

KEYS AND CROWN: THE SNAPE HEATH AND RIVER PUB TRAIL, SNAPE, SUFFOLK



Easy Terrain

4 miles
Circular
1.5 to 2 hours

250414



Access Notes



1. The route follows a mixture of pavements/village roads and heath/marsh/field paths, the latter of which can be quite muddy after periods of rain and in winter.
2. The paths can be quite narrow in places but there are no stiles on route, just a couple of kissing gates. There are just a couple of gentle slopes, with most of the route being entirely flat.
3. Snape Warren is grazed by Exmoor Ponies so take care with dogs in this section.
4. There are a couple of sections walking along quiet lanes so take care of any traffic at these points.

With pubs at the start and finish of this circular trail, you get chance to have lunch before your walk and then a drink at the end, or vice versa.

A 4 mile circular pub trail in Snape, Suffolk starting and finishing at two great Adnams pubs: The Golden Key and The Crown Inn. The walking route heads out through farmland and across the beautiful heath of Snape Warren to reach the River Alde. There's also an opportunity to visit the famous Snape Maltings, a lovely collection of shops, galleries and concert hall, before returning to Snape village. The views are beautiful throughout and there is plenty of wildlife to enjoy along the way.

Getting there

Snape is located just off the A1094, between the A12 and Aldeburgh in Suffolk. The walk starts and finishes at the Golden Key pub, on Priory Road close to its junction with Church Road. The pub has its own car park at the rear.

Approximate post code **IP17 1SA**.

Walk Sections



Start to Guilding's Lane



The walk starts from the Golden Key pub, and finishes just a few yards away at the Crown Inn on the corner. With the two pubs so close together, there's never been a better excuse to sample the ales! The way you make use of these two pubs is up to you – you could have lunch at the Golden Key, followed by a drink or pudding at the Crown Inn at the end of your walk...or you could start with just a drink and then have lunch at the end of your walk. Choices, choices...

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ADNAMS
SOUTHWOLD

Standing on Priory Lane facing the Golden Key pub, turn right along the village lane. Keep ahead passing a number of pretty properties each side. Within a left-hand bend in the road, fork left onto the signed footpath into a section of trees (passing the Long House on the left with an ornate gypsy caravan on the front lawn).

Keep ahead on the path and you will come to a junction with a wider track. Cross over to take the narrow woodland path continuing opposite. This path will lead you through a small clearing and then swings right back out to the road. Turn sharp left here to join the wide vehicle track known as Guidling's Lane.

1 → 2 Guidling's Lane to Church Common Track



Follow the track ahead and then, just after it swings left, keep straight ahead at the crossroads. Continue around the bend to the right, then keep straight ahead following the playing fields hedgeline on the right. Soon the path narrows between hedgerows with open crop fields across to the right.

Snape village has a long and colourful history. The Romans once lived nearby, evaporating the waters of the River Alde to produce salt. In Anglo-Saxon times the area was used as an important burial site. By the 19th century, the main industry had become fertiliser production and soon afterwards this switched to the growing of sugar beet which was exported to the Netherlands. Snape has close connections with Benjamin Britten – more of that later – and its most recent claim to fame is that the Harry Potter author JK Rowling borrowed the village name for one of the key characters, the Potions Master Severus Snape.

Further along, fields open up to the left and on the right you'll pass several outdoor pig enclosures. Beyond the pig enclosures, stay on the narrow path which swings left with a hedge on the left. You will come to a junction with a wide sandy track across Church Common (with the church from which the common takes its name visible beyond the trees).

2 → 3 Church Common Track to Rookery Farm

Turn sharp right along this track, with sections of gorse and scrub to the left and the pig enclosures to the right. At the far side of the field, you'll emerge to a T-junction with a tarmac lane, Priory Lane. Turn right along this lane, taking care of any occasional traffic. You will pass more pig enclosures to the left and then pass Rookery Farm, also on the left.



3 → 4 Rookery Farm to Snape Warren



The last of the buildings of the Rookery Farm complex is a classic old metal grain store, a beautiful old industrial building complete with its chute for dispensing the grain. Continue down to the bend in the road where you'll see a junction of multiple paths. Take the footpath straight ahead, a narrow path with fences to the right, signed to Snape Maltings.

