The Forest Way

A 25 mile walk between the forests of Epping and Hatfield.
Epping Forest

Epping Forest is a substantial part of the former Royal Forest of Waltham and is home to some beautiful trees. Many of the trees you will see have been POLLARDED. This is a form of woodland management which dates back to at least Anglo-Saxon times. Approximately every 15 years the trees would be cut to a height of 2 – 5 metres. The branches lopped off could be used by local Commoners for fuel, fencing etc. and new shoots would sprout out of reach of grazing cattle and deer. The right of Commoners to lop wood from the Forest ceased with the Epping Forest Act of 1878. The pollards have now been left uncut for over 100 years and their huge crowns cast deep shade over much of the once rich woodland floor. This shading effect means that plants such as primroses and butchers broom are becoming increasing rare.

Stages of Pollarding

Before cutting  After cutting  1 year after cutting
The Forest Way is clearly signposted and waymarked in both directions. These together with the guide book should make the walk easy to follow.

Follow the Waymarks

Follow the special Forest Way fingerposts and plaques. The plaques are bright green and unique to the Forest Way in Essex.

Look out for directional waymarker arrows on posts, stiles, gates and fingerposts. These indicate the direction to follow. Three different types of directional arrow are used:

- **Plain yellow** – used on official public footpaths.
- **Plain blue** – used on official public bridleways. Look out for cyclists and horse riders.
- **Plain red** – used on official public byways – look out for motor vehicles as well as horses and cyclists.

**Distance and time taken.**
25 miles (40km) allow 3½ hours if you intend to tackle it in a day.

**Going.**
Slightly hilly. May be soft after rain. Wear strong boots, shoes or wellies. Keep to the paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Please take care in crossing all roads.

**Ordnance Survey Maps.**
1:25 000 sheet TQ49/59. Pathfinder Series – Loughton and Harold Hill.
1:25 000 sheet TL41/51. Pathfinder Series – Harlow (North) and Hatfield Heath.

1:25 000 sheet TL42/52. Pathfinder Series – Bishop’s Stortford and Stansted Airport.

**Parking.**
Loughton Tube Station and Hatfield Forest.

**Dogs.**
Keep dogs on a lead where stock are grazing. Remember the countryside is a place of work.

**Transport.**
The Forest Way is well served by Public Transport at both ends of the walk.

Loughton – To get to and from Loughton Tube Station use the London Underground Central Line. The service operates 7 days a week and the last train from Loughton into London leaves at just after 11pm. For details of fare and service enquiries telephone 0171-222 1234.

Hatfield Forest – Buses run in both an easterly and westerly direction along Takeley Street. Buses running eastwards go to Stansted Airport and Bishop’s Stortford. From both of these destinations there are buses and trains to other parts of Essex and back to London. Travelling eastwards buses go to Great Dunmow, Braintree, Chelmsford and Southend. For bus timetables contact Essex Busline on (0345) 000333.

For information on rail services, telephone (0345) 484935.

A 25 mile walk following the footpaths and ancient green lanes between the unique forests of Epping and Hatfield. The walk meanders through gently rolling countryside interspersed with isolated farmsteads and tiny hamlets of bygone age. You don’t need to be an experienced walker – the route guide is easy to follow and there are signposts and waymarks to help you.

You can walk the Forest Way in a weekend – or a day if you’re keen – but why rush? Take your time, enjoy the scenery and indulge in some fresh air, exercise and Essex hospitality.

‘Ways Through Essex’ is an Essex County Council Project supported by the Countryside Commission.
A characteristic feature of the landscape is the network of medieval timber-framed buildings, many of which were built in the 17th century. The village is surrounded by lush green countryside, with an abundance of wildlife and birdlife. The Matching Wood is a particularly beautiful area, with a variety of flora and fauna.

Matching Wood: Matching Wood is a large and ancient woodland, covering over 800 acres of land. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is home to a rich variety of plants and animals. The wood is a popular spot for nature lovers and those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life.

Matching Hall: Matching Hall is a historic house, built in the 17th century. It is a Grade I listed building and is now owned by the National Trust. The hall is open to the public and is a popular visitor attraction. The grounds of Matching Hall are also open to the public and are a beautiful example of the English countryside.
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**Follow the Waymarks**

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**Distance and time taken.**

25 miles (40km) allow 9½ hours if you intend to tackle it in a day.

**Going.**

Slightly hilly. May be soft after rain. Wear strong boots, shoes or wellies. Keep to the paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Please take care in crossing all roads.

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**Parking.**

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Ways through Essex is an Essex County Council Project supported by the Countryside Commission. Our aim is to help you enjoy the Essex countryside using the County’s network of footpaths, bridleways and byways. For more information contact Ways through Essex at the County Planning Department, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1LF. Telephone: (01245) 437647.

Ways through Essex would like to thank the National Trust, the Conservators of Epping Forest and Epping Forest Countrycare for their assistance with this project.
Hatfield Forest

Hatfield Forest covers an area of over 1000 acres and is thought to be the most complete surviving example of a small medieval Royal Hunting Forest. In the 12th Century the Forest was in crown ownership and was used by the King as a hunting ground for fallow deer. The Forest remained in Crown ownership until 1238. Since then the Forest has passed through many generations of landowners but despite this most has survived in its earlier form.

In Hatfield Forest you will see a form of woodland management known as COPPICING. Trees are cut close to the ground every 8 – 25 years depending on the type of tree and the timber required. This causes the stump to send up fresh shoots which are left to grow for several years. These poles are then harvested for fencing, firewood, charcoal and other products. Newly coppiced woodland was protected from grazing animals by woodbanks with fences on top. Examples of these banks can still be seen today in Hatfield Forest.

Stages of Coppicing

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