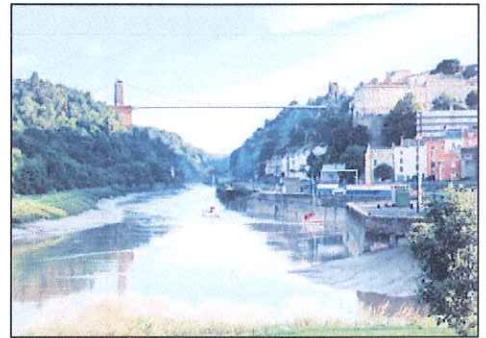


Gazette TRAVEL

Edited by
Mimi Murray



Bath's Pulteney Bridge (above) and The Old Parsonage (right) highlight the beauty and history in the town, while Bristol (top right) is a walker's dream, with plenty to see and do. Pics: VisitBath/Dave Pratt

WEST COUNTRY: WITH COUNTRYSIDE IN TOUCHING DISTANCE, BRISTOL AND BATH HAVE IT ALL

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TRAVEL to the west country couldn't be easier these days with direct flights to Bristol, your gateway to the region.

Whether it's a short city break to Bristol or Bath you're after or seeking out the lush quaint honey coloured countryside of the Cotswolds, the English west country offers a fascinating and diverse range of experiences for all travellers.

With a plethora of things to do and see, visitors are also spoilt with excellent quality accommodation, places to eat and drink, history, culture, the great outdoors as well as exciting shopping outlets, sure to provide genuine retail therapy.

After your short flight

to Bristol (less than an hour from Dublin), the first port of call for any dedicated shopper is the Clifton Village area of Bristol, offering up many up-market independent shops and boutiques selling jewellery, art, gifts, furniture, fashion good food and more.

For those after a genuine bargain, try one of the many outlet stores in the region, including the Mulberry Factory shop which is close-by.

If your legs haven't given in, you will be spoilt for choice with a wide range of award winning and reasonably priced restaurants and gastropubs in the area, serving some of the many locally brewed craft beers and ciders

from the region.

A relaxing Bath

After taking in the sights and sounds of Bristol, the next port of call has got to be the jewel in the crown of the region, the Roman city of Bath.

Built around the only natural hot spring in England, the entire area of the city is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Take a lazy stroll around the streets of this architectural treasure and view the stunning Royal Crescent, the Circus, Pulteney Bridge amongst other gems and finish up with a trip to Thermae Bath Spa, Britain's original and only natural thermal spa where you can enjoy the warm,

mineral-rich waters as enjoyed by the Celts and Romans over 2000 years ago, now that is real therapy!

A trip to the west country wouldn't do the region justice without exploring some of the delights the countryside has to offer.

For golfers there is some of the finest golf courses England has, offering easy great choice and beautiful scenery.

With over 6,100km of dedicated walking and cycling tracks, along with 1000s of acres of national trust parkland there is plenty of ways to find the inner explorer in you.

Such amenities also provide an excellent area for bird watching

and other green pursuits.

The west country is also steeped in pagan, Christian and mythical history, legend and landmarks.

A number of must see experiences includes Stonehenge and the village of Glastonbury whose abbey houses the first Christian sanctuary, visited by none other than our own St Patrick and where King Arthur's final resting place lies, so the legend goes.

No cheesy pun!

For the foodies amongst us, a visit to Cheddar, the home of cheese is top priority. Spawning many excellent artisan cheese makers, a visit to Cheddar

offers the opportunity to sample real cheese which is creamy and delicious with a choice of pasteurised and unpasteurised.

You'll soon forget the rubbery stuff in supermarkets!

A good base for all of these places is a lovely old bed and breakfast called The Old Parsonage just outside Bath, a grade II sandstone house built in the 1680s.

They provide great cooked breakfast with home made bread served on Wedgwood Devon Rose china, continental coffee, yogurt, fresh fruit and various cereals.

For details log on to www.theoldparsonagebandb.co.uk.