

Newsday

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A drive-thru lantern festival makes its debut on Long Island



"A Bug's Night: A Drive-Thru Adventure," a themed lantern festival coming to the Nassau County Museum of Art in Roslyn for the first time from Oct. 22 to Jan. 9. Credit: NYC Winter Lantern Festival

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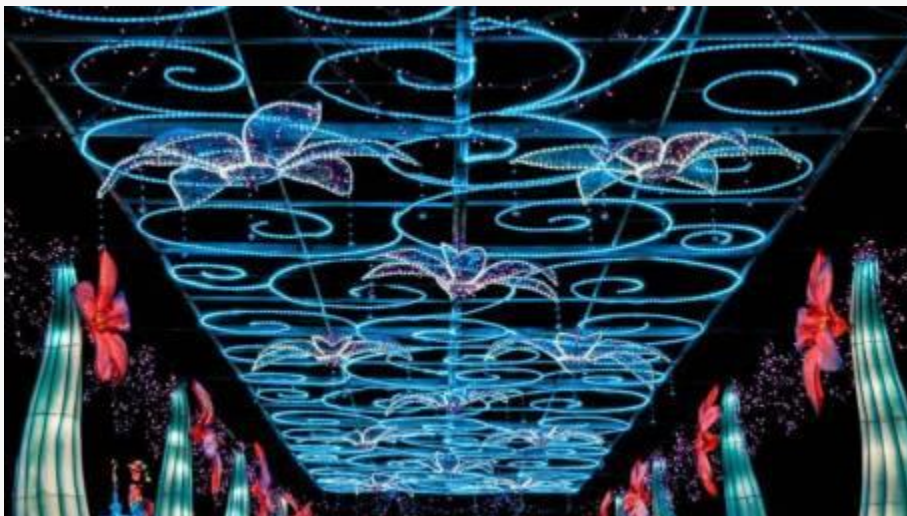
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Imagine your car is a beetle crawling through the jungle during "A Bug's Night: A Drive-Thru Adventure," a themed lantern festival happening at the Nassau County Museum of Art in Roslyn for the first time Friday through Jan. 9.

Pass tropical, colorful, larger-than-life flowers, glowing lizards and enormous dinosaurs while rolling through the exhibit; gawk at pandas and a tiger and a crocodile. "You are tiny and everything else is big," says Sarah Jordan, marketing assistant for the New York City Winter Lantern Festival. Cars will also pass through a light tunnel with video projection lighting that will reflect off the trees.

The lanterns aren't like those a person would carry around at a campground. Instead, elaborate sculptures are handmade in China, and artists come over from China to assemble them, Jordan says. Steel frames are covered with colorful silk fabric; LED lighting is placed inside the displays to illuminate them.



"A Bug's Night: A Drive-Thru Adventure" is a themed lantern festival.

"It just goes on forever," says Charles Riley, museum director. "It's epic. It's an illuminated fantasy. I love to see that this is a celebration of Chinese culture."

‘GIFT FOR OUR EYES’

The event is an expansion of the walk-thru New York City Winter Lantern Festival launched in 2018 at Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden on Staten Island by Haokun Liu, who was then a 25-year-old recent

sports business graduate of New York University. While he was studying in Manhattan, Liu noticed other types of holiday light festivals happening in November and December and wanted to bring the Chinese lantern festival to New York City as well.

In China, the lantern festival is a celebration in February or March, shortly after the Lunar New Year. Houses are decorated with colorful lanterns and the holiday's hope is for reconciliation, peace and forgiveness for the coming year.

Liu, now 28, says he thought bringing the Chinese tradition to New York during the holiday season here could give families something happy to experience together. "I made a decision to bring the traditional handmade lanterns from China to New York City because I thought people would love it," he says, and he was right. Over the past few years, the event has drawn 150,000 visitors, he says. "They say, 'Your lanterns are a beautiful gift for our eyes,' " Liu says.

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