

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

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**An Interview with the Russian Ambassador
Sharing Arctic Health
Unique Adventure Opportunities
Where to Stay—What to Eat—What to Do**

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Iceland, standing in the middle of the Atlantic, is a small nation positioned between two different cultures, political systems and world powers.

When the country hosted the famous meeting of the Presidents of the USA and former USSR, the island that was known as 'Europe's Best Kept Secret' was thrust into the limelight.

From that point, Iceland began to play more major roles, becoming the 'go to' place for tourists and adventurers—and becoming known for its volcanic eruptions and its economic crash.

On every front, Iceland was suddenly thrust into the public eye and, as word spread about the people, the nature, the amazing sights and experiences that greeted visitors, it has undergone an amazing transformation.

It has taken its place on the world

stage, bringing to the table fresh ideas, perspectives and an entrepreneurial vision. It is providing forums for discussion, a land of health alternatives, possibilities of tranquil peace and a humbling perspective of life with its dramatic landscapes that just might enable cooler heads to prevail.

One of the challenges that has faced Iceland with the current boom in tourism, is how to maintain the very things that differentiate it from every other country that tourists fly to see.

The country's infrastructure has been developing rapidly, not without its growing pains, but with a desire on the part of the nation not to allow its culture, landscapes and nature to be spoiled.

Iceland is very concerned about the environment and its care. It is a leader in geothermal developments, for example.

Providing for the needs of an expected 1.5 million tourists in a country of just over 300,000 inhabitants is no easy task

but Icelanders are rising to the occasion to meet the needs of tourists from budget back-packers to wealthy celebrities and provide the best experiences of the country throughout the year. All four seasons offer completely different views and challenges—a fact that is encouraging visitors to come at different times of year.

This issue offers a range of topics and views from this unique island in the North.


Einar Th. Thorsteinsson
 MANAGING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER



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Credits

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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 'with' |
| þ | Like 'th' in 'thing' |

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REYKJAVÍK





Anton Vasiliev, Ambassador of Russia to Iceland:
**“RUSSIANS ARE DILIGENTLY
 WORKING ON THE
 ARCTIC ISSUES”**

“I’m happy to be in Iceland and like the Icelandic people. Certainly, there are temporarily problems in relations between Iceland and Russia. I hope, however, that reason will prevail and that we shall succeed in finding solutions to these issues,” says Anton Vasiliev, Russia’s Ambassador to Iceland, when we met him in the ambassador residence in Túngata in Reykjavík. Vasiliev has served as ambassador to the country since April 2014. He knew a lot about Iceland before becoming ambassador. In 2008 Vasiliev had been appointed Ambassador of Russia for Arctic Affairs. “Thus, I also represented Russia in the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. I frequently came to Iceland on official business, got to know and like the country and nation.”

Worked in turbulent times

Anton Vasiliev has a relaxed and friendly demeanour. After a short chat with this just over sixty year-old representative of Russia in Iceland there’s no doubt that here is a highly qualified and experienced man. The Russian authorities have clearly made a careful choice when appointing Vasiliev as Ambassador to Iceland. His resumé is impressive. “I was born in Moscow”, said Vasiliev, adding that he studied at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, specialising in International Economics, graduating in 1976, aged 22. “I also learned Chinese, French and English. Then I went to China, where I worked in the Soviet trade mission in Beijing. This was at the end of the period of the so-called Cultural Revolution in China. I

returned home to Russia and completed my Ph.D. in Economics in 1983, focusing on the Chinese economy. I then returned to China and began a seven-year period as a diplomat of the Soviet Embassy.”

The Russian Ambassador has lived in tumultuous times. He was born only a year after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and lived to adulthood in the Soviet Communist society that most people believed was there to stay. All that would eventually change. “When I came back to Russia after seven years in China, the Soviet Union no longer existed. I returned again to China as the Deputy Head of Mission of the Russian Embassy. My job in China at first was mainly to monitor the Chinese economy. I travelled all over this magnificent country and learned a lot. China is one of the most



Dr. Anton Vasiliev ambassador of Russia in Iceland at his office in the ambassador residency in Reykjavik, Iceland.

interesting civilizations. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know this country. There I witnessed a dramatic change in Chinese society in the wake of the economic reforms that were established in 1979 and marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.”

Disarmament and the Arctic region

Vasiliev said he lived 13 years in China altogether and enjoyed that time very much. “The stay there was an instructive and unique experience.” He moved back to Russia in 1996, where he was assigned a new and radically different task from

that which he had in China and carried with it a great responsibility. “In following decade I worked for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the UN on arms control and disarmament. I was head of the Russian delegation in Geneva, Switzerland, in the implementation commission of the START Treaty. The former Soviet Union agreed with the United States to reduce strategic nuclear weapons capabilities at the end of the Cold War in 1991. This was a very challenging but also rewarding work.” In 2002 – 2007 he embarked on the multilateral arms control diplomacy, representing Russia at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Once again Vasiliev radically changed course in his work when he undertook new project. It happened in 2008, when



In Monaco, November 2008, at the international Arctic Conference with H.E. Albert II, Prince of Monaco, and Russian colleagues



15 May, 2013 Arctic Council ministerial meeting, Kiruna, Sweden

he was appointed Ambassador of Russia on Arctic Affairs. “My experience of dealing with major international partners and multilateral negotiations, both from the years in China and in arms control, proved extremely helpful to me in this area. I really enjoy working on Arctic issues. The natural environment and the people living in this region fascinate me. The conditions are exceptional. It’s a vast area and in many ways the environment is harsh. This calls for cooperation and assistance between nations. People have got to work together. Collaboration among nations within the Arctic Council has already yielded results. Nations have agreed to joint legal obligations relating to the Arctic such as for search and rescue cooperation and in the field of marine pollution. The arctic environment is extremely important.”

A Commendation of Icelanders

In connection with his work as Ambassador of Russia on Arctic Affairs, Vasiliev regularly visited Iceland. “I was in the country during the economic collapse in the autumn of 2008 and witnessed the protests here in the city centre as a result.”

As a Doctor of Economics, it was an unforgettable experience for him to see the nation’s financial system collapse. He looked not only at this through the eyes of a diplomat, but also through the eyes of a professional. It fuelled his interest in Icelandic society. Today he praises the Icelandic nation for how it addressed the huge difficulties involved in the crash. “Through my work as an ambassador, I have watched closely and can testify today the vivid success Iceland has achieved economically. This has been

accomplished in spite of numerous obstacles.”

Vasiliev said he was delighted to be appointed Ambassador to Iceland. He took up his post in April 2014 and has lived in this country ever since. This enabled him to get to know Iceland better and, at the same time made it possible to continue to monitor and work on issues related to the Arctic. “Between the environmental challenges we face due to global warming and the opportunities it offers for use of the Arctic’s resources and space, lies a contradiction. There are obvious commercial benefits, such as opening of maritime transport routes that were closed because of sea ice. Also, we can mention here an easier access to resources such as oil, gas and metals. Arctic nations must responsibly explore and extract resources while, at the same time, taking into account the need to protect the highly sensitive ecosystem of the area. The damage can easily become almost irreparable if we are not careful in all our policies and conservation.” This suggests to Anton Vasiliev the obvious example of Iceland. “Icelanders are familiar with the nature of the damage caused by wind erosion on areas of vegetation, as well as by human intrusion.”

Important factors in Arctic Affairs

This leading Russian expert on the Arctic region also highlights the human factor. He said that the rights of the indigenous peoples of the High North need to be guaranteed and their way of life protected. “This is a tricky tightrope walk that takes into account many factors. Into this are woven many challenges and problems due to changes in environment and technology. There is no doubt that global warming



In Suzhou, China, June 2013

is taking place with the changes in the climate system. We’ve become aware of this now. Never since records began, for example, has as much rain fallen in one day in Moscow as was the case this November. The equivalent of an entire month’s average rainfall fell in one day. Here in Iceland, this winter has so far been very mild. At the same time, we’ve heard news of snowfalls in the Saudi Arabian desert.”

Vasiliev said that the Arctic Council has undertaken an important pioneering study of global warming and other environmental changes in the Arctic – Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). He says that it is evident that it’s due to manmade causes. “Russia recognizes this and, among other things, became a member of the Paris Accord on Climate Control signed in 2016.



Aboard Norwegian Research Ship “Lance” with Ambassador Jon Egill Egilsson, Svalbard, August 2008



In Anadyr, Chukotka, Russia, August 2009



With the Arctic Council Ambassadors aboard the Russian nuclear icebreaker “Yamal”, the Northern Sea Route, August 2011



Tiksi, Republic Saha (Yakutiya), Russia, August 2011



At the international oceans’ conference in Singapore, February 2012



Farewell meeting with the Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials, Whitehorse, Canada, March 2014



Arrival at the North Pole, April 2013

Therefore, we are committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with certain criteria."

The Ambassador also mentioned that security is an important factor that has to be taken into account in the light of these changing circumstances. "Russia has about a ten thousand kilometre-long border along the Arctic Ocean coastline. Previously, the sea ice and difficult climatic conditions in this area provided a natural border protection. Now, as it warms and the ice retreats, the coastal areas became vulnerable to unwanted elements such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. We, in Russia, now need to look for new ways to protect ourselves and our borders in the north. Therefore, we are now systematically working to restore and build up military capability and surveillance in the North. This is just one manifestation of how we must now deal with the new challenges in the light of changing circumstances".

Russians are working diligently

Vasiliev said that nothing in Russian activities in the Arctic region should be surprising. "Since 2008, Russia has followed the strategy formulated by the Security Council and signed by the President relating to Arctic affairs. It includes, among other things, the development of the infrastructure associated with the maritime route north of Russia between the Atlantic and Pacific - the Northern Sea Route. We see it has a great future because it shortens the sailing distance between Western Europe and East Asia by 40 percent. This means great savings. Countries such as China, South Korea, Japan and Singapore are showing keen interest in it. We are not sitting idle. We have adopted a comprehensive plan that aims at managing traffic on this route and ensuring its safety. Search and rescue centres are under construction at regular intervals along the coast, from the port of Murmansk in the west to Anadyr in the east. Russia is also putting up satellites to monitor the safety of the shipping route north of Russia, provide better weather information and more secure communications. It is also mapping the seabed in these areas, training captains and others who will sail there and work, and so on."

The Russians are also constructing three new most advanced nuclear powered ice-breakers in the world. "These ships will be so powerful that they can break through all types of ice regardless of its thickness. We are also constructing new diesel-powered icebreakers. They are very sophisticated and are specifically designed to be capable of operation in shallow coastal waters. We are building a new large port Sabetta in Yamal region for exporting liquefied natural gas by ship. We see great potential in using this route for export of oil and gas to the market from the northern regions of Russia. There are enormous resources in the ground in Siberia, of both gas, oil and metals such as gold, copper and nickel."

Expected economic growth in Russia

At the end of our talk with Anton Vasiliev, we touch on relations between Iceland and Russia. The Soviet Union was one of the first to recognize Iceland as an independent nation. It happened in 1943 when the first envoy from there received permanent residence in this country. The bilateral relationship has always been good in both cultural and business areas.

In recent months, however, a shadow has become evident over trade due to Iceland's participation in the Western nations' sanctions against Russia because of events in Ukraine and Crimea. "Iceland joined sanctions some western nations placed on Russia. We responded with countermeasures. The solution to this issue is in your hands. Of course, we should remove all these absurd barriers to trade. But the Russians can live without these foodstuff products that we no longer import from Western countries."

Vasiliev adds that, in some ways, Russia has even benefitted from sanctions. "This has stimulated innovation in the technology sector and in creative industries in Russia. Our agriculture and domestic food production is flourishing. Russia, however, has certainly endured a recession in its economy. There are various explanations for this besides sanctions, such as a fall in oil prices on the world market. Currently this year there will be a GNP decline between 0.6 and 0.7 percent, but the bottom has already been reached. This year we expect more than a one percent growth. This is happening despite sanctions."

Not good for Iceland

Doctor of economics, Anton Vasiliev, says experience has shown that sanctions harm many of the countries initiating or taking part in them more than Russia itself. "Iceland is probably leading the pack. Marine products made up the bulk of imports of goods from Iceland to Russia and, generally, trade between the two states. Icelandic fish was highly regarded by Russian consumers. You had there a good market with bright future. The public in Russia witnesses that Icelandic fish has disappeared from the stores. I can feel it myself. When I'm home in Moscow I can no longer get the Icelandic fish I really like."

The Ambassador of Russia to Iceland believes that his nation has rarely enjoyed fairness in disputes with states in the West. "Let's look at the reasons given for the sanctions. Russia can refute all of them. First, the Crimea was not incorporated by force into Russia. It was the free will of the Crimean inhabitants, confirmed in a free referendum to join Russia. The entire process was fully consistent with international law. The Kosovo case was much less legitimate. Second, Russia did not shoot down the Malaysian passenger jet, MH17, over Ukraine in the summer of 2014. We have presented abundant proof to this, but it is disregarded. Thirdly, the Russian troops or arms have never been brought to eastern Ukraine. There is not one single piece of evidence to show that the accusations against Russia have a basis in fact. If there were any dependable evidence it would have emerged instantly because the surveillance systems are so advanced today, such as satellites, drones, Open Skies Treaty inspections etc., etc.. All these reasons are allegations and deception. Russia is not a threat to anyone (if you prefer to stay in a real world, of course, not in a world of make-believe built by information wars). This boycott is ludicrous and counterproductive and clearly serves other goals than were announced. But Russia is always open for fair and equal cooperation with anyone who really want it. I believe in further development of friendly relations and cooperation between Russia and Iceland in many areas, and will do my best in this regard," says Anton Vasiliev in closing.

-MAGNUS THOR HAFSTEINSSON



With Jonas Allansson, the Iceland Senior Arctic Official, Camp Barneo, the North Pole area, April 2013



With fellow ambassadors, Russian National Day reception on board of "Kruzenstern", port of Reykjavik, 10 June 2015



As Chair of the Barents-Euroarctic Council senior officials, Moscow, April 2008



With the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan at the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, June 2006



All Arctic Council Ambassadors at the exact point of the North Pole, 10 April 2013



With colleagues and compatriots, Russian National Day Reception on board of "Kruzenstern", port of Reykjavik, 10 June 2015



Making a statement at the UN General Assembly, October 2006



Dr. Anton Vasiliev ambassador of Russia in Iceland speaking with Icelandic Times Journalist Magnus Thor Hafsteinsson at the ambassador residency in Reykjavik, Iceland.

CHEERS! FOR PURE
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Keflavik

DUTY FREE

As tourism to Iceland continues to grow, it has fuelled demand for quality Icelandic products. Happily for travellers, Duty Free Iceland provides a great shop window on almost everything Icelandic from sweet treats to unique spirits to natural skincare products. Duty Free Iceland is tax- and duty-free and conveniently open day and night.

Shopping is available to arriving and departing passengers regardless of origin and destination, and it carries all the common international brands and products, plus a growing range of unique Icelandic products.

Unique Icelandic spirits

There is always a great selection of Icelandic duty-free wines and spirits

in store, featuring local favourites like Brennivín, a clear, unsweetened schnapps that is considered to be Iceland's signature distilled beverage.

Icelandic Mountain Vodka is a year-old product that started its adventure in the Duty Free shop in Keflavik. The gluten free brand, which is made with pure Icelandic water, has grown over the past few months and can now

be found in eight different countries and has received fantastic reviews in the media. Supercall and The Spirit Business named the vodka both 'Top trends to look for in 2017' and 'One of the best newcomers in vodka 2016'. The Icelandic Mountain Vodka is distilled seven times so it feels extra smooth while still standing strong at a 40% alcohol level.

Vor premium gin from Eimverk distillery is made with organic barley and is bursting with the flavours of the Icelandic countryside. Also from the Eimverk Distillery is Flóki, a handcrafted single malt. Its special taste comes from barley grown organically in volcanic soil at the Arctic Circle. Reykjavik Distillery incorporates local Icelandic

ingredients into spirits perfectly. Their rhubarb and juniper berry liqueurs capture the freshness and purity of Icelandic nature and offer a new way to enjoy a distinct and much-loved flavour in a cocktail or on its own. The award winning Reyka and Katla vodkas are available as well as the tasty Birkir schnapps and Bjork liqueur, which are smooth and uniquely





Icelandic. For those interested in shots, Tópas and Opal Vodka shots are not to be missed. And don't forget about the beer—Duty Free carries brands such as Viking, Boli and the award-winning Egils Gull. Duty Free Iceland also carries a large selection of other beers, which have also earned many international awards. A wide range of flavours is on offer, from numerous smaller breweries, as well as larger companies.

Sweet Iceland

Confectionery is a big thing in Iceland, and when it comes to chocolate, the Icelandic brand Noi Sirius is one to look for. The company, established in 1920, is the largest confectionery

manufacturer in Iceland. It produces a tasty line of chocolates encompassing semi-sweet, bitter and milk chocolate in a variety of shapes and sizes, including the company's well-known chocolate gift boxes.

Omnom is another local chocolate maker that is quite special. The company sources premium organic beans from a range of cocoa fields around the world and tailors its chocolate-making process to ensure that each variety of chocolate achieves its full potential. The only additions to the mix are raw cane sugar and, in the milk chocolate range, creamy Icelandic milk. Its design conscious packaging makes this the ideal gift to bring home.

Another name to check out is Hafliði Ragnarsson, one of the world's top 100 chocolatiers and something of a purist in terms of the mighty cocoa bean. He works his magic to combine classic blends with more exotic flavours of pistachio, passion fruit, star anise and even Earl Grey tea.

Freyja and Stefan B Chocolatier are among other popular brands that offer sweets and liquorice that would guarantee you a warm reception back home, if only you could resist temptation during your flight!

Quality Skincare Products

Icelandic herbal oils and cosmetics sit next to international brands, offering health-giving benefits from the

country's mountains, pristine valleys and hot springs. A recent scientific breakthrough in Iceland, based on 10 years of biotechnology research, has resulted in a new concept that is marketed here as BIOEFFECT® skin care (serum and day cream). It nourishes and replenishes skin cells, bringing a youthful glow to even the most stressed or sensitive skin, without harmful chemical compounds.

The scientists at Bioeffect won a Nobel Prize for their work, and their company offers a range of revolutionary biotech skin care products, including the recently introduced EFG Day Serum which rejuvenates the skin and minimizes the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

A number of other companies use local Icelandic ingredients as well.

Sóley Organic, for example, uses hand-picked wild Icelandic herbs in their environmentally-friendly and preservative-free products.

Taramar uses Icelandic seaweed and organic herbs in its pure, safe skincare products.

Villimey specialises in biological salves and ointments made of Icelandic herbs in products such as anti-aging facial oils, lip balms and muscle and joint creams.

The Purity Herbs brand produces natural skin care products including joint relief oils and volcanic body scrubs.

No discrimination

The shops are both duty free and tax free for all passengers regardless of what passport you may hold or which country you are flying to or from. The shops are open day and night, which is a nice touch from the Vikings!

Whether you're starting your holiday, stopping over, or concluding your trip, Duty Free Iceland will give you lasting warm memories of the Land of Fire and Ice.

-JG

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REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM

Multiple exhibits focus on historical and cultural aspects of the capital city

Reykjavík City Museum gives travellers the opportunity to experience the history of Reykjavík in a fun and engaging way. The museum, which comprises five separate sites, aims to preserve Reykjavík's cultural heritage, dating back to the days of the Settlement in the late 9th century. Four of the museums are within convenient walking distance of the centre of downtown Reykjavík, while the Árbær Open Air Museum is only a 15-minute drive from the city centre and the ferry to Viðey Island leaves regularly from the Old Harbour in downtown Reykjavík. —JG

The Settlement Exhibition & Settlement Sagas

The Settlement Exhibition is authentic as it gets as it was built around the actual ruins of a Viking Age longhouse that has been preserved. The exhibition gives guests a look into the life of the first people who called the Reykjavík area their home and the ways in which they adapted to their new life. Meanwhile, the second part of the museum is focused on the Settlement Sagas, and history and literary buffs will not want to miss this. The Settlement Sagas comprise some of the nation's most renowned documents, many of them written in the 12th century but relating events that go back to late 9th century. This is one of only three places in Iceland where you can see ancient Icelandic manuscripts. The exhibition is suitable for all ages and includes an activity centre for children.



Árbær Open Air Museum

The Árbær Open Air Museum is a treasure. The museum, which was founded in 1957, gives visitors a visual sense of Reykjavík's past. The site comprises a village-like collection of more than 20 houses, each of which is a separate exhibition. Visitors learn how Reykjavík developed from a few isolated farms into the capital city of Iceland that today is home to more than 120,000 people. During the summer months, staff members are clad in period costumes that are quite charming and fun. The museum is suitable for all ages and includes a playground and a toy exhibition where children can play freely.



Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Fishing has been the backbone of Iceland since the days of the Settlement. Fish nourish Iceland's inhabitants and are an important export industry. The Reykjavík Maritime Museum, which is located by the old harbour, focuses on exhibitions that show the importance of fish to the nation. Today, Icelanders fish on modern trawlers, but in the old days, fishermen regularly put their lives at risk on primitive boats in order to feed their families. The museum shows the equipment fishermen have used through the ages. However, one of the main attractions at the museum is Óðinn, the Coast Guard ship which took part in all three cod wars with Britain. Guided tours are offered daily at 13:00, 14:00, and 15:00.



Viðey Island

Viðey is a little gem of an island just off the coast of Reykjavík and is accessible by ferry. The island, which is about 1.7 square kilometres (0.7 square miles) in size, hosts unspoiled nature with large stretches of grassy plains and a rich birdlife, the John Lennon Peace Tower—an installation created by Yoko Ono, as well as art by world renowned artist Richard Serra. Viðey is a favourite among birdwatchers as the island is a nesting ground for more than 30 bird species. In the summer, there are daily ferry rides from the old harbour, from Ægisgarður pier by the Harpa concert hall, and Skarfabakki harbour. For the ferry schedule, please visit www.videy.com.



Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Reykjavík is home to some great photographers, past and present. The Reykjavík Museum of Photography has an impressive collection, now comprising about six million photographs. The oldest photos date from around 1860, giving a glimpse of city life decades ago. The museum preserves photographs from professional, as well as amateur photographers, from industrial and commercial photographers, to portrait and press photographers. Reykjavík is a vibrant city with a rich history and contemporary culture. Check out the free exhibitions.



