

Walking Information Handbook

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1. Introduction

We want you to have the best possible experience so please take the time to read this booklet in advance to ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your walking holiday and make sure you bring it with you on your walk.

In these pages you will find essential information for your walking holiday and tips and advice which we hope you find useful.



2. Your Day by Day Itinerary Notes

This is the most important document for your walking holiday. All the information you need day by day, from finding your accommodation through to ordering packed lunches is in your itinerary including information about each day's walking route.

Make sure you take this with you every day or you won't know where you are staying!

We email the itinerary as a PDF document one month before your arrival so that you can print spare copies, pass them on to anyone at home who needs to know where you are and for those with SMART phones you can store a copy on there.



3. Finding your Way

Use the maps and guidebooks provided along with your itinerary to navigate. GPS users can also download GPX files from our website. Coast paths are generally well signposted, and the sea is a good marker! Inland footpaths are not always as well signed so keep checking with the map. For routes with open moorland sections you should have a compass or GPS in case you are caught out in fog or mist.

On signposts, footpaths for walkers only are marked with yellow arrows; bridleways which are open to horse riders, cyclists and walkers are marked with a blue arrow. Trails are often also marked with a 'blaze' for the trail you are walking, for example an acorn for the South West Coast Path or a quill for the Coleridge Way

The general rule is that you should keep to the path as far as possible unless you are walking on areas that are 'open access'. On Ordnance Survey maps 'open access' areas are coloured yellow.

Some routes can feel quite remote but unless you are on open moorland if you do lose your way you will not have to walk too far before you come across a house, village or road. If you are lost - use your map and guidebook to work out where you are or try returning to the last place you were sure of your location as you may have missed a signpost or trail junction. You can always ask for help - residents are usually happy to direct you back onto the right path.

We do check the routes regularly, but things can change. If you find a section is confusing, let us know and we can add an update for the next walker or contact the path rangers to request some better signs.



4. Advice for Tired Walkers

If you are struggling on your walk and don't feel you can make it on to your accommodation, then check your itinerary for local taxi telephone numbers and call one from the next village.

You can also call your accommodation and ask about any local bus services in the area – you may even be lucky enough to be offered a lift!

Most pubs on your route will also have phone numbers for local taxi firms and are good locations for the taxi driver to collect you.



5. Safety and Dangers

Crime

Crime incidents on walking trails in England and Wales are extremely rare but you should keep your possessions within sight in crowded places, holiday areas and towns. In our larger towns and cities, as in the rest of the world, avoid walking alone late at night and take a registered taxi.

Poor Weather

Be prepared for all weather conditions. All areas of the UK will get periods of bad weather, so you must be prepared for this with good waterproofs. In very high winds and in storms do not venture onto exposed moorland or coastal routes. On remote sections if you get caught in heavy rain you may have to battle on for several hours.



Get used to checking the weather forecast the night before each walking day and if wet weather is forecast for the afternoon make an early start or if it is going to be a wet morning consider a late start and avoid the worst of it.

Local TV news around 6pm gives a reliable weather forecast as well as weather forecasts for the next day or check online at www.bbc.co.uk/weather

If the forecast has put you off walking, ask your accommodation for information on getting to your next location by bus or taxi or there are also taxi numbers on your itinerary. If you do decide to travel on to your next destination you can explore and perhaps do a smaller circular walk from there if you have bad weather.

Cliff Falls and Diversions

Always keep to the path and follow any diversions in place around cliff falls – these are for your safety. The coast has some very unstable sections of cliff and if you walk off the path you may end up in these areas.

Avoid cliff edges and don't sit directly below cliff faces. In any of the mining areas open shafts still exist, some are fenced-off, but others are not. Stick to the path and you will avoid this hazard.

If you see any dangerous erosion on the path, cracks, slips or loose rocks find a safe route around this and get in touch with us as we will report this to the Path Rangers for action.



Tides

Be aware of tides and use the tide tables we supply to check if you are in doubt. Every year people get cut off by the tide on beaches and sadly from time to time some are swept away by rip currents and freak waves.

It is safest to **SWIM ONLY ON THE MAIN BEACHES** where information is available on conditions and lifeguards patrol in season.



Away from the patrolled beaches if you do decide to risk swimming on a remote beach be very cautious and don't go out of your depth or into areas with surf.

