

Travel at Home

Stained Glass in Sydney

30 August 2014

In general

'Sydney is an ever-evolving city, and to have Karla's history and someone special like Jeff Hamilton tucked away makes it come alive'

'It was great to have someone as knowledgeable as Karla with us through the day'

'Both the churches and Jeff were very welcoming and hospitable. A pleasure to visit'

'Each activity was enjoyable and interesting'

'Both churches were lovely'

'Good to contrast the history and windows of the two churches'

'My first visit to both churches. I learnt so much. Beautiful windows'

'Karla's in-depth knowledge of stained glass made the visits to both churches more interesting'

'Thank you for a fabulous day and look forward to future tours'

Visit to St John's Anglican Church, Darlinghurst, to hear about its history and its community through the stained glass windows, from Laurie and Karla, and organ talk and mini-recital by Bransby

'An oasis of art and virtue in the midst of seedy Kings Cross. Karla and Laurie excelled in explaining the beautiful stained glass windows and the history of the church, including the shock of the loss of the *Dunbar*'

'Very informative from both Karla and Laurie'

'The stained glass windows are beautiful, and lovely to hear the history of the Church, especially about the *Dunbar*'

'The organ playing was beautiful'

'An unexpected pleasure was being blown away by Bransby demonstrating the power of the William Hill pipe organ of 1885. This all-too-brief introduction was a compelling invitation to his recital on 7 September'

'I will certainly return to hear Bransby's organ recital'

'Interesting talk and beautiful windows'

'Really enjoyable'

'Very good'

'Loved it'

'Very informative. Learnt a great deal from Karla and Laurie. The mini-organ-recital was a highlight'

'Beautiful Gothic and other styles of stained glass window, well explained by Karla'

'We really liked this church, especially the Australian wildflowers and other secular motifs in the beautiful stained glass. It was fascinating to hear the story of the *Dunbar* and its links to the church, and to see the bell. It is so sad to think that the passengers had survived the long journey to Australia only to be shipwrecked within sight of their destination...Stories of real people and events give one more of a feeling for the significance of a building than dates and additions, and link it with wider Sydney and Australian history. A highlight was the playing of the organ by the enthusiastic organist. I would have liked to have heard a complete piece. It's an incredible organ and looks as good as it sounds'

'The cup of tea so kindly provided was very welcome. This church is obviously very involved with the community, and Laurie was really welcoming and obviously in love with his church'

'Although I was delayed by public transport and arrived a bit late, I enjoyed what I heard. I especially enjoyed the walk around to look at the windows. Down the south end, I looked at the window next to the entrance. Did you notice that the closer you came, the brighter Christ's halo shone—brighter than those of the accompanying angels? A stroke of genius on the part of the artist!'

'St John's was wonderful, and so was hearing about the history of the church and its absolutely beautiful windows, woodwork in keeping with the theme of the *Dunbar* and sandstone walls. Just magical'

Visit to St Benedict's on the Notre Dame Campus

'Interesting talk from Father John and Karla continued to give us insights into the windows and their making'

'Interested in the history'

'Very good'

'Great'

'Another surprise: St Benedict's is Australia's oldest consecrated Roman Catholic church. With the highs and lows of its history, it acquired splendid stained glass windows. Karla explained their artistic merits and cultural value'

'Interesting: again learnt new things'

'We did not find this church as sympathetic as St John's, partly because it was not built from the warm sandstone used there. There also tend to be dark pictures of the Way of the Cross and crucifixion scenes in Roman Catholic churches. (At least there weren't as many gory tortured saints as in Italian churches!) The glorious deep blues and reds of the windows were lovely, and I liked the friendly wooden St Benedict, who looked rather as I imagine St Francis would have looked—without the animals, of course. It was interesting to see a church that is an integral part of a university campus. We were welcomed by Father John who has a love of his church and an encyclopaedic knowledge of its history'

'Quite informative. Father John spoke clearly, although the music from the Open Day outside was sometimes intrusive. My walk around to look at the

windows was also informative—the contrast between St John’s windows and St Benedict’s couldn’t have been starker...The Catholic windows and decorations show a God of punishment and sin, with the colours and designs of the windows emphasising the dark nature of Jesus’s sacrifice, and women and men weeping with heads lowered—I don’t think it’s humility but genuine sorrow, altogether depressing and oppressive. The Anglicans showed an ascended Jesus bringing hope to believers, while the Catholics concentrated upon death and sorrow. No wonder Henry VIII and Elizabeth wanted England to become Protestant! I noted that the only literature provided was a prayer sheet. I also noted that enrolling students thought nothing of bringing food inside the church while acknowledging it as a holy place by crossing themselves’

