

Walk & Cycle About Wirral Peninsula



A Merseytravel guide to Wirral Peninsula
walks and cycling routes



The lonely sea and sky

Merseyrail's Wirral Line brings the Wirral Peninsula within easy reach for everyone.



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

The North Wirral Coastal Park offers open vistas of sea and sky backed by windswept sand dunes, promenades and golf links.

With a fascinating mix of the old and new, the Wirral Peninsula is dotted with old woodland and laced by country lanes linking ancient villages. There are high heathlands with dramatic views across to North Wales in one direction and the Lake District in another. The Wirral has remarkable beaches, saltmarshes and some of the most extensive sand-dunes in the country; all protected by a necklace of country parks stretching the length of the peninsula.

Wirral's towns are as varied as its countryside; the elegance of West Kirby, the traditional seaside resort of New Brighton and the famous garden village of Port Sunlight are all worth lingering visits. Wirral is ripe for exploration on Merseyrail's Wirral Line trains, ferries from Pier Head and buses radiating from Birkenhead.

The region has a great public transport network. Merseytravel can help you make the most of the Wirral Peninsula 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.



Whatever the time of year, a walk in the Wirral holds a promise of something new, migratory birds on the wing, the changing seasons of the commons and woodland, and sunsets over the Dee to remember on the journey home.

Walk&CycleAbout

The Wirral coast and countryside is ideal for a break. Miles of seashore and inland walks across heaths, commons and woodland to entice you back, time and again, on your local train or bus.

Merseyrail's Wirral Line brings the Wirral Peninsula within easy reach for everyone. Only a few minutes by train from central Liverpool, it's the ideal choice for a day or half day outing. There is also an excellent network of local bus services that make the Wirral easy to get to every day of the week.

These four walks are easy going and the two cycle routes are full of interesting things to see with fine views. They're good fun for all the family and make a great little outing in Autumn and Winter too. Wrap up well!

Each walk introduces a part of the Wirral coast or a well known inland area featuring a local common or country park with fantastic views of the Dee or Mersey Estuaries.

Before beginning your trip you can always ring the Traveline on **0871 200 22 33** to check the times of 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 are already the maximum number of cycles on the train.

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!

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www.LetsTravelWise.org

WALK 1 **MOCKBEGGAR TRAIL**

Passing by a restored 18th Century beacon lighthouse at Leasowe, the walk runs between reed fringed pools and wild flower meadows to formidable sea defences where migratory birds can be seen during the Autumn and Winter, continuing to Meols by way of Dove Point.

See page 7

WALK 2 **RED ROCKS TRAIL**

A very pleasant coastal walk to Red Rocks and through the thriving dunes at Red Rocks Marsh Nature Reserve before reaching the sands of West Kirby, where there are good views of the Dee estuary and the Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve, one time haunt of smugglers. See page 7

WALK 3 **THURSTASTON COMMON**

A contrasting walk from Royden Park to Thurstaston Common, land used for grazing throughout the centuries. You climb Thurstaston Hill for excellent views across the Dee estuary to Wales before returning to the Visitor Centre. See page 9

WALK 4 **HESWALL DALES**

A walk to Heswall church and to Wirral Country Park, a haven for wildlife between Hooton and West Kirby. Leave it to climb the heathland of Heswall Dales, a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with exceptional views over to Wales. See page 9

CYCLE 1 **NORTH WIRRAL COASTER**

The ride from Seacombe offers a great perspective across the Mersey to Liverpool's historic waterfront. There are particularly fine views of the Pier Head and the Liver Building. In New Brighton, you will pass by Fort Perch Rock. See page 11

CYCLE 2 **SOUTH WIRRAL TOUR**

This ride offers exquisite views of the Dee estuary, especially along Denhall Lane, but the endearing feature of the route has to be the number of pretty villages through which it passes. See page 13



WALK 1 Mockbeggar Trail

Start: Moreton Merseyrail Station
 Finish: Meols Station
 Walking Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
 Distance: 3 miles/5 km



WALK 2 Red Rocks Trail

Start: Hoylake Merseyrail Station
 Finish: West Kirby Station
 Walking Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
 Distance: 2.5 miles/4 km



WALK 1

Mockbeggar Trail

From Moreton Station go right along Pasture Road towards the coast. At the bridge over the Birket, cross the road and follow the public footpath along the right bank of the stream to Lingham Lane.

