

## **Bath Literary-Historical Ramble (Sunday, 25 June 2017)**

The city of Bath is named after the Roman baths in the city center, build in 60 CE. So, it was originally a kind of spa town. Also in the city center is the Bath Abbey, built in the seventh century. However, in the seventeenth century, Bath began to make a name for itself: the water from the baths supposedly had curative/medicinal/health benefits, and people from all over England began to come here to treat their illnesses. By the mid-eighteenth century, it was well known, and had become the fashionable place to be—it was, in effect, a tourist/holiday destination for Britain's rich and famous. Adding to this was the amazing Georgian architecture (classical Palladian style), mostly designed by John Wood and his son using Bath stone, which gives the city of Bath its distinctive style. Bath rose to literary fame through Jane Austen's novels in the early nineteenth century (she also lived in Bath from 1801-5). Today, it remains one of the top tourist destinations in England, with many museums, shops, art galleries, and universities to service the millions of visitors each year.

Our Sunday literary-historical ramble will take us to most of the important sites in Bath. We can add or skip stops depending on how much time we spend at each stop. If we do the entire ramble below (which I hope we do), we'll walk about three miles over the course of three hours or so (that's giving us time to explore, observe, take pictures, shop, eat, drink, etc.). The optional walk to Beechen cliff will take a few hours.

**Stop #1: Assembly Rooms:** The Assembly Rooms were centers of social activity during the Regency Period, containing four separate areas: the ballroom, the tea room, the card room, and the octagon. This is where ladies and gentlemen would meet in the evenings to dance, to court, to schmooze, and to socialize.

**Stop #2: The Circus:** A ring of houses, and one of the most famous architectural sites in Bath.

**Stop #3: The Royal Crescent:** Located next to the Circus, the Royal Crescent is a row of townhouses where many famous folks have lived. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Crescent was the fanciest neighborhood where politicians and the elite of society would stay.

**Stop #4: Bath Abbey / Roman Baths / Pump Room:** All of these historic buildings are right in the city centre. Bath Abbey is a Gothic abbey in the center of Bath, and it has been the site of a religious building since the seventh century, when a monastery was build by the Anglo-Saxon king Osric. The abbey was built, destroyed, and rebuilt several times over the centuries, with the current abbey having been reconstructed in the sixteenth century, when Queen Elizabeth I set up funding to restore the church. We will take an evening tour of the Roman Baths, described above. The Pump Room was the social center of Bath in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Basically, everyone came here every day to see what everyone was up to.

**\* At this point, we'll grab lunch and check into the YMCA. After we check in, I'm going to walk to the top of Beechen Cliff, which is a very steep/strenuous walk, so this is optional. You will have a pass to the Fashion Museum in the Assembly Rooms as well as the Victoria Art Museum if you'd like to go there instead, or you can just stroll around Bath.**

**Stop #5: Beechen Cliff:** Located at the top of a steep hill just south of Bath, this site offers an amazing view of Bath and the surrounding picturesque landscape from Alexandra Park. This site was made famous from the famous scene in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.