

# ICELANDIC TIMES



Tourism, Culture and Business

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**LAND**  
& SAGA





Photos: Copyright 2010 by Tim Vollmer

## Editorial

Much has been written about Iceland in the last few months regarding the now infamous IceSave issue, which concerns the compensaton to the governments of the UK and Netherlands for deposit insurance payouts they made to depositors of the Icesave savings account in their relative countries.

Opinions are as divergent as the matter is complicated – some argue about the repayment terms, others say Icelanders refuse to pay their debts and yet others say the Netherlands and UK are forcing Iceland to pay a debt which is not theirs to pay.

Whatever the result of this complex



issue will be, Iceland will still surely remain the same. Even though the excess and immoderation of pre-financial crisis Iceland has disappeared for the most part, the mountains, glaciers, geysers and waterfalls are still there doing the same thing as they have done for centuries. The hard working and honest people in the tourism industry are still there and are still offering the same quality services as before.

We are proud to present to you some of these hard working individuals and their enterprises – be it horseback riding tours, exciting restaurants, whale watching tours, herbal supplements, modern designs, historical sites or wool products, you can be sure that they have been prepared with great care and integrity.

We wish you a very pleasant stay in Iceland,

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson



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**ICELANDIC  
TIMES**

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Iceland is one of the most active and productive sub-aerial volcanic region on Earth.

The Geology of Iceland

# Land of Contrasts

Iceland is a land of contrasts and diversity where beautifully colored lava, wide expanses of sand, and the power of its waterfalls all interplay. Only a short drive from Reykjavík one finds himself in a vast wilderness where lava formations resemble modern sculpture, bubbling holes of mud with superheated water are found, glaciers fill valleys and geysers explode.

**Geological Hot Spot**

On a geological time scale Iceland is a very young country. It's geological

history reflects environmental development in the North Atlantic region since Miocene times (about 25 million years ago). Iceland is situated astride a divergent plate boundary, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and on top of a hotspot presumed to be fed by a deep mantle plume. The centre of the plume is generally assumed to be located under Central Iceland. At the plate boundary the two major plates, the Eurasia and North America Plates, move apart today with a velocity of about 19 mm/year. The divergence of the ridge started in the north about 150 million years

ago and as the plates moved apart above the Icelandic hotspot, excessive eruptions of lava constructed volcanoes and filled rift valleys. The divergence continues today and is accompanied by earthquakes, reactivation of old volcanoes and creation of new volcanoes. The best place in the world to study divergent plate boundaries is Þingvellir, a short drive from Reykjavík. Þingvellir offers the possibility of observing both faults and tension fissures related to the rifting and drifting of the North American and Eurasian plates away from each other.

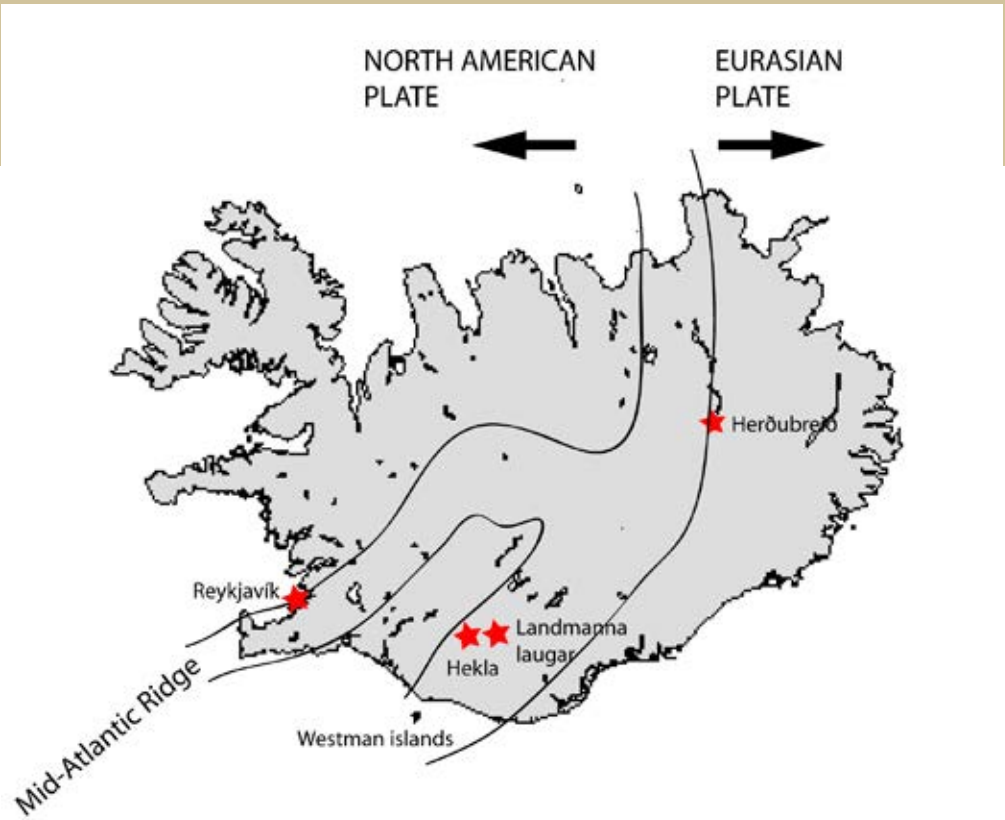
**Volcanic Eruptions Every Five Years**

Iceland is one of the most active and productive sub-aerial volcanic region on Earth, with eruption frequency of  $\geq 20$  events per century. Iceland is home to more than 100 volcanoes and on average, a volcano erupts about every 5th year. Volcanoes define a wide spectrum of forms, ranging from a crack in the ground to the stately stratovolcanoes like the Hekla volcano. Icelanders have learned to live with natural disasters and there is a risk that eruptions of molten lava could take place at any time. Laki's great eruption in 1783 is the largest lava eruption that the world knows of in historical times. Enormous quantities of lava poured out and devastated immense areas of land. Apart from damage caused by the lava, poisonous gases and the ashes

from the eruption led to crop failure and killed the livestock. In the famine that followed one fifth of Iceland's population died. Fortunately for Iceland such cataclysmic events are rare. The latest major eruption to take place was in 1973, when totally without warning a new volcano erupted on the eastern side of Heimaey town in the Westman Islands, south of Iceland. In 1963, to the south of the Westman Islands and to the accompaniment of columns of fire, clouds of ash and rumbles of thunder, a completely new island emerged from the sea. This island is called Surtsey after Surtr, the fire giant from Nordic mythology. Only scientists, keen to discover how new and isolated land is colonized by nature have access to it.