This delightful path, brushed by water loving plants, allows an unusual view of Leasowe Lighthouse, built in 1763 as a beacon to seafarers in those early times. It is now a visitor centre for the North Wirral Coastal Park which is open to the public on 'Lighthouse Open Days', for more information go to www.leasowelighthouse.co.uk

At Leasowe Common turn left to walk past the lighthouse towards the sea and 200 metres beyond, take the public bridleway on the right (not the footpath).

This runs through a conservation area where special protection is afforded to wildlife. Heading in the direction of the sea wall, there are several shallow ponds and reed beds on the left which attract frogs, newts, and all manner of water beetles. On the right is grassland and wild flower meadows which lead up to the sea defence itself, built to protect the Wirral from flooding in times of high tides and storms. The bridleway now follows the rear of the sea wall. However, where the bridleway turns sharply left you should follow the route straight ahead and up to the embankment.

From here you can see the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest, a section of coast which is alive with migratory birds between September and April each year. There are also known remains of a submerged 5,000 year old forest here, flooded by the sea as the climate has changed.

Walk along the top of the bank where there are fine views across Liverpool Bay. At the end of the Wallasey embankment stands the Life Guard Post and Dove Point slipway, a popular place for launching and mooring boats.

You now leave the North Wirral Coastal Park to walk along Meols Parade for approximately 300 metres. Then, turn left into Dovepoint Road which in 800 metres joins Birkenhead Road (A553) near Meols Station.

WALK 2

Red Rocks Trail

Please Note: Danger – This walk should not be attempted at high tide or up to 1 hour either side of high tide. (Contact the Rangers on 0151-648 4371 for details).

From Hoylake Station walk across Station Road and keep ahead to cross Market Street by the roundabout, then follow The Kings Gap towards the seashore. The road is said to have been named after King William III. In 1690 elements of his army were loaded onto ships on the sands near Red Rocks at low tide and sailed to Ireland prior to the Battle of the Boyne.

Once on the beach, turn left to walk the sands towards Hilbre Point where you should make a short detour (if tide and weather permit) to visit Red Rocks, also known as Bird Island. Return to the mainland and put Hilbre Point to your left. Walk just past Stanley Road slipway (ice-cream van here in summer!) and then look on the left for a gap in the low dunes and a path off the beach. This shortly picks up a boardwalk into the dunes. This whole area is the Red Rocks Marsh Nature Reserve, managed by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The thick reed-beds are home to the rare water rail and natterjack toad; a string of small ponds mean there's a good number of colourful dragonflies.

The boardwalk winds between the reed-beds and the dunes sheltering the Royal Liverpool Golf Course. Not far past the viewpoint (fine views to the Hilbre Islands and North Wales) and as the reeds recede, slip ahead-right onto a wide path at the edge of the dunes. You'll soon reach Dee Lane slipway and the Marine Lake in West Kirby, often bustling with dinghies, windsurfers and canoeists.

The Hilbre Islands can be seen across the sands, these are cut off by the tide at high water for up to 5 hours. The Islands have been inhabited throughout the ages, and there are still five private residences, although the only permanent home is that of the Ranger.

It is possible to visit the Islands at low water and the most enjoyable way is to join one of the guided walks. Parties of 5 or over need a permit from Wirral Country Park before visiting.

Caution – take note of the tide times and other information posted on the board near the Marine Lake. Make your way along Dee Lane past the supermarket to West Kirby Station in the centre of the town.



WALK 3 Thurstaston Common

Start and Finish: Bus stops by the Farmers Arms, Frankby*
Walking Time: 2 hours
Distance: 3.5 miles/5.5 km



WALK 4 Heswall Dales

Start and Finish: Heswall Bus Station*
Walking Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
Distance: 3 miles/5 km



WALK 3

Thurstaston Common

From the Farmers Arms take the drive into Royden Park. Keep left of the toilet block and Ranger's Office to find the miniature railway. Roodee Mere is on your left. Keep left at the sign for Irby Hill. Beyond the elevated railway go ahead into Thurstaston Woods, picking up the line of a wall on your left. Turn right just before the plank bridge and keep Greasby Brook on your left.

