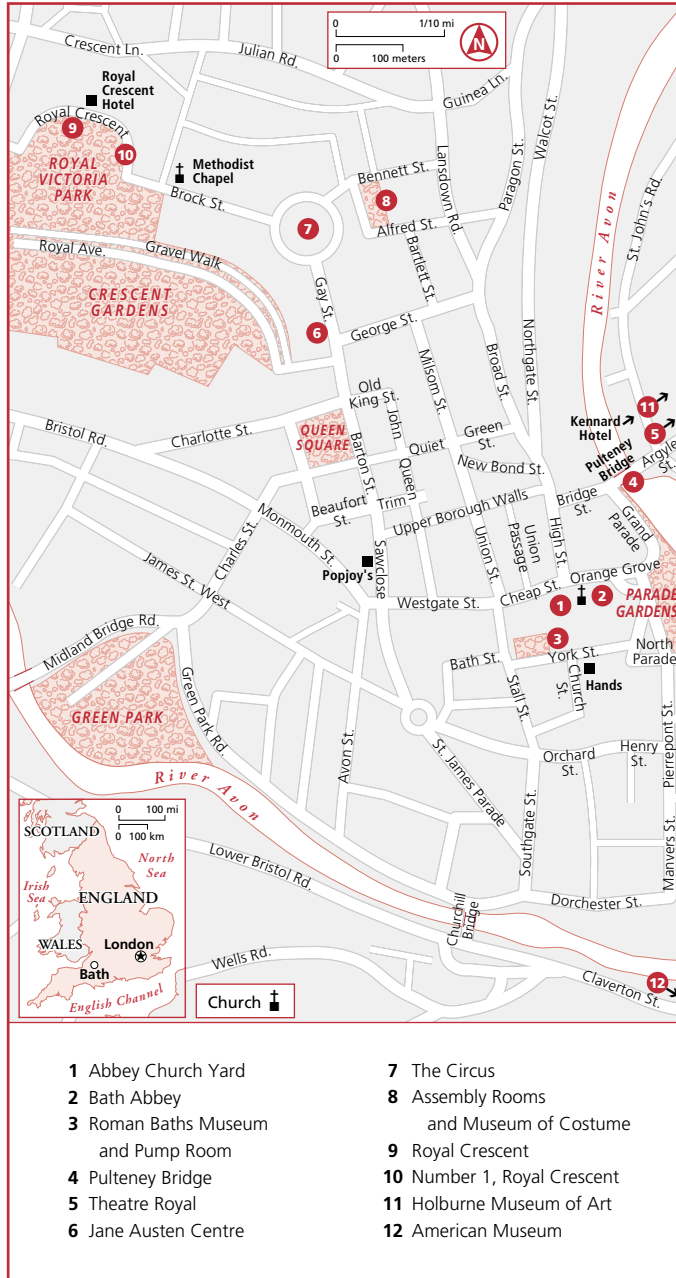


Trip

Bath

*T*he Romans channeled Bath's hot, sulfurous waters into elaborate thermal pools some 2,000 years ago. But it was 18th-century ladies and dandies who created one of England's most elegant and beautiful cities when they began coming to Bath to take the waters and enjoy the season amid terraced houses on elegant squares and curving crescents. These days, millions of visitors come to this city of soft, mellow stone—designated by UNESCO

Bath



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Bath Highlights

- Exploring the ancient Roman baths.
- Strolling across shop-lined Pulteney Bridge.
- Visiting the Museum of Costume—one of the world's leading collections of fashion.
- Admiring the elegant town houses of Royal Crescent, and touring Number 1, Royal Crescent.

as a World Heritage Site—not to take the waters (although that can be done) but simply to enjoy Bath's unique beauty. There's enough to do and see in Bath to make it a good place for an overnight stop; see the last section in this chapter for hotel recommendations.

