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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. 21–Oct. 21

MILWAUKEE (Aug. 8, 2018) — Organizers of China Lights, the wildly popular Chinese lantern festival at Milwaukee County’s renowned Boerner Botanical Gardens, announced today that tickets to China Lights: Panda-Mania are now on sale at chinalights.org and at various Parks locations.

The magical glow of 45 larger-than-life sculptural lantern displays will illuminate the renowned nine-acre Boerner Botanical Gardens, in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI. The festival, presented by Tri City National Bank, will also celebrate Asian folk-culture with professional entertainment sponsored by We Energies, a bustling marketplace, and a variety of food and beverage selections. The event runs from Sept. 21–Oct. 21, 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.

Lantern Displays

Along the three-quarter-mile walking route through the Botanical Gardens, panda-habitat lantern displays will be featured among the three-foot to three-story exhibits. Some of the individual panda lanterns have already arrived.

Visitors to China Lights will traverse one-way paths to see exhibits focused on Chinese culture, plants, and animals. Some displays will include animation, and a new area will highlight interactive displays, designed with children in mind. Near the interactive area, a new rest area will accommodate about 20 people.

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Displays are made of more than 1,000 components. Artisans from Zigong City, China will be on-site and working on the show, welding metal frames, lighting the frames from within using LED lights, covering the framework in brightly colored fabric, and hand-painting finishing touches.

In front of the Education & Visitor Center, a giant panda display will be constructed almost entirely of ping-pong balls. This display may be viewed free of charge.

Weekend Themes

Special weekend themes will be the following:

- Sept. 21–23, Opening Weekend
- Sept. 28–30, Asian Cuisine/Chicago Weekend, sponsored by MillerCoors
- Oct. 5–7, Moon Festival Weekend, presented by the Milwaukee Chinese Community Center and OCA–Wisconsin
- Oct. 12–14, Cultural Weekend, sponsored by the Reiman Foundation
- Oct 19–21, Closing Weekend

Cultural Entertainment

Each night at about 6:15 p.m., entertainment staff, dressed as a lion, will lead a procession through the audience in the Shrub Mall of the Botanical Gardens. The parade will conclude at the main stage in time for the first performance of the night.

Stage performances will highlight folk arts and culture, with professional acrobats, martial artists, and musicians from China. Entertainment will vary nightly, and bonus shows will be added Fridays through Sundays. Schedules for the two performance stages will be posted at the Welcome Gate.

Food & Beverage

Throughout the festival a wide variety of Asian and Western food options will be available, from Mongolian Beef to hot dogs. Vendors at this year's event include China D'Lite Café, Gift of Wings Grill, Heavenly Roasted Nuts, T. Best Kettle Corn Co., Tanpopo/Greenfish, Wisconsin Fried Cheese Curds, and Zilli Hospitality Group. Beverages available will range from Tsingtao beer and Ozeki Sake to domestic and premium tap beers and sodas. Hot beverages will also be available. Vendors will service two concessions areas—both with picnic table seating.

Expanded Complimentary Parking & Shuttle Service

Park Rangers will direct traffic through Whitnall Park, and electronic boards will provide additional parking information, in real time, for visitors heading to the show. First-come, first-served, complimentary parking will expand to 10 fully lighted parking lots. Complimentary shuttle service from the four outer lots will switch from a route system to a dispatch system to better serve event-goers. The shuttle service will also include an audio introduction to the show.

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.

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Designated drop-off areas for authorized taxis/uber and motorcoaches will also be located near the China Lights entrance. Motorcoach operators must make advance arrangements.

Admission/Fees

China Lights admission tickets will be valid any night of the regular 2018 schedule. Ticket prices are the following: Child, age 5-17, \$12; Adult, age 18-59, \$20; Senior, age 60+, \$12; one-visit individual VIP package, \$30; and unlimited-visit individual Season Pass, \$50. The VIP package includes early entry (5 p.m.), a collectible premium, a tour (5:15 p.m.), participation in the Illumination Parade (6:15 p.m.), VIP seating at the first show of the night, and the mobile guide. The mobile guide, which requires a cell phone for use, provides a cultural perspective on the displays. The guide is also available for \$5 on-site.

E-Tickets, which include priority access at the Welcome Gate, may be purchased in advance on-line at chinalights.org. The e-ticket can be scanned from a print copy or directly from a phone.

Tickets may also be purchased in person at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Milwaukee County Parks Public Services Office (9480 Watertown Plank Road), and golf courses at Brown Deer Park (7625 N. Range Line Road), Currie Park (3535 N. Mayfair Road), Dretzka Park (12020 W. Bradley Road), Grant Park (100 E. Hawthorne Ave.), Greenfield Park (12035 W. Greenfield Ave.), Hansen Park (9800 W. Underwood Creek Parkway), Lincoln Park (1000 W. Hampton Ave.), Oakwood Park (3600 W. Oakwood Road), Warnimont Park (5400 S. Lake Drive), and Whitnall Park (6751 S. 92nd St.).

Same-night tickets will be available on-site at the outdoor ticket office starting at 4 p.m.

For more information, call 888-733-1888 or visit chinalights.org.

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BACKGROUND

For the past three years, Festival Pro LLC, a Milwaukee-based special-events producer, worked with the Sichuan Tianyu Arts & Culture, Inc., in cooperation with Zigong City and the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce, to bring the China Lights lantern festival to Milwaukee

In 2016, Milwaukee became the first Midwestern city to host the unequalled China Lights. In each of the past two years, more than 100,000 visitors attended the show.

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.

According to the Zigong Lantern Culture & Industry Group, Zigong City now boasts nearly 600 registered lantern-making companies with 40,000 employees.