



Leytonstone to Loughton Walk

Epping Forest



Length 13.5km (8.4m)

Maps Explorer 174. Epping Forest and Lea Valley
Landranger 177 East London, Billericay and Gravesend

Toughness 1/10 mainly flat; some very gentle. short slopes. Overall there is 224m of ascent and 168m of descent.

Most of the walk – 9.2 km is done before lunch

For the long Leytonstone to Epping walk option the toughness is 3/10 (see below)

Features This short walk covers the southern part of Epping Forest, starting in London's East End and heading generally NNE to Loughton in Essex. You are never too far from busy roads which you have to cross but it makes an excellent outing through open woodland and more densely forested areas. The entire walk takes place within London Underground travel zones on the Central underground line so you have no worries about trains back.

This walk can be linked with [SWC 197 Loughton to Epping walk](#) making a long Epping Forest walk of 23km (14.4 miles) – and again all within Zone 6.

As this is a short walk it may mainly be done in winter but a word of warning; the soils in Epping Forest drain poorly and there are sections before lunch where it will be muddy and possibly waterlogged after rain.

You can avoid most of these by taking little side tracks off the main route which have been made by locals but a map or GPS and a compass are very helpful here.

Perhaps the best time to do the walk is April/May when the growing vegetation can suck up any water making the tracks less muddy and October/November when the leaf colour should be at its autumn best.

Most but not all of the morning route follows the Centenary path (see below) and although this is marked by white-topped footpath posts, some of these are missing or easy to miss. Also the open woodland areas are often criss-crossed by many smaller paths so you need to concentrate to ensure you keep to the main route. For the longer morning section I have broken up the walk directions into sections of the path between the roads you have to cross which will hopefully help navigation.

Walk options

Shortening the walk

You can shorten the walk when you reach the **Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge** by going to **Chingford railway station** just 10 mins walk away.

This makes a walk of 9.9km (6.2m). Details are at the end of the walk directions.

Lengthening the walk

Instructions for a continuation to Epping on the **Centenary path** - see above - have been added to the walk directions and GPX and extend the walk to 20.4km (12.7m). Or you could combine most of this walk with most of **SWC 197 Loughton to Epping**. This makes a long walk of around 23km (14.4m). Further details are at the end of this walk's directions.

Travel

Both stations on this walk are on the Central Line Underground. Leytonstone is in zone 3 /4 and Loughton is in Zone 6.

For the shorter walk Chingford station is in Zone 4 and has a regular train service to London Liverpool Street

Suggested trains

It takes about 30 mins to travel from Central London to Leytonstone on the Central Line. In winter you should aim to be at Leytonstone tube station between 10.30 and 10.45. You should reach your lunch-time pub or café in around 2 to 2.5 hours.

A good place to assemble before setting off is not in the small and potentially crowded underground ticket hall but just outside the station at

Le Parisien café where you can pick up refreshments.

Lunch

Next to the Queen Elizabeth hunting lodge is the **Butlers retreat** 12 Rangers Road, Chingford E4 7QH. Tel **020 7998 7858**. Originally a 19th century barn it is now an up-market café, refurbished in 2012. There is extensive outdoor seating for when the weather is fine.

Tea

In Loughton High Road, off the direct route to the station, there are a number of cafés and pubs, including the Wagon Boulangerie 174 High Road, Costa Coffee 230 High Road. The Last Post (Wetherspoons) 227 High Road is currently closed (November 2024) but local media reports plans to reopen.

On the way to Loughton Underground station you pass a Sainsburys superstore where you can get refreshments. At the station there is a small café but it is not open on Sundays.

If you do not mind breaking your tube journey back to London, at Leytonstone **the Olive restaurant** (Turkish) which is highly recommended by the original walk author, is just 40 metres from the underground station.

Notes

Leytonstone

The area is part of East London and is in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The busy main road, Leytonstone High Road is an ancient pathway dating to pre-Roman times and the remains of roman buildings have been found in the area. It has long been an important route from London to Epping Forest.

