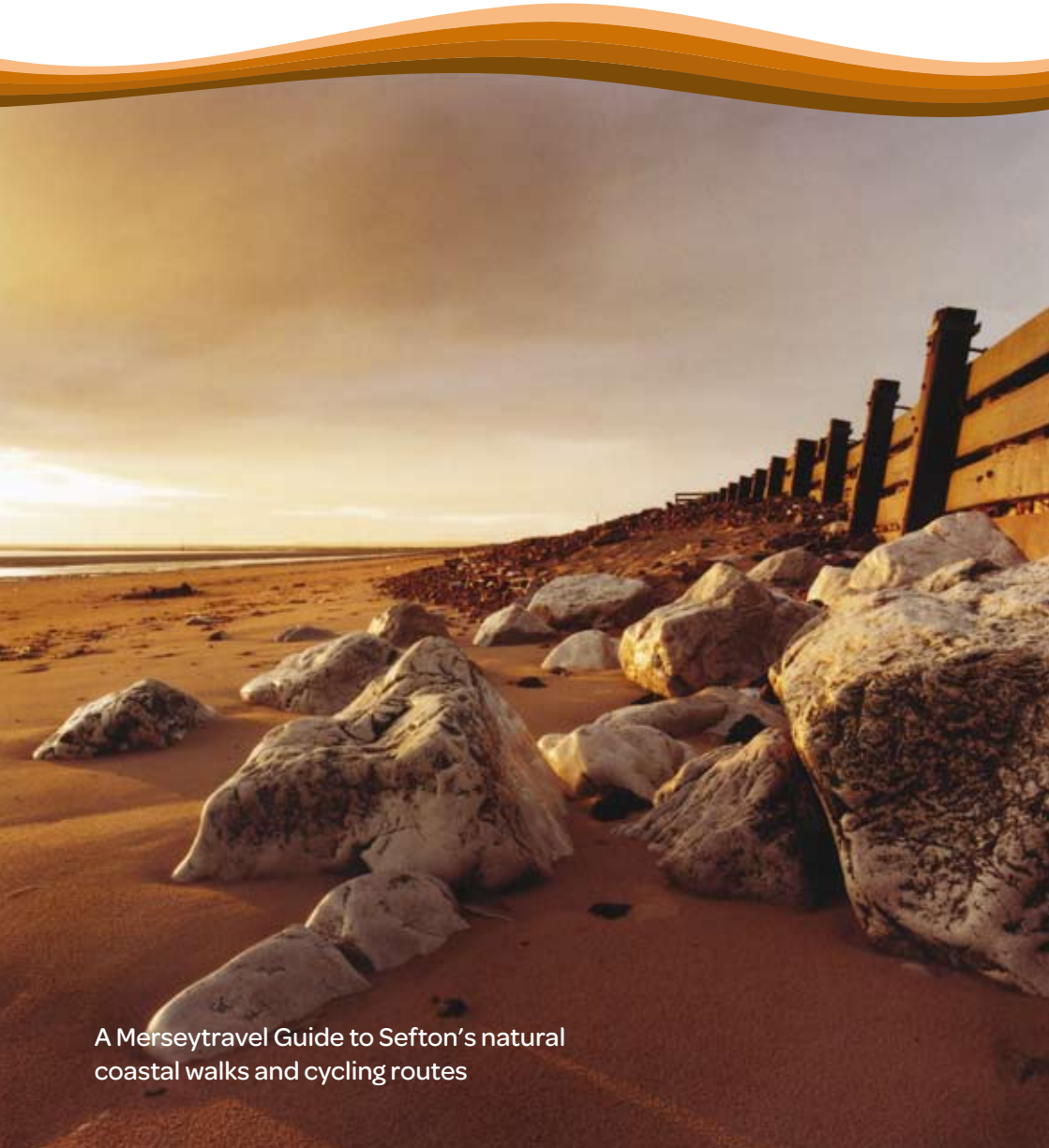


Walk & Cycle About Sefton's natural coast



A Merseytravel Guide to Sefton's natural
coastal walks and cycling routes



Sand dunes, squirrels and promenades

Just a mile or so from the mouth of the Mersey, you'll find broad, open, sandy beaches.



Did you know?

...Merseyside has a fantastic public transport network of buses, trains and Mersey Ferries

...you can buy a Merseytravel Saveaway for a great day out. It's the one-day off-peak ticket for any bus, train or Mersey Ferry in Merseyside

...this booklet is just one in a series; produced by Merseytravel and Mersey Waterfront. Pick up the other leaflets in the series from any Merseytravel Centre or log onto www.merseytravel.gov.uk

Sefton's natural coast is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive, while part of the coastal area between Formby and Crosby lies within the Ribble and Alt Estuaries Special Protection Area and Ramsar site.

All along this coast you'll find a string of nature reserves that provide a home to many rare and interesting species. Access to the coast is remarkably easy, with miles of open beaches and numerous accessible footpaths that criss-cross the endless dunes and adjoining woodland and grassland. As a visitor, you're always welcome – provided you keep to the waymarked paths and respect the wildlife value of this area.

Southport is described as sophisticated, cosmopolitan and vibrant with elegant shopping, bustling events and festivals – it has a classic feel, from the meticulously restored pier to the beautiful sandy beaches. It's the perfect place to enjoy a very traditional British seaside break or day trip – with every modern attraction you can imagine, including excellent dining and a huge choice of accommodation.

