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Walks Programme

The latest information about our walks programme is available on our website: <https://bristolramblers.org.uk>. Any additional walks are added as they are submitted. To see all the walks on specific days, or of specific lengths or difficulties, go to <https://bristolramblers.org.uk/display-programme>. From this page you can also download or print the list of walks, or add walks to your calendar.

Walking with other Ramblers groups

Remember that your Ramblers membership entitles you to join walks all over the country. Locally, <http://www.avon-ramblers.org.uk> lists forthcoming walks organised by the eight Ramblers groups in the Avon area. The website also has links to other groups' websites.

Saturday Walkers Christmas Lunch

Saturday, 14th December

If you'd like to join us for Christmas lunch at the Stoke Inn, Chew Stoke after a leisurely walk in the Chew Valley, please book your place with Aubrey on 07885 680393 or aubreyn@aol.com. Menu available from Aubrey.

WalkFest 2025

The Bristol Walking Festival will be back, running throughout May in 2025. Do you have a favourite walk you would like to share? Could you lead a walk for the Festival? If you are interested, please contact carew.reynell@gmail.com for more information.

Some walks from the December programme

This is not an exhaustive list of the walks available. Always check the website for the most up-to-date information:

<https://www.bristolramblers.org.uk/display-programme>

Sun 1 Dec – 3 Valley Views from Bath (B walk, 10 miles)

If the weather permits, there should be some lovely views from the hilltops around Bath. As the title says, expect 3 ascents/descents! Although there are no pub stops on the walk itself, there is a choice of several at the end.

Sun 1 Dec –Mynydd Bychan (A hill walk, 13 miles)

Rescheduled from the previous week for weather reasons.

A relatively short, if steep at times Hill Walk under the northern end of the Black Mountains. Great views guaranteed (if the weather plays ball). There are a couple of ways to complete the walk depending on apparent daylight hours!

OS Map: OL Expl 13.

Wed 4 Dec - The 'Mr Bump' walk - Sea Mills to Blaise, Kingsweston (B walk, 6 miles)

A pleasant, circular walk starting by the River Avon at Sea Mills, walking up through the woods to Blaise Castle Estate and up onto Kingsweston Down. We'll descend through Shirehampton Park and return, hopefully, if it's been dry, along the Severn Way alongside the River Avon.

How many Mr Bumps will you see?



Sat 7 Dec – Hinton Blewett (B walk, 6 miles)

Route via Prospect Hill and Prospect Style, with great views, through fields, and past reservoir near Coley. Note that in places it may be muddy and hilly.

Sun 8 Dec – Tetbury (B walk, 9 miles)

A fairly flat walk, but plenty of stiles! Tetbury to Shipton Moyne, a pretty village where we will have a coffee break at the church (bring your own coffee). The route continues past Westonbirt School, a magnificent property with beautiful grounds. Shortly after, we will visit a pub with indoor and outdoor seating. The return route to historic Tetbury passes close to Highgrove, though I can't promise tea with King Charles. There are a lot of horses en route, though most are well behaved.

Sun 8 Dec – Soudley Ponds and Newnham (A walk, 13 miles)

This circular walk begins & finishes on the outskirts of Cinderford, providing a hilly, varied & entertaining excursion by way of Soudley Ponds & Newnham.

Expect lakes & forestry, intermingled with rural scenery, all sandwiched between the Forest of Dean, the Blaize Bailey ridge, & the River Severn. Also expect the very handsome, former port of Newnham, with its stately Georgian buildings, plus some great viewpoints along the way!

A very pleasant outing may be reasonably anticipated.

OS Maps: Explorer OL14.

Wed 11 Dec – Clapton in Gordano (B walk, 6 miles)

A moderate walk with two ascents and a few stiles.

Coffee break at Tickenham church. Pub at end of walk. Parking is available on the roadside in Wood Lane, by the M5 motorway bridge.

Sat 14 Dec – Chew Valley (C walk, 5 miles)

This is the Saturday walkers' Christmas lunch walk, so booking is required! Contact: aubreyn@aol.com

Sun 15 Dec – Lantern Way (A walk, 14 miles)

This is a walk of two halves to the north of Dursley. Initially fairly flat, but the second half is much hillier. The route was developed to commemorate a local practice

whereby the men used to leave their shirt tails hanging out at night! I kid you not - and in public too!

OS Maps: Explorer 167

Wed 18 Dec – Castle Coombe Circular (B walk, 5 miles)

A peaceful and attractive walk, taking in the "chocolate-box" village of Castle Combe at (we hope) a less busy time of year. Undulating and likely to be muddy in places. Boots and poles advised.

There is parking at the paid public car park in Castle Coombe, and pubs are available near the end of the walk.

Sat 21 Dec – Sea Mills (B walk, 6 miles)

The route goes across the Downs, past St Monica's, along footpaths and minor roads, picking up Hollybush Lane, and on to Sea Mills. Returning along the River Avon towpath, which will be muddy, with a steep climb through Bishops Knoll Nature Reserve back up to the Downs. Muddy in places. Great views from the river across the Avon Gorge, and from the Downs.

Sun 22 Dec – Solstice Stomp (A/B walk, 17 miles)

Meet at the Clifton end of the Suspension Bridge at 7.55 ready to walk so that we can make a prompt start. The winter solstice this year is on the 21st so we shall have a tiny bit more daylight for our walk!

