

CAR@FREE in The Norfolk Coast

Great ideas for making the most of the area
by bus and train



1 OF 18 CAR FREE
BREAKS IN THE EAST
OF ENGLAND'S MOST
BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES

- Walks along the Norfolk Coast Path and Paston Way using buses to get you back
- Heritage railways, country houses and bathing beaches to head for

One of the pearls of Britain's long coastline, the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is well served with **public transport**. You can easily arrive in the area by train or bus, and spend days or even weeks exploring the best of it without a car. And even if you've arrived by car, the buses and trains are a really tempting alternative: they are remarkably good value, there's no hassle about parking or driving, and you can enjoy the views of the countryside as you go.

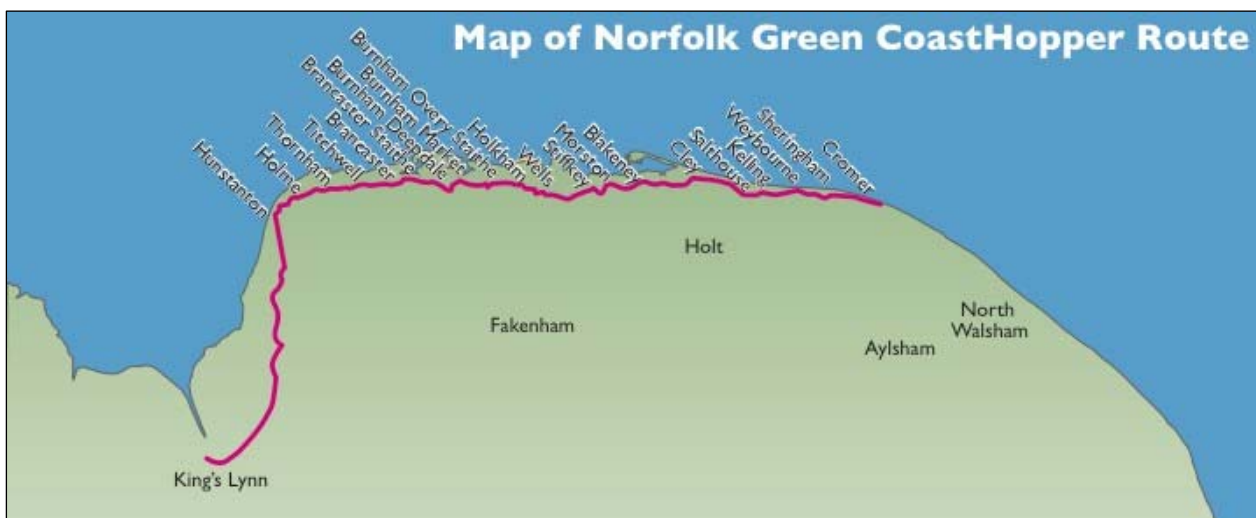
And there's a very useful little bus called the **CoastHopper**, which operates regularly along the coastal road (A149) between King's Lynn or Hunstanton and Sheringham. Parallel to it runs the **Norfolk Coast Path**, the area's undisputed gem for walkers: easy walking takes you through the loveliest landscapes, along sea dykes above reed beds, past huge saltmarshes, along magnificent beaches, past ancient round flint church towers and within sight of windmills.

The Norfolk Coast: the North Norfolk Railway Photo: Mike Page (www.norfolkskyview.flyer.co.uk) and a view of Weybourne from Kelling Heath



Ideas of where to go without using a car are treated by themes: three waymarked **coastal walks** (returning by public transport), **country houses** and **nostalgia steam rides**. These are followed by listings of local businesses, transport details (including a summary of bus services), and information on how to get to the area by bus and train.

THE ITINERARY:



The **CoastHopper bus** provides the ideal solution for walking the Coast Path. Circular walks based on the Coast Path can be hard to find: it isn't always easy to find an interesting route inland to walk back to your starting point (and you certainly wouldn't want to walk along the busy A149 itself). Instead, take the bus to one point where the Coast Path is easily accessed and walk a section to pick the bus up further along. Plan it so that you end at one of the many interesting villages and towns, so you can browse the shops and have a drink and a meal.

