

What is Volksmarching?

A volksmarch is a non-competitive 3.1 mile (5 km) or 6.2 mile (10 km) walk. It's not a pledge walk, it's not a race, but it is a fun activity you do with a club, with your family, with your pet, or all by yourself. Volksmarching got its name from its origins in Europe. Today there are thousands of volkssport clubs around the world, allied with the International Volkssport Federation, the IVV.

What do local volkssport clubs do?

There are hundreds of volkssport clubs throughout the USA, and many thousands around the world. Local clubs host the walking events. The club members select a trail for safety, scenic interest, historic areas, natural beauty and walkability. They then invite everyone to come and enjoy it on a weekend or a weekday evening.

What kind of trails?

The trails are marked or maps provided. Trails may be in cities, towns, parks, forests, rural areas, anywhere there is a pleasant or interesting place to walk.

Do I have to join a club?

Clubs welcome new members, but you don't have to join a club to enjoy the volksmarch events. All events are open to the public. Click the link called *Locate Walking Clubs*, then click on the *state* you are interested in.

What does this cost?

There is a \$3 fee charged per participant. To keep track of how you are achieving your fitness goals, join our [Individual Achievement Award Program](#). Distance and Event record books are available for \$6 each at most events. If you register for the event award or pay the credit fee (\$3.00 or less), at the finish the event and distance you walked are entered in the record books. After milestones such as 10 events, 30 events, 50 events, 500 km, 1000 km, etc. you redeem the record book for a *Certificate of Achievement*, a patch and a pin, and your accomplishment is printed in *The American Wanderer (TAW)*, our national bi-monthly publication.

Is there a New Walker Program packet to get me started right?

But of course! And it's a great deal. You can get one at an event or from a local club for \$5.00 if available. Call ahead first and make sure they have one. You may also order from AVA Headquarters for \$6.50 per packet (includes \$1.50 shipping and handling) usually taking 2 - 3 weeks for delivery. Fax or mail the order form found in the link above.

Packet includes:

First event book: good for your first 10 events until you earn your first Achievement Award

First distance book: good for your first 500km

Three coupons for free credit at events: so you can go to three events for free and still get credit.

A coupon for a free issue of *The American Wanderer (TAW)* newspaper

Explanations about volkssporting in a booklet

10% off first AVA merchandise order (most items)

Coupon for a free National Physical Fitness and Sports Month patch. Submit one per person.

How long do you walk?

Most people take 2 hours to stroll our 10km (6.2 mile) trails. Many events now have a 5km (3.2 mile) distance trail that is perfect for beginners and should take only an hour to complete at an easy pace. Some like to run or jog, others enjoy taking a leisurely pace and stopping to sightsee, picnic, or even shop! You go at your own pace, and you are always a winner at the end.

What do the trail route/ratings mean?

The following trail rating system is used to indicate the degree of difficulty of a trail for the AVA sanctioned walk.

Part 1 – INCLINE/ELEVATION		Part 2 - TERRAIN	
1	Very small hills or very little stair climbing. Probably suitable for strollers and wheelchairs. Cumulative elevation gain from Starting Point: up to 200 feet.	A	Almost entirely on pavement.
2	Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Probably suitable for strollers. May not be suitable for wheelchairs. Cumulative elevation gain from Starting Point: 200 - 1000 feet.	B	A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
3	Some significant hill or stair climbing. Not suitable for strollers or wheelchairs. Cumulative elevation gain from Starting Point: 1000 - 2000 feet.	C	A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky/rooted paths or soft sand.)
4	Lots of significant hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain from Starting Point: 2000 - 3500 feet.	D	A significant part of the route is on very difficult terrain.
5	Many steep hills. Cumulative elevation gain from Starting Point: more than - 3500 feet.	E	The majority of the route is on very difficult terrain.

Examples

When determining elevation gain, if a route goes up for 50 feet and down for 50 feet and back up for another 75 feet, the cumulative gain would be 125 feet.

A route that is mostly on flat pavement would be rated 1A.

A beach walk would be rated 1C.

A route with moderate hills on well groomed trails would be rated 2B.

Precautions: (Please be aware that weather conditions will cause a variance in the trail rating. Inclement weather or an unexpected hot or cold day can increase the degree of difficulty of a trail, so each participant should adjust their pace accordingly). It is advisable to carry water to all walking events. It is possible to become dehydrated in cold weather as well as in hot weather. It is always the goal in the AVA to provide the participant with a safe and enjoyable event. You alone know your own limits.

Where do I find out more?

To find a volkssport club or an event near you (or at your destination if you are planning a vacation), visit *Locate Walking Clubs* link or *Locate Walking Events* link found on the AVA website, www.ava.org. When you find an event you are interested in, click on the event for more details.

