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Country
walking
MAGAZINE

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and stop fears
holding you
back



Uncover local routes and kick start your passion for walking



It's Friday, and the weekend weather is looking dry ...

... so you've decided to plan a walk for the weekend. You cycle through the options you know – the canal tow-path route you did once in summer, the footpath route your mate showed you recently, across the fields and up into the woods; or climbing one of the peaks near you via the popular “easy route” where you can follow others up. All great options, all well-trodden, all somehow failing to get you excited about heading out.

That's a common feeling adventurer Anna McNuff can relate to: “When you've lived somewhere for a while and you think you know places to go, your brain thinks “this is dull.”

If you're new to walking, it's easier to stick to what you know but that doesn't always make for the most exciting outings. You could be living in the heart of an AONB – the Chilterns, the Pennines, the Suffolk Coast – and still find it uninspiring because you've walked the same half-hour footpath loop with the dog a million times over. If you really want to get into walking, the trick is not necessarily to go bigger... or further. Finding some new-to-you footpaths and linking them up differently could breathe new life into your local adventures, and build your route planning confidence in the process.

“It's like Hansel and Gretel leaving little breadcrumbs on the trails for other people.”

But short of pouring over a paper map that you struggle to interpret, and cross-checking with Google satellite images, how do you start planning routes that actually get you excited to start earning your walking stripes?

If you're komoot ambassador Anna, you check komoot: “I committed to looking at where other people have gone –

I basically did a search [on the komoot map] around Gloucester and ended up finding all these new places!”

Outdoor writer and fellow ambassador Sian Lewis has a similar experience of komoot's route planner. She taps into the insider knowledge fellow users share via komoot Highlights and finds Tours “literally on my doorstep, and it's quite surprising what's there.”

She gets ideas thanks to fellow users like Anna who leave “breadcrumbs” along her route: “I think it's really cool that I can take pictures as I go along, and upload them. It's like Hansel and Gretel leaving little breadcrumbs on the trails for other people.”

Like Sian and Anna, you can discover your local area by tapping into community insights. Use komoot's route planner on web or mobile to plan and tailor your walks in just a few clicks. From an interactive elevation profile that warns you how steep the climbs are, to the estimated time to complete your hike based on the distance, elevation, and your fitness, you'll have all the information you need to lace up your boots in confidence. Plus the reframe you need to get excited enough about planning local routes that you'll be route planning like a pro in no time!



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WELCOME TO Walking

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  **komoot**

There are lots of authors who write serious essays about the physical and spiritual benefits of walking, but I think the poet who best captures the joy of getting out there is Dr Seuss. 'It's opener there, in the wide open air,' he writes. 'Out there things can happen, and frequently do, to people as brainy, and footsy as you.' Every walk can be – will be – an adventure, whether it's climbing a mountain or spotting a cheeky robin in the park, leaving footprints on a sandy beach or braving the cold so that drink by the pub fire tastes all the sweeter.

And while the rewards are rich, the investment required is minimal. There's no need to fork out for pricey equipment, or pay fees to a gym; walking is something you can do for free anywhere and everywhere – urban, suburban, rural, wilderness. Britain has a world-beating network of paths with over 140,000 miles in England and Wales alone, there to help you explore the staggering array of beautiful landscapes packed into this tiny island. Read on to discover some of those great places, what to look for if you're after boots or a backpack, and how to make friends with your map and conquer any worries.

And then, in the words of the great Dr Seuss:
'You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!'

JENNY WALTERS

Features Editor, *Country Walking*

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Find inspiration

Look out for **QR codes** like this in the following pages – each one gives you free access to amazing routes to walk on the komoot app!



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**COUNTRY
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Your body on **WALKING**

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BULLETPROOF

Walking is more than twice as effective as running at fighting off heart disease, and an hour a day cuts your risk of heart attack in your 50s and 60s in half; a 30-minute walk a day cuts the risk of a stroke by a third.

BREATHE EASY

An hour's walk a day can reverse thirty years' gradual aerobic capacity decline, according to a US study which saw 50-year-old subjects regain the lungs of their 20-year-old selves.

LEAN MACHINE

Insulin allows your body to absorb the energy in food - but it also encourages the long-term storage of fat. Walking causes insulin levels to drop, yet at the same time increases your muscles' sensitivity to what insulin there is. That means you burn energy more efficiently and fat more readily - cutting your risk of obesity in half and developing Type 2 diabetes by 60% on the way.

FRICION FREE

Frictionless movement is thanks to synovial fluid in your joints. Research has shown regular walking increases levels of the magic oil as well as causing your body to supercharge it with its own supply of anti-inflammatory compounds.

BONES OF IRON

All exercise is good for the spine, but unlike aerobics or gym work, walking boosts bone density in the pelvis too - reducing the chances of hip fractures by 40%.

HIGH ON LIFE

Walking boosts circulation, triggers endorphins, decreases stress hormones and increases oxygen supply to every cell in your body, helping you to feel more alert and alive. A meta-study of research concluded: "Walking has a statistically significant, large effect on the symptoms of depression" - making it at least as effective as medication.


CANCER FIGHTER

Walking is a powerful weapon against the disease, with 10,000 cases a year of breast and bowel cancer being preventable in Britain alone by an hour on foot a day, according to the World Cancer Research Fund. For those who already have one of the commonest forms, Macmillan says a daily walk can cut the risk of death by 40%-50%.

AGEING IS OPTIONAL

Walking prevents muscle wastage (something the over-60s can never get back), triggers cells' anti-aging processes and even helps repair DNA. It also wards against brain shrinkage and increases memory, creativity, reasoning and sociability.

BUILT TO WALK

The fact we put our heels down first when we step is an evolutionary advantage that conserves 53% more energy per stride than running, scientists at the University of Utah found: "We consume more energy to run than the typical mammal our size. But we are exceptionally economical walkers." 

What you **CAN SEE**

Every walk, wherever you go, gives you the chance for magical encounters with...

...wildlife

The whistling call of a red kite, the tumbling flight of a lapwing, early snowdrops nodding like gossiping neighbours, the tangerine streak of a vanishing fox, the cider-crush smell of a crab apple tree, the luminous velvet of moss in sunlight, the fairytale glow of a toadstool, the sweet-sour pop of a ripe blackberry on your tongue – these are just a few of the wild things you might encounter on a walk, where gentle speed and quiet progress let you get close to nature. You don't have to know what something is called to enjoy its beauty, but if you do want to dig a little deeper, Spiny Software and Sunbird both produce handy ID apps



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

for your phone. Or if you prefer book-learning, we're long-time fans of the *Reader's Digest Nature Lovers Library*, for their detailed illustrations and rich descriptions that span history and folklore too (it's out of print, but readily available secondhand).



...weather

Warm, blue-sky days are wonderful, but as a walker you'll discover that every kind of weather has its joy, whether it's the exhilarating exfoliation of a howling wind or the still, crystalline beauty of a hoar frost, the hush inside a misty cloud or the percussion of rain on your hood (and yes, sometimes the joy is coming back in from the elements – never will your sofa seem so cosy). Of course in remote or upland terrain, bad weather is no joke, but you can find detailed mountain forecasts at the Met Office (metoffice.gov.uk/weather/specialist-forecasts/mountain) and the Mountain Weather Information Service (mwis.org.uk) to help you dodge the worst of it.