The region has a great public transport network. Merseytravel can help you make the most of the Sefton's natural coast and can provide details of all the buses, trains and Mersey Ferries in the area.

Mersey Waterfront aims to transform approximately 145km of diverse and breathtaking coastline into a world-class regional park for local communities, regional businesses and visitors alike.

The Mersey Basin Campaign was originally set up in 1985 as a partnership between central and local government, statutory bodies and private and voluntary organisations.

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Along the Sefton Coast



A string of nationally renowned nature reserves dot this area of sandhills, pinewoods and colourful heathland between Waterloo and Southport.

Walk&CycleAbout

Welcome to Sefton's natural coast, Merseyside's stunning face onto the Irish Sea.

Red squirrels scurry across carpets of pine needles, rare wildflowers dapple the sand dunes, a submerged forest appears at low-tide and old lanes wind to Britain's first lifeboat station. It's great, too, for kite-flyers, beachcombers, birdwatchers and those simply in search of glorious beaches on which to top up that tan! Merseyrail's Northern Line between Liverpool and Southport links the coastal towns and villages. Frequent daily trains run just a stone's throw inland from this captivating coastline. This booklet has seven suggestions for excellent day or half-day trips, ideal for all the family and just a few minutes' train ride from the City Centre.

Before beginning your trip you can always ring the Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 to check the times of buses, trains and ferries. See the Merseyrail Network Map on the inside back cover of this booklet.

On some trains the amount of space available for carrying bikes is limited so try to avoid peak periods. Train conductors reserve the right to refuse cycles if the train is very crowded or if there is already the maximum number of cycles on the train.

WALK 1

Birkdale's Woods & Sandhills

Trace the Sefton Coastal Footpath through the great sandhills of Ainsdale and Birkdale, home to the rare sand lizard. Wildflowers add a splash of colour in the sheltered dune-slacks. Short-cuts lead to stations on the Northern Line, near to handy pubs, shops and cafes. *See page 2*

WALK 2

The Woodland Path

Follow the Woodland Path, a gently undulating walk through the pinewoods of Ainsdale National Nature Reserve (look out for red squirrels here too) and across butterfly-rich heathland peppered with magnificent gorse bushes. *See page 4*

WALK 3

Freshfield Circular

An invigorating circular walk through heath, pinewoods, glorious dunes, sandy beaches and the National Trust's famous Red Squirrel Reserve. Part of the route follows the Fisherman's Path, an ancient route to the seashore used for centuries past by local boatmen. *See page 4*

WALK 4

Lifeboat Road & Ravenmeols

A walk combining coast and countryside, skirting rich farmland, old asparagus fields and wooded copses bright with wildflowers to reach the sandhills of the Ravenmeols Nature Reserve. Views across Liverpool

Bay to Snowdonia can be impressive. Lifeboat Road is named after the first lifeboat station in Britain, founded at Formby Point in 1776. *See page 6*

WALK 5

Crosby Promenade & Hightown Dunes

The Hightown Dunes walk explores the seashore and sandhills between Waterloo and the Alt Estuary near Hightown, an exceptionally varied route passing by fine Victorian sea-captains' villas and the remains of a submerged forest. *See page 8*

CYCLE 1

Ainsdale Circular

This easy ride from Ainsdale Station takes you to the level landscape of Downholland Moss where you are bound to see geese set to flight as you cycle along the long-abandoned northern section of the old Cheshire Lines route. It feels like cycling in Holland! **18 miles.** *See page 10*

