



The Polytechnic Rambling Club

In association with THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Founded 1885

Affiliated to the Ramblers' Association (Inner London Area)

Affiliated to HF Holidays

Polytechnic Rambling Club - a guide for walkers

Welcome to walking with the Polytechnic Rambling Club. Most of our walks are in the London and South East area and range in distance from 5 to 12 miles, (with occasional longer walks in the summer months). As we are a London-based club and many of our members do not have cars, all our walks are based around public transport and begin and end at a railway or underground station. We organise walking weekends away up to five times a year, usually including one trip abroad. Full details of each walk can be found in the walks programme, which is issued every four months. We hope that this guide will give you some useful tips on how to get the most enjoyment from your walking and to stay safe and comfortable.

Our walks

- There is no need to book to come on a walk – just turn up on the day. If you are joining us for the first time, you may like to let the leader know and they will look out for you. The leader's phone number is on the programme sent to you by email.
- The walks in the programme vary in length and difficulty (for example some walks have tricky stiles or steep ascents or descents). If you are unsure whether a walk will be suitable for you, please contact the leader in advance who will be able to tell you more about it. Additional information about a walk is often circulated by email a few days before so please look out for this
- The pace will depend on the length of the walk and the size and ability of the group. It is for the leader to set the pace. Please stay behind or close to the leader.
- In the unlikely event that a walk has to be cancelled or changed at short notice the Club Secretary will send an email and post on the website.

Leaders

- All our leaders are volunteers who enjoy planning and leading walks.
- The leader will check the route in advance, complete a risk assessment to identify any hazards, will carry a map (paper or digital) and will give a safety briefing at the start of the walk. For everyone's safety and enjoyment please listen to the briefing and adhere to any instructions.
- We are actively seeking new leaders for our walks. If you have been out on a few walks and are interested in leading a walk on a future programme, or if you would like to suggest a walk, please contact the Programme Co-ordinators, contact details on the programme.

What to wear for walking

Walkers must be adequately clothed and equipped for the conditions on the walk

- **Walking boots** are essential for most country walks, especially in the winter when we often encounter muddy conditions. Trainers or walking shoes may be adequate for some summer and London walks – check with the leader if you are unsure. Whatever footwear you choose, it must have a good grip in slippery conditions.
- **Walk pole(s)** are strongly recommended for steep descents, uneven terrain and muddy conditions.
- **Waterproof (not just showerproof) jacket** is essential for country walks.
- **Waterproof trousers and gaiters** are also useful.
- **Warm clothing such as fleece or pullovers.** Several layers are generally warmer than one thick layer and this enables you to take off layers when you get hot.

- **Gloves and woolly hat** in cold weather.
- **Spare socks** in case of wet feet.
- **Sun hat and sunblock** in hot weather.
- **Long trousers generally better than shorts** as brambles and nettles can be a problem on some walks. In spring and summer ticks are endemic in the UK. A proportion of ticks carry Lyme disease. Wearing long trousers tucked into your socks and using a repellent can reduce the risk of a bite. More information can be found on the [NHS website](#).

What else to bring

- **Water** - it is essential to carry extra water in hot weather as you can become dehydrated very quickly when walking. On country walks there won't be any opportunity to get water unless there is pub or café stop.
- **Food** – lunch is usually a picnic. There will be a drinks stop at a pub or a café if available. For some walks, especially in the winter months, there may be time for a pub or café lunch. It's a good idea to carry some emergency supplies in case no food is available.
- **Rucksack** - Rucksacks are not usually waterproof. Line yours with a plastic sack to keep the contents dry in heavy rain or use a cover.
- **Plastic bags or boot covers**– to tie over your muddy boots in pubs and cafes.
- **The leader's phone number** is on the programme sent to you by email but not on the website version. We suggest you make a note of it in case you need to contact the leader on the day.

Hot weather

- The Club will not run any walks if a red heat health alert is in place in the area the walk is taking place as it would be unsafe. If the temperature is forecast to reach 32°C or higher, taking account of humidity, walks are also likely to be cancelled due to the risk to health of strenuous exercise in those temperatures. This may result in walks being cancelled at short notice in the summer months. Walks may go ahead with an amber heat health alert in place. Please consider your ability to cope with heat when deciding whether to join a walk when a heat health alert is in place.

Getting there

- All our walks begin and end at a railway or underground station. Walkers usually meet the leader at the London terminus. The programme will tell you where to meet for each walk and what ticket to buy. Some walks are linear, starting and finishing at different stations, while others are circular. If you intend to travel to the walk by car, please inform the leader in advance.
- It is your responsibility to arrive at the start point on time. If you miss the train, or are otherwise delayed, do not ask the leader to wait for you as this will delay the rest of the group
- In order to avoid long ticket office queues, consider buying your train ticket online in advance or at a station ticket machine. If buying online the [C2C website](#) gives the option of buying a ticket from the zone 6 boundary (useful for freedom pass holders). If you buy online in advance note that refunds are no longer available on or after the day of travel.
- If you walk regularly, it is worth purchasing a Railcard which gives 33% discount on ticket prices. The [Senior Railcard](#) is the best option for those aged 60 or over and in 2026 costs £35 for one year or £80 for 3 years. For others the [Network Railcard](#) gives similar benefits in the London and South East area.
- If you already have a travelcard or freedom pass, ask for your ticket to start from the boundary of the zones covered by your card.
- Some walks involve the use of local bus services. If you have a freedom pass or national bus pass that gives you free travel on buses in England. Otherwise pay on the bus with contactless.

