

LOCAL AREA PORTRUSH

PORTRUSH - HISTORY

Portrush - Port-rois, meaning 'the landing place on the promontory'

Generations of holidaymakers can't be wrong! Portrush has had more experience than many seaside locations in providing fun and relaxation and in fact, Portrush has celebrated 250 years of offering holiday hospitality. Currently, with a resident population of 6,372, Portrush is a sleepy seaside haven during winter and a beeming centre of activity from spring to autumn.

Portrush began as just a small fishing village near the remains of a Norman Castle and a medieval abbey and was a site sheltered geographically by the protective peninsula of Ramore Head (Rath Mhor – meaning 'big ring fort' – a reference to the area's unique history stretching far back into antiquity). Offering protection from both westerly and easterly gales the promontory was a natural location for a growing fishing industry in what became known as Portrush. However, the real development of the town of Portrush followed the arrival of the railways in the 19th century and a period of rapid industrialisation.

Long elegant terraces of Georgian style houses reach out towards Ramore Head and throughout the 20th Century these provided excellent holiday accommodation for thousands of families dating right back to the post-railway boom. Some quirky buildings such as the mock-Tudor railway station and the fairytale-castle-like Town Hall with its round tower; give Portrush a

charming eccentric character. At the beginning of the 20th century, passenger steamers regularly travelled back and forth between Portrush harbour and Scotland and today cruiseships visit regularly during the summer months.

PORTRUSH TODAY

Today, Portrush is a bustling seaside town with a resident population of around 6,500 and a considerable number of visitors during the summer season and during special events throughout the year. The town enjoys panoramic views of the Atlantic Ocean and on bright, clear days views of Scotland may be glimpsed in the distance. Just north of Portrush, lying low in the Atlantic Ocean are the Skerries, a chain of small islands formed from cooled volcanic lava which are home to a large population of breeding seabirds. Geological evidence from the Skerries was crucial to prove the theory that basalt is formed from cooled volcanic lava. The Skerries along with the Giant's Causeway and a lot of the North Coast is an area rich in fossils, too.

With all the amenities demanded of a popular holiday resort, Portrush's beaches, West Bay, East Strand and Whiterocks are among the finest in Ireland for surfing and watersports and have enjoyed prestigious European Blue Flag status. Portrush also boasts accommodation to suit all tastes and pockets, including camping and caravan sites, hostels, hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts and self catering cottages and farmhouses. Portrush also has a



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growing variety of eating out options with restaurants, gastro pubs, cafes, hotels and take aways all adding their own flavours to the area. Portrush is famous for its nightlife and Lush at Kellys, on the outskirts of town hosts top international DJ's and dance acts most weekends. Alternatively, venues such as the Ramore Wine Bar and Rogues continue in popularity as trendy meeting spots offering live bands most weekends and drawing a fun-loving, mixed clientel. Entertainment is dotted throughout the town, especially at weekends and during festiavls - check our What's On page for details on what's coming soon.

PORTRUSH ATTRACTIONS

The Dunluce Centre provides brilliant family entertainment including the 'Darklight Lazer Drome' and the 'Turbo Tours' theatre - a film simulation experience, which is the ultimate indoor thrill-ride! The Centre is also home to 'Finn McCool's Adventure Playground' – a 3 floor interactive play environment which combines the latest software technology with state-of-the-art play equipment. The Complex incorporates a coffee shop, viewing tower and souvenir shops and the town's Tourist Information Centre is based here.

Ramore Head is a dramatic setting for some of the town's recreational facilities, such as bowls and tennis. Beside the East Strand, Royal Portrush Golf Club has one of the world's outstanding links courses - the Dunluce Links - where top international players compete. The club's second course

- The Valley Links - is also of championship standard.

The harbour is the focal point for angling, boat trips and water sport events. A special fisherman's centre offers anglers their own changing rooms and weighing and gutting facilities. Across the peninsula is another small harbour, Portnadubh (named from its use by Tavish Dubh the notorious 14th Century Scottish pirate) where the Causeway Coast Maritime Heritage Group are based. Adjacent is a nature reserve with fossil bearing rocks.

Situated at Portrush Harbour is the spectacular Waterworld, an imaginative and exciting indoor water play area for all the family. Giant water slides include 'The Black Hole' and a health suite boasts a steam room, sauna and relaxation area. The complex also offers ten-pin bowling with a hi-tech computerised scoring system and a cafe.

For those wanting to explore the human and natural history of the area the Coastal Zone Centre on Bath Road in the town is the best possible place to start with a programme of exhibitions, walks, lectures and films.

For those with an interest in earth history, there are no fewer than eleven geological Areas of Special Scientific Interest nearby!

