

UK

## Britain's best spring walks

Celebrate the arrival of March by getting away from it all. Joanne O'Connor suggests six places to stride out.

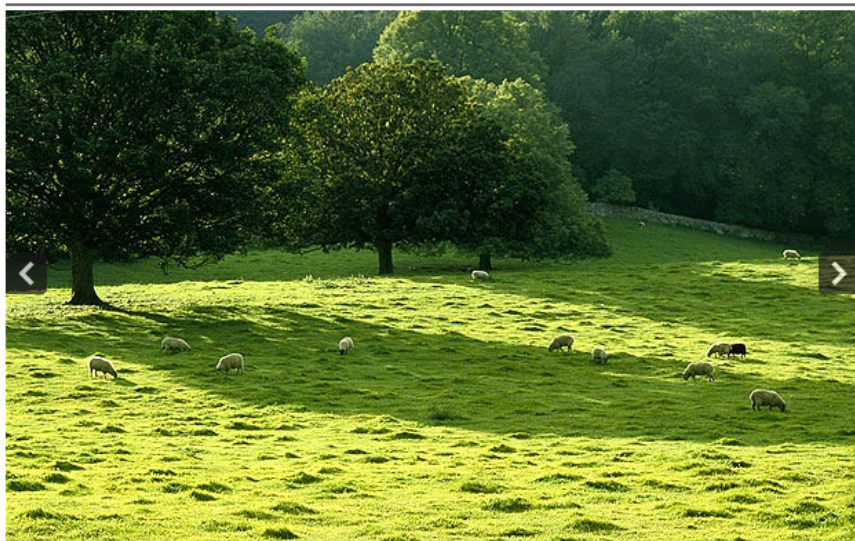


Image 2 of 4  
Sheep grazing in the Cheviot Hills Photo: PHOTOLIBRARY

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By Joanne O'Connor 8:00AM GMT 05 Mar 2011

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### 5. Coquet Valley, Northumberland

Surrounded by the bleakly beautiful moorland of the Northumberland National Park and the Cheviot Hills, the Coquet Valley offers some of Britain's most varied and underrated walking country.

The market town of Rothbury, with its tea rooms, pubs and speciality shops, is a great base for those looking to explore the area on foot. The National Park Visitor Centre (01669 620887; [www.nnpa.org.uk](http://www.nnpa.org.uk)) in the town can provide itineraries for walks in the area, including more challenging treks in the Cheviot Hills (open weekends only, 10am-3pm; then daily until 6pm from April 1). There are some gentle, scenic walks along the River Coquet from the town, or for a wilder route, head to the upper reaches of the valley and walk to the summit of Windy Gyle, with spectacular views into Scotland. For something a bit different, check out the guided walks offered by local shepherd Jon Monks (01830 540453; [www.shepherdswalks.co.uk](http://www.shepherdswalks.co.uk)). As well as winter walks in the Simonside Hills and Cheviots, his innovative programme includes occasional night walks, GPS training and Nordic walking tuition.

#### Where to stay

The old stable buildings of historic Brinkburn Priory, near Rothbury, have recently been converted into two luxurious holiday homes, which can be rented separately or together. The Stables sleeps up to seven and the adjacent Priory Cottage sleeps two, with weekly rates from £920 and £380 respectively. Both have wood-burning stoves and underfloor heating. Brinkburn Priory is closed to visitors in winter so guests have the grounds to themselves (0191 388 3752; [www.coquetcottages.co.uk](http://www.coquetcottages.co.uk)).

#### Further information

You can download four detailed Rothbury and Coquetdale walks at [www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/walkingrothbury](http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/walkingrothbury).