

High Lodge, Thetford Forest Accessibility Statement

Introduction

High Lodge, Thetford Forest is cared for and managed by the Forestry Commission and attracts around 400,000 people per year. As visitor numbers increase, the site endeavours to develop and improve to create new activities and features for visitors of all ages and capabilities to enjoy. On site, there is cycling and walking trails, play equipment, a café, cycle shop and Go Ape tree top adventure. More information on these and other attractions is available below.

Situated in the Brecks; an area covering 393 sq miles and spanning the border of Norfolk and Suffolk, it is steeped with history and full of wildlife, making it a popular destination to visit. High Lodge has been a member of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme for several years and the recommended visit length is 4 hours.

Arrival and Car Parking

The location of High Lodge is situated less than six miles from Thetford and one mile from Brandon on the B1107. It is accessible from the A11 and is 36 miles from Norwich and 37 miles from Cambridge. The postcode is IP27 OAF and brown tourist signs are present on the main roads. If you are planning to arrive on foot, please be advised that there is no designated walking or cycling route from Thetford or Brandon.



Large banners with clear signage entice and direct you into High Lodge from the roadside; advertising the different adventure activities on site.

There is a Site Entry fee applicable to visit High Lodge and prices are shown on the large banner at the entrance. Site Entry fee's are charged per vehicle and cover site services and facilities, which includes parking. Further information can also be found on the High Lodge website: www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge or to speak to a member of staff at the Information Point, telephone on 0300 067 4400.

Blue Badge holders do not receive discounted parking as the Site Entry fee covers the use of the park and its facilities.

There are electronic ticket barriers on the entrance road with clear on screen instructions. There is also a 'help' button should you need help. Payment is

made on site, at the end of your visit and tickets can be paid for at the Information Point or Pay Station, which is located to the Information Point. Accessible car parking spaces are available and are shown on the banners that direct you to either the 'Badger' or 'Adder' car parks. The car park surfaces are typically firm earth and stone. There are high level floodlights within both of these car parks. The Information Point and toilets are approx 50m away and are connected by smooth tarmac pathways, which are around 2m wide. There are no steps on site, however there are shallow ramps that lead into the Café and Bike Art cycle shop and there are drainage gully's that should be crossed with care. These are approximately 2-3cm deep. Forestry Commission staff are available to assist and give guidance. Please ask at the Information Point.

Train station and Taxi information

If you are arriving by train, the nearest train stations are Brandon, which is 3.3 miles away or Thetford at 6.2 miles away. Brandon train station is not staffed and the car park is located on the side of Platform 1. Each platform has low level access and there is a ramp to access Platform 1, however there is a bridge to cross over to Platform 2. Accessible car park spaces are located in the car park. For a map of Brandon Train station please download from:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/SME/html/NRE_BND/plan.html?rtnloc=BND

Thetford train station has Accessible car parking at the front of the station. The ticket office is accessible for wheelchair users via a ramp from Platform 1; however a ticket machine is also located on this platform.

If approaching from the front of the station there are steps that lead up into the ticket office. An option to use an induction loop is located within the office. Staff can assist but only during the times when the station is staffed not unless pre-booked in advance.

For Thetford train station map please download from:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/SME/html/NRE_TTF/plan.html?rtnloc=TTF

National Rail helpline contact: 0800 028 2878

For train journey info and assisted travel please contact: 0345 600 7245 (option 4) if calling from a mobile.

Local taxi companies are located outside of Thetford train station and Brandon has local taxi services where you can arrange your travel to High Lodge. Details of the nearest taxis are shown on Thetford station information poster or see listed below. Local taxi companies will drop off and collect from High Lodge and Site Entry fees will apply and can be paid for on site at the Information Point, note there are no designated drop off points at High Lodge but the Badger and Adder car parks are the closest and best options.

