

BELLE ISLE HOLIDAY STROLL AUDIO TOUR TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to the Belle Isle Holiday Roll!

For over 30 years, families have gathered at the Belle Isle Holiday Stroll to bring season's greetings with activities, performances, and holiday cheer. Since we will not be together in person this year, The Belle Isle Conservancy invites you to spark up your imagination, grab your coloring book, and get ready to create your own holiday fun as we travel along this journey through Detroit's favorite island jewel!

This audio tour is designed for you to listen along as you drive around the island. Please, be safe! Remember to stay socially distant, keep your eyes on the road, observe the speed limit, buckle up, mask up, and, of course, have fun!

Share your stories with us by tagging us on social media @belleisleconservancy and using the hashtag **#BelleIsleHolidayStroll** on your posts. Off we go?

The first stop on this holiday adventure is Sunset Point. Once you cross the MacArthur Bridge, take a right at the fork in the road and roll down Sunset Drive. Do you see the Sunset Point comfort station? Great, you've arrived!

Stop #1 Sunset Point - Take a look around Sunset Point, the westernmost tip of Belle Isle. As the sun goes down in the western sky, this is arguably the best place in town to view the magnificent sunsets. Wouldn't you agree? As you're exploring, imagine this as the first stop in a magical winter wonderland. What does that winter wonderland look like? Sound like? Smell like?

Now, think about your favorite winter tradition or holidays with your family. Use the Sunset Point page in your coloring book to decorate your own winter wonderland at Sunset Point with your family's celebrations in mind.

Before you head to the next stop, find the photo frame, and capture the moment. The view of the City's skyline along the crisp, frozen river is the perfect place to capture a memory. Say "Holiday Roll!" and show off your best smile before heading off to the Scott Fountain.

Stop #2 Scott Fountain - Follow the curve along Sunset Drive, and make a left onto Fountain Drive. You have arrived at the James Scott Memorial Fountain. During the summer, this fountain delights visitors with its spray of water from the 109 spouts planted in the mouths of its turtles, cherubs, and lions. But today, in our magical winter wonderland, I imagine that it looks like a magnificent ice castle. What do you see?

And as you circle the fountain, do you notice Mr. James Scott seated on its east side?

This fountain was completed in 1923 as an homage to James Scott. A wealthy but very disgruntled guy who lived in Detroit when the City was very young. It is said that he was quite mean, cold, and not very well-liked. Here's an example: the legend of "Scott's Folly" is about a mansion that James Scott built but never planned to live in. As beautiful as the house was in the front, the back was nothing but a high brick wall to block his neighbor's light and devalue their lot. Now, isn't that awful?! Sounds like an ice king to me..what do you think?

You might be wondering, why is there a monument dedicated to such a mean person? Well, when James Scott died in 1910, he left a gift to the City of Detroit and included a peculiar request with his gift. He asked to have a grand fountain built with a life-sized statue of himself made to carry his name. So, the City built the fountain, with a giant bronze statue of James Scott seated in the perfect spot to be sprayed in the face by the water from his own fountain!

The Scott Fountain has the highest ground-level line of sight on the island. It gives you a perfect view of our next destination, the Belle Isle Casino. But before you take off, take a mental picture, or an actual picture, and think about how you'll decorate your own fountain page in your coloring book.

Stop # 3 Belle Isle Casino- Exit Fountain Drive onto Casino Way, and let's roll on over to the Belle Isle Casino. The Belle Isle Casino you see was built in 1908 for visitors to rest and have a quick meal or get out of extreme weather while on the island. People are always surprised to learn that it was not specifically a venue for gambling or gaming, as its name might suggest.

But, over the years, the Casino has been the backdrop for a variety of occasions hosted by island visitors. Special moments like weddings, family reunions, birthday parties, and much more all happen at the Belle Isle Casino. The Casino has even hosted the Belle Isle Holiday Stroll!

Other than celebrating with family, one of the most popular things to do during the holidays is to shop for special gifts. For the 2019 Holiday Stroll, the Casino was transformed into a holiday marketplace.

Imagine walking through the doors to see a beautiful chandelier, marble staircases, holiday decor, the sounds of an orchestra in the background, and shoppers bounding about at the vendors. Feels warm, like the holidays! Now imagine that **you** are in charge of a winter/holiday celebration for your loved ones. What kind of celebration would you host at the Belle Isle Casino? How would you decorate it to include your favorite traditions? Find the Belle Isle Casino in your coloring book and bring your celebration to life!

