

HEART OF KENT



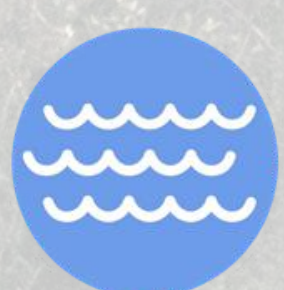
WALKING FESTIVAL

25TH - 26 APRIL 2020

ABOUT THE WALKS

The new Heart of Kent Walking Festival will span over two adventure filled days, the 25th and 26th April 2020. Led by experts, each walk will be unique, with varying difficulties and distances, so there is something no matter what your age or ability. Explore the beautiful landscapes running through the Kent Downs, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and along the Medway Valley.

Or take in the peaceful waterside, the bluebells blooming in woodlands and discover Neolithic stones, ruined castles and much more. With opportunity to explore local history and heritage, capture wildlife, take in stunning vistas, experience delicious local food and meet friendly like-minded people. So whether you choose a leisurely 1 mile wander or a challenging 22 mile hike, the Heart of Kent Walking Festival is the perfect opportunity to get outdoors this spring!



Riverside



Nature Reserve



Countryside



Town/ Urban



Easy access



Moderate



Easy



Strenuous



Leisurely



**Dogs allowed
(on a lead)**



Family friendly

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information detailed in this guide, Maidstone Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors and omissions nor for any consequences arising from use of this guide. All information correct at time of going to press.

OUR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



The Ramblers

The Ramblers is the largest walkers' rights organisation in Great Britain. The Maidstone Ramblers and the Medway Ramblers have both contributed a number of walks in this programme and will be led by some of their experienced walk leaders. The Maidstone and Medway Ramblers are friendly groups of people, facilitating walks for members who are passionate about getting outdoors. The Maidstone Ramblers also work with Kent County Council in actively monitoring, maintaining and improving the public rights of way, regularly volunteering their time to clear public footpaths.



Kent Wildlife Trust

Kent Wildlife Trust is the county's leading conservation charity with over 31,000 members and 1,000 registered volunteers. The trust works closely with local communities, landowners and partners to protect and improve habitats in the countryside, coast and town for the benefit for the wildlife and people in Kent. Kent Wildlife Trust manage and protect over 9000 acres of land across more than 80 different sites and nature reserves, alongside 3 visitor centres.



Medway Valley Countryside

Medway Valley Countryside partnership carries out a wide range of projects, activities, events and community engagement, sustaining and improving Kent's countryside, encouraging more outdoor participation and promoting the health benefits of outdoor activities.



Explore Kent

Explore Kent is a Kent County Council led partnership initiative with public, private and voluntary sector partners that promote and actively encourage Kent's residents to access, enjoy and benefit from the great natural resources that Kent has to offer..



Kent Downs

The Kent Downs Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit works with a host of organisations and partners to deliver a variety of projects and schemes across the Kent Downs AONB. The Unit is employed by Kent County Council and works on behalf of the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) to carry out the preparation and review of the Management Plan, to advocate its policies and work in partnership to deliver a range of actions described in the Action Plan.



Long Distance Walkers Association

The LDWA is an Association of people with the common interest of walking long distances in rural, urban, mountainous or moorland areas. Some of their members like to participate in the LDWA's many challenge events, with distances ranging from 20 to 100 miles. Others like to walk along long distance paths over several days, allowing an opportunity to socialise as they walk with one of the LDWA's 43 geographic groups.



Augustine Camino

The Augustine Camino, created by enthusiastic walkers Paula and Andrew - 'Camino' is used as a shorthand for 'long distance walking pilgrimage' inspired by Camino de Santiago. The pair have created pilgrimage routes in the South East which are authentic, not to original routes, but to the true spirit of pilgrimage.



Kent Community Rail Partnership

The Kent Community Rail Partnership exists to bring together widely varied partners in order to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the communities served by rural and secondary rail services. This is achieved by improving community links with rail operators and initiating projects that make rail services more attractive to residents and visitors alike.