Border Cars -	01842 814488 – Pre booking advised (Brandon)
Weeting Cars -	01842 810436 (Brandon)
Prestige Cars -	07880 734512 (Thetford)
A1 Cars -	01842 755 555 (Thetford)
Goddard's -	01842 754000 (Thetford)
Bob's taxi's and	
Minibus hire -	01842 769 086 (Thetford)

Alternatively visit - www.traintaxi.co.uk

Main Reception and Public Toilets

The Information Point is the main reception. The telephone number is 0300 067 4400. Access across the site is all at ground level and there are no doors to the Information Point. Instead, staff service is provided through a large open window. There is a low level counter making it easier to assist and interact with wheelchair users and younger visitors during their visit. A hearing loop is also available. The area is well lit with fluorescent lights above and on the side of the building. Staff members are happy to assist visitors on request.

Information on the site, maps and leaflets are available from this point. The Forestry Commission will consider all requests to make publications available in alternative formats; however this would need to be arranged in advance of visiting the site. The Diversity team can be contacted on 0300 067 5046 or diversity@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Site Entry payments can also be made here with cash and card payments accepted. All day tickets can be purchased in advance online at -

www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge and then the 'planning your visit' page.

There are no ATM cash machines on site; however Bike Art, the Café and Go Ape! do have credit card facilities.

Annual membership can also be purchased at the Information Point, this is called the 'Discovery Pass' and is currently priced at £58 for a year (correct as of September 2015). This allows unlimited access to High Lodge by one car and includes local and national offers. There are also membership schemes for minibuses and coaches. For more information please call the number above.

High Lodge also offers the free use of a mobility scooter, powered wheelchair and self propelled manual wheelchair, which was kindly donated by Friends of Thetford Forest (www.fotf.org.uk). It is recommended to pre-book in advance.

Details of how to book and further information can be found on the High Lodge website under 'Planning your visit', - 'facilities for the less able.'

(www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge)

Tarmac paths leave the Information Point, linking the Café, patio, Bike Art (cycle hire and shop) and Go Ape (tree top adventure) together, which makes wheelchair and especially mobility scooter access easier. As you leave the patio and explore the Wildplay area, pathways become more uneven and are typical forest tracks, which at times can be very wet and muddy and access can be difficult.

Toilet facilities are located at either side of the Information Point; both male and female toilets have low level counters, lever taps and step up stools, which can help all ages and capabilities to use the facilities. There are hand rails and baby change facilities in one cubicle in each set of toilets. The toilets are well lit by overhead fluorescent tubes.

There is also a 24hr toilet, located next to the female toilet, which has a wide access manual opening door (80cm opening). Inside there is an alarm cord, lever tap, and wide handle flusher, vertical and horizontal hand rails next to the toilet and sink and a baby change facility. Staff are happy to help; please ask at the Information Point. The toilet is 48cm from floor to seat and there is a space of 80cm to the right of the toilet for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. The height of the sink is 70cm. This toilet has an overhead small fluorescent light.

Toilet facilities are also available within the café, with one Accessible toilet (70cm opening) with horizontal and vertical hand rails next to the toilet, lever taps and a baby change. This toilet has an overhead small fluorescent light. There are manual opening doors and shallow ramps in to the Café. The flooring is mostly wooden and non slip lino throughout the toilets. The height of the toilet seat is 48cm and the sink is 76cm.



Attractions

With several attractions, High Lodge is an ideal place to visit with your family for a day out. Attractions include:

Cycle trails: There are four trails ranging from 3.5 miles to 11 miles.

The **Shepherd trail** is identified for families and beginners and is classified as a forest road, which are wide open tracks consisting of firm earth and stone suitable for bikes, tagalongs, trailers and child seats. The gradient is mostly flat and the length is 5 miles with a short cut option reducing it to 3.5 miles.

The **Poacher trail** is identified as moderate with mainly open trails but has some single track sections. There are variable surfaces, ranging from earth and stone, roots and sandier conditions. Some cycling experience is recommended with a good level of fitness. The gradient has a mix of flat and inclined sections and the length is 10 miles with a short cut option reducing it to around 5 miles.

The **Lime Burner** and **Beater trail** are identified as difficult and challenging and are both single, narrow tracks. Surfaces are mainly firm earth tracks with some stone sections with tricky descents and drop offs. The length of the Lime Burner is 10 miles and not recommended for those under 16 years of age. The Beater trail is 11 miles with a 6 mile short loop and is not recommended for those under the age of 12.