**Melting the Ice Age Away**

When the Ice Age set in three



million years ago, the volcanoes kept on erupting, melting huge cavities which filled with new rock under the ice sheets. After the termination of the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, the land had changed and great mountain ranges had grown from the sub-glacial eruptions. Composed mainly of crumbly rocks, like easily eroded tuff and rhyolite, they are the beautifully colored mountains at Landmannalaugar, the moss-clad cliffs

of Þórsmörk and the grey ridges that transect the northern desert. Where the eruptions were long enough, they broke through the ice and a hard cap of lava formed. After the ice melted, flat-topped "table" mountains appeared, of which Herðubreið is the most striking.

The older parts of Iceland, the east, north and north-west of the island were eroded during the Ice Ages and steep-sided valleys and fjords

were formed. Those mountains are made of many layers of basalts from eruptions that built the foundations of the island.

Because of Iceland's location, on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the island will be in the process of formation, of transformation, its old parts, the east and west carried away by the wind, the sea, the rain, and the ice, while new parts are created by volcanic action.



The beautifully colored mountains at Landmannalaugar. Photos: Steini Fjall





# Reykjavik Maritime Museum

- The tradition of Iceland's most important industry

Visiting a new country provides the opportunity to become acquainted with new cultures, learning about new ways of thinking, even about new ways of survival. Fishing includes for Iceland all those three points. It is a strong motif in both art work and literature, it is always in the minds of Icelanders and has been a significant factor in the survival of the Icelandic nation for centuries. Nowadays it is more important than ever as Iceland's biggest export industry. If you want to learn more about this essential part of Iceland, visit Reykjavik Maritime Museum, which will shed some light on Icelandic fishing life.

The museum is fairly new, was opened in the summer of 2005, in a historic house for the fishing industry as it used to serve as freezing plant for Reykjavik Trawler Company. It is located in the west side of Reykjavik, by the harbor, right at the downtown area. There are always five different exhibitions simultaneously going on, one of them being the Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn, which lies at the museum's separate pier. Óðinn used to be one of Iceland's main guard vessel and served as such for nearly half a century, until the year 2006. Its appearance and interior is nearly exactly the same as when it first came into service in 1960. It had a huge role in the so-called "Cod Wars" against the United Kingdom in the 20th century. The main dispute in the Cod Wars was governance over territorial waters regarding fishing rights. It was also an important rescue vessel. It helped over 200 ships that had malfunctioned, saved the crews of sinking ships two times and three times

those of aground ships. Óðinn was also significant when other transportations were not possible because of impassability, especially in the more isolated areas. The museum has one permanent exhibition called From Poverty to Abundance. Its main emphasis is on showing the development of Icelandic fishing, from a small rowboat industry to a huge trawler industry. It starts with showing the guest how the fishing life revolved for 1000 years around the rowboat. What is possibly most striking about those 1000 years using the rowboat is how poorly the fishermen's conditions were until in the late 19th century. The old oilskin coats were not as efficient a protection against the weather at sea as the ones they have now, in fact they hardly

covered the cold fishermen at all. Those bad conditions have without a doubt toughened up the unfortunate fishermen, in fact the same can be said of the general conditions in Iceland centuries ago. Poverty to Abundance also presents to the guest the rapid development of the trawler fishing in the 20th century but those new techniques played a huge part in making the Icelandic economy prosperous and living standards one of the highest in the world. In the so-called "Pier Hall" one can find the exhibition Arterial for Country and City, which was set up in the occasion of Reykjavik Harbor's 90th anniversary. This exhibition is quite an experience, as the whole hall is more or less made like a pier which one approaches through a historic Icelandic ship

called Gullfoss. The idea is to re-create the atmosphere of the pier and the changes that occurred in the advent of the harbor's construction. The harbor was influential in making Reykjavik the head of everything concerning fishing in Iceland. Additionally there are two temporary exhibitions in The Reykjavik Maritime Museum. One called A Tale told through Relics, but the museum owns about 4000 relics and nearly all of the items have been presented as a gift from many different individuals, companies or institutions. The motive behind this exhibition is to introduce the collection to the visitors but the collection is considerably large for a young museum. The fifth exhibition is The Story of the Sails, which covers the development of sails in Iceland but they were used from the settlement of Iceland until the late 19th century and therefore played a huge role both for fishing and also all sorts of transportation. Many Icelanders nowadays seem to live a life that has become really different from that in the fishing village of former times. Still, fish seems to have integrated deeply into the public mind. Ways to catch it, ways to eat it, why to eat it, eating fish oil, strengthening the immune system; all of this seems to be constantly floating around in everyone's mind. Buried deep down in the mentality of Icelanders, which has strong effect on every child's upbringing. Therefore, if one wants to really understand the functions and the way of thinking in Iceland, it would be wise to visit the Reykjavik Maritime Museum.

Further information is available on [sjominjasafn.is](http://sjominjasafn.is)



Óðinn served as Iceland's main guard vessel for nearly half a century.

