



**Title: Bowers Marsh**

Distance: 5½ miles

Time taken: 2½ hours

Location: Bowers Gifford, 3 miles south east of Basildon

OS Explorer Map: 175

Grid Ref.: TQ 755 867

Parking: At the end of Church Road, at RSPB Bowers Marsh SS13 2HG  
(Car Park closes at 5 p.m. : Access road in poor repair)

Bus: None (except at Benfleet)

Train:  South Benfleet (start the walk at point **R**)

Refreshment: (South Benfleet)

The Hoy and Helmet 01268 792307

The Anchor 01268 756500

The Half Crown 01268 754527

PEAR Rating: 

## Walk Description

This tranquil walk begins in the newly created Bowers Marsh RSPB reserve. This is a bird sanctuary and dogs are not allowed. The walk passes through several different wetland habitats, including saline and freshwater lagoons, scrapes, ditches, reedbeds and areas of wet grassland. In addition to waterfowl, the hedgerows lining the walk are rich with birdlife.



After leaving the reserve, the route follows the Thames Estuary Path (under construction at the time of writing) beside the mudflats of Benfleet Creek and into South Benfleet where there is a railway station and several pubs for refreshment. The walk returns through a recreation ground and then along a footpath beside the railway, before crossing through the churchyard of St Margaret of Antioch, a lovely old church built in 1320 and still in use every Sunday.



The access road to the car park is in very poor repair, cars with low clearance might have problems. (Please let us know if this improves!) The car park closes at 5 p.m. If there's any chance that you will be out later than this, park just north of the railway bridge, opposite the church.

Also, from J to P the route follows the Thames Estuary Path. At the time of writing this path is still under construction and you may need to exercise your best judgement to find the route through.

## Directions

- A.** From the car park (P) walk back up the access road for 250 yards. Turn left over the anti-vehicle barrier, along Bridleway 228 towards Great Pound (1).
- B.** Walk along the meandering grey gravel bridleway for about 500 yards. When you reach a field entrance on the right, turn left to continue along the grey gravel path over another anti-vehicle barrier. Walk southwards towards two sets of electricity pylons (2).
- C.** Keep walking along the grey gravel track. In between the pylons you will pass a viewing area (Great Pound) on the right. Continue ahead along the track.
- D.** 300 yards past the viewing area, turn left at an information board (3).
- E.** Follow the track round to the east. You will pass a borrowdyke on your right and grasslands and then a large lake with reedbeds on your left (4).
- F.** The path continue eastwards, between some benches by the lake and two windmill water pumps (5)
- G.** About 120 yards past the water pumps you will reach a junction. Bear right through a gate to continue walking on the grey gravel (6). Turning left along the beige coloured gravel will lead you back to the parking area.
- H.** Bear left as you approach a picnic area, following the sign roughly towards East Haven Creek. 60 yards later you will cross a flat bridge: turn right on the far side to continue along the grey gravel with a lake on your left and fields on the right (7).
- I.** Continue ahead walking north west for 280 yards or so. You will see a junction on the right followed by a sharp left bend. At the bend, leave the grey gravel and go straight ahead, up the grassy slope along a footpath in the direction of South Benfleet Station (8).
- J.** Head across the field towards the facing hedge, then bear right with the hedge on your left, towards the A130 bridge. Take the Thames Estuary Path down some steps, over a footbridge, and under the road bridge (9). It's a bit of a scramble up the far side.
- K.** Follow the riverside path along East Haven Creek, with the mudflats on your right. After 250 yards you will reach Jotmans Sluice. There are concrete steps down towards the mudflats on your right, and a footbridge on your left (10). Do not take either of these - keep straight on.
- L.** Carry on straight ahead along the estuary path as it slopes down nearer the line of the estuary high water mark. At the time of writing this way becomes quite difficult to traverse within 200 yards or so. Please be aware that the 'easier' looking track higher up on the bank is a motorbike scrambling track and therefore likely to be very dangerous to use as an alternative. The new Thames Estuary Path is intended to establish a clearer path south of the scrambling track, but at the time of writing was still under development.

