the View' selected as one of the best photos in the 'City Strolls' competition (*Your Shots*, spring 2026, p34). Unfortunately, the name and location were incorrect – the picture was taken in Durham.

Karen Shields, Gateshead



Thanks to all readers who recognised that Karen's photo was taken in Durham. We're pleased to reprint it with the correct credit.

Health warning

Heather Thompson offers sound advice to walk leaders on what to do if a walker feels unwell (*Ask the Experts*, spring 2026, p72). On one chilly walk, I couldn't keep up with the group on ascents because I felt breathless. I didn't know I was suffering from arterial sclerosis: my clogged arteries were dangerously closing in the -10C windchill. After a check-up, I underwent open heart surgery. Walkers should be aware that abnormal breathlessness can be a sign of a serious health problem.

Peter Hobbs, by email



Renewable replies

Many of you wrote in response to our feature Green Energy, Grey Areas? *(spring 2026, p20). Here are a few extracts...*

Matthew Jones's article explains how many of us feel conflicted by the need to fight climate breakdown and the ever-increasing damage it is causing through flooding and drought, while maintaining outstanding countryside views. I wonder why all supermarket, factory and warehouse roofs aren't required to be covered in solar panels, and why more wind turbines aren't situated on industrial estates where the electricity is required. Similarly, why don't building regulations require new homes to have zero or very low energy requirements, with solar panels and battery storage as standard? My suggestions wouldn't eliminate the need for onshore wind and solar farms, but they would bring some production closer to the consumer without impact on the countryside.
Fred Pickering, Derbyshire



The article didn't consider other solutions for large-scale electricity generation. Biomass, hydropower and anaerobic plants weren't mentioned , but the greatest omission was solar generation on existing buildings or new-build housing.
Bruce Freeman, Devon

I disagree that 'wind turbines require relatively small physical footprints beyond the base and access tracks'. The base requires between 1,500 and 2,000 tonnes of concrete and 100-150 tonnes of steel rebar. With each wind turbine having a lifespan of 20 to 25 years, are we going to be left with huge reinforced concrete blocks scattered around our beautiful countryside?
David Trickey, Hampshire

The UK contributes just 1% of annual worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. Whatever we do to reduce them will have no noticeable effect globally. Also, the wind does not always blow and the sun disappears from view. Where is the energy security in that? The UK imports electricity from Europe via subsea interconnectors when domestic wind generation drops, but also spent £1 billion last year compensating our own producers for having to turn wind turbines off because the wind was too strong.
Michael Doyle, Flintshire

Matthew Jones seems to suggest it is inevitable our countryside will become plagued by more and more onshore wind farms, and we should accept the consequences to our nation's scenic beauty. About 75% of UK wind turbines are onshore and 25% offshore, yet the operational capacity of the offshore turbines matches that of all those onshore. The more effective offshore turbines are more expensive to build and operate, but arguably this is a worthwhile premium to circumvent the planning opposition that onshore developments usually receive. Emotive hysteria to nuclear power generation has delayed expansion of this green power source in the UK for decades. France had 56 active reactors supplying about 70% of its electricity in 2023, with a further six planned. My choice would be a 'Sizewell D' power station, in preference to its equivalent of around 1,700 onshore wind turbines, and I'd be happy to live nearby! **Ian Oliver, Scottish Borders**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES

Challenging situations



Thank you for featuring the Two Moors Way in your challenge walks feature (*Ten Places*, spring 2026, p28). It is a great walk, culminating with crossing Myrtlebury Cleave, offering spectacular views across moorland and the Bristol Channel to South Wales, before descending in Lynmouth. Exmoor is one of the least visited national parks, but one of the most beautiful. I was surprised by the mention of Dunkery Beacon and picture of Culbone Church, though. Although in Exmoor, these are on the Macmillan Way West and Coleridge Way respectively.
Edward Levy, by email

In your piece about challenge walks, you include the Yorkshire Three Peaks. This trail is notoriously eroded and spoilt by hordes of charity walkers. There are even donation boxes to help maintain the path. It's most degraded on Whernside and Ingleborough, where they have had to resort to paving some of it. On summer days it is like a resort, and local villages are fed up of hordes of noisy walkers. Responsible walking this is not.
Penny Robinson, Harrogate

WIN! A £100 COTSWOLD OUTDOOR VOUCHER

The writer of our star letter wins a £100 gift voucher from UK-based outdoor clothing and equipment company Cotswold Outdoor (**cotswoldoutdoor.com**). Choose from waterproof jackets, trousers, fleeces and base layers to boots, backpacks, tents, product care and walking poles. The company also offers a Repair & Care service to ensure your walking gear lasts for longer. Cotswold Outdoor is a long-standing Ramblers partner and Ramblers members enjoy a 15% discount on Cotswold Outdoor purchases, in store and online. Show membership ID, email or a copy of **walk** in stores. Online, log into your Ramblers account for a code: you'll need to sign up to Cotswold Outdoor's Explore More loyalty scheme to claim. The Ramblers will also receive a percentage of the purchase price.

COTSWOLD outdoor



Jan Ward of Plymouth Ramblers leads a family walk across the River Meavy on Dartmoor

Stepping out with our volunteers

Our new Step Up, Step Out programme aims to make volunteering with the Ramblers more inclusive, fun and impactful. As well as recognising and celebrating the wonderful work of our existing volunteers, we want to welcome new volunteers – particularly from communities who face barriers to enjoying the outdoors – to boost Britain's health and happiness through walking

WORDS DANNY CARDEN & ELYSSA CAMPBELL-BARR

For over 90 years, dedicated Ramblers' volunteers have opened the way to walking, from leading walks and running committees, to improving paths and campaigning for walkers' rights. Today, we're proud to have tens of thousands of skilled Ramblers volunteers at the heart of our work, collectively having a huge impact on lives and landscapes throughout Britain.

Volunteers are vital to our success, but we know the experience of volunteering with the Ramblers can be improved. That's why we've launched our Step Up, Step Out programme to make volunteering more inclusive, enjoyable and impactful, so everyone who volunteers with the Ramblers feels welcomed, valued and supported.

To coincide with the rollout of Step Up, Step Out, and national Volunteers' Week in early June, we chatted to current volunteers Grace, Peter and Jan about their achievements and reflections.



Boosting physical and mental health

Grace Namwanje is a Ramblers Wellbeing Walks leader in Dudley, West Midlands

I work as an NHS social prescriber, connecting people to resources and activities to improve their mental and physical health. Most of my work is with deprived migrant communities in Dudley, where unemployment and health inequalities are common. Many can't afford gyms or fitness classes. Walking is a simple, cost-effective way to help them stay active.







I used to hate walking, but during Covid lockdowns, visiting a nature reserve near my home made me feel free, energised and connected to myself. I wanted to share this with my patients. So, I trained as a volunteer Wellbeing Walks leader through the Ramblers. It opened my eyes to the physical and mental health benefits of walking, and how to lead walks safely and confidently.

I've been leading a walking group for a year, once a week, in a local park or nature reserve. The group provides a consistent, welcoming space where people can come whenever they need support.

We have around 58 registered participants. Most are experiencing mental health issues, isolation, loneliness or long-term health conditions. Over time, many report improved mood, better sleep, reduced reliance on medication and stronger social connections. I see people who initially struggled with social anxiety gradually building confidence through walking with the group.

I incorporate mindfulness techniques during walks — breathing exercises, sensory awareness and grounding practices — to help regulate emotions. One day we were in the woods, surrounded by birdsong. A patient who had been struggling with depression paused and said how beautiful the sound was. Seeing that shift — someone appreciating nature and changing through going on a walk — is incredibly powerful.

The support I've received from the Ramblers has been invaluable. Claire [Watkins, Ramblers community development officer for the Midlands and East] has helped me guide walks and organise activities, ensuring safety and inclusivity. We've also addressed practical barriers, providing clothing, footwear and even bus passes.

Becoming a walk leader isn't just a volunteer role, it's a life skill. You can change people's lives. And it benefits you personally as well as those you support. For anyone considering volunteering, I'd say it's absolutely worth it.



Breaking down barriers to walking

Peter Clark volunteers with Pathways Partnership Carmarthenshire, a project between Ramblers Cymru and Carmarthenshire County Council to improve the county's public rights of way

My background is as a land surveyor, so the Pathways Partnership project appealed to me straight away. I've remained involved for three reasons. First, it gets me out into the countryside, which I enjoy. Second, the surveys we carry out provide up-to-date information that helps the council's Public Rights of Way (PRoW) team target improvements to get more people active outdoors. And third, as a walk leader with Llanelli Ramblers, it's given me the chance to create new routes based on the paths I've explored.

I've now surveyed over 100km [62 miles] of public rights of way. I found it helpful to have a target to aim for.

Although 100km sounds a lot, it's only a small fraction of the county's path network. Volunteering has given me an appreciation of the scale of the job the PRoW team faces in trying to keep these routes open and accessible. While surveying, I've been struck by the rural decline in Carmarthenshire, particularly decaying abandoned farms.

The volunteering involves walking (or sometimes attempting to walk!) public paths and bridleways, recording any issues and noting features like gates, stiles, footbridges and signage. We take photographs and upload everything to the council's Countryside Access Management System. This information allows the council to prioritise improvements, which ultimately helps remove physical barriers to walking and makes it easier for people to get out and about. ›

A favourite moment was when I was surveying a path that led to a blocked kissing gate, covered in brambles and low branches. I spent about 45 minutes clearing it. When I finally got through, I was rewarded with an incredible view across the Gwendraeth Valley towards the sea. It really felt like I'd unlocked something worthwhile.

As volunteers, we've had great support from the Ramblers. Project officer Amy Goodwin is supportive and enthusiastic, providing training, refresher sessions, and equipment such as tools and waymark discs. There are thank-you events where volunteers get together and hear updates on how the project is progressing.

The Pathways Partnership is continuing in new directions, but I'll continue to be involved. If you enjoy being outdoors, like structure and get satisfaction from seeing a project through from start to finish, it's worth considering this type of volunteering. It gives a real sense of achievement and opens up new areas for you to explore and share with others.



"Ultimately, it's about building confidence, enjoyment and a lifelong connection to being outdoors"



Inspiring the next generation of ramblers

Jan Ward, a walk leader with Plymouth Ramblers, organises monthly walks for local families

The idea for family walks came when my grandson, then eight, said he didn't enjoy walking with just his parents and grandparents. With my teaching background, I thought I'd try organising walks specifically for children and families. I started out small, encouraging existing Ramblers members to bring their children or grandchildren.

Things took off when I set up a Facebook group: Family Walks – Plymouth Ramblers. There was lots of interest from families who lacked experience or confidence to go out on their own. We attracted a wide mix, including single parents, families on low incomes and families who would welcome a bit of support. Some have since joined the Ramblers, but it's mainly about introducing walking to people who might not otherwise try it.

Four years on, we usually have 15 to 25 parents and children on each walk. There's a core of a dozen 10- to 14-year-olds who have formed a lovely connection together.

The walks are about 5 miles [8km], child-focused and more adventurous than typical Ramblers walks, with lots of stops and playtime. We go to Dartmoor or the coast or climb tors, wade through streams or swim in the sea. Lack of transport can be a barrier, so we often use trains, buses or ferries, which the children love.

Beyond the enjoyment of the walks themselves is the tangible difference they make to families' lives. For parents, it's a chance to relax a bit and enjoy a day out, at minimal cost, that they don't have to organise. For children, it's somewhere to channel their energies and find a new friendship group. We also have children who were inactive, always on screens, who now look forward to walking with the friends they've made.

Doing walk leader training through the Ramblers helped me consider the specific challenges of leading groups with children and less experienced walkers. Ultimately, it's about building confidence, enjoyment and a lifelong connection to being outdoors.

I'd recommend to other Ramblers groups to try offering family walks. Start small to gauge interest. You need to reach beyond existing Ramblers members, but that's part of the value: introducing a new generation to walking.







The future of volunteering

We want Step Up, Step Out to transform how it feels to volunteer with the Ramblers and make it easier for people to share their time, skills and experience. Initially, the programme will focus on simplifying processes, including how we welcome volunteers and celebrate their successes. We also want to make current roles more accessible, particularly to people in less well-off areas.

Ramblers staff working with marginalised communities have already begun the process of better understanding the challenges and opportunities facing potential new volunteers. We've also recruited a Volunteer User Group, with members from a range of backgrounds, roles and locations, to help shape the Step Up, Step Out programme.

Step Up, Step Out will scale up the ways that people are supported to volunteer. Look out for new roles,



tailored training and micro-volunteering opportunities to help us attract thousands more wonderful volunteers like Grace, Peter and Jan to volunteer with the Ramblers.

It's all part of our unique work as Britain's walking charity, opening the way for everyone to enjoy the outdoors and protecting the places we love to wander.



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WALK + TALK

JB and Chloe Gill

From multi-million-selling boyband member to turkey and pig farmer is an unusual career trajectory, but Britain's Favourite Path judge JB Gill and his wife, Chloe, are delighted to be raising their family on their Kent smallholding and inspiring others to connect with nature

INTERVIEW REBECCA SWIRSKY

POSTCODE LOTTERY
POSTCODE ACTIVE TRUST

JB Gill is a judge of the Ramblers' Britain's Favourite Path competition 2026, supported by Postcode Lottery players (see p11)

Did nature play a big part in your childhood?

Chloe: My father is from Ireland and my parents had a place there. My cousins and I picked fresh eggs, went horse riding and were chased by cows. I loved long walks with our parents. So when JB suggested moving to a farm, it wasn't so alien.

JB: My parents are from the Caribbean and I lived in Antigua until I was 5, where family members looked after sugarcane plantations. My memories are of being on my dad's horses. There's a picture of me with all my cousins on the back of one horse! On Fridays, we'd fill our bellies with grilled corn and fish cooked on the side of the road. My parents always encouraged me to be outdoors. In the UK, my mum would take me to Kew Gardens. Before Chloe and I set up the farm, it was my mum who suggested we get land.

How important is nature in your children's lives?

Chloe: Very. They feel relaxed and safe in nature. Our son will often say: 'Oh mummy, it's so peaceful; I feel so lucky.' During lockdown, we couldn't sell or give our eggs away, so we used them to teach maths. We asked our children, Ace and Chiara, to collect, clean and lay the eggs out, then use them to count in twos or fives. Those eggs were helpful for understanding times tables or concepts like 'half a dozen'! Covid made us appreciate what we have – we were lucky to be able to run around on our own land.

Is it important for city children to access nature?

JB: Imperative. I've always been a huge advocate for children being able to access the countryside. Nature is free to access. Even from London, you can be in a relatively rural area within an hour, and people should be encouraged to do that. I grew up in Brixton and then Croydon. We didn't have a garden but we were always in parks. The difference it makes to people's mental and physical health is huge. It's why I work alongside Farms for City Children and the Royal Countryside Fund. Open Farm Sunday is fantastic too.

What do you all enjoy most about going for walks?

Chloe: For the kids, wildlife. Even the smallest insects. Excitingly, we recently saw a slow worm! We're always encountering ladybirds, butterflies and spiders with beautiful markings, helped by an amazing app called iNaturalist, which identifies animals and plants while contributing to scientific research.

JB: When I'm on a leisurely walk, I feel peaceful and appreciate the details. It gives me time to look at wildlife and God's world around us.

Chloe: Walking puts me in a completely different space. If I'm having a stressful day or meeting, I step outside and walking gives me the mental space to make decisions.

What's your favourite season for walking?

Chloe: Spring! Daffodils, new life, things popping, baby animals being born. I also love autumn – the colours of our trees and kicking the leaves.

JB: Spring and early summer for me. I love





Clockwise from above: Collecting fresh eggs was a feature of Chloe's childhood; the path to Botany Bay, Kent, a coastal favourite; encountering ladybirds is part of the fun of a family walk; lush Antigua, where JB spent his early childhood



WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE

› COUNTRY WALK?

JB: The most recent! A six-hour walk into London along a green, scenic route in Downe, Kent, full of bridleways, paddocks and stiles, raising money for Great Ormond Street Hospital. Charles Darwin apparently strolled there, so I like to think I've walked in his footsteps.

› CITY WALK?

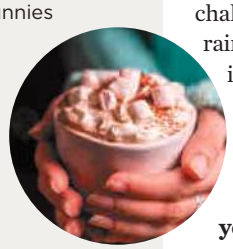
Chloe: We often walk to Victoria after meetings in Mayfair, past Buckingham Palace and through St James's Park.

› VIEW?

Chloe: Every morning from my bedroom window, regardless of whether it's raining! I open my curtains and take a deep breath at the sight of the trees, sky and wild bunnies hopping over the lawn.

› POST-WALK TIPPLE?

JB: Hot chocolate or mocha, that's our vibe.
Chloe: Or tea and custard creams.



› PIECE OF KIT?

JB: Our Barbour welly-boot carrier. After a walk, I stash the wellies in the carrier to sort out when I get back – or not!



woodland bluebell walks, all that bluey-purple carpeting the floor.
Chloe: We have woodland on the farm carpeted with bluebells. With nobody planting it, it's nature's gift. A sprinkle of magic, here and then gone...

Are you conscious of inspiring others into farming and an appreciation of the outdoors?
JB Absolutely. When Chloe and I initially spoke about setting up a farm, I don't think anyone believed it. Fast forward 13 years and people from all walks of life are starting farms. Flying the flag for farming is really important. Throughout society, from our education system to government, to sports and entertainment, we need everyone to appreciate the outdoors and where food comes from. Without that, we can't make change. Television shows – including the ones I make – are important for advancing that. Sometimes I've been the only one in the room from an urban background. But I wasn't deterred. You have to be brave and encourage others to follow suit.

As farmers, how do you support others to access nature?
JB: Like many landowners and farmers, public rights of way run through our land. We have a duty to look after those and maintain them, to be able to welcome as many people as possible to the countryside.

JB, tell us about walking along the River Severn for the BBC One series *Walks of Life*.
JB The county of Shropshire holds a special place in my heart. My friend owns a potato and onion farm there, and it's where I did my first *Songs of Praise*. Highlights included paddling in a round tub-like boat called a coracle on the river, and visiting a Roman vineyard. I'd no idea viticulture happened there. I took some wine home! I enjoyed the peace and open farmland alternating with deeply wooded areas.

The Ramblers is celebrating the official opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path. What's your favourite spot?
Chloe: Botany Bay, between Margate and Broadstairs in Kent, has white cliffs and amazing sea views. It's a beautiful family-friendly beach with fossils and chalk stacks, an hour and a half drive from us. The sea is gorgeous, with interesting chalk caves and rock pools. Even if it's raining, the children can just run around in wellies and enjoy being by the sea. The little caves are safe for exploring and pottering in. It's beautiful.

Any other coastal walks that you'd recommend?
JB: The path from the hills onto Inch Beach in south-west Ireland has stunning scenery. You can walk for ages along a long stretch of coastline with big sweeps of sand towards Dingle Bay and the Iveragh Peninsula.
Chloe: I could sit on Inch Beach for hours, watching the clay-coloured sand with ripples where the water has ebbed out. As a child, I'd visit with my sister and cousins; now we take our children. I remember everyone pulling on wellies and giggling, running to the sea. Our wellies filled with water. Eventually we had to sit in our knickers in the car, climbing over each other, laughing our heads off. Chaos! The Irish weather was often freezing, but we had the best time.
JB: We also love Bute in Scotland, where we got married.
Chloe: Bute's such a wild and epic place. We returned with the children when Ace was 7 and Chiara was 4. We all ran in the water, picking up crabs. It felt so simple and free. We need to make more memories there while they still want to run around with us.

