



# Coastal Walk

## Section 1 - South Groyne to Frenchman's Bay

A seven mile walk along the coast between the River Tyne and Whitburn Bents passing Marsden Rock and Souter Lighthouse.

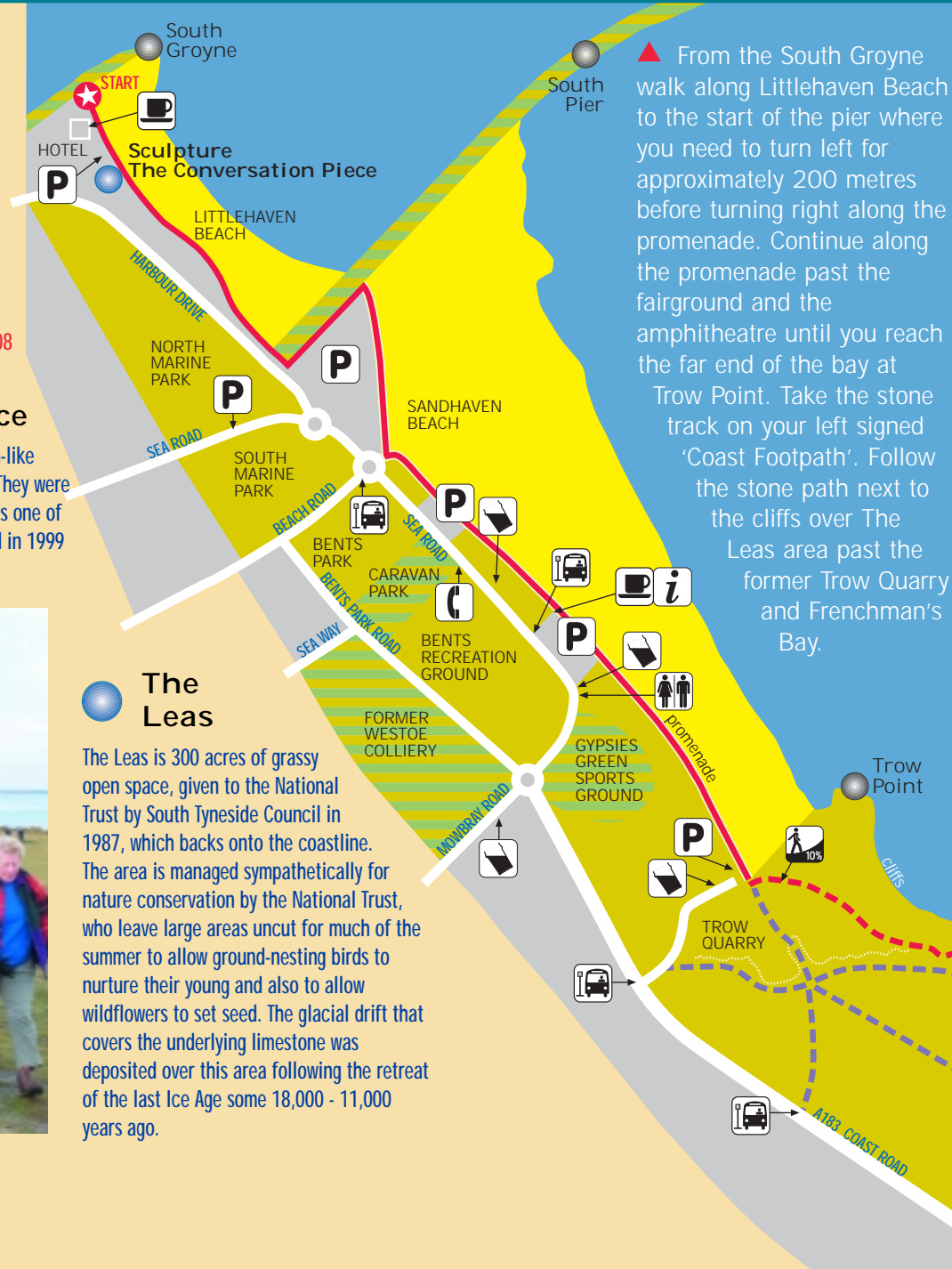
**GETTING TO THE START**  
 The E1 bus between South Shields and Sunderland provides a regular service to the coast and Sandhaven Beach.  
 Contact North East Travel Line on 0870 608 2608

### The Conversation Piece

'Conversation Piece' is made up of 22 life-size human-like bronze figures, which weigh a quarter of a ton each. They were created by the late Spanish artist Juan Munoz who was one of the most respected artists of his generation. Installed in 1999 the work offers a spectacular view over the sea.

