

**FREE**

**The New Forest**

# Essential Guide

to the National Park

**Forest map  
Places to explore  
Walking & cycling**

Image: Nick Whittle

The New Forest Essential Guide  
is brought to you by:



**Forestry England**





# Welcome

The New Forest is a spectacular landscape made up of a unique mix of woodlands and open habitats that are internationally important for nature and conservation.

There are a thousand ancient trees, extensive wetlands and bogs, and open heathlands that are home to many rare species of plants and wildlife long since lost from other parts of the UK. Ensuring the New Forest is a safe place to visit and protecting the very special nature we have here, requires all of us to respect and look after it.

Forestry England manages 47% of the New Forest National Park, in the core of the Forest area. It works closely with other organisations locally including Hampshire County Council, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, New Forest District Council and the New Forest Verderers.

The New Forest National Park Authority ensures this outstanding landscape has the highest level of protection to preserve it for the nation to enjoy for generations to come.

You can help nature and reduce your carbon footprint on your visit by walking, cycling, and using the New Forest Tour as much as possible, and buying, eating, and staying local.

We ask all visitors to follow the **New Forest code** to help protect this unique landscape

## Find out more

[forestryengland.uk/newforest](https://forestryengland.uk/newforest)

✕ @engnewforest

[newforestnpa.gov.uk](https://newforestnpa.gov.uk)

✕ @newforestnpa

## Follow the New Forest code

The New Forest is a unique place with rare wildlife and free-roaming livestock. Thank you for helping us care for this special place by following the simple New Forest code:



Scan me to find out more



Keep your distance from the animals – don't feed or touch them\*



Keep dogs under control. Don't let dogs approach or chase any animals



Stick to the permitted cycle tracks



Take home litter and dog waste



Park only in car parks



Drive with care – animals on the road!



No fires or barbecues\*



No wild camping



Help wildlife by keeping to the main tracks

\*Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty of £100 or being taken to court and a fine of up to £1,000.



# New Forest commoners

One of the first things you notice here in the New Forest are the free-roaming animals. The ponies, cattle, pigs, donkeys and, in certain areas, sheep graze and forage on unfenced open areas. These animals are owned by local families using their commoning rights.

The members of these families are called 'commoners' – ordinary people with an extraordinary commitment to this special place. They have commoning rights from land they own, rent or share that allows them to graze their animals on the open Forest. Commoners have to tend to their livestock all year round, so you might see them with trailers rounding up their ponies or checking on their cows. It's all part of the New Forest's long history as a working forest.

The iconic New Forest ponies are the real architects of the Forest and have helped shape the landscape for centuries. This traditional practice of commoning is vital in supporting our rare habitats which are a world capital for wildlife.



## Horse riding

Horse riders have always enjoyed open access in the New Forest, which has lots of suitable tracks. When leaving Forestry England land, remember to use bridleways. On private land riders must keep to the bridleways. These are shown on the Ordnance Survey maps and are usually indicated by fingerposts and/or blue arrows or dots.



## Pass wide and slow

**Sadly, many ponies and other livestock are killed or injured on the roads of the New Forest each year. Every animal killed is a great loss to the Forest, and to its owner, so if you enjoy seeing the animals in the National Park then please help us protect them through some simple actions:**

**1. Please #PassWideandSlow** when driving and be prepared to stop for animals. However tame they may appear they are unpredictable, and can bite and kick. Take particular care around ponies and cattle with young, especially if you have a dog with you.

**2. Don't feed the animals.** It is vital that they graze naturally, both for their own survival all year round and for the benefits grazing brings to the landscape. It's a finable offence to feed or leave food out for New Forest ponies and donkeys and to touch or pet them. Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty order of £100 which could increase up to £1,000

**3. Please don't leave water out** for the animals at any time of the year. There is always natural water available, and it is important for the Forest that the grazing shifts naturally according to the weather.



## How to report a problem with a Forest animal

Road accident involving a pony, cow, pig, sheep or donkey call: **999**

Sick, injured or dead ponies, cow, pig, sheep or donkey call: **02380 282 050** (office hours)  
**0300 067 4600** (after hours).





