



2024 MCCALL WINTER CARNIVAL DATES:
February 23 – 25, 2024

THEME:
“Color Outside the Lines”

Carnival FAQs

WHY DID YOU CHANGE WINTER CARNIVAL?

In recent years, McCall’s 10-day Winter Carnival has drawn as many as 60,000 tourists to McCall, which has less than 4,000 year-round residents. Trying to find enough staff to handle that sort of surge has proven extremely difficult for local businesses, especially those in the heart of McCall where most Winter Carnival events are held. In recent years, several well-established downtown businesses opted to close during Winter Carnival rather than provide their guests with service below their normal standards.

Winter Carnival is organized by the McCall Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber exists to serve the interests of our local business community and our community members at large. Several years of feedback convinced the Chamber that the 10-Day, mid-winter format was no longer working for the community, which made our signature winter festival more of a burden than a blessing to the town. Rather than cancel Winter Carnival, the McCall Chamber decided to change the format in an effort to preserve beloved traditions while minimizing the negative impacts of the sprawling event on our community.

WHY DID YOU CHANGE THE DATES?

Many of the members who provided feedback felt that it was counterproductive to host Winter Carnival during two consecutive winter weekends when our area experiences some of its best snow conditions of the season. The last weekend of January and first weekend of February are prime weekends for snow-sports enthusiasts to visit the area. Many of those visitors were getting pushed out by carnival crowds right when conditions were ideal for them to enjoy the best snow conditions of the year. Organizers felt carnival-goers could have an equally good experience at the end of February as the high-country snow conditions have less of an impact on the quality of their experience.

WHY DID YOU SHORTEN IT TO THREE DAYS?

Several concerns influenced the choice to consolidate the event. The first was to contain any negative impacts to a single weekend instead of a longer period. Another consideration was cost. One of the biggest expenses for Winter Carnival is the Fireworks Shows, which have increased in cost dramatically in recent years. There were two fireworks shows in the 10-day format and a three-day format allows for a single fireworks show. The 10-day stretch of events requires a massive volunteer effort. In recent years we’ve seen a dramatic drop in the availability of volunteers. Many of our local townspeople have expressed that increased visitation with decreased employee availability has left them with no extra time to volunteer during Winter Carnival.

AREN’T YOU WORRIED ABOUT LOCAL BUSINESSES LOSING BUSINESS?

This was a major concern for years as we considered making changes to Winter Carnival, but an unintended experiment during COVID gave us the confidence to make the change. Carnival was canceled for health and safety reasons in 2021, and a survey of our members reported that revenues were actually UP

for January and February. Even outside of COVID-era trends, McCall has seen an enormous surge in visitation during the months of January and February. The McCall Chamber uses city lodging tax collections to measure tourist visitation levels. Over the course of 10 years, (FY13 – FY22), lodging tax collections in McCall more than tripled during the months of January and February, increasing by 201.5%.

WHAT ABOUT THE SNOW SCULPTURES MELTING?

That was another big concern, as the snow sculptures are a key part of what makes McCall's Winter Carnival so magical. We carefully analyzed what the weather data shows about temperatures at the beginning of February versus the end of February, and found the difference was negligible. We were surprised to learn that McCall actually sees MORE RAIN in the month of January than during February, which gave us confidence in trying the new dates.

DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT THE WINTER CARNIVAL TRADITIONS?

Of course! The McCall Chamber of Commerce has been the organization behind the Winter Carnival since the 1960s, and we treasure the memories that have been made over the past six decades. When re-imagining the event, we did an inventory of which events were most meaningful to the largest number of our residents and made sure those events would continue.

WHAT IS THIS YEAR'S THEME?

This year's theme, "Color Outside the Lines," pays homage to the re-imagined event, which is focused on making Winter Carnival meaningful for locals again. It's also meant to honor our educators, from Council to Cascade, and everywhere in between. Their steadfast presence in our community and dedication to excellence has inspired generations of young people to dream big and chart their own course, even if that means coloring outside the lines.

WHAT WILL WINTER CARNIVAL 2024 BE LIKE?

Winter Carnival will be a lot like it has been in the past, just shorter and a few weeks later in the winter. Sculptures will line the streets of McCall and carnival-goers can enjoy favorite events, including The Children's Torchlight Parade, the Mardi Gras Parade, Snowshoe Golf, Tiki Torch Treks at the McCall Golf Course, McCall Starz on Ice Figure Skating Shows, the Monster Dog Pull, and of course Fireworks on the Lake, a vendor court, beer garden and live music on the Main Stage.

WHAT IF IT DOESN'T WORK?

We know visitors like to book their lodging for Winter Carnival in advance, so we've committed to this format for the next two years, 2024 and 2025. We will continue to seek feedback from our business community, volunteers, and local residents to evaluate the impact of the changes on the event and the community at large. That feedback will help inform our plans for Winter Carnival moving forward.



Scan the QR code to find more information on the 2024 McCall Winter Carnival

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