

HOW TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN



Simon Pearce

A PRACTICAL MANUAL

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR BUDDING MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS



HOW TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN

Simon Pearce

"You are not in the mountains. The mountains are in you."

- John Muir

First published in Great Britain 2024 by Pesda Press

Tan y Coed Canol

Ceunant

Caernarfon

Gwynedd

LL55 4RN

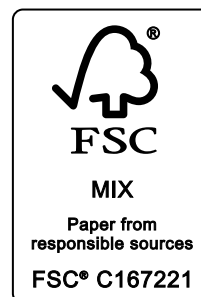
©Copyright 2024 Simon Pearce

ISBN: 978-1-906095-93-2

The Author asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the Publisher.

Printed and bound in Poland, hussarbooks.pl



Acknowledgements

I'm hugely thankful to so many people who've helped me in my mountaineering career and in writing this book. It would be impossible to list them all. What I love most about being in the mountains is that everyone you meet is friendly and helpful, so when coming to write this book it was easy to call on the support of friends and colleagues.

Thank you to the following who have provided help, advice, photographs and more in the compiling of this book: Lawrie Brand, Lyle Brotherton, Alex Croall, Tony Ellis, Franco Ferrero, Rich Griffiths, Andy Hewlett, Bill Hilton, Tammy Holmes, Keith Hulse, Carla Imbrenda, Belinda Kirk, Harriet MacMillan, Serena and Evan Pearce, Mike Raine, Nick Read, Richard Rees, Tom Swinhoe, Hywel Watkin, Kev Williams and Katherine Wills.

I would also like to thank all the clients of MountainXperience who have put up with me taking umpteen photos of them over the years.

All images are by the author except where acknowledged in the caption.

About the Author



Simon's love of the outdoors began in Cubs where he always enjoyed exploring – but later, as a Venture Scout, he visited the Peak District and didn't really enjoy getting drenched while wild camping! Some twenty years later he rediscovered his love of the outdoors, and in particular map reading. Short, local hill walks quickly turned into longer and more adventurous days out as he found higher and more exciting things to climb. A few outdoor courses later and Simon went on to gain numerous leadership and coaching qualifications in mountaineering and paddlesports.

In recent years, Simon has worked for a large outdoor charity with responsibility for the training and wellbeing of its volunteers, and as Chief Operating Officer of an adventure travel company, developing new and exciting holidays for its clients.

Today, Simon works full time in the outdoors running his own mountaineering business, based in North Wales but operating around the UK. MountainXperience guides hundreds of people safely to the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) each year and teaches others how to stay safe in the hills and mountains on various outdoor training courses.

His personal mountaineering career has seen him climb mountains on four continents, but he mostly loves exploring what we have here in the UK. Even after years spent in the outdoors, there are still British adventures he's keen to tackle.

Simon particularly enjoys working with those new to the outdoors and is passionate about passing on outdoor skills to others. He's a provider and course director for Mountain Training and delivers their Hill and Mountain Skills courses in Eryri (Snowdonia) and the Peak District. He also loves teaching map reading and compass skills as a provider and course tutor for the National Navigation Award Scheme.

Find out more about how you can join the author and his team on the mountain or on an upcoming outdoor course at www.mountainxperience.uk.

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
About the Author	5
Introduction	9
1 Getting Started	11
WHAT IS 'MOUNTAIN CLIMBING'?	14
2 What is a Mountain?	13
WHAT IS 'MOUNTAIN CLIMBING'?	14
3 Are You Fit Enough?	17
DON'T RUN BEFORE YOU CAN WALK (METAPHORICALLY)	17
PRACTISE WALKING	18
TEST YOUR GEAR	19
DO SOME 'CARDIO'	20
MOVE YOUR BODY	20
TAKE REGULAR BREAKS	20
PACE YOURSELF	21
JOIN A WALKING CLUB	22
4 Where to Go	23
BRITAIN'S NATIONAL PARKS	24
WHAT IS THE CROW ACT?	25
FINDING ROUTE IDEAS	26
GUIDE BOOKS	27
OUTDOOR MAGAZINES	28
SMARTPHONE APPS	29
WEBSITES	30

5 When to Go	31
START EARLY	32
WALK IN THE WEEK	34
AVOID BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS AND SCHOOL HOLIDAYS (IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN)	35
DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHANGE YOUR PLANS	36

6 The Countryside Code	37
RESPECT EVERYONE	38
PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT	40
ENJOY THE OUTDOORS	42
KNOW THE SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE	44
ADVENTURES MART	45

