

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

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**A Time for the Great Aurora Borealis  
Journey to the Inside of a Glacier  
Iceland's Most Romantic Settings?  
A Crash Course in Iceland's Otherworldly Aspects**

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The end of the year is always a time for reflection over the previous twelve months. For us at the Icelandic Times, the tremendous boost in the number of tourists visiting the country certainly brought its challenges—and not just for us, alone, but for all the industry.

However, we were not looking just at the visitors but beyond the horizon to lands still to be reached. In November 2014, we published the first Chinese edition, printed and distributed throughout China. By the end of 2015, our third Chinese issue was reaching an ever-growing number of people interested in visiting Iceland. That interest was reflected in the visitor numbers from China, up 80% in 2015. With its vast population, it would be a monumental task to reach everyone with a magazine but our new website added Chinese to the English, French and German languages and was picked up by many readers.

The Icelandic Times publishes articles in the fields of tourism, culture and business and it is this last category where we are now developing a new magazine.

Iceland is known for its fishing industry—not just the boats but all the background technology that goes into making a fishing fleet a sustainable and yet profitable enterprise. Iceland is second to none in its development of every area of the fishing industry, from net design to processing that enables a restaurant in New York to serve fish that were caught a mere 24 hours earlier over 4,000km away.



Icelandic companies in the fishing and food processing industries are keen to share their knowledge with others and the Icelandic Times will be publishing the first special magazine, in co-operation with the Chinese fishing and food processing industry organisations to reach their 5,500 members with the opportunities to move their industry to a new level, providing a whole range of business opportunities for both countries.

Einar Th. Thorsteinnsson  
 Managing Editor and Publisher

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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'          |

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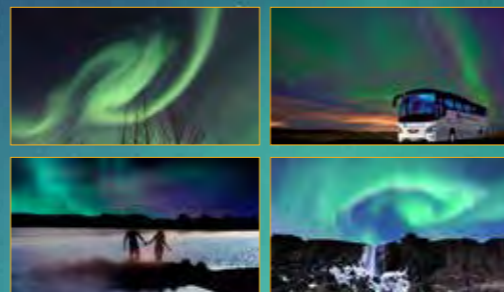
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# THE GREATER *Reykjavik* AREA

One of the world's smaller capitals, Reykjavik is surrounded by the towns of Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Álftanes (where the President lives), Hafnarfjörður and the country town of Mosfellsbær, combining to make up the Greater Reykjavik area. It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900s, Ingólfur Arnarson, it has grown from a handful of houses a few centuries ago to a compact and thriving metropolis. The National Museum holds the history of the nation, while the National Library, just opposite it, has the nation's books and records. There are many art galleries and museums throughout the area

and the new concert hall complex by Reykjavik's harbour, Harpa, has a full programme each month. Innovation and inspiration play a major role in the city's life. From here, visitors can reach the whole country. The countryside is always very close by. Activities such as tours, whale- or bird-watching, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking and horse-riding are very popular. There's even ice skating. On weekends especially, the city is filled with nightlife that continues till morning. There are plenty of pubs and restaurants with both genuine Icelandic food and international cuisines. So you never need to go hungry. From youth hostel to guesthouses and hotels, there's accommodation for every budget.



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Sunset at Elliðaavatn lake near Reykjavik



Harpa Reykjavik Concert and Conference Centre

The Pond in Reykjavík



Alþingishúsið (The Parliament House) is a classical 19<sup>th</sup> century structure which stands by Austurvöllur in central Reykjavik, Iceland. It houses the Alþingi, the Icelandic parliament. The building was designed by Danish architect Ferdinand Meldahl and built using hewn dolerite between 1880 to 1881.



Reykjavik by night, taken from the air



Reykjavik on a good summer's day from the air

Höfði is a house in northern Reykjavik, the capital city of Iceland, built in 1909. Höfði is located at Félagstún. Initially, it was built for the French consul Jean-Paul Brillouin in Iceland and was the exclusive residence of poet and businessman Einar Benediktsson (1864-1940) for many years. It is best known as the location for the 1986 Reykjavik Summit meeting of Presidents Ronald Reagan of the United States and Mikhail Gorbachev of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. That was a major step to the ending of the Cold War. Within the building the flags of the United States and the Soviet Union are cross-hung to commemorate the meeting.



# THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

*Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present*

In the town of Mosfellsbær, just a 15 minutes' drive from Reykjavík, master craftsman Páll Kristjánsson (or Palli) and his co-creator Soffía Sigurðardóttir are hard at work in their rustic atelier, where they create an array of handsome knives for collectors, chefs, and all those who appreciate the workmanship that goes into a finely crafted tool.



and Soffía are happy to work with you to produce a custom knife made to your specifications. More information can be found at their websites listed below where you can browse their collections and even special order online.

## Icelandic Artisans at Work

Damascus steel, well known for its durability and razor sharp blades, as well as stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden are choice materials favoured by Palli and Soffía. Many of the blades are Viking Age replicas decorated with finely etched designs that are then expertly paired with a handle carved by Palli. Traditional Icelandic materials are all used to create beautifully carved handles—birch, rowan, horse's hooves, reindeer antler, goat and sheep horn and even fossilised wood. Palli's knives can be found scattered throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items, they sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the Internet.

## The Woman's Touch

For her part, Soffía, who has worked under Palli's tutelage for several years, has created a line of beautiful professional kitchen knives and forks which are gaining in popularity. Blades for these knives come in various shapes and materials (Japanese, Damascus steel or high carbon steel) and the finely balanced handles make them a joy to use in the kitchen. Chefs, cooking schools and cooking enthusiasts tend to love to show off these one-of-a-kind handmade kitchen tools that have become something of a sought after souvenir from Iceland.

## Custom-made

Should you have your own design ideas or materials that you would like to use, Palli

## Walk-ins Welcome

Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvegur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are 9–6, Monday through Friday, from 9–4 on Saturdays or if you are in the neighbourhood outside of those hours, you are always welcome to pop in for a chat.

Though a visit to their workshop would be well worth your time, you can also find their products available in Brynja hardware store on Laugavegur 29 in the centre of Reykjavík.

-EMV



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# THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

*The Sea Baron's Fish Meals Attract Visitors from All Over the World*

Iceland has many 'different' foods which 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, 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!

## The Sea Baron in True spirit

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of 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'. While he never revealed the secrets of his recipe, that has never stopped the restaurant from being filled every day with aficionados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware store to buy a grill—and was in business! His visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out to make room for tables and chairs. He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no one else had thought of. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

## The Passing of the Sea Baron

Kjartan, the true Sea Baron, has recently passed away. But his legacy will surely live on for many years to come. A few years ago, Kjartan passed his mantle on to Elísabet Jean Skúladóttir, an energetic and vibrant young woman who actually bought the restaurant at the Sea Baron's request. Kjartan wanted to make sure his place would be well taken care of in the future, but he used to joke that, not only



did Elísabet make a great investment by purchasing the restaurant, but he was included in the deal himself. Kjartan's spirit will surely remain palpable as visitors will not only feel his energy but he will actually be there to greet them in the form of a wax sculpture!

## Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia 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. Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, it 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. Moby Dick on a Stick (minke whale on a spear) for example, is a play on words

with great impact, delicious and stirring—as are the great variety of other fish spears with a mix of cod, blue ling, salmon, trout, lobster and giant shrimp, to name a few. Also worth mentioning is an Icelandic specialty dish, available at noon on Thursdays, a combination of fermented fish. On the first Saturday of the month they offer skate with heaps of hamsatól (fried fat), potatoes and rye bread with butter. This delicacy is only available from 1<sup>st</sup> September–30<sup>th</sup> April. For desert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónagrautur—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

## Bon Voyage Sea Baron!

The Sea Baron will be missed dearly by all who knew him. His heritage will live on and there is no doubt that his recipes will continue to warm the bellies of both Icelanders and travellers alike for generations to come. This man has surely put his mark on the restaurant landscape and changed the way we perceive a grand dining experience. - ASF

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## COLOURFUL AND PLAYFUL PIECES

*SES Design Mixes Adventure and Fun in Each Collection*

Sigríður Elfa Sigurðardóttir bases SES Design in a charming workshop/store in Borgartún, where visitors can see, and purchase, her beautiful creations. Sigríður has been a lifelong creator and artist and studied as a painter. SES Design features fashion pieces for adults and children as well as accessories for the home, and jewellery and hats.

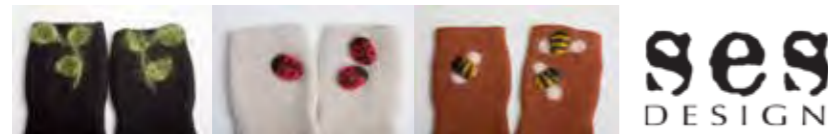
Design has been a passion for Sigríður for many years. SES Design was born in 2006, several years after she founded another design company. All of Sigríður's pieces are made by hand and each item is worked on one at a time. There is absolutely no mass production in SES Design. The concept started out as a children's line, but quickly expanded to include clothing for adults, including dresses.



The collection is colourful, playful and very pleasing to the eye. Some pieces feature fabrics that come from Africa. In addition to the SES Design workshop, which is recommended on TripAdvisor, Sigríður's designs can be purchased in Reykjavik at Álafoss, Epal (in Harpa), the Handknitting Association of Iceland, the National Gallery of Iceland,



Víkingur, Norska húsið in Stykkishólmur, the House of Hands in Egilsstaðir, and Gullfosskaffi on the Golden Circle. -JG

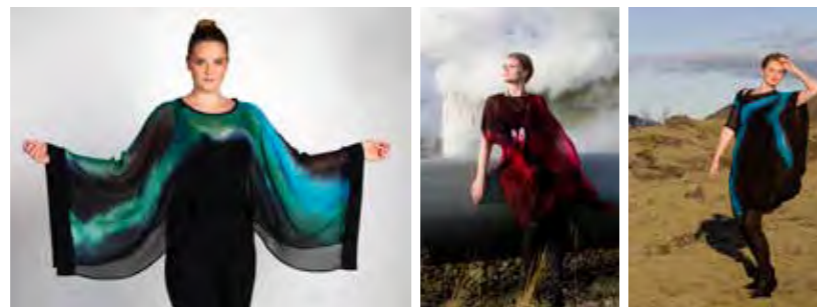


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## DELICATE HAND-PAINTED SILK DESIGNS

*Budda-Design Offers Whimsical Fashion Pieces Featuring Northern Lights Inspiration*

Budda-Design is the creation of Aðalbjörg Erlendsdóttir, a fashion and textile designer based in the heart of Reykjavik. Budda's line is based around gorgeous designs she hand-paints on silk, including scarves, dresses, pillows and artwork. Aðalbjörg's designs are delicate and colourful, while being classic and playful at the same time.



### Icelandic Nature

Iceland's stark nature and unrivaled beauty is a consistent influence on Aðalbjörg. She spends her summer travelling widely across Iceland and her deep love and appreciation for the natural surroundings is reflected in her designs. For her current collection, northern lights take centre stage with pieces inspired by the dancing green lights that adorn Iceland's skies every winter. Mountains, volcanoes and lava fields are also an inspiration.



### Career Switch

Aðalbjörg has had an interesting professional path as she studied biology and geology at the University of Iceland and worked for many years as a biologist. About 23 years ago, she wanted to further explore her artistic side and graduated from the Columbine School of Fashion and Design in Denmark.

Locals and tourists can buy Budda-

Design pieces at a number of places around Reykjavik including her studio at Skipholt 9, National Gallery of Iceland, Ófeigur Gullsmiðja, Icelandair Hotels Reykjavik Natura, Hilton Reykjavik Nordica and Radisson Blu Saga Hotel, and Gullfosskaffi along the Golden Circle. -JG

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# iRENT CAR RENTAL COMPANY

*Affordable Iceland*

Finally a car rental company with affordable prices! Knowing that the standard price for even a small 2-door, no frills passenger car can cost upwards of €100 a day in Iceland (in winter, and even more in summer), I was intrigued. Surely there was a catch—hidden fees or extra charges somewhere in the fine print? I decided to go straight to the top and find out for myself. (Ok it's a small family-run company so this was not difficult.)