Follow this path which soon opens up with trees and gorse each side. A little way along you'll come to a junction of paths marked with a wooden signpost. Fork left here, signed to Snape Warren. Follow the path with a fence on the left and then turn left through the kissing gate into Snape Warren. (Note: Dogs need to be on leads for this section).

4 → 5 Snape Warren to Woodland Junction



Follow the main path straight ahead which climbs steadily and leads you through the centre of the heath. Stay on this obvious main path ahead, ignoring any smaller paths off left and right.

Snape Warren is open access land managed by the RSPB. Areas of pine, birch and gorse have been cleared to re-create rare heath which is grazed by Exmoor ponies to maintain the balance. The mix of heath and scrub provides an ideal breeding habitat for nightjars, woodlarks and yellowhammers. Bird lovers may also be lucky enough to see a Dartford Warbler and keep your eyes peeled for adders basking in the sun. In spring the gorse comes into flower creating a blaze of yellow, whilst in summer the heather provides a purple spectacle.

As you emerge from a particularly dense section of gorse, you'll have your first views ahead across the heath and down to the River Alde. At the bottom of the path you'll pass out through a kissing gate to leave Snape Warren. Turn right along the grass path with the fenced heath to the right and the marshes of the Alde Estuary to the left. You will see the buildings of Snape Maltings ahead, which you will have chance to visit later on the walk. The path soon enters a section of woodland and you will reach a junction of paths marked with a wooden signpost.

5 → 6 Woodland Junction to Snape Bridge



Turn left at this junction, on the path signed to Snape Maltings. Follow this embankment path between the areas of reeds, with the River Alde visible to the left and the marshes across to the right. Take time to enjoy the views on this stretch and keep a close eye out for the plethora of wildlife.

You may notice a few narrow mud slides through the reeds down to the mud flats on the left. These are created by otters as they move between the river (left) and the dykes within the marshes (right). On the mud flats look out for the wading birds that feed on the worms, insects and crustaceans which are buried beneath the surface. You're likely to see avocets, curlews and oyster catchers feasting here. Across to the right, look out for birds hunting for food in the marshes and dykes. Herons are regular visitors and you may see a barn owl scouring the marshes for voles and shrews. If you are lucky you may see a marsh harrier gliding over the reeds. In spring, pairs of marsh harriers perform their breathtaking sky-dancing displays high in the sky.

The path winds for some distance and eventually it will lead you out to the road alongside Snape Bridge, with Snape Maltings on the opposite bank.

6 → 7 Snape Bridge to End



If you wish, you can turn left across the bridge to visit Snape Maltings. The maltings were built in the mid-1800s at this already busy port. Malting of barley (which was then shipped to breweries for beer brewing) began in 1854 and continued until the 1960s from when the buildings were left vacant. Meanwhile, for the decade 1937 to 1947, the composer Benjamin Britten lived at the nearby Hudson's Mill, after which he moved to Aldeburgh. Britten was inspired by the vast skies and moody seas of the Suffolk coast, and in 1948, along with singer Peter Pears and writer Eric Crozier, he founded the Aldeburgh Music Festival. At first the festival used local halls and churches but in 1967, Britten and Pears created a permanent home for the festival by converting the maltings into a concert hall. Within five years Britten and Pears had reclaimed more buildings on the site to establish a centre for talented young musicians. When you are finished exploring the shops and galleries at the maltings, return to this point by the bridge.

Cross over the main road with care and then turn right along the pavement. A little way along you'll come to the Snape village sign on the left. There are four quadrants within the village sign, each depicting a different element of the village. The top left depicts an Anglo-Saxon ship representing the local burial grounds, the bottom left depicts the old Snape Bridge (before it was a vehicle bridge), the top right depicts one of the Benedictine Monks that were based at the local priory and the bottom right depicts a curlew, representing the inspiration Benjamin Britten took from the Alde landscape.

Opposite this is the second Adnams pub on this route, the Crown Inn on the right which you can visit for some well-earned hospitality. To get back to the Golden Key, simply turn right immediately after the Crown Inn and you'll come to the Golden Key on the left.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

