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**Bath and Bristol, UK**

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## Interesting places and such fascinating people

**The UK's West Country is an informal term for the area of south-western England that takes in predominantly rural counties, villages and historic cities and towns.**

It is an area of fine beaches and seaside resorts, gently rolling hills and lush English countryside scattered with small villages.

But the West Country also offers a number of historic cities and towns of which the Georgian city Bath and old port of Bristol are perhaps the most well know.

Here is arts and culture in abundance and a vibrant city scene to counter balance the gentle pursuits just on the doorstep.

Carolan Nathan takes you to Bath, Bristol and Hunstrete.

### **Ashley Gibbins**

The International Travel Writers Alliance  
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### **Other places to visit in the UK's West Country**

Bournemouth and Poole, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean and the English counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.



# Why go to south-western England?

By Carolan Nathan



**Sounds a bit like Bilbo Baggins but when you are journeying around the countryside of south-western England, you are likely to come across many fascinating places and people.**

Their history stretches back to the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons and the Romans - each race introducing new cultures, different religions and ways of cultivating the land.

So a hodge podge from the past still exists although much has been sanctified and blessed into a greying sameness by the more prosaic and mundane English civil service that seems to run most things in this present day and age.



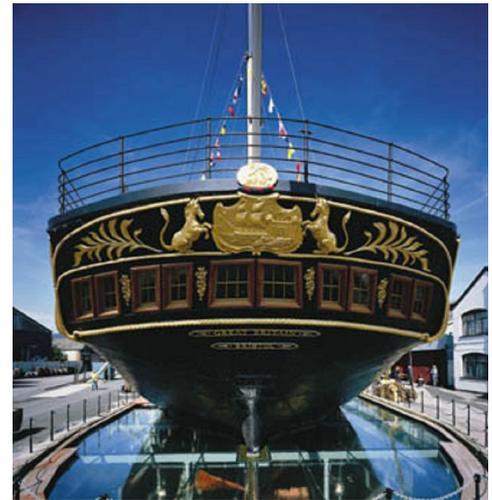
But whilst there is still a King and Lords of the Rings, and folk with imaginations like me who can paint with pictures and words, beauty and good can be found wherever you journey in the UK and beyond.

Culture is based in detail. It is based in generations of characters, of peoples, of species building on top of past generation's work.

Details will lead you down the path to the culture. We only have to look at the works of William Shakespeare, of Emily Bronte, of Jane Austen - they are played and read and enjoyed by millions of folk.

The paintings of Michaelangelo, Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones still evoke the glory of those masters and the rapt attention of ardent admirers.

### Bristol and beyond



The splendid city of Bristol that once was England's second city.

Definitely a trading place, it grew in importance after the Norman Conquest of 1066 when William the Conqueror gave orders for a castle to be erected.

Beautiful houses appeared throughout the city built on the proceeds of Spanish shipping plundered off the coasts of the Americas.

Churches and many fine buildings were erected, funded by Bristol merchants who dabbled in the slave trade and whose ships returned to Bristol laden with goods from the New World including cane sugar, tobacco and cocoa.

Perhaps the most revealing of life back through the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be viewed at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum centrally located inside Isambard Kingdom Brunel's historic 19<sup>th</sup> century railway terminus at Temple Meads.

This explores in detail how West Africa with its many rich, diverse cultures, great cities and thriving economies was raped and plundered by the earlier merchants and such entities as the Hudson Bay and East Indian Companies.

Many people from areas like Songhai where advances in medicine, mathematics and astronomy were more than a match for European science of the day, were sold as slaves. Britain also played a role in the slave trade in the Americas.

## One of England's most charming cities



Today Bath remains one of England's most charming cities filled with treasures from the past and present.

You can spend hours walking the passageways, stopping to admire buildings that echo a past that was filled with tranquillity. Naturally for the motivated modern there are lots of shopping streets with all the brands of shops seen in major London shopping areas.

Restaurants serving cuisine to meet every taste and pocket with many of them proud to offer fresh local produce.

### What to do in Bath

The open top bus tours are a grand way to see the city with experts commenting on such attractions as Bath Abbey, The Roman Baths, Queen Square, The Jane Austen Center, The Circus and Pultney Bridge plus the delights of Royal Victoria Park.

Of course you would be delinquent if you did not visit Sally Lunn's Refreshment House and Museum which is the oldest house in Bath dating back to 1482, and where you can enjoy their acclaimed historic trencher dinner served every evening.

### The Assembly Rooms

The Museum of Costume and Assembly Rooms is another attraction where the story of fashion over the last 400 years comes to life.

Every garment is original drawn from the Museum's outstanding collection of more than 30,000 items.

For those of American heritage, the American Museum and Gardens shows how you might have lived in Bath from the time of the early settlers to the civil war and includes an 18<sup>th</sup> century tavern.

It will take a few hours to explore the Jane Austen Center near Queen's Square. Truly a snapshot of life during Regency times, it includes displays of the costumes worn by Jane and others, and walk through rooms dedicated to many of her novels.