JB Gill's BBC shows include Down on the Farm, Countryfile *and* Songs of Praise. *Watch the family in* Cooking with the Gills, *on Channel 5: channel5.com/show/cooking-with-the-gills*

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

TEN PLACES

More to sea

More of Britain's coastline is walkable than ever before, thanks to the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIIECP) being officially opened as a National Trail this spring, the Wales Coast Path (launched in 2012) and Scotland's world-leading access rights (established in 2003). Ramblers volunteers have long played a vital part in improving public access to our coast. Here are ten sections that showcase their tremendous work

WORDS ELYSSA CAMPBELL-BARR



1 Budle Bay to Fenham Flats, Northumberland

ABOUT The Northumberland coast is known for its beautiful beaches, sand dunes, harbours, geology, wildlife and historic sites, including several spectacular coastal castles. The section from Bamburgh to the Scottish border covers 61km/38 miles, much of which was inaccessible to the public before the King Charles III England Coast Path was created. One newly accessible route extends from Waren Mill, west of Bamburgh, to Cheswick, from where existing rights of way continue north, linking with the Berwickshire Coast Path north of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

WALK IT Ramblers' Northumbria Area access officer Nuala Wright suggests walking sections of this newly created path as linear routes, connecting with bus services along the A1 trunk road back to your starting point. For example, head from Belford to Budle Bay, then north to Ross Point and Fenham Flats birding site, with wonderful views of Lindisfarne (Holy Island) and Bamburgh Castle, before diverting inland to Buckton or Fenwick to catch a southbound bus.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/LivingNorth_CoastPathRoute**



2 Chichester Harbour, West Sussex

ABOUT Chichester Harbour is a large natural estuary with a mosaic of habitats, including mudflats, shingle banks, saltmarsh, tree-lined shore, reedbeds and 97km/60 miles of footpaths. A designated National Landscape, it's also a thriving recreational area with 14 sailing clubs. This section of the new National Trail links several existing coastal paths, and Ramblers volunteers from Hampshire and Sussex attended its official opening in February 2026.

WALK IT Access points to the coast path near the harbour include West Wittering, Itchenor and Bosham. At Emsworth on the Hampshire border, join the scenic 14.5km/9-mile circular walk around Thorney Island, much of which is owned by the Ministry of Defence and is still operational. Enjoy views of the harbour with the South Downs as a backdrop. This route forms one end of the Sussex Border Path.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/ChichesterHarbourWalking**

3 Totland Bay to Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight

ABOUT The Isle of Wight is England in miniature, and the coast path here offers spectacular walking. The route from Totland Bay to Freshwater Bay climbs heathland and passes Alum Bay's multi-coloured cliffs before reaching the iconic Needles chalk stacks, lighthouse and Victorian Old and New Batteries (National Trust). Enjoy splendid sea views as you cross Tennyson Down, pass Tennyson Monument and descend to Freshwater Bay. Incredibly, the island was not automatically included in the England Coast Path scheme – Isle of Wight Ramblers campaigned for three years to have it added. More recently, they've been protesting an inland diversion on a busy road, instead of along the coastline at Osborne House (see p19), and now await the Planning Inspectorate's decision.

WALK IT At under 10km/6 miles, this easy route is an ideal way for holidaymakers to explore many of the island's best-known attractions. Bus 12 takes you back to the start (**islandbuses.info/services/SVCT/12**).

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/IOWRamblers_TotlandFreshwater**; *Isle of Wight* by Mark Rowe (£15.99, Bradt)





4 Isle of Sheppey, Kent

ABOUT Much of the south coast of the Isle of Sheppey was inaccessible before the King Charles III England Coast Path was created, but the public can now walk a new route along reclaimed marshland that's almost unique in Kent. This is a wide-open space with vast skies teeming with seasonal birdlife, including marsh harriers and buzzards. Ian Wild, coastal access officer for Kent Ramblers, has worked with Natural England on the delivery of the coast path in Kent for 15 years and attended the opening of this section by environment access minister Baroness Hayman in summer 2025.

WALK IT With no houses and limited access for vehicles, Sheppey's southern shore offers the rare chance to enjoy a walk that feels truly wild and remote in south-east England. The flat, easy-going route joins two National Nature Reserves, Elmley and The Swale, with wonderful views of wildlife from a newly constructed section along the sea walls.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/Elmley_CoastPath**



5 Walney Island, Cumbria

ABOUT Walney is a 18km/11-mile-long island linked to Barrow-in-Furness by a bridge and fords, and rich in history from the Mesolithic era to the 20th century. Long-time Ramblers coastal access volunteer Ian Brodie recommends this geological esker as a place to connect with nature while walking England's coast path, which opened here in 2020. The route goes through North Walney National Nature Reserve, home to the unique Walney geranium and endangered Natterjack toads. South Walney Nature Reserve, adjacent to the route, is a breeding ground for grey seals. Don't miss Walney Lighthouse, once run by Britain's only female keeper, and enjoy superb views to the Lakeland Fells and, some days, the Isle of Man.

WALK IT The King Charles III England Coast Path extends for 33km/21 miles around the island, giving public access to flower-rich dunes, beaches and foreshore. Walk the circuit in a couple of days or, with help from local buses, try a shorter ramble around one of the nature reserves.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/NaturalEngland_Walney**; **islandeering.com/walney-island-coastal-route/**

6 Orwell Estuary, Suffolk

ABOUT The estuary of the River Orwell between Felixstowe and Ipswich in Suffolk is a little-known haven where you can wander through woodlands, take in clifftop views and observe the unique marshland bird habitats that have made this area a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The creation of the King Charles III England Coast Path has transformed walking here, with a new 3km/2-mile section of path along the sandy river margin and past the old Nacton Quay, and new bridges and surfacing that have made marshy areas more accessible.

WALK IT Suffolk Ramblers' coastal access officer Nigel Meadows suggests walking his favourite section: the 6km/4 miles from Nacton Shores to Ipswich. As well as plenty of variety and interest along the route, you'll find free car parks conveniently situated at both ends.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/StourOrwellWalk**





7 Isle of Purbeck, Dorset

ABOUT Part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage site, the coast path east of Kimmeridge Bay is a spectacular roller-coaster of cliffs with distant views of the Isle of Wight to the east, and the Isle of Portland to the west. Although along part of the established South West Coast Path, the survey of the route of the new National Trail was led by long-serving Dorset area footpath secretary Brian Panton, a committed advocate of the England Coast Path. The complex geology of the area is reflected in limestone quarries, and even an oil well. Kimmeridge is famous for fossils – view local finds in the Etches Collection Museum of Jurassic Marine Life. For ice creams and paddling, head to the seaside town of Swanage.

WALK IT There are several options for circular walks combining part of the coast path with the inland delights of the Isle of Purbeck, such as the dramatic ruin of Corfe Castle and its picturesque neighbouring village.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/RamblersRoutes_Purbeck**; **bit.ly/DorsetRamblers_WorthMatravers**; **dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/the-purbeck-way**



8 Amlwch to Moelfre, Ynys Môn/Anglesey

ABOUT The Wales Coast Path (which Ramblers Cymru helped to instigate and develop) goes around the isle of Ynys Môn/Anglesey, where ramblers can enjoy 200km/130 miles of stunning coastal walking, much of it through the Tirwedd Cenedlaethol Ynys Môn/Anglesey National Landscape. Ynys Môn Ramblers' team of volunteers, known as the Silver Slashers, work with the council to improve paths, building coastal boardwalks and bridges, replacing stiles with kissing gates and cutting back overgrowth.

WALK IT Silver Slashers volunteer Andria Massey recommends the 19km/12-mile stretch from Amlwch to Moelfre, on the north-east coast, for picturesque walking. Don't miss the port town of Amlwch, once the centre of a global copper trade, the Rock Clock showing development of Ynys Môn rocks through geological eras, Point Lynas Lighthouse and shipwrecks in the Dulas Estuary, all with a dramatic backdrop of Eryri/Snowdonia.

FIND OUT MORE **https://shorturl.at/1L06C**

9 Cley-next-the-Sea to Salthouse, Norfolk

ABOUT An important trading port in the Middle Ages, Cley-next-the-Sea is now a charming coastal village known for its 18th-century windmill (now a guesthouse). Between the village and the sea lie Cley and Salthouse Marshes, a nature reserve of lagoons, marshlands and reedbeds offering splendid views and some of Britain's best birdwatching. Nearby paths through The Hangs, a popular and picturesque area of seaboard countryside, were officially designated public rights of way in 2022 after lots of hard work and a legal case brought by Ramblers volunteers and local residents.

WALK IT Ramblers volunteer Ian Mitchell suggests a 12km/7½-mile circular route to explore the recently protected paths, as well as the villages of Cley-next-the-Sea and Salthouse, and the coastal path along the wildlife-rich marshlands.

FIND OUT MORE **bit.ly/RamblersRoutes_CleySalthouse**



PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD TAYLOR/4CORNERS, ALAMY, GETTY



10 Inverclyde Coastal Path, western Scotland

ABOUT Inverclyde Coastal Path provides delightful scenic walks, with views across the Clyde to the hills of Dunbartonshire, Argyllshire and the Highlands. Explore Clydebank's shipbuilding heritage, and discover the 15th-century Newark Castle, heated saltwater Gourock swimming pool, Cloch Lighthouse and Wemyss Bay's stunning Edwardian railway station along the way. Inverclyde Ramblers played a major part in the path's planning, development and promotion, and look forward to its next phase: regeneration of the former Inverkip power station site into a new community with a linear coastal park.

WALK IT Explore 37km/23 miles of easy walking along rural paths and urban promenades, with excellent facilities and public transport links, and handily placed information boards and benches. For those seeking longer distances, the route connects with the Ayrshire Coastal Path and, through Renfrewshire, to the Forth & Clyde Canal.

FIND OUT MORE **inverclyderamblers.org.uk/coastal-path**; **bit.ly/InverclydeTrailLeaflet**

DISCOVER

The South Wales Valleys

The famous valleys that radiate northwards from Cardiff remain largely undiscovered by walkers outside South Wales. But, with the collieries long gone and nature returning, the variety of paths, scenery and heritage is exceptional. Above are open mountaintops and ridges with great views of forests, lakes and waterfalls, while lower down there are museums, country parks and numerous pubs and cafés. Multiple railway lines and regular bus services mean most walks are easily accessible by public transport, and there are lots of linear routes to enjoy

WORDS ANDREW McCLOY & MIKE KOHNSTAMM



LOCAL EXPERT

Mike Kohnstamm

Cardiff Ramblers



'I've been a member of Cardiff Ramblers for over 30 years, and our sociable group walks have taken me to so many places that I would never have found by myself. But I do also enjoy catching a train on my own to random valleys to see where the day takes me! After all these years, every time I venture out, I invariably go somewhere interesting I've never been before.'



Spectacular views

Craig y Llyn (Crag of the Lake), at exactly 600m high, gives extensive views from the Cynon Valley across to Bannau Brycheiniog (the Brecon Beacons) and Fforest Fawr.



Wonderful wildlife

Watching red kites on Gelligaer and Merthyr Common near Bargoed (barcud is the Welsh word for kite).



Recommended ramble

A station-to-station route from Pontlottyn in the Rhymney Valley over to Parc Cwm Darran (pictured) and south to Bargoed. But there are so many other great linear walks by train.



Awesome activities

Go mountain biking at Glyncorrwg's centre, near Port Talbot (pictured), or BikePark Wales, Merthyr Tydfil. And fly through the air at Zip World Tower in Rhondda Cynon Taf.



Marvellous museum

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery at Merthyr Tydfil houses displays of historic and artistic objects in a grand turreted house built in 1825 for local ironmaster William Crawshay II.



Seasonal must-do

A visit to Margam Country Park near the coast between Port Talbot and Porthcawl, where there's a ruined Norman abbey and Celtic stones museum, farm trail and miniature railway.



Cosy café

My favourite discovery is Caban Guto, in Llanwonno Forest, east of Rhondda. It's open Wednesdays and weekends, serving traditional Welsh cakes, bara brith (pictured) and breakfast rolls.

Step into history

The medieval, partly ruined Caerphilly Castle (main picture) is the largest in Wales, three times the size of Cardiff's Principality Stadium. Its leaning tower is wonkier than the one in Pisa!

Over to you...

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

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES

YOUR SHOTS

The best photos from our 'great group walks' competition

ATOP SILVER HOW, LAKE DISTRICT BY JENIFER BURDKETT-PICKER



GLORIOUS DOVEDALE, PEAK DISTRICT BY DAVID JACKSON



EVENING LIGHT AT WALDERS LOW WITH THE SHEFFIELD 40S RAMBLERS BY LINDA MORAN



TAKING A BREATHER AT NINE LADIES STONE CIRCLE, STANTON MOOR, PEAK DISTRICT BY RICHARD WALKER



YORK RAMBLERS' EPIC VIEWS IN THE NORTH YORK MOORS BY CARYS TEW



LIVERPOOL RAMBLERS WALKING ON KINDER SCOUT, PEAK DISTRICT BY BRIAN MCKAY



WHINLATTER FOREST PARK, LAKE DISTRICT BY PHIL CAMPBELL



FROSTY DAY IN MACCLESFIELD FOREST, CHESHIRE BY WILLIAM NEWTON



GIRLS' BIRTHDAY WEEKEND, OFFA'S DYKE PATH BY ROBERT FINNEY



WIN! LEKI FOLDING TREKKING POLES WORTH £400

For our next competition, we'd like your 'sea views' – don't forget to say where the photo was taken. Our favourite will win the LEKI Makalu FX Carbon or Carbon Compact trekking poles. These folding poles are built for rambles where low weight, quick adjustment and packability matter. Made from responsive carbon, they offer stability on descents and efficiency on climbs. The Aergon Air grip enhances comfort and control, while the ELD folding system and Speed Lock 2 Plus enable fast, secure length adjustment. For more info, visit **leki.co.uk**.



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 17 July 2026. Entries may be used in Ramblers publicity. Full T&Cs online.*



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Why hiking is more than "just a walk": what the evidence says.

Lateral are experts in healthy ageing for active people over 60 who have no intention of stopping, and are in partnership with the Ramblers to keep you on your feet in 2026.

There is a tendency to think of hiking as a leisurely activity. In reality, it sits at the intersection of several of the most powerful drivers of healthy ageing: sustained aerobic activity, strength loading, cognitive stimulation, social engagement, and exposure to natural environments. Here's what the evidence says about how hiking can keep you fit and healthy into old age.

Physical health benefits

Walking is well known to have a positive effect on health and survival, with large reviews of evidence finding that taking 7,000 steps per day was associated with almost 50% lower risk of all-cause mortality compared with lower step counts. However, hiking seems to have additional benefits beyond walking alone. A large review showed that it is associated with significant improvements in both physical and mental health outcomes, including cardiovascular fitness, metabolic parameters, psychological well-being, and reduced risk of chronic disease.

Importantly, age is not a barrier to starting or getting benefits from hiking. Another small study showed a 7-day intensive mountain hiking programme also showed significant improvements in static balance, gait speed, and quality of life in adults aged 65-85 years, with benefits sustained at 2-month follow-up.

Hiking is not the same as a casual stroll. Firstly, the terrain is more likely to be uneven, which has implications for improving balance and increasing the cognitive load of the activity. Secondly, there are more likely to be ascents and descents. Finally, you are likely to be carrying a backpack – even if it just contains some water. These three factors mean that, depending on terrain, pace and load, hiking can reach 6 to 9 metabolic equivalents (METs), which places it firmly in the moderate-to-vigorous intensity range. For older adults, this is a practical advantage. It allows you to reach a meaningful cardiovascular challenge without structured exercise or high-impact training.

There is also a unique benefit to your muscles. Walking uphill builds strength through concentric contraction. But equally valuable is walking downhill which requires eccentric contraction (muscles lengthening under load). Eccentric strength is critical for maintaining balance, controlling movement and preventing falls. And uneven terrain challenges proprioception and recruits stabilising muscles around the hips, knees and ankles. So, although hiking won't build your muscles in the way that resistance training will, it does train the exact type of strength needed to stay steady on your feet as you age.

The added value of the great outdoors

The evidence suggests that exercising in natural environments may confer additional benefits beyond those of indoor exercise alone. When compared with exercising indoors, exercising in natural environments has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, improve heart rate variability, and improve relaxation and mood.

Social connection: an underestimated health benefit

Social connection has emerged as one of the most important and under-recognised determinants of health in older age. Hiking is something that can help address social isolation as it can be done in a group. In fact, group-based walking interventions have been shown to improve not only physical health markers such as blood pressure and fitness but also reduce depression and improve wellbeing.

Conclusion

Hiking challenges the cardiovascular system, strengthens muscles in functionally relevant ways, engages the brain, provides exposure to natural environments, and can also help with social connection. Few activities bring these elements together so effectively.

The evidence base in general has a few limitations – most studies are small, and long-term data specific to hiking in older populations remain limited. Hiking also can't replace strength training that is essential for preventing age-related muscle loss. But, hiking delivers the kinds of physiological stimuli that are consistently associated with better health and independence in later life. And most importantly, it's a fun and accessible type of exercise that can be enjoyed by many well into older age. **Read the full article at lateral.uk/the-club.**

Modern health insurance for active over 60s

At Lateral, we are building differentiated, forward-thinking products specifically for active over 60s with no intention of stopping. The Lateral Health Plan is more affordable than traditional private medical insurance, by playing to the strengths of the NHS where it is most helpful, and supplementing with private care when needed. We've also added a number of stay-healthy benefits like physiotherapy, virtual GP services, diet and lifestyle support, and an annual health check worth £362 to keep you on your feet.

Get the health insurance you deserve and enjoy a £100 voucher, on us.

Sign-up to The Lateral Health Plan by 31st August 2026 and you can enjoy a £100 voucher, to spend in over 100 retailers from Amazon to John Lewis, after your first month.

Call our friendly team on **0203 826 8898** (between 9am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays), visit **join.lateral.uk/ramblerswalk**

Lateral is working with The Ramblers to improve paths this year.

Their support will help our brilliant network of volunteers who give up their free time to keep paths open and accessible – checking routes for blockages and obstacles, clearing overgrowth, improving surfaces, fixing or replacing gates and steps, installing signage and making routes easier for everyone to enjoy.

With this funding we can provide essential training, tools and materials, and support more on the ground improvements across the path network by funding new signage, gates, bridges or boardwalks.





Make group travel effortless

Step into your next adventure with Ramble Worldwide, the expert in guided walking holidays in the UK, Europe and beyond

Are you looking to experience adventure with a group of fellow walkers this summer? Ramble Worldwide is on hand to help. Its private group holidays will see you enjoying the privacy of a trip with friends, combined with all the benefits of an expertly-organised tour.

Why choose a private group holiday?

Think of Ramble Worldwide as an extension of your group – taking all the hassle out and leaving the fun bits to you. Its private groups managers, Melanie and Vanessa, will look after everything for you, with the routes and difficulty levels adapted to the needs of your group. Not only will you be fully supported throughout the planning and booking process, but you'll also benefit from the expertise of a dedicated walking leader throughout the duration of your trip.

There are numerous perks to booking a private group holiday with Ramble Worldwide, including:

- A strong **personal** service, with a dedicated planner to help tailor the perfect trip to suit your group.
- Strong **local knowledge** with hotels and suppliers to get you the best deals to ensure you make the most of your trip.
- We take care of all the **financial administration**, taking pressure off the group organiser.
- **Great value**, with discounts available for groups of more than eight people.
- The **security** of knowing that your trip is fully protected through ABTA and ATOL, giving complete peace of mind.

In the words of Audrey, from West Tyrone Ramblers, who travelled on the **Crete's Mountains & Villages** itinerary with 11 fellow members: 'It was great – I got the credit from the group, but in fact, all the work was done by Ramble Worldwide... The arrangements all went to plan, and the holiday itself was wonderful!'

ramble worldwide

To find out more, call 01707 386723 or visit rambleworldwide.co.uk/private-groups

Where can you travel on a private group tour?

Ramble Worldwide has a variety of locations suitable for private group holidays. Highlights include:

Lake District: Hassness Country House (exclusive to Ramble Worldwide)

This 19-bed property in idyllic Buttermere is available for exclusive hire, and the ideal base for exploring the dramatic Lake District on more challenging walks.



Spain: Hidden Gems of Andalucia

Experience sleepy villages, majestic palaces and local foodie delights on a seven-night Spanish adventure featuring a variety of leisurely walks.



Costa Rica: Natural Costa Rica

Witness slow-moving sloths, rainforests, active volcanoes and rushing waterfalls on moderate walks during a 15-night private group tour of this verdant country.

