

# Southend-on-Sea to Eastwood

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Start	Southend Central station — <b>SS1 1AB</b>
Finish	Eastwood, Rayleigh Road at Flamboro Walk — <b>SS9 5PT</b>
Distance	14.26km
Duration	3 hours 06 minutes
Ascent	159m
Access	Train at start of section, Chalkwell and Leigh-on-Sea <i>en route</i> ; bus throughout
Facilities	All facilities at start of section; numerous refreshment opportunities throughout.

1.1	Southend Central stn.	0m
1.2	L (E) from stn entrance; R on High St to Pier Hill.	470m
1.3	W to Westcliff Hotel; descend to W end of gdns; cross rd to promenade.	1280m
1.4	W to Chalkwell stn.	1870m
1.5	Ahead between rly and sea to Old Leigh.	1300m
1.6	Ahead on High St; up stairs; R to Leigh-on-Sea stn.	960m
1.7	Up steps opp stn; L after 45 steps; ascend to Marine Parade; L to end of rd.	1210m
1.8	L down to sea-level path; R; R at signpost to ascend to Hadleigh Castle.	1450m
1.9	Ahead; R (Castle Lane); L (Seaview Terr); ahead; R (Chapel Lane) to Hadleigh.	1830m
1.10	Ahead on New Rd; at end of houses on L, cross rec gd to L of pavilion; L; R onto Poors Lane; ahead through woodland; ahead on Poors Lane N (tarmac) to jct at Bramble Crescent.	1940m
1.11	Ahead on Poors Lane N to/through woodland; ahead (Belfairs Park Dr); L to A127; cross to service rd; R and bend L; R onto rec gd at pavilion; take path on 30° bearing to Leighfields Rd; descend; ahead to Rayleigh Rd, Eastwood.	1950m



*Southend-on-Sea pier*

**1.1** This section starts at Southend Central station and ends at Leigh-on-Sea station. The route is on hard surfaces throughout, starting on the clifftop parade and changing to the sea-level promenade at Westcliff.

Southend Central station is served by trains from Fenchurch Street, West Ham, and Barking. Southend Victoria (at the end of High Street 650m north of Southend Central) is served by trains from Liverpool Street. Tickets are not interavailable between these two lines, so if you are planning to break the day's walk at Hadleigh, Eastwood or Hockley, you may prefer to buy a return ticket to Southend Victoria, and return from Rayleigh (bus connection) or Hockley.

Southend Central station opened in 1856; Southend Victoria in 1889. The town itself grew from a few fishermen's huts to a seaside resort from the turn of the nineteenth century, impetus being given by the patronage of Queen Caroline of Brunswick, wife of King George IV.

**1.2** From the railway station, follow High Street south to Pier Hill, and to the upper level of the passenger lift.

This is the official start of the Saffron Trail, though there is neither waymark nor information board to celebrate the location.

The Saffron Trail crosses Essex between Southend and Saffron Walden, providing a complement to the Essex Way, which runs between Epping in the west and Harwich in the east of the county. The two paths cross at Great Waltham. The Circumcardinal route follows the Saffron Trail as far as East Hanningfield, a distance of about 39km, before joining St Peter's Way.

**1.3** Walk westwards along the path parallel to the road (or the roadside pavement where no alternative exists) along the clifftop. The way is clear throughout.

Just before the Westcliff Hotel, you will notice a low, curved wall on your left. Take the steps at the far end of the wall to descend through some zigzags to reach sea level at the far right corner of the cliff gardens. Cross to the seaward side of the road using the pedestrian crossings, and continue with the sea on the left.

There are several opportunities for refreshment and relief alike in this area, with toilets and cafés available between here and Chalkwell station.

**1.4** Follow the sea wall all the way to the end of the gardens, where there is a footbridge over the railway for access to Chalkwell station.

On your way, you will notice an obelisk on your left, either surrounded by water (at high tide) or with a walkway to it (at low tide). This is the Crow Stone, and marks the eastern extremity of the jurisdiction of the Thames Conservancy Board. There is a complementary monument on the south side of the estuary, at the outflow of Yantlet Creek on the Isle of Grain. The jurisdiction of the Port of London Authority is wider, the eastern boundary being a line running between Harwich Naze and North Foreland.

**1.5** Between Chalkwell and Old Leigh, the route takes a narrow path between the railway and the sea.

**1.6** At Old Leigh, the pathway enters High Street at Bell Wharf, where there are toilets. Follow High Street, bearing right at the end to maintain sea level and pass beneath Belton Bridge, which carries the main road access to Old Leigh. Beyond the bridge, follow a narrow road; where the road bends left, ascend a set of steps ahead. Cross the road at the top, and go over the railway to reach Leigh-on-Sea station.

*The Crow Stone*



Leigh-on-Sea –  
Old Custom House (below)  
Marina at low tide (bottom)



Old Leigh has a plentiful and diverse range of refreshment and retail opportunities; beyond Belton Bridge, there are several huts from which seafood is sold, so if you are breaking your journey here, a purchase might be tempting.

Leigh-on-Sea station is served by trains running between Southend Central and Fenchurch Street: if you are travelling to London, it is normally better to wait for a train running via Basildon (rather than Tilbury) for an earlier arrival at stations between Upminster and Fenchurch Street.

**1.7** From the railway station, cross the road to a flight of steps, and begin the ascent, turning left after the first 45 steps, and following a path to the rest of the flight up to Marine Parade, a climb of about 40m.

The principal online guide to the Saffron Trail invites walkers to turn left after 41 steps (*sic*). but it somehow fails to warn walkers about the other 150 or so steps needed to reach Marine Parade.

From the top of the steps, turn left along the grass verge bordering Marine Parade. Cross Belton Way West, and continue along

the path to the end of the street.

The official route dips and climbs within the woodland on the slope, but this seems pointless (as agreed by the guide).

**1.8** At the end of the street, look for a narrow path which descends from the left-hand corner, back to sea level. This path is often muddy, so care must be taken on the descent. If coming in the other direction, the ascent is even more energy-sapping than the stairs. Turn right at the bottom, and follow the clear path for 280m to a fingerpost.

Turn right here (signposted *Hadleigh Castle*) and climb to the castle (at about 50m above sea level). The path keeps to the right of the monument, but you may enter the castle precincts near the round tower and exit beyond the stables building.

Hadleigh Castle was raised in about 1215 (at the time Magna Carta was being signed at Runnymede) by Hubert de Burgh, King John's First Minister. The castle was forfeit after a disagreement with King Henry II, and reverted to the Crown. King Edward III saw the strategic importance of the castle on the Thames estuary during the Hundred Years War with France, and made extensive



*Belton steps, Leigh-on-Sea*

*Canvey Island and the area behind Gravesend from the ascent to Hadleigh Castle*





*Hadleigh Castle from the eastern approach*

refortifications. The castle was demolished in the middle of the sixteenth century.

**1.9** Beyond the castle, the Saffron Trail turns sharply to the left, returning once again to sea level. Turn right for 320m, and then turn right again, following the signs to the north-western corner of Hadleigh Farm, where you turn left on a green lane which leads to the cycling

headquarters at Hadleigh Woods.

This re-ascent has been moved eastwards from the original line (still shown on OS maps) when Hadleigh Woods was taken over for the off-road cycling events for the 2012 Olympic Games, making the drop and climb even more pointless than before.

There is, however, a sanctioned alternative, which will save 50m ascent and much frustration on the part of walkers. Ascend the lane as far as the vehicular entrance to Hadleigh Farm on your left. Turn right just inside (before the barriers), keeping the car park close on your right. Turn left to pass in front of a row of houses (on your right), and continue through the traffic barrier at the end, onto a green lane. This lane is joined from the left by the official route of the Saffron Trail, and leads to the cycling headquarters at Hadleigh Woods.

Turn right onto the lane, and follow it to the main entrance to the cycling complex on the left, where there is a signpost to toilets and a café.

*Hadleigh Castle: the north wall from the stables*

Take a refuge path on the left, rejoining the tarmac at the edge of residential Hadleigh, on Chapel Lane.

Hadleigh Farm is owned by the Salvation Army, and now offers training services for those with special needs: the farm is now run as a rare breeds park. However, this is only part of the Salvation Army's history in Hadleigh.

In 1889, General William Booth purchased premises in Whitechapel to create a

City Colony which was intended to improve the lives of selected poor men through craft training. He then bought up land south of Hadleigh in 1891 for a Farm Colony, to which selected City Colonists might graduate. As well as agriculture, there was a pottery and brickworks, with associated infrastructure. The right-hand option of the green lane to Hadleigh Woods (another part of the Colony) is a former tramway, and the (new) official route ascends on the line of another tramway, which linked (over the present railway) to a jetty on the estuary. Training included finance and office skills as well as the primary craft work. The Colony was, of course, strictly for men.

Continue along Chapel Lane to the junction with London Road.

There are bus services here which link Rayleigh with Southend.

**1.10** From the north side of Rayleigh Road, take New Road, using its left-hand pavement. Where the houses on the left end, enter the recreation ground on your left, and cut across the cricket pitch (keeping to the left of the square) and making for the left side of the pavilion.

Exit onto Rectory Road, and turn left. Take the right fork onto Poors Lane, and follow it to the very end. Continue ahead on a path (still called Poors Lane) through Great Wood. Keep to the main path until you emerge onto a metalled road again: Poors Lane North.

Pass Poors Farm on your right, and continue along Poors Lane North until you reach a *No through road* sign for the way ahead; the main road becomes Bramble Crescent as it swings to the left.

**1.11** Here, there is a divergence of opinion.

The route described in the online guide loops round by Bramble Crescent, taking a right-hand bend but taking a path ahead at the next left-hand bend, all the way to Eastwood Old Road, where it turns right, then left on Rothwell Close, and right alongside the A127 to the junction with The Fairway at a junction with traffic lights.

The signage on the ground (well, above the ground!), though, suggests that you continue on Poors Lane North, past The Grange and out onto Belfairs Park Drive, turning left on The Fairway at the bottom of the hill, and running out

Poors Lane North



to the A127 at a junction with traffic-lights (where the guide's route rejoins from the left).

On balance, the route via The Grange is preferable, because it is simpler, does not border the A127, and passes shops on the left at the corner of Eastwood Old Road.

Cross the A127 at the lights, and continue over to the trading estate's service road (it is called Stephenson Road). Turn right along the road, and take the left bend. Look out for an exit right, into a recreation ground at a pavilion.

Pass across the front of the pavilion, and take a path which drifts away from the left edge of the ground on a bearing of 30°. This leads to the end of Leighfields Road, which mutates into Flamboro [sic] Close as it descends. At the bottom of Flamboro Close, continue ahead on a path (Flamboro Walk) to reach Rayleigh Road in Eastwood, at a row of shops.

Eastwood is served by frequent buses running between Rayleigh and Southend.