

Spotters guide to mushrooms and fungi

With autumn in full swing now is the perfect time to take a stroll and embrace the great outdoors. In this edition of Essex Explorer, we've worked with our Essex Country Park Rangers to bring you a spotters guide to some of the different types of mushrooms and fungi you are likely to see.



There are over 15,000 different species of wild mushrooms and fungi in the country and you can use our guide to spot the most common species when you are visiting one of the Essex Country Parks.

Please remember, do not pick, eat or trample any mushrooms or fungi.

Not only are many species poisonous when consumed but you would also be breaking the by-laws of Essex Country Parks as it is illegal to pick them.

Also, remember mushrooms and fungi are a vital part of a woodland ecosystem and a food source for the park's animal inhabitants.

Bracket Fungus



Jelly Ear



Chanterelle Mushroom



Oyster Mushroom



Chicken of the Woods



Panther Cap



Fly Agaric



Penny Bun



Giant Puffball



Toadstool Mushroom



[Discover all the Essex Country Parks here.](#)

Autumnal strolls

The onset of autumn brings crisp air, fiery foliage and rustling leaves. Wrap up in your favourite jumper, head out and discover seasonal strolls to get active this autumn.

Whether you are a keen walker or struggle to get your steps in, autumn is a great time to explore the great outdoors on foot.

Why not start with a scenic walk surrounded by nature and enjoy the delights of the changing seasons at the Essex Country Parks?

We have put together a selection of strolls for you to choose from.

Belhus Woods Country Park, Aveley

Enjoy the autumnal shades of red, yellow, and orange with a stroll through the woods. From the car park, take the footpath towards Running Water Wood and then bear left into Whitehall Wood. Be amazed by the caramel colours of the sweet chestnut trees and meander through the fallen spiky horse chestnut cases. Exit Whitehall Wood into the meadow and head back towards the car park. The trees and shrubs lining the meadows – including dog wood, cherry and field maple – all come into colour at varying intervals.

This short walk is perfect for all ages and abilities.

Top tip: Dogwood has amazing deep colours including reds and plum purple shades – spot these on the field and woodland margins in Bumpstead, Brock or Cockhide meadows.

[Discover more about Belhus Woods Country Park here.](#)

Make your visit a more atmospheric one by arriving first thing in the morning when the mist, frost or dew is still lingering. Look out for wildlife – including squirrels and birds – feeding on berries and nuts.

We hope you enjoy getting outside and active with one of our recommended walks – hopefully you will enjoy it so much that you will rack up the steps without realising. It's just about finding what's right for you.

Discover local physical activities and sport opportunities near you via the 'Find Your Active' activity finder: www.activeessex.org/activity-finder



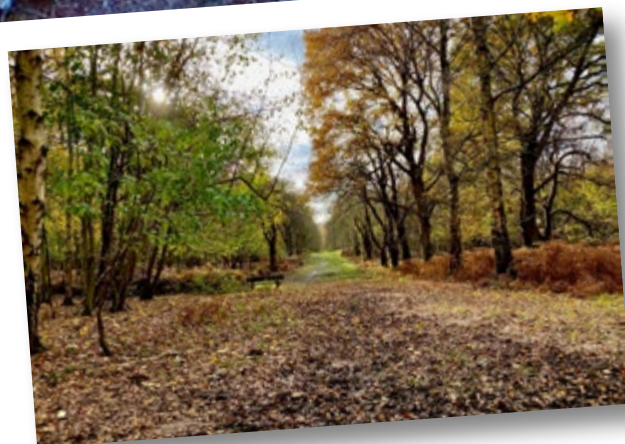
Danbury Country Park, Chelmsford

Enjoy a circular walk around the landscaped lakes at Danbury Country Park – this accessible walking route is perfect for the whole family to enjoy, from young children to grandparents.

From the Woods car park take the path towards the Lake's car park, heading on straight towards the toilet block and Middle Lake. Carry on past the toilets and down to the Ice House, venturing off the path into the leafy woodland.

Amongst the fallen autumn leaves, see if you can spot the mushrooms popping up. Expect to see vivid red fly agaric, oyster and wood blewit mushrooms and porcelain fungus. **Please do not pick or touch the mushroom and fungi but feel free to take photos.**

[Discover more about Danbury Country Park here.](#)



Weald Country Park, Brentwood

From Lincoln's Lane car park follow the footpath across the ridge of the hill – enjoy the sweeping views and autumnal colours of the woodland. Take a right down Chestnut Avenue. This is the perfect spot for a few family photos as this tree-lined path will be blooming with caramel colours. Head through the forest and you might be lucky enough to spot the herd of wild deer.

Not able to get a glimpse of the wild deer? Then head over to the deer enclosure near the visitor centre to get up close with these beautiful animals. Behind the enclosure is a vivid, scarlet red acer tree which looks particularly stunning in autumn.

[Discover more about Weald Country Park here.](#)