

PORTCHESTER CASTLE, HAMPSHIRE

Hazard Information for Education Visits

It is the responsibility of teachers and group leaders to complete a risk assessment prior to the site visit. The following information is intended as an aid and does not replace the group leader's own risk assessment. We recommend coming to the site on a free planning visit, to help you with your risk assessment. Please note: where possible, English Heritage staff at the site will be happy to assist you with your queries, but cannot check or sign any section of your risk assessment.

Environmental conditions at historic sites may change rapidly and you'll need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Make sure you wear sensible footwear and dress appropriately for the site and weather. Please be aware that the site may close at short notice due to adverse weather. Where applicable, stonework and trees at our sites are inspected regularly; however, storm damage can sometimes affect the stability of stonework and branches of apparently healthy trees. On-going conservation work may pose a temporary hazard; a member of staff will advise you of any works when you visit. Dogs on leashes may be present on site.

There are two car parks at Portchester Castle.

- Coaches may only use the main car park as the smaller car park has a height restriction barrier.
- The narrow approach road to the site entrance is shared by traffic and pedestrians.

The features around the outside of the castle present potential hazards.

- The castle walls are a climbing hazard and to the right of the fragile, narrow path is a steep sided dry moat. The bank has eroded in some places.
- Surrounding the castle is a large water tidal moat which is deep when full of water and very muddy when empty – we do not advise any access to the moats or ditches at any time.
- There also can be rope swings tied onto over-hanging branches. It should be noted that these are 'illegal' and are not part of Portchester Castle.

The defensive nature of the castle means that it is situated very close to the sea.

- The surface of the perimeter path is uneven at all times.
- As the path turns away from the sea, there is an old wooden jetty. This is privately owned and entry to it is not permitted.

The approach road to the castle continues into the outer bailey and passes close to the schools' base which is located on the first floor of the Landgate.

- Although the outer gate is sometimes half-closed please be aware there could be traffic using this road.
- The schools' base is accessed via a steep stone staircase with limited lighting. Careful supervision is required at all times.
- The inner gatehouse, leading to the inner bailey, is surrounded by a wet moat containing muddy water of substantial depth.
- The wet moat is muddy, has very steep banks and is unfenced in parts.

The ruinous nature of the castle presents many surface and climbing hazards.

- Floor surfaces are uneven throughout.
- Walls are rough and contain uneven and often sharp stones.
- Sensible footwear and outdoor clothing are necessary.

Staircases within the castle keep can present potential hazards.

- There are old, uneven steps and staircases throughout.
- A steep stone spiral staircase is used to access every floor of the keep.
- New access staircases are steep.
- The viewing platform on the first floor is reached via a new spiral staircase. A warning sign is in place.

The keep roof can only be accessed via the stone spiral staircase.

- The roof of the keep is exposed to the elements and for this reason access is restricted under certain weather conditions.
- There is guttering at head height at the top of the stairs leading to the roof.
- The centre of the roof is very fragile lead. There is a warning sign in place.
- Descent from the roof is via the same staircase used to climb up to it. The stairs are steep and users are likely to encounter visitors moving in the opposite direction.

There are no toilet facilities inside Portchester Castle.

- Public toilets operated by Fareham Borough Council are located in the main car park next to the castle. Children should be supervised when using these as they are used by other members of the public.