1 Essentials

VISITOR INFORMATION

The **Bath Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 01225/477-101; www.visitbath.co.uk) is in the center of town, in Abbey Church Yard. The center is open May 1 to September 30, Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 6pm and Sunday from 10am to 4pm; and October 1 to April 30, Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 5pm and Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

You might want to plan your visit to Bath to coincide with one of the many events the city hosts throughout the year. These include the **Bath Music Festival** in late May and early June, and **Mozartfest** in November. For information on these and other events in Bath, contact the **Bath Festivals Office** (☎ 01225/463-362; www.bathfestivals.org.uk).

GETTING THERE

BY TRAIN

Trains run about every half hour from London's Paddington Station to Bath. The trip takes 90 minutes, with the first train departing at 5:05am and the last train returning to London at 10:57pm. The "Saver Return" fare is £40 (\$64). For information, call ☎ 08457/484-950 or go to www.railtrack.co.uk. The Bath train station is at the south edge of the city center, off Dorchester Street, about a 5-minute walk down Manvers Street from Bath Abbey and Grand Parade.

BY CAR

Bath is 115 miles (185km) west of London. The M4 links London with Bath, and the trip usually takes about 2 hours. Most of the city center is closed to traffic, and much of the street parking is reserved for residents. It's easiest to use the city's Park and Ride facilities, well marked from entrance routes into the city; the most convenient when entering the city from the M4 from London is Lansdown, on the north side of the city. The facilities operate Monday to Saturday 7:15am to 7:30pm; parking is free. Buses to the city center leave about every 10 to 15 minutes and cost £1.40 (\$2.30) return.

BY BUS

National Express buses leave London's Victoria Coach Station for Bath every hour, with some half-hourly departures. Travel times vary from 3 hours and 15 minutes for the direct trip to 4 or even close to 5 hours for trips that require a change. The fare is £21 (\$34) return. The bus station is on Manvers Street, near the train station. For more information, call ☎ **08705/808-080** or go to www.nationalexpress.com.

GETTING AROUND

City buses run from the train station to locations around town, but most places are within walking distance. There is a taxi rank outside the station, or you can call **AA Taxis** (☎ **01225/460-888**). The center is compact, and many streets are open only to pedestrian traffic, making it easy to get around Bath on foot. The easiest way to get from the south side of the city center (where Bath Abbey and the Roman Baths are located) to the north side (for the Assembly Rooms, Circus, and Royal Crescent) is to follow High Street north as it becomes Broad Street and Lansdown Road, then turn left (west) onto Bennett Street.

2 A Day in Bath

The lively center of the city is pedestrian-only. Start your tour at **1 Abbey Church Yard**, adjacent to **2 Bath Abbey** (☎ **01225/422-462**; www.bathabbey.org). This airy cathedral was established in the 8th century and rebuilt in the 16th century with a graceful fan-vaulted ceiling and large expanses of glass that fill the church with light; little wonder the cathedral is known as the "Lantern of the West." Bath Abbey is open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 6pm in summer and from 9am to 4:30pm in winter; on Sunday it's open from 1:15 to 2:45pm and 4:45 to 5:30pm in summer and from 1:15 to 2:45pm in winter.

Just across Abbey Church Yard is the **3 Roman Baths Museum and Pump Room** (☎ **01225/477-785**; www.romanbaths.co.uk), the

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bath complex built by the Romans that remains, in part, just as they left it. A terrace overlooks the large pool where legionnaires once soaked in waters that continue to bubble forth at 116°F (47°C) at the rate of about 240,000 gallons a day. In a maze of subterranean chambers, which you navigate with the aid of an excellent self-guided audio commentary, are the remains of steaming pools and saunas, surrounded by elaborate paving. You can sample Bath water in the adjacent Pump Room, though you may opt to sip coffee or tea instead, to the musical accompaniment of a string trio. The complex is open November to February, daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm (last entry at 4:30pm); March to June and September to October, daily from 9am to 6pm. (last entry at 5pm); and July to August, daily from 9am to 10pm (last entry at 9pm). Admission is £8.50 (\$14) for adults, £7.50 (\$12) for seniors and students, £4.80 (\$7.70) for children 6 to 16, and £22 (\$35) for families of up to two adults and two children. A combined ticket to the Roman Baths and the Museum of Costume (see below) costs £11 (\$18) for adults, £9.50 (\$15) for seniors and students, £6.20 (\$10) for children 6 to 16, and £30 (\$48) for families of up to two adults and four children.