Lunch

- The majority of our walks have a picnic lunch with a pub or café for a drink and comfort stop, (not necessarily close to the picnic spot). This does depend on what's available and for some walks there may be no food or toilets until the end. On some walks it may be possible to have a pub or café lunch but this will depend on the time available and is the decision of the leader.
- Do not eat your own food on the premises of a pub or café (even in the garden) unless you have permission to do so from the landlord
- Muddy boots must be removed before going into pubs and cafes or wear plastic bags or boot covers over them.

Children and vulnerable adults

- Membership is open to all aged over 18 years. Children under the age of 18 years may join walks at the discretion of the leader if accompanied at all times by a responsible adult who is also a Club member.
- We welcome vulnerable adults provided that they are accompanied at all times by a responsible adult who is also a Club member.

Dogs

- If you are thinking of bringing your dog on a walk, you **must** ask the leader in advance who will advise if the walk is dog-suitable or not. The walk leader may refuse to accept a dog on any walk where we are likely to encounter cattle.
- Be sure to keep your dog on a short lead where there is livestock, especially sheep and cattle with their young. Owners are responsible for keeping their dogs under control.

Photography

Participants regularly take photos on our walks, some of which may be published on our website to illustrate walk reports and/or posted on the Club Facebook page. If you prefer not to have your recognisable image included in published photos please inform the Club Secretary and stand to one side when group photos are being taken. Please note that we cannot control photos that members may post on their personal social media pages or on the WhatsApp social group.

Health and safety

We take the safety of our members on walks seriously. We ask our walk leaders to recce their walks, to give a safety briefing and to note the names of walkers (and names and contact details of any guests) at the start of each walk. In turn we ask you to take responsibility for your own safety by complying with safety instructions and being aware of your surroundings and other walkers.

- For your own safety and that of other walkers, please co-operate with any instructions or requests from the leader. At the beginning of the walk the leader will give a safety briefing. Please listen and adhere to any requests made. Take extra care when walking along and crossing roads and crossing golf courses and railway lines.
- The leader will appoint a backmarker for all but the smallest groups. Please ensure you keep in front of the backmarker and if you need to drop behind for a comfort stop make sure you let the backmarker know. If you are struggling to keep up please also let the backmarker know.
- If you walk ahead of the leader, especially if you are out of their sight and hearing, you will be considered to have left the group and are no longer the responsibility of the leader
- Keep an eye out for walkers in front or behind you. This is particularly important when changing direction. If you do lose the group please phone the leader (number on the programme).

- If you decide to leave the walk you should let the leader know and if you go off on your own the leader is no longer responsible for your safety.
- If you have a recurrent medical condition e.g. asthma, allergies, diabetes, epilepsy etc., please inform the leader or another walker at the beginning of the walk, giving advice on any immediate treatment you may require and whether you are carrying medication with you.
- It is your responsibility to make sure that walks you join are within your capability by reading the description in the programme and any additional information sent by email and by seeking advice from the leader if necessary.
- Make sure that you have suitable clothing and equipment for the walk. Most of our day walks do not require special equipment but walking boots with ankle support and walk poles are advised on many walks. If you are not adequately clothed or equipped the walk leader may refuse to accept you on the walk.
- If you are feeling unwell on the day of the walk it is best to stay at home. If you become unwell on a walk please inform the leader or backmarker so they can provide help.
- Please carry emergency contact details either on your phone under ICE or a hard copy. If you have a medic-alert card or bracelet please carry it with you. You may wish to provide emergency contact details for the Club to hold.
- You are encouraged to carry your own basic first aid kit.

Weekends away

- Requirements for clothing and equipment on weekends away may be different from day walks, depending on the destination and weather conditions. Please read the information provided by the trip organiser to decide what to bring.
- We aim to provide a choice of at least a longer and a shorter walk each day, if possible 3 walks. Please read the information provided carefully when choosing which walks to do and ask the organiser if you are unsure. Remember that weekends away are often in hilly areas so length may not be the best measure of difficulty.
- You **must** arrange your own travel insurance for walking trips outside the UK. Please ensure that it covers you for walking in mountainous areas, if applicable. You will be asked to provide your insurance details and an emergency contact to the Club in advance of any overseas trip.
- You may also want to consider travel insurance for trips within the UK or personal accident insurance. The Club has public liability insurance but this does NOT provide personal insurance for members.
- When abroad you may wish to carry your insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number.

The Countryside Code

- As considerate users of the countryside, it is important that we follow the [Countryside Code](#).

Respect – Protect - Enjoy

- **Respect** everyone
- **Protect** the natural environment
- **Enjoy** the outdoors

We hope you enjoy your walking and look forward to seeing you on a walk soon.

Polytechnic Rambling Club

July 2026