



# Epping Forest Centenary Walk: Manor Park to Epping walk

A walk along the length of an ancient royal forest in East London - Wanstead and Leyton Flats, Walthamstow Forest, Highams Park and Epping Forest. Can be done over two legs.



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**Length** 24.2 km (15.0 mi) with 266/193m ascent/descent. For a shorter walk, see below Walk Options.

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**Toughness** 5 out of 10, with 5 ½ hours walking time.  
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**Walk Notes** Epping Forest stretches for 19 km (12 miles) from Manor Park in East London north to Epping, with the main body of the Forest being north of Chingford. It is never more than 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) wide, but is London's largest Open Space at 2,400 hectares (5,900 acres). It lies on a low ridge between the Lea and Roding Valleys and is an area of ancient woodland which has been protected since the 12th century as a Royal Hunting Forest, though more recently it has been managed by The City of London after the passing of the Epping Forest Act of 1878. The Epping Forest Centenary Walk runs the length of Epping Forest and it is the 100th anniversary of the Epping Forest Act that the Centenary Walk was devised to celebrate. An annual organised walk along the route - in September - keeps attracting well over 100 people, though many of those only join for parts of the route from alternative start points along. The Centenary Walk has never been waymarked but its (approximate) line has been shown on OS maps.

The Centenary Walk (now: the Big Walk) in the southern parts crosses some commons and public parks and travels along a few residential roads as well as going through woodland, but north of Chingford goes mostly through ancient woodland. The woods in the southern half of the route are well frequented and the paths here will be very muddy after prolonged wet weather, but the northern part of the walk is mainly on well-made gravel forest trails which despite some heavy usage by cyclists do not tend to get exceptionally muddy.

Due to the annual Centenary Walk/Big Walk attracting a very large group, it often chooses wide gravel or tarmac tracks over more interesting lesser paths nearby and for the same reason chooses to pass cafes and pubs with facilities even if that requires some road walking. These considerations are not that relevant for the SWC, so our route differs in places from both the Centenary Walk and the Big Walk. The route of the Big Walk is shown on our route map though and also available as a gpx (note: it finishes at a bus stop on the very busy High Street and away from any tea options).

## Walk Options

### Short Walks:

At the halfway point, the route passes close to Chingford Overground Station to the west and about 2 kilometres from Buckhurst Hill Underground Station to the east, so the walk can be done as 2 shorter walks (see details below). Also at the half way point is the Butler's Retreat cafe as a lunch option, next to the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge (1543)/The View Epping Forest Visitor Centre complex. There are numerous other refreshment options by Chingford and Buckhurst Hill Stations as well (see below).

- **Manor Park to Chingford:** 12.3 km/7.7 mi;
- **Manor Park to Buckhurst Hill:** 14.1 km/8.7 mi;
- **Chingford to Epping:** 13.1 km/8.1 mi;
- **Buckhurst Hill to Epping:** 15.0 km/9.3 mi.

### Other Epping Forest Walks:

We have 3 other Epping Forest Walks as well as another walk covering some of the woods just east from Epping:

- [SWC Walk 241 Leytonstone to Loughton](#): a very similar 'southern half' which both starts and finishes a little further north than the Manor Park to Chingford half length version of this route;
- [SWC Walk 197 Loughton to Epping](#): another forest walk, this time in the north, which has very little crossover with this route;
- [SWC Walk 409 Theydon Bois to Epping](#): covering an area east of the main forest at its northerly end;
- [SWC Walk 267 Epping to Ingatestone via Chipping Ongar](#): heading east from Epping through some more woods and across to Ingatestone in the

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### Credit

The Centenary Walk was devised by two members of West Essex Ramblers under the umbrella of the [Friends of Epping Forest](#). Lately, the Friends of Epping Forest were amalgamated with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust to form the Epping Forest Heritage Trust, which has since introduced pay & display schemes to the previously free-to-use 37 car parks around the forest and introduced car patrols through it. It has also renamed the Centenary Walk as the Big Walk, redrawn the routing and published a glossy brochure about it, available as a pdf from their website. We're sticking with the original name for now.