There is a train service from Norwich to Sheringham, via Cromer. Called the **Bittern Line**, it is also a useful way of getting to the **Broads National Park** and the magnificent cathedral city of Norwich, which has one of the finest historic centres in Britain. Then there are other bus services, and two heritage railway attractions that link in with the CoastHopper and national rail services.

There is accommodation to suit everyone, from cosy B&Bs and elegant rooms at highly-rated dining pubs and hotels, to eco-friendly camping and hostel options. Four **YHA youth hostels** are dotted along the Coast Path between King's Lynn and Sheringham, and you can sleep in a tipi or a camping barn at **Deepdale Farms**. There's good-value accommodation, and cycle hire, at **Kelling Heath Holiday Park**, and luxurious inn accommodation and good food at the **Hoste Arms**, Burnham Market.

This itinerary looks into some of the many options that buses and trains open up for you while in this beautiful corner of England.



Photo: copyright Tim Lidstone-Scott/National Trail

Walks along the coast

See also the free CoastHopper Yearbook for further ideas.

Burnham Overy Staithe to Holkham or Wells (5 or 8 miles)



Photos: Burnham Overy Staithe, copyright Tim Lidstone-Scott/National Trail

The 'staithe' (or harbour) is a most atmospheric little place with black-tarred cottages overlooking masts in a creek backed by saltmarsh. A drainage dyke zigzags its way above tall reeds, giving fine views of the marsh and farmland drained in the 18th century by Thomas Coke, the great agricultural 'improver' of Holkham Hall. Beyond the dunes the route continues along a huge beach that extends a mile or so out at high tide. At Holkham Gap, one of Europe's prime areas for spotting wild geese, a pine forest flanks the beach, and you can take the boardwalk through the dunes to reach the car park and A149 at the Victoria Hotel, Holkham. Before catching the bus from here you might like to wander into Holkham Park and visit the pottery and Holkham Hall (see below).

Or carry on along beside the coast from Holkham Gap – either through the pine woods or along the beach – to Wells-next-the-Sea. Wells itself is a handsome old port facing the marshes, with a lively quay full of small craft, and plenty of speciality shops to explore, and the **Crown** is excellent for food, beer and accommodation.



Sheringham to Cromer (4–9 miles)

There are two ways to walk this, or you could go out one way and return the other to make a satisfying 9-mile circular ramble. The more straightforward route simply goes along the sand and pebble beach beneath crumbling sandy cliffs between the resorts of Sheringham and Cromer, with plenty of scope for beach-combing along the way. Meanwhile the Coast Path takes a beautifully diverse route inland over rolling farmland and through Norfolk's heathy, bracken-clad heights: on top the sandy paths lead through coniferous forest and past the so-called Roman Camp near Beacon Hill and sites of medieval iron workings.

The train service between the two towns makes a useful method of getting back if you just want to tackle one half of the walk.

Among the plentiful **accommodation in Cromer**, Plantation House and White Cottage are two comfortable places to stay..

A day on the beach

For family beaches, public transport easily gets you around the resorts: Hunstanton has a beach, plus indoor swimming at Oasis, and a Sea Life Centre where you can get close to sharks, seals and rays. Cromer has a lifeboat museum and a splendid beach which extends all the way to Sheringham – where you can also swim indoors at Splash.



Cromer Pier

Cromer–Overstrand, 2½ miles each way, or 9 miles to Mundesley (return by bus)

Although not part of the official Norfolk Coast Path, this rewarding eastern extension runs along part of the long-distance Paston Way (Cromer–North Walsham). For a varied 9-mile walk along the coast and inland along peaceful lanes and farm tracks, you can also follow a longer section of the Paston Way continuing beyond Overstrand to Mundesley and return to Cromer by bus 5 (hourly; every 2 hours on Sunday; Sanders Coach Services) – total distance from Cromer 9 miles. Mundesley is a pleasant seaside resort with a sandy beach.

