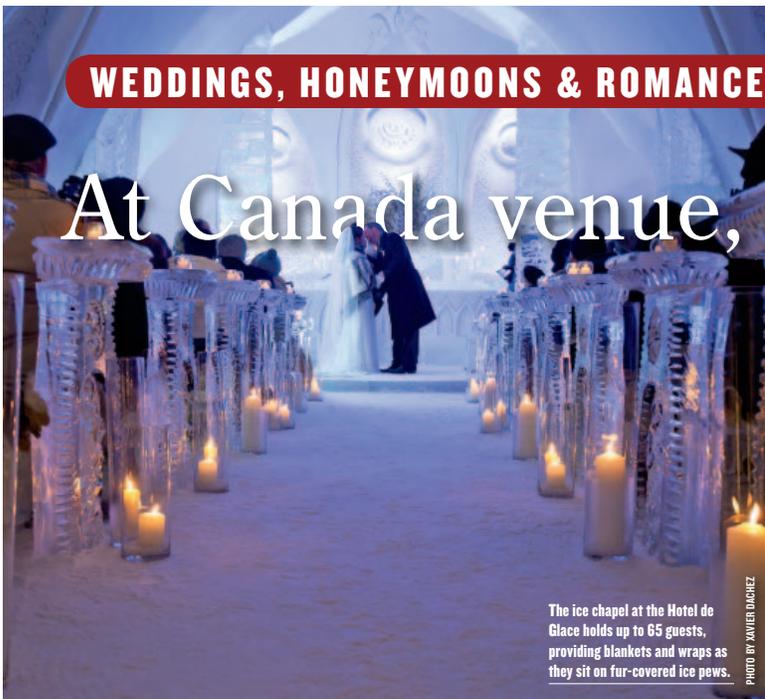


WEDDINGS, HONEYMOONS & ROMANCE

At Canada venue, expect cold feet



The ice chapel at the Hotel de Glace holds up to 65 guests, providing blankets and wraps as they sit on fur-covered ice pews. PHOTO BY JAVIER DUCHEZ

By Kristy Alpert

Although the walls are made entirely of snow and ice, and the internal temperature of the chapel averages around 23 degrees, weddings and vow renewals at Canada's Hotel de Glace are anything but frigid.

It takes more than 30,000 tons of snow and 500 tons of ice to assemble the accommodations each year, with sculptors and craftsmen working six weeks straight to mold, shape and polish each piece of this hotel, located just outside of Quebec City.

Each year the Hotel de Glace is constructed around a new design to include 44 rooms and themed suites, an open-air Nordic hot tub and sauna area, an ice bar and reception room (with a capacity for 300 people), an indoor ice slide and an ice chapel. Since opening in 2001, the hotel has hosted more than 55,000 overnight guests, and the ice chapel has welcomed more than 300 couples from around the world.

"The beauty is that since the ice chapel is rebuilt each winter, the chapel will never be the same from one season to the other," said Elisabeth Boudreau, wedding coordinator at the Hotel de Glace. "It is like getting married in a piece of art."

The chapel is designed to hold up to 65 guests, who are given chic blankets and wraps to bundle up while sitting on the fur-covered ice pews during the 25-minute-long ceremonies.

Boudreau and her team specialize in per-

sonalizing each event with special touches such as arrival by dogsled, a cocoa bar for receptions and hand-embroidered scarves, hats or mittens for guests.

"What I love the most about working at the Hotel de Glace is having the chance to meet with people from all around the world with different ideas and requests," Boudreau said.

Boudreau said her most memorable ceremony occurred a few years ago, when she received a request from a man who wanted to propose to and marry his partner of more than 20 years. The couple had two daughters, and the man hoped to surprise the entire family with an ice-chapel wedding.

"The man faked [receiving] a phone call from a TV show, saying that he won a weekend for four at the Hotel de Glace," Boudreau said. "He asked me to send a letter confirming the prize the couple won. We organized everything, from the proposal in an ice hotel suite to the wedding details such as the dresses and coats for the lady and the two daughters, hairstyle and makeup appointments, a photographer, ceremony readings, vows and more.

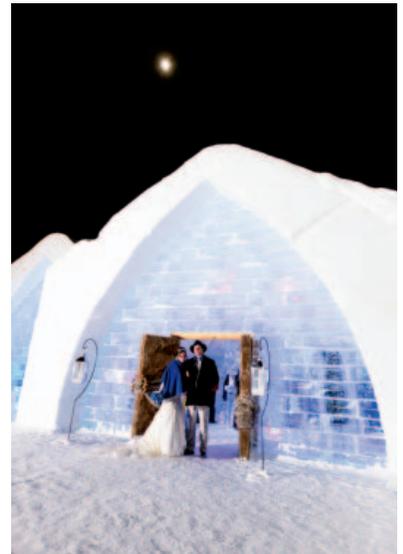
"The day came, and we welcomed the family of four with a tour around the hotel," she said. "When we arrived in the suite [they] reserved, the man proposed to get married on that day, in front of his two daughters. When the lady said yes, we were all very happy and relieved! She was then taken care of by a stylist for the clothing, hairstylist and makeup artist. Just a few hours after the proposal, she was walking down the aisle of the ice chapel with her two daughters on her side."

Each year the Hotel de Glace is constructed around a new design to include 44 rooms and themed suites.

Since the hotel is open only from January through March (depending on the weather), the chapel keeps its ceremonies to a minimum, hosting 20 to 30 weddings each year.

In 2017, the hotel will be moving to a new site near the current one. The Hotel de Glace will open Jan. 4 at the Valcartier Vacation Village, giving couples and guests the option to stay at the Valcartier Hotel (scheduled to open in December) if they don't want to brave a night in the ice hotel.

For more information, call (877) 505-0423, ext. 117.



The Hotel de Glace is rebuilt every year, using 30,000 tons of snow and 500 tons of ice, during a six-week period for a January opening.

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