Boost donations with The Walking Partnership

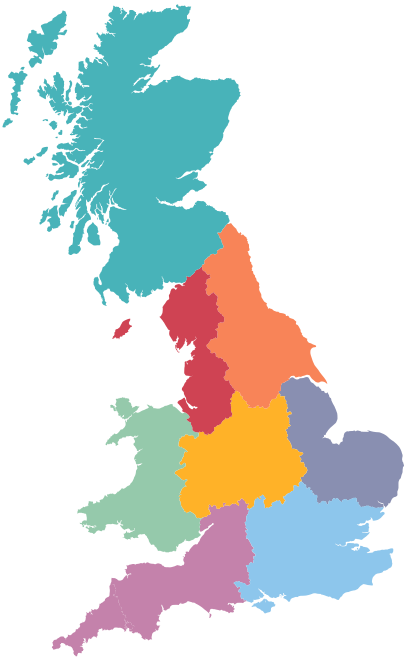
The Walking Partnership provides financial support to UK walking clubs and organisations. If your walking club is signed up to The Walking Partnership, the group will receive a donation every time a member books.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES/ANDREA PISTOLESI

Ramblers Routes

Britain's best walks from the experts



SCOTLAND

GIRVAN TO MAIDENS, AYRSHIRE

NORTH WEST

HUMPHREY HEAD, CUMBRIA

NORTH EAST

NORTH SHIELDS TO WHITLEY BAY, TYNE AND WEAR

WALES

LLANRHIDIAN TO RHOSSILI, SWANSEA

MIDLANDS

OUNDLE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

EAST

MUNDESLEY, NORFOLK

SOUTH WEST

DARTMOUTH CASTLE AND GALLANTS BOWER, DEVON

SOUTH EAST

DEAL TO DOVER, KENT

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

SCOTLAND
Girvan to Maidens, Ayrshire

Plan your walk

Imagine...

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.

Maps

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

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.



Download your free Ramblers app The Ramblers app connects you to the Ramblers community and 4,000 Ramblers Routes. Exclusively for our members, it can be downloaded for free through the App Store on Apple or Google Play for Android. **ramblers.org.uk/ramblersapp**

RAMBLERS

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SCOTLAND

Girvan to Maidens, Ayrshire

DISTANCE 14KM/8½ MILES **ASCENT** 16M/52FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** COAST

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **VIEWS & SEABIRDS**
NUMBER OF STILES **3**



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk along the Ayrshire coast.

START Girvan Harbour (NX182981).

END Maidens (NS211079).

TERRAIN Mostly beach, rough at times, plus tracks, roads and field margins. Best at low tide.

MAPS OS Explorer 326, OS Landranger 76.

GETTING THERE Stagecoach bus 60 from Ayr to Girvan Harbour via Maidens (bus 360 on Sundays). Regular trains from Ayr to Girvan. By car, A77 to Girvan. For Maidens, B7023 from Maybole, then A719. Park at Maidens, take a bus to Girvan and walk back.

EATING & DRINKING Dowhill Farm shop and café, Turnberry (dowhillfarm.co.uk, 01655 331957, closed Wed); Ropes Bistro, Maidens (ropes-bistro.wheree.com, 01655 331723).

SLEEPING Woodland Bay Hotel (woodlandbayhotel.co.uk, 01465 710700); Maidens Beach Holiday Park (headsofayr.com, 01292 442269).

VISITOR INFORMATION destinationsouthayrshire.co.uk; ayrshirecoastalpath.org

GUIDEBOOK *Ayrshire Coastal Path* by James A Begg (£12.95, Ayrshire Coastal Path Management Board, ISBN 978 0955906305).

A linear walk along quiet, sandy beaches with views across to Arran and Ailsa Craig, set against a backdrop of green hills and fields. Running from Girvan's historic harbour to the scenic fishing village of Maidens, this route is part of the 106-mile Ayrshire Coastal Path

ROUTE BY **HELEN TODD**

1 START Begin at the bus stop or car park at Girvan Harbour. Head east, keeping the harbour on your L. At the junction turn L on to Bridge Street, then first L and cross the River Girvan. Turn L again to return to the harbour, then R and follow the path around the harbour as it bears R.

2 At a small car park turn R and go straight between houses to Golf Course Road. Turn L and follow the road as it leaves town. At the T-junction turn L and then soon L again into Girvan Mains farm, following the green and white coastal path signs. This leads to a track heading for the coast.

3 Shortly after passing the Scottish Water works, the track runs alongside the beach. Soon signs ask walkers to use the beach for a short section, avoiding livestock in the field. Later, after a cottage, an optional high-tide route is marked along a field margin behind a second cottage before returning to the beach.

4 At Dipple, a fenced industrial site, the optional high-tide route is signed inland then along the verge of the main road. A stile takes you along a field margin leading up to the next field. Here a track L returns to the beach via a stile. Before turning L, you could divert to Dowhill Farm's café for a break.

5 At Balkenna, a short diversion inland goes past a building and over a bridge. Then after 1km/⅔ mile look for a wooden handrail and steps heading up into the dunes to a path across a burn and a stile, before returning to Turnberry Beach.

6 After 1.5km/1 mile, there is another burn. At low tide you can cross the shallow outflow. At high tide you may need to retrace your steps into the dunes for 100m/330ft before easily stepping over it. Walk along the edge of the golf course, but avoid disturbing play (the footbridge on OS maps no longer exists).

7 At the end of the beach, walk towards Turnberry Lighthouse before turning R on to Turnberry golf course. A track leads through the course, turning R at a junction on to a tarmac road. This leads to the main road. Turn L and follow into Maidens. The bus stop and free car park are at the junction with Harbour Road.



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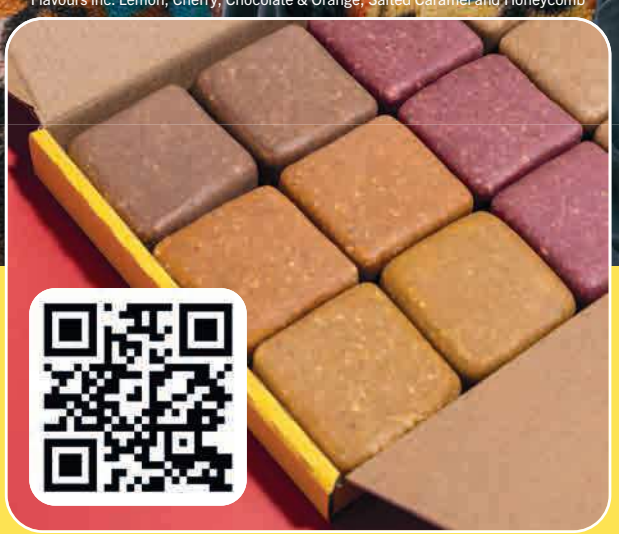
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NORTH WEST
Humphrey Head, Cumbria

DISTANCE 8KM/5 MILES **ASCENT** 145M/476FT
TIME 2½ HOURS **TYPE** WOODLAND AND WATERSIDE

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **LEISURELY**
PERFECT FOR **VIEWS**
NUMBER OF STILES **4**



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk from Kents Bank, south Cumbria.

START/END Kents Bank railway station, LA11 7BB (SD397756).

TERRAIN Lanes, paths, tracks and woodland (there is a very tight squeeze stile in point 4 – walkers of generous build won't fit!).

MAPS OS Explorer OL7, OS Landranger 96/97.

GETTING THERE Kents Bank station is between Lancaster and Barrow-in-Furness, with through trains from Preston and Manchester. Regular trains daily (traveline.info). By road, the station is 3km/2 miles south of Grange-over-Sands off the B5277. Roadside parking at station.

EATING & DRINKING
The Pheasant Inn, Allithwaite, Grange-over-Sands LA11 7RQ (thepheasantinnallithwaite.co.uk, 01539 532239).

SLEEPING The Pheasant Inn, Allithwaite (see above), and plenty of options in Grange-over-Sands.

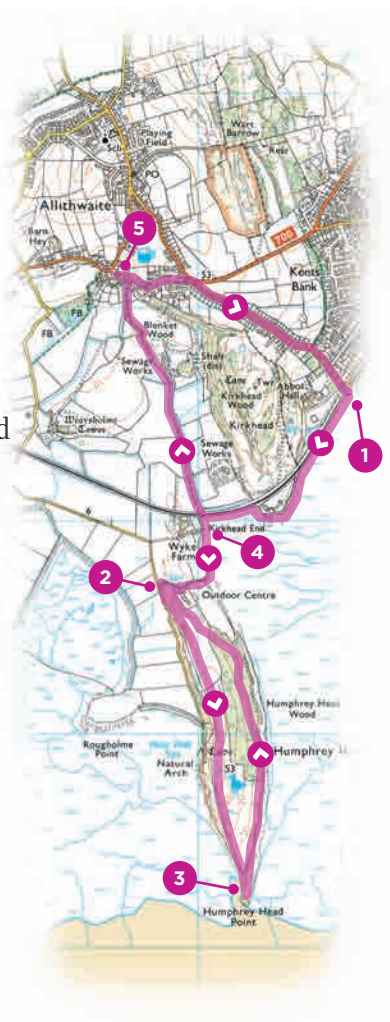
VISITOR INFORMATION
visitlakedistrict.com

GUIDEBOOK *Cumbria Coast: 40 Coast & Country Walks* by Darren Flint and Donald Greig (£6.99, Pocket Mountains, ISBN 978 1907025990).

Skirt the salt marsh of River Kent's immense estuary to find the secluded limestone prominence of Humphrey Head and sumptuous views across Morecambe Bay to the Pennines, Bowland, Furness and Lake District summits aplenty. The part-wooded headland is the highest coastal point between St Bees in North Cumbria and Colwyn Bay in North Wales

ROUTE BY **NEIL COATES**

Important: This route is affected by tides. Start the walk at least 2 hours after high tide (visit easytide.admiralty.co.uk and look for Arnside).



1 START At Kents Bank station, take the level-crossing handgate off platform 2, then use the wall-gap/steps (R) on to a solid concrete path along the flank of the railway embankment (or use dirt path below). Either way, advance on the meandering trail beside River Kent's extensive salt marsh (L), presently progressing around the tree-clad snout of Kirkhead End hillock. Briefly skim the railway embankment again (above a creek) before bending L below the sea wall of Wyke Farm (NB: There's a very short, very wet patch/drain here – take care). At the farm's stone barn, note the steps up (your return route). For now, stay on the clear marshside path for another 230m/750ft to use a gate-side kissing gate into an enclosed bridleway through to a lane.

2 Turn L, then in 30 paces go L up the Outdoor Centre's driveway. In 40m/130ft turn R at the telegraph pole on to a grassy tramp along the R flank of the low, rising limestone ridge-crest. Stay with this (fence R) through a kissing gate to reach the triangulation pillar on Humphrey Head. Indulge in the extravagant views across Morecambe Bay and to myriad distant fells. Continue down through another kissing gate to the rocky Humphrey Head Point, but don't venture on to the sands (quicksand danger).

3 Return back through the nearest kissing gate and bear R inside the fence line to find a sturdy kissing gate into the oakwoods (450m/1,470ft). Follow the good woodland path; at the gated corner (R) in 600m/1,970ft don't enter the meadow but bend L uphill within the woods to use a woodland-edge kissing gate. Drift R over the low crest to reach the Outdoor Centre driveway. Drop L to the lane, turn R then R again in 30m/98ft to retrace steps to Wyke Farm barn.

4 Climb the stone steps (L), take the handgate (R) and head through the railway underpass. Trace the path along R edge of the pasture. Cross the access lane (NB: very narrow squeeze stile here. If you can't get through, return to Wyke Farm and reverse the outward route in point 1 to return to Kents Bank). Continue through a line of kissing gates, presently passing L of large barns. Climb the ladder stile (slightly L in cross-hedge) and search near to the next R corner for a marked path diversion beside a water trough. Join the rough lane and turn L to the T-junction in Allithwaite.

5 The Pheasant Inn is a few steps L. Otherwise, turn R up extremely steep Jack Hill lane. Persevere to the junction with main road. Turn fully R onto Kirkhead Road (by postbox), which presently descends to Kents Bank station.

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NORTH EAST
North Shields to Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear

DISTANCE 9.5KM/6 MILES **ASCENT** 136M/446FT
TIME 3 HOURS **TYPE** COAST AND HERITAGE

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



Generally following the King Charles III England Coast Path, this scenic route includes a taste of everything you could wish for from a coastal walk – wildlife, flowers, history, art, literature and architecture – as well as a wide variety of food and drink opportunities along the way

ROUTE BY **GEOFF HOLLAND**

Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk on Tyne and Wear coast from North Shields to Whitley Bay.

START New Quay, North Shields (NZ356678).

END St Mary's Island, Whitley Bay (NZ351752).

TERRAIN Pavements, beach and grass sections.

MAPS OS Explorer 316, OS Landranger 88.

GETTING THERE 10-minute walk from North Shields Metro and Transport Hub (nexus.org.uk). Buses 307/309 from Whitley Bay (gonortheast.co.uk). Drive from the north or south via A1(M) and A19/A194.

EATING & DRINKING Low Lights Tavern (facebook.com/thelowlightstavern, 0191 257 6038); Beaches and Cream (bit.ly/BeachesCream, 0191 251 4718); Spanish City (spanishcity.co.uk, 0191 691 7090); Rendezvous Cafe (bit.ly/RendezvousCafe, 0191 252 5548).

SLEEPING The Tynemouth Castle Inn (inncollectiongroup.com, 0191 300 6154); Premier Inn Whitley Bay (premierinn.com, 0333 234 6570).

VISITOR INFORMATION visitnorthtyneside.com

GUIDEBOOK *15 Short Walks Northumberland* by Vivienne Crow (£9.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1786312013).

1 START Built in 1806, New Quay was the first deep-water quay in North Shields and provided an open area for markets and fairs. Collingwood Mansions was once the infamous Northumberland Arms, known to sailors worldwide as 'The Jungle'. With the River Tyne R, head past junction L with handsome red brick and terracotta building, once the Golden Fleece pub, R. Continue straight ahead through the Low Town, once overflowing with inns and taverns that earned North Shields a reputation as 'England's most drunken town'. Continue with the road past Prince of Wales pub R and 1992-installed 'wooden dolly'. Beyond the blue tower R, look out for life-size Herring Girl sculpture.

2 Eight hundred years ago, North Shields was a small fishing settlement of 'shiels' (huts), which became one of England's main east-coast herring ports in the late 19th and early 20th century. Continue, looking out for evidence of this rich heritage – including, at the bottom of Brewhouse Bank L, the town's oldest pub, the Grade II-listed Low Lights Tavern. Here, turn R towards river, then turn L along promenade towards Tynemouth, with monumental statue of Vice Admiral Collingwood and Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade Watch House Museum L and, eventually, Tynemouth Priory and Castle R (English Heritage, admission charge).

3 With vibrant Front Street and its cafés and bars L, continue straight on with the sea R and passing the Gibraltar Rock restaurant (R) to the beautiful Longsands beach. Continue along promenade (or turn R downhill for a 1km/⅔-mile beach walk, then head uphill past The View café L to join promenade route) and on to Cullercoats, once home to 19th-century American watercolourist Winslow Homer and a thriving artists' colony.

4 With sea R, continue past 1879 Grade II-listed Cullercoats Watch House R and striking Queens Head pub, with intricate gable mural. Stay with promenade and adjacent cycle track for 1.5km/1 mile to reach functional artwork *The Sandcastles* and Grade II-listed Spanish City, referenced in the 1980 Dire Straits song *Tunnel of Love*. Bear R downhill, turning L along beach-hugging promenade and passing skate park, clubhouse with interesting wraparound, Art Deco-style drinking fountain and the celebrated Rendezvous Cafe. Continue to promenade end.

5 Bear L uphill, turn rapidly R on track, cross over bridge and climb stairs to car park. With cliff close R, head to the mini-golf course and clifftop path to reach road corner. Bear R downhill and follow promenade to St Mary's Island, with eye-catching lighthouse. If time and tide allow, cross over to island to see grey seal colony.



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Poor sleep? Aches and pains? Here's the solution...

A father's devotion leads to incredible patented pillow – one day all pillows will be made this way

A NEAR tragedy has led to an amazing new development in sleep technology. When Georgia Miles was recovering from a life-threatening accident, her father Alexander looked everywhere for a pillow that would keep her comfortable throughout the night.

After purchasing dozens of different types and finding none that worked, Alex, a renowned furniture and domestic product designer, decided to engineer his own.

UNIQUE BREAKTHROUGH

He made a breakthrough when he realised that all pillows spread out and flatten down as the weight of the head rests on them. This flattening progresses through the night, leaving the head and neck poorly supported – and sleep interrupted. This is why many people find themselves half awake and 'pillow-punching' in the middle of the night, desperately trying to get comfortable.

EXTRA COMFORT AND SUPPORT

The innovative model that Alex designed has internal ties that hold the filling in place, and pull the pillow in and up to cradle the head and neck. This provides extra comfort and support that lasts through the night and ensures that you get the most benefit from an undisturbed sleep.



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Dr Deane Halfpenny
Harley Street Consultant and Spinal Pain Specialist

MADE IN THE UK

Made in the UK, the Gx Pillow comes in a choice of two levels of support: Medium-soft, which most people seem to prefer, or Medium-firm for those who like a little more resistance. Alex's desperate desire to help his daughter Georgia has led to a pillow that has also transformed the lives of thousands of people. So if you have spent a lifetime looking for the perfect pillow, your search may well be over!

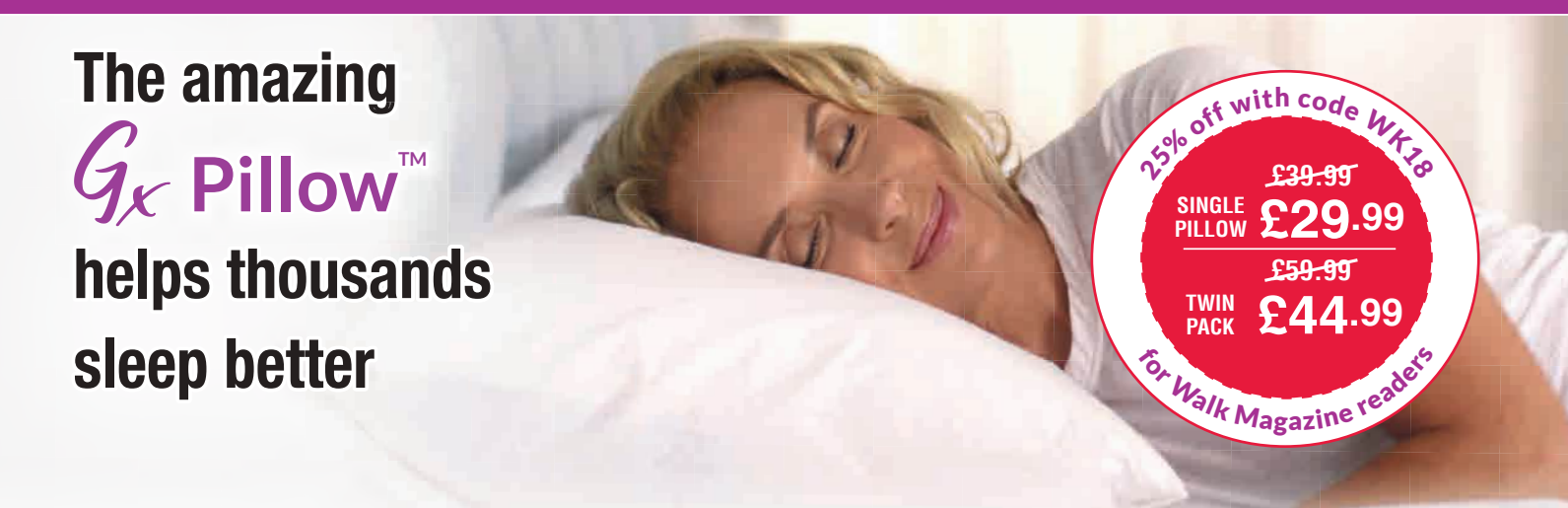


Alexander Miles, inventor of the Gx Pillow pictured with his invention

INFORMATION: *gxpillows/0800 316 2689*

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WALES

Llanrhidian to Rhossili, Swansea

DISTANCE 18KM/11 MILES **ASCENT** 299M/981FT
TIME 3¾ HOURS **TYPE** COAST

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



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk from Llanrhidian to Rhossili on the Gower Peninsula, via Weobley Castle and the Blue Pool.

START Llanrhidian Turn bus stop, SA3 1EH (SS498919).

END National Trust Rhossili Bay car park, SA3 1PR (SS414880).

TERRAIN Paths and beach.

MAPS OS Landranger 159, OS Explorer 164.

