

## **Countryside Walk 5: Butterfly Trail – Bernwood Forest (4.0 km, 2.5 miles, approx. 60 to 90 minutes)**

About 20 years ago the Forestry Commission established the Butterfly Trail in Bernwood Forest. The trail follows forest tracks that in summer have an abundance of butterflies. Butterflies to watch out for include the White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Skippers, Marbled White and rare Black Hairstreak. It is a very good place to take children in the summer holidays.

The trail starts at the Bernwood Forest car park (on the road between Oakley and Horton-cum-Studley). The route of the trail is marked with 1 metre (m) high square posts (in some places 2 m high posts) with a yellow painted band at the top. In theory it is possible just to follow the marker posts. However, in practice, there are so many crossing tracks in the forest that it is easy to get lost – hence the description below. In summer when it is dry walking in trainers is sufficient but at other times of the year the trail tends to be muddy and it is necessary to use walking boots or gumboots.

On the track leading out of the bottom of the car park is a large wooden post marked “Butterfly Trail”. At this point turn left down the main avenue leading into the forest. After 200m one arrives at a first crossroads (point A on the map). Turn down the left hand track. Continue down this for 400m until a gate is reached. Pass through the gap to the left of the gate and proceed straight for a further 150m upon which a marker post is reached on the left of the track. At this point turn right onto a small path leading into the forest. After 150m the path emerges onto a larger track. Turn right down the track. 150m down the track cross over an earth footbridge and continue further down the track (ignoring footpaths going to the left). 250m after the bridge pass through a doorway in a fence and turn left onto a broad grass track (ignore the public footpath sign indicating right!).

Walk up the grass track and follow it as it turns sharp right after 150m. Continue further along the grass track (ignoring a side-track bearing left) until reaching a major crossroads in the centre of the forest (point B on map). Continue straight across at the crossroads (do not turn left or right) and proceed down the track for 150m until reaching a marker post. Turn left at this point down a grass track marked with no horse riding sign. After 300m a crossroads and shooting tower is reached. At this point turn right down a further grass track. Proceed along this and after 200m continue over a wooden platform across a marshy area. Shortly after one arrives at a small crossroads. Turn right and proceed along a forest track marked with the Butterfly Trail posts. After 400m the forest track arrives at a major crossroads. Proceed straight ahead along the grass track marked with a no horse riding sign. After 500m the descending grass track meets a public footpath passing from left to right (point C on map). On the left hand side are the Bernwood Meadows. There is a display board that explains the history and importance of the meadows.

Having visited the meadows – that are full of orchids in spring – return to point C and proceed up the track for 250m. At a wooden bench turn right into a grass track. Continue along the grass track for 250m until reaching the crossroads (Point A on map) with a sign pointing to the car park.

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The Countryside Code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>) must be observed when walking:

**Respect other people:**

- consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

**Protect the natural environment:**

- leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- keep dogs under effective control

**Enjoy the outdoors:**

- be safe, plan ahead and be prepared
- follow advice and local signs

For all the walks it is best to use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 180 (can be purchased at the Book House or Martins in Thame). This provides clearer mapping than the mini-map accompanying the text above.