

Bradford
City Centre
Heritage
Trail



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I **Welcome** to the great City of Bradford

This self-guided walk takes you around Bradford's historic and fascinating city centre, highlighting some of its remarkable architecture and other features of interest.

Your walk will take in landmarks of all ages and styles – from medieval to the modern – to show how Bradford has developed over the ages.

We recommend beginning the walk at City Hall, but it can be picked up and followed at any point on the route. The first part of the walk should take approximately two hours, although may be a little longer if you choose to include the Little Germany and Cathedral parts of the route.

We have endeavoured to make the route as accessible and inclusive as possible, but please be aware that central Bradford can be quite hilly in places. Bradford Tourist Information Centre – located on Broadway, close to City Hall, can provide additional information and advice during opening hours.

II **Bradford** is a city that's always changing. During your walk, you may notice that some areas are under construction or being redeveloped. The city has a proud architectural heritage, but an equally bright future too.

Enjoy your visit.

The Making of Bradford

01 Bradford gets its name from a large stream, probably where it was once crossed by an ancient Roman road.

This “Broad ford” of water was probably located near to the site of the current Cathedral.

02 By the Middle Ages, Bradford had grown into a small town.

It was centred on the streets of Kirkgate, Westgate and Ivegate, and the “Manor of Bradford” was first held by the de Lacy family until 1311.

03 Bradford’s watercourses are mainly hidden from view today.

The ancient Bradford Beck now runs in a culvert under the city centre, but place names like Jacobs Well are reminders of what lies underneath our streets.

04 The English Civil War wasn’t good for Bradford.

Although the town had enjoyed early prosperity from the woollen industry, its support for the Parliamentary cause would prove costly. Royalists took control of Bradford in 1643, reducing it to a third rate town for the next 50 years.

05 Bradford’s worsted trade would rise again.

The area’s natural resources of water, iron and coal meant that it wasn’t long before the manufacture of worsted goods would once again begin to flourish. And then the Industrial Revolution happened...

06 By 1831, it was estimated that two thirds of the UK’s wool production was processed in Bradford.

By 1841 there were 38 worsted mills in Bradford town and 70 in the borough. Essential transport was provided by new roads, the Bradford Canal, and the Bradford-Leeds railway (opened in 1846).

07 Bradford quickly became known as Worstedopolis.

To quote one report from 1841, “Its hundred streets, stretching their wide arms for miles; filled with tens of thousands of busy merchants and artisans; and the immense products of its stupendous mills – where hundreds of clacking power-looms din the ear – exported to almost every country of the globe”.

08 Industrial growth led to the rapid expansion of the city.

Between 1800 and 1850 Bradford changed from a rural town amongst woods and fields to a sprawling metropolis filling the valley sides. The population of 6,400 in 1801 had increased to 104,000 by 1851.

09 Public health issues called for the large-scale provision of civic amenities and pioneering reforms.

The town (to have gained city status by 1897) expanded and its old buildings were largely replaced to meet new commercial needs. The best architects and craftsmen were engaged to build Bradford, and those landmarks which survive show the highest qualities of Victorian design and stone masonry.

10 Bradford was soon known around the world.

Not just as a major manufacturing capital, but as a global city of great pioneers, reformers, and world-firsts. Among the district’s famous daughters and sons include the Bronte sisters, Frederick Delius, J B Priestley and David Hockney.

11 The 20th century was an era of great change for Bradford.

The decline of the city’s traditional woollen industry and large post-war redevelopment projects began to change the face of the old Victorian city forever.

12 Modern Bradford remains an important centre of technology and innovation.

Bradford also boasts one of the youngest and most ethnically diverse populations in Europe, and is also renowned for its world-class cultural attractions.

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City Park

→ Your walk begins in the flagship City Park – a vast civic space, completed in 2012. The park is renowned for its impressive water feature, which gradually fills throughout the day to create a striking mirror pool which contains over 100 fountains. City Park is noted for containing the highest water fountain of any UK city, which is capable of shooting water up to 100ft into the air.

Although Bradford is renowned for its Victorian architecture, it's worth noting the interesting 20th century buildings close to City Park, including the adjacent pavilion building and the neighbouring Impressions Gallery of contemporary photography.

01

Bradford Magistrates' Courts

→ Built in 1972 and designed by Clifford Brown, the City Architect, using local “Bolton Wood” stone. Although quite different in character from the ornate buildings of the 19th century, it has quality and formality which suits its position next to City Hall and a main civic space.

