

Leaving the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park by train to Bedford St Johns, then walk or cycle through Bedford's floodplain and onto Priory Country Park, The Grange Estate and Willington Village all of which form part of Bedford River Valley Park.

Access information

You will walk across surface types ranging from hard & firm with & without stones and the steepest linear gradient is 1:6 with cross falls between 1:10 and 1:15. Bedford St Johns Station has a set of steps and there are kissing gates at the Millennium Country Park. Public toilets are available at the Forest Centre, Priory Country Park and at the privately owned Danish Camp so please purchase a drink or something to eat if using their facilities.

Facilities

The Forest Centre has ample parking, toilets and a café bar, whilst Priory does have toilets and within Willington you will find the Crown pub and Danish Camp who have toilets and serve hot/cold food

Bus

For timetable details ring 01234 220030 or visit **www.travelsmart.com**

LetsGo for details of other walks or rides throughout Bedfordshire please visit **www.letsgo.org.uk**

Let us keep you informed

Promoted
Route

7



For further information on all parts of the Forest of Marston Vale, our activities, and the facilities of the Forest Centre please visit:

www.marstonvale.org

Receive news about the Forest including what's on (either by post or email) by signing up via our website or by calling the Forest Centre.

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Partners:
Forest Volunteers, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, The British Horse Society and Marston P3 Group

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 NATURAL ENGLAND

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Priory Country Park by Daniel Fellman



**Bedford St Johns Station
to The Grange Estate
(6.5 miles)**

 the Forest of Marston Vale



Starling

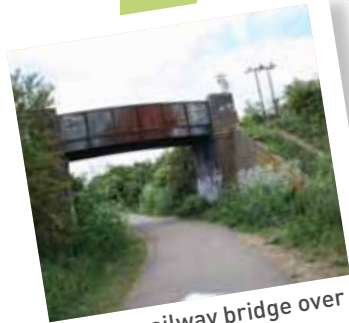
Kingfisher © B Mason

Forest Centre to Bedford St Johns Station to The Grange Estate

From the Forest Centre follow the brick paved path towards the car park to the kissing gate & horse stile opposite the roundabout. From the kissing gate turn left onto the surfaced track to the zebra crossing & continue ahead following the perimeter path to Millbrook Station. Take the train from Millbrook Station to Bedford St Johns. Cyclists are permitted to use the train

Trains are usually every hour but please check before travelling. www.londonmidland.com or ring 08457 484950. Please note there is no Sunday service.

1 Leave the train station by the stairs and turn left down Ampthill Road heading for Bedford Town Centre and the large roundabout. Take care when crossing the round about and take the third exit called Rope Walk signed (A5140) using the left hand footway. Follow Rope Walk to the next roundabout and take second exit into gravel car park following signs to Bedford Town Centre and Priory Country Park to cycleway bridge over the Great River Ouse.



Former railway bridge over Sustrans Route

2

At bridge turn right and follow Sustrans Route 51 cycleway signs to Priory Country Park and Sandy with the river to your left. Continue along the surfaced path alongside the river passing under the Longholme Road Bridge to a junction with a bridge to your left but you should bear right and then immediately left following signs to Priory Country Park and Sandy. Cross over 2 more bridges and continue along path walking past Priory Marina until you come to the access road for Priory Country Park which has a visitor centre and toilets.

3

Cross the access road and bear right then immediately left still following Sustrans 51 signs to Willinton & Sandy to a series of former railway bridges that once carried trains from Oxford and Cambridge. This section might be rich in aromas as you will now be passing Anglian Water's sewage works. Continue ahead passing beneath railway bridge where the path will then open out into an arable landscape with the busy A421 bypass and overbridge

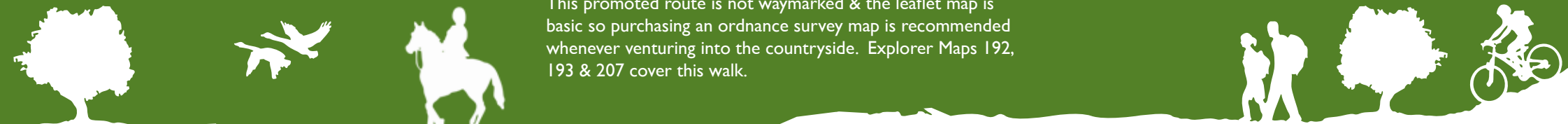
ahead of you. If you can stand the noise of the traffic take a minute to look at the surrounding landscape which has recently been restored after years of mineral extraction but is still rich in archaeology some of which are scheduled ancient monuments. Interpretation boards are just ahead that will explain the abundance of heritage evidence that lies buried beneath the soil.

