



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.



Coal tips to country parks trail starts here

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

nationalforest.org

- @NatForestCo
- @the.national.forest
- @NatForestCo



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The National Forest Company
Charity No. 1166563
National Forest Company, Enterprise Glade, Bath Yard, Moira, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE12 6BA



Long
11 miles
(17.5km)

Coal tips to country parks

A walk around a landscape transformed from coal mines to woodlands.



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



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

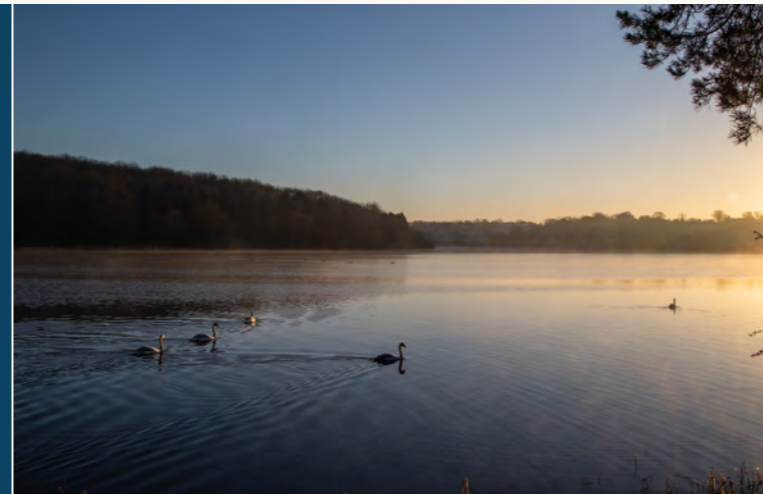


Bagworth Heath Country Park

This is the site of the former Desford Colliery, where coal mining took place from 1902 to 1984. Reclamation works began in 1991 to transform a scarred industrial landscape into a valuable natural habitat. The country park includes lakes that were formed by mining subsidence and is planted with native tree species.

Thornton Reservoir

Thornton derives its name from an old reference to the vegetation that grew wild around the village; thus "Town of Thorns" or Thornton. The reservoir was created in 1854 to supply Leicester with drinking water, which had previously relied on wells and springs. It is now a refuge for a diversity of wildlife and an important site for waterfowl, and was designated a Local Wildlife Site in 2005.

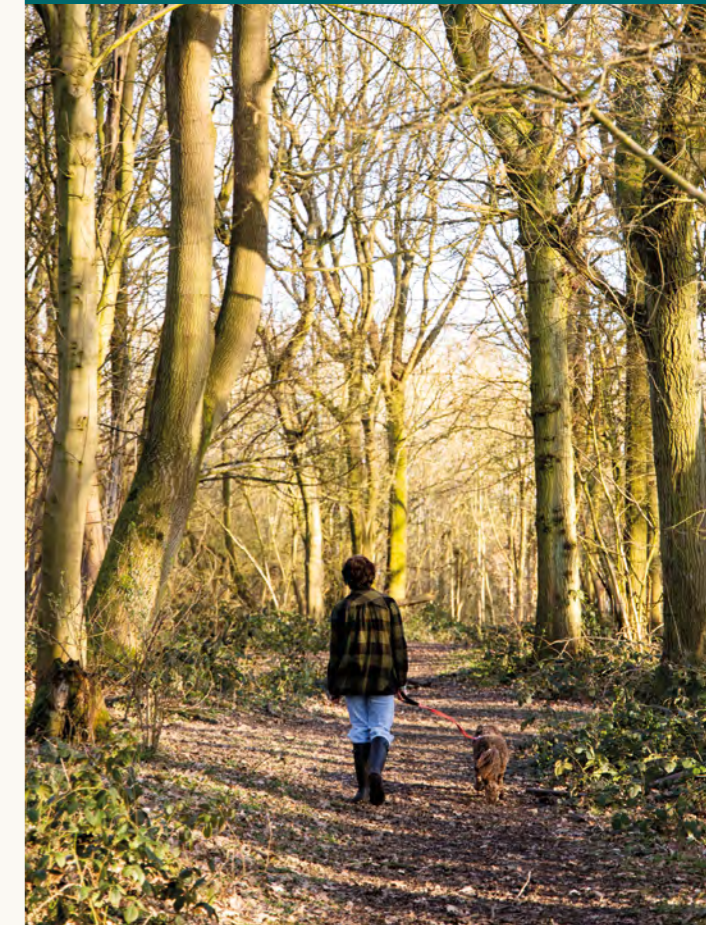


Royal Tigers Wood

Former soldiers from the Royal Leicestershire Regiment raised funds to plant Royal Tigers Wood. It is a living memorial and includes tree species from the various countries in which the Regiment (formerly the 17th Foot) gained some of their major battle honours. A granite memorial stone at the top of the hill bears the regimental cap badge.

