

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

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The Energy of Iceland belongs to its People  
Travel to the Edge of the Arctic  
From Mexico to the Edge of the World  
The Icelandic Phallological Museum

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ISSN



# Circuleight

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Iceland is blessed with abundance of energy and world's richest fishing banks. New General-Director of National Energy Authority, Halla Hrund Logadóttir yearns to work for Iceland, the Arctic and the World in all its diversity at this watershed moment in history of Energy Change. "Climate Change in the Arctic is knocking at our doors," she says in an interview with Icelandic Times. "Dramatic changes in the Arctic eco-systems, acidification of oceans, welfare of inhabitants and animals and Arctic security are all pressing issues. We are running against time. This is our cup of coffee and we will not offer our descendants slouch," she says.

Geothermal Baths are being built around Iceland and the newest one is Krauma in West Iceland. The water for Krauma comes from Deildartunguhver, Europe's most powerful geyser that provides for 200 litres pr. second of 100° hot water. Krauma mixes it with cold water from Rauðsgil which is Ok Glacier, Iceland's smallest glacier.

One of Icelandic's most common proverb is Prándur í Gøtu – Faroese Tróndur í Gøtu – literally meaning someone in the way. However it is not common knowledge that Tróndur í Gøtu has royal bloodline in abundance as descendant of one of Iceland's most famous settler, Auður djúpúðga – deepwise – who was born ca. AD 850. After her husband Ólafur White King of Dublin was killed in battle and her son Þorsteinn Red, King in Scotland was killed as well, she secretly built a Viking-ship and set sail to Iceland, stopping in Orkney and Faroe Islands where she married her granddaughters to locals lads. Their descendants are the Earls of Orkneys and Gøta Chaps in Faroe Islands.



Einar Th. Thorsteinsson

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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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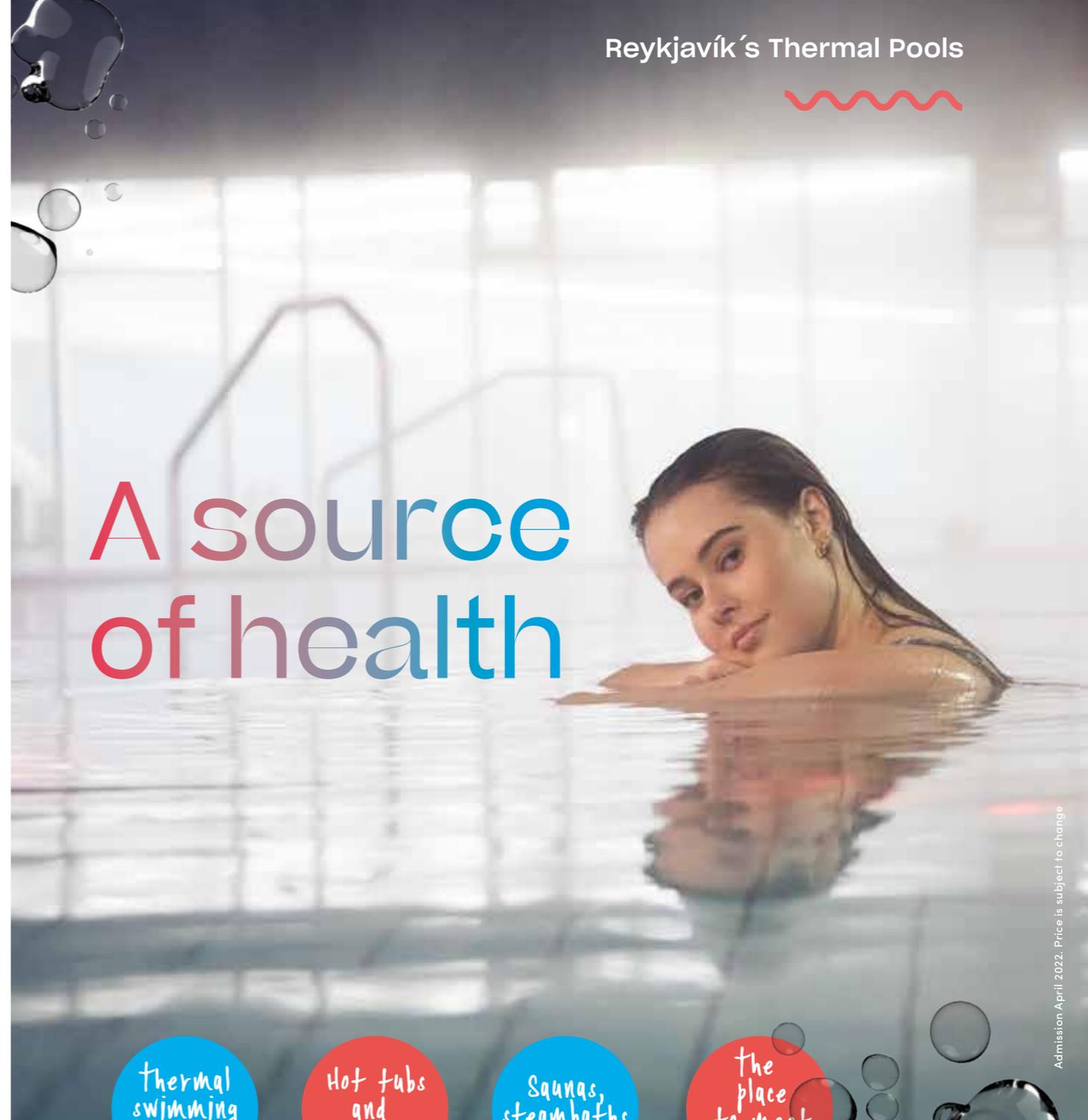
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- Thermal swimming pools
- Hot tubs and jacuzzi
- Saunas, steam baths
- The place to meet locals

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www.itr.is

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Admission April 2022. Price is subject to change



# THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Visit one of the most unique museums on the planet

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum is one of the most unique museums in the world and one of the most-visited in Reykjavík. The museum contains a collection of more than 300 penises belonging to every species of mammal found in Iceland and scores of foreign species. Visitors to the museum will see specimens belonging to whales, a rogue polar bear, seals and walruses, and specimens originating from many different kinds of land mammals. “The collection began in 1974 and it’s been constantly growing,” said Þórður O. Þórðarson, the manager of the museum. “We have well over 300 penis specimens and 300 penis themed art and cultural pieces.”

## History of the museum

The founder, Sigurður Hjartarson, a historian and teacher, began this collection in 1974 when colleagues who worked at the nearby whaling station in West Iceland began giving him whale penises to tease him. The idea of collecting specimens from more mammalian species was born. Collecting the organs progressed and by 1980, he had collected 13 specimens, four from whales and nine from land mammals. In 1990 there were 34 specimens and, when the museum opened in Reykjavík in August 1997, the specimens totalled 62. In the Spring of 2004, the museum moved to the small fishing village of Húsavík, the whale watching capital of Europe. It

was moved back to Reykjavík in 2011 and opened under the direction of a new curator, Siguður’s son.

## New and exciting location

“The first location in Reykjavík was great, but we had to relocate because the collection grew and the number of visitors grew as well,” said Þórður. “We are now located at Hafnartorg, which is a great area of Reykjavík near Harpa.” The museum has undergone extensive changes to improve the visitor experience. There is more space for guests to roam and view the specimens and the technology has been enhanced, with touch screens adding a modernized feel. Another exciting addition has been a phallus-themed bistro where locals and tourists can enjoy food, coffee and beers on tap from local breweries.

A visit to the Icelandic Phallogological Museum is a unique, must-see experience when visiting Reykjavík. The museum, which is open every day from 10:00 – 19:00, is a great way to spend a couple of hours in the capital, and it will be a conversation piece for years to come! - JG



**The Icelandic Phallogological Museum**  
Hafnartorg, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 561 6663  
www.phallus.is



# FlyOver Iceland

Soar above the island on an exhilarating ride

FlyOver Iceland gives you a thrilling bird’s eye view over the breathtaking landscapes of Iceland. Located in the Grandi harbour district on the west side of Reykjavík, the experience utilizes state-of-the-art technology, with full motion seating, for a true sense of flight. You sit suspended, feet dangling, before a 20-metre wraparound screen, while the film takes you on an exciting journey across Iceland. To enhance the experience, there are special effects, including wind, mist and scents, making you feel as if you are there.

## An unforgettable experience

It’s a unique feeling, hanging suspended as you soar through the landscape, feeling a light mist as you glide above a thundering waterfall, laughing and gasping at the dips and speed, and being enthralled by the epic beauty of the island. For many, the experience is more thrilling than expected and it’s fantastic to share with your family.

## Learn about Iceland’s history and nature

Before the flight-ride experience, there are two pre-ride shows that allow you to explore the unique nature of Iceland, as

well as the nation’s mythology and history. Before your flight begins, an animated Icelandic storyteller will welcome you into an ancient Viking longhouse. You join him by the light of the fire as he weaves a tale while an impressive shadow-play projection brings it all to life.

The animated narrator then takes you through the second experience, which uses audio, video and music. The guide, Sú Vitra, is a character based on old troll mythology that has been designed by the world-renowned illustrator Brian Pilkington. Sú Vitra guides you through three different acts. The first invites you to feel the power of Iceland’s nature, including towering volcanoes, vast glaciers and thundering waterfalls. The next act centres around the first settlers, while the last act shows how Icelanders have made a life on the island, despite the many obstacles.

## Relax at the comfortable café

You are welcome to enjoy the onsite café, Kaffi Grandi, where you can purchase snacks, light meals, soft drinks and coffee beverages. Adults can also order from the bar that includes a selection of beers, wines and cocktails.



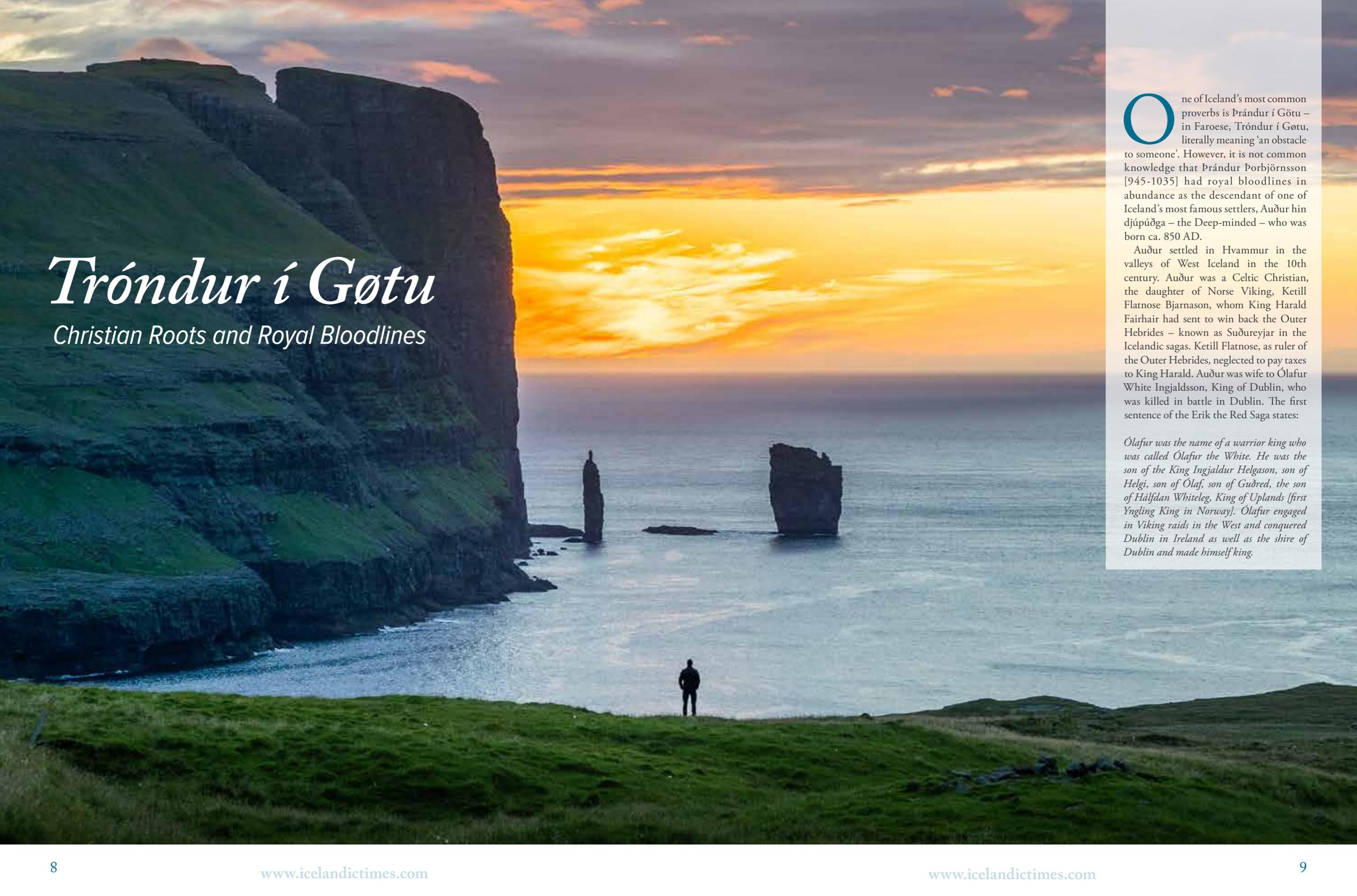
## Fun for the whole family

FlyOver Iceland is the perfect way to spend some time in the heart of Reykjavík with your family. Children aged 12 and under are welcome to join, as long as they are at least 102cm tall. FlyOver Iceland is open Wednesdays to Sundays this summer and the entire experience lasts about 35 minutes. The Grandi area is home to other family-friendly activities like the Whales of Iceland exhibition, as well as shopping and ice cream shops. -JG



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flyovericeland.is  
www.flyovericeland.com





# *Tróndur í Gøtu*

## *Christian Roots and Royal Bloodlines*

One of Iceland's most common proverbs is *Prándur í Gøtu* – in Faroese, *Tróndur í Gøtu*, literally meaning 'an obstacle to someone'. However, it is not common knowledge that *Prándur Þorbjörnsson* [945-1035] had royal bloodlines in abundance as the descendant of one of Iceland's most famous settlers, *Auður hin djúpúðga* – the Deep-minded – who was born ca. 850 AD.

*Auður* settled in *Hvammur* in the valleys of West Iceland in the 10th century. *Auður* was a Celtic Christian, the daughter of Norse Viking, *Ketill Flatnose Bjarnason*, whom King *Harald Fairhair* had sent to win back the Outer Hebrides – known as *Suðureyjar* in the Icelandic sagas. *Ketill Flatnose*, as ruler of the Outer Hebrides, neglected to pay taxes to King *Harald*. *Auður* was wife to *Ólafur White Ingjaldsson*, King of *Dublin*, who was killed in battle in *Dublin*. The first sentence of the *Erik the Red Saga* states:

*Ólafur was the name of a warrior king who was called Ólafur the White. He was the son of the King Ingjaldur Helgason, son of Helgi, son of Ólaf, son of Guðred, the son of Hálfðan Whiteleg, King of Uplands [first Yngling King in Norway]. Ólafur engaged in Viking raids in the West and conquered Dublin in Ireland as well as the shire of Dublin and made himself king.*

Auður and King Ólafur's only child was Thorsteinn the Red. After Ólafur's death in Dyflinn – Dublin – Auður, along with her young son, fled to the Outer Hebrides then ruled by her father. Þorsteinn the Red married Þuríður Eyvindardóttir, daughter of Eyvindur Eastman and Rafarta Kjarvalsdóttir, daughter of Cerball Kjarval MacDúnlaing [ca. 800-888 AD], King in Ireland. Þorsteinn the Red and Þuríður had seven children; Ólafur feilan and six daughters, Gróa, Ólöf, Ósk, Þóridur, Þorgerður and Vigdís. Þorsteinn the Red became King in Scotland but was killed by the Scots at Katanes. The Icelandic Færeyinga Saga that was written in 13th century says:

*There is a man named Grímur Kamban. Grímur was the first person to settle the Faroe Islands. In the time of Haraldur hárfagri –*

*Fairhair – a large number of people fled in the face of his tyranny. Some settled in the Faroe Islands and dwelt there, while some sought other unpopulated lands. Auður hin djúpaudga sailed out to Iceland and called in at the Faroes and there gave Þorsteinn the Red's daughter, Ólöf, in marriage, and thence originated the greatest family line of the Faroe Islanders, which they call Gata-Chaps, who lived on Austrey.*

*There was a man called Þorbjörn. He was known as Gata-Chap. He lived on Austrey in the Faroes. His wife was called Guðrún. They had two sons. The elder was called Þorlákur, and the younger Þrándur, [Tróndur]. They were promising men. Þorlákur was both big and strong; Þrándur was also of the same build when he grew up, but there was a large difference in their ages. Þrándur had red hair and a freckled face, handsome to look at.*



After her son's death at Katanes, Auður secretly had a Viking knörr [ship] built in the forest and set sail with the family treasures, along with Þuríður her daughter in law, grandchildren, freeborns and slaves. The family history, Laxdæla Saga, states:

*Men do not know that ever has one woman gotten away from such strife [war] with as much capital and entourage. From that it was concluded that she was outstanding among women.*

### Descendant of royals

The municipality of Gøta, near the Gøtavík fjord on the Eastern island, was the home of chieftain Tróndur í Gøta, defender of Viking traditions in the face of the King of Norway and the chieftain, Sigmundur Brestisson. Tróndur, as a descendant of Auður the Deep-minded, would have known his foremother's Celtic Christian heritage.

Tróndur í Gøtu – Þrándur í Gøtu – is the most famous of the Gøtu-Skeggjar or Gata-Chaps. It is common belief in Iceland that Tróndur was a heathen and worshipped the Viking gods and was a hero in the Faroe Islands. According to the

Færeyinga Saga, those who did not approve of Haraldur Fairhair's rule of Norway between 872-930 AD settled, among other places, in the Faroes. In the early 11th century, Sigmundur Brestisson [961–1005 AD] was sent by Ólafur Tryggvason, King of Norway to Trondheim [995-1000 AD]. Sigmundur forced Tróndur í Gøtu to convert or face beheading. Although Sigmundur was killed, Norwegian taxation was upheld. The Kingdom of Norway entered the Kalmar Union with Denmark in 1397 and the Faroes gradually came under Danish control.

### Epic in Faroese history

Sigmundur Brestisson and Tróndur Þorbjörnsson are two epic individuals in Faroese history. To the Catholic author of the Faroese saga there was no doubt: Sigmundur was the white knight and crusader fighting against Tróndur, who was said to be stuck in primitive and outdated Viking beliefs though he was really a Celtic Christian. Tróndur was renowned for his love for his land with deep sense of honour, executing the murderers of his enemy.

In this context, it's worth noting that his foremother, Auður, had accepted Christ

and become a Celtic Christian while in the Outer Hebrides. Her granddaughter Ólöf would, in all probability, have been of the same religion as her grandmother.

