

## TRAVEL TIMES Martin Laing discovers the delights of Portpatrick

# Coastal idyll is a breath of fresh air

**T**HE house sits high on the bluff above Portpatrick, and the views are spectacular. Away in the distance, across the Mull of Galloway in the gloaming, the lights of Donaghadee twinkle on the Ards peninsula of County Down and, in daylight, the entrance to Belfast Lough can be easily picked out.

All roads south and west stop here, and it feels like the end of the land, the coast tumbling into the Irish Sea in rocky cliffs. As the splendid vista makes only too clear, from here the next stop is the coast of Northern Ireland.

This is the most westerly point of the Scottish mainland, and almost the most southerly, but it is well worth the effort to reach this remote

village. From my perch on the first floor balcony of our holiday home, this panorama is stunning. The low-lying Ulster coast seems far away in the early evening twilight, reflections sparkle on the water that separates the two land masses and the lovely little village of Portpatrick huddles beneath my eyrie.

But, while feasting one's eyes on the panorama is sustenance for the soul, victuals of another sort are needed after a day of rambling along these rugged cliffs. A steepish path from our holiday home cuts between the cottages and bungalows and leads down into the main street.

Any number of hostels provide a warm welcome and excellent fare to restore our energy levels. We choose, on this occasion, the Mount Stuart Hotel, where the food is excellent and the staff bright and



■ The bustling and picturesque harbour forms the heart of Portpatrick, and is welcoming for visitors

friendly. But there is a palpable tension in the air as the lifeboat has just been seen slipping its moorings to head out into the night. Everyone here, it seems, has a link to the crew – brother, son, father, husband or friend – and all are anxious to see these brave volunteers return. Later, thank goodness, the vessel makes port safely once again.

The harbour, of course, is the focal point for a coastal village such as Portpatrick. Hotels, pubs, restaurants, shops and guest houses line its curve from the lighthouse that

dominates the entrance at the southern end to the lifeboat station at the other.

Once a bustling fishing port, today the harbour is home only to a few working and pleasure boats, but there is no sense of decline here. Buildings have been refurbished and are now put to new uses.

And above the harbour are new housing developments with a mix of luxury villas and affordable homes to tempt younger locals to stay in the area. The message is clear: Portpatrick's future is bright.

Walking is a popular activity here, and a climb from the village centre leads to the historic Dunskey Castle to the south, the ruined keep dating back to the sixteenth century. To the north begins the Southern Upland Way, its 212 miles heading across country to Cockburnspath on the east coast.

● Martin Laing stayed as a guest of Portpatrick Holidays. For more information visit [www.portpatrick-holidays.co.uk](http://www.portpatrick-holidays.co.uk) or contact 01776 810 555.

### ● Airport Parking

**GLASGOW** Airport Parking Free 24hr transfer, only 3 mins fr Glasgow Airport. Fully secured & fully tarmac. Special rates available. Flying Scot Parking. Tel 0141 848 6033 [www.airportparkingservices.co.uk](http://www.airportparkingservices.co.uk)

### ● Caravans for Sale

**CROSBIE TOWERS** Caravan Park. Super pre-owned caravans at prices to suit all budgets. Big discounts on site fees. Free information pack. Tel now 01294 823 028. [www.crosbietowers.com](http://www.crosbietowers.com)

### ● Florida

**A PRIVATELY** owned Executive 5 brm, 4 bath villa, priv pool, 12 mins Disney. Interior designed, kids themed room & much more. Virtual tour online. View [www.disneyvillasOrlando.com](http://www.disneyvillasOrlando.com) 01333 352335 email [tomakel@aol.com](mailto:tomakel@aol.com)

### ● France

**BRITTANY, BENODET.** Top quality mobile home holidays. Superb 4 star coastal sites. Book Now For Early 2011 Offers. 01543 473089 [www.benodetbreaks.com](http://www.benodetbreaks.com)

### ● Lake District

**THE LAKE DISTRICT** Langdale Valley, luxury lodges & caravans for hire. 01539 437231 for colour brochure. Ask about short breaks. [www.greenhowe.com](http://www.greenhowe.com)

### ● Canary Islands

**CANARY ISLANDS** LANZAROTE Puerto del Carmen. No hills, slps 4-8, very private, heated child friendly pool, included, book online and view new dvd of our villa. Taxis included. [www.casacatrina.com](http://www.casacatrina.com) Or tel 01563 531319.