Our meandering route takes in old favourites such as Leigh Woods, Abbots Leigh, Failand, Long Ashton and Ashton Court. Hopefully we shall have time for a visit to the Failand Inn but please bring enough food and drink for the day. Our return to the start will be shortly after sunset. The route is gently undulating and will hopefully be enjoyed by stronger B walkers as well as our regular A contingent.

Wed 25 Dec – Coombe Dingle (B walk, 6 miles)

A few modest ups and down around the Coombe Dingle/Stoke Bishop neck of the woods, and the possibility of mince pies at the tea stop.

An excellent prelude to Christmas lunch.

Sun 29 Dec - Water Tower, Penpole Woods, Pill and Clifton (B walk, 12 miles)

A fairly easy walk, taking in Durdham Down, Penpole Wood, Pill, Avon Walkway and Clifton Down. There is one steep climb at Nightingale Valley by Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Feature Articles

Review: Guatemala Five Volcanoes Challenge (Much Better Adventures)

You may (or may not) have noticed an active holiday company called 'Much Better Adventures' turning up in advertisements on your social media. Much Better Adventures is a small company that offers a large number of hiking, cycling, kayaking etc holidays through partnerships with local 'hosts', so your experience of any holiday with MBA will depend almost entirely on the host company.

Their Guatemala Five Volcanoes Challenge is rated 'challenging' on their website, and the walks involved are worthy of the steel of Bristol Ramblers' finest. Especially of me, given that I turned up with a dodgy Achilles tendon and then pulled a thigh muscle on the descent from Acatenanga.

The walks themselves are fairly straightforward, as you might expect when the main aim is to shepherd up to 14 unknown quantities up a rather pointy mountain and then back down again. The main attraction is, of course, the views; and although we were sufficiently unfortunate with the weather that the view from the top of Pacaya was an almost British thick cloud and drizzle, the night-time view of an active volcano spitting out molten rock, from our vantage point most of the way up its dormant neighbour, was worth the entire cost of the trip in itself.

The guides and porters were experienced and competent, able to adapt the walks to deal with problems as they arose (it wasn't just me and my unconvincing ligaments) and, more importantly, to light a bonfire with wet wood to dry everyone out after a hailstorm at 3,800 m. How one of the host team was able to cook a hot dinner and hot breakfast for 17+ people in her two-man tent remains a mystery.

All in all, the trip was well organised and good value for money (unless you count the amount I spent on chocolate); but if you're interested in an active holiday in Guatemala, you might be better off missing out the middleman and contacting Old Town Outfitters directly. Feel free to tell them I sent you.



Fuego at night.

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Editorial

Late November is not one of the times of year in which Britain shines at its best. Rainy, muddy, increasingly chilly, and with everything dying back for the winter; it can't really be considered anything other than depressing.

That is why I had the Cunning Plan™ of leaving the place entirely, and going somewhere warm and sunny for a week and a half instead. What could possibly go wrong?

First: when planning to go somewhere warm, do not then undermine yourself by planning to spend almost every day at altitude. Physics exists even in the tropics, and the temperature decreases by over 6 °C with every 1,000 m of height. So by the time you're setting up camp at over 3,500 m, it's maybe not as balmy as you might have been hoping for.

Secondly, just because it's officially the dry season, that doesn't mean it won't rain. In fact, it rained almost every day, except the one where it hailed. When it comes to ancient cloud forest, let's just say I saw plenty of clouds.

You may have been warmer and drier than I was.

So am I saying, don't bother? Well, no. I have seen things. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. C-beams glittering in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. (Well maybe not those, but the chance to quote Blade Runner doesn't come up often when writing a walking newsletter editorial). Plumes of black smoke rising over the lake formed by an unimaginably huge prehistoric volcanic eruption.

I'm just saying that next time, I'm going somewhere flatter and drier.



Camping below the summit of Central America's highest mountain



Volcanic peaks around Lake Atitlán

Ceiswyn

(pron. KICE-win)

Photographs copyright © Ceiswyn B, Nov 2024

Partners and Sponsors

Ramble Worldwide



Ramble Worldwide (previously Ramblers Walking Holidays) is the Ramblers holiday walking partner. If you book a holiday with Ramble Worldwide and let them know that you are a Bristol Ramblers member, this Group will receive a contribution (£10 for UK holidays, £20 for short haul, £30 for long haul). See <https://www.rambleworldwide.co.uk/faqs#tab-the-walking-partnership>

Note that this has no impact on the price you pay for the holiday.

Outdoor Retailers

Most outdoor gear shops offer discounts to Ramblers members.

Cotswold Outdoor



Cotswold Outdoor is the Ramblers national sponsor, and their discount is 15%.

Taunton Leisure



Taunton Leisure sponsors this local Group, and also offers 15% discounts. There are stores available in Bristol, Taunton and Exeter.

Books and Maps

Ordnance Survey

The Ordnance Survey are working with the Ramblers to open the way for everyone to enjoy the outdoors in a more accessible, safe and sustainable way.

Ramblers members can enjoy 25% off a new subscription to OS Maps Premium, using code RAMOSM. Additionally, £5 will be donated to the Ramblers for each valid subscription.

Stanfords Book Shop

Stanfords is a specialist retailer of maps, travel books and other travel accessories, with stores in London and Bristol. They offer a 10% discount to Ramblers members.

Cicerone Press



Cicerone publishes guide books for walkers and cyclists. They offer a 25% discount to Ramblers members, with the code RAMBMD25.

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