

disabled ramblers **LET'S GO RAMBLING!**

Disabled Ramblers have at least one thing in common – we can't walk sufficiently well to enjoy a day out on foot but want to see views and visit interesting places in the countryside. Thus you will not feel out of place with friendly, like-minded people on an informal, relaxed day. Please visit our website <https://disabledramblers.co.uk/> and view our Photos to see what we *actually* get up to. New members are given a password to access the Members Only section.

We run a national programme of rambles, supplemented by a field toilet, rescue trailer, loan scooters and so forth, as described in this booklet. There are sometimes also *Extra* rambles, with fewer support provisions, which are organised by experienced members close to their homes. Extra rambles are publicised to members in emails.

This booklet is intended to convey in general terms what to expect on a national ramble and how you can make the best use of the opportunities we can offer you.

You can stay abreast of all the rambles via the Calendar on our website - National rambles are in green and Extra rambles in blue.



WHO CAN GO ON A RAMBLE?

For insurance purposes you must be a member of Disabled Ramblers to ramble regularly with us on a scooter, but we are able to let you try one ramble as our guest before you join. You must be 14 to drive a powered mobility vehicle and anyone under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult. A small charge, specified on the booking form, is made for each disabled ramble to cover the costs of organising the ramble, insurance, maintenance of our equipment and transport of the field toilet, rescue trailer etc.

If you need someone to help you set up or board a scooter, use a toilet, or render you other personal assistance during a ramble, you must be accompanied by a responsible able bodied person to do so. That person must remain with you throughout the ramble.

Partners and carers, friends and family are all very welcome to walk with us as guests without charge. Each Disabled Rambler is responsible for their guests and for keeping them with the ramble party.

Your dog will usually be welcomed, provided it is under your control, but remember that not everyone likes dogs and you should not allow it to approach members who may feel uncomfortable. Occasionally, where there are nesting birds or vulnerable livestock for example, a landowner may insist that dogs are on a lead of less than two metres all the time or they may not be allowed at all. Sometimes only Assistance Dogs are allowed. The ramble details will tell you if there are specific restrictions.



HOW DIFFICULT WILL MY RAMBLE BE?

All rambles are fully reconnoitred, risk assessed, graded to the same standard and managed on the day by experienced members. They are divided into categories according to the overall difficulty, with category 1 being the easiest. However, it is almost impossible to ensure that a route is entirely of one level of difficulty and rambles are given the next higher category or indicated with a “+” if there is any doubt. Adverse weather conditions can sometimes result in a harder day than planned. Ramble photos and a more detailed description of criteria for ascribing categories to rambles are available on our web site.

Category 1 rambles

Suitable for manual wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters, category 1 rambles are generally on level routes with nothing rougher than a metalled farm track or forestry road. They usually do not exceed 5 miles in length. A quick look at the national programme will show that there are probably no category 1 rambles. This is because there has been little demand since we started to provide loan scooters but we try to respond to requests if there is sufficient support. Many National Parks and Councils provide suitable routes and you should consult their web site under “Access”. If you are particularly interested in Cat 1 rambles we may sometimes be able to put you in touch with an experienced member local to you for additional information.

Category 2 rambles

Category 2 rambles are more ambitious than category 1, usually in more undulating country best suited to more robust powerchairs and mobility vehicles with batteries that are capable of doing the distance. Whilst a fit and determined manual wheelchair user (possibly with supplementary pushers) may be able to cover the distance, they would need to be sure that they could keep up with the rest of the ramble - which can quickly get cold waiting for them - and should consider using a loan scooter.

Routes are generally on good tracks though you might encounter short stretches of stony or soft going with shallow ruts. Typically category 2 rambles are limited to gradients less than 1 in 10, with a maximum climb of 150 metres and total distance no more than 8 miles. However, some rambles are graded as category 2+, which indicates that there may be more height gain (but still on good tracks) or unavoidable short stretches of more difficult ground.

Category 3 rambles

This category involves serious undertakings, often some distance from roads on exposed hillsides over rough tracks with significant slopes, cambers and climbs. Consequently, “town” scooters or powerchairs are not suitable and an all-terrain mobility vehicle such as the Trampler or Supersport is needed. Longer stretches of rougher going than category 2 rambles are involved with steeper slopes (up to 1 in 5) and greater height gain (e.g. 1000ft or 300 metres). The length of the ramble depends on the terrain to be encountered and is typically 5 to 8 miles.