# Up close and personal

Did you know that the New Forest is home to all six native reptiles?

From rare sand lizards to adders and grass snakes, all are available to see at the **New Forest Reptile Centre**, signposted off the A35 near Lyndhurst.

These reptiles can be difficult to see in the wild as they are rare and very secretive, so the New Forest Reptile Centre is a great place to see them close-up.

Opening times are seasonal. Please check the website for holiday openings:

[forestryengland.uk/new-forest-reptile-centre](http://forestryengland.uk/new-forest-reptile-centre)

The New Forest Reptile Centre is managed in partnership with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC).



Male and female sand lizard

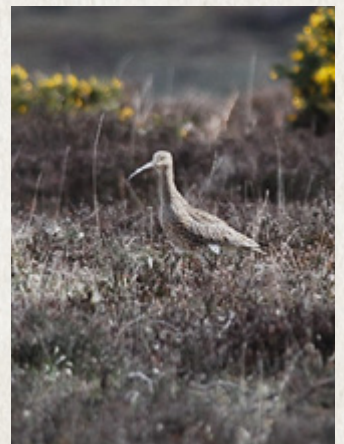
Image: Big Wave Productions

# The nesting season



The New Forest is a Special Protection Area for birds and an important breeding location for endangered ground nesting birds such as the lapwing, nightjar and curlew.

## Ground nesting birds



### Curlew

These large wading birds with majestic beaks nest in scrapes on the ground. Their plumage is beautifully camouflaged to help disguise them from potential predators. The chicks can run around just hours after hatching. This species is globally threatened and is classed as red, the highest conservation priority.



Unlike most birds, ground nesting birds build nests and raise their young on the Forest floor. They come into the New Forest to breed from early spring until late summer attracted by the mix of bogs, wetlands, and open heathlands with many returning to the same nesting spot every year.

The area is a key location for many species including the Dartford warbler with around a third of the British breeding population found here.

When enjoying time on the Forest look out for special signs in key nesting zones highlighting the presence of the birds and ensure you follow the advice on them.

**Orange signs** indicate areas very close to breeding grounds and can be seen in locations including car parks and on the main tracks. **Red STOP signs** highlight nesting sites in the immediate vicinity and we ask people to avoid these areas during spring and summer.



### Nightjar

Travelling from Africa to breed in the New Forest, they are found in heathland, around woodland edges and in recently cleared forest. The New Forest is a stronghold for them with around 15% of the UK population.



### Dartford Warbler

This small, dark, long-tailed warbler is resident in the UK. It will perch on top of a gorse stem to sing but is often seen as a small flying shape bobbing between bushes. Their nest is not on the ground, but close to it in gorse or heather.



### Lapwing

Lapwings are often nicknamed 'peewits', after the calls which are given in swooping display flights. Breeding lapwings have undergone widespread and marked declines in the UK over the last few decades, making the New Forest increasingly important for them. This species is globally threatened and is classed as red, the highest conservation priority.



### Woodlark

These secretive and rare birds build their nests in heather and the felled woodland areas of the Forest. Woodlarks are best seen and heard singing in February and March early in the morning. The New Forest holds a significant 16% of the UK population.





# Are you ready to ride?



## Explore the National Park by bike with over 100 miles of family-friendly cycle routes.

The cycle routes are marked with numbered wooden posts. You can navigate your way around the tracks by checking the numbers against our cycle trail cycle trail map or following the Ordnance Survey grid references also on the markers.

The network is easily accessible from railway stations at Ashurst, Brockenhurst and Sway and links to the main New Forest villages.

Visit: [newforestnpa.gov.uk/routes](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/routes) for all the best trails.

Please follow the **New Forest Cycling Guide:** [newforestnpa.gov.uk/cycling](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/cycling)

**Off-road cycling is only allowed on the waymarked routes.**

It's important that cyclists stick to marked trails all year round.



## Adventure cycling

For more adventurous cyclists, there are purpose-built mountain bike skills circuits at **Moors Valley Country Park**, Ringwood.

