

3 REASONS TO VISIT... BATH

ART AND CULTURE

The decadence of 19th-century Parisian nightlife comes alive in Bath with the opening of the *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Masters of Montmartre* exhibition this weekend.

It's the first time Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's complete collection of original posters has been exhibited in the UK, with more than 80 pieces – many of which were produced for the Moulin Rouge – on display at the city's Victoria Art Gallery (until May 26, £6; victoriagal.org.uk). For something less racy but no less interesting, the Museum of Bath at Work tells the story of the city's life over 2,000 years (£8; bath-at-work.org.uk).

SPAS

The Thermae Bath Spa is the city's most popular attraction and its bubbling pools fill quickly with weekend wallowers. Wrap up and join the queue about 30 minutes before the 9am opening. Once inside, make a beeline for the rooftop pool; your early start will be rewarded by having it

all to yourself for a precious few minutes, with nothing but steam to obstruct your gaze across the Georgian rooftops. Once the crowds descend, head downstairs to the

Wellness Suite – with its Roman- and Georgian-themed steam rooms, invigorating ice chamber and infrared sauna (£37; thermaebathspa.com). Trace the history of the original spa day at the Roman

Baths, which were built about AD70 and are some of the best-preserved remains in the world. A ticket to both ancient and new, with a three-course lunch at the Pump Room, costs £93.50 (romanbaths.co.uk).

ARCHITECTURE

This is best appreciated on foot. The visitor centre on Terrace Walk has a good map to help you navigate. Pop your head into the magnificent abbey, with its gothic fan-vaulted ceiling, before ambling up Milsom Street, the city's main run of shops that were once palatial townhouses. Emerge onto the Circus, the city's architectural centrepiece; come at twilight and you'll see the grand, creamy-gold stone houses glow. From here it's a few steps to the striking properties on the Royal Crescent.

Ben Clatworthy

Broad Street Townhouse is an elegant Victorian conversion near Pulteney Bridge (doubles from £150, B&B; broadstreettownhouse.co.uk)

