



THE AMERICAN WANDERER
TAW
The Walking Magazine

Texas Trail Roundup IML event in San Antonio February 20-22, 2026 was a great success, and everyone talked about the great walks and fun socials. 585 walked over the three days... over 260 individuals participated. Fri. Feb 20 was the Parade of Flags, Opening Ceremony and walks in Fredericksburg, TX, where the first volkswalk took place in 1976. Sat Feb 21 was the IML 42K and 21K events, along with 10K and 6K through San Antonio. 59 people completed the 42K marathon. Sun Feb 22 included IML walks in San Antonio plus the Closing Ceremony at Beethoven Mannerchor. The Susan Medlin Golden Boot award (veteran/military group with the most people finishing the 42K walk) was presented to CARMIL for the second year in a row (short for Caribische Militairen (Caribbean Military)). A special thank you to the TTR committee, AVA staff, and all the volunteers who made the event the success it was. Dates are already set for the next TTR: February 19-21, 2027 in San Antonio.

[See the TV interview with Carl Cordes here](#)



Above: Brenda Harris, left, and Davey Egan lead the America's Walking Club parade with a banner on Friday, Feb. 20 at Market Plaza. Suki Blay, RVN war correspondent and Carl Cordes, AVA board member, organizers of the event walked behind the banner followed by walkers holding flags from 26 different nations that participate in walking club globally. - Standard-Break Post/Christine Gonzalez

Left: Judge Jim Hepper (left) to Mayor Jovly Hoover welcome over 100 Volkswalking participants in Fredericksburg, the home of the first volkswalking club to meet in the United States - Volkswalking Fredericksburg (VWF) is Hepper remembered the first internationally sanctioned walk in the United States was held in Fredericksburg in June 1976, as part of the nation's Bicentennial Celebration. It was founded by his late friend, Karen Knapp, known as the Mother of American Volkswalking. The biennial event that walking trails in Fredericksburg and San Antonio.

Fun, Fitness, Friendship INSIDE THIS ISSUE



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ISSUE

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MEMBERS PROFILE

BY CLAY BAULCH

When Susan Fine asked me to write about my experience with the AVA, I immediately flashed to what I wanted to highlight – the friendships on the trail. There are many and I will leave many out (sorry), but here goes.

I attended my first volksmarch (except that one in 1980 in Fredericksburg) in 1990 at Bastrop State Park in Texas. Lauren Corder and I took our Explorers out for a 20 km shakedown in preparation for hiking at Philmont Scout Ranch. Current TVA President Lyn Ward talked my ears off about the AVA program – he was a true hard-sell. We politely declined to buy books. Twenty kilometers later, we reconsidered and bought everyone books. The snowball had started rolling.



IN!
New

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AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB

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ava.org

I had 10 events within a month and had roped my best friend Brian Fisher into joining me. We learned the dangers of sugar-free hard candies at Lake Medina and got massively lost on bicycles throughout Gillespie County events. Along the way, we crashed a swim party in Rapid City, SD, walked back and forth across Orange Beach, AL, got turned away from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and sweated the Texas 10 in San Antonio's August. Brian was with me most of the time as we attacked all of Texas' YRE/SYRE events in 2012 when we were state officers. We also rang in many, many New Years on Fredericksburg's midnight walk. We probably did over 1000 events together, and I miss walking with him today.

When the "old" people in Kerrville refused to let us join their club, Brian and I formed our own. The first walk we hosted was in 37° sleet in Hondo, TX, and we drew 375 walkers for Christmas in God's Country. We put on over 100 walk and bike events over the years. Heinz Johnson (AVA #001) put up with our shenanigans when I scheduled a snowshoe event in Eagle Pass, TX (no snow in 17 years) and supported our skate event and four boating events we had at a scout camp. His support was invaluable. He and David Toth would take over our start tables and fuss at each other the whole time while my son Michael Guerrero and I would watch the trails – fun memories.

Today I am the president of the Olympic Peninsula Explorers in Washington, and they put up with my eccentricities and crazy event ideas (so far). My wife Kathryn has walked all over the continent with me, including a monthlong journey on the Pembrokeshire Coast Trail in Wales. We meet friends everywhere, like in Las Cruces, NM last year. Bonnie Avenrude used our home as a base for our wonderful peninsula walks a couple years ago. I wonder if Susan Fine remembers the time I rescued her from a demonstrative walker at a checkpoint at Mineral Wells State Park – she and Ken have also used our home for a base. I also shook Michael Marke's hand for designing fantastic routes at the Olympiad – he always helped our club. So many friends . . .

Enjoy the 50th anniversary AVA. It has brought me immeasurable joy and a treasure-trove of memories – memories that are still growing. Looks like it is time to get back snowshoeing on Hurricane Ridge . . .

**HOT
DEAL**

AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

I would like to thank everyone that joined us in Boulder City NV for the Chairman's Weekend 50th Anniversary event in January. Walkers from 20 states enjoyed three days walking through history and exploring the town the Dam built. The February Texas Trail Roundup in San Antonio and our special Fredricksburg TX walk had not happened yet when I wrote this. But I know it will have been an outstanding 50th Anniversary signature event walking where our sport began in the USA.

It is critical that we increase participation to sustain AVA and the member clubs. That has proven more difficult for some than others. Perhaps you are member of a small club that can not or will not host traditional events to attract new walkers and members. Or maybe you are an AVA member with no club. Please consider joining the [AVA Sustained Giving Program](#). Your one time or recurring donation helps fill the participation gap. Give as little as \$10 a month. Or become an AVA Pioneer by donating \$50 in recognition of our 50th Anniversary. Clubs, regardless of size, can have a massive effect by encouraging their members become regular donors.

The mission of AVA National Office, AVA Board of Directors, State Associations, Clubs, and all AVA members is to promote and organize noncompetitive physical fitness activities that encourage lifelong fun, fitness and friendship for all ages and abilities. It is OUR mission. And we all have a role to play in its success. Whether it is your particular skill, serving at any level from Club to National, volunteering, outreach, participation, recruitment, or financial support, no contribution to the mission is too small. I appreciate everything you do to support the mission and growth of AVA.



CARL CORDES, AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN



AVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Find a Director in your area.

FIFTY YEARS OF WALKING: CELEBRATING A COMMUNITY BUILT ON FUN, FITNESS, AND FRIENDSHIP

As this walking organization marks its 50th anniversary, it celebrates not only a milestone in time but the people who have shaped its journey. For five decades, members, volunteers, and supporters have carried the organization forward, step by step, with dedication, enthusiasm, and a shared love of walking.

From mapping routes and organizing events to welcoming newcomers and managing early morning setups, these individuals have transformed ordinary walks into meaningful experiences. Their efforts have built a community grounded in Fun, Fitness, and Friendship — a community that has helped neighbors connect, encouraged families to explore their cities, and introduced countless people to the joy of walking.

Leadership has also played a vital role in sustaining this mission. Board Chair Carl Cordes and all former Chairs have provided steady guidance and vision. Current and past Board Members have ensured the organization remains strong and forward looking. Deputy Directors, Club Officers, Committee Members, Club Members, and Volunteers have contributed countless hours behind the scenes, planning, coordinating, and supporting every detail that keeps programs running smoothly.

Supporters — including partners, sponsors, community leaders, and longtime members — have further strengthened the organization through their encouragement and belief in our mission. Their contributions have helped the walking movement grow, thrive, and reach new communities.

This anniversary year will include seventeen major celebrations. Two events that have already taken place are the Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers 50th Anniversary event in Boulder City, Nevada, and the Texas Trail Round Up (TTR) in San Antonio, Texas. Special thanks to everyone who joined us in celebrating these milestones. Be sure to join us at the next 50th Anniversary event in Williamsburg, VA, for the Atlantic Regional Conference.

Fifty years is an extraordinary milestone, made possible by the passion, time, and generosity of everyone who has contributed along the way. The American Volkssport Association extends its deepest appreciation to all clubs and members whose dedication has shaped this organization into what it is today. For information on all seventeen 50th Anniversary events visit www.ava.org.

PACK YOUR BAGS, WE ARE HEADED TO SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI IN 2027!

It is official: the AVA Board of Directors has approved the Convention Committee's recommendation to host the 2027 Biennial Convention in Springfield, Missouri, during the week of June 20–July 2, 2027. A post convention walk in Rogers, Arkansas, is also being considered on July 3, 2027, for those interested in extending their celebration into the Fourth of July weekend. Details on all convention walks and activities will be shared in the monthly Checkpoint and upcoming issues of TAW.

PRESIDENT'S UPDATES



HENRY ROSALES, PRESIDENT AND CEO

CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF WALKING AT CRAZY HORSE JUNE 6, 2026

BY SUSAN FINE

The Crazy Horse Volksmarch in the Black Hills of South Dakota is the most popular organized hike in the U.S., with thousands of families and individuals participating each year. This year on June 6th, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of this spectacular hike up the mountain to the arm of Crazy Horse, along with celebrating the 50th anniversary of AVA: America's Walking Club, and the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

Sponsored by the Black Hills Volkssport Association and [Crazy Horse Memorial®](#), the hike is a woodlands walk to the world's largest mountain carving in progress. You can choose to walk a 5K or 10K beginning at 8am (registration opens at 7am), when an opening ceremony takes place, along with an official Lakota drum beat to start the walk. Hikers will then follow dirt trails and gravel work roads up the mountain to the Arm of Crazy Horse, directly in front of the nine-story-high face, which was completed June 3, 1998.

The cost is \$4 plus three cans of food. We thank Crazy Horse Memorial® for waiving the regular admission fee if each participant brings three cans of food to donate to the Care and Share Food Drive, part of the Feeding South Dakota Initiative.

America's Walking Club has secured a block of rooms at the [Best Western Ramkota Hotel](#) in Rapid City, SD, about an hour away from the event. The group rate is \$149++ for 1-4 guests, free parking and a hotel airport shuttle. Breakfast is also included. This is a great rate, but you must book your room before May 1st. The rate is available June 1-11, so you can choose your dates. Use the [link](#) or call 605-343-8550 and let them know you are with America's Walking Club Crazy Horse Volksmarch.

Crazy Horse Memorial® started in 1948 after Lakota [Chief Henry Standing Bear](#) wanted to honor the culture, tradition and heritage of North American Indians, specifically the Lakota leader [Crazy Horse](#). Sculptor [Korczak Ziolkowski](#) proudly began the work, on what will be the largest sculpture in the world. While the creation of the sculpture continues, the work has expanded to include The Indian Museum of North America®, and the Crazy Horse Memorial University®.

In 1981, the [Black Hills Volkssport Association](#) (BHVA) worked with the Crazy Horse Memorial® to sponsor a hike to the top of the mountain. Over the next 40 years, the event has become the largest volkswalk in the United States, with 6,000 – 8,000 expected for each event.



The BHVA encourages everyone to stay Sunday June 7th for a second day of walks at [Outlaw Ranch in the Black Hills](#) outside Custer. Start table opens from 6:30am – 9:30am; finish by 12noon. Afterward, BHVA is inviting everyone to Way Park in Custer for a party and 50th AVA celebration.



To help you with all the logistics for the Crazy Horse event Saturday June 6, here are some guidelines:

Driving to the start

Crazy Horse Memorial is located 5 miles north of Custer, SD on Highway 16/385.

Parking

Free, but due to the popularity of the event, parking can be some distance from the starting point. Shuttle buses between these outlying parking lots and the start/finish.

Registration

There is no advance registration. Hikers must check in at starting point, which is the at the Memorial's upper parking lot. Registration begins at 7am. The walk starts at 8am with an opening ceremony. Hikers must register before 1pm, and be off the trail by 4pm. No late starts.

Cost

Admission to the Memorial will be waived with 3 cans of food per hiker. The AVA fee is \$4 per person regardless of age. Regular admission applies to non-hikers or hikers without food.

How long does it take?

The hike averages two to four hours to complete. Hikers should pace themselves due to the terrain and peak elevation (nearly 6,500 feet above sea level).

What is the trail like?

The route is a 5K or 10K (6.2 miles round trip), on a hilly, rough terrain with some steep inclines. The rugged woodlands path is not suitable for infant strollers. From the valley of the Memorial's visitor center, the trail rises about 500 feet up to the mountain. You will see views of Crazy Horse Memorial® and its 1,000-acre campus not otherwise available to the public.

What are some hiking tips?

Travel light! Water stations and port-a-potties are available along the trail. Roving trail monitors and medical professionals will be available for those needing assistance. Watch the weather, dress appropriately, and anticipate taking layers of clothes. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

Are pets allowed?

Pets of all kinds are prohibited on the trail.

Is camping available?

There is no camping at Crazy Horse Memorial®. However, camping is available at Heritage Village, 1 mile south of the Memorial's entrance. The campground overlooks the mountain carving.

What else is there on site?

Crazy Horse Memorial Welcome Center has a short introductory movie "What is Crazy Horse", playing in the twin theaters in the Welcome Center. We also encourage you to visit the [Gift Shop](#), [Indian Museum of North America®](#), [Sculptor's Studio/Home Workshop](#), and the [Native American Educational and Cultural Center®](#). Breakfast and lunch is also available at the [Laughing Water Restaurant®](#).

HOW ABOUT THOSE CONVENTION WALKS

BY HELEN HULL

As we start working on our next convention in 2027, (but still don't know where), let's talk about the walks. Following the Las Cruces convention, AVA sent out a survey to find out what you, the walkers, want. And we had many people respond. Among the responses were observations about the type of walks, trail rating, availability of the walks from the convention hotel, transportation to the pre/post walks and airport, directions, trail rating, and cost of walks.



