

# Learning by walking

Die Landschaft im Norden Englands ist atemberaubend schön. Der deutsche Photojournalist **FRANZ MARC FREI** hat sie in Begleitung einer Wandergruppe erkundet – und ganz nebenbei sein Englisch aufpoliert. 

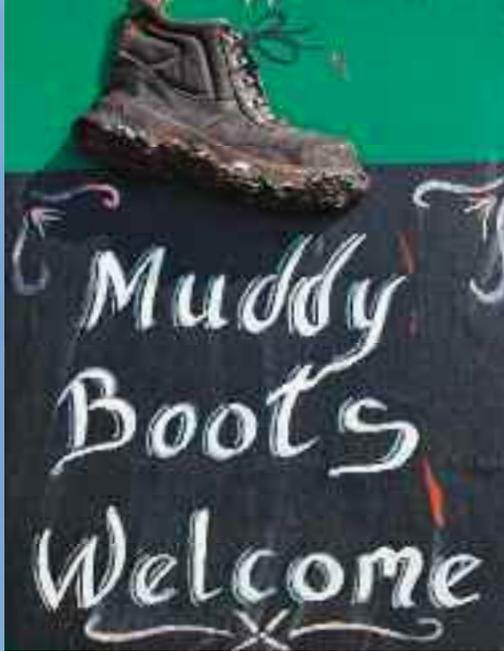
“Sie haben Post,” announces a voice coming out of my laptop computer. “Story idea: the Ramblers” appears in the subject line of an e-mail to me from the editor-in-chief of *Spotlight* magazine. I’ve never heard of it — or is it ‘them’?

I look at the word and am reminded of a song recorded by Bill Haley, one of the godfathers of rock’n’roll: “Shake, ramble and roll”. Such a great song! I decide to call the editor and impress her with this bit of 1950s trivia. When I get her on the line, though, she laughs out loud.

“I think you mean ‘Shake, rattle and roll’,” she says, singing me a line from the song. Despite my mistake, I discover that I am still in her good books: she is offering me the chance to go hiking in England with a group of “Ramblers,” Britain’s answer to the *Wandervögel*.

She tells me that the Ramblers is a charity that promotes walking in Britain. A sister organization, Ramblers Worldwide Holidays, offers hiking tours around the world. Later, I read about Ramblers tours in Britain, and it occurs to me that walking in a group for a couple of days might be a good way to improve my English. I decide to give it a try.





Walking groups are welcome at country pubs: some even post signs such as this, saying that all may enter, no matter the state of their shoes

But first, I take a look in my dictionary: the word “Ramblers” comes from the verb “to ramble”, which means “to walk for pleasure in the countryside”. The Ramblers have about 30 walking tours to choose from in different locations around Britain. I choose a two-day tour that begins near Skipton, a small town on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Weeks later, when I arrive in England’s north, I discover that Skipton has a famous castle, cobbled streets and at least two dozen pubs. Just my kind of place! Flowing through Skipton is the famous Leeds and Liverpool Canal, named for the two cities it connects. The 200-kilometre waterway crosses the low Pennine mountains — “the backbone of England” — and was important during the Industrial Revolution, which brought an economic boom to the region.

<b>subject line</b> [sʌb'dʒekt laɪn]	Betreffzeile
<b>editor(-in-chief)</b> ['ɛdɪtə]	Chefredakteur(in)
<b>godfather</b> ['gɒd,fɑːðə]	Pate; hier: Vater
<b>trivia</b> ['trɪviə]	Trivialwissen
<b>rattle</b> ['rætəl]	rasseln
<b>good books: be in sb.'s ~</b> ['gʊd buks]	bei jmdm. einen Stein im Brett haben
<b>hiking</b> ['haɪkɪŋ]	Wandern
<b>charity</b> [tʃærəti]	wohltätige Organisation
<b>edge</b> [edʒ]	Rand(e)
<b>cobbled</b> ['kɒbəl]	mit Kopfstein gepflastert
<b>Pennine</b> ['penaɪn]	





## A CLOSER LOOK

The **enclosure of public land** occurred at various times throughout Britain's history. At its high point from 1760 to 1830, Parliament made laws allowing landowners to put walls or fences around public land. Having lost the traditional right to use the land to grow food, people had to move to cities to find work in factories, a development that gave the Industrial Revolution an important resource: cheap labour.

Industrialization brought other developments, too. One was the **enclosure of public land**, which forced country people to move to the cities. This new urban working class soon realized what they had lost: easy access to fresh air and sport. Before long, walking groups had formed across Britain, with members demanding access to ancient public footpaths — even those that crossed private land.

Walkers protested for their rights loudly, and still do. As I remember, Madonna tried to keep walkers off of a path on her estate in the south of England. I'm considering the pop star's dilemma as I board a bus with the Ramblers walking group in Skipton. Travelling along a small road enclosed on both sides by dry stone walls, we drive into valleys and over softly rounded hills covered in thin blankets of fog. Wind-bent trees salute us from lonely farms and stone bridges carry us over streams that flow into idyllic meadows.

