

Walk this Way...South Downs Women's Walking Group

Welcome to our lovely ladies walking group!

Please find enclosed a membership form and health questionnaire.

You are welcome to come along on two of our walks before you decide to become a member.

Our Annual Membership fee is £12 per year (from April 1st) or £1 per month pro rata
Walk Contributions are £3 per walk

Most of our communications with each other are done via **WhatsApp** - so please download this App if you have a smartphone.

We have a **WhatsApp 'Noticeboard'** for myself as 'Admin & Co-ordinator' and for our walk leaders to notify everyone of any last-minute changes or cancellations due to weather or illness. Also, a **WhatsApp 'Group Chat'** for members to communicate with one another.

We can be found on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/www.walkthisway/>

We also have a private '**Members Only' Facebook Group** - where we post information and our members can also share photos of our walks etc. You can ask to join this by clicking on a link on our public page (as above).

Our Website can be found at <https://walkthiswaysouthdownswomenswalkinggroup.org>
You will find joining forms, current Walks Programme and all other info about us on here.

Walks start at 10am - so if you are running late please contact the walk leader on Whatsapp as we can only wait until 10.15am for latecomers - and only if we know you are coming!

Walking Gear - Walkers must arrive for a walk wearing suitable clothing or footwear for the current weather and ground conditions. A light rucksack should also be worn to carry any extra clothing, sunscreen, blister pack, drink & snack etc.

All Group Members are responsible for their own Risk Management whilst participating in our Group Walks.

Please see our website to read our Risk Management Advice Sheet and our Walks Risk Assessment.

Last Minute Walk Changes or Cancellations - Walk locations can be subject to change in the event of poor weather or walk leader illness etc. If in doubt about a particular walk; wet weather, terrain suitability etc. please contact me, Jackie Tuppen on 07766147773, or the walk leader (see **WhatsApp** above)

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Dogs - Well behaved, sociable dogs are welcome, but it is your responsibility to keep them under control. You MUST bring a lead to be used near livestock, in conservation areas or when requested by the Walk Leader. You must also pick up after your dog or 'stick and flick' depending on which is most appropriate. Always carry poo bags just in case

Some background on how our walking group started...

In the summer of 2015, my sister Suzy Luckin and myself, already keen walkers, started meeting up for countryside dog walks more and more often. It helped us cope with our anxiety and growing distress in the knowledge that our younger brother had just a few months left to live. He had been diagnosed with Stage 4 malignant mesothelioma (asbestos) cancer.

Getting away from home and into the nearby countryside for a few hours a couple of times a week was so therapeutic and enabled us to cope better at such a horrible time.

During one of our walks, we found ourselves chatting about how nice it would be to start up a ladies walking group, exploring new places slightly further afield, and one that also allowed well-behaved dogs to come along.

This idea soon became a focus of our conversations - we realised that many other women our sort of age would have experienced, or were still experiencing, similar worries and grief in their lives. Starting a walking group would be a great way of meeting other like-minded ladies and creating new friendships; chatting, laughing, sharing problems as well as the good things in life - and generally taking some valuable time out from all the stuff at home.

In the past I'd already had some useful work experience in starting up a similar project. I worked for the mental health charity 'Mind' and my job role there was to set up and run 'Get Active', a community project for adults with mental health issues. I had to plan and facilitate a varied programme of regular sports & physical activities for adults. So, armed with this bit of background know-how, I did some research and applied to West Sussex County Council and The South Downs National Park Association for a small grant from their *Community Initiatives 'Start Up' fund*.

'Walk this Way' South Downs Women's Walking Group finally came into being in April 2016.

Suzy and I both feel that it's definitely the best idea we've ever had, and we'd be lost without our lovely group of walking friends!

We look forward to walking with you...

Jackie Tuppen