

AN ICY UPGRADE: ICE HOTEL BALEA LAC IS MORE THAN JUST AN IGLOO



Several ice hotels have appeared over the past few years in Japan, Canada, and Sweden and tourists simply love them. A new addition to the icy series is the Ice Hotel at Balea Lac in Romania.

Spending a night in a hotel built mostly or even entirely from ice is for many not even an option to consider. On the other hand, there are thousands of snow-fans who wish to spice up their ski holiday with a bit of the bizarre and can't wait to sleep in a very posh igloo for a night or two.

Ice hotels are fantastic. They are very cheap to build and are a true spectacle - even for that one curious night. **The Balea Lac Hotel in Romania features ice - and ice only.** Walls, decorations, furniture, even glasses are made of ice. Local charming décor features replicas of sculpture works by one of the most famous of Romanian artists - Constantin Brancusi. There are eight rooms here and usually the price per night reaches approximately US\$ 40.

Whether or not to change into one's pajamas is a serious question, as it is fair to say the room temperatures may get to about -4 °C. Luckily, the beds are covered with sheep fur and not many visitors get cold at night. Especially, after they share the unique Palenica, or plum brandy, which will definitely make the blood boil.

The Romanian Ice Hotel at Balea Lac is a newbie on the scene yet already has a first. It proudly presents its small and charming ice church, where occasional masses take place, and more importantly, eccentric weddings. It is surprising how many young couples seek out unusual venues for their special day.

The surrounding wilderness of Balea Lac, a lake which is situated approximately 2,000 meters above sea level is astonishing. In winter, the area is only accessible by a cable car and bears, wolves, bison or lynx are local most frequent inhabitants. Romanian wilderness has much to offer and a winter holiday here seems like a trip to a different time.

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Date: 2010-02-15

Article link:

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