

Welcome To Severnside Walks

The following aims to answer all those questions about how our walks work, what to bring, what to drink etc...

All Severnside walks are listed on our programme, published 3 times per year, and it can be downloaded from our website. About 3-4 times a year, our Programme Secretary will email Severnside Members asking for walks. For Severnside to continue and thrive we rely on our members to lead walks for our programme. If you are keen to lead a walk but slightly nervous or unsure then please contact us, we can normally find someone to assist you in leading your first walk.

All Severnside walks are 'led'. That is to say that a volunteer leader will have worked out the route, planned the timings and actually gone out and pre-walked it to see that it all works. If the walk leader is expecting a large number of people, they may have a back marker as well. The leader's role is to make sure that everyone heads in the right direction, stays safe and stays together. That means everyone else can relax and enjoy themselves.

- At the start we organise ourselves to share lifts.
- The walk leader will give a brief before the walk starts.
- Most leaders will have a morning, lunch and afternoon stop. For some the timing is almost religious...
- On a walk, most leaders are happy if you go ahead of them - but don't get too far ahead (you might look round and find everyone has stopped to let people catch up, or for a coffee) or presume as to the route (this is the best way to get lost!).
- If you need a comfort break, do let someone know that you're stopping - they can then ensure that the group doesn't disappear off down a side turn without you.
- And if you've just climbed a hill, be prepared to spend a few moments catching your breath as the group waits for the last person to make it up the climb.
- After the walk we may occasionally head for a tea shop or a pub.
- As you might be muddy and/or sweaty at the end, bring some spare shoes to get changed into after the walk - it's both more comfortable and kinder on whoever's car you're travelling in....

Do I Need To Contact The Walk Leader In Advance Of A Walk?

You don't need to contact the walk leader in advance; you can simply turn up. In fact this is what most people do. However, if you are at all unsure about the level of the walk, if you are new to walking, or if there is anything you are unsure about, please feel free to contact the walk leader. If you are not sure which walk to choose from the programme, we recommend you go for an easy one to get a feel for things, you can then work your way up the grades if you want to. Walk leaders' phone numbers are printed on the programme. Please do not leave it until the evening before a walk to contact the walk leader.

What Grades Of Walks Do You Offer?

Severnside walks are graded in accordance with the Ramblers Grading scheme and are graded for difficulty as follows:

Easy Access Walks for everyone, including people with conventional wheelchairs and pushchairs, using easy access paths. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn. Assistance may be needed to push wheelchairs on some sections: please enquire.

Easy Walks for anyone who does not have a mobility difficulty or a specific health problem or is seriously unfit. Suitable for pushchairs if they can be lifted over occasional obstructions. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn.

Leisurely Walks for reasonably fit people with at least a little country walking experience. May include unsurfaced rural paths. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are recommended.

Moderate Walks for people with country walking experience and a good level of fitness. May include some steep paths and open country, and may be at a brisk pace. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential.

Strenuous Walks for experienced country walkers with an above average fitness level. May include hills and rough country, and may be at a brisk pace. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential. People in doubt about their fitness are advised to contact the organiser or leader in advance.

Technical Walks for experienced and very fit walkers with additional technical skills. May require scrambling and use of ropes, ice axes and crampons. You must contact the organiser or leader in advance for further details.

Note: The majority of our walks fall within the Easy, Leisurely or Moderate definitions described above.

Important: Grades are provided as a general guide only: if you have any doubt about your fitness for a particular walk please contact the organiser or leader in advance. You should also bear in mind the distance of the walk, regional differences in terrain and the possibility of bad weather, which can make a walk more difficult than planned. If you're unsure of your fitness level, try a short and easy walk first: it's much better to find a walk a little too slow and easy than to make yourself miserable and exhausted. Leaders may refuse to accept participants who in their opinion are inadequately equipped or unfit.

Almost anyone could do an Easy Access or Easy walk. Most new walkers should be able to do an Easy, Leisurely or possibly a Moderate walk but should expect to find it quite tiring. We would not normally advise people to start with a Moderate walk unless they are either a regular walker or confident of their physical fitness and stamina. Experience shows that the hardest walks on the programme (typically Welsh hill walks) can be very demanding. To really enjoy them you will need a reasonably high level of fitness.

Do I Need To Bring A Map?

On a programmed walk the leader will have a map and will know the route - so you don't have to carry one. However, we would always encourage people to be as self-reliant as possible - so feel free to bring a map and follow the route if you want. All leaders will be happy to explain the route to you or show you where you are, so please don't hesitate to ask.

How Safe Is Walking?

The type of 'low-level' walking undertaken on most Easy and Easy Access walks is fairly safe. However, you should understand that participation on group walks is on the basis that you are a willing adult and that you are aware of and accept any risks involved. No walker would ever leave someone in distress and any leader will always endeavour to give you an enjoyable and safe day out, but you must realise that ultimately the person responsible for your safety is you. The group cannot accept responsibility for accidents/injury or personal liability. If you are worried about this issue you may wish to enquire about insurance, the BMC (tel. 0161 445 4747) have a range of suitable policies. Please remember that leaders will normally not hold official walking qualifications or first aid certificates, they're just unpaid volunteers doing their best to give you an enjoyable day.

What Equipment Do I Need?

The amount of equipment required typically depends on the time of year and level of walk you are doing. For Easy Access, Easy or Moderate walks a pair of sturdy boots, some waterproofs, warm clothing (depending on the time of year), daysack and a packed lunch should suffice. Most ramblers avoid wearing jeans as they can prove very uncomfortable in cold, hot or wet weather. You may wish to wait until you join the Ramblers before buying much equipment as you can get discounts at various outdoor retailers, see the Membership page for further details.

