

## Everything is illuminated

March 09, 2016 8:45 AM Mary Cross  
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Visitors will encounter a 192-foot-long dragon and other shimmering silk sculptures at New Orleans City Park's China Lights display. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Through May 1, the Botanical Garden inside New Orleans City Park (1 Palm Dr.) will be inhabited by glimmering, grandiose creatures and fiery flora, as visitors wander through the new [China Lights](#) exhibit. Open Tuesday through Sunday, the family-friendly outdoor event displays dazzling symbols of Chinese culture rendered in silk and lights.

“The term lantern festival is a bit of a misnomer, because these are not just hanging lanterns. We have quite impressive large figures,” says John Hopper, New Orleans City Park’s public affairs director.

The Botanical Garden is currently adorned with over 30 vivid silk-covered installations, including ornate, gleaming archways, a tremendous 192-foot-long golden dragon, a towering multistory pagoda and a magnificent fan embellished with fluttering butterflies.

Some pieces use LED lighting to emulate movement, while others resemble delicate stained glass panels that have sprung to life.

“The detail is in the shaping of the metal rods making each structure. It’s amazing what you can do with silk,” says Hopper.

A team of artisans from Sichuan Tianyu (which is located in Zigong, China) created the displays.

With prior exhibits in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and in Spokane, Washington, the lustrous pieces have been viewed by international audiences.

China Lights will feature live entertainment nightly at 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m., including performances from Chinese plate spinners and contortionists.

The park is also offering a new concessions menu inspired by the exhibit.

Visitors can snack on Sriracha popcorn, sample a slice of the General Harry Lee’s chicken pizza topped with fried chicken pieces in a General Tso’s sauce or order the uniquely sweet s’more egg roll stuffed with Nutella and marshmallow cream.

[Tickets](#) are available online.

“It’s amazing what you can do with silk.”

John Hopper, public affairs director for New Orleans City Park