

The Fantastic Five... Norfolk Nature Trail

1. Winter walks at Congham Hall Hotel

Set off on an easy, three-mile, self-guided walk that will take you through Grimston Warren and Royden Common, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the largest surviving open heath in West Norfolk, to discover the reserve's fascinating winter secrets. On this three-hour circular ramble (walk notes are available at reception or downloadable below), 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.

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

2. Pink-footed 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 emerge en masse from their roosts to feed on the mudflats. 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.

Guided 'Pink-Footed Geese: Sunrise Walks' take place at 6.30am on various dates, mid-November to mid-January 2020. £14 per adult (£11 RSPB members), £7.50 per child (£6 RSPB members). Booking essential: www.eventbrite.co.uk

RSPB Snettisham Reserve, Beach Road, Snettisham, PE31 7RA

3. 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 interesting and informative commentary and offers the chance to get up close and hand-feed deer nuts to the animals. At this time of year, the 60 or so hinds and two 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

4. 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, where the females feed 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, Morston Lane, Morston, NR25 7AA.

Blakeney Point, Blakeney National Nature Reserve, Blakeney, Holt NR25 7NW
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blakeney-national-nature-reserve

5. Red squirrels at Pensthorpe Natural Park

The plight of the red squirrel is well known; their numbers have diminished due to centuries of felling of our forests and, later, a virus carried by their grey cousins. At Pensthorpe, they're working hard to boost numbers with a breeding programme, as well as re-introducing these animals to the British countryside. Squirrels don't hibernate and are active year round, but choose a milder day to ensure they're not tucked up in their dreys, because there's some good viewing of these bushy-tailed creatures to be had at Pensthorpe's three large enclosures linked by overhead runs.

Pensthorpe Natural Park, Fakenham Road, Fakenham, NR21 0LN
T 01328 851465 / www.pensthorpe.com

Congham Hall, Grimston, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE32 1AH
T 01485 600250 E info@conghamhallhotel.co.uk



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A17 BOSTON

BRANCASTER

RSPB TITCHWELL

BLAKENEY POINT

4

HOLKHAM HALL

A149

CROMER

A149

3

SNETTISHAM PARK

RSPB SNETTISHAM

2

SANDRINGHAM

HOUGHTON HALL

A140

PENSTHORPE NATURAL PARK

5

A148

1

ROYDON COMMON

KINGS LYNN

CONGHAM HALL

A134

ELY

NORWICH

GREAT YARMOUTH

PETERBOROUGH

THE ELVEDEN ESTATE