

Walking & Cycling Guide

to Sefton's Natural Coast

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The Countryside Code



- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control at all times
- Consider other people

Introduction

This Walking & Cycling Guide has been compiled to encourage you to get out and about in Southport and Sefton and discover the area's fascinating history and wonderful flora and fauna. Walking or cycling through Sefton will also help to improve your health and fitness.

With a wide range of accommodation to suit all budgets, Southport makes a very convenient base for walking and cycling in Sefton. So why not make the most of your visit; stay over one or two nights and enjoy some of the family-friendly walks detailed within this guide. Warm up by walking along Southport's picturesque Lord Street with its plethora of shops and cafés and then head for the promenade and gardens alongside the Marine Lake. Or take in the sea air with a stroll along Southport Pier's boardwalk before walking along the sea wall of Marine Drive to the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail or the nearby Eco Centre.

All the trails and walks in this guide are clearly signposted or waymarked and most are suitable for all ages and abilities. However, as with all outdoor activities, please take sensible precautions against unpredictable weather and pack waterproof clothing and wear suitable shoes. Don't forget your sun cream during the summer months. If cycling, make sure that your bicycle is properly maintained and wear a protective helmet at all times. Take some food and drink in a small day-pack, as although re-fuelling stops are suggested on the listed routes, there is no guarantee that they are open if you need them.

The maps in this guide are not intended for detailed route planning, but the superbly detailed Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No 285, Southport & Chorley, is available at Tourist Information Centres and bookshops. Many of the trails are public rights of way over farmland, or cross through the many nature reserves on Sefton's Natural Coast, so please observe the Countryside Code and leave nothing behind... except your footprints.



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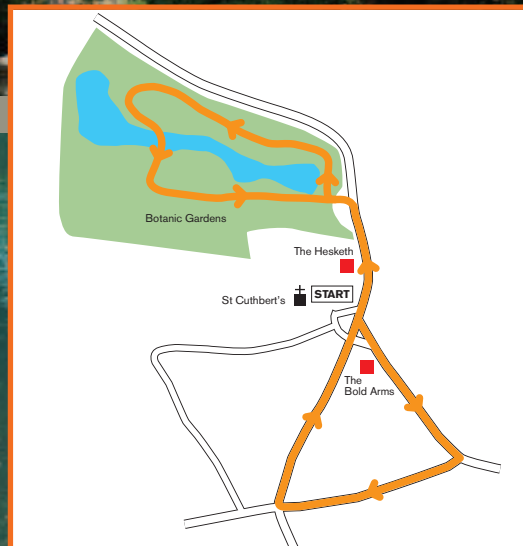
KEY TO ALL ROUTES

- Walking route
- Cycling route
- Railway station
- Accessible route (see route for details)
- Church with tower
- Church with steeple
- Public Rights of Way

The maps in this publication are not to scale and are intended only as a guide.

Churchtown and the Botanic Gardens – 2km

About 2 miles north of Southport is the historic and carefully preserved village of Churchtown which dates back to Anglo-Saxon times and is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. A frequent bus service runs between Southport and Churchtown and there is usually ample parking next to the Botanic Gardens where there are also public toilets.



Route distance 2km

We start our walk by the village green near St Cuthbert's church and the Hesketh Arms public house and restaurant. By the old grammar school, now the local Conservative club, are the village stocks, erected in 1741 and last used in 1860, when a resident by the name of John Rimmer was placed in them for drunkenness.

The Hesketh Arms was formerly called the Black Bull and the landlord was William Sutton, the so-called "Mad Duke" and founder of 'South Port', who opened his first hotel and bathing facilities in the town in 1792. Originally three fisherman's cottages, the coach house and stables can still be seen in the rear car park. Across the road is Meols Hall, one of the family homes of the Fleetwood-Hesketh family and now also a glamorous venue for wedding receptions and other functions.

Continue along Botanic Road for 200 yards to reach the entrance of the Botanic Gardens, a wonderful gem of a park, with its floral gardens, café/conservatory, boating lake, aviary and brass band concerts on Sunday afternoons in summer.

Opened in 1874 by the Southport and Churchtown Botanic Gardens Company, the lake was part of the Otter Pool, a stream that flowed through the grounds of Meols Hall to the sea. The museum was opened in 1876 and has excellent displays of local nature and local history, with many unique artifacts and displays, including the Cecily Bate Doll collection and a Victorian Room.



The Bold Arms - Churchtown village

Returning to the park entrance, turn right to pass Meols Hall on the left, turn left into Churchgate and through the old village with its many thatched cottages and small specialist shops. Turn right into Manor Road and then at the Box Tree Nursery and Café, turn right to return to the village green, completing our walk around historic Churchtown.



Hesketh Park to Marshside RSPB Reserve – 2.3km

Hesketh Park was created in 1864 and has recently been completely refurbished. It offers a very pleasant walk around ornamental lakes, fountains and flowerbeds, which in summer are a riot of colour. An abundance of mature trees attract woodpeckers and sometimes Red Squirrels and there's also a café with toilets and large play area for children.



Route distance 2.3 km

Hesketh Park



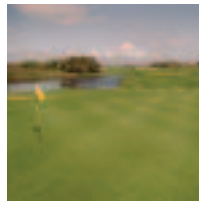
Hesketh Park

From the roundabout at the northern end of Lord Street (by the Fire Station and Law Courts), continue straight on along Albert Road, to reach the park entrance, at Park Road.

Hesketh Park features a historic observatory; a conservatory; aviary; waterfalls and cascade; American, herbaceous and mixed flower gardens and don't miss the clock garden, where a carefully restored floral cuckoo clock 'calls' the hours.

Leave the park by the north entrance and turn left into Park Crescent with its large Victorian villas. Carefully cross the road and turn right into Argyle Road and walk 300 yards to the next roundabout. Turn left into Hesketh Road, pass Fleetwood Road on the right to reach a footpath marker on the right after another 250 yards.

The concreted area here was once the site of Southport's first aerodrome. The information board at the entrance to the footpath which leads across Hesketh Golf Course tells you all about the history of Southport's 'Sun, Sand and Silver Wings'. Beyond the golf course to the left are the wetlands of Marshside RSPB Nature Reserve, now home to many wading birds and wildfowl, including around 20 pairs of noisy Avocets, the symbol of the RSPB.



Hesketh Golf Course

A half mile walk along an old seawall 'cop' (embankment) brings you to Marshside Road, with the playing fields of Stanley High School on your right. On reaching Marshside Road, turn left and walk between the open, often flooded, pastures, full of birds to reach Marine Drive. The RSPB visitor centre and hide is on your right, overlooking the marshes and is clearly signposted.



A Seaside Stroll – 2.6km

Southport, 'England's Classic Resort', is a classic Victorian town by the sea with a contemporary twist. With an array of shops and attractions, toilets, cafes and pubs it has plenty of activities and events on offer, right throughout the year.

This short walk (2 miles) takes in some of the resort's main landmarks and attractions and starts and finishes at the Tourist Information Centre at the Lord Street/Eastbank Street junction, near the Town Hall.

Crossing the road, we walk northwards on the left side of Lord Street under the beautiful Victorian canopies. Our first stop is Wayfarers Arcade, a beautifully restored Grade II listed building and shopping arcade, offering a wide range of shops and cafes.



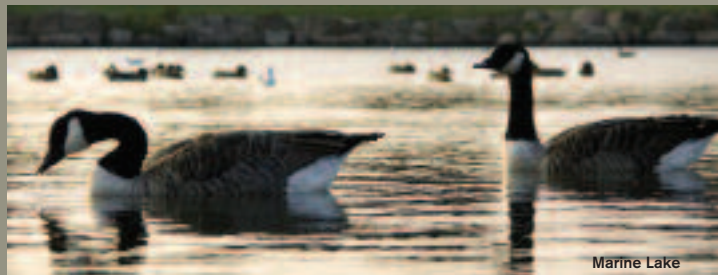
Wayfarers Arcade

Turning left into Nevill Street at Waterstones bookshop, we soon reach the Promenade, the entrance to Southport Pier and the Marine Lake. First opened in 1860 the Grade II listed Pier has now been completely restored and at 3,650 feet long is the second longest Pier in Britain. The café and 'penny arcade' at the end of the pier are well worth the stroll – or hop on board the Pier tram which runs every half hour.



Route distance 2.6 km

Returning to The Promenade, walk down to The Marine Lake in King's Gardens, with pleasure boats for hire or take a trip on the Southport Belle Mississippi style paddle boat. Also nearby are the Model Railway Village and Lakeside Miniature Railway, attractions well worth visiting.



Marine Lake



Continuing south along The Promenade, turn right into the Esplanade to reach the New Pleasureland. Across the road is Dunes Splash World all-weather water park, with its pool, flumes, whirlpools and sports and fitness facilities.

Just across the roundabout on the Esplanade, next to the Park and Ride, is the distinctive curved environmentally-friendly wooden and glass-built Eco-Centre, complete with its own 20 KW wind turbine and a great place to learn more about the environment. Directly adjacent is the Queens Jubilee Nature Reserve, a great spot for bird enthusiasts and to learn about the flora and fauna of Sefton's Natural Coast, which extends southwards all the way to the edge of Liverpool.

Returning to the roundabout, turn left to reach Marine Drive, cross the road and walk right towards the pier alongside the seawall. If the tide is high you will see lots of wading birds and gulls. Under the pier we then turn right onto Marine Parade, passing the Ocean Plaza leisure complex to the right, with its seven screen cinema, 20-lane ten-pin bowling alley, restaurants and fitness centre.

