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Photo taken by Mark on the Ebbor Gorge walk July 25

Balsam Centre Health Walks October – December 2025

What is a Balsam Centre Health Walk?

Health Walks promote walking as an achievable, non-competitive and enjoyable way to improve health and increase physical activity. There are a variety of walks to accommodate absolute beginners to the more experienced. They are a great way to increase your fitness levels, enjoy local natural spaces and meet new people. The walks are all free of charge, but donations are welcome. Walks are led by volunteers who are trained Health Walk Leaders.

Which walk is right for me?

There are different types of Health Walks to accommodate a range of walking experiences and fitness levels.



The Amble – from/to River Cale Cafe @ 10am, Thursdays

The Amble is a slow-paced, short walk (under 30 minutes) on level, stable ground, making it ideal if you haven't done much walking before, or perhaps don't get out of the house that often. With plenty of benches along the way, you can stop as often as you need to.

Starting Point: River Cale Cafe, Wincanton, BA9 9ED. Grid ref: ST708283



Short Walk – from/to the Balsam Centre @ 10am, Tuesday

These 1-hour walks aim to maintain or increase general fitness. The walk follows pavements, paths and tracks around Wincanton and the surrounding fields and will include some inclines. There is no need to book for these walks and can be geared to the walkers who turn up. These walks happen every Tuesday, starting and ending at the Balsam Centre, usually finishing with a cup of tea or coffee in the Centre.

Starting Point: The Balsam Centre, Wincanton, BA9 9PA. Grid ref: ST715285



Stourhead Buggy Walks @ 10am, Thursdays

Buggy & Toddler Walks run every other Thursday, meeting at 9:30am for a prompt 10am start from the Visitors Centre at Stourhead. This is a lovely walk around the beautiful gardens, suitable for buggies and babies in slings.

Entry is free for every adult with a child - extra adults will have to pay the garden entry fee or be National Trust members, (car parking is now also free).

There is no need to book, but all walkers will need to register and collect a pass at The Balsam Centre before the first walk, passes will only be issued to people living within a 10 mile radius of The Balsam Centre, so please take a proof of address with you to register. The walks last about 45 minutes, with the option of ending in the National Trust Cafe if you wish.

Meet outside Stourhead Visitors Centre at 9:30am. Postcode BA12 6QF.

Grid ref: ST778339

Long Walks - start location and day will vary each week

Information for these walks are in this brochure, and we request that you please book for these walks by emailing info@balsamcentre.org.uk

These walks are graded by number of boots:

	fairly level walk of no more than 3 miles
	walks of approximately 2 hours and may include steps, inclines, uneven paths and sometimes stiles
	More challenging walk of over 5 miles and could include terrain as for 2 boots

Last walk in the previous brochure:

Wednesday 1st October – 10am



Leaders: Mark and Annette

Mere - A 4.7 mile walk which will include Castle Hill, Burton and Charnage to the east.

Meet: The Walnut Tree in Mere. Nearest postcode: BA12 6BH.

What 3 words location: [///science.teaches.marketing](#)

New walks:

Thursday 9th October – 10am



Leaders: Annette and Chris

Bruton Coombes. Starting from the car park in Bruton, the walk follows the back lanes up to an old drovers road leading out of Bruton up on to the hill and over to Wyke Champflower, turning to follow Creech Hill before heading down to Coombe Hill House and down through Bruton to the car park. One long uphill and short steeper descent. 4.4 miles.

Meet: Station Road Car Park (free), as you enter Bruton from Wincanton. Nearest postcode: BA10 0EH. What3Words: [///partly.grinders.hooked](#).

Wednesday 15th October - 10am



Leaders: Lorraine and Hilary

Shearwater Lake. A walk on (mainly) forest paths with one hill. Approx 5 miles.

Meet: Shearwater Lake car park. Nearest postcode: BA12 7JJ.

What3Words: [//bedrooms.bulk.ghost](#).

Monday 20th October - 10am



Leader: Peter and Val

Fiddleford Manor, English Heritage. A varied ramble over the riverside meadows to Stur and return via Broadoak and Piddles Wood. 1 stile, some inclines. 4.5 miles.

Meet: Fiddleford Manor car park, English Heritage (free). Nearest postcode DT102BX.

What3words: [///harshest.cleans.unzipped](#).

Thursday 30th October - 10am



Leader: Annette and Chris

White Sheet Hill / Mere. The walk starts from White Sheet Hill car park, off the B3092, taking paths and tracks down towards Mere, turning along the north side of Long Hill before following the tracks and paths up to White Sheet Hill and back to the car park. Inclines. 5.23 miles.

Meet: White Sheet Hill car park.

What3Words: [///jeering.shunts.kiosk](#)

Thursday 6th November - 10am



Leaders: Wendy and Nigel

Queen Camel / Sutton Montis. Church BA22 7NX. It is a fairly level walk mainly across fields, the only inclines are gentle and there are 7 stiles, it is about 4.5 miles and will take over 2 hours. We will walk to Sparkford Church then to Little Weston and on to Sutton Montis Church returning along the Leyland Trail.

Meet: Queen Camel Church (parking alongside the old primary school - opposite side of the road). Postcode BA22 7NX. What3Words: [///tadpole.renovated.auctioned](#)

Tuesday 11th November - 10am



Leaders: Peter and Val

Shillingstone. A flat walk over the fields around Hamoon and Childe Okeford. 2 stiles, 4 miles.