Family Friendly Fun

Reykjavík City Museum is family friendly and all museum sites have something that caters to children. For example, the "Come and play" exhibition at Árbær Open Air Museum has a playground, furnished rooms with everything in child sizes as well as lots of toys to play with. The Settlement Exhibition has a special family corner where kids and parents can have a fun time together. The Reykjavík Maritime Museum offers a fun treasure hunt for kids during their visit to the museum.



Borgarsögusafn Reykjavíkur
Grandagarði 8 • 101 Reykjavík
+354 411 6300
www.reykjavikcitymuseum.is



THE ICELANDIC SECRET TO A HEALTHY LIFE

SagaMedica focuses on natural solutions for health

SagaMedica provides quality natural products from Icelandic medicinal herbs, with a special emphasis on angelica, which grows wild in Iceland. Some research claims that Icelandic herbs are more potent than others due to the short growing season in the summer months under the midnight sun. Today, scientific evidence backs up this claim. Research has proven that the Angelica archangelica plant is, in fact, an effective way to treat health problems such as cold symptoms, an overactive bladder, and frequent urination.

Impressive history

Angelica has a long history in Iceland. The plant was considered an asset to the Vikings who first settled in Iceland, as they knew its value full well. The root, stem, seeds and leaves were all used, both as food and medicine. This is documented in an Icelandic medical book over 150 years old.

SagaMedica has been selling natural dietary supplements made from Angelica since the company was founded by academics from the University of Iceland in the year 2000. Dr. Sigmundur Guðbjarnason, a former



dean of the university, was a pioneer in research into Icelandic medicinal herbs and their health benefits. He laid the foundation for SagaMedica, which has grown steadily through the years, and now offers a range of products that improve the lives of consumers. SagaMedica combines 1100 years of history and scientific research with the pristine Icelandic nature to create innovative health products.

Harvested on Hrísey

Angelica grows wild on the island Hrísey, which is situated in the northern Eyjafjörður fjord. The soil is fertile and pure and the

air is clean. In fact, Hrísey was awarded an organic certification due to its clean, positive environment. The herb is picked by hand on the island and every measure is taken to ensure its purity and the protection of the Icelandic nature. The process takes the natural environment into account from harvesting the herbs to the manufacturing of the final products.

The voice of Iceland

Voxis is a popular SagaMedica product that is produced from the leaves of Angelica. The throat lozenges, which are available in shops in Iceland and in the Duty Free area in Keflavik International Airport, contain antiviral phytochemicals which can help to prevent cold or flu infections. Voxis has been shown to relieve irritating coughs and has a soothing effect on sore throats. The lozenges contain menthol and eucalyptus and have a pleasant, refreshing taste.

SagaMedica's products are available for purchase in Iceland's grocery stores, pharmacies and on the company's website www.sagamedica.com. -JG

SagaMedica
 Krókhálsi 50-110 Reykjavík
 +354 414 3070
info@sagamedica.com
www.sagamedica.com

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THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

From the penises of elves to whales

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum in Reykjavík is, without a doubt, one of a kind. It holds a collection of phallic specimens that belong to various types of mammals. Here in the museum you can see examples of more than 220 penises and penile parts that belong to all the land and sea mammals found in Iceland. It even has on display the penis of an old Icelandic gentleman who died in 2011 at the ripe old age of 95. Furthermore, the museum has between 40–50 specimens from foreign mammals including a giraffe and an elephant.

“The purpose of the museum is showing these specimens,” says the curator, Hjörtur Sigurðsson, “but it’s also a scientific museum. Many professionals, such as biologists and doctors visit the museum to study. The purpose is also to educate and amuse people and, of course, to lift the taboo that has shrouded this subject for so long. It’s just a part of the anatomy; people should be able to discuss these things.”



Hjörtur says that what gets the most attention are the big things, like the penis of a sperm whale that is 1.7 metres long and weighs somewhere between 70–80 kilos. Strangely, the human penis gets a lot of attention too!

For the foreigners, the folklore section is popular. “They find it very funny that we can display penises from elves, trolls

and the Hidden People.” Regarding the Hidden People: some claim they can see the hidden man’s penis; especially the women. -SJ

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum
 Laugavegur 116 - 105 Reykjavík
 +354 561 6663
 phallus@phallus.is
 www.phallus.is

A TASTE OF NEPAL

Nepalese Kitchen has delicious food, a warm atmosphere and friendly service.

Nepalese Kitchen is a cosy restaurant on Reykjavík’s Laugavegur that is truly a feast for the senses. Upon walking inside, guests are greeted by the aroma of delicious spices as well as a welcome from its friendly owner, Deepak Panday. Deepak, who was born in Nepal, has been living in Iceland for about 10 years, and takes great care in creating a warm atmosphere, first class service, a diverse menu and absolutely delicious food. “I have been a chef for 34 years and I enjoy serving quality food and authentic spices for Icelanders and tourists,” says Deepak. This passion for food started when he was a child and led him to work as a chef in many countries including England, India, Nepal, France and the United States, before settling in Iceland.

Inventive Dishes

The dishes, prepared by Deepak and his wife, are perfectly spiced, while the chefs are eager to cater for any dietary restrictions. “We have guests that have a gluten allergy, or a number of other food sensitivities and we are happy to prepare food just how they like it,” says Deepak. “All our dishes are made from scratch for each individual guest.” The menu is so diverse, it could be difficult to choose just one dish! Diners will find chicken, lamb, seafood, and vegetarian choices with sauces ranging from delicate to hearty.

Special Spices

The key to Nepalese food is the spice used. Deepak is very concerned about the spices; not just how they taste but also how they impact the body and soul. “We have spices that can be helpful to diabetics, people that are stressed, and those with some food sensitivities,” says Deepak. Every summer, he travels to India to hand-select the herbs and spices used in the restaurant. “I want to see the plants for myself, to see that they are the best quality,” he says.

Beautiful Space

The restaurant is tastefully decorated with a nod to Nepali culture in the art, linens and even music. It’s clear that the restaurant is a



labour of love and Deepak’s passion for quality food shines through. “It is so important to cook good food for people; it gives them so much. People feel loved when they get good food,” says Deepak. One of his favorite dishes on the menu is a Nepali curry. “The spice mixture is unique and it comes directly from my mother.” Plan to stop by Nepalese Kitchen

during your next stop to Reykjavík for tasty food, a wide selection of beer and wine, and warm service. -JG

Nepalese Kitchen
 Laugavegur 60A 1 - 101 Reykjavík
 +354 517 7795
 info@nepalesekitchen.is
 www.nepalesekitchen.is

THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present since 1990

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.

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 distributed 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 her own collection of steak 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

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.

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*



Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbær
+354 899 6903
palli@knifemaker.is
soffia@knifemaker.is
www.knifemaker.is
www.kitchenknives.is



THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

The Little Christmas Shop that is festive all year round

Anne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Laugavegur, Reykjavík's main shopping street, is what you might call a 'one woman wonder'. Ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

In the Land of Eternal Christmas

Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas obsession and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. She already has



an extensive range, most made exclusively for her by a number of craftsmen, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials such as wool, glass and



clay. In addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Yule Lads and the Christmas Cat.

Anne Helen loves it to tell customers about Icelandic Christmas traditions. Visitors often stop by simply because they've heard of her hospitality and the shop's friendly atmosphere. They rarely leave empty handed. After all, placing an Icelandic Yule Lad on your Christmas tree every year is a great way to remember your visit to Iceland. *-HP*



Little Jólábúðin
Laugavegi 8 • Reykjavík
+354 552 2412
facebook
lindsay@simnet.is



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,

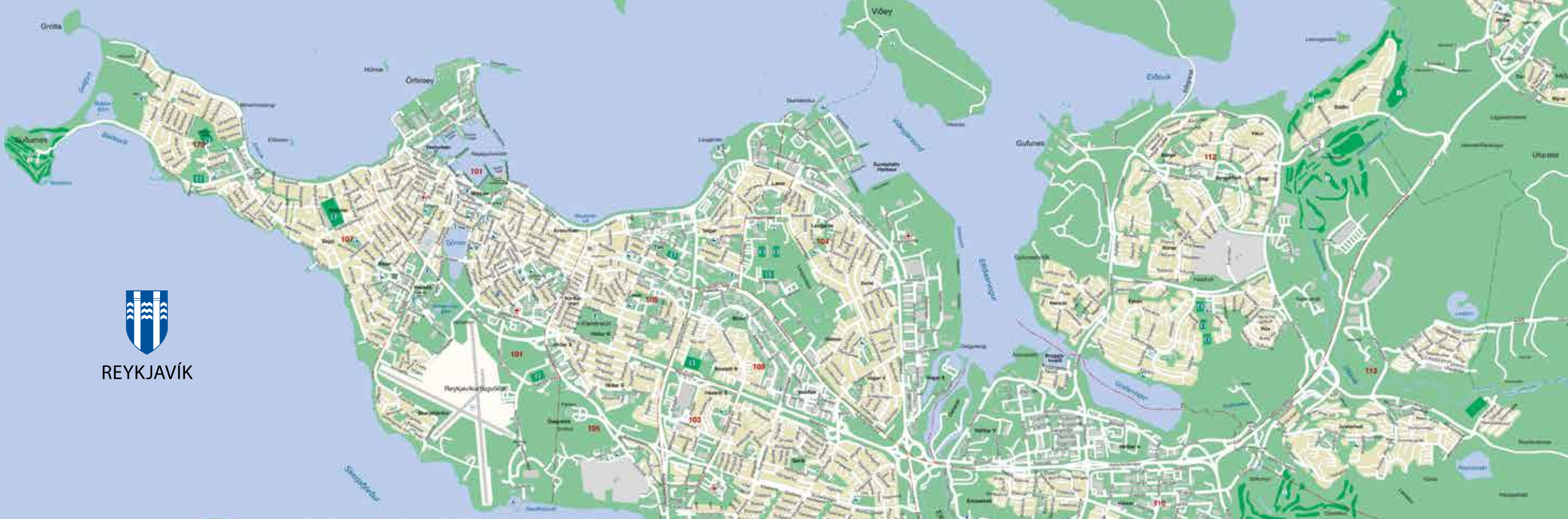
she started her own business. "I've worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside." Her services are available upon request.

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Snorrastofa in Reykholt, at Rammagerðin at the Keflavík International Airport, and directly from Guðrún. More information can be found on Facebook: Arkart-leatherdesign. *-NHH*



Arkart
Síðumúli 1 • 105 Reykjavík
+354 551 5533
arkgunna@simnet.is
www.facebook.com/pages/Arkart-leather-design/



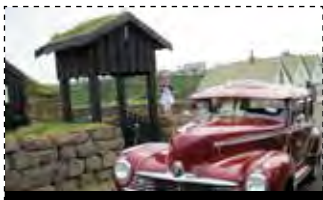


REYKJAVÍK



THE ÁSGRÍMUR JÓNSSON COLLECTION honours one of the pioneers of Icelandic art and the first Icelander to take up painting professionally. On his death in 1958, he bequeathed all his works and his studio home to the Icelandic nation.

Bergstaðastræti 74, Reykjavík
515-9625 • www.listasafn.is
Open Sat-Sun 14-17 (winter)



ÁRBÆR OPEN AIR MUSEUM is a unique museum was founded in 1957 in order to give visitors a tangible sense of Reykjavík's past. It comprises a village-like collection of over twenty 'homes', each a very interesting exhibition in itself.

Kistuhylur, Reykjavík
411-6304 • www.borgarsogusafn.is
Guided tours daily, 13-14



THE SETTLEMENT EXHIBITION allows visitors to experience Viking-Age Reykjavík. Multimedia techniques bring Reykjavík's past to life, providing visitors with insights into how people lived in the Viking Age, and what the environment looked like to the settlers.

Aðalstræti 16, Reykjavík
411-6370 • www.borgarsogusafn.is
Open daily 09-20



REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM is a great example of how it is impossible to truly understand Iceland without understanding its fishing history. The museum's main exhibitions illustrate the development from rowing boats to modern trawlers and the construction of Reykjavik harbour.

Grandagarður 8, Reykjavík
411-6340 • www.borgarsogusafn.is
Open daily 10-17



ICELANDIC FISH & CHIPS is not your run of the mill fish and chip shop! Not only does the restaurant use the freshest fish and ingredients, they serve their fish with delicious skyr-based sauces. This fast-food upgrade is much more nutritious than you'd think!

Tryggvagata 11, Reykjavík
511-1118 • www.fishandchips.is
Open daily 11:30-21



KITCHEN AND WINE is situated inside the stylish 101 hotel downtown. Kitchen and Wine is a luxurious bistro with a relaxed atmosphere. The cuisine is seasonal and focuses on simplicity and finesse. The cocktails are also excellent!

Hverfisgata 10, Reykjavík
580-0103 • www.kitchenandwine.is
Open Mon-Fri 11:30-24



KOPAR is by the old harbour in Reykjavík, emphasizing on adventure and experience in a brasserie setting. Their menu is composed of various locally sourced ingredients from sea and land and aims to give you a taste of Iceland in a single evening.

Geirsgata 3, Reykjavík
519-5050 • www.marrestaurant.is
Open Mon-Fri 11:30-14/18-22:30
Sat 12-14:30, 18-23:30 Sun 18-23:30



MAR is a seafood restaurant by Reykjavík's old harbour. The menu is inspired by South-American and southern-European cuisine and delivers fresh and uplifting dining experience, unique to the harbour area. MAR is an interesting choice for individuals and groups alike.

Geirsgata 9, Reykjavík
512-1525 • www.marrestaurant.is
Open daily 11:30-23



SEABARON known for "the world's greatest lobster soup" has really become a legend. Originally just one man and his grill, today the Seabaron is widely known for amazing food, all from fermented fish to "Moby Dick on a stick!" Make sure to visit, but look out for the ghost in the corner seat.

Geirsgata 4a, Reykjavík
553-1500 • www.saegreifinn.is
Open daily 11:30 - 22



KAFFI GARDURINN is a small cafe offering diverse menu of tasty vegetarian and vegan dishes. The soups are amazing, both glutenfree and vegan, but there is a variety of dishes, such as spinach lasagna, ground nut stew... and make sure to save room for desert!

Hafnarstræti 1-3, Reykjavík
561-1313 • www.uno.is
Open daily 11:30-11:30



JOE & THE JUICE is a coffee-shop/juice bar with great espresso drinks, freshly pressed smoothies and juices, and a variety of sandwiches. Check out the energy shots or get a double shot of coffee without extra charge! Operating from Kef Airport, Laugavegur and other places.

Laugavegur 10, Reykjavík
431-4058 • www.joeandthejuice.is
Open daily 08-21



LE BISTRO takes its cues from the long-established tradition of Paris bistros, serving hearty home-style dishes of casseroles; lamb ragout, boeuf bourguignon and coq au vin. Also there are Fondue and Raclette Feasts, and mouth watering deserts. Breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner...!

Laugavegur 12, Reykjavík
551-5979 • www.lebistro.is
Open daily 09-23



VIDEY ISLAND Unspoiled nature reigns on the island of VIDEY, which has a unique place in Icelandic history. Bird-life abounds on the island, while outstanding works of modern art also make their mark. Make sure to visit Víðeyjarstofa Cafe, for coffee and don't forget to check out the Peace Tower!

Víðey Reykjavík (ferry at the harbor)
511-1904 • www.borgarsogusafn.is
Wintertime opening Sat, Sun



MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY aims to shape a unique vision and to be leading in its field. The museum's exhibitions focus on Icelandic photography, works from Collection and works of foreign photographers. Admission FREE.

Tryggvagata 15, Reykjavík
411-6390 • www.borgarsogusafn.is
Open Mon-Thu 12-19, Fri 12-18,
Sat - Sun 13-17



THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM is a museum with indoor and outdoor exhibitions dedicated to the work of Einar Jónsson, Iceland's first modern sculptor (1874-1954). The museum was built in the early 1900's when Einar Jónsson offered all of his works as a gift to the Icelandic nation.

Hallgrímstorg 3, Reykjavík
551-3797 • www.lej.is
Open Tue-Sun 10-17



REYKJAVÍK CITY LIBRARY is great to access to Wi-Fi or meet the Reykjavík locals. Have a seat and dip into the latest magazine or relax while checking out their great selection of books. Entry is FREE and the museum of photography one floor up!

Tryggvagata 15, Reykjavík
411-6100 • www.borgarbokasafn.is
Open Mon-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-18,
Sat - Sun 13-17

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, Reykjavik'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, with 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 to collect their watches 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



JS Watch co.
 Laugavegur 62 · 101 Reykjavik
 +354 551 4100
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 www.jswatch.com




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The art of soap making is an ancient practice. SOAP VIKING aims to follow the traditional soap formulas of days past to produce high quality Icelandic soaps and bath products.

Brekkustígur 41, 260 Reykjanesbær
 +354 571 7274 & +354 618 7272
 info@soapviking.com
 www.soapviking.com



HALLDORA is a sustainable high-end fashion and footwear label by Icelandic designer Halldóra Eydis Jónsdóttir. The designs are commonly inspired by wild untouched nature. The brand's style is romantic, elegant yet unique and highly fashionable.

Hraunberg, 660 Mývatn
 +354 866 7960
 halldora@halldora.com
 www.halldora.com



CAFÉ LOKI, located in front of Reykjavík's largest church in five min. walking distance from the city centre, is the perfect place to enjoy traditional homemade Icelandic food at reasonable prices.

Lokastígur 28, 101 Reykjavík
 +354 466 2828
 loki@loki.is
 www.loki.is



The food at AALTO BISTRO draws on fresh, local, healthy produce, ingredients which change with the seasons. AALTO has an emphasis on unusual ingredients, flirting with Scandinavian cuisine with a Central-European influence.

Sæmundargata 11, 101 Reykjavík
 +354 551 0200
 aalto@bordstofan.is
 www.aalto.is



Whether you are interested in sailing, hiking, driving, strolling or flying, SEASON TOURS can fulfill your dreams. Specialized guides provide the rest as they inform, entertain and inspire you on your travels.

Ármúli 6, 108 Reykjavík
 +354 863 4592 & +354 820 7746
 info@seasontours.is
 www.seasontours.is



FISH SPA ICELAND is the first spa in Iceland to offer an unusual but increasingly popular type of pedicure, using the lovely Gurra Rufa fish to exfoliate and reinvigorate tired feet.

Hverfisgata 98, 101 Reykjavík
 +354 547 7770 & +354 776 8200
 fishspa@fishspa.is
 www.fishspa.is



BANTHAI has been selected the best Thai restaurant in Iceland by a local newspaper every year since 2009. BanThai offers a wide range of dishes so everyone can find something for their liking.

Laugavegur 130, 105 Reykjavík
 +354 552 2444 & +354 692 0564
 banthai@banthai.is
 www.banthai.is



TIMETOURS is a family owned and operated travel agency and tour operator that offers a variety of ground services and day tours for individuals, couples, families and groups. Specialising in smaller groups and focus on providing exceptional personal service.

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 www.timetours.is



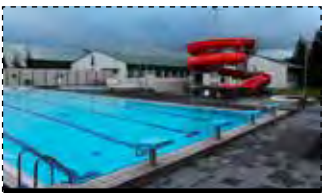
CULIACAN entices your taste buds with the vibrant flavours of Mexican cuisine as you dine there. This restaurant is known for serving delectable Mexican delicacies and refreshing beverages in a casual setting.

Suðurlandsbraut 4A 108 Reykjavík
 +354 533 1033
 culiacan@culiacan.is
 www.culiacan.is



STRACTA CAR RENTAL operated under the Stracta Travel concept. Its subsidiary company is Stracta Hotel at Hella. Stracta Car are located at Asbrú at Keflavik airport and branches are at Hella and Hafnarfjörður.

Bogatröð 4, 235 Reykjanesbær
 +354 531 8080
 info@stractacars.is
 www.stractacars.is



HVOLSVÖLLUR SWIMMINGPOOL is an oasis for the traveller. Energizing hot tubs and a shallow pool for the kids as well as a nice sized swimming pool and a slide for the brave. Also offering a sauna and a fully equipped sports centre.

Vallarbraut, Hvolsvöllur
 +354)488- 4295 • www.sundlaug.is
 Open Mon-Fri 06-20:45,
 Sat, Sun 10-14:45



KIRKJUBÆR is a unique guesthouse in the old fishing village of Stöðvarfjörður. It was converted from an old church. The surroundings are beautiful, with high mountains and various hiking trails.

Fjarðarbraut 37a 755 Stöðvarfjörður
 +354 892 3319, +849 1112 & +847 2966
 kirkjubaergisting@simnet.is
 www.kirkjubaerguesthouse.com



At HÖLMUR TRAVEL SERVICE you can drink in the fresh air and the awesome views in the area, visit our Farm Zoo and enjoy local food at our restaurant/brewery.

Hólmur 781, Höfn í Hornafirði
 +354 478 2063, +354 478 1037 &
 +354 861 5959
 holmur@eldhorn.is
 www.holmurinn.is



ITM - TOURIST INFORMATION Friendly staff will gladly advise you on weather & road conditions and make bookings. Accredited by the Icelandic Tourist Board, and Vakinn Quality and Environmental Standards, it's one of the oldest running information centres in Reykjavík.

Bankastræti 2, downtown Reykjavík
 +354)522 4979 • www.itm.is
 Open daily 09-19, summer 08-21



Situated on Klapparstígur in the heart of the city centre, KAFFIHÚSÍÐ GARDURINN is a small café that offers a delightfully diverse menu of tasty vegetarian and vegan dishes.

Klapparstígur 37, 101 Reykjavík
 +354 561 2345
 gardurinn@islandia.is
 www.heart-garden.is



ICELANDIC KNIVES is owned by a professional knife and gunsmith, widely known for his skills. The Icelandic hunting knife is made by owner Jóhann Vilhjálmsson. The design is really authentic, some even engraved with traditional Icelandic patterns.

Dalbraut 1, 105 Reykjavík
 +354 894 1950 • +354 561 1950
 www.icelandicknives.com
 www.j.vilhjalmsjon@simnet.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 offer 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. This truck, which seats up to 35 passengers, was acquired from NATO, who 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.

