



Portsmouth Millennium Promenade Walk

Three kilometres of promenade now links Portsmouth's historic waterfront. The route starts from Spur Redoubt near Clarence Pier, Southsea and finishes on The Hard, taking in Old Portsmouth, the Camber and Gunwharf Quays.

The walkway has been built of the highest quality natural stone and opened up waterfront land that had been closed to the public for centuries.

The route is indicated by a chain motif set into the surface, symbolising partnership between the communities of Portsmouth and Gosport and between past and present. Historically it also refers to the chain, which used to be tightened across the harbour entrance at times of potential attack.

Column-mounted lanterns light the promenade, designed to reflect the historic character of blue lights at night that are strung around the harbour.

Points of Interest from Spur Redoubt to the Historic Dockyard

Follow the promenade west from The Clarence public house to Spur Redoubt, which is situated beneath the wooden footbridge.

1. Spur Redoubt:

A small triangular shaped fort or redoubt built in 1680 by Sir Bernard de Gomme to strengthen a possibly vulnerable area in the fortifications of Portsmouth town. This is believed to be the point from which Nelson set sail for the Battle of Trafalgar onboard HMS Victory.

2. Long Curtain Battery:

This is the only surviving section of the ramparts and moat, which once enclosed the old town.

Continue to follow the chain links west. At the end of the raised walkway is the saluting platform.

3. Saluting Platform and Ten Gun Battery:

Constructed in the late 15th century to provide elevated gun sites near the harbour mouth, the platform overlooks the outline of the main guardhouse, Grand Parade and the Garrison Church. Originally a simple wall joining the Saluting Platform to the Square Tower, the Battery was adapted in the 18th and 19th centuries to serve as additional defence and consisted of ten guns.

Behind the Saluting Platform on the lower level stands Grand Parade, an outline of the Guard House and the Garrison Church.

4. Grand Parade:

Until the 1870's when most of its defences were removed, Old Portsmouth was a fortified garrison town, surrounded by walls and a deep moat. The army was at the centre of town life providing the residents not only with security but also with spectacular parades and pageantry on Grand Parade.

5. The Main Guard House:

The red brick outlines, on Grand Parade, are the foundations of the town's main guardhouse, which was demolished in 1883. There is a plaque here to tell you more about its history.

6. Royal Garrison Church- Domus Dei:

Originally a pilgrims hospice founded around 1212. This is also the place where Charles II married Catherine of Braganza, in 1662. The nave of the church was badly damaged by bombing in 1941 resulting in its roof being completely destroyed. Today it remains open to the sky as a tribute to those who lost their lives during the war.

The Garrison Church is owned by English Heritage and is open to the public at various times throughout the year.

Walking west from Saluting Platform towards King James' Gate, we can see the remaining structure of Victoria Pier.

7. Victoria Pier:

Built on the site of an earlier jetty from which gunpowder and later meat was ferried to wooden ships anchored at Spithead. In 1817 the steam packet service to and from the Isle of Wight began. Most of the present pier was washed away in heavy seas in 1925.

8. King James' Gate

The stonework on which the Millennium panel stands formed part of the original King James' Gate, built in 1687 to give access to Point from the Old Town. The gates stood on the site of the present road and to the north a drawbridge would have crossed a moat. The moat was filled in the mid-nineteenth century and the gate was removed in 1865.

From King James' Gate it is necessary to leave the chain links for a short time whilst moving down to the lower level where there are some more points of interest. Behind King James' Gate on the lower level stands one of Portsmouth's oldest and most famous structures, the Square Tower.

9. Square Tower:

Built and designed as a gun platform in 1494, the Square Tower was one of Portsmouth's first defensive structures. It was later used as the military governor's residence, a powder magazine and a meat and water store. In 1823 the Admiralty installed a semaphore station on the top of the tower which remained until 1848. The Tower is now administered by Portsmouth City Museums and between 1979 and 1986 it was restored to its present condition.

Continue to walk westwards on the lower level to the Sallyports and the Round Tower.

10. Sallyports:

The Sallyports, or openings in the fortifications, gave access through the defences to the beach and the sea, and were often used by sailors waiting with their boats for orders.

11. Pioneer Heritage Foundation Statue:

Members of the Pioneer Heritage Foundation presented this life sized bronze sculpture, situated in front of the last Sallyport, to the City of Portsmouth on 27th August 2001. "A permanent legacy to the commitment of the Europeans who courageously left their native lands to create a new home in America."

12. 18 Gun Battery

18 Gun Battery is the last section of Sir Bernard de Gomme's fortifications to be completed in the 1680's. Locally it is also known as Hot Walls as it was reputed to be where hot shot was prepared during the Spithead Mutiny of 1797. However a more likely story is that they form a suntrap for sunbathers!

13. Point Barracks:

By 1850 all the original buildings on this site had been cleared, to make room for artillery barracks. The arched sections are the surviving part of the soldiers' quarters. The barracks were demolished in the 1960s and the area opened to the public.

14. Round Tower:

Henry V ordered a wooden Round Tower be built at the mouth of the harbour in 1418, which was completed in 1426. His son, Henry VIII had the Round Tower rebuilt out of stone and a Square Tower was also built. Henry V ordered the construction of the tower and another across the harbour at Gosport after the French had invaded Portsmouth six times during the hundred-year war. Outside the tower is the Hecla Stone, a hard rock boulder used during the 1854 Russian War by two sailors from HMS Hecla as cover to keep the enemy at bay, assuring the safety of the whole crew.