### ● Cruising & Sailing

**LUXURY SILVERSEA CRUISE** - Canada & New England - 11 Oct 2011, 9 days, All Inclusive, flying from Glasgow. From £2299.00 per person based on double occupancy. Contact Kenneth Macleod Tvl on 0141 333 0100/ 0141 621 0555 or email [cityretail@kmtravel.co.uk](mailto:cityretail@kmtravel.co.uk) [giffnock@kmtravel.co.uk](mailto:giffnock@kmtravel.co.uk)

### ● Holiday Homes for Sale

*Rosneath Castle Park*  
**HOLIDAY HOMES/TWIN LODGES & PARK HOMES FOR SALE**  
**SELF-CATERING CARAVANS FOR HIRE**

01436 831208  
[www.rosneathcastle.co.uk](http://www.rosneathcastle.co.uk)  
Rosneath Castle Park, Rosneath, Argyll G84 0Q5  
*So near, yet so far away.*

### ● Skiing

**SKI TRAVEL CENTRE** For great value, secure joined-up ski holidays flying from Scottish Airports - don't take chances. We are the Skiers working for Skiers since 1985. Call us! 0141 649 9696.

### ● Northumberland

**BLUEBELL** Farm Caravan Park & Holiday Cottages, Belford. S/C cottages, slip 2/6. Current vacancies for static caravans & seasonal tourists. Also bunkbarn accom slps up to 14. Close Coast & Scottish Borders, pets welcome. Short/long breaks - View offers at [www.bluebellfarmbelford.co.uk](http://www.bluebellfarmbelford.co.uk) Tel: 01668 213362

### ● Travel Insurance

**TRAVEL** Insurance-No Age Limit. Most Pre-existing medical conditions covered e.g Heart conditions, cancer etc. Just Insurance Agents Ltd authorized & regulated by FSA. Call 0800 9540172 [www.justthecover.co.uk](http://www.justthecover.co.uk)

### ● Tours & Travel

#### Mercat Tours International Battlefields Experiences

Led by historians with extensive knowledge of the battlefields and a flair for enthusiastic presentation. Visit Ypres, Passchendaele, the Somme, D Day beaches, Krakow Auschwitz, Wieliczka Salt Mines. Travel by luxury coach, cabin on Hull-Zeebrugge ferry or direct flights from Edinburgh.

**THE POLAND EXPERIENCE:**  
Fri 25th - Mon 28th Feb  
Fri 30th - Mon 3rd Sept  
From £395

**WW1 EXPERIENCE:**  
Sun 13th - Thurs 17th Mar  
Sun 9th - Thurs 13th Oct  
From £490

**D DAY LANDINGS EXPERIENCE:**  
Sun 24th - Fri 29th July  
From £515



**MERCAT TOURS INTERNATIONAL LTD**  
Mercat House, 28 Blair Street, Edinburgh EH1 1QR  
**0131 225 5445**  
[info@mercattours.com](mailto:info@mercattours.com)

### ● Scotland Self Catering

## Port William

fabulous STB 4 cottage in stunning rural and coastal setting.  
Sleeps 6 - 8,  
*Xmas and New Year availability.*

Discover a more natural pace of life in style.  
Short breaks available.

**01988 700 284**  
[www.killantraecottages.com](http://www.killantraecottages.com)

**3 BED LUX PINE LODGE AT DUNKELD, PERTSHIRE** Set within Erigmore Estate, C.H. Food, bar and leisure facilities. Short stays brks/ or weekly lets avail. Tel 01796 474351 [www.holidaylodgeperthshire.co.uk](http://www.holidaylodgeperthshire.co.uk)

**ARRAN** HideAways now at Cottages & Castles. 130+ great houses\* Phone 01738 451610 or [www.cottages-and-castles.co.uk](http://www.cottages-and-castles.co.uk) 25% discount on holidays booked & taken before end of July.

**CLAYTON** caravan Park 5 star park 4 miles from St Andrews New and use static holiday homes from £11,000. Finance available Call 01334 870242 or [www.clayton-caravan-park.com](http://www.clayton-caravan-park.com)