Opposite the terminus of the Lakeside Miniature Railway, we pass the Ocean Plaza Retail Park on the left and cross the magnificent Marine Way Bridge. Cross the road back into Nevill Street and turn right into Lord Street again, to return to the Tourist Information Centre and finish our short stroll around Southport.



Southport Pier

The Sefton Coastal Path – 33.6km

At 33.6 km (21 miles), the Sefton Coastal Path is the second longest route detailed in this guide. This route is a stimulating journey through a wonderful variety of landscapes with a rich biodiversity of wildlife and a fascinating history. It features sandy beaches, coastal marshes, pine woodlands, heathland and tidal estuaries, all with invigorating vistas across the Irish Sea to North Wales, Snowdonia and even the Lake District on a clear day.

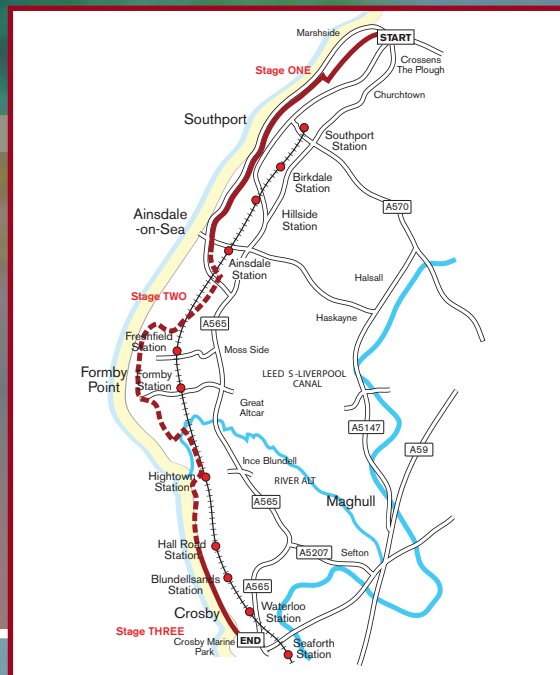
The Sefton Coastal Path can be walked throughout and parts are cycle-friendly. It can easily be completed over a weekend based in Southport, or it can be broken up into individual short walks as desired, perhaps using the Liverpool to Southport Merseyrail line which runs parallel to the coast. The route is fully accessible until you reach the Formby Bypass (A565). Suggested stages are summarised below and the details of the walk in its entirety can be found via the Sefton Natural Coast website, or simply follow the Sefton Coastal Path waymarker (pictured).



Waymarker

Stage One - Crossens to Ainsdale (Easy Cycling)

The route is flanked by the salt marshes of the Ribble which are managed by Natural England and Sefton Council and is suitable for cycling. Attractions include Marshside RSPB Reserve – one of the country's top reserves for breeding wading birds; Southport's wonderful pier and Marine Lake.



Route distance 33.6km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Marshside RSPB Reserve (WC Facilities accessible)
 Southport Pier & Pavilion
 Eco Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
 Royal Birkdale Golf Club
 Ainsdale Discovery Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
 Highest Sand Dunes: Big Balls Hill
 Formby Red Squirrel Reserve
 (WC Facilities accessible)
 Aintree Racecourse
 Alt Estuary
 Antony Gormley's 'Another Place'
 (WC Facilities at coastguard station accessible)
 Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre
 (WC Facilities accessible)





Other attractions in Southport include the Promenade, Lord Street shopping and dining; the Marine Way suspension bridge; the Ocean Plaza complex and the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail.

Stage Two - Ainsdale to Hall Road

(Suitable for cycling in part, on Ainsdale NNR and between Hightown and Hall Road).

This stage features Royal Birkdale Golf Club, the venue for The British Open in 2008 and the Women's British Open in 2010; Ainsdale Discovery Centre, headquarters of Sefton Council's Coast & Countryside Service; Sands Lake Nature Trail and several top rated nature reserves with Grass of Parnassus, wild Orchids, rare butterflies, Sand Lizards, Natterjack Toads, plus hordes of shorebirds in winter.

Formby Point has four more excellent nature reserves; the National Trust's famous Red Squirrel Reserve; the site of the UK's oldest lifeboat station; magnificent sand dunes and pine woodlands; the tidal mudflats of the River Alt, yet more shorebirds and a church with a unique stained glass window featuring the wildlife of the Sefton Coast.

Stage Three - Hall Road to Crosby Coastal Park (Easy Cycling)

This route features the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre; the site of an old fort; the only shingle beach in Sefton; birdlife in abundance and the evocative sculptures of Antony Gormley's 'Another Place' – 100 iron figures stretching along two miles of the beach from the mouth of the Mersey to the River Alt. There's also the magnificent Georgian villas of the 20th century sea captains overlooking Crosby Coastal Park and the port of Liverpool, with its towering container cranes, wind turbines and ships from all over the world.

Eco Centre



Antony Gormley's 'Another Place'



The Cheshire Lines Path – 23.2km

This walk forms part of the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) - a 346 km (216 mile) multi-user route from Southport on the Irish Sea coast to Hornsea on the shores of the North Sea. This route is fully accessible from Southport until you reach the Formby bypass (A565).

The starting point for the Cheshire Lines Path is adjacent to the TPT Seamark on Southport's Promenade and for most of the next 23.2 km (14.5 miles), the route follows the trackbed of the former Cheshire Lines Railway. The old station frontage, complete with clock tower, still survives and the building is to be fully restored as part of a new hotel and leisure development.

Elegant Lord Street, with its Victorian ironwork canopies, restored parks and gardens and hundreds of shops and restaurants, is signposted from the promenade and can be accessed via the magnificent Marine Way Bridge or Southport's meticulously restored Pier with its new pavilion, café, bar and interesting displays on the pier's history and the wildlife of the Ribble Estuary.



Lord Street

Our journey first takes us southwards on the seaward side of Marine Drive, passing the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail on the inland side of the road. The QJNT is just one of 17 nature reserves that line Sefton's Natural Coast, the largest undeveloped dune system in England which stretches all the way from Southport and the Ribble Estuary to Seaforth at the mouth of the River Mersey.

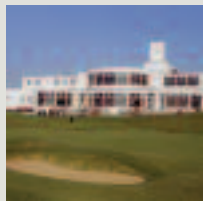


Route distance 23.2km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

- Southport Pier Pavilion (WC Facilities)
- Eco Visitor Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
- Royal Birkdale Golf Club
- Ainsdale Discovery Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
- Highest Sand Dunes: Big Balls Hill
- Lancashire Mosslands
- Aintree Racecourse
- Leeds - Liverpool Canal
-  Part accessible - from start to A565

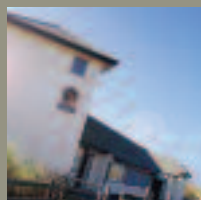
A modern wind turbine tops the award winning Eco Visitor Centre, which features all the latest developments in renewable energy and sustainable development. It's adjacent to the 'park and ride' and is well worth visiting, having an information point and toilet facilities.



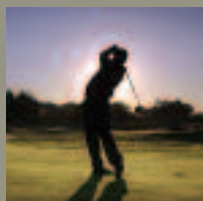
Royal Birkdale Golf Course

From Weld Road roundabout, the cycleway parallels the busy coastal road, while the footpath turns inland to run alongside the world famous Royal Birkdale Golf Course, venue for many major world championships, including the British Open in 2008 and the Women's British Open in 2010. At Shore Road, Ainsdale, a new boardwalk takes you around the Sands Lake Nature Trail and its wealth of bird life and dune flowers.

Take time out from your walk to visit the nearby Ainsdale Discovery Centre, headquarters of the Sefton Coast & Countryside Service, with its excellent displays and a wealth of free literature on the unique natural and local history of the coastal dunes. Food, drink and toilet facilities are all available nearby.



Ainsdale Discovery Centre

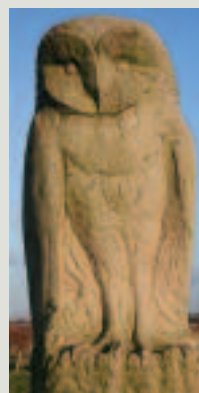


Formby Hall

Continuing on the coastal trail, we reach the highest sand dune on the coast at Big Balls Hill. Here the Cheshire Lines Path and Trans Pennine Trail part company from the Sefton Coastal Path, continuing along the coastal road to reach Woodvale traffic lights after 8 km (5 miles). Carrying straight on down Moor Lane and Plex Moss Lane, with the manicured greens of Formby Hall Golf course on the right, follow the clearly signposted track to rejoin the Cheshire Lines trackbed towards Maghull and Aintree.

The next 10 km (6 miles) to Green Lane, Maghull, takes us over the flat peatlands of the Lancashire plain, which in winter are visited by skeins of Pink-Footed Geese from Iceland, their distinctive 'gagging' calls attracting attention.

All of the surrounding area was underwater until the local landowners drained it in the 18th and 19th centuries. The monks of Cartmel Priory in Cumbria held the ancient fishing rights and many kinds of fish and waterfowl were harvested for food.



