



DISCOVER

BRANDON COUNTRY PARK
VISITOR GUIDE & TRAILS



DISCOVER THE HEART OF THE BRECKS AT BRANDON COUNTRY PARK, AND EXPLORE A LAND OF OPEN HEATHLAND, GREEN FORESTS, WIDE HORIZONS AND FRESH AIR . . .

OPENING TIMES

Brandon Country Park is open from dawn to dusk.

The Tearooms are open every day except Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day:

April to October : 10am – 4.30pm

November to March : 10am – 3.30pm

HOW TO FIND US

Brandon Country Park,
Bury Road (B1106), Brandon,
Suffolk, IP27 0SU

Brandon Country Park is just south of Brandon, 5 minutes from the A11 at Elveden, less than 30 minutes from Bury St Edmunds, and under an hour from Norwich, Cambridge and Ipswich.

Brandon Railway Station is 1.5miles (2.4km) away.

PARKING

There is limited car parking, and car parking charges apply between 8am and 8pm.

Car Park charges and 12 month annual pass available online at:

westsuffolk.gov.uk/parking

CONTACT US

Tel: 01284 757088

Email: parks@westsuffolk.gov.uk

www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/parks/brandon-country-park



www.facebook.com/BrandonCountryPark



www.instagram.com/brandon_country_park



West Suffolk
Council



www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/parks/brandon-country-park

WELCOME TO BRANDON COUNTRY PARK

Over 30 acres of managed parkland, with an arboretum, 'haunted' mausoleum, lawns and pond, historic walled garden, toddlers-to-teens playground, picnic areas and tearoom and miles of walking and cycling trails...

Located in the vast Thetford Forest, Brandon lies in the very heart of The Brecks: A wild landscape of dark forests, open heathlands, sandy soils and iconic belts of pine trees that straddle the Suffolk and Norfolk border.

A HISTORY

In the 19th Century, Brandon was vitally important to the British Army because the bulk of the country's gunflints were manufactured here. In fact, Brandon Flint was said to be the gold standard of all flint; guaranteed to spark on each shot!

Local businessman, Edward Bliss, made his fortune supplying the army with flint during the Napoleonic Wars and in the early 1820s bought over 2,500 acres of The Brecks and created his estate. Today, Brandon Country Park occupies a small portion of the original land purchased by Bliss.

TEAROOM

Enjoy morning coffee, breakfast, light lunch and afternoon tea in the Copper Beech Tearoom. We bake and make as much as we can here in our little kitchen at the park, including vegetarian, gluten free and vegan options (please call in advance on 01842 810185 with any special dietary requirements or queries, and we'll do our best to cater for your needs).

Leaflets and information about the Park are available to be picked up from the Tearoom.

The Tearoom is open every day except Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.



April to October 10am – 4.30pm (last hot food orders at 3.30pm)

November to March 10am – 3.30pm (last hot food orders at 2.30pm)

TRAILS SUMMARY

Explore the park and get closer to nature with our walking and cycling trails that guide you through the arboretum, forest and restored heathland...

Redwood Trail / Red Walk	1 mile / 1½ km	Allow 20mins – 40mins
Forest & Heath Trail / Purple Walk	3½ miles / 5¾ km	Allow 1 hour – 1 hour 45mins
Firecrest Trail / Orange Walk	5½ miles / 8¾ km	Allow 1 hour 45 mins – 3 hours 45mins
Tree Trail	1 mile / 1¾ km	Allow 45mins – 1 hour 15mins
Poachers Cycle Trail / Blue Trail	5¾ miles / 9¼ km	

All trails start from outside the Tearoom, simply follow the colour coded trail markers to explore your chosen route!

REDWOOD TRAIL / RED WALK

"Explore the arboretum..." with our easy going trail, a simple 1 mile loop around the arboretum.

Terrain: A gentle walk on firm paths suitable for all, including pushchairs and all-terrain wheelchairs.

FOREST & HEATH TRAIL / PURPLE WALK

"Venture into a working forest..." with this 3.5 mile circular route through our arboretum and into the deeper, wilder Thetford Forest with its acres of evergreen Scots Pine plantation, areas of Larch which drip needles onto the paths, and open glades.

Terrain: A gentle walk on firm paths and soft, forest tracks.

FIRECREST TRAIL / ORANGE WALK

"Discover the deeper beauty of the forest and the open landscape of the heath..." on 5.5 miles of trail through park and forest.