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 LED-lit blocks of ice supporting

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

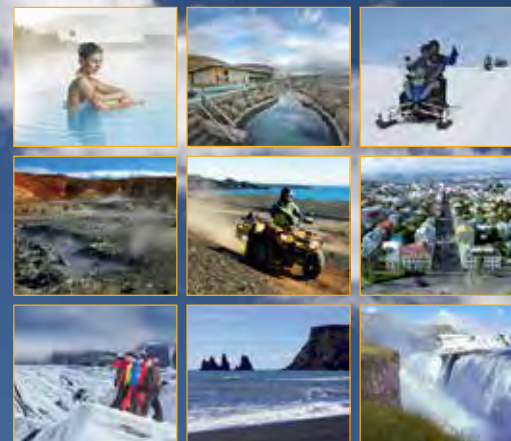
Into the Glacier offers daily departures from Húsafell at 12:30pm and the tour lasts about four hours during the winter. Day tours from Reykjavik to the ice cave are available as well. For those that would like to treat themselves to a meal, you can buy a scrumptious lunch at Hotel Húsafell before you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

Into the Glacier
 Víðarhöfði 1 • 110 Reykjavík
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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—and certainly not in the summer months. 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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ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE HEALTHY FOOD DIRECT FROM THE EARTH

In the old days, people still had knowledge about nature's richness. They used what Wild Nature provided them: picked leaves and herbs, or searched the shores for the ocean's supplies such as seaweed. The shore is a garden; you just have to know where to harvest and what to collect.

A PIONEER

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta, aiming at the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first one to revive the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack. The country is rich in natural resources when it comes to nutriment. His task was to reawaken folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved to be a success, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Spiced Salt (a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe) is an excellent contribution to your cuisine and a perfect gift.

HAND-PICKED AND HEALTHY

The hand-picked Iceland moss is ready for use in tea, bread or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient food. By adding seaweed to your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters.

Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method.

"Wild Nature knows what is best; we pick it for you, and you just have to take it home," says Eyjólfur.



Íslensk hollusta
frá náttúrunnar hendi!

ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

Healthy Food Direct from the Earth



In the old days, people still had knowledge about nature's richness. They used what Mother Earth provided them: picked leaves and herbs, or searched the shores for the ocean's supplies, such as seaweed. The shore is a garden; you just have to know where to harvest and what to collect.

A Pioneer

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta (Icelandic Wholesomeness), promoting the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness, such as cheese and varieties of herbal tea. Nothing is added or changed in the production of the products.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first to revive the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack and adding Iceland

moss, angelica and birch leaves into cheese making. He was also the first to create a bath salt from Icelandic geothermal salt, using seaweed and Mount Hekla pumice. The country is rich in natural resources when it comes to nutriment.

His goal was to reawaken the folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved successful, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Northern Lights Salt gift packages, a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe, are available on board Icelandair's aircraft in their Saga Shop.

Hand-Picked and Healthy

The hand-picked Icelandic moss is ready for use in tea or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient-rich food. By adding seaweed to

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Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method. The light and compact Seven Spices Gift Packet containing tea, salt and seaweed is an excellent contribution to your cuisine.

"Mother Earth knows what is best; we pick it for you, and you just have to take it home," says Eyjólfur. - DT



Íslensk hollusta

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BEST OF ICELAND

Book of tourism, culture and history



TARAMAR is a company at the forefront of natural pure skin care in Iceland. The Reykjavik-based company provides a line of products that use fresh, organic ingredients instead of murky formulas that many “natural” products claim to use. The products are based on many years of scientific research, including elements of food science. Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir, Professor at University of Iceland, founded the company whose core themes are: science, slow cosmetics and purity. TARAMAR offers creams and serums that are designed to reconstruct collagen fibers, restart healthy metabolism and protect the skin cells from aging due to oxidation and environmental factors.

Natural Ingredients

A multitude of products tout “natural” and “organic” ingredients, but that does not always equate to high quality as many companies also use harmful compounds in their products. TARAMAR, however, uses only high quality and pure ingredients including Icelandic seaweed, lava filtered water and local medicinal herbs. The formulas are based on cutting-edge technology and scientific principles. These ingredients, along with naturally derived peptides and enzymes, work to improve the strength and health of the skin. TARAMAR has incorporated these potent ingredients and used their bioactivity to create pure and safe products that work with nature, not against it. Icelandic seaweed and herbal extractions are known to have high antioxidant values and help decrease inflammation and redness, while promoting healthier cells. In these products, TARAMAR encapsulates the bioactive compounds—enzymes and peptides—into liposomal delivery systems, thus ensuring beneficial actions at intercellular levels.

Comprehensive Product Line

TARAMAR offers a day treatment that is a moisturizing and cell activating cream light enough to wear under makeup. It goes on smoothly and has a pleasant, natural smell. You won't find strong, unnatural perfumes in the products. Also available is an anti-aging serum that strengthens the collagen fibers and hydrates skin for a smoother and firmer appearance. Next is a purifying treatment: an algae cleansing oil that helps awaken



Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir

skin cells and firm the skin. Rounding out the product line is TARAMAR's night treatment that stimulates and restores skin cells while users sleep, reducing wrinkles and leaving the skin silky smooth.

All the products are based on innovative research using live cell models to understand how potent bioactives interact within cells and the damage that dirty formulas can cause. The products are so pure that, technically, they could be eaten.

Ancient Methods, Modernised

No other company in Iceland creates skin care products like TARAMAR. “We are modifying ancient techniques,” says Guðrún. “Most companies buy their ingredients and mix them together and 30 minutes later, there's a cream. In contrast, we use slow cosmetic methodology; some of the extracts take 6 months to prepare. Nearly all the ingredients are made from scratch by us or Icelandic organic farmers, starting with seeding in early spring to become powerful extracts one year later. All the procedures are done by hand. When extracts are ready, they are hand pressed and your hands simply glow from the very beneficial power of the medicinal herbs”. The final product is extremely satisfying, with a deep, mature, luxurious feeling of a total harmony of all the compounds.



Unique Packaging

The majority of skin care products are packaged in clear or light bottles that can actually hurt the bioactive properties of the ingredients. Indeed, the powerful bioactives isolated from the seaweeds are

especially fragile and can break down when exposed to light. Clear containers don't offer the necessary protection. Therefore, TARAMAR decided to use black glass bottles to contain the products. While there is science behind

the decision, the bottles are also chic and eye-catching.

Available for Purchase

TARAMAR accepts orders on its website, www.TARAMAR.is, and they have products available at a duty free kiosk in Keflavik International Airport. For travellers visiting Reykjavik, products can be ordered and delivered to their hotel.

TARAMAR is looking at international markets like the United States, Germany and Japan. It is also possible to invest in the company in the form of B shares. For more information, email the company. -JG

GRANDI'S BREWERY & BISTRO

Bryggjan Brugghús is a lovely addition to the trendy neighbourhood.

Bryggjan Brugghús is Iceland's first microbrewery and bistro, situated in the up-and-coming Reykjavik harbor area called Grandi. The brewery produces and serves a variety of beers, carefully selected wines and an exciting menu incorporating fresh, local Icelandic ingredients. Locals and tourists alike love to spend time in Grandi, visiting unique shops, cafés and strolling along the harbour before heading to Bryggjan Brugghús for a freshly-brewed beer and delicious meal.

Beer fresh to the tap

The bar holds 12 beer pumps that pump beer straight out of the brewery and there are always three to five beers that are brewed

on tap. The brew master, Bergur Gunnarsson, is a chemist and brewer educated in Scotland and Hungary. Bryggjan Brugghús brews various styles of beers such as Lager, IPA, Pale Ale, Belgian Duppel, Session IPA and other great beers. Beers from other top selected breweries such as Borg, Mikkeller, Brewdog and To Öl are served.

The Beer Academy

Bryggjan offers an entertaining hour-long seminar that beer lovers will love! The seminar offers a tasting platter of 3 beers, with up to 1.5 litres of their signature lager. But, make sure you come with an appetite. The academy offers 8 slow-cooked chicken wings tossed in Bryggjan's homemade hot sauce, along with blue mussels cooked in beer, fennel, garlic and coriander. Along with the food and beer, guests are treated to a knowledgeable tutor explaining everything about the platters. The Beer Academy takes place, in English, every day

at 17:00, and the minimum age is 20. It's a fun way for travellers to spend the afternoon!

Scrumptious menu

The lunch and dinner menus offer a good variety of local seafood, including lobster, mussels, shrimp and catfish, as well as offering meat and vegan options, soups, salads, steaks and desserts. Some favourite dishes are the bistro's Icelandic lobster feast that includes a whole lobster and tails with chili, garlic, parsley, potatoes and garlic bread, as well as a delicious confit de canard. For vegan customers there are plenty of options like a vegan club sandwich, baked carrots and oven-roasted cauliflower.

Be sure to explore Grandi during your next trip to Reykjavik and live like a local. Bryggjan Brugghús is open everyday for drinks, lunch and dinner, and on Sundays at 20:00, the brewery hosts live jazz music. -JG



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elvar@bryggjanbrugghus.is
www.bryggjanbrugghus.is




A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Bringing French and Icelandic cuisine together in Þrír Frakkar

On a little corner in the little big city in the North is a small haven for the food lover. Behind the beautiful rouge exterior of Þrír Frakkar hjá Úlfari is a romantic dining room, small and intimate, like a French bistro in the Parisian Saint Michel, yet rich in Icelandic heritage through chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson's artful fusion of French

and Icelandic cuisine using primarily fresh Icelandic produce. Specialising in fresh fish and known for his superb skills in creating rich flavours and a tender texture to seafood, Úlfar has earned a reputation as one of Iceland's most skilled chefs, marrying local traditions and fine French cuisine.

Úlfar Eysteinnsson and family bought the restaurant in 1989 and opened in the very last days of the beer prohibition. Úlfar kept the peculiar name, a name with dual reference to a long trench coat and the previous owners two Frenchmen and a Frenchman's wife. Today Úlfar's son Stefán Úlfarsson has taken over running the restaurant.




Þrír Frakkar
Baldursgata 14 · 101 Reykjavík
+354 552 3939
frakkar@islandia.is
www.3frakkar.com



Two Icelandic themed villages



The Viking Village is a unique place. It is the only Viking theme Hotel and restaurant in Iceland. We have step by step been developing our facilities over the last 24 years and will hopefully continue to do so in the future. We offer Hotel accommodation and Viking houses. Good for families and groups.

*"You haven't been in Iceland if you haven't been to us"
Don't miss it!*



The Fisherman's village, our newest accommodation is Hlíð in Álftanes only few minutes drive from the Viking Village. Like a country home by the seaside. Such an idyllic place to visit. The restaurant is open for groups in the evenings. Close to the President's residence.

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THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Association of Iceland sells Icelandic wool and products

Sheep came to Iceland with the Viking settlers and quickly proved their value, not only for their meat but also their wool and skins. Living conditions were very basic and especially tough in the cold and dark winter months. Sheep helped keep the settlers alive.

These Icelandic sheep have two types of fleece—an outer, weather and water repellent layer and a soft, warm fleece close to the skin. Combined, they have provided warm clothing for farmers and seamen, adults, children and babies for centuries. Making sweaters became a tradition in farmhouses, cottages and houses around the country.

From home to market

The Handknitting Association of Iceland was founded in 1977 to help knitters to get their handiwork marketed. A group of women formed the association, establishing standards and guidelines for the production that was—and still is, an important supplement to many family incomes. Shortly thereafter, they opened a shop to sell their members' woollen goods at Skólavörðustígur 19, the main shopping street that descends from Hallgrímskirkja, the cathedral overlooking the city.

Find the real thing

In today's globalised society, it is increasingly difficult to be sure you are getting a genuine article, rather than one made thousands of miles away, with wool that lacks the characteristics



that has made Icelandic wool so special for hundreds of years.

The Handknitting Assn.'s shop only stocks genuine Icelandic wool and clothing made by professional Icelandic knitters, so you can be certain you are getting the true, well-made product. Look for the logo to be sure.

Their motto from the outset has been, 'Buy directly from the people who make them'. Walking into the shop, one cannot help but be amazed at the skill and productivity of these ladies—and some men, too, from all walks of life, living in all parts of the country. Every item has that sense of individual uniqueness that only handmade items carry.

Traditional and modern styles

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago,

the designs took the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours.

Today, there is a wide range of sweaters, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, bags and many other items in sizes to suit everyone from a Viking warrior (or farmer) to a pretty fashion model to a newborn baby.

The store is a centre, not only for selling the finished products, but also for supplying the wool and all the accessories required to make woollen items. If knitting is your hobby, there is a world of warm designs just

waiting for you.

Icelandic wool wears very well and it is not uncommon for people to wear sweaters many years and for them to still look fresh.

Visitors can have their purchases shipped to them and they can also order from the website. That includes the patterns, wool, needles and accessories, not just the clothing.

- ASF



The Handknitting Association of Iceland
 Skólavörðustígur 19 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 552 1890
 handknit@handknit.is
 www.handknit.is

LE BISTRO

A Taste of France in the Heart of Reykjavík

Strolling along downtown Reykjavík's famous Laugavegur shopping street is always a treat. Here you will find a mix of eclectic businesses ranging from souvenir shops to the latest in chic Icelandic designer accessories. For the hungry, there are any number of possible eateries to choose from, but one rather unexpected, yet very welcome restaurant stands out from the crowd—Le Bistro.

A long-standing tradition comes to Iceland

Le Bistro takes its cues from the long-established tradition of Paris bistros that originated in the early 1800s. In France, bistros typically serve hearty home-style dishes in an informal setting and Reykjavík's very own bistro does an excellent job of bringing this timeless tradition to our doorstep. The menu sports many well known 'casseroles' such as lamb ragoût, boeuf bourguignon, and coq au vin—the perfect slow-cooked comfort food for a chilly Icelandic night out. And then there are classic dishes such as soupe à l'oignon, duck confit, and a gorgeous roasted salmon à l'Alsacienne that may have you swooning with delight. Pair your meal with wine by the bottle or by the glass from Le Bistro's impressive imported wine list, or maybe order a diablo menthe or a panaché (beer with lemonade) just for fun—c'est très français.

The Upper Room

Le Bistro offers a Fondue Feast and a Raclette Feast, which are served in a cosy little 'Swiss Chalet' on the 2nd floor. Whether you choose the cheese, meat or chocolate fondue (or all three), these quintessential Swiss dishes are perfect for celebrating special occasions among friends. (Note: You should reserve one day in advance.)

Leave room for dessert

Oven baked camembert with honey and nuts, served with sweet wine, a velvety mousse au chocolat, a 'skyramisú' (tiramisu

made with Icelandic skyr) or a heavenly crème brûlée are just some of the possibilities that will satisfy your sweet tooth and make a great meal truly complete.

Le Brunch et Le Petit Déjeuner

Le Bistro also offers breakfast, every day from 9am to 11.30am and brunch, everyday from 9am to 2pm. You can choose between the Icelandic, French, English or Healthy Brunch versions and be sure to grab a couple of freshly baked croissants or a pain au chocolat from the Le Bistro's on-site bakery to take away.

For a true taste of France, head on over to Le Bistro, located on the corner of Klappartígur and Laugavegur, downtown Reykjavík. -EMV



Le Bistro
 Laugavegur 12 • 101 Reykjavík
 +551 5979
 www.lebistro.is
 lebistro@lebistro.is

KAFFIHÚSIÐ GARÐURINN (Ecstasy's Heart-Garden)



Kaffihúsið Garðurinn is a small café offering diverse menu of tasty vegetarian and vegan dishes. The soups are amazing, both glutenfree and vegan, but there is a variety of dishes, such as spinach lasagna, ground nut stew... and make sure to save room for desert!

The staff all study meditation with noted teacher Sri Chinmoy, the aim is to create a peaceful atmosphere for our customers inspired by his philosophy of service.

Kaffihúsið Garðurinn
(Ecstasy's Heart-Garden)
Klapparstígur 37 101 Reykjavík
+354 561 2345
gardeninn@islandia.is
www.heart-garden.is

SAIL, SEE AND FISH

Reykjavik Sea Adventures specialises in Puffin Watching and Sea Angling tours

Sailing with Reykjavik Sea Adventures from the old harbour in the centre of Reykjavík is a unique opportunity to observe the colourful puffin amongst other beautiful sea birds. While cruising, you will see a lot of different sea birds and enjoy the exquisite view of Reykjavik and its surroundings. Sea angling is a must-do for first timers and experienced fishermen alike. Just breathing in the fresh air, being out in the open ocean and catching your first fish of the day make this an experience you'll never forget.



to the best fishing grounds the bay offers and give you a great insight in this fantastic Icelandic tradition.

The catch is yours to take with you. If you are interested, the staff will even assist you in barbecuing the fish you caught on the way back. This is a popular option for the proud fishermen while learning about the Icelandic ingredients, traditions and having a little fun with the guidance of the crew. They also offer private tours of all sorts.

The fishing grounds in Faxaflói have attracted Icelandic fishermen for centuries and the experienced captain knows the area like the palm of his hand. He will take you

Reykjavik Sea Adventures
Ægisgarði 3, 101 Reykjavík
7755777
info@seaadventures.is
www.seaadventures.is



REYKJAVIK'S OLDEST BAKERY

Bernhöftsbakarí, the source of delicious cakes, pastries and breads

Bernhöftsbakarí is one of Reykjavík's treasures that has served downtown Reykjavík residents and visitors with cakes, breads and pastries since 1834. A family business, it is not only the oldest bakery, but also Iceland's oldest company. The bakery focuses on using quality local ingredients including Skeyr, Icelandic cream and butter.

Bernhöftsbakarí's professional bakers proudly produce traditional Icelandic baked goods in the small artisan bakery, where everything is created by hand. Bernhöftsbakarí has been recognised for its quality products, and won the "Cake of the Year 2011" contest in Iceland. They are known for their delicious, fresh breads with a variety including Italian bread, croissants, rolls and buns.

Bernhöftsbakarí provides cakes and pastries for any event, including fun cakes for children's birthday parties, decorated



with everything from a favourite superhero character, sports club logo, or the child's picture. Their ideas are limitless. Expert bakers



also make cakes for weddings, confirmations, christenings, anniversaries and every type of special occasion. Cakes can be ordered with a minimum of one day's notice. They're the 'go to' place to contact for any special requests and special occasions, not to mention delicious everyday purchases as well.

Bernhöftsbakarí
Bergstaðarstræti 13 · 101 Reykjavík
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www.bernhofsbakar.is



HIKE OVER GLACIERS, VOLCANOES AND MOUNTAINS

Básar in Goðaland provides the accommodation

Básar in Goðaland is a place with mountain huts in the great hiking area of Þórsmörk. It is owned by Útivist, the Icelandic hiking club and is located at the junction of two of Iceland's most famous hiking trails, Fimmvörðuháls and Laugavegur.

The huts can accommodate 80-90 people and are occupied by wardens from

early May until October. In the summer there is running water and water toilets near the huts and on many of the campsites. The huts are heated with oil stoves.

Útivist has published a hiking map with descriptions of paths around Þórsmörk and Goðaland.

If you are looking for a good hiking area, this might be exactly what you

are looking for: a place where you can find glaciers, volcanoes and beautiful landscapes. GPS coordinates: N 63°40.559' W 19°29.014'

Útivist Travel Assn.
Laugavegur 178 · 105 Reykjavík
+354 562 1000
utivist@utivist.is
www.utivist.is/english



SEA IN SUMMER, LAND IN WINTER

Happy Tours reveals the Fishermen's World and Wonders of Reykjanes from Reykjavik's Old Harbour

If you're feeling curious about a fisherman's life, you may want to consider a tour with Happy Tours. They have taken a 40-foot long traditional fishing boat named Saga and turned it into a sight-seeing boat. It was built from oak in Iceland in 1970 and has all the latest safety equipment. Their captain has been sailing for forty years and taking passengers on board since 2009. This original take of using a fisherman's boat for tours makes them a unique company.

Happy tours is a small, Icelandic, family-run company that aims to provide fun, curious and educating experiences for its guests. Their tours leave from the Old Harbour in Reykjavik.

Catch, cook, eat and enjoy

They offer sea angling tours, where your catch may include cod, pollack or haddock,

fish that you later cook and enjoy in the traditional way, with potatoes. Here you will be both fishing and cooking with the locals since the staff is all Icelandic. Happy Tours also offers puffin watching tours. The puffin is well-known and very popular in Iceland, these tours three times a day during puffin season, which is from May 1st until August 23rd. There is a maximum number on each tour of 20 people, which provides personal service for each guest. They also offer whale watching tours and the ticket includes access to the Whales of Iceland exhibition.

A true winter wonderland

In the winter, they also offer bus tours. You can travel with them around Reykjanes Peninsula, which has a lot to offer but is often overlooked by tourists. There you will find hot springs, craters, lava and a landscape that is

often described as moon-like. The tours also include a visit to a fish factory and lighthouses, in line with their fisherman's theme.

Also during wintertime, they offer a three hour-long Northern Lights bus tour, with a maximum of 14 people on each tour. Given the nature of the Northern Lights, the route for each tour is set on a daily basis depending on weather conditions and sighting opportunities. They provide donuts and hot chocolate to warm you up on the tour.

Happy Tours strives to make each of their tours an adventure and leave their customers happy!

-KT

Happy Tours
 Hringbraut 68, 220 Hafnarfjörður
 (+354) 85 33 111
 info@happytours.is
 www.happytours.is

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PURE, SMOOTH, BREATH-TAKING

Reyka Vodka—Serve on Ice, so it remembers its Source

High in the North, far from the pollution of civilization, the arctic rains and snows fall on porous, 4,000 year-old lava fields. The lava does an amazing job of filtering the springs seeping slowly through its layers, resulting in the delicious, crystal-clear, clean water that is Iceland is famous for.

That is a key factor in the distillation of Reyka vodka, but to make it stand head and shoulders above the crowd, the company takes that filtration a step further. In a bottle of 80 proof vodka, there is still 60% water. The purity of that water thus has a great impact on the taste. To produce the very purest water in the world, Reyka filters the distilled water through its own lava filter on the still near the final point of production. Reyka Vodka is filtered through lava rocks that are collected at Grábrók lava fields, the source for Reyka water. Using lava rock filtration isn't only unique, it also gives Reyka extra smooth taste and lets the fine flavour of the vodka shine through.

Distilled at the Top of the World

Bring in the essence of barley, grown in the Scottish glens; malted spirit that is 96% alcohol, blend it with that Icelandic



crystal-pure water to bring it to 70% or 140 proof. Then distill it in small batches in the rarest of stills, the only copper Carter Head still that is used to make vodka, under the watchful and experienced eye of master distiller, Þórður. He heats the



spirit and water to boiling point using the totally green, clean, geothermal energy from the nearby Deildartunguhver hot springs. He then eases the steam pressure to gently separate the heavy elements in the malted barley. After some 20 minutes, he raises the steam pressure again, causing the alcohol to rise and then condense on the copper plates inside the still that give the unique smoothness to the final product.