Jubilee Woods

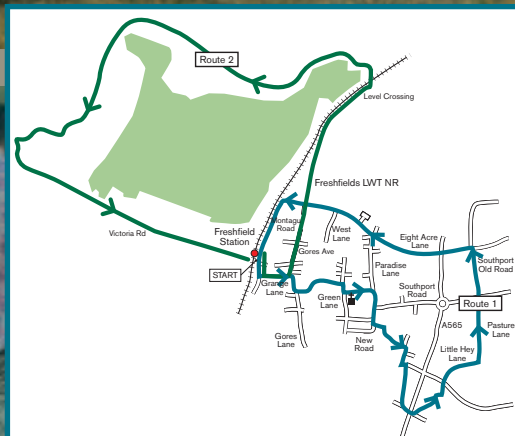
At Sefton Lane in Maghull, 20 km from the start (12.5 miles), we leave the Cheshire Lines Path to follow Old Racecourse Road, which was the site of the Grand National before it was transferred to Aintree. Following the TPT signs to Meadway, we pass the recently planted Jubilee Woods, part of a series of community woodlands on these former landfill sites, to cross the Alt River at Mill Dam bridge and join Chapel Lane towards Brook House Farm.

Carefully crossing the busy Northern Perimeter Road at Netherton, we carry straight on down Chapel Lane, which soon becomes Aldrins Lane, to join the towpath of the Leeds-Liverpool canal at the narrow swing bridge at 22 km (13.75 miles).

Heading eastwards along the towpath for the next 1.5 km (0.9 miles), we gain access to Ormskirk Road via Wally's Steps and continue southwards to finish our journey at Aintree Station on Park Lane. From here you can board the Liverpool bound Merseyrail service to Sandhills station, where you change to the Southport line to return.

The Trans Pennine Trail continues on from Aintree as the Liverpool Loop Line Path to reach the shore at Widnes and then heads due east following the Mersey Valley to Warrington and eventually the North Sea. Trail guides and detailed maps are available from www.transpenninetrail.org.uk.

Formby & Freshfields Walks (Walking only including several stiles)



Route distance 6.8km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Formby Village (Refreshment and WC Facilities)
Railway Inn Pub
Freshfields LWT NR

ROUTE ONE

This circular walk of 6.8 km (4.25 miles) starts and finishes at Freshfield Station, on the Merseyrail Liverpool to Southport Northern line. The part of the route from the station to Southport Road passing through the Green Lane Conservation Area is on hard surfaced footpaths and roadways, whereas the other footpaths, bridleways and byways can get very muddy after rain.

From Freshfield Station, cross Victoria Road into Freshfield Road and then turn left into Grange Lane. The distinctive buildings on the right are Tower House and Tower Grange, claimed to incorporate part of a 13th century monastic grange that belonged to Whalley Abbey.



St Peter's Church

At Gores Lane turn right passing the early 18th century thatched cottage opposite to come to a large house with the interesting name of 'Long Yort', which is old Lancashire dialect for yard. Immediately left is the Cricket Path, which skirts the cricket pitch to arrive on Green Lane and St. Peter's Church. Founded in 1747, St. Peter's is the

centre of the Green Lane Conservation Area and like the church the cottages on the west side of Green Lane date back to the 18th century or earlier.

Following the signposted Church Path running alongside St. Peter's to its end, we turn right into Paradise Lane and reach the junction of Ryeground Lane and Southport Road. With another 18th century cottage on our left at the junction, carry on down Ryeground Lane and where it turns sharp right, go straight on into New Road and then turn left into Clifton Road. Turn right onto the footpath behind the houses and head for the end of the overgrown hedge half left, where a passageway exits onto Deansgate Lane, where we turn right and then immediately left into Moss Side. At the footpath sign on the right after number 22 Moss Side, enter the Moss Side playing fields where a footpath runs adjacent to the hedgerow until it meets Mittens Lane.



Following the Mittens Lane track to your left we soon come to the busy Formby Bypass, which must be crossed with great care to rejoin Mittens Lane on the far side. Climbing a stile half left, a way marked path is followed over several stiles with the embankment of Downholland Brook on your right, to reach Moss Side again.

In summer this section of our walk is full of birdsong, with Skylarks, Sedge Warblers and Whitethroats, whilst in winter the peaty mosslands are home to huge flocks of Pink-footed Geese.

Crossing Moss Side we continue on Little Hey Lane, which gives access to the Golf Centre on the left and on reaching the drainage ditch, the former course of Downholland Brook, we turn sharp left into Pasture Lane, which we follow for 500 metres.

Go straight on along Southport Old Road to a crossroads near the kennels and a cattery, where we turn left along Eight Acre Lane to carefully re-cross the bypass and rejoin the track on the other side. This pleasant track, marked as a bridleway, continues as Sixteen Acre Lane to reach Paradise Lane at Kenton Wood stables. The long billed Curlew, probing for earthworms in the rich soil, often frequents the open pastures to your right.

Turning right, then immediately left, we enter Little Brewery Lane and then along Brewery Lane to West Lane, to reach the railway line again at Montagu Road. The gorse-covered heathland to the north is a new nature reserve, Freshfield Dune Heath, managed by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. It's very beautiful in spring and summer, when Yellowhammers and Linnets sing from the tops of the yellow gorse bushes and in autumn, the entire area is covered in the rich purple flowers of heather.

On reaching the railway, we turn left down Montagu Road for 500 metres, to complete our circular walk and return to our starting point at Freshfield Station. Formby has many pubs and cafes with toilet facilities.

ROUTE TWO (Walking only, some rough terrain through Dunes)

Leaving Freshfield Station, turn left into Victoria Road and then left into Gores Avenue, where a bend in the road takes us into Rimmers Avenue and on to the unmade footpath towards Freshfield Dune Heath.

At the crossroads in the paths, we go straight ahead until we reach the level crossing, where we cross **CAREFULLY** into Formby Golf Course and continue through a gate along Fisherman's Path. After a metal gate on the left, note the new route of the Sefton Coast Footpath.

At this point we make a short detour continuing along Fisherman's Path, following red-topped way-markers, crossing some small dunes until we reach the beach.

On a clear day, the views across the Irish Sea are outstanding and a stroll along the beach may bear witness to many of the shorebirds that make Sefton's Natural Coast so important for wildlife.

Retracing our steps back off the beach, follow the Sefton Coast Footpath to enjoy a pleasant walk through the pinewoods frequented by Red Squirrels, following the yellow way-markers along the edge of the golf course. We soon reach the National Trust Reserve car park, following the drive to the left to take us to Victoria Road.

On reaching the main road continue straight on to complete our walk back to Freshfield Station.

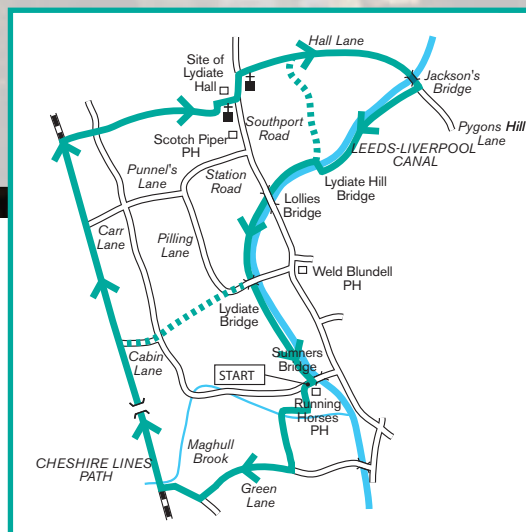
The Lydiate Loop – 9.6km

The walk starts and finishes at the Running Horses pub (OS Ref: 336403) adjacent to the Leeds–Liverpool Canal at Sumners Turn Bridge on Bell's Lane. Walkers may leave their vehicles here or at the site of the former Lydiate Station (OS Ref: 335404). The Lydiate Loop Walk is approximately 9.6 km (6 miles) long and is generally level throughout.

Turn left out of the pub car park and follow the footpath signed Green Lane around the field edge, crossing Maghull Brook at the footbridge and continue straight on to Green Lane. Turning right, follow the track signed Cheshire Lines Path/Trans Pennine Trail to reach Maukin Farm after 600 metres, where we turn right on to the farm track to reach the Cheshire Lines Path.

Heading right (north) this path forms part of the 346 km (216 mile) coast-to coast Trans Pennine Trail and was the trackbed of the former Southport and North Liverpool Extension of the Cheshire Lines Railway, which was opened in 1884 and closed for passenger traffic in 1952.

The flat peaty mosslands are often partially flooded in winter and land management in the Gore House Conservation Area by local farmers and other landowners has improved the biodiversity of the area. During spring the area is alive with Lapwings and their distinctive 'pee-wit' call. The site of the former Lydiate Station is reached after 2 km (1.25 miles), where there's a car park and an information panel on the Trans Pennine Trail. The mosslands here are particularly productive for small mammals, especially field and water voles and birds of prey such as Kestrels and Buzzards can be seen here.



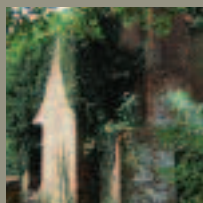
Route distance 9.6km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

- The Running Horses Public House
- Lydiate Hall
- Hay Lofte Coffee Shop
- St Catherine's Chapel
- The Scotch Piper - reputedly Lancashire's Oldest Pub
- Leeds - Liverpool Canal



At the next path access turn right to cross Acres Lane and follow a footpath sign 50 metres to your left which takes you to Southport Road. Following the field edge the path continues to woodland, where the ruins of Lydiate Hall are visible through the trees, before reaching the busy A5147 at OS Ref: 336450.