‘Father John was very warm and inviting. Amazing windows’

Opportunity to spend time with glass artist Jeff Hamilton in his studio, the artists’ building and the scenic roof

‘Jeff was friendly and knowledgeable and easy to talk to, as well as being a very talented artist’

‘An out-of-this-world experience! Entering via passages fit to be the set of a horror movie, into an untidy studio stuffed floor-to-ceiling with art, tools, chemicals and glass, we met sprite-like Jeff Hamilton, who demonstrated why he is king of stained glass creations’

‘Jeff was very informative and had no trouble answering our questions. All very interesting’

‘What a privilege! Excellent’

‘Wow—this was great! What a gracious gesture to invite us all into his world of design and manufacture. I loved how Jeff explained all the stages so simply and clearly; he’s really a great teacher as well as an artist. The intricate work he will have to do to realise those wildflower windows is amazing! To think some careers advisor told him in Year 12 that he’d never amount to anything in an artistic career. I suggested to Jeff that if he knew where this loser was today he could make the bloke a mirror window or (even better) one decorated with “the bird” gesture’

‘Lovely man. Inspirational’

‘Interesting and informative. Building a bit spooky’

‘Certainly different. Jeff very informative about his craft. Would not have met him any other way’

‘Fascinating—but studio needs dusting’

‘The building was very “interesting”. Would never have known it was there. Jeff: what an amazingly gifted man, so enthusiastic about what he does, and so willing to answer questions of any kind. This was a real delight to have been part of’

‘Jeff is a lovely man and very talented artist. Most enjoyable visit’

‘Jeff was very informative—amazing art and space (or lack of space!) Great works. Didn’t see the roof’

'Spending time with such a talented and knowledgeable artisan was unbelievable. Thank you for this wonderful highlight. So very sad to hear that this is a dying art'

'We're very interested in decorative glass, so this visit to a studio was fascinating'

'What a fascinating studio in a very strange rabbit-warren of a building. Beautiful works of art and a really dedicated, inspiring artist with a knack of communicating the procedures and themes of his work. We really enjoyed seeing the process from the cartoon through the tracing to cutting the glass. The slide show using motifs from nature, especially flowers and trees, was also fascinating. As would have been obvious to him, everyone wanted to stay even longer and see even more'

Lunch at the Fish Market

'Lunch at the Fish Market was a great idea. All tastes and palates adequately covered'

'Very nice lunch. Good service'

'This was worthwhile'

'Very good'

'Always good'

'My first time at the Fish Market. I've never needed to go there for fresh fish, because I have Costi Brothers at my local shopping centre. Loved looking round and loved my calamari—very tender—and chips. Didn't have salmon, my absolute favourite, because I'd had it for dinner the previous night. Selection of fish and seafood was tremendous—but I noticed that quite a bit was imported from as far away as Denmark and Norway'

'Bought prawns'

'Good as always'

'Irene and I had yum cha—peaceful and relaxing. Great fresh seafood served'

'Lunch at the Fish Market was, as usual, excellent, as you can find something for everyone—including vegetarian if you don't want seafood. It is probably the only suitable place in that area for a large group. Prices very reasonable—except for coffee—and it's always interesting to wander around'

Focus on different areas of Sydney

'Always good to see and hear about parts of Sydney you might not normally go'

'Once again, we wouldn't have known about these places without the tour'

'Good to know about and glimpse Central Park'

'I love seeing places being conserved for their historic connections with Sydney'

'I enjoyed seeing the buildings around Central and hearing first hand about the cost of real estate there'

'It's always interesting to explore Sydney, no matter which area we go to'

The level of information and interaction

'Karla's and the others' information was excellent—extremely well researched'

'Very informative. Everyone spoke well and interacted well with the group'

'Good'

'I liked its informality'

'Excellent'

'Fascinating'

'Amazing'

'The speakers and hosts were all pleasant, welcoming and enthusiastic. Thank you for trying to ensure that we saw the glass as well as hearing about its history, as in a short time we only need the bare bones of chronology'

'This is always good. Thanks for your excellent research, Diana, and for liaising with our guides'