The Grand Parade leads a few blocks north to **4 Pulteney Bridge**, an 18th-century span over the Avon River modeled on the Ponte Vecchio in Florence—and like its Italian counterpart, it is lined with shops. Return to the west bank of the bridge and follow Upper Borough Walls Street through the city center to the **5 Theatre Royal** (© 01225/448-844; www.theatreroyal.org.uk), one of Britain's oldest working stages. If you're unable to attend a performance, you might be around to join one of the tours on the first Wednesday of every month at 11am and every Saturday at noon; the fee is £3 (\$4.80) for adults and £2 (\$3.20) for children. The house next to the theater was once the home of Beau Nash, an 18th-century arbiter of taste and a high-living gambler who is credited with putting Bath on the map as a fashionable watering hole.

Gay Street leads north past Queen Square to the **6 Jane Austen Centre** (© 01225/443-000; www.janeausten.co.uk), a rather dull but informative collection of text-heavy displays that honor the ever-popular novelist of late-18th- and early-19th-century manners. Jane visited Bath twice in the late 18th century and lived here from 1801 to 1806; she drew lavishly from her experiences here for her novels. The most satisfying part of a visit is the gossipy introductory lecture; among the juicy tidbits you'll glean is how Jane came to loathe Bath, where she and her mother and sister fell upon hard times. The center is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 5:30pm; Sunday from 10:30am to 5:30pm. Admission is £4.45 (\$7.10) for adults, £3.65 (\$6) for seniors and students, £2.45 (\$3.90) for children 6 to 15, and £12 (\$19) for families of up to two adults and four children.

From the Jane Austen Centre, Gay Street continues north to **7 The Circus**, where three semicircular terraces of Regency town houses surround a circular park. The **8 Assembly Rooms and Museum of Costume** (☎ 01225/477-789; www.museumofcostume.co.uk), just east of the Circus on Bennett Street, evoke a lifestyle in which balls and gossip ranked high among priorities. You can walk through the four elegant rooms that were the center of 18th-century Bath social life, then go downstairs to view the finery in which a lady or dandy of the time would have danced away an evening; this is one of the world's leading collections of fashion. Just as intriguing as historic fashions are creations by Versace and other contemporary designers. Hours are daily from 10am to 5pm (last admission 4:30pm). Admission to the Assembly Rooms is free and to the museum is £5.50 (\$9) for adults, £4.50 (\$7) for seniors and students, £3.75 (\$6) for children 6 to 18, and £15 (\$24) for families of up to two adults and four children. A combined ticket to the Museum of Costume and the Roman Baths costs £11 (\$18) for adults, £9.50 (\$15) for children, £6.20 (\$10) for children 5 to 16, and £30 (\$48) for families of up to two adults and four children.

Brock Street leads west from The Circus to Royal Victoria Park and the amazing **9 Royal Crescent**, a majestic semicircle of elegant town houses and one of the most distinctive examples of residential architecture in the world. At **10 Number 1, Royal Crescent** (☎ 01225/428-126; www.bath-preservation-trust.org.uk/museums/no1) you can step into one of the town houses, a spacious "corner" house whose

The Beau of Bath

Bath was a sleepy, inelegant little place when Beau Nash arrived in 1705 to try his hand at some games of chance. Nash, then 31, had more or less given up law and made his living by gambling. He was well known in London social circles for his looks, charm, aplomb, and stylish attire. He was lucky in Bath, decided to stay on as assistant to the town's master of ceremonies, and soon made his mark by enforcing dress codes and rules of behavior at dances, installing streetlights, and improving lodgings. He put Bath on the map as one of Europe's fashionable spas, with a sparkling new Pump Room for taking the waters, Assembly Rooms for dances, terraces on handsome houses, and other improvements we still enjoy today. Bath staged a grand funeral ceremony when Nash died in 1761 at age 87—and the elegant town continues to pay tribute to Beau Nash with its perfectly preserved beauty.

