BLUE CARE GUIDE

A guide to water-based wellbeing for people over 55

WALKING  ROWING  KAYAKING

WELL BEING

BOATING

CANOEING

SWIMMING

PADDLE BOARDING

active ageing BRISTOL

West of England Nature Partnership
Joining up the dots for nature

Bristol Health Partners
We’ve organised activities into three key groups:
- by the water
- in the water
- on the water

We’ve also identified activities that you can do yourself, where there are organised groups to join, and where special support is offered. We’ve also highlighted some ideas for volunteering if you’d like to give back to nature and the community.

Key to Accessibility and Facilities

- Accessible toilets
- Adaptive to physical needs
- Dementia friendly
- Parking available
- Refreshments
- Showers available
- Visual impaired friendly
- Wheelchair accessible

The West of England covers four unitary authorities - so we’ve also colour-coded where the activities are to make it easier to see:

Key to Symbols

- Happening
- Venue
- Cost
- Website
- Contact
Our blue spaces (rivers, lakes, canals and shores) provide wonderful opportunities to be active outdoors – supporting our physical and mental wellbeing, while having fun and meeting new people along the way.

This guide celebrates the great outdoor water-based activities on our doorstep in the West of England – in particular along the River Avon and River Frome to Bristol, around Bristol’s historic Harbour and out to the Severn Estuary. From open water swimming to fishing lakes, sailing, rowing, volunteering and walking, we aim to highlight a variety of activities which we hope offer something appealing for everyone. We’ve picked activities that are suitable for adults aged 55 and over, and that offer different levels of support.

While not an exhaustive list, we hope this guide will encourage you to explore the rich and vibrant water environment near you – whether you want to learn a new skill, meet new people or reconnect with the natural world.
Active Ageing Bristol is a collaboration between Bristol Sport Foundation, The Anchor Society and St Monica Trust. Working in partnership with the West of England Nature Partnership, with support from The Care Forum and Bristol Health Partners, we have come together to create a blue care guide of wellness activities in the West of England. This is in the context of a growing awareness of the importance – and Government support – of nature-based activities for health and wellbeing, and the recognised need for more resources to signpost people to these activities. Many of the organisations listed are also available on the online platform Well Aware (www.wellaware.org.uk).

You might also be interested in the Active Ageing Bristol Physical Activity Directory: A new physical activity directory aimed at helping older people in Bristol get active, available across the city. It lists more than 200 physical activity and sporting sessions with the theme of being age friendly and inclusive. Most activities are either free or low-cost.

A limited supply of hard copies are available from Well Aware. Please contact the free phone telephone service open during office hours Monday to Friday 0808 808 5252 or visit www.wellaware.org.uk to find activities and groups taking place in Bristol.
Picture yourself by a calm river on a warm day. Perhaps you’re watching a kingfisher dart around, or a heron stoically hunting. Perhaps you want to jump in yourself. Does this simple image bring you some joy?

Being outdoors by water is well celebrated in the arts for its beauty, reflection and connection. But this isn’t just nostalgic – scientific research shows how beneficial the outdoor water environment is for our health and wellbeing too.

Spending just half an hour in green spaces can reduce the prevalence of depression and high blood pressure\(^1\).

Blue spaces such as lakes, oceans and rivers offer important therapeutic benefits including tranquility, contemplation and spiritual connection\(^2\).

Active exercise in these blue environments is hugely beneficial to our health and wellbeing\(^3\).

Open water swimming (brrr!) can reduce depression and chronic pain related to surgery\(^4\).

Aquatic exercise can reduce behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) and improve psychological wellbeing in those living with moderate to severe dementia\(^5\).

Volunteering in nature has important wellbeing benefits too – including social integration and support, which is so important in today’s society where people are increasingly socially isolated and suffering from loneliness\(^6\).

We invite you to discover some of these benefits for yourself – whether you want to jump right in or quietly be!

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Caroline’s Story

I suffered from depression and heard about open water swimming at Henleaze Lake. I swam throughout the summer and enjoyed it very much. My favourite aspects were touching the earth and being in the open as well as the quiet solitude of the lake. The staff were also very kind and even lent me a swimming costume when I forgot mine.

It was very therapeutic being barefoot and in touch with the earth and the peacefulness of the still water. It was also nice to be able to swim at my own pace, which you can’t do when you’re in lanes at a swimming pool.

A lot of people would prefer to stay in at home – but I would say you regret the things you don’t do, not the things you do!

