

Contents

Bath's Top 10 6

A Georgian jewel 8

Festivals in Bath 12

Walks and Tours

1 The ancient centre and a Modern Spa 16

Roman Baths 17, The Pump Room 20, Bath Abbey 21, Sally Lunn's 24, Thermae Bath Spa 25

2 Georgian grandeur (The Upper Town)..... 28

Queen Square 28, The Circus 30, The Royal Crescent 31, Royal Victoria Park 33, Georgian Garden 34, The Assembly Rooms 34, Fashion Museum 36, Crescents and towers 37, Gothic chapel 38, Museum of Bath at Work 40, Museum of East Asian Art 40

3 Across Pulteney Bridge 44

The Guildhall 44, Bath Postal Museum 46, Victoria Art Gallery 46, Parade Gardens 47, Empire Hotel 48, Pulteney Bridge 49, Great Pulteney Street 49, The Holburne Museum 50, Sydney Gardens 50

4 The spine of the city..... 52

SouthGate Centre 52, Stall Street 53, Farmers' Market 54, Herschel Museum of Astronomy 54, Little Theatre 55, Theatre Royal 55, The egg 56, The Min 57, Milsom Street 57, Walcot Street 58

5 From Pulteney Bridge to Prior Park 62

Pulteney Weir 62, Recreation ground 62, View of Pulteney



Bridge 63, Kennet and Avon Canal 64, Prior Park buildings 65, Bath Abbey Cemetery 66, Prior Park 66

6 Bath and the countryside in film 70

Hollywood to Bollywood 70, Period living 72, Star city 72, Lacock 72, Castle Combe 75, Bowood House 75, Dyrham Park 76

7 Bristol..... 80

Getting there 80, At-Bristol 81, Under the sea 82, Floating harbour 82, SS Great Britain 83, John Cabot's ship 85, Bristol Cathedral 86, Bristol Zoo 88, Shopping 88

8 Wells and Glastonbury 90

Cathedral Church of St Andrew 91, The Bishop's Palace 95, Glastonbury and Street 97