The result is the purest vodka, without additives—just malted barley and Icelandic water—a winning combination. As he pours the precious liquid from the still, Þórður separates it into three parts, the 'head'—the first 20 litres, which he tests for taste and purity, the centre, which is where the best quality lies, and the 'tail', with the dregs that are discarded.

He blends the sparkling liquid with more pure water to bring it down to a

deliciously palatable 40% or 80 proof, before it is bottled.

Glaciers in a bottle

All over the world, the sight of a glacier invokes impressions of purity. Here in Iceland, we have many of them, including one of the world's largest. We drink the water that comes from these natural wonders.

Since 2005, Reyka has added an extra kick to it, creating an award-winning vodka

in inventive Viking tradition, that reflects the breathtaking smoothness of the glaciers and put it in a bottle for all to enjoy—provided they're adults, of course!

Today you can find Reyka vodka all over the world—with the UK and USA being especially fond of it. So, now you know where it comes from and what makes it so special, there's nothing to prevent you enjoying the smoothest, purest vodka from the Land of Fire and Ice. *-ASF*

WE SPECIALISE IN YOUR ADVENTURE



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Our mission

It is the mission of Iceland 4x4 Car Rental to provide our customers with great cars, exceptional service and rental rates, and a lasting impression of our amazing Icelandic nature.

Our friendly, knowledgeable and professional staff will help educate and inspire our customers to have wonderful travels in our amazing country.



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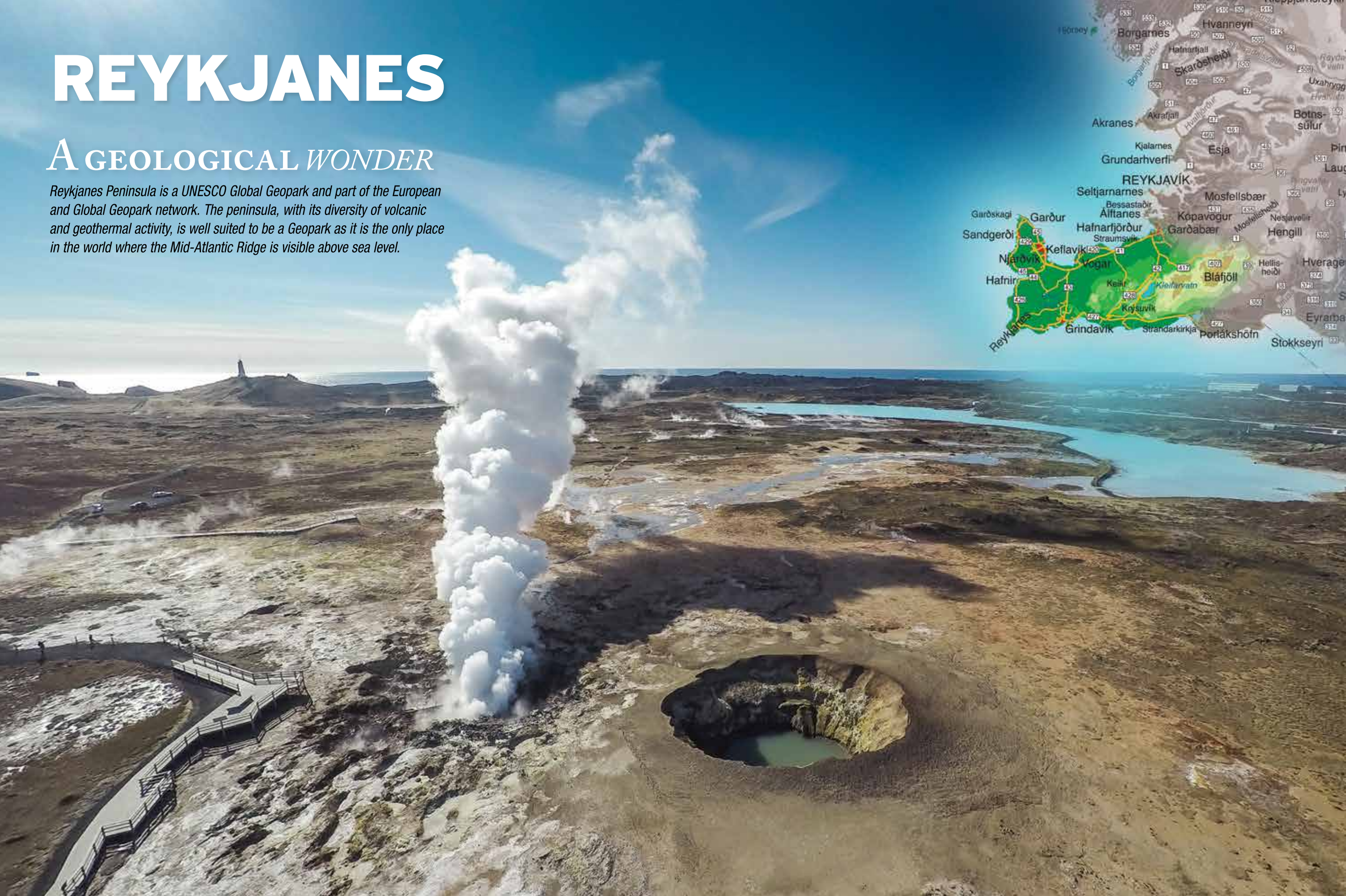
Take an adventurous trip into Mother Nature's back yard on our specially equipped Jeep Grand Cherokee



REYKJANES

A GEOLOGICAL WONDER

Reykjanes Peninsula is a UNESCO Global Geopark and part of the European and Global Geopark network. The peninsula, with its diversity of volcanic and geothermal activity, is well suited to be a Geopark as it is the only place in the world where the Mid-Atlantic Ridge is visible above sea level.



AS FRESH AS IT GETS

The fish practically jump from the sea to the Fish House Bar & Grill

In the fishing town of Grindavík, a dark brown, cabin-style house hosts the Fish House Bar & Grill. In front of the restaurant there are the remains of a whale's skull that washed up on shore many years ago. The logo is a fish skeleton and a colourful plaque is adorned with the poem "Eat fish and live long. Eat fish and love strong".

Their most popular dish is fish and chips. They have gained a reputation on Trip Advisor for having incredibly fresh fish. This makes perfect sense since they are only 100 metres away from the harbour, even offering guided walks there for guests who want to meet the fishermen or look at the fishing boats.

This proximity to the harbour makes it very easy for them to fetch more fresh fish if they need to—as was the case recently, when their pan-fried arctic char became the most ordered dish of the day.

Customers often ask if they offer anything else, aside from fish, and the owner points out that it is also a steakhouse and everyone should remember that steak is indeed on the menu. They also offer a variety of hamburgers, lamb chops and langoustine. One can choose the food by

the mood, as the menu offers a little bit of everything.

There are barrels under the bar, and with the dark brown wood, this could easily be the setting to an American Western film. However, some of the tables are surrounded by aquariums and the fish-skin art on the benches serves as a firm reminder that, indeed, you are in Iceland, a country where fishing and tourism are the primary sectors of the economy.

As is often the case in small towns, this restaurant doubles as a bar, and as a music venue. They have live concerts on Thursdays this summer, which have been well attended by both locals and tourists.

The last musician to play there was Mugison, a popular singer from Ísafjörður, and they have other local legends lined up for Seaman's Sunday, which will be celebrated in style in Grindavík. It is a small venue, so any concert there is an intimate affair, one that musicians often enjoy as much as the guests.

Grindavík is located on the Reykjanes peninsula, close to both Keflavik Airport and the Blue Lagoon so it is easy to include a stop at Fish House Bar & Grill in your schedule either when you land or after you bathe in the Blue Lagoon. Whether you're in the mood for fish & chips, or a dinner date with live music; Fish House Bar & Grill has it all.



Fish House Bar & Grill

Hafnargata 6 • 240 Grindavík
 426-9999
 info@fishhouse.is
 www.fishhouse.is



EXPLORE ICELAND FROM ABOVE

Exploring Iceland by helicopter gives travellers the ultimate sense of freedom. Soaring above the island allows visitors one of the most unique and exciting perspectives of the Icelandic landscape. The company's pilot, Matthias Vogt, is an experienced helicopter pilot and flight instructor who takes passengers for sightseeing trips around the country, in addition to adventure trips and photography outings with nature and travel photographers. "We are focused on personal service," says Matthias. "Most of the tours are private and we love taking travellers to visit exciting places in Iceland."

Diverse Tours

Visitors have many exciting tours to choose from. From Reykjavík, Matthias can take passengers everywhere—from Reykjavík and its surroundings to the famous Golden Circle, the Glacier Lagoon and the South Coast. Other trips from Reykjavík include a tour of the colourful mountains of Landmannalaugar in the Highlands, and the black sand beaches, fjords and craters of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula in the west. From June to September, Volcano Heli offers



tours departing from the northeast, at Möðrudalur, where travellers can survey the Askja Caldera, hot springs and glaciers, volcanoes, waterfalls, Vatnajökull glacier, and Holuhraun lava field, the site of the 2014-15 volcanic eruption.

Fly with Volcano Heli and enjoy the beauty of Iceland from above during your next trip to Iceland. -JG



Volcano Heli

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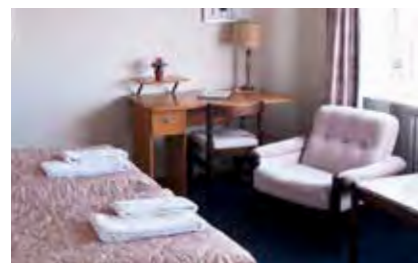
THE PLACE TO STAY IN GRINDAVÍK

Guesthouse Borg offers economical comfort in a friendly house

In most countries, the opportunity to experience life in a fishing town has all but disappeared. Not so in Iceland, where Grindavík is one of the busiest. Situated a few kilometres from the world-famous Blue Lagoon, 20 minutes from Keflavík's International airport and 40 minutes from the capital, the town is packed with history going back as far as the first settlers.

A geological hotspot, the area offers such a wide array of other tours, sights and experiences that one holiday is not enough.

Guesthouse Borg is an ideal place to stay, meet interesting people and enjoy the facilities and fun the town offers. It caters for individuals, couples, families and groups of up to 16 people in a clean, modestly-priced homestay accommodation.



You'll find a full kitchen where you can cook your own meals, a laundry and a computer to go online. Breakfasts are provided on a self-service basis.

Owners Björk and Magnús make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. -ASF

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 Borgarhrauni 2 - 240 Grindavík
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 ghborg@simnet.is





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.

Bryggjan is open from 8am-11pm on weekdays and from 9am-midnight or so if there is a lot of action, on weekends. Bryggjan can also be found on Facebook by the name of "Bryggjan Kaffihús".

-ASF

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 PUBLISHER

GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast

Walk down to Grindavík's harbour and you may see the nets. Then you'll 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 Reykjavík, 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. 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.

WEST *Iceland*



Nature Steeped in History and Beauty

DISCOVER WEST ICELAND'S *RICH CULTURE AND NATURE*

There's much more to West Iceland than the spectacular Snæfellsjökull, made famous by Jules Verne, gleaming white in the sunshine. The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with gushing geothermal activity.

But West Iceland is more than magnificent nature. 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.

For the outdoor enthusiasts, there is enough to keep them busy all summer long. Horse riding tours are popular, as are hiking, fishing and golf. At the end of an active day, there are plenty of swimming pools and hot pots to relax in. Accommodation covers the complete range from sleeping bag to hotel.

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 tours offering sea fishing.

THE MYSTICAL PENINSULA

Snæfellsnes Excursions reveals the mysteries and beauty of Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Snæfellsjökull glacier is an inspiring sight, especially at sunset, when the sky turns pink and purple as a crimson globe disappears slowly behind this majestic mountain. Known in literary circles as the starting point in Jules Verne's story, 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth', it also gained a reputation as the planned meeting point for aliens and humans in the nineties. Locally, it is considered a magical place that radiates immense energy.

Snæfellsjökull is the crown jewel of Snæfellsnes peninsula, which offers many more inspiring gems and incredible landscapes. In the quaint village of Grundarfjörður, one of those tiny fishing villages with colourful houses and a population of less than 900 people, you will find the headquarters of Snæfellsnes Excursions. Their guides are well versed in

the local folklore to give you a taste of the local mentality and culture.

When you experience the force of nature as strongly as on the peninsula, it is easy to understand why people believe in elves. Once you see hills that are considered homes to hidden people and rock formations called trolls, and hear the stories behind each, you may wonder what you yourself believe. Founded in a deep respect for nature, this folklore is important to the local community. The diamond circle of the Snæfellsnes tour introduces the peninsula's history and its mystical components through stunning landscapes. This is a full-day tour, starting at the Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavík at 8:30. You can also join the tour at the Borgarnes N1 petrol station at 10:00—or for those who are already on the peninsula, pick-up can be at Stykkishólmur at 11:00.

On Snæfellsnes, you will find numerous mountains. Kirkjufell is a favourite amongst photographers since it is a bit too pointy, and looks like it is leaning over slightly to one side. Another bonus is that it can easily be framed with a nearby waterfall for a picture that will gain dozens of likes online. Geology enthusiasts may enjoy the Berserk lava field, which is between 3,600 and 4,000 years old and filled with mysterious sculptures.

Snæfellsnes Excursions refer to Snæfellsnes peninsula as the best kept secret in Iceland, and it is true that most tourists who visit Iceland focus on other areas despite the numerous attractions that the peninsula has to offer. Most visitors only make it there on their second or third visit to Iceland, allowing it to remain a hidden treasure.



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Everything VOLCANIC

Snæfellsnes is considered the jewel of the west coast, in part, because the region has a taste of everything Icelandic. If you're looking for mountains, they're there. If you want to attempt a glacier walk, Snæfellsnesjökull awaits. If you're interested in volcanoes, Eldfjallasafn Volcano Museum in Stykkishólmur is the place to visit. The museum showcases works of art, old and new, which depict volcanic eruptions, as well as artefacts, and volcanic rocks. The museum focuses on volcanoes around the world.

Volcanic hot spot

Iceland has a high concentration of active volcanoes due to its location on the divergent tectonic plate boundary



of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and also because it sits over a geological hot spot. The island has 30 active volcanic systems, of which 13 have erupted since the settlement of Iceland in 874 AD. The most recent eruptions occurred in 2014 at Holuhraun near the Bárðarbunga system and the eruption under



Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 that produced an enormous ash cloud.

Riveting museum

Diverse aspects of volcanoes are presented at the Volcano Museum, from the science, geology and their environmental effects to how they appear in art and literature. Talks



are given daily in the museum in English and Icelandic about volcanoes and their effects, as well as information on geology for people with little or no previous knowledge of volcanoes. For visitors who would like an in-depth tour of the geology behind volcanoes, the museum offers geology excursions that visit a number of dramatic locations along the Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Passionate curator

The world-renowned volcanologist Haraldur Sigurðsson created the Volcano Museum to share the wealth of knowledge he has accrued. Haraldur was born in Stykkishólmur in 1939, completed a BSc degree at Queens University in Belfast in 1965, and received his PhD from Durham University in England



in 1970. He worked at the University of the West Indies from 1970, conducting research on Caribbean volcanoes. He served as professor of volcanology at the University of Rhode Island for 40 years. His research has been principally in volcanology, both on land and on the ocean floor. He has worked in Indonesia, Italy, West Indies, USA, West Africa, Greece, South and Central America and elsewhere, but Iceland remains firmly his home where the Volcano Museum is close to his heart. -JG



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FRESH FOOD IN A HARBOUR TOWN

Just a stone's throw from Reykjavík, there's a lot to see and do in Akranes

West Iceland is known for its hot springs, rivers, black sand beaches, quiet fishing towns, and a glacier, accessible on foot. Just 40 minutes outside Reykjavík, a trip to the west is ideal for those with limited time who want to enjoy some of the countryside.

Travellers who want to visit an authentic, small Icelandic fishing town should spend some time in Akranes. With just 6,900 residents, Akranes is charming, tranquil, and yet has a lot of outdoor activities and a great campsite. After a day, Galito Restaurant is the ideal place to sample fresh, local food, in a warm and cosy atmosphere.

Galito Restaurant

Galito is a favourite among locals and travellers alike. The 13-year old family business focuses on fresh fish, homemade sauces and local ingredients in its inventive, tasty dishes. The chefs buy fresh fish daily and source local, seasonal vegetables whenever possible. Guests can choose from

the restaurant's fine dining menu options such as tender lamb, beef tenderloin, or fresh Icelandic fish such as salmon, catfish and pan-fried cod. Galito also offer a good bistro menu which includes salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza, along with a good variety of starters and desserts and several healthy dishes such as Naan sandwiches and Jamaican jerk chicken.

In May, Galito begins offering sushi made from fresh salmon, shrimp and tuna, an exciting first for the restaurant. The same owners have operated the restaurant since it opened in 2003 and they are proud to be the top choice among locals.

Outdoor Activities

Akranes really comes alive during the summer. Locals love to spend as much time outside as possible. Visitors can enjoy one of the town's two swimming pools, tee off at the Garðavöllur 18-hole golf course, stroll along the golden sand beach, or rent bicycles to explore the

charming town. Hiking Mount Akrafjall is an easy climb with a spectacular view from the top, especially on clear days when you can see Snæfellsjökull. The mountain can be reached by the road no. 51 and is 11 kilometres east from the town.

Akranes Lighthouse

Akranesvíti, the Akranes Lighthouse, is delightful to visit any time of year. Away from bright lights, tourists and town folk catch a display of the Northern Lights dancing in the sky in winter. In the summer, you can see locals picnicking outside the lighthouse, and visitors can climb to the top during opening hours. Built in 1947, the lighthouse has been used to host concerts and art exhibitions in recent years. -JG



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 www.galito.is





TOKENS OF ICELAND: HANDCRAFTED JEWELLERY

Oddný Braga designs timeless pendants inspired by Iceland's nature

Tokens of Iceland is a handmade jewellery line that evokes four distinct Icelandic features—magma, glaciers, auroras, and hot springs. Created and designed by Oddný Braga, Tokens of Iceland is a dynamic brand that is the perfect souvenir from an idyllic Icelandic holiday.



Oddný Braga

Each necklace, with its own unique stone, is handcrafted in the West Iceland town of Borgarnes. The jewellery, which is made with natural mineral pearls wrapped in Sterling Silver, represent the geology and uniqueness of Iceland. The Magma below the ground, the Glaciers shaping the land, the Aurora Borealis lighting up the sky and the Hot Springs boiling below the very rocks we walk upon.

Molten Magma

Iceland is a volcanic island constantly in flux, with magma breaking through fissures and periodic eruptions that reshape the rocky landscape. Iceland's land is made up of igneous rock, most of which is basalt, which forms from cooling magma. Most of Iceland's volcanoes are fissures, like the 2014 Holuhraun eruption, where lava pours out of the cracks

in the earth's crust. Holuhraun produced fountains of lava shooting out of the earth. Oddný created the Magma pendant to reflect the fire-like intensity of the eruptions and the cooling magma left behind.

Gorgeous Glaciers

Like the air, Iceland's water is perfectly pure and that could, in part, be credited to the island nation's vast glaciers. Ice covers about 11% of the country, mostly in the form of Iceland's largest glaciers, Vatnajökull, Hofsjökull, Langjökull and Mýrdalsjökull. Travellers love to explore the icy expanses by hiking, snowmobiling and even visiting ice caves. The Glacier pendant has a pure, crystal clear feeling that reminds us of Iceland's gorgeous glaciers.

Haunting Aurora Borealis

The biggest winter attraction in Iceland is the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). People travel from around the world to catch a glimpse of the green, white, blue and red lights dancing in the night sky. Tokens of Iceland offer a striking green

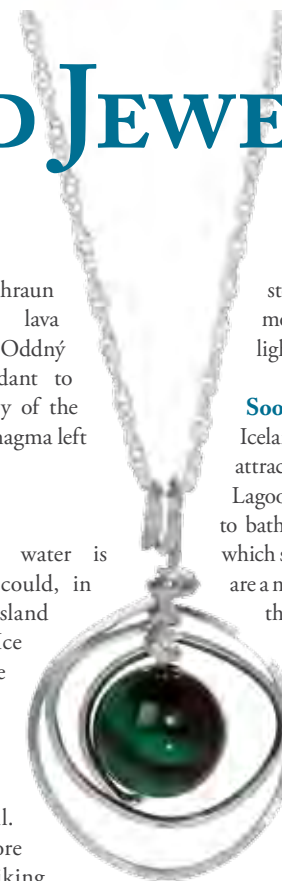
stone pendant that represents the movement of the dancing green lights.

Soothing Hot Springs

Iceland's waters also serve as tourist attractions. The man-made Blue Lagoon near Grindavík allows visitors to bathe in geothermally heated water, which soothes and heals the skin. There are a number of hot springs throughout the country that locals and tourists enjoy. Tokens of Iceland's blue Hot Springs pendant captures the striking blue colour of the Blue Lagoon. Tokens of Iceland pieces can be purchased at Kristý Borgarnesi and are also available online at:

www.tokensoficeiland.is

-JG





Tokens of Iceland
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 +354 437 2001
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 www.tokensoficeiland.is



STÓRI KAMBUR

Emphasising high standards of personal service, the Stóri Kambur horse rental is a family owned business offering short trips for small groups.

Known for their welcoming and friendly demeanour, the guides at Stóri Kambur make visitors feel both secure and comfortable, whether they are accomplished riders, ready to gallop at full speed on the beach surrounded by the magnificent nature, or simply first time riders, children and adults alike. If you are looking to experience the full range of the 5 gaits of an Icelandic horse with tremendous views of a glacier, waterfall, beach, and lush green meadows, this is your best bet.

Stóri Kambur also offers cosy studio apartment on the ground floor of the house at Stóri Kambur. The accommodation combines a living room, bedroom and kitchenette in one living space in addition to a bathroom with a shower. The accommodation is suitable for 2-4 people. Beds are made up for two guests, but guest beds can easily be added. The accommodation is self-catering. The view is amazing and the sense of tranquillity is otherworldly.

Groups of up to ten people are perfect and opening hours are from 1 June – 15 September.



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A PASSION FOR ICELAND

Iceland Guided Tours



There was a time when I thought independent travel was the only way to travel. Organised tours are for sissies, I thought. Guidebook in hand, I would do it my way. After a tour with Iceland Guided Tours I had to change my tune quite drastically as I came to the realisation that even the best guidebooks to Iceland can only scratch the surface of a country that has been quietly churning out more documented history, primarily in the form of Sagas for over 1,000 years.

