

Thornham - Local Area Guide

Situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty roughly halfway between the popular seaside town of Hunstanton and the picturesque Burnhams, [The Lifeboat Inn at Thornham](#) is the perfect spot from which to explore the subtle beauty of the North Norfolk coastline.

Whether you're drawn here for the wonderful wildlife, attracted by the numerous walks, tempted by the sweeping beaches and desolate marshy landscapes, keen to indulge in [local food and drink](#), or pursuing your favourite sport and leisure activities, there's plenty here to keep you entertained.

Here's our pick of things to do in Thornham and the surrounding area.

Villages & Towns

The village of [Thornham](#), once a prosperous harbour and smugglers' haunt, is today a small coastal village separated from the sea by its atmospheric marshes. Home to the Lifeboat Inn and our sister pub-restaurant, [The Chequers Inn](#), it's a magnet for walkers, birdwatchers, artists and photographers with its characteristic landscape of salt water inlets and marshes.

This stunning stretch of coastline starts at nearby [Hunstanton](#), a family-friendly seaside resort complete with funfair, amusements, a long promenade and its famous stripy cliffs.



Along the coast road in the opposite direction you'll find [The Burnhams](#), a group of seven small villages clustered around the River Burn, including Burnham Thorpe, childhood home to Lord Nelson, and Burnham Market, Norfolk's answer to Chelsea-on-Sea.

The historic fishing town of [Wells-next-the-Sea](#) is a charming destination where children hang crabbing lines over the jetty next to visiting yachts and a narrow-gauge railway ferries people between the harbour and the long sweeping beach, which is fringed with stripy beach huts and backed by cool pinewoods.

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Beaches near Thornham

The North Norfolk coastline offers a variety of beaches, from the child-friendly to wild, unspoilt stretches of sand.

[Hunstanton](#) is a typical family-friendly beach with ice creams, pony rides, funfairs, rock pools, and an abundance of buckets and spades, while neighbouring [Old Hunstanton](#) is wilder, with beach huts nestling amongst sand dunes.

[Brancaster](#) offers a windswept stretch of golden sand, perfect for sand castles and a magnet for kitesurfers, but the jewel in the crown is the magnificent beach stretching between [Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea](#). Once a year, the Queen's Household Cavalry brings its horses here for their annual holiday, where they trot through the pine woods and sand dunes before galloping along the water's edge.

The Nature & Wildlife of Thornham and the Surrounding Area

North Norfolk, with its sand dunes, reed beds, marshes and mud banks, may just be the birdwatching capital of Britain.

The nearby reserve of [Holme Dunes](#), accessible on foot from Thornham, plays host to a Norfolk favourite, the ghostly barn owl, along with a host of migrating birds and seabirds.

Just up the road, [RSPB Titchwell Marsh](#) offers excellent birding all year round and is notable for its migrating waders, shy bearded tits, nesting marsh harriers, and booming bitterns.

[RSPB Snettisham](#), its mud flats home to thousands of knot and skeins of pink-footed geese in the winter, is a short drive away, while further along the coast are [Cley Marshes](#) and [Blakeney Point](#), home to colonies of common and grey seals.



Heading inland, [Sculthorpe Moor Hawk and Owl Trust](#) is home to woodland birds, marsh harriers and a variety of owls, while summer plays host to an assortment of dragonflies.

North Norfolk Heritage

With its rich history and royal links, it's little wonder Norfolk has its fair share of historic houses to explore. The Queen's country home at [Sandringham](#), set

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in sixty acres of glorious gardens, is open at certain times of the year and filled with royal mementoes and art, while the surrounding country park is a popular destination all year round.

Stately [Holkham Hall](#) impresses with its gardens and large estate, and its Bygones Museum is a magnet for adults and kids alike with its collection of vintage cars, agricultural tools, Victorian toys and household gadgets.

Nearby [Houghton Hall](#) with its impressive state rooms and stunning walled garden, has an artistic twist in its contemporary sculpture garden. It also plays host to the prestigious Houghton International House Trials.

Archaeology lovers can explore the site of [Seahenge](#) at Holme, where a 4,000-year-old timber stone circle was discovered in 1998 – the original is now housed in a specially designed room at the [Lynn Museum](#).

Sport & Leisure Activities along the North Norfolk Coast

This area of coastline is sheer joy for walkers, drawn here in their droves to enjoy the verdant countryside and magnificent seascapes of the [Norfolk Coast Path and Peddar's Way](#).



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Sea lovers can take to the waters to go [sailing](#) or [fishing](#) from Brancaster Staithe, while the more adventurous can head to Hunstanton for [windsurfing and kitesurfing](#).

If golf's your game, there are a couple of great courses in the area: [Hunstanton Golf Club](#) and the [Royal West Norfolk Golf Club](#) in Brancaster, both 18-hole courses, though check the tide times before heading to the Royal West as high tides can cut off some of the holes.

The narrow country lanes, woodland cycle routes and pretty coastal paths offer perfect [cycling tracks](#) for enthusiasts and those who fancy the wind in their hair and a break from polluted city air.

Artists and photographers will find plenty of inspiration here too, in the atmospheric land and seascapes, the many galleries, exhibitions and displays, and the regular [Art Trail events](#), where local artists open their studios for the day.

Children's Attractions in the Thornham Area

North Norfolk has plenty of family-friendly attractions so you can keep the kids – or the grandkids – amused during your visit. Nearby Hunstanton is home to the [SEA LIFE Centre](#), where you can see seals, otters, and a host of other marine animals, and the [Princess Theatre](#) offers fun for everybody.



[Farmer Fred's Adventure Play Barn](#) offers the perfect rainy day activity for 0 to 12-year-olds, while [Snettisham Park Farm](#) is a real working farm where adults and kids can get up close and personal with their favourite farmyard animals.

A little further afield near Fakenham is [Pensthorpe Natural Park](#), with lakeside trails and woodland walks, and a whole host of activities to engage youngsters with the natural world.

Transport along the North Norfolk Coast

Transport lovers will adore the [narrow gauge railway](#) running between Wells-next-the-Sea and Walsingham, a place of pilgrimage since medieval times that's worth visiting in late winter for its [carpet of snowdrops](#) in the abbey grounds.

If you don't fancy driving for a day, the reliable [Coasthopper](#) runs along the coast from Kings Lynn to Sheringham and Cromer, joining the dots between the main places of interest.

And to keep the kids amused, amaze them with a ride on one of [Hunstanton's Wash Monsters](#), amphibious vehicles that drive from beach to sea and offer a panoramic view of the Hunstanton coast and those famous cliffs.

Shopping in Thornham and North Norfolk

Finally, while North Norfolk isn't a well-known shopping destination, there's some seriously good shopping to be found with an emphasis on local produce and independent boutiques.

[Drove Orchards](#), on the outskirts of Thornham, houses an impressive farm shop and invites visitors to 'pick their own' fruits. You can also find a fishmonger, plant nursery and a small selection of lifestyle shops.

Along the coast at [Burnham Deepdale](#) there's another cluster of lifestyle and nature shops, local art and pottery shops, and a pop-up market place, while [Burnham Market](#), a favourite haunt of celebrities, offers numerous boutiques,