

Estuary Edgelands Explore







12.5 miles (20km) allow 90 minutes riding time

A rural ride with breath-taking vistas of both coast and countryside. Enjoy open fields with scenic views, salt marsh and estuary birdlife, acres of orchards, ancient churches, quiet country lanes, traditional country pubs and glimpses of village life. There are some surprises along the way too. A feast for all the senses, this rural ride is a real treat.



How to get there:

Use the free journey planner on the Kent Connected app to find the best route to the Estuary Edgelands Explore, whether by train, bus, cycling or driving.

	Start/Finish	ME9 7LB
	what3words	lame.twitches.turkey
	Skill	Bikeability Level 2
	Terrain	Quiet undulating country lanes short section of unmade track
	Views	Estuary, Sheppey and rolling countryside
	Refreshments	Mews Brew House, Iwade, The Woolpack, Iwade, The Three Tuns, Lower Halstow, The Crown, Upchurch, Oh My Cod, Upchurch

Pedal-by-pedal Guide:

You are free to start your ride at any point on the map: as this is a circular ride, you'll always return to where you began. To help you plan your ride we've flagged where you'll find a pub, restaurant or coffee shop along the way – for a little break during your ride or to reward yourself with a welcome treat once you've finished!

We've provided a pedal-by-pedal guide to help you navigate the route, in addition to the map, and to highlight some points of interest along the way. Remember you don't need to start at No. 1 – you can start pedalling at any point. Your ride, your choice!

▶ NEWINGTON - IWADE

1. Head out of the station and wheel down the alleyway on your left. At the end, ride down Church Lane under the railway. Just before the road bends round to the left, you'll see a National Cycle Network Route 1 sign for Sittingbourne and Kemsley, follow this, turning right to stay on Church Lane. If you would like to visit the ancient Grade 1 listed 12th Century St Mary the Virgin Church, Newington, take the turning on your left just after the Oast Houses. The church is often locked, but has a large churchyard. Look out for the Devil's Stone, which is said to bear the Devil's footprint.
2. As you leave Newington, with a pond on your right and paddocks on your left, look over your left shoulder for a great view of Newington Church. The road bends round to the left and there is a short sharp climb, but it's worth it, as at the top, views open out over the fields on your right with woodland on your left. Go passed Happy Pants Ranch and then another farm. You'll see the Estuary, wind turbines and the Sheppey Bridge.
3. At the next junction, Route 1 turns right, but carry on straight ahead with the solar farm on your right and more views across the farmland. The route bends gently to the right, and you will go passed a recently closed brickfield with new tree and

hedgerow planting, look out for the rushes in the dyke and kestrels hunting. The lane takes a sharp left at Culnells Farm into School Lane. Ahead, you'll see Iwade. Listen out for skylarks.

▶ IWADE TO LOWER HALSTOW

4. As you enter **Iwade** with an orchard on your left, you may well be welcomed by a colony of sparrows in the hedgerow. Gently roll down School Lane – it's interrupted by a couple of junctions, first one turn left and second one turn right, passed the playing fields into the heart of the village. At the end of School Lane by the Brewhouse Mews, turn left up The Street passed the Woolpack pub. At the end, turn right and then turn left into Old Ferry Road. Views across fields on both sides. On your right you'll see Queenborough, the new Sheppey Bridge, the old Kingsferry Bridge, and Ridham Dock.
5. Turn left into Raspberry Hill Lane. The speedway track is here and if there's a meeting, you'll hear the bikes doing circuits. On your right are paddocks with goats and horses. As you go down the hill you are treated to a wide-open view across fields and the Estuary to Essex. As you go passed Toad Hall Farm on your left, you are almost at sea level and the waters of Bedlams Bottom at high tide will virtually lapping up against the road, treating you to displays of ducks, wading birds and the chatter of oystercatchers. The road rises passed the former Funton Brickworks and back into farmland before rolling down into **Lower Halstow**.

▶ LOWER HALSTOW TO UPCHURCH

6. The road bends sharp left and then passed Church Path - which goes down to the beautiful, 11th century village church of St Margaret of Antioch. The church is usually locked, but there are benches for a rest in the churchyard overlooking the wharf and creek. At the end of Church Path the Edith May Thames Barge (which sometimes sells teas, coffees and light lunches) is moored at the wharf of the former brickworks - Continue to follow the lane as it bends right and then left into The Street passed The Three

Tuns pub, village green and then out of the village downhill. The road rises again between paddocks, and you're treated to a glorious view of Upchurch's extraordinary church tower.

7. Turn right into Twinney Lane. This is now orchard country with fruit trees increasingly surrounding you, as you move into the peninsula. After the junction with Susans Lane, the road bends left. At the next junction turn right into Poot Lane. As you're heading into Ham Green, look out for the cottage on the right called Greylag, where there's a Blue Plaque in honour of **James Robertson Justice**. After Ham Green, Poot Lane bears left then after about 250m, left again heading south down hedgerow lined lane. The road begins to rise, and you emerge into paddocks with views of **Upchurch**.
8. At the end of Poot Lane turn right into The Street heading into Upchurch passed the pub, **The Crown**, and **St Mary the Virgin** church.