The High Stone at the junction of Hollybush Hill and New Wanstead, near the eastern boundary of the parish at the junction of the roads from Woodford and Woodford Bridge, is a restored 18th-century obelisk set up on an earlier stump which has been traditionally described as a Roman milestone.

Leytonstone was the centre of protests against the construction of the M11 link road in the early 1990s.

Leytonstone is at the end of Zone 3/start of Zone 4 on the Central underground line. Nearby Leytonstone High Road is an overground station on the Barking to Gospel Oak line.

Epping Forest

This ancient woodland, straddling the border of NE London and Essex covers 2,476 hectares and most of it is an area of special scientific

interest.

You can find out more about the forest on the walks page for [SWC 197 Loughton to Epping walk](#). It also has a detailed entry on Wikipedia.

Centenary Path Epping Forest

This 24km (15 mile) walk starts at Manor Park library near the railway station and continues all the way to Epping. The path, instituted in 1978 celebrates the passing of the 1878 Epping Forest Act whereby the forest was declared a public open space. On a visit to Chingford in 1882 Queen Victoria declared it the "People's Forest".

Every September the Epping Forest Heritage Trust organises a walk along the length of Epping Forest. The walk is open to everyone and you can find details on the Epping Forest Heritage Trust website [here](#).

There are maps showing the full route [here](#). The route is marked by white topped wooden footpath posts but these can sometimes be hard to spot and a compass is very useful

Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge

This unique surviving timber-framed hunting lodge was built on the orders of Henry VIII in 1543. Further details about the lodge and its opening times can be found [here](#). It is right by the lunch-time pub or café options and so you could combine a visit with your lunch.

Loughton

A town in the Epping Forest district of Essex. Its underground station is in Zone 6. It has an extensive Wikipedia entry which can be found [here](#)

Help Us! After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the [SWC Group on Flickr](#) ([upload your photos](#)) and [videos to Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:

By Car

Start

Finish

Help

National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

Version

Feb-25 [Alexander](#) [PeterB](#)

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Walk Directions

Walk Directions - pre-lunch

Sections 1-10 cover the route up to the lunch-time pub or café options. This is 9.2km (5.7m) which is 2/3 of the total walk.

1. **1) Leytonstone Underground to the Centenary Path (1.3km)**
2. Turn left up the slope after leaving Leytonstone underground ticket hall. Walk past Le Parisien café and continue on past the bus station to your left along Kirkdale Road. Church Lane and the Olive restaurant are to your right.
3. Kirkdale Road soon turns sharply to the right but you continue ahead up Lemna Road.
4. You soon reach a T junction with Gainsborough Road with a huge Tesco superstore ahead of you. Cross Gainsborough Road using the pedestrian crossing to your left and turn left along the pavement.
5. As Gainsborough Road turns sharply left downhill, you continue ahead across a bridge over the very busy A12. (From the bridge you can see the City's modern buildings lined up on the horizon.) After crossing the bridge, take the steps to your right and ignoring Colworth Road away to your left, continue ahead down Poppleton Road which in 60m turns sharply left.
6. 50m after the sharp turn left you turn right into Ashbridge Road. In 160m turn right into Teesdale Road and at the end of this cul de sac bear left past concrete bollards to continue along a tarmac path. The path soon bears left to meet Chadwick Road. Continue on this road for 60m and then turn right past some bollards and cross the busy Whipps Cross road via the pedestrian crossing.
7. Turn right on the other side of the road to go along a cycle path. In 15m the path turns left and in a further 30 metres you see a car-blocking barrier to your left and a gap between two wooden posts. Go through the gap. Just ahead of you is a **white-topped marker post**. This marks the Centenary path which you will mainly follow all the way to lunch. (Or you could cut on to the common from the pedestrian crossing, joining the path some 60m from the start.)
8. **2) Centenary path to Snaresbrook Road (1.1km)**
9. Start on the path on a bearing of 340° – close to North. This is the general direction you need to follow all the way to Snaresbrook Road. **(There are several paths leading north and if you find yourself on the wrong one, as long as you**

head north you will get to Snaresbrook Road. Then look for a small car park and rejoin the route from there.)