Do I Need More Equipment For A Longer Walk?

Yes, if attending a Moderate or Strenuous walk you will find more equipment useful. Be particularly aware that if walking at altitude, the Black Mountains or Brecon Beacons for example, it is possible to get cold very quickly. It is therefore important to carry more warming clothing that you think is required.

- *Waterproof jacket.* A breathable jacket will be much more comfortable though. They are becoming increasingly affordable.
- *Good Boots.* If you are buying a pair of walking boots for the first time, you will have the choice between fabric boots and leather boots. Fabric boots should have a waterproof lining, and will often be more immediately comfortable. Leather boots are more naturally waterproof, although many will have a waterproof lining as well, but need to be looked after properly. Some people also find it takes a little longer to

"walk them in". In recent years there has been a trend towards 'approach shoes', which resemble trainers but give slightly more support. They are fine for low level dry walks but as the ground gets wetter, steeper, rockier and more slippery you will need the waterproofing, warmth and support of proper boots.

- *Daysack.* You will need some sort of rucksack. Make sure it is comfortable for long periods. Always try out backpacks with a realistic load in them. On short summer walks it's possible to get away with a belt-bag and some people find them more comfortable - but make sure it's big enough. Choose one to accommodate your kit, food and drink - not the other way round. Most walkers carry 25-35 litre rucksacks (but every manufacturer has a different definition of 25 litres!).

You may end up wanting these too...

- *Layers* - Carry enough warm layers! A number of thinner layers are warmer and more adaptable than fewer heavier layers. Fleece materials dry out quickly and are much lighter to carry (whereas wool can be very warm, but needs to be kept dry). Even in summer it can be quite cold on hilltops or in the rain, so always carry a spare layer. The best layers are wicking ones - wicking t-shirts start at ~£15 and they quickly become your best friend! (It's fine to start out wearing cotton as a base layer but it can absorb and hold large amounts of water (i.e. sweat) which will then cool when you stop moving. In summer this may feel uncomfortable; in the winter it can make you feel very cold quickly).
- *Walking Trousers* (did we say no jeans?) they should be light-weight and loose fitting - so they dry out quickly. Waterproof trousers provide much better protection but for low-level walking they are not essential. Jeans are not recommended because when wet the denim doesn't retain your body heat so you get cold quickly - and it won't dry easily, so you'd stay that way. It also gets very heavy and uncomfortable.
- *Gaiters* (which protect your lower legs and ankles) are great for keeping the mud off, and if you go through long wet grass (or shallow streams).
- *Warm Gloves and Hat.* Outside of the summer always carry gloves and a warm hat. Again, fleece is better than wool. Hats are great for keeping you warm when you stop for lunch.
- *Torch.* Carry a torch between October and March - and check that it works and you have spare batteries.
- *Sun Hat and Sun Block.* Walks may involve long stretches with little or no cover and if you don't slap on the hat and cream then it's easy to get burnt when you're out all day. Sun glasses are often handy too.
- *First Aid Kit.* We can't guarantee that there will be one on every walk. It's sensible to carry a small personal first aid kit with you.

Do I Need To Bring Food & Drink?

Only you can judge how much you need to eat and drink - but always be sure to bring a bit more than you think you need in case of emergencies; plan on having some left at the end. On Sundays most rural shops will be shut and even drinking water may be hard to find on some walks. Moderate or Strenuous walks can drain a lot of energy and you may feel unexpectedly hungry or thirsty, especially if you haven't done many before. A few tips for your packed lunch box.

- Bring a balance of sugary (dried fruit, chocolate bars etc.) and starchy (bread, flapjacks, peanuts) foods.
- Always carry water or other cold drink in a re-sealable bottle. In summer bring plenty of water (but don't overburden yourself).
- In winter consider bringing a flask as a hot coffee/tea/soup can be very warming.(Once again) always bring more food and drink than you think you will need, the walk may last longer than you anticipate.

Oranges, bananas etc. take years to biodegrade, so please take the peel home with all your other left-overs. Empty wrappers and skins are much lighter after you have eaten the contents!

I Don't Have A Car - Can I Still Come On Your Walks?

This normally will not be a problem. The meeting point for all walks (unless otherwise stated is the Aldi Car Park, Brook Way, Bradley Stoke, BS32 9DA. This is served by CityLine service 73 (and 73A on Sunday), alight at Bradley Stoke Surgery. Please check bus times! We operate a car share policy as the walks often start in rural or village locations without extensive car parking facilities or public transport links. Please bear in mind that regular walkers do not normally advise the leader in advance of their attendance, so often a walk leader will not have a fixed idea of attendees. Please bring some cash so you can give the driver some money for petrol.

Can I Bring My Children/Dog?

As a group we try to be as welcoming as possible. However, children and dogs present additional problems and risks both to themselves and others. Never assume that any walk will be suitable for them or indeed that they will automatically be permitted on the walk. Always ask the leader well in advance. Remember that you will be responsible for their safety and actions at all times.

And Finally

All sporting and leisure activities have inherent hazards associated with them and walking, rambling or hill walking are no exception. In spite of the safety of members always being the paramount concern, accidents will occasionally occur. It is important, therefore, that when entering into the activity, each

member appreciates that they have a responsibility to identify the hazards associated with the activity and take all reasonable steps to eliminate or minimize the potential for an accident to arise.