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Green light

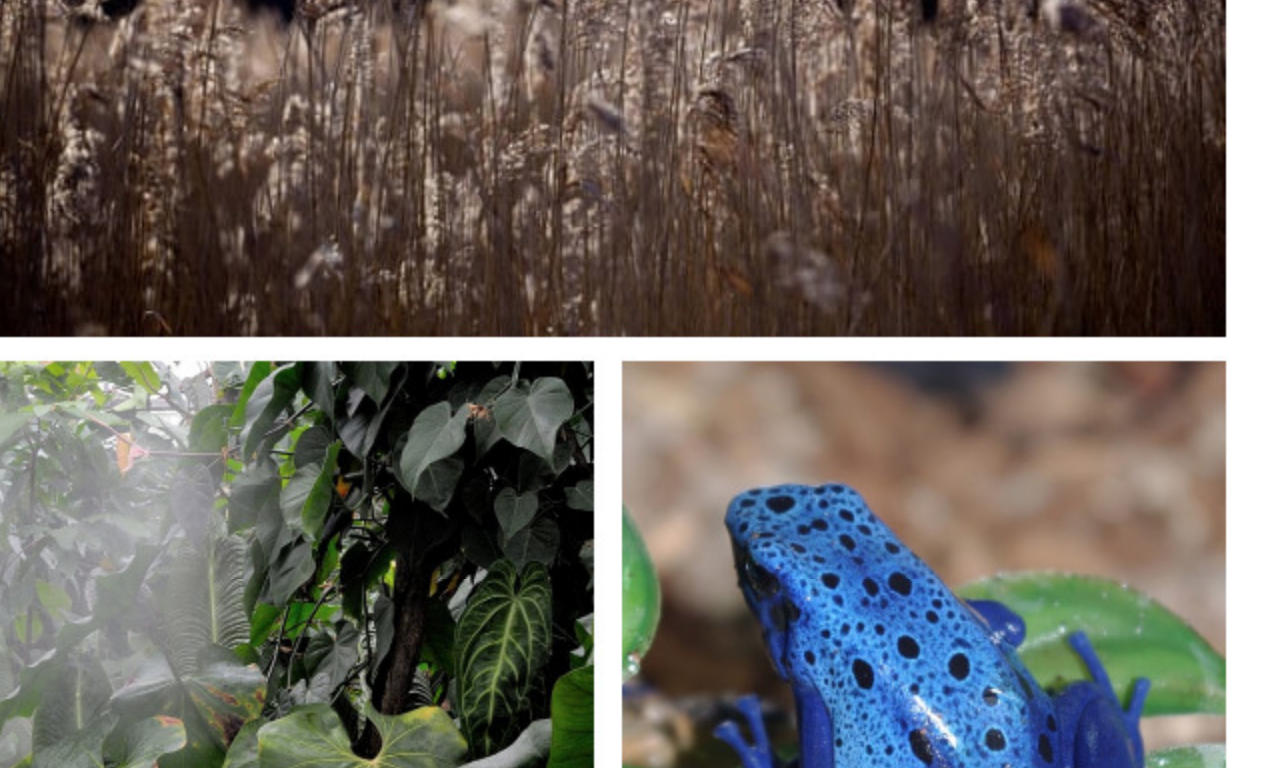
Eco-adventures: five of the best UK day trips for a nature fix

City life dragging you down? Relax: there's an eco-friendly adventure on your doorstep. Taking in natural wonders, wildlife havens and sustainable cafes, here are a few options for day trips by car out of London, Glasgow, Newcastle, Norwich and Leeds