Here you will find a network of forest road graded trails, as well as a blue graded singletrack trail. A cycle map is available from the visitor centre on-site.

## Cycle guide and map

Grab a cycle route map before heading out on your adventure. It shows off-road and road-based cycle networks across the New Forest, plus details of bike hire outlets.

Available to pick up at outlets across the New Forest National Park, including local information points.





# Rangers' tips for a great visit to the Forest

[forestryengland.uk/newforest](https://forestryengland.uk/newforest)  
[newforestnpa.gov.uk](https://newforestnpa.gov.uk)

The best way to enjoy your trip is to get an expert's advice. After all, nobody knows the Forest like the rangers who work here.



## Don't feed the animals

Keep your distance and do not feed or pet the ponies and other forest animals. They have all the natural food they need on the Forest, by feeding them human foods, even fresh vegetables or fruit can make them really unwell, and it also encourages them to come too close to people and near roads. It's a finable offence to feed or leave food out for New Forest ponies and donkeys and to touch or pet them. Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty order of £100 which could increase up to £1,000.



## No fires or BBQs

To reduce the risk of devastating wildfires, vast swathes of the New Forest and Dorset are complete no BBQ and fire zones. There is a ban on the lighting of fires of any type including BBQs and any outdoor cooking facilities or equipment. It also makes it an offence to place, throw or drop items likely to cause a fire such as lit cigarettes. Anyone using these items is liable to a fixed penalty order of £100 which could increase up to £1,000. Many shops and outlets in and around the New Forest have removed disposable BBQs from sale.



## Look after ground nesting birds

Some birds nest on the ground across the New Forest, and to help these birds survive please keep to the main paths and do not venture out onto the open heath when walking, cycling or horse riding from the start of the nesting season in March to the end of August. We also ask dog walkers to please keep their dog on the main tracks, and where necessary to use a lead, so that the birds and young chicks are not disturbed.



## Look after your litter

Take a spare bag with you to collect up any rubbish and look out for recycling points across the Forest. Your food and litter could harm the wildlife and livestock. Please take your litter home with you to dispose of and pick up after your dog at all times.

Both **Forestry England** and the **National Park Authority** employ rangers, who you'll often meet out and about in the New Forest.



### Forestry England rangers

0300 067 4601/[southern.enquiries@forestryengland.uk](mailto:southern.enquiries@forestryengland.uk)  
Forestry England, The King's House, Lyndhurst,  
Hampshire, SO43 7NH



### New Forest National Park Authority rangers

01590 646 600/[rangers@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:rangers@newforestnpa.gov.uk)  
New Forest National Park Authority, Lymington  
Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington SO41 9ZG

Image: Marcus Langelier



# See the best of the Forest

View the New Forest National Park from a different perspective this summer. Experience the best views of the Forest on the open-top New Forest Tour and hop on and off where you like.



## Where to stay?

For more information on where to stay, what to see and do in the New Forest visit: [thenewforest.co.uk](https://thenewforest.co.uk)

## New Forest Tour

**The New Forest Tour is the perfect excuse to leave your car behind and enjoy the Forest. It runs hourly, seven days a week from Saturday 29 June to Sunday 15 September 2024. Take a look at the map on the centre pages of this guide for routes. Check social media for exciting 20th anniversary celebrations!**

The Tour offers unrivalled treetop views of free-roaming ponies, ancient forests and picturesque villages. There are three beautiful routes to choose from: red, green and blue – and you can hop on and off where you like and switch routes – all on the same ticket.

Well-behaved dogs are welcome and you can even bring your bikes (carried free). Listen to audio commentary that brings the history and characters of the New Forest to life.

The perks don't stop there, as you can enjoy a free ferry ride from Southampton to Hythe and free journeys to the Tour on connecting bus services. Benefit from great discounts at attractions including the New Forest Wildlife Park, Exbury Gardens and Beaulieu National Motor Museum, as well as discounted treats along the way at local shops and eateries.

