

Pushchair Walks in Brittany

There can be few better places to introduce children to walking in the great outdoors than Brittany; a land of fairies, hoards of undiscovered hidden treasure and mischievous pixies at every turn. With just a little forethought and preparation it is entirely possible to enjoy walking *en famille*. Admittedly, for seasoned walkers various adjustments are inevitable as children cannot walk too fast too far or too high but in the increasingly inactive world that is modern day childhood, the benefits far outweigh these minor considerations.



Up until the age of three, children are normally carried or pushed by their parents. Babies can start off in frontal baby sling and once able to sit confidently, may transfer to a baby backpack. For extra adult comfort, look out for models with padded shoulder straps and waist belt whilst for baby the addition of sun and rain guards is essential. Remember to protect little ones with plenty of high factor sunscreen and to shelter them from the elements.

Although children may appear more energetic between the ages of two and three, they will still be unable to cope with lengthy walks. During this awkward phase when they either become too heavy to carry or begin to wriggle and protest unbearably the best solution is to invest in a sturdy, all terrain pushchair. These have three wheels and pneumatic tyres and have become much more affordable in recent years.

Between the ages of four and seven, it is said that children can walk approximately one kilometre for every year of their age. However do bear in mind that the pace must be much slower than that of an adult walk and for a really winning strategy try to build in lots of interesting diversions such as waterfalls, rockpools and rock formations along the way. Encourage children to look out for wildlife and interesting shells, rocks and leaves. Little legs tire quickly so allow for plenty of rest and refreshment breaks; tiny cubes of cheese, vegetable sticks, raisins and fruit are good, portable choices.



So where to walk? In Finistère head towards Mougou Bihan and the wooden walkways of the Korrigan Trail. Take a picnic and lunch near a remarkable alley-grave complete with ancient carvings. Once on the trail, children can access the information boards along the route and learn about the carnivorous *Drosera* plant and the star-shaped moss sponges which are able to absorb up to thirty times their weight in water.

Also in Finistère, a 7km level walk around the Lac du Drennec is just enough to stimulate the appetite and encourage children with the promise of delicious fare at the attractive lakeside crêperie.



South of Vannes in Morbihan there are many pleasant seaside walks around the oyster beds and the spectacular megaliths at Erdeven and Carnac present wonderful opportunities for accessible walks with lots of child appeal. Local Breton tradition claims that the reason the stones at Carnac stand in such perfectly straight lines is that they are a Roman legion turned to stone by Merlin!



For easy walking options throughout Brittany look for paths in parks and along rivers or canals such as sections of the Nantes-Brest canal. The Sentier des Douaniers around Perros Guirec in the beautiful Côtes d'Armor provides stunning coastal scenery. Further inland explore the many forests steeped in legend such as Brocéliande with its reputation in the medieval imagination as a place of magic and mystery involving King Arthur, Lancelot and Merlin. The Forest at Fougères in Ille-et-Vilaine has an attractive lake with sandy beach and children's play area. In most forests you'll need an all terrain pushchair after spells of wet weather.

My hope is that you're now suitably inspired to begin enjoying a future of walking with your young family. To paraphrase a famous philosopher: "The journey itself is much more important than the destination. The doing is more important than the outcome." Take heart!

© Karen Guttridge 2008. Karen is a mum of three and director of Holiday Tots.
With warm thanks to Wendy Mewes for all her help and advice in my endeavours!

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"I'd love to hear about your family walking experiences - do contact me at Karen@holidaytots.co.uk"