

Thames Chase Forest Centre Accessibility Guide

Updated: 18th September 2026



Welcome to Thames Chase Forest Centre

Welcome to Thames Chase Forest Centre. This guide has been created to help you plan your visit and find a route suitable for you and others to engage with nature, focus on wellbeing and enjoy the great outdoors.

Thames Chase Forest Centre is a managed woodland site, whilst there are surfaced trails with compact stones, the ground surface across the site may be challenging for some visitors with access requirements.

This access guide and accompanying access video has been created by and with the support of access consultants with lived experience of disability, who have experienced the trails described in this guide.

If there is any information you can't find in this guide, please contact Forestry England:

Telephone: 01708 642964

Email: thameschase@forestryengland.uk

We hope you enjoy your visit to Thames Chase Forest Centre.

Overview

The following pages provide an overview of accessibility at Thames Chase Forest Centre. Detailed access information can be found from page 5 onwards.

Opening hours

The car park is open daily from dawn to dusk.

Visitor centre opening times:

Summer (peak) open- 10am-5pm

Off peak- 10am-4pm

How to get to Thames Chase Forest Centre

The main vehicle entrance is off Pike Lane, Upminster, Essex

The Sat Nav Postcode is RM14 3NS

W3W: assets.loser.jazz

Access by public transport is limited. Upminster train and tube station is located 2 miles away.

Staff availability

There is a visitor centre at Thames Chase Forest Centre. This is managed by The Thames Chase Trust. For up-to-date information on opening hours visit the following webpage: thameschase.org.uk/visitor-centres/the-forest-centre

Toilet facilities

Toilet facilities are available during visitor centre opening hours. There are female toilets, male toilets, a unisex accessible toilet and a larger, adapted bathroom with an adult changing table, shower and hoist.

Car parking

There is one car park adjacent to the visitor centre. This is managed by The Thames Chase Trust. Please note that there is a 2m height restriction at this car park. There are 8 accessible parking bays marked out on firm, level ground.

Facilities

The following facilities are available on site:

- Visitor centre
- Toilet facilities
- Multi-use trails
- All terrain mobility scooter hire
- Inclusive play facilities
- Picnic areas

Trails

There are three waymarked trails at Thames Chase Forest Centre. Find out more about each trail in our detailed accessibility guide on page 5.

- Orchard trail (1km/0.65miles)
- Woodland trail (1.2km/0.76 miles)

- Meadow trail (0.8km/0.5 miles)

All trails are shared use paths with pedestrians and cyclists.

The trails are made up of surfaced and unsurfaced compact stone paths, with some loose stones and natural material on the ground. The ground can be uneven in places, however when dry, it is well suited for some wheelchair and mobility scooter users with larger, off-road wheels.

Detailed Accessibility Guide

Arrival and parking

Location

Sat Nav post code: RM14 3NS

Address: Thames Chase Forest Centre, Pike Lane, Upminster, Essex

What3words location: ///assets.loser.jazz

Car and cycle parking

There is one car park located adjacent to the visitor centre.

- The car park is accessed from Pike Lane.
- There is a 2m height restriction at this car park.
- Lighting is provided in the car park.
- There is plenty of parking and 8 accessible bays which are signposted.
- There is also an overflow car park adjacent to the main car park.
- Accessible bays have a 1.2m access zone on both sides.
- The accessible parking bays are located on a firm, level surface within 50m of the visitor centre.
- There is a level surfaced path from the accessible parking bays to the visitor centre.
- Cycle parking stands are found in front of the visitor centre, there are no cycle parking bays designed for larger adapted cycles.
- The car park is operated by the visitor centre. Car parking payment can be made inside the visitor centre.

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Images of car parking options are provided below:



Accessible parking bays are provided on level surfaced ground adjacent to the visitor centre. This image shows un-used accessible parking bays.



Cycle parking stands in front of the visitor centre accessed off the main path.



Signage for accessible parking bays in the main car park.

Public transport

There are no direct bus routes to Thames Chase Forest Centre. The nearest bus stop is 1.2 miles away. The nearest station is Uppminster Station, which is 2 miles away.

