

## ENGLAND – SUFFOLK: QUALITY SMALL GROUP CULINARY WALKS

7-days / 6-nights Easy inn-to-inn GUIDED walking and fine food in *Constable* country



**Departs:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2019

**Cost from:** \$4490 per person twin share      Single room supplement from \$850

**includes:** Twin share accommodation in comfortable, quality hotels and inns (single rooms are on request), all meals and wine with most meals (pre and post meal drinks except if staying at inns / hotels), support staff and vehicle, luggage transfers, all local transport for the walks with knowledgeable English speaking guides.

**Not included:** Transport to and from the walk and personal expenses

**Grading:** Easy walks on established footpaths, bridleways and backroads in small groups - maximum group size of 14.

Walking holidays have long been popular in England, but rarely walks in Suffolk on the east coast. Easily accessed from London, Suffolk offers the quintessential English countryside, dotted with beautiful villages of pastel coloured cottages with pitched thatched roofs. In recent times, amongst this quiet tranquillity, England has started to gain a reputation in the culinary world too and on this holiday you will eat fabulously well with some pretty scenery and fascinating walking to boost your appetite each day.

We stay two nights in the ancient wool-trade town of Lavenham, in an inn overlooking the medieval square and guildhall. Lavenham provides access to some wonderful dining opportunities, including the Great House, run by a French chef residing in England, one of the best places to eat in the country.

*The Great House is known for its fine cuisine – a couple of thousand foodies eagerly await mailings from Régis about his regular gourmet evenings. I was nervous dinner wouldn't meet my expectations 15 years on, and I am truly surprised to report that it surpassed them. We started with smoked pigeon and asparagus salad with caramelised apples and a quail's egg, and fresh fish soup with conger eel, red gurnard and mussels. For the main course we had roasted rack of lamb served with a garlic sauce, and pan-fried fillet of halibut, wrapped in a coat of green olives, with a tomato and fresh herb sauce. The cheeseboard shouldn't be missed. Simply delicious. **Kate Simon The (UK) Independent.***

We also stay two nights in Bildeston, in a renovated 16<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed coaching inn. Here we dine at the Bildeston Crown where the cuisine is renowned for its inventiveness, creativity and playfulness, as well as for the delicious flavours and local ingredients.

*Seven hundred years on from its construction, the Bildeston Crown is attracting more than its fair share of the county's gastronomic acclaim, thanks to its new custodians. Revealing its history at every twist and turn, the charming building now revels in opulence and warmth, no expense having been spared in complementing the original period features. Chef Chris Lee is cooking at the top of his game. **David Hancock, The (UK) Observer***

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Art history is also on the agenda as two great English artists were born in Suffolk: Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable. We spend two nights in Dedham, a village of much fame, as it was a part of the world favoured by Constable. We talk about Constable's life in his native Suffolk and visit Will Lott's house, scene of *The Haywain* and now a National Trust house. We also visit Thomas Gainsborough's House in Sudbury for a better appreciation of this versatile 18<sup>th</sup> Century portrait and landscape painter.

### Suggested itinerary:

#### Day 1: Arrive Ipswich, walk to Dedham

**walk @ 6 miles (10km)**

Arrive Ipswich railway station in the late morning and be driven to the beautiful village of Stoke-by-Nayland. We have lunch here at the Crown, a delightfully restored pub with a fine terrace and excellent food. After lunch we set out on foot for Dedham. John Constable was born near here and some of his greatest paintings were inspired by this area. Dedham Vale is pure Constable country. Dedham itself features in many of John Constable's paintings and is an incredibly picturesque village. We stay here at the Sun Inn for two nights. The tastefully decorated bedrooms have four-poster beds and ensuite bathrooms.

#### Day 2: The Stour Valley

**walk @ 5 miles (9km)**

After breakfast we see the old weavers' houses, then walk on to the stream-like river Stour where we collect rowboats at Dedham Lock. We row down the tiny river for half an hour (lightly!) and mess about in boats 'til we meet the picnic on the river's bank. Pimms, cucumber sandwiches, summer pudding... the lot. Those not wanting to row or be rowed can walk alongside the bank. After lunch we return to Dedham for pudding in the form of a delicious cream tea. We then drive the short distance to Flatford Mill to view Will Lott's house, famous for its position in Constable's painting *The Haywain*, one of the most reproduced pictures in the world. We walk back to Dedham following the River Stour. The beauty of the Stour Valley has changed little since the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Constable painted here. Constable's work influenced the Impressionists significantly. We dine tonight at Le Talbooth on the riverside, a beautiful restaurant with excellent food.

