Frequently Asked Questions

How do I sign up for a mountaineering club weekend?

About three weeks before each hut booking, the club's members/prospective members will receive an email from the Booking Secretary that includes a link to an online sign-up form. Simply include your details and pay the corresponding fee to the Treasurer by bank transfer. The current price is £17.50 per person per night.

Dates and locations of the hut bookings for the current year and the next year are displayed on the Bedford Mountaineering Club's website: https://bedfordmountaineering.uk

What is the accommodation like?

We normally stay in huts or cottages owned by other climbing clubs. While they're often basic, they are also functional and comfortable. The standard of the accommodation does vary, but as a minimum all huts will have a kitchen, bathroom, lounge area and sleeping accommodation. Some huts – but not all – have separate dorms and bathrooms for men and women. Many also have a room specifically for drying wet gear.

What are the arrangements for eating?

The kitchens tend to be well equipped with ovens, hobs, kettles, toasters, fridges and microwaves. Cutlery and crockery is usually provided – you just need to bring your own food and drink. For convenience, most people take prepared meals that only need reheating, but cooking from scratch also works. Some huts are conveniently close to pubs that you can go there to eat – it is up to you.

How are the huts selected?

At the start of each year, the Hut Booking secretary identifies huts in popular areas, e.g. Lake District, North Wales, Peak District or the Yorkshire Dales. They will also investigate the possibilities in other areas. Bookings need to be made early in the year to ensure availability, and to make it possible for the club's members to plan their weekends away.

What is the format of a weekend trip?

The following format is typical:

Friday late afternoon/evening: Arrive at the hut, stow your food in the kitchen and choose a bed in the dorm. Some dorms have bunk beds, others are “Alpine style”, where everyone sleeps side by side.

Catch up with other members and plan the following day’s itinerary.

Saturday: After breakfast, head out for the day, ensuring that one or more members are aware of your route and what time you expect to return. Some members prefer hillwalking, others like to go scrambling and/or climbing.

Sunday: After breakfast, help to clean the hut and then possibly squeeze in another walk/cllimb or make your way home for late afternoon.

With some huts, it may be possible to arrive on Thursday evening and fit in an extra day’s walking or climbing.

What do I need to pack for a club trip?

In addition to food and drink and your walking/mountaineering clothing, boots, rucksack and other gear, you will need a sleeping bag, pillow, sponge bag, towel and a pair of indoor shoes – trainers, or ideally hut slippers. These are both for comfort and to avoid tracking mud into the hut. A small torch (or your phone screen) may be also be useful after “lights out” in the dorm. A fold-out paper map of the area is more useful for route planning than a map app on your phone, though the latter is definitely worth having when you are out on the hills. Consider taking a power bank with you for extra peace of mind.

Taking a head torch on excursions is strongly recommended in case night falls in the hills before you return to the hut. You also need to make yourself easily visible when walking along a road at night.

A large holdall or extra rucksack for your hut gear will be useful.

Parking

Some huts have a parking area immediately outside, but others may involve you needing to carry your gear from a more distant parking spot.

What are the transport arrangements for a club weekend?

As you would expect, most huts are in fairly remote areas. To get there, we encourage car sharing where it is convenient. This helps to share the cost of fuel, uses less resources, and minimises the number of parking spaces needed at the hut. Sharing the drive can also make a long motorway journey less tedious, and provides a chance to socialise en route and discuss plans for the weekend's activities.

Is there a fixed programme for the weekend?

Absolutely not! Members decide their own routes and objectives, and will usually form groups to tackle a particular hiking route or climb. You are free to join any group or to decide/suggest your own route or climb. Bear in mind that having at least one other person accompany you is generally more enjoyable than heading out solo, and will improve your safety in the mountains. Climbers may want to visit a particular crag for roped climbing, while other members will opt for a day of hiking. The choice comes down to weather, fitness, ability and personal preferences. Poor weather (and thus a lack of views) will generally result in people choosing lower-altitude activities, but this is by no means compulsory.

Is training available?

Bedford Mountaineering Club does not offer formal training, though the more experienced members may offer some guidance and coaching on request. Our website has links to some commercial training courses, and the British Mountaineering Council can also advise you – see https://thebmc.co.uk/