Stop #4 Flynn Pavilion - Continue to the Flynn Pavilion. Make a left along Casino Way toward Central Avenue, turn right on Central, and another quick right onto Muse. Drive past the red Casino Way Bridge and by the Kresge Pavillion onto Loiter Way. The Flynn Memorial Pavillion is on the right.

The original Flynn Skating Pavilion was designed by J. Robert F. Swanson (Jons Robert Ferdinand Swanson) and opened on January 1, 1893. The pavilion welcomed visitors year-round, serving shelter and refreshments in the warmer months, and offering ice skating rentals for skating the frozen Lake Takoma in the winter months. The grand two-story structure was a favorite site on the island. In fact, it was used so much that it had become worn beyond repair and was demolished in 1950.

The building you see today was designed by Eero Saarinen and is situated beside the original building site. This building opened in 1950.

After a renovation of the building was completed in 2005, the Flynn reopened as an event venue. Like the Casino, The Flynn hosts private gatherings and public events like the Holiday Stroll!

Though it isn't as large as the original, the Flynn, as it is affectionately called, continued to offer a similar concession for many years. It even has a small observation box above the back door for staff members to monitor ice skaters.

The huge windows allow you to take a peek inside. What kind of things would you do at the Flynn? Take a walk around to the back to get a view of Lake Takoma. What do you see? Are there animals? Do you see the old observation box above the back doors?

Can you imagine yourself ice skating on the lake? What winter wonderland would be complete without it? It would unquestionably be a good time! Now, head back to the car, and let's roll.

Stop #5 Nancy Brown Peace Carillon - Along Loiter Way, past the Remick Bandshell to the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon. The Carillon grounds are home to many different symbols of peace that, when open, are incredibly impressive, especially during the Holiday Season. The row of benches along the base and the all-season Oudolf Garden are elements of this important stop. The two circular relief carvings facing the Canadian shore honor peace at the United States-Canadian border. The inscription on the north side reads, "With this everlasting witness we keep with our neighbors as they have kept peace with us throughout the years" and on the south side, "Dedicated to the Glory of God. And in hope of everlasting peace between the peoples of the dominion of Canada and of the United States of America."

The namesake for this site, Nancy Brown, was a beloved advice columnist and editor of The Detroit News' "Experience Column" from 1919 to 1942. At the recommendation of one of her readers, she led a citywide campaign and Easter Sunrise Service to honor the Depression-era peace movement. The Easter Sunrise Service attracted over 50,000 guests, covering nearly two and a half acres of the park. Can you imagine 50,000 people on Belle Isle at the same time?! Me neither! The Sunrise Service was so successful that her readers prompted, and funded, the monument we see today. Readers contributed nickels and dimes to build the tower and even got to see Brown, who many had never seen because she was notoriously elusive, at a dedication on July 17, 1940. The 98 foot, 49-bell tower plays on the hour, quarter-hour, and half-hour. Can you hear it? What sounds does it make?? As you color the Carillon in your book, let the sound of the bells remind you of peace at the holidays...

Stop # 6 The Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory-Continuing along Loiter way, turn into the parking lot to stop and explore our next destinations; the Belle Isle Aquarium and the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.

Whether it's warm or cold, these two iconic Detroit landmarks are a sight to behold. From the majesty of the architecture to the mystery of plants and animals you'll find inside, there's no mistaking that these two are visitor favorites all year round. And they're even more special with the sweet melodies and joy of laughter slipping out into the air during the annual Belle Isle Holiday Stroll. And be on the lookout for Pavo, the cat. He's usually hanging around the Conservatory!

Construction began on the Aquarium and Horticultural Building in 1902 and opened August 18, 1904. In the original Albert Kahn design, guests could walk between the buildings without exiting. The Aquarium and Conservatory have seen many changes, including the addition of The Lily Pond in 1936, The replacement of the Conservatory's original wooden frame with a skeleton of steel and aluminum in 1949, the dedication and renaming of the Conservatory to Anna Scripps Whitcomb on April 6, 1955. Anna Scripps Whitcomb donated her 600 plant orchid collection to the City of Detroit. And, finally, the Show House renovation in 1981.

The Conservatory is divided into five distinct indoor sections: the Palm House, the Tropical House, the Cactus House, a sunken Fernery, and the Show House... and outside a 13-acre parcel of land with the formal gardens and Lily Pond. If you look closely, you will see the Levi Barbour Memorial Fountain designed by Marshall Fredericks, a Japanese Tohro donated to Detroit in 1985 by our sister city Toyota, Japan, and the Peacock Sundial erected in 1927.

