

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

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When summer comes, Iceland opens up just like the many different varieties of flowers that bloom across the land. Like those flowers, there is such a variety of activities to do, sights to see and things to experience.

In this, the largest issue to date, we present some of that wide range of facets that make a summer visit to Iceland so different from the more common holidays. No magazine can do the country justice, however; every sense, every emotion and

every part of body and spirit is exercised to the maximum in this land of extremes. It's easy to use superlatives, but this is one occasion where they are merited. How else can life-changing sights and experiences be described? We invite you to investigate this Land of Fire and Ice yourself and see if you agree with all that has been written here. Yet, you will still only be scratching the surface!

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Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, It still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

How to make use of QR codes



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Icelandic Times



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A SCULPTOR FOR THE NATION

The Spirit of Iceland revealed through sculpture and art at the Einar Jónsson Museum

Just as the human spirit gives life to flesh and bone, Einar Jónsson's imagination has given form to Icelandic folklore and culture. Born in 1874 on a farm in Galtafell, South Iceland, Einar evinced early talent as a child. Though the son of farmers, his knack for reproducing ideas from his imagination took him to Europe in adolescence. In 1901, Einar emerged from his studies at Copenhagen's Royal Academy of Arts to take his place in the international art scene, winning acclaim after showing his sculpture 'Outlaws' at an official exhibition.

Einar spent several years in Europe and honed his craft by joining a radical group of Danish sculptors and participating in the emerging philosophical discourse about the individual and role of the artist. He staunchly

refused to compromise his creativity by copying the styles of cultures surrounding him and stayed true to his country by drawing from his innate knowledge of Iceland's rich literary heritage and folklore replete with imagery. This led his work to develop a character of its own and helped pave the way for sculpture in Iceland.

Einar Jónsson is frequently compared to old Icelandic skalds, or poets, who imbued their descriptions of daily life with elaborate two part similes, 'playing the melodies of human life on the stringed instrument on nature'. Interaction between man and nature, as well as the mutual influence of one upon the other, were considered integral parts of life. Sculptures such as 'The Wave of the Ages' (Alda aldanna), which personifies

the figure of an immense woman with her chin stretching towards the sky, capture Jónsson's tendency to reflect humanity in nature's rawness. The base of the sculpture swirls with bodies writhing in the wake of the wave, with one valiant person emerging to persevere through nature's hardships. Taken literally, it is representative of Icelanders' perpetual struggle with the elements, but on a symbolic level it represents the pursuit of something higher and that those who struggle to remove themselves from the milieu are rewarded.

Turning the transcendental tangible, Einar Jónsson's work tackles universals. Time, that tricky and often elusive beast, has evaded many artists for ages. In 'Time', Einar Jónsson has encircled the old Norse

figure of time, winged and carrying a globe on his shoulders, between the beautiful youth of day holding a sphere in one hand as he receives a wreath from a lovely young woman, night. Icelandic poetry refers to time as rolling days, injecting the motions of time's passage into verse. 'Time' pinpoints the rolling days in a languid split second, a brief pause before he continues to frantically beat his wings and compel life onwards.

After a career studded with worldwide accomplishments and travel, Einar Jónsson vowed to return home and donate all of his work to Iceland if a proper place was built to house it. This led to the creation of the Einar Jónsson Museum, which stands in its original spot, close to is Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavik. When built in 1916, that

part of the city was undeveloped and the house was in the midst of land considered undesirable because its sandy soil remained barren. The artist lived in the house and pictures at the museum show Einar Jónsson proudly standing near his home soon after its completion. Einar lived in the upper floor of the museum and used the basement as a work space. The museum allows visitors not only to look at a retrospective of Einar's

work, but peer into his personal life and final home. Though a world traveller, his heart was never far from his beloved Iceland, which he memorialised in his monuments and sculptures, giving us valuable insight into the heart and mind of a visual poet.

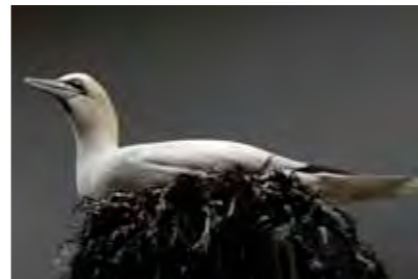
Einar Jónsson was a groundbreaking figure in Icelandic sculpture and his influence on the visual arts in Iceland transformed them.

KB



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BIRDS UP CLOSE

Sjósigling's Icelandic Bird Museum and Restaurant

When you take a whale-watching trip, you cannot help but notice the number of birds that swoop and swirl around. So many different varieties, too. Getting close to them is quite another matter, though.

Sjósigling, who have been running successful whale-watching trips from Reykjavik's Old Harbour for some years decided, on seeing how popular the birdlife is with visitors, to create one of the most unusual and effective museums to present the birds for everyone—adults and children alike—to see close-up.

What better way to see them without disturbing nesting or hatchlings? The concept has proven very popular, with whole families visiting and enjoying the presentation together.

Fact-filled folders

Visitors can follow each numbered bird in the displays using a folder containing a colour photo and thorough details of each one, such as its name in 12 different languages, the number of eggs each has, their size, wingspan and weight. The folder also shows their nesting locations, when their breeding period occurs, where the birds are to be found in both summer and winter, and numerous other details.

Feed your mind—not the birds

The museum has over a hundred stuffed birds presented in brightly-lit displays along with nests, eggs and young. So effective is the taxidermy and the variety of poses that one could be forgiven for thinking the birds had just been frozen in time.

As a natural history museum, this beautiful and specialised exhibition is very professionally presented. For anyone interested in birdlife in any way, it should be on your 'cannot miss' list. It's very enjoyable and educational. This is the kind of exhibit that can inspire young minds to learn more about nature and the beauty of its creation.

Watch the whales—and find the birds

When taking a whale-watching trip after visiting the museum, it will make it much more fulfilling, as you will be able to recognise the birds and will have a better understanding of their lifestyle. For children, it can make a fascinating game to see how many different types they can spot on their trip to see the whales and dolphins.

Food for the body, too

The Bird Museum and restaurant are located right on the corner of the Old Harbour downtown and are open daily. The

restaurant is a comfortable place to relax over a lunch, coffee or snack, surrounded by beautiful photos of the birds and whales. Tickets can also be purchased here for Sjósigling's whale-watching tours that run on a daily basis from May to the end of September, weather permitting.

Absolutely outstanding! A complete surprise as we walked along the harbor. Beautiful exhibits and extremely well designed graphics for each bird in the guidebook. I'm coming back again tomorrow.

Robert Mussey, Boston, USA
 (Furniture conservation expert)

-ASF

Sjósigling & Fuglasafnið



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A GRILL PARTY WITH CLASS

Fine food in a fun setting at Sjavargrillið

On Skólavörðustígur's busy shopping street, midway between Hallgrímskirkja and Laugarvegur, you'll find some of the best seafood dishes in Reykjavik in the cosy and lively Sjavargrillið restaurant.

Upon entering, you are greeted with a relaxed atmosphere and a pleasant aroma from the kitchen. The walls are innovatively decorated with driftwood and scrap iron from Iceland's fishing history. You immediately get the feeling that, in Sjavargrillið, you'll be dining with class—but not in a stifled or formal setting.

Owner and head chef, Gústav Axel Gunnlaugsson, the youngest chef ever to

win Chef of the Year award, says that was exactly what he initially planned when designing the restaurant. "We want our customers to feel like they can have a good time here and feel relaxed while enjoying a top class meal," says Gústav.

To drive the point home of having a good time, Sjavargrillið has recently introduced the Grill Party menu item, in which groups will be presented with a buffet-style grill party at their own table and the theme of the party will be designed after current events.

As the name implies, Sjavargrillið specialises in seafood, while offering a good selection of quality meat and vegetable dishes.



Gústav places special emphasis on using quality Icelandic materials whenever possible and even has his family finding and gathering materials. For example, his grandmother has dutifully been sending fresh handpicked blueberries from Gústav's hometown of Húsavík as fast as she can pick them.

Be sure to check out the winter menu, as the days get shorter – traditional Icelandic holiday dishes will be plentiful.

Sjavargrillið -VAG

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HOTEL WITH A HEART

Keilir Hotel in the heart of Keflavik and Reykjanesbær

Keilir Hotel is a family business on Keflavik's main street, within walking distance of all the best restaurants and pubs in the area. It's the perfect place in which to stay when exploring Keflavik or the Reykjanes Peninsula - which includes the world-famous Blue Lagoon. A mini-bus takes passengers to the International airport, which is only a stone's throw away.

Keflavik's cinema and geothermal swimming pool are also within a short walking distance. The quaint coastal promenade with

sculptures dedicated to local fishermen is nearby.

Keilir's hosts are Bryndís Þorsteinsdóttir and Ragnar Jón Skúlason and their three sons, Þorsteinn, Ragnar and Styrmir. The family truly put their hearts into making people feel welcome, comfortable and satisfied during their stay.

Keilir Hotel has 40 rooms, half facing the Atlantic Ocean. The rooms have a beautiful view. Whales can sometimes be spotted in the water from its windows. Keilir's larger



rooms accommodate 3-6 persons. Rooms of this size are unusual in hotels in Iceland but are particularly popular with families. Rooms are equipped with free wireless Internet, television, telephone and mini-bar.

Keilir Hotel also has conference/meeting room and off street parking. Bicycle rental is available.

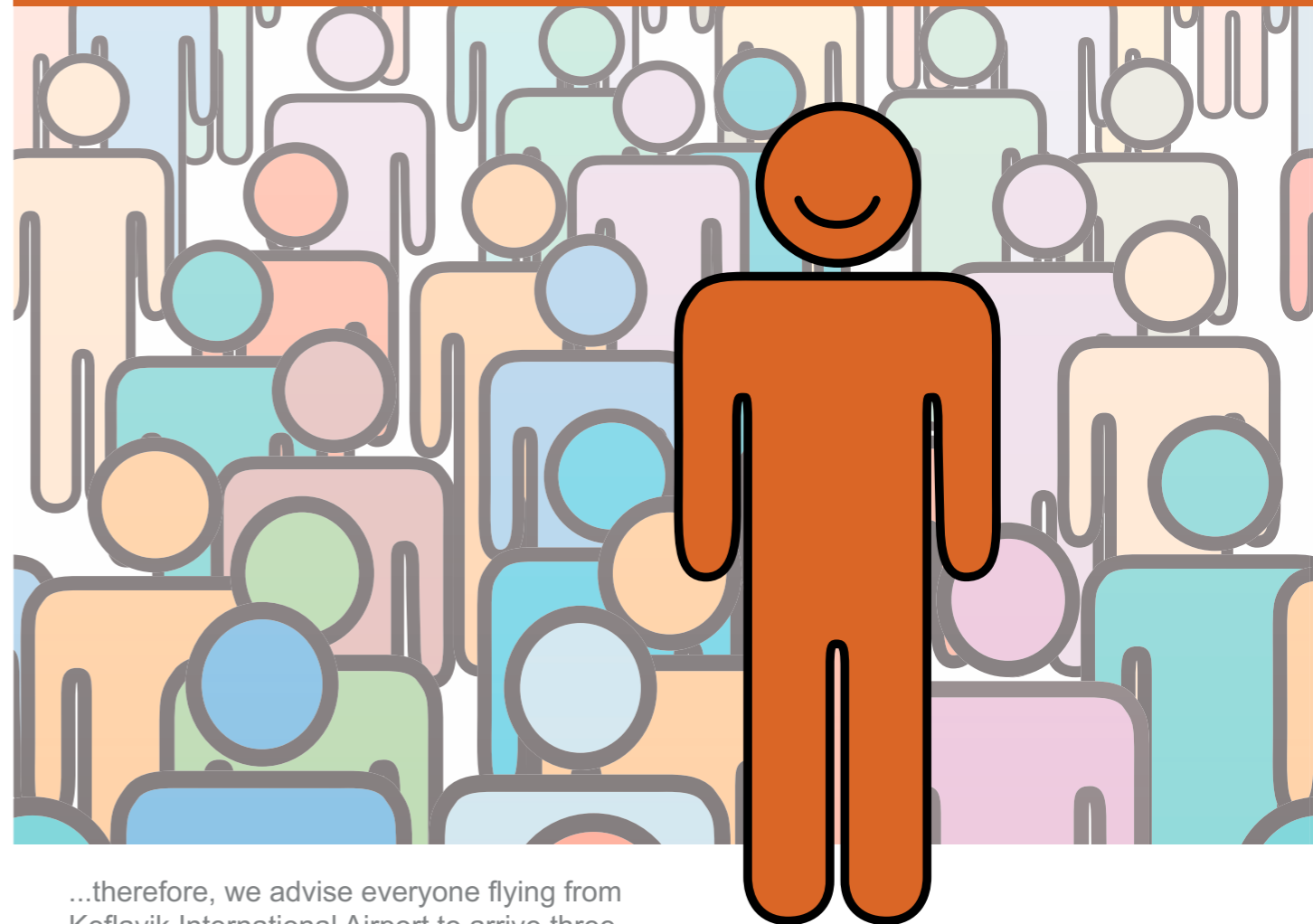
Keilir Hotel is named after Mt. Keilir, the landmark 1000 ft. high cone-shaped volcanic plug south of the main road along the Reykjanes Peninsula between the International airport and Reykjavik.

-SV

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THIS IS ICELAND'S BIGGEST TRAVEL SEASON, EVER...



...therefore, we advise everyone flying from Keflavik International Airport to arrive three hours before their flight to avoid unnecessary tension.

*Check-in opens at 05:00 AM





EAT THAI

Genuine Thai cooking at Krua Thai will leave you wanting more

I say it unashamedly, I love Thai food! Genuine Thai food, that is. The flavour is just so delicious when you have the real thing.

In Reykjavik, in the white building opposite the old harbour, is a restaurant called Krua Thai which just celebrated it's 10th anniversary. To have not just survived but to have become so popular over those ten years is a testimony in itself to the kind of food the restaurant creates. This is the restaurant that visitors from Thailand and other asian countries come to, as its reputation has spread across the world.

Icelanders have traditionally embraced new things and they quickly discovered the succulent taste of Krua Thai's many flavours compared to the comparatively bland Icelandic cuisine. Whether curries

or noodle dishes, there are meals to suit every palate and every age group.

Good food doesn't have to be expensive

Good restaurants often have a reputation for quite high prices but this is one restaurant that bucks that trend. You will not be putting a big dent in your bank balance by eating here and yet the cuisine is good quality. Running a Thai restaurant in Iceland has its own challenges, as the foods that are available in Thailand just don't exist here! Resourcefulness has been the key to success in Krua Thai. To ensure the sprouts are fresh, for instance, they grow them here themselves. Only the ingredients that are not dependent on being fresh from the field are brought in from Thailand. The others are locally produced. The chefs use their skills to blend the two together, producing their own creations that are both Thai and yet just that little bit different from regular Thai food to be both enticing and enjoyable.

Enjoy your Dinner Party - without the work
 Krua Thai is used to cooking for crowds and dinner parties for large numbers are both taken in stride and economical for the party host.

From Phone to Home

Perhaps you just want a night in. No longer does that mean TV dinners nuked in the microwave that have as much goodness as eating cardboard. One phone call and your dinner will be delivered to your door

anywhere within the Greater Reykjavik area. With their good sized portions, no-one will leave the table or couch feeling hungry!

When You Want It

Whether you want a good lunch or dinner, at the restaurant or at home, Krua Thai provides the service that will leave you satisfied. The menu is extensive and the prices are reasonable, too.

-ASF

Krua Thai



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A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Reykjavik's Volcano House

The Volcano House occupies an enviable location in Reykjavik, with its large bay windows overlooking the intersection of Tryggvagata and Geirsgata and the colourful old harbour lying just beyond. Inside, comfortable 60's and 70's era Danish- and Icelandic-designed teak armchairs cluster around sleek, low tables where guests chat over coffee. Nostalgic baby boomers will surely feel right at home. A group of Japanese tourists pore animatedly over reference books that deal with all things volcanic, while children play with a few carefully selected 60's style toys in a far corner. Indeed, the whole concept of the Volcano House has been carefully thought out down to the last detail. Rows of blue upholstered folding cinema seats from the 70's were imported from Sweden, as was the glass case displaying an array of tempting soups and sandwiches, home-made cakes and

snacks. The shiny black lava pebbles used in the flooring, smoothed by centuries of seabed-erosion, is a unique and highly durable surface that does not go unnoticed by visitors who often ask about it.

The highlights of the Volcano House are two excellent 20-minute documentaries shown in its cosy in-house cinema that cover two of Iceland's most well known eruptions: the 1973 eruption in the Westman Islands and the very recent 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull. The Eyjafjallajökull film is the work of the Emmy-nominated director Jóhann Sigfússon, who has produced nature documentaries for the BBC, National Geographic, and Discovery Channel amongst others.

The Volcano House provides hands-on geology displays of various types of volcanic rock, as well as a large collection of beautiful semi-precious stones from all



over Iceland and especially East Iceland. The gift shop offers unique volcano-themed gifts and souvenirs including original jewellery and quality coffee table photography books that would love to find a niche in your suitcase. The spacious café and cinema can seat small groups of up to 50 visitors.

-EMV



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THE BEST IS FOR THE BOLD

The Sea Baron's Fish Meals attract visitors from all over the world

Iceland has a number of unusual and different foods. Many of them have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods and their traditions continue to this day.

Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, when you first hear about them and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!

A True Fisherman

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of the unusual fish dishes. His lobster soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title of 'the world's greatest lobster soup'. Understandably, he doesn't reveal the secrets of his recipe but that doesn't



stop his restaurant from being filled every day with afficianados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, still packed in ice, a group of foreign visitors asked if he could prepare the fish for them. Quick to spot a new opportunity, he ran to the nearest shop to buy a grill - and was in business!. His visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word very quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out of the way to make room for tables and chairs.

He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no-one else had thought of trying. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and from them, made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

A man of the sea, Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia, all donated by old sea captains and their families, that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats,

pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together and where the fishermen used to sleep when coming to land.

Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, is an experience that will leave you with both good memories, a satisfied appetite - and perhaps, a rather shocked mind that you would actually have eaten fermented fish and that it tasted so, so good.

Special Until Christmas

Every Saturday lunch until Christmas, the restaurant offers Skata, a popular Icelandic traditional delicacy. Made from stingray prepared in a way I won't describe here, this is a delicious meal you have to try. Ask how it's made only after you have enjoyed it, though.

The Sea Baron's customers leave contented and return for more. What better recommendation is there?

Sægreifinn -ASF

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CHEFS RUN IN THE FAMILY

Höfnin Restaurant is as authentic as it gets

If you're looking for an authentic seafood experience you need look no further than Höfnin restaurant, which is as safe a bet as they come – run by descendants of sailors, situated in an old baiting shack down by the old harbour in Reykjavik, with a stunning view over the boats and fishermen.

Höfnin restaurant is run by husband and wife Brynjar Eymundsson and Elsa Guðmundsdóttir who have dedicated the restaurant to their fathers – one a fisherman and the other, the head chef the famous Gullfoss passenger ship. Brynjar himself started out as a chef on his father's boat and hasn't looked back since. Brynjar and Elsa's son is also following in their footsteps, being a chef at his parents' restaurant and a member of the Icelandic Junior Chef's Team.

A Linage of Sailors

Brynjar and Elsa had both been in the restaurant business for years when they heard that plans to demolish the old fishermen's huts down by the harbour had been scrapped and were instead to be renovated with new businesses. They were selected out of more than 70 applicants and opened up last summer in the now bustling neighbourhood. "When I first heard about the new plans I immediately thought of the unique location with views directly over the harbour. I myself was raised down by the harbour in my hometown, so we immediately felt as if this was our new home," says Brynjar.

They took care to preserve the spirit of the old fishermen while redecorating and now you'll find tasteful photographs of the area from olden times with informative captions in English.



well aware that the food and the service are what the customers expect to be of top quality and we're quite sure that we've got that well covered," says Brynjar, laughing.

It should come as no surprise that Höfnin specialises in seafood, though they do serve meat and vegetarian dishes as well. When asked for recommendations,



Exquisite Views

"The view is, of course, a major attraction, but we're not counting on the view satisfying our customers by itself. We are

Brynjar says jokingly that he's equally proud of all their dishes. "We stand by all our dishes wholeheartedly and take special care in offering only what we think is the absolute best, so you see why I have a hard time recommending one dish over another," says Brynjar. Höfnin is, however, already becoming known for their excellent mussels and the all-Icelandic "plokkfiskur."