#### Day 3: The Box Valley

**walk @ 9 miles (15km)**

A short morning drive to Stoke-by-Nayland. Constable loved the village church's tower and it appeared in many of his paintings; in fact he loved it so much he often painted it in even when it wasn't actually there. From Stoke-by-Nayland we walk in the Box Valley to Boxford. This was the birthplace of 'Tornado' Smith, who brought the 'Wall of Death' motorcycle stunt to England in the 1930s. We have lunch in Boxford before continuing on by foot to Kersey, an old wool town which spans two small hills with a ford in between. We drive from here to Bildeston, yet another picturesque medieval village. We stay two nights at the Bildeston Crown, run by award-winning chef Chris Lee and his wife Hayley. It is a sheer delight to eat at the Crown's excellent gastropub and enjoy this fantastic, clever, delicious cuisine on our first night.





#### **Day 4: Brent Eleigh & Ickworth**

**walk @ 6 miles (10km)**

We leave Bildeston after breakfast for a walk through fields of wildflowers, past Suffolk villages of pastel cottages with high thatched roofs. We pass the thoroughbred stud farm at Shadwell before arriving in the hamlet of Brent Eleigh for a simple lunch and a game of dominoes at the heritage pub. After lunch we drive to the great house at Ickworth which belonged to the Earl of Bristol. Ickworth stands in magnificent parkland and is a fine example of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Palladian style of this time. The house is full of paintings by Reynolds, Gainsborough and Angelica Kauffmann and Velázquez. There is a collection of furniture, ceramics and Paul de Lamerie silver. We return to Bildeston in the afternoon and dine at the Crown.

#### **Day 5: Lavenham & Long Melford**

**walk @ 7 miles (11km)**

A short drive to Brent Eleigh then a walk to Lavenham and to Long Melford. Lavenham is a pretty village lined with medieval half-timbered buildings. The wool trade in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries made this part of England very rich indeed, and with virtually no industry here since, its medieval character has been retained. We visit the church and have tea, then continue through forest and fields to Long Melford, with one of the prettiest high streets in Suffolk. The church is outstanding, with flushwork (patterning of black flint and stone) decorating the exterior wall), awe-inspiring stained glass and a beautiful Lady Chapel. We have a picnic lunch near the church.

After lunch we drive to the market town of Sudbury to visit Gainsborough's House Museum. Thomas Gainsborough was born and lived here during the early years of his marriage, before moving to Ipswich and then to more fashionable Bath. There are a few examples of his early work on show with the appeal of the naïve, being much influenced by his tutor Francis Hayman, portraying almost doll-like figures (see the Portrait of Mr and Mrs Andrews in the National Gallery, London). Gainsborough is perhaps the most important of England's portraitists, and also devoted time to landscape painting. We return to Lavenham, by vehicle this time, where we stay two nights. We use one of two hotels here, both in half-timbered buildings situated on the medieval square in the heart of this wonderful village. Dinner tonight at the Angel, a gastropub with excellent food.

#### **Day 6: Bury St Edmunds & Wyken Vineyard**

**walk @ 3 miles (5km)**

We drive to Bury St Edmunds, burial place of St Edmund and where, at the abbey in 1214, the barons swore to force King John to sign the Magna Carta. We visit the Greene King brewery in Bury, in a beautiful Art Deco building. We are very much in a beer region here. This brewery is a good example of why British bitter is so good and we learn more about how it is made. We have a short drive to Wyken Vineyard where we have lunch at the Leaping Hare. We admire the lovely garden here and taste some of the award-winning wines before a short walk to a local village. We drive back to Lavenham for some free time before our farewell dinner. We dine tonight at the Great House. Fabulous food with a huge reputation locally and internationally.

#### **Day 7: Departure day.**

After breakfast there is a transfer to Ipswich railway station for those who require it.

**Outdoor Travel** offers similar walks for the discerning in the southwest of France, including the **Lot** or **Dordogne** Valleys, in **Provence**, **Catalunya** in northeast Spain and the **Basque Pyrenees** of South-west France. Join a small group walking the **Way of St James** from Le Puy to Conques in France or a self-guided walk to Santiago in Spain or from Porto in Portugal. Walk the **Via Francigena** the pilgrims' Road to Rome.

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