7 What to Wear	47
FEET	48
BOTTOMS	50
TOP	51
HATS AND GLOVES	54

8 What to Take with You	57
RUCKSACK	57
WALKING POLES	58
GAITERS	59
FACE COVERING / BUFF®	61
CAMERA	61
TISSUES	62
ANTIBACTERIAL HAND SANITISER	62
MAP	62
MOBILE PHONE	62
MOBILE PHONE POWER BANK	64
HEADTORCH	64
PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT	64
FOOD AND DRINK	65
ENERGY GELS	66
SUNSCREEN	66
RUBBISH BAG	66

9 The Weather	67
MET OFFICE MOUNTAIN WEATHER FORECASTS	68
MOUNTAIN WEATHER INFORMATION SERVICE	68
HOW TO DEAL WITH CHANGING WEATHER	69
KNOWING WHEN TO TURN BACK	71

10 Navigation	73
WHAT IS A MAP?	73
TYPES OF MAPS	74
DIGITAL MAPPING	76
MAP SCALES	77
HOW TO READ A MAP	78
INTERPRETING HEIGHT ON A MAP	79
UNDERSTANDING GRID REFERENCES	80
ORIENTATING A MAP	82
WALKING WITH A MAP	83
MEASURING DISTANCE ON A MAP	85
MEASURING DISTANCE ON THE GROUND	86
TURNING DISTANCE INTO TIME	87

11 Walking with Children	89
BE REALISTIC	90
MAKE SURE THEY'RE KITTED OUT PROPERLY	90
GET THEM INVOLVED	91
BE POSITIVE	92
BRIBE THEM!	93
PLAY GAMES	93
MYTHS AND LEGENDS	94
DEVELOP THEIR FUTURE	94

12 Walking with Dogs	95
-----------------------------	-----------

13 Going it Alone	99
TELL SOMEONE WHAT YOU'RE DOING	99
TALK TO PEOPLE	100
INVEST IN SOME SAFETY TECH	101
REMEMBER YOUR MOBILE PHONE	102

14 Going to the Toilet	103
PERIODS	105

15 Litter	107
HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?	109

16 What to do if Something Goes Wrong	111
FORGETTING SOMETHING	112
RUNNING OUT OF ENERGY	112
RUNNING OUT OF TIME	113
GETTING LOST	113
BROKEN EQUIPMENT	115
ANIMALS	116
BLISTERS	117
MEDICAL EMERGENCY	118
CALLING FOR HELP	120
WHEN RESCUE ARRIVES	125

17 Where Can I Learn More?	127
SKILLS COURSES FROM MOUNTAIN TRAINING	127
NAVIGATOR AWARDS FROM THE NATIONAL NAVIGATION AWARD SCHEME	128

18 Hiring a Mountain Guide	131
-----------------------------------	------------

19 Popular Mountain Challenges	135
TRAIL 100'S	135
NATIONAL THREE PEAKS	136
YORKSHIRE THREE PEAKS	137
WELSH THREE PEAKS	138
WELSH 3,000'S	138

20 What Next?	139
SCRAMBLING	139
ROCK CLIMBING	141
WALKING AT NIGHT	142
WINTER WALKING	142
WILD CAMPING / BOTHYING	145
TRAIL RUNNING	147
CLIMBING MOUNTAINS ABROAD	147

Route Maps and Guides

21 Route Maps and Guides	151
LOCATIONS	151
WALK GRADES	152
Route 1 Cat Bells, Lake District	155
Route 2 Mam Tor, Peak District, Derbyshire	159
Route 3 Pen y Fan, South Wales	165
Route 4 Pen-y-ghent, Yorkshire Dales	169
Route 5 Roseberry Topping, North Yorkshire	173
Route 6 Yes Tor and High Willhays, Dartmoor	177
Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon), Eryri (Snowdonia), North Wales	181
Route 7 Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Llanberis Path	183
Route 8 Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Pyg / Miners' Tracks	189

Route 9 Ben Nevis, Scottish Highlands	195
Route 10 Cadair Idris, Eryri (Snowdonia)	201
Route 11 Scafell Pike, Lake District	207

Appendices

Useful Resources	213
WEBSITES	213
BOOKS	213
PUBLICATIONS	213
ORGANISATIONS	214
Glossary	215
Trail 100 List	217
Casualty Report Form	219
Index	221



A group stood at the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) admiring the views.

