

ICELANDIC TIMES

Tourism, Culture and Business

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...and many more



LAND
& SAGA



A Greeting from the President of Iceland

Iceland is a country of creation. Its volcanoes, geysers, glaciers and lava offer a dramatic interplay of fire and ice. Beautiful rivers and lakes, green fields and multicoloured mountains have inspired painters and poets.

The people of Iceland have safeguarded this unique island for more than a thousand years. From the period of Viking settlement to the creation of a highly modern society the spirit of discovery has guided our journeys. The history can be found in every footstep; regions celebrating their heritage and redefining their vision.

The visitors will be welcomed by the people and invited to share the country where the creation of the Earth is still going on.

Olafur Ragnar Grimsson



Photo.Hermann.Sigurds



Cover

Photo: Ingólfur Júlíusson

Model: Gréta María Kristinsdóttir

The photo was taken in Árbæjarsafnið museum, where Icelandic traditions are preserved in historic houses which are transported to the museum where they are restored to capture the period in which they were habited.

Gréta María is wearing Peysuföt, which is an Icelandic National Costume commonly worn by women in the 18-19th century. She is seated in front of a „rokkur“, which is a domestic device for making yarn or thread with a single spindle and a wheel driven by foot.

The next issue of Icelandic Times will be published February 2010.

The opinions expressed in Icelandic Times do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, publishers or their agents. Though the content of this issue have been meticulously prepared, no warranty is made about the accuracy and completeness of its content.

Congratulations for picking up the very first issue of Icelandic Times, a magazine which scrutinizes the best of what Iceland has to offer for our foreign visitors. Our aim is to give you a genuine insight into our culture, history, arts, geology, business, politics and whatever we consider Icelandic.

Much has been written about Iceland following the devastating crash of Iceland's banking system. While the Icelandic people are slowly recovering from the impact of the crisis, the Icelandic glaciers, volcanoes and hot springs pay little mind to those matters, which seem trivial in comparison to Iceland's geological history, which is plagued thousands of years of catastrophic volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Iceland's majestic landscapes are a timeless reminder of how we often forget the things that are important. Try standing on top of a glacier, walking inside a volcano or gaze at the Northern

Lights and see if your mind wanders to more trivial things.

Even though some Icelanders seemed to have lost sight of this larger scheme of things, most Icelanders are very much aware of nature's awesome powers and offer visitors unique opportunities to experience it. There are countless individuals and companies who have meticulously labored for years and decades towards making your stay more memorable. Hundreds of caves have been mapped out, dozens of jeeps have been modified, millions have been spent on logistics, mountain trails mapped out and thousands of sweaters have been knitted, just for you.

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

Thank you

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson

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**ICELANDIC
TIMES**
Tourism, Culture and Business

**LAND
& SAGA**

BORN AGAIN BY EGGERT



 EGGERT
-feldskeri-

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The National
Museum of Iceland:

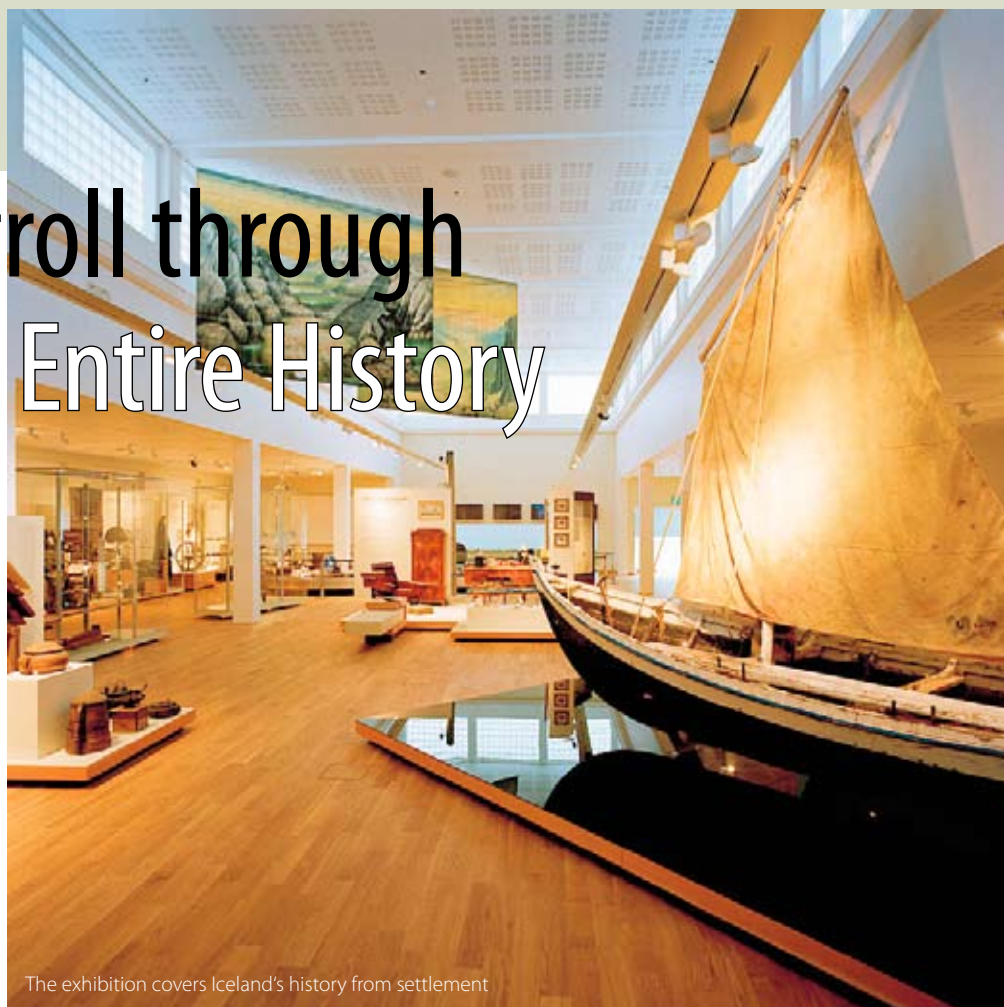
Take a Stroll through Iceland's Entire History

What better way to fully experience Iceland than to stroll through its history? The National Museum of Iceland's permanent exhibition entitled *The Making of a Nation*, allows you to walk through Iceland's timeline, from settlement to the present day.

The main exhibition is divided into seven time periods starting with 800-1000: *The Dawn of the Icelandic Society* and ending with 1900-2000: *Into the Modern World*. Each period is filled with items and information representing the development of Iceland; from heathens to Christians, from Norwegian and Danish rule to independence and from Vikings to the modern man. Every time period has a key item which represents the trends of that time, these key items include a church door, a bible, a religious icon of ambiguous origin and a carved drinking horn.

The Icelandic Psyche Explored

Helga Vollertsen, from the National Museum of Iceland, says that the exhibition is meant to motivate the guest to ask themselves fundamental questions about what makes Iceland the way we see it today: "The exhibition entails a modern interpretation and reevaluation of Iceland's history, which is of course closely connected to the Icelandic psyche."



The exhibition covers Iceland's history from settlement

The exhibition is concluded in the 20th century, which is cleverly represented with a conveyor belt. "The conveyor belt is meant to symbolize the excess, mass production, disjointed fashion trends and technological advances which predominated the 20th century. The items on the belt are of a very varied nature, there you can see shoes made out of hide next to modern trainers, the first computer, a soda maker next to a carved out dinner plate, home pregnancy tests, cell phones and gas masks.

The conveyor belt is also meant to symbolize Iceland's international connections. At the beginning of the exhibition you can see the outlines of a viking ship, on which the original settler came to Iceland and thus established a connection to the outside world and at the end of the exhibition you see the conveyor belt, which is our modern time connection."

Modern Standards

In 2004 the museum reopened its doors after extensive refurbishment

and the now modernized museum offers a wide variety of services to its guests. Helga says that with its new dynamic exhibition the Museum hopes to fulfill all the modern standards required of such an establishment, which keeps the nation's treasures safe.

The renovated museum makes full use of multimedia technology with several interactive screens placed throughout the museum, where the

user can explore the different time periods at their own pace. You can decide how thoroughly you want to explore the periods, how often and for how long, giving you a chance to delve into Iceland's history as it were. Each time period has an audio section where you can hear the way people spoke in their own time. The National Museum also offers audio commentary in five different languages.





Finn / SA

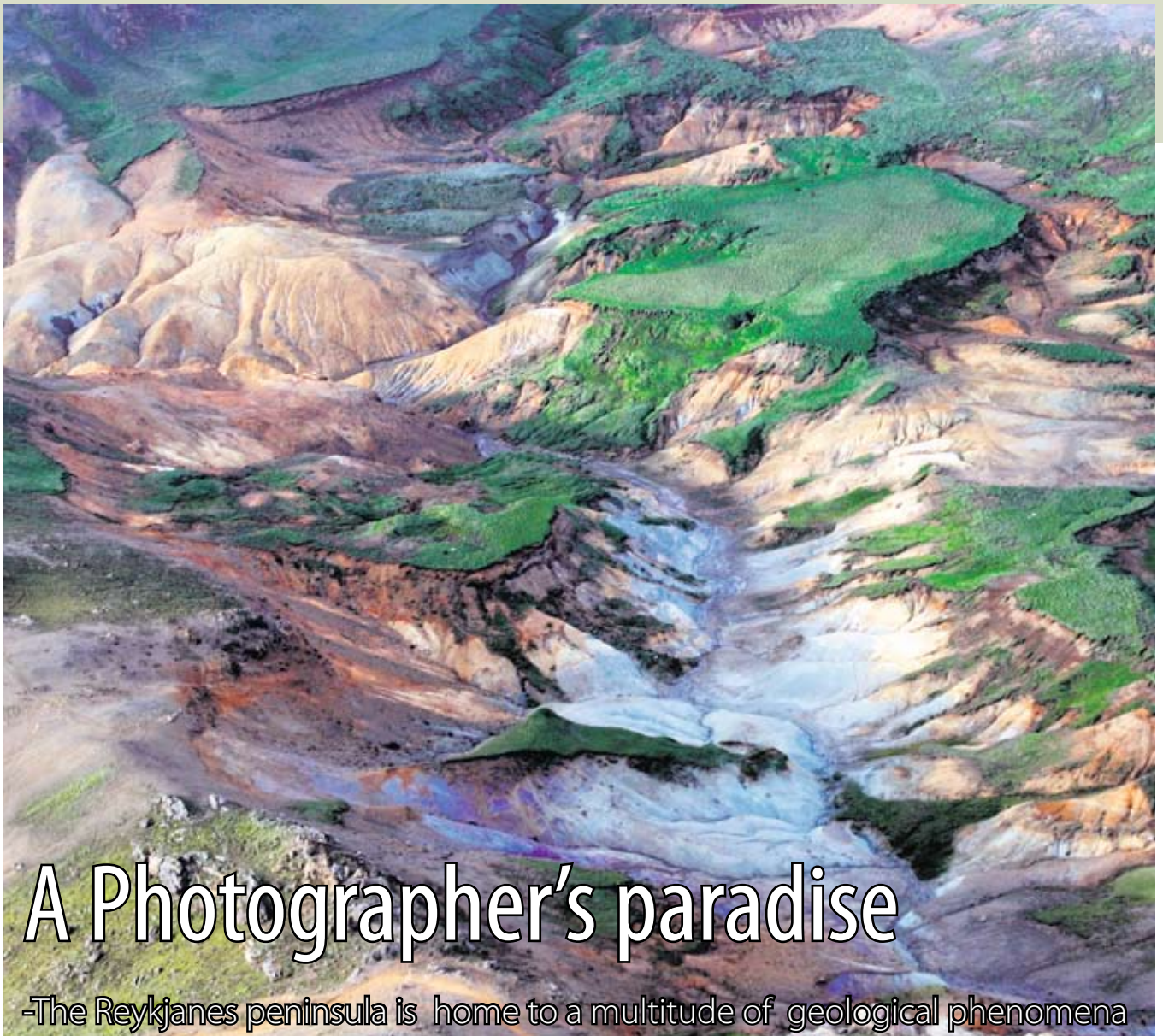
A source of health

Thermal pools and baths in Reykjavik are a source of health, relaxation and pureness. 94% of foreign guests that visited thermal pools and baths in Reykjavik said it had a positive effect on their health and well-being.

Welcome to Reykjavik's Thermal Pools



Tel: +354 411 5000 • www.itr.is • www.spacity.is



A Photographer's paradise

-The Reykjavik peninsula is home to a multitude of geological phenomena

The Reykjavik peninsula is the home of many spectacular attractions. The geographical phenomena are plentiful; seemingly endless lava fields, mysterious caves and colorful geothermal activity, all of which are supported by a booming service industry. Kristján Pálsson, director of the Reykjavik Tourism Board, says that in recent years efforts have been made to make this seemingly hostile landscape accessible to those interested in its many wonders.

Visitors can enjoy multiple walking paths, bird watching, explore museums which explore the areas rich history and culture, exhibitions which explain the geological phenomena of the area and of course relax at the famous Blue Lagoon.