Off route highlight

Martinshaw Wood is thought to have been mentioned in the Domesday Book as a wood lying within the Manor of Groby, and was later established as a wooded enclosure in a deer park in the 13th century. The estate sold timber to the local economy and quarrying industry, and more recently planted the site with conifers. An extensive historical survey uncovered archaeological features including a possible Iron Age enclosure, banks and earthen dams across streams and a sunken track which appears to run towards ancient stone quarries.



Coal tips to country parks



Long length



Distance: 11 miles (17.5km)

Time: Allow 5 hours.

Path type: Unsurfaced paths, tracks, and tarmacked sections. Sturdy footwear recommended.

Use with map OS Explorer
245 The National Forest

Start at: Bagworth Heath Country Park

car park, Heath Road, Bagworth, LE67 1DR
This walk can also be done as two shorter loops of 9 km and 11 km (6 and 7 miles).

OS Grid Ref: SK458067

Latitude: 52.656646

Longitude: -1.3242817

what3words: /// spinners.huddling.mega

Alternative start for Loop 2 (11km):

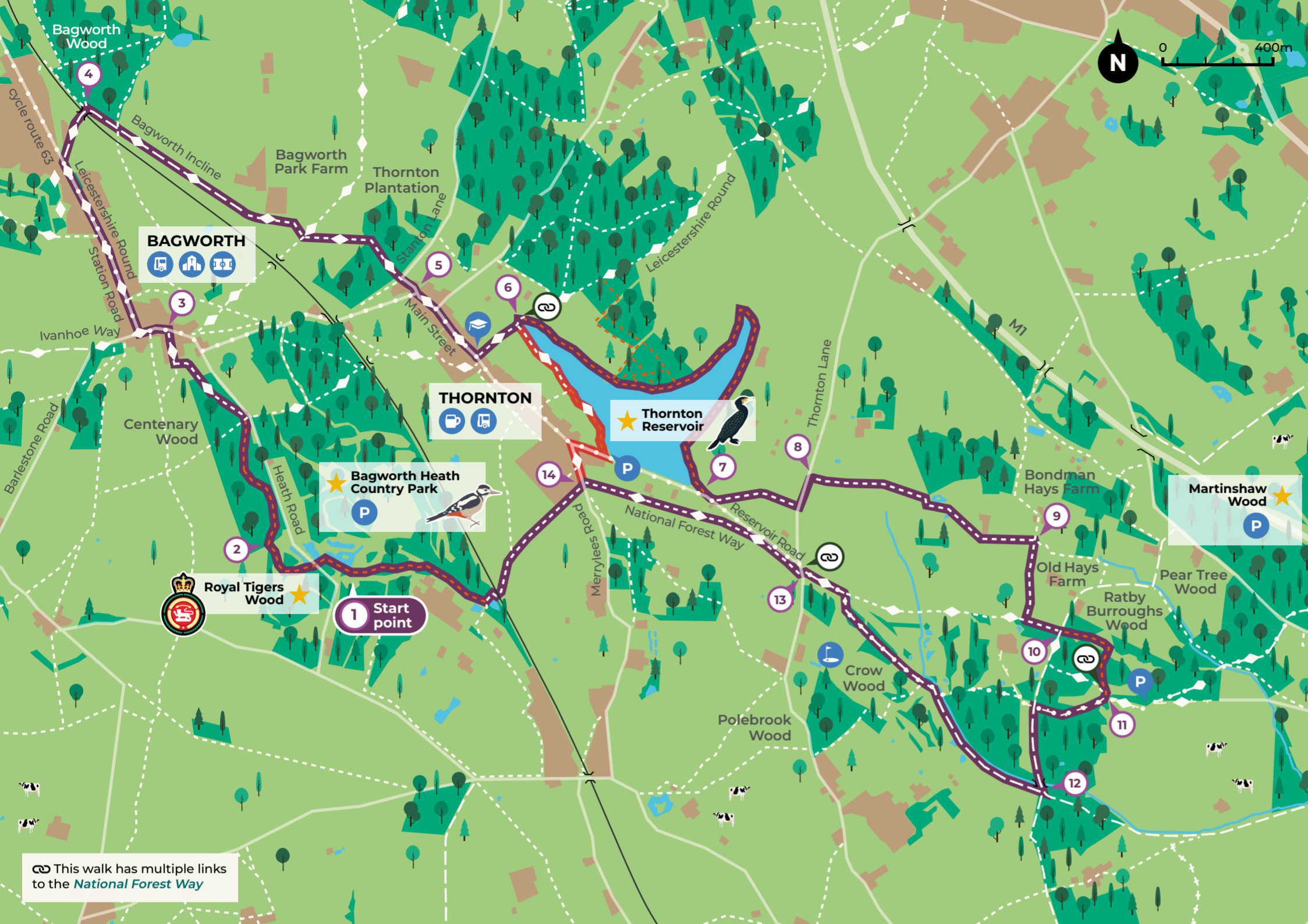
Start at: Thornton Reservoir
Car Park, Reservoir Road,
Thornton, Leicestershire, LE67 1AR

OS Grid Ref: SK470074

Latitude: 52.662805

Longitude: -1.3058853

what3words: /// rider.twitching.sponsors



This walk has multiple links to the [National Forest Way](#)

Map Key

	Trail route		Waypoint
	Shortcut route		Point of interest
	Footpath		Parking
	Bridleway		Bus stop
	Permissive path		Pub
	Road		Church
	Woodlands		Golf Course
	Rivers and lakes		Sports ground
	Buildings		School

13 Cross over the road and head for the gap in the hedge opposite. Go through the kissing gate and turn right (keeping the hedge to your right). Follow the **National Forest Way** through fields until you reach Merrylees Road.

