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 **RIDGEBACK**
QUALITY BICYCLES SINCE 1983

Guide to...

GETTING ACTIVE IN THE OFF-SEASON

You can still enjoy the great outdoors, whatever the weather!

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CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



Also available as a FREE ebook – see
www.practicalcaravan.com/know-how/ to download yours!

CYCLING ROUTES FOR ALL

Get out on two wheels to explore these great cycle trails, many of which take in historic attractions – we also highlight fabulous open-all-year sites to stay at!

SARN HELEN, WALES

229.9 miles (in total)

Wales has such a rich seam of fascinating history, it seems rather a shame to single out just one area to explore. So a ride that encompasses both tales of yore and recent events seems only fitting – you can take in short parts of this trail for an excellent cycle.

Based on an old Roman route, Sarn Helen crosses Wales from north to south and traverses some of the country's most beautiful natural areas. Along the way, it covers everything from ancient stone circles and castles, to slate mines and steel mills.

GPS download bit.ly/SarnHelenRide

Stay at Elan Oaks > www.elanoaks.co.uk

South Wales Touring Park (adults only) > southwalescaravansite.co.uk

Tan-Y-Bryn Glamping and Touring Park > tanybrynglamping.co.uk

BANNOCKBURN, SCOTLAND

9.1 miles

North Third reservoir itself isn't particularly historically significant, but the burn that runs from it is. The Battle of Bannockburn saw the Scots, led by Robert the Bruce, achieve a major win over the English in their fight for independence.

Often overlooked in favour of higher peaks to the north, riding around the North Third delivers good climbs, and gives you the chance to cross the river that gave its name to one of Scotland's most important historical events.

GPS download

bit.ly/BannockburnRide

Stay at The Woods Caravan Park
> thewoodscaravanpark.co.uk

**'Often overlooked
in favour of higher
peaks, the North
Third still offers
good climbs'**



BARBURY CASTLE, WILTSHIRE

10.8 miles

Appearing as a set of concentric rings from above, Barbury Castle is actually a pre-Roman hill fort set on the Ridgeway, Britain’s oldest road.

The Ridgeway is, as the name suggests, an ancient limestone ridge, and the track originally connected the east coast to the west. Now it makes easy-access riding. The route is neither long nor technical – it’s an easy-going, beginner-friendly ride, with a great deal of history crammed in along the way.

GPS download bit.ly/BarburyCastle

Stay at Postern Hill Campsite

➤ campingintheforest.co.uk

TALYBONT, BRECON BEACONS

13.6 miles

There’s plenty of great riding in the Brecon Beacons, and much of it is pretty hardcore. But you don’t need to be a hardened veteran to enjoy the region.

This route keeps things relatively low level, yet doesn’t short-change you on the ‘out there’ feeling that this corner of Wales does so well. It’s certainly a good stretch of the legs, but with just 700m of total ascent along its length, this is a relaxed ride, with not much in the way of technical off-road riding.

GPS download bit.ly/talybontride

Stay at Anchorage Caravan Park

➤ anchoragecp.co.uk

CASTLERIGG STONE CIRCLE, LAKE DISTRICT

16.1 miles

The folk who built Castlerigg Stone Circle, nestled among some of England’s most dramatic mountains, certainly knew what they were doing. Unfortunately, whatever it was they knew has been lost in the mists of time, but a good guess is that it was a place to worship the sun and mark the turn of the seasons. The summer solstice would be the perfect time to undertake this ride, not only because you could start with a spot of sun worship, but also because the fells will be dry.

