



Press Release

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For immediate release

Play safe in the mountains

Advice for hillwalkers as summer slow to arrive on the heights

Hillwalkers and climbers have been delighted to get back to Scotland's mountains in recent weeks.

But Scotland's weather hasn't been playing ball with people's dreams of returning to the heights.

While we're on the countdown to midge season, and ticks have already been making their presence felt in the glens, cooler than average temperatures have meant many late-lying snow patches remain, some of them icy when the temperature drops.

And only last weekend a well-known Mountain Leader posted photos of himself and his clients at the top of Ben Nevis in full winter conditions.

The message to hillwalkers has been clear: have fun, but be careful up there!

Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland, said: "I think the limitations placed on us by Covid-19 have made us all more appreciative of the great outdoors and the pleasures as well as the health benefits of walking and climbing amongst Scotland's mountains.

"The freedom to do that comes with responsibilities though. Our Tak It Home and Considerate Camping campaigns encourage people to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside and those they meet there, whether residents or visitors like themselves.

"But especially at this time of year, when weather can change so quickly from sunshine to storm, we encourage people to think safety. With the right kit and knowledge you can stay safe and get the best from your visit to the mountains."

Mountaineering Scotland has a wealth of online safety and skills advice. And recognising the number of people who are new to the hills, it has now launched **Sofa2Summit**, a free online course to help people get the most out of hiking and hill walking this spring and summer.

Split up into seven weekly sections, it explains the hiking basics through videos, downloads and text, plus a few quizzes to allow participants to check their understanding on the way.

The course is available free at www.mountaineering.scot/sofa2summit

Anyone heading for the hills is also advised to check a mountain-specific weather forecast before going, such as the Mountain Weather Information Service, at www.mwis.org.uk/

Shaun Roberts, Principal of sportscotland's National Outdoor training Centre Glenmore Lodge said: "The sun may be shining this weekend, but there are still winter conditions on our higher hills that can require the use of axe and crampons and can give white out navigation conditions in the cloud. Many of us are also still feeling the lack of fitness after months of lockdown. Take some more time in your preparation to get back in that headspace and be open with friends when discussing hill fitness and ambitions. Most of all...have an amazing time."

Kev Mitchell Vice Chair of Scottish Mountain rescue added: "Despite the challenges the ongoing situation is putting on our volunteer team members, Scottish Mountain Rescue Teams remain ready to respond to anyone who gets into difficulty in the outdoors, wherever that may be, in any and all weathers. If you are injured or in need of help in the outdoors call 999, ask for POLICE, then MOUNTAIN RESCUE."

Chief Inspector Gordon Fotheringham said: "Scotland has fantastic hills and mountains to enjoy, but these beautiful landscapes should not be underestimated. The conditions can change quickly and be very different from the area you left behind.

"If you are planning to walk in the hills or mountains, we ask you to be prepared by researching your route, have suitable equipment and food as well as letting someone know where you're going. By Planning Your Walk and Walking Your Plan, you will be giving yourself the best chance of enjoying the great Scottish outdoors safely.

"Mountaineering Scotland and mountain rescue teams have a wealth of information on preparing for hill or mountain walking and I would encourage everyone to look at these valuable resources before heading out. Anyone who does need help in an emergency should contact Police Scotland on 999 and ask for Mountain Rescue and you will be helped."

Ends

Further information contact:

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the national representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,500 members and is funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.

- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland also runs the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sport climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCoFS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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