The events of the Færeyinga Saga take place between the 9th and 11th centuries, but the story was written when the Roman Catholic Church had attained supreme rule in Iceland and Faroes.

### Descendant of Ynglings and Skjöldungar

According to Sigurdur Bjarnason, one of Iceland's leading genealogists, Tróndur Þorbjörnsson í Gøtu was a descendant of the Ynglings and Skjöldungar, the dynasty of Scyldings, who were the ancient Danish Kings. Skjöldur, the first Danish King, was claimed to be the son of the Viking god Óðinn, whom Bjarnason maintains, was born in mid-3rd century AD. Snorri Sturluson wrote of Óðinn in Heimskringla. Ynglingasaga is the first part of Snorri's history of the ancient Norse gods in Scandinavia and how Freyr founded the Swedish Yngling dynasty at Uppsala and their settlements in Norway and became ancestor to King Haraldur Fairhair.

Tróndur was a descendant of Ragnar Lothbrok – Ragnar Loðbrók – born in the mid-8th century, a legendary Viking King of Denmark and Sweden, known from ancient poetry. According to the traditional literature, Ragnar distinguished himself by conducting many raids against the British Isles and the Holy Roman Empire during the 9th century. Ragnar Loðbrók's son, Sigurdur Snake-in-the-Eye, born ca. 780, became King of Sweden. He took up arms against his uncle Haraldur Wartooth in a bid to overthrow him and take the crown of Denmark. Sigurdur won the Battle of the Brávelliir, where it is said that Óðinn himself intervened. Ragnar's son, Sigurdur Snake-in-the-Eye, had a daughter, Tóra – Þóra, mother of Ingjaldur, who was father of Ólafur White, the King of Dublin and Þorsteinn the Red.

Ólöf Þorsteinsdóttir was about 17 years old when her son, Þorbjörn Gata-Chap – Þorbjörn Gøtu-Skeggi was born, father to Þorlákur and Tróndur.

- Hallur Hallsson, Editor & Historian

# THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

*The Little Christmas Shop that is festive all year round*

**A**nne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Laugavegur, Reykjavík's main shopping street, is what you might call a 'one woman wonder'. 20 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 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. -HDB



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 lindsay@simnet.is



## SUSTAINABLE ARTISAN KNIFEMAKING IN ICELAND

*One of a kind knives that will last you a lifetime*

**W**hen people think about knife-making, nature and waterfalls are probably the last things that come to mind. However, that is precisely what you find when you visit Páll Kristjánsson's and Soffía Sigurðardóttir's world-renowned sustainable knife atelier. Situated in the idyllic Álafosskvós in Mosfellsbær, only a 15-minute drive from downtown Reykjavík, the atelier offers some of the best knives you will ever own.

Páll Kristjánsson, or Páll as he likes to be called, has been making knives for over 30 years. His craftsmanship is renowned worldwide, but his knives are unique because he only uses sustainable materials. "Soffía and I use materials that otherwise would be thrown away and

give them a new life", Páll says. "Some of the materials we use are birch, rowan, horses' hooves, reindeer antlers, sheep horns and whale teeth." As a result, every knife is one of a kind and made with Japanese Damascus steel or stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden.

Soffía Sigurðardóttir's artisan kitchen knives are made with only the best blades, which have to be handled with care. She is also the only kitchen-knifemaker in Iceland. "I get inspiration from nature and my surroundings when I'm creating the knives. One colour combination of rust-red and green, I got from a ship in the shipyard in the Old Harbour in Reykjavík", Soffía says.

"Sustainability and the environment are very important to us. No animals are hunted for us. The ram horns and horse hooves come from slaughtered animals, and the ivory comes from beached

whales. If we buy wood, we only buy from specially certified companies in the USA, which can reliably prove that the trees were legally chopped down." Additionally, they get wood from old trees in Iceland that need to be cut down.

It's not only Páll and Soffía who sell their art in the atelier. Páll's brother Bjarni is also an artist. His primary medium is ebony and ivory, from which he carves out small animals and other figures. Just like Páll and Soffía, his materials are sustainably sourced.

Visiting the atelier gives a particular sensation of calmness. It is evident the work done there is done with care. The smell of the different woods and leather of the sheaths, combined with the calm sounds of birds chirping and the waterfall, which is literally in their backyard, makes for an exceptional experience. One which is highly recommended. -HDB



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 Bjarni Kristjánsson: +354 697 6294  
 www.bj-art.is



# 64° REYKJAVÍK DISTILLERY: QUALITY CRAFTED SPIRITS

*An independent distillery with unique spirits and liqueurs*

64° Reykjavík Distillery is a family-run, independent micro-distillery that handcrafts unique Icelandic-inspired spirits and liqueurs. Popular among locals and visitors alike, the spirits feature flavours including blueberry, juniper, crowberry and rhubarb. The distillery, which was founded in 2009, uses handcrafted processes to create the spirits including natural infusion and

small batch distillation. The ingredients are sourced sustainably, and are proudly foraged locally in Iceland. Great care is spent in selecting the best ingredients as the unique quality and intensity of the berries are key to the rich flavours of the spirits. There is a short window for foraging berries in Iceland, so the pickers must time the season perfectly to collect the best berries.



The spirits, which can be enjoyed in mixed drinks or on their own, can be found in the finest restaurants and bars in Iceland as well as in state-run liquor stores.

### Something for everyone

There is a flavour to suit every taste: the blueberry, crowberry and rhubarb liqueurs are on the sweet side and are great for cocktails or to enjoy along with a dessert.

Reykjavík Distillery's Einiberja (juniper) is a delicious gin that has an elegant, pure, yet intense and crisp flavour. Meanwhile, the company's Brennivín packs a bit of a punch. Distilled from the best organic caraway seeds and local angelica seeds, 64° Brennivín is enjoyed neat with traditional Icelandic food. Lately, local and international bartenders have discovered 64° Brennivín, along with other 64° Reykjavík Distillery spirits, to design fantastic cocktails. -JG

**Reykjavík Distillery**  
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 info@reykjavikdistillery.is  
 www.reykjavikdistillery.is



# A TASTE OF THAI

*Krua Thai serves an enticing cuisine in the heart of the capital city*

Reykjavík's culinary charm is quite impressive for a small city, with a growing number of choices to suit all tastes. While there are traditional Icelandic restaurants serving fresh fish and tender lamb dishes, there are also fantastic restaurants specialising in food that you may not expect to see in Iceland. For instance, Krua Thai features classic and inventive Thai food in Reykjavík.

### Impressive Menu

Quality ingredients, friendly service and a comfortable environment make Krua Thai a favourite among locals and travellers. The menus feature many of the staples you expect to see such as savoury spring rolls, tasty rice and noodle dishes, and glorious plates of Pad Thai. Main courses include delicious options like Pad Grapow, which is a fried dish with chilli and basil leaf in oyster sauce, served with rice and either chicken, pork, beef or lamb. There are also soups and salads on the menu. There is truly something for everyone.

### Vegetarian-friendly dining

Non-meat eaters will feel more than welcome as Krua Thai has a large vegetarian section that is big on flavour. For instance, guests can enjoy vegetable noodle and rice dishes, as well as fried vegetables with tofu in oyster sauce, and a spicy vya salad served with rice.

### Central location

Krua Thai at Skólavörðustíg 21a, is conveniently located in the heart of city centre, and is a delightful location for a meal. It has a cosy atmosphere and friendly staff who are eager to ensure you have an ideal dining experience. It's the perfect place for a meal after some time exploring museums, shops, and cafes in the trendiest and liveliest part of Reykjavík. If you want to spend the evening in at your hotel or guesthouse, you can order food to take away, and with delivery. Delivery is available daily until 21:00. -JG



**Krua Thai**  
 Skólavörðustíg 21a, Reykjavík 101  
 +354 551-0833  
 www.kruathai.is





## FUR STORE AND WORKSHOP

Feldur is a family run fur brand that specializes in the design of high quality fur products. The shop and workshop is located in the heart of Reykjavik where you will find a wide selection of our fur products.

Inside you can also see the furrier at work, altering and repairing old fur garments giving them a new life and style. “We believe in the quality and durability of fur as a material that can last a lifetime”.



**Feldur verkstæði**  
 Snorrabraut 56 - 105 Reykjavík  
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 www.feldur.is



## ANNA MARÍA Design

*The influence of the Icelandic nature*

Anna María Sveinbjörnsdóttir is an Icelandic jeweller and designer who runs her own jewellery store, Anna María Design, on one of the main shopping streets in the city, Skólavörðustígur 3, in the heart of Reykjavík. Anna María studied both in Iceland and Denmark and has run her own company for more than three decades.

Anna María's design is pure, timeless and modern at the same time. She stresses exceptional attention to detail and craftsmanship and has eye for the smallest detail.

The jewellery is both for women and men and encompass silver, gold, white gold, Icelandic stones as well as precious stones like diamonds. In the store, you can find one of the biggest selections of jewellery with Icelandic stones in the country like Agate, Mose-agate, Jasper, Basalt and Lava.

When it comes to emphasis and style, Anna María mentions free and organic forms based on the Icelandic nature. Iceland is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and its waves inspire the jeweller and much of her jewellery where you can see the forms of the waves on rings, necklaces, bracelets or ear-rings.

Filigree represents a delicate form of jewellery metalwork usually made in silver and is well known regarding the traditional Icelandic women's costume. In some of Anna María's designs you can find this extraordinary delicate work, which reminds one of the Icelandic heritage. -SJ

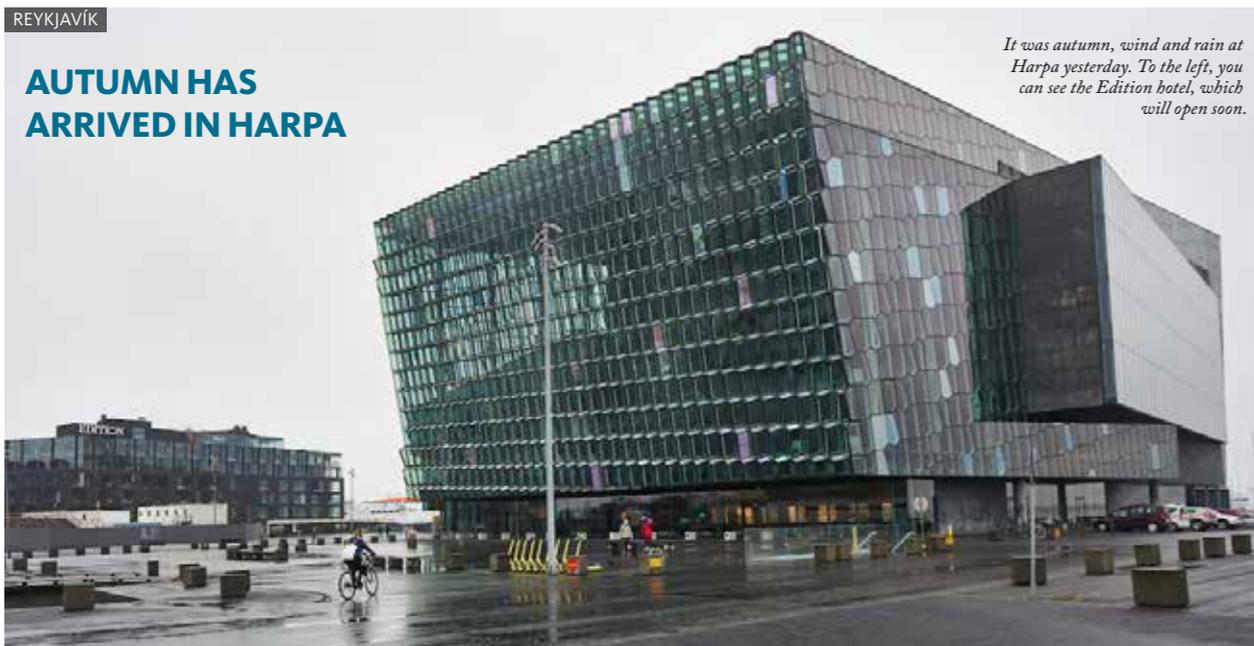


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REYKJAVÍK

## AUTUMN HAS ARRIVED IN HARPA



*It was autumn, wind and rain at Harpa yesterday. To the left, you can see the Edition hotel, which will open soon.*

The Harpa Culture and Conference Center, which opened ten years ago in May 2011, is one of Reykjavík's prominent landmarks. The house stands on the eastern edge of the entrance to Reykjavík Harbour. Due to fewer restrictions on the number of people allowed to gather, many concerts and events are on the agenda. Harpa has more or less been closed for a year and a half due to the pandemic. South of Harpa, two large and impressive houses are being built, the headquarters of Landsbanki Íslands, and Edition Hotel, the first five-star hotel in Iceland. These buildings will change the appearance of the capital considerably when they are completed.

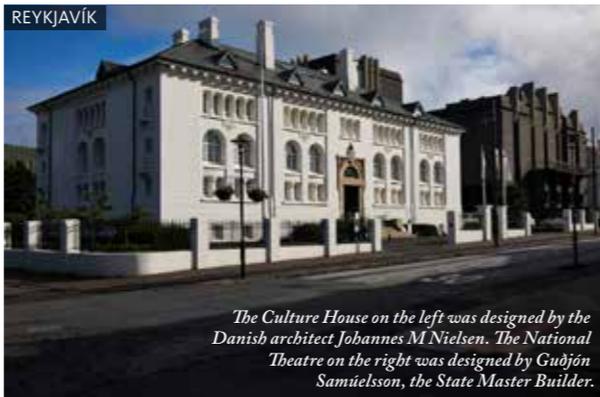
REYKJAVÍK



## THE FRENCH STREET IN REYKJAVÍK

Frakkastígur (French Street) is one of the most beautiful streets in the city centre. It is situated north of Skólavörðustígur and travels down from Hallgrímskirkja to the sea. At either end of the street are works of art. The statue of Leifur Eiríksson stands at the top of Skólavörðuholt, and The Sun Voyager by Jón Gunnar Árnason stands by the shore on Sæbraut. Jón Gunnar won a competition for outdoor works for the 200th anniversary of the City of Reykjavík in 1986. The artwork was unveiled in 1990. Frakkastígur takes its name from the French wooden houses that were transported from Austurstræti in 1901 when the street was built. At the bottom of Frakkarstígur, French shipping companies built a hospital in 1902, which is now used by a music school. Between 1830 and 1914, the French fished cod in Icelandic waters. It is estimated that around 4,000 French fishermen lost their lives by Iceland during this period.

REYKJAVÍK



*The Culture House on the left was designed by the Danish architect Johannes M Nielsen. The National Theatre on the right was designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, the State Master Builder.*

## THE TWO CULTURE HOUSES ON HVERFISGATA

The Culture House on Hverfisgata was built between 1906 and 1909 to house the National Library of Iceland, the National Archives of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland. The National Gallery of Iceland now operates the building, as the museums originally in the Culture House have received new and more suitable premises. The current exhibition in the house is "Fjársjóður Þjóðar" ("The Nation's Treasures"), pearls of Icelandic art from the second half of the 19th century to the present day. The National Theatre was opened in 1950, after being under construction since 1925, or for a quarter of a century. More than five million people have enjoyed performances in the National Theatre in the 70+ years since it opened. The house was designed by Guðjón Samúelsson almost a hundred years ago.



## Hafnarþorpið Marketplace REYKJAVÍK'S NEW AND UPDATED KOLAPORT FLEA MARKET

In a large building in downtown Reykjavík, initially built for the Customs Office, you will find Iceland's biggest flea market, formerly known as Kolaportið. It has been updated and is now a marketplace with a brand-new name, Hafnarþorpið, which translates to "The Harbour Village".

The flea market, which you can often find on a "Top-10-things-to-do-in Reykjavík" list, has had an update. The Kolaport flea market stalls with hidden treasures are still there, as are the stalls with used and new items such as Icelandic wool, art, crafts & accessories. There's the street-food court with Icelandic and international gourmet food and a café as well. In the evening it can all be changed into a concert and conference hall, an exhibition area, or a meeting room.

Ívar Trausti, one of the market updaters, says that the missing thing from Reykjavík was a proper trend port and marketplace. "Every time I go abroad, I specifically look for marketplaces. They are usually in or close to the city centre and very popular."

"The idea is over four years old, but the changes, for me, were a very logical thing to do. It was about time to update the old flea market, otherwise it would not have survived. The location is great for this kind of multi-functional marketplace. It should be a magnet for visitors from abroad and Icelanders."

One of the changes was to update the name, which has been changed from Kolaportið to Hafnarþorpið.

"It was necessary to modernise the market a little bit", Ívar said. "We won't remove anything; the stalls, with old and new outlets, gourmet food and the food court are still there. We're just updating it."

As of now, it is open during weekends. In the future, it is planned to open on Fridays and then hopefully during the lunch hours and then gradually more. "It is often cold in Iceland, and Hafnarþorpið is the perfect place to get in from the cold. Sit down, have a cup of coffee, a boost or a beer at Hafnarbarinn.is, maybe some Icelandic street-food and a beverage and then have a walk around and see all it has to offer", Ívar said.

"Hafnarþorpið is a great place for entrepreneurs and artists to come to introduce and sell their wares. That has already struck a chord and is fast becoming one of our most popular features. Various Icelandic music events and a Latino festival are already scheduled. Also planned are pop-up entrepreneur and artist markets and an Asian weekend to name a few. We plan to keep the old market busy, with plenty of fun."

Hafnarþorpið is right across from Reykjavíkurbíóið – the Reykjavík Harbour – and is open during weekends between 11 am and 5 pm and gradually will be extending opening hours. See the future of Hafnarþorpið by scanning the QR codes. -HDB



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# Gaming IN ICELAND

The video gaming industry is thriving in Iceland, with numerous companies developing products

The gaming industry has grown by leaps and bounds in Iceland. There are several reasonably large companies currently operating in Iceland, providing good jobs in creating innovative products. The industry's growth can, in part, be credited to increased government support, such as higher reimbursement of research and development costs and incentives for individual investors to back startups. However, the Icelandic population itself is the biggest driver for innovation in the sector. In Iceland, 99% of inhabitants use the internet, the highest of any country in Europe. Iceland is a technologically advanced country, with good universities that produce an intelligent and productive workforce for the video game industry.

The people in the Icelandic gaming industry are a close-knit community who collaborate extensively regarding both knowledge sharing and investment opportunities. "Bigger companies like CCP have paved the way and made solutions that helped entrepreneurs who have come since", said Jóhann Ingi Gudjonsson, Marketing Manager at Solid Clouds. "In Reykjavík, we have bi-weekly gatherings, through Game Makers Iceland, where we share projects, ideas and solutions – making for a think tank of sorts. Iceland also has a very competitive government incentive programme that lessens the risk of developing new products and supporting entrepreneurs."