GETTING THERE 118 bus from Swansea to Rhossili, roughly every hour Mon to Sat (stop at Llanrhidian Turn). If driving, park in Llanrhidian village and catch a bus back from Rhossili.

EATING & DRINKING Llanmadoc Village Shop and Coffee Shop (llanmadocvillage shop.co.uk, 07887 555837); The View Rhossili (theview rhossili.com, 01792 390519).

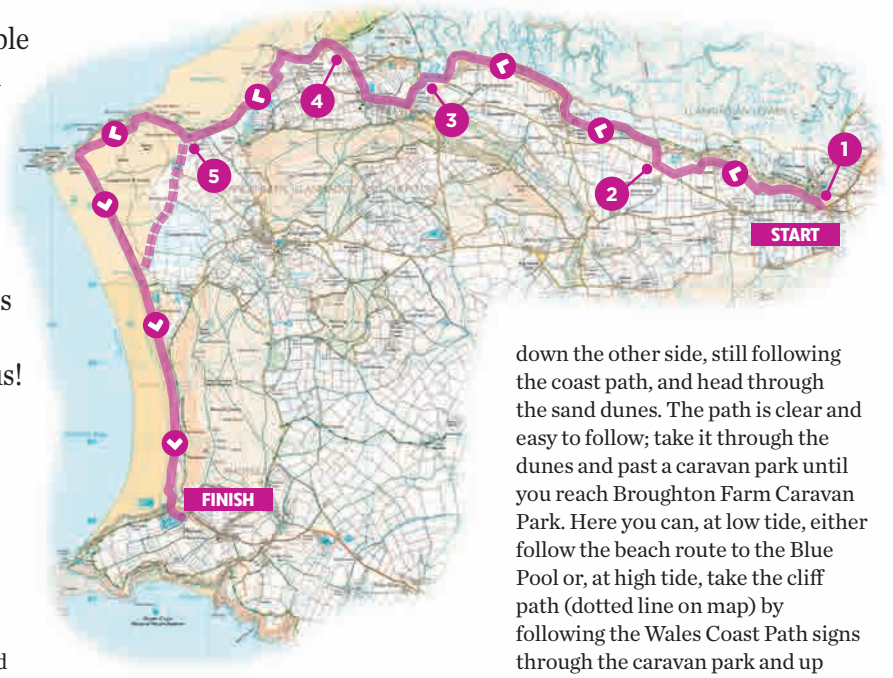
SLEEPING Camping and caravanning at Weobley Castle Farm (bit.ly/WeobleyCastle Farm); self-catering at Willow Mews (willowmews.tripcombined.com); Gower Coastal Cottages (gowercoastalcottages.co.uk, 07807 983288).

VISITOR INFORMATION visitswanseabay.com

GUIDEBOOK *Walking on Gower* by Andrew Davies (£14.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1852848217).

A classic coastal ramble taking in the fortified medieval manor house of Weobley Castle, the tidal natural swimming spot of Blue Pool, beautiful salt marshes and some of Britain's best beaches. Glorious!

ROUTE BY **JAMES AUSTIN**



1 START From the bus stop in Llanrhidian, head down the hill on Mill Lane before quickly bearing L along Malt Hall. Follow the footpath at the end of the paved road across a small meadow and past a pair of farmhouses. After 700m/2,300ft the path splits; go R (rather than L towards the road), pass through two fields before joining another footpath and turn L. Pass through a farmyard, follow the track to join a small road, turn L at the next set of buildings and follow the footpath over a couple of fields to the road.

2 Follow the road for 200m/650ft, taking care around traffic, then turn R at the track to head towards the farm and Weobley Castle. To visit the castle (Cadw, admission charge) go straight on; otherwise turn L and then R to go down the steep, open field towards the Wales Coast Path. At the bottom, turn L and follow the footpath along the foot of the hill through fields. It winds for around 2km/1½ miles until you reach a road and the tiny hamlet of Landimore. Turn R here to follow the coast path. Walk along the road for a short while before passing through a gate on to the path at the edge of the salt marsh. Follow this path for another 2km/1½ miles through the marsh, ignoring any paths that take you up the ridge. After crossing a bridge over a stream into the marsh, you'll hit a track.

3 Turn L and climb the hill to the village of Llanmadoc (or turn R and follow the Wales Coast Path signs to rejoin this walk at point 4). At the top of the hill where you meet the road, turn R and keep climbing. There is an excellent village shop on your R for supplies; otherwise, carry on and follow the R fork where the road splits down towards the coast. Pass a lovely café, Cwm Ivy, then the road turns into a track and eventually a path into the sand dunes as it levels out. Rejoin the coast path here.

4 Pass through the gate and climb steeply to Cwm Ivy Tor – gorgeous views from here. Drop down the other side, still following the coast path, and head through the sand dunes. The path is clear and easy to follow; take it through the dunes and past a caravan park until you reach Broughton Farm Caravan Park. Here you can, at low tide, either follow the beach route to the Blue Pool or, at high tide, take the cliff path (dotted line on map) by following the Wales Coast Path signs through the caravan park and up along the cliff line.

5 Follow cliff path along from the caravan park, taking L fork. It should be clear and well made. After about 1km/⅔ mile, a R turn takes you down a steep, mildly technical but clear path to the Blue Pool, which you can visit if the tide is out and weather good. Otherwise, continue along the coast path and the small peninsula. You'll reach the Spaniard Rocks and Rhossili Bay, with Llangennith Beach opening up ahead of you. Descend and walk along the beach, keeping the sea to your R. Follow it till you reach Hill End car park. Continue walking on the sand or climb up to the coast path at the car park and follow it to Rhossili, where this walk ends.

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MIDLANDS

Oundle, Northamptonshire

DISTANCE 8KM/5 MILES **ASCENT** 20M/65½FT
TIME 2½ HOURS **TYPE** TOWN AND RIVER

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



Plan your walk

WHERE Oundle and the River Nene, north Northamptonshire.

START/END Old Town Hall bus stops, Oundle PE8 4BA (TL042881). Parking nearby or at point 6.

TERRAIN Pavements and paths. Riverside paths are narrow and muddy in places. Can get boggy and even flood in winter or after heavy rain.

MAPS OS Explorer 227, OS Landranger 141 and 142.

GETTING THERE The X4 bus from Northampton to Peterborough stops hourly in Oundle, or every 2 hours on Sundays (stagecoachbus.com). By car, M1 or M11 and A14 (from south) or A1 (from north), then A605 towards Oundle.

EATING & DRINKING The Kingfisher Cafe in Barnwell Country Park (facebook.com/thekingfishercafe). Options in town include Salerno's on West Street (salernosoundle.co.uk, 01832 270842).

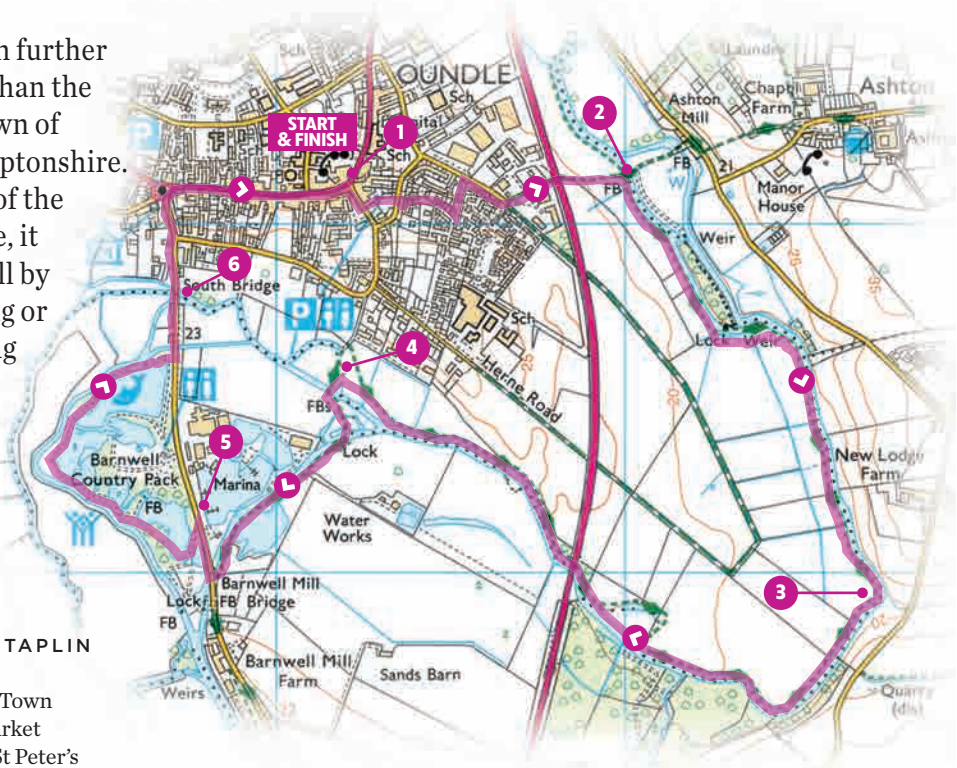
SLEEPING The Ship Inn, (theshipinnoundle.co.uk, 01832 273918); Talbot Hotel (talbothotel.co.uk, 01832 273621).

VISITOR INFORMATION love oundle.org/visit; oundle.info

GUIDEBOOK *Walking Close to the Nene Near Oundle* by Clive Brown (£3.95, Clive Brown, ISBN 978 1907669033).

It's hard to get much further from the UK coast than the lovely limestone town of Oundle in Northamptonshire. But, lying in a loop of the peaceful River Nene, it offers places to stroll by the water, go boating or even swim. Sampling the 183km/114-mile Nene Way, this much shorter route passes locks and marinas, lakes and meadows

ROUTE BY **PHOEBE TAPLIN**



1 **START** From the Old Town Hall bus stops on Market Place/North Street near St Peter's Church, walk down St Osyths Lane, past The Coffee Tavern. Just before the Co-op, turn L down lane and cross car park diagonally R to exit on to East Road. Turn L and very soon R on to tarmac drive between houses 24 and 26. Keep straight into Churchill Walk and turn L at end along Old School Avenue. Turn R along Ashton Road and soon L, opposite Sutton Road, on to signed footpath. Keep straight through business park, (carefully) over A605, through gates and along footpath towards Ashton Footbridge.

2 Just before the footbridge, turn R beside the river, now following waymarked Nene Way with water on L. Keep on, past weirs and lock, through gates and follow the river L. Keep straight across field and continue R along waterside path for another 800m/½ mile.

3 Follow the river for 1.2km/¾ mile more, curving R past reedbeds and through gates. Continue on waymarked footpath under road bridge and keep on along river on far side for another 800m/½ mile, with water nearby on L.

4 Turn L over footbridge (or shortcut R here back to town). Continue sharp L to another footbridge, R over it and straight over another footbridge near lock. Turn R with water now on R. Keep on along track, past fishing lake. Cross road and turn R along pavement, over bridge, past views of marina.

5 Follow sign L to Barnwell Country Park. Immediately after car park, turn L (café and visitor centre are R) and follow path past lake on L. Continue R, passing more ponds on R and river on L. Keep following river R for nearly 1.2km / ¾ mile. Look out for kingfishers, great crested grebes and other birds. Continue R with road on L and then turn L through wooden barriers and L again along pavement.

6 Keep straight over stone South Bridge and along Mill Road. Just after museum and before Catholic church, turn R along West Street back to bus stop. This road offers several options for post-walk refreshments. St Peter's Church, with Northamptonshire's tallest spire, is also worth visiting.

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EAST
Mundesley, Norfolk

DISTANCE 12KM/7½ MILES **ASCENT** 138M/453FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** VILLAGE AND COAST

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



Plan your walk

WHERE A circular countryside and coastal walk around Mundesley, Norfolk.

START/END Gold Park Gates bus stop (car parks nearby), NR11 8AE (TG312366).

TERRAIN Paths, tracks, lanes, pavements and caravan park drives. Some clifftop and roadside sections.

MAPS OS Explorer 252, OS Landranger 133.

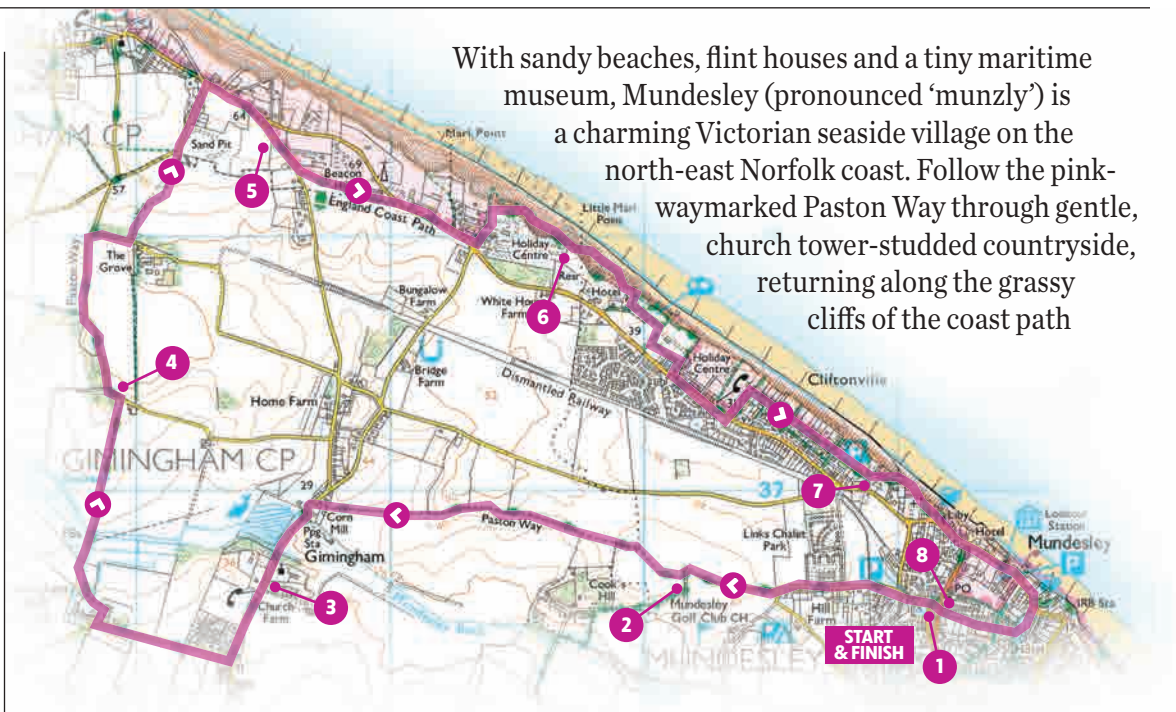
GETTING THERE The Coasthopper CH2 bus from Cromer to North Walsham stops in Mundesley hourly every day; the 34 runs weekdays from North Walsham (sanders coaches.com). Cromer and North Walsham are served by Greater Anglia trains (greater anglia.co.uk). By car, take the B1145 from North Walsham.

EATING & DRINKING Beach Hut Cafe (facebook.com/Beachhutcafemundesley); The Craft Bakery (instagram.com/craftbakerynorfolk, 01263 478540).

SLEEPING The Ship Inn, 21 Beach Road (mundesley-ship.co.uk, 01263 722671).

VISITOR INFORMATION visitnorthnorfolk.com/explore/visit/mundesley

GUIDEBOOK *Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path* by Bruce Robinson (£14.99, Aurum Press, ISBN 978 1781315019).



With sandy beaches, flint houses and a tiny maritime museum, Mundesley (pronounced 'munzly') is a charming Victorian seaside village on the north-east Norfolk coast. Follow the pink-waymarked Paston Way through gentle, church tower-studded countryside, returning along the grassy cliffs of the coast path

ROUTE BY **PHOEBE TAPLIN**

1 **START** From Gold Park Gates, turn L and soon R, past The Craft Bakery. Keep on into Links Road, signed Paston Way. Continue past houses. At bend near aerial mast, follow pink waymarks L beside field and soon R with tall pines on L.

2 Keep following waymarks with hedge on L, straight across and beside several fields, through gates and towards houses ahead. Continue on stony track and turn L along lane out of village, passing lakes, to church.

3 Continue along lane and turn R into Hall Road, opposite village sign. At junction where lane curves L, turn R, signed Paston Way. Follow track L. Just before gate, turn R into field. Follow grassy track L and R across field towards power lines. Cross footbridges and continue up hedged path.

4 Turn L along lane and follow it R. At first junction, keep straight, following Paston Way waymark. At next junction, turn R (leaving Paston Way) on to lane signed Mundesley. Before farm on R, turn L on to footpath. Keep straight over fields and old railway bridge, and along lane. At T-junction, turn R on to coast path with hedge on L.

5 Follow acorn-waymarked coast path beside Gimingham Road. Keep straight through trees, down lane, and soon L on to signed path. Follow path R near road and then L with hedge on L, through trees, and R near road for 400m/¼ mile. Ignore sign L and keep on to road. Cross into caravan park. Turn R past café. Follow waymark R and soon L along drive.

6 Follow drive L and turn R on to coast path. Continue along waymarked clifftop path for nearly 800m/½ mile, keeping on seaward side of caravan park. Reaching fence, turn R through gate. Keep on past chalets and along drive. Turn L along Cromer Road, L into Albion Road and R along Sea View Road.

7 When lane bends R, turn L. Follow path R, past gun emplacements and church. Walk R across car park and L past library. Continue along Beach Road, past garden. Just after memorials, turn L down to beach.

8 Turn R along promenade. Soon after steps to Ship Inn, turn R up waymarked slipway, L on road and R up footpath past pond. At T-junction turn R into fenced path and on into path near playground. Follow path with Gold Park on R back to start.

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SEE PAGE 80

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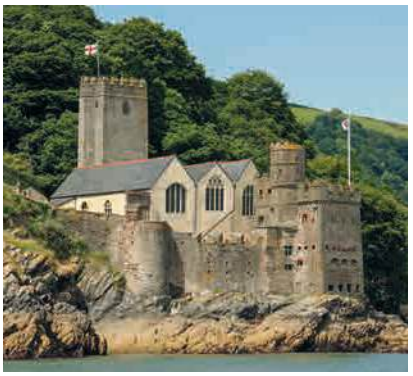




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SOUTH WEST
Dartmouth Castle and Gallants Bower, Devon

DISTANCE 9.5KM/6 MILES **ASCENT** 368M/1,207FT
TIME 3 HOURS **TYPE** COAST AND TOWN

NAVIGATION LEVEL **EASY**
FITNESS LEVEL **MODERATE**
PERFECT FOR **WILDLIFE & HISTORY**
NUMBER OF STILES **2**



Plan your walk

WHERE The South West Coast Path from Dartmouth, Devon.

START/END Royal Avenue Gardens, TQ6 9YY (SX878514).

TERRAIN Surfaced trails and undulating, unsurfaced coast path; steep and stepped sections; can be muddy.

MAPS OS Explorer OL20, OS Landranger 202.

GETTING THERE Train to Totnes, then 92 bus to Dartmouth or passenger ferry from Kingswear. By car, take A381 south from Totnes, then A3122 to Dartmouth.

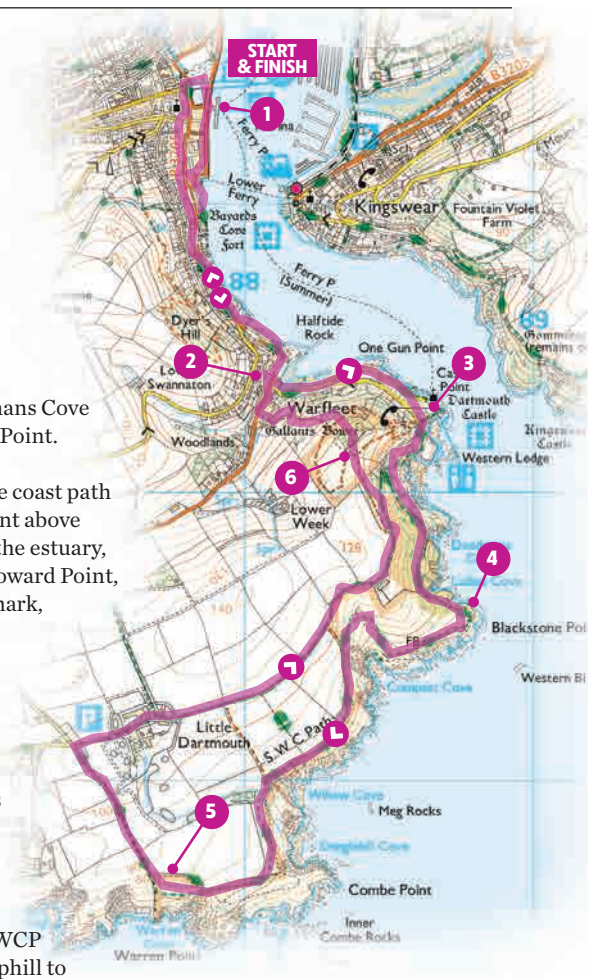
EATING & DRINKING Crêperie Billig et Rozell (instagram.com/creperiedartmouth, 01752 963736); Mediterranean dishes at Amalfi Kitchen (amalfikitchen.co.uk, 07917 401549).

