

CIVIL SERVICE RAMBLERS – Walking Programme for 2026

With the exception of evening walks you should advise the walk leader at least 12 hours in advance that you intend walking.

- Choose a walk appropriate to your fitness level – see disclaimer signed on joining the club available at www.nicsramblers.co.uk
- Safety notes and further information on the grading system and walk starts are at the bottom of this document
- Start times are provisional and any changes will be shown in the walk flyer or emailed before the walk.
- No flyers issue for summer evening walks with directions to the start point noted below or emailed before the walk.
- Additional information about a walk can be obtained by contacting the respective walk leader.
- Prospective members can contact a walk leader via the club’s membership officer (at ‘contact us’ page) www.nicsramblers.co.uk
- Train times correct at the time of publishing but check the timetable before travelling.

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
<i>January</i>					
Sat 3 rd	Meelmore Lodge – Ulster Way – Ott Track – Brandy Pad – Pollaphuca – Meelmore Lodge	12km	200m	C	Cowan Higgins
Sun 4 th					
Sat 10 th					
Sun 11 th	Tollymore Long Haul	13km	200m	D	Den Hamill
Sat 17 th	Newry to Carlingford Greenway	19km	Minimal	C	Ivan Baxter
Sun 18 th					

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sat 24 th					
Sun 25 th	Glenariff: High or Low level options	10km	500m/ Minimal	C D	Helen Magill
Sat 31 st	HL. Bloody Bridge CP -Brandy Pad - Commadagh – Slievenaglogh -Meelmore Lodge CP LL. Bloody Bridge CP -Brandy Pad - Meelmore Lodge CP (include Donard)	12km 11km	767m 500m	B C	Norman McElhinny Cowan Higgins
<u>February</u>					
Sun 1 st					
Sat 7 th					
Sun 8 th	Lisburn to Belfast: along the Lagan from Lisburn to Stranmillis. The walk will take in some historic sights along Hilden, Lambeg, Drumbeg and Edenderry,	15km	Minimal	D	Brett Irwin
Sat 14 th	Meelmore Lodge – Hares Gap – Bearnagh – return via Pollaphuca or alternative route			B	Kathryn Minnis
Sun 15 th					
Sat 21 st					

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sun 22 nd	Castlewellan Lake and Forest	16km	270	C	Denis Hamill
Sat 28 th	HL. Sandbank Rd CP – Pigeon – Cock/Slievenamiskin saddle – Hen - Sandbank Rd CP	11km	900m	B	Norman McElhinny
<u>March</u>					
Sun 1 st					
Sat 7 th					
Sun 8 th	Comber to Ards Greenway	5km	Minimal	D	TBC
Sat 14 th	Castlerock and Downhill: Beach stroll to the Barmouth, Downhill Estate via clifftop path, Downhill Forest north, via waterfall & return to Castlerock	14km	Minimal	D	Carol Warke
Sun 15 th					
Sat 21 st					
Sun 22 nd	Antrim Castle and Gardens	10km	Minimal	D	Helen Magill
Sat 28 th	Castle Bog: Leitrim Lodge Car park – Tievedockdarragh - Pierces Castle - Rocky Mountain - Leitrim Lodge Car park Optional / Bad Weather alternative: Avoid Pierces Castle	10km	460m	C	Kathryn Minnis

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
	and Rocky- stay on stone track to return to car park.	7.5km	300m	D	Not Required
Sun 29 th					
<u>April</u>					
Sat 4 th					
Sun 5 th	Cavehill Carpark – McArts Fort – Colinward – Upper Hightown – Cavehill Carpark	11km	200m	C	Helen Mallon
Sat 11 th	Kilbroney CP – Knockshee – Slievefadda – Slieve Martin - Kilbroney CP	12km	450m	B	Jim Martin
Sun 12 th					
Sat 18 th					
Sun 19 th	Helen’s Bay to Lead Mines – Columban Way	12km	Minimal	D	Alison Wise
Sat 25 th	Silent Valley CP –Lough Shanagh – Slievenglough/Meelmore path – Meelmore Lodge CP	14km	350m	C+	Norman McElhinny
Sun 26 th					
<u>May</u>					

