

Time to relax: Thermae Bath Spa

ROMAN AROUND

Tired and stressed? Bath offers the perfect getaway to help forget the bustle of London

WORDS JAHN VANNISSELROY

NEED TO KNOW

WHEN TO GO All year round.

GETTING THERE First Great Western trains run daily from London Paddington. Tickets from £9.50 each way.

GETTING AROUND Explore on foot. Take a sightseeing bus if you're lazy.

GOING OUT Komedia offers some of Bath's top comedy and musical entertainment. See komedia.co.uk/bath. Try the Huntsman, 1 Terrace Walk for real ales and live bands every Friday.

FOOD: Sally Lunn's for well-priced wholesome fare in Bath's oldest house (sallylunns.co.uk). For lunch, try tasty organic Thai at Yum Yum Thai (yumyumthai.com).

ACCOMMODATION: Stay at the exceptionally comfortable Brook's Guesthouse and enjoy their delicious award-winning breakfasts. See brooksguesthouse.com. Rooms from £59.

SEE visitbath.co.uk

Bath ENGLAND

Every tiny ache in my body seems to have evaporated and my mind has definitely entered the relaxation zone. Forty-two types of minerals, a high-pressure aqua jet and water temperature of 33.5°C tends to do that.

As the steam rises off the liquid heaven at Thermae Bath Spa, the sleepy city below begins to wake from its slumber, but at this height it's only the gentle groans of pleasure from my fellow poolgoers which breach the sound barrier.

Forty-five minutes later, I'm almost drifting off in a hazy eucalyptus-infused drowse in Thermae's steam rooms. Four different pods, four different scents, followed

Discover the city's history at the Roman Baths



up with a foot spa – the Romans who built this city certainly knew what they were doing. By now, for me anyway, it seems as if London doesn't exist.

DRINK IT IN

Outside, on the cobbled walkways which connect the well-preserved Georgian buildings, the city is a feast for the senses.

Bath is a place with a firm and proud embrace on arts and culture. As such, the streets ring with the simple strumming of



guitar players busking in the town square and, nearby, a brave fire breather astounds audiences with his mastery of flame.

At the historic Roman Baths, humorous actors recreate scenes from centuries ago around the pool's 37°C waters. Next door, at Bath Abbey, a brass and double bass ensemble fills the magnificent church's eaves with musical messages to the heavens. And after climbing the 294 steps of the Abbey's tower to survey the city from one of its highest points, I almost feel as if I'm the recipient of those melodies.

Back outside, waves of tribal roars from the Rec Stadium echo around the town as the local team play host to an Aviva Premiership rival. I join the hordes of other cheapskates on the Pulteney Bridge (a popular spot for marriage proposals) to watch the game on the big screen at the unobscured northern end of the ground, cursing inwardly whenever the action moves south.

Then, the renowned six-mile Skyline track on the city limits offers perspective on the hustle of the city. Its Roman ruins, hidden valleys and tranquil woodlands provide ample exploring until dusk finally extinguishes daylight.

