

# Belle Isle Hosts Fun and Games

Cathy West

1967

Belle Isle at springtime is a world in itself.

Go with some friends and rent tandem bikes (make sure you wear something you don't mind getting wet), and head down Central towards the Scott Memorial Fountain. The main fountain is a gigantic monstrosity with beautiful turtle statues; further down is a step fountain that's fun to climb on. All that water ends up in the lagoon that makes a pretty nice foot bath if you can get into it without a guard seeing you.

Back on the bikes, you head for the old Casino restaurant on Loiter Way. It's closed now, which is just as well because the hot dog stands around the island make good meals for poor hippies.

Turn right on Picnic Way and head for the Canadian side of the island. There's a rocky stretch of 'beach' that is the best place in the world to go wading. Those that are brave enough might think of swimming, but watch out for the boats. For the most part, the people that run those things are very nice straight people that are friendly as hell.

As you ride further on, down the Strand, you'll pass the Marine Museum and all the young couples making love on the comparatively quiet side of the island. I've often wondered if it would be worth making my way across the canoe straits just to sit on one of those isolated islands just to be with those trees.

If you're careful and observant you'll see the riding paths (Belle Isle provides horses for the more equestrian minded). Riding down one of those is like being far away from any city, right in the middle of a forest. Hide your bikes and have your own love-in.

Belle Isle has a great Children's Zoo that condescends to lend itself to the adults of Detroit also. I remember seeing my first parrot at the zoo, a strange gargantuan bird with terrifically gaudy feathers. And the seals don't seem to mind being in a zoo as much as some of the other animals.

There's a monkey house and an elephant house too. Funny caricatures of people swing and chatter like a meeting of the minds, and those wrinkled, trumpeting monsters welcome you home.

Go back three spaces, near the riding paths, and you have swings overlooking the Detroit River.

Keep your eyes open near the fountain, and you'll see ducks being free on the canoe straits. squirrels and pigeons are free on Belle Isle too.

Going home is as much fun as the tour of the island was. The crumbling bridge offers an excellent opportunity to wave at the boaters you missed before, and there's always a tour through the submarine if you leave in time. For the more nocturnally oriented, Detroit looks almost good viewed from a park bench on Belle Isle at midnight.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Belle Isle will host a giant Love-In complete with flowers, bells, food, and dancing. Be there around 12:00 o'clock and plan to stay forever.



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