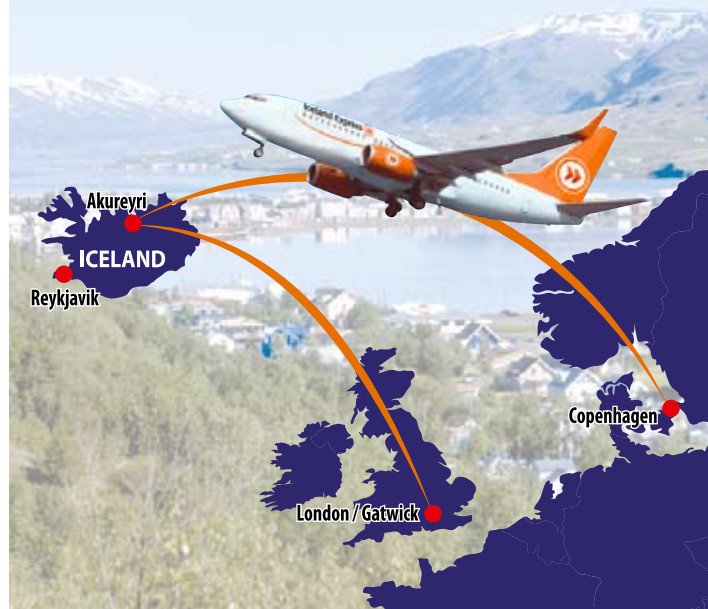


The museum opened in the summer of 2005. Photos: Ingolfur Juliusson

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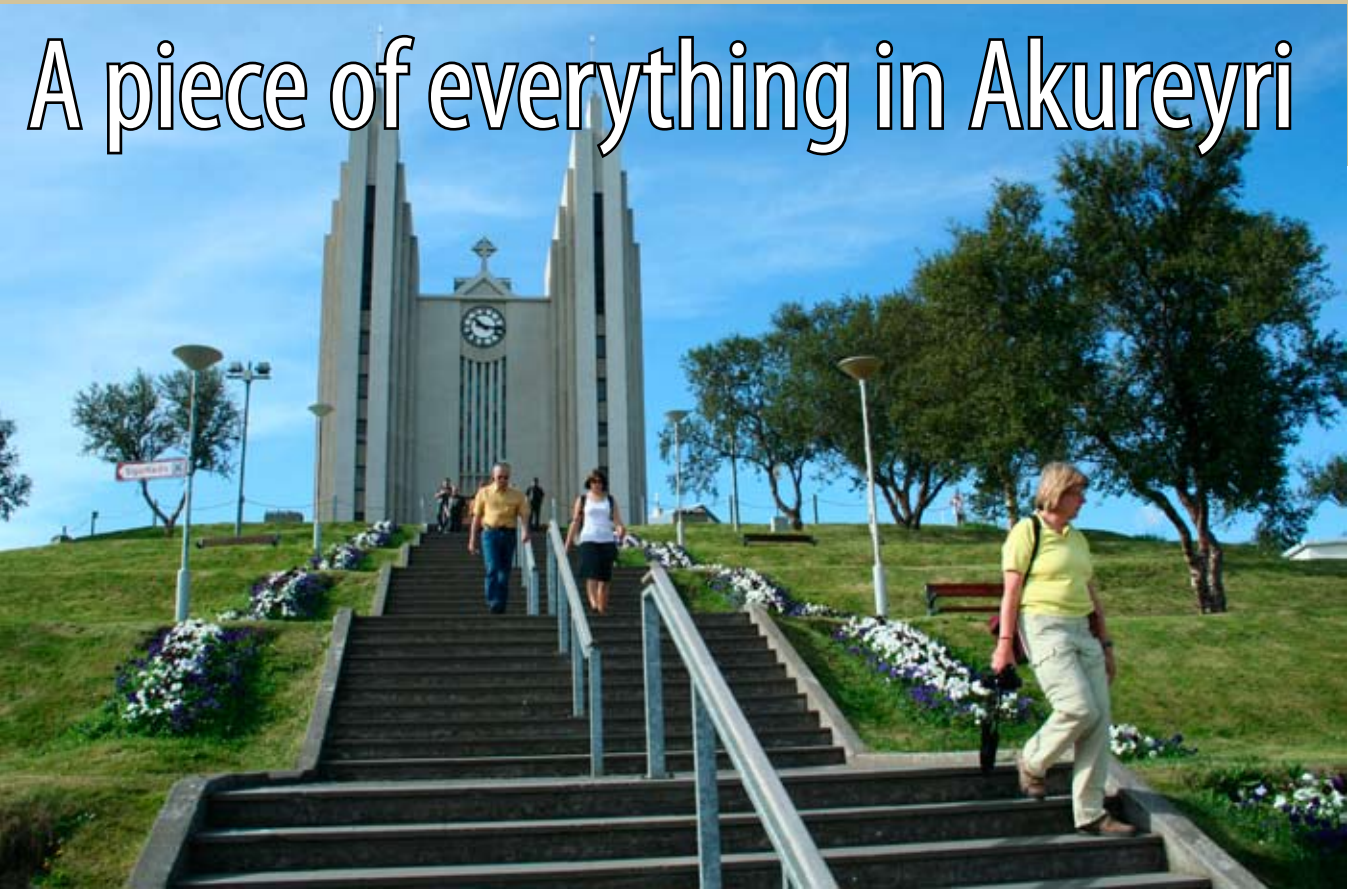


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**If you wish to visit the countryside in Iceland while still being able to choose from a variety of activities and cultural events, Akureyri, the capital of the North, is an essential stop. Upon arrival your eye will surely be caught by many things at once. The ocean view from the bottom of the Eyjafjörður fjord, which ends in a body of sea called “the Pool” by locals, is an impressive sight to behold, balanced by the town panorama which bears the town church as a crown on top of its steepest hill.**

Being the biggest town outside of the



**Akureyri is considered the capital of the North**

Reykjavik area, Akureyri has plenty of cafés, restaurants and activities, but is still small enough to offer the quietude of the countryside. It has become a favourite among tourists, both foreign and Icelandic, striking a balance between a city and a town. The first thing for a visitor to do is probably to take a stroll through the town centre. If you are lucky you might be able to drop in on a live concert at Græni hatturinn, one of Akureyri's best-known cafés, or when hunger sets in, grab a burger or a salad at Bautinn, one of the many restaurants located in the town centre. Finding accommodation should not be a problem, seeing as the town has plenty

of hotels and an ever-growing number of guesthouses (although one needs to book in advance for the summer). The hardcore camper will probably be best at home at the campsite on top of the hill close to the church, right next to the town's excellent swimming pool. The Akureyri swimming pool has for many years been one of the country's most popular pools. It is the place to visit for a refreshing swim, striking a conversation with the locals or taking a nose dive down the pool slide if one is interested. It has been made bigger and better in the last few years, swimming lanes have been added and yet another hot tub, ideal for letting stiff muscles relax after a day of walking around town. In addition, the pool is a great place for children, although you should be prepared to spend some time convincing them that this time on the slide really will be the last one.

