

Rail itineraries – Best of South West England 7 day trip



[best-of-south-west-england-7-day](#)

Bath - Bristol - St. Austell - St. Ives

7 days

Pristine beaches, picturesque fishing villages and more hours of sunshine than anywhere else on the British mainland; it's easy to see why the sunny South West is one of England's most popular holiday destinations.

This 6-7 day tour takes in the pick of the region's highlights, from the beautiful UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath to the unmissable Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

Easily accessible by train and public transport, the best way to explore the region's many delights is with a [BritRail](#) South West Pass.

Start your journey

The train from London Paddington to Bath Spa takes between 1 hour 25 minutes and 1 hour 40 minutes. From Bristol airport there is a bus to Bristol Temple Meads, then the train to Bath, which takes an hour.

For short trips, individual rail tickets can be booked in advance through [the Trainline](#). For longer journeys, one of the easiest and most relaxing ways to explore Britain is with a [BritRail](#) Pass, which allows unlimited journeys and the freedom to explore. The BritRail South West Pass is the most cost-effective way to explore this part of Britain, and can be purchased on the [VisitBritain shop](#).

Day 1

Bath

For centuries Bath has been the place where people came to in order to relax. The ancient Romans came here for the hot thermal waters, and the Victorians came here to take the healing waters and to shop. As a result, Bath today is a mix of ancient culture and refined boutiques, beautiful historic Georgian architecture and elegant eateries, with the Roman Baths still a centrepiece of the city.

Things to do in Bath

Roman Baths

One of the best preserved ancient sites in Europe, the Roman Baths are a must-see. Admiring the colonnaded pools and immersing oneself in the stories of the Romans at leisure shouldn't be missed. The Roman Baths are a 5 minute walk from the train station.

[Website: Roman Baths](#)



Thermae Bath Spa

The natural thermal waters of Thermae Bath Spa offer visitors the modern equivalent of the ancient Roman Baths. There is no better way to experience the naturally warm, mineral-rich waters than by bathing in their rooftop pool overlooking Bath's city skyline. Thermae is a 5 minute walk from the train station.

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#)

City Sightseeing

One of the most famous images of Bath is those golden stone Georgian terraced houses. There's the magnificent sweep of them at the Royal Crescent, and also a complete circle at the nearby Circus. After exploring the stylish shopping streets and arcades, the highlights of Bath are best discovered from on board the hop on hop off city sightseeing bus.

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#)



Bristol is a very quick journey from Bath, just 12-20 minutes by train. It's small enough to get around on foot, but large enough to keep visitors entertained. Its distinctive character mixes together some of the best parts of Britain's South West – cider, gorgeous green countryside, a thriving music scene – not to mention Blackbeard the pirate (said to have been born here) and a fascinating maritime history from its days as an important harbour.

Things to do In Bristol

SS Great Britain

The largest ship in the world when launched in 1843, this impressive feat of engineering by Isambard Kingdom Brunel is a forerunner of all modern shipping. Exploring the ship promises a journey back in time: the cabins have been painstakingly restored to recreate life on the world's first great luxury liner. One of the best experiences on board is 'Go Aloft', where participants climb the rigging to the top of the ship's masts! The SS Great Britain is a 20 minute walk from Bristol Temple Meads station.

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#) 



Ferry Trip


A Bristol Ferry trip is a great way to tour the city's waterways. There's so much to see, including the majestic Avon Gorge (spanned by Clifton Suspension Bridge) and the city's historic harbour. The ferry port is just 14 minutes' walk from Bristol Temple Meads station.

[Website: Bristol Ferry Trips](#) 




Bristol Street Art

Bristol has developed a vibrant street art scene - it is, after all, the city where the world-renowned street artist Banksy hails from. WhereTheWall offer Bristol Street Art Tours every Saturday and Sunday at 11am. Lasting two hours, this informative guided walk tells the story of Bristol's incredible creative culture and art scene from the 1980s to the present day. The tours start at College Green, in the centre of Bristol - but more exact details are provided on booking.

