

Ice sculpture festival suffers from Belgian balmy weather

November 13 2015, by Raf Casert



Ice Magic Managing Director Francis Vandendorpe checks the quality of the ice at the Ice Magic Festival in Bruges, Belgium on Friday, Nov. 13, 2015. Just a few weeks ahead of global climate change talks in Paris, ice sculpture festivals in Western Europe are feeling the impact of a particularly warm November. (AP Photo/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

Ice sculptures really aren't really cut out for this kind of balmy November weather.

Just a few weeks ahead of [global climate change](#) talks in Paris, ice sculpture festivals in Western Europe are feeling the impact of an unusually warm November that spotlights gradually rising world temperatures.

In Bruges, at the Ice Sculpture Festival, it means soaring energy bills to keep temperatures at minus 16 degrees Celsius (3 Fahrenheit), while outside, people are soaking up the sun at 16 C (61 Fahrenheit) instead of previous monthly averages of 10 degrees less. For the artists, the temperature shocks have meant sniffles and colds.

"The winter is coming later and later," said Ice Magic's managing director Francis Vandendorpe, who has been organizing the festival since 1999.

Scientists say the [global average temperature](#) has risen by about 0.8 degrees Celsius since the industrial revolution and new weather records in most European countries—precipitation or temperatures, by month or years—keep being set. The issue will be discussed at a major U.N. climate conference in Paris that opens Nov. 30.

In Belgium, tourists are still enjoying warm sunshine on the restaurant terraces of Bruges deep in November. But one famed brewer has had to postpone beer production because of the balmy weather, and a chocolate maker was hampered in his attempt to break the world record for the biggest chocolate coin ever because the paste won't harden fast enough.



An ice artist works on an ice sculpture at the Ice Magic Festival in Bruges, Belgium on Friday, Nov. 13, 2015. Just a few weeks ahead of global climate change talks in Paris, ice sculpture festivals in Western Europe are feeling the impact of a particularly warm November that spotlights steadily rising world temperatures. (AP Photo/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

"People are expecting winter, but they don't get winter," said Vandendorpe. His 12 cool compressors in his special thermo-isolated hall are working overtime as sculptors from several nations chip, chisel and saw away ahead of the Nov. 20 opening. "Now we can't give them a break because the outside temperature is too high."

Vandendorpe said his energy bill is expected to be close to 40,000 euros (US\$ 43,000) for the six-week festival, almost 10,000 euros more than he anticipated. He said a similar festival in Metz, France faced the same problem.



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Inside the hall, artist Kim Arents was working on huge slabs of ice to turn them into something recognizable for a festival that will feature anything from Vikings to bumble bees and even an ice-cold super-king-size bed that will be available for 500 euros a night. Like many others,

the frequent hot-cold-hot trips inside and out have affected him.

"You get sick from it. People are getting runny noses and it's pretty hard going. Outside it is too warm, working inside it's too cold," he said.



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