



Prospect Park and Loew's Theatre
July 10, 2017

Day Trip – description from the brochure:

Upon its inception in 1929, the Loew's Kings Theatre was one of the most unique theatres in the nation. As one of the five original "Loew's Wonder Theatres," The Kings was originally ordained a movie and live performance theatre of epic proportion. Discover the history and architecture of this former movie palace and its new life following a \$95 million restoration during a guided tour of this glistening space. We'll start the day with a nice and easy walking tour of Prospect Park. Designed by Olmsted & Vaux and covering almost 600 acres, it is a masterpiece of design, including a 60 acre lake, meadow hills, and waterfalls, not to mention Brooklyn's only remaining natural forest. Cool down and eat up in the rustic setting of The Farm on Adderly – one of Brooklyn's hottest farm to table eateries.

What we really did:

This day was arranged by the local community college and despite their trips often having organizational difficulties, I've always wanted to walk Prospect Park. Loew's or Kings Theatre was just an added benefit, as was the award winning farm-to-table restaurant.

The 1 ½ hour bus ride over the Verrazano Narrows Bridge started with movies on the history of the old Loew's Theatre, plus another historical film called "The Ghost of Flatbush Avenue" about the neighboring Dodgers and how they were a local group that brought the neighborhood together. Landing at 9th Avenue to the side of Prospect Park, was a 2-hour walk through the Park with a guide from www.BigOnion.com named Alice. She exited us at Grand Army Plaza where the bus took us to a nearby lunch at The Farm on Adderly, famous and awarded for their farm-to-table food, and ending with a tour of an old Loew's Theatre recently renovated. It was a worthy day but full of organizational errors.

Pros:

- Going over MY Verrazano Narrows Bridge with super memories. I say I own it since I rode my bike over it twice and ran over it five times.
- Seeing three new sights.
- Learning from two excellent guides, both at Prospect Park and at Kings Theatre.
- Spending time with neighbor Kathy who I can only hope will accompany me on another trip. She rode one of the bike trips over the Verrazano Bridge with me.
- Lovely weather with only rain showers happening as we boarded the bus to return home.

Cons aka Almost Amusing Screw Ups:

- **Do the organizers pre-check the bus route?** Off 8th Avenue was a very narrow street of brownstones that we needed to go down. After negotiating double parked cars and a Con-Edison repair truck, we all applauded the bus driver for his skill in getting through with inches to spare.

Then we came to an area where there were at least six cars parked in the middle of the street. They were all empty! A resident allegedly told that this was normal, that he could probably find the car owners and get them moved, but time was of essence because we had a walking tour in 15-minutes. The bus driver had to back up a long block through what had already seemed impossible.

- **Were the guides late?** Arriving at Prospect Park just moments before the 10am scheduled tour, there were no tour guides. One arrived around 10:15am and another closer to 10:30am. The guides told us they'd only been hired for a 10:30am start.
- **A 2-hour tour?** At noon, 1 ½ hours into the tour, the guides were told we'd be late to lunch and we had to scurry off. But the exit was closed necessitating a circuitous walk through the grassy area.
- **Little indication of tour time and distance.** These tours are full of old folks who would find a few block walk a challenge, and a 1-mile walk nearly impossible, let alone our 2 ¾ miles. The brochure gave no hint of the duration nor the distance. Some were very upset at the unexpected required endurance. Some tried to have a cart brought to rescue them.
- **Lunch at 12:30pm?** The first clue that something was amiss was the room size – it should hold about 25 maximum but poorly tried to accommodate our bus load of at least 40. Next, and weirdly, only plates of sugared toasts (and not enough for everyone), French fries and very limited amount of salad arrived at our table. For far too long a time that was IT. (I'd found the wine bar during the wait but even that was challenging to get in and out of the room.)
- **No food?** At 2:10pm some food arrived; by 2:25pm when we HAD to depart pre 2:30pm for the next tour, only To-Go boxes had arrived – NO food for two of the four tables. As we walked out having abandoned the dessert, 15 slices of carrot cake were offered To-Go. That's all they had. It was a challenge for Noreen the Guide to allocate those 15 pieces to 40-plus people.
- **Toilet stops?** With a bunch of old ladies with weak bladders, how could organizers not plan on toilet stops? It had been a long wait and then the restaurant only had ONE (1) toilet stall.
- **Theatre tour** had been set for 2:30pm and threatened to not wait for us. They did and that went well. Whee!

Links

Prospect Park: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prospect_Park_\(Brooklyn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prospect_Park_(Brooklyn))

Kings Theatre: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kings_Theatre_\(Brooklyn\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kings_Theatre_(Brooklyn))

Camperdown Elm Tree in Prospect Park: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulmus_%27Camperdownii%27

Love it! British influence. British kindness. Our tour guide in the Park was Alice and while explaining the huge British and American battle called the Maryland 400, she also told us how Sir Patrick Stewart the British guy, trying to save a parking lot area at the site of the battle in order to create a monument to the Maryland 400 – and the British loss.



