



# 'THE EASTERN angle

WANT A BREAK WITH A DIFFERENT SLANT? THEN TRY SUFFOLK'S STUNNING HERITAGE COAST, SAYS MAUREEN MAKINSON



Ordnance Survey Landranger Maps 134, 156

**U**NCROWDED EXPANSIONS of white sand and shingle beaches interspersed with heath, marsh and reed beds make up the Suffolk coast, much of it designated Heritage Coast and nearly all of it lying within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Five long river estuaries play their part in keeping the main roads inland, in turn preserving the tranquil atmosphere of this rich and varied area.

The Heritage Coast runs from near Felixstowe northwards to Kessingland where the Club bought an existing small site by the shore over 47 years ago, expanding it over the years with the acquisition of nearby land on the other side of the minor road.

White House Beach visitors can choose between the original small site by the shore,

or the more secluded main pitching area where most facilities are found. Awnings are permitted on only about half of the 24 pitches by the beach, but even though space is restricted this section is always booked up first. There is more room across the road where grass and hardstanding pitches are sheltered by trees and shrubs.

There are plenty of places nearby at which to eat and drink, including the Sailor's Home pub by the main site gate. Fishing and walking are favourite activities along the shingle and pebble beach, quickly reached from the main section of the site via a small gate near the office. Turn left on the foreshore and it's possible to walk or cycle to Lowestoft; turn right and head towards distant Southwold and the nature reserves – birdwatching is very popular

here, especially at RSPB Minsmere, south of Dunwich, where there is also a visitor centre and tearoom.

During the 19th century Lowestoft's fortunes were founded on the discovery of Dogger Bank and the North Sea fishing grounds. The Maritime Heritage Museum near the lighthouse records the town's historical links with the sea. Ness Point, overlooked by the wind turbine, Gulliver, is Britain's most easterly place but it's a disappointment to see that little has been done to mark that fact.

Lowestoft is not only a port but ideal for a traditional seaside holiday – the sandy north and south beaches, awarded Blue Flag status, are considered to be among the best in Europe. Children are encouraged to splash through the new Royal Fountains

## INFORMATION | TOURISM

- **Lowestoft TIC**, East Point Pavilion, Royal Plain, Lowestoft NR33 0AP. Tel 01502 533600 or see [visit-sunrisecoast.co.uk](http://visit-sunrisecoast.co.uk)
- **Southwold TIC**, 69 High Street, Southwold IP18 6EF. Tel 01502 724729 or see [visit-sunrisecoast.co.uk](http://visit-sunrisecoast.co.uk)

## INFORMATION | SITE

Full details of White House Beach can be found on p192 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2009/10*



that form part of the improved entrance to the south beach. A complex system of nozzles shoots jets of water high into the air during the day, and in the evening all is magically illuminated.

The two-day Lowestoft Seafront Air Festival in July engenders a good family atmosphere, as does the exciting offshore Powerboat Grand Prix over the following two days. Pleasurewood Hills theme park offers rides and shows for all ages while Africa Alive wildlife park, near Kessingland, is a firm family favourite.

Scenic Oulton Broad links the North Sea with the river Waveney via a lock and lake, and then the rest of the Broads. A wide range of leisure facilities and activities draws tourists, including quality powerboat racing most Thursday evenings. Farther west is the picturesque market town of Beccles, host to a popular carnival and firework display during the first week in August.

Much of the development of Lowestoft was down to Sir Samuel Morton Peto, builder of the Houses of Parliament and original owner of the nearby Anglo-Italian-style Somerleyton Hall and Gardens.



Farther down the coast, and famous for its brightly-painted beach huts (several of which are owned by celebrities including Dame Judi Dench and P D James), Southwold exudes an old world charm. The surrounding marshes have thankfully saved this gracious seaside town from development and expansion. A 19th-century lighthouse (open on Sundays) towers over the town as does one of the finest churches in Suffolk, dedicated to St Edmund, martyr and last King of East Anglia. Groups of distinctive buildings are interspersed with green open spaces, created when a 17th-century fire destroyed many of the houses. One of these greens is Gun Hill, dominated by canon from that time, sent to protect the town from sea privateers.

A major attraction on the seafront is the pier, re-opened in 2001 after more than 60 years. It now houses various leisure facilities, restaurants and cafés and is open every day (with free admission). The sandy beach, backed by rows of elevated beach huts, has a lifeguard service in summer, certain areas are dog

MAIN IMAGE: Southwold Pier and North Beach  
ABOVE: Southwold's famous brightly-painted beach huts  
BELOW: Somerleyton Hall

free and specified areas are set aside for water sports and fishing.

There are occasional finds of amber, a fossilised resin from Europe's ancient forests, trapped during the Ice Age and then deposited in various areas including the North Sea. After heavy storms there is a chance of a piece being washed up, usually somewhere between Southwold and Aldeburgh. Striking exhibits from all over the world are displayed in Southwold's amber museum.

From Southwold there are pleasant walks to the busy tourist village of Walberswick on the opposite bank of the river Blyth, either using the Bailey bridge or the foot ferry in summer. In early August bridges and river banks become crammed with fishing lines, buckets and strong smelling bait as the World Crabbing Championship day takes place – a family fun event with all funds raised going to various charities.

Whether you're young or old and whatever type of holiday you prefer, there really is something for everyone along this relatively unspoilt Heritage Coast. ■

## INFORMATION | ATTRACTIONS

- **Minsmere RSPB** – tel 01728 648281 or see [rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk) and search Minsmere. Open all year
- **Lowestoft Maritime Heritage Museum**, Sparrows Nest Park, Whapload Road, Lowestoft NR32 1XG. Tel 01502 561963 or see [maritimeheritageeast.org.uk](http://maritimeheritageeast.org.uk). Open daily May to October
- **Lowestoft Seafront Air Festival** – 23-24 July 2009 or see [lowestoftairfestival.co.uk](http://lowestoftairfestival.co.uk)
- **Honda Powerboat Grand Prix**, Royal Plain, Lowestoft seafront – 25-26 July 2009 or see [f4sa.com](http://f4sa.com)
- **Pleasurewood Hills**, Leisure Way, Corton, Lowestoft. Tel 01502 586000 or see [pleasurewoodhills.com](http://pleasurewoodhills.com). Open March to October, restricted days and times outside school holidays
- **Africa Alive**, Kessingland, Lowestoft. Tel 01502 740291 or see [africa-alive.co.uk](http://africa-alive.co.uk). Open all year
- **Somerleyton Hall and Gardens**, Lowestoft. Tel 01502 734901 or see [somerleyton.co.uk](http://somerleyton.co.uk). Open March to October but restricted days and times
- **Amber Museum**, Market Place, Southwold. Tel 01502 723394 or see [ambershop.co.uk](http://ambershop.co.uk)

