

My winter on the

SUFFOLK COAST . . .

By some of the people who live and work there

John Grant resident, wildlife and environment writer

What's best about winter in Suffolk? Simple. The birds and the beer. Our county's coastal habitat diversity is second to none. There are shingle beaches, dune systems, saline lagoons, grazing marshes, reedbeds, estuaries – all are vitally important for a breath-taking array of wintering species that take up residence with us from all over northern Europe and beyond. The best way I know of rounding off a great winter's

day's birding on the Suffolk coast is to enjoy a pint of Adnams in front of a roaring fire in a cosy pub. We are blessed with many, but my favourites are The Nelson in Southwold, The Ship Inn at Dunwich, The Bell at Middleton and, of course, the legendary birders' and ramblers' pub, The Eel's Foot at Eastbridge, on Minsmere's doorstep. Cheers.



Peter Osborne general manager, White Lion Hotel in Aldeburgh

Bright winter skies on frosty mornings make the most stunning backdrop to this area and Aldeburgh in particular looks beautiful framed by the light. That's the time I like to don wellies and take my family out for a long, bracing sea walk. The route from Aldeburgh to Thorpeness takes in some amazing sweeping views of the coast and is wonderful for blowing away the cobwebs with a blast of sea air. Head the other way and you can pick up the Sailors' Path – the ancient commuting route for local sailors who

moored at Snape Maltings to unload goods and after finding boats stuck at low tide were forced to walk back home to their cottages in Aldeburgh. The fascinating history of the route is reflected in the beauty and diversity of the path which takes in the meandering River Alde, the ancient woods of the Blackheath Estate and expanses of marshes and reed beds. It's one of the most peaceful and beautiful places I've ever been. www.whitelion.co.uk



Jonathan Adnams Chairman of Adnams



Atlantic depression, forecast, gales and rain, North Sea flood surges threaten all that is dear, Soon Mother Russia will breathe out her Siberian air, Chill 'NE winds ' carrying sleet and ice, 'The Widow Maker ' - cuts you to the bone. Woodcock arrive on November's full moon, Flown in from Baltic shores, exhausted flop, Long lining for codfish, drift netting the sprats, Skins of wild geese flight across the salt marsh at dawn, Golden reeds blaze in the low winter sunlight, A bracing walk on lonely marshes and bleak river walls, On the estuary, a distant yacht sails despite the snow, As the ebb tide flows its last to a grey winter sea, Widgeon dropping from the dusk to a sheltered dyke, Crunching along the shingle beach, the day's light quickly fades, Twinkling of fisherman's lamps are all that remain, Now is the time for a pint of Adnams Old Ale, In some Smugglers Retreat, our own Harbour Inn, Cheer by the glowing fire. Wet dog by your feet, Just Suffolk and good, my coastal home :)

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Johnny Gooderham owner and managing director of Snape Maltings. Johnny was born at Snape Bridge House

The winter landscape of the Maltings is one of my favourite views. Visitor numbers of the flying feathered variety swell to unprecedented levels. A regular on the quay is the kingfisher, who sits on the barge ropes, its rich plumage a stark contrast to the frosted landscape. I am entertained by the prolific movements of the migrating wildlife overhead in contrast with the stillness of the frosted golden

reeds which stretch for miles along the River Alde.

Looking up the river to Iken, St Botolph's Church has its own mysterious aura in its ancient landscape. The lazy easterly wind can make it very cold, but once you get moving along the footpaths the winter chill is soon forgotten, with the reward of a pint of Adnams in the Plough & Sail in front of an open fire on our return.



Mick Howes RNLI Spirit of Lowestoft, Lowestoft born and bred

Winter is a wonderful time to experience the Sunrise Coast at Lowestoft – famed for being the first place in the England that the shimmering rays of sunlight strike the nation's shores each day.

