

[The New Forest and its Towns and Villages](#)

The New Forest is without doubt a place to escape the pressures of the modern world. Relax, unwind and recharge your batteries – spring, summer, autumn and winter!

This is a remarkable corner of the English countryside set aside as a special place more than nine centuries ago by William the Conqueror. William named it his “New” hunting forest, to be guarded against any possible threat to the chase of the Royal Deer.

As you enter the New Forest today, you will appear to step backwards in time. The landscape is unique and traditions exist here that are unchanged since medieval times.

Over the centuries too many places have changed beyond recognition yet the New Forest’s ancient woodlands and wilderness heath remain largely intact, earning the area national and international status.

This most English of forests continues to be a living and working community where ponies and cattle still have the right of way as they freely graze the land. Deeper in the forest wild deer browse beneath canopies of mighty oak and beech – natural scenes unchanged by the modern world. When elsewhere so much heritage has been lost, it is remarkable that this way of life has survived as part of ancient England along with the unmistakable landscape it created. The Forest covers 145 square miles, two thirds of the area made up of ancient and ornamental woodland, heathland, grass land and valley bogs. The other third is enclosed plantations of broadleaf and conifer trees. The Forest supports many thousands of species of insects, birds and mammals but its grazing animals predominate, controlling the plant life and habitats of the forest.

A Special place all year round.

Ashurst. A small village on the edge of the forest, between Totton and Lyndhurst. The remains of an Elizabethan industrial site, where saltpetre was mined, were uncovered at Ashurst Lodge (now a private home)

Barton on Sea. This seaside village to the south-west of the forest has a good beach backed by cliffs, safe for swimming and with outstanding views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight.

Beaulieu. At the heart of this charming village nestling on the banks of the Beaulieu River stand the ruined remains of the 13th Century Abbey. There are tiny shops in the gently sloping High Street, while close by are Buckler’s Hard and the world famous Exbury gardens.

The present Lord Montague of Beaulieu is a well-known motoring personality who founded Britain’s National Motor Museum, which now houses over 300 exhibits. Not only is the history of the motor car traced from the 1890’s to the present day, but also the history of the motor cycle. Set in the grounds of the Beaulieu Estate, together with the historic Abbey and Palace House, this is one attraction not to be missed

Boldre. This small village on the Lymington River is 2 miles north of Lymington. Amid the narrow lanes is the delightful 13th Century Church.

Bramshaw. Surrounded by ancient woodlands, this little village has an interesting church with a “medley” of different architectural styles. Nearby is piper’s Wait, the highest point of the New Forest.

Bucklers hard. Two miles from Beaulieu on the banks of the Beaulieu River stands the eighteenth century ship building village of Bucklers hard. Founded in 1742 the village soon became a thriving shipbuilding centre: Nelson’s fleet was constructed here. The village is well worth a visit, as it remains virtually unchanged since the Napoleonic War.

Brockenhurst. Forest ponies, donkeys and cattle often wander through the main shopping street of Brockenhurst and graze on the village green. Set amid some of the loveliest Forestland, the village is close to some of the most popular local walks and cycle tracks. The railway station is the main interchange for local buses and trains, and to the north is New Park, home to the annual New Forest and Hampshire County Show.

Burley. Nestling in the lee of a hill, surrounded by an area of outstanding natural beauty, is this attractive traditional village with witches, smuggling and dragons a unique part of its character. There are several stables, offering horse-drawn wagon rides and riding, as well as many shops, tea rooms and cycle hire.

Cadnam. Cadnam is the gateway to the New Forest, situated close to the boundary of the M27/A31 and leading to Lyndhurst and the small villages of Bartley and Copythorne.

Eling. The famous Eling Tide Mill and Heritage Centre are next to the old Eling Quay. Riverside walks through the reed beds give views of wild life and Southampton shipping.

Exbury. World famous for its botanical gardens were created by Lionel De Rothschild in 1920. Some of the most spectacular displays of Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias in Europe may be found in these gardens. Open all year round, the gardens are ever changing as the seasons progress.

