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Jamie Ramsay, Endurance Adventure Athlete

📍 The Lake District, Cumbria

I am Jamie

This is my outdoors

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walk

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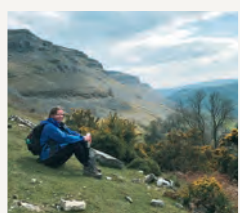
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Welcome to Walk

Since joining the Ramblers, it has struck me just how many of the challenges we are facing could be solved, or eased, if more of us walked, more often. Designing the places we live around people on foot, rather than those in cars, is a start – cities and towns with well-connected networks of paths and green spaces encourage walking and, in so doing, improve public health, boost local economies and help create safer, happier, more cohesive communities. As master storyteller, social campaigner and prodigious walker, Charles Dickens, said: ‘The sum of the whole is this: walk and be happy; walk and be healthy.’



Where we've been
Eglwyseg Rocks and Offa's
Dyke; a walking tour in
Berlin – including the wall



Ahead of the recent local elections in parts of England, the Ramblers launched a Charter for Walkable Neighbourhoods (see p17) with the aim of encouraging local councillors to sign up and commit to putting the charter's five aims into action. Perhaps town planners could learn a thing or two from visiting the 10 locations shortlisted for Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood Award. I'm thrilled to see Aberystwyth on the list. I lived in this bustling town for three years and can attest that it is an easy place to navigate on foot. Please take time to vote for the winner (see the carrier sheet and p26).

Promoting walking in all its forms is one of walk's main objectives. And to ensure we're giving members a magazine that inspires, engages and informs, please take a few minutes to complete our survey at bit.ly/WalkSurvey2019

Natalie

Natalie Hoare **Editor**

**READER
PANEL**

Every issue, we ask Ramblers members to share their views.
Sign up to join our reader panel at walkmag@ramblers.org.uk
We asked... Where's your favourite urban walk, and why?



**Holly Matthews, Surrey
Young Walkers**

'I love walking around the city of Bath, taking in the culture and architecture. I also like to walk the towpath of the River Thames from Kingston to Kew Bridge.'



**Nigel Sarsfield, Nottingham
& Derby Walking Group**

'A favourite is the short distance from Edinburgh city centre up to Arthur's Seat. The climb up the extinct volcano offers an almost picture-postcard view.'



**Eve Smillie, Glasgow
Young Walkers**

'From the city centre, you can walk along the River Ness to the Ness Islands, just to the south. There, you can explore woodlands, ponds and riverside trails. Best of all, it's an accessible adventure for everyone to enjoy.'



**Over to you... We'd love you
to be part of our reader panel
for a future issue. Email
walkmag@ramblers.org.uk**

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- 8 **THE VIEW FROM HERE**
Cringle Moor, Cleveland Way
- 10 **THIS SEASON ON FOOT**
Make the most of summer with our seasonal walking events guide
- 13 **FRONT FOOT**
The latest news from the Ramblers and the world of walking
- 19 **YOUR VIEW WIN!**
We hear from you
- 23 **YOUR SHOTS WIN!**
The best of our spring competition capturing 'waterside walks', plus win a pair of Asolo hiking boots worth £200
- 24 **URBAN WALKING**
***ON THE COVER**
The UK's shortlisted urban places putting walkers first are revealed. Vote for the winner of Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood 2019
- 28 **WALKS OF ART**
***ON THE COVER**
Ten trails that take in works of art or the places that inspired them



- 34 **WALK AND TALK**
The broadcaster Alice Roberts on why she's a fan of walking
- 36 **GOING THE EXTRA MILE**
Recognising volunteers making an extraordinary contribution to our efforts to get Britain walking
- 40 **DISCOVER... OSWESTRY & WELSH BORDERS**
Insider tips on the area's best historic sites, museums and trails
- 43 **RAMBLERS ROUTES**
Inspiration, maps and guides to top walks
- 60 **THE BIG WALK**
***ON THE COVER**
The Isle of Wight boasts a surprising range of landscapes – many enjoyed along its 70-mile coastal path
- 64 **DESTINATION: NEW ZEALAND**
WIN! *ON THE COVER
We get a sneak preview through primeval rainforests of the forthcoming Paparoa Track – the first new Great Walk for 25 years



- 71 **MY WALK OF LIFE WIN!**
Peter Owen Jones on his Everest ascent, in England, in 12 days
- 72 **GEAR ON TEST**
The best shoes and socks for summer trail walking
- 77 **ASK THE EXPERTS WIN!**
Our panel tackles your questions on walking gear, health and paths
- 80 **MASTERCLASS - CROPS**
Knowing your onions from your barley and the wheat from the rye, when crossing arable land
- 89 **REST STOP WIN!**
Crossword and conundrum
- 90 **MY PERFECT DAY**
The joy of walking helped travel adventurer Simon Reeve overcome a tricky time in his life



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Visit ramblers.org.uk/join



The view from here

Cringle Moor, Cleveland Way

Where North York Moors National Park (NZ535031).

Maps OS Explorer OL26; Landranger 93.

About This year marks the 50th anniversary of one of Britain's most popular National Trails – the Cleveland Way. Beginning in Helmsley and skirting the borders of the North York Moors, this 109-mile path offers rugged heather-clad hills, picturesque fishing villages and coastal drama, before concluding in Filey.

The history of England's second long-distance path (after the Pennine Way) is closely linked to the actions of local Ramblers. In

the 1930s, the Middlesbrough Rambling Club and the YHA came up with the idea of creating a long-distance route through the North York Moors that connected youth hostels and provided people with an opportunity to escape the industrialised urban conurbations.

'This was a time, post-war, when there was a real demand for leisure – people across the country were really looking to get out into the countryside more,' said Malcolm Hodgson, National Trails officer at the North York Moors National Park. 'It took until 1949 for the idea of these new long-distance routes to be enshrined in law,



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

and then over 15 years for the first National Trail to be established, followed a few years later, on 24 May 1969, by the Cleveland Way.'

This image is taken on Cringle Moor, looking towards Cold Moor, and features characteristic reclaimed slabs installed along an eight-mile section of the Cleveland Way in the 1990s to address path erosion. Cringle Moor is also the site of the Alec Falconer Seat – a great vantage point that's named after a local Rambler who campaigned for the path's establishment.

Our NE Ramblers Route (p49) follows part of the Cleveland Way.

READER PANEL



'I joined the Ramblers to experience the Cleveland Way. From Whitby Abbey, we followed the breathtaking clifftop path to the quaint fishing village of Robin Hood's Bay. I recommend Whitby's famous fish and chips.'

Eve Smillie, Glasgow Young Walkers



THIS SEASON ON FOOT

*What's on offer for walkers
this summer*



📍 Clockwise from main image: Haytor, Dartmoor; White Cliffs of Dover; Chichester; Bradford on Avon

JUNE

Newtown Walking Festival

1-2 JUNE

This new Welsh festival offers 23 guided walks, ranging from two to 14 miles. Forage for edible treats or join a 'stroll 'n sing' walk featuring a picnic. There are also self-guided walks and treasure hunts. All walks are free and no booking is necessary.

newtown.org.uk/walks

Quantock Hills Walking Festival

22-23 JUNE

A weekend of eight guided walks to suit all abilities in and around the Quantock Hills and West Somerset coast. Walk the new Castles and Coast trail connecting the villages of Nether Stowey and Stogursey to the England Coast Path. All walks are free, with tea and cake at the end. Booking is essential.

stoweywalking.co.uk

Otley Walking Festival

22-30 JUNE

Visit stunning Wharfedale and choose from 55 walks and events for all ages and abilities. New themed walks include On the Beat in 1957, Railway Pioneers and Poetry in the Park. There are also short town-based walks, strenuous moorland hikes and just about everything in between, plus evening events for all the family.

otleywalkingfestival.co.uk

Purbeck Plod

23 JUNE 2019

East Dorset Ramblers' annual long-distance challenge walk is a great introduction to the beautiful Isle of Purbeck. You can walk or run the full 25-mile route, while the 16- and 12-mile options are for walkers only. All three circular routes start in Swanage and take in the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, the Purbeck Way and the Priest's Way. Entry is £6



in advance or £8 on the day. Refreshments will be provided along the way.

eastdorsetramblers.org.uk

National Young Ramblers Weekend

28-30 JUNE

Join Ramblers from across the UK for a weekend of walking and socialising, while exploring the city of Cambridge and its surrounding countryside.



There's a choice of walks, as well as evening socials and entertainment. Booking is essential.

nyrweekend.org.uk

JULY

Evesham Walking Festival

1-7 JULY

This brand-new festival features 15 guided walks in the Vale of Evesham and North Cotswolds. Many have themes



such as the new Round Evesham walk with a Battle of Evesham talk, Market Gardening in the Vale, and National Meadows Day. All walks are free but must be booked in advance.

01386 765572;

eveshamramblingclub.org.uk/walkfest

AUGUST

White Cliffs Walking Festival

22-28 AUGUST

Covering Dover, Deal and Sandwich, this festival



offers 43 walks, ranging from one to 32 miles. Festival favourites include a fish and chip walk and the military fortifications of Dover Castle, and there are 12 new walks, including White Cliffs panoramic trails. Organised by Ramblers volunteers, most walks are free. whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk

Mendip Ramblers Walking Festival **24-26 AUGUST**

This year's free festival,

organised entirely by local Ramblers, is based in Shepton Mallet. The Somerset town is just off the Fosse Way, the old Roman Road, with evidence of Roman settlements nearby. There will be four walks of varying length each day, with tea and cake at the end. The short morning walk of three or four miles can be extended after lunch by joining the short afternoon walk of similar length. The medium walks

will be seven miles and the long walks 11 miles. 01749 672996; mendipramblers.co.uk

Dartmoor Walking Festival

24 AUGUST - 1 SEPTEMBER

Based in the National Park, there will be several events each day, ranging from modest guided strolls and children's rambles to full-day walks and other challenges. This year's festival is being run in partnership with the Disabled Ramblers and includes accessible events. moorlandguides.co.uk

Corwen Walking Festival

31 AUGUST - 1 SEPTEMBER

Set in the Clwydian and Dee Valley AONB, Corwen is a wonderful base for walking enthusiasts. Free guided walks range from short town history walks to a ridge walk along the Berwyn range. There are also evening events and skills talks, along with entertainment. corwenwalkingfestival.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

Gillingham Walking Festival

4-8 SEPTEMBER

Enjoy gentle rolling farmland, rivers and wildlife on a wide variety of friendly walks in Dorset. This year's theme explores the provenance of local food and drink, and includes visits to farms and a winery, and offers opportunities to taste and forage. On some walks there will be the option of a meal afterwards. gillwalkersarewelcome.btck.co.uk



READER PANEL



'Our group has organised a number of walking weekends away for the summer - in Shropshire, Sussex and the Brecon Beacons. Some of our members are also attending the National Young Ramblers Weekend.'

Nigel Sarsfield,
Nottingham &
Derby Ramblers

Scottish Borders Walking Festival

7-14 SEPTEMBER

This year's event - the 25th - will be based in Selkirk and the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys, with 35 guided walks of varying lengths. Join a free short stroll, including a James Hogg poetry walk and a tour of the Bowhill Estate. Longer walks include a 10-mile spectacular circuit of Ring o' the Loch and Loch of the Lowes. Booking is essential. borderswalking.com

Bedfordshire Walking Festival

7-15 SEPTEMBER

Nine days of guided walks across the county, ranging from short informative walks to a 40-mile challenge walk along the Greensand Ridge Walk. There are also railway walks, a boat trip and a section of the Icknield Way. All walks are led by Ramblers volunteers. 01234 353704; bedswalkfest.co.uk

Somer Valley Walking Festival

13-15 SEPTEMBER

Now in its fourth year, the festival will explore the delightful valleys south of Bath, with their fascinating industrial heritage. There are plenty of walks to choose from, including a nature trail and a visit to a folk music festival, as well as a launch event wildlife talk at Radstock Museum. bathscapewalkingfestival.co.uk/somer-valley-walking-festival

Bradford on Avon Walking Festival

6-8 SEPTEMBER

Visit this lovely corner of West Wiltshire to explore countryside in the southern part of the Cotswolds AONB. There are 15 guided walks, from three to 12 miles, with a theme of local food and drink. walkbradfordonavon.org

Chichester Walking Festival

6-8 SEPTEMBER

Join the debut Chichester festival, covering the Sussex Downs, the coast and the historic Roman city itself. Walks range from one-and-a-half to nine miles and include city tours, picturesque villages and the Manhood Peninsula. Most walks are free, with many led by Ramblers volunteers. visitchichester.org



Get more online

Discover some seasonal walking ideas at ramblers.org.uk/blogs



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A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue and orange plaid shirt over a white t-shirt, is looking down at some autumn leaves he is holding in his hand. The background is a soft-focus scene of trees with yellow and orange leaves, suggesting an autumn setting.

Front FOOT

Campaigns and news from
the world of walking

HEALTH

Walking towards a healthy future

Two Ramblers initiatives aimed at improving physical and mental health have received a significant National Lottery funding boost. The Ramblers Walking for Health programme has received £275,000 from National Lottery funding via Sport England, while £88,870 is to be given from the Building Connections pot of the National Lottery Community Fund to deliver new Friendship Walks for people who have experienced bereavement.

The Ramblers Walking for Health scheme, which aims to tackle inactivity among the least active groups, including women, older people, and those with long-term health conditions, has been run by the Ramblers since April 2012. Working with 370 local partner schemes, including local authorities, NHS bodies, other charities and volunteers, the programme

delivers 1,800 weekly short walks, led by 8,300 trained volunteers across England. The new funds will enable the scheme to evolve and be set up in new areas, provide support to volunteer walk leaders and



encourage more women into voluntary leadership roles.

The Friendship Walks scheme, which is expected to be up and running later this year, will be delivered in parts of London, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol, alongside Cruse Bereavement Care, Ramblers Walking for Health, Ramblers groups and other local partners.

Ruth, a regular user of the Greenway Centre Ramblers Walking for Health group in Bristol, said: 'When I gave up my job and needed something structured to help me fill my time, this group seemed to be a good place to start. The hour I spend with the group each week is a highlight and keeps me fighting through mental health difficulties and illness. I would encourage anyone feeling lonely or looking to keep fit or meet new people to get involved.'



Kitted out

Christopher Somerville

Our columnist muses on his 'essential' items of outdoor kit...

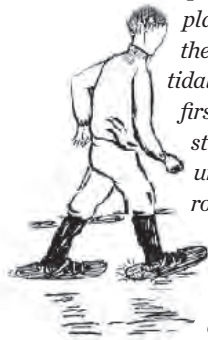
#16 Splatchers

'Two large oval boards,' wrote Arthur Ransome in Secret Water, 'with rope grips in the middle of them for heel and toe, and stout leather straps for fasteners'. Oh, the magic of those homemade mud skates and the squelchy poetry of their name 'splatcers'. That tough young mudlark the Mastodon demonstrated his pair to the Swallows, sliding across the Essex mud banks like billy-o, swinging each leg round in a wide circle so as not to trip himself up.

Easier to read about than to do, I discovered. Maybe East Coast mud was different from the stinking stuff we had at home on the banks of the River Severn. I made myself a pair of splatchers on the Ransome plan, and ventured out into the unknown. The Severn's tidal mud, stiff and grey at first, turned within a couple of strides into a gluey porridge underfoot. I swung my legs round like the Mastodon, the splatchers slid up my shins and I sank in up to my knees. There was one hell of a struggle back to shore, and a lot of explaining to do once I had squelched home, mud all over.

When I recounted the tale to an Essex islander years later, he laughed himself silly. 'What? Flat boards? No, mate, he was having a bubble. Your splatcher's a V-shape, like a little boat on each foot. Try that, you'll be all right.'

Finally, I will. I'm planning a walk out to the Blackwater Estuary islands. They do have causeways over the mud, but I think I'll go off piste in my V-shaped splatchers. If I'm gone too long, look for a tuft of white hair in the mud. That'll be me, literally six feet under.



#BIGFORESTFIND

Forest wildlife survey

If you go down to the woods today, be sure to look out for plants, birds, mammals and insects, and share your findings with England's largest survey of forest wildlife. Part of the Forestry Commission's activities to mark its centenary this year, the survey of forest biodiversity invites members of the public to record all the forest wildlife they encounter using the free app iNaturalist, or at events like nocturnal wildlife surveying at Maybeck, Yorkshire, and bug hunting at Drinkwater Park, near Manchester.

'The Big Forest Find is a fantastic opportunity for people to get out and

explore, and help us discover even more about the animals, insects and plant life in our forests,' said Forestry Commission ecologist Molly Gorman. 'These records are really important in the face of a changing climate and will help shape how we look after our woodlands for decades to come.'

The findings of this 'citizen science' project will bolster existing records and help to shape efforts to protect these landscapes for the future.

For more information, visit forestryengland.uk/bigforestfind

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Try the Ramblers mobile app

A new app delivers details of group walks throughout Great Britain, exclusive member offers and – in an upgraded version due later this year – thousands of high-quality, independent walking routes straight to your smartphone.

Download the free exclusive members' app by going to Apple's App Store or Google Play and searching for Ramblers. Enjoy a searchable library of 50,000 Ramblers group walks; access to a digital version of your member card; latest member offers and news; and the ability to share photos of your walks.

The in-house developers are keen to receive constructive feedback from members who have tried out the app, to help develop the next version due to be launched in the autumn. Email MobileApp@ramblers.zendesk.com.

'With the Ramblers app, you'll have a searchable library of our group walks in the palm of your hand,' said Nicola

Fickling, Ramblers' head of membership. 'We hope the app will help members discover Britain's breathtaking landscapes, hidden urban gems and the joy of walking.'

To use the app you will need your membership number and an Apple, iOS 8.0 or later, or Android, version 5 or later, smartphone.



MAPPING

Three-word location

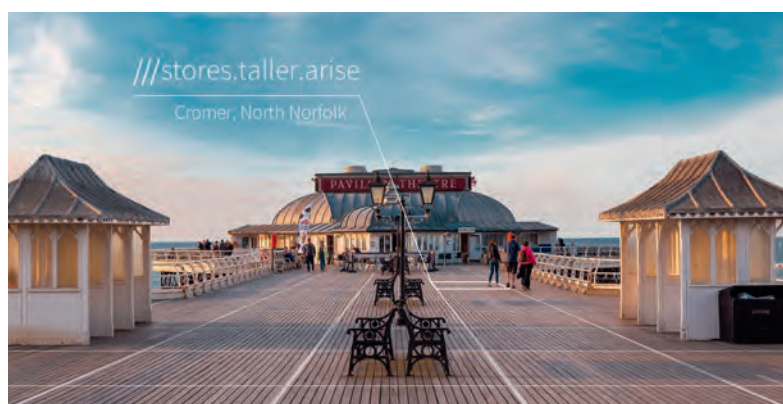
A mapping system that can pinpoint any three-by-three-metre-square location in the world using three unique words is being adopted by some Ramblers groups to share the meeting points of group walks.

Originally devised by a British start-up to provide people in remote and impoverished areas with an address, What3words divides the world into 57 trillion nine-square-metre (97-square-feet) areas and gives each a three-word

address. The Ramblers central office is 'hosts.kings.sits', for example.

The system has been adopted by several UK emergency services and even led to the location and rescue in March of a mother and child who had crashed their car in rural Somerset.

The What3words app is free to download on iOS and Android or can be used on a browser, and also works offline, meaning that even mobile users without a data connection can still discover their location.



MOVING FORWARD

General Council success

Greater Manchester and High Peak Area welcomed 200 members to the annual Ramblers General Council in April. Highlights of the three-day event included the volunteer awards presentation (see p36), a panel session chaired by President Stuart Maconie exploring how we can become more relevant to Great Britain's nine million regular walkers, the election of two new trustees (Jonathan Bergwerk and Thelma Brown), an insightful after-dinner speech from Mike Innerdale, director for the National Trust in the North of England – and, of course, plenty of led walks in the local area.

'It was a genuinely great meeting, with a palpable sense of a shared vision and direction, and real commitment, energy and enthusiasm in the room to work together, as one team, to embrace change and start to grow our movement again,' said Ramblers' CEO Vanessa Griffiths. For more information, including the motions debated, visit bit.ly/2VAj9xr

IN PRINT

Beyond the Footpath: Mindful Adventures for Modern Pilgrims



By Clare Gogerty
(£14.99, Piatkus,
ISBN 978
0349419671)

More people are taking time out from their daily lives to reconnect with nature and find enriching experiences imbued with meaning,

something that historically could be found on a pilgrimage. The UN World Tourism Organization estimates that 330 million people visit the world's religious sites each year. This book examines the ways we can derive meaning, health and happiness from our walks, whether we're religious or not, and includes inspiration, information and advice on creating your own mindful walks or pilgrimages – including 'the daddy of all pilgrimages', the Camino de Santiago.

NEW SUMMER KIT

Mozzie (and midge) proof kit

Lakeside jacket, from £90 jack-wolfskin.co.uk

For those keen to avoid slathering on chemical insect repellents, Jack Wolfskin has developed a range of mosquito- (and we are told midge-) proof clothing. The secret is in the weave of the 74% polyamide and 26% cotton blend. It's woven so closely that we are told 'it is physically impossible' for a mosquito to bite through it. The range includes a jacket, shirt, trousers and gaiters in men's and women's versions.



Pole position

Prices from £165 per pair Leki.com

Leki's latest Micro Vario Carbon walking pole features a new ELD (external locking device) system that's activated by a nifty lever, meaning that the pole can be assembled or folded really easily, even while wearing gloves. The standard 110-130cm model weighs 240g per pole, but there's also a slightly shorter (100-120cm) women's version and an AS (anti-shock) model that features suspension for hard surfaces.



Inspired by the Grand Canyon

£40 teva.com

To mark the centenary of the creation of the Grand Canyon National Park, US sandal maker Teva has released a GC100 Collection with patterns inspired by the area that inspired the establishment of the brand. A percentage of every pair sold from the collection will be donated to the Grand Canyon Conservancy to fund trail restoration and help environmental education programmes.





