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the waterfront city



the
official
mini
guide
2009



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Portsmouth is a vibrant and dynamic place where poignant reminders of our history blend seamlessly with a modern waterfront to create a contemporary, living city.

Whether you're looking for a romantic city break, a fun-packed family holiday or a weekend away with friends, Portsmouth is the perfect destination.



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Spinnaker Tower by Jonty Sexton

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This guide can only give you a taste of what's on offer, leaving plenty to surprise and delight you when you visit. For more information go online at www.visitportsmouth.co.uk

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Welcome to Portsmouth

Get your bearings by making your first port of call the Spinnaker Tower. Soaring 170m into the sky, there's no better introduction to the city. With Portsmouth laid out before you you'll be able to plan your visit and see how close everything really is. See the famous historic ships HMS Victory and HMS Warrior 1860 from new heights, then marvel at the glittering waterfront and green open spaces below you.

During the summer months a ride on board Alf, the Local Haunts bus, will give you a whistle-stop tour of the city and a glimpse into its history, giving a great introduction to Portsmouth. Or why not hop on the Southsea Express, a land-train taking in Southsea, Old Portsmouth and Gunwharf Quays between March and September.

Make the most of the sea air and get on your bike! We have put together two special cycle trails allowing you to take in the sights at your leisure and we can even organise cycle hire for you. Follow the Seafront Cycle Ride (4.5 miles) to take in the city's attractions, or the circular Langstone Harbour Ride (15 miles), which also guides you through Hayling Island.

If travelling on foot is more your style, then why not join one of the regular guided walks? With new themes for 2009 such as Henry VIII and old favourites like Spice Island, Charles Dickens and Pubs of Portsmouth, you'll know all about the city in no time! Alternatively guide yourself around the waterfront following the Renaissance Trail set in the pavement. A leaflet from our Visitor Information Centres will help you along your way.

Portsmouth's waterfront looks even more spectacular from the water, so hit the high seas with a leisurely harbour cruise or an adrenaline-filled RIB ride out into the Solent.



48 hours in Portsmouth

Family Fun

Day 1

Afternoon - Time to shop! Choose from three of the city's dedicated shopping areas. Portsmouth's City Centre has all the big names you'll recognise along with a traditional street market. Southsea boasts an impressive range of independent specialist retailers, two department stores and a host of high quality shops. Or head to the superbly situated Gunwharf Quays and discover more than 95 designer outlet stores.

Evening - Spend an evening in Southsea where you'll find a selection of stylish wine bars and distinctive restaurants. Catch a show at the majestic Kings Theatre or check out the upcoming musical talent at The Wedgewood Rooms.

Day 2

Morning - After breakfast, take yourselves on a mini-Culture Trail of the city. Begin at aspeX gallery, Gunwharf Quays for a fix of innovative, contemporary visual art. Here you'll find work of artists from Portsmouth alongside internationally recognised names.

Then head to the City Museum to discover more about Sherlock Holmes and his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in the award-winning A Study in Sherlock exhibition.

Afternoon - Make your way to Portsmouth's famous Historic Dockyard. Explore three of the most important warships ever built - HMS Victory, HMS Warrior 1860 and the Mary Rose, then visit the fantastic Action Stations and Royal Naval Museum. Finish off with a leisurely Harbour Tour to see today's naval dockyard and bustling harbour in action.

Evening - Evenings are the perfect time to visit Gunwharf Quays, with over 30 cosmopolitan bars and restaurants. Whether you'd like an intimate meal for two, bar snacks and partying, or something in-between you're in the right place.

Day 3

Morning - Enjoy a well-deserved lie-in then take a walk along the Renaissance Trail, starting at The Hard. The trail follows a chain motif set in the pavement along the Millennium Promenade and information panels provide glimpses into the history of the area along the way. Take a breather along the way with a visit up the Spinnaker Tower and look down over all the fabulous places you have visited during your stay.