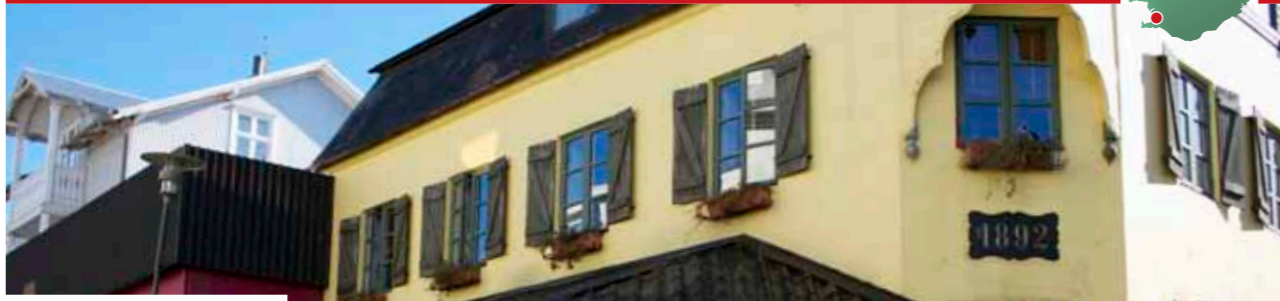
Höfnin offers a relaxed, casual atmosphere during the lunch hours with special offers and a bistro menu. (For the adventurous: try the Sea Captain's stew, an all-Scandinavian Viking special.) The evenings make for a more elegant outing with starlit views and top class meals.



Höfnin veitingastaður -VAG

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DELIVERING THE RIGHT PITCH

Caruso's Range

The rich rendition of Caruso's signature pizza, cooking in a wood-fired oven, along with the aroma of sautéed garlic waft over passers-by, giving this corner of Laugavegur's buzzing restaurant scene a distinctive Italian flair.

The unmistakable three-storey, lemon yellow house remains a local favourite for pizza and pasta as well as fresh fish and rich, gooey chocolate lava cake.

Named after the famous tenor opera singer, Enrico Caruso, the restaurant blends the quiet opulence of an opera singer's private rooms with the cheery warmth of a family restaurant. An attentive host greets each guest as they enter, guiding them to their table for an experience that can hit everything from the sweet symphony of romance to the sparkling tones of a lively dinner with friends and family.

Caruso's repertoire is reflected in its menu which spans pizza, topped with fresh arugula, complemented by slightly salty parma ham to lavish meals suited to a robust opera singer's appetite for life and food. An overture of grilled scallops or mushroom tops, stuffed with blue cheese and garlic sets the stage for the next act, fit for the tenor himself. The highlight of the evening is the main dish of cannelloni filled with Camembert, seasoned ground beef and spinach on a bed of lettuce. A finale of panna cotta



sprinkled with fresh fruit and strawberry sauce adds a finishing touch to the meal. An offering of fine wines lends each course its own special embellishment.

Owner José Luis Garcia, enhances the restaurant's reputation by conducting a dining experience that resonates from floor to floor. The ground floor bustles with the cheerful strains of conversation that float along with the aroma of succulent dishes. The second floor offers a quieter alternative, with its large windows overlooking Laugavegur and a comfortable lounge to sample Caruso's selection of

spirits before or after your meal. On the third floor an assortment of instruments dot the walls while a classical guitarist performs each Friday and Saturday from 8 till 10 pm. All floors cater to larger groups with a separate room on the second floor that is ideal for special occasions.

Caruso -KB,EMV,ASF

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DAYS TO REMEMBER

Calendars by Snerra Publishing bring Iceland to Your Home

It has been an experience you'll never forget but now it's time to return to the daily grind of work. Slowly the memories fade. Life returns to 'normal' and those days in Iceland seem like a

world away. You look up on the wall and suddenly, it all comes flooding back.

The calendar from Snerra Publishing, with its picture for each month is a constant reminder of that wonderful time – a souvenir



which is not only nice to look at but also practical and informative.

The 2012 selection is especially extensive, with 'The Icelandic Calendar', which includes pictures of the landscape, towns and people of Iceland in all four seasons; 'This is Iceland' offering glimpses of the Icelandic way of life; 'Experience Iceland' focussing on the powerful forces of nature at work in Iceland; 'The Panoramic Desk Calendar'; 'The Icelandic Horse Calendar and the ever popular 'Puffin Calendar'. The 'Nature Calendar' is new this year with drawings by award winning artist, Jón Baldur Hlíðberg.

You can keep up with what's going on here as the official Icelandic holidays are marked on the calendars - so you'll know when to book your quick weekend break to celebrate Iceland's Independence Day or eat putrefied shark, soured liver sausages or one of the other 'delicacies' that make it unique.

Snerruútgáfa



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-ASF



CELEBRATE HORSE RIDING

Íshestar's 30 years of exciting riding tours and satisfied riders

It's an anniversary worth celebrating. Some returned annually to ride with the horse family whose philosophy is 'we care and share'. They care for their riders, for their enjoyment and safety. They care for their horses and training and want to share them with people who would like to ride, whether adult or child, novice or experienced. They share the beauty and experience of the Icelandic countryside, both the local nature and, for those taking the longer tours, the spectacular upcountry experience.

A Tour for Every Rider

If you're on a weekend trip or a longer stay, there's a tour designed for you. Schoolchildren and families take the Family Adventure Tour and then enjoy the rabbits and other animals. Tourists can take the ride combined with whale-watching, a trip to Gullfoss and Geysir or the Blue Lagoon. The Viking Express Tour is a 5-6 hour tour for more experienced riders and seasoned riders can take the multi-day upcountry tours. Details are on their website.

Safety is paramount

You can watch explanatory videos while being driven from your hotel. (Find more on youtube.com by 'ishestar'). Training and help are given at every stage to make your ride fun. It's also smart to book a delicious lunch to eat on your return to the stables.

Íshestar -ASF

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SKIES COVERED IN COLOURS

Reykjavik Excursions takes you to the Northern Lights' Late Night Dance

As summer gives way to autumn, the season's changes are immediately apparent as the grass turns golden, then brown and the leaves start to fall. Visitors to Iceland during autumn, winter and spring are then rewarded with an extra bonus. These months are generally much milder than in other northern European countries or North America and the beauty of the nature is enhanced by spectacular displays in the skies.

After the sun has gone down and the days get shorter, the stage is set for the appearance of the enigmatic Northern Lights that sweep across the sky in spectacular displays that can last for hours.

Many a visitor comes to Iceland to enjoy this phenomenon in the heavens.

Every night is different and you never know what it will bring. The appearance of the Northern Lights is something that has to be experienced in person to grasp the majesty and beauty that artists and photographers try to capture. Nonetheless, a camera can capture even more of the richness of the colour and beauty, even if they can't capture the experience, so don't forget to take one.

Reykjavik Excursions run regular nightly excursions lasting from 2½ to 3 hours in length. Starting at 10 pm in the autumn (15th Sept-15th Oct) and spring (15th March-15th April) or 9 pm from 16th Oct-14th March, the tour's destination varies, depending on the weather and where the conditions are

most likely to be optimal. The weather has to generally be cold for them to appear at their best, so bear that in mind when choosing your clothing for the trip. They seek out the sites where the best displays are most likely to occur beforehand, though naturally, the Aurora Borealis don't appear on demand!

Should you go on a tour where they don't appear, you can join a tour another night again free of charge, as the company really want you to enjoy this experience.

A guide provides commentary, counsel and background in English on each of the trips, so you'll get the most out of this special night tour.

To see pictures is one thing but to be there when the sky is filled with colour and light is quite another.

Reykjavik Excursions



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REYKJAVIK BICYCLE TOUR IN WINTER

The best way to see the city any time of the year

If you're in Iceland in winter, your friends back home probably think you're a little crazy. Tell them you went on a bicycle ride around Reykjavik in the snow in December and January and they'll know you're crazy!

Meet the Locals

The thing is, you only live once and time is too precious to waist wandering aimlessly around any city. Instead, you can see the most interesting places in Reykjavik in a fun,

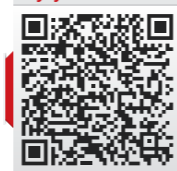
efficient and educational way accompanied by an enthusiastic local guide. What you learn on the tour will help you make the most of your time in the city for the remainder of your stay.

What do I see on the Tour?

You'll see many classic sites in the city centre as well as some places in the suburbs often missed by foreign visitors. Most importantly, you'll have a great time while doing light exercise and learning about the city in a fun way. The

popular Classic Reykjavik Bike Tour (2.5 hrs. / 7 km) is available all winter. The cycling part of this tour is easy and suitable for anyone who knows how to balance a bike. Contact Ursula or Stefan for a tour.

Reykjavik Bike Tours



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HARBOURSIDE SUSHI

Sushimiðjan-Midori, a Top Class Restaurant at the Old Harbour

In one of the bright green buildings down at the old harbour is Sushimiðjan, a bright and busy sushi restaurant.

Serving a range of tasty sushi dishes with sake, wine or beer, this is a very popular eating and meeting place.



Sitting on the patio on a warm summer day, enjoying a delicious sushi and the view over the harbour to Mount Esja across the bay, this is the life! For freshness, the harbour is the place to be. The combination of Icelandic fish and sushi cannot be beaten for quality and flavour - and its presentation is top class.

The menu offers Makis, Nigiris and Sashimis, along with a mixed vegetable sushi and different children's dishes. Japanese noodles with chicken, vegetables or Tiger prawns, fish or miso soup, seafood or beef salad round out the main courses.

For desert, there is chocolate cake with cream, ice cream and fresh berry smoothies.

The restaurant is open from 11:30 am to 11 pm. Take-away meals can be ordered by phone or on the web. They cater for companies, parties and lunches, too.

Sushimiðjan



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-ASF

THE MAGIC FLUTE

ÞÓRA EINARSDÓTTIR · FINNUR BJARNASON · GARÐAR THÓR CORTES
 ÁGÚST ÓLAFSSON · SIGRÚN HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR · JÓHANN SMÁRI SÆVARSSON
 HULDA BJÖRK GARÐARSDÓTTIR · AUÐUR GUNNARSDÓTTIR · SIGRÍÐUR ÓSK KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR
 SNORRI WIUM · VALGERÐUR GUÐNADÓTTIR · KOLBEINN JÓN KETILSSON · VIÐAR GUNNARSSON
 THE ICELANDIC OPERA CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

LIGHTING DESIGN: PÁLL RAGNARSSON · PUPPET DESIGN: BERND OGRONNIK
 COSTUME DESIGN: FILIPPÍA I. ELÍSDÓTTIR · SET DESIGN: AXEL HALLKELL JÓHANNESSON
 DIRECTOR: ÁGÚSTA SKÚLADÓTTIR · CONDUCTOR: DANÍEL BJARNASON

THE ICELANDIC OPERA'S FIRST PRODUCTION
 IN HARPA CONCERT HALL
NOV. 5TH, 12TH, 13TH, 19TH, 20TH, 25TH

THE ICELANDIC OPERA



A CULTURAL CELEBRATION

The Harpa Concert and Conference Centre opens to wide acclaim

The opening of a new concert hall in any country is a very prestigious event.

It never ceases to amaze people that a country of 300,000 people - that's a country, not a town or a city - can have such a rich cultural life. Art galleries abound, theatres, schools for each of the performing arts

and now, the jewel in Reykjavik's crown: the new concert and conference hall complex, situated right on the waterfront by Reykjavik's harbour.

The spectacular glass building would not be out of place in one of the world's largest cities but for it to be in Iceland's capital,

with a population of under 120,000, is all the more remarkable and testament to the emphasis this country puts upon the cultural aspects of life. The unique glass façade was designed by Ólafur Elíasson and Henning Larsen Architects and consists of quasi bricks inspired by crystallised basalt columns, such as those found at Skógarfoss waterfall. Natural light is a key element in the design as the changing daylight alters the reflectivity and colours of the glass. At night, when the façade is lit, the whole building glows dramatically against the background of the harbour and, across the bay, the mountains of Esja.

The radical design extends to each of the four halls, whose names correspond to the elements of air, earth, fire and water. Eldborg or 'Fire Castle', named after the famous volcanic crater in the East of Iceland, is the grand concert hall, seating up to 1800 guests.

Representing air, Norðurljós or 'Northern Lights' is a smaller recital hall, whose vivid blue decor is equally as dramatic. The colouring can be configured with different themes to create the optimum atmosphere and ambiance. It is an ideal location for conferences, concerts by sinfoniettás, chamber groups, jazz bands or similar

performances, receptions and other such events. The hall, situated between Eldborg and Silfurberg can be connected to them for larger events.

Silfurberg, representing earth, is Harpa's conference hall. Its name comes from a crystal of translucent calcite that is rarely found other than in Iceland. It can accommodate up to 750 seated guests. The stage is movable and expandable. The hall can be divided into two parts, each accommodating 325 seated guests, with a soundproofed retractable partition. The hall is very suitable for all types of conferences, receptions or concerts, especially if they are amplified. It is specially designed as a conference hall and features the best available technological equipment. The acoustics are adapted to the spoken word and are configurable.

Kaldalon or 'Cold Lagoon' representing water, is named after the beautiful blue bay in the West Fjörds. It is the birthplace of one of Iceland's most celebrated songwriters, Sigvaldi Kaldalóns. This is the smallest of the halls, seating just under 200 guests. Coloured yellow, the scheme can nonetheless be changed to match the theme of the event. It is well suited for all types of music, as well as for conferences, meetings, film screenings, and lectures with a moveable stage and a floor that can be used as a stage, as well. It features collapsible writing tables and power outlets for use with laptops.

What is Harpa actually like? I attended the centennial anniversary of the University of Iceland held in Eldborg. The decor is dramatic in rich red with black trimmings. Even 'up in the gods' in the upper gallery, the sound quality was amazing. Every word was crystal clear. A lot of work has gone into the advanced system of controls for the sound quality. The seating is very comfortable.



However, the experience is not just in the hall. There are large, open areas on each floor for socialising, flowing staircases with ingenious small lounges set at different levels along their length - and then, there is the view. Part of Harpa is built out into the

harbour. This is where its glass façade comes into its own, with its uninterrupted view over the harbour and bay to the mountain range of Esja beyond. The view in almost any weather is beautiful - and when the rainbows arch over the bay, it is stunning.



A wide range of events take place at Harpa and performers have included British pop sensation Jamie Cullum; German tenor Jonas Kaufmann; world renowned pianist Maria Joao Pires, violinist and conductor Maxim Vengerov, conductor Gustavo Dudame and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. With the annual Airwaves music festival, Björk and Yoko Ono have received rave reviews for their performances. Upcoming events include 'You Are In Control' and Eve Online Fanfest.

There is an underground car park, so guests are unaffected by inclement weather and all the services are in the top echelons of such international venues, including a state-of-the-art Business Centre, with high-speed Internet connections and translators' booths with the provision of headsets, where applicable.

There are three quality restaurants in Harpa and, being in the centre of the city, every type of eating establishment is within a five- to ten-minute walk. Already, since it's opening in May 2011, over 350,000 guests have attended events there - more than the total population of Iceland.





TREASURES AND RICHES

The National Museum Holds the Wealth of the Nation

It is always a special experience to visit a new country and to see its sights and enjoy all that makes it different from one's own. Its culture, its people, the beauty of its landscape and its man-made creations. However, its true wealth lies in what has made it what it is today as each generation added their own contribution. What you see in today's society is the result of all its previous generations and is what makes it truly unique.

The National Museum of Iceland is located next to the University of Iceland and holds a sample of the lives previous generations have left. Here is where you will gain so much greater insight of what makes Iceland today.

A Young Nation with a Mature History
 'The Making of a Nation' is the museum's permanent exhibition, displaying the

heritage and history of the Icelandic people and country, from the early days of the Settlement right through to modern times. It offers a fascinating perspective on many aspects of life and society throughout Iceland's short history.

Being the last European country to be populated, Iceland doesn't have the relics of the Romans, the architecture of the Greeks or the dynasties of China. What it possesses is a unique mingling of two very diverse cultures, living under incredibly difficult conditions at times and the powerful story of their struggles and overcoming great adversity to become the independent nation Iceland is today, with its rich culture. Many people find its cultural diversity absolutely incredible for a population so small.

Travel Through Time

The exhibition is conceived as a journey through time, beginning with the ship in which early settlers crossed the unpredictable ocean with the most rudimentary of instrumentation to the high-tech airport of today, handling many thousands of travellers. Using about 2,000 objects and 1,000 photographs, this is the next best thing to personal time travel.

When visiting the museum, you can opt to take one of four themed routes through the exhibition: Work and the Way of Life; Homes and Settlement Patterns; Arts and Crafts; Social Culture and Language.

To enrich your experience, there are multimedia presentations that allow you to gain greater insight and active

involvement in a more immersive experience. Likewise, there are two rooms that are especially popular with families on the second floor which are dedicated to hands-on experiences. Dress like a Viking; have a mock sword fight; try out some of the puzzles and games - and come away with a new perspective on the country through the best medium: fun!

Craftsmen Before the Age of Plastics

Between the two cultures, the Celts, with their writing and the Vikings with their craftsmanship, a rich tapestry of life has been handed down to us today. For example, there is a room containing a range of ornamentally-carved drinking horns. Your imagination can take you back to see the care and skill of the craftsman at work, transforming these bovine horns into objects of art - practical drinking goblets that have disappeared from modern mass-produced plastic society.

Temporary exhibitions add an additional perspective on Iceland's heritage, with thousands of photographs showing life over the last century.

Stay for the Day

You can choose how long and how much you want to get into the details of the exhibition but even a cursory look will take some time. For those wanting an in-depth view, you will undoubtedly want to stay longer. The museum offers refreshments and a shop so you can continue your time travelling. Iceland values its historical narrative highly and the National Museum is but the first step in a journey that will take you around the country. It provides a foundation that puts everything else in context.

History is for Children

Museums can make a very special contribution to a child's development. Recognising that, the museum has

brought in two teachers, Helga and Steinunn, who make presentations for schoolchildren from a young age all the way up to university students, with each presentation being both geared to their age and maturity level and the national curriculum. Children visiting with their parents can enjoy the quizzes and hand-outs the teachers have made - as well as having fun dressing up and re-enacting lives of the past. This is the way to learn history - hands on and seeing it first hand. The multimedia presentations build on the displays to provide adults and children alike with a fascinating, engaging experience that educates without you even knowing it!

Þjóðminjasafn Íslands -ASF

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REYKJANES RENDEVOUS

From Reykjavik to Another World with Salty Tours

When you fly all the way to Iceland, you must be expecting something different from the normal holiday destination. You will certainly have a completely different experience from the baking beaches of the Mediterranean.

You can take a trip through history, stand on two continents, see boiling mud pools and geysirs, volcanos and lava fields. You can see shipwrecks, the result of the powerful seas and eat shark meat, washed down with the local brew, Brennivin. Best of all, you can do all this in one day and still have the rest of your holiday to explore the remainder of the country!

Reykjanes is the home of the Blue Lagoon, the amazing geothermal pools set amidst the lava, famous for their healing properties. For now, though, the tour will take you a few kilometres past this popular attraction behind the mountains and lava

to see the awesome geothermal areas close to the coastline. Driving to volcanos, multi-coloured hills and boiling mud pools in the geothermal areas, past the shipwreck thrown clear over the rocky coast by the power of the waves, the tour takes you past small farms and the bustling fishing town of Grindavík to stand on the fissure dividing Europe from the Americas.

Driving can be rather boring unless you're with a guide who is passionate about his work and his country. Introducing Þorsteinn, who will regale you with stories from history, folk tales old and new, fascinating insights into the landscape, culture and society that makes Iceland what it is today.

Þorsteinn's tours have received rave reviews on TripAdvisor.com from some of those who have taken them. They make worthwhile reading to prepare you, in

some measure for the totally unexpected sights and experiences the tours introduce you to.

Iceland is not known for its forests, but if Þorsteinn has his way, there will be a tree with your name on it growing here. He started his 'Plant Your Own Tree in Iceland' tour that has proven a big hit with visitors. Part spontaneous, part planned, this tour varies according to the weather - and weather changes quickly here! After picking out your tree from a plant nursery, you drive off in one of three directions to plant it - and leave your mark on the country for generations to come.

Salty Tours runs tours to numerous other destinations - all beginning with a pick up from your hotel. On the Reykjanes tours, though, you will be able to relax and ruminate on your whirlwind visit in the warmth of the Blue Lagoon, before one of the frequent scheduled coaches takes you back to your hotel after a great day. Having taken this tour, I can only echo the rave reviews. And be sure to take your camera!

Salty Tours will collect you from your Reykjavik hotel for a tour unlike any other.

Salty Tours -ASF

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A TASTE OF SPAIN

Spanish-style Tapashúsið tapas restaurant by Reykjavik's Old Harbour

Puffin, duck and quail are some of the exotic foods you can try from the brand new menu of the recently opened Tapashúsið or the 'Tapas House' restaurant as it would be called in English.