At the bench, bear right. Follow the path by the edge of the woods. Keep the wire fencing to your right. At the end of the fence, just past a gate, fork right. Follow the path until it joins a surfaced track. Where the electricity wires cross the gravel lane take the narrow path (left) directly beneath them to find a kissing gate at a road corner. Take the steps opposite and climb to the top of Thurstaston Hill. From here are magnificent views across the Dee to Wales and north to the Lake District's mountains.

Take the bedrock path to the right of the plinth and behind the benches. Just a few paces past an obvious high step-down on this path, fork right along a path through the trees to reach Thor's Stone, a prominent outcrop. Turn sharp left here past a pond to reach another outcrop. Go straight across this (NB not left), and two subsequent outcrops to reach a stone pillar and sleeper bridge. Keep ahead on the main path, past an occasional boundary stone to a gap in a wall.

Head for the imposing half-timbered Hill Bark Hotel. This was actually moved here brick by brick by the wealthy owner Sir Ernest Royden in 1931. Follow the path in front of it, winding through the rhododendrons to a woodland-edge carriage road. Turn right to the car park near the Ranger's Office and then left to return to the Farmers Arms.

WALK 4

Heswall Dales

Cross to the library from the bus station and walk up the right side to the Jug & Bottle pub. Turn left into Rocky Lane and walk right along the road. Cross to the war memorial and take the railed path down to School Hill. Turn left down here and at the Black Horse pub, cross into the churchyard opposite.

Take the path to the left of the church, down through the graveyard to the rough Rectory Lane and turn right. This reaches Farr Hall Drive; keep left to cross a bridge. At the junction look left for the way onto The Wirral Way footpath and join this disused railway. Some 150 yards beyond the second bridge go left at the sign for Banks Road. Turn left, loop round over the bridge and go uphill to Pipers Lane. Turn left along here.

In 600 yards fork right up Oldfield Drive. Opposite Heathside, go right through the stile and up the narrow path into Heswall Dales.

Go straight over a cross path, climbing gradually through scrubby woodland. Go through the gate at the top and turn right along the rougher lane. At the bend go left back into The Dales. Pass an information board and stay on the wide sandy path. Fine views open out across the Dee Estuary.

Remain with this path, marked by blue waymark discs. Go down a series of widely-spaced steps. As a bungalow comes into view, go through the gap in the railed fence, left and trace this path to a junction by a slab bridge. Then turn right to reach Thurstaston Road. Cross and take FP14, opposite. Keep right at the bollards and walk through to steps near Tesco's. Go right through bollards and along rough Feather Lane. Turn left up the tarred road, then right to find the bus station.

* For information about how to get to the Farmers Arms near Frankby (Walk 3) and Heswall Bus Station (Walk 4) by bus, phone the Traveline on **0871 200 22 33**. Alternatively on Walk 4 you can walk from Heswall Rail Station to the start of the walk near the bus station (see map).

CYCLE 1 North Wirral Coaster

Start: Pier Head, Liverpool or Seacombe Mersey Ferries terminal

Finish: Meols Merseyrail Station

Ride Time: Allow 3 hours

Distance: 9 miles/15km

Traffic: Traffic free except for the last short section to Meols Merseyrail Station.



CYCLE 1 North Wirral Coaster

PLACES TO VISIT

NEW BRIGHTON

The ride from Seacombe offers a great perspective across the Mersey to Liverpool's historic waterfront. There are particularly fine views of the Pier Head and the Liver Building. In New Brighton, you will pass by Fort Perch Rock. The Fort dates from the late 1820s and was built to protect shipping during times of war although it saw little or no action. New Brighton itself was established as a seaside town from 1830 by James Atherton who hoped that it would come to outrank the resort of Brighton on the south coast. In Victorian times there was even a tower higher than the one at Blackpool. The restoration of the promenades make them a joy to walk and cycle along. There are several places to take refreshment en route.