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Pedestrian access points

Access from St Marys Lane

Please note that St Marys Lane is a busy road. Visitors arriving on foot via St Marys Lane can walk South on the public footpath adjacent to the golf course which leads directly to Thames Chase. There is a kissing gate at the start of this footpath which is not wheelchair accessible. There is also a footbridge with steps. Images of this access route are provided below:



Pedestrian access point from St Marys Lane. This is a public footpath.



The path leads to a kissing gate which is not wheelchair accessible.



The pedestrian route follows a forest path towards the visitor centre, crossing a bridge with steps.

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Access from Pike Lane

There is a pedestrian and cycle access point from Pike Lane. A wooden swing gate provides access from the road. There is then a path 1m-1.8m wide from the gate to the Woodland trail. Please note that there is no connecting footpath along Pike Lane to this access point.



The open gate leading from Pike Lane towards the Woodland trail.



View towards Pike Lane from the wooden swing gate.

Arrival by cycle

There are no formal cycle lanes on Pike Lane. Cycle parking stands are provided outside the visitor centre. There is no dedicated cycle parking for larger, adapted cycles or trikes.

Visitor centre

Description

There is one visitor centre on site. This is managed by the Thames Chase Trust. The visitor centre has step-free access throughout. Detailed information is provided below:

- The visitor centre is located adjacent to the car park; there is level access into the visitor centre.
- The entrance doors into the visitor centre are automatic doors.
- There is a level threshold into the visitor centre.
- There is a staffed reception desk. The desk is set at a lowered height accessible for wheelchair users.
- The reception area is well lit.
- There is plenty of circulation space inside for wheelchair users and mobility scooter users.
- There is a cafe on the ground floor, with level access throughout, and wheelchair accessible seating options.
- Tables and chairs are set at a wheelchair accessible height, with knee space underneath, seating can be moved.

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Images of the visitor centre are provided below:



View of the visitor centre from the car park, the route is level access, a set of automated doors provide access into the visitor centre.



All terrain mobility scooters can be hired from the visitor centre.



On arrival into the visitor centre there is a staffed reception desk, which has a lower counter and a knee recess underneath. There is plenty of circulation space in front of the desk.

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The café has indoor and outdoor seating options. Indoor options are shown in the above image. Tables are all at a lower, wheelchair accessible height.



There is a step-free access route to an outdoor area where there are picnic benches. Indoor seating has a flexible seating arrangement. Highchairs are available for young children.



A ramp next to the café provides access to the toilet facilities and an outdoor picnic area.

All terrain mobility scooter hire

All terrain mobility scooters are available to hire on a first-come, first-served basis. This service is operated by Countryside Mobility. Scooters are suitable to use on all waymarked paths at Thames Chase Forest Centre and can comfortably negotiate rough ground.

Please click on the following link for booking and further information about mobility scooter hire:

countryside-mobility.org/locations/thames-chase-2/



Two all-terrain mobility scooters are available to hire. These are collected from an outside area next to the car park.



An image of the all-terrain mobility scooter in use along the start of the Orchard trail.

Toilet facilities

Male, female and an accessible toilet are all located in the visitor centre via a ramp. Details about the toilet facilities are provided below:

- The toilets are located near to the cafe and are well signposted.
- The wheelchair accessible toilet does not require a RADAR key and is open during visitor hours.
- The accessible toilet cubicle is a standard size.
- The accessible toilet has a right-hand transfer.
- Lighting in the corridor to the male and female toilets is low.
- The lighting level inside the toilet cubicle is good.
- A foldable baby changing facility is available within the wheelchair accessible cubicle.
- A separate adapted toilet is available with additional facilities including an adult changing table and manual hoist. This is in a separate building behind the visitor centre.

Images of the toilet facilities are provided on the next page.

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Route to the male and female toilet facilities via a corridor. These are signposted.



There is an accessible toilet and baby changing facility at the top of the ramp, the door does not require a radar key to open.



The accessible toilet has a right-hand transfer. The toilet cubicle is a standard size, with grab rails fitted and an emergency pull cord.