Storytellers Par Excellence

Like all of Iceland Guided Tours' guides, Helgi Davidsson knows Icelandic history and those Sagas well and is full of stories and anecdotes that bring his tours to life. "Iceland has a particularly rich history that has been well documented since at least 930 when the Settlement Period began. Being able to draw from this wealth of information is what sets us apart from many others and in this way our tours really come alive", Helgi explains.

A magical mystical tour

One of Iceland Guided Tours newest tours is a day trip to Snæfellsnes National Park in West



Iceland. The tour takes you right around this mystical peninsula with its very own glacier-capped active volcano, Snæfellsjökull. Several of the most well known sites on the peninsula also happen to be quite unique to the island. Take Arnastapi for instance; a popular spot on the peninsula's south coast where lava from a long ago eruption came oozing its way right down to the edge of the sea, creating three unusual circular formations known as 'blow-holes'. Here, on windy days (read: almost daily), waves crash spectacularly inside them, making for a very impressive sight.

Snæfellsnes is also home to some of Iceland's most extraordinary citizens; a 17th century serial killer, a well-travelled Viking woman who married Leif Eriksson's younger brother, and a half-man, half-troll, Bárður Snæfellsás, who is thought to be the guardian

spirit of the peninsula. These are just some of the intriguing personalities, found only on Snæfellsnes Peninsula, whom Iceland Guided Tours will fill you in on.

Small groups and personal service

With a fleet of modern minibuses that take no more than 18 passengers at a time, Iceland Guided Tours specialises in small groups and personalised service at very reasonable prices. And with one of Iceland Guided Tours ultra-knowledgeable guides at your service, you may just want to leave your guide books at home!

-EMV



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DELVING INTO HISTORY

The Settlement Center in Borgarnes Takes You on a Trip Through Time

Some 1100 years ago, Iceland was a place covered with impenetrable forests and dangerous bogs, and it took groups of bold men to cross the rough North Atlantic sea, to discover the remote island and determine to settle there in order to start a new life. They were the first to name rivers, mountains and places that are world famous today, and many farms are still able to trace their history back to the days of the Settlement. As the most important source of Iceland's history, the Sagas are a collection of exciting stories built around these first settlers. Understanding Iceland completely means paying tribute to their achievements, which made the country what it is today.

A Warehouse of Exhibitions

In 2006 an Icelandic couple, actor Kjartan Ragnarsson and news reporter Sigríður Margrét Guðmundsdóttir, decided to dedicate a project to the story of the Settlement. They found a charming old warehouse in Borgarnes in West Iceland and started building up



two exhibitions on the brave pioneers who followed their curiosity into the unknown.

Provided with an audio guide available in 15 languages, visitors find themselves in an elaborate labyrinth that displays history in a really exciting way. Step onto a moving boat and get the feeling of how it must have been to cross the ocean in an open boat! Listen to stories, while figures behind the glass silently watch over you. On the lower floor the

exhibition of Saga hero and settler's son, Egill Skallagrímsson, takes you right into the story, with Egill's spirit at your steps.

Transformed through Art

Visual artists from Iceland and abroad contributed their work to both exhibitions, transforming it into a unique experience. Each audio tour takes 30 minutes, leaving the visitor with the deep desire to learn more. The Settlement Center's shop serves as a treasure chest of books on Saga literature, as well as Viking-themed handicrafts and woolen items created by local artists. Take your time to complete your visit with a dinner in the cosy restaurant that catches the atmosphere of the house perfectly and boasts a range of sophisticated Icelandic food at reasonable prices.

-DT/ASF



The Settlement Center

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landnam@landnam.is

www.landnam.is



VIKING BEER FOR THE WORLD

Brugghús Steðja brews beer for every occasion

Bring together a Viking farmer, a German brewer, pure Icelandic spring water and the innovation that Vikings are famous for and you have an award-winning phenomenon: a range of unique beers from one of Iceland's youngest breweries.

Based in West Iceland, not far from the town of Borgarnes, the Brugghús Steðja brewery produces a whole range of beers, some of which are designed for specific seasons. They are not bound by traditional recipes but have come up with highly unusual creations that have to be tasted and savoured.

Take, for instance, the Easter beer that counts cocoa and Icelandic seaweed as ingredients; Summer beer that uses New Zealand's citrus hops; Strawberry beer that is made with pure strawberries; October beer, a bock style of beer made with pumpkin seeds from Austria or the Christmas beer and Icelandic Northern Lights beer—very dark, malted beers with licorice, fitting for the dark nights of winter.

Another seasonal beer, with its own unique flavour, is the Hvalur 2, specially



brewed for the Thorri season in February. Pagan Vikings celebrated during these dark days with a festival honouring Thor, the mighty god of thunder. It's a festival that has been passed down through history to the present day. Icelanders eat ram's

testicles, soured whale fat, fermented shark and other 'delicacies' during this month at parties held throughout the country.

The Hvalur 2 beer is brewed with similar ingredients to provide a unique taste for this equally unique festival. The company takes fresh testicles from a fin whale, smokes them in the traditional Icelandic way, using dried sheep dung, with one testicle in each brew. This gives the beer its own special flavour—as well as a slightly meaty taste.

So unusual is this beer that the company has received orders from all parts of the world for it. Some believe its ingredients are like a natural viagra, producing positive effects on an individual's sex drive and potency. If proven true, Iceland will have to embark on a rapid fin whale breeding programme! Judging from the demand for the beer, they had better start soon. Smart entrepreneurs are advised to contact the company right away to ensure their supply.

As any connoisseur of beer knows, the whole experience is important. The bottle and the label set the stage for the climax. The labels are designed by an award-winning designer. The label for Hvalur 2, for instance, is in the shape of a whale and, on the back is a poem from the Hávamál, one of the ancient Viking poems.

These tasty, unique beers can be found at the Icelandic 'Vinbúðin' or wine shop and at selected bars in Iceland. The company also ships worldwide to individuals, companies, hotels and restaurants. Nothing creates interest more than an Icelandic beer in the heart of China.

-ASF



Steðji Brewery

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stedji@stedji.com

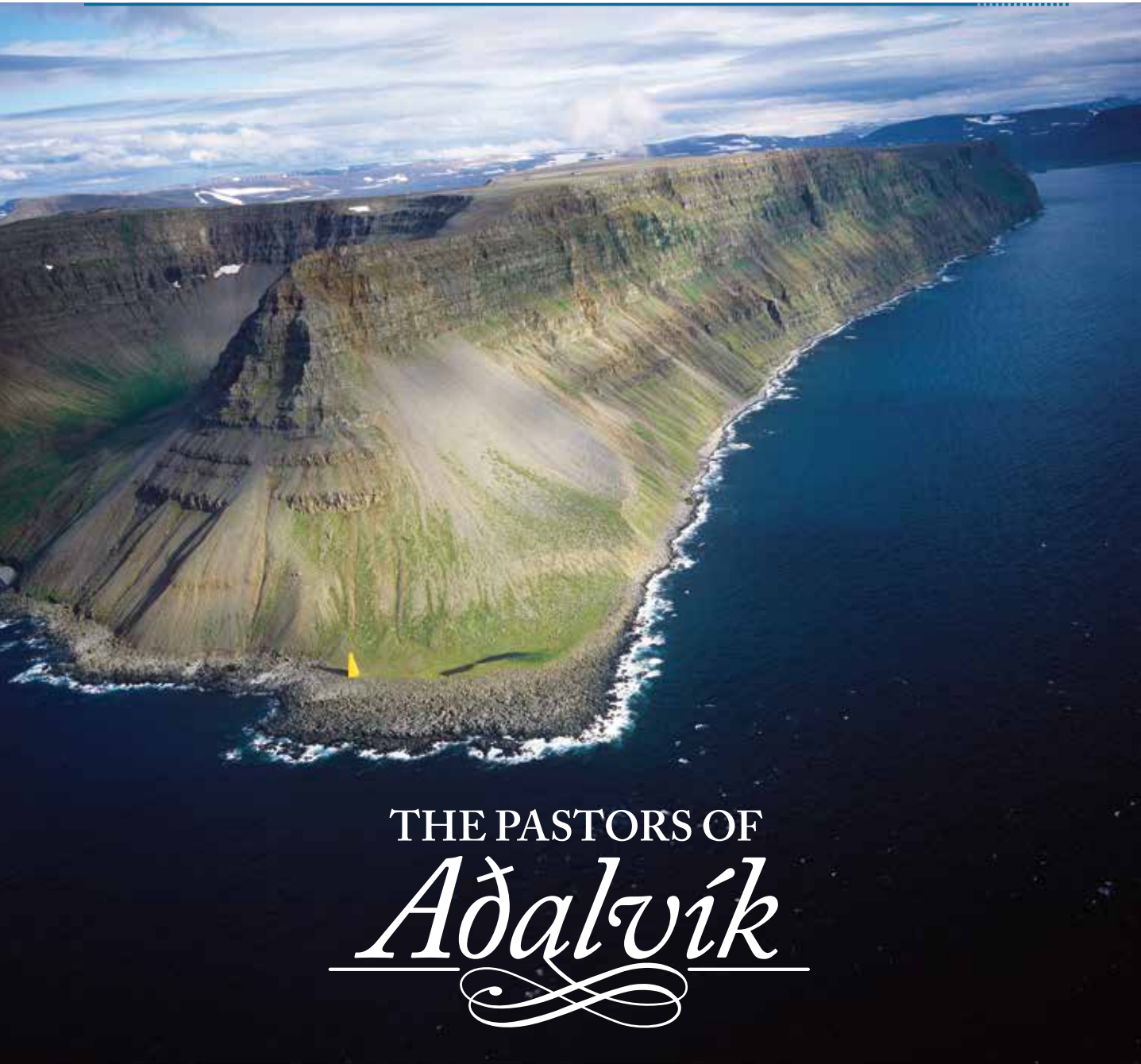
www.stedji.com



WESTFJORDS

Iceland





THE PASTORS OF *Aðalvík*

North of Ísafjarðardjúp lies Aðalvík bay, open to the sea. The Ritur mountain marks the southern end of the bay, while to the north, Straumnes rises, steep and majestic. The wreck of the Godafoss, a ship that ran aground in 1916, may still be seen on the shore.

Above the bay is extensive lowland, much of it verdant and picturesque. Several valleys lie inland between the mountains, the southernmost being Staðardalur. In

this valley is Lake Staðarvatn, where a water-horse, or kelpie, is said to reside and play various pranks. A farm named Staður with a church stands by the lake.

On the shore by Staðardalur is Sæból, formerly a fishing centre, where a village existed at one time. Another fishing hamlet developed at Látrar, at the northern end of Aðalvík.

Aðalvík was once quite densely populated, like other places in the Hornstrandir region;

people lived by farming and fishing and exploiting various other resources. Today, however, the place is deserted – the last inhabitant left in the middle of the 20th century. Nevertheless, many houses remain standing and are used by their owners in the summertime. Although Hornstrandir is far off the beaten track, mainly accessible by sea, the region attracts growing numbers of tourists, who are drawn by the magnificent natural environment.

One of the many buildings that remain standing at Aðalvík is the church of Staður, a handsome edifice with a vestibule, tower and choir loft.

War in the Spiritual Realm

In past centuries many renowned clergymen served the parish of Staður in Aðalvík. One of them was Snorri Björnsson, generally known as Snorri of Húsafell, in reference to the parish where he later served. He spent 16 years at Staður in the mid-18th century. He was believed to have supernatural skills, which came in useful in his relations with the Hornstrandir folk: Snorri generally got the better of them with his magical tricks.

A story told of Snorri when he was at Staður says that the pastor was once doing some carpentry down by the sea, while nearby a neighbour, who had supernatural skills, was also doing the same. This neighbour was carving runes into a rod of wood, designed so that anyone who read the runes would go blind. He threw the rod into the sea and let it drift to where the pastor sat. The Rev. Snorri was unaware of the trick, read the runes and immediately went blind. But Snorri was a fine poet and in this situation he made use of his poetic skills and made up verses to regain his sight. Then he scraped all the runes off the rod, flung it back in the sea, and said: “Go back to your master and you shall cause his death, if he intends to use you for evil purposes again.” The farmer saw the rod and grabbed it. He planned to carve it with such powerful runes that the pastor would die. But the knife slipped off the rod and into the farmer’s chest, up to the hilt. Thus the farmer died, and so received his just deserts for his attempt on the pastor’s life.

The Rev. Snorri was succeeded at the parish by the Rev. Vigfús Benediktsson, who remained at Staður for 18 years. According to folklore, he was subjected to sorcery by some of his parishioners, but fortunately he had a wife who knew how to respond. The Rev. Vigfús first served the parish of Staður in Aðalvík. There were many sorcerers in the congregation, who were opposed to the pastor. One Saturday the pastor went with two brothers by boat out to an island with their lambs. When they reached the island they put the lambs ashore to graze. The pastor disembarked but the others stayed in the boat. When the



“...He was believed to have supernatural skills, which came in useful in his relations with the Hornstrandir folk: Snorri generally got the better of them in such magical tricks.

pastor returned, the brothers had gone with the boat and left him behind alone.

The pastor’s wife was named Málfríður. She was an intelligent and experienced woman, who was said to have magical powers. She came down to the sea when the boat arrived and asked the brothers where Vigfús was. They told her he was writing his sermon for the next day, and smirked. She replied that it was quite possible that he might address them tomorrow. Then they went their separate ways; the brothers went home and thought no more of the pastor.

Early the following day the same brothers came to church. When they entered the church the pastor was standing before the altar. He preached a fierce sermon over them, which they well deserved. After Mass Málfríður said to them: “Now you have had the sermon you need, and it serves you right”. They answered that they had not yet thanked the pastor for the sermon, but they would do so another time. And all summer they never came to church, until

the first Sunday of the winter. One of the brothers was a married man and sat in the choir, while the other was unmarried and sat in the nave. The pastor’s wife saw that they were continually smirking at each other, and as soon as the pastor stepped into the pulpit, both brothers walked out. Some time passed. When the pastor was in the middle of his sermon, Málfríður called out to him: “Fúsi, go out; the sooner the better”. The pastor immediately stopped the sermon and walked out of the church and up above the churchyard. He saw one of the brothers heating a pot, while the other was writing some magical runes. The pastor came up to them and made to empty the pot, but his wife had arrived by this time and stopped him. She took the pot and poured the contents over the head of one of the brothers, then threw the pot at the other and both fell down dead. Málfríður said afterwards that it was as well they acted at once, for the brothers had intended to kill the Rev. Vigfús in the pulpit with their sorcery. While the Rev. Vigfús was pastor of Aðalvík, he was constantly at loggerheads with magicians and in the end he had to leave, for his life was in danger. When he served in Austur-Skaftafellssýsla (at the other end of the country), his old parishioners were always sending ghosts to plague him, but his wife could always turn them back and ensure they did not harm him. The Rev. Vigfús said that all these spells would be the death of him if he lived longer than his wife. But it did not come to that, for she survived him and died peacefully in old age.

-JRH

EXPERIENCE THE *Spectacular*

*Borea Adventures Reveals
the Westfjords Wilderness*



Borea Adventures is a small adventure company based in Ísafjörður in the Westfjords of Iceland. The company is owned and operated by people who are passionate about the outdoors, in particular the spectacular nature and fascinating cultures of the regions bordering the Arctic Circle. It is a passion they love to share, by providing people with access to these remote areas on their fun-filled and safe adventure trips and expeditions in Iceland and Greenland.

Borea Adventures adheres to the principles of low impact, sustainable tourism. Their trips are 'silent', since they try to minimise the use of any kind of noisy and polluting engines. Indeed, they like to encourage physical activity, suited to all levels of ability, from easy sailing and hiking through to exhilarating action sports.

They both rely on local knowledge and respect local culture. In fact, they take great pride in only using guides with a thorough knowledge of the local nature and history. Their priority is to guarantee their guests an enjoyable wilderness experience, in perfect harmony with the natural environment that supports us all.

Borea Adventures offers a variety of fascinating trips, but they can also customise trips for groups looking to put together their own itinerary for a unique adventure in the Northern Wilderness.

The Westfjords' hub

Ísafjörður is the mecca for day trips in the Westfjords of Iceland. This small and picturesque town, nestled between rugged mountains, offers unique opportunities

for all sorts of outdoor pursuits. With the domestic airport only a few minutes away from their office, you can fly in and out on the same day and still manage to have an exciting adventure!

Their day trips vary in length: some are 3 hours and others can be up to 13 hours long. Each trip varies in difficulty and there is something to suit everyone's interest and capabilities.

Borea's local guides have extensive experience in outdoor travel. They have great passion and respect for nature and look forward to sharing it with you. Safety is of the utmost importance to their guides, guaranteeing you a memorable adventure. They are true adventurers at heart and would love to show you the best that Iceland has to offer.

Homemade Organic Lunches—Included!

Throughout the years Borea has recognised the importance of eating a healthy homemade snack during their expeditions. Eating delicious food full of natural energy ingredients gives us the power and drive we need to keep us strong, alert and happy throughout our adventures.

Their trips consist of kayaking, hiking and biking.

Their favourite project is Kvíar Lodge, a farm house abandoned since 1948.

Kvíar was a farm in Kviadalur Valley, a beautiful setting at the edge of the water with panoramic views over the expansive Jökulfirðir Bay. With history of habitation since the 14th century, you can clearly see signs of turf houses and stone walls around



the farm. The last inhabitants left in 1948 and the house was left open to the elements.

In 2012, Borea came up with the idea of using the house for their adventures, turning it into a true adventure base for guests to enjoy.

After a lot of hard labour, the house has been brought back to life, and offers adventure seekers and free spirits a perfect platform for all things outdoors.

The Adventures you can experience in Kvíar... depending on season:

- Hiking in pristine wilderness
- Skiing from mountain tops to the sea

- Kayaking between abandoned fjords
- Exploring wildlife
- Arctic foxes, seals and birds within reach
- Relaxation and solitude
- Drangajökull Glacier is close by
- History of times gone by
- Fishing for arctic char and sea angling.



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ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

The furtive little arctic fox is found in the Westfjords in Súðavík

The arctic fox is an enchanting creature. At some point in the distant past, it travelled across the frozen sea and, in spite of the inhospitable climate, found a home on this small, isolated island. The arctic fox is Iceland's only native terrestrial land mammal and has been the subject of curiosity by scholars and lay people alike. For this reason, The Arctic Fox Centre was established in the village of Súðavík in 2010, since the fox is commonly found in the area.

Exhibition of the first native

The Centre is located in the oldest house in Súðavík, a 120 year-old farm that was renovated by the local authorities and is situated between what locals call the 'old village', destroyed in a devastating avalanche in 1995, and the 'new village', built in its stead at a safe distance from the mountain.

The Centre serves as an educational and cultural hub and offers an extensive exhibition on the arctic fox as well as regularly exhibiting local arts and crafts. Its main aim however, is to collect and preserve everything of importance regarding the arctic fox and its long-lasting relationship with man as surprisingly, fox hunting is the oldest paid occupation in Iceland.

The exhibition is divided into three sections: the biology of the fox, the hunting

of the fox and the hunters themselves, this last mentioned containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and, of course, there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round. The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland.

A nice little café at the Centre sells home-baked pastries, light courses and wonderful coffee, which guests can enjoy out on the patio overlooking the beautiful mountains and the sea. The café has open Internet access. On Friday nights, live music is performed in the loft, where it's nice to sit down for a drink in the cosy atmosphere. The Centre also has a small boutique selling specially made souvenirs and craftwork. - HP



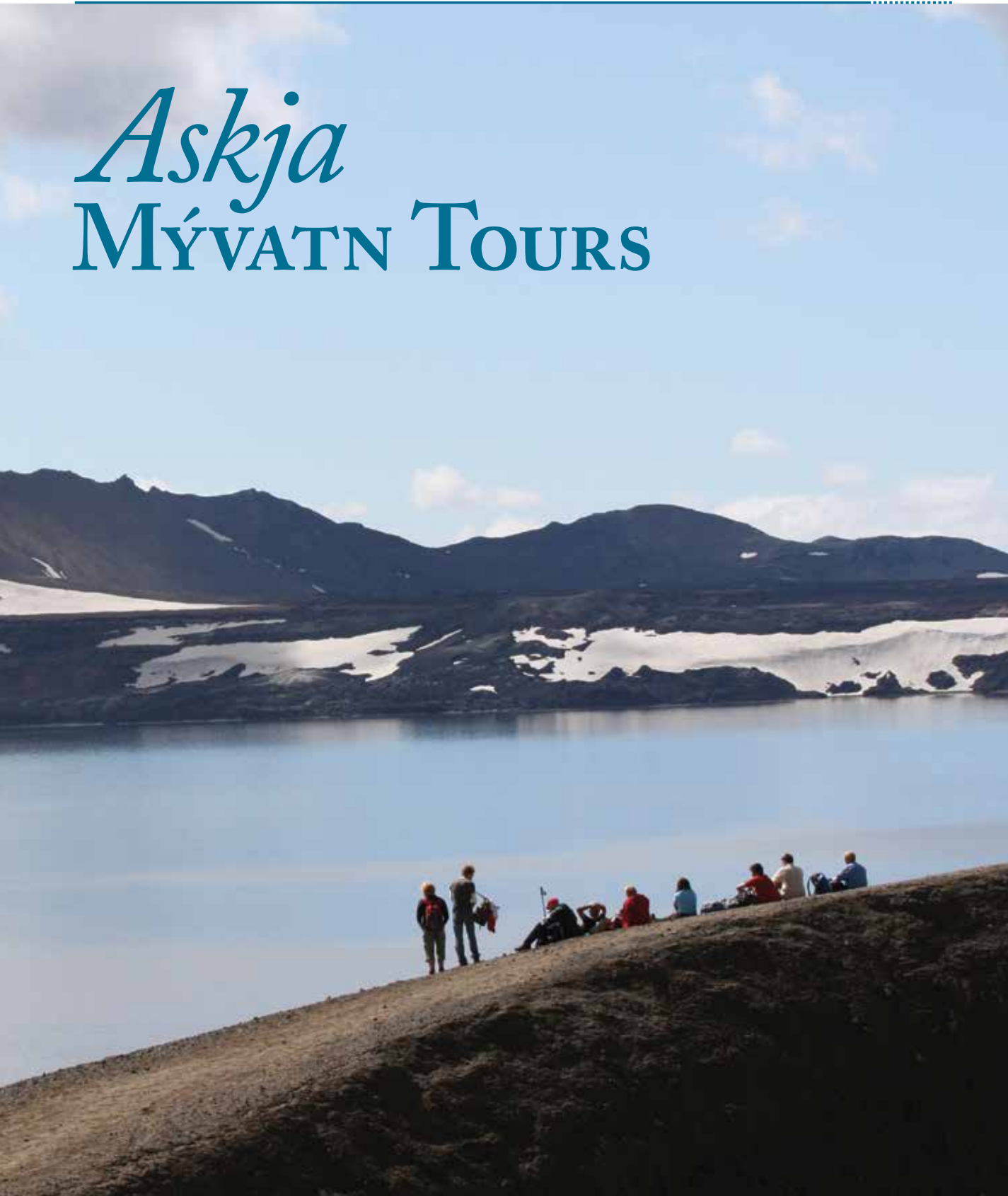

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NORTH *Iceland*



Askja MÝVATN TOURS



One of the most popular places to visit in North Iceland is lake Myvatn, a beautiful lake surrounded by mountains, it is picture perfect and often featured on postcards. Myvatn Tours, a family run company, offers bus tours from lake Myvatn to Askja caldera daily during summertime.

