

Ice Sculptures at Susukino

Ice carving at Susukino Ice World has evolved into a major facet of the snow festival. Like the snow festival, it takes advantage of winter resources: an abundance of available ice and cold temperatures that keep the finished sculptures intact throughout the festival.

The ice sculptures on display are elaborate and quite detailed. They depict everything from sea creatures to motorcycles to manga and anime characters, and animals both real and imagined. Also on exhibit are blocks of clear ice with fish and shellfish embedded in them, looking like slabs taken from a sea that has abruptly frozen over. The sculptures come in a range of sizes. Some are less than 1 meter tall while others are buildings such as a pagoda and an Ice Bar that serves beverages to festivalgoers.

Ice carving is an established tradition in Susukino. Local chefs have been carving large ice sculptures for hotel banquets and platters made of ice for serving sashimi for decades. There is even a local organization called the Ice Sculpture Society, which is dedicated to the craft.

The festival includes demonstrations of this unusual art, in which the sculptors shape stacked slabs of ice into figures. A contest to determine the best ice sculpture takes place during the first two days of the festival, when visitors can vote for their favorite at any of the five ballot boxes provided.