Welcome

The New Forest National Park is truly unique.

It’s a ‘world capital’ for wildlife with a huge diversity of rare plants and animals – one of the reasons why it was made a National Park in 2005. A place of outstanding natural beauty, the unique landscape is shaped by the grazing of ponies, cattle and pigs that roam freely. These animals may appear wild, but they are owned by people called commoners. This active, working Forest has been managed by people for centuries.

One of the last places in southern England to offer a sense of wildness and tranquility, it’s a wonderful area to explore on foot, horseback, or by bike. Indeed William the Conqueror, who set aside the ‘New Forest’ for hunting more than 900 years ago, would probably recognise much of it today.

The New Forest National Park

Find out more
newforestnpa.gov.uk

Over 5,000 ponies roam through the open area of the Forest and even in the main streets of some villages such as Brockenhurst and Burley. The ponies are known as ‘the architects of the Forest’ because it is their grazing that creates the accessible landscape we all enjoy. Ponies are owned by local people called commoners, who take great pride in their animals – often owning several generations of the same families.

Over 700 commoners turn out thousands of ponies, cattle, donkeys, sheep and pigs as part of their traditional ‘common rights’. These animals may appear wild, but they can be especially careful when driving at night.

Walking

Explore the woods, heathland and coast of the New Forest on 30 easy-to-follow routes.

The online routes finder allows you to search by distance, location or even whether there is a pub near the route! Once you have chosen your preferred route just print off the directions or download the tracks to your smartphone for free. newforestnpa.gov.uk/walks

After your walk check your dog and yourself for ticks as they can lead to Lyme Disease.

Birds: To help ground nesting birds rear their young safely, keep your dogs and horses away from the main tracks from the beginning of March to the end of July.

Dogs: To minimise disturbance to wildlife, livestock and other people, please keep your dogs close by you and visible at all times – if necessary use a lead. Pick up after your dog, especially around car parks, on paths and where people play or picnic, and take bagged waste home if there is no litter bin.

Forest management: Take notice of any warning signs and keep a safe distance from work sites. Only pass a vehicle loading timber when told it is safe to do so.

New Forest ponies

The famous

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Driving: The ponies and other animals have no road sense and frequently stand or walk on the unceded roads, so give them and walkers, cyclists and horse riders a wide berth and be especially careful when driving at night.

Ponies, donkeys, cattle & pigs: For their safety and your own please keep your distance from the animals – although owned and cared for by local people called commoners, they are unpredictable and best treated as wild. Don’t feed or pet them; there is plenty of natural food and it’s best that they don’t come to rely on people’s attention. They may look friendly but they can bite and kick, especially mares with foals.

Cycling

There are more than 100 miles of waymarked family friendly cycle routes to explore, many of them off-road and traffic free. The network, managed by the Forestry Commission, is easily accessible from railway stations at Ashurst, Brockenhurst and Sway and links the main New Forest villages. There are plenty of places to hire bikes during your stay and more than 20 easy-to-follow cycle routes.

Cycling
newforestnpa.gov.uk/cycling

A taste of the New Forest

Try delicious local produce or handmade crafts bearing the New Forest marque from local shops, cafés and markets. newforestmarque.co.uk

BBQs and fire: To reduce the risk of damaging wildlife, campfires are not permitted without the landowner’s permission. Disposable BBQs are welcome at Boldrewood, Blackwater and Washwood where stands and water are available. Raised non-disposable BBQs are allowed on the hard-standing areas of car parks, providing there is space for the animals to graze safely. Litter: Your food and litter could harm the ponies and donkeys. Please take your litter home if bins are full.

BBQs are available. Raised non-disposable BBQs are allowed on the hard-standing areas of car parks, providing water is available. You can hire fixed stand party-sized BBQs from the Forestry Commission 01590 646600 and from Hampshire County Council at Lape Country Park at 0300 067 4601

Contact us if you would like to receive the Pocket Guide in another format such as large print or Braille.

A pocket-sized map of the New Forest

newforestnpa.gov.uk/pocket-guide

FREE

MAP!
Your New Forest adventure awaits...

Every year, tens of thousands of people choose the best way to get around the National Park – with car-free trips on the New Forest Tour. There are great-value day tickets to ride all day, with discounts at attractions, tempting treats, and audio commentaries revealing secrets of the Forest on some services. Check the map for routes.

Travel Concierge
Meet the New Forest Travel Concierge for advice about exploring the National Park without a car. The service is available at the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst railway station from 7 July to 9 September. newforestnpa.gov.uk/travel_concierge

New Forest Tour
Enjoy grandstand views from the open-top Tour. Discover three scenic routes around magical landscapes, picture postcard villages and popular attractions, with a commentary to guide you. Hop on and off and switch routes – all on the same ticket. Hourly, every day, 7 July to 9 September. thenewforesttour.info

DID YOU KNOW?
Every purebred New Forest pony has a passport and a registered name

DID YOU KNOW?
The New Forest was established by William the Conqueror in 1079 as ‘Nova Foresta’ (‘new hunting ground’)

DID YOU KNOW?
The New Forest National Park is home to all six of the UK’s native reptile species

DID YOU KNOW?
The New Forest has the highest concentration of ancient trees in Western Europe, with some yew trees believed to be over 1,000 years old

DID YOU KNOW?
Over 2,600 species of fungi have been recorded here

Spectacular seasonal sights
May: Newborn foals and bluebell carpets
July: Sun-drenched coastal views from Lepe Country Park
August: Purple heather in bloom
November: Free-roaming pigs and autumn colours

Unidentified objects: Areas of the New Forest were used to test bombs in World War I and II. Please keep away from objects that might be dangerous and notify the police immediately on 999.

Fungi: Please leave fungi for other people to enjoy. Fungi are essential to the New Forest’s internationally protected ecosystem. Foray leaders must apply for permission for educational excursions from the Forestry Commission in advance. If you suspect or see commercial picking please call the Forestry Commission on 0300 067 4600 or the National Trust on 01425 650035.

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