

# BROOKSIDE VILLAB&B

## Tips on the Trail

### Walking Hadrian's Wall?

I do hope this page doesn't sound patronizing, but over the past 12 years I've had people arrive at our B&B exhausted and thoroughly grumpy – often because they've over-estimated their own and their colleagues' abilities! We do our best to make you comfortable and happier, dry you out and feed you, but here are some tips and info to try to ensure nothing gets in the way of your enjoyment of this incredible Trail. If you're an experienced long-distance-trail walker—this probably isn't for you—if not, take a couple of minutes to read through—I hope you find something useful.

### The Trail

The landscape and geology is varied and awe-inspiring, and the forts, milecastles, the wall itself and other places of historical interest make it truly fascinating. All the Roman sites are “accessible” physically and intellectually and are well-managed by knowledgeable people who are passionate about what they do. But please do not expect the Great Wall of China - for much of the walk you are following the line of this two-thousand-year-old ancient monument – do not expect 8 feet high standing Wall for the full 84 (roman) miles! In fact, the longest, best preserved stretches of original standing Wall are here in Gilsland - so be glad you're stopping here! Your map will have “standing wall” marked with crenellation symbols.

It is very well signposted - but do buy a guide book I prefer Stedman's) and an OS map—you'll get so much more out of the walk. The central section IS strenuous—you'll likely cover about 1.5 to 2 miles an hour. Please take this into account in your planning. For example, most people WILL NOT walk from Chollerford to Gilsland in one day and still be happy at the end of that day! (Some 8-10 hours fit-person's marching without stops). Of course, this is less important if you make use of our Trail Walkers' Freedom Package to cover the central section!

Go here to download the gradient profile from the National Trail website and use it to help you plan your daily mileage—do plan time to take in some of the forts. Consider not doing too much on the first day—again I've seen lots of folks who've spoiled their holiday by ruining their feet on day one. Other Trails and self-guided walking holidays in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland can be found at [Contours Walking Holidays](#).

The Trail is not well equipped with toilets or shops! You may only find “facilities” at the museums and tourist information sites off the line of the Trail. Some enterprising folks on the

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route have refreshment huts & wagons, but these cannot be depended on to be open every day. In Gilsland “House of Meg” tearooms offer a small selection of essential supplies (along with great home-baked goodies). We supply basic pharma and toiletry needs, batteries, etc. here.

You will be walking on fine grass paths, some boggy fields, stone paving, steep stone steps and some tarmac. There are innumerable stiles to climb over and gates to get through. Please do not walk in single file and please do not walk on the Wall! Even at the height of the season you are unlikely to meet or see lots of people except at the sites of Forts.

## **Your Feet**

Even if you walk or hike frequently, most of us don't trek for 4 to 7 consecutive days. You will probably get at least one blister! Buy hydroponic plasters— I find COMPEED are the best—and carry them in your pack—not in the bag which is being transferred to your next B&B! As soon as you feel a “hot spot”, stop and put on a plaster—don't wait until it blisters. I find ordinary sticking-plasters are worse than useless, and cause more problems than they fix.

## **Your Kit (I live with a “Kit Freak”, so do ask if you want some recommendations!)**

Do avoid wearing new, hard leather boots. They WILL hurt. Either break in new boots with some long walks with differing gradients, or buy fabric hiking boots or trekking shoes. Trainers are not good enough on most of the Trail—they do not give your feet and ankles the support you'll need, and the soles can be downright dangerous on slippery paths— HOWEVER trainers or walking shoes might be more comfortable on the Newcastle City and Bowness-on-Solway sections – being mainly on tarmac.

Buy the best waterproof jacket you can. You don't have to spend £100's - but at the very least ensure it has taped seams. Denim jeans or chinos are not a good choice of walking trouser – no wind protection, no warmth and once wet, stay wet all day! Lightweight trousers that offer some wind proofing and dry quickly are better. A pair of waterproof over-trousers are a good bet too.

We do overnight laundry—so take this into account with your packing if you like.

And don't forget the sunscreen and hat – we get wonderful weather here too! Midges can be a bother sometimes, so insect repellent might be useful.

I suppose I need to put the usual disclaimer about the above being only my own opinion, from my own experience and I take no responsibility for you following or not following any suggestion or advice. So there! Enjoy! Denise