



Epping
Forest

Registered Charity

EPPING
FOREST
VISITOR
GUIDE

2026

Adventure, nature and heritage for all

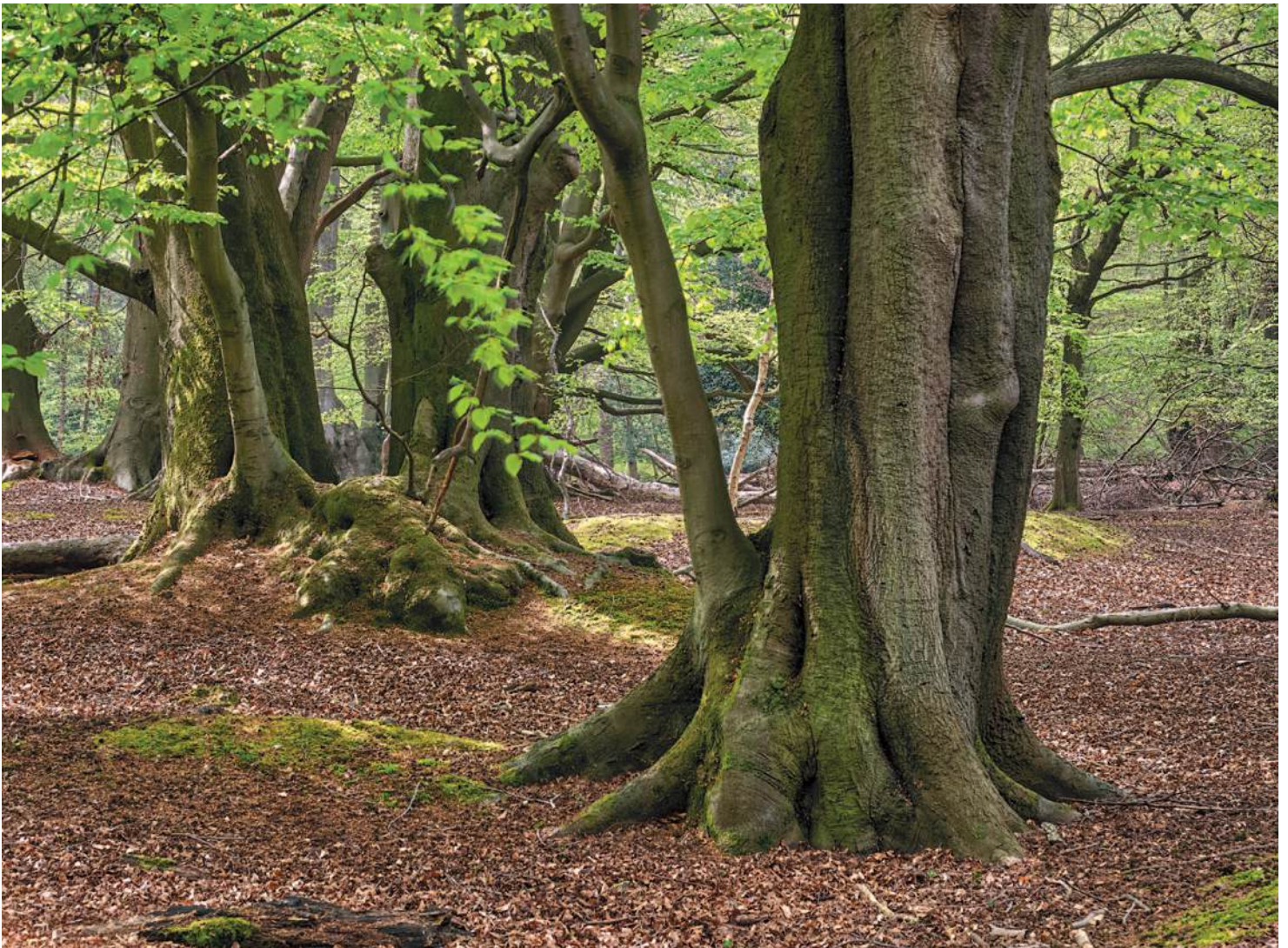
Welcome to Epping Forest

Stretching 13 miles (21 km) from east London to the market town of Epping in Essex, Epping Forest and its surrounding Buffer Lands is a place where history, nature and adventure meet. Once a royal hunting ground, this 8,000-acre (3200 hectare) landscape is London's largest public open space and has been cherished by generations.

Today the Forest is protected and cared for by the City of London Corporation as a registered charity, ensuring this ancient wood-pasture remains a sanctuary for people and wildlife alike. Its mosaic of wood-pasture, heaths, meadows, bogs, ponds and rivers supports over a million trees, including 55,000 ancient trees and countless species of plants, birds and insects.

Each season brings new beauty: spring bluebells, summer wildflowers, autumn colours and winter frosts. Whether you come to walk, cycle, run, play, picnic or simply breathe in the calm, Epping Forest offers something unforgettable for everyone.

This guide will help you explore the Forest's trails, discover its heritage and enjoy the events and experiences awaiting you in 2026.



Message from the Chair

The Epping Forest Act of 1878 required that the City of London Corporation preserve it 'for the recreation and enjoyment of the public', making our Forest one of the earliest publicly accessible landscapes in England.

Nearly 150 years later, I am delighted, on behalf of the Forest Conservators, to introduce our inaugural Epping Forest Visitor Guide 2026.

This Guide, packed with suggestions for how you, your families, colleagues and friends can explore and enjoy our stunning, unique landscape, demonstrates our commitment to the promise of the 1878 Act. Some of the suggestions are part of our annual cycle of events that you will have become familiar with over the years but some will be new additions, encouraging you to try a new walk, activity or experience.

There is something for everyone! My own family have accessed the Forest for generations, joining the thousands of visitors from the East End of London who, over the decades, have escaped the densely populated urban space for the '*green lungs of London*'. They have enjoyed sport and recreation, learning and study, music and culture, scientific and heritage discovery alongside moments of peace and tranquillity.

Now our visits number over 11 million annually, demonstrating that we remain true to the promise of Queen Victoria in 1878 when she dedicated Epping Forest "*...to the use and enjoyment of my people for all time.*" Enjoy your time of discovery, immersed in London's largest, most biodiverse green space.



SPRING seasonal walk

WANSTEAD PARK

Signs of spring in Epping Forest

As winter loosens its grip, Epping Forest awakens with a vibrant display of life. Spring is one of the most enchanting seasons to visit, offering a chance to witness nature's renewal across this historic landscape.

Look out for bluebells, wood anemones and wild garlic brightening the Forest floor. These blooms thrive in the dappled light beneath the ancient oak and hornbeam canopy, creating a spectacular sight in April and May.

Fresh green leaves unfurl on the trees, while hawthorn and blackthorn blossom along the ride sides and Forest edges adding splashes of white to the greenery. Birdsong becomes the soundtrack of the season. Year-round residents such as robins share the Forest with returning migrants including chiffchaffs and blackcaps. Keep an eye out for early butterflies like brimstones and orange-tips fluttering through sunlit glades. The Forest's ponds and streams teem with life as frogs and newts begin their breeding season.

CHESTNUT TRAIL

This circular route follows the main tracks in this historic park with some sections across open grassland. It is mostly flat with a few gentle inclines.

Start / end point: Warren Road entrance

Distance: 3.25 miles / 5.2 km

Time: 2 hours

Best spring spots to visit:



Wanstead Park – The best place to be entranced by the breathtaking carpet of bluebells in Chalet Wood.