Hush Heath Estate

Set within the rolling hills of Kent, Hush Heath Estate began with a simple love of wine, a handful of vineyards and the will to push boundaries. With the huge success of their first wine, Balfour Brut Rosé, they turned their passion into a family business. Hush Heath offers an exceptional guest experience across 400 acres of pristine Kent countryside. From expert-led winery tours and guided wine tastings, to stunning vineyard walks and nature trails within ancient oak woodland.



The Black Horse Inn

The Black Horse Inn is a relaxed, rural, family run Inn set in the Kentish countryside. The 18th century Inn offers some of the finest bed and breakfast accommodation in Maidstone, and although not situated in the Inn itself, the bed and breakfast is conveniently located in a series of separate Kentish barn style buildings close to the main Inn. The surroundings are idyllic, an area of outstanding natural beauty.



Visit Maidstone

Visit Maidstone is the official tourist site for Maidstone, the county town of Kent. It offers advice on what's on, where to stay and what to do during your time in Maidstone.



Maidstone Borough Council

Maidstone Borough Council is the second level local authority for the Borough of Maidstone in Kent, United Kingdom. The Borough of Maidstone is a local government district with borough status in Kent,



Interreg Europe

Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, we aim to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place.

LET'S GET WALKING

SATURDAY 25TH

Views from the North Downs Way

Although quite a difficult walk, it will take in some amazing views of the Kentish countryside. You will get a sense of achievement by climbing the escarpment to reach these vistas. Look out for various raptors such as buzzards and maybe even a red kite soaring over the Downs. A short detour off the North Downs Way will include the view from the Woodland Trust Hucking Estate, a fantastic spot for a picnic lunch.



Start time: 10:40 **Start point:** Hollingbourne Train Station, Maidstone, ME17 1FZ
Duration (approx): 3hrs **Distance:** 4.03m/6.5km **Refreshments:** Bring a packed lunch **Age:** 16+ **Parking:** Free parking at Hollingbourne station **Train:** Hollingbourne **Led by:** Derek Whitehead

Landscape Characterisation Through Time

This walk along the scarp slope of the chalk downs offers unparalleled views across the weald of Kent and the Medway Gap. Blow away the cobwebs and feel the up draught of the spring air as we take a walk through time interpreting the evolution of the landscape from post ice age recolonization, neo-lithic man, iron age deforestation, the coming of the Romans, through to pilgrims, the agrarian revolution, Captain Swing, paper making and today's post-industrial landscape. We might be lucky to spot some soaring raptors, reptiles and orchids along the way too. A relatively short walk but with some steep and challenging sections.



Start time: 14:00 **Start point:** Bluebell Hill, Mill Lane, ME17 1LA **Duration (approx):** 2hrs **Distance:** 2.5m/4.0km **Age:** 12+ **Parking:** Bluebell Hill Car Park **Bus:** 101 Chatham/Maidstone **Train:** Chatham 3 miles **Led by:** Mark Pritchard





In and Around Aylesford

From Cobtree Manor Car Park we head to the River Medway following a riverside footpath into Aylesford. We then head towards Eccles and Kits Coty. A short time on the North Downs Way then head South towards Great Cossington and back to Cobtree Manor Park. Fairly flat no stiles. Mostly country paths, woods and orchards.

Start time: 10:30 **Start point:** Cobtree Manor Park, Forstal Road, Maidstone, ME20 7AG **Duration (approx):** 2.5hrs **Distance:** 6.5m/10.5km **Age:** 18+

Parking: Cobtree Manor Park £2 all day **Led by:** Medway Ramblers - John Billings



Augustine Camino

This is a pilgrimage. It is the second leg of the Augustine Camino, a long-distance walking route from Rochester Cathedral to the Shrine of St Augustine in Ramsgate via Canterbury and Faversham. The route has featured on Radio 4 and in the Guardian. We start with a tour of the Friars, built by the Carmelites on their return from the Crusades and now once more welcoming pilgrims in some of the original buildings. The Priory has much beautiful modern art, a relic of local saint Simon Stock and a peaceful riverside setting. Then we pass into the village for photographs on the medieval bridge followed by a stroll to the HQ of the Kent Wildlife Trust at Tyland Barn. The ruins of Boxley Abbey are next followed by an amble through the vineyards to lunch at the Kings Arms. Just opposite is St Mary and All Saints Church, a really lovely stop along the Pilgrim's Way. From there we walk to Detling and on to Thurnham and St Mary's church. Just up the lane is the Black Horse, a perfect pilgrim pub.