Other places to see by public transport

Holkham Hall

The CoastHopper bus drops you at the Victoria Hotel, Holkham, from where in a matter of minutes you can either walk to the beach at Holkham Gap, or stroll through Holkham estate village and into Holkham Park. There's free access to walkers to the glorious landscaped park itself throughout the year, where paths wind round past an ornamental lake, a folly temple and obelisk. The sumptuous Palladian-style mansion (Easter–end September) is home of the Earl and Countess of Leicester, whose ancestors built it 1734–64, has spectacular state rooms hung with paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck and Gainsborough. Elsewhere on the estate are the Bygones Museum, History of Farming Museum, art gallery, Stables Café and pottery shop – the last selling Holkham's very own ceramics, made on site here since the 1950s. Produce from the 25,000-acre estate appears on the menu at the Victoria Arms.

Felbrigg Hall

A 3-mile walk south-west from Cromer on the long-distance Weavers' Way footpath leads to this glorious National Trust mansion, one of the great 17th-century houses of East Anglia: it has a large collection of Grand Tour paintings, a fine library, walled gardens, the National Collection of Colchicums and a working dovecote. There's free access all year to the woods and parkland for walkers and cyclists: there are waymarked paths, and the mixed woodland supports a range of woodland birds, including spotted woodpeckers, woodcock, tree creepers and nuthatches, while ragged robin and orchids flourish in the herb-rich meadows. You can walk to the estate church, the sole survival of a vanished medieval village. The house and garden are open late March–late October (£1 off the entrance fee to the house and garden for visitors with valid bus or train tickets); the grounds are open to walkers and cyclists free of charge all year.

Nostalgia train rides

Two steam railways run inland from the Norfolk coast: both link conveniently with public transport. Discounts are available if you hold a valid ticket on the Bittern Line.

The North Norfolk Railway (the 'Poppy Line')

Known as the Poppy Line, this is full of natural colour at various times of year, not just the red flecks of poppies in summer; carpets of bluebells, clusters of primroses and bright yellow gorse are spectacular in spring and early summer, and later on you'll see purple swathes of heather on the heathlands. It links perfectly with the CoastHopper bus and the Bittern Line from Norwich. You get captivating views of the coast and Norfolk countryside as the train steams its way five miles, through Weybourne and Kelling Heath, to end a mile from the centre of the attractive Georgian country town of Holt: a London Routemaster bus – the Holt Flyer – meets most steam services.

Kelling Heath station (stops by request on return journey to Sheringham) is admirably placed for some exhilarating walking on the seaward side of the line, over Kelling Heath and Telegraph Hill, the highest ground in Norfolk, and from there you can drop down to the coast to join the Norfolk Coast Path and follow it back to Sheringham (about 5 miles).

You can take dogs and cycles on the train for a small additional charge. Vintage diesel trains on some services. Round trip tickets give unlimited travel all day. Model railway at Holt station; Weybourne and Sheringham are period gems, and Sheringham has a signal box museum.

The Poppy Line runs most days from 1st April to end-October, and weekends in November (mostly diesel), with steam trains at December weekends (for Santa Specials), and from 20 - 24 Dec and 26 Dec to Jan 2007 (Santa and Mince Pie Specials). See listings section for contact details.

The Wells and Walsingham Light Railway

Not linked to the national rail network, but connects with the CoastHopper at Wells. World's longest 10¼-inch narrow gauge railway, with its unique Garratt loco 'Norfolk Hero'. Good-Friday–early November, daily. Cycles cannot be transported. The southern terminus, Walsingham, is in two parts – Great and Little; Little Walsingham is a beautifully preserved old village with an extraordinary shrine built to replicate the Virgin Mary's home in Nazareth. Although Henry VIII destroyed the medieval shrine, it was rebuilt in the 1920s and is now an Anglican pilgrimage centre.

