

THE VILLAGE OF PORT STANLEY ON THE SHORES OF LAKE ERIE

From Elgin Tourism:

Welcome to the village of Port Stanley! With one of the finest stretches of sandy beach on the north shore of Lake Erie, the village is a very popular destination for day trippers and for those wanting to stay a little longer. Port Stanley's uniqueness lies in natural attractions such as Kettle Creek and the multitude of leisure boats that frequent its banks. Port Stanley is home to the historic King George VI Lift Bridge, the oldest in Ontario, located in the centre of town.

Ride an authentic L & P.S. railcar, with [Port Stanley Terminal Rail](#) and enjoy a scenic view of Kettle Creek and the surrounding countryside. Open year round; be sure to take part in one of the many events on the train cars such as; Meet Stanley the bear, Easter Bunny Train, Murder Mysteries, and many more! Its great fun for the whole family!

Numerous quaint boutiques that dot the streets, and by the delicious culinary treats that await at Port Stanley's many dining establishments. Spend an afternoon or evening at the Port Stanley Festival Theatre located in the centre of the village. The season runs from May-September and highlights Canadian works in drama, comedy and musicals. Port Stanley is also home to an active artist's community, several art galleries, and an annual art show.

Spend a day on the links at one of Port Stanley's three Golf Courses.

HISTORY: The site of Port Stanley was part of an important early route from Lake Erie to other inland waterways for a succession of explorers and travellers of the 17th and 18th centuries, serving as an important landing point and camping spot, Adrien Jolliet, brother of Louis Jolliet, landed at this location in 1669 during the first descent of the Great Lakes by Europeans, Other notable visitors included François Dollier de Casson and René de Bréhant de Galinée(1670), Jean-Baptiste Céloron de Blainville (1749) and Sir William Johnson (1761),^[1] In commemoration of this role, a site bounded by Bridge, Main and Colbourne Streets was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1923, and was marked with a cairn.^[2]

A settlement named **Kettle Creek** was founded here in 1812 by Lieutenant-Colonel John Bostwick , Around 1824, it was renamed Port Stanley after Edward Smith-Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby, who had visited nearby Port Talbot, Lord Stanley later became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the father of Frederick Stanley, 16th Earl of Derby, Governor General of Canada, ice hockey enthusiast and donor of the first Stanley Cup in 1893.

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Port Stanley has a large sheltered harbour formerly operated by Transport Canada, now divested to the Municipality of Central Elgin. Historically, these facilities supported trade in coal and wood between Southwestern Ontario and the United States. Today, most of these facilities are dormant, but a commercial freshwater fishery operates from the harbour

Attractions include a large sandy beach, a lifting bridge across Kettle Creek, marinas, restaurants, hotels, shops, the Port Stanley Festival Theatre, located in the former town hall building on Bridge Street, and the Port Stanley Terminal Rail, which operates a tourist train between St. Thomas, Ontario and Port Stanley using a portion of the former L&PS rail line.

The village used to have a building opened in 1926 as the L&PS Pavilion, later renamed the Stork Club (not to be confused with the famous New York establishment), with a 13,000-square-foot (1,200 m²) dance floor, the largest dance floor in the London-Port Stanley area; the club was famous for swing dance and big band and attracted several big names to play there. It was closed by health authorities in 1973 because it could not earn the revenue to keep the building up. H.J. McManus, a London businessman, bought it and his son, Joe Jr., led the renovations, reopening in 1974 with the Harry James Orchestra performing before a sellout crowd. The last event was a performance by Day Break on New Year's Eve of 1978/79; a fire in a dumpster 12 days later damaged the building too heavily to save it.

Over the past decade, there have been numerous proposals to operate a ferry between Port Stanley and Cleveland, Ohio.

BEACHES: In addition to providing a number of excellent choices for lodgings, shopping or eating, Port Stanley also offers terrific beaches and a variety of year 'round attractions, including many outdoor activities and events that will make your 'Port' memorable.

