



Photo taken at The White Horse, Wiltshire walk in July 2024

Balsam Centre Health Walks

January - March 2025

What is a Balsam Centre Health Walk?

Health Walks promote walking as an achievable, non-competitive and enjoyable way to improve health and increase physical activity. There are a variety of walks to accommodate absolute beginners to the more experienced. They are a great way to increase your fitness levels, enjoy local natural spaces and meet new people. The walks are all free of charge, but donations are welcome. Walks are led by volunteers who are trained Health Walk Leaders.

Which walk is right for me?

There are different types of Health Walks to accommodate a range of walking experiences and fitness levels.



The Amble – from/to River Cale Cafe @ 10am, Thursdays

The Amble is a slow-paced, short walk (under 30 minutes) on level, stable ground, making it ideal if you haven't done much walking before, or perhaps don't get out of the house that often. With plenty of benches along the way, you can stop as often as you need to.

Starting Point: River Cale Cafe, Wincanton, BA9 9ED. Grid ref: ST708283



Short Walk – from/to the Balsam Centre @ 10am, Tuesdays

These 1-hour walks aim to maintain or increase general fitness. The walk follows pavements, paths and tracks around Wincanton and the surrounding fields and will include some inclines. There is no need to book for these walks and can be geared to the walkers who turn up. These walks happen every Tuesday, starting and ending at the Balsam Centre, usually finishing with a cup of tea or coffee in the Centre.

Starting Point: The Balsam Centre, Wincanton, BA9 9PA. Grid ref: ST715285



Stourhead Buggy Walks @ 10am, Thursdays

Buggy & Toddler Walks run every other Thursday, meeting at 9:30am for a prompt 10am start from the Visitors Centre at Stourhead.

This is a lovely walk around the beautiful gardens, suitable for buggies and babies in slings.

Entry is free for every adult with a child - extra adults will have to pay the garden entry fee or be National Trust members, (car parking is now also free). There is no need to book, but all walkers will need to register and collect a pass at The Balsam Centre before the first walk, passes will only be issued to people living within a 10 mile radius of The Balsam Centre, so please take a proof of address with you to register. The walks last about 45 minutes, with the option of ending in the National Trust Cafe if you wish.

Meet outside Stourhead Visitors Centre at 9:30am. Postcode BA12 6QF. Grid ref: ST778339

Long Walks - start location and day will vary each week

Information for these walks are in this brochure, and we request that you please book for these walks by emailing info@balsamcentre.org.uk

These walks are graded by number of boots:

	a fairly level walk of no more than 3 miles
	walks of approximately 2 hours and may include steps, inclines, uneven paths and sometimes stiles
	A more challenging walk of over 5 miles and could include terrain as for 2 boots



Friday 10 January – 10:00am

Leaders: Mark

Win Green Hill from Berwick St John - Moderate 6 mile (9.5km) circular walk from Berwick St John up Winkelbury Hill and along Ox Drove to the trig point at Win Green hill (277m) and back down around the edge of Ferne Park. It's a mix of minor roads and chalk and grass footpaths. Duration approx. 3 hrs.

Meeting Point: Berwick St John Village Hall car park - use the rear overspill car park if possible. Village Hall entrance is narrow and approx 100m along the narrow lane opposite the Talbot Inn on Water Street - turn in right by the red telephone box (book library).

Nearest Postcode: SP7 0HA

What 3 Words location: closed.earplugs.prove



Wednesday 15 January – 10:30am

Leaders: Maureen & Thelma

Glastonbury Tor - Yes, this is all UPHILL to get to the top, we can stop regularly for breaks on the way up, but the view is well worth it. The footpath is all concrete, so very firm underfoot. The walk is about 4.5 – 5 miles lasting about 2 hours.

Meeting point: The local Morrisons Supermarket, Street Road, Glastonbury

Nearest Postcode: BA6 9ED

What 3 words location: curious.staples.heaven



Wednesday 22 January – 10:00am

Leaders: Lorraine & Hilary

Mere. More details of this walk will be emailed to you closer to the time as it will be weather dependent.

Meeting point: Castle Street car park, opposite the Butt of Sherry

Nearest Postcode: BA12 6DS

What 3 words location: tuck.hunches.overgrown



Wednesday 29 January – 10:00am

Leaders: Wendy

Stourton Caundle to Ramillies Farm - Approximately 4miles / 2 hours

Meeting point: Opposite The Trooper Inn

Nearest Postcode: DT10 2JW

What 3 words location: series.kitchens.rationing



Tuesday 4 February – 10:00am

Leaders: Peter

Sherborne, Quarr Community Park - Walk over tracks, fields and lanes in countryside to the north of Sherborne, no stiles, 4.5miles.

Meeting point: near pub and public green space

Nearest Postcode: DT9 4JD

What 3 words location: conqueror.misted.pranced



Friday 14 February – 10:00am

Leaders: Mark

Gillingham Farm Loop - Route is approx 9km (5.5 mile) amble to the east of Gillingham around Windyridge, Woodwater and Wolfridge farms and King's Court Wood and returning via the site of King's Court Palace. Duration is approx. 3 hrs.