Walk on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge

„Here you can see the mid-Atlantic ridge rise above the sea surface and you can literally walk on its surface. Here we can see the unique power in the earth unified with the

lands natural landscape to create a completely unique setting. The ground takes on spectacular forms in immense lava fields, caves, hot springs and volcanic craters. The interplay of the wide spectrum of colors created by the geothermal areas make Reykjavik a paradise for photographers. You can see variable flora in between the black sands, rugged lava fields and tall cliffs facing the ocean. The birdlife of these cliffs is considerable, especially in Krýsuvíkurbjarg and Hafnarberg,” says Kristján.

Reykjavik's unique geological phenomena stem from the fact that it is positioned between the Eurasian

Plate and the North American Plates in the North Atlantic Ocean. Reykjavik is in fact itself a part of



Photo: Olgeir

“The interplay of the wide spectrum of colors created by the geothermal areas make Reykjanes a paradise for photographers. You can see variable flora in between the black sands, rugged lava fields and tall cliffs facing the ocean. The birdlife of these cliffs is considerable, especially in Krýsuvíkurbjarg and Hafnarberg”

the longest mountain range in the world; the mid-Atlantic ridge, and is one of the few peaks which rise above the ocean surface. The area is particularly active, with several volcanic eruptions in human times, due to the fact that the space between the two plates widens by around two centimeters every year. “Today there is still considerable geothermal activity close to the surface in the area, especially along the edge of the peninsula, which has created a unique and colorful landscape in its surroundings,” says Kristján.

Peninsula on Fire

Geologically Reykjanes is the youngest part of Iceland, at least of the populated areas. The youngest lava fields came to be in an eruption around the year 1226, when the whole peninsula literally came on fire. The eruption before that dates back to 1151. The lava fields are thus of different origin and nature, and are therefore different in appearance and have various amounts of flora. In these fields there have been recorded over 200 caves of various shapes and sizes.

Kristján says that those who visit Reykjanes have a wide variety of options when it comes to exploring the peninsula's geology. „You can find tourist operations which offer organized trips to volcanoes, cave exploring and guided trips around the lava fields. The tourism industry is thus closely connected to the geology of the area,” says Kristján.

Haunted Hot Springs

According to Kristján the most geologically prominent sites can be found on the southern edge of the peninsula, particularly Eldvörp and Krýsuvík. „This is the area in which



Kristján Pálsson



Hiking trails are plentiful in Reykjanes. Photo: Ellert Grétarsson

we have based our services to our visitors. The Blue Lagoon is of course the most famous of these, in addition to Seltún in Krýsuvík and Gunnuhver. The Blue Lagoon is more than just a tourist attraction though. There is a skin affliction treatment facility on location as well as a production plant for skin treatment products. It is now the most popular tourist attraction of the country with more than 420 thousand visitors annually,” says Kristján.

Gunnuhver is allegedly a haunted hot spring which has seen a considerable rise in geothermal energy in recent times. Legend has it that long ago a specter named Guðrún caused a great disturbance in the area, until a priest set a trap for her which ultimately led to her falling into the hot spring. Kristján says Gunnuhver is an increasingly popular attraction,

as it has additional educational value. „Gunnuhver extremely helpful when it comes to showing people how the earth's energy bursts through the earth's crust in the form of bubbling mud, boiling water or vapor. This frequently causes a wide array of colors to appear in the landscape, which often causes amazement and wonder for our visitor, especially those interested in photography,” says Kristján.

Adventure Land

Kristján says that in the near future an adventure land of sorts will rise in the area, where people can stay over an extended period of time. Activities will include: nature walks, bird watching, nature baths and geology research. „Gunnuhver will be the centre of the geological portion of the area, where we want to give



Reykjanes is geologically the youngest inhabited part of Iceland. Photo: Olgeir



The Northern Lights can often be seen dancing in the sky over the Reykjanes peninsula. Photo: Olgeir

visitors a chance to do some cooking in the hot springs, specifically boiling eggs and baking bread. Birdwatchers will get their share of activities. Valahnjúkur is a nesting area for local birdlife and also the location for the oldest lighthouse in Iceland. The original lighthouse was actually damaged badly by an earthquake

in 1905, but a new lighthouse was erected in 1907-08 at a different location, which is now the most recognizable lighthouse in Iceland. Just off the shore is Eldey, which is an island created in a volcanic eruption in 1226, home to one of the largest population of Northern Gannets

in the world. Nearby in Bæjarhöll you can find an old pool, where Grindavík's population learned to swim in the olden days.

A 100 megawatt geothermal power station is located nearby which harnesses the power largely from Gunnuhver. Inside the plant there is

a very interesting show called „Earth, the power plant, “which explains how the earth's energy is created and how man is able to harness it. The harnessing of Gunnuhver's power has also formed the Grey Lagoon in a similar way that the Blue Lagoon came to be, where we hope to offer a

“The harnessing of Gunnuhver's power has also formed the Grey Lagoon in a similar way that the Blue Lagoon came to be, where we hope to offer a bathing facility in the near future.”



Photo: Olgeir

“As Reykjanes is a relatively small area it is easy to commute between its varied attractions.”

bathing facility in the near future. This area thus has exciting opportunities in abundance, which will hopefully be accessible to our many visitors in the near future,” says Kristján.

Close to the Capital

Kristján says that one of the many benefits of touring the Reykjanes peninsula is its proximity to the capital area. “70% of the population lives within an hour’s drive from most of the locations in Reykjanes. The road system here is excellent, with the only lighted highway in Iceland. As Reykjanes is a relatively small area it is easy to commute between its varied attractions. It also boasts of more accommodation than most other areas in the country creating healthy competition, which results in lower prices for the consumer,” says Kristján.

Wide Array of Museums

Among the activities offered in Reykjanes is a long list of museums, with exhibitions connected to the area and its history. One of those is Víkingaheimar (e. Viking Worlds) in Reykjanesbær where you can see a genuine Icelandic Viking ship called Íslendingur as well as catch the show Vikings – the North Atlantic Saga, which was a gift from the Smithsonian Museum. In Reykjanesbær you can also find Duushús, which is a cluster of historical buildings which amongst others exhibit a huge collection of model boats. The natural museum in Sandgerði, Fræðasetrið, offers an exciting exhibition on the arctic explorer Jean-Baptiste Charco, whose ship the Pourqui Pas sunk off the



Photo: Olgeir

shore of Reykjanes in 1936. Kristján says it is also worthwhile to visit the docks in Sandgerði, where you can observe the small fishing boats bring in the catch of the day. In Grindavík you can visit the Salt Fish Museum, which tells an important part of Iceland’s history, as salted fish was once one of Iceland’s main exports.

You can also book adventurous quad bike tours and volcanic tours around the peninsula.

Other services worth noting are sea fishing, car rental, horseback riding and guided walking tours. Kristján says that walking paths around the area are numerous and that ancient walking paths from a time when no

roads or automobiles existed. All of the major attractions in Reykjanes are handicapped accessible, including the Blue Lagoon, the Salt Fish Museum and Viking Worlds.

For further information, visit www.reykjanes.is



The Geothermal activity in the area has created unique landscapes. Photo:Ellert Grétarsson

Relaxing Stay on the Arctic Circle

-Básar in Grímsey offers accommodation on Iceland's northernmost Part

The northernmost part of Iceland is the tiny island of Grímsey, located some 41 kilometers (25 miles) off the shore from the mainland. Grímsey is an unforgettable place to visit, with its unique culture and majestic landscapes. The island is just under two square miles in size with a population of around 150. Básar Guesthouse offers comfortable rooms and services during your stay in Grímsey and it doesn't hurt that the guesthouse is positioned on the actual Arctic Circle, which gives you some pretty impressive boasting rights once you get home.

Básar is only a ten minute walk from the town and pier and has eight comfortable rooms on offer, either with made up beds or sleeping bags, with breakfast and other meals



Básar is located on the arctic circle.

on order. There are a multitude of activities you can undertake during your stay at Básar.

You can of course explore the whole island on foot in a few hours, which in itself is an extremely rewarding experience. Básar can arrange for a sailing trip around the island where you can view the steep cliffs which surround most of the island. You can also try your luck in sea angling. The people of Grímsey are of course experienced fishermen and can give you some valuable fishing tips.

The birdlife in Grímsey is especially colorful, with over 60 different species present during the summertime. An important part of Grímsey's culture is



The island is only two square miles in size.

egg picking during the spring, which of course is done with sustainability in mind.

The people of Grímsey are known to be extremely friendly and welcoming, so expect to make some new friends from the Arctic Circle. Though the population is small Grímsey doesn't lack in services, as there is a grocery store, restaurant, craft shop, church and a swimming pool on the island.

Grímsey can be reached either by ferry departing from Dalvík three times a week or by airplane which departs from Akureyri three times a week during the winter time and daily during the summer. Básar is situated right next to the airport in Grímsey.

For booking at Básar contact 467-3103

Hidden Pearls of the Highlands

-Fjalladýrð offers accommodation in the highest inhabited settlement in Iceland

The highest inhabited area in Iceland is called Möðrudalur, where you can find accommodation and guided tours to the northern highlands of Iceland. Tourist company Fjalladýrð offers 27 made up beds and camping facilities, guided hiking tours as well as specially designed jeep tours to hidden pearls of the highlands.

Fjalladýrð is located at 1500 feet above sea level in between Myvatn and Egilsstaðir. On location is a unique restaurant, called Fjallakaffi (or Mountain Café) which offers genuine Icelandic cuisine, ideal refreshments after a hardy walk. All the meat in Fjallakaffi comes from locally bred sheep, which is cooked and smoked according to age old traditions. On special order, Fjallakaffi offers the completely unique dish called Sláturterta (or blood-pudding cake), which is a full meal made to resemble Herðubreið Mountain, complete with mashed potatoes in the crater. You can also purchase unique wool-products in Fjallakaffi, dutifully knitted by the local women of the area.

Möðrudalur's history is particularly interesting, as it has been inhabited since the settlement of Iceland and

served as an important waypoint ever since. The northern highlands also served as a hiding place for Iceland's most famous outlaw, Fjalla-Eyvindur. Elisabet Kristjánsdóttir from Fjalladýrð, says the Möðrudalur valley is thus surrounded by a hue of mystery and adventure, which can only be fully enjoyed in the company of those who know the area's rich history.

Fjalladýrð offers guided jeep tours to remote locations such as Askja, which is an immense active volcanic crater with a pool of water at the bottom, the Ice Caves of Kverkfjöll, the enormous canyons of Hafrahvammagljúfur and Herðubreiðalindir, an oasis in the middle of the barren highlands where Fjalla-Eyvindur resided during the hardest winter of his banishment. The highlands of Iceland have especially



Fjalladýrð offers a wide array of guided hiking tours.

rich geological history with countless volcanic eruptions throughout the ages creating a completely unique landscape. These geological phenomena are explained in detail in Fjalladýrð's nature tours.

Fjalladýrð also offers guided hiking tours of various length and nature, all

according to the customer's wishes. In the summertime Fjalladýrð offers guided walks during the evenings where guests staying overnight can learn about the local geology, flora, agriculture, culture and history.

For further information visit www.fjalladyrd.is



Sea Monsters and Outlaws in Arnarfjörður

-EagleTours offer a wide variety of activities in one of Iceland's most remote areas

In the many fjords of the Westfjords lies one of Iceland's most beautiful fjords, Arnarfjörður, where you can find the tiny fishing village Bildudalur, which offers a seemingly endless range of activities and opportunities. EagleTours is a local tourist company which offers accommodation, various adventure tours, guided historical tours, theatre plays, sea angling, remote outdoor BBQ's and ice climbing to name a few. One of the more exciting tours is the four day all inclusive adventure tour, departing all year round, called *The Surprises of the West*, which includes natural pools, exotic foods, staggering cliffs and many more surprises.

Bildudalur is renowned for its tranquility and majestic mountain views. Some say that enormous sea monsters occupied the waters of Arnarfjörður at some point in time. A museum has been opened in town to enlighten visitor about these fearsome creatures, which the people of Bildudalur call their friends. The people of Bildudalur are famous for their friendly nature and free spirits, known to break out in a song at any given moment. A museum has been opened to celebrate the musical tradition of this tiny village of 150 inhabitants. Bildudalur is accessible by plane and EagleTours offers a drive and pick up to the local airport, which is just outside of town.

Fish on a Hook - Fish on a Plate

Sailing around Arnarfjörður is one of many activities EagleTours has on offer. As many of the locations in Arnarfjörður are impossible to get to by land, this offers an opportunity to set foot down where only a few people have ever been before. Sea angling is also very popular in Arnarfjörður and EagleTours offers various opportunities to catch and even cook some freshly caught haddock. Scheduled short tours depart twice a week during the summertime, but longer trips can be arranged on order (including pick up at the airport). It has proven popular to intertwine the various excursions EagleTours offers with a barbeque. With the assistance of EagleTours a remote and beautiful

setting is chosen where a BBQ party will be held. You can even cook your own catch of the day, giving true meaning to the saying: "Fish on a hook, fish on a plate."

