

Drinks, music and fun in the sun at Bristol Harbour Festival

The Bristol Harbour Festival is one of the biggest events in the city's calendar, and if you're making a list of must-do [Bristol activities](#) then look no further.

Imagine the scene. Groups of friends sit on the harbour walls, sipping local cider and soaking up the afternoon sunshine. A flotilla of boats bob in the harbour and the sound of flags snapping in the breeze fills the air. Live music from the open-air stage drifts across the water and the atmosphere is relaxed and happy. Welcome to Bristol's annual harbour festival!

This year's festival will take place on the weekend of 20th – 22nd July and there's plenty to get excited about. It's long been one of the highlights in the local calendar and is the ideal focus for a [Bristol hen weekend](#) or a friend's reunion and the best bit- it's all totally free!

Here's our run-down of the best that the festival has to offer, to help you make the most of a weekend packed full of [Bristol activities](#).

What's the deal?

The Harbour Festival was set up to celebrate Bristol's proud naval heritage, and every year hundreds of boats converge on the floating harbour to moor up and join in the fun. Famous ships like The Matthew make an appearance and there are water-based displays of everything from Newfoundland rescue dogs to the local fire service.

The city is taken over by music and dance and it's a great showcase of the area for visitors, as well as being a great way to celebrate a stag weekend, a birthday or a [Bristol hen weekend](#).

The best music?

The festival starts on Friday night with a free, live music concert in the newly-revamped Lloyds Amphitheatre on the banks of the river. Previous years have featured a concert orchestra providing the warm-up for UK rapper Roots Manuva so expect an eclectic mix!

There are eight different music stages at the Harbour Festival showcasing a range of music styles, so there's something for everyone. A trip to the famous floating nightclub the Thekla is at the top of the list of [Bristol activities](#) that shouldn't be missed; host to a stage in its own right, this is a unique chance to enjoy a bit of live music on board during daylight hours.

The best food?

Bristol is considered the culinary capital of the UK and eating is one of our favourite [Bristol activities](#). The Harbour Festival embraces this tradition and there is some top-quality food

on offer over the festival weekend. Many local places offer special deals for festival-goers and with three Michelin-starred restaurants in the centre of town you could certainly choose to push the boat out!

Don't fancy a sit-down meal? There are a number of 'Market' areas where you can grab some food on the go featuring cuisines from all over the world.

The best drinks?

Drinking is also taken very seriously at the Harbour Festival and if you're a fan of craft ales and ciders then you're in luck. Local producers take the chance to promote their best vintages and sinking a pint of Somerset cider outside the Arnolfini is a must-do [Bristol activity!](#)

No [Bristol hen weekend](#) would be complete without a drink or two, and the festival doesn't disappoint here either. Pop-up cocktail bars are normally found near Queens Square, or take some time out of your festival experience to sample a couple of hand-crafted drinks in The Rummer on Corn Street. It's at the heart of the Bristol drinks scene and is well worth a visit.

The best activities?

If you're organising a [Bristol hen weekend](#) then you'll probably be interested in finding something unusual to entertain the gang. Head to Queens Square to the dance stage to try your hand at everything from Salsa to Bhangra, or try out the circus tent to see some gravity-defying performances.

There's plenty to see on the water as well. Keep your eyes peeled for tall ships moving in and out of the harbour throughout the weekend- the sight of a traditional ship sailing down the river under the Suspension Bridge is not to be missed. Charge up the camera batteries, this is Bristol at its finest!

Fancy something a bit more active? Get involved in the Dragon Boat Racing display! It will get your pulse racing while giving you a great view of the city from the water. If that seems like hard work then there are plenty of other traditional [Bristol activities](#) on offer across the weekend, like morris-dancing and pirate walks.

Give in to pier pressure, and enjoy!

The Bristol Harbour Festival is an unmissable blend of culture, music and fun. Bring your mates, bring the family, make it the centre of your [Bristol hen weekend](#) and enjoy the party. This is the West Country at its best!