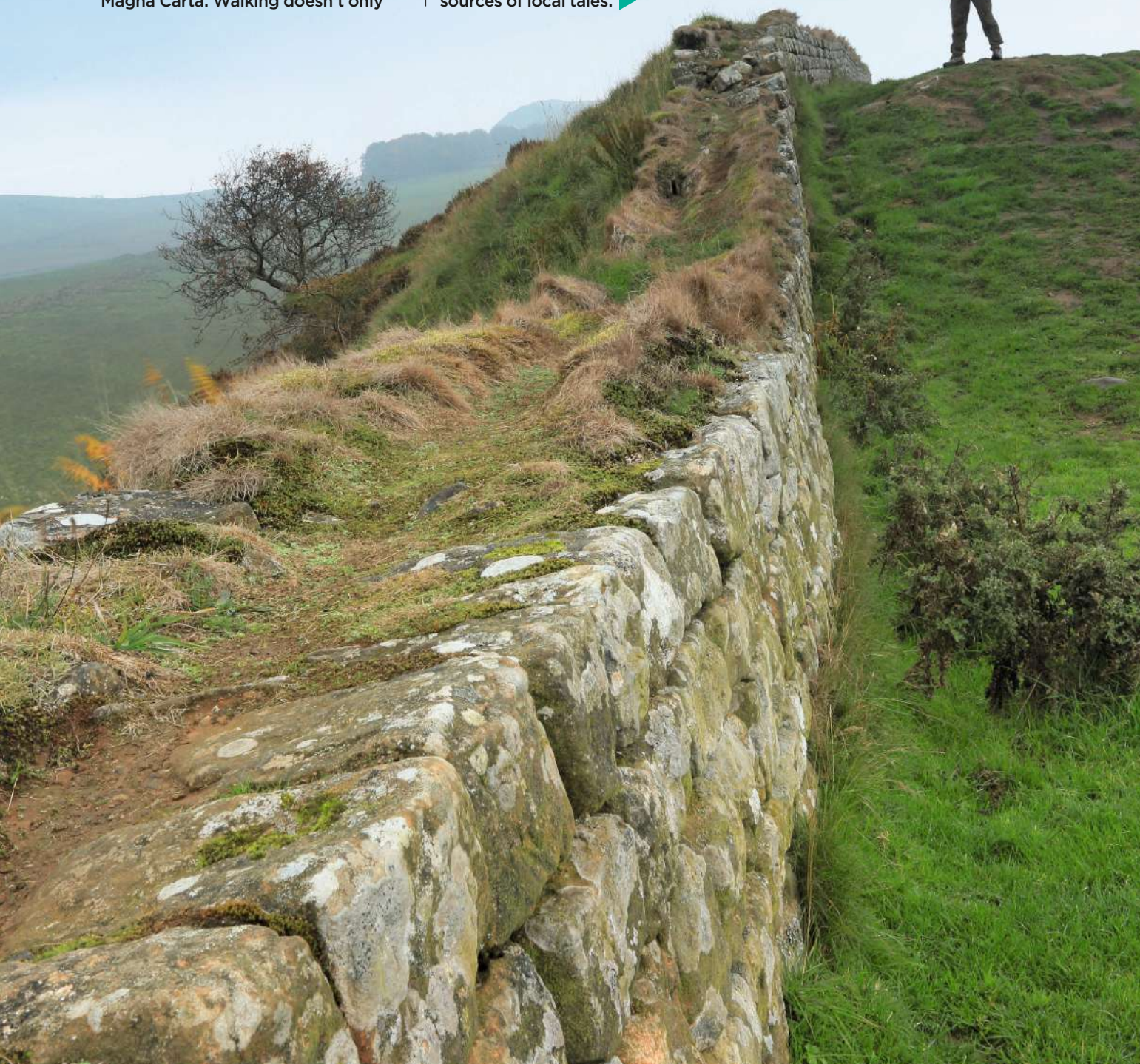
...history

Learning about Britain's history is one thing, but walking where it happened is like moving from a script-reading onto a film set: suddenly, it all comes roaring to life. Imagine stepping onto the Sussex field where William conquered and Harold took an arrow in the eye, or walking the Northumberland escarpment where the Roman Emperor Hadrian built his wall; exploring the Northamptonshire village where Mary Queen of Scots lost her head, or strolling the Thames riverside where King John signed the Magna Carta. Walking doesn't only

reveal the history of kings and queens: you'll discover lesser-known, just-as-fascinating, stories of local heroes and villains too. Look for the blue symbols of buildings of historic interest, castles, heritage centres, museums, and properties run by the National Trust, English Heritage and Cadw on the map, take time to study local information boards, and pop into any church you pass - they're often good sources of local tales. ▶



PHOTO: DEREK CROUCHER/LAMY.



...adventure

The fun of walking isn't only in the walking, it's also in the tiny adventures it presents along the way - the tarn that tempts you to a wild swim, the tree that has to be climbed, the ridge that has to be scrambled, the animal tracks in the wood that have to be followed, the cliffs that tempt you to

hunt for fossils, the waterfall you discover you can walk through. And there's confidence-building satisfaction in meeting the bigger challenges too, like climbing a hill you didn't think you could, or walking further than you ever thought you would.





...people

It's rare you'll pass another walker without exchanging a cheery hello, or maybe stopping for a quick chat. It can really buoy your day – especially in these troubling, socially-distanced times. And if you're looking for someone to walk with there are local groups all over the country or you can join our friendly, welcoming online community at facebook.com/groups/walk1000miles/

“It’s rare you’ll pass another walker without exchanging a cheery hello...”

...peace

Oh. So. Quiet. In this noisy world it's easy to forget the restorative power of peace. As you walk away from the sound of cars and streets and crowds, you might feel your shoulders drop and your mind start to jangle a little less, as the loudest noise is now the breeze rustling through a poplar, or the chatter of sparrows in a hedge. Wildlife sound recordist Chris Watson explains how quiet places let us switch from the stress of blocking out sounds,

to actively listening: “We waste so much energy in shutting things out, we don't get the chance to listen. I'm saddened that people have to battle through this or seem to ignore it. It's a stressful thing to deal with, that you spend most of your time and energy shutting things out rather than listening.”



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



...views

Britain's landscape creases, crinkles, and crumples in ways that make for heart-stopping, jaw-dropping vistas. Some of them will stay with you for life – years later you'll find yourself dreaming back in an idle moment, with a distant look in your eye, to the panorama from Snowdon (left), or along the paper-white cliffs of Sussex's Seven Sisters, or across a glass-still Buttermere in the Lake District. And it's not only the grand scenery of our national parks that delivers good viewage – it can be something as everyday as a field of barley hit in the summer sunshine, a twist in a woodland path, or a country park frosted white on a winter day. Who knows what you might see? **CW**

Find your **PERFECT WALK**

Britain, like the ultimate pick 'n' mix sweet shop, packs extraordinary, mouth-watering variety into its 80,823 square miles. What will you try first?

