



AllWays Traveller

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, London UK

www.allwaystraveller.com

Evenings with the stars – under the stars

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, which is located in Queen Mary's Gardens, on the Inner Circle of Regent's Park was founded in 1932 by Sydney Carroll and Robert Atkins.

It has been one of London's unique theatrical attractions ever since.

The theatre itself is surrounded by woodland, which is invariably used to great effect as a stage backdrop.

It is the UK's largest permanent professional outdoor theatre and, during the summer months, stages a programme of drama, comedy and musicals.

Stars of stage and screen are constantly keen to perform here.

And despite enjoying one of the largest audience auditoriums of any London theatre, the tiered seating and overall ambience gives the *Regent's Park Open Air Theatre* a real intimacy and special atmosphere.

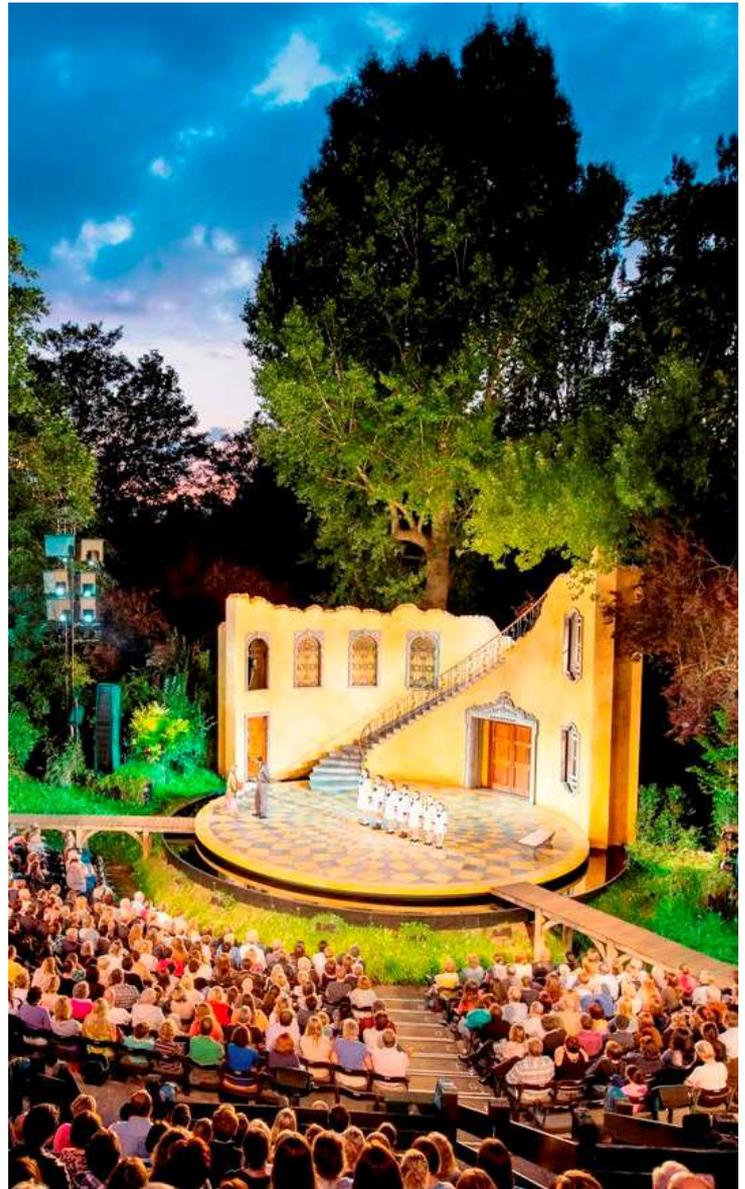
The best way to make the most of a visit is to arrive early with a hamper and chilled wine (or opt for the theatre's fine selection of food and drinks).

A pre-theatre picnic in the 'forest glade' foyer is a delight in its own right.

Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor

AllWays traveller



The Sound of Music



The Beggar's Opera



Lord of the Flies



The Importance of being Ernest

A wonderful evening at this theatre - come rain or come shine



Gigi

By Ashley Gibbins

Disturbances from the auditorium, be it chattering or mobiles sounding off, can be the bane of the actors life.

So off-putting.

The late, great, Richard Griffiths found this so frustrating he was known to stop a performance to lambast the culprits.

So what to do when the, albeit gently rhythmic disturbance comes from the constant cooing of a pigeon on a branch at stage left.

At this theatre it is par for the course and part of the appeal.

In fact the evening I enjoyed *Hobson's Choice*, an owl flew across the stage (albeit silently).

One also spots the high flying aircraft soaring into the sunset on their transatlantic crossings and the stars appearing as night time falls.

An illustrious history

The history of the Open Air Theatre is a truly illustrious one.

Way back in 1932 a play by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini at the New Theatre (now the Noel Coward) 'bombed'.

In desperate need of a production, theatre impresarios Robert Atkins and Sydney Caroll staged a short-run production of *Twelfth Night*.

When the time came to move out of the new theatre the pair took their production to a makeshift theatre in Regent's Park and a theatrical institution was born.

The following year, in its first full season, the Open Air Theatre revived *Twelfth Night* and staged the first of, many subsequent productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

From then on there was just no looking back.

In 1934 George Bernard Shaw wrote *The Six of Calais* for the theatre and, between 1939 and 1945, it was only one of two (with the Windmill) to remain open throughout wartime London.

Regent's Park Theatre Ltd

As Regent's Park Theatre Ltd, the theatre operates as a registered charity.

Over the years the Open Air Theatre has built up an audience of part loyal supporters, part London tourists and, finally, those visiting Regent's Park who manage to take in a performance by chance.

Getting there

The Regent's Park Open Air Theatre is located in Queen Mary's Garden - within Regent's Park - and is a 10 minute walk from Baker Street underground station.



