



Norfolk Coast Path

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Norfolk Coast Path: A Complete Hiking Guide

The Norfolk Coast Path is an 83-mile / 133.5 km UK National Trail in [England](#), running from Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea along the Norfolk coast. It is usually walked in 6–8 days and is easy to moderate: mostly flat, non-technical, and exposed rather than steep. It suits first-time long-distance walkers, birdwatchers, coastal hikers, and anyone wanting flexible day stages using the coast bus. For a more rugged coastal route, compare the [Anglesey Coastal Path](#).

Route Overview

This is a linear, west-to-east walk from Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea, following the eastern half of the Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path National Trail. The route passes Old Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea, Brancaster, Burnham Overy Staithe, Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea, Blakeney, Cley next the Sea, Sheringham, Cromer, Mundesley, Happisburgh, Sea Palling, Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth and Hopton-on-Sea. The Coasthopper / Coastliner bus parallels much of the coast road, making section walking straightforward, with rail links via King's Lynn, Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth. If you want an island coastal walk instead, see the [Arran Coastal Way](#).

History of the Norfolk Coast Path

The Norfolk Coast Path opened as a National Trail in 1986, originally running from Hunstanton to Cromer alongside the older inland Peddars Way, which follows a Roman road. It was extended east to Sea Palling in 2014 and to Hopton-on-Sea in 2016. The route now also forms part of the King Charles III England Coast Path and crosses the Norfolk Coast National Landscape, linking coastal villages, reserves, salt marshes and birdwatching sites.

Notable highlights

- **Hunstanton striped cliffs:** The trail starts by the town's distinctive red-and-white chalk and carrstone cliffs, a landmark seafront and an immediate geological marker.
- **Holkham beach and pine woods:** A broad sweep of sand backed by Corsican pine plantations on the Holkham National Nature Reserve; it is one of the route's classic wide-open beach sections.
- **Blakeney and the salt marshes:** Blakeney National Nature Reserve and Blakeney Point form a major coastal wetland, with seals and tidal creeks shaping one of the most memorable lowland sections.
- **Cley next the Sea:** Known for its restored brick tower windmill and Cley Marshes, a Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve and major birdwatching stop.
- **Beeston Bump:** The trail's high point at 63 m near Sheringham, a steep-sided glacial hill with North Sea views and Second World War listening-post history.
- **Happisburgh Lighthouse:** The red-and-white striped lighthouse stands above a stretch of coast known for serious cliff erosion, where path diversions may be needed.

Challenges to expect

The walking is gentle, but not effortless. Expect wind exposure, soft sand, shingle, sea-wall paths, boardwalks, mudflats and low eroding cliffs. Around Happisburgh and Overstrand, cliff erosion can force diversions, so check current route updates. Some salt-marsh sections are tidal. Navigation is generally straightforward, but long flat horizons and shifting coastal conditions can slow progress. For another exposed coast path, compare the [Ayrshire Coastal Path](#).

Key Data

Country	United Kingdom, England
Distance	133.5 km
Duration	6-8 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	300 m
Highest point	63 m
Terrain & landscape	Coastal, Salt Marsh, Dunes, Mudflats, Low Cliffs, Heath
Trail surface	Sandy, Boardwalk, Gravel, Dirt, Grass, Beach, Shingle
Accommodation	Guesthouses, Pubs, Hotels, Hostels, Campsites
Average daytime temp.	16°C
Chance of rainfall	Medium
Estimated cost	\$\$
Optimal season	Year Round
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Pet Friendly
Facilities	Restrooms, Water Sources, Campsites, Picnic Areas
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Norfolk Coast Path is a long, low-level walk around one of England's most distinctive coastlines, running from Hunstanton on The Wash to Hopton-on-Sea on the Norfolk–Suffolk border. It suits first-time long-distance walkers, families, birdwatchers and anyone who wants big coastal days without mountain terrain.

The route links striped cliffs, dunes, salt marsh, working harbours, pine-backed beaches and classic seaside towns. Holme Dunes, Titchwell Marsh, Holkham, Blakeney, Cley next the Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and Winterton-on-Sea all give the walk a strong sense of variety despite the modest height gain.

This is not a hard trail in the usual hillwalking sense: the 133.5 km / 83 mile classic route is almost entirely flat and waymarked with National Trail acorns. Its appeal is space, wildlife, light and the changing edge between land and sea rather than physical drama.

What it does ask for is sensible planning. Wind exposure, soft sand, shingle, tidal salt-marsh sections and live cliff-erosion diversions can make an easy-looking day slower or more awkward than the map suggests.

This guide covers stages, daily planning, accommodation, food, transport, terrain and the common mistakes to avoid.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

Stage 1: Hunstanton to Brancaster — 21 km

The route begins on Hunstanton seafront below the town's striped red-and-white cliffs, then turns east through Old Hunstanton towards the open coast. This first stage quickly sets the tone for the north Norfolk section: low-level walking, broad skies, dunes, marsh edges and long exposed stretches where wind can matter more than gradient.

Underfoot, expect a mix of beach-side paths, sandy or grassy dune sections, boardwalks and firm tracks, with some salt-marsh and wetland margins. The walking is technically easy, but soft sand and shingle can slow the pace, especially when carrying a full pack.

Key places passed include Old Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Titchwell before the finish at Brancaster. Holme Dunes and RSPB Titchwell are major wildlife stops, so this is one of the best stages for birdwatchers; allow extra time if stopping at hides or viewpoints.

Food and water are best planned around the coastal villages rather than assumed on the path itself. Hunstanton is the reliable start-point for supplies, while the villages en route and Brancaster may have seasonal or limited services; opening times should be checked before travelling, particularly outside summer.

Accommodation is available in the north Norfolk coastal villages, but Brancaster and the surrounding area can be busy in peak season. Book ahead for summer weekends and bank holidays, or be prepared to use nearby villages and the coast bus where practical.

Transport access is strongest at the start. Hunstanton has no railway station, so most walkers arrive by bus from King's Lynn, which has rail connections; the coast bus corridor then helps with section-walking along much of this north-coast stretch. Current bus times and stopping points should be checked before relying on them.

Navigation is generally straightforward, with National Trail acorn waymarks and a clear coastal line. The main planning issue is not route-finding but conditions: open marsh and dune sections are exposed, and low-lying tidal areas require tide awareness. Stick to signed diversions and avoid improvising across salt marsh or mudflats.

Stage 2: Brancaster to Wells-next-the-Sea — 23 km

This is a classic north Norfolk day, moving through Brancaster Staithe, Burnham Deepdale and Burnham Overy Staithe before reaching Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea. It is flat, scenic and often very exposed, with long views over marsh, creeks, sands and pine-backed beach.

The terrain varies between sea banks, sandy tracks, marsh-edge paths, beach sections and paths near dunes and pine woods. Holkham beach and the Corsican and Scots pine plantations behind it are the main highlight, but the scale of the beach can make distances feel longer than the map suggests.

Burnham Overy Staithe and Holkham are useful intermediate landmarks, and Wells-next-the-Sea is a natural overnight stop with a harbour, quay and beach road. The approach to Wells can feel drawn out if the wind is against you, so avoid treating this as a short day simply because the ascent is negligible.

Food and water should be planned carefully between villages. Wells-next-the-Sea is the most dependable resupply point on this stage, while smaller places en route may have limited or seasonal options. Carry enough water for the full day, especially in hot or windy weather when exposure increases dehydration.

Accommodation is generally easier to arrange at Wells-next-the-Sea than in the smaller settlements, and the town is one of the main overnight hubs on the route. It is also popular, so early booking is sensible in summer.

Public transport is relatively useful on this section because the coast bus serves much of the Hunstanton–Wells–Cromer corridor. This makes Brancaster, Wells and intermediate villages practical for section walking, though exact services should be checked before setting an itinerary.

Navigation remains easy in clear weather, but there are broad open areas where paths can feel less obvious than in a village or cliff-top setting. Follow the waymarked National Trail rather than cutting across marsh or sand, and check tide times where the route interacts with tidal creeks, marsh or beach access.

Stage 3: Wells-next-the-Sea to Cley next the Sea — 19 km

This stage links Wells-next-the-Sea with Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea, crossing one of the most wildlife-rich parts of the trail. It is a relatively moderate distance, but the walking can be slow if the surface is soft, the wind is strong, or wildlife stops are built into the day.

Expect flat coastal walking on sea banks, marsh-edge paths, tracks and sections close to tidal creeks and mudflats. The route passes the Blakeney National Nature Reserve area, with views across salt marsh and towards the shingle spit of Blakeney Point.

Blakeney is the main settlement on the stage before Cley next the Sea. Cley itself is a key trail landmark, known for its restored brick tower windmill and Cley Marshes, a renowned Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve.

Wells-next-the-Sea is the best place to start the day with provisions. Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea may provide options, but village services can be limited or seasonal, so do not rely on them without checking opening times. Carry enough food and water to complete the stage independently.

Cley next the Sea is a logical overnight stop, but accommodation in smaller north Norfolk villages can be more limited than in Wells, Sheringham or Cromer. If staying in or near Cley, book ahead; alternatively, use public transport or a pre-arranged transfer to connect with nearby accommodation.

The coast bus corridor remains useful on this north-coast section, making it one of the easier parts of the Norfolk Coast Path to split into shorter walks. Current timetables should be checked before building the day around bus connections.

The main warning on this stage is tide and marsh discipline. The scenery invites exploration, but salt marsh, tidal creeks and mudflats are not places to improvise a shortcut. Keep to the signed line, follow National Trail waymarks and check for any local route notices before setting off.

Stage 4: Cley next the Sea to Cromer — 21 km

From Cley next the Sea the path continues through Salthouse, Kelling, Weybourne and Sheringham before climbing over Beeston Bump and descending towards Cromer. This is one of the more varied

days on the route, moving from marsh and shingle coast into resort-town walking and the trail's only notable height gain.

The first part of the stage remains low and open, with shingle, beach-edge and coastal paths. Around Weybourne and Sheringham the route becomes more cliff-top and seafront in character, with firmer paths and more frequent access points.

Beeston Bump, also called Beeston Hill, is the highest point of the whole Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path National Trail at 63 m. The climb is short but steeper than anything earlier on the coast, and the top gives wide North Sea views as well as the concrete remains of a Second World War 'Y Station' listening post.

Sheringham is the main mid-stage service point and has rail access on the Bittern Line to Norwich. Cromer is another major resort town and a strong overnight stop, with a pier, seafront and good onward transport links.

Food and water are easier to manage on this stage than on the marshier western sections because Sheringham and Cromer are substantial settlements. Smaller places such as Salthouse, Kelling and Weybourne should still be treated as variable for opening times, especially outside the main visitor season.

Accommodation is generally more plentiful at Sheringham and Cromer than in the smaller villages. Cromer is a practical place to stop for walkers wanting a wider choice of rooms and easier rail access.

Navigation is straightforward through the resort and cliff-top sections, but pay attention where the coast path moves between beach, promenade and higher ground. Weather exposure remains significant: there is little shelter on open shingle and cliff-top stretches, and strong onshore winds can make an easy distance feel harder.

Stage 5: Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea — 27 km

This is the longest stage in the six-day schedule and needs an early start for most walkers. It leaves Cromer and follows the more easterly Norfolk coast through Overstrand, Sidestrand, Trimmingham, Mundesley, Bacton, Walcott, Happisburgh, Eccles-on-Sea, Sea Palling and Horsey before reaching Winterton-on-Sea.

The character changes noticeably after Cromer. The path uses low clifftops, seafront sections, sea walls, tracks and beach-side walking, with stretches affected by soft, eroding cliffs and coastal defence works.

Happisburgh is the standout landmark, with its red-and-white lighthouse above a coast known for rapid erosion. Winterton-on-Sea dunes provide a wilder finish to the day and are a major contrast to the resort and village sections earlier in the stage.

Food and water planning matters on this stage because of the distance and the number of smaller settlements. Cromer is the reliable starting point for supplies; Mundesley and other coastal villages may offer options, but opening times should be checked before travelling. Carry enough food and water to cover long gaps, particularly outside summer.

Accommodation becomes thinner and more seasonal on the eastern half of the Norfolk Coast Path. Winterton-on-Sea is a sensible stage end, but beds should be booked well ahead in peak season; if accommodation is not available at the stage end, transport or taxi arrangements may be needed.

Public transport is less consistently useful than on the Hunstanton–Wells–Cromer section. The coast bus coverage is broadly useful as far as Mundesley, but it does not span the whole route, so onward connections beyond this area must be checked carefully before relying on them.

Navigation needs more attention than on the earlier stages because cliff erosion can force temporary or longer-term diversions, especially around Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh. Check the official National Trail diversion notices before walking and follow signed inland diversions without trying to stay on an unsafe cliff edge.

