

The Fantastic Five... Norfolk Nature Trail

Winter walk at Congham Hall

An easy, three-mile, self-guided walk will take you through Grimston Warren and Roydon Common, the largest surviving open heath in West Norfolk, to discover some fascinating winter secrets. On this circular ramble, expect to see Dartmoor ponies and British white cattle grazing on the frost-covered heather – natural mowers brought here to help gently maintain a healthy heath. Hares might also make an appearance in the short grass, while glimpses of Hen Harriers, Merlin and even the Great Grey Shrike are possible sights in the skies above. Walking notes are available at hotel reception or can be downloaded at www.conghamhallhotel.co.uk/interesting-walks-in-norfolk.

Congham Hall, Lynn Road, Congham, King's Lynn, PE32 1AH
T 01485 600250 / www.conghamhallhotel.co.uk

Wild geese on The Wash

Every winter, The Wash at Snettisham hosts one of the UK's greatest wildlife spectacles when more than 40,000 pink-footed geese flock here from their breeding grounds in Iceland, Greenland and Spitsbergen. At dusk and dawn, the sky swirls with the wildfowl as they rise from or head to their roosts. For a closer look, consult the RSPB's tide timetables – during big tides, the encroaching sea pushes the geese onto the banks and islands in front of the RSPB hides. Check the RSPB website for guided walks, but you can make your own way there, too.

RSPB Snettisham Reserve, Beach Road, Snettisham, PE31 7RA
www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/snettisham

Deer at Snettisham Park

Take a deer safari at Snettisham Park, a working farm that's also home to a herd of red deer. This family-friendly, 45-minute trailer ride features an informative commentary and offers the chance to get up close and hand-feed deer nuts to the animals. At this time of year, the hinds and magnificent stags will be wearing their shaggy winter coats.

Snettisham Park, Bircham Road, Snettisham, King's Lynn PE31 7NG
T 01485 542425 / www.snettishampark.co.uk

Seal pups at Blakeney Point

This four-mile-long spit is the site of England's largest colony of grey seals. Winter marks the breeding season, October to January, when the pups emerge covered in silky white fur, and the beach becomes a nursery, with the females feeding their young for three weeks before leaving them to fend for themselves. Hard on the heels of pupping comes the mating season, a torrid time on the shingle when the bull seals fight for territory and mates. Viewing seals is a sensitive pursuit, best done by boat to avoid disturbing the animals, but it's also possible to follow a three-mile trail out to the colony on foot. Regular boat trips are offered in winter by Beans Boat Trips (01263 740505) and Temples Seal Trips (01263 740791) from Morston Quay, Quay Lane, Holt, NR25 7BH.

Blakeney Point, Blakeney National Nature Reserve, Blakeney, Holt NR25 7BH

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blakeney-national-nature-reserve

Snowdrops at Walsingham

In the depths of winter, the snowdrop is a glowing hint of spring. As early as the last week of January, the carpets of snowdrops laid across the 18 acres of woodlands and riverbanks around Walsingham Abbey begin to open. From mid-February to early March, you can see them in full bloom. Walsingham's grounds provide the ideal conditions for these tiny miracles to thrive, and enthusiasts of the snowdrop, known as galanthophiles, will lie on the wet leaves to properly appreciate its myriad variations.

Walsingham Abbey, The Shirehall Museum, Common Place, Walsingham, NR22 6BP

T 01328 820259 / www.walsinghamabbey.com/snowdrops

Please check the individual venues for opening times before you visit.

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BRANCASTER STAITHE

WELLS -NEXT -THE -SEA

BLAKENEY

SALTHOUSE

SHERINGHAM

WEST RUNTON

OLD HUNSTANTON

CROMER

HOUGHTON HALL

SANDRINGHAM

RSPB SNETTISHAM

CONGHAM HALL

KINGS LYNN

NORWICH