10. In about 150m the path goes through a gap between trees. In another 300m, pass through another area of trees and gorse, after which the path bears slightly left. Wooden posts mark the onward route through more gaps between bushes. Keep on past a potentially muddy area and soon after a cross paths, you can see (and hear!) Snaresbrook Road about 200m ahead of you.
11. Eventually you come to a small car park with an Epping Forest and Leyton Flats notice board and continue ahead to the road.

12. 3) Snaresbrook Road to Woodford New Road (A1404) (800m)

13. Cross the road with care. The route continues on a path behind a car-barrier to your left. You are in a wooded area on a wide earth path and soon pass houses and flats to your left. Pass a white-topped marker post and a street lamp where you ignore a narrow path to your left to continue ahead on the wide earth path.
14. In 120m you reach a cross paths and continue ahead. In another 150m by a white-topped marker post, **[!] turn off the clear track** ahead of you and bear left to cross a ditch, your direction 320°. The now less distinct path now follows the line of trees and shrubs just a few metres to your left. There is open grass land to your right.
15. **[!] Attention here.** In 150m the open ground area narrows and the path enters dense woodland. In 30m as the main path veers gently to the right, take a narrow path to your left (230°).
16. In 40m, cross a bridge over a ditch and continue ahead. Traffic noise will now be clearly audible ahead and away to your right. In 30m you reach a small grassy area. Head towards the road and you should emerge at a pedestrian crossing.

17. 4) Woodford New Road (A1404) to Forest Road (A503) (800m)

18. Cross this busy road at the pedestrian crossing and turn right along the pavement, passing My Shish restaurant. Just before a bus shelter, turn left passing a car-blocking barrier. Pass an Epping Forest notice board to your right and continue on a track bearing right into the forest.
19. In 100m pass another white-topped marker post and then in 20m bear right on a wide earth track heading towards another white-topped marker post 60m ahead of you.
20. Soon you reach a bench and a pond to your right. Just after the bench, pass a post with a yellow arrow, with the pond still to the right. The path swings to the left at a white-topped marker post. Continue ahead on the wide earth track.

21. **[!]** In another 100m, at the next white-topped marker post, take the left fork with a fence to your left half hidden by foliage. (Beyond this fence are allotments.) In 100m at the end of the fence (just visible through foliage), ignore a narrow path to your left through trees and carry on for 70m to a white-topped marker post and a post with a yellow arrow. Follow the arrow up a slope, your direction 330°, and continue along a raised bank with flats to the left and reservoirs to the right.
22. In 100m you reach a substantial bridge crossing Forest Road, the A503.
23. **5) Forest Road (A503) to the North Circular (A406) (300m)**
24. Cross the bridge and continue ahead on a grassy track passing a wooden seat and white-topped marker post to your left. Ignore a yellow arrow pointing right and go straight on with the wide path through the woods. In 110m go straight on at a cross-paths and in 50m, go straight on at another cross-paths, passing a white-topped marker post to the left.
25. Continue on this potentially muddy path in a wooded area ignoring ways off, and soon come to a further substantial pedestrian bridge crossing the very busy North Circular Road.
26. **6) North Circular (A406) to Oak Hill (1km)**
27. Cross the bridge and continue ahead along a wide earth track post passing in 30m a white-topped marker post to your left. You continue ahead with some cream coloured houses soon visible ahead of you, and come to a wooden 5-armed signpost.
28. Follow the signs for Woodford and Lake, bearing slightly left down a wide track heading towards another signpost 60m away. This time follow the sign for the Lake, bearing left again on another wide earth track and following white-topped marker posts. Ignore a wide path to your left and continue ahead down a potentially muddy track. **[!]**In 200m this track forks and you take the right hand fork, your direction North. In 50m you continue on the path as it swings gently to the left.
29. In 80m swing right onto a wider path, passing a white-topped marker post on the right. and you reach another white-topped marker post in a further 30m. **[!]** At this post turn right on the wide earth path, following a signpost for Highams Park Station and the Lake. In 110m you reach a white-topped marker post and a car-blocking barrier to Oak Hill.
30. **7) Oak Hill to the Charter Road (500m)**
31. Cross Oak Hill and continue past another car-blocking barrier on the path and a signpost, now following this sign for the Lake. Cross an earth path to continue down a narrow path into woodland with a block of flats to your left. In 30m you reach a T

junction with a signpost, where you follow the sign to the Lake, turning left along a narrow earth path.