This stage is exposed throughout and can be tiring despite the low ascent. Wind, soft sand, shingle and sea-wall walking all add effort, and winter conditions can feel bleak on the open coast.

Stage 6: Winterton-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea — 22 km

The final stage follows the coast south from Winterton-on-Sea through Hemsby, Scratby, California, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea on the Norfolk–Suffolk border. It is flatter, more settled and more resort-influenced than the previous day, but still has exposed beach and dune sections.

The route starts with the dunes and quiet beach around Winterton-on-Sea, an area associated with grey-seal pupping nearby. Further south, the walking becomes more developed around the coastal settlements and then urban around Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea.

Surfaces are mixed: sand, dune paths, promenades, seafront paths and urban edges. The walking is not technically difficult, but long hard-surface sections can be tiring after several days, while sandy stretches can slow progress.

Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea are the main service centres on the final day. Before them, food and water options in smaller resort settlements may be seasonal, so start with enough supplies and check opening times if depending on a stop en route.

Accommodation is available in the wider Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea area, while options at or near Hopton-on-Sea should be booked ahead rather than assumed. Many walkers finish at Hopton-on-Sea and travel onwards rather than overnighting directly at the finish.

Transport from the finish needs planning. Hopton-on-Sea is south of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea; local Coastal Clipper or bus services connect back to Great Yarmouth station, with trains onward to Norwich. Current bus times should be checked before committing to a same-day rail connection.

Navigation is generally simple, but the developed coast can make the exact line less intuitive than an empty beach or cliff path. Watch for National Trail acorn waymarks through resort and urban sections, and do not assume the seafront path is always the signed route.

The main warnings are exposure, seasonal busyness and underestimating the finish. The terrain is easy, but 22 km after several days on sand, shingle and hard promenade can still be a full walking day.

Recommended Itinerary

Distances below are approximate for the classic Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea route. Check current National Trail mapping before booking accommodation, especially on tidal salt-marsh sections and the erosion-prone coast around Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh.

Standard 6-day itinerary

This is a good plan for fit walkers who are comfortable with 19–27 km days on mostly flat ground. The walking is not technically hard, but the longer days can feel exposed in wind, rain or soft sand.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Hunstanton	Brancaster	21 km	A straightforward first day from Hunstanton's seafront through Old Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Titchwell. It gets the walk properly onto the north Norfolk coast without over-stretching the first stage.	Hunstanton has the easiest start-point services, but no railway. Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and nearby Burnham Deepdale are useful overnight areas; book ahead in summer.
2	Brancaster	Wells-next-the-Sea	23 km	A full but natural coastal stage via Brancaster Staithe, Burnham Deepdale, Burnham Overy Staithe, Holkham and the Holkham beach area. Wells is one of the best places on the route to end a day.	Wells-next-the-Sea has strong accommodation, food and resupply options, including hostel-style accommodation in the wider Wells/Sheringham YHA provision noted for the trail. It is a popular stop, so summer availability can be tight.
3	Wells-next-the-Sea	Cley next the Sea	19 km	A slightly shorter day after two longer ones, crossing the salt-marsh and birding coast through Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney before reaching Cley.	Accommodation in the smaller marsh villages is more limited than in Wells, Sheringham or Cromer. Blakeney and Cley are busy in birdwatching seasons and school holidays.
4	Cley next the Sea	Cromer	21 km	A varied stage through Salthouse, Kelling, Weybourne and Sheringham, then over Beeston Bump before continuing through West Runton and East Runton to Cromer.	Sheringham and Cromer are among the strongest overnight and resupply points on the whole route. Both have rail access on the Bittern Line to Norwich, making this a useful join/leave point.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
5	Cromer	Winterton-on-Sea	27 km	The longest day of this itinerary, following the more exposed eastern coast through places such as Overstrand, Trimingham, Mundesley, Bacton, Walcott, Happisburgh, Eccles-on-Sea, Sea Palling and Horsey before Winterton-on-Sea.	This is the stage that needs the most care. Accommodation is thinner on the eastern half, bus support is less comprehensive beyond the main north-coast corridor, and cliff-erosion diversions can change the day. This should be checked before travelling.
6	Winterton-on-Sea	Hopton-on-Sea	22 km	A final coastal day through the dunes and resort edge of Norfolk, passing Hemsby, Scratby, California, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea before the finish at Hopton-on-Sea.	From Hopton-on-Sea, local buses run to Great Yarmouth for rail connections to Norwich. Check current bus times before fixing the final-day travel plan.

Slower 7–8 day variant

A slower schedule suits first-time long-distance walkers, families, birdwatchers and anyone carrying heavier kit. It also gives more flexibility if wind, tide times or erosion diversions make a day slower than expected.

The most useful places to split the walk are the Cley–Cromer section and the long Cromer–Winterton section. Exact distances depend on the overnight stop chosen, so check official mapping before booking.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Hunstanton	Brancaster	21 km	Keeps the first day simple and reaches a logical north-coast overnight area.	Book ahead around Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe or Burnham Deepdale, especially in summer.
2	Brancaster	Wells-next-the-Sea	23 km	Still a full day, but it ends in one of the strongest service towns on the trail.	Wells is a natural resupply and overnight stop. Availability can be tight at weekends and in holiday periods.
3	Wells-next-the-Sea	Cley next the Sea	19 km	A manageable marsh-and-wildlife stage with time for Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and Cley.	Smaller villages have fewer rooms than the resort towns. Book before committing to this split.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
4	Cley next the Sea	Sheringham	Check official mapping before booking	Splits the standard Cley–Cromer day and gives more time for Salthouse, Kelling, Weybourne and the approach to Sheringham.	Sheringham has good accommodation and rail access, making it a strong overnight choice.
5	Sheringham	Cromer	Check official mapping before booking	A short, useful recovery day over Beeston Bump and through the Runtons, or a late-start day if using Sheringham as a rest stop.	Cromer has some of the best services on the route and is another useful rail access point.
6	Cromer	Mundesley, Bacton or Walcott	Check official mapping before booking	Breaks up the hardest logistical section of the 6-day itinerary and allows time for any cliff-path diversions.	Choose the overnight stop first, then set the walking distance. Accommodation and onward transport on this stretch should be checked before travelling.
7	Mundesley, Bacton or Walcott	Winterton-on-Sea	Check official mapping before booking	Completes the exposed eastern-coast section at a more forgiving pace, passing the Happisburgh and Sea Palling area before Winterton.	This part of the coast is more vulnerable to erosion-related changes. Check current National Trail diversion notices.
8	Winterton-on-Sea	Hopton-on-Sea	22 km	Finishes with a moderate final day through the resort fringe around Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea.	Arrange the Hopton-on-Sea to Great Yarmouth bus connection in advance of travel.

Faster variant

The 6-day itinerary above is already the sensible faster version of the Norfolk Coast Path. Compressing the route below six days is possible only by creating very long flat coastal stages, and is not the best use of a trail where wind, soft surfaces, tide timing and erosion diversions can all slow progress.

For most walkers wanting a brisk completion, use the 6-day plan and keep accommodation fixed at the stronger service centres: Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham or Cromer, and Winterton-on-Sea. Any attempt to go faster should be planned from current mapping and booked accommodation rather than from generic mileage alone.

Planning the Route

Plan the Norfolk Coast Path around overnight stops, transport links and coastal conditions rather than climbing. The walking is generally straightforward, but long exposed sections, soft sand, shingle, sea walls and wind can make a flat day feel slower than the map suggests.

Most walkers should allow 6–8 days. Six days is realistic for fit walkers happy with longer flat stages; seven or eight days gives more margin for weather, birdwatching, shorter winter daylight and the slower surfaces around dunes, shingle banks and marshes.

Choosing how many days to take

Itinerary	Best for	Planning implications
6 days	Fit walkers wanting an efficient end-to-end	Expect several days of roughly 20 km or more, including a long Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea stage in the common six-day schedule. Accommodation needs booking carefully, especially on the quieter eastern half.
7 days	Most independent walkers	A good balance between steady progress and flexibility. It gives more room to shorten a day after difficult weather or to spend time at reserves such as Titchwell, Holkham, Blakeney and Cley.
8 days	First-time long-distance walkers, families, birdwatchers and relaxed schedules	Closest to many organised itineraries. It reduces daily pressure and makes the route feel more like a coastal journey than a mileage exercise.

Walking quickly suits the terrain, because there is very little ascent and the route is well waymarked. Walking slowly often suits the place better: the north Norfolk coast has many wetland reserves, harbour villages and wildlife stops where a tight schedule can feel restrictive.

Stage planning and overnight stops

Daily stages are dictated mainly by where accommodation exists. Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer are the most obvious larger service points, with guesthouses, B&Bs, pubs with rooms, hotels and some hostel/camping options spread through the coast villages.

The north Norfolk villages are popular and can be busy in summer and around bank holidays. Book ahead if staying in places such as Brancaster, Burnham Deepdale, Wells-next-the-Sea, Blakeney, Cley next the Sea, Sheringham or Cromer.

The eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea is thinner for accommodation and services. This is where a flexible, last-minute approach can cause problems, particularly if the day's walk is extended by a cliff-erosion diversion or poor weather.

Campers should plan around established campsites rather than assuming there will be one at every convenient stopping point. There are a few campsites on or near the route, but spacing and seasonal opening should be checked before travelling.

Shortening, splitting or section-hiking

This is one of the easier National Trails to section-hike. The coast bus network parallels much of the northern coast, broadly between Hunstanton/Wells, Cromer and Mundesley, which makes one-way day walks and shorter trips practical.

The bus coverage does not span the whole route. Timetables, operators and Sunday or off-season services should be checked before travelling, especially east of Mundesley and when planning the final approach to Hopton-on-Sea.

Rail access is useful for breaking the walk. Sheringham and Cromer are on the Bittern Line to Norwich, and Great Yarmouth has rail onward to Norwich. From Hopton-on-Sea, use the Coastal Clipper or local bus to reach Great Yarmouth station; current times should be checked before committing to a same-day train connection.

Hunstanton has no railway station. The usual public-transport approach is by Coastliner bus from King's Lynn, which has direct trains from London King's Cross via Cambridge.

If you only have a long weekend, the Hunstanton to Wells-next-the-Sea or Wells-next-the-Sea to Cromer sections are the simplest to organise because of the stronger north-coast transport and accommodation pattern. For a tougher logistics exercise, the Cromer to Hopton-on-Sea eastern section needs more attention to accommodation, bus links and erosion diversions.

Extending the walk or avoiding route confusion

The classic Norfolk Coast Path described here runs from Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea. Current National Trail information may also refer to a longer Norfolk Coast Path including the westward extension from Sutton Bridge to Hunstanton, and the wider Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path National Trail includes the inland Peddars Way approach.

When booking accommodation, downloading GPX files or buying guidebooks, check that the route matches the intended start and finish. A Sutton Bridge start, a Hunstanton start and a full Peddars Way combination are different walks with different logistics.

What matters most in planning

Accommodation is the main constraint. The terrain allows flexible mileage, but beds do not always fall at ideal intervals, especially in peak summer and on the quieter eastern half.

Food and water need day-by-day checking. There are towns and villages along the coast, but some marsh, dune, beach and sea-wall sections feel remote once committed. Carry enough water and food between overnight stops, and do not rely on every small village having late-opening shops or pubs outside the main season.

Navigation is usually straightforward, but not something to ignore. The route is waymarked with National Trail acorns, yet dunes, sea walls, marsh edges, boardwalks and beach options can be confusing in poor visibility or after diversion changes. Carry a map or reliable offline mapping; the relevant OS Explorer maps are 250, 251, 252 and 236 for the eastern end, with Landranger 132, 133 and 134 also covering the route.

Weather is a bigger factor than ascent. The path is low and exposed to wind off The Wash and the North Sea, with limited shelter on beaches, embankments and open marsh. Strong headwinds can slow progress sharply, so avoid planning every day at the maximum distance you can walk in calm conditions.

Tides and marsh conditions matter in places. Some salt-marsh sections are tidal, and beach or marsh-line choices should not be treated casually. Check tide times before travelling and again during the walk if using any route option affected by tidal water.

Cliff erosion can change the line of the path. Low soft cliffs between Cromer and Happisburgh, including areas around Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton and Walcott, are prone to erosion and periodic diversions. Check the National Trail diversion notices shortly before departure and avoid relying on an old printed route line alone.

Permits are not a planning bottleneck. The practical issues are accommodation, transport, tides, weather and live route diversions rather than a trail permit.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

Accommodation is easiest to organise on the north Norfolk section, especially around Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. The eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea has fewer obvious walking-stage bases, so book earlier in summer, at bank holidays and if using a fixed itinerary.

Do not assume every small coastal village has a shop, evening food or year-round accommodation. Opening hours and bus times change seasonally; this should be checked before travelling.