There have been many new opportunities in the gaming space, which makes it a very appealing market. "People of all ages and backgrounds play video games, and the industry is exciting in the sense that, even

the most niche groups still consist of a large number of potential customers", said Ólöf S. Magnúsdóttir, Producer at Arctic Theory. "We've seen in the past few years that an increasing number of people look for more social experiences in video games, and this has been especially true during the Covid-19 pandemic."

It's an exciting time for the gaming industry in Iceland. Below are profiles of a few companies making waves in the sector.

## Solid Clouds

Solid Clouds is a Reykjavík-based video game developer, established in 2013 by co-founders Stefán Gunnarsson and Stefán Þór Björnsson. The company creates deep and meaningful gaming experiences for PCs and mobile devices, utilising a team with diverse and multidisciplinary talents. The company has 22 employees but has been growing lately as they are working towards fulfilling ambitious goals and entering new markets.



Stefán Gunnarsson, the CEO of Solid Clouds

Solid Clouds released its first game, Starborne: Sovereign Space, in 2016. The game is a massively multiplayer online real-time strategy game in gigantic maps with up to 500 players vying against each other for galactic dominance. Players will forge alliances, plot, scheme and fight their way to victory in unique handcrafted maps – each offering different challenges and victory conditions. The game has enjoyed success and was recently called one of the best strategy games of its genre by PCGames magazine.

"We are currently working on our first mobile game, Starborne: Frontiers, which opens us up to a market of roughly 2.2 billion gamers. Frontiers is a persistent MMORPG, where you navigate a web of complex alliances and conflicts among the stars. The game allows players to explore the dazzling, expansive universe while continuously surprising and captivating them. Starborne: Frontiers takes place in the same universe as Sovereign Space but offers radically different gameplay" said Ívar.

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

## Miðeind

Miðeind, which focuses on Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications for the Icelandic language, has launched a new crossword game, Explo. Explo is based on the very successful Netskraft, a crossword web game for Icelandic, which over 20,000 Icelanders have played at some point and that now has about 7,500 monthly users. That amounts to about 2% of the population of the country. Miðeind has ten employees and is continuing to grow.



Vilhjalmur Þorsteinsson, founder of Miðeind

Explo (and Netskraft) are classic crossword games with a set of letter tiles in a virtual "bag", and players form their crosswords using these tiles. For Netskraft, Miðeind created a new tile bag for Icelandic using computer simulation to optimise the letter frequencies and scores. For Explo, they did the same for the English tile bag and designed a better game board that is downward diagonally symmetric instead of the classic centre-symmetric one.

The company has been operating in NLP and AI since 2015. It is a participant in the Icelandic Government's 5-year Language Technology Programme, intended to help save the Icelandic language from digital extinction. The technologies the company develops will hopefully also be beneficial for other minor, low-resource languages of the world.

Apart from Explo, which will be brought to market soon, Miðeind has developed services such as a machine translation website ([velthyding.is](http://velthyding.is)) for translating between Icelandic and English, a spelling and grammar checking website ([yfirlestur.is](http://yfirlestur.is)) for annotating text, and Embla, a voice assistant app for smartphones that can answer questions in spoken Icelandic.

[miðeind.is](http://miðeind.is)



The Arctic Theory team in Reykjavík

talent, so we're very excited for the future of Arctic Theory," said Ólöf, Producer at Arctic Theory.

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

## Parity

Parity is a video game company founded in 2017 by CCP-veteran, María Guðmundsdóttir. The company is based on the principle that the gaming industry craves more diversity in development and the products themselves. They employ 14 people, and aim to create games with more parity and variety, which appeals to a broader range of people. "We at Parity are currently working our first title, Island of Winds, a story-driven adventure game inspired by 17th century Iceland", said María.



The team members of Parity in their Reykjavík office

## Arctic Theory

Arctic Theory was founded to bring an innovative and exciting virtual world to life, giving players a unique take on the multiplayer space by focusing on collaboration over conflict. The founding team consists of four industry veterans, who have decades of experience building multiplayer games and have been an integral part of creating some of the most ambitious games on the market.

Founded in June 2020, Arctic Theory's team consists of nine people and is actively hiring to grow the studio. Arctic Theory is currently working on their, as yet, unannounced debut title. "We believe in open development, so we have a live prototype available on Steam called Project Existence as part of that philosophy. This proto-type acts as our testing grounds where we frequently implement and try out features and technology in a live environment. We've built a small and active community around the prototype which helps us tackle issues, validate our ideas and 'find the fun' much sooner than if we kept things internal."

Early next year, Arctic Theory will be announcing its debut title. "We're actively growing the team and looking for the top

In Island of Winds, the story revolves around the heroine, Brynhild, an herbalist who returns home after a long journey, only to find her clan missing and the island under a strange hex. Players are tasked with solving the mystery of the missing family and the peculiar hex through missions, puzzles and empathy-based combat filled with Icelandic history, folklore, and mythical creatures. "Island of Winds is a game with an astonishing open-world environment that explores the themes of self-doubt, violence, regret, and empathy", said María.

Parity just launched its first trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r6FSxvrl-I> that got over 100,000 views in the first 24 hours. "The next step is to continue our marketing campaign, start with beta testing, launch our second trailer, and develop our game", she said. "Island of Winds will launch on PC next year and soon after on other platforms."

<https://parity.is/>

### 1939 Games

Developer 1939 Games publishes the digital collectible card game, KARDS, a game set during WWII. The game has been designed as a cross platform game and was released for PC on Steam. The company, which has 17 employees in Reykjavík and Helsinki, was founded by brothers Ívar and Guðmundur Kristjánsson, both veterans of the gaming industry. Ívar was one of three original founders of CCP and CEO of the company when it launched the hit game MMORPG EVE-Online back in 2003.

The company recently completed a \$5.3M funding round to finalise the development and launch of the mobile version of KARDS. “The biggest opportunity lies with the mobile version, so the future is exciting”, said Ívar, now CEO of 1939 Games. “Currently we only offer KARDS for PC but we are working on the Mac version and the mobile version. We will be busy with KARDS for the next 18-24 months to reach its full potential but after that, we have several ideas for our next game.”



Ívar Kristjánsson, the CEO of 1939 Games in his studio

1939 Games has some untapped opportunities in markets like South Korea and Japan that they are exploring right now but the biggest opportunity is with the mobile launch next year. KARDS has already attracted more than 700,000 players and generated about \$4M in revenue. “Games like KARDS can expect to add 5-10 more players to the game after the mobile release so the coming year will be super exciting,” said Ívar.

<https://www.1939games.com/>

### Directive Games

Directive Games was founded by industry game veterans in Shanghai in 2014 and today, maintains a global presence in China as well as Iceland and the United States. The



Þorgeir Frímarr Óðinsson, general manager at Directive Games

company has grown significantly over the past three years and now has 17 employees in Iceland. Directive Games’ roster of titles includes Super Kaiju, The Machines, and Ready Player One: OASIS. “Right now, we are focusing on the game, The Machines Arena, a fast-paced PvP cross-platform multiplayer competitive game”, said Þorgeir Frímarr Óðinsson, general manager at Directive Games. “We are still testing the game, and as part of that testing, we had a global tournament a month ago where 16 teams competed. It was streamed and 150,000 people viewed it, which is great for it still being in alpha mode.”

The gaming industry in Iceland has seen a boost from the government in terms of tax incentives and rebates. “All startups in the IT industry have benefited immensely from these measures”, said Þorgeir, adding that this should not be taken for granted. “The next problem the industry will face is a scarcity of human resources. We need to bolster our education system when it comes to STEM courses and a more immediate goal would be to attract foreign talent to the country.”

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



Halldór S. Kristjánsson, CEO and Game Director at Myrkur Games

### Myrkur Games

Myrkur Games is a video game developer established in 2016 and based in Reykjavík. The company, which has 24 full-time employees, is currently developing an ambitious new action-adventure game for PC and consoles, called Echoes of the End. “We make high-quality action-adventure games for PC and consoles”, said Halldór S. Kristjánsson, CEO and Game Director at Myrkur Games. “We are currently working on Echoes of the End and it will be the first in a trilogy of games in the series.”

The company’s journey began when it was set up in 2016 by three founders who met in University. “We started working on game technology, but soon pivoted towards our passion, game development”, said Halldór. “We saw a huge opportunity in game technologies that would allow smaller studios to do so much more than anyone could have imagined.” Indeed, it’s an exciting time to be in the gaming industry. “Game technology has vastly changed over the last few years, which has opened the doors for new experiences”, he said. “There are more gamers than ever and the demand for high-quality gaming content is huge.”

As Myrkur Games develops Echoes of the End, the company is looking to increase its staff. “We are currently looking to expand the team by at least 11 more developers by summer 2022,” said Halldór. “Our largest task right now is finding great people and growing our team.”

<https://myrkur.is/>

-JG



REYKJAVÍK

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN REYKJAVÍK



The Cathedral of Christ the King, Landakotskirkja, stands at the top of Landakotsþæðinn in the western part of Reykjavík.

The National Church of Iceland is Lutheran, with 70% of Icelanders registered in it. The history of Christianity is as old as the settlement in the country, but Icelanders converted to Christianity (Roman Catholicism) in the Alþingi of 1000. The Reformation took place here in 1550 after Jón Arason, bishop of Hólar in Hjaltdalur, was beheaded in 1550, along with his sons. The first Catholic priest since the Reformation, the Frenchman, Bernard, came here around 1860, bought the Landakot cottage on the outskirts of Reykjavík and built a small chapel near the town in 1864. After the First World War, Catholics in Iceland began to discuss building a new and larger church. The architect Guðjón Samúelsson was commissioned to design a church in the neo-Gothic style. When the church was consecrated in July 1929, it was the largest church in the country. Guðjón designed many historic buildings in the capital, including the Lutheran Hallgrímskirkja, the largest church in the country at the top of Skólavörðuholt.

REYKJAVÍK

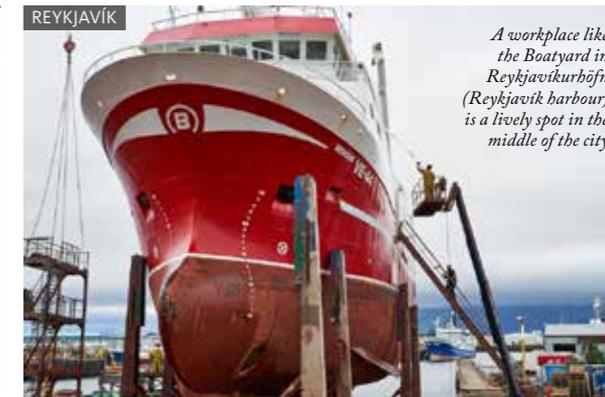


Looking north up Bergstaðastræti towards Skólavörðustígur.

### THE CHARMING PINGHOLT

Pingholt is a neighbourhood in the centre of Reykjavík. Bergstaðastræti can be called its main artery. The street extends from Landspítali University Hospital by Barónsstígur to Laugavegur, the primary and oldest shopping street in Reykjavík. Hotel Holt, one of the more luxurious and older hotels in the country, noted for its art collection, is on this street. The Kaffibarinn bar is on the street, too. It has been one of the most popular bars in the country for the last 25 years. The Gandhi Indian restaurant is there also, where you can even buy Greenland beer.

REYKJAVÍK



A workplace like the Boatyard in Reykjavíkurböfn (Reykjavík harbour) is a lively spot in the middle of the city.

### LIVELY REYKJAVÍK HARBOUR

Iceland is the 19th largest fishing nation globally and number three in Europe, after Russia and Norway. In terms of per capita, it is by far the largest in the world, after the Faroe Islands, as the country catch measures just over a million tonnes of fish a year. The stern trawler Bergur VE 44 (pictured) was built in Denmark 23 years ago and arrived in the Westman Islands from Norway 6 years ago. Bergur is 36 metres long and 569 GT (Gross ton) in size. It was being repaired in the boatyard in Reykjavík recently. Visir, the Grindavík fishing company, bought the trawler from the Westman Islands, to be delivered to the company shortly. Forty-six trawlers fish around Iceland, but they are by far the largest fishing vessels fishing in the Icelandic fishing jurisdiction. There are 649 other fishing vessels, according to Statistics Iceland.

SELTJARNARNES



*The beach that connects Gróttá to the mainland is on the left of the picture.*

**GRÓTTA  
 THE PEARL AT THE END OF THE PENINSULA**

At the far end of Seltjarnarnes Peninsula is the small island of Gróttá with its magnificent lighthouse. The first lighthouse was built at the beginning of the 20th century, but the current lighthouse was built in 1947. Gróttá was considered an excellent place to fish until the great Básenda floods on 9th January, 1799 destroyed both the island's beach and fields. The area is now one of the leading outdoor recreation areas in the capital area. Gróttá is a place where people take their dogs for a walk, go surfing, end their cycling circle around Reykjavík, or just enjoy the breeze that seems to belong in and around Gróttá all year round, though it is only possible to access it at low tide. The island is also closed during bird breeding seasons from 1st May to 15th July to protect the wonderful birdlife that nests there on the headland.



**THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF GREENLAND,  
 THE FAROE ISLANDS AND ICELAND**

Nordatlantens Brygge is a cultural and museum building for Greenlandic, Faroese and Icelandic cultures. The building also houses the embassies of the three countries. It is located by Christianshavn in the heart of Copenhagen, opposite Nyhavn. Nordatlantens Brygge was built as a warehouse between 1766 – 1767 by Det Almindelige Handelskompagni, which ran trade and services in Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Finnmark in northern Norway. Nordatlantens Brygge was renovated at the turn of the century. The building has housed the embassies and other cultural operations of the three countries since 2003. The Icelandic Embassy in Copenhagen was established in 1920 and is the oldest working embassy in the country, but relations between Iceland and Denmark have been greater than with other countries. Iceland was part of the Kingdom of Denmark for 564 years, from 1380 to 1918 when it gained sovereignty, and then complete independence, when the republic was established at Þingvellir National Park in 1944.



**THE OLDEST HOUSE IN REYKJAVÍK**

Aðalstræti 10 by Ingólfstorg is the oldest house in Reykjavík, built in 1762 by Skúli Magnússon (1711-1794), the first Icelandic Treasurer. He has been named the father of Reykjavík. This house was part of the Inntréttingar, eight buildings that housed the first textile workshops of Iceland. When it was built, Reykjavík was only a village. Icelandic society was still based primarily on self-sufficient farming in rural areas. 140 years later, Reykjavík had become the country's capital. Now this beautiful and remarkable house has become part of the Reykjavík City Museum, where you can get to know the city's history and its inhabitants. The house has been inhabited by the Bishop of Iceland, the Director of Health, and the Rector of the Reykjavík Junior College. Merchants Silli and Valdi bought the house in 1926.



*Looking up Skólavörðustígur towards Hallgrímskirkja Church*

**A SUMMER EVENING IN THE CITY CENTRE**

Skólavörðustígur is one of the two main shopping streets in the centre of Reykjavík, the other street being Laugavegur. Skólavörðustígur stretches from the intersection of Laugavegur and Bankastræti to the southeast up Skólavörðuholt Hill and ends at Hallgrímskirkja Church, which stands at the top of the hill. There are many companies and shops on the street as well as a prison. The prison is currently being renovated. It was built in 1872 and was in use until 2016. The idea is to turn the building into a dining hall. When the Icelandic Times visited Skólavörðustígur late last night, it was surprising how many people were out and about, especially tourists window shopping.

**COURTYARD IN REYKJANESBÆR**  
**THE FIRST MARRIOTT  
 HOTEL IN ICELAND**

Of the famous Marriott Hotels of the world, the one at Keflavík must rank as one of the most strategically located, with the volcanic eruption at Fagradalsfjall – ‘Beautiful Valley Mountain’ –being visible from its bedrooms.

The hotel is located within the world-renowned Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark and is in close proximity of numerous geological wonders and attractions, such as Gunnhver and the bridge between the continental plates of America and Europe, where one can literally walk from one continent to the other. Keflavík's Marriott is easy to get to, being only five minutes away from Keflavík International Airport and thirty minutes from the capital, Reykjavík.

The hotel offers 150 deluxe rooms that combine comfort and functionality, with crisp linen, blackout curtains, a walk-in shower, complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi, flat screen TV and a large desk. The hotel has a 24/7 gym and The Market, a convenience store, also open 24/7.

**The Bridge Restaurant at the centre**

The new state-of-the-art lobby at the Courtyard provides greater flexibility and choices for guests. At the centre of it all is The Bridge restaurant for a great breakfast, lunch or dinner and drinks in the evenings. Guests also enjoy inviting, flexible spaces, whether working or relaxing, free Wi-Fi throughout and easy access to the latest news, weather, and airport conditions. The Bridge, the on-site restaurant, brings a new standard and presentation for both local guests and international travellers, with exciting menus using fresh ingredients from local suppliers, offers endless opportunities for events, groups, business occasions etc.

Brand-new meeting spaces are perfect for interviews, corporate training, and other events. The hotel's two meeting rooms can be combined into one large event space with an accessible pre-function area, ideal for corporate meetings or smaller gatherings.

Whether visiting Iceland for business or pleasure, the friendly staff at Courtyard Reykjavik Keflavik Airport guide guests and help make visit to Iceland a success. -HH



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# LEATHER DESIGNER

*Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces*

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs.

Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”

Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours. Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986.

After working at an architect’s office, she started her own business. “I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.” 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



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## Information on road condition

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[@vegagerdin](https://twitter.com/vegagerdin) [www.road.is](http://www.road.is)

# TRAVEL IN STYLE WITH HREYFILL TAXI SERVICE

Why not skip the rental car in Iceland and book a taxi instead? Hreyfill taxi offers a personal experience, whether it is to be picked up from Keflavík International Airport or if you want to explore the country. Hreyfill is the largest taxi service in Iceland, as well as one of the oldest, founded in 1943.

Hreyfill is an excellent option if you want to travel to places off the beaten track or even if you just want a more intimate Golden Circle Tour. Longer or shorter trips are also available, and it is possible to book at short notice. The call centre is open 24/7, so there is always someone who can help.

One of the must-go places to visit in Iceland is the Blue Lagoon, near Grindavík. The lagoon is a great place to relax and eat good food, and having a driver and car from Hreyfill takes the whole experience to the next level. There is no need to plan your trip according to a company’s coach schedule.

No trip is too short or too long. If you just need a ride to the next street over, Hreyfill is



happy to help. It’s possible to order a taxi by phone, via email, through their app or just hail one from one of the many taxi ranks in the city centre. -HDB



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# ICELANDIC TIMES



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



# From Mexico to THE EDGE OF THE WORLD!

*A Mexican photographer displays the nature of the North as art*



**W**ould you follow your dreams to the edge of the world? That's what Mexican Arctic-nature photographer Marcela Cardenas did after falling in love with glaciers, icebergs, polar bears and winter landscapes. She had been dreaming for years about living amid spectacular nature and being able to capture its essence through her lens. "I'm deeply attracted to the blue ice found in glaciers and icebergs. They are the most fantastic natural formations, and each iceberg is a unique piece of art," said Marcela.

