

Explosion of light and sound at the Botanics

Light cascades across the turf at the Royal Botanic Garden. The exhibit is called A Sea of Light and it lives up to its billing as well as being a fitting finale for this year's Festive light show.

The eye-catching mix of sound and light technology from award-winning company ITHACA was used by Coldplay during their Glastonbury performance and it was undoubtedly a memorable highlight which had guests reaching into their pockets for their cameras.

It was only 3C on a windless, still night but the fingers felt a tad cold pushing the button, but it was worth it to record the scene to remind one of the visit.

This is just one of the new exhibits in the glittering array of light and flame on view for 32 nights until January 2 and profits from ticket sales helps to support research and conservation efforts at home and abroad.

It took us just over an hour to leisurely stroll around the garden, taking a number of pictures on the way, and be assailed by an explosion of sound and colour.

Among the sounds were classics like Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas by Bing Crosby, Walking in a Winter Wonderland from Michael Buble and Last Christmas from Wham.

Sleigh Ride from The Ronettes and It's Beginning to look a lot like Christmas from Johnny Mathis plus Chris Rea's favourite, Driving Home for Christmas, were also on the play list.

Fireflies in the Woods produced by Electric Foundry, 100

points of LED lights tangled through the trees, created a twinkling hidden wonderland proved popular when we visited.

Digital Rain' by Bespoke lighting and video is an immersive installation of LED lights that 'rain' down on guests to create a shimmering shower.

Rounding off the new installations is Aquastell by PITAYA, where large looping arches with beams of light flashing illuminate the night sky. For me, this was one of the exhibits which excited, so much so that I took more pictures here than anywhere else.

Another highlight was Sparkling Waters with music from Il Divo.

A favourite from last year was the Christmas Cathedral by Mandylights, a 55metre-long, window-like structure showcasing thousands of individual, flower-shaped LED lights. This again proved a really popular spot for guests to take pictures so be patient but we listened to the favourite, When You Wish upon a Star as we waited.

For those concerned, there are health and safety measures in place to ensure that visitors follow Scottish Government guidance on COVID-19.

There is a reduced capacity of attendees, a one-way system, a request to make space for others and the mandatory wearing of face coverings in indoor areas.

Bosses say these measures will be monitored and visitors kept informed of any changes to guidance during the run.

Last year, the trail welcomed 66,000 visitors during its five-week run and this year's event, which can be visited by people from all over Scotland after the lifting of travel restrictions, is predicted to be a record.

Kari Coghill, the garden's director of enterprise and

communication, said that tickets are still available and she added: "This year's trail is one of the most spectacular yet.

"We are really looking forward to welcoming visitors to the Garden over the coming weeks and those who attend directly contribute to our wider work, with profits from ticket sales helping to support our vital research and conservation efforts in Scotland and around the world.

"At a time when the impact of the climate on biodiversity is high on the agenda globally, our work is more important than ever."

Jonathan Marks, chief development director at Raymond Gubbay, a division of Sony Music, which promotes the trail, added: "Christmas at the Botanic Gardens is a huge draw within the Capital's festive calendar.

"We are extremely pleased with the breadth of artists and installations that are part of this year's trail and I am sure that the experience will be as magical as ever."

For ticket information, prices and timings visit www.rbge.org.uk/christmas. A timed entry system will be in place with visitors encouraged to book now.