CYCLE 2

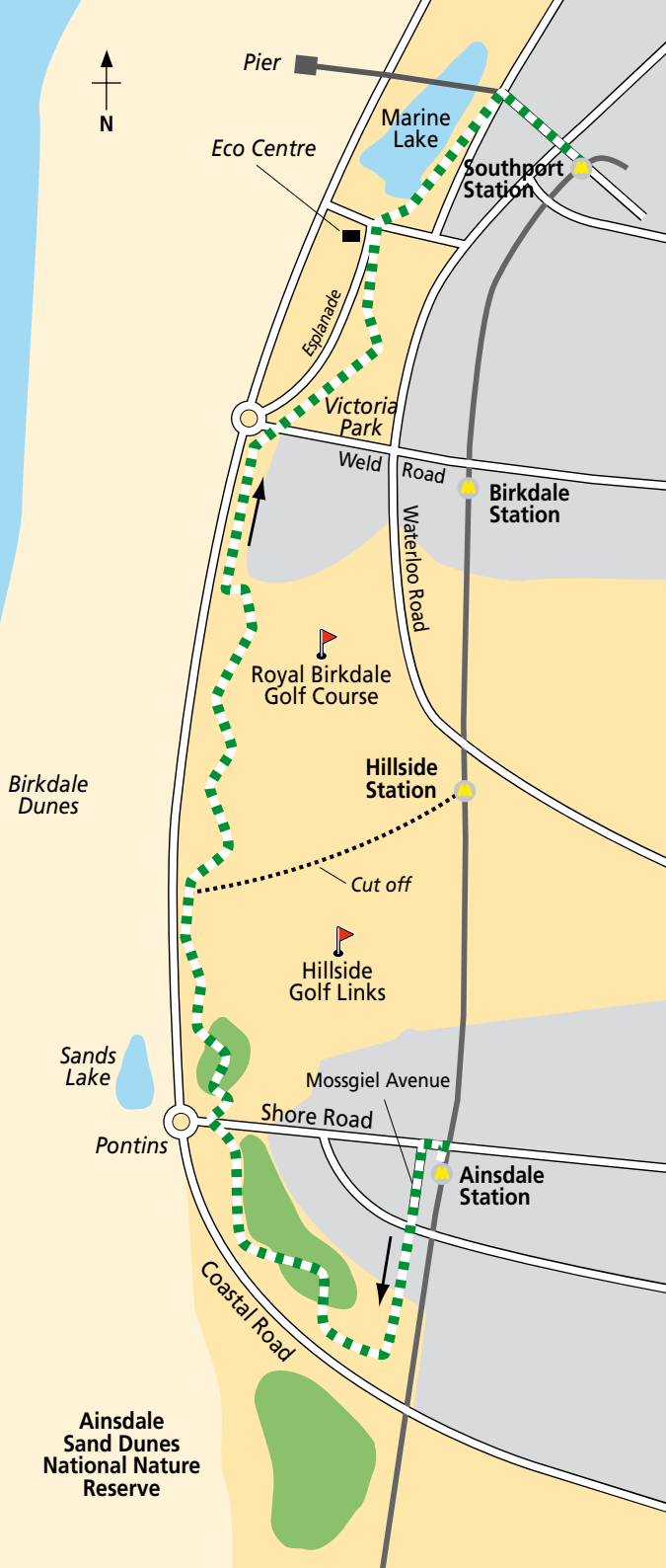
Along the Sefton Coast

From Blundellsands and Crosby Station ride along the coastal road to Hall Road Station then inland to Little Crosby with its fine church and hall, home to the Blundell family in earlier centuries. Ride through rich farmland to Hightown and continue through to Formby, said to have been founded by Vikings. **6 or 9 miles.** *See page 12*

WALK 1 Birkdale's Woods and Sandhills

Start: Ainsdale Merseyrail Station
Finish: Southport Merseyrail Station
Walking Time: 2-4 hours
Distance: up to 6.5 miles/10.5 km

 Generally unsuitable for wheelchair users due to sandy paths.



TravelWise is Merseyside's campaign to promote sustainable transport choices – walking, cycling and public transport. Walking and cycling for short trips as well as leisure helps you stay healthy, save money and be on time!

TRAVELWISE
MERSEYSIDE

www.LetsTravelWise.org

WALK 1

Birkdale's Woods and Sandhills

Between the coastal dunes and the golf course links lies a secret world of low woodland, marshy dune-slacks and wildflower-rich sandhills, all linked together on this superb stroll in northern Merseyside, ending in the elegant resort of Southport.

Turn from Ainsdale Station away from the shops. For the longer walk turn left along Mossgiel Avenue (beside the car park). To cut out the first one and a half miles, instead go straight along Shore Road to the roundabout near Pontins. Otherwise, take the railed footpath beyond the end of Mossgiel Avenue and beneath the bridge, go straight across the path (don't cross the footbridge) and keep alongside the railway to find a signboarded junction of paths about 100 yards before the road bridge. Fork right at the low Sefton Coastal Footpath post, soon passing the first of many white-topped posts marking the route through to Birkdale. At the next-but-one post keep left; in 100 yards turn right along a sandy path soon marked with Trans Pennine Trail signs.

Note the contrast between the sandy dunes and the woodland. The dunes are spangled with the bright flowers of trefoil, burnet and vetches amidst the creeping willow and sea buckthorn. The woodland is largely of birch, willow and in particular white poplar, its tough leaves rustling in the breeze like a localised snow flurry. Great drifts of honeysuckle perfume the air whilst virtually everywhere, dog rose and sweet briar dapple the undergrowth.

The path parallels the Coastal Road for a stretch, then snakes through more woodland on a raised boardwalk to reach an area of gnarled pines. At the far end join the roadside path to the traffic island near Pontins (NB. the short cut from Ainsdale Station joins here). Cross Shore Road inland of the island to find a Birkdale Sandhills Information Board.

Go through the gap stile and fork left, picking up the white-topped posts again. Wind through more low woodland and sandhills to come close again to the Coastal Road for about a quarter mile to reach a signboard. Here you can turn inland to Hillside Station (1.5 miles, waymarked with posts) or continue towards Southport. Beyond this, the distant horizon is smudged by the line of the high Bowland hills.

The way now winds through an area riddled with reedy ponds. Just inland, the wire fence marks the boundary of the famous Royal Birkdale Golf Links.

The undulating path eventually reaches a corner beside housing. Turn left here along the narrow footpath beneath the trees to reach the Coastal Road. Turn right along the footpath and remain with this to the beachside traffic roundabout at Birkdale Sands (straight inland from here is Birkdale Station, 800m). Carefully cross Weld Road just inland of this roundabout.

There's a choice of route here. Either walk to the roundabout and turn right through the bollards, following the quiet Esplanade road.

You may have time to visit the Southport Eco Visitor Centre (www.southportecocentre.com 0151 934 2728/2713). It sits on the Esplanade Park and Ride site and offers free access to information about the environment with a particular focus on climate change, energy, water, travel and tourism.

Alternatively, enter the grassed land off Weld Road and walk to the far-right corner, then bear half-left to enter Victoria Park, following a tarred path through these gardens, location for the famous Southport Flower Show each August.

