

## Day 4 - Alnwick Castle Gardens and Lunch at the White Swan



The Cascade provides an ever-changing scene, with fountains erupting at intervals, inter-spaced with 20-30ft water jets, one of which was captured on camera by Peter Watts - what on earth is Chairman Simon Bishop spouting about off the top of his head?



By the time we had strolled to the top through the amazing topiary tunnels along each side of the cascade, smaller fountains were playing, with the



huge new pavilion and visitor centre with their barrel-vaulted, grid-shell roof as a backdrop.

At the top of the cascade was the entrance to the formal gardens, with a collection of over 4,000 plant varieties, thousands of seasonal blooms and more, albeit smaller, fountains - this one is mirrored on the other side of the hedge in perfect symmetry, and

these astroemeria were a joy to behold. There are a variety of paths leading down, including via a tranquil cherry orchard or a bamboo labyrinth, but we strolled down a pathway on the wooded hillside towards the Serpent Garden, which has an intricate sculpture forming a water feature - not working when we were there, but with seats set in a shady bower, it was a pleasant spot for a rest.







**The Serpent Sculpture**



Of all the gardens at Alnwick, the Poison Garden, which features intoxicating and poisonous plants, attracts the most interest.

It can only be visited on a guided tour, the guide pointing out the various species, which include the sources of strychnine, hemlock, the deadly ricin, foxglove and laburnum. One of the main aims of this Garden is drugs education, particularly for the young, with



**The Tree House**

featured plantings of cannabis, coca and the opium poppy.

In 2004 a 6,000 sq.ft tree house - one of the largest in the world - was opened. It houses a restaurant, has tree branches growing through the floor and is also available for weddings.

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Our next call was at the White Swan Hotel - a short walk from the Gardens, where we had lunch surrounded by the magnificent panelling, mirrors and stained glass windows from the RMS Olympic - twin ship to the ill-fated Titanic.







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*Budle Bay*



*Crastor Harbour*

After a superb lunch and a final group photo, we set off on a scenic coastal drive back to Lindisfarne via Crastor, Budle Bay and Bamburgh, full of thanks and praise to Ronnie & Kath and Nigel & Emma for an absolutely superb Singer National Weekend 2017.

**Mike & Trish.**



*Bamburgh Castle*