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TRI CITY NATIONAL BANK



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For immediate release

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Ticket Sales Begin for World-Class Chinese Lantern Festival at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Sept. 22–Oct. 22

MILWAUKEE (Aug. 8, 2017) — Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced today that tickets to the world-class Chinese lantern festival, China Lights: The Magic Returns, are now on sale at chinalights.org and at various Parks locations.

The magical glow of nearly 50 larger-than-life sculptural displays will illuminate 10 acres of Milwaukee's renowned Boerner Botanical Gardens, in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI. The festival, presented by Tri City National Bank, also celebrates Asian culture with professional entertainment, a bustling marketplace, and food. The event runs from Sept. 22–Oct. 22, Tuesday through Sunday, from 5:30–10 p.m., with a 5 p.m. opening for people who purchase the VIP ticket package. The festival will be closed Mondays.

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Lantern Displays

About 95 percent of the themed lantern displays will be new this year. (Only the two most popular displays will be returning—the 200-foot-long dragon and the mythical quilin.) In addition to new themes, some displays will be constructed using innovative materials and techniques. This year's show-stoppers are expected to be the Phoenix, which rivals the dragon in size; the Pagoda Palace, which is made up of 60,000 plates, cups, and spoons; and the Elephant, which lets visitors pedal a bicycle to power the lights. The Pagoda Palace will be located in front of the Education and Visitor Center so that the public may view construction through completion of the display.

Displays are made up of more than 1,000 components. Artisans from Zigong City, China are on-site and have begun work on the show, welding metal frames, lighting the frames from within using various types and colors of LED lights, covering the framework in brightly colored fabric, and hand-painting finishing touches. Some of the exhibits will include animation. Lanterns will range in size from about three feet to three stories high.

One-way traffic patterns through the display areas will be used.

Cultural Entertainment

Each night at about 6:15 p.m. members of the entertainment staff will lead the Illumination Parade, a procession through the displays in the Shrub Mall. The parade will conclude at the main stage in time for the first performance of the night.

Two entertainment stages will highlight folk-culture. Performance times will be staggered between the stages beginning at about 6:30 p.m. Bonus shows will be added Fridays through Sundays. Schedules will be posted on-site. Professional acrobats, martial artists, and musicians will be among the performers. One stage will offer quieter entertainment.

Weekend Themes

Each weekend will have a special theme.

- Sept. 22–24, Opening Weekend will kick off the festival with a ceremony, giveaways, and tours.
- Sept. 29–Oct 1, Asian Cuisine/Chicago Weekend will offer cooking demonstrations and food specials as well as a free premium to the first 3,000 visitors presenting an Illinois driver's license.
- Oct. 6–8, Moon Festival Weekend, presented by the Milwaukee Chinese Community Center and OCA–Wisconsin, will feature demonstrations of Chinese folk arts
- Oct. 13–15, Cultural Weekend will focus on Chinese cultural arts with demonstrations, lectures, and videos.
- Oct 20–22, Closing Weekend will feature giveaways and the closing ceremony.

Food & Beverage

Throughout the festival a wide variety of Asian and Western food options will be available, from Kowloon Chicken to hot dogs—or the fusion of cultures in the Blueberry Pie Egg Roll. Vendors include Tanpopo/Greenfish, Lychee Garden, Zilli Hospitality Group, Gift of Wings Grill, Wisconsin Fried Cheese Curds, and T. Best Kettle Corn Co. Beverages available will range from Tsingtao beer and Ozeki Sake to domestic and premium tap beers and sodas. Vendors will service two concessions areas—both with picnic table seating, one with a quieter atmosphere.

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Free Parking & Shuttle Service

One-way traffic through Whitnall Park will lead to parking lots which also have one-way traffic. Free parking, has been expanded to nine lots, all of which are lighted. The preferred close-up paved parking nearest the China Lights entrance will be available on a first-come, first-served basis to people with disabilities who have state-issued disabled parking or disabled Veteran parking license plates, or the state-issued disabled parking identification card. Also expanded is the free shuttle service from outer lots to the China Lights entrance. New drop-off areas have been added for taxis/uber and motorcoaches.

Admission/Fees

China Lights admission tickets will be valid any night of the regular 2017 schedule.

Admission is \$15 for adults (age 18–59) and \$10 for seniors (age 60 and up) and children (age 5-17). Children under age 5 will be admitted free. For \$30, a patron may purchase a one-visit VIP ticket, which includes early admission at 5 p.m., the mobile guide, a collectible Chinese hand fan which serves as the admission ticket to a private tour at 5:15 p.m., and optional participation in the Illumination Parade. Offered exclusively at the Botanical Gardens will be a season pass, which allows one adult repeat visits for \$45. Free parking is included with all admission tickets.

A mobile guide, which requires a cell phone for use, will provide background information on the displays. The guide is available for \$5 on-site.

Tickets may be purchased in advance on-line at chinalights.org, Boerner Botanical Gardens, and the following Milwaukee County Parks point-of-sale locations: Milwaukee County Parks Public Services Office (9480 Watertown Plank Road), Mitchell Park Domes (524 S. Layton Blvd.), Brown Deer Park Golf Course (7625 N. Range Line Road), Currie Golf Course (3535 N. Mayfair Road), Dretzka Golf Course (12020 W. Bradley Road), Grant Golf Course (100 E. Hawthorne Ave.), Greenfield Golf Course (12035 W. Greenfield Ave.), Hansen Golf Course (9800 W. Underwood Creek Parkway), Lincoln Park Golf Course (1000 W. Hampton Ave.), Oakwood Golf Course (3600 W. Oakwood Road), Warnimont Golf Course (5400 S. Lake Drive), and Whitnall Golf Course (6751 S. 92nd St.).

Expedited night-time ticket purchases will be available on-site at the outdoor ticket office.

Exclusive Preview Night

An exclusive preview night will be offered Sept. 20, from 6–9 p.m. All proceeds will go to support Milwaukee County Parks through The Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3). Tickets include VIP Parking, a collectible Chinese hand fan, Asian and Western hors d'oeuvres and beverages, behind-the-scenes tours, three stage performances, demonstrations by Chinese artisans, an admission ticket to the 2017 China Lights, and the mobile guide. Attire for the event is casual. Tickets are \$100 per person.

China Lights is brought to Milwaukee through the partnership of the Milwaukee County Parks and The Park People of Milwaukee County, with support from Travel Wisconsin. The event is presented by Tri City National Bank and is sponsored by We Energies.

For more information, visit chinalights.org.

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Background

In 2016, Milwaukee became the first Midwestern city to schedule the unequalled China Lights. Visitors from across the state, the Midwest, and beyond attended the show. At one point, demand for tickets to the show was so great that sales had to be suspended.

As part of China's five-year economic plan, in 2015 the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce developed a campaign with the goal of holding 100 lantern shows in 100 cities worldwide to spread Chinese traditional culture and promote cultural exchange. The custom of lighting lanterns has occurred for thousands of years, and Zigong City now boasts 380 lantern-making companies with 80,000 lantern artisans.

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