Her free spirit, courage, and determination allow her to travel alone to remote places throughout the Arctic region, pursuing her own photographic projects. "I reinvented myself when I was 35 years old and decided to quit my unfulfilling office job. Instead, I followed my heart and passion and moved to the northernmost inhabited place on earth: Svalbard, Norway and made my dream come true!" said Marcela.

## **Svalbard, the kingdom of the Polar bear**

Marcela had an authentic Arctic adventure driving her own snow scooter for over two years, exploring and photographing some of the most pristine nature in the world. "I love Polar bears, they are my absolute favourite animals, and I still get goosebumps thinking about my first encounter with one. There is nothing like seeing polar bears in their natural habitat," said Marcela, who became a full-time photographer in 2011 while in Svalbard and has never looked back.



### Greenland, The Land of the People

Marcela later moved to Greenland for one year to start a new photo project and adventure. Greenland has breathtaking and unspoiled nature combined with the fascinating Inuit culture. “I felt so welcomed and embraced by locals. Greenlanders happened to be the most hospitable people I ever met; they were so kind, friendly, sweet, helpful, humble and giving,” Marcela said.

She was based in the town Ilulissat, around majestic icebergs which can be several stories high, thousands of sled dogs and the most colourful houses you can imagine. “I had the chance to travel to 25 towns or villages and have exhilarating and unforgettable experiences staying with locals. I was invited to join them for fishing, hunting, vacation in summer cabins and family celebrations,” said Marcela.



### Iceland, The Land of Ice and Fire

Marcela is currently living in Iceland and she loves every opportunity to photograph Icelandic horses, northern lights, puffins, ice caves, black sand beaches, waterfalls and many other amazing landscapes. But the definite highlight of her trip so far is the once in a lifetime opportunity to photograph the Fagradalsfjall volcano eruption last year. “It was easy to get lost in the moment since it looked so surreal, magical and breathtaking,” said Marcela.

Marcela values the total freedom to do what she wants and what she loves. Here is some food for thought, why not do as Marcela: “Follow your passion and find a way to get paid doing what you love, so you don’t have to work a day in your life!”

Marcela has a shop selling her photographs in Laugavegur 35 in the city of Reykjavik.



**Marcela Cardenas**  
 +354/8540479  
 Instagram: marcelacardenas.m  
 info@polarartgallery.com



# “PEOPLE OF ICELAND NEED TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF THEIR ENERGY RESOURCES”

*Interview with Iceland’s New National Energy Director-General,  
 Halla Hrund Logadóttir*

New Director-General of Iceland’s National Energy Authority, Halla Hrund Logadóttir, yearns to work for Iceland, the Arctic and the World in all its diversity at this watershed moment in history of Energy Change. She is forty-one, born 1981 and learnt her work ethics at her grandparent’s farm at Hörglandskot, Kirkjubæjarklaustur – Church-Farm-Cloister. She took the experience to her studies in Reykjavík and graduated from the Women’s College in 2001 and gained a degree in Political Sciences from University of Iceland in 2005.

Halla Hrund then went abroad to work in the Icelandic Embassy in Brussels. In 2009, she was on her way to Togo, Africa and, from there, back to Europe to the OECD in Paris. She then crossed the English Channel to study at London School of Economics before returning back home to Iceland in 2013 to the University of Reykjavík where she founded the Iceland School of Energy.

At that point in time, the Arctic Circle Assembly was opening new horizons, so Halla Hrund went to Harvard, Boston, Massachusetts to master Climate Change in the Arctic.

“Climate Change in the Arctic is knocking at our doors. The effect of Climate Warming on people and the environment is escalating,” says Halla Hrund in an interview with the Icelandic Times. She is married to Kristján Freyr Kristjánsson, a company director, and they have two daughters, Hildur Kristín and Saga Friðgerður. Halla Hrund became Director-General of the National Energy Authority in June 2021. The first months have been dedicated to forming its future vision and organization chart.

## **Hörglandskot**

Halla Hrund is the daughter of Logi Ragnarsson [1960] and Jóhanna Steingrimsdóttir [1961]. Up to the age of 20, she spent practically every summer at Hörglandskot by Kirkjubæjarklaustur

in the south of Iceland where her grandparents, Steingrímur Lárusson [1933-2014] and Anna Hildur Árnadóttir [1938-2018] ran a prize-winning farm. Her grandfather was a respected leader; district chief and staunch member of the Independent Party.

“There was plenty to do at the farm, where I learnt to appreciate nature as well as horses, cows, sheep, and hay-making and developed a sense for the practical while getting the harvest into barn,” Halla Hrund says. After graduation, she spent three years in the Icelandic Embassy in Brussels introducing Iceland’s art and culture. In Togo, in West Africa, she taught university students and helped the local farmers. “I learnt to appreciate the importance of infrastructure. There were constant electrical breakdowns and darkness in Togo, a former French colony. However, going over the border to Ghana, the former British colony, there were no such problems as the infrastructure had been developed.”



*Halla Hrund Logadóttir, New Director-General of Iceland’s National Energy Authority.*



Holdren, President Barack Obama's scientific adviser, delivering lectures. Eric Schmidt, CEO and founder of Google [2001-2017], joined the Arctic Initiative bandwagon, being known for his support of innovation and initiators, as well as supporting the Arctic Circle Assembly.

"Cooperation is the key to success, not size. No nation, no company, no institution, or municipality can, on its own solve, the environmental issues we are facing. However, by working together, great things can be achieved," says Halla Hrund. Among the lecturers in Boston is former UN Secretary, Ban-Ki-moon.

### The Future is Green

At the start of the third decade of the 21st century, the Government of Iceland embraces new challenges and opportunities. "The Future is Green. My grandfather always waited rather impatiently for the milk bus to arrive with the post and the Independent newspaper, Morgunblaðið. Nowadays, information comes with speed of light. Iceland faces immense opportunity, while the challenge is colossal," she says. No country has consolidated into policy the climate, energy and environment. She points out that, in 1969, Neil Armstrong's words from the moon echoed around the world: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

The United States was first to send men to the moon, winning the race against the Soviet Union. The moon landing was a historical landmark. Mankind is now at another watershed moment. "We are taking a giant leap. The Government looks to the climate in its ambitious Energy-Changing Policy. I welcome the Government prioritising these issues and merging the Ministries of Energy, Climate and the Environment. Icelanders have the opportunity to be the first nation to become completely Green. We have the opportunity to be leading, by becoming 100% Green, bridging the 15%. Connecting energy, nature and climate is a unique opportunity. Technological breakthroughs arrive at the speed of light, and it is of great importance to embrace changes with great care.

"The National Energy Authority serves the people. We want to proceed

in a responsible way as we establish its framework and supervision. It is of great importance to declare to the world loud and clear: "Iceland's policy is to utilise and protect the land and its nature. The hydro energy of waterfalls and geothermal energy are invaluable limited resources that need to be handled with care. We want to have the World's Greenest Tourism, connecting agriculture and greenhouses. The demand is endless and needs to be defined in our nation's interests. People need to see the benefits of our deeds and be assured that they will reap the benefits."

Halla Hrund walks along the old warm water pipelines to her National Energy offices at Grensásvegur in Reykjavík. She says that, at this epoch-changing moment in history, she often reflects back 100 years, when Icelanders were one of Europe's poorest, then became sovereign, practically uneducated, yet started utilising their resources by harnessing waterfalls and warm water, putting engines in their boats and buying trawlers to fish the world's richest fishing banks. "The nation had everything to gain and took giants leaps. That should come easy now 100 years later," she says.

### Our cup of coffee

Halla Hrund's career reflects Icelanders' road to prosperity. As a child, she experienced the joys of life at her grandparent's farm, learnt to work, taking the experience to Reykjavík as she got her education, then going into the big world. Now, she's finally back home working, once more, for Iceland. In eight years, the Iceland School of Energy has grown from four students to 600 focusing on the Arctic, where climate warming is twice as fast as in any great metropolis of the world. Her Arctic Initiative has grown and prospered.

"Dramatic changes in the Arctic ecosystems, the acidification of oceans, the welfare of the inhabitants and animals and Arctic security are all pressing issues. We are running against time. This is our cup of coffee and we will not offer our descendants slouch," says Halla Hrund Logadóttir.

-Interview by Hallur Hallsson



"The farm back home opened my mind to the importance of nature and energy, Togo to the importance of developing infrastructure," she says. She points to Iceland's development, Reykjavík's harnessing of Elliðaárdalur in 1921 and Reykjavík's Geothermal Energy; the heating of East Town School and the surrounding neighbourhood in Reykjavík in 1930, with geothermal water from Laugardalur. Then developing Mosfellsdalur's abundant geothermal energy in the fifties, and the Glacial Thjórsá River in 1970 which turned Iceland from one of Europe's poorest countries in the early 1900s to its place in the top ten at the end of the 20th century.

### Arctic Initiative

As Halla Hrund finished her studies in London, she took on the task of International Development at Reykjavík University in 2013, when President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson [1996-2016] was starting the Arctic Circle Assembly at the

Harpa Convention Hall. Iceland became a melting pot of discussions and ideas concerning the Arctic as world leaders, scientists and just average people wanting change, came together. Halla Hrund seized the opportunity that President Grímsson had created by connecting the Arctic, Climate Warming, Green Energy and Nature. At the beginning of 2013, there were four students at Iceland's School of Energy all having their picture in the University's brochure.

As the World in general does not appreciate the alarming seriousness of advancing climate changes, it was needed to get big players to the table of Arctic issues. Halla Hrund was offered a fellowship at Harvard University, being co-author of the paper "Iceland's Energy Policy: Finding the Right Path Forward". She has taught at Harvard and internationally since 2012. At Harvard, she founded the Arctic Initiative. The first Seminar of Innovation was held in 2018 with Halla Hrund and Dr. John



Borehole by Kringlumyrarbraut, the Japanese Embassy and Valhöll, the Independence Party's headquarters, in the background.



There is a borehole at the west end of the Hilton hotel by Suðurlandsbraut.



At the entrance of the American Embassy at Engjateigur is hot water well.



Solar energy and geothermal energy in the centre of Reykjavík.

When the price of fossil fuels is high and the pollution that such combustion emits into the atmosphere is a serious problem, it is very beneficial to have district heating as 89.6% of all housing in Iceland uses.

Iceland's first real district heating was installed in Laugaskóli, the school in Reykjadalur, Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla. It was first used in 1924. The first district heating in Reykjavík was in Austurbæjarskóli. A 3 km pipeline was laid from Laugardalur to heat the school in 1930.

Today Veitur operates thirteen district heating utilities, one in the entire capital area, five in the West, and seven in the South. The company serves up to 70% of the population, a truly giant company in its field in the world. The company distributes 89.9 million cubic metres of hot water per year. The length of the district heating pipes is 3,066 km or 1,905 miles, from 78 utilized boreholes. The average annual consumption of Icelandic homes is 4.5 tonnes of hot water per square metre of housing.



# LYSI

*Bringing the healthy living of Iceland to the world*

The story of LYSI is one of vision and innovation. In 1938, two Icelandic brothers formed LYSI as a small cod liver oil producer. The demand for lýsi – cod liver oil – was already high in Iceland, due to the need for vitamins A and D. LYSI began by offering the oil to Icelanders at home. During World War II, LYSI began exporting to the US and UK. As research into the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids increased, the demand for LYSI's products continued to rise. The company placed research and product development at its forefront and has since grown considerably. Today, LYSI offers a suite of fish oil and wellbeing products to world markets, from fish taken straight from the Icelandic seas.

### Wide range of products

LYSI has recently introduced 'Lýsi Life', a line of products that combine an omega-3 base with other functional supplements; a focus on the brain, heart, skin, joints, eyes, bones and pregnancy, along with the fundamental liquid cod liver oil. The products include active ingredients such as antioxidants, marine collagen, calcium, folate and hyaluronic acid. Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, LYSI's cod liver oil is key to development and unlocks the potential of the brain, the central nervous system, and the immune system. Vitamin D is essential to build strong, dense bones, while contributing greatly to an optimal immune system. LYSI will continue

launching their series of novel health products to fit all diet and nutritional needs in early 2020.

### Impressive technology & facilities

LYSI continues to invest in its operation to ensure the highest quality products, opening advanced production plants in 2005 and 2012, as well as an expert in-house laboratory. With the latest technology, the LYSI production process meets consumer demands for high purity products. The processes have been specifically designed to minimize the oxidation of the oil and to remove taste and smell in the final product by natural means. Quality is a vital factor in LYSI's business.

### Strong values & social responsibility

LYSI is committed to sustainability, with core values that reflect social responsibility. The company's ethos is in the spirit of sustainability and respect for nature, exploiting the whole raw material in its entirety and throwing nothing away. Thus, LYSI makes by-products from the remainders of the primary production, creating value out of every part. LYSI uses energy from renewable resources – geothermal and hydropower – while guaranteeing effective waste management and maximizing the raw materials used



within production. LYSI has also invested in plastic recycling, and the company is committed to these operations.

### Trusted brand at home & abroad

LYSI has been a recognised part of the Icelandic market for decades, making it a well-established and trusted brand. In fact, it's a tradition for every Icelander to take cod liver oil from childhood. The brand extends abroad as well, as its health benefits have become known worldwide. As global demand continues for LYSI products, the company has extended its e-commerce operations to reach customers in all geographic markets. -JG

The products can be purchased online at [www.lysi-life.is](http://www.lysi-life.is)



**LYSI hf.**  
Fiskislóð 5-9, 101 Reykjavík  
+ 354 525 8100  
[www.lysi.com](http://www.lysi.com)





**KRUATHAI IN KÓPAVOGUR** is a favourite for many. With their reputation to always deliver fresh, tasty food, both at the restaurant & to your door, it is no wonder they are such a popular choice.

Bæjarlind 14, 201 Kópavogur  
+354 552 2525  
www.kruathai.is/en/  
kruathai@kruathai.is



**LISTASEL** is a new art gallery in Selfoss' new town centre. The gallery has exhibitions and artwork for sale by a diverse group of professional artists. Come and see unique paintings, sculptures, ceramics, glass art and graphics.

Brúarsel 1, 800 Selfoss  
+354-860-4472  
info@listasel.is



**SEA BARON** is a seafood restaurant in the Old Harbour in Reyjavik. The lobster soup & the grilled fish on skewers are their signature dishes. Sægreifinn also has a variety of vegetarian dishes.

Geirsgata 8, 101 Reykjavik  
+354 553 1500  
www.saegreifinn.is/en/  
seabaron8@gmail.com



**VERA DESIGN** is the collaboration of goldsmith Guðbjartur Þorleifsson who has 60 years of experience and stylist and designer Íris Björk Jónsdóttir who has 15 years of design behind her.

sales@veradesign.is  
veradesignjewellery.com



**BRYGGJAN KAFFIHÚS** is a cosy little Café located on the Pier next to the Grindavík Harbour on the Reykjanes peninsula, minutes south from famous Blue Lagoon.

Bryggjan Grindavík  
Miðgarður 2, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 7100  
info@bryggjan.com  
www.bryggjan.com



**THE GRINDAVÍK CAMPSITE** on Reykjanes peninsula is one of the more organised campsites in Iceland. They have BBQ's, electricity, playgrounds, a play castle, kitchen, laundry room and WiFi.

Camping in Grindavík  
Austurvegur 26, 240 Grindavík  
+354 660 7323  
camping@grindavik.is www.grindavik.is/tjaldsvaedi



**FISHHOUSE BAR & GRILL** in the romantic fishing village of Grindavík is an excellent seafood restaurant minutes south of the Blue Lagoon. They pride themselves on the use of delicious local produce.

Fishhouse bar and grill  
Hafnargötu 6, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 9999  
kari@fishhouse.is  
www.fishhouse.is



**SALTHÚSIÐ RESTAURANT** in Reykjanes is the only seafood restaurant in Iceland that specialises in Bacalao, the salted cod. Once the staple food for the poor, now a sought after delicacy all over Iberia and Iceland.

Stamphólsveg 2, 240 Grindavík  
+354426 9700  
salthusid@salthusid.is  
salthusid-english.weebly.com/



**THE MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART COLLECTS**, preserves, researches and exhibits Icelandic design from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day.

Gardatorg 1, 210 Gardabaer  
Phone: (+354) 512 1525  
honnunarsafn@honnunarsafn.is  
www.honnunarsafn.is/en



**FJÖRUKRÁIN** is a Viking restaurant where emphasis lies on making the experience a genuine Viking experience with Viking food served by Vikings and Valkyries, all dressed up for the occasion.

Strandgata 55, 220 Hafnarfjörður  
+354 565 1213  
booking@vikingvillage.is  
www.fjorukrain.is/



**HAPPY TOURS** is a small family company running an old and lovely fishing boat from Hafnarfjörður since 2009. Their goal is to give guests an intimate and informational experience.

Hlésgata, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 85 33 111  
info@happytours.is  
happytours.is/



**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND** One ticket – four museums. In the National Gallery is a unique collection of Icelandic art. New exhibitions open regularly, and the gallery aims to highlight the best of Icelandic contemporary art, as well as Icelandic art history.

Frikirkjuvegur 7, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 515 9600  
list@listasafn.is  
www.listasafn.is



**GRINDAVÍK SWIMMING POOL** is located in the middle of town, next to the lovely campsite. They have a 25m lap pool, a kid pool, waterslide, hot tubs, sauna, tanning beds and a gym.

Austurvegi 1, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 7555  
ithrottir@grindavik.is  
www.grindavik.is/sundlaug



**BRUIN RESTAURANT** is a family run seafood place with delicious fish dishes and fish soup as specialties with a stunning view over the harbour. Their menu also includes pizza, burgers and a kids menu.

Hafnargötu 26, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 7080  
bruin@simnet.is  
www.restaurantbruin.com



**VOGA SEATOURS** is a new tour company offering sea-tours such as whale watching, sea angling and Northern lights tours from Vogur on Reykjanes, 15 minutes from Keflavik airport.

Voga Höfn, 190 Vogar  
+354 833 9080  
info@vogaseatours.com  
vogaseatours.com



**VOGAR CAMPING** and Youth Hostel is located only 15 min from KEF airport. Open 24/7 all year.

Hafnargata 19 - 22, 190 Vogar  
+354 777-3222  
vidsjoinn@gmail.com  
www.vogarcamping.is



**ÁRBÆJARLAUG** is a beautiful swimming pool right in midst of a wooded area. Large swimming pool, kiddie pools, hot tubs, steam bath, waterfalls and two slides along with an indoor baby pool. Easy to get in and out of the facilities.

Fylkisvegur 9, 110 Reykjavík  
+354 530-2200 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30 – 22,  
Sat, Sun 09-22



**BREIÐHOLTSLAUG** is a cosy pool with three really fun slides, hot tubs, kiddie hot pool and a great swimming pool. Indoors there is an additional pool for children that is very popular. Steam bath and sauna for both men and women.

