

Ruddington & the Great Central Railway



The wonderful countryside at Ruddington.

Here is a great family walk which, of course, also includes the four-legged member, as there is something for everyone. There's an extensive play area for the children, industrial heritage for transport enthusiasts, outstanding views and a lovely nature reserve. What about the most important member of the family? Although some areas of the nature reserve are out of bounds or 'on-lead' only, there are plenty of places for a good run and lots of chances to meet other doggy friends.

Rushcliffe Country Park was created around the site of a decommissioned Second World War munitions factory. The factory was built in 1940 and comprised over 200 buildings. After 1945 when the site was no longer required, it was used for auctioning redundant ex-military vehicles and equipment. It finally closed in 1983. In 1989 work began by Nottinghamshire County Council to clear the rubble which was then used to landscape the park.

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Part of the park became the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre which has an impressive collection of classic buses and steam trains in various gauges.

The country park has over five miles of pathways, wild flower meadows and over 400 species of trees.

Terrain

Well-maintained paths in the park. The field verge and path at the side of the railway can be overgrown and wet in prolonged periods of heavy rain.

Where to park

There is a large car park at Rushcliffe Country Park, with a machine for suggested donations of £1 to help with the upkeep of the park. The gates are open from 8 am, with a closing time displayed on the entrance gate (GR: SK 575322). **OS map:** Explorer 260 Nottingham.

How to get there

Take the A60 south from Nottingham, signed for Ruddington and Loughborough. On leaving Ruddington turn right at the last roundabout which has a brown information sign for Rushcliffe Country Park and the Transport Heritage Museum. Continue to the next roundabout and then turn right. The car park is on the left.

Nearest refreshments

Do I tell you about a small gem of a café? You will have to travel for another 4 miles along the A60 towards Loughborough. In Costock you will find **Six Acre Nurseries** and here there is the small **Garden Deli & Coffee Shop** which does wonderful sandwiches and great toasties. Would it help if I said they also have a very good selection of home-made cakes? The café is open from 10 am until 5 pm every day except Mondays (closed). They welcome dogs on leads, or food can be taken away. Postcode LE12 6XB. ☎ 01509 852339.

Dog factors

Distance: 4½ miles

Road walking: Two short sections on minor farm roads. There is a crossing of a preserved railway line.

Livestock: None

Stiles: None

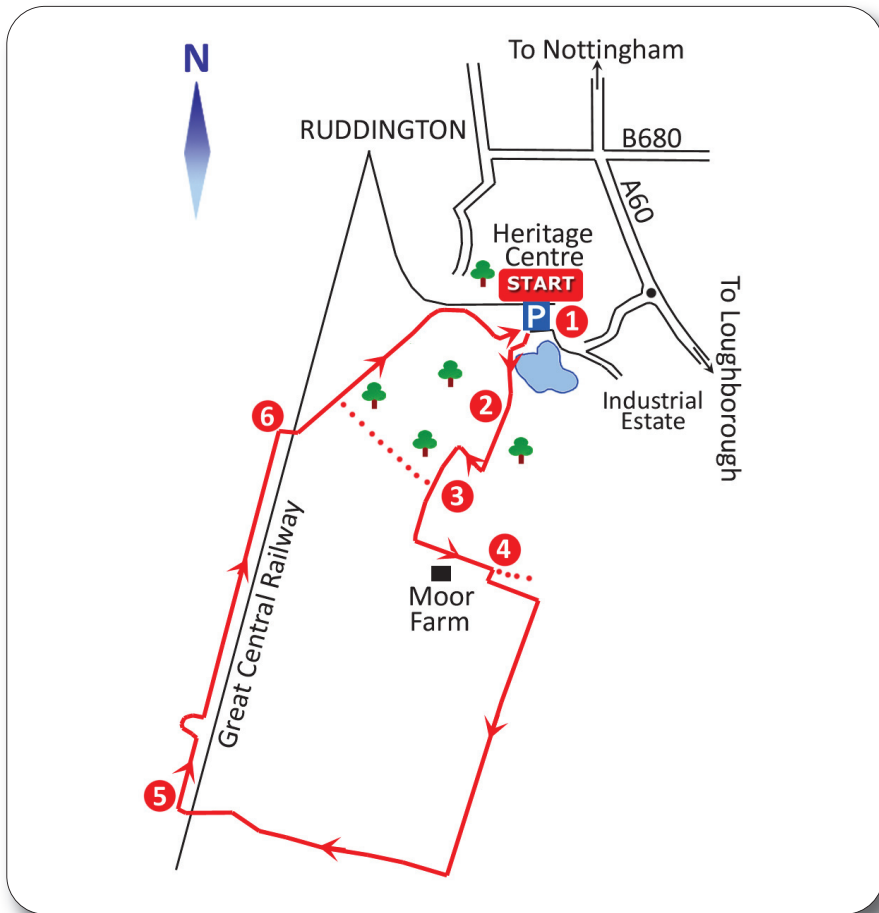
Nearest vets: Ruddington Veterinary Clinic, Ruddington. ☎ 0115 921 2155.



