

Around Alberta

PHANTOMS ON ICE

IF YOU NOTICE a fleet of sailboats gliding along the surface of Ghost Lake in the depths of winter, it's not an apparition – it's the Ghost Lake Ice Sailing Club.

"I find ice sailing less onerous than typical sailing because there's very little to do on the boat," says club member Stefan Dalberg. The simple, single-sail boats have a steering tiller and a rope to control speed. They sit on three skates and have a canoe-shaped hull to withstand the forces of wind and ice.

Ghost Lake, half an hour west of Calgary, is one of the top places for ice sailing, according to Dalberg. "It's perfectly situated in an east-west direction so when the wind comes off the mountains you get this nice, long reach down the lake. And it gets chinooks, or 'nature's Zamboni,' as I like to call them. You need clear ice or you won't be able to build up speed."

From the first weekend in December, you'll see club members out on the lake – most willing to give rides or let you take their boat out for a spin. Dalberg notes that knowledge of sailing is helpful but not required, because you can get into less trouble on an ice boat. "You can tip if you try hard enough, but you try not to make a habit of it," he says. ghostlakeiceboats.ca –Shauna Rudd