When I first joined AVA and started walking in 2005, I was only interested in the walks. I had no interest in the business side of the convention and the socials were OK options, but I really came for the walks. I wanted to see new places and since I had only done 5 AVA walks before attending my first convention in New Jersey, just about any walk was new to me. My friend and I flew into Washington, DC, rented a car, and set out for the walks. The walks started in West Virginia, then Virginia, then Maryland, Washington, DC, and ended in Delaware. And this was pretty much what everyone did, you flew to a nearby airport, rented a car, and you were responsible for all your transportation. The convention did offer transportation to the weekday walks for an extra charge. But there was no option for transportation to/from an airport or for the pre and post walks. There were several tour buses including one from the Iowa area that took care of their group, but unless you signed up for one of these tours, you were on your own.

Now that was 20 years ago. And many people who drove to the convention or flew and rented cars are now a few years older and no longer want to drive. We understand this and are looking into what we can do to help walkers with this issue.

Now for the walks themselves:

1. Type of trail – several people said that we needed more 'flat' walks especially for those who have gotten older, and that the trail ratings need to be more accurate. As trailmaster for the Las Cruces walks, I had walked every one of the trails at some point in the last 2 years. But I will admit that the last time I did the Organ Mountain trail was in 2018 when I was much younger and more agile. And my memory had faded and I had slowed down and the trail should have had a more difficult rating. As far as 'flat' walks, most of the walks were relatively flat with some gentle ups and downs and mostly on sidewalks. So we will try to make the ratings more accurate.

2. Speaking of trails – many want flat trails, but then others suggested hiking at Mt Shasta and other peaks. So although some may want flatter trails, other want more difficult routes. We can't please everyone.
3. Thus, we try to have a mixture of city walks on sidewalks combined with some possibly more challenging nature walks. And we will work on the walk ratings and descriptions to better describe the routes.
4. Availability of walks from the convention hotel – while thinking about the conventions from 2005 to 2025, I can't think of any that had more than one walk originating from the convention hotel. Trying to find a site from which we can create routes from a hotel is not easy. Think about your hometown and region. Can you come up with a site from which you can offer 3 different 10K routes? If you can, let us know and please include a rough map of each route so that we can investigate them.
5. Have an option for walks only on the registration point - (no meetings, workshops, socials, etc) – this is under consideration.
6. Cost of walks – The pre/post walks for Las Cruces were available as OSB which means they cost only \$4 each. But the rest of the convention walks were \$10 each. Ouch, that hurts! But why the additional charge, especially since the walks could be done at any time like a YRE? When you plan a YRE, you generally don't have more than 2-3 cars taking up parking spaces at the start point, but when you have a big group walk or featured walk, then you must have a start point with a parking lot and restrooms, etc. Although some places once offered starting locations with lots of parking for free or maybe a couple hundred dollars, most places now charge to reserve a pavilion, parking lot, restrooms, cleanup, etc., and prices have gone up in the last 20 years. Now back to my first convention in New Jersey, over 700 people attended those walks. So even if the location charged \$100-200, the cost per walker was less than 50 cents. But now we have about 300 walkers and prices have gone up so that the cost per walker is frequently over \$1 per walker. Then factor in the cost of the convention facilities. The hotels/convention centers charge for every hour that a room is used (or being held for our use, like the Silent Auction room, the registration room, etc.). And we have to cover those costs.

Hopefully this has answered some of your questions and explained why costs have gone up over the years. Just think about what you paid for a candy bar, coffee, iced tea, dinner, gas, car, hotel room, everything back in 2005 and what you pay today. When you consider all of that, it is amazing that our costs are not even higher. Hope to see you somewhere come 2027.



CONVENTION, OH WHERE TO GO

BY HELEN HULL

Most of us are eagerly waiting to find out where our 2027 convention will be held. And I wish I had the answer. The convention team has visited several sites to check out hotel and convention facilities and potential trails. Headquarters sent out a survey after the Las Cruces convention and have been reviewing the comments, especially about location, when, and weather concerns.

The survey asked where you would like to go and when to go and we had multiple suggestions: somewhere not in the southwest region, cooler area, later in the year, where there are more clubs with volunteers to support the activities, etc. Yes, I agree with all of these.

How are convention locations chosen? Some of the survey responders suggested that the convention be rotated among the 10 regions, and this is, indeed, what has happened over the past 20 years.

Convention sites since 2005:

- 2005** – Cherry Hill, NJ – Atlantic Region
- 2007** – Sacramento, CA – Pacific Region
- 2009** – Richardson/Dallas, TX – Southwest Region with pre/post walks in South Central Region
- 2011** – Des Moines, IO – Mid-America Region
- 2013** – Orlando, FL – Southeast Region
- 2015** – Salem, OR – Northwest Region
- 2017** – Billings, MT – Rocky Mountains Region
- 2019** – Albany, NY – Northeast Region
- 2021** – Madison, WI – North Central Region
- 2023** – San Antonio, TX – Southwest Region (not really a convention, part of Olympiad & IML)
- 2025** – Las Cruces, NM – Southwest Region

People have wondered why we have had so many major events in the Southwest region (Texas and New Mexico) in recent years which includes the Feb IML event in San Antonio each year, the Olympiad in 2023, and then the convention in Las Cruces in 2025.

For those not familiar with the IML (International Marching League), IML is a separate organization from AVA with its own rules. IML, IVV, and AVA have agreed to give credit to both IML and AVA participants.

But here are some rules about IML. In order to be certified as an IML event, the site must go thru 3 years of holding events, have IML officials visit and critique the events and facilities before finally granting 'IML' status to an event. The site and date cannot be changed, and the walk routes must stay fairly static. So this is why the IML is held in mid/late Feb in San Antonio every year and cannot be moved to any other location. In the same way, the annual IML Freedom Walk is held in Arlington, VA every year in mid-October and cannot be held in any other location.



Then there was the Olympiad (just what is an Olympiad?). AVA is affiliated with the international IVV which holds an Olympiad every 2 years somewhere in the world. I attended the 2019 Olympiad in France and most recently the 2025 Olympiad in Finland. The 2021 Olympiad scheduled for South Korea was canceled due to COVID-19 concerns, and the US hosted the 2023 Olympiad. It was held in San Antonio in conjunction with the Feb IML so that international participants would hopefully attend both in one trip.

And finally, why was the 2025 convention held in Las Cruces? Since there had not been any club submitting a bid to host the convention, it was left up to headquarters to find a location and develop the convention. Las Cruces had been suggested as a possible site several years before, but the person who suggested it died in 2022. Headquarters decided to investigate Las Cruces and El Paso as a possibility, especially since it actually offered a brand new place which many people had not visited.

So yes, it seems like a lot of multi-day events have been held in the Southwest region, but we certainly want to visit other areas of the country.

Where do we go from here? For many years the local clubs hosting the convention handled all of the arrangements, hotel and facilities negotiations, socials, workshops, speakers, walks, volunteers, everything. But clubs are finding it difficult to handle all of these things. Our national office has now stepped in to provide the help and the expertise of dealing with these tasks, particularly the contracts. We still need the help of locals in developing new quality walks which will attract our walkers. So if you know of a place that has not been 'overwalked', is cool (not cold, not hot), that's scenic, and has the potential of something new, let us know so that we can investigate. But remember, a convention can't be planned in a few months or even a year. It takes time.

**BECOME A MEMBER OF
AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB**

MEMBERSHIP

Your membership supports
the work of AVA in our quest
of Fun - Fitness - Friendship

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP
\$25 / YEAR
ava.org

50th Anniversary
AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB
— ESTABLISHED 1972 —

50TH ANNIVERSARY

BY SUSAN FINE

We've had two celebrations for AVA's 50th Anniversary featured events: Chairman's Anniversary Celebration in Boulder City, NV in January, and Texas Trail Roundup in San Antonio, TX in February. There are 15 more signature events in 2026. These clubs have worked very hard to create walks and socials to highlight the best in their areas; and many coincide with the United States 250th anniversary. We hope you can attend many of these events; or at least a few in your area. As a reminder, here's the list of the remaining anniversary festivals. You can also get more info at: ava.org/50th-anniversary.

MARCH 20-22 – [Williamsburg, VA \(Atlantic Region\)](#) – Atlantic Regional Conference

APRIL 17-19 – [Council Bluffs, IA and Nebraska City, NE](#) (North Central Region)– Memories on the Mighty MO

MAY 16-20 – [Lake George in Upstate New York](#) (Northeast Region) – Walk the Story that Changed the World: A Multi-day Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites

JUNE 6-7 – [Crazy Horse and Black Hills, SD](#) (North Central Region) – 40th Annual Crazy Horse Memorial® Volksmarch

JUNE 19-21 – [Indiana and Illinois](#) – (Mid-America Region) – Mid-America Regional Conference

JULY 24-25 – San Francisco, CA – (Pacific Region) - 50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking

JULY 28 – AUG 1 – Colorado Springs, CO (Rocky Mountain Region)– Rocky Mountain Rendezvous

AUGUST 28-29 – Boston, MA (Northeast Region)– AVA 50th Anniversary Walk in Boston

SEPTEMBER 7 – [Mackinaw City and St Ignace, MI](#) (Mid-America Region) – Annual Mackinac Bridge Walk

SEPTEMBER 24-27 – [Astoria, OR](#) (Northwest Region) – NW Regional Conference "Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark"

OCTOBER 16-18 – [Arlington, VA](#) (Atlantic Region) – 25th Annual Freedom Walk Festival IML

OCTOBER 28 – November 1 – MO, KS, OK (South Central Region) – "Halloween Kicks on Route 66"

NOVEMBER 6-8 – Tampa area, FL (Southeast Region) – 35th Walk Around Florida

NOVEMBER 14 – Dayton, OH (Mid-America Region) – OWF Honors Veterans

DECEMBER 5 – Helen, GA (Southeast Region) – Weihnachten Lights Spectacular

RAILS TO TRAILS CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY WITH AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB

BY SUZANNE MATYAS

Join us outside for Celebrate Trails Day on Saturday, April 25! This annual springtime celebration was started in 2013 by Rails to Trails Conservancy, the nation's largest trails organization, and invites everyone to experience the country's trails through events and self-guided activities.

Celebrate Trails Day creates a national moment of awareness and appreciation—spotlighting the joy and impact of America's trails, and the movement that's making it possible for more people to be able to safely walk, bike and be active outside where they live.

As part of our partnership with the AVA this year, we're proud to be able to invite and inspire more people to enjoy walks and other types of outings along trails on the day (and beyond!). And with 2026 marking several big milestones and anniversaries—Rails to Trails Conservancy's 40th, AVA's 50th and America's 250th—we're looking forward to making this the biggest, best and most impactful celebration yet.

Events and activities are planned along the 42,500+ miles of multiuse trails and 150+ trail networks around the country, including those led by the AVA. Whether you join the Nebraska Trailblazers for their "Miles of Memories Across the Mighty Missouri" event along a section of the cross-country Great American Rail-Trail the weekend before Celebrate Trails Day, or choose to go on one of the AVA's year-round walks on April 25, or attend one of the other Celebrate Trails Day events, we hope to see you on the trail.

To explore events, opportunities to get great giveaways, and more ways to celebrate trails, visit RailsToTrails.org/CelebrateTrailsDay For information, contact Suzanne Matyas, Suzanne@railstotrails.org.

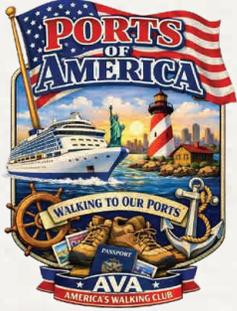


Celebrate
Trails
Day

APRIL 25, 2026

SEARCHING FOR CLUB HOST FOR 2028 SPECIAL PROGRAM PROPOSAL

BY DIANE HOWELL EVANS, PROGRAMS COMMITTEE CHAIR



The Programs Committee received a proposal for a Special Program named "Ports of Entry." There was a similar special program "Walking America's Ports of Call" offered from 2016-2019 by a WA state club which is no longer active. Since the club is inactive, any club can offer to host this special program. Inquiries as to whether any other WA club wanted to host the Special Program did not elicit a taker. So, the proposal is now open to clubs anywhere in the US. Rob McDaniel, author

of the proposal, is more than willing to assist any club willing to host the special program with the identification of air, land and sea ports of entry.

The proposal description and justification is complete and the proposal package only needs a signed agreement by the host club's POCs, a completed checklist, and a sample booklet. Rob has designed a sample patch for the proposal. The November 1, 2026, deadline for 2028 Special Program proposals certainly provides more than enough time for an interested club/POC to discuss the proposal with Rob, as well as complete the additional proposal documents.

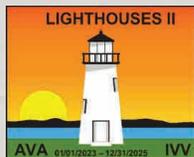
If you are interested in more details, please contact Programs@ava.org.

RECOGNITION OF AVA SPECIAL PROGRAM COMPLETIONS - LAST CALL

Per an article in the August 2025 Checkpoint, the Programs Committee will be publishing a list of participants who have completed any of the club hosted current active AVA Special Programs or any special program that ended on 12/31/2025. Special Program POCs are currently in the process of submitting their participant list of completions. To respect a person's privacy, we need to know if you prefer your name omitted from any recognition list. If yes, you do prefer your name omitted from upcoming recognition lists, please provide your name, city and state to Programs@ava.org by April 17, 2026. We ask that clubs share this notice with their club members. Thank you.