GPS download bit.ly/CastleriggRide

Stay at Castlerigg Farm ➤ castleriggfarm.com



Paul Williams/Alamy





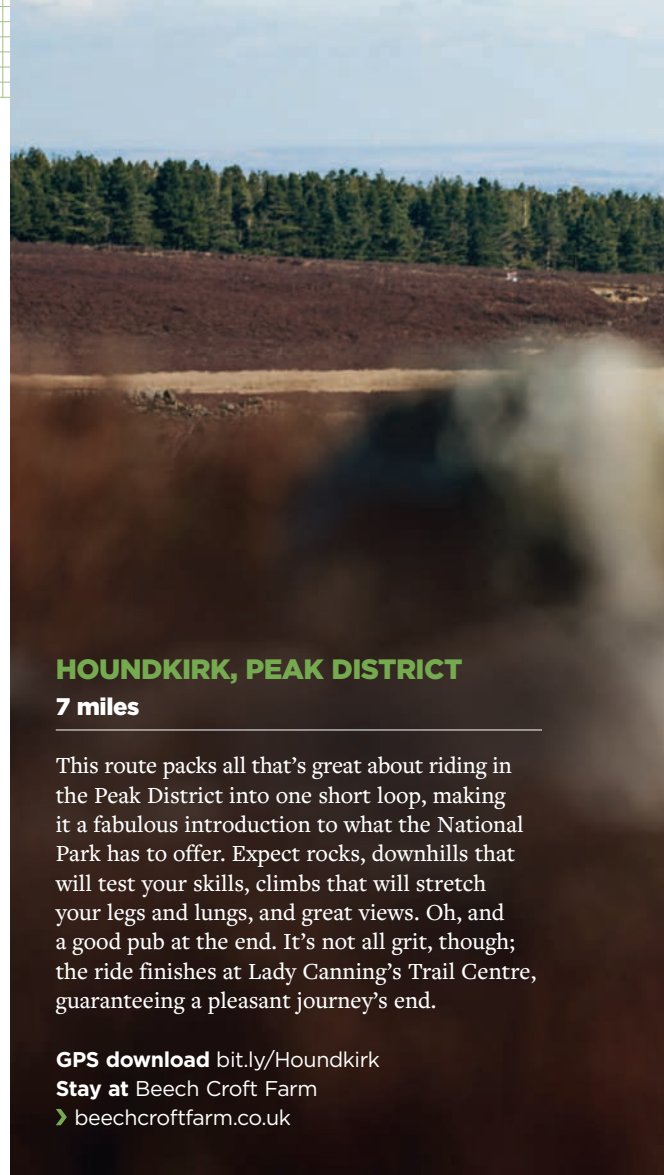
AMBERLEY, SOUTH DOWNS

11.7 miles

Off-road biking doesn't have to be done on mountains, as the South Downs can prove. They might lack the rugged glamour of their taller cousins, but the Downs demand respect. Their smooth, rolling features disguise the fact that they require concerted effort to climb, but once you've gained height, they reward you with superb views and easy riding – although you'll want to look out for green chalk, especially in the wet. Fancy extending the ride? Look out for signs for the South Downs Way.

GPS download bit.ly/Amberleyride

Stay at Concierge Camping > conciergecamping.co.uk



HOUNDKIRK, PEAK DISTRICT

7 miles

This route packs all that's great about riding in the Peak District into one short loop, making it a fabulous introduction to what the National Park has to offer. Expect rocks, downhills that will test your skills, climbs that will stretch your legs and lungs, and great views. Oh, and a good pub at the end. It's not all grit, though; the ride finishes at Lady Canning's Trail Centre, guaranteeing a pleasant journey's end.

GPS download bit.ly/Houndkirk

Stay at Beech Croft Farm

> beechcroftfarm.co.uk

BOLTON ABBEY, YORKSHIRE

30.2 miles

Religion has played a large part in shaping the UK landscape. Monks, like those at Bolton Abbey in the 1100s, would have been responsible not just for the priory and buildings, but also for much of the farming that went on – creating fields and the tracks that we ride today. This 50km route follows some of North Yorkshire's lesser-known trails, taking in the monastic estate and stupendous views over God's Own County.

GPS download bit.ly/BoltonAbbeyRide

Stay at Riverside Campsite > riversidecampsite.co.uk



AVIEMORE, SCOTLAND

18.8 miles

Aviemore could be the closest thing to a resort town that we have in the UK, and while it's best known for winter sports, the riding on offer here is superb all year round.

In the shadow of the mighty Cairngorms, this ride keeps things at a lower level, making it a safe bet if mountain weather does move in.

The route has less than 400m of ascent, so if you're after an all-day ride in the mountains that's family-friendly, this is a good bet.

Don't mistake this to mean that it's boring – zipping through the Rothiemurchus woods is sure to put a smile on your face.