Hunstanton

Hunstanton is the traditional starting point, with the route beginning on the seafront below the striped cliffs before heading east through Old Hunstanton. It is one of the easiest places on the trail to arrange a first night, with a broader choice of guesthouses, B&Bs, hotels and resort facilities than the smaller villages beyond.

For food and last-minute supplies, Hunstanton is the best start-point option before the quieter coast eastwards. There is no railway at Hunstanton; walkers usually arrive by Coastliner bus from King's Lynn, which has direct trains from London King's Cross via Cambridge.

Old Hunstanton

Old Hunstanton sits immediately east of Hunstanton on the first part of the walk. It can work as a quieter alternative to staying in Hunstanton, especially if accommodation in the main resort is full.

This is still very early in the route, so it is more useful as a start-night or short first-day base than as a normal stage end. The Peddars Way joins the coast near Holme-next-the-Sea beyond here, so expect more trail traffic from walkers combining the inland and coastal routes.

Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Titchwell

These villages lie on the early north-coast section between Hunstanton and Brancaster, close to Holme Dunes and Titchwell Marsh. They are useful for birdwatchers who want extra time at the reserves, and they can help split a first stage if a shorter opening day is preferred.

Accommodation exists in the north Norfolk villages, but capacity is limited compared with Hunstanton, Wells, Sheringham and Cromer. Food and drink availability should be checked in advance, particularly outside the main summer season.

Transport on this part of the coast is helped by the coast bus corridor, but current stops, frequency and evening services should be checked before travelling.

Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and Burnham Deepdale

Brancaster is a common first overnight stop on a six-day itinerary from Hunstanton. Brancaster Staithe and Burnham Deepdale sit nearby along the same coastal strip and may be useful alternatives if rooms in Brancaster are full or if a slightly different stage length is needed.

This cluster is practical because it keeps the first day manageable while placing the next day within reach of Burnham Overy Staithe, Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea. Accommodation is more village-based than resort-based, so book ahead rather than relying on turning up.

Food options and shops should be checked before committing to an overnight here. The north-coast bus corridor gives flexibility for section walkers, but the exact service pattern changes and should be checked before travelling.

Burnham Overy Staithe and Holkham

Burnham Overy Staithe and Holkham sit on the approach to Wells-next-the-Sea, with the route passing close to salt marsh, beach and pine woods. They are better treated as scenic intermediate stops than default overnight bases unless suitable accommodation has been booked in advance.

Stopping in this area makes sense for walkers who want more time at Holkham beach and the Holkham National Nature Reserve. Services are more limited than in Wells-next-the-Sea, so carry food and water rather than assuming frequent shops or cafes directly on the line of the walk.

Wells-next-the-Sea

Wells-next-the-Sea is one of the best overnight stops on the whole Norfolk Coast Path. It is a natural stage end after the Hunstanton/Brancaster section and has a stronger accommodation and food base than the smaller villages either side.

Expect a mix of guesthouses, B&Bs, hotels, pubs with rooms and hostel-style options in this part of the coast, including YHA provision associated with Wells-next-the-Sea. Demand is high in summer, so early booking is strongly advised.

Wells is also a sensible resupply point before the salt-marsh and bird-reserve section towards Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea. The coast bus corridor broadly serves the Hunstanton/Wells to Cromer/Mundesley stretch, making Wells a useful access point for section walkers.

Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney

These villages sit between Wells-next-the-Sea and Cley next the Sea, alongside one of the most wildlife-rich parts of the route. Blakeney is the most useful of the three for walkers looking for a possible overnight, with the wider area drawing visitors to Blakeney National Nature Reserve and Blakeney Point.

Accommodation can be limited and popular, especially in peak season. These villages are good candidates for a slower birdwatching itinerary, but they are less convenient if the aim is simply to complete the trail in six days.

Do not rely on frequent shops or late food without checking. This is also a section where tide awareness matters around marsh and creek-side walking, so plan the day rather than treating it as a simple promenade walk.

Cley next the Sea

Cley next the Sea is a key overnight stop and a common stage end between Wells-next-the-Sea and Cromer. It sits beside Cley Marshes and is one of the main birdwatching bases on the route.

Accommodation is more limited than in the larger resort towns, so it should be booked early. If staying here, confirm evening meals and breakfast arrangements when booking, as small-village options can vary by season and day of the week.

Cley is a good place to pause before the route continues through Salthouse, Kelling and Weybourne towards Sheringham. Walkers interested in wildlife often build extra time here rather than treating it purely as a bed stop.

Salthouse, Kelling and Weybourne

These are smaller places on the section between Cley next the Sea and Sheringham. They are useful for breaking up the day, but they are not as dependable as Sheringham or Cromer for accommodation, food and onward transport.

If using any of them as an overnight base, book accommodation and meals before setting out. For most walkers, they function better as intermediate villages on the way to the larger service centres at Sheringham and Cromer.

Sheringham

Sheringham is one of the strongest logistical bases on the Norfolk Coast Path. It has resort-town facilities, a wider accommodation choice than the surrounding villages, and rail access on the Bittern Line to Norwich.

This makes Sheringham particularly useful for starting, ending or breaking a section walk. It is also a practical bad-weather fallback if a planned village stop proves awkward.

The route reaches the trail's high point near Beeston Regis at Beeston Bump shortly after Sheringham when walking east. Although only 63 m, it is a noticeable change after the very flat marsh and beach sections.

West Runton, East Runton and Cromer

West Runton and East Runton sit between Sheringham and Cromer and can provide useful alternatives if Cromer or Sheringham accommodation is full. They are close enough to the main resort corridor to be practical, but services should still be checked before relying on them.

Cromer is a major overnight stop and one of the best places on the trail for accommodation, food and transport. It has rail access on the Bittern Line to Norwich and is a sensible point to start or finish a shorter north-coast section.

Cromer is also the last major resort base before the route continues into a more exposed and, in places, erosion-affected east-coast section. Check current cliff-path diversions before leaving Cromer, especially for the stretches around Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh.

Overstrand, Sidestrand and Trimingham

These smaller coastal settlements lie east of Cromer on the low-cliff section. They are useful for spacing the day, but the main planning issue here is not accommodation: it is route reliability.

The cliffs on this part of the Norfolk coast are soft and eroding, and diversions can affect the line of the path. Check the official trail updates before walking this section, and avoid planning an inflexible day that depends on an exact clifftop line remaining open.

Mundesley, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh

Mundesley is a useful east-coast stopping point and sits around the outer reach of the better-known north-coast bus corridor. Beyond here, public transport and accommodation planning become more important, as the route is no longer as easy to manage with the same flexibility as the Hunstanton-Wells-Cromer stretch.

Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh are on a vulnerable low-cliff and sea-defence section where live diversions may be in place. Happisburgh is also a notable landmark stop because of its red-and-white lighthouse and the well-known erosion issues on this coast.

Do not plan this part of the trail solely from an old map or guidebook. Check current route notices, accommodation availability and transport before committing to a stage end.

Eccles-on-Sea, Sea Palling and Horsey

These places sit on the quieter eastern section before Winterton-on-Sea. They can be useful for spreading the long Cromer-to-Winterton section into shorter days, but only if accommodation and food are arranged in advance.

This part of the route feels more remote and exposed than the resort sections. Carry enough food and water for the day, and check whether any planned overnight stop has evening meals nearby or requires a transfer.

Horsey and the coast towards Winterton are associated with grey seals, and the dunes and beach can be sensitive wildlife areas. Keep to signed routes where requested and allow extra time if seasonal access management is in place.

Winterton-on-Sea

Winterton-on-Sea is a common overnight stop before the final stage towards Hopton-on-Sea. It sits by extensive dunes and a quieter beach, making it a good contrast to the busier resort sections further west.

Accommodation is thinner than in Hunstanton, Wells, Sheringham or Cromer, so early booking is important. Food arrangements should also be checked, particularly outside the main holiday season.

For a six-day itinerary, Winterton is a practical final-night base. If accommodation is unavailable, the surrounding eastern villages may help, but do not assume transport will make last-minute rearrangements easy.

Hemsby, Scratby, California and Caister-on-Sea

These settlements lie on the final approach towards Great Yarmouth. They can provide intermediate services and possible overnight options, but they are more useful for breaking the final stage than as essential trail towns.

The coast here becomes more developed in places, but planning is still needed because the Norfolk Coast Path does not have the same simple accommodation rhythm as the north-coast resort section. Check where the path runs, where the nearest overnight option is, and how to rejoin the route the next morning.

Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea

Great Yarmouth is the main transport and service hub near the end of the walk. It has rail access, with trains onward to Norwich, and is the obvious fallback if accommodation at Hopton-on-Sea is limited or if finishing travel works better from a larger town.

Gorleston-on-Sea lies south of Great Yarmouth on the final coastal stretch before Hopton-on-Sea. It can be used to shorten the last day or to avoid depending on accommodation at the official finish.

For walkers ending the trail in Hopton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth is the key onward-transport point. Local bus links connect Hopton-on-Sea with Great Yarmouth station, but the current Coastal Clipper/local bus timetable should be checked before travelling.

Hopton-on-Sea

Hopton-on-Sea is the classic finish of the Norfolk Coast Path, on the Norfolk-Suffolk border south of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. It is a logical place for the finish photo, but not necessarily the easiest place to base the final night.

Accommodation and food options should be arranged before arrival, especially after a long final stage from Winterton-on-Sea. Many walkers will find it simpler to continue by bus to Great Yarmouth for rail connections and a wider choice of services.

If booking a final night in Hopton-on-Sea, check the exact location against the trail finish and the next day's onward transport. This avoids an unnecessary extra walk at the end of an otherwise flat but exposed coastal trail.

Getting to the Start

By train

Hunstanton has no railway station, so the usual rail approach is to travel to King's Lynn, then continue by bus to the coast. King's Lynn has direct trains from London King's Cross via Cambridge, making this the simplest public-transport gateway for the classic Hunstanton start.

From King's Lynn, allow time for the onward bus connection to Hunstanton, especially if arriving late in the day or planning to start walking immediately. Current train and bus times should be checked before travelling.

By bus

The 33/34/35/36 Coastliner bus links King's Lynn with Hunstanton. This is the key connection for walkers reaching the start without a car.

The Norfolk Coast Path traditionally starts on Hunstanton's seafront below the striped cliffs. From the town, follow the seafront to pick up the National Trail acorn waymarks leading east towards Old Hunstanton and Holme-next-the-Sea.

The Coasthopper/Coastliner network is very useful later in the walk, but coverage is partial rather than continuous along the whole 83-mile route. For the start, focus on the King's Lynn–Hunstanton connection and check the current route number, stops and timetable before travelling.

By car

Hunstanton is straightforward to use as a road access point, but the Norfolk Coast Path is a point-to-point walk ending at Hopton-on-Sea, not a circuit. If leaving a vehicle in Hunstanton, plan the return journey from the finish before committing to a parking arrangement.

Do not assume that seafront or town-centre parking is suitable for a multi-day stay. Long-stay rules, charges and overnight restrictions can change, so this should be checked before travelling. Accommodation in Hunstanton may be able to advise on local parking options for guests.

For walkers being dropped off, the practical target is Hunstanton seafront near the cliffs, rather than Old Hunstanton. The waymarked trail then heads east out of town.

From the nearest airport

Flying is rarely the simplest way to access the Norfolk Coast Path start. The most practical onward plan is usually to reach the rail network, travel to King's Lynn, and then take the bus to Hunstanton.

If arriving through a London airport, route planning should be built around getting to London King's Cross for the direct train to King's Lynn via Cambridge. Airport-to-rail connections, late arrivals and Sunday or bank-holiday services should be checked before travelling.

Where to stay before starting

Hunstanton is the most convenient place to stay the night before beginning the walk. It puts you directly at the traditional start, avoids a same-day bus connection from King's Lynn, and makes an early first stage towards Brancaster much easier.

Old Hunstanton can also work if accommodation is available, though the classic start is on Hunstanton's seafront below the striped cliffs. If staying outside the town, check how you will reach the start in the morning rather than assuming local buses or taxis will fit your walking schedule.

King's Lynn is a practical fallback for late rail arrivals, but it leaves a bus journey to Hunstanton before any walking begins. That is manageable, but less efficient if the first day is a full stage.

Getting Home from the Finish

The classic Norfolk Coast Path finishes at Hopton-on-Sea, on the Norfolk–Suffolk border just south of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. The key planning point is that Hopton-on-Sea does not have a railway station, so most walkers leave by local bus or taxi to Great Yarmouth, then continue by train to Norwich.

By train

The nearest practical railhead for the finish is Great Yarmouth station. From Great Yarmouth there are trains to Norwich, where you can connect with wider rail services.

Allow time for the Hopton-on-Sea to Great Yarmouth transfer before booking advance rail tickets. If finishing late in the day, do not assume a seamless same-evening connection from the trail end to the station; bus and train times should be checked before travelling.