Lunchtime - Now you've worked up an appetite, complete your visit to Portsmouth with a traditional lunch at one of the historic pubs in Old Portsmouth - alongside cobbled streets, a fishing port, one of our cathedrals and centuries of history. Watch the world float by from a sunny terrace, or cosy up by an open fire depending on the weather!

Climb the tallest indoor climbing tower in the UK, get on board a WWII landing craft, ride the waves indoors, or look a tropical shark in the eye; Portsmouth has plenty of things to keep you and the family occupied!

Get the kids scratching their heads with a visit to Action Stations' InterAction gallery. Boasting some serious science and technology exhibits, you'll get to grips with gizmos and gadgets whilst injecting a little education into your visit.

Think museums are boring and stuffy? Then think again; Portsmouth's museums are extremely child-friendly and lots of fun. The D-Day Museum takes visitors on a journey through wartime Britain, with walk-through air-raid shelters, a D-Day control room and a crashed glider before leading you on board a real landing craft. At the Royal Marines Museum you can learn about jungle warfare and even come face to face with snakes and scorpions! Visit Portsmouth Natural History Museum and let your children find out all about the city's wildlife and geology. In season, enjoy the museum's butterfly house and garden.

Blue Reef Aquarium is the perfect place for a family visit, with regular talks and feeding demonstrations, a walk-through underwater tunnel, cute otters and fascinating fish. Don't forget your bathers in the warm weather because the Blue Reef Beach Club has a sandy beach, giant water cannons, pirate's bridge and rockpool sandpit! Or why not take the family to see Pompey play at Fratton Park? A day at the football will get pulses racing and is a chance to see the Premier League's finest in action.

When the weather's good, you can't beat Southsea's seafront. With pebble beaches to explore and gigantic green spaces you can soak up the sea air and enjoy nature's playground. The children are bound to notice the funfair shining like a beacon from Clarence Pier, so indulge them with a few wild rides or a turn in the arcades. Or head over to the Pyramids Centre for more family fun.

Hidden Gems

Ever wanted to get off the beaten track and discover some of Portsmouth's secrets? With our help you can tour the city like a local and uncover some of the city's hidden gems.

Eastney Beam Engine House is open the last weekend of every month (excluding Dec). Tucked away in residential streets, this attraction offers a fascinating glimpse into a Victorian engine house and it's James Watt beam engines.

Experience the quiet life in Old Portsmouth with cobbled streets, the picturesque Camber Dock, traditional pubs and tucked-away tearooms. Enjoy a quiet drink overlooking the harbour.

Many visitors still don't know about the magnificent Spitbank Fort, a man-made island jutting out of the Solent. Take a short boat trip out to this impressive seafort to enjoy Sunday lunch and a historic tour.

Make sure you visit us in September if you wish to see the real behind-the-scenes Portsmouth. Heritage Open Days takes place every year and gives exclusive access to archive collections and unseen areas at venues such as the Kings Theatre, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the Square Tower.

Did you know that Portsmouth is a two-cathedral city? Visit Portsmouth Cathedral (St Thomas's) in Old Portsmouth to discover a seamless portrayal of the city's history and the cathedral's understated beauty. Portsmouth's Catholic Cathedral (St John's) offers a quiet space in the heart of the city and is a stunning example of 19th century French-Gothic style.

Despite being a bustling city, Portsmouth has plenty of open spaces just waiting to be explored. Take a self-guided trail into Hilssea Lines where you'll find eighty hectares of space including enchanting woodland, an ancient monument and brackish lakes. Or discover the city's nature reserve at Farlington Marshes, a haven for wildlife and an important site for migratory birds.

Cultural Heritage

Here in Portsmouth we are very proud of our unrivalled naval and literary heritage. Our Historic Dockyard presents some of the finest maritime heritage in the world, making it a key feature of Portsmouth's waterfront and a definite 'must-see'. Also learn more about the literary greats that have graced the city over the years and how their life in Portsmouth has shaped their work.