CASEWORK FOCUS

Protecting rights of way

The Ramblers engages with landowners and local authorities to try to resolve rights of way issues without recourse to legal action. However, when more intractable cases go to public inquiry or court, we work with legal experts, local authorities and our volunteers to protect walkers' rights

PATH SUCCESSES

Building bridges



West Essex Ramblers have replaced a rotten footbridge in Epping Green, using materials supplied by Essex County Council. This project is typical of the

work undertaken on a weekly basis by the path maintenance team, which puts up 200 waymarkers and 20 bridges, and clears around 20km of pathways a year. 'The team's coordinator Brian Smith has been doing this work for 12 years and has been more responsible than anyone else for the quality of footpaths and ease of access in the Epping Forest District Area,' said Len Banister, Essex area path maintenance team coordinator.

Poetry and cakes



Ten volunteers from the 'Tim Taclo' path maintenance team and two Ramblers Cymru staff members met up in March to clear dense vegetation and branches that

were blocking two footpaths in Penygroes, an area known for its links to poet R. Williams Parry. Overseen by Gwynedd Council, the work caught the attention of one local resident, who showed their appreciation by offering cakes to everyone. 'It's always a great feeling to reopen a path that local community members can enjoy,' said Graham Fitch, coordinator of Tim Taclo.

Over the boardwalk



During the winter, four Ramblers volunteers joined forces with six volunteers from Tibenham Parish in Norfolk to build a boardwalk along a path that was waterlogged and

had been a problem for local walkers for years. The parish provided the funding, Norfolk Area Ramblers sourced the materials and transported them to the site, and the volunteers joined forces to carry out the work, which took three days. Most weeks a Norfolk Area Ramblers team, coordinated by Peter James, are carrying out path maintenance.

CASE 1

Burwash, East Sussex

RESULT SUCCESSFUL

A Planning Inspector has confirmed an order to add a footpath to the definitive map of Burwash in East Sussex. Fewer than 50 metres long, the path runs from the main A265 road to the village playing fields and pavilion (which doubles as a community centre), saving residents

from having to go a longer way around via Ticehurst Road. The status of the path was brought into question in 2014 by fencing. This resulted in a formal application to safeguard its status. The landowner objected, which led to an inquiry, at which East Sussex footpath secretary Diane Smith testified, along with several people who had used the way.

CASE 2

Barrow upon Soar

RESULT ONGOING

Leicestershire Ramblers will be in the front row of a public inquiry in June to oppose a level-crossing extinguishment, unless a bridge can be provided. The crossing serves bridleway 120 at Barrow upon Soar and is used by many residents of Sibley Road to access the countryside and a good rights of way network. The alternative routes are along busy roads.

Network Rail has dismissed all possible options for retaining the route, including

the provision of a bridge or warning lights. The Ramblers agree the crossing is dangerous: what is needed is a bridge, not the extinguishment of a popular old-established route. In objecting, the Ramblers is supporting the parish council, the local access forum, and the Leicestershire Footpath Association. Martin James, the area's footpath secretary, said: 'With the expansion of Barrow upon Soar, everything should be being done to expand the rights of way network as well, not extinguishing crucial links like this.'

CASE 3

East Anglia level crossings

RESULT ONGOING

After overcoming delays and a shifting timetable, the inquiries into the closure of dozens of footpath level crossings in East Anglia have finally closed.

At the final inquiry in Essex, Ramblers' Barrister Merrow Golden presented the case for retaining many of these crossings, the alternatives often being unsafe roads or other unsuitable diversions. During the past four years, 25 volunteers have given up many hours of their time responding to consultations, meeting

with Network Rail, preparing Proofs of Evidence and testifying at the inquiry. 'It's one of the largest undertakings and most impressive efforts and collaborations that I have seen in 32 years working at the Ramblers, and they deserve the highest praise,' said Eugene Suggett, senior policy officer. A final decision is expected from the Secretary of State for Transport in early 2020.



Found a path problem?
Report it via the Pathwatch App
ramblers.org.uk/pathwatch



URBAN WALKING

Walkable Neighbourhoods

The Ramblers has released a new charter to encourage local authorities in England to build neighbourhoods that are safe and welcoming places to walk and improve everyday access to green spaces. The Charter for Walkable Neighbourhoods sets out five actions councils can take to improve the places we walk every day.

Tom Platt, director of advocacy and engagement at the Ramblers, said: 'The quality of our local streets and our ability to access nearby green spaces has an impact on all our lives. Neighbourhoods that are green and walkable promote good physical and mental health. They help combat poor air quality and encourage people to get outside and be active. A walkable neighbourhood is not only a safe and welcoming area to walk but also a better place to live, work and play. By signing up to the Charter,

local authorities are committing to improve the places we walk every day.'

The Charter was launched during the Ramblers second annual Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood awards, which celebrates the most walking-friendly towns, cities or neighbourhoods in the UK (see p24 for the shortlisted locations). We are aiming to sign up as many councillors as possible and will be providing them with toolkits and guidance on how to apply the Charter asks in practice, for example by creating green routes across urban areas and building healthy communities.



Get involved

Why not tell your local councillor about the Ramblers' new Charter
bit.ly/2IbYAQK

ACTION NEEDED

Protected dunes under threat



Ramblers Scotland is asking walkers everywhere to write to the Scottish Government to urge them to save Coul Links' internationally protected dunes from becoming a golf course. Scotland already has more than 550 courses – more per resident than any other country in the world – and the proposals would cross part of the long-distance John o' Groats Trail. Ramblers Scotland joined forces with outdoor access group ScotWays at a public inquiry in March 2019 to fight the plans. The Scottish Government is expected to make a final decision later this year. bit.ly/2V3pTVd

TAKE OUR READER SURVEY AND WIN!

walk is asking readers to complete a short online survey to help inform future decisions about the magazine and ensure we are delivering a quality publication to members and supporters.

Everyone who completes the survey will be entered into a prize draw to win a Vaude Brenta Rucksack (RRP £90) and Darn Tough Hiker Micro Crew Cushion Socks (RRP £18). Tell us what you think is going well, what you like and where there may be room for improvement by visiting bit.ly/WalkSurvey2019



WHAT'S NEW



Pilgrim paths created

LINCOLN

Three 50-mile pilgrim routes leading to Lincoln Cathedral have been created with help from Lincolnshire Ramblers. The north-east route from Louth traverses the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB; the north-west route begins in Epworth, and the south route begins in Boston or Bourne. Each one will have a *Journeys of Faith* guidebook. lincolncathedral.com



West Highland Way

SCOTLAND

The start of the West Highland Way now features new information boards and timber and steel artworks, thanks to a local community project delivered by Glasgow-based architects PagePark. The West Highland Way, stretching 154km/96 miles from Milngavie in East Dunbartonshire to Fort William in the Highlands, attracts 35,000 walkers a year.



South Downs Heathland Trail

SUSSEX

Seven sandstone sculptures that tell the story of the history, wildlife and people of heathlands have been designed for a new trail in the South Downs National Park. The trail links seven heathland sites in the national park – all of which are a rich haven for biodiversity, including rare insects and all 12 of Britain's native reptiles and amphibians. southdowns.gov.uk



Walking in wine country

Enjoy Luxembourg's award-winning trails and dramatic scenery, before sampling some world-class wines produced on the banks of the Moselle

Just 20km from Luxembourg's scenic capital lies the Grand Duchy's wine country – the Moselle region. Nestled between the great wine-producing countries of Germany and France along the banks of the Moselle River, its location has unsurprisingly inspired generations of local winegrowers to produce top-notch varieties, including sparkling Crémant, elegant Riesling and flowery Weissburgunder (Pinot blanc), to name just a few.

Why not join a dedicated walking tour of the region? Follow the Weinstross wine route or drop into the dedicated Wine Museum in Ehnen (currently being refurbished, reopening 2020), with its typical winemaker's house.

MOSELLE TRAILS

For breathtaking views across the vine-filled slopes of the Moselle region, coupled with a spot of wine-tasting, try the 55km Moselle trail. Sun-soaked paths connect charming wine-growing villages and offer glimpses of the Moselle River, the natural boundary between Luxembourg and Germany. Start the trail in Wasserbillig, home to a small aquarium, then wind down-river through the picturesque wine towns of Grevenmacher and its biodiversity wetlands and lake beaches, to Remich, the capital of wine production, and also one of

the creators of the Moselle region's 'champagne' – Crémant. Finish in the historic town of Schengen, where the agreement was signed to abolish borders in many European countries. It's also home to a museum charting this momentous accord.

For those who prefer shorter trails, but don't want to miss out on Luxembourg's excellent vineyard experiences, the three Traumschleifen Dream Loops are superb circular trails close to the picturesque Moselle River valley.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALFONSO SALGUEIRO, MARC LAZZARINI

WONDERFUL WINE FESTIVALS

Luxembourg's calendar is overflowing with wine-themed events from spring until late autumn. During Pentecost weekend (9-10 June), winegrowers and distillers in the Moselle valley throw open their cellars and bars for a weekend of wine-tasting, music, guided tours and food. Welleschter Kirmes (28-29 July) in the village of Wellenstein is a folklore festival and market featuring games, concerts, and general merriment. And during the Pinot and Friture festival (5-6 August), visitors can sample the region's traditional fried Moselle fish, washed down with plenty of local Pinot.

WALKING IN LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg has more than 300 hiking paths, over 30 long-distance trails and seven pilgrim routes. A Luxembourg Card (one, two or three days, €13-€28, 10% discount for over-60s) includes unlimited use of the Grand Duchy's public transport network and access to over 60 museums and other attractions free of charge.

More information: visitmoselle.lu, visitluxembourg.com

**VISIT
LUXEMBOURG**

YOUR VIEW

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

STAR
LETTER



The Ramblers' next campaign?

I am concerned about the current Great Tea Shop Crisis facing the nation. Increasingly, Ramblers are finishing walks and going in search of restorative tea and cake, only to find that the local tea shop closes at 4pm. My friends and I have been turned away from several establishments at just before 4pm. I am sure most people in this country would consider 4pm the ideal time for a cuppa and walkers in particular are severely affected by this problem. I think Ramblers should take a lead in tackling this crisis by lobbying Parliament for legislation and encouraging members to contact their local MPs on this subject. At the very least, there should be a regular column in **walk** listing tea shops that stay open until 5pm, and possibly a system of awards for Best Walkers' Tea Shops. There may also be a place for a 'Name and Shame' campaign for those establishments that turn away thirsty walkers. Who's with me?

Sue Weatherley, Derbyshire Dales Ramblers



One happy customer

After purchasing a pair of walking trousers and a water bladder from Cotswold Outdoor online,

I found that the leg length was too long, and the water bladder leaked. On advising Cotswold Outdoor staff, they

promptly arranged for the trousers to be shortened (at their cost) and replaced the bladder, even though I had mislaid the receipt! I wish all companies selling walking goods would operate like this. I am very pleased and satisfied by their service.

Gordon Roots, Leatherhead, Surrey



What's this?

Walking near Hurst Green in the Ribble Valley through a forest that was being cut down, I saw several ladders attached to trees with a seat strapped on top. Does anyone know their purpose?

Clive Richards, Liverpool

Cattle battles

The letter 'Safe passage' (*Your View*, spring, p20) suggested that partitioning a path around the edge of a field might solve the issue of troublesome cattle. That may well be so, but it soon becomes a muddy track, as we avoid hedges, fences and undergrowth. In more urban areas, these narrow paths can lose much interest. Perhaps the worst aspect of paths that have been shoved to the field edge (assuming they remain passable) is the loss of a sense of freedom that is found when a path crosses a field. A classic example is on the Mendip Hills just south of Priddy, where a popular footpath (part of the Mendip Way) follows the edges of large open fields as a muddy strip, rather than its proper route diagonally across them.

Pete Hellier, Somerset



I have come across numerous situations where a landowner has erected a fence a metre or so out from the hedge or woodland, along a field edge, to keep ramblers contained (not safe). They often use barbed wire which snags clothes, rucksacks and even flesh, as the under- and overgrowth pushes you closer to it. After a year or two, the area becomes overgrown and very soon impassable. Unless you're prepared to clear it yourself, we lose yet another path through our wonderful countryside.

Peter Brown, West Midlands



An Andorra trip I'll never forget

I immediately recognised the location of the main photograph illustrating the Andorra article (*Destination*, spring, p62) as the descent from Coma Pedrosa. The reason? This was the spot where I experienced a heart attack while on a Ramblers Walking Holiday (RWH) in 2016! I can vouch for the efficiency of Andorra Mountain Rescue, the helpfulness of the RWH leaders and the expertise of the cardiac unit in Barcelona. The cause turned out to be a problem with a stent that had been fitted two years before. I am now fully recovered and have just booked to join another RWH holiday in the Alpujarras in Spain this summer.

Tony Willey, Kendal, Cumbria

Be prepared

In the *Go It Alone* article (*Masterclass*, spring, p78) books and maps to pre-plan were recommended, but I would also suggest Google Earth. I have used this on many occasions to get a feel for a route I will be walking blind. The detail is good enough to even pick out footpath wear in places. The article also recommended that solo walkers carry a whistle. I suggest that all walkers should – even in a group it might be necessary to let the leader of a split group know there is a problem. Lastly, all walkers approaching a blind bend should increase their body width by holding out their hand, a map or similar article to give the oncoming driver a little more time to react to their presence.

Paul Rose, Coventry



On the buses

I belong to a bus-pass rambling group in South Wales. Some of the walks you recommend in the magazine seem to require a car to get to the starting point. With concern about climate change and the need to cut carbon emissions, would you take this into consideration and look for walks where public transport can be used?

Maggie Seale, Dyfed

Editor's reply *We always include public transport details, where available. But it would be a shame to omit the many fantastic walking areas not served by*

buses or trains, as this would limit the range of walks we can showcase in the magazine. A bus-pass rambling group is a great idea, though.



You've got email

I encourage everyone who has an email address to give it to the Ramblers via their account on ramblers.org.uk or by phoning Membership Services on 020 3961 3300. A lot of members think that permission must be given for their email to be used to get local walk information – this is no longer the case. Email addresses stored on the main Ramblers database can be used by groups for communications about local walks and social activities. Permission is only needed for marketing emails, which you can opt out of on your website account.

Terry Bates, Leicester Ramblers

Safety in numbers

Several members of my local group carry In Case of Emergency (ICE) cards (*Ask the Experts*, spring, p76). This is such a sensible idea, as none of us know when we might have a fall or be taken ill on a walk. One extra bit of information that is worth adding is one's car registration number. Many of us arrive for walks on our own, and if we were to be involved in an accident, it would be all too easy for our vehicle to be left behind, vulnerable to theft, vandalism or parking fines. If the walk leader knows which car is owned by the casualty, then appropriate steps can be taken for its recovery.

Pam Hardy, East Riding of Yorkshire

WIN! SHOES AND SOCKS

The sender of our star letter will win a pair of Keen Targhee EXP shoes, worth £100. They are built to keep feet dry and comfortable in the most challenging of conditions.

The shoes have a leather and performance mesh upper, a waterproof, breathable membrane and a mud-shield overlay, protecting against scuffs and abrasions.

keenfootwear.com/en-gb Senders of the other letters published will each receive Bridgedale Hike lightweight boot socks, worth £17.50. bridgedale.com



Over to you...
Got something to say? Tell us at walkmag@ramblers.org.uk or write to us at: **walk magazine**, Ramblers, 2nd Floor, Carnelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW. Letters may be edited.

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YOUR SHOTS

Our favourite photos from spring's 'waterside walks' competition

BRACING DAY ON THE FIFESHIRE COAST
BY ADAM LAW



WITH THE KIDS AT LULWORTH COVE
BY LIN TAIT



NORTH CORNWALL COAST
BY PHIL McKELLIGET



CRAIG GOCH DAM, ELAN VALLEY IN WALES
BY GARY COX



CWM NASH BEACH, VALE OF GLAMORGAN
BY JACKIE BRETT



DERWENTWATER
BY GILLIAN McDONALD



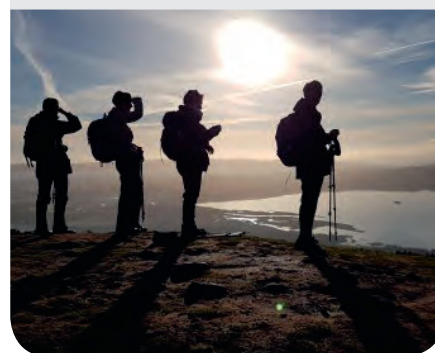
HAVING FUN AT STROME CASTLE, SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS
BY LIN MURPHY



DON'T GET YOUR FEET WET! COIREGROGRAIN, GLEN LOIN
BY PETER ALLAN



LOCH LOMOND FROM CONIC HILL
BY MAGGIE NUTLEY



WIN! A PAIR OF ASOLO GREENWOOD GV HIKING BOOTS

For this issue's competition, send us photos taken within a protected landscape - a National Park, AONB or National Nature Reserve - and tell us where it is. The sender of our favourite photograph will win Asolo Greenwood GV hiking boots, worth £200 and built with lightweight, modern



materials for comfort and versatility. The boots feature a one-piece, water-resistant Perwanger leather upper and waterproof, breathable Gore-Tex lining. The 'Duo Radiant' Asolo/Vibram outsole has self-cleaning lugs for optimum performance on a variety of terrains. Available in men's and women's versions. asolo.com

How to enter
Enter online at ramblers.org.uk/walkcompetitions or send your photos with your name, address and contact details to: Your Shots, **walk** magazine, Ramblers, 2nd Floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW, by 11 July 2019. Entries may be used in Ramblers publicity. Full T&Cs online.

Britain's Best Walking NEIGHBOURHOODS

After reviewing 80 nominations, our panel of experts reveals the 10 places in Great Britain putting walkers first. Vote for the winner now

VOTE NOW



Bow and Three Mills, East London

The historic East End

neighbourhood of Bow and Three Mills has undergone a huge regeneration in recent years. With waterways and green spaces, Bow and Three Mills provide easy access to areas of ecological wilderness within a bustling city location. Pedestrianised shopping streets and a borough-wide 20mph speed limit in Tower Hamlets (and much of Newham) help keep traffic speeds down, while 'filtered' residential streets discourage commuters from using the area as a rat-run, making sure walkers in Bow and Three Mills are given priority.

Bow and Three Mills was shortlisted because it feels like a bit of a hidden gem, with waterways and lots to do and see, including markets and pocket parks. It is a multicultural neighbourhood, with brilliant public transport connections.

Neighbourhoods that are green and walkable promote good physical and mental health. They help combat poor air quality and encourage people to get outside and be active. That's why the Ramblers is recognising those places in England, Scotland and Wales that encourage people to go about their everyday lives on foot.

Across the country, people have been nominating their favourite places for the Ramblers' second annual Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood award, celebrating any urban district, area or community where measures have been made to improve the community's access to green spaces and make local streets more pleasant to walk.

Our experts have made a shortlist of these 10, and we now need you to vote for Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood 2019.



Aberystwyth, Ceredigion

This ancient market town on the Welsh coast lends

itself to walkers of all ages and abilities. The promenade, harbour and Plasrugg Avenue make attractive and accessible short walking routes, while nearby Penglais Nature Park and Constitution Hill, with direct access to the Wales Coast Path, offer challenges for the more adventurous walker.

Aberystwyth was shortlisted because it has a good urban and rural mix, as well as great access to green spaces and the seafront. There are also good public transport links, and traffic-calming interventions.

In addition, Aberystwyth is a beautiful place, and the town has made great use of its unique geography.





Cambridge city, Cambridgeshire

Cambridge is amazingly green, with its extensive network of meadows, commons, colleges, parks and riverside walkways leading right into the heart of the city. The numerous bridges over the River Cam are restricted to pedestrians and cyclists, and many streets are filtered to prevent rat-running and promote safer places to walk and cycle.

Cambridge was shortlisted because of its access to green spaces. The local authority builds on the community's involvement and has introduced 20mph speed limits, and there are measures limiting people's access to the city centre by car, making it a great place to walk. The local authority's use of development agreements to fund walking and cycling infrastructure was also highlighted as an example to follow.



Brighton city centre, East Sussex

The seaside resort of Brighton on the south coast is a great city to explore on foot. Walkers can take in the pier and promenade, or get lost in the Lanes – a maze of pedestrian-friendly shopping streets, stopping for a rest in the gardens beside Brighton Pavilion. The local council has invested in a unique wayfinding system, which includes on-street markers and a downloadable app with walking routes.

Brighton was shortlisted because of its great access to green space and the seafront, and the strong community engagement in making its streets full of activity. The local authority's interventions to calm traffic and prioritise pedestrians are a great advantage.



Chorlton and Whalley Range, Greater Manchester

Chorlton is a leafy suburb of Manchester known as the 'liberal heartland'. Its walkable streets and independent cafés, pubs and shops contribute to a strong sense of community and a village feel. Chorlton Water Park is one of a number of wild spaces and nature reserves that make it one of the greenest parts of Manchester. Walking and Cycling Commissioner Chris Boardman plans to make improvements to infrastructure and create better links to the city.

Chorlton was shortlisted because of its capacity to bring people together in green spaces, via festivals for example. Its street trees are also a plus, as well as its aspirations to become even more pedestrian friendly. >



Elgin, Moray

On the south coast of the Moray Firth, the town of Elgin is home to the picturesque ruins of what was once one of Scotland's foremost cathedrals. The pleasant and walkable centre is easily accessible to nearby new housing developments, and the fully pedestrianised High Street features a range of shops and services. Turn off into a warren of alleys and closes that are home to a number of independent shops and interesting places to visit.

Elgin was shortlisted because of the council's commitment to pedestrian safety, having introduced wider pavements, traffic calming around new estates and in the town centre, and attractive places to relax. The public realm is high quality, and the town is well connected to other parts of Scotland.



Falkirk, Stirlingshire

Falkirk, in the Central Lowlands of Scotland, is an area rich in culture and history. With a population of just 159,000, the Falkirk Council area boasts 617km/383 miles of well-maintained and signed footpaths, wide pavements and many easy-to-navigate routes. There are also routes linking up areas of town and countryside in an interesting way.

