

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Fairmont delves into local culture with ice festival

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*Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise*

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By NANCY BUCKLEY

The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada, is teaming with the neighboring tourism office for an annual event at the 21st Ice Magic Festival.

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Each year Canada's Banff National Park in Alberta hosts an international ice carving competition that brings competitors from all around the world to Lake Louise to battle for the best structure. Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise is located in the heart of the competition and likely sees a spike in accommodation requests during January as it welcomes repeat visitors, local neighbors and intrigued tourists.

"Annual events are a great way for properties to build equity among guests and promote repeat visits," said Taylor Rains, managing partner of [Flugel Consulting](#), Charleston, SC. "Events like the Ice Magic Festival are unique experiences and likely to generate a lot of interest among guests and potential guests.

"Annual events typically have a high rate of repeat traffic," he said. "By associating itself with the event, the property is able to capitalize on that repeat traffic and, ideally, generate a base of regular guests. At the same time, the hotel stands to benefit from event regulars

who may not have been familiar with the brand."

Mr. Rains is not affiliated with Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Fairmont Hotels & Resorts** was unable to respond by press deadline.

Break the ice

Ice Magic Festival will host carvers from the United States, New Zealand, Philippines, Canada, The Netherlands and Russia.

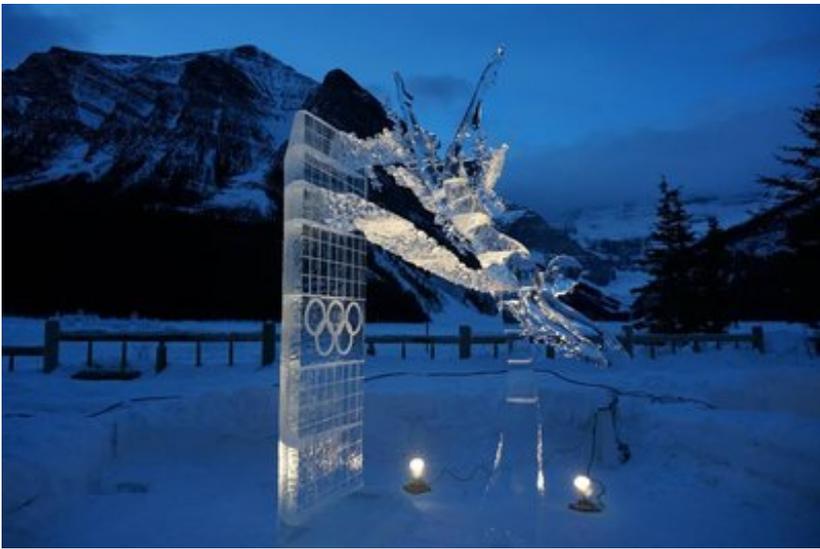
The carvers have several competitions over the course of the festival. For instance, there is a challenge called "One Carver, One Hour, One Block" which is when 10 carvers have exactly one hour to impress both the judges and the people. Another competition is an ice carving demonstration.



*Ice sculpture from previous competition*

Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise is a sponsor of the event. The property is hosting accommodations each weekend and guests of the hotel can attend the festival for free. Since the hotel is located within Banff National Park, it is in very close proximity to the festival and is hosting several events at the hotel itself.

Also, the awards ceremony for the ice carvers will be held at the hotel. The awards will be hosted by television personality Gord Gillies and will pay tribute to all of the carvers from the competition.



*Olympic diver ice sculpture*

The second weekend of the Ice Magic Festival will have events for children. Kids will be able to try ice carving and go on a winter wonderland scavenger hunt. Also, at the Fairmont, children will be able to meet and skate with an Ice Queen and hang out indoors with an activity center.



*Ice sculptors in action*

Ice Magic Festival is ran by the Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau and will occur from Jan. 16-25.

"Participating in local festivals has numerous benefits. First, it helps position the hotel as a good corporate citizen, gaining "points" which can be very beneficial in crisis situations where community support is needed," said Karen Escalera, president at [KWE Partners](#), Miami. "Second, as affluent travelers look more to hotels to provide travel experiences, a festival can not only add to the sense of place, but also, create memories. And finally, participation by hotel staff with festival organizers provides networking opportunities that can result in sales."

#### Local vibes

Interacting with locals can create a bond between hotels and their consumers that lasts more than one weekend or one vacation. Other hotels have sponsored similar events in their respective neighborhoods.

For instance, The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, invited guests to participate in its "Do Good,

Feel Good” package this fall to give back to the communities surrounding the hotel.

The package acquainted guests with the DC Central Kitchen, a community kitchen that helps feed low-income and at-risk neighborhoods of Washington. Luxury hotels have been responding to the growing interest in philanthropy travel with packages that include charity aspects ([see story](#)).

Luxury hotels that dabble in the native cuisine, explore the surrounding area and delve into the local culture will stand out to consumers and help the properties get ahead of competitors since these packages provide experiences that cannot be emulated elsewhere.

Since luxury consumers are known to research their trips and hunt for exclusive experiences, putting together well-curated packages that immerse guests in new realms may boost the number of bookings. Investigating the nuances of the local culture and environment is becoming more popular and should not be overlooked when trying to attract guests ([see story](#)).

Looking beyond guests to the neighbors of a hotel can lead to initiatives and events that benefit more than just the hotel and its current guests.

"Hotels stays are not just about the property for guests," Mr. Rains said. "They are about the community that houses the property.

"More often than not guests are selecting a destination first," he said. "When hotels align with local tourism authorities they are able to increase their visibility among individuals interested in the destination for a potential stay."

Final Take

*Nancy Buckley, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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