Either way you'll reach a further traffic roundabout. Cross over, staying on the Esplanade for a short distance then enter Princes Park, with its Marine Lake and other attractions.

Southport Pier is at the far side. To find Southport Station, cross the road from the pier entrance, pass by the statue of Queen Victoria, then the impressive war memorial on Lord Street and walk to the station now visible in the distance on the right.


The Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills Local Nature Reserve is managed by the Sefton Council Leisure Services Coast and Countryside Service (0151 934 2967). A site leaflet is available from the Ainsdale Discovery Centre, The Promenade, Shore Road, Ainsdale-on-Sea.



WALK 2

The Woodland Path


Start: Freshfield Merseyrail Station
Finish: Freshfield or Ainsdale Station
Walking Time: 2 hours 30 minutes
Distance: 3-4 miles/5-6 km

 Unsuitable for wheelchair users due to sandy paths.

WALK 3

Freshfield Circular via Fisherman's Path

Start and Finish: Freshfield Merseyrail Station
Walking Time: 2 hours
Distance: 3.5 miles/5.5 km

 Dune Path South and beach section unsuitable for wheelchair users.



WALK 2

The Woodland Path

Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve was established in 1965 to protect the dune habitat of two of Britain's rarest animals, the natterjack toad and the sand lizard.

From Freshfield Station follow the route to Fisherman's Path as described in Walk 3. At the National Nature Reserve, go through the gate and at the information sign board, fork right along the gravelly track. This winds along within the woodland. About 100 yards after you pass by a golf course green on your right, go left at the path junction, following a Sefton Coastal Footpath waymark.

This, the Inner Woodland Path, is initially very sandy, then follow a pine needle covered track through the cool woodlands, the 1 mile route is marked here and there by white-topped posts. Red squirrels and wild birds abound.

At the edge of the woods you'll reach the wide Dobson's Ride. For a longer walk, turn left here (see next paragraph). For a shorter walk turn right to return to the Nature Reserve signboard. Here you can retrace the outward stretch back to Freshfield Station.

Remember to take extra care when crossing the railway tracks at the end of Fisherman's Path.

FOR A LONGER WALK...

Turn left along Dobson's Ride. Follow the Coastal Footpath waymarks beside the railway and beneath the Coastal Road bridge.

Turn right at the next junction of paths and keep alongside the railway (don't cross the footbridge), pass under a bridge to find Mossgiel Avenue and, at the far end, Ainsdale Station for trains to Freshfield, Liverpool and Southport.

Natural England welcomes visitors to the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve. Please remember to keep to the waymarked paths. For further information phone 01704 578774.



WALK 3

Freshfield Circular via Fisherman's Path

Fisherman's Path is a long established route to the shore for local people. Fishing was at one time an important part of the economy of Formby village. A few of the older thatched cottages can still be seen in the area.

From Freshfield Station walk along Montagu Road, parallel to the railway behind the station car park. Beyond the houses keep beside the railway to reach a gated crossing place. *Take care crossing the tracks, trains pass here every few minutes. Look long and carefully both ways before crossing straight over. Close the gates on both sides of the tracks.*

Walk ahead following the main path across the golf course – beware golfers playing through! Go through the entrance gates at the National Nature Reserve. Keep left at the information signs, following Fisherman's Path through the woods to the dunes.

At the Sefton Coastal Path waymark you can continue ahead, up and over the great sand dunes to reach the beach. Alternatively, turn left here and follow the waymarked route through the Dunes (the Sefton Coastal Path leads to Victoria Road).

The vast sandhills and dunes are constantly reshaped and moved by wind and storms. In places sheep graze where dunes once rose whilst in other places pine trees are buried, leaving gaunt trunks sticking out of dune tops. The sandhills at the end of Fisherman's Path are amongst the largest on the Sefton Coast.

Take time to beachcomb or watch tiny sanderlings scurrying just ahead of the waves. Continue along the beach for over half a mile to reach the beach marker post for Victoria Road. Leave the beach here, walk to and through the car park then follow the tarred lane to the Squirrel Reserve.

The highlight of this walk is the National Trust's Squirrel Reserve, many acres of pinewoods home to the increasingly rare red squirrel. Entry is free. Please keep dogs on leads.

Follow Victoria Road straight to Freshfield Station.

The National Trust's Freshfield Reserve is famous for its red squirrels which are accustomed to being fed and are very tame. The site is threaded with paths. Reserve leaflets, nuts for the squirrels and other information is available from the Warden's Office on Victoria Road. School groups are welcome by appointment. For further information phone 01704 878591.

WALK 4


Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols



Start and Finish: Formby Merseyrail Station

Walking Time: 3 hours 30 minutes

Distance: 5 miles/8 km

 Middle section between Hoggs Hill Lane and Lifeboat Road unsuitable for wheelchair users. However, the Lifeboat Road area has many paths suitable for wheelchair users. A site leaflet is available, phone the Rangers on 0151 934 2967.



WALK 4

Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols

The complex of sand-dunes, meadows and woodland here at Ravenmeols is amongst the largest in England, now mostly protected as both a Local and a National Nature Reserve. Information boards along the walk detail what is to be seen.

Turn right from Formby Station entrance. Walk down Formby Bridge and continue along Kirklake Road to the end, here turning left along St Luke's Church Road. As this bends right into Lifeboat Road, go ahead along the unsurfaced road following the Sefton Coastal Footpath waymarks. This tree-lined lane eventually also bends right. Again, here, go straight ahead along the rougher track, passing alongside a school playing fields then the isolated Asparagus Cottage, its name recalling a crop still grown locally. Keep ahead at any forks or junctions, eventually reaching a small wood at Cabin Hill, rich in wildflowers from early spring to mid-summer.

Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve is managed by Natural England (www.naturalengland.org.uk). Chiff-chaff and long-tailed tits flit amongst the branches whilst lapwings and skylarks nest in the sandy meadows. In spring keep a sharp eye out for toads, they're frequently seen crossing the path when moving between ponds in the dunes.

At the boundary of the Altcar Rifle Range turn right along the sandy track, Hoggs Hill Lane, following this beside the ranges and through the dunes to the beach. Turn right along the foreshore and walk the sands for the next mile.

The strand line (high-tide mark) is strewn with riches: mussel and razor shells, starfish, mermaid's purses (dogfish and skate egg-cases) and whelk shells of various sizes. The smashed remains of countless other shells colour the sands all shades of the rainbow. Salt and water-whitened driftwood adds further interest. On clear, sunny days the mountains of North Wales, far across Liverpool Bay, seem close enough to touch!

Walk along the sands to the beach marker post for "Nature Reserve". (You can leave the beach earlier at beach markers for Albert Road or Alexandra Road, cutting through to St Luke's Church Road).

Walk up through the dunes, eventually reaching Lifeboat Road (to the left of the tall, dead pines).

Turn right along this. There's a pleasant path parallel to the road in the trees on the left. At the end turn left, pass by St Luke's Church and walk back along Kirklake Road to Formby Station.

Alternatively, stay on the beach to reach the remains of the old lifeboat station, beyond which rise the huge sandhills of Formby Point. Walk inland along Lifeboat Road (signposted) to rejoin the start of the walk and return to Formby Merseyrail Station.

The Sefton Coast Partnership includes Sefton Council, the National Trust, Natural England, RSPB and other coastal agencies. These organisations are working together to protect and conserve the special wildlife and habitat of the Sefton Coast and welcoming visitors by providing suitable facilities for recreation and education. For further information log on to www.seftoncoast.org.uk

The Ravenmeols dune area, including Lifeboat Road, is managed by Sefton Council's Leisure Services Coast and Countryside Service (0151 934 2967).



Altcar Rifle Range

RIVER ALT



Coastal Path

Hightown Station

Submerged Forest


Sailing Club

Hightown Dunes

West Lancashire Golf Course

WALK 5 Crosby Promenade & Hightown Dunes

Start: Waterloo Merseyrail Station
Finish: Hightown Merseyrail Station
Walking Time: 3 hours
Distance: 5 miles/8km

 Waterloo to Hall Road is accessible to wheelchair users; assistance recommended.

Shortcut

Coastguard Station

Hall Road West

Hall Road Station

Shortcut

Blundellsands & Crosby Station

Crosby Promenade

Leisure Centre

Blundellsands Road West

Boating Lake

Gardens

Crosby Marina

Waterloo Station



WALK 5

Crosby Promenade & Hightown Dunes

At the height of the Empire, Liverpool was one of the world's busiest ports; local sea captains and ship owners became wealthy. Many liked to keep an eye on the comings and goings of their ships and so built fine houses away from the docks but within sight of the shipping lanes. Such are to be found in Waterloo and Crosby, the elegant colour-washed and balconied villas near this walk en-route to the estuary of Merseyside's "other" river, the River Alt.

Turn left from Waterloo Station and follow South Road to the end. Cross straight over Marine Crescent into the park (not the walled Marine Gardens) and fork right just past the conveniences, walking between the two lakes to reach the promenade.

You may well see cormorants fishing in the larger lake. To your left the dock skyline of Bootle and Seaforth has a new feature, the tall wind turbines, harnessing the fresh breezes of Liverpool Bay to generate enough electricity to supply a moderately sized town. On your right beyond the park are some of the fine Victorian houses built for the merchants and sea captains.

Turn right up the promenade. You can either follow this or the beach. Either way, at high tide the shipping lane to and from Liverpool's docks will be busy with tankers, freighters and ferries.

Next you'll find Antony Gormley's famous installation 'Another Place', life-size naked cast iron figures on Crosby beach!

For a shorter walk, take the tarred footpath, right, about 250 yards past the imposing new Waterfront Leisure Centre, and follow Blundellsands Road West inland to Blundellsands & Crosby Merseyrail station about 800 yards away. Otherwise, follow the promenade to the car park beside the Coastguard Station at Hall Road.

The Coastguard Station helps monitor shipping movements and marine safety throughout the Irish Sea, one of the busiest shipping areas in Europe. The end of the promenade here is a favourite place for fishermen, hoping to catch flatfish, bass or dogfish around high-tide when the waves break on the stone wall just below the railings. You can also cut the walk short here and walk inland along Hall Road West to Hall Road Station, about 500 yards away.

Take the rough road beyond the car park into Hightown Dunes and Meadows, the dunes protected by infill-tipping to prevent erosion.

The dunes and sandbanks are rich in birdlife.

The River Alt reaches the sea here just past the breakwater, an excellent place to watch for wading birds such as redshank, sandpipers, dunlin and knot; shelduck and wild geese also thrive. Across Liverpool Bay the distant mountains of Snowdonia may be seen.

Pass the pumping station and carry on past an isolated gate on your left. In a further 200 yards keep right at the fork, soon reaching a Sefton Coastal Footpath waymark post. Turn left here along the distinct path through the dunes, held together by sea buckthorn, creeping willow and tough grasses.

Follow the white-topped posts to reach Blundellsands Sailing Club. A board indicates a path to the beach and submerged forest - the shrunken trunks and stumps of a 4,000-year-old woodland are exposed here at low tide.

Rejoin the Coastal Footpath through the dunes, eventually reaching the river Alt and a boatyard. Join the road, cross the roundabout and keep ahead along Lower Alt Road to find Hightown Station, shops and a hotel.

If you're after a longer walk...

(A further 3.5 miles) then remain beside the River Alt at the boatyard, following the Sefton Coastal Path (yellow waymark discs) to reach Hoggs Hill Lane (see Walk 4) and paths to Formby Station.

Crosby Coastal Park is managed by the Sefton Council's Leisure Services Coast and Countryside Service. The Rangers look after a number of sites on the Coast. For leaflets and other information phone 0151 934 2967 or visit www.sefton.gov.uk





Birkdale Hills

To Southport

Ainsdale Station

AINSDALE

Ainsdale Hills

To Liverpool

Moor Lane

Plex Moss Lane

Downholland Brook

Leeds & Liverpool Canal

Scarbrick Arms

Downholland Moss

B5195

Downholland Cross

Downholland Moss

Acres Lane

Gore House Farm

CYCLE 1

Ainsdale Circular

Start: Ainsdale Merseyrail Railway Station

Finish: Ainsdale Merseyrail Railway Station

Ride Time: 3 hours

Distance: 18 miles/29km

Traffic: There is moderate traffic on the first mile of route and low levels experienced on the roads between Gore House Farm and Downholland Moss. Otherwise the route is traffic free.

Approximate Scale

1 km

1 mile

CYCLE 1

Ainsdale Circular

PLACES TO VISIT

RIDING THROUGH DOWNHOLLAND MOSS

The main feature of the ride is the rich “moss” farmland through which you pass, where arable crops have been grown for local markets throughout the ages. It is often possible to see flocks of geese or other birds gathering on these fields before taking flight to some distant land. In many respects it feels like the Netherlands; it is after all the lowlands of the North West. The Cheshire Lines Cycle Path was developed by Sustrans, a charity that campaigns for sustainable transport, in association with Sefton, Liverpool and West Lancashire Councils. It links with the old Liverpool Loop Line Path as part of the Trans Pennine Trail. Sustrans has launched a campaign to establish a national network of cycle routes with about 5,000 miles already developed and in use, including this section. (For further information about the National Cycle Network phone 0845 113 0065.)

AINSDALE

When in Ainsdale it is worth locking up the cycles to explore the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve and Ainsdale Hills local nature reserve on foot as both feature dunes and woodland.

The Ride

- 1 Leave Ainsdale Merseyrail Station into Shore Road and go immediately right into Chesterfield Road. It is safer to simply wheel your cycle into Chesterfield Road. At the end beside Chesterfield Close you proceed ahead under the road bridge. Emerge into Bridge End Drive and go right along Easedale Drive and then keep right into Kendal Way.
- 2 You reach a junction with Pinfold Lane. Cross over to a path and turn left along the cycle route which follows the coastal road out of Ainsdale to a junction with the main A565 road. Cross straight over into Moor Lane, which soon becomes Plex Moss Lane and narrows.
- 3 It bends left, right twice and left again. The surface is very uneven because of subsidence. About 300 metres ahead look for a track on the right. This is the access track to the Cheshire Lines Cycle Path. Pass by the edge of a wood and follow the track as it bends right.
- 4 You reach a junction where you go left. Ride through perfectly flat countryside across Downholland Moss. Cross Downholland Brook and then the path becomes a metalled road running alongside a major drainage channel. You will pass under a road and then come to a junction with another old trackbed, a rail line which at one time ran into Southport.
- 5 Keep ahead to ride beneath the B5195 and to the left of a waterworks. In approximately half a mile you reach a semi circular small parking area. This is where you turn left along a track to pass Gore House Farm. Go left into Acres Lane. It winds to a junction with the B5195, appropriately known as Flatman’s Lane. Turn right along this.
- 6 Pass a farm on the left and another on the right. The road bends sharply right to rise up to the Scarisbrick Arms at Downholland Cross, a public house which stands by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. However, your way is left at this bend along a narrower lane signposted to Haskayne. The road bends right then you turn left. This quiet lane links up with another. Keep ahead and follow this road as it rises up over the Cheshire Lines Path.
- 7 Apply your brakes on the descent as you bear left at the bottom along an access road to return to the cycle route. Go left and retrace your wheels back to Plex Moss Lane and Ainsdale.





CYCLE 2

Along the Sefton coast

PLACES OF INTEREST

SEFTON COAST

The Sefton Coast offers many miles of sandy beaches and lovely views. Through careful management by Sefton Council Ranger Service, English Nature and the National Trust you will find along the entire length of the Sefton Coast stretches of sand dunes and pockets of woodland which are home to rare species of plants and wildlife, it's especially noted for natterjack toads and red squirrels. There are several nature reserves which you can visit on foot especially from Lifeboat Road in Formby. It is important to keep to the paths to conserve these sensitive areas. You will need to lock your cycles up at a picnic area before venturing towards the sea. There are opportunities to take refreshment in Blundellsands, Hightown and Formby.