Venture along winding woodland paths and forest tracks, through dense undergrowth and open glades, and explore the open landscape of Brandon Heath with its solitary birch trees and big open skies.

Terrain: A lengthy walk on firm paths and soft forest tracks. Walking boots or wellies recommended, can be muddy.

TREE TRAIL

"Enter a world of majestic trees..." as you learn about trees from around the world on this 1 mile route.

See Monterey Pines and get close to Giant Redwoods, the world's biggest tree – feel its soft spongy orange bark like the hair of an Orangutan! Look up at the Monkey Puzzle's tangle of spiky branches, and marvel at the magnificent Blue Atlas Cedars.

Terrain: A short walk on firm paths and forest paths. Suitable for all, including pushchairs and all-terrain wheelchairs.



POACHERS CYCLE TRAIL / BLUE TRAIL

Get the heart pumping on a slightly bumpy ride suitable for all the family, along 5.75 miles (shortcut available) of well-marked wide paths, narrow tracks and undulating drives through the heart of Thetford Forest.

Terrain: Firm paths, soft tracks and wide forest drives. Some areas can be quite sandy.

TREE TRAIL

1. **Box** (*Buxus sempervirens*)

Origin: Native **Identification:** A small evergreen tree rarely more than 4.5-6m (15-20ft) high. It has yellow, spiky flowers that appear in April.

Did you know? • Box is the hardiest and heaviest of all European woods – it sinks in water! • Today, Box only grows wild in a few places in England – at Box Hill, Surrey, for instance.



2. **Copper Beech**

(*Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*)

Origin: Switzerland **Identification:** A deciduous broadleaf that reaches 30m (100ft) in Britain, with distinctive leaf colour and beech mast fruit in autumn.

Did you know? • According to Swiss legend, the red-leaved copper beech sprang up where five brothers were murdered.

3. **Monterey Pine** (*Pinus radiata*)

Origin: California **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 35m (115ft) in Britain with distinctive, large cones.

Did you know? • It's also called the 'remarkable cone pine' as it keeps its large cones on the tree for 20-40 years!

4. **Western Yellow** (*Pinus ponderosa*)

Origin: Western America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer that reaches 32m (105ft) in Britain. Its upper branches ascend and the lower branches droop, and its cones are around 12cms, ridged and prickled with scales.

Did you know? • It's also called the Ponderosa, Big Bull and Heavy Pine
• Tree ring dating – or dendrochronology – was developed using this pine.

5. **Grand Fir/Giant Fir** (*Abies grandis*)

Origin: North America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 55m (180ft) height in Britain and 90m (300ft) in America. The bark is grey-green, smooth with resin blisters and the cones are 9cms long and tapering.

Did you know? • It was one of the tallest trees in East Anglia before being felled in 2018 due to disease.

11. **Fern-Leaved Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica 'Aspleniifolia'*)

Origin: Native **Identification:** A very attractive deciduous broadleaf reaching 30m (100ft) high.

Did you know? • When the leaves regrow from a damaged branch they vary in shape and size from full to completely cut leaves.

12. **Delavays Silver Fir** (*Abies delavayi*)

Origin: South-West China and Tibet **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 20m (65ft) high with inky-blue, barrel-shaped cones and needles with a white underside.

13. **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*)

Origin: Native **Identification:** A deciduous broadleaf reaching 30m (100ft) high with sharp buds and distinctive silver bark, particularly in winter.

Did you know? • Fagus is Greek for 'eat', which refers to the edible beech nuts or 'beechmasts'. • The two large beeches on our lawn release enough oxygen for about twenty people every year!

14. **Horse Chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Origin: The Balkans **Identification:** A deciduous broadleaf that reaches 30m (100ft) high, with a splendid blossom, conkers and a lovely autumnal colour.

Did you know? • The twigs have distinctive horseshoe-shaped leaf-scars.
• The winter twig has dark brown buds that become sticky in spring. • Up until fairly recently, Horse Chestnut wood was used to make artificial limbs, as the wood is light and easily worked!

15. **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Origin: China **Identification:** A deciduous broadleaf that reaches 30m (100ft) high with large leaves - up to 1m (3ft) on a young, vigorous tree - that turn an attractive reddish-gold in autumn.

Did you know? • It was originally known as the stinking tree ... crush a leaf to find out why!
• It has a good resistance to atmospheric pollution.



6. **Deodar Cedar** (*Cedrus deodara*)

Origin: Himalayas **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 33m (110ft) in Britain with descending branches.

