



SHORELINE DESIGNS

Sandcastle sculptors come from near and far to compete in a uniquely coastal artform

Once upon a time, you day-tripped to the beach, built a sandcastle with a bucket and plastic shovel, admired it briefly, and watched it slowly fade away as the tide washed ashore. Sandcastle construction has come a long way, however, for the artists around the world designing elaborate – and more permanent – installations. Some of those creations are coming to Rhode Island this Columbus Day weekend (October 7-10), when Misquamicut Beach in Westerly hosts Atlantis Rising, the first annual International Sand Sculpture Competition.

Ten sand sculptors from around the world compete for cash prizes and bragging rights in their field (or, rather, beach). The three-day event also features live music, vendors, food trucks and other family-friendly activities.

Mélineige Beauregard with her partner, Chris Guinto, sculpting an installation in Westerly announcing Atlantis Rising



South County Tourism Council president Louise Bishop is excited to see the event come to fruition. “We have been wanting to do this for at least five years now. Our focus has been on expanding our shoulder seasons (spring and autumn), so we’re looking at different types of attractions to bring to our quiet southern coast of beaches,” says Bishop.

The competition is an economic driver and visitors are expected to attend from around the region. “We have marketed this event all the way down to Philadelphia,” she notes. “Our drive market includes DC, Philly, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts, so it’s pretty far and wide; we’re marketing the way we would in the summer.”

Several “teaser” sculptures were commis-

sioned this summer and have been installed around the area at locations including the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce and the Ocean Community Chamber in Westerly.

“It’s a big endeavor to pull all this together,” says Bishop. Most of the artists arrived in September to begin working on their sculptures. “The opening is on Friday, October 7 and we expect most sandcastles to be nearly complete and judged by then. There will be some under construction so people will get to see how that works, but the majority will be completed by the end of Friday,” says Bishop.

Creating a sand sculpture that lasts more than a day or two requires a unique skill set, along with a few traditional tools. “The sand is mixed with water and packed in frames,”

explains Bishop. “It’s fully packed, sits a day, and then they remove the forms and start creating the piece. Then it is sprayed with a combination of water and Elmers glue. The process creates a thin crust that protects it from the rain.”

There will be numerous photo opportunities, including a sand sculpture that you can walk through and a 20-foot globe. “There’s a lot of visuals with this event that you won’t see anywhere else,” says Bishop.

Organizers have arranged for nearby oyster farms to donate oyster and scallop shells, which kids and adults can use to develop works of art of their own. “This is really about art and educating people about how to enjoy nature’s art,” adds Bishop. SouthCountyRI.com/Atlantis-Rising