### Maps

**OS Landranger Map:** 177 (East London) and 167 (Chelmsford)  
**OS Explorer Map:** 174 (Epping Forest & Lee Valley)

### Travel

Manor Park Station, map reference TQ 419 857, is 13 km northeast of Charing Cross, 7m above sea level and in **East London**. Epping Station, map reference TQ 301 805, is 16 km north northeast of Manor Park Station and 80m above sea level and in **Essex**. Manor Park is served by the Elizabeth Line with a journey time of 15 minutes from Liverpool Street. Epping is the north easterly terminus of the Central Line with a journey time of 37 minutes to Liverpool Street.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Start the walk no later than 10.30 hours.

**Drivers** can park near Epping and walk south, or park anywhere, and do the walk in 2 parts with a tube ride in between. Manor Park to/from Epping takes about 40 minutes (change at Stratford). If you want to split the walk in 2, best to use Buckhurst Hill Underground station, which although 2.5 kilometres off the route, connects well with both Epping and Manor Park.

The Epping Forest car parks are no longer free. The maximum stay is 6 hours (£6), so they cannot be used for a full day's walk. There are Mon-Sat CPZ (residents only parking) around the southern half of the route. Try looking on Google Maps streetview, e.g. IG1 3LB still has free parking. Around Rangers Road and High Beaches visitor centres it is difficult, but the roads to the west of the northern part of the Forest are generally OK, as is Epping itself.

### Elenvens es/Lunch

#### Manor Park/Whipps Cross

- **Blakesley Arms**, 53 Station Road - right by Manor Park Station.
- **Lakeside Diner**, 157 Whipps Cross Road - 4.5 km into the walk.

#### Highams Park (9.1 km into the walk)

- **Humphry's Café**, Henry's Avenue, Highams Park. Open every day 9.00–17.00 (or dusk, whichever is earlier).

### **Rangers Road Visitor Centre (12.3 km into the walk)**

- **The Larder at Butler's Retreat**. Café/bistro with outside seating. Open 09.00-16.00 daily.
- **The Royal Forest**. **Currently (Q4/24) awaiting re-opening**.

### **By Chingford Overground Station (on the short walk)**

- **Numerous Options** (but no pub).

### **Near Buckhurst Hill Underground Station (on the short walk)**

- **The Three Colts**, 54 Prince's Road.
- **The Railway Bar & Grill**, 5 Queen's Road.

## **Late Lunch/ Tea**

### **High Beach Area**

- **The Original Tea Hut**, Fairmead Road Road, Loughton. Located 100m off route, 15.5 km into the walk.
- **Oyster Shack & Seafood Bar**, Paul's Nursery Road, High Beach, Waltham Abbey. Located 500m off route, 17.0 km into the walk.
- **The King's Oak Café**, Paul's Nursery Road, High Beach, Waltham Abbey. Located 500m off route, 17.0 km into the walk.
- **The King's Oak Hotel**, Paul's Nursery Road, High Beach, Waltham Abbey. Gastro pub and wedding venue. Located 500m off route, 17.0 km into the walk.

### **Ivy Chimneys (1.7 km from the end of the walk)**

- **The Forest Gate Inn**, 111 Bell Common, Epping.
- **Perky Blenders**, 111 Bell Common, Epping. A coffee kiosk, open 09.30-15.00 weekends.

### **Epping High Street (from 600m off route, at the end of the walk)**

- **The Duke of Wellington**, 36 High Street, Epping.
- **Dada Café**, 5 Station Road, Epping.
- **The George & Dragon**, 208 High Street, Epping.
- **The Black Lion**, 293 High Street, Epping.
- **The Funky Monk**, 236 High Street, Epping.

## **Links**

- [Epping Forest - wikipedia](#)
- [Epping Forest Forum](#) - a fansite rather than a forum
- [Epping Forest Visitor Centre and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge](#)
- [Epping Forest Heritage Trust](#) - was Friends of Epping Forest ( their [Facebook page](#))

- [Maps of Waymarked Trails in Epping Forest](#)

