

Riding the Peddars Way

There are two routes associated with the Peddars Way. The one detailed in this information note is the guide created by Elizabeth Barrett and follows a route designed to give a good ride avoiding busy roads and footpath sections of the Peddars Way. The second route sticks to the National Trail, poor road crossings and all. The map on page 5 highlights footpath sections of the Peddars Way which you will have to avoid. The poor road crossings are the A11, a dual carriageway and the A47.



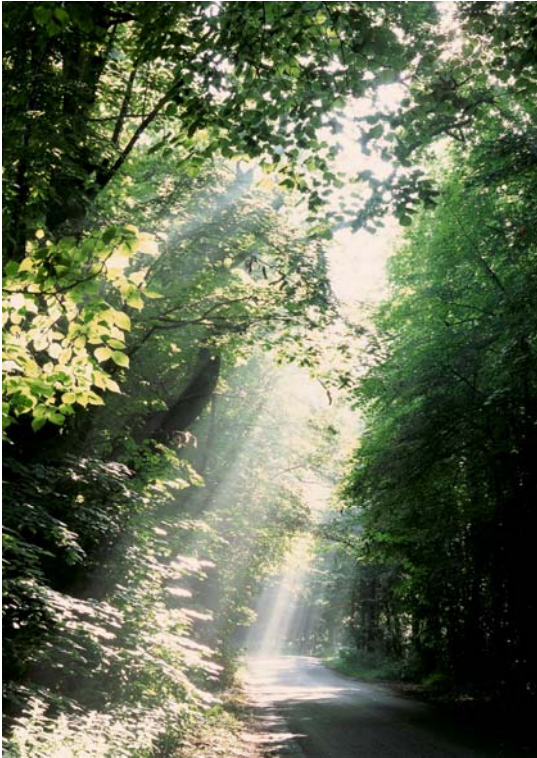
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Peddars Way - a route for horse riders



Knettishall to S Pickenham 18 miles

The route starts at Knettishall Heath at the Suffolk County Council car park (GR 952804), 1 mile south of the A1066 Diss-Thetford road. This is an attractive spot which has been established as a country park. Close to the packhorse bridge over the Little Ouse there was once a Roman ford but sadly it was removed in the early thirties. Follow the road eastwards towards Hopton and just beyond Hall Farm turn left at the bridleway sign to the River Ouse, go to the river and through the ford, remembering to close the gate behind you. Keep to the right and follow the edge of the wood through two fields to the next hard track close to the cottage. Turn left and follow the track round by the church and school and keep straight on to the A1066. Cross straight over and where the tarred road swings right enter the forest on a track marked as an FC ride but it happens that this is an unclassified county road. Cross

straight over onto the wide forest track alongside the picnic site. Cross the bridge over the River Thet and turn right to the village of Bridgham, then take the second left and continue straight on to Roudham Church and straight on over the railway line. Horse riders must obtain prior clearance to use the crossing by telephoning the signal man. Carry straight on over the A11 which is single carriageway at this point, onto the next bridleway. Leave the forest on the left: the bridleway at this point runs parallel to the Peddars Way. Continue across the next minor road and the small church of Illington is on the right: continue on the UCR and bridleway to the A1075.

Cross straight over and go through the gap in the fence and turn left and follow the minor road: this has a good riding verge and very little traffic. At Galley Hill turn right and follow the line of the Peddars Way.

The battle training area is close by and soldiers with blackened faces can suddenly erupt onto the scene or helicopters appear overhead. At Galley Hill, if you look carefully you will see that there are two parallel tracks and you can take either: the one to the right is the older and follows the line of the agger. Close by but not all readily accessible are Fowlmere, Mickle Mere and Ringmere. These meres were once an important source of water in this dry Breckland which was originally a vast sandy heath, virtually impossible to farm. The level of water in the meres is dependent on water retained in the chalk subsoil and not on the rainfall. They are now important nature reserves.

Continue straight on past Thompson Water, once a place for watering cattle in droving days. Take time to stop off in the village of Thompson - the church is worth a visit with its knapped flint finish and aisle-less construction - it dates from the 14th century. Accommodation for horses and humans is available at College Farm. The Way narrows to one horse width only for a short section between barbed wire fences, which one is warned not to cross because of the danger of unexploded bombs. The seclusion of the forest is now left behind and one is in Merton Park. All around is scrub and also hogweed of a fantastic height.

