



Spa review

Bath, England

Story by **Jennifer Carr**

When in Bath, do as the Romans do... or did. Pay a visit to Britain's original thermal spa, a place that has delivered hydrotherapy for more than 2,000 years and remains one of Britain's most important Roman legacies in modern day. After undergoing a highly publicised, multi-million pound restoration project between 1997 and 2006, **Thermae Bath Spa** is up and running after a serious facelift and is proving big business for a city formerly known for its teashops, antique shopping and classical buildings. The (delayed) opening of the venue appears to have been worth the wait, with visitors flocking from around the globe to soak up some spa time and a slice of culture simultaneously. After all, this is one spa with a massive historic lineage that allows you to engage with the past but with all the comforts expected from a 21st-century spa environment.

So what's it like inside? Admittedly, the spa's modern glass and stone frontage does little to evoke images of high-powered Romans gathering for their weekly steam, swim and social catch up. It's a pleasant surprise therefore to discover a real cross-section of people; young and old, businessmen and mothers who are all here to benefit from the healing, mineral-enriched water delivered by one of Bath's three natural well-heads. Each of Bath Spa's four thermal pools are fed a constant supply of this life-enhancing water, averaging around 45°C and rich in over 42 minerals including magnesium, calcium, silica and iron. The benefits seem to be endless, with people visiting weekly to alleviate anything from arthritis,

psoriasis, eczema, insomnia, anaemia and even depression. Besides its association with healthy pursuits however, the interesting thing about Bath Spa is the social, convivial atmosphere – surely not unlike that experienced many centuries ago.

Speaking of its history, the Spa is a sophisticated blend of old meets new, with original features reigning supreme but not without offering a variety of modern comforts and activities including a treatment area of spa 'pods' – four aromatherapy infused steam rooms – plus a scenic (if blustery!) opportunity to bathe alfresco in the spa's very own rooftop pool. I am told this is best done in the summer, when pink hazy sunsets can be enjoyed overlooking Bath's 18th-century urban landscape and impressive aesthetic status as a 'World Heritage City'.

The original Cross Bath also leaves a lasting impression – a stand-alone facility of original stone where you can bathe privately or experience Watsu, an underwater massage that relaxes the body for an equivalent of six hours sleep. All this in addition to the communal Royal Bath and Hot Bath area, makes for a day of indulgence I am surprised to find leaves a minimal dent in my wallet, but with maximum physical and psychological satisfaction. So yes, when in Bath, do as the Romans did. I guarantee you'll love it.

For further information and prices visit www.thermaebathspa.com
Royal Jordanian fly to London eight times a week. Bath is just over an hour away from London on the train. www.rj.com