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Ice, Ice Baby: Chillin' Out at Canada's Hôtel De Glace

by Winnie McCroy
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Hotel de Glace (Source:Pixel/Flickr)

You've seen it in James Bond movies and on the Travel Channel, and somewhere along the line, staying overnight in an ice hotel made it onto your bucket list. Trekking to Norway, Sweden or Finland to find a hotel entirely made of ice may be outside of your travel budget, but an evening at Canada's **Hôtel De Glace** can make this dream a reality.

If you're seeking adventure in the snow, Canada is a winter wonderland that's less than a two-hour flight from New York and Boston. And for those who want to check out an ice hotel while also enjoying other cold-weather pursuits can find it all just 40 minutes (4 km) outside of Quebec City.

Winter fun reaches its zenith at Valcartier Vacation Village, the biggest winter recreation park in North America. This huge, four-star hotel boasts a winter playground complete with ice rafting park featuring nearly 30 slopes, ice skating, a children's playground, plus Bora Park, a huge, indoor, Polynesian-themed water park.



Cocktails at Hotel de Glace. (Source:Winnie McCroy)

Best of all, for the past 15 years the property has hosted the Hôtel De Glace, a mammoth ice hotel now celebrating its 52nd anniversary. Each year, artisans build a unique hotel out of crystal-clear slabs of purified ice sculpted into breathtaking images, including a free-hanging ice chandelier, several ice bars, and 44 rooms for overnight guests.

You can enjoy the Hôtel De Glace without spending the night there. Visitors to Valcartier can sign up to take a tour, or end their evening with a cocktail at the ice bar. Marriages are held at the stunning North Star Chapel, and thousands trek through every day to ride on the Viking ice slide.

Visitors wander through themed suites celebrating mapmakers, explorers, and even St. Nick, or sidle up to the ice bar and order a frozen cocktail like the Ski-Doo Accident, a winsome mix of Ungava gin, spruce beer and a bloody dab of grenadine, garnished by a twig of pine and served straight up in a glass of

cut ice.



Stay a While

Come 9 p.m., all but the initiated are driven out of the ice hotel, and that evening's guests receive their sleeping gear. Eventually, the exhaustion of a day on the slopes will wear you out, and even the most intrepid guests will wrestle themselves into the big warm sleeping bag that makes even an igloo seem cozy.

If you're worried you won't be able to endure the cold of sleeping in the snow, join the club! Guests are required to take a special half-hour seminar on the proper ways of overnighing

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Hotel de Glace. (Source:Flickr/Matias Garabedian)

in the Hôtel De Glace without freezing to death.

It's all about getting your body temperature up via the numerous hot tubs located around the hotel. After that, guests are instructed to return to their regular, non-ice hotel rooms at the Valcartiers Hotel and completely dry off.



Hotel de Glace. (Source:Renaud Philippe)

You return to the ice hotel in synthetic fabrics (cotton and wool will freeze) and shake out your long, 'coffin-style' sleeping bag to get air moving around inside it. After sliding yourself into a 'sleep sac,' you wiggle down into the sleeping bag, securing numerous bungees and Velcro straps for complete coverage.

Experts say that less is more, meaning that sleeping in the buff will actually keep you warmest. Barring that, pare it down to some synthetic long johns and a non-cotton top, and you should be fine.

The icy bedframe is lit, and a candle is left on the nightstand to scare away the dark. It's surprisingly easy to fall asleep in a

room made of ice, as the sound is completely muted, and the sleeping bag is cozy, if a bit constricting. The only downfall comes in the early morning hours, when nature calls and you're faced with staggering to the restroom in your PJs.

For this intrepid traveler, making it to 5 a.m. was enough of a feat to brag about. After one look at the comfortable, king-sized bed in my (non-ice) Valcartiers Hotel room, all thoughts of returning to my cavern of ice were dashed.

The Hôtel De Glace operates from the New Year until nearly April each year (this year it runs through March 26), and a trip this momentous may take some planning -- especially if you're trying to tie the knot while you're there -- so be sure to allow appropriate time. Staying in an ice hotel is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that won't leave you out in the cold.

For more information, including a 360 degree tour, visit <https://www.hoteldeglace-canada.com/>



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If you need a break from the workday, take a look at this video from Justin Bieber's Instagram posted over the weekend.

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Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.



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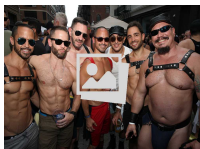
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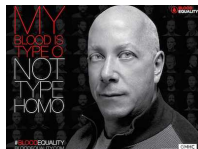
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