**Tour information**  
[thenewforesttour.info](https://thenewforesttour.info)

   [newforesttour](https://newforesttour)



By donating to the New Forest Trust, you're supporting conservation, education and commoning projects to help secure the future of the New Forest.

You can do this by choosing restaurants and hotels which support the charity; through local donation boxes; or by donating online at [justgiving.com/newforesttrust](https://justgiving.com/newforesttrust) (see QR code)





# The sign of true local produce



When you're shopping in the New Forest, look out for the New Forest Marque for your sign of true local produce.

Everything you see with the distinctive blue logo has been grown, brewed, reared or produced right here in the local area.

When you buy Marque products, you know you'll be getting fantastic local produce while supporting local businesses and helping New Forest traditions continue to thrive.

You'll find the stamp of approval on cosy pubs, quaint tea rooms, and high-end restaurants – all offering a selection of menus bursting with locally-sourced

ingredients; not to mention farm shops, campsites, family-run bed & breakfasts, boutique guest houses and larger hotels, all proud to support local produce.

**Inspired by the New Forest**  
The New Forest Marque has always supported beautiful arts and crafts made with locally sourced materials, and recently expanded the arts and crafts offering with the new Inspired category.

Showcasing local artists and makers who take their inspiration from our remarkable National Park, you'll find the Inspired logo on a variety of crafts and gifts from pottery to textiles.

Visit [newforestmarque.co.uk](https://newforestmarque.co.uk) to see the fantastic array of produce on offer.

## Look out for the New Forest Marque on:

- Forest-reared meat
- Locally caught fish and seafood
- Local cheeses
- Seasonal fruit and veg
- Beer, cider, gin, wine and soft drinks
- Cakes, pastries, pies and other sweet and savoury treats
- Jams, honeys and chutneys
- Artisan-produced soaps and skincare products
- Bespoke hampers
- Woodcrafts
- Paintings and photography
- Handcrafted gifts, jewellery and knitted goods
- Hospitality and retail

**Buy local  
Eat local  
Stay local**

[newforestmarque.co.uk](https://newforestmarque.co.uk)  
X f @NewForestMarque





# Discover the New Forest

## Don't miss Moors Valley Country Park and Forest

Explore waymarked footpaths and cycle routes, hire a bike or bring your own. For a more leisurely journey take a trip on the narrow-gauge steam train. Children will love the adventure play areas and the 'Play Trail' with its huge wooden play structures.

If you'd rather live life more adventurously why not try Go Ape's new Nets Adventures at Moors Valley? It's a wonderworld of treetop nets, trampolines and netted tunnels. With Treetop Challenge,

Treetop Adventure+ and Forest Segway all thrill-seeking, family entertainment boxes are firmly ticked. And, when you're feeling hungry after all of that, you can enjoy delicious food in Seasons restaurant.

Moors Valley is open all year round, with a full programme of events for adults and children. Disabled access and facilities are provided including wheelchair and mobility scooter hire.

For more info visit [moors-valley.co.uk](http://moors-valley.co.uk) follow us on @MoorsValley



## Finding out more...

**Lepe Country Park**  
[hants.gov.uk/lepe](http://hants.gov.uk/lepe)  
**New Forest Heritage Centre**, Lyndhurst  
[newforestheritage.org.uk](http://newforestheritage.org.uk)

**The National Park Mobile Information Unit**, various locations  
[newforestnpa.gov.uk/visiting](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/visiting)

**New Forest Reptile Centre**, Lyndhurst  
[forestryengland.uk/new-forest-reptile-centre](http://forestryengland.uk/new-forest-reptile-centre)

**Bolderwood Information Unit**  
[forestryengland.uk/bolderwood](http://forestryengland.uk/bolderwood)

**St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery**, Lymington  
[stbarbe-museum.org.uk](http://stbarbe-museum.org.uk)

**Ringwood Gateway**  
[Ringwood.gov.uk/gateway](http://Ringwood.gov.uk/gateway)

**Fordingbridge Information Centre**  
[fordingbridge.gov.uk/information-office](http://fordingbridge.gov.uk/information-office)