GPS download bit.ly/AviemoreRide

Stay at Dalraddy Holiday Park

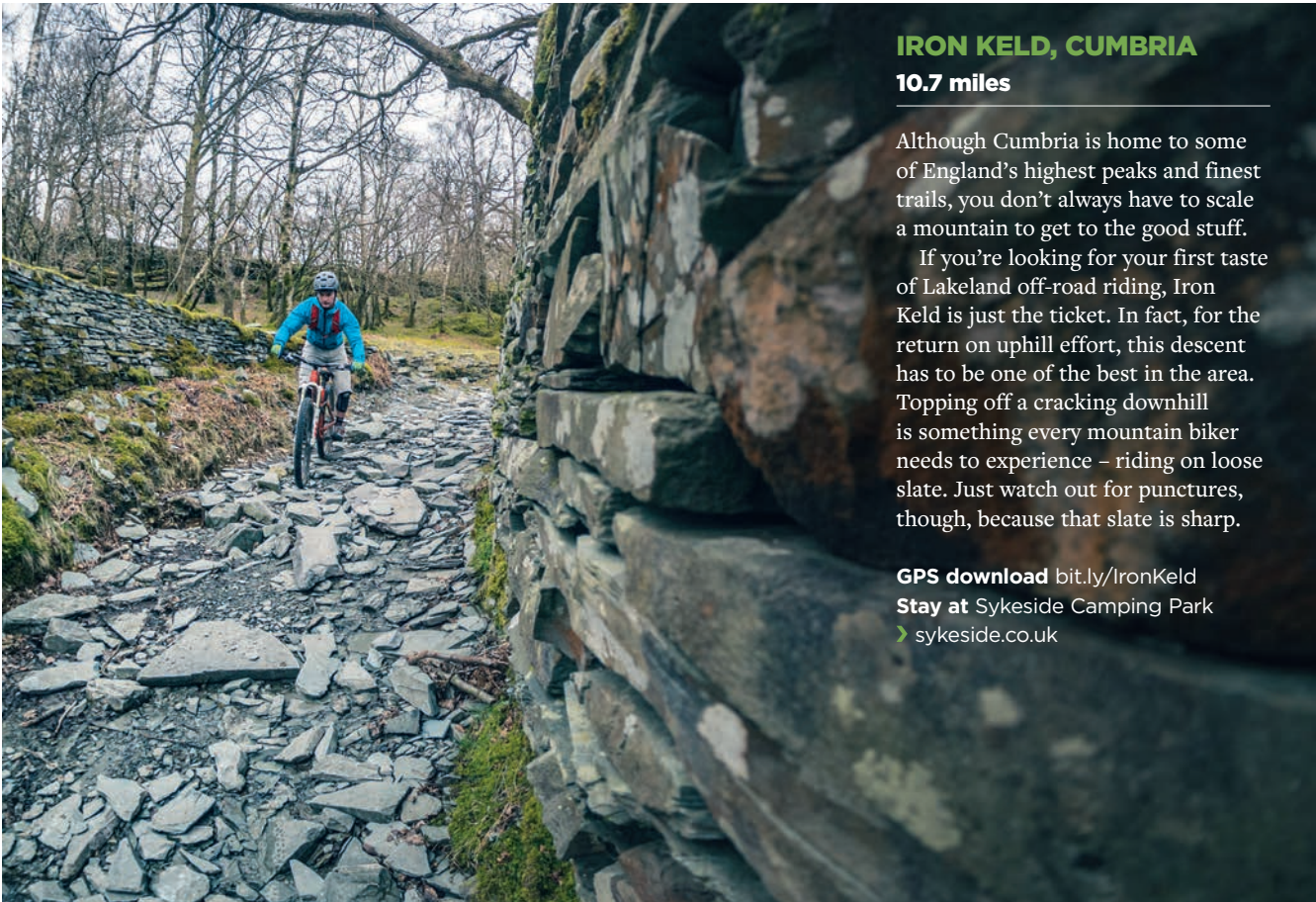
> campinginaviemore.co.uk

'If you're after an all-day ride in the mountains that's family-friendly, this is a good bet'

Ian Lamond/Alamy



CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



IRON KELD, CUMBRIA
10.7 miles

Although Cumbria is home to some of England’s highest peaks and finest trails, you don’t always have to scale a mountain to get to the good stuff. If you’re looking for your first taste of Lakeland off-road riding, Iron Keld is just the ticket. In fact, for the return on uphill effort, this descent has to be one of the best in the area. Topping off a cracking downhill is something every mountain biker needs to experience – riding on loose slate. Just watch out for punctures, though, because that slate is sharp.