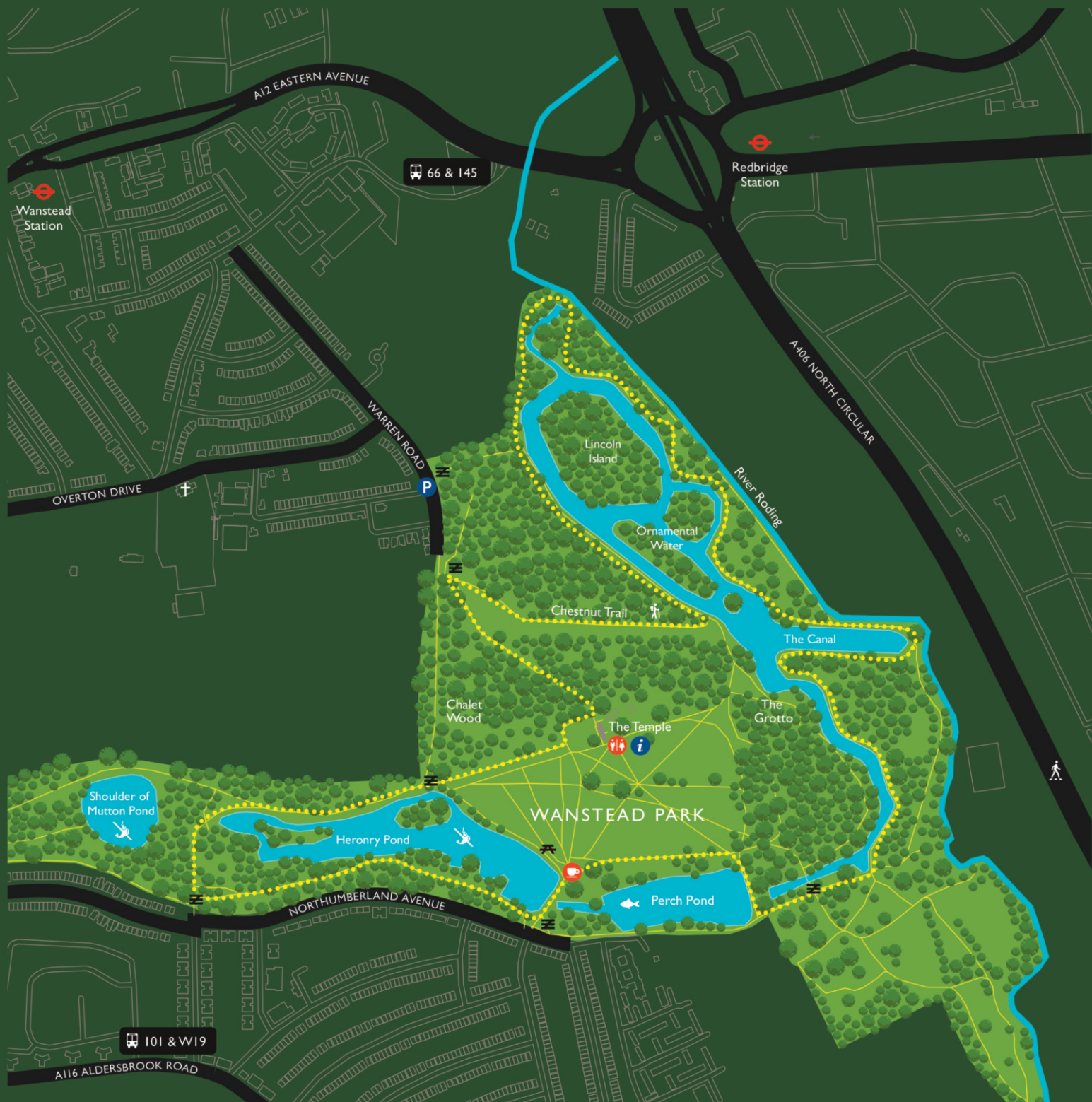
Connaught Water – An easy access path encircles the lake, offering serene views alongside the busyness of waterfowl claiming territories, finding mates and building nests.



High Beach – The heart of the Forest, with an easy access path leading from the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach.



Chingford Plain – Perfect for families, with wide open spaces, a Brambly Hedge sculpture trail, a flagship visitor centre and the historic highlight of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.



WHAT TO SPOT



Common toad
 Early each spring, common toads gather to breed and spawn in the ponds. They spend much of the rest of the year away from water, feeding in the surrounding woodland and tussocky grassland. They hibernate over winter, often choosing the security of piles of deadwood and logs.



Bluebells
 Each spring, for just a few weeks, Chalet Wood transforms into a carpet of native bluebells, one of Epping Forest's most outstanding sights. Bluebells are fragile; trampling crushes their leaves, stops them photosynthesising and compacts the soil, damaging bulbs beneath the surface. Please keep to the paths to help this precious ancient wood-pasture spectacle survive.

Visitor information

GETTING HERE

Epping Forest is easily accessible from London and Essex.

Train: Epping Forest is well-served by overground and underground trains. Please visit the Transport for London website.

Bus: Regular services from Walthamstow, Ilford, Romford, Enfield and Waltham Abbey.

Car: Close to Junction 26 of the M25, with multiple car parks across the Forest.



VISITOR CENTRES

Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford

Rangers Road, Chingford, London E4 7QH
Located next to Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, this centre offers exhibitions, maps, gifts and seasonal events. It's a hub for exploring the Forest's heritage and is the starting point of the new Epping Forest Brambly Hedge Trail. A community room is available to hire. Free entry. Toilets available.

Opening times:

Summer (Tuesday 31 March – Sunday 27 September):
open Tuesday to Sunday 10am–5pm

Winter (Tuesday 29 September – Sunday 28 March 2027):
open Tuesday to Sunday 10am–4pm

Open Bank Holidays except Christmas Day.

The Temple, Wanstead Park

Wanstead Park Avenue, London, E11 2LT
Set in the heart of Wanstead Park, the Temple is an 18th century classical garden building now serving as a visitor centre. It interprets the history of Wanstead House and tells the fascinating story of the heritage of the Park. The Temple is host to changing exhibitions and every summer a wonderful programme of Open Air Theatre is held in the Temple Enclosure. Free entry. Toilets available.

Opening times:

Open 11am–3pm year-round (see events list).
Open one weekend per month in the summer and one Sunday per month in the winter, 11am - 3pm.

Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach

Paul's Nursery Rd, High Beach IG10 4AE
Nestled in the Forest's central area, this centre is managed on behalf of the Conservators by Epping Forest Heritage Trust. It provides information and interpretation about Epping Forest. Nearby is a circular easy access path. It's a popular starting point for walks and nature exploration. Free entry. Toilets available.

Opening times: Please see website for opening times.

A BITE TO EAT - FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS

Whether you're craving a hearty pub lunch, a slice of homemade cake or a peaceful picnic, Epping Forest offers plenty of options to satisfy your appetite.

Tea Huts and cafés

Scattered throughout the Forest are charming tea huts, offering hot drinks, snacks and a warm welcome:

The Original Tea Hut at High Beach, located by the Cross Roads at the northern end of Fairmead.

The Holly Trail Café on Bury Road, adjacent to Chingford Golf Course.

The Boat House at Hollow Pond offers ice creams and snacks as well as rowing boat hire over the summer.

Butler's Retreat at Dannet's Hill, close by the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Lakeside Diner at Whipps Cross is a small café beside Hollow Pond.

Wanstead Park Tea Hut is located in the heart of Wanstead Park, beside Heronry Pond.

Picnic spots

The Forest is full of informal picnic areas, from open glades to shaded woodland clearings. Whether you're watching deer graze or children play, there's a perfect spot for everyone.

Ice cream vans

On fine days, ice cream vans may visit The Pillow Mounds at High Beach and Connaught Water.

If you need help on where to visit in the Forest, please see our website or start your Forest exploration at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, where our knowledgeable staff can help you get the best from your walk in the woods.



ACCESS FOR ALL

Places to consider include:

- Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford
- Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach
- High Beach Easy Access Path
- Connaught Water Easy Access Path
- Knighton Wood Easy Access Path
- Jubilee Pond Easy Access Path

Blue Badge parking is available free of charge in all Epping Forest car parks.

TOILETS

- Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford
- Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach
- The Temple, Wanstead Park

Accessible toilets are located at each of these sites.

FOR OUR YOUNGER VISITORS

Epping Forest Brambly Hedge Trail

We are delighted to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Jill Barklem's beloved book series through the Brambly Hedge Trail, which brings to life an enchanting world inspired by the trees and hedgerows of Epping Forest. The Trail begins at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre in Chingford.

The Trail features 17 carved oak sculptures of Brambly Hedge characters. A leaflet, including a Trail map, is available to buy at the Visitor Centre at Chingford. Tick off each Brambly Hedge character you encounter on your walk and when you've met all 17, return to the Visitor Centre for your completer's sticker!

Each sculpture is hand-carved from sustainably sourced wood.



Play

The entire Forest is a wonderful space for exciting adventures and endless natural play. You will find a more formal natural play area located behind the Temple in Wanstead Park.

Little Saplings

We are very excited to present Epping Forest's 'Little Saplings' monthly events for pre-schoolers. Join us to hear a seasonal story, enjoy an activity and sing along to some nursery rhymes. Little Saplings takes place inside the magnificent Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge at Chingford, or in the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford. For further information and booking, please visit our website.

MAP KEY

Circular Waymarked Forest Trails:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| •••• Willow Trail | •••• Rowan Trail |
| •••• Gifford Wood Trail | •••• Hornbeam Trail |
| •••• Golden Hill Trail | •••• Chestnut Trail |
| •••• Holly Trail | •••• Lime Trail |
| •••• Warlies Park Trail | •••• Big Walk |

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Ponds / rivers | Parking |
| Woodland | Visitor Centre |
| Buffer Land | Train station |
| Other green spaces | London Underground |
| Viewpoint | Café |
| Ancient hill fort | Golf course |

P

Parking

Car parks are located across the Forest, visit the website for the full list of car parks or see map for main car parks.

Charges:

£1.75 (1 hr)
£3.00 (2 hrs)
£4.50 (4 hrs)
£7.00 (6 hrs)

Motorbikes are free

Annual pass: £170

This is a really cost-effective way to park in all Forest car parks, at any time during opening hours, working out at just over £3.20 per week.

Blue Badge holders park free

Simply register Blue Badge parking within 24 hours by emailing eppingforest@horizonparking.co.uk with vehicle details and badge photo.

