

Bristol – a quick flick by easyJet from Edinburgh

The name Black Boy Hill is a hint to Bristol's involvement in the slave trade which peaked between 1730 and 1745.

There is a poignant plaque to the countless African men, women and children whose enslavement and exploitation brought prosperity to the city.

So did the export of coal, lead, and animal hides and imports into Bristol included wine, grain, slate, timber and olive oil.

It was once the second largest port in England after London and the harbour area is still buzzing. However, tourists now, thankfully, help boost the economy and help erase memories of the past.

Restaurants, bars and hotels are concentrated around the harbour area which appropriately houses the M Shed museum which is packed with films, photographs and interactive exhibits telling the story of the city.

In my view the city's star exhibit is the SS Great Britain just along the quayside.

Brunel's ship is billed as the ship that changed the world and it was launched in 1843 with a ground-breaking screw propeller, a move away from the then traditional paddle wheels.

But there is more to Bristol than that. Concorde also made its mark on aviation history after its inaugural flight from Bristol in 1969.

It's iconic shape dominated the sky just as the the Clifton Suspension Bridge dominated Bristol's skyline when it was built and still does. There are spectacular views from the top.

Bristol Zoo is nearby and is home to 400 species of animals including seven gorillas. It is easily accessible from the city centre by bus.

Bristol Aquarium is also popular and it is just behind the restaurants at Harbourside.

And the imposing cathedral is nearby as are the shops and main theatres, The Hippodrome and The Bristol Old Vic. Several passenger ferries operate in the harbour area.

OPEN TOP BUS: The best way to see the city is on the award-winning hop-on, hop-off open top bus which starts from Harbourside and the tour takes 75 minutes. There are two loops, the Clifton Village and West End and the Old City and Cabot Circus loop. Both are worth the time. Tickets are available from the driver and online.

www.bristolinsight.co.uk

CYCLING: The Adventurous Activity Company runs organised tours with bike hire included and it also organised water, forest and other activities.

<http://www.adventurousactivitycompany.co.uk>

SS GREAT BRITAIN: It is claimed to be Bristol's No 1 visitor attraction and you can explore this Victorian masterpiece from the first-class sleeping and dining areas to the doctor's surgery and the on-board abattoir. Not to be missed.

www.ssbreatbritain.org

CONCORDE: The exhibition celebrates 50 years of the iconic plane, helicopters and space. Concorde was designed, built and tested in Bristol and the first plane flew from Filton Airfield on April 9, 1969. You can get on board and hear

stores of who flew on the aircraft. It is surprisingly small inside.

www.aerospacebristol.org

CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE: This spans the Avon Gorge linking Clifton in Bristol to Leigh Woods in North Somerset and was opened in 1864. Another unmissable attraction

www.cliftonbridge.org.uk

BRISTOL ZOO: This is the world's fifth oldest zoo and houses 400 species in nine animal houses. Compact and interesting with a tremendous water exhibit.

ww.bristolzoo.org.uk

ARNOLFINI: One of Europe's leading contemporary art galleries with exhibitions, live performances and indie cinema. Admission is free.

www.arnolfini.org.uk

BRISTOL AQUARIUM: Tropical marine and freshwater creatures living in naturally-themed surroundings. Children under three go free.

www.bristolacquarium.co.uk

THE MATTHEW: The ship docked outside the M Shed is a replica of the boat sailed by John Cabot when he discovered Newfoundland in 1497. Walk-on trips are available when she is in dock and it sails to the Avon Gorge and round the harbour.

info@matthew.co.uk

ARCHITECTURE CENTRE: Free exhibitions on architecture, design and the environment plus talks and workshops.

OLD CITY: It is only minutes from Harbourside but it has bags of character with cobbled streets lined by some of the city's oldest buildings. The oldest continuously-working theatre in Britain, the Bristol Old Vic, is housed there and West End shows are regularly staged at The Bristol Hippodrome.

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL: It has been the site of worship for over 1,000 years and is one of the world's finest examples of a hall church. It is also a popular film location.

<https://bristol-cathedral.co.uk>

JOHN WESLEY'S CHAPEL: It is the oldest Methodist building in the world and boasts a new multi-media centre.

www.newroombristol.org.uk

CLIFTON VILLAGE: Chic boutiques, cosy cafes, Georgian terraces and leafy streets with highly-desirable property is the hallmark of this area tucked away from the centre of the city and which is home to the sensational Clifton Suspension Bridge. Clifton Lido has been restored and offers year-round outdoor swimming and nearby are Clifton Downs, an area of protected parkland.

www.discoverclifton.co.uk

SHOPPING: The Mall at Cribbs Causeway just outside the city has 150 shops including department stores, high-street top brands, restaurants and cafes as well as a cinema. Broadmead is in the city and boasts high-street big guns including M&S and Primark. Don't miss Gloucester Road which is claimed to be the longest independent shopping street in Europe or the Georgian St Nicholas Markets with more than 60 stalls. Adjoining it is a food hall with Italian, Mediterranean and Asian food. The smell is sensational. Park Street has a range of vintage clothing shops, jewellery and behind the Hippodrome stands Bristol's largest Oriental supermarket, Wah Yang Hon, and 200-year-old Averys, family wine merchants.

Stnicholasmarkets.co.uk

Bristolshoppingquarter.co.uk

<https://www.mallcribbs.com>

ARNOS VALE: A five-acre home to the original Bristol Blue Glass factory and shop and the cemetery opposite has been the final resting place for notable citizens since 1837. The garden cemetery offers a haven for wildlife and leisurely

walks.

www.bristol-glass.co.uk

<https://arnosvale.org.uk>

FOOD AND DRINK: Food and Drink Bristol is a comprehensive guide to eating out and it is available from the Harbourside tourist office. Don't walk past the Moroccan/Mediterranean in St Nicholas Market, it is one of my favourites.

SPORT: Bristol is home to Gloucester Country Cricket Club and the ground will host matches in the 2019 ICC World Cup. The city has two professional football teams in Bristol City and Bristol Rovers plus a professional rugby club, Bristol Bears, and a basketball club in Bristol Flyers. Badminton horse trials take place in Gloucestershire, not far from the city which is also home to an indoor climbing centre. You can, of course, climb the rigging on the SS Great Britain.

Cricketworldcup.com

<https://www.gloscricket.co.uk>

<https://www.bristolrovers.co.uk>

<https://www.bcfc.co.uk>

<https://www.bristolbearsrugby.com>

<https://wwwbristolflyers.co.uk>

FESTIVALS: Bristol has a Harbour Festival, puppet festival, food festivals including the British Dal Festival and Food Connections plus a balloon fiesta and Christmas events including a market, ice skating and light installations.

<https://visitbristol.co.uk>