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Walking On The Mountains – Check The Weather!

By Pat Ransom

Many people planning to holiday in Snowdonia, the Highlands of Scotland or the Lake District this

summer will be considering a walk on the hills or mountains. If you are planning one of the high walks, apart from your fitness and how sore your feet will get, one of your main considerations will be the WEATHER.

Before you start on your walk you will be getting together your hiking shoes, filling your backpack with provisions but please don't forget to CHECK THE WEATHER! The Met Office has forecasts for the Lake District, Snowdonia and Scotland. Even if it looks like it is going to be a nice day you can never be certain what is going to sweep in across the hills. If you are walking Ben Nevis or Snowdon you can be on the hills for most of the day - plenty of time for the weather to change! Knowing and being prepared for the weather conditions will add to your enjoyment of your day, and will keep you safe.

Weather on the mountains is very unpredictable - almost unbelievably so at times. It is very possible that you will choose a lovely clear day for your climb, and will start the day in a tee shirt with the sun beating down on your back.

As you start to climb higher you may find that cloud begins to form, and the summit will be hidden from view! You will be safe if you keep to the well trodden paths, but it is really not advisable to go too far from the track. The cloud and mist can form very quickly and become very thick and it is very easy to quickly become disorientated and lose your way.

Another thing you will notice as you climb the mountain is that the temperature will drop. It will certainly be much colder at the top than at the bottom – particularly in low cloud. The average temperature on the summit of Ben Nevis is –1 degree centigrade. You will need to take a jumper even if you start off on a warm summer's day, and will also need a waterproof in case of low cloud or mist – this can be very wet, and if you are not suitably prepared, your clothes will get sodden.

Visit

<http://www.mountainwalk.co.uk/weather.html>

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to see examples of weather changes on walks up

Snowdon and Ben Nevis. The photographs on this page were all taken on the same walk on an early August day up the Watkins Path of Mount Snowdon. The day started off without a cloud in the sky – three hours later we were scrambling through thick cloud and near gale force winds, getting very wet. Once the summit of Snowdon was reached there were no photo opportunities - apart from being able to see nothing through the cloud, there was also the strong wind that threatened to blow walkers off the top of the cairn!

Snowdon does have the benefit of its summit cafe although it can get very crowded. When you walk up Snowdon you can feel that you have achieved something, even if mist spoils the view.

And just to show mountains have the same typical weather, the same web page shows a walk up Ben Nevis. Again the start of the walk up has the sun shining, but the summit shrouded in mist!

The lesson is be prepared – and especially so on in late spring or early autumn where you could find yourself scrambling through snow on the higher peaks and hills.

And if you are a novice walker it is best to avoid the worst weather of the winter months entirely, unless you go with an experienced guide.

Pat Ransom has walked both Snowden and Ben Nevis and encourages others to do the same on the website

<http://www.mountainwalk.co.uk>

. Being a keen photographer the site is full of photos of both mountains and the surrounding areas.

Why Use Walking Sticks?

By Gabriel Adams

If you've ever been out hiking on a trail, or even walking along a back road, you've probably seen people using walking sticks. Walking sticks (also known as hiking sticks or poles) are long poles or sticks used to help a hiker keep their balance and for many other duties while in the great outdoors. Some people may wonder if a walking stick will help them out while climbing mountains or hiking trails, and the answer is unequivocally, yes!

Walking sticks are very commonly used by hikers in areas of Europe with mountainous terrain, such as in the Alps. The stick or pole can help you to balance while you're walking in areas that can be slippery or hard to get footing on - such as shale, mud or sand. You can dig into the material with your walking stick and then use it almost as a third leg so you don't slip. You can also use a walking stick to help

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your knees and back, as you can either prop yourself on it to rest, or use it as a lever to help pull yourself uphill when hiking. Among other uses for walking sticks can include using it as a place to prop up a blanket for a makeshift tent, or even as a way to push aside tall grass or brush so you can pass through these areas more easily.

A good height for a walking stick is between 4 feet and 5.5 feet, depending on your height and the way you plan to use your stick. Walking sticks can be made of all sorts of wood (some people even use broom handles), but an important necessity for a good walking stick is a handle or strap. Hiking poles, which are a type of walking stick, are generally made of metal and may have a spike or cleat at the end for digging into the ground. No matter which type of walking stick you choose for your hiking needs, you can definitely benefit from the use of a stick.

Get Walking Sticks & Folding Walking Sticks at

<http://www.walking-stick.net/>



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