Key bus routes

36 CoastHopper: Hunstanton–Wells–Sheringham.

Hourly April–October, every 2 hours November–March.

40, 41: King's Lynn–Hunstanton.

Half-hourly on weekdays, hourly evening and Sunday. Operator: First.

X6: Fakenham–Cromer (connects with X8; often the same vehicle).

Every 2 hours daily. Operator: Norfolk Green.

X8: King's Lynn–Fakenham (connects with X6; often the same vehicle).

Every 2 hours daily. Operator: Norfolk Green.

29, 30: Fakenham–Wells.

Approximately hourly, Monday–Saturday. Operators: Norfolk Green (29), Konect (30).

29: Norwich–Fakenham–Wells.

3–4 per day. Operator Sanders.

X5, 4: Norwich–Cromer–Sheringham.

Approximately half-hourly, Monday–Saturday; limited evening service; every 2 hours on Sunday. Operators: First (X5), Sanders (4), Norfolk Green (X5 evening and Sunday).

5: Mundesley–Overstrand–Cromer.

Hourly Monday–Saturday, every 2 hours Sunday. Operator: Sanders.

For more information about timetables and route-planning by public transport visit www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk or tel 0870 608 2 608.

ITINERARY LISTINGS

Things to see and do:

North Norfolk Railway (the 'Poppy Line') North Norfolk Railway plc, Sheringham Station, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8RA. Tel: 01263 820800 (10-4; talking timetable 01263 820808); www.nnr.co.uk.

Oasis Sports & Leisure Centre Central Promenade, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5BD. Tel: 01485 534227; oasis@west-norfolk.gov.uk

RNLI Henry Blogg Museum The Promenade, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9HE. Tel: 01263 511294; www.cromerlifeboats.org.uk/muse.htm Lifeboat museum, now housed in an all-new building at the bottom of the launch gangway for the Cromer lifeboat.

Sea Life Sanctuary Southern Promenade, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5BH. Tel: 01485 533576; www.sealsanctuary.co.uk/hunt1.html

Splash Leisure and Fitness Centre Weybourne Rd, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8WD. Tel: 01263 825675; enquiries@sheringhamsplashleisurecomplex.co.uk The leisure pool has a wave machine and 150 foot waterslide.

Wells and Walsingham Light Railway Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1QB. Tel: 01328 711630; www.wellswalsinghamrailway.co.uk

Where to stay:

Deepdale Farms, Burnham Deepdale, Norfolk PE31 8DD. Tel: 01485 210256, www.deepdalefarm.co.uk Eco-friendly hostel and camping accommodation, tipi hire and tourist information.

Hunstanton Youth Hostel, 15 Avenue Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5BW. Tel: 0870 770 5872; hunstanton@yha.org.uk, www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/101.html

Kelling Heath Holiday Park 5 star holiday, camping and caravanning park, Weybourne, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 7HW. Tel: 01263 588181; www.kellingheath.co.uk Offers a range of activities linked to the environment and the opportunity to explore miles of woodland and heathland walks, a nature trail with conservation ponds and magnificent views of the Weybourne coastline.

King's Lynn Youth Hostel, College Lane, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1JB. Tel: 0870 770 5902; kingslynn@yha.org.uk, www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/214.html

Plantation House Guest House 5 diamonds, Silver Award. Ashburn, Old Cromer Rd, High Kelling, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6AJ. Tel: 01263 710121; www.plantation-house.net An atmospheric Colonial hideaway in the heart of North Norfolk.

Sheringham Youth Hostel, 1 Cremer's Drift, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8HX. Tel: 0870 770 6024; sheringham@yha.org.uk, www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/78.html

The White Cottage B&B 4 diamonds. 9 Cliff Drive, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0AW. Tel: 01263 512728; jboocock@whitecottagecromer.freereserve.co.uk, www.whitecottagecromer.co.uk

Superbly located private house on the North Norfolk Coastal Path, offering elegant accommodation with every home comfort and delicious home-produced breakfast.

