

CAR@FREE in The Norfolk Coast

Exploring the Norfolk Coast Cycleway



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

- Norfolk's quiet back roads and timeless villages and landscapes
- Perfect terrain for cycling
- Done as a single ride across the top of the county or as any one of a series of shorter circular day rides
- Easily ties in with train services and cycle hirers

The landscape of north Norfolk seems made for cycling. It's not hilly and easily managed even by occasional cyclists. Yet it rolls enough to be interesting, and from the saddle you can go at your own speed and savour the distinctive character of the area – its flint walls, red tiled roofs, birdlife, majestic medieval churches, cosy pubs, grand country estates and wonderful tranquility. And you're nearly always aware that the sea is not that far away.

As you cycle, the pace of life seems to slow down, and you see, hear and sense more. Cycling is not only kind on the environment, but it's inexpensive, easy to arrange and wonderful exercise. Norfolk is fast gaining a reputation as one of the most cycle-friendly parts of Britain – suitable for experienced cyclists, families and older visitors alike. There are signposted cycle routes leading you round the area, and plenty of places to stay that are on the routes and welcome cyclists.



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Arrival by train, and a welcome refreshment stop

Contents

Using the **Norfolk Coast Cycleway** to cross north Norfolk west to east. Pubs, tea rooms, where to eat and stay, attractions along the way. And information about cycle hirers and taking your cycle on the train.

THE ITINERARY:



Map credit: Huff & Puff Cycle Hire (www.cyclenorfolk.co.uk)

Along the Norfolk Coast Cycleway

This series of signposted routes make it sheer pleasure crossing through delectable Norfolk countryside. On very clear maps (see below) it consists of the **Norfolk Coast Cycleway** itself, a single 92-mile route parallel to the coast, and ten **Explorer Loops** (6 to 40 miles), which are circular tours you can do within a day (see below). Many accommodation hosts – from family holiday parks to luxurious B&Bs – welcome cyclists, providing cycle storage and drying areas, and some are even linked to cycle hire operations. For **budget accommodation**, there are usefully placed **youth hostels** at King's Lynn, Hunstanton, Wells and Sheringham, and a camping barn and hostel accommodation at **Deepdale Farms** in Burnham Deepdale and a simple camping barn at **Courtyard Farm Bunkhouse** near Ringstead. **Kelling Heath Holiday Park** is a camping and caravanning park at Weybourne with excellent woodland and heathland walks, and a nature trail.

The **Norfolk Coast Cycleway** takes you along idyllically peaceful back roads and country lanes parallel to the Norfolk Coast, all the way from King's Lynn to Cromer (59 ½ miles), and then Cromer to Great Yarmouth (42 ½ miles). It's signposted all the way: from King's Lynn to Wighton (just south-east of Wells-next-the-Sea) it follows National Cycle Network Route 1 (white 1 on a red square); from Wighton to Great Yarmouth it follows Regional Route 30 (white 30 on a blue square). Specially routed to keep you off the rat runs and take you past dozens of historic sights, country churches, village pubs and viewpoints, it can be done on a touring or mountain bike (one or two offroad sections have alternatives along roads). To return, you can take your bike on the train from Great Yarmouth to Sheringham or King's Lynn: the **Anglia Plus** ticket makes a great value way of getting around (see back page).



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One of Norfolk's many ancient churches

The **Explorer Loops** link with or partly follow the Cycleway. They are:

- Ingoldisthorpe Explorer Loop (18 miles)
- Sandringham Explorer Loop (22 miles)
- Ringstead Explorer Loop (23 miles)
- Docking Explorer Loop (32 miles)
- Walsingham and Wells Explorer Loop (40 miles)
- Holt Explorer Loop (24 miles)
- Cromer Explorer Loop (24 miles)
- Quiet Lanes Explorer (Mundesley area) (18 miles)
- Broads Explorer Loop (Martham area)
- Caister Castle Explorer Loop

King's Lynn

King's Lynn has a fascinating old quarter by the river, with handsome Jacobean and Georgian merchants' houses and secretive little yards, evoking its old port days. In the hub of it stands the 15th-century **Holy Trinity Guildhall**, checked with black flint and pale stone, while the former Custom House is now home to the tourist information centre and you can eat in a converted warehouse at the **Green Quay Heritage Centre**. Lynn has three weekly markets and a wide range of shops as well as a good choice of pubs and restaurants for food and drink. In the historic heart of the town are the **Tales of the Old Gaol House** (closed Sundays, and Mondays November–March) - and a chance to hear the stories and experience the sights (& smells!) of Lynn's criminal past. Also on display is the priceless King John Cup. Close by is the **Town House Museum**, evoking the domestic life in Lynn from medieval times to the 1950s. You can also see the last fishermen's yard in **True's Yard** (closed Sunday and Monday). For refreshments, try **Green Quay Heritage Centre and Café** at Marriott's Warehouse on South Quay or, out of town, **The Coffee Shop** at Thaxter's Garden Centre at Dersingham.