Normally, Category (Cat.) 3 rambles can only be done once you have gained experience on a Cat. 2 ramble (not just a Cat. 1). However, some less challenging Cat. 3 rambles may be designated as suitable for a first ramble with us and are shown as Cat 3* (3 star) on the Booking Form. To participate in any Cat 3 or 3* ramble you must have a suitable scooter or use one of our loan scooters (see later).



CATEGORY 2 RAMBLE



CATEGORY 3 RAMBLE

SAFETY ON RAMBLES.

Rambling on rough paths with lots of other people - some of whom can't move very quickly in an emergency - could be a dangerous pastime without adequate safety measures, particularly for someone new to rambling. Consequently we regard safety as a key aspect of planning and organising rambles. Our programme and booking form highlight which outings are suitable for a first ramble. It is important to ensure that a participant's scooter is suitable for the terrain and that the rider is able to control it sufficiently to ensure their own and others' safety. Hence we could exclude you from a ramble if the member in charge feels that your scooter is not suitable or that you are unable to control it adequately.

IS MY WHEELCHAIR OR SCOOTER SUITABLE FOR RAMBLING?

(NB. all members driving their own scooters are expected to have third party insurance.)

Like everything in life it depends.....! Most manual wheelchairs, powerchairs (which usually have joystick control by varying the speed of the drive wheels) and mobility scooters are designed for everyday use on pavements. Small wheels may be OK on concrete but frequently prove unsuited to stony tracks. The following notes illustrate how you might decide the suitability of your vehicle.

Manual wheelchairs need good surfaces and small gradients. The rider needs to be fairly fit and/or have attendant pushers. You need to consider how robust your chair is before taking it on rougher tracks. In recent years manual wheelchairs for rough going have been designed, some with lever action mechanisms for improved easier propulsion.

Mobility scooters or powerchairs designed for use in a town environment may be suitable for some easier rambles but they tend to have limited ground clearance and/or power and can be readily damaged on rough tracks. Scooters with medium to large wheels and batteries of at least 50 amp-hour capacity are more likely to be suitable for rambling. Most scooters have handlebar controls but there are models that use a joystick or more elaborate control systems for those with upper body disabilities.

"Off-road" electric scooters are the "Land Rover" equivalent of the shopping scooter, being designed for rough country with greater power, ground clearance and strength. They are manufactured by a number of British companies as well as imports. There are, however, a limited number of **powerchairs which are designed for off-road use** that, in the hands of an experienced rider, may be used on Cat 3 rambles with the agreement of the member in charge or The Rambles Organiser.

If you have only driven on pavements but think your scooter might be suitable for rambling we suggest that you try driving it on the grass in your local park and/or an unsurfaced farm track before coming on a ramble - but do take care to have an able bodied person with you in case of difficulties.

If you are new to rambling and unsure if your own scooter is suitable, or if you feel that your experience in handling an off-road scooter safely under difficult conditions makes it unnecessary for you to start with a ramble designated suitable for new members, please contact the Rambles Organiser (paula@disabledramblers.co.uk) well before the day of your first ramble.

WHAT IF MY SCOOTER ISN'T SUITABLE?

We want everybody to have the chance to ramble with us so we have a small number of off-road loan scooters (currently Trampers). Drivers of our scooters need to be over 18 and have sufficient upper body strength and powers of concentration to manage a scooter safely. To ensure a fair distribution across those wishing to book a loan scooter, we limit the number of bookings per member per year. See also the section on Loan Scooters under Frequently Asked Questions in the Members Only section of the web site.

Before you borrow a loan scooter for the first time you will be instructed in its use and assessed on your ability to control it to ensure the safety of yourself and others. Please remember to allow at least 40 minutes for this when planning your first ramble. Transporting, maintaining and insuring the loan scooters involves a large annual outlay, so we have to make a charge to help meet this cost.



I CAN'T GO BEHIND A BUSH NOW!

We aim to have an accessible toilet at the start, lunch stop and finish of each ramble. If there are no permanent facilities on a supported ramble we provide our own using a tent (photo right) or a trailer and a "Porta Potti" camping toilet with handrails. Access is from your scooter. There are baby wipes and an alcohol spray in lieu of water for your hands.



WHAT IF...?

Should any powerchair or scooter break down or be damaged during a ramble, we do our best to evacuate machine and rider to a suitable pick-up point wherever possible. You won't be left to fend for yourself!

In the case of injury we do not provide first aid though there may be someone on the ramble able to help. You are encouraged to carry a small first aid kit and a "space blanket" with you. Information relating to any critical medication you need to take could be important in an emergency. If necessary the Emergency Services will be summoned but may be delayed if mobile phone reception is patchy or access is difficult.