32. Continue on this woodland path with houses and flats to your left. Stick to the path right of the houses, signposted for the Lake. (***Following the main path can be a little tricky here as there are a multiplicity of little paths away to your left and right. Keep on heading north with the houses about 60m away to your left. You may care to take one of the smaller paths to your left as they could be less muddy but keep on the bearing of almost due north.***)
33. In 400m you pass some wooden barriers and you reach a minor road – the Charter Road.

34. 8) The Charter Road to Chingford Lane (A1009) (1km)

35. Cross the road and take the wide path ahead of you which is just to the right of a large boating lake and modern boatyard. You pass an Epping Forest sign to your right and continue on the path with the lake to your left.
36. You are soon passing the open space to your right called The Highams Park. In 150m you pass a wooden bench and a signpost for Chingford Hatch. Take the left fork along the lake shore, and follow it to the end of the lake, about 400m. You are now in an open area with logs and a wooden bridge to the left. **[!] Don't cross the footbridge** but take a path bearing right through the trees, soon coming to a T-junction where you turn left with houses and gardens just away to your right. Bear right with the path as it merges with another path to your left and head towards a main road 70m in front of you.

37. 9) Chingford Lane (A1009) to Whitehall Road (A110) (500m)

38. Cross the road with care and continue ahead along the wide grassy path, following the direction for Whitehall Plain on a signpost by the road, through an area known as the Lops. In 150m continue on the path as it swings gently to the right.
39. **[!]** In 60m you reach a 4-armed signpost. Take the path straight on (actually bearing slightly left) in the direction signposted Whitehall Plain. (***There is a potentially very boggy area ahead of you and you may have to navigate round this on a narrow winding path to your left which eventually links up with the main path.***) Follow the obvious path for just under 1km all the way to the busy Whitehall Road (A110).

40. 10) Whitehall Road (A110) to Rangers Road (A1069) and the lunch-time pub or café options (1km)

41. Cross the road and continue ahead on the main path immediately passing a Beware Cattle sign. There is an open grassy area to your right – the Whitehall Plain – and bushes, trees and shrubs immediately to your left.

42. Continue on the wide grassy path, taking a left fork through an attractive woodland area. **[!]** After about 250m, at the end of the next grassy area to your right, do **not** continue ahead but turn left on a wide path into a wooded area your initial direction 325°.
43. In 20m you cross a wide earth bridge over a stream and continue ahead on the path. In 40m, continue ahead across a small grassy area. Stick with the main, potentially muddy path as it enters woodland. The path soon emerges into a more open area and you continue ahead on a more gravelly and drier surface. A pond is to your right and a road just visible ahead of you.
44. 60m after a bench on the right by the pond, you reach some wooden posts and a car-blocking barrier and bear left on a very wide gravel track heading for the main road – Rangers Road. ***There will be cars using this track as it is adjacent to a parking area.***
45. On the other side of Rangers Road the **Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge** is straight ahead of you. Just away to your left is the **Brewers Fayre** lunch-time pub but the recommended lunch-time option is the white clapperboard building away to your right, the **Butlers Retreat**, a popular café. There is a lot of outside seating at the front and rear of the café. Cross the busy road with care.
46. Here you can cut the walk short and head to Chingford station, 10 minutes walk away. See Section A at the end of these directions.

47. Walk Directions after lunch

This part of the walk is just 4.3km (2.7m) to Loughton and the tracks will be less muddy and often with a made-up surface.