Austurberg 3, 111 Reykjavík  
+354 557-5547 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 09-22



**GRAFARVOGSLAUG** is often used for swim competitions for the younger generation as the indoor pool is the perfect size. Nice open space identifies Grafarvogslaugs area, offering hot tubs, steam baths and sauna, and two fun slides.

Dalhús 2, 112 Reykjavík  
+354 411 5300 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 09-22



**KLÉBERGSLAUG** is located in a short distance from Reykjavík, surrounded by nature. Small comfortable swimming area with two hot tubs. Sometimes there are Zumba and other fun activities going on, and then there is a gym close by.

Kléberg, 116 Reykjavík  
+354 566-6879 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 15-22,  
Sat, Sun 11-18



**LAUGARDALSLAUG** is one of the most popular pools with various activities for the children. The slide is very popular for any age, as are the hot tubs, cold tub and the seawater tub. Steam baths and sauna are available. A cafeteria for after swim refreshment.

Sundlaugavegur 30, 105 Reykjavík  
+354 411 5100 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 08-22



**VESTURBÆJARLAUG** is a small and friendly neighbourhood pool, located within walking distance of the city centre. The pool has an outdoor pool and children's pool, waterslide, four hot tubs, steam bath, sauna and gym.

Hofsvallagötu, Reykjavík  
+354 411-5150 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 09-22



**SUNDHÖLL REYKJAVÍKUR** is the oldest public bath in Iceland. It opened in 1937 and is located in the centre of Reykjavík. It recently reopened after renovations that include a new outdoor pool area.

Barónsstígur 45a, Reykjavík  
+354 411-5350 • www.sundlaug.is  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 08-22



**NAUTHÓLSVÍK GEOTHERMAL BEACH** is a paradise for people who love splashing around in the ocean or sunbathing in the golden sand. The beach is equipped with changing facilities and showers, steam-baths and hot tubs.

Nauthólsvík 108 Reykjavík  
+354 511 6630  
www.nautholsvik.is/en  
Open Mon - Fri, Sat-Sun 10-19



**THE HERITAGE MUSEUM ON GARÐSKAGI**, Byggðasafnið á Garðskaga, is located in a museum area by Garðskagavíti Lighthouse in Suðurnesjabær, where there is a beautiful panoramic view in all directions.

Skagabraut 100,250 Suðurnesjabær  
+354 425 3008  
byggdasafn@sudurnesjabaer.is  
Open: May 1. – Sept. 30. 10am – 17 pm



At the **ÁRNÆSSÝSLA HERITAGE MUSEUM'S** varied exhibitions in 'The House' at Eyrarbakki, visitors can experience past times and learn about the remarkable history of the building. Húsið (The House) at Eyrarbakki is one of Iceland's oldest buildings, built in 1765.

Húsinu 820, Eyrarbakka  
+354 4831504  
lydurp@byggdasafn.is

# Go WEST!



## Enjoy the Vast Beauty of West Iceland

A trip to West Iceland is perfect if you want to see a bit of everything. Black-sand beaches, hot springs, quiet fishing towns and a glacier accessible by foot await you. The West is frequently referred to as 'Iceland in miniature' as it contains so many interesting landscapes and attractions.

### Visit stunning waterfalls

The West is home to some spectacular waterfalls. Glymur, Iceland's second tallest waterfall, is a worthwhile detour before heading further west from Reykjavík. Glymur stands 198 metres high on the Botnsá river, the white water crashing down the side of Hvalfell mountain. The hike to the top can be a bit challenging for some, but it's worth it! The view from the top over Hvalfjörður is quite striking on a clear day.

Hraunfossar is a series of waterfalls streaming over 900 metres out of a lava field. The falls are beautiful to visit in any season and rainbows are frequently seen when the sun breaks through on showery days. There's a neighbouring waterfall very

close by, called Barnafoss. It's a stunning, wide waterfall, with water rushing over a rocky landscape, creating several cascades.

### Enjoy Iceland's unique geology

Iceland is paradise for geology buffs. Be sure to take a look at Deildartunguhver, which is considered Europe's most powerful hot spring. It provides 200 litres of boiling—100°C (212°F)—water per second. Visitors will see water bubbling up and splashing against moss and rock, a reminder that Iceland is very much alive with pure geothermal energy.

If you want to get up close and personal with Iceland's interior, visit Viðgelmir, the largest cave in Iceland. With a guided tour, you can explore the beautiful ice formations, including scores of stalactites and stalagmites. It's a fascinating look at Iceland from the inside.

### See spectacular Snæfellsnes

The Snæfellsnes peninsula is considered the jewel of the western coast, in part, because the region has a taste of everything,

including a mighty glacier. Snæfellsjökull, the king of Icelandic mountains, lies on top of a volcano situated in the centre of a national park. The glacier's peak reaches 1,446 metres and can be seen from Reykjavík on a clear day. The volcano is considered active, though it last erupted 1,900 years ago.

Meanwhile, the western edge of the Snæfellsnes peninsula is home to Snæfellsjökull National Park and small towns like Hellissandur, Ólafsvík, and Grundarfjörður. Charming fishing villages dot the peninsula and offer ample hiking routes and quirky museums. Other areas of interest include the beautiful rock formations and birdlife of Arnarstapi-Hellnar, and Kirkjufell, one of the most photographed mountains in Iceland.

It's possible to visit all these places in three days and enjoy others along the way, but it is recommended to allot more time to the West for the sheer beauty and uniqueness of the region.

Make sure West Iceland is on your radar for your next trip to Iceland. -JG



# KRAUMA

## *Geothermal Baths*

*Experience Iceland's geothermal energy in these soothing hot baths*

Enjoy Iceland's sublime naturally-heated waters while bathing in geothermal baths in West Iceland. Krauma, the newly opened bathing facility, offers five relaxing natural baths, along with a cold tub, two soothing saunas and a relaxation room, where you can lounge by the fireplace while listening to calming music. This is the perfect way to experience Iceland's renowned waters in a more intimate setting than the more crowded Blue Lagoon.

### Powerful hot spring

The water for the baths is heated by Deildartunguhver, which is considered Europe's most powerful hot spring. It provides 200 litres per second of hot water at 100°C (212°F). To achieve the perfect bathing temperature, Krauma mixes the hot water with cold water from Rauðsgil, which originates in what was the Ok glacier, Iceland's smallest glacier. Visitors can see Deildartunguhver next to the baths, with its water bubbling up and splashing against bright green moss and jagged rocks. Seeing where the heated water comes from adds to this unique experience. Be sure to keep your distance, though, to avoid being splashed if you get too close.

### Important hot water source

Deildartunguhver is crucial to the comfort of the region. Most of the water used for central heating in the West Iceland towns of Akranes and Borgarnes is taken from Deildartunguhver. The hot water pipeline to Akranes is 64 kilometres long, which is the longest in Iceland. It's still about 78-80°C when it reaches the town.

### West is best

Krauma is conveniently located in West Iceland, where there are numerous attractions. Starting from Reykjavík, you can make stops at the popular fishing town of Akranes and climb to the top of its lighthouse for spectacular views, before continuing to



Borgarnes to visit the Settlement Centre to get a taste of the famous Sagas. In Reykholt, one of Iceland's most notable historical sites, you can stop at the Icelandic Goat Centre before visiting Snorrastofa, dedicated to Snorri Sturluson, one of the most famous and important figures in Icelandic literature. Snorri penned the Edda, Egil's Saga, and Heimskringla before his death in 1241. There is so much to see and do in West Iceland and Krauma is perfectly positioned.

### Visit Krauma

Geology enthusiasts and spa lovers alike will enjoy a visit to Krauma. You can experience nature from its core while bathing in these unique geothermal baths in beautiful West Iceland. Make sure you pay a visit to Krauma during your visit to Iceland. -JG



**Krauma**  
Deildartunguhver, 310 Borgarbyggð  
www.krauma.is





# TOKENS of Iceland

**T**okens of Iceland is a collection of high-quality souvenirs from Iceland, created and handcrafted by Oddný Braga in the West Iceland town of Borgarnes. The line features handmade silver pendants that evoke four distinct Icelandic elements—magma, glaciers, auroras, and hot springs. The jewellery, which is crafted with natural

mineral pearls wrapped in sterling silver, represent the geology and uniqueness of Iceland. Tokens of Iceland also offers four high-quality perfume body mists; with scents that make your memories of Iceland come alive. The scents are elegant and unique, with captivating fragrance notes in beautiful packaging.



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# JOURNEY INTO THE INSIDE OF A GLACIER



*Into the Glacier is an environmentally conscious company with a rich history*

**E**xploring 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 section of Langjökull, the second largest ice cap in Iceland, and 1,260 metres above sea level, the ice cave reaches 300 metres (984 ft) deep underground and is 550 metres long. It has 5 rooms carved out, including a chapel for weddings, and it gives visitors a chance to see ice that has been formed over centuries.

### Proud history

The Into the Glacier story began with an idea among a small group which then led to four years of planning. Baldvin Einarsson and Hallgrímur Örn Arngrímsson thought of the idea to construct a manmade ice cave and a team of architects, geophysicists, and specialists was brought in to see how the concept could take shape. Over fourteen months, the construction team worked to make the ice cave a reality.

### An iconic experience

In 2015, Into the Glacier began welcoming tourists on this epic adventure. Guests board one of the most unique vehicles ever made: a customised super truck, which seats 35 passengers. Once the truck reaches the mouth of the ice tunnel, the visitors are provided crampons to attach to their shoes before experiencing something few have ever seen. They are also treated to views of gaping crevices as they look up from below.

### Focus on sustainability

The founders of Into the Glacier and its staff recognise their environmental responsibility and work to a high standard to protect the environment and nature. They ensure their operations are as eco-friendly as possible and invite travellers to help counteract the adverse effects of climate change and offset part of their carbon footprint in Iceland by donating money to plant a tree in the region of Húsafell. The trees are planted in the Kolviður forest, a planting area dedicated to carbon offsetting to help save the glaciers from climate change. Into The Glacier is also a dedicated member of the Iceland Carbon Fund and Glacier Forest Project, where the company plants



5,000 trees a year to minimise the carbon footprint of its daily operations. The Into the Glacier team has a great appreciation and respect for the nature they show their visitors every day.



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# Go West: VISIT LOVELY *Akranes*



Charming towns await travellers who drive north through the Hvalfjörður tunnel from Reykjavík. Just 50km from the capital is Akranes, a popular detour for those looking to explore the west coast and spend time in the countryside. Akranes is a traditional fishing village, peaceful and friendly, and home to a famous lighthouse that is open to the public.

The Akranes Lighthouse (Akranesviti) is a delightful place to visit at any time of year. Away from the bright lights, tourists and locals flock to the site in winter to enjoy the view of the Northern Lights dancing across the sky. In the summer, people picnic outside the lighthouse and, during opening hours, guests are invited in and can climb to its top. Built in 1947, the lighthouse has been used to host concerts and art exhibitions in recent years. Visit @akraneslighthouse on Instagram for photos and videos and its Facebook page for opening hours.

### Rich town history

To get familiar with the town's history, visit the Akranes Folk Museum, which is dedicated to exploring what Akranes was

like from the time of the Settlement to the present day. The museum recently underwent an extensive renovation, re-opening in 2020, and the revamped museum hall features multimedia exhibitions and historical and cultural artefacts from the town. There's an audio guide available in the price of admission. Outdoors, there are various houses and boats crucial to the town's history. Visitors can explore the houses. Visit [www.museum.is](http://www.museum.is) and the Akranes Folk Museum's Facebook page for more information.

### Bathe in soothing Guðlaug

After exploring the lighthouse and folk museum, there is no better place to relax

than in Guðlaug, a heated natural pool situated along Langisandur, Akranes' sandy beach. The two-tier structure is the perfect place to take some time off. For opening times and prices, visit Guðlaug's Facebook page and visit @gudlaugbaths on Instagram for picturesque photos.

Akranes is a family-friendly destination, so ensure you take time to visit the town on your next trip to Iceland.



**Akranes**  
[www.skagalif.is/is/visit-akranes](http://www.skagalif.is/is/visit-akranes)



# BEST OF ICELAND

Book of tourism, culture and history

# 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



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# INTO THE WILD WESTFJORDS

Discover Iceland “the Westfjords Way”

The Westfjords are an unmissable region of Iceland. Here, you will find steep cliffs with millions of nesting birds, well-maintained hiking paths, quirky museums, and some of the most breathtaking beauty on the island. To explore this beautiful slice of Iceland, there is a convenient new touring route called Vestfarðaleiðin, or the Westfjords Way. This driving route encompasses a 950 km circle around the edges of the Westfjords and there are eight different types of route experiences to help travellers navigate the region.

## Driving highlights

Vestfarðaleiðin pinpoints locations where the landscape views are impressive and the driving experience is thrilling. Examples include the pass between Hrafnseyri and Þingeyri, the road around Klofningur and the Neshringur loop.

## Quirky experiences

Many experiences are unique to Iceland, with unexpected places, museums, and attractions. Examples on this route include the Samúel Jónsson Sculpture, the Museum of Sorcery & Witchcraft and the Sea Monster Museum.



## Tours to iconic sites

There are numerous opportunities to tour remote natural spots like the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, the Látrabjarg cliffs and the Rauðasandur beach. You can spend your time roaming these gorgeous natural sites, soaking in the spectacular scenery.

## Getting wet

Water is abundant on the island and can be experienced by bathing in hot pools like Guðúnarlaug, visiting waterfalls such as Dynjandi, or getting into it by kayaking and whale watching.

## Taking the air

There are countless sky-high viewpoints where you can marvel at mountains, ascend hiking routes and enjoy skiing in the winter months. Examples include: Bolafjall, Dynjandi waterfall, the experience of flying into Ísafjörður, or hiking the old road to Bolungarvík.

## Stories

The Westfjords have a rich history and travellers can explore this through the sagas, visiting longhouses and museums. Examples include: Hnjótur Museum, Eiríksstaðir Viking Museum, Eldsmiðjan Iron making, and the Jón Sigurðsson Museum.

## Taste the place

Foodies rejoice, Iceland has so many tasty options to enjoy and the Westfjords is no exception. The Vestfarðaleiðin route leads you to the best eating places, coffee stops, excellent restaurants and farm shops. Examples include Erpsstaðir Dairy, Tjörhúsið, and Sætt og Salt specialty chocolate. The Westfjords is also home to cosy cafes like Kaffi Sól, Litlibær, and Simbahöllin.

## Instagrammable icons

Get your phone ready as there are so many views and experiences that capture the essence of Vestfarðaleiðin. Examples include: the aircraft at Hnjótur; Garðar BA64 Steel Ship; the red roofed A-frame sheep hut in Arnarfjörður, as well as wildlife like puffins, whales, seals, and Arctic foxes.



## Easier to navigate

Vestfarðaleiðin was created following the opening of a tunnel between Arnarfjörður and Dýrafjörður, an important link between the north and south parts of the Westfjords. The opening of the tunnel ensures the new Westfjords Way will be open year-round as travellers can now avoid the Hrafnseyrarheiði mountain pass, which is unpaved and closed for many months of the year.

In a country full of beauty, the Westfjords may be the most beautiful region of all. Endless coastlines, jaw-dropping cliffs, and spectacular mountain landscapes await those who make the trip. Discover Iceland the Westfjords Way. -JG





# VISIT THE GREAT NORTH

Explore the culture, beauty and history of North Iceland

North Iceland is a beautiful part of the country, encompassing breathtaking nature, unique history and some of the best bathing spots in all of Iceland.

### Navigating the Diamond Circle

The Diamond Circle is a popular tourist route that covers five key destinations in the north, starting with the picturesque Goðafoss waterfall. In a country full of spectacular waterfalls, what sets Goðafoss apart is the sheer width of these powerful falls. White water surges over the rim, thundering down and crashing into rocks and the water below. Next are the striking blue and green landscapes of Lake Mývatn, followed by the stunning Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in all of Europe. Continuing on the route takes you to Ásbyrgi, an enormous canyon full of fascinating rock formations, lush grass, well-maintained walking paths, thriving birdlife, and several bodies of water. The final destination is Húsavík, the whale-watching capital of Iceland, with deep blue seas and several boat departures every day.

### Arctic Coast Way

For travellers who have a bit more time to allocate to the north, North Iceland's newest tourist route spans 900 km and has been dubbed the Arctic Coast Way. This route leads travellers on a journey across 21 towns and villages close to the Arctic Circle. The route, which debuted in 2019, is recommended to take 9 days. Along the way, you will see spectacular landscapes of mountains, steep cliffs, charming fishing villages, glacial river deltas and even crossings to islands like Grímsey and Hrísey. For more information on the route, visit [www.arcticcoastway.is/en](http://www.arcticcoastway.is/en).

### Rich bathing culture

Bathing opportunities are plentiful in the north and it is worth visiting as many as time allows. These swimming pools are heated by natural geothermal energy, at the perfect temperature in which to relax and enjoy some conversations with the locals. Icelanders love their pools! There are also fantastic bathing centres for a more extensive experience like the Mývatn Nature Baths and the GeoSea Sea Baths in



Húsavík. For something truly unique, visit the Beer Spa in Árskógssandur. Here you soak in a bathtub filled with beer, water, hops and yeast, an unforgettable soothing experience for your skin.

### Don't forget about the wildlife

Getting on a whale-watching boat and viewing the gentle giants up close is an extraordinary experience and there are several harbours in the north that offer trips. You can board whale watching vessels in Akureyri, Dalvík, Hauganes, Hjalteyri and Húsavík to get a glimpse of these spectacular creatures. For seal watching opportunities, be sure to visit Hvammstangi and for puffins, taking a ferry to the island of Grímsey, straddling the Arctic Circle, is highly recommended to spot these iconic birds.



### Experience North Iceland's culture

The locals of North Iceland are proud of their history and eager to introduce travellers to their art and culture, which stretches back to the Viking Age. Some museums to put on your radar include the Húsavík Whale Museum, which presents not just 11 real whale skeletons, including a 25-metre-long blue whale but an educational overview of these fantastic beasts. Another museum of note is the Icelandic Herring Era Museum in Siglufjörður, which examines the region's rich maritime history. For those after an interactive experience, the newly opened exhibition, 1238: The Battle of Iceland, uses technology to bring history to life. The exhibition tells the tale of Iceland's dramatic clash of family clans which led to a fatal civil war.

There's something for everyone in the north, whether it's charming towns and villages, well-maintained hiking paths, spectacular bathing centres, soaking in the culture at museums or getting up close to Iceland's wildlife. The North awaits! -JG



# THE ARCTIC COAST WAY

Explore this scenic North Iceland route



North Iceland's newest tourist route spans 900km and has been dubbed the Arctic Coast Way. This route leads travellers on a journey across 21 towns and villages close to the Arctic Circle. Along the way you will see spectacular landscapes of mountains, steep cliffs, charming fishing villages, glacial river deltas and even crossings to islands like Grímsey and Hrísey. The route is best started from the west in the town of Hvammstangi, ending in Þórshöfn in the northeast. Following are some of the highlights of the Arctic Coast Way.