Drinking Water

It is important to keep well hydrated when walking, especially in very hot weather, by drinking plenty of fluids.

Tap water in the UK is safe to drink unless otherwise indicated though you can buy bottled water from most shops,

Please try to use a refillable water bottle or buy portable water filters which are designed for walkers and campers rather than adding to the amount of single use plastic bottles in the world.

Do not drink straight from streams and untreated water sources like cattle troughs as these can be contaminated by farm run off or dead animals upstream.



Ticks

Ticks are small insects that can carry certain diseases the most serious of which is Lyme Disease. When walking in areas of thick dense vegetation such as bracken you should wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck trousers into your socks. Avoid shorts and open sandals.

Check your skin at the end of each day for ticks. It is a good idea to carry a tick remover which is more effective at removing ticks cleanly than tweezers.

You can find out more about Ticks and how to avoid them or remove them on this website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/

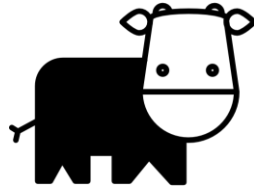


Livestock

You will almost certainly come across livestock at some point in your walk. Cows are allowed on footpaths and are not usually a problem provided they are not frightened.

Always give cows a wide berth and where possible walk around the herd not through it and don't make too much noise. Don't panic or run – the cows may run just because you are!

Be especially cautious when cows have new- born calves with them and give them a very wide berth. Never walk between a cow and its calf or calves as she may perceive this as a threat to her offspring.



If cows are obstructing your path, then you are within your rights to find a safe route away from the path to get around them provided you re-join the path as soon as practicable to do so. Always close gates behind you.

Please also see the section on dogs and cattle if you are bringing your dog with you.

Blisters

Prevention is better than cure – wear comfortable, worn in boots and socks both of which should fit you properly. (see Section 11 – ‘What to bring’ for more info on this)

Take the opportunity to let your feet loose from your boots when you stop for a break, to cool them down. If you do feel any rubbing due to a sock having slipped or bunched up – **DON'T PUT OFF ADJUSTING IT!!**

It is very easy to just put up with it until the next scheduled break but by then it is often too late.

If you do get a minor blister use a normal plaster to give some protection against rubbing, ideally a blister plaster (see Kit List) which will form a barrier over your blister.

If the blister gets worse or bursts of its own accord carefully make a hole in the skin using a sterilised pin or needle to allow the liquid to escape. (You can sterilise the needle by heating with a match or lighter, with an alcohol wipe or by putting it in boiling water for ten minutes). Put antiseptic cream and a plaster on it and check it frequently.



6. Luggage Transfers -

Number of Bags

Unless you have arranged something different with us your allowance is one case per walker of up to 20kg. If you have more than this then call the office and we can arrange to transfer extra bags at an additional cost per item per day.

Luggage labels will have been sent to you, please complete these and put them on your bags so it's clear to those moving the luggage who it belongs to.

Make sure you mark clearly on the labels how many bags your group has in total.



Luggage Weight ****IMPORTANT****

The 20kg limit for any luggage item is very strict and must be observed.

In older harbours and villages, bags sometimes need to be carried up flights of steps or down tiny lanes with no road access.

For the safety of those employed in moving the bags please do not go above the weight limit. If you have heavier bags you will need to divide your luggage into two cases or talk to us about leaving some items in one location.

Luggage Transfer Operators will refuse to move any luggage items over the weight limit and to prevent any injury we will **ALWAYS** support them in this policy.



Luggage - Valuable Items

Do not put valuables in with your luggage, please carry them with you.

We require everyone booking with us to have travel insurance cover. Make sure this also covers your luggage or valuables as this will then cover items in your accommodation and when travelling to, from and around the UK.

We take every effort to ensure bags are delivered safely and securely but please do make sure you are covered for all eventualities and be aware of the limit and conditions your insurance sets for baggage

cover.

Any liability by Encounter Walking is limited to £200 per booking and only in the case of our negligence, so do not add additional valuable items into your luggage (such as laptops) unless your own insurance policy fully covers them.

Luggage Delivery Times

Your itinerary will tell you who is moving your bags for you on each day. Ask your accommodation where to leave the luggage and remind them where the bags are going and who is collecting them.