Is there a national membership?

To receive *The American Wanderer (TAW)* newspaper, plus rental car discounts and special member offers, join as an Associate member, our national individual associate membership program. This does not include a complimentary New Walker Packet. Visit ava.org, Membership

What is a Year-Round Event?

A Year-Round/Seasonal Event is a self-guided walking event available most days of the year. The local club selects a trail, draws maps and writes detailed walking instructions, and sets up a permanent starting point. You arrive during the stated open hours, register, take a map, and enjoy the trail. These events include a series of state parks in several states, great tourist attractions and national parks and good daily exercise routes in hundreds of communities. Some are scenic, some are historical, some are just for exercise. Call the club to find out which events suit your interests.

Starting points: The starting points are often hospitals, hotels, or convenience stores. At the start point is a walk box. The walk box takes many forms - it may be a bureau or kiosk, or it may be a file box or tool box. You may have to ask the proprietor to point it out or get it out. The proprietors are often not club members, so please be patient with these people who are volunteering to help the club.

The Start Procedure: Inside the walk box is a registration log. Please register - we need to know who is participating in our event. Sign the log and take a start card and trail map.

Enjoying the walk: Walk at your own pace, enjoy the local area for as long as you desire (daytime hours only!). If you have any difficulty with the directions provided, be sure to write a note to the host club and put it in the walk box when you return.

Finishing: At the end, turn in your start card. If you walk for IVV Credit, stamp your books. If you do not have a book, you may use an *Insert Card* until you get one. Please do not cut or paste the cards. If you registered for the award, read the instructions in the walk box on how to get your book stamped - the stamp may be in the walk box, may be with the proprietor, or may be mailed, depending on the club.

Where do I find these Year-Round Events?

Year-Round Event book, *Starting Point* has details on all events in the USA. The online *Locate Walking Events* link lists minimum details, with links to more information provided by the clubs. For a full brochure about a trail, either follow the link, call or email the club. The annual *Starting Point* book is your best bet for getting information on all of the routes each year in a handy travel spiral book.

VOLKSSPORTING TERMS DEFINED

Volkssport - a noun or verb. The noun meaning a group of "people's" sports that include walking, swimming, skiing, snow shoeing, and biking (and occasionally roller-skating). The verb means to participate in those sports - ex. volkssport Washington state.

Volkssporting - a noun or verb. Same definition as above.

Volkssporter - A person who participates in Volkssporting events.

Volksmarch - a walking event. Also termed volkswalk. In Germany, these events were originally termed Volkswanderung. Reportedly this was difficult for American military stationed in Germany to understand and so they started using the term Volksmarch. It evolved into Volksmarch in the United States. Those feeling that the term was too foreign, coined the word - Volkswalk.

[IVV - Internationaler Volkssport Verband](#) - This is the international parent organization which is headquartered in Germany. Many nations have chapters. Our AVA is one of the chapters of these "International Popular Sports Clubs." The AVA pays dues to the IVV, we have adopted their awards program, we have a vote as a member nation, etc. Volkssporters who travel to other countries will notice that our Distance and Event books are the same size and color, the award patch, pin and certificates are the same, etc.

[AVA - American Volkssport Association](#) - This is our national organization. Fees are paid to keep our national organization going in support of the member clubs. The AVA sanctions all nation-wide programs, provides event insurance, and processes our awards for us. Our officers are all volunteers.

[IVV Awards Program](#) - just like in Europe, you can record the number of events you participate in and the number of kilometers you walk, ski or bike in record books. These books, available at most organized events for \$5.00 each are the way you become involved in our international awards program and give yourself an incentive to participate in events. When you begin, you will want both the green book (event record) and blue book (distance record). The directions for the program are on the books. Normally when first starting out, we recommend you purchase a [New Walker Packet](#). As you complete certain milestones, the first distance one is 500 km and the first event one is 10 events, you send them in to the national office in Texas. Normally it will take about two to three weeks for processing. By return mail, you will receive a patch, pin and certificate indicating the award that you have earned. You will also receive an "IVV Record of Achievement" passbook when you send in your first book for processing. It is used to record the event and distance milestones you have accomplished. Once you purchase a book there is no additional charge to you for the patch, pin and certificate upon completion. Each next level book you purchase from a club will be \$5.00, or if ordering from AVA Headquarters direct cost will be \$6.50 (includes \$1.50 shipping and handling). See the AVA Record Book Guide for more details.