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sat 2 nd					
Sun 3 rd	Causeway Challenge Walk	30km	150m	B+	TBC
Sat 9 th	Anglesey Coastal Path – Colin 8 th – 15 th May				
Sun 10 th	Anglesey Coastal Path – Colin 8 th – 15 th May				
Sat 16 th					
Sun 17 th	Bangor to Holywood	TBC	Minimal	D	Alison Halliday
Sat 23 rd					
Sun 24 th	Mourne Wood	7-9km	750m	C	Kathryn Minnis
Sat 30 th	Slieve Croob: Cratlieve Mountain on a gradual incline to the base of Slieve Croob close to the source of the River Lagan. Then use a path to ascend to the summit of Croob.	15km	300m	C+	Jim Martin
Sun 31 st					
<u>June</u>					

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sat 6 th					
Sun 7 th	Murlough Nature Reserve and Beach	15km	Minimal	D	Miriam Miskelly
Sat 13 th	Lamagan, Cove and Beg / Analong Valley	15km	800m	B	Cowan Higgins
Sun 14 th					
Sat 20 th					
Sun 21 st	Dunseverick Castle to Giants Causeway and back.	10km	Minimal	D	Alison Halliday
Sat 27 th	Slieve Gullion Circuit	TBC	TBC	C	Kathryn Minnis
Sun 28 th					
<i>July</i>					
Sat 4 th					
Sun 5 th	Groomsport to Orlock Return: Leisurely walk along the shoreline with views of Scotland and the Copeland Islands	6km	Minimal	D	Alison Wise
Sat 11 th	Meelmore Lodge – Spellach –Meelmore - Meelbeg and return via Pollaphuca (Bearnagh option)	11km	940m	B	Sinead McCartan / Norman McElhinny

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sun 12 th					
Sat 18 th	Newry to Scarva - canal walk	20km	Minimal	D	Ivan Baxter
Sun 19 th	Isle of Man Holiday – Brett 17 th - 21 st July				
Sat 25 th					
Sun 26 th	Quoile River Walk	8km	Minimal	D	Denis Hamill
<u>August</u>					
Sat 1 st	Banagher Glen & Forest Walk: Circular route on paths & forest tracks around the forest, glen & Altnaheglis Reservoir & dam.	14km	365m	C	Carol Warke
Sun 2 nd					
Sat 8 th					
Sun 9 th	Low Level: Killyleagh – Delamont and Gibbs Island	16km	176m	D	Jim Martin
Sat 15 th	HL. Leitrim Lodge CP – Yellow River – Shamlieve – Eagle – Pierces Castle/Tormarock saddle - Leitrim Lodge CP.	14km	570	B	Norman McElhinny

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sun 16 th					
Sat 22 nd					
Sun 23 rd	Pop -up low level walk	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Sat 29 th	Meelmore Lodge – Hares Gap – Brandy Pad – Commedagh and return	12km	450m	C	Cowan Higgins
Sun 30 th					
<u>September</u>					
Sat 5 th					
Sun 6 th	Woodburn and Knockagh Monument	15km	Minimal	D	Alison Halliday
Sat 12 th	Carrick Little, Hares Castle, Annalong Buttress, return Annalong Valley	8km	450m	C+	Jim Martin
Sun 13 th					
Sat 19 th					
Sun 20 th	Low Level: Belvoir Forest Park and Giants Ring	9.5km	Minimal	D	Helen Mallon

