

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 will need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Most accidents are the result of slips and trips so please make sure you wear appropriate footwear and dress sensibly 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, extreme weather conditions can sometimes affect stonework and trees so as well as following any staff instructions and being mindful of temporary barriers and signage, please remain vigilant at all times. 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.

All learners who are 16 years or younger should be supervised by a responsible adult at all times whilst on site.

There are two car parks at Portchester Castle run by Fareham Borough Council, not English Heritage.

- Coaches may only use the main car park as the smaller car park has a height restriction barrier. Parking charges are in place.
- 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.

- Climbing the castle walls poses a significant hazard and is not permitted.
- To the right of the fragile, narrow path is a steep-sided dry moat. The bank has eroded in some places and can be unstable.
- Surrounding the castle is a large tidal moat which is deep when full of water and very muddy when empty. Access to the moats or ditches is not permitted at any time.
- There can occasionally be rope swings tied onto over-hanging branches. It should be noted that these are unofficial 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 and there is no physical barrier between the path and the water.
- 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.

Hazards on the approach to the outer and inner bailey.

- The approach road to the castle continues into the outer bailey through the land gate. Although the outer gate is sometimes half-closed, please be aware there could be traffic using this road.
- 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 recommended.

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. These are used by other members of the public, and students should be supervised when using these.

Covid-19 and flu.

- We follow government and [NHS guidelines](#) to reduce the risk of transmission. Please also follow their guidance and do not visit if you have flu or Covid-19 symptoms or have recently tested positive.