#### **A vibrant cultural scene**

For those interested in the arts, Akureyri does not disappoint. The steep hill that runs down from the church into the centre is generally called “Arts' Alley” because of the stunning number of art galleries to be found there, along with the Akureyri School of Visual Arts, some design and handcraft shops, workshops and a coffee house that also serves as a gallery. You will also

find the Akureyri Art Museum in this same street, an institution that has been one of Akureyri's cultural pillars since its foundation in 1993. Despite the museum's policy of keeping its exhibitions diverse, they are both progressive and carefully selected, interesting and provoking. It has a wide and ever-growing collection of older art that is presented alongside the works of new and interesting artists, both Icelandic and foreign.

Every year a culture festival is held in Akureyri, running from mid-June until late August, called the Summer Art Fest. During that time, the town has a colourful schedule of cultural events related to the visual arts, music, theatre, local history and more, taking place all over town. The festival is managed by the Akureyri Cultural Center and any further information on the festival events can be acquired in a booklet published by the center in the beginning of June, available at most cafés and galleries in town, or in the center's office also to be found in the “Arts' Alley”.

The Akureyri Drama Society is the second oldest drama society in Iceland and a well established one. It is also the only professional drama society outside of the capital area. They stage their productions in a beautiful and well preserved old house on the outskirts

The North of Iceland is an area no one should miss while staying in Iceland. The key to that area is Akureyri, being both the cultural center of the North and a vibrant town full of activities and pleasure.

of the town centre, obvious to anyone walking along the coast towards the bottom of the fjord, away from the centre. A night at the theatre can even be interesting although your Icelandic may need some fine-tuning.

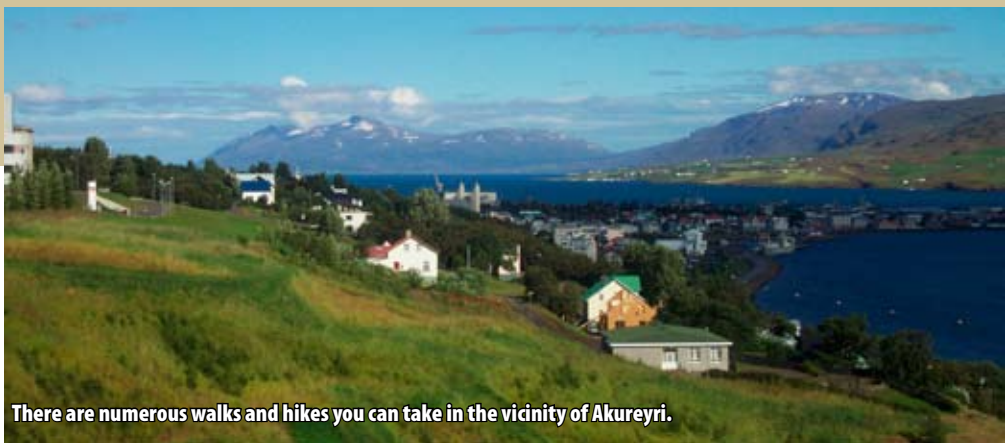
#### **A stroll through history**

Akureyri has a rich and colourful history, not only reflected in its relatively large number of museums, but also in the town itself, especially the older part, situated south of the centre, where you can see beautiful and well-preserved houses from earlier centuries. Akureyri Museum, which specializes in the collection and preservation of artefacts and records relating to the area's cultural history, offers historical walking tours through these older parts of town in Icelandic, Scandinavian and English. Other museums include the Akureyri Museum of Industry, with displays of old machinery and products, the Aviation Museum, which records the history of flight in Iceland, exhibiting numerous aircrafts, and Nonnahús, a museum dedicated to the acclaimed Icelandic author Jón Sveinsson.

Another thing not to be missed is the Botanical Garden, which has in recent years become one of the town's most popular sites. Inside, you can take a look at the garden's wide collection of flora, including specimens of almost every type of plant growing in Iceland and around 7.500 foreign specimens. The idea for the garden was realized by a group of prominent women in 1910 and has grown relentlessly since then, offering locals and tourists a shelter from the hustle and bustle of the town.

#### **Get out of town!**

But the town itself is only half of what the Akureyri area has to offer. The Eyjafjörður fjord is one of Iceland's most popular places for camping, hiking and sightseeing. One of these sights is Kjarnaskógur, a forest near Akureyri. Although trees are a rare



**There are numerous walks and hikes you can take in the vicinity of Akureyri.**

sight in Iceland, you will find them in abundance in this quiet and beautiful area the locals use for picnics and family gatherings. There is also a campsite there, ideal for anyone who prefers the tranquility of the forest to the comfort of the town, and a perfect location for setting up camp at the eve of a long hike. New walking tours have been mapped out recently and a track for mountain-bikes as well, but if ease and quiet is what you are looking for, the forest can also be the best place to sit back and enjoy doing nothing. There are numerous walks and hikes you can take in the vicinity of Akureyri. The local travel societies regularly offer interesting and exciting hikes in most ranges of difficulty. In the summer of 2009 they organized three weeks dedicated to a variety of walks and hikes taken every day of these three weeks and although nobody expects you to walk every one of these days, picking one, two or three of the tours is heavily recommended, seeing as the same thing has been planned for the summer 2010.

Just a few minutes from Akureyri, you can find the northernmost 18-hole golf course in the world, Jaðarsvöllur. Each year the Akureyri Golf Club hosts a most unique golf tournament, the Arctic Open, where the participants play from late afternoon until morning, taking advantage of the midsummer sun shining throughout the night.

#### **The fjord of islands**

The Eyjafjörður fjord is magnificent to look at from the tip of the pier, but it doesn't have to end there. From the part of the harbor closest to the town centre regular boat trips are scheduled every week, the most established ones being those offered by Húni II and Haffari, two boats ready to take you on a fun trip to sea. Húni II offers boat trips where they mix sightseeing with historical guidance to significant sites in the area and since 2008, has also organized round trips to the village of

Hjalteyri, including the boat trip to and fro, a bus trip when on land and a guide to point out the sights worth seeing on the way. It is surely a good way to get to know the countryside from many perspectives. For those that like to fish, a trip on Haffari is recommended, offering both sightseeing and sea angling with professionals.

