



Curlews

Tourist guide to Manningtree and Mistley



The entire eight miles of the Stour estuary are a magnet for artists, walkers, birdwatchers, cyclists and sailing enthusiasts.

From the waterfront there are fantastic views across the Stour Estuary, a stroll or picnic at Mistley Walls makes the most of this delightful scenery and you can also see the famous Swan Colony. Also well worth a visit are the beautiful Mistley Towers, the remains of a medieval church remodelled to a Robert Adam design in 1776.

One of the most famous contributors to the area was Richard Rigby who had lavish plans to turn Mistley into a spa town. The area acquired its Georgian character from his attention. He engaged the famous architect Robert Adam, but his plans were never brought to fruition as money ran out when Rigby was disgraced because of his mismanagement of his position as Paymaster of the Forces. Mistley Towers and the Swan Fountain are perhaps the most notable remains of Adam's work.

For two centuries, Manningtree and Mistley were important brewing centres and ports. Even today, although perhaps on a reduced scale, the brewing industry is still well represented and Mistley is a small but thriving port.

The unprepossessing outer parts of Manningtree give little clue to the extraordinary charm of the Georgian and Victorian buildings in the High Street which house an excellent selection of shops, pubs and restaurants.

Witchfinder General

One of Manningtree's more dubious claims to fame is that it is believed to have been the home and burial place of the famous Witchfinder General Matthew Hopkins, who is believed to have been responsible for the killing of around 300 women between the years 1644 and 1646. Many of these women were accused of witchcraft by children.

He carried out his interrogations mainly at inns in Manningtree and Mistley, with trials being held in Chelmsford. East Anglia was known as the 'Witch Country'.

Hopkins is believed to have died and been buried in Mistley in 1647. His memory inspired at least one film, *Witchfinder General* (1968).



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Tourist guide to Constable country and the coast

Dedham Vale, with the River Stour, straddles the borders of Essex and Suffolk and is otherwise known as Constable Country after the famous painter John Constable.

Dedham was once one of the opulent wool towns in the 15th Century, and sits beside the River Stour where John Constable's father had a watermill (since replaced with a victorian one).

Flatford Bridge and the 16th century Bridge Cottage will be the first things you'll see when arriving at Flatford. Crossing the bridge, from the cottage side, and turning left will take you to the riverside views of The Granary Barn and then Flatford Mill.



Harwich is a busy coastal town with an international port located on the estuary of the rivers Stour and Orwell in north-east Essex. The town is an historically important port which has provided a sheltered anchorage for shipping through the ages. The old town of Harwich is a conservation area containing many historic buildings. The neighbouring town of Dovercourt, while appearing much more modern, actually merits a mention in the Domesday Book.

Frinton's beautiful sweeping greensward, immaculately clean sandy beaches, tree lined avenues, fine coastal walks and the summer repertory theatre make a visit to the town a unique experience. The glorious beach is still studded with Victorian style beach huts reminiscent of the days when the town was a favourite retreat for the aristocracy and even royalty.

Walton always has something going on. Ten-pin bowling or sea fishing on the country's second longest pier, beautiful beaches, cliff top walks and gardens, a visit to the Naze Tower or strolling through the town's narrow streets, Walton retains the ability to charm visitors of all ages. The Naze itself is about 1.5 miles north of the pier and there are pleasant walks to be enjoyed on the cliff tops.





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Tourist guide to local places of interest

Other Coastal Towns

Brightlingsea is a town rich in seafaring history and the only one of the Cinque Ports outside of Kent and Sussex, the charming town has many interesting buildings, shops, pubs and restaurants. It also boasts a European Blue Flag beach. At the top of Brightlingsea Creek is the village of Thorrington, with outstanding views around the only remaining Tide Mill in Essex. Thorrington also boasts an ancient church, an ideal place for those seeking some tranquility in the summer. St Osyth village is centred on a crossroads and contains an attractive group of shops and restaurants and two museums. The nearby creek has a small boatyard and water skiing lake.

Colchester & The Castle

The Castle, built by the Normans around 1100, was the largest Norman keep ever built. It was constructed on the base of the Roman temple of Claudius which was built one thousand years earlier. Essex has no natural building stone and the castle was built from reclaimed Roman building materials. Colchester is still a town full of buildings of great age and character. There are many restaurants and historic pubs, catering from all tastes from MacDonaldis through to French, Thai, Nepalese and of course Indian & Chinese. Colchester also has many quaint old style shopping areas as well as the more modern shopping centre in Culver Square with its water fountain and street entertainers, a popular local meeting place plus a market held every Friday.

Beth Chatto's Gardens.

The Gardens, which are open to the public, are located next to the Colchester to Clacton-on-Sea road, the A133, about 4 miles east of Colchester and just the other side of Elmstead Market. They have their own parking facilities.

Beth Chatto started her garden in 1960. The site consisted of neglected wasteland in a shallow valley with dry gravel soil on the higher ground and a spring-fed ditch in the bottom.

Layer Marney Tower

Layer Marney Tower is the tallest Tudor gatehouse in Britain. Dating from the 16th century it lies in the small hamlet of Layer Marney about 7 miles South West of Colchester. This building was intended, by the First Lord Marney, to be the gatehouse of a much larger house. The main house, however, was never built.

As a gatehouse it would certainly have been impressive with a tower eight stories high.

Tendring's Villages

Away from the coast there are a wealth of beautiful and picturesque villages to discover and explore.

Some of the lesser-visited villages can easily be reached on foot, by bike or car. The area's villages offer a spectacular range of floral displays and gardens and have an excellent record in Anglia in Bloom competitions.

Ardleigh, Beaumont, Great Bentley, Little Bentley, Tendring and Thorpe are all well worth a visit.