9 Longleat and Stourhead..... 100

The Marquess of Bath 101, Longleat House 101, Stourhead 104

10 The ancient sites (Stonehenge and Avebury) 106

Stonehenge 106, Avebury 111, Silbury Hill 112

Travel Tips

Active pursuits 114

Themed holidays..... 117

Practical information..... 118

Accommodation..... 123

Bath's Top 10

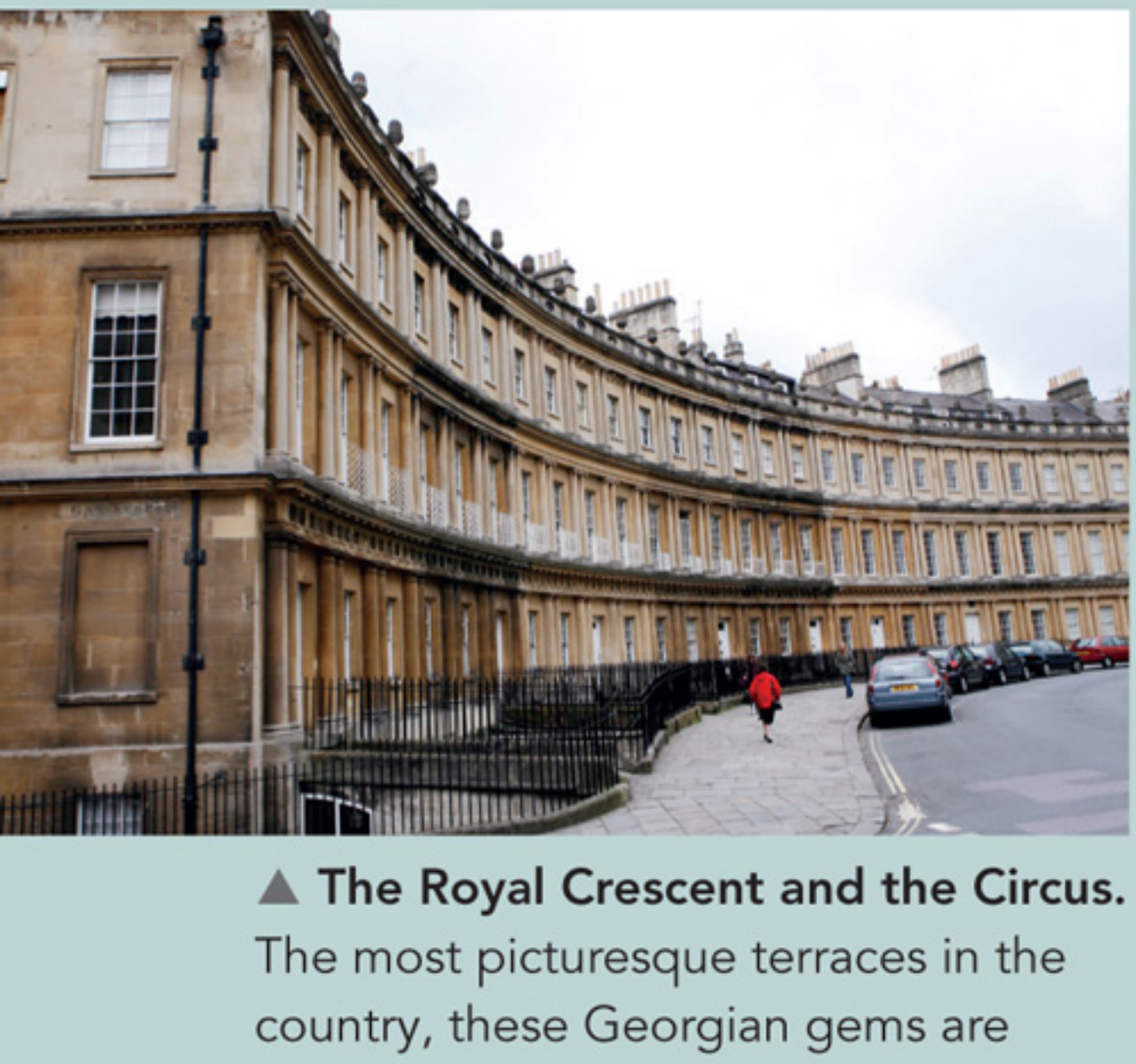
Magnificent Georgian architecture, historic attractions, modern spa facilities, and a host of cultural festivals… here at a glance is why Bath is one of the few cities to have achieved Unesco World Heritage Site status.



▲ **Roman Baths.** The city's most popular tourist attraction, the baths are a vivid reminder of exactly what the Romans did for us. See page 17.



▲ **Thermae Bath Spa.** Bath's thermal springs are its raison d'être, and this modern facility allows you to be pampered in style while you take the waters. See page 25.



▲ **The Royal Crescent and the Circus.** The most picturesque terraces in the country, these Georgian gems are 18th-century architecture at its best. See page 30.



▶ **Bath Abbey.** The heart of the city in the Middle Ages, the site of the magnificent Abbey is where Edgar, England's first king, was crowned. See page 21.



▼ **Prior Park.** The original show home, this was built by 18th-century businessman Ralph Allen to demonstrate the beauty of the honey-coloured stone that now dominates the city. See page 67.

