

Enjoying Lobster in Historic Dartmouth

Dive into England's most succulent lobsters and steep yourself in the history of this ancient town on the River Dart.

By Sherry Ballou Hanson

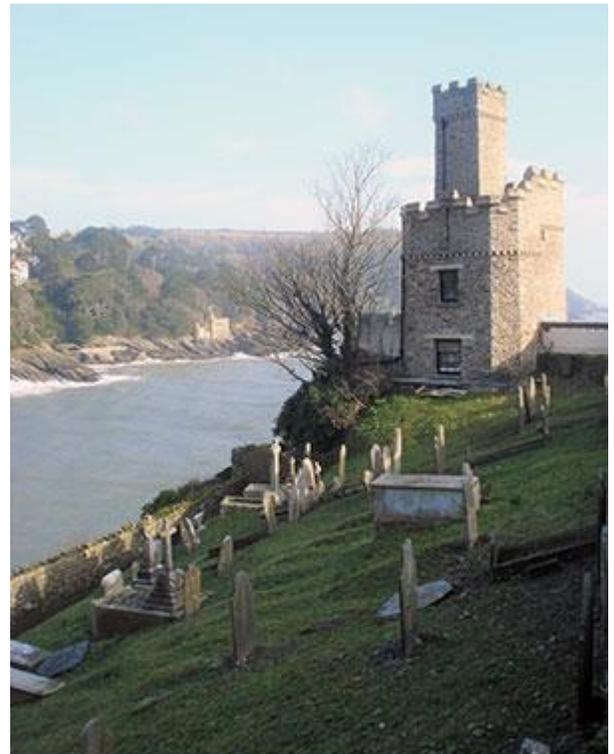
The site of St. Petrox Church adjacent to Dartmouth Castle gives new meaning to the word ancient. The site has been a place of burials since the year 506, before the castle and church were constructed. So, too, has the deep-water port at Dartmouth been fishing grounds for the people who live there. Today the town is a sheltered harbor for the local fishing fleet as well as a popular sailing area. Two vehicle ferries and a passenger ferry operate daily, connecting Dartmouth on the west side of the river with Kingsbridge to the east.

Dartmouth is also home to the Britannia Royal Naval College. Ever wonder why the British Royal Navy was feared worldwide for centuries? Before this facility was founded, the lads of England were trained entirely on the job; that is on the ships themselves. By the time a naval ship showed up off the coast of France or Spain in the 1500s, those sailors were the best.

And they had to eat. Dartmouth is tidal, sitting as it does at the entrance to the sea, and the waters off the town and as far away as the Barents Sea in Norway yield fabulous quantities of the freshest seafood to be found anywhere in England. Fish and chips, cod, haddock, salmon, sole, and crab and lobster in season, which in this area runs approximately mid-March to mid-September, according to Ankur Biswas, head chef at the Royal Castle Hotel Grill Room.

Dining In in Style

Visitors who plan to stay at the award-winning 17th-century hotel, the Royal Castle on The Quay, in Dartmouth will be able to dine on the freshest and most sustainable seafood available, in the Grill Room, or in either of two bars, Galleon or Harbour. While the Grill Room does not have lobster on its regular menu, the bar menu in The Galleon features a traditional environment with log fires, roast dinners available all day, a kids' menu and a delicious lobster curry. Guests can even bring Fido. The Harbour offers daytime coffees and light lunches, accompanied by a selection of craft beers, wines and spirits, and live music on Thursday nights.



St. Petrox Church attests to how long folks have lived in Dartmouth and fished its deep-water port.
JULIA WRIGHT

(contd)



Eating lobster by candlelight sets the mood at Moby Nick's Valentine's Feast.
JULIA WRIGHT

Guests looking for lobster can put in an order with the dining room and be served hot, steamed lobster with melted butter and the fixings in their own rooms. The hotel also has three private dining rooms for parties of 12 to more than 30; they will serve from their own menu, or the party can contract with an outside caterer for the preferred menu.

The Shipping News

The Rockfish Grill is the choice for the best blue Devon lobsters that are all over the menu in season. There is a new private dining room upstairs, as well as a small outdoor deck for dining. These lobsters caught by the local fishing fleet offer some of the world's sweetest,

firmest meat. Other favorites include the English fish and chips, freshly caught cod and haddock, crab in season and hand-picked scallops.

For the Brave

Lobster seekers in Dartmouth can stop in at Moby Nick's fish market or call ahead on its 24-hour hotline. Customers come by later, pick up their lobsters and steam them to perfection back at their own cottage. Moby Nick's on Fairfax Place is the primary outlet shop for the wholesale business headquartered in Plymouth. It also provides all manner of fresh fish, frozen items and many sides. Moby Nick's extensive catalog is online for your convenience. The folks at Moby's will answer your questions on preparation in case you have never cooked the succulent beasts yourself.

Dartmouth visitors will return home steeped in both history and memories of tasting the freshest lobsters in England.

Planning Your Trip

For more information on Royal Castle Hotel, visit royalcastle.co.uk; Rockfish Grill, therockfish.co.uk; Moby Nick's, moby Nick's.com. Call your local AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel for help planning your next vacation

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