

## The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain's finest landscapes. It extends from the Stour Estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Ipswich and, in the north, to Kessingland. It covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife-rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

### Visiting Thorpeness

Ordnance Survey Map No. 212 (Woodbridge and Saxmundham)

The village of Thorpeness is approximately 2 miles (3.2 km) north of Aldeburgh.

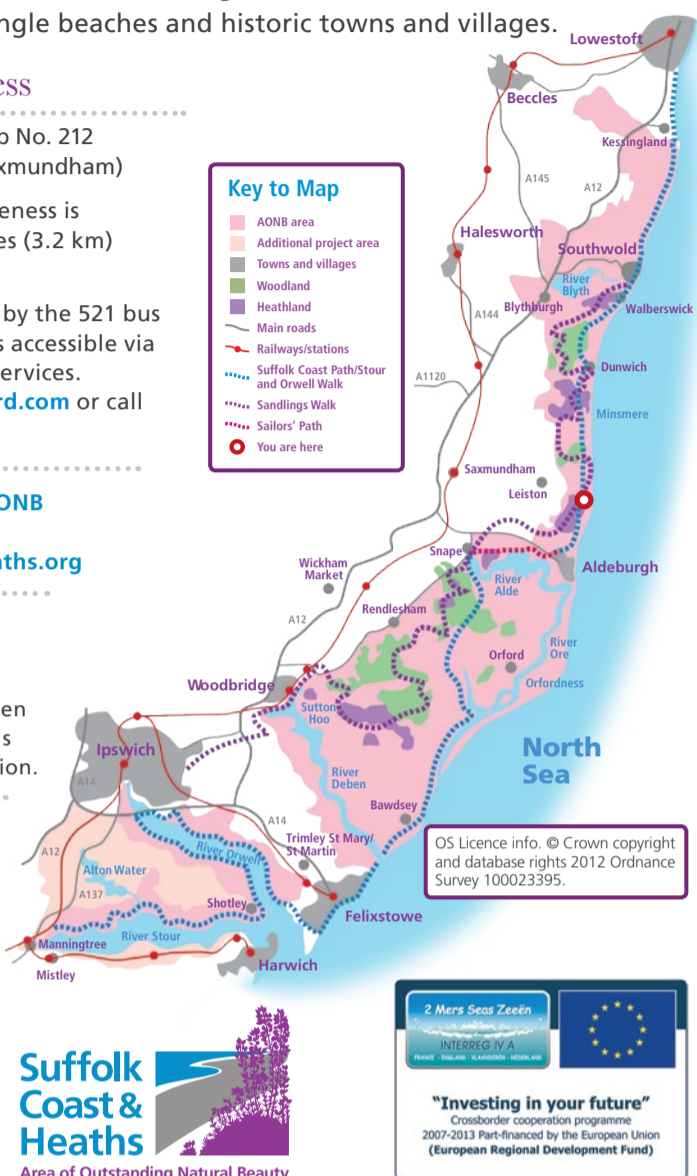
The village is served by the 521 bus service. Aldeburgh is accessible via the 64/165/521 bus services. [www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com) or call 0845 606 6171

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB  
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### TA | HOTEL COLLECTION

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# Thorpeness Explorer Guide



Discover two wonderful walks in the heart of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)



# Thorpeness

Suffolk Coast & Heaths *Explorer Guide*

## Highlights of Thorpeness

- The low-lying countryside** around the village is a mixture of marsh, heath, wood and shingle beach, very typical of this nationally important landscape.
- Thorpeness** was little more than a fishing hamlet until the late 19th Century. In 1910, Glencairn Stuart Ogilvie, a Scottish barrister, bought land between Aldeburgh, Minsmere, Aldringham and Leiston. Ogilvie developed Thorpeness into a private fantasy holiday village, one of the first purpose built holiday developments in the world.



He built mock Tudor and Jacobean houses and a water tower disguised as a house, the House in the Clouds. A windmill was moved from Aldringham to pump water to the House in the Clouds. Thorpeness Meare, inspired by J M Barrie's *Peter Pan* story, was also created. Most of Thorpeness was sold in the 1970s but the character of the original holiday village is retained.