The Vatnsnes Peninsula is home to some of the best seal-watching opportunities in the north and there's a museum with lovely exhibitions at the Icelandic Seal Center. Hvammstangi is the largest town on the peninsula and the site of many tourist attractions.

Hvítserkur is one of the most photographed sights in northwest Iceland. The stone structure, which is a basalt rock stack that juts out of Húnaflói bay, is said to resemble a rhinoceros.

With sloping mountains, a beautiful coastline and chunks of glacial ice dotting the fjord, Skagafjörður's landscape is spectacular. Skagafjörður is often described as horse country as horse farms and horse tour operators abound in the region.

Secluded Siglufjörður is the northernmost town in all of Iceland. It's easy to fall in love with this beautiful harbour town. Siglufjörður's marina is home to much of the activity in the village, with bustling restaurants and a few town-specific museums focusing on the herring industry and the local music scene.

Grímsey is a windswept and secluded island, about five square kilometres in area, that is as striking in beauty as it is difficult to reach. Tourists come to explore the tiny island, bird-watch and experience 24 hours of daylight in the height of the summer. Night does not reach Grímsey until late July, when the sun sets around midnight, only to rise a short time later.

Akureyri is commonly referred to as Iceland's 'second city', a moniker many of

the town's 18,000 residents find amusing given its size. Some might say Akureyri feels more low-key and more relaxed than Reykjavík. There are gorgeous gardens to explore, charming museums, paddleboats dotting the fjord in the summer months, and an eccentric art scene.

Húsavík has transformed itself from a placid small town to a must-see destination for tourists interested in some of the best whale-watching opportunities on the island.

Ásbyrgi is an enormous horseshoe-shaped canyon full of interesting rock formations, lush grass, well-maintained walking paths, thriving birdlife, and several bodies of water, including rivers and waterfalls.

Langanes is a narrow, 40-kilometre-long peninsula situated between two bays (Þistilfjörður and Bakkafloi). The sloping coastal landscape is ideal for bird-watching and photographing steep sea cliffs.

The Arctic Coast Way is truly a spectacular route, encompassing sights that are uniquely memorable. - JG



## THE ICELANDIC SEAL CENTRE

The Icelandic Seal Centre was created to promote seal research and sustainable seal-watching along the Vatnsnes peninsula. While the centre has a serious research component to the facility, the museum section perfectly captures these lovable, adorable creatures.

The main varieties of seals that the Centre works with are harbour, harp, bearded, gray, hooded, and ringed seals. (There's also the odd walrus that comes ashore in Iceland from Greenland. The Seal Centre is contacted in that event.) The staff has information on the best sites for seal-watching opportunities and a small shop (hours variable; check website) sells souvenirs and light meals. For independent travellers, it is possible to go to the popular seal-watching spots without a tour guide.

The museum is an entertaining, informative and fun experience for both adults and kids. Some of the exhibitions are geared toward children, with topics that include the seals of the North Atlantic

and the Arctic, the importance of seals in Icelandic culture and tradition, seal biology (with skeletons on display), and the evolution of seal hunting on the island. There are also documentaries on Icelandic seals in English.



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# TRAVEL TO THE *Edge of the Arctic*

Explore the Northeast of Iceland, the end of the Arctic Coast Way

The northeast of Iceland is home to some of the most exquisite nature on the island, without the crowds. The north is ideal for slow travel, to spend time basking in the beauty of the region, and enjoying outdoor activities like hiking, kayaking and birdwatching. The region offers sweeping landscapes with backdrops of looming mountains, narrow fjords, and curvaceous coastlines. If you're looking for unspoiled beauty, it's all here.



## **Báran Restaurant, Þórshöfn in Langanes**

Báran Restaurant has earned the reputation as one of the best restaurants in northeast of Iceland. Specialising in fresh local meat and produce from nearby farms and fresh fish from the local boats, Bárán is a delightful full-service restaurant in Þórshöfn.

Báran, which features a cosy, warm atmosphere, is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week, something rare for this part of Iceland as the next full-service restaurant is about 150 kilometres away. Guests can enjoy options from a diverse menu, including lamb, fresh fish, burgers, soups, sandwiches, pasta and pizza. There's something for everyone. And if the weather is good, guests can enjoy their meal on an outdoor deck overlooking the serene harbour. For those up for a drink, Bárán has an impressive beer menu from local Icelandic breweries as well as imported beer.



## **Eyri in Hjalteyri**

Nearby Hjalteyri, which is a small village on the western shores of Eyjafjörður, close to Akureyri, has transformed from a fishing town to an artist community. The old herring factory is frequently used as a venue for art exhibitions. Hungry travellers should stop by the Eyri Restaurant, a beautiful eatery with gorgeous fjord views. Eyri serves dishes derived from local meat and produce. In fact, all of the lamb served is from farms within 30 kilometres of the restaurant and the fish comes from Þórshöfn.

Hjalteyri has evolved into an attractive tourist destination over the past few years. There is a food co-op that sells fresh organic produce every two weeks; there's live music on weekends and the hot tub is a hit with locals and tourists alike. Eyri is at the heart of it all with great food and a friendly atmosphere.



## **Hotel Skúlagarður and Restaurant**

Hótel Skúlagarður offers comfortable accommodation for travellers looking to explore two tourist routes—the Diamond Circle and the Arctic Coast Way. The hotel has 17 rooms, all with private bathrooms and, during the summer months, the hotel provides a reception area, restaurant and bar. The restaurant focuses on quality, local ingredients and offers an á la carte menu from June 1– September 1. The winter months have limited service.

Skúlagarður is located in Kelduverfi and natural wonders can be found within walking distance of the hotel, including hiking trails, caves and lake Skálftavatn. The location is perfect for travellers exploring the Northeast and discovering some hidden gems along the way.



## **Sandur Guesthouse in Þórshöfn**

Sandur Guesthouse offers charming accommodation in a historically significant house in the town of Þórshöfn. The renovated guesthouse offers an array of accommodation ranging from a single room to a 4-bed family room, all with private bathrooms. The guesthouse is perfectly situated along the Arctic Coast Way, with attractions nearby. The guesthouse owners also offer kayaking rentals and tours that allow you to explore the natural beauty of the area by water.



## **The Arctic Coast Way**

The businesses above are located along the north-eastern corner of North Iceland's newest tourist route, the Arctic Coast Way, which spans 900 kilometres from Hvammstangi in the northwest to Bakkafjörður in the northeast. This route leads travellers on a journey across 21 towns and villages, and along the way you will see spectacular landscapes of towering mountains, charming fishing villages, and glacial river deltas.

Northeast Iceland is often overlooked, but has some of the most pristine, untouched nature in Iceland. On your next trip to Iceland, make sure to spend some time hiking and photographing the Northeast coast. Even during the high season, there's a good chance you won't bump into many other tourists. The Northeast can be your own private treasure. -JG



# Geothermal SEA BATHS

Húsavík's unique hot baths



At the awesome GeoSea baths, set on top of Húsavíkurhöfði – ‘Húsavík Cliff’ – bathing guests view a majestic range of mountains to the west, old oak fishing boats silently sailing Skjálfandi Bay, the Puffin and Flatey Islands, the Arctic Circle on the Horizon and the serene town of Húsavík, with its majestic wooden Church. Húsavík, the whale watching capital of Europe, with its population of 2,500, is one of Iceland’s main tourist attractions. Simply magical and unmatched anywhere else.

### Health benefits of GeoSea

The geothermal heat north of Húsavík has been well known to residents, who have used it for bathing and washing for centuries. Drilling for hot water at Húsavíkurhöfði in

the mid-20th century revealed water that turned out to be hot seawater, too rich in minerals to be suitable for heating houses.

Instead of letting the hot water go to waste, an old cheese barrel was installed at Húsavíkurhöfði. There, Húsavík residents could enjoy the health benefits of bathing in hot seawater. Many suffering from skin conditions such as psoriasis have found relief by bathing in the water, which is at an optimal temperature of 38°-39°C.

### The bore holes provide purity

The water in the GeoSea baths comes from two bore holes, one located by the cheese barrel and the other by Húsavík harbour. There is no need to use any cleaning agents or equipment, as the steady flow of water

from the bore holes, between the pools, over their edges and into the sea ensures that the water stays within the limits stipulated by health regulations.

The GeoSea sea baths enable guests to enjoy nature in a unique manner. Thanks to the underground heat, the seawater in the baths is warm and comfortable and the mineral-rich water caresses the skin. While warm sea works its miracles, guests enjoy the spectacular view and health benefits. -JG



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# HARBOUR RESTAURANT AND BAR

*A Welcoming New Addition to Skagaströnd*

In the small village of Skagaströnd in Northwest Iceland, you can find a brand-new restaurant, Harbour. The restaurant opened on 17th June 2021, the Icelandic National Day. It is in an old industrial building by the harbour and is the perfect spot to enjoy good food and watch the harbour life. You can often see the fishermen docking their boats with the catch of the day.

Harbour Restaurant and Bar is cosy and has a friendly atmosphere. It is owned by two couples Birna Sveinsdóttir and Slavko Velemir, and Hafðís Hrunn Ásgeirsdóttir and Stefán Sveinsson.

It is important for every town to have a restaurant and there was a gap that needed to be filled in Skagaströnd. “We wondered what we were waiting for and decided to open the restaurant ourselves. We wanted a welcoming restaurant, where people could sit for a long time and enjoy themselves”, Birna said. In the wintertime, people might get lucky and get a Northern Lights show with their dinner.

### Fresh Local Food

Asked about the menu, she said that everyone would find something to their liking. “Our most popular dish so far is the fish and chips, but we put emphasis on using fresh local produce. We get much of our food products very locally,” she said smiling. “Vörusmiðja BioPol is next door, where local farmers can process their produce, and on the other side, we have a fish market.”

There is a large choice of meals on the menu. Dishes range from side dishes such as smoked trout, onion rings and a shareable party platter with cheeses, fruits, crackers and more, to hamburgers, pizzas, chicken salad, falafel salad and Icelandic lamb chops.

Harbour Restaurant and Bar is not only a restaurant, but also a cultural house. We recommend checking out their Facebook page to see upcoming events. The Christmas buffet in December is sure to be a feast filled with the Christmas spirit.

### Halfway between Reykjavik and Akureyri

Skagaströnd is a part of the beautiful Arctic Coast Way and only a brief 15-minute drive from the Ring Road. It is also just about halfway between Reykjavík and Akureyri and a great place to stop.

The Arctic Coast Way stretches 900 kilometres along the North Atlantic Ocean. It is the first officially opened tourist route in Iceland. It gives people a different way to travel the Ring Road and see less-travelled areas. Along the way are some of Iceland’s most beautiful sightseeing spots.

In Northwest Iceland, after having visited Skagaströnd and Harbour Restaurant and Bar, we recommend you travel north to Kálfhafarsvík. The beautiful lighthouse, nestled among columnar basalt, with incredible birdlife, is a sight not to be missed. -HDB



**Harbour Restaurant & Bar**

Hafnarlóð 7, 545 Skagaströnd  
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 www.harbour.is





# KRUA SIAM

## Experience Thai Cuisine in North Iceland

In the heart of the largest town of North Iceland, Akureyri, is the Krua Siam restaurant. The restaurant specialises in authentic Thai food and offers fish, meat and vegetarian dishes.

The name Krua Siam means Siam Kitchen and refers to the name of Thailand until 1939. Many Thai customs involve food. It is common for everyone to order a few dishes, which are then shared among the group; it is even seen as bad luck to eat

on your own. It is considered important to not throw away leftovers since it can anger the rice goddess, Phosop. Her role is to make sure everyone has enough to eat and if she becomes angry, it could mean famine for the whole nation!

Krua Siam offers the option to eat in or take away and has offers for 2 and more people. There is a lunch buffet between 11:30 and 13:30 every weekday with many different courses. You can find dishes with everything from pork, chicken, shrimp, fish and, of course, fried noodles and vegetable dishes, as well.

The restaurant is situated smack downtown on the corner of Glerárgata and Strandgata, near to Ráðhústorgið and Hof, the Akureyri Cultural and Conference Centre. It is thus a great place to check out during your travels.

Enrich your palate with a visit to Krua Siam. –HDB

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 Strandgata 13, 600 Akureyri  
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 www.kruasiam.is



**KAKALASKÁLI** in Skagafjörður has two story and art exhibitions about the turmoils of the 13th century. One is an outdoor installation depicting the biggest battle in Icelandic history, the Battle of Haugsnes. At Kakalaskáli you also find Maria's workshop and antiques store.

**Kringlumýri, 561, Varmahlíð**  
 t: +354 865 8227  
 kakalaskali@gmail.com  
 www.kakalaskali.is/



**NAUSTIÐ** is a small, family-owned restaurant in the heart of Húsavík. It is located in a beautifully renovated old house, full of great ambiance. They offer great food, with carefully chosen ingredients.

**Ásgarðsvegur 1 - 640, Húsavík**  
 t: 4641520  
 www.facebook.com/naustid



**HÚSAVÍK GREEN HOSTEL** is a cosy place in the heart of Húsavík, where everything is within short walking distance. It has a diverse selection of rooms and its own environmental policy. The minimum stay is 2 nights.

**Vallholtsvegur 9, 640 Húsavík**  
 +354 866 0882  
 husavikgreenhostel@gmail.com  
 www.husavikgreenhostel.is/



**BÁRAN BAR/RESTAURANT** in Þórshöfn, Northeast Iceland, offers local cuisine like fish, lamb, vegetables or for those who dare, whale or Puffin. During summer they also serve breakfast.

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**ICELANDIC TIMES**  
 www.icelandictimes.com



# MÝVATN TOURS

## EXPLORE THE INTERIOR OF ICELAND

### Enjoy the breathtaking landscapes of Askja and Viti

Iceland's uninhabited interior is home to an otherworldly landscape that must be seen to be believed. It's full of dramatic and wild scenery, swept by endless wind and marked by vast expanses of ice and desert. It's the most distinctive landscape on the island, replete with lava fields and volcanoes.

### Explore the highlands with Mývatn Tours

You can venture deep into the highlands on a day tour with the family-run business, Mývatn Tours. The Askja Classic tour, which has been operated for more than 40 years by Mývatn Tours, brings you to Askja on a unique 4x4 bus. Askja is a caldera (sunken crater) within the surrounding Dyngjujökull mountains which offers dramatic volcanic features that were formed by collapsing land after a volcanic eruption. They are essentially huge volcanic craters. The area is remote and

awe-inspiring. Askja, which stands at 1,510 metres, emerges from the Ódáðahraun lava field, amidst rocky terrain.

### The awe-inspiring Askja

Askja is in the middle of the Highlands and it takes between 3 to 4 hours to drive there. The trip starts and ends in the village of Reykjahlíð, in the Lake Mývatn area. On the way up to Askja, the bus stops several times to have a closer look at the amazing landscapes and geological wonders, such as lava fields, glacial rivers, fresh water rivers, natural springs and towering mountains.

### Travel in a vehicle equipped for the Highlands

Getting to the Highlands is no easy feat as basic rental cars are not suitable for the journey. With Mývatn Tours, you sit up high in a special vehicle designed to navigate the rugged Highlands, with a lot of space for your feet and your belongings. The 4x4 buses can handle the unforgiving lava fields and rivers. You are in safe hands with the experienced and professional drivers, so you can relax and listen to the guide while he tells you about the area.

When the bus arrives at the parking space in Askja around 12–1pm, passengers get 2–2½ hours to explore the area. There is



an approximately 35-minute easy walk from the parking area to Askja and the Viti crater area. Viti is a tremendous crater, filled with a pale blue lake, that emerged after the great eruption of the Askja volcano in 1875 where you can go for a swim, if conditions allow.

The Highlands are an unforgettable slice of Iceland and the guides of Mývatn Tours can't wait to introduce you to the hauntingly beautiful landscapes of its interior. - JG



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# A CHARMING FARM IN MARVELLOUS MÝVATN

*Vogafjós emphasises a farm-to-table approach amidst stunning surroundings*



**V**ogafjós is situated on a spectacular slice of land in the Mývatn region. The farm, owned by the same family for roughly 120 years, is an ideal base to explore a bit of Mývatn while enjoying comfortable accommodation and delicious food at this friendly farm resort.

### From farm to table

The restaurant focuses on using the farm's products for a delicious farm-to-table concept. The meat is sourced from the farm and is used in burgers, carpaccio and soup, while the farm's milk is used to make

mozzarella and salad cheese and for coffee drinks and cooking. While enjoying your meal, you can watch their dairy cows being milked on the other side of a glass partition (milking is at 7:30 and 17:30). Guests are also welcome to go inside the cowshed and pet the cows.

### Traditional Icelandic methods

In addition to their farm-to-table concept, Vogafjós embraces some traditional Icelandic cooking methods, a lovely authentic experience for guests. As Vogafjós is situated close to a geothermal area near Lake Mývatn,

they prepare Geysir bread, a sweet rye bread, for guests. The bread is placed in a hole in the ground in the geothermal area, and then a lid is placed over it to harness the heat and bake the bread. The bread is kept underground for 24 hours while it slowly bakes. Vogafjós also prepares smoked Arctic char and raw lamb meat in the traditional method, adding a unique, classically Icelandic flavour. This method has been used in the Mývatn area for generations.