GPS download bit.ly/IronKeld
Stay at Sykeside Camping Park
sykeside.co.uk

AFFORDABLE ASSISTANCE

ELECTRIC  BIKES



AVAILABLE TO BUY FROM
Freewheel.co.uk

Model shown:
Arcus 2 Open Frame – £2299.99

Affordable Assistance.

It's easy to achieve one less car in the household. Our all-terrain E-bike, the Arcus 2 is built for comfort in town and country, your go-to transport solution to help reduce your carbon footprint.

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SPORTLINE
www.sportline.co.uk

ridgeback.co.uk



SAVE MONEY WITH OFF-SEASON ACTIVITIES

So you want to get active on a winter tour, but keep costs down, too? Here are some great tips from our expert team!

Book ahead

Pre-book your activities online to make the most of potential discounts – many locations will offer visitors a few pounds off if you book your tickets in advance.

Buy a CampingCard

The ACSI card – which offers savings on low-season stays at campsites during the quieter months – doesn't just give you discounts in Continental Europe, it can also be used at some sites in the UK.

Find out more at www.campingcard.co.uk/united-kingdom.

Check your phone tariff

Don't be stung by mobile costs if you're touring abroad – Brexit means phone companies have been free to reintroduce a charge on roaming in the EU, so you could quickly rack up a substantial bill, particularly if you're streaming video or sending photos.

Check with your provider before you go on holiday, and look for campsites offering Wi-Fi if that's important to you.



DIY food and drinks

Pack a picnic to take with you and enjoy during the day – it will help save money compared to buying from pricey cafés. Similarly, take a flask of tea, coffee or hot chocolate with you – that way, you won't be tempted to make tracks to the nearest teashop. For a savoury snack, you could carry hot soup or pasta instead.



Make pots of money

Allocate cash for each part of your trip, for example, dining out, any pre-booked activities, and so on. Use a budgeting app or online banking, such as Monzo, where you can create 'pots' for each item.

'Take a hot drink and you won't be tempted to make tracks to a teashop'



On your bike

Invest in a rack and take your bike with you on tour – that way, you can save money on transport, fuel and parking while getting active. When you're there, try taking one of our great cycling trails (p68)!



SIX OF THE BEST... WALKING ROUTES

Hiking is a great way to explore on tour, and these are some of our favourite trails

1 PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH, WALES

So much excellent walking in Wales, but for its glorious light and beautiful route, we're highlighting this wonderful National Trail, covering 186 miles of fine coastal scenery.

The path offers great variety, too, from the rugged Angle Village to Freshwater West trail to the beautiful beaches around Tenby on the Skrinkle Haven to Amroth section.

Delightful spots on the path include views towards Skomer Island, the Strumble Head Lighthouse and the Blue Lagoon, a flooded slate quarry much favoured by high-divers.

Just off the A477 and less than six miles from Tenby (easily accessible by train, too), **The Buttl's Caravan Park** is perfectly positioned for exploring the area. Open all year, the site is pet-friendly and offers good-quality amenities, with easy access to shops and a welcoming pub.

▶ thebuttlscaravanpark.com



Khrizmo/Getty

2 RIBBLE VALLEY, NORTH-WEST ENGLAND

Ribble Valley is often missed by visitors pushing on to the better-known Yorkshire Dales and Lake District.

That's a shame – they are missing out on the pretty villages and beautiful scenery of the River Ribble, Bowland Fells and Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There is good walking here, too, including a 5.5-mile Tolkien Trail, near Hurst Green – said to have inspired the writer – and the Clitheroe 50km loop, which begins and ends in the town. Other highlights include Pendle Hill, with superb views over the countryside, and a wealth of foodie destinations – try the Spread Eagle Inn in the Forest of Bowland.