### The Leas

The Leas is 300 acres of grassy open space, given to the National Trust by South Tyneside Council in 1987, which backs onto the coastline. The area is managed sympathetically for nature conservation by the National Trust, who leave large areas uncut for much of the summer to allow ground-nesting birds to nurture their young and also to allow wildflowers to set seed. The glacial drift that covers the underlying limestone was deposited over this area following the retreat of the last Ice Age some 18,000 - 11,000 years ago.



▲ From the South Groyne walk along Littlehaven Beach to the start of the pier where you need to turn left for approximately 200 metres before turning right along the promenade. Continue along the promenade past the fairground and the amphitheatre until you reach the far end of the bay at Trow Point. Take the stone track on your left signed 'Coast Footpath'. Follow the stone path next to the cliffs over The Leas area past the former Trow Quarry and Frenchman's Bay.



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## Section 2 - Frenchman's Bay to Souter

### Marsden Bay and Rock

The coast here has spectacular cliffs, caves and arches, and one of England's most important sea bird colonies with thousands of pairs of Kittiwakes, Fulmars, Gulls and Cormorants. The rocks, formed almost 250 million years ago, are Permian Magnesian Limestone and are of great interest to geologists world-wide. The limestones were originally formed as muds on the floor and flanks of a shallow tropical sea that stretched from Greenland to eastern Poland, at a time when Britain lay deep within a great continent only just north of the Equator.

### Marsden Lime Kilns

Opposite the car park at Souter Point, to the north of the lighthouse, you will see the Marsden Lime Kilns, built in the 1870s. The limestone from Marsden Quarries was burnt in these kilns before being transported by train (known as the Marsden Rattler) to South Shields. The kilns ceased production in 1960.

### Souter Lighthouse

High above the cliffs stands Souter Lighthouse, which was built in 1871 and was the first lighthouse specifically constructed to use an electric light.

The National Trust opens the lighthouse to the public as follows - from April to October, open daily (except Fridays) from 11am to 5pm. An exhibition, video and guided tours are on offer, and there is also a souvenir shop and tea-room. Telephone: (0191) 529 3161.



▲ When you reach the northern end of Marsden Sands you have two options: either to follow the coastal footpath along the top of the cliffs to Marsden Rock or to go down the slope onto the beach and up the steps near the Grotto pub. If you choose to do the latter, please check the tide times before going to the beach and note that there are over 100 steps to be climbed.

▲ From Marsden Rock follow the grass coastal path towards Souter Lighthouse past the Lime Kilns. When you reach Souter Point car park access road, turn left towards the car park and follow the stone path heading south by the side of the lighthouse. Go past Souter Lighthouse and continue along the coastal path down to the Rifle Range where it may be necessary to follow a diversion. The alternatives are detailed overleaf.



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## Section 3 - Souter to Whitburn



▲ *If the range is in use:*  
Red flags will be flying to warn you and you will not be able to walk the next section. Instead take the path alongside the rifle range to the Coast Road. Walk south along the road past the range and Wheataill Farm. After the rifle range, follow the signs for National Cycle Network Route No.1 through the housing estate and you will rejoin the coast footpath at Whitburn Bents.

▲ *If the range is not in use:*  
Red flags will not be flying and you will be able to continue straight down the coast, where Jackie's Beach is on the left. After leaving the rifle range area, continue along the coastal footpath at the rear of Whitburn Village (an area known as Whitburn Bents) until you reach the South Bents car park.

▲ If you wish to continue to Sunderland Pier, you can walk on the sand all the way if the tide is low enough. If the tide is too high, take the coast pavement/ promenade all the way to the pier instead.

### GETTING FROM THE FINISH

There are a number of bus services between Sunderland and South Shields. From Souter Lighthouse and Roker Harbour View, service E1 follows the coast and enters South Shields via Sea Road and Ocean Road.

If you are travelling from Newcastle, you can reach South Shields by Metro, and return by Metro or train from Seaburn Station.