Sheringham and Cromer are useful railheads for earlier exit points on the route, but they are not the natural rail option from the Hopton-on-Sea finish.

By bus

From Hopton-on-Sea, use the Coastal Clipper or local bus services towards Great Yarmouth for the rail connection. Timetables, evening services and Sunday/bank-holiday running can change, so check current times before fixing your final walking day.

Do not rely on the Coasthopper for the finish. Its useful coverage is mainly along the north Norfolk coast, broadly Hunstanton/Wells–Cromer–Mundesley, and it does not provide a simple end-to-end solution for Hopton-on-Sea.

If the final stage from Winterton-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea runs long because of soft sand, weather or diversions, have a backup plan: an overnight stop near the finish, a pre-booked taxi, or a later rail departure from Great Yarmouth.

By car/taxi

For a one-way walk, leaving a car at Hopton-on-Sea is usually less convenient than using public transport from Great Yarmouth. If you do need a vehicle transfer, arrange it in advance and be clear about the exact pickup point at Hopton-on-Sea.

A taxi is the simplest fallback if buses do not line up with your finish time. Pre-booking is sensible, especially if finishing in the evening, in poor weather, or during busy summer and bank-holiday periods.

If returning to a car left at the start in Hunstanton, expect a multi-stage public-transport journey rather than a direct rail return. This should be checked before travelling.

From the nearest airport

Airport transfers are not usually the main planning factor for this trail. The practical route out from the finish is still via Hopton-on-Sea to Great Yarmouth, then train to Norwich for onward connections.

The nearest-airport option and any airport bus, rail or taxi links should be checked before travelling, particularly if planning to fly the same day as finishing.

Where to stay at the finish

Staying overnight at or near the finish is often the safest plan if you expect to arrive late, want a relaxed final day, or are walking in winter when daylight and onward transport options are more limited.

Accommodation is generally thinner on the quieter eastern half of the route towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea, so book ahead in summer and around bank holidays.

Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea are practical alternatives if Hopton-on-Sea accommodation is limited, with the advantage of being closer to the rail connection at Great Yarmouth station. If using them as a final-night base, check the last bus or arrange a taxi from Hopton-on-Sea before setting out on the final stage.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The standard and most common direction is **west to east: Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea**. This follows the classic Norfolk Coast Path line from Hunstanton's seafront below the striped cliffs, then east through Old Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea and the north Norfolk coast before finishing at Hopton-on-Sea on the Norfolk–Suffolk border.

The reverse direction is perfectly workable. The trail is waymarked, almost flat and non-technical, so there is no meaningful gradient advantage either way. Direction choice is mainly about transport, accommodation flow, wind exposure and the feel of the journey.

Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea: the standard direction

This is the best default for most walkers. It starts with a clear traditional beginning at Hunstanton and gives a natural progression along the coast: The Wash and north Norfolk reserves first, then Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea, Blakeney, Cley next the Sea, Sheringham and Cromer, before the quieter eastern coast and the finish near the county border.

Transport works well enough in this direction. Hunstanton has no railway, so most walkers reach the start by Coastliner bus from King's Lynn, which has direct trains from London King's Cross via Cambridge. At the end, Hopton-on-Sea is linked by Coastal Clipper/local bus to Great Yarmouth station, with trains onward to Norwich.

Accommodation is generally easier on the north Norfolk section, with more options around Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. The quieter eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea has fewer options and should be booked early, especially in summer and around bank holidays.

The main downside is that the final stages can feel more logistically demanding. Bus coverage is strong on much of the northern coast but does not cover the whole route in the same way further east, so onward travel and overnight stops beyond Cromer need more care.

Hopton-on-Sea to Hunstanton: the reverse direction

Walking westbound is a valid choice if accommodation availability or transport connections line up better that way. Starting via Great Yarmouth and a local bus to Hopton-on-Sea is straightforward enough, and finishing at Hunstanton gives a memorable final landmark at the striped cliffs.

The reverse direction also puts the quieter eastern coast early in the walk. That can be useful if you want to deal with the thinner accommodation and more limited bus options first, then finish through the better-served north Norfolk villages and resorts.

The trade-off is psychological rather than technical. Hunstanton is the traditional start, and walking away from the classic eastbound flow can feel less intuitive. Some walkers may also prefer not to end with a bus connection from Hunstanton back to King's Lynn, though this is a standard way to access the trail.

Wind, tides and terrain by direction

Gradient should not influence the decision. The route has only modest ascent overall, and the high point at Beeston Bump near Sheringham is just 63 m, so there is no “easier” climbing direction.

Wind matters much more. The Norfolk Coast Path is long, flat and exposed, with open beaches, shingle, sea walls, dunes and marsh edges where a headwind can make an easy stage feel much harder. The better direction can change with the forecast, so check wind direction before committing to long exposed days.

Tide awareness applies in either direction. Some salt-marsh and coastal sections are tidal or affected by coastal conditions, and low-cliff erosion can cause diversions around places such as Happisburgh, Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton and Walcott. Check current National Trail diversion notices and tide information before travelling.

Recommendation

For most walkers, **walk Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea**. It is the traditional direction, gives the most natural scenery progression, starts from the classic Norfolk Coast Path trailhead, and finishes cleanly at the Norfolk–Suffolk border with onward transport via Great Yarmouth.

Choose **Hopton-on-Sea to Hunstanton** only if accommodation availability, transport plans or the short-term wind forecast make westbound walking clearly more convenient.

Accommodation Along the Route

The Norfolk Coast Path works well as an inn-to-inn walk, but accommodation planning matters more than the easy terrain suggests. The north Norfolk coast has a strong holiday market, so beds can disappear quickly in summer, at weekends and around bank holidays, especially in the smaller villages.

Choice is strongest in the established seaside towns: Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. These are the easiest places to build an itinerary around, with a mix of guesthouses, B&Bs, pubs with rooms, hotels and, at Wells-next-the-Sea and Sheringham, YHA accommodation.

The awkward points are the quieter village stops and the eastern half of the route towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea. Brancaster, Cley next the Sea and Winterton-on-Sea are useful stage ends on a 6-day schedule, but they should be treated as limited-capacity stops rather than places where a walker can arrive and choose from several rooms.

Best overnight bases

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Hunstanton	Good	Start-night accommodation	One of the strongest places to stay before beginning the walk. There is no railway at Hunstanton, so build in the bus connection from King's Lynn if arriving by public transport.
Brancaster / Brancaster Staithe / Burnham Deepdale	Limited	First-night stop on a 6-day itinerary	Useful after the Hunstanton to Brancaster stage, but capacity is more limited than in the larger resort towns. Book early in peak season.
Wells-next-the-Sea	Good	Natural overnight and resupply stop	One of the best accommodation hubs on the route, with a broad mix of options and YHA accommodation. It is also a busy holiday town, so summer booking pressure is high.
Blakeney / Cley next the Sea	Limited	Birdwatching, shorter stages, Cley Marshes	Good position for breaking the Wells to Cromer section, but small-village accommodation can be tight. Cley next the Sea is a common stage end, so do not leave it late.
Sheringham	Good	Flexible stopping point, rail access, shorter itinerary adjustments	Strong accommodation choice and YHA accommodation. Also useful for walkers who want to split the Cley to Cromer section or use the Bittern Line.
Cromer	Good	Major overnight, resupply and transport point	One of the most reliable places for beds, food and onward transport. A practical point to pause, shorten the walk or restart a section hike.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Mundesley / Bacton / Walcott	Limited	Breaking the long Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea section	Accommodation is thinner on this eastern side of the route. These places can help shorten the long day to Winterton-on-Sea, but current availability should be checked before travelling.
Winterton-on-Sea	Limited	Key overnight before the final day to Hopton-on-Sea	A useful and atmospheric stop, but not a large accommodation hub. Book ahead, especially in summer.
Hopton-on-Sea	Limited	Finish-night stay	The finish is close to the Norfolk-Suffolk border and south of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. If staying at the finish, arrange the room before walking; otherwise use local transport towards Great Yarmouth.

Booking strategy

For a relaxed itinerary, secure the limited village nights first: Brancaster or nearby, Cley next the Sea or nearby, and Winterton-on-Sea or nearby. Once those are fixed, it is usually easier to fit Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer around them.

A 6-day schedule often creates longer days and relies on specific overnight points. If one small village is full, the simplest solution is usually to shorten or lengthen the day and stay in a stronger accommodation centre, or arrange a taxi transfer from the trail. Taxi availability and fares should be checked before travelling.

Section-walkers have more flexibility on the northern coast because the coast bus broadly parallels the route between Hunstanton, Wells, Cromer and Mundesley. That makes it possible to base in a better-served town and travel out to daily start and finish points. This is less straightforward towards the far eastern end, where accommodation and public transport both need more careful checking.

Camping, hostels and baggage

Camping is possible on the Norfolk Coast Path, but campsites are not evenly spaced and some may be seasonal. Do not assume there will be a campsite at every stage end; check opening dates and whether walkers are accepted before committing to a camping itinerary.

Hostel-style accommodation is limited rather than continuous. The key YHA options are at Wells-next-the-Sea and Sheringham, which can be useful for budget walkers, solo walkers and anyone building a lower-cost itinerary around the better-served towns.

If using baggage transfer, check that the company will serve every overnight stop on the chosen itinerary, particularly east of Cromer and around Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea. Small villages, seasonal opening patterns and short-notice changes can make luggage logistics more restrictive than the walking itself.

Camping and Wild Camping

The Norfolk Coast Path can be camped, but it is not a route where you should rely on informal overnight stops. The coast is heavily used, much of it is protected for wildlife, and long sections pass through salt marsh, dunes, beaches, low cliffs and private land where camping is either inappropriate, unsafe or only possible with explicit permission.

For most walkers carrying a tent, the practical approach is to use booked campsites on or near the route, then fill any gaps with B&Bs, pubs, hostels or bus-supported short transfers where needed.

Campsites and camping logistics

Campsites exist along the Norfolk coast, especially around the busier north-coast villages and resort towns, but coverage is not even. The accommodation pattern is generally stronger around places such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer, and thinner on the quieter eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea.

Do not assume a campsite will be directly on the path. Some pitches may involve a road walk inland or a short bus connection, and opening dates can be seasonal. This should be checked before travelling, especially outside summer and around bank holidays.

Booking ahead is strongly advised in peak summer. The Norfolk coast is a popular holiday area, and campsites, guesthouses and pubs can fill quickly during school holidays and long weekends.

A camping itinerary also needs more flexibility than a B&B itinerary. The trail is flat, but a heavy pack is still noticeable on soft sand, shingle banks, sea walls and exposed beach sections, particularly in wind.

Wild camping: legality and reality

Wild camping in England is generally not permitted without the landowner's permission. On this route, that matters: the path crosses or borders farmland, private coastal estates, beaches, dunes, salt marshes, nature reserves and resort seafronts, none of which should be treated as open camping ground.

The practical reality is that wild camping is a poor fit for much of the Norfolk Coast Path. The landscape may look open, but many of the quietest areas are also the most sensitive: Holme Dunes, Titchwell Marsh, Holkham National Nature Reserve, Blakeney National Nature Reserve, Cley Marshes and the dunes around Winterton-on-Sea are important wildlife areas, not camping zones.

Beach or marsh camping is also risky. Some sections are tidal, salt-marsh creeks can flood, and exposed beaches offer little shelter from wind or weather. Low, eroding cliff areas around places such as Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh are unsuitable for informal camping and may be affected by live path diversions.

If permission-based camping is arranged with a landowner, keep it discreet, late-arrival/early-departure and well away from houses, livestock, dunes, marshes, bird reserves and seal areas. Where local rules are unclear, they must be checked locally.

Where camping works best

Camping is most workable on the busier, better-served parts of the north Norfolk coast, where villages and resort towns give more options for food, water, toilets and onward transport. The section from Hunstanton through Brancaster, Wells-next-the-Sea, Cley next the Sea, Sheringham and Cromer is generally easier to plan around services than the quieter eastern run beyond Cromer.

The Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea and Winterton-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea stages need more care. Accommodation is thinner, cliff erosion can affect routing in places, and the Coasthopper-style coast bus coverage does not extend conveniently along the whole route. Check current buses, campsite availability and diversion notices before committing to long camping stages here.

Water, food and resupply

Use campsite taps, village shops, cafés, pubs and town services for water and food. Do not rely on natural water: this is a coast of salt marsh, tidal mudflats, agricultural land, dunes and beach, not a route with dependable drinkable streams.

Carry enough water for exposed sections, particularly in warm weather or strong wind. The walking is not mountainous, but long flat days over sand, shingle and sea walls can still be dehydrating.

Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth are the most useful larger service stops on or near the route. Smaller villages can be very helpful, but opening hours vary and should not be assumed.

Leave No Trace and coastal restrictions

Camp only on official sites or with clear permission. Avoid dunes, reedbeds, salt marsh, beaches above the tideline, nature reserves, farmland edges, sea banks and eroding cliffs.

