

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.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

We want to reassure you that we're following government guidance to make your trip as safe and enjoyable as possible.

We've introduced a range of new hygiene standards and social distancing measures. Our staff and facilitators have received guidance to help them safely run education visits at this time, and we've also created a general risk assessment for education visitors to help you with your individual risk assessments. You can find this and other information about what to expect on your visit at: english-heritage.org.uk/schools-what-to-expect

We've also detailed key changes on the individual site schools pages of our website, so please check before you visit. Once your booking is confirmed, we recommend booking a free planning visit to help you prepare for your trip and familiarise yourself with the 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. Climbing poses a significant hazard and is not permitted.
- 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 can also 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 education room 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 education room is accessed via a steep stone staircase with limited lighting. Careful supervision is required at all times and this space can only be used if it is pre-booked.
- The inner gatehouse, leading to the inner bailey, is surrounded by a wet moat containing muddy water of substantial depth when the tide is in.
- The wet moat 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.

- When the roof area is open to the public, education groups can only access the roof with appropriate adult supervision. No students should access the roof unsupervised.
- 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.