



Walk on the WILDSIDE

SAND DUNES, MARSHES AND A VARIETY OF WILDLIFE ADD TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF NORTH NORFOLK, SAYS JO VAUGHAN



OF COURSE, we all know Sandringham as the Queen's Norfolk retreat, but it can be ours too thanks to the Club's site, positioned in the heart of the Royal Estate. There are many walks to embark on from here, including one that takes you to Sandringham House. But for the purposes of our stroll we must take the short drive to the coastal village of Thornham. From here, catch the 'Coast Hopper' bus to Holme next the Sea, where our walk truly begins. The use of public transport is essential as there is no roadside path on which to walk between the two villages.

The bus runs approximately every hour during the winter, and information

(including timetables) can be found at travelineeastanglia.org.uk or passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk. Alternatively, there's an information line that can be reached on 0870 608 2608.

From Holme, we walk to, and then along, the 130-year-old sand dunes that protect the land behind from flooding during high tides and rough weather. Wildlife abounds in this rich environment, including numerous varieties of bird (you can find details of what's to be seen from the small hut found just before you enter the reserve). A little farther on is a long sandy beach, which may not tempt at this time of year, but during the summer its seclusion ensures a reasonably quiet sunbathe.



General information

Nearest Club Site: The Sandringham Estate Caravan Club Site, Glucksburg Woods, Sandringham PE35 6EZ. Tel 01553 631614. Open from 4 Jan 2006

Distance: 3.6 miles/5.8km

Terrain: Good paths

Number of stiles: One

Essential equipment: Ordnance Survey OS Explorer Map 250 - Norfolk Coast West; binoculars (for wildlife spotting)

Level of difficulty: Easy

Car parking: Park in Thornham in Church Street next to All Saints Church (behind the brick and stone bus shelter)

Refreshments: White Horse Inn, Holme next the Sea, at the visitor centre, or in Thornham

Toilets: At the visitor centre



DIRECTIONS

1 Cross the road at the Orange Tree restaurant and bar, and use the bus stop opposite. Leave the bus at the next bus stop at Holme next the Sea (situated just before exiting the village). Cross the road and turn right to head down Peddars Way.

2 At the end of Peddars Way, cross the road and continue straight ahead down a gravelled lane, between the two signposts Kirkgate Street and Westgate Street. After the last building, veer left and cross the wooden stile. Follow the yellow Norfolk County Council Footpath sign down the right side of a field (past a sign Redwell Marsh Reserve).

3 Continue following the reed-filled dyke and then continue to the end of the field. Cross the small metal-railed footbridge, and then at the track turn right before going immediately left by the little wooden hut, heading towards the sea.

4 At the path's crossroads turn right following the wooden boardwalk. Continue through the dunes, with the marshes to your left. Keep to the main track as it curves down a dip to the right, towards a house, still following the yellow arrow, and now an acorn sign.

5 Head to the left side of a clump of woodland. As you pass this, the path becomes gravelled. Keep following the wayposts, passing the Holmes Dune Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre signs before continuing ahead, leaving the formal footpath on a more sandy track through an avenue of trees. Ignore all the footpaths that branch off to the left and right.

6 You soon return to the wooden boardwalk. At the end of this, follow the yellow arrow and acorn sign up a flight of wooden steps, and turn left following the wooden boardwalk. There's a bird observatory at this junction.

Tourist information

Hunstanton Tourist Information Centre, Town Hall, The Green, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 6BQ. Tel 01485 532610

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Thornham BOTTOM: Sandringham Club site

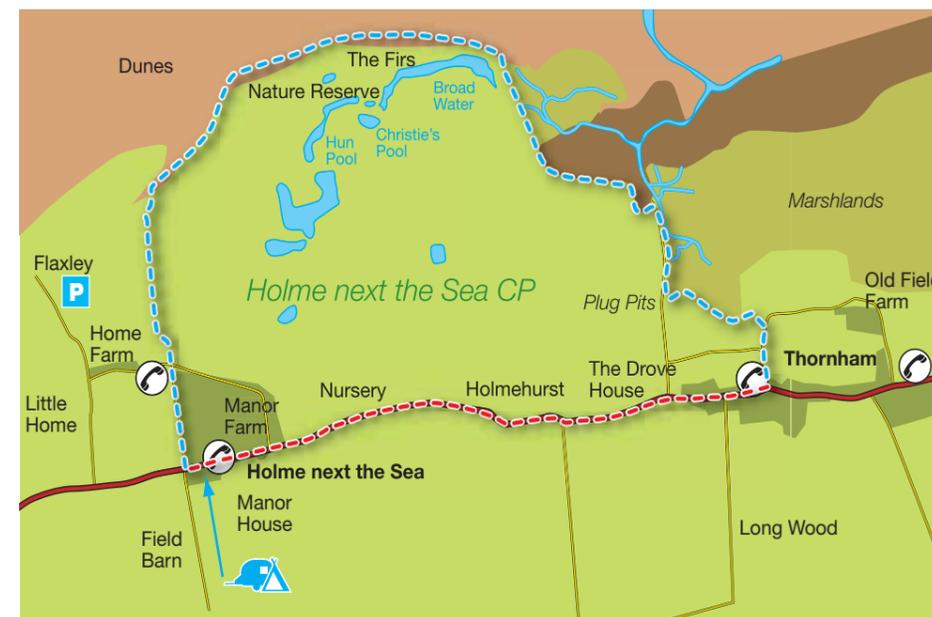
ABOVE FROM LEFT: Thornham; Beach, between Holme and Thornham

7 Follow the boardwalk as it heads around to the right to head inland. As you walk down this section of pathway there are salt marshes inland to the left. Go past the wooden gate and continue as the path veers to the left and then the right. Go past another wooden gate, and very soon turn left towards a car park, heading over a sluice.

8 Turn right at the car park and continue along the road. If there's no room by the church, you could start the walk from here, but remember to add some extra time so you can catch the bus.

9 After the parking area take a left turn on to a smaller path (sp Norfolk Coast Path - Public Footpath, Thornham 1/2 mile). Cross a wooden footbridge and then turn right following the acorn public footpath sign. At the road turn right again, following the signs 'Norfolk Coastal Path - Thornham Village'. Continue until you return to your vehicle.

HOLME NEXT THE SEA WALK: 3.6 miles/6.8km



Local attractions

■ Sandringham Estate, Sandringham, Norfolk PE35 6EN. Tel 01553 612908. Museum, visitor centre and gardens. Disabled access: full access.

■ Norfolk Lavender, Caley Mill, Heacham, Norfolk PE31 7JE. Tel 0870 243 0147 or see norfolk-lavender.co.uk. Cost: £4.50 for a mini bus tour and £2.25 for a tour of the garden, drying barn and distillery. Tours from May to the end of September. Disabled access: full access.

■ Snettisham Park, Snettisham, nr Sandringham, Norfolk PE31 7NQ. Tel 01485 542425 or see snettishampark.co.uk. Cost: Farm only: adults £4.95, seniors £4.25, children £3.95. Farm and deer safari: adults £8.50, seniors £7.50, children £6.50. Open: 1 February to 31 October from 10am to 5pm. Disabled access: full access to the farm, and help is at hand if necessary for the safari.