

Canadian festivals defy the winter cold

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Winter in Canada doesn't mean hibernating indoors for months on end. For Canadians it's a time to throw on layers of warm attire, get outside and embrace winter's chill. Skate along frozen rivers sipping hot cocoa, dog sled through snow-laden forests, explore whimsical Ice Castles. Join the celebration at these winter festivals all across Canada.

Enchanting Ice Castles, Edmonton and Winnipeg

Imagine walking through a castle created entirely out of ice? You can explore these crystalline castles in Winnipeg and Edmonton. Each magical castle is made from more than 250,000 pounds of ice. Meander through archways past towering formations filled with icicles. You can even take a ride on the ice slide or play king of the castle in the throne room. Try to linger till dusk when the castle is illuminated.

Winterlude Festival, Ottawa

Ottawa, knows how to put the fun in winter with Winterlude. This three-week festival (through Feb. 19) is filled with an array of wintery activities. Head to Confederation Park's Crystal Garden for a magical ice-carving competition. Watch chunks of ice be transformed into glistening art. Glide on the Rideau Canal on the world's largest skating rink — 4.8 miles of smooth ice. Or rent a sleigh. You can indulge in a sugar-fueled Beaver Tail. These deep-fried cinnamon-coated treats were invented in Ottawa.

Sourdough Rendezvous Festival, Yukon Territory

Canada's Yukon Territory may be small in population, but it's grand in nature. Living as far north as the Yukoners do, you have to know how to roll with

winter. Whitehorse's Sourdough Festival (Feb. 16 through 25) has been around since 1964. The event is named after the bread that was a staple of survival for the miners working in the freezing conditions. Possibly Canada's quirkiest festival (past participants bowled a frozen turkey across ice), you can canoe over the frosty terrain, or try to cajole a bunch of huskies to take you dog sledding. You may even catch the Northern Lights dancing in the sky.

Quebec Winter Carnival

Quebec City, known for its history and European flare, has been home to Carnaval de Québec since 1955. This popular event (through Sunday) is known for its famous mascot Bonhomme, a gregarious 7-foot snowman in a red sash. He even has his own Ice Palace, where this year you will find works of graffiti art. If you are looking for something wintery and sweet, head to the sugar shack, which serves maple taffy, dipped in fresh snow. For the brave at heart, take a ride on the 300-foot slide made from ice. If it's beauty you are after, intricate ice sculptures can be found all over the city.

Silver Skate Festival, Edmonton

Skate into winter at the Silver Skate Festival in Edmonton's River Valley (through Feb. 19). Have you ever tried pedaling through snow? Watch how the pros navigate the terrain. You can give it a go on a demo bike. Take in the Dutch-rooted Kortebaen speed race. Skaters sprint along the ice in pairs. Keeping to tradition, the winner gets a ham. Be sure to traverse the folk trail in the early evening for the lantern walk; you can make your own lantern for \$2. Perhaps the most famous event is the Tower of Flames, built of hay and wood.

Festival du Voyageur, Winnipeg

Festival du Voyageur, Western Cana-

da's biggest winter festival, transforms Winnipeg's French Quarter into a big party (Feb. 16 to 25). Step back in time at Fort Gibraltar. Built in 1809, this spot played an integral role in Canada's fur trading history. Winnipeg's Voyageur Park comes alive in tradition, with a beard-growing contest, jugglers carrying fire, sleigh rides and kitchen parties where you can sing, dance and stomp your feet while the fiddle plays.

Montréal en Lumière

Montreal is home to one of the largest winter festivals in the world, Montréal en Lumière. From Feb. 22 to March 4, this eclectic city lights up. For the adventurous, hop on the *lait urban* slide (milk slide). It's more than 100 yards long and runs through the city center. You can even go ziplining, with illumi-

nated works of art and snow below you. Don't miss a ride on the Observation Wheel in the Old Port. Snap photos of the views while in the heated gondolas.



Ottawa's Canal Skateway along the Rideau Canal offers 4.8 miles of smooth ice. OTTAWA TOURISM



Voyageur Park comes alive at night for the Montréal en Lumière festival. DAN HARPER