IMPORTANT 2026 DEADLINES FOR AVA SPECIAL PROGRAMS

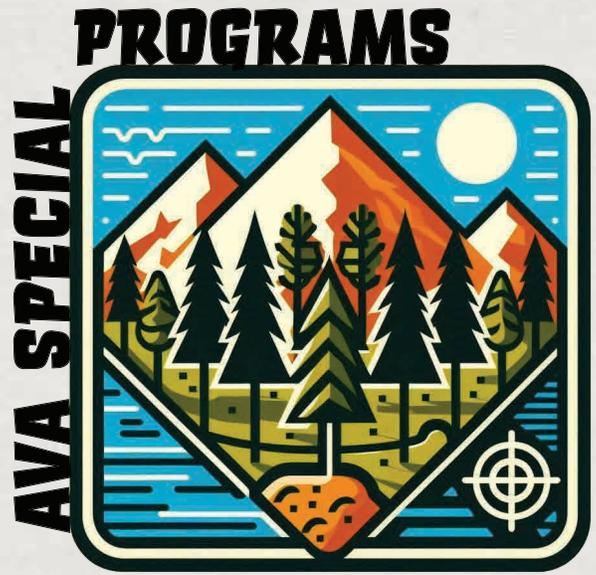
REDEMPTION - the last date to complete any purchased challenge books and redeem for "Lighthouses II" and "Par for the Course" Special Programs is **12/31/2026**.



PURCHASE - the last date to purchase a challenge book for the following AVA Special Programs "A-MAZE-ing Labyrinths", "Anniversaries Hurrah", "Rails-to-Trails", and "Step to the Beat" is **12/31/2026**.



Remember to check the AVA Special Programs webpage for information on redeeming or purchasing the Special Program challenge books listed above. cb.ava.org/specprog.php.



For information on these Special Programs, as well as all the other current programs, please review the Special Programs website at: cb.ava.org/specprog.php

50th Anniversary AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WALKING
JAN 9 - DEC 5 2026
17 EVENTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY
Come Walk With US!

Get Your Passport Book
Celebrating AVA's 50th Anniversary

Attend either 8 Anniversary 'Signature' 8 events or all 17 events in 2026. Get special awards.

ava.org/50th-anniversary

PORTUGAL: THE NATURAL CHOICE FOR A WALKING TRIP ABROAD

BY SOLOS

Portugal has a way of drawing you in gently. From ancient cliff-top tracks of the Algarve to the mist-shrouded laurel forests of Madeira, these trails offer total immersion in landscape. For a first walking adventure overseas, the terrain is remarkably forgiving, providing rhythmic beauty that lets you focus on the horizon rather than your footing.

In the south, the Seven Hanging Valleys trail winds over honey-colored limestone where Atlantic salt spray meets wild thyme. The magnificent Rota Vicentina—a 211-mile path from Santiago do Cacém to Cape St. Vincent—traverses one of Europe's finest preserved coastlines. The Fisherman's Trail follows rugged cliffs over sand dunes with spectacular ocean views, while the Historic Route winds inland through traditional villages. The Castro Marim Nature Reserve offers salt marsh trails alive with flamingos, leading to whitewashed hamlets perfect for pausing over galão and custard tarts.



Walking connects you to layers of history you'd otherwise miss. Along the Vicentina Route, trace paths once used by fishermen and pilgrims. In the Golden Alentejo, cork oak forests open onto medieval villages where time seems suspended, while the Knights Templar legacy is etched into fortress towns like Tomar.

The climate serves as constant companion with mild springs, golden autumns, and winters that never truly bite. Evening meals become rituals of fresh grilled sardines and local wines, where conversations flow naturally among fellow walkers.

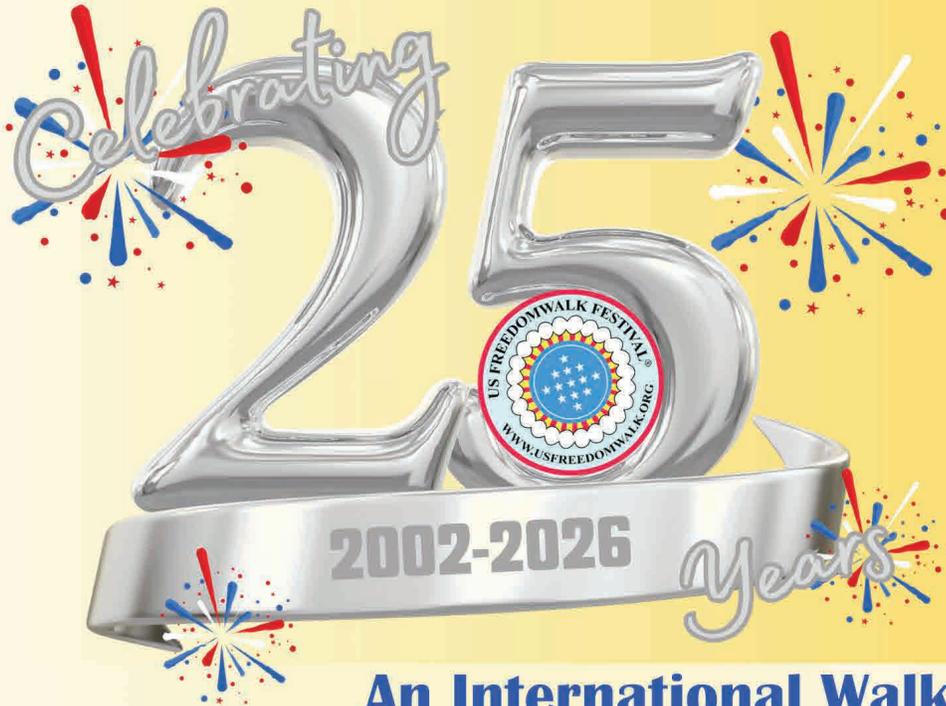
"With its striking variety of landscapes, Portugal is made for exploration on foot," says Rhi, Solos Product Manager. That's why Solos offers six distinct walking tours throughout the country, each designed for solo travelers who crave both the independence of their own journey and the camaraderie of like-minded explorers on the trail.

For more information or to book a walking trip to Portugal, visit solosholidays.com/solo-walking or call 1-888-259-4027.



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www.USFreedomWalk.org

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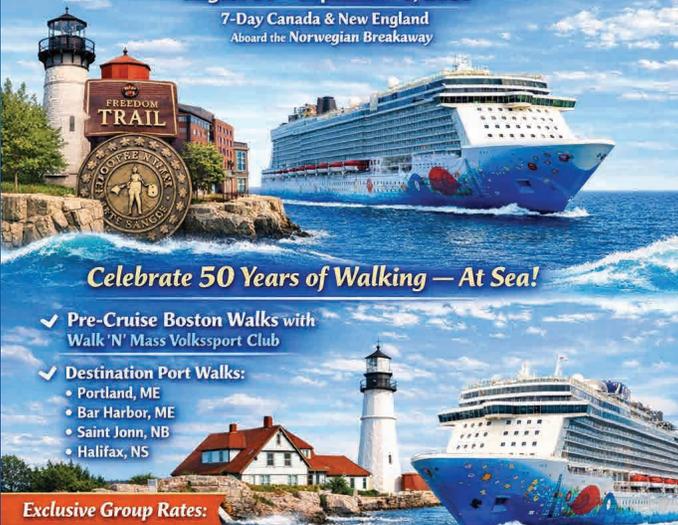
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50th Anniversary



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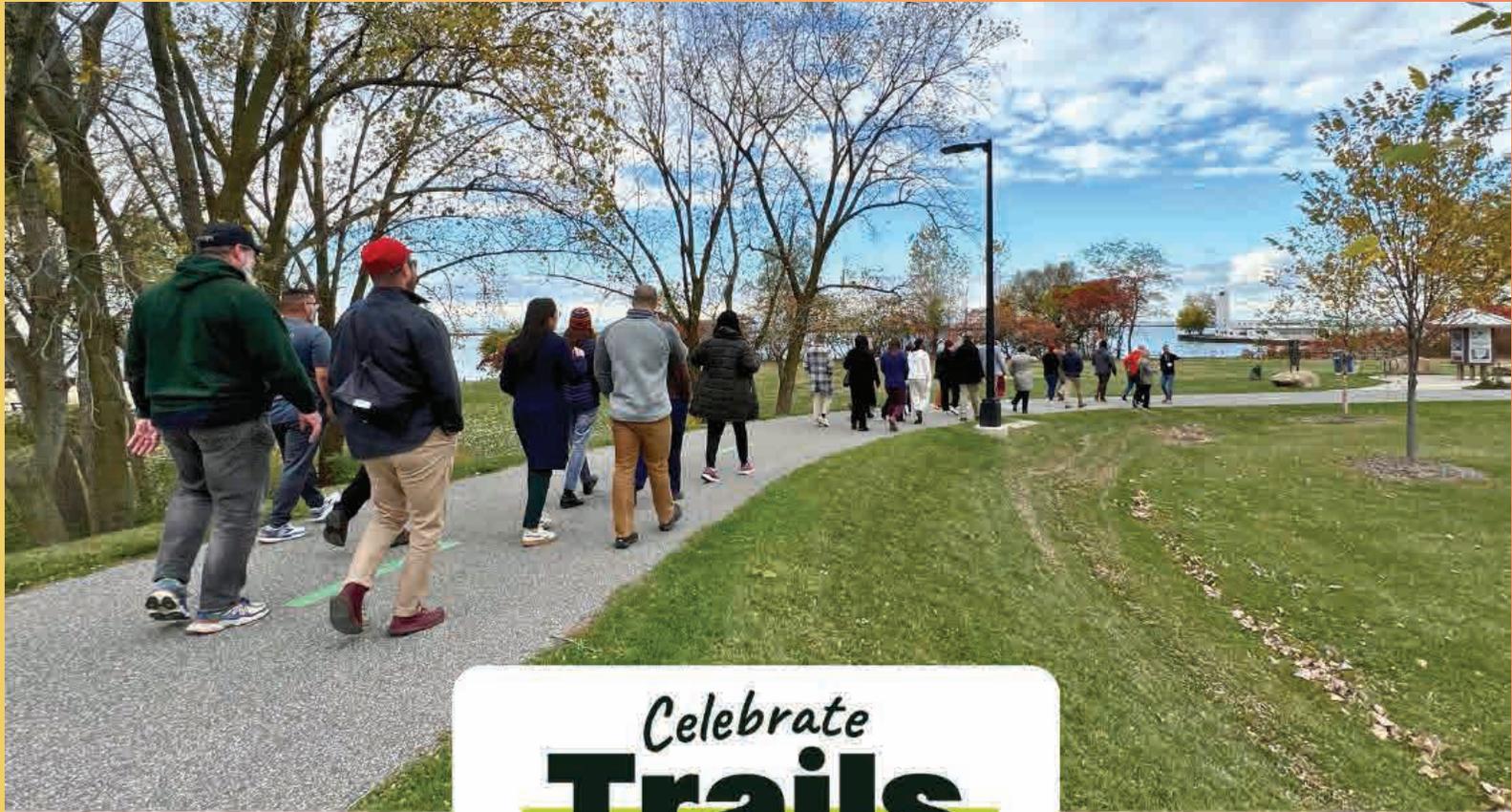


Come Walk WITH US!



Thank you to the Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers for hosting the first 50th anniversary celebration for America's Walking Club. 88 people from 20 states went to Boulder City, Nevada for three days of walking and socials. Everyone praised the club for a great weekend of walking.





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REGIONAL TALES FROM THE TRAILS



ATLANTIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



FIVE WALK, BIKE, AND EAT ON THE STREET WHERE IT HAPPENED (IN 1776) TRADITIONAL EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR 2026 WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA: WHERE AMERICA BEGAN

BY TIM MINER

As part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the AVA and America's 250th anniversary, come to the street "where it happened" in the Commonwealth where America began on the weekend of March 20 to 22, 2026. There is a pre-walk in Fredericksburg and post-walk in Alexandria as well.



This is the Atlantic Region Conference which will be at the apex of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail in Williamsburg with events in Yorktown and Jamestown available as well. There is so much history all located in a small area. Come and see why "Virginia is for Walking Lovers."

Hotel information: Best Western Hotel 351 York Street Williamsburg, Virginia

Reserve rooms at the Best Western Historic:

https://www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotel-rooms.47149.html?groupId=3P2SN4J5

... If you call the hotel (757-229-4100), mention the Atlantic Regional Conference to get the hotel rates. There are 100 rooms reserved. "HOTEL RESERVATIONS can be made at the Best Western Historic District at the rate of \$82 plus tax for Thursday and Sunday nights and \$114 plus tax for Friday and Saturday nights."

Visit the website for more information and links to pre-register for the events or the entire conference package:

<http://walkvirginia.org/atlantic-region-conference-2026>

Questions to the committee at ARConference2026@walkvirginia.org

First State Webfooters set up a booth at the Dover Delaware Chamber of Commerce in January



FIVE EXCITING TRADITIONAL EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR 2026

BY ANTHONY (TONY) LAING

The Seneca Valley Sugarloafers Volksmarch Club of Montgomery County, Maryland have once again sanctioned five fun-filled and enjoyable Traditional Events in 2026.

