

Your guide to **walking on access land**



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at the heart of walking



What is access land?

In England and Wales we have a world renowned network of foot-paths which everyone has the right to walk on. These paths are known as “public rights of way”. We also have the right, in certain places, to walk off these paths, across privately owned land. This is known as “open access”. Open access gives you the chance to walk freely, explore wild, open landscapes and find your own way.

The England Coast Path, due to be completed in 2020, is giving us a right of access to many areas between the path and the sea. This area is known as the coastal margin and allows people to explore dunes, cliff slopes and beaches, right up to the water's edge.

This guide helps you make the most of your open access rights – so have a read, grab a map and go walking!

Scotland has different rights of access to England and Wales.

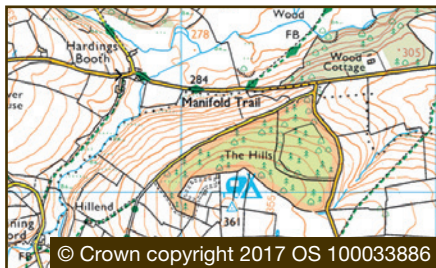
If you want to find out more about your access rights in Scotland, download our ‘Scotland on Foot’ guide:

**[www.ramblers.org.uk/
accessguide](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/accessguide)**

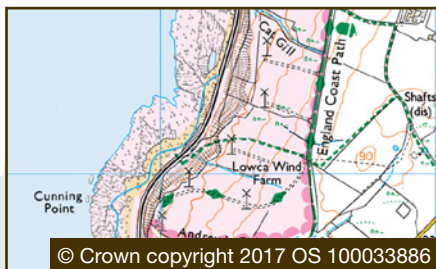


Where you can walk

Open access land in England and Wales is marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a yellow wash.



Coastal margin in England is marked as a magenta wash.



Within these areas you have the right to walk wherever you wish, subject to the exceptions and restrictions outlined in this guide.

You are permitted to climb over walls or fences to get into, out of, or across open access land, as long as you don't damage them.

When you are out walking, open access land is often identified with the access symbol. If you are leaving open access land, you may see the 'no access' symbol, and will need to find a public right of way to continue your walk.



Restrictions to where you can walk

The right to walk across open access land or coastal margin can sometimes be restricted. Check for restrictions* before you set off, and look out for information when out walking.

Some types of land remain off limits, even if they fall within the boundaries of open access or coastal margin on a map. This excepted land may not be signposted on the ground. These are common types of land you may encounter within open access areas which you **do not** have the right to roam over:

- **Buildings (and land within 20m of a building)**
- **Private parks and gardens**
- **Quarries**
- **Railways or tramways**
- **Golf courses**
- **Aerodromes or airports**
- **Temporary livestock pens**
- **Race courses and land used for training race horses**
- **Military land, for example where they may be firing guns**

There are some differences within the coastal margin – see the next page to find out more.

However, where there are open access restrictions, you can still walk on a public right of way.

Find out more about
where you can walk at
www.ramblers.org.uk/accessguide

What you can do on access land

Open access land is designated for walking and outdoor recreation on foot. This usually means that **you can go walking, dog walking, running, climbing, birdwatching, or even have a picnic** (as long as you take your rubbish home with you).



As open access land can cover rural businesses and areas of sensitive wildlife, there are **some activities you cannot do** without the landowner's permission. These include:

- **Walking a dog off the lead around livestock (or between 1 March and 31 July)**
- **Cycling or horse riding**
- **Water sports, including swimming or taking a boat onto a river, lake or reservoir**
- **Driving a motorised vehicle**
- **Lighting fires or camping**
- **Shooting, foraging or picking flowers**
- **Using a metal detector**
- **Taking part in organised games or commercial activities**
- **Interfering with activities of farmers or other landowners**

The England Coast Path has given a right of access to the coastal margin, shown on Ordnance Survey maps in a magenta wash.

There are types of land which remain off limits and rules for what you can and can't do in the coastal margin. These are largely the same as on open access land, although you can walk:

- **On land within 20m of a building**
- **Through land used for training race horses**
- **Your dog off the lead all year round, except around livestock - but you do need to check for local controls which may be in force.**

Access may be excluded from areas of saltmarsh and mudflat where the land is unsafe to walk. This may be particularly dangerous for visitors who don't know the area well. Whether you are a visitor or live locally, it's important to take note of the ground conditions and read and follow instructions on local signage.

Find out more about what you can do on access land at www.ramblers.org.uk/accessguide

Your responsibilities

When you're out walking on access land, you are responsible for your own safety and for making sure that your actions don't damage the people, animals or environment around you.

Always stick to the **Countryside Code** so that you can enjoy, respect and protect the countryside.

Follow the three key principles outlined on the right.

1. Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared

2. Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and remember to follow paths when you're not on open access land

3. Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Find out more about what you can do on access land at **www.ramblers.org.uk/accessguide**

Find out more...

If you're not sure about whether you can walk somewhere or what activities you can do there, get in touch at **policy@ramblers.org.uk**

Alternatively, you can contact Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, or your local authority using the details below

Natural Resources Wales at **openaccessmapping@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk** or telephone **0300 065 3000**

Natural England's Open Access Contact Centre at **openaccess@naturalengland.org.uk** or telephone **0300 060 2091**

Your local authority: **<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>**

*Check for restrictions to where you can walk at **<http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk/wps/portal/oasys/maps/MapSearch>**