Falkirk was nominated because of its combination of modern and historical neighbourhoods that offer small shops, cafés and pleasant walking routes. The Roman archaeology, canals, and features such as *The Kelpies* (below) and Falkirk Wheel rotating boat lift all provide plenty of interest to those on foot.



Greater Brockley, South-East London

Brockley has four centres of shops and amenities – Crofton Park, Ladywell and Honor Oak Park – all with transport links and within easy walking distance of each other. Many key routes in and around Brockley are through beautiful green spaces. Independent shops and bars, pubs and restaurants create a real community atmosphere.

Brockley was nominated because it's a great example to other London neighbourhoods of how to encourage residents to walk more. It achieves this through a series of innovative conservation projects, a well-integrated walking network and variety of green spaces. The vibrant mix of street art and things to do also adds to its community-friendly feel.



Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

A 'New Town' developed in the 1960s, Milton Keynes boasts a well-connected walking network, allowing residents to travel between local housing, services and shops on foot. The central shopping area can be reached along the Grand Union Canal, which weaves its way from the top to the bottom of the town, and through Campbell Park, one of Europe's finest contemporary parks.

Milton Keynes was nominated for its variety of green spaces, green infrastructure and commitment to connecting housing with local amenities. A walker can get from one side of the town to the other without crossing a road (thanks to subways). The local authority has invested in pedestrian safety, street trees and LED lighting.



The Deepings, Lincolnshire

The Deepings – a series of small settlements in the south of Lincolnshire – boasts conservation areas, parks, river frontage and many historic buildings and a great selection of independent cafés, local pubs and restaurants. The Deepings is full of attractive features, old and new, both in the built and natural environment, in a blend of styles that give the whole neighbourhood a distinctive character that motivates residents and visitors to choose walking for access and recreation.

The Deepings was nominated because of council plans to adopt 'the Deepings Green Walk Standard', meaning that all new footpaths are 'safe, accessible, attractive, and rationally linked to existing routes,' as part of a neighbourhood plan.



VOTE NOW!

1. To read more about the shortlisted locations and to cast your vote for *Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood 2019*, visit ramblers.org.uk/vote by Sunday, 30 June.
2. You can also vote by completing and returning the voting slip included on the carrier sheet enclosed with this issue of *walk*.
3. Alternatively, scan this QR code using any smartphone QR scanner app.





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PHOTOGRAPHY: 4CORNERS



TEN PLACES WALKS OF ART

Retracing the footsteps of artists past and present,
we've identified 10 tempting trails that take in
works of art, or the locations that inspired them

WORDS CHRISTOPHER SOMERVILLE



I John Constable's paintings, Dedham Vale, Essex/Suffolk
ABOUT Dedham Vale was the setting for many of Constable's best-loved paintings, including *The Hay Wain*. Stand in front of Flatford Mill and admire the scene – the swirl of the river and the play of the trees against the sky, flanked by the brick chimney and red roofs of Willy Lott's Cottage.

WALK IT From Manningtree, follow the St Edmund Way (SEW) through Cattawade Marshes to Flatford Lock. Cross to Bridge Cottage, go through the car park and turn L up the road. In 100m, take the path that is parallel to road, then in ½ mile take a L down Fen Lane and in 300m cross the bridge. In 100m, turn R along the SEW to Dedham. Turn L onto the B1029 and in 150m, L again opposite Dedham Mill on path to road; L on path to River Stour; R along bank path, then back on the SEW to Manningtree (11.25km/7 miles).

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2f2kE2Y

2 The Long Man of Wilmington, East Sussex

ABOUT The Long Man of Wilmington, clutching two enormous staves, straddles a steep downland slope east of Alfriston. No one knows the age of this imposing 226ft tall figure outlined in the chalk of Wilmington Hill. Over the centuries, his martial helmet has disappeared, along with the features of the face that once stared out from beneath it.

WALK IT For a 13.5km/8½ mile route from Willows car park, head east via White Bridge, Plonk Barn and the South Downs Way (SDW) to the reservoir. Track below the Long Man, along Wealdway east, then south to St Andrew's Church, Jevington (refreshments available at the Eight Bells pub). Continue on the SDW west to Holt Brow, take the bridleway west to the road at Litlington. Go L past Litlington church and, just before Plough and Harrow pub, turn R along the Vanguard Way to Cuckmere River and R to Alfriston.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2UkDgz7



3 Carry Akroyd's print, Dunwich Beach, Suffolk

ABOUT The spirit of this beautiful, hauntingly wild walk along the Suffolk coast is perfectly captured in Carry Akroyd's wonderful serigraph *Towards Southwold*. Keep a lookout for redshanks and avocets, swifts and herring gulls, marsh pools and creeks, Southwold's hump of houses beyond, and yellow-horned poppies fringing the pebble-spattered beach.

WALK IT From Dunwich car park, loop south along the cliff path, through the monastery site to the road beside Dunwich Museum. Go L, then fork R at Blythburgh church. In 150m, turn R past Bridge Farm, before heading north along the Suffolk Coast Path for 2¾ miles via Sandymount Covert, past a wind pump ruin and boardwalk to the footbridge and shingle bank. Turn R to Dunwich to complete the 9km/5⅔-mile circuit.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2OKduiy





4 Medieval art, Church of St Issui, Partrishow, Powys

ABOUT The church lies in a tangle of narrow lanes. The carver who fashioned the dragons spewing grapevines along the rood loft in around 1500 was a master of his tools. Far cruder is the mural of a skeleton wielding an hourglass, spade and scythe a grim *memento mori* ('remember you will die') for the illiterate Welsh peasants of the Middle Ages.

WALK IT From A465 at Llanvihangel Crucorney, L ('Llanthony') to Stanton. Car park near the Queen's Head pub. From here, go west up minor road, then L towards Ferm Newydd and then north via Ty Coch to cross Grwyne Fawr river and Llanthony road. Climb the track to Partrishow church. Return to cross road and river; steeply uphill; cross track at top, onto next track; R for 1½ miles back to Stanton to complete this 11.25km/7-mile route.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2FitCwS



5 Ramblers Window, Walesby, Lincolnshire Wolds

ABOUT All Saints at Walesby, the 'Ramblers Church', became the focus of walkers' expeditions when it stood in romantic ruins. Restored in the 1930s, there is a beautiful stained-glass window from 1951, depicting Christ beckoning across a cornfield to a trio of young ramblers.

WALK IT For a 16km/10-mile ramble, start in Tealby and follow the Viking Way (VW) north-west. In the second field, turn L onto Catskin Lane and follow the path to Walesby. Continue on the VW along Moor Road, turn R towards Mill House Farm and then Claxby House Farm. From Normanby Rise, take the path to Normanby-le-Wold church before heading south on VW through three fields. Loop L via Otby House to Walesby and take the VW via the Ramblers Church and then back to Tealby.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2OFdoZk





6 Antony Gormley's *Another Place*, Crosby, Merseyside

ABOUT On Crosby beach 100 men, naked as jaybirds, stand to attention and stare out to sea. This is *Another Place*, sculptor Antony Gormley's remarkable installation. Rusting and corroding at the whim of saltwater and scouring sand, adorned according to locals' fancy – a painted bikini here, a swimming hat there – each of

these iron casts of the artist's body now possesses its own subtly developing individuality.

WALK IT From Crosby's Waterloo rail station, it's a short walk along South Road to the beach and turn R/north along the coast until the figures come into view. Continue walking north along the Sefton Coast and catch return trains from Ainsdale, Formby or Hightown stations.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2z1blYd



8 Poetry Path, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria

ABOUT Just outside Kirkby Stephen lies the Poetry Path, a celebration in sculpture and verse of a hill farmer's yearly round. Its hand-carved verses and sculptures are the work of local poet Meg Peacocke and lettering artist Pip Hall. Rocks, stones and boulders carry Meg's pungent lines and Pip's carved interpretations – April lambs, July haymaking, the October sheep sales – ending with December's haiku carved on three rock slabs beside the River Eden: 'There sails the heron/Drawing behind him a long/Wake of solitude.'

WALK IT Pick up a leaflet guide from Upper Eden Visitor Centre in Market Square, Kirkby Stephen and follow the well-laid-out two-mile route.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/1GxxJ78

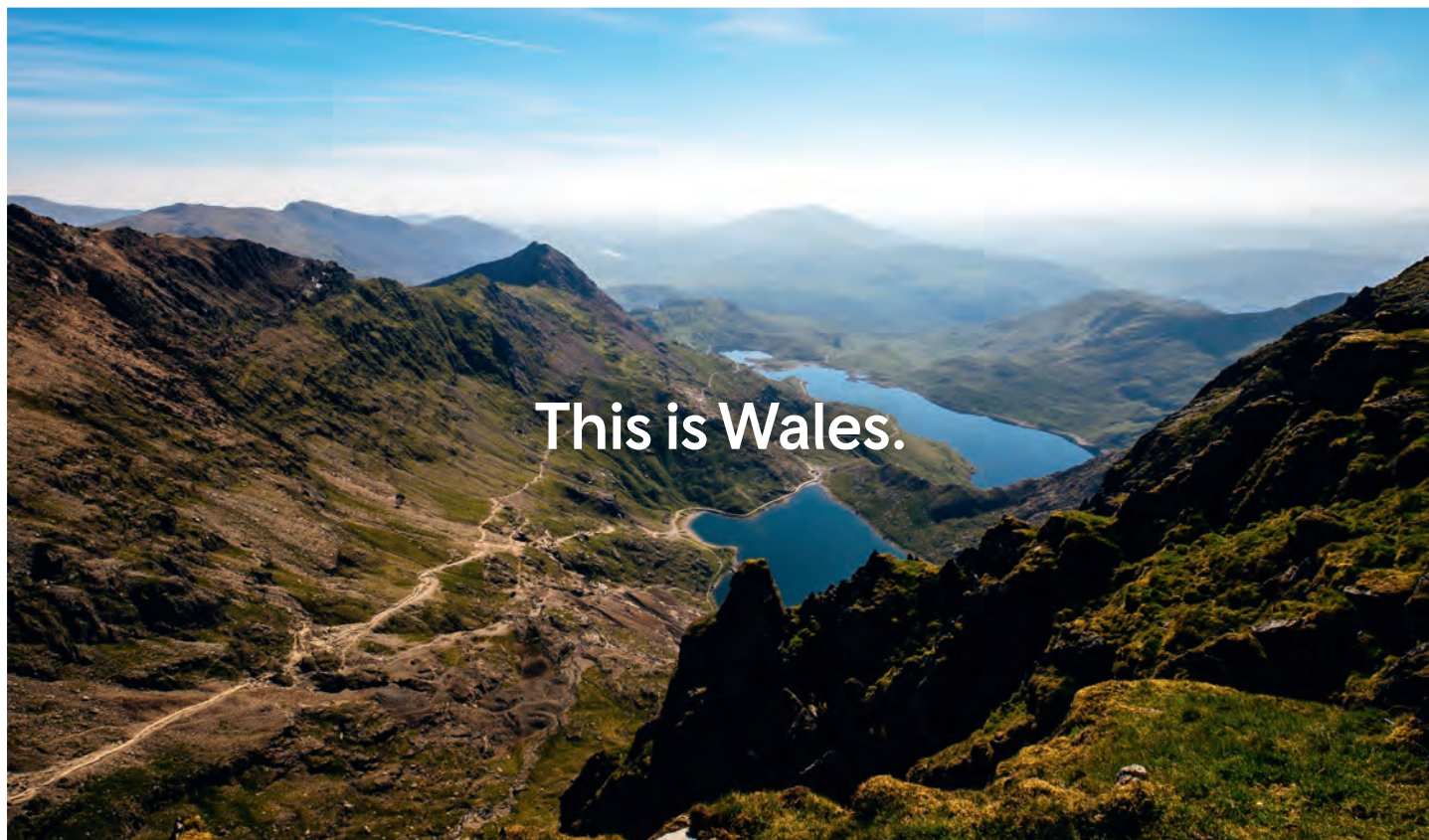
7 Andy Goldsworthy's *Clougha Pike Chambers*, Forest of Bowland, Lancashire

ABOUT On the heights of Clougha, three stone monoliths stand in a sea of stony litter – *Clougha Pike Chambers*, a trio of sentry boxes with beautiful elliptical openings, installed by artist Andy Goldsworthy.

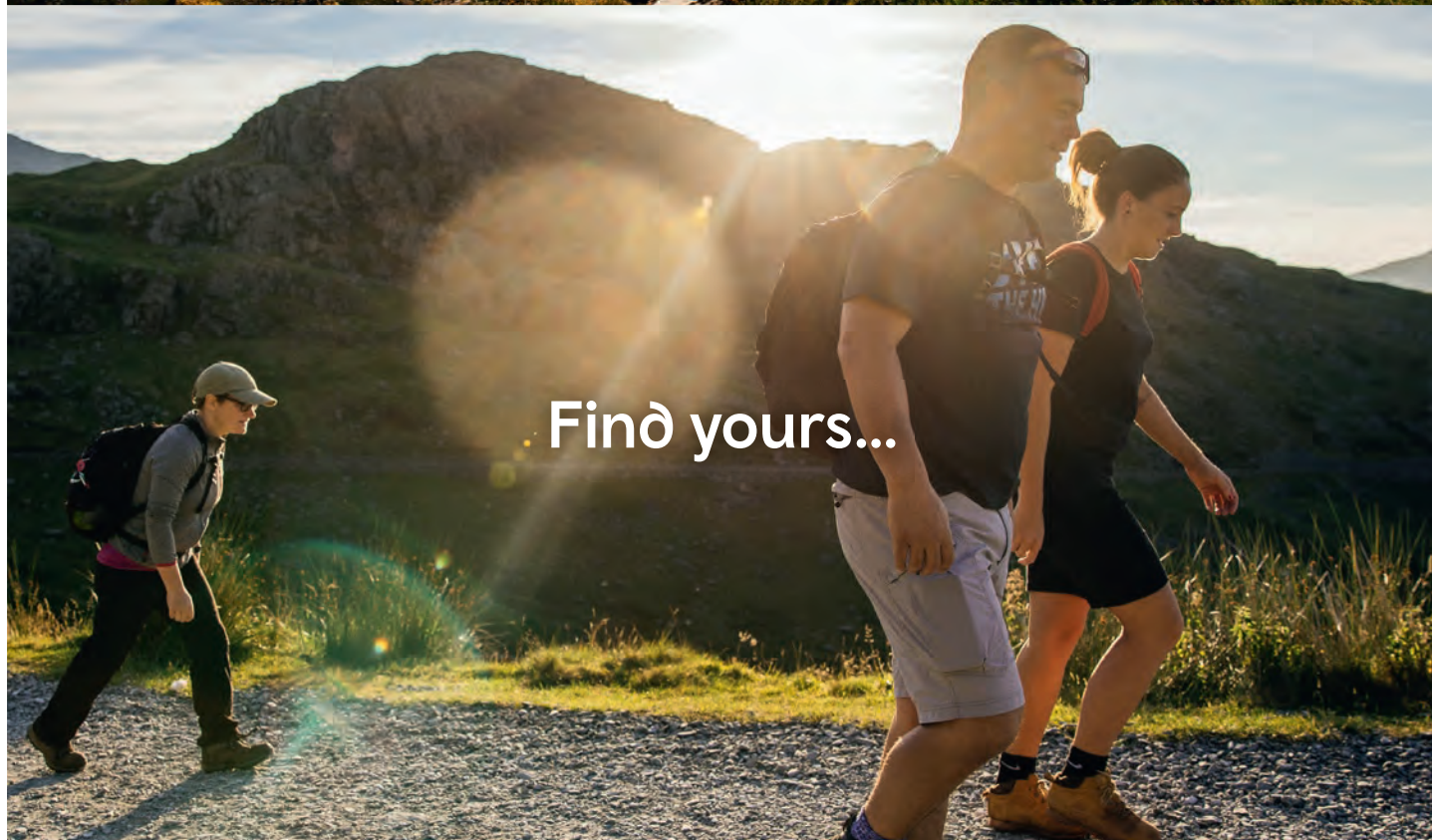
WALK IT From Little Cragg car park, Little Dale Road, head R along the road, then R over ladder stile by Cragg Farm to begin this 9km/5½-mile circular walk. Just past Skelbow Barn, turn R uphill beside Sweet Beck, go through the gate and, in 150m, L over stile and then R. After 100m, beside gate, turn L up the track aiming for the tree. Head south-east and south up Black Fell for ¼ miles to 4x4 track and turn L to the installation. Return along the track for 1¾ miles, descending to Cragg Wood wall, then take the path R/east for ½ mile to Skelbow Barn and car park.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/1NUgX5e





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READER
PANEL

'We organise walks on the Greensand Way in the Surrey Hills AONB, which takes in a number of sculptures,

works of art and a few designed benches. There is a wooden shelter at the top of Winterfold Hill, which has messages and names of local people carved into it. It's perfect for a break and to admire the views of the countryside.'

Holly Matthews,
Surrey Young Walkers



9 Sculpture Trail, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

ABOUT The Forest of Dean

Sculpture Trail was a pioneering project when it opened in 1986. Some of the initial works have been absorbed organically by the forest or have been decommissioned for safety reasons, but many remain, with more planned. Strung out along a winding path, they include charred boats in an old

coal mine drain and *Cathedral* – a large stained-glass window suspended between the pine trees.

WALK IT From Beechenhurst Lodge, follow the waymarks around the 7.25km/4½-mile Sculpture Trail. There are also two shortcuts (one just over 2 miles long, the other 3 miles), which are waymarked.

FIND OUT MORE
forestofdean-sculpture.org.uk

10 'The Mannie', Golspie, Sutherland

ABOUT

The shore walk from Brora to Golspie is beautiful, but it ends in controversial surroundings. Towering over Golspie at the summit of Ben Bhraggie (and accessible by a path from the village) is 'The Mannie'. This massive statue, created by Sir Francis Chantrey in 1837, is of the 1st Duke of Sutherland, most notorious of the Highland landlords who evicted their tenants in favour of more profitable sheep. Attempts are regularly made by activists to destroy the 100ft sculpture.

WALK IT From Brora rail station, head L along the A9 and take the second L down Harbour Road. Follow 'Back Shore' and turn R along the shore path for 4½ miles, detouring inland along Dunrobin Castle's woodland paths to regain the shore by Tower Lodge. Turn R along the shore path to Golspie rail station to complete this 13km/8-mile route.

FIND OUT MORE bit.ly/2UciFNN



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, CARRY AKROYD, ROBERT HARDING

Alice Roberts

The academic, writer and broadcaster on a strong incentive to keep walking, and how the loss of biodiversity could be halted

WORDS REBECCA SWIRSKY

What kind of impact did making your BBC documentary series *Wild Swimming* have on you?

I've always enjoyed camping and surfing and sea swimming, but I absolutely loved the immersive nature of river and lake swimming. It's just a different perspective, very calm and meditative. You're at the level of the water, so you notice a lot more insect life. And to see a kingfisher skimming the surface is magical. I was pregnant while making that documentary, and I swam in the Dart with Alison Hastie, partner of the late Roger Deakin [author of the seminal wild swimming guide, *Waterlog: A Swimmer's Journey Through Britain*]. Later, I returned to swim with my young family. So, in a sense, I swam full circle – which was lovely.

You collaborated with the Science Museum to design the perfect body for your needs. What would the ultimate modification be for a Rambler?

Oh, that was a great programme to work on. The premise of it was that the human body isn't a perfect creation. A geometric scan was made of my own body, onto which I merged my wish list of 'modifications' with the skills of an anatomical artist. It was a flight of fancy, but the driving force was that our genes don't really care for perfection. Rather, they care for what's 'good enough' to pass on to the next generation. I ended up looking to animals for inspiration. I imagined that humans had evolved from marsupial, rather than placental, mammals. Hence the end result of a pouch in my belly. We're already built pretty well for walking.

We considered placing pumps in the legs to alleviate deep vein thrombosis and help blood flow. But if you're an active walker, then your leg muscles are already doing a really great job of pumping blood up the leg veins towards your heart – in a way, acting as a heart. So I believe that's a strong incentive to keep walking!

Humans co-existed with the plants and animals they foraged or managed. Where's the balance today between colonisation and conservation?

This is a huge question. It's one I examined in my most recent book, *Tamed*, which explores species and domestication. Shockingly, we are farming every available piece of land – 40% of the Earth's surface. So the massive problem facing us is how



📍 Clockwise from top: Wheal Coates, a former tin mine, on the South West Coast Path; Alice wild swimming; the Somerset Levels, with Glastonbury Tor in the distance



we balance our demand for resources against mitigating climate change. Also key on the at-risk register is biodiversity. It is unbelievably high, yet is seen as less crucial to our future than financial crashes or terrorism. I truly don't believe that as a society we have properly grasped [the impact of biodiversity loss]. Over the last 40 years, we have lost a catastrophic amount of insect life. And if we lose them all, we will not survive. So it's essential that we focus on wildlife-friendly farming in Britain.

Where do you go for a peaceful walk to enjoy nature?

Before we had children, my husband and I really enjoyed walking parts of the South West Coast Path. Dipping in and out of Cornish towns, walking along the path

with little fulmar seabirds like spitfires all around us, was wonderful. Once, when we had stopped for a cup of tea, using a little gas burner and kettle, my husband remarked how close he felt to nature. At that moment a small bird flew by and pooped on his leg. Nature was indeed very close...

Can sharing a love of walking and nature bring people together?

Yes, indeed. I am a huge fan of walking. It's a wonderful thing to do. I love going for walks with friends and colleagues. I recently went for a long walk in the woods with a friend to help her prepare for her viva [verbal university exam]. I'm extremely lucky to work at Birmingham University, a campus with huge amounts of green space. Radically, we've even knocked

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE

> COUNTRY WALK?

I love the Mendips, which are local to me. When the mist is lying low, the landscape feels as if it's slipping back to the Bronze Age. I find it very beautiful.

> CITY WALK?