John’s Story

I first learned to sail during my career at sea with the Merchant Navy. I am now retired and have Parkinsons disease, which limits my mobility, and I am no longer quick enough to duck under the boom of the sail boat. I heard about All Aboard Sailing in July 2017. They have specially designed boats where the boom goes over the top of your head – great for those with reduced mobility. I joined All Aboard in August 2017 and sailed nearly every week through the winter to July 2018.

My favourite aspect of sailing is being on the water and getting lost in the moment – it is a real stress release and has that feel good factor. I also became more active walking to and from the club. My advice to others is to get out there and do it!
By the Water - Walking

You don’t have to leave land to enjoy the water. There are some wonderful walking trails in our region – or perhaps you’d like to relax by fishing, watching wildlife or being still through mindfulness.

**Go it alone**

In the UK we benefit from a unique heritage of public footpaths, meaning we’re able to get out and explore our local environment.

As well as exploring your local footpaths (visit Ordnance Survey for more information at [osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)), we’ve highlighted below some of the great waterside walks that you might want to explore with friends, family, or perhaps on your own.

Some of these paths are also suitable for cycling.

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**Bristol Harbourside**

Explore Bristol’s rich nautical history.


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**Bristol and Bath Railway Path**

Previously a railway line, this well-loved path takes you from city to city through beautiful countryside and with wonderful views and access to the River Avon.

Be aware that this is a shared path that is particularly busy with cyclists during commuting times and towards Bristol.

[www.bristolbathrailwaypath.org.uk](http://www.bristolbathrailwaypath.org.uk)
River Avon Trail
Following the River Avon, this trail takes you all the way from Pill through Bristol and to Bath.
www.riveravontrail.org.uk

River & Canal Walks
Explore some wonderful walks along the river and canal in and around Bath.
www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/river-and-canal/river-and-canal-walks

Kennet & Avon Canal Trail
Discover the history of the canals and breathtaking views.
canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/canal-trails/kennet-and-avon-canal-trail

Chew Valley Lake Walks
Enjoy the serene Chew Valley Lake.

A Forgotten Landscape
Discover the rich heritage, wildlife and beauty of the Lower Severn Vale Levels.
www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk/walking-map

Frome Valley Walkway
Follow the River Frome from the centre of Bristol to the Cotswold Hills.
www.fromewalkway.org.uk

West of England Walking Routes
A great selection of walking routes across the West of England.
travelwest.info/walk/maps-routes/west-england-walking-routes
Organised activities

Severnside Ramblers

We arrange walks throughout the year, ranging from short to long, and rural to urban. You are welcome to come on a taster walk or two before joining.

See website for programme
Meet at Aztec West Business Park for evening and weekend walks
£ Paid membership
www.severnside-ramblers.org.uk
i info@severnside-ramblers.org.uk

Run by Ramblers, England’s largest network of health walks, helping people across the country lead a more active lifestyle.

See website for programme

There are currently seven active local groups across the West of England. Visit the website to find your nearest group

£ Free
www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
i See website for individual group details

JUST BEYOND
Why not experience our blue spaces by trying out fishing? Just remember — it’s so important to fish responsibly to ensure our fish stocks are sustainable. Don’t just turn up at the water — go through a club or get your own licence.

Avon Valley Adventure and Wildlife Parks

We allow fishing on one of our lakes, included in our general admission – all you need to bring is your licence and tackle. We ask that you kindly return all fish to the lake.

Closed Mondays during term time. Tuesday – Sunday open 10am – 5.30pm. Closed October to March

Pixash Ln, Bath Road, Keynsham, BS31 1TP

Park admission fee

www.avonvalley.co.uk

info@avonvalley.co.uk, 01179 864929

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Bathampton Angling Association

Offering a unique and exciting opportunity to fish some superb fishing locations in the local Bath and Bristol area. There are even opportunities for personal coaching on the lakes. Accessibility key relates to some pegs.

See website

Paid membership or day tickets

www.bathampton.org

07720 882368
miketurnerbaa@gmail.com

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Keynsham Angling Association

River Chew, River Avon and Century ponds

Paid membership or participation

www.keynsham-angling.co.uk

07939 147148
keynshamangling@gmail.com
Weston Dolphins SAC
Sea fishing all year round. The club meets once a month in the Borough Arms.

- Fishing all year round
- 74 Bournville Road, Weston Super Mare, BS23 3RR
- £ Paid participation
- 01934 414744

Ham Green Fisheries
Two still water course fishing lakes stocked with Carp, Roach, Perch, Pike, Bream and Golden Tench. Night fishing is available by arrangement.

