

Ice Hotel, Jukkasjarvi



The Icehotel (styled as ICEHOTEL) is a hotel built each year with snow and ice in the village of Jukkasjärvi, in northern Sweden, about 17 kilometres (11 mi) from Kiruna. It is the world's first ice hotel.

After its first opening in 1990, the hotel has been built each year from December to April.[2] The hotel, including the chairs and beds, is constructed from snow and ice blocks taken from the nearby Torne River. Artists are invited to create different rooms and decorations made by ice. Besides bedrooms, there is a bar, with glasses made of ice and an ice chapel that is popular with marrying couples. The structure remains below freezing, around -5°C (23°F).

History

Jukkasjärvi Icehotel interior. Sculptures by J rgen Westin

In 1989, Japanese ice artists visited the area and created an exhibition of ice art. In Spring 1990, French artist Jannot Derid held an exhibition in a cylinder-shaped igloo in the same area. One night there were no rooms available in the town, so some of the visitors asked for permission to spend the night in the igloo at the exhibition hall. They slept in the igloo in sleeping bags on top of reindeer skins, and were the first guests of the "hotel".

Hotel

The entire hotel is made out of snow and ice blocks from the Torne River, even the glasses in the bar are made of ice. Each spring, around March, Icehotel harvests tons of ice from the

frozen Torne River and stores it in a nearby production hall with room for over 10,000 short tons (9,100 t) of ice and 30,000 short tons (27,200 t) of snow. The ice is used for creating Icebar designs and ice glasses, which are used for ice sculpting classes, events and product launches all over the world while the snow is used for building a strong structure for the building. About 1,000 short tons (900 t) of what is left is used in the construction of the next Icehotel.

When completed, the hotel features a bar, church, main hall, reception area, plus rooms and suites for over 100 guests.[3] The hotel hosts also an ice restaurant.[4] The furniture is sculpted blocks of ice in the form of chairs and beds. The thick walls, floor and ceiling are made of ice. Even the beds, the fittings and decoration are carved from ice. No two rooms are the same; the rooms are unique works of art. At the Icehotel the beds are bedded with reindeer furs and people are given special equipment to use while sleeping in the hotel. The guests sleep in polar-tested sleeping bags. There is no heating and the bedroom temperatures are constantly around 23F (-5C). There's no plumbing at the hotel, but there's a sauna that is run on the premises of the Icehotel with hot tub outdoors.[1]

The ice suites do not have any bathroom facilities but bathrooms for guests are found in a warm building close by. There is also warm accommodation available next to the hotel. The Icehotel in Jukkasj  rvi is known to be the biggest hotel of ice and snow in the world, spanning over some 6,000 square metres (64,600 sq ft).[5] Each suite is unique and the architecture of the hotel is changed each year, as it is rebuilt from scratch. Each year, artists submit their ideas for suites, and a jury selects about 50 artists to create the church, Absolut Icebar, reception, main hall and suites. When spring comes, everything melts away and returns to the Torne River. The Icehotel only exists between December and April, and has been listed as one of the Seven Wonders of Sweden.[6] The northern hemisphere's aurora borealis can be seen during the winter month in the location.[2]

Documentaries that focus on this hotel can be seen from time to time on the Discovery Channel[7][8] and National Geographic.[9] The hotel appeared in a sketch about Sweden in one of the shows of the Eurovision Song Contest 2013, courtesy of Lynda Woodruff. The Icehotel has guests from many countries. There are many charter flights to the nearby Kiruna Airport, directly from London.[10]

Church

The local parish of Jukkasj  rvi, part of the Swedish Church, runs the Ice Church. Following co-operation with the Icehotel, the Swedish Church operates the Ice Church as a regular church. Each year the church is consecrated at the Christmas Day service. During the winter period around 140 couples get married and about twenty children are baptized. Most of the baptized children live in the parish or have parents living there. The wedding co-ordinator can arrange for civil ceremonies to be carried out. Characteristics of a wedding in the Ice Chapel are the cold, the stillness and a cappella singing.[11] Reverend Jan-Erik Kuoksu from the Jukkasj  rvi parish started the Ice Church. During his 17 years of service he has united 1,500 couples and baptized many children. Kuoksu worked alone as the priest in the Ice Church for the first fourteen years. His wife, Lisbeth, volunteers as a church usher.