



AllWays Traveller

North Norfolk, UK

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

# This part of East Anglia has it all

**Norfolk is an eastern English county in an area historically known as East Anglia.**

It borders Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and the North Sea.

The cathedral city of Norwich is the county town and the Norfolk Broads comprises the UK's largest protected wetland.

Within the county, North Norfolk offers visitors historic English market towns in rolling countryside and a coastline of fine beaches scattered with small fishing villages and ports.

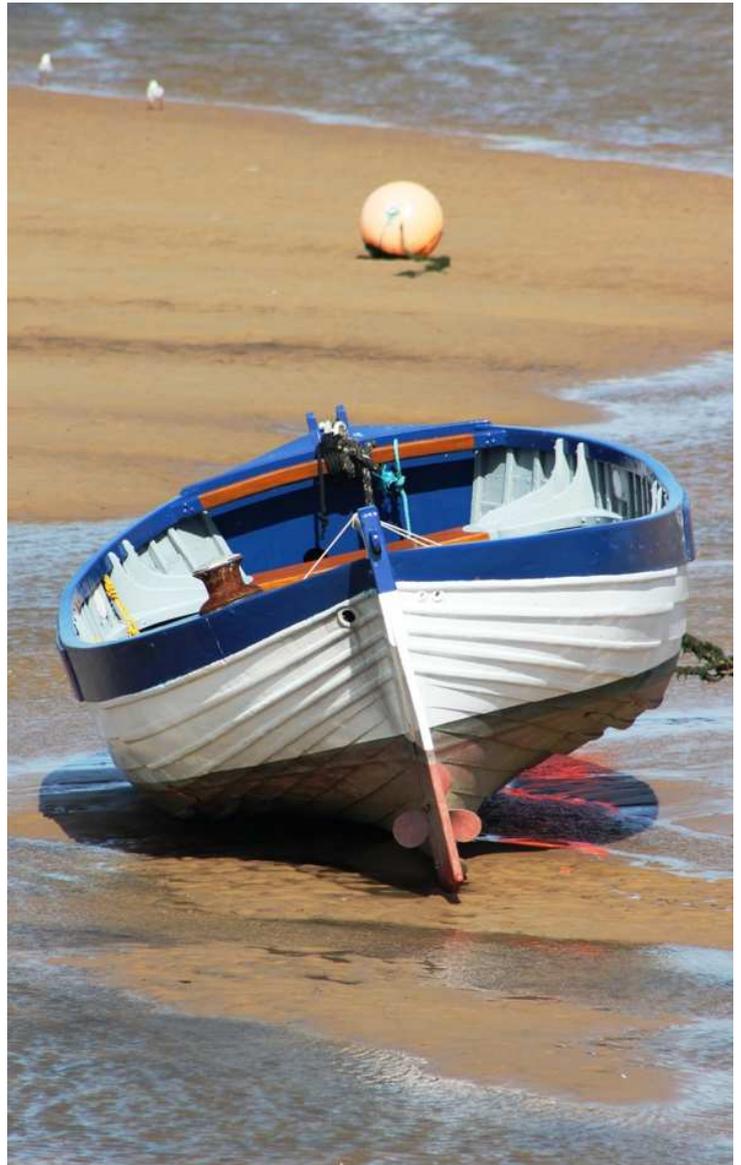
With large swathes of North Norfolk officially areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or designated nature reserves, this is also somewhere that rewards walking and bird watching.

North Norfolk also has more than its fair share of stately homes and gardens for those wanting to appreciate English heritage at its best, including the Queen's country retreat at Sandringham.

[www.visitnorthnorfolk.com](http://www.visitnorthnorfolk.com)

## Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor  
**AllWays traveller**



## A personal view of North Norfolk

### Fresh air and fine times

By Ashley Gibbins



Chris Taylor

For those who enjoy travelling, there is always the risk of being tempted by far off horizons to the detriment of destinations on one's doorstep.

OK, I accept North Norfolk is not on my London doorstep.

But a two and a half hour drive to arrive somewhere that is a world away from the UK capital is of little consequence.

Particularly when compared to what is waiting to be discovered in this part of East Anglia.

Most of the pleasure here comes from being out and about.

Within the space of a five night stay were able to walk along a beach voted the best in Britain and coastal paths teeming with bird life.



And while on the coast in North Norfolk, we experienced a sunset as stunning as those on the Gulf of Mexico.