The New Forest's free tap water refill service, across the Forest. Download the Refill app, bring your own water bottle, look out for the window stickers and get a free tap water refill. [refill.org.uk](http://refill.org.uk)

## Local Information Points

- i Bashley**  
Hoburne Bashley Holiday Park
- i Brockenhurst**  
Cyclaxperience
- i Burley**  
Shappen Stores
- i East Boldre**  
Chapel Stores
- i Hythe**  
Herald Publishing
- i Landford**  
Landford Village Stores
- i Milford-on-Sea**  
The Village News
- i Minstead**  
Community Shop
- i Sway**  
Shop and Post Office
- i Woodgreen**  
Community Shop and Post Office



## Key to map

- i** Visitor information
- i** Local information
- A** Campsite
- W** Wildlife area
- C** Castle
- T** Toilets
- ♿** Accessible toilets
- C** Cafe
- P** Picnic area
- ⛶** Play area
- 🚶** Walking trails
- 🚲** Cycle network
- 🎣** Fishing (by permit)
- 🐟** Fishing
- P** Car parking
- 🌳** National Park



- New Forest Tour\* (see page 8)
- New Forest Tour\*
- New Forest Tour\*

\* The Tour runs hourly 7 days a week in the summer season. See: [thenewforesttour.info](http://thenewforesttour.info) for dates and times.



# Walking in the New Forest

## Follow our waymarked walks and trails...

The following trails are marked on the ground by wooden marker posts with coloured bands. An overview map of each route is displayed at the start point in the car park. All routes are circular and will bring you back to your starting point. The numbers refer to map locations on the centre pages.

### ② From Bolderwood car park

#### **Deer Watch Trail**

**0.75km/0.5 miles**

A short stroll leading you to a deer-viewing platform overlooking fields where wild herds of fallow deer are frequently seen. The path is a moderately smooth, gravelled surface with gentle slopes and benches along the way. The trail is accessed by a gate which has a low catch.

#### **Jubilee Grove Trail**

**1.5km/1 mile**

Including the deer fields, this meandering route leads you past some majestic trees, the oldest of which date back to 1860. Benches from which to admire their beauty can be found along the way. The path is a moderately smooth, gravelled surface with two short 'but fairly steep' slopes and frequent resting places. The trail is accessed via a gate which has a low catch.

#### **Radnor Trail**

**3km/2 miles**

A longer route which takes you into the heart of the Forest and across the Bratley Water stream. Benches and picnic benches are located along the trail. The path is a moderately smooth, gravelled surface with two short 'but fairly steep' slopes and frequent resting places. The trail is accessed via a gate which has a low catch.

### ⑥ From Blackwater or Brockhill car parks:

#### **Tall Trees Trail**

**2.5km/1.5 miles**

Follow the marker posts and you will be guided along a shady path beneath mighty Douglas firs and redwoods that were planted during the reign of Queen Victoria. The path has a fairly smooth, gravelled surface. The trail is flat with frequent resting places and no gates.

#### **Blackwater Arboretum Trail**

**0.75km/0.5 miles**

A circular route which leads you past tree species from around the world. By following the unique panels you can use your senses to discover the secrets that these trees hold. Benches are located along the walk. The path has a fairly smooth, gravelled surface with one very gentle slope.

### ⑦ From Whitefield Moor or Puttles Bridge car parks:

#### **Ober Water Trails**

**1.5km/1 mile (red trail)**

**2.5km/1.5 miles (yellow trail)**

Two circular routes follow the Ober Water midway between its source and the sea. Close to this meandering stream is the open grassy expanse of Whitefield Moor. The paths are moderately smooth, gravelled surfaces and compacted grassy ground with some gentle slopes and a few resting places. This trail can be muddy after wet weather.

### ③ Reptile Centre car park:

#### **Reptile Trail**

**2km/1.5 miles**

Enjoy a circular walk through the woods. The trail mainly follows a fairly smooth, gravelled surface.

