

FARM STAY EAST ANGLIA

A DAY OUT IN THE WAVENEY VALLEY AROUND BUNGAY

Bungay, a little town on the Norfolk/Suffolk border is the start of the tour. Famous for the “Black dog” legend, this historic market town (market day Thursday) has many specialist shops including antiques, gifts curios, second-hand books and a pawnbrokers. There is also the famous Nursey's factory sheepskin shop. The Bungay town trail can be picked up from the Tourist Information Centre opposite Barclays Bank and perused over an excellent coffee and homemade cakes in Earsham Street tearooms, or for something stronger the Green Dragon, a Pub that brews its own ale on Broad Street. Not to be missed is the 12th Century ruined castle built by the notorious Hugh Bigod and the visitor's centre nearby.

From Bungay there is a choice of circular routes either to the South or East.

Eastern Route

Leave Bungay's central roundabout via picturesque Bridge Street, then turn right onto the A143 at the famous chicken roundabout (the only roundabout in Britain of 2 A roads with an indigenous wild chicken population much loved by the locals, - take care not to run them over! Carry on the A143 to Ellingham where you turn left (signed Kirby Cane church). Follow the road for about 3 miles, just before reaching the A146 turn left at a sharp right hand bend following signs to “Hales Hall”. Here you will find a specialist conservatory and tender plant nursery and the national citrus collection, all set in the grounds of a ruined hall next to a magnificent large brick built medieval barn.

Retrace your steps to the last junction and then turn left to join the A146. A detour via Raveningham gardens is shown on the map. (Lovely gardens open most Sundays and some other days, check local guides). The Raveningham Centre just down the road has lots of things of interest on the arts and crafts side. There is a gallery, an oriental rug centre, craft workshops and a tearoom.

Return to the A146 and follow signs into Beccles. Turn right into Beccles by Safeway's and then first right again following signs to Beccles Quay, where the T.I.C. is situated. From here you can walk along the river, hire a boat or drive or walk into the town, where you will find some interesting shops, churches and an excellent lunch stop at “Swan House”. Or stop for teas at “Twyfords” tearooms. Beccles also offers a printing museum, an interesting parish church and lovely streets including “Puddingmoor” and “Northgate”.

Leave Beccles on the B1062 (Signed Bungay) with lovely views over the Waveney Valley. In the hamlet of Shipmeadow you will see the old workhouse on your left, now converted to residential use. Returning to Bungay you can continue along the B1062 to Flixton and call in at the aviation Museum, This is privately run but very interesting with planes and memorabilia from world war 2 (This area is covered in the

remains of airfields from that time.) The museum is open most days. From here you cross the Waveney River at Homersfield, turn right onto the A143 towards Bungay.

The Bell at Wortwell serves homemade food (no food Mondays). Earsham Hall has excellent furniture, with showrooms and a tearoom. There is also a Farmers Market twice a month. You may wish to call in on the famous Earsham Otter Trust, which has the world's largest collection of otters with riverside walks, playground and tearooms. (Open daily from April to October). Return through Earsham village to Bungay.

Southern Route

Take the right turn in Bungay “Upper Olland Street”, at the junction with B1062 go straight over “St. Margaret's Hill”. Turn right at the t-junction, after about 1 mile you will reach St. Peters Hall. This contains the remains of an ancient monastery and is now a successful brewery and restaurant with a visitors centre and a shop. There are guided tours (Phone 01986 782322 for opening times). Turn left out of the brewery and continue on this road until you meet the A144, turn right towards Halesworth. On the first roundabout in Halesworth is The Triple Plea Pub with excellent food.

The old Roman road (Stone Street) takes you to Halesworth (Market day Wednesday) a pleasant pedestrianised main street has a good selection of antique and specialist shops, including “Focus” organic food shop. The gallery and tearooms are worth a visit and good refreshments can be found at Warner's wine bar or the Angel pub. The town trail leaflet can be found in the Tourist Information Centre or the library. If you wish to visit an excellent nursery specialising in herbaceous plants then visit Wooten's of Wenhaston about 3 miles (See map).

Leaving Halesworth on the Bungay road take the first left (Signed Wissett). Take some time out to visit Valley Farm Vineyard, where you can enjoy the vineyard tour and a spot of wine tasting! Follow this road through Rumburgh (good pub, and an interesting church), continue to St. Margaret's and turn left at the signpost to South Elmham Hall. Here you will find an historic barn converted to a visitor centre and a café (open Thurs, Fri Sun and Bank hols.).

From the café you can wander round the unique farm trails of varying lengths through ancient woodland and water meadows, past the old Minster (11th Century), you may see the rare British White cattle grazing. The house, which is the remains of the bishops palace is open for guided tours Thurs. and some Sundays (Phone 01986 782256 for availability).

Turn Left out of the farm gate and follow the signs to Homersfield where you will join the B1062. Either turn right to go past the air museum or turn left and then right onto the A143 to go past the Otter Trust (as mentioned on the eastern route) on your way back to Bungay.