

# Heartwood Forest Access Guide

February 2019

This access guide does not contain personal opinions or recommendations regarding the accessibility of this forest but aims to accurately describe the access to, from and around Heartwood Forest and the facilities available both on-site and locally. Please bear in mind that accessibility is affected by current and historic weather conditions to your visit and by the impact of forestry work carried out by and on the behalf of The Woodland Trust. The safety of our visitors, volunteers and staff is paramount to us so we ask you to follow any on-site guidance during your visit.

## Welcome

We, the Woodland Trust, invite everyone to enjoy Heartwood Forest – an 858 acre woodland creation project – which is now the largest new continuous native forest in England.

Heartwood Forest, in Sandridge, Hertfordshire, is a place where everyone can find space, peace, wildlife and miles of beautiful woodland to explore.

Our journey began in 2008 when we purchased the land, and since then over 40,000 volunteers have helped us by planting trees on what was mostly arable farmland. Today the forest is home to a native arboretum and a community orchard, as well as wildflower meadows, hedgerows, and protected ancient woodland. Over 600,000 trees have been planted with the last tree going in the ground in March 2018.

All visitors are welcome at Heartwood with free access and parking, including five designated spaces for blue badge holders.

Further details about Heartwood Forest, volunteering opportunities and the Woodland Trust are available on the [Heartwood website](https://heartwood.woodlandtrust.org.uk) (<https://heartwood.woodlandtrust.org.uk>). If you have any queries or require any further information please contact [heartwood@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:heartwood@woodlandtrust.org.uk).

## Contents

1. Pre-arrival information
2. Getting to Heartwood Forest
  - a. By train
  - b. By bus
  - c. By car
  - d. By bike
3. Arrival and car park
  - a. Welcome hub
4. Nearest facilities
5. Entrances to Heartwood
6. Paths and gates
7. Walking routes
8. Additional access information
9. Contact details

## 1. Pre arrival

Heartwood Forest is close to St. Albans, on either side of the B651 between Sandridge and Wheathampstead Village. At 858 acres, there are multiple entrances to the site all linking to either bridleways, public or permissive footpaths.

If you are visiting Heartwood Forest for the first time, we recommend you use the main car park entrance so that you can view our information boards and site map. Alternatively, if you are in Sandridge, you can follow one of the recommended self-guided routes from local businesses (see 'Walking Routes' below).

## 2. Getting to Heartwood Forest

### a. By train

Regular trains run to nearby St Albans City station which is approximately 4km (2.5 miles) away from Heartwood Forest (Station Way, St Albans, AL1 5HE).


Services running to this station include Bedford to Brighton via East Croydon, Luton to Sutton via Hackbridge and Luton to Sutton via Wimbledon. Check travel websites to get up to date journey information before departure. For information on train times please contact National Rail on 03457 484950 or visit the [National Rail](#) website.

From St Albans City station you can walk, cycle or use the bus service into Sandridge. In Sandridge village there is a public bridleway that runs adjacent to Sandridgebury Lane off the main High Street – this is the easiest way to reach the main entrance at Heartwood if you are not in a vehicle. Once in Sandridge, you also have the option to visit one of the many local businesses which have recommended walking routes into Heartwood (see 'Self-Guided Routes').

### b. By bus


There are several options for travelling by bus to Heartwood Forest. The recommended route depends on where you are visiting us from, but there are bus services from St Albans City train station (653, 657), St Albans (653, 304) and Harpenden (657). If you are planning to travel by bus please check travel websites to determine the best route and times and plan ahead for your journey. For more information on bus services please visit the [Traveline](#) website.

Once you have arrived in Sandridge village there is a public bridleway that runs adjacent to Sandridgebury Lane off the main High Street – this is the easiest way to reach the main entrance at Heartwood from the village if you are not in a vehicle. Once in Sandridge, you also have the option to visit one of the many local businesses which have recommended walking routes into Heartwood (see ‘Self-Guided Walking Routes’).