The circular walk around the docks at Bristol, as I enjoy being near water. If I'm in London, I try to walk, although I get frustrated about residents-only green gardens. No one should be able to lock green spaces away.

> VIEW?

Looking out over the Somerset Levels, with the Quantocks, Glastonbury Tor, Brent Knoll and Brean Down. A wonderful combination of mysticism and ancient heritage.

> KIT?

Meindl boots.

> POST-WALK TIPPLE?

Tea. Or a nice sloe gin.



How and why should we ensure that children have access to nature?

I'm a great fan of the Forest School movement. Anything you can do in a classroom, you can pretty much do outside. Engaging in biology is really exciting, and it's just so great for you – rural schools have an advantage in that way. City schools have a more difficult time, so it's really important that they make use of green space and go on trips, too.

What is your most vivid memory as a child of being in nature?

On camping trips in Cornwall and Dorset, I would go for long walks with my dad. I was probably about five or six years old. I really enjoyed the experience of walking across fields and along little country lanes, the two of us exploring together.

Alice is on tour in September, sharing insights and anecdotes from 20 years of exploring Britain's past. alice-roberts.co.uk

Going the extra mile

The Ramblers wouldn't exist without the thousands of volunteers who generously give their time each week. Our National Volunteer of the Year Awards honour those who have made an exceptional contribution

WORDS ELYSSA CAMPBELL-BARR
ILLUSTRATIONS HOLLY MAGUIRE



With Volunteers' Week taking place from 1 to 7 June, charities nationwide are celebrating and publicising the wonderful work of their volunteers. And the Ramblers has more to celebrate than most. Across England, Wales and Scotland, an estimated 25,000 volunteers play a part each week in keeping the Ramblers running – or, rather, walking. Leading walks, maintaining footpaths, organising groups, delivering training, producing newsletters, fundraising, campaigning, giving evidence in legal disputes, running social media accounts... There are countless ways in which their expertise and enthusiasm get Britain out on foot and protect the places we love to walk.

Throughout the year, we encourage members to put forward nominations for our volunteer certificates and commendations. Certificates go to volunteers who use their time and skills to make a difference, while commendations recognise outstanding contributions to supporting walkers and walking. Every Ramblers volunteer nominated for a

commendation is put forward for our National Volunteer of the Year Awards. And every October, chair Kate Ashbrook has the enjoyable task of reviewing all commendations from the previous 12 months, and the difficult one of drawing up a shortlist of finalists in three key areas: inspiring walkers, innovation and protecting and expanding where we walk. A public vote on the Ramblers' website decides the winners.

When you speak to our 2019 recipients, what comes across most strongly is their passion for walking and their keenness to share this with others. A close second is their humility. Despite their exceptional achievements, the volunteers don't see themselves as special.

'In all honesty, I have never really seen leading walks for the Ramblers as volunteering. I am just out doing something that I love and meeting great people in the process,' insists Morna McLean, a winner in the innovation category.

'It never occurred to me that I might be nominated for an award,' says Graham Allan, another innovation winner. 'I'm completely gobsmacked!'



MAGGIE HEMS Merseyside and West Cheshire Ramblers

'Friendships come along when you bring people together on walks. You're breaking down social barriers as well as helping people enjoy the countryside,' explains Maggie Hems, a walk leader for Liverpool Ramblers for almost 20 years.

As a teacher, Maggie guided teenagers through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award,



INSPIRING WALKERS

This award recognises inspirational volunteers who have encouraged, supported and inspired others to get out and get active.



and she draws on this valuable experience in her volunteering. 'I did a mountain leadership course, so my navigation is quite good,' she says. 'I like helping people learn how to navigate and read a map, and inspiring them to enjoy the countryside on their own.'

As well as being a walk leader and trainer, Maggie has been secretary of Liverpool Ramblers and now chairs Merseyside and West Cheshire Area, frequently representing local members at the Ramblers' General Council. She values the respect and gratitude these busy roles bring her, saying that it's very different from being a teacher.

For all her accomplishments, Maggie says her proudest moments are simply when someone says they've liked one of her walks. 'It's a real achievement to get people to enjoy a walk together, safely, and at the end to say they've enjoyed it and they'll come again.'



NORTH SOMERSET Ramblers Walking for Health

Founded in 2007, the North Somerset Walking for Health scheme now has 120 trained volunteers leading around 300 short, sociable walks every year.

'Despite public sector cutbacks, we've always maintained our preventive agenda when it comes to public health and have continued to help people keep active

to support their wellbeing,' explains co-ordinator Kira Thorpe.

Why has the scheme been so successful? 'It's the commitment of our volunteers,' Kira replies. 'We have more than 100 supporting us, week in, week out.'

Among them is Marion Davies, an experienced walk leader with Woodspring Ramblers. She attended North Somerset's first training course for health walk leaders and has led health walks in the Yatton area ever since, alongside three other volunteers.

'What motivates us is the love of walking and sharing it,' she says. 'People join our walks for all sorts of different reasons. Perhaps they don't get out much, or live on their own, or have health issues or family problems. For all of them, walking is a lovely escape.'

'For all four of us it's a privilege to be leading the walks. We enjoy the company we can give people and they can give us. It's a great scheme, and a joy to be part of it.' >



INNOVATION

This award recognises volunteers who have made changes or tried new approaches to reach more people or achieve Ramblers' aims more effectively.



MORNA McLEAN Tayside Young Walkers

When Morna McLean moved to Dundee for work in 2014, she thought joining a walking group would be a good way to meet people. A few months later (with a little help from Ramblers Scotland), the keen Munro-bagger was a founder member and the first secretary of Tayside Young Walkers (TYW).

In Morna's award nomination, the same words crop up again and again: 'friendly', 'welcoming', 'hard-working', 'much-loved'. 'We've become an extended family thanks to Morna,' says one group organiser. Others appreciate her 'sense of enthusiasm and fun' and say her inclusive approach has helped build a diverse group of walkers.

'I am proud of how far the TYW club has come in such a short time,' Morna says. From a first ramble with just four participants, the group now offers a busy programme of walks, social events and weekends away. Its online Meetup page has almost 700 members.

An annual walking weekend in Glencoe, held with Aberdeen Young Walkers (AYW), has become a popular fixture. 'I am particularly proud of leading 30 members of the TYW and AYW over the Buachaille Etive Mor – a double Munro,' says Morna.



GRAHAM ALLAN Penrith Ramblers

'Ten years ago this group was rather moribund, with some fractious individuals arguing,' recalls Graham Allan. 'So the task was to bring people together, encourage them to do things enthusiastically and help move things forward.'

During his decade as chair of Penrith Ramblers, he addressed all these challenges and more, overseeing steady growth in membership, volunteers and activities. 'There's been an increase in

the number of members doing more than simply walking – moving into leading, understanding map and compass work, developing social activities and trips, securing better finance and doing more footpath work, which has all come on apace,' he says proudly.

Graham also introduced new types of walks, from easy-paced strolls for graduates of the Walking for Health scheme to challenging long-distance routes broken up over several summer weekends to make them more accessible – with certificates of achievement for those who complete every section.

Asked what he enjoys most about being a Ramblers volunteer, Graham replies: 'Being part of a group of enthusiastic individuals who get pleasure and enjoy life through a very simple and forward-looking pastime. Also encouraging others, who might sometimes be leading difficult and stressful lives, to get out and relax among friends.'



PETER SEED Sussex Ramblers

Many footpath secretaries look after one or two parishes, but Peter Seed oversees four – in two different local authorities on the Sussex coast. An active Ramblers volunteer for 16 years, his award-nomination describes him as ‘modest and self-effacing’ but also ‘a formidable adversary’, with an impressive track record of campaigning against path closures and badgering councils and corporations about illegal obstructions and unwarranted diversions.

So what’s Peter’s biggest success? ‘The reopening of a stretch of footpath [Telscombe 12A] set to become part of the England Coast Path, after decades of closure, when the public was diverted onto a main road,’ he says. ‘This was achieved with the help of many organisations and individuals.’

With his in-depth knowledge of rights of way legislation, Peter has also become a key member of Don’t Lose Your Way Sussex. As the 2026 deadline for recording historic paths approaches, he’s investigating lost rights of way locally and lodging claims to safeguard them for the future.

‘Peter’s greatest asset is his tenacity,’ say his fellow Sussex Ramblers. ‘He personifies the finest in Ramblers’ footpath volunteers.’

BRIAN MICKLAM West Wiltshire Ramblers

As footpath secretary of West Wiltshire Ramblers from 2011 to 2018, Brian Micklam ‘worked enthusiastically, tenaciously and creatively to protect and improve our rights of way,’ explains his award nomination.

As well as being a member of the weekly footpaths working party and walk leader, Brian is a dogged campaigner. Successes include persuading the local council to spend £25,000 on saving a footpath at risk of being washed into the River Avon, and a three-year campaign to get Wessex Water to provide a track to a safe crossing place across

the busy Westbury-Warminster road. ‘As a footpath secretary it is quite impossible to make an impact on rights of way maintenance and improvement on your own. You need support,’ he says. He secures this not just from fellow group members, but from councillors, rights of way officers, organisations, local press, the Ramblers’ legal team.... Anyone who can help.

‘Most people think footpaths are a good thing and want to protect them. However, there’s also the thinking that it’s somebody else’s job. That needs to be changed,’ he says.



PROTECTING WHERE WE WALK

This award recognises volunteers who go above and beyond to make sure the places we love to walk are protected, expanded and maintained for future generations.



JAMES WILLIAMS Lampeter Ramblers

James Williams joined the Ramblers 16 years ago, very quickly getting involved in volunteering for his local Lampeter group.

‘When I retired, I had a great interest in helping the Ramblers with their footpath volunteering team – building bridges, putting in new gates and boardwalks. It’s brilliant and I enjoy doing it.’

But his volunteering efforts don’t end there – he has been Chair of Lampeter Ramblers for the past eight years, has been involved with surveying and trail-marking the Cambrian Way and has helped coordinate two Big Welsh Walks.

‘James is more than happy to help out on a Ramblers Cymru project,’ explains his nomination. ‘Without his help coordinating the council staff for the Big Welsh Walks, we would not have had such well-waymarked routes for walkers to follow. James also avidly walked, surveyed and trail-marked the Cambrian Way across all of Ceredigion.’

What makes it all worthwhile? ‘It’s taking people for a walk over ground that I’ve contributed to opening up and improving. It’s satisfying, seeing the faces of people enjoying the walk and knowing I was part of the team that made it possible.’

Step up and volunteer

Apart from their love of walking, the thing all our winners share is their ‘can-do’ attitude and willingness to give things a go. The Ramblers has so many volunteering opportunities – from leading walks and maintaining footpaths to creating publicity material and campaigning for walkers’ rights. If you want to put your skills to good use – or learn new ones – find out more at ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer-with-us





DISCOVER

Oswestry & Welsh Borders

Insider knowledge from local experts

WORDS ANDREW McCLOY & PETER DANBY

The historic Shropshire market town of Oswestry lies in the Welsh Borders, a walking environment as varied as you will find anywhere in the country. Offa's Dyke brings many visitors to the area, but the rolling hills extend north, west and south, spilling down onto the Shropshire Plain. Wooded river valleys provide enticing lower-level walks, while historic forts, castles and canals deliver plenty of tempting diversions along the way



Great viewpoint

Enjoy the walk up to Rodney's Pillar (above) in the Breidden Hills and take in its two companions, Moel-y-Golfa and Middletown Hill.

Favourite place to walk

Head west on paths from Trefonen along Offa's Dyke to the Moelydd, a hill with commanding 360-degree views that take in the Wrekin, Berwyn Mountains, and even Cader Idris on a clear day.

Best walkers' café

Caffi Wylfa near Chirk Aqueduct is excellent for coffee and cake or lunch. It's run as a social enterprise and features the work of local artists on its walls.

Awesome adventure

Younger and more energetic visitors may like to go mountain biking at the Revolution Bike Park at Llangynog in the Tanat Valley, where there's a variety of challenging trails set among undulating woodland. Bikes can be hired for the day.



Wildlife highlights

Pied flycatchers (above) nest in the woods of Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Craig Sychtyn Nature Reserve, south-west of Oswestry. Look out for the nettle-leaved bellflower, as well – a local speciality that is also known as the blue foxglove.

Best walkers' pubs

As a group, we enjoy the Keys, a family-run pub at St Martin's, or further afield, the Chainbridge Hotel near Llangollen. Lunch at the Queens Head near West Felton is also recommended.

Best museum and gallery

Oswestry Town Museum in the Guildhall gives a great insight into local history. The Willow Gallery features art exhibitions and work by local craftspeople (as well as a friendly café).



Seasonal sights

The azaleas and rhododendrons at Chirk Castle are a delight in early summer, as are the gardens at Erddig (above), near Wrexham, while the views from Powis Castle are spectacular at any time of year.



Historic sites

Old Oswestry Iron Age hillfort (above) is a must-see. Llansilin, west of Oswestry, has the atmospheric remains of Glyndŵr's Castle at Sycharth.

Festival time

The annual Oswestry Food and Drink Festival will be held on 13-14 July, while the Oswestry Balloon Carnival takes place on 24-25 August, with colourful hot-air balloons launched from Cae Glas Park. The Oswestry Show (3 August) reflects the area's agricultural heritage. Visit oswestry-welshborders.org.uk

LOCAL VIEW

Peter Danby

Oswestry Ramblers



'I came to Oswestry 45 years ago, from Nottingham, with my wife and two young children,

and although we walked regularly, it wasn't until retiring as a journalist in 2011 that I joined Oswestry Ramblers. Immediately, I found like-minded people, with whom I could really explore this beautiful area and discover all its walking opportunities. And, given my background, I was welcomed onto the group committee as press officer, with my wife becoming walks coordinator.' ramblers.org.uk/oswestry

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY, ISTOCK, SHROPSHIRE PHOTOS



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

MY DEUTER IS MY

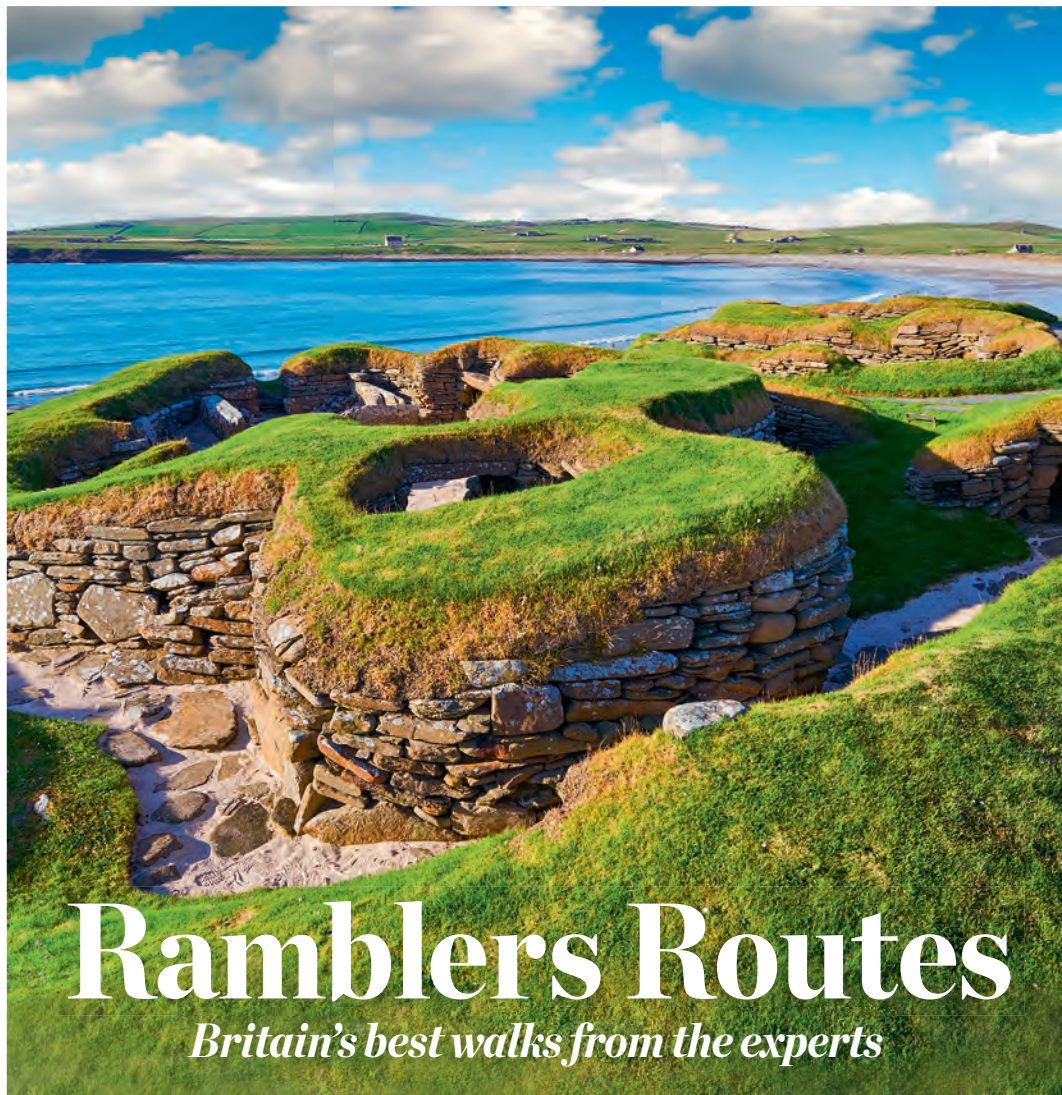
Freedom

"I cherish mountain adventures with my parents and brothers, my wife and our kids just as much as ventures on mountains like Fitz Roy. Deuter to me is a brand with history - and future!"

MICHI BÜCKERS WITH THE NEW TRAIL 30. Michi is a certified mountain and skiing guide and Deuter brand ambassador. He started his career as a road bike racer. Today his list of outdoor sports is long and he loves to combine all of them.



www.deutergb.co.uk



Ramblers Routes

Britain's best walks from the experts

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 no longer than three months before publication.

Directions

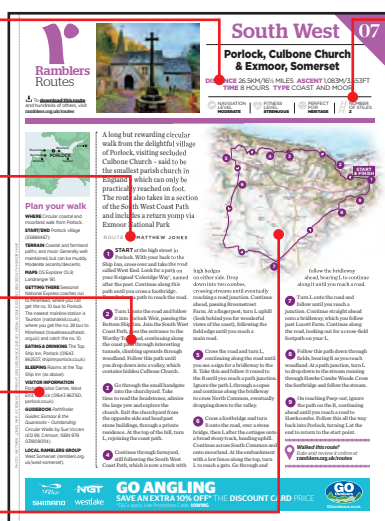
Left and right are abbreviated to L and R.

Plan your walk

Information on public transport, maps and guidebooks, accommodation and eating and drinking options.

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.

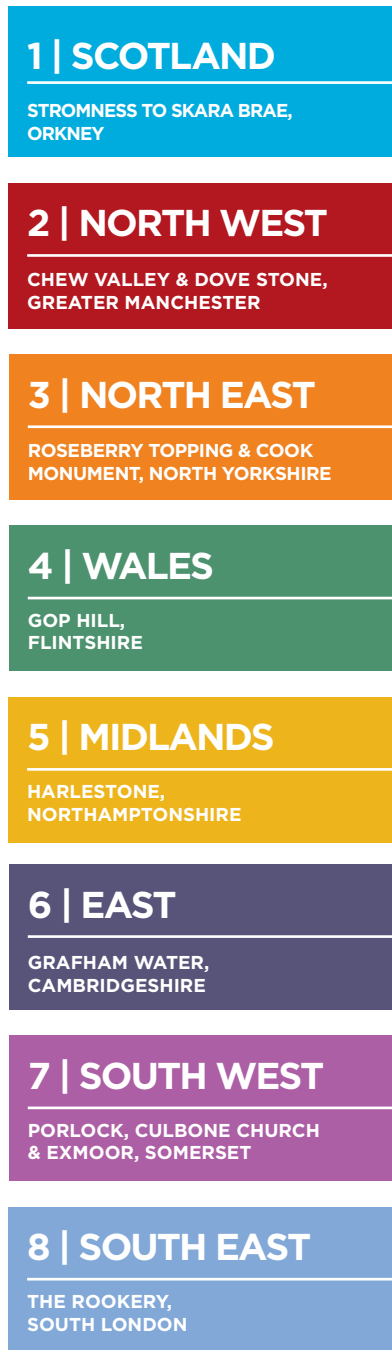


Grades

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 some rough terrain and sustained ascents and descents, and need a reasonable level of fitness. Strenuous routes are physically demanding with steep climbs.



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Stromness to Skara Brae, Orkney

DISTANCE 18KM/11 MILES **ASCENT** 284M/931FT
TIME 6 HOURS **TYPE** COAST

NAVIGATION
LEVEL
MODERATE

FITNESS
LEVEL
MODERATE

PERFECT
FOR
ARCHAEOLOGY

NUMBER
OF STILES
10-15



Plan your walk

WHERE Linear walk on West Mainland, Orkney (the Mainland is Orkney's largest island).

START/END Victoria Street, Stromness (HY25396)/Skara Brae (HY235188).

TERRAIN Coastal paths, open ground, some walking near high cliffs, some quiet roads.

MAPS OS Explorer 463; Landranger 6.

GETTING THERE For bus services, visit orkney.gov.uk/transport. Car parking in Stromness (charge) and at Skara Brae (free).

EATING & DRINKING Ferry Inn, Stromness (01856 850280; ferryinn.com). Café at Skara Brae Visitor Centre (tinyurl.com/yae8hg7j). No facilities along the route.

SLEEPING Burnside Farm B&B, Stromness (01856 850723; burnside-farm.com). Point of Ness Campsite (01856 850907; tinyurl.com/guxdpbk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Kirkwall VisitScotland Information Centre, The Travel Centre, West Castle Street (01856 872856; orkney.com).

GUIDEBOOK *Orkney* by Mark Rowe (£15.99, Bradt Travel Guides, ISBN 978 1784776305).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Inverness (01463 236204, ramblers.org.uk/inverness).