▶ **Ribble Valley Holiday Park**, part of the award-winning Holgates group, has high-quality amenities. From here, you're well placed for exploring the area.

▶ holgates.co.uk/our-parks/ribble-valley



Ashley Cooper/Getty

CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



Hadrian's Wall stretches for some 73 miles (that's 80 Roman miles)

VisitBritain/Joe Cornish

3

3 HADRIAN'S WALL, NORTHERN ENGLAND

History buffs will love this slice of the past, stretching 73 miles across the north of England. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Wall was built some 1900 years ago on the orders of the Emperor Hadrian, as a defensive fortification.

Today, large parts of it are still intact, including Hare Hill, where one section reaches 2.7m high, and Birdoswald Roman Fort, where there are extensive remains. Housesteads Roman Fort is another impressive fortification and well worth a visit – its elevated position provides superb views and you can explore the barracks, the hospital and even the ancient toilets.

On the eastern side of the trail, visit the Roman Temple at Benwell or walk the streets of a Roman town at Corbridge.

- **Hadrian's Wall Campsite**, just off the A69, is ideal for visiting Housesteads Roman Fort. It's 20 minutes on foot to the Wall from the site, which is in a lovely rural setting.
- hadrianswallcampsite.co.uk

'The Downs themselves, a range of grassy chalk hills, cover some 260 square miles'

VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett

Lush landscapes on the South Downs Way

3

Hadrian's Wall Campsite

4 SOUTH DOWNS WAY, SOUTHERN ENGLAND

A well-situated getaway from the major conurbations of the south, this delightful National Trail stretches 100 miles from Winchester in Hampshire to Eastbourne in East Sussex, and takes in beautiful landscapes along the way.

The Downs themselves, a range of grassy chalk hills, cover some 260 square miles, a fact that becomes most apparent on the final leg (from west to east), where you can see the stark white of the chalk cliffs at the Seven Sisters hills.

The trail makes for an excellent short walking or cycling trip. The paths are safe and the gradient is relatively easy. Highlights include wonderful views at Harting Down, Devil's Dyke and the Jack and Jill Windmills, and finally the Beachy Head Lighthouse.

- Stay at the award-winning **Concierge Camping**, Chichester, which has large pitches and fantastic amenities, including luxury shower suites and an excellent shop and licensed bar.
- conciergecamping.co.uk

4

Fort William, in the shadow of Ben Nevis

5



Thomas Woollard/Getty

5

Lomond Woods



5 WEST HIGHLAND WAY, SCOTLAND

This long-distance walking route works its way north from the lowlands at Milngavie, through the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and then on to Fort William, in the shadow of Ben Nevis. Covering some 96 miles, it gets progressively harder, so you might prefer to build up to tackling the northern stretches.

The 15-mile Drymen to Rowardennan section is great for wonderful countryside without venturing too far north. It leads towards Conic Hill, with breathtaking views, before dropping down onto the shores of Loch Lomond – a great introduction to a country full of dramatic landscapes.

- Pet-friendly **Lomond Woods**, part of the Wood Leisure group, is a 15-minute drive from Drymen. The excellent facilities include fully serviced and hardstanding pitches.
- woodleisure.co.uk/our-parks/lomond-woods

6 EXMOOR, SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND

There's exceptional walking all over the south-west, but the enjoyable thing about Exmoor is that several great routes intersect in this beautiful region.

These include sections of the South West Coast Path, the Two Moors Way, which drops down into Dartmoor, the Exe Valley Way, along the River Exe, and the Tarka Trail, which runs for 180 miles through north Devon.

Exmoor clearly has plenty to interest walkers of all abilities, but we particularly like the 12-mile Dulverton to Tarr Steps loop. The famous Steps form a bridge – known as a clapper bridge – made of unmortared stone slabs.

- **Zeacombe House Caravan Park**, near Tiverton, is a good base for exploring Exmoor. The site is well serviced, with 50 extra-large pitches, modern showers and a shop.
- zeacombehouse.com

Walk across the clapper bridge at Tarr Steps

6



VisitBritain/Ben Selway



HOW TO... GET FIT FOR HIKING

Shape up before you hit the trail on tour, says Julia Clarke of Advnture.com

LEARNING TO GET FIT for hiking helps to increase your stamina and improve your leg strength, so you can go further. So before you lace up your boots on tour, add these six tips to your routine.

