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## **Lifestyle and leisure factsheet**

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### **Places of interest and entertainment**

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Plymouth is situated in the south west corner of Devon at the gateway to Cornwall. It has all the benefits of any large thriving city plus the advantages of Dartmoor National Park, the outstanding countryside and coastline of the South Hams and the large sandy beaches of the Cornish coast on its doorstep.

There are many tourist attractions both in Plymouth and within close proximity to the city, and listed below is a selection.

- The National Marine Aquarium, situated next to the Fish Market at Fish Quay, Sutton Harbour, places strong emphasis on conservation, and visitors are able to view marine life from the world's seas and oceans. For more information on opening times, please telephone 01752 220084.
- Plymouth Gin Distillery, located on the Barbican, offers tours of Black Friars distillery, the oldest working gin distillery in the world.
- The National Trust has several properties in the area including Saltram House in Plymouth, Cotehele House in the Tamar Valley and the former home of Sir Francis Drake, Buckland Abbey, near Tavistock.
- Mount Edgcumbe Country Park is situated in south-east Cornwall, on the River Tamar, and is jointly owned by Plymouth City Council and Cornwall County Council.
- Burgh Island is located 200 metres off the south Devon coast, at Bigbury, and is home to the restored art deco Burgh Island Hotel. The island is accessible on foot across golden sands at low tide, and at high tide by the hotel's unique 'sea tractor'. The hotel was a particular favourite of Agatha Christie, Edward and Mrs Wallis Simpson, Noel Coward and Amy Johnson, and was the setting of a recent episode of 'Poirot'. Bigbury is located within a 30-minute drive of Plymouth.



- The Eden Project in St Austell, Cornwall is approximately one hour's drive from Plymouth; flora from all over the world can be seen growing in two huge 'biomes' (conservatories).
- The main theatre in Plymouth, the Theatre Royal, is situated in the city centre, and offers a wide range of entertainment from ballet, drama, opera and musicals to comedy and pantomime. The main auditorium seats 1,296, with the smaller Drum Theatre accommodating up to 200. The prestigious Theatre Royal is the leading regional producing theatre in the country, and has been responsible for a string of West End hit shows. There are also other smaller theatre venues in the city.

The new production and creative learning centre, TR2, is a truly unique facility in the UK. The architecturally award-winning waterfront building, on the bank of the River Plym, contains unrivalled set, costume, prop-making and rehearsal facilities which not only allow the Theatre to produce work at all scales and for both stages, but also attracts some of the most successful producers in the country.

Some of the Theatre's most important and vigorous work is created by the Creative Learning team. Based at TR2, it provides one of the biggest education and outreach programmes for a regional venue in the UK. The team operate two large youth and community theatre performance groups as well as numerous after-school classes and ongoing projects with schools, agencies and other partners throughout the south west. A large range of bespoke activities reach deep into many areas of the community, ranging from skill-based workshops to large-scale performance pieces, from targeted local initiatives to adventurous international exchange.

- Plymouth Pavilions offers entertainment, leisure, exhibition and conference facilities all under one roof. Its large arena is ideal as a conference and exhibition venue, but it is equally at home playing host to the top names in show business, and seating for up to 2,500 can be provided. Sporting events such as the BSKyB International Snooker Tournament and the English Badminton Championships have also been held in this arena. The Pavilions is also home to the city's national league basketball team, the Plymouth Raiders.
- Plymouth Guildhall offers a smaller venue in the city centre for events such as the Model Train Exhibition, craft exhibitions, concerts and public meetings.
- The City Museum and Art Gallery exhibits artefacts and paintings as well as housing touring exhibitions.
- Plymouth Arts Centre, located in historic Looe Street, is an alternative venue for the visual arts.



- The Barbican Leisure Park, which is located within a few minutes' walk of the National Marine Aquarium, offers a 15-screen multiplex cinema, 10-pin bowling, restaurants, bars, nightclubs and a health and fitness suite.
- Smeaton's Tower, located on Plymouth Hoe is famous throughout the world as the first wave-washed lighthouse to be built of interlocking stonework by John Smeaton. When it was replaced in 1882 by the Douglas lighthouse, Smeaton's Tower was moved stone by stone to its present site on Plymouth Hoe and is open to the public. It has recently spent more than two years receiving comprehensive repairs and restoration (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and Plymouth City Council).

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## **Sporting and leisure pursuits**

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There are a variety of indoor and outdoor leisure pursuits available to residents of Plymouth and its surrounding area.

- The city is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty, benefiting from Dartmoor National Park to the north, the natural harbour of Plymouth Sound to the south and the rivers Plym and Tamar on either side, offering a wide range of outdoor activities from hiking to scuba diving.
- The magnificent and contrasting coastline of Devon and Cornwall is around 650 miles long and is served by a coastal footpath linking its large sandy beaches, small coves, harbours, imposing cliffs and estuaries. There are also a number of large coastal towns as well as small fishing villages.
- As large parts of Devon and Cornwall are designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, have Heritage Coastline and two National Parks, there is enormous potential for the keen hiker or those who enjoy a casual stroll.
- The National Trust owns 14,111 ha (34,868 acres) in Devon and 9,929 ha (24,535 acres) in Cornwall, providing the public with access to buildings of historic interest and magnificent gardens and countryside.
- Dartmoor is situated on the edge of the city, whilst Bodmin Moor can be reached within a 40-minute drive. The countryside varies from the wild and rugged beauty of the moors to rolling hills and small picturesque towns and villages.
- Horse riding is also a very popular pastime, and there are many riding schools and stables in the area for those without their own horses. Participants can choose between sandy beaches, countryside or moorland.