Start time: 09:00 **Start point:** Aylesford Priory Reception, Aylesford, ME20 7BX **Duration (approx):** 6hrs **Distance:** 9m/14.5km **Refreshments:** Pub lunch or bring a packed lunch **Parking:** Aylesford Priory £2 suggested donation **Bus:** 155 **Led by:** Andrew Kelly



A Hidden Oasis

This delightful nature reserve is tucked away in a residential area of Maidstone. Once part of a large country estate, the 90 acres have been transformed, and is now home to a variety of wildlife. Your walk leader is a regular volunteer on the reserve. The lake is home to ducks, geese, coots and moorhens, and there will probably be baby waterfowl to be seen. Bluebells should be in flower.

Start time: 10:30 **Start point:** Newnham Court Inn, Maidstone, ME14 2LH **Duration (approx):** 2.5hrs **Distance:** 4m/6.5km **Refreshments:** Optional lunch stop at Newnham Court Inn **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Newnham Court **Train:** Bearsted 2.1 miles **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers



Noticing Nature Mindfulness Walk

Join Kent Wildlife Trust for a gentle walk around the Tyland Barn nature park and Wonderful Wordicular Wildlife Walk. This walk will incorporate mindfulness techniques and exercises, enabling you to take the time to experience the benefits of nature through the Five Ways to Wellbeing; Take Notice, Connect, Be Active, Learn and Give. The walk will be very slow paced and relaxed, and is mostly flat – however, it can get muddy so please do wear appropriate footwear. There are facilities, parking and a café at Tyland Barn visitor centre where the walk will begin and end. Feel free to bring your own sketching materials and binoculars, but they aren't a necessity.



Start time: 10:00/14:00 **Start point:** Tyland Barn Visitor Centre, Chatham Rd, Maidstone, ME14 3BD **Duration (approx):** 2hrs **Distance:** 1m/1.6km **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Tyland Barn **Bus:** 101 **Led by:** Vicky Aitkenhead

History Walk

Next to the Town Hall, is Bank Street where you can see old Maidstone's history in the buildings as you head to the river. The route will take you through Whatman Park, part of the 12km Maidstone River Park that stretches from Teston to Aylesford. Along the route you will be able to see much of Maidstone's heritage, passing Allington Castle, Allington Lock before reaching the historic medieval five arched bridge at Aylesford. Stopping for lunch in Aylesford you will then head back along the Medway to Maidstone town centre.



Start time: 10:00 **Start point:** Queen Victoria Monument, Jubilee Square, Maidstone, ME14 1LR **Duration (approx):** 4.5hrs **Distance:** 9m/14.5km **Refreshments:** Pub lunch or bring packed lunch **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Town Centre Car Parks **Train:** Maidstone East/West Station **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers

Maidstone to Loose Valley and more...

This circular walk heads out of town through the famous Mote Park with its ancient trees, long history and wide open spaces. The trail then heads uphill toward Boughton Mount through a short section of urban area and then out into the countryside and fields. Then walking through the Loose Valley for a pub lunch stop at the Chequers, Loose; or in the outdoor space for packed lunch. You then head downhill through a nature reserve finally arriving at the River Medway crossing at Tovil, walking downstream towards Maidstone along the Medway path.



Start time: 10:00 **Start point:** Town Hall, Jubilee Square, High Street, Maidstone, ME14 1TF **Duration (approx):** 5.5hrs **Distance:** 8m/12.9km **Refreshments:** Pub lunch or bring a packed lunch **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Town Centre Car Parks **Train:** Maidstone East/West stations **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers



SUNDAY 26TH



Reptiles and Rebellion

Discover more about the history of the local area before reaching an oasis for wildlife that is Vinters Valley Nature reserve. Starting from the Barracks station, this walk will take you over the rail bridge and through Brenchley Gardens where you can see the historic Chillington Manor House, now home to Maidstone Museum. You will then head to Vinters Valley Nature Reserve where you may be lucky enough to see the amphibians, especially the common toad which uses the lake to breed in spring. Now a receptor site for the relocation of reptiles, keep your eyes peeled for slow worms and lizards. A huge variety of bird life can also be spotted on route. The walk will continue and take you through woodland before crossing Penenden Heath. The Heath was used as a site for executions and it is famous for its connections to the Peasants revolt or 1381.