Meeting point: RiversMeet leisure centre car park, Gillingham

Nearest Postcode: SP8 4HX

What 3 words location: sponsors.thrashed.error



Wednesday 19 February – 10:00am

Leaders: Thelma & Sally

Castle Cary - More details of this walk will be emailed to you closer to the time as it will be weather dependent.

Meeting point: Castle Cary Market House

Nearest Postcode: BA7 7AH

What 3 words location: inspected.spades.songbook



Wednesay 26 February – 10:00am

Leaders: Wendy

Kingsdon through Rookery Farm and back through Coombs Plantation.

Meeting point: Roadside parking near playing fields.

Nearest Postcode: TA11 7LG

What 3 words location: crystals.poses.amps



Friday 7 March – 10:00am

Leaders: Mark

Ludwell Loop - Route is a circular loop around the north of Ludwell, taking in Dockham Bottom, Windwhistle Corner and Lower Coombe. The route is approx. 7km/4.5 miles and should take 2-2.5 hours.

Meeting point: The car park behind the Grove Arms.

Nearest Postcode: SP7 9ND

What 3 words location: pancake.whom.sonic



Friday 14 March – 10:00am

Leaders: Tony

Wells/Wookey Hole - A 4.5 mile walk, starting outside Wells Cathedral and then out over fields to Wookey Hole and back into Wells via a disused quarry. 5 stiles.

Meeting point: Outside Wells Cathedral

What 3 words location: writing.analogy.insulated

Parking: Parking in Wells is largely pay for parking but I can suggest free good on road parking (but I can't guarantee space !) at Ash Lane (Old Bristol Road end, what3words useful.repeat.sandbags)



Tuesday 18 March – 10:00am

Leaders: Peter

Shillingstone/Hammoon - Gentle walk, partly by River Stour, over fields, tracks and lanes, few stiles. 4.5 miles.

Meeting point: Meet in the car park off A357 near old railway bridge over a side road.

Nearest Postcode: DT11 00X

What 3 words location: committed.dangerously.pushing



Wednesday 26 March – 10:00am

Leaders: Thelma & Maureen

Pitcombe - More details of this walk will be emailed to you closer to the time as it will be weather dependent.

Meeting point: St Leonard's Church, Pitcombe

Nearest Postcode: BA10 0PQ

What 3 words location: tastings.trout.drops

How do I join a Walk?

If you would like to participate in any of the Health Walks please complete a registration form before attending your first walk - you can do this by either dropping into the Centre and complete a registration form or completing the form online.

Once you have registered, you can join any walk in the brochure. **Booking is required for "Long" walks**, though not for our other walks. Walks of any length may be cancelled in exceptional circumstances or weather conditions and those who have booked to attend a long walk will be contacted. If in doubt, please contact the Centre.

We advise that you take part in walks appropriate for your health and fitness levels. If you have not participated in much exercise recently or are worried about your health, please consult your doctor before taking part or increasing your physical activity levels.

A waterproof coat, removable layers and supportive, waterproof footwear is recommended.

A parent or guardian must supervise any children under the age of 16. If you wish to bring a young child, please phone and book your place as some walks may not be suitable for the very young.

Regrettably dogs are not allowed on the walks.



Follow us on Facebook

If you are on Facebook join our "Balsam Walking Group", which is a private group where you can share your photos and thoughts about our walks. We hope to update this group if there are any conditions you may need to know about for a particular walk.

Interested in becoming a walk leader?

We are in need of new walk leaders and back-markers. If the idea appeals, we provide free training. For details, telephone Andrew Pattie 01963 31842 or email info@balsamcentre.org.uk

Why walk?

It's widely acknowledged that walking from A to B is better for the environment and air quality in our towns and villages than using our diesel and petrol powered cars.

Walking is undeniably good for us too. It may:

- improve your mood
- reduce **stress**
- manage **anxiety**
- help you sleep better
- increase your energy
- help you to cope with difficult times
- improve your confidence and self-esteem
- reduce the risk of **depression**

These points are explored in further detail on:

<https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/walking-health>

There is a fantastic video on YouTube called "**23 and ½ hours: What is the single best thing we can do for our health**".

Watch it here - <https://youtu.be/aUaInS6HIGo>

A *morning walk* specifically may have many potential benefits. "**Just one thing**" by Dr Michael Moseley first aired on BBC Radio 4 in March 2021. In the April 10th episode he explores why an **Early Morning Walk** is beneficial to our health, and on May 15th why **Green Spaces** could benefit your brain and body. The episodes are available on BBC Sounds App or

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09by3yy/episodes/player?page=1>

And there's always NHS guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/>

Any cited sources of information are given in good faith and are a small representation of what is available. The Balsam Centre is not advocating a particular viewpoint and individual judgement should be used when accessing such information.

Have you considered using walking poles..?

There are several reasons to use walking poles when out walking or trekking. Walking poles help you move across terrain quicker, provide additional support and reduce the amount of effort required thus allowing you to achieve more during your walks.

When used correctly walking poles can significantly increase your pace which has additional health benefits. Walking poles improve posture, especially important if you are carrying a load. For more tips about walking poles:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/walk-magazine/reviews/2012/september/walking-poles-buyers-guide.aspx>

The list of walks can also be found on our website <https://www.balsamcentre.org.uk/health-walks> and further updates are posted on our Facebook group

**A BIG thanks to our volunteers –
without you, this wouldn't be possible!**



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