Castle Rising

One of the most impressive of all medieval castle ruins and with its walls standing to their original height, this 12th-century keep stands within massive turfed banks. It was once the palace and home of Isabella, dowager Queen of England and is now maintained by English Heritage. The excellent audio tour gives you a vivid picture.

Sandringham

Much of the estate of the Queen's Norfolk residence is designated as **Sandringham Country Park**, open free all year, an area of 250 hectares of carefully managed woodland and heath. It has two nature trails and camping and caravan club sites.

Ringstead

Here the route makes a 90-degree turn to the east. Here you can enjoy a drink and a meal at the Gin Trap. A permissive bridleway leading west from the village explores **Ringstead Down Nature Reserve** (Norfolk Wildlife Trust) an 9-hectare area of chalk grassland – the largest area of unimproved grassland in Norfolk. Wildflower species include squinancywort, dropwort, wild thyme, rock rose, dwarf thistle and burnet saxifrage, and you might see the brown argus butterfly; some 243 species of moth have been recorded on this site. The **Gin Trap Inn** is a very pleasant village pub with good food and accommodation. At Ringstead the route also crosses the **Peddars Way** (part of the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail); see box.

The Peddars Way

You are permitted to cycle nearly all of the Peddars Way, some of which is on unmade tracks that can be muddy. This, combined with the Norfolk Coast Path, makes up one of Britain's National Trails (please note that cycling along the Norfolk Coast Path itself is not permitted). From the coast near Hunstanton, it leads southeast along tracks and quiet lanes that follow the strikingly straight course of a Roman road, through the lowland heath and forest landscape of the Brecks to end at Knettishall Heath (Suffolk), just east of Thetford. This ancient route has a wonderfully timeless quality, and gives an exhilarating sense of crossing an ancient landscape. A cycle-carrying bus, the Peddars Wayfarer, operates for the southern part of the route between Thetford and Swaffham.



In Ringstead

Courtyard Farm

East of Ringstead you pass the entrance to **Courtyard Farm**, owned by environmental campaigner Peter Melchett, who has opened his estate to walkers: there are some 10 miles of paths and circular walks. The farm was transformed in the 1990s from a cereal producing arable site to a thriving organic mixed arable and livestock farm, with the aim of enhancing wildlife and improving land fertility. As a result there has been a fourfold increase in the numbers of skylarks, and increases in migrating turtle doves, breeding corn buntings and green woodpeckers. There are great numbers of insects, including moths and butterflies, that in turn attract birds such as swallows. The organic, free-range meat comes from stock reared to a high standard of welfare, with nearly all the feed produced on the farm. The meadows provide a rich variety of grass species for the winter silage. The farm has its own bunkhouse barn, offering inexpensive accommodation for cyclists and walkers.

Burnham Market and Burnham Thorpe

The attractive old village of **Burnham Market** spreads around a large central green and has a pub and several stores. Beyond here, the route skirts the south side of **Holkham Park**, and there's an optional diversion into **Wells-next-the-Sea**, an appealing little port overlooking the marshes – which has plenty of places to stay, including the **Crown Hotel** (also excellent for a meal or just a drink). Just east of Burnham Market, Burnham Thorpe is the birthplace of Horatio Nelson.

South of Burnham Thorpe an optional diversion is past **North Creake** and **South Creake** ('the Creakes'), each with its fine medieval church; North Creake has a coffee shop and remains of an Augustinian abbey. At Compton Hall (just beyond South Creake), the **Amazing Maize Maze** (mid-July to early September) is a seasonally cut maze in the cornfield, designed to confound even the most hardened maze-solvers.

Little Walsingham is a charming old medieval 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. Two places to stay here are **St Davids House B&B** and **The Old Bakehouse Guest House and Tea Rooms**.

At Wighton NCN Route 1 diverts right (inland) to Fakenham, while the Norfolk Coast Cycleway continues parallel to the coast. **Nutwood Lodges self-catering accommodation** at Wighton is open all year and makes a useful base if you want to stay put for a few days and explore the area by bike.

Binham Priory

The huge priory church at Binham is one of Norfolk's architectural medieval gems, although it is not as great as it was when Henry VIII tore down much of the monastic range of buildings, ruins of which stand adjacent. The west front of the church is a magnificent example of Early English architecture.