by Anna Bailey

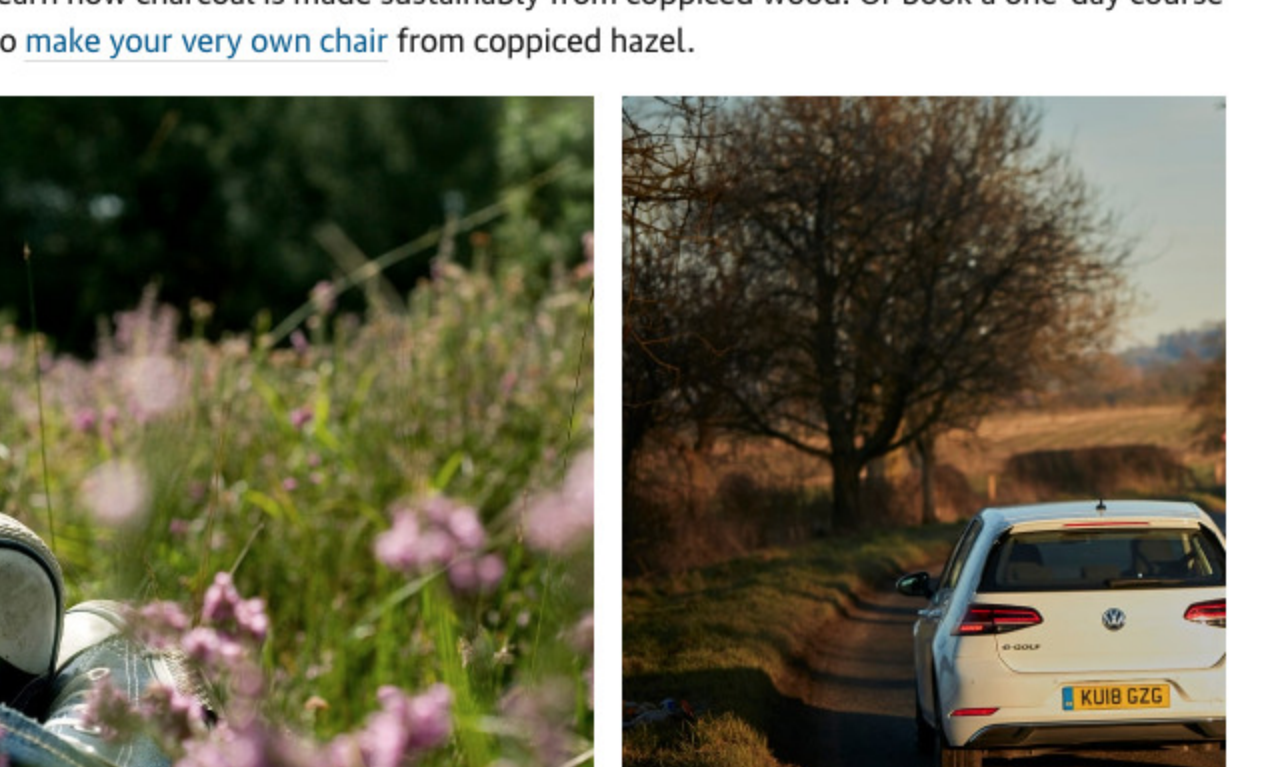
London

On your way out of the big smoke, travelling west, stop at the [London Wetland Centre](#) near Hammersmith. Wander among its tranquil meadows and lakes to spot skylarks and finches, or take in the view from the cafe. Back in your car, head a couple of hours further west to the [Living Rainforest](#) in Thatcham where birds, butterflies and lizards roam in tropical glasshouses.



Alternatively, you could spend a day exploring the [New Forest](#), famous for its wild ponies, open heathland and ancient woodland, just a couple of hours from the capital. Take a scenic drive around the forest via Nomansland to Bolderwood Deer Sanctuary and Arboretum, then on to the postcard-pretty villages of Brockenhurst and Beaulieu.

Or base your day in Pondhead, a serene area of the forest managed by a volunteer-run conservation project in partnership with the Forestry Commission. Make a small donation to join a woodland walk – go in spring to admire the carpet of bluebells – and learn how charcoal is made sustainably from coppiced wood. Or book a one-day course to [make your very own chair](#) from coppiced hazel.



On your way back to London, stop off for a bite at the [River Cottage Kitchen](#) in Winchester and fill up on seasonal, organic and wild food. If you're driving an EV, take advantage of the charging point at the Esso on Bar End Road (SO23 9NP)* around the corner.

Want to make a night of it? Visit [Heckfield Place](#), a luxury hotel with a conscience, in Hook. The 160-hectare (400-acre) estate includes a biodynamic farm, which supplies Michelin-starred chef Skye Gyngell's farm-to-fork menu.

Glasgow

Pack a picnic brunch and make the 45-minute car journey north-west of Glasgow to [Gellston Garden](#), a National Trust gem by the River Clyde with an enchanting walled garden, meadow and kitchen plot. Visitors are welcome to take fresh produce home, leaving a donation in the honesty box. Look out for the famous giant rhubarb, with leaves the size of eagles' wings!



For something equally lovely, drive a little over 30 miles north of Glasgow to [Loch Lomond & The Trossachs national park](#). Take a guided walking tour to admire Scotland's largest loch and the park's deep glens, waterfalls and craggy mountaintops. Refuel with award-winning locally sourced grub at [The Real Food Cafe](#) in Tyndrum. If you're driving an EV, you can charge the battery at the rapid point in the car park (FK20 8RY).

