

Bath, England: Travel Feature

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Guest Contributor

For most international visitors, think of England and the first place that comes to mind is the capital city, London. That's understandable - after all, it is packed with history, Royalty, and hundreds of things to see and do. Venture outside London and you'll find plenty of other cities that are just as historic, even if they may not have quite the same Royal connections or the amazing variety of places to visit.

Bath in the southwest of England is just one of those places. Much of what you see today builds on the city's history that dates back 2,000 years to Roman times. One of the huge draws here is the Roman bath, and with good reason. You're unlikely to see such a well preserved set of baths anywhere else in the world. They're below street level and were originally built here because it was believed that the area waters had healing powers. As you'd expect from the Romans, they didn't do this by halves - this is a spa and a temple, constructed around the water, which they contained in a reservoir. Even today, that would be some undertaking! On your tour you'll see the Sacred Spring, Roman Temple, the Roman bath house and various archaeological finds that have been made here over the years.

But what makes this different is that these aren't ruins you're seeing, where you try to imagine what would have been constructed on the site. The main parts of this complex remain intact. The highlight has to be the Great Bath, a very appropriate name. If you've ever seen photos of Bath, it's probably a picture of the Great Bath that you've been looking at, with its distinctive light green colored water and columns all around the bath. You can tell immediately that this area was used for bathing and in fact, it's something like five feet deep! Even today, this is something that many modern spa resorts would be proud to name amongst their facilities.

Close to the Roman baths is Bath Abbey, a superb site for photographers. This church dates back to 1611 and is well worth a look inside. England is fortunate to have a number of churches in what's called the Perpendicular style, with their high ornate roofs, and they really are worth seeing. This is perhaps one of the best examples of this type of church in the country.

Most of the other sights in Bath are much newer, but that doesn't mean they're any less stunning. One of my favorite views in the city, one that I could stare at for hours and never get bored, is Pulteney Bridge. It's named after a local heiress and was completed in 1773. With shops on

both sides across the full span of the bridge, its style is very reminiscent of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence. To me, the special thing about this bridge is not just taking a walk across it - although that's a great way to spend some time in this lovely city - but the picture postcard view of the bridge with the river in front of it. It really is one of the iconic images of Bath, although interestingly, the bridge has undergone so many changes since it was built that it's thought unlikely its architect would even recognize it now!

It's worth catching one of the "hop on, hop off" tour bus services that operates around Bath to head up to see the Royal Crescent. Built in the late eighteenth century, these 30 houses form a semi-circle that overlooks a huge lawn. This crescent of homes is one of the best examples of Georgian architecture you'll find anywhere and it's rightly been given a World Heritage Site listing. The architectural story doesn't end with the Royal Crescent though, as aerial photos will quickly show. Brock Street leads down from the Royal Crescent to the Circus, a complete circle of more stunning houses.

The only tragedy is that you can only really get an idea of the scale of this development from aerial photos. It's a breathtaking sight from the ground, but one that's very difficult to take in - and even harder to photograph, especially as you have to get so far away from the properties to capture the scale of it. It's another view that I have many fond memories of just sitting and staring at, ensuring that it was kept in my memory.

Now there's one other place that you have to visit in Bath and, fortunately enough after your exploration of the city, it's also somewhere that you can settle down to get some much needed food. Sally Lunn's House is the oldest house in Bath, with Roman remains showing that food was prepared here as far back as 1,700 years ago! The present building dates from 1482 and is named after a young French woman who came to England around 300 years ago. She introduced a type of rich round bread, known as the Sally Lunn Bun, which became a delicacy of the time and is still on sale today. Having sampled it, it's definitely worth trying - a very nice treat after a lot of walking around the city! If you want to visit during the day, you shouldn't have a problem getting in there, but if you're looking for an evening meal there, it's worth booking in advance through their web site at <http://www.sallylunns.co.uk>

It's probably fairly apparent by now, but Bath is one of my favorite cities to visit. I love the sense of history, both recent and ancient. It's definitely a place to linger and enjoy the beautiful sights you'll see at every turn.

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Bath is about an hour and a half away from London by train, with numerous tour operators offering day long visits there from London, many of them also including a visit to Stonehenge.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

Article last updated: 10/11/2007

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