

WanderWomen dark walks begin on Wednesday

Dark walks for women begin on Wednesday and will continue all the way through the winter, aiming to empower women, switch on their senses and encourage spending time outside no matter what the weather.

Anna Neubert-Wood, who leads the walks, says that the outdoor experience will offer a “unique mix of mindfulness and adventure”. She tries to help women with wellbeing, and uses everything she knows to pass on her knowledge to others, preferring not to be called a teacher but a facilitator.

On Wednesday 6 October the first of a series of walks – the City Lights Night Walk – will take place in Holyrood Park. It is an opportunity for a change of scene and some self care along with other like-minded women. You are reminded to bring your own mug and water although snacks and drinks are provided along with a seat mat. The group will be small but there are still some places left for Wednesday at £25 per person.



Anna Neubert-Wood PHOTO Amanda Farnese Heath
The walking pace will be gentle and will allow some time for meditation or silent reflection and a WhatsApp group will be

created for the participants so that meeting and getting home is made easier and it is also used for sharing photos.

Anna explained where it began. She said: "I suppose my motivation comes from growing up in East Germany where going into nature was an escape from propaganda and the political system. My mum and dad would take my brother and me into nature to a hut in the woods. That was freedom and happiness.

"I am also into sea swimming. In the GDR there was a culture of nudist bathing which I think was also a move against the system, finding freedom in the locked down country that we lived in. Getting naked and getting into the water was the ultimate freedom.

"I live in Portobello, where I mainly swim. I also go to East Lothian, and I enjoy fresh water swimming in rivers and reservoirs."

Anna was working 9-5 when she started up WanderWomen, realising that humans are not made to work at desks in heated offices for eight hours a day. She explained that she flexi schooled her two boys, which meant that on Mondays she would be outside playing with them.

They would help the rangers at Holyrood count orchids and bumble bees, or go to the beach where they would make fires or to the country where they climbed trees. Anna said: "My boys played and learned more outdoors without the school structure on that one day of the week.

"But when my older boy started secondary school they both went back into full time schooling and so I decided to keep on sharing this love of the outdoors with other people and that is when WanderWomen was born.

"To start off with it was meant to be at weekends to complement my full time job, but over social media many people from all over the world contacted me. It was mind-blowing. I

had visitors from America and Europe. I put on extra events last summer after the first lockdown – which was just in my second year.

“I think it is important that people look after themselves more – they need to take time out. Working from home you can get caught up in your own little bubble – leading to too much time spent working or doing housework. They need to take time out for a lunch break or a bit of walking outdoors.”

At the beginning of the walk Anna prefers to have everyone walk in silence for the first fifteen minutes or so.

She said: “It is all about slowing down so the walk begins with silent walking. There is no nervous small talk. I give everyone a meditation card with prompts, and they turn their phones off. People relax and after about 15 to 20 minutes we check in and I ask about their reasons for joining the walk – some love the silence while others don’t of course.”

There are all sorts of women who go with Anna on the walks from young students to stay at home mums, teachers and professional women, all searching for something personal from the experience.

Anna explained: “People open up – it is magic and I think it is caused by being outdoors. Phones are all switched off and everyone is in a safe, guided space. It can often allow people to show their vulnerability brought out by being outside rather than in an office where the atmosphere can perhaps be quite combative.”

“We keep on walking after a short break and people do then begin to chat to each other if they wish. Our shortest walk is 90 minutes long and the longest is 24 hours with an overnight camp during the summer. I lead some meditation or help people do some breathing exercises which allow people to reflect and connect with nature.

“On the Dark Walks – people are so worried about the simplest things – for instance whether they are allowed to make fire or not. It is all about owning this accessible adventure right on your doorstep. Darkness is a beautiful thing to experience particularly in my own comfort places like Holyrood which I know very well.”

[WanderWomen](#) also offers other events such as Forest Bathing, or Mama and Baby Wanders all aimed at helping women to de-stress.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/city-lights-night-walk-tickets-165740282647?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

