

Is your dog heading for a fall?

You can't beat a good cliff top walk with the wind in your hair, the smell of the sea, a stunning coast view and your dog at your side. Yes, it's that time of year again when long days, good weather (hopefully) and holidays mean more dog owners are enjoying Devon's beautiful cliff walks.

Sadly, every year also sees heartbreaking stories about dogs running or falling off the county's cliffs. Too often, owners' ignorance or carelessness turns a walk into injury or death for dogs and farm animals. It's a shame, when a few simple precautions can keep your coast walk safe and enjoyable.

So, before you don your boots and grab Rover's lead, here are the NDAA's top tips for a safe cliff top walk.

1. Plan your walk

Not just obvious things like checking the weather and packing appropriate clothing. Have you got your dog's lead, some water for a drink (for both of you) and, where appropriate, a supply of bags for picking up poop! A few minutes' thought will ensure a more enjoyable walk.

2. Mind the edge

Always mind the edge! Part of the fun of a cliff top walk is the great view and the sense of exhilaration from overlooking the sea. But take a moment to remember how close you are to the cliff edge and whether tide, wind or other weather conditions make your position unsafe. If in doubt, stay back!

3. On the cliffs? On the lead!

For your peace of mind and your pet's safety, **always use the lead on the cliffs**. Sadly, too many pets run over cliff edges each year, causing untold heartache. It's a fact! Even well trained pets may not resist chasing a rabbit or seabird – distressing for wildlife and potentially fatal for the dog!

Cliff top areas often contain grazing farm animals too – please don't become another sheep-worrying statistic.

4. Shut that gate!

Will your cliff top walk take you across grazing land? Open gates are an invitation to sheep and cattle to wander into danger. Farming is hard enough without extra hazards. Help keep livestock safe and farmers friendly. Please shut that gate!

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5. Look out for anything unusual

Part of the pleasure of a cliff walk is the view. While you look around, be alert to anything unusual. If you see or hear an animal in distress on the cliff, consider calling The North Devon Animal Ambulance or the Coastguard. Your vigilance could save an animal's life.

TIP: Put the NDAA's number in your mobile before you set out. Our EMERGENCY hotline on is 07817 995751.

WARNING: Never put yourself in danger. If in any doubt, call the NDAA or the emergency services – they're trained for cliff rescues.

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4. **Shut that gate!**
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Summer or winter, with a little common sense, and these simple precautions, it's easy to keep every cliff top walk safe and enjoyable.

Walkies anyone?

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