

CAR@FREE in The Norfolk Coast

See the wildlife wonders of North Norfolk by bus



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

- Using the CoastHopper bus to get you to great birding and other wildlife sites
- Coastal walks outstanding for wildlife at various times of year
- Not just birds, but seals and porpoises – and a few surprises!

The Norfolk Coast is one of England's great **coastal wildlife** areas, rich in birdlife and sea life. Thousands of seasoned birdwatchers come here over and over again. But you don't need to be an expert to enjoy the wildlife experience— just a pair of binoculars, enthusiasm and knowing where to go.

All year round there is plenty to see. In winter particularly there's real magic here, with a spectacular number of migrant birds seen in late October. And in winter larks, pipits and finches frequent Holkham Bay, and along the approach road to the beach wildfowl (wigeon, brent geese, white-fronted geese, pink-fronted geese) on the meadows.

The coast includes the largest area of saltmarsh in Europe, and large areas of dunes, shingle and sandy beaches that are habitats for mammals, birds and insects, and which harbour distinctive flora.

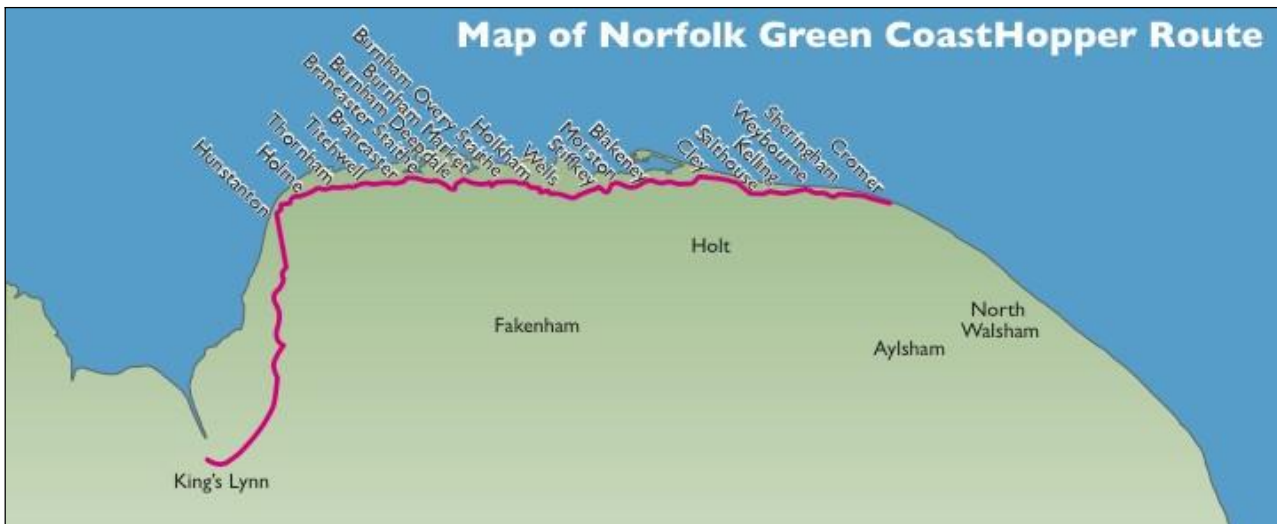


Wildlife sites along the coast. Photos (copyright): left and centre, Andy Tryner/Countryside Agency. Right: National Trail/Tim Lidstone-Scott

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A journey west to east, from Hunstanton to Salthouse Marshes, detailing the top sites for nature along the coast and just inland, and listing local businesses that have enthusiasts in mind.

THE ITINERARY:



The great news, especially for this sensitive environment, is that a bus called the **CoastHopper** has regular services along the coast. It's excellent value, with a Rover ticket for unlimited travel on the day of issue. And as well as saving on parking and petrol and sparing the environment, you can enjoy the views from the window and link up sections of the **Norfolk Coast Path**, which runs from Holme next the Sea to Cromer. You pass several Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) reserves and one run by the RSPB.

CoastHopper buses run approximately every two hours increasing to hourly during peak summer periods, providing main services between Hunstanton and Sheringham; some buses run between King's Lynn and Sheringham via Hunstanton, and there are connections with bus X6 from Sheringham to Cromer (through tickets are available). The **CoastHopper Rover** is just £5 for a day ticket (£3 concessions) and £11 for a family ticket (two adults and up to two children). Rover Plus (£6, adult, £4 concessions, £13 family) includes the CoastHopper plus other services, from King's Lynn to Cromer, Fakenham to Wells and Hunstanton–Sandringham–King's Lynn, plus some Sunday/bank holiday services to Norwich. Single fares and cheap day return tickets are also available.

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.

Special areas for wildlife reached by CoastHopper bus

Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary

Bus stop in centre of Hunstanton by the esplanade.

Open 364 days a year, the **Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary** in Norfolk is somewhere you can bank on seeing wildlife in comfort on any day. The site includes the Sanctuary, where sick, orphaned or injured seal pups are cared for before finally being returned into the wild. The centre is also home to otters, penguins and spectacular displays of marine life within 30 permanent displays.