[Website: Bristol Street Art Tours](#) 



The journey to St. Austell from Bristol takes around 3 to 3.5 hours via Exeter St.Davids station.

The historic market town of St Austell is one of Cornwall's biggest towns. It's best known for the nearby tropical biomes of the Eden Project, and is well located between some of [Cornwall's loveliest beaches](#) . We recommend spending 1 to 2 nights here.

Things to do In St. Austell

Eden Project

The Eden Project is like no other garden on Earth, let alone in England! Built 15 years ago in a disused clay pit, Eden's iconic Biome greenhouses contain the largest indoor rainforest in the world and are also surrounded by vast outdoor gardens.

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#) 



The Lost Gardens of Heligan

One of Cornwall's most magical gardens, Heligan was rediscovered after 25 years under a tangle of weeds, through a hidden door in the ruins of a country estate. Full of wildlife, from kingfishers to badgers, alongside an exotic array of designed gardens, exotic plants and even a giant sleeping lady, they're a rewarding place to explore!

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#) 



St Austell Brewing Experience

St. Austell Brewery was founded in 1851, and it's the biggest brewery in Cornwall. There are few better establishments to tour, see how beers and ales are made, and enjoy some samples! It's a 9 minute walk from the train station.

[Website: the St. Austell Brewing Experience](#) 





The train from St Austell to St Ives, via St Erth, is a 1 hour 25 minute train journey. In particular, the St Erth - St Ives part promises a beautiful 15 minute ride, with fantastic broad vistas across some of Cornwall's most beautiful bays. For visitors who are tight for time, it's best to catch the train to St Ives on the evening of day 4, ensuring there's still enough daylight to take in the views. Voted among Europe's top 10 beaches on TripAdvisor, St Ives is a beautifully picturesque seaside town on the Cornish coast. Its latitude means it's actually subtropical, and visitors will find palm trees growing here beside the water. It's also a centre for arts, with Tate St Ives and the wonderfully atmospheric Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Garden.

Things to do in and around St Ives

Tate St Ives

It's a real treat to be able to combine the laid-back seaside atmosphere with a trip to the Tate gallery in St Ives. Every Tuesday the gallery holds guided walks around the town to tell the story of the artists who've lived here.

[Website: Tate St Ives](#)



Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Gardens

A visit to the home and workshop of one of St. Ives' most famous artists is not to be missed. After settling here at the outbreak of World War 2, Barbara Hepworth lived and worked in what is today her museum, a beautiful space full of her bronze, stone and wood sculptures. It's a lovely way to experience art, and to learn a bit about the artist's life. The museum is in central St Ives, easy walking distance from the station.

[Website: Barbara Hepworth museum and gardens](#)

St Michael's Mount

St Michael's Mount is one of Cornwall's most popular and unique attractions and has a fascinating history. It has magnificent panoramic views across Mount's Bay to Land's End and The Lizard, boasts a picturesque harbour and has a spectacular castle, complete with beautiful gardens. This attraction has something for everyone, and is a perfect family day out.

From St Ives, St Michael's Mount is only 20 minutes by road.

[Website: St Michael's Mount](#)



Minack Theatre

The open-air Minack Theatre enjoys a dramatic position, high above a rocky granite outcrop overlooking the sea at Porthcurno. Visitors here are rewarded with a memorable evening watching theatre in a fantastic natural setting. [Oates Travel](#) offers transport to Minack Theatre and back to St Ives.

[Website: Minack Theatre](#)



Catching the train from St. Ives back to London Paddington takes around 5 hours and 52 minutes.

BritRail Pass

For those exploring Britain by train, a BritRail Pass is the easiest and most cost-effective way to travel. For a single fixed price, pass holders can make unlimited train journeys around the whole country or a region of their choice. BritRail tickets are exclusive to overseas visitors so they will need to buy their ticket before they arrive in the UK.

[Book on the Visit Britain shop](#)