



A guide to  
enjoying the  
outdoors  
in North  
Edinburgh

# Wild Places & Open Spaces



Community  
Gardens  
Parks  
Beaches  
Cycle Paths





## WILD PLACES MAP KEY

- |    |                              |    |                                     |
|----|------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1  | Cycle Paths                  | 11 | Muirhouse Linear Park               |
| 2  | Granton Castle Walled Garden | 12 | East Pilton Park                    |
| 3  | Granton Community Garden     | 13 | Silverknowes Parkway playing fields |
| 4  | Pilton Community Garden      | 14 | Easter Drylaw Park                  |
| 5  | NEAC Community Garden        | 15 | Gypsy Brae Woods                    |
| 6  | Granton Hub Community Garden | 16 | Cyclone Bike Track                  |
| 7  | Drylaw Community Garden      | 17 | Silverknowes Beach/Promenade        |
| 8  | Forthquarter Park            | 18 | Granton Beach                       |
| 9  | West Pilton Park             | 19 | Granton Harbour                     |
| 10 | Granton Crescent Park        | 20 | River Almond Walkway                |



# Introduction

The areas of Pilton, Muirhouse, Granton and Drylaw in North Edinburgh are blessed with a magnificent mixture of wild, outdoor places where local people can go and enjoy being connected to nature.

If you like being by the water, you can visit two beaches and a harbour, a river and a duck pond. If walking or cycling is your thing there are plenty of routes to choose from along the old railway public pathways, Silverknowes Promenade and the Gypsy Brae Woodland Bike Trail. The area is also peppered with fantastic community gardens, public play parks and wide open green spaces where people can get active or simply sit and be.

Spending time outdoors is proven to have great benefits to our health. However, despite this, many people do not spend any time in places of nature. In an increasing digital age it is more important than ever to take time away from our smart phones, televisions and computers and get outside in the fresh air. In this booklet we showcase some of the natural environments across the community and hear from some local people about how and why they use them and why others should too.

Studies show that spending time in the outdoors can;

- Increase self-esteem and resilience against stress and adversity
- Improve concentration, learning, creativity, cognitive development, cooperation, flexibility and self-awareness

*‘Though we often see ourselves as separate from nature, humans are a part of that wilderness’* Louv, R (2005)

# Cycle Paths and Woodland Trails

Thanks to the Old Railway, Edinburgh has an amazing network of secret pathways branching out across and connecting the city.

As well as being a fantastic location for walking, jogging and cycling, they are also home to many different species of trees and wildflowers, birds, insects and other creatures; little ribbons of nature waiting to be explored!

We visited a spot at the junction between West Granton, Ferry Road and Granton Access paths with local Herbalist Ally Hurcikova. Ally visits a number of places in the area to forage for plants which are used to make herbal medicines for treating patients in herbal clinics across Edinburgh. To find out more about herbal workshops, courses & clinics.

**Contact:** [ally@grassrootsremedies.co.uk](mailto:ally@grassrootsremedies.co.uk)

**Website:** [www.grassrootsremedies.co.uk](http://www.grassrootsremedies.co.uk)

You can get a map of  
Edinburgh's Cycle Routes from  
[www.spokes.org.uk/spokes-maps](http://www.spokes.org.uk/spokes-maps)

Autumn- the cycle paths are also  
a great Blackberry Hotspot!!!



---

## Cyclone Bike Track

Situated in and around the woods at Gypsy Brae, near to Silverknowes Esplanade, are a number of mountain bike trails fit for everyone. There is an easier route for families as well as something a little more difficult for those who like a challenge. The tracks are free to use!

**Find out more:**

[www.mydg.org.uk/cyclone-gypsy-brae-bike-track](http://www.mydg.org.uk/cyclone-gypsy-brae-bike-track)



## Gypsy Brae Woods

Early years staff from the Local area have been amazed by how much spending time in the woods has benefited the children they take there for Forest School.

Forest school is all about getting kids outdoors and away from technology, no matter the weather. Whether its toasting marshmallows over the fire keeping them warm as snow lies on the ground or, listening to the rain pitter-patter on the roof of their makeshift shelters; the children experiencing how the woods change with the seasons

You've heard it before, there is no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothing.

Early years play leader Nicky tells us how bouncing on fallen tree branches and running on the uneven ground has really improved their balance and coordination. Their language skills have also developed at an amazing rate. One of the biggest ways spending time in the woods has benefitted the children has also been their confidence.

Nicky says *'I feel really passionate about getting out and getting the children outdoors'* Despite being close to the popular esplanade at Silverknowes, the woods are surprisingly underused by families with younger children, Nicky tells us. *'Whether this relates to the myths about outdoor play being dangerous or just a lack of awareness that they are there is uncertain, but the woods are a great free and accessible resource for local people.'*

**FACT:** Scientists suggest children need contact with nature just as much as they need food and sleep. Louv, R (2005) Pg. 3

### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Build a den
- Climb a tree





# Community Gardens

Wherever you go in North Edinburgh you will find a community garden where you can get your hands dirty, learn all about growing and gardening and meet new people.