I spoke to iRent's affable owner Björgvin Sævarsson who assured me that what you see is what you get. Unlimited miles, all taxes and fees included in the price, and a very nice selection of new and almost new cars to choose from, starting at €39.00 a day. You can even rent a bicycle or an all-terrain vehicle, or opt for their high-end luxury cars such as the Cadillac Escalade or the Hummer H2. The least expensive car? It's the 5-passenger

Hyundai i10, priced at €39.00 a day from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to May 31<sup>st</sup> 2016. At these prices how can you NOT afford to visit Iceland this winter? -EMV

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## REFINEMENT IN REYKJAVIK

*Einar Ben Brings Style and Class to Dining in the Capital*

Einar Ben is one of a select few restaurants in the highly competitive Reykjavik scene, where new, trendy places come and go on a monthly basis, that has found its way into the Icelandic psyche and has been able to maintain the delicate balance of class, comfort and top-rate food at reasonable prices that inspires customers to return.

### Home of a Hero

The restaurant is, in fact, the former home of one of Iceland's greatest heroes, after whom it is named. Einar Ben was a poet and pioneer who personified the dreams and ambitions of Icelanders in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is easy to see why the restaurant has become a part of Reykjavik's culture. It retains the romanticism and grace of the Golden Age period and yet it is free of pretense and excess. You'll find none of the modern, careless, fast food rush here. The staff enjoy taking time to provide a quality service in an open, friendly manner.



### Dishes With a Difference

Of course, what matters most is the food, and here, Einar Ben's reputation is well known. Its dishes are built around the classics: fish and lamb. They are justifiably proud of their menu,



from the hors d' oeuvres, the main course to the desserts and coffee drinks, the master chef creates sublime tastes which blend together for an amazing dining experience.

### Fortified for the night

Up on the third floor of the house is fun surprise: Rauði barinn, Einar Ben's lounge. It's the perfect place to relax with some after-dinner drinks. Reykjavik's nightlife is legendary, so the 'Red Bar' will prepare you to start a night on the town.

Einar Ben is found on the corner of Ingólfstorg, at the end of Austurstræti, right in the city centre. -ASF



### Einar Ben Restaurant

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## CELEBRATING ICELANDIC NATURE THROUGH TEXTILE DESIGN

# GJÓSKA WOOL ART

Textile artist Birna Kristín Friðriksdóttir walks through the pasturelands that surround her farm Brúnagerði, in the Fnjóskadalur valley, North Iceland. In summer, the countryside is full of life and bursting with energy. In winter, the profound stillness of this valley is restful and refreshing. Now, in late September, the rapid transition from summer to winter begins and it is here in the midst of all this splendour, that Birna gets her inspiration, in hefty daily doses, while working out of her studio.



### 100% Icelandic Craftsmanship

Her medium is textiles. Reams of knitted Icelandic wool is her canvas upon which she skillfully incorporates strands of loose unspun merino wool, interspersed with flashes of neon green or bright red/orange silk, evoking a magnificent Northern



Lights display, or the lava falls from the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2010. Once the patterns are created, Birna cuts the material into shapes that will then be sewn into woollen outerwear—hats,

gloves, jackets, capes & ponchos and of course sweaters, in her own inimitable style.

### Inspired by Nature

After many years working as a textile teacher in her hometown of Grenivík, Birna felt the call to move into the realm of clothing design.



In 2013 Gjóska Clothing Company was set up, allowing Birna full reign to indulge her passion for clothing design. She's been going full steam ever since.

### Plans for the Future

Birna hopes to export her creations to other nations where the Northern Lights are visible, such as Canada, Finland and northern Norway. Closer to home, plans are afoot to bring Northern Lights tours to her workshop in Fnjóskadalur as an exciting addition to Northern Lights tours in North Iceland.

You are welcome to visit Birna at her workshop in Fnjóskadalur, a 30-minute drive from Akureyri or to pop in to the retail shop at Skólavörðustígur 20, 101 Reykjavík to see her creations.

They make wonderful mementos of your trip to Iceland! -EMV



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Find them on Facebook: Gjóska

## THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE WATCHMAKER

*They sell to the stars but are known only to the few*

It is probably the world's smallest watchmaker, located in a very small shop in one of the world's smallest countries and yet they produce the most exquisitely crafted and sought-after hand made watches.

In this era of electronic, battery-powered watches, you might expect that automatic mechanical watches had passed into history. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a greater demand for high quality timepieces that will outlast the temporary electronic watch phenomenon.

### The choice of connoisseurs

You can be defined by your choices. There are watches for the mass market and there are those watches that are individualised, personalised collectors' items, works of art that are cherished for generations. These are investments—especially those limited editions. Yet, they have a key place in the lives of the wearers.

Kings, princesses, international leaders from East and West, film stars, rock idols—all have made their way to the small shop on Laugavegur, Reykjavík's main shopping street, to select their own watch, have it assembled and personalised just for them, a testament to their discernment of true quality.

While I was visiting the shop, it's wall filled with photos of well-known personalities who are now wearing their watches, I couldn't help but wonder if it was only the rich and famous who could afford such time pieces. My answer came as I was standing there. A beautiful young woman came to pick up a watch she had ordered and two tourists selected watches for themselves. They would return later in the day after their selections had been assembled specifically for them in the tiny studio at the back of the shop.

Others, wanting something even more personal, have their watches engraved on the inner rotor with special messages.



### Relying on reliability

Pilots and the Icelandic coastguard have to be able to trust their watches. Lives could depend on them. The coastguard are issued with the "Sif" watch, designed especially for them. The only watch in the range without a transparent back, it has a 4mm Sapphire non-reflective glass and can be used to a depth of at least 1,000 metres. It is also available to the general public, along with pilots' watches, likewise known for their dependability and absolute reliability.

### Wear the volcano

Iceland used to be known as "Europe's Best Kept Secret" but it was thrust into the limelight in 2010 with the Eyjafjallajökull volcanic eruption. The fine ash that brought Europe's air traffic to a halt now coats the face of the most sought-after watch, the Goð. Ornate Viking engravings on the case make this watch stand out—especially as some of the engraving can be personalised to make it totally unique. -ASF



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# LEATHER DESIGNER

*Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces*

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs. Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”

Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours.

Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After

working at an architect’s office, she started her own business.

“I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.”

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Snorrastofa in Reykholt and directly from Guðrún.

More information can be found on Facebook: Ark.art leather design. -NHH



**Arkart**

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arkgunna@simnet.is  
www.facebook.com/pages/Arkart-leather-design/



# BRINGING ART TO THE PEOPLE

*Engilberts Offers Inventive Designs that Feature the Work of Jón Engilberts*

Engilberts is a dynamic design company that cherishes the work of one of Iceland’s most beloved artists, Jón Engilberts. Jón was a very accomplished and distinguished artist who won the Van Gogh prize in 1939, and was given the Order of the Falcon from the president of Iceland in 1961. The owner of the company, Greta Engilberts, is Jón’s granddaughter. She owns the rights to his work and wants to celebrate his memory by printing his work onto various design

products. The goal is to allow Jón’s art to live on and her dedication is to bringing Jón’s art to the people.

## Diverse Product Line

Engilberts, which has an online shop at [www.engilberts-honnun.is](http://www.engilberts-honnun.is), offers varied product lines with something for everyone. The company creates delicate scarves, buffs and pillows that feature Jón’s printed artwork as well as unisex T-shirts and fibre cloths to polish glasses. Stylish collars made



from Icelandic goat skin and handmade jewellery that incorporates ostrich and raven feathers are also available. Each piece is carefully handcrafted with great care. Engilberts’ workshop, which holds the entire collection, is open to the public and the designer loves welcoming visitors! Design pieces are for sale at the workshop as well as at the Blue Lagoon, Rammagerðin, Listasafn Íslands, the flower shop in Harpa called Upplifun, onboard Wow Air flights, at Sirka in Akureyri, and at Skjaldarvík Guesthouse in North Iceland. -JG

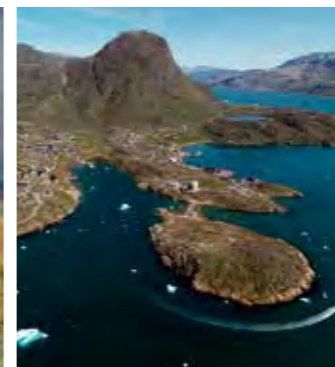


**Engilberts**

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# NORDIC CHIC AT ITS BEST

*Modern Icelandic Fashion Brand Farmers Market Makes Waves in Grandi*

**F**armers Market is an Icelandic design company and clothing brand that features designs that mix modernity with classic Icelandic heritage. Natural fibres, muted colours and unrivaled craftsmanship are at the centre of each piece of the collection.

Founded in 2005 by a young artist couple—a designer and a musician, Farmers Market has become a staple in Icelandic fashion, found in the closets of artists, musicians, everyday Icelanders and hip tourists. The clothes are impeccably styled with pieces suitable for city life while sustaining the outdoor elements. “We place ourselves at a junction,” said Farmers Market designer Bergþóra Guðnadóttir. “A place where heritage meets modernity, the national meets the international, and the countryside meets the city. We find this an exciting place to explore.”

The brand focuses on sustainability,



respect for the environment and the use of natural fabrics. Farmers Market works with materials including local Icelandic wool to waxed cotton fabrics from British

Millerrain to raw Indian silk. The use of synthetic materials is kept to a minimum.

While knitwear is at the core of the brand with luxurious cardigans, sweaters



**Farmers Market**  
— ICELAND —

and dresses; Farmers Market also creates quality pants, skirts, tops and underwear for women. For men, the brand offers knitwear along with shirts, pants, vests and underwear. Scarves and hats are also a must for men and women. Adorable sweaters and jumpsuits are on offer for children.

Farmers Market’s flagship shop, Farmers & Friends, is situated in the up-and-coming Fishpacking District in Grandi. Just a 20-minute walk from the city centre, Grandi is home to a growing number of businesses including a microbrewery, ice cream shop, restaurants and gourmet butcher. Farmers & Friends is the perfect place to purchase clothing and accessories, while browsing a perfectly curated selection of CDs and LPs, books, and other goods. It’s a fun shop to spend some time while exploring the charming old harbour district. The shop is open Monday-Friday 10am–6pm and Saturdays 11am–4pm. —JG



**Farmers Market | Farmers & Friends**  
Hólmasstöð 2 · 101 Reykjavík  
+354 5521960  
info@farmersmarket.is  
www.farmersmarket.is





# JOE & THE JUICE GETTING JUICED IN ICELAND

Joe & the Juice is an on-trend coffee shop/ juice bar that opened in January 2015 at Keflavik International Airport. The concept answers today's traveller needs for a quick pick-me-up in the form of great espresso drinks, freshly pressed smoothies and juices, and a variety of sandwiches prepared on the spot.

### A Winner Is Born

Created by the Danish entrepreneur Kaspar Basse, Joe & the Juice won the prestigious FAB Awards in the category of 'Best Airport Coffee Shop of the Year' in Copenhagen for 2013 and 2014.

### Whew! Hot!

The popular brand, known for its attractive 'juicers' and hip electronic dance music, can be found all over Denmark, and has been popping up elsewhere in Europe—Norway, Sweden, Germany, the UK, France and more recently, here in Iceland. According to Joe & the Juice's Icelandic manager Daníel Kári Stefánsson, "People come for the atmosphere as well as for the healthy drinks, and it's been going even better than we initially expected. The reaction from the Icelandic public has been great".

### Flavour, Nutrition and Hydration

Unmistakable names for freshly pressed juice combinations such as 'Sex Me



Up'—passion fruit, ginger and apple, 'Joe's Green Kiss'—spinach, ginger and apple and one called 'Hell of a Nerve'—strawberry, elderberry and banana, are sure to grab your attention. For a distinctly Danish touch, Joe's sandwiches are made with traditionally baked rye bread, using flavourful combinations of fillings such as Serrano ham, mozzarella and tomato, and a touch of pesto.

### Size Matters

Joe & the Juice uses a unique blend of coffee beans that have been specially cultivated in South America. There's no extra charge



if you want to up your caffeine intake with a double shot in your latte and you choose your cup size—in pink, purple, yellow or grey. How about a ginger shot for a natural boost of energy? Coming right up! Just ask!