- Point-to-point and National Hunt racing can be seen at the Newton Abbot and Exeter racecourses.
- For those interested in climbing there is a choice of moorland tors and sea cliffs, both of which offer challenging climbs for the experienced or those starting out in this sport.
- The water plays a large part in the lives of local residents, with yacht and dingy sailing, canoeing, surfing and jet skiing among the most popular. There are clubs and facilities available for all standards. Plymouth has hosted the start and finish of many major sailing events including the Fastnet, Transat, Tall Ships and Clipper Races. The Formula One Powerboat Grand Prix has become an annual summer event, attracting tens-of-thousands of visitors to the city. The racing takes place in the picturesque setting of Plymouth Sound.
- HMS Scylla, an Exocet Leader Class Frigate was decommissioned in 1993 and bought by the National Marine Aquarium in 2003 to be placed on the seabed as a reef. Scylla was sunk in March 2004 and is now being colonised by plumose anemones, jewel anemones, Devonshire cup corals and white sea fingers. Hundreds of fish have been reported on Scylla and the site is a great attraction for scuba divers keen to view its fast development.
- The city also has a number of indoor and outdoor swimming pools and the refurbished art-deco lido at Tinside on Plymouth Hoe is open during the summer months. There are also a number of outdoor pools cut into the rocks at Tinside which are filled with sea water.
- The Mount Batten Centre offers a vast range of both water and land-based sports activities, and offers training, educational and fun courses. This facility provides overnight accommodation and can cater for conferences, corporate events and private functions.
- Plymouth has a dry ski slope and toboggan run, and an all-weather athletics track. The surrounding area provides excellent mountain bike country with one event of the World Cup Championships having been held at Newnham for the last couple of years.
- There are several golf courses close to Plymouth with St Mellion, the most famous, being just 10 miles away. Many national and international golfing tournaments have taken place here on the Championship Course designed by Jack Nicklaus.



- Plymouth Argyle Football Club are in the Coca-Cola Football League Championship and play at their 20,000-capacity stadium, Home Park. The Brickfields is the home ground of Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club who are in National Division One. Professional basketball can be seen in the city as the Plymouth Raiders are in the British Basket League and the Plymouth Admirals are in the British American Football League.
- There are numerous squash and tennis courts, rugby pitches and both indoor and outdoor hockey and football facilities, together with a number of gyms and health and fitness centres in Plymouth and the surrounding area.

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## **Shopping**

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### **Plymouth City Centre**

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Plymouth city centre's pedestrianised shopping area offers a relaxed atmosphere with water features, outdoor cafés, floral displays, seating, outdoor performing and children's play areas, and the broad walkways offer comprehensive shopping facilities with most leading chains having outlets.

There is, by contrast, a range of small privately-owned shops at the western end of the main shopping centre, where the city market is also located.

The 60,800 m<sup>2</sup> (654,000 sq ft) £200m Drake Circus covered shopping centre developed by P&O Developments opened in October 2006 and has since won several awards including the Retail and Leisure Property Awards' 'Best Shopping Centre - New or Refurbished'. The shopping centre offers a variety of stores, restaurants and cafés and a multi-storey car park for 1,270 cars.

Various events are held in the city centre during the year including the Flavour Fest, with national and local celebrity chefs, food producers and kitchen gadget suppliers giving cookery demonstrations and providing entertainments and tasting. There are regular Farmers Markets and craft fayres, and other markets include the Continental Market and German Christmas Market.

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### **The Barbican**

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There is also a range of small privately-owned shops at the nearby historic Barbican, the oldest part of the city which dates back to the time of Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. The former fish market has been replaced with a modern fish quay located on the opposite side of the harbour where locally-caught fresh fish can be purchased.



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## Outside the city

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Plymouth is well served by a range of out-of-town shopping facilities, and many nearby towns offer independent specialist shops and hold weekly open markets. Tavistock, located just 14 miles to the north of Plymouth on the edge of Dartmoor, has recently topped a poll in a nationwide survey as a market town that has managed to preserve a strong local identity and a sense of community.

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## Eating

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There is a range of international cuisine available in Plymouth, with its numerous hotels, restaurants and bistros, many of which specialise in fresh seafood dishes. The region has a rich tradition in fresh, locally-produced food and drink which can be sampled at many of the highly-regarded establishments to be found in the area. There are several well-known chefs in the area, including:

- the Tanner brothers. Christopher and James Tanner opened their first restaurant in 1999 in the 15th century Prysten House in Plymouth, the city's oldest surviving domestic building with medieval features including an original limestone well. The brothers have recently taken part in various television programmes, and James is a regular on 'Ready, Steady, Cook' and 'Saturday Kitchen'.
- Rick Stein, whose award winning seafood restaurant has been established in Padstow for over 25 years. The success of this restaurant has led to more seafood restaurants, cafés and shops in the town. Rick Stein has recently opened a Seafood School where the public can learn about the art of seafood cuisine.

There are many character public houses which serve very good food and drink in the city and, if a quieter atmosphere is preferred, there are numerous country and village public houses within a 30-minute drive of the city which serve excellent food.

