



> ICE ON WHYTE

BRINGING ICE TO THE AVENUE

Lucy Haines

It's snowy and cold—i.e. Edmonton in January—so it must be time for one of the city's premier winter events, Boardwalk Ice on Whyte. But The beloved festival of ice and snow, carving competitions, music, food and drink looks different than it has in its past 14 successful editions. There's a new location and new focus for this signature event in the city's Old Strathcona neighbourhood; changes that organizers are sure will provide renewed interest and enough nightly excitement to beat anyone's January blues.

Visitors will notice several changes, starting with the name Boardwalk Ice on Whyte (to unify with the name of Boardwalk Sand on Whyte, the organization's sister summer celebration on the avenue, and to honour our name sponsor). The biggest change is location—the family-friendly outdoor celebration has moved from End of Steele Park a few blocks north, to the new, more visible space at the northeast corner of Whyte Ave. and Gateway Blvd across from El Cortez restaurant; the same space Sand on Whyte occupies.

The space is smaller, but will still include all the elements festival-goers expect: The Igloo of activities (L'il Chipper and Big Chipper ice carving lessons), a spot for food, drink and seating, and, of course, the signature attraction—the International Ice Carving Competition, which is also newly moved to inside a giant tent. The added shelter will keep carvings in pristine condition for visitors to enjoy over the festival's two weekends.

A big impetus to move to the new location is to better include Whyte Ave. and all of Old Strathcona in the festival-going experience. To that end, around 15 restaurants and businesses are offering special discounts and promotions to Ice on Whyte patrons—a way to extend a visit to the festival by offering dining options, entertainment and recreational activities in neighbouring spaces.

"You can go to the Farmers' Market, come see the ice carvings, and then go for a meal, try a painting class or head up the block to hear live music. We're inviting our visitors to experience the entire community," says Boardwalk Ice on Whyte producer Wanda Bornn.

"This year, we want to focus on what makes us unique among other Edmonton winter events. That's the ice carving competition, set in the historic, cultural hot spot of Old Strathcona. The focus is truly local, from the food truck and ice bar, to partnerships with area businesses; all creating an inclusive experience for festival patrons."

Indeed, some of the festival's yearly 40,000 visitors—families, tourists, area residents—make a vacation of their Boardwalk Ice on Whyte experience. That may include shopping on Whyte Ave. or staying overnight at one of the hotels on Whyte, so Bornn says the renewed partnership with area merchants is the best way to showcase the festival and its neighbours.

Ice on Whyte runs January 25-28 and Feb 1-4. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$4 for children and 2 and under are free. See ticket details, hours and a daily event schedule at iceonwhyte.ca

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