Did you know?

- In India, it's known as the 'tree of God' or 'sacred Indian fir' and is a symbol of fruitfulness and durability.
- Its wood is fragrantly scented.



7. **European Larch** (*Larix decidua*)

Origin: Central Europe **Identification:** A deciduous conifer reaching 38m (125ft) that looks as if it's wearing a cloak. The branches change from a delicate green in spring to glorious golden yellow in autumn. In April, the male flowers are purple and erect and the female flowers are whitish and pendulous.

Did you know?

- Plenty of wild flowers grow underneath these trees as they cast very little shadow.

8. **Monkey Puzzle/Chilean Pine** (*Araucaria araucana*)

Origin: South America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer that reaches 24m (80ft) in Britain and 30m (100ft) in South America. Dry and papery cones hang in clusters near the branch tips.

Did you know?

- The tree gets its name because there are sharp scale leaves on the upper trunk and it would puzzle a monkey to try and climb it!

9. **Wellingtonia - Giant Redwood** (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)

Origin: California **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 50m (165ft) in Britain with distinctly knobby cones.

Did you know?

- This species is the largest tree in the world! A Californian sequoia called the General Sherman is 83.8m tall and 25m wide (275ft x 82ft)
- The tree can live for 4000 years – our specimen has c.3900 to go!
- The bark is resistant to fire.

10. **Blue Atlas Cedar** (*Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'*)

Origin: Atlas Mountains of Algeria & Morocco **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 36m (120ft) high with ascending branches. The tree is triangular, its cones are pinkish and the females look like wasps' nests.

Did you know?

- It prefers drier conditions than most conifers
- This particular tree lost 20m (60ft) in the March 1986 storm!



16. **Douglas Fir/Oregon Pine/Columbian Pine** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)

Origin: North America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 65m (215ft) tall in Britain. Its cones are tufted and it often has resin on the trunk.

Did you know?

- It's used for doors and veneers as it is heavy and durable and takes paint and polish well.

17. **Colorado White Fir** (*Abies concolor*)

Origin: Western America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 30m (100ft), with smooth apple-green, domed and cylindrical cones and blue-green needles.

Did you know?

- The needles are covered in air filled spores, which explains their distinctive colour.



18. **Coastal Redwood** (*Sequoia sempervirens*)

Origin: North America **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 112m (368ft) in its native environment, but grown much smaller in Britain.

Did you know?

- Fossil remains have been found in Britain but the living tree is only native to North America, where some are 2,500 years old!
- This species is the tallest living thing on earth! A Californian sequoia named Hyperion is no less than 115.72m (379.7ft) tall.
- Its soft bark is fire resistant.

19. **Bhutan** (*Pinus wallichiana*)

Origin: Nepal **Identification:** An evergreen conifer reaching 35m (115ft) high in Britain. It has a long, cylindrical, banana-shaped cone usually between 15-30cms long, orange-green bark which may be cracked into plates, and drooping lower branches.

Did you know?

- The tree is tapped for its sap and is used in turpentine and insect repellent.

20. **Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*)

Origin: Native **Identification:** An evergreen broadleaf which can reach 20m (65ft) high. Look out for the variegated leaf variety with berries ranging from yellow to red in colour.

Did you know?

- It was traditionally thought unlucky to cut down a holly.
- The caterpillars of the holly-blue butterfly feed on its leaves
- The tree is grazed by deer and domestic animals.





THE WALLED GARDEN

Built in the late 19th century as a kitchen garden growing food for Brandon House, the Walled Garden contains features including a well, herb garden and pumpkin patch. A perfect picnic spot!

The Walled Garden is also available to hire, offering a tranquil, private outdoor space for a party, workshop or event!

THE LAKE

Edward Bliss built an ornamental lake with a small rustic bridge between 1820 and 1845. In 1992, the lake was redeveloped to look more natural.

THE LAWNS

The lawns today are much as they were when they were created – formal gardens leading down from Brandon Park House to the lake in a series of terraces.

BRANDON PARK HOUSE

Brandon Park House is a Grade II listed Regency mansion, built by Edward Bliss and occupied by his family from 1826 until 1903. Almeric Paget bought the house in 1903, and the house is now privately owned.

THE ARBORETUM

Edward Bliss planted an extraordinary eight million trees on his estate, creating much of what we know today as Thetford Forest! Most of these were plantations and shelterbelts of larches and scots pine, but he also created an arboretum of exotic species from Blue Atlas Cedars to Giant Redwoods and Monkey Puzzle trees.





