

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 then north to Kessingland. The AONB covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife-rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

How to get to Dunwich Beach car park or Darsham Station

-  Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 231 (Southwold and Bungay), No. 212 (Woodbridge and Saxmundham) for part of route.
-  **Dunwich Beach car park:** access via the B1122, the B1125 and unclassified roads from the A12. The car park gets very busy on summer Sundays and bank holidays.
-  **Darsham Station:** the car park is very small, so only rail access is possible.
-  Dunwich Beach car park: IP17 3EN
-  Darsham Station is on the East Suffolk Line (hourly service Ipswich to Lowestoft).
-  Train information: www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 08457 484950
-  Public transport information: www.suffolkonboard.com or call 0345 606 6171
-  www.traveline.info or call 0871 200 2233
-  Visitor information from www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
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www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org



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The Dunwich & Minsmere Cycle Explorer Guide has been produced with the generous support of Adnams. They also sponsor a number of cycling events across the region. Cycling is a fun, inclusive and healthy way to enjoy the beautiful county we live in, and it's made even better by a refreshing drink in one of the Adnams' pubs at the end of your adventure.

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Dunwich & Minsmere

Cycle Explorer Guide

In partnership with



This route visits the ancient parish of Dunwich as well as the RSPB's famous nature reserve at Minsmere and the National Trust's beautiful Dunwich Heath property.



Dunwich & Minsmere

Suffolk Coast & Heaths *Cycle Explorer Guide*

A route of contrasts through the stunning Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Explore the ancient parish of Dunwich, including the ruins of the mysterious Greyfriars Priory and visit Minsmere, the RSPB's flagship nature reserve.

Route Highlights

1 *Dunwich* village is a fragment of a once great port and a stark reminder of the power of the sea. A series of storms in the medieval period gradually destroyed the town, reducing a borough of nine churches to a parish of just one. There is a tale that, on stormy nights, the bells of the lost churches can be heard tolling under the sea. If you want to discover more, visit the excellent Dunwich Museum in St James' Street.



2 *Westleton* is an attractive village with a large green and a duck pond. The parish church of St. Peter is unusual in being thatched. It was built by monks in the 1300s. The building used to have a tower, but it collapsed in a great storm in 1776.



3 *Minsmere* is the RSPB's flagship nature reserve. It was established in 1947 and is one of the best bird watching sites in the UK. What makes the reserve so special is the diversity of the habitats, which include reed bed, heath, grassland, forest and shingle.



The reed beds have been managed for many years, allowing bird species such as the rare bittern to thrive. Many other animals and insects co-exist here, including marsh harriers, stone chats and reed buntings as well as over 30 species of butterfly. One of the most impressive animals is the red deer.

4 *Dunwich Heath* is a rare surviving lowland coastal heath, a habitat which used to cover a much larger area. The heathland at Dunwich is managed by the National Trust and is a great place for wildlife. Breeding birds include Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark. Throughout the year, the coconut-scented yellow flowers of gorse brighten the landscape, whilst between July and September, heather flowers paint the heath pink and purple. In the distance is the distinctive dome of Sizewell B nuclear power station.

5 *Greyfriars Priory* is one of the most significant ancient monuments in Suffolk. What remains are the ruins of a medieval Franciscan priory. The ruins in the centre of the site used to be the refectory, whilst the impressive gate was once the main entrance. The site is now managed by the Dunwich Greyfriars Trust and is free to visit.