Discover more about Admiral Lord Nelson, Henry VIII, World War Veterans and Portsmouth Dockyard workers at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Learn about life on board three of the world's most famous warships ever built, HMS Victory, HMS Warrior 1860 and the Mary Rose. Explore 800 years of the Royal Navy at the Royal Naval Museum and then complete the story by testing your own skill and brainpower at Action Stations. Take a leisurely 45-minute boat tour around Portsmouth Harbour and see the ships of the modern Royal Navy fleet in port.

Exciting times lie ahead for the Mary Rose, which will be housed in a new museum from 2012. She's due to be withdrawn from public view in Autumn 2009 but don't worry; during the construction you can still enjoy a fascinating visit to the current Mary Rose Museum where the ship will be interpreted in new ways. Find out more about Henry VIII with a visit to Southsea Castle, one of the fortifications constructed by the king to protect the country from invaders. Here Henry VIII stood and watched the Mary Rose tragically sink in 1545.

The city's literary figures also form an important part of our vibrant history. The great Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth in 1812, and visitors can take a peek into his humble beginnings at the Charles Dickens Birthplace Museum. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived in Portsmouth when he started his writing career, penning his first and second Sherlock Holmes novels in the city. Find out more at 'A Study in Sherlock: Uncovering the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection' at the City Museum and Records Office.

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St. Thomas of Canterbury Anglican
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www.portsmouthcathedral.org.uk

Retail Therapy

Portsmouth is a great choice as a shopping destination, with independent stores and all the big names you'd expect to find in a city. Each shopping district in the city offers something a little different and all are within easy reach of one another for some serious retail therapy.

To find high-street style, head to our City Centre. Commercial Road and Cascades are home to big names such as Topshop, H&M, Debenhams, River Island and Next. From Thursday to Saturday you'll also find a traditional street market dating back centuries. Pick up your 5-a-day fruit and veg, snap up a designer-inspired handbag or find some great toys for the kids. When you need time out to review your purchases, head to nearby Victoria Park for a picnic and some rest.

Southsea town centre has its own unique flavour and is perfect for those craving a touch of individuality. Palmerston Road is home to department stores and high-street favourites on a smaller scale, along with regular Farmer's Markets. In nearby Marmion Road you'll find chocolate, inspirational furnishings, stunning shoes and award-winning diamonds, all in one place. Head to Albert Road for vintage delights, antiques, edgy clothing and collectables. The street is buzzing all day and night, with quirky cafés and bars.

At Gunwharf Quays you'll find designer outlet shopping on the waterfront, a shopper's heaven! With more than 95 designer outlets and up to 70% off usual store prices, you can look chic for less. Gunwharf Quays is also home to regular gift fairs and French and Italian markets, so along with the shop at aspx gallery, you'll never be stuck for an unusual gift. When you need a break from all that shopping there are 30 cosmopolitan bars and restaurants to choose from, or a trip up the Spinnaker Tower might be just the refresher you need.

Live Portsmouth

Portsmouth is a hotspot for visual and performing arts. With live performances from theatre to comedy and thought-provoking fine art from the contemporary to the classic. There's always something new to see.

The city is home to two striking theatres, both worked on by architect Frank Matcham. The New Theatre Royal is host to cutting-edge dance, theatre, drama, music and comedy whilst The Kings Theatre has a mix of professional and amateur shows along with variety shows and touring West End productions. Portsmouth is also home to independent cinemas showing world film and new releases together with cult and classic movies. What better place to find real drama than on the football pitch? Head to Fratton Park to catch the 2008 FA Cup Winners in action and some of the most passionate fans in the league.

Get your dose of live music at the legendary Wedgewood Rooms in Southsea or check out Portsmouth Guildhall, the city's largest concert venue. From festival warm-ups to touring established acts, you'll be spoilt for choice.