Lydiate Hall

The Ireland family, who were lords of the manor of Lydiate from 1410 to 1673, built Lydiate Hall in the early 16th century. It had become a complete ruin by 1940 and now the old barn and outbuildings house a farm shop, duck pond and the Hay Loft Coffee shop with parking and toilets.

A short detour of some 150 metres to the right along the main road brings us to two very interesting buildings. Set back from the road, next to a grove of splendid Oak trees, are the ruins of St. Catherine's Chapel, which was the private place of worship for the Ireland family of Lydiate Hall. The chapel probably dates from the early 15th century. Next to the chapel is the cruck-framed Scotch Piper Inn, built around an oak tree and reputed to be the oldest inn in Lancashire, dating back to 1320. The story goes that an injured highland piper soldier returning from a battle in the Jacobite Rebellion, c. 1745, stopped off at the inn and married the landlord's daughter. The inn was renamed the Highlander, and later the Scotch Piper.



The Scotch Piper

Returning to where the footpath meets the main road, we turn left into Hall Lane, passing an old school building, now converted into a beautiful cottage.



After 1km, the Leeds–Liverpool Canal is reached at Jackson's Bridge and we turn right on to the towpath to follow the canal. This section of the canal from Liverpool to Gathurst was opened for traffic in 1774 and saw regular commercial traffic up to 1964. The canal bank cottages near Jackson's Bridge are typical examples of the canal-side architecture.



Taking almost 40 years to complete, The Leeds–Liverpool Canal at 206 km (127.25 miles), is the longest canal in the country. Beyond Lydiate Bridge is a 'winding hole' for turning narrow barges and 600 metres further on we return to our starting point at the Running Horses pub, with its refreshments, food and toilets.



Canal

Exploring Ince Blundell – 6.4km

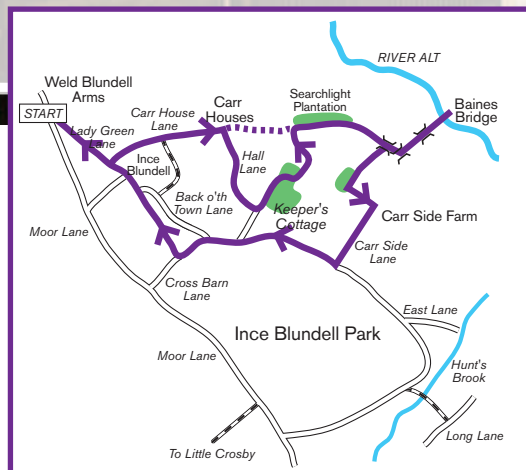
Ince Blundell is a rural parish close to the floodplain of what was once the tidal River Alt and the surrounding low-lying land is often flooded in winter. There are now plans to allow controlled flooding in the area, creating a large wetland, which will not only help with avoiding the effects of unplanned floods, but also create valuable habitat for flora and fauna.

Our walk around the Ince Blundell woodland and estate begins at either the Weld Blundell or the Red Squirrel pub directly opposite each other on the A565 (OS Ref 331403), both with car parking, and is about 6.4 km (4 miles) in length.

Turning left out of the car park along Lady Green Lane after 400 metres, we turn left into Carr House Lane, where Carr House is soon reached.

This cluster of dwellings is now a conservation area on the edge of the River Alt's flood plain. The Norse word 'kjar', from which carr derives, means boggy land covered in willow scrub, which would have been the case when the cottages were built.

Turning right at Carr Houses takes us down Hall Lane for 500 metres, where we turn left through the grounds of Keeper's Cottage to enter Keeper's Wood across a stile. This way marked path first turns right then left to exit the wood as a field edge path with a drainage ditch on your right.



Route distance 6.4km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Lady Green Garden Centre (Café & WC)
Ince Blundell Park & Hall
Weld Blundell Pub
Red Squirrel Pub



After 130 metres turn sharply left, keeping the ditch on your right, to reach the Searchlight Plantation at the end of Carr House Lane. Searchlight Plantation is so named as a searchlight battery was stationed here in WWII. Turn right here with the plantation on your



Weld Blundell

left, and then crossing a footbridge turn right again back towards Carr Side Farm. The tree-lined Carr Side Lane brings us back to Park Wall Road, where we turn right.

After 300 metres a white painted cross on the wall marks the position of a medieval wayside cross. Funeral processions used to halt at these crosses for rest and prayer while en route to Sefton Church for burial.



Nuthatch, Photograph: Gary Irwin

Several ponds and pits alongside the road and the large lake in the park itself were excavated for the clay to make the bricks for the estate wall. The Ince Blundell Estate, with its mature trees, is a haven for birdlife, especially woodpeckers and the locally scarce Nuthatch.



Ince Blundell Hall

Ince Blundell Hall was built in 1729 to replace the 15th century Old Hall, and the current building is now a nursing home. Until 1959, when Col. Joseph Weld moved to Dorset, there was a very fine art collection housed in the classically designed Pantheon attached to the hall, most of which is now

on display in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. The brick wall surrounding the estate was built between 1770 and 1776 and has several ornate gateways, the most impressive of which is the Lion Lodge Gate.



Lady Green Garden Centre

Continue past the junction with Hall Lane, with North Lodge on your left until you reach a dirt track on the left, cross Barn Lane, which is an access road to Home Farm. Taking this track you soon turn right on to a footpath over open fields to Victoria Road, which leads us through Ince Blundell village to Lady Green Lane and past the well stocked Lady Green Garden Centre, to the start of our walk at the Weld Blundell or Red Squirrel pub car park. Food, drink and toilet facilities are available at both of these establishments.



Thornton & Little Crosby – 7.2km

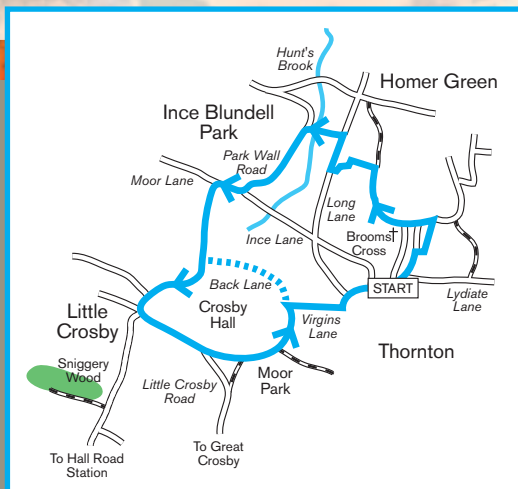
Thornton is situated to the north east of Crosby and is one of the oldest villages in Sefton. This walk commences at the Grade II-listed stocks and sundial at the junction of Green Lane and Water Street (OS ref: 333696), which date back to the late 18th century.

Carefully cross Lydiate Lane heading right. After 200 metres, turn right at the Gamekeeper's Cottage onto a cobbled track between hedges, which shortly turns left to cross the edge of a field leading to Back Lane. Turn left and after 50 metres the 'Brooms Cross' is reached. This is another of the medieval wayside crosses on the ancient 'corpseway' from Hightown to Sefton Church, where bodies washed up on the coast were given a Christian burial.

Continuing on this pleasant byway, Gates Lane, look out for a footpath on your left, taking you alongside drainage ditches to reach Long Lane. In spring the surrounding fields are full of singing Skylarks and displaying Lapwings tumbling about the sky with their distinctive call.

Turn right at Long Lane to reach another footpath sign on the left after 250 metres. Follow this peaceful wooded lane, Little Lane, crossing Hunts Brook to reach Park Wall Road, where we turn left. In late summer the wall-side verge can be full of butterflies, including the rare Small Copper and Comma.

Ince Lane (A565) is reached at the splendid Lion Lodge Gates (see route 8), where we very carefully cross this busy trunk road



Route distance 7.2km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Thornton Village
Ince Blundell Park
Crosby Hall
Little Crosby Museum
The Courtyard Tea Rooms





from Liverpool to Southport and turn right to join a track to the left after 200 metres. This track takes us to the lodge house at Back Lane.

Continuing straight on down Back Lane, the buildings of Crosby Hall can be seen on the left. Part of the 15th century Great Barn, the former stables and other buildings have been converted by the Crosby Hall Educational Trust (CHET), a charitable institution that promotes the personal development of children in need, by providing residential courses in the quiet countryside.



St Mary's

Beyond the Hall, which dates from around 1609, we soon reach West Lane House and St. Mary's Church. West Lane House and Chapel was built in 1719 and was a place of worship before St. Mary's was consecrated in 1847, after which it served as a Presbytery, convent and school.

Built in early-decorated Gothic style, St Mary's contains the works of Nicholas Blundell, artist and sculptor and many memorials to the Blundells of Little Crosby, who have been lords of the manor for over 700 years.

Four Lane Ends crossroads is reached after 100 metres. Delph Road to the right once led to a quarry (delph), which supplied the sandstone for all the local buildings between 1660 and 1890. Well worth a short detour is 'The Courtyard', 100 metres along Delph Road, which has an excellent tearoom, arts and crafts centre, pet corner and toilets.



The Courtyard

Continuing along Little Crosby Road in the opposite direction we pass through the village of Little Crosby.



The Well Cross, enclosed in 1857 is located at the site of the old village green, and opposite is a memorial to Francis Nicholas Blundell, the local squire, erected by the villagers. The Little Crosby museum on the right, in the middle of the village, is worth a visit and is open most of the year.