Meticulously and tastefully conceived furniture and interior decorations, created with great attention to detail, Spanish background music for the perfect Spanish ambience and friendly service compliment the delicious food served in this restaurant.

It is a casual yet sophisticated place, frequented by families in the early evening and chic groups of friends both local and foreign, couples and singles standing at the well-stocked bar later in the evening. Each course is presented in a unique and fun way, and perhaps most important - the food is affordable.



Tapashúsið restaurant is right down by Reykjavik's Old Harbour small boat marina which, needless to say, looks beautiful any time of the day or night.

Baccalao Islandia

Tapashúsið is in a completely refurbished and relocated house named Sólfell, built in 1921. The one storey section which overlooks the harbour was, in former times, used for salting and drying cod for export to Spain - 'Baccalao Islandia'. The top section of the corrugated roof has a couple of windows, formerly with air vents. The shape of the roof, the windows and the false air vents lend the house a unique look.

The female touch

Iceland chef of the year 2004, Lárus Gunnar Jónasson, owns and manages Tapashúsið. Head chef Vigdís Ylfa Finnsdóttir is the first woman to make it into the final five in the same competition in 2009. While paying great attention to detail, she strives to preserve the natural and fresh flavours of locally produced food in combination with Spanish culture, flavours and tastes.

Menu for all ages and tastes

At first glance, the menu looks intimidating. Don't worry, the management has compiled seven menus to make ordering simple and easy. Choosing food for the children has never been easier because one of the menus caters specifically to children: 'Baby Tapas'.



This modestly priced children's menu for the 'most demanding, young customers' includes chicken, a mini-hamburger with ham-cuts, rather than ground beef, fried fish and French fries served with a generous portion of tomato sauce. Those who'd like some exotic flavour may want to try chorizo sausage with mustard, baked goat cheese or gratin of bacalao with olives, or cured salmon with birch.

This fun restaurant is open every day for dinner from 4 PM to 1 AM.

Tapashúsið -SV

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ADRENALIN PUMPING

Moonscape Riding with ATV-Adventures in Grindavik



Although exploring foreign landscapes through the window of a moving car and the occasional stop can be quite efficient and comfortable, there is really nothing which compares to scaling volcanic craters and speeding across sandy beaches on a quad-bike! ATV-Adventures in Grindavik offer you that unique chance through practical and thrilling tours on the volcanic landscapes of the Reykjanes peninsula.

Being the 'youngest' part of Iceland and the upper-most part of the North-Atlantic ridge, the Reykjanes peninsula is abundant with geological wonders and spectacular views, including immense lava fields, hot springs, multi coloured landscapes and, the most famous of all, the Blue Lagoon. You can explore in the wide array of tours ATV-Adventures has on offer.

Make Your Last Day in Iceland Count

The practical aspect of ATV-Adventures is the ability to combine excitement with the often tedious logistics of travelling. Instead of having to arrange different modes of transport for each activity, ATV

offers you a pick-up at your hotel in Reykjavik or Keflavik and several options for further activities the same day. A popular choice is to make the most of your last day in Iceland with a car waiting for you and your luggage at your hotel in the morning, then some adrenaline pumping quad-biking, then winding up in the Blue Lagoon while ATV safely stores your luggage before finally heading off to the airport in the afternoon.

Alien and Foreign Landscapes

The tours include the compact Panorama Tour, which takes you up a hard mountain path for some splendid views and a ride along the coastline with stops at the various shipwrecks. The Lava Beach Tour goes further into the culture and history of the area in two hours and explores the lives of the local fishermen in the past.

The Trip to the Moon tour takes you for a three-hour ride on top of a relatively recent lava field, so recent that vegetation has yet to get a foothold on it and smoke actually steams up from underneath, an alien and foreign landscape for sure – hence the name. The tour also includes

a stop at a hot spring which rumours say is haunted, an old lighthouse, a look into a volcanic crater and a chance to pick up a lava rock that feels actually still warm to the touch. The 6-7 hour Volcanic Safari offers you the chance to see all of Reykjanes' most dramatic locations in one exciting trip that includes the birdlife in the area, lunch down by the docks in the fishing town of Grindavik, the multi-coloured landscapes of Vigdísarvellir and all of the activities in the other tours.

Safety First

ATV places special emphasis on safety and quality equipment in their tours. All of the tour guides are required to complete strenuous safety and first-aid courses and the company works closely with the local rescue team to map out all possible safety scenarios. All the quad-bikes are specially built for two persons, which means both riders are fully insured.

-VAG

ATV-Adventures



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BERG HOTEL

7 minutes from Iceland's International Airport

Berg is a new small and cosy hotel in Keflavik run by Ólöf and Arnar who really do care for their guests. According to "TripAdvisor" they indeed they take great pride in exceeding their guest's expectations in order to make each person's stay as comfortable and convenient as possible.

Berg's 11 double rooms are quite spacious compared to regular hotel rooms in Iceland. Each room has an en-suite bathroom with a washbasin, shower and toilet. Rooms are equipped with a television set and DVD player and movies on request, wireless internet, a safe, high-quality bedding, a fridge, a hair-dryer and other conveniences. Breakfast buffet is served between 7 and 10 AM.

Berg Hotel stands on a black basalt rock overlooking the local small boat harbour in Keflavik. The rock face provides the small boat harbour with a shelter on its western side. In winter the rock face is lit

with electric lights which can look very dramatic during mid-winter blizzards. A fire burns in the sitting room hearth, casting a warm glow over some typical Icelandic furniture dating from the middle of last century. Outside there is a hot tub from which it is possible to catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights when conditions allow.



Some of Keflavik's best strolls and restaurants are within easy reach of Berg hotel. It is only 7 minute drive from Iceland's International airport which makes it a favourite choice amongst travellers who arrive in the county late at night, and leave early in the morning.

Hótel berg



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KNIVES OF DISTINCTION

Handcrafted knives

In a quiet and secluded dale just outside Mosfellsbær, you'll find a narrow street, bustling with creativity, centered around the diminutive Álafoss waterfall. There you'll find Palli the Knife-maker toiling in his workshop, making timeless pieces of art in the form of knives. Each knife, being unique, makes it the ultimate souvenir, a matchless item for the collector, the absolute tool of the hunter or simply a thing of great beauty.

A visit to Palli's open workshop in Álafoss, Mosfellsbær is an experience—the blades, dangling from the ceiling, his collection of animal skulls, the piles of exotic materials, the 75 year-old dentist drill he uses for delicate carvings and the view of the waterfall outside his window all make for a delightful visit.

and whale teeth, and ivory (legally obtained, of course.) He hand-sews each hardened leather sheath specifically to fit each knife. The blades themselves are either hand-made copies of Iron Age or Viking Age designs from Denmark, Damascus steel, or factory-produced blades from other parts of Scandinavia.



never tires of his craft. "No knife is the same, even if I use the same components, it never comes out the same. I try to let the material I'm working with each time decide what the final product will look like, so I'm never repeating myself and I'm always equally excited with each knife I make. In fact, my friends tell me I never work, instead I just play all day long," he says.

It's best to phone Palli before visiting – he might be out looking for fresh



Exotic Materials

The knives are what make your visit worthwhile. Palli is a true pioneer and an exceptional artist who labours over his craft for days on end. He uses materials from all over the world and is particularly fond of using Icelandic reindeer, sheep and cattle horns and horses' hooves, and wood from various types of Icelandic trees.

Palli is always looking for exotic materials to work with, including walrus

A Labour of Love

A testament to Palli's dedication to his craft is his use of ancient brown coal, which he has to dry for six years. Palli exposes the brown coal to more and more oxygen by piercing a tiny hole each day with a needle through an insulating plastic covering. For those less patient, the brown coal, which is actually a fossilised tree, would dry too fast, splinter and crumble.

Palli has made over 2,500 knives but

materials. He has a good selection of knives available in his shop, but he can also custom-make knives to your specifications, which can be shipped to your doorstep, as well as those you'll find on his website.

Palli the Knife Maker



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THE SHEEP STAY WARM

Álafoss' wool keeps you warm and dry - like the Icelandic sheep

Just 20 minutes from the centre of Reykjavik lies the town of Mosfellsbær on the road to the north. There, after passing under the bridge you will find a roundabout. Most traffic continues straight, but if you take a right turn, you'll immediately see the red-roofed building of the old mill built next to the warm álafoss or ála waterfall, from which the mill took its name. Built in 1896, the mill was used to knit woollens. It was here that the Icelandic woollen industry began and flourished.

The mill itself has closed but the building now houses the Álafoss store, where visitors find a very wide range of designs of woollen clothing, the yarn and everything associated with making the clothing, art and craft supplies and souvenirs.

The clothing ranges from traditional to high fashion and the wide range of styles and colours gives

plenty of choice for men, women and children alike.

The Icelandic wool is noted for its special qualities. The fibres are made up of two different types of wool: a virtually



waterproof outer layer and a soft, warm inner layer. This makes clothing especially comfortable and suitable for all weathers. Sweaters made from this wool have been used for generations by farmers, fishermen, mountaineers - and the man or woman on the street, too. They are warm, shower-proof and comfortable.

Today, many young designers have taken the Icelandic wool to create a whole new range of designs and colours, whilst the store still carries a stock of the traditional designs that have become a fashion statement in themselves the world over.

Browsing clothing and knitting articles may not be to every man's taste but there is a lot to keep all the visitors interested, as the store is also a virtual museum. There are pieces of machinery, olden-style cash registers, original early phones and examples of equipment used to make the company the powerhouse that it was in Icelandic society for so many years.



There is a small café at the back which overlooks the waterfall that started it all. It is the kind of store where you can relax and browse, enjoy the ambiance and find those special gifts and personal items that are so rarely found in Europe or the rest of the world.

-ASF

Álafoss Wool Store



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MUNAÐARNES RESTAURANT & COTTAGES

Fall in love with Iceland in this corner of paradise

Ninety-five kilometres north of Reykjavík, lies a 65 hectare tract of birch-covered land on the banks of the peaceful Norðurá river.

It's a place where Icelanders go to get away from the stress of city life, and is a favourite haunt of families, in particular.

Fifty-six rustic, self-contained cottages are scattered throughout the park-like grounds, some sleeping 6 to 8, while others are ideal for couples, but all come with the usual accoutrement of the summer cottage life-style, an inviting hot tub and grill out on the deck.

All in all, Munaðarnes can accommodate up to 300 guests, year-round, making this an unparalleled place for family reunions, tour groups and conferences.



Making it relaxing and fun

The heart and soul of Munaðarnes lies at the spacious café-restaurant that seats over 100 guests and where managers Stefania and her husband Þór are busy making sure that visitors are well taken care of and even entertained throughout their stay. I met them on the terrace where we savoured an organic Sumatran coffee and enjoyed the warm September sun.

Thoroughly loving what they do, Stefania and Þór have no regrets about leaving Reykjavik and have no plans to resume their life there any time soon. It's not hard to see why.

The energetic couple put their all into making Munaðarnes a genuinely fun and friendly place to stay, with lots of activities for guests, such as bingo, karaoke, a Sunday afternoon cake buffet, guided nature walks, bouncy castles for the kids and even an Indian curry night.

On cool summer evenings, you can cosy up on the deck in colourful wraps, while the kids play in the playground or have a round of mini-golf just outside the door, all of which contribute to Munaðarnes' popularity as the 'go-to' place for families with children of all ages.

An original menu with local ingredients

Munaðarnes Restaurant prides itself on several original dishes such as savoury crêpes filled with grilled chicken, smoked lamb or trout, with rice and fresh vegetables. The succulent Limousin-Galloway beef, which comes straight from a nearby farm, is used in all of Munaðarnes' home-style burgers and steaks.

A specialty of the house is the hearty Icelandic goat meat hamburger which is fast gaining favour and a real must to try. Lastly, a variety of home-baked cakes and desserts served with excellent fair-trade coffee rounds off your meal.

Reading through the guest-book, I was impressed with the many positive comments from visitors. As one young person so aptly put it, "This is the place where I fell in love with Iceland"—a fitting sentiment that pretty much sums up the 'Munaðarnes experience'!

-EMV

Munaðarnes



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NORTHERN LIGHTS RETREAT

Gamli bær Guesthouse in Húsafell

Húsafell is one of the best places in Iceland to see the Northern Lights and is only two hours' drive from Reykjavik. Its surroundings include lava fields, an amazingly beautiful river and waterfalls which make the ideal setting for prize-winning photographs.

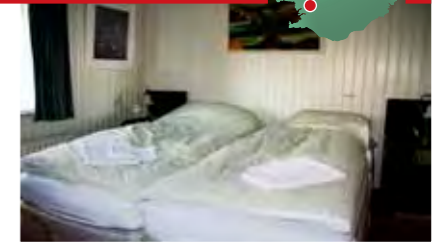
A local source of geothermal hot water provides the guesthouse with its space heating as well as hot water for the hot tub. "After dark in winter it is the best place to sit and watch the Northern Lights," says host, Steinunn Jóhannsdóttir.

Gamli bær Guesthouse was originally a farmhouse built by a woman in 1908. "At the time it was very unusual for a woman to build

a house", says Steinunn. "Many wondered why she needed such a large house but it turned out to be a good investment. A new mountain road to Þingvellir National Park (F-550) was opened in 1930 and since then, Gamli bær Guesthouse has been a popular place to stay."

Tourist attractions in the area include two glaciers, waterfalls and a lava field about 1,100 years old. Gamli bær Guesthouse is only a stone's throw away from Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls as well as Eiríksjökull and Langjökull Glaciers.

A farm church stands next to Gamli bær. It is used for christening, weddings and funerals. Local artist Páll Guðmundsson,



who lives next door, has made a stone-bar xylophone for the church as well as dozens of sculptures on and off the property.

In winter families and small groups can rent the 10-bed Gamli bær Guesthouse in its entirety for a modest price.

-KB

Gamli bærinn



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 none



STAY IN STYLE

Breathtaking Beauty in Borgarnes B & B

Borgarnes is becoming known as a town for artists and designers but, long before they started to arrive, the most beautiful house in Borgarnes was built in 1947. Designed by Halldór Jónsson, it has many very unusual features. The house is bright and airy, with paintings on the walls and other beautiful works throughout, making it a very special place to stay.

Its owner, Inger, has now opened it up for visitors to stay and enjoy the beauty of the house and the area it overlooks. The house is ideal for groups wanting some time together. Either a single floor or the whole house is available to rent. Its size and its calm style is just right

for small retreats or conferences where a warm comfort is more important than an extravagant hotel's luxury.

After farming for over 30 years, Inger decided that she wanted to buy a house in Borgarnes. A friend told her of this house at 11 am and she had bought it by 3 o'clock the same afternoon! When you visit, you will understand why. An unusual feature of the house is the theme of cows that is found throughout. Children will love a hunt around the house to find all the cows and other animals in all their forms.

There are 7 rooms including a 4-bed family room. The house is very child- and baby-friendly. The garden has a play area

with swings and a trampoline but, right next door is a famous play park that an older man crafted specially out of timber for the children in the neighbourhood to enjoy themselves in a beautiful location. Each room also has a TV and free wireless Internet access. Guests can use the very large, beautifully laid-out kitchen, to cook for themselves if they wish - but there is a delicious breakfast available every day.

Located at the tip of the peninsula, the lounge looks out over the rocks towards the sea. The view is stunning and the sun puts on a spectacular show every clear evening as it dips towards the horizon. The patio below the lounge provides a lovely sheltered spot to enjoy the warmth, the garden and the view.

Bird-watchers can enjoy the wide variety of birdlife, both in the tall fir trees and amongst the rocks in the sea. Birds like the eider are frequently seen.

-ASF

Borgarnes B&B



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THE KLONDIKE OF THE NORTH

Hvanneyri Guesthouse Invites You to Experience the Essence of Iceland

While staple tourist attractions can be rewarding and often easily accessed, all too many visitors leave the country without ever having experienced the true essence of Iceland. You won't get any closer to it than in a genuine Icelandic fishing town, as the proprietors of Guesthouse Hvanneyri in Siglufjörður Bay will attest to.

Katrín Sif Andersen, one of the owners of the family-run guesthouse says that, while Siglufjörður may not be as well known as many of Iceland's other attractions, those who do make their way there never regret it. In fact many who intend on staying only one night wind up extending their stay for several days – such is the beauty of the Tröllaskagi peninsula, on which Siglufjörður is located.

The Herring Era

In the mid-19th century, Siglufjörður was the primary location of herring fishing during the so-called 'Herring Era'. The amount of herring that was landed in Siglufjörður was so substantial that it

amounted to 20% of Iceland's total exports during the peak years, leading the town to be dubbed the Klondike of the North. The herring eventually disappeared but the people of Siglufjörður stayed behind, including the family in Hvanneyri Guesthouse. The patriarch of the family had in fact worked in Siglufjörður's fishing industry in one way or the other since he was six years old right up until the last fish processing plant was closed this year.

Family Affair

Recognizing that herring was far from the only thing Siglufjörður had to offer, the family has lovingly set up a much-needed service to Siglufjörður's visitors in the form of a Guesthouse. It is located on the main street and is thus within arms reach of the town's restaurants, shops and bakery, making it an ideal location to set up base during a stay in Tröllaskagi. The selection of accommodation is surprisingly wide, ranging from dorms to lavish suites, something which Katrín and her family are especially proud of – offering something to fit each and every customer's taste and budget.

Returning Friends

As you can imagine when dealing with a family-run business, Guesthouse Hvanneyri places special emphasis on giving their customers as personable and friendly service as possible. "We feel as if our customers appreciate this and many of them keep



coming back. In fact I just received baby gifts for my newborn baby from one of our customers. I guess it doesn't get any more personal than that," says Katrín.

The town itself has a lot to offer in itself. Just by interacting with the friendly folk of Siglufjörður, you see a slice of Iceland you perhaps won't see at more popular tourist spots. In addition, the people of Siglufjörður are particularly proud of their museums: The Herring Era Museum and the Folk Music Centre, where you can delve into Iceland's folk music heritage, thanks to Rev. Bjarni Þorsteinsson, a one-time resident of Siglufjörður, who diligently collected and documented hundreds of folk songs from the year 1880 onwards.

-KB



IMPECCABLE RUB 23 RESTAURANT

One of Akureyri's finest

Every now and then I come across an outstanding, special place - be it bistro or bar, restaurant or relais. One never forgets those gastronomical 'aha' moments when the food becomes something extraordinary; lifting you from the mundane to the magical.

What is a 'rub'?

One such place that stands out as truly memorable is Rub 23 Restaurant, right in the heart of that wonderfully picturesque north Iceland town of Akureyri. A 'rub' is, of course, the culinary term for a variety of spices and herbs that are applied to meat, fish or vegetables before cooking and this is where Rub 23 has taken the concept all the way. Rubs such as magic pepper, garlic-coriander, creole, Arabian, Indian, and Asian are just a few of the 11 different exotic spice blends available to choose from to coat your choice of rib eye steak, fillet of lamb, chicken breast or any number of fresh fish that come straight from the waters around Iceland.

Delectable sushi

Now, I have to confess something here. I have not always been a big fan of sushi, having tried it a couple of times in other parts of the world. But Rub 23's sushi dishes, including sashimi, nigiri, makisushi and inside-out rolls were of such a high quality that I can say without a doubt that I am now converted. Served with a variety of perfectly paired sauces and condiments, this is a must for sushi lovers. There is even a sushi take-away menu for those midnight sushi snacks.

Specialty of the house: Sushi Pizza

A specialty of Rub 23 is the popular and surprising Sushi Pizza which is not what you think it is—it's better. But you'll have to go and taste that one for yourself, as I don't want to give away any house secrets. Another house specialty to try: Ten Ten Three Tempura made with lobster and arctic char.

No to burgers and fries!

Equally impressive is Rub 23's children's menu. No burger and fries appear on this menu and if you ask for it, there is only one answer: No! The delight of discerning parents, the children's menu is adventurous - sushi for kids, blue mussels in jus, deep fried arctic char, and a down-to-earth chicken BBQ rub for the less adventurous—all served with potatoes, vegetables and/or salad.

Owner/chefs Kristján Kristjánsson and Einar Geirsson have created a restaurant that amply showcases their combined talents and where they have free reign to create inspired culinary works of art. The one word that stands out here to describe Rub23 is 'impeccable'.

-EMV





SPORT TOURS

tagline

Sport Tours is an activity Travel Agency in North Iceland but we operate our tours all over Iceland and offer a variety of tailor-made and activity-packed tours for groups and both private and scheduled tours for groups and individuals.

We are specialists in this field and have been organizing package tours for many years. Our tours contain plenty of excitement and action blended with Iceland's spectacular nature, relaxation in geothermal water, excellent food and good accommodation.