48. 11) Rangers Road to Epping New Road (A104) (2.5km)

49. After lunch and a possible visit to the Hunting Lodge go to the back of the Butlers Retreat café where there is a large and recently restored water fountain just to the right of the outdoor seating area.
50. **[!]** From the fountain, take the wide grassy path between two footpath posts on a bearing of 20°, signposted for the Connaught Water Willow Trail (not the earth path just to its right). This path goes gently downhill. In 100m, continue along the wide grassy path heading towards another footpath post with an orange arrow showing the way ahead. Continue past this footpath post with a line of bushes either side of you.
51. In 300m keep straight ahead at a cross-roads on a wide dirt track into woodland. In 40m and 100m pass two narrow paths to your right and you continue ahead.
52. In 300m you reach another cross-roads and you continue straight ahead on a wide forest trail (the Green Ride) ignoring paths to your left and right.

53. A track to your left with a two footpath posts merges with your onward route. Continue ahead as the track swings to the right and goes gently downhill. After some 500m, you reach two footpath posts on your right. Ignore a path to your left and continue on the track as it swings gently to your right.
54. In 50m you reach a footpath post to your left and a T-junction where you bear right with the car-wide dirt path. In 300m you reach a T-junction with a footpath post to your left and you then bear left with the main track which soon swings round to the left.
55. In 150m the path swings round to the right. In 80m you reach a T-junction with a tarmac lane (Fairmead Road). Cross the lane and continue ahead on the dirt track. You will hear and see traffic ahead of you. You soon pass through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate reaching busy road in 20m.
56. **12) Epping New Road to Loughton Underground station (1.8km)**
57. Cross the road with care, go through a small car-park and pass a car-blocking barrier and **[!]** bear left to continue on a shingle path. Almost immediately, ignore an earth path going into the woods. In 100m you reach a small grassy area and continue ahead, ignoring several small paths to the left. In 200m after the grassy area, you come to a T-junction with a wide earth track.
58. If you turn left at this T-junction you will be on the route of **SWC.197** SWC 197, Loughton to Epping walk- see note at end of these directions.
59. To continue on this walk you turn right, then in 80m turn left. ***(You are now doing in reverse the opening part of SWC 197 all the way to Loughton Underground station.)***
60. In 300m you reach a road (Nursery Road), a modern half-timbered house ahead of you. Cross this road to the pavement and turn left, passing Upper Park to your right in 10m. In 100m pass Little Dragons entrance way on your right. **[!]** In another 50m, just before the entrance to Forest Nurseries on the other side of the road, turn right past some horse-blocking barriers and a footpath sign to go up an earth track, a high brick wall to your right.
61. In 50m go through horse-blocking barriers and pass a footpath sign to continue down a tarmac lane. In 60m, pass a footpath sign to your right and bear right down Ollards Grove soon going steeply downhill.
62. At the bottom of the hill Connaughts Avenue joins Ollards Grove from the left and you continue ahead towards the busy road (A121, Loughton High Road) 60m ahead of you.
63. At the main road you can turn left for Loughton's pubs and coffee shops but the onward route to the tube station is to cross the road using the pedestrian crossing

to your right. Turn left after crossing the road and in 30m turn right into Old Station Road passing a two armed footpath sign in 10m.

64. You pass a Sainsbury's superstore to your right and you continue onwards to Loughton Tube station which soon becomes visible ahead of you.

Options

A) Shortening the Walk to go to Chingford Railway station (Zone 4). Takes about 10 minutes.

1. Turn left after crossing Rangers Road (A1069) - or turn right along the pavement if you had lunch or visited the Hunting Lodge.
2. In about 200m you reach a confluence of roads and continue past Bury Road to your right to pick up the A1069 - now the Station Road - as it swings left. You need to be on the left hand side of this road. Chingford station is opposite Connaught Avenue on the other side of the road.
3. There are regular trains from Chingford station, which is a terminus, to Liverpool Street station.

B) A long Epping Forest walk from Leytonstone to Epping, 23km (14.4m)

1. Follow the instructions for this walk to the end of the first paragraph in section 12 above. You then pick up the walk instructions for SWC 197 Loughton to Epping from para 5.

