

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Bats, glass, and roses - April 18, 2025

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SUMMARY

It was a leisure day for us so we had a lazy morning then walked along Torrens river to Adelaide's fabulous botanic garden. Unexpectedly, we were there during an amazing exhibition of Dale Chihuly glass vessels and sculptures. Many of them were in a pavilion but the largest, most spectacular were set among the gardens and ponds. There was also a wonderful rose garden with 2,700 rose bushes in full bloom! Nearby trees house numerous black blobs hanging from their branches. They were sleeping grey-faced flying foxes (a type of bat). We headed back at dusk to watch them awaken and take flight - kind of a scene out of *The Birds*. -

Karen

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DETAIL

No flights today, no tours today. What a concept! We enjoy a lazy morning in our oh-so-modern room. Eventually, we do clean up and head out. We're thinking we should do all our outdoor stuff early, while it's still cold, or at least cool.

The four of us walk along the river walk, looking at the three different varieties of black waterfowl: swans, cormorants, and ducks. They provide an artistic contrast to the steel white sculpture "Origami paper boats" theoretically "floating" on the water. In the background is the end of the pedestrian bridge with its wide waterfall, cascading into the river.

Our eventual target is the botanical garden, but along the way we discover how lovely and peaceful the riverside walk is (bike bells notwithstanding). We're also not expecting, and are gobsmacked by the zillions of huge bats, sleeping in the gum (eucalyptus) trees overhead. Note to self: come back at dusk and watch these guys take off for their nighttime foraging.

At the botanical garden we see this plant and that area and eventually we come to (dun, dun, dun...) the rose garden. They are out in force (despite that it's fall). Karen reads that we're looking at 2,700 rose bushes. We believe it. A sign explains that there will be a competition, with the public being able to vote for their favorite, later in April. We'll miss it (but will be in Paris, at the Bagatelle Gardens in June, where there will be a similar publicly judged rose competition).

Next we go through the Chihuly glass exhibition, indoors in their monstrous greenhouse. I'm nervous that the greenhouse will be even hotter than the warmth of the rose garden, but no worries, the space has air con, as they say here. It's lots of fun and there are some amazing pieces and installations.

We refresh with a couple of beers for the guys and yummy looking iced chocolate with whipped cream for the gentler sex. There's a sign here warning of overly aggressive birds, wishing to share your meal. Apparently they don't care about beer or chocolate.

Pushing on we visit a smaller, older green house with a big lily pond with enormous lily pads. There's an almost hour-by-hour description, entitled "Sex and the Lily" of how the Victoria Amazonia "use all kinds of seductive tricks to attract pollinators." It says the flower effectively sets up a night club for scarab beetles to come and mate (and in the process pollinate the lily). 18 years of older only, please.

In the heat of the day we retire to our room and then at dusk Karen, Tricia and I head back along the river, to where the bats hang out. They're still there, mostly asleep, but some are starting to rouse. They hang upside down, stretching their evil-looking gossamer black wings, checking to ensure they still work. It takes a good while, but as it gets darker they eventually do wake up and take off. They zoom around, waiting for their friends to join them, with their broad black wingspan whooshing overhead. We look up, dumbfounded but also nervous about any bat guano that might drop on us. Thankful it doesn't.

We retrace our steps along the river back to the hotel . Overhead is an endless stream of bats headed out, all in the same direction, to find their food for the night. Back at the hotel we gather all the snacks and drinks from our room and port them up to Tricia and Don's on the 7th floor. We pool all our resources and order some things from room service and enjoy a very delicious dinner. Good day! Tomorrow? Back to the life of the tourists on a van tour.

Photos



Out for our morning walk along the riverfront. The bright paddleboats maybe should have clued us into the bright colored glass we'd be seeing later in the day. We did like the bridge end in the background, with the waterfall.



They didn't really cooperate for a picture (always ducking down to eat) but these black swans, black ducks, and black comorants provided a light-dark contrast to the 'folded paper' sculptures on the water.



We were not expecting all these sleeping grey-faced flying foxes in the trees. They're big and a tad scary even during the day.



On the internet we were able to find a daylight picture of how these flying foxes look. I'm not sure that's any better in terms of how scary they appear.



The rose garden was quite spectacular and in the arched glass greenhouse behind is the Chihuly exhibit.



The blown bowls greeted us upon entering the exhibit. In the filtered sunlight the colors really popped.



We don't know how they transported all the many sculptures or how they 'installed' them, but they were striking.



Some blended with nature and some clashed. This seemed in place.



Outside the paid exhibit the Chihuly's continued.



This is glass, too, layers of flat glass, it appears. We're not sure who the artist is, but the reflection is of Tricia and Don.



The enormous lily pads where the lily flowers time things perfectly to attract mating beetles to do their thing (and pollinate the lily flower in the process).



This combination of blown glass pieces clashed with the green and blue behind, and blew our minds as to how this all was shipped and re-assembled here.



Lots of the flowers were spectacular, but had a hard time competing with Chihuly's teams works.



Karen inspecting another striking piece. It looks like a halo.



It was warm and any shade was welcome.

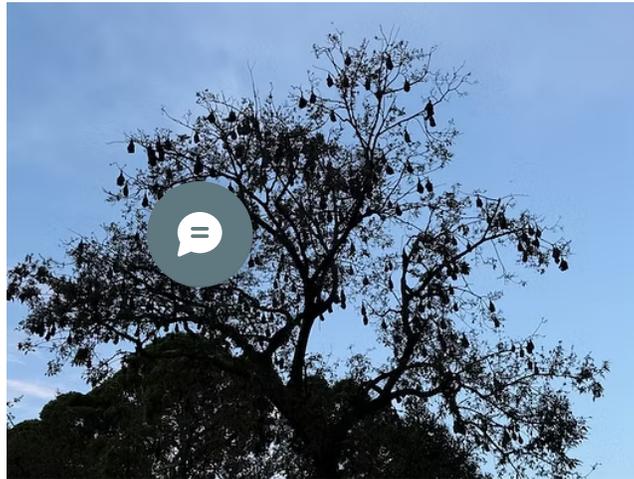


Back to our dogbone shaped hotel (when

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Back out later to watch the bats wake up.
We loved the everchanging views from
the riverside walking/biking path.



The bats were starting to stir as dusk fell.



Eventually they were airborne, hard to
photograph though, going so fast in the
limited light.



Back by our hotel, the pedestrian bridge and it's reflection in the water put on it's own show.

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