Rural sites and seaside delights
Southend-on-Sea and the Roach Valley

Total distance of main route is 40.5km/25miles

Attractions along this route
- Adventure Island Southend
- Southend Cliffs Pavilion
- Palace Theatre
- Prittlewell Priory Museum
- Central Museum and Planetarium
- Southchurch Hall Museum
- Southend Marine Activities Centre
- Sea-Life Adventure
- Southend Planetarium
- Southend Pier Museum
- Southend Pier

Accommodation
- The Roslin Beach Hotel
- Pier View
- Beaches Guesthouse

Places to eat
- Azzuro
  Tel: 01702 435845
  www.azzurrosouthend.com
- Toulouse Restaurant, Bar & Bistro
  Tel: 01702 333731
  www.toulouserestaurant.co.uk
- Zabrano
  Tel: 01702 476999
  www.zabrano.co.uk
- Simply Seafood
  Tel: 01702 716645
  www.simplyseafood.co.uk
- The Dining Room
  Tel: 01702 477499
  www.thediningroomsouthend.co.uk
- The Bull Inn
  Tel: 01702 203122
- The Punch Bowl
  Tel: 01702 258376
- The Plough and Sail
  Tel: 01702 258242
  www.theploughandsail.co.uk

Short walks
- A 17.4km/10.8miles
- B 10.9km/6.7miles
- C 15.3km/9.5miles
- D 20.3km/12.6miles
- E 7.6km/4.7miles
- F 2.9km/1.8miles
- G 10.7km/6.6miles

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Key
- Walking Route 5
- Short walks
- Place of worship
- Telephone in rural area
- Public House
- National Rail
- Telephone in rural area
- Public House
- National Rail
- Accommodation
- Restaurants

This map is intended as a guide only. Please refer to relevant OS Explorer maps for specific details.

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The trail is using Southend-on-Sea as its base where you and your family can enjoy a variety of activities. The town serves as an ideal setting for people wanting to get away for some fun, relaxation and culture. It has it all – from walking trails to clean, safe beaches (3 Blue Flags and 7 Quality Coast Awards) to beautiful parks and gardens, exciting festival events, museums and galleries, theatres, nightclubs, and more than 300 places to eat. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

For passionate walkers the countryside around the district of Southend offers spectacular vistas which can be enjoyed by walking The Roach Valley Way. The 23 mile circular walk meanders through the landscapes, from the ancient woodland of Rochford in the west to the coastal margins of the Roach and Cr such estuaries in the south and north. Christopher Somerville, a native of “Coast”, the accompanying book of the BBC series describes the coastal cliffs of the west and windblown marshes as moody and of subtle shapes and climate, where the sea creates up on the land and the land melts down into the sea, a place of shifting margins and hauntingly beautiful clifftop scenes.

Start in Rochford, a medieval market town boasting a large number of listed buildings, including Rochford Hall, one time home of the Bawley family (now a golf club) and The Old House in South Street, built in 1710 and allegedly haunted!

The way passes through many historic villages. As you follow the watermarked route you are confronted by the mud flats, its origins go back to Saxon times when it was left to the elements. With many trails winding to the coastline, visitors can explore and enjoy all manner of maritime sports. The largest purpose-built performing arts venue in Essex. Shows include touring West End musicals, comedians, classical, rock and jazz concerts, pantomime, etc. Station Road, Southend On Sea, Essex. Tel: 01702 394072

3. Palace Theatre
A truly unique building, the Palace always offers an excellent mix of comedy, music and drama. And with its excellent refreshments, it has something for everyone. Palace Road, Southend On Sea. Tel: 01702 361130

4. Pitfield Priory Museum
Well presented 13th Century Priory housing a museum of the Priory’s history. All some time during 2008 the museum will close for building work. Tel: 01702 342878

5. Central Museum and Planetarium
An Edwardian building housing displays of local history, social and local history. Hands on discovery centre. Moot Hall, Southend. Tel: 01702 434449

6. Southchurch Hall Museum
18th century mansion framed imposing mansion house with Tudor additions. Period room settings from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. Exhibition of history of house and mansion. Tel: 01702 467671

7. Southend Marine Arthritis Centre
Southend Marine Arthritis Centre or SMC as it is known locally on The Roach Beach is for anyone looking to enjoy all kinds of maritime sports, SMC is a Royal Yachting Association Training Centre and the only Royal Yacht Vu de navigation instruction centre in the region. Breathtaking views are available in sailing, waterskiing, canoes, kayaking, jet skiing and paddleboard skiing. Tel: 01702 612770

8. Sea Life Adventure
With more than 30 display tanks and hands-on activities, there are loads of fascinating facts to discover of Sea Life Adventure. Tel: 01702 442211

9. Southend Planetarium
Displays of archaeology, wildlife and local history. The only planetarium in Essex that provides a comprehensive programme for children. Exciting hands-on Discovery Centre. Tel: 01702 434449

10. Southend Pier Museum
Blogs to the fascinating past of the longest pleasure pier in the world. Artefacts, picture display of pier’s entertainment, diners, stilt, boat, illustrations and more. Tel: 01702 414552

11. Southend Pier
The longest pleasure pier in the world stretching 3.5 miles out to sea. Served by railway or ferry service to Pier head. Pier Museum and Boats, cafe and gift shop. Tel: 01702 428640

The impressive church tower is said to have been executed by Harry V in thanksgiving for his victory at Agincourt, and local legend says if it stands as long as the tower stands, there will be witches found in Canewdon. St Andrews church in Canewdon, the next village along the coast, is said to have been built in honour of the soul slain during the 1616 battle fought between King Charles I and Essex Rebellion. The church a wooden and is a model of a Viking ship – both gifts from the Danish Embassy. An unusual sandstone carved into its wall by the south erners commemorating Edward V.

The last leg of the Roach Valley way passes Hockley Woods, over 250 acres of ancient woodland, the largest in Essex and a site of Special Scientific Interest. The woods are a complex mosaic of different trees, each species growing where conditions are most favourable. Oak and sweet chestnut grow on the higher ground; birch on the most acidic soils, hornbeam on the poor soils, hazel and ash along the streams. There are various pathways through the woods, for the bird watches the best place to see birds in the woods is the area surrounding the public car park.

As you walk along the seaward from Llan Cress to Lower Pitt, Farm it may seem quite remote and isolated but you are not alone. This patchwork of farmlands, sea, woodland and grazing mounds supports an abundance of wildlife, as a result, both the Roach and Cruch Estuaries have been designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest by English Nature. Continue your journey along the coast path past lower Pit, Farm to Pit farm, take the climb above Upper Pit, Farm, prepare to look back across the estuary to the hills of the Dengie Peninsula and Bridgemarsh Island. The views are spectacular. After a number of crossings the Bridgemarsh Island is now developing fast into saltmarsh providing a rich feeding ground for wildlife.

Next stop is Canewdon, the name is believed to come from Canis the Great and nearby earthworks suggest that this was his home camp before his victorious battles during his invasion of Essex in 1013. There is much superlution around the village, believed to be the site of a castle of feudal times. Some believe that six witches still live in the village and claim that whenever a stone falls from the tower or a witch dies, only to be replaced immediately by another. Local folklore also has it that if you walk around the church on Halloween you will see a witch, and forty times you will disappear.