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Images of the adapted bathroom are provided below:



Signs for the office and larger adapted bathroom.



Image of the door to the larger adapted bathroom with a push pad door control on the right-hand side.



The adapted cubicle is larger than a standard accessible toilet, it is fitted with drop-down grab rails on either side of the toilet. There is an adult changing bench at the back of the room.

Information boards and picnic areas

Description

Information boards are provided in outside spaces around the visitor centre; these provide information on the trail routes. Picnic seating is provided near the information boards.

Images of the picnic areas and information boards are provided below:



Example of an accessible picnic bench at the back of the visitor centre on surfaced ground with some small, loose stones.



Under covered picnic area to the side of the visitor centre.



Information board at the back of the visitor centre on the side of the path showing a map of the trails across the site.

Play areas

Description

There are three play areas at Thames Chase Forest Centre. Details are provided below:

- There is one large inclusive play area at the back of the visitor centre, managed by Thames Chase Trust
- There is a small play area along the woodland trail called The Woodcutters Cottage
- The Forest Glade play area is an inclusive play area found on the Meadow Trail
- Images of the play area next to the visitor centre are provided below. Images of the Forest Glade Play area and Woodcutters Cottage are shown in the Trails section of this access guide.



The path leading to the play area is wide, firm and level.



Inside the play area there is a firm path that provides access to inclusive play equipment.



There is a British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation panel within the play area.

The Woodland trail

Description

This is a trail that starts from the back of the visitor centre, it has wide paths that loop through the woodland. The trail is signposted using green way marker arrows on posts. The trail is mostly surfaced, with some sections of unsurfaced natural woodland paths. Along the trail you will find wellbeing signposts inviting visitors to stop, pause and connect with nature.

Distance

1.2km/0.76 miles

Gradients and terrain

The surface is generally well suited for wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and pushchairs with off-road wheels. This trail is mostly flat with some very gentle gradients as the trail loops back towards the visitor centre. During dry weather the paths are firm. In wetter weather the unsurfaced sections of the path can become muddy.

Seating

Bench seating is provided at regular intervals along the side of the path every 50-100m, providing moments to stop and take in the sights and sounds of the forest. The wooden benches are located at the side of the path and provide arm rest and backrest support.

Images of the Woodland trail are provided on the next page.

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A wheelchair user on the Woodland trail. Green way marker arrows on posts are found along the trail.



Wooden benches are provided at regular intervals along the trail on the side of the path, with arm rests and backrests, and space for a wheelchair user to sit alongside.



The Woodcutter's Cottage is a small inclusive play area along the Woodland trail; this has a level firm access route leading to it.

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Example of a path along the woodland trail, the paths are at least 2m wide providing plenty of space for wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and buggies.



Example of a wellbeing panel along the trail inviting visitors to stop, pause and connect with nature.



Example of a wooden bench at the side of the path with arm rests, a backrest and space to the side for a wheelchair user to sit or transfer.

Orchard trail

Description

This trail starts from the back/ South side of the visitor centre, near the picnic area. The route loops through woodland and offers views across the open orchard and wider countryside. The trail is signposted using orange way marker arrows on posts. Paths are wide and can accommodate wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and pushchairs.

Distance

1km/0.65miles

Gradients and terrain

The paths are a mix of surfaced, compact stone, and natural forest paths. In dry weather the paths are firm, with some small stones, and loose material such as leaves and twigs. The trail ends with a moderate downhill slope through the orchard.

Seating

A mixture of wooden bench and perch seating is provided along this route. Seating is located at the side of the path along steeper sections of the route, allowing visitors to stop and rest along slopes.

Images of the Orchard trail are provided on the following page.

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Example of a wayfinding post with orange directional sign.



Example a wooden perch bench at the side of the path.



Example a wide path next to the orchard, the path slopes upwards, there is perch seating part way along the slope.

Meadow trail

Description

The Meadow trail is a short loop route that starts from the car park. The trail offers views across the meadow, and opportunities to spot wildlife.