The cottages beyond the Well Cross are 17th century, built from the local sandstone and the white cottage, with prominent dormer windows, was once the home of Mr. Aldred, priest to the Blundell family. The last building on the right is the old smithy, built in 1713.

We leave the village keeping the Park Wall on our left and a cross set into the wall indicates the position of the old village cross, which was swallowed up by enclosure into the parkland in the early 19th century.

At the Liverpool Lodge Gates, topped by the rampant lions from the Blundells of Crosby's family crest, we turn left through the



Stocks and Sundial

metal kissing gate onto a footpath that follows the wall to reach Virgins Lane, where we turn right. We then turn left into Brook Road and right into Ince Road, then carefully cross the A565 again at the traffic lights and follow Green Lane past the Grapes pub to reach our starting point.

The walk described is 7.2 km (4.5 miles) in length and is generally level throughout. The stiles on the route are low and the easiest sections are on the surfaced footpaths around Little Crosby.

Sefton Village and the Meadows – 4km

This circular walk starts at the Punch Bowl Inn, with its excellent food, drink and toilet facilities at the very centre of historic Sefton village, and is generally level throughout.

Like Maghull on the other side of the River Alt, Sefton's name reflects its geographical location and in Old Norse means the 'hamlet where the rushes/reeds grow'. Sefton was well established before its registration in the Domesday Book, when it was listed as 'Sextone'.

The Molyneux family held the manor of Sefton from the 12th century right up to 1972, when the last Earl died. The moat of the old hall is still visible as scrub-covered wetland opposite the imposing Church of St. Helen, Sefton's only Grade I listed building. The church has great historical importance because of its association with the Molyneux family. An 18th century estate map shows a small hamlet of a dozen buildings grouped around the church and several interesting buildings still remain.



Church of St. Helen

From the Punch Bowl car park (OS Ref: 335401) turn right along Lunt Road until a footpath sign is reached at a vehicle barrier. Directly opposite, set back 10 metres from the road, is St. Helen's Well which, nowadays is capped by an inscribed stone.



Route distance 4km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Sefton Village
St Helens Church & Well
Sefton Meadows
Punch Bowl Pub
River Alt





St. Helen's Well used to be much more important within the community than is apparent today. Its water is icy cold and reputed to be 'very good for rheumatism, strains, bruises and weaknesses of the nerves'. Wells were once greatly respected and sanctified places before the advent of clean fresh water on tap and they were often decorated on holy days with flowers and boughs of trees.

Turning right at the footpath sign takes us along a track, which crosses Harrison's Brook in 300 metres and continues to reach a wooden footbridge and the site of the former landfill site, now extensively replanted with native trees as part of the Mersey Forest Initiative. The landscape improvements have already meant that many more bird species now nest in the area, including the secretive Grasshopper Warbler, whose strange reeling song sounds like a fishing reel or a freewheeling bicycle.



Showrick Bridge

Walk through the plantations to reach the metal service bridge over the Alt. Do not cross the bridge, but instead turn left along the path following the Alt on an embankment until you reach Showrick Bridge. The extensive meadows and rich farmland extend many miles to the north and large flocks of Lapwings, Curlews and Golden Plovers can be seen in winter.



Lapwing

The Environment Agency has plans to relieve flooding on the Alt and the increasing pressure on its pumping stations, by allowing some of the fields in this area to flood naturally when necessary. This will turn some of the fields back to marshes and meadows, increase both wildlife and biodiversity, reducing the risk of flooding.



Punch Bowl

From Showrick Bridge turn half left and then right to reach Moor Lane, which used to be an important route crossing the Alt, as shown on early 19th century maps. On reaching Harrison's Brook we turn left to follow the ditch back to connect with our original route at the bridge, where we turn right to return to Lunt Road and the Punch Bowl car park.

From Coast to Countryside – 13.2km

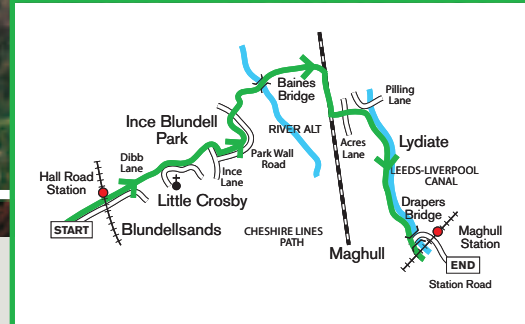
This lengthy walk of 13.2 km (8.25 miles) takes us right across the borough of Sefton from west to east, from coast to countryside, crossing the rich meadows of the River Alt on the way and is generally level throughout.

Starting at Hall Road Coastguard Station you may first like to take time to view the Antony Gormley 'Another Place' Statues. When you are ready walk past the Coastguard station and continue along Hall Road. We pass the entrance to the West Lancashire Golf Club just before the level crossing at Hall Road station and continue straight on down Dibb Lane, where Hall Road turns right at 90 degrees.

Dibb Lane is an ancient green trackway which takes us over open fields towards the village of Little Crosby in the distance, with Linnets, Skylarks and Curlews for company. At St Mary's Church we turn right into Back Lane and continue past the Crosby Hall Educational Centre to reach a lodge where Back Lane turns sharp right.

We carry straight on across open fields to reach some mature woodland and the main A565 trunk road through Ince Blundell woods, where we turn right and cross carefully to turn left into Park Wall Road at the Lions Gate Lodge. Following the wall around the estate we soon come to Lunt Road.

500 metres further on, turn right into Carr Side Lane, passing Carr Side Farm to follow the way marked narrow footpath to Baines Bridge and cross the River Alt.



Route distance 13.2km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Antony Gormley's 'Another Place' (Toilets at the Coastguard Station)
 Sefton Coastal Path
 Little Crosby Village and Museum
 River Alt
 Maghull - Frank Hornby's former home
 Great Mogul PH
 Village Tea Rooms

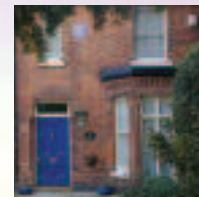
Thanks to the constant efforts of the Environment Agency, the river is now as clean as it has ever been in the last hundred years or so. If you're very lucky you might even catch a glimpse of the cobalt-blue Kingfisher, which has recently returned to fish along its banks, or a Barn Owl hunting the nearby ditches and fields.



Crossing the bridge we head east for 2km along a farm track called Maghull Hey Cop. Brown Hares are common here and in winter huge noisy flocks of Pink-footed Geese fly over. Look and listen out for aircraft from the nearby microlight landing strip.

Reaching the Cheshire Lines Path, turn right to the car park at Gore House Farm, where we turn left to cross Acres Lane up Punnell's Lane and right into Pilling Lane until we reach the bridge over the Leeds–Liverpool Canal.

Descending the steps we follow the towpath to the right (southwards) for the next 3km to Drapers Bridge, which is crossed to gain access to Rutherford Road. Following Rutherford Road we turn right into Station Road, passing Frank Hornby's former home complete with blue plaque (just after the shops on the right), to reach Maghull Station at the level crossing, just beyond the Great Mogul pub. Food, drink and toilet facilities are widely available towards the end of the walk, including the locally run Village Tea Rooms in Moss Lane, Lydiate.



Frank Hornby's former home



River Alit

Maghull to Aintree along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal – 5.8km

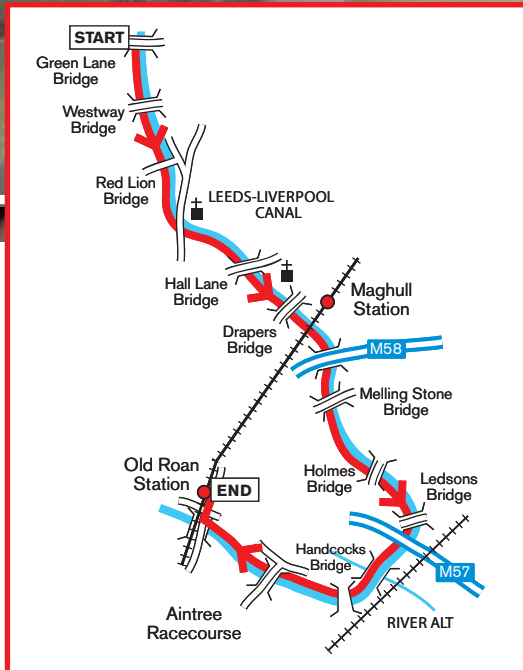
This pleasant canal-side walk or cycle ride is entirely level throughout on the well-surfaced and maintained towpath of the Leeds–Liverpool Canal.

From the green suburbs of Maghull, we travel southeast through farmland and open countryside, under two motorways before the route loops back northwest, alongside the world-famous Aintree Racecourse. Parking is widely available in Maghull and alternatively starting from Maghull Station will slightly shorten the walk.



Maghull Station, Photograph: Peter Hodge

Starting at Green Lane (OS: 373025) we follow the towpath southwards, first under the concrete Westway Bridge and then the older humpback bridge that carries Liverpool Road North.



Route distance 5.8km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

St Andrew's Church (Frank Hornby's Memorial)
Frank Hornby's House
Melling Stone Bridge
Aintree Racecourse





Maghull Chapel

Passing under the major A59 Northway road bridge, St Andrew's Church is visible on the left, with its 14th century chapel in the churchyard, before we reach the swing bridge at Hall Lane and then Drapers Bridge, where we can connect to Maghull Station.

