

# Welcome to Bristol – Home of the Bristol Steiner School

If ever there was a city with a story to tell, it is Bristol. Enveloped in the hills of South West England, it has developed an unmistakable identity and fiercely independent spirit, forged by its passionate locals. Laid-back, welcoming and kind: your typical Bristolian.

Bristol is a unique city that offers the full range of infrastructure expected of any modern city while at the same time boasting an enviable quality of life. Bristol's residents believe the city is one of Europe's best places to live and work, ranked 36 in Europe's Best Cities 2023 where it is described 'Independent, creative and multi-cultural, Bristol is England at its most engaging.' So of course, we're not surprised to learn that Bristol is on The Sunday Times' *Best Places to Live 2023* list. Visitors and residents alike enjoy a varied social and cultural life as well as easy access to outstanding countryside.

All the buzz of a major city without the expanse, Bristol is truly walkable. For a city, Bristol is compact and manageable. Getting around is quick and easy and you can access all the facilities expected of any modern city without the stresses and strains of life in an over-populated concrete jungle. Living and working in Bristol makes a healthy work-life balance both achievable and enjoyable.

Bristol is a university, home to two world-class universities, [University of Bristol](#) and the [University of the West of England](#), Bristol is the region's leading centre for business, culture and education.



Bristol is defined by its diversity and multiculturalism and has an ethnically diverse population due to its past trading connections, post-war immigration and the large numbers of foreign students who attend university in the city.

## Environment

Bristol was the first British city to be named European Green Capital. This award celebrates and promotes innovative responses to urban environmental challenges.

Bristol's other accolades include being the 'Vegan capital of the World' and was one of the first cities to declare climate and ecological emergencies.

Although Bristol's skyline is pierced by iconic buildings, life in the city is as much about the great outdoors, clean fresh air and healthy living. Bristol is Britain's third greenest city. In and around the hustle and bustle of the city, Bristol boasts over 400 gardens and parks, ideal for walking, cycling and relaxation.



Bristol is surrounded by beautiful countryside with many and varied opportunities for walking, cycling, climbing, sailing and water sports.

Bristol is a wonderful city in itself but it's also brilliant for its connections to the rest of south-west England. There are a whole host of incredible destinations just a short journey away from Bristol.

The city of [Bath](#) was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 and it's not hard to see why. The city is home to ancient Roman baths, Grand Georgian architecture and the impressive Bath Abbey. It's easy to visit Bristol and Bath in one trip as they are only about 12 miles from each other.

It doesn't get much more picturesquely English than [The Cotswolds](#). Charming little villages dot the gorgeous rolling hills in this designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. On a day trip from Bristol, you could see Bourton-on-the-Water, a village nicknamed "Venice of the Cotswolds." Or visit Lacock Abbey, another iconic Harry Potter filming location alongside Alnwick castle.

Just 20 miles from Bristol, [Cheddar Gorge](#) should be on everybody's bucket list. Boasting awe-inspiring cliffs and extraordinary subterranean caves, Cheddar Gorge is not just an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but it's also a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Try rock climbing, uncover secrets about our prehistoric ancestors or just enjoy the views.

Stunning [Devon](#) is one of England's most popular areas to visit. Known for its dramatic coastline, sweeping sandy beaches and vast green spaces, the natural beauty of Devon is mesmerising.

Just north of Bristol is the imposing 12th-century [Berkeley Castle](#). One of the best castles in England, Berkeley Castle was built to defend England from the Welsh. It's still lived in today by the Berkeley family but you can spend a day exploring its amazing rooms and grounds.

Bristol is also close to some of the UK's Heritage and National Trust sites such as [Stonehenge](#), [Avebury](#) and [Glastonbury](#).



[The Forest of Dean](#) is on Bristol's doorstep; chase adventure through the tree-tops at [Go Ape](#) and admire nature at its finest in one of England's ancient forests. Hike through waterfalls in the [Brecon Beacons](#), and stay overnight to take advantage of the national park's status as an International Dark Sky Reserve.

## Rich heritage

Bristol was originally known as Brigstow, 'the place at the bridge', and you can still see this name around the city today.

A starting place for early voyages of exploration to the New World, Bristol has always had strong links with the ocean. As a vibrant port city, Bristol's trade and industry in tobacco, glass and chocolate boomed and merchants prospered.

The city's role as a key port also led to its brutal and shameful part in the Atlantic slave trade. See these important stories at the [Bristol People gallery](#) at the [M Shed](#).

