



# Bath

Thermal water bathing and world-class Roman relics are some of the draws in this UNESCO World Heritage city

## WHY GO?

**Much of the stately architecture in this compact city was built by the classical-loving Georgians – it's easy to imagine yourself in a Jane Austen novel. There are temple-like pediments and Doric columns aplenty, and even the newly-built South Gate shopping centre pays homage to the style, although highlights are the Royal Crescent and Circus. One of Europe's best-preserved Roman temple and bath complexes is a must-see, with ever-constant hot springs. You can taste the mineral water in the nearby Pump Room, and then relax in the naturally thermal waters of the classy Thermae Bath Spa.**

## GETTING THERE

### By train

Bath Spa station is only a five-minute walk from the city centre.

■ **First Great Western** (www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk). Direct trains from London Paddington (one hour, 30 minutes), Bristol (15 minutes), Cardiff (65 minutes), Cheltenham (one hour, 10 minutes), Gloucester, Southampton, Portsmouth and Weymouth, among others.

■ **South West Trains** (www.southwesttrains.co.uk). Direct trains from Bristol and Salisbury.

### By bus

Several bus and coach operators provide services to Bath: (www.firstgroup.com,

(www.traveline.info (0871 200 2233)

(www.nationalexpress.com.

### By car

There are 12 city car parks, but it is advisable to avoid driving in the city centre. There are four Park and Ride services on the outskirts of the city, with return bus journeys (10 minutes) costing around £2.50. For more information, visit (www.bathnes.gov.uk.

## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

### ■ Mayor of Bath's Walking Tours

(www.bathguides.org.uk

Free daily walks begin outside the Pump Room/Roman Baths. Just turn up for the two-hour tours, given by the Mayor of Bath's Corps of Honorary Guides at 10.30am. Also at 2pm Sun-Fri, and May-Sep: Tue and Fri at 7pm.

### ■ Assembly Rooms

(www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Open daily (closed during functions)

Admission free

### ■ Roman Baths

(www.romanbaths.co.uk

In the museum, look out not just for the gilded bronze head of Sulis Minerva, but also the sun-like Gorgon face from the temple's pediment, and a fine mosaic of sea horses.

The Baths stay open later than other city attractions, so consider visiting at the end of the day, but allow two hours. If you arrive just an hour before the site closes, get your ticket signed so you can return the next morning.

The elegant Pump Room restaurant is the place to taste the spring water. For 50p (no extra charge with Roman Baths admission, or £2 with sweet additions), you are served a cup of the water from an ornate fish fountain.

Open daily – times vary. In July and August, open 9am-10pm (last entry 9pm)

Admission £11.50 (or £15 if bought with a ticket to the Fashion Museum). Includes audio guide and 40-minute guided tour (on the hour)

### ■ Thermae Bath Spa

(0844 888 0844

(www.thermaebathspa.com

Thermal pools, steam rooms and more than 50 treatments available. For £24 you can have a two-hour session at the New Royal Bath (the main building), no advance bookings unless in a group of more than seven. You also get an extra total changing time of 15 minutes, and 45 minutes more if you buy at the café. The overstay charge is £6 per 30 minutes. We suggest having a robe (£4 extra or bring your own). Towels are £3, though there is a free drier for bathing costumes!

Open daily 9am-10pm, last entry 7.30pm.

At weekends, mornings are usually less crowded than later on. **Cross Bath session:** £14 for one hour, 30 minutes – this is just one small, oval pool in an open-air building across the street. To learn more about this 'spa quarter', try out the self-guided audio walking tour (£2) from the old Pump Room visitor centre (allow up to 30 minutes) over the road. Open Apr-Oct daily.

### ■ Bath Abbey

(www.bathabbey.org

Open daily (reduced hours on Sun); Heritage Vaults Museum closed Sun

Admission free to Abbey and Heritage Vaults Museum (suggested donation £2.50). Tower tour (lasting 45 minutes) £5, see website for frequency

### ■ Victoria Art Gallery

(www.victoriagal.org.uk

Open Tue-Sun

Admission free

### OTHER SIGHTS AND ACTIVITIES

Fans of bonnet and breeches novels and their celluloid adaptations should find the Jane Austen Centre in Gay Street of some interest (www.janeausten.co.uk. Open daily, £6.95. This house exhibits the connections she and her novels had with the city. Walking tours on weekends and Bank Holidays at 11am.

Queen Victoria's mourning dress and a preposterously wide court dress from the 1760s are two of the historic gems at the Fashion Museum in the Assembly Rooms [www.museumofcostume.co.uk](http://www.museumofcostume.co.uk). Open daily, admission £7 (or £15 if bought with a ticket to the Roman Baths).

## GOOD PLACES TO STAY

### 14 Raby Place

☎ 01225 465120

East of the river and a 10-minute walk to the centre, this guesthouse with city views is on a smart Georgian terrace lined with decorative balconies. Convivial hostess Muriel supplies homely elegance in the five inviting bedrooms – tiled fireplaces, cases of books, and even a piano in room 6! Room 1 has a superb Abbey view. Passing trains are within earshot from rear-facing rooms. Meet fellow guests around the breakfast table. Parking permits available. **Double room B&B £70 (no cards accepted)**

### The Kennard

☎ 01225 310472

☎ [www.kennard.co.uk](http://www.kennard.co.uk)

Just around the corner from Pulteney Bridge, this elegant, peaceful townhouse emphasises its 18th-century roots, with a small Georgian-style garden. In the basement dining room, a varied breakfast buffet (including pain au chocolat and cheeses) is laid out under arches where a kitchen fireplace and bread oven once stood. The single rooms are small as are some of the shower rooms, but all 12 rooms are smartly decorated, and have good quality provisions. Free parking permits. **Double room B&B from £98**

