

The Royal Inn Portishead Pub Walk

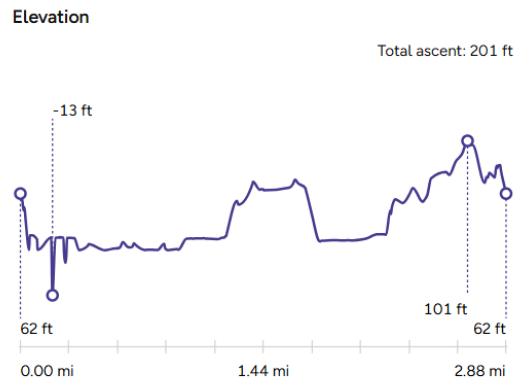
The Seaside Story of Portishead

OVERVIEW

In the 1800s, the Bristol Corporation set out to turn Portishead into a seaside resort. Their vision centred on the wooded hillside now known as Woodhill, with its planted walks, viewpoints and gentle gradients.

The woods and walks, The Royal, the Lake Grounds and later the open-air pool were all part of the same civic idea: a curated landscape where visitors could breathe sea air, wander through designed woodland, and feel they'd arrived somewhere with purpose.

This walk shows exactly what the Corporation was trying to achieve, following the route Victorian day-trippers once took.



Start/Finish	The Royal Inn, Pier Road, Portishead, BS20 7HG
Parking	Parking at the pub.
Grid Reference	ST 475 775
What3Words	///harnessed.multiples.diplomats
Distance	3 miles / 5 km Time 1.5 hours Ascent 200 ft / 60 m
Paths/Terrain	Lanes, pavements and public footpaths.
Difficulty	Easy walk, some short up-hills but nothing strenuous.
Public Transport	Regular buses from Bristol and Clevedon/Weston direction. One day the railway will return to Portishead!
Toilets	The Royal & multiple options along the way.
Other Pubs Nearby	Numerous options in Portishead to suite all tastes. The walk passes the Siren's Calling on the marina. A short walk onto Portishead High Street would introduce The Port, The Settle Inn, The Poacher, the Phoenix Bar and plenty of others nearby.

DIRECTIONS



1. Start at The Royal, the old Bristol-Corporation hotel perched above the channel, and drop down the steps opposite the driveway entrance, passing the Dock Master's House on your right.
2. Continue beyond the RNLI station & jetty, to the site of Portishead's original 'pier', where steamers once brought Victorian day-trippers from Bristol.
3. Turn right to follow the edge of the marina, passing the Old Lockhouse (now a rather good Italian restaurant) and cross one of the lock gates to follow the marina on the other side.
4. Stroll past Mokoko, whose coffee and pastries are highly recommended.
5. Continue straight ahead to pass The Siren's Calling, a small ale house with a fiercely loyal following.
6. Stay on this side of the marina all the way around to the far end, passing Hall & Woodhouse, Aqua, Bottelino's, and the cocktail-polished Sidney & Eden.
7. Head for the left-hand end of the Leisure Centre, to a pedestrian crossing to cross the road.
8. Head straight on, into the 'precinct', bearing right so you're walking away from Waitrose on your left, towards Portishead town.

9. The Shell garage is beyond the library. Before reaching the garage, cross Station Road at a pedestrian crossing ahead of you, to follow Cabstand road uphill (past hairdressers on either side of you). Stay on the right-hand side as you ascend.
10. Take the first right onto Woodhill Road, then turn left at the end.
11. Join Beach Road West, a level lane running above the Lake Grounds, with wide views across the ornamental lake and cricket field.
12. Follow the road as it eventually curves right and drops gently to the seafront.
13. Walk the full length of the Lake Grounds 'Esplanade', passing the cricket pitch, the lake, the tennis courts. Ahead of you is the Portishead Open Air Pool with its excellent volunteer-run café.
14. To the left of the café, climb the steps to Battery Point, where ships bound for Avonmouth pass astonishingly close. Pause at the seafarers' memorial and the old gun emplacement.
15. From here, take the rising path into Woodhill, the long Victorian-planted woodland created as part of the original resort plan.
16. Follow the woodland path uphill – it emerges onto Woodlands Road, a quiet lane lined with some grand Victorian villas, such as Woodlands and Woodside, with glimpses across to the mountains of South Wales.
17. Continue along the lane until The Royal comes back into view — a fitting end to a walk that threads together every chapter of Portishead's seaside story.

NOTES - Portishead Marina: From Power Stations to Pleasure Craft

It's easy, standing on the marina today, to imagine that this waterside world of cafés, restaurants and bars must somehow have been part of Portishead's original Victorian resort plan.

In truth, it's the exact opposite.

The Bristol Corporation's 1830s vision — Woodhill's planted walks, the cliff-top hotel, the Lake Grounds — all unfolded over the hill and out of sight, beyond the old pier. What lay on the marina site was never intended to be picturesque back then.

For most of the 20th century this was a heavy industrial estate, dominated by two major power stations:

- Portishead A (coal-fired, opened 1929)
- Portishead B (oil-fired, opened 1955)

Together they fed the energy demands of Portishead docks and the industries that clustered around them. Cooling towers, chimneys, sidings, oil tanks, coal conveyors — the whole landscape was shaped for output, not outlook.

The idea that this would one day become the town's most desirable neighbourhood would have seemed laughable. And yet the marina has become the foundation of modern Portishead, the catalyst for a reinvention every bit as dramatic as the Victorian resort experiment.

When the power stations closed (A in 1976, B in 1982) and the site was cleared, it created a blank canvas on a scale few coastal towns ever get. The result is the Village Quarter and the marina itself — a new part of town built around water, light and leisure rather than smoke and machinery.

What's striking is how neatly this modern chapter echoes the original 19th-century ambition. The Bristol Corporation wanted Portishead to face the water; the marina has made that happen again, just in a contemporary idiom.

Today's yachts, cruisers, paddleboarders, gig rowers and coffee shops are the spiritual descendants of the Victorian promenaders and day-trippers — even if the industrial century in between makes the connection feel improbable.

The marina didn't just tidy up a derelict site. It has reoriented the town, given it a new centre of gravity, and quietly completed the circle begun by the Corporation nearly two centuries ago: Portishead, once again, is a place where people come for the water, the air, the views — and, fittingly, a good pub at the end of a walk.