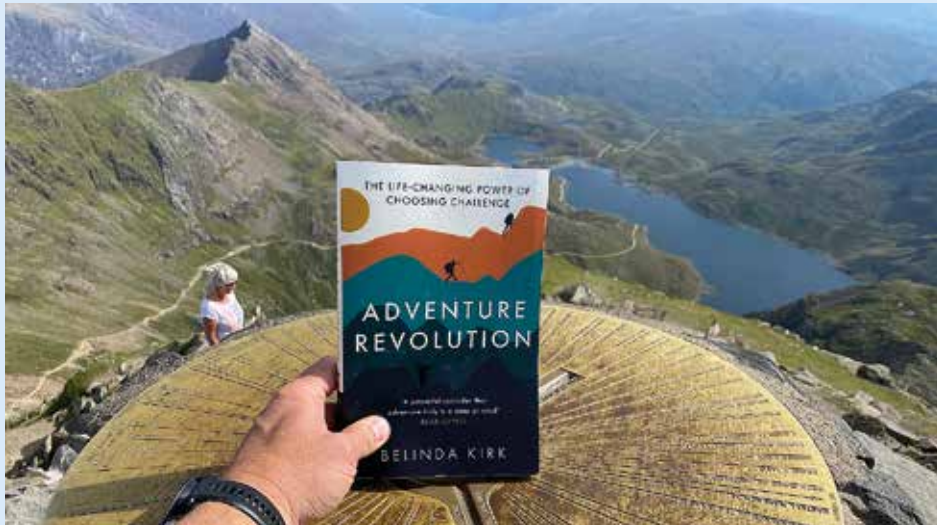
Introduction

For most of you reading these words, this represents the beginning of your mountain climbing journey. I hope you're as excited as I was when I first started dreaming of mountains. What I most love about climbing mountains is that it's an adventure every time. It doesn't matter if you're seven years old and running up your local hill, or 77 years old climbing Kilimanjaro, it's an adventure, and it's that adventure that makes it exciting.

I find myself climbing Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) around 70 times a year for work and it's still an adventure every time. I meet new people, I still see new sights, and I always experience something different. Most importantly, I come off the mountain each time with a smile on my face. That's an adventure in my books.

This book is all about **you** starting **your** adventure. You might be a parent looking to take the family on a weekend in the hills, or perhaps you've been roped into a charity challenge at work to climb the National Three Peaks, or maybe you've signed up to summit Toubkal in Africa or hike to Everest Base Camp. I'm here to help you plan for your adventure. I'll tell you what you need to know before you start, everything you'll want to have with you, how to plan your trip and, most importantly, how to stay safe.

Adventure Revolution



Looking down from the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) towards Llyn Llydaw – Crib Goch on top left.

If you'd like to read more about how adventure changes lives, I highly recommend a book by my former boss Belinda Kirk: *Adventure Revolution: The life-changing power of choosing challenge*.

Belinda is an explorer and leading campaigner promoting the benefits of adventure on wellbeing. Over the past twenty-five years, she has led dozens of international expeditions and remote filming trips. Belinda has walked through Nicaragua, sailed across the Atlantic, searched for camels in China's Desert of Death, discovered ancient rock paintings in Lesotho and, with the other members of the crew, gained a Guinness World Record for rowing unsupported around Britain.

With much of Belinda's professional life revolving around adventure she's seen it change people first hand, turning the timid into the confident, the addicted into the recovering, and the lost into the intentionally wandering. This book reveals the astonishing health and psychological benefits of living more adventurously.

If you're new to mountain walking you can read this book from start to finish, but then I suggest keeping it close to hand as a useful reference guide for you to dip in and out of. The chapters are designed for you to quickly and easily find an answer to any mountain climbing query.

What I've written here is really aimed at those new to the outdoors. If you're ready to plan your first mountain climbing adventure, read on.



The UK's most popular mountain, Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) in North Wales. Could this be your mountain climbing target?

1 Getting Started

Why do we climb mountains? This is something my non-mountain friends challenge me over frequently, and something I'm not always able to persuade them about. But almost without fail, every time I'm stood on a mountain summit, I'm overcome by a huge sense of achievement. Even if it's a mountain I've climbed many times before, or if the weather is rubbish and I'm soaked, or if we got lost on the way up and it took an hour longer than planned; I've still achieved something that most others haven't.

You too can have that sense of achievement, and it's something you can have regularly. What I most envy about you, the reader, is that you're at the start of your mountain climbing career and have the opportunity to achieve so much still ahead of you. Taking your toddlers out to climb a local hill, organising a family trip to something bigger, or planning your own major international mountain ascent – the achievements are out there and waiting for you.

You don't need to be an expert mountain navigator (although knowing the basics will help – see Chapter 10), you don't need to be super fit (read more in Chapter 3) and you don't need all the latest expensive gear (see what you do need in Chapters 7 and 8). Climbing a mountain might not be as hard as you think, so begin the path to your next mountain achievement today.



Crib Goch ridge – perhaps best left until you have gained more experience.

