

BECCLES U3A WALKING GROUP

Walking is a pleasurable activity. Getting out into the countryside, in the fresh air, brings health and fitness benefits, is good for the spirit and can provide invaluable opportunities for socialising.

There are three walking groups: Walking 1 meets on the second Tuesday of the month and walks 5 – 6 miles; Walking 2 meets on the first Thursday and walks 5½ – 7½ miles; Walking 3 meets on the third Thursday and walks 3 – 5 miles. We have set a maximum of 15 members per walk, so the group sizes are manageable. Whilst it is important that you stay with your original walking group you can, of course, also join the other group walks if you wish. Please let the appropriate group convenor know should you wish to do this.

Attending walks: The mode of transport to the start of walks would normally be by members' cars. In order to avoid large numbers of cars parking at a start venue, we encourage members to share cars. Such arrangements could involve an agreed petrol payment, by passengers, to the driver. At times, it might be possible to arrange some walks using public transport, especially buses – bring your bus passes! Please arrive at least 10-15 minutes before the departure time from **Beccles Quay car park** to allow for car sharing. Make sure you sign in and give your membership number. Bring an emergency phone number too, and relevant medical details. It is expected that walks will be within a 15-20 mile radius of Beccles.

All the walks will be on public footpaths or permissive paths, and will have been checked out beforehand by the leaders. Inevitably, where paths are absent, some sections of the walk will have to be along public roads.

It is imperative that you are fit enough to undertake the walk you intend joining. If you are unsure of your fitness level, try a short and easy walk first, then you can always build up to a longer walk later, if you wish.

Please make sure you are suitably equipped for the walks. Suitable footwear, ideally boots or strong walking shoes, and waterproofs are essential, as is a rucksack with some food and drink. A small first aid kit is useful too. Leaders may refuse to accept participants who, in their opinion, are inadequately equipped or unfit.

Walking is inherently regarded as one of the safest outdoor activities, but no activity is completely without risk, and it is your responsibility to behave sensibly and to minimise the potential for accidents to occur. We shall appoint backmarkers and they and the leaders will wear hi-vis bibs. For your own, and others' safety, please abide by any advice and instructions issued by the walk leaders. This particularly applies when walking along public roads or through fields where cattle are present.

U3A public liability insurance covers the Group against accidents whilst out walking, "but it is not an automatic personal accident insurance. It is an insurance against legal liability and therefore, it would have to be shown that U3A, its agents or members had in some way been negligent in causing injury to a victim".

It is hoped that walks, once scheduled, would take place. However, occasionally, walks might have to be cancelled at the leader's discretion – because of inclement weather (snow, ice, torrential rain, etc). If there is any doubt about the weather, it would be advisable to ring the walk leader beforehand (an hour before?). A walk might also have to be cancelled if a walk leader suddenly became unavailable, e.g illness, and there was no suitable alternative leader on the day.

Countryside Code: Members will need to read, understand and follow the Countryside Code, copies of which will be made available to all members.

Walking etiquette: members will need to be aware of walking etiquette. For example, don't get ahead of the leader, be safety conscious on roads, walk in single file on crossfield paths (1m wide), etc. Members will be instructed in these walking practices by leaders during our walks.

Walking in groups: some new walkers find it strange and unsettling when they walk in groups for the first time. Such walks can be noisy, with people chatting and laughing and, if you are 'stuck' in the middle of this, it can be a bit irritating. If this is your experience, you might gravitate towards the back of the group. Some people find that once they have done a few group walks, they soon adapt to the tone and rhythms of the group.