These day-tours run while the highland area is accessible, this year that will be from the 18th of June until the 7th of September. The owner, Gisli Rafn, started driving to the former volcano in 1984 with his father so he has over thirty years of experience with this route. His father, Jón Árne, founded the company in 1980 to show curious travellers the highlands.

Askja caldera is located in Dyngjufjöll, a mountain range north of Vatnajökull glacier. It is a stunning sight and looks like it could be on another planet, the dark lava covers the bare ground which is mostly black with some red rocks. There may still be snow during summer-time, depending on how the climate has been in the highlands.

In 1875, there was a huge eruption from Askja where it is said that volcanic shards reached mainland Europe, such was the force of the explosion. It created both the crater Viti (e. Hell), and lake Askja which at 217 m, is the deepest lake in Iceland. To view these lakes, you will hike for 35 minutes, it is possible to bathe in a warm geothermal lake inside the crater of Viti although travellers are asked to show caution as they do so.

On top of Askja, you will bizarrely

find a small lake in the middle of the crater Viti. Here, you will suddenly find an array of colours, orange mud and blue creamy water. This is an extreme contrast to the surrounding lava field. The air has a slight stench, to remind the visitors that they are on top of an active volcano which last erupted in 1961.

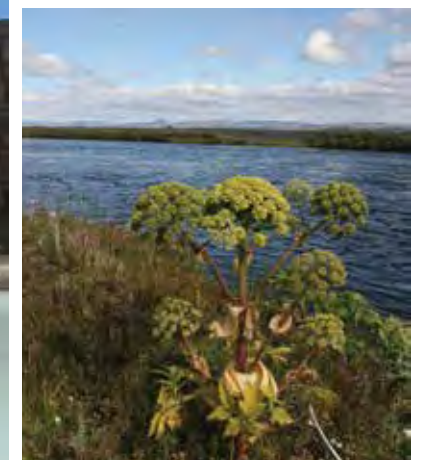
Geologists visit Askja in order to research what the surface of Mars may be like, and the astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin trained at Drekgil (e. Dragon Canyon) before visiting the Moon in 1969. You will stop at their training grounds on the Lunar Tour where you can easily imagine how it would be to visit outer space.

Mount Herdubreid is another breathtaking sight, a sub-glacial volcano which is the “Queen of Mountains” in Iceland. The weather in the highlands is unpredictable so travellers must dress accordingly. There are no restaurants en route so bringing a picnic lunch along is advisable as you spend the day exploring these phenomena of nature. We would strongly suggest bringing a camera along so that people will believe you when you explain what you have seen in just one day.



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THE KLONDIKE OF THE ATLANTIC

Siglu fjörður remembers its Golden Age



Siglu fjörður is a small fishing town on the north coast of Iceland, about an hour's drive from Akureyri (sometimes referred to as the Capital of North Iceland). The town, which is a part of the Fjallabyggð municipality, is flanked by rugged mountains and blessed with a history that is quite literally rich. The town was once nicknamed the Klondike of the Atlantic—a reference to the famous gold producing region in Alaska. The gold in this case was an abundance of 'the silver of the sea', herring, which gave the town its second nickname: The Herring Town. Today Siglu fjörður is a haven for hiking, sailing, fishing, skiing and other activities. You will also find a nice swimming pool there and a 9 hole golf course.

Golden Age of Herring

The golden age of herring lasted just over 100 years, from 1867 to 1968. Icelanders generally refer to this era as the 'herring fairy tale'. The country was still impoverished and essentially an undeveloped Danish colony at the time, but the resulting economic boom helped to turn Iceland into a developed country—that ultimately led to its independence.

Initially, the boom was mostly confined to several towns in the north of the country, but later it also moved to towns in the eastern fjords. At times, the export of herring accounted for up to half of the country's total export income.

Siglu fjörður was at the forefront of this economic boom, and often the herring exports from this one town alone provided more than 20% of the country's total export income.

As one would expect, given any kind of gold rush, the town blossomed and grew rapidly, fostering a colourful culture that is still remembered and honoured today.

The Herring Era Museum

Siglu fjörður's ambitious Herring Era Museum is the largest industrial and marine museum in Iceland. It has five exhibition buildings, totalling 2,500 square metres, and it is most likely the only one of its kind in the world.

The town itself is a piece of history and the museum has essentially endeavoured to rebuild a part of the old town as it was during its heyday, complete with herring boats, a herring port, boatyard, and a herring factory. In addition, it puts on live re-enactments. It

won Iceland's Museum Award in 2000, and the Micheletti Award in 2004 as the best new industrial museum in Europe.

The museum is open daily from June to September. Last summer the museum broke its attendance record in June, with 4,000 visitors—thanks, in part, to big cruise ships that visited the fjord.

Saturday admissions in July include a 'Salting Show' at 3pm, where 'Herring girls' re-enact the gutting and packing of herring into barrels, in the way it was done in the old days. Traditional songs and dances are also performed and guests are invited to join in.



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SKAGASTRÖND

WHERE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE MEET

One might think that life in a small remote fishing town would result in a reserved population wary of outsider influence. This is not the case in the town of Skagaströnd in the north-west of Iceland, where international artists mingle freely with local fishermen, creating a unique atmosphere where the past meets the present without judgment.



Fish Is Life

Like many Icelandic towns, Skagaströnd's history is centered around fishing, which is very much a part of Skagaströnd's identity today. The harbour is usually bustling with life, with boats coming and going, people and forklifts moving about trying to get the fish from the boats and to the stores as quickly and securely as possible. Just watching the harbour life is an activity in itself, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike—just be careful not to get in the way. There is also a pleasant coffee shop, Kaffi Bjarmanes, in a renovated old house right by the seaside just across from the harbour, giving an excellent view of the harbour life, the ocean and the ever-watchful seabirds around.

What Does the Future Bring?

The first documented settler in Skagaströnd was a woman named Þórdís who resided there in the late 10th century with substantial influence in her community. She was known to be a spirited and fierce woman, with the gift of prophecy, who made no compromises when it came to dealing with powerful men at the time and is noted as such in several of the old Icelandic Sagas. Although the people of her time might have been glad to be rid of her, present day inhabitants of Skagaströnd celebrate her legacy

and have opened a museum in her honour. Visitors are taken through her fascinating life with various exhibitions and artifacts—as well as given the chance to have a prophecy given about them.

Another museum can be found in a charming tiny old house, named Árnes, which gives an impression of daily life in the early 20th century.

Art and Fish

You might not think that modern day artists and small town fishermen would have much in common, but as it turns out, they have co-existed in Skagaströnd with great success for several years now. The Nes Artist Residency was opened in 2008 and has resulted in a colourful atmosphere where past and present traditions find common ground. The mayor of Skagaströnd, Magnús B. Jónsson, says the success of the artist residency is a testament to the positivity and open-mindedness of the people of Skagaströnd. "We have all types of people coming here from all over the world and staying with us for extended periods of time working on their craft and the fact that it has gone seamlessly really says something about our community." Magnús says

that the advent of the Nes Artist Residency has livened up the town and the creative atmosphere has proven to be quite contagious. "Now it is not at all uncommon to have all sorts of happenings and events that would have seemed strange before, but today are considered part of everyday life here in Skagaströnd." The town itself is also decorated with creative art. You'll find a very striking exhibition centered on the old Nordic gods made from scrap metal, carefully selected to represent each one. Loki, the god of mischief and deception, is for example made from an old manure spreader and Odinn, the highest god of all, is made from scraps from a power station. The Sunwatch is also a quite striking piece, made from four basalt columns that guide sunrays according to an old Icelandic time-telling tradition.

Plenty to Do

A popular activity is hiking to the top of the Spákonufell mountain or along the sea cliffs at Spákonufellshöfði, which is where Þórdís lived. Some even claim that her face can be seen, petrified in the mountain.

Detailed trail descriptions and maps are available in town. You'll find a traditional Icelandic swimming pool, with the obligatory relaxing hot pot, a nine-hole golf course and Borgin, a restaurant in a unique log house with a maritime theme.

- DT/ASF

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STUNNING ÞÓRSHÖFN

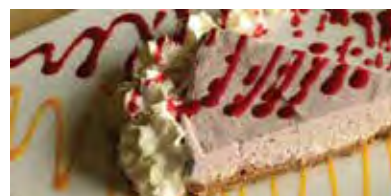
Visit this northern village for outdoor activities and a terrific meal at Bárán Restaurant

Þórshöfn is a charming fishing village on the coast of the Langanes Peninsula, a beautiful slice of northeast Iceland. Travellers love to visit the village for its remoteness. Þórshöfn is as far as you can get from Keflavik International Airport—so no crowds of tourists—just nature, rich birdlife and a variety of outdoor activities.

Langanes is a 40km long, narrow peninsula with a sloping coastal landscape with steep sea cliffs that is ideal for birdwatching and photography. Here, you are likely see puffins, gannets and terns.

Bárán Restaurant, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, is one of the best restaurants in the north. The cosy restaurant has a warm, friendly atmosphere and focuses on fresh, local ingredients, emphasising fish and shellfish from local fishermen. Diners can also enjoy soups, salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the harbour that's ideal to enjoy a meal and a beer. In fact, Bárán has an impressive beer menu, with more than 17 beers from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Bárán Restaurant's owners operate kayaking tours in Þórshöfn and Langanes, as well as to Skálar and Fontur. Many different sea birds, seals and sometimes, whales can be seen while sailing the crystal clear water from May to August. It's possible to fish during the tour and the restaurant can prepare your catch to your liking. Put Þórshöfn on your itinerary. -JG




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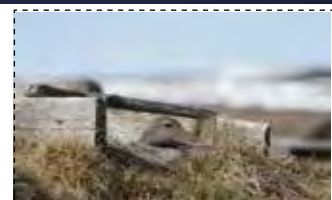
KELDUNES GUESTHOUSE is an ideal place to stay while you discover the northern part of Iceland. It has six double rooms and two cottages. The guesthouse lounge can be used for receptions.

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BÁRÁN RESTAURANT at Þórshöfn is the perfect setting to enjoy a great meal. The dining room overlooks the harbour and fishing boats. Bárán specializes in preparing fresh local food.

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THE CALL OF THE WHALE

Ambassador provides Whale Watching in Reykjavik and Akureyri

Whale watching is very popular amongst tourists who visit Iceland, and whales can be seen all around the coast. Ambassador offers whale watching tours when weather conditions are favourable from both Akureyri in North Iceland and the capital, Reykjavik.

Ambassador first offered tours from Akureyri in 2013 and soon built up a stellar reputation within the tourism industry. With very high sighting rates and fantastic online reviews, their business is booming. In the spring of 2017, they also started offering tours from Reykjavik.

Their tours in the North of Iceland range from two hours for the Whale Watching Extreme Tour, a very fast ride by RIB safari boat, (which has a minimum age limit of ten years old), to a six-and-a-half hour tour to Grimsey island. Grimsey is located on the Arctic circle and has only 80 inhabitants. For the regular three-hour long whale watching tours in Eyjafjörður bay, they use their boats, 'The Arctic Circle', a catamaran, and 'Konsúll' which has indoor cabins and toilet facilities on board. The boats have decks that offer views in all directions. Eyjafjörður is surrounded by

mountains that provide protection from Iceland's well-known winds, which creates a calmer environment for whale-watching. This also helps prevent seasickness and allows for a more pleasant tour.

In Reykjavik, the boat they use is called 'The Ambassador'. It has been customised for whale-watching after serving as both a German police boat and a pleasure yacht. She is a very nice whale watching boat and goes faster than most whale-watching boats in Reykjavik. With smaller group sizes on each tour, you are able to get closer to the whales. These three-hour tours



double as sight-seeing tours of Reykjavik since some popular landmarks are hard to ignore from the sea, even when you're searching for whales.

The whales that you can hope to see on a whale watching tour will be listed here by size, starting with the largest mammal on Earth: The Blue Whale. Fin Whales, Sei Whales, Northern Bottlenose Whales, Humpback Whales, Minke Whales, Orca Whales, White Beaked Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises. It is safe to say that there are plenty of whales and dolphins in the sea around Iceland. Humpback whales, Minke whales and Dolphins are a more common sight than the largest ones. Puffins can also sometimes be seen on whale-watching tours in the summertime and they are, of course, a welcome bonus.



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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 for from 1 to 4 hour periods.

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 the 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, consisting of several rides and sightseeing by bus. 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, 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
Grytubakki II • 601 Akureyri
+354 463 3179
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MAGNIFICENT SIGLUFJÖRÐUR AND ÓLAFSFJÖRÐUR

Summer Festivals and Fun in Tröllaskagi Peninsula

Miles and miles of intimidating and hard-faced mountain peaks, stretching out as far as the eye can see, separate Siglufjörður and Ólafsfjörður, two small fishing villages on the very northern tip of the Tröllaskagi Peninsula. The two especially scenic villages are part of the Fjallabyggð Municipality, 76km north of Akureyri. With the relatively recent opening of the Héðinsfjörður Tunnels, the two villages are now connected year-round and life on the peninsula has been totally transformed. The tunnels have opened up new routes to the many spectacular hiking trails from Héðinsfjörður to Ólafsfjörður and Siglufjörður and also provide easy access to pristine trout fishing grounds that were hitherto accessible only on foot or by boat.

Culture, museums and summer festivals galore

Siglufjörður and Ólafsfjörður are known for their lively annual summer events that attract visitors from around the world. Here are just a few of the more popular ones:

Boating Days

Siglufjörður is a hot-spot and the proud host of many well-known annual events. Their flagship event is, without a doubt, 'Boating Days', a family festival held over the last weekend in July with a full agenda of fishing, boating and herring related, (or not) events. Musical entertainment is mainly provided by renowned Icelandic musicians and artists who will perform throughout the weekend. Boating Days is ideal for families and has something for everyone and, while it's popular to camp out during the festival, there are many local hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs for those who are not keen on camping.

Herring Era Museum and Festival

One of the best museums of its kind in Iceland, Siglufjörður's Herring Era Museum has a creative and entertaining way of bringing fishing to life. The museum was awarded the Micheletti Award for best new industrial museum in Europe in 2004, with a series of exhibits that revisit Iceland's Golden Age of Herring and the enormous impact it had on Icelandic society and its economy. Lively theatrical performances depicting life and times from the Herring Era of the 1950s are scheduled every Saturday in July. (opening hours are from 10:00 to 22:00, 12th June to 18th August and from 13:00 to 17:00 in the spring and autumn.)

Music is in the air

Historically, music has always played an important role in the lives of Icelanders and continues to do so to this day. Icelanders' love of music is reflected in Siglufjörður's Folk Music Centre, located in the former home of the 19th century Reverend Bjarni Thorsteinsson, an avid collector of written folk music and talented composer. Every year in July, the Folk Music Centre holds a Folk Music Festival with participants from around the world giving concerts, lectures and workshops.

Other local area festivals include the Berry Harvest Music Festival in Ólafsfjörður, 17th – 20th August, where chamber music, as well as other musical genres will be performed.

The Red, the Yellow and the Blue

The unmistakable bright red, yellow and blue buildings on the Rauðka Marina serve as the main gathering place and landmarks in Siglufjörður. Named after a well-known local sailor, the Hannes Boy Café, with its cosy, rustic ambiance, is reminiscent of the so-called 'glory days' of the herring era. Next door, the Red House Café & Bar is the place to enjoy light lunches, a glass of wine, and

live music. Finally, the Blue House serves as a gallery for local artists.

Poetry Centre

The Poetry Centre is open during summer and here you can read poems by major Icelandic poets as well by foreign poets, past and present.

Natural History Museum in Ólafsfjörður

Although Icelandic birdlife is the primary focus of the museum, there are also mounted animals on display such as the goat, polar bear and arctic fox along with fish and crabs.

With so much to see and do in Tröllaskagi Peninsula this summer, the detour north promises to be a very worthwhile one and is not to be missed.

-EMV



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AFRO-SIGLO

The 18th Folk Music Festival in Siglufjörður, North Iceland, starts on the 5th of July

The Folk Music Festival in Siglufjörður, North Iceland, will be held from the 5th to the 9th of July this year. Music from Africa will be emphasized, both in concerts and courses. Musicians from Guinea will teach music and dances from their country. Music from Ireland will also be taught in a special course and there will be courses on Icelandic handicraft. The Folk Music Academy is a special course on Icelandic folk music and will, this year, be in English.

The Folk Music Festival in Siglufjörður was first held in the year 2000. Musicians from all parts of the world visit the festival, together with Icelandic musicians. The festival starts Wednesday the 5th of July with music from Norway, Finland and Ireland. Three young Finnish women play and sing their own music in the Hyvä Trio, based on Finnish folk music tradition. Later that same evening we hear the Canadian duo Sophie and Fiachra play and sing Irish folk music, cultivated by the Irish minority in Canada.

Composers and folk musicians come from all around Iceland. On Thursday evening you get to hear songs from famous Icelandic songwriters from the Eastern part of the country in jazz arrangements. The Kalman Choir from West Iceland gives a concert on Icelandic choir music and the Swedish folk musician Malin Gunnarsson performs her thrilling music. On Friday, 7th July we will get a great performance of Tango music from Argentina, diverse accordion music from the 20th century and Icelandic and English folk musicians sing and play folk songs from the two countries in a varied medley.

The festival reaches its peak on Saturday, 8th of July. Icelandic folk dances will be taught in the morning and in the afternoon

there will be six different concerts. First of all there will be music and dances from Guinea, West Africa. You can also listen to gypsy music from Russia or to songs by mountain peoples from all over the world. The female choir Vasele Bebe female choir will give a sample of music from Balkan countries and you can also hear the Trato Ensemble from Chile perform music from South America. Later in the evening one can join the dancing to happy accordion

music. The last concert of the festival will be at Siglufjörður church of Sunday, 9th of July, where the Iceland Youth Symphony Orchestra plays music from Mexico and Poland together with the Unfinished Symphony by Franz Schubert. Soloist is Björg Brjánsdóttir on flute and Gunnsteinn Olafsson conducts.

Further information about the Folk Music Festival in Siglufjörður can be reached on www.siglofestival.com



SAIL WITH WHALES

Whale Watching Hauganes is Iceland's oldest whale watching tour operator

Specialising in whale watching and sea angling since it was founded in 1993, the company has been operating from Hauganes, a small fishing village on the west side of Eyjafjörður, just 30km North of Akureyri (a short 25 minute drive).

From this picturesque town, their tour will quickly immerse you in the midst of the whale populations and the rich sealife characteristic of the area. Whether the whales have ventured deep into the fjord or are staying closer to the island of Hrísey, they are always just a short trip away from Hauganes.

Oak boats and whales

Enjoy a comfortable tour on one of their two traditional Icelandic oak boats, while observing the fantastic scenery, birdlife, and of course the diverse range of whale species

of Eyjafjörður. Commonly, Humpback Whales, Minke Whales, Harbour Porpoises and White Beaked Dolphins are seen. If you're lucky, you may even catch a glimpse of a Killer Whale or a Blue Whale! Then, after the thrill of watching the whales in the fjord, enjoy a little sea angling on the return trip and have your catch filleted to take with you.

Carbon neutral tours

Carbon emissions play an ever-increasing role in environmental issues such as climate change. With the company's carbon neutral programme, their carbon emissions are neutralized through the creation of a special Whale Forest forestry plan. By planting one tree for each whale watching tour, they offset their carbon dioxide emissions, sequestering the amount of carbon equivalent to their emissions. Also, their oak boats run partially



on biodiesel made from recycled cooking oil from restaurants. Guests can therefore be assured that, by travelling with Whale Watching Hauganes, they minimize their carbon footprint. Good for our guests and, of course, amazing for the environment!

100% Success Rate

Each one of boats' captains spend their winters as professional fishermen, so you can be assured you're in good hands during the summer season of whale watching. In 2016 they had a 100% success rate of spotting whales and expect no less in 2017!

Each tour includes hot coffee and delicious pastries as well as warm safety clothing. All the equipment you may need to enjoy sea angling or deep sea fishing is available for you on board the ship.

EAST *Iceland*





EXPLORING UNTOUCHED BEAUTY

Vopnafjörður is home to striking nature and fun outdoor activities

Vopnafjörður is surrounded by picturesque mountains, wondrous waterfalls and historical farms. It's one of the best spots on the island to enjoy Iceland's peace and tranquillity and home to an array of wildlife. The history of the village dates back 1100 years, when the bay was first settled by Viking seafarers from Norway. Foreign merchants frequently sailed to Vopnafjörður in the early modern age, and a settlement gradually formed on a peninsula where the village stands today.

Stunning nature

The village has numerous opportunities for relaxation and outdoor activities. Many well-marked walking trails lead through the region's natural pearls. One of them, 'the elephant', is a significant rock pillar on the east side of Vopnafjörður that bears a striking resemblance to an elephant. Fuglabjarganes is a prominent cliff that juts out on the northern coast of the town. You can get a good look at it from a marked hiking path from Strandhafnarvegur road, which runs along the Fugla River. The scenery is beautiful with white beaches, towering cliffs and impressive rock caverns and pillars. Vopnafjörður is only 60 to 90 minutes away from outstanding

features of Iceland like Dettifoss, Mývatn and Langanes and only 2-3 hours from Herðubreið, 'the queen of Icelandic mountains', Askja and Holuhraun.

