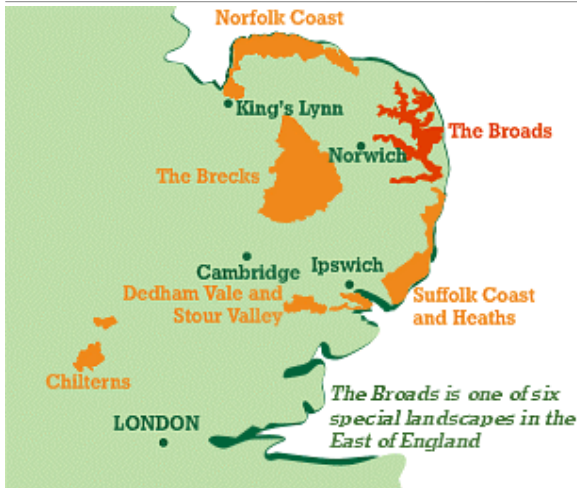


CAR@FREE in The Broads

Canoe Safaris



ONE OF A SET OF
CAR FREE ITINERARIES
IN THE EAST OF
ENGLAND'S SPECIAL
LANDSCAPES

- Paddling the waterways of the Broads and getting up close to nature
- Easily managed, and no experience necessary
- Go at your own pace: gentle or energetic

There's an almost miraculous richness of wildlife in the Broads National Park – a unique landscape of shallow, reed-fringed lakes or 'broads', waterways and rivers flanked by grazing marshes. It's not at all easy to see it from the land.

One of the best ways of getting really close to it is by taking a **waterborne safari** – venturing by yourself (or in a group of up to four) in a canoe, into the reedy open waters and along the tree-fringed rivers – and sometimes along waters free of motorized craft. Paddling at your own pace and without the disturbance of engine noise, you'll be in the ideal position for spotting kingfishers, voles, herons and maybe even the elusive otter. Keep your ears alert for the song of a Cetti's warbler, and on the river bank look out for the bright yellow collar of a grass snake. When you feel like a rest, there are plenty of places along the river where you can stop for a while (please respect any 'private' signs'), and it's an idyllic way to sample local pubs and restaurants.



*Wildlife on the water and canoeing through the reeds.
Photos: Broads Authority.*

Contents

Each of the six centres offering **canoe hire** is described overleaf. They're scattered over the Broads, and each has its own character. You might like to try more than one to experience the diversity of wildlife the Broads can offer. Most of the canoe centres are accessible by **public transport**, so even if you're travelling without a car you can use trains and buses to reach most of them.

THE ITINERARY:

You don't need any experience of canoeing to enjoy the magic of canoeing in the Broads, and all the family can take part. There's virtually no current, and even if you've never canoed before you will soon get moving. You decide how strenuous or relaxing you want to be. Technically it's not that different from rowing a boat on a park pond – only it's much, much more exciting!

The Broads never look or feel quite the same from one day to the next, and the changes between seasons are even more dramatic. Canoe safaris are worth doing in autumn and spring too, though bear in mind that some canoe hire yards might be closed in winter.



Car-free ways of reaching the canoe centres

If you're visiting the area using public transport or cycle, there are plenty of ways of reaching most of the canoe hire centres. You can even arrive by train in Norwich, join a boat cruise that starts near the station and get off at a canoe hire centre.

"When canoeists come back at the end of the day, exercised and happy, they're invariably full of it"
– Tony Urwin, Canoe Hirer, Bank Dayboats. Photo: Broads Authority.

Where to start

There are six **Broads Canoe Hire Centres** throughout the Broads National Park. They rent Canadian canoes, which are very stable and take two, three or four adults and the hire charge includes buoyancy aids, including life jackets. You also get a dry bag for keeping the splashes off your valuables. At only £25 a day or £15 a half-day per canoe, this healthy and highly environmentally friendly way of getting around is remarkably good value. You don't need special skills or any experience, and all the family can join in. At low bridges you may need to get out and carry the canoe over a stretch, but this is easily managed by two adults.