Luggage must be available for collection from

9.00 am each morning as your B&B may be the first pick up in a long day of collections for the drivers.

If you are having a late breakfast that's no problem, but please make sure the main bags are packed and ready for collection at 9.00am. Drivers will not be able to wait at busy times for you to pack.

Your luggage is booked to be moved on to the next destination by 4.00pm so if you arrive earlier than this please be aware that you may be there before your luggage arrives.

In the unlikely event that your luggage has not arrived by 4.00pm, please ask your accommodation to call the luggage transfer company for an update using the telephone number listed in your Itinerary Notes for that day. Please note, it may not be the same telephone number every day.

The driver may just be delayed, which can happen from time to time particularly during the school holiday season when the roads can be very busy.



7. Finding Your Accommodation

Your Itinerary gives you all the information you need to contact and find your accommodation. There are detailed walking directions to the accommodation from the trail and if it is marked on OS maps or guidebooks this is noted to help you.

In the unlikely event that you need further directions then you can call the accommodation for help and directions – the telephone numbers for all the places where you are staying are noted on your itinerary.

8. Checking In and Checking Out

Check-in instructions are in your itinerary for each place you are staying

Check-in for our walkers is ALWAYS from 4.00pm to 6.00pm

If you are expecting to arrive earlier or later than this then you **MUST** call your accommodation in advance to discuss if any other check in times are possible.

Remember that a bed and breakfast establishment is **NOT** a hotel and if you try to arrive early without arranging it there may not be anyone there to welcome you.

If you intend arriving later than 6.00pm call ahead to let them know - if you don't and your hosts know you are walking, they may call the coastguard or the police if you fail to turn up by early evening.

Pubs and hotels are more flexible, but you should still call them if arriving early or late to check they will be open.



Checking Out of your accommodation

We pay **ALL** of your accommodation and breakfast costs in advance.

When you check out you will need to pay for any drinks, evening meals or extra services you have ordered during your stay.

If you are asked to pay for accommodation or breakfast at check-out please **do not pay** and instead, show them the pre-paid accommodation pass which is on the back cover of this booklet.

This confirms that your accommodation and breakfast has been paid in advance and gives them the details to call us if they need to check this with us.

9. Getting on with your Accommodation

If you are not used to walking holidays in the UK, the following tips can help to avoid any misunderstanding.

Do not walk into the accommodation with muddy boots - you will be expected to take them off at the door.

Respect the 4pm to 6pm check in times – if you want to arrive early call to see if it is possible and if it is not head into the town to explore or get refreshments.

If you are delayed, you must phone to advise your hosts – they may be planning to go out!



It is **NOT** customary for accommodation and taxi staff to carry your bags for you - so please don't expect it! When taking bags to and from taxis and to your rooms in the accommodation you will be expected to carry these yourselves so don't bring cases that you can't move on your own.

You do not need to tip your accommodation (unless you want to). It's not expected unless someone did something very out of the ordinary for you, such as collecting you from the train station.

If you have a problem, you **MUST** talk to your accommodation first **BEFORE** contacting us as they will often be able to solve any problems or may not even be aware of the issue until you tell them.

Please don't post negative reviews online about accommodation if you did not try to discuss it with them first!

10. Food on your Holiday

Packed Lunches and Evening Meals

Some accommodation options can provide a packed lunch. Your itinerary will advise what is possible and you just order it and pay the accommodation directly. If no packed lunch is available, the itinerary will also advise on where you can buy food locally AND about the cafes and pubs along the day's walk so you can choose the best option for you.

If you are relying on lunch in a pub, we advise that you phone ahead and check opening hours, so you can time your walk to suit.

We make sure evening meals are available at your accommodation or close by every night and your itinerary will detail this for you.



Special Diets

Vegetarian breakfasts and options for evening meals are generally available in the UK but diets such as vegan, gluten-free or lactose-free are less widely catered for and in remote areas may not be easily available without advance notice. If you are vegan or have any dietary needs or food allergies, you should contact your accommodations directly using the email addresses and phone numbers in your Itinerary Notes to let them know and check what they can offer. You can bring essential items such as soya milk or gluten free bread with you and have this sent on with your luggage transfer to be certain you won't get stuck.



