

# The Great Spa Towns of Europe – Bath





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The city of Bath is part of The Great Spa Towns of Europe, a serial transnational World Heritage Site, made up of 11 famous historic spa towns and cities in seven European countries.

This incredible site was recognised internationally when it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2021, so as to preserve it for humanity. The ‘Great Spa Towns’, which for centuries have been using water, exercise and cultural activities as an unbeatable recipe for wellness, can be found in Austria, Belgium, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

## What makes this UNESCO Designation special?

The eleven Great Spa Towns developed around natural mineral and thermal springs over centuries, and were once some of the most fashionable, international, and dynamic spa towns among many hundreds across Europe. They were the earliest tourism destinations, centres of innovation and creativity, and boasted social and cultural facilities rivalling capital cities. Together they tell the story of the ‘European Spa Phenomenon’.

Each Great Spa Town has its own distinct character but all eleven share common features. These towns, dedicated to health and wellbeing, are the only urban typology developed around a medical practice, resulting in distinctive ensembles of spa buildings, including baths, pump rooms, drinking halls, treatment facilities and colonnades designed to harness the water resources for practical use.

‘Taking the cure’, through bathing, drinking, or even inhalation, was complemented by exercise and social activities which resulted in the development of visitor facilities, such as assembly rooms, casinos, theatres, hotels, villas and related spa infrastructure such as

funicular railways. These buildings were often built on a palatial scale, and still sit alongside parks, gardens, promenades, sports facilities and woodlands, which along with the surrounding landscapes, were - and still are - used regularly for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.



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Counties: **Bath & North East Somerset**

