



Picturesque and historic Manningtree and its neighbour, Mistley, lie on the river Stour, gateway to beautiful Constable Country, in the extreme north east of Essex. A short drive from Colchester, Harwich and Ipswich, the smallest town in England has much to offer visitors, whether they are just passing through or using the town as a convenient base for a longer stay.

Bird-watchers, artists, walkers, cyclists and sailors throng to the banks of the Stour. It is one of the most important wildlife estuaries in Europe, and supports a sizeable population of swans. There are plenty of walks by the river for those who appreciate wildlife and the adjacent town centre is so compact that it is easy to find your way round. Turn the corner at the end of the High Street and a panorama is revealed across the Stour estuary, which forms the boundary between Essex and Suffolk.

The High Street area has everything you need - banks, post office, library and museum - not to mention welcoming pubs and restaurants and a comprehensive range of traditional and specialist shops and a small supermarket. Manningtree received its Market Charter in 1238 and the market is still held every Wednesday and Saturday morning.



Where to stay
Manningtree is just over an hour from London by rail and roughly ten miles drive from Colchester, Ipswich or Harwich. There is comfortable bed and breakfast accommodation both in the town and the surrounding villages, as well as a number of convenient camping and caravan sites within a short drive.



Manningtree Tourist Information Point
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Published by Manningtree District Business Chamber

We are grateful to local businesses for their support in producing this leaflet.
Designer: Peter Laming (Tel: 01206 290000) Photographs: Lantern Studios and Peter Laming
Printed by The Five Castles Press Ltd, Ipswich

MANNINGTREE



Steeped in history

The origin of the name Manningtree is obscure, but by Tudor times it had become a thriving port known as Manytre. There are plenty of walks through the town with its imposing flat fronted Georgian facades, many of which conceal Tudor or Elizabethan houses with lath and plaster walls. The ancient site of the market, at the crossroads in the town centre, is still known as Market Cross and there, in Elizabethan times, stood a public clock tower with a room beneath it for public assembly.

Much of the wealth of the town in those days came from the cloth trade and some fine examples of weavers cottages still stand in Brook Street and South Street. There are two ancient coaching inns in the High Street, with arched entrances leading to stable yards, although many of the town's former public houses are now shops.

Matthew Hopkins, the notorious Witchfinder General of the 17th century, began his career at Manningtree by condemning a coven of witches and the names of those unfortunate women are still to be found locally. Hopkins was paid twenty shillings for each witch discovered and suspects were tested by being bound and thrown into the river. If they sank - and were drowned - they were declared innocent; if they floated they were proved witches and afterwards hanged or burnt at the stake. Hopkins is buried at Mistleay Heath.



Did you know???

- * Manningtree was the home of the Manni tribe, which greeted Caesar in 55BC
- * In 1782 smugglers were caught with 168 gallons of gin at Manningtree.
- * Matthew Hopkins, Witchfinder General, accused women of being witches - if they owned a cat!
- * The Shir Burn, a Lawford stream, drove the only overshot water mill in Essex at the time of the Domesday Book.
- * Manningtree Station is built on soil from Mistleay but is actually in Lawford