The Shell Museum, Glandford

A short detour south along a quiet little lane near Cley next the Sea brings you to this enchanting little treasure-house (the oldest purpose-built museum in Norfolk), created by a Victorian collector for his collection of seashells, archaeological artefacts, fossils, birds' eggs, carved scrimshaw and brooches and tiny figures made out of shells. Closed November–late March and Monday but open bank holiday Monday.

Felbrigg Hall

You pass the entrance 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. 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; the grounds are open to walkers and cyclists free of charge all year.

Near Cromer, places to stay include **Shrublands Farm B&B** and (at Thorpe Market) **Green Farm Hotel and Restaurant** and **Thorpewood Cottages** (cottages and Caravan Club certified caravan site).

Continuing on to Great Yarmouth

The second part of the Norfolk Coast Cycleway zigzags 42½ miles through villages and past coastal settlements, reaching the sea at Mundesley and Sea Palling before skirting the north-east part of the Broads National Park, and passing **Waxham Barn** (1565), a huge thatched building, and **Horsey Windpump**, a pumping mill preserved by the National Trust. Beyond Caister-on-Sea it takes the coast road into Great Yarmouth, to end at the railway station.

ITINERARY LISTINGS

Cycle hire

A.E. Wallis, 34–40 High Street, Heacham, Norfolk PE31 7EP. Tel: 01485 571683; www.aewallis.co.uk

Bircham Windmill Cycle Hire, Bircham Windmill, Great Bircham, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 6SJ. Tel: 01485 578393; www.birchamwindmill.co.uk

Fat Birds Don't Fly 12 King's Lynn Road, Hunstanton. Tel: 01485 535875; www.fatbirds.co.uk

Probably the UK's largest road bike shop and home of FBUK, Great Britain's only UCI Ladies Racing Team.

Knight Riders Cycle Centre, West Street, Cromer. Tel: 01263 510039; www.knightriders.co.uk

On Yer Bike Cycle Hire, The Laurels, Nutwood Farm, Wighton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. Tel: 01328 820719 or 07799 647330; www.norfolkcyclehire.co.uk Situated on Norfolk Coast Cycleway Route 30.

Collection/delivery point at Burnham Deepdale information centre. Open throughout the year

Overland Cycles 34 Norwich Road, Holt. Tel: 01263 713293.

Searles of Hunstanton, Searles Leisure Resort, South Beach, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5BB. Tel: 01485 534211; www.searles.co.uk

Kelling By Cycle. Kelling Heath Holiday Park, Sheringham. Tel: 07788 132909 (out of season 07747 012616); www.cyclenorfolk.co.uk

Walsinghams, 78 Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-Sea. Tel: 01328 710438.

Wells and Holkham By Cycle, Beach Road Car Park, Wells-next-the-Sea. Tel: 07879 032241 (out of season 07747 012616); www.cyclenorfolk.co.uk

Useful maps

Norfolk Coast Cycleway (King's Lynn to Cromer and Cromer to Great Yarmouth). Available for £2 from Tourist Information Centres; or £2 plus postage from North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9EL. Tel: 01263 513811.

Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale **Landranger maps 132 and 133** covers the whole of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Sustrans map of National Cycle Network Route 1 (Fakenham–Harwich, £2.99) covers a stretch through the Broads from Norwich to Beccles. Available online from Sustrans at www.sustransshop.co.uk. You can see the East of England cycle map at www.sustrans.org.uk For further information: **0845 113 0065** or info@sustrans.org.uk

Things to do and see:

The Amazing Maize Maze Compton Hall, South Creake, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 9JD.

Tel: 01328 823224; www.amazingmaizemaze.co.uk

Binham Priory Warham Rd, Binham. Tel: 01328 830362; www.norfarchtrust.org.uk/binham/index.htm

Castle Rising Castle Castle Rising, Norfolk PE31 6AH. Tel: 01553 631330; www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConProperty.15

Courtyard Farm Ringstead, Near Hunstanton, Norfolk. Tel: 01485 525251; courtyard.farmltd@virgin.net

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

Horse Windpump Horsey, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 4EF. Tel: 01493 393904; www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Shell Museum Glandford, Holt NR25 75R. Tel: 01263 740081; www.shellmuseum.org.uk

Sandringham Country Park Sandringham House The Estate Office, Sandringham, Norfolk PE35 6EN. Tel: 01553 772675; www.sandringhamestate.co.uk

Tales from the Old Gaol House Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5DQ.

Tel: 01553 774297; www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=21849

Town House Museum 46 Queen Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5DQ. Tel: 01553 773450; www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk

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

Where to stay:

Courtyard Farm Bunkhouse Courtyard Farm, Ringstead, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5LQ.

Tel: 01485 525369; rsgpigs@aol.com

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.

