

# Bodices & Bonnets

With a new series of Bridgerton here and an adaptation of Jane Austen's Persuasion due later in the year, Sally Coffey heads to the City of Bath, to experience the enduring charm of its Georgian grandeur



This image:  
Costumed Jane  
Austen fans  
promenade during  
the annual Jane  
Austen Festival



**F**rivolous romp, period drama for the streaming age, American fantasy of Regency romance, or must-watch TV.

Whatever you think of *Bridgerton*, the Netflix series that brings Julia Quinn's Regency-set novels to screen, one thing the show gets right is its depiction of marriage, my guide Fred Mawer, tells me as we walk around Bath's Georgian streets, where much of the first series was filmed.

To women or girls in Regency England, securing the 'right' marriage would set you up for life, while reaching your mid-to-late twenties unmarried and with no proposals in sight could spell financial ruin.

In the programme, of course, the action is set in London during the annual 'season' (which by this period, had shifted to the spring/summer months) when the upper classes would descend on the capital when parliament was in session, combining political responsibilities with a great deal of social networking.

The season was traditionally a time when balls were held, and young girls were introduced into society as debutantes in the hope of attracting admirers and securing a marriage, an adventure Daphne Bridgerton embarks on in Series 1.

Though London is still home to some beautiful Georgian pockets, producers chose Bath as the main filming location for Series 1, presumably because so much splendour of the period has survived the centuries.

Filming for Series 1 took place in Bath in 2019, with 14 locations featuring in as many as 70 scenes.

Set in 1813, during the regency of the Prince Regent, later George IV, who was famous for his debauched parties and life of excess, there is no shortage of men ➤

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Above, left to right: The Duke of Hastings' & Daphne Bridgerton's love story captivated audiences in Series 1; The Holburne Museum





# BRIDGERTON'S BATH

Live like Daphne and the Duke with these *Bridgerton*-themed experiences

*Bridgerton* tours take visitors to filming locations throughout the city while weaving in other parts of the city's history and discussing elements of the show for authenticity.

For instance, though *Bridgerton* takes a rather colour-blind approach to things on screen, Blue Badge-qualified guide Fred Mawer discusses how likely it would have been that people of colour, like Lady Danbury, would have held the positions they do in real-life Regency society.

**Fred Mawer Tours** ([fredmawertours.co.uk](http://fredmawertours.co.uk)) offers private, two-hour *Bridgerton* walking tours of Bath: £120 per group (any reasonable number).

**Bath Walking Tours** ([bathwalkingtours.co.uk](http://bathwalkingtours.co.uk)) offers public two-hour *Bridgerton* walking tours, daily: £15 per person.

## Bed down

The boutique hotel No.15 spread across a row of listed Georgian townhouses, on Great Pulteney Street (one of Bath's finest) has 36 bespoke rooms, from the gloriously grand to the romantic and intimate. [guesthousehotels.co.uk/no-15-bath/](http://guesthousehotels.co.uk/no-15-bath/)



**Clockwise, from above:** The Ballroom at Bath's Assembly Rooms would have been a regular haunt for Austen; costumed cast members for *Bridgerton*, filming in Bath's Royal Crescent in 2019; Bath's Abbey Green was regularly used for filming Series 1 of *Bridgerton*



behaving badly in *Bridgerton*, but for 'ladies', such behaviour would never be tolerated – just ask the mysterious, all-knowing Lady Whistledown.

The Royal Crescent, that gorgeous arc of Georgian buildings high up in the city of Bath, is the top filming location of *Bridgerton*, but the city's second most used location is Abbey Green, a rather more modest part of the city, just a short walk from Bath Abbey.

Here the cobbled stones and square surrounded by shops does a good impression of London's Covent Garden, where Penelope and Eloise can often be spotted walking, gossiping, and letting off steam.

*Bridgerton* fans will find it hard to resist popping into Modiste on the square (The Abbey Deli), where filming of Madame Delacroix's dress shop took place both inside and out over five days in 2019. Sadly, no dresses can be ogled, but a *Bridgerton*-themed afternoon tea may make up for that.

One feature that surely made this shop appealing for filming is the crinoline railing outside, a railing designed to allow ladies with their hooped skirts to get a little closer to peer in shop windows.

Another location where filming took place both inside and out for Series 1 is Gunter's Tea Shop (most recently a hair salon), where Simon and Daphne flirt up a storm.

Gunter's Tea Shop was the name of a real place in Regency London, which stood at 7-8 Berkeley Square,

## Bath is a city where history collides, from the Roman Baths to the Georgian Assembly Rooms

later moving to Curzon Street, which was famous for its ices, which were very fashionable in Regency England.

Interestingly, the building used for Gunter's Tea Room in Bath sits on Trim Street, the location of Jane Austen's last house in Bath, which the author was not enamoured with as it was in the lower part of the town and not nearly as fashionable as the location of her first home in the city: Sydney Place.