Another aspect of the Eyjafjörður fjord is the islands, from whom its name is derived, literally meaning “the fjord of islands”. Its most famed treasure is the one called Hrísey, an island of about two hundred inhabitants, known for its beautiful nature, diverse bird life and many pleasant walking trails. Although the island is small, it has a restaurant, a guesthouse, a camping spot, a super market, museums and even a swimming pool with a recently attached info center. A good way to get to know the island is to take one of the ever-popular tractor tours or perhaps to find your way to the lighthouse, located on the highest point of the island, and take in the beautiful view, which is especially breath-taking on a clear summer night.

Grimsey is the northernmost settlement in Iceland with the Arctic Circle running straight through

it. Despite that, the summers are generally mild and the island sports an incredible number of plants and during the summer, up to sixty species of birds nest there, making the island ideal for bird watching. It has two guesthouses and a camping spot, so there is no need to rush off if one does not want to. New walking trails have also been mapped out for the summer of 2010. Regular ferry trips to both Hrísey and Grimsey are carried out from the Dalvík harbor but one can also fly from Akureyri airport to Grimsey. The North of Iceland is an area no one should miss while staying in Iceland. The key to that area is Akureyri, being both the cultural center of the North and a vibrant town full of activities and pleasure. In the end one has to add that it is a town full of lively locals who will welcome you every day of the year, even in the heaviest of blizzards.

For more information regarding everything related to Akureyri, the website [www.visitakureyri.is](http://www.visitakureyri.is) provides a good overview of what the town has to offer, as well as historical facts and more. It also lists additional contacts for further information on activities, events, planning, accommodation, etc.



**The Akureyri swimming pool has for many years been one of the country's most popular pools.**





-Skagafjörður bay

# The Perfect Family Retreat

**After a busy day of activities there is no better way of relaxing than in the thermal pool.**

An often overlooked pearl in Iceland is Skagafjörður bay. With its majestic landscapes and a multitude of activities it is the perfect place to explore the best Northern Iceland has to offer in a family friendly environment. Just off the main road next to the town of Varmahlíð you'll find some peaceful and affordable cottages nestled on a hill overlooking the

vast plains and distant mountains of the charming Skagafjörður valley. A perfect getaway for families and adventure seekers alike where you can relax in a thermal pool under the midnight sun after a busy day of activities.

The cottages are run by the family company Hestasport Activity Tours, who also operate horseback riding tours on location. There are

many different styles of cottages on offer, each equipped with full self-catering kitchen and dining facilities, a bathroom and shower, beds and linen, and a humbly furnished living area. For families and those travelling in large groups this is an ideal place to set up base from where you can explore the Skagafjörður area and beyond.

## Activities for the entire family

Families travelling together are in for a treat as the list of activities in the area is almost endless. First of all it is a must to take at least one horseback riding tour which can be arranged on location. Tours range from one hour for complete beginners up to many days for the adventurous types. White water rafting might sound a bit risky for some but there are family friendly river rafting tours just around the corner, which can also be arranged for on location. Rafting in the awe-inspiring canyons of the glacial rivers in Skagafjörður is an experience you won't soon forget. For those who stay up late midnight rafting under the midnight sun is surely the way to go. Hiking trails are abundant in the area, with up to 1200 m hikes. Also deepsea angling can be arranged for on location. When you've had enough action the areas many museums and historical sites will give you an informative and relaxing day's worth of soaking in the daily lives of past generations in Iceland. One of these sites is Glaumbær, the home to the first ethnic European born in the Americas; Snorri Þorfinnsson. Photography enthusiasts, birdwatchers and nature lovers in general should not miss the chance to visit Drangey

island, whose steep cliffs tower majestically above the surface of Skagafjörður bay. Local folklore says that the island is what is left of two enormous trolls who were trying to cross the bay before daybreak, but failed and were turned to stone along with the cow they had with them. For more information visit [www.riding.is](http://www.riding.is) or contact (+354) 453 8383



When you've had enough action the areas many museums and historical sites will give you an informative and relaxing day's worth of soaking in the daily lives of past generations in Iceland.

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# Pólar Hestar

- Riding in the tranquility of the North

**Pólar Hestar is a family-owned horseback riding company that has its 25 year anniversary this year. It is situated 25 minutes from the capital of the north, Akureyri, in a farm house called Grýtubakki. If one wishes to be able to sit down in the grass and listen to the birds singing without hearing any traffic sounds while on a horse tour, Grýtubakki is the right place to visit, according to Stefán who runs Pólarhestar with his wife, Juliane.**

## Coming back for the Icelandic horse

„Up to 40% of the people coming to us every summer are people that have already taken a tour with us,” says Stefán. „I think the main reason is that they experience something special towards the horses, some special connection, in the midst of nature.” Pólar Hestar offers wide variety of horses, some suitable for those who are just getting to know the Icelandic horse, to others better suited for experienced horseback riders. Stefán emphasizes that they try their best to find the right horse for the right person, making the riding tour much more pleasurable for both the rider and the horse.

Most of Pólarhestar’s riding tours are bigger tours, up to a week, but they also provide travelers in the Akureyri area with shorter riding trips, like daytours. „We haven’t got any scheduled shorter tours, the ones who

are interested can either book online or at their hotels or guesthouses in Akureyri,” says Stefán. The Icelandic horse is often referred to as an “essential servant” in Iceland. The breed is more than 1000 years old and strong regulations are upheld to the utmost concerning the export and



import of the horses. As an example, a horse that has been sold out of the country can never come back. The Icelandic horse is small but strong and, most importantly, easy-tempered which makes the ride easier and more pleasurable.

## All included in the longer trips

„In the longer tours, individual travelers book themselves in a group of 10-15 people. Everything is included in those tours, from a pick-up from the airport or bus-station in Akureyri until we return them after seven days of riding. All food is provided, as well as accommodation, sightseeing and swimming pools,” says Stefán. Pólarhestar has about 15 to 17 longer tours every year according to Stefán, mostly during the summer time. Tours like „Riding with Elves” and „Fascinating North Iceland” offer travelers a ride through the tranquil fjords and mountains of the north. The tours, that usually start on Saturdays, also offer you to see some of the most renowned sightseeing spots in the North, such as the Goðafoss waterfall and the geothermal area around Mývatn. „The main guiding language is English, of course, but we just speak whatever language people can communicate in, my wife speaks five languages for example,” says Stefán. „We try to make the tours personal and fun, that’s the advantage of traveling in a group of 10-15 people.”