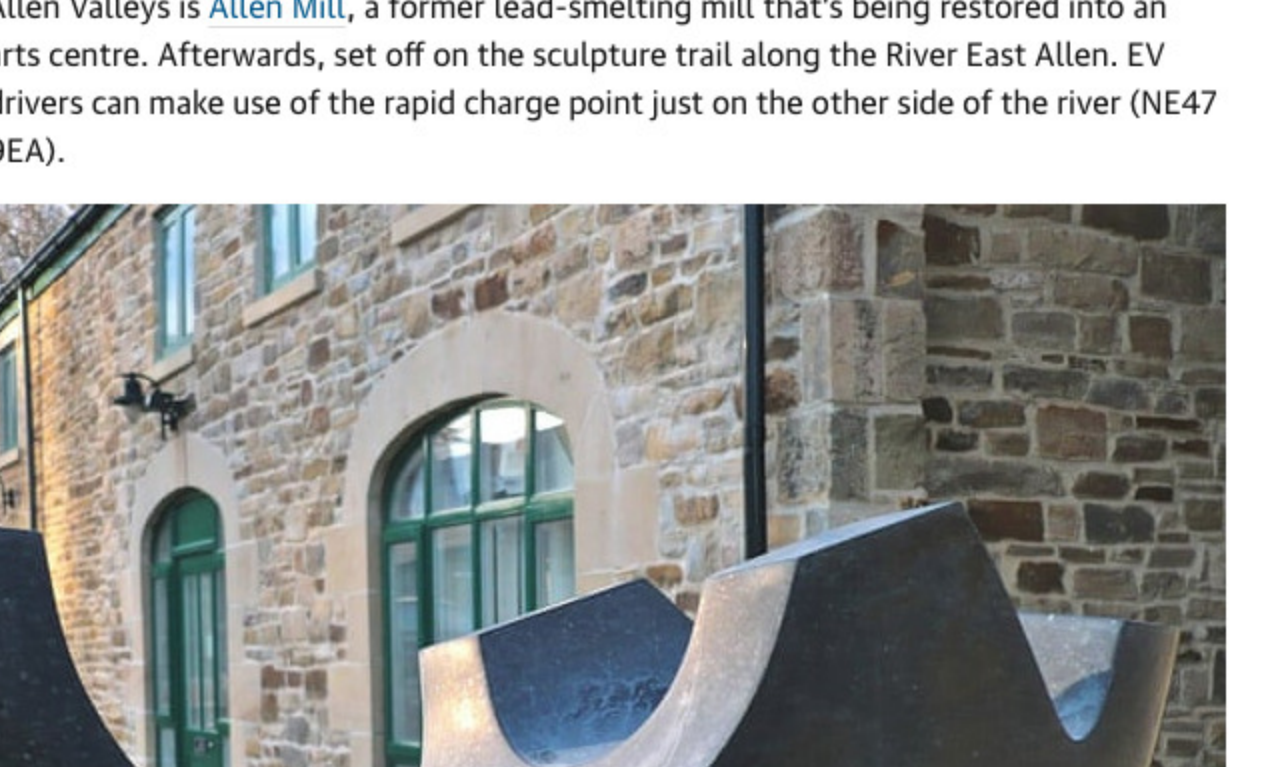
Alternatively, head south from Glasgow into the wide open spaces of Dumfries and Galloway. Stop at [Finlay's Farm](#), a couple of hours south of the city and home to ethical dairy [Cream O' Galloway](#). This innovative enterprise generates power from farm waste and has a focus on "cow contentment", letting calves stay with their mothers. Don't forget to sample some artisan cheese and ice-cream, courtesy of the happy cattle.



Be sure to check out nearby Broughton House too, the home and studio of Scottish collector and artist EA Hornel, one of the [Glasgow Boys](#). The fine art on show inside and the labyrinthine Japanese garden on the banks of the River Dee are a feast for the eyes. Driving an EV? You can charge it en route at Brooms Road Car Park (DG1 2LA) in Dumfries.

Newcastle

Venture into the wild splendour of the North Pennines, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty about 40 miles south-west of Newcastle. In the heart of the gloriously unspoilt [Allen Mill](#), a former lead-smelting mill that's being restored into an arts centre. Afterwards, set off on the sculpture trail along the River East Allen. EV drivers can make use of the rapid charge point just on the other side of the river (NE47 9EA).