NORTH WIRRAL COASTAL PARK

The coast is known for its wildlife, especially wading birds which visit during their migration - oystercatcher, dunlin, redshank and turnstone near to the water's edge for example. In prehistoric times the land was heavily forested and it is sometimes possible on rare occasions, at very low tide, to see the scant remains of a submerged forest at Dove Point, dating from the Stone Age. From the Coastal Path you'll see Leasowe Lighthouse where the North Wirral Coastal Park rangers are based.

It was built in 1763 as one of several beacons used to guide ships safely into the Mersey estuary. Along the coast is Meols, a name derived from the Norse word for "sand hills". Until recent times it has always looked to the sea for its wealth.

THE RIDE

- 1 The ferry arrives at Seacombe and you need to wheel your cycle through the terminal. Then go right, along a 'no through' road. Pass the Kingsway Mersey Tunnel ventilation building. You then join the designated cycle path that runs from Seacombe Ferry, up the promenade. On the way you pass Wallasey Town Hall, Speaker's Corner (by all means feel free to make a speech!) and Vale Park. It is a 2 mile ride through to New Brighton and the views across the estuary are splendid.
- 2 You arrive at New Brighton to ride along Tower Promenade. Pass the Floral Pavilion Theatre. Opposite, on the right and beyond the Marine Lake, is Fort Perch Rock. The cycle route runs ahead along the promenade of Kings Parade. Take care at the points where it crosses access roads.
- 3 At the far end of the Parade keep ahead along the Coastal Path. This leads to the Derby Pool Picnic Area. Go left here to join the track running parallel to the embankment access road. This runs ahead to Leasowe Sand Dunes Car Park and continues ahead above Mockbeggar Wharf.
- 4 The route joins the concrete road to sweep around Leasowe Bay. Please give way to pedestrians along this section as it is a shared route. You rise up to run above Leasowe Common where you can see Leasowe Lighthouse and Ranger's Office on the left.
- 5 The North Wirral Coastal route eventually reaches Dove Point where you join a road, Meols Parade. Keep ahead at first but then turn left into Dovepoint Road. This leads to the main road (A553) where you bear left to ride up the rise to Meols Merseyrail Station.



RIDE 2 South Wirral tour

Start: Hooton Merseyrail Station

Finish: Hooton Merseyrail Station

Ride Time: 4 hours

Distance: 11 miles/17km

Traffic: You will encounter low levels of traffic on some lanes and moderate levels in places. There are more junctions and turns than on the other rides and the route is more hilly.

Cycle route devised by Merseyside Cycling Campaign and Cycling Solutions.
www.cyclingsolutions.co.uk www.merseyworld.com/mcc



CYCLE 2 South Wirral tour

PLACES TO VISIT

The University of Liverpool's Ness Gardens are renowned for their rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias in spring and roses and lilies in summer. There is so much more here though, including rare fruits, superb tropical and conservatory displays and a collection of British wildflowers which are available to see all year (entry fee payable).

The ride offers exquisite views of the Dee estuary, especially along Denhall Lane, but the endearing feature of the route has to be the number of pretty villages through which it passes. Burton was at one time the port for Chester. The Manor was a home of the Gladstone family, descendants of the Victorian Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone.

The splendid beechwoods above the village are National Trust property, the nearby church is also worth visiting.

At Willaston you pass by Hadlow Road Station on the Wirral Way, a well restored country station where information about the area is available. There are several 17th and 18th century buildings throughout the village. Nearby, the windmill in Mill Lane is quite a sight. Built in the early 1800s it is very tall and is said to have ceased milling in the 1930s. It is now a private residence. You will cycle right by it.

The Deeside marshes beside Denhall Lane are a renowned bird reserve, bright in summer months with the flowers of sea asters. Hard to believe that there were coalmines hereabouts until 70 years ago, working the little known West Cheshire Coalfield.

The ride is based on "On Your Bike" published by Ellesmere Port and Neston Tourism, a series of cycle routes in South Wirral. The pack of routes is available at local tourist information centres for a small charge.