High Lodge also has a **Pump track**, which is a closed loop circuit of around 500m with rolling features and tightly bermed corners. This track is identified for those looking to build up their off road cycling skills and confidence.

Walking trails: There are four trails ranging from 1 to 6 miles

The **Pine trail** is a short, gentle amble through giant pine trees. This wide, flat trail mainly consisting of earth and stone tracks is suitable for mobility scooters and some manual wheelchairs. Trail length is 1 mile.

The **Fir trail** is a longer route that ventures further into the forest. The ground conditions vary from surfaced sections to typical forest conditions of earth and exposed roots, which at times can be wet and muddy. The trail narrows in places and gives the opportunity to find some quiet spots where wildlife can be seen. The trail length is 3 miles and is flat.

The **Beech trail** connects to the Fir trail as an option to extend your walk by a further 3 miles to 6 miles in total. This trail takes you through Risbeth Wood and passes Thetford Warren Lodge, built by the Prior of Thetford in 1400.

The **Nature trail** is a 'there and back' half mile route (1 mile in total), which finishes with a hide that is accessed by a wooden ramp. The hide offers peace and quiet and wildlife can be seen, with many species of birds, butterflies and insects often present. Look out for the four species of deer found in Thetford forest; Muntjac, Fallow, Roe and Red deer. The ground is mostly forest conditions with large grassed sections that can get very wet and muddy at times. Access with a manual wheelchair is challenging but most mobility scooters can cope. Ask at the Information Point before setting out.

Activity Trails:

The current Activity trail is the 'Superworm Trail' (as of September 2015) and is a self lead trail that is signposted from the Wildplay entrance, which helps explore the play areas. The trail has a mixture of surfaces from earth and stone to softer forest conditions with some exposed roots. Activity packs are available to buy from the Information Point and the pack includes an illustrated book and leaflet that relates to the interpretation panels dotted along the trail. The trail is aimed at 3 to 8 year olds and is due to end in November 2015 and be replaced by a new themed trail soon after. Check our website for updates.

Wildplay:

The entrance for the Wildplay area is approx 50m from the patio and main thoroughfare. The entrance is identified by a large overhead banner and there are brightly coloured map boards and information detailing where pieces of equipment are located and what to expect. Within this area there are over 50 different pieces of play equipment with a number of them suitable for those who are less able. Situated not far from the café, the Wildplay area is easily accessible by a tarmac path and short section across firm earth. Once within the play area the surface is mostly earth and soft forest ground, which can be wet and muddy at times. There are some exposed roots as well as some surfaced areas, especially on the Sculpture Play trail. However, this can also be wet and affected by leaves and debris. This trail is accessible by mobility scooters and some manual wheelchairs. Assistance may be required to overcome some sections.

For the less able, the 'birds nest swing' is just one piece of the play equipment that can be used. This is located close to the Pyramid slide. The 'Giant Sea-saw' is suitable for those who are more experienced and adventurous. This piece of equipment moves when weight is placed on either end of the platform. When one side of the sea-saw is lowered, wheelchair users are able to use the large ramp to move up, over and across. Assistance is advised to enjoy this piece of equipment.

The Sound Trail can be found at the furthest point from the Information Point (approx 350m). A variety of musical instruments can be found on the trail, such as a xylophone, sound cushions, windpipes and dance chimes, with the later two items both at ground level. This multi-sensory trail is an interactive and engaging part of the Wildplay collection. Adults and children can explore and be creative experimenting with sight, touch, and sound. The trail condition is mostly firm earth and stone and access from the Information Point can be achieved by a combination of tarmac paths and stone surfaced tracks without having to enter on to wet, muddy tracks that may be present within the main Wildplay area.

Bike Art:

This is where you can hire bikes and purchase items from the well stocked shop with a good range of cycle products. Bike Art is approx 100m away from the Information Point and connected by smooth tarmac paths. Seating is available within the vicinity. The access to Bike Art is via a wide open gateway, which leads on to a hard stoned yard. Alternatively the shop can be accessed via the courtyard where the smooth tarmac surface continues. The doors are manual opening and inside the flooring is wood laminate with short pile carpeted mats across the doorways.