British Mountaineering Council Participation Statement

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is the representative body that exists to protect the freedoms and promote the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers. Its 'Participation Statement' sums up pretty well the risks involved in climbing mountains. Of course, we do everything we can to help mitigate these risks (reading this book being the first thing!) but it's important to know that these risks exist.

The BMC Participation Statement states that: The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.



Mountain climbers standing on top of Ben A'an in the Scottish Highlands. Photo: Andreaobzerova, Dreamstime.com

2 What is a Mountain?

Surprisingly, there isn't actually a universally accepted definition of what a mountain is. If, like me, you grew up in rural Lincolnshire, you could be amazed when you come across any size hill; whereas someone brought up in the Swiss Alps might come to the UK and scoff at our highest point being just 1,345m (4,413ft) high.

In the UK and Ireland, the official Government definition of a mountain is a summit of 610m (2,000ft), or higher. There are other requirements relating to prominence and isolation but I wouldn't worry about them.

Using this definition, there are over 2,700 mountains in the British Isles with 80% being in Scotland, 8% in Ireland, 7% in England and 5% in Wales. While you're going to have to travel up to the Scottish Highlands to climb the really big ones, the rest are scattered right across the UK and you're sure to have something nearby.

You'll hear people talking about Munros, Corbetts and Wainwrights. These are just a few of the many different classifications of our hills and mountains in the UK. Unless you plan on taking on one of the popular challenges such as climbing all 214 Lake District Wainwrights, or summiting the 282 Scottish Munros, I wouldn't worry too much about all the technical terms. However, a particularly good collection is the 'Trail 100'

where the experts at the UK hillwalking publication Trail Magazine have compiled the 'definitive collection of the 100 UK peaks all hillwalkers must climb at least once in their life'. Search for it online, find your nearest peak and start planning your adventure.

Trail 100 Challenge

Hand-picked by the experts at Trail Magazine, the Trail 100 will take you from the mighty summits of Scotland to the limestone peaks of the Yorkshire Dales and the gritstone edges of the Peak District. You'll cross razor-sharp Welsh ridges, lose yourself in Lakeland valleys, explore the weird tors of Dartmoor, discover the dazzling green beauty of the Brecon Beacons, and reach the highest point in Ireland's Mourne Mountains. You can find the full Trail 100 list in the appendix.

If you're really interested in learning more about each individual hill and mountain, look for The Database of British and Irish Hills online, where a small group of committed statisticians maintain an accurate database – a 'user friendly' version of which can be accessed at www.hill-bagging.co.uk.

Don't get too hung up on whether something is a hill or a mountain, or neither. If you've had a good time, climbed something, got your boots dirty and worn yourself out then, as far as I'm concerned, that's a good mountain day.

What is 'mountain climbing'?

This is a matter of regular online debate. What exactly is the difference between hiking, trekking, hillwalking, mountain climbing and mountaineering? There isn't a hard and fast rule about which word describes a particular activity, and the terms are used interchangeably in everyday language. If you want my opinion (and you obviously do otherwise you wouldn't have bought my book), I'd suggest the increase in activity level, and perhaps difficulty, goes in the order they're written above.

A 'walk' is what you do to get to the bus stop. It's how you get from A to B and is incidental to what you're trying to do.

A 'hike' is a walk with the purpose of activity or exercise. It would usually be in the countryside but can also be around town. What differentiates it from simply walking is that the hiking is the main activity. You might also start to introduce activity specific gear such as a rucksack or proper hiking boots – stuff you wouldn't normally have for a walk.



Scrambling the awesome Crib Goch ridge up to Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon). I defy anyone to tell me this isn't 'climbing'!

A 'trek' is a considerable 'hike' – possibly even overnight (although we might also call this backpacking). You'll have equipment with you to last more than just a few hours, and you'll definitely look the part with dedicated outdoor clothing and a rucksack on your back. Trekking lets you explore further by not necessarily having to be back where you started at the end of the day.

'Hillwalking' and 'mountain climbing' for me are the two most 'blurred' terms and are frequently used to describe the activity of going up a mountain on foot. 'Hillwalking' could lend itself more to gentler terrain and perhaps familiar paths, and one could argue that 'mountain climbing' is a more serious experience, but in everyday language I'd suggest there's little between them. All that aside, the official Mountain Training handbook for professional Mountain Leaders is called Hill Walking, which further adds to the debate!

Next up would be 'scrambling', which is often an ambiguous term for activities that sit between hillwalking and mountaineering / rock climbing. Here, you'll be using your hands as well as your feet, and with the added levels of excitement come added risks. Scrambles, even simple ones, by their very nature are often high, narrow and exposed. Some of the best examples of 'easy' UK scrambles are the Crib Goch arête on Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) in North Wales, Striding Edge on Helvellyn in the Lake District and the



Sunrise over the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland.