4

Over the bridge to a series of interpretation boards and continue along the surfaced Sustrans Route still following signs for Willinton and Sandy. The fields to your left and right were recently planted with native trees that include, ash, willow, birch, oak and hazel. Continue ahead and turn left just before the access road following signs to the Riverside Path and access the Grange Estate. The Grange Estate was purchased by the Marston Vale Trust in 2006 and forms part of Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) which will create a park consisting of wet woodland, grassland, open water, public access and areas dedicated to habitat and wildlife conservation. Once completed BRVP will be bigger than Hyde Park and Central Park!

Maps

This promoted route is not waymarked & the leaflet map is basic so purchasing an ordnance survey map is recommended whenever venturing into the countryside. Explorer Maps 192, 193 & 207 cover this walk.



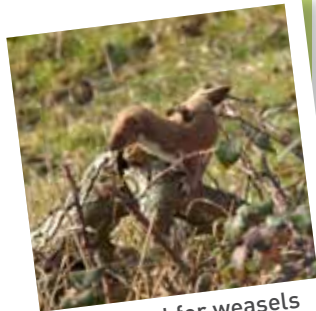
Forest Centre to Bedford St Johns Station to The Grange Estate

5

Follow the surface path along the boundary of the Grange Estate taking care when crossing internal tracks that become muddy during prolonged periods of rain. The path runs parallel with the A421 road for a short section before fading away and you now have the Great River Ouse as company to your left. Watch out for Kingfishers on the river! Halfway round the Grange Estate you will come to a junction where you can either continue to follow the surfaced path alongside the river to Danish Camp or you can cross through the middle of the Grange Estate and rejoin the Sustrans Route 51 Cycleway at the end of Church End, Willington and pick up signs back to Bedford or Sandy. Please see the map as the middle route will shorten your journey by a mile but a visit to Danish Camp is recommended!

6

Continue walking alongside the river until you come to a series of Pylons and a small woodland called Bulge Wood and a short circular walk through the trees and over a back channel that was created as a refuge for



Watch out for weasels & stoats along the Sustrans route
© Don Mason

fish during flood events and shelter for spawning fish. Past the pylons and follow the path round site with views to your right of the grassland and Dovecote Lake that is home to anglers and wildfowl and was created as part of the restoration of the site after mineral extraction. The path continues round the site and leads to a bridge over the Elstow Brook with a pond dipping platform close by before exiting the Grange Estate at a junction with the Sustrans Route 51 cycleway where if you turn left you can visit Danish Camp or if you turn right then you will be heading back to Bedford.

7

From Danish Camp you can either turn left and continue walking to Blunham and Sandy or turn right and start your journey back to Bedford following the Sustrans Route 51 signs. Willington Village is worth a visit with an abundance of listed buildings that include the 16 Century Dovecote and Stable located at Church End. To get back to Bedford then the Sustrans Route 51 cycleway can be accessed from either Danish Camp or at the end of Church End. Once back to your



Dipping platform at the Grange Estate

original entrance point into the Grange Estate then simply retrace your steps back to Bedford St Johns Station.

Notes

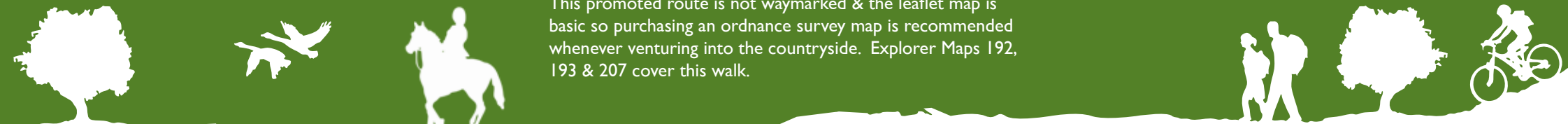


Common terns frequent visitors to the Grange
© Barry Mason



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