### Where to Get Juiced in Iceland

You can find Joe & the Juice at Reykjavik's Kringlan Shopping Mall, Kópavogur's Smáralind Shopping Mall, Laugar Fitness Centre and Keflavik Airport's check-in lounge. A new Joe & the Juice will open in Keflavik airport's departure lounge on March 15<sup>th</sup>. This is one place to check out!

**Joe & The Juice - Iceland**  
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 +354 585 0800  
 info@joeandthejuice.is  
 www.joeandthejuice.is



## CATCH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ALL YEAR AROUND

*Aurora Reykjavik's Northern Lights Center lets you see the Lights all year*

There is perhaps nothing more magical and unforgettable than witnessing the beauty of a Northern Lights display in one's lifetime. It's the dream of many who come to Iceland, but alas, those unpredictable, frenetic lights tend to have a mind of their own and don't always show up on cue. So it is with great joy that we welcome one of Iceland's most recent additions—Aurora Reykjavik's Northern Lights Center, where the Northern Lights are always on display.

### A Unique Experience

The centre is the unique creation of four enterprising young Icelanders who recognised the need for just such a place—a kind of one-stop-shop for all things Northern Lights. Located on the far side of Reykjavik's Old Harbour, the centre serves both educational and inspirational purposes. Here you can read up on the auroras through stories and legends from around the world, learn something

about the science behind this amazing phenomenon and gaze at spectacular Northern Lights photography from top Icelandic photographers. There is even a specially equipped 'photo booth' where you can learn how to adjust your camera's settings should you want to try your hand at capturing an auroral display yourself.

### Soothing Sights and Sounds

However, Aurora Reykjavik's real pull and ace up its sleeve is its fantastic HD time-lapse film of recent auroral activity. Projected onto a 7 metre wide screen, you can sit back and enjoy this 13 minute film that features a dazzling display of auroral activity, accompanied by relaxing music. Therapeutic and restful are two words that come to mind to describe this zen-like experience.

### Hot coffee and choice gifts

Before leaving, be sure to grab a free cup of coffee in the Northern Lights Center



gift shop and check out the impressive display of clothing, glassware, paintings and woollen knitwear by some of Iceland's most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it.

-EMV

### Setting the record straight

While in Iceland, you might be told that the outside air temperature needs to be around 0°C or below in order to see the Northern Lights. The oft quoted but erroneous assumption is that the Northern Lights only appear at these temperatures. We would just like to set the record straight that while it is true that the Northern Lights do happen to be visible more often when the air is cold and the sky is clear, their appearance has nothing to do with actual temperature of the air.



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 www.aurorareykjavik.is

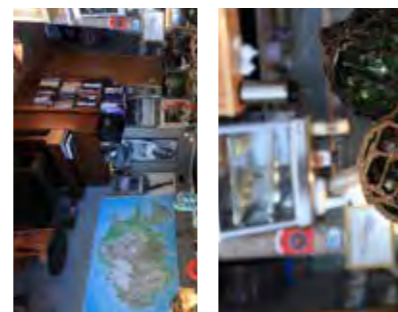


## GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

*The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast*

Walk down by Grindavík's harbour and you may see the nets. Then you know you're there. Bryggjan's main work is repairing fishing nets and lines—nets that would completely cover the nearby mountain and lines that would stretch way beyond Reykjavik, over 50km away.

This is a fishing town and the café is a fishermen's café—though, with the growing number of visitors from all over the world finding it, it is quickly becoming the café of choice in the area. Little wonder, as the help and friendliness of the owners is only matched by the delicious food they offer.



Images © Gabriel Rutenberg

My suggestion: don't leave without having a bowl of their soup. It's really good.

While I was there, one of the owners was spending time with visiting tourists, explaining the area and showing them on a map the best places to visit. It's in the evenings and on weekends that things really take off, though. It's a small place but packed with character. A piano in the corner is often pressed into use, making it a fun and inspiring evening. Whether you are a local or just visiting, you'll feel at home. —ASF

**Café Bryggjan**  
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# 365 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

*The wonderland that keeps the Christmas spirit alive all the year*

On Laugavegur, which is Reykjavik's main shopping street, The Little Christmas Shop is in holiday spirits all year round. The owner, Anne Helen, happily makes sure she keeps that Christmas spirit alive; come rain or shine.



## An obsession for Christmas

Anne Helen admits that she has an incurable obsession for Christmas as well as a genuine passion for things of beauty in general. Her pride and passion lies in searching for various Christmas things of quality and she is always on the lookout for items of unique beauty.

She imports products from all over Europe but her main ambition is to specialize in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. The Little Christmas Shop has a large selection, mostly made exclusively for Anne Helen by a number of craftsmen, who each have a distinctive approach, working with materials such as glass, clay and wool.

In addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she offers Icelandic folklore figurines, such as the thirteen Yule Lads and the notorious Christmas Cat. Tourists enjoy visiting the store and partaking of Anne Helen's well known hospitality, where the shop's friendly atmosphere makes them feel more than welcome. It is almost impossible to leave this winter wonderland empty handed! It is just too tempting to invest in an Icelandic Yule Lad for your Christmas tree back home and it



is a warm, lovely way to remember your visit to Iceland.

## Crazy about Christmas

Anne Helen has always been crazy about Christmas and the sparkling atmosphere surrounding the holidays, so to run her own shop, devoted exclusively to the Christmas season, is a dream come true.

Before the Little Christmas Shop became a reality, Anne Helen sold decorations and Christmas-inspired articles from her garage, which attracted curious guests to her home at all hours every day. Being a very sociable person, she encouraged people to relax and enjoy their visit. She moved her treasure trove to her new shop on Laugavegur, in the heart of Reykjavik's bustling shopping area, which was only 3 streets away from her garage.

The beautiful shop devoted to Christmas has become an integral part of the businesses in the neighbourhood as The Little Christmas Shop is open seven days a week; all year round.

During the summer months of July and August, about 70% of Anne Helen's business is selling Icelandic handmade Christmas products to foreign visitors, who are especially fascinated by the uniqueness of her merchandise.

## Children and Santa

In addition to serving adult customers, Anne Helen is always pleased to meet children from all over the world who are drawn like magnets to her joyful store. Many of them are excited to get their hands on the Christmas letters that are sold in the shop and which they can then send to Iceland's Santa. The children are guaranteed that, when Christmas time comes, they will receive a letter as well as a treat in the mail from the man himself.

## 13 Mischievous Yule lads

When visiting Anne Helen at the Little Christmas Shop, one can expect her to share some interesting and fun stories from the various Christmas traditions of Icelandic culture. Stories of the mischievous 13 Icelandic Yule lads have been known to scare some foreign children but are nonetheless extremely popular!

- HH



**Little jólabúðin**  
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lindsay@simnet.is





REYKJAVIK EXCURSIONS:

# AN UNFORGETTABLE NORTHERN LIGHTS TOUR

*Relax in the Soothing Laugarvatn Fontana Baths while waiting for the Northern Lights to appear*

One of the biggest attractions during the winter in Iceland are the spectacular Northern Lights which often look like they are putting on a show just for your pleasure. The green lights flicker and dance in the sky, changing colour and intensity, delighting all those who get a glimpse of the mysterious phenomenon. A regular Northern Lights hunt is great, but for travellers who are looking for something special, Reykjavik Excursions has a special Warm Baths & Cool Lights tour. The tour features a visit to the Laugarvatn Fontana Geothermal Baths.

### The Glorious Laugarvatn Fontana

Even though Reykjavik Excursions can't guarantee that the Northern Lights will make themselves appear, the company does guarantee that guests will be in the perfect spot while waiting for

them during the tour at Laugarvatn. The warm steam baths and hot tubs offer an perfect view of the sky and the landscape. Guests can enjoy themselves in the steam room, take a dip in the pool, and soak in the geothermal pool while waiting for the Northern Lights to emerge. Enjoy the mysterious aurora borealis, feel the warmth of the earth and geothermal energy and inhale the fresh Icelandic air.

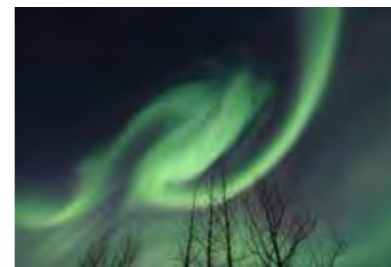
### Nature Meets Tradition

Since 1929, Icelanders and travellers alike have been enjoying the healing powers of the natural steam baths in Laugarvatn. Hot, soothing steam streams directly from the ground through grids in the cabin floors of the newly renovated wellness centre where nature meets tradition.

### Three Hot Springs

The region has three hot springs at the shore of Lake Laugarvatn, which vary in heat and have been used for different purposes. Vigðalaug is the coolest and most well known as it was the site of a mass baptism for the entire Parliament of Iceland in the year 1000 AD. The middle spring is the one utilised by Laugarvatn Fontana and where the Northern Lights tour takes you. The current modern facilities were built in 2011, but there is a historical spa facility located on the site that dates back to 1929. The third, and hottest, spring is used solely for the geothermal heating of all the homes and buildings in the area, and is therefore not a visitor's attraction.

The 7-hour Warm Baths & Cool Lights tour, which includes bus fare, a local-style buffet, and admission to the Laugarvatn Fontana, is one of Reykjavik Excursions



on and off at their leisure and a full tour lasts 1 hour. Reykjavik Excursions has the best spots planned out around the city. A ticket lasts a full 24 hours and there is daily service year-round. The bus route takes travellers to sites including the National Museum, which documents the history of Iceland from settlement to modern times, the Reykjavik Maritime Museum, where guests can explore the island's fishing culture, as well as the landmark church Hallgrímskirkja and Reykjavik City Hall. The tour also includes Höfði House—where Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev held their 1986 summit meeting, Whales of Iceland—the largest whale exhibition in Europe, as well as the old



most popular winter tours. Travellers love soaking at Laugarvatn Fontana, nourishing their bodies and souls while watching the northern lights dance above. The tour is available from September 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. It departs daily at 6:00pm and includes pickup at your hotel.

### Hop On-Hop Off

Taking a bus tour with City Sightseeing is an ideal way to explore Reykjavik, without keeping to a strict schedule. Guests can hop

harbour district, where travellers can go on whale watching tours, browse shops and dine at eclectic restaurants. Reykjavik Excursions has created a tailored agenda of all the hot spots to hit in Reykjavik.

### A Memorable Experience

Whether you are seeking a glimpse of the majestic Northern Lights, or would rather enjoy a tailored tour of Reykjavik by sightseeing bus, be sure to check out tours offered by Reykjavik Excursions. The dedicated team, from customer service representatives to tour guides, is committed to making your trip seamless and unforgettable. In everything they have to offer, you can rest assured they will strive to leave you with the best possible memory of your time in Iceland! *-JG*



**Reykjavik Excursions**

BSI Bus Terminal - 101 Reykjavik

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www.re.is





# JOURNEY TO THE INSIDE OF A GLACIER

*Experience a Glacier from the Inside with Into the Glacier*

Exploring the surface of a glacier is thrilling, but actually getting inside one is a once in a lifetime experience. The staff behind Into the Glacier offers travellers that rare opportunity. Situated in the western part of Langjökull, the second largest ice cap in Iceland, and 1,260 metres above sea level, the ice cave stretches 40 metres deep underground giving visitors the chance to see ice that's been forming over centuries. The ice cave stretches more than 550 metres into the glacier.

## Trip to the Top

The classic guided tour begins in Húsafell, which is 130km from Reykjavik, when guests board one of the most unique vehicles ever made, a customised super truck. The truck, which seats up to 35 passengers, was acquired from NATO, where it was originally used as a cruise missile launcher.

The 20km trip up to the glacier is an experience in itself in good weather or bad. Clear days offer exquisite views of the vast icy desert, while poor weather conditions reveal the power and unpredictability of Icelandic weather.



