

The Cheshire Lines Path – 23.2km

This walk forms part of the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) - a 346 km (216 mile) multi-user route from Southport on the Irish Sea coast to Hornsea on the shores of the North Sea. This route is fully accessible from Southport until you reach the Formby bypass (A565).

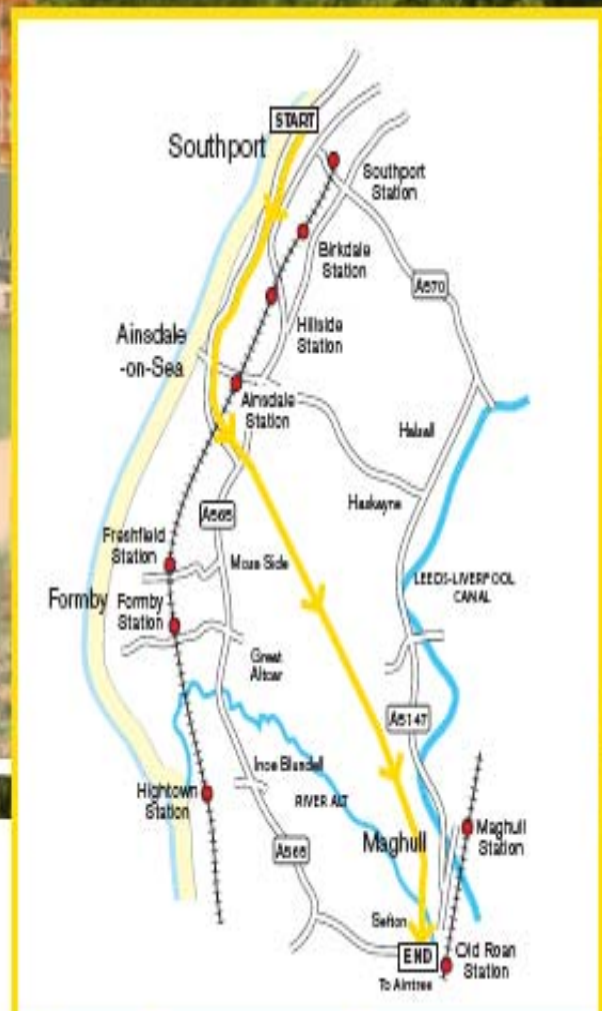
The starting point for the Cheshire Lines Path is adjacent to the TPT Seamark on Southport's Promenade and for most of the next 23.2 km (14.5 miles), the route follows the trackbed of the former Cheshire Lines Railway. The old station frontage, complete with clock tower, still survives and the building is to be fully restored as part of a new hotel and leisure development.

Elegant Lord Street, with its Victorian ironwork canopies, restored parks and gardens and hundreds of shops and restaurants, is signposted from the promenade and can be accessed via the magnificent Marine Way Bridge or Southport's meticulously restored Pier with its new pavilion, café, bar and interesting displays on the pier's history and the wildlife of the Ribble Estuary.



Lord Street

Our journey first takes us southwards on the seaward side of Marine Drive, passing the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail on the inland side of the road. The QJNT is just one of 17 nature reserves that line Sefton's Natural Coast, the largest undeveloped dune system in England which stretches all the way from Southport and the Ribble Estuary to Seaforth at the mouth of the River Mersey.



Route distance 23.2km

ROUTE KEY POINTS

- Southport Pier Pavilion (WC Facilities)
- Eco Visitor Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
- Royal Birkdale Golf Club
- Ainsdale Discovery Centre (WC Facilities accessible)
- Highest Sand Dunes: Big Balls Hill
- Lancashire Mosslands
- Aintree Racecourse
- Leeds - Liverpool Canal
-  Part accessible - from start to A565

A modern wind turbine tops the award winning Eco Visitor Centre, which features all the latest developments in renewable energy and sustainable development. It's adjacent to the 'park and ride' and is well worth visiting, having an information point and toilet facilities.



Royal Birkdale Golf Course

From Weld Road roundabout, the cycleway parallels the busy coastal road, while the footpath turns inland to run alongside the world famous Royal Birkdale Golf Course, venue for many major world championships, including the British Open in 2008 and the Women's British Open in 2010. At Shore Road, Ainsdale, a new boardwalk takes you around the Sands Lake Nature Trail and its wealth of bird life and dune flowers.

Take time out from your walk to visit the nearby Ainsdale Discovery Centre, headquarters of the Sefton Coast & Countryside Service, with its excellent displays and a wealth of free literature on the unique natural and local history of the coastal dunes. Food, drink and toilet facilities are all available nearby.



Ainsdale Discovery Centre



Formby Hall

Continuing on the coastal trail, we reach the highest sand dune on the coast at Big Balls Hill. Here the Cheshire Lines Path and Trans Pennine Trail part company from the Sefton Coastal Path, continuing along the coastal road to reach Woodvale traffic lights after 8 km (5 miles). Carrying straight on down Moor Lane and Plex Moss Lane, with the manicured greens of Formby Hall Golf course on the right, follow the clearly signposted track to rejoin the Cheshire Lines trackbed towards Maghull and Aintree.

The next 10 km (6 miles) to Green Lane, Maghull, takes us over the flat peatlands of the Lancashire plain, which in winter are visited by skeins of Pink-Footed Geese from Iceland, their distinctive 'gagging' calls attracting attention.

All of the surrounding area was underwater until the local landowners drained it in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The monks of Cartmel Priory in Cumbria held the ancient fishing rights and many kinds of fish and waterfowl were harvested for food.



Jubilee Woods

At Sefton Lane in Maghull, 20 km from the start (12.5 miles), we leave the Cheshire Lines Path to follow Old Racecourse Road, which was the site of the Grand National before it was transferred to Aintree. Following the TPT signs to Meadway, we pass the recently planted Jubilee Woods, part of a series of community woodlands on these former landfill sites, to cross the Alt River at Mill Dam bridge and join Chapel Lane towards Brook House Farm.

Carefully crossing the busy Northern Perimeter Road at Netherton, we carry straight on down Chapel Lane, which soon becomes Aldrins Lane, to join the towpath of the Leeds-Liverpool canal at the narrow swing bridge at 22 km (13.75 miles).

Heading eastwards along the towpath for the next 1.5 km (0.9 miles), we gain access to Ormskirk Road via Wally's Steps and continue southwards to finish our journey at Aintree Station on Park Lane. From here you can board the Liverpool bound Merseyrail service to Sandhills station, where you change to the Southport line to return.

The Trans Pennine Trail continues on from Aintree as the Liverpool Loop Line Path to reach the shore at Widnes and then heads due east following the Mersey Valley to Warrington and eventually the North Sea. Trail guides and detailed maps are available from www.transpenninetrail.org.uk.