Broads Canoe Hire Centres

Outney Meadow Caravan Park, Bungay

Just outside **Bungay**, and a short walk from the town centre; National Express buses from London stop here, and there is a limited bus service from Beccles (which has rail services). On a great horseshoe meander of the River Waveney, this centre is well placed for exploring a stretch of the river free of motorised craft. You can paddle upstream around the meander until the bypass bridge, and then back, for a short excursion. Downstream, head along the river to the Locks Inn at **Geldeston**, by the start of the navigation; carry on to the Wherry at Geldeston, and if you want a long day, as far as **Beccles**, and you may glimpse otters on the way. Homersfield makes a satisfying objective, and you can also stop off at the **Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum** at Flixton (admission free) for tea. Outney Meadow also rents out cycles and has pitches for caravans. Bungay itself is a delightful historic East Anglian town that is fun to explore: the waymarked **Bigod Way** (yellow arrows on brown) takes you round a series of loops, passing the castle ruins.

Rowancraft, Geldeston

The bus stop here is next to the Wherry public house and is a minute's walk from the boatyard. Bus 580, run by Anglian Coaches, runs approximately hourly (not Sunday or bank holidays) from Beccles Old Market Place (a 10-minute walk from Beccles rail station); the same service goes from Diss to Yarmouth via Beccles – all of which have rail stations. Geldeston is also on National Cycle Network Route 1.

Downstream an easy day's paddling would be to canoe to **Beccles**, where the church tower comes into view as you approach the town. Stop for lunch in town – for example at the Waveney House Hotel, handily placed on the waterfront (may need to reserve mooring in high summer). In the upstream direction, **Bungay** is a good place to aim for; you soon pass the remote Locks Inn after which there are no motorised craft beyond a low footbridge. The abundant wildlife includes geese, ducks and moorhens in great numbers, and kingfishers. For a full list of places to eat and stay please see the section at the end of the guide.

Waveney River Centre

Tucked away on a remote loop of the River Waveney, this is a perfect spot for relaxation and exercise. In addition to canoe hire it offers holiday accommodation to let, including lodges and apartments, holiday homes for sale, a family-friendly pub and restaurant – the Waveney Inn – a Nordic Leisure Centre with a heated indoor swimming pool, sauna and spa, a campsite for tents and touring caravans, a shop, a day cruiser, bicycle hire, boat servicing and private moorings.



Canoeing in convoy. Photo: Broads Authority.

From here you can paddle all day in either direction along the Waveney. Experienced canoeists might like to venture towards Oulton Broad (which gets very busy with craft); a quieter stretch for novices is to go upstream along the Waveney in the Beccles direction.

This passes **Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve** (owned by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust), an area of grazing marshes, reed beds, dykes and minibroads which attracts a variety of marsh flowers, insects and birds.

Wildlife and places to stay and eat on the Waveney

During summer months warblers are seen and heard on the river – Cetti's warblers, reed warblers, sedge warblers and grasshopper warblers, and great crested grebe and dragonflies are common sightings; less common is the marsh harrier, and you would be very lucky to spot one of the Waveney's many (but elusive) otters. Yellow flag makes a colourful splash by the river banks.

In addition to the accommodation at Waveney River Centre and Outney Meadow, the Three Horseshoes and Waveney House Hotel (both in Beccles) are usefully placed destinations for lunch or a drink; the Waveney House Hotel has 3-star accommodation. Earsham Park Farm, near Bungay, has a Visit Britain Gold Award for its guesthouse accommodation. For a full list of places to eat and stay please see the section at the end of the guide.

Norfolk County Council Outdoor Education Centre, Whitlingham Country Park

Buses 58 and 58A go every 15 minutes from Norwich city centre to Trowse, from where it is a 15-minute walk from the village centre, along Whitlingham Lane, opposite the church

Just outside the built-up area of Norwich, Whitlingham is the newest of the broads, created in recent years from a disused gravel quarry. Canoeing here can be on Whitlingham Broad itself, or along the River Yare. Now landscaped and centred on a splendid new Broad, the site is managed by a charitable trust and it is a place to come for all kinds of activities: as well as canoeing (which is on offer all year round), there is bike hire, archery, orienteering, abseiling, sailing and instruction in various other outdoor activities. It is also good for bird watching and they also run nature-based events such as pond-dipping and moth and bat evenings.