Port Stanley offers one of the most outstanding beaches in Canada. 'Main Beach' has again been awarded the prestigious 'Blue Beach' award for 2011 and rightfully attracts tens of thousands of sun-seekers and beach-goers every summer and throughout the year. It has a deep sandy beach leading out to warm waters and a sandy bottom that drops off gradually to deeper waters in the first hundred meters. The main beach is patrolled by Life Guards during the summer months and has a pavillion with 7 picnic tables and BBQs, public change facilities and ample parking to accommodate thousands of daily visitors. Windsurfers and

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windsailors are often seen 'doing their thing' most seasons because of frequent, good on-shore winds.

Our 'Little Beach' is best suited for families with small children. It sits on the east side of town, has shallow water and is well-protected by the east berm. It too has ample parking, public toilets and will easily accommodate a few hundred people for a day of fun, sun and picnics at the beach with the family.

'Erie Rest Beach' is several hundred meters west of Main Beach and has parking for about 20 vehicles – plan to arrive before 11:00 AM if you hope to find a spot. 'Erie Rest' is about 250 meters wide and has a beautiful sand beach with waters dropping off gradually in the first 100 meters. This beach has no lifeguards and facilities are limited to a portable washroom. It's best suited for those hoping to find a beach that's less busy than Main Beach on a hot sunny day.

There is a relatively secluded beach about 350 meters west of Erie Rest Beach. This beach has no facilities or supervision. Access is limited to walking west along the shoreline past all private dwellings on the beach and cliff.

The beaches immediately to the west of both the Main and Erie Rest Beaches (and between the Main and Erie Rest beaches) are privately owned down to the water's edge; however, thousands of people walk the entire beach shoreline to soak in the beauty of the area. It's about a two kilometer walk from the east end of Main Beach to the cliffs at the end of the secluded sandy beach west of the Erie Rest Beach.

On any given day throughout the year, local residents and visitors alike can be seen casually strolling along the beach to catch a magnificent sunrise or sunset or just get some fresh air and take in the sounds and sights of one of the great lakes of the world.

SCENERY AND VIEWS: On arriving in 'downtown' Port Stanley, there's no mistaking our fishing and maritime heritage. Marinas and commercial fishing boats line picturesque Kettle Creek and the harbour. The lighthouse stands at the end of the west pier, jutting out into Lake Erie, guarding the entrance, guiding the fishing fleet and thousands of boaters and sailors to the safety of the harbour. The maritime character of many buildings in Port Stanley's core business district speaks to our past and current history as the largest commercial fishing hub on the north shore of Lake Erie and one deserving of consideration as a Heritage Conservation District.

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Converging breakwaters protect parallel piers leading into Kettle Creek. Important clearance limitations include the historical King George VI bascule highway or 'lift' bridge with 13 feet when closed and a fixed railroad bridge upstream with 15 feet. The bascule bridge, which is the oldest in Ontario, opens on the hour and half-hour from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. during the boating season and monitors VHF channel 6. All of the marina facilities are located above the lift bridge. The lift bridge is so delicately balanced that in the event of a mechanical or electrical breakdown, it can be raised or lowered by hand.

ANNUAL AND SEASONAL EVENTS: Port Stanley and various community organizations host a number of seasonal and annual events, including:

- Dickens Days Parade – an annual parade prior to Christmas featuring floats, carriage rides and hot beverages hosted by the Lioness Club of Port Stanley
- Community-wide, Spring and Fall Yard and Sidewalk Sale – every spring and fall, Port's residents and businesses put on a community-wide yard and sidewalk sale
- Fish Fry and Dance – every May, the Lions Club of Port Stanley host a large fish fry and dance at the Port Stanley Arena & Community Centre
- Craft and Bake Sale – every spring, Branch 410 (the Last Post Branch) of the Royal Canadian Legion hosts an annual craft and bake sale

GOLF COURSES: Port Stanley offers four golf courses within 15 minutes of Port Stanley. The Kettle Creek Golf & Country Club is open to the public and within walking distance of downtown Port Stanley. It boasts a scenic 18 hole golf course and handsome, full service club house, restaurant and banquet facility. Reservations are recommended.