Historical Settings

One of Iceland's most famous sagas, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, takes place in the Westfjords around 1000 A.D. An epic tale of murder and vengeance, which tells the tale of the hero and outlaw Gísli Súrsson, whose tragic fate is known by most Icelanders. EagleTours offers a unique chance to explore the story's setting, as parts of it took place in Arnarfjörður. The *Gísli Súrsson History Tour* includes a boat trip, where the homes of the monsters

One of Iceland's most famous sagas, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, takes place in the Westfjords around 1000 A.D. An epic tale of murder and vengeance, which tells the tale of the hero and outlaw Gísli Súrsson, whose tragic fate is known by most Icelanders.

of Arnarfjörður are visited and a visit to homesteads and hideouts of the heroes of Gísli saga. In the summer of 2010 the tour will be complete with an on-site theatrical play detailing the story of Gísli Súrsson.

Optimal Ice Climbing Conditions

Arnarfjörður has one of the best conditions for ice climbing available, as the sun doesn't shine on the southern mountains and valleys for several months, creating unique ice formations.

Fully Furnished Apartments

EagleTours offers accommodation in fully furnished apartments at reasonable prices, which include a kitchen, living room, bathroom with a shower, access to a washer and dryer as well as internet connection. The apartments come in various sizes, from two bedrooms up to seven. For further information visit www.bildudalur.is





"For those who want to remember Iceland by in a more unusual way, why not buy a stuffed puffin to adorn your living room with?"

Photos: Ingó

A Piece of Iceland

-The Viking Souvenir Shop

For many the worst part about visiting Iceland is that eventually you'll have to leave. What better way to cherish the memories of an unforgettable trip than with unique Icelandic souvenirs? The Viking store offers a wide selection of items, ranging from decorative ornaments to full winter coats.

The Viking has been run by the same family for over fifty year and has recently been passed on to the third generation. Sigurður Guðmundsson, owner, says that The Viking has always put emphasis on offering quality products at fair prices. "I think it is safe to say that we have one of the largest selections of souvenirs around. We want to offer our customers quality products, which they can cherish and remember Iceland by. Nobody should

leave Iceland without something warm and fuzzy to keep them warm when it gets cold, sparking the memories of their stay in Iceland," says Sigurður.

After a visit to the Viking you won't ever have to be cold again. There you can buy knitted wool sweaters, mittens and socks, winter coats, fur shoes and Icelandic design products. For those who want to remember Iceland by in a more unusual way, why



Wool caps and mittens to keep you warm once you get home.

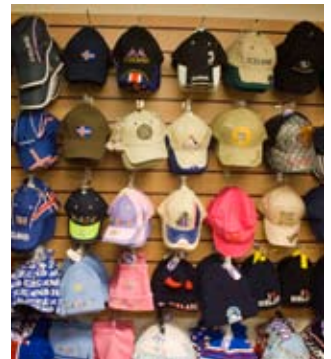
not buy a stuffed puffin to adorn your living room with?

The list of items is almost endless; key rings, statues, novelty items, heathen ornaments, baseball caps. Be sure not to leave home without at least one book about Iceland, where you can reminisce about your stay with spectacular photographs of everything Iceland has to offer.

Drop by at one of their stores and see for yourself. You can find The Viking in both Laugavegur 1 and Hafnarstræti 1 in Reykjavík and in Hafnarstræti in Akureyri.



The Viking boasts of the largest selection of souvenirs around.





Controversial Industry

Iceland's decision to allow commercial whaling for the next five years, after having been banned for nearly two decades, has been met mixed enthusiasm. Two opposing views clash over economic and environmental issues. Some say that commercial whaling is necessary to control fish stocks in the North Atlantic, while others say that the whales in question are endangered species which should under no circumstances be hunted commercially.

Although the two views seem irreconcilable, early this year Iceland's ministry of fisheries issued quotas to hunt 150 fin whales and 100 minke whales annually for the next five years. According to the Ministry of Fisheries estimated sustainable annual catch levels are 200 and 400 fin and minke whales. Commercial whaling is estimated to create around 200 new jobs in Iceland. However since the decision to allow commercial whaling was made there has been a change of government and the current prime minister has said that the laws will be reconsidered and hinted that the initial five year period will be shortened.

Whether people believe whaling to be fundamentally disagreeable or not, current whaling quotas are issued with sustainable whaling in mind. According to a recent statement, the ministry of fisheries places great emphasis on effective management of fisheries and on scientific research on all the components of the marine ecosystem. The statement goes on to say: "At a time when many fish stocks around the world are declining, or even depleted, Iceland's marine resources

are generally in a healthy state, because of this emphasis. The annual catch quotas for fishing and whaling are based on recommendations by scientists, who regularly monitor the status of stocks, thus ensuring that the activity is sustainable."

Fin Whale

The fin whale, or Langgreyður in Icelandic, is the second largest animal

on earth (after the blue whale), reaching up to 27 meters (88 ft.) in length and weighing up to 74 tons. Its primary food nutrition consists of small schooling fish, squid and various crustaceans. The total number of fin whales is estimated to be around 120-150 thousand globally, while around 25 thousand animals are estimated to reside in the Central North Atlantic. The fin whale was heavily hunted during the 21st century and is now listed under „endangered“ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has issued a moratorium on commercial hunting of fin whales.

"At a time when many fish stocks around the world are declining, or even depleted, Iceland's marine resources are generally in a healthy state, because of this emphasis. The annual catch quotas for fishing and whaling are based on recommendations by scientists, who regularly monitor the status of stocks, thus ensuring that the activity is sustainable."

Minke Whale

The Minke Whale is considerably smaller than the Fin Whale, reaching up to ten meters in length and weighing up to ten tons. Minke whales have been hunted since early last century, yet the population has been increasing. There are estimated to be around 70 thousand animals of the Central North-Atlantic minke, of which around 43 thousand are in Icelandic coastal waters. It is listed under „least concern“ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



Commercial whaling is estimated to create around 200 new jobs in Iceland. Photo: Ingó



Houses such as this one have been covered by ash and lava since 1973.

Pompeii of the North

-Thirty Years of Ash and Lava Uncovered

One of the largest natural disasters in Iceland's recent history is the volcanic eruption in Vestmannaeyjar in 1973. While only resulting in one casualty, it destroyed a large portion of the town and made the whole island uninhabitable for the five months it lasted. The eruption was particularly powerful and caused the island to grow by about 2.24 square kilometers. It also covered almost 400 homes in lava and ash, which have remained there untouched since. That is until now.

An ambitious project, named Pompeii of the North, has been started which will eventually result in some of the houses being dug up and made available to visit. The project is already underway and several houses have been partially uncovered. Kristin Jóhannsdóttir, Vestmannaeyjar's Tourism-, Culture and Marketing Manager, says that people were pleasantly surprised to see the condition of the houses once they were uncovered. "Experts had predicted that the houses would be in shambles, but we were pleasantly surprised to see entire walls intact still with the original paint on. Seeing these houses rise from the ashes after 30 years is an exceptional experience. This is a unique, modern archeology dig that cannot be compared to anything else," says Kristin.

The project started officially in 2005 and is expected to take several

"Experts had predicted that the houses would be in shambles, but we were pleasantly surprised to see entire walls intact still with the original paint on."

years. Digging around the houses is done by industrial machinery, while digging close to the houses is done by hand. "Several houses have already appeared from underneath the ash and hopefully we will be able to enter

the first house next summer," says Kristin.

The project entails creating a small village that will rise from the ashes of the disaster, giving visitors a chance to experience the effects of the awesome destructive force of a volcanic eruption. Some houses will be partially uncovered, while others will be completely uncovered and reopened for guests to visit. Already

there have been put up signs next to each home, detailing its inhabitants and what the houses looked like.

Even though the excavation has not yet been completed, it has been open for people to visit for some time now. Kristin says that visitors have been very impressed by Pompeii of the North and that many had expressed their intention of revisiting once the project develops further.



Digging close to the houses is done by hand.

Sizzling Designs

-Kraum offers unique design items by over 200 designers



Halla Bogadóttir, manager of Kraum. Photos: Ingó

The aptly named design shop Kraum offers an especially diverse selection of design products, ranging from small decorative ornaments, practical clothing to full sized furniture. The name represents the sizzling creativity within the almost 200 designers who contribute to Kraum's selection. The one thing the products in Kraum have in common is that they all have a strong reference to Iceland's history, culture and nature.

Icelandic designers are known to be very progressive and imaginative so expect each item to have a rich historical and cultural concept behind them. Just ask the friendly staff at Kraum about the items you like to give you the full concept behind the unique designs.

Many of the products are made from all Icelandic materials, including wool, fish skin, rocks from the beach or anything that can be used from Iceland's nature. One of those products is a special massage stone made out of rocks from the magical landscapes of Snæfellsnes, where Jules Verne once said the entrance to the center of the earth was located.



An ideal present for major achievements is a silver Birki twig, which symbolizes the prosperity of Icelandic flora despite the harsh conditions in which it lives.

Wool products play an important role in the design of many of Kraum's contributors. Among the wool products you can find are the ever popular fuzzy chair, knitted neckties, modern designs of the Icelandic sweater and the ram's wool cap, which comes with knitted „horns.“ For the sinners out there, be sure to not leave home without the „Virtue quilt,” which is based on the old Icelandic tradition of sewing desired virtues onto a quilt. One famous story tells of four priest's daughters who were each made to embroider virtues for their proposed marriages, but the youngest

one couldn't be bothered to make one and thus her marriage failed tragically. The new virtue quilt comes with pre-embroidered virtues, which have been updated to accommodate the modern man.

Products made out of fish skin have also proven very popular, including clothes, chandeliers and various smaller items.

Iceland's geology is well represented in Kraum; check out the notepad which emulates the volcanic activity of Hekla and Askja, where each page of the notepad represents a particular layer of ash or lava with the year of the eruption indicated. A good way to remember Iceland in the kitchen is a replica of Herðubreið Mountain which you put under a steaming saucepan or Iceland shaped ice cubes. Kraum is located in Aðalstræti 10, which is in fact the oldest house in Reykjavik and home to the first wool design house in the country. You can also find various exciting exhibitions within, both historical and design oriented. For those of you visiting



over the holidays be sure not to miss the Christmas exhibition, where craft designers display their incredible array of Christmas items.

For more information visit www.kraum.is





The Kingdom of Vatnajökull

-Home to Europe's Largest Glacier

The Kingdom of Vatnajökull is a majestic wonderland home to Europe's largest glacier, the picturesque Jökulsárlón, the highest peak in Iceland, Skaftafell National Park and many more attractions. For the people of Hornafjörður county Vatnajökull glacier has been a simultaneous boon and a bane throughout the centuries, the glacial rivers streaming towards the sea isolating the county for months on end. The glacial rivers have since all been bridged and Hornafjörður now boasts of an impressive service industry centered round the many wonders of the Kingdom of Vatnajökull.

The activities available in the Kingdom of Vatnajökull are sure to make your stay memorable. Imagine scaling Europe's largest glacier with a pick axe and crampons, speeding across its widespread surface by snowmobile or sightseeing by airplane over its 8100 square kilometers of snow.

The town of Höfn in Hornafjörður is home to a plethora of companies providing services to visitors. The town and its surroundings have an abundance of accommodation providers, ranging from home stays on local farms to upscale hotels. Every Saturday a

Farmers and Fish market is held, which is renowned for its lively atmosphere. Hornafjörður can be reached by the main road all year round.

Land of Opposites

The Skaftafell National Park is a popular stop due to its incredible landscapes where opposites meet. In Skaftafell you can see seemingly endless deserts of black sand meet white the white glacial tongues of Vatnajökull. The Skaftafell visitor's center is now open during the wintertime.

The glacial lake of Jökulsárlón a unique



natural phenomenon which many feel is the highpoint of their stay in Iceland. It's breathtaking landscape has also inspired international filmmakers and England's most famous spy, James Bond, can be seen maneuvering a futuristic sports car on the frozen lake in a recent film. During the wintertime the local seal population can often be seen relaxing on the icebergs floating in the lake, they are known to be a curious and friendly bunch.

Whether you seek the adrenaline rush of extreme sports or not, just standing in the presence of nature's awesome power is enough to make your stay memorable.

"During the wintertime the local seal population can often be seen relaxing on the icebergs floating in the lake, they are known to be a curious and friendly bunch."



Bay of a thousand islands

-Seatours offer sailing tours around Breiðafjörður bay

Breiðafjörður Bay is a place of many wonders, home to thousands of islands, fascinating birdlife and beautiful landscapes. Tourist Company Seatours offers a wide variety of boat tours where you can navigate around the islands, visit the people of Flatey or have a taste of some very exotic seafood.

Display of Bravery

Seatours operate various scheduled tours, one of which is called the Unique Adventure Tour. This tour is on schedule daily during the summer months. On the tour you get to see the uncountable islands, navigate powerful tidal currents, see countless birds; including puffins, eider ducks, shags, kittiwakes and if lucky, the majestic white-tailed eagle. The highlight of the tour for many is when a small net-plough is cast overboard and shellfish delicacies are brought on board, including fresh scallops and urchin rows. Krístrún says that most people want to try them, even



though it is just to show their bravery. "We get very different reactions from the fresh scallop tasting, but they have a surprising taste and texture that is much less potent than many would imagine. Some absolutely love it and eat as much as they can. Then there are those extra



Breiðafjörður is the home to many wonders

brave ones that try the sea urchin rows, but they have a much more definite flavour," says Krístrún.