Bike Art offers regular cycles for hire as well as a small range of up to seven different specially adapted bicycles and equipment for those who are less able. Friends of Thetford Forest helped to provide the funding to purchase this specialised equipment so that visitors are able to choose and hire different bikes suitable for their needs. One of the most popular bikes suitable for wheelchair use would be the 'Van Raam Velo Plus'. This tricycle has a platform for a wheelchair located at the front of the bike and pedalled by an adult at the back. It is suitable for any age wheelchair user and is best used on paved surfaces and the Shepherd trail.

The 'Van Raam O-Pair small' is suitable for ages ranging from 5-15 year olds and an adult rider is required to pedal the bike. This bike is also fitted with a smaller seat and includes an adjustable side supports, shoulder straps and head support. For details on how to hire please contact on 01842 810 090 or visit the Bike Art website - www.bikeartthetford.co.uk

Go Ape!:

Go Ape! is around 150m away from the Information Point beyond the Café and is connected by smooth tarmac paths. Seating is available within this area.

This popular course attracts a number of visitors to site. Go Ape! Tree Top Adventure is a physical and challenging course that requires participants to wear a harness and then climb, overcome different obstacles and use zip wires. It takes between 2 -3 hours to complete. This course can accommodate individuals who may be less able or have mental health needs. It is recommended to visit the course prior to making a booking. It is important that the participant can lift them-selves and move around the course. For visitors who have learning difficulties or are visual impaired there is an option for two responsible adults to guide or supervise a participant around the course. Visitors with prosthetic limbs have taken part on the Go Ape! course and any additional needs can be accommodated with no extra cost of the equipment. Tree Top Junior is another shorter option to accommodate younger participants or those who may not have the fitness to complete the larger course.

Go Ape! Forest Segway is another product that can facilitate customers with special needs. These electric motorised machines with two wheels are ridden through the forest on specific trails. Training and partial supervision is provided. For more details on all the Go Ape! products please visit their website under the heading 'what is Go Ape' then 'Can I Go Ape'. There you will find the heading 'Do you have any special needs'.

Catering:

The Café and Pantry is located between Bike Art and Go Ape! and smooth tarmac paths connect the Café from the Badger and Adder car parks. Outdoor seating is provided with wooden benches suitable for wheelchair users. The table height is 70cm with leg clearance of 66cm. The seat height is 43cm. There are fixed low level seats provided within the courtyard between Bike Art and the Pantry.

The seat height is 50cm. Two large umbrellas provide an undercover eating option. A shallow ramp leads in to the entrance to the Café/Pantry. There are large wooden manual opening doors and the flooring throughout the Café and Pantry is wooden with shallow pile firm door mats at the doorways. The tables and chairs are wooden and the height of the tables is 73cm with leg clearance of 69cm on the round tables and 61cm on the rectangle tables. There are also some soft seats and settees. The seat height of these is 43cm and both have arm rests.

Menus and food service information is displayed by a combination of black boards, plastic signs and wall posters. Staff are happy to assist upon request. The toilets are signposted and located along a corridor wide enough for a mobility scooter or wheelchair. Lighting is provided at high level by typical household light bulbs. Due to the nature of the buildings design (Traditional Suffolk Black Barn) the illumination can appear to be darker than usual at certain times of day/year. Large windows are tinted but still allow daylight in. There is a TV within and subtitles can be asked to be put on.

The Café/Pantry is run by Churchill Catering who offer a range of home made dishes, cakes and refreshments. Gluten free and dairy products are usually catered for and staff are happy to discuss dietary requirements. Food orders are made at the counter and customers then take their purchases to their table. For those who need assistance, table service is provided upon request.

Event catering is offered for a range of bookings, such as weddings, birthday parties and meetings. The Oak Lodge building is often used. This is a separate single level building that is located around 200m away from the Cafe. There is a car park immediately outside Oak Lodge, which is made up of small 'pea shingle' over a hard tarmac surface. The main access/egress is via a low level ramp; however there are two other entrances/exits that require a step up/down of approx 20cm. The floor within is wooden with two small removable door mats. Toilets are provided and the ladies/Accessible toilet has lino flooring and handrails. The door openings are 80cm.