Start time: 10:00 **Start point:** Maidstone Barracks Station, ME16 0SQ **Duration (approx):** 2hrs **Distance:** 4m/6.4km **Age:** 12+ **Parking:** Town Centre Car Parks **Train:** Maidstone East/West & Barracks stations **Led by:** Andrea Griffiths



East Malling Circular

An interesting circular walk through fields, woods and some quiet country lane walking. We pass the old Watercress Beds that were once grown here commercially by the springhead in Well Street. The stream that rises here flows in a generally easterly direction to join the River Medway at Mill Hall, Aylesford. On its route to Aylesford it once powered six watermills. The stream may have formerly been known as the Bradbourne. Bradbourne Lane in Ditton bearing witness to this name. At the top of the High Street we pass the old St. James church of England Infant School which is now a Home for the Elderly.



Start time: 10:30 **Start point:** East Malling Car Park, ME19 6AJ **Duration (approx):** 3hrs **Distance:** 5.5m/8.8km **Age:** 18+ **Train:** East Malling station **Led by:** Medway Ramblers



Bluebells and Orchids

This is an exceptional site for spring flowers notably bluebells, wood sorrel and wood spurge at this Woodland Trust site. Most notably we will walk through the adjacent Admirals' wood, where, if conditions are right, early purple orchids are so abundant they will provide a remarkable carpet of imperial purple unmatched anywhere in Kent to my knowledge. Bumblebees and butterflies will be active and taking advantage of the fragrant and nectar rich emblems of spring in this classic English woodland. An expert guide will point identify the plants and animals as we encounter them on this woodland stroll. A moderate walk 90% on good paths through woodland and grasslands.



Start time: 11:00 **Start point:** Hucking Estate Car Park, Church Rd, ME17

1QT **Duration (approx):** 2hrs **Distance:** 2.5m/4km **Age:** 8+

Train: Hollingbourne station 3.1 miles **Led by:** Mark Pritchard



Linton, Loose & Langley Loop and the Greensand Way

This long walk sets off from the enchanting village of Linton, located on the southward slope of the Greensand Ridge, with panoramic views of the Weald of Kent. The route will follow some of the Greensand Way, named after the sandstone ridge that crosses Surrey & Kent. A hallmark of this route is the number of magnificent houses, gardens and parks that you will see. After Hunton the walk turns back through the attractive Loose Valley, well known for its stream and tumble of old cottages. The remains of thirteen paper mills lie along the valley, and you may spot the haul stones where the wagons were hitched to and the trough where the horse would drink. The walk will continue past Langley Loch to a lunch stop at the village pub or a picnic in the churchyard. In the afternoon the walk will turn again at Ulcombe for more Greensand Ridge on the way back.



Start time: 09:00 **Start point:** St Nicholas Church, Linton Hill, Linton, ME17

4AW **Duration (approx):** 9hrs **Distance:** 22m/35.4km **Refreshments:** Pub

lunch or bring a picnic **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Linton Village/Linton church **Led**

by: Peter Jull





Urban Sprawl 🦋

The walk will take you out of town to the picturesque village of Loose that sits in an attractive valley. On Old Loose Hill the Kentish ragstone can be seen in the kerbs and gulleys. There are houses that date from the 15th century, and a yew tree that is at least 1500 years old! Hayle Nature reserve falls partially within the larger Loose Valley conservation area, through to Tovil. The site forms part of the former grounds of Hayle Place, a grade II property built in the mid 15th century. The reserve is considered one of the top natural sites in Maidstone.

Start time: 10:00 **Start point:** South Park Car Park, Armstrong Rd, ME15 6AZ **Duration (approx):** 2hrs 45 **Distance:** 4.5m/7.2km **Age:** 18+ **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers - Carol H



History Walk 🌊🏛️

Starting in the town centre Maidstone's history will be apparent as you pass in the ancient buildings on route to the river. Continuing along the river path, your knowledgeable walk leader will point out many key historic sites on route to Allington. From Allington you will leave the riverside as you head towards Fant before re-joining the Medway river path back to the town centre where you will see the medieval quarter where the Archbishops' Palace, All Saints Church and the College of All Saints sit perched by the River.