SLEEPING Many hotels, B&Bs, campsites and cottages, including the Royal Castle Hotel (royalcastle.co.uk, 01803 833033); Compass Cottage (nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays/devon/compass-cottage, 0344 8002070).

VISITOR INFORMATION southwestcoastpath.org.uk; visitsouthdevon.co.uk

GUIDEBOOK *15 Short Walks in South Devon – Salcombe, Brixham and the Coast* by Holly Scrivener (£9.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1786312532).

Nestled on the western banks of the Dart Estuary, Dartmouth is perfectly placed for walking in the South Hams. Explore the town's fascinating history, tracing the estuary past Bayard's Cove Fort and Dartmouth Castle. Spot seals, dolphins and ospreys at Blackstone Point high above the Channel, then take in the far-reaching views from Gallants Bower, an English Civil War fort



ROUTE BY **JEN & SIM BENSON**

1 **START** From Royal Avenue Gardens follow the River Dart downstream. Pass the lower ferry and stay L, walking along the shore into Bayard's Cove Fort. This rock-hewn, 16th-century artillery blockhouse was Dartmouth's last defence against unwelcome visitors who evaded the twin castles at the estuary's entrance. Leave the fort and turn R up steps to Newcomen Road. Turn L, following the road and South West Coast Path (SWCP) on to Warfleet Road and down into Warfleet.

2 Turn L over the road bridge and follow the SWCP along Castle Road towards Dartmouth Castle (English Heritage, admission charge). At the fork in the road join the path signed SWCP, heading for Dartmouth Castle. This impressive artillery fort was built in the late 1400s alongside Kingswear Castle on the opposite bank. A hefty chain would have been slung between the two to obstruct attacking ships.

3 From the castle, continue on the SWCP south. You can stay on the higher path or follow steep steps and slopes down to the diminutive beach at Sugary Cove, then back up to the coast path. Continue on a lovely path through woodland above Deadmans Cove and around Blackstone Point.

4 Continue along the coast path to reach a high point above Compass Cove. Across the estuary, on the skyline above Froward Point, stands Kingswear Daymark, an 80ft-high octagonal navigational beacon built in 1864. Below the tower, just off the rocky headland, the Mewstone with its wave-washed platforms is a popular haul-out for grey seals.

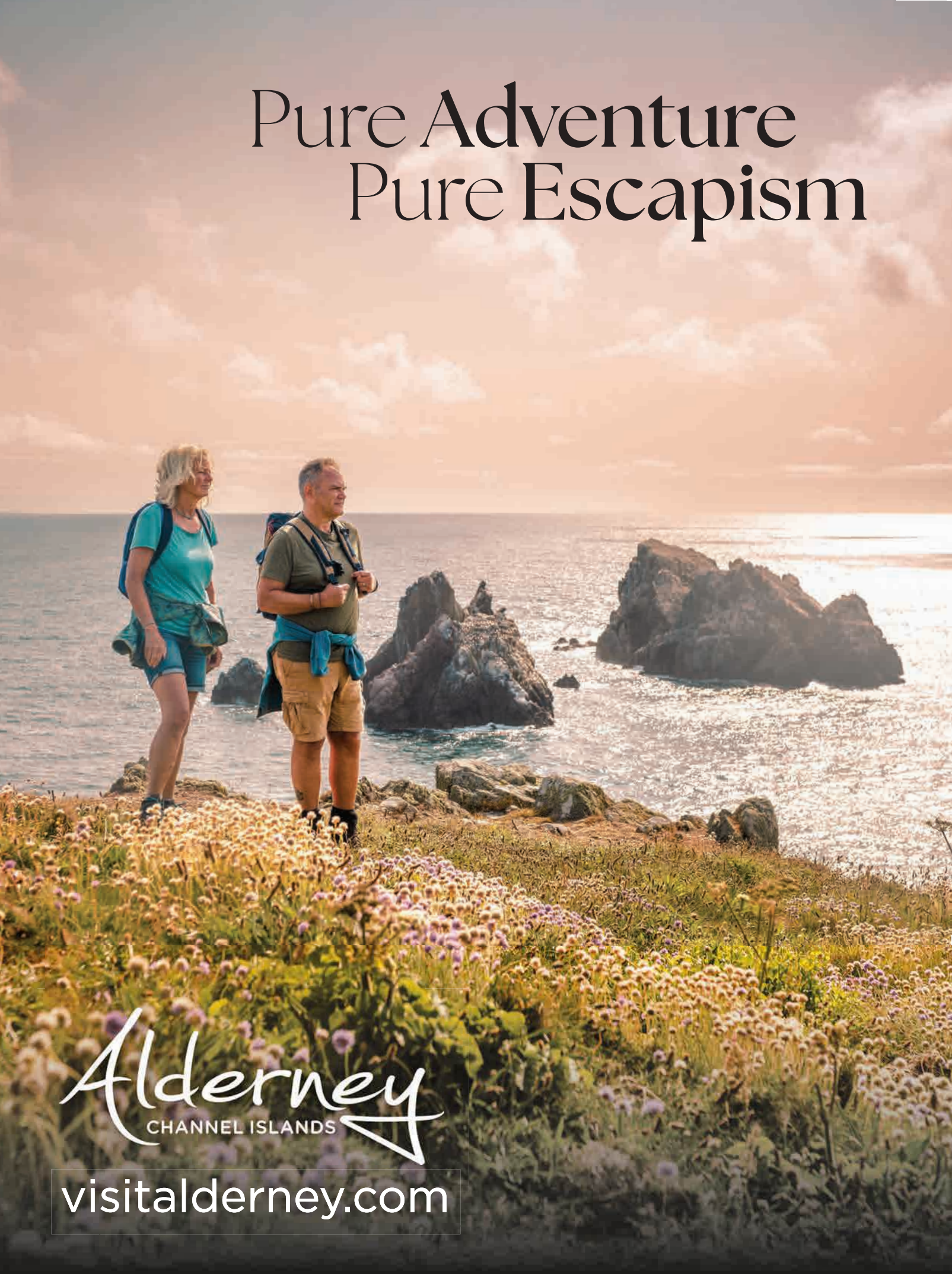
5 At Warren Point continue on the SWCP as it heads inland and uphill to Little Dartmouth car park (National Trust). Leave the SWCP here, turning R and following the obvious track through Little Dartmouth Farm. Continue along the track, walking between fields and past some houses on to a lane. Follow this to a L fork on to a wooded path up to the extraordinary hill fort at Gallants Bower. Built to defend Dartmouth against the Parliamentarians in the 1640s, it was dismantled in 1650 but remains one of the best-preserved of its kind in the country.

6 After taking in views along the estuary to Dartmouth and the Royal Navy college, the Daymark and out to sea, turn L (heading west) at the top of the fort. Follow the path to a gate on the R, continuing downhill through woodland to the road at Weeke Hill in Warfleet. Turn R and follow road downhill to rejoin SWCP and outbound route back into Dartmouth.

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SOUTH EAST
Deal to Dover, Kent

DISTANCE 15.5KM/9½ MILES **ASCENT** 255M/836FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** COAST, TOWN AND DOWNS

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



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk from Deal to Dover, returning by train.

START The Pier, Deal CT14 6HY (TR378526).

END Marine Parade, Dover CT16 1LW (TR320411).

TERRAIN Promenade, pavement, tracks and clifftop paths, with some stepped climbs.

MAPS OS Explorer 138, OS Landranger 179.

GETTING THERE Frequent daily trains from London St Pancras to Dover Priory and between Deal and Dover, plus town centre car parks.

EATING & DRINKING Zetland Arms at Kingsdown (zetlandarms.co.uk, 01304 370114); National Trust White Cliffs of Dover visitor centre (nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/the-white-cliffs-of-dover).

SLEEPING Local self-catering, B&B and camping choices at whitecliffscountry.org.uk/stay. For holiday cottages, see keeperscottages.co.uk.

VISITOR INFORMATION Visitor Information Centre at Deal Town Hall and White Cliffs Country Visitor Information Centre at Dover Museum.

GUIDEBOOK *Great Walks on the England Coast Path* by Andrew McCloy (£20, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1852849894).

Step out along the famous White Cliffs of Dover on this varied and historic section of the King Charles III England Coast Path. From the elegant Cinque Ports town of Deal to the 850-year-old fortress of Dover Castle, enjoy a straightforward walk via bays and cliffs with Channel views and heritage at every turn

ROUTE BY **ANDREW McCLOY**



1 **START** Facing the sea by the pier in Deal, turn R and walk along the promenade past the Timeball Tower, which was designed to drop a ball down a short mast daily at 1pm to send an accurate Greenwich Mean Time signal to passing ships. Continue past Deal Castle (English Heritage, admission charge) and along the edge of the shingle beach via Walmer (with another castle – English Heritage, admission charge) to reach Kingsdown. The Zetland Arms pub is named after a ship called the *Earl of Zetland* that was wrecked on this coast in 1860.

2 Where the coast road bends sharply inland, go up steps on to the cliffs. Now head out across the grassy clifftop to reach a towering war memorial dedicated to the Dover Patrol, a Royal Navy unit tasked with keeping German ships and submarines out of the English Channel during the First World War. Follow the clifftop path as it drops down past houses, then go L down a series of steep steps to the beach. Turn R to reach the café and toilets at St Margaret's at Cliffe.

3 Head up the road next to The Coastguard pub, then L along Beach Road and L again for a signposted path back out to the clifftop. Join a wide track and after 1.6km/1 mile reach South Foreland Lighthouse. Beacons were lit here in Roman times to warn ships of the treacherous Goodwin Sands nearby. The present Victorian lighthouse was the first in the world to use a light powered by electricity. Now it's owned by the National Trust, with a handy tearoom.

4 The final section along the gently undulating chalk cliffs is superb and easy to follow, with great views over the English Channel and, closer to hand, the busy ferry port of Dover. Pause at Langdon Bay for the National Trust's interesting visitor centre and café.

5 Beyond the visitor centre car park, go out to the road. At the hairpin bend, with imposing 12th-century Dover Castle on the hilltop ahead (English Heritage, admission charge), go straight on and down a steep, surfaced path underneath a flyover to enter Dover. Walk ahead along a narrow street called East Cliff, then cross the main road via pedestrian lights to turn R and along the harbour edge. Finish by the public sculpture celebrating cross-Channel swimming, next to the start of the North Downs Way National Trail.

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THE BIG WALK

The best of Bodmin

So close to classic Cornish coastal holidays, and yet a million miles away, Bodmin Moor offers rugged beauty without the tourist throngs. Walks in these brooding uplands deliver sweeping views, tumbling rivers, rare wildlife habitats, haunting legends and history both ancient and industrial

WORDS MARK ROWE

Cornwall, it's sometimes said, is a picture frame without a picture. The liminal edges, the beaches, cliffs and coastlines are stunning – and superb for walking – but a barren scene lies at the heart. Standing on Roughtor, on Bodmin Moor, I realise what utter gibberish that is. At 400m/1,312ft, Roughtor (pronounced 'row-ter', to rhyme with 'outer') is the second highest hill on the moor, a thrilling jumble of weathered slabs of stone, some shaped like burger buns, others resembling altar stones.

Rather than coastal sunshine, the wind feels as cold as mountain air. Solitary buzzards and ravens, rather than chip-hungry gulls, watch me beadily as I drop down to cross the De Lank River, a tributary of the Camel winding its way to Padstow. My next perch is the wilder neighbouring tor, the highest point in Cornwall, known as Brown Willy (stop the sniggering: the name comes from the Cornish *Bronn Wennili*, or 'hill of the swallows', after the feathered fork-tails that patrol these moors from April to September).

A modest climb leads to 360-degree views where the terrain around my mud-caked boots is filled with magnificent granite tors that frown upon an untilled countryside of stones, black heather and stunted broom. Sun rushes across the moor, one hill golden brown, its neighbour cold and dark. The valleys reverberate with the lowing of cattle in a way I've only heard from red deer in the Scottish Highlands. To the north-west, an ombré horizon from gunmetal grey to silvery-yellow pinpoints where the Atlantic coast meets the sky.

'A wild rough place'

Bodmin Moor is the most westerly of the south-west's three great moorlands, and easily the most overlooked. This is partly thanks to the A30, which enables the holiday hordes to scoot across it in scarcely 20 minutes. Accordingly, this can feel a lonely, empty place, with a fraction of the footfall of neighbouring Dartmoor or Exmoor. In other words, a perfect choice for walkers in search of an atmospheric, slightly forbidding landscape.

To get me in the mood, I've re-read *Jamaica Inn*, the 1936 novel by Daphne du Maurier set in the heart of the moor. It regales readers with Georgian-era smuggling, cold-blooded shipwrecking and murder, featuring feisty heroine Mary Yellan and bruising villain Joss Merlyn, 'nearly seven feet high... large fists like



hams'. Over a long weekend's hiking, I appreciate du Maurier's descriptions of the moor as 'a wild rough place' of 'trees bent and twisted from centuries of storms... a backing wind brought a granite sky... miles of barren moor, looking ink black... jagged clouds shaped like a highwayman's cloak'.

The right to ramble

Walking on Bodmin Moor is exhilarating but it requires planning. While the moor is guarded by Bodmin in the west, Launceston in the east, Liskeard to the south and Camelford to the north, no single formal waymarked route traverses it. This is partly for historical reasons. Before the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gave walkers access, the public was kept at arm's length. Only commoners (those who owned or worked the land) enjoyed the right to leave the road and cross the moor.

While open access allows you to explore more freely, it can be demanding, with few footpaths or fingerposts. Waymarkers often lean at 45 degrees, battered by the elements or livestock. Paths lead to farms and then evaporate. It's best to stick to visible tracks and be aware of marshes and bogs, for this is proper don't-get-stuck-out-here-in-bad-weather territory.

I take the advice of local guide Mark Camp (see 'Walk it!', p59) and embark on a series of circular loops out of villages on the moor's edges, with a couple of high moorland routes for good measure. Having explored Roughtor and Brown Willy, I return to the Roughtor car park and head for Bolventor for my next walk. The settlement is dominated by Jamaica Inn, dating to 1750 and itself a landmark where the owners have done a fine job of paying homage to the eponymous novel. From the inn, I walk northeast under the A30, following lanes and footpaths past Codda farmhouse and cross the infant river Fowey (for centuries this land was known as Fowey Moor; it only changed to Bodmin Moor in the early 19th century, on a whim of Ordnance Survey), then contour to the east of Codda Downs where the source of the Fowey lies. Following occasional fingerposts and tracks past lonely Trezelland Farm, I pass back under the A30 and descend through the Dryworks plantation, crossing the Fowey again to return to Bolventor, a hamlet named for the 'bold venture' of setting up habitation in so harsh a landscape. >

Land of legends

Later that day, I follow lanes downhill from the inn for 2km/1½ miles, past wind-battered farms, to Dozmary Pool, the only natural lake on the moor. While visually unremarkable, the lake enjoys a niche in folklore as the site where King Arthur is given the sword Excalibur by the Lady of the Lake.

The Fowey is a frequent companion during my stay. I next encounter it at Golitha Falls, on the southern side of the moor, where a circular walk of 3km/2 miles follows the riverbank past moss-draped beech trees as the river squeezes between boulders to drop 100ft/30m in a series of cascades. I'm enchanted by the Cornish names, hardy survivors of the regional language. Fowey comes from *fowydh*, which means 'beech trees', while *golitha* is Cornish for 'obstacle', referring to a huge stone blasted away to enable salmon to swim upwater.

Hiking through history

A couple of miles east of Golitha, I embark on a walk through an altogether different kind of moor at the village of Minions. Unsurprisingly, it's a popular spot for parents to take children on holiday (the name predates the eponymous movie by a good 400 years; the etymology is uncertain but may refer to the Cornish word for 'stones', *menyon)*. There is nothing cute about this landscape, though – the surrounding area has been worked bare, yielding copper, tin and clay, leaving a skyline broken by engine houses and chimney stacks.

Passing derelict quarries, I reach the Cheesewring, an eye-catching stack of granite stones 10 storeys high. Local lore says they were assembled by druids; science points to a geological masterpiece created by weathering through the ages. Close by is a more recent – relatively speaking – manmade construction; the Hurlers, an ensemble of three late Neolithic or early Bronze Age stone circles.

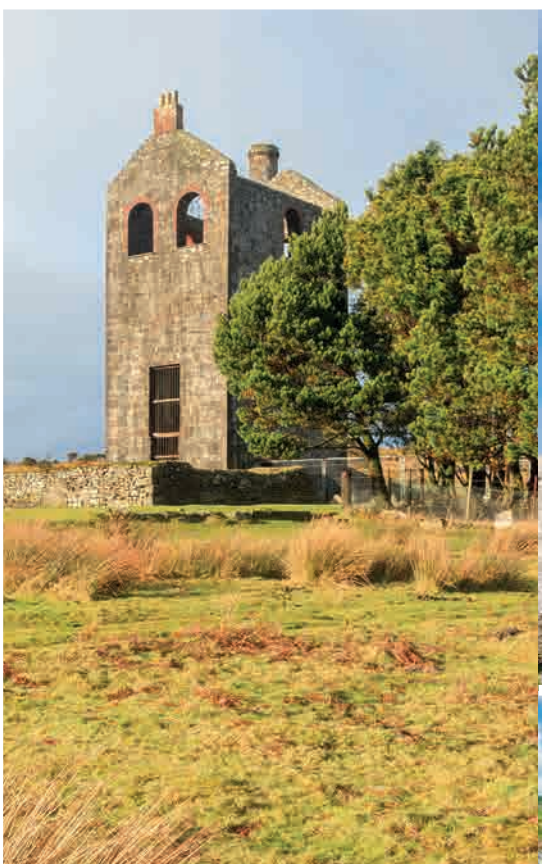
Village views

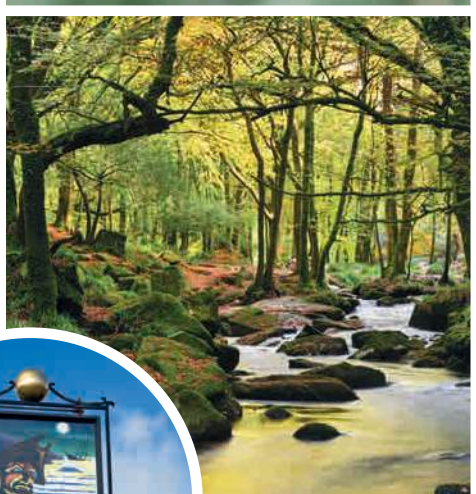
A half-day walk from St Neot village provides my final encounter with the Fowey as I follow the Two Valleys Trail (marked on OS maps), a circular walk looping high out of the community to give



Previous page: RoughTor, Bodmin's second highest peak. Clockwise from top: the view from Berry Down; the Cheesewring; Brown Willy, Cornwall's highest point; Tintagel; the Hurlers; the fabled Jamaica Inn; Golitha Falls; swallows are frequent visitors; industrial legacy at Minions











PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, JUSTIN FOULKES/4CORNERS











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Walk it!

DAY 1 The return walk from Roughtor car park to Brown Willy is around 8km/5 miles. The circular walk from Bolventor to the Fowey and Codda Downs is 8km/5 miles. The return walk from Bolventor to Dozmary Pool is around 5km/3 miles. **DAY 2** The Golitha Falls walk is 2km/1.5 miles; the walk from Minions to Cheesewring and Hurlers stone circle is 4km/2.5 miles; the Two Valleys trail from St Neot is around 8km/5miles. **DAYS 3 & 4** Circular routes from villages on the edge of the moor, such as Lewannick, Davidstow and Michaelstow, range from 4km/2.5 miles to 15km/9 miles.