Walk, walk and walk

Before you start climbing mountains, start adding more functional walking to your daily routine. Walk to work if you can, or take a walk on your lunch break. Walk to the shops, or park a little further out when you're going into town.

To keep track, we highly recommend investing in a fitness tracker or GPS watch – and wear your hiking boots, as this gives you a chance to break them in.

Take the stairs

Hiking tends to involve quite a bit of incline, so it's good to start climbing before you get to the trail. Skip the lift or escalator and take the stairs.

Climbing the stairs, focus on engaging your hip flexors to lift your knee, and engaging glutes and quads as you drive your heel down to straighten your knee and come into hip extension. Make sure you also take the stairs down, so you can practise engaging your quads on the descent, and in both directions, ensure that your knee isn't dropping inward.

Cardio plus strength

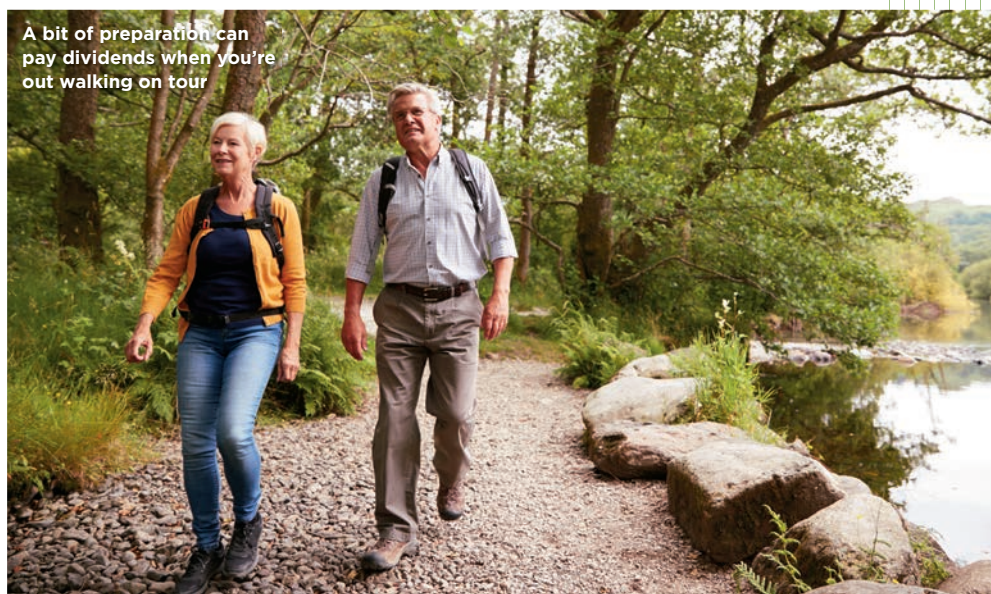
Hiking involves low-impact cardiovascular activity and leg strength, so make sure you train both of these. Any low-impact aerobic training will support you once you get on the trail – walking, swimming, cycling, elliptical, jogging, even yoga.

Aim for at least 60-minute bouts of low-intensity cardio several times a week.

You also want to train leg strength, to help with endurance, reduce injury risk and decrease your chances of muscle soreness following a hike.

Consider pilates, yoga, working out with resistance bands and common exercises for hikers, such as squats

A bit of preparation can pay dividends when you're out walking on tour



'Adding more daily walking for a few weeks will be good preparation for a short hike'

and lunges. Always consult a professional trainer or physical therapist for help in approaching these exercises safely.

Load your backpack

Even if you're only heading out on a day hike from your caravan, you're likely to be carrying a backpack.

This might hold food and a water bottle, a waterproof jacket and other clothing, your map and compass, a first-aid kit and more. In other words, it can get heavy, fast.

Walking with a backpack can change your gait and posture, so you want your muscles to get used to the load. If you're new to hiking, begin carrying your day pack around town with a full water bottle, fleece jacket and waterproofs.