Fordingbridge. Recorded in the Domesday Book, this small country town with many shops derives its name from “forde” and “bridge”, with the medieval seven arched bridge over the River Avon as its centre. St. Mary’s is a magnificent early English Church and many of the private houses date back from the Georgian era.

Fritham. In the 18th Century smugglers are reputed to have gathered at the famous Royal Oak Inn in this small village in the northern part of the Forest. Nearby is Rufus Stone the Site has historic significance as it marks the spot where King William Rufus met his mysterious death in 1100. It is claimed that King William Rufus, son of William the conqueror, was accidentally killed by an arrow shot by the noble man Sir Walter Tyrell while hunting where in the Canterton Glen. He supposedly meant to kill a stag but the arrow strayed and struck Rufus, the most hated of Kings. The body lay it fell and

was discovered by a charcoal burner, who carried it on a cart to Winchester. According to some sources the shooting was not an accident.

Hythe. This bustling small town on the waterside enjoys panoramic views of Southampton water, offering an ideal vantage point for the many ocean-going liners including the Queen Mary 2, QE2 & Oriana. Along the long Victorian pier runs the oldest working pier train in the world, taking passengers for the ferry journey to Southampton. The old part of Hythe has many Georgian and Victorian buildings.

Lymington. A busy fishing port with a lively yachting marina, Lymington provides car ferry access to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. Georgian and Victorian cottages, houses and shops characterise the town and its busy high street and Saturday open Market. Stroll down the old cobbled hill to the quay, past quaint shops and cafes to the quayside, where you can take a river cruise or just sit and watch the fishing boats.

Lyndhurst. From 1079, when William the Conqueror established the New Forest as a royal hunting preserve, kings, Queens and their Courts came regularly to stay on the royal manor and Lyndhurst took its place naturally as the area's "capital". Today with its shops, café's, Museum and visitors Centre, Lyndhurst continues to welcome the visitor. Lewis Carroll's Alice (Hargreaves) is buried in the 19th century Churchyard, close to Queen's House containing the 14th Century Verderers' Hall.

Milford-on-Sea. Milford-on-Sea began as a Saxon village and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The unspoilt village offers traditional shops and a village green, which is well used for local events. On May Day there are celebrations on the green and on August Bank Holiday there is a popular carnival. Milford has fantastic views in all directions with good walks by the cliffs above the shingle beach. The cliffs have been left free of buildings and are in their natural state of turf, grass and shrub. Milford-on-Sea developed from the late 1880's and the large Victorian and Edwardian villas set in their gardens are Milford's hallmark today. Milford Parish Church is almost certainly the oldest building in the area, with some parts dating back to the 1100's. It is an attractive and interesting church to visit. To the south-east, a shingle spit leads to Hurst castle, built by Henry VIII to defend the Solent. (Passenger ferry from Keyhaven) Centre for sea fishing.

Minstead. With its traditional village green, Minstead is set deep in the forest, north-west of Lyndhurst. All Saints' church has an unusual triple-decker pulpit and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, is buried in the churchyard.

New Milton. There are excellent shopping facilities in this spacious town on the edge of the New Forest, with easy access to the coast and surrounding area.

Ringwood. For centuries the area's main market town, with a charter dating back to 1226, Ringwood stands on the western edge of the New Forest at a crossing point with the River Avon. The town has a good mixture of traditional and modern shops, historic Inns and thatched cottages.

Sway. On the south-western edge of the Forest, Sway is a small rural village 4 miles from the coast and Lymington. In Victorian times, Captain Marryat used the surrounding countryside as a backdrop to his "Children of the New Forest" and the eccentric Judge Peterson built the 220 foot Sway Tower as a celebration of concrete!

Woodlands. This secluded village faces the Forest boundary at Busketts Lawn Enclosure and is near Netley marsh, where a steam rally always takes place each July.