**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** E12 5EP      **Finish** CM16 4HW

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

**Version**      Oct-24      [Friends of Epping Forest](#)      [Andrew](#)      [Thomas G](#)

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## Walk Directions

**Directions last checked:** 26/10/2024

1. Leave **Manor Park Station** up to Station Road, cross the road and turn left along it. Cross Forest View Road and veer right into **Manor Park Flats**, staying close to the road on the left (Forest Drive).
2. By the end of the housing away to the left and Capel Road turning left, cross over the road on the left into **Wanstead Flats**. Head north westerly, somewhat in between the two roads. In 300m, as you approach **Alexandra Lake**, fork left in a westerly direction, parallel to the road away to the left.
3. Stay to the left of a tussocky area (hiding a stream feeding the lake) and all sports fields.
4. In 1.0 km you cross a wide gravel-and-grass track and in 100m go through a car park on **Centre Road**. Cross the road and bear right, staying to the right of a line of bushy growth, in a north westerly direction.
5. In 550m you reach **Lake House Road** at a slight bend, with a housing estate away to the right. Turn left across the busy road and turn right immediately in a northerly direction, staying to the right of playing fields and to the left of a wooded strip and the housing estate beyond.
6. In 550m enter **Bush Wood** and at a subsequent multi-path junction, bear third left along a crossing tarmac path to a road visible close by. Cross Bushwood (road) and turn right along its pavement.

7. In 400m you meet Browning Road with the fenced **Henry Reynolds Garden** ahead. Turn right along the fence and curve to the left with it along Bush Road (the A114). In 80m turn right across the road at some pedestrian lights and turn left along a combined cycle and footpath to use a couple of underpasses under a gyratory road (the **Green Man Roundabout**, ie the A12/A1199 junction).
8. On the far side cross a bridge across the **Central Line** and enter **Leyton Flats** past a car barrier where the tarmac track bears left to **Whipps Cross Road**. Follow the right of two grass paths broadly parallel to the road. In 180m enter a wooded strip for 80m and in 300m from the far end of the trees, cross a wide gravel-and-grass track. You pass a car park on the left with the **Lakeside Diner** situated at the far end of it.
9. At the shores of the **Hollow Pond**, turn right along it past an info panel. In 130m bear left along a sandy path along the shoreline and follow it through some trees. In 250m turn left along the northerly tip of the pond but then follow a forest path somewhat away from the shoreline, in a west south westerly direction.
10. In about 300m, with the pond again part-visible away to the left through some trees, turn right with a **Greenwich Meridian Trail** (GMT) marker post along a forest track in a northerly direction. In 250m leave the wood and veer right to pass **Gate 157** and cross **Snaresbrook Road** at some lights and turn left to cross **Lea Bridge Road** (the A104) at some more lights.
11. Continue away from the A road with a footpath marker post along a grass path through a meadow close to Forest Rise (road) on the left, with the houses of **Upper Walthamstow** beyond. In 130m veer right with the path, now with houses on the right as well beyond a row of trees.
12. In another 200m veer right into a wood (**Canada Plain**) with a marker post with a yellow arrow, soon with a church visible away to the right. In 300m pass to the left of **Bulrush Pond**, in this area passing one or other low marker post with yellow arrows.
13. In 200m bear left with the main path up a mud-prone incline to then cross a fenced covered reservoir on your right and cross the A503 on a footbridge-with-views: across Walthamstow and the Lea Valley to **Tottenham and North London**'s higher ground.
14. You gently descend with the path into **Waterworks Wood** and at a subsequent path crossing continue ahead with a GMT marker on a footpath marker post, ignoring a path to the right to another raised grassy covered reservoir. At a subsequent fork, just after a very mud-prone low section, fork left in a north north westerly direction and follow some white-topped poles as the path converges with the noisy **North Circular Road** (the A406).
15. In 800m go through an underpass into **Walthamstow Forest**. Turn left with the path in a cutting, then right again to continue ahead at a four-way junction by a mis-aligned three-way signpost ('Lake'). In 180m turn right at a three-way junction