### ⑧ Wilverley car parks:

#### **Wilverley Wander**

**4.2km/2.5 miles**

A longer and more informal trail which winds through this diverse and working woodland. The paths are moderately smooth, gravelled surfaces with some short, steep slopes. Please note that part of this trail is on a cycle route.

### ⑤ Knightwood car park:

#### **Knightwood Oak**

**Less than 0.25 miles**

An accessible route to one of the most famous trees in the New Forest. Believed to have been planted before 1600, this tree is still going strong and is a spectacular example of the ancient practice of pollarding. Benches are located throughout. The path has a fairly smooth, gravelled surface.

**P**

Please remember the only places parking is allowed in the Forest is within official car parks. A full list can be found at [forestryengland.uk/new-forest](http://forestryengland.uk/new-forest)

Do not park on or drive over verges even when car parks are full.





## Free walking routes app

There's an easy way for you to follow the best walking routes in the New Forest – **the National Park's walking routes app.**

Available for Android and iPhone, the app features 40 walking routes of various lengths from coastal strolls to woodland walks.

It makes following the routes easier than ever, with GPS navigation allowing you to see your location at all times. This removes the need to read a map or decipher written directions, making it perfect for the casual walker.

Each route on the app also features points of interest, where you can find out interesting history or nature facts along the way.

Download for free at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/walksapp](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/walksapp)

**Don't miss out**

Subscribe to the free email newsletter at [newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk)



**No smartphone? No problem!**

All walks are available to download and print at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/routes](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/routes)



Learn more about the wildlife, history and culture of the New Forest during this popular festival.

This year's **Walking and Cycling Festival** takes place across the New Forest during the autumn.

Experts will be leading the way on dozens of guided events which range from wildlife walks to historic meanders, bird watching to ranger rambles. It's a chance to learn about the special landscape, habitats and culture of the New Forest, connect to nature and experience new things. The Festival will feature guided walks suitable for families of all ages. Many events are free, but places need to be booked in advance. [newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival)



# New Forest heathlands

Here in the New Forest we're fortunate to have the largest area of lowland heath in Western Europe. Our wet bogs that run through areas of heathland are home to many rare species.

The heathlands support a vital resource of peat-based habitats such as mires and wet heathland that has the capacity to store as much or more carbon as an equivalent area of woodland.

The valley mires are filled with plants such as sundews, bladderworts, butterworts, aromatic bog myrtle with its fantastic balmy smell and uncommon species like bog orchid, cotton slender grass, pale green sphagnum bog moss and bog sedge.

There's nowhere quite like the New Forest, where you'll find a variety of native creatures and plants which have long since disappeared from the rest of England.

Forestry England's local team takes pride in maintaining and restoring this precious habitat. We manage the gorse breaks; control the bracken on the heathland; remove regrowth and rhododendron, which smother many plants growing underneath. It is only through this ongoing forest management that we will protect the habitat at a landscape level, creating a mosaic of habitats for wildlife whilst fostering one of the New Forest's key features for the enjoyment of future generations.

Early purple orchid



Sundew



Large Marsh Grasshopper







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village

*Where time flows differently*

A great place to eat and drink, visit a museum and  
take a seasonal river cruise.

**NEW! Art of Buckler's Hard exhibition (ends 3 Nov 24)**

New Forest, Hampshire | [bucklershard.co.uk](http://bucklershard.co.uk)



# Follow the New Forest code

The New Forest is a unique place with rare wildlife and free-roaming livestock. Thank you for helping us care for this special place by following the simple New Forest code:



Scan me to find out more



Keep your distance from the animals – don't feed or touch them\*



Keep dogs under control. Don't let dogs approach or chase any animals



Stick to the permitted cycle tracks



Take home litter and dog waste



Park only in car parks



Drive with care – animals on the road!



No fires or barbecues\*



No wild camping



Help wildlife by keeping to the main tracks

\*Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty of £100 or being taken to court and a fine of up to £1,000.



## Thank you for looking after the New Forest



Forestry England



New Forest National Park Authority

**The New Forest Essential Guide** is a joint publication with Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority.