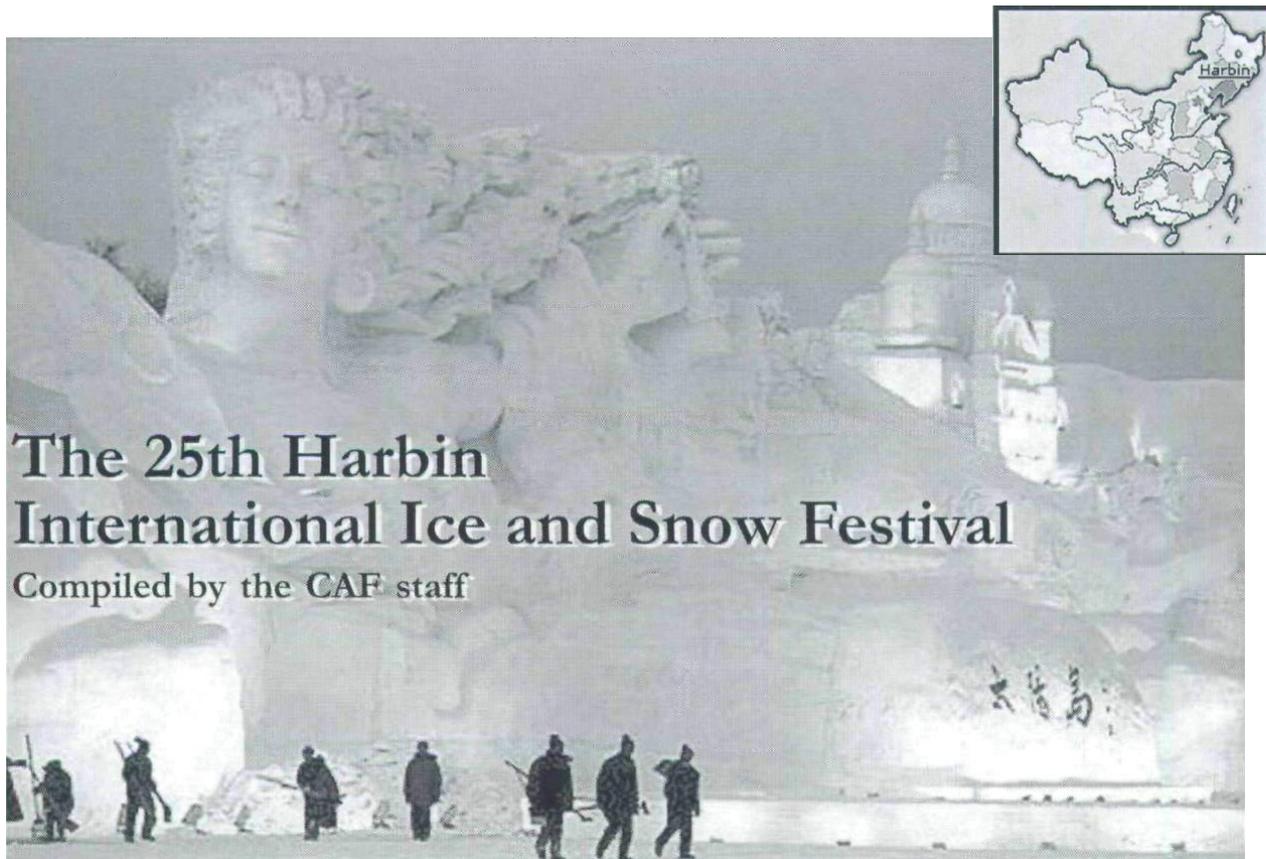


FEATURE



The 25th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival

Compiled by the CAF staff

People look at giant ice sculptures at the Ice and Snow World Park in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province January 5, 2009. Over 50 million yuan and 100,000 cubic meters of ice were consumed there for the sculptures of the 25th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival

which started on Monday. Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province, is one of the country's coldest places. Winter temperatures can drop to below -35 C.

The Festival, established in 1985, is held annually from January 5 and lasts for over one month. Harbin is the capital city of Heilongjiang Province and this is China's original and greatest ice artwork festival, attracting hundreds of thousands of local people and visitors from all over the world. Harbin Ice Festival provides the visitors each year a whole new world of ice and snow.

The city's location in northeast China accounts for its arctic climate which provides

abundant natural ice and snow. Subsequently, the 'Ice City' of Harbin is recognized as the cradle of ice and snow art in China and is famous for its exquisite and artistic ice and snow sculptures. The fabulous Ice Lantern Festival was the forerunner of the current festival and is still the best loved part of the overall event in the opinion of all who come to Harbin each year.

The Derivation of the Ice Lantern

The Ice lanterns were a winter-time tradition in northeast China. During the Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911), the local peasants and fishermen often made and used ice lanterns as



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jack-lights during the winter months. At that time these were made simply by pouring water into a bucket that was then put out in the open to freeze. It was then gently warmed before the water froze completely so that the bucket-shaped ice could be pulled out. A hole was chiseled in the top and the water remaining inside poured out creating a hollow vessel. A candle was then placed inside resulting in a windproof lantern that gained great popularity- in the region around Harbin.

From then on, people made ice lanterns and put them outside their houses or gave them to

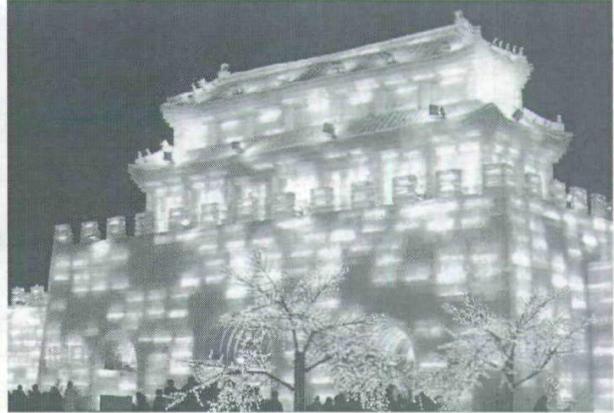
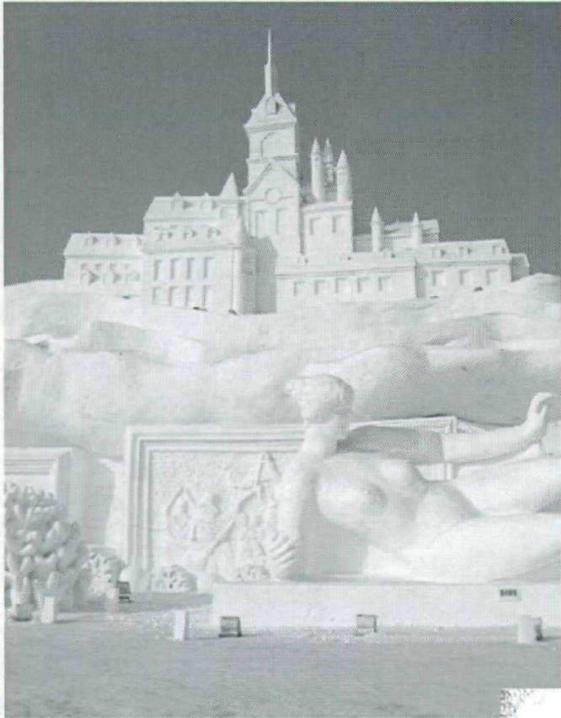
children to play with during some of the traditional festivals. Thus the ice lantern began its long history of development. With novel changes and immense advancement in techniques, today we can marvel at the various delicate and artistic ice lanterns on display.

Today, the Harbin Ice Festival is not only an exposition of ice and snow art, but also an annual cultural event for international exchange. Ever)' year, there are many ice sculpture experts, artists and fans from America, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Russia, China, etc. gathering in Harbin to participate ice sculpting competitions and to communicate with each other in the ice and snow world. Also, Harbin ice lanterns have been exhibited in most of China's main cities as well as in many countries in Asia, Europe, North America, Africa and Oceania.

For more than 40 years, Harbin's natural resource of ice and snow has been fully explored to provide joy and fun for visitors to the city. Now during the festival, many sporting competitions are also popular including ice-skating, sledding and so on. Weddings, parties and other entertainments are now very much a feature of this ice world, adding their own contribution to the celebrations of this great festival of art, culture, sports and tourism.



Harbin began to make and display ice lanterns on a large scale in 1963 when China was suffering 3-year-old natural disaster. In order to enrich people's cultural life and life their spirit, the Gardening Apartment organized force, used simple tools such as basins, buckets and so on, to freeze more than one thousand ice lanterns and dozens of ice flowers, displayed at the festival of lanterns at Zhaolin park. Harbin ice lanterns swept the whole city by storm, making a grand scene.



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