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



THE SEASIDE

Coast is something Britain excels at, in both quantity and quality. The shoreline of the mainland alone stretches 11,073 miles, without taking into account all the islands, islets and skerries speckled out to sea, and none of us lives more than 70 miles from the waves. The west coast tends to be craggier, its rock frayed to cove and cliff by Atlantic rollers; the east tends to long beaches and wild expanses of saltmarsh. And whatever kind of coastal walk you dream about, you can find it here. White shell beaches caressed by turquoise sea? Try the Isles of Scilly (below) or Luskentyre

in the Outer Hebrides. Strands of gold that stretch for miles and heap into dunes? Head to Holkham Bay in Norfolk, or Saunton Sands in Devon. High fractured cliffs rattled by thundering waves? You'll find those in Wales' far west, in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Shingle spits so strange they seem like places from another world? Crunch your way along Dungeness in Kent or Orford Ness in Suffolk. Epic headlands that take you far out into the waves? Clamber along Worms Head (tide permitting!) on Wales' Gower Peninsula. White cliffs, secret coves, rock arches? Yes, yes

and yes – the Seven Sisters in Sussex, numerous hidden bays along the wiggly Cornish coast, Durdle Door in Dorset. We could go on (and on)...

Ready to walk?

Scan the QR code to discover

10 top seaside routes on the komoot app, plus inspiration for hundreds more coastal trails.





THE GENTLE HILLS

If you dream of paths wending over rolling green hills between villages tucked into valleys, then looking for places with 'downs' or 'wolds' in the name is a good place to start. There are the chalky swells of the South Downs National Park, the North Downs too, and the Dorset Downs (above), to name but a few. Then there are the famous

honey-stoned Cotswolds, and the much quieter wolds of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire too. Some places stick with the plainer 'hills' though, like the Chilterns north-west of London and the Eildon Hills in the Scottish Borders, a trio of shapely grass summits that prove even somewhere as famously rugged as Scotland has its softer side.

**Ready
to walk?**

Scan the QR code to discover **10 top gently rolling routes** on the komoot app, plus inspiration for lots more **walks on little hills**.



THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Britain's highest peaks may not be giants in world terms – Ben Nevis tops out at 1345m, which is less than a sixth of the height of Everest – but they more than make up for it in character. As a general rule, things get taller and gnarlier as you head north and west, with Britain's toothiest, toughest range – the Black Cuillin – out in the sea on Scotland's Isle of Skye. That's a daunting prospect involving ropes, but the vast majority of Britain's mountains fall firmly into the walker's, not climber's, remit, with places like the Yorkshire Dales and Brecon Beacons a friendly place to start.

And the variety is bewitching, with each upland region having its own distinct personality. The Lake District is renowned for its nobbly-bobbly fells; the Brecon Beacons for the origami-sharp folds of summits like Pen y Fan; the Cairngorms for chunky granite behemoths like Ben Macdui; Snowdonia for shapely, ice-sculpted peaks like Snowdon and Cadair Idris (below); the Assynt in the far north for standalone, island-mountains like Suilven. And if you get a taste for summits, there's a wealth of tick-lists to keep you inspired from the Munros (the 282 Scottish mountains over

3000 feet) to the Wainwrights (the 214 Lake District hills included in Alfred Wainwright's famous Pictorial Guides to the Lake District Fells).

Ready to walk?

Scan the QR code to discover **10 top mountain routes** on the komoot app, plus inspiration for other **hilly hikes**.



BRITAIN'S BEST WALKS

Find **27 turn-by-turn route guides** with maps in every issue of *Country Walking* magazine, featuring amazing walks from across the nation.





THE FORESTS

‘Between every two pines there is a doorway to a new world.’ With those words John Muir, nature writer and conservationist, perfectly captured the thrill of walking in woodland, where every step reveals something new to discover in the tangled world of close-knit trees. Britain’s woods now tend to grow in patches, rather than Amazonian expanses, but they’re liberally scattered so you should be able to find one near you (the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust are good places to start). And you’ll find even the

smallest forest can be an immersive experience, as the trees soon shut out the world beyond to enclose you in a kaleidoscope of whispering summer leaves, or crunching autumnal colour, or the sculpted austerity of bare winter branches. Britain’s arboreal highlights include the deciduous acres and woodland glades of the New Forest (above); the Caledonian forest at Rothiemurchus in the Cairngorms, guarded by ancient Scots pines; and the twisted fragments of wildwood like Wistman’s Wood on Dartmoor,

where you will feel like you’ve stepped into a forest from a fairytale.

Ready to walk?

Scan the QR code to discover **10 top woodland routes** on the komoot app, plus inspiration for hundreds more **trails among the trees.**





THE CITIES

More than 83% of us live in urban areas, but walking doesn't have to mean travelling out of town to the nearest beauty spot. City strolling can be fascinating, as you roll through the rapidly changing scenery of houses, gardens, shops, cafes, pubs and parks, often bustling with things happening now, and storied with things that happened in the past. You will discover all kinds of things on foot you'd never see otherwise, and in many cities you'll find surprisingly bucolic views too. Almost 50% of London (left) is green or blue – park, wood, river and lake – which is why it became the world's first National Park City last year. And Edinburgh's Holyrood Park is like a slice of the Highlands dropped into the metropolis, topped by the ex-volcano of Arthur's Seat.

Ready to walk?

Scan the QR code to discover **10 top city routes** on the komoot app, plus inspiration for hundreds more **urban trails**.



THE WILD MOORS

Emily Brontë and Kate Bush aren't the only ones in thrall to the wiley, windy, wuthering moors. The curving heather and big skies feel spine-tinglingly wild, and all you can hear is the breeze running up the hill and the haunting call of a curlew. The views roll deep and lonely on Dartmoor (right), the North Pennines and Scotland's Rannoch Moor; find more intimate heathery scenes at Dunwich Heath in Suffolk and Ashdown Forest in Sussex (home of Winnie-the-Pooh). [CW](#)

Ready to walk?

Scan the QR code to discover **10 top routes on moor and heath** on the komoot app, plus ideas for lots more **heathery trails**.



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 Iliotibial band syndrome
 Hip Pain
 Lower back pain

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Something in us yearns to be in the forest.

The safety, the calmness, the peace. Or alternatively, the adventure, the fun and the excitement – it just depends on what you're looking for. And whatever you want from your forest visit, **Forestry England's** nationwide network can deliver, from small woodlands to vast upland forests.

Forestry England looks after more than 1500 forests and woods, and many of its sites offer easy access, parking facilities, information boards and waymarked trails, making them perfect places to discover England's richest greenery in comfort and safety.

And these magical places for walking are closer than you think.