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sat 26 th	Sallagh Braes: Cairncastle to Glenarm (meet at Linford carpark,)	9.5km		C+	Helen Magill
Sun 27 th					
<u>October</u>					
Sat 3 rd					
Sun 4 th	Low Level: Strangford Shoreline and Castle Ward	10km	100m	D	Jim Martin
Sat 10 th	HL: Donard car park – Commedagh –Corragh – Slievenaglogh (following the Mourne Wall) to the Hares Gap and return via Brandy Pad.	14km	1012m	B	Gillian Hynes
Sun 11 th					
Sat 17 th					
Sun 18 th	Carnmoney Hill	15km	250m	C-D	Helen Mallon
Sat 24 th	Ness Wood including Oak Wood	10km	80m	D	Carol Warke
Sun 25 th					

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
Sat 31 st					
<u>November</u>					
Sun 1 st	Cregagh Glen	10km	Minimal	D	Helen Mallon
Sat 7 th	Granite Trail: Bryansford Avenue carpark, go through Tipperary Wood to the lower slopes of the mountains, through Donard Park and finish at Newcastle Harbour.	10km	300m	D	Ivan Baxter
Sun 8 th					
Sat 14 th					
Sun 15 th	Ballyhoran and Ardglass Loop	15km	90m	D	Colin McWhirter
Sat 21 st	Spelga CP – Butter – Craigdoo - Spelga – Cock Mountain – Slievenamiskan – Spelga CP	12-km	560m	B	Norman McElhinny
Sun 22 nd					
Sat 28 th					
Sun 29 th	Bunkers Hill – and Loanens	10km	Minimal	D	Den Hamill

Date	Walk	Distance	Total Ascent	Grade	Leaders
<u>December</u>					
Sat 5 th	Carrick Little – Ben Crom Dam – Shelter Stone – Meelmore Lodge. Optional – Weather permitting - Include Binnian	11km 13km	400m 750m	C B	Cowan Higgins Norman McIlheny
Sun 6 th					
Sat 12 th					
Sun 13 th	Crawfordsburn Country Park	10km	Minimal	D	Ivan Baxter
Sat 19 th	Carnadranna - Taylors Rock - Slieve Roosley - Leckanmore - Ballymoney Forest - Rostrever - Kilbroney Park.	16km	450m	C+	Kathryn Minnis
Sun 20 th					
Sat 26 th	Pop-up / Christmas Walk				
Sun 27 th	Pop-up / Christmas Walk				

Additional **“Pop-up” trips** for high mountain walks (weather dependent) may be arranged.

WALK GRADINGS

Grade D = LEISURELY

A rating of D means a gentler pace with only an average level of fitness required. These walks are suitable as starter walks for new members. Depending on the route it will sometimes be possible to join for part of the walk. One can expect gentle slopes, distinct coastal trails, valley tracks and paths with a total walking distance of 8 to 20km (5 to 12 miles). Most grade D walks will have a minimal amount of altitude but the total ascent can be up to 250m (820ft). Grade D walks normally take around 3 to 4 hours and the pace is leisurely with plenty of breaks if needed. Good quality walking shoes are recommended.

A rating of D+ will be given for walks between 21 and 24km (13 to 15 miles) provided that the walk is on easily walked paths and trails.

Grade C = MODERATE

A rating of C means walking on easy to moderate slopes, tracks and paths, which may be rough underfoot at times, with a total ascent of 250 to 550m (820 to 1,804ft). Walking distances for Grade C walks are typically 8 to 20 km (5 to 12 miles) and these walks should take up to 5 hours. Lightweight boots with good tread and strong ankle support are recommended.

A rating of C+ will be given if walk duration is greater (21 to 31km/ 13 to 19 miles) or if the route is not on well-marked paths and trails. Walking boots with a moulded sole, deep tread and good ankle support are strongly recommended for C+ walks.

Walks of between 26 to 31km (16 to 19 miles) where the route is on easily walked paths and trails and there is minimal ascent (up 250m or 820ft) will also be graded C to reflect the extra difficulty level due to the distance. As these walks are graded C due to their distance rather than the terrain there may not always be a need for boots depending on the route. Good quality walking shoes are recommended as a minimum and if in doubt members planning to attend should check the flyer or consult the leader.

