

MWA - Home & Overseas - April 2019

The Garden at 120 Fenchurch Street - a new roof garden in the City of London

The Garden at 120 Fenchurch Street, is a new roof garden on Fenchurch Street. This suspended public park lives 15 floors high, on top of a building called One Fen Court.

And the best bit? It's completely free, whereas the Shard now costs £27 to visit, and the Skygarden requires pre-booking, there is no pre-booking to the Garden, just turn up and take the lift (subject to a bag check).

The Garden offers 360 degree views, but as it's only 15 floors high, to the north, tower blocks obscure the view. You do get a pretty unique view, mostly of zone 1 (London speak) stretching to London Bridge and Canary Wharf, as well as the across river to the Shard. On weekdays it's open 10am-6.30pm, and from 1 April, it's open till 9pm.

At the moment its open at weekends, 10am-5pm, but this is not definite to continue, so check before turning up at a weekend.

The 2,800 sq metre roof garden has a capacity of 207 people, so if it's a lovely summer day, and as the tourist season gets going, you might have to queue.

At ground level there is a spacious through-passageway between Fenchurch Street and Fenchurch Avenue. It's from here that you catch the lift to the roof. There's an digital art installation on the ceiling, which brings pictures from the garden down to the street.

The Garden offers the expected peaceful retreat, although like all gardens it will take a while to mature properly. There are trained fruit trees, *“neatly trimmed hedges, wildflower patches, and tranquil water features”* together with a wisteria covered pavilion. There is a canopy designed to give shelter to visitors, and a perimeter walk

At the moment there is a coffee hut, and plenty of benches to sit on, although its bound to become a favourite for City workers with sandwiches.

The City planning authorities are encouraging developers to provide more of these free public spaces in new developments, for us all to

enjoy - although it is a little sad that “free” and “public” actually means limited numbers, a bag check, and any behaviour deemed unacceptable will mean instant ejection. Compared to the Skygarden, its got more open outside space, but the views aren't quite so good. Access is easier, but could mean queues, whereas if you have booked the Skygarden, you are sure of entry. Its also less appealing in bad weather.



Try it next time you are in London!
Naomi Hancock