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# 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](http://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



Medium  
5 miles  
(8km)

## From the furnace

A meandering walk exploring the industrial and natural heritage of Moira.





# 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



### Moira Furnace Museum & Country Park

A hidden gem in the heart of the Forest, you will find plenty to do. Visit the museum to learn about iron-making and social history, explore the lime kilns and ancient woodlands, take a trip on the narrowboat or walk along the Ashby Canal towpath. The Country Park is open all year round, with boat trips and museum operating Apr – Sept. A great place for a day out and all with free parking. For more info visit [moirafurnace.org](http://moirafurnace.org)

### Ashby Canal

This 50km (31 mile) long canal in England originally connected the mining district around Moira with the Coventry Canal at Bedworth in Warwickshire. It was opened in 1804, and a number of tramways were constructed at its northern end to service the collieries. A 14km section from Moira to Snaresstone was progressively closed between 1944 – 1966, due to breaches caused by mining subsidence. The Ashby Canal Association was formed in 1992 to work towards reconnecting the 2.5km Moira section south to the Snaresstone Tunnel.



### Hicks Lodge, National Forest Cycle Centre

In the heart of the National Forest this is a former coal mining site that has been totally transformed by new woodland and exciting trails. A great day out for the budding cyclist, there is a range of trails for beginner to intermediate riders. Visit the lakeside bird hide where you can soak in the beautiful scenery and spot visiting wildlife, such as the migratory sand martins. There are also walking and horse riding paths to explore, a play area and a café. [forestryengland.uk/hicks-lodge](http://forestryengland.uk/hicks-lodge)



## Off route highlight

7 Interpretation Hubs are located in the heart of the Forest: Albert Village Lake, Donisthorpe Woodlands, Moira Furnace, Conkers Waterside, Oakthorpe picnic site, Ashby Wouds heritage trail and Hicks Lodge lake. They are inspired by the stories of the communities who have lived and worked in the villages in and around the Ashby Wouds, between Swadlincote, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Measham and Overseal.



# From the furnace



Medium length

**Distance:** 5 miles (8km)

**Time:** Allow 2.5 hours.

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

**Use with map OS Explorer 245 The National Forest**

**Start at:** Moira Furnace Country Park, Furnace Lane, Moira, DE12 6AT. *This walk has multiple options for shortcuts if required.*

**OS Grid Ref:** SK312152

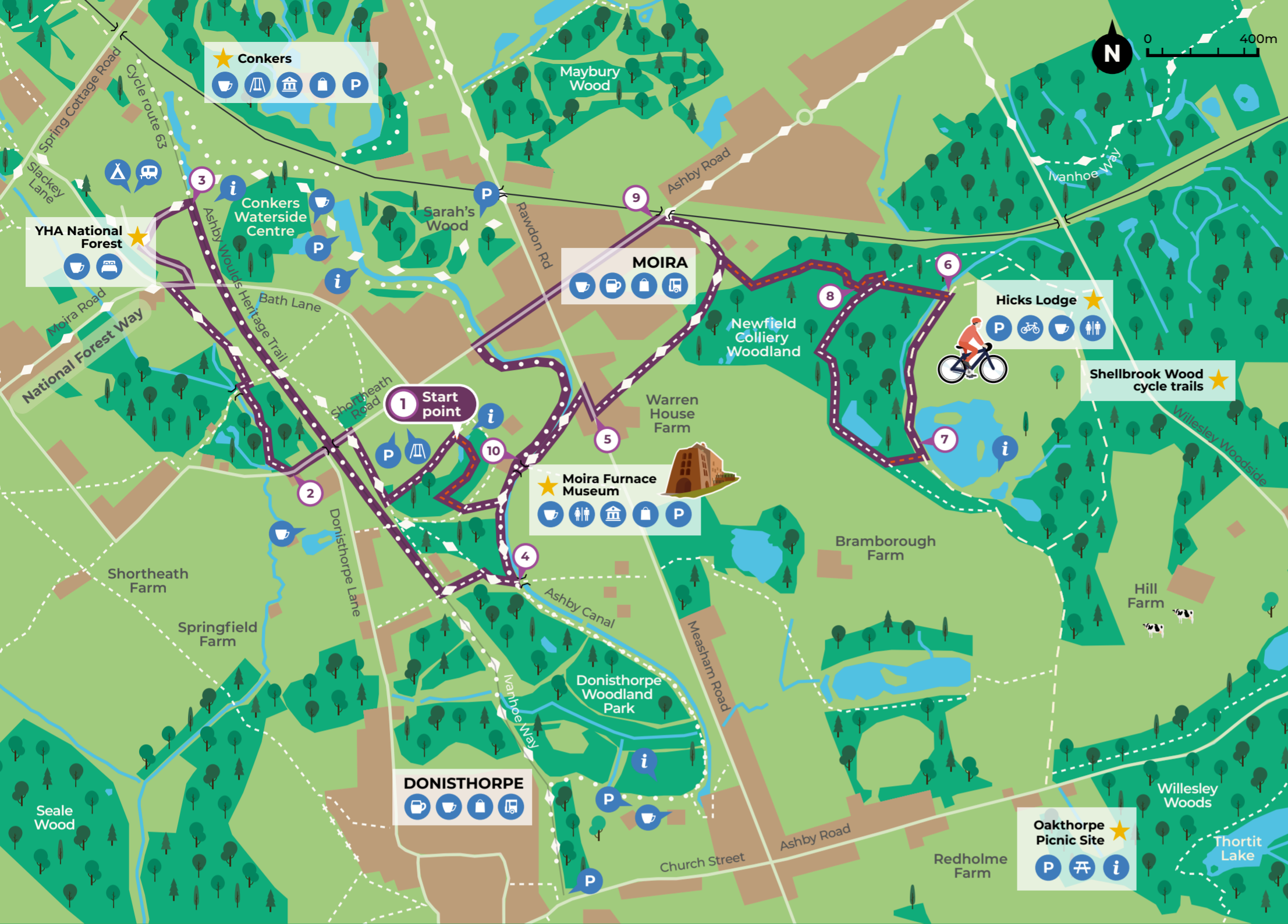
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**Longitude:** -1.5386635