- A railway** once served Thorpeness, a short branch of the East Suffolk Line that ran to Aldeburgh. The line opened in 1859 and a station for Thorpeness was added in 1914. The line closed to passengers in 1966. Today it serves Sizewell Nuclear Power Station. Part of our route follows the course of the former railway. Much of the land between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness is part of the North Warren and the Haven Nature Reserves, owned and managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).
- The grazing marshes** south of Thorpeness are a wonderful example of a managed landscape that is now increasingly rare. Farming livestock on wet grassland has long been an important feature of the coast and river valleys in Suffolk, but many such areas have been converted to crops. Where traditional management continues, grazing marshes are an important feature of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.
- Away from the coast**, where the land gradually rises, it becomes much drier. This is the edge of the Sandlings, a strip of light, sandy, acidic soil lying between Ipswich and Southwold. The Sandlings was traditionally grazed with sheep, forming the patchwork of grassland and heath characteristic of the AONB. The 'sheep walks' north of Thorpeness provide a glimpse of a landscape that existed for hundreds of years.



Images: Front cover – Thorpeness Meare. A. Bittern – One of North Warren's wildlife 'stars'. B. Sea Pea – Rare shingle plants grow on the beach south of Thorpeness. C. Hairy Dragonfly – Breeds in early summer in the grazing marsh dykes. D. The House in the Clouds – a vertical fantasy.

*Places to eat and drink* can be found near the start and finish of these walks. The Dolphin Inn and Meare Tearoom in Thorpeness are close by. A little way into your walk, Thorpeness Hotel and Golf Club welcomes hungry and thirsty walkers.

# Thorpeness

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*Thorpeness Explorer includes two easy circular walks. 'The Cutting and the Coast' route takes in a former railway line, grazing marshes and open coast. The 'Sheep Walks and Shingle' route visits Aldringham Walks, part of the historic Sandlings heaths, before returning along the Suffolk Coast Path.*

*Dogs are welcome, please keep them under control and on lead as advised*

## 'Sheep Walks and Shingle' Distance 4.2 miles (6.8 km)

**Time:** 2 hours 30 mins

**Terrain:** Easy – Ground under foot mainly flat on rural footpaths, bridleways and permissive paths. Some parts may be muddy. There is some walking on shingle beaches. Beach may be impassable at high tide, please check tide times. Part of route on public road. Please be aware of traffic. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Start at the Beach car park in Thorpeness. Leave the car park heading inland, turn right and walk past the Meare. After 50m, turn left and follow the unmade road (footpath) past the windmill and House in the Clouds. At Thorpeness Hotel and Golf Club, continue straight on, keeping the club buildings and Meare on your left until you reach a junction where our path meets the old railway line. Pause for a moment to enjoy the excellent view across North Warren's fen.

Turn right and follow the footpath until you reach the B1353 road. Cross the road and follow the bridleway to the right of the house. The bridleway takes a sharp right turn after a short distance and continues across Aldringham Walks.\*

\*Branch beyond sharp right turn for the Optional shorter route.

### Optional shorter route

*(saves you 1 hour plus)*

Turn right onto the footpath, then right again to follow the byway across Thorpeness Common to the village. Continue through the village back to the car park.



Remain on the bridleway for approximately 1/4 miles until you reach a minor road. Turn right onto a footpath that leads past the Dower House and continue to the beach.

Turn right and follow the Suffolk Coast Path along the beach back to Thorpeness. Due to erosion the beach is constantly changing and the route may be impassable at high tide, particularly during spring and autumn.

## 'The Cutting and the Coast' Distance 3.1 miles (5 km)

**Time:** 2 hours

**Terrain:** Easy – Ground under foot mainly flat on rural footpaths, bridleways and permissive paths. Some parts may be muddy. There is some walking on shingle beaches. Beach may be impassable at high tide. Please check tide times. Part of route on public road. Please be aware of traffic. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Start at the Beach car park in Thorpeness. Leave the car park heading inland, turn right and walk past the Meare. After 50m, turn left and follow the unmade road (footpath) past the windmill and House in the Clouds. At Thorpeness Hotel and Golf Club, continue straight on, keeping the club buildings and Meare on your left until you reach a junction where our path meets the old railway line. Pause for a moment to enjoy the view across North Warren's fen.

Turn left and follow the route of the old railway line. Continue for approximately 1 mile until you reach an obvious path crossing your route. Turn left and follow this footpath through the grazing marshes until you reach the coast road. Cross the road and turn left, walking along the beach back towards Thorpeness, keeping the houses on your left.



**Images:** A. White-fronted Geese - can be seen on the grazing marshes during winter; © Winfried Wisniewski/FLPA. B. Thorpeness Mill - a post mill with a 'fantail'. C. Thorpeness Meare - boats for hire. D. Little Terns - sometimes nest on the beach in spring, but are vulnerable to disturbance. Please respect any fenced areas protecting the birds.