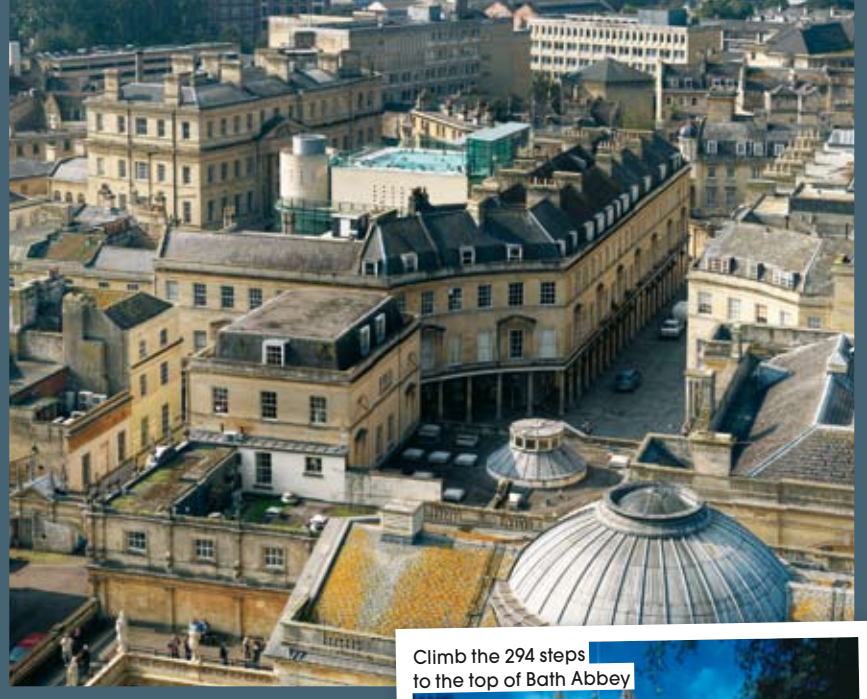
YOU MUST BE HAVING A LAUGH

They say laughter is food for the soul so, later, glutinous tendencies are indulged at the Krater Comedy Club at Bath's newest entertainment venue, Komedia. The acts are outstanding and the sound system top-notch. My soul leaves well-satiated – my only regret is not booking in for a (physical) meal and a front-row seat.

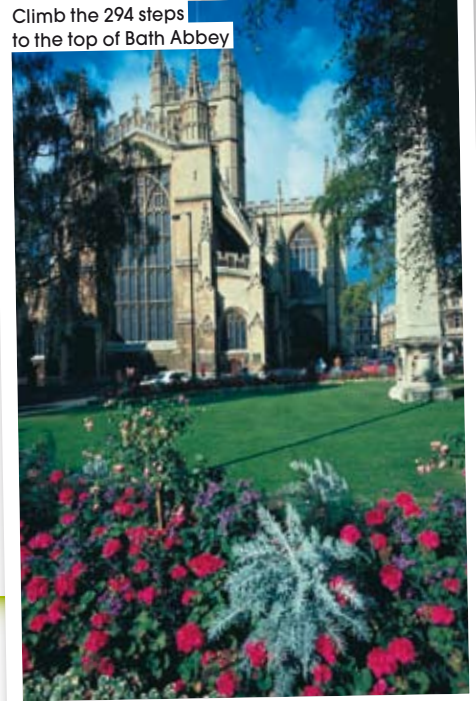
It's also unfortunate that one night is all my stay permits – the Theatre Royal down the road hosts many plays beginning their season, before they hit London for their official opening.

After dinner at Bath's oldest house, Sally Lunn's (the light, sweet buns this French

Relax on a rooftop



Climb the 294 steps to the top of Bath Abbey



baker perfected more than 300 years ago have to be tasted to be believed), tiredness kicks in. Thoughts of those hot spas invade my mind.

Bath may move at a slower pace than the big smoke of London but with so much on offer, a second soak may be in order tomorrow – just to prepare me for another busy day.

» Jahn Vannisselroy travelled to Bath with First Great Western (firstgreatwestern.co.uk). Trains leave daily until 11.30pm from London Paddington to Bath Spa and tickets start at £9.50 each way.

TNT online

For a full travel guide on the United Kingdom go to intmagazine.com

Combine tea, cake and marriage



ROMANCE IN THE STONE

A RIGHT ROYAL HISTORY

Not even Bath can escape the royal wedding fever generated by the nuptials of Prince William and Kate Middleton.

Bath's famed Fashion Museum (museumofcostume.co.uk) will host Royal Wedding Dress Teas on March 15 and 29 and April 12, where visitors can enjoy tea and cakes while listening

to illustrated talks on *the dress*. Tickets also include entry to the 'What Will She Wear?' exhibition. Some of the finest wedding dresses from the museum's collection will be on display, as well as a previously unseen archive of photographs of couture wedding dresses from the 1930s.

Ston Easton Park Hotel (stoneaston.co.uk) will host a Royal Wedding Celebration on April 29 with champagne from 10.30am and coffee and a brunch buffet served in the beautiful surroundings of this luxury country house.