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TIM SAUNDERS & FAMILY VISIT

# Portland Castle

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It takes the best part of three hours to travel to Portland Castle from our Hampshire home – and it's only 85 miles away. But it is well worth the trip.

This 450 year old Portland stone structure has much history to tell. Overlooking Portland harbour it was built by Henry VIII in the 1540s to protect against the French and Spanish invasion. We marvel at the Tudor craftsmanship of this, one of Henry's finest gun forts. The main point of this prominent structure was protection and with this in mind canons are situated on the roof and to the side. We stroll around with a helpful and informative audio guide, which even the children can operate easily. There's a huge amount of information to take on board and it would be necessary to revisit a number of times for me to remember just some of the facts. It is interesting to note that the windows are so thin to prevent enemy fire from getting through. It would certainly be tough to penetrate.

English Heritage has sympathetically restored this castle and presented the chambers in such a way as they would have been used. The kitchen is most obvious room and it does get you thinking about the challenges of feeding the soldiers. At least being by the coast fish was in plentiful supply.

A local vicar ended up living here and restoring it and the castle was used in the first and second world wars. Later the head of the local naval base lived here and then it was handed over to the nation. A good thing too that this is preserved for future generations because there is so much to be gained from walking in the footsteps of the past. We all marvel at this grand building, how difficult it would be to

build today let alone 450 years ago. It's a harsh landscape in which to build such a fortress. As we arrive at the top a helicopter at the former naval base is preparing to take off, making a huge racket.

The children discover an exhibit that shows you how to load a cannon correctly and if you get it right a light flashes at which point you can push a button and it fires. Henry is in his element; he can't press the switch enough. He returns two or three times throughout our visit and then discovers that it's not working... Let's leave quietly....



For more information visit:  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portland-castle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portland-castle)

Watch the video at  
[www.travelwriter.biz](http://www.travelwriter.biz)