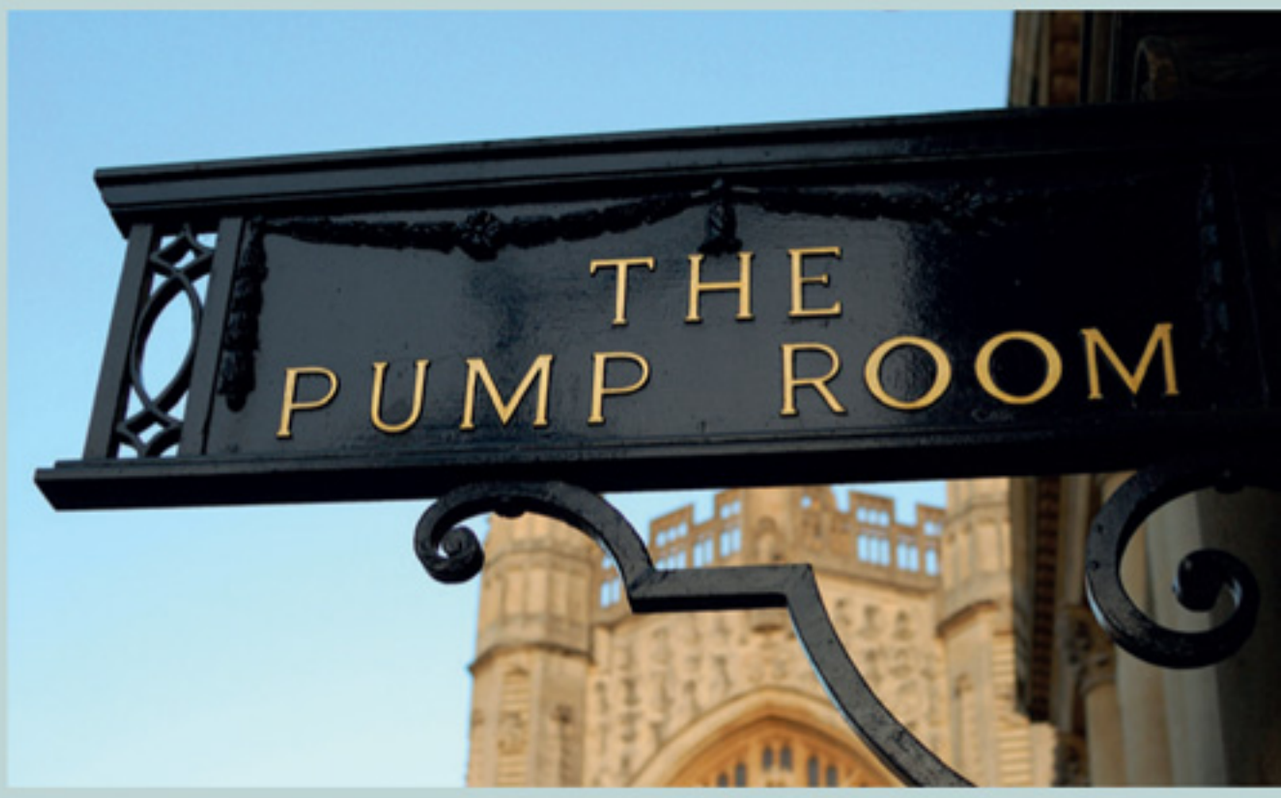
▲ **Assembly Rooms.** No Jane Austen adaptation is complete without a scene set in these rooms that were at the centre of Georgian society. The building also houses the impressive Fashion Museum. See page 34.



▼ **Pump Room.** Experience a taste of Georgian social life in this elegant room where you can also sample the spa water (if you're brave enough). See page 20.



▲ **Festivals.** The city's annual calendar of festivals offers something for everyone, from comedy to films and Jane Austen to jazz. See page 12.



▼ **Milsom Street.** One of the UK's favourite streets for fashion, and just a small part of a city renowned for its diverse range of independent shops. See page 57.



▲ **Pulteney Bridge.** A beautiful bridge-cum-shopping arcade overlooking the River Avon. See page 44.





Pulteney Bridge in the snow.

Overview

A Georgian jewel

With its beautiful, honey-coloured stone and exquisite architecture, Bath makes a striking first impression, attracting several million visitors each year.

Declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1987, Bath has been attracting visitors since pre-Roman times, drawn to its natural spring waters. Today it is a gracious and beautiful city in an incomparable setting, and most visitors find themselves falling in love with it. All significant stages of English history are represented here, from the Roman Baths to medieval Bath Abbey, from the Georgian splendour of the Royal Crescent to the modern Thermae Bath Spa development – the only place in Britain where you can bathe in natural hot spring water. Thanks to its rich past and architectural heritage, combined with a vibrant shopping centre, year-round festivals and lively entertainment scene, Bath is one of Britain's most appealing cities.



LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE

The city lies cradled amid several hills in the Mendips, home to its famous pale stone as well as the hot springs that have been the source of its pop-

ularity since Celtic times. Dissected by the Avon River, which flows into the Severn estuary at Avonmouth, the Kennet and Avon Canal (1810) and the Great Western Railway (1841), the city covers 11 hilly sq miles (29 sq km). It centres on the ancient Abbey and Roman Baths, with Georgian Bath spreading north to the Upper Town and east over the river to Bathwick.

