



The Hertfordshire Walking Festival is here.

Rukia Augustine, Hertfordshire Year of Walking Officer provides more than 70 ways to discover Hertfordshire during May's Walking Festival.

The Hertfordshire Year of Walking is set to culminate in an exciting, fun and diverse walking festival, taking place across the county. The county council's Countryside Management Service (CMS) is coordinating the festival that will showcase some of the best Hertfordshire has to offer. Themes are varied and include nature trails, local history, the dawn chorus, singing strolls and photography walks.

It is set to be a wonderful collaboration of outdoor activities and pursuits, bringing together a huge range of organisations. All of the Hertfordshire Walking Festival events are **FREE** and cater for all audiences; day-long rambles through to family friendly bug hunts are on offer.

Hertfordshire is the ideal location for both urban and countryside walks. It has several Local Nature Reserves, a National Nature Reserve (Broxbourne Woods), 49 Green Flag Award winning parks, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (The Chilterns), and rare, iconic chalk rivers. The county's 5,000 Public Rights of Way also provide 3,100 km of walking opportunity.

Guided walks are a great way of getting to know an area, giving you the confidence to return with friends and family to experience the change the seasons bring. Many of the walks will be repeated later in the year or are part of a series lead by a group that you can then connect with and join. The festival coincides with the National Month of Walking and the long standing Stevenage Walking Festival that takes place from the 7th-15th May 2016. The Festival will provide an opportunity for residents to explore their county, get active and make new friends.

We've picked out some highlights from the Festival to give you a taste of what's on offer.

- Shenleybury Trail, Borehamwood - Monday 9th May, 11am. Take a bus ride and a leisurely walk back to hear all about 6 centuries of local history.
- Southern Country Park, Bishop Stortford – Tuesday 17th May, 10am. A short walk to discover the Park, Northern Parkland and Thorley Wedge.
- Photography Walk around Hemel Old Town and Gadebridge Park – Wednesday 18th May, 6.30pm. Gain some expert guidance to frame and focus your shots beautifully.
- Panshanger Estate Ramble – Monday 30th May, 10am. An 8 mile ramble on the disused railway line towards Welwyn Garden City looping around the estate on public rights of way through woodland, countryside and parkland.

On Monday 16th May between 9am and 12noon CMS are hoping to attract the largest number of people ever to take part in a Hertfordshire Health Walk at the same time. The Mass Health Walk will show the country that Hertfordshire is a county of walkers! With a dozen or more Health Walks available on the day there is no excuse for missing out. To find your nearest Hertfordshire Health Walk and join in visit www.Hertsdirect.org/healthwalks

Don't miss out, some of the events have limited availability so visit www.hertsdirect.org/walkingfestival, email: walking@hertfordshire.gov.uk or call 01992 588433 to find out more.