



Medium  
7 miles  
(11km)

# Mill, mines and railways

A fascinating heritage walk linking  
Whitwick and Swannington.



© Jacqui Rock

## Be a responsible visitor to the National Forest



To get the most out of your visit,  
please follow some simple rules:

**Respect other people** • Consider other people  
enjoying the outdoors • Leave gates and property  
as you find them and follow marked paths

**Protect the natural environment** • Leave no trace  
of your visit and take your litter home • Keep dogs  
under effective control

**Enjoy the outdoors** • Plan ahead and be prepared  
• Follow advice and local signs

# Exploring the National Forest


Located right in the heart of  
the country, the National Forest  
embraces 200 square miles of  
the Midlands. It spans parts  
of Derbyshire, Leicestershire  
and Staffordshire, and aims to  
link the two ancient forests of  
Charnwood and Needwood.


After centuries of coal mining and clay  
extraction, the closure of the pits in the  
1980s left a scarred and derelict landscape.  
Now, more than a quarter of a century  
later, millions of trees have been planted,  
breathing life into the landscape and its  
communities – turning a landscape from  
black to green. This bold regeneration  
shows how trees can transform not only  
the landscape, but also, vitally, people's  
lives and the local economy.




To find out more about  
the National Forest  
and how you can get  
involved, visit:

**nationalforest.org**

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The National Forest Company  
Charity No. 1166563

National Forest Company, Enterprise  
Glade, Bath Yard, Moira, Swadlincote,  
Derbyshire, DE12 6BA



04/23



THE NATIONAL  
FOREST



# Walking in the National Forest



There are hundreds of miles of paths and trails to explore in the National Forest, and plenty of places accessible for all ages and abilities. Grab your walking boots, your trainers or your dog and head out into the woods for a walk or a run, or try your hand at orienteering or geocaching.

Follow gentle trails through vibrant young woodlands and nature-rich ancient forests. Discover more about the area's heritage or just let a canal towpath take you to the nearest pub lunch.



## Walking highlights



© National Forest Company

### Swannington Incline

The Incline (inclined plane railway) was part of the Leicester & Swannington Railway (L&SR), and trucks carried coal uphill from mines at Swannington and Coleorton. It was then taken in wagons to Leicester to power the textile mills. The L&SR was one of the first steam railways in the world, built by Robert Stephenson in 1832.

### Hough Mill

Originally called Thringstone Smock Mill, this is the only one remaining of several windmills in the area build to grind flour to feed the local mining community. Constructed in 1790 by John Boulton, Lord of the Manor of Thringstone, it was used until the 1880s when commercial use ceased. Following a period of dereliction and removal of ironwork for the WWII war effort, it was purchased by the Swannington Heritage Trust in 1994 who have restored it as a visitor attraction.



### Gorse Field

Next to the mill is a five acre field of gorse and birch woodland, with a network of grass paths. Gorse was grown as a feed for animals, and was also used as a fuel for heating bread ovens. The gorse burns rapidly and hot, and produces very little ash. The nearby Califat Spinney, purchased by the Trust in 1993, was planted on the site of the Califat mine as a small arboretum. The mill pond provides an excellent wetland habitat for flora and fauna.



## Off route highlight

Snibston Colliery Park is located on the site of the former Snibston Colliery. The park is owned by Leicestershire County Council and covers over 40 hectares of woodland, wetland and meadows, and a variety of walking and cycling trails. A collection of mining artefacts and memorabilia is on display. The café is next to the Century Theatre, the oldest surviving travelling theatre. The Grange Nature Reserve was the garden of Snibston Grange, once home to the Colliery Manager, and has a Victorian arboretum, ponds and wildflower meadows. [leicscountryparks.org.uk/snibston-colliery-park](https://leicscountryparks.org.uk/snibston-colliery-park)



The walking highlights sites are owned by the Swannington Heritage Trust and managed by volunteers.

For more information about the history of Swannington and surrounding area, please visit [swannington-heritage.co.uk](https://swannington-heritage.co.uk)



# Mill, mines and railways



Medium length

This walk has been developed in partnership with the [Swannington Heritage Trust](#)