Pick up the chain again from outside the Round Tower and follow it through the Caponier and out into Capstan Square.

15. Caponier:

This is a bombproof fortified passageway which led from Point Barracks into the Round Tower to protect troops whilst moving between buildings.

16. Capstan Square:

The site of the capstan, a drum equipped with a ratchet, used for drawing taut the iron chain boom between Gosport and Portsmouth to protect the harbour entrance. The chain was first recorded in the 16th century and last renewed in the 18th century.

17. Tower Street:

Tower House was the home of marine artist William Wyllie. Black Horse Cottage was part of the Black Horse Tavern said to have been frequented by Prince William, later King William IV, when a midshipman.

Follow the chain down Tower Street to Bath Square.

18. Bath Square:

Many fishermen and fishmongers lived here in the early 1800s. The square has connections with General Wolfe and the last fatal duel fought in England. Quebec House was built in 1754 as a public bathing house and is probably the only wooden-framed building to survive locally. Customs House, an 18th century HM Water-guard Office was extended in 1956 in the style of the original building.

19. Hailing Station:

The Pier and Hailing Station next to Quebec House formed the Lloyds look out where in-bound and outbound vessels would have their names, cargo and destinations recorded and printed the following day on the Lloyds list.

Following the chain you will pass through Broad Street to what used to be the most infamous area of Old Portsmouth, The Point.

20. The Point:

This area was reputed to be the main meeting ground of Press Gangs who enlisted young men to sign up for the Navy and was also notorious for its numerous ale-houses. The Still & West was first listed in trade directories in 1784 as The Still Tavern. The ' & West Country House' section of the name was added after it combined with the East & West Country House, another pub in Bath Square in 1903. The Point was also known as Spice Island because it was once a major port importing exotic spices from around the world.

Follow the chain up Broad Street.

21. Broad Street:

The street contains many houses of architectural interest including Fortitude Cottage, a public house until the 1920's, now a guesthouse.

Continue past 18 Gun Battery on your right before turning left into the Camber.

22. The Camber:

The original fishing settlement developed in the 12th century by the Normans, beginning the town of Portsmouth. Once a busy commercial dock, the camber now has a small fishing fleet, fish markets, yachts and working boats. The Bridge Tavern stands on the dockside; on its outside wall is a large painting depicting the colourful way of life on the Point.

The chain will now take you out of The Camber, left past Viviers' fish market and across the Gunwharf Quays residential area.

23. Gunwharf Quays:

A major leisure, retail and sailing development completed in 2001. Originally the site of an old arsenal from the 17th century and later from 1923 to 1986 the site of HMS Vernon, the Royal Navy's mining and torpedo establishment. Why not pick up a leaflet from the Visitor Information Centre?

24. HMS Vernon Gate:

This Grade II listed building was the main entrance through which thousands of sailors passed into the naval shore base. The building to the right of the gate was built in 1877 as a Police Office; to the left is the guardhouse, built in 1920.

Further up on the right stands Donegal House.

25. Donegal House:

Built in 1897 as a Quartermasters quarters, this building was also used by the naval Chaplain and Captain. Please note – this building has now been demolished

Continue south towards the waterfront.

26. City Quay and Vernon Creek:

To the left of the City Quay promenade is Vernon Creek. Running inland from the harbour, this is where ships were beached for repairs from the 12th century prior to the development of the dockyard. There are now attractive water features, including three torpedoes used as seating which were found in a building on the site and an old crane left by the MOD when it sold the site, floodlit at night. Also alongside the creek is the Vernon Figurehead from a wooden ship. This is not the well-known Admiral Vernon but the Honourable George Vernon.

Across the creek in the residential area is the original wall around and gate into Gunwharf, built in 1803.

27. Vulcan Building:

To the left of City Quay- across Vernon Creek- is the residential area of Gunwharf Quays. This is the most impressive Georgian building on the site, built in 1814 as the Grand Storehouse. Originally U-shaped, the North wing was destroyed in World War II and is to be rebuilt as part of the residential development of the building.

28. Vernon Building or The Old Customs House:

Further up City Quay on the right is The Old Customs House. Built around 1800 as an office block, this Grade II listed building has been converted into a pub. The elegant Georgian building was restored using traditional materials of the late 18th century by Gales, a local brewery, with the close involvement of English Heritage.

29. Waterfront:

At the end of City Quay is the Waterfront area of Gunwharf Quays, which offers 500 metres of berths for yachts and tall ships, and plays host to an exciting range of sailing events. There are also a wide selection of bars, restaurants and designer outlets, with stunning views of Portsmouth Harbour, Old Portsmouth and Gosport.

30. Spinnaker Tower:

The 170-metre Spinnaker Tower is now open. The Tower will be the focal point for Portsmouth Harbour, becoming the first landmark for millions of visitors arriving in the UK on ferries, ships and boats. The 3 observation platforms will offer breathtaking views of the harbour and a 23-mile panorama of the Solent and beyond.

The final destination of the trail is The Hard. There is currently a break in the chain here. From Central Square follow the Marlborough Avenue to the pedestrian exit that travels under the railway line. Turn left and rejoin the chain links along The Hard.

31. The Hard:

Originally called the Common Hard, it was constructed around 1720 as a landing area for small boats. The road leads along the public waterfront towards Victory Gate entrance to the Historic Dockyard. **There is currently a break in the chain between the Hard and the Spinnaker Tower. If starting the walk from the Hard continue along the main road, past the bus and coach station and enter Gunwharf Quays. You can pick up the trail again at the Tower.**

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