## Much less traffic than in the South

On the Grýtubakki farm live about 120 horses and 50-60 of them join the longer trips so they can get a good rest in between having someone on their back. Riders are, most of the time, 5-6 hours per day in the saddle which allows time for other activities such as swimming, sightseeing and of course enjoying the landscape. „We stay overnight either on Grýtubakki or in some farm houses, school houses or country guesthouses during the trip,” says Stefán. „People can always get a hot bath after a day of riding!”

„Our main aim on the tours is to try and be where there is hardly any traffic at all. It is much less enjoyable to be all the time in the next group’s rut. The good thing about taking a riding tour in the North, is that here is much less traffic than in the South,” says Stefán. Those who want to take a ride in the South nearly always follow many of the horseroads there, according to Stefán. „But here we just try follow the sheep tracks.”

“Thus we can enjoy being in nature much more. There are no redundant noises, just us, the horses and the surroundings. At the same time there are a lot of sights here in the North worth to see. Waterfalls, deserted areas, beautiful coastlines like Látraströnd, geothermal areas and even small forrests. Not to mention all the mountains, rocks and fjords,” says Stefán. Should one seek a riding tour in a tranquil environment but still want to have a small and personal group around oneself, a riding tour in the North with Pólar Hestar seems to be a good choice. Visit [www.polarhestar.is](http://www.polarhestar.is) for more information.



-Gentle Giants whale watching

# Hundred and fifty years of experience

**The family owned whale watching company Gentle Giants offers a wide array of sailing tours in Skjalfandi bay giving you the chance to see the earth’s largest mammals face to face. Among other exciting tours on offer are a chance to catch and cook your own fish and a chance to spend a day or two as a genuine Icelandic fisherman.**

Gentle Giants are Located in Husavik on the northern coast of Iceland and sail out to Skjalfandi bay on a daily basis during the summertime. Stefán Guðmundsson, owner and manager of Gentle Giants, descends from a long line of sailors which have passed on 150 years of experience down the line. “This strong family tradition is extremely helpful in ensuring that our customers get the best possible experience in Skjalfandi bay,” says Stefán.

## Promising summer

Stefán is constantly monitoring the bay area, as the flora and fauna are often good indicators of how the summer will turn out. “This summer looks very promising in terms of whale presence in the bay area. The cod and haddock population is already indicating that there will be a lot of action here in the summer,” says Stefán.

Stefán has been whale watching for many years now and gotten to know the whales quite well. “They come to the bay primarily to eat of course, as Skjalfandi is especially plentiful in regards of food, but they have since gotten used to us and to enjoy our company. Sometimes if we’re lucky we’ll just turn off our engines and watch the whales swim and jump around our boats for considerable amounts of time,” says Stefán. The whale watching season starts May 1st and stays until the end of October. Tours depart daily.

## A Day in the Life of a Fisherman

Gentle Giants also gives you the chance of experiencing the ways of Icelandic fishermen. One way is to join the Fishing – catch your own meal tour where you can try your luck in sea angling, although luck will probably not have much impact on your success since Gentle Giants offer a 100% chance of catching something.



The whales have come to enjoy the company of Gentle Giants.

„Because of our experience we can offer this guarantee. We know the bay like the back of our hands and we know exactly where to find the fish,” says Stefán. You can then either have your catch cooked for you at a local restaurant or have it prepared for your own cooking pleasures.

Stefán has also recently started offering visitors to experience the Life of an Icelandic fisherman for a day or two. In the tour you’ll go out to sea with genuine Icelandic fishermen and do whatever they do – you’ll dress, eat and work like a real Icelandic fisherman. Stefán says that although the tour is definitely not for everyone, as being a fisherman is no easy task, it has been met with great appreciation from those brave souls who have tried.

Gentle Giants will also be offering mountaineers and hikers a chance to scale some of the impressive mountains surrounding the bay. Depending on the group’s skills and fitness Gentle Giants will set sail to a remote location where you’ll be given a chance to experience the great outdoors far away from any signs of civilization.

For more information go to [www.gentlegiants.is/](http://www.gentlegiants.is/)



The life of fishermen is no joke, as a famous Icelandic pop song once stated.



The colourful Puffin.



Hólar in Hjaltadalur:

# Nine Centuries in One Hour



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

One of Iceland's most important historical and cultural sites is without a doubt Hólar in Hjaltadalur. From 1106 Hólar was one of two Episcopal sees in Iceland and has been site for learning and education right up to present times with a three department University on site. Through years of meticulous archaeological digs,

historians and archaeologists have been able to put together several important pieces of the lives of Hólar's inhabitants since the 11th century.

The SagaTrail takes you through Hólar's colourful history in less than an hour by foot. In the tour you'll learn about the 36 bishops who sat at Hólar. You'll visit the site of Iceland's

first printing press, which was set up around 1530 by Catholic Bishop Jón Arason, who was later beheaded for his refusal to further the progress of Lutheranism in Iceland. You'll see the oldest stone church in Iceland, built in 1763. You'll visit various excavations sites where archaeologists are still making new discoveries, including the remains of an ancient tunnel which led

The SagaTrail takes you through Hólar's colourful history in less than an hour by foot.

from a church to a residency. Nýibær is a monument to the unique building techniques of Iceland. To insulate from the cold Icelanders would stack the outer walls with rocks and cover the roofs with soil and grass. In Nýibær you'll learn all about how Icelanders kept warm during the harsh winters. Even though the walk only takes an hour it is worth your while to stay for a longer period of time. On location you'll find cosy accommodation options (made up beds, sleeping bag, camping, apartments or summerhouses), a restaurant with some very exciting dishes and a swimming pool.



-Básar Guesthouse in Grímsey

# Where Everybody Know Your Name

For those used to living in metropolitan areas or even small towns a visit to Grímsey will surely change the way you feel about your neighbours. Grímsey is a tiny island of only two square miles, located 25 miles north of Iceland and has a population of less than a hundred. The small population makes sure that everyone has to share the community's responsibilities and that everyone knows everybody.