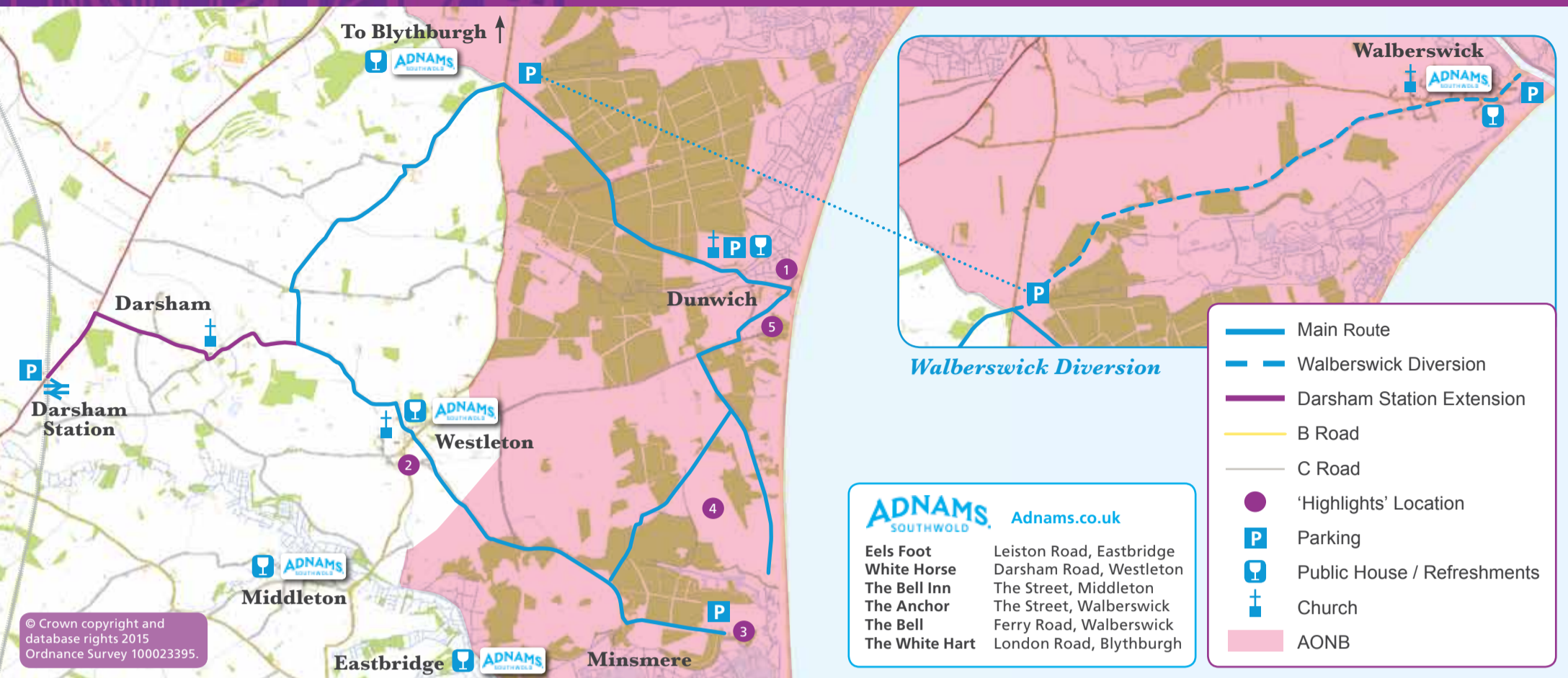


Images: Front cover – A cyclist pauses at Dunwich Heath. A. Dunwich Beach – An ever-changing place (photo – Tony Pick). B. Westleton – Cycling along the village street. C. Marsh Harrier – One of the many species of bird at Minsmere (photo – Jon Evans). D. Red Deer – Minsmere hosts a herd of these beautiful animals (photo – Jon Evans). E. Dunwich Heath – Heather and Gorse in bloom (photo – Justin Minns). F. Greyfriars Priory – One of the finest ancient monuments in Suffolk.

Dunwich & Minsmere

Suffolk Coast & Heaths Cycle Explorer Guide

As this route is circular, you can start from several different places; however, the recommended starting point is Dunwich Beach car park. If you want to leave the car at home and come by train, you can start from Darsham Station.



Suffolk Coast & Heaths Circuit

Dunwich Beach car park – Westleton – Minsmere – Dunwich Heath.

Distance: 13 miles/21 km.
(16.5 miles/27 km if the route is started/finished at Darsham Station).

Start: Dunwich Beach car park or Darsham Station.

Time: 3 hours if started from Dunwich Beach car park/4 hours if started from Darsham Station (allow more time for visits to Minsmere reserve, Dunwich Heath and optional diversion to Walberswick).

Terrain: Route mainly follows minor roads, one with poor surface. Several sections on roads with 60mph speed limit. One long section on track with variable surface. Some short hills.



Starting from Dunwich Beach car park

Follow road out of car park. Turn right through village passing Ship Inn. Bear right at next junction and follow road through Dunwich Forest, continuing straight at crossroads. At next crossroads with main road, go straight across signposted Hinton.

Walberswick Diversion (7 miles/11km – 1.5 hours). To visit the beautiful coastal village of Walberswick, turn sharp right at cross-roads and follow track, then road, to village. Retrace route to continue. Track can be muddy and rough in places.

Ignore immediate right exit. Follow lane and take next left (un-signposted farm lane). Immediately follow around to left and then bear right away from farm (watch out for pot holes). At T-junction, turn left and then shortly right. At following T-junction, turn left. Follow road into Westleton.

*Pass to left of White Horse Inn, immediately slip right and continue straight across green. At staggered crossroads, go straight across into Bakers Lane. Continue straight at junction and follow signs and lane to RSPB Minsmere (free entry to visitor centre, but charges apply to visit reserve for non RSPB members).



Retrace route from Minsmere until entrance gate. Immediately after gate, turn right onto unsurfaced Bridleway. Follow Bridleway through forest and across heath, ignoring all footpath exits (you will need to dismount at gates and rough patches). When you reach lane, turn right and follow to reach National Trust's Dunwich Heath Visitor Centre.

After visiting Dunwich Heath Visitor Centre, retrace route but continue straight at junction with bridleway. At T junction with main road, turn right. Follow road into Dunwich, bearing right at road junction. Stop to visit remains of Greyfriars Priory. Retrace route to start.

Starting from Darsham Station

Turn left out of the station and follow main road (beware of traffic). Take next right, signposted Westleton and Dunwich. Follow road through Darsham to Westleton, ignoring all exits. Join route as described left (* symbol). Retrace this route to return to Darsham Station after the circular route has been completed.



Safe Cycling Guidance

- Make sure your bicycle is safe to use
- Wear a hi-vis jacket and a helmet that comply with current standards
- Obey the rules of the road and follow the Highway Code
- Be courteous and acknowledge people who give way to you
- Give way to pedestrians, wheelchair users and horse riders
- Ride in single file to let vehicles overtake if the road is busy or narrow
- Don't assume everyone can see or hear you
- Ring your bell or call out to warn others of your approach
- Try to reach the start of your ride using bike or public transport
- Please cycle on roads, byways, cycle paths – not on Public Footpaths

Thank You

Images: A. Cycling across the heath – Quiet bridleways lead through the landscape. B. Boats at Walberswick – This coastal village is worth a diversion. C. Green Woodpecker – One of the many beautiful birds you can see at Minsmere (photo - Jon Evans). D. Cyclists at Dunwich – Enjoying the view out to sea. E. Greyfriars Priory – The ancient gate to the Priory.

