

✖ My last Sunday in London and I decided to spend it seeing some more art, some more crowds, some more parks and some more theatre. First, the art. The Royal Academy has two blockbuster shows on right now, From Russia, great works from Russian collections, and Cranach, a medieval artist.

The image above was used in the RA promotions for the event, and generated quite the storm of press when Transport for London initially refused to allow its use in tube stations, bus stands, etc. The public reaction was so universally against TfL that they ultimately relented and this image has joined the ranks of so many others to be vandalised on a regular basis by passengers.

I knew that these shows were already largely sold out, and that very long lines of people turned out for the limited number of same-day tickets which went for sale early each day. So, like with so many other cultural attractions I passed on those exhibitions. Call me a heathen, but to stand on line for an hour in the hope of getting a ticket only to then try to admire artwork from a thicket of fellow art lovers. No thank you. I opted instead to enjoy the permanent collection exhibits which occupied the rest of the galleries. Many fewer people to contend with, which heightened my enjoyment.

Next I wandered down to St. James Park to enjoy what had become a very nice day. I had brought with me a bag of pumpkin seeds which I purchased at Tesco weeks ago, but don't really fancy. I thought the birds would like them, and figured that might make for some fun photos.

It is a gorgeous day in the park, and there are large crowds everywhere. I have gotten pretty good at figuring out the language in use by a gaggle of tourists and then using the proper "pardon", "perdon", "scusi" or "entschuldigung" as appropriate (having consulted the web for tips). That comes in handy with this navigational challenge. Almost all of these gaggles are students on tour, and they hang together tightly, sometimes ignorant or oblivious of the other users of the pavement.

I find my way to the narrow pond which bisects the park east to west and then to a properly gravelled area in which to toss my pumpkin seeds. There are signs along the railings around the water which admonish you not to feed the wildlife, but then explaining that to do so anywhere damages the grass, so please find a gravelled area. I start to throw the seeds, and am soon surrounded by flocks of pigeons, geese, ducks and a curious (but aloof) swan or two. And humans. A flock of humans wielding camera also descend upon me. In short order the birds have had all of the pumpkin seeds and then they just follow me as I resume my walk around the pond. I feel like the pied piper.

I trudge on through the neighbourhoods below St. James. I found a string of roads I particularly liked. Along the southern edge of the park is Birdcage Walk (which is a roadway, not a walking path), a short jog off of Birdcage is Old Queen Street, which turns a sharp left to Cockpit Stairs (yes, they name those as well). I kind of liked that set.

A bunch more photos later I wandered into Pimlico station and caught a train up to Oxford Circus, and found a nice little pub to get Sunday Roast. Football was on, FA Cup action. The BBC got themselves in a lot of trouble for committing 14 hours out of a 24 hour period to either FA Cup soccer or 6 Nations rugby this past weekend. You can't win for trying. I saw the last 20 minutes or so of Barnsley spanking Chelsea on Saturday, and managed to see the only goal scored in the match. It was quite the upset. Sunday I saw Cardiff score two goals against Middlesbrough in another upset. I have watched plenty of soccer in my life, but in this one 24 hour period I think I may have witnessed more goals than in the past 45 years. And I saw two out of three of the upsets that will lead to the first FA Cup final in 106 years to have no "Premiership" level teams competing. (Manchester United had been unceremoniously dispensed with earlier).

Back home to clean up my photo galleries before tonight's theatre. You can see photos from today's travels [here](#)

Ta!