



**Title: Mersea Island**

**Distance:** 13½ miles

**Time taken:** 5½ hours

**Location:** 8 miles south of Colchester

**OS Explorer Map:** 184

**Grid Ref.:** TM 009 126

**Parking:** West Mersea, car park off the High Street behind the library

**Bus:** No 67 half hourly (every two hours on Sundays)

**Note:** When the causeway connecting Mersea Island to the mainland (the Strood) is impassable due to high tides, the bus service terminates in Peldon.

**Train:** No train service

**Refreshment:** West Mersea :The Victory: 01206 382907

The Coast Inn: 01206 383568

Mersea Island Vineyard (café open till 4pm) 01206 384698

**PEAR Rating:** 

## Walk Description

This is a simple walk around Mersea Island. The northern half is quiet, mostly along the sea wall, with tidal flats on one side and farm land on the other. The southern half is mostly along the beach, with the Blackwater Estuary on the left and beach huts and chalets on shore. Keep an eye on the tide - in some places, when the tide comes in the beach disappears completely and you need to be on the sea wall or you could be in trouble. Parking is in a civic car park in West Mersea. There are toilets in the car park, and shops and cafes on the High Street.

**Please Note:**

Mersea Island is connected to the mainland via a causeway called The Strood. This regularly become impassable under up to 3 feet of water with strong undercurrents, sometimes for several hours at a time. A day or two before you plan to go, check the tide tables here: [Strood Tides](#). Free online tide tables usually only go a few days or weeks ahead: there are online tools which allow for more forward planning but they are not user friendly. Flooding over The Strood is likely if the water level is above 5m, or 4.5m if it is windy and the water is choppy. Also, during high tides sections of the beach are completely submerged: you can walk safely along the sea wall, but on some long stretches there are no easy routes off the sand.

## Directions

- A.** Exit the town centre car park (P), and turn right. Walk along the High Street passing St Peter and St Paul's church on your left. After the church, the road bends round to the right and there is an access point to the beach. Stay on the Coast Road (1).
- B.** As you walk along Coast Road you will pass St Peter's Well on your left, then some houseboats and a boatyard. Opposite the boatyard is The Victory pub.
- C.** Continue along Coast Road past the Oyster Bar on the left and a few yards later, the Coast Inn set back from the road on the right.
- D.** Keep going along Coast Road, now heading north. Go past a car park and another boat yard, until you see Dabchicks Sailing Club ahead, surrounded by a collection of black weather-boarded cottages (2). Passing Carriers Close, go straight ahead along the gravel track between the cottages for a few yards, then turn left then right to walk northwards along the sea wall.
- E.** Stay on the sea wall. You will pass a caravan park on the right and on the left, the amount of mud flats, salt marsh and old oyster beds gradually increases until it's about 200 yards wide. Follow the sea wall round to the left and then to the right and continue past the polders in the Strood Channel which are intended to recreate areas of saltmarsh (3).
- F.** Keep going along the sea wall. The polders give way to more salt marsh. Continue to the roadside and turn left (4). Walk north along the B1025 Colchester Road for 500 yards to the junction with East Mersea Road. Turn hard right to walk south east along East Mersea Road (5).
- G.** About 270 yards along this road you will see a metal gate on the left in front of 3 trees. From the map this appears to be the start of a footpath along the seawall. Don't be fooled: the sea wall collapsed some years ago and the footpath was temporarily closed in 2012 to allow repairs to take place. The repairs never happened. Instead carry on along the road past the 3 trees to a footbridge on the left and cross this onto a permissive footpath (6).
- H.** Turn left to walk along a permissive path beside the sea wall as it snakes along the coast. After about half a mile, climb up a steep slope into a small copse (7).
- I.** From here the footpath line is along the sea wall but the vegetation can get a bit thistly from time to time, in which case use the farm track to your right. Continue past Bower Hall marsh and sluice gate (8) and about a mile later, just past the Mayday sluice, you will reach the mudflats of Pyefleet Channel (9). 500 yards later go through a kissing gate. The footing along the top of the sea wall is easier from here onwards.
- J.** Half a mile further on you will pass Pewit Island on the far side of Pyefleet Channel to your left. This island was once the centre of a thriving oyster industry, with hundreds of men employed. The corrugated iron hut was once a packing shed (10).

