

# Southampton:

## History Comes Alive In The Old Town

Derick McGroarty who has lived in Southampton for three decades takes a fresh look at its attractions.

On the edge of the New Forest, Southampton has excellent travel links with all major towns. Frequent rail services from London (Waterloo) are only 80 minutes and National Express from Victoria is good value. Named Clausentium by the Romans, William the Conqueror used it for routes from Normandy. Richard the Lionheart sailed to the Crusades and Edward 111 embarked here in 1346 for victory at Crecy. The last century saw the great Atlantic liners. After a decline, when much quicker air travel developed, there has been a revival with Cunard operating New York services and both that line and P & O building a successful leisure cruise industry. Mayflower Park is a good viewing area for watching liners depart.

In gleaming white Portland stone, the Guildhall, Art Gallery and 180 ft. Clock Tower is the icon for modern Southampton. Another icon, Bargate, predates it by eight centuries, with its attractive archway, once a prison and entrance to the older city. It is now a museum and the starting point for guided tours. Do walk the substantial sea wall and explore below. St. Michaels Saxon church is the oldest in the city with a spire added in the 19th century. Opposite, the Tudor House, a well preserved 16th century building has half timbered walls, overhanging gables and an attractive garden.

Gods House Tower now an archaeological museum was founded in 1185. Below is a chapel where the knights who plotted against Henry V, were buried after execution at Bargate, as the army set out for France and the



P & O liner, Oriana from Mayflower Park

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Tudor House

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Battle of Agincourt. The Medieval Merchant's House, (1290) owned by John Fortin, a wine trader, has been restored to its former glory. The 14th century Wool House is the city's Maritime Museum with a fine collection of model ships and a section devoted to the Titanic. Contrasting the old town outside the wall but close by, the modern shopping centre includes West Quay a large air conditioned mall with restaurants, departmental stores and shops to please everyone. Solent Sky Aviation Museum records the history of the world renowned "Spitfire" and the once largest

flying boat operation in the world. The many original aircraft displayed include the enormous Short Sandringham passenger flying boat. For a restful haven there are extensive central parks and a 300 acre common. In the evening there is the Mayflower which is one of the few provincial theatres large enough to stage leading London shows including "Chicago". Further elaborate musicals including "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" are scheduled for 2007. ■

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