Image © Roman Gerasymenko

## Enter the Glacier

Once inside, travellers, with crampons attached to their feet, get to experience something very few have seen. Lit by LED lights, guests begin to explore the tunnel, with a knowledgeable guide leading small

groups, sharing many interesting facts about Iceland's glaciers. Travellers are treated to views of gaping crevices as they look above. Additionally, there is a special area in the cave, which developers named 'the chapel', with blocks of LED-lit blocks of



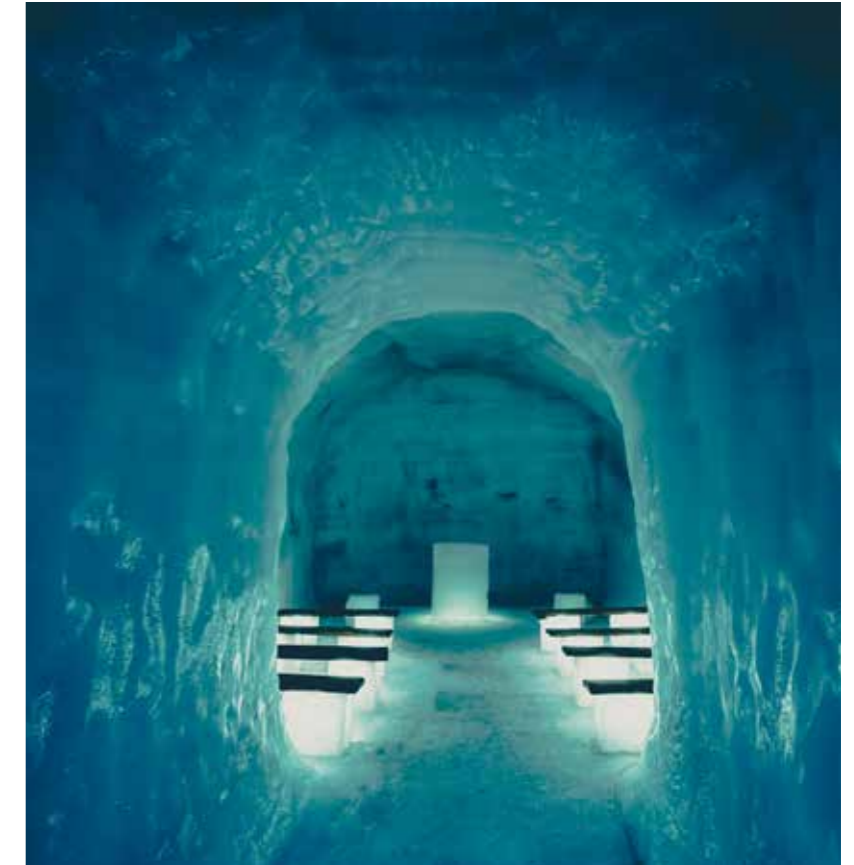
ice supporting wooden beams, which serves as a venue for weddings, marriage proposals and concerts.

Into the Glacier offers daily departures from Húsafell at 12:30pm and the tour lasts about four hours during the winter. Day tours from Reykjavik to the ice cave are available as well. For those that would like to treat themselves to a meal, you can buy a scrumptious lunch at Hotel Húsafell before you head out on your excursion. Be sure to consider Into the Glacier on your next trip to Iceland! -JG



## Into the Glacier

Víðarhöfði 1 • 110 Reykjavík  
+354 578-2550  
info@intotheglacier.is  
www.intotheglacier.is





# ADVENTUROUS AURORA TOURS

*Adrenaline-Packed Excursions like Helicopter Flights, Tours to the Highlands of Iceland and to the Wilderness of Greenland*

Aurora Tours specialises in some of the most thrilling excursions available including helicopter rides, tours in the vast highlands and even expert-guided tours to Greenland. One of the most popular tours is taking travellers out on a Northern Lights hunt. The 3-hour tour picks guests up at their hotels and embarks on a journey to seek out the mysterious and alien-like phenomenon of the aurora borealis. The green and white lights are a showstopper, delighting all that get the privilege of witnessing them shimmering in the sky. To enhance the experience Tatanja, who is the heart and soul of this small agency,



speaks both Russian and English fluently and will provide entertaining tidbits the whole way.

## Iceland From Above

Surveying Iceland by helicopter is just stunning. Travellers get an entirely different perspective of the island's towering mountains, looming volcanoes and thundering waterfalls. Super jeeps look like ants crawling to the top of peaks. It's a beautiful and humbling experience, one that trills guests to no end. A tour can be arranged for 30 minutes up to a whole day, and be sure to remember your camera!



## Hearty Highlands

For those travellers looking for adventure, you're covered. One of the tour guides, a Russian national that has lived and worked in Iceland for more than 15 years, loves taking travellers on tours to the highlands. The remoteness and desert-like conditions of the interior are a treat for those that want to venture beyond the Golden Circle.

A super jeep will drive you to the top of mountains that you would not expect a vehicle to be able to reach. The guide navigates rough terrain with ease, ensuring a amazing and inspiring ride. The isolation, starkness and contrast of colours are gorgeous and unlike any other part of Iceland. The tour lasts for a period of 10–12 hours.



ice, there are meadows, strewn with delicate flowers during the summer.

The possibilities are endless and the staff behind Aurora Tours is committed to showing you the best, and most exciting tours out there. The family-run company creates tailored tours for every client with carefully designed itineraries.

## Adventurous Aurora Tours

Adrenaline-Packed Excursions such as Helicopter Flights, Tours to the Highlands of Iceland and to the Wilderness of Greenland make Aurora Tours a great choice for those who love to challenge themselves against the elements. -JG

## Glorious Greenland

Greenland is home to colossal icebergs, picturesque fjords and amazing wildlife. Aurora Tours offers trips to Greenland for a period of 1–14 days in Ilulissat, Kangerlussuaq, and Nuuk.

Travellers are treated to a wild expanse of icy desert, and an amazing contrast of nature. Next to the blinding white eternal



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Chinese Ambassador, Zhang Widong, in the Icelandic Times headquarters, declares his approval of the Chinese magazine to Edda Snorraddóttir, Project Manager of the Icelandic Times and Einar Th. Thorsteinsson, the company's Managing Editor and Publisher.

# ICELANDIC TIMES EXPANDS FURTHER IN CHINA

The first issue of the Icelandic Times was printed and distributed in China more than a year ago, in November 2014. Expert Chinese speakers translated the content of the English issue into Mandarin Chinese. Printed in China, it is the only version of the magazine distributed there. In

addition, it is also distributed directly to five thousand travel agencies throughout the country.

The Icelandic Times has been very well received in China. The third edition has been released and as before, its subjects are tourism, culture and business. The magazine is now well-

established in China, and aims to expand further in the coming months.

There has been a significant increase in the number of tourists from China visiting Iceland over the past few years. In 2014 the increase was around 50% compared to the year before. In 2015, there

was an 80% increase compared to 2014. Likewise, Icelanders have also been looking increasingly to China, both as a tourist destination and for business connections. The possibilities for innovative Icelandic business are virtually endless in China, given the size of its market. Bilateral relationships between China and Iceland in the various economic sectors increased as both individuals and companies have become more engaged in the process.

Given these circumstances, it's therefore no surprise that the Chinese edition of the Icelandic Times has become popular. It is available in both print form and on the Internet at [www.icelandictimes.cn](http://www.icelandictimes.cn).

### Important partnerships in China

With the next issue, the Icelandic Times enters a new field. The paper will be dedicated to fishing, the fishery industry and food relating to it. There are about 5,500 companies that belong to the Chinese fishing and food industry organisations and the magazine will be developed in close cooperation and collaboration with them.

The Icelandic Times is also working together with the Chinese State News Feed, the Xinhua News Agency. Two



Karl Lúðviksson, Sales Manager for the Icelandic Times, will be overseeing the sales for the new Fishery magazine in China.



Ragnheiður Elin Árnadóttir, Minister of Industry and Commerce, a strong supporter of the Icelandic Times magazines.

documentary programmes have already been produced, one about tourism, and the other on the Icelandic Þorrablót or Thorablót, the mid-winter feast rooted in Iceland's pagan history. These programmes have been shown both in China and around the world. Xinhua News Agency operations include the television channels CNC China and CNC World, which broadcast in English and Chinese in over 120 countries and on the Internet.

### The need exists

The introduction of Iceland as a tourist destination has had a considerable impact in China. The Icelandic Times has played a role in this. The aim of the magazine is to contribute valuable information to foreign travellers who visit Iceland, including its topography, Icelandic culture, history, nature, and the services available so that their visit to Iceland is as enjoyable as possible. Therefore, it is important that information is provided in the language the visitors speak.

In addition to the Chinese version, the Icelandic Times is also published in English, French and German. The English version was introduced in 2009 and is published five times a year. The first editions in French and German were published in 2012, and come out once a year.



Iceland's Prime Minister, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, reading the Icelandic Times, with Einar Th. Thorsteinsson, the magazine's publisher.



# WEST *Iceland*



#WESTICELAND

The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere in the West of Iceland. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with

gushing geothermal activity. Land and history form an unbroken whole as the setting for sagas like Sturlunga, Egil's Saga, Eyrbyggja and Laxdaela, not to mention the rich folklore and tales of adventure. Tours bring history to life as museums and historical sites abound.



Arnarstapi or Stapi is a small fishing village at the foot of Mt. Stapafell



Grundarfjörður is a small town situated on the north of the Snæfellsnes peninsula in the west of Iceland.



Stefánshellir cave lies in West Iceland in the Hallmundarhraun lava field. This lava field was created during the eruption in 930 AD and contains several large lava fields. Some of the largest and deepest caves in Iceland are found here. Stefánshellir is around 1,520 metres long



Glanni waterfall in Norðurárdalur – Borgarfjörður – Iceland



Hafrafell seen from Berserkjahraun, Snæfellsnes, Iceland

# SHAPED BY THE BAY

*A Base on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula*



On the northern part of the Snæfellsnes peninsula lies Stykkishólmur, a picturesque seaside town that overlooks the beautiful Breiðafjörður bay. The town's rich history as a centre for trading, transportation, culture and service for the bay area gives it a unique sense of antiquity and historical significance. The town's centre is home to some of the most colourful and oldest houses in the country—almost making the whole town a museum in itself.

Stykkishólmur is viewed as one of Iceland's most charming towns by many Icelanders. The town's proximity to Breiðafjörður bay contributes to the town's character to a large extent, surrounding it with exclusive natural beauty. Likewise, the town's historical significance, as a former centre for trade and commerce centuries ago, and a seat of government. The inhabitants have consciously made an effort to preserve the town's old spirit, by

retaining its appearance and maintaining old traditions from the bay area.

Visitors will get a chance to experience this when dining out in Stykkishólmur, where they'll get fresh ingredients from the bay and surrounding area, served on plates made by local chefs from local ingredients.

### Sail Away in Breiðafjörður Bay

If you only have time to partake in one activity while you're in Stykkishólmur, a chance to go sailing in Breiðafjörður bay is not to be missed. There are numerous professional guides available in the area that will happily provide you with this unforgettable experience. A calming cruise navigating the stunning islets gives a unique opportunity to view the splendid wildlife in the area close-up, such as the seals and the colourful seabirds inhabiting the holms, including the distinctive puffin from just metres away. You will have a chance to taste the freshest sushi

you will probably get in your lifetime.

A common practice is to offer guests to sample whatever seafood delicacy comes up when the nets are pulled, such as sea-urchin or scallops, while sailing between the seemingly countless islands and enjoying the quiet grandeur of the scenery.

### A Trifle of Culture

History and culture are prominent in Stykkishólmur as the town has three museums. In the 'Norwegian House', the oldest two storey timber house in Iceland, you will find the Snæfellsnes district museum. There you



can receive a lot of information about the region and its history. The house itself was built in 1832 by Árni Thorlacius, who was a merchant and ship owner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### A Library of Water

Stykkishólmur also prides itself on fine museums that represent the two prevailing elements of Icelandic nature: fire and water, in both original and conventional ways. In the case of water, on the highest point of Stykkishólmur, with its splendid views, the old town library has been changed into a museum of water, weather and words. In the museum you'll find 24 glass columns with specimens of water from all the primary glaciers of Iceland, in a piece made by renowned artist, Roni Horn.

### The Volcano Museum

Dr. Haraldur Sigurðsson, the world-famous volcanologist, founded the Volcano Museum in 2009. In the museum, you not only learn



about everything connected with volcanoes, eruptions and other geological matters, but also see how these strong forces of nature have been expressed in artwork throughout the centuries, in Iceland and around the world.

