

Post



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Finding the (not so) Hidden Gardens - April 19, 2024

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SUMMARY

Visited 10 of the 12 gardens on the Hidden Garden Tour, took a city trolley tour and had tea. Also had several very good meals and basically walked our feet off! - Karen

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DETAIL

I forgot to turn my daily alarm off before bed so we're up at 7 am, as usual. It's 6 am body time, but we're fine. The coffee helps. It's spring and we're here to see pretty flowers, so the hidden garden tour should be perfect. The local ladies garden club puts it on annually and has been doing so for a while.

Dressed and on our way we stop in at Fancy Parker's Market for coffee and a breakfast sandwich. This place is in the middle of town, but has gas pumps and lots of unhealthy gourmet food. If you want diabetes, this is your place. The coffee is good as is the sandwich and soon we're back on the street, hoofing it towards the meeting point to pick up our maps and wrist bracelets.

Along the way we see so much Spanish moss. It's on the live oaks (the Georgia State Tree) but also on crepe myrtles, signs, electrical wires, anywhere it can get a foothold. We do see flowers but also see that we're just a bit late for the azaleas and a bit early for the big white magnolia blossoms. There are a few but we can tell that when they're at their peak it must be spectacular.

Apparently this tour is a big deal. There are lots of people with matching wrist bands all wandering around hunting for these hidden gardens. It's so named because so many back yards are behind walls and some people have done an awesome job of planting and cultivating all kinds of plants, flowering and not. There are lots of water features. The organizers do some amazing repeats every year but usually a garden doesn't show on the tour but every four or five years. A number of the gardens were underwhelming but others really were amazing.

Of the twelve gardens we see eight before lunch. They're spread all over (old/down) town, so it's a bit of a walk to see them all. We catch our breath on a bench in front of the Mercer William's house (featured in the book/movie "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil"). Lunch is a 'mile high' club sandwich from Franklin's which we enjoyed in one of the city's many squares.

The driver of the trolley tour is normally also the narrator, but as this is a chartered tour, arranged by the ladies of the garden club, one of the ladies takes the mic. We don't ask her title, but gather she's up there. We learn (well, hear) a lot about the history of Georgia and Savannah.

Apparently the guy in charge of Georgia (Savannah?) at first thought that slavery was an abomination and so forbade it. Ten years later, when they figured out what crops did well here, they realized they needed the slave manpower to grow those crops and so succumbed to participating in that trade.

We see tons of Georgia Live Oaks, including the oldest, the Candler Oak. It's three hundred years old. We're told that an oak grows for 100 years, lives for 100 years, and then dies for 100 years. We see lots of wrought iron and hear of the various styles and artists. We're told the bottom level of the house, the floor of which starts typically two feet below grade and is called the basement. You walk up the stairs, from the street, and you get to the first floor.

As we end our tour our driver explains that everyone's going to have to lean right, on the last turn. She intentionally didn't let anyone sit in the last row on the left. As she makes the turn a big tree branch comes in to the trolley and then wooshes to the back of the bus. We all gasp and then laugh.

Our trolley tour was planned to get us back just in time for the formal tea we'd also paid for as a part of hidden garden tour. We're politely ushered in and queue to select our victuals to have with our tea. There are fussy small sandwiches, most open face, sandy pecan cookies, a mini-quiche-looking thing with some tangy jalapeño jelly on top. All were good. Inside and out of this old house were ladies in huge antebellum hoop dresses.

After our food is gone and we've downed much too much iced tea, we head off for two more of the hidden gardens on the tour. Our hosts for the last garden for the day, for us, were so proud of their charcuterie board with fruits, crackers, cheeses, and meats. Their garden is quite lovely and (as a secret test) I ask about a delicate vine that had taken over the fence that was covered in fragrant white five pointed flowers. "That's Jasmine" all three replied in unison. Ah, yes, I say, but is it a particular variety of Jasmine. "Confederate" they all reply together, and then one continues "but we're not supposed to say that". Tee, hee, hee.

After some downtime blogging in the room we head back out and grab drinks at The Original Pinkie Masters. It's a small old dive bar known for cash-only, cheap beer, wine, cocktails, and frozen drinks ("slushies"). They were cheap. It's legal to walk down the street with a cocktail or such in your hand, so we do.

Towards dinner, a long ways away, we traverse Forsyth Park. It's like a square but is absolutely huge. The grass and trees and paths go on forever. There are people throwing frisbees, playing volleyball, reading or just relaxing. Many of the people we pass are in extremely fancy clothes. We asked a couple playing frisbee what that's all about and they say weddings, or parties, or proms, or or or. So many good reasons to get dolled up here.

We have dinner at "Strange Bird", a Mexican restaurant that'd been recommended. Its logo is a flying pig (from "When Pigs Fly"). If you ever saw one you might say "What a strange bird!" Hence the name. Our waitress is from The Woodlands, just north of Houston. She's going to SCAD (the Savannah College of Art and Design). \$60K a year, we hear. Good meal.

We walked on and pop into a very old "health food" store. It's mostly vitamins, supplements, pills, powders, creams, lotions, oils, tofu hotdogs, and fake cheese. Does not seem very healthy to us, other than a very small section of sad looking "fresh vegetables". The place reeked of patchouli oil.

Next door, at the Sentient Bean, we buy coffee and have it ground. Next door to that we buy some very nice wine from Austria and Italy.

For the end of the evening, after dropping the wine in our room, we head down to see the businesses on the banks of the Savannah River. There are tons of tourists milling about. There's lots of candy and tchotchke stores, lots of hotels, bars, restaurants, and escape rooms. You could tell this used to be industrial but it's all been redone. The industry area is visible upriver, off in the distance. Lots of huge structures for loading and unloading container ships, something about which they're very proud.

On our walk home we find the seemingly very new J W Marriott Riverside hotel. It's decorated with rocks, dinosaur bones and minerals, many much larger than ourselves. Very impressive, Karen, a rockhound of long standing, loved it. We stroll down the pedestrian walk at City Market. It's custom made for tourists with shops and businesses appropriate to that. We find the coffee shop from where our host gave us coupons for free cups of coffee. Looked like fun. Finally home and to bed.

Photos



Still in bed, waking up, consuming the day's news.



Walking through Forsyth Park, it's famous catalogue-bought fountain in the background.



Each stop on the hidden garden tour was labeled with signs pointing the way. Some did a better job at that than others.



A "flower bed" we got a kick out of.



We're told this is how this particular variety of magnolia tree grows! Talk about your perfect southern Christmas tree!



Loading up for tea.



Ladies in the dresses of yesteryear to set the proper mood.



Parker's Fancy Market (and gas station) on one of Savannah's main drags



The Original Pinkie Masters. Did we mention it's Cash Only?



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moss, really is pretty.



But the trees, with their penchant to grow where ever, can be a problem for sidewalks.



"Adult Slushies" at Strange Bird.



Karen's finally found something she wants to take home!



A gem specimen she could definitely fit inside.

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