If you are on the 11km loop, turn right and follow the road back into Thornton. Turn right down Reservoir Road then left into the car park where you began this loop.

14 Cross over onto the footpath at the end of the row of houses (or turn right if on shortcut). Follow this past the houses and downhill through fields to the railway line. Carefully cross the railway, follow the footpath past the pond and turn right on to the path next to the factory leading into **Bagworth Heath Country Park**. Follow the path through the Country Park back to the car park.

1 From the car park, cross the access road and enter **Bagworth Heath Country Park** through the kissing gate. Bear left along the grassed path beside the fishing pools before crossing Heath Road into **Royal Tigers Wood**. Walk into an open glade and follow the grass path on the right. Keep right to reach the arboretum and through to **Centenary Wood**.

2 Go ahead on the path through the wood, turning right to cross a brook beneath power lines. Continue uphill on the grass path as it winds through the wood. Just before the road, turn left to join the Leicestershire Round footpath, which runs parallel with the road. Follow it out of the wood over a field and through the church cemetery. Turn right after the kissing gate, over a stile and out onto Main Street..

3 Turn left up Main Street and then right on to Station Road. After about a kilometre turn right on to Park Lane, signposted **National Forest Way** & Ivanhoe Way. Follow the bridleway to the railway line.

4 Cross the railway bridge and turn right on the route of the **Bagworth Incline** (part of the **Leicester - Swannington Railway** and now a green lane that is rich in wildlife). Follow the path for approx 1km. At the end of the incline, go through three kissing gates and then cross the driveway (which leads to Bagworth Park Farm) to join the footpath opposite. Follow the footpath signs to a crossing of paths and turn left through the kissing gate. Take the footpath ahead towards the pylon and over a stile into Thornton Plantation. Follow the footpath on the right through the plantation and exit on to Stanton Lane. Go straight ahead and left when you reach Main Street.

5 Walk down Main Street to the primary school and turn left, down the track (marked **National Forest Way** & Leicestershire Round) and through the kissing gate, to follow the footpath downhill to another kissing gate at Thornton Reservoir.

Shortcut option: At this point you can either continue on the full route, or take a shortcut (9km total): turn right and follow the path along the reservoir past the boat house to the car park. Go out onto the road and turn right to go uphill to the junction. Cross and turn left onto Merrylees Road and walk ahead to follow from point 14 below.

6 This 11 km (7-mile) loop can be walked separately. Parking is available at Thornton reservoir. Walk from the car park for approx. 600m along the shoreside path to the kissing gate. Turn left and follow the surfaced path along the side of Thornton reservoir for approx. 2km until you get to Reservoir Road.

7 Turn left on to the road. After about 50m turn left over the stile and proceed straight up the grassy hill. Head for the right hand corner of the field and cross the stile. Cross the next field to a stile, which takes you onto Thornton Lane. Turn left and, after about 150m, take the public footpath to the right.

8 Follow the path for ¾ of a mile to a waymarker at a T-junction of paths. Turn left and, after about 150m, take the public footpath to the right. Follow the path across fields, past Bondman Hays Farm, for approx. 1.5 km to a waymarker at a T-junction of paths.

9 Take the path to the right and follow it for 500m to another T-junction close to Old Hays Farm. Turn left on to the **National Forest Way** towards **Ratby Burroughs**. As the path turns sharp right, look for a metal gate on your left, and go through the pedestrian entrance into the wood.

10 Follow the path straight on through the woods and take the desire line across the meadow to the memorial stone for the Bali Bombings. At this point take the unmarked footpath directly to the right and down into the woods (do not continue along the grassy path). Follow the path uphill and continue out the other side of the woods and then cross the grassy open space to the kissing gate.

11 Turn right along the track for approximately 400m, then turn left through the metal gate (**NOT the surfaced cycle way Route 63, although this is a good wet weather option!**) and follow the unsurfaced bridleway through the woods until you reach a small bridge with tubular metal handrails.

12 Cross the bridge, turn right and follow the bridleway keeping the brook on your right, passing through **Crow Wood** and **Polebrook Wood**. Cross the brook at the bridge, keep ahead and eventually you will reach a fingerpost marking National Cycle Network route 63. Turn left here and continue on the tarmac path to Thornton Lane.