

PORTHLEVEN SANDS

Parc-an-Als & Porthleven Harbour

The beach begins right next to the outer Harbour wall of this historic and attractive fishing village and continues for over 4kms past [Loe Bar](#) to [Gunwalloe Fishing Cove](#). It faces South West and takes the full force of the Atlantic swell and prevailing wind. It is easily accessible but has notoriety as a dangerous beach for bathing although there is a reef the other side of the Harbour which is arguably the best place to surf in Cornwall. Porthleven Harbour is the most southerly port in the UK. The northerly end of the beach is backed by extensive coastal defence works to protect properties and roads; the whole length of the beach is under constant erosion from the sea.



View from Parc an Als Cliff showing extent of the beach



TR13 9EZ - The B3304 from Helston terminates at the Harbour at Porthleven the nearest car park to the access points to the beach is off Shrubberies Hill - **TR13 9EA** - and although it is only 300m from the beach it is relatively small (capacity 50 cars). An alternative is the main car park off the Square next to the Harbour - **TR13 9HQ** - which is 500m from the beach and has a capacity of around 65 cars. There is a certain amount of roadside parking but care needs to be taken with time restrictions. There are two small car parks by Parc an Als Cliff which can be accessed



The Porthleven end of the beach



Parc an Als Cliffs



Winter storms at the Harbour end of the beach.

from the road and parking for [Loe Bar](#). However, because of cliff falls, there is now no longer any means of getting down to the beach from car parking at this end of the beach and it means walking back into Porthleven (600m).



The best access is the slipway (quite steep) which is about 60m from the outer Harbour wall on Cliff road. Alternatively, there is a flight of steps down the coastal defence wall some 300m further along the beach from the slipway. These are effectively the only easy means to access the whole length of the beach up to the Coast Path access to [Loe Bar](#).



By Cornish standards the beach is sharply shelving along its entire length. It is made up of a mixture of shingle and sand although the consistency will change depending on the seasons. At high water it is not possible to walk along the full length of the beach due to a number of rocky outcrops the nearest to Porthleven being 'Western Tye'. There is usually plenty of sand /shingle above high water, especially in summer but the areas of dry sand decrease to the southerly end of the beach. The only rocky foreshore is immediately next to the Harbour which itself has a small sandy/silt beach in the inner basin.



The sea defence wall backing the beach



The slipway



The flight of steps



There are safety equipment points at the Porthleven end of the beach but there is nothing at the Parc an Als end. RNLI Lifeguards are on duty at the Porthleven end from early July to early September but they only cover a small part of the overall length of the beach.



It is a dangerous beach for swimming and should only be undertaken when lifeguards are on duty and then in the designated areas. Entry to the water at the Parc an Als end of the beach should not be considered even when conditions seem benign. The steeply shelving beach has a notorious undertow coupled with strong currents although this is less marked towards the Harbour. It is not advisable to swim in the Harbour unless at high water.



Porthleven Beach is not a surfing beach at all but some mention needs to be made of the reef on the northern side of the Harbour which creates an especially hollow and powerful wave. It is only for the experienced surfer and is not advisable to be considered at low water. It gets very busy (some say overcrowded) because of its fame and notoriety.



The rocky foreshore next to the Harbour Wall



It is not a snorkelling beach and entry to the water for snorkelling should not be considered. There are a few rock pools at low water at the Harbour end of the beach.



There are restrictions on dogs from Easter Day until October, 7.00am to 7.00pm from the Harbour Wall to the flight of steps (known as the Blue Buoy steps). The rest of the beach there are no restrictions.



The nearest toilets are 65m from the top of the slipway towards the Harbour; there are no facilities for the disabled. There are plenty of cafes, restaurants pubs and beach type shops around the Harbour.



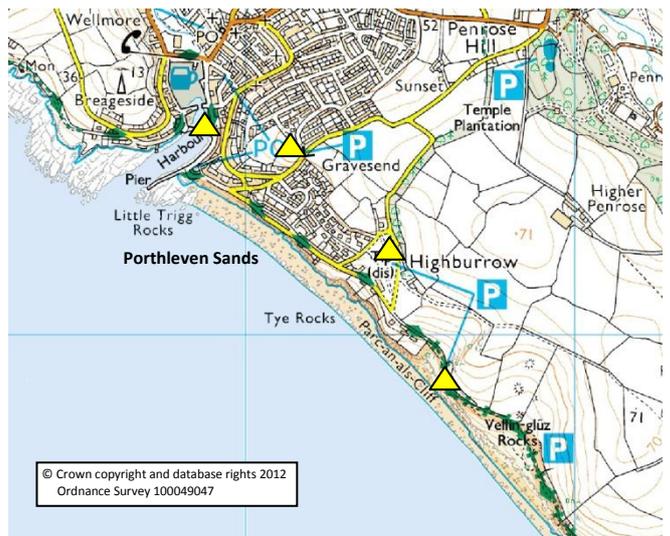
The slipway access to the main beach can be used to launch small craft such as canoes and kayaks but nothing much larger. The Harbour slipway can be used after contact with the Harbour & Dock Company.



Looking south from the Harbour



Parc an Als



Location – Part of OS Explorer Map 103



In recent years the water quality has been very good. The main beach is cleaned in summer. It is an unusual beach by Cornish standards that has its merits despite parts having access issues. The Harbour Beach is best from the seats above.