Increase the weight each week to give your muscles time to adapt, and do core strength exercises.

Gradually increase distance

Adding more daily walking for a few weeks will be good preparation for a short hike, so start with a route of no more than three to four miles. From there, you can slowly increase distances.

Similarly, if you're training for a longer hike, figure out how many miles you'll need to travel each day and work your way up to that distance. Make sure you wear the boots you intend to walk in before you set off on your long journey.

Practise recovery

Although functional walking every day is fine, be sure to take rest days from any strength training, and don't plan on doing long-distance hikes seven days a week. Stretch after hikes and workouts with yoga for hiking and yoga for backpackers (see advnture.com), and check out other recovery tools such as foam rolling and sports massage.



OPEN ALL HOURS

Want to get active this winter? Here are 10 open-all-year sites to base yourself at!

1 SILVERDALE HOLIDAY PARK, CUMBRIA

Holgate's flagship site is a superb park in the heart of Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It's only two miles from the coast and an hour's drive from the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and Forest of Bowland.

On site, there's a huge pool complex, sauna and steam room, gym, bar, café and restaurant, a bowling alley and a soft play area. There are also a number of dog-walks in and around the park.

Address Middlebarrow Plain,
Cove Road, Silverdale LA5 0SH
➤ holgates.co.uk/silverdale
➤ 01524 701 508

2 RIVERSIDE CARAVAN & CAMPING PARK, DEVON

A short walk from South Molton, this spacious site has 10 acres of woodland trails. The River Mole runs through the park and it's in a great spot for exploring Exmoor National Park and the coast.

Site facilities include fishing lakes, a play area and a dog-walk. Amenities include a heated shower block, evening entertainment and a restaurant/bar. There's a wide choice of pitches.

Address Marsh Lane,
South Molton EX36 3HQ
➤ exmoorriverside.co.uk
➤ 01769 579 269

3 ORD HOUSE COUNTRY PARK, NORTHUMBERLAND

This beautiful campsite, set in 44 acres, is ideal for exploring Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Visitors can also head north to the Scottish coastal towns of Eyemouth and St Abbs, or follow the Northumberland Coast Path south to Holy Island.

The dog-friendly site has a good choice of touring pitches. Guests have access to the Ord House Lounge Bar & Grill, and there's a soft play area for the children, and an adults-only lounge.

Address East Ord TD15 2NS
➤ maguirescountryparks.co.uk
➤ 01289 305 288



Great for...
family get
togethers



Great for...
hiking on
Exmoor



Great for...
visiting
beautiful
Berwick



4

Great for...
exploring
coastal south
Wales

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4 SOUTH WALES TOURING PARK, WALES

This family-run, adults-only park has a reputation for great customer service. Set in beautiful countryside, it's a mile from the M4 and perfect for exploring south and west Wales.

Facilities include heated shower rooms, toilets, dish-washing and laundry, and a dog-shower. The site has teamed up with a local firm to offer dog-sitting. Shops, pubs and eateries are a walk away.

Address Fferm Llwynifan Farm,
Llangennech, Llanelli SA14 8AX
➤ southwalescaravansite.co.uk
➤ 01554 820 420

5 BRIGHTON CAMC SITE, EAST SUSSEX

Only two miles east of central Brighton and a short distance from the Marina, this CAMC site offers easy access to the many attractions of the seaside town. Perhaps a dip in the sea would appeal?

Buses are regular and Volk's Electric Railway runs along the prom, bringing you close to major attractions such as Brighton Pier and the Royal Pavilion.

On site, there's a toilet block, laundry, disabled facilities and a dishwashing area.

Address East Brighton Park BN2 5TS
➤ caravanclub.co.uk
➤ 01273 626 546

6 OLD OAKS TOURING PARK, SOMERSET

This adults-only park is close to Glastonbury, perfect for the festival, the Tor and the Chalice Well. On site, you can fish on the lake, or run your dogs in the exercise area, with dog-shower.

Accommodation includes touring pitches, glamping cabins, shepherd huts and cedar lodges. This year, 16 of the pitches have been upgraded to 'superior', with their own patio, low-smoke fire pit, picnic bench and bird table.