**what3words:** /// lavished.retrial.crops

## Map Key

	Trail route		Interpretation hubs
	Footpath		Play area
	Bridleway		Picnic area
	Permissive path		Bus stop
	Road		Pub
	Woodlands		Café
	Rivers and lakes		Shop
	Buildings		Public toilets
	Waypoint		Cycle hire
	Point of interest		Museum
	Parking		Camping & Caravanning
			Accommodation



**1** Start at the **Moira Furnace Country Park** car park. Facing the play area, turn left and walk across the playing field. Go through the gap in the trees in the top corner of the field then turn right at the fence to walk along the track to a gate and out onto Shortheath Road. Cross the road and turn left, go under the bridge and keep ahead until you reach a footpath opposite the entrance to the Shortheath Fisheries/Lakeside Tearoom.

**2** Go through the gate into **Barratts Pool** woodland, take the left fork and turn right before the concrete bridge. Follow the path keeping the brook on your left until you reach a T-junction. Turn right then almost immediately left, continuing straight on through two gates until you reach the road. Cross the road, turn right and take the driveway on the left to the youth hostel. Follow the driveway and turn right, before the campsite entrance, up the surfaced track to follow the **National Forest Way**.

**3** After the barrier turn right on to the Ashby Wouds Heritage Trail (leaving the **National Forest Way**). *The metal sculpture here is one of 7 Interpretation Hubs in the Heart of the Forest – why not come back another time to find the others?* Walk along the trail for 1200m until you reach a bench with a footpath (signed Ivanhoe Way) to the left, by a row of cottages. Take the footpath and walk along the track. Turn right at a crossing of paths and walk through the woodland until you reach the canal.

**4** Turn left at the canal bridge (don't cross it!) and walk along the towpath past **Moira Furnace** (or shortcut here, back to the car park) to a swing-bridge over the canal. Cross the bridge, turn left and walk along the track past the houses and out onto the road. Cross the road with care, turn right then take the footpath on your left after 50m.

**5** Walk uphill along the narrow path (the old tramway which took coal from Newfields Colliery to the Furnace) and turn left at the footpath fork after 300m. Continue uphill to emerge from the trees at a gate. Go through the gate, across the field and through another gate to an unsurfaced road. (Turn left to shortcut and follow from point 10). Turn right, and shortly right again to go through the metal barrier signposted **Hicks Lodge**. (The concrete capping of the Newfields Colliery is in front of you). Turn left and walk along the stone path for approx. 700m to **Hicks Lodge**. *The ground here may look bare and inhospitable, but it is an important lowland heath habitat and home to many species of butterfly and reptile.*

**6** When you reach a T-junction turn right onto the bridleway signposted for Donisthorpe, and walk towards the lake. *Alternatively, turn left here to go to the café and cycle hire, where you can retrace your steps, or follow the surfaced path back round to Waypoint 7.*

**7** As you reach the lake you pass a picnic table then a bench, on your right. Shortly after the bench turn right at the signpost and go down the grass slope. Ignore the wide path to the right and keep going down hill. Bear right to follow the narrow path and continue as it follows the hedge with open fields to your left and passes a large pond on your right. *This path can be muddy during wet weather.* Keep ahead on the path, ignoring paths to either side, as it weaves through gorse and young trees and eventually reaches the same stone path you were on earlier.

**8** Turn left and retrace your steps to the metal barrier and turn left, ignoring the footpath and track to your left, following the unsurfaced roadway out to Ashby Road.

**9** Turn left and walk downhill, crossing the road at the mini roundabout and keep straight ahead. Just before the Co-op, turn left by the canal lock gates and walk along the towpath which brings you back to **Moira Furnace**.

**10** Keep on the towpath past the building (detour here to visit the museum and café) and after 100m take the first footpath on your right. Go through the gate and down the slope to come out by the limekilns. Follow the footpath past the butterfly bank and bear right, taking the gate into **Pit Prop Wood**. On the path turn right at the first junction and right again after a wooden bridge. Keep ahead on the main path, then turn left at the metal sculpture. Follow the path over two boardwalks back to the car park to finish.

*This area, known as the Heart of the Forest, tells a story of national change in microcosm: the change from 19th-century extractive industries to a 21st-century green landscape, and its new natural and built environment promising a sustainable future for the area.*

*The Industrial Revolution came to this area in the late 1700s and brought the creation of clay workings and collieries, the Ashby canal, Moira blast furnace and the limekilns. Over a few decades of rapid development, the area was transformed. By the late Victorian period, the area's products were building the growth of Britain and its empire. This boom did not last and by the middle of the 20th century the area was in decline. The first local colliery closed in 1947 and others were merged or scaled back, until the last closed in 1990.*

*Alongside this industrial boom and decline, the wildlife clung on in small copses and meadows waiting for its time to come again. When industry's grip on the area began to fail, plants and animals were quick to re-establish. Over time, woodlands grew on the sites of derelict collieries and grasses and heather took hold of pit tips. The transformation from black to green had begun.*

*This landscape change was accelerated by the creation of the National Forest in the early 1990s. The Heart of the Forest has seen the most significant increase in tree coverage, with forest cover increasing from 1% to 27% over the last 30 years.*

Find out more: [nationalforest.org](http://nationalforest.org)