Parking queries:

PCNs/machines:

Horizon Parking 01245 392289

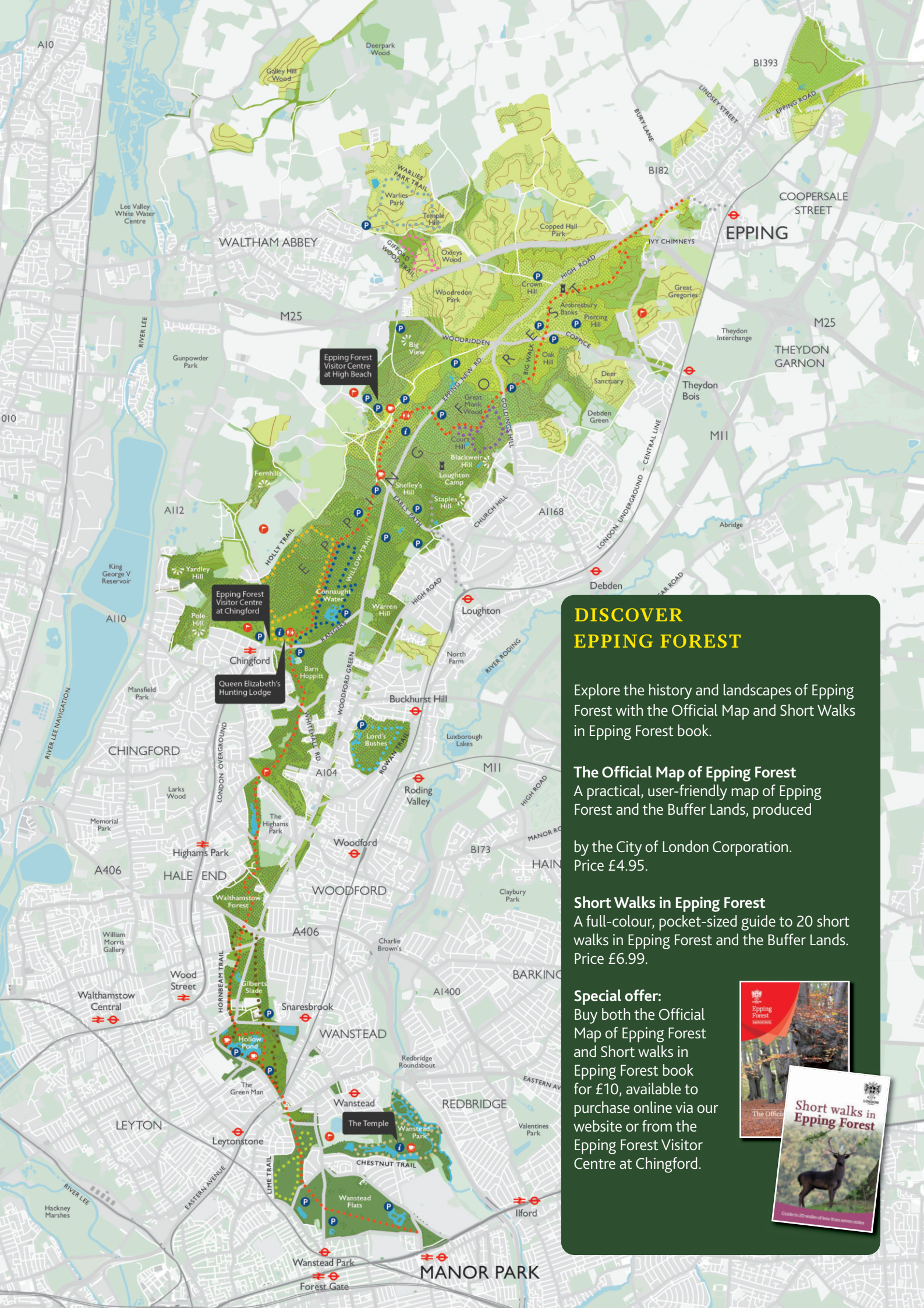
Payments/bookings:

RingGo 020 7110 0000

For payment or booking queries, contact:

RingGo 020 7110 0000

Thank you for supporting Epping Forest by paying for parking. Every pound raised through car park charges is reinvested directly into caring for and protecting this special landscape.



DISCOVER EPPING FOREST

Explore the history and landscapes of Epping Forest with the Official Map and Short Walks in Epping Forest book.

The Official Map of Epping Forest
A practical, user-friendly map of Epping Forest and the Buffer Lands, produced

by the City of London Corporation.
Price £4.95.

Short Walks in Epping Forest
A full-colour, pocket-sized guide to 20 short walks in Epping Forest and the Buffer Lands.
Price £6.99.

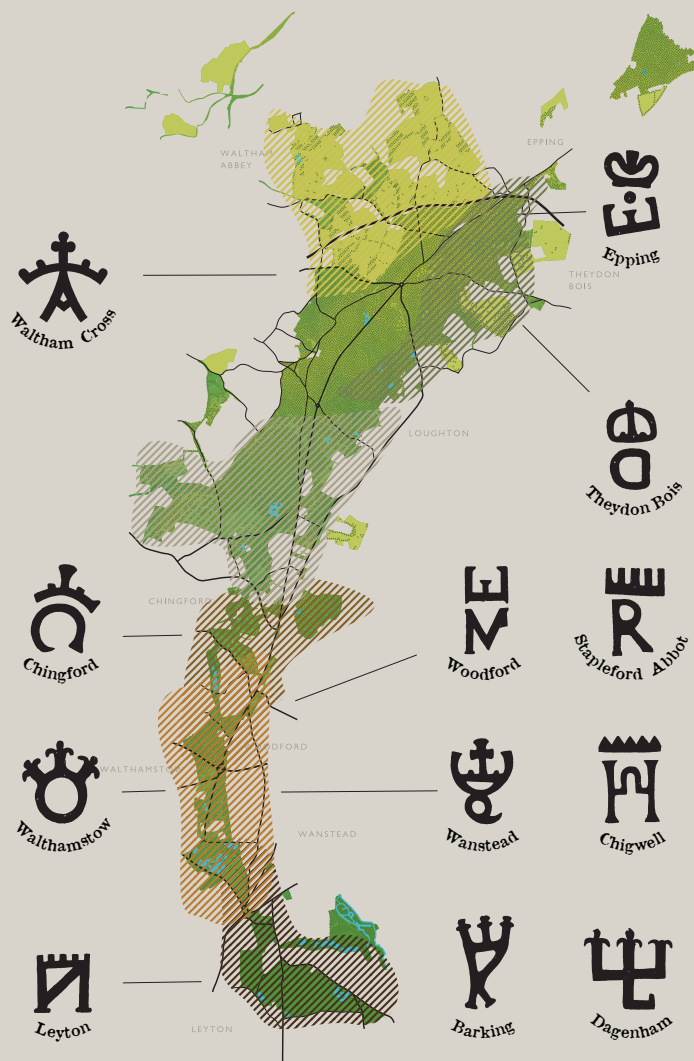
Special offer:
Buy both the Official Map of Epping Forest and Short walks in Epping Forest book for £10, available to purchase online via our website or from the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford.



The ancient custom of grazing

For over a thousand years, grazing animals have shaped Epping Forest's unique landscape. The 1878 Act reaffirmed and protected the rights of local Commoners to graze cattle, preserving the open character of the wood-pasture.

Although traditional grazing declined in the 20th century, conservation grazing continues today using English longhorn cattle fitted with GPS collars to create virtual boundaries. Cattle help maintain biodiversity by controlling the growth of dominant plant species, allowing rarer wildflowers and grasses to thrive and creating a range of vegetation heights. Their hooves create small patches of bare ground, providing habitats for insects and ground-nesting birds. Grazing also helps prevent scrub encroachment, preserving the open character of the grassland.



HISTORIC CATTLE BRANDING

For centuries, the woodland and open pastures of Epping Forest served as grazing land for Commoners. All cattle 'depastured' in the Forest during the summer months were required to be marked with both a parish brand and an owner's mark. With no fences, cattle freely grazed across parish boundaries, a right known as intercommonage. This principle was central to the 1876 Court of Chancery case *Commissioners of Sewers v Glasse*, which played a key role in preserving Epping Forest.

HOW TO BEHAVE NEAR CATTLE:

Please help with this valuable conservation work and be kind to the cows:

Pick up and remove any rubbish and dog mess.

Keep your distance. Please respect the cow's personal space.

Act calmly when near the cattle. Sudden movements may scare them.

Keep dogs under effective control, do not allow them to chase or harass the cows.

Reduce loud noises and shouting.

Calm humans = calm cows.

Locating the cattle:

Should you wish to find out where the cattle are, please scan the QR code:



To report any concerns call 020 8532 1010.

Buffer Lands

The Buffer Lands of Epping Forest form areas of vital protective land around parts of the northern sections of the Forest, safeguarding its boundaries and linking habitats across a wider landscape. Managed by the City of London Corporation, these 1820 acres (735 hectares) of farmland, parkland and open countryside were acquired to shield the Forest from encroaching development and maintain ecological connectivity.

Copped Hall and Warlies Park are amongst the most popular areas of Buffer Land to visit. These sites offer scenic walks, panoramic views and quieter spaces for nature, making them ideal for visitors seeking tranquillity and wildlife encounters.

