

Walking



What's the best form of transport of all but probably the one we first forget when it comes to getting from A to B? Walking – it's the greenest, not to mention cheapest, method of travel.

It's something most of us could fit more of into our lifestyles. Driving a car on unnecessary journeys is bad for the environment but something that nearly half of us have owned up to doing. According to the Energy Saving Trust, 48% of people in the UK use their car for journeys they could have completed in a more sustainable way at least once a week. Whilst public transport is better, buses, trains and trams all emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. So walking comes out on top when it comes to getting to the shops, work, school – and so on.

Walking – In Decline?

But recent evidence suggests that walking is in decline. One of the major reasons for this is due to the rise in car ownership over the past 30 years - from 30% of households in 1961 to 70% in 1998. Total distance walked per person per year fell from 244 miles to 189 miles between 1986 and 2001, according to the Department for Transport's national travel survey in 2003. People are travelling more miles, but relying on different methods of transport.

The Environmental Benefits

However the environmental benefits of walking provide a compelling argument for doing more of it. The only fuel you need to walk is food and drink. Cars, on the other hand, are expensive and inefficient in their fuel consumption. You can reduce your carbon footprint massively by walking shorter journeys instead of driving. You'll also save on petrol costs.

Get Walking

Keep it easy by slowly building up the amount you walk each day, replacing those short car journeys with walking instead. Always ensure that you know the way, and always stay safe, particularly if walking alone or at night. If in doubt, always take an alternative method of transport if you feel your safety could be at risk.

One way of keeping you on track is planning your journey in advance. Keep a handy A-Z or local map to ensure that you don't lose your way. Walkit.com is a website dedicated to helping you find the best walking route for a journey. It plots you a step-by-step route planner with a map in the same way as a car route planner works, but with a pedestrian in mind. It's a great way of plotting walking journeys you may be used to completing by car.

The Health Benefits

It might be obvious, but walking also has big benefits to your health as well as the environment. It's a very good form of exercise that anyone can and should try and do more of. Because it's only gentle, it's not too strenuous even for those who cannot go too far. According to the Ramblers' Association, walking:

- Reduces the risk of heart disease and strokes
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces cholesterol
- Reduces body fat
- Enhances mental well being
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Helps control body weight

