

THE WALKING PARTY

ITINERARY FOR A 'TASTE OF SUFFOLK'

7 day itinerary

Distance: 59km

Walking : easy



This is the where I was brought up so it gives enormous pleasure to be able to show you around one of the most beautiful counties in England. Suffolk Pink, Suffolk Punch the Redpoll Suffolk Cattle and it surely has to be one of the best counties for the gastropub. Two master chefs here so you will be eating fabulously well. I think all agree now that the best cooking in Europe is in England! Good wine to taste, the fine collection of works of art at the country house Ickworth, Gainsborough's House, cream tea, Pimms ...

Day 1 Sunday You will be met at Ipswich railway station or Stansted airport in the late morning and driven to the village of Bildeston. Here we will stay at a fabulous pub recently restored by its present owner James Buckle and an excellent English gastropub with a superb award winning chef, Chris Lee. Chris Lee seems to continue rising the ranks. It is a sheer delight to eat here on your first night where you will enjoy this fantastic clever delicious *cuisine*. In the afternoon we will drive to a pretty Suffolk village where we will set off on foot to a next door village with a charming position. We will pass through a hamlet famous for once being the seat of John Winthrop before he sailed to settle in America. He was the founder of the city of Boston and was elected Governor of the State of Massachusetts in 1629. Dinner at Bildeston.

Walk: 8km

Day 2 Monday After another delightful English breakfast we will drive before starting a walk to a charming village favoured by Constable where we have lunch. We then continue along the valley and up our one Suffolk hill (!) before arriving at Dedham for a good cream tea! A short walk along the river before a light supper at your hotel which has a lovely cosy armchair, 'folded newspaper' feel to it and where you spend your next two nights. Dedham Vale is pure Constable country. "*I associate all my careless boyhood with what lies on the banks of the Stour; those scenes made me a painter*" (John Constable). *Walk: 15km*

Day 3 Tuesday After breakfast we will walk up to the old weavers houses before we walk back and on to the stream-like river Stour where we will pick up the rowing boats at Dedham Lock. We will then row

down the tiny river for half an hour (lightly!) messing about in boats 'til we meet the picnic on the river's bank. Pimms, cucumber sandwiches, summer pudding ... the lot. Those not wanting to row or be rowed can walk alongside the bank. After lunch we then continue the short distance to Flatford Mill where we will see Will Lott's house (famous for its position in Constable's 'The Haywain' painting). We then return to Dedham by car. Dinner at your hotel. *Walk : 6km*



Day 4 Wednesday After breakfast we will set off in the cars for Bildeston. We will walk through flower filled fields for the pretty village of Lavenham passing through lovely Suffolk villages before lunch at a small heritage pub. This comprises two small rooms with fireplaces in each. James the innkeeper produces a simple lunch and a game of dominoes! After lunch we continue on foot to Lavenham. You stay at the beautiful medieval half timbered house in the heart of this wonderful village. It has been awarded the AA's Guest Accommodation of the Year award. It has elegant four poster bedded rooms and an excellent breakfast! Dinner at The Angel now owned by Marco Pierre White who is the first English chef to have gained three Michelin stars. Marco Pierre White does not cook here but the food is excellent and bistro style. *Walk: 15km*

Day 5 Thursday We will set off from Lavenham by foot for the pretty village of Long Melford. We lunch in the village before visiting the beautiful church. English pubs are making a comeback with their quality lunches. There was a period when a Ploughman's lunch would be a couple of slices of Slimcea bread, a hunk of cheese and a spoon of chutney. This is something of the past and gastropubs are now at the fore. In the afternoon we could visit a hall owned by the Hyde Parker family. Admiral Hyde Parker was responsible for telling Nelson to retreat at the Battle of Copenhagen. Nelson paid no attention turning his blind eye to his telescope and saying he saw no signal. Of course he went on to win the battle!) or we could drive to Sudbury the market town of Sudbury to visit the tiny Gainsborough's House Museum. Thomas Gainsborough was born here and lived here while he was married. There are only a few lovely examples of his early work on show which have always appealed to me more than the later robust social portraits. It has the appeal of the naïve, being much influenced by his tutor Francis Hayman, portraying almost doll-like figures (see the Portrait of Mr and Mrs Andrews in the National Gallery, London). Return by car to Lavenham for some time off in the garden or for a good walk around the village. Dinner at The Angel. *Walk: 11km*

Day 6 Friday Today we drive to Bury St Edmunds, burial place of St Edmund and where, at the abbey in 1214, the barons swore to force King John to sign the Magna Carta. Before Bury though we have a tour of the great house Ickworth which belonged to the Earl of Bristol and which has a wonderful family

history of all sorts of sauce and a magnificent collection of furniture, ceramics, silver and paintings containing several magnificent Gainsboroughs as well as a much treasured Velasquez and an extraordinary collection of Paul de Lamerie silver. We then visit Greene King in Bury. If there is time we may take a quick drink in the smallest pub in England. We are very much in a beer region here and this brewery is a good example of why the British bitter is so good and shows us how it is made. Lunch at the brewery then a short drive to the Wyken vineyard belonging to Sir Kenneth and Lady Carlisle. We will look at the lovely garden here before a short walk to a local village before driving back to Lavenham. Dinner at a beautiful restaurant in the charming main square. It is run by a French couple who come from our region here in France. Fabulous food with a huge reputation locally and internationally! Voted the best restaurant with rooms in the country! *Walk: 4km*



Nayland



Dedham

Day 7 Saturday We leave Lavenham after breakfast for Ipswich or Stansted airport.

NOTE: *The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.*