Tours and Activities

We offer a variety of tours, such as the great diving tour to the unique diving sites in Eyjafjörður where you can see Strytan (staglamite), the geothermal chimneys that rise from the bottom of the ocean. Super Jeep tours to all the nature pearls of North Iceland like Dettifoss, Ásbyrgi, Lake Myvatn, Goðafoss, Askja and many more. Snowmobile tours, Hiking, Horse riding and Catskiing in the great mountains of Tröllaskagi or 'Troll peninsula'. Deep sea fishing, Whale watching and Shore fishing in Eyjafjörður.

Events and Incentive

Sport Tours can also assist with event planning and the provision of equipment for various activities such as parties/receptions etc. and outdoor pursuits and activities. Alternatively, any event and incentive tours of your choosing can be managed and organized directly by us, leaving you free and unfettered to fully enjoy the occasion.

Sport Tours - Cottages

Our farm, Ytri-Vík, is a beautiful and peaceful place, located on the west side of Eyjafjörður between Akureyri and Dalvík. We are situated in close proximity to the shoreline and there is a glorious and unobstructed view across the fjörd. Our cottages come in different sizes and have

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GOLDEN CIRCLE TT 01

This has been the most popular tour for years and with good reason. The Golden Circle takes you to three highlights of historical and natural wonder; the ancient site of the Icelandic parliament, Þingvellir National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is of great ecological, geological and historical interest, the beautiful Gullfoss waterfall as well as the famous Geysir geothermal area where colourful hot springs and geysers are abundant.

- Duration approx: 7 - 8 hours
- Departures: Every day
- Available: All year
- Pick up between: 08:30 - 09:00



SOUTH COAST TT 03

- Departures: Mondays, Tuesdays Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays
- Available: All year
- Pick up between: 08:30 - 09:00



This fascinating excursion takes you to the South Coast of Iceland where you can see the famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano, glaciers, beautiful waterfalls, black basalt lava beaches and bird cliffs. Numerous waterfalls tumble like silk threads down high green cliffs, which in prehistoric times formed the coastline. Rising behind are majestic glaciers with their tongues creeping down to the lowlands, the most prominent being Sólheimajökull. Experience standing behind the plummeting Seljalandsfoss waterfall. Observe the beautiful Skógarfoss, walk along a black sand beach near Vik and Reynisdrangar, and feel the amazing power of volcanoes and glaciers all in one day.

NORTHERN LIGHTS TT 04

The Northern Lights are a spectacle of colourful lights that seem to dance across the arctic sky on crisp, clear Icelandic nights. Sometimes they are brilliant, sometimes just there, and every once in a while, 'missing in action'. The Northern Lights - Aurora Borealis is a tour on winter nights operated ONLY when sky and Aurora conditions are favourable.

- Various locations depending on weather and cloud conditions.
- Duration approx: 3 - 4 hours
- Departures: Every day (Weather permitting)
- Available: Sept 15th - April 1st
- Pick up between: 20:30 - 21:00



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THE WONDER OF WHALES

Europe's only Whale Museum in Húsavík offers an impartial presentation

Today most people think of whales as majestic creatures gliding effortlessly and unseen through depths of the oceans. However, during the Settlement Period, Icelanders' view of whales was limited to survival, seeing stranded whales as an easy source of food to sustain a community through unforgiving winters. Seventeen sagas mention the relationship between humans and whales in Iceland's Settlement Era, with disputes over stranded whales often mentioned as sparking animosity between communities and sometimes even resulting in deadly duels. Finding a stranded whale was a rare and lucky find and the Icelandic word 'hvalreki', or whale stranding, has come to mean 'jackpot' or 'good fortune'.

The Húsavík Whale Museum features permanent exhibitions that explore whales in the context of various cultures. Although Iceland had traditionally abstained from commercial whale-hunting until the turn of the 20th century, it has been involved with whaling since the thirteenth century due to its status as a Norwegian colony. A Norwegian treatise written during this period called 'The Speculum Regale', or 'King's Mirror', describes the character of whales found in Iceland and warns men about the dangers of the hunt. "There are certain varieties that are fierce and savage toward men and are constantly seeking to destroy them at every chance. They roam about in all the seas looking for ships, and when they find one they leap up, for in that way they are able to sink and destroy it the more quickly." Though mixed with bits of folklore, The Speculum Regale gives valuable insight into the historical relationship between man and whale.

The Whale Hunt, a new temporary exhibit at the Húsavík Whale Museum, expands on the museum's permanent exhibits by exploring the relationship between indigenous whaling cultures and whales with the help of artist Jonathan Harris. Harris journeyed to Barrow, Alaska and stayed with the Inupiat Eskimos for nine days to document their indigenous whale hunting. The Whale Hunt allows visitors to come to their own conclusions by following the heartbeat of the hunt through a series of photographs, extending from the preparation before the hunt to the distribution of meat afterwards. Harris' goal was to witness an event without letting modern notions and judgements get in the way of traditions that have existed for thousands of years.

Húsavík's Whale Museum remains the only museum in Europe dedicated exclusively to whales. The museum seeks to expand its collection as information about whales and the debate surrounding them grows. Iceland stands at the forefront of this debate as opinions have swung from adhering to limitations given by the International Whaling Commission in 1986 to the current position of whaling quotas of certain species until 2013 in the hopes of creating a sustainable industry. These continued connections allow Húsavík's Whale Museum to evolve its exhibits to reflect man's varied relationship with whales, while maintaining a neutral perspective.

Hvalasafnið



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-KB

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visitors so that they can simply relax and enjoy their time.

Often referred to as comfort hiking, Álíheimar offers a complete package and includes hotel accommodation and local restaurant dishes. Though days can be long and rigorous, Álíheimar provides its guests with a comfortable place to rest their bodies after a day out in nature. The only thing that they need to bring is a good pair of hiking boots and warm clothes.

“We have spent time creating the different day tours from our hotel and have hosted every level from amateur to experienced hiker. Our local guides give our guests opportunity to see places that they might not find on their own and tell them about that they see and experience,” says Arngrímur.

Álíheimar Guesthouse encourages its guests to slow down and take a closer look at their surroundings with its ‘Hiking in the Elves’ Mountain Programme’. Rather than rushing from place to place, guests are treated slow travel in the immediate surroundings where they can get a better idea of local life and nature. The community has its roots in eco-tourism, placing a special emphasis on respect for nature through environmental stewardship. This has earned the community recognition from the EU’s Blue Flag programme for its environmentally friendly harbour, Hafnarhólmi. Birds, especially puffins, circle the harbour area, which provides an ideal lookout point for avid bird-watchers.

Three- to seven-day tours give travellers the chance to explore the area and break from their normal routine. It is easy to get to Borgarfjörður. Air Iceland flies from Reykjavík to Egilsstaðir airport and then Álíheimar offers free collection to the accommodation in Borgarfjörður eystri.

A hiking guide takes guests from the hotel to a new destination each day while explaining to them about the area. All hotel staff have lived in the area for several years and can often trace the story of a place that could cause questions to city people to a folk-tale or the local life of the village. Borgarfjörður eystri has a diverse collection of rare rocks and minerals especially rhyolite. At the rock museum of one family in the village you can see several unique types of stones found in the area. Unlike Landmanalaugar, one of the most difficult treks in the country, in Borgarfjörður eystri, rhyolite can be found close to the road and along relatively easy hiking trails.



Included in the tour are flights within Iceland, pick up from the local airport and accommodation in Borgarfjörður eystri, where guests will be taken to one of Álíheimar’s thirty double rooms, each with made up beds and a private bathroom. Once at Álíheimar, guests have nothing to worry about as all transportation, museum admissions, and meals are included. Meals focus on local food and guests often have the chance to meet the farmers and fishermen who supplied their dinner. Guests are always encouraged to drop by the farms to get a better idea of daily life, and if they arrive in autumn or spring they get the added experience of participating in the autumn sheep round-up and spring’s lambing season. Arngrímur says that, in 2012, guests will arrive for the 7 days tour on a Saturday, so they are ready for the first hike Sunday morning. The season will start on the 2nd of June and there is a guaranteed departure every Saturday until 15th of September. If they have only one guest, it can be lovely but they take a maximum of 14 people per guide. Because they spend 6 nights at the hotel, they can choose their 5 days of hiking when they see the weather report and we offer the catch of the day in elves’ mountain. Hikes are from 12-18 km but, usually, they are about 5-8 hours in the nature. Everyone likes to stop and experience the nature and the wilderness.

In the normal day-to-day programme, the second day begins with a hike to Stóruð, or

Boulder Hollow, chosen as the best hike in Iceland last year. Starting from Vatnskarð pass, an experienced guide will lead hikers across the Geldingafjall mountain. From there, you can see Njarðvík, Fljótsdalshérað valley, the black sandy beach of Héraðsflói bay and, if the day is particularly clear, Vatnajökull glacier and Mt. Snæfell in the distant east. From here it’s not far to Stóruð, an expanse of enormous rocks cut through by a small river with streaming pools of icy turquoise water. The road then forks into a more challenging, yet unforgettable, hike through Dyrhöll, the Door Mountains, or an easier way down through the valley.

Following a day’s rest and hearty meal of freshly-caught fish from local fishermen, a new day begins with a more relaxed hike of 11 kilometres, stretching from Selfljót river and along the seashore to Stapavík cove. From Stapavík, the hike goes along an old riding trail through Gönguskörð pass. Until 1955, this trail was the only way from Borgarfjörður to Fljótsdalshérað valley. Once through the valley, hikers will be picked up from Njarðavík and driven to Borgarfjörður.

THE HIKING PARADISE

Álíheimar’s Comfort Hiking Package

Moving mountains may seem impossible, but thousands of years ago, when the landscape around Borgarfjörður eystri was still forming, colossal glaciers collided, raising massive mountains and leaving paths of flat valleys in their wake.

The Borgarfjörður eystri hiking area was named one of the 25 most beautiful treks in the world by National Geographic

Adventure and last year’s top choice for hiking in Iceland. Borgarfjörður eystri, a small community in the northeastern corner of the country, distinguishes itself from other hiking areas with its well-established infrastructure and clearly marked trails. For the past fifteen years, Arngrímur Viðar Ásgeirsson, owner of Álíheimar, has aided tourists in their search for natural beauty by offering a complete 3-7 day package to

Álíheimar



Brekkuþæ, 720 Borgarfirði eystri
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The next day is dedicated to an easy hike of 15 kilometres to view Breiðavík. Hikers begin walking over moors and will notice light brown rhyolite that turns golden in the sunshine around Lake Urðarhólavatn. As Breiðavík inlet stretches before them, they will watch the majesty of rhyolite mountains' expand in an array of pastel colours. After a gentle walk along a sheep trail, it's time to enjoy the atmosphere, waterfalls and peace in Breiðuvík before heading up to Gagnheiði ridge which is the best viewpoint over about 500 metres, and then it's back to Bakkagerði.

The fifth day is a gentle one and includes a cultural tour around the immediate area of Borgarfjörður encompassing the Old turf house, concert hall, local fish factory, and a workshop that turns rock to art. The local museums of the artist Kjarval and the fairytale museum where you can learn a little more about the local elves are also on the route which, of course, includes the Elf rock and the local church. Following a delicious fish soup from the local Álfacafé, the guides lead hikers to Hvolsmælir peak which lies at the foot of the Door Mountains.

The hikes will continue the next day with Brúnavík Bay. It starts at Borgarfjörður's environmentally friendly harbour, Hafnarhólmi, with a visit to the puffins and other nesting birds such as the harlequin ducks. Moving up from the coast, the hike passes through vegetated mountain screes to Brúnavík pass, descending to Brúnavík inlet. Here lies a black sand beach littered with beautiful stones and a small stream that hikers can cross barefoot, staying that way until they reach Hofstrandarskarð pass. The final

part of the walk flanks Helgárgil, a canyon where a myriad colours are reflected, and heads back towards Bakkagerði village.

Guests have the option of continuing their stay in Borgarfjörður eystri or choosing to take a tour that includes travel to Mývatn and Akureyri. The difficult task of leaving Borgarfjörður is softened by the beauty of Mývatn, which hosts a variety of birdlife on its peaceful shores. Guests will visit Mývatn's famed natural geothermal bath and stay at a nearby farm holiday guesthouse. From there they will be driven



can try on elf costumes as they visit a castle, the elves' mountain home, and dive under the sea to a mermaid's world. An exhibition about Kjarval, one of Iceland's most famous painters, takes guests through his life and displays his sketches of local people. For guests looking for a cosy café, Elf Café offers a delicious fish soup, homemade cake and cookies, coffee, tea and espresso.

In the little fishing village of Bakkagerði and the nearby area, you can find about 140 people and a lot of elves. They offer a variety of 240 different types of beds from mountain huts to hotel style rooms. They like to have guests and are not involved in mass tourism, so will help you to find your right place to stay. The local tourism website, www.borgarfjordwureystri.is will give you a lot of information and www.puffins.is can update you about the birdlife.

to Akureyri, where they can spend the day before heading back to Reykjavik.

Álfheimar Guesthouse's owner, Arngrímur Viðar Ásgeirsson, has taught sports at the local school for several years and recommends a few tips to prepare for the trip. "Though hikes are easy to moderate, I encourage people to walk for one to two hours, three to four times per week to get their bodies ready for hiking. We want to make sure that our guests get to see all the places and some require more effort to get to. Hikes

can be challenging, but we make sure we find out each hiker's capability before we head off on the day's hike," advises Arngrímur, "and if someone decides to take a day off, we can help them to find short hikes or places to go in the little village of Bakkagerði".

Guests can take a close look and learn information about the landscape's geology by going to the rock museum which then leads into every child's dream, 'Fairytale Land'. Adults and children alike can hear stories and kids

Álfheimar -KB



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OPENING THE EAST

Tourism Matures in East Iceland

The last vestiges of Reykjavik slip away as East Iceland's landscape unfolds its raw talent for the unexpected. Home to Iceland's densest forests and desolate highlands, East Iceland often conjures up

visions of Iceland as it used to be. "This is the Iceland of my childhood. Small and friendly with an authenticity hard to find anywhere else," reminisces Asta Thorleifsdottir, head of marketing for the region. Her

contagious enthusiasm has passed on to her staff, who know East Iceland from their personal travels and provide travelers with a wealth of information that goes beyond any guidebook.

A car will open East Iceland to travelers willing to ascend steep mountain roads and descend to verdant valleys shouldered by fjords filled with clear, cobalt waters. For travelers who want to get around without a car, small bus companies have started offering tours of towns as travelers start to recognize the vast stretches of beauty ready to explore. Jeep tours unveil the once remote highlands by navigating rugged roads to places inaccessible to most cars. Some towns have developed their infrastructure to accommodate travelers' needs and desire to see beyond the lights of the capital, while staying true to their small town feel.

East Iceland's distance from the capital region remains both a blessing and curse as its small population greets visitors with an unparalleled warmth, but limits



travelers to a few avid enthusiasts. Today, a one hour flight from Reykjavik cuts down the eight to ten hour drive on Iceland's Ring Road. This has allowed the trickle of travelers steadily grow over the past few years, leading to a growth in skilled local guides and organized tours for hiking, ice cave exploration, horse back riding, bird watching, and spotting reindeer. Locals lend their personal knowledge and experience to visitors who seek authenticity, making travel through East Iceland an extraordinary trip into a little known and understood part of the country.

Activities

Brisk winds usher in autumn and winter to East Iceland, bringing with them endless possibilities for a wide variety of new experiences. Autumn bears witness to the shifting colors of moss and trees that cover the east with brilliant foliage. Contrary to popular belief, Iceland's mild climate rarely dips below freezing in autumn or winter, although snow often begins falling in late autumn into the springtime. Powdery snow sugars mountains, turning their lush green into idyllic white slopes made for skiing.

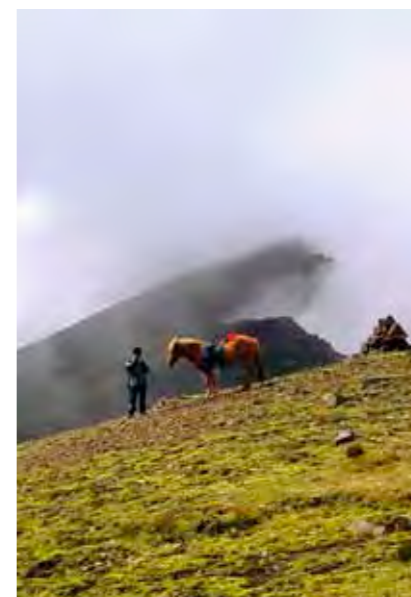
Skiing with expert guides from mountain peak to fjord's coast gives experienced skiers a rush of adrenaline, while milder slopes lined with ski lifts allow amateurs to work on their skills before tackling more challenging slopes. Hiking and cross-country skiing allow visitors to appreciate nature more slowly, with plentiful trails marking paths through valleys and steep climbs. Along the way visitors can arrange tours of the many ice caves found along the

way or set off on Jeep tours to explore the vast expanses of highland desert.

On the way travelers can sometimes find reindeer wandering through valleys and horseback riding tours on the beach come across curious seals playing along the coastline. Contrary to popular belief, Iceland can have relatively mild winters with temperatures rarely dipping much below freezing. Many places in the east remain warmer throughout the year and allow visitors experience the joys of winter in a mild climate.

Nature

East Iceland's once active volcanos are now mute, but its turbulent past can be seen in the rock formations left in its wake. The bedrock here dates back to 13 million years ago, when



long extinct volcanos formed some of the oldest land in Iceland. As fall settles into the East, colors explode into burning shades of red, yellow, and orange as the Northern lights provide cool shades of blue, green and white to light the lengthening nights. Polished black basalt columns flank waterfalls and spar mines which once produced transparent calcite which was used in experiments leading to momentous breakthroughs in physics and optics.

Unlike other parts of Iceland, the east has escaped the ravages of deforestation, maintaining Hallormstadir, the largest forest in the country. Birch trees and other native species mingle with nonnative species in a reforestation project intended to recover Iceland's lost forests. East Iceland is not only rich in forests, but its highlands and coastal areas are replete with several rare bird species that can often be easily spotted. Birds nest along the coast, and in the highlands surrounding Vatnajokull glacier. Among the rarer birds frequently seen in East Iceland are harlequin ducks, which have their only European breeding ground here, and Steller eider ducks which can be seen along the north coast in Borgarfjordur eystri. Swans swim on the vast mirrored surface of the sea and lakes that border the road on the way to the East Fjords, lending a fairy tale atmosphere to the area.

Close at the heels of nesting birds is Iceland's only native species, the arctic fox. Preying on nesting birds and ptarmigans, arctic foxes can frequently be found at the shore hunting for birds or fish or when retreating back to their burrows. Like the arctic fox, reindeer also thrive in the wild but were introduced to Iceland by Norwegians in the eighteenth century. Reindeer are found exclusively in East Iceland and though originally intended for domestication, Icelanders never took to farming them and has led to a substantial population of reindeer grazing throughout the east. Seals survey the area, peaking their heads from the surf long enough to gain the admiration of travelers before disappearing back into the sea.



Culture

With fjords outstretched like fingers towards European shores, East Iceland has hosted communities of Norwegian fishermen and merchants, French, Russians and traditional Icelandic culture scattered throughout the land. Commonly linked by a love of the land and sheer will for survival, each community indelibly imprinted their own culture on towns which still retain relics from their past as though waiting for bygone residents to reappear. Museums have sprung up around these former communities to give visitors a glimpse of the past with well-preserved accounts of daily life in days gone by.