This superb walk on Orkney runs from the picturesquely rugged port town of Stromness to the remarkably well-preserved Neolithic village of Skara Brae. Lengthy but rarely strenuous, it takes in breathtaking coastal views and dramatic seawalls with the likelihood of seeing seabirds and seals

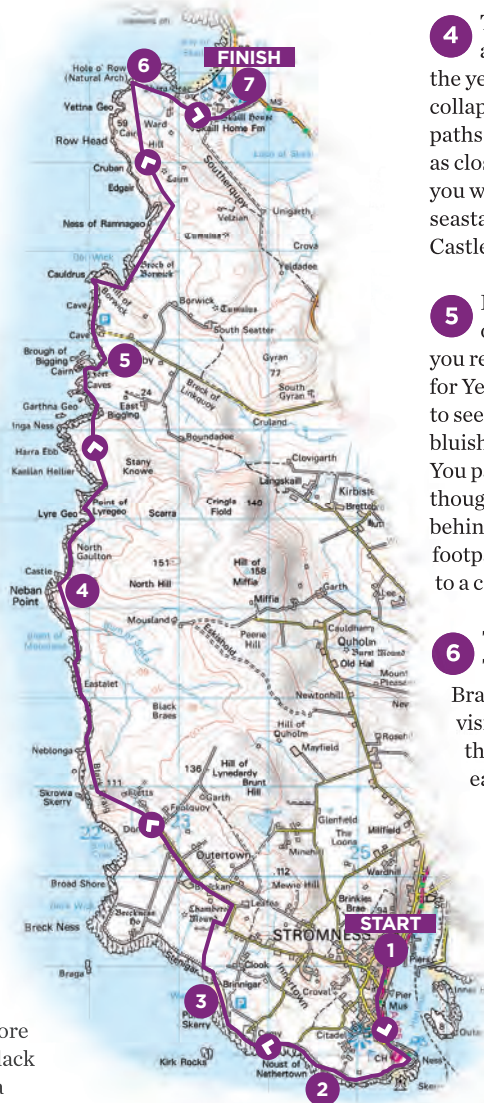
ROUTE BY MARK ROWE

1 START Begin in Victoria Street, part of the cobbled thoroughfare that runs through the heart of Stromness. The street changes its name along the way and has many shops and cafés, quaysides and slipways to explore. After 1km, it merges into the coastal path, which curls around the Ness headland past a campsite before turning west.

2 Across the waters of the Scapa Flow are the dramatic high hills of the island of Hoy. As you walk along, look up to your right across the golf course and you will see the Ness Battery, which defended Scapa Flow against enemy attack in both world wars. The site can be visited, and inside you will find a beautiful mural painted by soldiers and depicting idyllic scenes of rural life.

3 The paved path reaches and passes Warebeth Cemetery, before winding its way above Warebeth Beach. Here, it meanders away from the shore and follows a quiet paved lane for around 1.5km, before ascending the flanks of the hill Black Craig, above high cliffs, to reach a huge chasm in the coast known as Whale Geo. The path crosses several small burns via small footbridges and threads through increasingly dramatic scenery to reach a point

high above the sea, opposite a stirring seawall known as the Castle of North Gaulton. This is around the halfway point of the walk.



4 The coastal drama increases as you head north, with the yellow-red sandstone cliffs collapsing into huge slabs. Several paths traverse this stretch – stay as close or as far from the cliffs as you wish. You pass another superb seawall, 35m high, known as the Castle of Yesnaby.

5 Passing just below the Brough of Bigging, a huge headland, you reach the rudimentary car park for Yesnaby. This is a good place to see short-eared owls and the bluish-purple Scottish primrose. You pass the Broch of Borwick, though beware of the sheer drop behind it. Open ground and footpaths then lead up Ward Hill to a cairn.

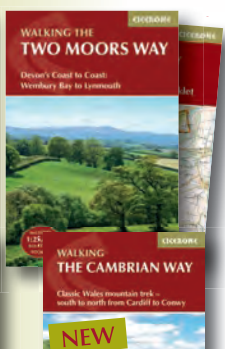
6 The views here are superb. The Neolithic village of Skara Brae (pictured above) is clearly visible below, by the shore of the vast Bay of Skail. Looking east, you can see much of West Mainland, from lochs to valleys and glacially rounded peaks. From the summit of Ward Hill, descend to the north-east.

7 Walk around the back of Skara Brae and 17th-century Skail House to reach the site.



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Chew Valley & Dove Stone, Greater Manchester

DISTANCE 13.4KM/8½ MILES **ASCENT** 529M/1,735FT
TIME 5 HOURS **TYPE** MOOR, CLIFF AND VALLEY

NAVIGATION
LEVEL
MODERATE

FITNESS
LEVEL
MODERATE

PERFECT
FOR
VIEWS

NUMBER
OF STILES
1



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk above Greenfield, near Oldham.

START/END Dove Stone Reservoir car park (SE013034).

TERRAIN Reservoir road, tracks and paths. Marshy sections and precipitous drops. Some simple scrambling. Not a wet-weather route.

MAPS OS Explorer OL1; Landranger 110.

GETTING THERE The nearest bus stop (routes 180, 350, 354) is at the Clarence pub, Greenfield, 1 mile from the start (Traveline: 0871 200 2233). By car, look for the Dove Stone sign off the A635 towards Holmfirth, east of the Clarence.

EATING & DRINKING The Clarence Pub, Greenfield (01457 820200, theclarencepub.com).

SLEEPING The Diggle Hotel, Diggle (01457 872741, digglehotel.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Visitor Information Centre, Saddleworth Museum, High Street, Uppermill (01457 874093, saddleworthmuseum.co.uk).

GUIDEBOOK *Walks for All Ages: Greater Manchester* by Neil Coates (£5.99, Bradwell Books, ISBN 978 1909914414).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Oldham (07594 432479, ramblers.org.uk/oldham).

This memorable circuit of cloughs, reservoirs, moors, crags and cliffs, where the South Pennines plateau descends into the Tame Valley, is home to peregrines and grouse, and has magnificent views. The approach is up the Chew Valley. The descent of Birchen Clough is moderately challenging and impassable after persistent heavy rain

ROUTE BY NEIL COATES

1 START Walk behind the sailing club and join the tarred road up Chew Brook Valley. About 200m before reaching Chew Reservoir dam is a small, reedy quarry on the L; immediately past this, turn L and double-back above the quarry. A path hugs the edge of the emerging cliff-line to reach the distinctive Dish Stone Rock, a weathered gritstone pedestal.

2 Beyond here, the widening, occasionally very boggy path skirts the sheer bluffs and cliffs high above Chew Brook. Darting in around Charnel Clough, the way then passes the distinctive Fox Stone, capped by a cairn above Great Dove Stone Rocks. Past here, head 'inland' around the deep head of Ashway Clough, crossing the beck on the level above low waterfalls. Return to the edge, which fails temporarily into steep, grassy slopes. In about 500m, look ahead and R for a tall stone cross breaking the skyline and rise to this (200m rough walking).

3 Face the isolated memorial's inscription commemorating James Platt MP, who died after being accidentally shot here in 1857, and head L on the path striking across the moorland over heather, peat and stony ground. Dropping slightly before veering R, the path comes to

rim the precipitous valley of Greenfield Brook (L), where a rake of sheer cliffs at Raven Stones includes the distinctive three-pronged Trinnacle. The main path sticks close to the edge and is boggy in short stretches. If the sheer drops alarm you, then use a higher, uneven, heathery path away from the edge. The cliffs culminate at the Hanging Stone, superglued to its cornice at the tumultuous corner of Birchen Clough.

4 Turn R on the well-defined path along the brink of narrow Birchen Clough. In 400m, this drops gently down to the beck. Cross and immediately turn downstream on the thin, steepening, very undulating path threading between boulders via ledges and rock steps. This involves some simple scrambling – exercise caution.

5 At the mouth of the clough, judiciously recross the brook above the pond and cross the concrete footbridge. Join the rough



track down the valley of Greenfield Brook below austere cliff buttresses. Pass Greenfield Reservoir (L) and trace the roadway through woodland, emerging beside Yeoman Hey Reservoir. At the dam, bear R up the tarred lane. In 50m, take the gate (L) onto the wide path below the woodland. This develops into a tarred path beside Dove Stone Reservoir, ending up at the dam. Cross the concrete bridge across the overflow and head to the car park.

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Roseberry Topping & Cook Monument, North Yorkshire

DISTANCE 8KM/5 MILES **ASCENT** 371M/1,217FT
TIME 3 HOURS **TYPE** HILL AND MOOR

NAVIGATION
LEVEL
EASY

FITNESS
LEVEL
MODERATE

PERFECT
FOR
VIEWS

NUMBER
OF STILES
1



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk from Gribdale Gate.

START/END Forestry Commission car park at Gribdale Gate (NZ592110).

TERRAIN Mostly footpaths and bridleways; some tracks across open access land. Can be muddy in wet weather. Moderate ascents and descents.

MAPS OS Explorer OL26; Landranger 93 and 94.

GETTING THERE No public transport to start (3.5km from Great Ayton rail station), but it is possible to begin from the station instead – turn R out of the station and pick up the route at point 3. Trains from Middlesbrough or Whitby (northernrailway.co.uk).

EATING & DRINKING The Royal Oak, Great Ayton (01642 722361, royaloakgreatayton.co.uk).

SLEEPING The Royal Oak (as above).

VISITOR INFORMATION Great Ayton Discovery Centre, 105b High Street (01642 723268, northyorks.gov.uk/great-ayton-discovery-centre).

GUIDEBOOK *The North York Moors* by Paddy Dillon (£12.95, Cicerone, ISBN 978 1852849511).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Northallerton (01845 523376, ramblers.org.uk/northallerton).

This invigorating circular walk visits a striking stone monument dedicated to explorer Captain James Cook and climbs Roseberry Topping, the iconic little hill locally known as the Yorkshire Matterhorn, which offers panoramic views across North Yorkshire. It also offers a taste of moorland walking, following part of the Cleveland Way

ROUTE BY MATTHEW JONES

1 START at Gribdale Gate, off Dikes Lane. Take the path signed 'Cleveland Way, Kildale 2½ miles', which heads up through the Forestry Commission plantation to reach Little Ayton Moor and Easby Moor. Pass a small memorial to the crew of an RAF Hudson aircraft that crashed here in 1940. Don't be alarmed by grouse exploding from the heather.

2 Walk to the stone obelisk – a monument to Captain Cook, the explorer and Royal Navy captain. Take the moorland path R, heading downhill and swinging R. Follow path past a rocky outcrop and through a gap in a low stone wall. Carry on until the path splits, then take the L fork along a waymarked path that heads downhill into Ayton Banks Wood. At the bottom of the slope, ignore a track crossing the path and continue ahead to reach another low wall. Follow this wall slightly L. Turn R onto a waymarked bridleway. Go through a gate with fine views of Roseberry Topping. The path becomes a tarmacked track leading to the village of Great Ayton.

3 Cross over Dikes Lane into Aireyholme Lane. Walk over a small bridge across a stream. Follow

the lane until you see Aireyholme Farm ahead, where Cook's family moved to in 1736. Before reaching the farm, take a signed footpath L between a field and a small copse. Join another footpath and head R. Note that the line of the path is not exactly as it appears on the OS map here.

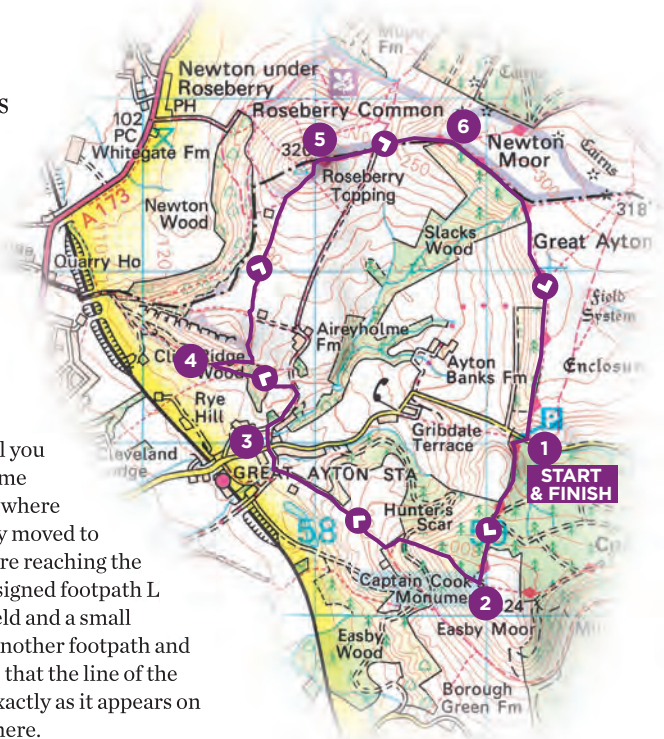
4 Turn sharp R uphill at Cliff Ridge Wood. Continue past an impressive spreading oak. Go through a kissing gate at the top of the hill and then turn L to cross a stile. There is a group of larch trees here, and archaeological digs in 2015 and 2016 suggest this may have been the site of the Cook family's cottage. Go R and through another kissing gate, with the unmistakable silhouette of Roseberry Topping directly ahead. Follow the field edge and go R through a gate. Follow the path to the summit, though you may want to detour slightly L to visit a distinctive squat stone shelter with open windows and a domed roof. This is a late 18th-century shooting box (pictured above) built for the local gentry, who visited this romantic spot for picnics or for shooting. The summit path is a stiff

but short climb, while there are expansive views from the top in every direction.

5 Take the path north-east to descend, picking up the Cleveland Way. Follow a zigzag path up the hill opposite, alongside a stone wall. Go through a gate, and as the path splits into three, take the R path.

6 You are now on the edge of Newton Moor and Great Ayton Moor. Continue along the Cleveland Way. Keep following a stone wall on your R, ignoring the moorland paths that head off L, and walk for 2km to return to the start point.

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Gop Hill, Flintshire

DISTANCE 11.5KM/7 MILES **ASCENT** 396M/1,299FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** HILLS AND COUNTRY



NAVIGATION
LEVEL
EASY



FITNESS
LEVEL
LEISURELY



PERFECT
FOR
VIEWS



NUMBER
OF STILES
20



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk from Trelawnyd, near Prestatyn.

START/END Car park, High Street, Trelawnyd (SJ091798).

TERRAIN Lanes, byways, field paths and tracks. Can be very muddy in places.

MAPS OS Explorer 265; Landranger 116.

GETTING THERE Limited P&O Lloyd service 19 between Rhyl and Flint (not weekends or bank holidays, Traveline: 0871 200 2233, traveline.info). Free parking at signed public car park on High Street, Trelawnyd.

EATING & DRINKING The Crown Inn, Trelawnyd (01745 571989). Eagle & Child Inn, Gwaenysgor (01745 856391, eagleandchild.com).

SLEEPING Red Lion Inn, Meliden (01745 852565, theredlionmeliden.co.uk). Plenty of B&Bs in Prestatyn.

VISITOR INFORMATION Rhyl Tourist Information Centre, West Parade (01745 344515, discoverdenbighshire.wales).

GUIDEBOOK *Walking in the Clwydian Range* by Carl Rogers (£7.99, Northern Eye Books, ISBN 978 1902512143).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Deeside (01244 537440, ramblers.org.uk/deeside).

Meander between villages hidden in the rippling coastal hills of north-east Wales, part of the Clwydian Range AONB. Discover a secluded valley once noisy with mills, a stretch of Offa's Dyke Path and some terrific views to Snowdonia and Liverpool Bay, ending with a visit to Wales's largest prehistoric cairn at Gop Hill

ROUTE BY NEIL COATES

1 START Drop down from the car park to the main road and turn R. In 200m, go L on Cwm Road. In 550m, go R on the bridleway before treatment works. At fork, in 250m, go L along the sunken track. Cross the flat stone-flag bridge (700m) and keep R on a continuing track within the woodland edge to Marian Mill Farm and the remains of a mill.

2 Turn R along the track to a fork beyond the trout hatchery. The ruin of Grove cornmill is 100m L; otherwise keep R up the lane. At sharp-R bend, head L over Offa's Dyke Path (ODP) stile. At main road, cross R to use ODP handgate. Rise over low ridge to lane beyond second pasture. Turn L, then R in 70m at metal handgate (ODP concessionary path). Follow track, then bottom field edge to waymarked ODP heading R up-field below cables, through four pastures to Bryniau hamlet.

3 Head L on lane; first R then immediately R along gated track (ODP). Passing R of houses, ODP weaves across Prestatyn Hillside through gorse thickets (follow ODP Prestatyn fingerposts diligently). Pass



above old quarry workings, with views ahead to Liverpool Bay and back towards Snowdonia. Pass steeply above the ruined cottage. In a further 475m, use the stile (R) signed 'Gwaenysgor' and walk the hill-foot path presently bending L, then R to reach the old walled well. Head into Gwaenysgor village.

4 Turn R to find Ffordd Teilia on L in 100m (Eagle & Child pub is 150m to R). Turn along this road out of the village. In 500m, the lane roughens; remain with it for another 650m to a cross-path 50m before woods. Use stile R (Clwydian Way - CW) and drift L to a wood-side path alongside two pastures. At the woodland corner, advance below cables to a scrubby corner. Ignore the stile here; instead turn up-field to use two close stiles (CW) L into pasture.

Head half-R (woods to R) to a mid-hedgerow stile, then stiles at far-L corner in trees. Descend two field edges to a lane.

5 Turn R, then L at junction in 400m. At sharp-L bend slip R (CW stile) on field-edge path up past woodland. At far side, turn R on woods-edge path to Gop Cairn, the second largest man-made mound in Britain (after Silbury Hill). Drop to kissing-gate and descend slightly-L to cross-path and waymarked post. Go L to stile into grounds; use avoiding path to access lane. At end turn R to village centre.

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Harlestone, Northamptonshire

DISTANCE 7.75KM/5 MILES **ASCENT** 77M/252FT
TIME 3 HOURS **TYPE** VILLAGES AND COUNTRY



NAVIGATION
LEVEL
EASY



FITNESS
LEVEL
LEISURELY



PERFECT
FOR
FAMILIES



NUMBER
OF STILES
NONE



Plan your walk

WHERE Figure-of-eight walk from Harlestone, north-west of Northampton.

START/END Upper Harlestone (SP693639).

TERRAIN Paths and tracks through fields and woods.

MAPS OS Explorer 223; Landranger 152.

GETTING THERE Nearest rail station is Northampton, from where an hourly Stagecoach bus (96) stops on the A428 near Lower Harlestone (not Sundays or bank holidays).

EATING & DRINKING The Fox and Hounds at Lower Harlestone (01604 821251, thefoxandhoundsharlestone.co.uk).

SLEEPING Broombank Barn, Upper Harlestone (via Airbnb). Drivers Retreat, Little Brington (self-catering apartment, 01604 771077, driversretreat.co.uk). The Red Lion Hotel, East Haddon (01604 770223, redlioneasthaddon.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Northampton Tourist Information Centre, Sessions House, County Hall, George Row (01604 367997, visitnorthamptonshire.co.uk).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Daventry (ramblers.org.uk/daventry).

This figure-of-eight walk explores two attractive villages near the famous Althorp Park. Upper Harlestone and Lower Harlestone nestle at either end of a valley with mature woodland, parkland and an old ornamental lake. The route passes one of the few remaining areas of heathland in Northamptonshire, and the undulating landscape inspired Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*



ROUTE BY **ROGER BUTLER**

1 START From the Village Green in Upper Harlestone, walk south down the lane and take the second footpath on L. Walk through two fields, cross the next lane and continue to gate. Follow the path between fences to reach the next lane, turn L and then immediately go through a large gate.

2 Take the grass track over the field to a gate into a wood and continue on path, past a stone lodge, to another gate. Join a broad ride through woodland to a clearing, with another lodge on R. Keep ahead towards field, with views over a number of old estate buildings. Veer R to pass through small gate, turn R on track and continue to road. Turn R for 350m.

3 Take bridleway (marked 'Midshires Way') on L after last house. Go through gate and continue downhill, initially with hedge on L, to gate into woodland, where plantations of oak, pine, birch and hornbeam are managed by the Althorp Estate. Continue to first junction, turn L on track to bend R after 300m. Turn L at large glade, then R on path at corner of field. Turn L at next junction and continue downhill past Harlestone Heath Nature Reserve. Go through railway underpass, cross footbridge and pass through tall poplar trees to next junction. Turn L and continue (with views to golf course) to edge of wood.

4 Turn L on narrow path, cross footbridge and walk through double arches under the railway embankment. Turn R, go through next gate on L and follow wide track

uphill and over fields for 1.2km. Go through gate to road and turn R.

5 Take path on L after 300m, next to a thatched property. Cross yard and join narrow path through valley with houses ahead. Pass through gate in wall and turn R at next gate, by cottages, to junction of lanes. Take narrow lane towards church, go through gate and keep ahead on path, with beech hedge on L. Continue for 400m, pass through small gate in hedge and veer L to lane with traditional village store.

6 Go R at end of lane, take path next to village hall and keep ahead for 400m to return to start.

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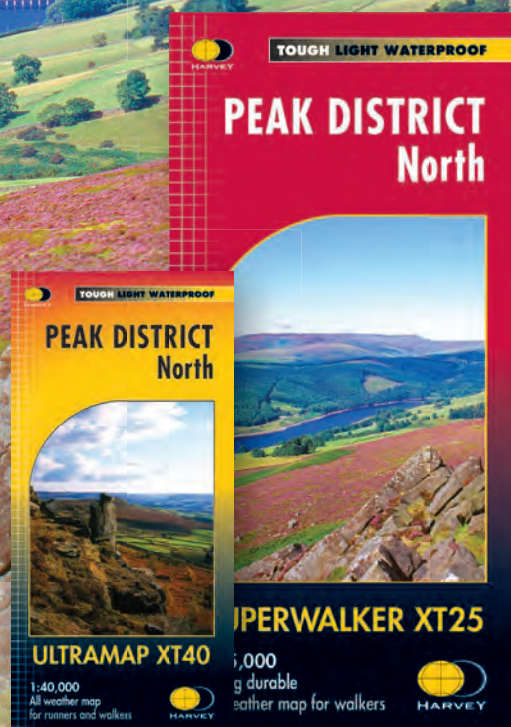
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Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire

DISTANCE 14.5KM/9 MILES **ASCENT** 35M/114FT
TIME 4 HOURS **TYPE** RESERVOIR

NAVIGATION
LEVEL
NOVICE

FITNESS
LEVEL
LEISURELY

PERFECT
FOR
BIRDWATCHING

NUMBER
OF STILES
NONE



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk around Grafham Water reservoir, Cambridgeshire.