Other scheduled tours include a magnificent three day nature tour around the bay, sea angling tours and day trips to the habited island of Flatey.

The Best Kept Secret of Iceland

Seatours also offers private trips on request. "For groups our Gourmet Adventure is the most popular tour; here we start with sightseeing like on the Unique Adventure Tour but then serve a delicious three course dinner in our restaurant below deck. Private tours to Flatey Island have also been very popular. Flatey Island is one of the best-kept secrets in Iceland, an utterly timeless place where you can relax listening to the birds and the sea.



Fresh scallop tasting.

For individuals private sea angling tours have been popular but also the Wonders of Breiðafjörður Bay which is a combination of sea angling and sightseeing. Our personal favourite tour is the Oceans Secrets, a tour that takes you to Flatey Island but also to a tiny island in the middle of nowhere with a natural geothermal pool," says Krístrún.



The Let's Talk Local play covers the entire history of Reykjavík.

The History of Reykjavík in One Funny Hour

For those interested in learning the history of Iceland's capital without having to spend a day at the library can quench their thirst for knowledge by attending the one hour comedy play "Let's talk Local - Reykjavík."

The play is performed in English every day in Restaurant Reykjavík at 18:00, where you can also enjoy drinks and light refreshments before and after the show. The play is performed by two actors and covers the history of Reykjavík dating from the Vikings up to present times.

A relatively new theatre group named Kraðak is behind the play. The group's first play, Let's talk Christmas, was premiered before last Christmas and was a great success. Anna Bergljót Thorarensen, from Kraðak, says that Kraðak always puts special emphasis on humor and making the plays as entertaining as possible, which according to the smiles on their guests



Gryla tells an unconventional Christmas story.

faces, has proven successful.

For those who missed Let's talk Christmas last year need not despair, as Kraðak intends to start showing it again this Christmas. Those expecting a traditional Christmas story are in for a surprise, as Icelandic Christmas stories are quite different from those of the jolly white bearded man in red. The play is told from the perspective of Gryla (a sort of female troll), the mother of the 13 Icelandic Yule lads who get into all sorts of trouble around Christmas.



Time Tours can tailor make the trip of your dreams.

Bus Tours with a Personal Touch

-Time Tours offers both scheduled and specially designed tours

Time Tours is a small but ambitious family owned bus tour company, which offers guided trips to many of Iceland's most exciting locations. Time Tours offer a personal touch and aim to offer their customers services according to their needs.

Time Tours offers a wide variety of tours, each specially designed according to the customer's wishes. So whether you want to explore the magnificent Golden Circle, explore a glacier by snowmobile or enjoy the northern lights in the evening, Time Tours will take you there. Time Tours

can also arrange for transportation to and from airport, as well as longer trips around Iceland. Time tours also offer exciting and informative sightseeing trips around Reykjavik, where historic buildings are visited, including the presidential residence. Among the most popular trips are

an all inclusive eight day adventure tour, which includes locations such as Snæfellsnes peninsula, Borgarfjörður fjord, The Golden Circle and a snowmobile trip on Mýrdalsjökull glacier. Other trips include: The South

Coast, where majestic waterfalls and glaciers are among attractions. Landmannalaugar, where you can enjoy natural baths and multicolored rhyolite mountains. Volcanic Power, where the eco-friendly Geothermal Plant at Hellisheiði and surroundings are explored. Glacier Adventure includes a visit to Þingvellir National Park, Langjökull glacier and Europe's largest hot spring. The Northern Lights tour chases the elusive Aurora Borealis to different locations for the best possible view.

Explore Time Tour's wide variety of options on www.timt.is. Time Tours also operate scheduled tours under www.gottraveliceland.is, which includes locations such as Landmannalaugar, The Blue Lagoon, and Snæfellsjökull National Park. Time Tours offers a wide range of buses of all sizes, from nine seats up to 37 seats.



NORTHERN LIGHTS EVENING TOUR

Price: 12.900

Included in the tour:

- Bus transfers
- Visit to the Ghost Center and the Icelandic Wonders Museum
- Search for the Northern Lights (*weather depending*)
- Aurora Borealis DVD
- Cocktail drink with pure glacial ice cubes
- Soup and bread + coffee or chocolate

Duration | 4-6 hours
Pick-up from hotels | 18:30-19:00

Departure from | Icelandic Wonders Souvenir Shop at 19:00
(address: Hafnarstræti 4, 101 Reykjavík)

Bookings at: info@auroraexperience.com
Further information: www.auroraexperience.com

Available from
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Guaranteed departures
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Villimey's products are based on an age old tradition of herbal medicine.

Icelandic Organic Balms

Villimey offers a wide range of organic Icelandic balms which can treat everything from baby rash to sore joints. The balms are made from 100% organic plants handpicked in the unspoiled landscape of the West Fjords of Iceland.

The knowledge of the usage of herbs for medicinal purposes descends from age old traditions, Icelandic wisdom and know-how. Aðalbjörg Þorsteinsdóttir, the founder of Villimey, says that there is a strong tradition in her family of using herbs and balms to treat various illnesses

and discomfort. She built on the foundation of those traditions to further develop the balms. "I always had great interest in the effects herbs have on people, so some twenty years ago I started trying different remedies for whatever ailments my family members had. My family was

so happy with the results that they encouraged me to let other people enjoy the benefits, thus Villimey was founded," says Aðalbjörg.

Among the list of products is: *Skin Magic, Wound Magic, Foot Magic, Muscle and Joint Magic, Baby-Bottom Magic, Belly Magic* and *Lip Magic*. The products can be used to treat ailments of various nature such as pain, swelling, skin rash, skin burn

and diaper rash, to name a few. The materials used for the balms are picked from the largest certified organic picking area in Iceland, which is over 120 km² in size. The production is also organically certified.

Aðalbjörg says that Icelandic herbs are especially potent since the soil is extremely cold and the summers are very short. "Herbs in Iceland have a very short growth period and are therefore very potent and resilient. Since we are positioned in the West Fjords, which are even colder and more barren than the rest of the country, the herbs here are even more potent than in other parts of the country," says Aðalbjörg.

She says that even though some people are skeptical of unconventional medicine, the response she gets from her customers is proof of the effectiveness of her products. Arthritis patients say Villimey products relieve the pain when even morphine fails, patient recovering from surgery say the *wound magic* heals scars better than other balms and even BBQ accidents have been quickly remedied with Villimey products.

Eat and drink like the locals at the original Icelandic Bar, the home of nostalgia



Are you local?
... you can be for a night!

Hangikjöt, plokkfiskur and harðfiskur are as interesting to eat as they are to pronounce. After dinner, stay for the "frábæra" live music and the "fræga" Reykjavík nightlife.

Iceland has numerous micro breweries that produce countless variations of beers and we stock each and every kind at the Icelandic Bar.



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Restaurant

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info@icelandicbar.is
www.islenskibarinn.is



Top of the World

-Kaldbaksferðir offers tours to the top of Kaldbakur mountain

Imagine standing on top of a 1,173 m (3800 feet) high mountain peak with a spectacular panoramic view overlooking the north of Iceland. Now imagine skiing down.

Tourist company Kaldbaksferðir offers outdoors tours by special snow cats to the peak of Kaldbakur, one of Iceland's highest northern peaks. From the top of Kaldbakur passengers can enjoy the magnificent view and then choose to ski, snowboard, walk,

sled or simply sit back and enjoy the ride down in the snow cat.

A New World

Sigurbjörn Höskuldsson, manager of Kaldbaksferðir, says that the snow cats offer everyone a chance to

experience the awesome landscapes of the north. „Once we reach the top a completely new world opens up. The view stretches towards Langanes in the East, the Highlands in the south and Herðubreiðar mountains in the East. It is an experience most people won't regret living, even if you choose not to ski down. Not everyone has the chance to experience the sheer power of nature by standing on top of one of

its most magnificent creations. That's why we call it an outdoors excursion, instead of a skiing tour exclusively," says Sigurbjörn.

Iceland's Longest Ski Slope

He says the skiing part isn't as difficult as the length of the slope might indicate, but the total length of skiing comes to about six kilometers (3.7 miles). „This probably is Iceland's longest skiing slope, but that doesn't mean you have to do it all in one go. You can choose easier routes and rest in between and we can of course pick those up who get in over their heads, but that almost never happens," says Sigurbjörn.

The two snow cats can carry up to 52 passengers, but as they are open air, be sure to dress accordingly. Tours must be booked in advance.

For more information visit www.kaldbaksferdir.com or phone +354 8673770.

Enjoy the Silence at Hotel Brimnes

The mystical "peninsula of Trolls," or Tröllaskagi, offers a wide variety of activities, all which can be enjoyed within the tranquility of fully furnished Finnish styled cabins at Hotel Brimnes.

The family run hotel is located just under an hour drive north of Akureyri in the quiet fishing town of Ólafsfjörður. Brimnes offers both standard rooms in addition to bungalows, each with a private hot tub. The hotel is positioned next to a lake, on which guests can go out sailing and try their luck in fishing trout.

The manager of Brimnes, Axel Pétur Ásgeirsson, says that even though the immediate surroundings of Brimnes are plentiful he hopes that his guests seize the opportunity to explore the peninsula and that the hotel staff will gladly help arranging trips around the area.

The list of activities includes: hiking, fishing at the pier, visiting remote



fishing towns, hunting and sailing out to the northwest settlement of Iceland: the island Grimsey, 41 km

off the coast of Iceland where the sun doesn't set during summer solstice. And if you're planning to

visit during winter Tröllaskagi offers excellent skiing slopes.



From 1106 Hólar was one of two Episcopal sees in Iceland and a site for learning and education.

Hólar in Hjaltadalur

Enjoy Garden Angelica Soup at a Historical Setting

Hólar, which is located in the northern part of the country not far from Sauðarkrúkur, is a site of cultural and historical importance. From 1106 Hólar was one of two Episcopal sees in Iceland and became a site for learning and education. Still a site for learning today, Hólar now also provides it's visitors with accommodation and a restaurant with some very interesting courses.

Ólafur Jónsson, the manager of tourism in Hólar, says that the restaurant emphasizes on providing unique dishes which rely on local materials. One of these is the renowned Garden Angelica Soup which is made from Garden Angelicas (*Angelica archangelica*) picked from a valley nearby. In the time of Vikings the Garden Angelica was renowned for its medicinal qualities, a myth supported by modern research which indicates that consumption of the herb strengthens the immune system and that it is effective against various bacteria, fungal infections and even viral infections.

Another course is the Arctic char which is caught locally on a daily basis and thus always served fresh. Other courses are spiced with locally

gathered herbs and mushrooms. Activities are abundant in Hólar, including a camping ground located in a tranquil forest setting, various walking paths, hiking options, church, swimming pool and various



exhibitions detailing the historical and cultural importance of the site.



The list of activities in Hólar includes a swimming pool, walking paths, museum exhibitions and hiking.



Driving on top of a glacier is an experience you won't forget soon.

Winter Wonderland

-Enjoy the Icelandic Winter with Reykjavik Excursions

Reykjavik Excursions is one of the largest and most experienced tour operators in Iceland. They offer a grand selection of exciting options for those who want to see the best of Iceland, including a wide variety of exciting day trips during the wintertime. Be sure not to miss a chance to go on glacier hikes, snowmobile drives, a chance to stand in the footsteps of Vikings or see the Northern Lights dancing around in fantastic colors across the Icelandic Arctic sky.

Reykjavik Excursions operates an extensive list of day tours from Reykjavik all year around, including:

The Golden Circle, South Shore Adventure, Take a Walk on the Ice Side, Gullfoss- Geysir Direct,

to name a few. The tours are guided by professional guides in English, German, French or Scandinavian. RE also offers a great flexibility in Blue Lagoon tours, a spot not to be missed when in Iceland.

Glacier Adventures

Though the Icelandic winters can appear harsh and unwelcoming, they offer unforgettable opportunities for outdoor activities. *The Glacier Adventure* tour takes you up to the top of Mýrdalsjökull glacier, where you are invited to explore it's surface by snowmobile for a full hour. Standing on top of a glacier is a truly rewarding experience, where you are surrounded by snow and ice as far as the eye can see. Another icy expedition is the hiking tour *Take a Walk on the Ice Side* on Eyjafjallajökull glacier. This is considered a relatively easy hike with special crampons up on to an ice field where a wonderland of ice sculptures, ridges and deep crevasses awaits discovery. For those who wish to

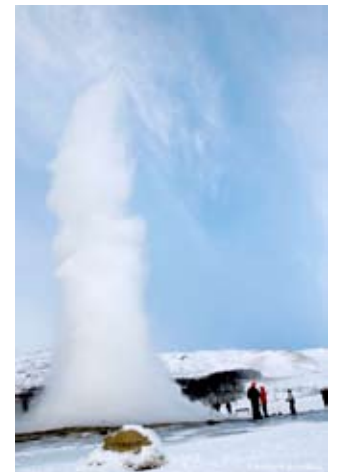
combine staple tourist attraction with exciting winter sports the Gullfoss – Geysir & Langjökull Snowmobiling tour is the perfect solution. Started by visits to the unique Gullfoss and Geysir and followed by an adventurous snowmobile trek/ ride on Langjökull glacier, Iceland's second largest glacier.