More recently, artist communities have sprung up in several small towns scattered throughout the East. These communities encourage international and local participation through artist in residence programs that provide budding artists with the time, space, and tools necessary to complete their projects. Gunnar Gunnarsson, contemporary of Nobel Prize winning author Halldor Laxness and arguably the best Icelandic writer, built his home in the east and drew upon its richness to inflame his imagination. In 2011 the literary tradition continues with Icelandic author Gyrðir Elíasson winning the Nordic Council Literature Prize for a short story collection that he wrote while staying in the east. In the design world, communities of artists fuel their creativity with nature's



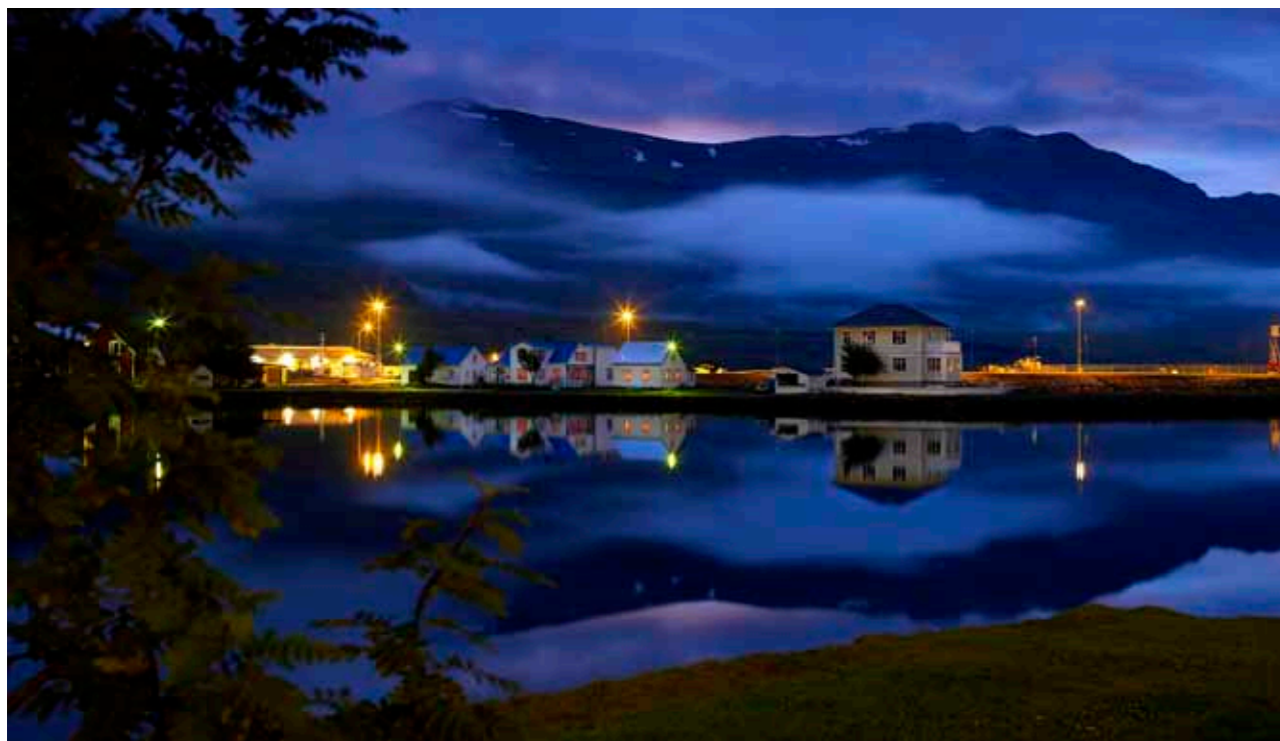
rich palette of patterns and materials such as reindeer skins and horns, fragments of rock which have broken off from the multi-colored mountains, and sustainably harvested wood from the surrounding forests.

Legends and folklore lend another shade to the colors which burst forth from the region, where tales of elves and monsters which roam the area increase the sparse population and giving breadth to nature. A wormlike monster, often compared to the sea-serpent at Loch Ness in Scotland, is rumored to dwell in a large river called Lagarfljot where many still claim to see him.

In the north lies the city of elves, where the elf queen presides over her kingdom from atop a hill. Tales lay close to the heart of locals who happily discuss their traditions with visitors and quickly integrate travelers into daily life.

**Festivals Throughout the Year
 OCT., NOV & DEC.**

October 1st
 Haustroði – Celebration of harvest and autumn in Seyðisfjörður



November 3 – 13th
 „Days of darkness“ in East Iceland – Various events related to light and darkness, joyful celebrations in every town in the East.

December 31st
 New year celebrated at midnight. Every family has its own firework fired up at exactly 00:00 o'clock. Beautiful sky in unforgettable settings, power and joy by every house.

MAY
 May 12 – 15th
 The Hammond festival is an annual tribute to the legendary Hammond organ in Djúpivogur. Four days of great music in this favorite location of nature-lovers.

JUNE
June 3 – 5th
 National Seamen's Day on the first Sunday in June. Celebrations in every fishing village in the East.

June 11th
 Man on the Moon – children's art festival in Seyðisfjörður

June 18 – 26th
 Hiking Week in Fjarðabyggð. Hikes, evening entertainment, workshops and more.

June 23 – 25th
 The oldest Jazz festival in Iceland.

June 25th
 Great Forest Day. A family festival celebrated in Hallormsstaðarskógur including a BBQ, forest coffee and fun activities for the whole family.
 Every Wednesday Every Wednesday evening during the summer, there is a concert at the Blue Church in Seyðisfjörður.

JULY
July 1 – 3rd
 Occupation Day. The Allied occupation of Reyðarfjörður from the Second World War remembered through a scheduled programme.

July 9th
 Formula Offroad driving competition by Egilsstaðir.

July 7 – 9th
 The real „Eistnaflug Rock Festival“ in Norðfjörður, held at Egilsbúð.

July 7 – 11th
 Vopnaskak – family festival in Vopnafjörður.

July 10 – 17th
 LungA 2011. Art festival of young people in Seyðisfjörður.

July 15 – 17th
 The sustainable town festival at Stöðvarfjörður. Activities and events scheduled for the whole weekend.

July 22 – 24th
 Ironsmith festival at Seyðisfjörður. The Technical Museum's annual Ironsmith Festival focuses on the skills and traditions of craftsmen and artisans as well as traditional Norwegian-Icelandic food and popular music from the 1800's to modern times. Set in original early 1900's surroundings, presentations, exhibitions, workshops and tasty (even exotic) everyday food are accompanied by musical performances and public dancing on the wharf.

July 23rd
 Annual music festival „Bræðslan“ at Borgarfjörður eystri.

July 28 – August 1st
 French Days. Fáskrúðsfjörður town celebrates its Gallic heritage. Visit www.franskirdagar.com

July 29th – August 1st
 The Elf celebration at Borgarfjörður Eystri – family festival.

July 29th – August 1st
 Neistaflug Festival in Norðfjörður. Entertainment on an outdoor stage, concerts, a funfair, and a special sing-along.

July 30th
 Barðsnes Off-Road Run in Norðfjörður: 27km off-road run.

AUGUST
August 1 – 7th
 „Once in an August Evening“ – Culture festival at Vopnafjörður.

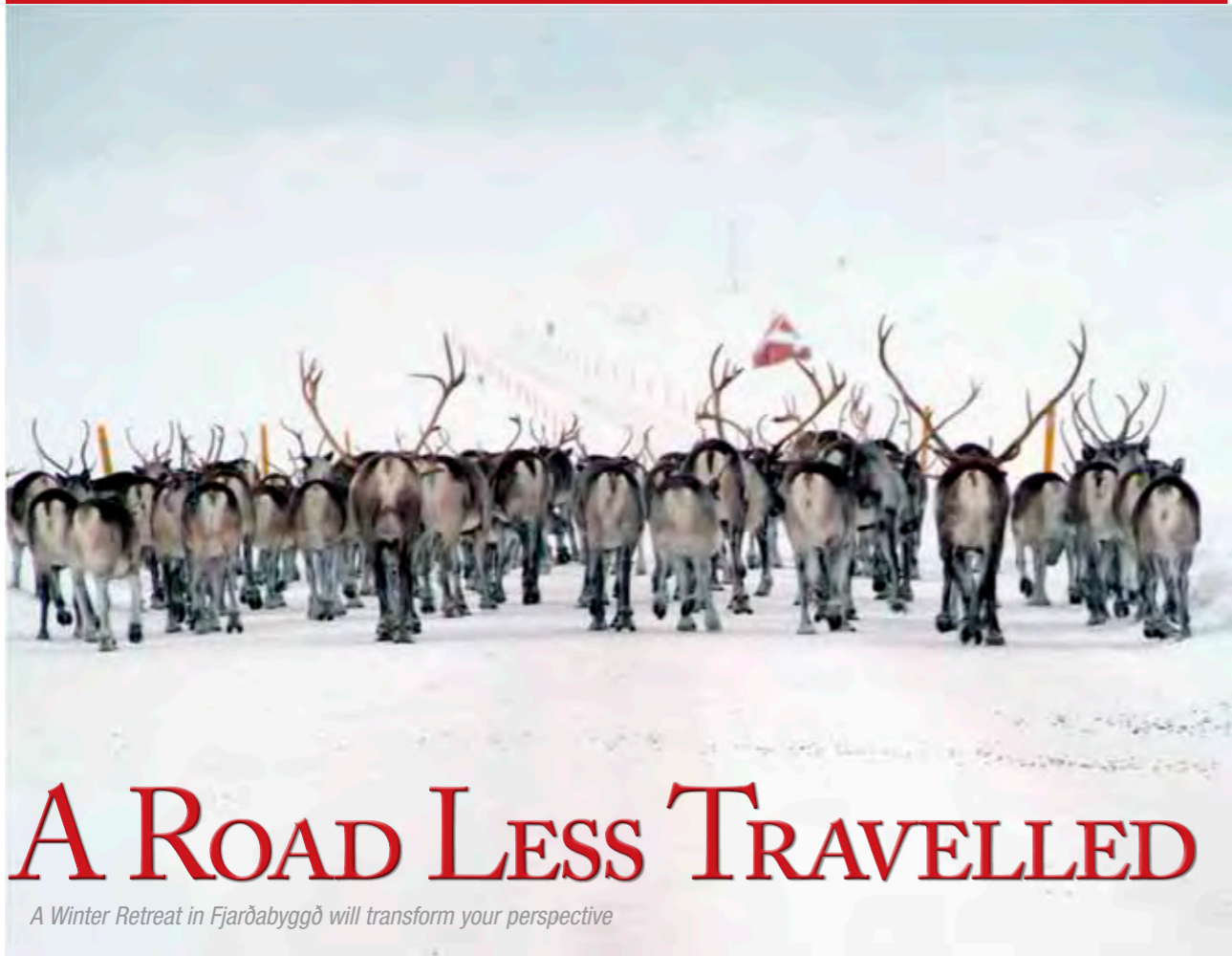
August 6th
 Historical celebration at the location of the old saga „Hrafnkell saga Freygoða“



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A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

A Winter Retreat in Fjarðabyggð will transform your perspective

In the mild Icelandic winter, the Eastern fjords are blanketed with a reflective stillness that falls over the land with the snow.

Fjarðabyggð's six towns cropped up around naturally calm harbours created by its rolling fjords, towered over by impressive

mountains that have earned the area the nickname of East Iceland's Alps.

A Therapeutic Mountain Retreat

The region is known for mountain therapy, which lets guests unwind with the help of

well-marked mountain hiking trails and the unspoilt nature found everywhere.

Off the main road, Route 1, which frequently closes in winter, the road to Fjarðabyggð stays open year round enabling visitors to embark on an unforgettable winter adventure with local people.

For visitors who want a much needed mountain retreat, a new winter tour is available that can be booked through Tanni Travel, the bus company travelling around Fjarðabyggð. Simple travel and enjoyment is the focus of this tour which connects visitors to local culture and Icelandic winter traditions. Three to five day packages allow visitors to get a feel for the area. Everything from lodging and meals to transportation and activities in the area are included so that visitors will get the benefit of local knowledge without the hassle of figuring out where to go. "We want everyone to feel a part of the community while they are here," says Hildigunnur Jörundsdóttir, Fjarðabyggð's tourism officer.



Reindeer and Northern Lights

Day trips from accommodation at Mjóeyri's guesthouse and cottages explore the region's life and traditions, while visitors enjoy winter's special charms. Reindeer are known to wander on snowy mountains in search of food and the Northern Lights liven up cold nights with a stunning natural light show. Day trips get visitors involved in the history of the region. A trip to Helgustaðanáma spar mine, which fed the field of physics with materials needed for experiments in optics, allowing them to see the conditions that miners had to face.

Skiing for All Levels of Expertise

Winter in the East means skiing season in Oddsskarð, or Odd's pass. Recently, Fjarðabyggð has become known for its exceptional ski area, where ski lifts at Oddsskarð take visitors over 800 metres for a spectacular view of the area. Skiers can descend the slopes of the East Iceland Alps while other visitors can simply take in their surroundings. Avid skiers also have the chance to ski from mountaintop to the seaside with local guides who are expertly trained.



Gerpir, a hiking area between Eskifjörður and Norðfjörður, will delight hikers with its superb view of the transformation of the fjord and mountains in winter.

Tradition and Culture

No trip to the Fjarðabyggð is complete without driving Norðfjörður's scenic route with its avalanche defenses built to protect residents from heavy snows and hiking down to Páskahellir, the seaside Easter cave where humans turned seals are said to gather. Easter and Christmas traditions are shared on the tour as locals teach visitors how to make traditional twisted donuts and handicrafts for winter.

After an active day, guests are welcomed to dinner with a local family or treated to a restaurant's specialities, such as reindeer, served by friendly staff. The glow of



campfires and candlelight on Mjóeyri's beach illuminates conversation and provides guests the opportunity to share their experiences with each other.

The package includes free trips to museums that will give guests more insight into different aspects of town life including the history of fishing at Eskifjörður's Maritime museum and Norðfjörður's museum about the area's local flora, fauna and culture, including contemporary paintings by Icelandic artists. Foreigners have also visited the area, with some settling down to stay - like the French in Fáskrúðsfjörður, where a museum reveals the lives of this small community and Reyðarfjörður's World War II museum catalogues life during the war, when troops from several nations came through the region, flooding traditional towns with a whole new way of life.

An Icelandic-style Farewell

On the last day, everyone will gather to party like a local with dinner, dancing, and samples of Icelandic shark and schnapps passed around. "We want our visitors to leave feeling not like tourists, but part of our town," says Hildigunnur.

Before travelling back to Reykjavik or through the rest of Iceland, Fjarðabyggð's mountains are sure to restore a sense of tranquility to guests looking for a winter retreat.

Fjarðabyggð



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A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

Sænautsel Turf Farm is restored to its original state and style

Once buried in a thick layer of chalky ash from a volcanic eruption, the turf farm Sænautsel has been lovingly restored thanks to the hard work of Lilja Óladóttir and her family. Sænautsel was built in 1843 and its owners lived there until Dyngjufjöll erupted in 1875, covering it with ash that can be seen in some of the uncovered remains of a sheep pen at the farm. Lilja has worked hard to get Sænautsel up and running and insists on keeping to the spirit of the original farm. Everything is handmade, often using the same tools that were used at the old farm.

The Way of the Past

Constructed using driftwood found in Vopnafjörður, a town 60 kilometres away, all materials had to be brought in with a team of horses over rough terrain. Initially, the farm had one house. The people stayed on the upper floor and kept their sheep on the ground floor. This was practical for keeping the sheep safe and warm as well as using the sheep's body heat to keep people warm but, as the farm got bigger, the people spread their livestock between different buildings, which are open to visitors today. Lilja has also added a few touches like a chicken coup and a homemade refrigerator that runs without electricity.

Life with a Volcano

This area of East Iceland was especially popular with poorer families just starting out because the land was cheap and gave them the chance to buy a farm and settle down. This led to farms cropping up throughout East Iceland, including Sænautsel.

Unfortunately, the family at Sænautsel had only thirty years of prosperity before they had to flee from their home, leaving most of their worldly possessions behind for five years. Yet, upon their return, they found that their sheep had thrived in their absence and they earned a tidy sum selling them.



Sample the Culture

Today, Lilja and her family raise their own sheep, a cow and chickens at the farm in the summer months while maintaining it as it was before the eruption, donning period costumes as they open the farm to visitors. For 1,500 kr, guests can take a tour of the old farm, sample Icelandic schnapps, smoked meat made by Lilja and get endless coffee and pancakes with jam whipped up from scratch. Animals roam around the farm and their playful offspring are sure to delight children and adults alike.

-KB

Sænautsel ehf



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A WARM WELCOME IN THE EAST

A blend of tradition and modernity equals a comfortable stay

Lakeside paths wind around Egilsstaðir Guesthouse, a stately eighteen-room hotel in Egilsstaðir, just a few minutes off Route 1. Built by owner Gunnlaugar Jónasson's great grandfather, this former farmhouse has hosted guests since it was finished in 1903. However, Egilsstaðir Guesthouse has changed to meet the needs of its growing number of visitors and was renovated in 1998.

As Egilsstaðir transformed into East Iceland's hub, Gunnlaugar improved on his great grandfather's original idea of a comfortable guesthouse by adding modern conveniences such as an en suite bathroom, wireless Internet access and a television for each room. Guests are also served a complimentary buffet breakfast each morning in Egilsstaðir Guesthouse's spacious restaurant.

Egilsstaðir Guesthouse holds onto its 'lived in' feeling mainly because Gunnlaugar's family lived in the house for generations and Gunnlaugar lived in a section of the hotel with his wife and children until one year ago, giving the service and style of the hotel a personal touch. "My children used to play in the halls and help welcome visitors. This was not a hotel, but our home and we still receive guests in the same way today." Egilsstaðir Guesthouse holds onto the unmistakable warmth of a house, while treating guests to a hotel's quality of service.

Food plays an important part at Egilsstaðir Guesthouse and its restaurant has gained an impeccable reputation for its food and decor. Gunnlaugar's wife, Hulda, is the mastermind behind the menu, adding variations to Icelandic dishes and including at least one vegetarian dish of the day. Hulda's mastery of the art of local food is mainly due to establishing a network of farms and fishermen to supply the restaurant with fresh ingredients year round. Menus share tips on Icelandic dining decorum and the names and stories of the people who supply ingredients to the restaurant, connecting dishes to their source. Most ingredients come from less than 50 kilometres away, like the beef and dairy products that come from the farm right across the street and deliveries of fresh vegetables from Vallanes, a farm 12 kilometres away.

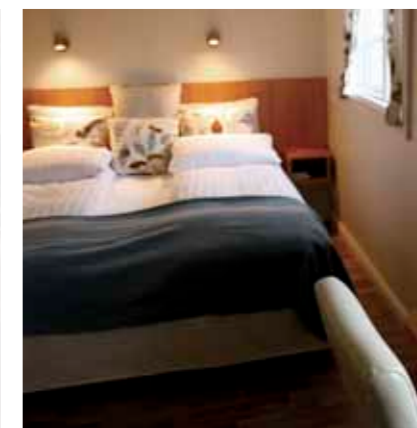
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Gistihúsið Egilsstaðir



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AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION IN THE EAST

Egilsstaðir's Lyngás Guesthouse offers simple, clean room to stay.
 Opened in 2010, Lyngás Guesthouse gives guests in Egilsstaðir the option of high quality accommodation at an affordable price. Lyngás is located in the centre of town and has six rooms suited for individuals, couples or groups of up to seven. White walls, accented with bright photos of plant life emphasise clean cut

minimalism. All rooms share bathrooms, kitchen, and the living room with free wireless access throughout the guesthouse. From the start of autumn, guests can get excellent bargains at this clean and modern guesthouse just a few minutes walk from Egilsstaðir's pool and art museum. Guests on a tighter budget can bring their sleeping

bag for a reduced price or pay a small fee for the convenience of a made up bed.

Gistiheimili Lyngás -KB

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EASTERN LAKESIDE RESORT

Hotel Hallormsstaður offers boating, riding, swimming and more
 In the midst of Iceland's largest forest, Hotel Hallormsstaður sits perched atop a hill overlooking Lake Lagarfljót. Resembling a lakeside resort, Hotel Hallormsstaður's reputation is built on a commitment to serving guests, which is shown with the small touches of comfort in its rooms and when presenting a delicious dinner buffet that ranges from traditional Icelandic cuisine to international dishes like curried vegetables and seaweed salad. Guests can dine or drink a cup of coffee or tea on Hotel Hallormsstaður's two outdoor patios that give a view of Lake Lagarfljót and Mt. Snaefell in the distance. Spacious rooms are equipped with a television and en-suite bathroom. Rooms on the upper floor have a spectacular view of the lake and forest and rooms on the lower floor open onto an outdoor area where guests can sit on sunny days or enjoy a walk on one of the many nearby trails and soon, to an outdoor spa, planned for this spring.

Hotel Hallormsstaður lies a short distance from East Iceland's natural beauty circled by impressive waterfalls, en route to the highlands, and a short trip from Vatnajökull National Park and Mt. Snaefell. It can easily accommodate large groups and will open its doors in winter to cater specifically to meetings and special events.

Hótel Hallormsstaðir -KB

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THE EAST'S MUSIC SCENE

Egilsbúð

Neskaupstaður is where it is all happening Egilsbúð, a lively restaurant in Neskaupstaður East Iceland, has established itself as the premiere music

venue in the region. Egilsbúð offers exciting new music along with daily deals on food and drinks, especially its pizzas, burgers, and appetisers like nachos. Pub food that

pairs well with the sports games frequently featured on Egilsbúð's 42 inch screen as well as Icelandic lamb, fish, and steak fill the menu. Every Thursday kicks off with a pizza party from 18:30 until 20:30, followed by beer specials and live music starting at 21:00.

