

White House Tour

National Botanical Garden

Wednesday, 12 July 2023



I applied for our White House tour through Lisa Murkowski's office back in January. We received initial approval & then had to send in multiple pieces of identification for the vetting process. Finally got what they call "the boarding pass" on Jun 30th. Very excited!!!!



Took the shuttle from the Franconia/Springfield Metro Station into the McPherson Square Station in DC and walked over to the White House Visitor's Center to use the toilet before we got in the HUGE line to wait for entry. We didn't spend much time at the Visitor's Center, did think it was funny that this wall mural of all the presidents was facing the restroom doors!

room, but I guess with the number of people, it's just not possible. I'm actually amazed that they don't prohibit use of cellphones and cameras. They say that no videos are allowed although I have no idea how they would control that since everyone had their cellphones pointed all over the place.



President Reagan dancing with Princess Diana in 1985



The entry hall had loads of photos of different presidents & their families with guests everywhere. It was hard to know where to look. Most people were still in a que, so you didn't really want to dilly dally too much & disturb the flow.



Most rooms had ropes across the doorways, so you could only look in. This is the Presidential Theater. Looks cushy!



This reception area was made into a gift shop. We didn't even bother to look around. Folks were buying a few lapel pins, etc.





The Vermeil (gilded silver) Room, the Library, & the China room were all just available to peek in the doorways. This was a very congested area as the area beyond the Vermeil room was blocked off & folks were milling around as they crossed from side to side of the hall to look in the doors. A guard was blocking the rest of the hallway - said it was only offices beyond. I wanted to take a picture of him, but didn't have the nerve!





We went upstairs & entered the East Room. Very opulent.



I asked the secret service agent in the Green Room if anyone in residence actually used the room & he said "Jill" used it for her tea parties occasionally. He seemed quite amenable to chatting, but I couldn't think of anything intelligent to ask! Very annoying!







We continued flowing in line through the other rooms, Blue (Oval) room was gorgeous. Last room we went through was the State Dining room. I asked the agent stationed in there when it was used last & she said for the South Korean contingent in March. It was a very large room - the sign said as many as 140 could eat in the room, so it could obviously be configured in a different way.



The last area we were allowed to see was the Entry & cross halls. The Presidential Seal is over the door to the Blue Room & would be the first thing you'd see if you entered through the main entrance. There was a magnificent grand piano & some recent presidential portraits (Obama & Bush were in places of honor. No Trump. Didn't I read that he had never released a portrait for display?

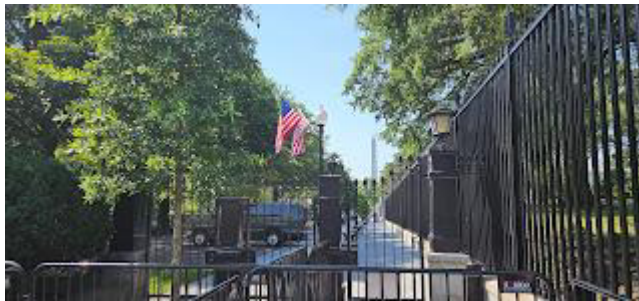


I wanted to get a picture of us leaving down the front steps, but just too many people, so I took a quick shot of George! Picture me beside him! Really happy that we finally got this opportunity.





Dilly Dallied as long as possible before leaving the grounds. Took a lot of pictures & stood in the sweltering heat!



Wandered around the outside fences as we left. Just seemed like it was over too soon!



We got a little discombobulated on directions & decided to sit & relax with an iced coffee at the Cafe du Parc at the Willard Hotel. Excellent!









Spent a lovely couple of hours wandering around the US Botanic Garden. It was hot inside in most of the greenhouse area, but there were 2 exhibition rooms that were air conditioned, so we made sure to check them out carefully also. They were mostly about conservation. There had been a special orchid exhibition, but only a few of them were still blooming. The ones that were were gorgeous! Climbed the stairs to get the over head view. Heat rises, so that was like a steam bath, but still worthwhile. Views of the surrounding area was great too.



Before we left the Botanic Garden, I asked for close eating recommendations. The seated lady security guard started spewing out all kinds of suggestions. I was overwhelmed, but captured the first one & we headed off up Pennsylvania Ave to We the Pizza. It was an uphill walk, so we figure we had worked for it, but managed to fully consume a 16* pepperoni with jalapeno. Washed it down with 2 delightfully cold beers. It was a perfect topper to the day. Absolutely delicious. And since there was upstairs air-conditioned seating, we were very satisfied.



Heading back to the metro, we continued sight seeing. Tried to go in the Library of Congress, but guards stopped us & said it was not open for the public. It was an easy walk back & the metro got us back to the vehicle with no worries. Great day!