THE RIDE

- 1 From Blundellsands and Crosby Merseyrail Station (platform for trains to Southport) go right into Blundellsands Road West which leads into the very wide Burbo Bank Road along the Front. Keep ahead towards the Coastguard Station. This area was developed in the late 19th century as Blundellsands Park and there are still many of the original gothic-style villas nearby. On the way you will see St Nicholas fountain (1881) on the other side of the road. A biblical inscription reads: *"Drinkers of this water shall thirst again but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" St John, IV, 13&14.*
At the end go right into Hall Road West.
- 2 Pass Hall Road Merseyrail Station and follow Hall Road East until it bends sharp right to become Manor Road. Here you keep ahead along a bridleway, Dibb Lane, which runs between fields to Little Crosby.
- 3 On reaching the road in the village pause a moment or two. Ahead is the pretty St Mary's Church, much restored by William Blundell in the 1840s. He even had the level of the roads lowered here to make the church look more impressive in the landscape! Nearby is Crosby Hall, several estate cottages and buildings which date mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries. Records indicate that there has been a hall on this site since the 13th century although the building seen now is 17th century, built by the influential landowning family, the Blundells.
- 4 Ride ahead on the B5193. It bends left to leave the village and once again you can feel the breeze on your face as you proceed along Moss Lane towards Hightown. This road is busier so be wary of traffic. Within half a mile you reach a junction with Gorsey Lane by a pocket of woodland known as Flea Moss Wood. Unusually for this area, the woodland is full of rhododendrons.
- 5 Go left to follow Gorsey Lane. It bends right and then left by Moss Farm. Just beyond you reach a junction with a track on the right. Go along this through fields towards Hightown. Turn right at the end when you reach the houses. It then becomes a road again, Sandy Lane, which leads to Hightown Merseyrail Station on the left.
- 6 If you want to continue to Formby you can expect more traffic, mainly on roads in Formby. Continue along Alt Road to a junction. Keep right here and ride to a junction near Whitedge Farm. Keep left here and this lane leads up to the busy A565 road.
- 7 Fortunately there is a cycle path beside the road. Turn left and follow this to the outskirts of Formby where the path gives out at a traffic roundabout, so take care. Go left and follow Liverpool Road (B5424) towards the town centre. The road bends right and you approach a number of shops.
- 8 At the mini roundabout by a thatched cottage, go left along Raven Meols Lane. Continue over the level crossing and then ahead at Queen's Road and then Bushby's Lane, towards the sea. At the end of the road there's a junction with Lifeboat Road ahead and a track on the left known as St Luke's Church Road. You can go ahead here along Lifeboat Road to the information point on the right. Obviously, there is no cycling beyond this point. Your bike would soon grind to a halt in the soft sand so dismount at the car park. It is, however, a great spot for a picnic. There are also many fine walks through to the nature reserves along the coast so lock up your bike and explore a little.
- 9 Otherwise, at the junction with Lifeboat Road go right to pass St Luke's Church, then right again along Kirklake Road to Formby Merseyrail Station which can be accessed from the road above the railway line.

Sefton's natural coast

Sefton's natural coast is perfect for those who want to get away from it all and explore. Stretching out over 22 miles this unique and tranquil coastline comprises beautiful beaches, sand dunes, woodland and farmland, is a haven for all sorts of flora and fauna and the location of the internationally renowned 'Another Place' sculptures by Antony Gormley.

BIRD-WATCHING

The coastline from Crosby to Southport is designated for its wildlife value and provides over-wintering habitats for a number of important species of ducks, geese, wading birds and many others besides. These birds can be viewed right along the coast and are easily accessible at the RSPB Marshside Reserve north of Southport (www.rspb.org.uk) and at other sites including Crosby Marine Park, Southport Pier and Formby.

PIER TRAM

Take a trip along England's longest pier – not as tiring as you might expect if you hop onto the brand new pier tram and let it whisk you in style to the end of the pier, the modern pier pavilion and the outstanding views of Liverpool Bay. On a clear day you can see Blackpool Tower.

WATERSPORTS

Wind and watersports are popular with a hub of activity at Ainsdale offering power kiting, kite buggying and land boarding (one of the premier sites in the UK). Southport and Crosby marine lake also allow windsurfing and dinghy sailing. Ainsdale is also the only Blue Flag designated beach in the Northwest.

WILDLIFE

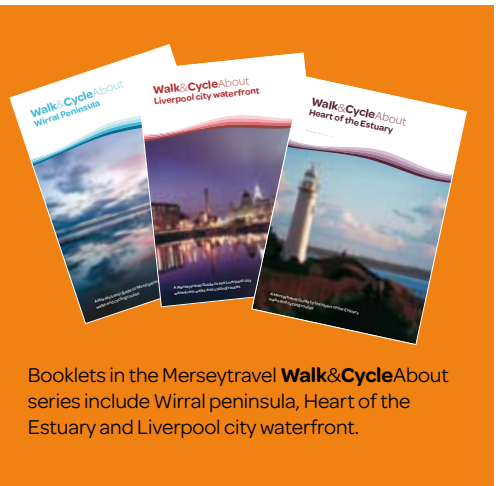
Sefton is well known for its diverse wildlife not least the endangered red squirrel, sand lizard and natterjack toad. It is also the location of the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve, rolling sand dunes and pine woodlands that are teeming with life – all you have to do is look.