Bristol was renowned for ship building with the finest materials and skilled techniques, leading to the phrase 'shipshape and Bristol fashion'. Visit the [SS Great Britain](#), a former passenger steamship combining size, power and technology that changed the way that ships were built forever.



These ships weren't alone on the waves. Discover the infamous pirate Captain Blackbeard's hideaway cave under [St Mary Redcliffe Church](#), and his original birthplace and childhood home on the harbourside.

Hear history come to life through sea shanties, or discover letters, diaries, photos and film spanning 800 years at the Bristol Record Office. Marvel at the [Clifton Suspension Bridge](#) - since 1864 this feat of engineering has been a testament to Isambard Kingdom Brunel's amazing designs.

Take a tour of the neo-Gothic Wills Memorial Building, and [climb the tower](#) for sensational views across the city. Or visit any of the 100 Grade I listed buildings in Bristol, including [Bristol Cathedral](#) and [Blaise Castle](#).

## Arts and Culture

Banksy is now a world-famous artist, whose work has sold for hundreds of thousands of pounds. But once, he was just another kid on the streets of Bristol with a can of spray paint in his hands. As a result, some of his earliest work is hidden around the city, and spotting it is an absolute must for fans of his work.



Aardman is proudly based in Bristol, a city with a rich creative culture. Co-Founders Peter Lord and David Sproston first moved to Bristol in 1976 to produce their first professional production and never left. Aardman is now so deeply rooted in the city that it has become part of the studio's DNA. Peter and David always embraced the notion of being helpful and supportive to the city. One of Aardman's greatest achievements in Bristol is our involvement in Wallace & Gromit's Grand Appeal, the official Bristol Children's Hospital Charity, which has raised in excess of £70 million since 1995. The charity has organised countless fundraising initiatives including three hugely successful charity art trails in Bristol.

Hot air balloons are one of Bristol's most iconic symbols and every year over 150 take to the skies in the [Bristol International Balloon Fiesta](#).



## Museums and Galleries

Bristol is well known for its rich heritage and artistic streak. You're just as likely to find engaging historical exhibits displayed with pride as you are cutting-edge artwork on show far and wide. Let's put it this way: you'll never be short of cultural experiences here.

Bristol museums come in all shapes and sizes. From Brunel's [SS Great Britain](#), an incredible immersive experience transporting you back to Victorian times, to [M Shed](#), the city's social history museum housed in a 1950s transit shed. Don't miss [Bristol Museum & Art Gallery](#) – a magnificent space exploring the city's archaeology, natural history and more. Or [We The Curious](#), which boasts the only digital 3D planetarium in the country. And hold onto your flying goggles for [Aerospace Bristol](#). The star of the much-anticipated attraction is the one and only Concorde Alpha Foxtrot, the last of the iconic aircraft to be built and the last to fly.

Bristol is also blessed with lots of well-respected galleries that even spoilt-for-choice Londoners love. We should start, of course, with Bristol's first ever art gallery: the [RWA](#) (Royal West of England Academy), a beautifully lit Grade II listed building which exhibits work from some of the country's most celebrated artists.

Then there's [Arnolfini](#), a leading centre for contemporary art with a commanding spot on the waterfront, great for enjoying an alfresco coffee. Also vibrant [Spike Island](#), which is a working artist studio as well as gallery. But you won't just find art in traditional places – for Bristol artists, anywhere can be a canvas, from public parks to pop-up spaces. And not forgetting the city's famous street art.

The World's First 'Amazement Park' featuring secret passageways and ice caves, [Wake The Tiger](#) is an immersive art experience consisting of 27 different creative environments including artwork, installations, narrative, soundscape, secret passageways and so much more.

Bristol museums and galleries boast an ever-changing, ever-inspiring calendar of exhibitions and events. Whether you're into fashion, animation, design, aviation, photography, dance, nature – you're bound to find something to suit you.

## Theatre and Music

Professional theatre, opera of the highest quality, visiting ballet, classical music, and contemporary circus acts all mingle in Bristol to make the city a well-rounded venue for evenings out.

Bristol has an incredibly impressive theatre scene. The [Bristol Hippodrome](#) is one of the largest theatres in Britain and often shows large hit musicals. Or try the newly revamped [Bristol Old Vic](#) which is celebrated for its wonderful performances from experimental theatre-makers. [The Wardrobe Theatre](#) offers a whole range of shows from comedy to family shows in an intimate, heartwarming setting.

