

## 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 then north to Kessingland. The AONB covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

### Visiting Sutton Heath

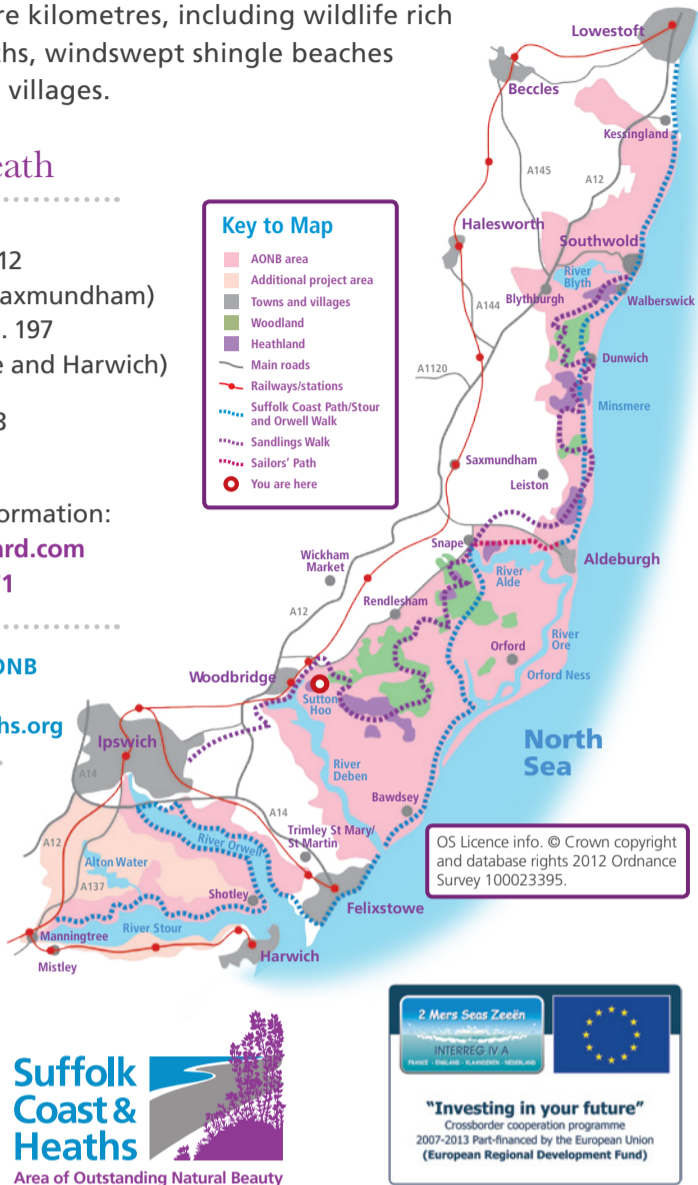
Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 212 (Woodbridge and Saxmundham) or Explorer Map No. 197 (Ipswich, Felixstowe and Harwich)

Access via the B1083 from the A12.

Public transport information: [www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com) or call 0845 606 6171

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB  
01394 384948  
[www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org)

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a partner of the BALANCE project, part-financed by the European Union through the Interreg IV A 2 Seas Cross-border Programme.



Research, text and some images by Simon Peachey. Printed on Recycled, FSC, ECF, Carbon Balanced paper.

# Sutton Heath *Explorer Guide*



Enjoy two beautiful walks exploring heathland in the Parish of Sutton.



# Sutton Heath

Suffolk Coast & Heaths *Explorer Guide*

## Highlights of Sutton Heath

**1 Sutton Heath** is a special place for many people and the miles of paths are very popular. Lowland heath is rare in Britain and provides a home for numerous animals, insects and plants. Birds such as stonechat, nightjar and woodlark can be seen, depending on the time of year. Reptiles such as common lizards enjoy the dry, sandy soil. If you visit in the evening, you may see bats above the clearings and deer slipping through the woodland. Ponies and sheep are used to graze the Heath to keep the vegetation under control. The Heath is managed by Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.