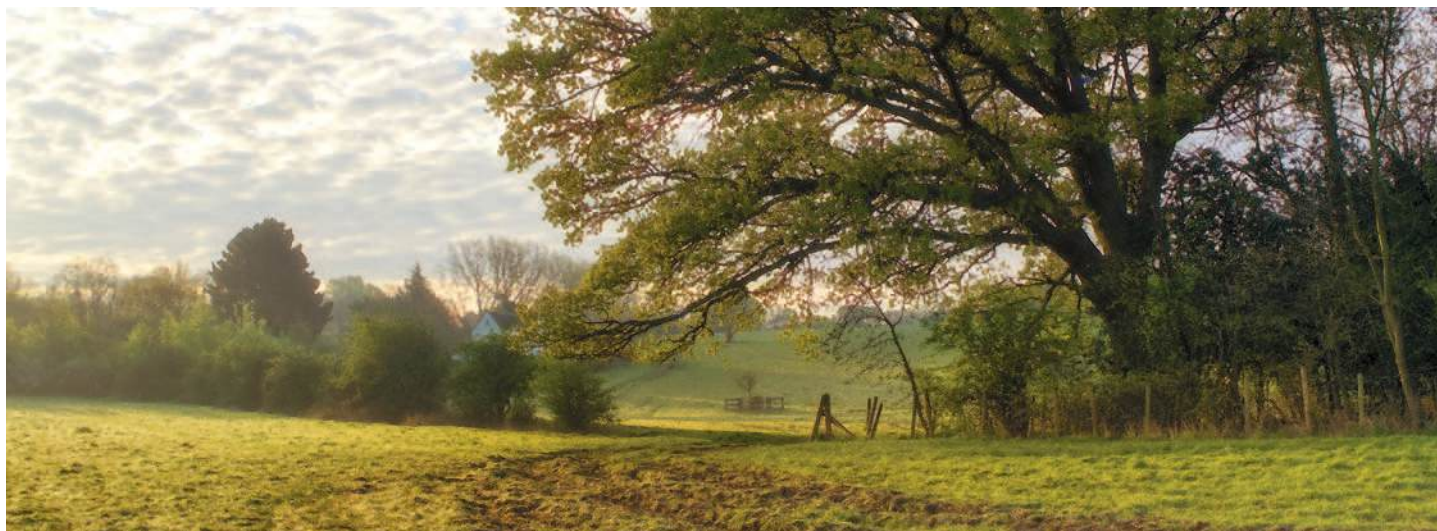
Copped Hall parklands form one of Epping Forest's largest areas of Buffer Land, protecting the Forest's northern fringe and connecting it to the wider countryside. This historic Grade II* landscape features sweeping parkland, veteran trees and peaceful meadows, accessible via public and permissive paths

and permissive walking areas. Visitors can enjoy far-reaching views across the estate, including striking vistas of the restored Copped Hall mansion. Copped Hall is a historic Georgian house, restored by the Copped Hall Trust, with events and open days held year-round.

Warlies Park, another significant Buffer Land site, is criss-crossed with public footpaths, permissive horse rides and bridleways. Its high ground offers sweeping views and seasonal wildlife spectacles, from flocks of fieldfares and redwings to the ghostly glide of barn owls. The Park's hedgerows and meadows support a rich diversity of birdlife, including spring arrivals like chiffchaff and blackcap.

These Buffer Lands are not only ecologically important but also serve as peaceful alternatives to the busier parts of Epping Forest. They provide opportunities for walking, birdwatching and quiet reflection, while supporting conservation efforts such as habitat restoration and cattle grazing to maintain species-rich grasslands.

Whether exploring the historic landscapes of Copped Hall or the wildlife-rich meadows of Warlies Park, the Buffer Lands invite visitors to experience some beautiful landscapes where nature thrives and heritage is preserved.



NATURE'S CLASSROOM: LEARNING IN EPPING FOREST

Epping Forest is the perfect place to learn more about the natural world. The Learning Team offer education sessions for schools. Our education partners at the Epping Forest Field Centre also offer a wide range of outdoor learning opportunities, not just for schools, but for family groups and adults too. For further information, please visit our website.



CELEBRATE YOUR CONNECTION TO EPPING FOREST

Have your generosity recognised with a plaque installed for 10 years at available locations in the Forest. Whether to mark a special occasion, in memory of a loved one or simply to express appreciation for this cherished landscape, donors to Epping Forest (registered charity number 232990) can become a plaque sponsor.

For further information, please visit our website.



SUMMER seasonal walk

WARLIES PARK

Signs of summer in Epping Forest

Summer in the ancient wood-pasture of Epping Forest arrives not with a single dramatic event, but with a steady unfurling of signs that the season has taken hold. By June, the many beech, oak and hornbeam stand in full leaf, their canopies deepening into rich greens that filter sunlight into shifting pools of gold on the woodland floor. Ferns rise in soft, feathery waves, bracken unrolls and the air gains that sweet, verdant scent carried by warm days following cool nights. During the month of June fallow deer fawns are born. Their mothers slip into secluded glades or bramble-fringed edges to give birth, leaving their young hidden and still for much of the day while she feeds nearby. A fawn's instinct is to remain motionless, relying on its dappled coat to mimic the pattern of sunlight on leaf litter. Special care must be taken to never approach or disturb the fawns.

Life also thrives in less obvious places, such as beneath a cow pat. In the traditional wood-pasture system, where grazing cattle help maintain open habitats, their droppings become miniature ecosystems. A fresh pat draws a swift, complex community: dung flies, beetles and tiny parasitic wasps arrive within hours, each species playing a role in breaking down the nutrient-rich mass. Dung beetles tunnel below, burying fragments that enrich the soil, while others sculpt small chambers where they lay their eggs. As the pat ages, its surface cracks and dries, becoming home to springtails and mites that further reduce it to soil. Birds, especially starlings and jackdaws, probe the edges for invertebrates, transforming the pat into a feeding station. What appears, at a glance, to be an unremarkable heap of dung is in fact playing a vital role in the delicately balanced ecosystem of Epping Forest.

Together, these signs, lush canopies, hidden fawns and bustling ecosystems in unexpected places, remind visitors that Epping Forest's ancient wood-pasture is a deeply interwoven landscape, where summer is announced through countless small, vital interactions.

Best summer spots to visit:



Yates' Meadow – A wide, sweeping hill of grassland framed by ancient trees, Yates' Meadow is full of summer colour, with butterflies drifting over the wildflowers. It offers a magnificent view over the Forest's canopy and across the Lea Valley into London.



Warlies Park – Warlies Park is gently undulating parkland with scattered tree clumps, many 200–250 years old. The southern area features West Hill and Temple Hill, offering views of the mansion. A 1737 rotunda and two obelisks survive.



Whitehall Plain – Stroll across Whitehall Plain, where the Ching Brook meanders and summer leaves frame the open grassland. Between Whitehall and Rangers Roads, English longhorn cattle may be seen grazing.



Debden Slade – This valley-like clearing offers a blend of open grass, scattered trees and sunlit rides. In summer, its warm, sheltered slopes attract butterflies and grazing deer, making it a rewarding spot for peaceful wildlife watching and a lazy picnic lunch.

WARLIES PARK TRAIL

The Trail covers a circular route over undulating ground with mainly grass underfoot.

Start / end point: Park entrance west of Upshire Village Hall

Distance: Approx. 2.5 miles

Time: Approx. 1 hour



WHAT TO SPOT



Little owl

The parkland provides ideal habitats for little owls that are commonly seen in and around the Park.



Stag beetle

As dusk befalls the Forest on summer evenings, look and listen out for the Forest's most magnificent insect, the stag beetle. With an almost mechanical, clacking whir this rare and harmless beetle may be heard and seen clumsily flying around in search of a mate.

Dogs are welcome in Epping Forest

Epping Forest is a wonderful place for dogs and their owners, offering around 6189 acres (2504 hectares) of wood-pasture and many routes across the additional almost 1,820 acres (735 hectares) of Buffer Lands to explore.

The Forest is shared by many users, and its habitats and wildlife must be protected. Please familiarise yourself with our Dog Walkers' Code of Conduct before setting out.



Enjoying the Forest on two wheels

Exploring Epping Forest by bike offers a great way to get to know the Forest. Familiarise yourself with the Cycling Code of Conduct before you set out.



Dog Walkers' Code of Conduct



- Your dog must be under effective control. If your dog does not respond to recall you must keep it on a lead.
- Respect any seasonal site signage to keep your dog on the lead in certain areas, to protect rare species.
- Clean up after your dog and take the waste home.
- Do not allow your dog to disturb other visitors.
- Dogs must not disturb or chase any wildlife, cattle, deer or horses.
- Make yourself aware of potential hazards to your dog such as ticks and harmful algae.
- Public Spaces Protection Orders may prohibit walking multiple dogs. Please check with the appropriate Local Authority.

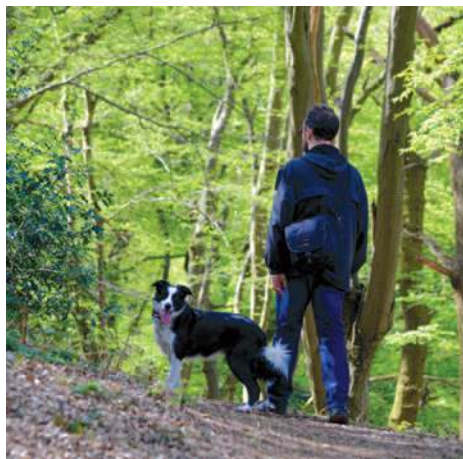
Cycling Code of Conduct



- Use the shared use trails considerably to ensure the safety of others. Let people know you are there with a greeting or bell. Pedestrians and horse riders have priority.
- Approach corners and descents with caution; dogs, wildlife and cattle may cross your path unexpectedly.
- Racing bicycles (including digital KOM/QOM 'chasing') is prohibited in Epping Forest.
- Building or digging jumps or berms and tree cutting is prohibited.
- Leave no trace. Use the existing routes and avoid skidding to prevent erosion. Take your litter home.
- Leave gates as you find them, to prevent cattle straying.
- Respect 'No cycling' restrictions that exist to protect ancient monuments, easy access paths and delicate habitats.