11. What to Bring

Suggested Kit

- **Hat** for protection from sun/cold depending on time of year and gloves in winter

- **Waterproof Coat** - essential at any time of year. A shower proof or 'water resistant' coat will not be enough to keep you dry in prolonged wet weather.

Waterproof Trousers. Again, essential at any time of year. Alternatively, some people prefer gaiters which protect your lower leg without you having to wear a full set of over-trousers but to cope with very wet weather you should also have full waterproof over trousers.



Walking Trousers Lightweight trousers which dry quickly are better than jeans. Some can be zipped off to form shorts but don't bring just shorts as they will not give you protection against ticks, nettles and brambles.

Top Layers - lots of thinner layers are better than one great big jumper. Bring a good fleece for cold days or evenings.

Rucksack/Daysack - if you are carrying your own luggage then you will need a sturdy rucksack. Those using the luggage transfer service will still need a daysack for essential items. A daysack is more comfortable than a shoulder bag and allows both your hands to be free.

Walking Socks should be properly fitting without bunching at the toes and long enough to be able to tuck your trousers into on muddy or tick-infested areas. Cotton socks are not a good idea as they retain moisture.

Many modern walking socks use a combination of fabrics and are designed to wick moisture away from the skin.

Walking boots with good grips and ankle support are the best footwear. Boots give your feet extra support on long walks, they absorb your feet from shock on the trails which in dry weather will be hard underfoot and you are less likely to get stones, twigs and other debris inside your footwear if you are wearing a decent boot.

We don't advise walking in shoes or trainers. You will struggle when the trails are muddy and you will have no protection against twisting an ankle which is the most common injury on the long-distance walking trails. Make sure you have tried your boots and walked them in before you come on holiday!

Walking Poles If you normally use them bring them – Poles can provide good support on the steep climbs and descents on coastal

routes if you are bit unsteady on your feet but it's worth trying some before you arrive to see if you find them helpful or a nuisance! Most UK high streets have an outdoor shop selling walking poles



Other Important Items

- Large water bottle
- Small first aid kit with some blister packs
- Whistle and torch in case you need help
- Mobile phone (see Communications)
- UK Power Adaptor (not the same as a European one)
- A waterproof map case - invaluable in wet weather.
- A towel and swimming things
- Binoculars if you are keen on wildlife

Document checklist

- Your Itinerary – and we advise printing a spare copy to go in your luggage.
- This booklet
- Your maps, guide books and tide times
- Copy of your travel insurance
- Airline and train tickets
- Credit card for emergencies but if based overseas check it can be used in the UK



12. Communications

Mobile Phones

We strongly advise carrying a mobile phone when walking, it's good for checking in with accommodation, getting bus times, opening hours of eating places and calling a taxi if you need one. Remember in rural areas the signal can be patchy - deep valleys and beaches below cliffs are particularly bad places. Your OS maps/guide book shows phone box locations and most pubs/villages still have public phones if there is no mobile signal.

If you have not already provided us with your mobile phone number(s), please email us with these in case we need to contact you during your walk.



UK National Telephone Code

From outside Britain the international country access code is 44 followed by area code or mobile number. In both case you need to take off the first 0.

WIFI

Most accommodations offer a Wi-Fi service although in some places this may only be in public areas and not in your room.

However please remember that some of the areas you are walking through are very remote and there are many 'not-spots' where you will not be able to get either Wi-Fi or phone signal. Also, very remote villages are often at the end of the broadband line and speeds can be slow and service intermittent.

13. Money

Most larger pubs and restaurants will accept a debit or credit card for buying meals, but smaller establishments such as beach cafes may be cash only, so make sure you carry enough money with you for food and refreshments for several days ahead.

Main towns will have cashpoint machines at banks and supermarkets, and you can sometimes find a cashpoint in a local newsagent or post office during their opening hours.

In general villages will **NOT** have a bank or cashpoint, so be prepared in case you cannot withdraw money for a few days.



14. Walking with your dog

Make sure you keep your dog on a lead when walking near cliff edges (dogs frequently chase rabbits and fall off cliffs). Also use the lead in any fields with livestock - farmers have the right to shoot dogs that are running loose in fields of sheep. With cows stay well away when you have a dog with you and if threatened by cows when you have a dog let go of the lead. The dog will outrun the cows better than you can.