It is situated 97 miles (156km) west of London and 13 miles (21km) south-east of the large port city of Bristol. Bath has a population of 95,000, though this number is boosted by over four million tourists a year and out-of-towners who come for its shops, restaurants, theatre and concerts. The surrounding hills give Bath its steep streets and make its buildings appear to climb the slopes. While in many minds the city is associated with middle-class retirees, its population is a mix of old and young, the latter boosted by a strong student presence from Bath University, Bath Spa University, and City of Bath College.

Intricate fan vaulting inside Bath Abbey.





Statue of the celebrated dandy Beau Nash in the Pump Room.

Bath, like the rest of southwest England, has a temperate climate and is generally wetter and milder than much of the rest of England. January is the coldest month with mean minimum temperatures between 1° and 2°C (34–36°F), while July and August are generally the warmest months, with a mean daily maximum of around 21°C (70°F). When the sun shines in Bath, its buildings seem to come truly alive, and there are plenty of open spaces and parks to enjoy.

A RICH HISTORY

In the 1st century AD, the Romans built a temple and baths on the site of the sacred hot springs, which attracted pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire who would come to petition the god Sulis Minerva and to bathe in the healing waters. When the Romans abandoned Britain in the 5th century AD, Bath fell into relative decline.

The city was revived in the 18th century during a period known as the Georgian era, referring to the reign of four kings named George, from 1714–1830. During this time, a long-neglected provincial retreat was transformed into a fashionable spa with the help of three self-made men: Richard (Beau) Nash, a charismatic dandy, Ralph Allen, an astute businessman, and John Wood, a trail-blazing architect. Developments in the social sphere, led by Master of Ceremonies Nash (also known unofficially as the King of Bath), were accompanied by the planning and building of what amounted to a new city, in which Allen and Wood played significant roles. Allen made his fortune by transforming and modernising the postal system, making him one of the founders of the modern post office. Having acquired the

The Roman Baths complex offers a fascinating insight into the beliefs and customs of Ancient Rome.



Food and drink

Bath boasts a number of local specialites worth sampling. Sally Lunn buns have long been baked in Bath and are still available at the restaurant of the same name. The famous Bath Soft Cheese is a reproduction of a lost recipe dating back to the time of Admiral Lord Nelson, while Wyfe of Bath cheese is quickly catching up in terms of popularity and reputation. The Bath Oliver is a dry-baked biscuit invented in the 18th century by Dr William Oliver, an early anti-obesity campaigner.



Sally Lunn's – the perfect place for afternoon tea.

nearby quarries of local stone, he encouraged the brilliant young architect, John Wood the elder, to realise his visions in Bath stone. The legacy of Wood and his son can be seen in the shape of the Royal Crescent, the Circus, Queen Square, the Assembly Rooms and Prior Park, with other architects following their lead to create a bustling, elegant Georgian city that still thrives today.

All the traditions of Bath from that era – the healing of the sick, the cultivation of the arts and the entertainment of visitors – were carried on into the 19th and 20th centuries and are still evident today. With its Thermae Bath Spa complex, which has attracted about 250,000 visitors annually since opening in 2006, the city has returned to its roots, allowing visitors a unique opportunity in Britain to enjoy the natural thermal waters in a striking contemporary setting, alongside up-to-the-minute health and beauty treatments and a new wellness suite for 2017. The development has won numerous awards including making the finals list in the Good Spa Guide 2016.

The city used to have an important manufacturing sector, including the famed crane makers Stothert & Pitt, but manufacturing has now declined in the city, which looks instead to its growing technology, creative and service-oriented industries, alongside its crucial tourism sector.

Find our recommended restaurants at the end of each Tour. Below is a Price Guide to help you make your choice.

Eating Out Price Guide

Two-course meal for one person, including a glass of wine.

£££ = over £30

££ = £15–30

£ = under £15

Guide to Coloured Boxes

Eating

Fact

Green

Kids

Shopping

View

This guide is dotted with coloured boxes providing additional practical and cultural information to make the most of your visit. Here is a guide to the coding system.