

Guidance for Participants on Friends of the South Downs walks and strolls

All individuals who walk with the 'Friends' are responsible for their own personal safety. There are some basic safety precautions that individuals should take to avoid problems on group walks. Mostly they are based on common sense and have been developed by experienced leaders. The leader may highlight additional points on the day which should be adhered to.

Basic Safety Advice

- Ensure you are fit enough for type of walk outlined in the programme, the stated mileage, route and conditions on the day, especially if you are not a regular walker.
- Take particular note of any features which you may find difficult, such as steep ascents, descents and numerous stiles.
- Downland tracks can be rough, uneven, muddy and slippery in wet weather.
- Ensure you have suitable clothing, footwear and equipment. Boots or good walking shoes are recommended and clothing to give protection from sun, wind and rain depending on the time of year and weather forecast. Be aware of the effect of extremes of weather.
- In advance, inform the leader of any relevant medical condition.
- Take note of any unsafe areas or hazards pointed out by the leader on the day.
- Carry a mobile phone if you have one. You can include an 'ICE' (In Case of Emergency) contact on your phone. Always carry an information card with your name, emergency contact details, and any medical conditions as appropriate. You must inform the leader if you intend to leave the walk.
- Responsibility for dogs where permitted lies with the owner who must do as requested by the leader. Dogs must be on a lead or under close control at all times. We do not allow extendable leads for safety reasons.
- Walk together in single file when on public roads as directed by the leader and Highway Code
- Ask for assistance over stiles or other hazards where appropriate.
- In exceptional circumstances, the leader may cancel a walk for safety reasons, giving as much notice as is possible. **If any doubt exists whether the walk will take place it is the responsibility of the walker to contact the leader** who may be telephoned if required.
- Be aware of ticks and Lyme disease - wearing long trousers and sleeves reduces the risk.
- Carry a personal First Aid kit.

General Suggestions

- If you are attending for the first time seek out the leader and introduce yourself.
- Carry a suitable cold or hot drink.
- If you intend to eat at a pub lunch time (where indicated on the programme) you should also carry emergency food, in case this is not possible. The Lunch stop is usually around an hour.
- Alternatively you may wish to take a packed lunch.
- Potential shelter/seats for picnickers will be used where possible.
- If proper toilets are not available, comfort breaks may need to be taken 'in the bush'.
- Avoid causing any damage to property by climbing over walls or fences etc.
- Follow the Countryside Code.
- Please consider car sharing or public transport where possible.
- Society members may invite up to three guests to a walk or stroll. Guests should read these Guidance notes and accept their participation will be entirely at the leader's discretion.
- Have a good time.