



Access Guide to Fort Island

Manx National Heritage has the guardianship of many ancient monuments in the landscape. A number of these sites are publicly accessible. Please note in most circumstances the land is not in the ownership of Manx National Heritage and visits are made at your own risk.

We recognise that visiting the Island's ancient monuments can present difficulties for people with disabilities. We have prepared an access guide for visiting Fort Island to help you plan your visit. This access guide does not contain personal opinions as to suitability for those with access needs, but aims to accurately describe the environment at the site.

Introduction

Fort Island or St Michael's Isle is first mentioned in 'The Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles' as the site of a battle in 1250 and the location of St. Michael's Chapel. Built upon the site of a Celtic keeill (early Medieval period chapel), St. Michael's, along with St. Trinian's Church, is one of the best-preserved examples of early Manx Christianity, with the area around the chapel being used for burials well into the eighteenth century.

The most prominent of the island's attractions is the circular Derby Fort. Built on the orders of King Henry VIII, to repel any possible French or Spanish invaders, it was one of many such forts built along the coast of the British Isles. In the 1640s it was refurbished and modernised on the orders of James Stanley, the Earl of Derby, during the English Civil War. After the war had ended, the fort was converted into a lighthouse and remained as such until a century ago, where it fell into total disuse.

Getting to Fort Island

Map Reference: SC 2947 6737

By Car: From Douglas takes 25-30 mins – Follow the (A5) and signs for Castletown and the Airport. Continue past the Airport and King Williams College - both on the left. Turn left at the roundabout onto Shore Road, after 180m turn left at the junction onto The Promenade



and continue for 1.3km. At the end of the long straight, turn right onto Fort Island Road. Please beware, as this corner is narrow, and difficult to see around. Follow Fort Island Road and pass the Golf Links car park. The access road to Fort Island can be difficult to see but continues on from the road. Please keep to given speed limit as the narrow causeway bridge can be dangerous and, at points, has no walls. Once across the bridge you will be in the car park (pictured below).



Fort Island's Car Park

By Bus: Getting to Fort Island by bus will be difficult as it is not on a main route and will require a considerable amount of walking. The closest bus stop is on the main A5 road between Castletown and Douglas. A number of routes run between Douglas and Castletown, which currently include 1/1A/2/2A/11/12/12A. The journey time from Douglas is approximately 35 to 40 minutes and from Port Erin is approximately 25 minutes Please visit www.iombusandrail.im for more details.

Disembark at the Janet's Corner housing estate. If travelling from the South, you will have to cross the road, please ensure that you use the Pelican Crossing. Walk along the pavement towards the roundabout, bear left at the roundabout and continue for the next 180m. Turn left at the junction and continue along The Promenade for the next 1.3km. At the end of the

straight, take the right-hand turn down Fort Island Road. From there, continue for another 1.2km, until you reach the Golf Links car park. Continue through the car park and across the causeway which gives access onto Fort Island.

Access for Visitors

The terrain on Fort Island is varied. There is a path circling the centre of the island. For most, this will be the easiest way around. The quality of the path is varied, with much of it being dotted with dips and rabbit-holes. For the most part, it is easy to traverse (see images below for examples). If you wish to travel off the path, however, this is where it may become difficult. Particularly around the North and the Eastern sections of the island, finding decent footing can be something of a challenge.



An example of one of the better pathways towards the fort



Another example of the varying quality of the paths around the chapel



Another example of the path towards the fort, with the pass being less visible



St. Michael's Chapel, and the pathway leading up to it



Further Information

Please observe the Isle of Man Country Code when visiting ancient monuments in the landscape. This is to protect yourselves, the wildlife, farm animals, and to preserve the natural beauty of the Manx countryside.

Please remember that you are responsible for your own safety and for others in your care, so dress appropriately, wear stout footwear, be prepared for changes in weather and other events. We recommend letting someone else know where you are going and when you expect to return. Remember to bring your mobile phone with you, but don't assume you will always get reception at some of the more remote sites.

If you would like to speak to a member of our team about visiting Fort Island or other ancient monument sites please email: enquiries@mnh.im. For more detailed information about the site please see 'A Guide to the Archaeological Sites of the Isle of Man up to 1500AD' by Andrew Johnson and Allison Fox (Culture Vannin, 2017), available to purchase from the Manx Museum Gallery Shop and online: www.manxnationalheritage.im