

Introduction

Welcome to one of a series of maps of self-guided walks in the Black Country Urban Forest. There are currently maps for walks in Bilston, Tipton, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Oldbury and Willenhall. These routes go through some of the greenest parts of the Black Country. Thanks to the large number of small woods, wetlands and wildflower areas, these landscapes change a great deal through the seasons, so once you find a favourite walk, try sharing it with friends and visiting it in spring, summer, autumn and winter. There should always be something new to see.

The walks have been carefully chosen so that almost anyone can use them. Within the network of footpaths, three short health walks have been highlighted on each map. These are particularly easy and written directions can be found on the back of the map. Alternatively you could choose a longer circular route or take advantage of the many public transport links that connect to the walks. Information about buses, trains and the Midland Metro can be obtained from the Centro hotline on 0121 200 2700 or the website www.travelwm.co.uk

Most of the walks are along surfaced footpaths and many of them follow canal towpaths or disused railways. They may be muddy in places and shelter is limited, so wear suitable footwear and clothing. Most of the paths are unlit, so time your walk to avoid getting caught out at dusk. The distance printed on the map will help you to work out the length of a walk.

There are very few public toilets along the routes, but the maps show pubs and other places where you can buy food and drink. There are plenty of places to picnic, but please take all your litter home and do not light fires.

Finally, do be careful, especially along canal towpaths and where the routes cross busy roads or the Midland Metro. Help may not be at hand in the event of illness or injury, so it makes sense to enjoy your walk with a companion.

Black Country Urban Forest



The Black Country is surprisingly green. There are a great many public parks and recreation grounds, but there is also wilder 'urban countryside' where nature has turned derelict industrial land, old quarries and abandoned railway lines into new woodlands.

For the turn of the Millennium, a large grant from the National Lottery was spent in adding even more trees. Now there are over 1000 small woodlands across the region and these, together with existing trees in streets, parks and gardens are what is known as the Black Country Urban Forest.

Woodland on the doorstep benefits the people who live and work in the Black Country and it also improves the region's image for those who are just passing through. The urban forest helps to clean up air pollution, reduce the risk of flooding and it provides a wonderful habitat for wildlife.

Most important of all, the natural peacefulness of the Black Country Urban Forest is very easy to enjoy, thanks to the endless networks of footpaths which weave through the landscape and link conveniently to rail, Metro and bus routes. With the help of these maps, many more people should gain real pleasure (and a little more good health) from the Black Country Urban Forest.



Walking the Way to Health initiative

Walking the Way to Health is a national initiative which is helping people to get fitter and healthier through regular walking. Walking is also a good way of enjoying the outdoors, meeting new people and exploring the local area.

Gentle exercise through walking is known to reduce the risk of a number of illnesses, including Alzheimer's disease, bowel cancer and stroke. Walking can also reduce anxiety and depression, whilst increasing self confidence and stamina. Regular walking can also help people to maintain or reduce their weight.

The map overleaf shows three health walks which have been specially designed for people who are not used to regular physical exercise or who need encouragement to explore their local area. All the walks start and end at points which are easily accessible by public transport and they are suitable for just about everybody. As well as using the map, you can also follow the written directions. Alternatively, you may wish to design your own route from within the wider network of footpaths shown.

Walking for health

Walking at any speed will burn calories, improve muscle tone and strengthen bones. It is also likely to make you feel better. If you wish to improve heart and lung fitness, you need to walk briskly. When you are health-walking effectively, you should find that you

- Breathe a little faster
- Feel warmer
- Sweat slightly
- Have a slightly faster heartbeat

...but you should still be able to hold a conversation!

If you have not done much exercise for a while, it is important to build up gently. Start with one of the shorter, easier health walks before tackling the longer, more challenging ones. Try to build up to being active for 30 minutes at a time on five occasions a week. Walking is very good, but so are swimming, cycling and even gardening - in fact anything that helps your heart and lungs to work a little harder.

Health Walk 1

Sheepwash Park Circular

Start point Dudley Port
Railway Station

End point Dudley Port
Railway Station

Total distance 0.6 miles (0.9 km)