Ringstead Downs

Alight at Holme next the Sea; or walk from Smithdon School, Hunstanton, past Lodge Farm, turn right and left past Downs Farm and into the reserve). Follow the Peddars Way from Holme inland, to Ringstead. Here you can enjoy a drink and a meal at the **Gin Trap**. A permissive bridleway (please keep out of the

woods) leading west from a point (grid reference TF 750118) just south of 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.

Titchwell Marsh

The bus stops right by the entrance to this Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) site. Shallow lagoons and reedbeds constitute this beautiful wetland reserve, which attracts many wintering birds, including snow bunting, ducks and geese, while autumn sees the arrival of migrating waders, and marsh harriers are often spotted in summer over the reeds. You can purchase books and outdoor equipment, and buy or hire binoculars from the shop, and the boardwalk paths and birdwatchers' hides are wheelchair accessible. Snacks are sold from a servery and there's a covered eating area.

Entrance free, car park charge for non RSPB members.

Another place for binoculars is in Titchwell village, where there is an outstanding binocular shop called **Infocus**. For a meal or a drink in a wonderfully atmospheric old pub, try the **Lifeboat** at Thornham, which also has 2-star accommodation.

Brancaster to Burnham Overy Staithe (7 miles walk)

Take the CoastHopper to Brancaster village (or Burnham Overy Staithe, and walk it in reverse). The **White Horse** makes a welcoming place to stay, eat or drink.

On this walk you pass along London Street, originally a Roman road, and skirt the grassy mounds of Branodunum Roman shore fort. Seawards from the coast path lies the saltmarsh, where cord grass, sea arrowgrass, sea aster and sea lavender grow; the sands and mudflats are frequented by oystercatchers, Brent geese, shelduck, redshank and black-headed gulls, while the reed beds are breeding grounds for sedge warblers and bearded tits.

The Coast Path leads to Burnham Deepdale, which has a locally typical flint church with a round tower: look inside for the Norman font intricately carved with depictions of the countryman's working year. From Burnham Deepdale the coast path runs along a drainage dyke – marking the northern limit of cultivated land: the huge empty expanses of Trowland Creek and Scolt Head Island Nature Reserve lie further north.



Holkham Gap

Get off the CoastHopper at Holkham, by the Victoria Hotel. The road towards the sea leads to the huge beach at Holkham Gap, from where you can walk west to Burnham Overy Staithe or east to Wells: at either place you can rejoin the CoastHopper bus. Holkham is one of the best places in Britain between November and February to see wild geese. Thousands of pink-footed geese from Iceland graze on the marshland and smaller numbers of Brent Geese and Greylag Geese can be seen.

A view along the coast. Photo: copyright Mike Page www.norfolkskyview.flyer.co.uk

A boat trip from Morston

Get off the CoastHopper at Morston. This is a great opportunity to see common seals as well as one of the most important bird sanctuaries in Norfolk from the water. The hour-long boat trip crosses to the spectacular shingle formation of **Blakeney Point**, which juts out some 3 miles. Here more than 260 bird species have been recorded; ringed plover and oystercatcher are common sightings. All year round you can sight common seals basking on the sandbanks close by the Point itself (they pup during May and June), and perhaps harbour porpoises. Plants found in the shingle include sea bindweed, common stork's bill, tree lupin, yellow-horned poppy, sea campion and sea sandwort. Redshanks, shelduck and brent geese inhabit the saltmarsh in huge numbers. For bookings and information tel 01263 740505/01263 740038; www.beansboattrips.co.uk. Trips run daily April–October, and various days rest of year; some leave from Blakeney Quay.

Blakeney to Cley (3½ miles walk)

Once a busy port, but from the 16th century on silting up has gradually made Blakeney only accessible to small craft at high tide. Among the attractive brick and flint houses, stand the almost cathedral-like parish church, its western tower a landmark for far around, and the medieval Guildhall.

From Blakeney Quay the Coast Path makes a great loop along the sea wall seawards to Blakeney Eye. This skirts Blakeney Freshes, a grazing marshland where wildfowl winter, and you may see gadwall, wigeon, Brent geese, pintail and shoveler. In summer yellow wagtail, lapwing, snipe and oystercatcher frequent the pasture, while the reeds are home to reed bunting, reed warbler and bearded tit. The path almost reaches the sea before veering inland to the A149 just outside **Cley next the Sea**, another former port stranded by the receding sea.

At Cley village itself is the famous windmill, one of the most-photographed buildings on this coast. You can pick up the CoastHopper, or walk on further: the Coast Path leads out to the coast and runs along a shingle bank, above NWT Cley Marshes Nature Reserve (see below). There are good views over Salthouse Marsh.