Beyond the railway bridge and then the underpass of the M58, the landscape takes on a much more rural aspect as Melling Church becomes visible on the low hill to your left. In summer, the reedy sections of the canal here ring with the chattering song of the Reed Warbler, having returned from its amazing 16,000 km (10,000 mile) journey to Southern Africa and back.

At Melling Stone Bridge, we pass under Brewery Lane, then Ledsons Bridge and under the M57 into the open countryside once more. This section is probably the most untouched area of the route along the canal. To the left is an area of scrub, woodland, pools and grasslands that attracts a wide variety of wildlife, including foxes and hares.



Melling Stone Bridge
Photograph: Peter Hodge

The canal towpath continues as part of a cycle route, crossing high over the River Alt on an embankment. Thanks to the various clean-up campaigns, the Alt is now so clean that it is home to wild Ducks, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtails and it is hoped that even wild Salmon will make a return.



River Alt

The Leeds–Liverpool Canal itself has an abundance of coarse fish, including some large Pike.

Reaching Handcock's Bridge at Wango Lane, Aintree, the canal curves to the right to run along the north side of Aintree Racecourse, home of the world famous John Smith's Grand National.

At 4 miles 4 furlongs the race is one of the toughest steeplechases in the world. Aintree also once had a superb motor racing circuit, where in 1955, Stirling Moss won his first British Grand Prix.

The Canal Turn and Valentine's are two well-known fences next to the canal, which is also crossed by the Melling Road, before we reach Ormskirk Road, the A59. Turn right to reach Old Roan Station on the embankment some 200 metres away, where trains to Maghull and Liverpool run frequently.



The Maghull Trail – 6.4km

The Maghull Trail is fairly level and at just under 6.4 km (4 miles) makes a pleasant halfday stroll, passing several sites of local history interest, including the churchyard where Maghull's most famous former resident, Frank Hornby of Meccano, Hornby Trains and Dinky Toys fame is buried.

From Maghull Station (OS Ref: 33840) turn right along Station Road and then turn left after 200 metres on to Rutherford Road, to gain access to the Leeds–Liverpool Canal at Drapers Bridge. We then turn left (south) along the towpath, heading under the railway and then the M58 motorway, towards the village of Melling. At Melling Stone Bridge (OS Ref: 338400) leave the towpath via a track to reach Brewery Lane, passing a small row of terraced houses, where a footpath continues straight on through open fields, as the driveway to Wood Hall Farm.

A great forest formerly surrounded Wood Hall, which dates back to at least 1300, when the Molyneux family owned it. The current house is late 17th century and James II is reputed to have stayed here when the family were persecuted as Catholics in the Elizabethan period. It is a Grade II listed building and now a farmhouse, so please respect the privacy of its residents.

Follow the footpath towards the duck pond and left through the farmyard, crossing open farmland towards the railway embankment and walk through an underpass to turn left between the M58 and the railway and cross the motorway footbridge.



Route distance 6.4km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Maghull Town Centre and local amenities
 Frank Hornby's former home and Memorial
 Leeds - Liverpool Canal
 St Andrew's Church
 The Meadows Public House
 Meadows Leisure Complex



Take the enclosed footpath under a link road of the motorway and follow the footpath alongside Melling Brook to reach the main A59 Dunnings Bridge Road. The route continues on the other side of this busy trunk road and a pedestrian crossing controlled by lights allows you to cross here safely to pick up the footpath opposite. Passing underneath the disused Cheshire Lines railway bridge we follow the embankment of the River Alt to Mill Dam Bridge some 550 metres, with the spire of Sefton Church in the distance.

Our route continues over the bridge and through part of Jubilee Woods, restored and replanted as part of the Mersey Forest Initiative. The whole area was once the floodplain of the River Alt, and some local residents will remember skating on the flooded meadows during particularly hard winters.



Maghull Hall Bridge

After 500 metres, near an electricity pylon, we meet the trackbed of the disused Cheshire Lines railway again and crossing Dover's Brook we continue along the banks of Whinny Brook, passing school playing fields on our left.

At Ormonde Drive turn right, then left into Liverpool Road, passing the Meadows pub. The Meadows, with its food, drink and toilets, is built on the site of the Old Racecourse Farm, which was where

the steeplechase – later to become the world famous Grand National – was run in 1837 and 1838, before its permanent transfer to Aintree.

From the Meadows, cross the road towards Maghull Town Hall and the new Meadows leisure complex and turn left along Liverpool Road South to the children's playground. Enter the King George V playing fields and go through the public gardens and follow the path alongside the tennis courts.



Frank Hornby Memorial

Turn right to reach the A59 Northway via the steps, turn left at the top and after 100 metres a footpath sign marks the steps down to the canal towpath once more.

Turning right (south) beneath the main road we come to St. Andrew's Church built in 1878, on the other side of the canal. A marble memorial to Frank Hornby MP, stands in the graveyard by the ancient chapel, built around 1300.

Continuing along the towpath we come to Maghull Hall Swing Bridge, with some attractive old cottages and their well-kept gardens, before reaching Drapers Bridge once more to complete the circuit and the Maghull Trail.





Whitethroat (Photograph: Mike McKavett)

Meanders Around Melling – 7.5km total

Historically a part of Lancashire, Melling's name originates from the Anglo Saxon name for "The Homestead of Maella" (or Malla), who first settled in the area in the 6th century.

Maghull Station Circular

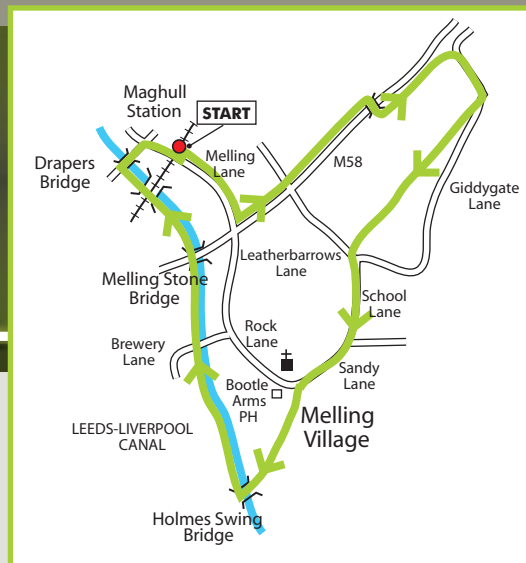
This first route commences and finishes at the railway station in the adjacent town of Maghull. Commencing at Maghull station, turn left out of the car park, cross the level crossing and walk 450 metres along Melling Lane to the M58 overbridge, where we turn left on a signposted path through amenity woodland, keeping the green fence of the motorway embankment on the right and playing fields to the left.

Reaching the bridge over the motorway (Leatherbarrows Lane), we go straight on down a surfaced farm road for 500 metres with rough land to our left. The large dead tree to your left often has a Kestrel sat on it and on summer evenings, even a Little Owl can be seen.

The road crosses the motorway at the telecommunications mast giving access to Moss Nook farm, where we continue left on a track, once more running alongside the motorway to Giddygate Lane. We turn right and follow the track for 300 metres, looking out for a footpath on the right alongside a drainage ditch, which takes us back to Leatherbarrows Lane once again.

Turn left and then immediately right into School Lane, which becomes Sandy Lane at the right fork in the road, and after 400 metres we reach Rock Lane, Melling.

Our route carries straight on following a way marked footpath, but first turn right and after 200 metres you come to the parish church of St. Thomas and the Holy Rood (Holy Cross) on your right, with



Route distance 7.5km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

Melling Village
Church of St Thomas
Bootle Arms Pub
Leeds - Liverpool Canal

the Bootle Arms pub almost opposite, where food, drink and toilet facilities are available.

Rejoining our footpath at the junction of Sandy Lane and Rock Lane, we continue over open fields and through the farmyard at New House Farm, to reach the Leeds–Liverpool Canal at Holmes Bridge. Crossing the swing bridge we turn right (northwest) to follow the well-surfaced towpath back towards Maghull, passing under Brewery Lane, then the motorway and railway bridges.

After 1.8 km (1.1 miles) we leave the canal towpath at Drapers Bridge, cross the canal and reach Maghull station car park via Rutherford Road and Station Road, thus completing our circular walk around the historic village of Melling.



Whitethroat (Photograph: Mike McKavett)

Red Route



Bootle Arms

Starting at the Bootle Arms in Melling, follow Rock Lane southwards for 60 metres, turning left into Tithebarn Lane and then bear right at the junction with Sandy Lane. Take care when walking on these narrow lanes, as they can be very busy at peak periods.

An old sandstone tithe barn, now a community centre, and giving its name to Tithebarn Road, is a further 100m on the left, after the junction with Sandy Lane. Just opposite the barn is a footpath across the fields, which we follow to join another path which takes us left, under some power lines towards Waddicar House some 300 metres in the distance.

Carefully cross Waddicar Lane and following to the right, look out for the FP3 footpath sign adjacent to house number 144. Take this path across open fields for 360 metres and then turn right into the housing estate at Marc Avenue, which becomes Rainbow

Drive, leading back to Waddicar Lane again, where the footpath sign FP4 leading down Chapel Lane is on the opposite side of the road to the right. Waddicar is Old English for 'fields where the woad plant grows'. Woad gives a blue dye, which the ancient Britons used to use as 'war paint'.

At the end of this lane is a pedestrian gate into Wadacre Farm and nursery, keeping right walk down the path with the barn on your left. Cross the stile and walk down the path between the fences, over another stile, then a sleeper bridge and following the field edge we regain our original route back towards Sandy Lane and return to the Bootle Arms.

