How to find Priory Country Park

Access Information

There are disabled parking spaces in the main car park, off Barkers Lane. The Visitor Centre and toilets are accessible by wheelchairs. The path around the lake is surfaced and suitable for wheelchairs and prams.

When to visit

The Park is open every day of the year. The main route around the Park is accessible in all weathers although other areas can get wet and muddy. The Park is busy at weekends, especially on Sundays, but is quieter during the week.

Public Transport

Stagecoach route no. 4 bus stops approx. 200m from the park at the western end of Riverfield Drive from Bedford town centre. The nearest railway station is Bedford, approx. 2 miles away.

Contact Information

Park Address
Priory Country Park, Visitor’s Centre
Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9DJ

Rangers
You can contact the Rangers by phone. Please leave a message and the Rangers will get back to you.
Tel: 01234 718012 (24hr answer phone)
E-mail: prioryranger@bedford.gov.uk
Web: www.bedford.gov.uk

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire,
Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire
Tel: 01234 366213
E-mail: bedford@wildlifenbcn.org

Cloverdale Retreat Cafe
Tel: 01234 325462

Priory Water Sport Association
E-mail: info@priorycyc.org.uk
Web: www.priorycyc.org.uk

Canoe Slalom
Bookings: www.canoealacom.co.uk/courses/cardington.htm

Priory Marina Beefeater Restaurant
Table Bookings: 01234 352883

Priory Marina (British Waterways)
Boats and Moorings: 01234 351931

Other walks

Find out about more of Bedfordshire’s walking and riding routes as well as nature reserves and country parks by visiting
www.leatsgo.org.uk
Let’s Go! Bedfordshire’s Promoted Routes & Sites

Circular walks

Priory Country Park
Riverside Wildlife Trail
Approx 6.5 km / 4 miles. Time: 3.5 hours. Bed.png

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Priory Country Park

Riverside Wildlife Trail

Approx 6.5 km / 4 miles  Time: 3.5 hours

1. Bird life to look out for on the lake from the main path includes: Cormorants, Mallard ducks, Canada Geese and Mute Swans.

2. You may see Willow fencing in the water, this is bank revetment work. It is done to try and prevent the bank and the path from eroding away into the lake. Along either side of the main path you will see Willow trees growing. These trees are managed by rotational coppicing, each year a section is cut down, the new growth encourages insects and nesting birds.

3. Follow the path through the Finger Lakes conservation area.

4. The Floral and New Meadow are left long to encourage biodiversity, they are a haven for butterflies, dragonflies and beetles. Areas of grass are kept short to create paths and provide space for activities such as kite flying.

5. In the 1840s the New Cut was dug out to create an embankment for the railway. The cycle path now traces the route of the old line and is a part of route 51 connecting Milton Keynes to Sandy.

6. On the far side of the riverbank gravel extraction has created the landscape. Other habitats such as reedbeds can be created after the gravel has been extracted.

7. Riverside Brook carries water down from the New Cut and feeds Riverside Pond.

8. Riverside Pond is a popular area with anglers fishing for Tench and Pike. It is an important breeding area for fish.

9. Along this stretch Willow trees and Dogwood fringe the path. These are managed by coppicing and the young growth offers some contrast in colour.

10. Go down the ramp and into the Floral Meadow. Keep an eye out for butterflies, dragonflies and birds such as Pheasant and Green Woodpecker.

11. A little way down the route a small path leads off to the left hand side to Kramer bird hide. From here quiet observation may reveal sightings of birds such as Heron, Coot, Moorhen, Mallard ducks and Grebe.

12. There is a lovely view over the Finger Lakes from this point. The banks on the right are popular with night fishermen fishing for Carp.

13. To the left is the canoe slalom, this is regularly used for national canoeing events.

14. Following the slalom up to its source, you will see the sluice gate which is used to control the amount of water flowing down it. If the river levels become very high, the gate can be opened to divert some of the water away.

15. The trail continues along the river bank before cutting through Press Meadow and rejoining the river bank at Cardington Walk. Here there are a number of veteran Willow trees which support many insects and species of fungi.

16. The trail then leads through a Scheduled Ancient Monument, called the Fish ponds, before joining the cycle path and leading back to the park entrance.