Catch the Northern Lights

The often elusive Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) are for some the most memorable part of their trip. The problem is that they don't follow any given schedules and



Reykjavik Excursions offers a wide variety of hiking tours.



The often elusive Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) are for some the most memorable part of their trip. The problem is that they don't follow any given schedules and the locations from which they can be seen are not always the same. The Northern Lights Tour takes care of that problem.

the locations from which they can be seen are not always the same. *The Northern Lights Tour* takes care of that problem as Reykjavik Excursions guides will take you to the place where they're most likely to be seen.

Explore Iceland's Saga

In the informative *Saga Circle*, you are taken to some of some of Iceland's most famous historical settings where you will be able to stand in the footsteps of some of Iceland's most noted people. The first stop is Borgarnes, the home to one of Iceland's most famous Vikings and first poets, Egill Skallagrimsson. The visit includes a stop in the Icelandic Settlement Centre, which tells the

saga of the settlement of Iceland and has an exciting and lively exhibition on the life and adventures of Egill. The next stop is Reykholt, the home of one of the most important Nordic poets and historians, Snorri Sturluson. The trip is completed with a visit to Hraunfossar waterfalls and the largest hot spring in the Northern Hemisphere, Deildartunguhver. A must do tour for Saga enthusiasts.

Bonfire Tour on New Year's Eve

Be sure not to miss the *Reykjavik Grand Excursion* while you're in town. Reykjavik has a lot to offer, which all too many miss due to lack of either information or transportation. RE offers a guided tour through



Snowmobile tours on seemingly endless plains of snow.

all the city's highlights, including a visit to the Pearl, Hallgrímskirkja church, the National Museum, the harbor and the famous downtown area. If you are in Reykjavik over the holidays RE offers the unique *Bonfire Tour* which explores the various bonfires lit up throughout the city on New Year's Eve and offers you the chance to join in on the celebration. The fireworks display immediately following is something to be remembered.

Plan Your Own Vacation

With prior notice Reykjavik Excursions can tailor make adventure tours for individuals and groups, combining all the locations and activities you can think of. Through its many partners Reykjavik Excursions offers a multitude of exciting activities such as horseback riding, quad bike tours, sailing tours, 4X4 jeep tours and white river rafting.

For further information and booking send an e-mail to main@re.is or visit www.re.is



BORN AGAIN

A Unique Novelty in High Fashion

"Today we must change our minds about throwing valuable things away. Here we have the skin and first wool of a young lamb. Soft, gentle curls – a beautiful Icelandic product," says Eggert Jóhannsson, the furrier, who is responsible for a new fashion product called BORN AGAIN.

BORN AGAIN is the result of experiments with special lambskin. These are skins from lambs that died in birth or shortly thereafter. This is material that previously would have been discarded but now has a purpose.

Approved by Left Green Party

Iceland's Minister of Agriculture and member of the Left Green Party, Jón Bjarnason has applauded this novelty, which he says supports the environment by utilizing goods, which otherwise would have been discarded.

The experiments were done more or less in order to find a new and valuable export item in times of local economic difficulties. This pioneering work is done in close cooperation with local farmers, skinnners and tanners. The basic idea behind this is to create an entirely new skin material for use in high fashion.

Renowned furrier

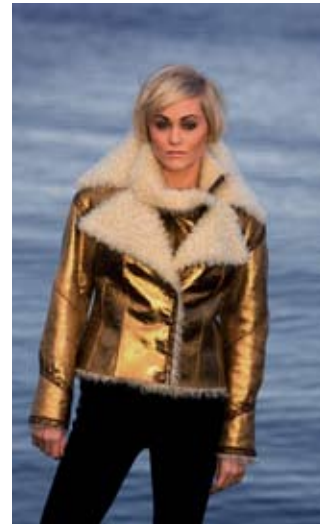
After 30 years of creating beautiful garments, Eggert Jóhannsson has

become one of the top professional furriers in the world, and his work is internationally acclaimed. Eggert is a member of the exclusive Purple Club whose members are selected by high standards and custom design. Eggert received his training in England and in Sweden. His first training was with Mr. Jack Marcel in London. Mr.

Marcel was at that time considered to be an outstanding furrier. Later Eggert moved to Sweden where he studied with the Master Furrier Ms. Doris Stille. Her influence upon young Eggert Jóhannsson is still with him today. Ms. Stille told Eggert one day: "I cannot understand people who want to throw away natural resources and how that can benefit nature." This has been Eggert's professional motto ever since!

Ocean Leather

Eggert Feldskerí has become an international trendsetter in his field. His early work with fishskins, usually thrown away in the fishing industry, - mostly skins of salmon, perch and cod, were unique at the time, but are now known as Ocean Leather and widely used in high fashion. Eggert still works with Ocean Leather, but now mostly for colorful jackets and the trim of his fur creations.



T THORVALDSEN

BISTRO - BAR - GRILL

Thorvaldsen is a relaxed and comfortable bistro-bar-grill in the heart of Reykjavík.

On weekends it becomes the hottest night club in town. Our versatile menu offers creative Asian-fusion dishes. We value presentation of the food and emphasize the freshness of our ingredients. We offer excellent coffee and a good selection of quality wines as well as numerous cocktails.

Our famous weekend atmosphere - where the best DJs play long into the night - needs no introduction.

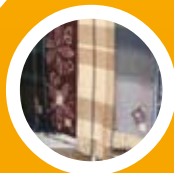
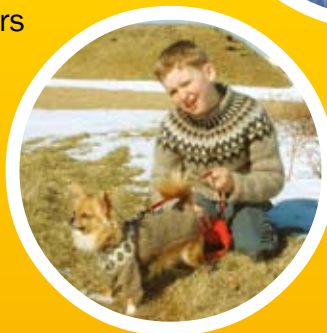


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www.alafoss.is





Photo:
Mary Ellen
Mark

Among the highlights of this season in Reykjavík Art Museum is the Kjarvalsstaðir exhibition of Steinunn Siguraðardóttir's fashion designer, who has gained a worldwide recognition for her timeless and unique clothes design.



Hafnarhusid

Experience Icelandic Art

-Reykjavík Art Museum exhibits classic and contemporary Icelandic art

While Iceland is usually most often recognized for its unique landscape, Iceland boasts a number of highly talented artists, some who have reached international acclaim. The Reykjavík Art Museum exhibits three of Iceland's most successful artists on a permanent basis, as well as exhibiting works of exciting new artists and works from renowned artists from all over the world.

The Reykjavík Art Museum is housed in three unique buildings in different parts of the city. One of which is *Kjarvalsstaðir*, named after Iceland's most beloved painter, Jóhannes Kjarval (1885-1972). The current exhibition focuses

on Kjarval's key works and offers an unique overview of his prolific career.

The works of Iceland's most eccentric painter, Erró, are on display in *Hafnarhúsið*, which is located downtown by the harbor. While Erró is on permanent display, Hafnarhúsið is simultaneously a melting pot for young and aspiring artists from Iceland and abroad and promotes all types of contemporary art.

The third building is the sculpture museum *Ásmundarsafn*, former home and studio of the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson. His works are

often displayed with works by other artists.

Among the highlights of this season in Reykjavík Art Museum is the Kjarvalsstaðir exhibition of Steinunn

Siguraðardóttir's fashion designer, who has gained a worldwide recognition for her timeless and unique clothes design. At Hafnarhúsið the internationally acclaimed Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara has made a new installation specially designed for the gallery, with special shipping containers equipped with peepholes and window.

The museum buildings are open daily and entrance is free to all exhibitions. For more information take a look at the museum's website, www.artmuseum.is.



Asmundarsafn



Kjarvalsstadir

Knit your own Icelandic Wool Sweater

-Garnbudin offers everything you need for knitting



Photo: Ingó

Icelandic knitting products are popular souvenirs and gifts to bring home from Iceland. Garnbudin (The Yarn Store) now offers you a chance to make your own Icelandic Wool sweaters, with its wide array of yarns, knitting pins and instruction books. You can even order them online and thus make yourself a little piece of Iceland without ever having gone there.

Garnbudin is located in Akranes, just outside of Reykjavik, and offers all you would ever need for knitting. As the name indicates Garnbudin offers a seemingly endless variety of yarn, including Icelandic yarn, various multi-colored decorative yarns and the Argentinean AslanTrends yarn.

Anna Silfa Þorsteinsdóttir, owner of Garnbudin, says that Icelanders are especially avid knitters. "Icelanders used to export knitted goods and the whole family would sit together and knit; men, women and children. The most popular product is of course the Icelandic wool sweater, while another unique Icelandic product is the two-thumbbed sailor's mittens," says Anna.

You can find the patterns of the Icelandic products in special guidebooks,



available in English. "The Icelandic yarn is available in many beautiful colors. The Icelandic yarn comes in two types "þel" and "tog" which give it its unique durability and resistance to the elements.

All products from Garnbudin are available online, so you can knit sweaters for your whole family, which is not an uncommon tradition in Iceland, long after your visit is over.

For more visit www.garnbudin.is

Budget Accommodation with Majestic Views

-Móar Guesthouse is located just outside the Capital

Móar Guesthouse offers accommodation for reasonable prices, just outside Akranes, which is close to the capital area. According to Sólveig Jóna Jóhannesdóttir, manager of Móar, visitors have found Móar to be an ideal base while touring the South of Iceland.

„Many of our visitors have decided to stay with us for several days, exploring attractions such as Gullfoss, Geysir and Þingvellir during the day and coming back to Móar to relax in the evening. The town of Akranes also offers a wide array of services such as a golf course, a swimming pool and museums.

People find the surroundings of Móar to be both very peaceful and beautiful.



Móar is an ideal base for your travels in the South of Iceland. Photo: Ingó

In fact many of our customers choose to stay with us just by seeing Móar from the road. The view covers the entire Faxaflói bay, the mountain of Akrafjall and even a glacier in the distance," says Sólveig.

Móar offers accommodation for up to 20 persons, either for sleeping bags or

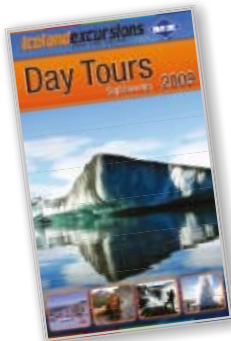
with made up beds. Each room comes with a private toilet and shower. There is a communal lounge area with a TV and a kitchen area for those wishing to cook their own meals.

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Visit the Setting for Iceland's Greatest Saga

-The Saga Center in Hvolsvöllur offers a unique Chance to Stand in the Footprints of Iceland's greatest Heroes

The most famous and acclaimed of all of the Icelandic Sagas is without a doubt Brennu Njáls Saga, or Njála as most Icelanders call it. It is an epic prose written in the thirteenth century by an unknown author which tells the story of blood feud lasting fifty years. Njála is a highly complex work telling the lives of memorable characters such as the powerful, yet peaceful, warrior Gunnar Hámundarson from HlíðarendiHllh and his friend and title character Njáll from Bergþórshvöll, who were continually sucked into power struggles and battles by both their enemies and their own families.

The Saga Centre in Hvolsvöllur offers you a chance to actually visit the sites described in the story and learn more about its characters through the informative Njála exhibition. There the story and principal characters are explained in great detail, richly illustrated with pictures and descriptions of their conflicts at fateful moments in the story.

Njála describes Icelandic society as it was approximately 1000 years ago; it offer magnificent characterization of power struggles, torrid passions, strife, and skulduggery in a heathen society that was about to become Christianized.

Unforgettable Experience

The immediate surroundings of

the Saga Centre are the actual historical setting of Njála itself. The key sites from the story are labeled with the Saga Centre logo and in many places there are information signs detailing how the site is related to the events and characters in Njála. All the sites are easily accessible to all visitors. The Saga Centre can be of assistance in hiring thoroughly experienced tour guides for large and small groups alike, which is an experience which will not easily be forgotten.

Imagine standing on top of the same rock as the seemingly invincible Gunnar Hámundarson did when he fought off an ambush at the river

Rangá. Gunnar had previously killed a man named Þorgeir Otkelsson and a nemesis of Gunnar had heard of a prophecy saying Gunnar would meet his demise if he were to slay another member of Þorgeir's family. So it was no coincidence that among the attackers was Þorgeir's son, which Gunnar of course killed.

Fair is the blooming meadow

A famous passage in the book is when Gunnar was being forced to exile from Iceland and took his last look over his homestead and spoke: „Fair is the blooming meadow.“ After viewing the meadow of Hlíðarendi Gunnar decided to stay in Iceland

Imagine standing on top of the same rock as the seemingly invincible Gunnar Hámundarson did when he fought off an ambush at the river Rangá.



Gunnarssteinn, where Gunnar and his brother Kolskeggur fought for their lives.

and thus live the remainder of his days as an outlaw. That same influential meadow is of course still there today and you can decide for yourself if it is beautiful enough to spend your life as an outlaw for.