Easy access

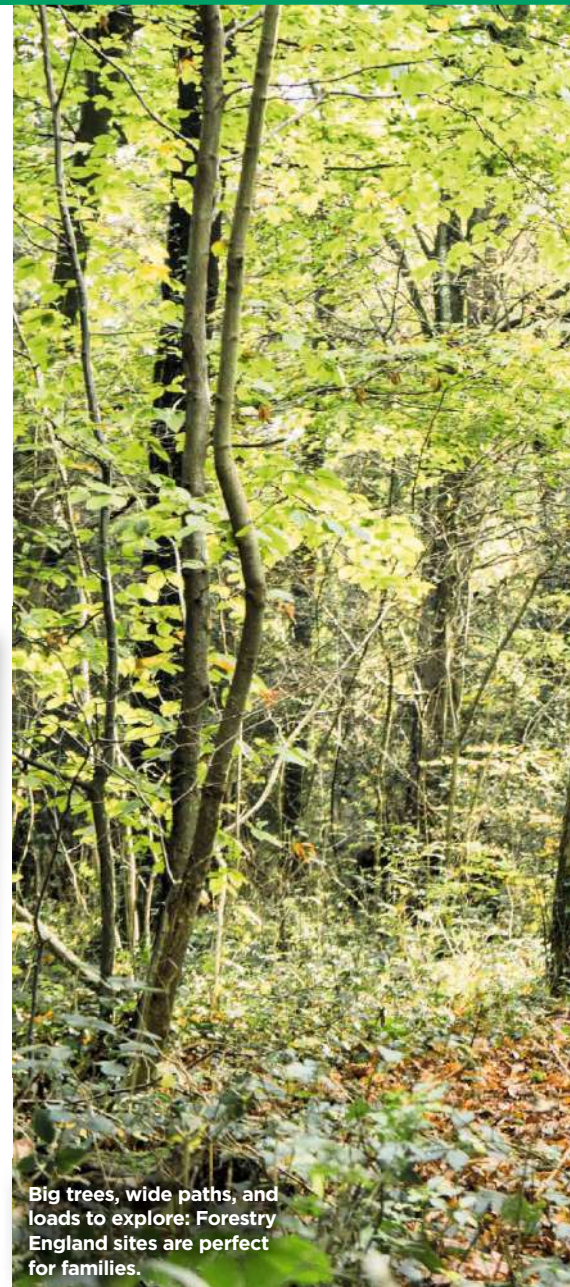
99% of England's population lives within an hour's drive of a Forestry England site. Many sites offer clearly signposted walking trails with easy-to-read leaflets that can be downloaded before you go, or found in the information centres at many sites. You'll find walks of any length, from family strolls of 1-3 miles to challenging hikes of 5-10 miles (even longer, in



some larger estates). And at 40 or so of the bigger sites you'll find a café and visitor facilities, so you can treat yourself after the perfect walk with a cuppa, some cake or a hot chocolate.

A place to be calm

Forests are the ultimate in chill-out zones. Enclosed beneath the canopy, with soft ground soaking up sound, the world becomes a quieter, calmer place. It's the perfect place for mindful escapes. A simple walk is enough to take you away from the pressures of today's strange world, but if you want a truly mindful moment, try what the



Big trees, wide paths, and loads to explore: Forestry England sites are perfect for families.

Japanese call *shinrin-yoku* or forest bathing: essentially the act of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, observing nature around you while breathing deeply. It's known as 'bathing' because it can trigger the same sense of depth as immersion in water, providing a sensation of peace and detachment – almost as if you're floating. As pioneering walker and naturalist John Muir said: "The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness."

A place for adventures

On the other hand, forests can also deliver all the activity, adventure and excitement you'd ever want from a walk. From energetic long-distance routes to dedicated family-friendly and dog-friendly trails, it's all here, along with breathtaking viewpoints and secluded glades just waiting to be discovered. Larger sites offer guided

WHERE WILL YOU DISCOVER?

With hundreds of sites across the country, you're bound to find a forest walk near you. In these uncertain times, forests offer the perfect places to find space and be with nature. However, like all organisations, Forestry England is having to adapt and respond to the pandemic, so please check the website before you go. You can search via map or postcode at

forestryengland.uk/visit and find great advice at forestryengland.uk/walking. If you aren't able to visit the forests right now, the website can also provide ideas and information to help you stay connected to nature at home. Read thoughts from forest-loving walkers at forestryengland.uk/blog and discover the science behind woodland wellbeing at forestryengland.uk/wellbeing



WIN A FORESTRY ENGLAND MEMBERSHIP!

Here's your chance to win a Forestry England membership. It gives you free parking at a forest of your choice so you can make full use of the forest closest to you, as well as many other benefits and discounts. To enter the competition, go to www.walk1000miles.co.uk/winforestry and answer this simple question: Which fictional beast has his own trail at key Forestry England sites? Full T&Cs available online.

walks covering everything from birdwatching to fungus foraging. You can try alternative ideas like Nordic walking or orienteering – or look for wild beasts. Forestry England also has a longstanding partnership with acclaimed author Julia Donaldson, creator of the **Gruffalo** – so young adventurers can come to the deep, dark wood to discover orienteering

trails and giant Gruffalo sculptures, or download the Gruffalo Spotters Trail app and seek out the fearsome beast in some of the most spectacular woodlands in the country. (Check what's available at your chosen forest before you visit.)

Wildlife encounters

You'll find an incredible array of wildlife in Forestry England sites. The woods are a birdwatcher's paradise. In addition to hundreds of familiar species, you might find rarer birds like firecrest, warblers and kingfishers (the latter a fleeting splash of colour as they dive into streams seeking prey), as well as all six UK species of owl and an array of birds of prey, such as goshawks, ospreys, buzzards and red kites. The trees provide habitats and food for a huge range of mammals too, such as badger, dormouse, red squirrel, pine marten and many species of deer. And

don't forget wildflowers: through spring and summer, our forests are carpeted with orchids, wood-sorrel, bluebells, snowdrops and foxgloves. And in autumn, come on a fungus foray, where experts can point out everything from the edible morel to the toxic-but-stunning fly agaric. So whatever you're yearning for, you can find it in our forests.

Catch sight of an osprey from Whinlatter Forest.



USEFUL LINKS

Find your nearest site at forestryengland.uk/visit and access enhanced information via the following pages:

- forestryengland.uk/walking
- forestryengland.uk/wellbeing
- forestryengland.uk/we-are-wildlife
- forestryengland.uk/gruffalo

What to **WEAR**

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You don't have to buy a thing to get started in walking. If you can walk comfortably in what you've got, off you go. But if you're going to make a habit/hobby out of walking, a little knowledge and some

careful shopping will make your walks comfier and cosier – and give you the confidence to head for new horizons. Here's our simple guide to getting started, and what to look for when you're browsing.

1) GOOD FOOTWEAR

A walker's feet are their skis, their 9-iron and their casting rod – and they cost a lot less than any of those. *But* that means you need to take care of them. If you're comfy in trainers, great. But once your curiosity takes you further out into the countryside, you're going to hit some terrain that trainers don't do so well in: muddy fields; stony hill tracks; boggy moors. And to a pair of dedicated walking shoes or boots, these are all in the job description. Tougher, comfier, more stable, more protective and more weatherproof: good footwear really is your golden ticket. Here's what to look for.

FIT (PART 1)

Every foot is different, so finding the right fit for yours is paramount. Get your feet measured in an outdoors shop with a Brannock device, so the staff can find you the closest match in

their range. Top tip: shop in the afternoon when your feet are warm and swollen, as they are on a walk.

FIT (PART 2)

Wear your new shoes/boots round the house for a week before you take them outside. This gives you time to work out if they really are perfect for you – and keeps them pristine enough to exchange if they aren't.

COMFORT

An ergonomic **insole** will cradle your foot and soak up impacts. Look for good support under the **arch** and round the **heel**. Some pricier boots have **memory foam insoles**, which feel like an on-the-go foot massage.