▶ UPCHURCH TO NEWINGTON

9. Take the left turn into Chaffes Lane, opposite the co-op. Go passed the picnic play area on your right and then the park a bit further on, on your right, and into the housing estate.
10. Continue straight when Chaffes Lane bears right, onto the tarmac byway (ZR25) heading downhill with orchards on both sides. Watch out for the potholes, they're big so you'll see them, and head into the farmyard. Continue straight on to the mud track ahead with ponds on your left. The pathway becomes a farm track.
11. At the T-junction at the end, turn right onto Holywell Lane heading up the hill, then over the crossroads into Boxted Lane, you're surrounded by fields with great views, then roll back down into Newington, passed the school and turn right into Church Lane.

This ride along quiet undulating country lanes, with a short section on an unmade track, explores the rich variety of the estuary landscape. Here are some of the things you will discover along the way.

Iwade – A late medieval village with a Grade 1 listed 13th century church with a low pointed steeple. Iwade developed into a ribbon village along the old main road between Maidstone and the Isle of Sheppey crossing. The Woolpack Inn was the last stop before the Kings Ferry across the Swale. Iwade got a boost with the opening of The Kingsferry Bridge in 1960, which for the first time, provided a bridge crossing for both rail and road traffic. The village has expanded rapidly in recent years with new housing developments that have also brought new shops, community facilities and a nature reserve.

Lower Halstow – A marshland village inhabited in Roman times and possibly dating back to the Iron Age due to its natural resources of flints, clay and water. Being so close to the water, Lower Halstow has (until recently) been a village that has made its living from the water – in one way or another. Whether it be ancient pottery making, ancient fishing, or brickmaking, the water has been the lifeblood of the village

The Three Tuns, Lower Halstow – Built in 1468 the pub has held an ale licence since 1764. Inside, there's an open fire and award-winning traditional-style pub with a separate dining area an ever-changing seasonal menu using local produce. The Three Tuns was Swale CAMRA Pub of the Year 2022. Dogs welcome in bar area. Garden with outside seating. Closed on Tuesdays.

James Robertson Justice – was a larger-than-life character who was a stalwart of the British film industry during the 1950s and 1960s, starring in over 80 films. He was a friend of Prince Phillip who referred to him as “a large man with a personality to match” who “lived every bit of his life to the full”. Some of this life was RJR myth, for instance he claimed to be born underneath a whisky distillery on the Isle of Skye, but in reality, he was born in Lewisham and raised in Bromley. Which is probably why he ended up in this remote cottage - now called Greylag- after he was mysteriously discharged

from the Royal Naval Reserves in 1943. In 1944, when a flashing light was spotted coming from his bedroom window, he was hauled before the Sittingbourne Magistrates Court for breaking the blackout law. His film career took off that same year.

St Mary the Virgin, Upchurch – A beautiful Grade I listed 14th century church with a very unusual ‘candle-snuffer’ steeple where an octagonal pyramid appears to have been stacked on top of a square one resembling a couple of inverted ice-cream cones! It is believed that the distinctive shape served as a navigational aid for shipping on the Estuary. Sir Francis Drake's father was vicar here in the 16th century.

Under the church is a small crypt (a charnel house) where bones were kept when the churchyard was full.

The church is usually open during the day and there are benches outside for a rest in the churchyard.

Upchurch – A small village on the creeks of the Medway centred around its ancient church and traditional village pub. The village lays on a pre-Roman trackway and was occupied by the Romans who built up a community of ex-soldiers here wanting to settle in England. Evidence of their occupation were the discovery of a Roman cemetery, several Roman pottery works and Roman coins.





St Margaret of Antioch Lower Halstow – is an 8th-century Saxon church to which were added north and south aisles in the 12th century and a west tower in the 13th century. The masonry includes re-used Roman tiles. The font is Norman and was made around AD 1190. Unusually it is made of lead. In the nave and aisles are remnants of 14th-century wall paintings. The church is normally closed but is open every Saturday, from June through to September, from 2.00 pm until 4.30 pm offering tea & coffee and a cool place to sit on a hot day.

Newington – A large village located on the A2 (originally a Roman road), with a station on the mainline between London and the Kent coast, surrounded by countryside, orchards and home to the national collection of Witch Hazel. There is a pub (The Bull) and coffee shop (Albion Cafe) on the High Street.

The Swale estuary - a nationally important site for wildfowl and waders. In winter, thousands of birds flock to this unique habitat in search of food exposed by the receding tide. As the sea comes in and goes out, it creates a variety of changing habitats, from open sandbanks, where seals haul out, to vast mudflats, attracting flocks of birds. The estuary is home to waders, such as curlews, oystercatchers and redshanks, which constantly probe the mud for molluscs, worms and crustaceans. On the open water, you can see hundreds of pintail, widgeon, teal and other duck species. Common sightings along our walk also include sandlings, godwits, dunlin, lapwing, grey plover, black headed gull, common gull, Brent geese, avocets, turnstone and marsh harriers.

We have taken all responsible steps to ensure that this route is safe and achievable by people with a reasonable level of fitness and skill. However, all outdoor activities involve a degree of risk. To the extent permitted by law, Swale Borough Council accepts no responsibility for any accidents or injury resulting from following this route. Walking and cycling routes change over time. Weather conditions and other road users may also affect the route. Please use your own judgement when using the route, based upon the weather and the ability, experience and confidence levels of those riding.



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