START/END Grafham Water Visitor Centre (TL165681).

TERRAIN Mostly cycle track and roads.

MAPS OS Landranger 153; Explorer 225.

GETTING THERE 400 bus from Huntingdon to Grafham village.

EATING & DRINKING The Wheatsheaf, West Perry (01480 810253, wheatsheafperry.com). Grafham Water Visitor Centre and Café, (01480 812154, anglianwaterparks.co.uk/grafham-water).

SLEEPING Grafham Water Lodge (cabin/lodge accommodation; 07501 444525). Carters Yard B&B, High Street, Kimbolton (01480 861178, cartersyard.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION Grafham Water Visitor Centre (as above).

GUIDEBOOK *Walking Close to Grafham Water* by Clive Brown (£2.99, ISBN 978 1907669088).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP Huntingdonshire (01480 492672, ramblers.org.uk/huntingdonshire).

On the very edge of Cambridgeshire, this circular route around the Grafham Water takes you through nature reserves, wetlands and woods. There are plenty of opportunities to leave the path and take advantage of one of the many bird hides dotted around the perimeter of the reservoir

ROUTE BY
DAVE HAMILTON

1 START Walk along the right-hand side of the play park (facing the water), then take a R to join path to nature reserve. After 100m, when the cycle track heads north, take the L fork to join rough footpath through the trees to the waterside. Continue north to a tucked-away lakeside beach. Remain on the waterside track. It can be quiet here, especially early in the morning when the mist is still rising off the water. You'll soon see the aeration tower and Hill Farm ahead. A yellow marker arrow directs you R to the lane; follow this then continue to the farm.

2 At the back of the farm, a brown sign directs you to the nature reserve along the cycle path. This path takes you into the woods, where you join the Three Shires Way. Continue past the first entrance into Savages Spinney and take the second one heading R-north at the farm gate. Follow the footpath as it loops around the top of reservoir and over the river that feeds it.

3 Once over the bridge, the path starts to leave the water's edge

as you continue along the Three Shires Way. Remain on the path into Little Wood. Here, keep to the cycle path to the L, leaving the Three Shires Way. Watch out for speeding bikes! You may be lucky enough to see a charcoal burner in action in the woods. If you would like to have a go at this ancient technique of charcoal production, visit wildlifebcn.org and search for events. Keep to the cycle path all the way to the café.

4 Cross the lane at the back of the café and continue along the footpath running parallel with the edge of the reservoir. Stay on the path leading past the boatyard. Take a R to join Chichester Way to the Wheatsheaf pub.

5 Facing the pub take a L to head east along the pavement of the B661/East Perry. Go past the entrance to Duberly Close, then take next L to join path alongside hedgerows parallel with main road. The path wends its way between the reservoir and the road heading towards the dam.

6 Take a L to join the path heading over the dam. It follows the curve of the water. Make your way back to the café and visitor centre for some well-earned refreshments.

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Porlock, Culbone Church & Exmoor, Somerset

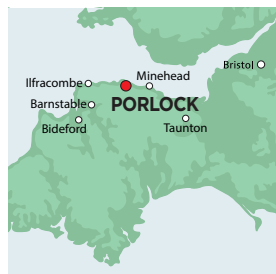
DISTANCE 26.5KM/16½ MILES **ASCENT** 1,083M/3,553FT
TIME 8 HOURS **TYPE** COAST AND MOOR

NAVIGATION LEVEL
MODERATE

FITNESS LEVEL
STRENUOUS

PERFECT FOR
HERITAGE

NUMBER OF STILES
2



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular coastal and moorland walk from Porlock.

START/END Porlock village (SS884467).

TERRAIN Coastal and farmland paths, and moor. Generally well maintained, but can be muddy. Moderate ascents/descents.

MAPS OS Explorer OL9; Landranger 181.

GETTING THERE Seasonal National Express coaches run to Minehead, where you can get the no. 10 bus to Porlock. The nearest mainline station is Taunton (nationalrail.co.uk), where you get the no. 28 bus to Minehead (travelinesoutheast.org.uk) and catch the no. 10.

EATING & DRINKING The Top Ship Inn, Porlock (01643 862507, shipinnporlock.co.uk).

SLEEPING Rooms at the Top Ship Inn (as above).

VISITOR INFORMATION Porlock Visitor Centre, West End, Porlock (01643 863150, porlock.co.uk).

GUIDEBOOK *Pathfinder Guides: Exmoor & the Quantocks - Outstanding Circular Walks* by Sue Viccars (£12.99, Crimson, ISBN 978 0319090114).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP West Somerset (ramblers.org.uk/west-somerset).

A long but rewarding circular walk from the delightful village of Porlock, visiting secluded Culbone Church – said to be the smallest parish church in England – which can only be practicably reached on foot. The route also takes in a section of the South West Coast Path and includes a return yomp via Exmoor National Park

ROUTE BY MATTHEW JONES

1 START at the high street in Porlock. With your back to the Ship Inn, cross over and take the road called West End. Look for a path on your R signed 'Coleridge Way', named after the poet. Continue along this path until you cross a footbridge. Turn R along a path to reach the road.

2 Turn L onto the road and follow it into Porlock Weir, passing the Bottom Ship Inn. Join the South West Coast Path, pass the entrance to the Worthy Toll Road, continuing along the coast path through interesting tunnels, climbing upwards through woodland. Follow this path until you drop down into a valley, which contains hidden Culbone Church.

3 Go through the small handgate into the churchyard. Take time to read the headstones, admire the large yew and explore the church. Exit the churchyard from the opposite side and head past stone buildings, through a private residence. At the top of the hill, turn L, rejoining the coast path.

4 Continue through farmyard, still following the South West Coast Path, which is now a track with

high hedges on either side. Drop down into two combs, crossing streams until eventually reaching a road junction. Continue ahead, passing Broomstreet Farm. At a fingerpost, turn L uphill (look behind you for wonderful views of the coast), following the field edge until you reach a main road.

5 Cross the road and turn L, continuing along the road until you see a sign for a bridleway to the R. Take this and follow it round to the R until you reach a path junction. Ignore the path L through a copse and continue along the bridleway to cross North Common, eventually dropping down to the valley.

6 Cross a footbridge and turn R onto the road, over a stone bridge, then L after the cottages onto a broad stony track, heading uphill. Continue across South Common and onto moorland. At the embankment with a low fence along the top, turn L to reach a gate. Go through and

follow the bridleway ahead, bearing L to continue along it until you reach a road.

7 Turn L onto the road and follow until you reach a junction. Continue straight ahead onto a bridleway, which you follow past Lucott Farm. Continue along the road, looking out for a cross-field footpath on your L.

8 Follow this path down through fields, bearing R as you reach woodland. At a path junction, turn L to drop down to the stream running through Hawke Combe Woods. Cross the footbridge and follow the stream.

9 On reaching Peep-out, ignore the path on the R, continuing ahead until you reach a road to Hawkcombe. Follow this all the way back into Porlock, turning L at the end to return to the start point.

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The Rookery, South London

DISTANCE 4KM/2½ MILES **ASCENT** 97M/318FT
TIME 1½ HOURS **TYPE** URBAN



NAVIGATION
LEVEL
NOVICE



FITNESS
LEVEL
LEISURELY



PERFECT
FOR
GARDENS



NUMBER
OF STILES
NONE



Plan your walk

WHERE Circular walk in Streatham, South London.

START/END The Rookery (TQ309709).

TERRAIN Pavements, footpaths. Can get muddy in places.

MAPS OS Explorer 161.

GETTING THERE There is a free car park by The Rookery entrance. Streatham and Streatham Common rail stations are both within a mile. Multiple buses: 50, 60, 109, 118, 249, 250, 255, G1 (tfl.gov.uk).

EATING & DRINKING

The Rookery Café (therookerycafe.co.uk).

SLEEPING Parklands B&B is 2 miles away (020 8696 0399, parklandsbandb.com).

VISITOR INFORMATION

visitlondon.com

GUIDEBOOK *The Capital Ring* by Colin Saunders (£16.99, Aurum Press, ISBN 978 1781315699).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP

The London Strollers (ramblers.org.uk/London-strollers) and the South Bank Ramblers (ramblers.org.uk/South-Bank).

This walk provides a slice of peace and tranquillity in busy South London and offers views across much of the city. Beginning in The Rookery, an Edwardian-style garden on the site of a former spa, the route passes an attractive mansion and goes through a remnant of ancient woodland

ROUTE BY NATALIE LEAL



1 START Enter The Rookery by the gate L of the café. At the terrace, descend the wide set of steps past the large cedar tree to the gardens below. First, you enter the Old English Garden, originally part of a walled kitchen garden belonging to an 18th-century mansion that stood here until 1912. The house, also called The Rookery, was built to accommodate people visiting three mineral wells operating since the 17th century. A small wishing well now stands on the site of one of these. Turn L at the entrance to the White Garden, then up some steps to the Rock Garden. Follow the path, crossing the small waterfall. At the top, go R leaving The Rookery, then R again heading down Copgate Path, part of the Capital Ring, a 78-mile route linking inner London's green spaces. The path leads through a small patch of woodland before arriving at an old gatehouse.

2 You will soon arrive at the back of Norwood Grove, a large country house at least 200 years old, with surrounding parkland that

was once its grounds. Norwood Grove, also known as the White House, is now a pre-school with luxury flats above, but its garden is open to the public. Walk up to the house to sit by the old orangery and take in the spectacular views over South London and beyond. Follow the footpath back down along the edge of the park, then leave at the corner gate, turning L onto Gibbons Hill.

3 Follow the leafy residential street uphill, with the railings on your R. It's so peaceful up here, you could easily forget you're in London. At the top of the road by a cluster of old houses and a school, turn R onto a much busier main road. Pass Beulah Hill Pond (also known as Big Pond and Crown Pond) on the L, a former watering place for cattle and horses, then soon turn R onto Biggin Hill, where there are more extensive views.

4 After some allotments, turn R past the tennis courts and head into Biggin Wood, a surprising

remnant of the Great North Wood that used to cover much of South London. Keep to the main footpath through the woodland until you emerge into a quiet residential area. Walk straight ahead along Covington Way, with views northwards here. Cross the main road and keep walking until you reach the other side of Norwood Grove. Follow the footpath as it winds uphill towards the old house.

5 Go through the gate into the gardens. After exploring Norwood Grove gardens, go L at the rose arbour, down the slope and then head downhill towards the far L gate out to the road. Almost immediately, turn R following a small path between fences. Go L at the tennis court, then through the gates back into The Rookery.

Report a path problem
Via the Pathwatch app or at ramblers.org.uk/pathwatch





THE BIG WALK

Treasure Island

Follow the 70-mile Isle of Wight Coastal Path and be rewarded with a bewildering range of landscapes and coastal scenes that – thanks to local Ramblers – will form part of the England Coast Path

WORDS MARK ROWE

Sir John Betjeman once described the western part of the Isle of Wight as ‘an earthquake poised in mid-explosion’. Standing above the Needles, the incisor-shaped chalk pinnacles that punch up from the Solent on the island’s western extremities, it is easy to see what he meant.

Looking east, the cattle-grazed Tennyson Down roller-coasters its way to the horizon, collapsing on its southern haunches into white cliffs so severely sheer that they seem to have been guillotined. Beyond this vanishing point, the island coast re-emerges, the downland’s trailing edges sweeping upwards once more, no longer chalk white but now the yellow of sandstone. More immediately – and dizzyingly – down to my left, are the swirling multicoloured soft sands and clays of Alum Bay’s cliffs, twisted by ancient subterranean upheavals so that their many colour bands – 21 have been identified – are more vertical than horizontal.

Coastal paths

The Needles and Tennyson Down are simply breathtaking and represent an exhilarating start to my walk around the island’s coastline. The Isle of Wight Coastal Path route covers 112km/70 miles of coast, a circumnavigation that takes most visitors an easy-going week to walk. The good news is that soon it will take a little longer, thanks to the expansion of the England Coast Path, which is poised to add a further 25.75km/16 miles to the route, opening up parts of the coast currently closed off to walkers. The walk will then be designated a National Trail.

These access improvements are seen by the Ramblers as finally settling a long-standing injustice. When the idea for the England Coast Path was first conceived, it excluded islands, except where the government deemed them large enough. Puzzlingly, the Isle of Wight, 23 miles broad in the beam and 13 miles from north to south, did not initially pass the size test. ‘It was a bolt from the blue,’ says David Howarth of the Isle of Wight Ramblers. The Ramblers organised a public consultation that put support for the coastal path at 92%. ‘We threatened a judicial review,’ says David, ‘at which point the government agreed.’ The expectation is that, with final additions secured this summer, the new access will be in place in 2020. >



*'In all, the island
packs in more
than 800km
of rights of way'*



Clambering up Tennyson Down, I am accompanied by buttercup-yellow gorse flowers, ascending skylarks and a hovering kestrel, and monitored by a brooding peregrine. Eventually, I reach a monument to Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who called the island home for 40 years until his death.

Descending to the town of Freshwater, I pass through a newly installed gate. It turns out to be part of the Donate a Gate scheme run by the island's Ramblers. Recently, the 200th such gate was opened on the island, making progress easier for walkers who struggle with stiles, as well as dog walkers.

Other-worldly landscapes

After 24km/15 miles, I approach the town of Ventnor. The climate and views change utterly, now Mediterranean and subtropical and kept pleasantly warm by the protection provided against northerly winds by the chalk downs towering above the town. The Botanic Garden, right on the coast path and worthy of a diversion, is home to more than 6,000 species of plants, many of them exotics. Ventnor's climate was considered by Victorians to be a curative for tuberculosis – and the gardens were once home to the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest. Among those who took the air here were Karl Marx and the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie.

The southern edge of the Isle of Wight is often described as 'dynamic', which is a euphemism for 'collapsing'. Nowhere is this more apparent than when I follow the coast path through the Bonchurch Landslip. The present terrain results from major landslides 200 years ago caused by the soft Gault clay that underpins this part of the island, buckling under the weight of the chalk that sits upon it. The effect is other-worldly.

The landslide has long since settled down, and as the coastal path coils its way through, I find myself enveloped by a fine mist. A tiny church emerges out of the spectral haze. St Boniface Old Church is entered through an arched doorway of thick planks that leads to a chilly interior. Light is only grudgingly allowed to squeeze through the tiny medieval windows.

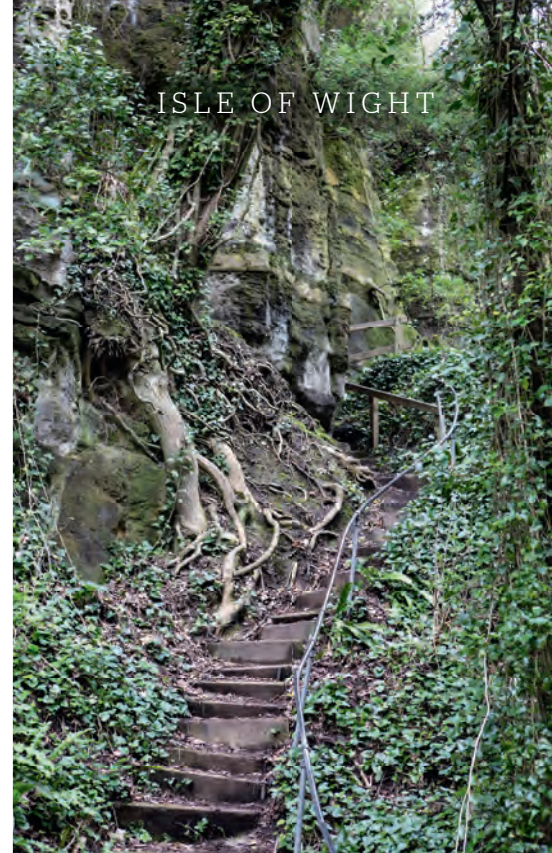
📍 Above, clockwise from far left: the landscape is forever changing; Tennyson Down; colourful boats; Yarmouth; Bonchurch Landslip; wildflowers thrive on the island; St Boniface; Newtown Creek. Below: black-headed gulls at Sandown Beach; Ramblers have replaced 200 stiles

Back outside, and in the heart of the landslip, I head uphill, ascending wooden staircases along footpath V65c. Every footpath on the island has an individual ID. Here, 'V' stands for the parish of Ventnor; elsewhere you will see 'BB' for Bembridge, 'CS' for Cowes. In all, the island packs in more than 800km/500 miles of rights of way, as dense a network as you will find in the UK.

The landslip runs for a couple of miles and has one last surprise. The path appears to come to a dead end in front of a sheer rock face. Then I notice a narrow gloomy chink, through which I can just about squeeze without edging sideways. This cleft is known as the Devil's Chimney. Inside this open-air passage, every shade of green on the colour spectrum seems to seep into the rocks.

I emerge on the southern headland of Sandown Bay, a magnificent five-mile stretch of beach that offers the quintessential seaside experience. In between the Victoriana of arcades and postcard shops in the towns





of Shanklin and Sandown, the views of the coast and the cliffs – white chalk and russet sandstone juxtaposed once again – that frame the bay are magnificent. At the north end of the bay, around Yaverland, people are rooting around in the soft cliff base for fossils. Everything from 65 million-year-old oyster shells to dinosaur footprints have been found here. Elsewhere, the Isle of Wight coast has thrown up skeletons of sauropods and iguanodons.

Beyond Sandown, I reach Bembridge Harbour, where the path hugs the rim of a tidal bay, home to stately houseboats. I cross the harbour via a tidal causeway onto St Helens Duver (the name rhymes with cover), a local word for a large spit of shingle and dunes. Woods bookend the harbour, and a line of beach huts adds a parti-colour touch to the view.

Work to be done

One of the last legs of my journey is along the north coast, north-west of the island's major town, Newport. Here, around the village of Newtown, lie some of the most delectable, little-visited walking spots the island has to offer. The low-lying land sinks gently into the sea, with mudflats and lagoons infilled twice daily by the Solent and boardwalks reaching out into the creeks.

Newtown is poised to become one of the great triumphs of the improved coast path. A lack of suitable public rights of way means that the existing 'coastal path' runs inland for 5km/3 miles, following one of those country lanes where a walker's heart sinks as they hear a vehicle coming around a blind corner at speed.

'Newtown Creek has five "fingers" of land that stick out into the water,' explains David. 'Before, we had to walk across the "wrist" of that hand – now we will be able to walk up and down all the fingers.'

I cross a hay meadow that will be on the new coast path. In spring and summer, it is a delight, fringed with the blue tinge of sea aster and the purple of sea lavender, and in between with green-winged orchids and marbled white butterflies.

To the east rises a headland where another battle is still being fought. The Ministry of Defence owns land known as Jersey Camp here and has objected to a footpath, even though the area is only lightly used for military training. 'We recognise that there has to be a balance between walkers, nature and landowners, but we've been campaigning for a new coast path since 1988,' says David. 'It's been poor for many years. We have one shot at this and we have to get it right. We need it to be the best, not a compromise.'

Another issue awaiting resolution, also on the north coast, involves the parish of East Cowes, which has no public or permissive footpaths. Hopes that the new coast path might run across the beach at Osborne House – where Queen Victoria used to bathe – have met resistance from the owners, English Heritage. 'I think English Heritage is missing the point and missing an opportunity,' says David. 'Walkers would probably buy an ice cream from the café by the beach, see the house and make a note to go back and pay to enter the next day.'

I complete my circular walk in Yarmouth. I walk along the pier: water, woodlands and slivers of beach are all visible. Once on board my ferry, on deck, I stare at the retreating island – now Tennyson Down and then the Needles reveal themselves. I'm struck by how incredibly varied this coastline is, and struggle to think of many other stretches of coast in the UK that squeeze so many changes in landscape into a similar distance. ■



Walk it!

TIME/DISTANCE The Isle of Wight Coastal Path is currently 112km long (70 miles) and typically takes 6-7 days to complete at an easy pace.

MAPS OS Explorer OL29; Landranger 196.

ACCOMMODATION Seaview Hotel (seaviewhotel.co.uk, 01983 612711). Seaview is located on the coast path and provides free bus passes for walkers staying there.

FURTHER INFO visitisleofwight.co.uk, walkinginwight.co.uk




DESTINATION

Paparoa Track

Cutting through primeval rainforest and towering limestone gorges, the forthcoming Paparoa Track is New Zealand's first new Great Walk in 25 years

WORDS SARAH STIRLING

📍 Sarah admires the limestone Pororari River Gorge – the West Coast's most spectacular



Just as my partner Rob strode away to get dinner started at the mountain hut, the bird magic began. When you're quiet, forests seem to engage you on a deeper level, and nowhere is that truer than in New Zealand. When the Gondwana supercontinent broke up, this fragment of islands drifted north and spent 80 million years in isolation, preserving a chunk of primeval rainforest as a living museum of life before mammals.

It was approaching dusk and tendrils of otherworldly light were filtering through the trees as I dawdled. Suddenly, a small bird swooped through the canopy and landed on a moss-covered log next to me. The feathered grey ball planted its legs wide, folded its wings behind its back and looked at me with confiding eyes. South Island robins can live to be 14 years old, are monogamous and reign over territorial patches in pairs. This one had wise eyes. New Zealand's birds didn't encounter humans until geologically recently – the first settlers rowed over from Polynesia in the 1200s – and as a result, many are more instinctively curious than fearful. Assessment complete, the robin flew off between the ancient podocarp trees.

