

BUCKINGHAM PALACE GARDEN PARTY

On Wednesday the 07th of May 2025, together with my fellow GSS winning finalists, we attended the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

The day started at 9am, when we all met in front of the central gate, where we all caught up after 3 months and where the sunny but chilled day began.

Once all together, Alice, one of the Royal footmen greeted us and helped us take a group Photo, right before we went through the security checks.

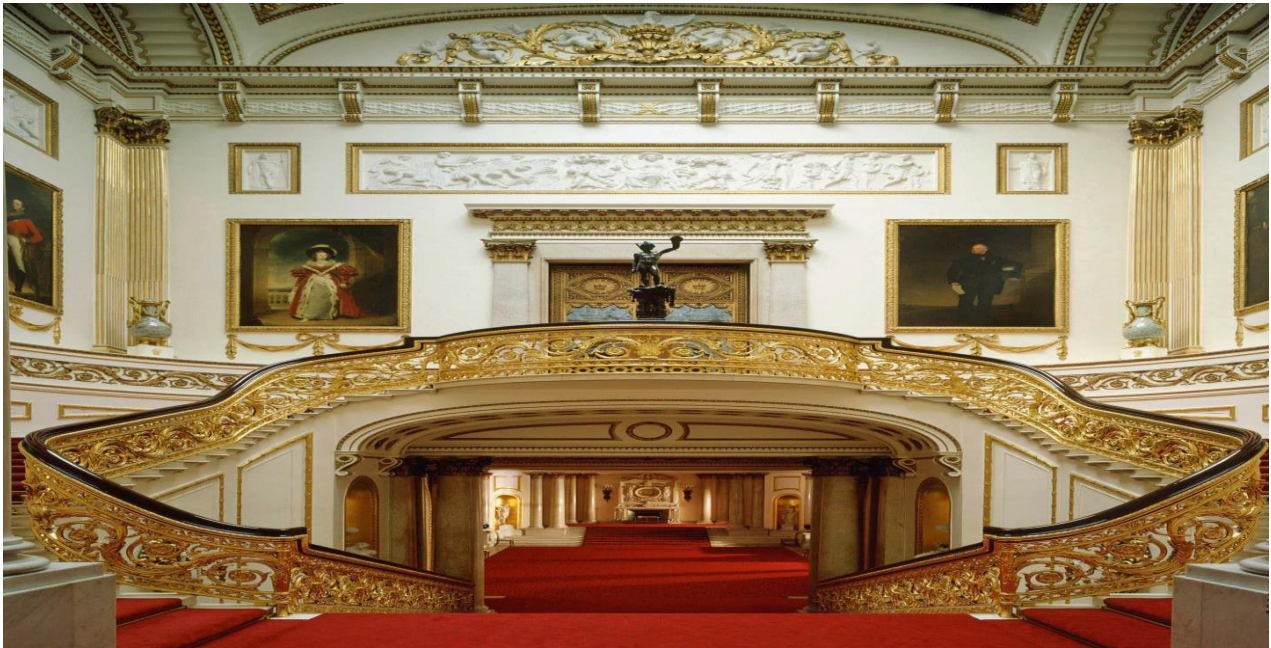


Once inside the Palace, we were guided to a room, where a tea and coffee refreshment was organised as a welcome to us and where we were introduced to some of the team members, of which Matthew, who is one of the managers in there, who explained how their Food and beverage operation works in the palace, pointing each and every one duties.

The experience began with a 2 hours tour around the palace, guided by the very knowledgeable team members that with a lot of patience and peaceful manners explained every single piece of art in the palace and showed us all the rooms.

The most interesting part of it, is that, every room or corridor can be used for events, depending on the type of event and the amount of people. Some of the room have some sliding walls, which permit the royal members to avoid big groups of people.

The highlight of all of them was, late queen's Victoria corridor walls, which used to be only made up by mirrors, where she used to look at herself, but that was now covered by a peach coloured silk wallpaper and very important paintings.



After a wonderful tour of the front of house, the team guided us through the back of house, where we had the chance to see their crockery and silverware, many of which are dating back to the 18th century and which are still used for different events.

What was surprising is that the team is very hands on, as not only the managers decide what piece of equipment to use during the meals hosted at the palace, but on rotation, everyone is entitled to choose and organise them.

Of course, there is a lot of pressure on them as most of the guests attending are probably going to the Palace only once in their life, so every detail need to be looked after in order for the event to be successful.

Around 12:30pm we all moved to the staff canteen, where we had a quick luncheon. Like a staff canteen in any hotel, there was buffet section, where the food served is prepared by a catering company and delivered fresh every day, and a fully set up cosy room where it is possible to enjoy your meal and some time with colleagues.

Since covid happened, all the team decided not to have heavy meals while on duty, so they restrained the menu options to: a soup/ a main (which consisted of a salad, a wrap or sandwich or meat/fish stew with rice) and a fruit.

After Lunch, we moved to what was one of the highlight of the day. Visiting the Royal wine cellar, where all the wines and spirits for the events held at the palace are stored.

The Royal household has different deals with various wineries (a fun fact: the team is so used to serve champagne from magnums that they are not used to handle regular bottles anymore).

It was great to see, the different presents corners in the cellar, where various fine wines gifted to the king are stored, and then used for various occasions.



Now, we move on to the main reason of why we were invited at Buckingham Palace, The Garden Party.

The event hosted around 8000 people, from everywhere in the world. 3 tents were built in the garden: The one hosting the Royal family, the one hosting all the diplomats and the bigger one, which was hosting all the rest of the guests.

To be invited at a garden party is a privilege, and as such, all guests are required to wear an elegant attire, which is complimented by an umbrella for the gentlemen and a fascinating hat for the ladies.

We started our experience in the bigger tent around 2:15, where we attended the team briefing, which was explaining what was happening on the day and how high the expectations from all the guests were.

The buffet opened at 3:15pm and were serving a wide selection of Afternoon Tea pastries, and sandwiches, along with a Royal garden black tea supplied by Twining's or The king's orchard's apple juice (Highgrove).

Our role, in assisting the team during the service were multiple. While I and Valentino were assisting on clearing tables and assisting guests in the garden, Isabella was helping the Royal footmen at the Royal tent and all the rest of the winning finalists were serving pastries and teas behind the counter.

The event lasted roughly 3 hours and it was a great experience to be part of, as I will always remember this iconic day for the rest of my life.

I will always be grateful to The GSS trustees for such an opportunity and for the chances and support given.