Situated in the picturesque village of Wark in Northumberland, the [Battledowns](#) restaurant, pub and hotel has impressive green credentials, from the carbon-neutral heating system to the polytunnels keeping the kitchen stocked with organic produce all year round.

If its sustainable retail therapy you're after, head to [Corbridge](#). This pretty market town in the Tyne valley is home to [Ito](#), a colourful Aladdin's cave filled with furniture and homewares made from recycled, pre-loved and restored finds.

Or check out [Fleece With Attitude](#), a wool-producing smallholding in Weardale that's completely off grid and powered by renewable energy. The owner, [Ellie Langley](#), runs workshops in her studio, where you can learn how to make handmade felt accessories, similar to the ones on sale in the shop, such as slippers, hats and lampshades.

Norwich

Norwich is the perfect jumping off point for the unspoilt Norfolk coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This relatively unglorious stretch of shoreline is rich in wildlife, making it an important conservation area.

Go birdwatching at [Titchwell Marsh](#), [Snettisham](#) or [Cley Marshes](#) nature reserves, all of which have a staggering range of birdlife and wonderful views across [The Wash](#). Or if you fancy a walk, explore the coastal path that stretches from Hunstanton to Sea Palling. EV drivers can charge up at Hunstanton's central car park (PE36 5EH). Back in the car, take a detour to [Brancaster Staithe](#), for mussels straight off the boat, or to [Cromer](#), for its famous crab.



If you have little ones in tow, make a beeline for [BeWILDerwood](#), an eco-focused adventure park in a fairytale woodland setting just outside [Wroxham](#). The treehouses, jungle bridges and treetop rope walks are all made from sustainable wood, while characters such as litter-hating goblin-like creatures help keep the green theme on point.

Sustainable sustenance can be found at [Strattons](#) in [Swaffham](#), about an hour west of Norwich. This award-winning boutique hotel has a strong environmental ethos, with a restaurant that serves organic and locally sourced produce – including vegetables, salad leaves and herbs from their own garden.

Leeds

Just an hour west of Leeds at [Hedden Bridge](#) is [Hardcastle Crags](#), a beautiful wooded valley with footpaths, streams and waterfalls. Drive a similar distance north to marvel at the 12th-century ruins of [Bolton Abbey](#), on the banks of the River Wharfe.

Of course, some of the best nature escapes near Leeds start and end in the expansive [Yorkshire Dales](#) national park. If you're heading for the Dales, make a pit stop at [The Courtyard](#), a farmstead just outside [Settle](#) that's been turned into a sustainable shopping hotspot. EV drivers can grab a locally sourced light bite at the brasserie while they make use of the rapid charge point (BD24 9JY).



It's a short hop from [Settle](#) to [Malham Cove](#). This curved limestone cliff is truly awe-inspiring, and the ramble that takes in [Gordale Scar](#) and [Janet's Foss](#) waterfall is so stunning it made number three in [Britain's top 100 walks](#).

Make your way deeper into the Dales to the village of [Reeth](#) to see artist [Michael Rusczyk's](#) weird and wonderful [Graculus Sculptures](#). His creations are all made from recycled materials in his incredible studio, which visitors are welcome to have a poke about in.

Find more artisanal inspiration at [Farfield Mill](#), nestled at the foot of the [Howgill Fells](#) in [Sedburgh](#). This restored mill celebrates Yorkshire's rich textile heritage across four floors of displays. Pick up a unique handcrafted gift, have a go on a loom and grab a brew at [Weavers Cafe](#).

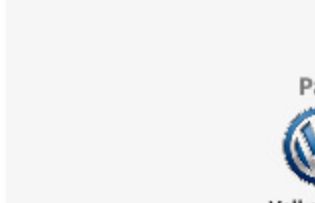


Or spend a day at [Saltaire Village](#) World Heritage Site, just half an hour's drive west of Leeds. Behind the grand facade of [Salts Mill](#) you'll find art galleries, exhibitions, shops and [Salts Diner](#) where you can grab a bite surrounded by the impressive [David Hockney](#) collection.

Ready to embark on your own eco adventure?
The Volkswagen e-Golf range – up to 144 miles on a full charge, according to WLTP tests – will accommodate most day trips, but should your adventures take you farther afield, there are three main types of charging: slow, fast and rapid. Slow units are best for use overnight, fast chargers will typically fully charge an EV in 3-4 hours, and rapid points charge the majority of EVs to 80% in around 30-60 minutes. Find out more at [volkswagen.co.uk](#).

*In this article we've stuck to rapid chargers, so you'll be back on the road before your coffee's cold.

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