Bergþórshvöll was the home to Njáll, as well as the setting for his death. After a series of misfortunes, mostly caused by his sons, Bergþórshvöll was ascended upon by an army of a hundred men who burned the home to the ground with Njáll and eleven others in it. This event of course spawned the name of the story: The Story of the Burning of Njáll.

Insight Into the World of Vikings

The Njála exhibition also offers a unique insight into the pre-Christian world of Vikings, including the unique sailing techniques of the Vikings and miniature models of Althing. Another part of the exhibition explains the unique Icelandic tradition of safeguarding its storytelling wealth by writing it down on calf skin. And if you really want to submerge into the life of a Viking, you can attend events in the Saga Hall, which is a reproduction of a typical Viking Age chieftain's

hall, complete with benches clad in horsehide.

History of Trade

The Saga Centre also hosts an exhibition of Icelandic cooperative society, where guests can learn about the history of trade, commerce and the cooperative movement. Take a glance back in time and explore the life and work of past generations. The exhibition is conceived as a journey through time and enables guests to walk through the past 100 years of trade in Southern Iceland.



Sögusetrið offers audio guides in Icelandic, English and German.



In Keldur you can see how the development in housing has been since 1100.

Bergþórshvöll was ascended upon by an army of a hundred men who burned the home to the ground with Njáll and eleven others in it.



All of Iceland Excursion's vehicles are equipped with safety belts.

Iceland's Most Modern Car Fleet

-Iceland Excursions puts safety first

Iceland Excursions offers a wide variety of day tours and longer tours to all of Iceland's most exciting locations. The company takes great pride in offering its customers the most comfortable and safest experience possible by renewing their fleet regularly and now boasts of having the most modern fleet in Iceland. Iceland Excursions has a strong environmental policy, putting a strong emphasis on responsible driving and using the most eco-friendly vehicles available. In 2004 Iceland Excursions was given the formal Gray Line Worldwide franchise in Iceland. Gray Line is the worlds leader in sightseeing, ground transportation services and unique tours at over 150 destinations around the world.



Iceland Excursions operates several tours all year round to staple attractions, including, Gullfoss & Geysir Express, the Golden Circle Classic, Greater Area Reykjavik Sightseeing and Blue Lagoon Direct. Many of the tours can be combined to include two or more locations in one day. Iceland Excursions also offers exciting activity tours such as the cave exploring tour Iceland From Below, which takes you to Iceland's most spectacular lava tube caves and craters. There you will enter through narrow cave entrances and find they reveal extraordinary scenery of colors and lava formations.

Snorkeling, Horseback riding and Snowmobiles

For those who want to try out their riding skills on the unique Icelandic Horse try The Viking Horse tours, which can be combined with either an afternoon trip to Gullfoss and Geysir or to the Blue Lagoon. Also a great activity before visiting the Blue Lagoon is an ATV tour on the

Reykjanes peninsula on the ATV and Blue Lagoon Direct tour.

As the landscapes of Iceland are often ill traversed, Icelanders have accumulated years of experience in jeep modifications and snowmobile driving. The Golden Circle Super Jeep Tour offers you a chance to visit some of Iceland's most famous and exciting natural phenomena in 4x4 super-jeeps, which have been



The Golden Circle Super Jeep Tour offers you a chance to visit some of Iceland's most famous and exciting natural phenomena in 4x4 super-jeps, which have been specially modified to traverse difficult off-road tracks and mountain roads.

specially modified to traverse difficult off-road tracks and mountain roads. Included is a one hour snowmobile ride on Iceland's second largest glacier, Langjökull glacier.

For a truly unforgettable experience be sure not to miss diving or snorkeling in Silfra at Þingvellir. Silfra is a fissure in the face of the earth with a constant temperature of 1-3° all year round, so the weather is not a factor. Diving requires a diver's certification, although diving in Silfra is considered quite easy. Snorkeling is available for beginners and basic training is included in the tour.

Celebrate the New Year with the Locals

Icelanders are renowned for their excess when it comes to ringing in the new year. The fireworks display is completely unique, where hundreds of tons of fireworks are shot up in the air in a matter of hours. The Bonfire and Fireworks tour offers you the chance to view this extraordinary event from an advantageous viewpoint, as well as toasting in Champagne and celebrating with the locals.

If you are visiting Iceland during winter it would almost be a crime to leave without at least trying to see the Northern Lights. The Northern Lights Mystery tour gives you a unique chance to see this often elusive phenomenon. On a clear night Iceland Excursion's experienced guides will try to find the best location to see them, which will of course vary from day to day.

Safety First

Each bus in Iceland Excursion's fleet is equipped with a sophisticated location device, which keeps a detailed track of the vehicle's driving record. This enables Iceland Excursions to monitor speed, turning, braking, acceleration and length of stops. With this data Iceland Excursions is able to advocate both safer and more environmentally friendly driving.

Iceland Excursions definitely puts safety first; every bus is equipped with safety belts for all passengers and parents can get Children's Safety Car Seats free of charge for their small children (up to 20 kg in weight).



Iceland Excursions go to Geysir all year round.



The Northern Lights Mystery Tour.



The Icelandic horse is known for its mild temper. Photos: Ingó

The Essential Servant

-The Icelandic Horse breed has survived a Thousand Years of Harsh Winters and Volcanic Eruptions

The Icelandic Horse is considered to rank among the finest breeds in the world. It is highly sought after by international horse breeders for its fine physique and two extra gaits. The Icelandic people hold these noble creatures in high regard, as horseback riding is among the most popular sports and hobbies in the country.

The Icelandic horse is a bit smaller than most horses, in fact it is almost a pony (but don't ever call it a pony to a native). They are especially strong due to a natural selection of sorts, as they are the survivors of hundreds of years of extreme winters and volcanic eruptions. But perhaps due to a lack of natural predators in Iceland they are especially docile and easy-tempered, which makes them optimal for riding for those less experienced.

Their colors and patterns are very variable and the Icelandic vocabulary has over a hundred names for them, some of which are more obvious than others. For example if an Icelander describes a horse as grey, you might think it is white and if he describes it as brown you might think it is black. While most horse breeds only have three or four gaits, i.e. ways of walking or running, the Icelandic breed has two unique additional gaits: tölt and skeið. The former is shared by all Icelandic horses and is considered a

very comfortable gait for riding; the latter is rarer and usually reserved for highly trained horses and riders.

Founders of Iceland

The original settlers of Iceland brought with them horses from their home countries, which later

mixed with breeds from the English islands. After early failed attempts at crossbreeding a law was passed in 982 which forbade the importation of horses to Iceland. The Icelandic breed is thus over one thousand years old.

The horse was an extremely important part of the daily life in the Viking times and an important factor in making these harsh landscapes habitable, which is why the horse is sometimes called the „essential servant.“ Travelling long distances

“Horses were highly revered by the Nordic settlers and played a grand role in Norse mythology and were even worshipped as deities. The most famous horse of all was Sleipnir, the eight legged steed of Óðinn, who reportedly set down one of his hooves one time in Northern-Iceland, creating the magnificent Ásbyrgi canyon.

would have been impossible without the horse, which made them essential for trade, commerce, politics, education and human interaction. All heavy manual labor was usually carried out by a horse, whether it was carrying fish from the shore, carrying hay from the field or wood for building.

Horses were highly revered by the Nordic settlers and played a grand role in Norse mythology and were even worshipped as deities. The most famous horse of all was Sleipnir, the eight legged steed of Óðinn, who reportedly set down one of his hooves one time in Northern-Iceland, creating the magnificent Ásbyrgi canyon.

Horses were considered an indicator of its owners wealth; the better the steed – the richer the owner was. Some lords would even have their most prized steed buried with them. In order to decide who's breed was the best, horse fights were held, in which stallions would be pitted against each other.



Inside the Volcano

-Volcano Tours Offer you the Chance to Stand inside a Volcano and Descend below the Surface into Ancient Lava Caves

Much has been said and written about Iceland's many unique geographical phenomena, but there is nothing that beats the experience of actually walking inside a volcanic crater or descending into mysterious caves under the surface of the earth.

Tourist company Volcano Tours offers a variety of unique excursions which explore the multitude of craters, caves, lava fields, hot springs and geothermal areas found on the Reykjanes peninsula.

Jaw Dropping Experience

The staff of Volcano Tours have years of experience of cave exploring and touring the volcanic craters and can thus give you the full details of Reykjanes' unique landscape. Erling Einarsson, owner of Volcano Tours, estimates that he has explored over 200 caves on the Reykjanes peninsula, yet when he enters a new cave his jaw still drops to the floor in awe. „It is truly a rewarding experience to stand face to face to the awesome powers of the earth. I often see it in the faces of the groups I bring to the caves, people sometimes stand still in amazement and even forget to take photographs. That's when I know the trip has been a success," says Erling.

Reykjanes' geographical history is as rich as it is long. Reykjanes is in

fact a part of the mid Atlantic ridge, which lies along the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and is the longest mountain range in the world. Volcanic eruptions on the Reykjanes peninsula have been frequent throughout the ages, the last major eruption occurring in the 13th century. This high level of volcanic activity has created a wide array of unique geological phenomena, many of which Volcanic Tours provide a chance to explore up close and personal.

When some of the volcanoes became inactive hundreds of years ago they suddenly emptied themselves and are now hollowed out. This gives us the chance to explore them from the inside, which Erling says is an experience which will not be easily forgotten. „It is an amazing experience to stand inside a volcano and see how the lava once oozed down the crater walls like melted chocolate when the lava stopped spurting up from beneath the surface," says Erling.

Volcano Tours offer many varieties of excursions which frequently include around 20-25 stops at various geological and historical locations, depending on the customers field of interest. Tours include an experienced guide and protective clothes as well as a full cave exploring kit, including helmets, headlamps, overalls and mittens. Tours can include hiking



Volcano Tours offers you a chance to step inside volcanoes.



A magical world underneath the surface.

and/or short walks, all depending on the wishes of the customer. All of Volcano Tours' excursions are on 4x4 jeeps, with six passengers in each vehicle.

Dance of the Spirits

During the wintertime Volcano Tours also gives you the unique opportunity to catch the northern lights in all their glory. The Aurora Borealis Tour is tailor made so that you can experience this marvelous phenomenon in all its glory. Volcanic Tours will help find the perfect spots for you to view and photograph the "dance of the spirits" in the comfort of a luxurious jeep and warm overalls.

For further information and booking visit www.volcanotours.is



Cursing the Gods

While most people are familiar with the red-haired god of thunder Thor who smote his opponents with his mighty hammer Mjöltnir, not as many would agree that he actually resides in Valhalla drinking with his buddies Odin and Loki. Ásatrúarfélagið, the largest non-Christian religious organization in Iceland, does however hold the Old Norse gods in high regard and follow their ways in modern day Iceland.

Ásatrúarfélagið says it is open for those who believe in the Nordic and Icelandic folklore, the spirits and entities the folklore represents in addition to gods and other beings from the Nordic pantheism. The purpose of the organization is keeping alive the old traditions, beliefs and ways and restores the Ancient Way to its former glory, reclaim Iceland's cultural heritage and honor the ways of the old Nordic Gods.

As a fully licensed religion Ásatrúarfélagið performs various ceremonies such as naming rituals, marriage and funerals. One of the biggest events for Ásatrúarfélagið is the „blót,” in which members gather for a feast and celebrate the gods by cursing them. In 2008 Ásatrúarfélagið had over 1.200 registered members.

Unique scholarly tradition

The Norse Mythology flourished

during the Viking Age in the Scandinavian countries, but it was primarily in Iceland that the mythology was documented. *Snorra Edda* and *Eddukvæðin*, written during the 13th century, are the primary source of information on the religion and its traditions from that time. These unique scholarly feats have fuelled great respect and pride for the old traditions in Iceland, made evident by the practice of Ásatrúarfélagið.

A Long Time Coming

Celebrating the Old Norse gods publicly was outlawed in Iceland in the year 1000, although heathen

rituals continued in secrecy. Not until 1874 was the ban lifted with a new constitution. Ásatrúarfélagið was founded in the year 1972. There was a perceived need of a methodological preservation of the old traditions and the founders were adamant that an official religion should be founded.

Having been dormant for hundreds of years, the Old Norse gods had lost their credibility and it is said that the minister of justice and ecclesiastical affairs, of that time, perceived

Ásatrúarfélagið's application as a joke. Ásatrúarfélagið however gained the status of an official religion the following year and has been growing ever since; it even had a representative in congress at one point in time.

Welcoming religion

Even though Odin, Thor and their cohorts can seem unwelcoming characters and even openly hostile at times, Ásatrú is a religion based on tolerance, honor, honesty and respect for nature and all life, with each person responsible for his or her own actions.



Photo: Thor's battle against the giants (1872) by Mårten Eskil Winge

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The Icelandic sheep is considered strong willed and stubborn. Photos: Ingó

Land of sheep

-The Icelandic sheep plays an important role in Iceland

The Icelandic sheep has been closely intertwined with the Icelandic psyche throughout the centuries, which does not come as a surprise as sheep were one of the fundamental factors in getting Icelanders through the harsh winters since the late 800's. Even though central heating and continental food were introduced late last century, most Icelanders still hold the Icelandic sheep in high reverence. The Icelandic sheep is still the staple food of Icelanders, it supplies materials for the ever popular Icelandic wool sweater, it the subject of academic research and it even has its own Facebook fan page.