### The Perfect Base

Accommodation and services in Stykkishólmur are plentiful, with options ranging from a quality campsite, budget hostels and high-class hotels. You'll find quality restaurants, a supermarket, golf course and an amazing swimming pool, in which the water has gotten a quality

certification from Institut Fresenius, two hot pots with water straight from the earth and an excellent waterslide.

The Snæfellsnes peninsula is a must to visit when coming to Iceland. It is strewn with natural, historical and mystical phenomena and Stykkishólmur is the ideal base to explore it. -VAG

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 www.visit.stykkisholmur.is

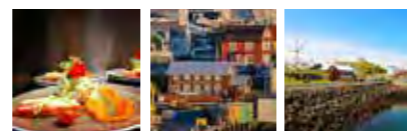



# SJÁVARPAKKHÚSIÐ RESTAURANT & BAR

*Splendid Seafood in Stykkishólmur*

Despite its humble beginnings as a fish packing plant, or perhaps because of it, Sjárpaökkhúsið is fast becoming known in this part of Iceland as one of the places to go for straight-out-of-the-boat fish and seafood dishes. It's a small, unpretentious place, decorated with an unmistakably minimalist Icelandic flair. There's no hiding behind pompous decor or gaudy frills—the beautifully presented food takes centre stage, as well it should.

Specialties include generous portions of blue mussels in white wine dependent on availability, scallops cooked to perfection, and a hearty fish soup. Top it off with a local craft beer or glass of wine and you have the makings of a great meal out. Musically endowed patrons have been known to spontaneously break out into song on the in-house piano or guitar, and a few times a month local musicians pop



in for an evening jam session of spirited Icelandic folk music or whatever strikes their fancy. Built over 100 years ago, Sjárpaökkhúsið boasts the more recent addition of a large veranda that overlooks the harbour where colourful fishing vessels of every size are neatly arranged. The cosy ambiance, the authenticity of the picturesque setting and the succulent food all add up to

an excellent dining experience right here in Stykkishólmur. Please see Sjárpaökkhúsið's website below for opening hours, daily specials and more. -EMV

**Sjárpaökkhúsið Restaurant & Bar**  
 Hafnargata 2 • 340 Stykkishólmur  
 +354 438 1800  
 sjavarpakkhusid@gmail.com  
 www.sjavarpakkhusid.is

# HOTEL EGILSEN

Hotel Egilsen is a small boutique hotel exemplifying the town's charm, tying it to the region's heritage while seamlessly offering all the high-end amenities of any modern hotel.

You are guaranteed a good night's sleep in the COCO-mat beds, made of natural materials from renewable sources. Then wake up to homemade breakfast consisting of freshly baked bread, jams from local blueberries and dandelion honey along with other goodies.

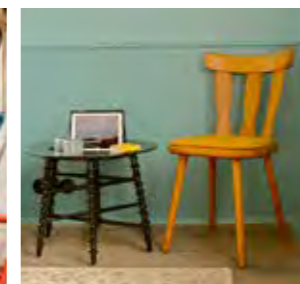


There's a small library to enjoy where you can even trade in one book for another. Enjoy a drink in the beautifully decorated



lounge and participate in storytelling with the locals or other guests from all over

the world. If a guest submits a story, they receive a discount on their stay!



**Hotel Egilsen**  
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# REAL LIFE FANTASY FROM BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR BAY

*Láki Tours takes you to meet the whales and more*



Anyone who has met them will agree that whales are amazing animals—especially seen close up. Whether they be orcas, humpbacks, minke or pilot whales—or dolphins, for that matter, catching a sight of them is a real experience. Láki Tours offers you just that, leaving from Ólafsvík in the summertime (Summer Whale Watching) and from Grundarfjörður in winter. (Winter Whale Watching).

## Basking in the Bay

Grundarfjörður and Ólafsvík lie on the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay—a fantasy world of countless islands, birds, fish, dolphins and whales. They are sighted almost daily through the year here. Recently, for instance, 100 pilot whales put on a show for visitors aboard Láki's boat. Such a high rate of sighting a range of these maritime creatures makes this area tops for both experience and photo opportunities. The tour to the whales leaves from Ólafsvík.

## Sea-angling and Bird Watching

While the whales are very popular, the tour to the islands to see the birdlife and catch some fish is not to be missed. Sea angling is a lot of fun; if you haven't tried it—and if you catch your dinner



yourself you can certainly guarantee its freshness. You're in the perfect position to spot any whales or dolphins that are curious enough to see what you're up to and if you're taking their dinner!

The photographers on this tour will have a feast of their own, with so many photo opportunities as the roughly 2-hour tour from Grundarfjörður on Láki, is an experience that many want to repeat. During the summer months, when the evening sun paints the sky red, the bay takes on a wholly different, romantic character. Sea angling in this setting is quite special, too.

Last but not least, there are special one hour-puffin and seabird tours only in the summertime, leaving from Grundarfjörður. A slow sailing on Láki offers the maximum potential to see these furry creatures in their nesting environment as nature reserve on a nearby island, Melrakkay attracts hundreds of puffins and other seabirds.

Check Láki Tours out on Facebook, where beautiful photographs tell half the story and 'diaries' following every trip are on display.

## Stay by the Bay

While Láki Tours are an amazing experience, the area has more to offer. It is very popular for hikers, photographers, bird watchers and horse riders, as all these activities are available—not to mention tours up onto the famous Snæfells glacier. No one has yet replicated Jules Verne's 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' but the glacier is spectacular.

Then, open since early 2015, Láki Hafnarkaffi café is another treat and just the place to visit after a whale watching trip. Refreshments are great quality, soup of the



day is always available and the menu offers anything from pizzas to paninis to fishpies—over to a wide range of cakes and the coffee is marvellous!

Láki Hafnarkaffi can also be found on Facebook, as well as Láki Tours.

## Hótel Framnes

Staying at the Hótel Framnes, situated right by the bay, is a very good choice, as it perfectly located for whale watching. It is a comfortable, homey hotel that provides very friendly and personal service. You can watch the sky changing over the bay in the evening as you relax in the hot pot. Its restaurant offers delicious freshly-caught fish on its gourmet menu. The restaurant at Hótel Framnes is open from January to the middle of October between 18:30–21:00 and winter opening times vary according to demand, so please contact the hotel for details. Open all year round, the hotel makes a very good base for all your activities on and around the peninsula. *-ASF/SP*



**Láki Tours**

Nesvegi 6 • 350 Grundarfjörður  
 +354 546 6808  
 lakitours@gmail.com  
 www.lakitours.com



# LJÓMALIND FARMER'S MARKET

*Not to Be Missed! - Authentic Icelandic Products*

Ljómalind Farmer's Market specialises in exclusive regional products. Small batch production of items such as traditional skyr from a local creamery, fresh farm eggs, dried fish, grass-fed beef and smoked salmon from local producers ensure top quality products. Sugar free chocolate candies, skyr confect, jams, ice cream and a variety of handcrafts and woolen knitwear, make unique gifts or snacks for the road. Unlike the big supermarkets, small production sometimes means limited quantities so you never know what you will find on offer at the market, which makes the experience all the more



exciting. Open year round including bank holidays.



## Open every day as follows:

Winter opening hours: From 1.00pm to 6.00 pm. Summer opening hours: From 11.00am to 6.00pm.

Location: beside the Borgarnes Tourist Information Office. *-EMV*



**Ljómalind Farmers Market**

Brúartorg 4 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 1400  
 ljomalind@ljomalind.is  
 www.ljomalind.is



# BORGARNES IN BORGARFJÖRÐUR

*The Heart & Soul of Iceland's Cherished Sagas*

Whether you're off to visit Akureyri, the Westfjords, or Snæfellsnes Peninsula, the journey to Iceland's north always includes a stop in the village of Borgarnes. It's time to stretch one's legs, have a bite to eat and soak up nature's magnificence in this most picturesque spot, where mountains, sea and sky

converge... and to take time out for some in-depth exploring of this important historical region that is oft overlooked.

The town offers wealth of activities and services that you would normally not expect to find in urban area of this size. There are museums, restaurants, art galleries, guesthouses and of course one of Iceland's



finest bakeries. So, when you are travelling through Iceland, be sure to take your time and explore this historical district where the Icelandic sagas come to life and the nature consumes you with its quiet grandeur. *-EMV*



The beautiful Snæfellsnes Peninsula is considered the jewel of the west coast of Iceland. In part, it's because the region has a taste of everything. If you're looking for mountains, they're there. If you want to attempt a glacier walk, Snæfellsjökull is your place. If whale watching is what you're after, this region has it. There's a reason why many locals refer to the region as "Iceland in miniature". The landscape is breathtaking with the long volcanic ridge spanning miles with rocky lava fields and towering mountains. The area is considered the most stunning place on the island by many Icelanders.

#### Romantic Getaway

Situated at the tip of the peninsula, Hótel Búðir is a romantic hotel isolated in a gorgeous stretch of the west, close to sand beaches, lava fields and an impressive mountain ridge. The hotel specialises in accommodating weddings, as it is the ideal setting to gather with friends and family to celebrate your special day. The staff, which is experienced in handling small, intimate weddings as well as large receptions, commits to doing everything possible to create the wedding of your dreams. The ceremony can take place in the noted Búðarkirkja church, standing only a few steps away from the hotel—or, if preferred, in some of the spectacular nature scenes surrounding the hotel, such as the sparkling sandy beach, or on the moss in the middle of a lava field. The possibilities are endless!

#### A Journey to the Center of the Earth

The natural surroundings of the hotel are magnificent, and there are various walking paths leading from the hotel to the nearby nature attractions. Looming large in the background is Snæfellsjökull, a glacier that became world famous after author Jules Verne described it in *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* as the starting point of the terrific journey in the book. Snæfellsjökull lies on top of a volcano and it's situated in the centre of a national park. The glacier's peak reaches 1,446 metres and it can be seen from Reykjavik on a clear day. The volcano is considered active, though the last eruption occurred 1,900 years ago. The hotel stands on the beautiful Búðarós shore, and offers the possibility of seal spotting with the ancient, but functional, telescope in the ground floor lounge.



# HÓTEL BÚÐIR LOVE IS IN THE AIR

*The Snæfellsnes Hotel Boasts One of the Most Romantic Settings on the Island*



#### A Superb Northern Lights Site

Another asset of the area is the striking view it offers of the iconic aurora borealis. The absence of light-pollution and strong Northern Lights activity in the area create

unique conditions for observing the gorgeous phenomena. You can order a wake-up call from the hotel staff to ensure that you won't miss out, in case of an unexpected performance from the thrilling spectacle.

#### A Warm Country-Style Getaway

Hótel Búðir is very cosy and comfortable, but the house stylists, Sigga and Agnes, arrange every single item meticulously with motherly care. The result is a country-style haven, filled with warmth and suited to make anyone feel at home. There are sitting areas with fire places on each floor, where travellers can mingle and exchange their stories after an eventful day—or simply kick back and relax. The rooms are comfy and spacious, equipped with private bathrooms and make for perfect love nests for couples celebrating their love in an unforgettable way. The rooms feature an awe-inspiring view of the gorgeous surroundings and deluxe rooms are situated at the corners and hence have two different views of the area, and a slightly larger relaxation area. The popular loft rooms have slightly sloping ceilings which provides a feeling of intimacy and you will feel tucked in like a bird in a nest.

The entire hotel has Wi-Fi and all the rooms are equipped with modern comforts such as TVs, DVD players, phones and clocks.

The house that hosts the hotel is exceptionally well built, with a strong foundation. The original hotel, built in 1948, unfortunately burned down in 1999. It was then rebuilt in 2001, and though the fire was tragic, the new structure has an obvious new feeling to it, a freshness that isn't always found in countryside hotels in Iceland. Due to the popularity of the hotel, there are already plans add a new extra building in the next few years.

#### Memorable Restaurant

The in-house restaurant features the creations of a great Danish chef's who designs playful and original dishes, using only the finest local ingredients from the region. The menu is small but offers something for everyone, and the quality ingredients often take on a

surprising role in the capable hands of the chefs. The hotel manager, Daði Jørgensson, says that the restaurant is one of the hotel's main prides, and that despite the small menu he believes the restaurant would compare well with top restaurants in Reykjavik. Hotel guests love the complimentary breakfast buffet, which offers great variety, including freshly baked breads, homemade marmalades and jams, fine cheeses, and quality ham, fresh fruits and cereals.