### The Tea Room

Upstairs the delightful Tea Room serves many dishes relating back to the author's favourite foods.

You may wish to take a tour of Jane Austen's Bath and enjoy the places she walked, visited and shopped, and the locations made famous in her two Bath novels, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.

### Other attractions in Bristol

There are many other attractions in Bristol to numerous to write about but mention must be made of the SS Great Britain, designed by Brunel and the first steam ship to cross the Atlantic.

This is a great venue for all who enjoy exploring wonders of the world.

### Where to stay and eat in Bath

Highly recommended is the beautiful Royal Crescent Hotel set in splendour in the Royal Crescent, supposedly the loveliest crescent in the UK. Pampering you is their mission that they carry out faultlessly.

The Dove House Restaurant prepares superb cuisine and their wine list is incomparable.

Of course, there are lots of small quite elegant hotels scattered around the city and it is easy to find one to suit your taste and pocket.

Just the same goes for the many eateries serving various styles of cuisine.

### Where to stay in Bristol

Travellers will enjoy the Berkeley Square Hotel situated in a peaceful Georgian Square close to the shops and university, they have an admirable dining room as well!

But for those well seasoned in travel, you can find lots of small hotels and B&Bs.

### Hunstrete House Hotel



Well welcome to Hunstrete House Hotel.

Here a certain quality of light illumines the lush foliage and warms the honey coloured brick of this fascinating country house hotel. It dapples the grey and pinkish white hides of the does as they playfully flirt and then shyly turn away from the piercing eyes of the antlered deer. It ripples across the quietly moving waters of the trout stream and turns the shining leaves of the great towering trees to gold.

## The Theatre Royal



One of Britain's oldest and most beautiful Theatres is the Georgian Theatre Royal offering a year round programme of top quality drama, comedy, opera and dance.

Their many festivals include The Bath Shakespeare Festival and The Bath International Puppet Festival.

## The Roman Baths



Perhaps the most famous of all attractions is the Roman Baths and Pump Room.

A delightful wander will take you round this building to view the magnificent Temple that flourished in Aquae Sulis between the first and fifth centuries.

The blue green spa waters are surrounded by many ancient artefacts including sculpture, coins, jewellery and the gilt bronze head of the goddess Sulis Minerva.

The King's Bath Spring has its own little area and the actual source of this water fell as rain up to 10,000 years ago in the nearby Mendip Hills.

It was driven down through carboniferous limestone cave systems by pressure from the high water table on the Mendips and its curative powers have been known since medieval times as a cure for certain conditions such as gout and colic.

## Hunstrete

Hunstrete is an 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian house set in ninety-two acres of deer park at the edge of the Mendip Hills between Bath and Bristol, dating as far back as 963 AD when Houndstreet Estate was owned by the Abbots of Glastonbury. In 1621 "Hownstret" passed to the Popham family of Littlecote whose home it became for the next three hundred years.

### A favourite place



It is definitely one of my favourite places to visit not only because of its historical background, but for the superb service headed up by general manager, Bertrand de Halgouet whose peerless French ability to charm guests makes your visit unforgettable.

Every bedroom is named after a different bird, some more masculine, some very feminine.

Each has a different ambiance and many returning guests have their favourites.

Just as I always love Dove, a four poster suite with two bathrooms.

Spacious and delightfully furnished it is hard to leave even when the bright morning light filters through the large windows and the gardens call for you to wander amongst the quiet greenery.

The softness of Dove well suits its ambiance with finely pleated silk and country garden furnishings.

Cuisine at Hunstrete House is a delightful experience in the masterful hands of the Executive Chef, Daniel Moon, together with his young and most excellent sous chef, Thomas Bally, and kitchen brigade, each dish is well-designed and based on fresh local produce, fish and meat of which there is an abundant supply.

## The Pump Room



The Pump Room which opened in 1706 provided a place to drink the waters and today you can go into its lovely dining room and besides other refreshments, sip a glass of the spa water drawn from underground springs.

It is dispensed to visitors and although slightly bitter, is quite delicious.

## The cooking style

The distinct cooking style can be observed in the skilful preparation of sauces, soups and other menu items whilst the wine menu encompasses many fine wines from Italy and France.

The accolades that have fallen on this Manor House hint at the richness of history which every guest can share.

### More information :

[www.visitsouthwest.co.uk](http://www.visitsouthwest.co.uk)  
[www.visitbristol.org](http://www.visitbristol.org)  
[www.visitbath.co.uk](http://www.visitbath.co.uk)  
[www.hunstretehouse.co.uk](http://www.hunstretehouse.co.uk)

## The International Travel Writers Alliance



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### The International Travel Writers Alliance

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

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## Carolan Nathan



Born and raised in England, Carolan has travelled extensively throughout Europe, North America and the UK since 1985 as a freelance international food, wine and travel writer and radio personality.

One of her great loves is the beauty of nature, lakes and rivers, forests and farmlands and the culture, food and wines of these areas.