Peddars Way

a route for horse riders



Follow the sandy track, bearing slightly right and then left and right again to Home Farm. Keep straight on to Wick Farm and the B1108, turn right along the road towards the centre of Watton and at GR 905008 turn left onto a short bridleway to the B1077 and follow this road to Saham Toney. Follow the same road round to the left and then keep straight on towards Great Cressingham; at the second crossroads turn right along the line of the Peddars Way. This road, the old Walsingham Way, which was the pilgrims' route to the shrine at Walsingham, is tarred but it is a pleasant country lane between arable fields.

On reaching the B1077 again, turn left into the village of South Pickenham. Do pause and have a look at South Pickenham church and at the fine gatehouse to the Hall. Close by the Hall it is possible to water your horse in the River Wissey; access is beside the road bridge. Then go straight on to the end of the village and at a cross roads continue in a westerly direction to the A1065 Swaffham road.

South Pickenham to West Acre 15 miles

Between South Pickenham and the next village of Cockley Cley (pronounced to rhyme with "sky") are several belts of Scots Pine, planted as long ago as the 17th century in an attempt to stop the sandy soil from being blown away in strong winds. The success has been partial as can be seen quite dramatically on a blowy summer's day.

Cross the A1065 and follow the tarred road to Cockley Cley which is well signposted and has wide grassy verges. You will probably have to pass large flocks of sheep grazing in fields on both sides of the road. Stopping in Cockley Cley is a must: the lovely Saxon church with its bare interior, the reconstruction of an Icenic village and the carriage museum are all well worth a visit. There is also a good pub in the village - The Twenty Churchwardens - which offers food and welcomes horseriders.

Leave Cockley Cley with the church and pub on your left and in about 300 yards, after the houses finish, take the forest road to the right. The bridleway has been diverted through the forest then turns back to the original track. Once again you are in an area of almost overpoweringly tall evergreens. In about two miles cross the next road at Drymere - a former mere - and continue through scrub land and arable and then enter Swaffham Forest, where there is a picnic site with car parking. (You need to change to the OS map 143 for about a mile and a half.) At this point the track is thought to be part of the prehistoric Ickield Way which runs from south Norfolk to Buckinghamshire and links up with the Ridgeway to the West Country. At the end of the forest cross the A1122, and in about 200 yards take the bridleway to your right to the A47. (You are now on OS map 132.) Cross the A47 - great care is essential - and you are now on the Fincham Drove. This is the remains of a Roman road which once ran from Smallburgh in Broadland to Denver on the edge of the Fens, from which point there are links to the Midlands and to Cambridge. The name Drove reminds us, of course, of its more recent use for moving animals and birds from country areas to urban markets, such as London, in medieval times and later.

The forest is now left behind and the scenery changes, with the route crossing large arable fields. The route is along a well defined track which is criss-crossed by others. Keep straight on over one road and at the second (GR 798118), at the edge of a wood, turn left onto the tarred road and continue to the top of the hill which is reached in about a mile and a half. Turn right (GR 789137) and keep straight on the RUPP until the third junction at GR 801133, here turn left to South Acre Hall. Turn right on the road and take the next left going through the ford to Castle Acre.

Castle Acre is a small town perched high up within the outer bailey of the castle. The earthworks are dramatic - the inner bailey alone covers some 15 acres and the motte is over 100 feet high. The Bailey Gate still stands and separates the present day village green from the castle. Have a look at the perpendicular architecture of the Church of St. James just along the road and then continue to the impressive ruins of the Cluniac Priory. The largely intact west front is one of the finest in the country and one can feel how large and important the whole establishment was in its time .

Back to the route in Castle Acre turn right and keep straight on towards Newton and take the Byway to Broadmeadow Common. Turn right and just before the Mill turn left and follow the track towards the A1065. Just before the road is reached, turn left in a northwest direction, leaving the gravel pit on the left. At the next crossways turn left and keep straight on for 2 1/2 miles.

At GR 801193 turn right up another UCR to Great Massingham, crossing the B1145 on the way. Turn left at the village centre and cross more or less straight over, keeping the large pond on your right. At the end of the green and pond turn left and left again at GR 793231 to the Peddars Way. Turn right on the Peddars Way and continue in a northerly direction, with the route running straight for several miles through undulating countryside.

At the A148 cross straight over and keep straight, crossing the B1153 and two minor roads and on to Fring.



