

The National Forest Way takes walkers on a 75-mile journey through a transforming landscape, from the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to Beacon Hill Country Park in Leicestershire.

On the way, you will discover the area's evolution from a rural landscape, through industrialisation and its decline, to the modern-day creation of a new forest, where 21st-century life is threaded through a mosaic of green spaces and settlements.

The trail leads through young and ancient woodlands, market towns and the industrial heritage of this changing landscape.



The National Forest Way was created by a partnership of the National Forest Company, Derbyshire County Council, Leicestershire County Council and Staffordshire County Council, with the generous support of Fisher German.



To find out more, visit:
www.nationalforestway.co.uk



Stage 1:

Beacon Hill to Bradgate Park

Length: 7¼ miles / 11¾ kilometres

About this stage

Start: Beacon Hill, Woodhouse Eaves (LE12 8TA)
End: Bradgate Park, Newtown Linford (LE6 0HB)

On this first westbound section, the National Forest Way leads you through the craggy uplands of Charnwood. En route you will go through ancient woodlands and pass some of the oldest rocks in Britain. Heathland characterises the open summits affording stunning views of the surrounding countryside and, in the distance, the city of Leicester.

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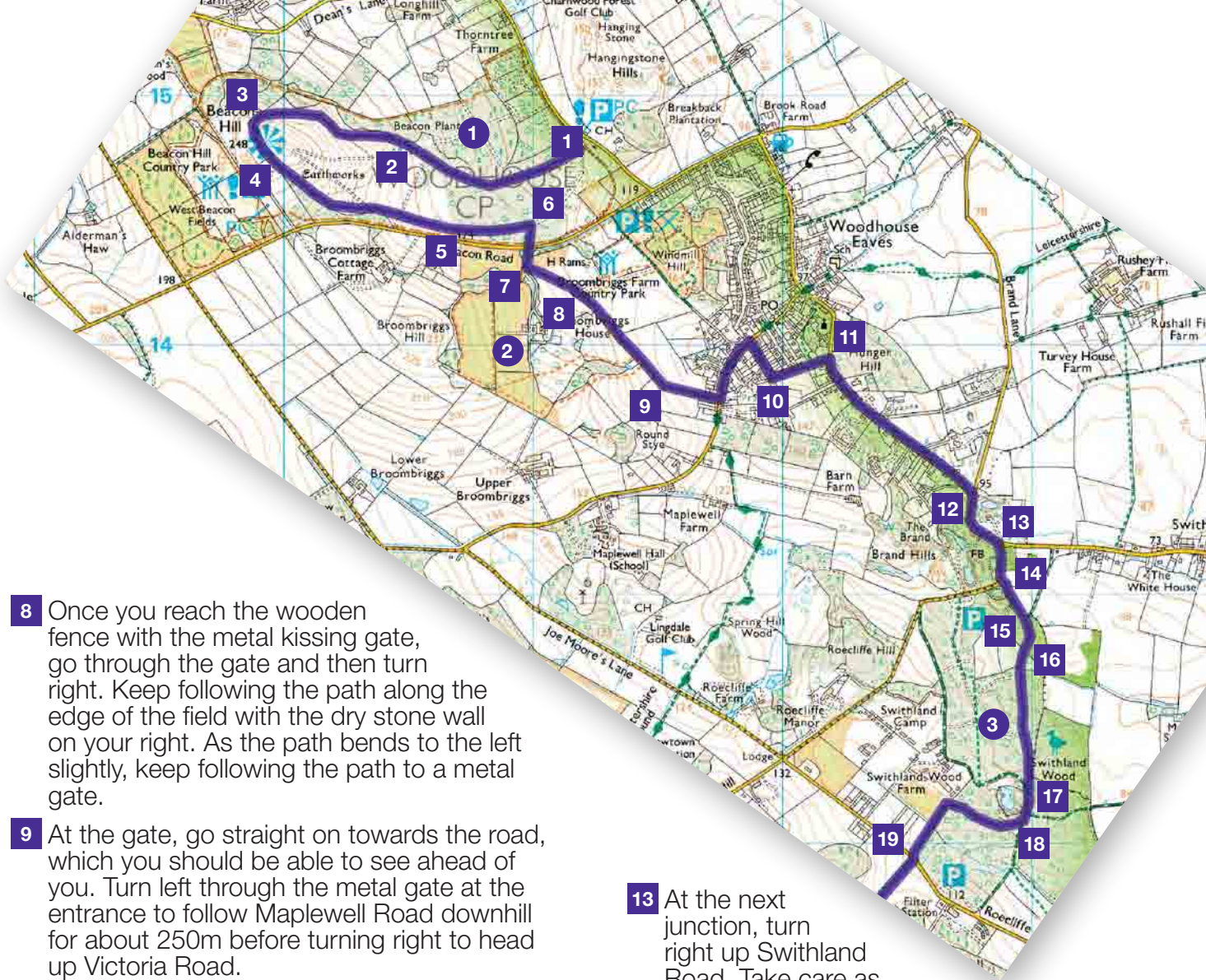
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Route directions: Westbound

