Southwold

Long walk – 3.5 miles/5.6 km

Start from public car park just to the north of the pier.

Visit the pier for a wonderful view of the area you are about to walk. The first pier was built in the 1930s to receive London holidaymakers by steamer, but storms and war took their toll. This rebuilt pier was completed in 2001.

Head south towards Southwold, on North Parade. Alternatively, take the promenade and after about 500 metres, ascend by path or steps to join North Parade.

At St James’s Green, by the cannon and mart, turn right, passing lighthouse and Sole Bay Inn to your right.

The Southwold lighthouse sits on the edge of the shipping, and as a guide into Southwold harbour entrance. It has operated since 1890, originally using oil burners, but has been updated with an electric lamp. Currently it can be seen up to about 800m, passing to seaward side of cottages about 500m from the lighthouse, then – because this reduced the flow – were blamed for causing the harbour to silt.

In the 1900’s, Southwold was set up to ease the pressure of the herring fishery as it followed the shoals up in business here. The building you see now is Victorian, and local hops and recycled glass bottles are used.

Adnams prides itself on being a ‘green’ brewery, and now produces a Carbon Neutral beer. Heat and water are recycled in the brewing process, saving in running costs, and toptaps and recycled glass bottles are used.

Turn left again into Victoria Street. At Trinity Street turn left, then immediately right and right again on to path (The Promenade) across beach.

By the Sailing Reading Room, turn right into East Street; Lord Nelson on the right. Turn left into Pakefield Road and again into Queen Street; Red Lion pub on left.

Follow the footpath between greens toward the sea, to Gun Hill. Turn right, past cannon, and follow path to end of the railings. Continue on path behind dunes, or walk along beach, for about 800m, passing to seaward side of cottages and, to the mouth of the River Blyth, by the Alfred Cory Lifeboat Museum.

Turn right past the pub, on road, and immediately fork right onto a footpath across the marsh heading for the lighthouse, and back toward Southwold. (In inclement weather, or if concerned about livestock on the marsh, then follow road back to town.)

In the 1900’s, Southwold was set up to ease the pressure of the herring fishery on Lowestoft. The ‘Kipperdrome’—about where the WCs are—was an octagonal hall for processing herring, and there was a fish market area on today’s camp site. Scottish fishing boats joined the herring fishery as it followed the shoals up the North Sea, and many Scottish fishermen came to Southwold for the season to process the catches. At that time, some 120 local fishing boats launched from Southwold beach.

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Southwold Route Overview

The walk begins with Adnams pubs, unsurprisingly, since the town is home to the brewery itself. Most of the pubs are close to the town centre, but to extend the walk between pubs, a route wants to take you through the town, on the other side starts at the pier end loops south to the harbour.

Parking can be tight in Southwold. In summer some of the pubs have car parks, but out of courtesy, check before you leave your car there unattended, especially if you plan to walk first, visit the pub later.

The short walk (3 miles) begins from the Randolph Hotel, and turn left (Lowestoft Road) and cross to footpath opposite marked with Suffolk Coast Path. Continue on footpath north of houses past Lowestoft South-west of the Both at Buss Creek.

The Police and Fire Stations opposite the Blyth Hotel are on the site of the old Southwold railway station, from here the line ran south-west across Southwold Common to a connection site to southeast of Southwold.

Flood Relief Wall south-west of the town at Blackshore. To the left, the land rises towards England’s most easterly headland. It is now nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, managed by English Heritage. To seaward is Sole Bay, which gives Adnams Brewery its inspiration, a large sandy bay formed by the impact of a number of sandspits.

The Battle of Sole Bay added to the vendetta in 1672. It was the first, and inconclusive, naval engagement of the Anglo-Dutch War. The action took place towards Lowestoft, with the loss of over 4,000 men, and some 19 ships sunk.

Buss Creek gets its name from the herring fishing boats, or ‘busses’, that were laid up in the creek at Blackshore. A branch of the creekencircles Southwold like a moat, and was vital to the town in the 17th and 18th centuries. For the sea wall, all of this low-lying land would be open to the sea. The creek escape Southwold like a moat, blocking the road. If the town were built on this site, it is possible that Southwold could have been a well-protected town.

The market place and market cross are being refurbished, these are massive stones that may have inspired the turreted gateway. Some of the pubs have car parks, but out of courtesy, check before you leave your car there unattended, especially if you plan to walk first, visit the pub later.

The Walk

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So, where does this walk start? The Walk starts at the Randolph Hotel, and turn left (Lowestoft Road) and cross to footpath opposite marked with Suffolk Coast Path. Continue on footpath north of houses past Lowestoft South-west of the Both at Buss Creek.

Beyond the Pier, continue on road (North Parade) above beach, or enjoy the promenade, joining the road by steps or path. Carry straight on along path above beach, past St James’s Green.

At the car park behind the bath, turn right, and head for the pier, with Buss Creek flowing away to your right.

The old route is walkable, from Southwold to Blythburgh.

To the left, the land rises towards Eastons Bawens. In the 16th century, Easton Ness extended out to sea and rose England’s most easterly headland. It is now nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, managed by English Heritage. To seaward is Sole Bay, which gives Adnams Brewery its inspiration, a large sandy bay formed by the impact of a number of sandspits.

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