

Let's walk in the Horsted Valley

Horsted Valley is a ribbon of chalk grassland, scrub and ancient woodland stretching from Luton Village all the way through to the Davis Estate and Rochester Airport. The valley consists of several component parts: the former Horsted Farm land, Daisy Banks, Coney Banks, Bishop's Hoath Wood and the Millennium Green. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the Horsted Valley was owned by the War Department and this is the reason it remained largely undeveloped.

A hidden gem, it provides a vital green lung in Medway's urban landscape. A popular area for recreational activities such as dog walking and Sunday league football, Horsted Valley is also an important refuge and habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. It is interesting to note that the former farmland is much less rich in wildlife than the Coney and Daisy Banks because of its previous cultivation.

During the warm summer days it is possible to see many species of butterflies, notably The Marbled White, birds, and the rare man orchid grows on the Daisy Banks. Near Fort Luton there are green woodpeckers, although these are quite shy, often only seen as a burst of bright green as they fly away. In the evenings, moths, owls and bats can be seen and you may even be lucky enough to see the lights of glow worms along the scrubby edges of the grassland.

Like guarding sentinels, two late 19th century Victorian land forts cast a sleepy eye over the valley. Fort Horsted and the smaller Fort Luton were built to defend the overland approaches to HM Dockyard Chatham.



Man Orchid
Photo courtesy of R.I. Moyse

Photo courtesy of Fort Luton

Legend:

- 3.5km/2.2m (Red line)
- 2km/1.25m (Green line)
- 2km/1.25m (Yellow line)
- Steps (Mountain icon)
- Access Points (A in blue box)
- Easy Access Points (A in purple box)
- Play Area (P in green box)
- Car Park (Car icon)

The forts were built by convicts from Borstal prison which was created specifically for this purpose. Made almost entirely from concrete and topped with chalk and earth, the only visible sign of the fort structures was from the rear. The ditches surrounding the forts were also lined with concrete and were intended to be dry. During the excavation of the moat at Fort Luton, an ancient burial site was discovered.

Both are now in private ownership and are scheduled monuments. Fort Luton is open to the public on certain weekends through the year. For more information see their Facebook page or email : info@fortluton.co.uk



The Routes

You can choose from a number of different waymarked routes. The entire valley can be walked as a circular route of approximately 6.5km and there are a number of shorter trails of 1.5km to 3km. For ease of use all of the walks have been colour coded, both in this leaflet and on the way marking used along the routes. All distances are approximate and refer to the walk only, not the links used to access them.

The paths are mostly small unmade tracks and all of them will have areas of incline due to the valley setting. There are steps on some of the circuits, as marked, but no stiles, and some paths may be slippery. Don't forget to wear suitable shoes or boots.

There is on street parking and a small carpark at Barnfield – marked on the map.