Next, a nearby fern rustled... one of New Zealand's cheekiest birds flattened itself into a straight line and ran, startled, like a cartoon roadrunner, kicking up red beech litter. Once safe behind a fan of yellowish-green leaves, the weka played coquettish peekaboo.

The West Coast of New Zealand's South Island is one of the best places to see rare birds such as robins and wekas. Hemmed in between the snowcapped Southern Alps and the pounding Tasman Sea, the wild strip has been sparsely populated throughout human history – apart from a brief, heady gold rush.

There's also coal in them thar hills: the first section of the 55km Paparoa Track follows an existing path, the Croesus Track, which is one of the finest surviving examples of a 19th-century coal miners' walk to work. It begins just outside Blackball, a sleepy town with a claim to fame. In 1908, miners went on strike here, arguing for a lunch break extension from 15 to 30 minutes and an eight-hour day rather than the 10 hours their employer wanted. When they won, their moral grit took the organisation of trade unions in New Zealand to another level. Little has changed here since the coal days. The hub is a traditional, resolutely quirky Kiwi pub/hotel named Formerly the Blackball Hilton after an altercation with a certain hotel chain.

Continuing my pre-dinner stroll, I popped out above the bush-line and caught a glimpse of the Ces Clark Hut ahead. To my left, I could see nothing but forested mountains. The sun was setting, turning gathering clouds purple. A whoop echoed down; Rob, looking for me from the hut's huge panoramic windows. Dinner was ready, >



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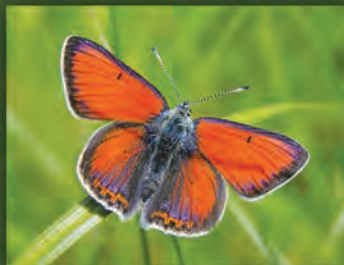
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📍 Clockwise from top left: Sarah surrounded by lush ferns on the Croesus Track; a rare but instinctively curious South Island robin; on Pike29 Memorial Track; the hotel known as Formerly the Blackball Hilton

cooked on a camping stove, and the log burner was lit. Only 10km along the Paparoa Track, I was enchanted.

Moonlight Tops

We had planned on returning to our car the next morning but the bush gods seemed intent on tempting us further along the Paparoa Track. We were settled in with books and breakfast, hoping the rain would clear, when a chopper broke the silence. Two hours later, two grey-haired men emerged from the thinning mist and wandered into the hut. One was wild-blue-eyed and excited, the other calm and responsible behind spectacles.

We told them our story: we had asked the Department of Conservation (DOC) if we could preview the new Great Walk, so that I could write about it. The response had essentially been: 'You dafties, the path's still being built!' While the two ends of the Paparoa Track are existing tracks, the 40km-section along a ridge and escarpment in between them will be new. Path-building teams had been working towards each other for months. Thwarted, we'd decided to walk the existing section to the Ces Clark Hut, then turn back.

The two men looked at each other. The calm one, it transpired, was Tom Hopkins, manager of the project to build the new

Great Walk; the other was an engineer. They were here to see how it was coming along.

Tom pulled out a map, showed us how far the track building had progressed, and gave us permission to walk past 'Track Closed' signs as far as those points. Two new mountain huts have been built along the Paparoa Track. We could, we realised, reach Moonlight Tops hut that day, then descend and spend the next day hiking up the tail of

the path to the other one – Pororari Hut. We'd only miss an 18.7km section of summit ridge between them. We readied ourselves.

On leaving the Ces Clark Hut, the bush gave way to the dry yellows of alpine tussocks and grasses, and we soon reached the Paparoa ridgeline. When the mist swirled open, we glimpsed sea views. From here, the Croesus Track descended west, while the new track snaked north, artfully carved into the mountain crest. Over the past 25 years, there has been a renaissance in traditional track-building methods in New Zealand – fitting the track to the land, rather than the opposite. Interestingly, this is the first Great Walk that is also open to mountain-bikers. It climbs with graceful curves rather than breathless zigzags.

After three hours' walking, we spied the new red Moonlight Tops hut ahead. Every Great Walk has its USP, and the Paparoa Track's is its escarpment, a 700m-high cliff with exposed coal seams. Sunsets from the hut are apparently incredible, as the light reflects from the white escarpment and slips into the sea.

From here, there will be two options: carry on along the top of the escarpment, enjoying sheer, dramatic views, or descend east on a new 11km side track through virgin podocarp and beech forest – this Pike29 Memorial Track commemorates the >

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📍 Clockwise from top left: part of the Paparoa Track's 700m-high escarpment; Sarah on one of the many bridges along the route; sunset with the Ces Clark hut in the foreground; Moonlight Tops



29 men who died in 2010 in a mine explosion at the end of this track.

It feels really wild up on the ridge, which at roughly 1,200m is the highest point of the Great Walk. Paparoa means 'Long Place' – this mountain range extends for a huge 29 miles. In all directions there is rippling, dense bush penetrated by ridges, steep cliffs and deeply incised rivers.

On the eastern horizon, we could make out the white tips of the Southern Alps. Tantalisingly, this was where we had to turn back.

The Pororari River Gorge

The next morning, we set off up the tail of the Paparoa Track, an existing walkway through the West Coast's most spectacular river gorge. The powers of nature seemed suspended mid-battle here – towering fortresses of limestone forcing up through the bush, tresses of greenery reclaiming cracks in the rock and the river, relentlessly carving its passage through.

I spotted New Zealand orchids growing from a tree trunk – they smell of honey – and nikau, the world's southernmost palm.

The gentle hum of cicadas gave a tropical feel. Flashes of colour crisscrossed the trail – this is one of the best places to see New Zealand's forest birds.

After 3km, we reached the end of the gorge walkway, skirted 'Path Closed' signs and continued along the newly built Paparoa Track as it climbed, following the river towards its source. We could really feel that we were among the first people to walk through this pristine section of bush. Seaweed-like lichen was draped liberally from the trees and beams of sunlight were pouring through into the dark depths, giving the feeling of being underwater.

Finally, we reached the new green Pororai Hut, a clearing giving it views along the main spine of the Paparoa Range. At the time of writing, this was the end of the path. It would take workers months to pick a route through the impenetrable bush between here and the escarpment we could see across the valley.

So far, though, the new track had been a delight. Sweeping along riverbanks, zigzagging up steep ascents and running along every ridgeline, the path had kept our eyes moving from one vista to the next, focusing on curled ferns one moment, then opening out to expansive views of valleys and ridges disappearing into the West Coast mist. I can't wait to walk the whole route. ■



Walk it!

TIME/DISTANCE 55km/34 miles. The Paparoa Track starts at Smoke-ho car park near Blackball and ends at the Pororari River car park near Punakaiki. It can be walked over two or three days, with stays in mountain huts (must be pre-booked).

MAPS Pick up the *Paparoa Track Great Walks* booklet from any Department of Conservation office in New Zealand. Or download it from doc.govt.nz

ACCOMMODATION Formerly the Blackball Hilton hotel is a quirky base from where you can explore the local mining heritage. Nearby Greymouth has a range of accommodation and food options.

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What compelled me to walk hills equalling the height of Everest was the feeling I had to do it. I didn't understand the emotion that was churning deeply within me until I started the process. And the book that has emerged, *Everest England*, is completely different from the one I imagined might have been written about the journey.

Against expectations, this was the most important walk I've done. Walkers may set out with an intention, and that's fine. I'd planned the routes and sat down looking at maps, but when it came to it, I went off the route. And the more I let the walk dictate itself, the more extraordinary the journey became. What wasn't planned made the journey.

I met a man on The Cheviot hill who was a true wanderer. Wanderers don't have routes, they just get up and decide to go wherever they feel moved to. And we've lost that – even in the depths of the countryside you're going to come across signs, and on roads we're constantly being told where we are. And I learned through this walk that this isn't always helpful. It's a construct of normality. When you leave all that behind and truly decide to wander, then something quite wonderful can happen.

Kinder Scout was the hardest part of the walk. Going up Grinds Brook and up Grindsbrook Clough, you're in cloud, and then you're lost. It's important to go with that experience. I met other people who were lost so we were lost together. It wasn't any more physically testing, but it's mentally testing to be cold and lost. It asks different questions of you. I wasn't in mortal danger, so I decided to be lost. Being lost is a very interesting experience.



MY WALK OF LIFE

PETER OWEN JONES

The author, presenter and priest walked the height of Everest, in England, in 12 days

INTERVIEW SUSAN GRAY



📍 Clockwise from top left: Grindsbrook Clough, Kinder Scout; walking in the New Forest; Peter among the heather with not an information board in sight

I would support the Peak District National Park, which has decided not to put signs way up high. Let's try to keep the wilderness as much of a wilderness as we can. That comes at a cost, but I would rather that than having boards that tell me what type of heather is around us.

On the walk, I never felt in danger – I felt very tired but never in danger. If you are going up Jack's Rake [a level 1 scramble] on Pavey Ark in the Langdale Pikes, you have to take care. At the top of Jack's Rake there is an adverse camber and you have to treat it with respect. If you make

a mistake, then that's it. And, when it's cold and icy, you've got to be even more careful.

The real Everest holds no temptation for me – I think we should leave her be. There's no need for any of us to go up her or K2. These high mountains are sacred places.

Even just 2,000 feet up things are very different. I live on the Sussex Downs and I'm looking at the ridge now, and just 700 feet up it's very different. The weather's different, the light is different. The hills and wilderness give us perspective – personal perspective and emotional perspective – that's the great gift of these hills. And we're so lucky in this country – the hills are just the right height to walk up in a day.

I returned from the walk and everything had changed. Coming home is often the hardest part because you return to everyone treating you as your previous self. Home holds all the reasons why you set off in the first place. Then there is the work of reconciliation to be done. These are the hard yards of being human.

Our network of paths is a huge legacy that has been laid down. In most countries you can go on designated trails, but here we have freedom of movement, and it's so rare. I meet people from Europe and Australia who are in awe of our network of paths between villages. We take it for granted, but it is one of the greatest jewels of this island. The work of the Ramblers is just extraordinary in keeping the network open.



WIN We have three copies of *Everest England*, worth £12.99, to give away. Email walkmag@ramblers.org.uk by 19 August 2019.

GEAR ON TEST

Walking shoes

Our new kit testers Jen and Sim Benson review the best footwear for easy trails, fast-and-light adventures, scrambles and everyday wear

Women's picks

Scarpa Mescalito

£160 scarpa.co.uk

✦ These approach-style shoes feature a Vibram Megagrip outsole for safe and secure footing on any terrain. The durable suede upper and full-length lacing wrap around the foot to create a snug, secure fit. A rubberised toe gives protection, while cushioning means they're comfortable to wear all day.

✦ The heel is quite narrow, which, while ensuring a really snug fit, might irritate a sensitive Achilles tendon.

VERDICT Technical features and a secure fit make these approach-style shoes a great choice for long summer days in the mountains, with grip suited to anything from easy trails to ridges and scrambles.



4/5

Salomon Outline GTX

£115 salomon.com

✦ Based on a running shoe but with more protection and greater control through the mid foot, this lightweight shoe is comfortable all day long and ideal for easier trails, fast-and-light adventures and everyday wear. Gore-Tex keeps your feet dry and Salomon's Contragrip sole is great on most surfaces.

✦ The Contragrip outsole loses traction on wet rock and pavement.

VERDICT A trainer-style walking shoe with excellent comfort and performance, particularly good for less technical trails in dry weather.



3.5/5

walk
MAGAZINE OF
THE RAMBLERS
GREAT
VALUE



4.5/5

Asolo Nucleon GV

£146 asolo.com

✦ Designed for hiking on varying terrain, these shoes have a supple yet durable one-piece suede upper and a Gore-Tex waterproof membrane. The full-length lacing ensures a precise fit throughout the foot. The dual density Vibram Megagrip outsole combines a harder-wearing central section with softer, grippier edges, while rubber guards protect the toe and heel areas.

✦ The lugs aren't particularly deep, so aren't as suitable as some for muddy conditions.

VERDICT A superb technical hiking shoe with outstanding grip, precision and comfort. Ideal for rocky mountain trails when trusting your feet is key.



4/5

Zamberlan 104 Hike Lite GTX

£135 en.zamberlan.com

✦ With its casual looks yet ability to handle technical terrain, this shoe combines a comfortable suede upper with precision lacing for a great fit throughout the shoe. The Vibram Pillow sole provides excellent grip in wet or dry conditions.

✦ The upper was uncomfortable at the flex point during initial wears but softens with time.

VERDICT A smart-looking, waterproof shoe designed for easy trekking and daily use but with plenty of grip and protection for tackling trickier terrain.



La Sportiva TX4

£155 lasportiva.com

✦ A great-looking shoe with a supple suede upper for superb comfort and durability. The Vibram Megagrip outsole has a varied tread pattern for outstanding traction and cushioning on all terrains in wet and dry conditions. Longer lacing gives a precise, foot-hugging fit.

✦ May not suit wider feet.

VERDICT Designed for those spending prolonged periods walking on technical mountain terrain, these shoes offer a near-perfect balance of comfort, grip, structure and precision.

5/5



Hanwag Belorado II Low GTX

£155-£165 hanwag.com

✦ Available in a standard or bunion-accommodating fit, these shoes feature a comfortable suede/synthetic-mix upper with Gore-Tex waterproofing. The low-profile replaceable sole feels responsive and has a good grip.

✦ The cushioning is a little on the firm side and the insole doesn't contour around the foot, so the fit doesn't feel as snug as some models.

VERDICT This is a great option for those looking for shoes with a bunion-accommodating fit. A different, more foot-shaped choice of insole would probably improve the fit.



3.5/5

WOMEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT WALKING SOCKS

Thorlo Ultra Light Hiking

£13.95 thorlo.com

✦ These light, breathable socks are made in the US from Thor Wick

Cool, a moisture-management fabric. They have

padding for comfort and are a good fit.

✦ The toe seam is quite prominent and the socks don't feel particularly durable.

VERDICT A good-value, light and breathable synthetic sock. Fits well but may be best-suited to shorter walks.



3.5/5

Smartwool Hike LT Summer Nights Print Crew

£18.99

smartwool.com

✦ Made in the US from a mix of soft, responsibly sourced merino wool for comfort and nylon for durability, with a little elastane for stretch, these half-cushion socks feature a supportive arch and flat-knit toe seam. They look great in a 360-degree adventure print and a choice of colours.

✦ None.

VERDICT Smartwool socks look and feel great and last forever. The new prints add a touch of creativity to your sock drawer.



5/5

Bridgedale Hike Lightweight Boot socks

£17.50 bridgedale.com

✦ Made in the UK, these socks are a blend of polyester, cotton and nylon. The light cushioning is placed in zones where it's needed, leaving the rest of the sock highly breathable, and there's a supportive arch. Covered by a lifetime guarantee.

✦ The toe seams bunch up at either end of the seam, which can get uncomfortable. They also felt a little synthetic.

VERDICT A cooler-feeling sock than those containing wool, these boot-length socks would be well-suited to warm-weather walks.



4/5

Buyer's tips

Socks provide protection, cushioning, insulation and moisture management. They should fit perfectly: too small and they'll restrict your toes, while too big and they'll ruck up, causing discomfort. Look for different knits and fibres: merino wool is naturally antimicrobial and temperature regulating, while synthetics like nylon add durability. Always try socks on with your favourite walking boots or shoes to check the combination works well.

Men's picks

Salewa Mountain Trainer GTX

£160 salewa.com

+ A supportive and protective waterproof approach shoe with a deep-treaded grippy sole and a tough upper. A comfortably wide toe box works well with the deep heel and full-length lacing to offer a secure, boot-like fit. Available without Gore-Tex for £150.

- The heaviest on test.

VERDICT A really great mountain walking, scrambling or approach shoe, but these features may mean some find it a little heavy and stiff for general use.



4.5/5

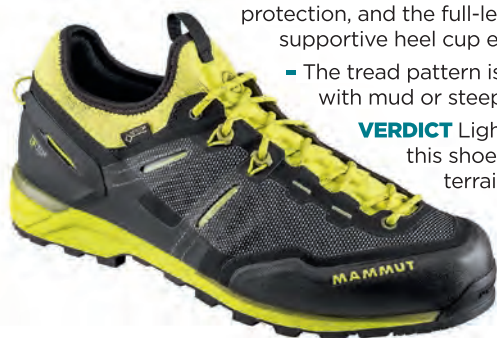
Mammut Alnasca Knit Low GTX

£149 uk.mammut.com

+ A lightweight, waterproof approach shoe with a soft and comfortable yet supportive upper and a Michelin rubber sole that grips very well on rock. The rubberised toe adds protection, and the full-length lacing and supportive heel cup ensures a good fit.

- The tread pattern is shallow so struggles with mud or steep grass.

VERDICT Light and comfortable, this shoe excels on the rocky terrain found in mountainous areas but struggles a bit with mud.



4/5

Keen Venture Low

£120 keenfootwear.com

+ These funky-looking shoes are available in bright colours or more subtle options. The soft and light waterproof forefoot is matched to a supportive heel cradle with a KconnectFit lacing system that holds the foot securely.

- Although grippy on rock, the sole struggles in mud, and the light upper isn't very protective.

VERDICT The lightweight upper and secure lacing system hold the foot well. Comfortable but best for lower-level paths due to the lack of protection.



4/5

Alt-Berg Jorvic Trail

£174.99 altberg.co.uk

+ Alt-Berg has a long history of making high-quality boots in Yorkshire and Italy. The Jorvic Trail, with its deep-treaded Vibram sole, PFC-free waterproof Sympatex lining and one-piece Italian leather upper, combines a timeless design with the ability to last a lifetime. A broader forefoot and a narrower heel give a perfect fit.

- Expensive and quite heavy.

VERDICT A comfortable walking shoe with the typical Alt-Berg qualities of great fit, beautiful workmanship and durability.



4.5/5

MEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT WALKING SOCKS

Darn Tough Hiker Micro Crew Light Cushion

£20 darntough.com

+ Darn Tough socks are made in Vermont, US, and come with a lifetime guarantee. This model blends nylon for durability, responsibly sourced merino wool for comfort, thermo-regulation and odour resistance and Spandex for stretch. They are nicely cushioned underfoot.

- High price.

VERDICT Well made, durable and comfortable, with a superb fit.



5/5

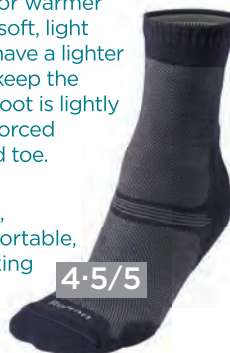
Rohan Hot & Temperate

£13 rohan.co.uk

+ Made in the UK from a blend of merino wool, nylon and elastane, these socks are designed for warmer conditions. They feel soft, light and breathable, and have a lighter weave on the top to keep the foot cool. Under the foot is lightly cushioned, with reinforced panels at the heel and toe.

- None at this price.

VERDICT Breathable, supportive and comfortable, a great summer walking sock that's also good value.



4.5/5

1,000 Mile Approach Socks

£12.99 1000mile.co.uk

+ These twin-skin socks help to reduce friction between foot and shoe. The inner is a wicking Tactel nylon fabric, while the outer is padded, with merino wool for comfort, thermo-regulation and odour-control.

- Having a fully synthetic inner reduces the benefits of wool against the skin.

VERDICT They come with 1,000 Mile's blister-free guarantee for miles of comfortable walking.



4/5



Columbia Peakfreak XCRSN II XCEL Low

4/5

£95 columbiasportswear.co.uk

✦ The lightest and softest shoe in this test, these are really comfortable straight from the box and ideal for lower-level walking or fastpacking. The uppers are seamless for comfort and feature Columbia's OutDry external waterproofing.

✦ Soft and light equals less support, and they can't be as durable as suede or full-grain leather.

VERDICT They are good-value, comfortable and lightweight trail shoes, perfect as a companion to some boots that you use when you need extra support.

Scarpa Mojito Trail GTX

£160 scarpa.co.uk

✦ A walking shoe with stylish approach shoe looks, full-length lacing, a good-grip Vibram sole and a waterproof lining. It's light enough for all-day comfort but stiff and supportive enough for more technical walking, and the sole has enough tread depth to cope with any footpath.

✦ Quite pricey.

VERDICT A brilliant modern walking shoe that combines the ability to cope with any terrain with stylish looks, durability and a comfortable fit.



5/5



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Walking shoes comparison guide

Your at-a-glance guide to the main features of these walking shoes and how they compare with each other.	WEIGHT*	UPPERS	OUTSOLE	MEMBRANE	SIZES	RATING
WOMEN'S						
 Asolo Nucleon GV £146	666g EU40	Suede	Vibram Megagrip	Gore-Tex	UK 4-9	4.5/5
 Hanweg Belorado II Low GTX £155-£165	762g UK6.5	Suede and synthetic	Hanweg Multifilm Light	Gore-Tex	UK 3.5-9	3.5/5
 La Sportiva TX4 £155	666g EU40	Suede	Vibram MegaGrip	None	EU 36-42	5/5
 Salomon Outline GTX £115	600g UK6.5	Synthetic	Contagrip MD	Gore-Tex	UK 3.5-10.5	3.5/5
 Scarpa Mescalito £160	740g EU39	Suede	Vibram Dynamis	None	EU 36-42	4/5
 Zamberlan 104 Hike Lite GTX £135	738g EU40	Suede	Vibram Pillow	Gore-Tex	EU 36-43	4/5
MEN'S						
 Alt-Berg Jorvic Trail, £174.99	1154g UK11	Nappone Leather	Vibram Masai	Sympatex	UK 4-14	4.5/5
 Columbia Peakfreak XCRSN II XCEL Low, £95	776g UK10.5	Synthetic	Columbia Omni-Grip	OutDry	UK 6-14	4/5
 Keen Venture Low, £120	1060g UK11	Synthetic	Keen All Terrain	Keen Dry	EU39.5-49	4/5
 Mammut Alasca Knit Low GTX, £149	890g UK11	3D Knitted Synthetic	Michelin Rock Tech	Gore-Tex	UK 6.5-13	4/5
 Salewa Mountain Trainer GTX, £160	1214g UK10.5	Suede	Vibram	Gore-Tex	UK 6-13	4.5/5
 Scarpa Mojito trail GTX, £160	1,024g	Suede	Vibram Salix	Gore-Tex	EU 40-48	5/5

*Per pair in size specified

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ASK THE EXPERTS

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

OUR EXPERTS



Helen Todd is campaigns and policy manager for Ramblers Scotland.