A vantage point near the subway next to the court building provides a good view of the modern Margaret McMillan Tower (home to the city's archive) and the...

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National Science and Media Museum

→ Opened in 1983, the museum is part of the Science Museum Group and is home to an internationally significant collection of film, photography, television and modern media items, as well as the Wonderlab gallery. The museum also contains an independent cinema and a large IMAX screen.

Outside the museum stands the statue of the playwright and novelist...

03

J. B. Priestley

→ (1894 – 1984) with his trademark hat, pipe and flowing coat. Priestley was born in Bradford and learned his craft as a columnist for the local newspaper.

Further to the right stands the...

City Park



Victoria Memorial

- 04 → Sculptured by Alfred Drury and unveiled by the future George V in 1904. This impressive bronze statue, which is twelve feet high and weighs 3 tons, shows the queen dressed as she appeared at the jubilee of 1887. This tranquil garden space is also home to a number of other important memorials, including Bradford's cenotaph.

Alhambra Theatre

- 05 → Built in 1914 as a variety theatre for the Edwardian "King of Pantomime" Francis Laidler. The architects were Chadwick and Watson of Leeds. The sloping and tapering site has resulted in quite a unique building with a richly plastered interior, which is now regarded as one of the finest receiving venues in the North of England.

Alhambra Theatre



Bradford Live

- 06 → The former Odeon Cinema was built in 1930 as a combined cinema and theatre, with a spectacular cinema organ, and designed by the architect William Illingworth, it was one of the largest cinemas outside London and went on to be a renowned concert venue, hosting the Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendix among others. After reverting back to being a cinema (and bingo hall) in the late 1960s, it permanently closed in 2000. It is now known as Bradford Live, a new live music and entertainment venue to be operated by the NEC group after its redevelopment.



Cross the road in front of Bradford Live to enter City Park again, and make your way towards the modern crescent-shaped building opposite City Hall. There is a large open gateway in the middle of the building, to the right of Starbucks. Through here you will see the arched entrance to Sunbridge Wells...

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Sunbridge Wells

→ A unique subterranean complex of independent bars, eateries and shops, opened in 2017. The tunnels were originally part of a 13th century quarry and were later saw a variety of uses including a dungeon; an air raid shelter; and a 1960s music venue. They were largely closed off and hidden from public view for many years before the most recent redevelopment.



Retrace your steps back to City Park, where it becomes Centenary Square.

Sunbridge Wells



Bradford City Hall



07

Bradford City Hall

→ One of Bradford's most distinctive buildings. The original building, with its 'Italianate' clocktower, was opened in 1873 and was designed by Bradford architects Lockwood and Mawson. The upper parts of the elevations contain 35 statues of the Kings and Queens of England and Oliver Cromwell, by the London masonry firm Farmer and Brindley. The detailing around the main entrance - flanked by Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria - shows local stone and stone carving of superlative quality. The extension at the rear, completed in 1908 in a "Gothic/Tudor" style carefully designed to harmonise with the original, was chiefly the design of the famous architect Richard Norman Shaw.

The building remains the administrative headquarters of the Bradford district, and is also home to the Bradford Police Museum - which includes the preserved Victorian cells and 1873 courtroom.



Cross Bridge Street to the small public square in front of the distinctive red-coloured building.

Prudential Assurance Building

08 → Unmistakable in Bradford as the only major building to be built of red brick and terracotta. It was built in 1895 and designed by the famous Manchester architect Alfred Waterhouse. Whilst a building of some interest, the style and materials owe little to Bradford, but were those chosen by the company for all its new buildings to promote its national image.



Walk up the left side of Sunbridge Road and cross to Upper Millergate, noting the buildings opposite on the way.

Sunbridge Road

09 → The north side of Sunbridge Road consists of a fine group of Victorian commercial buildings, in varied Gothic and Classical style. They were built in the period 1873 - 80 following the construction of Sunbridge Road to bypass Ivegata and the City Centre. The view as a whole down Sunbridge Road and Bridge Street is of relatively intact and high quality Victorian frontages.

Sunbridge Road



Make a short detour to the top of Sunbridge Road before returning to walk up Upper Millergate.



Part of the **#SeeMore**
Bradford series – a set
of guides which help you
to explore and discover
some of Bradford's
greatest sites.

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