

## **Birches Valley Forest Centre**

### **Introduction**

The Forestry Commission is the biggest provider of outdoor recreation in the UK and aims to offer quality woodland access to the widest range of visitors as possible.



Birches Valley Forest Centre is the main access point to Cannock Chase Forest. It is an attraction in its own right with Birches Valley Café, Swinnerton Cycles Bike Shop, Go Ape, a Play Area, Picnic facilities and is also the starting point for a number of walking and biking trails.

### **Pre Arrival**

Birches Valley Forest Centre is located in the heart of Cannock Chase Forest between Stafford, Cannock and Rugeley in Staffordshire, England.

Address: Birches Valley Forest Centre, Birches Valley, Rugeley, Staffordshire, WS15 2UQ.

Birches Valley Forest Centre can be located by road by following brown tourist signs, which have the white stag on a purple background.

There is no direct public transport to Birches Valley Forest Centre. The nearest train stations are Rugeley Trent Valley and Rugeley Town which are both approximately 2 miles away. Rugeley Trent Valley is on the West Coast main line with good links to most of the country.

A number of taxi companies service the area.

## Dogs

Dogs are welcome at Birches Valley, we just ask you follow our 'Tog Dog' guidelines.

- Take the lead; Make sure you know when you need to use a lead.
- Please respect other visitors and wildlife and keep your dog within sight.
- Have good control; does your dog come when called? Make sure your dog understands your commands to keep you safe, using a lead if necessary.
- Keep our Forest clean; Bag and bin your dogs waste (or take it home to bin) or you can 'Stick and Flick' when you are deeper into the woods.

Water bowls are located on benches near the Café.

Assistance dogs are welcome throughout the Café and all dogs are welcome in the conservatory.

## Car parking and arrival

Birches Valley car park has around 500 spaces and is in two sections, a lower looped car park and an upper rectangular park.

There are four sections of designated accessible parking available located throughout the car park all of which are located alongside pay and display machines.



The first area of parking is on the right immediately after entering the car park. This area has 4 hard standing spaces and is approximately 10 meters from the café and toilets. The path to the café and toilets is hard standing and is on a gentle slope. The path also leads to a picnic area with two picnic benches on hard standing approximately 3 meters from the parking bays.



The second accessible parking area is located on the exit road of the car park. This area has 3 spaces on hard standing and offers access to the café and toilets approximately 10 meters away via a gently sloping hard standing path.

The third area is located at the top of the looped car park. This area has 3 gravel spaces and is approximately 2 meters from the play area and the start of the Ladyhill trail. The path to the play area is flat and is made of gravel no bigger than 3cm.



The fourth area is located in the upper rectangular car park. This area has three spaced surfaced with gravel no bigger than 3cm. They are about 5 meters from Go Ape and 10 meters from Swinnertons Cycles bike shop and the start of the majority of our walking and biking trails. The path from these spaces is gravel and contains sections of moderate slopes.



Car parking charges apply to Blue Badge holders and is paid using a pay and display system. All our Pay and display machines accept coins and do not give change. Some Pay and Display machines also accept card payments. Pay and Display machines have a keypad at 1m, ticket collection at 1.5m and coin insert at 1.1m high

## Toilets

There is a unisex accessible toilet available located in the main toilet block near the café. The door opens outwards and has a width of 86cm.



The toilet has a twist lock, lateral transfer space and fitted grab rails. A key is not required to use the toilet.

The sink in the toilets is fitted with lever taps, soap dispenser, hand dryer and mirror. The sink is 72cm from the floor and the soap dispenser and hand dryer are 90cm from the floor.

The toilet has an emergency alarm activated by a red pull cord

## Birches Valley Café

Birches Valley Café is a single level building with access from a gently sloped hard standing path.



There is a single door with a width of 85cm. The doors open outwards and are manually operated.

There are seating areas available inside and outside. The café does not have separate toilet facilities.

### Birches Valley Play Area

Birches Valley Play area is a fenced play area with play equipment suitable for 4 –13 years olds. The gates to the play area are 110cm wide. They open inwards and are self closing.



The whole of the play area is surfaced with woodchip. There are several picnic tables and benches within the fenced area. The picnic benches have a 30cm overhang at both ends. There are also benches just outside the fenced area.

### Walking trails

The Ladyhill Trail is a 1 mile circular walk on a flat wide path.



The trail has rest stops at least every 25 meters so may be accessible to those with limited mobility. The top of the mushroom seats are 80cm from the floor.



The Fair oak Trail is a 2.5 mile multi use circular route around Fair oak Pools and Valley. It is a relatively flat route but has moderate slopes and uneven ground in places with loose stone and a ford crossing. There are benches positioned around the pools with a maximum distance of 1km between them.

Mobility scooters are more suited to urban environments and may struggle in our forest. We do not recommend the use of smaller three wheeled personal mobility vehicles, as these can be particularly unstable on uneven ground. Mobility scooters are not available to hire.

Other paths throughout the forest will become muddy and wet and may not be suitable for pushchairs, wheelchairs, mobility scooters or people with limited mobility. They will also have some steeper gradients.

### Swinnerton Cycles bike shop

Swinnerton Cycles is a single level shop. Access to the shop is to the front down a moderately steep gravel slope.



There are manually operated double doors to the shop with a width of 75cm each. The doors open both outwards and inwards.

The bike shop has a trike available to hire. A short assessment is required before use and customers are advised to contact the shop prior to discuss their individual requirements.



## Go Ape

Go Ape is a high wire adventure course. Whilst their courses are designed to be as accessible as possible they do offer a degree of physical and mental challenge. For some people this may mean that additional equipment and/or levels of supervision will be required for safe participation. For others the risks of injury may still be too great despite taking such additional measures, preventing their use of the course.

Customers are advised to contact Go Ape to discuss their individual requirements.

## Contact information

For more information please contact the Forestry Commission by emailing [info-cannock@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info-cannock@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) or by phone on 0300 067 4340.

### Other contacts

Forestry Commission Cannock Chase Office – 0300 067 4360

Forestry Commission Recreation Team – 07771 812608

Go Ape – 0845 643 9215

Swinnerton Cycles – 01889 575170

Birches Valley Café - 01889 574475