Do not light open fires. They are inappropriate on this coast, especially around dry dune grass, pine woods, reserves and beach areas, and can cause lasting damage. Use a stove only where permitted by the campsite or landowner.

Take all litter out, including food waste and hygiene products. Burying waste is not suitable in sand dunes, marsh, shingle or busy coastal margins; use toilets in campsites, towns and public facilities where available.

Keep noise low, stay off signed wildlife areas, and give seals, nesting birds and grazing livestock a wide berth. Spring and autumn are prime birdwatching seasons, while some dune and beach areas are sensitive at particular times of year, so local signage should always be followed.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Norfolk Coast Path is not a remote wilderness route, but it is still a coastal walk with exposed marsh, dune, beach and sea-wall sections where there may be nowhere to buy food or refill water for several hours. Plan each day around the larger overnight stops, then treat cafés, pubs and village shops in smaller places as useful extras rather than guaranteed resupply.

Food is easiest in the resort towns and larger coastal stops: Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer, Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. Smaller places such as Thornham, Brancaster, Burnham Deepdale, Blakeney, Cley next the Sea, Weybourne, Overstrand, Mundesley, Sea Palling, Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea may have pubs, cafés or small shops, but opening hours can be seasonal and limited, especially outside summer.

Daily food planning

Carry lunch and snacks from the start of each stage unless there is a known open stop on the way. This is particularly important across the marsh, beach and dune sections, where the path can feel close to villages on the map but still involve long open stretches with no guaranteed facilities directly on the trail.

Evening meals should be planned before arrival in smaller villages. In summer and around bank holidays, pubs and restaurants on the north Norfolk coast can be busy; in winter or midweek, some may close early or not open every day. Accommodation hosts may also be able to advise on local eating options, but this should be checked before travelling.

Water

Start each walking day with enough water to reach the next certain settlement or accommodation. For most walkers, 1.5–2 litres is a sensible minimum on typical stages; carry more in hot weather, strong wind, or when walking longer 20 km-plus days over exposed beaches, sea walls and dunes.

Reliable water is most likely from accommodation, cafés, pubs, public toilets where drinking water is explicitly available, and shops selling bottled drinks. Do not plan to use sea water, salt-marsh channels, tidal creeks or mudflat water: much of the route runs beside brackish or tidal environments, and these are not practical drinking sources. If carrying a filter, it should be treated as a backup only, not as the main water plan.

Stage-by-stage resupply guide

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Hunstanton to Brancaster	Good at Hunstanton before starting; possible options in Old Hunstanton, Thornham, Titchwell and Brancaster, but do not rely on all being open.	Fill up in Hunstanton. Further refills are most likely through cafés, pubs or accommodation in villages.	A straightforward first day, but Holme Dunes and the coast around Titchwell can feel exposed. Carry lunch unless a stop has been checked in advance.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Brancaster to Wells-next-the-Sea	Mixed. Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe, Burnham Deepdale and Burnham Overy Staithe may provide food options; Wells-next-the-Sea is the main resupply point.	Refill before leaving Brancaster. Further water depends on open village services until Wells.	The Holkham beach and pine-woods section is a classic open stretch where services are not always close to the path. Arrive in Wells with resupply in mind for the next day.
Wells-next-the-Sea to Cley next the Sea	Good in Wells before departure; limited and seasonal through Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney; Cley next the Sea is a useful overnight stop but still worth checking options.	Fill in Wells. Refills are most likely at open cafés, pubs or accommodation in the villages.	This is a marsh-and-creek day with bird reserves and tidal landscapes. Natural water beside the route should not be used for drinking.
Cley next the Sea to Cromer	Food options may be available in Cley next the Sea, Salthouse, Weybourne, Sheringham, West Runton, East Runton and Cromer, with Sheringham and Cromer the strongest resupply points.	Start full from Cley. Sheringham and Cromer are the most dependable places to refill or buy drinks.	This stage includes Beeston Bump near Sheringham and more resort infrastructure than the previous marsh stages. It is still exposed in poor weather.
Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea	Cromer is the key place to buy a full day's food. Smaller settlements including Overstrand, Trimingham, Mundesley, Bacton, Walcott, Happisburgh, Eccles-on-Sea and Sea Palling may have seasonal or limited options. Winterton-on-Sea should be checked in advance for evening food.	Fill in Cromer and do not assume frequent refills. Buy or refill water whenever a reliable open stop appears.	This is commonly the longest stage on a 6-day itinerary and the eastern half of the route is quieter. Cliff-erosion diversions can also affect how close the path runs to services.
Winterton-on-Sea to Hopton-on-Sea	Mixed to good near the resort belt. Hemsby, Scratby, California, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea may provide food options, with Great Yarmouth the largest service centre.	Refill before leaving Winterton-on-Sea. Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea are the main reliable places for drinks later in the day.	This is less isolated than the marsh stages, but seasonal resort opening times still matter. Carry enough food to avoid depending on a single café or shop.

Practical resupply tips

Buy breakfast and packed-lunch supplies the evening before whenever possible. Early starts are useful on long stages, but rural shops and cafés may not open early enough to support a same-morning resupply.

On Sundays, bank holidays and outside the main summer season, assume reduced opening hours until checked. This is especially relevant in smaller villages and on the quieter eastern stretch towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea.

Campers should carry more food than B&B walkers, as campsite locations and nearby evening meals are not always conveniently aligned with the trail. A lightweight stove or no-cook backup meal is sensible if staying away from the main resort towns.

Waste bins are not guaranteed on the wilder beach, marsh and dune sections. Carry all food packaging out to the next settlement and take particular care around bird reserves, salt marsh and seal areas.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Norfolk Coast Path is a waymarked National Trail, using the standard acorn markers. For most of the route it is straightforward to follow, especially through the resort towns, along sea walls, on promenades and on the more obvious clifftop sections.

This is a good trail for walkers with limited navigation experience, but it should not be treated as a route where signs remove the need to navigate. The coast has open beaches, dunes, salt marsh edges, nature reserve paths and occasional erosion diversions, so a map or downloaded route line is sensible.

What to expect on the ground

Navigation is generally easiest where the path follows a clear sea wall, boardwalk, promenade or clifftop path. Around towns such as Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth, the route is usually intuitive, but urban seafronts can have several parallel paths and access points.

The more careful sections are the open coastal areas: dunes, shingle banks, beach edges and salt-marsh margins. In these places the walked line can be less visually obvious, especially in poor visibility, strong wind or after storms.

Between Cromer and Happisburgh, and around places such as Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton and Walcott, low soft cliffs and coastal erosion can affect the line of the path. Diversions may be in place and should be followed rather than trying to stay on an older clifftop line.

GPX, maps and offline navigation

A GPX file is recommended, not because the trail is technically difficult, but because it helps at junctions, beach exits, reserve paths and diversion points. Download it before walking and keep it available offline.

Paper mapping is also sensible, particularly for section-walkers using buses or for anyone needing to adjust a stage. The relevant Ordnance Survey coverage is:

Map series	Sheets
OS Explorer	250, 251, 252, plus 236 for the eastern end
OS Landranger	132, 133, 134

An app with offline Ordnance Survey mapping is the most useful digital option for this route. A standard phone map may be enough in towns, but it is much less helpful for distinguishing public footpaths, sea-bank routes, beach exits and inland diversion lines.

Diversions, tides and live checks

Check the official National Trail information before setting off, especially for cliff-erosion diversions. This matters most on the east Norfolk coast, where the route can change more often than on the flatter north-coast sections.

Some marsh and coastal-edge sections are tidal or influenced by high water and weather conditions. Tide times should be checked before relying on any low-lying or beach-adjacent line, particularly in poor

weather or after prolonged onshore winds.

Mobile signal and practical back-up

Do not rely on live mobile data for navigation. Much of the route is near settlements, but there are long open stretches of coast, dunes and marsh where a signal or battery cannot be assumed.

Carry the route offline, save accommodation and transport details before leaving each stop, and keep a power bank if navigating by phone. On this trail the main navigation risk is rarely getting seriously lost; it is missing the correct beach exit, following an outdated cliff-top line, or losing time correcting a small error late in a long, exposed stage.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Norfolk Coast Path is physically gentle by National Trail standards, but it is not uniformly easy underfoot. Its difficulty comes less from climbing and more from long, flat exposure, changing coastal surfaces, wind, soft going and the need to pay attention to tides and erosion diversions.

There is no sustained rocky or technical terrain. Most fit walkers will find the walking straightforward, but daily distances of 19–27 km on sand, shingle or exposed sea banks can still feel tiring, especially with a full pack or in strong wind.

What the Ground Is Like

The route changes surface repeatedly. Expect a mix of wide sandy beaches, marram-grass dunes, shingle and pebble banks, raised sea walls, embankments, timber boardwalks, grassy or gravel clifftop paths, salt marsh edges and tidal mudflat sections.

Terrain type	Where it matters	Practical effect
Sand and beach	Especially around the wider north Norfolk beaches, including the Holkham area and the dune-backed coast further east	Can be slow and tiring if soft; pace drops compared with firm paths
Shingle and pebble banks	Around shingle spits, beach ridges and some marsh-edge sections	Awkward underfoot and harder on ankles than it looks
Sea walls and embankments	Common along the low-lying marsh coast	Easy navigation and firm going, but very exposed to wind and weather
Boardwalks and wetland paths	Through marsh and dune/wetland areas such as Holme, Titchwell and other reserve landscapes	Usually straightforward, but can be slippery when wet
Grassy and gravel clifftop paths	Sheringham, Cromer and the low-cliff coast eastwards	Generally easy, but keep to signed routes where erosion affects the edge
Tidal salt marsh and mudflat margins	Parts of the north Norfolk coast around creeks and marshes	Tide awareness matters; some sections should be checked before travelling

The path is waymarked with National Trail acorn signs, so navigation is usually simple in settled weather. In open marsh, dunes and beach sections, poor visibility or missing a waymark can make the line less obvious than it appears on a map, so carrying offline mapping remains sensible.

Flat Does Not Mean Effortless

The total ascent on the classic Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea route is modest, around 300 m, with the high point at Beeston Bump near Sheringham at 63 m. That makes this one of England's flattest long-distance trails.

The steep-sided climb over Beeston Bump is the one place where the route briefly feels like a hill walk. Elsewhere, the challenge is cumulative: long flat days, repetitive surfaces, wind resistance and limited shelter across open marshes and beaches.

Soft sand and loose shingle are the main pace-killers. A 20 km day on firm sea wall or promenade will feel very different from the same distance on yielding beach or pebble banks.

Exposure, Wind and Weather

The trail is consistently exposed to weather from The Wash and the North Sea. Sea walls, salt marshes, dune systems and broad beaches offer little shelter, so wind can make otherwise easy stages noticeably harder.

A headwind on the open coast can slow progress more than the elevation profile suggests. In summer, the same lack of shelter can mean strong sun and glare; in winter, the route can feel bleak and cold despite the low altitude.

Waterproofs and a warm layer are worth carrying even when the forecast looks benign. There are long stretches where there may be no immediate shelter once committed to an open marsh, beach or sea-wall section.

Tides, Marshes and Wet Ground

Some marsh sections are tidal, and the coast includes creeks, salt marsh and mudflat margins. Tide times should be checked before relying on any low-level or marsh-edge line, particularly where the route crosses or skirts open tidal landscapes.

Do not treat all flat coastal ground as safe walking ground. Mudflats and salt marsh can be hazardous away from the established path, and the safest approach is to stay on the signed National Trail line or any posted diversion.

After wet weather, boardwalks and grassy banks can be slippery, while low-lying sections may feel damp underfoot. This is not a boggy upland trail, but waterproof footwear is still useful outside dry summer spells.

Erosion and Diversions

The low, soft cliffs between Cromer and Happisburgh are a distinct feature of the eastern half of the walk. Erosion can affect the path and force inland diversions, especially around Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton/Walcott and Happisburgh.

These diversions can change the character of a day: a planned clifftop or beach-side section may become a more inland line. Current National Trail diversion notices should be checked before travelling, particularly before the Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea stage.

Keep well back from cliff edges and follow local signs even if a map or older GPX track suggests a different line. On this coast, the mapped route is not always the safest or current route on the ground.

Settlements, Seafronts and Hard Surfaces

The walk passes through or near many coastal villages and resort towns, including Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer, Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. These sections bring firmer surfaces, easier navigation and access to services, but they can also mean harder walking underfoot for sustained periods.

Promenade and seafront walking is straightforward but can be tiring in a different way from sand or grass, particularly in lightweight trail shoes. Busy summer resort sections may also slow progress compared with the open coast.

Road walking is not the defining feature of the Norfolk Coast Path, but short linking stretches through settlements or around diversions may occur. Where erosion has forced the route inland, expect the walking to feel less wild and potentially more indirect.