The Bluffs Golf Club, about a 5 minute drive from Port Stanley, is a challenging and picturesque 9 hole public course with driving range located on the bluffs overlooking Lake Erie. Its combination of rolling terrain, deep ravines and breathtaking views make it an enjoyable experience for all levels of golfer.

The St. Thomas Golf & Country Club is a member-only, private 18 hole championship golf course that was established in 1899 and is repeatedly ranked in the top 100 golf courses in Canada.

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Redtail Golf Course is an 'uber-exclusive' private golf course with restricted membership and access. It was designed by Donald Steele and is about a ten minute drive from Port Stanley . Throughout the golfing season, private helicopters are often seen ferrying the 'rich and famous' to and from this beautiful and demanding links-style course.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: There are a host of other attractions and sites to see while visiting Port Stanley such as:

Elgin Hiking Trail – If you're much more adventurous and hiking is your 'thing' then the Elgin Hiking Trail will not disappoint you. It's South Western Ontario's 41 km long 'jewel of trails' and weaves through the magnificent Carolinian Forests between Port Stanley and Payne's Mills. It has trail elevations of approximately 50 meters and runs through valleys, ravines and along wooded hillsides adjacent to Dodd's Creek and Kettle Creek. It also links to the Legacy Trails of Ontario.

Fisherman's Museum – right by the bridge at Glover Park, Port Stanley hosts a small museum and memorial to the lives and times of Port Stanley fishermen.

Glover Park – a recently renovated mini-park with benches and picnic tables right beside the King George VI lift bridge and Kettle Creek. It's a wonderful spot to sit, relax and watch the ebb and flow of maritime traffic slip by. It's also occasionally used to provide a venue for small bands and entertainers.

Historical Walking Tour of Port Stanley – If going for a casual stroll is more to your liking, consider spending an hour or so taking a walking tour that brings to life some of the fascinating history and heritage of our beautiful village.

King George VI Bascule Bridge – Port Stanley's trademark bridge is entertaining in its own right. Watch as it majestically opens and closes to allow boaters and fishing vessels safe passage to and from the harbour.

Lake Erie Salmon & Trout Club – maintains a beautiful acreage located just outside of Port Stanley at 4255 Thomas Road. The club features fish hatcheries, ponds, a natural creek and woodland. The public is always welcome. Inquiries – contact Kit Brown at 519 633-2979

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Lions Landing Marina Park – is a public, grass-covered park with picnic tables, BBQ pits and a covered seating area. It also rents boat slips on a seasonal basis. It's situated on the west side of Kettle Creek just north of the lift bridge.

Moore Water Gardens – for over 75 years, Moore Water Gardens has specialized in the growing of water lilies and aquatic plants for wholesale and retail sales. They have more than an acre of outdoor ponds devoted to hardy lilies and greenhouse facilities for the propagation of tropicals. Moore Water Gardens offers special events, tours and speakers over the summer months.

Port Stanley Jail – imagine, then see what a period jail cell looked like in Port Stanley in the 1870's. It's located across from the Legion just over the King George VI bridge.

Port Stanley Festival Theatre (PSFT) – a 150 seat theatre located in the former Town Hall building. The PSFT produces appealing, summer theatre that highlights Canadian works in drama, comedy and musical-comedy, along with other celebrated works.

Port Stanley Terminal Rail – an operating tourist railway running between Port Stanley and St. Thomas. It's been in operation for 25 years and is Elgin County's longest running tourist attraction.

The Cork Kiln – located near the south end of Main Street was built around 1915 during the boom of the fishing industry and was instrumental in drying the cork floats used for the fishermen's nets. The kiln was built into the side of the hill as a natural means of maintaining a dry heat. Its preservation makes a unique architectural contribution to the streetscape.

The Stork Club Big Band Museum & Hall of Fame – was set up to create a museum, exhibition and hall of fame dedicated to the history of the Stork Club, the display of Big Band memorabilia, and the revival and enjoyment of Swing Era music through on-going events such as dances, concerts and festivals. It's located in the heart of Port Stanley beside the theatre and library.

Port Stanley also has other recreational amenities provided and maintained by the Municipality of Central Elgin including a Skateboard Pad, Baseball Diamond and a recently renovated Arena & Community Centre.