Sadly, for Jane, who remained unmarried, when her father died in 1805, Jane, her sister Cassandra, and her mother saw their financial circumstances suffer as they had to do without his vicar's pension, until that is Jane's brother, Edward, who had been made heir to other wealthy family members, offered them a house in Chawton, Hampshire.

Bath is a city where history collides, from the Roman Baths to the Georgian Assembly Rooms and Royal Crescent, and with a council that puts screen tourism high on its agenda, it's also a city where period dramas collide.

While *Bridgerton* uses Bath as a stand-in for somewhere else (London), the latest adaptation of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, set in 1816 and due out later this year (also on Netflix and starring Dakota Johnson as protagonist Anne Elliot), puts the action firmly in Bath. ▶





**Clockwise, from top:** From the very first scenes, Bath mimics Regency London in *Bridgerton*; Penelope Featherington and Eloise Bridgerton; The facade of No.1 Royal Crescent becomes the Featherington's Grosvenor Square house



**Below:** Inside, No.1 Royal Crescent is dressed as it would have been during the late 1700s, shortly before Jane Austen's arrival in Bath



While high society would spend spring and early summer in London in the Regency era, summers were often spent in the country, or taking the waters in one of England's spa towns, of which Bath was one of the most popular.

Jane Austen lived in Bath for several years from 1801-1806, though she is known to have visited from as early as 1797, and it left enough of an impression on her that she set a large part of the action of both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, her final completed novel, here.

Bath Street, a road that leads up to the Thermae Bath Spa, is a popular filming location as it has very few modern intrusions. Scenes for *Persuasion* were filmed here, as were scenes of the horse and carriages promenading supposedly in Mayfair in *Bridgerton*.

If you walk along Gravel Walk, a walkway tucked in behind a row of Georgian properties, which was something of a lover's lane in Jane's day, you'll be walking through the locations of one of *Persuasion*'s pivotal scenes (we won't say any more for risk of spoilers).

At the end of the walkway, you will reach the lawns of the Royal Crescent and if you bear right and walk ➤



Above: The Holburne's Sydney Gardens is the UK's only remaining Georgian pleasure garden  
Below: Afternoon tea is served in the Drawing Room of The Royal Crescent Hotel

## JANE AUSTEN'S BATH

Fill up on everything Austen at these sites in the city centre

For many visitors, Bath is all about Austen. If you want to learn more about the author's links to the city, then a visit to the Jane Austen Centre ([janeausten.co.uk](http://janeausten.co.uk)) on Queen Street (near one of the houses Jane stayed in) is a must.

Jane is known to have attended balls at the city's Assembly Rooms ([nationaltrust.org.uk/bath-assembly-rooms](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/bath-assembly-rooms)), designed by John Wood the Younger, which were the height of fashion in the Georgian era, with a tearoom on one side and a ballroom on the other and they feature in *Persuasion*, including in a key scene where Anne Elliot's love interest Captain Wentworth storms off in an apparent jealous rage.

No.1 Royal Crescent, which reopened with a new immersive experience in 2021, hosts a monthly Jane Austen-themed tour ([no1royalcrescent.org.uk](http://no1royalcrescent.org.uk)) and don't miss the annual Jane Austen Festival ([janeaustenfestivalbath.co.uk](http://janeaustenfestivalbath.co.uk)).

### Bed down

A few doors along from No. 1, The Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa is a genteel kind of place, with a beautiful drawing room and library, sophisticated bedrooms, a pretty English garden, and afternoon tea, which would no doubt have appealed to Jane's sensibilities. [royalcrescent.co.uk](http://royalcrescent.co.uk)



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**Summers were often spent in the country, or taking the waters in one of England's spa towns**

straight ahead, you'll shortly come to No.1 Royal Crescent, aka the family Featherington's Grosvenor Square house in *Bridgerton*.

Step inside and it's not the Featherington's house at all, but a Georgian-style audio-visual museum – it looks very much like the kind of place Jane Austen would have stayed at on some of her earlier visits, or at least the kind of place she would have liked to if her family had just a little bit more money.

Interestingly, in Series 2 of *Bridgerton*, though many of the locations seem to have been used in filming again, much of what you see are studio sets.

The only location used for filming in the city for this series is The Holburne Museum, Lady Danbury's elegant home, which is central to the action throughout and is very near Jane's first home in the city on Sydney Place, so she certainly would have known it – though it would have been known then as the Sydney Hotel.

While Jane Austen with her more conservative spin on things, all bonnets, and quiet asides, may seem at odds with the more brash and sexy approach to things of *Bridgerton*, it seems Bath is big enough for both and it's all the better for it. ■

*For more Bath travel inspiration, go to [visitbath.co.uk](http://visitbath.co.uk)*