

# ISLE OF HARTY CIRCULAR WALK

9MILES (15KM)



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Enjoy a peaceful coastal walk along the promenade and shingle shore to the quiet hamlet of Shellness. The route continues through the Harty Marshes bird sanctuary, where a hide offers views across three waterways.

**LOCATION:** Start at Wing Road past Leysdown Coastal Country Park, ME12 4QX

**WHAT3WORDS:**

/// Vibe/louder/avoiding

**DISTANCE:** 9 miles, 15km

**TIME:** Allow 4 ½ to 5 hours with breaks

**EXPLORER MAP:** 149

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Not suitable for bikes, wheelchairs, or pushchairs

**PARKING:** Available at Wing Road and Neptunes Café

**FACILITIES:** Toilets and refreshments at start/ finish; pub mid-route

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** Arriva Bus 360:

This is the main bus route serving Leysdown-on- Sea, connecting it to Sheerness and Minster. It stops in the village, which is a short walk from the park

ideal for spotting wading birds and enjoying wide views across The Swale. Historically, it had a reputation for smuggling, with pirate (skull and crossbones) flags once flying from houses.

Turn right (southwest) through Gate 2 (TR 051 682) into the RSPB nature reserve **3**, which consists of saltmarshes to the south and grazing pastures for cattle and sheep to the north of the grass footpath.

Continue walking until you reach a well-maintained bird hide **4** (TR 038 671), which is open to the public. The hide's windows offer views of three waterways and The Swale. They can be opened for binoculars and cameras—this is one of the best places in Britain to see birds of prey (raptors). Swans with their young can be seen in June, along with ducks and a variety of geese.



Start your walk near Leysdown Country and Coastal Park **1**. Park considerably in Wing Road (Postcode: ME12 4QX). This is a residential area with parking available year-round. Alternatively, there is a larger public car park next to Neptune's Café (TR 044 697) (Postcode: ME12 4RH), but this is only open during the summer months and some areas may be muddy.

Walk southeast through Gate 1 (TR 037 701) via a recreation area. At the end of the path, carefully cross the road and go up the steps onto the coastal promenade, passing the Neptune's Café car park on your right. Continue southeast along the promenade and shingle footpaths along Shellbeach **2** to the hamlet of Shellness. This area is

Follow the footpath to Gate 3 (TR 031 662), which offers good views of marshes, pastures, saltmarshes, and an artesian well used for irrigation. Cattle and sheep help manage the grassland north of the waterways. A short walk over more uneven ground leads to Gate 4 (TR 029 661). An information board here provides detailed insights into the surrounding landscape.







Turn left onto the Isle of Harty Trail, which leads to the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle **5**—the most remote church in Kent. Historically, the vicar had to take a ferry from the mainland to conduct services. The church is well worth a visit, offering spectacular views of the Swale Estuary at the back, interesting stained glass windows, and local honey for sale near the entrance. Circular benches at the front provide a spot for packed lunches.

After visiting St. Thomas's Church, turn left out of the church and follow the track to Sayes Court (TR 021 663), now a ruin.

The walk continues southwest along a footpath to the Ferry Inn **6** (TR 015 659), which now hosts wedding receptions and has two bridal suites. A fingerpost marks the path across two fields. You can purchase food and drink here, and there's a sculpture of two hares boxing—symbolizing the doe rejecting the buck's advances.

Head north to Mockett's Farm (TR 014 664) via the path beside a field containing a small solar farm. The path runs along the left-hand side behind the solar panels and is not very

distinct. Take care crossing a dry channel, which may hold water in very wet weather. Then take the road east to return to St. Thomas's Church.

Walk north to Elliott's Farm (TR 025 673). At the T-junction outside the farm, turn right (northeast) onto a concreted track. Wildflowers bloom along the left side of the Isle of Harty Trail in spring and summer, while crops grow on the right. The northern bird hide is visible but not accessible. Pass through three gates: Gate 5 (TR 036 687), Gate 6 (TR 039 689), and Gate 7 (TR 042 693).

The final gate leads to Muswell Manor, which offers refreshments. A statue here celebrates the Short Brothers **7**, who established an aircraft factory on Sheppey in the last century. Turn left at the statue and walk back along the metalled road to Neptune's Café. It can be busy, so take care. The café opening times may vary.

Your walk ends here if you parked at Neptune's Café. If you parked on Wing Road and don't wish to stop at the café, cross the road before reaching it and retrace your steps along the footpath you used at the start of the walk.



Short Brothers Statue