Fring to Holme-next-the-Sea 10 miles

Keep straight on to the little ford over the Heacham River and turn left to the village of Sedgeford. Follow the line of the Heacham River to Sedgeford and turn left and right as you enter the village, signposted to Ringstead. In half a mile turn right onto the broad track at GR711379, after the dis-used railway crossing.

Keep straight on, crossing a minor road and leaving Courtyard Farm on the left. At the next T junction, turn right (you can ride in the field). Continue to the cross roads and turn left. Where the road turns right, take the grassy track which goes straight on, climbing steeply to the next road. The climb is worthwhile as, at Beacon Hill 160 feet above sea level, one can see the sea and journey's end in the distance. This is a really thrilling moment. Turn left and within a few yards leave the tarred road, keeping straight on along the old highway called Green Bank, the site of an Iron Age hoard found in the '50s. Keep straight on to the Ringstead Road. At the tarred road turn left and right and follow round to the right on the RUPP leading to Holme-Next-The-Sea, crossing the A148 on the way.



Riding is allowed on the beach but not on the dunes.

If the tide permits, you can ride or walk along this wonderful stretch of beach in either direction. Peddars Way terminates here, probably because at this point the Romans headed north by ferry across The Wash to Lincolnshire, although proof of this has never been established.

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ROUTE INFORMATION

Maps OS 132 NW Norfolk, OS 143 Ely & Wisbech, OS 144 Thetford & Breckland

Mileages	64 in total
Knettishall - S Pickenham	22
S Pickenham - West Acre	15
West Acre - Fring	15
Fring - Holme	10

Parking for horseboxes

is at the southern end of the Peddars Way

Contact Forest Enterprise at Santon Downham. Tel: (01842) 810271.

Food and Drink

The Twenty Churchwardens, Cockley Cley
The Ostrich, Castle Acre

Water for horses

The River Wissey, S Pickenham
The River Nar, Castle Acre

Veterinary Surgeons

E M Curnow, Five Acre Farm, Lynn Road, West Rudham, KINGS LYNN, Norfolk

Tel: 01485 528437

Wensum Valley Veterinary Surgeons, Racecourse Drive, Dereham Road, Pudding Norton, Fakenham,
Norfolk, NR21 7NA

Tel: 01328 864444

The Old Golfhouse Vet. Group, 4 Goddards Court, High Street, WATTON, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6AB

Tel: 01953 881415

The Old Golfhouse Vet Group, Brandon Road, THETFORD, Norfolk, IP24 3ND

Tel: 01842 764244

Farriers

Kevin Green AWFC, Anvil Farm, Mill Lane, Syderstone, KINGS LYNN, PE31 8RX

Tel: 01328 701530

Peter Hiatt Dip WCF, 9, Boston Square, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 6DT

