

FIRST LADY

Club President **Julia Bradbury** on great British walks, sustainability and getting kids outdoors



The habits and patterns we develop when we're growing up affect the rest of our lives.

As a little'un, walking in the Peak District with my dad Michael sowed the seeds for a lifelong love of nature and my passion for walking.

Sometimes, that passion is walking for walking's sake for the buzz that comes from exercise in the fresh air. Often, rain and wind actually add to my enjoyment but it's usually blue skies and sunshine I prefer!

At other times, I like to have a purpose. A destination, perhaps, or a route. Happily, there are loads of walks that offer a wide variety of rewards with no cost involved, like walking a section of a long-distance footpath. There's no charge for exploring our National Trail network which can take you through stunning scenery as well as the chance to bump into such epic landmarks as Hadrian's Wall and Durdle Door.

For most of us, there will be a walk nearby that has an historical link, no matter how tenuous. John Bunyan Trail is named after the Puritan evangelist who wrote the Christian allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* while he was banged up in jail in Bedford.

If you're looking for something more mainstream, you could step out on a family-friendly National Trust walk along the wild and windswept Tin Coast, part of the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site, and the location of BBC's *Poldark* TV series. Yours truly even did a TV walk there once...

CAMPING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability, circular economy, net zero; all things we're hearing a lot about these days.

It's all well and good talking about 'free' natural resources but we all know now that we need to protect and nurture these spaces to appreciate and benefit from them. The outdoor industries are leading the way in addressing the issues around sustainability in the production of clothing, footwear and outdoor gear. These are complex issues that require long-form thinking to solve but companies are seeing sustainable options as a priority and rigorously pursuing them.

Often, the sustainable options cost more initially but the point is that they're not costing the earth's resources as much or creating as much



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Cornwall, home of tin mining and Poldark

pollution. Durability and long life are key aspects of sustainability so, in the long run, an item that seems expensive at first could prove to have been top value for money many years later.

As well as durability, initiatives such as Patagonia's Worn Wear programme aim to breathe life into old and damaged outdoor gear by repairing it free of charge. It sets an example that we could all follow in avoiding the pitfalls of our disposable society.

With the problems we all face about plastic pollution, I'm determined to tackle plastic-free issues at home and at work. We can all make a difference, so it was really good to hear about Vango's initiative, in collaboration with the National Trust, announced at the Caravan, Camping and Motorhome Show.

Vango's new eco-friendly tents and sleeping bags in the National Trust camping collection use fabrics and fills made from recycled PET plastic bottles. In the first year of release, the collection will probably repurpose almost 295,000 PET plastic bottles. Great job, guys!

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

Whichever direction I'm heading, I never tire of the great views outdoors from coastlines to summits.

Plus, of course, the simple pleasures of stepping out in city parks or exploring the history of city streets. Being outdoors, being active and interacting with nature delivers significant health benefits, and mental health benefits, so helping your children to enjoy the freedom of life outdoors can enable them to be happy and healthy for the long term. And, of course, not all outdoor activities have to be organised or need special equipment.

Here are my top ten free activities to encourage children to play outdoors, using their imagination and having fun together: make fairy rings; make sculptures with stones and pebbles; make daisy chains; make pictures from things collected off the ground; make mud pies; make a bug hotel from 'found' materials - logs, bricks, slate; make a leaf collage; make a sun dial; make up stories; make happy memories. 



The Outdoor Guide is a free-to-access online resource that includes hundreds of free walking routes and also offers info on local attractions.

Head to theoutdoorguide.co.uk