

KEW GARDENS

It was an early start for a day trip, but worth it. The only disappointment for me was that the historical elements, Kew Palace and the Pagoda, were closed for the winter. Winter? It was the 29th of September, and it was a gorgeous day! There was still too much to see in one day though, it is the kind of place you have to go to on a regular basis to get the most out of it. Apparently, the Christmas lights shows are stunning.

A few of us took advantage of the free guided tour. We learned about the origins from the private gardens of the Georgian Royal Families in the 1750's and where they divided it up, because they could not get on – and they employed people to hurl abuse over the fence at the other side.

In the 1840's it was adopted as the national botanic garden and was opened to the public. The splendid palm house was built of wrought iron and glass. The waterlily house was an absolute delight. The more recently added Princess of Wales Conservatory takes you through all the different types of climates from Tropical Rain Forest to arid deserts.



'The Hive' is a unique structure inspired by the scientific research in o the health of bees. It is a 17m tall honeycomb like structure of 170,000 individual components, with 1,000 LED lights that glow and fade, and a unique soundscape that hums and buzzes, encapsulating the story of honeybees.



The Palm House

Some walked the famous Tree Top Walkway; some admired the immersive art installation of “The Hive” and others took in the walks and admired the plethora of trees regenerated after the storm of 1987. There were so many follies and temples (including the Icehouse). We also enjoyed the lakes and their waterfowl. The jackdaws were very friendly, and I was told there is a badger sett.

Of course, all that is visible and open to the public is a tiny amount of the world leading research and conservation that goes on under the name of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

It has to be said that the journey home was rather long, partly due to heavy amounts of traffic on the chosen route, and an “unexpected detour.” Nevertheless, we were warm and comfortable and had time to reminisce about the great day out.