Season-by-Season Conditions

Spring and autumn are often the best balance: cooler walking conditions, strong birdlife interest and generally quieter paths than high summer. Wind and rain can still be significant, so the flat profile should not lead to underpacking.

Summer brings the easiest temperatures for casual walkers and the busiest conditions in places such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. Heat, sun exposure and soft dry sand can be the main physical challenges, along with busier accommodation and services.

Winter is walkable, but it is the most exposed version of the trail. Short daylight, cold wind, wet boardwalks, bleak marshes and reduced shelter make it feel more serious than the elevation suggests.

How Hard Is It in Practice?

For most walkers, this is an easy to moderate long-distance walk rather than a mountain challenge. The route is well suited to first-time long-distance walkers because it is low, waymarked, non-technical and supported by frequent settlements on much of the north Norfolk coast.

The harder days are usually caused by distance, wind, soft surfaces, tide constraints or diversion logistics rather than steep gradients. Walkers planning 6-day itineraries should be comfortable covering long flat stages without relying on elevation gain to vary the effort.

A realistic approach is to budget slower-than-road pace for sand, shingle and exposed sea-wall sections, check tide and diversion information before each affected day, and avoid judging the route solely by its low ascent figure.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Norfolk Coast Path is walkable year-round, but the best seasons are spring and autumn. These give the strongest mix of quieter paths, good wildlife interest around places such as Holme, Titchwell, Blakeney and Cley, and more manageable conditions on the long exposed beaches, sea walls and marsh edges.

The route is not difficult because of height or technical terrain. The main weather challenge is exposure: wind off The Wash and the North Sea can make flat days feel much harder than the map suggests, especially on open sand, shingle banks, sea walls and clifftop sections.

Season-by-season planning

Season	What to expect	Planning advice
Spring	One of the best times to walk, especially for birdlife and quieter villages. Conditions can still feel cold and exposed in wind.	Carry full waterproofs and a windproof layer even if the forecast looks settled. Accommodation is easier than peak summer, but popular stops can still fill at weekends and holidays.
Summer	Long daylight and generally the easiest season for relaxed stage planning. Resort towns and villages such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer are at their busiest.	Book accommodation well ahead, especially around bank holidays. Expect less shade on beaches, dunes, marshes and sea walls; carry enough water between villages and be ready for tiring walking on soft sand or shingle.
Autumn	Another prime season, with quieter paths and strong birdwatching appeal. Wind and rain become more important planning factors.	A flexible itinerary helps if poor weather coincides with the more exposed marsh, beach or clifftop sections. Check live route information for erosion diversions before setting out.
Winter	Realistic for experienced walkers, but bleak, exposed and much less forgiving. The walking remains low-level, but short daylight and cold wind can make standard stages harder.	Keep stages conservative, check accommodation and food options in advance, and carry reliable waterproof and insulating layers. Winter is better suited to shorter sections than a rushed end-to-end walk.

Wind, rain and exposure

Wind is the defining weather factor on this trail. A strong headwind can slow progress dramatically on the exposed north coast and on the eastern stretch towards Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth and Hopton-on-Sea.

Rain is usually more of a comfort and surface issue than a navigation problem, as the trail is waymarked and low-level. After wet weather, expect boardwalks, grassy sections, marsh edges and sea-wall paths to feel slippery or more tiring underfoot.

A hooded waterproof, warm mid-layer and windproof layer are sensible in every season. Umbrellas are rarely useful on exposed coastal days.

Heat, sun and shade

Summer heat can be deceptive because the sea breeze may keep temperatures feeling manageable while the exposure remains constant. Much of the route crosses open beaches, dunes, salt marsh, shingle and sea walls with limited shelter.

Plan water and food around actual settlements rather than assuming frequent services between them. This matters particularly on longer stage days and on the quieter eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea.

Tides, marshes and storm conditions

Some salt-marsh and mudflat sections are tidal, so tide times matter on parts of the route. Check tide information before walking any section where the path uses marsh, creek or beach-margin ground; this should be checked before travelling.

After storms or periods of rough weather, be alert for route changes on low, eroding cliff sections, particularly around Happisburgh, Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton and Walcott. The official National Trail route notices should be checked before travelling, as local diversions can change.

Fog, poor visibility and navigation

The Norfolk Coast Path is well waymarked, but poor visibility can still make open beaches, dunes, marsh margins and sea walls harder to read. Carry an offline map or GPX as well as following the National Trail acorn waymarks.

This is especially useful where the line of the path shifts between beach, dunes, sea wall, clifftop and inland diversion. Do not rely only on footprints or other walkers in open coastal terrain.

Accommodation and seasonal pressure

Summer is the most difficult season for accommodation availability. The north Norfolk villages and resort towns are popular, and beds can be tight in peak holiday periods and around bank holidays.

Spring and autumn are usually more comfortable for booking, but key overnight stops still need planning ahead. In winter, the issue is less crowding and more whether accommodation, food and local services are open on the days needed; this should be checked before travelling.

Insects and ticks

There is no major route-specific insect issue that defines the walking season. Normal UK countryside precautions are sensible when passing dunes, grass, marsh edges and nature reserves: check for ticks after the day, avoid leaving food exposed, and carry basic insect repellent if prone to bites.

Safety Notes

The Norfolk Coast Path is not a technical mountain route, but its safety issues are very real: exposure, tides, soft coastal surfaces, cliff erosion and long flat days that can become tiring in wind or heat. Treat it as a coastal trail, not simply an easy footpath.

Emergency help

In the UK, call **999 or 112** in an emergency. On the coast, ask for the **Coastguard** if someone is in difficulty on the beach, mudflats, salt marsh, dunes, sea wall or cliff edge; ask for ambulance, police or fire as appropriate for other incidents.

Mobile coverage should not be assumed everywhere, especially on open marsh, dune and beach sections away from settlements. Carry a charged phone, keep some battery in reserve, and download offline mapping before setting off.

Tides, salt marsh and mudflats

Several sections pass close to tidal creeks, salt marsh and mudflats, particularly around the north Norfolk coast between Holme-next-the-Sea, Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea. Stay on the signed route, boardwalks, embankments and established paths; do not take shortcuts across marsh or mud.

Tide times matter on this route. Check the day's tide information before setting off, especially where the route runs near marsh, creeks or beach alternatives. This should be checked before travelling.

Cliff erosion and diversion risk

Low, soft cliffs are a particular issue on the eastern part of the route, with erosion-prone stretches around **Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh**. Keep well back from cliff edges, avoid walking below unstable cliffs, and follow all signed inland diversions.

Do not rely solely on an old guidebook or saved GPX line in these areas. Check the official National Trail diversion notices before each day where cliff-top walking is involved.

Weather exposure

The route is almost entirely open to wind from The Wash and the North Sea. Even on flat ground, strong headwinds can make progress slow and tiring, especially on beach, shingle and sea-wall sections.

In summer, there can be long exposed stretches with little shade, particularly across beaches, dunes, sea walls and marshland. Carry enough water between villages, use sun protection, and avoid underestimating how draining a flat day can be in heat.

In winter and poor weather, the same openness makes the trail cold, bleak and exposed. Waterproofs, warm layers, gloves and a hat are sensible even though the route is low-level.

Soft sand, shingle, boardwalks and sea walls

The Norfolk Coast Path changes surface often: sand, shingle, dunes, grassy paths, gravel, boardwalks and raised embankments all appear along the route. Soft sand and pebble banks can be slow and tiring, and wet boardwalks can be slippery.

Footwear with decent grip is more useful than heavy mountain boots for most walkers. Walking poles can help with balance on shingle, sea walls and long beach sections, particularly when carrying a multi-day pack.

Roads, resorts and shared-use areas

The route passes through busy coastal towns and resorts including Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer, Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea. Expect promenades, harbour areas, seafront paths, road crossings and short built-up sections rather than uninterrupted wild walking.

Use pavements and signed crossings where available, and take extra care near car parks, beach access roads and busy quays. On narrow lanes or road-edge sections, face oncoming traffic where it is safe to do so and make yourself visible in poor light.

Wildlife and livestock

The trail passes important bird and seal habitats, including Holme Dunes, Titchwell Marsh, Holkham, Blakeney and Cley Marshes. Keep to marked paths, respect seasonal signs and avoid disturbing wildlife, especially around reserves, dunes and seal areas.

Livestock is not one of the main hazards of this route, but grazing animals may be encountered on rural or marsh-edge sections. Give animals space, keep gates as found, and keep dogs under close control where permitted.

Solo walking

The Norfolk Coast Path is well suited to solo walkers because it is waymarked and passes regular settlements, but some beach, dune and marsh sections still feel remote. Tell someone your planned overnight stop, carry offline maps, and avoid pushing on late in the day if the next village or bus option is uncertain.

The eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea has thinner services than the most popular north-Norfolk section. Plan food, water and exit options before leaving each morning.

Check before setting off each day

- **Weather and wind direction**, especially for long exposed beach, sea-wall and marsh sections.
- **Tide times** where the route is close to creeks, salt marsh, mudflats or beach alternatives.
- **Current National Trail diversions**, particularly around Happisburgh, Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton and Walcott.
- **Daylight remaining**, as flat stages can still take longer than expected in sand, shingle or headwind.
- **Food and water availability**, especially outside the main resort towns and on the quieter eastern half.

- **Bus or rail options** if using public transport as a safety fallback; services and coverage should be checked before travelling.
- **Phone battery and offline maps**, as mobile signal and wayfinding support should not be relied on everywhere.

Gear Recommendations

The Norfolk Coast Path is not a mountain route, so gear should be chosen for distance, exposure and variable coastal surfaces rather than ascent. The main challenges are wind, rain, salt air, soft sand, shingle, long sea-wall sections, boardwalks, tidal marsh margins and occasional erosion diversions on the low cliffs east of Cromer.

Footwear

Lightweight walking shoes or trail shoes suit most walkers better than heavy boots. The route is almost entirely flat and non-technical, and breathable footwear is more comfortable on long beach and sea-wall days.

Choose shoes with enough cushioning for repeated hard surfaces and enough grip for wet boardwalks, grassy cliff paths and compacted shingle. Soft sand and pebble banks can be tiring, so worn-out trainers with poor support are a false economy.

Waterproof footwear is a mixed choice. It helps on wet grass, marsh edges and winter days, but can feel hot in summer and will not stay dry if water or sand enters from above. Many walkers are better served by quick-drying trail shoes, good socks and spare dry socks in a waterproof bag.

Short gaiters are worth considering if using low shoes, mainly to keep sand, grit and shingle out. They are more useful here than high mountain gaiters.

Waterproofs and wind protection

A reliable waterproof jacket is essential, even in summer. Much of the trail is open to The Wash and the North Sea, with limited shelter on beaches, dunes, salt marsh and sea walls.

Waterproof overtrousers are strongly recommended outside high summer, and still useful for multi-day walkers in summer if the forecast is unsettled. Coastal rain with wind can be cold even on a flat route.

A windproof layer is particularly valuable. On dry but blustery days, a windshirt or lightweight softshell is often more comfortable than walking all day in a waterproof shell.

Warm layers

Pack warm layers for stops, early starts and exposed sections. A lightweight fleece or synthetic insulated jacket is usually enough for spring to autumn inn-to-inn walking, but winter and shoulder-season walkers should add a warmer mid-layer, hat and gloves.

Do not be misled by the low elevation. Beeston Bump is only 63 m, but the route can feel cold when a north-easterly wind is blowing across open beach, marsh or cliff.

Navigation and route information

The Norfolk Coast Path is waymarked with National Trail acorn signs, but navigation should not rely on waymarks alone. Carry an offline mapping app or GPS file, plus a paper map or printed route notes as backup.

OS Explorer maps 250, 251 and 252 cover the main north-coast sections, with Explorer 236 relevant for the eastern end. Landranger 132, 133 and 134 are the broader-scale alternatives.

Check live route information before walking cliff sections around Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh, where erosion can force inland diversions. Tide times should also be checked for any marsh or tidal-margin sections. This should be checked before travelling.

A waterproof phone pouch or dry bag is sensible. Salt spray, rain and wind-blown sand are hard on phones, maps and charging ports.

Water and food carry

Carry enough water for a full stage, especially on open beach, dune and sea-wall sections where there may be little shade. In warm weather, increase capacity rather than relying on finding frequent taps or shops exactly when needed.

Food resupply is generally easier on the north-coast resort and village sections, including places such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. It becomes thinner and more seasonal on quieter stretches, particularly on the eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea.

Even when staying indoors, carry lunch, snacks and an emergency reserve each day. Opening hours can be seasonal, and long flat stages can still take longer than expected in headwinds or soft sand.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are optional rather than essential. There is very little climbing, so they are not needed for sustained ascents or descents.