We all know what the brownstones look like in Brooklyn, but have you seen the huge estates? And right next door one might find tiny little two story houses. Entering Prospect Park near to 8th Avenue is this commemoration to Lafayette, pictured with his slave that he emancipated, whereupon the slave took Jefferson's last name. The French had so many of their own heroes that Lafayette made good of the opportunity to make a name in America. It's all sweet.



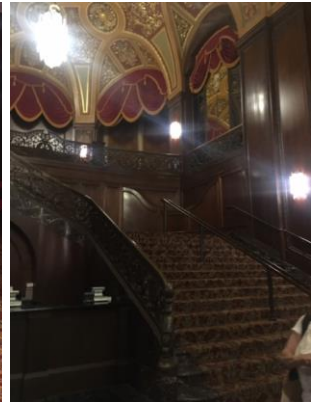
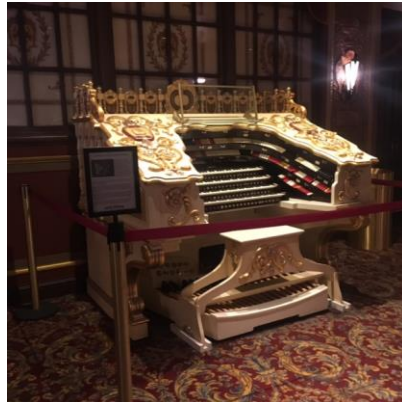
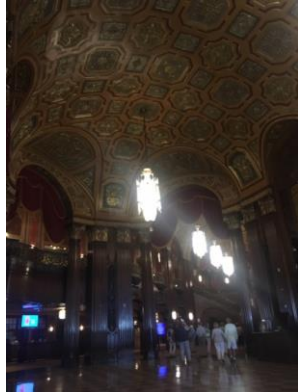
One of the waterfalls and many lakes. The Lake was full of turtles and unfortunately also algae. We've had newspaper articles recently about the heavy and somewhat dangerous algae growth and this lake had an area for dogs, but with a warning of current danger. One of the first statues of Abraham Lincoln had been defaced and one couldn't help but laugh. Over his crotch was stuck a Maxi-Pad. Then along came a young skate boarder who crawled up and removed the defacement. Sweet again. A series of busts of famous musicians surrounded the French gardens. Here is Mozart.



The famous Camperdown Elm. Link above. The tree doesn't know to grow upwards giving it an odd look and continual efforts at holding it off the ground. Look at all these little Jewish boys! They were lined up for some kind of ceremony where they were given a round slice of bread and all at once they were told to toss the bread into the lake. What's this about other than cute kids?



This is the boat house with the little boys behind. All that green is the current condition of the lake. I think it wasn't just algae but Duck Weed covering the top. The main section of the Park is called the Long Meadow. The Grand Army Plaza and arch was our exit point. Many of our walkers were very unhappy walkers by that time.

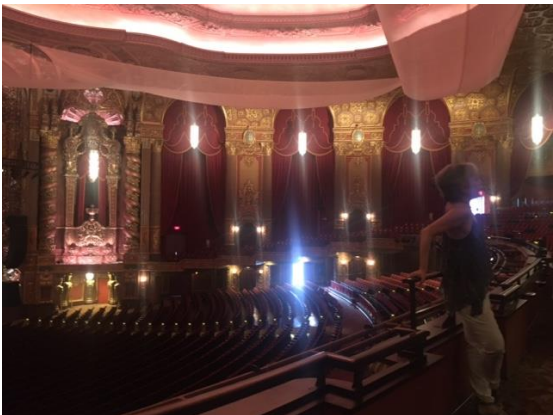


I don't know why we didn't have real food, but rather a choice of three sandwiches and I chose tuna. It was unusual, with little to no dressing, lots of olive pieces, heavy on capers, roasted tomatoes, all on sourdough bread. I wrapped up $\frac{1}{2}$ as there was not time to eat it before heading to the Loew's Theatre, now called Kings Theatre.

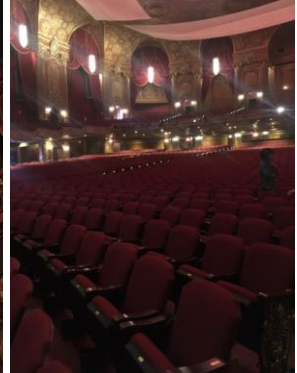
The Theatre is worth a trip. The pictures were tough to get due to the lighting glare. Built in 1928 and opened almost exactly at the start of the Depression, it closed in 1977 and fell into disrepair. Such disrepair that there were floods, scavengers, and a look of being completely irreparable. But in 2015 with \$95 million it was re-opened and is now a historically protected site and home to many performances. The local Flatbush area is seemingly being revived and maybe because of it.



Huge lobby. Huge inner lobby. Smoking rooms. Can seat 3700 people with only one balcony. The furniture has a lovely story: When the long time lady director retired she was given a lot of the furniture. She put it into storage and with the renovation she donated it back. Restorers who worked with Versailles assisted in the restoration. Just as nice is that it is available to sit in!



In restoration they found a small piece of carpet underneath a popcorn machine. That sample allowed them to find the original carpet maker and thus the carpet is exactly as original.



Restoration check-ups were ongoing and thus the netting on the ceiling. We were told that we were the last tour that would be going through for some time and maybe due to maintenance work.