"We're lucky with the weather today," says Julian, the leader of our group. As we roll into Hebden, population 200, the sun breaks through the fog. Perfect timing, I think. Julian opens a big map in the village car park and, using his walking stick as a pointer, explains our route.

Between the words "way", "river", "bridge" and "village", I notice that he uses two prepositions quite frequently: "up" and "down". A fellow walker who studied languages in school explains why. "Dale" comes from Old Norse, he says, and is related to the German word *Tal*. "So I am in the Yorkshire 'valleys'?" I ask. He nods.



The village of Hebden: where the Ramblers' walk begins

Julian gets our attention again, saying the walk will cover about 20 miles, which is around 30 kilometres. That means I'll have to make six hours of small talk! Our leader puts away his map and takes us onto the path. A group of 15, we form an uneven line of walkers along the peaceful banks of the River Wharfe.

Julian leads us towards a meadow filled with bleating sheep. Andy, walking next to me, says they remind him of a television series called *All Creatures Great and Small*. The show is about a veterinarian in the Dales named James Herriot, and it won the hearts of millions in the 1970s and 80s. More recently, he says, the Malham Cove area welcomed the crew filming scenes from the most recent Harry Potter movie.

Not all the walkers are impressed by this bit of trivia. They are interested in more important things:

"Where are we going to have lunch?" asks a lady in a floppy hat.

"Linton," Julian says, swinging his walking stick at his side. "That's where we're going."

"But didn't we pass a pub about a kilometre back?" I hear myself whine. "I think it had a sign that said, 'Muddy boots welcome!'"

"Yours aren't even dirty yet," says Julian.

"One-nil Julian," says the floppy hat with a friendly smile. I give her my best tough-guy grin and move on.

The next part of the hike is harder than it looks: leaving the field with the sheep, we follow the route through brambles and over a stone wall. As I listen to the other walkers commenting on hurdles such as fences and stiles, I realize I'm not the only foreigner in the group: there are a few Canadians, too. As a mountain-loving Bavarian, I reckon I

**One of the great stone faces of Skipton Castle: the fortress was built in 1090 by a Norman baron**



have the best-looking calf muscles of us all. This is my chance to prove that they can handle the Yorkshire Dales.

My fellow walkers, most of them Brits, are happy to chat. Peter, for example, tells me that he goes on Ramblers hikes at least once a year. He then often walks the route again with his wife a few weeks later. He patiently answers my language questions and doesn't seem to mind when I can't find the right word. He just waits — or offers a helpful hint.

We walk and talk, and the others join in with polite conversation. “The hills are so lovely, aren't they?” says Anne. Is this a question? I decide it must be: “Yes!” I answer, adding, “they are”. As we go, I expand my repertoire of short answers with “yes, we are” (lucky with the weather) and “yes, I am” (enjoying the tour), but “no, I don't” (understand that farmers need signs saying that dogs should be leashed).



One of the geological sights of the Yorkshire Dales: the limestone pavement at Malham Cove is a natural platform from which visitors can enjoy the view

<b>fence</b> [fens]	Zaun
<b>enclosure</b> [ɪn'kləʊʒə]	Einzäunung
<b>ancient</b> ['eɪnfənt]	(ur)alt
<b>footpath</b> ['fʊtpɑːθ]	Gehweg
<b>cross</b> [krɒs]	durchziehen
<b>estate</b> [ɪ'steɪt]	Anwesen
<b>enclose</b> [ɪn'kləʊz]	umgeben
<b>salute</b> [sə'luːt]	grüßen
<b>meadow</b> ['medəʊ]	Wiese
<b>pointer</b> ['pɔɪntə]	Zeigestock
<b>Wharfe</b> [wɔːf]	
<b>bleating</b> ['bliːtɪŋ]	blökend
<b>veterinarian</b> [ˌvetərɪ'neəriən]	Tierarzt, -ärztin
<b>floppy</b> ['flɒpi]	Schlapp-
<b>muddy</b> ['mʌdi]	schmutzig
<b>nil</b> [nɪl]	Null
<b>bramble</b> ['bræmbəl]	Brombeerstrauch
<b>stile</b> [staɪl]	Zaunübertritt
<b>calf</b> [kɑːf]	Wade(n-)
<b>hint</b> [hɪnt]	Hinweis
<b>leash</b> [liːʃ]	anleinen
<b>xxx</b> [xxx]	xxx
<b>xxx</b> [xxx]	xxx
<b>xxx</b> [xxx]	xxx

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Old stone walls, buildings and trees define the Wharfedale landscape; Morris dancers at the music festival in Grassington town

Julian explains that we are following in the footsteps of many others who have fallen in love with the British countryside. Founded in 1954, the Yorkshire Dales is 1,760 square kilometres in area, a little smaller than Greater London and twice the size of Berlin. Julian explains that public access to our path goes back to 1824 and the founding of the Association for the Protection of Ancient Footpaths in the Vicinity of York.

