

What is Michael Portillo up to now?

At the time of writing, Michael Portillo works as a journalist and television presenter. The Englishman most recently launched a six-part travelogue series called *Portillo's Andalucía*, which successfully aired on the United Kingdom's free-to-air public broadcast station known as Channel 5.

Although Michael Portillo has historically showcased an affinity for railway transportation, evidenced by his experience hosting numerous documentaries centred around Great Britain's expansive train network, this eye-opening television series focuses on his travels through the diverse Spanish region of Andalucía.

If documentaries pique your interest, check out [our article exploring the best classic television shows of the 20th century](#).

Anyway, back to the topic at hand.

Why did Michael Portillo create this series?

Michael Portillo uniquely delivers his television punditry; offering personal takes and compelling arguments drawn from historical references both big and small. In a recent interview for The Sunday Times, [Portillo claimed to have always been fascinated with past events](#), which fuels his day-to-day interest in historical monuments and the life surrounding them.

The inaugural season of *Portillo's Andalucía* documents his interactions with the locals who share their passions, provides viewers with insights on Michael Portillo's favourite sites and shares his personal opinion on why the places he visits are so memorable.

How many episodes does Michael Portillo's series have?

Portillo's Andalucía kicked off its first season with six episodes. Each segment is an hour long and focuses on a different part of the autonomous Andalusian community.

In the first episode, Michael Portillo takes viewers to the scenic city of Granada. Here, he meets a local food writer and puts his pottery skills to the test. Conversely, the third episode sees him visit the ancient city of Cordoba and the Costa del Sol, where he savours the different Christian, Muslim and Roman civilisations.

Within the last episode that aired on December 12, 2023, Michael Portillo finishes off his Andalusian odyssey by documenting the two places he knows best – the city of Sevilla and his hometown of Carmona, where he currently resides.

You can learn more about what makes the Andalucía region great in [our post highlighting some fantastic holiday getaways in Europe for the winter season](#).

Has Michael Portillo presented television programmes before?

Without a doubt, Michael Portillo has some serious broadcasting pedigree. He has hosted several different television programmes in the past, such as:

- *Portillo's State Secrets* on BBC2 – where he examined classified documents retrieved from the British National Archives.
- *The Enemy Files* – portraying a British view of the 1916 Easter Rising.
- *Portillo's Hidden History of Britain* – uncovering mysterious buildings and abandoned locations that reveal some of the country's biggest secrets.
- *Portillo: The Trouble with The Tories* – examining the divisions within the Conservative Party, from Winston Churchill to Ted Heath.
- *Portillo's Empire Journey* – recounting how a small island on the outskirts of Europe built the British Empire.
- *Spanish Civil War with Michael Portillo* – presenting colour footage of war only previously seen in black and white.

However, Michael Portillo is arguably most famously known for his work presenting an informative 13-season television programme called *Great British Railway Journeys*. You'll see him travelling by train to various destinations around Britain, exploring local landmarks, meeting residents, sampling local food and exploring how the railways have profoundly influenced the country's economic, social and political history.

A couple of years later, Michael Portillo converted the original premise behind *Great British Railway Journeys* by becoming the face of a similar BBC show called *Great Continental Railway Journeys*. Beyond that, he launched many subsequent railway documentaries, like:

- *Great American Railroad Journeys*.
- *Great Indian Railway Journeys*.
- *Great Alaskan and Canadian Railroad Journeys*.
- *Great Australian Railway Journeys*.
- *Great Asian Railway Journeys*.
- *Great Coastal Railway Journeys*.

However, Portillo's television presence doesn't merely end here. In early 2022, he featured as a guest on a GB News program called *The Political Correction*, after which he received an invitation to launch his own political show called *Portillo*, which began airing in October 2022.

What public-facing roles has Michael Portillo previously occupied?

The Rt Hon Mr Michael Portillo has had an eventful political career in England. His first ministerial post was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security in 1987. The following year, he got promoted to Minister of State for Transport.

Portillo's progress from a House of Commons endorsement in a 1984 by-election to being a former Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer and member of parliament highlights his wide-ranging political experience in local government.

Following the ousting of Margaret Thatcher, he served under John Major as a cabinet minister in 1992, working as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He was promoted to work as Secretary of State for Employment in 1994 and then subsequently becoming the Secretary of State for Defence in 1995.

On 1 February 2000, William Hague promoted Michael Portillo to the Shadow cabinet as Deputy Leader and Shadow Chancellor. A year later, he contested leadership of the Conservative party, but lost out in the final voting round to Iain Duncan Smith and Kenneth Clarke.

Beyond that, Portillo has written a regular column for *The Sunday Times* newspaper, and been a long-serving panel member in the BBC Radio 4 series *The Moral Maze*. He has also enjoyed several years of political discourse with Andrew Neil and Labour MP Diane Abbott on the weekly BBC1 television programme *This Week*, which aired in 2003 and ceased production in 2019.

Wrapping up Michael Portillo's current ventures

As of December 2023, Michael Portillo is broadcasting his six-part documentary that revolves around the Spanish region of Andalucía. In doing so, the journalist and television pundit has successfully brought the cultural quirks and scenic sights of Andalucía to a global audience.

Michael Portillo: FAQs

What kind of job does Michael Portillo have?

Working as a television presenter, Michael Portillo tours various world regions known for their historical and philosophical significance. He samples the cultural influences these places have to offer, together with offering personal takes on different historical events and monuments.

Is Michael Portillo still an MP?

Michael Portillo no longer holds a position as a conservative MP, having retired from active politics at the 2005 general election. He succeeded in the position of [MP for Enfield Southgate constituency from 1984 to 1997](#), taking over from the murdered incumbent Sir Anthony Berry – who died in the bombing of the Grand Hotel, Brighton by the IRA. Portillo also had a separate stint as the [MP for Kensington and Chelsea from 1999 to 2005](#).

What did Michael Portillo do when he was a child?

Portillo was born and raised in Bushey, Hertfordshire by his single mum, who grew his love for railway exploration by taking him on 13-hour trips from London to Kirkcaldy aboard a steam-hauled night train. At eight years old, Michael Portillo [featured in a television advertisement for Ribena](#) - the makers of a popular blackcurrant-based soft drink.

Apart from that, he loved playing with toy trains during his free time, so much so that he owned a complete clockwork train set.

Who was Michael Portillo's mother?

Michael Portillo grew up under the care of his mother - Cora Waldegrave Blyth de Portillo. She was responsible for his early development and education at Stanburn Primary School and Harrow County School for Boys. Her pride was arguably immeasurable when her son obtained a first-class degree in history from the University of Cambridge, having been a student at Peterhouse.

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