

# The Flagler Museum, Palm Beach, Florida: An Attraction Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Henry Flagler. It's not a name I'd come across before our recent visit to Palm Beach, Florida, but it was a name I soon learned much about at the Flagler Museum there.

Located in his former home, known as the White House, the mansion was originally a wedding gift to his wife, Mary Lily Kenal. It contributed to her nickname, "The \$9 Million Bride," thanks to all the gifts he bestowed on her when they married. The property was built in just 18 months between 1902 and 1903 and was described by the New York Herald as, "more wonderful than any palace in Europe."

Sadly, the house had a checkered life. After Mary died in 1925 the house passed to her niece, but she couldn't keep up payments on it. In a bid to bring more money in, an extra building was added on the back, which became a hotel, attracting all the top names of the day, including Walt Disney and his wife. That saved the property for another quarter of a century, but in 1959 the hotel closed and the place was faced with the threat of demolition. Fortunately, Flagler's granddaughter stepped in, and it opened the following year as a museum.

The museum is probably the best use of the house, for this building is so much more than a house. You can see that as soon as you arrive, walking through imposing gates as you head up towards the columns at the entrance of the property. The feeling continues as soon as you get inside and you're greeted with a grand marble staircase, fit for a princess.

As we toured the ground floor of the house with our knowledgeable guide, we learned how technologically advanced this place was for its time. Things you look at now and take for granted were almost unheard of when the house was built. It had electric lighting, central heating and a telephone system, along with 14 bedrooms and many more bathrooms. Bearing that in mind, it's a minor miracle that it was completed so quickly.

Every room we entered had sumptuous furnishings, with many of their rooms based on the finest properties in Europe. The ballroom has echoes of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles Palace, just outside Paris, while the ceiling of the dining room was based on one of the ceilings found at Warwick Castle in England. The drawing room was created in the style of King Louis XVI of France, and the organ and chandeliers in

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the music room have to be seen to be believed. It really is like stepping into a country house or a palace in Europe and it's hard to believe that you're still in Florida.

The feeling continues upstairs, as you take your own self-guided tour of the bedrooms, including the Colonial Chamber, the largest of the guest bedrooms, where the Flaglers' most influential guests would stay. As you can imagine, the master bedroom is the most elaborate of all the bedrooms, complete with marble floor and fixings. By contrast, as you headed back downstairs, you are given a glimpse into the lives of the Flaglers' servants who had nice enough accommodations,, but very basic compared to everyone else who stayed here.

The house is only part of your visit, though. Head outside and you can see one of Henry Flagler's original railroad cars and has every bit of luxury you can imagine. Travelling by railroad back then might not have been fun, but my goodness, they knew how to ensure that it was as pleasant as possible.

In case you're wondering how Flagler made his money, like so many others, he had oil to thank for it, after he went into business with one certain John D. Rockefeller. He moved to Florida and found the hotel facilities and transport system lacking, but realised that it had great potential to attract out of state visitors. He set about realising that potential, creating what would eventually become the Florida East Coast Railway and building hotels along the east coast of Florida. One of the most impressive is the Breakers Hotel, located just a few miles away from the Flagler Museum.

It's certainly an impressive place to see and is not to be missed if you're in Palm Beach, but it's worth knowing that admission doesn't come cheap. It costs \$18 for adults, \$10 for 13-18 year-olds, and \$3 for children aged 6-12, with children under six free of charge. All must be accompanied by an adult.

To find out more about the Flagler Museum, visit <http://www.flaglERMuseum.us> The museum is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and on Sundays from Noon to 5:00 pm. It is closed on Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

[View more of Cheryl's photos of the Flagler Museum here.](#)

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland*

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Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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