- No closed season. 7am to 8pm June to October. 8am to 5pm November to April
- Chapelpill Lane, Hamgreen, BS20 6DB
- £ Paid participation or membership
- 07818 640227

Plantation Lakes Fishery
Offers a choice of three fishing lakes stocked with Carp, Roach, Rudd, Bream and Perch. There is ample parking and toilet facilities and food is available in the summer.

- Open all year from dawn till dusk
- Middle Lane, Kingston Seymour, Clevedon, BS21 6XW
- £ Paid participation or membership
- See Facebook page
- 01934 832325

N. SOM
Windmill Fisheries

We offer coarse fishing on four different lakes suiting all levels of fishing, both social and match fishing.

Open 7 days a week, 7am-6pm winter, 7am - 11pm summer

Windmill Leisure,
Henfield Road,
Westerleigh, BS36 2FE

Membership or paid participation and licence

www.windmillleisure.co.uk
07498 730476
enquiries@windmillleisure.co.uk

Ecowild - Wellbeing, Nature, Arts and Crafts

Tailored for carers, people who are isolated, at risk of mental health problems and anyone in need of a break from busy lives. We know that contact with the natural world can transform your state of mind.

See website for diary

The Community Farm,
Chew Magna, BS40 8SZ and
Greyfield Woods, High Littleton, BS39 6YE

Participation fee

www.ecowild.org.uk
07812 155659
ecowilddimitri@gmail.com

B&NES
If you like being by the water, why not volunteer? There are some great opportunities to get involved in looking after our blue spaces — from litter picking to wildlife monitoring and improving the surrounding green spaces. Here are just a few ideas.

**Clean up Bristol Harbour**

Help keep our beautiful Bristol Harbour and its immediate surrounds free of litter. We walk around the Harbour or use boats, using litter picking equipment provided. Sensible shoes and enthusiasm required!

- **Every third Sunday of the month in the afternoon**
- **Outside the Arnolfini building, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol, BS1 4QA**
- **Free**
- **www.cleanupbristolharbour.weebly.com**
- **jpc@gmx.co.uk**

**Canal & River Trust**

Help look after our inland waterways for everyone to enjoy, while supporting wildlife and stewarding our heritage.

- **Frequent and non-frequent opportunities to volunteer** — see website for more details
- **Kennet & Avon Canal in and around Bath**
- **Free**
- **canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer**
- **03030 404040**

BRISTOL
Bristol Avon Rivers Trust

A community-led organisation which aims to deliver education, land and river management and practical river restoration work in the Bristol Avon catchment.

See website for details

£ Free

www.bristolavonriverstrust.org/what-we-do/riverfly_monitoring

info@bristolavonriverstrust.org

If you enjoy watching wildlife, this is a great way to volunteer for nature. Volunteers’ wildlife records are crucial evidence of the state of nature in our area, and really do help influence regional policy.

The Bristol Region Environmental Record Centre can point you to your local recording group. Take a look here: www.brerc.org.uk/aboutbrerc/links.htm

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust’s wetland reserve at nearby Slimbridge is a haven for birdwatchers:

www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge
Swimming doesn’t have to mean lanes in an indoor pool. Why not try some of our wilder swimming spots?

**Go it alone**  
**Wild swimming**

The following are designated bathing spots in the West of England:

- Henleaze Lake, Bristol  
  (see right)
- Clevedon Beach, Clevedon
- Uphill Slipway, Weston Super-Mare
- Brean, Weston Super-Mare

Go at your own risk, but additional popular wild swimming spots include:

- Claverton Weir  
  [www.wildswimming.co.uk/map/claverton-weir-avon](http://www.wildswimming.co.uk/map/claverton-weir-avon)
- Tellisford  
  [www.wildswimming.co.uk/map/tellisford-frome](http://www.wildswimming.co.uk/map/tellisford-frome)

Always take care where and when you chose to swim.

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**Organised activity**  
**Open water swimming**

**Henleaze Swimming Club**

This 400m lake serves as a haven of solitude for those who enjoy freshwater swimming or simply a quiet rest in the open air. All year round mixed course fishing membership also available — please contact for more details.

