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Busy March in Fairbanks, now busier with addition of Iditarod start

Fairbanks, Alaska (AK) - Fairbanks is the home of the 2016 World Ice Art Championships, the largest ice sculpting competition in the world featuring more than 70 teams from across the globe. Approximately 45,000 visitors come to the Ice Art Park annually to see these intricately carved masterpieces. Sculptors will use over four million pounds of "Arctic Diamond" ice—exceptionally clear, thick ice—considered by sculptors to be “the best in the world.” The theme for the 27th Annual World Ice Art Championships is “Drive on ,” and runs from February 22nd through March 27th, 2016.

The 43rd Annual Festival of Native Arts is another must see for visitors. Scheduled for March 3rd, 4th & 5th, 2016, the festival provides a forum for Alaska Native groups to share their rich cultural heritages. Dance groups and artisans from Alaskan locations as distant as Hooper Bay, Atmautluak, Barrow, Juneau, Huslia, Stevens Village and Shishmaref will join with invited guests from the continental United States, Japan, Russia and Canada for diverse presentations, crafts and food booths.

While visiting Fairbanks don't forget to look up, because early March is a great time for viewing the aurora borealis. Fairbanks is one of the best places on earth for experiencing the beautiful and mysterious northern lights, and if you stay three nights in Fairbanks, you'll have an 80% chance of seeing them. Prime viewing time is late evening through the wee hours of the morning. You can experience the aurora from a heated "aurorium" cabin, on an overnight sled dog trip, by snow cat tour to a panoramic vista, in a horse drawn sleigh, on a flight above the Arctic Circle, or simply walk outside and look up to see the captivating northern lights weave their way across the night sky. If the aurora appears in the middle of the night, many hotels offer wake-up calls so you won't miss a moment. The longer you stay, the better your chances of viewing a once in a lifetime display!

If you're in Fairbanks and have an interest or curiosity about dog mushing, you're in luck. March features a busy dog mushing schedule, which includes the Junior North American Championship Sled Dog Race from March 3rd-5th, The Limited North American Championship Sled Dog Race from March 11-13, and the 70th Annual Open North American Championship Sled Dog Race from the 18-20.

If you're feeling lucky while in Fairbanks, a \$2.50 chance purchased by April 5th, 2015 will get you into this year's Nenana Ice Classic pool. The jackpot totaled \$ \$363,627 in 2014. Since 1917, those with a betting spirit have wagered when the ice will break up on the Tanana River. Venture down to Nenana, a small community on the banks of the Tanana River about an hour's drive south of Fairbanks, for the Nenana Ice Classic Tripod Weekend, March 6th-7th. A tripod made of local logs is raised and frozen into the river and attached to a time clock ashore to mark when the ice goes out – it could be as early as late April or it could be late May.

A trip to the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center in downtown Fairbanks is always a good idea,

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About Explore Fairbanks

Explore Fairbanks is a non-profit marketing organization whose mission is to be an economic driver in the Fairbanks region by marketing to potential visitors and optimizing the visitor experience. Explore Fairbanks markets Fairbanks as a year-round destination by promoting local events, attractions and activities to independent travelers, group tour operators, travel agents, meeting planners and the media. Find out more at explorefairbanks.com.

The Fairbanks Community/Dog Mushing Museum, now in its new location in the historic Empress Theater in the Co-Op Building in downtown Fairbanks, features Sled Dog memorabilia. An Iditarod exhibit will include photographs by Jim Brown from the early 1980s as well as other memorabilia from past Iditarod races. There also will be an exhibit about famous musher George Attla. The Museum will be open from 11 a.m.- 3 p.m. 7 days a week.