## While in the area

### The beaches of North Norfolk



North Norfolk's coastline, between Hunstanton and Sheringham, is spectacular - and much of it designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

As such it is protected by organisations including the National Trust, RSPB and the local councils with the Norfolk Coast Partnership.

#### Holkham beach

Holkham beach, which is managed by Natural England and the nearby Holkham Estate, is recognised as one of the UK's most unspoilt and beautiful stretches of sand.

It is also part of one of the largest national nature reserves in the country and is home to many rare species of flora and fauna.

Coastal and woodland walks around the beach are highly enjoyable options for those preferring somewhere a little less 'popular' and something a little more active.

[www.holkham.co.uk/html/beach](http://www.holkham.co.uk/html/beach)

#### Wells-next-the-sea beach



The sandy beach, with its pine trees, sand dunes and colourful beach huts, is (along with crabbing on the dockside) this bustling little towns main allure.

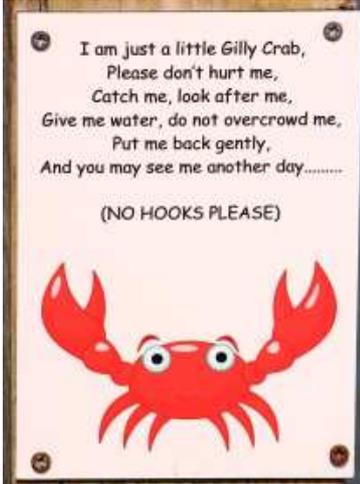
Those walking for under two miles along the sands will end up at Holkham beach.

This is the place to spot oyster catchers and ringed plovers, who nest on the beach, along with common and little terns.

[www.wells-guide.co.uk](http://www.wells-guide.co.uk)

## Delightful little creatures and so willing to cling to our line

**Joining the youngsters - with their equally excited parents and grandparents - we crabbed on the picturesque quay sides at Wells-next-the-Sea and Blakeney.**



One of life's little pleasures, we were able to catch these delightful little creatures.



### Delightful small towns

We also visited the small seaside resort of Hunstanton and the country town of Sheringham.

In between is an area of natural beauty that is as outstanding, as its official designation applies.

Then there is Holt, a small country town, and a magnet for tourists, it was almost completely rebuilt during Georgian times following a fire that devastated the town in 1708.

Today it provides a collection of small coffee shops and restaurants together with antique emporiums and gift outlets.

They are more than willing to be lifted from the water clinging to a juicy bit of bacon.

They then spend a spell in the bucket of sea water before being returned to their natural home.

### Tucking in

If our briefly captured crabs enjoyed their bacon bites, we tucked into some tremendous lunches and dinners.

Most of these were in traditional pubs with restaurants serving dishes that would grace any restaurant.

On the subject of English pubs (one of my favourite), each of the delightful country villages we went through had at least one.

I was tempted, naturally enough, to stop at each.

Had I done so we would be there now, with me enjoying yet another pint of Woodfordes traditional ales.

### A stately visit

As this is England, the weather may not always be up to scratch.

Not to worry, the walking here can be wonderfully bracing when the wind is blowing.

But to avoid the elements are a number of fine English stately homes, many of which are managed by the National Trust.

The efforts of the National Trust in preserving and protecting the UK's heritage for us to enjoy is to be roundly applauded - and actively supported.

A visit to a National trust property never disappoints.

## Cley Marshes



Cley Marshes is Norfolk Wildlife Trust's oldest and best known nature reserve.

It was purchased in 1926 to be held 'in perpetuity as a bird breeding sanctuary', and has provided a blue print for nature conservation across the UK.

The water levels in the pools and reedbeds are regulated to ensure they are ideal for the resident birds, and reed is harvested every year to keep them in good condition.

The shingle beach and saline lagoons, along with the grazing marsh and reedbed, support large numbers of wintering and migrating wildfowl and waders, as well as bittern, marsh harrier and bearded tit.

A new eco-friendly visitor centre contains a café, shop and viewing areas.

[www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)  
[www.coasthopper.co.uk](http://www.coasthopper.co.uk)

### The Norfolk Coastal Path



Taking the Norfolk Coastal Path from Wells-next-the-sea for a stretch can be equally as enjoyable.

The whole of the path goes for 45 miles from Hunstanton to Cromer and is part of the National Trails - long distance footpaths and bridleways in England and Wales, administered by Natural England

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)

## Beside the seaside



Cromer

The UK has seaside resorts, large and small, along its coastline and North Norfolk has Cromer.

Cromer is not the liveliest resort you will find and nor, thankfully, is it the most commercial.

