

Bok Tower Gardens - The Sanctuary Your Soul Has Been Searching For

It's one of my earliest and fondest memories.

Lying on the soft grass, gazing up at the 200-foot Neo-Gothic Singing Tower, listening to its chorus of bells playing J.S. Bach's "Sleepers Awake."

Those summer trips to Bok Tower Gardens *were* like a dream – one from which I never wanted to awaken.

That was more than 30 years ago. Today, this hidden gem in Lake Wales Florida remains my single favorite spiritual destination on earth.

If you're planning a spiritual sabbatical this year, here's why you should put Bok Tower Gardens on your shortlist.



Bok's Singing Tower

A Sanctuary for Your Soul

Bok Tower Gardens is not your standard tourist destination. In fact, its founder had something quite unusual in mind when he first dreamed of it.

In 1921, a Dutch immigrant and writer named Edward W. Bok and his wife Mary Louis Curtis Bok, planned to create a bird sanctuary on the spot where Bok Tower Gardens now sits.

In the years that followed, Bok's vision for the gardens evolved from a mere sanctuary for wildlife to "a sanctuary for the human soul." I can't think of a better way to describe what Bok Tower Gardens is today.



Edward W. Bok

Take a Trip Back in Time

Imagine acres of soft, glistening grass decorated with splashes of bright red, orange, and purple flowers. Imagine winding paths through thick shades of great oak trees, bright green bamboo thickets and lush tropical plants.

Imagine the warm, gentle wind rustling through the trees, the melodious chirping of birds and the hypnotic rise and

fall of the singing cicadas. It's like experiencing the soft rise and fall of the earth breathing in and out.

You begin your journey on one of these paths. From there, you can wander through the twists and turns of side trails.

Or you can walk right to the top of "Iron Mountain" -- the highest natural point in the state of Florida -- towards the magnificent centerpiece of the gardens.

It's a short and scenic walk to the top, and as you crest the final slope, you see it.



A great art-deco Singing Tower seated on a small island amidst a still green lagoon. Swans glide across the dark waters, and bright red, orange and yellow koi fish lurk just below its flower-decked surface.

And yet, the most striking feature of the garden's breathtaking centerpiece is something that's impossible to capture in words or pictures.

It's the quiet, hauntingly surreal feeling that you've just taken a trip back in time. And everyone who falls under

the garden's spell recognizes this as the unique gift of this sacred sanctuary.

Even in its busiest season, Bok Tower Gardens is secret enough to attract only a small crowd of visitors. And even children and teenagers respect the calm and quiet of the gardens.

A Journey That Stays With You

On the other side of the Singing Tower is a lush oak-tree-shaded field of thick, soft grass. You could lie there for hours listening to the sound of the bells and gazing up at the tower.

Beyond the Tower (if you can bear to walk away from it), you'll take a short walk to Edward Bok's quaint summer home. It's everything you'd expect an early 20th Century writer's summer home to be.

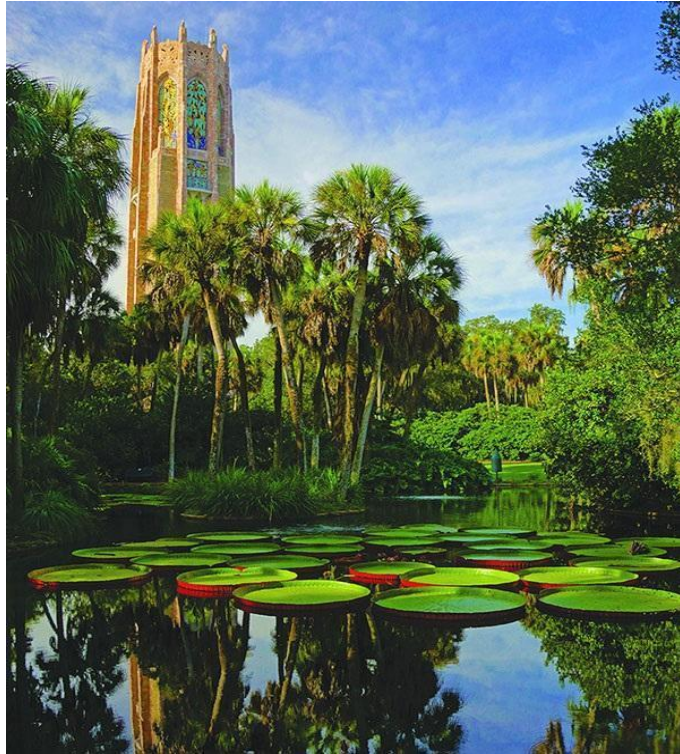
The rest of the Gardens are every bit the sanctuary for the human soul that Edward Bok imagined it to be.

You can walk all day through acres of botanical gardens and lily-padded lagoons, sometimes without seeing another person for hours.

Yet, no matter where you go, the peak of the Singing Tower watches over you, and the soft ringing of its bells echo through every leaf, flower, and blade of grass.

Maybe you're planning a spiritual sabbatical this year. Maybe Lake Wales Florida is the last destination on your mind.

But if you take this trip, you'll find that this rural Florida town hides one of the world's last sacred sanctuaries.



Its beauty, peace and mystery will stay with you for the rest of your life.