

OUT OF TOWN: BRISTOL

By Jo Caird

Overlooked by the **Clifton Suspension Bridge**, 19th-century engineering genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel's best known work, Bristol is a historic city with a decidedly modern outlook.

Begin your tour at **The Clifton Observatory** for an excellent view of the bridge and **Avon Gorge**, and be sure not to miss the extraordinary camera obscura. It's one of only a handful in the country. Another Brunel highlight is the **ss Great Britain**, once a luxurious passenger steam ship and now a fascinating museum in the heart of Bristol's historic Harbourside.

Also in the Harbourside you'll find the **Arnolfini**, an important centre for contemporary arts that hosts art exhibitions, dance performances, concerts and more. It's just one of several highly acclaimed cultural institutions in the city that include the **Bristol Old Vic**, the UK's oldest working theatre. A new adaptation of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* – the ultimate family show – is running until 19 Jan. **The Bristol Museum And Art Gallery** is also well worth a visit – its extremely varied collection incorporates everything from ancient Japanese art to dinosaurs fossils.

When it comes to visual art in Bristol, however, all you really need to do is keep your eyes peeled as you walk about – the city is a mecca for street art. Banksy, the graffiti artist

whose work now sells all over the world, is this thriving scene's most famous name.

For a taste of history try **M Shed**, a museum dedicated to Bristol's glorious past. It's located in a former 1950s transit shed and uses interactive displays, quirky objects, films and photographs to explore the city's history, from its role in the Transatlantic slave trade to life in Bristol during World War Two, and more.

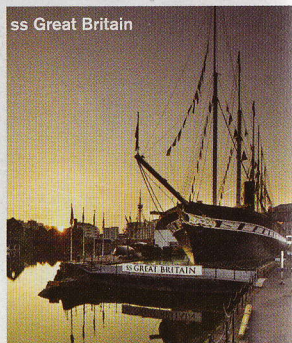
To see how Bristolians lived in the 18th century, there's the **Georgian House Museum**, a six-storey townhouse in the city centre, or a little way out of town is the charming **Blaise Castle House Museum**, which includes the remains of the **Kings Weston Roman Villa**.

Back in the city, kids and adults alike will enjoy themselves at **Bristol Zoo**, which occupies a five-hectare site in Clifton, an area admired for its gorgeous Georgian architecture. Time your visit to coincide with the penguin and seal feeding, and don't miss the entertaining and educational talks that take place throughout the day.



And while you're in Clifton, take advantage of the area's great shopping opportunities, from trendy boutiques specialising in independent fashion and jewellery, to the beautiful **Clifton Arcade** with its range of antiques and crafts shops.

If all that sightseeing sounds like

thirsty work, have no fear because the 10th Bristol Cider Festival is taking place on **25-27 Jan**. Sample 100-plus ciders and perries (cider made from pears), and enjoy local entertainment in the atmospheric surroundings of the **Brunel Old Station**, one of the oldest train stations in the world.



TRAVEL INFORMATION

Rail: Direct trains depart from  London Paddington, to  Bristol Temple Meads. Journey time is approximately 90 mins.

VISITOR CENTRE

E Shed, 1 Cannons Road, Bristol, BS1. ☎ 09067 112 191.
 visitbristol.co.uk