And that is its charm.

Cromer is a resort that enjoyed a heyday in the 1800s, and has a Victorian pier that was built around this time.

It comes complete with a traditional end of the pier variety show during the holiday seasons.

Cromer epitomises what those of a bygone age wanted from a seaside stay.

That is a relaxing break in a genteel coastal resort with the option of an embracing walk on the cliff top path.

Or the chance to watch the fishing boats being hauled onto the shingle beach after a days work.

And the opportunity to enjoy Cromer crab - if you are happy to eat the larger cousins of those little fellers you came to know earlier in your stay.

[www.thisiscromer.co.uk](http://www.thisiscromer.co.uk)

### Amazona Zoo

And while in the Cromer area, you really should spend a couple of hours at Amazona zoo.

As zoos go, this is a relatively small one, but it is lushly landscaped, and there are exotic animals in abundance.



Amazona Zoo, on the outskirts of Cromer, focuses on South American wildlife.

It is home to over 200 tropical animals including jaguars, monkeys, snakes, tapirs, Amazon parrots and flamingos.

The zoo works with conservationists and other zoos to protect 'all wild species and their wild homes' and has not taken any animals from the wild.

In particular, Amazona Zoo is the main sponsor of a programme of research into the life of the Titicaca River Frog, an extraordinary amphibian from Lake Titicaca.

The frog is an important food source for local people and its decline is demonstrating that the whole local environment is being degraded.

[www.amazonazoo.co.uk](http://www.amazonazoo.co.uk)

## Watching seals – and them watching you



For those wanting to get out to sea, Beans Boats provide boat trips to Blakeney Point to watch the colony of Common and Grey seals

These number around 500 with the Common seals having their young between June and August and the Greys between November and January.

Seals are generally quite inquisitive and will often swim around the boats for a better look at their visitors!

On many of the trips visitors will be dropped off onto Blakeney Point for the chance to get up close to these animals or to take a stroll up to the Old Lifeboat House.

The National Trust took over the Point in 1912 and it is now an international breeding ground for many migrant birds during both summer and winter.

There are hides located at prime sites.

[www.beansboattrips.co.uk](http://www.beansboattrips.co.uk)

### The North Norfolk Railway



The North Norfolk Railway, which operates steam and diesel trains, provides another way to enjoy the North Norfolk scenery.

The heritage railway, known locally as the 'Poppy Line', runs for five miles from Sheringham along the coast through Weybourne to Holt.

The stop at Kelling Halt gives access to Kelling Heath, a protected parcel of heathland covered with gorse, heather and bracken and rambling paths.

[www.nnrailway.co.uk](http://www.nnrailway.co.uk)

## Places to stay in North Norfolk

By Ann Mealor

### Barnham Broom Hotel



Barnham Broom Hotel, which is set in 300 acres of Norfolk countryside, 10 miles from Norwich, is a modern four star hotel offering a comfortable base for touring the North of the county.

#### A round or two



The adjoining Barnham Broom golf club is one of the county's best, with two 18 hole championship golf courses.

#### Dining

For dining, the hotel's Brasserie serves a range of dishes, including steaks, smoked Norfolk chicken, lamb cutlets and monkfish wrapped in pancetta, accompanied by an extensive wine list.

An excellent breakfast in the Brasserie sets one up for the day.

#### The Spa at Barnham Broom



The tranquil and relaxing spa at Barnham Broom is the ideal place to enjoy a range of body treatments and facials.

Waiting in the comfortable reception area I passed the time testing the range of ESPA products on display, including hand creams, body lotions, moisturisers, serums. All smelled divine.

Looking forward to my 50 minute Personalised ESPA Facial, I filled in my health details on the required questionnaire.

I then discussed my skin and what I wanted from my visit with therapist, Serena.

While doing so, the spacious and serene treatment room with its low lighting and soothing music was making me feel suitably snooty.

Before we got started, I was asked to do the sensory test.

Serena asked me to smell two aromatic toners and oils for use during my facial.

She said my skin would tell me what it needed – and it was the products that focussed on rehydration.

After cleansing my face, Serena examined my skin under the ESPA skin vision lamp, which showed up any areas of flakiness, dehydration or pigmentation and oiliness.

I was pleased to hear that my skin looked very good, and Serena decided to use a range of ESPA anti-aging products to further improve my skin.

Serena then expertly started to exfoliate, massage, apply a face mask and finally massage my scalp with some delicious smelling pink hair and scalp mud.

The whole experience was extremely enjoyable, relaxing and skin rejuvenating.