Outdoor activities

Vopnafjörður is a birdwatcher's dream and the Tangi peninsula north of the village is a beautiful and remote spot to watch seabirds. Vopnafjörður also offers several hiking routes that vary from easy to challenging. Beginners will find a wide range of mapped routes and marked trails that offer scenic views of the whole of area—the bay, the Tangi Peninsula, inland areas and mountains. Hike to the end of the Tangi Peninsula to find interesting rock formations and beaches. Other activities could include a round of golf at the well-maintained 9-hole course or taking a dip in the heated swimming pool.

Culture and history

The old farm of Bustarfell is one of the best-preserved traditional Icelandic turf houses that many Icelanders called home for centuries. The museum offers a great opportunity to see how people's way of life has changed through the centuries. The foundations of the current house are



from 1770, but the house has undergone alterations over the years.

The East Iceland Emigration Center is dedicated to the emigration years 1870-1914, the years following the great Askja eruption of 1875 that displaced hundreds of people. The centre focuses on the history of the region and renewing contact with emigrants' descendants. There are many documents and photos on display, making it a fascinating place to visit. -JG



Vopnafjörður Tourist Information Centre

Hafnarbyggð 4a, 690 Vopnafjörður
 +354 473 1331
www.vopnafjordur.com



THE EAST ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

Appreciating the life and times of a bygone era in East Iceland

The East Iceland Heritage Museum in Egilsstaðir showcases life as it was in the bygone era of Iceland's rural society where self-sufficiency was essential to survival.

On display is a traditional 'baðstofa' - or communal living/sleeping room, taken from an authentic Icelandic turf house that was inhabited until as late as 1964. Visitors are encouraged to step into the 'baðstofa' and experience the nostalgia of life as it was in days gone by.

The museum prides itself, however, on its permanent reindeer exhibition.

Found only in East Iceland, the rather shy and sometimes elusive wild reindeer have a mystical air about them and contribute to the area's sense of identity. With their numbers on the increase, it is possible to see them as they descend from their feeding grounds at higher

elevations in summer, to lower elevation grasslands nearer the coast in winter.

The Heritage Museum guides visitors through the history of the reindeer settlement in Iceland, their behaviour, characteristics and habits, a look at hunting regulations and, in short, everything you need to know about reindeer in Iceland. This is a unique opportunity to learn about these fascinating creatures, via a variety of displays and multi-media presentations that bring the exhibit to life.

The exhibition commemorates two the reindeer enthusiasts, Helgi Valtýsson, writer, and Eðvarður Sigurgeirsson, photographer and filmmaker. In an effort to shed light on the plight of the Icelandic reindeer, the pair tracked the movements of various herds from 1939 to 1944.

Eðvarður's film, "In Reindeer Territory", is available for viewing at the exhibition.

Visitors are also invited to watch a new documentary about Icelandic reindeer and a short animated film based on a section of the book, Independent People by Halldór Laxness, a twentieth-century Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize winner. -SP

Admission: Adults (18+) 1,000 ISK
Opening hours: 1 June to 31 August
Mon-Fri: 11:30-19:00.
Sat-Sun: 10:30-18:00.
Winter: Thur-Fri: 11:00-16:00



East Iceland Heritage Museum

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A FAIRY TALE HOME

Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection



Petra loved people as well as stones and her passion project became a museum that was open to the public. Her husband, Nenni, passed away in 1974 and on the day of his funeral she decided to open up their home so that those who

In the tiny town of Stöðvarfjörður in East Iceland, a young girl named Petra began collecting stones in the mountains surrounding her home—and continued to do so until she passed away at the age of 89. During her lifetime, her home became a museum and is now a popular tourist attraction: Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection.

In the story of Burnt Njal (Brennu-Njálssaga), it is said that a quarter of your personality comes from your name, the other three-quarters come from your mother, father and your upbringing. "Petra" means stone, which is oddly fitting.

The collection is remarkable as every stone is beautiful. While it is very interesting for geologists to see so many rocks from the same area, the stones have not been arranged according to their scientific value but rather in a way that pleases the eye, a tribute to the wonderful colours that can be found in nature.

At first, this was only her personal collection as, for the first two decades, Petra would only collect stones that were within walking distance of her house. As she arranged them in the garden, strangers would pull over in their cars to better see what was going on. Sometimes the children would be sent out to ask the drivers if they would like to come inside to see more stones and have a cup of coffee.

Petra spent her entire life collecting rocks, and would sometimes bring her young children along to search for new additions to the collection in the surrounding mountains. She arranged her stones in a garden that would be right at home in a fairy-tale. Petra believed in elves and hidden people and her colourful garden would be the perfect place to meet them. As her children moved out of the house, her stones moved in and the remarkable collection continued to grow.

wished to see the mineral collection could do so.

The stones and minerals have been chosen for their beauty and their colours, without regard to their scientific value or monetary worth. However, there are many semi-precious stones in the collection, such as amethyst.

Today, her children run the museum together and continue to add to the collection. Her youngest daughter, Þórkátla, says that she herself would prefer not to believe in elves—but maybe her mother had a helping hand when she went around searching for rocks, as she was incredibly lucky.

Petra's Stone Museum
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 www.steinapetra.is



LAUGARFELL

Laugarfell is located in the eastern part of the Icelandic Highlands, a bit north from Mount Snæfell. There are only two km. from the road that leads to Kárahnjúkar to the hostel and it is the only part of road that is not paved. In the summer there is good access to Laugarfell in all kinds of vehicles.

Laugarfell offers accommodation for 28 people. Two natural pools are located in Laugarfell and according to old folk tales the water is known for its healing powers.

There are many interesting tracking paths around Laugarfell and a number of beautiful waterfalls. Additionally, one can expect to see reindeers wandering around the area of Laugarfell. Laugarfell offers guided tours in the area.

Laugarfell
 Fjögðalsheiði, 701 Egilsstaðir
 773-3323
 info@laugarfell.is
 www.highlandhostel.is



ÁLFHEIMAR COUNTRY HOTEL OF BORGARFJÖRÐUR EYSTRÍ

A Seaside Hotel with a Mission

Álfheimar Country Hotel, set in a prime seaside location, overlooks the wide expanses of Borgarfjörður fjord on the edge of the colourful fishing village of Bakkagerði.

The country hotel's affable owner, Arngrímur Viðar Ásgeirsson, born and raised in the area, is fairly brimming over with local knowledge. Proud of his background and heritage, Arngrímur, and his local staff, often take on the role of chief tour guide, much to the delight of the hotel's international clientele.

Álfheimar Country Hotel offers 32 rooms from single rooms to family size, all with private bath. Each evening, the hotel restaurant emphasises a main course using quality fresh fish or lamb supplied by the area's fishermen and farmers.

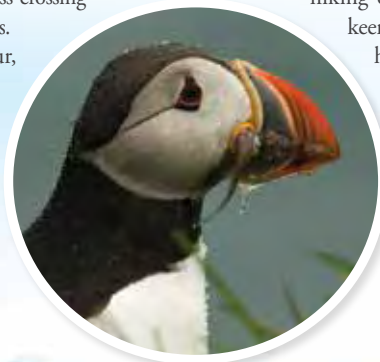
Puffins Galore

If puffin spotting is on your to-do list this summer, Borgarfjörður eystrí could well be called the best place on earth to do just that. Each year, 10 to 15 thousand of these charming little birds arrive in mid-April and stay until mid-August. Quite tame, these little guys allow you to get within a few metres of them for that highly sought-after puffin close-up and can often be seen circling the harbour, which provides an ideal lookout point for avid bird-watchers.

The area of Borgarfjörður Eystrí has a well-maintained hiking infrastructure with over 300km of marked trails criss-crossing the fjord's wild, deserted inlets.

According to Arngrímur, "We are a hidden treasure in the trekking world

and therefore our guests can enjoy the peaceful area with day tours ranging from a few hours long to multi-days treks, led by experienced local guides. I like to call it 'comfort hiking' because we carry only our daypack, and afterwards you will sleep in a comfortable hotel room – and of course enjoy our 3-course dinner with wine in our restaurant, surrounded by good company. For even more comfort, our neighbour, Blábjörg Guesthouse, offers a wonderful spa and wellness centre with a hot tub and sauna that is relaxing after a good day's hike in the mountains. For those who are new to hiking or those who are not keen on the 'mountain hut' lifestyle, our service would be an excellent option."



Eco-tourism

The community has its roots in eco-tourism, placing a special emphasis on respect for nature through environmental stewardship. This has earned it recognition from the EU's Blue Flag programme for Hafnarhólmi, its environmentally friendly harbour, and for their sound, sustainable practices.

Iceland's Elf/Hidden People Debate

To believe or not believe. You decide. Here in the Elf Capital of Iceland you can visit

Álfaborg, a rocky mound that is purportedly home to the Queen of the Elves. There are some 172 folk stories about hidden people, elves and trolls that attest to the vast number of these beings that are thought to have populated the area for centuries.

Slow Travel Tips from Arngrímur

"Rushing around the Ring Road, attempting to see the whole country in a week, is one way to see Iceland, but not the only way", says Arngrímur, who suggests picking one

to three 'slices' of Iceland as a base and exploring from there.

"If you need a place to relax and get out of ordinary city life, you will find a quiet zone of Iceland at Álfheimar Country Hotel... It's only a one hour flight via Air Iceland from Reykjavik to the East.

"We are more than happy to help you plan your stay, suggest itineraries, fetch you from the airport and basically do everything we can do to make your holiday memorable and enjoyable. That's our mission!" –EMV



Elf Tours

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www.puffins.is



SOUTH *Iceland*



The 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 Kerð caldera; world-famous volcanoes like Hekla—"the Gateway to Hell", Lakagígar, 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.

SEE ICELAND IN SAFETY, COMFORT AND STYLE



Reykjavik Excursions Golden Circle and South Shore Adventure Tours

With Icelandic winter weather being rather unpredictable, it's good to know that you don't have to brave the elements on your own. Reykjavik Excursions is one of Iceland's oldest tour companies, with experienced drivers and years of experience under its belt. With a large variety of tours to choose from, we take a look at two of their most popular day tours: South Shore Adventure and the Golden Circle.

First up, the South Coast

Reykjavik Excursions' South Shore Adventure tour is the optimal solution for seeing all those iconic places that the south coast is so well known for—Seljalandsfoss, Skógarfoss, Reynisfjara beach, Vík and Mýrdalsjökull. This 10½-hour day tour departs from the BSÍ bus terminal in

Reykjavík, taking you over the beautiful Hellisheiði heath that overlooks the south coast from its eastern flank. Passing several small villages, the tour makes its first stop in Hvalsöllum, just a stone's throw from the famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano that erupted spectacularly in 2010.

A must for nature lovers, photographers and history buffs

On this tour, you'll get a chance to walk up to (but not on) a real live glacier, Sólheimajökull, that flows out of the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap. Then it's on to Reynisfjara, the black sand beach known for its massive columnar basalt cliffs and sea stacks. After lunch (not included) in the picturesque village of Vík, you'll have a guided tour of Skógar Museum where some 15,000 cultural artifacts are on

display. Here you will learn about the life and times of Icelanders over the centuries and gain an appreciation for the Icelandic way of life. Afterwards you will visit the landmark waterfall Skógarfoss that thunders down from a 60m high precipice and then onwards to Seljalandsfoss, the only waterfall in Iceland that you can walk behind.

The Famous Golden Circle

Located within 100km of Reykjavík, the Golden Circle continues to be one of Reykjavik Excursions' most popular destinations. The tour encompasses three of the most popular Icelandic tourist spots, known for their geological, historical and scenic significance. Thingvellir National Park, the original site of the world's oldest running parliament, is unique in that

it sits on the divergent plate boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Next is the Haukadalur Geothermal Area where you'll see the dormant Geysir that gave its name to these steam spouts, a spouting geyser named Strokkur and bubbling mud pools in a steamy, otherworldly landscape.

Gullfoss, (Golden Falls), is a raging, double cascade waterfall, as spectacular as they come—and equally impressive when the temperature drops below freezing. En route, you will tour Friðheimar Greenhouse, where geothermal energy is used to grow pesticide-free tomatoes and cucumbers, year round. Friðheimar's refreshing homemade tomato soup (not included) is a tempting option, should you want a hot, filling meal during the tour. Shorter versions of the Golden Circle tour are also available.

Helpful tips

Should you decide that a Reykjavik Excursions tour is right for you, here are a few helpful tips to make the most of your tour. 1. First and foremost: dress warmly. The wind chill factor needs to be taken into consideration, particularly in winter, so do dress warmly in layers and don't forget your gloves and hat. 2. Wear sturdy shoes—you wouldn't want to scuff up your brand new Nikes. Iceland's volcanic nature is not always kind to the latest fashion footwear. Sneakers will not cut it! Lastly, all of Reykjavik Excursions tours are available with guidance in English, but did you know that most tours are also available in French, German, Scandinavian, and now Spanish?

Be warm, be well and enjoy Iceland this winter with Reykjavik Excursions. - EMV



Reykjavik Excursions

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www.re.is



A Jewel in Iceland's Winter Crown

SOUTH EAST ICELAND'S VATNAJÖKULL REGION

The Vatnajökull region is narrow stretch of land that lies just below Vatnajökull Glacier, spanning from Lómagnúpur in the west, to Hvalnes on its eastern border. From the highest peaks of Hvannadalshnúkur down to the expansive glacial outwash plains that characterise the area, the district embraces over 200km of Iceland's main ring road.

Where the snowcaps glisten

Glistening glacial lagoons, thundering rivers, waterfalls, black sand beaches and numerous ice caves are just some of the natural gems that can be found within the region's borders. When the Northern Lights appear, they make an unforgettable sight over Vatnajökull Glacier's gleaming ice cap and the surrounding winter landscape. The area is also known for its fresh seafood, especially langoustines, aka Norway lobster, and restaurants throughout the district are keen to show off this specialty in a variety of ways. For families with kids there is a fun 2km

nature trail by the sea, with beautiful views of the glacier where the solar system comes to life! Free maps of the trail are available at the Hofn Visitor Centre (Gamlabuð).

Into an ice-blue world

Should you have your heart set on visiting an ice cave, look no further, because the Vatnajökull region boasts many of these stunning ice-blue caves. They are only accessible from November to March for obvious reasons and several local companies run by experienced teams of caving experts offer tours into this awe-inspiring world of subglacial speleology. Booking in advance is highly encouraged as tours fill up quickly. For important safety reasons, it is not recommended to go into an ice cave without a certified glacier guide.

Höfn

Well situated just off Road No.1, the attractive harbour town of Höfn makes an

excellent base for further exploration of this vast region and beyond. With a population of just over 2,000 inhabitants, the town and its surrounding area boast a number of comfortable hotels and guest houses, a supermarket, petrol stations, a pharmacy, as well as several notable restaurants known for their fresh langoustine dishes.

At the tourist information office located in the Hofn Visitor Centre (Gamlabuð) you will find maps, brochures, souvenirs and helpful staff on hand who can answer all your questions. For directions and opening hours, please check their website <http://www.vatnajokulsthjodgardur.is/english/operations/visitor-centre/hofn-visitor-centre/>.

For further information about the Vatnajökull region, please check out the website listed below.

- EMV



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Lítlubrú 2-780 Hornafjörður
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www.visitvatnajokull.is



HOTEL GULLFOSS

The Golden Circle is the most popular tourist attraction in Iceland, it comprises of Thingvellir national park, the great Geysir and Gullfoss waterfall. Each of the three stops are distinct and together they make for an interesting daytrip that covers a variety of scenery. It is easy to include more activities such as snowmobiling, river-rafting, horse-riding or visiting local farms.

For travellers starting their trip in Reykjavik, that wish to fully explore the Golden Circle before continuing their travels to another part of Iceland, it makes sense to stay at Hotel Gullfoss. This is a moderately priced hotel which is so very close to its namesake, the famous waterfall Gullfoss (e. Golden Falls) and a short drive away from Geysir and the surrounding smaller geysers.

Guests at the hotel can walk along the canyon of the river Hvítá to Gullfoss waterfall. They can also book tours comfortably at the reception to get to know the surrounding area and South Iceland better.



GULLFOSS is a beautiful waterfall where you can often find a rainbow on a sunny day. It is easily accessible and a local favourite. It is situated in Hvítá river (e. White River) that has its origin in the Langjökull glacier. Nowadays, more than half of the tourists that visit Iceland make their way to Gullfoss. A century ago, there was serious talk about building a dam to generate electricity at Gullfoss, a famous Icelandic poet, Einar Benediktsson, was one of the business men involved. Sigríður Tómasdóttir, a young woman who lived at the farm Brattholt where Hótel Gullfoss is located now, fought for many years against these destructive plans. She has been called Iceland's first environmental activist and fits right into the long list of women who have been and still are fighting against the brutal destruction of nature all around the world.



GEYSIR is a hot spring that used to erupt although it has been inactive for some years now. Its name is the origin of the word geyser that describes it. Its little neighbour, Strokkur, erupts frequently and is a hugely popular attraction. The Geysir hot spring area is geothermally active, with hot water bubbling underground.



THINGVELLIR (e. Parliamentary planes), is an incredible place and notable for two reasons. Firstly, it is a UNESCO cultural world heritage site and major events in the history of Iceland have taken place there. The settlers realized that there must be law in their young society so in the year 930 they founded a parliament at Þingvellir; Althingi. It is one of the oldest parliaments in the world. The second reason is geological. Þingvellir, has been a nature reserve since 1928 due to its unique tectonic and volcanic environment. The faults and fissures of the area show the rifting of the earth's crust. Here you can see the tectonic plates of North America and Europe meet and drift apart. Usually

this happens below the surface or under the ocean but at Thingvellir it is clearly visible and you can almost walk between the plates.

Hotel Gullfoss is close to these attractions and more. It offers reasonable rates and clean rooms. Their restaurant also offers Icelandic cuisine and serves dinner. Both the restaurant and rooms are decorated in simple Scandinavian style and have a beautiful view over the valley. -KT



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THERE WERE STARS IN THIS CAVE

Raufarhólshellir Lava Tunnel with Reykjavik Excursions

As many Icelanders will be glad to point out with a smile and even a wink, “the weather is always good inside a cave!” While weather conditions in Iceland do sometimes change drastically in a matter of minutes, you can be sure that the temperature in a cave will remain the same, no matter if it’s raining or even snowing outside.

Reykjavik Excursions have recently started offering a caving trip to Raufarhólshellir lava tube which is only thirty minutes away from Reykjavik. This is great news for those who wish to experience caving in a lava tube. Raufarhólshellir is a large lava tube, 30 metres wide and 10 metres high, which means you can easily

walk upright in it. This three-hour tour departs daily at 10am from BSI bus station, and includes the hour-long guided cave tour. You will be provided with the necessary helmets and headlights. You have to bring your own sturdy shoes, however, as flip flops are a huge no-no in caves!

What is truly astounding is how colourful the cave itself is. There are stones here that are almost purple in colour and others that are orange, as well as the classic grey stones you might expect. This magnificent display is enough to make you want to paint a picture or at least take lots of photos. Some of the stones are covered with moss that reminds us how resilient nature is and life goes on.

Iceland is a volcanic island and it is a magnificent sight to see the lava from within. You will surely foster a deeper interest in geology as you see the different rocks and rock formations all around you. The colour variety is caused by the different types of rock minerals. This incredible setting is illuminated by light from the entrance that is above you, where the lava tube ceiling caved in at some point in the past.

If you are a true film fanatic you may recognise the cave from the movie ‘Noah’, in which Russell Crowe played the lead and Anthony Hopkins was a supporting actor. The director, Darren Aronofsky, is a huge fan of Icelandic nature and has joined forces with singers Björk and Patti Smith as well as the band ‘Of Monsters and Men’, and others to try and save it from damage. Once you’ve seen this lava tube, we’re sure you’ll understand why.

-KT



Reykjavik Excursions

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Reykjavik Excursions is one of Iceland's largest tour operators, founded in 1968. Their fleet is impressive and both their guides and drivers are professionals. They are an environmentally conscious company, with both the local quality and environmental system certification, Vakinn, and the British Standard Institutes's certification for environmental management, ISO 14001.





EXPERIENCE THE GLACIERS

Acanum Glacier Tours takes you on an unforgettable trip

Arcanum Glacier Tours is a qualified glacier tour operator with almost twenty years experience in taking customers up on the magnificent Mýrdalsjökull and Sólheimajökull glaciers. Under Mýrdalsjökull glacier the Katla volcano lies dormant. The glacier is the 4th largest in Iceland and covers about 600km². The ice is on average 250 metres thick.

Arcanum's main services are Snowmobile tours, Glacier walk tours and ATV Quad bike tours. All the tours start at the Arcanum base camp where they fit you with the relevant gear and go over safety instructions.

The Snowmobile tour is excellent for first time riders. Everything you need for a safe and comfortable ride is provided. Safety is the keyword with Arcanum so, before they head up onto the glacier, they give you a short briefing.

When the visibility is good, the view from the top of the glacier is awesome and there is some time allowed for photography.

Tour length: Total 2 hours (1 hour snowmobile + 1 hour glacier truck transfer)

Glacier Walk is another tour which they are very proud of. After providing you with the necessary equipment and a short lesson in ice walking, the tour begins. The route crosses amazing terrain with crevasses, sink holes and ice ridges. Tour length: 2 or 3 hours

Quad biking. After gearing up you head down to Sólheimasandur, the black beach with the volcanic sand which derives from glacial outbursts of the Katla volcano. On the way down to the beach they cross a few small rivers. The view towards the glacier and down to the coastline is amazing. On this tour, a stop is made at the famous aircraft wreck which has been sitting on the sand since 1973. Tour length: 2 hours

Glacier walk and the south coast. The tour starts with a pick-up in Reykjavík. The drive takes you along the beautiful south coast of Iceland where the landscape changes a lot along the route. At the

Arcanum base, everyone gears up and starts the ice walk across the amazing glacial landscape. On the return to Reykjavík, you make a stop by Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss, two magnificent waterfalls by the south coast. Tour length: Total of 10 hours, with a 3-hour glacier walk

ATV AND THE SOUTH COAST. The tour starts with a pick-up in Reykjavík. On the way, you explore the beautiful south coast. At the Arcanum base, everything is ready for the quad biking and you go over safety instructions. On this tour, as on the ATV tour, you're able to enjoy the amazing view up to Mýrdalsjökull glacier, and along the coast all the way to the small Dyrhólaey peninsula, a much-visited tourist site on the South Coast. Tour length: 10 hours, 2 hours ATV. -KT



Arcanum Glacier Tours

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DINING OUT AT *Icelandair's Hotel Klaustur*

Don't let Kirkjubæjarklaustur's tongue twister of a name (church-farm-cloister) intimidate you - even Icelanders use its more informal nickname, Klaustur. Armed with this new-found knowledge, consider a visit to the tiny village that has been in existence since the year 1186. Full of interesting history, geology and folk tales, Klaustur is a popular stopping point on the main south road and indeed one of the only places where you and your car can refuel between Vík and Höfn.