**c. By car** 

If travelling by car to Heartwood Forest, the nearest post code is AL4 9DQ. If following a sat nav, this postcode will take you to the B561 – the main entrance to the site is shown by a brown ‘Heartwood Forest’ visitor attraction sign on this road. The B561 is the main road running from Sandridge to Wheathampstead, and if you are arriving at Heartwood Forest for the first time we recommend you use the main entrance into the car park.

The track to the car park has a 10mph speed limit and speed bumps. The car park track is a single track which also features clearly indicated passing points to allow vehicles to pass safely. Please take note of the right of way clearly indicated at each point to allow safe and efficient transport along the track.

**d. By bike** 

There are multiple cycling routes to Heartwood Forest from the local area. If travelling to Heartwood by bicycle, take extra care along the B651 as this is a frequently used road with fast approaching vehicles and some narrow turns. Once you reach the turning into Heartwood indicated by the tourist sign there is a permissive bridleway on your left that runs parallel to the road and leads to the car park. On arriving at the car park there are several bike stands where you are welcome to store a bike.

### 3. Arrival and car park

The free car park at Heartwood Forest provides parking for 55 cars, with 5 designated for blue badge holders. These spaces are clearly marked with a blue badge logo as below.



There are no time restrictions on length of parking for visitors to the site, allowing you plenty of time to explore at your own leisure. Just be sure to check the car park closing times shown below.

Please keep your dog on a lead when in the car park and car park field.



The car park was resurfaced with tarmac in January 2017. The parking bays are a gravel retention system, where the gravel compacts into plastic mesh to provide a firm surface.



An additional overflow car park is used on an ad hoc basis for events and exceptionally busy days – this is flat but the surface is grass and therefore in adverse weather conditions could potentially become muddy or waterlogged.

Eight bike stands are available for use during your visit. They are located in front of the visitor welcome and information point.

We don't accept responsibility for any vehicle or bicycle left in the Heartwood Forest car park and we politely remind visitors not to leave any valuables on display.

The car park opens at 8am every day of the year. Closing times for the car park are listed below. The closing time is also clearly displayed on arrival in the car park for your convenience.

Car park opening hours	Opening time
1 January - 28 February	8am - 5pm
1 March - 26 March	8am - 6pm
27 March - 30 September	8am - 8pm
1 October - 30 October	8am - 7pm
31 October - 31 December	8am - 5pm

### a. Welcome hub

On arrival in the car park you will see our welcome hub, as pictured below. This is a helpful resource for new and returning visitors and features a site map, recommended things to see and do, and a community notice board as well as information about Heartwood's creation.



#### 4. Nearest facilities

We want everyone to enjoy their experience at Heartwood Forest. Due to the size of the site, you may find the following information useful when planning your day.

There are some moderate slopes between Heartwood Forest and Sandridge Village (gradients between 5% and 12%).

#### Toilets

The nearest public toilets are in the village of Sandridge (AL4 9DA). There are toilets adjacent to Sandridge Village Hall, in the car park, including an accessible toilet (RADAR key required). There are no baby changing facilities available.

There is ramp access to the village hall (to the left hand side of the main entrance). The width of the ramp is in excess of 4ft.

#### Food and drink

There are several pubs and a tearoom in the Sandridge area. For individual information about each pub or to request accessibility information please see the relevant websites or contact them directly.

[The Rose and Crown](#) – 24 High Street, Sandridge, AL4 9DA

[The Queen's Head](#) – Sandridge, AL4 9DA

[John Bunyan](#) – Coleman Green, Wheathampstead, AL4 8ES

[Heartwood Tearooms](#) – 27 High Street, Sandridge, AL4 9DD

There is also a local store in the village providing food and beverages:

The Old Village Store, 29 High Street, Sandridge, AL4 9DD



## 5. Entrances to Heartwood

There are multiple entrances to Heartwood Forest. All entrances onto the bridleways and hard surfaced paths are free of gates and there are no stiles present on the site. However, the entrances from the bridleways into Heartwood do have horse hops. Kissing gates are located as indicated on the map below. All kissing gates are latched, with a width of 1.5m.



