

A WALK IN THE WOODS



WTP/L_Paul Hetherington

Hainault Forest, Essex

Hainault Forest, Havering Country Park and Bedfords Park

ANCIENT HORNBEAM POLLARDS, MAJESTIC WELLINGTONIA AVENUES AND HERDS OF RED DEER ARE THE HIDDEN TREASURES TO BE FOUND IN THESE THREE COUNTRY PARKS, ALL WITHIN 15 MILES OF CENTRAL LONDON

The woods in these country parks on the outskirts of London are all former royal hunting grounds providing venison for the king's table. At Bedfords Park this is commemorated with a deer park holding a herd of red deer, managed by the London Borough of Havering, and in all the woods there are fallow and muntjac deer living wild. Havering Park has the second largest plantation of wellingtonia in England: this can be enjoyed along an easy-access trail suitable for buggies and wheelchairs. Similar exotic planting was carried out in Bedfords Park in

the 18th and 19th centuries. In autumn Hainault Forest is a great place for a fungal foray – more than 400 species have been found, including several rare examples. Many of these are associated with the ancient hornbeam pollards, a relic of the time when locals had the right to graze their animals and cut wood from the forest. As well as managing this ancient woodland in keeping with its history, the Woodland Trust has purchased an additional 53 hectares (130 acres) of adjacent land and is planting 55,000 native trees with the local community. The visitor centre at Bedfords Park, managed by Essex Wildlife Trust, was built on the site of the 18th-century manor house, and incorporates many sustainable features by reusing parts of the earlier building. A free trail guide describing the waymarked route around the park can be picked up from there and an events programme downloaded from www.essexwt.org.uk



Hainault Forest, Havering Country Park and Bedfords Park

2½, 6 OR 10 MILES
1¼, 2½ OR 4 HOURS
MODERATE

1 START

From the Woodland Trust's Camelot car park, pass through main gate and follow wide path down to crossroads with bench on left, turn right.

2 1 MILE

At crossroads turn left to pass through metal squeeze gap. Continue on, to cross path with iron railings. To explore lake, country park refreshments and visitor centre bear right, otherwise head up grassy slopes towards millennium beacon on edge of wood. Enter wood behind beacon and follow main path uphill to right. In clearing turn right and follow path up meadow, passing through squeeze gap at top.

3 2 MILES

For shortcut back to car park, head into wood and follow main track ahead. Turn right to go down track and after 80m turn left, following Havering Link Footpath across golf course. Once through kissing gate head straight across fairway and on to yellow post 20m uphill. Enter wood and turn right and then left, following London Loop and yellow markers on trees. Cross to

6th tee and turn left. About 20m after bench turn right through woodland strip and cross arable field on footpath. Go left round ditch to follow field-edge path with ditch on left. At end, cross culvert and continue on field edge, keeping ditch on left. Turn right on track, go past Lower Park Farm and turn left before post and rail fencing. Continue on bridleway (may be muddy) to Havering Country Park.

4 5½ MILES

For shortcut turn left and rejoin route at 6 after 250m.

Enter country park and go straight up wide path ahead for ½ mile to white metal gate. Continue on Pinewood Road and take care crossing B175 at Orange Tree pub. Turn right and after 100m turn left along permissive route to Bedfords Park (may be muddy). Enter wood and follow path round to right, pass over stream and after 30m uphill take path to right. Follow route inside wood edge, keeping ditch on right. As wood opens up, bear right and follow yellow waymark trail (number 14) downhill. Cross footbridge and turn right at next post. Take care over old footbridge next to small pond and turn left to go uphill. At

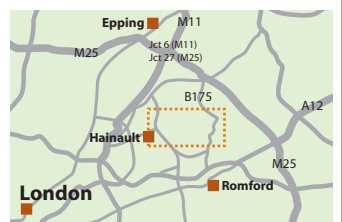
meadow bear right and after 50m turn right into wood by hornbeam along minor path to pick up yellow trail again (number 4). Follow winding path through wood and then turn right into open field with marvellous views across City of London. Walk diagonally across field, turning left through gap in hedge to follow path down to lake built in 1950s for fishing. Cross stream on sleeper bridge and take route uphill. Follow surfaced path to T-junction.

5 5½ MILES

Turn right and after 20m turn left and bear right to Damsel Pond. Retrace steps back to main track and follow horse chestnut and lime avenue up to metal gate. Turn left and cross footbridge to visitor centre. Head towards red deer enclosure and follow marker post towards clearing. At large wellingtonia turn right to skirt car park, following yellow arrows through wooded area. Go round pond to left and cross playing fields, heading towards white water tower. Exit country park and turn left, following pavement for 300m. Take care crossing road at entrance to hospice and follow pavement round corner to right. Cross North Road with care to village green in front of church. Bear right to go down steps at end of small wall to rejoin London Loop straight ahead. Pass the Bower Hall on right to enter Havering Country Park ahead. Follow Wellingtonia Avenue, past picnic fields, to main crossroads. Continue on towards Mud Hill, passing through two metal kissing gates to edge of wood.

6 7¼ MILES

Turn right on to surfaced bridleway and then left at T-junction. At next junction, turn right following permissive link to Hainault Forest Country Park. Turn left at horse gate on to Woodland Trust land and follow path all way round to picnic table. Follow path as it bends to left at gate, to climb hill inside the forest. At top of path go over horse gate and turn left. After 40m turn right at crossroads to return to car park.



TERRAIN

Most routes are on well-defined wide grassy paths or surfaced tracks. Care is needed on two short road sections with pavements and across the golf course.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus stops opposite entrance to Hainault Forest Country Park on A112 and in Havering-atte-Bower on B175. Nearest London Underground stations are Hainault and Grange Hill. For information on train and bus services call Traveline on 0870 608 2608 (www.traveline.org.uk). For details of coach services contact National Express on 0870 580 8080 (nationalexpress.com).

PARKING

The Woodland Trust's Camelot car park opposite Miller and Carter pub (grid reference TQ478943). Hainault Forest Country Park (grid reference TQ476926): £1 for 2 hours or £2 all day. Bedfords Park (grid reference TQ519924).

REFRESHMENTS

The Camelot Miller and Carter pub (grid reference TQ478944; telephone 020 8500 7712; millerandcarter.co.uk/the-camelot-romford); no food served on Mondays. Hainault Forest Country Park kiosk (grid reference TQ476926). Orange Tree pub (grid reference TQ511928; telephone 01708 752739); serves food all day from 12pm. Bedfords Park Visitor Centre (grid reference TQ520923; telephone 01708 748646); drinks and biscuits, closed Mondays. Facilities for disabled.

ACCOMMODATION AND TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Centre, 44 High Street, Brentwood, CM14 4AJ (grid reference TQ595937; telephone 01277 200300). Nearest youth hostel is 9 miles away at Epping Forest (grid reference TQ408984; telephone 0870 770 5822 or visit yha.org.uk).

MAPS

Ordnance Survey Explorer 174 and 175; Landranger 177.

OTHER WOODS TO VISIT

See the Exploring Woodland guide for East Anglia and North Thames or visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/woods