Beacon Hill to Bradgate Park

- 1 Leave the lower car park by going through the wooden barrier (at the opposite end to the entrance from the road). Go straight ahead along the surfaced path, passing the wooden sculpture of a man. Keep following the surfaced path, ignoring the paths to the right and left.
- 2 Go through the metal gate and keep on the gravel path, once again ignoring paths to the right and left. The path will take you to the top of Beacon Hill.
- 3 Once you have enjoyed the view, keep following the main path, which will now go slightly downhill, through a metal gate and on down the slope.
- 4 At the fork in the path, take the left turn.
NOTE: If you turn right at this point, you will reach a second car park with public toilets.
- 5 At the next fork in the path, next to a wooden carving of a head, take the right-hand fork and keep following the main path for about 800m.
- 6 Turn right where you see a turn-off and a waymarker. You should be able to see another gate and the road ahead of you once you've done that. There are two sets of gates with a chicane at the side of each of them. Go through both of these, crossing a cycle track as you do so, to reach the road.
- 7 Carefully cross the road and walk up the drive opposite, heading for Broombriggs Farm. Continue straight on past the first footpath almost immediately on your left. About 50m further along the drive, take a left turn through a gap in the dry stone wall, onto the permissive bridleway. Go through the gate, and continue on diagonally across the field.



- 8 Once you reach the wooden fence with the metal kissing gate, go through the gate and then turn right. Keep following the path along the edge of the field with the dry stone wall on your right. As the path bends to the left slightly, keep following the path to a metal gate.
- 9 At the gate, go straight on towards the road, which you should be able to see ahead of you. Turn left through the metal gate at the entrance to follow Maplewell Road downhill for about 250m before turning right to head up Victoria Road.
- 10 At the top of Victoria Road, veer left to go up by the side of the wall with a gate set in it. Follow the path until you reach the gateway at the end, where you turn right onto the road, which is signed Brand Hill.
- 11 Keep following the road for about 800m, going past the Wheatsheaf Inn on your right.
- 12 At the junction, turn right (signposted for Swithland) and follow the road as it curves to the left.
- 13 At the next junction, turn right up Swithland Road. Take care as the pavement gives way to wide verges.
- 14 After about 100m, the road bears right. At this point, turn off left through the gateway into Swithland Wood.
- 15 Follow the path straight ahead, ignoring the paths to the right. You should be able to see fields behind the trees on your left. Keep following the path at the waymarker as it bears slightly right.

16 Within about 50m, turn right, following the obvious path. You will soon see a picnic bench on your right in a clearing in the wood, which might make an ideal spot to stop for a rest.

17 When the path splits, go straight on, ignoring the path on the right. Again, keep straight on going slightly uphill, ignoring the bridleway to your left.

18 At the junction of the paths, take the bridleway to your right and follow it to the edge of the wood. The bridleway now turns left and runs alongside the wood to Roecliffe Road.

