

The Two Brewers and Hainault Forest, Epping Forest, Essex



Moderate Terrain

3 miles
Circular
1 to 1.5
hours

200114



Access Notes



1. The walk is relatively flat with just a couple of gentle slopes.
2. Most of the paths are well-made but the first section through the forest can get fairly muddy after periods of rain and in winter.
3. There are no stiles and just a few kissing gates.
4. Dogs are welcome in the country park.

The Two Brewers is a lovely spacious pub with comfortable furniture and a well-stocked bar.

A 3 mile circular pub walk from the Two Brewers in Chigwell Row, Essex. The walking route explores the adjacent Hainault Forest Country Park, with chance to see beautiful ancient woodland, a pretty lake and even a city farm and zoo.

Getting there

Chigwell Row is situated in the triangle formed by the M11, M25 and A12, just a few miles north of Romford on the A1112. The walk starts and finishes at the Two Brewers pub on Lambourne Road, east of the main A1112. The pub has its own car park alongside. Alternatively, if this car park is very busy, turn left out of the pub and there is another car park for the country park just a little further along on the right.

Approximate post code IG7 6ET.

Walk Sections



Start to Camelot Crossroads



Leave the pub car park and turn left along the pavement. Cross over Coopers Close and soon afterwards cross over the main road using the zebra crossing. Veer left into the small country park car park. A few paces in, turn left through the metal kissing gate and keep straight ahead on the grass path running close to the hedgeline on the left.

Cross the small wooden footbridge into the next field, and then cross this field diagonally right (at 2 o'clock) to reach the opposite corner where the field meets the forest edge. When you reach the far corner, swing left to join the grass path which leads you into the pretty mixed woodland. Follow the wide woodland footpath ahead for some distance (note: this path can get quite muddy).

Grand in size, stature and origins, Hainault Forest

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today is, in fact, just a tiny remnant of what was once the Forest of Essex. A former hunting forest, it was created in the 1600s under the reign of Charles I to provide venison for the King's table, and it is one of the best surviving medieval forests of its kind. Hainault's status as an ancient woodland is confirmed in spring by its dense carpets of bluebells which make a stunning display in patches of the forest. Ownership of the whole country park is now split, this section being under the management of the Woodland Trust.

At the first three-way signpost, keep straight ahead on the main path, now a well-made stone surface. Soon you'll reach another major crossroads of paths, with the Camelot car park signed to the left. Turn right here.

1 → 2 Camelot Crossroads to Fox Burrow Road



After less than 100 yards, you'll emerge out of the trees into another multi-way junction of paths. Do NOT go ahead into the fenced area of heath, instead take the gravel path immediately to the left of this. Follow this bridleway with the fence now running on the right, ignoring the path off left into the golf course.

Follow the bridleway for some distance, heading steadily downhill. You are now in the section of forest managed by Redbridge Council as a country park. The name Hainault originates from the two words: 'Higna', meaning monastic community and 'holt', meaning woodland. The forest belonged to the Abbey of Barking until Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries.

Each side of this path are beautiful hedgerows packed with native plants such as hawthorn, elder and hazel. The path continues over the brow of a small woodland hill and a little distance further the path emerges alongside a vehicle bollard to reach a T-junction with Fox Burrow Road, with Foxburrows Farm to the left.

2 → 3 Fox Burrow Road to Lake



Turn right along Fox Burrow Road, the quiet tarmac access lane for the country park. Pass a row of terraced cottages, a picnic area and then the (largely disused) complex of old estate offices all on the left. After this, join the stone path running along the left edge of the road, and on the left you'll pass the fenced enclosures

of the farm and zoo.

There are plenty of animals to see here including horses, Shetland ponies, sheep, goats, ducks, geese, pigs, donkeys and even meerkats. The zoo is used in part to preserve a number of rare species, and is a popular local attraction.

Continue past the public toilets on the left and immediately ahead you'll see the country park cafe. A few paces before this, cross over the access road to turn right down the stone path which runs to the right of the tarmac car park. Follow the wide stone path ahead and then swinging left and on the right you'll reach the lake.

3 → 4 Lake to End



Stay on the main track as it gradually swings right around the perimeter of the lake. On the far bank, ignore the smaller paths forking off into the forest, simply stay on the main gravel path as it continues beyond the lake into dense woodland.

At the fork, keep left on the wide woodland path. Keep straight ahead at the first crossroads, and then turn left at the second crossroads, crossing a bridge over a small stream. Further along, pass through a squeeze gap alongside a vehicle barrier to reach another junction of paths with a three-way signpost. Go straight ahead, signed as the Retreat Path. Follow this section of path, which has a particular mystic feel, with its tall majestic beech trees.

The path emerges from the woodland and continues ahead with fenced private properties on the left. At the top corner you'll reach a fork, keep right following the gravel path along the top edge of the woodland, with more properties to the left. Keep ahead to reach a junction of paths, where the fences on the left end. Turn left and follow this path up to the T-junction with the road, passing the car park on the right. Cross over the zebra crossing and turn left along the pavement. On the right you'll come to the Two Brewers for some well deserved hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