Things to do

Whether you're after relaxation or adventure, Epping Forest has something for everyone, including:



WALKING

With thousands of acres of Forest and Buffer Lands, there are routes for every ability, from short easy access paths to full-day treks. There are also a number of waymarked trails and the Epping Forest Brambly Hedge Trail for younger visitors.



HORSE RIDING

Over 60 miles (96km) of horse rides and free-range summer riding make Epping Forest one of the best riding areas in the UK. You will need a licence to ride in Epping Forest. To apply, complete the relevant application form available online or in person at Chingford Golf Course, Bury Road, Chingford, London, E4 7QJ.

CYCLING

Cyclists are welcome in Epping Forest, apart from a few restricted areas, please see the website. Please follow the Epping Forest Cycling Code of Conduct and slow down for and give way to pedestrians and horses.



FOOTBALL

Wanstead Flats hosts up to 60 pitches for casual or seasonal hire, with accessible changing facilities and toilets. For pitch hire and booking information, please visit our website.

RUNNING AND ORIENTEERING

The Forest is criss-crossed with paths and rides, many of which are perfect for running and cross-country events. Organised events require a licence. Please visit our website for further information.

BOATING

In the warmer months, visitors can hire rowing boats at Hollow Pond for a peaceful way to experience the beauty of Epping Forest.



GOLF

The public Chingford Golf Course (Par 72) lies within the Forest, minutes from Chingford Station. Visit: www.chingfordgolfcourse.co.uk

EXHIBITIONS:

Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford hosts some fascinating and inspiring exhibitions throughout the year. From the ever-popular annual Summer Exhibition to local artist showcases, there is something for everyone to enjoy.



Epping Forest 2026 events

Discover what's happening across Epping Forest throughout the year with our month-by-month guide to events, exhibitions and activities.

Most events require advance booking via Eventbrite, with booking opening up to two months in advance. Events are subject to change and new ones may be added throughout the year. To stay informed, please visit www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforest and follow us on social media.

JANUARY

Thurs 1 Jan – Sat 31 Jan
Exhibition: Bedford House Print Group Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Thurs 1 Jan – Sat 31 Jan
Exhibition: Epping Forest Calendar Photography Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 11 Jan 11am – 3pm
The Temple Opening The Temple | *Free*

Fri 23 Jan 11am – 1pm
Volunteer Information Session Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Wed 28 Jan 10am – 12pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 29 Jan 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 30 Jan 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 30 Jan 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

FEBRUARY

Sun 1 Feb – Tue 31 Mar
Volunteering in Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 15 Feb 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend The Temple | *Free*

Tues 17 Feb 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session Highams Park | *Free, booking required*

Wed 18 Feb 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 19 Feb 11am – 12.30pm
Art Collective (families) Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Tues 24 Feb – Sun 29 Mar
Paula Long: Bark and Bloom Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Tues 24 Feb 11am – 1pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 26 Feb 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Feb 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Feb 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

MARCH

Sun 1 Mar – Tues 31 Mar
Volunteering in Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 15 Mar 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend The Temple | *Free*

Thurs 26 Mar 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Mar 10am – 12pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Mar 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Mar 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Tues 31 Mar 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session Highams Park | *Free, booking required*

APRIL

April - August
Brambly Hedge Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Wed 1 April 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick Wanstead Park | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 1 April – Sun 10 May
Essex Art Club Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Wed 8 April 11.30am – 1pm
Youth Photography Collective Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *£5 per child, booking required*

Sat 11 and Sun 12 April, 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend The Temple | *Free*

Tues 14 April
Summer Show: applications open Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *£5 per entry*

Fri 17 April 11am – 1pm
Volunteer Information Session Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 23 April 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 24 April 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 24 April 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Wed 29 April 11am – 1pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

MAY

Sat 9 and Sun 10 May, 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend The Temple | *Free*

Tues 12 May – Sun 7 June
Born to Be Wild Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Thurs 21 May 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 22 May 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Sun 24 May 11am – 2pm
Love Bees Day Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free*

Tues 26 May 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session Highams Park | *Free, booking required*

Tues 26 May 10am – 12pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Wed 27 May 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick High Beach | *Free, booking required*

Fri 29 May 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

JUNE

Tues 9 June – Sun 12 July
Will Lewer: Epping Forest Reflections Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sat 13 and Sun 14 June, 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend The Temple | *Free*

Thurs 18 June 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 19 June 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Fri 26 June 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 26 June 11am – 1pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free*

Sun 28 June 1pm – 3pm
Rose and Crown Singers Summer Performance
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

JULY

Sat 4 July
Open Air Theatre: Pinocchio
Temple Enclosure
| *See website for details*

Fri 10 July 11am – 1pm
Volunteer Information Session
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Fri 10 July 12pm – 1pm
Teddy Bear's Picnic
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Sat 11 and Sun 12 July 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
The Temple | *Free*

Thurs 16 July 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 17 July 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Sat 18 July – Sat 6 Sept
Summer Show Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Wed 22 July 10am – 12pm
Top Picks
See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Wed 22 July 11.30am – 1pm
Youth Photography Collective
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *£5 per child, booking required*

Thurs 23 July
Treeline London Performance
| *See website for details*

Sun 26 July
Open Air Theatre: The Three Musketeers
Temple Enclosure
| *See website for details*

Tues 28 July 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session
Highams Park
| *Free, booking required*

Wed 29 July 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford
| *Free, booking required*

Fri 31 July 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

AUGUST

Sat 8 and Sun 9 Aug 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
The Temple | *Free*

Tues 18 Aug 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session
Highams Park
| *Free, booking required*

Wed 19 Aug 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick High Beach
| *Free, booking required*

Tues 25 August 11am – 1pm
Top Picks
See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 27 Aug 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 28 Aug 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 28 Aug 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Sun 30 Aug (evening, time TBC)
Open Air Theatre: Pirates of Penzance
Temple Enclosure
| *See website for details*

SEPTEMBER

Sept – mid-Oct
Youth Photography Collective Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 6 Sept 2pm – 4pm
Skylark Celebration
Harrow Road Pavilion | *Free*

Tues 8 Sept – Sun 4 October
Loughton Camera Club Exhibition Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sat 12 and Sun 13 Sept 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
The Temple | *Free*

Sun 20 Sept (time TBC)
Open House Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free*

Thurs 24 Sept 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 25 Sept 10am – 12pm
Top Picks See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Fri 25 Sept 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 25 Sept 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

September – November
Programme Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

OCTOBER
Mid-October – December
Epping Forest Calendar Photography Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 6 Oct – Tues 1 Nov
Thomas Peck Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 11 Oct 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
The Temple | *Free*

Fri 16 Oct 11am – 1pm
Volunteer Information Session
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 22 Oct 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 23 Oct 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
| *Free, booking required*

Tues 27 Oct 9.30am – 12.30pm
Youth Conservation Session
Highams Park
| *Free, booking required*

Wed 28 Oct 11am – 1pm
Top Picks See website
| *Free, booking required*

Wed 28 Oct 11am – 12pm
Youth Litter Pick
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford
| *Free, booking required*

Wed 28 Oct 11.30am – 1pm
Youth Photography Collective
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford
| *£5 per child, booking required*

Fri 30 Oct 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

NOVEMBER

Tues 3 Nov – Sun 29 Nov
Gail Hoban and Roz Howling: Nature Is for Everyone Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Sun 15 Nov 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
The Temple | *Free*

Thurs 19 Nov 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 20 Nov 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Tues 24 Nov 11am – 1pm
Top Picks
See website for meeting point | *Free, booking required*

Thurs 26 Nov 10.30am – 3.30pm
Decorate the Hunting Lodge (volunteer event)
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Fri 27 Nov 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

DECEMBER

Sun 5 Dec – Jan 2027
Epping Forest Art Collective Annual Highlights Exhibition –
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free*

Fri 11 Dec 10.30am – 11.30am
Little Saplings - Epping Forest
Visitor Centre at Chingford
| *Free, booking required*

Sun 13 Dec 11am – 3pm
The Temple Open Weekend
| *Free*

Sun 13 Dec 1pm – 3pm
Rose and Crown Singers –
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge | *Free, booking required*

Wed 15 Dec 11am – 1pm
Top Picks – See website
| *Free, booking required*

Thurs 17 Dec 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Epping Forest Exhibition
Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford | *Free, booking required*

Fri 18 Dec 2pm – 2.45pm
Guided Tour: Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
| *Free, booking required*

AUTUMN seasonal walk

BURY WOOD

Signs of autumn in Epping Forest

Autumn in Epping Forest is a season of transformations, when the ancient wood-pasture shifts from the lush fullness of summer to a landscape rich with colour, sound and movement. By late September, the Forest canopy begins its great annual change, with oak, hornbeam, beech and many other species' leaves turning through a spectrum of yellow, russet, copper and gold. Pollarded veteran trees, some shaped by centuries of management, seem to glow from within on bright afternoons, their twisted branches catching low, amber light. Underfoot, the woodland floor softens into a carpet of crisp leaves, beech mast husks and the pale parchment of freshly shed hornbeam seed bracts.

