

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER



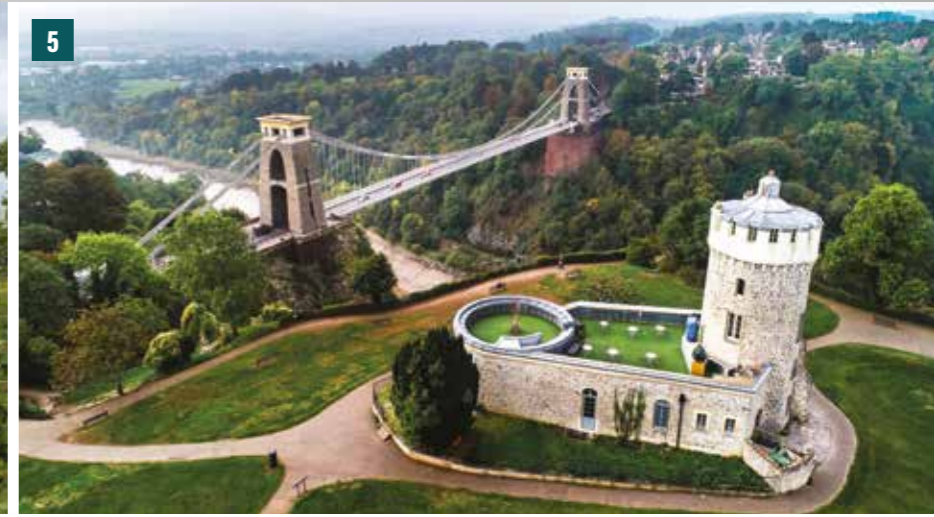
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From Brunel to Banksy, the creative south-west city has much to marvel at

1 BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS STATION

Bristol's main rail hub is located in Redcliffe, about 15 minutes' walk from the city centre, and was designed 180 years ago by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, making it the oldest station in the city. As you exit the main entrance, turn on to the slip road on the left (Lower Approach Road). You'll spy a series of street artworks that juxtapose strikingly with the station's Gothic façade in the background. Highlights include a colourful collaboration between Copyright and Paul Monsters of a woman with butterfly wings, and posters paying tribute to the NHS. These give you a first taste of the city's rich graffiti scene, which exploded in the 1980s and counts Banksy as a participant. The Visit Bristol website lists some of the elusive artist's works if you are interested in seeking them out: bit.ly/bristolbanksytour

2 QUEEN SQUARE

Turn right on to Temple Gate and then left on to Redcliffe Way. As you cross Redcliffe Bascule Bridge, you'll spot a scenic terrace of colourful houses on Redcliffe Parade on your left, elevated above the city's Floating Harbour. Continue on to Bell Avenue and you'll see pretty Queen Square straight ahead. This 2.4-hectare park is surrounded by Georgian townhouses and cobbled streets that lead to the harbourside. Laid out in its current state in 1700 and named after Queen Anne, it's a relaxing spot for a sit or stroll but it hasn't always been the picture of tranquillity. In 1831 it was the focus of a riot after the House of Lords blocked a popular electoral reform bill. There were hundreds of deaths and casualties, and almost 100 buildings in and around the square were burnt to the ground. It was rebuilt over the next 80 years.

3 CLIFTON CUISINE

From here, it's a 25-minute walk to the attractive suburb of Clifton. After the steep trek up Park Street, you'll be ready for a sit-down. Clifton is an affluent area of sweeping crescents and leafy streets that are home to a wide range of independent shops, restaurants and cafés. These include the Italian-inspired Rosemarino (rosemarino.co.uk), which is located on the corner of Clifton Road and York Place. The menu makes good use of local producers and suppliers and includes a tempting selection of *cibetti* such as arancini, polpetta and calzone as well as brunch dishes – I recommend the lemon and ricotta pancakes with home-cured salmon (£11). Open Tues-Sun 9am-4pm. After an aperitivo, pop into Clifton Road Community Bookshop (number 10) for a browse – set up last year, all of its second-hand books cost £2.

4 THE DOWNS

Continue down Clifton Road and on to Lansdown Road, taking in the magnificent Georgian architecture. Turn left on to Manilla Road, which will take you to the 179-hectare Downs. The area is protected as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest – summer months promise colourful wildflowers in the meadow areas, and you might spot young peregrine falcons leaving their nest and learning to fly at the Peregrine Watch point. The Avon Gorge is home to a variety of whitebeam trees, some of which are endemic to the area and don't grow anywhere else.

5 CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE

As you head up the footpaths of the Downs, you'll begin to catch glimpses of the incredible Clifton Suspension Bridge before taking in the epic

landmark in its entirety when you reach the clifftop. The engineering marvel straddles lush greenery on either side of the Gorge, connecting Bristol to North Somerset. Brunel designed it in 1831 and described it as "my first child, my darling", although he sadly died before it was completed in his honour in 1864.

While the clifftop vista itself is remarkable, you can take in 360-degree views of Bristol's cityscape

from the Clifton Observatory, a couple of minutes' walk away and home to one of the UK's oldest working camera obscuras. It's linked by tunnel to the Giant's Cave, set in the limestone face of St Vincent's Rocks. This dates back to 305 AD and sits 76 metres above the Gorge, with a viewing platform offering staggering views – particularly at sunrise or sunset. Combined entry £5. cliftonobservatory.com