GETTING THERE There is no public transport across the moor, but the gateway towns of Liskeard, Camelford, Bodmin and Launceston, as well as some villages on the periphery, are served by bus and/or train (**transportforcornwall.co.uk/services**). A car certainly helps with exploration.

ACCOMMODATION Jamaica Inn at Bolventor (**jamaicainn.co.uk**) is an atmospheric Grade II-listed pub that dates back to the 1750s. It welcomes walkers, with double rooms from around £100 and hearty mains in a timbered bar. The beer garden has superb views.

INFORMATION Use OS Explorer 109 for Bodmin Moor. The best source for walks is *Mark Camp's Six Walks on and Around Bodmin Moor* (volumes one to three) (£8.99) and his circular *The Copper Trail* (£4.95), both published by Best of Bodmin Moor and available in bookshops and information centres in Launceston and Liskeard, as well as online. Mark also leads walks on the moor (**walkaboutwest.co.uk**).

panoramic views from Berry Down. Following the loop clockwise, I drop down to a delectable path above the river. Its flow picks up speed and crashes through what feels like a miniature canyon, fallen trees joining the banks. All around, beeches and sycamores are swaddled in mosses and lichens of an intense green.

St Neot is one of several villages on the moor's periphery that lend themselves to circular walks, allowing ramblers to explore churches, lanes and bridleways, and offering insights into moorland life. Mark Camp's guides detail several half-day hikes (see 'Walk it!', above). I spend a couple of days exploring parishes, delving into farming culture and religious history.

At Lewannick, on the moor's eastern fringe, I end up at the village church where two headstones are curiously engraved in Ogham, an early Irish script. A walk at Michaelstow, to the north-west, explores the Wesleyan past of the area and introduces me to the first of several holy wells that were once commonplace. The most impressive – and the largest in Cornwall – is at St Clether to the north, where a boggy path drops from the church to a chapel boasting a 5th-century altar.

My last planned walk explores Davidstow Moor, east of Camelford. Roughtor forms a triangular backdrop to my wanderings across open moorland and what, surreally, turns out to be a former airfield and racing circuit. Studying my map, I'm surprised how close I am to the coast – the edge of that picture frame. It's irresistible. I head north for 9km/5½ miles to the sprawling, forbidding ruins of Tintagel, standing proud at the end of a causeway and said to be King Arthur's stronghold. I think back to the Arthurian legends of Dozmary Pool, and am again reminded of how much more there is to Cornwall than its seaside edges. ■



DESTINATION

Nordic walking

Fancy tackling a traditional pilgrimage trail, but without the heat and crowds of southern Europe's ever-popular caminos? Scandinavia's St Olav Ways, converging on the majestic Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, have been walked by pilgrims for almost 1,000 years and are now attracting new generations of hikers

WORDS LIZZIE ENFIELD

At the edge of Norway's largest Viking-age graveyard, Vang, on the outskirts of Oppdal in Trøndelag (central Norway), is an undulating patchwork of around 900 turf-covered mounds, most dating to between 750 and 1050 AD. Information boards describe those buried here – farmers, warriors and merchants – whose grave goods, from swords to brooches, speak of a people connected to both land and sea. It is a sobering yet fitting place to begin a journey on the St Olav Ways. Just beyond runs the Gudbrandsdalsleden path, one of the network of pilgrim trails that lead to Trondheim, the resting place of Norway's most famous medieval king, St Olav.

Stretching 643km/400 miles from Oslo to Trondheim, the full path takes a month to complete. I opt for the final section from Oppdal – a more manageable week's steady walking, and handily accessible by train from both Oslo and Trondheim.

Pilgrims' progress

From Oppdal, pilgrims have for centuries made their way northwards to Nidaros Cathedral, where St Olav, credited with uniting and Christianising Norway, was buried. Today the route from Oppdal to Trondheim covers 150km/93 miles across mountains, forests and farmland, a landscape where myth and history merge.

Leaving Oppdal, the path follows King's Road, once a medieval thoroughfare linking Oslo with Trondheim. It is a sturdy, stone-set track, broad enough for horses and carts but now softened by grass and moss. On one side rise the foothills of the Dovre mountains, home to herds of wild reindeer. On the other stretches fertile farmland grazed by sheep and farmed reindeer. Weather-worn farm buildings line the way, their timber tarred and sun-darkened to a mottled, dappled sheen.

The path is punctuated with markers – the red cross of St Olav, superimposed over a grey heritage logo, painted on wooden posts or hung from trees on pendants – and with information boxes that open to reveal stories rooted in the landscape. One clearing in the forest was once a football pitch; another is said to have been hacked out by a sorcerer. Further on, a rock bears the imprint of a horse's hoof, attributed to Olav himself.

In the Middle Ages, the way to Nidaros was among Europe's four great pilgrim routes, alongside those to Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. However,







Clockwise from left: charming Trondheim; a St Olaf's waymarker; Vang burial site; the Y-shaped Rennebu Church; Nidaros Cathedral





after the Reformation in the 16th century, the St Olav paths fell silent. It was not until the late 1990s that the Norwegian government began restoring them to lure latter-day pilgrims and emulate the success of the Camino de Santiago in Spain. The official reopening followed in 1997.

The choice is yours

Today, there are nine long-distance routes, threading in from Finland, Sweden and the north, south, east and west of Trondheim. The most well trodden, in medieval times and now, is the Gudbrandsdalsleden path.

The effect of the restoration is just being felt, but one notable outcome has been drawing visitors to parts of Norway beyond its famous cities and fjords: the Dovre mountain range, the Celtic-fringed western seaboard and the densely forested Sámi region of Hedmark. Numbers remain modest compared to Spain's Camino – a few thousand versus hundreds of thousands – which means walking here retains a sense of solitude and wildness. Locals dryly refer to the terrain's undulating ups and downs as 'Norwegian flat', but in reality the path demands stamina, weaving from mountain slopes into spruce forest, down to rushing riverbanks and on towards the fjords.

Accommodation is as varied as the scenery. In Oppdal, the Turisthotell offers a comfortable and unpretentious base, its wood-clad interiors and hearty breakfasts setting the tone for days on the trail. Further on, the elegant Orkla Gjestebolig, Løkken, once the guesthouse of a copper mine owner, now offers spacious, art-filled rooms near the Orkla Industrial Museum. But pilgrim beds are mostly humbler: converted barns where bunks line former animal stalls, dormitories with painted wooden furniture or simple rooms in farmhouses. At Hæverstølen farmstead, 24km/15 miles from Oppdal, I meet Børge Dahle, an eco-philosopher who has written on *friluftsliv* – literally 'open-air life' – the Norwegian philosophy of outdoor living. He speaks of the rhythms of nature and the joy of sleeping out under the stars. It's thanks to Norway's *allemannsretten*, the 'everyman's right' that allows wild camping almost anywhere.

As with the Camino de Santiago, walkers come here for different reasons. I meet a 73-year-old Norwegian woman walking alone, a group of Germans who stumbled across it online, and others for whom this is a spiritual journey in the footsteps of saints and Norwegian nature. >







Clockwise from left: on the trail from Oppdal; Trondheim's colourful streets; rømmegrøt; golden cloudberries



Walk it!

TIME/DISTANCE Lizzie walked 150km/93 miles from Oppdal to Trondheim. Allow around seven to ten days, walking 20-25km/12½–15½ miles per day.

GETTING THERE Norwegian (**norwegian.com**) flies direct from London Gatwick to Trondheim from around £60 each way, and several airlines fly from other UK airports to Oslo. From either city, trains run to Oppdal, the start of this section of the Gudbrandsdalsleden path (**sj.no/en/front-page**).

WHEN TO GO June to September offer the best walking conditions, with long days and relatively mild weather – but always be prepared for rain.

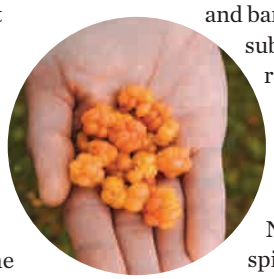
ACCOMMODATION Ranges from hotels and converted farmhouses to wild camping.

FURTHER INFORMATION For more on the St Olav Ways network of trails, including accommodation, history and maps, visit **pilegrimsleden.no/en**

Trail tucker

Beyond Hæverstølen, the path descends into thick forest. Shafts of light pierce the canopy and a Beatles earworm, *Norwegian Wood*, loops in my head. Emerging from the trees, I find myself by the Orkla, a crystal-clear river famed for its salmon, tumbling over rocks and boulders. Fish features heavily on menus here: salmon, mussels and baked salt cod (*ovnsbakt klippfisk*), alongside pilgrim staples such as lamb stew and *rømmegrøt*, a sour-cream porridge made with butter, flour and salt. The latter is heavy but moreish, a peasant dish that fuels long days of walking. When the path dips back into forest, berries and mushrooms provide their own feast – blueberries and cranberries by the handful and the rare cloudberry, golden as sunlight.

On the third day, the path takes me to Rennebu and a midday stop in the museum of rural life. Over coffee and waffles with blueberry jam, I learn about the area's unusual church. Built in 1669, it is one of only four surviving Y-shaped churches in Norway, its layout intended to bring the congregation closer to the priest and reflect a new post-Reformation egalitarian spirit.



The figure of Olav himself looms large, but guides are quick to remind visitors that he was no meek saint. 'International terrorist,' quips one at Trondheim Cathedral, before recounting how Olav raided his way across northern Europe, once reputedly hauling London Bridge into the Thames with ropes tied to his longships. After his exile and conversion, he returned to Norway determined to seize power and spread Christianity. He died at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, felled by spear, sword and axe, but in death his reputation was transfigured. Stories spread of miraculous cures: a blind man's sight restored, a wound healed. When his body was exhumed a year later, it was said to be incorrupt and fragrant with roses. Olav became Norway's patron saint and the cult of pilgrimage to his tomb flourished.

Trolls, goats and fish scales

As the trail draws closer to Trondheim, the landscape shifts. The path follows the Gaula River towards the Trondheim Fjord, the third-largest in Norway. At Kastberga – which means 'throwing rock' – folklore dictates that pilgrims should toss a stone ahead to warn lurking trolls of their approach. Whether the trolls heard me or not, the path delivers me safely into gentler terrain: rippling fields of corn and barley, woodland giving way to suburbs where joggers and roller-skiers replace sheep and goats. Clapboard houses with fish-scale-tiled roofs indicate the city lies nearby.

And then the first glimpse: Nidaros Cathedral's Gothic spire piercing the skyline. The final 4km/2½ miles wind through Trondheim, past Sverresborg Trøndelag Folk Museum and across the Nidelva River to the cathedral square. Built on the site of Olav's grave, it is a brooding masterpiece of soapstone, with intricately carved statues and a great rose window that glows crimson in the late afternoon sun. St Olav, a symbol of Norwegian independence and pride since the Middle Ages, is still inspiring people and landscapes here. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, MATTIAS JANSSON, VISIT TRONDHEIM

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Love walking but your feet hurt?

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LET'S MEET IN REAL LIFE

Remember when buying boots meant going into an outdoor shop? That's where I met my wife, actually. I was picking up crampons for a climbing trip, and there she was, trying on boots. I asked if she fancied joining me, and the rest is history.

These days, everyone clicks "Buy Now" online, but let's be honest: boots aren't socks. You can't tell if they will fit your feet, your gait, or your next adventure just from a photo.

Getting older has taught me that feet change, and good advice is gold. The pros at Footmap can assess your biomechanics, posture and walking style, helping you find boots that actually fit, preventing pain later on. And let's not forget the joy of chatting with people who love the hills as much as you do, sharing stories while trying boots in-store, rather than shouting at a delivery box that they don't fit.

WHERE YOUR FEET MATTER

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As locomotion experts, we understand the complex dance between your bones, nerves, and ligaments, and how the wrong footwear can sabotage your movement. That's why our clinic is embedded inside one of London's best outdoor stores – Altimus based in Kensington – and can also offer home appointments. Once we analyse your gait and foot structure, we help you choose the perfect boots or trainers from top brands like Berghaus, Asics, Meindl, Altberg, Helly Hansen, and Tecnica.



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Jay, Senior Foot Health Practitioner at Footmap

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Chris Lawlor

The new president of Ramblers Scotland has built a following of over 2 million by sharing his passion for the outdoors on social media

Looking back, I think my first 'proper walk' was when my dad drove us from Motherwell to Tinto Hill in South Lanarkshire. I must have been about 12. I remember enjoying the feeling of walking up high alongside him.

But even after that – and it's funny saying this now – I don't think I realised other hills existed. We weren't an outdoorsy family. I'd never heard of Munros. And I wasn't aware of many walks from our doorstep. Looking back, it feels like something was missing in how kids were introduced to walking and the outdoors.

It wasn't until I passed my driving test at 17 and got a car that I realised how many brilliant walks we have in Scotland. While studying computer science at the University of Strathclyde, I started regularly heading to the hills with friends. I was probably the keenest, though!

I couldn't expect people to join me every weekend, so eventually I went up Ben Vrackie near Pitlochry on my own. That's when it clicked. I realised how much I valued the solitude and calm of being alone in a beautiful place.

Sharing my adventures

For fun, I began documenting my walks, posting occasional videos on TikTok. I was surprised by how many people started watching.

I've quite a logical mindset – perhaps from my computing background – and became interested in tracking which videos reached the most people. I shaped my content around that, leading to many of my videos starting with, 'Did you know that in Scotland...?'. That's the line I'm best known for.

It feels surreal that millions of people now watch my videos, and that I'm meeting politicians, journalists and celebrities. Creating videos began as a side hustle alongside my day job in app development, but it's now a big part of how I earn a living. Thankfully, it's also something that I enjoy.

With a large audience comes responsibility. I'm aware of the need to promote ethical walking and tourism, and always consider the impact upon the places I feature. For example, I won't encourage visits to spots that lack public transport or parking. Respect for local communities matters, and it's important that walkers have the right information before setting off on routes near sensitive habitats.

Ultimately, I want everyone – visitors, businesses and local communities – to benefit from Scotland's landscapes and world-class access rights. Even though it can make my life financially harder, that means I only do paid partnerships that will genuinely interest my audience, such as with official tourism or nature organisations.

A passion for walking

I also walk regularly without a camera, purely for personal enjoyment and to de-stress. That time is so important for my mental wellbeing, especially as I normally work in busy Glasgow city centre.

I love local routes, such as forest trails at Chatelherault Country Park or Strathclyde Country Park. I also return to favourite spots further afield – I've lost count of how many times I've climbed Ben A'an in the Trossachs. That's probably my favourite walk. It's not too difficult – just a couple of hours – but with incredible views over Loch Katrine. I've been there at sunrise, sunset, even on New Year's Day.



Presidency plans

It's such an honour to become Ramblers Scotland's president, and it's been a busy start. I've already done several media interviews – a new experience for me, as I'm more used to being behind my own camera. Within weeks of becoming president, I met first minister John Swinney. We spoke about our shared love of walking.

I'm aware that I've gone from being 'that social media guy' to representing a national charity. I'm excited about meeting Ramblers members, being a judge in the Britain's Favourite Path competition, and helping promote initiatives such as the Out There Award, which encourages young people to build confidence outdoors.

I don't want to just hold the title of president. In three years' time, I want to look back and feel I've made a genuine impact in supporting our charity's work, and helped many more people discover a love of walking.

Follow Chris: @chrispaullawlor

INTERVIEW: DANNY CARDEN



GEAR ON TEST

Packable protection

A lightweight waterproof jacket offers protection against not just rain, but also wind getting in and warmth escaping. Packing down small for carrying and easy to throw on over other layers when required, it's an essential piece of kit even in the height of summer, and a great emergency addition for cooler days

WORDS JEN and SIM BENSON

As with any outdoor kit, you should think about the 'three Fs' when you're choosing a new jacket:

Fit – the cut should be comfortable, unrestrictive and able to accommodate layers underneath, without being baggy or flappy. Check the sleeve length and overall movement, especially around shoulders and elbows, so you won't feel restricted when walking.

Features – consider the features you'll find useful, such as internal and external zipped pockets, adjustments to customise the fit, and reflective details. While waterproof fabric has a breathability rating, in use it allows little airflow, so vents – zipped or not – can improve comfort by increasing cooling airflow and reducing moisture buildup inside the jacket. The hood is an important feature to get right – it should fit snugly, without restricting vision or head movement.

SEARCH FOR SAVINGS
Our reviews quote the RRP. Look out for sales, special offers and Ramblers discounts to save money.

Fabric – waterproof fabric is made with a layered, bonded construction, either from technical three-layer (3L) fabrics, which offer the best protection for the weight and packability but tend to be most expensive, or two-layer (2L) fabrics, lined with mesh or other breathable material for improved comfort and airflow. A jacket's waterproof rating measures how high a column of water it can resist, in mm, in lab testing. Choose a rating of at least 10,000mm for summer use, and 20,000mm for year-round walking.

Waterproof kit is usually treated with a Durable Water Repellent (DWR) coating, so that water beads and runs off rather than soaking in. DWR treatments made with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are gradually being phased out, due to their impact on the environment and health. All the jackets tested here use a PFAS-free DWR.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: HELLY HANSEN

Women's lightweight waterproof jackets



Ayacucho Adventure Jacket II

From £80 *cotswoldoutdoor.com*

430g in S. Size range: XS–3XL

The updated version of the Adventure Jacket features improved waterproofing (15,000mm) and breathability, and PFAS-free DWR. There's an inner pocket, two closeable pockets and a storm flap over the zip. The jacket stows into its own pocket, which doubles as a bag, including a pouch for valuables. The helmet-compatible hood is adjustable, with a wired peak for stability in wind.

Montane Norste Lite

£150 *montane.com*

280g UK10. Size range: UK8–18

Made from a durable 2.5L Pertex Shield nylon fabric, this lightweight, packable jacket offers solid protection with a comfortable, streamlined design. The adjustable hood is articulated to move with you, the adjustable cuffs and hem offer protection and a customised fit, and two zipped handwarmer pockets add secure storage. A smart choice for stashing in a pack or as a versatile, hardwearing year-round protective layer.





Patagonia Storm Racer Jacket

£270 *eu.patagonia.com*

185g in S. Size range: 2XS–XL

Made in a Fair Trade Certified™ factory, this jacket is pared down for minimum weight and maximum packability, but without compromising on performance. The fully recycled, highly protective three-layer shell stuffs into its zipped chest pocket for easy carrying and quick deployment. The cut is fitted and fully articulated, with a snug hood that works best with a cap. Perfect for fast and light rambles all year round.



Craghoppers Zohra Jacket

£100 *craghoppers.com*

435g in UK10. Size range: UK8–20

In a soft, rustle-free fabric with a fitted but unrestrictive cut, this smart, great-value jacket has an impressive waterproof rating of 30,000mm, making it ideal for year-round wet-weather wear. The rear hem is cut longer for protection, and the hood is adjustable, with a stiffened peak for a snug, protective fit. There's a mesh lining for comfort, adjustable cuffs and hem, and a zipped inner pocket and two zipped handwarmer pockets.



Watch our buyer's guide to waterproof jackets

For more advice on finding the right waterproof jacket, take a look at our buyer's guide video. Scan the QR code or visit **bit.ly/RamblersWaterproofsGuide** for Sim's top tips on finding the fit, fabric and features to keep you dry and meet all your needs when you're out on the trail.



Berghaus Rain-Motion Jacket

£240 *berghaus.com*

255g UK10. Size range: UK8–20

Designed for lightweight performance, this jacket is a joy to wear. The cut is athletic but unrestrictive, with well-fitting elasticated cuffs and hem finished with soft binding. The 3L Pertex Shield fabric is comfy, quiet and hardwearing. There's a zipped inside pocket and a chest popper, so the zip can be undone for flap-free venting. The hood offers one-handed adjustment for a good fit. An excellent choice for high-energy, wet-weather adventures.

Women's lightweight waterproof jackets



Columbia Whistler Peak Jacket

£270 *columbiasportswear.co.uk*
400g in S. Size range: XS–XL
This heavier, highly protective jacket combines a recycled nylon shell with a durable polyurethane overlay and soft, breathable lining. It's cut longer for better coverage, with two zipped underarm vents to reduce heat and moisture buildup when you're working hard. There's adjustment throughout, including a helmet-compatible hood (if not wearing a helmet, this works best over a cap to reinforce the peak).