- **All year round. Reduced opening in winter**
- **Henleaze Lake, Lake Road, Bristol BS10 5HG**
- **£** Paid membership (waiting list closed – check online in April/May). Non-members/groups may be given access if pre-arranged (see website)
- **[www.henleaze.swimmingclub.org](http://www.henleaze.swimmingclub.org)**
- **0117 9620 696**

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**BRISTOL** ☕️ 🛀️
Farleigh and District Swimming Club

This is the original ‘wild swimming club’ with 100m of swimmable river, a picnic/sunbathing field and a dilapidated hut. Rob Fryers Wild Swimming Europe is also available on the website.

Open during the summer, approximately April to September

BA2 7RS

Paid membership or fee

www.wild-swimming.com/farleigh.html

07769 214419

farleighclub@gmail.com

Clevedon Marine Lake

A seawater lake on the Bristol Channel; an amazing space the size of two football pitches.

Open 24/7, see website for closure dates

Clevedon Marine Lake off Old Church Road, Clevedon, BS21 7TU

Free but donations accepted

Vobster Quay

The perfect blend of great freshwater diving and swimming. Swimmers of all levels will find the heady mix of onsite facilities, high quality coaching and a friendly welcome hard to resist.

Happening: See website for opening hours

Vobster Diving Ltd, Upper Vobster, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5SD

Paid membership

www.vobster.com

01373 814666

info@vobster.com
Enjoy being out on the water — whether you want to pick up the pace or relax — by boating, canoeing, kayaking, rowing, sailing or stand-up paddle boarding. Where organisations offer multiple activities, they are included in one listing.

Organised activities

**All Aboard**

We strive to make it possible for everyone in our community to participate in a range of watersports. This includes people with physical, emotional or cognitive disabilities. Kayaking, gig rowing, sailing, multi-watersport session and powerboat trips.

See website for dates and times

- Baltic Wharf, Underfall Yard, Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6XG

- Free 50+ activities

- [www.allaboardwatersports.co.uk](http://www.allaboardwatersports.co.uk)

- 0117 929 0801

- admin@allaboardwatersports.co.uk

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**Bristol Cruising Club**

We are a boat club based in the heart of Bristol for those interested in boating of all types and sizes. Members enjoy discounted mooring fees and many entertainment events.

- 1st Tuesday of the month
- 8pm, Friday night socials

- Sabrina 6, Redcliffe Backs, Bristol BS1 6NE

- Paid membership

- [bristolcruisingclub.co.uk](http://bristolcruisingclub.co.uk)

- 07973 837291

- commodore@bristolcruisingclub.co.uk
Below are some affordable frequent boat trips around Bristol Harbourside and on the river and canal from Bath. We’ve not included boats for private hire here — but if it does tickle your fancy to spend a little longer on our navigable waters, there are several boat hire companies in the region.

**Bristol Packet**

Wide range of public boat trips: including the City Docks Tour, Cream Tea Cruise, Lunch Trip to Beese’s Bar and Garden, Avon Gorge Cruises, Riverside Pub Lunch Cruise, Evening Tour of Dockside Pubs and Bristol to Bath.

- **Every weekend, weather permitting**
- **Bristol Packet Boat Trips, Wapping Wharf, Gas Ferry Road, Bristol BS1 6UN**
- **£** Senior from £6.25. See website for more details.
- **www.bristolpacket.co.uk**
- **0117 926 8157**
Sir John Knill Waterbus

Trips on an electric boat along the Kennet & Avon Canal between Bathampton and Bath. Wheelchair accessible.

Join from the George Pub at Bathampton, Bath Narrowboats or Bath Top Lock

£5 one way; £9 return. Senior discount.

thesirjohnknill.com

07963 834828

B&NES
**Bath Canoe Club**
Join us for canoeing and kayaking day trips and weekends away, training with qualified coaches or pool sessions.

- Pool sessions every Monday evening - other trips/events on website
- The Old Organ Factory, Cleveland Cottages, Bath BA1 5UE
- £ Paid membership
- www.bathcanoeclub.co.uk
- membership@bathcanoeclub.co.uk

**Clevedon Canoe Club**
We have interests in all forms of canoeing and kayaking. We also run training courses and regular public ‘have a go’ sessions.

- See website for events calendar
- Lake sessions: **Clevedon Marine Lake or Portishead Marina.** Pool sessions: Strode Leisure Centre, Strode Road, Clevedon, BS21 6QG
- £ Paid membership or participation
- www.clevedoncanoeclub.org.uk
- 07500 861154
Frome Canoe Club
We have a flexible approach and you can join a coached group, or you can paddle with others, either on the river or in our pool sessions. Please contact for more information on disability access.