Meet: Shillingstone car park off A357 at the west end of the village. Nearest postcode DT11 00X. What3words ///committed.dangerously.pushing

Thursday 20th November - 10am



Leaders: Annette and Lu

Fonthill - Ridge. A walk around the west side of the lake to Ridge Hill, over the ridge and down to Fonthill Bishop and back long the lake. Footpaths across fields and some quiet road walking. There is a pub 10 mins walk from the layby if anyone wants lunch! 2 inclines. 4.3 miles.

Meet: layby at the side of the road. Grid ref: ST933243172

What3Words: ///estuaries.decreased.explains.

Wednesday 26th November - 10am



Leaders: Lorraine and Hilary

Win Green to Tollard Royal. A walk on the chalk downs to Dew Pond at Tollard Royal. Gentle downhill and uphill. Approx. 5 miles.

Meet: in the car park by Win Green. Grid ref. ST923204

What3Word: //cabinet.bravo.spellings.

Friday 5th December - 10am



Leaders: Mark and Chris

Stourhead / Stour Valley. A walk towards Zeals turning off to Gasper and back via the Stour Valley Way. A couple of inclines and descents as we go over hills. Just under 5 miles.

Meet: Stourhead National Trust car park (free for members, but also free parking on the road nearby). Post code: BA12 6QD. What3words: ///worlds.microfilm.prospered

Tuesday 9th December. 9am - note the earlier time



Leaders: Nigel and Wendy

Salisbury. A walk around Salisbury. There is only one bus there at 09.07 and one bus back at 13.40, £3 or free for bus pass holders. "Christmas in the Square" and the weekly Charter Market will both be on, as well as art galleries and cafes to visit, or you can walk the historic streets of the city; we can split up for this event.

Meet: Wincanton Bus Station, outside the Memorial Hall in Wincanton.

Nearest postcode: BA9 9JU but this is the High St. Put Windmill Cottages Wincanton into Googlemaps instead. What3words: ///stick.poetry.dries.

Tuesday 16th December 10am



Christmas Walk

All walkers welcome to join the short walk around Wincanton followed by mince pies in the café!

The list of walks can also be found on our website <https://www.balsamcentre.org.uk/health-walks> and further updates are posted on our Facebook group

How do I join a Walk?

If you would like to participate in any of the Health Walks please complete a registration form before attending your first walk - you can do this by either dropping into the Centre and complete a registration form or completing the form online.

Once you have registered, you can join any walk in the brochure. **Booking is required for “Long” walks**, though not for our other walks. Walks of any length may be cancelled in exceptional circumstances or weather conditions and those who have booked to attend a long walk will be contacted. If in doubt, please contact the Centre.

We advise that you take part in walks appropriate for your health and fitness levels. If you have not participated in much exercise recently or are worried about your health, please consult your doctor before taking part or increasing your physical activity levels.

A waterproof coat, removable layers and supportive, waterproof footwear is recommended, along with a bottle of water.

A parent or guardian must supervise any children under the age of 16. If you wish to bring a young child, please phone and book your place as some walks may not be suitable for the very young.

Regrettably dogs are not allowed on the walks.



Follow us on Facebook

If you are on Facebook join our “Balsam Walking Group”, which is a private group where you can share your photos and thoughts about our walks. We hope to update this group if there are any conditions you may need to know about for a particular walk.

Interested in becoming a walk leader?

We are in need of new walk leaders and back-markers. If the idea appeals, we provide free training. For details, telephone Izzie 01963 31842 or email info@balsamcentre.org.uk

Why walk?

It's widely acknowledged that walking from A to B is better for the environment and air quality in our towns and villages than using our diesel and petrol powered cars. Walking is undeniably good for us too. It may:

- improve your mood
- reduce **stress**
- manage **anxiety**
- help you sleep better
- increase your energy
- help you to cope with difficult times
- improve your confidence and self-esteem
- reduce the risk of **depression**

These points are explored in further detail on:

<https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/walking-health>

There is a fantastic video on YouTube called “**23 and ½ hours: What is the single best thing we can do for our health**” - watch it here - <https://youtu.be/aUalnS6HIGo>

A *morning walk* specifically may have many potential benefits. “**Just one thing**” by Dr Michael Moseley first aired on BBC Radio 4 in March 2021. In the April 10th episode he explores why an **Early Morning Walk** is beneficial to our health, and on May 15th why **Green Spaces** could benefit your brain and body. The episodes are available on BBC Sounds App or

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09by3yy/episodes/player?page=1>

And there’s always NHS guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/>

Any cited sources of information are given in good faith and are a small representation of what is available. The Balsam Centre is not advocating a particular viewpoint and individual judgement should be used when accessing such information.

Have you considered using walking poles..?

There are several reasons to use walking poles when out walking or trekking. Walking poles help you move across terrain quicker, provide additional support and reduce the amount of effort required thus allowing you to achieve more during your walks.

When used correctly walking poles can significantly increase your pace which has additional health benefits. Walking poles improve posture, especially important if you are carrying a load. For more tips about walking poles:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/walk-magazine/reviews/2012/september/walking-poles-buyers-guide.aspx>

**A BIG thanks to our volunteers –
without you, this wouldn’t be possible!**

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