66°North Ljósufjöll Shell Jacket

£495 *66north.com*
350g in S. Size range: XS–2XL
Designed for extreme conditions, this high-performance Gore-Tex jacket is packed with features. Made from a 100% recycled nylon shell with a soft and quiet backer, it feels incredibly light and unrestrictive to wear. It has two generous zipped chest pockets and an inside pocket, plus zipped side vents. There's also a high, microfleece-lined collar and adjustable stow-away hood.





Rab Phantom Mountain Jacket

£160 *rab.equipment/uk*
210g in UK10. Size range: UK8–16
A lightweight shell for stashing in a pack as a protective waterproof layer, the Phantom's 2.5L Pertex Shield Diamond Fuse fabric is sleek and a little shiny. There's adjustment on the hem but not on the cuffs, which, combined with a generous fit through the sleeves, might let water in and warm air out. The hood is excellent, offering freedom of movement, single-handed adjustment and an effective wired peak.

Replace or renew?

It's worth considering whether you really need a new waterproof jacket, or if you could give a new lease of life to an old one. To keep your jacket performing well, it needs washing and reproofing from time to time. If it gets muddy, or you notice that water is soaking in rather than running off, it's time to give it some attention.
To remove dirt – which attracts water – use a specialist cleaning product such as Nikwax Tech Wash (currently £5.95 for 300ml at **cotswoldoutdoor.com**), which will also help to restore water-repellency and breathability. For re-waterproofing, Nikwax TX. Direct is available either as a spray (currently £9.95 for 500ml) or wash-in treatment (£10 for 300ml).

If your jacket becomes damaged, repair services are available. Alpkit will fix outdoor gear from any brand, while some brands offer free repairs on their products, including Berghaus and Patagonia (posting charges may apply).

Men's lightweight waterproof jackets



Highlander Munro V2 Mountain Jacket

£180 *highlander-outdoor.com*
590g in L. Size range: S–2XL
Offering excellent value while reduced to £119.99 this summer, the Munro V2 is reasonably light for the protection it offers. The stiff three-layer polyester fabric holds its shape in driving rain. A helmet-compatible hood moves with your head, pockets are positioned above pack waistbelts, pit-zips aid ventilation and sleeves (with adjustable cuffs) are wide enough to roll up. The cut could be better, but it's very functional.



INOV8 Ventureshell Jacket

£235 *inov8.com*
415g in L. Size range: XS–XL
One of the lightest properly four-season waterproofs we tested. The three-layer, recycled nylon fabric is stiff enough to cope with extended bad weather, but feels nicer, weighs less and packs smaller than stiffer mountain shell jackets. The adjustable hood is protective and moves well, and there are zip pockets, a storm flap and adjustment. A do-anything jacket: carriable just in case, but also effective and wearable all day.



Outdoor Research Helium UL Jacket

£185 *ultralightoutdoorgear.co.uk*
165g in M. Size range: S–3XL
The Helium jacket is the lightest on test, and packs away smallest. But it doesn't compromise on performance – the 2.75L nylon fabric is tough and weatherproof. The weight is saved with minimal features: just a zipped chest pocket and a stiff peak on the adjustable hood. The cut is good, so the cuffs don't need adjustment, and we like the absence of unnecessary zips. Perfect as an emergency layer, or for travel or general lifestyle use.

Helly Hansen Loke Jacket 2.0

£120 *hellyhansen.com*
250g in M. Size range: S–2XL
The Loke combines low weight and a small pack size with useful features, sustainable manufacturing and a great price. The bluesign-certified recycled nylon 2.5L fabric uses a weatherproof Helly Tech membrane. The sleeves can roll up; Velcro cuffs secure them. Pit-zips add ventilation, the hood adjusts and moves with your head, there's a storm flap on the zip, and two zipped pockets. A summer waterproof for travel, commuting and active lifestyles.





Tierra Back Up 3L Jacket

£260 *trekitt.co.uk*
390g in M. Size range: S–2XL
A classic three-layer Gore-Tex hiking waterproof to keep you dry in the worst weather. Cut to fit layers underneath, with long sleeves that roll up. The stiffened adjustable hood gives good protection and there's a storm flap to protect the zip. Side vents improve airflow and reduce moisture buildup. The hand pockets are waterproof, and high enough to work with a rucksack. A solid year-round option.



Jack Wolfskin Prelight 2.5L Lt Jacket

£150 *jack-wolfskin.co.uk*
260g in M. Size range: S–2XL
This jacket is light and packable, with an athletic cut and stylish looks at a reasonable price. The 2.5L Texapore Ecosphere Pro recycled polyester fabric is comfortable, soft and flexible, while also durable and protective. The hood is adjustable, but works best with a cap. There are pit-zips for venting, two zip pockets, plus cuff and hem adjustment. Ideal for carrying in case of downpours.

Salomon Outerpath Pro 2.5L

£200 *salomon.com*
365g in M. Size range: S–2XL
This funky-looking waterproof feels great and performs well. The unusual, flapped chest storage works, but is it better than a pocket? The rest is more conventional: zipped pockets, pit-zips, and both hem and cuff adjustment. The hood is fine but improved with a cap, while the cut is comfortable, offering free arm movement. The 2.5L nylon fabric provides a nice balance between comfort and wet-weather performance. A good all-round waterproof.





Inselberg Axiom Shell

£380 *inselberg.com*
630g in L. Size range: XS–2XL
The Axiom is built for use in the foulest conditions, with a four-layer construction comprising a super-tough nylon outer, double membrane and durable backing. Features are designed for extreme use: glove-friendly zip-pullers, big chest pockets, wide adjustable cuffs and a protective hood. It's cut long for coverage and big enough for layers. Pit-zips offer ventilation, but it's on the heavy side for year-round walking.

Ask the experts

Whether you've got a question on gear, health or paths, our experts are 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.



Elyssa Campbell-Barr, **walk** editor, has been a journalist for charities and membership associations for over 25 years.



Kate Conto, the Ramblers' policy and public affairs manager, specialises in open-access rights and urban walking.



Dr Jo Maher, an NHS GP in Sheffield for more than 20 years, is physical activity clinical champion for the city's Move More campaign.

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



ACCESS

Coastal conundrum

I was delighted to see the King Charles III England Coast Path officially opened in March. But when I went to a nearby section, there were no signs telling walkers where to go, and a local farmer told me it isn't finished yet. How can a National Trail be open to the public when parts of it aren't complete?
Peter Gorecki

Kate Conto King Charles opened England's coastal path in March 2026 (19 years after it was first announced), when 100% of proposals for the route had been submitted to the government for approval. This was certainly cause for celebration, but the path remains a work in progress – as you'll see in our feature on p16. About 90% of the coast path's 4,345km/2,700 miles are now fully open and waymarked, but work continues on other stretches, and there are sections in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight with ongoing challenges over the precise route. Before setting out for a walk by the English coast, it's worth checking the official website (**bit.ly/NationalTrails_KCIIIECP**), which has up-to-date information about every section, including incomplete stretches, temporary closures or diversions. We also recommend taking the relevant OS map, or mapping app, when walking routes you don't know well.

GEAR

Sole trading?

I've heard top-brand hiking boots often come with poor insoles, as manufacturers assume walkers will replace them – is this true? There are so many options for insoles and footbeds. Which ones do you recommend?
Peter Houghton



Jen and Sim Benson Walking boots usually come with a neutral insole, which will offer some cushioning, support and protection. In combination with a properly fitting and laced boot, and good-quality hiking socks, they're designed to be comfortable for most people. Off-the-shelf insoles can add extra cushioning, stability and support. We'd recommend brands such as Svartz, Ultimate Performance and Enertor – but these will still be a generic fit. If you need a custom-fit insole or orthotic for a specific issue with your feet or your gait, then it's worth seeing a podiatrist for a full assessment.



HEALTH

Hypermobile hiking

Any advice for someone new to rambling who has hypermobility?
Nikki Forrest

Dr Jo Maher Joint hypermobility syndrome means you have unusually flexible joints (hypermobile people are often called 'double-jointed'). Walking is fantastic exercise for keeping muscles stimulated and joints protected to improve balance and strength, which can be challenging for people with this condition. Fatigue can also be an issue with hypermobility, so build up distance gradually. In between hikes, simple strength exercises (such as those on the NHS website or app: **nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises**) can help you to improve joint stability and strengthen stabilising muscles. Avoid wearing knee or wrist braces if possible – hypermobile joints need to move freely, and strengthening muscles is a better way to prevent injury than a brace. Choose hiking boots that support your ankles and arches, and walk with trekking poles to reduce pressure on your joints and ligaments, especially on steep or uneven terrain. Being hypermobile makes you more susceptible to injuries, including dislocations, sprains and strains, so walk with a friend or Ramblers group and carry a first-aid kit that includes anti-inflammatory painkillers (such as ibuprofen tablets and/or gel) and compression bandages. A warm bath, heat pad or heat-rub cream will help to ease any post-hike joint pain. Being out in nature is great for mental health, as well as physical strength, so welcome to the rambling community and enjoy hitting the trail!

GEAR

In the hood

Reviews of waterproof jackets often highlight that the hood is 'helmet compatible', but most walkers don't want an enormous hood that accommodates a helmet! Can you suggest any jackets that have closer-fitting hoods (or a way of storing excess hood material)?
Rick Bamford

Jen and Sim Benson Most waterproof walking jackets designed for three- or four-season use have a helmet-compatible hood. Well-designed versions have adjustment to reduce the volume to fit comfortably without a helmet but, as with any feature, we'd recommend trying a few different styles to find the one that fits you best. There are a few with lower-volume hoods: Berghaus' classic Cornice 2.0 (pictured – £285, **berghaus.com**) or the lighter-weight RG Alpha 2.0 (currently from £84) are both great options, with smaller-volume, foldaway hoods and plenty of useful features. Jackets by sailing companies such as Gill or Musto often feature foldaway or zip-off hoods, as they're designed for use in windy conditions. Gill's Pilot Sailing jacket (£155, **gb.gillmarine.com**) is a good option for walking.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

GEAR

Animal-free footwear

Which boots do your reviewers recommend for vegan ramblers?
Patricia Fairey

Jen and Sim Benson Many walking boots are made from synthetic fabrics, but it's the glue that manufacturers can't always guarantee is vegan. Of the lightweight boots tested in the spring 2026 issue (Gear on Test, p66), only the INOV8 and Lowa boots are vegan. However, there are lots of good options for vegan ramblers. The INOV8 Roclite range is entirely vegan (currently from £58.99, **inov8.com/roclite**). The Roclite Mid (pictured – currently from £79.99) is a great lightweight boot, while the Roclite Pro (£200) is a little more protective. Scarpa has a vegan filter on its website (**scarpa.co.uk**) so you can easily search the range. Its Rush TRK LT GTX (£200) is a great all-rounder, providing a good balance of low weight, comfort, protection and support. If you prefer a traditional-style walking boot, the Altberg Dalesway is made with vegan leather (£239.99, **altberg.co.uk**). We've tested the excellent Fremington, its real-leather equivalent.



MEMBERS

Back-issue browser

I love walk for all the walking information and inspiration, but I don't have room to keep lots of paper magazines. It would help immensely if I could access past editions electronically.
Anna Przedrzymirska

Elyssa Campbell-Barr You're in luck! We have an archive of back issues going back to 2020 on the Ramblers website: **ramblers.org.uk/my-account/walk-magazine-back-issues**. This is a members-only benefit, so you must be logged in to the site as a Ramblers member to view it.

The best buys for campers

It's peak camping season and these must-haves all make life outdoors better, including a classic tent design, sturdy backpacks, super socks, plus-size gear and incredible repellent



A truly timeless tent

With its instantly recognisable A-frame shape, the **Vango Force Ten Classic UL2** takes inspiration from the company's first-ever tent, produced back in 1966. Now its design has been upgraded with modern components and materials to celebrate Vango's 60th anniversary, including carbon poles and a PFC-free ripstop flysheet. Perfect for whatever your next adventure brings. RRP £500. **Buy from vango.co.uk**

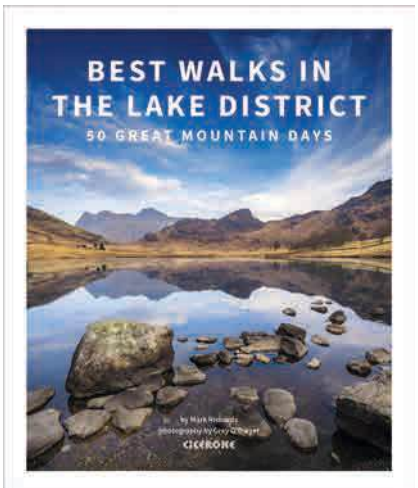


Plus-size camping gear

Camp in comfort with the range of wide and double-wide sleeping bags, mattresses and heavy-duty camping chairs at **Vampire Outdoors**. From lightweight kit for backpacking to campervan- and campsite-ready luxury, this is high-quality gear that's made to last – designed for your adventures in summer and beyond. **Get 10% off with code RAMBLERS10 at vampireoutdoorgear.com**

Discover the Best Walks in the Lake District

Make the most of your next Lake District adventure with this inspirational large-format guide to 50 of the best mountain days the region has to offer. From iconic summits like Scafell Pike and Helvellyn to quieter, lesser-known fells, each route is graded for difficulty and supported by 1:40,000 Harvey maps, as well as Mark Richards' hand-drawn fellscapes and stunning photography by Grey O'Dwyer. The ultimate planning companion for your perfect day out on the Lakeland fells. *Best Walks in the Lake District: 50 Great Mountain Days* by Mark Richards (Cicerone, £19.95, **pre-order now, out 30 June)**.





Mohair magic

Based in the Cotswolds, Corrymoor Mohair is known for making the UK's original mohair socks. Mohair is an excellent sock material: it's three times more durable than other wools, with natural wicking properties (no more sweaty, smelly feet!), extreme strength and a silky soft feel that offers a unique combination of practicality and luxury. The calf-length Companion is Corrymoor's most popular walking sock, designed for comfort, protection and durability, including a cushioned sole, reinforced heel and ribbed leg. It's perfect for hiking and heavy everyday use in wellies, walking boots and shoes. The Swift ankle socks are a great summer alternative, also with a reinforced heel and toe. Buy from **corrymoor.com**

Backpack bliss

Taking its name from the Sanskrit word for 'friend', the **Vango Mitra Air** backpack is the perfect companion to your outdoor adventures. Available in a 20- or 30-litre option, you'll be set for everything from afternoon strolls to longer hikes and weekend camping trips. Features include a back system that reduces load stress and boosts air flow, walking pole storage, durable ripstop fabric and mesh pockets. RRP from £62.50. **Buy from vango.co.uk**



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

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WIN!

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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 £190 at retail partner stores. After analysing your data, its experts can suggest footwear and a medical care solution. Bring in your old boots to get £45 off any footwear when you visit. **Visit foot-map.com**

MASTERCLASS

A-Z of **path maintenance**

Britain's path network is a wonderful national asset, but keeping our paths walkable requires constant maintenance and improvement work. The Ramblers has 150 path maintenance teams across England, Scotland and Wales, with about 2,500 dedicated volunteers tackling path problems from A to Z

WORDS: ELYSSA CAMPBELL-BARR & RAMBLERS COLLEAGUES

Accessibility

More than 20% of people in Britain say physical barriers prevent them being active in nature. While not every path can be accessible to all, we believe everyone should have access to nature and that local authorities and landowners should do more to open up the countryside – for example, by replacing stiles and narrow gates with less restrictive options where practical. Ramblers volunteers are often on the frontline of removing unnecessary barriers to nature – clearing nettles, resurfacing paths, repairing boardwalks, upgrading gates and much more – to make the countryside more accessible.

Bridges and boardwalks

As well as keeping our feet dry, boardwalks and bridges protect fragile terrain and wildlife habitats. Over time, traditional wooden versions rot and degrade, so Ramblers volunteers often install replacements made from recycled plastic, which last decades longer.

Clearance

Overgrown vegetation is a common barrier to walking – and clearing it is probably the easiest type of path maintenance to get involved in. Ramblers path maintenance volunteers battle brambles, trim trees and pull up problematic plants such as Japanese knotweed and ragwort.



Definitive Map

Under the legal maxim of 'once a right of way, always a right of way', our volunteers are battling to add lost paths to the Definitive Map – the legal record of all public rights of way in a local authority area of England or Wales. By providing evidence that a path existed historically or that people have walked there unhindered for 20 years, they can secure a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO), protecting and expanding our path network for everyone, forever.

In Scotland, where the public has access to almost all open land, there's no definitive map, but access authorities' Core Paths Plans identify key routes, and many public rights of way are recorded by ScotWays.

Erosion

Over time, path surfaces may be worn away by heavy footfall or extreme weather. Without intervention, problems worsen: walkers avoiding muddy or cracked ground inadvertently widen and further erode the path; a track that's become a channel for



gushing rain draws in more and faster-flowing water. Our volunteers' maintenance work – maybe adding stone slabs, wood chippings or a boardwalk, or improving drainage – protects the trail and surrounding landscape and wildlife.



Funding

Sadly, cash-strapped councils often struggle to fund path maintenance and improvements. Ramblers volunteers do millions of pounds' worth of work each year, giving their time and skills to maintain and upgrade routes for us all to enjoy. Some successfully seek grants for path work – for example, from local active travel schemes.

Thanks to fundraising and partnerships, the Ramblers also finances some path improvements. Our Path Accessibility Fund, supported by a generous anonymous donor and others, has funded 41 projects across England and Wales to improve the accessibility of local paths – with many more in the pipeline. Through our partnership with retailer Cotswold Outdoor, we've provided Ramblers paths volunteers with vital kit. And countless gates, benches, signs and even entire trails have been funded by Ramblers members leaving us a legacy in their will: **ramblers.org.uk/support-us/gifts-wills**.

Gates

A stile can be an insurmountable barrier, not only for wheelchair users, but also for walkers with small children or large dogs, and people who have problems with their sight, joints or balance. Ramblers path maintenance teams often remove stiles or replace them with self-closing gates, opening up the route to more walkers while keeping livestock safe. For stiles of historic significance – those in dry-stone walls, for example – an accessible gate may be added alongside the original structure.



Highway authorities

In England and Wales, footpaths, bridleways and byways are all public highways, with the same protections as roads, all under the responsibility of the local highway authority – usually the county council or unitary authority. In Scotland, the local access authority (a local authority or National Park authority) has this duty. Many Ramblers path maintenance teams have an excellent relationship with their local highway authority or access authority, who may provide guidance, funding and tools to help our volunteers carry out maintenance and improvement works.



Insurance

The Ramblers provides public liability insurance and personal accident insurance for our path maintenance teams. This also covers use of power tools, as long as those using them are trained. To be protected by this insurance, the volunteer role must be registered with the Ramblers, and the team must have permission for the work from the landowner or local authority.

Jobs

When someone reports a problem on a path, the local authority should investigate and decide what work is required, which >

they call a ‘job’ and often assign a ‘job number’. Some authorities allocate certain tasks to the local Ramblers path maintenance team; others have a ‘jobs board’ of maintenance work needed, allowing volunteer teams to pick a job that suits them.



Kit

Most local authority path maintenance agreements require volunteers to have suitable kit and personal protective equipment (PPE), some of which may be provided by the authority. The basics are sturdy boots with good grip and ideally toe protection, puncture-resistant gloves, waterproofs, and protective eyewear if using power tools.









Thanks to Lateral,
providers of health insurance for active over-60s, who are funding Ramblers path improvement work this year. Find out more on p37.

Landowners

Whether individuals, corporate bodies or public authorities, landowners generally have responsibility for maintaining stiles and gates, and keeping paths on their land clear of overgrowth and other obstructions. In Scotland, landowners are required by law to respect access rights over land. Ramblers path maintenance teams often work with landowners, reporting problems, negotiating permissions and carrying out improvements on their behalf. Responsibility for maintaining the surface of the path itself usually rests with the highway authority (see above).

Machinery

Much path maintenance work is done with simple hand tools like secateurs, handsaws and shovels, but some projects require power tools or specialist machinery. Many Ramblers path maintenance teams have amassed an impressive collection of tools, such as brushcutters, post-hole diggers and even caterpillar-tracked wheelbarrows.