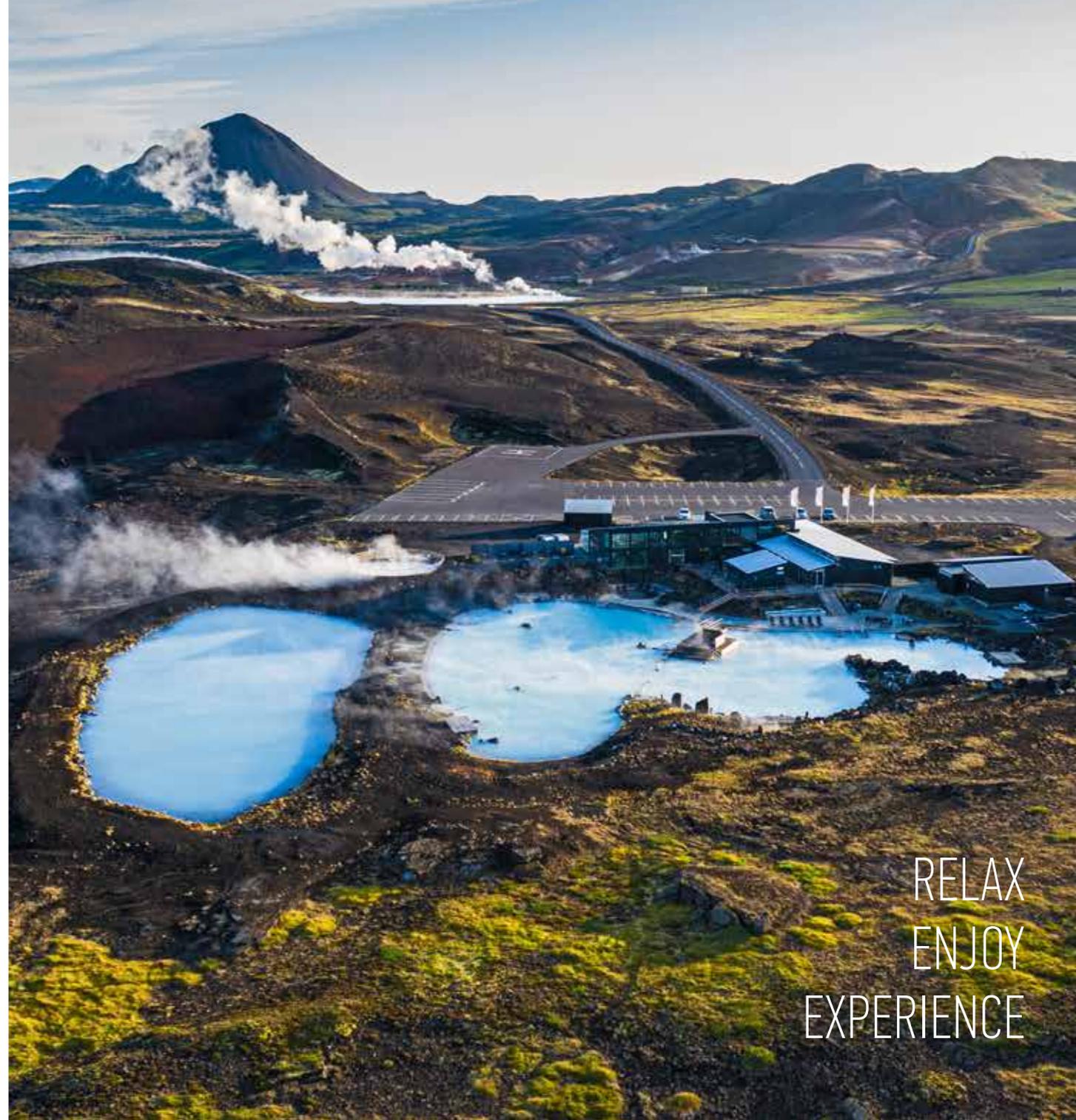
### Comfortable accommodation

Vogafjós' guesthouse consists of two log houses with ten rooms each and one log house with four superior king-size rooms and double rooms, all with private bathrooms – a total of 26 rooms. The rooms are well furnished, comfortable and are designed to let guests feel relaxed while enjoying the unique natural environment Mývatn offers.

The Mývatn region is a can't-miss part of North Iceland. Visitors are lured by gorgeous hiking trails, rich birdlife, activities along Lake Mývatn, and the soothing Mývatn Nature Baths. There's so much to do and see in Mývatn, and Vogafjós is the perfect place to base yourself from when travelling the great North. -JG



**Vogafjós**  
 660 Mývatnssveit  
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RELAX  
 ENJOY  
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# MÝVATN NATURE BATHS

pre-book online at [naturebaths.is](http://naturebaths.is)



# THE PEARLS OF *East Iceland*

*Explore the vast beauty of the East*

**E**ast Iceland is home to some of the most remote, spectacular nature on the island, with breathtaking attractions and numerous hiking opportunities. The region offers sweeping landscapes with backdrops of looming mountains, narrow fjords, and rugged coastlines. If you're looking for unspoiled beauty, it's here.

There are several itineraries to help you determine the best way to explore East Iceland on [www.east.is](http://www.east.is). Below are some of the highlights of the eclectic east.

Djúpivogur, a town of fewer than 500 people that has a history of fishing and trading dating to 1589, is a recommended place to visit. The picturesque landscape is the backdrop to countless hiking trails, which are free to roam and explore.

Fáskrúðsfjörður is a small village, also with fewer than 500 people, nestled on a long fjord of the same name. It's the most 'French' part of Iceland, as the village was originally a base for more than 5,000 French fishermen, who came every year to fish the rich Icelandic waters. Some settled here in the late 19th century. The village had a hospital, chapel, and cemetery that were built by the French, and both the buildings and the history

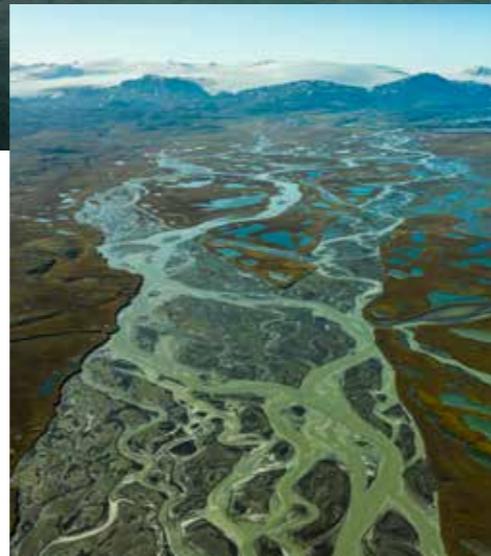
remain, as the streets of Fáskrúðsfjörður are marked in both Icelandic and French.

Egilsstaðir is considered the unofficial capital of East Iceland, but don't let that fool you; it's a 'capital' with fewer than 3,000 residents. The quaint town earned its name based on a reference to the nearby Egil's farm, which appears in the stories of the Sagas.

If you're interested in exploring a bit more of the interior, consider a drive through the highlands. There are the hot natural pools at Laugarfell, the towering Snæfell mountain, and the vast beauty of the Vatnajökull National Park.

While surveying the landscape, you will have certainly noticed that trees are a rare sight in Iceland. Hallormsstaður has the distinction of being the largest forest in the country, though it would be considered small by other standards. It stretches along banks of the 35-kilometre-long Lagarfljót glacial lake. It's beautiful to roam among native birch trees that have survived inclement weather and found a way to thrive.

Seyðisfjörður is well-known for its variety of cultural events, its diverse community and the town centre that is adorned with beautiful wooden houses that are quite rare in this



country, as well as the ferry port that brings visitors from Europe with the cars, motorbikes or bikes. Opportunities for outdoor activities are varied in Seyðisfjörður and for those who are interested in hiking, you can find both short and longer hiking trails.

### Convenient App

To help you discover and navigate the magic of East Iceland, an app called Austurland, is a valuable resource to get the most out of your trip. Austurland includes information about attractions, hiking trails, swimming pools, as well as discounts, special offers, local secrets,

services and announcements. The Austurland app, which is available for both Apple and Android products, is a great guide to help you find inspiration for places to eat, activities or ways to unwind in the east of Iceland.

East Iceland is often overlooked by first-time visitors to the country, but it has some of the most pristine, untouched nature in Iceland. On your next trip to Iceland, be sure to spend some time visiting, hiking and photographing the east coast and Eastfjords. Even during the high season, there's a good chance you won't bump into many other tourists. The East can be your own private treasure. -JG



# A UNIQUE BATHING EXPERIENCE *in the Idyllic East*

*Vök Baths offers guests the only floating geothermal pools in all of Iceland*



Vök Baths is an exciting new geothermal bathing facility where guests can enjoy two heated floating pools among the beautiful scenery of Lake Urriðavatn. Situated just a few minutes away from Egilsstaðir, Vök Baths is an ideal place to relax while sightseeing in East Iceland. The brand new baths, completed in the summer of 2019, take their shape from the ice-free patches on the lake, created by the bubbling hot springs in the lake.

### **Harnessing the power of geothermal energy**

There are many advantages to the Land of Fire and Ice, and one is the abundance of natural, renewable geothermal energy. The

baths are gloriously warm, soothing your skin and muscles while you're enjoying the pristine nature of the region. The pools, whose water is so clean and pure it has been certified as drinkable, are especially welcome to the area, as East Iceland is home to few hot springs, compared to other parts of Iceland.

### **Bathing facilities and changing rooms**

In addition to the floating pools there are two on-shore hot pools, and an outdoor pool bar. A steam bath and cold tunnel equipped with a cool mist shower inside is just about completed. The indoor shower facilities and changing rooms are comfortable with nature-inspired designs.

There are private showers and lockers to store your belongings while bathing. You can rent swimsuits and towels at the baths if you did not bring your own.

### **Enjoy an onsite café, restaurant and bar**

Housed inside the facility, the café-restaurant offers a delicious array of small courses. The Infusion bar also serves an impressive selection of complimentary teas made from local herbs, brewed with the natural hot spring water.

Using the hot water from Lake Urriðavatn, Austri, the local brewery, produces a 4% Blond Kellerbier and a 4% Session IPA especially for Vök Baths from this special hot water. If you would like to enjoy a drink or two while bathing, there is a pool bar so you can relax with your drink while soaking in the pure waters surrounded by the unique Icelandic nature.

### **Strong commitment to the environment**

The creators of Vök Baths have a deep respect for the environment and are committed to upholding excellent standards of sustainability in every aspect of their business. When it comes to maintaining the pools, the bar and restaurant facilities, employees make a determined effort to avoid all use and disposal of plastic, where possible, and packaging is organic and recyclable. Additionally, all the wood furniture and features at Vök are made from ethically sourced trees raised in East Iceland. -JG



**Vök Baths**

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## A FAIRY TALE HOME *Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection*

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.

Petra loved people as well as stones and her passion project became a museum that is 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 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, Þórkatla, 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. -EMV



### Petra's Stone Museum

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PHOTO AND TEXT: Páll Stefánsson

NORÐUR-MÚLASÝSLA

## LOOKING OVER EAST ICELAND



Road 917 from Vopnafjörður over Hellisheiði Eystri to Egilsstaðir is one of the steepest and highest mountain roads in the country. The road is impassable all winter and into spring since there is no winter service on the mountain road over the heath. Here we look southeast of Landsendaþfall over Eyja. The river that is closer is Jökulsá á Dal. Further away, you can see the estuary of Lagarfljót. Between the rivers is Húsey, where Héraðssandur Sand has one of the largest seal populations in Iceland. Krossfall is furthest to the left, Dyrfjöll to the right. Behind them is Borgarfjörður Eystri, but between the mountains is road 94, which connects Borgarfjörður Eystri to the outside world.

EGILISSTAÐIR



### WARM WEATHER AND WATER

This photo is taken in Vök baths on the banks of Urriðavatn, Egilsstaðir, on its second anniversary in July. What makes the bathing place so unique is that the hot springs in and by Lake Urriðavatn are the only hot springs in the country where the water is suitable for drinking. No chlorine or other toxins are used in Vök Baths, but the purity is achieved with a high flow of this pure water. The weather was not bad for visitors and residents of East Iceland, but the air temperature at the bathing place at noon today was 22 °C / 72 °F. The only thing to beware of when taking a bath in Vök is the proximity to the Lagarfljót worm. It can go to Urriðavatn for a swim when it fancies, but it probably happens more often in the winter.

REYÐARFJÖRDUR



### TREASURES OF EAST ICELAND

There are about 7000 reindeer in the country, all in East Iceland, and they all roam free. They were transported to the country in four groups between 1771 and 1787. The stock remains in the country's eastern half, from Langanes in the north to Jökulsárlón in the south. They mostly stay in the highlands in the summer, in the wilderness north of Vatnajökull, around Snæfell. The reindeer come down from the mountains in the winter, like this beautiful group I met in Reyðarfjörður.



# SURVEY THE SCENIC SOUTH

*Arguably the most popular region of Iceland that never disappoints*

The South is home to glaciers, volcanoes and well-known sights like Þingvellir National Park and the Geysir geothermal region (both on the popular Golden Circle tour), lesser-known gems like Þórsmörk (an area with its own micro-climate), colourful mountains, waterfalls, canyons, and lava-shaped landscapes.

## The classic Golden Circle

Encompassing the three most visited sights in South Iceland, the Golden Circle gives you a slice of Icelandic history at Þingvellir, a spectacular view of Iceland's bubbling geothermal activity at Geysir, and the experience of a roaring, powerful waterfall at Gullfoss. Many travellers visit Þingvellir for its geological significance, offering a rare view of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the meeting point of the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. It's also home to Þingvallavatn, the largest natural lake on the island.

The next stop on the Golden Circle route is the Geysir hot spring area. While Geysir itself currently lies dormant, its neighbour, Strokkur, erupts every seven minutes or so. Crowds gather to watch as the churning, gurgling pool of hot water erupts into a fountain of boiling water 15-20 metres high. The final stop is at the mighty Gullfoss waterfall, where the Hvítá, meaning 'white river', a perfect name for the turbulent white

water, plunges into the deep canyon below. The falls consist of three steps, ranging from 11 to 21 metres, ending in the 70-metre-deep gorge.

## The scenic South Coast

The south coast has a bit of everything: waterfalls, black sand beaches, charming villages and vast canyons. Two of the most popular waterfalls, Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss, stand near the coast, and they are unmissable.

Meanwhile, a stop at Reynisdrangar provides a rare experience before heading to the quaint village of Vík. Reynisdrangar is a cluster of striking basalt sea stacks that jut out from a black sand beach. The stacks sit under the Reynisfall mountain just outside Vík. It's popular pastime to climb on the stacks and take photos, then roam the black-sand beach picking up stones and admiring the rock formations. Reynisfjara, from which Reynisdrangar is visible, is probably the most famous black-sand beach in Iceland. The juxtaposition of the white waves crashing on the stark black sand and pebbles is beautiful, with towering basalt columns along the shore next to a small cave.

A lesser-known attraction, Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon, is worth a visit. The canyon, which is believed to have been formed during the last ice age, has been hollowed by the Fjaðrá river, creating narrow walls. The canyon is about 2 kilometres long and about 100

metres deep and visitors can walk on a foot path along the canyon's edge to admire the view and take photos.

## The vast, striking beauty of the Vatnajökull region

The South is home to yet another unmissable attraction, Jokulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. Situated in the Vatnajökull region, the lagoon features massive chunks of ice scattered about, walls of ice jut from the sea, and icebergs of various sizes float on the water. Huge blocks of ice constantly break off the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier into the lagoon which, though not very wide, is up to 250 metres deep—the deepest lake in Iceland.

Meanwhile, Svartifoss waterfall is another spectacular site. After a short hike, you can see Svartifoss (Black Falls) waterfall, where thundering white water cascades over striking black basalt rock columns.

A lesser-known gem is Vestrahorn, an area approximately a ten-minute drive away from Höfn. The shore features stunning lava dunes, that are constantly being shaped by the natural forces of water and wind. Down towards the sea, it is possible to get perfect reflections in the wet sand, a favourite for photographers.

South Iceland has something for everyone and is a must-see region. Waterfalls, glaciers, national parks and black sands await! -JG



# ON TOP OF THE WORLD *Glacier Jeeps*

*The largest glacier in Europe*



The weather report was looking good—a full day of sunshine ahead of me and temperatures above 10°C. I was on my way to a face to face encounter with the world’s 3rd largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull. This trip would mark a couple of firsts for me—my first time ever to set foot on a glacier, and my first time to travel by snowmobile. Needless to say I was really excited!

I first met Kristján and Bjarney, of Glacier Jeeps, at our pre-arranged meeting place: Vagnsstaðir. This is the official meeting place for all Glacier Jeep summer tours. Glacier Jeeps has years of experience conducting jeep, snowmobile and hiking tours on the glacier since 1994. (Bjarney has been helping run the family business since she was 14 years old.) I parked my car and joined them in their sturdy 4WD, which wound its way slowly every upwards on road F985 after a short drive on Route No. 1. The gravel road twisted and turned around hairpin bends, past waterfalls and deep canyons. My guides fill me in on the details of the landscape, pointing out how the glacier has crawled across the terrain, devastating everything in its path along with other interesting facts.

It is about a forty minute drive from Vagnsstaðir to the roots of Vatnajökull Glacier where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

Now it’s time to test drive the snowmobiles. I am a little hesitant at first and Kristján shows me the ropes. It looks easy enough but I decide that I prefer to let him drive over the glacier with me sitting safely behind him on this ‘skidoo for two’, at least until I get a better feel for it. ‘Off we go over the wild white yonder, climbing high into the sun’ to paraphrase an old song, with cloudless blue skies above us and the wind in our faces. Further along we stop and dismount, to take in the magnificent panoramic views over the glacier, the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Höfn far below in the distance. I felt like I was on top of the world and it was truly a cause for celebration!

Kristján jokes that we cannot go onwards unless I drive. By now I am feeling a little more sure of myself and agree to give it a try. This time we are off to inspect a massive sheer rock face that rises straight up from the glacier at an elevation of 1200 metres. Finally, our one

hour snowmobile adventure comes to an end and it is time to return to base.

Glacier Jeeps also offers a hiking tour of the glacier that comes with all the equipment such as safety helmets, climbing irons and ice axe, instruction and a guide, included in the price.

In case you just don’t think a strenuous hike or a thrilling snowmobile adventure is for you, then Glacier Jeeps offers an alternative to see the glacier in a comfortable, specially equipped 4WD and is available year round, weather permitting. Each tour is only 3 to 4 hours in total, giving you plenty of time to do other things with your day, even though once you are up there you may not want to come down. Although it’s best to book one day in advance, you can also just show up at Vagnsstaðir at either 9.30 am or 2.00 pm and join the tour from there.

Vatnajökull Glacier Jeep tours: a must for your bucket list! -EMV

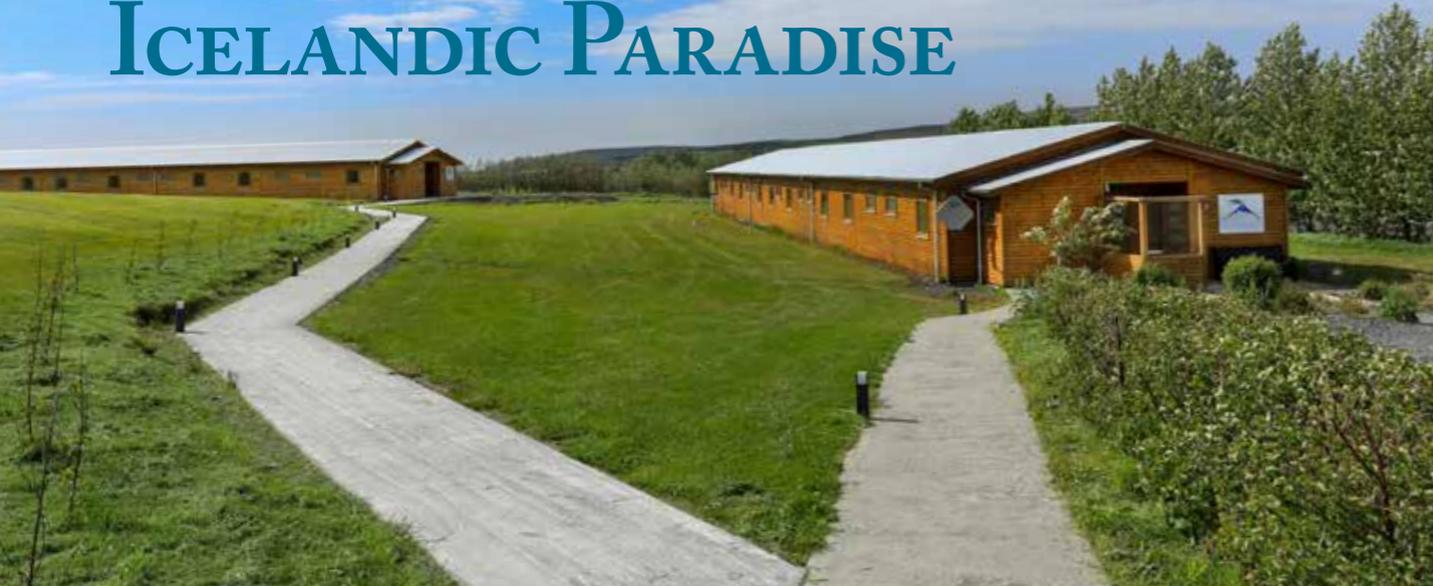


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## HELLISHÓLAR COTTAGES, GUESTHOUSE AND HOTEL

# A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



Set in one of the most idyllic locations in South Iceland, Hellishólar offers a variety of accommodations 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 eat 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 Hótel Eyjafjallajökull with 36 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, each with an 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 viewing the Northern Lights.