On to the aquatic masterpiece, the Aquarium. Once the third-largest in the world, the Belle Isle Aquarium can only be described as momentous. New exhibits and fish continue to be added, tanks restored, and history preserved for generations to come. Guests can travel worldwide and explore the Great Lakes and waters of the world with one of the largest collections of air-breathing fish in the world and the only known collection of all seven species of Gar in North America. During Belle Isle Holiday Stroll, you can find the entryway festively decorative with winter themes and the gallery bustling with sounds of live music and joyful visitors exploring the many aquatic creatures on display.

Stop #7 Dossin Great Lakes Museum. Turn right out of the parking lot onto Inselruhe. Go over the Inselruhe Bridge toward The Strand and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum.

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is an extension of the Detroit Historical Museum dedicated to the Great Lakes and Detroit's role in maritime history. This 16,000 square foot museum boasts exhibits that tell more than 300 years of the region and the significance that our waterways have in our region's industrial and social history. Each year for the Belle Isle Holiday Stroll, the Dossin is filled with cheer as visitors decorate cookies, warm up with hot chocolate, and the staff leads carols for all to join. Now head over near the water and take a look out onto the river.... What do you think is happening out there? Imagine yourself aboard a ship traveling along the Detroit River in the winter. What would you be doing? What traditions would you have? How would you decorate the Dossin's page in your coloring book to celebrate maritime in the winter? Don't forget to snap a photo before you go!

Stop #8 Belle Isle Nature Center- Let's keep rolling to the Belle Isle Nature Center, an extension of the Detroit Zoological Society. Continue along The Strand, past Woodside Drive, The South Fishing Pier, Lake Okanoka, and the Blue Heron Lagoon onto Lakeside Drive and arrive at the Belle Isle Nature Center. Opened in 1977 and re-opened as the Belle Isle Nature Zoo in 2005, you're sure to be in awe and wonder when you visit this spot. From the educational programs like Nature Tots, where children ages 2-4 and their families can enjoy stories, crafts, and activities and use their senses to explore nature together or Belle Isle Nature Walks to explore the plant and animal life through the changing seasons or themed school field trips during the year, to Santa's workshop and music JUST for Holiday Stroll, the Nature Center is full of things for the whole family to explore. How could you add your own traditions to the Nature Center's magic on your coloring page?

Stop #9 Belle Isle Boat House- Follow Lakeside Drive to Riverbank drive back toward the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle's oldest tenant. The Belle Isle Boat House.

The Detroit Boat Club (established in 1839) moved to the island's shore in 1890. The current boathouse is a replica Gaztelii maintained by Friends of Detroit Rowing and the Detroit Boat Club Crew. Designed by architect Alpheus W. Chittenden and completed in 1902, it is the first reinforced concrete structure built in the country. When the weather permits, the [Detroit Boat Club Crew provides competitive and recreational programs for men and women of all ages and abilities, as well as training opportunities for rowers competing on national, international, and Olympic levels.](#) But, for Holiday Stroll, the Boat House transforms into a cozy winter hideaway with a make-your-own trail mix station, hot cocoa, face

painting, and we can't forget the sounds of the chorus dancing through the air...Holidays at the Belle Isle Boat House are a most exciting time!

Take a look at your coloring book to see for yourself! Color in these pages to bring the scene to life. And, if you close your eyes and imagine, you can almost smell the aromas from the food trucks in the parking lot...savor the moment we've almost reached the end of today's tour. But don't be sad, you can come back whenever you'd like! We'd love to have you.

Belle Isle Bridge - Friend, our time together has come to an end. We've now gone around the isle and back again. So, au revoir, back over the MacArthur Bridge we go, saying until next time to the flower clock and our beloved island jewel.

There have been three bridges to Belle Isle. Between them, they've carried countless numbers of Detroiters and friends to an island paradise in the middle of the Detroit River. The current bridge, renamed for WWII 5-star General Douglas MacArthur in 1942, sees about 4 million visitors each year, with 2000 or more just for the Belle Isle Holiday Stroll. The MacArthur is the longest concrete deck arched bridge in Michigan at nearly ½ mile long. Oh no, check your book! It looks like we've forgotten to trim the bridge, will you decorate it for us?

So long, farewell. It's time to bid you adieu. Remember, Belle Isle is a magical place with things to see and do all year round. So, come back again and again, we'll be here. And when you miss us, grab your book to remember that great time you had on the Belle Isle Holiday Roll. I hope you've enjoyed yourself! See you next year!

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