Start time: 10:00 **Start point:** Town Hall, Jubilee Square, High Street, Maidstone, ME14 1SA **Duration (approx):** 4hrs **Distance:** 7m/11.3km **Age:** 18+ **Parking:** Town Centre car parks **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers - Joan Jenner



Discovering Nature for Families 🦋

230 acres of beautiful parkland with a range of habitats including six lakes, rich grasslands, shallow wetlands, scrub and woodland. The park is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and a Natural England accredited Country Park. See dragonflies and damselflies in spring and summer, large number of birds and maybe a water vole along the banks. This short walk is also suitable for families with young children and toddlers. Terrain is pushchair and wheelchair friendly. Picnic tables and children's play area. Optional lunch stop after walk at Kiosk in Country Park

Start time: 10:30 **Start point:** Leybourne Lakes Country Park, Malling Road, Leybourne ME6 5ST **Duration (approx):** 1.5hrs **Distance:** 2m/3.2km **Age:** Everyone **Parking:** Leybourne Lakes Car Parks (pay and display) **Led by:** Maidstone Ramblers - Carol D





Hills and Hoppers

Explore the rolling landscape that surrounds Yalding, a village steeped in history, and terrain that is home to a variety of wildlife. On route you will see traditional Hopper Huts constructed in 1880 for the annual hop pickers. Meet us at Yalding railway station, where you will be greeted with some refreshments. The route will take you through Yalding Fen with woodland, willow carr, ponds and a traditional orchard. Look out for grass snakes swimming on the pond. You will cross the 15th century Yalding Bridge, the longest medieval bridge in Kent. Enjoy views of Buston Manor before reaching Greensand Way. This path stretched through Hampshire, Surrey and Kent across a sandstone Ridge and provides stunning views. The final stretch will provide nice views of the River Medway before arriving at Waterringbury Station.

Start time: 09:30 **Start point:** Yalding Train Station, Nettlestead, ME18 6HJ **Duration (approx):** 3hrs **Distance:** 6.2/9.9km **Age:** 16+ **Parking:** Maidstone West Station/Lockmeadow Leisure **Train:** Maidstone West Station to Yalding/Waterringbury to Maidstone West **Led by:** Vicky Carton/Andy Place

EXPLOREKENT.ORG



BOOKING

For the safety of our walk leaders and participants, a maximum number of participants will be capped for each walk. Booking is essential for all the walks. Please book early as places are limited. To find out how to book please visit

www.heartofkentwalkingfestival.org

CANCELLATION

No refunds will be given unless the event is cancelled by the organisers or under exceptional circumstances.

ARRIVING FOR WALKS

You are advised to arrive at the event at least 10 minutes before the start time. There will be an event leader there to meet you whatever the weather. In unsafe conditions a safety assessment will be made and a decision may be taken to cancel the event if necessary. The leaders will not wait around for you if you are late.

CHILDREN

Please check each walk for which age they are suitable for. All young people under 16 must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

PHOTOGRAPHY

You are welcome to take photographs along the walks. We may also take photographs at these events. Photos might be used in future publicity. If you have any objections please advise the leader at the start of the event.

CLOTHING

Warm, waterproof and comfortable clothing is recommended, most events will take place rain or shine (unless deemed unsafe). Wear suitable footwear on all walks, walking boots recommended but otherwise any other sturdy and comfortable shoe.

WHAT TO BRING

You are responsible for bringing any refreshments including lots to drink, snacks and where required, a packed lunch (please check individual walks for details).

DOGS

Dogs are only allowed on walks that specify. They must be kept on a lead at all times during the walks.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Some of the walks will be challenging and may be long distances, uneven terrain or require a brisk pace. Please make sure that you are fit enough to complete the walk you are booking to avoid disappointment or risk of injury. Each walk has been graded with their appropriate difficulty. Please check the website for full definition.

CONTACT US

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