They can still be useful on soft sand, shingle, long sea-wall sections and windy exposed days, especially for walkers carrying camping gear or managing knee and foot fatigue. Rubber tips are worth using on hard promenades and paved seafront sections.

Power, phone and electronics

A small power bank is recommended for multi-day walkers using phone navigation, tide apps, transport information and accommodation messages. Cold wind and constant screen use can drain batteries faster than expected.

Download maps and key route information before starting each day. Mobile coverage should not be treated as guaranteed on every beach, dune or marsh section.

Binoculars are optional but highly relevant on this route. Birdwatchers may want them for Holme, Titchwell, Holkham, Blakeney, Cley Marshes and the wider wetland sections, but they add weight and should be balanced against daily mileage.

Sun, sand and insect protection

Sun protection matters on the Norfolk Coast Path because the route is open and reflective. Pack sunglasses, high-factor sun cream and a brimmed cap or sun hat for beach, dune and sea-wall walking.

Wind can mask sunburn risk, particularly on long exposed stages. Lip balm with sun protection is useful in bright, breezy weather.

Insect repellent can be worthwhile in warmer months around marshes, wetlands, dunes and still evenings near campsites or accommodation. A lightweight long-sleeved layer also helps with both sun and insects.

Extra advice by walking style

Inn-to-inn walkers

A 25–35 litre day pack is usually enough if staying in B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs or hotels. Prioritise waterproof packing, spare socks, a warm layer, full waterproofs, food, water and navigation.

Pack light. The trail is gentle, but 19–27 km days over sand, shingle and hard sea walls feel much harder with unnecessary weight.

A pair of lightweight evening shoes or sandals can be useful if footwear gets wet or sandy, but avoid overpacking town clothes. Dry bags or a pack liner are more important than a large wardrobe.

Campers

Campers need a stable, weatherworthy shelter rather than a high-mountain tent. Wind exposure is the main issue, so choose a tent with secure pitching, good pegs and guy lines suitable for mixed coastal ground.

Keep sleeping gear protected in dry bags. Sand, condensation and salt-laden air are common annoyances on coastal trips.

Plan camping stops in advance, particularly in peak summer and around bank holidays. Campsites exist on the route, but accommodation is thinner on quieter eastern sections and availability can be seasonal. Do not assume informal camping is acceptable on beaches, dunes, reserves or salt marsh; arrange legal overnight stops.

A stove and cooking kit are useful if camping, but food shops and cafés should still be checked stage by stage rather than assumed. This should be checked before travelling.

Fast and section hikers

Fast walkers and day-section hikers can travel very light, especially where the coast bus or rail access makes a short stage possible. Even so, do not strip the kit down too far: waterproofs, a warm layer, navigation, water and food are still necessary.

The Coasthopper bus is useful on much of the northern coast but does not cover the entire route. If using public transport to enable fast one-way days, check current bus and train times before setting out.

For running or fastpacking, choose grippy trail shoes with good drainage, carry a windproof or waterproof shell, and protect electronics from sweat, rain and sand. Soft beach sections and headwinds can slow progress significantly, even where the map looks flat.

Budget and Costs

The Norfolk Coast Path can be walked on a relatively modest budget if you camp, use buses and self-cater, but costs rise quickly in the popular north-Norfolk villages and resort towns. Accommodation is the main variable, especially in summer, at weekends and around bank holidays.

Exact prices change by season and availability, so current rates should be checked before booking. This is particularly important for Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and the smaller villages where there may be limited rooms close to the trail.

Main cost factors

Cost	What affects it on this route	Budget advice
Accommodation	Guesthouses, B&Bs, pubs with rooms, hotels, a few hostels and campsites; supply is thinner on quieter sections towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea	Book early for summer and bank holidays; consider campsites or hostels where available
Food	Resort towns have more options; smaller villages may have fewer evening meals or shops	Carry lunch and snacks between villages; do not assume every overnight stop has late-opening food
Transport	No railway at Hunstanton; access is by bus from King's Lynn. Returns are easier via Sheringham, Cromer or Great Yarmouth	Use rail-and-bus links where possible; check current bus timetables before fixing stage ends
Local buses	The Coasthopper parallels much of the north coast but does not cover the whole route	Useful for section-walking and shortening days, but not a full end-to-end safety net
Taxis	Useful for awkward accommodation gaps, late arrivals or eastern sections with fewer options	Pre-book in smaller places; short transfers can add up quickly
Luggage transfer / packages	Optional services may suit walkers using B&Bs or hotels	Confirm current operators, coverage and prices before booking

Budget approach

The lowest-cost version is to camp where campsites fit the stages, use public transport, carry lunches and keep pub meals occasional. This works best for flexible walkers who are comfortable with longer or shorter days to match available camping and food stops.

The few hostel options, including YHA accommodation at Wells-next-the-Sea and Sheringham, can help reduce costs on the northern half. They should still be booked ahead in busy periods.

Mid-range approach

Most independent walkers will budget for B&Bs, guesthouses or pubs with rooms, plus café lunches or pub dinners in the main overnight stops. This is the simplest way to walk the route without carrying camping gear.

A 6-day itinerary has fewer accommodation nights but longer days, including stages of around 21–27 km. An 8-day itinerary costs more in accommodation but gives more flexibility for birdwatching, weather and public transport.

Comfortable approach

A more comfortable trip uses hotels or better rooms where available, shorter stages, luggage transfer and occasional taxis to reach accommodation away from the path. This is especially useful if walking in peak summer, when the best-located rooms may be full or expensive.

Self-guided packages can simplify booking and baggage logistics, but they are usually more expensive than arranging the walk independently. Check exactly what is included: accommodation standard, baggage movement, route notes, transfers and any single-room supplements.

Where costs are likely to rise

Expect higher demand and less flexibility in the popular north-Norfolk stops such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer. Smaller places between these towns can be excellent overnight stops, but limited accommodation means prices and availability may be less forgiving.

The eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea needs careful planning because services and accommodation are not as evenly spaced for walkers. Budget for the possibility of a taxi or bus link if the most practical bed is away from the trail.

Transport costs to allow for

For the start, most walkers reach Hunstanton by bus from King's Lynn, which has direct trains from London King's Cross via Cambridge. For the finish, Hopton-on-Sea links by local bus to Great Yarmouth station, with trains onwards to Norwich.

If section-walking, rail access at Sheringham and Cromer on the Bittern Line to Norwich can reduce the need for taxis. The Coasthopper is useful along much of the northern coast, broadly between Hunstanton/Wells, Cromer and Mundesley, but current routes and times should be checked before travelling.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

Luggage transfer

Luggage transfer can make the Norfolk Coast Path much easier to enjoy, especially in summer accommodation-heavy itineraries where walkers are moving between guesthouses, pubs and small hotels. It is most useful for anyone walking the full Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea route over 6–8 days, families, first-time long-distance walkers, and anyone who wants to carry only waterproofs, food, water and navigation during the day.

The route is flat enough that experienced walkers can carry a full pack without the climbing penalty found on hillier National Trails. However, the exposed coast, soft sand, shingle, sea walls and long open sections can make a heavy rucksack more tiring than the ascent profile suggests.

When booking, check that any baggage service covers the exact itinerary being walked. Some support may focus on the busier north Norfolk coast between Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer, while the eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea is quieter and has thinner accommodation. This should be checked before travelling.

Ask each accommodation whether it accepts luggage deliveries and whether there are restrictions on drop-off times. In small B&Bs and pubs, staff may not be present all day, so clear labelling and mobile contact details matter.

Self-guided walking packages

Self-guided walking holidays are a good fit for this trail. Packages typically arrange accommodation, luggage transfer and daily route information, leaving walkers to follow the National Trail independently.

This option suits walkers who want the logistics handled but do not need a guide on the path. It is also useful in peak summer and around bank holidays, when accommodation in Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and the smaller coast villages can book up early.

Before committing, check whether the package uses the classic Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea route or a shorter itinerary ending at Cromer, Sea Palling or another coastal point. The Norfolk Coast Path has been extended over time, so the advertised endpoint matters.

Also check how the company handles live route changes. Cliff erosion and diversion notices can affect sections around Overstrand, Trimmingham, Bacton, Walcott and Happisburgh, and walkers should still check the official National Trail updates before setting off each day.

Guided walking

A fully guided trip is not essential for most walkers on the Norfolk Coast Path. The route is waymarked, low-level and non-technical, and the parallel coast bus makes many northern sections straightforward to shorten or split.

Guided support may still appeal to walkers who prefer a group setting, want transport and accommodation organised, or are more interested in the wildlife and coastal landscape than in

independent route planning. Birdwatchers may particularly value extra time around Holme Dunes, Titchwell Marsh, Holkham, Blakeney, Cley Marshes and Winterton-on-Sea.

If booking any guided or semi-guided option, check group size, luggage arrangements, daily distances, included meals, and whether the itinerary reaches Hopton-on-Sea. Current prices, departure dates and inclusions should be checked before booking.

Taxi transfers and public-transport back-up

Taxis are most useful where accommodation is away from the trail, where a day has to be shortened, or on the quieter eastern half where services are more spread out. They are also helpful for linking an overnight base to the path if suitable accommodation is unavailable in the exact stage-end village.

The coast bus is a major advantage on the northern part of the route, broadly along the Hunstanton/Wells–Cromer–Mundesley corridor, but it does not cover the whole trail. Do not plan the eastern stages on the assumption that the same level of public-transport back-up continues all the way to Hopton-on-Sea.

There is no railway at Hunstanton, so most walkers reaching the start by public transport use the bus connection from King's Lynn. Rail is more useful later in the route, with stations at Sheringham and Cromer, and return options via Great Yarmouth after finishing at Hopton-on-Sea using a local bus connection.

Book taxis ahead for early starts, late finishes, Sundays, bank holidays and rural pick-ups. Mobile reception, exact access points and road closures near eroding cliff sections can all complicate last-minute arrangements.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Norfolk Coast Path is unusually easy to break into shorter trips, especially on the northern coast where the Coasthopper bus broadly follows the walking line between Hunstanton, Wells, Cromer and Mundesley. The eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth and Hopton-on-Sea is quieter and less straightforward by public transport, so check current bus times and diversion notices before building a one-way walk there.

Best for	Section	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best day walk	Wells-next-the-Sea to Cley next the Sea	19 km	A strong single-day sample of north Norfolk: Wells, salt marsh, Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and the approach to Cley Marshes. Good for birdwatching and big coastal views without committing to a multi-day itinerary.	This sits on the main north-coast bus corridor, broadly covered by the Coasthopper. Check current timetables before travelling.
Best weekend section	Hunstanton to Wells-next-the-Sea	44 km	A natural two-day introduction from the striped cliffs at Hunstanton through Old Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea, Titchwell, Brancaster, Burnham Deepdale, Burnham Overy Staithe and Holkham. It gives a balanced mix of beaches, dunes, reserves, villages and a proper harbour-town finish.	Hunstanton has no railway; reach it by the 33/34/35/36 Coastliner bus from King's Lynn. Wells is on the north-coast bus corridor.
Best 3–5 day section	Hunstanton to Cromer	84 km	The strongest short version of the whole trail, covering the classic north Norfolk coast in four typical stages: Hunstanton–Brancaster, Brancaster–Wells, Wells–Cley and Cley–Cromer. It includes most of the route's best-known landscapes while ending at a rail-served town.	Start via King's Lynn and the Coastliner bus to Hunstanton. Cromer has rail services on the Bittern Line to Norwich, and the Coasthopper can help shorten or skip stages if needed.
Best section for scenery	Brancaster to Cley next the Sea	42 km	This two-day stretch links Holkham beach and pine woods, Wells-next-the-Sea, the salt-marsh country around Stiffkey and Morston, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea. It is one of the most rewarding parts of the route for wide horizons, wildlife and classic north Norfolk coastal scenery.	Both ends sit within the easier northern public-transport zone. Bus coverage should be checked before booking accommodation.

Best for	Section	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best for beginners	Hunstanton to Brancaster	21 km	A manageable first stage with simple navigation, flat walking and early highlights including Hunstanton's cliffs, Holme Dunes and Titchwell Marsh. It is long enough to feel like a proper point-to-point walk without adding the remoter feel of the eastern coast.	Hunstanton is reached by bus from King's Lynn. Brancaster is on the north-coast bus corridor, making a one-way day possible if timetables work.
Best for public transport	Cley next the Sea to Cromer	21 km	A practical section for walkers who want an easy exit: the route passes through the Sheringham area, crosses Beeston Bump near Beeston Regis, and finishes in Cromer. It combines coast, low cliffs, resort facilities and the trail's 63 m high point.	Cromer and Sheringham have rail access on the Bittern Line to Norwich. The Coasthopper broadly serves this part of the coast, but current times should be checked before travelling.
Best for villages and accommodation	Hunstanton to Wells-next-the-Sea	44 km	This is the most straightforward short section for walkers who want regular settlements, pubs, B&Bs and services. It passes through or near a dense run of north-coast villages and ends in Wells-next-the-Sea, one of the route's main overnight stops.	Good bus flexibility compared with the eastern half. Book ahead in summer and around bank holidays.
Best for camping	Hunstanton to Wells-next-the-Sea	44 km	Camping is most practical where services are denser, and this northern stretch is the sensible place to build a short camping itinerary. Use established campsites, check opening dates, and book ahead in peak season.	Public transport is relatively helpful on this section, but campsite locations and bus times should be checked before travelling.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Norfolk Coast Path is strongest on wildlife, big skies, salt marsh, beaches and traditional seaside towns rather than mountain viewpoints. The best places to build in extra time are Holme/Titchwell for birding, Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea for beach and town time, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea for marshland wildlife, and Sheringham/Cromer if you want an easy overnight with transport and services.