Fungi become one of the season's most rewarding spectacles. After the first proper rains, the Forest bursts with fungi of every form: tiers of bracket fungi decorating ancient trunks, puffballs swelling in small pale clusters and fly agarics appearing under birch. Rotting wood hosts delicate, jelly-like growths, while old stumps sprout dense troops of honey fungus. It is wonderful to spot the incredible forms and colours of the fungi, but please leave them as you find them. It is illegal to collect fungi from Epping Forest. Another unmistakable sign of autumn is the increase in bird activity. Mixed tit flocks drift through the canopy in restless, chattering bands, joined by treecreepers and goldcrests. Jays become bold and conspicuous as they gather acorns, flying low with their colourful flashes of pink, blue and black. Overhead, migratory thrushes begin to arrive, and redwings announce themselves with thin flight calls on cold, clear mornings.

The most dramatic autumn event, however, is undoubtedly the fallow deer rut. Throughout October, the males, known as bucks, establish territories in favoured rutting stands, often in secluded glades or among ancient pollards. Their deep, repeated groans echo through the trees, a distinctive sound that can carry surprisingly far. Bucks clash antlers in short, powerful bursts, pushing and twisting to test each other's strength. Though most contests are ritualised rather than dangerous, the spectacle is intense and unforgettable. Females, or does, gather nearby and the Forest's atmosphere feels charged with energy and tension. If you come across a deer rut, please take care not to disturb the deer and be sure to keep a safe distance away at all times (50m is recommended as a minimum).

By November, misty mornings, drifting leaves and the earthy scent of decay signal autumn's final phase, but the Forest remains full of subtle movement, reminding visitors that this ancient landscape is always in transition, even in its quietest moments.

Best autumn spots to visit:



Knighton Wood – Knighton Wood features a small lake, veteran oaks and hornbeams and quiet paths through the landscaped grounds of a former estate. An easy access path from the car park circles the lake, making it ideal for a tranquil autumn stroll.



The Lower Forest – The glades and wet hollows of The Lower Forest hang with mist on autumn mornings, while the undergrowth sparkles with cobwebs. Flocks of thrushes and finches feed on seed heads in patches of grassland.



Great Monk Wood – Great Monk Wood becomes one of the Forest's most breathtaking autumn areas to visit. Its towering beeches glow in shades of gold and amber, forming a lofty canopy overhead. Underfoot, deep drifts of crunchy leaves cover the soft, moss-covered woodland floor.



Furze Ground – Furze Ground is the name of the slope crossed by the Green Ride as it climbs out of Hangboy Slade. The old word for gorse, furze, is still fitting, as gorse bushes grow here, alongside heather and magnificent beech trees flanking the slope.

HOLLY TRAIL

This circular route follows surfaced Forest paths with short sections across the open grassland of Chingford Plain. The route includes a gentle incline.

Start / end point: Chingford Plain

Distance: Approx. 2.5 miles

Time: Approx. 1 hour



WHAT TO SPOT



Fly agaric

The colourful fruiting body of fly agaric can usually be seen between late summer and early winter. The parts of the fungi that we see above ground are just the fruiting bodies. These grow up from a structure known as the mycelium, a mass of gossamer like threads below ground.



Fallow deer

The black fallow deer, commonly associated with Epping Forest, are thought to have been introduced to the Forest from Scandinavia by King James I. They tend to gather in small herds but can form much larger groups.

Venue hire

Epping Forest offers a superb setting for a wide range of events, from guided walks and outdoor yoga to fun fairs and concerts. It is also the perfect setting for filming, with many extraordinary landscapes and features.

Community room

Within Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, we have a small community room available for hire. This space is ideal for small conferences, wellbeing events as well as parties.

Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge

Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge is a magnificent Grade II* Tudor hunting lodge, commissioned by Henry VIII in 1542 and completed in 1543. As well as forming the perfect venue and backdrop for weddings, the Lodge is available for hire for other events and gatherings.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Epping Forest's timeless scenery has appeared in countless films and TV shows, from Monty Python and EastEnders to Countryfile and Great British Railway Journeys, and more recently Paddington in Peru and Knives Out 3: Wake Up Dead Man. All filming follows strict ecological guidelines.

LICENCING

Anyone organising an event or activity on Epping Forest land such as sponsored runs, guided walks, cycle tours or organised visits like school or scout trips or sports sessions, must obtain a licence from the City of London Corporation. This also applies to photography and filming.

Why we require licences

Licences help ensure activities in Epping Forest are safe, respectful of other users and comply with Forest byelaws, while protecting the Forest, its wildlife and other visitors. They also ensure events meet health and safety and other legislative standards.

Any profits from weddings, venue hire, filming and licencing are invested directly back into the Epping Forest charity, taking care of this protected ancient landscape.

Applying for your licence

You can apply online via our website.



Forest weddings

Celebrate your special day in one of London's most enchanting settings - Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

This Grade II* listed Tudor building offers a romantic and historic venue for weddings and civil ceremonies.

Should you wish to discuss the options for Epping Forest to host your next event, please contact us, we'd love to hear from you. For further information, please visit our website.



Listed and loved

Celebrating Epping Forest's historic treasures

Epping Forest is not only a haven for nature lovers but also a sanctuary for heritage. Scattered across its ancient wood-pasture are buildings and monuments that tell stories of royal hunts, rural retreats and centuries of community life.

There are a number of listed buildings in Epping Forest, including:

Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Chingford – Grade II*

A rare surviving example of a Tudor timber-framed hunting lodge, offering panoramic views and immersive history.

A milestone at Gregson's Ride – Grade II

A modest but meaningful marker of travel and trade routes through the Forest.

Butler's Retreat, Chingford – Grade II

A symbol of Victorian leisure and hospitality, now reborn as a vibrant café.

Ordnance Survey Obelisk, Chingford – Grade II

A surveying landmark that helped map the nation.

The Temple, Wanstead Park – Grade II

A classical garden building that now serves as a visitor centre and exhibition space. Regular open days are held.

The Grotto, Wanstead Park – Grade II

A romantic parkland feature nestled in the landscape, evoking 18th century tastes.



Epping Forest also protects three Scheduled Monuments, each offering a glimpse into ancient life:

Ambresbury Banks

An Iron Age hillfort with imposing earthworks and strategic views.

Loughton Camp

Another Iron Age hillfort, steeped in mystery and surrounded by woodland.

The Temple, Temple Hill, Warlies Park

A historic site with archaeological significance.

As part of Epping Forest and the surrounding Buffer lands, many of these historic sites and features can be visited.

Please check on guidelines for visiting these special sites which require extra sensitivity and protection.

For more information on visiting these heritage sites, guided tours and opening times, please visit our website.



History in the landscape

Discover the story of Epping Forest

Epping Forest's rich history spans over 11,700 years, beginning at the close of the last ice age when the first trees began recolonising the landscape, as the climate gradually warmed. Over millennia, Mesolithic hunters, Iron Age tribes and medieval villagers shaped the landscape into a mosaic of clearings, pastures and ancient trees.

Following the Norman Conquest, the area was designated a Royal Forest, reserved for royal hunting. Yet, local communities continued to gather wood and graze livestock, fostering the unique wood-pasture landscape that endures today.

In the 19th century, the Forest faced threats from railway expansion and land enclosure. Public protest led to the landmark Epping Forest Act of 1878, placing the Forest under the stewardship of the City of London Corporation, a commitment that continues to protect this ancient woodland today.

From the Iron Age hillforts of Ambresbury Banks and Loughton Camp to Tudor landmarks such as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Epping Forest is a living archive of British heritage.

Interpretive signage, archaeological sites and guided tours reveal the Forest's transformation, from royal hunting grounds to a beloved retreat for East End communities. Ancient pollarded trees, green lanes and World War II relics whisper stories of centuries past.

To delve deeper into the Forest's fascinating history, join one of our regular guided tours of the Epping Forest Exhibition at Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford or Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. These tours run throughout the year and provide engaging narratives of the Forest's evolution.

To explore the history of Wanstead Park, visit the Temple on one of its regular open days. This 18th century garden feature now serves as a visitor centre, interpreting the story of Wanstead House and its surrounding parkland.

For further information, including tour dates and booking details, please visit our website.

Epping Forest historical timeline



c. 10,000 BC

(The Mesolithic): Flint tools found beneath Ambresbury Banks indicate early human activity in the Forest.



c. 500 BC

(Iron Age): Construction of hillforts at Ambresbury Banks and Loughton Camp, likely used for defence, seasonal settlement, or livestock enclosure.



Roman period:

Roads and tracks established;
Roman pottery, roof and floor tiles and
tesserae discovered in Wanstead Park.



1086:

Epping Forest listed in the
Domesday Book as part of the
Royal Forest of Waltham.

12th century:

Forest Law introduced to
protect royal hunting rights;
role of Verderers established.

1509:

Epping Forest was
one of the many
hunting forests for
the royal Tudors.



1543:

Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge
built by order of King Henry VIII;
now a Grade II* listed building.



1715:

Wanstead House
The magnificent Portland Stone
building, designed by Colen
Campbell and built 1715-20, was
the first large country house in
the Palladian style.