19 Cross the road and follow the path uphill, with the field on your right and the hedge on your left. You should now be able to see Old John Tower in the distance ahead of you. Carry straight on uphill for about 500m, passing over a wooden stile if the gate is shut, until you reach a T-junction in the paths.

20 Climb over the first stile and turn right along the track. Don't go through the second gate which is opposite the stile you crossed. You will meet a stile along the track, which you cross and continue straight on through a wooden gate.

21 When you reach the tall kissing gate on your left, you need to go through this and head towards Old John Tower, which you can see on top of the hill.

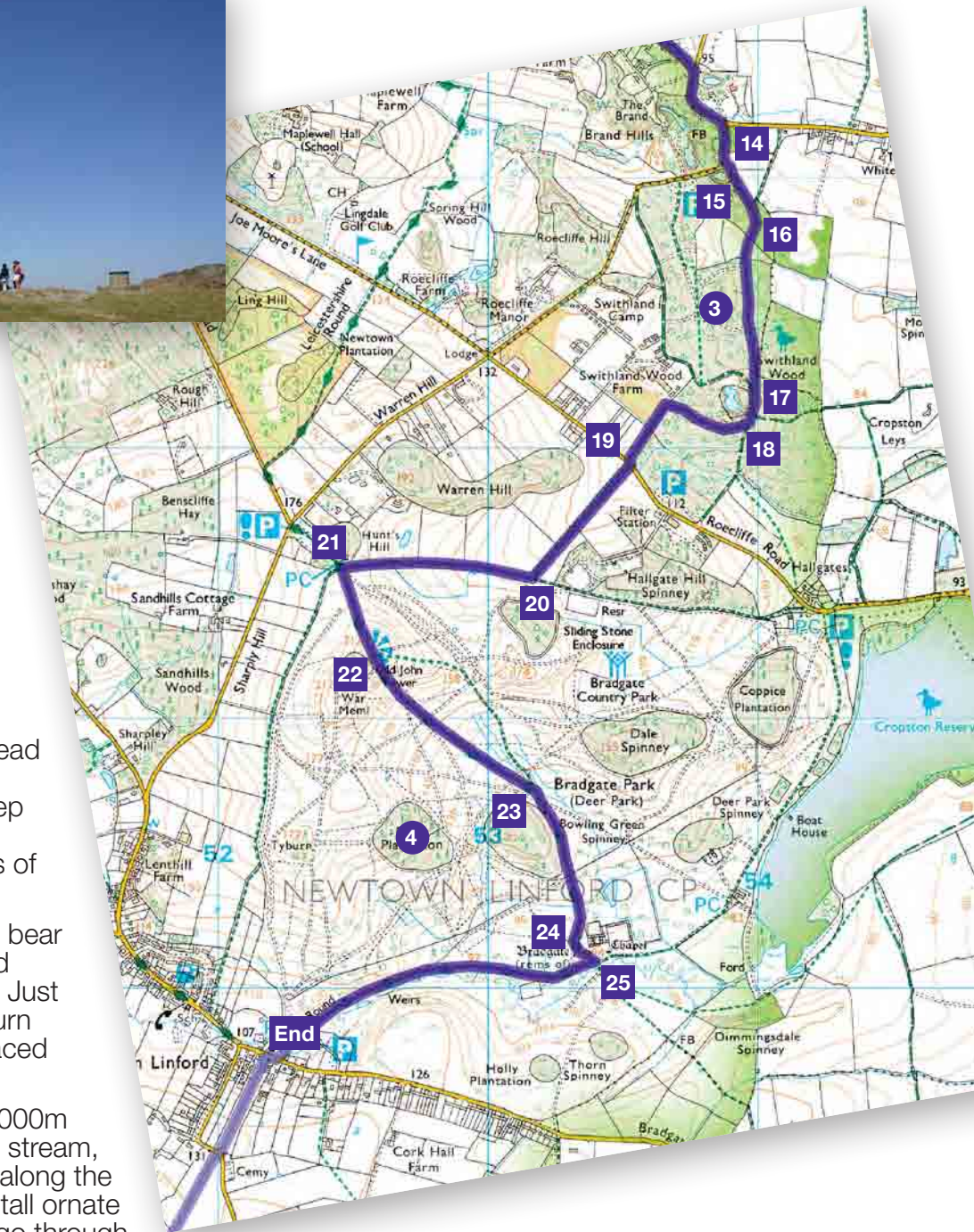
NOTE: Should you need them, there are toilets to your right before you go through the gate.