The Icelandic sheep is considered by many to be among the oldest and purest stock of sheep in the world, as early attempts of breeding with other

stocks proved unsuccessful and as a result the import of foreign stock was prohibited. Many believe that the Icelandic sheep possess a very unique character, strong willed and independent, which is made evident by their almost supernatural and extremely frustrating ability to evade any fencing attempts to contain within a given field. So don't be surprised to see sheep standing on the side of the road, nonchalantly chewing cud and ignoring all boundaries set by their masters.

The Icelandic people are among the biggest lamb consumers on the globe. In comparison the Finnish population consumes less than half a kilo per year,

Denmark and Sweden around one and a half kilos, Norwegians over 6 kilos, but Iceland takes the prize with over twenty kilos. Around 8500 tons of mutton are produced in Iceland each year, most of which is consumed domestically.

Icelanders have not only relied on the Icelandic sheep solely for sustenance, but also for warmth. The wool is considered quite unique as it has

two layers, one being long and rough, while the other being short and fluffy. As a result the Icelandic knitted wool sweaters are highly sought after for their insulation and durability. In addition to its more practical qualities the Icelandic wool sweater is considered quite stylistic and its signature pattern is used as a base by many young fashion designers.

Land of sheep

In 2008 there were over 360 thousand sheep in Iceland, compared to a population of 315 thousand, which means there are 1.15 sheep for each person.

In 1980 there were 685 thousand sheep in Iceland, compared to a population of 226 thousand, which means there were over three sheep for every person.



The Icelandic Film School is currently in the process of completing an immense studio space, which is of a much larger scale than anything previously heard of in Iceland.



The Icelandic people are among the most avid cinema enthusiasts in the world.

Icelandic Cinema

Despite its relatively short lifetime the Icelandic cinema tradition is particularly strong. Iceland's cinema attendance per capita ranks up with the highest and the movie production rate especially formidable for a nation of less than 350 thousand. The Icelandic Film School plays an important role in Iceland's cinema landscape and indeed has plans to change Iceland into a bona fide cinema heavyweight.

Looking for leaders

The school recently relocated to a new 37.000 square feet building and is now undergoing a change which would allow it to graduate students at a university level. The Icelandic Film School is in the process of expanding its capacity up to 400 students and plans to open a department for international students in 2010. The school currently graduates students from four departments; directorial and production department, technology department, script writing and directorial department and acting department. „First and foremost we are looking for leaders, talented people who will drive this industry forward. It really doesn't make that much of a difference from which department students graduate, our goal is to produce individuals who can take on almost any role within the film industry,” says Böðvar Bjarki

Pétursson, Director of Icelandic Film School.

Cinema Iceland

Böðvar says that he wanted to see if it were possible to take it to the next step and create 3000 new jobs by turning Iceland's cinema industry into a sizeable portion of the country's gross domestic product. „After extensive research we concluded that this would indeed be possible, but in order to that to happen we need to break through a certain growth ceiling. We need coordinated actions from the government, increased support for television production, we need to continue to attract foreign cinema investments and in due time establish an investment fund,” says Böðvar.

Böðvar says that the government has been quite supportive of the industry so far and Iceland has attracted several noted projects to its shores, including a Clint Eastwood directed war film and a recent James Bond film.

Blend of business and art

Böðvar claims that the cinema suits Icelanders especially well because it is a blend of arts and business. „Iceland has a rich history of storytelling and Icelanders are known for their business enthusiasm, which are key elements in the cinema industry. In addition we are a very technologically advanced nation and quick to adapt to new trends,” says Böðvar.



The Icelandic Film School is currently in the process of completing an immense studio space, which is of a much larger scale than anything previously heard of in Iceland. The

facilities will be equipped with all the latest technology required and supported by an audio recording studio next door.





The concept of the building is to create a crystalline form with a variety of colors dependent on the surrounding nature.

Iceland's most ambitious building

The Icelandic National Concert and Conference Centre will open in 2011

One of the most ambitious buildings to rise in Iceland would certainly have to be the Icelandic National Concert and Conference Centre, which will open in the old harbour in Reykjavík early 2011. The building has a unique design with a glass facade covering the entire building. It is over 258.000 square feet in size, which will easily accommodate larger international conferences, conventions with accompanying trade shows and promotions, or for any large group meetings for that matter.

Unique design

Situated in the old harbour between Reykjavik city centre and the North Atlantic, the new Icelandic National Concert and Conference Centre will

undoubtedly stand out as a unique landmark in continuous interplay with its surroundings. The design is influenced by Iceland's unique landscapes and places the building on the boundary between land and sea, where, according to its builders, it is meant to reflect both sky and harbour space as well as the vibrant life of the city. "The concept of the building is to create a crystalline form with a variety of colours dependent on the surrounding nature, giving the viewer a continuous feeling of sensuous change. The building stands alone as a monolith, reflecting the varying sky both in intensity and colour depending on the time of day, the weather and the season. The sun will accentuate the details in light and shadow, and the building will allude to the warm golden colours of glowing lava or to the ice blue glaciers of winter."

"The glass facade was designed by renowned visual artist Ólafur Elíasson. The architects of the building are Henning Larsen Architects in Copenhagen, Denmark."

The glass facade was designed by renowned visual artist Ólafur Eliasson. The architects of the building are Henning Larsen Architects in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Simultaneous Events

The Icelandic National Concert and Conference Centre will have four halls, the largest of which can accommodate up to 1.800 seated persons. In addition there will be various smaller meeting rooms spread

around the building and a spacious exhibition area, all equipped with the latest technology. This makes it possible to host events simultaneously without one interfering with another. In addition the building will serve as a centre for live musical performance of all types and genres, be it classical, opera, jazz, blues, rock or pop. The Iceland Symphony Orchestra will have its base there, as well as the Icelandic Opera.





Photos: Ingó

Iceland in figures

The land and its inhabitants

Iceland is the second largest island in Europe and it is located in the North Atlantic Ocean.

The island is 103,000 square kilometers and it embraces approximately 200 volcanoes.

Approximately 75% of the land is in more than 200 meters over sea level and a large part is a plateau devoid of vegetation with odd mountains and mountain ranges.

All in all, glaciers in Iceland cover approximately 11,900 square kilometers compared to 1,400 square kilometers of farming land.

On January 1st 2008 the population in Iceland was 313,000 and 63% of the population lived in the capital area in the south of Iceland.

In the beginning of the 17th century 50,000 individuals inhabited the island and the population was much more scattered around the country than it is to day.

In the beginning of 2008 the number of immigrants as a proportion of the total population was 6.8% which makes for 21,400 individuals with foreign citizenship residing in Iceland.

In the year 1950, 2,700 foreign citizens resided in Iceland, which makes for 2% of the total population of 141,000 people.

The weather

The sea temperature in the south and south west of Iceland is ca 10°C during summertime and 5°C during the winter. In the north and east of Iceland the sea temperature is 5°C during summertime and ca 1-2°C during the winter. Because of a relatively stable sea temperature the air temperature does not differ much between seasons.

The average air temperature in Reykjavík is ca 5°C. In January the average air temperature is ca 0.4°C but 11.2°C in July.

The lowest air temperature in Iceland was recorded in Grimsstaðir in January 1918 when the temperature went below -37°C.

The highest air temperature recorded was ca 30°C in 1939.

It rains often in Iceland and mostly so in the south but not for a long period at a time.

The predominant characteristic of the weather in Iceland is how changeable it is.

This information and other statistical information can be found on the Statistics Iceland's web site: www.statice.is

FJÖRÐUR

The Heart of Hafnarfjörður

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The Shopping Mall Fjörður in downtown Hafnarfjörður is definitely the heart of shopping, service and communications in the town of Hafnarfjörður, only 10 minutes drive from Reykjavík. Fjörður will be 15 years old in november 2009. On the whole business and services in the mall have increased steadily since its establishment. Approximately 30.000 to 35.000 persons visit Fjörður Mall every week.

Out of the 29 businesses and services which now are situated in Fjörður, 11 have been there from the beginning.

In the mall there are all kinds of shops and services. To mention a few there are fashion shops for men and women, an optician, a bank, bakery, coffee house, telephone shop, a food supermarket, hairdresser, shoe shop, pharmacy, post office, toy shop, shop with sporting goods, a wine shop etc.

And in addition there are various offices of the town's social services and a center of medical doctors.

Parking lots are outside and in the cellar of the mall and where people can use the services of a company which specializes in cleaning, washing and polishing cars.

On Fridays and Saturdays there are frequently all kinds of happenings and a temporary market is put up on the corridors of the shopping mall with diverse and interesting products for low prices. Among those are handicraft, cakes and stock fish (dried cod) and the atmosphere is great. We urge you to visit us to experience a fun atmosphere in Fjörður and what we call the vivacious "Hafnarfjörður-esque" aura.

Welcome to



**Shopping Mall
of Hafnarfjörður**



Sigur Rós are known for their introvert nature in interviews, but not in their live shows. Photos: Ingó

The Music of Iceland Inspired by elves?

The multitude of bands and musicians constantly emerging from Iceland has led to many speculations about possible reasons behind this creativity. Most analysts make a connection between Iceland's often dynamic landscapes and some kids getting together and making music. Other reasons often cited have got something to do with elves, trolls, government subsidies or something in the water. Whatever the reason is, there are indeed many musicians working in Iceland today and some of them are quite gifted.

Most people with a passing knowledge of Iceland's music scene usually ask: "Why is it that such a small country produces so many talented musicians?" The answer to that question is elusive and has spawned some very interesting theories and misconceptions. The most common being: Icelanders believe in elves, Icelanders are inspired by their majestic landscapes, Icelanders are bored in the darkness of winter or that

Icelandic bands receive government support.

Some of these misconceptions about Iceland and Icelandic music likely come from the most famous Icelanders, through no fault of their own. The most recognized Icelander of all time would have to be Björk. Since her first album in 1994 she has appeared in countless interviews and news articles, which in some cases provide the only knowledge

people have about Iceland. Sigur Rós is probably the most famous band to emerge from the shores of Iceland, having sold millions of CD's, toured extensively all over the world with some of today's most acclaimed artists and gathered universal acclaim from critics and music enthusiasts from all over the world. In their appearance in the media Sigur Rós and Björk have perhaps helped support the stereotype of the Icelandic people and music. If the only Icelanders you'd ever meet were Björk and members of Sigur Rós it would be quite understandable to perceive all Icelanders as shy, elf-like, introvert characters with a great connection with the forces of nature. Other musicians from Iceland do not necessarily share their views on life.

Looking for a common theme or style would prove a fruitless task as Iceland's modern music is as diverse as it is plentiful. Elves hold little significance to most and most musicians are born and raised in the capital area, not between an active volcano and a gargantuan glacier. The only really unifying theme is the sense of freedom; the fact that artists are free to explore their creativity without necessarily shedding their audience. Market laws do of course apply as everywhere else, but record sales do not seem to be the driving force for most artists. This can be seen by the seemingly endless flow of artists performing in tiny coffee shops, playing music that will almost certainly never reach a wide audience.



Curious heritage

Iceland's musical heritage is a curious one, driven by strong rhythms, intricate rhyming and storytelling. Early on instruments were scarce due to harsh conditions, but rudimentary stringed instruments were available, in particular the "Langspil," which is a 2-3 string instrument native to Iceland. The most common tradition is the so-called "Rímur" or rhymes, which are sort of epic vocal poems, with fixed diatonic melodies. Rímur have had an upheaval of sorts with the recent collaboration of *Steindór Andersen* and *Sigur Rós* who performed and recorded Rímur a few years back. For those interested in modern interpretations of Icelandic folk be sure to check out *Hinn Íslenski Þursaflokkur* where you can hear progressive 70's sounds, unconventional time signatures and Icelandic folk traditions all in the same mix. A duet of two of Iceland's most

talented guitarists, *Guitar Iclancio*, has been playing jazzed up versions of Icelandic folk songs for almost a decade to great acclaim.

Meet the Beatles

Rock and roll hit Iceland big and some of the early Beatles rockers are still creating music today. One of the most successful early rockers was *Hljómar*, which even made it as far as cutting an EP for Parlophone. Said EP apparently is an extremely valuable collector's item today. With the advent of psychedelia and progressive rock *Hljómar* united with another popular group of the time, *Flowers*, to form the super group *Trúbrot*, which recorded one of the more acclaimed albums in Icelandic rock history.

Iceland's Dylan

One of the more acclaimed and infamous musicians is Megas, who has been called the Icelandic Dylan. Since his first album came out in 1972 the Icelandic people have learned to love and hate him simultaneously. His peculiar voice, his choice of lifestyle and controversial lyrical topics have made sure that every Icelander has an opinion on *Megas*.

Another controversial figure and a friend of *Megas* is *Bubbi Morthens*, one of the biggest selling recording artists in Iceland. An early punk rock icon and working class spokesman, he is responsible for some of the most important music in Iceland's rock history. *Bubbi* is known for speaking his mind on whatever topics are at hand, be it drugs, politics, his own dyslexia or his recent financial troubles.