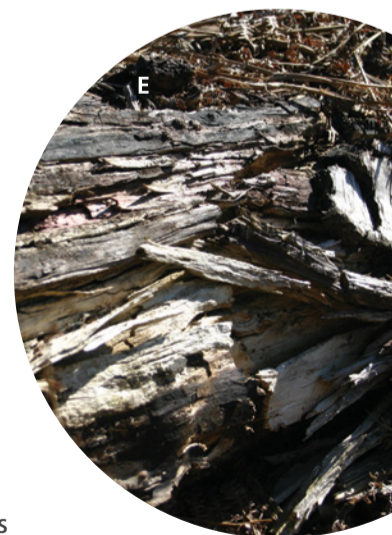
**2 The heathland** was first created when Stone Age people cleared the wildwood to graze animals. Since then, people have had a huge influence on the landscape. There is evidence of a medieval rabbit warren and a shepherd's garden. During World War II, anti-glider trenches were dug to prevent enemy gliders landing on the Heath.

A few miles north west is the famous Anglo Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo. Sutton Hoo is managed by the National Trust and is accessed from the road to Woodbridge.



**3 Scots Pines** are a feature of the Heath and are native to Britain. These trees have orange flaky bark and produce lots of small cones. They provide a home for many insects and birds. Even the wood from dead trees is important as it provides a home for insects and fungi.

**4 MoD Woodbridge** is the large military base to the north of the Heath. It started life during World War II as an emergency landing strip for damaged aircraft. During the Cold War it was used by the United States Air Force, along with nearby Bentwaters, as a base for fighter aircraft. Today it is home to 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) of the British Army.



**5 Modern agriculture** has had a great impact on the Sandlings landscape. The heathland soil is not very fertile, but the use of fertilisers and irrigation has allowed farmers to grow a variety of crops. Almost 80% of Sandlings heathland has been ploughed for agriculture. The soil is ideal for growing good quality root vegetables. The remaining heathland is now protected.

Images: Front cover – Many paths lead across the Heath. A. Sutton Heath – a mixture of heath and woodland. B. Exmoor Ponies – used to control the vegetation. C. Heathland – first created many centuries ago. D. Scots Pine trees – a distinctive feature of the Heath. E. Dead wood – a great habitat for insects and fungi.







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

## ‘Heath and Forest Hike’

Distance  
4 miles (6.4 km)

**Time:** 2 hours

**Terrain:** Paths and tracks can be muddy after rain. Because of grazing animals and ground nesting birds, please keep dogs on leads. The route follows Public Rights of Way and permissive routes.



Start from the Sutton Heath Southern Car Park off the B1083 road. Follow track that leads away opposite car park entrance, beside information boards. Keep straight until cross paths, then turn right. Follow track straight over another cross paths and through woodland. Continue past field on left until you reach major cross tracks, with sewage works opposite.



Turn left and follow wide track. When you reach kissing gate on right, turn right and enter heath. Follow path across heath, keeping straight at cross tracks. When you reach open grassy area, take path left towards distant cottage. At cottage, go through gate and take track sharp right. Follow track until you come to wooden gate on right.

Go through gate on to heath and follow path parallel with fence on left. At cross paths, bear left, keeping roughly parallel with fence. When you reach fence on far side of heath, turn right and follow path along edge of heath.



When you reach corner of heath beside sewage works, go through gate to cross tracks and continue straight on path opposite, keeping field to right. When you reach kissing gate on left, turn left and follow path beside fence. As woodland on left thins, turn right and follow path across heath back to car park.



## ‘Sutton Heath Stroll’

Distance  
2 miles (3.25 km)

**Time:** 1 hour

**Terrain:** Paths and tracks can be muddy after rain. Because of grazing animals and ground nesting birds, please keep dogs on leads. The route follows Public Rights of Way and permissive routes.



Start from the Sutton Heath Southern Car Park off the B1083 road. Follow track that leads away opposite car park entrance, beside information boards. Keep straight until cross paths, then turn right. After short distance, turn left at cross paths.

Follow path, ignoring wide track that leaves on right. When path splits, take middle path to reach second car park. From car park, turn right before information board and follow path through forest.

When you reach open forest track, turn right. At T junction, turn left along path followed earlier. When cross paths reached, turn left. Follow path through woodland until kissing gate on right. Go through gate and follow winding path across heath until path junction. Turn right and follow path back to car park.



**Images:** A. Birch woodland – beautiful shady walks. B. Sutton Heath – many paths cross the Heath. C. Sheep – graze the Heath to keep the vegetation in check. D. Gorse bushes – the coconut scented flowers provide food for insects - Gary K Smith/FLPA. E. Pine cones – crunch underfoot as you walk. F. The Heath under snow – Sutton Heath is a great place to visit all year round.