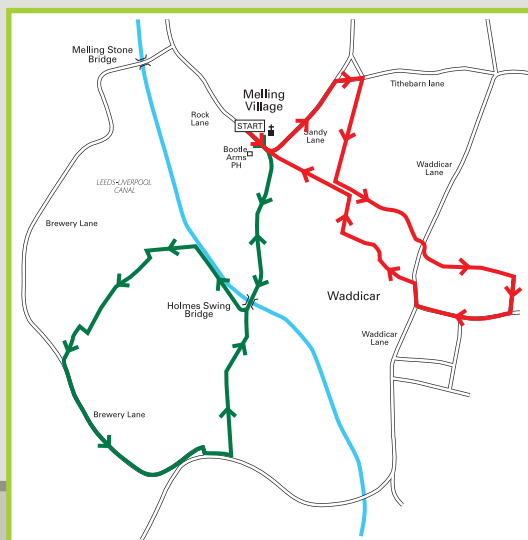
Green Route

Again starting at the Bootle Arms, this route takes us to the right and down the waymarked footpath towards New House Farm and the towpath of the Leeds–Liverpool Canal, after some 465 metres at Holmes Bridge, we follow the towpath to the right (north).

The pleasant canal-side walk gives us an opportunity to see and hear many species of birds in spring and summer, with Coots, Moorhens and Mallards busily looking after their young and Whitethroats and Yellowhammers singing in the hedgerows.

After almost 300 metres, we turn left down a set of wooden steps to join FP8, which follows a mature hedgerow on your left until reaching another track after 200 metres, which we follow to the yard of Brooklands Farm.

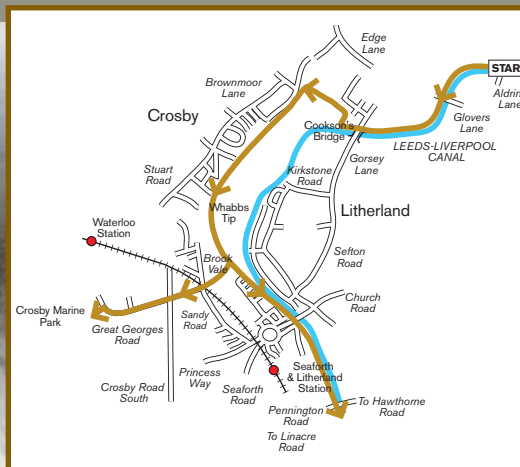
On leaving the yard turn left to follow Brewery Lane, which becomes Spencer's Lane when you reach the houses on your left. 100 metres past the houses turn left on to a marked footpath across the fields, to reach a ditch after 260 metres, where we bear right along the field edge to reach a surfaced track. This leads us back to the canal at Holmes Swing Bridge, where we can retrace our steps past New House farm towards our starting point at the Bootle Arms, with its food, drink and toilet facilities.



Netherton to Crosby Coastal Park

– 6.4km 

This combined cycling and walking route starts at the Aldrins Lane swing bridge on the Leeds–Liverpool Canal and proceeds westward along the canal towpath to link up with the tarmac pathway through Rimrose Valley Park. The route then crosses the Liverpool–Southport railway between Seaforth and Waterloo stations to finish on the banks of the Mersey at the new Crosby swimming pool.



Route distance 33.6km


ROUTE KEY POINTS

Rimrose Valley Nature Reserve

(No toilet facilities)

Leeds - Liverpool Canal

Cooksons Bridge Pub

 Part accessible - within Rimrose Valley

We start at the Aldrins Lane swing bridge to follow the towpath for the next 2km (1.25 miles) through the suburban housing estates of Netherton and Buckley Hill. The place name Netherton, comes from the Old English 'nether' (lower) and 'tun' (hamlet), being first listed as such in 1576 and was probably done so to separate it from the other local tuns, such as Thorntun, Seftun and Hightun.



Aldrins Lane, Photograph: Peter Hodge

On reaching the overbridge at Gorsey Lane with the Cooksons Bridge pub to the right, we enter into Rimrose Valley, with its more open surroundings and greenery. The valley was formed 1.6 million years ago and always being liable to flooding was never settled or farmed extensively. During the 20th century much of the land was used for tipping and some areas were also used for allotments and recreation grounds.

It now forms part of the chain of nature reserves and amenity sites administered by the Sefton Coast & Countryside Service and the Brookvale Local Nature Reserve was set up in the wettest and wildest part of the valley to further enhance the wildlife value for residents and visitors.

After 250 metres we turn right to leave the towpath as the canal bends to the left and join the main pathway through the Rimrose Valley Park. After 1.5 km (0.95 miles) at the highest point, known as Whabbs Tip, most of northern Liverpool and Bootle is laid out before you. The panorama includes both cathedrals, St. John's Beacon and the Royal Seaforth docks, complete with container cranes and its modern 'windmills'.



Leeds Liverpool Canal, Photograph: Peter Hodge

As you drop down towards the entrance to the park at Beach Road, look out for some steps to your right just before the notice board, if cycling there is a sloping path just beyond. This narrow pathway has recently been surfaced and crosses the lowest point of the valley between allotments on your left and football pitches to your right,



Five Lamps war memorial

Exit right and turn into Brooklands Avenue, then turn left along the path at the side of number 94. Continue across the '5 lamps junction' into Great Georges Road and then left into Brunswick Parade.

Turn right into Cambridge Road and continue through the large car park at Crosby Marina. The newly constructed Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre gives an ideal opportunity to stop for refreshments and use of the toilet facilities. Continue on to the cycle track along the southern edge of the marine lake and then turn right onto the promenade and enjoy the sea views as you complete your ride at Crosby leisure centre.



Crosby Marina

An alternative route to see some of Bootle's industrial past, is to continue along the Leeds-Liverpool canal towpath at the footbridge over the canal just before Beach Rd. The canal passes under Princess Way, which is the main link road to the Port of Liverpool, replacing the old Litherland swing bridge and then a replacement footbridge.



100 years ago, both banks of the canal were crammed full of industrial wharves, sugar refineries, tanneries and the like. Huge numbers of horse-powered and steam barges jostled to pass through the swing bridge, no doubt causing severe disruption to road traffic. In 1934 a new lift bridge was installed which was removed in the 1970s, when the new road bridge was built.

Currently this route along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal towpath ends 800 metres further on at the Pennington Road overbridge, where there is easy access to both Hawthorne Road and Linacre Road/Stanley Road.



Crosby Leisure Centre

The Crosby Cycle Route – 5.6km

The Crosby Cycle Route is a 5.6 km (3.5 mile) long journey through industrial and commercial areas coupled with a seaside park, nature reserve and residential developments, typical of the urban landscape of Sefton.

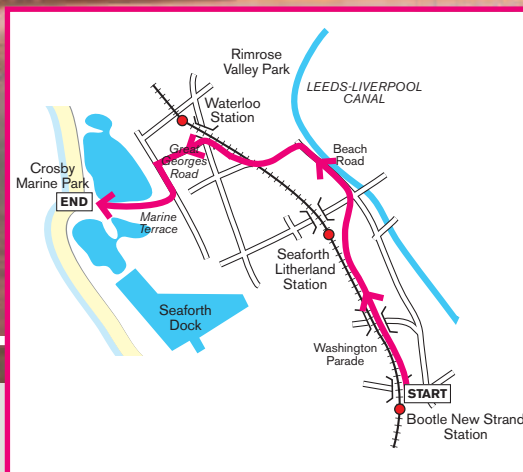
We start at the traffic lights junction of Washington Parade and Marsh Lane, Bootle and head away from the newly refurbished Bootle New Strand Station and the Bootle Strand Shopping Centre, with its shops, food and drink outlets and public toilets.

The first place of interest along our route is Bootle Leisure Centre, housed in the parkland known as North Park, with children's play areas and lazy winding pathways through a variety of flowerbeds and shrubbery. Washington Parade is a traffic-calmed road that restricts through traffic with the exception of pedestrians and cyclists. The route then crosses Knowsley Road and enters Litherland, passing through areas of residential and light industrial business.



Bootle Leisure Centre

The Southport to Liverpool railway line runs parallel to the cycle route, a disused section of which passes through Litherland and links with the Kirkby to Liverpool and Ormskirk to Liverpool lines.



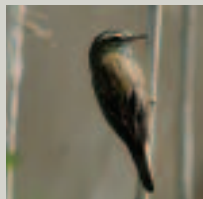
Route distance 5.6km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

- Bootle New Strand - Shopping Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
- Rimrose Valley Country Park
- Brookvale Local Nature Reserve
- Marine Terrace
- Crosby Leisure Centre (Café & WC)
- Crosby Marine Park

The link spurs off from the Southport line and the cycle route goes under the line at this point. Following the bridge, the route becomes a shared cycle/footpath and passes through Hapsford Road Recreation Ground, an oasis of green in a typical urban background. On leaving the park the cycle route weaves through the residential streets of Litherland and passes through a subway under the A5036, the main link road from the Port of Liverpool and the Liverpool Freeport to the M58, M57 and beyond.





Sedge Warbler

The route emerges on Beach Road and passes the local allotment gardens and into the Rimrose Valley Country Park, which is noted for its wild flowers and prolific birdlife. The path leads through the valley's wetland into Brookvale Local Nature Reserve, which in summer is awash with Yellow Flag Iris, whilst the tall reedbeds are alive with the songs of Reed and Sedge Warblers.