Ed Wilson is the volunteering coordinator for the Ramblers.



Robyn Stephens is the policy and advocacy support officer at the Ramblers.



Jen Benson is a writer and *walk's* gear reviewer. She has a BSc (Hons) in podiatry and an MSc in sports and exercise medicine.



Laura Brooker is biosecurity information officer for the Forestry Commission.



SAFETY

When to call mountain rescue

I'm a volunteer walk leader and would welcome some advice on when to call mountain rescue instead of an ambulance. Colin Lowrey, Birmingham

Ed Wilson You need mountain rescue if your location means an ambulance can't get to you. Call 999 and ask for the police, who will request help from the local mountain rescue team. If you have no mobile reception, still dial 999 as your phone will automatically connect to any available network. To get help quickly, you'll be asked for your location – OS Locate is a helpful app that will give you your grid reference. It is also advised that you register for emergency SMS (emergencySMS.net) – this is a free service that allows you to send a text message on emergency bandwidth when a call can't get through. The Ramblers runs free volunteer courses on walk leadership, first aid and navigation, and cover many of these safety issues – email volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com to find out more.

PATHS

Highland estate path blocked

The owner of a small estate in Scotland recently died, and his executors have locked a gate crossing an ancient riverside trail bordering the estate, which has been used by walkers for many years. We believe that this action is illegal. What should our next course of action be? Frances Gillespie, Perthshire

Helen Todd Access rights in Scotland apply to most land, unless it falls into any of the specific exclusions. If the

track runs up to the house, access rights should apply up to its curtilage. As to your next steps, each council has a duty to uphold access rights and can take up the issue with the estate. Finally, access rights apply to all non-motorised users in Scotland; so while a locked gate

is an obstruction for bicycles or horses, climbing locked gates and fences is recognised as responsible access for walkers if no alternative is available. You are within your rights to do so – taking care to climb at the hinge end of the gate.



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



COUNTRYSIDE

Overgrown and overwhelmed

I've just become aware that ash dieback is spreading more quickly than has been anticipated. Is there anything walkers should be aware of – such as any risk from diseased trees, and whether reports are still needed?

Phil Smith, Berkshire

Laura Brooker Ash dieback, caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, is now present in most parts of the UK. However, walkers can still help minimise its impact and slow its further spread by brushing

soil and plant debris off footwear before leaving a site and washing it at home before their next walk. The Forestry Commission is still keen to receive reports of ash dieback to monitor any distribution changes, particularly in parts of the country where it has not already been recorded. If you think you have spotted the disease in a new area, please check the distribution map and then submit a report via Tree Alert (treealert.forestryresearch.gov.uk). Further information can be found on our blog: bit.ly/2UwRMj8

PATHS

How can I get a local path reopened?

I have been fighting to open and clear footpaths in Tysoe, Warwickshire but have been told by the county council that it would be too costly to retrieve certain paths or make signs, etc. One path has been closed off by the residents, who refuse to do anything about it as they say it has not been used for years. I have a particular interest as it would make the walk to school with my son much safer as the road is dangerous.
Beverley Cressman, Warwickshire

Robyn Stephens We know that highway authorities are struggling to act but they still have a statutory duty to assert and protect the rights of the public on rights of

way under section 130 of the Highways Act 1980. When corresponding with the council, we would suggest pointing out that the House of Lords has declined to accept shortage of money as an adequate excuse for not carrying out a statutory duty in *Regina v East Sussex County Council Ex Parte Tandy* (1998). You could also try contacting your local council committee chairman or cabinet member, who is responsible for rights of way; writing to your councillor; writing to the local paper; lodging a complaint with your local authority and, finally, lodging a complaint with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (lgo.org.uk) stating that the highway authority has failed to carry out its statutory duty.



HEALTH

Insoles solution

I've started to feel pain in the forefoot and large metatarsophalangeal (MTP) joints during and after walking. I've been told that I have arthritis in the joints. Can you suggest any insoles for me? **Elsie Roberts, Flintshire**

Jen Benson Osteoarthritis is a common condition and the MTP joints are often affected. Most treatments aim to limit movement of the joint(s) to reduce pain. Stiffer-soled footwear does this well, so you may find a more rigid boot helpful, with a roomy toe box to reduce trauma to your feet. A three-quarter-length insole, which runs from your heel to just short of your MTP joints, may also help, or speak to an HCPC-registered podiatrist about a custom-made insert.

GEAR

Which walking pole?



What type of walking pole would be best for assisting with failing knees? My wife, who is petite and slim, mostly struggles on steep descents but is concerned that the wrong type of pole could give way if too much weight is put on them. **Dan Weaver, Lancashire**

Jen Benson Poles are designed to reduce joint loading and aid stability. Many walkers find them invaluable on steep, uneven terrain. Poles come in a range of sizes, and it sounds like a slimmer, lighter design is likely to suit your wife best; some brands make women-specific models. Look for quick and easy adjustment so they can be lengthened for descending and, ideally, visit a good outdoors shop for advice and fitting.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

Chris Hopwood, Cotswold Outdoor Expert

📍 Betws-y-Coed, Wales

I am Chris

This is my outdoors

"I've always been into the outdoors. I was just constantly walking the dog, playing out with friends or at the beach with family. My love for camping came along later when I started to extend those days out and stay out. I got to see more of Britain and that really exploded the possibilities. I didn't realise we had all that in such close quarters."

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SOWING THE SEEDS

A handy guide to help walkers identify the most common crops grown in the UK

WORDS MATTHEW JONES ILLUSTRATIONS HANNAH BAILEY

Have you ever walked a cross-field footpath and wondered what was growing all around you? When it comes to enjoying the countryside, a bit of field knowledge can go a long way. This guide aims to help you interpret the farmed landscape and develop an understanding of the cycles of sowing, growth and harvesting – all of which dictate what you are likely to see at different times of the year in Britain's fields.

Farming activity reaches its traditional peak during the autumn harvest. That's when you're most likely to see combine harvesters and other agricultural machinery in the fields. However, modern agricultural methods mean that farmers are busy throughout the year.

As Cotswolds farmer and BBC *Countryfile* stalwart Adam Henson explains: 'Many people are

surprised that the harvest season is no longer confined to the traditional months of August and September. We could be lifting early potatoes in the West Country and Pembrokeshire from April and harvesting hardy winter vegetables such as sprouts and cauliflowers through the winter. There's probably a harvest of one crop or another taking place somewhere in the country every month of the year, and recent trends such as polytunnels have helped to delay or speed up growth.'

About 72% of the UK is made up of agricultural land, the majority being used as grazing for livestock and dairy herds, with the croppable area taking up over a third of the utilised agricultural. The UK grows an inordinate amount of different produce, from staple cereals such as wheat and barley to root crops, vegetables and specialist commercial crops. >



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY



Cereal crops

Barley

The UK's second most popular crop, British barley is grown for food, as well as for use in brewing and distilling. It is an important crop on many farms, partly because it can grow well in cold and wet conditions, so is especially common in Scotland and northern England.

Winter barley is sown in September and October. It's generally harvested from July to August. Spring barley is sown between February and March, and harvested around three weeks after winter barley.

Its main distinguishing feature is long awns that protrude from the kernels of the grain.

Oats

Oats are used in breakfast cereals, oatcakes, beauty products and as animal feed. They tend to grow well in cooler parts of Britain, especially in Scotland.

Oat grains are produced on an open seed head rather than the compact heads of wheat and barley. The plant grows to about 1m tall, with waxy, bluish leaves that twist anticlockwise. It is sown in early autumn or early spring.

Wheat

As the UK's largest arable crop by area, wheat is the crop you're most likely to see growing in large fields, particularly in east England. This crop is used mainly for milling into flour for bread, biscuits and animal feed. Most wheat grown in the UK is winter wheat, which is planted in the autumn and harvested the following August (or September in Scotland). Grain planted from January to April is generally spring wheat, harvested in September.

Modern wheat varieties generally grow to only about 60cm or 2ft, with a large seed head comprising rows of distinctive kernels or 'ears', balanced atop a thick stem. The crop is husk-free and usually lacks 'awns' – the long, stiff bristles that grow from the ears of barley, rye and many other grasses. Young seedlings (or 'tillers') are green, with the plants ripening to a golden yellow before harvesting.



Corn and maize

Maize has been cultivated by humans for more than 10,000 years. The most widely recognised variety is sweetcorn or corn on the cob, but the grain can also be stripped and used to produce cornflour, polenta or cornmeal. In the UK, it is most often used as animal fodder, and makes good bird feed.

It typically grows in southern parts of Britain on rich, low-lying soil. Most varieties are sown in spring.

Maize is often one of the last crops to be harvested, in late September and into October.

Corn or maize fields consist of rows of very tall, green plants, often growing up to 3m (10ft) high. Individual plants have a thick central stem and broad, wispy leaves. Ripening corn has big green husks or cobs, covered by strands of silky hair.

Rye and triticale

Other cereal crops you might see growing in Britain's fields include rye and triticale. Rye is a cereal used for flour, bread, beer, crispbreads, some whiskeys and vodkas, and animal fodder. Triticale is a laboratory-bred hybrid of wheat and rye grown mostly for forage or fodder, although it is sometimes found in health foods and breakfast cereals.

Rye is the hardiest of all the small grains, and so most UK rye is 'winter rye', which is planted in the autumn and harvested by August. Triticale follows a similar cycle and grows well on marginal land.

Rye grows rapidly and vigorously, and so tends to be taller than wheat. The plant has many upright tillers (shoots arising from the base of the stems), with flat leaves and long awns; and the seed is smaller and darker than wheat.

While growing, triticale is difficult to distinguish from wheat, although the plants tend to lie flat during the early tillering stage. Its seed is not as plump and looks more wrinkled than wheat.





Oilseed crops

Rape

Oilseed rape is now the third most popular crop grown in the UK. The seed is crushed to extract oil for the food industry, while the leftover meal is used as animal feed.

Fields of maturing rapeseed are easy to identify, thanks to their height (growing up to 2m), vibrant yellow flowers and pungent smell.

Winter rape is sown in late summer or early autumn for harvesting in July. Spring rape is sown in March to April and harvested in August to September.

Linseed

Linseed or flax was grown to produce fibres for linen production, but in Britain today it is grown solely for its seeds, which can be pressed to make oil for medicinal, agricultural and culinary uses, as well as for oiling tools and sporting goods. It's sown in early spring and grows for four to five months, resulting in a pretty, distinctive blue flowering plant.



Borage

Borage is a traditional herb that has long been grown in kitchen gardens but is now also grown commercially by British farmers as a spring crop. That's due to rising demand for borage oil, which is high in omega-6 fatty acids and used in dietary supplements and treatments for skin disorders.

It is a sturdy plant covered with stiff, prickly white hairs. It can grow up to 60cm tall and has deep blue, star-shaped flowers. Borage is a fantastic source of nectar for bees and other insects, and the plants require natural pollination, so you will often see beehives among borage fields. Seeds are usually planted in April or May and harvested in July or August.



Hay and straw

Hay is made from various different grasses, alfalfas or clovers, which are cut and wilted before being baled. It is used to feed horses and farm animals.

Straw is a byproduct of cereal crops, made from the leftover stalks once the grain has been harvested. It is primarily a bedding material for horses and farm animals, although it is also used as a feed supplement. Traditional upland hay meadows, like those in North Yorkshire and the North Pennines, are some of the best fields to walk in, thanks to their remarkable biodiversity.



Root crops

Potatoes & sugar beet

More than half the potatoes grown for consumption in Britain come from East Anglia and Yorkshire. More than 450 varieties are grown, around 80 commercially. Look for rows of muddy ridges and furrows – the potatoes grow a few inches under the earth, while above ground the



green, leafy plants are typically short and squat with flowers.

Sugar beet is a root crop that looks similar to a parsnip and is used for commercial sugar production. Sown in spring, then harvested in late autumn and early winter, most of it is grown in eastern England and the West Midlands. Look for rows of bright green-purple plants with broad, frilly oval-shaped leaves.

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In England and Wales, farmers of land crossed by public rights of way must ensure that the route is visible, and users are not obstructed or endangered. Field-edge paths should not be cultivated (minimum widths are 1.5m for footpaths and 3m for bridleways). Cross-field paths should be reinstated following ploughing and cropping. If a cross-field path has not been left clear, walkers are within their rights to continue through the field of crops,

following the path as best they can.

In Scotland, walkers have the right to walk in field margins when crops are growing, but to avoid damage should stick near edges, in single file and where possible on paths or unsown ground. Once crops have been harvested, it is acceptable to walk on the stubble to cross fields. Any ploughed paths should be reinstated by farmers within two weeks, and if a core path is affected, they should provide an alternative route.

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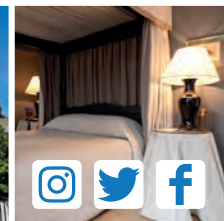
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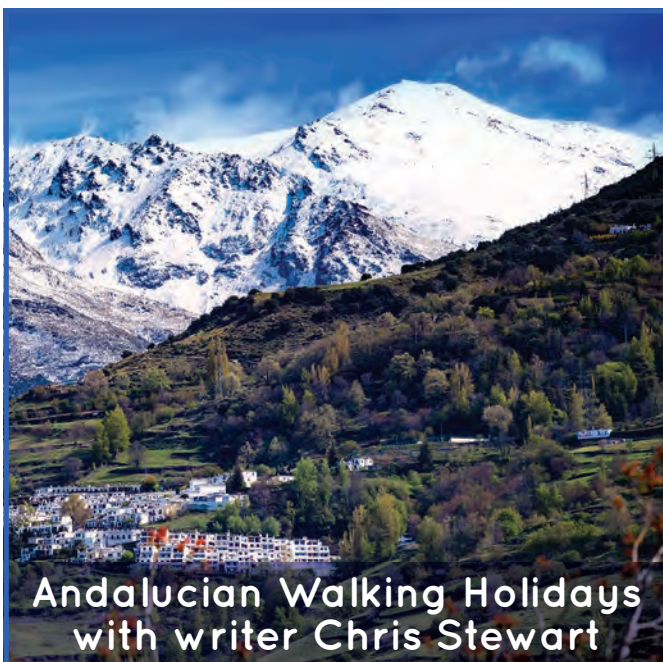
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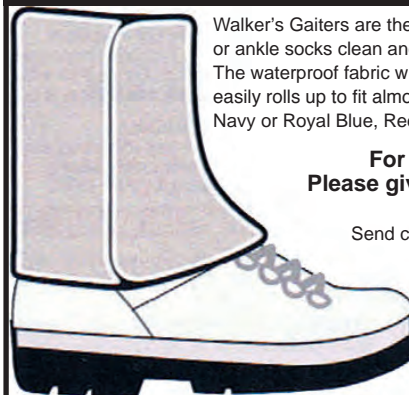
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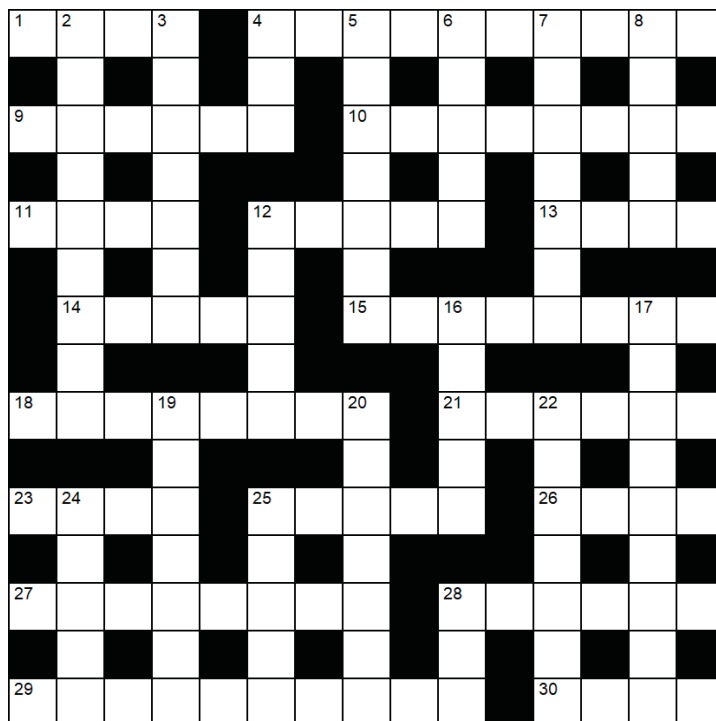
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Summer 2019 crossword clues

ACROSS

- 1** Last of walkers, however, turned back (hit toe, painfully) (4)
4 What a would-be long-distance ramblers experiences – itchy feet? (10)
9 Irish county, feature of Donegal waymarker (6)
10 LDP from Gravesend to Eastbourne, we'd always endlessly misconstrued (8)
11 Cuillin Hills location – heavens! Needs energy (4)
12 See **12** Down
13 A walk in the park? (4)
14 & 4 Down Elizabeth I's favourite route? Epping to Harwich LDP (5,3)
15 Greater Manchester borough with a 32-mile trail – it'd seem a deviation (8)
18 No stoic, I mixed a type of rehydrating drink (8)
21 Backing of United Nations money for suede-like leather (6)
23 Prohibition on north Northern Ireland river (4)

- 25** Regular walkers wear down these solitary trails, finally (5)
26 Lazy Nottinghamshire river (4)
27 Loitered around blue-grey rock found, eg, in North Pennines (8)
28 & 28 Down Broadstairs sandy inlet – associated with James Cook? (6,3)
29 Town on edge of Brecon Beacons NP – darn lovely rambling (10)
30 Get this to take a hike in the US (4)

DOWN

- 2** Lacking a path, tackles SR perhaps (9)
3 Chief includes three directions for town linked with Windermere (7)
4 See **14** Across
5 City on Wales Coast Path provides fresh fortified wine (7)
6 Peak District village contributes to restored alehouses (5)
7 Runs in tights? (7)
8 Marks rock faces (5)
12 & 12 Across A way

- on East Sussex/Kent coastline, named after Roman fortification – roaming horses and an ox (5,5)
16 Men of habit, St Cuthbert's Way founders? (5)
17 Area on the Thames Path: cold, dank development to south! (9)
19 Abbey on Wye Valley Walk held in respect, internationally (7)
20 Valley in Cheviot Hills. It's educational! (7)
22 City at end of Severn Way – fancy bistro on left (7)
24 Everyone goes round to coral island (5)
25 Irish county town's good in soil management (5)
28 See **28** Across

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MY PERFECT DAY

SIMON REEVE

The TV adventurer reveals his love of Dartmoor and how a night walk in Glencoe turned his life around

INTERVIEW REBECCA SWIRSKY

Where would you wake up on your perfect day?

Wild camping with my family on Dartmoor in Devon. We live there, but wild camping puts you in contact with Mother Nature in all her wondrous forms. With its forests, hills, streams and huge amounts of beauty – not just open moorland – Dartmoor is one of my favourite parts of planet Earth.

What's your favourite walk?

For bragging rights, particularly with children, walking High Willhays is pretty damn good. At 621 metres above sea level, it's the highest point on Dartmoor. It's also the highest point in the UK, south of the Brecon Beacons – so you can say, 'Kids, we're going up a mountain that is the highest peak in England, south of the Peak District.' Low-impact exertion mixed with maximum bragging rights.

Who would be your ideal walking companion?

Bill Bryson is a funny and wonderful traveller. He's happy to laugh at his own shortcomings. Interested and interesting – he's perfect travelling material.

What was your earliest nature-based experience?

Well, key for me were Holiday Fellowship holidays – Christian holidays themed on long walks. We would stay as a community at a rambling country house that had seen better days. A couple of walks would be guided daily, an easier one and a more energetic walk, such as a 23-mile day walk around Loch Awe or Derwentwater. Variety, community and scenery – a mix I loved, in that order. There's something special about walking with a group of people with mixed ages, stories



📍 Clockwise from top: Simon exploring the Caucasus Mountains, Russia; a trip to Glencoe changed his life; Derwentwater, a favourite for long walks

and interests. I was about 10 or 11 years old and my brother was eight. I loved it. I was a troubled, urban kid; there were girls I fancied and there was the thrill of reaching the view. Walkers are lovely people – you don't get nasty walkers, do you? It's self-selecting for nice people.

In your autobiography you reveal that you struggled with depression. Do you think walking has helped?

Getting outside is something that should be prescribed more often. A walk saved my life. I was in a dark place after I left school, with no real qualifications. I was suicidal. After claiming benefits

and social security, I scraped some money together and went on a journey to Scotland. With no map or food or water, I took a walk around Glencoe, which ended up becoming a bit of a hike up the ridge of mountains. Surprisingly, I made it to the top and back down in total darkness. It gifted me with an enormous amount of physical confidence when I was incredibly low. Afterwards, I began applying myself to life and for jobs. I can see clearly there was a before and after to this hike. I don't think I've ever felt such a rush of self-confidence and physical achievement as when I sat alone under those stars.

You've travelled through 130 countries. What's the most surprising thing you've learnt about our planet?

That we are annihilating life on Earth – and hearing that from indigenous people, who, while knowing nothing about climate change, have told me that the climate in their patch of the world is drastically changing. On TV, I aim for a human, rather than a professional, response to situations. Often those emotions are fear and sadness and fundamental disappointment – that we are the most interesting creature who has ever existed and yet there is a risk of us destroying the only planet we will call home. If I consider my son, it makes me angry that we are so short-sighted and willing to squander the right to life and enjoyment of future generations. Conversely, another surprising element has been how safe and welcoming the people of planet Earth are.

Simon's memoir Step by Step (Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99) is out in paperback this August.



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