STABILITY & GRIP

A tough, grippy **outsole** will give you traction through swampy

field-gates but also help to balance your foot on uneven hill paths.

PROTECTION

A tough **toe-box** protects your toes from the bumps and bangs of tree-roots and rocks, while a high, padded **ankle cuff** will lessen the risk of twisting your ankle on uneven ground.

WEATHERPROOFING

Waterproofing makes a huge difference, but it can also make your feet hot, so you need a balance between waterproofing and **breathability** – i.e. the ability to vent excess heat and remove sweat. The key to that is a **waterproof/breathable membrane**. The 'gold standard' is **Gore-Tex** but it can bump up the price. A lot of brands offer cheaper footwear with an 'in-house' membrane, and Gore-Tex options for a higher price.

Try these for size...

QUECHUA

NH150 WP shoe **£25** ●●

Astoundingly good value for a comfy, waterproof all-rounder.

decathlon.co.uk



VANGO Grivola boot **£80** ●●

A terrific entry-level boot if you fancy tackling hillier ground.

vango.co.uk



SCARPA Mistral GTX boot **£150** ●●

Great for all terrains; has a Gore-Tex membrane and is *really* built to last.

scarpa.co.uk





CARING COMPANIONS

A bit of TLC after use will really help your footwear last longer, such as a quick scrub with **Grangers Repel reproofers** (£8.50, grangers.co.uk). And the best pair of shoes in the world won't do their best work unless you couple them with versatile, breathable walking socks. Try the **Bridgedale Hike Midweight** (£17, bridgedale.com), which is just about perfect.



2) A DECENT WATERPROOF

Sometimes it rains. But with a decent waterproof, you can stay dry, cosy and unbothered by the drizzle. A good jacket needs to have that same magic mix of waterproof barricade *and* breathability, so you don't overheat on the go. Here's what to look for...

WATERPROOFING

It sounds obvious, but do check the jacket you're looking at claims to be **waterproof**. There's a different type of outdoor jacket called a **soft shell** which is designed to be warm, windproof and **water-resistant** but not fully waterproof. (They are jolly useful, but you can't rely on them to keep out day-long rain.)

BREATHABILITY

As with shoes, a **waterproof/breathable membrane** is the best

option, and again, Gore-Tex is the flagship option if you've got the money and want to make a long-term investment. But many own-brand membranes work reliably too, such as Rohan's Barricade and Berghaus' Hydrosheal.

ADJUSTABILITY

Ideally you want to be able to tailor the fit as closely as possible. Look for a **drawcord** on the hem, adjustable cuffs to keep the draughts out of the sleeves, and an adjustable hood that ensures a snug fit round your head.

POCKETS

Always handy – but make sure they are as waterproof as the rest of the jacket. Look for a **taped zip** (a strip of waterproof fabric that is heat-bonded over the zip).

Try these for size...

ROHAN

Ridge £150 ●●

A beautifully made and built-to-last jacket with outstanding breathability. rohan.co.uk



BERGHAUS

Deluge Light £80 ●●

Berghaus make waterproofs of every style and thickness. Here's a great lightweight option at a very reasonable price. berghaus.com



CRAGHOPPERS

Atlas ● / Toscana ● £80

Usually findable for less than that, these all-weather jackets come with a lifetime guarantee. craghoppers.com

3) A MIDDLE LAYER

The secret of comfortable walking is layering: putting together two or three layers (base, mid and outer) which work in harmony to keep rain out, keep your body temperature stable, and get rid of unwanted heat and sweat. A **mid layer** is a great idea – not a heavy cotton jumper but something light, versatile and polyester-based like a **fleece** or a **soft shell**. A fleece is the warmer and more snuggly option; a soft shell is more adaptable as it's usually water-resistant (look for the letters DWR, which stand for Durable Water Repellent) – it will keep out drizzle or a sudden downpour, and dry out quickly afterwards.



TRY THESE FOR SIZE...

MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE

Snowdon fleece **£35** ●●
A great price for a snug, cosy mid layer. mountainwarehouse.com



MONTANE Dyno Stretch soft shell **£100** ●

A water-resistant jacket with the attributes of some that are twice its price. montane.co.uk



FJÄLLRÄVEN High Coast Wind Jacket **£170** ●●

Pricier, but full of great features (including excellent water-repellency) and likely to last you for years. fjallraven.co.uk

THE FRIENDS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

Whenever we ask CW readers what one item of kit has made the biggest difference to their walking, the second answer (after good footwear) is often **walking poles**. They keep your body well balanced, lengthen your stride and – crucially – relieve

the weight and pressure on your knees and lower back by about 30% (and even more on descents). Also useful for holding back brambles or nettles, and testing puddle depths. Here's a typical comment from a fan on our #walk1000miles group:

"Literally changed my life. I had knee problems for years but they hardly even trouble me now!" There is a technique to good pole usage; make sure your chosen pair explains the technique clearly. And a pair works much better than a single pole.

Try these for size...*

FORCLAZ 500AS **£36** ●

These well-made poles can switch from anti-shock (they bounce to soak up impacts) to rigid (more sturdy, less vibration). decathlon.co.uk



LEKI Journey Lite **£65** ●

Leki are the biggest name in poles. This is their most affordable all-rounder, with an easy-to-use flick-lock system to set the height. leki.com/uk



PACERPOLE 3-Section **£79** ●

They take some getting used to (you'll need to watch a video in which the designer shows you how to use them) but these uniquely designed poles have won thousands of fans. pacerpole.com



*Prices per pair

4) A BAG

Well obviously we mean a rucksack, but you don't have to buy something that looks ready to trek the Himalayas if you're just looking for something to carry your jacket and some snacks on a simple country walk, so we decided 'bag' sounded friendlier. That said, the refinements that come with a decent rucksack can make a huge difference to how comfortable you feel on a walk. Here's what we mean.

BACK SYSTEM

The way your pack sits against your back really can make a difference. To manage the heat and moisture that builds up, look for an ergonomically curved back panel with **ventilated padding**, or a **suspended system**, in which the load is held away from your back by a taut mesh panel, offering maximum ventilation.

HARNESS

The obvious difference between 'casual' rucksacks and more

specialised outdoor packs is usually the presence of a hip-belt and chest strap. These wrap the pack snugly round you, meaning the weight is dispersed around your waist and upper torso (not sitting heavily on your back) and the pack won't bounce around as you move.

STORAGE

It's good to have a large main compartment for a jacket, fleece and snacks, but it's also good to have well-placed extra pockets for a bottle/flask, car keys, valuables, map/guidebook, compass, sunscreen and first aid kit.

CAPACITY

15-25L packs are great for day walks; 30-40L packs are good for long weekends if you're walking between accommodation venues; and 50-60L packs are ideal for multi-day walks where you want a lot of kit, possibly including camping gear.

Try these for size...

MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE

Inca 18 **£60**

This has everything we talked about above, and is usually sold for £30. Bargain. mountainwarehouse.com



DEUTER AC Lite 18 / AC Lite 14 SL **£65**

Versatile, lightweight, a joy to wear and (like most of Deuter's range) comes in specific sizes and fits for men and women. deutergb.co.uk



OSPREY Talon 22 / Tempest 20 **£100**

Climb any hill in the UK and you're bound to see someone wearing one of these. Pretty much the perfect day-hiking pack. ospreyeurope.com



THE NICE-TO-HAVES

Little extras that might not be essential – but sure can make walking more fun!