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Monday, Tuesday (for adults), Wednesday in spring and summer. Friday night pool sessions

📍 Market Yard, Frome, BA11 1BE

£ Paid membership or participation fee

🌐 www.frome-canoe-club.org.uk

📞 pam@dixon.org.uk

07740 472982
Young Bristol
We offer a multi-activity programme of water based sports including Gig Rowing, Kayaking and Canoeing, as well as instructor and coach training.

Mondays 10am-12pm, Wednesdays 10am-12pm. Specific dates. Contact for details

Pooles Wharf Activity Centre, Hotwell Road, Bristol BS8 4RY

Participation fee

www.youngbristol.com

0117 929 2513

info@youngbristol.com

Avon County Rowing Club
Row on the beautiful River Avon at Saltford. All beginners are welcome and we are always happy to see new faces.

See website for details
Saltford Rowing Centre, Bath Road, Saltford, Bristol BS31 3JS

Paid membership

www.avoncountyrowingclub.org.uk

0117 986 7934
captain@avoncountyrowingclub.org.uk

On the Water - Rowing
Portishead Pilot Gig Club

We row traditional wooden Cornish pilot gigs. We run ‘Learn to Row’ sessions to give you a taster before you sign up to become a full member.

Learn to row sessions run at weekends
Portishead Quays Marina, Portishead, North Somerset, BS20 7DJ
Paid membership
portisheadpilotgigclub.co.uk
portisheadpilotgigclub@gmail.com

Bradford on Avon Rowing Club

Rowing and canoeing. Training takes place on a scenic stretch of the River Avon. The club is also very sociable with regular (informal) events.

Regular training on Saturdays and Sundays
Barton Bridge, Pound Lane, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1LF
Paid membership
www.boarc.org.uk
Email from website
Bristol Avon Sailing Club

- Family friendly club with a range of great value memberships and a number of social events.
- Competitive sailing on Sundays and Thursday evenings. Non-competitive sailing events.
- Mead Lane, Saltford, BS31 3ER
- See website for membership prices
- £ - Paid membership or participation
- www.bristol-avon-sailing.org.uk
- 07811 760693
- enquiries@bristol-avon-sailing.org.uk

Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club

- The picturesque surroundings make the lake popular for walkers, picnickers, birdwatchers and sailors.
- Wednesday, Thursday and every weekend. Racing Wednesday evenings and Sundays
- Walley Court Road, Chew Stoke, BS40 8XN
- £ - Paid membership or participation
- www.chewvalley-sailing.org.uk
- 01275 332194
- 01278 287735
- info@clads.co.uk

Chew Lake Association of Disabled Sailors

- Our members have a wide range of disabilities including Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, Cerebral Palsy and general disabilities caused by accidents. We are a very friendly bunch and try to hold several social events throughout the year.
- See website for calendar
- Walley Court Road, Chew Stoke, BS40 8XN
- £ - Paid membership
- www.clads.co.uk
- 01278 287735
- info@clads.co.uk
Clevedon Sailing Club
A friendly club which supports all watersports. New members are always welcome. The marine lake is ideal for learning to sail.

Full calendar available on website
The Alcoves, The Beach, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7QU
£ Paid membership
clevedonsailingclub.com
i 01275 875916
clevedonsailingclub@outlook.com

Stand-up Paddle Boarding

SUP Bristol
Join for a stand-up paddleboarding adventure and see Bristol from a brand new perspective. Get started by joining a taster session on an evening or a harbourside adventure on the weekend.

Taster sessions Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6pm
The Cottage Landing, Baltic Wharf, Cumberland Road, Bristol, BS1 6XG
£ Participation fee
www.supbristol.com
i 0117 422 5858
info@supbristol.com

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This guide has been produced by Active Ageing Bristol in partnership with the West of England Nature Partnership (www.wenp.org.uk) with support from The Care Forum and Bristol Health Partners, to provide information about activities available across the area’s water networks.

Whilst every effort has been made to verify activities, Active Ageing Bristol cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the data and any rescheduled or cancelled activities. Participants are advised that it is their responsibility to check credentials and health and safety requirements for each activity.

Activity details are correct at the time of going to print. Activities may be subject to change and it is advisable to check the Well Aware website at www.wellaware.org.uk or contact the provider before you attend.

Website: www.activeageingbristol.co.uk
Facebook: ActiveAgeingBristol
Twitter: @AcitveAgeingBris