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## November 30th 2016

From the rolling countryside of Britain, to the shores of Portugal or Croatia, via France and Italy, we reckon that there's no better time than Spring to get out on the trail. What will await you when you step out on your chosen Walk? We take a look at what the locals are doing, and what's in store on our Walks next May, just the prettiest month to be out in the open air!

### A spring hike in England at its best

There's nothing quite like rural **England** in Spring for patchwork landscapes, winding country lanes amid hedges just in full leaf, bubbling streams and pretty thatched cottages set in flower-filled gardens. May Day, signalling the end of winter, is still celebrated in many villages where you may still see a maypole decked with ribbons. In Dorset we can admire the grand interiors of a stately home set in stunning gardens and walk along one of the world's most fascinating 'Jurassic' coastlines. The Cotswolds is a chocolate box of golden stone villages and ancient relics of prehistoric ancestors. Both Walks let us live like a lucky local, trying farmhouse cheeses, cream teas and real ales along the way.



### Take the high road in Scotland

In **Scotland** the scenery changes color and the Highlands and islands are dotted with

wildflowers and blooming rhododendrons. Statistically, May brings the best chance of dry weather, minus those pesky midges! Edinburgh, that royal capital city is a delight to discover and guess what? May is Whisky Month in Scotland, celebrated in the traditional manner! Read more about our Walk in the Highlands and Edinburgh.

In the beautiful islands of the Outer Hebrides, Gaelic language and culture is alive and well. As the days lengthen after harsh, long winters, the notably hospitable islanders welcome visitors and we'll discover how the life of a crofter has and hasn't changed over the centuries. We'll visit a local family's cosy home and experience the infectious music and traditional dancing at a ceilidh too.

## France before the crowds arrive

To **France** and the chance to explore two very different, but equally glorious regions in balmy weather and before the crowds arrive in high summer. Alsace will be a riot of color as its towns and villages are bedecked with flowers. Famous for its Wine Route, we may come upon a village festival celebrating the grape and the vine leaves will be a bright, fresh green with the promise of a great harvest. In Provence, although you might still get a taste of the mistral winds, or a day of warm spring rain, we will delight in fields of wildflowers. Almond trees are in full bloom and trees are weighed down with deep red cherries. In bustling local markets stalls are piled with fresh asparagus and strawberries. Like the locals we will jump at the chance to lunch outdoors under a kindly sun, perhaps with a glass of local, peach colored rosé wine.



## An Italian dream

**Italy**, never more *bella* than in Spring, comes alive with festivals and markets. At the beginning of the month the fields are bright green. The bright yellow rape-seed flowers tinge the countryside first, then the bright red poppies dot the hills. Spring on the Amalfi Coast is the golden season, as the sleepy seaside villages come out of their winter hibernation, and the sent of orange blossom or jasmine fills and air. Imagine eating lunch freshly prepared by a delightful farming family, sitting outside, high above the sea! Whether it's Classic Tuscany or rugged Puglia, to hike Italy in Spring is to live *la dolce vita!*



## To the coast in Portugal

Join our new Walk in **Portugal** on the Algarve Coast and you will find a climate perfect for coastal hikes. If we are lucky, we may see the White Stork families emerging. They love to nest on high and we will look out for their nests on old chimneys, or church steeples.



Migratory birds love the Algarve. Particularly the Sagres area, which is pretty much a bird highway, with all types of wonderful creatures paying visits to southern Portugal.

## **Croatia in colour**

As the days grow warmer and longer in late spring, the season becomes the best time to visit the Dalmatian Coast and islands of **Croatia**. By mid-May the coast should be pleasantly warm, but so much quieter than in the summer months. The colorful fishing boats are getting a lick of paint for the new season and Dubrovnik's famous red roofs glow in the sunlight. A unique Croatian dish you'll want to try is a black risotto made from cuttlefish. If you are not a fan of seafood, be sure to order pasticada, a traditional beef dish, which is marinated for 24 hours in garlic, wine and herbs. It has a rich, dark sauce and is served with homemade gnocchi, and best enjoyed with a glass of the local red wine.