NATURE

Look out for buzzards soaring in the air above, sparrowhawks skimming through the trees, nuthatches, nightjars, woodlarks and blue tits. Our lake is often full of mallards, and home to toads and dragonflies, plus look out for our resident heron! Listen out for woodpeckers drumming or barking muntjac deer, and at dusk hear our resident tawny owls.

Spot a kaleidoscope of butterflies, wildflowers (the purple heather on the heathland looks particularly spectacular when in full bloom in August), and plenty of fungi – from earthstars to deathcaps and stinkhorn fungi to coral fungi!

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
	nuthatches fieldfares long tailed tits coal tits		great spotted woodpeckers brimstones		hawthorn blossom flag iris blackcaps	
		heather red admirals vapourer moths crossbills		conkers fly agarics red deer (rutting!)		holly berries redwings robins
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
hornet moths stonechats hedgehogs lizards glow worms		blackberries hazelnuts goldfinches poplar hawk-moths		death caps false death caps earthstars		
	snowdrops hazel catkins toads adders		cuckoos primroses cowslips woodlarks moorhens		nightjars ox-eye daisies pipistrelle bats	



THE MAUSOLEUM

The gothic Mausoleum surrounded by Irish Yews was built by Edward Bliss as the final resting place for himself and his wife. The flintwork to the main chapel shows the quality knapping for which Brandon was famous.

Today the Mausoleum is home to Pipistrelle bats – and reputedly the ghost of Edward's nephew, Baron Boretto! Dressed in knee breeches and a deer stalker and holding a candle-lit human skull, he is occasionally seen wandering the grounds. What, or who, is he looking for?!



THE COPPER BEECH AVENUE

Particularly impressive in the Autumn when the leaves are in full colour, the current entrance to Brandon Country Park was once the grand entrance to Brandon Park House, planted by Almeric Paget in the early 1900s.

THE OLD ORCHARD PICNIC AREA

A charming picnic area, originally planted with fruit trees to supply Brandon Park House.

THE PLAYGROUND

Toddlers to teens will enjoy our two play areas with climbing frame, assault course, swings and slides.

THE ENGINE HOUSE

An historic flint building (dating from 1883) made up of The Pump House and The Bothy. The Pump House was once the beating heart of the estate, generating electricity to power Brandon House, and pumping water to feed the grounds. The Bothy was originally the estate office.

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery, the two buildings were recently renovated and linked to form The Engine House, which is available to hire for meetings, parties, workshops or events.



HEATHLAND AREA

The Breckland heaths are a unique environment and habitat, attracting rare wildlife and plants. The heath area indicated in our guide forms part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) known as the Breckland Forest, a vast area of forest and heath covering over 18,000 hectares.





WHAT'S ON

Keep an eye on our website and social media for events here at Brandon Country Park.

PARKRUN

Every Saturday morning at 9am, enjoy a 5km parkrun here at Brandon Country Park – it's you against the clock, so join in, whatever your pace or ability!
www.parkrun.org.uk/brandoncountrypark

DOGS IN BRANDON COUNTRY PARK

Dogs are welcome, and we want them to enjoy it as much as you do! But please remember to clean up after your dog, and keep them under control at all times. Please note: The Walled Garden and Tearoom are dog-free areas (except, of course, assistance dogs which are always welcome).

CYCLING IN BRANDON COUNTRY PARK

We have cycle racks by the front entrance, and a signposted 5¾ mile cycle trail – the Poachers Trail, plus The Brecks Trail (a cycling-friendly, 14 mile (22.5km) linear trail between Brandon Country Park and West Stow Country Park) and links to High Lodge and their trails.

Please note: The lake and lawns are non-cycling areas. Cyclists, please give way to walkers.

WORKING WITH THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

Collaboration between Brandon Country Park and the Forestry Commission enables visitors to experience a much wider area of the forest on both bike and foot.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Guard against all risks of fire – no barbeques
- Keep dogs under control
- Put your litter in the bins or take it home
- Protect and respect wildlife, plants and trees
- No camping



Forestry Commission
England

BEYOND BRANDON COUNTRY PARK

Visit www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk for more information on where to go and what's on, or pick up leaflets from our Tearoom! Local highlights:

- West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village & Country Park
- Brecks Trail
- Grime's Graves
- The Little Ouse Path
- Weeting Heath