Walk-ins welcome, but reservations are always good

Icelandair Hotel Klaustur's restaurant and bar, which opens from 6:00pm to 9:30pm, is not just for hotel guests; walk-ins are

welcome and it's a great place for a healthy and relaxed dinner. Talented head chef Einar Björn Halldórsson is a keen proponent of the Slow Food Movement and his cooking is a reflexion of this philosophy: his new summer menu focuses squarely on making use of a variety of ingredients from small-scale food producers located in the vicinity.

A menu for all seasons

The famed Arctic char is bred right here in a free-flowing stream of oxygen-enriched glacial waters that have been naturally filtered through layers of lava in the nearby Vatnajökull Glacier. The fish, which figures prominently on the restaurant's menu, tastes something like a cross between trout and salmon, is favoured by many chefs at top restaurants around Iceland.

Tempting your purse and palate with reasonably priced options

The 2017 summer menu offers a tempting range of starters, soups and main dishes and even tasty vegan options such as the mushroom patty with broccoli salad and carrot purée. For the budget-conscious there are reasonably priced main dishes such as the grilled Klaustur Arctic char with dill hollandaise, baby potatoes, fennel and leeks. Flavourful and local are keywords here as some of the ingredients travel no more than perhaps 5km at most and arrive at the hotel at their peak of freshness.

Speaking of freshness, many of the herbs and greens used in the kitchen are picked fresh daily from the hillsides around the hotel. Slow food at its best!

What to see in Klaustur

Just a few minutes' walk from the hotel lies a small but beautiful pine forest at the foot of a double waterfall known as Systrafoss (Waterfall of the Sisters). Here you can picnic, hike to the top of the falls or just do a bit of 'forest bathing' in this genuinely peaceful location, amidst some of the tallest trees in Iceland. The village was the site of a convent of Benedictine nuns from 1186 to 1550 and both Kirkjubæjar Abbey and the waterfall

and lake (Systravatn) above the village refer to this abbey. Magnificent hikes and day trips to places such as Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon and the Laki Craters are all close by while the snowy, jagged peaks of Skaftafell and Vatnajökull Glaciers beckon in the distance.

Loving the new look!

The hotel has been undergoing some recent renovations; a new colour scheme of soft greens and greys and modern geometric patterns grace the café/bar and echo the moss and lava of the surrounding countryside. Extra touches such as l'Occitane bath products in every room, good Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, and a copious breakfast buffet to greet you in the morning are some of little perks that will make your stay just that much more enjoyable. When the weather is fine, (which does happen in summer!), you can enjoy an espresso coffee, or maybe an excellent Icelandic IPA craft beer out on the patio.

Hotel manager Sveinn Heiðar Jensson, who received his training in Switzerland, does a fine job with his staff who are friendly, welcoming and attentive to guests' needs.

See you this summer at Icelandair's Hotel Klaustur. - ÓB



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THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

None of Heimaey's 5,300 inhabitants had ever expected that a volcanic eruption could make them homeless, when on 23rd January 1973, earthquakes started to shake the small island south of the Icelandic mainland. Only hours later a 2,000 metre-long crevice opened just outside the town and close to the church, pouring fountains of lava and ash over Heimaey's houses and streets.

In less than one hour all the inhabitants had been evacuated, without any chance of saving their belongings. Some people never returned to the island.

Heroes Saving a Home

Two hundred brave men stayed in the danger zone to fight the devastation, and finally succeeded in slowing down the lava flow by cooling it with seawater and thus saved the port. However, when 5 months later, the eruption came to its end, around 400 houses had been completely destroyed.

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii, which in 73 AD,

was buried under thick layers of ash and lava from Mt. Vesuvius. Huge parts of that historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

'Pompeii of the North' deserves its name: 40 years after the disaster some 10 houses have been raised from the ashes, and an impressive museum tops off the excavation site, that had been open to visitors since the very first dig.

A Museum as a Mirror

Eldheimar's design is unique, rather ominous, and yet austere. It is an architectural masterpiece made of volcanic stone that perfectly mirrors the inexorability and harshness of nature. Its beating heart right in the centre of the building is Gerðisbraut No. 10, the house that had been situated on the slope of the lava-spewing volcano. Having been fully excavated, it displays life on the day of the eruption and now serves as a memorial for a lost homeland.

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m² museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman



Island's Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a height of 220 metres out of the blue, not existing before its eruption.

It was similar to the submarine volcano that erupted in 1963 and lasted four years creating the island of Surtsey, south of Heimaey.

Nature protection laws protect Surtsey and only scientists are allowed to access the island for research reasons. The island is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2008.

The Eldheimar museum is quite open in both design and guidance in the exhibition halls as well as in the café and shop. It leaves enough space for walking around and contemplating the natural disaster and its impacts on the economic and cultural life of the Westman Islands, creating respect for the determination of its fearless inhabitants, who still brave the elements today. -DT

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DINE IN THE LANGOUSTINE CAPITAL

Humarhöfnin satisfies the hunger for whole langoustine in Höfn

Iceland is known for some of the finest fresh fish in the world and a large share of the country's catch is landed at Höfn í Hornafirði, on the south-east coast. Höfn (which sounds like 'Hup' to our ears and means harbour) is also known as the langoustine capital of Iceland, where several thousand visitors gather in the town for the annual Humarhátíð (Langoustine) Festival, to be held in June.

You would expect the langoustine capital of Iceland to have a fine-dining restaurant that can do justice to the lovely little crustacean. The Humarhöfnin sea-food restaurant, which has been a big success since it was opened over 7 years ago by Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, her brother Ari Þorsteinsson and their spouses, has definitely earned that accolade.

A menu to entice any connoisseur

A favourite with tourists from the Mediterranean countries, Humarhöfnin was the first restaurant in Iceland to serve whole langoustine, though it has now become



popular in the town. The concept is still new in Iceland, so each diner who orders langoustine receives illustrated instructions on the finer points of using the langoustine cracker and fork that come with the dish.

The menu was created and developed by the French chef Jacques DuPont and his many dishes such as the beautifully presented 'Mix of Whole Langoustine and Tails' and the famous 'Black Magic Sauce' have been very successful. Paired with one of Humarhöfnin's specially selected wines, you are in line for an absolute feast. Also on the menu, the arctic



char is a delight. The crème brûlée, made from local eggs and imported Madagascar vanilla will have you swooning and you might want or need to order a double portion.

The casual, bright and lively décor fits Humarhöfnin's harbour location and the friendly wait staff will be happy to point out the very boat that brought in the day's catch, moored at the docks just a short distance away. The building itself was originally the town co-op before it was totally renovated and transformed into this beautiful restaurant. There is an exhibit on the 2nd floor which portrays the history of the house.

If you are a langoustine aficionado, you can fly, drive or take a bus to Höfn where you will find your seafood haven awaiting you. -EMV

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THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

Hotel Borealis, a Countryside Hotel with Style and Soul

While travelling in Iceland during autumn, the weather and the sun's changing light create a unique atmosphere in the countryside. Famous poet Rilke found appropriate words for this time of contemplation and retreat: "Lay your shadows upon the sundials, and o'er the isles allow your winds to vent".

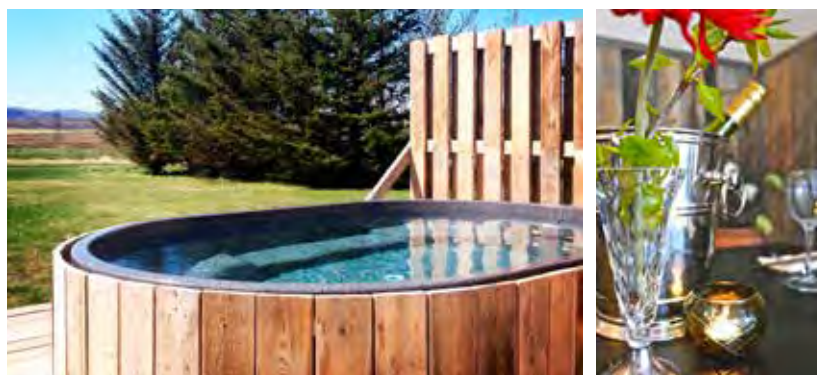
Enjoying Northern Lights

As darkness returns in autumn, the Northern Lights start illuminating the night skies, and as Hotel Borealis is situated far away from light pollution, the darkness makes them shine even brighter. And there is nothing like soaking in the hotel's hot tub after an exciting day as the Northern Lights dance above you!

In Nature's Heart

Hotel Borealis, just a few kilometres from the charming town of Selfoss, offers the serene silence of an elegant countryside retreat while activities and bustling life are on hand a short distance away. The welcomingly neat white houses have been tastefully furnished by blending last century's Icelandic antiques with modern style and prove to be so cosy you might never want to leave!

Offering 20 comfortable rooms with



bathrooms, cosy bungalows for families and a small villa, Hotel Borealis is able to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

The hotel has a special room for conferences and events and 'Hlaðan', a renovated barn that is a perfect location for a

romantic Icelandic country wedding. Hotel Borealis also serves well as a calm retreat for writing a book or contemplating the magic of the Icelandic changing light. When the autumn sun pours out her golden beams on the heather and red leaves, nearby Þingvellir National Park turns into an enchanted island. Cuddle up in a traditional wool sweater and take a stroll through the famous former site of Iceland's parliament, discover Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir on a day trip, try golfing on the nearby course or fishing in Lake Úlfjótvatn. Then, with daylight slowly fading, return to Hotel Borealis for a marvellous dinner, served on antique tables in the spirit of good, old Icelandic hospitality. The chef prides himself on only using local products such as highland lamb, arctic char from Lake Þingvallavatn and vegetables grown in the area's greenhouses for his delicious meals. -DT

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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 visible, 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

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REFRESHING VÍK

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, and 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

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A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

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, 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

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STRACTA HOTEL HELLA

A New Hotel on Iceland's South Coast



Located in the peaceful village of Hella in South Iceland, Stracta Hotel is one of Iceland's newest hotels, catering for every budget. Built in 2014, the hotel gets high marks for its ability to incorporate a pleasant modern look seamlessly throughout its well thought out concept and design.

A Room for Every Budget

The hotel encompasses a wide variety of room options—from high-end deluxe suites, each with its own private hot tub and well-stocked mini-bar, right down to budget rooms with shared facilities. There are also studio apartments and spacious cottages, with simple self-catering facilities that are perfect for families with children. Whichever you choose, you can always count on comfortable beds, free access to the hotel's hot tubs, saunas and wi-fi throughout the hotel.

Northern Lights Prime Time

Stracta Hotel's prime location, situated far from the light pollution of the bigger towns, allows guests a fabulous opportunity to view the northern lights from October through April. Imagine yourself lounging in a cosy hot tub, glass of wine in hand, as the Northern Lights swirl through the skies



above. Should the auroras happen to make their appearance while you are sleeping, a wake-up call can be arranged so you don't miss this experience-of-a-lifetime event!

Healthy Food Choices Abound

Food options and choices are varied at Stracta Hotel. The bar and bistro located on the ground floor is where you can order healthy sandwiches, salads, cakes and deserts, coffee, teas and a variety of wines and spirits. They even offer asian food. Guests will enjoy the panoramic views of the surrounding countryside from the second floor dining room where a buffet style dinner is served every evening.

When the weather is fine you can take your dinner out onto the balcony, or sit outside on the patio below, where you can enjoy the long summer nights. Planning a day out? Why not purchase a freshly made packed

lunch from the bistro to take with you on your journey?

Health, Wellness and Activities

Experience Iceland via a wide range of activities that can be arranged at the front desk. Horse riding tours, local farm visits, super jeep tours of nearby Eyjafjallajökull volcano or even an exciting helicopter tour over the most famous South Iceland sites are all possibilities. Rental cars are offered at a special price for hotel guests. Fancy a massage or healing treatment? Stracta Hotel is well connected! Local therapists make themselves available to hotel guests and offer massages, meditation, Reiki and cranial-sacral massages.

Hotel Stracta welcomes you! -EMV

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HARMONIOUS HJARÐARBÓL GUESTHOUSE



A Personal Touch in a Special Part of South Iceland

Hjarðarból Guesthouse is a family-owned business situated in a beautiful part of the Ölfus district, which has the feel of being far from the bustle of Reykjavik, but it is just a short drive away. The guesthouse offers 21 comfortable rooms ranging from doubles to family accommodation, and the owners debuted a hot tub facility on the property this past

summer that was a huge hit among guests. Taking a soak after a long day of exploring the region is an ideal way to relax and recharge for the next day of excursions.

Delicious Jams

Guests will also find a delicious breakfast buffet with homemade jams prepared by the owner, which is a favourite among

guests. Visitors are often thrilled to learn that jams are available to purchase in the lobby, and take a tasty souvenir of their visit home with them.

In addition to a modern building on the property, Hjarðarból has a structure affectionately nicknamed The Old House, which is the first house ever built in the area. The darling house was built in 1950 and represents the history of the area. The owners are renovating at least four rooms that will be ready by Christmas, focusing on tasteful décor and the comfort of first-time and returning guests.

Consider Hjarðarból Guesthouse for a home-away-from-home experience in South Iceland. -JG



Hjarðarból Guesthouse

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RESEARCHING ICELAND'S PUFFINS

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands studies Iceland's puffin population, and reports dire findings

Birdwatchers are delighted when they visit Iceland, as there are more than 300 species of birds that can be seen around the island. Iceland serves as a stopover for birds migrating between North America and Europe. Popular bird species are Gyrfalcons, Great Northern Divers, Harlequins, and Barrows Goldeneyes.

However, the birds that have become synonymous with Iceland are the adorable puffins, with their black and white bodies, bright orange feet and colourful red, blue and orange beaks. Puffins are remarkable swimmers and divers, able to stay underwater for over 2 minutes and surface with many small fish in their beaks. While exceptional in water, puffins are known for their uneven landings on land, which is part of their charm. It's possible to see puffins during the summer in many areas including the Westman Islands, Grimsey, the Látrabjarg cliffs in the Westfjords, Hafnarhólmí in Borgarfjörður Eystri, and Papey.

About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain, according to Erpur Snær Hansen, the Director of Ecological Research at Náttúrustofa Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands was founded in 1996 and has a team of scientists



conducting research on environmental and wildlife issues. Erpur has been investigating the puffin population of the Westman Islands since 2007 and has some startling data regarding Iceland's puffins.

If winter surface sea temperatures remain at current levels or higher, Erpur says, then much of the puffin population of south and west Iceland will disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. "We go around Iceland twice a summer to measure chick production," says Erpur. "We also study their diet and environment."

Iceland's puffin population has been struggling largely due to lack of food.

"They predominantly eat two species of fish around Iceland—capelin and sand eel," says

Erpur. "The sand eel population collapsed in 2003-2005 and has not recovered yet, and we believe that is a real problem." The main hypothesis the agency is working on is that warmer winter ocean temperatures are lowering young sand eels' survival as they exhaust their wintering energy reserves prior to the spring food appearance. The spring bloom has also been greatly delayed over the same time period. Lack of fat fish has caused famine for some colonies of Iceland's puffins.

The impact is clear. Adult puffins must forage farther and come back with fewer fish for their young. Researchers are seeing puffin chicks starve, nests are abandoned, and fewer adult birds are breeding.



About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years, at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain. Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).



"This has occurred before," says Erpur, explaining that the population dynamics are linked to a periodic warming cycle called the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO). Indeed, waters surrounding Iceland warmed for about 35 years, and then cooled off for another 35 years, and puffin populations have correspondingly dropped, then recovered. However, it appears to be different now.

Ocean temperatures have now climbed as much as two degrees since the last cold period, but similar to the last warm period (1920-1964). Now the spring bloom is very late but it's timing in the last warm period is unknown.

The puffin chicks

are feeling the impact. Even when the current warming cycle ends, around 2030, it won't perhaps be cool enough, depending on the effects of global warming. "The warming is definitely felt in Iceland," he says. "It makes things happen fast, and the birds are suffering."

Because of the declining puffin population, the government should consider some changes, says Erpur. "The hunting is unsustainable," he says. "We need to rethink our management system and base it on scientific measurements and on being sustainable, similar to the fishing industry here. Something needs to be done."

Puffins impact tourism as well, and that's something the government need to consider, says Erpur. "Many people come from all over the world to see Iceland's puffins during the summer months," he says. "It's a big part of business when you think of whale and puffin tours. Puffins are worth more money to the tourist industry alive rather than dead." And that goes for restaurants in Iceland. "Seeing puffin on the menu at some restaurants is both embarrassing and sad," he says. "These birds are important and we're losing them. There needs to be a shift in thinking to help preserve puffins." An easy and responsible solution for the government would be to ban the trade of game.



ICELANDIC TIMES

Icelandic Times is an ambitious magazine, published in five languages, for the multitude of visitors Iceland receives all year round. Icelandic Times emphasizes everything that can be considered Icelandic – the people, the food, tourism, industry and in fact anything that might give visitors a better picture of the country and its people.

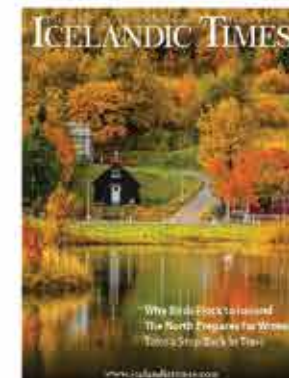
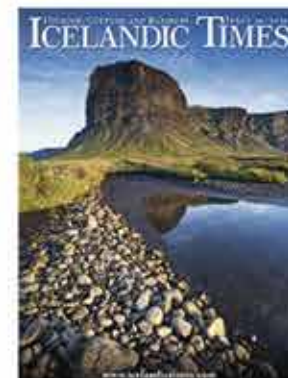
As you may know, Iceland has a lot to offer and there are countless individuals and companies who have meticulously laboured for years to make your stay more

memorable. Hundreds of mountain trails and caves have been mapped out, dozens of jeeps have been modified, millions have been spent on logistics, and thousands of sweaters have been knitted, just for you.

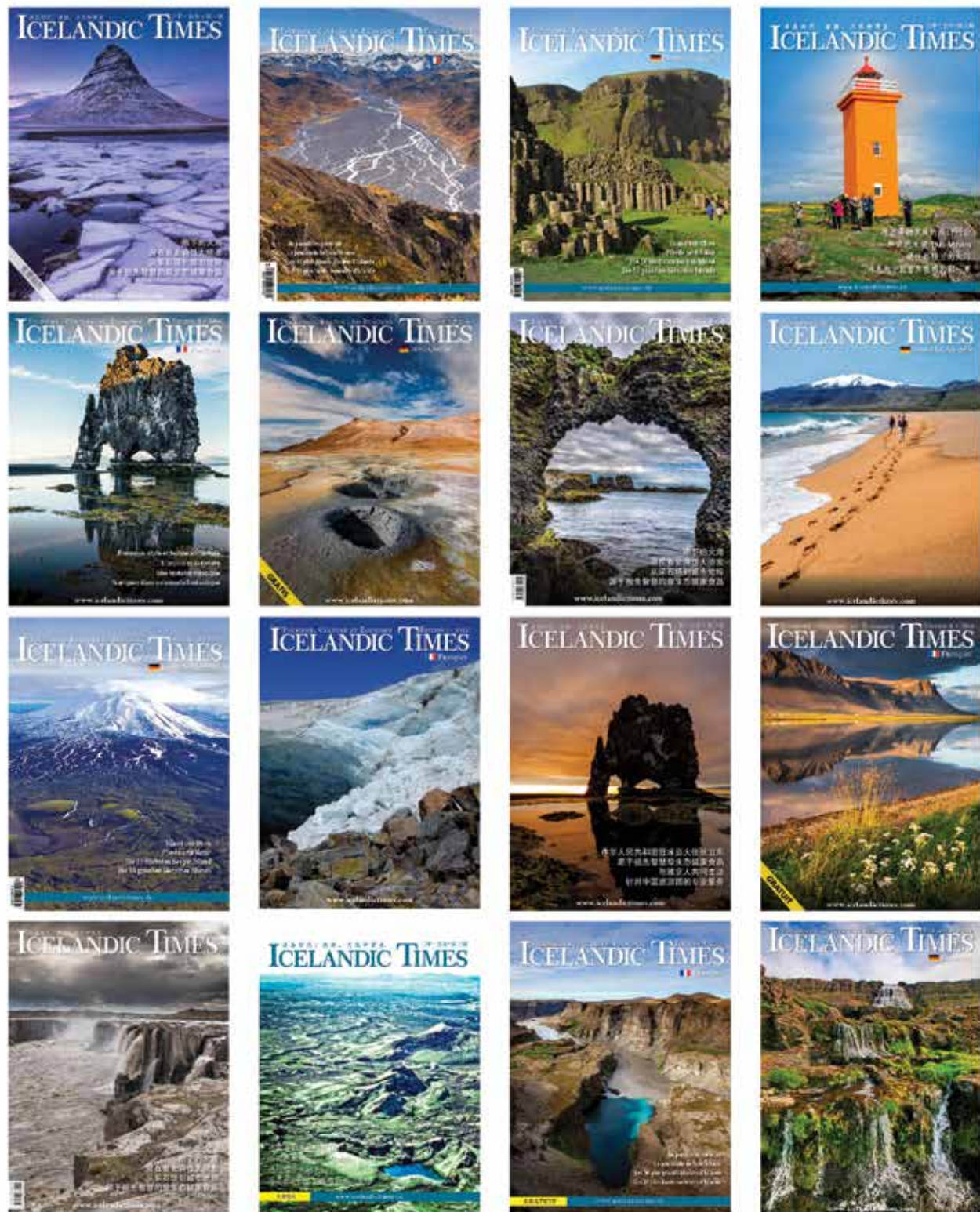
We hope you enjoy reading about these people and that this magazine will be helpful in making your stay more enjoyable.

Ólafur Þ. Þorsteinsson

Managing Editor and Publisher



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