For example one inhabitant, Ragnhildur Hjaltadóttir, shares the

duties of being the manager of local guesthouse Básar, operator of a small banking branch in Grímsey, airport manager and chairwoman for the local women's club.

"In order to live happily in such a tight knit community you have to be 100% content with yourself and be generous to the community. We have an extremely active social life and there is really no other alternative than to take part in it. We tend to celebrate every occasion we can think of and most people I know from the mainland tell me that the social life here is much more energetic. For example our community centre is sometimes even booked the whole week through and when it's someone's birthday the whole island is invited," says Ragnhildur.

Activities in Grímsey are plentiful. You have the option of going sea angling, which can be arranged for in Básar. You can spend the day bird watching as the island hosts various species of birds. If in doubt where the best spot is simply ask the locals who will gladly point the out for you. Then of course you can just explore the



The island is only two square miles in size.

entire island by foot; see the church, chat with the fishermen at the pier (not all of them speak English though, but they'll welcome you anyway) or drop by at the community centre and see if there is a bingo game or a lottery going on. Ragnhildur says island visitors are uniformly welcomed to the island and commonly offered to join in on whatever events the locals are celebrating. "We like to think of this environment as more personal than in many crowded populations. For example I never leave my guests unattended and I often take guests

staying at Básar for a drive around the island and introduce them to our daily lives" says Ragnhildur. Básar offers 18 beds in eight different rooms, either made up or for sleeping bags. Breakfast is on offer, as well as full meals if requested. The guesthouse is located next to the Arctic Circle and you only have to take three steps outside the guesthouse to cross it. From June 12<sup>th</sup> until August 20<sup>th</sup> flights depart for Grímsey daily at 13:00 in Akureyri. Prior to that time flights depart three times a week. A ferry also departs three times a week (Mon, Wed, Fri) from Dalvík at 9:00.

-Strikið restaurant in Akureyri

# Dine Out in Style with Unforgettable Views

Situated on the top floor of a five story building overlooking the majestic Eyjafjörður bay, the dining experience doesn't get much more impressive than in Strikið restaurant in Akureyri. Strikið is renowned for its diverse menu, friendly atmosphere and last but not least agreeable prices.

Head chef, Róbert Hasler, put special emphasis on creating a diverse menu with quality dishes. You'll find exciting pastas, pizzas and hamburgers as well as delicious steaks and seafood dishes. For an extremely satisfying meal during lunch time you can enjoy the special of the day with soup for only 1,500 ISK. Strikið is open every day from 11.30 a.m.



Strikið is owned by Heba Finnsdóttir and Sigurður Jóhannsson, who have many years of experience in the restaurant business. But they have a special attachment to Strikið, as it is the place where they served as interns and originally learned the trade. To honour their humble beginnings at Strikið they have taken great care to create a friendly and lively atmosphere with good people and quality service. After a night out in Strikið you'll see that their internship really paid off.

Strikið can host up to 140 guests inside, as well as up to 100 guests on the outside balcony. During hot summer days and warm summer nights it is an unforgettable experience to take in the fantastic views overlooking Eyjafjörður bay, the town of Akureyri, the surrounding mountains and out to sea, while you enjoy a delicious meal. For those wondering what Strikið means – it is a reference to Akureyri's rich Danish background. Strikið being the Icelandic word for Strøget, Copenhagen's famous shopping street.

Heba and Sigurður also operate Bryggjan, which makes genuine flame baked pizza's down at the docks. Like true Icelandic entrepreneurs they're also opening a club in Akureyri's old post house, which will be aptly named Pósthúsbarinn, or the Post House Bar.



Friendly and lively atmosphere at Strikið.



Summer days on the balcony.



Strikið emphasises on a diversity and quality.



# Á Hreindýraslóðum Guesthouse In Reindeer Country

Iceland cannot boast of having an especially grand selection of wild land mammals, but many people are not aware of that a sizeable herd of reindeer reside in the East of Iceland. Á hreindýraslóðum (Home to the Reindeer) in Skjöldófsstaðir in Jökuldal valley offers you a chance to spend the night in reindeer country. Á hreindýraslóðum serves as a makeshift museum of the history of reindeer in Iceland, it has a craft store and just a few kilometres away there is a small zoo where you can see a few reindeer up close and personal.

The guesthouse's theme is of course reindeer and everything connected to them. The walls are lined with reindeer horns, skins, reindeer products, pictures and information. Á hreindýraslóðum can accommodate up to 37 people, in either made up beds or sleeping bag.



The reindeer at Klaustursel are quite friendly.

Breakfast is included as well as other meals if requested. Included in the price is access to a small swimming pool and jacuzzi.

## Zoo and Crafts Store just around the Corner

Just 17 kilometres away, in Klaustursel, you'll complete the reindeer theme by

actually seeing them up close. There is one male, one female and a year old calf. Locals say that the male and the calf are very friendly, but the female is very shy, so don't be offended if she seems aloof. To get to Klaustursel just ask the manager in Skjöldófsstaðir. On location is also a crafts store where you'll be able to purchase purses, hats and various trinkets all made out of reindeer skin, hair and horns. For those with qualms about fur products – Icelandic reindeer are hunted responsibly and with government supervision.

## Iceland's Fauna

Reindeer in Iceland are not a native species and were first introduced to Iceland's eco system in the early 17th century. Attempts were made in several places around the country but most did not survive Iceland's extreme climate, except in the Eastern part of Iceland. The stock is now around 4500 animals and efforts are made to keep that size each year. Each year hunting quotas are issued according to both areas and gender; that way it is ensured that the population is spread equally and the ration of males to females supports the breed's renewal. For those who are wondering which are the other wild land mammals found in Iceland, they are: minks, mice, rats, rabbits, all of which arrived with humans at various stages in history. The only native wild land animals in Iceland (if there is such a thing) are the arctic fox and the occasional polar bear who have been known to wander onto the shores of Iceland from time to time. For further information visit [www.ahreindyraslodum.is](http://www.ahreindyraslodum.is)



Hákonarstofa in Skjöldófsstaðir.

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# Seafarers, Pirates and Awesome Landscapes

Reykjanes peninsula was once Iceland's primary sailing route.

