

Spokane's Manito Park: A Four-Season Spectacle

by Tamara Muldoon

Every December, more than 14,000 people flock to Spokane, Washington's Manito Park during the 10-day Holiday Lights Show at Gaiser Conservatory. The greenhouse glows from within as visitors wander its rooms, reveling in holiday music and humid warmth among showy tropical plants and 600 poinsettias festively illuminated by more than 30,000 lights.

Named among the Top 25 Parks in the country by TripAdvisor's 2014 Traveler's Choice Awards, Manito Park provides a four-season spectacle. In addition to Gaiser Conservatory, there are five major themed gardens, as well as Mirror Pond, picnic areas, playgrounds and a seasonal cafe.

In December, Gaiser Conservatory shines brightly with holiday cheer. Frequent winter sunshine and occasional dusting of snow emphasize the park's trees, shrubs, basalt outcroppings and natural areas.

Come springtime, the Lilac Garden's intoxicating perfume fills the air, emanating from the blooms of more than 100 different cultivars. Seek out the voluptuous double pink variety "Spokane," pride of the Lilac City; Spokane's spring Lilac Festival has been held annually since 1938.

Manito Park reaches the peak of splendor in summer. From a bench on the overlook, meditate on the spectacular vista of Duncan Garden, whose European Renaissance-style symmetrical flower beds are accented by a central fountain and classical gazebo. The Joel E. Ferris Perennial Garden is awash in a diverse, ever-changing color palette. Breathe in the sweet scent of more than 150 varieties of grandiflora, floribunda, hybrid tea and miniature roses on sun-drenched Rose Hill, bookended by brilliant white pergolas.

Autumn is the best time to visit Nishinomiya Tsutakawa Japanese Garden. Achieve

serenity as you tread its meandering stone paths, listen to the tinkle of falling water, and gaze upon vibrant red maple leaves reflected in the Koi pond while resident ducks glide across its surface.

A favorite with local residents since its 1904 inception, Manito Park's 20 acres of manicured botanical gardens and 78 acres of natural landscape are located in Spokane's genteel South Hill neighborhood, just minutes from downtown.

Entrance to Manito Park and Gaiser Conservatory is free. This year's Holiday Lights Show with extended evening hours will run from December 11 to 20, although the lights will remain in place through December 31. Visit spokaneparks.org for information on Manito Park and the Holiday Lights Show. See visitspokane.com to discover Spokane's other attractions. 🌟



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