**Distance:** 7 miles (11km)

**Time:** Allow 3.5 hours.

**Path type:** Unsurfaced paths, woodland trails, fields and tarmacked sections. Stiles. Sturdy footwear recommended.

**Use with map OS Explorer**

**245 The National Forest**

**Start at:** Vicarage Street car park, Whitwick, LE67 5GZ.

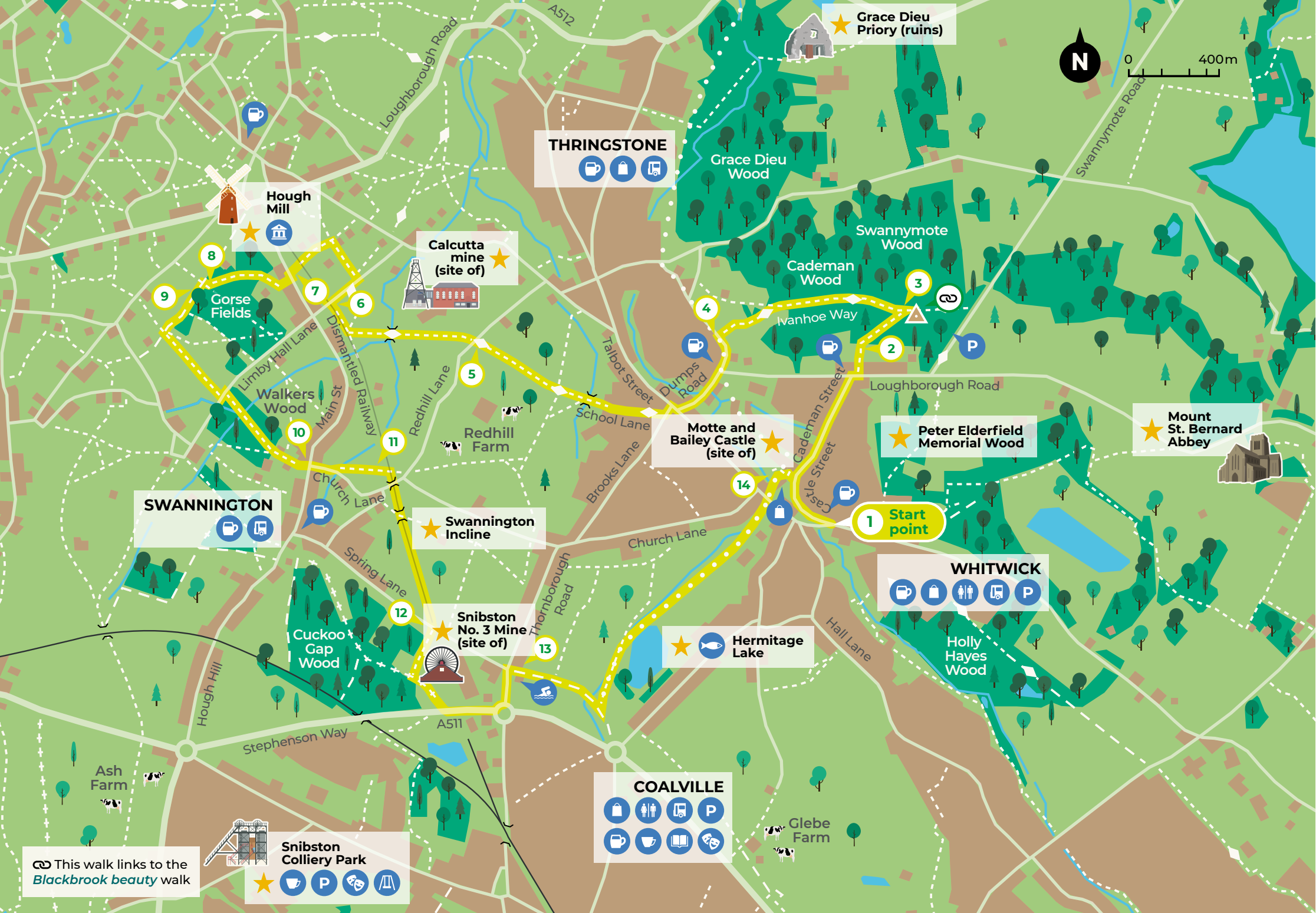
**OS Grid Ref:** SK437160

**Latitude:** 52.740010 **Longitude:** -1.3539653

**what3words:** /// dress.teeth.object

## Map Key

	Trail route		Parking
	Footpath		Bus stop
	Bridleway		Pub
	Road		Café
	Woodlands		Shop
	Rivers and ponds		Public toilets
	Buildings		Theatre
	Trig point		Library
	Waypoint		Fishing
	Point of interest		Leisure Centre
			Museum



**1** Starting from Vicarage Street car park, turn left to walk along Castle Street (*the mound to your left is the site of Whitwick motte and bailey castle*) and on to Cademan Street. Follow the road uphill and cross Loughborough Road. Turn right then shortly take the public footpath on the left, between two houses, before the Man Within Compass pub.

**2** Follow the footpath between the fences and out into a field. Keep straight on and head into **Cademan Wood** on the rocky path, bearing half right at the first junction. Keep on uphill in the same direction as marked by yellow-topped posts, ignoring the many paths off to each side.

**3** As you reach the edge of the woods, a footpath (*Ivanhoe Way*) crosses in front of you in front of a low stone wall. Turn left here and follow the marker posts through Cademan Wood along the Ivanhoe Way. Bear right at a fork in the path after 250m and then left after 600m. The path eventually emerges from the woods and heads right, around the edge of a meadow before turning left down a steep track (past a vineyard!) onto Grace Dieu Road.