Bank Dayboats, Wayford Bridge

On the A149 between Stalham and Hoveton. Bus 736 (not Sun or public holidays), Cromer–North Walsham–Yarmouth, six services daily; about 20 minutes from North Walsham (nearest station), or 10 minutes by taxi.

Canoeists can base themselves across the road at the Wayford Bridge Hotel.

To the north there is a marvellously evocative old canal, no longer used by mechanised craft but ideal for canoeing 1 ½ miles up to the disused lock; kingfishers, otters and marsh harriers are often seen along here – the marsh harriers can be seen dropping food offerings to their partner or offspring while in flight. South from Wayford Bridge, the River Ant can be followed to reach **Barton Broad**, and you can divert to the **Museum of the Broads** at Stalham. Run by volunteers, this fascinating museum on the history of the Broads is open to the public throughout the summer. The heritage of the waterways and the people who lived there and worked along it are vividly brought to life. The museum is involved with the preservation of Broads' heritage as well as conserving and restoring objects, including boats, which tell a local story. On Wednesdays from the beginning of April to the end of October, the museum runs steam boat tours.

Barnes Brinkcraft, Wroxham

A 10-minute walk from Hoveton & Wroxham station (with direct services to Norwich) and terminus of the Bure Valley Railway. If arriving by bus, get off at Roy's Shop in the village centre; Barnes Brinkcraft is a two-minute walk from the bus stop. There are plenty of places to eat and stay nearby and in the charming village of Coltishall only a further mile and a half along the B1345. For a full list see the section at the end of the guide.



Paddling through the reeds. Photo: Broads Authority.

Very much in the centre of the boating scene, Wroxham is an excellent starting point for venturing by canoe along the River Bure. you can paddle upstream past Belaugh towards Coltishall, or downstream past the entrance to Wroxham Broad and Hoveton Great Broad towards Horning and Bure Marshes National Nature Reserve: this reserve is full of wildlife, including the Norfolk hawker dragonfly, the swallowtail butterfly, and nesting birds such as reed, sedge and grasshopper warblers. Otters are attracted by the variety of fish, and the rare bittern frequents the reedbeds.

ITINERARY LISTINGS

Broads Canoe Hire Centres:

Bank Dayboats Wayford Bridge, Smallburgh, Stalham, Norwich NR12 9LN. Tel: 01692 582457;
www.urwins.co.uk

Barnes Brinkcraft Riverside Road, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8UD. Tel: 01603 782625 or 01603 782333;
www.barnesbrinkcraft.co.uk Also luxury Norfolk Broads holiday cruisers from 2-12 berth, day Launch Hire and sports cruisers.

Outney Meadow Caravan Park 3 stars. Bungay, Suffolk NR35 1HG. Tel: 01986 892338;
www.outneymeadow.co.uk Caravan park, canoe hire and cycle hire.

Rowancraft Wherry Dyke Big Road, Geldeston, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 0LY. Tel: 01508 518208.

Waveney River Centre 4 stars. Staithe Rd, Burgh St Peter, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 0BT Tel: 01502 677343; www.waveneyrivercentre.co.uk Holiday park, cycle and canoe hire, and marina.

Whitlingham Country Park, Norfolk County Council Outdoor Education Centre, Trowse, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 8TR. Tel: 01603 632307; ncc.oep@norfolk.gov.uk, www.nccoutdooreducation.co.uk

What to see:

The Museum of the Broads The Staithe, Stalham, Norfolk NR12 9DA. Tel: 01692 581681;
www.museumofthebroads

Where to stay:

Bridge House B&B 4 diamonds. 1 High Street, Coltishall, Norfolk NR12 7AA. Tel 01603 737323;

Coach House B&B 4 diamonds. 96 Norwich Road, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8RY. Tel: 01603 784376;
www.coachhousewroxham.co.uk Delightful conversion of barn and stable complex, three guest rooms.

The Dragonflies B&B 4 diamonds. 5 The Avenue, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8TN. Tel: 01603 783822;

Earsham Park Farm 4 diamonds, Gold Award. Earsham, Bungay, Suffolk NR35 2AQ. Tel: 01986 892180;
bobbie@earsham-parkfarm.co.uk, www.earsham-parkfarm.co.uk Beautifully furnished Victorian farmhouse overlooking the Waveney valley. Voted the 'most brilliant B&B' in 2005 by Which? magazine.