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

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# DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

### Jökulsárlón Boat Tours on the Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

There are few glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none more awe-inspiring and accessible than the renowned Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, situated at the head of Breiðamerkulljökull outlet glacier on the peerless Vatnajökull Glacier.

### Sail Among the Icebergs

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 30 years. Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting one hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

### Coffee with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where you can get homemade soup with bread, fresh sandwiches, cakes with coffee or tea which can be either taken out on the terrace or consumed inside.

### The Show of Fire and Ice

The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described without a doubt as one of the most memorable fireworks shows on earth. The event, held annually in late August, starts at 11.30 pm, with proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.

Located within a few hundred metres of Route No. 1, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring over 28 square

km (9.6 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 300m (984 feet) deep, five Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare. With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water enters into the lagoon bringing with it krill, capelin, herring and salmon. Curious seals know where the food is plentiful and can often be seen bobbing along with the currents, swimming in and out between the icebergs and appearing to enjoy the attention from onlookers on the shore. Across the road, near the delta where fresh and salt water converge, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the rather surreal sight of baby 'bergs' beached on the shoreline. -EMV

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# A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

## Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro

Located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, has a firm foundation of culinary excellence that attracts patrons from around the world. Owner, Baldur Öxdal Halldórsson, pastry and master chef, trained at the Hotel and Restaurant School of Iceland between 1980–1984, received training as a pastry chef at the Culinary Institute of America, New York in 1986–1987, and attended the prestigious Richemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988–1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert.

After his training abroad was completed, Baldur began something of a culinary revolution in Reykjavík, working at many of the top hotels and restaurants, creating spectacular and sophisticated desserts that were hitherto unknown in the capital.

### Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which has become known as the 'Mecca of Icelandic wild game', with its lamb, fish, seafood and game caught in the wild. His menu

is seasonal and features exotic dishes that can be made from reindeer, goose, duck, cormorant, guillemot, puffin, minke whale or pan-fried arctic char. Always on the cutting edge, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his bilberry skyr mousse with crow berries and rhubarb.

### Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt', he can take his pick of the choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden, providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil, red and blackcurrants. The lamb and venison come from N.E. Iceland and are known for their delicious flavour, fed on mountain herbs. The Arctic char are caught fresh from either Lake Pingvellir or Lake Apavatn daily.

### In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, right beside the lovely natural sauna, steam baths and pool at the Fontana Spa. The 45 minute scenic drive from



Reykjavík takes you through enchanting landscapes. Laugarvatn is half-way between Pingvellir and Geysir and Gullfoss, making it an excellent choice for a day trip to in one of the most scenic areas of Iceland. You can also now stay at any time of year in Laugarvatn at either the Golden Circle Apartments next to Lindin, the Gallerí Guesthouse or the village hostel to enjoy the Northern Lights in winter and the midnight sun in summer and the spectacular views from Lindin's terrace and garden across the lake to the Hekla and Eyjafallajökull volcanoes. —EMV/ASF

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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. But on 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 1,000m<sup>2</sup> 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.

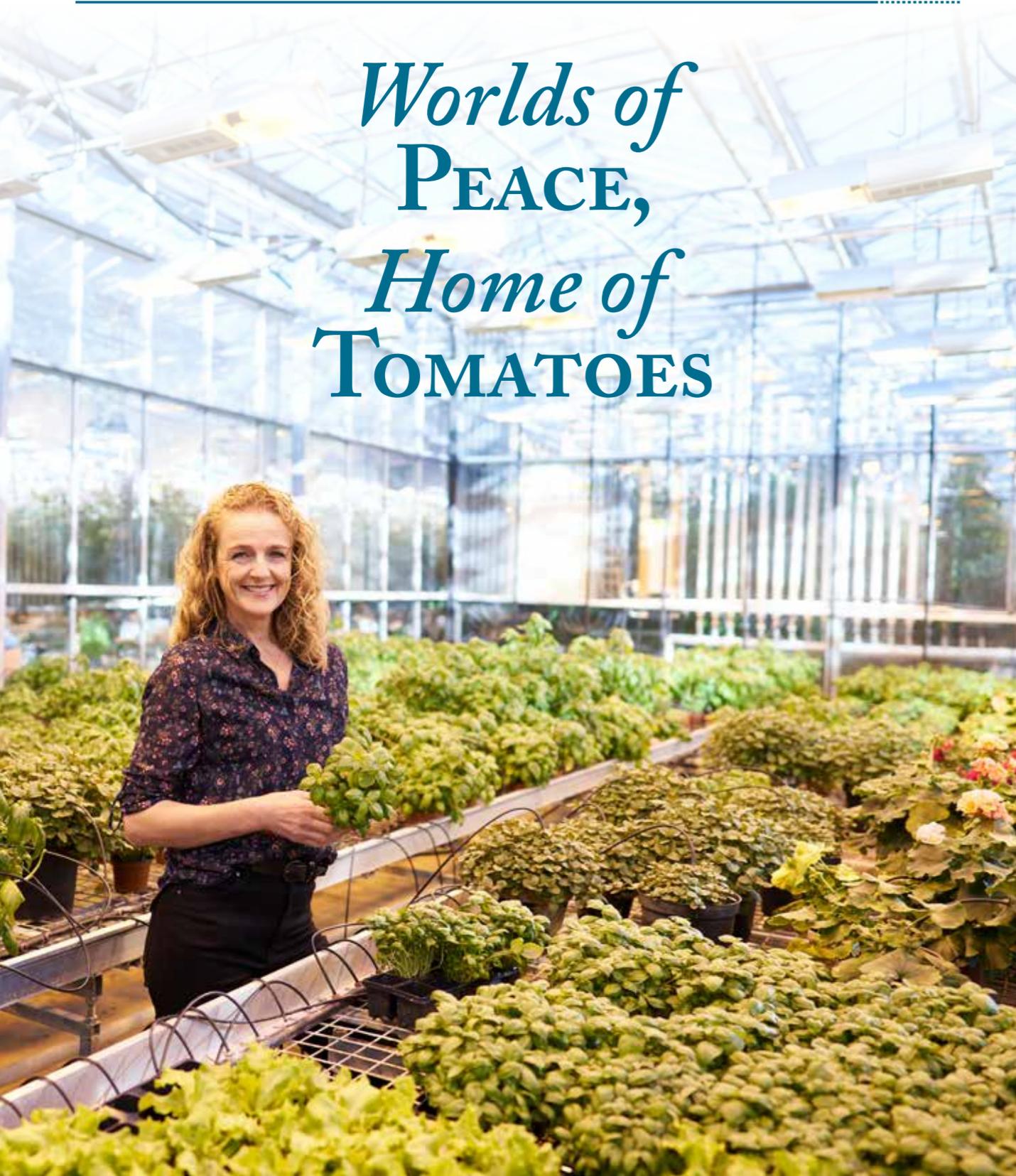
Nature protection laws protect Surtsey and only scientists are allowed to access the island for research reasons. The island is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2008.

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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# Worlds of PEACE, Home of TOMATOES



*Helena Hermundardóttir*

## *The phenomenal rise of Friðheimar, in South Iceland, where tomatoes, horses and tourism make a perfect combination*

**B**ack in 1995, Knútur Rafn Ármann and Helena Hermundardóttir, a couple from Reykjavík, bought a farm called Friðheimar in the tiny village of Reykholt in the South of Iceland. They had fallen in love at the age of seventeen and made their plans. By 1995 they had just graduated at the age of 25, he as an agronomist from Hólar University in the North of Iceland and she as a horticulturalist from Reykir's Horticultural College at Hveragerði. Friðheimar – 'Worlds of Peace' – was really rather desolate in the middle of nowhere at a time when people were seeking opportunities in Reykjavík rather than in the countryside. Their aim was to combine their passions for horses and tomatoes, and Friðheimar was the ideal place for doing exactly that.

Horticulture, using natural hot water, had been introduced at Friðheimar back in 1946, two years after Iceland had become an independent nation. The farm had two modest greenhouses and a large house that had stood unoccupied for five years when Knútur and Helena arrived. A quarter of a century has now passed since they started developing and expanding the operations with the aim of combining their different areas of expertise – horses and horticulture. They have five children and a grandchild on the way.

While the place hums with life today, it hasn't always been easy. The process of development at Friðheimar can be divided into several phases. The first six years were spent renovating old greenhouses and building new ones. The next period of ten years began when they started building new greenhouses and putting lights in all of them, enabling them to grow tomatoes all year around. During this time, Knútur and Helena were also adding to their knowledge and expertise, making frequent visits

to Finland, for instance, where they benefited from collaboration with Finnish experts. Horticulture under artificial lighting is highly advanced in Finland.

### **From 900 to 180,000 visitors**

In 2008 they took a big step and decided to open the farm to visitors, wanting to introduce the unique traits of the Icelandic horse to their guests. A stable for 20 horses was built, with reception facilities, as well as an outdoor arena with a stand for 120 spectators. A horse show for tourists was launched.

In 2011 the crop-growing space was enlarged by 60%, and a visitor centre was built in the middle of a greenhouse, with a restaurant located in between the tomato plants. They were inspired to create something special and unique, something they hoped people had never tried before. Their focus is on food experience where a simple menu is offered – tomato-based dishes from the plants. The main idea is to spread knowledge about the background of the food which is grown in the greenhouse and offered in the restaurant, in a sustainable and eco-friendly way.

In 2012-2013, a range of food products and souvenirs were developed, made with tomatoes and cucumbers. The Little Tomato Shop opened next to the Atrium selling souvenirs and in 2014 an online

shop was introduced. "We looked upon tourism as a side business but it turned out to be bigger than our main business. In 2012 we had six employees, and 900 visitors and in 2019 we had 48 employees and 180 thousand visitors. To say that we moved faster than anticipated, is certainly an understatement! The challenge was to ensure quality and training of the staff, but we have managed to do so," says Knútur in an interview with Icelandic Times.

### **Greenhouse constructions in midst of covid**

After all that success, they were faced with extreme challenge, as tourism all over the western world was shut down. Iceland was no exception. It was covid. "Yes, at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 we were faced with a dilemma. We were 48 people working in Friðheimar, and three quarters of us were working in tourism. How to respond as our staff is the heartbeat of the company. We were not prepared to let our people go and lose knowhow, so we decided to build a greenhouse of 5.600 square-metres and double our production. We asked our people whether they were prepared to face the challenge with us and to turn into builders. Luckily, everyone said yes. We needed more land, so the owners of Birkilundur, our neighbours were gracious to sell us land. The municipality



*Knútur Rafn Ármann*

fast-tracked permits through the system. Work began in May 2020 and in January 2021, the first tomatoes were produced and delivered to customers. So now we produce 2 tons of tomatoes every day in 11.000 square-metres under glass, 700 tons per year. We are optimistic for the future,” says Knútur and points out that “Icelandic horticulture is unique on a worldwide scale with the world’s cleanest water, the geothermal hot water and sustainable energy. In early summer 2021, when tourism started again post covid, we got back to our feet quickly because the staff were able to return back to their old positions and therefore we could keep our knowhow and infrastructure inside the company”, Knútur continues.

#### Sustainability and Responsibility

Knútur emphasises that the strategy of Friðheimar focuses on Sustainability and Responsible Tourism. The direction is to ensure that production and services continue to fulfil the expectations of customers, with the same quality standards being maintained into the future as the business grows. Maintaining good connections with customers and fellow growers into the future is also of key importance. Friðheimar has been a proud member of Vakinn, the official quality and environmental certification for Icelandic tourism since 2017, using that as a guideline to build infrastructures. All employees participate in continuously improving the quality system, so that they can maintain their high quality products and services in the best way possible.

“As we all know, companies have a major impact on their surroundings and community with their activities. Our company is no exception and that is why Friðheimar wants to offer an environmentally and socially responsible service for our guests. We want to set a good example for our colleagues within the tourism industry by taking responsibility and help making our business as sustainable as possible,” says Knútur Ármann.

-Hallur Hallsson  
Photo: Páll Stefánsson



# SKÓGAR MUSEUM

## THE CROWN JEWEL AMONG REGIONAL MUSEUMS

*This year its former director, Þórður Tómasson celebrated his 100th birthday*

Skógar Museum can be found by the majestic Skógafoss waterfall in South Iceland, 150 kilometres east of Reykjavík. It is a cultural heritage collection of over 18,000 artefacts exhibited in three museums. The Museum displays a variety of tools used for fishing and farming, as well as some artefacts dating back to the Viking Age. There is also the Open Air Museum, showcasing historic buildings from the area, and the Technical Museum, which exhibits many historic vehicles and features from the transportation history of Iceland. This museum is the Crown Jewel of Icelandic regional museums.

#### Fisheries and Agriculture

The Maritime section of the Folk Museum contains a large collection of objects related to fisheries along the south shore of Iceland. Fisheries in this region were unusual because Iceland’s sandy south coast has no proper harbours; boats had to be launched from beaches open to the North Atlantic waves. The centrepiece of the section is Pétursey, the eight-oared fishing boat, built in 1855 and used until 1946.

The Agriculture section contains tools and utensils used on farms in past times; riding gear, haymaking tools, wool-working and iron-working equipment. In a subsistence economy, farming households had to be self-sustaining, making and repairing all their own tools and utensils.

The Folk Museum also has an esoteric collection of everything from textiles to natural history to rare books.

#### Turf houses & Technology

In the original turf houses rebuilt in the Open Air Museum one can catch

the atmosphere of times long gone and experience the living conditions in Iceland throughout the centuries. The Technical Museum tells the story of technology and transportation and its development in Iceland in the 19th and 20th century. Among the many automobiles and two airplanes on exhibit is the world’s best preserved Kégresse P15N track – a must-see for all car enthusiasts!

#### The Pioneer: Þórður Tómasson

Þórður Tómasson was born in 1921 and developed an interest for folk culture from a young age. Growing up in the countryside in South Iceland he started to notice the swift changes taking place in the daily life of what was essentially a farming culture that had not changed for centuries. As working methods modernized and old equipment became redundant, the tendency of the farmers was to get rid of it. Þórður started from a young age to collect old equipment that was being discarded. He also spent a long time listening to the elderly as he was growing up and later started to document this oral history.

In 1944, the residents of the two farms at Ytri-Skógar donated 69% of their land to the counties of Rangárvellir and West Skaftafell, to construct a new boarding school. At the first meeting of the school board in 1945, it was suggested that a folk museum also be established. Skógar Museum was founded in 1949, and the first exhibit was set up in the school basement on December 1st the same year. Initially Þórður Tómasson took responsibility for the museum, and in 1959 he was appointed as director. He was an organist in two churches and, for many years, he was a member of the parish councils of both areas. For ten years he was also a member of the Rangárvellir county council. In 1997 Þórður was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Iceland for



his contribution to research in the public interest. Þórður continued his work for the museum until he retired in 2014.

Þórður has written more than 28 books about the old Icelandic farming culture, folklore and the artefacts that can be found in the museum. This year Þórður Tómasson celebrated his 100th birthday.

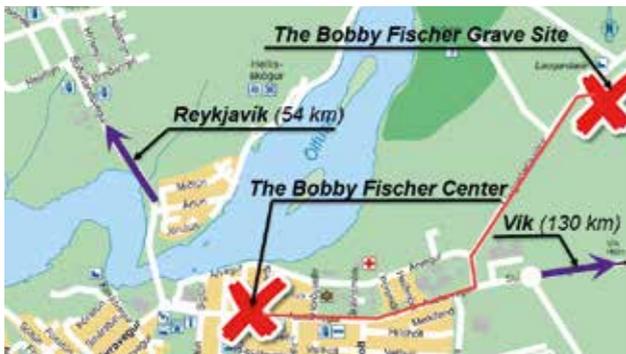
-Hallur Hallsson

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# THE BOBBY FISCHER CENTER

*It is housing a memorabilia of the 11th World Chess Champion BOBBY FISCHER and the Selfoss Chess Club.*

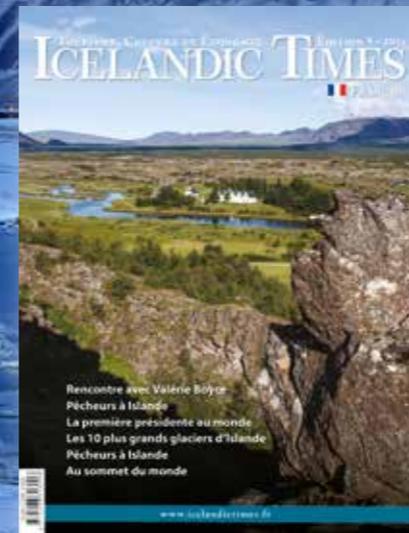
The American Bobby Fischer became the World Chess Champion when he defeated the Soviet grandmaster and reigning World champion Boris Spassky in Reykjavik in the summer of 1972. The match is generally referred to as the Match of the Century. It took place at the height of the Cold War, mirroring the tense relations between the two superpowers, United States of America and the Soviet union. Since 1948 Soviet chess players had held the World championship title - uninterrupted for quarter of a century. On display at the Bobby Fischer Center in Selfoss are among other things Spassky's and Fischer's scoresheets, a printout from the radiation measurements demanded by Spassky's delegation after the 17th game and a replica of the chess board used during the match which was staged in Laugardalshöll in Reykjavik. In addition many curious items related to Bobby Fischer's stay in Iceland during his last years (2005-2008), for example his chair from the antiquarian bookshop Bókin in Reykjavik. He died on 17th of January 2008 at the age of 64. Bobby Fischer's final resting place is at Laugardælir cemetery, a few hundred meters away from Bobby Fischer center.



# ICELANDIC TIMES

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