- of forest paths and in 200m turn left at a signpost (direction 'Lake', 'Woodford Green' and 'Highams Park Station').
16. Some paths join from the right at marker posts and you cross a stream in a dip. You continue ahead with some houses away to the left and after 350m from the left turn pass **Gate 148** and cross **Oak Hill** (road).
  17. At the road continue in the signposted direction of 'Lake' and again in 120m when crossing a bridlepath. In 30m bear left at a T-junction and in 100m at a subsequent signpost you veer right through a particularly mud-prone wood. In 270m you pass a signpost ('Chingford Hatch' and 'Humphry's Café') and cross a road to the southern tip of the **Boating Lake in Highams Park**, where you pass **Gate 196** and continue to the right of the lake .
  18. Soon, a right turn leads you across a grassy area to the enticing **Humphry's Café** on the right.
  19. But **follow a path close to the lake shore** and in 600m at the far end of the lake continue in the same direction (north), now along the **River Ching**, which has run parallel to the lake all the time (but does not feed into it). You will now broadly follow the Ching to its source.
  20. In 250m, by a bridge across the river on the left, bear up to the right with the path from the bridge, away from the river which enters a built-up area, and in 180m **cross Chingford Lane into Hatch Plain** and follow a signpost for 'Whitehall Plain'. In 200m bear left with another signpost, direction 'Whitehall Plain'. **Woodford Golf Course** is now away to the right beyond a wooded belt.
  21. You continue through **Hatch Forest**, eventually with a golf fairway to the right, and the Ching visible down below on the left in places, then with some houses to the right. In 1.1 km cross **Whitehall Road** into **Whitehall Plain** and continue in the same direction for 320m to a four-way path junction.
  22. The connecting route to/from **Buckhurst Hill Underground Station** joins from the right.
  23. Turn left to in 30m cross the Ching and ascend out of the valley. In 500m turn right along a clear track, still gently uphill. A tennis and bowling club's premises are visible to the right.
  24. In 200m you cross **Ranger's Road** by the Barn Hoppitt car park on the right, opposite **The Butler's Retreat**, with the **Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge** and **The View Visitor Centre** away to the left, and **The Royal Forest Inn** still further left.
  25. **Chingford Overground Station** is 500m away along the road to the left.
  26. Pass to the right of Butler's Retreat and **Gate 115** as well as a subsequent large drinking fountain and at a four-way signpost, veer right gently downhill (ie do not bear right) in the direction of 'Connaught Water' and 'Willow Trail' (30°). Cross a

four-way junction by a low marker post with a red arrow, veering right from the previous direction. [Note: this path can be extremely muddy in sections, but there is a drier grassy alternative away to the right.]

27. In 340m, at the bottom of the gentle descent, bear left along a broad gravel track, immediately crossing the **Cuckoo Brook**, a Ching tributary which – together with a tributary to itself – drains the area ahead to the left towards Sewardstonebury and behind to the left, ie the Chingford Plain.
28. You now follow the **Green Ride** broadly northerly, up **Magpie Hill** and still within the catchment of the Ching. **Connaught Water** is unseen away to the right in the forest, fed by the Ching as well as some drainage ditches. In 400m continue ahead at a crosspaths, still uphill, and at the brow of the rise you pass a tussock-filled pond away to the right (on the OS map) by **Bury Wood** on the left.
29. The ride bends to the right and in 75m you cross a streamlet on it, emanating from a seep on the left (may be seasonal): this is the **Source of the Ching** [Note: although both Cuckoo Brook and a tributary channel draining Fairmead are further from the mouth of the Ching.]
30. You have the wooded **Long Hills** on the right and in 375m ignore a left forking gravel track but in another 35m do fork left along a second gravel track (this is just before a prominent four-way junction visible ahead). In 40m cross a broad gravel track and continue in a northerly direction through **North Long Hills**.
31. In 370m bear right with the track, ignoring several grassy paths into the **Whitehouse Plain** on the left, in 160m cross a drainage channel and turn left with the gravel track, ignoring any grassy paths into the plain to the right (in the general direction of Loughton).
32. The track now rises through **Hill Wood**, and more steeply than in previous sections, as you close in on the watershed to the River Roding catchment, 800m away. En route you can glimpse some car parks away to the right through the trees and eventually turn right with the track to pass **Gate 83** and cross the busy **Cross Roads** a little to the right. **The Original Tea Hut** is visible away to the right along the road.
33. You pass **Gate 82** and ignore a faint left turn to continue along a broad gravel forest track, which turns left just before **Epping New Road** (the A104 again). You cross a few streams along the aptly named **Up and Down Ride**, all flowing east into the **Roding Valley**. Ignore a left turning path at one of the brows and then curve to the left with the track, away from the A road for 200m to a three-way junction.
34. For the **late lunch or tea options at High Beach**, continue ahead and in 180m turn left along an engineered gravel path. In 80m turn left at a T-junction and in 65m cross a tarmac drive into the car park by **The King's Oak Hotel**.
35. Turn right to continue the walk route. The track converges with the A road and after going through a metal gate left of a wooden field gate you turn right past **Gate 69**



