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 wilderness 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.

Cycling

Cycling is the perfect way to get the New Forest – there are more than 100 miles of waymarked family-friendly cycle routes to explore, all of them off-road and traffic free.

The network, managed by Forestry England, is easily accessible from railway stations at Ashurst, Brockenhurst and Swanage, and links the main New Forest villages. There are details on where to hire bikes and more than 25 easy-to-follow cycle routes at newforestnpa.gov.uk/cycling

Free roaming animals

When you visit the New Forest one of the first things you will notice is the free roaming animals.

It's rare to travel more than a few miles without coming across these famous Forest residents. You can spot brand marks on the ponies that show who owns them or different tail-clippings indicating in which part of the Forest they belong.

They are known as 'the architects of the Forest' because they are grazing that creates the accessible landscape we all enjoy.

The ponies, cattle, donkeys and pigs are owned by local people called commoners, who take great pride in their animals – often owning several generations of the same families.

Driving: The ponies and other animals have no road sense and frequently stand or walk on the unformed 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. Please 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.

Walking

Walking is one of the best ways to explore the New Forest, but to reduce damage to the ground please use tracks when it's wet.

Proper footwear

New Forest events and heritage

There are hundreds of exciting events and activities taking place in the New Forest, including the New Forest Show in July. For details pick up the Essential Guide visitor newspaper, speak to the rangers, or visit newforestnpa.gov.uk/events

BBQs and fire: To reduce the risk of damaging wildlife, campfires are not permitted without the landowner’s permission. Disposable BBQs are only allowed at Boldrewood, Blackwater and Wivelsley where stands and water 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 Forestry England (0300 067 4601) and from Hampshire County Council at Lepe Country Park at hants.gov.uk/lepe

Litter: Your food and litter could harm the ponies and donkeys. Please take your litter home.

Love the Forest?

Then help secure the future of this wildlife, young people and communities by donating to the New Forest Trust at newforesttrust.org.uk/donate

The New Forest is one of 15 National Parks in the UK, each providing precious habitat for wildlife and breathing space for millions of visitors each year.

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

Walking

Explore 27 easy-to-follow New Forest walks.

Download the free New Forest Walks app with GPS navigation and fascinating points of interest to view as you walk. newforestnpa.gov.uk/walksapp

You can also use our online route finder that 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 map and directions. newforestnpa.gov.uk/walks

For guided walks join the New Forest Walking Festival for dozens of behind the scenes wildlife walks, history hikes and family strolls; 12 to 27 October 2019. For guided walks join the New Forest Walking Festival for dozens of behind the scenes wildlife walks, history hikes and family strolls; 12 to 27 October 2019. newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival

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**Hop on the 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, 6 July to 8 September. thenewforesttour.info

Travel Concierge

Meet the New Forest Travel Concierge for advice about exploring the National Park without a car. The service is available at Brockenhurst railway station from 6 July to 8 September. newforestnpa.gov.uk/travel_concierge

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DID YOU KNOW?

Every purebred New Forest pony has a passport and a registered name.

DID YOU KNOW?

The New Forest National Park is home to 13 of the 18 species of bat found in the UK.

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 has the highest concentration of ancient trees in Western Europe, with more than 1,000 recorded.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 2,600 species of fungi have been recorded here.

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Making a discovery

Spend quality time together at one of our stunning 10 campsites located across the New Forest. Book today at campingintheforest.co.uk or call 024 7711 0108.

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 landowner – either Forestry England on 0300 067 4600 or the National Trust on 01425 650035.