C) Extension to Epping on the Centenary Path

1. Follow the instructions for this walk to the end of the first paragraph in section 12 above. Turn left at the T-junction.
2. In 150m there are some ponds away to your left. 200m beyond these you pass a large pond immediately to your left. Continue past a metal barrier and in 30m you reach a tarmac road. Cross this road with care, go past a metal barrier, and continue on the clear wide path ahead - the Three Forest Way.
3. This woodland track gently descends and you continue on this wide track, ignoring all ways off. After 200m, a track merges from the right. In another 100m, the path crosses a ditch in a slight dip.
4. Another 200m further on, you are at the bottom of a gentle slope and the track ahead of you starts to gently rise. A small stream passes under the track you have been following. This is where walk **SWC 197** turns left, but for the Centenary Path route, continue straight on. Continue on this path for 2.3 km until you reach the busy A121. In more detail:

- After 500m you could detour left to try and spot the remains of Loughton Camp (an Iron Age fort); there are a number of faint paths through the trees.
 - After 900m keep right on the main track (the left fork would lead you back to the main walk route near the High Beach centre).
 - In another 600m you cross a wider stream where a arrow on a tree marked Epping Forest Golding Hill Trail marks the onward route.
5. Cross the A121 with care. There is a car park and a bus stop for the 66 bus between Loughton and Waltham Abbey. The path continues to the right of the car park, but it swings left at a white post, keeping a square stone structure on your right, and then swings right again to continue downhill at initially 80 degrees. ***700m after the car park, turn LEFT at a T junction of paths** (The path right leads to Theydon Bois tube in 3km).
 6. You reach another car park and the B172 after 1.5km. Cross the road and continue through the car park past a vehicle barrier on to the obvious track in your previous direction (north at first, then curving NE) - ***it's the widest track, with a raised bank on the left** (this is part of Ambresbury Banks, another Iron Age fort). In 300m go straight on at a cross paths.
 7. Proceed for another 2km ignoring all turn-offs. You come to a junction with houses visible on the left and possibly a car park on the right. Take the path going half right. To your left through the wood is a cricket pitch and pavilion. In 200m continue ahead at a cross paths. In 100m pass a car-blocking barrier and continue ahead through a small car park to reach a busy road in 80m.
 8. Cross this road with care to turn left and then in a few metres veer right past a barrier to go along a tarmac path. At this point, you are recrossing the M25 which emerges from a tunnel below to your right. In 70m you reach another road, which you cross and turn left. In 30m you reach a T junction where you turn right along a road following the sign for Epping and Loughton. In 50m ignore the public bridleway sign to your right and continue along the pavement. In 30m you pass the Forest Gate Inn to bear right with a minor road past some cottages to your right with woodland to your left.
 9. In 200m the minor road swings sharply to the left but you continue ahead on an unmade road past a sign for Bell Common. Continue on this unmade road, ignoring ways off until in 200m you go through 3 wooden posts and bear slightly right across a grassy area and reach a tarmac road in 30m. (This is the best place to leave the walk route and head to Epping High Street for meals and refreshments. At the tarmac path go left until you reach the main road where you turn right to reach the main shopping area of Epping High Street in a few hundred metres.)
 10. To continue on to Epping Underground Station (where there are no amenities, not even a shop), cross the track and cross another grassy area between bushes to come to a bench on the left in 50m. Cross the grass, staying near the top of the

slope with a fence on your left, to enter a wooded area and pick up a clear path. Follow the path through the wood, marked with posts with yellow arrows on the reverse. At a fork, keep left to stay on the edge of the wood, ignoring a marked path downhill across another grassy area. In 150m you reach a concrete bridleway sign and a road.

11. Turn left along the road and in 100m you reach a T junction. Cross the road and turn left soon passing some impressive trees over to your left. You soon cross over Sunnyside road to your right. In 80m cross over Woodland Grove to your right. ! 40m past Woodland Grove just beyond a street lamp go down an easily missed tarmac path to your right soon going down some steps. Continue on the enclosed path as it goes round an extensive car park until you come out to a road. Epping Forest Underground station is 40m away to your right.

D) The Centenary Path – Manor Park to Epping.

1. The full 24km (15 mile) walk is set out in [SWC walk 259](#). You can catch a train from London Liverpool Street (or Stratford) to Manor Park which is in Travel Zone 3/4. Epping is in Zone 6.

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