

Bath:

The hometown of wellness

When the Romans settled in Bath in 60 AD, they knew there was something special about this southern counties suntrap. A few centuries later, and *Happiful's* **Kathryn Wheeler** headed to the city to discover what Bath has to offer today's wellness weekenders

Cushioned by rolling countryside, lined with Georgian streets built from honey-coloured Bridgewater brick, and accented by ancient architecture that has stood the test of time – there's something special about Bath.

A mini-break in the Somerset city has been on my to-do list for an age, and so when Visit Bath invited me to discover what makes it the ultimate wellness destination, I had my bags packed quicker than you can say “rest and relaxation”.

My stay began with a check-in at The Bird – a boutique hotel with views over the recreation ground and Bath Abbey. Overflowing with surprising moments of delight – with quirky, modern decor that runs in parallel with the impressive period architecture – The Bird makes an enchanting base to explore the city from.

Stepping out of the hotel, the first place on my itinerary was the famous Roman Baths. Ever since the Roman's settled here in 60 AD, bringing with them public spas, Bath's past has become entwined with wellness. Hold your hand over the steam, rising from thermal water that rushes through the limestone, to feel the

power of this bubbling natural spring – and walk the perimeter of the baths, developing a sense of what it would have meant to bathe in these naturally warm waters in ancient times.

Across the city, No.15 Great Pulteney is the spa hotel that's putting a 2020 spin on wellness – as I discovered when I was offered the opportunity to try their latest treatment, ‘Mindful Touch’. Combining visuals in a virtual reality headset with more familiar massage elements, ‘Mindful Touch’ is an interesting experience that opens up questions about the role that VR could potentially play in our wellbeing.

But for a more traditional experience, head to the Soul Spa for a 20-minute drop-in meditation session. At just £5 a session, this is the ideal way to dip into some mindfulness in the midst of a busy city day. Hosted in the eaves of a historical building, the session I attended was guided meditation on the topic of ‘loving kindness’. A perfect experience to enjoy with a partner or loved one, the session asks you to reflect on the love in your life, prompting you to celebrate and share the positive feelings that run between us all.

Insider Tip

Leave the car behind and take a stroll around this beautiful, compact city. From the centre, all major attractions are within a 15-minute radius, and down at street level, you can't help but stumble across picturesque alleys, independent cafes, and charity shops brimming with treasures.

Back out on the streets, to get a good feel for Bath and the surrounding area, hop on the open-top bus for a whistle-stop tour of the major points of interest in the centre, before heading out on to country roads to see a stunning view over the entire city. Far from a pootling time-filler, the bus tours are an opportunity to sit back and relax while you take in the sights.

When it comes to eating out in Bath, you'll be spoiled for choice. I headed to Turkish-Mediterranean restaurant Cappadocia. Book a table next to the panoramic window and take in views across the River Avon, and the famous Pulteney Bridge. I recommend the hummus and falafel – a treat for your tastebuds, this vegan staple is



1) Walk the around the Roman Baths,
2) Be in awe of Bath Abbey, 3) Rest at
The Bird hotel, 4) Recharge at Soul Spa

brought to life by a powerful blend of flavour and spice.

Just a stone's throw away is The Boater pub. This establishment is a Narnia of a place. From its quaint, unassuming front, you would never guess that it boasts the largest pub garden in Bath. Mixed with homely, cosy corners – it's the ideal place to settle and mull over the day.

As my overnight stay in Bath came to an end, I experienced that perfect mini-break feeling that you get when you've found the fragile balance between activity and relaxation. Revitalised by the treatments I'd sampled, and the places that I'd visited, the 'Bath effect' lingered all the way home.

But it's more than an array of spa hotels and innovative treatments. A stroll around the centre will soon reveal that the sense of eudaimonia is etched into the very structure of the city. Simultaneously very much alive, and yet serene and easy – a stay in Bath is contrary to standard hustling city breaks, offering something so much more harmonious and consolidating. So pack your bags and experience this rare place yourself – you won't be disappointed.



Plan your stay in Bath by heading to [visitbath.co.uk](https://www.visitbath.co.uk) 