



Press Release
23 August 2010

Take the Trekker Test and head for the hills at this year's Valleys Walking Festival

With the Wales Valleys Walking Festival soon approaching (04-19 September), 'The Valleys - Heart and Soul' campaign has launched the 'Valleys Trekker Test', to help visitors find the most suitable walking route for their ability (and their personality!)

Now in its sixth year, the annual festival is a celebration of walking and the breathtaking scenery of The Valleys. Hundreds of visitors are expected to take part in the series of walks which take place at various scenic and cultural locations across The Valleys, including medieval villages, lakes, waterfalls and hidden caves. All walks are free and are led by local and experienced guides, all hoping to encourage more people to get out into the countryside and enjoy The Valleys.

Like the familiar colour grading used on ski slopes, but without a black run in sight, the 29 walking routes are colour coded from an 'Easy' green to a 'Very Strenuous' red, to reflect the difficulty of the walks.

And, along with the ski inspired grading, this year visitors can take part in a fun, new quiz, dubbed the 'Valleys Trekker Test*', where they will be asked a series of fitness, culture and personal interest related questions, to determine their Valleys character** and suggested walking routes.

Following on from the success of the 'VQ' test launched in January, which quizzed visitors on their Valleys credentials and written by Welsh comedian Chris Corcoran, The Valleys Trekker Test aims to capture The Valleys' unique sense of humour while being informative and helpful to visitors at the same time. Visitors can take part in the quiz by visiting thevalleys.co.uk

Frank Olding, an experienced walk leader from Abertillery, said: "The Festival offers all kinds of routes to suit all abilities, so the colour grading helps to let people know what they're getting themselves into!

"The routes are also tailored to suit different interests, from the likes of the 'Cider with Stacey' route on 07 September, offering a refreshing twist on the rambler

experience, to the more challenging 'Discover Torfaen's Hidden Gems' on 05 September, which involves a 15 mile hike through woodlands, a nature reserve and waterfall. This is a well respected event and we have hundreds of visitors coming from across the UK every year to enjoy The Valleys which offers some of the best walking in the UK."

Kevin Oates, Festival Chairman, said: "The Festival is even bigger and better this year, offering a greater number of walks and in new locations, including Bridgend, Neath and Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire.

"The Valleys boasts a wealth of cultural attractions and beautiful landscapes that can be appreciated from many of the walking routes, so the festival really is the perfect way to celebrate all that the area has to offer. Many tourists come to The Valleys because of the great walking on offer here so it is a key element in bringing revenue to the area."

The Festival is part of 'The Valleys – Heart and Soul of Wales' campaign, a three year campaign led by partnership organisations from the Western Valleys, Heads of the Valleys and The Valleys Partnership. The aim is to change perceptions of the Valleys and bring long-term economic benefits to the area.

To request a booking form contact walkingfestival@thevalleys.co.uk or call 01443 838632. Visitors can also find Wales Valleys Walking Festival on Facebook.

To take the 'Valleys Trekker Test', download a Wales Valleys Walking Festival brochure or to find out more about events in The Valleys, visit thevalleys.co.uk. For the latest updates, follow @LoveTheValleys on Twitter or find Love The Valleys on Facebook.

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

*Characters:
Betty the Beginner
Take it Easy Tony
Adventurous Ann
Strenuous Steve

**<http://www.thevalleys.co.uk>

For further information please contact Helen Newton and Kate Sullivan at Equinox Communications on 029 20764100 or email valleys@equinoxcommunications.co.uk

The Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, together with match funding from the Welsh Assembly

Government and other partner organisations. The 3-year campaign aims to bring economic benefit to Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend, northern parts of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot and the eastern Valleys of Carmarthenshire.

Aimed at changing perceptions of the Valleys both to local people and outsiders, the campaign will encourage more visitors and attract potential investors.

www.thevalleys.co.uk