Rock in Reykjavík

The most famous Icelander outside of Iceland is most certainly *Björk Guðmundsdóttir*. While her solo output is her most recognized work, she was an active participant in the Icelandic punk rock scene in her early years. Björk was a member of bands such as K.U.K.L. and Tappi Tíkarrass, while eventually having her breakthrough with the Sugarcubes.

The Icelandic punk scene was a glorious melting pot of adolescent rebellion and exciting music. Of the more renowned punk artists were: Utangarðsmenn, which played angry blues inspired punk, Þeyr which delved into the cold world of post-

punk (notice future Sugarcubes drummer, Sigtryggur Baldursson), Þurkur Pílnikk were the youngest of the bunch and included future Sugarcubes vocalist Einar Örn Benediktsson, who is now fronting



It is however in recent years that the music scene began to expand to its current size, now boasting successful artists in almost all genres, including rock, pop, jazz, blues, classical, opera, ambient, rap, punk, progressive metal and even a reggae band.

an experimental noise band called Ghostdigital. The Icelandic punk rock scene was documented brilliantly in *Rökk í Reykjavík* (both DVD and CD) where you can witness enlightened discussions about glue sniffing and other punk rock shenanigans.

Pop

It is however in recent years that the music scene began to expand to its current size, now boasting successful artists in almost all genres, including rock, pop, jazz, blues, classical, opera, ambient, rap, punk, progressive metal and even a reggae band.

Icelandic female singer-songwriters have been especially prominent in recent times. In addition to Björk,

chanteuses such as Emiliana Torrini, Hafdis Huld and most recently Lay Low have been singing their way into the hearts of the international community. Although each of them has their own style they all share a certain cutesy sincerity. Torrini has been putting out albums for some time and has been reigning over the European charts this summer with her hit single "Jungle Drum." Hafdis Huld was originally a member of the GusGus collective, but is now an established solo artist. With her blend of country, blues and indie music Lay Low is one of the best selling artists in Iceland and surely on her way to international acclaim.

One of the more exciting acts to emerge from Iceland today calls himself Mugison. Mugison started as a solo performer with a laptop and gained a large following as such. Always looking for a new sound and vision, he now performs with a full rock and roll band which ably plays almost all possible genres, often within the same song. Don't be surprised to hear soft acoustic songs, heavy blues rock and death metal in the same sitting.

Bang Gang has been around for awhile, yet their music has only recently reached international shores. Bang Gang is really a one man band, whose leader Bardi Johannsson also performs under his own name and with Lady & Bird.

Classical

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra is considered one of the leading Nordic orchestras and has in recent times been active in collaborating with contemporary artists and putting up memorable concerts. The orchestra is in fact one of the few musical endeavours subsidized by the government (through the national radio.) Classical music in Iceland is certainly not exclusive to the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. Jóhann Jóhannsson is a renowned composer of modern classical music and has released several albums to wide critical acclaim. Another young prodigy, Ólafur Arnalds, has been causing a stir within the classical community with his electronic/ambient influenced compositions. Already he has performed to a full audience at the Barbican Hall and toured with Sigur Rós.



The Þingvellir area is part of a fissure zone running through Iceland. Photos: Ingó

Alþingi at Þingvellir

Þingvellir National Park is perhaps the most important historical site in Iceland. From 930 to 1798 Þingvellir hosted „Alþingi, “a general assembly where many of the major events in Icelandic history took place. It is included on the list of UNESCO’s world heritage sites as it is considered giving „a unique reflection of mediaeval Norse/Germanic culture and one that persisted in essence from its foundation in 980 AD until the 18th century.”

Alþingi initially was a general assembly of the nation, where the country’s most eminent leaders gathered to set laws and settle disputes. Alþingi was considered the most important social gathering of the year and lasted two weeks each time. All free men were allowed to attend and the event frequently drew a large crowd of farmers, traders, storytellers, travelers and of course those who had disputes to settle. These guests would each set up their own camps during Alþingi and fragments of around 50 booths built from turf and stone can still be found there today. At the center of the assembly stands Lögberg, or Rock of Law, on top of which an appointed official would direct the events and recite the laws of the land.

Many important decisions were taken at Þingvellir and perhaps the most important one was the adoption of Christianity in the year 1000. At that time Iceland was divided into two factions; heathens and Christians. Each faction had its own lawmaker and refused to acknowledge the other group’s legislation, thus threatening to dissolve Alþingi. Famously, the two



lawmakers decided that the heathen lawmaker would decide which faith should prevail. The heathen lawmaker, named Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði, went to rest under a fur blanket, under which he stayed the whole night, before he gave his verdict: Iceland would adopt Christianity, although heathens could practice their religion secretly. This coined a common saying in Iceland, “to lie down underneath the fur,” which is

said whenever a matter needs to be given serious thought.

Upplausn var yfirvofandi í hinu unga samfélagi þar sem þingheimur hafði skipst í tvær fylkingar heiðinna manna og kristinna. Fylkingarnar höfðu hvor sinn lögsögumann og sögðu sig úr lögum hvor við aðra. Lögsögumennirnir tveir sammæltust um að Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði lögsögumaður heiðinna skyldi ákveða hvaða trú Íslendingar allir skyldu taka. Þorgeir lagðist undir feld og hafðist þar við nóttina og næsta dag. Eftir það gekk hann að Lögbergi og kvað upp þann úrskurð að Íslendingar skyldu taka kristna trú en heiðnir fengju áfram að stunda sína trú þótt leynt skyldi fara.

Alþingi took on a different role in the later part of the 12th century, when the executive power was transferred to the King of Norway with the adoption of the new legal corpora of the codex Járnsíða in 1271 and Jónsbók in 1281. Now Alþingi shared formal legislative power with the king and both the king and Alþingi had to give its consent for laws to be passed. Toward the end of the 14th century Norway and Iceland were brought under the control of the Danish monarchy through royal succession. In 1662 Alþingi relinquished its autonomy to the Danish Crown, including legislative rights. Alþingi continued to be held at Þingvellir until 1798.

Today Þingvellir is a protected national shrine. According to the law, passed in 1928, the protected area shall always be the property of the Icelandic nation, under the preservation of Alþingi.

Þingvellir National Park is not only impressive for its historical importance, it also boasts

In the last few decades, research has made it clear that Þingvellir is a natural wonder on an international scale, with the geologic history and the biosystem of Lake Þingvallavatn forming a unique entity, a magnificent showcase. Being able to witness the evolution and formation of new species in a place like Lake Þingvallavatn is of immense value. The Þingvellir area is part of a fissure zone running through Iceland, being situated on the tectonic plate boundaries of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The faults and fissures of the area make evident the rifting of the earth’s crust.

Preservation measures at Þingvellir were modelled on the national parks that had been established somewhat earlier in the United States to stem changes to the natural environment there resulting from encroachment by settlers. National parks conserved large uninhabited areas, which people could visit and enjoy - but not settle or develop.

Iceland identified a similar need to preserve certain natural and historical sites for future generations to enjoy them in their original state. Today, Þingvellir is one of the most frequently visited tourist sites in the country. Each year, thousands of visitors go there to become better acquainted with Iceland’s greatest historical site and jewel of nature.





Around 82% of Iceland's energy consumption is generated domestically through renewable sources. Photos: Ingó

Geothermal Nation

In recent years Iceland has rapidly been positioning itself as a leading force in harnessing geothermal energy for the purposes of producing electricity. Around 82% of the energy consumption in Iceland is generated domestically with renewable energy sources, 67% of which come from geothermal sources. Despite that it is estimated that around 20-25% of Iceland's renewable energy sources have been harnessed. That fact is reaffirming to most Icelanders as the nation is the world leader in energy consumption per capita.

Heat from the earth's core is harnessed by drilling for hot steam surging up through the earth at great speed. The steam is then used put turbines into motion, which power a generator which ultimately produces electricity. This is however only possible where there is volcanic activity. What happens is that water will seep down the soil where it comes into contact with extremely hot surfaces which then send the water back to the surface, either naturally through geysers or man-made boreholes. Geothermal areas are divided into high and low heat areas, in low heat areas the temperature is usually under boiling, but high heat areas can reach over 200°.

Iceland's scientists and specialists have been working adamantly in developing way in how to harness the earth's heat and now rank among the top experts in the field. An ambitious

"deep drilling" project is now underway, which would drastically increase the production of geothermal boreholes. The theory is that by drilling 4-5 kilometers (2.5-3 miles) into the extreme temperature of 400-

600° (750-1100 F) the efficiency of boreholes could be increased tenfold. This expertise is highly sought after by the international community. Icelandic Energy Companies have been involved in projects all over the world; Asia, Africa and the Americas. The president of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, is an adamant supporter of the use of renewable energy and has actively encouraged that the nations of the world make use of the experience Iceland has gathered.

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Icelandic Costume, 1811 G.S. Mackenzie.

Iceland symbolized in clothes

The Icelandic National Costume holds great significance in the minds of most Icelanders. Every independence day (June 17th) an Icelandic actress is chosen to represent the Fjallkona (the lady of the mountains) who symbolizes Iceland as a whole. The Fjallkona appears in full traditional garb; the splendid Skautbúningur, complete with elaborate embroidery, belt of linked silver, silver brooch and a high white headdress.

Independence garb

The origin of the Icelandic costume is unclear as historical evidence is

scarce before the 16th century. But from the 16th and 17th century evidence is more readily available from paintings and manuscripts. Interest in the traditional costume grew considerably in the 19th century when Iceland's campaign for independence from Danish rule gained momentum. The costume proved a useful tool for a nation with a growing sense of national identity and became a symbolic icon for Iceland's spirit.

History preserved

In order to preserve knowledge of the Icelandic traditional costume and the making of such a costume

the Ministry of Education and Culture established a National Costume Board in 2001. Said board has since collected and supported extensive research on the Icelandic traditional costume. Throughout its history the national costume has developed and adjusted to different fashion landscapes and now has several variations, including: Peysuföt, Upphlutur, Kyrtil, Skautbúningur and Faldbúningur.

You can catch a glimpse of the Icelandic National Costume at Árbæjarsafn. Further information at www.buningurinn.is



The Vikings are Coming

Iceland's rise and fall in the international economic environment has catapulted the tiny nation into the headlines of renowned international newspapers, usually reserved for much larger economic heavyweights. Browsing through articles and columns written about Iceland three specific words seem to reoccur frequently; "raid", "invasion" and "Vikings."

"The Vikings are Coming," "Next-generation Viking Invasion" and "Viking raids" on various companies are all actual headlines from international newspapers, printed during the economic boom in Iceland. These headlines have unfortunately been replaced by headlines such as "Iceland's Vikings face a Long Winter." But even though most Icelanders take such comparisons to the Viking age lightheartedly and are actually proud of their Viking heritage, they beg the question of where do similarities between modern day Icelanders and the Vikings of old start, and where do they end.

The perception many non-historians have of Vikings is that of barbaric, ruthless murderers and pillagers, perhaps not unjustly given that several Vikings did in fact murder and pillage quite extensively. But this is far from being their sole legacy; Vikings were in fact master seafarers, explorers, craftsmen and traders which left behind a rich cultural legacy.

The term Viking is used collectively for people of the Scandinavian countries; Denmark, Norway and Sweden who made numerous ambitious expeditions from the late 8th century until the second half of the 11th century. With expert shipbuilding skills and an uncanny sense for navigation these explorers traversed as far West as Newfoundland and as far East as Constantinople.

It is not fully known why the Vikings set sail for these dangerous expeditions, some say the there was land shortage in the Scandinavian countries, while others say that the Vikings were fleeing persecution from the ruling class. In the beginning these expeditions were primarily of the pillaging and murderous nature, which perhaps tainted their reputation for all time. But gradually the nature of these expeditions changed into trade and commerce, and soon goods were moving from east to west and back at

While the modern day Icelandic investors obviously did not sail over to England armed to the teeth, wearing horned helmets, the comparison by the English media is understandable.

a greater pace than ever before, which resulted in the massive expansion of trade.

While the modern day Icelandic investors obviously did not sail over to England armed to the teeth, wearing horned helmets, the comparison by the English media is understandable. During the height of the Viking age, ca. 1000, Danish and Norse Vikings



Businessman or barbarian?

controlled large areas of Britain and Scotland. The Danes ruled primarily in the east of England (Danelaw), while Norwegians occupied Scotland and its islands. The Viking age then came to an end in 1066 by the Norman conquest of England when William the Conqueror defeated the English army at Hastings, but the Viking influence does not stop there however, as Normans were descendants of Viking conquerors in Northern France.

When Icelandic investors started buying up renowned English

companies, the comparison was perhaps too obvious. The connotation with violence and bloodshed might be considered unfortunate, but then again it might not be that easy to find a clever historical comparison without bloodshed in European history.

The Vikings possessed qualities which many Icelanders admire; bravery, entrepreneurship, daring and pride and even though the latest "Viking invasion" turned out to be a disaster, these values will still be printed firmly in the Icelandic psyche for years to come.



The Vikings possessed qualities which many Icelanders admire; bravery, entrepreneurship, daring and pride Photos: Ingó



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