

Information pack for self-led educational visits

Please note: Our school visit programme is now fully booked. We're delighted by the enthusiasm and look forward to opening more spaces soon.

Hainault Forest is an ideal location for educational visits, with 414 acres of ancient woodland, woodland pasture, grassland, a lake, and a small farm. It is the perfect place to connect your group to nature and inspire a generation to look after the environment.

We hope that this pack will provide you with the information you need to plan your visit, we still recommend that you visit the site to familiarise yourself, before bringing your group. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us hainaultforest@visionrcl.org.uk

The Woodland Trust, London Borough of Redbridge and Vision RCL are working in partnership to create an inspiring and welcoming Hainault Forest, for now and for the future. Located on the outskirts of East London, we're working hard to ensure the valuable wildlife and habitats of the forest are protected. We're creating a space for people – both local and from further afield - to connect with nature and enjoy the great outdoors, supported by reinvigorated facilities for learning, recreation, play and events.



General Information

Location

Hainault Forest, Fox Burrow Road, Romford Road, Chigwell, IG7 4QN

Parking is available on site; this is limited so we ask that you note in your booking form if any vehicles will be parking and staying on site. We do not have designated coach or minibus parking so ask you to use the bottom of the car park to park across multiple bays if needed. Please note – double decker buses/coaches can only drop-off in the first car park, this is to avoid damage to the trees lining the rest of the road. Parking fees apply and can be paid through RingGo, via the app or phone.

The nearest tube station is Hainault (approx. 2 miles away)

The nearest bus station is on Romford Road, adjacent to the entrance.

Please note that there is a long path (approx. 0.5 miles) from the entrance to the main visitor area, if you are arriving on foot or by public transport, please take this into account when planning your journey time.

Toilets

There are toilets located in the 1856 Café, the farm, and between the farm and global café. Accessible toilets are available in the café. Accessible toilets and a Changing Places toilet are available in the block between the farm and global café. There are additional hand-washing facilities in the farm.

Storage

Unfortunately, we do not currently have facilities to store belongings including bags, coats and lunches. These must remain with you during your visit.

General Information

Food and drink

You are welcome to bring your own food onto site, please think of the environment and try to limit the amount of single use packaging you bring with you. Bins are provided, so please dispose of any waste responsibly, if the bins are full, please take your rubbish with you. We do not allow BBQs due the risk of fire. There are 2 cafés on site which serve a range of hot and cold food and drink you can purchase.

You can choose where to enjoy your lunch, from a range of picnic tables and large grass fields. We politely ask that you do not sit in the café unless purchasing food, to make sure that all visitors are able to use these facilities. No food or drink is allowed to be consumed on the farm.

Visitors' centre

We have a Woodland Trust visitor centre on site, which has a small gift shop. There are interactive displays in the centre as well as a large map, and staff will be able to answer queries that you have on the day.

Please visit the website for the most up-to-date opening times
<https://hainaultforest.org/essential-information/getting-here/>

Health & Safety

We expect First Aid and Risk Assessments to be the responsibility of the school/group on a self-led visit. If you would like some 3rd party resources to help with planning & risk assessment for outdoor visits, please see our website: vrcl.uk/hf

The nearest A&E to the site is King George Hospital (Barley Ln, Ilford IG3 8YB). There is an AED on site that is publicly accessible for emergency use (///voice.spray.saints)

We aim to preserve the natural heritage of the forest, which means some trails follow natural, uneven ground which is often muddy. Please be aware that phone signal is limited in some areas due to the rural nature of the site. We have Staff Rangers and Volunteers who patrol the site regularly and assess trees, paths, and collect litter for safety, however, we are large site and cannot continuously monitor every part of the forest. If you do notice anything that concerns you, please speak to a member of staff. We are a public space and are unable to close areas off for sole use of groups/schools.

General Information

Accessibility

The Lake Walk trail is wheelchair accessible. There are solid paths with some loose gravel, that link the car park, the visitor centre, 1856 café, playground, and farm. Accessible toilets and a changing places toilet are available as described earlier. All of the waymarked trails at Hainault Forest have been graded using the Paths For All grading system, which should help you make a decision as to which one is right for you. Please find the description of each of these trails here: vrcl.uk/foresttrail or in the visitor centre.

Please get in please let us know by emailing: hainaultforest@visionrcl.org.uk if there are any adjustments that would make this event more inclusive and enjoyable for the learners - examples include providing extra materials such as a map and activity descriptions in advance, descriptions of likely sensory input from different animals. A social story is available to download in advance which may help neurodiverse learners prepare for their visit: vrcl.uk/hfinstagram

Foxburrows Farm & Play Area

The farm is open daily, except for Mondays' during term time. Donations to the farm allow us to remain open for everyone to visit and enjoy, these can be made either online: vrcl.uk/donateredbridge or at the kiosk as you enter (card & contactless only) The recommended donation is £1 per child and £2 per adult.

Visiting a farm does come with extra H&S considerations, especially for people who are young, old, immunocompromised, or pregnant, make sure you familiarise yourself with these and adhere to any signage. More information can be found here: vrcl.uk/healthandsafety Do not feed the animals on the farm as this can cause serious harm to them.