Photo: Sara Winter, Dreamstime.com

Carn Mor Dearg arête on Ben Nevis in the Scottish Highlands. These are all classed as Grade I scrambles, meaning that no special equipment is necessarily required. However, if you're reading this book then they're probably still a little way off for you, without the assistance of a qualified mountain guide. Certainly, once you move in to Grade II and III scrambles, the crossover in to rock climbing becomes a lot more blurred.

What is definitely a step up for most people would be 'mountaineering'. At this level we're starting to introduce special equipment such as ropes and harnesses, and we're well in to 'rock climbing' territory. This is not something I'm going to go into in this book, as it's definitely not for those new to the outdoors.

So, do we actually 'climb' a mountain?

In the English language today, it's widely accepted that to 'climb a mountain' is to make an ascent in whatever way you feel. So, whether you used ropes and harnesses to scale a rock face or just your feet on a long, uphill walk then, great job – you've climbed a mountain!



Do as much as you can to be prepared for your mountain climbing experience. Photo: Anna Dudko, Dreamstime.com

3 Are You Fit Enough?

You might be put off the idea of climbing a mountain because you don't think your fitness is up to scratch. It is true that reaching the summit of many mountains around the world is a real physical and mental challenge, and an individual's fitness level is subjective – but taking the routes in the back of this book as an example, none of these are out of the realm of most of you reading this now. Preparation is key, and certainly, the more ready you are for your mountain day, the easier it's going to be, and therefore the more likely you are to enjoy it.

I regularly work with people with little or no mountain walking experience, and lead them successfully to a summit, and back down again. Some are active gym-goers, many are keen walkers and even runners but, unless you're regularly walking up something, you're likely to find a big mountain somewhat of an assault on your lower body.

Don't run before you can walk (metaphorically)

If you've done little or no serious distance walking and find yourself out of breath running up the stairs, you're probably going to struggle getting to the top of a mountain; putting in some good prep work is essential. You don't have to be an athlete, you don't need to be able to run a marathon, but you do need to be able to walk uphill for several

hours and then back down again. I often meet people struggling their way up Wales' highest mountain, and when we stop and chat they tell me that not only is this their first ever mountain climb, but often it's the most physical exercise they've ever done in their life.

Don't assume just because Barry from marketing 'smashed Snowdon' last year, that it's necessarily going to be the same experience for you. We're all different. We all have different bodies and differing fitness levels. Put in the time and effort before your big mountain day and you're guaranteed a more positive experience.



Take the family out locally to get everyone used to walking – Lud's Church, Peak District.

Practise walking

It might sound daft, but the best thing you can do to prepare yourself for climbing a mountain is to get out and practise walking. You may not be able to venture uphill close to where you live but that doesn't stop you getting out and about on the flat. If you're just starting out, try going for a simple walk around your neighbourhood and aim to be active for as long as you feel able. You'll want to be comfortable walking for at least an hour and eventually for several hours; although I'd argue that if you get back from a 60-minute walk and you're still feeling good, then you're likely to be OK. Remember

that on a mountain day you're going to be out all day. For example, you'll need six to eight hours to reach the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and get back down again.

As you progress on your local walks, start seeking out hills and inclines to begin to appreciate the difference between walking on the flat and walking uphill.

The more you can get your body used to walking good distances in advance of your first big mountain day, the better the day is likely to go.

Test your gear

As you progress and your fitness improves, you definitely want to try out your gear. If you've invested in new walking boots, you'll find yourself getting more tired wearing them than a normal pair of trainers as they are likely to weigh more; start wearing them on local walks to add a bit of realism. Add your rucksack too, and build up what you carry in it so it's not such a shock when you start on your first real mountain.

Make sure your waterproofs fit well over your walking clothes and that you can walk comfortably in them. Trying them on in the shop is fine but they need to feel good while you're moving, and for more than just a few minutes. If you use walking poles, try them out so you know how to extend and adjust them. Be sure your socks fit correctly and that they're warm enough / not too warm. All of these things become second nature after a while, but when you're starting out, you'll need to be a bit more aware.



A well-equipped walker testing her new gear before a big mountain adventure.

Do some 'cardio'

As you start moving your 'practise walking' from the flat to uphill, you'll start to appreciate how much more energy is needed and how much harder your body is working. As with most physical activities, the more often you do something, the more your body will get used to it. There's no substitute for getting out and practising. However, if you're able to get to the gym, or if you can workout at home then regular cardiovascular exercise will do wonders for your mountain walking. Get your body moving, get your heart rate up, and get into a pattern of exercise. Since the pandemic I've become a big fan of home workouts which you can find through smartphone apps or even your smart TV. They're easy to do, relatively cheap and you don't even need to leave the house.