Lighting is provided overhead by typical household light bulbs and fluorescent strip lights in certain rooms.

Outside there are extensive grassed areas to enjoy surrounded by tall beech trees and lime trees, which offer shelter and some degree of privacy.



Supplementary Attractions:

Supplementary attractions are located around the site and operate mainly between March and November on weekends and school holidays; weather permitting. These activities are payable by cash on the day. These include:

Pony rides – provided by Brecks Treks. A short or long guided trek is available on a first come first served basis. Currently, Pony rides are located down towards the Sound Trail, around 300m away from the Information Point. Access is partly by tarmac paths which then lead on to typical forest ground of firm earth and stone. Participants with learning and mental health needs can be catered for. To contact them in advance please call 07939181362 or visit Brecks.treks@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/PonyRidesatHighLodge

Lookout Archery - provides a complete archery experience for beginners to intermediate archers, offering 'have a go' sessions but also welcoming group booking for Birthdays, School visits and family days out. Lookout Archery is located on the main grassed area, directly opposite the Information Point at around 200m away. Access is mainly via the Oak Lodge path, which is approximately 2 metres wide and has 'pea shingle' over tarmac, however the final 50m is across grass that can be wet and bumpy and challenging with a manual wheelchair. All of the instructors actively shoot for local clubs and comply with all aspects of safety and tuition to Grand National Archery Society level. Adult and children bows are provided along with all necessary safety equipment and varying ranged targets. Customers with special needs can be encouraged to have a go; as long as you can hold a bow you can have a go. Visually impaired and blind visitors are able to participate. For more information or to book your group archery experiences you can call 07729 402009 or visit www.facebook.com/Lookout-Archery-534143716622519/timeline/?ref=ts

Highline Adventure - specialise in delivering dynamic, high impact mobile outdoor activities including Mobile Climbing Walls, Mobile Spider Mountain and slide. At least one of these activities is guaranteed at High Lodge subject to weather and availability. Highline is located next to Lookout archery and access is via a smooth tarmac path with the final 30m across grass that can be challenging in a manual wheelchair at times. Visitors with special needs can contact Highline in advance on - 0845 409 1303 or 01553 841830 or E-mail: info@highlineadventure.co.uk

Battlefield Live – is an ideal alternative to Paintballing, where you can enjoy all the excitement and adrenalin rush without the risk of being bruised by a stray paintball pellet. Battlefield Live is located behind the Information Point approximately 150m away and is not connected by an identified pathway. Car parking is available directly outside, subject to time of day/year and the surface is firm earth and stone. The Battlefield Live terrain is played outside on softer forest ground conditions and is played in much the same way as paintball, with various activities available with team mission objectives. The biggest difference between the two sports is the weapons used. Battlefield LIVE weapons do not fire projectiles but instead fire an infrared beam of light that activates sensors fitted to various pieces of your opponents' kit. These flash red indicating a successful hit. The Battlefield LIVE technology is so dynamic it can be played in all weathers and all year round. **Pre-booked sessions only** - phone 0845 680 1970 to check availability, book a session or discuss special needs arrangements. Alternatively book sessions online at www.battlefieldlive-eastanglia.co.uk

Other attractions and events

Concerts:

Each year High Lodge hosts a range of events. The largest being Forest Live concerts, where up to 10,000 concert goers can enjoy an open air concert and get close to their idols. The events take place on the large grassed area in front of the Information Point, approximately 50m away. Accessible parking is provided close by within the Badger and Adder car parks and smooth tarmac paths connect down to the customer entrance. An Accessible viewing platform is provided on a first come, first served basis. For more information see the Forest Live website - www.forestry.gov.uk/music. Access to the platform is via the Oak Lodge path with approximately 60m across grass, which can be wet and bumpy in certain conditions. Accessible toilets are located next to the viewing platform inside the concert arena.

For those who are visually impaired guide dogs are welcome in the arena, more details can be found on the Forest Live website.

