DAY OUT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Head through the Visitor Centre and marvel up at the grand ship in front of you. Can you see the two gold unicorns? From there, follow the ship round to the left as you enter the Great Western Dockyard.

Stop 1: The Great Western Dockyard

Try to imagine what it would have been like over 170 years ago. Can you hear the sound of whistling and humming of the Victorian dockworkers in the green Pissoir (or loo). Can you spot the huge chains on the ground? And look out for the ship’s lifeboats ready to be lifted on board.

The ship now rests on a glass sea which is strong enough to take the impact of an 18-stone rugby player falling off the Weather Deck. This glass sea keeps the iron hull of the ship dry to stop it rusting. Go down the stairs and descend ‘under the water’ into the Dry Dock to see the bright colour of the hull.

Stop 2: The Dry Dock

Why is it so dry and hot? Well, you may notice some holes in the iron plates. This was caused by corrosion. To stop this happening any more, we use a giant dehumidifier (the big silver tubes) to keep the air very dry – in fact, it is as dry as the Arizona Desert!

At the stern of the ship, you will see a replica of the screw propeller, which was cutting-edge technology in 1843. How many blades does the propeller have?

The Dry Dock displays why the ss Great Britain was such an innovation. When it was built it boasted the biggest iron hull, a ground breaking screw propeller instead of conventional paddle wheels, and the most powerful steam engine ever afloat. This meant the ship could travel to a timetable which hadn’t been done before and therefore defined a whole new era of global travel and transportation.

Once you have explored the Dry Dock, go back up the stairs and head into the Dockyard Museum.

Stop 3: The Dockyard Museum

The museum is divided up into the four main time periods of the ship’s history; 1970 - Abandonment and Survival, 1886 – Windjammer, 1875 - The Emigrant Steam Clipper, 1843 - The Launch. At each point you will find a station where you can stamp your admission ticket, you will see the first one in front of you when you enter. There are also portholes scattered throughout, lift up the doors to reveal interesting facts.

Can you steer the ss Great Britain? Take your turn at the ship’s helm, using the compass to help you steer a course due west. Keep an eye out for the tiller moving under deck!

Try on frock coats, dresses and fancy bonnets in our Victorian photography experience, Flash! Bang! Wallop! Pose for a photograph against the ship’s backdrop, and take a picture using your own camera. Just behind the photo booth, you will also find our mini-cinema where you and your family can watch a film which captures the events and memories of those involved in the ship’s epic salvage.
Have a go on the propeller lifting frame. Test your crew skills and strength and see if you can raise the giant propeller. If you have a heads for heights, climb to the maintop and imagine working aloft from the ship’s main mast, over 20m above deck. On the way down, pull the rope and hear the loud steam whistle from the ss Great Eastern.

Head up the stairs and across the bridge. You are now on board the ss Great Britain.

The Ship

➢ Stop 4: The Weather Deck

The upper deck of the ss Great Britain, with its brightly coloured flags looks today much as it did in 1845 when the very first passengers went aboard at the start of their voyage to New York. Explore the ship with a choice of audio companions, including a guide narrated by children in search for the ship’s cat. These are available from the audio hut.

The deck space was divided into different areas for passengers travelling first, second or third class. Only passengers travelling first class were allowed to cross a white painted boundary line into an area behind the mainmast specially reserved for their use.

Look out for all the animals on board including the ship’s cow. How many types of animal can you spot? What do you think they made of life at sea?

Do you pack a punch? Sailors used to practice boxing using a punch-bag hanging on the deck – now you can take a turn!

Try turning the ship’s wheel, and image you are Captain of the ss Great Britain! Or climb up on the bridge. On a big ship such as this, the Captain and his officers needed a raised platform from which to direct the crew at their work.

If you have a head for heights, take the chance to discover what it was really like to be a member of the ss Great Britain’s crew by climbing the rigging to over 30 metres above ground level. If you are brave enough you can then edge out onto the main yard, which will take you nine metres out across the Great Western Dockyard below, unveiling a unique and breathtaking view of Bristol. Tickets for Go Aloft are £10 per person. (This price does not include entry to Brunel’s ss Great Britain and will need to be purchased separately).