If you're planning to take on a major mountain then cardiovascular training is essential, as expeditions such as Kilimanjaro or Everest Base Camp will require consistent physical effort, day after day.

Move your body

I'm going to suggest two things that you're not going to like. Squats and lunges are brilliant ways of getting your lower body ready for climbing a mountain, or more particularly for dealing with coming back down again. You don't need to be knocking out 100 in one go, but doing a few daily exercises in the run-up to your big mountain day will make a huge difference. Many complain that they find descending more strenuous on their lower limbs than heading up the mountain, so anything you can do to prepare for this will help.

If you're looking for some easy workout ideas or just need a bit of motivation, check out daily challenges from websites such as darebee.com.

Take regular breaks

You should enjoy your mountain day at your pace. It's absolutely fine (and encouraged) to take breaks throughout your climb. Unless you're taking part in a mountain marathon, you're climbing a mountain for enjoyment, and sometimes we forget that, particularly if you're walking with a group.

Mountain summits aren't usually the best place to stop for a picnic lunch due to the weather, exposure, etc. Regular, shorter stops along the way ensure you stay fuelled and hydrated, and also give you an opportunity to recover.

However, as so often, there is a fine line here. If you find yourself sat in the Hafod Eryri visitor centre on top of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) relaxing with coffee and cake, do remember your day is only half done and you still have to get down the mountain. The longer you sit still, the more your body is going to seize up, so enjoy a shorter break and keep your momentum.

Pace yourself

It's important to find your mountain pace. This can be tricky when walking as part of a group but it's key to enjoying your mountain day.

If you find yourself struggling to hold a conversation because you're out of breath, then you're moving too fast. In this case, rather than stopping frequently to catch your breath, try walking a little slower. You should be able to chat with relative ease while you're on the go



Remember to take regular breaks and enjoy the views – Halfway House, Eryri (Snowdon).



Getting out with a local walking club is a great way to boost your fitness.

Join a walking club

There are groups of people all over the country who meet every week and go out walking together. These range from small gatherings planned on social media platforms such as Meetup or via local Facebook groups, to entire organisations that are dedicated to getting people outside. Many are free or they might have a monthly or annual membership fee. What they all offer is a great way to get / stay fit, enjoy the outdoors and make new friends.

Something to bear in mind, is that many smaller get-togethers organised online are typically peer-led events and there's unlikely to be any particular person in charge. This is somewhat of a grey area amongst the outdoor community where we would normally ensure that there's a qualified leader with up to date first aid training, public liability insurance, etc. If you're at all concerned, look for a larger, more organised walking group.

Route Maps and Guides



Taking in the view on the Pyg Track (Route 8).



Grindsbrook Clough in the Peak District with the Mam Tor ridge visible in the background.

21 Route Maps and Guides

If you've read this book from the beginning, then you're ready to venture out into the mountains and aim for your first summit. Over the coming pages you'll find detailed route maps and guides to what I believe are some of our most popular and achievable hill and mountain walks. I've tried my best to choose a selection from around the country, so hopefully you won't have to travel too far. However, the very make-up of the UK means that if you live in the South East of England, then you're going to need to make a weekend of it.

All the routes in this book are designed for beginners who may not have any more outdoor experience than simply reading this book. The routes mostly follow marked footpaths which should make for simple navigation and are all popular with walkers, so it's unlikely you're ever going to be on your own. Feel free to photograph the relevant pages with your phone, as they are for your personal use.

Locations

Locations (for where a walk starts from) used in the route guides are provided in three different formats which offer varying degrees of accuracy. Always check before setting off that you know exactly where you're heading to.

Royal Mail Post Codes

Example: LL55 4TU

Post codes are the least reliable method for pinpointing a location – particularly in the mountains. A post code in a town centre might cover ten properties all within a 100m radius, whereas post codes in rural areas typically cover the same number of properties but over a much larger area. Use a post code in your sat nav or Google Maps to help you plan your journey but be aware it's unlikely to be spot on.

OS Grid References

Example: SH 583 598

I've included six-figure Ordnance Survey grid references which, as you'll know from reading the navigation chapter, give you a 100m² area. Much more accurate than a post code but you will need to understand how OS grid references work ... and have an OS map. If you're using the OSM app on your smartphone, then you can input the grid references there for a pretty accurate location.

What3Words Location

Example: ///shady.ground.joys

The most accurate but least used method is What3Words, whose technology has divided the world into three-metre squares and given each square a unique combination of three words. Extremely simple to use and understand. Access the What3Words website or download the smartphone app.

