

## The Imperial War Museum, London

**In Museums and Galleries month, young reviewers in London find the Imperial War Museum offers an up-close-and-personal perspective on life in the 1940s.**

The Imperial War Museum really wasn't what we were expecting. There were planes hanging from the ceiling in a huge open room filled with tanks, missiles and bombs - all of which we could go up to and touch.

The big disappointment for us was an event put on especially for Museum's month, incorrectly named 'Do touch the exhibits!' We reckon the Imperial War Museum could be done under the Trade Descriptions Act as what was advertised as 'a chance to handle and learn more about objects from the two World Wars' turned out to be a 45 minute talk.

It would have been much better if the objects had been passed round, rather than us having to wait until the end to touch them. There were kids from a range of different ages there but it was the younger ones and their grandparents who seemed to be having the most fun. We did, though, enjoy trying on tin helmets, handling grenades (which were not live!) and picking up firebombs with what looked like a giant iron pooper-scoop.

One of our highlights was the Submarine Exhibition, which cleverly showed what it was like living underwater in a confined, metal container - very claustrophobic. There were many interactive activities; we got to lie on the sailors' bunks, and identify various sounds of the sea - torpedoes, battleships and whales

The 'Trench Experience' was really well done. Walking through wartime trenches was a bit like an educational theme park attraction, much better than a collection of display stands in a stuffy museum.

Even so, we could not understand why they had devoted so much space to this temporary exhibition when there was a very similar, permanent exhibit on the next floor.

Walking around the 1940's House exhibit (based on the Channel 4 series) didn't inspire us that much. We all felt wandering through a replica house was something our grandparents were much more likely to relate to.

The museum's Blitz Experience was much better. Sitting on a bench, in a gloomy shelter, with people jumping every time a falling bomb made our seats shake, was a real insight into wartime London.

We came away feeling we knew more about life in wartime, and had generally learned it in a fun and hands-on way. We were really pleased that the Imperial War Museum was making an effort to attract young people.

On a busy Saturday during Museums Month we would have expected more special events to be going on. How about some actors in costume re-enacting what life would have been like?

Having said all that, we wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to other young people.

### About the team

This story was produced by Neil Hampton, 14, Shannon Carr, 13, Daniela Sidoli, 13, and Jonathan Ijoyah, 11. It was published in the Museums Journal. For more reviews, see column, left.

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