

Entertainment

Around the World in an Afternoon at the Morris Arboretum

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By Allison Titus
Correspondent

Would you like to travel to Egypt? How about Paris or Italy? What if I told you that you could travel to 12 different wonders of the world without leaving Pennsylvania? Well – this summer you can!

Now open until Labor Day, the Morris Arboretum's Garden Railway is a display of model trains, accompanied by re-creation sculptures of important architectural buildings from around the world. The display includes seven loops, 15 different railroad lines, nine bridges and two cable cars that speed through a colorful garden on a quarter-mile of track.

The Morris Arboretum holds garden railway events twice each year — once in the winter and once in the summer. The winter railway event opens the day after Thanksgiving and runs until the end of December. The winter railway is always holiday-themed — trains carry little packages and gifts through tunnels and up hills while the sparkling lights showcase the Philadelphia landmark sculptures.

The summer railway events have a special theme each year and include more sculptures than just Philadelphia landmarks. This summer the theme is “Around the World in an Afternoon” and the 12 sculptures on display include the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Hagia Sophia, Tikal, Petra, Maachu Picchu, the Giza Pyramid, the Arch de Triomphe, Alexandria Light House, the Sphinx and the Easter Island figures. Sculptures of famous Philadelphia landmarks are also included in the garden.

Susan Crane, marketing director at the Morris Arboretum, relived the past when she said, “When we first started the garden railway event, we thought it would be just a temporary exhibit. But the response from the public was so overwhelming that we continued having the events, and now here we are, more than 15 years later.”

Jarrod McNertney, a member of the construction crew of Applied Imagination, provided some background behind the sculptures.

He said, “Paul Busse is the mastermind behind everything. He created the company in the mid '80s — the sculptures are all of his creations.” He also said, “We travel all across the country setting up events; some events take longer than others — it takes about two days to set up in Columbus but about six days to set up an event in New York City.”

On the arboretum's website, its mission is noted as follows: “Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania is a historic public garden and educational institution. It promotes an understanding of the relationship between plants, people and place through programs that integrate science, art and the humanities.”

With the arboretum's mission in mind, it only makes sense that this magical world in the garden is made of entirely natural materials — both the display and the sculptures — minus the polyurethane used on the sculptures to ensure durability.

Twigs, branches, vines and logs were used to decorate sculptures, create tunnels, build bridges, and set up a trestle bridge guests can walk under. Leaves, mosses, flowers, seeds, stones and acorns were also used to decorate the buildings and to enhance the overall setting.

Susan Crane said, "Something really special about this event is that despite the huge amount of visitors, it never feels crowded — there are 92 acres to explore, and room for kids to run around. Once you enter the garden, it's a beautiful colorful garden with tons of open space and more than 12,000 labeled plants and trees to explore. It's a magical fantasy world integrated with the outside planting environment."

Crane stressed that "the arboretum has so much to offer, not only in its special exhibits. It's just a wonderful place to feel safe and experience nature. We try to introduce visitors young and old to the value of the natural world."

The mystical garden and inviting display will be open to visitors all summer long. Come out, leave your troubles behind and take a trip around the world in only one afternoon.

IF YOU GO:

The Garden Railway

is on display at

the Morris Arboretum,

of the University

of Pennsylvania,

100 E. Northwestern Ave.,

Chestnut Hill, PA 19118,

through Labor Day.

Hours: weekdays, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.,

Thursdays, to 8:30 p.m.,

& weekends, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Admission: \$16, adults;

\$7, children;

ages 3 & under, free;

members, free.

Info: 215-247-5777 or

www.morrisarboretum.org.

URL: <http://www.montgomerynews.com/articles/2013/07/30/entertainment/doc51a4dcf661a28661797656.prt>

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