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tenants included, in 1776, the duke of York, second son of George III. The Bath Preservation Trust has restored the house using only paint, wallpapers, fabrics, and other materials available in the 18th century, and furnished the three floors with a superlative collection of period antiques; one of the more amusing pieces is a card table in the study—a handy piece of equipment given the popularity of gambling in Georgian Bath. The house is open mid-February to October, Tuesday to Sunday from 10:30am to 5pm; and in November, Tuesday to Sunday from 10:30am to 4pm. Admission is £4 (\$6) for adults; £3.50 (\$6) for seniors, students, and children 6 to 18; and £10 (\$16) for families of up to two adults and two children.

MORE THINGS TO SEE & DO

11 Holburne Museum of Art When this mansion was Bath's finest hotel, Jane Austen kept an eye on the fashionable clientele from her house nearby. Now the elegant rooms house silver, glass, and other decorative objects, as well as paintings by Joseph Turner and other masters, collected by 19th-century Bath resident Sir William Holburne.

Great Pulteney St. ☎ **01225/466-669**. www.bath.ac.uk/Holburne. Admission £4 (\$6) adults, £3.50 (\$6) seniors, £1.50 (\$2.40) children, £7 (\$11) families of up to 2 adults and 2 children. Mid-Feb to mid-Dec, Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 2:30–5pm.

12 American Museum On display at 19th-century Claverton Manor are quilts, folk art, Shaker pieces, and the other holdings of Britain's only museum devoted to Americana; the 125 acres (51 hectares) of gardens, including a replica of the one at Mount Vernon, spill down the hillside. The museum is closed most of the winter, except from mid-November to mid-December, when the rooms are decorated for Christmas.

Off the Ave., Bathwick Hill. ☎ **01225/460-503**. www.americanmuseum.org. Admission £6 (\$10) adults, £5.50 (\$9) seniors and students, £3.50 (\$6) children. Mar 22–Nov 2, Tues–Sun 2–5pm; Nov 22–Dec 13, Tues and Thurs–Sun 1–4pm, Wed 1–4pm and 5:30–7:30pm. Bus: 18 to the museum from the train station and other stops in the city center.

ORGANIZED TOURS

Among the many walking tours of Bath (the Tourist Information Centre has a complete list), you get the best overview on the free, 2-hour **Mayor of Bath's Honorary Civic Walking Tour**, with stops at the Pump Room, Pulteney Bridge, Royal Crescent, and other architectural gems. The tour departs from outside the Abbey Church Yard entrance to the Pump Room from May to October, daily at 10:30am; Monday to Friday and Sunday at 2:30pm; and Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday at 7pm. From November to April, tours depart daily at 10:30am, Monday to Friday at 2pm, and Sunday at 2:30pm. The 90-minute tours of **Bizarre Bath** (☎ **01225/335-124**; www.bizarrebath.co.uk) use street theater for a humorous look at the city. Tours leave from in front of the