This and later groups of walkers fought to regain or simply maintain access to old footpaths. In 1932, walkers led a “mass trespass” up Kinder Scout, a mountain that was closed to the public. Some were arrested at the event,



### A CLOSER LOOK

At about the same time that German artist Caspar David Friedrich was painting the cliffs on the island of Rügen, Englishman **James Ward** (1769–1859) was busy creating his own homage to nature: *Gordale Scar*. Completed in 1815, the wall-size painting of dramatic cliffs in Yorkshire is a masterpiece of the English Romantic genre. The great work can be seen at the Tate Britain gallery in London.

onto an area of flat rock at the top of a cliff. This limestone “pavement” looks like a great stone floor that could be man-made; but it is natural, a reminder of glaciers from long ago. Now it forms a platform for visitors viewing the hills — and, far below, a stream called Malham Beck (like *Bach*, I soon learn).

Julian puts down his rucksack and announces that it is time for lunch. I’m surprised at how quickly the time has passed. Not only are we in Linton, but we’ve also done most of the day’s walk. We get out our packed lunches and find places to sit on a grassy hillside. The meal is simple but satisfying: sandwiches, muesli bars and fruit.

The afternoon provides plenty more opportunities for conversation and new vocabulary. What I’ve learned here is going to stay with me — not only because I’ve heard it spoken, but also because I’ve experienced it. I’ll never forget “muscle ache” or “blister”, for example — complaints that Peter says are “par for the course” when rambling.

Late in the day, we stand before the impressive Gordale Scar. My best description of it is “a very big rock”. My fellow walkers inform me that the 100-metre high rock may also be described as “an outcrop” or “a bluff”. Jane, a pretty 50-something hiker, says the rock is famous, too, because of a great painting by **James Ward**.

and it almost certainly led to the founding of a national Ramblers Association in 1935.

In the more than 75 years since, the Ramblers have reopened old footpaths, marked them on maps to establish their legality and established a system of signposts. After the Second World War, the Ramblers helped to establish Britain’s national parks. Today there are more than 120,000 members.

As we walk, I find myself falling in love with the wild beauty of the Yorkshire Dales. We are at a place called Malham Cove and step

**The way from Malham Cove to Gordale Scar: plenty of good conversation — and sheep**





Where in the Dales are we? Julian, the guide, always knows

Today, the bluff is full of walkers who are keen to experience its beauty first-hand. I sit down on the grass to view the Scar, while running a hand over my legendary Bavarian calves. “Everything all right?” asks Julian. “Yes,” I say. “But my muscles do ache a bit!” Good Lord — I used ache as a verb! Not bad!

<b>vicinity</b> [vəˈsɪnəti]	Nähe, nahe Umgebung
<b>trespass</b> [ˈtrespəs]	unbefugtes Betreten
<b>signpost</b> [ˈsaɪnpəʊst]	Wegweiser
<b>limestone</b> [ˈlaɪmstəʊn]	Kalkstein(-)
<b>pavement</b> [ˈpeɪvmənt]	Gehweg
<b>glacier</b> [ˈglæsiə]	Gletscher
<b>ache</b> [eɪk]	Schmerzen; weh tun
<b>blister</b> [ˈblɪstə]	Blase
<b>par for the course</b> [ˌpɑː fə ðə ˈkɔːs]	zu erwarten
<b>scar</b> [skɑː]	Narbe
<b>outcrop</b> [ˈaʊtkrɒp]	einzelne stehender Felsen



Crossing the River Wharfe: the old stone bridge at Linton

### Getting there

The closest international airport to the Yorkshire Dales is Manchester (MAN). Easyjet, BMI and Lufthansa have direct flights starting at €85 return. It is also possible to drive and take a ferry to various points in Britain. See [www.poferrys.de](http://www.poferrys.de) and [www.dfdsseaways.co.uk](http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk) for a variety of routes.

### Rambling

The Ramblers' tours are listed on their travel website: [www.ramblerscountrywide.co.uk](http://www.ramblerscountrywide.co.uk)

For all tours, be sure to take proper walking shoes that have already been broken in, a rain jacket and trousers, and a small rucksack for snacks and packed lunches.

The tour described here is “Skipton: the Gateway to the Dales”, and is offered from two to eight days. The best time to go is between May and August. Prices begin at £239, which includes a double room (sharing), breakfast, supper, a guide and bus travel. Packed lunches are extra.

For more information on the Ramblers' charity, see [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)

### Sights

Skipton Castle is one of the best-preserved medieval castles in England. Open daily; entry costs £6.20.

Bolton Abbey on the River Wharfe was under construction during the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. The grounds offer a magical place for walking, fishing and picnicking. Open daily.

### More information

See [www.visitengland.de](http://www.visitengland.de) and [www.yorkshire.com/de](http://www.yorkshire.com/de)

<b>break in</b> [ˌbreɪk ˈɪn]	(Schuhe) einlaufen
<b>medieval</b> [ˌmediːiːvəl]	mittelalterlich
<b>preserved</b> [prɪˈzɜːvd]	erhalten
<b>abbey</b> [ˈæbi]	Abtei
<b>dissolution</b> [ˌdɪsəˈluːʃən]	Auflösung
<b>monastery</b> [ˈmɒnəstəri]	(Mönchs)Kloster