



CLUB PEOPLE • JUNE 2017

MY CLUB: THE SCIENTIST

Professor Kathy Willis is the director of science at London's Kew Gardens

As director of science at London's [Kew Gardens](#), Professor Kathy Willis travels the world mapping climate resilience in plants. The Silver Executive Club Member tells *The Club* about her travel bucket list, a food faux pas in Madagascar and why Norway stole her heart



Professor Kathy Willis

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Where do you regularly travel to for work?

I travel once or twice a month as part of my job. Since December 2016 I've been to [Mexico](#), [China](#), [San Diego](#), [Tucson](#), [Sweden](#), [Colombia](#) and [Norway](#). I spend a lot of my life on British Airways flights.

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Where do you love to visit?

Norway – it's beautiful and calming. I've been to [Bergen](#) (*pictured*), mainly because I'm an honorary doctor at the University of Bergen, but have also visited [Oslo](#). I stay at [Hotel Park](#), which is full of antiques.

What's your top travel tip?

As I only tend to travel for work around three days at a time, I try to stick to UK time. Otherwise it's hopeless – you go for three or four days to China, switch to the time zone, then spend your weekend back home unable to do anything.

What kind of traveller are you?

I have three children and we tend to do outdoorsy holidays. We've camped in the [USA](#) and done a cycle camping trip in [Brittany](#), but it rained for two weeks and our gear was soaking wet, so we haven't done that again.



Photo: Getty Images

Where do you escape the crowds in London?

Aside from Kew, I like the [Barbican](#) (*pictured*). It's so interesting architecturally and you can hide away from the rush, have a coffee and browse the shops.

Which destination has surprised you most?

I was bowled over by Madagascar's extraordinary array of plants and animals. The scientists we work with live in a house together in the capital Antananarivo. When I was there, they asked me to serve lunch, and being typically British I scooped small portions of rice onto everyone's plate. They laughed as a huge pot of rice was brought out and plates were piled high and served up with fresh fish.

What's the best thing about flying with British Airways?

I feel safe and the cabin crew are friendly. Now I'm a Silver Executive Club Member, the [lounges](#) are a big plus, although I'm usually late to the airport so sometimes I can only grab a coffee.

Interview by Ross Clarke

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