Wells-next-the-Sea Youth Hostel, Church Plain, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1EQ. Tel: 0870 770 6084; wellsnorfolk@yha.org.uk, www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/844.html

Where to stay, eat and drink:

Crown Hotel, 2 stars. The Buttlands, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1EX. Tel: 01328 710209; www.thecrownhotelwells.co.uk Smart hotel in town centre with comfortable rooms, imaginative food and real ale; Good Pub Guide 2006.

The Hoste Arms, 3 stars. The Green, Burnham Market, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8HD. Tel: 01328 738 777; reception@hostearms.co.uk, www.hostearms.co.uk In the village centre, a 17th-century inn with log fires, an excellent selection of food, wine and real ale, and comfortable bedrooms. Recommended in the Good Pub Guide 2006.

Where to shop:

Big Blue Sky Warham Road, Wells-next-the-Sea Norfolk NR23 1QA. Tel: 01328 712023; www.bigbluesky.uk.com For "beautiful, practical, precious things that come from Norfolk".

Additional listings

Felbrigg Hall Felbrigg, Norfolk, NR11 8PR. Tel: 01263 837444; www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Holkham Hall Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1AB. Tel: 01328 710667; www.holkham.co.uk

Useful maps

For **country walking**, the orange-covered Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps 250, 251 and 252 show all the detail you are likely to need, including public rights of way and field boundaries – even individual buildings and back gardens.

For **general purposes**, the purple-covered Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger maps 132 and 133 have a very useful amount of detail, including public rights of way and tourist information.

Both Explorer and Landranger maps show the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path.

Useful websites

Broads Authority www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Norfolk Countryside Access www.countrysideaccess.norfolk.gov.uk Information on footpaths, bridleways and byways for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path (including where to stay and what to see in the area)

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/PeddarsWay

Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk

Visit Norfolk www.visitnorfolk.co.uk

Visit Norwich www.visitnorwich.co.uk

How to get there

For **information** about timetables and route-planning by public transport visit

www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk (or www.traveline.org.uk for the whole of Britain) or tel 0870 608 2 608.

For national rail enquiries tel 08457 48 49 50; www.nationalrail.co.uk

Wagn operate services to King's Lynn from Cambridge and London King's Cross. One Trains operate services from Norwich to Sheringham, via Cromer. The same places are also served by National Express coaches www.nationalexpress.com tel 08705 808080.

Rail services in the region are operated by One Railway (www.onerailway.com). The Bittern Line www.bitternline.com runs from Sheringham, along the coast to West and East Runton to the resort of Cromer before going inland via Gunton to North Walsham, past Hoveton & Wroxham, the major boating centre for the Broads National Park, and on to Norwich, where you can pick up mainline services. Services Monday to Saturday are almost hourly; there's a less frequent Sunday service. The journey from Norwich to Sheringham takes 54 minutes and costs £5.50 cheap day return.

From London Liverpool Street to Cromer or Sheringham, the cheapest return ticket is Leisure Advance (not available on all trains; must be booked before 1800 on day before travel), costing £22. One Railway also offers several **Rover tickets**:

Anglia Plus Unlimited travel for a day on lines in East Anglia (including Sheringham, Great Yarmouth, Cambridge, Ely, Ipswich, Felixstowe, Lowestoft and all intermediate stations) for £10 per adult. Up to four accompanied children aged 5 to 15 inclusive travel for just £2 each. Bikes can be carried for a £1 charge.

Anglia Plus Three-Day Ticket Covers the Anglia Plus area for any three days you like over a seven-day period, and bikes are carried free. Cost £22 for an adult; up to four accompanied children aged 5 to 15 inclusive travel for just £2 each.

Bittern Line Rover Unlimited travel for one day on the Bittern Line between Norwich and Sheringham plus travel on the BroadsHopper and CoastHopper buses. £6 per adult, £4 senior citizen and £3 child. The Bittern Rover is available at any time at weekends or bank holidays and after 8.45am weekdays.