Nature

As well as improving trails for walkers, Ramblers volunteers protect and enhance nature along the routes that they care for. By maintaining clear, well-signed paths, they prevent people from trampling surrounding vegetation and damaging sensitive wildlife habitats. And by removing litter, invasive species and other hazards, they help nature to thrive.



Obstructions

Mother Nature often obstructs rights of way with fallen trees, overgrowth and floods. Other blockages are human-made, for instance fly-tipping, padlocked gates, barbed wire or crops planted across paths. Psychological barriers such as unfriendly signage and intimidating fencing can also be considered obstructions. Ramblers footpath officers monitor the condition of paths and alert local authorities to problems, while our path maintenance teams often take on the practical work of removing the blockages.

Path Improvement Tracker

The Ramblers’ Path Improvement Tracker has been measuring the impact of our volunteers’ work across Britain’s path network since 2025. We’re asking all our maintenance teams to log the jobs they complete, to build our understanding of our volunteers’ incredible impact locally and nationally, and meet our target of improving or opening 3,200km/2,000 miles of paths. Find out more at **ramblers.org.uk/path-improvement-tracker**.

Quagmire

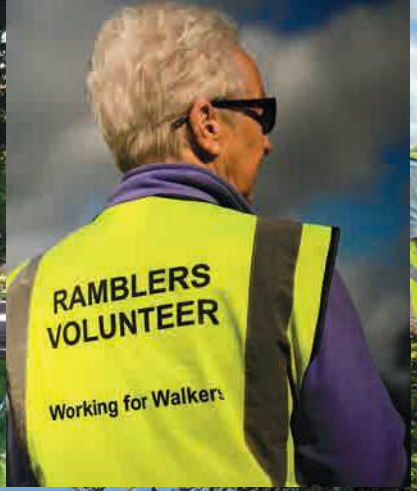
Milder, wetter winters and more intense rainfall events mean increased flooding and erosion on Britain’s paths, creating extra work for maintenance volunteers. ‘We’ve seen a surge in applications to correct quagmire paths,’ says Helen Bates, who oversees the Ramblers’ Path Accessibility Fund (see Funding).

Rubbish

Some Ramblers groups have a dedicated litter-picking team regularly clearing

PHOTOS SHOW HARDWORKING PATH MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEERS FROM DUDLEY, EDINBURGH, HAMPSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE, SOMERSET, WINDSOR, YNYS MON AND MORE













rubbish from local paths, while others organise special clean-up events. Gloves, bags and litter pickers are provided, and there's often a well-earned drink or lunch at the end. Our volunteers usually report fly-tipped waste to the local authority, rather than clearing it themselves, as there may be legal or environmental health issues.



Safety

With tools, varied terrain and the general public in the mix, safety is a vitally important part of path maintenance – which is why we've launched a new safety project to keep our volunteers and path users even safer. Look out for additional safety training and guidance for path maintenance team leaders and members over the coming months.

Technology

Path maintenance is becoming increasingly high-tech. Problems are recorded with smartphone cameras, pinpointed with GPS mapping and logged using online reporting systems. Some authorities issue Ramblers volunteers with tablets to record and report the work they've carried out.

Urban paths

The Ramblers' new Access Denied campaign (see p9) highlights stark inequalities in access to nature, with our research showing that less well-off communities in urban areas have the worst path provision. The work of our path maintenance volunteers is already having an impact in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and other cities, improving local people's wellbeing by creating better access to green spaces.

Volunteers

None of the amazing work in this feature would be possible without the volunteers who offer their time and skills to enhance the local environment and improve people's access to nature. Find out more about becoming a path maintenance volunteer, and the training and support available: **ramblers.org.uk/volunteering**.



Waymarkers

Damaged or missing signage can be as much of a barrier to walking as physical blockages. Our volunteers help more people access more places by repairing or upgrading existing signage and installing new waymarkers and fingerposts.

X = Access Denied

The X in the graphics for our Access Denied campaign (see p9) represents the blocked, missing or unusable paths that deny millions of people access to nature – particularly in Britain's least well-off communities. Ramblers path volunteers do a sterling job, but we also need politicians to reverse the years of political and financial neglect that have blighted Britain's path network.

Yellow hi-vis

Ramblers-branded hi-vis vests help our volunteers to stay safe and ensure they're easily identified as part of a team when out working. To order yours, email: **paths@ramblers.zendesk.com**.

Zzzz

You'll sleep well after a busy day of path maintenance work! It's fantastic for cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and mobility. And volunteering, particularly in a group and out in nature, has been shown to boost both mental and physical health. So why not get involved? ■

Can you help us maintain Britain's paths for everyone to enjoy?

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Make a donation:
ramblers.org.uk/donate

Leave a gift in your will:
ramblers.org.uk/legacy

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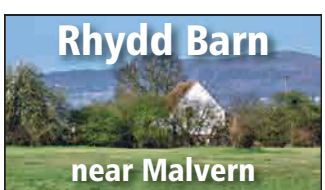
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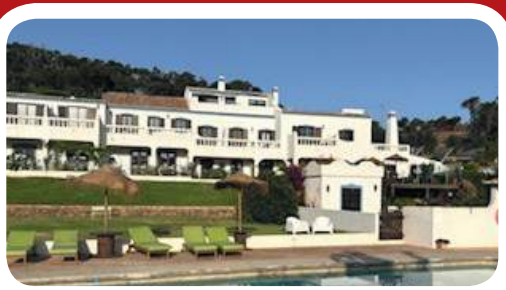
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Rest stop

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

WHERE WAS I?

Is this the place where the self-ennobled Marion Robert Morrison mined his True (Ashover) Grit?
Challenge set by Paul Andrews

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



Over to you...

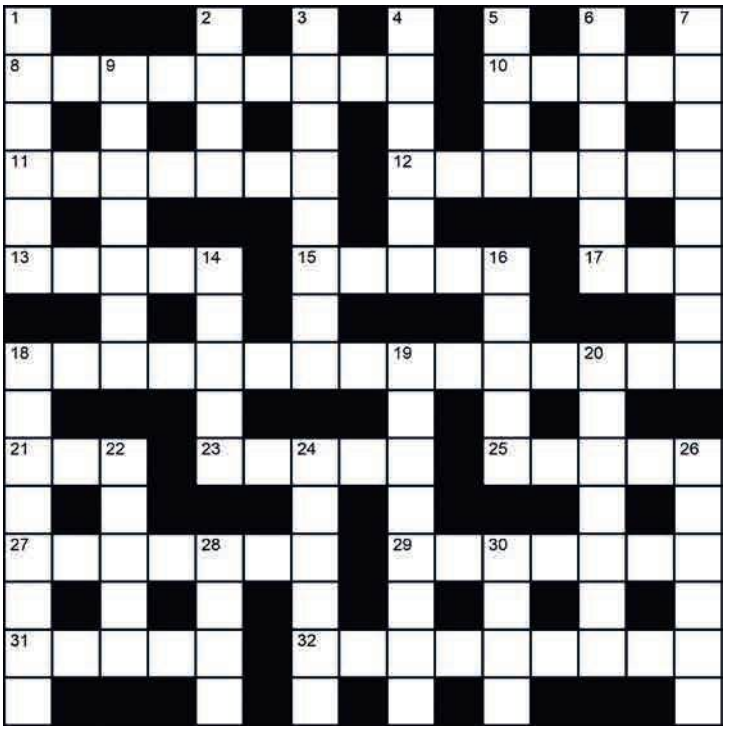
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Summer 2026 crossword clues

ACROSS

8 e.g. Yorkshire's Filey Brigg – gets Alpine sun! (9)

10 Footwear shouldn't hurt on Ermine Street, initially (5)

11 Highest point on Cheshire's Sandstone Trail – very cold summit! (3,4)

12 Surrey town on Greensand Way: i.e. great resort (7)

13 Declaim: "It's an unbroken waterfall like Cautley" (5)

15 Devon river's aquatic resident? (5)

17 It may establish your rights of way in Llandegla, Wales (3)

18 Our campaign to save historically protected paths – say you're now told differently! (4,4,4,3)

21 Soaked through in flipping Bronte Way! (3)

23 Walker – who raises prices sharply? (5)

25 In summer I thirsted for town on the London Loop! (5)

27 Lady ran off for neck cord (7)

29 Sheet twisted, with L and R protection from weather (7)

31 Proceeded cautiously – some diagnose danger (5)

32 Village in Peak District NP has sea surges? I say! (9)

DOWN

1 Seen on churches – and southern piers, perhaps (6)

2 One of the joints regularly used by walker! (4)

3/6 The parliamentary report urging wider access to walk/nature areas – of our toll roads, oddly! (8,3,3)

4 Alternative to a stick, as an incentive? (6)

5 Leaders of Sussex's Saxon Shore inspected a protected conservation area (4)

6 See 3 down

7 Epping to Harwich LDP – Elizabeth I's favourite route? (5,3)

9 Now went round Welsh town on Severn Way (7)

14 Cultivated soil partly until Thursday (5)

16 Outer, alternative, path (5)

18 Description of Lincolnshire Wolds: depressed country! (8)

19 Hill in Cumbria's Howgill Fells – as direly altered (8)

20 Blow this as a means of getting help! (7)

22 They provide temporary shelter once you've pegged out! (5)

24 Highest pike on Wainwright's Coast to Coast – young goat enclosure? (6)

26 Dash wildly – was painful last half of mile (6)

28 A County Down peninsula, somewhat upward slog (4)

30 Direction right on the map? (4)

Spring 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 1 September 2026.



MY PERFECT DAY

Lira Valencia

The ranger, birder and self-styled 'urban wildlife queen' on walks with her mum and inspiring the next generation

INTERVIEW REBECCA SWIRSKY

Where would you wake up on your perfect day?
An island, definitely. Sea, shining sun, fruits dropping at my feet, coconut water, parrots, hummingbirds; I can already smell the sea salt! When I worked with BirdLife in Malta, I loved being an island girl.

What's your favourite walk?
Along the Pembrokeshire Coast where, on a sunny day, the golden sands and clear blue water can feel tropical.

Who would be your ideal walking companion?
My mum. We have a close relationship. We could be walking in the rain and find joy. She enjoys being outdoors, and it helps her feel better mentally. Although we live together, walking means that we can bond and share special information.

What's your first memory of nature?
I didn't have a garden growing up. I lived on estates until I was six or seven, and wasn't taken for countryside walks. But my grandmother's back garden in Streatham was wonderful, alive with snails. No matter the weather, I'd be there, hypnotised by their intricate spirals. I'd mark the shells with my grandmother's nail polish to track them. When I went to university to study ecology, I realised this was the bona fide method used!

What is so powerful about walking in nature?
Walking is such a powerful way of getting out of your mind – and the double whammy of walking and nature is blissful. The more you see, the more you want to discover. On my street in London alone, there are peregrines, woodpeckers and kestrels! It's so healing.

Do you feel it's important to inspire the next generation?
I still pinch myself for helping to inspire underrepresented communities. It plays out as imposter syndrome, asking myself, 'Am I good enough to be inspiring others?' Even after my degree, I gave up on my dream many times. I worked in Ikea for four years, then as an eyelash technician. Then lockdown happened. I had this burning passion and knowledge. And I realised there's probably a little girl out there who isn't feeling represented or seeing themselves in the books they read. I needed to be that change.

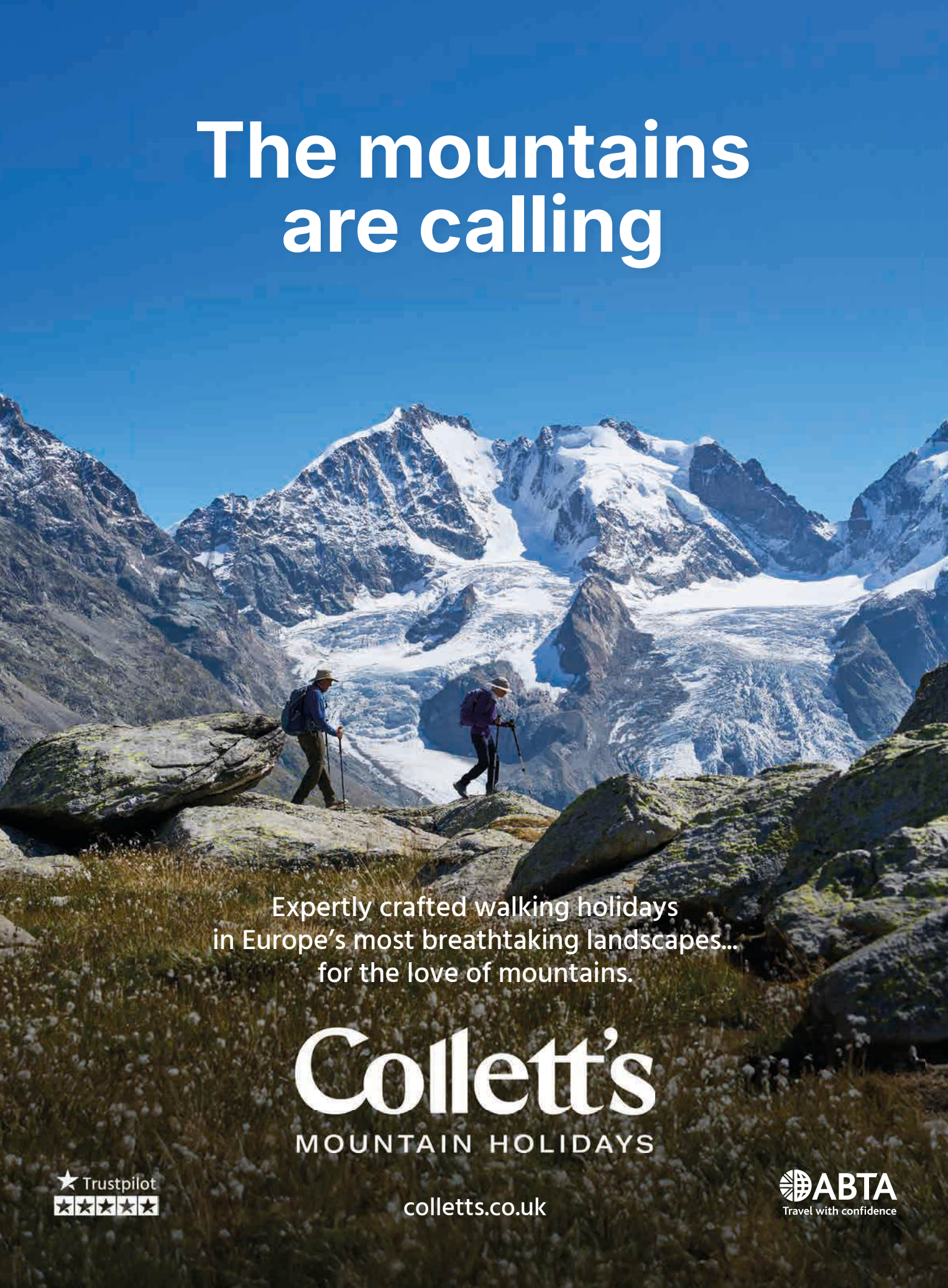
How important is access to nature?
Nature is a human right. Put animals in the conditions some working-class families live in, and you'd see a negative effect almost immediately. That's why we see so many communities battling mental health issues. Lack of nature access in poorer communities leads to multiple health and mental health issues. And the economic crisis worsened things. There was lots of knife crime in our area, which we've counteracted with gardening and food-growing in a community garden at the end of our road called Soul Food Garden. The space had been a dump for bulky waste, bikes and motorbikes. Gangs would burn stuff. The council did nothing. So Mum organised litter picks and had the idea of planting things. We've had no funding, and we all have jobs. But there's such power in a presentable green space. People stopped dumping, crime reduced and the council now support our endeavours. There's a wonderful treehouse in a sycamore. Setting up a community group takes time, though – no one teaches us how to get funding or how to make applications.

You've said 'nature offers a space where there is no judgement'...
We live in a world with social media, feeling judged and comparing ourselves to others. I was the first of my family born here, which comes with an identity crisis. In Colombia I'm not seen as local, and here, with the rise in anti-immigration rhetoric, well – it's a scary time. But nature doesn't have that judgement. It doesn't know borders. Try telling a flamingo flying from Africa to Europe about borders!

How do we balance access to nature and wildlife conservation?
Recently, I've taken the stance of not sensationalising natural spaces. Sometimes people visit areas not to benefit from nature, but just to take a selfie or snap a view. We need to be careful of too much footfall and dog walking. We need to be conscious of how we move around nature, enjoying but not destroying.

Lira presents segments for BBC One's Springwatch, Winterwatch *and* Naturewatch. *Follow her on social media at @outsidewithlira.*

The mountains are calling



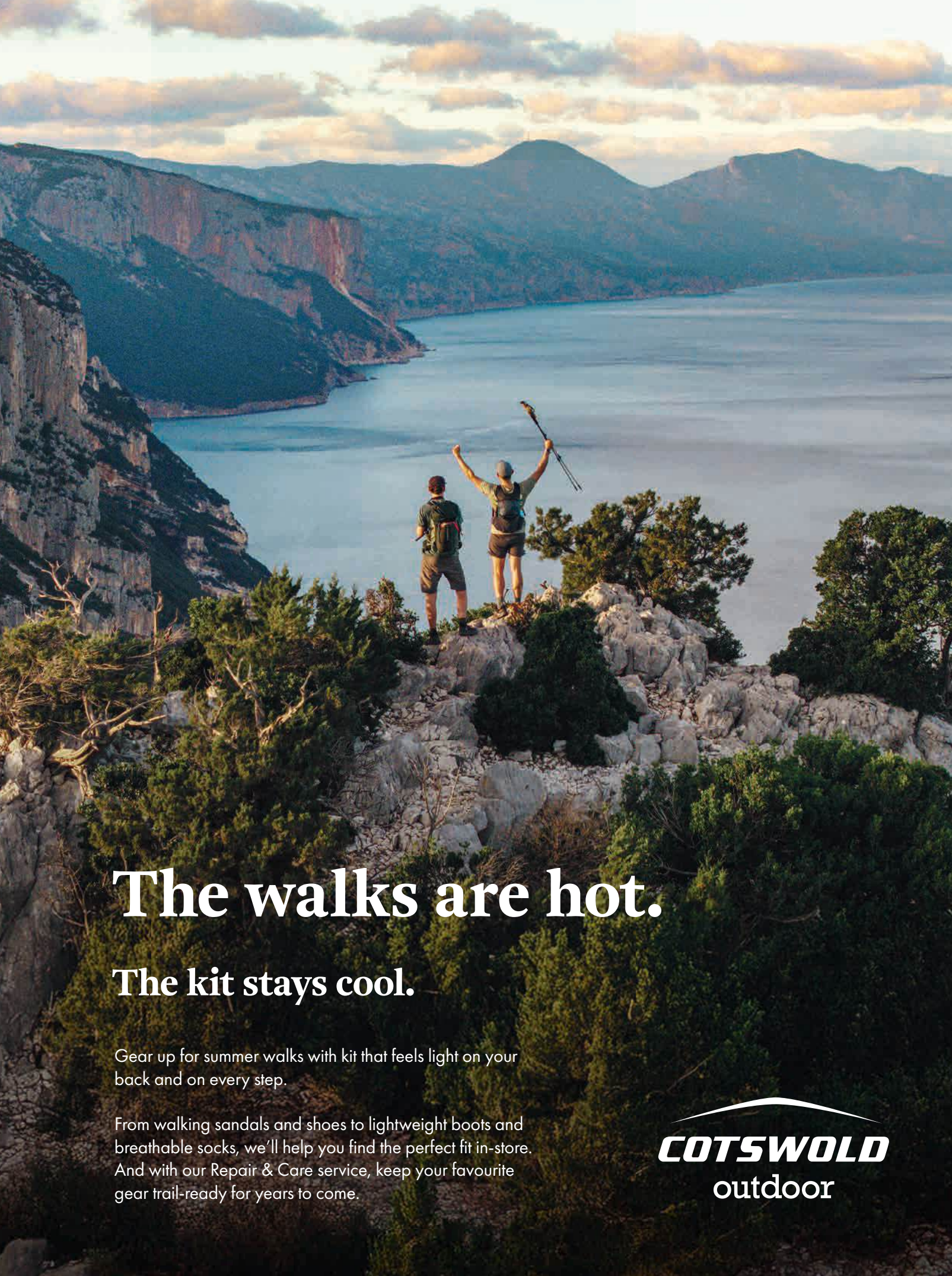
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