

# Sisters woman hikes UK National Trail

By Carol Statton  
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It was primarily a solitary journey across England, on foot, spanning 20 days and 308 miles.

Distant views were often shrouded in clouds, creating a sense of tunnel vision and isolation. Terrain included moors and bogs, seemingly never-ending expanses of treeless hills, intense altitude climbs and pastures filled with livestock.

Each day would conclude at a B&B in a quaint village where there might or might not be resources from a store or restaurant. For Diana Durbin Field, completing the UK National Trail, called the “Pennine Way,” was a challenging experience that satisfied her love of walking and filled her soul at the deepest level.

The adventure required physical ability, determination and a willingness to overcome the elements. For Diana, there were many moments when the ground underfoot was so wet that the only way forward was to leapfrog across large stones or search for different ways around a bog. The route was often unmarked, with

limited visibility at times, and the possibility of getting lost seemed quite likely.

“With the combination of weather and getting off track, you could conceivably end up going over a cliff,” Field said.

GPS was helpful, when available, to navigate uncharted territory. A hail-storm came down at the most inopportune time, when there was no tree or building in sight, and the only protection was to turn her back to the storm and stand in place.

Not everyone could or would want to experience these challenging factors, but for Field, the potential was understood because of a previous coast-to-coast trek across England two years prior. Diana knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the walk would contain far more positives than negatives and that time spent within the beauty and intensity of this place would be a long-lasting and transformational gift.

When you have only yourself to depend on, and there is often no cell service to fall back on, you must plan well and be prepared for anything. Field kept her pack as simple as possible, not wanting to be too weighed down, so meals

were more like snacks. Maps were critical, especially when GPS wasn’t accessible, and there were still moments of getting off track. The route would often lead through miles and miles of rolling hills and across various farmlands where a distant gate would be the only thing to confirm being at the correct location. Identifiers are important when traveling through natural settings, away from roads and civilization. And, as Field learned, there are times to be wary of livestock such as steers who may not appreciate your presence in their field.

There is a code that those walking the countryside are asked to honor, ensuring a peaceful quality of life for local residents and continuing opportunities for future travelers: Be considerate and quiet; honor private property while being allowed to access it; leave no trace; keep water clean; control pets; use gates; protect other living entities and vegetation and guard against risk of fire.

These are but a few of the agreements understood by those passing through. All were common-sense requests that Field could easily follow without thought because they



PHOTO PROVIDED

Diana Durbin Field on the “Pennine Way” in Great Britain.

mirrored the way of life back home.

The Pennine Way is a walk through history: Diana’s footsteps covered the same land where Roman soldiers once traversed and the Bronte family created their literary treasures. Nature, just as it was centuries ago, remains compelling and impressive every step of the way. Some of the challenges found throughout

the ages remain constant as well. History and great literary works have told the story in countless ways: Weather and challenging terrain can be a formidable opponent requiring those who push forward to summon deep internal strength and fortitude not only to complete their journey but to remain safe.

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