



## All Ages



### When **including children & families** in pilgrimage...

**Preparation is key** - Pack a rucksack. You don't need any special equipment, but prepare for a few eventualities.

**Plan together** - Children will be excited about a walk if they've had some input in deciding where to go/ what to take/ what to wear etc. Your aim is for them really to enjoy it.

**Think about the distance** - Make the walk doable. For younger children they need to be able to achieve it. For older children, you want them to enjoy it and be up for going again.

**Schedule realistically** - In the spirit of pilgrimage, and not to be nagging children to hurry up the whole way round, mentally schedule in an extra 20 minutes. It really can make all the difference to having a nice time.

**Look up** - What can you see? Children are naturally curious – notice what they see, ask them what they think, and share your questions and knowledge as you notice things too.

**Connect** - Walking together is a brilliant time for conversation. Ask your children questions and take the time to listen properly to their answers.

**Respect their solitude** - Children need time to think and wonder, they also need solitude and silence. If it's safe to do so, allow them time to wander and wonder – this is an essential part of their healthy development.

**Distraction** - At some point, a child may decide they don't want to walk any further. Distraction is your counter-move:

- Strike up a fun conversation about something totally unrelated to the walk
- Sing/chant songs, rhymes or poems, or make up silly songs and rhymes of your own
- Break up the journey – show them the journey in small steps (“we just have to get as far as that tree on the corner”)
- Stop for a snack. Children get hungry (don't we all!) Sometimes we just need to pause and refuel.

**Phones** - Model the behaviour you want to see. If you don't want children to be on their phone, don't be on yours. If you have children with you who will have phones in their hands, then turn them into a positive, and set a photo challenge. As a group you could each try to capture a picture on your walk that reflects a word or idea (i.e. 'colour', 'peace', 'dusk' etc.).

**Enjoy!** - Walking with children is likely to contain some of the special moments they will remember for the rest of their lives. Don't take yourself too seriously – just enjoy this time you have in the outdoors. Have your eyes opened by the things they see and say.

**Be thankful** - When you get home, say thank you to your children for a lovely walk, and verbalise one or two things you especially enjoyed. You'll find this simple act of gratitude toward one another is very powerful.