Breakdown rescue on a supported ramble

BOOKING RAMBLES

The **National Programme of Rambles** for the year is circulated to members as early as possible, together with a booking form which includes instructions for booking loan scooters. Please remember to read the notes and conditions ("Important Information") contained in these documents as they contain information for your safety and to ensure the smooth running of the rambles. You will receive confirmation of your booking, together with another copy of the booking form so you can book further rambles if you wish. Closer to the time of the ramble(s) you have booked you will receive joining instructions, which include directions and map references for the starting point.

Members are informed of **Extra Rambles** by email together with instructions for booking.



CATEGORY 3 RAMBLE

Reserving accommodation

Please ensure that your ramble booking is confirmed before booking accommodation. Whilst the national ramble programme will give the nearest town, it is well worth checking the approximate location of the ramble shown on a Google map on the Calendar page of the web site. Further consultation of the relevant OS map can also be helpful. In hilly areas the road network in valleys may be limited and the wrong location of your accommodation can mean a long drive to the start of the ramble. Bear in mind also that you may be using the location to do two or more rambles which makes the choice even more important.

Some information can be gleaned using a section called Accommodation on the web site under Links. You could also try a web search on "accessible accommodation" or "disabled access" plus the nearest town. National Park or other tourist web sites often signpost disabled accommodation.

From time to time, members offer to co-ordinate accommodation for single ramblers on an informal basis. E.g. see the Spring 2015 edition of the newsletter via the web site and/or ask other members.



THE DAY OF YOUR FIRST RAMBLE

Bookings will have issued you with full joining instructions and directions to the start point for a ramble on the national programme and, when there is an Extra ramble, similar instructions will be sent by its organiser.

If you have problems getting to the start or you have decided that you won't join the ramble at the last minute, **PLEASE TRY TO SPEAK TO THE LEADER** on the telephone number provided in the joining instructions before 10.15 am. It may not, of course, always be possible to do this due to lack of mobile phone signal etc., but the ramble will not normally wait for you to arrive. If all else fails, a text message may be picked up later in the day.

Rambles start with a briefing from the leader, usually at 10.25 am, after which we move off. Before the day you need to establish how long it takes you to unload your wheelchair/scooter and, if necessary, use the toilet ready to join the ramble. The organisers try to have signs to the start posted by 09.30 am and you should try to be in the car park by 10.00 am - or earlier if you need extra time. If you have booked a loan scooter for the first time, remember to allow at least 40 minutes for an induction and driving assessment. You should expect to finish the ramble around 4.00 pm.



A list will be circulated as people are gathering for the start of the ramble, on which you will be asked to sign a disclaimer and provide a contact telephone number in case of emergencies (if you haven't already done so). We would like to know if you have hypersensitive parts of your body or need to be approached in a particular manner so that, with your permission, we can inform other ramblers.

What should I take on the ramble?

Once you leave the car park you will usually not be able to access your car until the end of the day. Consequently you will need to carry whatever you need with you. Whilst the vast majority of rambles are enjoyed without incident it is The Disabled Ramblers' policy to ask ramblers to be sensibly equipped. Each route is thoroughly checked before the day and hazards avoided wherever practical but things *can* go wrong, often by simple bad luck. We do not have trained first aiders on rambles but we will try to summon help if necessary.



It gets cold on a scooter, even in the summer and many disabilities exacerbate this problem. Thus you will need warm clothing including gloves and hat plus windproof and waterproof layers. Many companies supply wheelchair “bags” for your legs and, whilst they give very good protection, be aware that many are too short for someone of 5ft 10 inches so try them on before you use them!

We recommend that you should also take:

- Clothing suitable to the conditions, including waterproofs and/or a hat for protection from the sun (yes we do get sunny rambles!).
- Any medication you might need. If you are on your own please carry some information about your disability and/or medication (e.g. if you take Warfarin) in a wallet, purse or medallion for use in case of an emergency.
- Packed lunch - occasionally refreshments are available at the start or on the route of the ramble in which case it will be made clear in the joining instructions.
- Hot and/or cold drink.
- Insect repellent and a simple first aid kit for cuts and stings.
- A “space blanket” foil cover (available from outdoor shops) for use if you are stationary for a long period due to breakdown or injury.
- A bowl and water if you are taking a dog.

Please ask any walkers accompanying you to be properly dressed and shod for the conditions you are likely to meet. Boots are recommended for Category 2 rambles and above.

A digital camera will help you remember the day and we welcome photos for the web site. Don't worry, we're all amateur photographers! A map will tell you where you've been but this is not essential, as the route will have been well reconnoitred.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US?

Go to the “Contact Form” section of our web site
<https://disabledramblers.co.uk/> or email
membership@disabledramblers.co.uk