If you would like some 3rd party resources to help with planning & risk assessment for farm visits, please see our website: vrcl.uk/hf

Outdoor Adventure Play Area

Children can use the play area, under the supervision of the adults in your group. The play area is a public space, please respect other visitors that wish to use this area. The gates should not be closed for the sole use of your group.

We politely ask that you use the play area in smaller groups of up to 10 children at a time, this is so everyone who is visiting feels comfortable to use the play area. The summer term (May-July) is our busiest, when this is most important.

Foundations of the Forest



Hainault forest is a special place and we hope that your visit inspires awe and wonder in your group. Please help us to keep it this way by following the forest foundations below.

Stick to paths and trails

Wandering off the trails and paths causes plants to be trampled and wildlife to be disturbed. We have rare species on site including nesting sites for skylarks, these birds' nest on the ground in long grass and are easily spooked, please avoid causing disturbance in the marked areas.

Leave no waste

Litter causes big problems for the many animals that call the forest their home. Please ensure you dispose of all waste in the bins provided (our contractor Ahern have sophisticated systems to sort and recycle waste, so you don't need to worry about separating it!).

Plan your activities

Fires and BBQs are strictly prohibited due to the importance of the forest, and risk of wildfires. Pond dipping can only be carried out as part of a guided visit.

Respect others

There are many different people that visit the site, including people with animals such as dogs and horses. Please be respectful of other visitors, it helps everyone enjoy their visit!

Respect the forest

The forest is home to an array of plants and animals, please show them the respect that they also deserve. Please don't pick plants, chase/feed wild animals, or remove/damage created habitats such as leaky dams (in the streams) and upright log piles (Stumperies).

Enjoy and explore!

We think that the forest is a magical place to inspire your pupils, and we hope you agree. Immerse yourself and the group in the natural wonders of the site.

HAINAULT FOREST



Forest Centre

Trails & Walks

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|  Lockwood Trail |  Vehicle entrance |
|  Buxton Trail |  Main pedestrian entrances |
|  Buxton Trail – Extension |  Parking |
|  Woodland Trail |  Viewpoint |
|  Forest Walk |  Toilets |
|  Collier's Walk |  Changing places toilet |
|  Roe's Well Walk |  Café |
|  Woodpecker Walk |  Shop |
|  Lake Walk |  Foxburrows Farm |
| |  Playground |

Key



A Brief History

Early 1100s - Hainault formed part of the vast Forest of Essex; owned by the crown and used as a royal hunting forest. Only the king was allowed to hunt deer, and forest dwellers were subject to all kinds of restrictions.

1225 - The creation of the Charter of the Forests meant that everyday people were given more freedom and rights to use and collect resources from the forest. This allowed people to graze animals like pigs and cattle, and to harvest timber via pollarding.

Late 1700s - A commission was set up to review the state of forests, it was recommended that the area should be disafforested and the timber used for ship building by the Navy. Oak trees were the preferred tree for the hulls of ships.

1800s - Timber for shipbuilding was becoming less important and much of the forest was seen as wasteland that could be put to better use. London had a hungry, growing population and farmland was in demand.

1851 - Act of Parliament was passed to remove the forest's legal protection and allow large scale clearing. 100,000 trees were felled in the space of three short weeks, using steam ploughs.

Late 1800s - Edward North Buxton spearheaded a campaign which ultimately saved what was left of the forest. By lobbying parliament and harnessing public pressure, Buxton is often thought to be a pioneer of the modern conservation movement.

1906 - Hainault reopened to the public, with a celebration held on the 21st July where crowds arrived on horse-drawn carriages and on foot for speeches, music, tea and refreshments.

1909 - The lake was created by unemployed men from Shoreditch (at a total cost of around £600)

1987 - The great storm, in Hainault Forest about eight hundred trees were blown down or damaged in the wake of the storm. The historic Hornbeam pollards were particularly vulnerable.

2023 - Works to restore and improve facilities are completed as part of a multi-million pound project to protect the forest.

Wildlife & Habitats



Ancient Woodland

These are areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600. Due to the disafforestation of Hainault Forest, only a few areas of ancient woodland remain, these are very important ecosystems supporting a diverse range of plants and animals.

Young Woodland

Most of the woodland you see was planted because of Edward Buxton's campaigning to protect the forest. 20,000 new trees have been planted in recent years at Hainault Forest, along with areas of natural regeneration where nature is left to do its own thing.



Woodland pasture

This habitat is made up of open grassland with areas of scrub and denser woodland, and often grazed with animals such as cattle or sheep.

Grassland

The grasslands in Hainault Forest are an important place for many species of animals including the skylarks which nest in the long grass.



Wildlife & Habitats



Wetland

The main wetland is the lake, here you can find many species of bird, both resident and migratory species. Streams and ponds around the forest also create this important ecosystem.

Look out for these plants & animals!



**Green
Woodpecker**



**Greylag
Goose**



**Muntjac
Deer**



Hornbeam



Oak



Muntjac Deer - Photography © Michael Trump

Spotter Sheets

Use the link below for some **spotter sheets** from the Woodland Trust, that you can use for your visit to Hainault Forest:
vrcl.uk/outdoorticksheets