[www.barnham-broom.co.uk](http://www.barnham-broom.co.uk)

### Pensthorpe Natural Park

Pensthorpe Natural Park, near Fakenham, is a 660 acre area of wetland, gardens, meadows and a conservation centre.



Pensthorpe began its development, in 1988, from a series of disused gravel workings and has become an internationally renowned nature reserve with thousands of species of fauna and flora.

It also provides a habitat for some of the UK's rarest and most endangered wildlife and, in doing so, attracts families, walkers, gardeners and bird spotters in equal measure.



Along with the ducks and geese that live or migrate to Pensthorpe, visitors can also spot avocets, lapwings, little ringed plovers and kingfishers.

The Pensthorpe Conservation Trust, based at the reserve, is involved in work to breed rare species including cranes, corncrakes and turtle doves.



There is also a flourishing red squirrel project, which Pensthorpe runs with the East Anglian red squirrel breeding programme.

[www.pensthorpe.com](http://www.pensthorpe.com)

## The White Horse, Brancaster Staithe



On first arriving at the White Horse Inn, what really hits you is the fantastic view across the mysterious and magnificent marshland *writes Ann Mealor*.

The White Horse Inn, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike, is ideally situated on the glorious North Norfolk coast at Brancaster Staithe.

The Inn is an ideal base for walkers, cyclists, bird watchers and dog owners with miles of tidal marshes and sandy beaches to explore.

Although the bar and reception area are in traditional pub style, the bedrooms and restaurant have a more contemporary feel.

The bedrooms, many of which overlook the marsh are spacious and decorated in hues of blue, green, lavender and sand to reflect the outdoor seascape.

The conservatory restaurant has a deck terrace and takes full advantage of the marshland views.

After a day out walking, I was really looking forward to my evening meal and sampling some of the delicious local produce on offer in the 2 AA rosette restaurant.

I started my meal with some delicious bread and then tucked into a duo of locally smoked salmon and salmon mousse beautifully presented on a slate platter decorated with rondels of crème fraiche, tiny deep fried onion rings and green leaves.

The two salmons worked well together - a great combination of flavours and texture.

The main course soon followed - a most delicious piece of flakey, white cod, topped with crispy pancetta and rocket served on creamy mashed potato.

[www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk](http://www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk)

Once again everything looked and tasted wonderful.

We ended the meal with homemade ice cream and a slice of warm, carrot cake and finished off the very pleasant bottle of house white wine, Le Bouquet.

The restaurant menu includes a variety of fresh local produce.

Depending on the season, mussels, crab, lobster, oysters, shrimp, sea bass, mackerel and sea trout are all available.

Local seasonal produce includes asparagus, grown across the road or samphire from the salt marsh.

Avrum Frankel, Head Chef, uses his skill and culinary flair to produce daily specials from the local produce.

The White Horse has an excellent reputation for its cuisine and it is no surprise why.

### The Jolly Sailors

Just down the road is *The White Horse's* sister pub/restaurant - the Jolly Sailors, which serves a range of homemade pizzas and other wholesome pub fare – ideal for families and of course, enjoyed by the locals.

## Stately homes

### Holkham Hall



Holkham Estates

Holkham Hall is an 18th-century country house next to the pretty village of Holkham.

Built between 1734 and 1764 by Thomas Coke, the 1st Earl of Leicester, this elegant Palladian style mansion has been home to the Coke family since that time.

The Halls state rooms offer superb collections of ancient statuary, original furniture and tapestries and works of art by Rubens, Van Dyck, Gaspar Poussin, Claude and Gainsborough.

The majestic Holkham Park, surrounding the Hall, is home to herds of fallow and red deer.

[www.holkham.co.uk](http://www.holkham.co.uk)

### The Natural Trust

The National Trust has a number of properties in North Norfolk.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

### Sandringham

Sandringham is the country retreat of Her Majesty The Queen, having been the private home of four generations of British monarchs since 1862.

The house, set in 24 hectares of gardens, is at the heart of a 8,000-hectare Sandringham Estate, including a 240 hectares Country Park.

[www.sandringhamestate.co.uk](http://www.sandringhamestate.co.uk)

### A trip on the Norfolk Broads

A visit to North Norfolk would not be the same without a trip on the Norfolk Broads.

The *Electric Eel Boat Trip* at How Hill Nature Reserve provides a good introduction to the Broads with a waterborne trail by electric boat, along dykes fringed with marshland plants.

