

09 Southern England Brockenhurst, Hampshire

• Distance 18km/11 miles • Time 5-6hrs • Type Woodland and heath

2 NAVIGATION LEVEL 2 1 FITNESS LEVEL 1



Plan your walk



WHERE: Circular walk from Brockenhurst to Bank, via Black Knowl and the Tall Tree Trail.

START/END: Brockenhurst train station (SU302019).

TERRAIN: Woodland tracks and heathland trails. The trails can get lost, so a compass is recommended.

MAPS: Explorer OL22; Landranger 195 & 196.

GETTING THERE: South West Trains operates from London to Weymouth, Southampton or Bournemouth, stopping at Brockenhurst (☎ 0845 748 4950, www.southwesttrains.co.uk).

EATING & DRINKING: There are lots of options along the village high street (Brookley Road). In Brockenhurst, there's The Foresters Arms (☎ 01590 623397, www.newforestonline.biz/forestersarms) and The Thatched Cottage (☎ 01590 623090, www.thatched-cottage.co.uk), or try The



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

The New Forest is one of the largest-surviving swathes of ancient forest in South East England. For centuries it was a royal hunting ground, and then a major source of ship-building timber for the Royal Navy. It has a patchwork of mixed forestry, open heath and unenclosed pasture accessible straight off the train at Brockenhurst.

1. START From Brockenhurst station (SU302019), turn L down Brookley Road, past The Foresters Arms on your R, over a cattle grid and the junction to the shops along Brookley Road. Head to the ford at the top of the street and turn R. Follow the road past a church on your R to pick up a well-surfaced footpath at the junction with Meerut Road (SU295027), which heads north over the expanse of lawn and scrub that makes up Black Knowl.

2. Stay ahead on the path into

the forest enclosure and over Bolderford Bridge's boardwalk across the Lymington River. Turn L at the gate for the cycle path to Lyndhurst on to a woodland footpath. Keep in sight of the boundary fence on your R and follow it northwest, turning R at the fence's far corner (SU287045).

3. Continue following the footpath along the fence-line and turn L at the second track that branches L by a gate on your R. The path goes over two brooks and through a gate before heading up on to Hursthill Inlosure. Turn R where you meet with the surfaced track and then L off the track after 30m on to a footpath heading north through bracken. Go straight over the junction with the track and head for a kissing gate at a T-junction with another footpath (SU287058).

4. Go through the gate and follow the path through Gritnam

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Oak Inn at Bank (☎ 023 8028 2350, www.fullers.co.uk).

SLEEPING: The four-star Careys Manor hotel (☎ 01590 623551, www.careysmanor.com) is offering walk readers a special New Forest Walk & Spa package for group bookings, including guided walk, lunch and spa treatment. Visit www.thenewforest.co.uk.

VISITOR INFORMATION: Lyndhurst & New Forest TIC, High Street (☎ 023 8028 2269, www.thenewforest.co.uk).

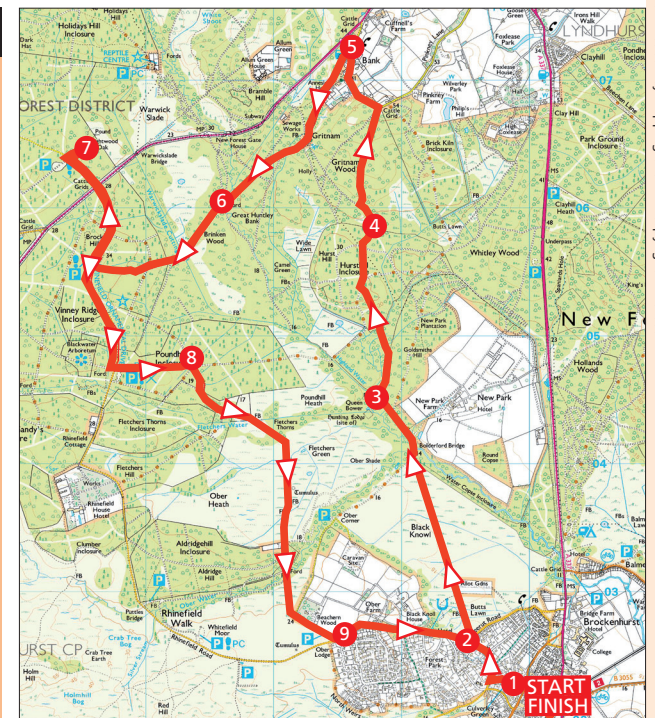
GUIDE BOOKS: *Walks Around the New Forest National Park* by New Forest Ramblers (New Forest Group, 5 West Road, Bransgore, Dorset BH23 8BQ); *Hampshire with the New Forest and South Downs National Parks* (Pathfinder Guide) by David Foster (£11.99, Crimson Publishing, ISBN 978 1854585523).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP: New Forest Ramblers (☎ 01425 627159, www.newforestramblers.org.uk).

Wood, keeping R at a fork to stay on a northerly course. At a cattle grid at a bend in a road, turn L down the road, into Bank and The Oak Inn pub on the corner.

5. Turn L at the pub and go down the lane to Gritnam. Follow the track around the eastern side of the hamlet and pick up a footpath through bracken at the end of a row of white cottages, heading southwest through woodland. Follow it through a brook and straight ahead to meet with a bridge over a stream (SU276061).

6. Cross it and turn L, then almost immediately R through bracken, which opens up into a broad



southwesterly path through Brinken Wood. Keep to the route over a raised track and brook and through a gate on to a forest track. Keep ahead over a junction until you meet with the road known as the Rhinefield Ornamental Drive and turn R. Cross the A35 and follow the road to the Knightwood Oak (SU265064) – at more than 400 years, it's the oldest oak in the New Forest, with a girth of 7.4m/24ft.

7. Retrace your steps to the Ornamental Drive and pick up the circular Tall Trees Trail, going south. The route meanders under some Jurassic-sized trees, including 100m-high Sequoias and California Redwoods taller than Big Ben. At the end of the trail is the worthwhile Blackwater Arboretum. Otherwise, turn L through Blackwater car park, following signs for a picnic area into a deer conservation area. Keep straight ahead over a junction with a grassy, disused track, then turn second-R at a

junction with three gravel tracks (SU274048) to head southeast.

8. The track bends R, then L. Then, before it bends R again, turn L on to a path, passing through a gate. Turn R at the tree margin to follow a path heading south over a ford and out across the heathland of Fletchers Green, where herds of deer often roam at dusk. Aim for the cottage ahead (SU281034) and head up its driveway, taking the first L on to a footpath through a belt of woods to a footbridge over a brook. Cross over and continue ahead to meet with the corner of a single-track road and turn L along it to Beachern Wood car park at the road junction (SU284026).

9. Turn L along the quiet road for about 1km to bring you back to the junction with Meerut Road by Black Knowl. Retrace your steps through Brockenhurst's village centre to the train station.

Route devised by Dominic Bates