

A DAY OUT AROUND AYLSHAM & BROADLAND

An enjoyable way to explore some of this area is to use the Bure Valley Railway from Aylsham to Wroxham buying a combined rail & boat ticket which includes a 1 1/2 hour cruise on the Broads with bar & coffee on board. You can also hire a boat yourself for a few hours here or at Horning, or follow the Wildlife Water Trail at How Hill Nature Reserve (A1062 from Wroxham).

Do take time to explore this busy centre of the pleasure boat industry which boasts of having the biggest village store in the world – Roy's of Wroxham. You can relax nearby at Hoveton Hall gardens with its woodland & lakeside walks, rare rhododendrons, azaleas & water plants and admire the herbaceous borders of the Spidel walled garden. Or go up the road to Neatishead where you will find superb dried & silk flowers in a 300 year old barn at Willow Farm Flowers.

If Wroxham seems crowded you can soon escape to other less frequented Broads and capture the timeless atmosphere of Hickling where you may be lucky enough to see the rare Norfolk Hawker Dragonfly or a Swallow-Tail butterfly, both of which still breed on the Broad. Norfolk wherries can be seen at Womack Staithe Ludham and don't miss the medieval arch of Potter Heigham bridge and the Museum of the Broads with its traditional tools & crafts. Not far away is Horsey Windpump with splendid views from the top. Unspoilt sandy beaches in a rural setting stretch from Mundesley to Waxham

If you are interested in crafts you are spoilt for choice with Wroxham Barns, Alby Crafts & the Black Sheep shop nearby. Wroxham Barns has gifts & crafts in beautifully restored C18th barns which are also home to craftsmen's workshops where you can watch them at work. The tearoom has a tempting selection of home made cakes.

Black Sheep at Aylsham use their own wool - visit the farm at Ingworth in summer – to make classic countrywear which you can see being made in the workshop. A good place to eat here is the restaurant at The Greens. Just up the A140 is Alby Crafts with a wonderful display of crafts & 14 studio workshops set in a plantsman's garden of 4 acres featuring unusual plants, shrubs & a wild area. Again the tearoom is recommended. Another beautiful garden nearby is Mannington Hall which has an outstanding collection of heritage roses. There is also a Saxon church, Victorian Follies and country walks & trails.

Blickling Hall, a Jacobean mansion, has a fine display of tapestries and furniture and beautiful gardens in a magnificent parkland setting. Walk through the park to enjoy the wildlife on the lake before having a bite to eat in the restaurant or the Buckinghamshire Arms.

If you like exploring the countryside on foot or by bike, this is a good area to get off the roads. Wolterton Park has marked trails, and an adventure playground, in 340 acres of historic parkland and do leave time to sample the food at the Saracens Head here.

We have mentioned the Bure Valley Railway where there is a 9 mile walk beside the line and you can relax on the train for the return journey. You can hire bikes at Reepham Station and ride along the Marriotts way , a traffic free 26 miles from Aylsham to Norwich or get off the beaten track in Broadland - maps available.