SIT MAT

Nature is lovely but she doesn't often leave obvious places to sit, have a snack and watch the world go by. Step forward the sit mat – a foldable pad that fits neatly in your rucksack but pops out to make any surface comfy. Try the **Pocket Perch** (£20, jacwicksdesigns.co.uk, pictured) or the **Multimat Compact Kumfie** (£6, multimat.uk.com).



FLASK

Nothing improves a view like the steam of a hot coffee, especially in winter. Try the **LifeVenture TiV 500ml Vacuum Flask** (£17, lifeventure.com).



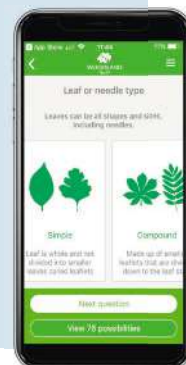
BINOCULARS

From checking if that's a handy signpost in the next field, to identifying whatever's making that beautiful singing sound in the sky, a pair of compact bins can enrich almost every walk. Try the **Silva Pocket 8X** (£40, silva.se).



...AND YOUR PHONE

We mostly walk to disconnect from our screen-heavy lives. But phones can be helpful: for route planning and mapping (like Komoot and OS Maps), for photos, for nature ID (like the free **British Tree ID** app from the Woodland Trust) – and if you sign up to #walk1000miles next month, it's your pass to the friendliest walking community on the planet. **CW**



Make friends with **YOUR MAP**

A map is packed with a bewildering amount of information, but you only need to focus on a few things to start to unravel its secrets.

* The examples below are all taken from an **Ordnance Survey Explorer** map (not reproduced to scale)

Find paths

Dashed green lines are every walker's favourite thing on the map as they represent **rights of way**. A line of short green dashes means it's a footpath, a line of longer dashes mean it's a bridleway, and a series of crosses or half-crosses indicates byways. You can walk them all, while other users like riders and cyclists are also permitted on bridleways and byways, but not on footpaths. And while those prized green lines mean you have a legal right to walk somewhere, they don't always guarantee you'll see a clear path on the ground: look for thin black dashes along the same line to know there will be a path you can clearly see. And the green diamonds? They show national trails or other long distance routes.







Discover Access Land

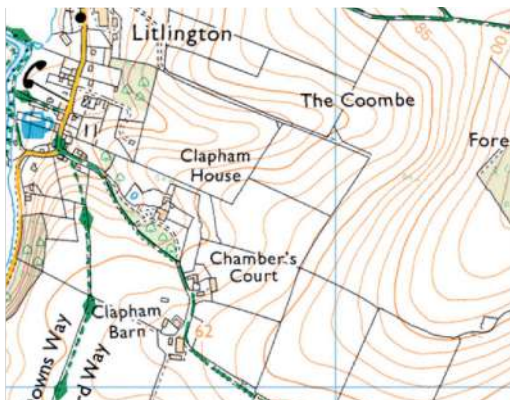
The bits of the map shaded peach show open access land – areas where you don't have to stick to the paths but have a right to roam wherever the fancy takes you. Strictly speaking, landowners can temporarily restrict access if necessary (check at openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk) but it's something we've rarely encountered. Access land is most plentiful in the uplands, but you can find pockets of it all over. But you won't see this tint on Scotland's maps, or any rights of way either, as Scottish law gives you the right to roam pretty much wherever you like.



MAP EXTRACTS: © CROWN COPYRIGHT 2020 ORDNANCE SURVEY MEDIA 021/20

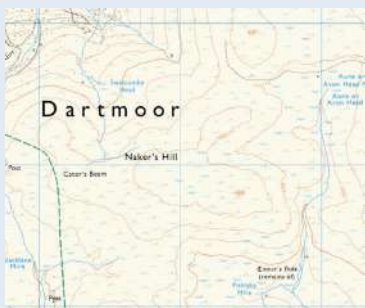
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (Rights of way are not shown on maps of Scotland)

-  Footpath
-  Bridleway
-  Byway open to all traffic
-  Restricted byway (not for use by mechanically propelled vehicles)



Count fields

These thin, often straight, black lines mark field boundaries like fences and walls, and they're one of the best ways to keep track of where you are in the countryside, field by field, particularly where distinctive landmarks are few and far between.



Check distance

Map scales vary but the best for walkers is a detail-packed 1:25,000 (Ordnance Survey Explorer or Harvey Maps Superwalker) where 1cm on the map = 250m on the ground. You'll see the map is divided into squares by thin blue grid lines; each square measures 4cm x 4cm and represents 1 square km.



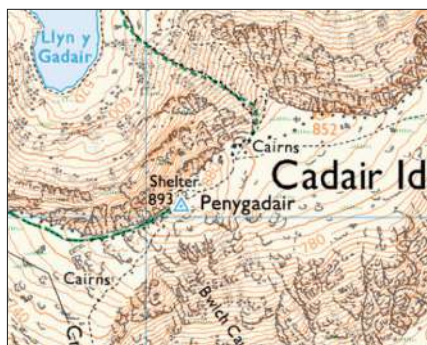
PHOTO: KUK KIM/ALAMY

WHERE DO I GET MAPS?
 Paper maps are sold at bookshops and often at petrol stations too. You can also access maps on your phone, through a range of apps.

Assess steepness

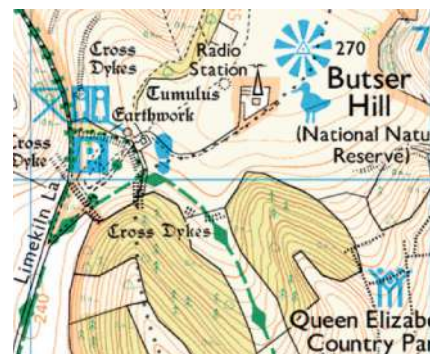
The delicate orange lines that swirl across the map are contours, which represent the 3D landscape on flat paper. Technically, each line joins points at the same height above sea-level so if you walked along one your height wouldn't change. The thing to

know is this: the closer they are together, the steeper the ground will be. Wide, curving lines mean open, undulating countryside; lines that are scrunched up tight (below left) mean steep, rugged hills.



Find up

The contour lines of a slope plunging into a valley or lifting to a ridgeline can look very similar, so how do you know what's up and what's down? The contour lines are regularly marked with numbers, showing the height in metres of that line above sea-level - find two and you can see if it's getting higher or lower. Even more usefully, the number is printed with the top of the digits pointing up the hill.



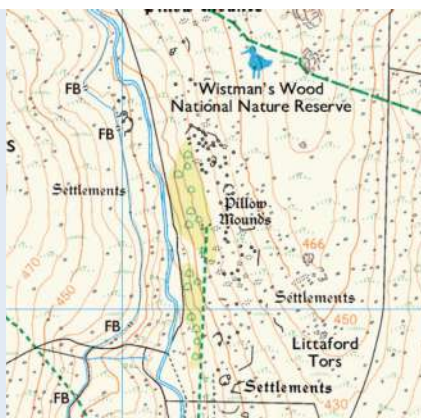
Spot what you love

All kinds of interesting things are marked on the map - pubs, nature reserves, panoramic viewpoints, castles, cathedrals, gardens, campsites - so check the legend for the full list (below are just a few), find the symbol that shows your favourite thing, then look for it on the map.