April 18 - Washington Grove/Old Towne Gaithersburg

This walk consists of two 5 km walks. The first is the Olde Towne trail on paved surfaces, mostly on city sidewalks. The walk is through several historic neighborhoods with houses from the 1900 era; one street housed five Gaithersburg mayors, which was also the first street to receive street lights. The second trail is the Washington Grove walk through a tiny town within a forest and an oasis of tranquility. It began in 1873 as a permanent place for Methodist camp meetings (religious retreats). Walkers enjoy viewing the narrow Carpenter Gothic cottages with steeply pitched roofs, lacy gingerbread trim, and gravel walkways with few streets for car traffic. It is a view of living in the past.

May 2 - Germantown/Little Seneca Lake

The 5km walk is on sidewalks and asphalt trails with no significant hills. The 5k loop leaves Germantown, named after a merchant of German origin. It then meanders around 18-acre Lake Churchill with its shade trees and abundant waterfowl before returning to the vibrant small downtown of Germantown with its plentiful and bountiful restaurants. The 10k loop leaves Germantown for a stroll next to the scenic 505-acre Little Seneca Lake that is part of the stunning Black Hill Regional Park before returning to downtown Germantown.

June 6 - Breakfast Walk in Kensington

Enjoy a community pancake breakfast at a local church before hitting the trail. On this walk, you will walk through tree-lined residential streets in Kensington's Victorian-era historic area and past the Noyes Library for Young Children (the oldest library in Montgomery County), Warner Mansion & Warner Circle Park, Antique Row, and onto the famous Rock Creek Park Trail. The 10 km walk experiences more of this scenic urban park.

October 3 - Oktoberfest in Frederick

Both the 5 km and 10 km trails traverse through historic downtown Frederick, noted for Civil War era events such as the Barbara Fritchie House. You will walk along the restored Carroll Creek Park with its famous urban canal. The trails are on sidewalks and roadsides. The trails are user-friendly for wagons, wheelchairs, and strollers. A bonus is that walkers get free admission into Frederick's famous Oktoberfest, which is normally a \$10 fee.

October 24 – Halloween in Kentlands

Unmatched Halloween decorations in the award-winning Kentlands neighborhoods are designed for their suburban livability and ability to walk to stores and markets. East and West walks are on sidewalks and asphalt trails with some moderate hills. The Muddy Branch/Lakelands walk is on sidewalks, asphalt trails, and natural trails. You may walk one, two, or all three trails for the total distance of your choice.

WEDNESDAY WALKS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

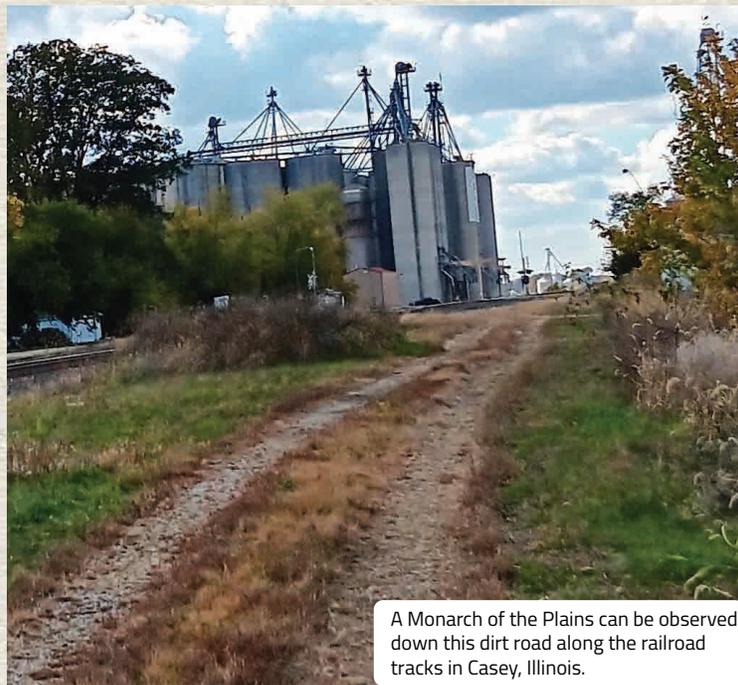
BY STEVE BROWN

Boston is a city with a vibrant history. Many people think of the Freedom Trail, where we have a longstanding great year-round walk, when thinking of historic places to see. There is so much more to see off the regular paths and we have created a brand new Boston walk for 2026. Please join Walk 'n Mass on our year-round Hidden Gems and Special Places walk in Boston. The 11km and 5km routes explore such highlights as the Charles River Esplanade, the Hatch Memorial Shell, Bay Village, Boston Common, the four-story granite Armory, and New Old South Church. The 11km route also includes the Church of the Advent, Harrison Gray Otis House, Custom House Tower, Liberty Square, and Chinatown. Liberty Square marks the location where Alexander Graham Bell made the first successful telephone call in 1876.

Our traditional events kick off on March 28, 2026 with our annual Soup Social in Holliston, MA. Come walk with us then warm up with a variety of tasty soups and baked goods.

We look forward to seeing you throughout 2026 and are preparing an exciting slate of self-guided, group and traditional event walks.

Start times, directions to the start, and updates to the walk schedules can all be found at our website walknmass.org or on Facebook at AVA Walk 'n Mass Volkssport Club (m.facebook.com/WalknMass). These resources are updated frequently, so please check in often to see what new adventures await.



A Monarch of the Plains can be observed down this dirt road along the railroad tracks in Casey, Illinois.

The last day of this exciting weekend is Sunday, June 21, and will offer walkers a memorable experience in Casey, Illinois, located in Clark County. Here walkers will be enchanted by the esoteric marvels found around town, which earn the town recognition for its “Big Things in a Small Town.”

This weekend of fun activities is a featured 50th Anniversary event for the America’s Walking Club. It is a weekend that you do not want to miss.

Pre-Registration is open NOW. To learn more about these exciting events, other activities and pre-registration, please visit the Mid-America Region Facebook page or [follow this link to the event brochure](#).

Let us all give a big vote of thanks and appreciation to Roxie Weaver, the Deputy Regional Director, and the members of the Mid-America Region Conference Committee.

VOLKSSPORTING ACTIVITIES RETURN TO MARION, ILLINOIS

BY ROBERT BUZOLICH



After a more than a thirty year hiatus, Volkssporting activities are returning to Marion, Illinois, on April 1, when a new Seasonal walking event opens through the AVA Online Start Box.

The Gateway Milers NFP, collaborating with interested parties at the Veteran’s Administration Marion Illinois Medical Center, will host a Seasonal walking event on the grounds of the VA Medical Center and the surrounding community.

The event offers 5- and 10-kilometer routes through serene natural settings along a mostly paved pedestrian/bike path. This event makes for an enjoyable break from driving along Interstate 57, especially on your way to or from the 2026 Mid-America Region Walking Weekend and Conference.

To learn more about this exciting fresh event, please follow the following link: <https://my.ava.org/event-view.php?sn=131866>.



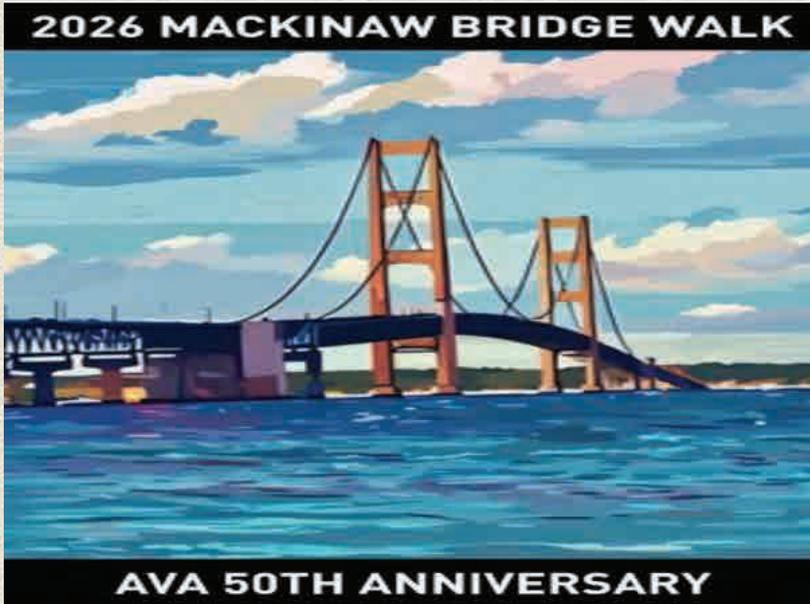
MID-AMERICA REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



MID-AMERICA REGIONAL WALKING WEEKEND & CONFERENCE FAST APPROACHING

READY, SET AND WALK your way to adventure during the [Mid-America Walking Weekend & Conference](#), which is set to kick off with a walk on Friday, June 19, in Terre Haute, Indiana. Terre Haute is the county seat for Vigo County and is home of Indiana State University.

Following the walk in Terre Haute, walkers will encounter further adventures in Coles County, Illinois, where the Region will host walks in Charleston, Illinois, and Fox Ridge State Park on Saturday, June 20. Along the routes walked on this date, you will experience a mixture of thrills and emotions with a visit to Eastern Illinois University and view wildlife in a serene and scenic setting.



INFORMATION FOR PLANNING A TRIP TO THE MACKINAC BRIDGE WALK SEPT 7

BY BOB BUZOLICH

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of AVA, the Mackinac Bridge walk in Michigan, Monday, September 7, 2026, will be one of the featured celebration walks. The Bridge Walk is an annual event on Labor Day, the only time that the bridge is closed to traffic from early morning to 12 noon, allowing thousands of people to walk across the Straits of Mackinac on the bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere. The total distance across the entire bridge and back is 20K, but people can choose to walk as far as they want, then turn around.

Because thousands of people from Michigan and across the U.S. come to the area for this historic walk, we wanted to give you a heads up to start planning now.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS: Items to consider include:

- 1) There are two Start Points (one at the North end of The Bridge - St Ignace, and one at the South end of The Bridge - Mackinaw City).
- 2) You may start any time after 7 am, when the Governor's delegation opens the walk at the North end of The Bridge and **MUST** be off The Bridge by 12 Noon.
- 3) The Michigan State Police and the Mackinac Bridge Authority regulate the Bridge Walk. (This event is not under the control of the MARD or the AVA.)
- 4) The distances offered for The Bridge Walk are 5-km, 10-Km, 15-Km and 16-Km, to which you may add your distance to reach the ingress point for the walk and the direct return to your lodging or auto. The four distances identified are based upon a round trip from the ingress point to a specific turnaround point on the Bridge and return.

To plan your trip, you will need to make some decisions beforehand on where to start and how far to walk. Detailed information on the walk itself will be available in the Map & Directions for the event, which is OSB only, except for bus groups.) Once you have decided on your Start Point and Distance, you will want to give some consideration to lodging, transportation and parking.

LODGING: Because of the variables of The Bridge Walk, I do not anticipate there being a "Host Hotel." If cost is not a factor, staying in Mackinaw City is possible. Bear in mind that lodging in Mackinaw City during the Labor Day Weekend is not cheap. Even the two Super 8's in Mackinaw charge over \$300 per night with at least a two-night minimum stay. Recommended lodging locations with reasonable rates, availability and a reasonable distance to the South end of The Bridge may be found in Gaylord (1 hour drive on I-75 to Mackinaw City), Grayling (1-1/2 hour drive on I-75 to Mackinaw City), Cheboygan (MI) and Petoskey (MI). Recommended lodging locations with reasonable rates, availability and a reasonable distance to the North end of The Bridge may be found in Sault Ste Marie (1 hour drive on I-75 to St Ignace), and St Ignace itself.

TRANSPORTATION: For transportation, a vehicle is useful for mobility. From Michigan's Southern State Line to Mackinaw City, it is about a 6-hour drive one way, and a 3-1/2 to 4-hour drive from Michigan's Western and Southwestern State Line to St Ignace. The nearest airport to Mackinaw City that provides regular commercial flights is the Pellston Regional Airport (PLN), which also has available rental vehicles and a shuttle. Rentals and the shuttle require reservations that may be done through the PLN website. PLN is serviced by Delta and United through SkyWest. Another option for commercial flights near Saint Ignace is the Chippewa County International Airport (CIU), which is the former Kincheloe Air Force Base. It is at the midway point between Saint Ignace and Sault Sainte Marie. So, it is only about a thirty minute drive on I-75. CIU is serviced by Delta through SkyWest. The nearest Amtrak Station is in Traverse City, which is currently not a good option, because of distance and lack of options for travel between Traverse City and Mackinaw City.

PARKING: For parking on the day of the event, you will find plenty of free parking at Bridge View Park, which is also the Start/Finish Point at the North end of The Bridge. If you wish to walk to the North of the Bridge from your lodging in St Ignace the distance may be up to 3.7 miles one way, which you may add to the distance you actually walk on The Bridge. Also, some of the lodging locations may offer a shuttle to or from a point near the North end of The Bridge. To access the South end of The Bridge there is plenty of parking for a price in the range of \$10 to \$30 in Mackinaw City. Some of the parking may be provided by local charitable organizations seeking a donation. Last year, Shepler's Ferry started offering parking for \$15 at its Day Lot on Nicolet Street, even if you are not taking the Ferry on the same date. If you arrive very, very early on September 7, you may even find free parking at the Michigan Welcome Center on Nicolet Street after exiting from I-75 at Exit 337 (Nicolet Street). (The Welcome Center is exactly one kilometer South of the ingress point at South end of The Bridge.)