The areas gardeners welcome the involvement of local people in their activities. Whatever your age, experience or ability, there is something for everyone to do.

*‘Gardening is so good for you!  
Not only does it improve strength and fitness,  
it also reduces stress and has great social benefits too.’*

## Granton Castle Walled Garden

Linda Garcia was born and brought up in the area and is an active member of the community. Linda has been involved in an initiative to restore the historic, Granton Castle Walled Garden and protect it from being built upon. Linda is passionate about preserving and sharing this local history with the community. Linda tells us;

*‘This historical green spot is one of the few, truly wild places not polluted by Industrialisation. If more people got involved and supported the garden it could have a real positive impact on community spirit. It is a sanctuary for people who come here. We see people from all walks of life coming along, they seem to find it calming and therapeutic. It is a real hidden gem!’*

**Find out more:** <https://grantoncastlewalledgarden.wordpress.com/>

**Contact:** [grantoncastlegardengroup@gmail.com](mailto:grantoncastlegardengroup@gmail.com)



## Granton Community Garden

A group of residents who grow food on street corners, encourage gardening, and host community meals. They are even growing wheat, that is being milled into flour to make their very own local bread.

Resident Stephen (50) is one of dozens of people from the area now involved in the garden since it began in 2010.

He says *'It gets me out, gets my hands dirty and gets my mind off things when I'm feeling fed up. The best part has been meeting new people and getting involved in new things.'*

**FB:** [www.facebook.com/grantoncommunitygardeners](http://www.facebook.com/grantoncommunitygardeners)

**Email:** [gardengranton@gmail.com](mailto:gardengranton@gmail.com)



PHOTOS: Tom Kirby Granton Community Gardeners

## Pilton Community Garden

A community garden in West Pilton started by local residents with the dream of growing lots of lovely fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs on their doorstep.

Local resident Ann visits the garden on a weekly basis to carry out various tasks and enjoys being outside in all seasons. She loves the simplicity of the space and always feels energetic after spending time there. Ann encourages other people to come along and see if the garden is for them.

**Find out more:** [www.facebook.com/PiltonCommunityGardeners/](http://www.facebook.com/PiltonCommunityGardeners/)

**Email:** [piltoncommunitygardeners@gmail.com](mailto:piltoncommunitygardeners@gmail.com)



PHOTOS: Friends of Granton Castle Walled Garden volunteers

## Granton Hub Garden

The space at the back of historic Madelvic house used to be wasteland but it has now been transformed into a thriving community garden thanks to the help of volunteers.

Local resident Ann is very passionate about appreciating the small patches of wildness left in the area and gets a real sense of achievement from clearing, cutting back and digging in the garden.

*'There is plenty scope for people to come along and contribute their own ideas on how it can be developed. Working together not only improves the space but also builds relationships within the community.'*

**Find out more:** <https://grantonhub.org/outdoors/> **Get involved:** [community@grantonhub.org](mailto:community@grantonhub.org)



PHOTO: Gina Fierlafijn

---

## North Edinburgh Arts - Community Garden

A haven in the heart of Muirhouse and open to everyone. There is a play area, sand pits, gardening plots for groups, home grown fruit and veg for the Pop-In Café to use and seats and spaces for relaxing.

Ian heard about the garden from his healthcare professional, he finds it a very calming and supportive environment.

*'I have learned so much about growing my own vegetables and how to cook them'*

**Find out more:** <https://northedinburgharts.co.uk/north-edinburgh-grows/>

**Contact:** [northedinburghgrows@gmail.com](mailto:northedinburghgrows@gmail.com) **Tel:** 0131 315 2151

PHOTOS: Valla Moodie- North Edinburgh Arts Centre





## Drylaw Community Garden

Managed entirely by volunteers, the garden at Drylaw Community Centre offers opportunities for people curious about or interested in gardening and growing vegetables, being outdoors or meeting new people.

**Find out more:** [www.drylawnc.org.uk](http://www.drylawnc.org.uk)

**Contact:** [info@drylawnc.org.uk](mailto:info@drylawnc.org.uk)

**Tel:** 0131 315 4989



PHOTO: Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre

## Community Parks

### Forthquarter Park

This fantastic community landscape features a duck pond, waterside walkways, mature woodland and local wildlife. The clean open grass spaces are also perfect for picnics or ball games with the kids.

Local mum Rachael Gardener visits the park regularly with her two young children.