There are three sets of steps through the site:

If entering Langley Wood from the Eastern entrance (along the public bridleway) there are seven steps leading to a kissing gate.



If entering Langley Wood from the Western entrance there are two steps present.

If entering Heartwood Forest from Nomansland Common, there are six steps leading to a kissing gate, and a slope leading onto the bridleway, with a horse hop.



## 6. Paths and gates

There is a network of over 20km of paths to explore at Heartwood Forest. The paths are a variety of surfaces and gradients designed to encourage all visitors to access and enjoy the site. Three public footpaths, two of which are also bridleways, cross the site with public rights of way and permissive paths being in good condition.

The site is well drained; however there may be some muddy sections in winter and bad weather – particularly where ‘desire lines’ (unofficial pathways) have been created by visitors. We ask that all visitors travel only on official footpaths or bridleways as indicated by the onsite map and leaflet.

The Woodland Trust aims to manage all main footpaths to allow a minimum width of 3m.

### **Hard surfaced route**

A hard surfaced path has been created with direct access from Heartwood Forest car park. The path has a firm/compacted surface as can be seen below. The route meets DDA standards as seen below, with a consistent width of at least 1.5 m and a gradient no greater than 1:12. The slopes are however at lengths of up to 500m.



*Hard surfaced path*



The map below shows this path indicated as 'Surfaced all ability route'.



This path now extends into and around Langley Wood to allow improved access into the ancient woodland. In total around 600 m of extra surfaced path was added into Langley Wood and this is most easily accessed half way along the bridleway.



## Obstacles

You will not encounter stiles, bridges, cattle grids or boardwalks. However as a woodland we are subject to weather conditions so paths may become muddy in places and therefore pose an obstacle.

The only physical obstacles that you may encounter are:

**Steps** – there are some small steps at an entrance to the site from Nomansland Common (see photograph above). A slope is also present leading onto the bridleway with a horse hop.

There are also some small steps leading from a bridleway into one of the entrances to Langley Wood and from the Heartwood Hike western entrance. These steps can be avoided by continuing up the bridleway (in the direction away from the Heartwood Forest car park) where you can enter the wood at an alternative entrance point.

**Gates** – kissing gates are used widely throughout the site and are latched with a width of 1.5m.

**Public road crossings** – due to the size of the site, you may choose to take a route which requires you to cross a public road. This does not affect visitors who follow one of the waymarked routes. If choosing to cross a public road, please use caution.

## 7. Walking routes

There are several self-guided walking routes available at Heartwood Forest. Currently all of these routes are graded as 'Easy'.



This means that the routes hold the following properties:

**Gradient** – Maximum 12%

**Surface materials/condition** – Generally a smooth, firm surface. Well drained and maintained with minimum loose material

**Obstacles** – Minimum use of steps. Free of narrow gates or gaps and always itemised in terrain description

**Useable width** – Generally 1200mm. Short sections (<20m) down to 800mm

**Distance limits** – Total distance of whole route does not exceed 8km/5 miles (returning to start point)



**Magical Meander**

This meandering path through Puddler's Wood is a great place to see the ancient woodland trees and the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows. It is a great place to see the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows.

A network of hard paths and greenways will be built to provide a long gentle slope in long gentle slope.

2.4km / 1.5 miles  
Allow 1.5 hr

**Wildlife Wander**

This path is a great place to see the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows. It is a great place to see the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows.

The path follows a hedge and green spaces that are great for watching the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows.

4.5km / 2.8 miles  
Allow 1.5 hr

**Heartwood Hike**

This walk is the longest of the three walks. It is a great place to see the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows. It is a great place to see the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows.

Most of this route is on grass and footpaths that are great for watching the many wildflowers that grow in the meadows.

4.3km / 2.7 miles  
Allow 1.5 hr

## Waymarked routes

Additional access information for each route is as follows:

### Magical Meander

**Grade:** Easy

**Distance:** 3.4km/1.5

miles **Time:** 1 hour

**Terrain:** A mixture of hard path and grass tracks that become muddy in winter (boots recommended). Includes a long gentle slope.