-  Viewpoint
Point de vue
Aussichtspunkt
-  Picnic site
Emplacement de pique-nique
Picknickplatz
-  Country park
Parc naturel
Landschaftspark
-  Garden/arboretum
Jardin/Arboretum
Garten/Baumgarten

Know the ground

As well as gradient, the map reveals detail about terrain, and whether your walk involves boulders, bracken, forest or scree. Some of the symbols are intuitive - like a lollipop tree for non-coniferous woodland or short green tufts for rough grassland, and blue ones for marsh - but check the map legend to familiarise yourself with the full rundown.



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How to plot a route

- **Fun things first!** What do you want from your walk? Sweet valleys or gnarly hills? Five kilometres, or 20? A circular walk or an out-and-back? Clear paths or trackless wilderness? Is there a sight you're keen to reach?
- **Grab the map.** If you've got a target, like a summit, then pinpoint it and look for paths nearby. Trace each one out, studying the contours and landscape for the route that will suit you best.
- **Wander the paper.** If it's more of a general area you're interested in, then see what catches your eye on the map – hills, rivers, forests, pubs – then look for paths to link them together and to a start.
- **Check it.** Is it about the right distance? Look closely for any hazards you might encounter like bogs or cliffs, adding a detour if necessary.



- **Suss it out.** A map can't show you everything, so if there's a section you want to know more about then try a satellite view, or geograph.org.uk which is collecting photos for every grid square in Britain.
- **Flex it.** Your planned route isn't set in stone – changeable weather and your own energy levels can all affect how your day pans out, so prepare a short cut if it pours, or a longer loop if the sun shines.



How to follow a route

- **Rehearse it.** Run your finger along the route and describe it to yourself – I'll go through a valley, past a church on the left, up a steep hill. It fixes the route in your mind and sets warning bells ringing if you start to go wrong.
- **Collect clues.** Notice things – junctions, woods, streams – even if your route is clear. Even once you've passed a feature, you can use it to pinpoint your location: we crossed a stream 200 metres back so we must be *here*.
- **Short legs.** Navigate in 500m sections: walk to path junction, check map, walk to ridgeline, check map, and so on. You'll know roughly where you are without having your nose stuck to the map.
- **Collect things.** Worried you'll miss a turning? Look for what's called a collecting feature – something unmissable like a cairn or tarn – just past what you're aiming for. Reach it and you've gone a bit too far.
- **Follow the rail.** Linear features like streams and walls are easy to follow on the map *and* the ground and make great 'handrails' – particularly if you're heading off path.
- **Judge distance.** Knowing how far you've come is crucial for knowing where you are. Generally you walk 4km in one hour, or 1km every 15 minutes. On an Explorer map that's 4cm, or straight across a grid square, every quarter of an hour. Hills slow you up, by about 1 minute for every 10 metres climbed.

How to get confident

- **Start map reading near home** so you can see how a familiar landscape translates to paper (or phone screen) and you'll never be too far from somewhere you recognise.
- **Use walk guides** with turn-by-turn instructions and maps – *Country Walking* has 27 in every issue.
- **Get the komoot app** and download a route from one of its many collections. It will give you instructions on the hoof, like your

car's satnav but on footpaths, with a reassuring dot on the screen to show exactly where you are. It also lets you plot your own walk, or put in your start and destination and it will plot the best route, and guide you along it by map and by voice, or notification.

- **Sign up for a one-day navigation course** which will cost about £70, but the skills, confidence and freedom it gives you makes it worth every penny. [CW](#)



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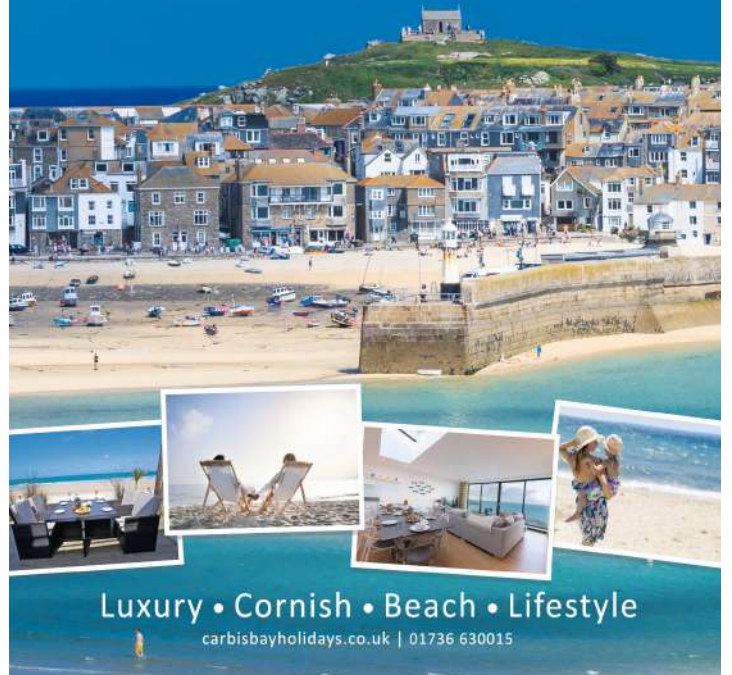
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Lose your FEARS

Worried about walking in the country? You're not alone. We asked our Facebook community about their biggest concerns, and how to tackle them.



Encountering cattle

A herd of these hefty beasts can be a scary thing to encounter on a walk, and serious incidents understandably make headlines. These are thankfully rare though, and you should never meet dangerous bulls. Recognised dairy breeds like Friesian and Jersey bulls are banned by law from any field with a footpath; beef bulls are only permitted if they're with cows; and farmers are advised to keep aggressive animals elsewhere. Of course, bullocks, and cows with calves can be daunting too, but farmer Richard Heady explains that your best approach is to be boring, and walk quietly at a steady pace. Start to dash, wave your arms or shout and they'll think it's all good fun and charge towards you. If they do get a bit close, walking slowly towards them encourages them to back off, so you can keep going on your way. Andrea Meanwell, the Lake District National Park Authority's Farming Officer, also advises to move away slowly, adding:

"Don't turn your back on the cattle and don't make eye contact as they can find this intimidating."

Cattle see dogs as a particular threat, so keep your pet quiet and under close control. If things get tricky, let the dog off the lead so it can run and you can walk from the field. And if you can't safely cross the field, you're within your rights to go around, rejoining the path as soon as possible.

► **Watch Richard's video at [facebook.com/headysfarm/videos/356047318536156/](https://www.facebook.com/headysfarm/videos/356047318536156/)**

Reader tip: "If they look frisky I always walk around the perimeter of the field regardless of where the path goes. It's far safer. If they surround you but you have your back to the hedge simply walking towards them will get them to back off, I find. Also try standing still and letting them get used to you. Above all stay calm and relatively quiet." **Natalie Covill**

Being slow

Aesop had it right in his tortoise-hare fable; slow can win the race. It enjoys the race more too. Charging uphill makes your heart hammer, lungs ache, and muscles flood with searing lactic acid. Setting a slow pace – and we mean s-l-o-w enough to let you chat easily – lets you breathe comfortably and relish those growing views without sweat stinging your eyeballs. If it helps, professional mountain guides go slowly up hills, and nobody is questioning their fitness. The point is that slow is a pace you can sustain – happily – for hours, perhaps smugly plodding past those hares you last saw at breakfast now flopped in agony on a boulder. Flagging a bit? Singing a song (in your head, out loud; your choice) can boost morale; snacking on a jelly baby or two will boost energy. And briefly locking your back knee as you swing your other leg through transfers weight from hard-working quads to your supporting skeleton for one fleeting, reviving moment.

