



Filming and photography at Clifton Suspension Bridge

Our History

The Clifton Suspension Bridge, spanning the picturesque Avon Gorge, is the symbol of the city of Bristol. For almost 150 years this Grade I listed structure has attracted visitors from all over the world. Its story began in 1754 with the dream of a Bristol wine merchant who left a legacy to build a bridge over the Gorge.

24 year old Isambard Kingdom Brunel was eventually declared the winner and appointed project engineer – his first major commission.

Work began in 1831 but the project was dogged with political and financial difficulties and by 1843, with only the towers completed, the project was abandoned.

Brunel died aged only 53 in 1859 but the Bridge was completed as his memorial and finally opened in 1864. Designed in the early 19th century for light horse drawn traffic it still meets the demands of 21st century commuter traffic.

Clifton Suspension Bridge has featured in various films, television series, documentaries and photo shoots. Our credits include:

Countryfile (BBC One)
Climbing Great Buildings (BBC Two)
Shoestring (BBC One)
100 Greatest Britons (BBC One)
Home Grown (Walkers Crisps)
Points West (BBC One)
The Worst Jobs in History (Channel 4)
Casualty (BBC One)
Absolute Genius (CBBC)
Ident (Fox TV)

What can we offer?

The Bridge sits 75m above the (tidal) River Avon in the Avon Gorge. It is 214 metres long and consists of two narrow footways and a toll road, administered and maintained by the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust. The road is used by up to 12,000 motor vehicles each day.

- By prior arrangement, traffic control measures may be implemented to allow filming on the roadway over short periods or of single crossings, outside rush hour periods only.

At each end of the bridge plaza, there are toll houses and barriers at each end of the bridge plaza. The bridge is a suspended structure constructed from iron rods and

chains with a deck of Douglas fir topped with a tarmac surface. The piers (or towers) are made from local pennant sandstone with cast iron caps. The majority of the structure is original, constructed between 1829 and 1864.

At the base of each pier is an abutment which provides a viewpoint over the Cumberland Basin, bonded warehouses, paddle steamer platforms and New Cut to the south - and across the limestone strata of the Avon Gorge (a Site of Special Scientific Interest), Observatory and Giant's Cave in St Vincent's Rocks to the north.

- Both piers have inspection ladders which provide access to the intermediate platforms, bridge saddles and cast iron caps: these are accessible only when wearing full safety equipment and accompanied by a fully trained member of CSBT staff.
- They are suitable only for small crews with handheld equipment.

Below the Leigh Woods pier, there are a series of vaults designed to provide a level platform for the pier.

- The first two vaults are accessible via an enclosed ladder when wearing hard hats and high vis and accompanied by a member of CSBT trained in air quality monitoring.
- The remaining chambers are accessible only to those with approved Enclosed Spaces training.
- The vaults are equipped with service lighting, but there is no power supply.

Below the bridge deck is a maintenance cradle, used to inspect the structure beneath the roadway.

- The cradle is accessible using a series of small ladders.

Surrounding land and viewpoints

If you are seeking to film or photograph the bridge as a scenic structure within the landscape, you will need to liaise with the relevant landowner. Contact Bristol Film Office on 0117 922 3958 or info@filmbristol.co.uk, who will suggest the most suitable location for your project and put you in touch with the owner/administrator.

If you would like to take footage of the bridge from the air, please be aware that there is a 200m exclusion zone around the bridge itself – and it is illegal to fly beneath it. Please contact us to discuss your requirements before making any further arrangements.

What won't be considered?

We regret that we are unable to support any requests for filming or photography which include the theme of suicide or suicidal thoughts as this conflicts with our mission to promote the bridge as a safe and secure destination for visitors and commuters.

Our service

One member of the management team will work with you throughout the process of your filming /photography. Staff will also be on-hand to facilitate on the day. You are welcome to come and meet with us at the bridge prior to your day of filming so that you can make the best use of the location and identify the most suitable points to set up. If you are planning a large scale production, please call us to discuss your requirements.

What do we charge?

Clifton Suspension Bridge is maintained by a Charitable Trust that relies on the support of the public. We receive no funding from either Bristol City Council or North Somerset Council, using the income from bridge tolls to fund our maintenance programme. We offer a competitive scale of charges which we will be happy to discuss with you.

Who to contact

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