What class of passenger would you have been? Either head into Steerage or towards the stern to First Class...

➢ Stop 5: First Class

Below deck there were two areas for First Class passengers to socialise; The Promenade Deck and the Dining Saloon.

Passengers were able to walk, chat, dance and flirt on the Promenade Deck without getting wet or windswept. The doors either side led to the first class cabins. As you explore these, you will meet some of the passengers who travelled on the ss Great Britain between 1845 and 1875.

Can you find...
- Isambard Kingdom Brunel. He is thinking through the design of his next ship, the Great Eastern.
- The surgeon, Samuel Archer. Breathe in the pungent smell of disinfectant soap.
- Mr Jones, who has set up a barber shop in berths 97 - 98.
- Georgiana Bright and her family in berths 99-100.

The Captain had his own cabin in the centre of the ship, just off of the Promenade Deck. The cabin contained all the charts and instruments which he needed to sail the ship. Can you see the Captain arguing with the First Officer? What do you think it’s about?

Head down the staircase to reach the First Class Dining Saloon.

The clinking of cutlery and fine china mingles with the hum of voices as you walk through the Saloon eavesdropping on conversations from another era.

Play with the round brass nutspinner game. It may have been used for gambling but its precise use is a mystery. Can you make up your own game?

➢ Stop 6: Steerage

Steerage, also known as third class, is where most passengers lived during the voyage to Australia. It was the cheapest accommodation and located on the lower decks in the forward end of the ship. Accommodation was very cramped, on a typical voyage, every berth was occupied. It was very noisy and there was very little space left for eating or recreation.

Imagine you are a passenger travelling to Australia. What would you write home about?

Can you find Sinbad, the ship’s cat who has sneaked off for a snooze?

Look out for the pantry. This is where rations and eating utensils are stored. One person, the ‘mess’ leader was responsible for around eight people and would fetch food, take it to the galley for cooking, collect and distribute the meal, and tidy up afterwards.

➢ Stop 7: Galley, Stores and Bakery

What’s for dinner? Find out what is cooking in the ship’s galley. Wander into the stores, close your eyes and breathe in deeply. What can you smell?

The ss Great Britain often carried more than 600 passengers and crew, and the galley staff had to keep all these stomachs full for the whole journey. The first class passengers ate well and had plenty of meat and soft bread. The steerage passengers stuck to basic rations of porridge, salt meat, pease soup and endless ship’s biscuits.

➢ Stop 8: Forward Hold

The forward hold looks today much as it did in 1970, when Ewan Corlett and his salvage team brought the ss Great Britain back from the Falkland Islands. This is one of the best places to see important features of the ship’s structure.
Look out for the holes in the hull, in some places you can see daylight where patches have completely disintegrated through corrosion.

- **Stop 9: Engine**

Visit the powerhouse at the heart of the ship – an astounding recreation of Brunel’s original engine. Everyone on board would have felt and heard the motion as it pounded away, often for days at a time.

Look down to the very bottom of the engine room to see the stokers, who are toiling to keep the fires under the boiler burning fiercely. The stoker’s job was probably the most exhausting anyone had on board.

Can you spot the tall control levers on either side of the engine room? The engineers used these to control the amount of energy that the pistons produced to drive the great wheel. Can you use the levers to change the speed at which the great wheel turns?

**Stop 10: Discover fascinating objects**

Make a stop into the Brunel Institute, located just off of the Visitor Centre and hear stories about items from the Archive Vault. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & the first two Saturdays of each month, drop in between 12.30pm - 1.30pm.

**Stop 11: The Dockyard Café Bar**

Refuel at the Dockyard Café with drinks and tasty snacks for all appetites including special children’s lunch boxes - high chairs are also available.

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**Handy to know...**

- Drinking water is available from the Dockyard Café.
- Picnic tables are located on Brunel Square if you want to bring a picnic.
- Miss Crompton’s Ice Cream Parlour sells delicious sundaes and ice creams, using local supplier, Marshfield.
- There are toilets facilities located around the attraction, including baby changing facilities.
- Cycle racks can be found between the car park and entrance to the ship.
- Pay and display car park.