It's Bike Time

From May to September TravelWise Merseyside runs Bike Time cycle rides and Fix It sessions so you can enjoy the summer on two wheels.

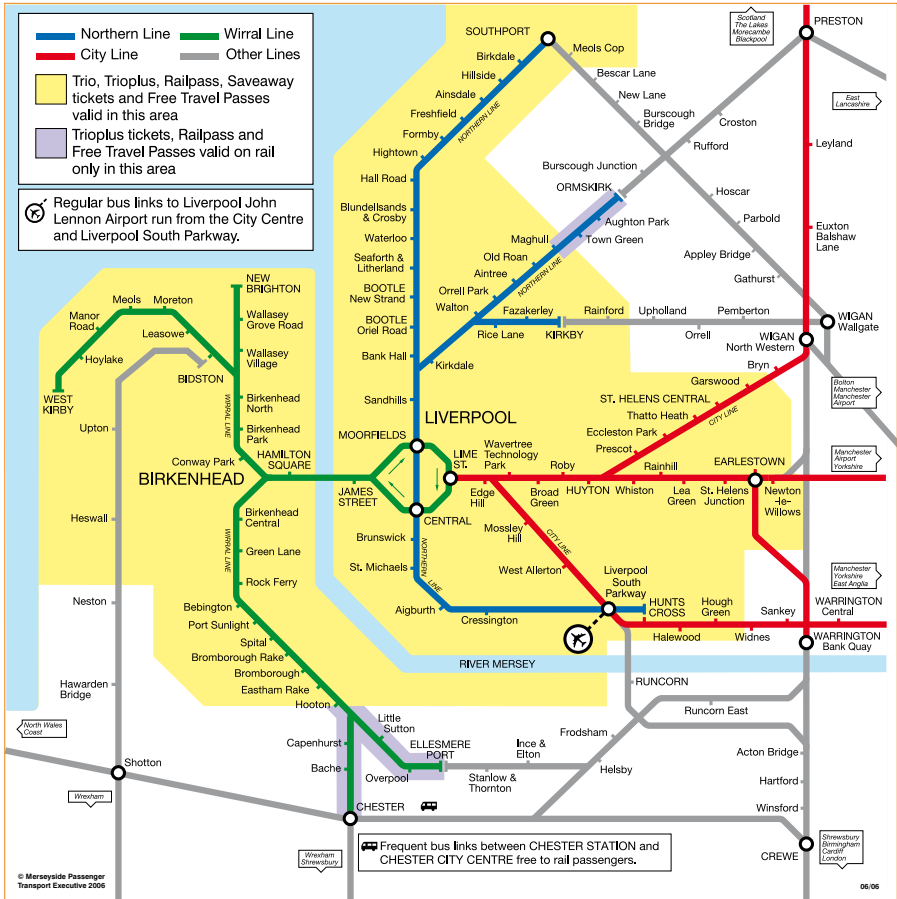
- Easy led cycle rides for everyone to enjoy for free
- Free Bike Fix It sessions
- Cycle skills sessions for adults
- Free cycle maps

Log onto www.LetsTravelWise.org for rides in your area or nearby or email info@letstravelwise.org for your free map or if you want to know more.



Booklets in the Merseytravel **Walk&CycleAbout** series include Wirral peninsula, Heart of the Estuary and Liverpool city waterfront.

Merseyrail route planner



Relax and help keep Merseyside cleaner and healthier by using our excellent Merseyrail trains to reach locations in this guide, particularly the Sefton and Wirral coasts and the city waterfront. The Merseyrail network will also take cycles at no charge – space permitting. For further information call the Traveline.

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Walks researched, written and maps designed by Simon Holt Marketing.

Photography by Sefton MBC, Simon Holt Marketing. Cover photography by McCoy Wynne.

Cycle rides devised by the Merseyside Cycling Campaign.

www.merseyworld.com/mcc

www.cyclingsolutions.co.uk

Detailed leaflets about individual Nature Reserves visited by the walks in this booklet are available locally from information or wardens offices on-site. Some leaflets are also available from the Tourist Information Centre in Southport and local libraries. Information about individual sites is also available at www.seftonsnaturalcoast.com

The full Merseyrail Network is shown on the map on the inside back cover. For further information on Merseyrail, Bus and Ferry services telephone Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit your local Merseytravel Centre.

For a longer challenge, the 20-mile Sefton Coastal Footpath links the entire length from Waterloo to Southport, crossing high sandhills and meandering through shady pinewoods and rich farmland. It is signed throughout by yellow waymark discs. Linking paths and lanes lead to Merseyrail Stations on the Northern Line.

The rangers lead regular guided walks throughout the area, phone 0151 934 2967 for details. For information about events organised by Sefton Council, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB and other partners please see www.seftoncoast.org.uk and www.seftonsnaturalcoast.com

Please note that walking times and distances given in this leaflet are approximate.



These walks are probably unsuitable for wheelchair users due to adverse surface conditions and restricted access.

This information can be provided in alternative formats on request.

Travel Information	 traveline public transport info	0871 200 22 33
OPEN 8AM TILL 8PM 7 DAYS A WEEK		
www.merseytravel.gov.uk		

For further information on rail, bus and ferry services phone the Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit your local Merseytravel Centre.



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