Hope that this information is helpful for planning your trip to the 2026 Mackinac Bridge Walk. If you should have any specific questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through the Facebook page for the Mid-America Region or via email to sonofbuzz@prodigy.net. Remember the event brochure will be available NLT March 7, if not sooner.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Ken Johnson, NC RD

**JOIN THE MINNESOTA VOLKSSPORT CLUBS
IN THEIR MEANDER MINNESOTA WEEKEND EVENT
SEPTEMBER 11TH THRU THE 13TH.**

BY WAYNE HEATH



Starting Thursday, September 10th, there will be a meet and greet where there will be a Pizza and game night. Friday there will be two walks one in Mantorville, MN which will be holding their Marigold Days celebration and then over to Northfield where they are having their annual "Defeat of Jesse James Days" celebration with a recreation of the shootout defeating the Jesse James gang throughout the

day. Saturday there will be a walk to the State Capitol building and grounds followed by a nature walk in one of the local regional parks followed with a booya dinner. Sunday we will be going to Nerstrand Big Woods State Park to walk in a portion of big Woods that used to dominate this part of Minnesota followed by a Brat lunch.

For information and a brochure contact: Wayne Heath at wwheath76@gmail.com.



NORTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Carol Giesecke, NE RD

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN HISTORY!

BY LINDA MORZILLO

Northeast Weekend (May 16-20, 2026) is one of the multi-day events promoted by AVA to commemorate its 50th anniversary, as well as the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence! It will soon be here and the New York Empire State Volkssporters (ESCV) are excited about having our attendees enjoy all that we have planned. Our new website, escvwalks.org has a detailed schedule as well as a secure link to register. In addition to our scheduled walks and social events participants can enjoy a cruise on Lake George, the "Queen of American Lakes."

Our weekend is planned with the American Revolution in mind. To promote appreciation for history along the walk routes, we hope that participants will acquire background knowledge of events specific to these locations. We cannot duplicate You Are There, first a radio show in the late 1940's and then a TV series during the 1950's; reporters took viewers on a figurative journey back in time each week as they reported on great events of the past. Two of the twelve episodes report events during the Revolutionary War and are directly related to Northeast Weekend. [The Signing of the Declaration of Independence](#) is available free on YouTube as well as a part of Burgoyne's Surrender at Saratoga.



Eastern Upstate New York was a focal point for two notable events that were important pieces of the story of the United States. They are the Battle of Saratoga and the Noble Train of Artillery. In preparation, people can read books, watch podcasts, visit museums to see Revolutionary War artwork (example: prints of the painting, "The Surrender of General Burgoyne," displayed on the Capitol Rotunda are in some museums) and watch educational TV shows to learn about the passage of events. One highly recommended resource is a 6-part series originally aired on PBS. The American Revolution, by Ken Burns, Sarah Botstein and David Schmidt is quite detailed and viewers will learn much more than they learned in history class about the people and places that made history. The episodes are available as podcasts, can be borrowed from some libraries or purchased from some vendors.

One of the events discussed in the PBS series was the transfer of cannons from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston on orders from General Washington. During December 2025, a reenactment of Henry Knox's Noble Train of Artillery took place, partly in the Schuylerville area. Our 10K walk route in Schuylerville will navigate a short part of the reenactment route.

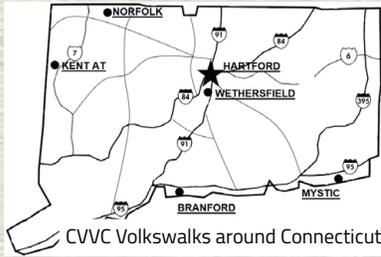
Of course, books have been a vital part of learning about the Revolutionary War Era. Among the most notable nonfiction is 1776 by David McCullough and among historical fiction are those written by Jeff Shaara.

New York State has over 2800 historic markers! These were managed by the Department of Education's State History Office between 1926 and 1966. After 1966, the approval, installation and maintenance of the markers became a local responsibility. Each of our walks will pass by some of these markers located next to places of historic interest. We will be walking on historic grounds, indeed! Walkers will see markers commemorating events from several historic time periods on all walk routes: Johnstown, Crown Point, Fort Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga Hamlet, Schuylerville, Lake George and Round Lake. Accompanying this article is a sample of the historic markers walkers may notice as they follow the walk routes.

Join us for five days of history and beautiful scenery!

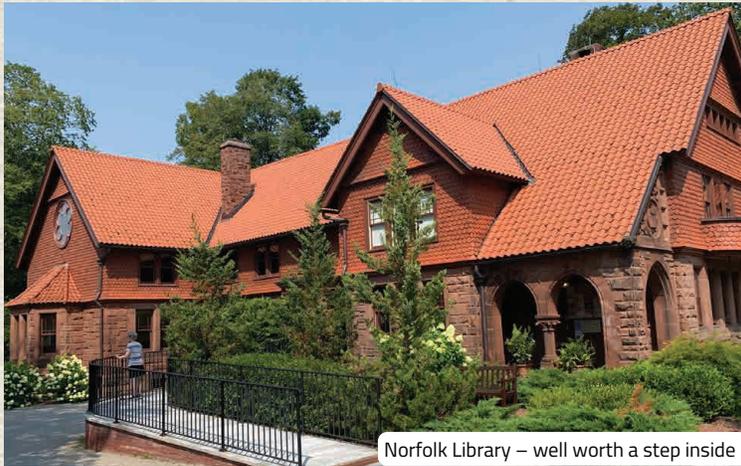
NORFOLK: ICEBOX OF CONNECTICUT, AND MORE

BY CAROL ENDRISS WEST



Norfolk is Connecticut Valley Volkssport Club's newest Volkswalk among the 60 walks hosted over the last thirty-three years. A town nicknamed the "Icebox of Connecticut" might not seem like prime territory for a Volkswalk. Who wants to walk in the coldest and snowiest

snowiest town in the state, where the consistently lowest temperatures (including -37 F) have been recorded each winter? But how about venturing to this charming northwest Connecticut town (ranked best small town in Connecticut for three years in a row by Connecticut Magazine) in other seasons?



Norfolk Library – well worth a step inside

Historic Architecture

What walkers are likely to notice first are the historic buildings. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, summer tourists flocked to Norfolk, drawn by the pleasant temperatures and beauty of the surrounding Litchfield Hills. Attractive inns were built, and some people stayed, building elaborate mansions designed by nationally-known architects. The Norfolk Library (1889) on the village green is stunning, both outside and inside, as are the Tiffany windows in the Romanesque Revival Norfolk Battell Chapel (1887) across the street.

The Music Scene

Norfolk is home to the Yale Summer School of Music and Art, which hosts the famous Norfolk Chamber Music Festival on the Battell-Stoockle Estate each summer (the Volkswalk goes through their lovely landscaped grounds). Norfolk's historic (1883) Infinity Music Hall (like its sister venue in Hartford) hosts a variety of musical events throughout the year. Fifteen miles to the west in Falls Village, Music Mountain Summer Festival offers weekend jazz concerts and chamber music from June to September. It's worth planning a summer weekend in Norfolk.

Natural Areas

The 10K Volkswalk includes a 5K walk through Barbour Woods (Norfolk Land Trust), with its old carriage roads and fast-disappearing 1908 stone arch Killarney Bridge. For walkers wishing to further explore the area, nearby are scenic trails with panoramic views in Haystack Mountain State Park and Dennis Hill State Park.

Beyond Norfolk: "Revolutionary" Walks in Connecticut

But, wait, there's more in little Connecticut. With a total area of approximately 5,500 square miles, Connecticut is America's third smallest state (only Rhode Island and Delaware are smaller). During this semi-quincentennial year, CVVC's six walk towns all played vital roles in the American Revolution. Hartford and Wethersfield, considered safely inland from British forces, were a strategic center for military planning. Washington and Rochambeau met first in Hartford (1780) and the following year at the Webb House in Wethersfield to plan the Yorktown Campaign. Local merchants provided the privateers that stalked the British ships along the coast. Mystic provided ships and guarded the coast, while Branford showed early support for the fight by sending men to Massachusetts to fight at Lexington, MA. From Kent and Norfolk in Litchfield County came iron for cannon and residents eager to defend their land. Check the club's website at <https://www.avaclubs.org/cvvc> for a list of the 2026 group walks in these six towns.



NORTHWEST UPDATE

BY SANDI SEVERTSEN

With the cold weather in the Northwest, OSTVA Vice President Ed Hainline created an incentive to get everyone outside and walk! It's called "Winter Walk Challenge". It went from January to March, encouraging walkers to attend minimum of 10 walks to be eligible for a prize. It was well received, and got those of us out walking, no matter the weather! Consider this an idea for your region.

Nevada was the first area to hold AVA's 50th Anniversary walks. The selection of this sunny state in January was the best location for the coldest time of the year! It was good to see old friends and meet new ones. Pictures are of Lake Mead, Bighorn sheep, and group walk in Bootleg Canyon. I look forward to seeing more of our nation through these walking events.



Northwest Hiking Weekend is scheduled from April 17-19, 2026, sponsored by Four Plus Foolhardy Folks volkssport club. There will be three challenging hike events during the weekend at Steamboat Rock State Park. You'll be witness to amazing views of Northrup Canyon, Steamboat Rock, and ascend 800 feet to a

plateau where you'll have a 360 degree view. Grand Coulee, WA is the designated place to stay. Yes, that's Grand Coulee Dam, where you can also walk a YRE that covers 3 counties in Washington and a view from on top of the Dam.





Wild and Woodsy weekend event is happening from April 23-26, sponsored by Capitol Volkssport club. There are 6 walks and a pub crawl in and around Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater, Washington. This event would give walkers the opportunity to stamp challenge books for the Capitol City (Olympia) and the State (Washington) while

visiting many beautiful parks and neighborhoods. (visit my.ava.org for more details).

50 WORKS OF ART FOR 50 YEARS OF WALKING

BY MARY BOND, SAN FRANCISCO BAY BANDITS

San Francisco is rife with public art thanks to programs as old as The New Deal, or the 1980s 1% for Art requirement in new construction regulations, and last year's more temporary Big Art Loop agreement.



You will see some of the fruits of these programs during our 50 Years of AVA celebratory walk, "50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking" on July 24 & 25, 2026. The artworks are very diverse, from murals to canvasses, fountains, statues, collages and "pieces," my favorite art term when I don't know what to call something! Not everything is accessible during weekends, hence our Friday (July 24) option. But no worries. Most of the art is placed outside and Saturday participants will not be disappointed.

We look forward to seeing you here and to sharing our beautiful, historic city with you! We will notify all when pre-registration begins.



PACIFIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY SOUTH BAY STRIDERS

BY HOLLY PELKING

The South Bay Striders AVA 0338 based in San Jose, California, have many anniversaries to celebrate. First of all they will have been "Striding" for 40 years February 2026. In recognition of this milestone, they held an anniversary walk which is the original walk route mapped as their first traditional event as a new club.



The Bellringer Walk in Los Gatos, California, is named after the Bellringer Project initiated in 1976-marking its 50 year anniversary. This project was an initiative honoring properties that contribute to the town's historic character. The program identified pre-1900s homes with architectural and cultural significance, helping homeowners modernize essential systems while restoring period details with support from federal aid and private investment.

Each property is marked by the pictured distinctive bronze cat plaque doorbell (Los Gatos means "the Cats"), designed and crafted by local artisans and students. If you look closely, the door bell is the cat's mouth!

Over 30 stunning Bellringer homes are included on this walk in the beautiful hills of Los Gatos, a city located in the foothills of the Santa Cruz mountains. One of the more majestic homes is pictured here. The beautiful Moser house built in 1885. The Moser family who lived there from 1889- 1916 were friends with Sarah Winchester. Sarah was the daughter-in-law of firearms manufacturer, Oliver Winchester and is known for the famous Winchester Mystery House located on Winchester Blvd, nearby in San Jose.

Yes, The South Bay Striders have many anniversaries in their area this year. One anniversary even has ties to Alfred Hitchcock! Watch for more from this club in the next TAW.

FOUR WALKS IN THE CA WINE COUNTRY

BY TY FREDRIKS

PRESIDENT, CENTRAL COAST BEACH BOARDWALKERS

Join us for the CVA Convention Friday-Sunday, May 15-17, 2026

The Low Desert Roadrunners & Central Coast Beach Boardwalkers welcome everyone to our 3-day California Volkssport Association Convention in Temecula, CA, from May 15 - 17, 2026. Come to sunny Southern California to enjoy three brand new walks, plus one of our perennial favorite YREs.

We have four wonderful walks planned for you: Temecula Rose Garden, Vail Ranch, Murrieta Veterans Memorial, and The Duck Pond Memorial. The weather is sure to thaw out your chilly winter bones, and the opportunities for sightseeing in this lovely desert community abound!

Please save the weekend of May 15-17 and join us for a wonderful time of great walks, delicious food, enjoyable wine tasting, and the best thing that volksmarching has to offer: the Fun, Fitness, and Friendship with lifelong walking companions!!

Further information can be had by contacting the following people from the host clubs:

Kathy Bundy, LDR President, <mailto:bunznkatz7@gmail.com>

Jo Billman, LDR Treasurer, graficnsstuff@gmail.com

Ty Fredriks, CCBB President, 805-714-1552, tyandginger@gmail.com

STROLLING SOLANO AVENUE - ALBANY CA TO BERKELEY CA

BY PATRICIA THOMAS

The San Francisco Bay Bandits invites all walkers to come and enjoy Strolling Solano Avenue, from Albany, California to Berkeley, California, on Saturday, April 25, 2026. We will be starting at the Tay Tah Cafe <https://www.taytahcafe.com/> at 1182 Solano Avenue, directly



across street from the Albany Post Office, after 9 AM. Street parking is available in the surrounding residential neighborhoods (watch the signs and pick an area without time limits). A variety of delicious breakfast sandwiches and specialty coffee and tea drinks are available for purchase at the cafe -- it is a neighborhood favorite.