22 Once you reach the Tower you can enjoy the views across the park and on to Leicester. Set off down the other side of the hill. You will see two plantations of trees about 750m ahead of you. Head towards the left hand side of them.

23 Bear left where the paths cross, and keep going to the left side of the plantations. Once you reach the walled copse of trees, go straight on along the side of it, and walk towards the gap in the wall you should see ahead of you. Go through the gap in the wall, and keep walking straight ahead down towards the ruins of Bradgate House.

24 At the side of the ruins, bear right towards the walled enclosure you can see. Just before the enclosure, turn right along a wide surfaced track.

25 Follow this for about 1,000m as it runs alongside the stream, admiring the waterfalls along the way. You will reach the tall ornate park gates, which you go through to enter the car park and arrive at the end of this stage.



Useful Information

Parking

Car parking is available at Beacon Hill and Bradgate Park.

Please note that there is a charge for parking at both sites and also be aware of car park closing times before setting off.

Public transport

Woodhouse Eaves is on the 154 Loughborough-Leicester bus route (Mon-Fri) and 123 Loughborough-Leicester (Sat only).

Newtown Linford is on the 120 Coalville-Leicester bus route (Mon-Sat).

Change at Anstey to travel between the start and finish of the stage.

For detailed information on timetables, call **Traveline** on 0871 200 22 33 (charges apply).

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication. However, the National Forest Company cannot be held responsible for any error, omission or subsequent changes.

How to use this leaflet

The maps in this leaflet are based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps and are presented at the correct scale if printed on A4 paper.

- 1 Square symbols on the maps link with the route directions that are provided alongside the map.
- 1 Circular symbols represent key points of interest along the route of the trail.

Points of interest along this stage

1 Beacon Hill Country Park

Rising to a height of 245 metres, Beacon Hill is the second highest point in Leicestershire. Look out for the unusual rock formation, which has been dubbed the 'Old Man of Beacon Hill'. The Country Park has won awards for its management, most visible in the grazing sheep, cattle and alpaca that are moved around the site to graze the grassland and heathland.



2 Broombriggs Farm

Broombriggs provides a fascinating insight into the workings of a typical Charnwood arable and livestock farm. Follow the circular way-marked trail around the farm and then take in the views across the Soar Valley from the remains of the former windmill.



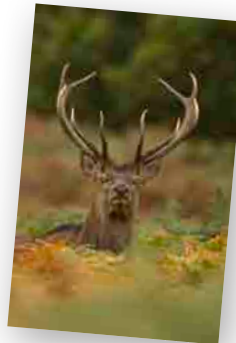
3 Swithland Wood

Swithland Wood is an attractive and atmospheric area of ancient woodland, a remnant of the original Charnwood Forest oak woods. Designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Swithland Wood is an important habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species including bluebell and wood anemone.



4 Bradgate Park

Bradgate Park is an historic medieval deer park in the heart of the ancient Charnwood Forest. It retains much of its original wild and rugged landscape with dramatic rocky outcrops and gnarled oak trees, many of which are well over 500 years old. Herds of red and fallow deer still roam amongst the bracken.



About The National Forest

The National Forest is one of Britain's boldest environmentally-led regeneration projects: the creation of a new forest across 200 square miles of parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire, linking the ancient forests of Needwood and Charnwood.

Over the last twenty years, The National Forest has trebled forest cover within its boundary, creating habitats for wildlife, a woodland economy and a beautiful landscape for everyone to enjoy.