#### Shop at Krambúðin

Krambúðin is a charming little shop that stands right beside the hotel, and is the only part of the original building to survive the fire. The shop offers various Icelandic handicrafts made by locals, as well as items from Icelandic nature, such as the samples of the characteristic sand, called Gold-sand, found near the hotel. The sand, which is a popular souvenir, got its name from the rare olivine minerals that are mixed with the light coloured shell sand and cause the beach to shimmer when hit by sunlight. The shop is run by the two Valkyries, Sigga and Agnes, who so tenderly care for the hotel. Hótel Búðir attracts visitors from around the world with its ideal location, unrivalled customer service and romantic surroundings. It's no surprise why so many weddings are held at the hotel.

Love is in the air at Hótel Búðir! -ES/JG

**Hotel Búðir**  
 356 Búðir • Snæfellsbær  
 +354 435 6700  
 budir@budir.is  
 www.budir.is



# WESTFJORDS *Iceland*



#WESTFJORDS

The 'Lonely Planet' guide put Westfjords on its list of the top 10 regions of the world to visit in 2011 and the area won a 'European Destination of Excellence' (EDEN) award. A very sparsely populated region of Iceland, it is home to the Arctic fox, a dizzying variety of birdlife and a nature that is simply breathtaking. With precipitous cliffs that plunge almost

vertically to the deep blue seas below, its multitude of beautiful fjords, its hot springs, pure streams and waterfalls, it's a place for the nature-lover to be awed by its silence and tranquility, pierced only by the birds. The mystical Breiðafjörður bay, with its countless islands is home to all kinds of sea life and tours out into the bay will visit islands covered in birds, with some offering sea fishing.



Skeiðseyri sandbar in Ósarfjörður



Borðeyri Village, Hrótafjörður



Dynjandi Waterfall, Westfjords, Iceland. Dynjandi (also known as Fjallfoss) is a series of waterfalls located in the Westfjords (Vestfirðir), Iceland. The waterfalls have a cumulative height of 100 metres (330 ft)



Kollafjörður



Gjörabót is a bay in Patreksfjörður



The small village of Gjögur

## ÍSAFJÖRÐUR'S PRISTINE WINTER PLAYGROUND

# THE CALL OF THE WILD

### COORDINATES

Tungudalur 66.056547, -23.224723  
Seljalandsdalur 66.066113, -23.214956

In just a few weeks' of November, the last vestiges of autumn give way to winter; Ísafjörður's fall colours disappear under the inevitable snow that blankets the area, thus heralding the start of skiing season here in the capital of the Westfjords. Despite the all-encompassing winter darkness that creeps across the land, the town's folk look forward to this time of year, taking advantage of the well-lit ski areas and enjoying the pristine wilderness that is their backyard. Ísafjörður is, after all, a ski town where every year, 90% of its 3,000 strong population take to the slopes in some way or another, whether it's snowboarding, downhill, cross-country/nordic, backcountry skiing and even participating in good old-fashioned snowball fights.

### Where Elite and Recreational Skiers Rub Elbows

The highly accessible ski area comprises the twin valleys of Tungudalur and Seljalandsdalur with their many facilities that cater to all types of snow sports. Seljalandsdalur provides groomed cross-country/nordic ski trails as well as wide-open terrain for those looking for an off-piste experience. Tungudalur has three lifts and groomed runs for all levels of difficulty, from beginner slopes to the sheer vertical chutes that are highly coveted by the most advanced extreme-sport enthusiasts. Both

areas are within easy reach of comfortable ski lodges where one can warm up with a hot cup of coffee, buy snacks or rent ski equipment.

### Breathtaking Backcountry Skiing

In recent years, the area around Ísafjörður has been showing up on the radar as a fantastic

place for backcountry skiing. The terrain is varied with everything from gently rolling hills to steep, gnarly couloirs—and there is no need to travel long distances from town to enjoy an unforgettable day in the mountains. There's also the option of taking a boat to the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve to ski this dramatic backcountry area. Here you can spend your days in the mountains, and in the evening, return to your lodgings onboard a sailboat or in an old renovated farmhouse where you can enjoy a fine dinner and a good night's sleep.

### Annual Events in Ísafjörður

Every year Ísafjörður hosts many local events based on its rich cultural and skiing heritage. One such event is the popular Easter Ski Week with a varied programme of outdoor activities and local culture, culminating in

the 'Aldrei fór ég' suður rock festival. In early May, Ísafjörður hosts the annual Fossavatn Ski Marathon, attracting locals as well as visitors from around the world. Suitable for participants of all ages and abilities,

the marathon offers a variety of distances including a 50km course. This year, the Fossavatn Ski Marathon celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and is the oldest skiing marathon in Iceland, dating back to 1935.

### Ísafjörður - A Rare Opportunity for Beauty

It's that unvarnished rugged aspect of Ísafjörður that makes it such a compelling destination—a compact little town where everything is practically within arm's reach, with a surreal beauty that defies description, coupled with an unearthly quiet that is not found, let's face it, in just about any other place on earth.

-EMV



 **Ísafjörður Ski Area - Dalirnir tveir**  
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ski@isafjorur.is  
www.dalirnir.is





# NORTH *Iceland*

Summer in the North is characterised by the midnight sun. You can play golf, go seal and whale watching, horse riding, hiking, swimming, fishing, river rafting, bird-watching, camping or simply enjoy the disparate forms of nature. The region wears a different coat in winter, when you can ride horses on the frozen lakes in Mývatn under the Northern Lights or ski the slopes just minutes from Akureyri town centre. Northern Iceland is probably Iceland's most diverse region—in every sphere. Nature varies from the mystical area around Mývatn Lake, a birdwatching paradise, to the awesome horse-shoe canyon of Ásbyrgi, the thunderous waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, Askja's calderas and volcanoes, or islands

like Drangey, to name a few. The region is bursting with vibrant history, just waiting to be enjoyed. Museums are found in almost every town, with fascinating insights into fields such as the seals at Selasetur in Hvammstangi or the Whale Museum in Húsavík to the turf house of Glaumbær farm in Skagafjörður. Then Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltadal valley in Skagafjörður is Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of the first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest town of the north, along with its art galleries and rich culture.



#NORTHICELAND

Mývatn is a shallow eutrophic lake situated in an area of active volcanism in the north of Iceland, not far from Krafla volcano. The lake and its surrounding wetlands have an exceptionally rich fauna of waterbirds, especially ducks. The lake was created by a large basaltic lava eruption 2300 years ago, and the surrounding landscape is dominated by volcanic landforms, including lava pillars and rootless vents (pseudocraters).



Hverfall (also known as Hverfell) is a tephra cone or tuff ring volcano in northern Iceland, to the east of Mývatn, Iceland



Goðafoss is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. It is located in the Bárðardalur district of North-Central Iceland at the beginning of the Sprengisandur highland road. The water of the Skjálfandafljót river falls from a height of 12 metres over a width of 30 metres





## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

*Iceland on Horseback with Pólar Hestar of North Iceland*

One of Iceland's most iconic symbols can be found in its own special breed of horse, known for its friendly nature and its two extra gaits. The hardy and sure-footed Icelandic horse is an excellent introduction to the world of riding, and what better way to experience Iceland than from the back of one of these magnificent creatures that have been part of the Icelandic landscape for over a thousand years.

Now you can get a feel for the real Iceland with Pólar Hestar Tours of North Iceland who offer a range of riding tours that appeal to all levels of ability, from the absolute beginner all the way to the most seasoned rider. The tours can be arranged from 1 to 4 hour period.

Short Duration Tours are perfect for beginners or those with a little riding experience. These reasonably priced tours run from just one hour to two hours up to half-day tours of 4 hours and are also available in winter, weather permitting. This is a wonderful introduction to the Icelandic horse and great fun for both adults and children.



For intermediate riders there are many options to choose from including our popular 'Between the Fjord and the Valley of the Elves Tour'. This 6-day, 5-night tour takes you through lovely landscapes, with breathtaking views, delightful deep green valleys with rushing brooks and along a fascinating scenic coastline.

### Ring Around the Midnight Sun

The fragrance of early spring, bright nights and the awakening nature are characteristics of this tour, which consists of several rides and sightseeing by bus. You will experience the days around the midnight sun visiting the famous

turf houses of Laufás, the whales in Eyjafjörður fjord and the amazing area around the breathtaking Lake Mývatn. A Midnight Ride as a highlight of the week at this special time of year when the sun hardly sets is included.

### Fascinating North Iceland Tour

Take part in this exhilarating 8-day, 7-night tour—a wonderful opportunity to experience the diversity of Iceland's mesmerising nature.

The tour's itinerary includes some of North Iceland's well known waterfalls as well as Europe's most active volcanic area. You can witness the breathtaking Highlands, once the domain of outlaws, elves and trolls, and journey over ancient lava fields in this unforgettable tour that is suitable for more experienced riders.

-ASF/EMV

*Pólar Hestar Tours is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from around the world for over 30 years.*



### Pólar Hestar

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 polarhestar@polarhestar.is  
 www.polarhestar.is



# MÝVATN NATURE BATHS

## EXPERIENCE - RELAX - ENJOY

### The Mývatn Nature Baths

Enjoy a relaxing visit to the Nature Baths. Begin with a relaxing dip in clouds of steam rising up from fissures deep in the earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water, drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres. Mývatn Nature Baths are perfect for those who enjoy close contact with nature and want to relax their body and soul in the warm natural waters, overlooking the scenery of Lake Mývatn and the volcanic crater of Hverfjall.

### The Kaffi Kvika Restaurant

Welcome to Kaffi Kvika or "Magma Café" located at the Mývatn Nature Baths. Here our guests can enjoy light meals, drinks and sweets in a beautiful setting with a great view of the area.

### Opening Hours

High season (June, July, August) 09:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.

Low season (September - May) 12:00 noon - 9:30 p.m.

### Lake Mývatn Area

The region is one of Europe's greatest natural treasures. Shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions and seismic activity down through the ages, the landscape around the 37 square kilometre lake is a spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife and are also home in summer to the swarms of midges from which the region takes its name.

Our staff is happy to help you out with information about things to do or see in the area.

Mývatn Nature Baths / Jarðböðin við Mývatn

Jarðbaðshólar, 660 Mývatn, Iceland

Tel: (+354) 464 4411, Email: [info@naturebaths.com](mailto:info@naturebaths.com)

[www.naturebaths.com](http://www.naturebaths.com)



MÝVATN NATURE BATHS



# EAST *Iceland*

**T**iny, tight-knit communities extend a warm welcome here. A well-developed infrastructure, with regular flights from Reykjavik to Egilsstaðir, the main hub of the area, enable visitors to enjoy the beauty of the region. The ferry from Europe docks at the 19<sup>th</sup> century town of Seyðisfjörður, making the East a good starting point for a holiday. Tours of all types take visitors to Europe’s largest glacier, stark highland mountains and sweet-smelling heathlands and, for fishing and kayaking, to mirror-smooth fjords. The hiking nature-lover can discover countless spectacular routes, with frequent waterfalls and reindeer sightings. The beauty of this area has drawn

artists and designers to the little towns, which have developed their own cultural flavour, many with a strong European—and especially, French or Norwegian—influence. There is a long history of folklore here. Borgarfjörður eystri is known as the capital of the elves. It’s also an area of hiking trails and birdwatching, with puffins being especially plentiful. Brilliantly coloured semi-precious stones are found in the mountains and Petra’s Stone Museum in Stöðvarfjörður holds probably the world’s largest private collection. The numerous hotels, guesthouses and camping areas attest to the rising popularity of the area.



#EASTICELAND



Djúpivogur is a small town and municipality (Djúpavogshreppur) located on a peninsula in eastern Iceland, near the island of Papey and on the fjord Berufjörður.



Hamarsfjörður in the evening sun.