Don't miss aspx, Portsmouth's leading contemporary art gallery, for your chance to take in the cultural greats of tomorrow. Immerse yourself in contemporary visual art with exhibitions, workshops and events. If fine art is your thing, then head to the City Museum & Records Office where you'll find a wide range of material from the 17th century to the present day.

Whilst visiting the city centre, make time to walk through Guildhall Square. Not only will you find the beautiful Portsmouth Guildhall, but now also the Big Screen. Portsmouth was one of eight cities chosen to host a Big Screen by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic & Paralympic Games (LOCOG). The Big Screen currently shows a range of local information including a diary of upcoming events and locally produced films.

What's On in 2009

We have a spectacular range of events across the whole year in our museums, galleries, theatres and open spaces. Here is just a taster of what we have in store.

The best place for up-to-date listings is our website at www.visitportsmouth.co.uk where you'll find dates, places, times and all the essential details. Here's just a flavour of the events happening in 2009.

- Charles Dickens' Birthday Celebrations at Charles Dickens' Birthplace Museum
- National Science Week at Blue Reef Aquarium
- Easter, Summer and Half-Term holiday activities at various attractions
- Museums and Galleries Month at various locations in Portsmouth
- Portsmouth Festivities "Henry VIII 500 – Portsmouth & the Tudors" at locations across Portsmouth
- Shakespeare's Globe open-air touring production
- The Greatest Show on Earth, a circus-inspired flower festival, at Portsmouth Cathedral
- Portsmouth International Kite Festival on Southsea Common
- Heritage Open Days at locations across Portsmouth
- Great South Run Weekend
- A Victorian Festival of Christmas at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
- Henry VIII: Man and Monarch, British Library Touring Exhibition at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

Making the most Of your visit

Whether you are in Portsmouth for a break away or just the day, then we can help you make the most of your time in the city. Our staff are award-winning, well-trained and friendly. Call or pop into one of our visitor centres and put us to the test.

Looking for somewhere to stay? Contact us in advance and we can book city accommodation and even help you find somewhere to stay at your next stop. Get in touch with our Contact Centre or pop in.*

We can also help you make the most of whatever time you have, providing information and loads of suggestions on the choice of local, regional and national attractions, entertainment and events. We offer a range of tickets and vouchers offering up to 10% discount on Portsmouth attractions – including Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard, Blue Reef Aquarium, D-Day Museum and the Royal Marines Museum. Make sure you contact us in advance as tickets may not always be available on the day.

We will advise you on how to get around with all the maps and timetables you'll need. We also sell tickets for local ferry and coach operators including Wightlink car ferry, Waverley Paddle Steamer and Local Haunts, Lucketts and Vision coach holidays & day trips.

For that little something to remind you of Portsmouth, we also sell a range of local gifts, books and traditional souvenirs and a few of those little things that make your holiday run more smoothly including stamps, camera film and batteries.

We can arrange the sale of gifts, publications and some tickets by mail order – please get in touch with our Contact Centre to find out more. Go to www.visitportsmouth.co.uk for full information on all current services.

*Small booking fee charged plus deposit of 10% of the first night's accommodation costs.

Portsmouth's Visitor Information Service

Contact Centre open daily from 9:30am to 5:15pm

Call 023 9282 6722

Email vis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Web www.visitportsmouth.co.uk

Post Clarence Esplanade, Southsea, PO5 3PB

Or come and see us – our Service is open 363 days a year:

The Hard, Portsmouth – outside the entrance to the Historic Dockyard

Open daily 9:30am - 5:15pm New Years Day open 11:00am - 3:00pm
(Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

Southsea, Clarence Esplanade – next to the Blue Reef Aquarium
March - October, open daily 9:30am - 5:15pm

Nov - Feb, open Monday to Friday 9:30am - 4:30pm
(Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day)

Information for Groups

If you're organising a visit of 10 or more people to Portsmouth, make sure you check out the great group rates and offers available to you.

For more information, contact our Groups Department on **023 9284 1666** or email tourism@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



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