This neighborhood holds a big "Strolling Solano Avenue" event every September, but we will be enjoying it without the crowds. Both 5K and 10K routes will explore the unique shops and restaurants representing many countries along Solano Avenue, and portions of the Ohlone Greenway trail, named for the Ohlone people who first lived here, and remain active in the community. The trail passes beneath the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) elevated train tracks, and will pass by the Albany library and community center <https://aclibrary.org/locations/ALB/>.

The 5K will travel through neighborhoods of charming, historic homes. The 10K route continues along Cordonices (quail) Creek before gradually climbing the hill to the "gourmet ghetto" area of North Berkeley (home of the original Chez Panisse and other famous eateries). 10K walkers will continue to the University of California campus, where some walkers may wish to detour for a campus visit. The 10K then winds back across town to Live Oak Park with its art center and redwood grove. Then the more challenging part begins, climbing up into the Berkeley hills, where the houses get larger and more elegant as the elevation increases. Walkers are encouraged to take their time and stop to enjoy the views. You will see a lovely Bear Fountain in a traffic circle, which was created because developers were hoping to persuade the state capital to relocate here (the ploy didn't work, but the fountain remains). Around the circle, you will find Indian Rock Avenue. Your trip up the hill will be rewarded by magnificent views of San Francisco Bay (if Carl the Fog cooperates). Please note, climbing up onto the steep rock is not part of our AVA route. Finally, the 10K walkers will descend Indian Rock Path, one of an extensive network of paths <https://www.berkeleypaths.org/> to rejoin the 5K walkers at the top of Solano Avenue.

You can then relax by strolling down the hill by the shops and restaurants along Solano Avenue, before finishing at Tay Tah Cafe, where you may be tempted to treat yourself with a well-deserved tropical-flavored ice cream to finish your perfect East Bay day!

We will have a meet-up point where you can register for all six events and then walk them at your leisure. Keep in mind that the end of July gets hot here, so we are recommending you try and start your walks early in the mornings. Here is a summary of the walks; check out the listed websites on each walk for more information:

1) The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is in the NE Denver Metropolitan Area. With 20 miles of trails covering prairie grasslands, riparian areas, and small lakes, the opportunities for observing wildlife, restored grasslands, and the Colorado Front Range are exceptional. A choice of two 5K trails and a 10K trail are offered. The terrain is relatively flat and mostly treeless. The refuge is open from sunrise to 8:00 PM, and there is no fee for this federal reserve. In addition to the hiking trails, there is a driving trail to follow after completing your walk to see the resident bison herd and other wildlife. Check out <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/rocky-mountain-arsenal>.

2) The Black Forest Regional Park is a large natural area covered with Ponderosa Pine open forest with numerous trails in gentle terrain. See how Mother Nature on the high plains has spent 14 years recovering from a forest fire. Enjoy the powerful images of the Rampart Range and Pikes Peak to the west. Enjoy the quiet of this rural park. The Black Forest area is northeast of Colorado Springs. Check out <https://parks.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/black-forest-regional-park/>



3) The Paint Mines Interpretive Park in Calhan is about 37 miles east of Colorado Springs and is a geological marvel. The park has four miles of trails and covers 750 acres, containing grassland and geologic formations of hoodoos, colored clay and sandstone-capped spires. Unfortunately, I spotted only one tree in the entire park, so this is definitely a walk that you need to do in the early morning and carry lots of water. There is no fee. Check out <https://parks.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/paint-mines-interpretive-park/>.

4) Stratton Open Space spans 318 acres and has 15 miles of trails right in the heart of Colorado Springs. It has great views of the city, and travels through pine forests and meadows. Mountain bikers are allowed, but for the most part, they are pretty respectful. There are a few uphill and some rocky, tree-rooted trails, but as I mentioned, the views are worth it. Take your time and bring plenty of water. Check out <https://coloradosprings.gov/stratton>.

5) The Garden of the Gods is a National Natural Landmark with more trails (23 miles) than you can walk and more views than you can photograph. Large natural sandstone monoliths, as well as numerous smaller formations, are reached on the trails throughout the park. Scenery within the area, as well as outward to the mountains, is unparalleled. Do the walk and make the time to explore the rest afterwards. One-track trails, improved trails, and some paved trails are part of the experience. Check out <https://gardenofgods.com/>.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

Christopher Begnoche, RM RD

COME TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RENDEZVOUS IN JULY

BY SHERRY SAYERS AND TERRY LUNGHOFER

Come one, come all to the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous in July, where we have planned six signature walking events for your pleasure to celebrate the 50th anniversary of AVA.



6) Last but not least, is our mining adventure walk in Victor, known as the City of Mines. Victor is approximately 47 miles from Colorado Springs, and sits at around 10,000 feet, so we recommend you do this one last to get acclimatized to the altitude. The 10K goes to the Vindicator Valley Trail where you will wind around the historic Independence mining camp where Winfield Scott Stratton discovered gold around 1891. Yes, this is the same Mr. Stratton that Stratton Open Space is named for. Victor is also home to Rita, the Rock Planter Troll, so you will have the opportunity to do a separate walk to visit her. Again, make sure you carry plenty of water and take your time in order to breathe. Check out <https://victorcolorado.com/>.

We only have five clubs in the Rocky Mountain Region, but they are all very dedicated and work hard to maintain some amazing year-round and seasonal events for you to enjoy and we will highlight some of their best walks. Please plan to spend some extra time in our region to take part in these unique walks that our clubs have available for you to enjoy.

See you in July and stay tuned for more information on lodging and the location of the registration site!

With the 100th anniversary of this famous highway's designation by Congress, it was a natural theme for our Roundup since the "Mother Road" went through 3 of our regions states. Mark your calendar NOW for our 10-event walking weekend October 28-November 1.

This extended weekend will start on Wednesday with the Dogwood Trailblazers' YRE walk of Joplin. If you are interested in another nearby Route 66 walk then the Carthage YRE is highly recommended. Both of these walks will be "remote" start/finish points for that day with assisted registration being at the Drury Inn & Suites. This hotel is tentatively planned to be our overnight accommodations for several days. The Drury chain of hotels is well-known for a fabulous breakfast buffet and their hot food & cold drinks at their nightly Kickback.

Thursday will be devoted to all 13.2 miles of US 66 in the Sunflower State. The shortest but perhaps best-signed stretch of Route 66's eight-state run is its slice across the southeast corner of Kansas. A traditional event will be sponsored by the Sod Stompers featuring the small community of Riverton. All participants will have an opportunity to walk on an original portion of US 66 with the 10km walkers enjoying more of the Kansas farmland and the Rainbow Curve (Marsh Arch) Bridge over Brush Creek. Just a few miles further down the Mother Road, the Baxter Springs YRE will be available. This event will start at the Heritage Center and Museum. Baxter Springs is known for its Fort Blair Civil War Historical Site and its well-preserved (& decorated) US 66 businesses. On a side note, take time to enjoy some of the relics of the historic highway in Galena as you travel from Joplin into Kansas. Some of the sites in Galena were the inspiration for the Disney/Pixar movie "Cars". You might find the Luigi character sitting in an old garage along the way.

Friday will be filled with 2 traditional walks in Oklahoma. The morning event will be in Miami and the afternoon walk will be in Will Rogers' hometown of Claremore. Both of these walks will have numerous signage, murals, and businesses associated with US 66. The Claremore event will start in the J.M. Davis Arms & Historical Museum. This is a fantastic museum with different collections to be enjoyed by visitors to this complex. Plans are in the works for the Davis Museum to host our "Brats & Bites" on Friday evening before our travels to Tulsa.

On Saturday morning, the Tulsa Walking Club will be sponsoring a traditional event along 11th Street, known for its large, statue-like characters, signs and the old businesses that lined US 66. Another walk - location to be determined - will be featured in Tulsa in the afternoon. The evening meal will be at The Spudder. Not much to look at from the outside but it has unique décor with its many gasoline signs and gas-pump crowns along with excellent food.

Wandergruppe of OKC will sponsor traditional walk in Bristow on Sunday morning. This town features highlights of railroading days along with Route 66. The Chandler YRE will be offered as a "remote" registration for any interested participant for the afternoon. Each town will have some unique sites from this historic highway which helped with the westward settlement of the U.S.

A printed brochure will be available when all events and the details are finalized. Pre-registration with payment will be encouraged. This will help in the planning of all of the special event activities besides making the walking events handed more efficiently. There definitely will be fun, fitness, friendship and food on the agenda, so come enjoy this Halloween weekend in the South Central Region! If you need further information, please contact: Terri Tyler tttyler50@gmail.com 785-817-6333. E-mails are preferred due to "spam" calls.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Terri Tyler, SC RD



HALLOWEEN KLICKS ON ROUTE 66

BY TERRI TYLER, PRESIDENT OF SUNFLOWER SOD STOMPERS

Yes. That's right. It is never too early to start planning your weekends to help celebrate AVA's 50 Anniversary. Since 2026 is an even-numbered year, it is time for the South Central Region to host their 13th biennial get-together known as their Regional Roundup.

This year, the Dogwood Trailblazers, Sunflower Sod Stompers, Tulsa Walking Club, and Wandergruppe of OKC are combining their efforts to host "Halloween Klicks on Route 66".

HALLOWEEN CLICKS ON SOUTHWEST MISSOURI EVENTS

BY GLEN CONYERS

Two small Missouri towns that live within fourteen miles of one another in southwest Missouri is where we find Aurora and Monett Missouri along Highway 60. Dogwood Trailblazers Walking Club have chosen these two towns for two walking events on March 28, 2026. They each share a long history of the historical railroad days, in fact the starting point and registration for the Aurora event will take place in the historic Frisco Railway depot which adjoins a small museum of items about the town.

Aurora, in addition to interesting railroad history, was also a major lead mining area for many years.

Both towns are very well-preserved architecture and downtown structures. Walking along many of the streets, walkers will still see at times evidence of the WPA sidewalks still in place. There are not too many famous folks that this writer could determine although the name "Brad Pitt" surfaced in Aurora. Anyone know who that is?

Dogwood Trailblazers invite you all down for a couple of walks to do without doing a lot of driving. Come see us!

TULSA WALKING CLUB PRESENTS APRIL AND MAY WALKS

BY TERESA ARNOLD, PRESIDENT TULSA WALKING CLUB

CIVIL WAR WALK OFFERED IN OKLAHOMA: Looking for a little history to spice up your walk? On April 18th, the Tulsa Walking Club is pleased to host a 5K/10K walk at Honey Springs Battlefield, Rentiesville, Oklahoma.

The Battle of Honey Springs (July 17, 1863) was in both size and importance, the Gettysburg of the Civil War in Indian Territory, for it marked the climax of massed Confederate military resistance and opened the way for the capture of Fort Smith and much of Arkansas. Honey Springs was unique among Civil War battles, in that the number of African American and Native Americans engaged outnumbered the European Americans on either side.

Honey Springs in 1863 was an important stopping point or "depot" on the Texas Road. This wagon trace led south across the rolling hills of Oklahoma and was a vital North-South route through the Indian Territory where the "Five Civilized Tribes" had been resettled following the Trail of Tears. According to U.S. Army official reports, the Confederate commander, Brigadier General Douglas L. Cooper, had gathered about 6,000 of his troops at Honey Springs, a well-known place to rest and get fresh water along the Texas Road. There they awaited another 3,000 troops under Brigadier General James Cabell from Fort Smith and together they planned to attack and annihilate the garrison at Fort Gibson north of the Arkansas River.



In the meantime, the Union Indian Brigade at Fort Gibson was reinforced by Major General James G. Blunt and a division of his Army of the Frontier. Blunt decided to attack Cooper's force before it could be aided and, after crossing the Arkansas River, marched his 3,000 men all night. They reached the Confederate line on the morning of July 17, 1863, rested for nearly two hours, then began the attack with more than an hour of artillery fire. That was followed by fierce hand-to-hand combat which led to the collapse of the Confederate center.

As a result of this battle, the Confederates no longer controlled the area north of the Arkansas River and a route to Fort Smith, Arkansas, was opened to the Federal army.

The walk consists of interpretive walking trails that follow the movements of the troops prior to and during the battle. On each of these trails, wayside exhibits use quotes from original first-hand accounts to describe the day's events. (see picture)

Honey Springs Battlefield is located northeast of Rentiesville, Oklahoma, approximately eight miles from the intersection of Interstate 40 and U.S. Highway 69.

Walkers are in for an additional treat, as a new interactive museum and visitor center has been built. Walkers will want to allow time after the walk to explore this exciting new facility.

Come explore the history of this battlefield. For details, please see the AVA website to download a flyer; contact Teresa Arnold @ 918-630-3206 or email at arnoldtea@hotmail.com.

Then join TWC on May 16th, for a walk through the vibrant downtown of Broken Arrow. There will be a picnic after the walk. There is even a grain elevator in downtown Broken Arrow! Don't miss out on all the fun and camaraderie!! For details, please see the AVA website to download a flyer; contact Ralph Axsom @ 918-252-4752 or email at ralphax66@gmail.com.