Address Wick Farm,
Wick, Glastonbury BA6 8JS
➤ theoldoaks.co.uk
➤ 01458 831 437

**'The Brighton CAMC
site is just two miles from
the town – perhaps a dip
in the sea would appeal?'**



Great for...
seaside
activities

5



Great for...
fishing and
walking

6

Great for...
exploring
by bike



7 RUN COTTAGE, SUFFOLK

Set in Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this peaceful five-acre site has a large pond and charming views.

As well as touring pitches, there are several luxury glamping pods.

The campsite provides a modern toilet/shower block, a washing-up station and a launderette. There's also a pub close by, a village store within 600 yards and a dog-walk.

Address Alderton Road,
Woodbridge IP12 3RQ
 > runcottage.co.uk
 > 01394 411 309

8 GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY CARAVAN PARK, SCOTLAND

This pristine park in the Cairngorms is just the place for exploring the glorious National Park. There's fishing for salmon and trout on the River Spey, and a range of walking routes and cycle trails.

Chalets, pods and wigwams are all available for hire, and facilities at this dog-friendly park include high-speed broadband, two shower and toilet blocks, a launderette and a children's play park.

Address Seafeld Avenue,
Grantown-on-Spey PH26 3JQ
 > caravanscotland.com
 > 01479 872 474

9 OXON HALL TOURING PARK, SHROPSHIRE

This Morris Leisure campsite is near the English border with Wales. In landscaped grounds around a lake, the dog-friendly park offers luxury showers and toilets, disabled facilities, a launderette and a children's play area.

Local attractions include Shrewsbury, Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, the Ironbridge Gorge Museums and the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway.

Address Welshpool Road,
Shrewsbury SY3 5FB
 > morris-leisure.co.uk
 > 01743 340 868

8



Great for...
fishing in
the Spey

10 BACK OF BEYOND, DORSET

A wonderful site in 30 acres of fine countryside, including 18 acres of woods, lakes and a river. The lakes are a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Facilities are excellent – four heated toilet and shower blocks provide power showers, and there's even a warm-water dog-wash for muddy pooches.

Address 234a Ringwood Road, East
Moors Lane, St Leonards BH24 2SB
 > backofbeyondtouringpark.co.uk
 > 01202 876 968

9



Great for...
fun days out
and about



Great for...
relaxing
in nature



OUR TIPS FOR GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

On two wheels, on your feet or on the water – our team advise on how to get started

Secure your gear

If you're planning to take sports or other activity equipment with you while you're on tour, make sure you have somewhere safe to store it when you're pitched up onsite. An awning is ideal during rainy weather, and means you won't need to stash muddy kit in your caravan lockers, but do make sure you lock any valuable items in your tow car before leaving for the day, or during the night.

Sarah Wakely



Keep track

Smart watches have come down a lot in price and can help you keep track of your activity when you're out and about. It's amazing how quickly the steps mount up when you are wandering to and from the campsite washrooms, too!

Peter Byrne



Go for a hike or a run

A caravan parked on a relatively empty site makes a great base from which you can go out for a 5km or 10km walk or run. Don't be put off about running in the dark and cold: so long as you have the right clothing and a head torch, it's actually fun.

You can usually see your vehicle from a long way off, which gives you some extra encouragement as you head for home, and you'll appreciate its cosy interior more than ever when you arrive back after your activity.

Peter Baber



On the buses

Public transport is your friend when it comes to getting active – why not take a train or bus from near your campsite, then walk or cycle back? It's a great way to see the area and get moving, too. For top sites with good public transport nearby, see the next issue of *Practical Caravan*.

Simon Mortimer

Pack a kayak

Invest in a paddle board or inflatable kayak – that way, you can save on hire fees and enjoy unlimited time out on the water. Outdoor retailers have reasonably priced ones, or look for a secondhand option. Just make sure you have room in your tow car to carry it, though!

Jo Davies

Don't overdo it

Know your limits and don't overstretch yourself, physically or mentally. If the going is too tough or the terrain unsafe, be prepared to cancel. Equally, if the weather conditions are becoming too dangerous, don't be afraid to abandon your hike or cycle and head for home – there's always another day.

Paul Critcher