An experienced guide points out the wildlife on route including dragonflies, marsh harriers, wildflowers and swallowtail butterflies.

The trip lasts 50 minutes, including a short walk to a bird hide.

[www.broads-authority.gov.uk/boating](http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/boating)  
[www.enjoythebroads.com](http://www.enjoythebroads.com)

## And a place to eat : The Pigs



**I liked the sound of this place writes Ann Mealor.**

**The name itself conjured up good old fashioned down to earth wholesomeness and visions of free range old spots snuffling in fields the traditional way.**

We were booked in for lunch and told we would like *The Pigs* because it was 'quirky' and 'a bit different'.

On entering the 17 century country pub I noticed they had local produce for sale including free range eggs, runner beans and Norfolk samphire.

A nice touch I thought and shows real support for local producers.

The restaurant had a farmhouse kitchen feel with rustic tables, an eclectic mix of oak chairs and church pews, open brickwork, wooden beams and copper pans hanging from the walls and ceiling.

There was a window behind me which looked straight into the kitchen, allowing diners to see the chefs at work.

### **What to choose, what to choose!**

As the name suggests, there are a lot of delicious sounding 'piggy' dishes on the menu, including honey glazed bacon joint; three pigs belly of pork; potted pork and black pudding.

However, there is plenty of fish-bream, haddock and salmon- as well as vegetable dishes for the non-meat eater.

As this was lunch, and we were eating again in the evening, we decided to go for six dishes to share from the mouth watering *Iffits* selection, otherwise known as Norfolk tapas.

A great idea.

After much deliberation, we went for :

- the Honey, marmalade & mustard glazed pork ribs (just for me as Ashley doesn't eat meat)
- Cley smoked prawns with roasted garlic mayonnaise
- *Old Spot* battered east coast oysters with chilli chutney
- Cromer crab rarebit on sourdough toast
- Cley Smokey made of smoked haddock, cream and Dapple cheese, and
- Roast beetroot with hazelnut and Binham Blue cheese.

We also added a side of chunky chips and couldn't wait to get stuck in.

Our banquet arrived, invitingly presented, on one very long wooden platter.

The pork ribs were delicious and plentiful- five meaty fingers covered in sweet stickiness.

Two big, battered oysters nestled in their shells were soon devoured by Ashley.

The prawns were juicy and fresh with a hint of smokiness; the chips hot and crispy.

Our favourite was the moorish Cley Smokey with sour dough toast- we couldn't get enough of it and ended up virtually licking the dish.

*The Pigs* is committed to using locally sourced food and lists the providers their Norfolk location and some quirky details on their menu such as *Pork from David and his team in Great Ryburgh- the pigs even listen to North Norfolk Radio!*

I would have loved to have had a mug of homemade hot chocolate or peanut butter hot chocolate and a plum pudding with honey roasted plum ice cream and caramelised plum sauce, but it was a hot summer's day and I was very full.

However, I now have a good reason for a return visit.

*The Pigs* also offers accommodation.

[www.thepigs.org.uk](http://www.thepigs.org.uk)

## 2 posh 2 pitch



For 'glamping' with a difference Kate Southerland has set up 2posh2pitch and offers pre-pitched canvas bell tents.

Kate will pitch her tents, within a 30 mile radius of Brancaster Staithe, at a site chosen by the campers themselves.

And so arriving at the agreed site (Whitehall Farm in Burnham Thorpe in our case), one unzips the tent to find a double bed standing on coloured matted flooring with bedside lights.

It really does make for a hassle free for those wanting to spend a couple of nights glamping without all the hassle.

[www.2posh2pitch.co.uk](http://www.2posh2pitch.co.uk)

### **The Globe Inn, Wells-next-the-Sea**



The Globe Inn, located in an oh so attractive Georgian square in Wells-next-the-Sea is another fine place to stay.

A true English pub with a real buzz, great real ales, and a fine restaurant serving home cooked dishes highlighting local fish.

There also six individually designed en-suite rooms.

[www.theglobeatwells.co.uk](http://www.theglobeatwells.co.uk)

## A snapshot of North Norfolk



### AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)



[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

#### AllWays traveller

*AllWays traveller* provides travel features to destinations worldwide from the journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.

#### The International Travel Writers Alliance

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

#### Ashley Gibbins

Ashley Gibbins is a professional travel writer and photographer and Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance.

#### Ann Mealor

Ann Mealor is a professional travel writer and photographer and Commissioning Editor of *AllWays traveller*.



Ashley Gibbins



Ann Mealor