Jeanne Stokes, SE RD

SOUTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

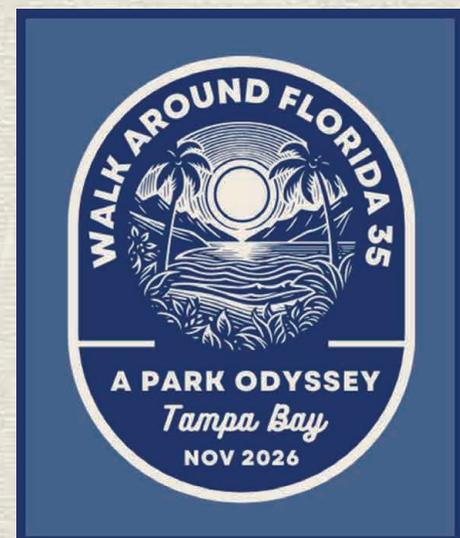


WALK AROUND FLORIDA 35: A PARK ODYSSEY

BY ALICE LAWRENCE, JOHN MCCLELLAN, CATHY METHERELL

Walk Around Florida (WAF) 35, an AVA 50th Anniversary event, will take place Nov 6-8 in the Bradenton area of Tampa Bay. WAF is an annual multi-event weekend sponsored by the Happy Wanderers, Mid-Florida Milers, and Suncoast Sandpipers.

This year's host club, the Sandpipers, is planning walks with a "Park Odyssey" theme as participants travel from city, county, state and national parks and preserves.



On Friday, there will be a hosted walk of the Bradenton Year Round Event, featuring a vibrant riverwalk, the quaint Village of the Arts, and LECOM Park, spring training home of the Pittsburgh Pirates. On Saturday, a walk is planned in the Robinson Preserve, home to coastal grasslands, marshes and mangrove habitats filled with Florida wildlife; then it's on to the De Soto National Memorial, stepping back in time to revisit the 1539 landing of Hernando de Soto and European exploration of the southern United States. On Sunday, the turbulent past will be forgotten with a hike in a serene state park. Under consideration are Lake Manatee State Park with its vast reservoir and Oscar Scherer State park, home to the inquisitive Florida Scrub Jay.

Organizers are coordinating hotel, dinner, and social activities throughout the weekend to ensure plenty of opportunities to rekindle old friendships and to spark new ones. Look for the brochure and registration form on Jul 1. They will be posted on suncoastsandpipers.org and facebook.com/walkaroundflorida35. For more information, contact Alice Lawrence at 727-542-9742 or pipers@tampabay.rr.com.



RIVERWALK SOUTH FEATURED YRE PI DAY WALK

BY MARTIN CALLAHAN



From left to right, Gayle Weinraub, Ellen Ott (behind Gayle) and Jackie Lytle display their pies. The pies were handed out to Volkssporters participating in the walk at a previous featured Pi Day event in 2022 in San Antonio, Texas. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

The San Antonio Pathfinders is again hosting its annual Pi Day celebration on March 14, this time on the Riverwalk South trail as a featured YRE Walk. The walk starts at the King William River Park, 247 Washington Street, San Antonio Texas. The start time is between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. with no official finish time since it is a featured YRE.

March 14 is National Pi Day and is the symbol used in mathematics which is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter (3.14). You can learn more about Pi Day online at: www.piday.org/. A free hand pie will be given to each paid Volkssporter as long as they last.

The Trail covers historic downtown San Antonio along the Paseo del Rio or "Riverwalk" through the King William district, La Villita, HemisFair Park, the Institute of Texan Cultures, San Fernando Cathedral and Mission San Antonio de Valero better known as "The Alamo". Pets are not recommended but if taken must be leashed at all times. Numerous restaurants are located along the walk. There are no restrooms at the start but there are restrooms on the trail.



John and Brenda Zimmerman with Blanca stop for a picture along the walk trail in front of the historic Haarmann/Goethe House built in 1893. The house was along the trail through the King William Historic District during a San Antonio Pathfinders walk in February 2025. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

One special highlight of this walk trail is the King William Historic District that was the residential center of the German community in San Antonio and comprises about twenty-two blocks with 79 historic buildings. The streets were laid out between 1853 and 1859, with the main street being named King William in honor of the King of Prussia.

The walk route will take you by many of the most beautiful and historic buildings in the district, with the oldest dating to the 1860s. The walk route also continues along a portion of the scenic San Antonio River Walk and will treat walkers to a view of the old San Antonio Arsenal built in 1859 and other historic structures.

For information on the walk event contact Ellen Ott at 210-723-8574 or email her at: ellenott@sbcglobal.net. You can learn more about this walk event and others by visiting the club website at: <https://sanantoniopathfinders.org/>.

THE SAN ANTONIO PATHFINDERS' 15TH ANNUAL TOUR DE CASTROVILLE WALK

BY MARTIN CALLAHAN

The San Antonio Pathfinders is hosting its 15th annual Volksmarch on April 11 which is an adjunct of the annual Tour de Castroville walk, run, and ride family events in Castroville, Texas. Registration for the Volksmarch is separate from the Tour de Castroville registration, though Volkssporters will follow the same Tour de Castroville marked trails.

Castroville, also known as the "Little Alsace of Texas" is located on the Medina River and US Highway 90 W, 25 miles west of downtown San Antonio in eastern Medina County. The town was named after its founder, Henri Castro, who obtained a land grant from the Republic of Texas to establish a colony. Henri Castro and his mostly Catholic Alsatian farmers first settled on the scenic bend of the Medina River in September of 1844.

Walkers prepare to start the April 2025 Tour de Castroville walk in Castroville, Texas. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)



There are over 300 preserved historic buildings in and around Castroville, many of which sit in the old part of town, now a National Historic District. A large number of these original buildings, some displaying unique Alsatian architecture, were constructed more than 170 years ago and are still being used as residences or businesses. Note that the sign "PCH", on these historic buildings, stands for Pioneer Castroville Home. You will also have the opportunity to visit numerous antique shops, restaurants and the famous Haby's Bakery after your walk or along the trail. For more information on Castroville online go to: www.castroville.com.



The 5 km and 10 km walk routes are rated 1A and begin at the event tent at the Castroville Regional Park, 816 Alsace Street, Castroville, TX 78009. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. with the walk start time between 8:20 and 11:30, finish by 2 p.m. For information on the 15th Annual Tour de Castroville online visit: castrovilletx.gov/tourdecastroville but do not register on this website but at the event tent.

For information on this walk contact Mike Schwencke at: 210-382-0367 or email him at: mike.schwencke@outlook.com. You can learn more about this walk event and others by visiting the club website at: <https://sanantoniopathfinders.org>.

From left to right, Kathy Swoboda, Andy Thomas and Kathy Schwencke with Blanca all pose for a picture by the San Antonio Pathfinder's banner next to the start point for the April 2025 Tour de Castroville registration in Castroville, Texas. Photo credit: (Martin Callahan)

THE SAN ANTONIO PATHFINDERS' BOERNE OUTDOOR FAMILY FAIR WALK

BY MARTIN CALLAHAN

The San Antonio Pathfinders Volkssport club of San Antonio, Texas, is hosting its second annual walk in conjunction with the Boerne Outdoor Family Fair on March 21 beginning at The Main Plaza, 100 N Main St, Boerne, TX 78006 with the start time from 8 a.m. until 10 a.m., finish by 2:00 p.m. Boerne is about 30 miles northwest of San Antonio. The town was first settled in 1849 by a group of German pioneers and continues to this day to have a distinctive German flavor.

Volkssporters will follow a route through residential and historic sections of the town including the Outdoor Family Fair Event at the Town Square. On the walk you will have the opportunity to visit many fine antique shops, craft shops and restaurants. You can learn about Boerne online at: www.visitboerne.org/.

Kathy Schwecke (left) and Ellen Ott wave to the camera from the start table for the March 2025 Boerne Outdoor Family Fair Walk. During the fair they handed out free literature on Volkssporting and souvenir Volksmarch patches and medals for interested visitors to their table at the Main Plaza. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)



The Boerne Outdoor Family Fair is from 10am - 2pm in the Main Plaza. The Outdoor Family Fair provides families the opportunity to learn about local services and organizations that are available in Boerne and surrounding areas. This community-focused event features entertainment and fun for the whole family. Stop by the booths to learn about the different organizations and play some games.

For information on the walk events contact Ellen Ott at 210-723-8574 or email her at: ellenott@sbcglobal.net. You can learn more about this walk event and others by visiting the club website at: <https://sanantoniopathfinders.org>.



Sheri and Harold Doss with Blanca stop for a picture in front of some angel wings painted on the front of a business on the trail along Main Street during the March 2025 The Boerne Outdoor Family Fair Walk. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

THE HILL COUNTRY VOLKSSPORTSVEREIN'S EASTER WALK IN COMFORT, TEXAS

BY MARTIN CALLAHAN

On April 4, the Hill Country Volkssportsverein is hosting its popular Easter walk in Comfort, Texas. This event is best known for its Easter egg hunt along the walk route. Comfort is about a 45-minute drive northwest of San Antonio at the junction of State Highway 27, U.S. Highway 87, and Interstate Highway 10.

Hermann Altgelt established the town in 1854, near the site of an Indian village. German settlers, many of whom had a philosophy opposed to a formal local government, settled the town. The town suffered a tragic loss of life in 1862 at the Battle of Nueces when a large number of men from Comfort were killed attempting to cross into Mexico to enlist in the Union Army. After the war the bones of these Unionists were gathered and buried in Comfort, with a monument dedicated in 1866. The Treue der Union (Loyalty to the Union) monument is one of a few in the country that is allowed to fly the flag continually at half-mast.



From left to right, Mike Linnebur, Jimmy Young, Jeanie and John King all proudly display the Easter eggs they found along the trail that they exchanged for a gift at the end of the walk during the March 2024 Comfort, Texas Easter Walk. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

The walk start point is the Comfort Park, Highway 27, Comfort TX 78013. The traditional tasty breakfast and lunch will be available at family prices at the start point. Volkssporters will have two 5k loops to choose from. Volkssporters choosing one loop will follow the trail through town past the Treue de Union monument and then stroll along Cypress Creek to the finish. Volkssporters doing the other loop will follow country roads past San Jose Cemetery to the finish.

Volkssporters doing either a 5k or 10k trail will also have the opportunity shop in the numerous antique and handicraft shops in downtown Comfort. The 5K walk route is rated 1A and attractive B-awards will be available for purchase. A limited number of large, colorful Easter eggs will be hidden on the left side of the walk trail. Volkssporters can exchange these eggs at the finish for a prize with a limit of one prize per participant.

For more information on both walks call John Bohnert at: 830-496-1746 or email him at: tinabohnert@gmail.com.



Cindy Mayfield proudly displays the Easter egg she found along the trail before exchanging it for a prize flower during the April 2025 Comfort, Texas Easter Walk. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

Why This Matters for Aransas Pathways & Aransas County

This partnership aligns naturally with Aransas Pathways' mission and our four pillars—Birding, History, Kayaking, and Trails. AVA collaboration can:

- Promote healthy, low-impact recreation for all ages
- Highlight Aransas County's natural, historic, and cultural sites
- Support placemaking and heritage-based tourism
- Connect local trails to a nationally and internationally recognized walking network
- Encourage repeat visitation rooted in wellness and meaningful travel

Aransas County already has an AVA presence through the Rockport Trailways Club, a local AVA chapter hosted by Rockport Parks and Recreation—providing a strong foundation as we explore expanding opportunities countywide.



WALKING TOGETHER TOWARD MORE CONNECTED TRAILS

BY ARANSAS PATHWAYS

The following was posted on AVA Facebook, and is a great partnership to read:

[Aransas Pathways](#), a non-profit organization in Rockport, TX, along the Texas coastline, welcomed Mike Shwencke (President) and Kathy Shwencke of the [San Antonio Pathfinders](#) AVA Walking Club during their visit on January 8 at the Aquarium Education Center. Their visit sparked thoughtful dialogue and exciting ideas to explore future collaborations that support healthy living, outdoor recreation, and heritage tourism in Aransas County.

Also in the photo is Ms. Pam Stranahan, Co-Chair of the Aransas Pathways Steering Committee, reflecting the collaborative leadership that continues to guide Pathways forward.

Looking Ahead: AVA 50th Anniversary Walks

As AVA celebrates its 50th Anniversary, the San Antonio Pathfinders will host special Volkssport walking events on February 20–22 in Fredericksburg and San Antonio, Texas, bringing together walkers from across the region to celebrate five decades of movement, wellness, and international friendship.

AVA, Volkssport & the Global Walking Movement

The American Volkssport Association (AVA) was founded in 1976, inspired by the European Volkssport movement—literally meaning “the people’s sport.” Originating in countries such as Germany and Austria, Volkssport focuses on non-competitive, inclusive walking and outdoor recreation that encourages lifelong wellness, community connection, and cultural discovery.

AVA is the official U.S. member of the International Federation of Popular Sports (IVV), a global federation established in 1968 and now active in 20+ countries worldwide. Through this international network, walking becomes a shared language—connecting communities across borders while celebrating local culture, heritage, and place.

Interested in walking with purpose, discovering new places, and supporting healthy, people-centered communities?

- Follow Aransas Pathways for upcoming AVA-inspired walks and trail experiences
- Learn how to participate in AVA walking events locally and beyond
- Join us as we connect local trails to a global walking community

More opportunities and events are ahead—stay tuned.

Birding. History. Kayaking. Trails.

JOIN NORTH TEXAS FOR A GROUP WALK THIS SPRING

BY SUSAN FINE

The clubs in North Central Texas meet weekly, and sometimes twice a week, to walk one of the many year-round or seasonal walks in the area. We invite everyone to join us for any or all events. These walks are hosted by four clubs: [East Texas Trekkers](#), [Dallas Trekkers](#), [Tarrant County Walkers](#), and [Hood County Hummers](#). All walks meet at 9:15am to register, walk at 9:30am.

