

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain's finest landscapes. It extends from the Stour estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Ipswich and north, to Kessingland. The AONB covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

Visiting Walberswick

Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No 231 (Southwold & Bungay)

Walberswick is approximately 3 miles/5 km from the A12 at Blythburgh

Public transport information: The nearest train station is Darsham. Local buses serve Southwold from Halesworth and Lowestoft. You can then walk to Walberswick from Southwold (30 mins).

Public transport information: www.suffolконboard.com or call 0845 606 6171

Southwold Tourist Information:

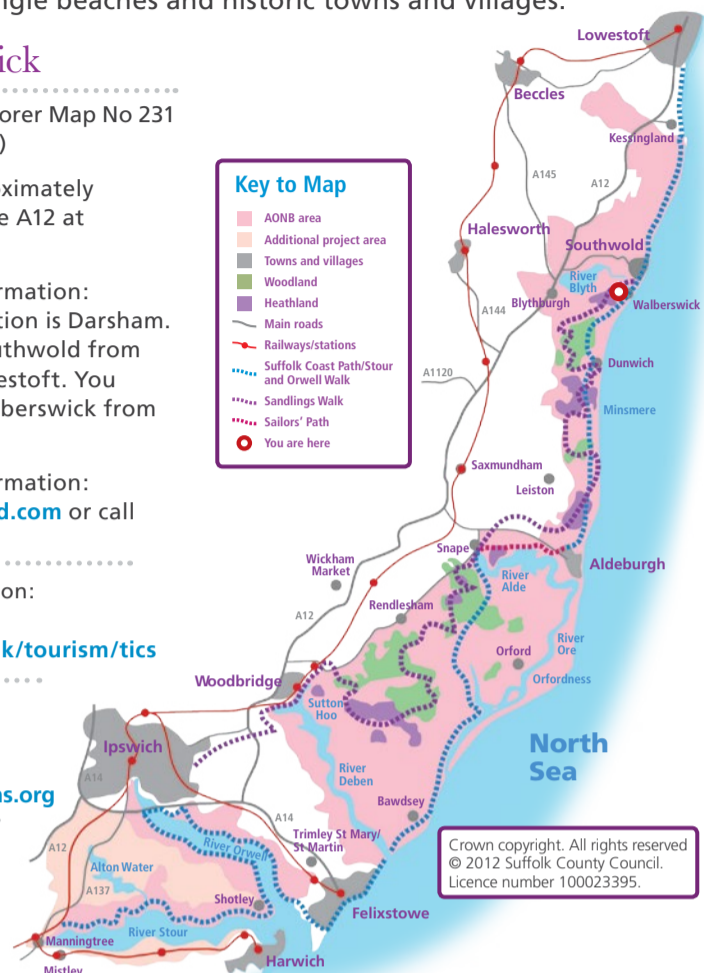
01728 688303

www.suffolкcoastal.gov.uk/tourism/tics

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
01394 384948

www.suffolкcoastandheaths.org

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Walberswick *Explorer Guide*



Enjoy two walks around Walberswick village and further afield to the coast and reedbeds. Enjoy village pubs, open coastline and forest.



Walberswick

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Highlights of Walberswick

1 Walberswick is located on a spur of high ground, close to the natural haven of the River Blyth. Whilst the landscape appears unchanging, history shows that coastal change and tidal flooding were ever present. In 1328, a severe storm destroyed much of the ancient port of nearby Dunwich. The River Dunwich then forged a new path to the sea via Walberswick.



Walberswick became a centre for fishing and shipbuilding but its fortunes varied. St Andrews Church fell into such disrepair that it was partially demolished. A smaller church was built within its remains. Today, Walberswick's economy relies mainly on tourism.



2 Southwold - Walberswick Ferry. In 1885, following the formation of the River Blyth Ferry Company, a pontoon that could carry a horse and cart was used to cross the river. This was hand-operated by means of chains. In 1911, a larger steam-driven chain ferry was commissioned. This ran until the

outbreak of the Second World War, when the ferry was anchored in mid-stream as part of anti-invasion measures. The ferry broke free and sank. Since then, a rowing boat provides the ferry service.

