

BRADWELL COCKLE SPIT

Come for a day at the coast. Our remotest wildside walk will offer you the chance to take in the sea air with hardly a deckchair in sight! This part of the Dengie evokes a feeling of space and peace, especially around St Peter's Chapel. Don't forget your binoculars.



Distance and time taken

6 miles (10 km) – 3 hours
Suggested direction – anti clockwise from Eastlands.

Going

Easy along the sea wall, with some road walking.

Transport

For details of public transport for this walk contact the Travel Line on 0871 200 2233.

Habitat types

Salt marsh, scrub, hedgerows, mudflats, dykes and sea walls.

Ordnance Survey Map

Explorer Map 176.

Parking

Small car park just past Eastlands Farm.

Refreshments

Three pubs on route
Two village shops.

Dogs

Under close control.

More about Bradwell Cockle Spit

The nature reserve includes 30 acres of shell bank and extensive mudflats (saltings). It was established to help shore nesting birds, especially the little tern. A rare British breeding sea bird, the little tern suffers from 'people pressure' on shingle beaches where they nest.

The Essex coast is internationally important for wildlife, combining habitats which, in particular, provide breeding and feeding grounds for many species of birds. Over 15,000 geese, ducks and waders take a winter break in the county, including a quarter of the world's Brent goose population. Not welcomed by Essex farmers whose crops suffer goose damage each winter, they arrive in October after a summer breeding in Siberia.

Special winter visitors to the Dengie coast are knot, sanderling and grey plover. These waders have long beaks to feed on the many creatures living in the slimy mud.



4. Bradwell War Memorial

During World War 2 Bradwell was home to an active airfield. Now all that remains is the control tower, some runway and a memorial to pilots who never returned.

Blackwater Estuary

Look out for the traditional sails of restored Thames barges among the modern sailing boats.

5. The Marina

The growth in demand for marinas presents one of the most serious threats to coastal marshes, especially on our estuaries.

6. Bradwell-on-Sea

The village of Bradwell-on-Sea boasts some fine buildings, including the 14th century parish church of St Thomas (inside is a model of St Peter's Chapel as it originally looked). By the south gate are stone mounting blocks and in the south east corner, the 'cage' and whipping post, formerly used to hold local drunks. The King's Head has many old pictures of village life inside and unusual Dengie wildlife in the garden.

1. St Peter's on the Wall & Othona

St Peter's on the Wall is probably the oldest surviving church in England. It is also the sole monument to Celtic Christianity in Essex (the former kingdom of the East Saxons). The chapel was built by Bishop Cedd around 654AD, almost entirely of Roman material from the fort of Othona (a small display inside explains its history).

Othona was one of the nine Roman forts built along the south east coast to repel Saxon invaders. The fort has long since been eroded by the sea and buried inland.

2. Linnet's Cottage

Linnet's Cottage was once home to Walter Linnet, a professional wildfowler, but nowadays you'll need a licence to hunt the ducks and geese. Next door is the more modern bird observatory.

3. Salt marshes

Salt marshes provide a habitat for a number of salt tolerant plants. Shrubby sea blight is widespread and an important stabiliser of shingle banks. Other plants of interest include sea holly, reputed to be an aphrodisiac for older men, when dipped in sugar. Please don't try this at home! Sea lavender colours large areas purple in July and August.