Strýta Farmhouse



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Jökulsá í Lóni on the East coast



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Hvalnes



# SOUTH *Iceland*

**T**he wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be experienced in the region. This region has geological wonders such as Geysir; the waterfalls of Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanos like Hekla, 'the Gateway to Hell', Lakagíggar, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; fantasy sites like Þórsmörk and Jökulsárlón. Here are historical sites like the world's longest-running

parliament at Þingvellir; museums, churches, the Stöng settlement, the Saga centre and villages like Eyrarbakki. Activities abound. Tours take you to all the sites, including the glaciers. Horse riding tours are popular. Try the riverjet, boat trips or kayaking; scuba diving in clear waters, fishing or caving. Independent travellers can try hiking and cycling, camping or caravanning. Winter activities are just as thrilling. Fortunately, there is plenty of accommodation available throughout the region from camping to high-class hotels and restaurants to suit every taste. A developed infrastructure helps you get the most from your trips.



#SOUTHICELAND

Vestra-Horn, a 454 metre-high mountain and an interesting geology site composed of unstratified plutonic rock, mostly gabbro but with some granophyre. East of the mountain is a strange-shaped outcrop called Brunnhorn that stretches out to sea.



Ice Cave in South Iceland



The wreck of a plane at Sólheimasandur



Svínafellsjökull glacier



Twilight over the Glacier Lagoon



Mt. Pumall in Vatnajökull Glacier, Highlands of Iceland

HELLISHÓLAR COTTAGES, GUESTHOUSE AND HOTEL

# A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



Set in one of the most idyllic locations in South Iceland, Hellishólar offers a variety of accommodation for the weary traveller who is looking for a good night's sleep in peaceful surroundings.

The sprawling Hellishólar property is located 17 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótslíð, a picturesque farming district sheltered by three glaciers: Mýrdalsjökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull.

### Cosy Cottages

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólar's 25 popular, fully furnished cottages? Each cottage can sleep from 3 to 6 people and has a small kitchen for making your own meals. If you prefer, you can also have your meals in the on-site restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### So Many Choices!

At Hellishólar there is also a guesthouse and a brand new hotel called 'Hotel Eyjafjallajökull' with 18 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, all with ensuite bathroom.

### A Glorious View of Nature

The views from Hellishólar are, in a word, stunning! In winter when the northern lights are active, one has only to step outside the door and look up. The lack of light pollution



makes Hellishólar an ideal location for Northern Lights viewing.

In summer, the long days bring optimum opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólar—trout fishing on the lake, salmon fishing from the river that runs through the property and enjoying a round of golf on the

18 hole golf course. Hellishólar is the perfect base from which to explore South Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

**Hellishólar ehf**  
 361 Hvolsvöllur  
 +354 487 8360  
 hellisholar@hellisholar.is  
 www.hellisholar.is  
 www.hoteleyjafjallajokull.is

## SUÐUR-VÍK RESTAURANT

Food, Culture, Nature and History Combined

Every visitor has a unique take on what makes a destination interesting; some come for the nature, others for the food, some for the culture and history and others for the people. The stately Suður-Vík restaurant in Vík í Mýrdal combines all of these and more with splendid views over picturesque rock pillars in the ocean, locally made delicacies, historical building and family atmosphere.

The house itself is positioned on a hill with a panoramic view, in one of Vík's oldest houses, built in 1902. The interiors capture the building's history with romantic furniture and decoration, which makes for a very peaceful and warm place to be.

This family-owned restaurant blends past, present and different cultures imaginatively, as the restaurant is based around local materials and traditions with a modern twist with the welcome addition of Thai influences. All ingredients are



locally made—everything from fresh locally caught fish, locally made ice cream and picking their own rhubarb for the traditional Icelandic rhubarb porridge.



The pride of Suður-Vík is their pizza, which they claim is the best in the area—a claim many of their customers support.

Other staples include the always popular steak sandwich, which Ben says has been developed to perfection by the kitchen staff, and of course varied quality Thai dishes to add welcome variety to a small Icelandic town.

Suður-Vík is open from 12:00 noon to 10:00pm, offering lunch and lighter dishes as well as an elegant evening dining experience. -VAG

**Suður-Vík Restaurant**  
 Suðurvíkurvegur 1 • 870 Vík  
 +354 487 1515  
 sudurvik@gmail.com  
 none



## 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 emphasises the use of only quality ingredients from the locality in their cooking. Whether be it a freshly caught salmon you crave, steaks from grass-fed cattle or free range lamb served with the accompaniment of locally grown greens – you can be sure that Halldór's Café will deliver. They also offer a variety of lighter meals such as soup of the

day and light salads, and those with a bit of a sweet-tooth will not be disappointed, as the menu includes home-baked cakes and home-made ice cream from a local farm.

Originally, Halldór's Café was the 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, using local produce, where possible.

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. The café is open all year round. Summer opening hours are from 11:00am to 10:00 or 11:00pm, but winter openings are from 11:00am to 9:00pm. When travelling in the area around the beautiful Vík, be sure to stop at this charming café and get greeted with a welcoming smile and a seductive menu. -JB

**Halldórskaffi**  
 Víkurbraut 28 • 870 Vík  
 +354 847 8844  
 halldorskaffi@gmail.com  
 www.halldorskaffi.is

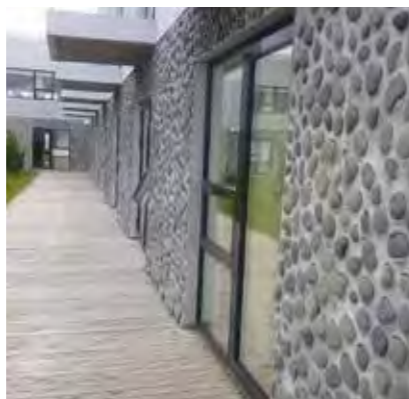
# THE MYSTERIOUS HOTEL LAKI

*Light, Elves and Volcanoes*

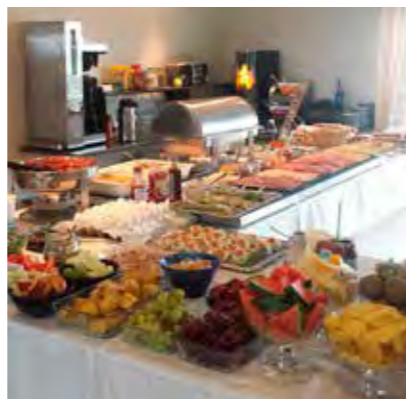
Hotel Laki, located in the countryside in the South of Iceland, offers many possibilities for an unforgettable stay. The hotel has large vertical and panoramic windows which flood the spacious dining area and other areas with natural light. On the horizon, the gargantuan Vatnajökull glacier dominates the landscape, to the guests' delight.

## And There Was Light

The hotel's remote location blissfully eliminates all light pollution from urban areas. This is a fortunate quality as it allows the natural light in the spectacular surroundings to shine undisturbed; the light nights in the summertime as well as the stunning Northern Lights in the wintertime. Hotel Laki recently added a viewing platform where guests can observe the great aurora borealis in a glass dome on the roof of one of the hotel's wings. Can you



imagine enjoying such an amazing view in the comfort of warmth, wrapped in blankets and perhaps sipping on a cup of hot cocoa? Photographers and the more adventurous travellers can step outside onto a large balcony to fully take in the phenomenon. If you are afraid you will sleep in, just ask the hotel staff to wake you up once the Northern



Lights make their grand appearance. Hotel Laki is family run and the owners have occupied the premises, Efri-Vík, since 1968. Initially they were traditional farmers but evolved into the travel business in 1973. They started building Hotel Laki in 2005, right beside their old home, and are continuously making improvements to add



to the guests' comfort. Today, the hotel has 64 rooms in different categories as well as 15 summer cottages. The family is currently in the process of building a house in the style of the Icelandic turf farmhouse, for guests to enjoy.

## Birdhouse and Telescope

For bird lovers' pleasure, a bird house is located next to a nearby lake where plenty of information about the Icelandic birdlife is to be found. There is also a telescope in



the house that provides an opportunity to watch the rich birdlife in the vicinity. Anglers can also buy a fishing licence there to fish the lake.

Only 500 metres from the hotel is a mysterious place which is believed by many to be an elf dwelling. A number of people claim to have seen various hidden people there. Believe what you will, but you can read up on these mystical beings on a vibrantly displayed monument, dedicated to them.

Also close by is a historical site dedicated to the history of volcanic eruptions in Iceland, where visitors can view layers of ash dating back 1,000 years and find an abundance of information on volcanic eruptions.

The renowned natural pearls of Skaftafell National Park, Jökulsárlón, Ingólfshöfði and Laki are also in close proximity of the hotel, so if you are planning to do some hiking during your stay in Iceland, the hotel is sure to suit your needs.

The nearest village is Kirkjubæjarklaustur, which has both recreational and the necessary services, such as a swimming pool, post office, bank, supermarket, healthcare centre and information centre among others.

Hotel Laki is open all year round. -KB



**Hotel Laki**

Efri-Vík • 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustri  
+354 412 4600  
hotellaki@hotellaki.is  
www.hotellaki.is





# A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

*Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant*

Chef Eiríkur Þór Eiríksson was busy pouring drinks when we arrived. The well known song *Vorkvöld í Reykjavík*, (a Spring Evening in Reykjavík) was playing softly in the background. A table of tourists who had spent the day exploring a glacier with a guide, talked animatedly over dinner in the front room. The low slung building with pleasantly creaky wooden floors, once serving as the search and rescue building of Stokkseyri, but is now one of the most popular lobster restaurants in Iceland, with over 45,000 patrons dining there in 2014.

### 15 tons of lobsters can't be wrong

Fjöruborðið's website says that some 15 tons of lobster are used annually to make its famous soup, aka langoustine soup. Hmm...impressive statistics but does it really live up to its reputation? After all, there are many fine restaurants right in the capital, so is it really worth the 45 minute drive over a mountain in sometimes dubious weather conditions? Yes! I am happy to report that the soup was sublime. And just forget the word soup, how pedestrian! Chef Eiríkur informs me that it is, in fact, a classic bisque de langoustine.



Whatever name you go by, it was delicious and I would have happily eaten another bowlful had I not needed to move on to taste everything else that was set before me: lobster tails that were perfect in themselves, homebaked bread with various dipping sauces and if, per chance, you are not partial to sea food, there is a wonderfully tender roasted fillet of lamb served with baby potatoes and red wine sauce that is excellent. A crisp salad made with local produce was

refreshing and nicely complemented the seafood and meat dishes. Right on cue as soon as we had finished the lobster tails, our attentive server brought a warm wet cloth for our, by then, messy hands, which was much appreciated.

From the outside, Fjöruborðið appears deceptively small but in fact, it can seat several hundred all told, something that those having a tête-à-tête in the main building would never guess. Facing the ocean out back, a large permanent marquee can seat another 100 or so guests. All that to say, groups are welcome.

