



Lee Valley Regional Park's Lake and Riverside Trail

From Ware in Hertfordshire through part of Essex, down to the Thames at East India Dock Basin, the Lee Valley Regional Park provides access to 26 miles of traffic-free walking routes.

Stretching along the banks of the River Lee, this 10,000 acre Regional Park has been shaped to provide a mosaic of countryside, nature reserves, urban green spaces, heritage sites and sports facilities, and contains around 400 hectares of open water. Over 200 species of bird can be found within the Regional Park and the water meadows at Waltham Abbey are a dragonfly sanctuary, the only one in the country.

You can take a walk along the whole length of the Park, all 26 miles and take in the sights of the new Olympic sites in Broxbourne and Stratford, or follow one of many smaller circular walks within the Park.

Lake & Riverside Walk – Waltham Abbey

This circular walk through the heart of River Lee Country Park is a spectacular wildlife route; it takes in the sights of the 1000 acre former gravel pits, now transformed into a haven for wildlife and people.

The walk is four miles and starts at Lee Valley Park Farms. Cross the car park and join the surfaced pathway towards Fishers Green. At Fishers Green visit the Bittern Information Point/bird hide. This gives you the best opportunity to watch, enjoy and learn more about these extremely rare birds. In recent years the reed beds and plentiful food supply in the Lee Valley have attracted between four and seven Bitterns which arrive in October and leave in March. Bitterns are well camouflaged, very shy and naturally skulking, so it pays to be patient and quiet as you wait for a possible sighting. The hide is open every day and the Information Point is open most weekends staffed by Lee Valley Regional Park Volunteers.

Walking along Waltons Walk head around the top of the scrape and look out for Kingfishers and Water Voles along the Flood Relief Channel. The Plover Viewpoint and Hall Marsh Scrape are a short detour from the route – continue along the pathway bearing to the left and the viewpoint overlooking Hall Marsh Scrape is on the left.

Further along the walk you come to Hooks Marsh Ditch, a premier dragonfly location and in 1993 the Hairy Dragonfly was first seen here. It is the rarest breeding species in the Lee Valley. On the walk you will also see the best place in London to see Early Marsh Orchids. These delicate flowers are one of only a few plants able to thrive in the nutrient poor soil, created with waste ash from coal-fired power stations.

Cross the Old River Lea, regularly used by Otters which were re-introduced into the Regional Park in 1991. Always elusive, they are seen occasionally in this area and you might be lucky enough to spot one. At the end of the bridge turn left and continue along the east side of the river. Proceed along the surfaced pathway leading to Holyfield Lake and Weir, continuing south and crossing the Flood Relief Channel to Fishers Green car park. Follow the path to Lee Valley Park Farms. Once back at the Farms stop for a well deserved bite to eat and a drink in the Orchard Café.

This walk has a mixture of pathways and some are uneven and narrow. There is a bridge with a steep incline and several walk-around and kissing gates.

For more information on walks in the Lee Valley Regional Park please contact the information centre on 08456 770 600 or visit www.leevalleypark.org.uk