

The sporting SEASON



Hector Payne tackles the Three Star cross country course at Houghton International.



Zara Phillips performing a dressage test.

From equestrian events to watersports and golf, the Royal Coast offers ample opportunities to unwind. Hilary Manners rounds up the sporting fixtures not to miss.

Visitors flock to the Royal Coast each year, and not just to enjoy the stunning beaches and delicious local produce. Sport features highly for many families, particularly those with children who can all too easily tire of making sandcastles and hunting for crabs.

So what is there to see and do this summer?

The 'season' kicks off with the Burnham Market International Horse Trials, April 17-19. The starting line up boasts many of the top names in the sport, including Olympic medal winners. Zara Phillips competed there in 2013. Running three weeks before the Badminton Horse Trials in Gloucestershire, it is the perfect time for these elite athletes to have a final outing

before tackling the most famous Three Day Event in the world.

There can be few better places to sit than on 'the mound' on the cross country course, where you can watch a large part of the action from one place. Back at the arena you can get right up close to the stars of the sport, in a way that is impossible at the major events.

For those who prefer wheels to legs, two weeks later is the Pedal Norfolk Cycling Festival (May 3-5). This action-packed weekend caters for all standards of cyclist – and non-cycling members of the family. Book on to a 50, 100 or even 250 mile bicycle ride, or simply pedal round the beautiful Holkham Estate.

Back to the horses, and the West

Norfolk Point to Point takes place at Fakenham Racecourse on May 18. Houghton International Horse Trials runs from May 22-25, in the stunning parkland of Houghton Hall, and back at Fakenham Racecourse on June 1 is Ladies Day. The Sandringham Driving Trials, incorporating the FEI World Para Equestrian Driving Singles Championships, runs from June 26-29, entry is free on all three days, and visitors are encouraged to picnic in the park.

More for the teenagers, Hunstanton is then home to Tennis Week (August 17-24), reportedly Britain's biggest tennis tournament. Established in 1920 it attracts entrants from far and wide; they come not just to play tennis but to party – notably at the infamous Foam Balls. The coast

overflows with shiny 4x4s, local pubs bump up security checks on customer ages and the bus stops overflow with young people. A week later, locals pop their heads out again and normal life resumes!

While the parties are in full swing on the coast, slightly off our patch is the Aylsham Show (August 25). This is a the largest one-day agricultural show in East Anglia, drawing huge crowds to Bickling Park.

As well as the standard agricultural classes, displays and tradestands you will find the Bolddog Lings Freestyle Team performing their heart-stopping motorcross tricks and the Chariots of Fire Display Team, with its team of stunt ponies, while overhead the Lancaster, Hurricane and Spirit of the Battle of Britain Memorial

Flight evoke the past.

Other sporting activities can be found along the coast throughout the summer. There are multiple golf courses to be enjoyed, most notably the Royal West Norfolk Golf Club's course at Brancaster. Alternatively you could try the Royal Cromer Golf Club, the Sheringham Golf Club, Heacham Manor Golf Course, or the Hunstanton Golf Club.

Perhaps you want to be on or in the sea when in Norfolk? Sailing clubs are dotted up and down the coast. One such club is the Sailcraft Sea School at Brancaster Staithe. It offers sailing, powerboat and windsurfing courses for all levels of ability.

Further round the coast, Norfolk Etc offer sailing and power boating courses in

Contact sheet

EQUESTRIAN EVENTS

- Burnham Market International Horse Trials and Houghton International Horse Trials
♦ www.musketeer.co.uk
- West Norfolk Point to Point and Ladies Day
♦ www.fakenhamracecourse.co.uk
- Sandringham Driving Trials
♦ www.sandringhamestate.co.uk

CYCLING

- Pedal Norfolk Cycling Festival
♦ www.pedalnorfolk.co.uk

FOR TEENAGERS

- Tennis Week
♦ www.hunstantonitl.co.uk

THE SHOWS

- Royal Norfolk Show
♦ www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk
- The Aylsham Show
♦ www.theaylshamshow.co.uk

GOLF

- Royal West Norfolk Golf Club at Brancaster
♦ www.rwngc.org
- Royal Cromer Golf Club
♦ www.royalcromergolfclub.com
- Sheringham Golf Club
♦ www.sheringhamgolfclub.co.uk
- Heacham Manor Golf Course
♦ www.heacham-manoor.co.uk
- Hunstanton Golf Club
♦ www.hunstantongolfclub.com

SAILING AND WATERSPORTS

- Sailcraft Sea School at Brancaster Staithe
♦ www.northshoresport.co.uk
- Norfolk Etc, Blakeney Harbour
♦ www.norfolketc.co.uk
- Hunstanton Sailing Club
♦ www.hunstantonsc.co.uk
- The Glide Surf School in Cromer
♦ www.glideurfschool.co.uk
- Hunstanton Watersports
♦ www.hunstantonwatersports.com

Blakeney Harbour – where you can also take a private sailing charter out to see the seals on Blakeney Point.

Although not famous as a surf destination there are still opportunities, with The Glide Surf School in Cromer, which is a popular destination with local surfers. Or maybe you fancy trying your hand at wind and kite surfing? If so, head off to Hunstanton Watersports and book a lesson. Alternatively try the Hunstanton Sailing Club - they offer windsurfing, sailing, canoeing, kite surfing and kite buggying for those who want to take to the water.

So, whenever it is this season that you find yourselves on the Royal Coast, your only dilemma will be deciding on how to spend your time. Happy holidays!