The charm of this stretch of coast is well known by many, not least the crew of the town's RNLI lifeboat. The crew of the Spirit of Lowestoft lifeboat enjoy a panoramic view of the south beach and promenade from the lifeboat station on the South Pier when taking a break from training and maintaining their lifesaving vessel in a state of readiness. After a

wintery shower, dog walkers can be seen enjoying the long expanses of snow covered sand, while others take a bracing walk along the otherwise deserted beach, with only the squealing of seabirds to accompany the crashing waves.

There is always something of interest to watch. A steady stream of wind turbine transfer boats sail each day to and from the harbour and kite boarders and surfers often demonstrate their skills as they ride the waves. Then it's off to a cliff top pub for a warming drink in front of a real open fire!

Becky Lim

Suffolk Secrets based at the watertower on Southwold Common



I have lived in many places in the world including Italy and Australia, but nowhere seems to beat the tranquillity, natural beauty and spaciousness of the Suffolk coast.

One of my favourite things to do on a crisp and sunny winter's morning is to follow the Suffolk Coastal Path from Walberswick to Dunwich – the former Anglo-Saxon capital of East Anglia.

The scenery en route never fails to take my breath away and it's no wonder that this part of the Suffolk coastline has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

My partner Richard and I like to take the circular route which passes reed beds, an old wind pump and a national nature reserve before looping back along the beach to Walberswick.

If we time it right, we usually get to The Bell Inn just in time for Sunday lunch.

If you haven't yet discovered the tranquillity of walking along this stretch of coast, I thoroughly recommend it and rate it as one of the best antidotes to a busy, modern life!



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Richard Nichols artist and Suffolk Magazine contributor

Readers who follow my regular Take Part in Art feature will know how much I love all things natural, especially the coast and sea with all the changes of mood and colour throughout the year.

Southwold is a particular favourite in winter as the crowds have gone and very often those sweeps of frosty dunes, wind whipped

sand and sensuous curls of sea are shared with no one else but loved ones on two or four legs. Luckily, I had my camera one afternoon as the sun dropped rapidly to reveal a beautifully graduated sky blending into pink, purple clouds with figures giving the whole thing scale.



Elizabeth Tipping Thorpeness retired resident

I used to holiday here for many years, but six years ago my husband and I made the decision to live here full time – we love the area.

On a cold winter's morning, the resident of Thorpeness has the village to oneself. The summer crowds have gone and the boats are in store being painted for the next season. Yet a bracing walk is a rewarding experience.

You can visit the Meare where the swans and ducks are waiting to be fed, especially when it is frozen over. Then have a hot drink in the Meare Cafe enjoying the view and the wildlife, followed by a stroll across the road to explore the Emporium, full of



antiquities and curiosities, and a brisk walk along the beach to Aldeburgh. This way you pass the the RSPB reserve on one side and the sea on the other with the Britten memorial scallop shell on the beach.

Annette Mason-Gordon Heritage Coast Market Towns Initiative (HCMTI)

Being a Yorkshire lass who has also lived in Gloucestershire, London and South Africa, the novelty of the seaside hasn't



worn off and there's nothing better than a bracing walk along a shingle beach or the cliffs at Sizewell with a chilly wind whipping up the waves. One of our favourite pubs is The Dolphin at Thorpeness – a steaming glass of mulled wine and a card game with the kids in front of the fire feels all the more luxurious after a long walk. Suffolk's market towns also take on a life of their own in the winter months, which is quite different from the summer when there's hustle and bustle. Shopkeepers, restaurateurs and cafe owners have more time to chat and extoll the virtues of their produce, lovingly made from ingredients sourced locally, each with their own story.

Lindy Knights Denny's of Southwold

I love the Suffolk coast, especially Southwold, the wonderful big blue skies and amazing



sunsets. In the winter when the beaches are deserted, I go for long walks with my Bedlington terrier, Digby. The sea glistening, frost on the dunes, the sun breaking through the clouds, seagulls crying out and waves crashing on to the shore . . . I consider myself extremely lucky to live in this beautiful part of the country.