



SKYE'S LIMIT FOR CYCLISTS

Entries have opened for the 95-mile Skye Mor and 48-mile Skye Beag sportive events.

The cycling challenges take place on the island of Skye on August 25.

Both routes leave the town of Portree and head north up the east coast of the island, passing The Old Man of Storr, an 160ft basalt pillar.

All riders then continue around the wildly beautiful Trotternish Peninsula to the northern tip of the island and on to the port of Uig.

The routes swing south with the majestic Cuillin mountains directly ahead. Some six miles after leaving Uig the routes diverge with Beag riders cycling straight back to the finish in Portree.

Riders on the Skye Mor head for Dunvegan, home of top mountain biker Danny MacAskill.

The Mor route continues on quiet roads to the Sligachan Hotel where a smooth surfaced road sweeps north back all the way to the finish at Portree.

■ See www.handsonevents.co.uk to enter.

GEAR OF THE WEEK

LEKI NORDIC WALKING POLES

Leki are a big name in Nordic walking. The company have an eco-friendly production facility in the heart of Europe and have made a variety of poles for 60 years.

Michael Brechtelsbauer, International Sales Manager at Leki said: "Nordic walking poles represent a huge one fifth of our overall business."

One of Leki's most popular Nordic Walking poles is their unisex Spin Speed Lock, with high strength aluminium shafts and length adjustment of 100cm to 130cm.

A Leki Smart Tip 2.0, for multi-terrain Nordic Walking, has a slip-proof pad to ensure good traction on pavements and an integrated, telescopic carbide tip for a steady hold off-road. It also features an improved pad profile and tool-less pad change.

The innovative Trigger Shark 2.0 with glove-integrated strap and revolutionary "Trigger Loop" enables walkers to quickly and easily click in and out.

■ Leki poles are available from Ardblair Sports. See www.ardblairsports.com for stockists



Be in pole position

NORDIC WALKING

What is it?: Nordic walking is a style of walking that uses poles to enhance movement. It's a fluid, faster and more dynamic form of walking that uses the whole body to propel the walker.

Tell me more: Nordic walking is thought to have started in the 1930s in Finland. At that time competitive cross-country skiers started to use their poles for off-season training.

World Nordic Walking Day was launched in 1948 and this year the 70th anniversary is celebrated over this weekend, May 19 and 20.

Popularity of the sport grew in the 90s, and classes in Nordic walking were introduced to the UK at the start of this century.

In Scotland, you can learn to Nordic walk at sessions and courses across the country. For Nordic Walking poles see Gear of the week, far left.

Check out:

■ britishnordicwalking.org.uk

■ nordicwalking.scot

■ www.nordic-walking-se-scotland.co.uk

■ www.activestirling.org.uk/nordicwalking/

■ taysidenordicwalking.co.uk/aboutaberdeen.com/Nordic-Walking-Aberdeen-Scotland

Anything else to know?:

Nordic walking is a complete body workout that can burn up to 46 per cent more calories than walking alone.

Because the activity uses poles, upper body muscles receive a good workout and the lower joints are better supported.

Nordic walkers use specialist poles that have a smaller diameter grip than trekking poles.

The poles are planted angled backwards and then pushed behind the hip to give forward propulsion. The hand opens,



WALK THIS WAY There are Nordic Walking poles to suit all terrains from mountain trails, above, to beaches

much the same way you will see with a cross-country skier, and a special strap holds the pole in the correct position for when the pole is pulled forward for the next plant.

Who does it?: Nordic walking is the "fastest growing fitness activity in the world", according to Nordic Walking UK. It's estimated more than 10 million people globally enjoy it year round.

For people who are already active, Nordic walking is an ideal compliment to other exercise.

But Nordic walking is also an ideal form of exercise for those who haven't been active for a while, or dislike traditional sports or the gym. Older people and those unsteady on their feet find the poles give extra support and confidence.

Nordic Walking is an easy way to exercise the entire body and gain great health benefits.

10 benefits of Nordic walking:

■ All over good: Exercises 90 per cent of muscles, not just the 40 per cent used in ordinary walking.

■ Exercises the heart. Nordic walking is good cardiovascular training.

■ Weight loss. Nordic walking uses up to 46 per cent more calories compared to ordinary walking. Thirty minutes five times a week is a good aim.

■ Strengthens bones without joint trauma. Nordic Walking is as good a form of exercise as cycling or swimming but with the added benefit of being a weight-bearing, low-impact activity.

■ Good for posture: This form of walking releases neck and back tension and improves posture and gait. Nordic Walking encourages a more upright posture.

■ Spine fitness: Nordic walking rotates the trunk and enhances the mobility of the spine.

■ Great for the core: Nordic walking strengthens the muscles of the back and abdomen.

■ Good mental health: All kinds of cardiovascular exercise outdoors, including Nordic walking, are beneficial for those suffering from stress disorders and many mental illnesses.

■ Easy to access: Once you have learned how to Nordic walk and you have the poles and walking shoes or boots, you can do it anywhere and at any time.

■ Long-term health: Scientific research has shown that regular moderate exercise such as Nordic walking can help reduce the risk of cancer, particularly bowel, womb and breast cancer, and has great benefit for those recovering from cancer, heart attack or stroke.