



Holkham NNR

Discovery Walk

Explore the fantastic dunes, beach and pinewoods on this 4.5 mile (7.25km) walk. There are a couple of short cut options, returning to your start point by Coasthopper bus. The shorter walk is 3 miles (4.8km).

Start this walk at the Wells-next-the-sea entrance to the NNR at the north-west corner of Wells Beach car park, at the end of Beach Road. Grid reference TF912454, Postcode NR23 1DR.

The Holkham Estate car park has a pay and display charge. The Norfolk Green Coasthopper bus makes regular, frequent stops at Wells-next-the-sea, and you could take the little train from the playing field along Beach Road to the car park.

1. Enter the NNR through the wooden kissing gate. The pond to your left is called Abraham's Bosom. You may see large black cormorants here, as well as ducks. Follow the path to the signpost ahead of you and take the path to the right. Some of the pine trees on your left are called maritime pines which have really big cones – can you find one that has fallen to the ground?



2. Continue past the brick toilet block (open in summer months) and walk up the boardwalk slope. Who will be the first to see the sea? Turn left at the top of the slope before the steps. Keep to the path along the top of the ridge. This ridge was formed as a sand dune many years ago, before the pine trees were planted. Watch out for tree roots that might try and trip you up!

3. This path continues along the edge of the pinewoods all the way to Holkham Bay. There is a lot to see on the way!

Can you find;

- A pine cone that a squirrel has nibbled?
- Yellow and black striped caterpillars of the red cinnabar moth on a ragwort plant?
- A pine tree which is a strange shape? What does it look like?

You might like to go out onto the beach and dunes to explore. Continue walking west, following the line of the pine trees. Look out for the spiky sea buckthorn bushes on the way. In autumn and winter the bushes produce clusters of bright orange berries, which bird visitors such as thrushes and fieldfares like to feed on. Also look out for the sharp marram grass that helps to build up the sand dunes by trapping sand. This grass is very hardy and is specially adapted to live in the harsh, dry and salty conditions.

4. After about a mile you will reach Holkham Bay, either through the woods or along the beach. The bay has areas of new developing saltmarsh which is an important habitat for rare plants and animals, Listen for the song of a skylark hovering over the purple flowered sea lavender, shoots of fleshy green sapphire and bushes of shrubby sea-blite. Help us protect them and make sure you don't tread on any!

5. If you are tired or short of time, find the board walk at the gap in the trees in the bay. (Look for a wooden fenced area that helps to protect the dunes from the action of the sea). Go to number **12** to complete your walk.

6. If you are still having fun exploring carry on around Holkham Bay to the western side. Follow the edge of the bay, along the line of the fence for a while, keeping the pine trees on your left. Continue straight on where a horse rider's way marker post points to the right. In the distance beyond the large sand dune ridge is a fenced off area. Shore nesting birds such as terns, ringed plovers and oystercatchers nest here on the raised shingle. The fenced area is beyond this circular walk but you can do a short trip to it to spot the birds. They are very sensitive to disturbance so tiptoe past!

7. Keep a good look out for a wooden platform viewing area on your left, towards the pine trees – be careful not to walk past it. You need to turn back into the pine woods here. Does it feel different walking amongst the trees after being on the beach?

8. Follow the path along the boardwalk. This is a great place to see butterflies and dragonflies in the summer. How many different kinds can you spot?

9. Take the boardwalk path to the right for a sit down in the bird hide. If you are lucky you might

see a bird of prey called a Marsh Harrier from here. The North Norfolk coast is a great habitat for them. Remember to whisper in the hide so you don't disturb anyone!

When you are ready, leave the hide and go down the boardwalk slope to the bottom. Turn left along the path.

10. This path will lead you to the Lady Anne's Drive entrance to the NNR. On the way can you find a pool called Salts Hole? Is anything swimming on it? Does it smell? Read on the sign to find out why.

11. At the Lady Anne's Drive entrance you have a choice. Either carry on straight ahead for about a mile, along the track behind the pine trees, which will take you back to where you started in Wells. On the way to Wells listen for high-pitched calls of tiny goldcrests, which can often be seen flitting around at the end of pine branches? There are benches to rest on along the way. This path forms part of the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail.

Or

12. Walk to the far end of the long car park (watch out for cars and sometimes horses!) to the road, which is the A149 coast road. Look out for lapwing & cattle on the marshes along Lady Anne's Drive. The cows help to keep the grass short for the breeding wading birds. Turn left at the main road to find the Coasthopper bus stop. The bus will take you back to Wells-next-the-sea. If you parked at the Wells Beach car park you could take the little train from the playing field area back to the car park.