Sleep it off in comfort

Egilsbúð provides guests who want to stay in the area with accommodation at its nine room guesthouse, where its double rooms include a private bathroom and television. Neskaupstaður is the largest of Fjarðabyggd's six towns and renowned for its vivacious music scene. Egilsbúð has helped make Neskaupstaður's the highlight of night life in East Iceland.

-KB



BETWEEN MOUNTAINS AND FJÖRD

Reyðarfjörður's Fjarðahotel opens up the beauty of the area

Fjarðahotel, a hotel in the middle of Reyðarfjörður which lies close to both fjörd and mountains, provides ample room for conferences or special occasions. With room for 20 to 50 people, large and small groups will find this hotel

well-suited for their needs. All rooms feature an en suite bathroom, free wireless Internet access and a television. Guests are a short walk from Reyðarfjörður's expansive fjörd and mountain hiking



trails, which Fjarðahotel's friendly staff will happily direct guests to.

Fjarðahotel's restaurant melds local Icelandic fare like fish, lamb and beef with the flavours of a steak house, with entrees like flaming lamb crown alongside mouth-watering Western steak and spare ribs. Of course, no Icelandic restaurant would be complete without dishes of freshly caught fish featured daily. Fjarðahotel also features a well-rounded selection of spirits, wine, and beer.

-KB



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Hjá Marlín

On a residential street in Reyðarfjörður stand three houses that belong to Hjá Marlín, less of a hostel and more of a home away from home. With fifteen rooms that can sleep one to three people

each and options for sleeping bag or made up beds, Hjá Marlín's friendly atmosphere will encourage travellers to stay in Reyðarfjörður just a little bit longer.

Each house has a living room with its own library, television, and a selection of DVDs. One of the houses has a sauna installed for much needed relief of tired muscles after a long day spent hiking. Guests can prepare their own meals in a spacious kitchen or decide to head over to the restaurant and café to try the café's

speciality, real Belgian waffles made by Marleen, who is herself Belgian and who owns the hostel with her husband. Two larger rooms open onto a balcony and other guests can enjoy a house balcony to view the ranges of mountains that surround Reyðarfjörður.

-KB



Hjá Marlín



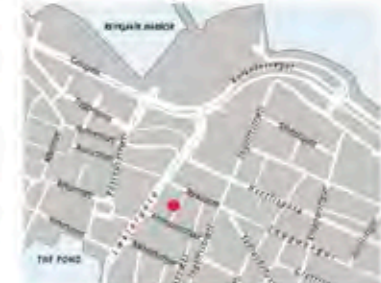
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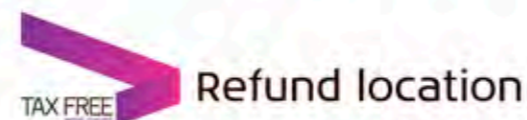
HOTEL SHOPPING STORE LOCATION IN THE CENTER

Feel free to visit us down town at Bankastræti 2. There you can find many of our products as well as Icelandic souvenirs. At this location you can also deliver your TAX FREE notes to get your refund.

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BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Hotel Aldan in Seyðisfjörður is a timeless classic brought up-to-date

The narrow, curving fjörd of Seyðisfjörður cuts deep into the town, leaving behind a flat town flanked by mountains that rise up behind the town. Seyðisfjörður is the port the ferry from Europe comes to, bringing cars, campers and backpackers to Iceland. Before starting their tour, its relaxing to walk through this small bohemian town with its 19th century Norwegian fishermen's homes sprinkled throughout it. Its boom began with herring entrepreneurs who built their fortunes upon fishing and erected its houses in the golden years of 1895-1922.

Hotel Aldan was originally built in 1898 with 19 rooms and soon earned a reputation as one of the best hotels in Iceland. Following this period as a hotel, it became the location for Seyðisfjörður's bank and is now restored to its former glory with seven double and two triple rooms. Its historical

look has remained intact, though the owners have added modern conveniences expected of a contemporary hotel such as en suite bathrooms, wireless Internet, and a television in each room. Rooms can also be joined to create a suite which is able to sleep four to six people.

A restaurant filled with local ingredients Hotel Aldan serves a breakfast buffet every morning at its café and restaurant a few minutes walk from the hotel, with an assortment of fruit, yogurt, cereals, and bread with a selection of meats and cheeses. Hotel Aldan's restaurant is open throughout the day for lunch, dinner or just coffee and cake. The menu draws from the ingredients found in the immediate surroundings with vegetables from Vallanes' organic farm, all meat and fish from Iceland, and wild herbs and mushrooms picked fresh from the forest each autumn.



Activities and interests around

Hotel Aldan is located near Skálanes Nature and Heritage Centre where guests can learn more about ecology, natural history, geology, archeology, conservation and traditional skills to give them a deeper insight into the area.

Active pursuits such as kayaking, biking, sailing, sea fishing, and hiking are plentiful around the fjord and Hotel Aldan's staff can point visitors in the direction of places to go and things to do during their stay.

For those interested in art, Skaftafell offers a gallery and an artist in residency programme, which delves into the local art scene.

-KB



Hótel Aldan



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EAT, DRINK, AND ENJOY

Eskifjörður's Kaffihúsið

A huge, tilted coffee mug balanced high above Eskifjörður's main street announces the new arrival of a restaurant, sports pub, and meeting place. Opened in May 2011, Kaffihúsið has quickly become an important part of town life. Its chef lived in Spain for a decade before deciding to return to Iceland and is experienced as both cook and restaurant owner.

Owners Grettar and his wife found it important to involve their staff in menu

selection and making the most of easily available ingredients. The result is a menu with a range of international flavours, with dishes like chicken curry adding a kick to pub food staples like nachos and pizza.

Though it normally closes at 10 pm, on Friday and Saturday, Kaffihúsið stays open until between 1 am and 3 am with music, disco, or sports games bringing much of the town to the pub. Kaffihúsið also welcomes its visitors to stay the night at its 11-room

guesthouse after enjoying a meal or coffee. Parties and events can be arranged on request, with Kaffihúsið catering food and arranging its restaurant to suit visitors' needs.

-KB

Kaffihúsið Eskifirði



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ART AND EAT, SLEEP AND HIKE

Kaffi Steinn refreshes visitors and artists alike

In the small and artistic town of Stöðvarfjörður is Kaffi Steinn, a nine-room guesthouse and café overlooking the fjord. Across from a graphic art gallery and soon-to-be design workshop, Kaffi Steinn beckons visitors to stay with a menu of

quick meals like pizza, salad, and tortillas and cosy rooms named after mountains that surround the fjörd. Light refreshments of coffee, pancakes with jam are available, and there is a bar where a selection of wine and Icelandic beer are also served.

Opened last year, Kaffi Steinn has added a place for people in the community to drop by or weary tourists to take a break and get a good meal before continuing their journey.

Each morning, breakfast is provided to guests before they start their journey hiking into the mountains, which are just five minutes away. For travellers who want to learn more about rocks and minerals found

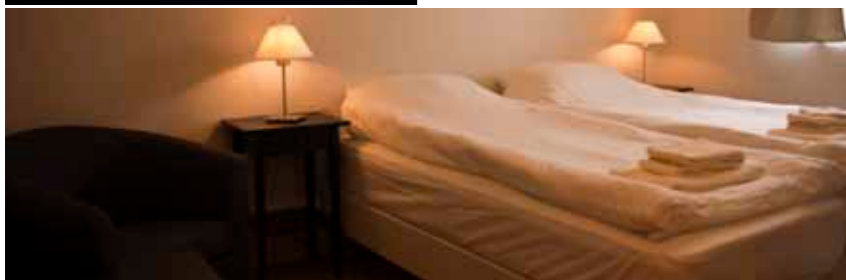


in the mountains, the nearby museum called Petra's Stone Collection will satisfy their curiosity with its very unusual presentation.

Kaffi Steinn



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 facebook.com/kaffi-steinn



STAY WHERE REINDEER PLAY

Experience Eskifjörður's Nature at Mjóeyri

Five quaint cottages and Askja Guesthouse dot Mjóeyri, the centre of accommodation in Eskifjörður, a small town in the East Fjörds. The cottages are neighbouring the home of Saevar and Berglind, owners of Mjóeyri, who know Eskifjörður well and are often close at hand to help their guests plan their travels or simply have a friendly chat. Askja Guesthouse is only a few minutes down the road, offering single, double or triple rooms with a shared kitchen, living room and bathrooms. The cottages and guesthouse can easily accommodate all visitors whether individuals, groups, or families and all guests get complimentary breakfasts and wireless Internet access.

Though summers hold their own special beauty, winter has equal charm, as days grow darker and snows begin to fall. Snow covers the mountain peaks which rise from the foot of the graceful fjörd to set the stage for a colourful play of Northern Lights. Reindeer often roam into town when food becomes difficult to

find and they can often be spotted close to the road, while seldom-seen arctic foxes occasionally dart out to hunt.

Wildlife is close to Saevar and Berglind's heart with the couple often taking in orphaned



animals and raising them to adulthood. This year the couple found a young orphaned arctic fox which has won everyone's heart. Respect for nature is also deeply rooted in the hunting culture where reindeer are hunted to maintain their population at a manageable size. Unlike recreational hunting, the entire reindeer is used to produce food and art characteristic of the region.

vessels and forced the industry to move to larger ports, the house was closed and remained shut for the next 75 years. After a joint project in cooperation with the East Iceland Museum Society, Mjóeyri helped open the house as a restaurant and museum in 2008. Visitors have poured in to see the maritime traditions of a small fishing village while trying reindeer meatballs and fish straight from Eskifjörður. For guests interested in exploring the fjörd Mjóeyri provides boat rentals at Randulf's Sea House.

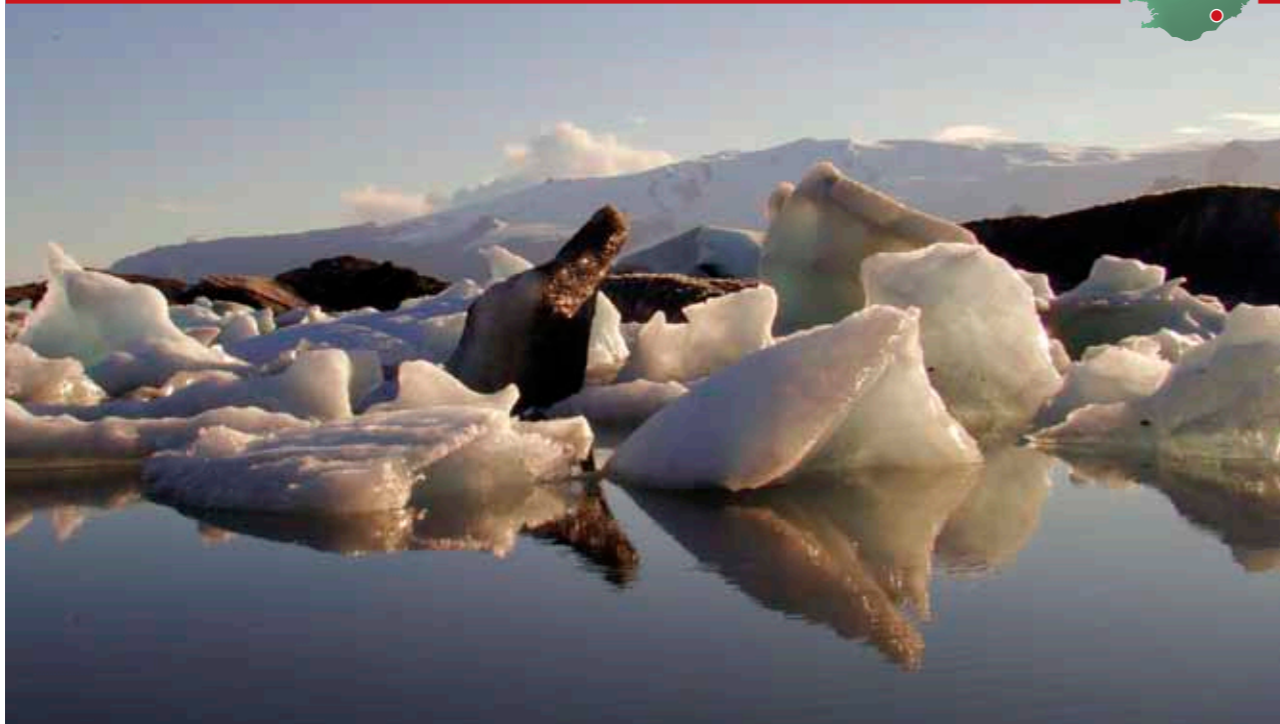
-KB

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JÖKULSÁRLÓN GLACIAL LAGOON

An Iconic Fantasy World of Rock and Ice

The Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon is, without a doubt, at the very top of my list of places to see in Iceland. Not only is it one of my favourite places, it is one that most definitely deserves all the superlatives of the English language—unbelievable, stunning, magnificent are three that instantly spring to mind. It's the place, given only three or four days in the country, that I would go to first—and for two reasons:

First, just because of the unparalleled destination in itself.

The second reason is that the drive from Reykjavik to Jökulsárlón takes you along the whole southern coast, which is so varied and dramatic that it makes the drive totally



worth it. You could easily spend your entire vacation exploring the south coast and not run out of things to see and do.

So accessible

There are not many glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none that are this accessible. Located just a stone's throw from the main ring road, the lagoon

is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring 23 square km (36.8 square miles) in size, you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. It's 250 metres (825 feet) depth would fit five Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of another!

Scenic boat tours

Upon arrival at the lagoon, you will find a small café where you can enjoy coffee, hot chocolate, waffles, or soup and sandwiches. Jökulsárlón ehf offers guided boat tours using specially-equipped amphibious boats which take you further into the lagoon, sailing among the icebergs.

Across the road, where the lagoon flows into the sea, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the baby 'bergs' that dot the shoreline- a truly amazing sight!

Images by © Emily Bulajevski

Boat tours are available daily

July and August - 9.00 to 19.00
15th Sept. - 30th Sept. - 10.00 to 17.00

Jökulsárlón



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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+354 478 2122
jokulsarlon@jokulsarlon.is
www.jokulsarlon.is

-EMV



DON'T BYPASS BEAUTY

A cosy fireplace, sauna, home-made food and pastries in Breiðdalsvík

Breiðdalsvík village, (pop. 139), in the south east part of Iceland is too often bypassed by travellers heading for the towns of Egilsstaðir or Höfn in Hornafjörður. This is a great pity because Breiðdalsvík deserves a much closer look.

Breiðdalur Valley is the largest valley in the eastern part of Iceland which makes it ideal for farming. At the head of the valley lies Breiðdalsvík village built around its fishing harbour. A trading post was established there in 1889.

Today's travellers find various services in Breiðdalsvík such as a heated swimming pool with a hot tub, sports centre, petrol station and car mechanic, grocery store, a bank, a post office, and an outdoor market in season.

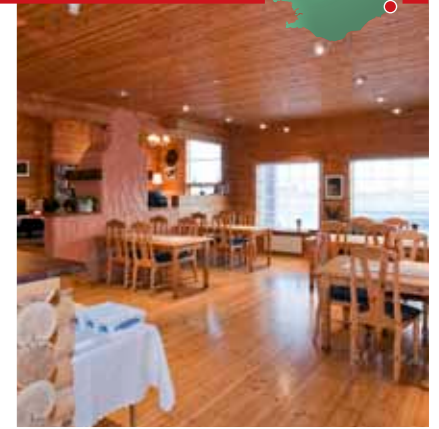
Hotel Bláfell

Hotel Bláfell, with 25 rooms is a focal point in the village and for a good reason too.

Hosts Friðrik Árnason and Hrafnhildur bought and renovated the hotel in 2009. It is constructed in part from natural wood, which gives it a warm log cabin feel. Some of the interior fixtures are adorned with semi-precious stones found in the area.

Hotel Bláfell offers standard and deluxe rooms with a bathroom, TV and telephone. Downstairs there is a comfortable sitting room with an open fireplace and a wireless Internet available to guests at no additional cost. Conference and meeting rooms are available for 120 and 30 people respectively. A sauna offers relaxation to weary travellers.

Whether you are looking for an invigorating holiday resort in which to unwind in the serenity of nature, or simply longing for a hearty meal as you drive along the Ring road on your way somewhere else, the owners and staff promise that about Hótel Bláfell and



Breiðdalsvík village will leave you with good memories after your visit.

Kaupfjlagið coffee shop, crafts and local food

Kaupfjlagið coffee shop is in a refurbished old building diagonally across the street from Hotel Bláfell. Originally it was a general store but today it is the tourist information centre, local hand craft market, and coffee shop.

The coffee shop serves meals made from local produce, home-made breads, cakes and pastries and is open all year round.

Winter activities

Travellers who visit the area in winter have plenty to do. Northern lights are a favourite. There is hiking and ice-climbing and guided horse riding tours all year.

There's a mineral museum next door to Hotel Bláfell dedicated to the semi-precious stones found in the area.

The local sports centre has an outdoor hot tub and fitness centre. It is open to the public Monday to Friday from 16:00-20:00.



Hótel Bláfell



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+354 475 6770
info@hotelblafell.is
www.hotelblafell.is



HÖFN'S FOOD HAVEN

Café Hornið brings the best local ingredients to the table

Right on Höfn's main road sits Café Hornið where you can find seafood and a tempting selection of dishes from filling plates of lamb to salads topped with chicken or lobster. Soup is served daily with homemade bread and a salad bar is open for guests who want a small but filling lunch. The menu is large, with seafood and local specialities like lamb and beef featuring prominently,

Café Hornið's owners, husband and wife Ingólfur Einarsson and Kristín Óladóttir, have made good use of Höfn's prized local food: the langoustine. Found just off the Höfn's coast and widely celebrated as a town delicacy, the lobster-like creature known as langoustine features prominently in Café Hornið's menu with an entire section devoted to dishes showcasing the succulent shellfish in every price range.



although vegetarians are not left out as a dish of pan-fried chickpea cutlets remains one of the more popular dishes. This restaurant and café with airy cathedral ceilings and ample seating for guests has been successful since opening in 1999, alternating as a restaurant, café and bar.

The langoustine is distinguished from lobster because it is much smaller and its meat is said to be sweeter. While plentiful in European waters, langoustines, better known as scampi, are scarcely found in North America and whenever served at restaurants they have been shipped frozen



because their delicate meat does not survive the journey. Fortunately for Höfn and Café Hornið the langoustines are freshly caught each day for visitors to taste.

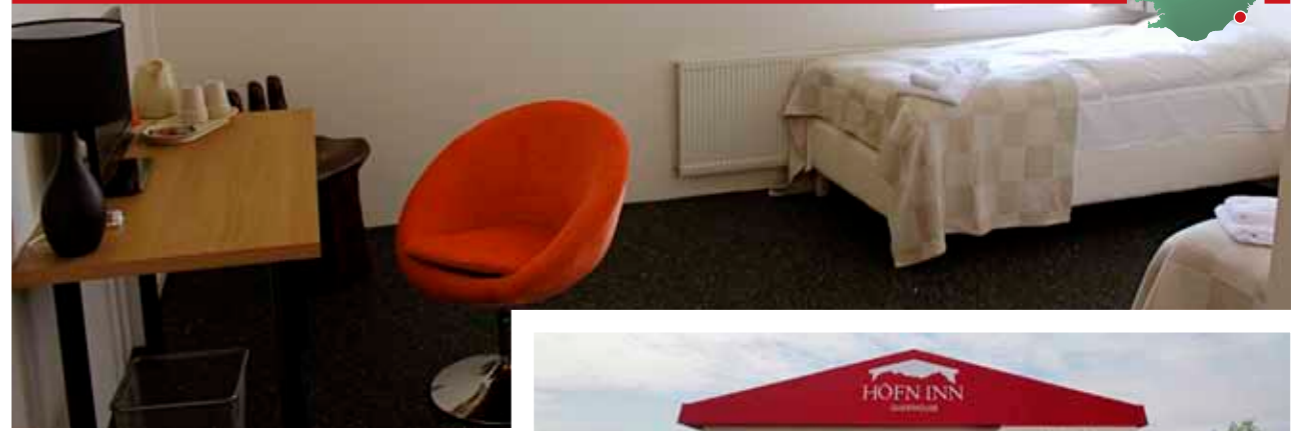
Fresh fish, also caught daily, lamb and beef from nearby farms and chicken dishes round out the menu. Pizzas are made to order with a special langoustine pizza for guests who want to try a twist on toppings. Icecream made at Arbær, a dairy farm a few kilometres from Café Hornið, tantalises visitors with homemade flavours like chocolate licorice.

