

Old Dean Common

Old Dean Common covers much of the southern part of the forest and is a large area of heathland with hills and the most open part of the forest. This area is dominated by Saddleback Hill, which is roughly central and gives good views all around to Swinley in the north and Farnborough to the south. The area is owned by the MoD and you will commonly come across soldiers on exercise when passing through. Navigation is not too difficult as the area is open and so you can usually see your way easily.

Passing through the middle of Old Dean are high-voltage powerlines, which run from Owlsmoor and cross the A30 at American Golf. These are useful for navigation since they are easily seen from most of the common and help orientate you. Heading north perpendicular to the power lines will set you back in the direction of The Look Out, which is about 2 – 2.5 miles away depending on the route you choose.

There are some good quiet trails to the back of Saddleback Hill which follow the officer's houses forming Sandhurst Military Academy with lots of hidden tracks and hills. As it is over 2.5 miles from The Look Out just to get to this section of woodland, this area is suitable for longer runs. I can't advise any specific routes, but running there are trails running all round the edge of the wood which are a good point to start, and no run in this area should go without climbing Saddleback Hill! The hill has several paths from the top from all sides, and some are particularly steep and challenging.

Heading out of this part of the wood involves climbing the ridge where a tarmac military road can be found which takes you back to Lower Star Post. Alternatively, follow the vague stream (Wishmoor Bottom) which will take you towards Surrey Hill, else head for the transmitter tower which will take you towards Bagshot.