Huntsman Inn in North Parade Passage every evening at 8pm from April 1 to September 28, and cost £5 (\$8) for adults, £4.50 (\$7) for students; purchase tickets, in cash, at the time of the walk. The **Jane Austen Centre** (☎ 01225/443-000; www.janeausten.co.uk) sponsors walking tours that focus on the novelist's residences and settings for her novels and are conducted daily at 1:30pm from June to September, and Saturday and Sunday at 1:30pm from October to May. Walks begin in Abbey Church Yard and cost £3.50 (\$6) for adults; £2.50 (\$4) for seniors, students, and children.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Skiffs, punts, and canoes are available for rental from the **Victorian Bath Boating Station**, on the River Avon beneath the Pulteney Bridge (May–Sept daily 10am–6pm; ☎ 01225/466-407). The nearby Kennet and Avon Canal towpath is one of many local places ideal for hiking, cycling, and boating; the **Bath and Dundas Canal Company** (☎ 01225/722-292) at the canal information office rents bikes as well as well as canoes and other boats. It's 5 miles (8km) south of Bath on the A36 at Monkton Combe. (Take bus no. 4, 5, or 6 from the train station.) Soaks and other water-related treatments are once again available in Bath at the luxurious new **Bath Spa**, next to the Roman Baths (☎ 1225/780-308; www.bathspa.co.uk), scheduled to open in 2004.

3 Shopping

One of Bath's liveliest shopping venues is the **Green Park Arts and Craft Market**, in the historic Green Park train station, north of the center off Charles Street; the market is open from 9am to 5pm Tuesday through Sunday and hosts vendors selling everything from antiques to crafts to farm produce. Vendors at the **Bartlett Street Antique Centre**, near the Assembly Rooms on Bartlett Street, open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm, sell jewelry, silver, prints, and other easily portable items. Vendors in the **Bath Saturday Antiques Market**, in the Old Cattle Market on Bath Walcot Street, sell collectibles of an unusually high quality Saturday from 6:30am to 2:30pm. Quill pens, needlepoint kits, and other items associated with Jane Austen are for sale in the gift shop of the **Jane Austen Centre** (☎ 01225/443-000).

4 Where to Dine

Hands LIGHT FARE/TEA These bright, airy rooms next to Bath Abbey are especially popular for morning coffee and at teatime. Breakfast and lunchtime sandwiches and salads are available, too.

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Moments Soaking up Bath

Bath was designed to be admired, so find a vantage point and just soak in the architectural grandeur of the place—two of the best are Royal Victoria Park, looking toward the Royal Crescent, and the Grand Parade, looking toward Pulteney Bridge.

Abbey St. ☎ **01225/463-928**. Most items £3.50–£7 (\$6–\$11). MC, V. Tues–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm; Sun 11am–4:30pm.

No. 5 Bistro FRENCH A welcoming, casual air pervades this handsome restaurant at the east end of Pulteney Bridge, where chef Michel Lemoine serves fresh fish, hearty soups, and other memorable dishes.

5 Argyle St. ☎ **01225/444-499**. £13–£14 (\$20–\$22). AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 6:30–10pm; Fri–Sun 6:30–10:30pm.

Popjoy's MODERN BRITISH/CONTINENTAL This 1720 home built for Julia Popjoy, mistress of the dandy Beau Nash, provides an elegant setting in which to enjoy seafood and innovative modern British cuisine.

Beau Nash House, Saw Close. ☎ **01225/460-494**. Main courses £15–£23 (\$24–\$37). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm.

5 Extending Your Trip

Bath is so engaging that you may well want to spend the evening taking in a play at the Royal Theatre or enjoying a leisurely dinner, and continue your sightseeing the next day. Plus, Bath is a handy base from which to explore the nearby Cotswolds.

Kennard Hotel Just across the Pulteney Bridge from the city center, this handsome town house was built as lodgings in 1794 and still treats guests to tidy and comfortable accommodations, an attractive breakfast room, and a gracious welcome.

11 Henrietta St. ☎ **01225/310-472**. www.kennard.co.uk. £48–£118 (\$77–\$189) double. MC, V.

Royal Crescent Hotel These elegant, interconnected town houses not only boast the best address in town but provide elegant accommodations as well as a delightful garden and beautiful pool and spa.

16 Royal Crescent, Bath, Somerset BA1 2LS. ☎ **01225/823-333**. www.royalcrescent.co.uk. From £170 (\$272) double. Check the website for special offers. AE, MC, V.