



The Sheerness Way

Looking for a day out the whole family can enjoy? Want to learn something new - maybe you wondered how Blue Town in Sheerness got its name? Why is there a sunken ship just off shore with unexploded bombs! What made the location of Sheerness so strategic in a number of wars? Maybe you want to have some family fun on the beach, relax and let the children enjoy traditional and new seaside amenities. Come and Explore.



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explore...



Canal bank

Did you wonder why there is a big earth embankment to the south and east of Sheerness? Cycle over the bridge at Barton's Point Coastal Park and discover the Queenborough Lines or the "canal bank" as it is known locally. It is a mid nineteenth century ditch and mound

fortification built to protect Sheerness Naval Dockyard from attack from the landward side. The Queenborough Lines were used in both world wars as the site for gun emplacements and some of the concrete footings can still be seen.

Ships and Chips

Just a short detour from the main circuit lies the historic area of Blue Town. Why was this part of Sheerness called Blue Town? Back in the 1700s workmen in the Royal Naval Dockyard built ramshackle houses out of short pieces of wood known as "chips". Permission to take these timber planks was only granted if they were 3 foot in length and could be carried on one shoulder. The name Blue Town comes from the use of blue naval paint which was used on these houses. This rickety accommodation was home to many of the men, otherwise they lived in the hulks of old war ships. Conditions were dreadful by modern standards: theft was rife, sanitation poor and malaria a problem. It wasn't until the 1820s when these blue houses burnt down that better accommodation was built, but the name has remained. Why not visit the Blue Town Heritage Centre or the Sheerness Heritage Centre while you are here?

Landmark

In the Centre of Sheerness stands the clock tower - it is an iconic feature, one of the oldest and largest surviving cast iron clock towers in Kent. Standing at 36ft it was built in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII.

The Catholic Church of St Henry and Elizabeth by the seafront is another landmark in Sheerness and was completed in 1864. The church was designed by Edward Pugin, the eldest son of Augustus Pugin, most famous for his work designing the Houses of Parliament. This church is very striking and boasts a stunning rose window and Caen stone altar.

Dutch Courage

Back on the sea wall the dockyard is clearly visible to the west. Sheerness began as a fort due to its key location in protecting the River Medway from invasion. The potential of Sheerness as a site for a naval dockyard was originally identified by Samuel Pepys. This was tested in the Anglo-Dutch wars in the 1600's, during which Sheerness fell.

Many common sayings come from naval terms, including 'Dutch courage', which dates from this time. British sailors would insult the enemy saying that Dutch sailors were cowards and would only fight when drunk on schnapps.

The current dockyard is privately owned by Peel Ports and not open to the public but some of its many historic buildings can be glimpsed from the route. At the entrance to the dockyard is the historic Naval Terrace, a line of early nineteenth century housing, built for naval officers along with the adjoining church, now in ruins. Along the seawall bordering the Thames, a series of fortifications from Napoleonic times to the 2nd World War are visible.

The Big Bang!

Looking out to sea you may glimpse the masts of a sunken World War II vessel, the SS Richard Montgomery. It was loaded with explosives but because of its proximity to Sheerness it was deemed too dangerous to blow up – the explosives are still there!

Also on the theme of explosives, it was in Sheerness that Sir William Penney, the first director of British Nuclear Weapon Research studied for a short while at Sheerness Technical School. And it was from Sheerness in 1952 that a ship was loaded with a nuclear bomb and sent to Australia to be detonated in the sea. This was the first British nuclear test. Upon detonation the ship was shrouded in intense light and heat and vaporised and Britain became a nuclear power.

More than History

Time to release more energy after learning all that history? At Barton's Point Coastal Park, a 40 acre public park, there is plenty to keep the family occupied for at least half a day. Try your hand at pitch and putt, take a boat out on the lake, enjoy some exciting water sports or watch model aeroplanes buzz round the heads of experienced flyers.

For more family fun take a paddle in the sea or relax on the shingle beach, perhaps take a picnic or enjoy some food in one of the many local cafés. There really is something to keep the whole family entertained. Enjoy the traditional seaside resort plus let the children play on the sport pitches, climbing wall and leisure complex.





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Local Information

National Rail timetable:	08457 48 49 50
Nearest Train Station:	Sheerness-on-Sea
Arriva Bus Timetable:	0871 200 22 33
Interactive mapping:	www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent , www.sustrans.org.uk
Ordnance Survey Explorer map number 149:	to order call 08458 247 600
Nearby towns:	Minster-on-Sea, Eastchurch, BlueTown, Queenborough, Elmley
Sheppey Cycles:	214 High Street, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1UN Tel: 01795 667898
Vandal Bikes:	129 High Street, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1UD Tel: 01795 661564

Cycle Safety

It's important that your bike is in tip top condition and the right size. Before you start your journey, pinch the tyres to make sure they are not flat and test the brakes to make sure they work.

Use cycle lanes and paths where possible and follow traffic sign and traffic light instructions. Make sure you carry lights/reflectors and dress brightly and appropriately. Cycle helmets, water bottles and rucksacks are recommended.

Smart cyclists think ahead!

For further information contact:
Countryside Access Service,
Kent County Council,
Invicta House, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XX
Tel: 08458 247 600
www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent
e-mail: explorekent@kent.gov.uk



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