Here's a list of upcoming walks (please confirm with any club president in case there is a change):

Tuesday March 10 – Benbrook walk. Meet at Art Cowlson Trailhead at Pecan Valley Park

Tuesday March 17 – Fort Worth Cultural District and Trinity River. Meet at Fairfield Inn on University.

Saturday March 21 – Canyon Creek in Richardson. Meet at Tom Thumb on Custard

Saturday March 28 – Weatherford. Meet at Albertson's on Spring St.

Tuesday March 31 – Irving's Las Colinas – meet at Marriott on Las Colinas Blvd.

Saturday April 4 – Historic Nacogdoches. Meet at Java Jacks on North St.

Tuesday April 7 – TBA

Tuesday April 14 – Fort Worth Nature Center. Meet at Hardwicke Interpretive Center

Tuesday April 21 – Dallas Downtown. Meet at Old Red Courthouse on Houston

Saturday April 25 – Rails to Trails celebration – walk Katy Trail and Highland Park. Meet at Trader Joe's

Tuesday April 28 – TCU Fort Worth. Meet at Kroger parking lot on University

Tuesday May 5 – Highland Park. Meet at Trader Joe's on Cole

Tuesday May 12 – Fort Worth Downtown. Meet at Sheraton Hotel on Commerce.

In addition to these specific walks, the Dallas Trekkers meet every Sunday at 8am to walk White Rock Lake, and the Hood County Hummers meet every Saturday at 9am to walk Granbury.



GROUP WALK OF TEXAS OLDEST TOWN, NACOGDOCHES, IS APRIL 4

BY SUSAN FINE

Historic Nacogdoches, Texas, the "oldest town in Texas" dating back to the 1700s, has been re-sanctioned as a seasonal walk, valid through June 2026, by the East Texas Trekkers. A guided group walk is scheduled for April 4 at 9:30am, starting at Java Jacks, 1122 North Street, Nacogdoches.



The 6K walk explores [Stephen F. Austin State University](#), ranked as the top regional public university in Texas, known for its strong programs in teacher education, forestry and agriculture, the arts and D1 athletics. Walkers will also stroll on campus through the 11-acre [Ruby M. Mize Azalea Gardens](#), Texas' largest azalea garden, maintained by SFA students, community members and nursery professionals.

The 11K walk consists of two separate 5/6 loops: one to the Tucker Woods near the university, and a separate loop to the historic downtown with churches, cemetery, Victorian homes, and the Caddo Indian mounds.

Nacogdoches originates from the Caddo-speaking Native American tribe "Nacogdoche", and dates back thousands of years to the Caddo settlements. Spain arrived in 1540 establishing a mission, the first European construction in the area. After the French and Indian War, Spain decided the mission was too costly, and ordered everyone to move to San Antonio in 1772. Obviously, many stayed.

The city has been under more flags than the state of Texas – [nine flags total](#). In addition to the Six Flags of Texas (Spain, France, Mexico, Republic of Texas, Confederate States of America, and United States), it also flew under the Magee-Gutierrez Republic, the Long Republic, and the Fredonian Rebellion. In 1859, the first oil well in Texas began operations, but it was never as well known as Spindletop near Beaumont, drilled in 1901.

Located in the piney woods of east Texas, Nacogdoches is about 140 miles northeast of Houston, 180 miles southeast of Dallas, and 90 miles southwest of Shreveport. Nacogdoches hosts the Texas Blueberry Festival on the second Saturday in June.

As a side note, plan to visit the [Caddo Mounds State Historic Site](#), about 30 miles west of Nacogdoches, founded more than 1,200 years ago. Today three earthen mounds, still considered sacred to Caddo people, rise on the landscape.

We hope you join us Saturday April 4 at 9:30am to walk the Oldest Town in Texas, Nacogdoches.





HERE IS A LIST OF UPCOMING MULTI-DAY EVENTS FOR YOUR TRAVEL PLANNING. CLICK ON THE LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THESE CLUBS.

2026 AVA Multiple Event Listing				
Month	Date	Multi-day Event Description	Host Club	Location
March	20-22	Atlantic Regional Conference 	Virginia Volkssport Association	VA
April	17-19	Memories on the Mighty Missouri	Nebraska Trailblazers	IA & NE
April	23-26	Wild and Woodsy in Washington	Capitol Volkssport Club	WA
May	2-9	MOVED TO 2027 Huffin & Puffin on High Plains of Kansas	Sunflower Sod Stompers	KS
May	16-20	NE Weekend: A Revolutionary Event	Empire State Capital Volkssporters	NY
June	6-7	Crazy Horse Sat. and Black Hills Sun	Black Hills Volkssport Association	SD
June	19-21	Mid-America Walking Weekend	Mid-America Region	IL & IN
July	24-25	San Francisco - 50 Years of Art	Bay Bandits Walking Club	CA
July	28-1	Rocky Mountain Rendezvous	Falcon Wanderers	CO
August	28-29	Anniversary Walk in Boston	Walk 'N Mass Volkssport Club	MA
September	7	Mackinaw City & St. Ignace	Mid-America Region	MI
September	24-27	Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis & Clark	Oregon Trails State Volkssport Association	OR
October	9-11	Philadelphia - Where the Nation Was Born 	Liberty Bell Wanderers	PA
October	16-18	U.S. FreedomWalk Festival IML	U.S. FreedomWalk	VA
October	28-1	Halloween Clicks on Route 66	South Central Region	KS, MO, OK
November	6-8	35th Walk Around Florida	Suncoast Sandpipers, Mid-Florida Milers, and the Happy Wanderers	FL
November	14	Honoring Veterans	Ohio Wander Freunde	OH
December	5	Weihnachten Lights Spectacular	Alpine Helen Volksmarch Club	GA

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UPCOMING



EVENTS

IVV EVENT



AWARDS

BIKE DISTANCE



AWARDS



IVV DISTANCE AWARDS

AVA FEATURED EVENTS

Atlantic Regional Conf

**March 20-22, 2026
Williamsburg, VA**



'Signature' AVA 50th Event

Pre-walk Friday March 19-Fredericksburg
3 Walk Events Williamsburg area
Bike and Swim events

Special Hotel Rate at Best Western Historic District
Sponsored by Virginia Volkssport Association

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Memories on the Mighty MO

**Council Bluffs, IA
& Nebraska City, NE**



April 17-19, 2026

'Signature' AVA 50th Event
Walk along the Missouri River
3 Walks, Dinner & Socials, Museum Tour

Special Hotel Rate: [Holiday Inn & Suites](#)
[Pre-Register Here](#)

Sponsored by Nebraska Trailblazers

[Click here for more information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: ava.org – find a walk

Wild & Woodsy in Washington

**Lacey, Olympia, and
Tumwater, WA
April 23-26, 2026**



11 Walks Plus Pub Crawl Over 4 days
Socials & Dinners

[Brochure & Registration Form Here](#)

Sponsored by Capitol Volkssport Club

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Revolutionary War Battle Sites

**Lake George, NY
May 16-20, 2026**



'Signature' AVA 50th Event

7 Walks Over 5 Days

Walk the Story that Changed the World: A
Multiday Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites
Social Event plus Dinner

Special Hotel Rate: Georgian Lakeside Resort

Sponsored by Empire State Capital Volkssporters

[Click Here for More Information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: ava.org – find a walk

Crazy Horse, SD & More

**June 6, 2026
June 7, 2026**



'Signature' AVA 50th Event

40th Annual Crazy Horse Memorial
Volkssport Event on June 6
(Bring 3 cans of food + \$4 to walk monument)

Black Hills Walk on June 7

Sponsored by Black Hills Volkssport Assoc.

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Mid-America Regional Conf

**Indiana & Illinois
June 19-21, 2026**



'Signature' AVA 50th Event

Walk in Terre Haute, IN
Charleston, IL
Fox Ridge State Park, IL
& more to come

Sponsored by Mid-America Region

[Click Here for More Information](#)

HOW TO BOOST YOUR WELLNESS WITH WALKING AND SIMPLE DAILY HABITS

BY PATRICIA SARMIENTO

For walking club members and outdoor enthusiasts across the U.S., staying consistent can be harder than the miles themselves. Common wellness challenges, stress that lingers, sleep that slips, and routines that break during busy weeks, often drain fitness motivation even for people who genuinely enjoy getting outside. Organized walking events can add structure and social support, but many groups still struggle to connect those outings to lasting wellness improvement strategies. With the right community health resources, a regular walk can become a steady reset.

QUICK SUMMARY OF KEY WELLNESS STEPS

- Practice stress reduction techniques that support calmer daily routines and overall well-being.
- Start beginner fitness routines with walking to build movement habits safely and steadily.
- Build healthy sleep habits by prioritizing rest as part of a balanced wellness plan.
- Make nutritional changes with simple upgrades that support energy and long term health.
- Create a positive social environment that encourages participation and supports ongoing self-improvement.

UNDERSTANDING HOLISTIC WELLNESS BASICS

To ground your walking goals, start with the big picture.

Holistic wellness means your health is more than symptoms or step counts. A state of **complete physical, mental and social well-being** includes how your body moves, how your mind copes, and how supported you feel day to day. Walking fits here as a simple exercise, and rest matters because recovery helps your body adapt.

This matters for walking club members because progress is not just faster pacing. Regular walking can support your body in many ways, including **improving heart health**, while stress, poor sleep, or overdoing it can stall motivation. When you treat wellness as a system, your habits work together instead of competing.

Picture a week of group walks plus a busy schedule. If you add gentle walks, sleep a bit more, and take one rest day, you often feel steadier and show up more consistently. If you push hard every day, small aches and irritability can build.

With that foundation, practical habit blocks make daily choices easier and more rewarding.

HABITS THAT MAKE WALKING WELLNESS STICK

Try these small rituals to steady your week.

These habits turn “good intentions” into repeatable choices you can do between organized walks. They help walking enthusiasts and club members build energy, manage stress, and stay consistent long enough to notice real health benefits.

Bookend Breathing

- What it is: Do a 2-minute **five-finger breathing practice** before and after your walk.
- How often: Daily or on walk days.
- Why it helps: It downshifts stress so your walk feels restorative, not rushed.

Default Walk Appointment

- What it is: Put two walks on your calendar like meetings with a clear start time.
- How often: Weekly.
- Why it helps: Scheduled movement reduces decision fatigue and improves follow-through.

Fuel and Hydrate Check

- What it is: Pack water and a simple snack before longer routes or hotter days.
- How often: Per walk over 45 minutes.
- Why it helps: Steadier energy supports pace, mood, and safer recovery.

Friendly Boundary Plan

- What it is: Use the **boundary definition** to set a pace limit you can say out loud.
- How often: Before each group walks.
- Why it helps: Clear limits prevent overdoing it and protect motivation.

Replace One Drain

- What it is: Swap one negative habit after dinner for a 10-minute easy stroll.
- How often: 3 times weekly.
- Why it helps: Small wins build confidence and make routines easier to repeat.

Pick one habit this week and adapt it to your family’s schedule.

COMMON QUESTIONS FROM WALKERS STAYING CONSISTENT

A few quick answers to common sticking points.

Q: What are effective strategies to reduce stress and enhance overall wellness through self-improvement?

A: First, identify your main trigger, such as time pressure, social stress, or mental overload. Then adjust your plan with a small, repeatable reset like a 10-minute easy walk plus a short breathing pause. Confidence helps consistency, and walking for mental health can be a steady anchor while you build other habits.

Q: How can I stay motivated to maintain a regular fitness routine that supports my health goals?

A: Identify what makes you skip walks, such as weather, boredom, or a packed calendar. Then adjust by using a backup option like an indoor loop, a shorter route, or a set meet-up time with your walking club for accountability. Tracking one simple win, like the number of walks per week, often keeps motivation realistic.

Q: What tips can help improve sleep quality as part of a holistic approach to wellness?

A: Identify your biggest sleep disruptor, such as late screens, heavy meals, or rumination. Then adjust with a consistent wind-down cue like a gentle after-dinner stroll and a set lights-out time. Keep evening walks easy so your body settles rather than ramps up.

Q: How do I create and maintain healthy boundaries to reduce overwhelm and improve mental health?

A: Identify where you tend to overextend, such as pace, distance, or saying yes to every event. Then adjust by choosing one clear boundary you can state ahead of time, like a turnaround time or a maximum effort level. If you need to share limitations or wellness forms with a group organizer, a simple fillable online document you can save and send can reduce stress, including [working with PDFs online](#).

Q: How can I find local walking events and trails that support my fitness and wellness journey?

A: Identify what support you need most, such as beginner-friendly pacing, social connection, or training structure. Then adjust your search by checking community calendars, park and recreation listings, trail associations, and library bulletin boards, plus asking your club leaders for recurring routes. Interest is rising, and searches for [local walking groups are up by 300%](#), so you are unlikely to be the only one looking.

Choose one small adjustment and let your walking community help you keep it going.

BUILD LASTING WELLNESS BY WALKING AND ONE SIMPLE DAILY HABIT

It's easy for good intentions to fade when weather shifts, schedules fill up, or motivation dips, even for committed walkers with long-term fitness goals. The steadier approach is a personal growth reflection that favors consistent wellness practices, small adjustments, and community health engagement over perfection. With time, the outdoor activity benefits stack up, more reliable energy, better mood, and a routine that supports self-improvement motivation without burning out.



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