Hunstanton striped cliffs

The classic start is on Hunstanton seafront below the distinctive red-and-white chalk and carrstone cliffs. They are an immediate landmark and unusual in this part of England because the coast here faces west across The Wash, giving a very different feel from the North Sea sections later in the walk.

Allow a little time at the start rather than hurrying straight out of town. The cliffs and seafront are the clearest visual marker that the route has begun, and the path soon leads east through Old Hunstanton towards the lower, dune-backed coast.

Holme Dunes and Titchwell Marsh

The early stretch through Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Titchwell is one of the route's best wildlife sections. Holme Dunes is associated with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, while RSPB Titchwell is one of the best-known birdwatching stops on the north Norfolk coast.

This is a good place to slow the pace if birds are a major reason for walking the trail. Expect dunes, reedbeds and wetland habitat rather than dramatic height gain; binoculars are more useful here than a camera zoomed at distant scenery.

Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and the tidal coast

Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe sit on a low, open coast of creeks, marsh and harbour-side activity. This is typical north Norfolk walking: big skies, long horizons, sea walls and exposed ground where wind and tide shape the day.

Some salt-marsh sections on the route are tidal, so timing matters more here than ascent. Tide times and any local path notices should be checked before travelling, especially if planning a long day through the marshier parts of the coast.

Holkham beach and pine woods

Holkham is one of the signature landscapes of the whole route: a vast sweep of golden sand backed by 19th-century Corsican and Scots pine plantations on the Holkham National Nature Reserve. It is a natural place to pause, especially in good weather, but the scale of the beach can also make it feel slower than it looks on the map.

The combination of beach, dunes, pine woods and open reserve makes this one of the best sections for walkers who want the classic wide, empty north Norfolk feel. In poor weather, the same openness means there is little shelter from wind.

Wells-next-the-Sea

Wells-next-the-Sea is one of the most useful and attractive stops on the route. The harbour, busy quay, long beach road and colourful beach huts make it worth more than a quick resupply stop, and it is a natural overnight point on many itineraries.

For planning purposes, Wells is also a good place to reset: food, accommodation and onward bus options are generally better here than on smaller marsh-side sections. In summer and around bank holidays, accommodation should be booked well ahead.

Stiffkey, Morston, Blakeney and Blakeney Point

The coast between Wells-next-the-Sea and Blakeney is dominated by tidal creeks, salt marsh and low, open walking. Morston and Blakeney are useful places to pause if the day has been shaped by tide, wind or birdwatching stops.

Blakeney National Nature Reserve and Blakeney Point form one of the major natural highlights of the route. The shingle spit, tidal creeks and salt marsh are important wildlife habitat, and Blakeney Point is associated with England's largest grey-seal colony offshore.

Cley next the Sea and Cley Marshes

Cley next the Sea is one of the most recognisable villages on the trail, with its restored brick tower windmill standing above the marshes. It is also a major birding stop thanks to Cley Marshes, a pioneering Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve.

This is a strong candidate for extra time if wildlife is a priority. The surrounding walking is flat and exposed, so a short day into or out of Cley can make sense if the weather is rough or if you want time on the reserve.

Weybourne, Sheringham and Beeston Bump

After Salthouse, Kelling and Weybourne, the trail approaches Sheringham and the most noticeable rise on the whole route. Beeston Bump, also called Beeston Hill, reaches 63 m at Beeston Regis and is the high point of the Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path National Trail.

It is not a large hill, but on such a flat route it feels significant. The summit gives North Sea views and has the concrete remains of a Second World War "Y Station" listening post, making it one of the best short viewpoints and historic features on the trail.

Sheringham and Cromer

Sheringham and Cromer are the main Victorian seaside resort stops on the central part of the route. Both offer promenades, seafront walking and the practical advantages of larger coastal towns; Cromer also has its pier, which still hosts an end-of-pier show.

This is a good section for walkers who want a more serviced overnight, easier public transport or a break from smaller villages. Rail access at Sheringham and Cromer also makes this part of the trail especially useful for section-walking.

Overstrand, Trimingham, Mundesley, Bacton and Walcott

East of Cromer the character changes again, with low cliffs, seafront villages and sections affected by coastal erosion. Overstrand, Trimingham, Mundesley, Bacton and Walcott sit on a more vulnerable edge of the coast, where diversions can alter the walking line.

This part is less about classic resort promenades and more about understanding the living, changing coastline. Live cliff-erosion diversions should be checked before travelling, particularly around Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton and Walcott.

Happisburgh Lighthouse

Happisburgh is one of the most memorable landmarks on the eastern half of the trail. Its red-and-white lighthouse stands above a coast well known for rapid cliff erosion, and the path in this area is periodically diverted inland.

The lighthouse is the key visual highlight, but the practical point is just as important: do not assume an old map line will still match the ground. Check current National Trail and local diversion information before relying on the clifftop route here.

Sea Palling, Horsey and Winterton-on-Sea dunes

The route north and south of Winterton-on-Sea returns to a wilder dune-and-beach feel. Winterton-on-Sea has extensive dunes and a quieter beach landscape, with a grey-seal pupping ground nearby.

This is one of the best eastern sections for walkers who prefer open sand, dunes and wildlife over town stops. As elsewhere on this coast, the openness is part of the appeal but also means wind can make progress feel harder than the flat profile suggests.

Great Yarmouth, Gorleston-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea

The final approach passes through the more developed coast around Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-Sea before finishing at Hopton-on-Sea on the Norfolk–Suffolk border. This section is a contrast to the marshes, reserves and quiet dune systems earlier in the walk.

Great Yarmouth is important practically as well as culturally, with onward rail connections via the town. The finish at Hopton-on-Sea is quieter than the larger resort areas just to the north, so onward bus and train plans should be checked before travelling.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

The Norfolk Coast Path is physically gentle, but the planning traps are real: long exposed stages, variable surfaces, partial bus coverage, busy summer accommodation and live coastal diversions. Treat it as an easy long-distance trail, not as a string of casual beach strolls.

Common mistake	Why it matters here	Better plan
Assuming flat means effortless	The route has very little ascent, but soft sand, shingle, sea walls, boardwalks and wind exposure can make progress slower than the map suggests.	Plan stages by surface and exposure as well as distance. A 20–27 km day on sand or into a headwind can feel much harder than the elevation profile implies.
Booking accommodation too late	Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham and Cromer have good choice, but rooms become busy in summer and around bank holidays. The quieter eastern half towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea has thinner options.	Book early for summer trips, especially if following a fixed 6-day itinerary. If accommodation is tight, use the coast bus or rail links where available to sleep off-route.
Relying on the Coasthopper for the whole trail	The coast bus is very useful on the northern coast, broadly around Hunstanton/Wells–Cromer–Mundesley, but it does not cover the full route to Hopton-on-Sea.	Check current bus routes and timetables before building a section-walking plan. For the finish, plan onward travel via local bus to Great Yarmouth station rather than assuming a continuous coast bus. This should be checked before travelling.
Forgetting there is no railway at Hunstanton	The classic start is reached by bus, not train.	Travel by train to King's Lynn, then use the 33/34/35/36 Coastliner bus to Hunstanton. Check the current timetable before booking fixed onward accommodation.
Underestimating the finish logistics at Hopton-on-Sea	Hopton-on-Sea is not as transport-simple as Cromer or Sheringham.	Plan the final day with enough time to connect by Coastal Clipper/local bus to Great Yarmouth station, then by train towards Norwich. This should be checked before travelling.
Using old GPX files without checking diversions	Low, soft cliffs between Cromer and Happisburgh are vulnerable to erosion, and diversions can affect places such as Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton/Walcott and Happisburgh.	Check the official National Trail diversion notices shortly before departure and again during the walk. Follow current waymarks and local diversion signs over an old line on a GPS device.
Ignoring tide-sensitive marsh sections	Parts of the route use salt-marsh and tidal mudflat margins, particularly along the north Norfolk coast.	Check tide times before committing to marsh-side sections and take signed alternatives or official diversions where required. Do not assume every apparent line across marsh is usable at all states of tide.

Common mistake	Why it matters here	Better plan
Planning too many long days because the route is easy	A 6-day itinerary is realistic for fit walkers, but it produces several long stages, including the Cromer to Winterton-on-Sea section at about 27 km.	First-time long-distance walkers are usually better served by a 7- or 8-day plan. Use shorter days where accommodation and transport make that practical, especially if carrying full kit.
Assuming every village will solve food and water needs	The route passes many villages, but services are not evenly spaced and may be seasonal or closed on certain days. Smaller places should not be treated as guaranteed resupply points.	Carry enough water and food between larger stops, and check opening times for pubs, cafés and shops before relying on them. Build more certain resupply around larger settlements such as Hunstanton, Wells-next-the-Sea, Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth.
Starting exposed sections in poor weather without a backup	Much of the coast is open to wind from The Wash and the North Sea, with limited shelter on beaches, sea walls, dunes and marshes.	Check the forecast daily, especially wind strength and direction. In bad weather, shorten the day, use transport to reposition where available, or keep to official inland diversions where signed.
Relying only on acorn waymarks	The Norfolk Coast Path is well waymarked, but beach sections, promenades, erosion diversions and resort edges can still be confusing.	Carry an up-to-date map or offline route file, plus enough phone battery. OS Explorer 250, 251 and 252 cover the main coastal route, with OS Explorer 236 useful for the eastern end.
Confusing the classic route with the newer official extent	The classic, most-walked Norfolk Coast Path runs 133.5 km / 83 miles from Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea. Some official material now describes a longer Norfolk Coast Path including the westward extension to Sutton Bridge.	When booking, downloading GPX files or comparing guidebooks, check that the route version matches the Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea itinerary. This avoids accidentally planning for the longer Sutton Bridge to Hopton-on-Sea line.

Practical fixes that make the walk easier

- **Keep the itinerary flexible where transport allows.** The northern coast has particularly useful public transport for shortening or splitting days, but coverage becomes less comprehensive further east.
- **Book the awkward nights first.** Accommodation on the quieter eastern half can dictate the whole schedule more than the walking difficulty does.
- **Check three things the week before departure:** current National Trail diversions, bus/train times and tide times for marsh-influenced sections.
- **Carry windproof layers even in good seasons.** Spring and autumn are excellent for birdlife and quieter paths, but the coast can feel cold and exposed in a strong onshore wind.
- **Do not let the low ascent figure lower standards.** Comfortable footwear, blister care, offline navigation and a sensible food-and-water plan still matter on an 83-mile point-to-point trail.

Final Advice

The Norfolk Coast Path is best for walkers who want a long-distance route that is straightforward underfoot but still feels like a proper journey. It suits first-time thru-hikers, families, birdwatchers and experienced walkers looking for big skies, coastal wildlife and flexible daily distances rather than steep climbs or technical terrain.

The main planning task is not navigation; the National Trail is waymarked and the line is generally clear. Instead, plan around accommodation availability, exposed weather, tide-affected marsh sections and live diversion notices on the eroding low-cliff coast, especially around Happisburgh, Overstrand, Trimingham, Bacton and Walcott. This should be checked before travelling.

The most rewarding stretch for many walkers is the north Norfolk coast between Holme, Titchwell, Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea, Blakeney and Cley next the Sea, where dunes, salt marsh, wide beaches, reserves and harbour villages come in quick succession. The eastern extension towards Winterton-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea is quieter and more exposed, with a more open, end-of-coast feel.

As a full thru-hike, the route works well over 6–8 days because the terrain is gentle and the stages can be made quite long. As a section walk, it is one of the easiest National Trails to break up, particularly on the northern coast where the Coasthopper bus broadly parallels the route between Hunstanton/Wells, Cromer and Mundesley. Transport becomes less simple beyond that, so check current bus links before committing to a one-way day stage.

Do not underestimate the route just because it is flat. Soft sand, shingle, long sea walls, wind, rain and limited shelter can make easy mileage feel slow, especially late in the day. Start with realistic stage lengths, carry enough food and water between villages, book summer accommodation early, and check tide, transport and diversion information before setting out.