### Royal Crescent Hotel

☎ 01225 823333

☎ [www.royalcrescent.co.uk](http://www.royalcrescent.co.uk)

Discreetly hidden within one of England's finest terraces, this luxury hotel makes a worthy treat. There's a formal elegance in the main 18th-century building, behind which you can take afternoon tea under the trees of the beautifully landscaped garden. Lilies and abstract artworks adorn the Dower House restaurant in a pale stone annexe where George IV once stayed. Next door, the appealing Bath House offers all sorts of pampering possibilities, along with hot tub barrels and a spacious pool. Each of the 45 rooms is uniquely designed. Valet parking only. **Double room B&B from £195**

### Royal Park Guest House

☎ 01225 317651

☎ [www.royalparkbath.co.uk](http://www.royalparkbath.co.uk)

This modern, informal B&B faces the main Upper Bristol Road – a 10-minute walk to the centre.

Former chef Nick uses organic, local products for a breakfast including vine tomatoes and smoked bacon. The four modern bedrooms feature sumptuous linen, sleek alarm clocks and modest shower rooms. Three parking spaces. **Double room B&B from £80**

### Three Abbey Green

☎ 01225 428558

☎ [www.threeabbeygreen.com](http://www.threeabbeygreen.com)

This guesthouse is just a minute from the Abbey yet on a quiet, little cobbled square. Rooms are smartly furnished and generally spacious – the pricier Lord Nelson even has a four poster and fireplace. Breakfast options (cooked to order) include scrambled egg and smoked salmon. Free internet access and a communal fridge. Attractive apartments are also available in nearby buildings. The nearest car park is five minutes away. **Double room B&B from £85**

### Villa Magdala

☎ 01225 466329

☎ [www.villamagdala.co.uk](http://www.villamagdala.co.uk)

In a tranquil spot by a park, this Victorian house with helpful staff has plenty of character and sizeable bedrooms with pristine bathrooms. Free car park. **Double room B&B from £95**

## GOOD PLACES TO EAT & DRINK

### Garrick's Head

☎ 01225 318 368

☎ [www.garricksheadpub.com](http://www.garricksheadpub.com)

Just beside the Regency Theatre Royal, this smart pub makes a good choice for a pre-show dinner. The main bar gets busy, but there's a separate dining room, with candlelit tables. The daily-changing menu could include duck breast with pickled berries and fennel or a filling spinach, lentil and cheese bake. There's a varied wine menu as well as local real ales, such as Bath Gem, on tap. Mains usually £10-£16; two-course, pre-theatre menu £15.

### The Hole In The Wall

☎ 01225 425242

☎ [www.theholeinthewall.co.uk](http://www.theholeinthewall.co.uk)

A low-key, intimate atmosphere reigns at one of the city's oldest restaurants. You could sit in a barrel-vaulted niche in the low-lit Georgian dining room, which has colourful oil paintings of local scenes on the walls, and tuck in to regionally sourced food such as salmon fillet in bouillabaisse with baby prawns. Finish with Bath Oliver biscuits (dry circular biscuits) with cheeses or the strange but tasty 'A Hole Mess' (honeycomb slabs with a tart berry and cream mixture). Bottles of wine from £14. Mains £11-£18; two-course, pre-theatre menu £9.95

### Sally Lunn's

☎ 01225 461634

☎ [www.sallylunnns.co.uk](http://www.sallylunnns.co.uk)

Close to the Abbey, Bath's oldest standing house (1482) doubles as a tearoom/restaurant, so it's no surprise that there are often queues to get a table in one of several quaint, beamed rooms. After seeing the ancient kitchen below, sit perhaps on a tapestry-coated banquette by antiques and ornate mirrors and try the signature Sally Lunn Bun – a cross between a brioche and a light, thick toast slice (£3 with butter and jam). The other specialist food is the 'trencher' – a flour-based plate used in medieval times, with ratatouille, beef and sausage versions. Cream teas from £5.70, mains £8-£10.

### Tilley's Bistro

☎ 01225 484200

☎ [www.tilleysbistro.co.uk](http://www.tilleysbistro.co.uk)

Sally Lunn's home country of France is celebrated next door at this cramped but charming bistro. There is more space in the rustic-looking room downstairs, while upstairs, paintings of French vineyards are a fitting backdrop to dishes such as escargots, Normandy mussels or medallions of pork à la Dijonnaise. There is also a good vegetarian selection. Our starter (a tower of grilled aubergines) could have been warmer, but the mushroom risotto was tasty. Dishes range from £6-19; two-course, pre-theatre menu £12.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Tourist information centre

Abbey Church Yard

☎ 0906 711 2000 (calls cost 50p per minute)

☎ [www.visitbath.co.uk](http://www.visitbath.co.uk)

Open daily. Here you'll find plenty of leaflets advertising the many tours available in the city. These include evening ghost and comedy walks, a city sightseeing bus tour, and cruises along the River Avon. You can print off a good city map and info guides for free from the website.

**WHICH? HOLIDAY TIP** Consider buying the Bath Visitor Card for £3 – this gives you discounts at various sights, shops and restaurants, and is valid for three weeks. Eg, you get a £1 off an Abbey tower tour and the Spa Visitor Centre audio tour. Those going to Bath on First Great Western trains can also get 2-for-1 deals on many attractions, [www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/twoforone.aspx](http://www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/twoforone.aspx).

### SHOPPING

Cute awnings and the Bath Humbug shop add appeal to the daily indoor Guildhall Market in the city centre. Every Saturday there's a farmer's market at Green Park station as well as the bric-a-brac Walcot Market. Bath also has a Christmas market [www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk](http://www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk) – in 2010, this should be Nov 25-Dec 12.