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South Padre Island Turns Sand into Spectacular Art for 38th Annual Sandcastle Days

World-class sculptors transform the Island's beach sand into intricate works of art during free festival October 1-4

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas, September 21, 2026 - For one weekend this October, the beach on South Padre Island will become a giant outdoor art studio as some of the world's most talented sand sculptors turn an everyday beach staple into extraordinary works of art.

The [38th Annual Sandcastle Days](#) returns October 1-4, 2026, at Clayton's, bringing master sculptors, aspiring artists and thousands of spectators together for one of South Padre Island's most distinctive traditions. The free, family-friendly celebration combines world-class sand sculpting with live music, local art, food vendors, beach activities and opportunities for visitors to try their own hand at creating something memorable in the sand. New this year will be a spectacular drone show over the ocean, held Saturday the 3rd at 7:45 PM. Viewable from Clayton's, the drone show will feature illuminated island-inspired shapes, including a sandcastle, sea turtle, seashell and rolling ocean waves.

The real star of the weekend, however, will be the sand itself.

South Padre Island's fine-grained beach sand is exceptionally well suited for sculpting because it compacts and drains effectively, giving skilled artists the ability to build taller, stronger structures and carve remarkably intricate details. In the hands of master sculptors, enormous piles of wet sand can become elaborate castles, people, animals, fantasy scenes and other creations that look more like monumental sculptures than something built on a beach.

"Sandcastle Days is where you really see why South Padre Island has earned such a strong reputation for sand sculpting," said Kelly deSchaun, Chief Executive Officer of Visit South Padre Island. "Our sand provides an incredible canvas, and watching these artists transform it into massive, detailed works of art is amazing. Even better, visitors don't have to experience the artistry from behind a velvet rope, they can watch it take shape right on the beach and then pick up a bucket and shovel and create something of their own."

Founded 38 years ago by South Padre Island master sculptors Walter "Amazin Walter" McDonald and Lucinda "Sandy Feet" Wierenga, Sandcastle Days began as a way to showcase the special sculpting qualities of the Island's sand while encouraging protection of its coastal environment. The celebration has since grown into a major fall tradition that draws more than 30,000 spectators and features a competition for accomplished sand artists.

Highlights of Sandcastle Days 2026 include:

- **Masters of Sand Competition:** Watch professional sand sculptors work throughout the festival, transforming towering mounds of sand into intricate creations before judging on Saturday.
- **Sandcamp:** Visitors inspired by the professionals can learn some tricks of the trade during free Sandcamp sessions. No advance registration is necessary. Just show up, with buckets and shovels.
- **Amateur Sandcastle Competition:** Kids, families, groups and individual sculptors can put their creativity to the test during Saturday's amateur competition, giving beachgoers the chance to move from spectator to artist.
- **Saturday Night Drone Show Over the Ocean:** Taking flight at 7:45 PM on Saturday, October 3rd.
- **Awards & People's Choice:** Judging for the amateur and Masters divisions culminates with an awards ceremony, while festivalgoers can also have their say through the People's Choice competition.
- **More Than Sand:** The weekend also features the Sandcastle Days Mercado, live bands at Clayton's, food and vendors, children's activities, fireworks and plenty of opportunities to enjoy the Gulf beachfront.

The festival offers visitors the rare opportunity to watch a work of art emerge almost in real time. Sculptors begin with little more than sand, water, tools and imagination, then spend hours packing, shaping and carving increasingly intricate details into their creations. Visitors can return throughout the weekend to watch the sculptures evolve from massive blocks of compacted sand into finished works.

Sandcastle Days is free and open to the public. Festival activities take place at Clayton's, 6900 Padre Blvd., South Padre Island.

For the latest festival schedule and additional information, visit [SandcastleDays.com](https://sandcastedays.com).

Additional information, including things to do, restaurants, and accommodation information on South Padre Island, can be found at www.visitsouthpadreisland.com

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About South Padre Island

With miles of pristine shoreline and clear emerald water, South Padre Island is Texas' only tropical island paradise. Calm weather and more than 300 days of sunshine make South Padre Island a year-round destination offering a variety of nature tourism attractions, water sports, and activities for the entire family. For more information, visit www.visitsouthpadreisland.com.