**K.** Shortly after Pewit Island the sea wall loops around an inlet and passes through a kissing gate (11). Continue along the sea wall, passing some more polders.

**L.** Ignore the footpath on the right going inland and stay on the sea wall. Go past the Colchester Oyster Fishery premises and landing stage to continue along the sea wall heading south east along a narrow path. About a third of a mile past the fishery there are good views of Brightlingsea across the Colne estuary (12).

**M.** Three quarters of a mile past the fishery you will pass Mersea Stone on the left. This is a narrow peninsula, from the tip of which there is a ferry service to Brightlingsea and Point Clear during the summer months. Turn right and continue along the sea wall going southwest along an asphalt path (13).

**N.** After a third of a mile you will reach the edge of Cudmore Grove Country Park where there are toilets. Look for a concrete ramp down to the beach and continue along the sand (14).

**O.** Walk along the beach heading west with the cliffs on your right. You will go past the remains of a WWII observation post for the East Mersea coastal artillery battery. The cliffs are fossil rich, and are a geological SSSI. Fossil evidence shows that bison, beaver and bears used to live here. Nowadays it's just people and pooches on the beach! (15)

**P.** After a while the cliffs disappear and the terrain inland becomes saltmarsh. The beach becomes littered with oyster shells. As you approach Coopers Beach Holiday Park you have a choice: to go up into the holiday park and walk along the sea wall or to continue along the beach. If the sea is getting close to the sea wall, get off the sand. At high tide the beach gets completely submerged and there are no exits from the beach for a third of a mile (16).

**Q.** Having said that, when we were there the tide was well out and we took the beach route past a slightly random pillbox (17).

**R.** At the far end of the Holiday Park is an entertainment complex, with a swimming pool, restaurant etc. Walk past the complex and turn right by the, boat launch ramp to walk inland passing a small supermarket on the right and a children's play area on the left (18). (When we did this walk the sea wall beyond the Coopers Beach Holiday Park was closed for repair so our route goes inland. If it has reopened you can continue along the sea wall and rejoin the directions at point W. *Essex Walks does not advise walking along the beach here as it is under water at high tide for the next mile, with no exits*).

**S.** After about a third of a mile you will come to St Edmund's Church (usually open during the day). Turn left along a wide farm track past a circular tower (19).

**T.** Continue ahead over the fields initially with a hedge on your left, for three-quarters of a mile. As you approach a black weather-boarded building, skirt round to the right and continue to the roadside (20).

**U.** Go ahead along the road past an open barn on your right containing a Davey Paxman & Co steam engine and follow the road round to the left. 175 yards later you will pass the entrance to Mersea Island Vineyard. Continue down the lane to the Mersea Outdoors Youth Camp. Despite being an Essex County Council venue, this camp seems remarkably unfriendly (21).

**V.** 50 yards past the entrance gates bear right past a 5 bar gate in accordance with the footpath signs. Walk around the edge of an overflow car park heading west then south. At the facing fence turn right along a field edge path beside a campsite (22), before turning left towards the coast.

**W.** At the coast turn right to walk along the coastal path towards the Waldegraves Holiday Park. When you reach the caravan park, go up some steps onto the sea wall and continue west (23).

**X.** About a quarter of a mile past the caravan park, cross a level grassy area heading towards a small copse: just before the trees, bear left onto the beach. Continue westwards along the beach towards the famous Mersea beach huts (24).

**Y.** The beach huts continue for almost a mile. There are several snack bars scattered among the huts. After the beach huts there are a few apartment blocks (25) then another half a mile or so of private gardens with beach access. Continue along the beach past the last garden then turn right to go inland and up some steps to Coast Road (26).

**Z.** Turn right to go up the hill back to the cafes and car park, or left to the pubs.

### [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](#).