Tel: 01485 535927

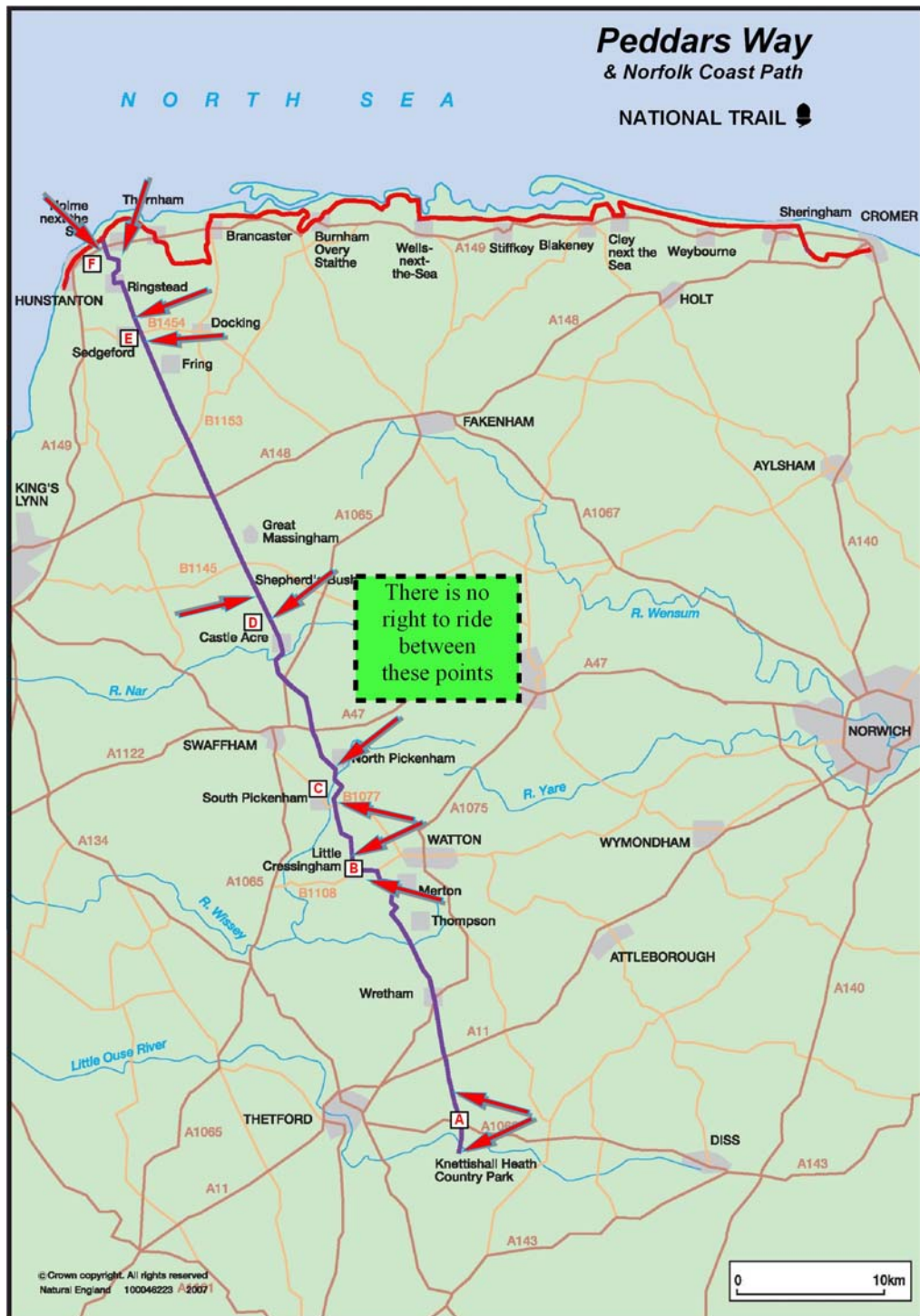
R Reeve Dip AWFC, 22, Lezziate Drove, Pott Row, Grimston, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE32 1DB

Tel: 07765 973889

M Goodwin RSS, Rickinghall Stables, Mill Lane, Rickinghall, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 1HG

Tel: 07780 834063

For those riders who want to stick to the Peddars Way, this map indicates footpath sections where you cannot ride.



- A - Alternative road route via bridleway through Riddlesworth Hall School, West Harling Heath, Bridgeham to join the Peddars Way just south of the A11.
- B - The footpath runs alongside the road on the field edge. Riders must use the road.
- C - Where the footpath leaves the road horse riders must keep to the tarmac surface and take the next left into North Pickenham village to rejoin the Peddars Way.
- D - Just north of Castle Acre the route runs alongside the road on a field edge path. Riders must keep to the tarmac road.
- E - At Fring Cross (ford) the Way becomes a public footpath, riders must turn left and follow tarmac roads into Sedgeford left then right towards Ringstead. It is possible to turn right just past the old railway line and follow roads past Neat's Ling to rejoin the Peddars Way just south of Ringstead.
- F - North of Ringstead the path turns left along a field edge. Riders must keep to the tarmac road, ride down the hill into Holme next the Sea.

General Information

Information available on the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail

www.nationaltrail.co.uk

This is the primary source of information

General information leaflet

Available from tourist information centres or the National Trail Office.

The Pocket Companion

(Accommodation Guide and public transport routes)

Available from the National Trail Office. This Accommodation Guide is also available online through an interactive map.

Cycling information

Available from website & downloadable.

Vehicle use of the Peddars Way

Available from website & downloadable.

Completion certificates

Available from National Trail Office on completion of a feedback questionnaire - available on-line.

Completion cloth badges

Available from National Trail Office on completion of a feedback questionnaire - available on-line.



The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path is a partnership between Natural England, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils



www.naturalengland.org.uk



www.countrysideaccess.norfolk.gov.uk



www.suffolkcc.gov.uk