Favoured by tour guides who often bring their clients here as the ultimate finish to a perfect day of sightseeing, the restaurant has received several well known personalities such as Prince Frederik of Denmark, the Rockefellers, Clint Eastwood, Martha Stewart, Bette Midler and Cherie Booth (wife of Tony Blair). -EMV



**Fjöruborðið**  
Eyrarbraut 3a • 825 Stokkseyri  
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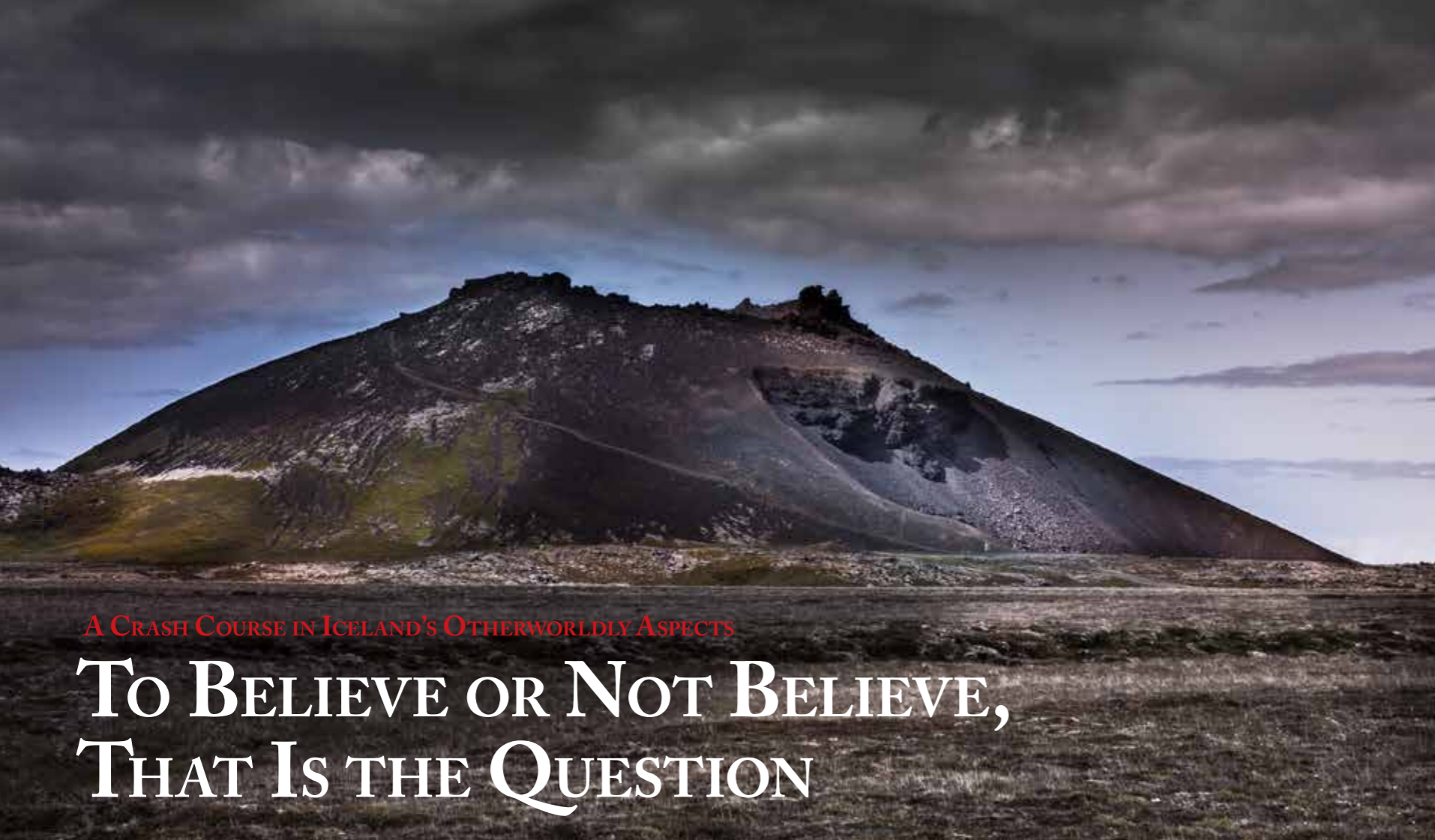


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A CRASH COURSE IN ICELAND'S OTHERWORLDLY ASPECTS

# TO BELIEVE OR NOT BELIEVE, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Many foreigners go through varying degrees of euphoria when coming face to face with the powerful effects of the otherworldly nature that hits them when they first arrive in Iceland. There is an intangible energy that seems to pervade the landscape but is hard to explain if you have never experienced it for yourself. How much you are aware of this energy seems to

depend on your spiritual sensitivity to these sorts of things or lack thereof.

### Culture Shock!

A related phenomenon is that rather disconcerting dilemma of elves, trolls, fairies and nature spirits et al. that get lumped under the umbrella term 'huldafólk' or hidden people. It will be just a matter

of time before that age-old, yet persistent debate about the existence of these 'hidden people' pops up in conversation. Even on a short visit to the country, it is hard to ignore, seeing how almost every tour guide touches on the subject one way or another. And with every second rock or boulder being the likely habitation of elves (possibly with an agenda if you do not respect their property),

coupled with the widespread belief in them among Icelanders, it makes for a very interesting debate.

### For or Against?

However hidden these beings may be to the vast majority of us, there are some who claim to have seen them and accounts of these encounters are scattered throughout

Iceland's written history as far back as the Sagas. And what do we make of the thousands of testimonials gathered over time, even recently, of elf sightings?

On the other hand, there is also a vociferous minority who are firmly in denial about these beings and some prominent Icelanders, such as Iceland's current President, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, vehemently deny their existence. His argument is that these beings are just figments of the imagination of lonely farmers who needed company during the long dark winters of this northerly latitude. Maybe he just has to keep to this 'official' position so he doesn't appear foolish when meeting heads of state of other countries.

Over the years, polls have shown that while only a small portion of the population believe without doubt in the

existence of elves, the overwhelming majority are not prepared to discount them entirely either.

Could it be that Iceland's remote location could well be just the type of place that these 'hidden people' prefer? Out of sight, out of mind, and they can get on with their existence without too much disturbance from inquisitive humans?

### Why Do You Travel?

Which brings us to the question of why are you travelling in the first place. Is it not to learn from other cultures, to try to understand how others think and live?

Personally I think it is much more fun to be in the 'uncommitted to a firm opinion'. A little culture shock is good for you. I say keep an open mind because Iceland is sure to surprise you in more ways than one. -EMV



## THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI

*The House at Eyrarbakki*

Árnessýsla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.

Opening hours: May 1st - September 30th daily 11.00-18.00 or by an agreement  
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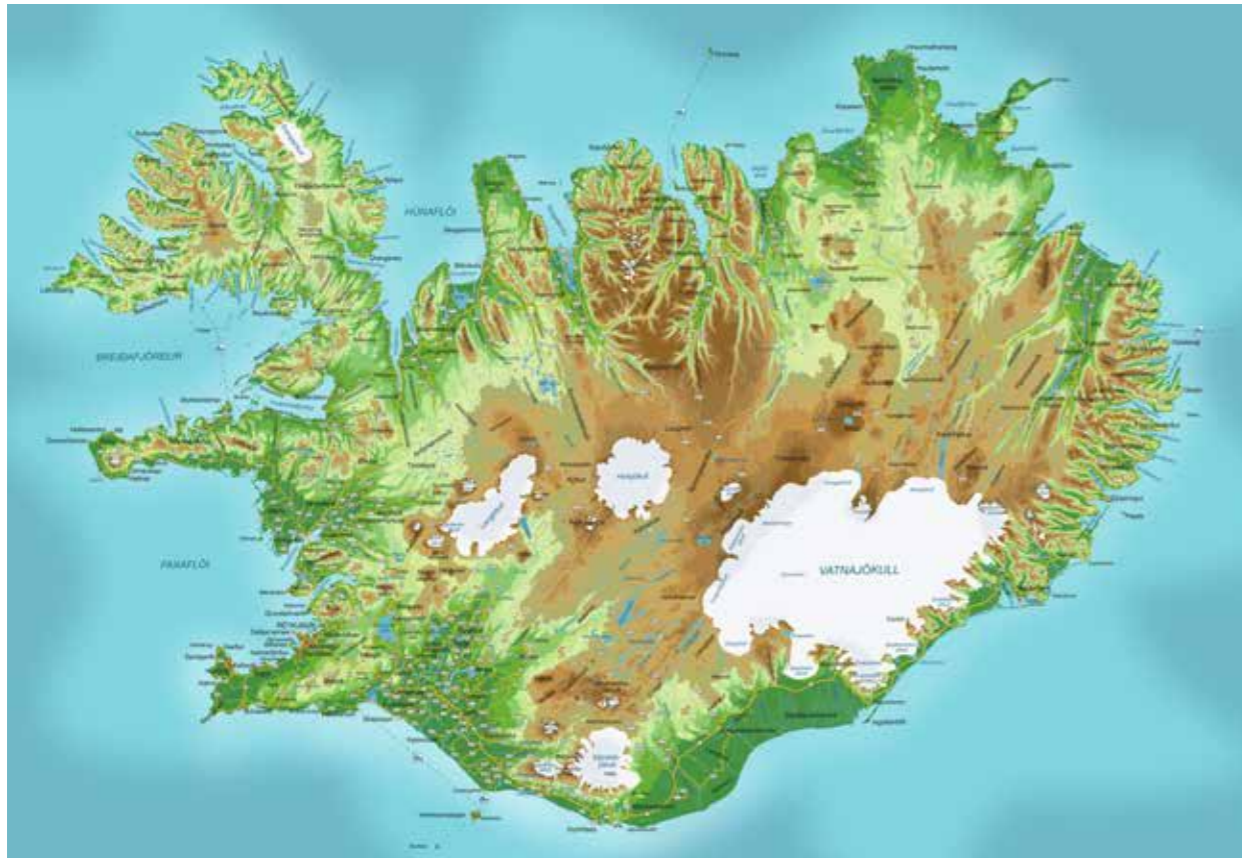
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# THE HIGHLANDS OF *Iceland*

**N**othing in Iceland prepares you for the stark, desolate, raw beauty of the barren upland plateau called the Highlands. An uninhabited area, The Highlands are completely without towns or villages, just endless plains, glacial rivers and lava fields punctuated by ice caps, volcanoes and jagged mountains. The isolation is the reason why people visit and travellers are humbled by the sublime sight of nature in its rawest, barest form. Historically, trails in the highlands were used as summer short cuts between north and south and myths of ghosts and fearsome outlaws spurred travellers along the tracks with all speed. Today, it is probably wiser to worry about the weather, as conditions can be fickle

and snow is not uncommon, even in mid-summer. The solitude is exhilarating, the views are vast and it is immensely tough but equally rewarding to hike or bike these cross-country routes. Any self-driving, cycling or hiking trip must be carefully planned. There are no roads in the area, just tracks and hardly any bridges across the rivers. Of all the various tracks, only two routes actually cross the whole way between north and south: Sprengisandur (F26) and Kjölur (F35). The region is fully accessible only by four wheel drive vehicles. It is also possible to get a taste of this utter isolation in safety on bus tours, where you will discover amazing landscapes, similar to lunar landscapes. Which is the reason why the Apollo astronauts came there to train for moon landings!



#ICELANDSHIGHLANDS



Taken in south-Iceland







The falls plunge 33 feet in a horseshoe-shaped recess, breaking into as many as six distinct segments depending on how much water is present in the artificially reduced river. During periods of heavier discharge the whole ledge may become covered in water, stretching out unbroken to nearly 200 feet in width.



Sprenghisandur.



Laki or Lakagígur (Craters of Laki) is a volcanic fissure in the south highlands of Iceland. Lakagígur is its correct name, as the Laki mountain itself did not erupt, as fissures opened up on each side of it. Lakagígur is part of a volcanic system centered on the Grímsvötn volcano and including the Þórðarhyrna volcano. It lies between the glaciers of Mýrdalsjökull and Vatnajökull, in an area of fissures that run in a southwest to northeast direction.



Enjoying the beautiful scenery in one of the natural hot tubs in the highlands—Hveravellir.

# IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVING IT

Picture hunting in Iceland with the professional photographer Rafn Sig,-

Day tours / Photo and Photo Workshop tours / Winter and Summer tours

The soft light of a sunset and dawn's freshness are part of the magic that the island exerts on hunters of the moment. For photographers, Iceland is among the most magical places in the world.

If you like to live your passion for taking stunning pictures under professional guidance, you should get in touch with 'Rabbi' Rafn Sig,- one of the big names among Iceland's photographers.

## Small groups, big chances

Being a professional tour operator, he knows that the best way to elicit secrets from the country is by travelling in small groups. "You have to be relaxed for landscape shooting," says Rafn, "everyone needs his time for a picture. And, after all, you want to enjoy the moment." He offers tours travelling in a comfortable Super Jeep four-wheel drive Mitsubishi, suitable for any highland and low land trip.

He doesn't conceal the fact that photo hunting is still fun for him, even after 30 years of professional work. When he was a boy, he found places of incredible beauty in the highlands. Their special magic had to be captured and a lifelong passion was born. "It's all about loving it," says Rafn.

## Like-minded travelling companions

This professional photographer has published 8 books about Iceland and his pictures have been published all over the world. He likes to share his passion for travel with like-minded people. He offers customized, all year round photo trips and workshops range from a day to a fortnight long.

When you join him in his adventures, he might have a few more secrets to share.

## Treasure Hunting

The winter, with only a few hours of daylight, is a particular challenge to any photographer.

Long twilights, with sunny gold pouring over the hills, and nights when the sky is full of Northern Lights that appear to be closer than anywhere else, are a real treat and best to be enjoyed in a goooooooood group.



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