- M.** Follow the estuary path east as it meanders up and down the slope, passing an old World War II pill box. At the time of writing, the going here was rough.
- N.** Walk east until you reach a metal fence running north-east to south-west from the water treatment plant to the estuary. There is a gap in the fence on the right (estuary end), go through this and turn immediately left along a narrow path, away from the creek and with the metal fence on your left (11).
- O.** This narrow path bears right after a few yards to pass the corner of a wire fence, then continues ahead over rough ground towards a large, unattractive, graffitied metal container of indeterminate purpose (12).
- P.** When you reach the container turn right, walking south east along the Thames Estuary Path, with scrubland on your right and a playing field on the left. Head towards the corner of another metal fence (13).
- Q.** Continue roughly ahead with this fence on your left, turning left after 70 yards to follow the fence eastwards. Keep going eastwards for a third of a mile, passing some moored boats, until you descend to a pavement. Turn left under the railway bridge heading northwards (14).
- R.** If you are starting the walk from South Benfleet Station, exit the station onto Ferry Road and turn right. Walk under the railway bridge, then cross the road and go up the steps 15 yards north of the bridge.
- S.** As you emerge from beneath the railway, continue northwards with a stream (Church Creek, which once contained a busy wharf exporting timber throughout England) and a stone memorial to the Battle of Benfleet, on your right. (15).
- T.** Keep going along this path for about 200 yards, then turn left to walk west, on a metalled path which 160 yards later curves round to the north (16).
- U.** Turn left at a T-junction, walking westwards. 150 yards later, follow the path left across a ditch, then turn right to continue westwards, now much nearer to the railway line and with a ditch or stream on your right (17).
- V.** Keep going along the metalled path through the recreation grounds for a third of a mile, getting progressively closer to the railway line. When the path turns right in front of a small copse, leave the path and continue ahead into the trees along a muddy footpath behind some houses and adjacent to the railway (18).
- W.** Follow the track through the trees for about a quarter of a mile. Cross Watlington Road (19) and continue ahead along Footpath 188 behind the houses for a further 60 yards.
- X.** Climb over a stile into a field, and continue with the hedge and railway line on your left. Keep going for about 250 yards (20) then cross over a second stile. Continue for a further 250 yards then turn right at a (hidden) finger post about ten yards before the facing hedge to cut across the field corner.

**Y.** Head north along the field edge, negotiating several more stiles through a series of paddocks, until you reach the access road for Rookery Farm (21).

**Z.** Turn left along this access road and go under the A130. Keep going until you approach the farm itself, then turn right just before the railway bridge, along Footpath 188 towards St Margaret's Church (22). You can see St Margaret's church spire through the trees ahead of you.

**AA.** Follow the footpath into St Margaret's churchyard. Walk westwards through the churchyard, with the church on your right (23). Turn left on Church Road to walk under the railway bridge and return to the car park.

### [ROUTE DIRECTIONS at www.essexwalks.com](http://www.essexwalks.com)

The ROUTE MAP and ROUTE PHOTOS **also** need to be downloaded and saved on your computer for printing.



The Route Map PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Description & Map](#)



The Route Photos PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Photos](#)

This route description is not meant to be used in isolation, it is one piece of a three part guide to the walk. The other two pieces are the route map, and the numbered photographs. The walks work best when the description, map and the photos PDF are printed off and used in conjunction with each other.

The numbers in brackets in the description refer to specific points along the route, marked with numbered symbols and these in turn are matched to illustrative photographs which show you the lie of the land.



These symbols are shown at strategic points along the route, overlaid on a 1:50K Ordnance Survey map: [Online OS Map at www.essexwalks.com](#).

Unless otherwise stated, the parking facilities available on this walk may not be suitable for large walking groups or those arriving in more than one car. Parking cannot be guaranteed. If you are using a car, be considerate with your parking: parking areas in rural communities are primarily for local use: please don't abuse this and spoil it for others. It could result in parking controls being tightened, requiring the withdrawal of the walk route. For more see: [Advice: Courtesy](#)