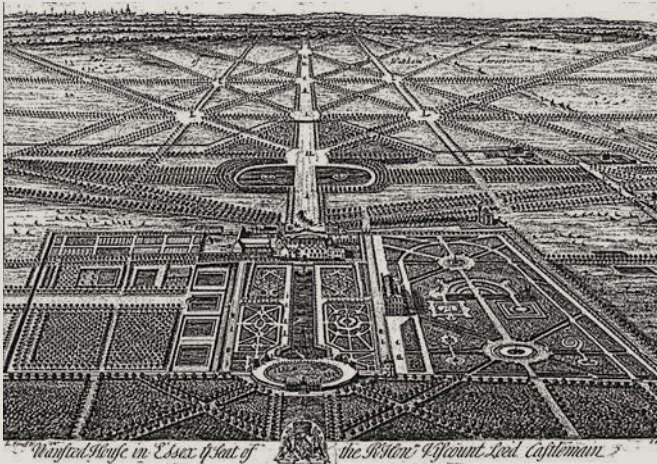
1765 – 1875:

Pollarding shaped Epping Forest's wood-pasture landscape for centuries. Commoners' traditional pollarding rights ended under the 1878 Epping Forest Act, but the Conservators still carry out pollarding today as an essential conservation practice preserving ancient trees and habitats.



1817:

Attempt by the Commissioner of Woods and Forests to disafforest Epping and Hainault Forests.



1820:

In the 1800s, Catherine Tylney-Long owned Wanstead House. After her husband squandered her fortune, the mansion was demolished in 1820 and the land sold to settle their debts.

SAVE THE FOREST.

WORKING MEN!
ATTEND BY THOUSANDS
AT THE
OPEN AIR MEETING
TO BE HELD AT
WANSTEAD FLATS,
Opposite Chestnut Walk,
On Saturday, July 8th, 1871
TO PROTEST
AGAINST THE
ENCLOSURES
OF THE
FOREST.

The Chair will be taken at six o'clock, by
SIR ANTONIO BRADY, J.P., F.G.S.

1871:

Following the enclosure movement, only one-third of Epping Forest remained unenclosed.



1878:

The City of London Corporation became Conservators of Epping Forest after campaigning in the 1800s against enclosure that threatened public access. Acting to protect Commoners' rights, the Corporation took legal action and eventually bought out manorial interests. This led to the Epping Forest Act of 1878 and appointed the City of London Corporation as its Conservators.

1882:

Queen Victoria visited Epping Forest to formally dedicate the Forest on behalf of the City of London Corporation.



1898:

Fairmead Lodge was demolished in 1898.

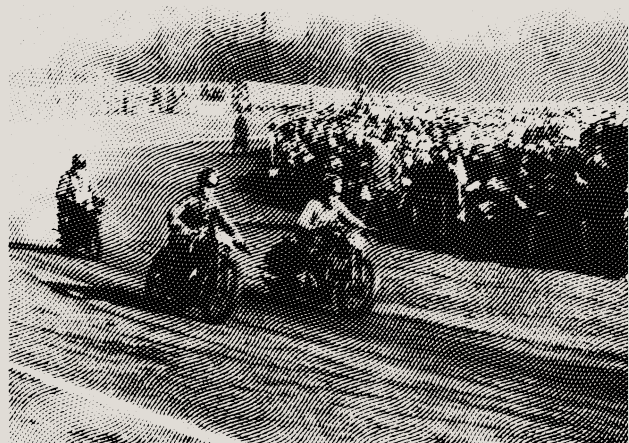


1914 – 1918:

World War I impacts the Forest; some areas used for defence and training.

1928:

Dirt speedway racing at High Beach between 1928 and 1931.



1939 – 1945:

World War II brings anti-aircraft installations, air raid shelters and prisoner-of-war camps to the Forest.



21st century:

Epping Forest designated as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), due to its ecological importance.

Epping Forest is part of the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy, linking it to global forest conservation efforts. The Forest was also recognised by the Queen's Green Canopy and designated as one of 70 Ancient Woodlands during Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee.

Figures in the landscape

Epping Forest has long inspired artists, writers and poets. Its natural beauty and mysterious atmosphere ignite the imagination, from romantic painters like Lucien Pissarro to contemporary photographers capturing its shifting light and textures. Writers and poets have celebrated its serenity, folklore and timeless charm. The Forest's rich history, royal hunting heritage and biodiversity have attracted monarchs, creatives and thinkers over the centuries. Art exhibitions are regularly held at Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, offering visitors a fresh perspective and a chance to connect with this enduring source of inspiration.

POETS:

John Clare

*'I love to see the old heath's
withered brake
Mingle its crimped leaves
with furze and ling,
While the old heron from
the lonely lake...'*

I love to see summer beaming forth

John Clare, the "peasant poet," was a patient at Dr. Allen's asylum at High Beach during the 1800s. The Forest's tranquility and natural beauty inspired his poetry. He was captivated by its ancient trees, winding paths and rich wildlife, often contrasting the Forest's wildness and solitude with encroaching urban life.

Edward Thomas

*'Out of the town and into
Epping Forest,
Where silence listens and
the mind grows clear,
I walked till London loosened
from my thought.'*

Lights Out

Edward Thomas lived at High Beach in 1916 while training at a local army camp. A keen walker, he drew poetic inspiration from the Forest's trees, paths and seasonal moods. His love of the English landscape contrasted with war's devastation; he was killed at the Battle of Arras in 1917.

ARTISTS:

William Morris

William Morris, a central figure of the Arts and Crafts movement, championed traditional craftsmanship and nature-inspired design, creating iconic wallpapers, textiles and furniture. Deeply connected to Epping Forest, he drew inspiration from its ancient trees and landscapes, campaigning to protect the Forest while integrating its natural forms into his artistic vision and designs.



Sir Jacob Epstein

Sir Jacob Epstein, a sculptor and painter, lived on the edge of Epping Forest in Loughton for around 25 years and painted many landscapes and woodland scenes of the Forest, especially in the 1930s and during World War II.

Lucien Pissarro

The painter, engraver and lithographer, Lucien Pissarro, lived in Epping in the 1890s and painted several scenes in and around the Forest.

Grayson Perry

Renowned British artist, Grayson Perry, created a series of paintings specifically for a 2003 exhibition at Guildhall Art Gallery on the theme of Epping Forest, exploring people–nature relationships.

Walter Spradbery

Illustrator and poster artist, Walter Spradbery, is known for iconic London Transport posters featuring landscapes that include Epping Forest; he lived in the area and is buried in Buckhurst Hill.



Above: Spradbery's work is a familiar sight, welcoming visitors on the 'gateway' signs to Epping Forest.

HISTORICAL FIGURES:

Boudica

Local legend suggests that the Iceni queen, Boudica, may have held out in Epping Forest, though there is no firm evidence to support this claim. What is certain is that the Forest and the surrounding Essex lands lay within the territory controlled by the Iceni during her revolt against Roman Empire rule. Julius Caesar himself described the Britons as retreating into natural strongholds and fortified places, such as hillforts, when confronted by Roman forces, so perhaps the legend is not entirely implausible after all.

Dick Turpin

Infamous highwayman, Turpin, is one of the most enduring figures associated with Epping Forest, where legend places him riding, hiding and robbing travellers in the early 18th century. The Forest's dense woodland and maze of tracks made it an ideal refuge for highwaymen evading the law. Turpin's criminal career was rooted in danger, secrecy and lawlessness on London's edge. Turpin's life of crime finally closed in on him and on 7 April 1739 he was led to the gallows at Knavesmire. Before a jeering crowd, the infamous outlaw met his fate, bringing his reckless exploits to a decisive and brutal end.

Henry VIII

Henry VIII played a key role in shaping Epping Forest as a royal hunting ground during the 16th century and is likely to have visited the Forest for hunting expeditions during his reign. A passionate devotee of the chase, Henry expanded royal control over the woodland to support deer hunting and courtly sport.

LITERATURE:

Benjamin Zephaniah

Benjamin Zephaniah, both poet and author, wrote the delightful book, *When I Grow Up*, which takes an alternative look at 12 occupations and the people who fill them. It's aim is to open up children's imaginations to the possibility that there are many more roles open to them than they may think, including that of Epping Forest Keeper!

Zephaniah lived locally in Manor Park in East London and used Epping Forest regularly for jogging, training and enjoying nature. He spoke about his love of the Forest and how important it was to him personally and creatively.

Samuel Pepys

Samuel Pepys wrote extensively about Epping Forest in his diary entries, particularly during the Great Fire of London in 1666. Pepys' writings provide a valuable historical record of how the Forest was used and enjoyed during his era.

James Herbert

The author, James Herbert set his novel *Lair*, the sequel to *The Rats*, in Epping Forest. Moving from London's slums to the Forest, the story follows a second outbreak of mutant black rats spreading into the countryside. Herbert vividly portrays the struggles confronting these voracious creatures, blending horror with the Forest's eerie beauty and turning the woodland into a tense, atmospheric backdrop for terror and suspense.

Looking after the Forest

Epping Forest is undergoing major conservation and access improvements this year, alongside our daily care of this ancient landscape.

The multi-year Habitat Restoration Programme continues to restore historic wood-pasture by reopening glades, restoring heathland and giving ancient pollards more space and light. Please visit our website to find out more about these important works. The restoration work and ongoing management of targeted areas of wood-pasture within Epping Forest has been made possible through Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England funding under a Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreement.

Leaky dams are made of natural materials, laid in streams and ditches to act as a flood management system. The dams help to slow and divert waters as well as hold water in the Forest, which will make the landscape more resilient during the summer months. This helps to protect the ancient trees which Epping Forest is so famous for. Work continues this year to build the dams.