Next to the Brookvale local football pitches, the route enters into Waterloo, passing through the Brookvale housing development (on the carriageway and footway adjacent to the railway line) to emerge on the A565 opposite the Five Lamps war memorial.

On passing the war memorial the path leads towards the Crosby Coastal Park along Great George's Road. The six on-shore windmills that utilise the wind's energy to produce over nine million kw/h of electricity per year dwarf views of the park.

Great George's Road has several historic buildings, including Waterloo Town Hall and the Royal Hotel, which, like Waterloo itself, have close ties with the 1815 Battle of Waterloo. Formerly known as Crosby Seabank, it became Waterloo after the battle as did the Royal Hotel, which has now reverted to its original name. The route also passes Wellington and Blucher Streets, the victorious allied generals in the great battle, which somehow Napoleon managed to lose despite all his advantages in men and materials.

At Marine Terrace the path runs parallel to the Coastal Park and the three adjoining garden parks with an abundance of trees and



Marine Terrace

shrubs. Facing the park are rows of pastel painted stucco terraced houses, one of which was home to Thomas Henry Ismay of the White Star Shipping Line, which later included the ill-fated Titanic.

We enter the Coastal Park at Harbord Road on a hard surfaced path to witness a vista of sand dunes, the Liverpool Freeport and Crosby Leisure Centre (aka the Flying Saucer, for obvious reasons.) The path meanders through the park and quiet residential streets facing the beach, passing the leisure centre to finish at Mariners Road. The route runs in close proximity to the promenade, where cycle links have been provided to link into the Sefton Coastal Path and the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre nearby.

Making the most of your walk or cycle ride

Walking and cycling are among the most accessible and beneficial activities you can be involved in. You can do them at your own pace, leisurely or brisk, and very little equipment is needed; they can also be done alone or in a group. Just 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times per week will half the risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Rights of Access

The public regularly uses all the footpaths, trails, tracks and dedicated cycle ways in this guide, without let or hindrance as public rights of way, or as permissive paths with the consent of the respective landowners. However, please respect the privacy of landowners, tenants and farmers and the possession of this guide is NOT to be taken as a guarantee of any particular right of access.

If you encounter any problems in walking or cycling any of the routes listed in this guide, please contact Sefton Council's Rights of Way Officer, Tel: 0845 140 0845 or write to us at Technical Services, Sefton MBC, Magdalen House, Trinity Road, Bootle L20 3NJ.

Maps, Guides and Books

All of the routes in this guide are clearly marked on the latest 1:25,000 Explorer series maps from the Ordnance Survey. You are strongly advised to use Explorer 285 Southport & Chorley and 275 Liverpool, as both also give a wealth of other rights of way and tourist information.

Many books and other publications about the area covered in this guide, especially local history titles, are widely available at all good bookshops. Many churches have their own leaflets and booklets.



What to wear and bring with you

Please remember the Countryside Code and leave everything as you find it, leaving only footprints or tyre tracks behind. Picking certain wild flowers or disturbing wild birds is illegal and if you do see anything suspicious or believe that wildlife is being disturbed please contact the **Merseyside Police Wildlife Officer on 0151 777 3628** who will be grateful for your information.

Most of the walks and rides in this guide are fairly level and could in no way be described as 'strenuous'. Considerable sections follow well-drained and reasonably surfaced trackbeds of disused railways or canal towpaths and/or specific way marked footpaths and trails.

In winter, many of the open countryside stretches or routes shared as bridleways can be very muddy and suitable footwear should be worn. There are many places to stop off for a drink or a meal, including some excellent pubs and there are signposted links to all of the Merseyrail stations on both the Northern Line and the Ormskirk Line.

Each walk or ride is designed to be as long or as short as you want it to be, but as a guide, any reasonably fit person should be able to complete all of the shorter routes described in a morning or an afternoon walk. The Trans Pennine Trail/Cheshire Lines Path from Southport to Maghull and back is a favourite afternoon cycle ride for families and groups of all ages and abilities.

If walking any distance, good quality walking shoes or lightweight waterproof boots are advisable, as is a daypack to carry your maps, food and drink and extra clothing or waterproofs. In winter be aware of the wind chill effect in exposed areas, on the Sefton Coastal Path for example.

In summer it would also be sensible to pack a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water and it is always better to be able to remove or add layers of clothing depending on the local weather conditions, than to be unprepared in the first place.

A couple of reference field guides on the flora and fauna mentioned within the guide will make your journey that much more interesting. A pair of binoculars brings another fascinating world into focus and adds considerable detail to your observations. A small compact digital camera is also very useful to take along with you.



Pinewood

Getting about, organised walks & watersports

Southport Marine Way Bridge

Getting About

Sefton is well served by an excellent and frequent public transport system, in particular the Merseyrail Network. Information on local bus and rail services is available at all tourist information centres, libraries and other local facilities.

You can also contact Arriva Bus (0844 8004411) arrivabus.co.uk or Merseytravel (0871 200 2233) merseytravel.org.uk for their timetables and other information, including an excellent series of free walkabout guides produced by Merseytravel.

Organised Walks

If you fancy walking regularly, why not take part in 'Every Step Counts' organised walks? The walks are lead by a qualified walk leader and are free, fun and friendly. There are walks organised all over the borough on week days and weekends. For more information, please contact the Sefton Walking Co-ordinator Stephanie Boote on 0151 934 2824.

Watersports

Wind and watersports are popular with a hub of activity at Blue Flag-designated Ainsdale, offering power kiting, kite buggying and land boarding (one of the premier sites in the UK). Southport Marine Lake also allows windsurfing and dinghy sailing.

Crosby's new Lakeside Adventure Centre is now open at Crosby Marine Lake, and is well worth a visit. A number of watersports and learning and recreational facilities are available here, plus fitness suite, café, restaurant, bar and accommodation facilities.



Lakeside Adventure Centre



Pier Tram



Watersports



Formby beach

Free cycle loan, The National Cycle Network & Bike for Your Life

Free Cycle Loan

Southport is now a designated "Cycling Town" so if you would like to cycle the routes in this guide, but don't have your own bike, low cost cycle hire is available from Southport's Eco Centre (Southportcycletown.gov.uk) and Southport Train Station.

There are also currently 10 'Freewheeling' loan centres throughout the borough with a selection of ladies and gents bikes. The centres are located close to many of the routes for easy access. Free cycle loan is subject to proof of identity and you will also need two passport-size photographs to register within the scheme. There are also bikes available for people with special needs and disabilities. These bikes are located at the 'Wheels for All' cycle centre in Southport and at the Litherland sports park. For more information, please contact the Sefton Council Cycling Development Officer on 0845 140 0845.

The National Cycle Network/Sustrans

The National Cycle Network is designed and promoted by the charity Sustrans to provide an infrastructure of continuous, high quality, safe and attractive routes for cyclists, walkers and people with disabilities, through all areas of the country. So successful has the initiative been that it has acted as a catalyst for many new local routes and links, and currently 15,800 km (10,000 miles) are completed. Latest information is readily available on the Sustrans website at www.sustrans.org.uk

Bike for Your Life

The Cyclist's Touring Club, Britain's biggest cycling organisation, is behind this initiative to get more of us out of our cars and on to our bikes, on the basis that cycling is healthy for us and also benefits the community we live in.

Three quarters of all personal journeys are less than eight km (five miles) – that is no more than 30 minutes on a bike and switching from car to cycle for these short journeys improves your fitness, reduces noise and air pollution as well as traffic congestion.

For further information, practical advice and details on how to contact your nearest CTC local group, look up their excellent website at www.ctc.org.uk



Cycle Hire Centre



Useful contacts

The following is a short alphabetical list of the current web sites of organisations that could be helpful to you. Web addresses almost never change once established, whereas physical addresses and telephone numbers often do. Those listed as .gov are government agencies or departments.

www.britishwaterways.co.uk (British Waterways)
www.cpre.org.uk (Council for the Preservation of Rural England)
www.ctc.org.uk (National Cyclists Association)
www.cycling.org.uk (Cycling Project North West inc. cycles for the disabled)
www.defra.gov.uk (Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
www.english-heritage.org.uk (English Heritage)
www.environment-agency.gov.uk (Environment Agency)
www.forestry.gov.uk (Forestry Commission)
www.gottravelwise.com (Merseyside TravelWise)
www.groundwork.org.uk (Groundwork Trust)
www.jncc.gov.uk (Joint Nature Conservation Committee)
www.mammal.org.uk (The Mammal Society)
www.merseybasin.org.uk (Mersey Basin Campaign)

www.merseyforest.org.uk (Mersey Forest)
www.merseywaterfront.com (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park)
www.merseyworld.com/mcc (Merseyside Cycling Campaign)
www.nationaltrust.org.uk (The National Trust)
www.naturalengland.org.uk (Natural England)
www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk (The Ordnance Survey)
www.ramblers.org.uk (Ramblers Association)
www.rspb.org.uk (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)
www.rspca.org.uk (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)
www.sefton.gov.uk (Sefton Council Coast & Countryside Service)
www.seftoncoast.org.uk (Sefton Coast Partnership)
www.seftonsnaturalcoast.com (Sefton's Natural Coast)
www.southportcycletown.gov.uk (Southport Cycle Town)
www.sustrans.org.uk (Sustrans)
www.ukbap.org.uk (UK Biodiversity)
www.visitsouthport.com (Official Southport Tourism site)
www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/lancashire (Lancs & N Merseyside Wildlife Trust)



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