

SKIBBEREEN WALKING GROUP (SWG)

GENERAL RULES AND GUIDANCE NOTES FOR WALKERS AND WALK LEADERS

All participants in any SWG walk who are currently full or associate members of SWG and therefore also full members of Mountaineering Ireland (MI), will be fully covered by the MI insurance policy.* All Members should bring their valid MI membership card with them on all walks.

All walkers with the Group are reminded that they understand and agree to the following: *"I accept that walking and rambling are activities with a danger of personal injury and death. I am aware of and accept these risks and wish to participate in these activities voluntarily and shall be fully responsible for my own activities and involvement. I have read and will comply with the SWG Rules and Guidance Notes for Walkers and Walk Leaders"*.

No children aged under 6 are allowed (whether walking, in a pushchair or being carried).

Children aged 6-10 can not participate in the monthly hillwalks but they can participate in the regular fortnightly walks under certain conditions as follows. They should themselves be prospective or current full or associated members of SWG, having had their membership application form signed by a parent or guardian, and must be accompanied by a parent or guardian on all walks.

People between 11 and 18 years of age can participate in the regular fortnightly walks and monthly hillwalks only under certain conditions as follows. They should be prospective or current full or associated members of SWG, having had their membership application form counter-signed by a parent or guardian and they should be accompanied on the walk by a parent or guardian.

No dogs are allowed (even on a leash).

Everyone intending to take part must make themselves fully aware of the nature, duration and difficulty of the walk to be undertaken and be confident that they (and any children that they are accompanying as parent/guardian) are in the necessary physical condition. Whilst the regularly fortnightly walks may be on by-roads and only 2-3 hours' duration, the monthly hillwalks are off-road on mountainous terrain, 4-6 hours' duration and may involve a climb/descent in the region of 4,000 feet (1,220m) plus and some scrambling.

It is recommended that all participants engage in warming up/loosening exercises prior to the start of the walk and similar 'cooling down' exercises afterwards.

All participants must be suitably equipped, i.e. appropriate footwear, waterproofs in case of rain, and food and drink on the longer walks which start in the morning. Participants requiring regular medication must take into consideration the possibility that the duration of a hillwalk can sometimes be much longer than intended, due to variation in ground condition and weather conditions during the walk.

If a participant wishes to leave the walk before the end, they must inform the leader.

All participants must keep to the IFA farmland code of conduct:

- Respect farmland and the rural environment
- Don't interfere with livestock, crops, machinery or other property
- Guard against all risk of fire, especially near forests
- Leave all farm gates as you find them
- Avoid entering farmland containing livestock
- Always use gates, stiles or other recognised access points and avoid damage to fences and walls
- Take all your litter home
- Take special care on country roads
- Avoid making unnecessary noise
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take heed of warning signs - they are there for your protection

** The MI insurance policies in the main protect the SWG and SWG/MI members against civil liability claims. There is also a personal accident element in the event of injury resulting in death or permanent disability. Details can be obtained from the SWG Secretary if required.*

Leaders

Leaders should have conducted a recent recce, unless the leader has previously walked the route or has assessed the challenge level of the route based on maps, walking guide information & own general familiarity with the area, to make sure that they really do know the way and that nothing has changed since the last time they walked it, e.g. landowners blocked off access, etc. Before the walk the leader should nominate a sweeper and make this known to the participants in the introductory briefing before the walk.

Where circumstances require car-pooling from a designated meeting point to the designated start point of the walk, the leader should nominate a sweeper-car for the car-pool convoy.

Be aware that if no walkers show up at the designated start point (possibly due to bad weather) the walk can be considered to be 'off'. You must wait until the official walk start time before abandoning the walk and even if only one walker turns up, the walk can be considered to be 'on'.

Leaders should be equipped with a map covering the route area and a compass, also a SWG First Aid kit and two yellow hi-visibility jackets for leader and sweeper. (The jackets and kit should be obtained from the leader of the previous walk.)

Leaders and sweepers should also carry mobile telephones, exchange contact numbers and synchronise watches before the start of the walk.

In the introductory briefing to a walk, the leader should try to ensure that all participants are potential or current SWG/MI members or associate members and announce to everyone that non-MI members are not covered by the MI insurance policies, beyond their 3 free walks, and they walk with the group entirely at their own risk. Give a brief description of the route conditions and length/time of the walk and make sure that all participants agree that they are suitably equipped and fit for the walk.

Lead from the front, wearing a SWG hi-visibility yellow jacket and do not allow anyone to overtake you. The nominated sweeper (also wearing a yellow jacket) should bring up the rear to make sure that no-one falls behind.

When on a public or private road which may carry motorised traffic, observe the general rule of walking on the right of the road - **unless** the numbers are such you cannot walk in single file in which case the group should walk on the left. When approaching a blind corner consider whether crossing to the open side is a safer option. The leader should remind participants about these rules of road-walking behavior in the introductory briefing to the road walk.

Count the number of walkers before, during and after the walk to ensure that no-one is missing.

Some knowledge of First Aid would be advantageous. Identify any First Aid capability among the participants.

Stop every so often, wait for all walkers to catch up and if possible, (some prior research may be advisable), point out and give a short explanation of any item of archaeological, historical, geological, geographical, botanical, zoological or ornithological interest such as ringforts, standing stones, stone circles, altar tombs, ruined towers or castles, country houses, hills, valleys, offshore islands, flora and fauna, birds, etc.