



disabled  
ramblers

## HOW DIFFICULT WILL MY RAMBLE BE?

All routes are fully checked, risk assessed and graded to the same standard by experienced members. (WAGs also risk check routes). They are divided into categories according to the overall difficulty, with Category 1 being the easiest. However, it is almost impossible to ensure that a route is entirely of one level of difficulty and routes are given the next higher category or indicated with a “+” if there is any doubt. Adverse weather conditions can sometimes result in a harder day than planned. Route photos and a more detailed description of criteria for ascribing categories to rambles are available on our web site.

**Category 1 Routes** Suitable for manual wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters, Category 1 routes are generally on level routes with nothing rougher than a metalled track or forestry road. They usually do not exceed 5 miles (8 km) in length. Many National Parks and Councils provide suitable routes, and you should consult their web site under “Access”. If you are particularly interested in Cat 1 Routes.

**Category 2 Routes** Category 2 routes are more ambitious than Category 1, usually in more undulating country best suited to more robust powerchairs and mobility vehicles with batteries that are capable of doing the distance. Whilst a fit and determined manual wheelchair user (possibly with supplementary pushers) may be able to cover the distance, they would need to be sure that they could keep up with the rest of the group - who can quickly get cold waiting for them - and should consider using a loan scooter. Routes are generally on good tracks though you might encounter short stretches of stony or soft going with shallow ruts.

Typically, category 2 rambles are limited to gradients less than 1 in 10, with a maximum climb of 150 metres and total distance no more than 8 miles. However, some rambles are graded as category 2+, which indicates that there may be more height gain (but still on good tracks) or unavoidable short stretches of more difficult ground.

**Category 3 Routes** This category involves serious undertakings, often some distance from roads on exposed hillsides over rough tracks with significant slopes, cambers and climbs. Consequently, “town” scooters or powerchairs are not suitable and an all-terrain mobility vehicle such as the Tramper or Supersport is needed.

**Longer stretches of rougher going than category 2 rambles are involved with steeper slopes (up to 1 in 5) and greater height gain (e.g. 1000ft or 300 metres). The length of the route depends on the terrain to be encountered and is typically 5 to 8 miles. Normally, Category (Cat.) 3 Routes can only be done once you have gained experience on a Cat. 2 Route (not just a Cat. 1). However, some less challenging Cat. 3 routes may be designated as suitable for a first ramble with us and are shown as Cat 3\* (3 star) on the Booking Form. To participate in any Cat 3 or 3\* ramble you must have a suitable scooter or use one of our loan scooters.**

## **IS MY WHEELCHAIR OR SCOOTER SUITABLE FOR OFF-ROAD ROUTES?**

(NB. all members driving their own scooters are expected to have third party insurance.) Like everything in life it depends.

Most manual wheelchairs, powerchairs (which usually have joystick control by varying the speed of the drive wheels) and mobility scooters are designed for everyday use on pavements. Small wheels may be OK on concrete but frequently prove unsuited to stony tracks. The following notes illustrate how you might decide the suitability of your vehicle.

Manual wheelchairs need good surfaces and small gradients. The rider needs to be fairly fit and/or have attendant pushers. You need to consider how robust your chair is before taking it on rougher tracks. In recent years manual wheelchairs for rough going have been designed, some with lever action mechanisms for improved easier propulsion.

Mobility scooters or powerchairs designed for use in a town environment may be suitable for some easier rambles but they tend to have limited ground clearance and/or power and can be readily damaged on rough tracks. Scooters with medium to large wheels and batteries of at least 50 amp-hour capacity are more likely to be suitable for rambling. Most scooters have handlebar controls but there are models that use a joystick or more elaborate control systems for those with upper body disabilities.

“Off-road” electric scooters are the “Land Rover” equivalent of the shopping scooter, being designed for rough country with greater power, ground clearance and strength.

They are manufactured by a number of British companies as well as imports. There are, however, a limited number of powerchairs which are designed for off-road use that, in the hands of an experienced rider, may be used on Cat 3 rambles with the agreement of the member in charge or The Rambles Organiser. If you have only driven on pavements but think your scooter might be suitable for rambling we suggest that you try driving it on the grass in your local park and/or an unsurfaced farm track before coming on a ramble - but do take care to have an able-bodied person with you in case of difficulties.