Grade B = ENERGETIC

A rating of B normally means walking in the mountains/ high moorland and a total ascent of 550 to 950m (1,804 to 3,117ft). Grade B walks will involve steeper climbs and rougher uneven terrain where there are not always marked paths and trails. Walking distances are normally from 8 to 20 km (5 to 12 miles) and grade B walks should take up to six hours.

A rating of B+ will be given if walk duration is greater (21 to 31km/ 13 to 19 miles) or if there is scrambling/ exposure.

Walks of 32km (20 miles) and over where the route is on easily walked paths and trails and there is some ascent (between 250m and 550m/ 820ft to 1,804ft) will also be graded B to reflect the extra difficulty level due to the distance.

Walking boots with a moulded sole, deep tread and good ankle support are strongly recommended for Grade B walks.

Grade A = CHALLENGING

A rating of A means a number of mountain peaks and a total ascent of 950 to 1,200m (3,117 to 3,940ft). Walking distance is normally between 8 to 14 km (5 to 9 miles) and there are often no paths or trails. Grade A walks normally take between six to seven hours. These walks require a high level of fitness.

A rating of A+ will be given if walk duration is greater (16 to 24km/ 10 to 15 miles) or if there is scrambling/ exposure.

A rating of A++ will be given if distance exceeds 15 miles or if the ascent exceeds 1,200m (3,904ft).

Walks of 32km (20 miles) and over where there is a significant amount of ascent (550m to 950m/ 1,804 to 3,117ft) will also be graded A to reflect the extra difficulty level due to the distance. This will apply regardless of terrain.

Walking boots with a moulded sole, deep tread and good ankle support are strongly recommended.

SAFETY NOTES

All walkers are expected to:

- Take cognisance of the footwear recommendations for the Grade level of the walk;
- Have a waterproof coat, appropriate trousers (preferably wicking and ideally not jeans), adequate warm clothing, hat and gloves (in event of cold conditions) together with enough to eat and drink;
- Have waterproof leggings for walks above leisurely;
- Have a torch and spare batteries, whistle, map and compass for Grade A & B walks (not just the leader).

Leaders are expected to carry a first aid kit (in the case of mountain walks this should be a mountain first aid kit). Any members with allergies should carry first aid items themselves (plasters etc.). If members require any medication during a walk (including painkillers) they should also bring this themselves.

WALK STARTS

Unless otherwise stated on the flyer you must advise the walk leader that you intend to walk, by 8pm on the night before the walk using the telephone number given on the walk flyer. This allows for the leader to cancel the walk if there are no takers or to make contact if weather conditions deteriorate forcing cancellation or change of walk. For Grade A & B walks there is a recommended minimum of 4 people, below which the leader is at liberty to cancel the walk. If a leader is cancelling the walk due to lack of attendance this should be done by 10pm the night before the walk.

Summary – Grading Guide

Ascent (metres)	Distance (miles)	Terrain (mostly)	Grade
0 – 250	Up to 12	Paths/ tracks	D
0 – 250	13 – 15	Paths/ tracks	D+
0 – 250	16 – 19	Paths/ tracks	C
250 – 550	Up to 12	Paths/ tracks	C
250 – 550	13 – 19	Paths/ tracks	C+
0 – 550	20 +	Paths/ tracks	B
0 – 550	Up to 12	Off-track	C+
550 – 950	Up to 12	Off-track	B
550 – 950	Up to 12	Difficult	B+
550 – 950	13 – 19	Any	B+
550 – 950	20 +	Any	A+
950 – 1200	Up to 9	Off-track	A
950 – 1200	10 – 15	Off-track	A+
950 – 1200	Up to 15	Difficult	A+
Over 950	16+	Any	A++
Over 1200	Any	Any	A++