

Visit the Railway

Developed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel as a branch line of the Bristol and Exeter Railway and opened in 1862, the West Somerset Railway is the longest standard gauge independent heritage railway in the UK.



The Gauge Museum

Situated on Platform One of Bishops Lydeard Station, the Gauge Museum tells the story of the West Somerset Railway; from its beginnings, at the hands of Brunel, to its decline and subsequent recovery, also covering themes such as the Industrial Revolution, the growth of holiday towns such as Minehead and the impact of railways on the local economy. There are also opportunities to actively engage with our collections by investigating our interactive exhibits including a working signal box and of course our lovingly restored Victorian first class sleeping carriage. Entry to the museum is free.

For further information, or to book a visit, please visit our website: <http://www.wsrht.co.uk/learning/>

Learning Sessions

We offer a broad range of Learning Sessions which can be delivered either in the museum or in your own classroom. Combining costume and role play and using a range of real and replica objects, they offer an opportunity not only to explore our local and national history, but also provide optional links to the STEM subjects with a range of 'add-on' challenges.

Led by our Education and Learning Officer and based on the 2014 National Curriculum, our sessions cost just £45.00 for a class of up to 32.

Current Sessions

include:

EYFS/KS1: 'A Trip to the Seaside'

Exploring and comparing how seaside holidays have changed over time with links to local history through the development of Minehead from small town to big attraction.



KS1: 'Who was Isambard Kingdom Brunel?'

Exploring the life and achievements of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the changes that his GWR and branch lines brought to our local area.

EYFS/KS1: Living at Three Chimneys – 'What might life have been like for the Railway Children?'

Based on the classic novel, our Railway Children inspired session invites children to compare everyday life in Edwardian England with modern equivalents.



KS2: Deadly Forces: Exploring safety on the railway – 'Why did the Railway Children become heroes?'

Children Investigate some of the forces involved on a railway, finding out why safety is so important and exploring the measures taken to prevent accidents.

KS2: Victorian Britain: 'How did the railways change people's lives in our locality?'

Children discover how the railways became a defining part of Britain's Industrial Revolution, changing people's lives throughout the Victorian period and establishing the framework of the modern world.

KS2: Operation Pied Piper: 'What was it like to be an Evacuee during the Second World War?'

Children investigate what life might have been like for a child during the Second World War, making comparisons with their own lives.

Visits with Train Travel

Your Museum visit can be combined with a ride on one of our historic trains.

The WSR offers a range of possible routes on our line, allowing you to tailor your visit in terms of time and expense.

STEM Learning

Our STEM challenges may be combined with a learning session or booked as a stand-alone activity and can be adapted for KS1 or KS2.



The Gauge investigation explores the differences between Brunel's broad gauge and standard gauge railway lines.

Brunel's Great Bridge Challenge examines some of the different types of bridge design before inviting children to select and shape different materials in order

to design and build a bridge sturdy enough to hold a 'locomotive'.

Stevenson's Rocket Challenge investigates how steam is used to power a locomotive, before challenging children to construct their own compressed-air powered locomotive.

Museum Trails



In addition to a history-based trail, we also offer several STEM-themed scavenger hunts, encouraging

children to explore some of the science behind our collections in greater depth.

Digital Resource Packs

Designed to support with a variety of topics, our digital resource packs contain a large selection of photos, worksheets, challenge cards and printable replicas.

Costing just £15, content is sent to you on a flash drive, allowing you to edit and adapt the resources to the needs of your class.

Best of all, they are entirely 'bubble friendly', allowing us to send some of the magic of the railway – and the museum to you.

Current themes include:

- The Seaside (EYFS/KS1)
- Isambard Kingdom Brunel (KS1)
- WW2 and Evacuation (KS2)

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West Somerset Railway
Heritage Trust Ltd



The Gauge Museum
Primary Schools