Bristol has a vibrant music scene beating behind the doors of its many characterful venues. From musical legends in revered concert halls, to 25-piece Samba bands strumming under Banksy-covered walls, from indie hangouts to gigs afloat an old German boat, these music and arts venues cater for all tastes.

Many of the city's pubs run open mic nights and local gigs throughout the week, and you'll also find a varied programme of music and performance at [Lost Horizon](#), [Propyard](#), [The Folk House](#), [Fiddlers](#) and more. The [O2 Academy Bristol](#) hosts some of the world's best-known bands, while the city's brilliant selection of record stores regularly put on intimate live music nights.

[Bristol Beacon](#) is the largest concert venue in the South West and Bristol's home of music. Run by the charity Bristol Music Trust, audiences have been enjoying live music here since 1867. The venue has undergone a complete redevelopment and is set to reopen in November 2023.

Back in the day, when the venue was called Colston Hall, superstars such as The Beatles, David Bowie and Rolling Stones played gigs in this historic space. Over the last 152 years, Bristol Beacon's story has been bound up with the story of music itself: the seismic shifts in sounds and styles that have defined modern culture have played out – in spectacular fashion – on its stage. From impressive choirs and orchestras to grandees of the swing age; from the pioneers of rock 'n' roll to the great family tree of genres they inspired.





If you live for live music, breathe Bach or Beethoven, or want to jive to more jazz, [St George's Bristol](#) is the place for you, offering a 580-seat concert hall was converted from a 200-year-old Georgian church, and is a truly special space where they welcome the finest performances from the world's greatest artists. The hall also has what Sir Simon Rattle called 'the best acoustic for chamber music in Europe' – meaning you can experience every note, riff, song, or symphony with perfect clarity (and often, no amplification at all!)

Bristol is renowned for its diverse and lively events programme, which includes everything from carnivals, open-air concerts, street theatre and major international sporting occasions.

Our international reputation as a centre of culture and city to visit has grown dramatically in recent years. This is partly thanks to the regeneration of the city centre and historic harbourside, as well as our festival scene including St Paul's Carnival the city's iconic celebration of African Caribbean culture, the Thai and Multicultural Food Festival and Bristol Islamic Fayre.

One ward, Easton, hosted one of the largest Iftars in Europe, with several thousand people sitting down to eat together at the end of Eid in St Marks Road, which has been awarded the status of the UK's best street in the UK in the Urbanism Awards.



Bristol is also reflecting on its past, and recently made worldwide headlines during the Black Lives Matters movement when the statue of Edward Colston was symbolically removed from its plinth during the peaceful demonstration.

Bristol also offers a wide variety of Council run sports and leisure facilities as well as a full selection of private gymnasiums and sports clubs offering a full range of facilities and activities suitable for all ages and all levels of fitness.

**Socialising** – With cosy pubs, modern bars, small live music venues and diverse restaurants, Bristol's nightlife is vibrant and varied. Throughout the city, you can find a variety of places to eat, drink, listen to music and dance in.

## Faith and Spirituality

Bristol is home to around 450,00 people, many of whom have settled here from other parts of the UK, Europe and the world, bringing with them their languages, cultures and traditions of religious faith. Places of worship provide places of welcome for newcomers, help in adjusting and integrating into a new society, and support in maintaining their inheritance of community values and culture.

Over 40,000 people meet to worship and interact socially in any week in over 200 faith communities, great and small. As well as the major Christian denominations there are also established Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities as well as flourishing Buddhist and Zen groups, Theosophical Society, Friends Meeting House and a thriving alternative culture from Wicca to Druidism.

## How to Get Here

### 1. Bristol by Train

Bristol has two main train stations - Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway. Bristol Temple Meads is the more central of the two, about a 15-minute walk away from the city centre. Trains between Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway run very frequently throughout the day and journeying between the two stations only takes about 13 minutes. Taking the train is a quick way to visit Bristol and if you book in advance, ticket prices can be very reasonable.

### 2. Bristol by Plane

Another way to visit Bristol is to fly into Bristol Airport (IATA code: BRS). There are regular flights to and from other major cities in the UK as well overseas to Europe. The Bristol Flyer bus service makes it easy to travel between the airport and the city centre with shuttles running every 10 minutes or so.

### 3. Bristol by Car

It's possible to drive into Bristol though it's well worth checking their clean air zone charges before doing so.

### 4. Bristol by Bus

Regular buses run in and out of Bristol to many nearby towns and cities. The main Bristol Coach Station is located on Marlborough Street and is an easy walk to the city centre. Hopping aboard a bus to visit Bristol is an easy and affordable option.