Walk grades

I've given each route a grade; either **EASY**, **MODERATE** or **HARD**. The problem with walk grades is that they're very subjective. What's easy for one person might be hard for another. However, as this book and the routes in it are aimed at absolute beginners and those who are unlikely to have climbed a mountain before, I've taken that into account. Expect an **EASY** route to be relatively short, reasonably simple to navigate, with little risk of falling off the side of a mountain. A **MODERATE** walk might involve covering a greater distance, so you're likely to be walking for longer, may require some extra concentration when navigating and the route could have you walking near some steep edges. A **HARD** walk will be a longer day out in the mountains with perhaps more exposed walking and big drops. But all are within the ability of a 'beginner'. It goes without saying that all the routes involve a fair amount of uphill walking!

EASY

Route 1 – Cat Bells 451m (1,480ft) – A great 'starter' hill in the Lake District.

Route 2 – Mam Tor 517m (1,696ft) – The Peak District's most popular peak.

Route 3 – Pen y Fan 886m (2,907ft) – The highest peak in South Wales but achievable by most.

Route 4 – Pen-y-ghent 694m (2,277ft) – Another great introduction to mountain climbing, found in the Yorkshire Dales.

Route 5 – Roseberry Topping 320m (1,049ft) – Everyone's favourite North Eastern hill.

MODERATE

Route 6 – Yes Tor and High Willhays 621m (2,039ft) – The highest point on Dartmoor.

Route 7 – Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Llanberis Path 1,085m (3,560ft) – The most popular and 'easiest' route up Wales' highest mountain.

Route 8 – Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Pyg / Miners' Tracks 1,085m (3,560ft) – Some argue it's quicker, it's certainly shorter, but you'll definitely have to work a bit harder.

HARD

Route 9 – Ben Nevis via the Mountain Track 1,345m (4,413ft) – The highest point in the UK and surely the ultimate mountain day out.

Route 10 – Cadair Idris 893m (2,930ft) – The highest point in mid-Wales and a challenging day out.

Route 11 – Scafell Pike from Wasdale 978m (3,209ft) England's highest peak, found in the heart of the Lake District.

- Route 1 Cat Bells, Lake District National Park**
Start / Finish CA12 5UE or NY 246 211 or [///noisy.curtains.tutorial](#)
- Route 2 Mam Tor, Peak District National Park, Derbyshire**
Start / Finish S33 8WH or SK 149 830 or [///hydration.best.gender](#)
- Route 3 Pen y Fan, South Wales**
Start / Finish LD3 8NL or SN 983 203 or [///encourage.extreme.autumn](#)
- Route 4 Pen-y-ghent, Yorkshire Dales National Park**
Start / Finish BD24 0HF or SD 808 726 or [///covertly.overture.cloak](#)
- Route 5 Roseberry Topping, North York Moors National Park**
Start / Finish TS9 6QS or NZ 570 128 or [///trimmer.configure.expand](#)
- Route 6 Yes Tor and High Willhays, Dartmoor National Park**
Start / Finish EX20 4LU or SX 561 918 or [///cross.sung.printout](#)
- Route 7 Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Llanberis Path**
Start / Finish LL55 4TU or SH 583 598 or [///shady.ground.joys](#)
- Route 8 Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) via the Pyg / Miners' Tracks**
Start / Finish LL55 4NU or SH 647 556 or [///fast.jeeps.splashes](#)
- Route 9 Ben Nevis, Scottish Highlands**
Start / Finish PH33 6SX or NN 123 730 or [///reduce.incurring.verges](#)
- Route 10 Cadair Idris, Eryri (Snowdonia) National Park**
Start / Finish LL36 9AJ or SH 732 115 or [///warmers.lighters.reports](#)
- Route 11 Scafell Pike, Lake District National Park**
Start / Finish CA20 1EX or NY 187 085 or [///currently.switched.tile](#)



Map by Bute Cartographics. Contains OS data
© Crown copyright and database rights 2023.



The views, even from this small mountain, are breathtaking.

Route 1

Cat Bells, Lake District

Height	451m (1,480ft)
Total height gain	462m (1,516ft)
Distance	5.95km (3.7 miles)
Total time	2-3 hours
Grade	EASY
Start / Finish	CA12 5UE or NY 246 211 or ///noisy.curtains.tutorial

Cat Bells, while smaller than many of its Lake District neighbours, is a great 'starter hill' for those looking for their first mountain climbing experience. Situated just a few miles from Keswick and easily accessible, this short walk will give you immense satisfaction as well as spectacular views and a real sense of what it's like to be in the mountains.