Distance

0.8km/0.5miles

Gradients and terrain

The route is partly surfaced. The last section of this route back to the car park includes a section of larger stones, which are more uneven under foot and wheel. This section lasts approximately 150m. The route is flat, with no steep gradients.

Seating

Bench seating is provided at the side of the path at regular intervals along this route. Seating has arm rests and backrests and includes space for a wheelchair user to sit alongside.

Images of this trail are provided on the next page.

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A wheelchair user on the Meadow trail path with a purple directional arrow on a way marker post on the right.



A wheelchair user on the Meadow trail on a wide path with a bench on the left-hand side of the path.



A surfaced part of the Meadow trail leading back to the car park, with larger, courser grade of stones than other sections of the path.

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Entrance to the Forest Glade play area, a surfaced path provides wheelchair access up to the slide.



The Forest Glade play area on a level area of ground with a surfaced path with some loose forest material on the ground.



A quieter more enclosed natural play space within the Forest Glade play area.

Sensory Guide

What to expect

Thames Chase Forest Centre provides three waymarked walking trails. Wellbeing panels can be found on the Woodland trail encouraging visitors to stop, pause and connect with nature.

Different forest users

All of the paths are shared paths. There are no formal cycle paths, however cyclists may use the trails if they wish to.

Sensory experiences along the trails

Textures

In autumn, fallen leaves may cover the path in the woodland areas to create different ground textures. In wetter weather some areas may become muddy, especially on unsurfaced ground. A section of the Meadow trail includes surfaces with larger stones which will feel rougher under foot or wheel.

Sounds

Expect to hear a variety of different natural sounds along all of the trails, including birdsong. Motorway noise can be heard along some sections of the trails, including a section of the Meadow trail.

You may hear woodland maintenance work happening including the sounds of chainsaws and other types of machinery.

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Light

The woodland trees can create shaded areas, with natural light shining through on a sunny day. There is no artificial lighting in this forest. There are some larger open spaces at the start of the trails and along the Orchard trail.

Shelter

The visitor centre provides shelter from different weather conditions. There is one undercover picnic area at the side of the visitor centre.

Quiet room

A quiet room can be found in the same building as the adapted bathroom, follow the signs to the adapted bathroom opposite the barn. The quiet room provides a space for visitors to decompress or can be used as a prayer space. Images are shown below:

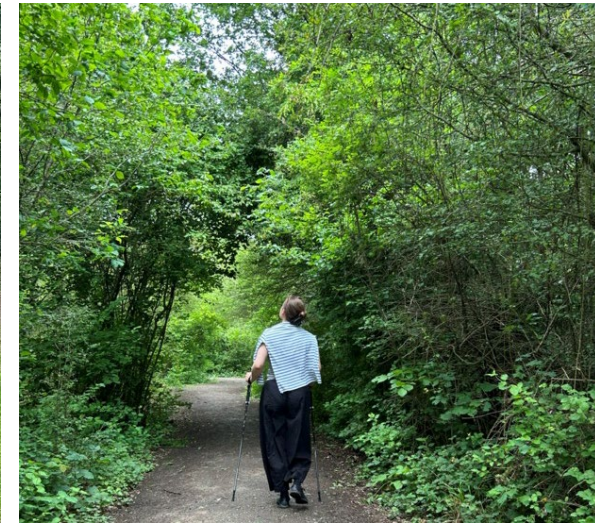
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The quiet room includes softer seats, tables and books with good circulation space inside for wheelchair users.



Example of a wellbeing post along the Woodland trail, adjacent to a quieter area of seating.



Example of a path through the forest, along the Woodland trail.

Activities

A number of different activities operate across Thames Chase Community Woodlands. In addition to self-led trails, there are led activities on site. Some are provided by Forestry England and others by independent providers.

Forestry England's Feel Good in the Forest programme offers activities to support people with their mental and physical health to Feel Good in the Forest. These activities are free to take part in and include optional time at the end for refreshments and socialising. You must book in advance to take part in these sessions.

Information about current Forestry England activities and how to book can be found on the following webpage:

forestryengland.uk/thames-chase/feel-good