All My Sons

The annual season

The annual season runs from May to September and will attract 140,000 theatre goers.

The productions



Hobson's Choice

In recent years, the theatre has moved away from the works of Shakespeare to embrace other playwrights including Arthur Miller, Oscar Wilde and William Golding.

They do, however, produce a Shakespeare play "re-imagined for everyone aged six and over" to introduce younger audiences to the Bard.

The season is then supplemented by one off evenings of comedy, musical concerts and screenings of film classics.

The first visit is unlikely to be the last



The Sound of Music

For London theatregoers like myself, the first visit is not going to be the last.

One just gets hooked on the place.

A three course evening of entertainment

To get the absolute most from a visit to Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, one should take a pre-planned approach to each performance.

Enjoy the park itself

The first thing to do is to arrive at Regent's Park as early as possible so as to be able to enjoy the lakes and gardens themselves.

Those dashing through the park, so as not to miss 'curtain up', will not be able to appreciate one of the worlds finest city green spaces,

Even the 10 minute stroll through the park, from Baker Street tube, is a real pleasure.

All the more so if you stop and sit a while.

Swans, ducks, geese, moorhens, coots and heron all vie for your attention, and that bread if you have any.

The nesting season of mid to late spring, when the young chicks and cygnets are about, is a real 'ah look, so cute' time of year.

Pre-theatre dining alfresco

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, which sits within landscaped grounds, provides a dining experience in its own right.

There is an outside picnic lawn, a summer café and a covered dining area circles the whole of one side of the auditorium.

Not here do you find the impatient milling in foyer areas, or people sitting staring at the curtain, waiting for the production to start.

The gates open well in advance of each evening's production and those in the know are ready.



The theatre is more than happy for guests to bring their own picnics and drinks although it does offer an excellent selection of dinner dishes and a fully stocked bar - with *Pimm's* always popular.

Productions at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre

And then, of course, we come to the main course in the evening's entertainment - the production itself.

Though each season at the theatre offers a carefully balanced blend of classic drama, comedy and musicals, the theatrical experience remains the same.

The casual ambience continues in the auditorium itself.

The tiered seating now new and very comfortable, offers a fine view of the stage from wherever.

And finally the audio is excellent, which it needs to be with the theatre roofless.

The auditorium



The raked 'arena style' auditorium, with 1,250 new and very comfortable seats, is one of the largest in London.

And yet the unique location of the setting and the casual ambience that prevails makes for an intimate experience.

Wining and dining



The theatre gates open 90 minutes before evening performances and 60 minutes before matinees (visit openairtheatre.com for exact gate opening times)

The theatre welcomes theatre goers bringing their own food and drink, which can be consumed in the picnic lawn.

You are welcome to take drinks in to the auditorium but are asked that you do not eat during the performance.

Regular visitors to the Regents Park Open Air Theatre invariably make the most of the setting by arriving early to dine or picnic before the performance.

If not, the theatre itself offers an excellent selection of dining options with a summer café, barbecue and bar.

No smoking

Despite it being in the outdoors, and following customer feedback, the theatre and theatre grounds are completely no smoking.

Those who wish to smoke should ask a member of staff who will let them out of the theatre exit gate.

A true theatrical experience - whatever the weather may hold



Much Ado About Nothing



Into the Woods



Ragtime



Twelfth Night

You will now realise that I, along with so many other theatre goers, find the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre an absolute delight.

When I wax lyrical about it to others, there is invariably a question about the weather? This is England after all.

Let me assure you, the weather is all part of this theatrical experience.

Planning a visit here includes consulting the weather forecast.

And having sun cream can be as important as bringing rainwear.

We also make sure that we have the items of the warmer clothing to put on as the evening progresses and temperatures fall.

Whether you are a Londoner or someone enjoying a short break in the city, if you are there during the spring and summer check out the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre.

And if you can go, go - come rain or come shine.

The Regents Park



The Regent's Park, designed by John Nash, covers 395 acres and includes Queen Mary's Gardens which features more than 12,000 roses of 400 varieties, and the restored William Andrews Nestfield's Avenue Gardens.

In addition to the Open Air Theatre, the Park also includes London Zoo.



Strolling through the park provides the UK's largest free to access to waterfowl and some 100 species of wild bird.

www.royalpark.org.uk/parks/the-regents-park

The weather



Crazy for You

Each visit is different depending on the season and weather.

It is a genuine experience to enjoy a performance as the light of the day fades and the stage lighting takes prominence.

And to watch a performance during light rainfall is memorable in itself.

The trick, naturally enough, is on being prepared – be it with sunglasses and suntan lotion, warm clothing and blankets or waterproofs.

Despite the vagaries of the English weather, an average of 94% of each year's performances are completed.

However, as the stage and auditorium are uncovered, bad weather may result in productions having to stop and re-start.

Productions are never cancelled before the start time but, in cases where one cannot be completed, tickets can be exchanged for another performance or production.

There are no refunds but there is no time limit on exchanging tickets due to weather.

Visit openairtheatre.com/terms for full terms and conditions.

Getting tickets

Information on purchasing tickets can be found on the theatre's website.

More information



Twelfth Night re-imagined

www.openairtheatre.com

A snapshot of the Regents Park Open Air Theatre



Hello Dolly!



The Sound of Music



Lord of the Flies



To Kill a Mockingbird



The Crucible



The Winter's Tale re-imagined



A Midsummer Night's Dream



The Tempest re-imagined



Pride and Prejudice

AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



AllWays

www.allwaystraveller.com

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with a view of the world from the journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.



The International Travel Writers Alliance

www.itwalliance.com

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

Ashley Gibbins is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance and Managing Editor of AllWays traveller

Ashley Gibbins



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