### Wildlife Wander

**Grade:** Easy

**Distance:** 4km/2.5

miles **Time:** 1 ½ hours

**Terrain:** The walk begins on a hard path but takes you onto grass tracks that can become muddy in the winter (boots recommended). Includes a long gentle slope and kissing gates.

### Heartwood Hike

**Grade:** Easy

**Distance:** 4.3km/2.7

miles

**Time:** 1 ½ hours

**Terrain:** Most of this route is on grass and bridleways that can get muddy in winter. Includes short slopes of gradients up to 1:8, kissing gates and steps into Langley Wood. Boots recommended.

The above routes are way marked using colour coded arrows as illustrated below.



## Non-waymarked routes from Sandridge

Several local businesses in Sandridge display a map outside their entrance, with a suggested route to walk into the forest.

Please note that these routes are **not** waymarked. The information for the starting points, length and distance for each route is outlined below:

[The Rose and Crown](#) – 24 High Street, Sandridge, AL4 9DA

The Rose and Crown Trail

Grade: Easy

Distance: 3.2km/2 miles Time:  
40-50 minutes

[The Queen's Head](#) – Sandridge, AL4 9DA

The Queens Head Trail

Grade: Easy

Distance: 3.2km/2 miles  
Time: 40-50 minutes



[JTB Butchers](#) – Sandridgebury Lane, Sandridgebury Farm, St Albans, AL3 6JB

JTB Butchers Trail

Grade: Easy

Distance: 3.2km/2 miles

Time: 40-50 minutes

## 8. Additional access information

### Benches

There are a number of benches around the woodland, with the closest 100 m from the car park. Follow the gentle slope from the car park towards the bridleway/scout hut/ Langley wood and before you reach the gate the bench is on your left.

### Dogs

Dogs are welcome guests at Heartwood Forest. The vast majority of the site allows dogs off lead – however there are designated areas of the site for dogs to be kept on leads for their safety and to protect native wildlife. In particular, we ask that you keep your dog on a lead in the first field by the car park and the over flow field, our ancient woodlands and in the long grass during nesting bird season. We ask that you walk no more than four dogs at once.

## Horses

Horses are welcome on both public and permissive bridleways throughout the site. To help avoid damage to the ground and plants, we ask riders to keep to the bridleways at all times and try to avoid any waterlogged paths to help prevent further erosion or widening. Horses are not permitted on footpaths, including the permissive paths through the ancient woodland. Horse riders should be aware that the bridleways are also used by pedestrians and cyclists. Bridleways and footpaths are clearly signed throughout the site.

## Bicycles

Bicycles are welcome on all of the public and permissive bridleways at Heartwood Forest. Cyclist should be aware that the bridleways are also used by pedestrians and horse riders. Footpaths are not accessible for bicycles and horses and are intended only for pedestrian use, including those through the ancient woodland. Bridleways and footpaths are clearly signed throughout the site.

## Livestock

In some areas of the site which are clearly signed, there may be grazing livestock present at certain times of the year in neighbouring fields. We ask for dogs to be kept under close control when nearby to these areas.

## Medical care

While there may be Woodland Trust employees or volunteers on site who are trained in First Aid (particularly during events), if you require immediate medical attention we advise you to visit the nearest hospital.

Urgent Care:

- St Albans City Hospital, Waverley Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 5PN (2.4 miles)
- Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Howlands, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 4HQ (4.9 miles)

A + E department:

- Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane, Barnet Hertfordshire EN5 3DJ (10 miles)

- Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0HB (10.3 miles)
- Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4AB (10.4 miles)
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital, Lewsey Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU4 0DZ (10.7 miles)

## 9. Contact details

Further details about Heartwood Forest, volunteering opportunities and the Woodland Trust are available at [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk). This access guide is updated biannually by the site team. If you have any queries, require this document in large print or in an alternate format, please contact us at [heartwood@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:heartwood@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or phone 0330 333 3300, quoting Heartwood Forest. Alternatively, you can write to us at:

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

We welcome suggestions on ways in which we could improve your experience of our visitors.