Images: Front cover: Walberswick Windpump - Malcolm Farrow. A. Walberswick Village Green - a popular focal point. B. Southwold - Walberswick Ferry c.1900. C. Southwold Light Railway - Travellers c.1910 - Blythweb Ltd/Wenhaston Archive Project. D. Reedbed and Grazing Marsh - classic landscape features. E. Walberswick Village - view from the Marshes.

3 The Old Railway. In 1879, a narrow gauge railway opened between Halesworth and Southwold and included a station at Walberswick. The railway followed the southern side of the Blyth valley then crossed the river via a swing bridge. The line connected to the East Suffolk Railway, serving holidaymakers and the fishing industry. A link was added to Southwold Harbour in 1914, but the decline of the fishing industry swiftly followed. Increased competition from road transport and ageing equipment also took their toll and the railway closed in 1929.



After the Second World War the Bailey footbridge replaced the railway swing bridge. This bridge provides pedestrian access between Walberswick and Southwold to this day.



4 Grazing Marsh and Reedbed characterise the coast between Walberswick and Dunwich. Dingle, Reedland, Westwood, Corporation and Oldtown Marshes lie in the Dunwich River valley where deep peat overlies river and marine alluvium. The area was used for fairs in the 1380s.

Westwood Marsh was claimed from salt marsh around 1590. The mid-20th century saw much re-flooding. This area is now part of the Suffolk Coast National Nature Reserve. The landscape features grazing cattle on low intensity wet grassland and is dissected by a network of dykes that have some scrubby areas.





These routes are open to the public for quiet recreation. Enjoy your visit.



'Marshes, Coast and Forest'

Distance 6.8 miles (11 km)

Time: 3 - 4 hours

Terrain: Paths and tracks, some of which can be very muddy at certain times. Please be aware of tides when walking along the coastline. At high tides, the coastal route may be impassable.

Start on Walberswick village green, facing Ferry Road and turn right towards the village hall, following the road as it bears right onto The Street. Take the footpath on your left just before you reach The Anchor pub.

Take the right fork, then the left fork, then turn left again. You should now be on the Suffolk Coast Path with the narrow Dunwich River immediately on your left (look out for the Suffolk Coast Path marker discs).

Follow the Suffolk Coast Path across marshes, passing the derelict Walberswick windpump. The marshes support scarce wildlife, such as the bittern, that depends on fresh water but these marshes are at risk of becoming saline if sea defences cannot be sustained.



Continue following the path for approximately 1.5km to the edge of Dunwich Forest, then follow the track with the forest on your right and Dingle Marshes on your left. When the road is reached at Bridge Farm on the edge of Dunwich, turn left.

From Dunwich, you can either retrace your route, or walk back along the beach to Walberswick. The top of the shingle bank provides the best views but the sandier shoreline makes for an easier walk. In winter, however, the beach route may be impassable.



'Walberswick Wander'

Distance 3 miles (5 km)

Time: 1 hour 30 mins depending on ferry crossings (Summer time only)

Terrain: Paths and tracks. This walk takes you onto public highways. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Start on Walberswick village green facing Ferry Road. Turn left and then left again onto the road at the top (N end) of the village green (Leverett's Lane).

Take the second track to your right, signed 'Bridleway'.

Follow this track and bear right onto a Footpath when you reach the 'Footpath' sign.

Follow this path across Walberswick Common and bear right again down a track (Palmer's Lane) when you reach another 'Footpath' sign.

Bear right at the next 'Footpath' sign and head down towards the river and Southwold, following the route of the former Southwold Light Railway. Look out for the disused windmill across the reedbed.



Cross over the Bailey bridge and turn right, keeping the River Blyth on your right. Go past the boat yards, chandleries and fisherman's sheds of the Harbour and cross over the river on the foot ferry to bring you back into Walberswick. When the ferry is not running, it's possible to do a similar walk by keeping to the Walberswick side of the River Blyth instead of crossing the River on the Bailey Bridge.

On leaving the Ferry turn left. You soon reach Ferry Road which runs between the two car parking areas. Keep walking along Ferry Road which takes you back into the village.

Images: A. Silver-studded Blue - seen on heathland in summer. B. The Open Coast - beautiful throughout the year - M Watson. C. Bittern - creeps through the wetlands - Do Van Dijck/FN/Minden/FLPA. D. Otter - elusive resident of the reedbeds. - Simon Litten/FLPA. E. The Bailey Bridge - a vital link. F. Walberswick Harbour - a welcome refuge in bad weather.