The Hedges B&B 4 diamonds. Tunstead Road, Coltishall, Norfolk NR12 7AL. Tel: 01603 738361;
www.hedgesbandb.co.uk

The Old Railway Station 4 diamonds. 31 Station Road, Coltishall, Norfolk NR12 7JG. Tel: 01603 737069;
www.theoldrailwaystation.co.uk

Outney Meadow Caravan Park (see above)

Waveney House Hotel 3 stars. Puddingmoor, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9TL. Tel: 01502 712270;
www.waveneyhousehotel.co.uk. 3 stars.

Right on the river, with bar and restaurant food. Useful destination for canoeists on the Waveney.

Waveney River Centre (see above)

Wayford Bridge Hotel 3 stars. Wayford Bridge, nr Stalham, Norfolk NR12 9LL. Tel: 01692 582414;

wayford-bridge-hotel@fsmail.net, www.wayford-bridge-hotel.co.uk Useful for Bank's Dayboats canoe hire. Luxury riverside accommodation.

Wroxham Park Lodge 4 diamonds. 142 Norwich Road, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8SA. Tel: 01603 782991;
www.wroxhamparklodge.com Friendly non-smoking guest house with large garden, car park, newly refurbished, all rooms ensuite with TV, tea/coffee, serving a good hearty breakfast.

Where to stay, eat and drink:

Kings Head 3 diamonds, Broads Quality Charter. Coltishall, Norfolk NR12 7EA. Tel: 01603 737426;

www.kingshead.norfolkbroads.com 17th Century Inn with B&B, on banks of River Bure near Wroxham; food freshly prepared with local produce includes fresh fish and a range of meat dishes. BroadsHopper bus and Bure Valley Railway links serve Wroxham itself.

Where to eat and drink:

The Bear and Bells Broads Quality Charter. 11 Old Market, Beccles Suffolk. Tel: 01502 712291;
www.bearandbells.co.uk Traditional Suffolk pub restaurant, serving real ales and pub food.

The Bridge Restaurant Broads Quality Charter. Norwich Road, Wroxham, Norfolk. Tel: 01603 783509. Situated in a former boathouse with a view of the river, serving a wide range of seasonal local fresh fish dishes.

The Canton Orient Broads Quality Charter. The Station, Hoveton/Wroxham. Tel:01603 783939. Traditional Chinese cuisine with friendly service, within easy walking distance from the centre of the village.

The Kings Head Hotel Broads Quality Charter. Station Road, Hoveton. Tel: 01603 782429. Home cooked English food and carvery.

The Swan House Broads Quality Charter. New Market Place, Beccles Suffolk. Tel: 01502 713474; www.swan-house.com With influences from the Chelsea Arts Club, to the Kampung Café, Bali, the food is genuinely English with strong international ideas.

The Swan Inn Broads Quality Charter. Barnby, Suffolk. Tel: 01502 476646. Fantastic range of fresh fish brought every day from Lowestoft fish market, with over fifty daily specials.

The Three Horseshoes Broads Quality Charter. Old Lowestoft Road, North Cove, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 7PH. Tel: 01502 476601; www.3horseshoes-fairfield.co.uk Home cooking, including steak and ale pies and game in season.

Twyfords Broads Quality Charter. Exchange Square, Beccles, Suffolk. Tel: 01502 710614. Simple good food from grilled baguettes to indulgent cakes, like warm Tunisian orange cake with melted Belgian chocolate, served all day.

The Hotel Wroxham Broads Quality Charter. The Bridge, Wroxham, Norfolk. Tel: 01603 782061; www.arlingtonhotelgroup.co.uk A family friendly hotel on the waterfront, opening for breakfast and carvery lunches and dinners.

Additional listings

Bure Valley Railway Aylsham Station, Norwich Road, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6BW. Tel: 01263 733858; www.bvrw.co.uk (Daily April–late September; for other times of year phone for operating dates).

The Locks Inn Locks Lane, Geldeston, Beccles, NR34 0HW. Tel: 01508 518414.

Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum Buckaroo Way, The Street, Flixton, Bungay, Suffolk NR35 1NZ. Tel: 01986 896644; www.aviationmuseum.net

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Brook House, The Green, Ash Bocking, Ipswich IP6 9JL. Tel: 01473 890089; www.suffolkwildlife.co.uk Carlton Marshes Reserve Visitor Centre (Easter–October), tel 01502 564250.

Wherry Inn 7 The Street, Geldeston, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 0LB. Tel: 01508 518371.

Free publications (from most Broads Information Centres)

Broads Mini-guide: Places to visit and things to do in the Broads, with a map showing what's where.

Eating Out in the Broads: pubs, restaurants and tearooms within the area that have earned the Broads Quality Charter mark – perhaps enjoying locally brewed beer, fresh fish or organically grown vegetables.

Fun in the Broads: organised nature and conservation events.

Norfolk County Transport Guide: has a map of all bus and train routes in the county, with details of when each route operates.

Norwich, Norfolk Broads and Countryside: includes a substantial accommodation guide, plus activities, sights and more in the area; see also www.visitnorwich.co.uk

Useful websites

Broads Authority www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Beccles town information www.beccles.info

Bungay town information www.bungay-suffolk.co.uk

Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY, tel 01603 625540; www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

Public transport in Norfolk www.passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) www.rspb.org.uk

Sustrans for National Cycle Network routes www.sustrans.org

Visit Norfolk www.visitnorfolk.co.uk

Visit Norwich www.visitnorwich.co.uk

Visit Suffolk www.choosesuffolk.com

Wherryman's Way www.wherrymansway.net

How to get there

If you're travelling from outside the Broads, the **train** is a supremely civilized way to arrive: in just over two hours you can travel from London Liverpool Street to Norwich, from where connecting trains get you into the heart of the Broads within 20-30 minutes, or less. Leisure Advance return tickets (not available on all trains; must be booked in advance) from London to Norwich cost £20, or £22 to Lowestoft.

For **national rail enquiries** tel: 08457 48 49 50; www.nationalrail.co.uk The rail operator for the Broads area is **One Railway** (www.onerailway.com).

National Express **coaches** serve Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Beccles and Bungay: see www.nationalexpress.co.uk.

For **information** about timetables and route-planning by public transport visit

www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk (or www.traveline.org.uk for the whole of Britain) or tel: 0870 608 2608. You can also text for bus time information. Look on a bus stop for its code and text it to 84268. The free return message will give you the bus times.



THE CAR@FREE PROJECT:

The *CAReFREE* itineraries are designed to encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the special landscapes of the East of England with minimal impact on the environment, while generating positive benefits for local people. The itineraries give visitors exciting ideas about what to do in the area, by leaving their car at home or at their accommodation, and exploring the area by bike, boat, bus, horse or train.

The itineraries for each area can be found at the following websites:

ONE OF A SET OF
CAR FREE ITINERARIES
IN THE EAST OF
ENGLAND'S SPECIAL
LANDSCAPES

The Brecks

www.brecks.org

- Enjoy living on a working farm
- Horse riding breaks in and around Thetford Forest
- Biking and Brewing in Thetford Forest

Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

- A day walking through Constable Country
- Days out cycling on the Painters' Trail
- Exploring the Stour Valley on foot

The Broads

www.broads-authority.gov.uk

- Canoe Safaris
- Great ideas for discovering the best of the Broads by cycle
- Walks and sights of the Broads by train and bus

Norfolk Coast AONB

www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk

- Exploring the Norfolk Coast Cycleway
- See the wildlife wonders of North Norfolk by bus
- Great ideas for making the most of the area by bus and train

The Chilterns AONB

www.chilternsaonb.org

- Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs
- North Chilterns Villages by Bicycle
- Walking and Cycling in the Northern Chilterns and Hitchin

Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

- A car free break in Southwold
- Exploring the Stour Estuary
- Woodbridge, Sutton Hoo and the Deben Estuary

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: If you are business in the one of these areas and would like to write your own itinerary to show visitors how to enjoy the area near you without using their car to get around, you will find a blank itinerary template (a Word document) together with a toolkit explaining how to complete the itinerary, at the websites listed above.



For further information contact:
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www.broads-authority.gov.uk

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