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East Anglia,  
ENGLAND





England's enigmatic east is a sampling platter of old England, without the usual touristy trinkets. Bundled together as East Anglia, the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire are dotted with villages of half-timbered 16th-century houses and unexpectedly arty wool towns, backing a coastline studied with beaches and bird reserves that echo with the boom of bitterns every spring. Sure, there are popular spots (Cambridge; the Norfolk Broads waterways) but also timeless escapes, where participating in the 21st century feels entirely optional. After visiting, you won't see England in quite the same way again.

#### OLDE ENGLAND – BUT THE REAL DEAL

After the trials and tribulations of the early 2020s, many travellers are desperate to

escape the modern age, and East Anglia is happy to help out. The past seeps from the landscape in the former heartland of England's wool trade, where medieval

## highlights

**1** / Listen as the wind amongst the reeds creates a soul-soothing soundtrack at birding hotspots such as **Minsmere** and **Cley Marshes**.

**2** / University-hop in **Cambridge**, visiting legendary libraries, exceptional museums and college greens that hosted Newton, Hawking, Darwin and the Monty Pythons.

**3** / Have a night out in **Norwich**, Norfolk's cultured capital, enjoying theatre, live music, art shows and creative dining.

**4** / Explore **North Norfolk** on local buses between Cromer and Kings Lynn, stopping for bird reserves, beaches, handsome **Holkham Hall** and East Anglia's best seafood.

money built palatial mansions, sky-piercing cathedrals and some of the world's most prestigious seats of learning. But this isn't the pre-packaged 'Ye Olde English Village' experience – history is a living thing out east. Traditional arts and crafts are fiercely protected and ancient architecture is lived in and preserved. Rent a cottage to stay in and it will probably come half-timbered, wonky and older than most modern nations.

Why visit in 2025? Because word is creeping out, and competition is growing for those dreamy, centuries-old cottages. Using the cities of Cambridge and Norwich as springboards to reach the Suffolk and Norfolk coastline, you'll feel the pace of life ease tangibly as you step off the train – an increasingly rare experience in this crowded island.

#### A FEAST FROM THE EAST

East Anglia was doing organic, local and seasonal long before it became cool. Meals here come layered and lavish – such as the inspired creations of Daniel Clifford at Cambridge's Midsummer House – or the agreeably unpretentious, like munching fish fresh off the boats and crisp chips in the charming coastal towns of Aldeburgh and Southwold. What you'll notice everywhere are dishes leaning towards the sea. Thanks to the protected fisheries of the Wash, East Anglia never lost its taste for seafood, as other regions did when British fishing declined during WWII. Menus are

Norwich, cleaved by the River Wensum and topped by its magnificent cathedral **1** Looking down Cambridge's Trinity St to the tower of St John's College **2** Half-timbered heaven in the Suffolk village of Lavenham



© Helen Huxton/Shutterstock **1** © gowthrod/Shutterstock **2** © Andy333/Shutterstock





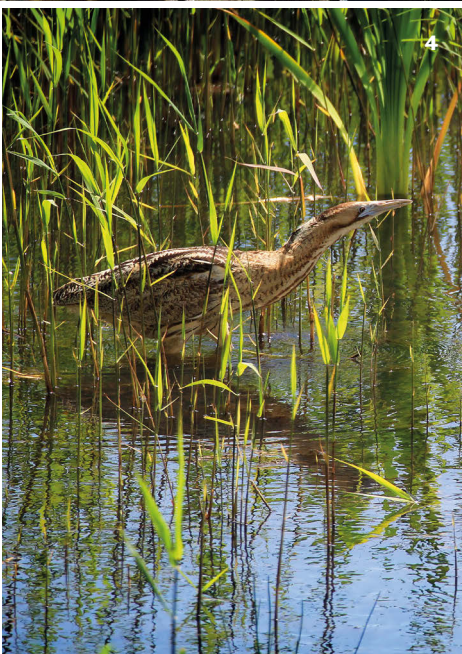
I love the quirky market towns with unusual shops and a real community vibe. There are also spectacular places to explore nature, such as Minsmere and Dersingham Bog, and some absolutely stunning scenery.

**ANNETTE SALKALD**  
/ North Suffolk Coast Reserves warden,  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

alive with oysters and mussels, dressed crab, smoked fish, potted shrimp and more – even chip shops are getting in on the action, with lobster and chips and *moules marinières* popping up amongst the usual favourites. Foodies make a beeline for Cambridge, the Suffolk village of Dedham, the north Norfolk coast (where every village has its own seafood treat) and Norwich, where weekend dining options along St Benedicts St give London a run for its money.

### EASTERN EDGE

Just because this region drips with history, don't imagine that it's stuck in the past. The east has a long history filled with orthodoxy-busting creativity, anti-establishmentarianism and rebellion – this is, after all, the home turf of king-killer Oliver Cromwell, pioneering music producer Brian Eno and warrior queen Boudicca. Small theatres, community arts centres and venues in converted churches showcase everything from radical political shows to performance art and thrash metal, particularly in student-oriented Norwich and Cambridge, where every second building seems to host something arty and



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unexpected. Music, both mainstream and eccentric, gets its dues at enthusiastic festivals such as Latitude and the Cambridge Folk Festival, and high culture gets a look in too, most famously at the Aldeburgh Festival, founded by former resident, composer Benjamin Britten. Then there's the visual arts scene, which buzzes with life at venues including Colchester's Firstsite, Houghton Hall's sculpture garden and Cambridge's Kettle's Yard. Pay attention to flyers and posters all over East Anglia – you never know what you'll stumble across.

3 Fruits of the sea for sale in Aldeburgh 4 Listen for the booming call of the elusive bittern at the RSPB's Minismere Nature Reserve 5 East Suffolk beachlife in Southwold

### when to go

East Anglia is lovely in late summer, when long evenings demand trips to pub gardens and walks along the foreshore. From June to September, book ahead for accommodation, Broads boats and North Norfolk dining.

### how to get there

There are fast and frequent train services to Cambridge, Norwich and Lowestoft. A hire car will make exploring easier, but local bus services connect most towns and villages.

### further reading

Read Graham Swift's *Waterland* to be transported to the wartime Fens wetlands, or John Preston's *The Dig* for the backstory of the Sutton Hoo burial treasure.