[Credit](#) - This is the entry of a validation imprint (IVV Certification Stamp) into the event and distance record books you keep. It shows your progress toward reaching the various levels of event and distance awards. Everyone gets excited as a book is nearly filled up! The validation imprint shows the event sanction number and can only be given on the day of the event. IVV rules allow it only to be stamped in the official record books. If you forget to bring your record books to an event, you have the choice of buying a new book as you eventually will need one! Or if an *Insert Card* is available, you may use one, however, please do not cut or paste into the official record books.

[Credit Only](#) - When you register for an event, either in advance by mail (pre-registration), or in person at the registration table, you can ask for a credit only, or Award. Credit only means that you want the validation imprint (IVV Certification Stamp) only, no award. If an award is offered at the event, and you register and pay for the award, the credit is included in the price. For example, an event may offer the following schedule of fees:

A Award (includes credit) = \$6.00

B Award (includes credit) = \$4.00

Credit Only = \$3.00

[Ks - Kilometers](#) (1 km = .6 mile). Many people refer to walking distance as "getting in their K's." A standard 10km event or a minor 5km may be offered. Some events may be longer.

[A Medal or A Award](#) - This term was started in Germany. Most of the awards were originally medallions. The A medal is the medal that is the award for the current event. Awards must have the initials AVA/IVV and year affixed permanently to it.

B Medal or B Award - This is last year's or previous year's awards. Usually you can earn these awards at a reduced price. The key to remember is that you must earn these awards even though they are from prior events. Oddly enough, sometimes a patch or cup is referred to as the "B-medal." This is a remnant from the German terminology.

Start/finish - This is where the registration and finish area of the volkssporting event is housed. When you arrive for an event, look for the "start" or "start/finish". This is where you register for the volkssporting event. Quite often refreshments are sold, merchandise is available and information on upcoming events is spread out on tables. It's a great place for socializing!

Pre-registration table - This table is where you go if you sent in your registration fees early. Some flyers indicate that you can register by mail. After picking up your "start-card," you go to the next step.

Registration table - This is the table at which you pay your credit only or award fees, pick up a "start card," put your name and address on the card and then move to the next step.

Start number or Start table - This is where the club numbers your card. It helps them keep track of the number of volkssporters out on the trail. It is important for you to stop at this table to help the club with their record-keeping and often it is the place where maps and directions are given out. Not all events have a start table, but it is wise to ask if there is one.

Checkpoint - These are strategically placed points along the route where you must pause to have your *start card* stamped, punched or sometimes, you need to write something on it. This is proof that you have passed along the route. During organized events, water and, often, sweets are offered at the checkpoint. Ideally, a restroom is available. Recent events have had checkpoints located in coffee shops, fast-food restaurants, etc. and so the checkpoint can be a real rest stop! Food is most often available at the Start/Finish point.

Finish - This is the table where you go when you have completed the route. If you have IVV Record of Achievement Books (which you should) you will present your *start card*, and if you have paid for credit only or for the Award, you will get your book(s) stamped. You can only earn the stamp on the day of the event, so if you forget your books, don't expect to come to the next event and get them stamped! If there is an award, and if you have paid the fee, you will be given your award at the finish table. If the awards have not yet arrived, or the club has run out of awards, they will ask you to sign a list with your name and address so that they can mail your award to you.

Information table - This is where you should go after you finish the event. Brochures from upcoming events, trip ads and specialty ads are put here for you to browse and take home.

TAW - The American Wanderer - This is our national bi-monthly volkssporting publication. It is sometimes referred to as the "TAW." It contains event listings nation-wide, articles and pictures. You can subscribe by becoming a Volkssports Associate member. This is a program which supports our national organization and gives you the TAW and some member discounts.

Regional Director - In the U.S., groups of states are assigned an elected volunteer Regional Director who serves as a liaison with the AVA and the clubs in his/her region and assists in guiding the AVA as a member of the Executive Council.

State and Country Bars - Volkssporters like to collect and record everything. The AVA and IVV countries sell small metal bars (about 1 inch) to sell to those who have participated in volkssporting events in other states and countries. They have two holes drilled at the top and bottom to allow for linking them into an impressive chain of bars. To start your collection, buy a "header pin" and your own state. Link them together (needle-nosed pliers help) and start your travels! Shop the AVA store on the website (ava.org).

50 Staters - These are people who are in the process of or have completed volkssporting events in all 50 U.S. States. When you complete this feat, it is cause for celebrating! Be sure and tell your club about it. The AVA has a Walking the United States book (50 States/51 Capitals) to keep track of your accomplishments and upon completion you can get a certificate, a distinctive T-shirt, and other goodies.

Convention - The AVA holds a biennial convention every two years, on an odd year. Volkssporters will gather from near and far for a week of walks, education, socials and meetings. These conventions are educational and a tremendous amount of fun.



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