

THE RAMBLERS EAST DORSET GROUP - WALKS USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEMBERS AND WALK LEADERS

The vast majority of the Group's walks are not accessible by public transport. We usually expect members to get to the start by car. However, we do receive a small number of enquiries from people wanting to join and walk with the Ramblers who do not have a car and some members may prefer, for environmental or other reasons, to minimize their use of cars. For these reasons the Group is trying to make more walks accessible by public transport.

1. Terminology

In what follows "Bus walk" or "Train walk" means a walk planned on the basis of travel to the walk by bus or train with no consideration of car parking near the start. "Bus accessible walk" or "Train accessible walk" means a walk planned to start at a point with parking nearby and with bus stop or railway station nearby with services at suitable times for the start and finish of the walk.

A "bus accessible walk" or "train accessible walk" should be one that is accessible from central Bournemouth or Poole with a stop or station within reasonable distance of the start of the walk and at times convenient for the start and finish of the walk.

2. Information

Information on public transport, for example timetables, route maps and special fares can be obtained (often free) from tourist information offices, libraries, bus company offices, railway stations and the Internet. The website for Wilts and Dorset Buses is www.wdbus.co.uk, for Transdev Yellow Buses is www.bybus.co.uk and for National Rail www.nationalrail.co.uk.

3. Timing of walks

For walks using public transport, leaders should allow 10 minutes plus time to walk from the stop or station to the starting point of the walk and should time the start of the walk so that any who come by bus/train do not have to wait long for the start. For the finish, leaders should try to adjust the return time (e.g. by adjusting length of afternoon stop) to give a reasonable connection with the bus/train. However, with a frequency of hourly or better this is not vital.

4. Missing the return bus/train

For bus/train accessible walks, if the end of the walk misses the planned return bus/train and there is a wait of more than an hour for the next one, the leader should try to arrange a lift to a bus stop/station with an earlier service for anyone who came by bus/train. Leaders are advised to allow some flexibility in the walk to minimize the risk of this happening. For bus/train walks, the leader is in the same position as others who came by bus/train and will try even harder to make sure that this does not happen.

5. Changes to bus/train times

Public transport times can change on a much shorter timescale than our walks programme. Bus companies must legally give at least six weeks' notice of changes. Train times normally change twice yearly apart from changes due to engineering work at weekends for which a minimum of 12 weeks' notice is normally given. Details can be obtained on the national rail website and by telephone. Although the start time has to be initially set in light of timetables current at the time of submitting the walk, members and leaders should check the timetable near the date of the walk.

If changes in times mean that plans for the walk have to be changed, please tell the Programme Co-ordinator and he will have the information posted on the Ramblers walks finder web site (see below). For bus/train walks, changes also apply to those planning to get to the start by car. For bus/train accessible walks, the start time of the walk is not changed to match a substantial change in the timetable so the walk may no longer be bus/train accessible. This policy can be reviewed when we get appreciable numbers coming to walks by public transport. If in doubt, contact the leader or consult the Ramblers' walks finder pages at www.ramblers.co.uk/walksfinder.

6. Action if the bus/train does not turn up

For bus/train accessible walks, if the start is near enough the stop for the leader to see that the bus/train has not turned up, they may, at their discretion, delay the walk briefly to wait for it. Otherwise, start the walk at the scheduled time. For bus/train walks, the leader catches the next available bus/train and the walk starts when he or she arrives.

7. Programme details for each walk

If you are a leader submitting a walk that uses public transport, please provide the following information for the Programme Co-ordinator. Please state whether the walk is a “Bus walk”, “Bus accessible walk”, “Train walk” or “Train accessible walk”. Add the train route or the bus company (abbreviated) and service number. Also add the name of the alighting point and time and map reference of walk start and details of how to get there from the alighting point if necessary with the same details for the finish point of a linear walk. For all public transport walks add “consult timetable or telephone leader for bus/train times” and for bus or train walks add “start time x am or when the bus/train arrives, whichever is later”. 2 weeks before the date of the walk, consult timetables so that you can provide information to walkers who contact you about the walk.

8. Days of the week

Bus and train services are generally more frequent during the week than on Sunday. Train times are prone to such major disruption on Sundays (and sometimes Saturdays) that leaders should avoid arranging train walks for Sundays. Saturday bus and train services are often as frequent as on a week day outside peak times. It is worth mentioning that currently members aged 60 and over are entitled to a bus pass for free travel. The passes cannot usually be used on journeys starting before 9.30 am except at weekends. Therefore it is especially useful to lay on bus or bus accessible walks on Saturdays when there are plenty of buses but journeys can be started earlier.

9. Timescale

A glance at a bus route and frequency map for our area shows that only a small proportion of our walks could be made accessible by public transport, even to members who live in the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation. We hope that leaders will look to see which of their walks can be made accessible. However, all our leaders are volunteers, so we cannot tell them what walks to put on.

Finally, if you have any comments or suggestions arising from these notes or on your experience in using them, please contact the Chairman or Secretary whose contact details are shown in the East Dorset Group programme.

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