



JINGLE ALL THE WAY

Eiteljorg Museum brings back Jingle Rails train display

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The cacophony of chugging trains filled the cavernous space inside the Eiteljorg Museum.

The tiny trains looped around nearly a mile of track, crossing suspension bridges and hugging cliffside curves. Disappearing into mountain-side tunnels and reemerging in entirely new landscapes, the trains were on an unending rotation, traversing from Indianapolis to Las Vegas to the Grand Canyon, among many other locales.

Lost in the childhood wonder of so many model trains were the grandeur of the miniature landscapes that make up the Jingle Rails exhibition.

"This really works well with the Eiteljorg, because of our focus on Western art," said Kathryn Haigh, Eiteljorg president and CEO. "We're really taking you and transporting you through the iconic buildings that are in Indiana, but then also taking you out West.

"It takes you to a different place."

Jingle Rails has returned to the Eiteljorg Museum once

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RAILS

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again, combining holiday whimsy with painstakingly crafted worlds constructed entirely out of natural materials. Nine working ultra-sized G-scale/gauge model trains chug over nearly 1,200 feet of track.

Trains will start in downtown Indianapolis, with the Soldiers & Sailors Monument and Lucas Oil Stadium, before pushing westward to places such as the Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. A painstaking recreation of the Indiana State Fairgrounds during fairtime as a large-scale model of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway round out the display.

"This is a Hoosier holiday tradition," Haigh said. "There are so many great things to see. We have all of the old favorites here."

To bring the magic of Jingle Rails alive, the Eiteljorg turns to a unique partner — Applied Imagination, a design firm out of Alexandria, Kentucky. The company was founded by model train enthusiast and landscape architect Paul Busse, and has



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A replica of downtown Indianapolis in this year's version of Jingle Rails at the Eiteljorg Museum.

created garden railroads for the New York Botanical Garden, United States Botanic Garden in Washington, the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Bellagio Conservatory in Las Vegas.

The company uses tree bark, twigs, leaves, nuts, pine cones and other woody materials to craft their landmarks. Each is a wonder to behold.

"All of the materials are stored in a warehouse here in Indianapolis, and the people from Applied Imagination start with a floor-plan and get everything set up," said Mike Davis, a model train volunteer at the Eiteljorg during Jingle Rails.

Trains pass through tunnels carved in mountains made of tree trunks,

frontier villages and stagecoaches. Waterfalls tumble over ledges and into basins that meander through canyons made of bark. Hot air balloons hang from the ceiling.

Yellowstone National Park features a small working Old Faithful. Hoover Dam holds back "water" made of resin. On a small-scale Las Vegas strip, trains wove through Caesar's Palace, a digital "Elvis!" sign and an illuminated slot machine.

"We're a Western museum, so we'd like to have things from the West — in keeping with that theme," Davis said. "They start with a picture of the actual landmark, and they have the knowledge of how to build that."

Jingle Rails has been a



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A replica of the Soldiers & Sailors Monument and other downtown Indianapolis landmarks in this year's version of Jingle Rails.

tradition at the Eiteljorg since 2010. The concept was to create a holiday tradition for the museum, which organizers could put on year after year to attract more visitors to the building.

The exhibit is included with general museum admission, so visitors can take advantage of all the museum has to offer. With the display open through Jan. 15, and with extended hours to 7 p.m. on select days between Dec. 16 to 30, opportunities are available catering to all visitors' schedules.

"It's my goal to be as accessible to as many people as possible. If people work 9 to 5, it's hard for them to get here by 5 p.m. every day," Haigh said.