Reader tip: "My weight held me back, I'd be worried that I'd look out of place, being the fat girl amongst the super-fit pro walkers and I worried that I wouldn't be able to manage a decent walk. I was wrong to worry on both counts. The more I walked, the fitter I became." **Sara Stephenson**





Getting lost

Losing the way happens to us all and the most annoying advice is also the best: don't panic! Rushing off in what you think is the right direction will only make things worse (we know, we've done it). Obviously, a GPS in your pack, or a phone with a mapping app like komoot, is a godsend here, but assuming that's not an option the first thing to do is stop and have a break (a snack works wonders on fraying nerves) and realise you're not as lost as you think you are. Look at the map and pinpoint the place where you last knew *exactly* where you were, say at a path junction or footbridge. Turning around is hard, but retracing your steps is often the safest option. If that's not possible, you can still narrow down where you are. How long is it since you were at that known point? What's the furthest you could have walked since, based on an average of 15 minutes to walk one kilometre (or one grid square on the map)? You have to be somewhere within a circle of that size around your last known spot, and you probably know roughly in which direction. Then put your map to one side and look around. Note features like hills, rivers, woods or church spires and think how the map should look, then pick it up and have a careful look for bits that match. And give yourself time; Mountain Rescue recommends always having a head torch, so even if darkness falls you can find your way back.

Reader tip: "Take photos along your route, like when you come to a junction. You can look at them to check which way you went on your return." **Elaine Burgon**

Meeting dogs

Whether it's one in a farmyard or out on a footpath, strange dogs can be terrifying – especially if they're barking or growling. The first thing to know is that a dog behaving aggressively has perceived you as a threat, either to its own safety, its territory or its people, so your safest course of action is to seem as unthreatening as possible. David Ryan, Chairman of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors, has worked with the RSPCA to provide guidance on meeting unfamiliar dogs. He suggests you stop walking but don't turn your back; instead face the dog, but with your body angled slightly away from it. Don't stare at it, but turn your head sideways and slightly down so you can watch it out of the corner of your eye. It's best not to shoo, kick or yell, but instead talk to it calmly in a soothing tone, and you might feel reassured if you can manoeuvre a coat or bag between you and the animal. Try, as best you can, to keep relaxed, with your weight on your back foot as if you're leaving calmly, and if necessary move away slowly, either backwards or

PHOTO: JUNIORS BILDARCHIV GMBH/ALAMY



sideways until it loses interest. Very few dogs will press home a serious attack; most will be content you are leaving.

► **Read more at** rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/company/unfamiliar

Reader tip: "Try not to scream, shout or wave your arms about; try firm commands of sit, stay, down, if you feel able to. And I suggest carrying a few dog treats, throwing them as far from you as possible to distract a dog you feel threatened by." **Marie Dawn**

Walking alone

This is mostly a worry for women walkers, and it's everything from having an accident, to getting lost, to being attacked. *Country Walking* Features Ed Jenny says: "I've had all those worries too, even hit full panic a few times, but I love walking solo – space to think, notice more, beetle at my own pace, and there's satisfaction too, in doing it all myself. I started by trying to rethink my perception of the risk; the odds of there being someone bad all the way out in the wilds are truly tiny. I reminded myself that all the tens of thousands of miles walked happily never make headlines. I built my navigation skills with a weekend course and lots of practice on routes I knew, to minimise the getting lost panic. I also have a map app on my phone to confirm my pinpoint location when I need it. I'm extra cautious on difficult terrain, to try and avoid an accident – and I take all the time I need. You might find walking with a dog helps, or taking

self-defence classes, and always tell someone where you're headed and when you should be back. You can even get phone apps that show your friends your location. You'll find the more you do, the less you worry, as the positive memories and confidence grow. And I tell myself there are different risks in letting the fear stop me, in the exercise I'd miss and the soul-soothing views I wouldn't get to see."

Reader tip: "I used to pretend I was Julia Bradbury with a camera crew and producer behind me. I'm now happy being me and discovering new routes!" **Maggi Thompson** **CW**



Jenny, hiking alone and loving it in the Brecon Beacons.

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A man and two women are standing in a park-like setting, wearing Regatta heated jackets. The man in the center is wearing a black jacket, while the women on either side are wearing dark and blue jackets. A large, glowing orange and red circular graphic surrounds them. The background shows trees and a path.

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One of the amazing things about walking is how powerful a force for health and happiness it is, in spite of being low impact, low hassle and low investment. And what's amazing about walking every day is how quickly the miles add up into something extraordinary. Something that only a vanishingly small proportion of the population can say they've done or could ever do. And yet you can - with just a smidge of determination and far less effort than you think - walk 1000 miles in 12 months.

That's further than the distance from Land's End to John o'Groats - and yet you'll do it without changing

your life, taking time off work, becoming a stranger to your friends or an absentee within your family. No one will even notice you've embarked on an epic quest. Except they will notice something. That you're looking well; that you're up for more things; that you've got more energy and a readier laugh; that your Instagram or Facebook page have really lit up - that you're yourself, only more so.

The secret can stay with us: that it takes just 2.74 miles a day - every day - to walk 1000 miles in a year. That's under an hour's walking for most people, and you don't even have to do it all at once. If that seems like a trivial investment of time, it is - and the returns are simply enormous.

72% of participants say they suffer fewer minor ailments; 74% that they feel more body-confident; 92% that they're far more optimistic for their long-term health as a result, 96% that it has significantly changed their life for the better, 99.6% that it's suitable for all levels of fitness.

You don't have to be a superhero to do this (you just have to keep at it) but you'll feel like one by the end. And you'll discover that once gigantic-seeming number is perhaps the smallest wonder of your achievement.

The journey starts at your door. The destination is a bigger world and a brighter, happier, healthier you. Join tens of thousands of people changing their lives one step at a time. **CW**

***"Works wonders
on your mind,
body and soul"***

Kirsten Clayton

***"Life-changing
in all the best
ways"***

Clare Gaut

***"Never stuck to
anything before
- this challenge
changed that"***

Andrew Collings

**“Breathed life
back into me”**

Hannah Clewer

**“I can see
clearly now”**

Milly Ellis

**“Never
dreamed I
could do it”**

Steve Potter



**“The best
feeling in
the world”**

Elaine Kelly

**“Lost 8 stone
in 10 months”**

David Smith



**FREE, FUN,
FLEXIBLE**

Register for the challenge and the newsletter for free now at walk1000miles.co.uk; get your Progress Chart and 64-page #walk1000miles 2021 handbook free with the February edition of *Country Walking* magazine, in shops **January 5th** or online at www.greatmagazines.co.uk walk1000miles.co.uk





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