Those with a disability who have a carer will need to purchase tickets for the event and then contact Box Office to discuss having a complimentary ticket for their registered carer. However, fees may apply for a carer or companion ticket for the event. Box Office can be contacted on 03000 680 400 or via email on boxoffice@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

Barbeques:

There are six barbeques on site that are available to hire. They are all free standing and are approximately 90cm tall. Picnic benches are often in the vicinity. They are positioned around the main grassed area with barbecues 3 and 4 the closest to the Oak Lodge path meaning easier access by wheelchair or mobility scooter. They are also closest to the Badger car park for unloading and the Information Point for toilet convenience. For more information please visit our website - www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge and click on 'food and drink' - 'BBQ's'.

'The Green':

The main grassed area outside the Information Point is often referred to as 'The Green'. This is where visitors are able to play games, picnic or relax. The Green has a path either side and makes access easier for wheelchairs and mobility scooters to enter the Green. The grassed area is worn in places and bare earth is visible. It can be bumpy and wet and challenging in a wheelchair. There are no picnic tables on the Green, however there are several benches around the edges and customers can bring their own if they prefer.

Active Forest:

This is a partnership agreement with Sport England to encourage people of all ages and abilities to engage in sporting activity within the forest. At High Lodge we currently have two table tennis tables and a volley ball net. The table tennis is located approx 50m away from the Information Point and the ground around is firm earth and stone. The volley ball net is on the Green. Both are turn up and have go activities. Please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/beeH-9ttj3f for more information.



Additional Information

- A copy of this Accessibility Statement is available in large print on site at the Information Point or by email. To request a copy please email: highlodgefeedback@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- Assistance dogs are welcome on site. Fresh water and a bowl are available from the tap in the courtyard between Bike Art and the Café. Dog litter bins are located close by the Information Point, at the start of the walking trails and by the Wildplay area.
- Litter bins are provided in the courtyard, patio and play areas. The height of the bin opening is 76cm.
- The signage on site is a mixture of banners, wooden material, and plastic typically in dark green with lighter text in cream and orange colours. Pictograms and illustrations are used in some locations.
- Way-marked trails are colour coded and have directional arrows on named coloured plastic discs.
- Within the local area there are several places to stay. Below there are listed places with access and disability provision; all of which have accessibility information.
 - 1) www.premierinn.com - Thetford – approx 5 minutes away
 - 2) www.travellodge.co.uk - Barton Mills – approx 25 minutes away
 - 3) www.brecklandlodge.co.uk - Attleborough – approx 30 minutes away

Future Plans

High Lodge is currently in the process of forwarding a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to build an all-ability multi-user trail through the forest. The trail will reveal and interpret the landscapes history. It will show how people have shaped this landscape, from prehistoric wildwood clearance to medieval rabbit farming; from gunflint mining in the eighteenth to the creation of Thetford Forest in the twentieth century.

The Trail, up to 5 kilometres, will give access for everyone (excluding horse-riders) and be suitable for families, less experienced cyclists and those with health limitations. The smooth surface will be suitable for wheelchairs and mobility scooters and encourage those who are less able to use the specially adapted bikes from Bike Art.

Along the route there are plans to have interpretation panels, audio stories and forest sounds as well as a smart phone app to help learn and enjoy the trail to its full extent. Benches and shelters along the way will provide rest places.

The trail is hoped to be completed for August 2018.

Contact Information

High Lodge, Thetford Forest
Thetford Road
Brandon
Suffolk
IP27 0AF

Telephone: 0300 067 4400

Email: highlodgefeedback@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge

Grid reference: TL807864

Opening hours:

Site:

Open: everyday from 9:00am (Except Christmas Day)

Closes: seasonally - earliest 5:00pm latest 7:00pm

Information Point:

Open: everyday – seasonally – earliest 9:00am, latest 10:00am

Closes: seasonally – earliest 5:00pm, latest 7:00pm

Toilets:

Open: everyday from 9:00am

Closes: seasonally – earliest 5:00pm, latest 7:00pm*

*24hr toilet available

Bike Art:

Open: everyday from 9:00am

Closes: seasonally – earliest 5:00pm, latest 6:00pm

Go Ape!:

Open: seasonally – check website for up to date details

Café/Pantry:

Open: everyday – seasonally – earliest 9:00am, latest 10:00am

Closes: seasonally – earliest 4:00pm, latest 6:00pm