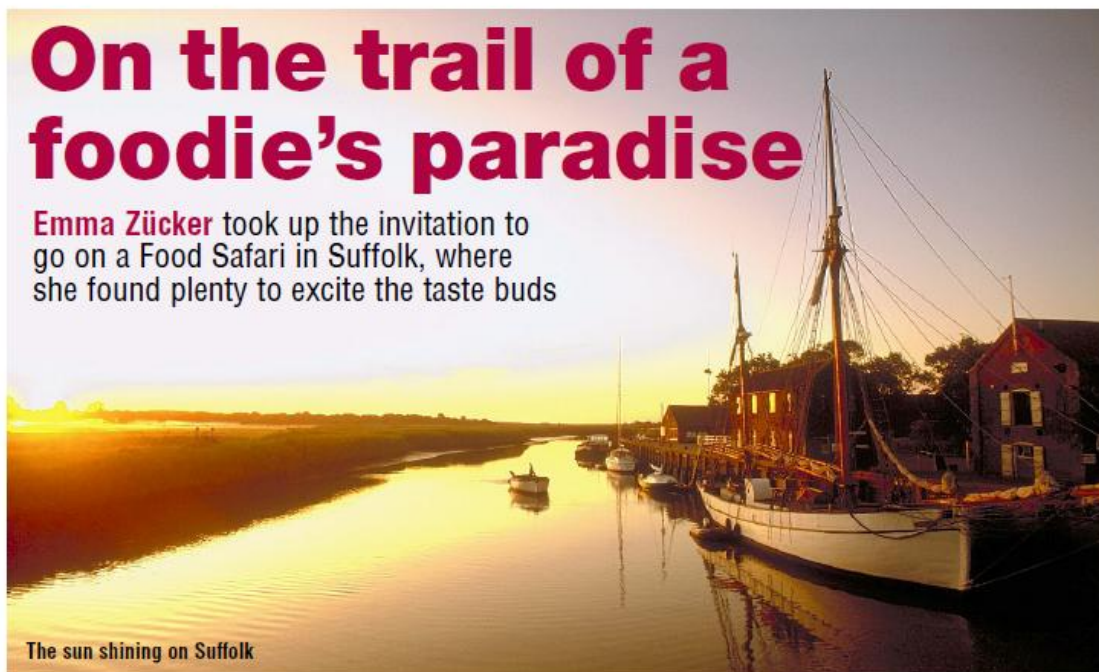


## On the trail of a foodie's paradise

Emma Zücker took up the invitation to go on a Food Safari in Suffolk, where she found plenty to excite the taste buds



The sun shining on Suffolk

I absolutely love food. Any kind of food. In fact, I spend the majority of my spare time thinking about what I'm going to have for lunch, dinner or when I'm going to be eating out next.

So you can imagine my delight when I was offered the chance to go on a 'foodie weekend', which even included going on a food safari.

When I was informed about the Food Safari, I had no idea what to expect – let's face it, there aren't many places in Suffolk you'd envisage bumping around on the back of an open-top jeep – but it was still enough to have me chomping at the bit.

My boyfriend Aly and I were to be whisked away to the seaside town of Aldeburgh in Suffolk for a delectable couple of days, and our base camp was one of the most gorgeous little houses I have ever seen.

### Cosy

We arrived at the Hidden Cottage on a dark and blustery evening, with the salty sea air whipping around us. Newly renovated last summer, the cottage had been transformed from a dilapidated ruin into a cosy four-roomed property.

Although it was tiny, this suited us perfectly as a couple, and the thought of snuggling up in the compact living room – complete with working coal-burning stove – was rather lovely.

The sympathetically restored, crooked features of the Hidden Cottage are just beautiful, but do beware of the low ceilings – being over six feet tall, Aly did bump his head a few times, but assured me he still loved the quirky property and it did make for a few amusing moments!

That night, we walked a few minutes across the road to beach front hotel, The Brudenell, to enjoy a delicious meal in the restaurant, which included Maldon's finest oysters – an appropriate precursor for our outing the following day.

What I've failed to mention yet is the sumptuous food package we



Hidden Cottage.

received on our arrival – something which the tourist board, Choose Suffolk can often arrange for self-catering breaks.

The hamper, which came from local establishment, Lawson's Delicatessen, was jam-packed full of local produce including smoked salmon, home-made runner bean chutney, cheese, moist fruit cake, and fresh apple juice from a local farm. In addition well-known brewer Adnams, which produces its ale in nearby Southwold, had supplied a plethora of beers and a bottle of their own champagne. Heaven!

### Fascinating

After a blissful night's sleep in a gorgeous, solid wood bed, we were up early for the focal point of our weekend away – the Food Safari.

We met in nearby Orford at Pinney's which sells fresh seafood, caught by their own fishing boats in the North Sea, and also cooks it up in their restaurant just around the corner.

Although the Food Safari days vary in theme – cheese and beer are two of the options – today we were focusing on oysters and other seafood.

First we took a trip to the nearby oyster beds, Butley Creek, which were first restored in the 1950s by Richard Pinney who had moved to a derelict cottage from London, and had been searching for ways to make a living.

The beds worked for him and since then, on the same site, a smoke house was set up for hanging much of the fish which is sold at Pinney's of Orford to this day. It was fascinating watching oysters being scooped from the beds and you would usually get a chance to go out on a fishing boat, but sadly the sea was so choppy it was

carefully sourced and delicious foodstuffs. And it really works. Their kind and bubbly personalities are wonderful, and the shop is stunningly displayed. Lawson's really is a must if you're visiting Aldeburgh – in fact, I'd go as far as to say that it's worth a special journey.

Those who have some knowledge of Aldeburgh may well have heard about its award-winning fish and chips. So it was a given that our Saturday night meal would come from Aldeburgh Fish & Chip Shop, although we were advised to go early if we wanted to avoid the queues which often form. We did this, thank goodness, and after we'd eaten, I could see why people come from miles around to buy their fish supper. It really was delicious.

After stuffing ourselves until we were fit to burst, we thought it best to walk it off – as far as the nearest pub, that is, which turned out to be just a few minutes away, where we sank a few local ales and mused upon our thoroughly fulfilling day.

Our trip to Aldeburgh was just what we had needed – an informative and interesting but fun and relaxing weekend, which I know we will talk about for a long time to come.

It's most definitely a place which I will revisit, and even somewhere I can see myself living one day.

