

CUT OUT  
& KEEP

Photo: Ian Lancaster

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is one of England's most important wildlife sites

# Strolling through history

A ramble around Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, one of England's most important wildlife sites, takes you past bird hides and a 16th century castle

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Established in 1970, but under the management of Sussex Wildlife Trust

since 2011, Rye Harbour's nature reserve is set in more than 1,000 acres of coastal wetland landscape.

It is home to more than 4,000 species of plants and animals, many of them rare or endangered.

The flat marsh land that is the subject of this walk would have been under the sea before the 13th century.

The second half of the walk passes close to Camber Castle. It was built in the 16th century as part of King Henry VIII's plan to create a series of defensive artillery forts along the southeast coast. However, only 80 years later the sea had receded so far that the harbour was out



Illustration: Graham Jeffrey

of range of cannons and the castle became useless but was never demolished.

There are several bird hides along the first half of the walk. These are open to the public and well worth visiting for a spot of birdwatching if time permits.

Refreshments are available at the Discovery Centre (10am-4pm) and at pubs and cafés in the village afterwards.

## Brought to you by Friends of The South Downs

Membership starts from £2.50 per month and grants access to a comprehensive programme of guided walks and strolls. Non-members can take part in taster sessions.  
01798 875073  
(Monday to Wednesday 9am to 1pm).

[friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk](http://friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk)





COMPASS POINTS

**Location:** Rye Harbour, East Sussex.

**Distance:** Five and a half miles (9km).

**Terrain:** Level ground. Partly muddy in winter.

**Ascent:** 61ft.

**Where to park:** Rye Harbour car park (free).

**Grid reference:** TQ 942189.

**Sat nav:** TN31 7TY.

**What3Words:** smuggled. summaries.business

**Map:** OS Explorer 125, Rye & Winchelsea.

**Dog-friendly:** Permitted if under control.

**Refreshments:** Discovery Centre or tea room and pub in Rye Harbour village. Toilet facilities outside the car park.

THE WALK

**1** Exit by the car park entrance and turn half right into the nature reserve on an asphalt track that runs parallel to the River Rother. Just past the Rye Harbour Discovery Centre is the first of several bird hides that look out over pools and marshes that make up the reserve. On the left is Norton's Hut with its striking red roof and views of Camber Sands beyond. After another 270m turn right onto the path that runs behind the shingle beach.

**2** Stay on this path for 2.5km as it passes Ternery Pool on the right (a short detour to its Crittall hide is worthwhile) and the derelict Mary Stanford Lifeboat House on the left. On a clear day there are views along the coast east to Dungeness and west to Fairlight.

**3** At an information board marked Shingle Habitat No 6, take the footpath heading inland. Continue ahead as the path rises along a ridge, eventually

reaching a crossing track. Turn right for just a few metres then left again to a path with a large lake on the right. The path dips to cross a dyke and then rises to reach Morlais Ridge.

**4** Turn right through a gate with a sign marking the path to Camber Cottage. It passes through their backyard and several gates to emerge into a field. Camber Castle can be seen ahead. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field and cross the stile in the corner. Immediately turn left towards Castle Farm with a fence on your left. As you approach the trees ignore the gate to the farm and instead double back on another path that heads off in the general direction of the castle. As you near the castle, go through a gate and ahead the path divides.

**5** Take the right-hand fork onto a clear but unmarked path to pass just to the left of the castle. Then keep ahead (due north) aiming for a willow tree with a gate beside it. On the far side, fork right again to walk

round the lakes that form part of Castle Water Nature Reserve. You may wish to stop and watch the activity on the lakes from benches near the water's edge. At another gate, take an enclosed path on the left next to reed beds. It soon turns sharp left and heads towards the back of an industrial estate.

**6** Turn right at a T-junction to walk behind the industrial units, taking care along this section as rabbits have burrowed into the sand. In 600m go left at a fork. When the path emerges onto Rye Harbour Road, turn right along the shared footpath/cycle track through Rye Harbour village to the car park. ♦

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