Cley is well worth exploring. **Pink Foot Gallery** has some of the best contemporary natural history, sea and landscape art in the UK today, by well-known and up-and-coming artists. **Picnic Fayre** is an award-winning delicatessen for all the elements of a classy picnic. For binoculars, **Cley Spy** is a very well-stocked binocular shop, with its own little museum of binoculars. The **Cley Smoke House** is a wonderful place to try purchase traditional smoked fish and other local products which you can have mailed home. **Cookes of Cley** provides guest-house and self-catering accommodation in the village centre.

The Shell Museum, Glandford

About 1 ½ miles' walk along a quiet lane south from Cley village centre 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.



*An aerial view of Cley Marshes. Photo: copyright Mike Page
www.norfolkskyview.flyer.co.uk.*

Salthouse Marshes NWT Reserve

Get off the CoastHopper at Salthouse village, from which the Reserve is a ½-mile walk. It can also be reached by walking the Coast Path from Cley next the Sea.

Here a shingle bank protects the grazing marsh and saltwater lagoons from the sea, creating a habitat for black-tailed godwit, ruff, redshank, lapwing and avocet. There are spectacular numbers of brent geese in winter, with the chance of spotting snow buntings and shore larks.

Cley Marshes NWT Reserve

The CoastHopper bus stops here; it's ½ mile east of Cley-next-the-Sea.

There's something special to see here at any time of year, for experienced birders and first-timers alike. Bird watchers' hides give excellent views of the pools and scrapes, and there are delightful strolls along the wheelchair-accessible boardwalks through the reeds. The visitor centre will be replaced in 2007 by a new, turf-roofed building with a café. Open daily; visitor centre late March to early December. Admission charge; free for children and NWT members. Adults £3.75, children and NWT members free; tel 01263 740008. Species to look out for include: bittern, avocet, marsh harrier, bearded tit, large numbers of wildfowl including wigeon, teal, pintail and brent goose. Migrating waders such as ruff and black-tailed godwit as well as unusual vagrant birds, blown off course by strong winds, are regularly seen here.

ITINERARY LISTINGS

Things to do and see:

Hilltop Outdoor Education and Adventure Centre, Old Wood, Beeston Regis, Sheringham Norfolk NR26 8TS. Tel: 01263 824514; hilltopdc@lineone.net, www.hilltopoutdoorcentre.co.uk

B&B, adventure days and holidays for children and families.

Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary Southern Promenade, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5BH.

Tel: 01485 533576; www.sealsanctuary.co.uk

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

How to get around:

Bean's Boat Trips 69 Morston Road, Morston, Norfolk NR25 7BD. Tel: (01263) 740505;

www.beansboattrips.co.uk Daily April–October, and various days rest of year.

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.

The Lifeboat Inn 2 stars. Ship Lane, Thornham, Norfolk PE36 6LT, Tel: 01485 512236;

www.lifeboatinn.co.uk Atmospheric 16th century smugglers' ale house by the marshes, and furnished with pews, settles and carved oak tables; good restaurant food. Recommended in the Good Pub Guide 2006.

White Horse 2 stars, AA Best Seafood Pub award 2005-6. Brancaster Staithe, Norfolk PE31 8BY. Tel: 01485 210262; www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk Comfortable inn with rooms, imaginative food and a pleasant bar. Recommended in the Good Pub Guide 2006.

Where to stay:

Cookes of Cley 3 diamonds. High Steet, Cley, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7RX. Tel: 01263 740776;

www.cookes-of-cley.co.uk Guest house, self-catering accommodation (sleeps 7–8), bar and tea room in village centre.

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

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

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

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 shop:

Bird Ventures 9b Chapel Yard, Albert Street, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HG. Tel: 01263 710203; www.bird-ventures.co.uk Nesting boxes, wild bird food, also guided bird tours through the Bird ID Company www.birdtour.co.uk

Cley Smoke House High Street, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7RF. Tel: 01263 740282;

www.cleysmokehouse.com Traditional smoked fish, can be shipped to destination of your choice.

CleySpy Ltd, Jodrell Barn, Manor Farm, Glandford, Holt. Norfolk NR25 7JP. Tel: 01263 740088;

www.cleyspy.co.uk Binoculars, telescopes, tripods and more.

Infocus Main Street, Titchwell, Norfolk PE31 8BB. Tel: 01485 210101 www.at-infocus.co.uk Binoculars and telescope specialists overlooking the RSPB reserve, with its own bird viewing area.

Picnic Fayre The Old Forge, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7AP. Tel: 01263 740587;

www.picnic-fayre.co.uk Award-winning delicatessen set in a historic old forge.

Pink Foot Gallery Cley next the Sea NR25 7RB. Tel: 01263 740947, www.pinkfootgallery.co.uk New gallery displaying natural history, sea and landscape art.

Useful websites

Broads Authority www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty www.norfolkcoastaonb.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 (NWT) Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY, tel 01603 625540; www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

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

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Titchwell: Visitor Centre, RSPB Titchwell Marsh nature reserve, Titchwell, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8BB. Tel: 01485 210779; www.rspb.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).

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.



**Peddars Way &
Norfolk Coast Path**

National Trail 