

By Jane Oddy

As she strides along stunning cliffs and spectacular coastlines for her new walking series, it's obvious that the popular TV presenter Julia Bradbury is in her element being back in her hiking boots.

Despite continuing tight coronavirus restrictions Julia was determined to bring some of the UK's most beautiful places to life for viewers during the gloomy days of January in a glorious celebration of nature.

Julia (50) is stepping out again in a new series, Cornwall And Devon Walks With Julia Bradbury.

"It has been fantastic to get a series out at this time when it is most needed. It's very positive in its outlook, is beautiful to watch and features such invigorating walks. I have to admit that

walking has kept me sane during the Covid-19 crisis. I know many people have keyed into the importance of green spaces and how therapeutic they are for us. We have realised that is what we need in our lives."

However, making the eight-part ITV series last springtime was not easy to achieve. Julia explains: "We

'It has been fantastic to get the series out at a time when it is most needed'

filmed between lockdowns when TV programming was allowed but most of the filming was done outside which was incredibly helpful."

Julia started out from Land's End with a clifftop walk from Porthcurno to Sennen Cove and in later episodes her adventures include walking the dramatic Atlantic Highway and a culinary

rendezvous with Jack Stein, the chef son of restaurateur Rick Stein.

She says: "This series was such a joy to make because along the way I also got to interview people who care passionately about the countryside, our food and nature. I discovered that people who live by the sea, and in coastal environments, are healthier and sleep better. There are such positive effects on wellbeing that it's called the Blue Gym effect."

Julia has been an outdoor enthusiast since she was a small child, inspired by her dad's passion for walking. "I was striding out on big, long walks with Dad



Julia has loved walking since she was a child



Julia exploring the coastline for her new ITV series, Cornwall and Devon Walks



With Nicky Campbell and Paul Heiney on Watchdog, left, and Matt Baker and John Craven on Countryfile

'We need nature in our lives'

With a new walking series just started on TV, Julia Bradbury tells why she's so passionate about the great outdoors...



in the Peak District when I was about 11. I am thankful to him every day for introducing me to it as it's such a great joy in my life. If I am feeling crowded in by anything or have a problem, I will always go for a walk. It invigorates me and makes me feel better. When I come back, I can tackle the issue with a healthier mind."

But it was by chance that she ended up becoming the poster girl for rambling - Britain's favourite pastime. A producer asked her if she was interested in walking as he was researching a series re-tracing Alfred Wainwright's famous walks in the Lake District. "I was very enthusiastic but no one knew that it would suddenly mushroom from nothing."

Her first series Wainwright Walks was such a huge hit, that it has since spawned numerous walking programmes such as Britain's Best Walks and seen her exploring landscapes all over the world.

She reveals that her all-time favourite location was in Iceland's most famous hiking route, a trail which ends at the huge volcanic crater at the centre of the Eyjafjallajökull glacier.

Laughing she says: "I even learnt how to pronounce the name. The walk was the toughest of my life and when I was being helicoptered to the top of the crater there was a real sense of danger."

Julia says that as a mother of three young children, Zephyr (9) and twins

Xanthe and Zena (5), she is even more aware of her health these days.

In 2019, she had a triple hernia yet recovered incredibly quickly and puts it down to her healthy lifestyle. "I'm not unduly cautious, but I keep on top of it with 'MOT' checks. I certainly don't feel my age at all," she says.

Julia has been using her local park for her daily exercise during the pandemic, posting live walking therapy sessions with her friend, psychotherapist Jonathan Hoban on her website theoutdoorguide.co.uk and he is featured in her new series.

She says: "After the pandemic, I think there will be an explosion of mental health issues such as depression and

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anxiety but there will also be a huge backlog for professional help. We are going to have to do a lot of self-care but nature is one tool that we can all use."

Keeping to a structured routine at her west London home has kept her strong during the last year.

"I have increased my exercise to at least five times a week; cycling, walking

and I do yoga almost every day. And I do my chanting - affirming positive thoughts."

She adds: "When the pandemic first started I was frightened, I've got children, older parents, friends with health problems, but I found having a timetable and ticking off lists helped. It's good to stick to a routine for your kids.

"There have been so many fun, family times in the last few months. There have been days I haven't even got out of my pyjamas! We've been watching movies together and we get down to their level and play with them to make up for the lack of playtime activity with their peers.

"Overall, I'm incredibly lucky. We have a garden and space in our house. I talk to my parents all the time and I get cuddles from the kids every day. We have managed. But I haven't been out and I haven't seen my friends socially. Like everyone, I can't wait until I can hug them and my family again!"

■ Cornwall and Devon Walks is on ITV on Wednesdays at 8.30pm. If you missed the first episode catch up at the ITV Hub