The Walk

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- 1 Walk past the country park buildings, keeping to the right. There is a lake in front of you. Dogs should be on the lead in this area. Turn right and take the wide path with the lake on your left. Take the next path on the left, still walking round the lake. Ignore the dog-walking areas on the right and continue to a T-junction.
- 2 At the T-junction turn right and follow the wider path to a Y-junction. Keep right here and follow the wide path with meadows on either side.



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The meadows are home to over 100 species of wild flowers. There is also an abundance of birds in the park, including yellowhammer, reed bunting, dunnock and redstart. The barn owl boxes are also home to little owls and kestrels. Amongst the reptiles present are grass snakes, great crested and smooth newts, and red-eared terrapins.

Continue along the path passing a seat and a sign for The Hedgerows. Just after the sign take a grassy path on the left which bends to the left and reaches a yellow barrier.

- 3 Pass round the barrier and out of the park. Continue straight ahead up the tarmac road towards some farm buildings (**Moor Farm**). The road bends to the left with a farmhouse on the right. There is a gap in the hedge halfway down the road with a footpath sign.
- 4 Go through the gap and turn left. Follow the path round the field for about ¾ mile. Halfway down the field the path passes from the right to the left-hand side of the hedge. On reaching a T-junction, turn right and follow the path until you reach a railway embankment.
- 5 Cross the preserved railway line with care and directly turn right following a path with the railway line on your right for about a mile.

The railway line was part of the Great Central Railway which ran between Sheffield and London Marylebone. It was the last ‘main line’ to be built until the Channel Tunnel rail link in 2003. Due to its late construction, the company was able to take advantage of the latest technology, including steam excavators. The line was heavily engineered with viaducts and wide cuttings with a maximum gradient of 1:128; there were no sharp curves or level crossings which ensured a fast service for both passengers and freight. From the outset, the line had to compete with established north-south routes and it became the first main line to close in the Beeching era. The Great Central Railway PLC now operates throughout the year from their headquarters at Loughborough Central, running trains from the Heritage Centre at Ruddington as far as East Leake. The line north of Loughborough remained open for freight traffic to serve the gypsum mine at East Leake.

- 6 Eventually you reach a farm road. Turn right over the bridge and follow the road to reach a barrier. At the barrier turn right, back into **Rushcliffe Country**



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Park. Keep to the path on the left past the children's play area. It is possible to see the railway lines running into the Heritage Centre on the left. For a better view, stand on the white walkway bridge on the left.

The Nottingham Heritage Centre occupies the former Ruddington Factory Halt. No trace of the station remains, but the long building with the white roof is the original depot building. In the early 1990s a group of transport enthusiasts set up the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) Ltd, with the aim of re-instating the remaining line into Loughborough. The Heritage Centre is well worth a visit.

Continue along the original path which takes you back to the car park.



A photo call near the lake.