You may spot these structures along brooks and streams, but please do not walk on them. This is a project managed by the City of London's Climate Action Strategy team, in partnership with Epping Forest.

Project Pondscape and wetland restoration also continues, with desilting, reshaping and the creation of new ponds at Fairmead, Cuckoo Pits and Palmers Bridge. This work informs a new Pond Strategy to guide the care of more than 150 water bodies.



Heritage sites, including Ambresbury Banks and Loughton Camp, are receiving protection from scrub encroachment and erosion.

In Wanstead Park, restoration of the Grotto has recently been completed and the Temple has reopened following refurbishment at the end of 2025.

Seasonal protection for skylarks and other ground nesting birds is in place at Wanstead Flats over the spring and summer months, with temporary fencing helping to safeguard nesting areas.

On the Buffer Lands, climate action projects such as meadow creation, woodland enhancement and veteran tree management, are improving carbon storage and biodiversity.

Access improvements continue across the Forest, including path repairs, new signage and bridge replacements.

Together, these projects protect wildlife, strengthen climate resilience, conserve heritage and enhance the experience of the millions who visit each year.

WINTER seasonal walk

HOLLOW POND

Signs of winter in Epping Forest

Epping Forest transforms in winter into a quiet, frost-kissed wilderness where wildlife adapts to the cold and shorter days. Despite the bare trees and leaf-littered paths, the Forest remains teeming with life. One of the most familiar sights and sounds of the season is the robin. Even in the midst of winter, male robins maintain their bright red breasts and melodic song, a cheerful counterpoint to the otherwise muted woodland. Their crisp, tinkling notes are often heard from hedgerows or low branches, as they defend territories and search for food among the fallen leaves, often fluttering down to investigate any leaves churned up in your wake.

Winter is also a prime time to glimpse some of the Forest's more nocturnal residents. Tawny owls, with their characteristic hooting, become increasingly audible in the dark evenings. These owls are top predators in the Forest ecosystem, silently patrolling the woodland edges and clearings in search of small mammals. Their presence is more easily detected by sound than sight, as they perch camouflaged among gnarled branches, listening for the faint rustle of a vole or mouse beneath. The winter months also coincide with the start of mating season for several woodland species. Foxes engage in courtship behaviour that includes yipping, playful sparring and scent marking. Even in the quiet of a snowy night, these unearthly screams break the silence of the otherwise hushed Forest.

Other mammals, such as deer, squirrels and badgers, adjust their activity to cope with colder temperatures, often foraging in the leaf litter for nuts, berries and remaining fruits. Birds like woodpeckers, tits and nuthatches remain active, often forming mixed-species flocks that move through the canopy in search of insects hidden under bark.

The winter snows transform the Forest into a magical wonderland, where snowmen spring up among the trees and the air rings with the joyful whoops and laughter of sledders. When the temperatures drop and the many ponds throughout the Forest freeze, we remind visitors of the dangers of stepping onto the ice. Please also ensure that children and dogs do not venture onto the frozen ponds.

Best winter spots to visit:



Copped Hall – The historic parkland of Copped Hall offers bracing scenic winter walks across its footpaths and open areas and provides some fantastic winter vistas. Deer can often be spotted browsing amongst the woods while birds of prey such as buzzards are a common sight.



Barn Hoppitt – Barn Hoppitt is a significant wood-pasture area containing a remarkable concentration of veteran pollards, placing it among the top 20 such sites in the UK. Linked to Whitehall Plain and bordered by the meandering River Ching, it forms a sensitive, grazed landscape supporting long-established grassland and woodland habitats.



Deershelter Plain – Deershelter Plain is a historic heather-covered clearing, criss-crossed with paths, birch trees and old oak pollards. It takes its name from a large conical thatched deer shelter that was once sited here, where hay and root vegetables were placed to feed deer during severe winters.



Bury Wood – Adjacent to Chingford Plain, Bury Wood is defined by mature oak, hornbeam and birch. Long managed through pollarding, it is notable for its twisted, gnarled hornbeams, winding woodland paths and diverse wildlife.

HORNBEAM TRAIL

Mainly flat along Forest tracks across open grassland and wooded areas. There is a short steep incline between Canada Plain and Waterworks Wood.

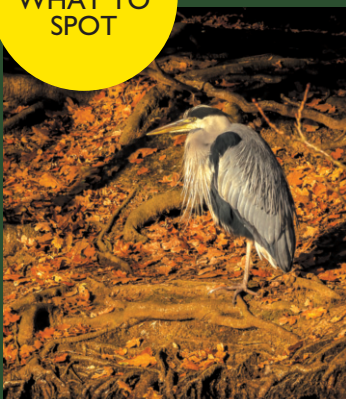
Start / end point:
Snaresbrook Road

Distance: 3.5 miles / 5.72 km

Time: 1.5 hours



WHAT TO SPOT



Hérons
Hérons are often seen hunting patiently along Epping Forest's ponds and wetlands, where they feed on fish, amphibians and invertebrates. Their success reflects the Forest's rich, thriving wetland habitats.



Woodpeckers
Look and listen for the greater spotted woodpecker's distinctive bouncy flight and repeated 'kek'.

Caring for Epping Forest

Epping Forest is a living ecosystem and cultural treasure, much of which is protected as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for its rare habitats and ancient trees. Epping Forest is managed, preserved and protected by the Epping Forest charity with the City of London Corporation as Conservators and Trustees in accordance with the Epping Forest Act 1878.

Epping Forest is a registered charity (232990).

EPHING FOREST BYELAWS

The Forest is carefully managed to balance recreation and conservation. With over 11 million visits each year, this internationally important and protected ancient landscape faces many pressures. We ask all visitors to help care for this special place by following the byelaws, observing the Visitor Code of Conduct and taking litter home. Please leave no trace of your visit, except footprints and take nothing but memories and photographs.

REPORT FLY-TIPS

If you spot fly-tipping in Epping Forest or its surrounding Buffer Lands, please report to the Police on 999 and contact us: 020 8532 1010 (available 24/7). To help us respond quickly, please provide a clear description of the waste and its exact location.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

If there is an emergency, please dial 999 immediately.

After contacting emergency services, please notify us by calling 020 8532 1010, available 24/7. This number should also be used for reporting any non-emergency concerns.



Volunteering opportunities

In 2025, volunteers contributed over 18,000 hours to support the City of London Corporation with the protection of Epping Forest through conservation, habitat management and visitor support, playing a vital role in caring for this ancient woodland. Volunteer roles include conservation tasks, litter picking, photography, visitor support, learning assistants, cattle minders, youth opportunities and many more. Why not make 2026 the year you get involved and give something back to the woodland you love? Join one of our bi-monthly Volunteer Information Sessions at Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, visit our website or email efvolunteering@cityoflondon.gov.uk to find out more. We'd love to hear from you!

VOLUNTEERING ORGANISATIONS

We are grateful to the many organisations who volunteer throughout Epping Forest. To find out more about these groups, located all across the Forest, visit our website.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING

We invite your organisation to take part in Corporate Volunteering in Epping Forest. This is the perfect opportunity to step beyond the office and into one of London's most iconic green spaces. Just 30 minutes from central London, the Forest offers a powerful setting to deliver meaningful Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) outcomes. From clearing invasive species and planting trees to building leaky dams, your team will take part in practical conservation work that strengthens collaboration, builds connection with nature, improves staff wellbeing and helps protect this unique ancient landscape. To discuss a bespoke corporate volunteering package, please email efvolunteering@cityoflondon.gov.uk

SPECIES RECORDING

Should you spot an unusual species in Epping Forest, please help our Conservation Team by completing an online record via our website.

LEND A HAND TO CLEAR LITTER

We hold litter picks the length and breadth of the Forest and even run youth litter picks. Please contact us to find out how you can get involved in the hugely rewarding activity of clearing litter.

The pictograms below highlight a selection of guidance for visitors to be aware of. For the full list of Epping Forest byelaws, please visit our website.

Be Forest aware



No barbecues allowed



No fires allowed



Avoid contact – watch out for oak processionary moth



Danger – Possible blue-green algae in ponds



Do not disturb fawns (June)



No picking or trampling of bluebells



Respect the cows and give them space



Skylarks nesting keep out of fenced area (Feb to Sept)



Swans nesting – keep your distance (spring)



Froglets migrating – watch your step! (spring)



No fungi picking



Fallow deer rut – keep your distance (autumn)



Keep off frozen lakes and ponds (winter)

THANK YOU



Thank you for supporting Epping Forest, it could not thrive without the dedication of visitors, volunteers and local residents. As a registered charity, Epping Forest depends on the generosity of its supporters. Every small action makes a difference: picking up even a tiny piece of litter helps our wildlife, purchases from our shop fund the ongoing care of the Forest and the vigilance of our visitors helps us protect this special place. If you would like to donate to the Epping Forest charity, please visit our website.

Photographers:
City of London Corporation, Nicky Bamber, Ariane Blacher, Thomas Boughton, Clare Eastwood, Mark Powter, Chris Shepherd, Jo Stokes, Don Taylor, Leighton Thomson, Andrew Wakefield (front cover), Mike Ward, Alan Woodgate and Yvette Woodhouse. Design: Evolve Design

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STAY IN TOUCH

Stay up to date with Forest news and events, follow us on social media and visit our website.

 Epping Forest City of London
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