



The Marvellous Marianne North

Marianne North was a Victorian lady traveler and explorer. She was born in 1830 to a very wealthy family. Her father was an MP and being very upper class they spent their time in three different houses in Hastings, Norfolk and London.

The North family spent a lot of time traveling in Europe and after Marianne's mother died in 1855 she started traveling to more distant countries with her father.

Drawing and painting were thought to be suitable pastimes for young ladies in Victorian England and Marianne always took watercolours and sketch pads wherever she went. Later she was introduced to oil paints. She loved using oils because they had such vivid strong colours. She never went back to watercolours.

Marianne was fascinated by plants and particularly exotic tropical plants. The director of Kew Gardens was one of her father's friends. He gave her a bunch of flowers from a tree called 'The Pride of Burma'. They made her want to visit tropical places and see plants in their natural habitats.

Her father died in 1869, when Marianne was 39, she was devastated. Two years later she began the main travels of her life visiting 15 countries in 14 years. As usual she took her paints and she spent most of her time painting the plants of those countries in their native habitats, with all the other plants and animals around them. In total she painted 832 pictures.

These paintings were very important to scientists in places like Kew Gardens because they could see how the plants grew in the wild and learn more about their habitat.

Marianne designed a gallery for her paintings at Kew Gardens and all 832 from her travels are on display. You can still see them if you visit Kew today.

← Marianne's painting of a pitcher plant, *Nepenthes northiana*, that was named after her.



Marianne's Project Ideas

In 14 years Marianne visited: North America, Jamaica, Brazil, Tenerife, Japan, Singapore, Borneo, Java, Sri Lanka, India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, The Seychelles and Chile. There were no planes flying in those days, she would have had to go by ship and some of the journeys would have been long and possibly dangerous.

- Use google maps, a world map or a globe to map her journey today, have a look and see where she went. Can you find out how long it would take?
- In those days Victorian Women wore a lot of clothes! Heavy dresses, petticoats, bloomers and boots! Do you think that this is suitable for the tropics? It's very hot and wet in the rainforest! What would you wear if you went to the rainforest today? Remember you need to protect your skin from bugs and you don't want to get bitten by snakes.

Marianne had five new plants named after her which she discovered on her travels.

- Have a look around your house and garden and see how many different types of plants you can find. Do you have house plants, are there plants in the garden? How many types and do they have flowers on?
- Choose one of the plants you found and see if you can draw it, you can take a photo with a phone or ipad and draw it from that if you like. If you have paints you could try to paint it like Marianne did. Do your best to draw it accurately and add some plants and animals around it, maybe some birds or butterflies that you think might like that plant.
- Marianne designed her own gallery for her paintings at Kew gardens. See if you can find out where Kew is, you might find some pictures online. Have a go at designing your own gallery, you could draw it or maybe make a model. Maybe you could turn a room of your house into a gallery.



*The Marianne North
gallery at Kew Gardens*