**4** Turn left and follow the road to the right, past the City of Three Waters onto Dumps Road (*the line of the abandoned Charnwood Railway, linking Coalville with Loughborough, passes below the bridge*) and uphill to the junction with Talbot Street. Cross to a grass verge and go right, down School Lane. Follow the public footpath at the end of the street, downhill to a footbridge in the corner of the field. Keep straight ahead on the footpath, which follows the edge of three fields. Just before the road, turn left at the hedge to a stile to emerge on Redhill Lane. Turn left, go ahead for 20m and take the public footpath through a kissing gate.

*The headstocks and pump house at the bottom of the hill are on the site of the Calcutta mine, which had closed by the mid 1870's. A powerful pump was put in the shaft to clear water from nearby redundant mines to prevent flooding. It was decommissioned in 1986 and converted to a private building.*

**5** Go through the field downhill, across a stile and through a small field to a metal gate. Cross the stile next to the gate, then turn left downhill, over another stile and a wooden bridge. Cross the field and go over another stile, taking the left footpath over a stile and up the steps. Turn right and walk along the embankment (*the line of the 1833 Coleorton horse-drawn railway*) to the road.

**6** At the road turn right. *Jessop's 1794 horse drawn tramway ran along here connecting Swannington Common to the Charnwood Forest canal at Thringstone.* After 200m take the footpath on the left. Over the stile, and follow the footpath straight ahead to cross another stile. Follow the hedge up the field and after 150m, turn left (footpath marker in the hedge) and cross the field to a stile hidden in the hedge in the corner of the field, just to the left of Highfield House (*formerly Swannington Isolation Hospital*).

**7** Over the stile, across a small field and another stile, through the trees (*the Coleorton railway cutting*) and over the next field, to the road at St George's Hill (*part of the Hinckley to Melbourne Turnpike*). Cross the road and turn left. Take the footpath up the track to the right and cross the stile by the gate. Cross the field, heading for the trees. Go through a gate and take the path through the woods.

**8** Upon reaching the stone track you can explore the grounds of **Gorse Fields** and **Califat spinney**. Or turn left and go up the track, through the gate and on towards the windmill.

*Turn right to see the Califat excavations and walk around the Califat Spinney, seeing the remains of the Miners' Cottages and the Newcoman Boiler. When you reach the track again turn right. Walk up through the metal gate to see the horse ginn sculpture then take one of the paths off to the left to make a loop around Gorse Field. When you rejoin the track, turn left and continue on to reach Hough Mill.*

**9** Go through the gate into the grounds of Hough Mill (*built in 1790 and originally known as Thringstone Smock Mill*). Turn left and go through the kissing gate to walk along the bridleway to a footpath into the field on the left. Go down the hill with the hedge on your left to the road. Cross the road and go over the stile, taking the grassy footpath through **Walkers Wood** until you reach Burtons Lane. Take the footpath to the left and then turn right, taking the narrow pathway down to Main Street in Swannington village.

**10** Cross Main Street, turn right then left down Church Lane, using the wide grass verge to stay off the road. Go along the road for 150m until you reach a gate in the hedge. Go uphill on the footpath through the field to a set of steps.

**11** Climb the steps to reach the **Swannington Incline** (*the western end of the Leicester and Swannington railway, used to haul wagons from Coleorton and Swannington mines up the 1 in 17 slope*). Turn right and walk up the cutting, passing under two

bridges, Church Lane bridge, then Potato Lane bridge. (*The machinery at the top of the incline was used to lift the pumping rods from the Calcutta pumping engine shaft for maintenance. The footprints of the cottages, boiler and engine house from the Inclined Plane railway are further up the path*). Continue ahead, next to a section of railway track, and go through a gate onto the road.

**12** Crossing the road, go through the gate and past the winding wheel (*marking the location of Snibston No. 3 mine*), continuing downhill to meet a track. Turn left and continue until you exit onto Stephenson Way. Turn left at the road, left at the roundabout and up Thornborough Road, crossing at the central reservation and walk uphill to Bridle Lane.

**13** Turn right here and follow the track past the Leisure Centre. After 400m take the left path (signed for Whitwick) and walk along the surfaced track for 1km (*the line of the former Charnwood Forest Railway*). On the right is the old clay pit from Hermitage Brick Works, enlarged to form a fishing lake. (*The old station is on street level, just after the railway bridge, now the home of Whitwick Historical Society*.) The path descends to Grace Dieu brook (*fed by a spring, the source of which rises below the chancel of the Parish Church, once used to power the bellows of the church organ*). Turn right at the path junction towards the houses and follow the narrow footpath along the brook, coming out at Castle Street.

**14** Turn right and follow the road round to Vicarage Lane, and the end of the walk. (*The Winding Wheel seen over the road at the City of Dan was erected as a memorial to the miners and quarrymen of Whitwick*.)