

Portobello Architecture Heritage Trail

This guide will help you find out more about Portobello, Edinburgh's seaside resort. The trail is approximately 1.7 miles in length and should take you about 1 - 1½ hrs. to complete.

Origins

Portobello takes its name from a cottage built around 1753 and lived in by one George Hamilton who tradition has it had been a sailor and had taken part in the capture of Puerto Bello in Panama in 1739, after which he named his house. However, the house was built by a farmer named Peter Scott for his shepherd and although a George Hamilton lived there in 1753, it is not known if he had ever been a sailor.

A Regency Spa

In the early 19th Century, Portobello became a fashionable Regency Spa with many wealthy families building permanent homes or renting houses for the summer. The beach was developing as a bathing place for the wealthy and the discovery of mineral wells led to the layout of Portobello, between 1800–1830, as a fashionable watering place. During this period, many fine Georgian streets and crescents were built as people also realised that Portobello was an attractive place in which to live all year round.

A Victorian Resort

In Victorian and Edwardian times, Portobello became a holiday destination for all classes of people, including day trippers from Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Promenade was completed in 1866 as well as a pier, built in 1870, demolished in 1917. Old postcards of Portobello show a crowded beach so packed with people that you can hardly see the sand. Portobello became a parliamentary burgh in 1833, with its own burgh council, but lost its independent status in 1896 when it became part of Edinburgh.

An Outstanding Conservation Area

Today Portobello retains its character as a seaside resort. There are still amusement arcades on the Promenade as well as fine indoor baths and a sailing club. Behind the Promenade however lies the main attraction of Portobello, a wealth of elegant Georgian houses and streets. It is for this reason that the main part of Portobello has been designated as an outstanding conservation area.

A Guided Tour of Portobello

As well as containing many fine buildings and interesting industrial sites, many famous people have lived in Portobello. The following route indicates places of architectural and/or historical interest.

 The walk starts outside the Town Hall in the centre of Portobello. 1



The design of the border is taken from the ironwork on the balcony of a house on the Promenade