

The Getaway Garden

text | Diana Lambdin Meyer

The age-old advice to “stop and smell the roses” is as important while traveling as it is in our daily, overscheduled lives. Garden clubs and philanthropic organizations around the country lend a helping hand to Mother Nature, providing us with abundant opportunities to slow down and enjoy the beauty before us. Below are three spectacular gardens where roses are among the hundreds of reasons to stop for a few hours.



Elizabethan Gardens—Roanoke Island, NC

Elizabeth I was Queen at the time the first English settlers arrived on Roanoke Island, a part of what would become North Carolina's Outer Banks. But it was not until 1960 that a 10.5-acre garden reflecting the beauty of the Elizabethan period was dedicated to the public.

A centerpiece is a nearly 400-year-old live oak tree that was here when the settlers arrived. Beneath it, surrounded by camellia and hydrangea, stands a statue of Virginia Dare, the first child born to English parents in the Americas.

Marble fountains and more sculptures accentuate meticulously groomed yaupon holly, an indigenous planting that contributes to the formal setting of the Elizabethan period. The fantasy of the time lends itself naturally to the infusion of fairies, the theme for the newly developed children's garden. Step inside at www.elizabethangardens.org.

Powell Gardens—Kansas City, MO

About 30 miles southeast of Kansas City, Missouri, on 900 acres of a former dairy farm, is Powell Gardens, a beautiful botanical garden known as much for its festivals as for the ever-changing blooms.

Beginning in June, it's not uncommon to see at least 50 species of butterflies enjoying the terraced beds, which are changed three times in the growing season to attract new and different species.

Butterflies are the feature of a two-week exhibit each August called the Festival of Butterflies. In a specially designed enclosure, you can get up close and personal with such beauties as the Pipevine Swallowtail or Banded Orange Heliconian. Children enjoy catch-and-release sessions and a caterpillar petting zoo. Adults may participate in watercolor classes and talk with experts about creating their own butterfly garden. See the beauty online at www.powellgardens.org.



Photography by Bruce H. Meyer



Stanley Park—Vancouver, BC

The upside of 48 inches of rain a year is some of the most lovely gardens in North America. Eight public gardens thrive in Vancouver, British Columbia, about two hours north of Seattle. The oldest and largest of the city's park system is Stanley Park, 1,000 acres on a peninsula in Coal Harbour.



In addition to individual gardens highlighting rhododendrons, roses, and azaleas, the park features an aquarium and a lagoon filled with swans, ducks, and Canadian geese. More than 35,000 annuals are planted surrounding First Nation's totem poles, and hundreds of flowering cherry and plum trees line the numerous walking paths.

Visitors may also enjoy a horse and carriage ride, a petting farm, and miniature train ride. A passport is unnecessary when visiting Stanley Park at www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/parks/stanley.

Diana Lambdin Meyer is a gardener known for killing plastic houseplants but who delights in the gifts of Mother Nature in her travels around the world as a freelance journalist.