There's a cafe at Ness Gardens and several inns on the route.

THE RIDE

- 1 From Hooton Merseyrail Station wheel your cycle out to Waterworks Lane (right). Go right along it and turn right into Oakfield Road. Turn right along Heath Lane and climb to pass over the railway. You bear right and rise to cross the Wirral Way but cycles are not allowed on this section so continue to the main B5133.
- 2 Turn left to ride into Willaston village. Go left by the Nag's Head pub along the B5151 Hadlow Road and left again at the old Hadlow Road railway station buildings to admire the fine restoration work at this country station.
- 3 Return to and continue along the B5151 road to the main A540 Chester High Road which is crossed at traffic lights. Go straight over and ride along Dunstan Lane to the pretty village of Burton.
- 4 The road continues through the village where you turn left into Station Road to cross over the railway and descend to the marshy margins of the Dee estuary. The road bends sharp right and is now known as Denhall Lane as it rises up to a junction.
- 5 Go left on the Neston Road to pass by the entrance to Ness Gardens. Once you have visited continue ahead to Ness village. Just before the Wheatsheaf public house turn right with care. This is known as Mill Lane and is very narrow in places. Rise up to the main A540 road where you cross straight over at the traffic lights into Damhead Lane. Along here you pass the entrance to Leahurst, the University of Liverpool Veterinary College.
- 6 Cross Hanns Hall Road with care as there is more traffic here. This leads into Lydiate Lane. Come to another junction with the B5151, Birkenhead Road, once across which you enter the much quieter Mill Lane to pass by the windmill on your right.
- 7 This bends round to Willaston village where you go left to ride along the B5133 Hooton Road to Hooton Merseyrail Station. It is better to dismount to cross the road into Waterworks Lane and the station.

Wirral Peninsula

The Wirral Peninsula offers a wealth of opportunities for individuals, families and groups to enjoy the great outdoors. From watching internationally important birds on both the Mersey and Dee Estuaries and grey seals basking on sand banks off Hilbre Island, to taking part in watersports on the two marine lakes and sand yachting along the shore, there is something for everyone.

BIRD-WATCHING

Wirral has a plethora of bird watching opportunities as it offers unlimited views of both the Mersey and Dee Estuaries. Both estuaries are internationally designated as areas for over wintering and migrating birds. For more information on the birds and the key viewing locations, go to: www.wirral.gov.uk/er or www.deeestuary.co.uk

WILDLIFE

There are a number of areas around the Wirral Peninsula that are designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNR) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the rare and beautiful wildlife that can be viewed there. For more information contact the Ranger Service on **0151 648 4371**.

COASTAL PARKS

Wirral has a number of coastal parks (CP) that offer superb views of the Mersey and Dee Estuaries and activities for all. These include Eastham CP, North Wirral CP (including Leasowe Lighthouse) and Wirral CP – the first designated country park in the UK and a great place to access the Wirral Way.

Go to: www.visitwirral.com

WATERSPORTS

Wirral can offer opportunities for both the watersports enthusiast and the complete beginner. For wind based watersports such as windsurfing and sailing (for experienced and inexperienced sailors) contact Wirral Sailing School, West Kirby on **0151 625 2510** or the Mike Jones Sailing School, New Brighton **0151 691 0941**. Hoylake beach is also one of the best sites in the UK for sand yachting. To learn more visit www.wsyc.org.uk

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 Sefton's natural coast, 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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Cycle rides devised by the Merseyside Cycling Campaign.

www.merseyworld.com/mcc

www.cyclingsolutions.co.uk

The walks described in this booklet have all been specially selected because they can be reached easily by public transport.

Merseyrail's Wirral Line network, with services from Liverpool and Birkenhead to West Kirby, New Brighton, Hooton, Chester, Ellesmere Port and Shotton make the Wirral Peninsula accessible from all parts of Merseyside. The area is also well served by buses. The full Merseyrail Network is shown on the map on the inside back cover.

When walking through the countryside, you are reminded to follow the countryside code which can be viewed on www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/things_to_know/countryside_code

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.