- to cross it. Stay to the right of **Mount Pleasant** car park and follow a gravel path gently down Mount Pleasant through **Little Monk Wood**. In 550m, about 30m before a T-junction, fork left to in 30m joining the broad gravel **Green Ride**.
36. The track curves to the right (ignore a signposted path to the right to the 'Lost Pond') and descends steeply and in the dip (**Bellinger's Hollow**) crosses the stream draining the **Wake Valley** away to the left. You rise out of it in a northerly direction through **Great Monk Wood** up **Golding's Hill**, crossing a tributary to the stream from the right and ignoring a signposted path to the right to 'Golding's Hill Ponds'.
37. In 750m pass **Gate 47** and cross Golding's Hill (road) to continue to the right of the Great Monk Wood/Broadstrood car park. The track turns left then right to descend to a crossing of another stream and a following steep re-ascend. In 420m from the crossing at the top of the rise, you turn left at a T-junction with **The Ditches Ride**.
38. You gently rise along the ridge of **Jack's Hill** to in 650m pass **Gate 53** by Jack's Hill car park. You cross Jack's Hill (road) and go through the **Long Running** car park. Pass **Gate 29** and ignore a right turning forest track to continue in a northerly direction along the **Green Ride**, with an earth bank on the left through a more lightly wooded area, with some patches of bracken and water-filled hollows.
39. You veer a little to the right and after 450m along the Green Ride you curve more markedly to the right. In 180m you find an info panel 25m away to the left at the outer ditch and the bank of the **Ambresbury Banks Fort**, one of many Iron Age forts along the boundary of the settlement areas of the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni tribes.
40. You go through several shallow dips and cross minor streams in their bottoms and in 750m continue ahead at a staggered junction. Rise gently through **Epping Thicks** and in 700m at the end of the forest, with a cricket pitch visible ahead to the left, turn right with the broad track.
41. Pass **Gate 19** and go through the **Forest Side** car park to **Theydon Road** and cross it to turn left along a pavement. The path veers right away from the road past a transformer station and crosses the easterly end of the **M25 Bell Common Tunnel**.
42. Cross **Ivy Chimneys Road** and turn left along its pavement and turn right along **Theydon Road** ('Epping 1'). In 70m you pass **The Forest Gate Inn** on the right, with its **Perky Blenders** coffee kiosk.
43. Continue along **Bell Common** cul-de-sac where Theydon Road turns left and in 500m at the far end of the row of cottages on the right, cross a grassy area to in 30m reach a drive to Hemnall House on the right.
44. For the **tea options in the centre of Epping**, turn left up the drive and in 40m turn right through a grassy area parallel to the High Street on the left. In 200m continue along Hemnall Street at a bend. In 230m turn left along Half Moon Lane

to then turn right along the very busy High Street. You pass **The Duke of Wellington** en route to the junction with Station Road 350m away, where you find the **Dada Café** a little to the right. **The George & Dragon, The Black Lion and The Funky Monk** can all be found further along the High Street. Turn right down Station Road and in 500m turn right down Station Approach for the Underground Station 150m away.

45. Cross the drive and in a small grassy area between shrub islands, turn right and in 40m enter a larger meadow by a wooden bench and cross it downhill to its far left lower corner 130m away. Join a gravel-and-earth footpath joining from the left and bear right along it, slightly uphill.
46. In 30m bear left where another path joins from the right and keep left along this path, ignoring paths to the right into a sloping meadow. You have shrubs on the left then a small wood and in 175m some garden fences.
47. At a T-junction with **Western Avenue**, a residential road, turn left and curve to the right with it, enjoying some views into the **Roding Valley** between houses ahead. Turn left along a pavement separated by a hedge from **Centre Drive** and in 60m cross **The Crescent** and continue along Centre Drive. You cross a bus stop on the left and then **Woodland Grove** on the right.
48. **[!]** In another 35m turn right along an **easy-to-miss tarmac path** with a signpost for the station half-hidden in a hedge. Follow the path down, to the left, and to the right, to **Epping Underground Station**.

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