



Guidelines for Walkers

Updated January 2024

1. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

1.1 **Walking is an activity that has the potential to result in serious injury or even death. All walkers should be aware of and accept these risks and take full responsibility for their behaviour.**

1.2 Walkers should select a walk category that matches their experience and current level of fitness. The club *Upcoming Walk* page contains information on the name, duration, distance, elevation gain and meeting point for the next walk in each category: <https://galwaywalkingclub.ie/upcoming-walks-2020/>. Future walk schedules are listed on the relevant walk category pages. The Walk Coordinators may be consulted for advice on suitability.

N.B. It is strongly recommended that anyone wishing to participate in a hillwalk must have completed at least 3 rambles first.

1.3 It is the responsibility of all walk participants to ensure that they have suitable boots, clothing and equipment for the walk (see Section 2).

1.4 Members are encouraged to develop their basic navigation skills (map reading and compass use), with the aspiration of becoming self-sufficient walkers.

1.5 All members should carry a weatherproof emergency information card (laminated or in a waterproof cover), stored in a readily-accessible external pocket in their rucksack. The Walk Leader may need to access this in the event of an emergency.

The following information should be listed on the card, which should be kept up to date:

- Name, address and phone number
- Name(s) and phone number(s) of next of kin/emergency contact(s), and their relationship to you
- Medical conditions (if any)
- Medication and dosages (if any)
- Allergies to medication (if any)

1.6 Please be aware of the risk associated with moving vehicles before, during and after a walk.

2. WALKING BOOTS, CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

2.1 Walking boots

Walking boots are compulsory for hillwalks and recommended for other walks. Shock absorbent footwear with ankle support is crucial for all walkers. Walkers without suitable footwear will not be allowed to participate in a walk.

Boots must be sturdy, waterproof, suitable for the terrain and season, with full (above ankle) support and treaded sole. Trail runners, standard runners or other footwear are completely unsuitable. Proper hillwalking socks are also recommended.

2.2 Clothing

The following items of clothing are essential for walking.

- Yellow hi-vis vest
- Base-layer: Synthetic wicking material or merino wool, but not cotton.
- Mid-layer: Fleece, soft shell or synthetic insulating layer.
- Walking trousers: comfortable and quick drying. Denims are not permitted. The use of long trousers all year round may help reduce the risk of tick bites.
- Waterproof jacket with adjustable hood.
- Waterproof over-trousers.
- Hat and/or cap
- Gloves and/or mittens.

2.3 Rucksack and contents

Recommendations for rucksack and contents (N.B. no sharp or glass objects):

- Rucksack (recommended volume 25-35 litres). This should be well fitted, correctly adjusted and comfortable. A padded hip belt will help distribute the load from your shoulders to your hips.
- Yellow hi-vis vest
- Emergency details card (see Section 1.5)
- Food, high energy snacks, with a reserve supply for emergencies
- Reusable bottle(s) or bladder/platypus with water; with extra water for hot weather or emergencies
- Flask with hot drink (e.g. soup), particularly for cold weather or emergencies
- Survival bag (double bag recommended)
- Map and compass (see Section 1.4)
- Mobile phone (fully charged at the start of the day, in a waterproof bag). Do not rely on having reception or assume that your battery will last for the duration of the walk.

- **Personal first aid kit**
- Headtorch (with working batteries)
- Whistle
- Drybags
- Spare gloves/mittens, hats/caps, buffs, balaclava(winter) and warm mid layer.
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, SPF lip balm, sun hat, insect repellent.

The following items are optional:

- Walking poles
- Gaiters
- Spare headtorch batteries
- Spare boot laces
- Tick removal tool
- Sit mat
- Mobile navigation app (e.g. Outdoor Active or Hiiker) or a handheld GPS device.
- Small power bank (5,000 mAh) and cable to charge a mobile phone/GPS.

3. WHATSAPP GROUPS / REGISTERING FOR WALKS

- 3.1 There are dedicated WhatsApp groups for each of the walk categories. Members may join one or more groups by contacting the relevant Walk Coordinator.
- 3.2 Places on walks must be booked in advance through polls posted on the WhatsApp groups. The deadline for Sunday walks is strictly 8 pm on the Friday beforehand; the deadline for Wednesday walks is strictly 8 pm on the Tuesday beforehand. Please only book a place on an upcoming walk if you intend to participate. If you must withdraw at short notice, please remove your name from the poll and alert the Walk Leader and/or Walk Coordinator.
- 3.3 Carpooling can be arranged through the WhatsApp groups and is strongly encouraged in order to (i) reduce the carbon footprint associated with the walk, and (ii) reduce the number of cars at the start/finish point. After an initial message, please WhatsApp others privately to finalise arrangements. Suggested contributions are €5 per person for journeys up to 20 km, and €10 per person for journeys greater than 20 km.
- 3.4 To prevent WhatsApp groups becoming swamped, the posting of videos and other unnecessary content is strongly discouraged. Please limit photo uploads to group shots.
- 3.5 WhatsApp groups are reserved for approved club activities only.

4. ON THE WALK

- 4.1. Ensure that you sign your name in the sign-in book, thereby acknowledging the risks associated with walking and accepting personal responsibility.
- 4.2. Before the walk, please notify the Walk Leader discreetly of any medical condition(s) that may impact on your safety and the safety of the group members. Carrying the medical details card suggested in Section 1.6 does not exempt you from this requirement.
- 4.3. Listen to the Walk Leader's description and instructions at the start of the walk, and follow the Walk Leader's guidance and advice at all times.
- 4.4. Walkers are encouraged to take an interest in their surroundings, in map reading and navigation/route-finding.
- 4.5. All walkers should endeavour to keep pace with the main body of the group (see Section 1.3).
- 4.6. The Walk Leader may curtail, extend or alter the route on the day, for the safety or enjoyment of the group, or in response to the weather conditions.
- 4.7. A yellow hi-vis vest must be worn when walking on public roads, and when visibility is poor on the hills. Walk leaders and the sweepers/backmarkers normally wear orange vests.
- 4.8. On public roads, walk on the right hand side of the road, in single file, facing oncoming traffic, in groups of less than 15. Please leave an adequate distance between groups to enable the passage of approaching vehicles.
- 4.9. Gates should be left as they are found, open or closed. If a gate must be climbed, please do so one at a time on the hinged/hung side only. Stiles should be used where provided. Care should be taken not to damage fences and stone walls.
- 4.10. Follow paths/trails where present, even if muddy, to minimise erosion to surrounding ground.
- 4.11. Show respect at all times towards road users, landowners, their property, land and animals. Respect wildlife and the environment in general.
- 4.12. Look out for fellow walkers and offer assistance if someone needs it.
- 4.13. Leave no trace, of food waste or litter. *"If you bring it in, take it out"*.

- 4.14. Mobile phone calls during a walk should be limited to urgent and emergency use only. Non-essential phone use is strongly discouraged.
- 4.15. Leave a change of clothing and footwear, a towel and a bag in which to stow your wet clothing and dirty boots in the driver's car for after the walk.
- 4.16. If availing of a lift, respect the car owner by keeping it as clean as possible.
- 4.17. Dogs are not allowed on any club walk under any circumstances.