

HIGHAM MARSHES CIRCULAR

ESCAPE TO NATURE

8 MILES (12.8KM)



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Begin your journey in the heart of this historic maritime town and unveil its importance in history. Leave bustling Gravesend town behind and enjoy this tranquil stretch of the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIECP) with wildlife filled marshes on one side and the River Thames to the other.

OVERVIEW

LOCATION: Start at Gravesend Town Pier, Gravesend DA11 0BJ

DISTANCE: 8 miles (12.8km)

TIME: Allow 4 hours

EXPLORER MAP: 163

ACCESSIBILITY: Uneven terrain, gates, sets of steps and stiles.

PARKING: Pay and display in Gravesend.

REFRESHMENTS AND FACILITIES: Choice of eateries in town and on promenade.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Gravesend train station is 0.3 miles from start point. Check kentconnected.org for times and services. Fastrack buses also run to the centre of Gravesend. The National Cycle Route 1 can be joined along this route.

WALK DESCRIPTION

Your walk begins at **Gravesend Town Pier 1**, located on West Street. This was once the lively main port of embarkation for the passenger steamer to and from London. Continue eastwards, past the Three Daws pub and into Elizabeth Gardens. Follow the slope down into Royal Pier Road, passing St Andrew's Church, The Royal Clarendon Hotel and **The Blockhouse 2**, foundations of an artillery fortification constructed as part of Henry VIII's Device plan of 1539, in response to fears of an invasion of England by European countries. It was built here, at a strategic point along the River Thames.

Follow the road as it curves right, you should see the clocktower in the distance ahead of you. At the first crossroads turn left and bear left again following the path past **Milton Chantry 3**, the oldest building in Gravesend and all that remains of a leper hospital built in 1322.





Views across the Thames to Tilbury from the KCIIECP.

Pass the Gravesend Rowing Club leading onto **The Promenade 4.**

Stroll along the promenade, admire the views across the Thames and over to Tilbury. Stop for a refreshment at the café before continuing eastwards to leave the promenade and pass the Gravesend Sailing Club. Cross the little bridge into an industrial estate, from here follow the blue signs for the National Cycle Network Route 1.

This footpath leads onto Wharf Road. Continue to follow the National Cycle Network Route 1 onto Thames and Medway Canal Road. After 0.5 miles, as you pass the Metropolitan Police Station, the road turns into a restricted pathway, continue on this path. Take the first left and head towards the river to join the KCIIECP.

Turn right and follow the well-trodden path alongside the River Thames. Keeping the water





This route gives easy access to the National Cycle Route.

on your left and the marshes on your right. You will pass by **Shorne Marshes 5** first, an old firing range featuring 700 ponds formed as the result of bomb craters. Spot breeding Lapwings and Redshanks here. Look out for horses grazing along this route, they are used to sharing this path. Please do not feed or touch the horses.

Shortly on your right you will pass by Shornemead Fort, now a disused artillery fort built in the 1860s to guard the entrance to the Thames, continue straight ahead.

After approx. 1 mile, look out for a metal gate and stile to your right, leading into a field and following a well-trodden path. Climb over this stile. To your left is now **Higham Marshes 6**, an area of mudflats and saltmarshes, home to wading birds at low tide. During the winter look out for flocks of Dunlins and Knots. Continue to walk ahead, next to the small creek, until you reach the end of the path where it curves to the right.

There is a locked gate ahead, walk over the little bridge to the left of the gate. Follow the yellow public rights of way signage.

As you reach the end of the field do not cross the train tracks, instead turn right before the stile, and follow the yellow public rights of way arrows, keeping the train tracks on your left. There is a set of approx. 5 steps halfway along this path.



IMAGE COURTESY OF PIXABAY

Wading Redshank.

The path exits onto a paved road, next to an industrial site, at the end of this road turn right onto Canal Road and follow this road until you pass a white bungalow on your right. Continue ahead and follow the National Cycle Network Route 1 signs again as they lead you onto a restricted pathway.

Follow this path for 2 miles with the Thames and Medway Canal on your left. There are many places to stop for a rest and take in the scenery. Retrace your earlier steps back through the industrial estate, across the promenade and back to the pier.

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<https://explorekent.org/activities>

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Photography: John Miller