Our route starts from Hawse End on the west bank of Derwentwater. There's really nothing else here, so be sure to bring everything with you. There's a very small car park on the Skelgill road and some roadside parking if you're lucky. An even better option is to leave your car in nearby Keswick and take the boat across Derwentwater. There are regular shuttles during the summer between Keswick

and Hawse End, as well as circular trips around the lake that stop at various landing stages. Ask locally or search online for 'Hawse End shuttle service' for more information.

If arriving by boat, you'll need to walk up through the woods, past the Hawse End Outdoor Centre, turn left at the main road and you'll arrive at the car park and our starting point.

START From the car park follow the signpost signed 'Cat Bells 1 mile'. This is a clear, easy-to-follow path that zigzags up and onto the ridge, directly to the summit. There are a couple of steeper sections where you might need to use your hands for support, but certainly nothing close to scrambling. Look around you as you're climbing – the views of Derwentwater to your left and the fells in all directions are truly spectacular. It's quite steep at times, with a brief respite around halfway followed by an even steeper climb to the top, so if you're not used to mountain walking, take it easy.

As you get close to the summit there are numerous path options but, as long as you're heading uphill, you're heading in the right direction.

It shouldn't take you long to reach the summit and when you get there it's like standing on top of a rock. Hopefully you're there on a beautiful summer's day and can really take in the views. Grab a drink and a snack and be happy that it's downhill for the rest of the walk.

1 When you're ready, continue in the same direction, on a much more gradual descent until you reach a little dip. **2** Take the path to your left that heads steeply downhill. This stone path zigzags its way down, before straightening out to skirt around the hill.

3 Towards the bottom of the hill, just above the treeline, a path heads off to your left. If you're just here to bag the peak and not interested in anything else, you can take this path directly back to the start point. However, hopefully you're looking for a bit more of a walk, so instead carry on ahead. Pass through a gate and follow the path around to the right which takes you down to the road. Turn right here, walking along the road, past the houses and look out for a gate on your left, signposted 'Lodor – 1 mile'. **4** This is the Cumbria Way National Trail and will lead you gently down to the banks of Derwentwater.

Cross over the stream, using the small bridge if you need to. The easy-to-follow path passes through farmland and adjacent to a wooded area. Go through a kissing gate and when you reach the next gate, take the path option to your left. Walk over the duckboards then bear right, walking down to the shore. As you get close to the lake look up to your left and you'll have a great view of where you've walked so far.

5 You're now at the south end of Derwentwater, with Keswick being at the far north end. The path runs alongside the



Map created by Lovell Johns Limited. Based upon Ordnance Survey digital map data
© Crown Copyright 2023 Licence Number 43368U. All rights reserved.



The start of your walk is clearly signposted from the small car park.

left bank, all the way back to your start point and is easy to follow. This is a beautiful section to walk along as it mixes the waterside with forests and open land, and there are plenty of opportunities to sit and relax on the water's edge, or even take a swim - with fantastic views back up to Cat Bells throughout.

The path skirts around a lovely lakeside house where you'll need to climb a short, unpaved stretch before turning right through a gate. (6) Where the path splits in two, stick with the right-hand option nearest the water. Here there is a landing stage and, if the boats are operating, there's an opportunity to catch a ferry back to Keswick, with a circular tour of the lake.

⑦ At the next landing stage, pass through the gate and turn left. You'll have more great views of Cat Bells and the entire ridge you walked along earlier, up to your left. Head through a gate and follow the path around to your right, which leads you into the grounds of the Hawse End Outdoor Centre. If you travelled over from Keswick on the ferry, you could bear right here for a short cut down to the jetty, otherwise carry on straight. When you reach the tarmac track, turn right and follow it up to the road. Turn left around the outdoor centre car park and then right along a footpath through the trees, which will take you back to where you started.

HOW TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN

Climbing your first mountain might feel like a daunting challenge, but with this book you can make it happen. Perhaps all you've managed so far is a walk to the park or a bumble around the local countryside but now have aspirations to go further and higher. Maybe you're a parent wanting to take the family on a weekend adventure; or you've signed up for a charity challenge to climb Ben Nevis, or Kilimanjaro, or to Everest Base Camp! If you've been put off heading into the hills for fear of getting lost, or not knowing what to take with you, or because you're not sure where to go or simply don't know where to start, this book is your answer.

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

MOUNTAIN NAVIGATION

THE WEATHER

WALKING WITH CHILDREN

GOING IT ALONE

**POPULAR MOUNTAIN
CHALLENGES**

ROUTE MAPS & GUIDES



Cover: High up on Eryri's Glyderau mountains in North Wales. Photo: Carla Imbrenda