Green Farm Hotel and Restaurant Thorpe Market, Norfolk NR11 8TH. Tel: 01263 833602;

www.greenfarmhotel.co.uk

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

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

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.

Nutwood Lodges self-catering accommodation Grade 4. The Laurels, Nutwood Farm, Wighton, Wells-next-the-sea, Norfolk NR23 1NX. Tel: 01328 820719; www.nutwoodlodges.co.uk Open all year (also runs On yer Bike Cycle Hire; see previous page.)

Pinewoods Holiday Park 4 stars. Beach Road, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1DR. Tel: 01328

710439; www.pinewoods.co.uk Wooden lodges, caravans and camping, with summer cycle hire from

adjacent Beach Road car park. For easy 8 mile cycling route see www.cyclenorfolk.co.uk

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

St Davids House B&B 3 diamonds. Friday Market, Little Walsingham, Walsingham, Norfolk, NR22 6BY.

Tel: 01328 820633; stdavidshouse@amserve.net, www.stdavidshousewalsingham.co.uk A 16th-century red brick house in the centre of Little Walsingham.

The Old Bakehouse Guest House and Tea Rooms 4 diamonds, Silver Award. 33 High Street. Little

Walsingham, Norfolk NR22 6BZ. Tel: 01328 820454; theoldbakehouseguesthouse@yahoo.co.uk

www.glavenvalley.co.uk/oldbakehouse A traditional tea room in the heart of Little Walsingham with three en-suite double/twin rooms.

Shrublands Farm B&B 4 diamonds. Northrepps, Cromer Norfolk NR27 0AA. Tel: 01263 579297;

youngman@farming.co.uk, www.broadland.com/shrublands.html Farmhouse B&B and 4 star self-catering accommodation on a 300-acre family farm.

Thorpewood Cottages Nursery Farm, Cromer Rd, Thorpe Market, Norfolk NR11 8TU. Tel: 01263 834493;

www.thorpewoodcottages.co.uk Newly-renovated cottages and Caravan Club certified caravan site in the grounds of a Grade II listed farmhouse, five miles from the coast.

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, Silver Award. 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.

Gin Trap Inn, 4 diamonds. 6 High Street, Ringstead, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5JU. Tel: 01485 525264;

gintrap@aol.com, www.gintrapinn.co.uk Beamed bar with woodburning stove; bar food, real ale and more elaborate restaurant fare; bedrooms. Recommended in the Good Pub Guide 2006.

Where to eat and drink:

The Coffee Shop Thaxter's Garden Centre, 49 Hunstanton Road, Dersingham, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31

6NA. Tel: 01485 541514; www.thaxters.co.uk

Green Quay Heritage Centre and Café Marriott's Warehouse, South Quay, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE30

5DT. Tel: 01553 818500; www.thegreenquay.co.uk

Where to shop:

The Real Ale Shop Branthill Farm, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1SB. Tel: 01328 710810;

www.therealaleshop.co.uk Huge selection of local real ales, available for shipping home.

Useful websites

Broads Authority www.broads-authority.gov.uk

CTC The UK's national cyclists' organisation www.ctc.org.uk

English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk

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

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

Norfolk Wildlife Trust www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path (including where to stay, cycling the Peddars Way and what to see in the area): www.nationaltrail.co.uk

Sustrans for National Cycle Network routes: www.sustrans.org

Visit Norfolk www.visitnorfolk.co.uk

Visit Norwich www.visitnorwich.co.uk

West Norfolk (including attractions in and near King's Lynn) www.west-norfolk.gov.uk

How to get there

Taking your bike on the train

You can carry your bike for a flat fee of £1 on **local train services** in Norfolk and Suffolk and no reservation is necessary. Dedicated space for carrying cycles is provided in newer carriages, (look for the cycle logo next to the first-class accommodation or at the end of the train); otherwise leave your bike in the doorway area, making sure it isn't in the way of other passengers.

For **One mainline services** to and from London Liverpool Street to Norwich the single fare for a cycle is £3. It is usually best to make a reservation first (as there is only space for four bikes per train), and this is essential for **Intercity** trains between London and Norwich. For reservations and information tel 0845 600 7245 or enquire at a station. There are restrictions on carrying bikes on services to London and Cambridge at peak times. **Wagn** trains (London King's Cross to King's Lynn) do not charge for carrying bikes, although they cannot be taken in the morning rush hour.

The **Anglia Plus** ticket gives 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. There's also the Anglia Plus Three-Day ticket, covering the same area for any three days' travel over a seven day period; bikes are carried free (£22 for an adult; up to four accompanied children aged 5 to 15 inclusive travel for just £2 each).