Kaffi Hornið



Hafnarbraut 42 • 780 Höfn
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 facebook.com/Kaffi-Hornið

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STAY WITH STYLE

The Designer's Touch in Höfn Inn

The red roof of the Höfn Inn, a brand new 12-room guesthouse opened in the town of Höfn, signals a new kind of accommodation. Rooms are particularly large with a character all their own shaped by colorful art on the walls and seats moulded to look like hands. The floor gives the feel of walking on a smooth pebbled beach because it's made from stone found on Höfn's beaches. This sense of style comes from the

owner's wife who hails from Brazil and wanted to add something different to the décor.

All rooms have an en-suite bathroom, wireless Internet access, and come with a breakfast buffet served in the house across the street. One of the rooms is large enough to fit a family or group of four. Höfn Inn is close to Jökulsárlón glacial



lagoon and Skaftafell National Park, but offers all the comforts found in town.

Höfn Inn Gistiheimili



Vesturbráut 3 • 780 Höfn
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 hofninn.is

OASIS UNDER THE GLACIER

Freysnes Restaurant, Supermarket & Petrol Station

Opened in 1995 by Anna Maria Ragnarsdóttir and her husband Jón Benediktsson, Freysnes Restaurant & Supermarket is often a welcome stop to break the long stretches between Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Höfn. Popular with tourist guides and truckers who circle the country, you will find hearty home cooking, a salad bar and hot meals that make up the lunch or dinner menu. If you left your tube of toothpaste down the road 150 km ago, then the mini-supermarket is a convenient place to restock.

wonder that genealogists the world over are not flocking at her door for an interview.



to see that his dream of preserving the land is finally coming to fruition", says Anna Maria.

Vatnajökull - Record of Extremes

In June 2008, Skaftafell National Park became a part of Vatnajökull National Park which covers an area of some 12,000 km²

or at most 12% of the area of Iceland and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. Vatnajökull National Park holds the record for having both the warmest and coldest recorded

A Father's Vision Fulfilled

The story of Anna Maria's ancestors is well documented outside the Skaftafell Visitors' Centre. Her father, Ragnar Stefánsson, who was way ahead of his time, was one of the few of his generation who had a vision of preserving the area for use as a national park. In his day, this was definitely a 'foreign' concept that was not at all welcome among many of his compatriots. "I think my father would be very pleased, if he were alive today,

temperatures, for being the wettest and driest location and containing the highest and lowest elevations in Iceland.

Söluskálin Freysnesi



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 none

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-EMV



ICE & ADVENTURE TOURS

Glacier Jeeps

Located not far from Jökulsárlón in East Iceland, Glacier Jeeps Ice and Adventure tours offers exhilarating guided glacier adventures that might be the one stop in Iceland that changes your life. Exhilarating is the only word that

adequately describes the view from Europe's largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull.

Glacier Jeeps offers year-round adventure jeep tours using specially fitted 4WD vehicles, snowmobile tours and hiking tours. All equipment - helmets, snowsuits, snow boots, and snow climbing or hiking gear is included in the price.

Tours depart twice daily at 9:30 or 14:00 from road F985, where you will begin the 16 km drive up to Jöklael Restaurant, which also serves as a base. This is where guests get their gear for their respective tours and then, you're off! Each tour is approximately 3 to 3½ hours in length and there will be plenty of time for photo breaks and enjoying the view. It is possible to stop at Jöklael for refreshments after the tour.

-ASF

Glacier Jeeps



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 www.glacierjeeps.is



KNIT-WITS

Vik-wool Unravelling by Vikurprjon

The early settlers of Iceland set the tone of the country by dotting its empty hills with sheep. These sheep were one of the few things that the first settlers brought with them on their journey to Iceland and became an important source of food, clothing, and even wealth. Perhaps this explains why the population of sheep is twice the human population and why much of the human population is occupied in knitting.

a time-honoured tradition into a thriving business and paved the way for an entire industry.

The wool, processing, design, and production are Icelandic and Vikurprjon has maintained a staff dedicated to creating clothing distinguished by its quality and attention to detail. Most of the work is done on the premises of the two-storey building where visitors can take a peek at the people behind the scenes. Visitors can



You also might have realised that, with the unpredictability of Icelandic weather comes the need for warm, waterproof clothes. This is why the people at Vikurprjon have continued knitting in the original patterns brought by the first Icelandic settlers, who knew just how to deal with the damp and chill.

Imagination and Tradition

Just a quick Icelandic lesson: Vikurprjon means Vik-wool (Vik knitting) and for the past thirty years they have turned wool into everything from traditional hats, scarves, and sweaters in natural colours to striking, contemporary patterns dreamt up by imaginative designers. As one of the best-known and oldest producers of Icelandic wool products, they have turned



climb to the second floor of the shop to look down onto the bustling workshop and see how their clothes are made before purchasing them.

Sounds of the Past, Books of Today

Wool is not the only focus in the store, which treats travellers to Icelandic folk music as they browse. The music plays softly in the background of the shop so that visitors can hear the voice of a bygone era as they stroll around. Vikurprjon's selection of books contain anything and everything visitors want to know about Iceland, from the contemporary nightlife in Reykjavik



and recent volcanic eruptions to Old Norse myths and well-known Icelandic sagas. Best of all, visitors are just a few minutes from Vik's shore with its black sand beaches and rugged coastline. This store on the southern tip of Iceland gives travellers the chance to bring home souvenirs and handmade crafts that keep a tradition alive.

-KB

Vikurprjon hf



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 vikwool@vikwool.is
 www.vikurprjon.is



No Ash – Just Beautiful Camping

Hike in the freedom of the mountains in comfort

Camping in Iceland? Are you joking? Isn't it freezing? What about the volcanos and all that ash? Þakgil Camp Site is a popular spot for Icelanders who love beauty and enjoy the hiking in the area. Do you really think they would go there in such numbers if it were covered in ash?

Set at the base of a spectacular canyon with a beautiful river running through it, there is no ash here. A climb to the top of one of the surrounding mountains offers

a view of range after range waiting to be conquered, green expanses contrasting with craggy rocks and sparkling waterfalls.

There is plenty of room to breathe here. You can bring a tent, a camper or caravan or, if you prefer, stay in one of the summerhouses. All the normal facilities are available. It's nice to know that, after a day's hike, you can take a refreshing shower before grilling your dinner as the sun slips behind the mountains.

If you enjoy the freedom of the mountains, this camp site is the perfect place to base from.

Tjaldstæðið Þakgili

-KB & ASF



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 helga@thakgil.is
 www.thakgil.is



REFRESHING VÍK

Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

Guests at Halldór's Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vík's shoreline, with its black sand beaches, Halldór's Café serves up small dishes like soup of the day or salads with tuna, chicken or just feta along with bigger meals of fish, lamb or chicken. Originally, Halldór's Café was a general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vík. Today, it

continues to satisfy patrons with its menu which has something for every taste.

Halldór's Café supports artists with a rotating display of local talent featured on its walls, and serves up steaming cups of coffee and cake, ideal for meeting and greeting old friends or new acquaintances. Halldór's Café opens in the middle of April and closes for the season in the middle of September. Its hours are 11:00 to 22:00 or 23:00, but Fridays can turn into late nights,



with the café remaining open until 1:00 am with its fully stocked bar providing a late night pwwlce to grab a drink.

Halldórkaffi

-KB



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ÁSÓLFSSKÁLI FARM HOLIDAYS

tagline

It's one of those places that is easy to miss if you are rushing along the ring road on Iceland's majestic south coast. Sharing the peaceful location just below Eyafjallajökull with a handful of other farms, Asólfsskáli

Farm seems to magically come into focus in a way that you might not expect. It won't be the most beautiful farm in Rangárthing-eystra county and the honour is wholly fitting for



this neat and tidy dairy farm that opened its doors to travellers in 1991.

There are two self-contained cottages that can sleep up to 6 people each and come complete with jacuzzi and gas barbecue, making it an ideal retreat in a post-card perfect setting. Visitors are welcome to watch the milking of Asólfsskáli's 50 cows, hike the foothills along marked trails or visit the picturesque 19th century Asólfsskáli church that presides over the landscape.



Ásólfsskáli

Ásólfsskáli • 861 Hvolsvelli
 +354 487 8989
 asolfur@emax.is
 none

THE OLD COWHOUSE RESTAURANT

Sitting Pretty on Iceland's South Coast

Location wise, The Old Cowhouse Restaurant couldn't be in a more perfect position for feasting your eyes upwards to the misty, craggy, moss-covered peaks of Eyafjallajökull. It's a welcome addition to Iceland's ever-growing list of new amenities that have been popping up all over the country.

The remodeled former barn easily seats 50 to 60 dinner guests while retaining its unpretentious character and sweet bovine

simplicity, making this a thoroughly enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast.

The menu boasts grass-fed beef, as is the norm in Iceland, coming straight from restaurant's own cattle herds. A hearty and warming meat soup called Volcano Soup, served with homemade bread, is a favourite.

Open year-round, the Old Cowhouse plans monthly events including an October evening of traditional food, a November

evening of game (reindeer and geese), a December buffet of traditional Christmas dishes, as well as musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the year.

For opening hours in Winter, please contact The Old Cowhouse Restaurant directly. Large and small groups welcome.



Gamla Fjósið

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UNDERSTANDING ICELAND

Uncovering the Secrets of Skogar's Folk and Cultural Museum

I am an avid explorer of Iceland. From the breathtaking landscapes to the moodiness of a craggy peak shrouded in mist to the lone pair of ravens that patrol the remote farmlands in winter, I never tire of it. The people, too, sculpted and shaped by their collective history, stand out. Not fitting neatly into any European or Scandinavian mould, Icelanders have their own unique point of view, no doubt influenced greatly by their long battle against the elements in their isolated position in the North Atlantic. If you share in this passion for Iceland; what makes Icelanders tick and the why's and wherefore's of Icelandic society, then a day spent meandering through one of Iceland's largest and most popular folk museums is in order.

The Skogar Folk Museum started life in the basement of the village school house in 1945. Over the years it has grown to include 3 separate areas which comprise the

main building, with its various historical and cultural exhibits, an open air museum with its reconstructed turf houses and other historic buildings and the most recent addition, the Museum of Transport and Communications, completed in 2002.

The Museum of Transport explores the history of transport, communications and technology in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries and is full of fascinating relics of a bygone era. However, quite a few surprises are

in store: did you know, for instance, that the wheel was one innovation that did not take hold in Iceland until the 1890s? Because there were no roads until that time, people traveled on foot or on horseback or went from one side of the country to the other by boat. Those old fashioned crank up telephones where an operator has to connect you arrived in Iceland in 1906. But it is just as amazing to learn that this type of telephone continued to be used in some parts of South Iceland until 1984!

After World War II, the mostly rural farming society began to decline, and it took just one generation for Iceland to be swiftly catapulted into the modern age. You can follow the evolution of this change through the various exhibits in the museum, including ingenious generators, whimsical old cars, communications exhibits and a search and rescue exhibit, to name a few.

A great place this is to ponder the past and spend an afternoon or even all day. The museum also offers light lunches in its cafeteria as well as a wide selection of woollen goods and souvenirs in the gift shop.



Byggðasafnið Skógum

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

A fascinating look behind the scenes in Hvalsöllum, South Iceland

Just 100 kms south-east of Reykjavik lies the quiet village of Hvalsöllum. Typical of many small villages in Iceland, at first glance it seems like there is just one of everything: one grocery store, one hardware store, one hotel, a bank, a post office and 2 petrol stations. For all its apparent smallness, Hvalsöllum nevertheless remains one of the most important service towns in the region. You might be tempted to just pass

right on by thinking incorrectly that 'there's nothing much here', but don't be deceived by Hvalsöllum's placid exterior, for there's more going on here than meets the eye.

Firey Neighbours

First of all, Hvalsöllum is the home turf of a few very famous and/or infamous volcanoes. Eyjafjallajökull is the one that was on everyone's lips in 2010 - well sort

of, anyway - if you could pronounce it, that is. Nearby is Mt. Hekla, which has kept everyone on their toes throughout the years and last erupted in 2000 but has not been showing any signs of activity since. More recently, though, there have been rumblings underneath the notorious Katla volcano, which lies at a safe distance of about 75 km to the east and poses little threat to the town itself.

Take the scenic drive into Fljótshlíð

Road 261 takes you into one of the most charming and pastoral valleys of

South Iceland, where one has the rare opportunity to gaze upon no less than 3 glaciers at once. The road opens up to a spectacular view of Mýrdalsjökull straight ahead, Eyjafjallajökull to your right and the topmost peaks of Tindfjallajökull to your left. Throughout the valley you will find numerous possibilities for accommodation at various farms. Hotel Fljótshlíð at Smáratún Farm, open year-round, offers comfortable rooms with ensuite bathrooms, as well as a guest house with made-up beds or sleeping bag accommodation. Just nearby is Hellishólar, a popular location that offers cozy chalets and camping, plus an 18 hole golf course which would no doubt win the prize for being the most scenic golf course in the whole country. On a clear day, the view to the glaciers from both Smáratún Farm and Hellishólar is exceptionally beautiful.

Further along, we come to the picturesque Hlíðarendi church, built in 1897. It is also one of the sites of Brennu-Njáls Saga, the longest and most celebrated of the Icelandic Sagas. It is possible to drive up to the church where you can get out to explore the area and to get a feel for the immensity of the panoramic views that Gunnar of Hlíðarendi of Njáls Saga fame found impossible to leave behind.

The paved road eventually turns to gravel and then you are looking right across the Markafljót River, with Eyjafjallajökull looming large in front of you. The rustic

Fljótisdalur Youth Hostel, with its traditional turf roof, sits high on a hill at the very end of Road 261, with amazing views to the volcano and the Þorsmörk Mountain Reserve. The youth hostel boasts one of the largest and oldest libraries of English language books about Iceland in the country.

The Saga Centre

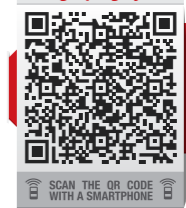
For those with an interest in history, Hvalsöllum is also home to The Saga Centre, located across from Hotel Hvalsöllum. The Centre offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the vast and fascinating world of the ancient sagas and Njáls Saga, in particular. Guided excursions to all the main sites where the story took place can be booked through the centre.

An overview of the region would not be complete without mentioning the charming Country Hotel Anna. Named after Anna from Moldnupur, who was born and bred on the very farm where the hotel is located, the hotel is steeped in the history and lore from Anna's colourful and adventurous life.

Although hardly an exhaustive list of all there is to see and do, several highlights are covered here in an effort to give travellers a head start in their discovery of Hvalsöllum in the Rangárthing-eystra district.



Rangárþing Eystra



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-EMV



A FOUNTAIN OF WELLNESS

The Newly-opened Thermal Baths at Laugarvatn Fontana

Bathing in warm geothermal pools outdoors, soaking in steam rooms, resting in a sauna or walking along warm beaches is a wonderful experience available in only a few countries of the world. Even more rare is to enjoy it in any kind of weather. Since Iceland's weather is well known for its fast and frequent changes, you could go home refreshed with memories few could match.

Just an hour east of Reykjavik, past Þingvellir and close to Geysir, the small town of Laugarvatn has a long tradition of using the mineral-rich healing waters of the area for relaxation and restoration of body, mind and soul. This summer, a completely new complex of outdoor interconnected baths, sauna and steam rooms was opened alongside the beautiful Lake Laugarvatn.

Feel It, Hear It

Built over the natural hot spring that has supplied the community for generations are Fontana's three steam rooms. With temperatures varying from 40 - 50°C (104°F-122°F), depending on the weather conditions, the rooms have grates in the floor that allow you to see, hear and smell the waters as they bubble up to the surface and flow under the rooms. No piping here! Next door is the sauna. Finnish-style, its temperature is between 80°C (176°F) and



90°C (194°F) but with lower humidity than the steam rooms. Surprisingly pleasant, these traditionally-styled rooms are very effective in cleansing the skin of dirt and poisons alike. A simple method of ventilation controls the

temperature in the rooms. Anyone with muscle problems will appreciate the positive effects of the springs and steam. I know I did!

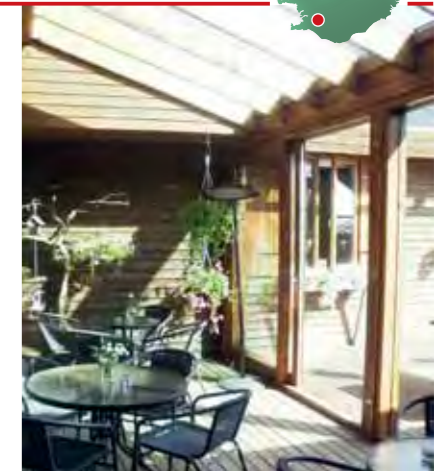
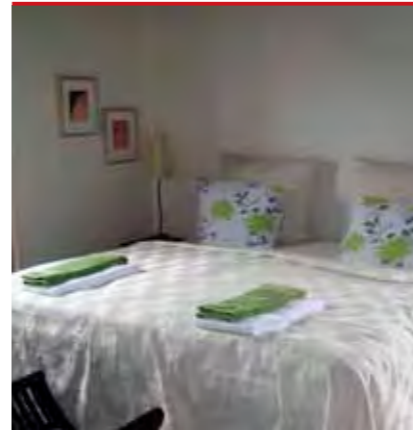
Refreshed, Re-invigorated and Cleansed

Three interconnected baths filled with natural, warm spring water are great places to relax and have fun. They have different temperatures and depths.

The hot tub at the end of the baths provides a panoramic view of the area while the mineral waters work their wonders on your body. If you come in winter, you have to try the pools when it's snowing. Sitting there, with snow on your hair whilst revelling in hot, health-giving waters is an amazing experience. The complex is completed by a cooler pool and a beach whose warm sands are beneficial to those with arthritis and joint problems.

Swimsuits, towels and robes are available and there are healthy refreshments and locally produced delicacies in the café whilst health-related souvenirs and gifts can be purchased at the reception. It is not necessary to have your own car as regular coach services operate from Reykjavik's BSÍ bus station and the major tour companies also organise day trips.

-ASF



WITHIN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Galleri Guesthouse

The small but bustling town of Laugarvatn lies in the Golden Circle created by Þingvellir, Geysir, and Gullfoss and in the middle is the quaint and quiet Galleri Bed and Breakfast. Started by owners Þuríður and Joel after their kids had flown the nest, three extra bedrooms are now filled with tourists wanting more than the normal day trip to Iceland's most famous attractions. An enclosed patio, that will soon feature a

fireplace, overlooks two of Iceland's active volcanoes: Eyafjallajökull and Hekla.

Breakfast is included in the price of the room. Galleri's knack for handicrafts shows in light fixtures made by Þuríður and small decorations found throughout the rooms. The Galleri store is where Þuríður and Joel's artistry shines, allowing travellers to take home a small piece of Icelandic design. Joel and Þuríður's hospitality extends an invitation to their guests to come along

and find out the café's secret to tasty bread, baking it in a natural hot spring close to Geysir. This bread is served along with slices of salmon each day at Galleri's café.

Galleri Laugarvatn



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-KB



DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS

Caving with Laugarvatn Adventure

The mouth of Gjáðakkahellir leads down to rocky paths hollowed out by lava flow that pushed through earth, forming the cave's smooth and polished walls near Laugarvatn, the town within the Golden Circle.

The experienced guides of Laugarvatn Adventure have had over a decade of training in caving and can navigate through almost any of these caves. Tours vary in difficulty from Gjáðakkahellir's relatively

gentle descent to Tintron's vertical drop accessible only by abseiling down a rope.

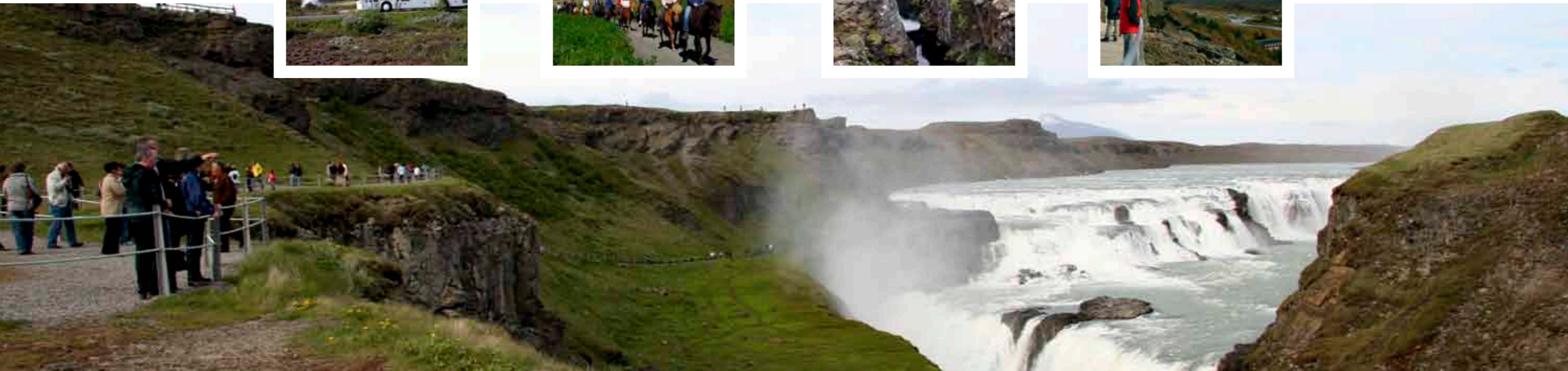
Laugarvatn Adventure's three cave tours let visitors safely delve into the depths with the help of guides who were educated in caving and are active members of the Icelandic Search and Rescue Team. Children over five can even go on some of the easier tours, while adults tackle the challenge of rock climbing on Þingvellir's craggy cliffs or crawling through a small hole at the opening

of Litli Björn cave. Tours are offered every day from May through August with a two person minimum necessary for departure.