Difficulty level Medium
includes some unsurfaced paths

Time allowance
45 mins-1hour

- 1 Leave Dudley Port Station and walk down the drive. Note the viaduct for the railway and the aqueduct for the Birmingham Main Line Canal on your right.
- 2 Turn left and cross Horseley Heath, using the nearby pelican crossing
- 3 Turn along John's Lane between the *Royal Oak* pub car park and the row of shops
- 4 Pass through the metal gates at the end of John's Lane and enter Sheepwash Park through the trees to the left
- 5 Follow the path through the trees until you reach a stream. Turn right and then immediately left to cross the stream using the bridge
- 6 Turn right and follow the path keeping the stream on your right and the large lake on your left. (The sunken path acts as an overflow into the lake when the stream floods)
- 7 At the far end of the lake, leave the main path and turn left through the trees and across two wooden bridges. Follow the path as it winds through the trees and around the edge of the lake. (NOTE: This path can get muddy after wet weather)
- 8 At the second lakeside bay follow the grass path away from the shore and after a few yards turn left along a grassy strip with a smaller pond on your right hand side. (For a good view across the Black Country to Dudley Castle, take a short detour to the top of the low hill on your right)
- 9 At the next junction of paths, beyond the pond and lake, turn right. The path bends round to the left through the grassland area
- 10 On reaching the pylon, turn left and follow the tarmac path back to the bridge crossing the stream.
- 11 Cross the bridge, turn right and retrace your steps through the trees and along John's Lane to the *Royal Oak* and Dudley Port Station.

Health Walk 2

West Bromwich-Oldbury

Start point West Bromwich Central Metro Stop
End point Oldbury Bus Station

Difficulty level Easy
mostly paved, includes some gentle gradients

Time allowance
45 mins - 1 hour

Total distance 1.5 miles (2.5 km)

- 1 From the entrance to West Bromwich Metro stop, carefully cross the line and turn right onto the path that runs alongside the Metro
- 2 When you reach Lodge Road Metro stop, cross the line again, and use the steps, path, or lift to reach Lodge Road
- 3 Turn left along Lodge road, crossing straight over at the traffic lights
- 4 At the end of Lodge Road turn right onto Oak Road and continue to the Oak House Museum on the left
- 5 From Oak House Museum, continue along Oak Road and take the second left into Clifford Road
- 6 At the far end of Clifford Road turn right to reach the roundabout, and carefully cross to the road on the far side (Bromford Lane) towards Sandwell & Dudley park and ride
- 7 Continue along Bromford Lane, cross the canal and pass under the railway bridge beyond Sandwell & Dudley station
- 8 At the junction with the traffic lights turn left along Broadwell Road and follow the bend until you reach a brick path on the right hand side leading into a small park
- 9 Walk through the park, past a small playground, and at the far end turn right to cross the stream and take the short alleyway to Simpson Street
- 10 Turn left along Simpson Street, then right into Birmingham Street. Walk into the old town centre of Oldbury, with the church in your left, then left into Halesowen Street to reach Oldbury bus station

The following buses all make the return journey from Oldbury bus station to West Bromwich:
217 (West Bromwich - Merry Hill Centre)
238 (West Bromwich - Merry Hill Centre)
404 (Blackheath - Walsall)
417 (West Bromwich - Hayley Green)
441 (West Bromwich - Halesowen)
688 (Dudley - West Bromwich)

For more information on these services call the Centro Hotline on 0121 200 2700.

Health Walk 3

Galton Valley Walk

Start point Sandwell & Dudley Railway Station
End point Smethwick Rolfe Street Railway Station

Difficulty level Medium
includes some flights of steps

Time allowance
45 mins - 1 hour

Total distance 1.6 miles (2.6 km)

- 1 From the main entrance to Sandwell & Dudley station, turn right and walk away from the railway along Bromford Road
- 2 When you reach the canal bridge, turn right and follow the canal towpath as it bends round to the left
- 3 At the canal junction cross the footbridge and turn immediately right to follow the lower canal, closest to the railway line
- 4 Continue along the towpath for approximately 1.8km (1.1miles), passing under the M5 motorway and several other smaller bridges
- 5 Before reaching the short tunnel you will walk under Galton Bridge. (NOTE: To shorten your walk, climb the steep sloping path just before the tunnel to reach Smethwick Galton Bridge railway station)
- 6 Pass through the short tunnel, and continue along the towpath
- 7 At the Smethwick Pumping Station, with its brick chimney, climb the steps to the upper level canal, turn right and then right again up more steps to Brasshouse Lane. The Galton Valley visitor centre is 100m to the left
- 8 Turn right and follow Brasshouse Lane round the bend to reach Smethwick Rolfe Street railway station

BLACK COUNTRY URBAN FOREST

EASY WALKS AROUND WEST BROMWICH & OLDBURY

1	2
3	4



1	2
3	4

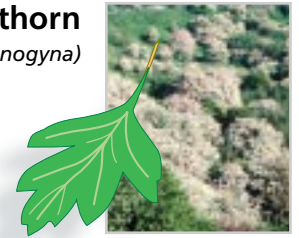
Walsall Canal and the Eight Locks



The Walsall Canal leaves the Wednesbury Canal at Ryders Green Junction and heads north-west for 7 miles to Walsall town centre. The first 3 miles, opened in 1786, was originally named the Broadwaters Extension after the colliery north east of Moxley where it terminated. The remaining 4 miles of the Walsall Canal was completed 15 years later. From Ryders Green Junction the Walsall Canal drops down through 8 narrow locks, 7 of them in one straight 600 yards flight. This is best viewed from the Ryders Green Bridge, which crosses the canal at the top lock.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE TREES ALONG YOUR WALK:

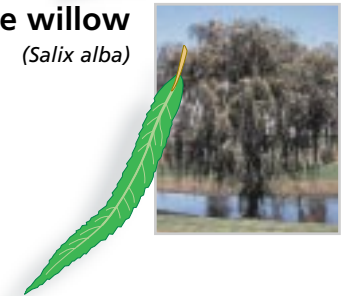
Hawthorn
(*Crataegus monogyna*)



Silver birch
(*Betula pendula*)



White willow
(*Salix alba*)



Smethwick Pumping Station and Galton Valley Visitor Centre

The New Smethwick Pumping Station was opened in 1892, to pump water up from the lower locks to the higher section of the canal. Further information and displays can be found at the Galton Valley Visitor Centre.

Open all year, Mon-Thu + Sun 10-3, closed Fri + Sat.
Admission is free. Tel 0121 558 8195 for more details.

West Bromwich

Sheepwash Urban Park



Sheepwash is the largest forest park in the Black Country. This former brick works and waste tip has been reclaimed for nature conservation, and the woodland, wetland and grassland habitats support a wide range of plants and animals. Since records began in 1985, 164 different bird species have been recorded, including little ringed plover, redshank, reed bunting, yellow wagtail, bullfinch, kestrel and mute swan. Sheepwash is popular for fishing, birdwatching, walking, photography, and is used by local schools as a teaching resource.

Disused railways & canals provide an ideal corridor for wildlife to move around the urban area:



Orange tip butterfly
(Anthocharis cardamines)



Grey heron
(Ardea cinerea)



Yellow flag iris
(Iris pseudacorus)

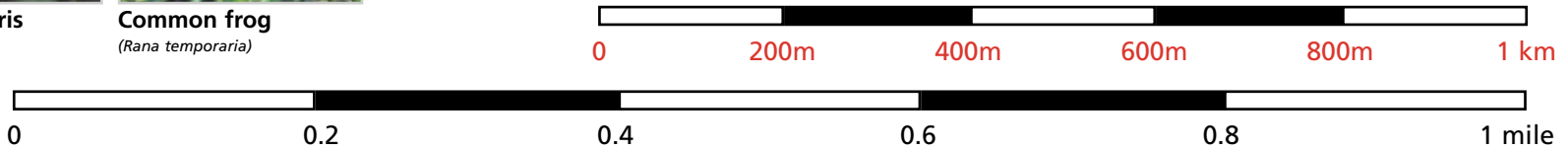


Common frog
(Rana temporaria)

Monks Tip Mound



The small hill behind the Hindu Shri Balaji Temple is a reclaimed industrial tip that was planted with trees in the early 1990s. It is typical of the hundreds of new woods which have planted on derelict land to create the Black Country Urban Forest. NOTE: Although the site is open and has several paths that lead over the mound, it is private property and there are no formal public rights of access onto the mound from the canal towpath.



1	2
3	4

Oak House Museum



Oak House is one of the finest timber framed buildings in the Midlands. It was built for a yeoman over 500 years ago and it has survived remarkably well in a region transformed by industry in the 19th and 20th centuries.

*Open all year. Closed Thu + Sun, October - March.
Admission is free. Tel 0121 553 0759 for more details.*

Trinity Way



Kenrick Park



Kenrick Way



Steep slope from Roebuck Lane onto canal towpath

West Smethwick

Smethwick Rolfe Street

KEY

- Leisure walk
- Health walk
- Distance markers (miles/km)
- Black Country Urban Forest Millennium site
- Other site of interest
- Open space
- Bus stop
- Midland Metro station
- Rail/tram route
- Newsagent
- Public house
- Refreshments
- Main road **Cross with care**

M5

Spon Lane South

**Health Walk 3
Galton Valley Walk**

1.2

1.9

0.5

0.8

0.4

0.7

Brasshouse Lane

Rolfe Street

Smethwick Galton Bridge

1	2
3	4

Galton Bridge and the Birmingham Main Line Canal



Both the bridge and the canal were built by Thomas Telford in 1829 and the 50 metre span of the cast iron bridge is 22 metres above the canal. When completed this was the longest single span bridge over what was claimed to be the largest earthwork in the world. The canal was designed to run at a constant 138 metres above sea level between Birmingham and Tipton. With no locks, there was less congestion and water loss, and quicker movement of goods.