On coast paths some of the main public beaches are closed to dogs for the summer months and this is generally made clear on signs at the beach. However, it is fine to walk your dog along the back of the beach (on the coast path) provided it's on a lead. Away from the popular tourist areas you will find plenty of dog friendly beaches where you can let your dog roam but please do clean up after it. If you need a vet for your dog, your accommodation is the best to ask for where you will find the nearest veterinary practice.



Remember to take water for your dog as well as for yourself as you will not be able to rely on finding fresh running water every day.

Bring a towel to clean dirty dogs before going into your accommodation or into a taxi and please follow any rules at your accommodation.

Every year fewer accommodations are willing to accept dogs, often because of just one or two thoughtless owners. Your dog will not be allowed into restaurants, but pubs will often have areas where you are able to have your dog with you while you eat.

Dog waste

Out on the trails it is acceptable to 'stick and flick' your dog's poop. If you can get it into undergrowth and off the trail where people won't then be at risk of stepping in it then that's fine.

Alternatively, you can bag up the poop but ONLY if you are prepared to carry it to the next dog bin which may be some miles away.

What you must never do is put the poop into a bag and then leave it behind!



15. The Environment

Follow the Countryside Code

Respect..... Protect..... Enjoy.....

Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs



Toilets when walking

Whilst public toilets can be found in most villages and towns these may charge so have some spare change. The best advice is to use the toilets in pubs and cafes when you stop.

Away from built up areas where routes are remote you will find yourself walking for some hours without access to a toilet in which case you may need to make use of a nearby bush!

If you are caught short, then make sure you are away from any water courses and off the trail and bury or cover the waste. Take away paper and wet-wipes and dispose of responsibly.

16. Problems

We want you to have the best possible trip so if things go wrong let us know as soon as possible and we will do whatever we can to put things right.

If it's a problem with your accommodation **YOU MUST** talk to your hosts first as usually they will be able to sort things out - if things were not resolved to your satisfaction let us know what happened at the end of your trip when we ask for your feedback

We will stop using any accommodation, transfers or walking routes where things are not right for our walkers and we rely

on you to let us know about things that were not right so that we can improve things for the next walkers

17. Keeping in touch with us

Feedback - We will email you on your return, so you can let us know how things went.

This helps us continue to improve things for the next walker and any pictures or useful information will be gratefully received and the information passed on and used for others benefit.

The final two pages give our office phone number and out of hours messaging service.

Happy Walking - and we look forward to hearing about all your adventures!



To call us during your walking holiday use the main office number

+44 (0)1208 871066

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Outside of these hours you can leave us a message or if your problem can't wait then you can follow instructions on this number to connect to the ***Out of Hours Messaging Service***. This is monitored by staff during evenings, bank holidays and weekends.

Please do remember that we are based in rural Cornwall with patchy mobile signal, but we still aim to respond to all messages left within an hour. Remember to clearly give us your contact number when you leave your message.

Do NOT use email or social media messages if urgent, we do not monitor these out of hours – please call the Out of Hours Messaging Service instead.

For Emergency Services Dial 999 or 112

Ask for Police, Ambulance or Coastguard

Use your OS map to give your location.

If you need non-emergency medical or police assistance, then please use the following numbers-
111 (medical) or 101 (police)

Use your OS map to give your location.

After an emergency, we will do everything we can to help, so if you need to curtail or alter your trip for any reason contact the office or ask someone else to call on your behalf.

Latest Updates

Travel Insurance - This is even more important since COVID - it is condition of your booking that you have travel insurance to cover your holiday costs. Make sure it is in place now to cover your costs if you have to cancel

Booking Meals - One legacy of COVID is that the number of eating options on any given night has reduced noticeably in the regions towns and villages. Make sure you book an evening meal in advance of your walk for each night – the itinerary we send gives you information about options

Getting to your walk - Travel changes faster than anything else and timetables are updated at least twice a year in our region. Use the following to work out how to get to your walk and how to travel during it if you need a day off.

TravelineSW - Covers all Buses and Trains across the SW

www.travelinesw.com

TravelineWales - Covers all Buses and Trains in Wales

www.traveline.cymru

Trainline.com – Easiest train times and booking website

www.trainline.co