*'It's really good for my little boy who's autistic. It's got lots of space for him to run about and feel free instead of us being stuck in the house. It's his happy place. It calms him down a lot as he can get really frustrated. He's always smiling and having fun when we come down here and that makes me happy.'*



## West Pilton Park

In the heart of Pilton, this community park has a large grassy area suitable for all kinds of sporting activities, Junior/toddler and teen play areas, a footprint sculpture and woodland.



The community-led 'Friends of West Pilton Park (Parklife) group also hold regular events on the park such as family fun days, Easter events and litter picks.

**For more info:** <https://www.facebook.com/WestPiltonParklife/>

**Email:** [westpiltonparklife@gmail.com](mailto:westpiltonparklife@gmail.com)



---

## Muirhouse Linear park

Great for kids with play area, basketball court and a skateboard park and BMX track. The park is also a busy thoroughfare for cyclists and joggers.

**FACT:** Studies suggest that thoughtful exposure of youngsters to nature can be a powerful form of therapy for attention-deficit disorder and other conditions. Louv, R (2005) Pg. 3



## East Pilton Park

A well-used community park in the middle of East Pilton with a Cherry tree lined pathway running through the centre. It has a large grassy area suitable for ball games and fitness activities, Junior/Toddler Play area, full size Football Pitch and pavilion, benches and picnic tables.




---

## Silverknowes Parkway playing fields

Large open grassy area next to Silverknowes Golf Course with nice views across the Forth of Firth. Suitable for a range of activities: ball games, kite flying, walking, jogging and all kinds of fitness training. Also well-used by local dog walkers.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Photo the same patch of sky every day for a month and see how it changes
- Pick a special 'sit spot' in nature. Get to know it by day/night, in rain and snow, summer and winter, get to know the types of birds and trees



## Granton Crescent Park

With great views overlooking the Forth, Granton Crescent Park consists of open grassy areas and a Toddler/Junior playpark.



### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Make a spider web from sticks and string
- Outdoor Tic Tac Toe- make the grid and crosses out of sticks.

---

## Easter Drylaw Park

As well as having plenty open spaces to run around in, this park also features a Junior and Toddler play area, climbing wall and Stunt Bike Track.





# Coastal Walks and Beaches

The area boasts some beautiful coastal spots with fabulous views over the Firth of Forth.

## Crammond Beach and Silverknowes Esplanade

An expansive sandy beach and three mile long esplanade kitted out with benches, cycle racks, public toilets and outdoor gym equipment. Crammond Beach and Silverknowes Esplanade are a perfect location for building sandcastles, walking, jogging, cycling, roller blading and flying kites! People can also enjoy Fish and Chips or an Ice cream from the local café; a fantastic outdoor spot for all the family.

**FACT:** Spending time by the sea helps strengthen our immune system and is also great for relieving stress.





## Granton Beach

Not to be confused with Granton Harbour/Wardie Bay, this less known spot can be found along the West Shore Road. The smaller Granton beach is perfect for collecting seashells and fossils, skimming stones across the water or watching the sunset.

*‘Unlike television, nature does not steal time, it amplifies it. [...] Nature inspires creativity in a child (or adult) by demanding visualisation and the full use of all the senses.’* Louv, R (2005) Pg. 7



## Granton Harbour

Opened in 1838, Granton Harbour was once a thriving fishing and trading port. Queen Victoria arrived for her visit to Edinburgh via Granton Harbour in 1842. The sea front is also listed as an important geological site after the discovery of ancient fossils.



*'Nature breeds wonder'*

Louv, R (2005) Pg.9




---

## River Almond Walkway

This is a beautiful riverside walk along the River Almond, accessible from the end of the Silverknowes Esplanade, taking in woodland, meadows and local wildlife. Watch out for salmon using the newly built (2018) fish pass at the stunning Fair a Far Weir. There is also a 'Friends of River Almond Walkway' group who help with maintaining the pathway as well as working on other projects to improve and encourage wildlife

**Email:** [friendsoftheriveralmondwalkway@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftheriveralmondwalkway@gmail.com)





*We would like to thank the following people without whose help this publication would not be possible:*

**Valla Moodie**  
**Tom Kirby**  
**Kirsty Sutherland**  
**Rachael Gardner**  
**Ally Hurcikova**  
**Linda Garcia**

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

**Penny Donnelly**  
**David McDonald**

WRITTEN BY:

**Lianne Pipskyj**  
Community Development worker  
Pilton Community Health Project  
[liannepipskyj@pchp.org.uk](mailto:liannepipskyj@pchp.org.uk)

## **Pilton Community Health Project**

73 Boswall Parkway, Edinburgh, EH5 2PW

Tel 0131 551 1671 | Email [admin@pchp.org.uk](mailto:admin@pchp.org.uk) | Web [www.pchp.org.uk](http://www.pchp.org.uk)