Laugarvatn Adventure



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MAKE YOUR TRIP MEMORABLE

Iceland Excursion's Tours bring you the country's essence

As you plan your holiday, you're probably wondering how to do it all, see it all, enjoy it all and, when you come back, remember it all. That's a lot to fit in but there are clear shortcuts to making it happen.

Say you'd like to ride a horse, see the famous Icelandic sights and learn some history but not have the trouble of driving yourself. Among its many tours, Iceland Excursions has one tour that covers those criteria pretty well.

Starting with a pick up at your hotel around 9 am, this particular tour takes you out past Mosfellsbær to Laxnes Horse Farm, where a horse is selected to match your riding skills. After putting on helmets and riding gear, you're off into the beautiful countryside for a two-hour ride. Run by Þorí and his family, the Laxnes Horse Farm has built a reputation for safety and quality, with many famous celebrities riding there.

After a break for an optional lunch with a delicious soup and hot, fresh bread, the coach arrives for the remainder of the tour. Now that the roads are paved to the major sites, the coaches are the same modern luxury coaches found all across Europe.

This is where a tour beats driving yourself hands down! The guides are all highly trained and very knowledgeable and make the most of the drive to point out things you would have otherwise missed or share an anecdote from history - both ancient and recent. This turns the tour into an enjoyable and memorable experience, allowing you to focus on taking photos to later jog your memory when sharing your experiences with your friends. These tours are certainly something you will want to share, too, as the combination of the nature, people and guide's talks will leave you feeling as if you really know this part of the country, rather than having just seen it.

I talked with a young couple who had rented a car to go sightseeing. When I told them about my experiences of taking a tour to where they had been, they were dismayed, feeling they had wasted their time and missed so much - and, in many respects, they had. Just as you wouldn't ride a horse without the proper equipment, getting the most from your visit to Iceland really requires someone experienced to share their knowledge with you.



If you take a look at their website, you will notice Iceland Excursions' professional approach to their tours. You can also read the reactions of others who have taken a tour. After all, if you are spending your time and money coming all the way to Iceland, you will doubtless want to make the most of it.

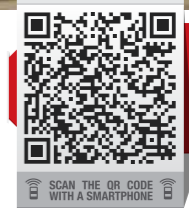
The gratifying thing about the tours is that they are not intrusive. They get you to the places you want to see, tell you all about the sights and history so that when you arrive, you are prepared to fully enjoy them and will know what you want to focus on. By taking the strain out of the driving, you arrive fresh at each place - and you do arrive - you don't get lost!

A nice thing about Icelanders is that they sincerely want you to enjoy the country they love and get the most out of your visit. They want to share it all with you. You don't feel disappointed or ripped off. On the contrary, you come away feeling you have lived your holiday to the full and are taking home very special memories. You will probably not have time to see everything in one holiday, but



Iceland Excursions will be here to take you to other equally amazing destinations on your next trip. And you will want to return! You have but scratched the surface of an astounding country.

Iceland Excursions



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The world of tomorrow will no longer be powered by polluting fossil fuels. With the world's oil and coal reserves dwindling, attention is being focussed on alternative forms of energy generation.

Although a very small country, Iceland is on the cutting edge of both research and use of clean energy resources. The country has shown that it is possible to use clean energy, even close to the North Pole. Whether houses are heated by geothermal energy or powered by hydroelectricity, Iceland has shown that it is not only possible but an environmentally very friendly way to power a modern society. By having the political will, support from the business and academic sectors and an environment that encourages innovation, a lot of progress has already been made.

Whilst, clearly, each country has to assess its own resources and capabilities, if a small nation such as Iceland can develop a renewable energy policy that currently meets 82% of its needs, then larger and more affluent societies can find hope in reducing their dependence on fossil fuels.

Such is the impetus to become as independent of fossil fuels as possible that the development of hydrogen-powered

fuel cells is well under way to address the remaining 18% of energy requirements: that of transportation. Experiments with hydrogen-powered buses, methane or electric cars have proven the feasibility of these alternative energy sources. In other areas, recycling has led to towns being powered through energy generated from waste disposal and bio diesel is freely available at fuel stations.



A Worldwide Challenge

In this fast-changing world, countries are still heavily dependent on fossil fuels for their energy needs. A full 79% of current energy needs are met by oil-based products yet, with the developing world's energy needs growing and oil reserves dwindling, alternative energy forms are needed to fill the void. Presently, all renewable energy forms contribute only 14% of the world's energy.

According to research published by Dr. Ingvar Friðleifsson, the Director of the UN University in Reykjavik, 70% of the world's population uses less than a quarter of the energy per capita of W. Europe and one sixth of the USA. Two billion people or one third of the world's population have no access to energy resources. This is not only a moral issue but a societal challenge of immense proportions, especially given the anticipated increase in the world's population. A key issue, therefore, is how to improve the living standards of the poor and, in this context, energy plays a vital role.

The only conceivable way to increase world energy supply is to develop renewable energy resources. Nuclear energy, once thought capable of providing all the world's needs, currently supplies 7% of the world's energy. It has proven to have serious weaknesses, as shown by the major incidents at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Japan. Nuclear waste is also a very challenging issue, for which no truly safe and effective solution has been found.

Renewable Energy Resources

According to figures compiled in 2007, hydro power led the field in installed capacity at 87.5%, followed by Biomass with 4.5%, Wind with 6.6%, Geothermal at 1% and Solar at 0.4%. The potential for each of these resources is so great, however, that all the expected future energy needs could technically be met through renewable resources.

Iceland's Role

Iceland uses not only its natural resources but the intellect and skills of its people. Since 1951, Icelandic geothermal experts have worked as consultants in over 50 countries in all continents. When the UN discussed the need for the development of alternative energy forms, Iceland stepped up and opened a UN university in Reykjavik in 1978 focusing on the geothermal aspects. Hydrogen use is actively pursued. Wind research is currently under way by a team in the University of Iceland, in collaboration with 14 other organisations throughout Scandinavia, both in academic and business

arenas. Tidal energy is also being researched at the university.

Hydrogen Power

In an effort to reduce dependence on oil, Global Energy prize winner, physicist Þorsteinn Ingi Sigfússon and his team at the University of Iceland and Innovation, (the government-sponsored centre to promote development and marketing of new ideas), Daimler-Chrysler, Norsk Hydro and Shell Hydrogen, have already got probably the world's most crowded hydrogen station in the world running in Reykjavik, currently serving 2,000 cars.

The potential power gains from hydrogen fuel cells far surpass the capacity of current battery storage technology, making them an ideal power source for vehicles. Hyundai is introducing a hydrogen-powered car with a range of 500 km., opening the door for the further expansion of the concept.

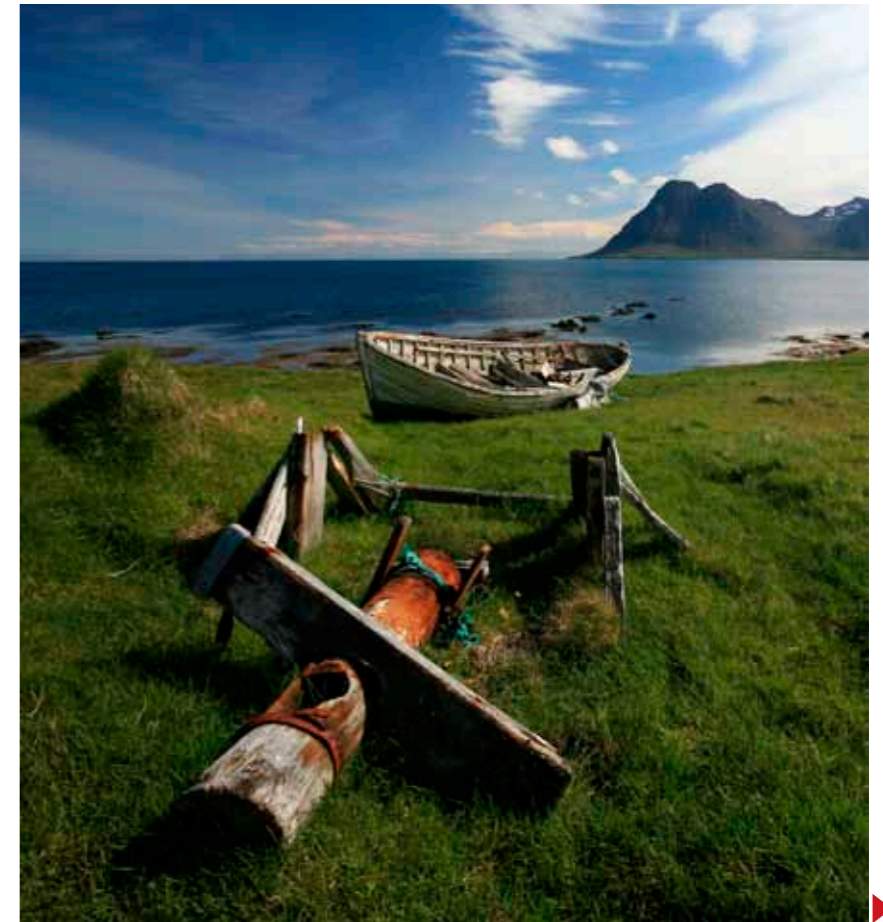
Using hydrogen to power fuel cells with battery storage for the excess energy, the vision of the non-polluting electric car is

steadily becoming reality. However, there are still great challenges and problems to be overcome but when compared to the amount of time and investment that has been poured into the internal combustion engine, progress has been very significant.

This work is not being done in isolation but is being shared with the international community. An example of this is Russia's investment in the establishing of a large centre for renewable energy at the university in the 400 year-old city of Tomsk, in Siberia.

Taking another approach, Reykjavik has installed recharging centres for battery-powered cars and the N1 energy company has installed some of its service stations with methane pumps for the increasing number of hybrid cars.

A transportation system whose only byproduct is clean water would have a major impact on the world with a drastic cut in pollution and health issues to name just two.





Programme in Reykjavik has trained 424 scientists from 44 developing countries from China to Africa to Central America. By training teams who can work together, combining their talents in each discipline, countries can develop a comprehensive development programme. Follow-up is done in each area by the Icelandic professionals and close communication is maintained to provide a cost-effective programme. Geothermal resources offer the most consistent supplies of energy unlike wind and solar power and there are many locations worldwide where the technology can be applied. Its technical potential is 100 times that of hydroelectricity.

Blowing in the Wind

Wind power generation is a mature technology that is being applied worldwide. However, there is still a great deal of research being undertaken to develop greater efficiency and power.

Iceland, living under the jet stream, definitely has the potential for wind generation. A team, led by Kristján Jónasson, a professor at the University of Iceland, in conjunction with other universities and Scandinavian companies are working on a project named 'IceWind'. The Icelandic Meteorological Office has built a wind map of the country, showing the most potential sites for wind farms. Landvirkun, the country's energy company, is planning a pilot project near Búrfell. The wind at a

Using the Fire in the Basement

For many years now, hot water has been used to heat houses in many parts of Iceland. In 1930, geothermal heating was installed in Reykjavik. Bubbling up from the ground in hot springs, the water has also been used in swimming pools and hot tubs. However, it was realised early on that there was potential for much more. Drilling into volcanic rocks, still hot after many generations produced many new sources of hot water and steam. This led to electricity generating stations using this geothermal source to supply power. One unexpected offshoot of one of these stations in the Reykjanes peninsula was the creation of the now-famous Blue Lagoon health spa. By 2009, 66% of primary energy came from geothermal sources - both heat and electricity.

A wealth of experience has been gained in all the technologies needed to tap into this powerful energy source. For the past 30 years, the UN University Geothermal Training



height of 90 m. or more is much stronger and more consistent than at lower levels, so by using tall windmills about 100 m. in height, a much greater generating capacity can be utilised. Developing a complex mathematical model, one plan is to combine wind and hydro to produce constant power. Wind currently produces 2% of world energy. The technical potential of wind energy worldwide is almost 13 times that of hydroelectricity.

Water Power

Iceland has some of Europe's largest glaciers and most powerful waterfalls. The first hydroelectric power station was built in 1904. There are many sites throughout the country that have now been developed for hydroelectric power. Over 80% of electricity generation has been through hydroelectric power. The largest power station by far is Kárahnjúkavirkjun (690 MW), which generates electricity in the area north of the Vatnajökull glacier for the production of aluminium.

Tidal Power

Icelanders are ambitious when it comes to energy and scientists are now looking at osmotic and tidal power to meet future energy needs. Þorsteinn Ingi Sigfusson at the Innovation Centre Iceland (ICI), who has also been involved with the development of osmotic energy and tidal power, says that osmotic technology is relatively safe and simple.

Prototype power plants tapping these innovative sources are to be located in the West Fjords of Iceland and expected to be functional in the next few years.

As for tidal power, two types are envisaged. A tidal barrage plant and a tidal current plant.

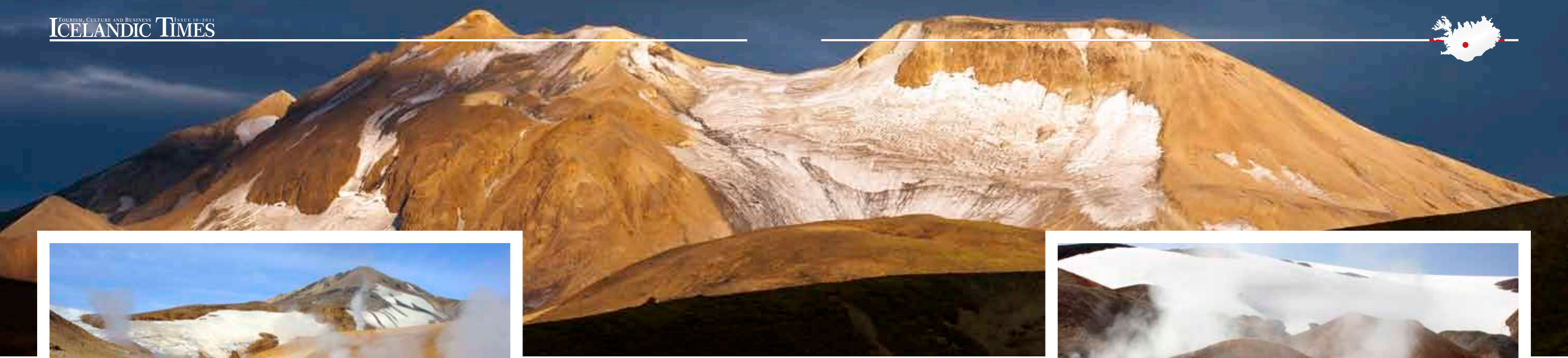
Bjarni M. Jónsson has been involved with the former. "It will measure the height difference between low and high tides," he says. He found that the real power that can be harnessed from the fjords emptying into Breiðafjörður would be 75-80 Mw. But there is an added bonus: if the barrage is constructed, two crossings will be built across adjacent fjords to house the turbines. Bridges for these fjords were already in the pipeline by the Icelandic Roads Authority, so the plan would combine both projects.

From Poverty to Plenty

Around 1900, Iceland was considered the poorest country in Europe and all

its scientists and engineers had to travel abroad to gain their education. Since the end of the Second World War, there has been a massive growth in the university student population and now the University of Iceland is recognised as being one of the top centres of learning and research in the fields of engineering and renewable energy. This, along with the UN University, the new Keilir university at Keflavik and the Innovation Centre, has created a dynamic force for the development of renewable resources both at home and worldwide that will be of great benefit to the international community and developing countries, in particular. From its humble state at the beginning of the last century, Iceland has an understanding of the needs of developing countries and is doing its best to help transform them in the same way.





BETWEEN THE GLACIERS

Breathtaking experiences and stunning hiking treks in Kerlingarfjöll

If hiking is your passion, the challenge of new places is in your blood. This is one reason for the surge in popularity in hiking trips to Iceland. There are just so many varied hikes to take and various levels of difficulty.

Up past the classic tourist sites of Geysir and Gulfoss, the road reverts to gravel as it heads into the highlands of the interior along the Hvítá (White River), up between the Langjökull and Höfsjökull glaciers. This relatively flat territory, forming a large Plateau is named Kjölur (meaning keel of a vessel). Here, between these glaciers rises a group of mountains,



hosting the third largest geothermal area in the interior: Kerlingarfjöll.

Kerlingarfjöll is 80 Km from Gulfoss, partly on gravel roads that have been improved for normal vehicles. During the summer months, the Sterna bus company and SBA have regular services there.

This entire trip is one of superlatives as every aspect of the nature cries out for your attention. The different elements play with each other, creating a vista of constantly changing, shimmering colours and forms throughout the day and over the months. The pristine, pure, clean air and the thundering silence of the surrounding mountain peaks draws you into hiking its many trails. Plumes of steam rise from geothermal vents and hot springs over a landscape coloured red, yellow and green by the different minerals and natural chemicals.

Who is the old woman?

The name, 'Kerlingarfjöll' means 'Old Woman's Mountains' and comes from

folk tales telling how an old troll woman stayed out too late and didn't make it to her home in the mountains before the sun rose and turned her to stone. A 25 metre-high tuff stone pillar, said to be the troll, gives the range its name. Other folk tales describe the area being used as a haven or sanctuary for robbers and outcasts.

An Oasis in the Desert

This would be an austere region were it not for the restaurant and cottages situated at Ásgarður, in the green valley at the north eastern end of the canyon leading from the main geothermal area, Hveradalir. They transform the hiking experience by providing comfortable accommodation for up to 100 people and good food before the start and at the end of a long day's hike. Not only that, but the natural hot pool is a wonderful place to relax and soothe sore muscles. In the winter months, it gives the added experience of watching the Northern



Lights as they sweep across the sky in a dance that can last for hours, with a totally different performance each night against a backdrop of glistening mountains and glaciers.

It is one of the driest parts of the country yet, during the winter months, it is covered in snow, transforming the scene once again. This is the time to travel by superjeep as Kjerlingafjöll is a very interesting destination in the winter as well.

See to the Seas

It is little wonder that Kerlingarfjöll is a popular place to stay in summer though, as many people love to enjoy the wonders of nature along with the peace and tranquility it offers. The area is big enough that its solitude is rarely interrupted by another hiker and yet, amazingly, there is mobile phone access, so you are never far from modern life, should you need to communicate.

From the peak of the 1477 metre-high Snækollur mountain, you can see the seas in both the north and south on a clear day, which makes the summit second to none when comparing the size of area one can see from it.

Formed in Fire

Born in a volcanic eruption, Kerlingarfjöll is a relatively young range of mountains, unusually created from rhyolite, liparite and both dark and bright tuff stone about 10,000 years old. This is what gives it its constantly changing colouring, depending on the light, the sun and the time of day. When it was being created, there was a glacier covering the mid highlands. In some places, it seems tuff stone burst through the ice, becoming covered with lava.

Kerlingarfjöll is at the centre of a system of volcanoes, with one of the most powerful hot spring areas in Iceland. It is a very active geothermal area still, with plenty of warm streams and pools flowing out from different parts of the mountain range. Some of the geysirs have melted the glacial ice and created impressive arches, caves and ice rocks.

Melting Treasures

Geologists from many parts of the world come to see its treasures - some of which, according to Dr. Simon Carr of the Dept of Geography at Queen Mary's College, University of London, could disappear in a matter of a couple of decades, making it all the more imperative to visit and enjoy its wonders while they are still there. Until 2000, this used to be one of Iceland's most popular destinations for a summer skiing school but since that time, no lifts have operated as the snows have melted and the glaciers retreated under the effects of the changing climate.

In Spring, the melting snow creates unusual sculptures, swelling the many streams that turn into rivers, flowing in different directions. Amongst them is the mighty Hvítá that gives the Gulfoss waterfall its power and makes it such a magnet for tourists. Yet, it all begins here, in the area around Kerlingarfjöll.w

-ASF

Kerlingarfjöll



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