Most of Iceland's visitors are greeted by the seemingly outlandish landscapes of Reykjanes peninsula on which the international airport Keflavíkflugvöllur is located. The area is actually home to a plethora of geological phenomena and historical sites, which can all be accessed within an hour drive.

While many of Iceland's visitors are already familiar with the Blue Lagoon

which is located on the Reykjanes peninsula, most are unaware that there is an abundance of hot springs, lava fields, volcanic craters and other related phenomena just around the corner. Reykjanes is where the mid-Atlantic ridge rises above the ocean's surface. The mid-Atlantic ridge is a divergent tectonic plate boundary located along the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, which separates the Eurasian Plate and North

American Plate in the North Atlantic. It is also the longest mountain range in the world. This is why the geological activity is especially vivid in Reykjanes. Be careful however when visiting geothermally active areas and be sure to visit your local tourist office for information on recent developments.

## Abundant Geological Phenomena

Plans are in the making for a Geopark in the area where visitors will be able to spend an extended period of time exploring the area's attractions. Although the park itself is not yet there, its attractions surely are and yours to find and enjoy. You can find extraordinary shapes in Háleyjabunga and Valahnjúkur mountains, hot springs of all sorts, natural pools, an exhibition on harnessing the earth's awesome power in Reykjanesvirkjun, a sandy beach in Sandvík or you can cross a bridge over the tectonic plates to name a few. Birdwatchers are in luck as Krútsvíkurberg is home to one of Iceland's largest bird populations. Hafnarberg is also a beautiful bird watching site. In Garðurinn town there is currently being put up a bird watching centre, there is also a bird watching centre in Sandgerði and in Garðskagsvíti lighthouse. All these sites are relatively easy to access. If you have your own car you can simply drive up to most of them and buses depart to most of Reykjanes' towns from Keflavík Airport during the summer. Most tour companies

in Reykjavík also offer guided tours around Reykjanes during the summer.

## Discovering New Worlds

Reykjanes is also home to several historical sites, including a battle which started an international dispute between Denmark, Germany and England in the 15th century. Reykjanes was once the primary location for the fishing industry where a large part of the population would travel to and bring fish back to their homes. A travel book from the early 18th century notes that there were around 2000 people in Njarðvík during the fishing season, while Njarðvík's inhabitants were likely around 200. Landmarks from Reykjanes' fishing days are abundant throughout the peninsula. A walk along the coastline in local community Garðurinn for example is a rewarding effort. Along the way you'll see a multitude of sites where local fishermen would push their boats out to sea and then pull them



Real Vikings in the Viking World museum in Reykjavík.

Plans are in the making for a Geopark in the area where visitors will be able to spend an extended period of time exploring the area's attractions.

back to land full of fish. You can even see the indentation in the rocks where the boats were pulled to land. Most of these sites have been marked with informative signs detailing the area's history," says Kristján Pálsson, director of the Reykjanes Tourism Board. Be sure not to miss the exact replica of a 9th century Viking ship in Viking World museum in Reykjavík. "It is quite impressive to see how our forefathers managed to make ships capable of traversing the open seas and back. These were the sort of ships that were used to discover the New Worlds; America, Iceland and Greenland, so it is definitely not to be missed," says Kristján. In Hafnar you'll find the remains of what is thought to have been the homestead of Herjólfur Bárðarsson, the great-grandfather of Bjarni Herjólfsson, the first European to discover America.

The waters around Reykjanes served as a common sailing route, which is evident by its large number of lighthouses on the peninsula. There are 11 lighthouses scattered around Reykjanes, including both the tallest and oldest lighthouse in Iceland - Garðskagsvíti (28m) and



Kristján Pálsson, director of the Reykjanes Tourism Board

## International Crisis

At least two of these shipwrecks were no accidents though. In the 15th century there was good business to be had trading fish in Iceland and the tradition at that time was that the first foreign ship to arrive in the spring would retain exclusive rights to trading



with the Icelanders. In March 1532 a 60 ton ship from the Hanseatic League (a Germanic economic alliance) docked in Bäsendar on the western side of Reykjanes peninsula, which was particularly early according to Kristján. „Only a few days later a 150 ton English trading ship appeared and wished to dock as well and wanted to do some trading alongside the Hanseatic traders. And then another 120 ton English trading ship appeared. After the Hanseatic traders refused to allow the Englishmen to dock, the first English ship then tried to board the Hanseatic ship, but the Germans had cannons and fought the English ship back, which then crashed in the shallows. The second English ship also suffered defeat, but were allowed to retreat after having surrendered their weapons and paid ransom. The other surviving Englishmen then surrendered and went to Grindavík. In total nine sailors lost their lives in the battle, two Germans and seven Englishmen.

The story is far from over there however. The English traders quickly became unpopular in Grindavík, as they were uncompromising in behaviour and would steal stockfish from the Germans and Danes. They would also do the fishing in their own boats with their own crews, whereas others would trade with the Icelandic fishermen. The Danish, German and Icelanders then put together a militia and drove the English out with considerable bloodshed, where 15 Englishmen lost their lives.

This caused a massive international conflict which seemed to be heading

towards a world war, but the English king Henry VIII and Danish monarchs Kristján III and the Germans figured out a solution before it came to that," says Kristján. These historic events are documented throughout the area and of course especially in Grindavík, where the battle was fought.

## Pirates on the Horizon

These events were likely long since settled by the time a foreign ship was

seen coming into Grindavík in 1627. The ship turned out to be a pirate ship originating either from Morocco or Algeria. The pirates pillaged and plundered Grindavík, abducting twelve people who were later sold to slavery in Algeria. Be sure to check out the historical sites and monuments detailing these vicious pirate attacks, there you can even find out what happened to those unfortunate souls who were sold to slavery.

Go to [www.visitreykjan.es.is](http://www.visitreykjan.es.is) for more



Be sure not to miss the exact replica of a 9th century Viking ship in Viking World museum in Reykjavík.



You can cross the continental divide on Leif the Lucky's Bridge



-Thorvaldsen – bistro – bar – grill

# Your home away from home

Located across from the parliament house in Austurvöllur is a cosy bistro-themed restaurant where you can enjoy a pleasant meal during the day and party with the locals throughout the night.

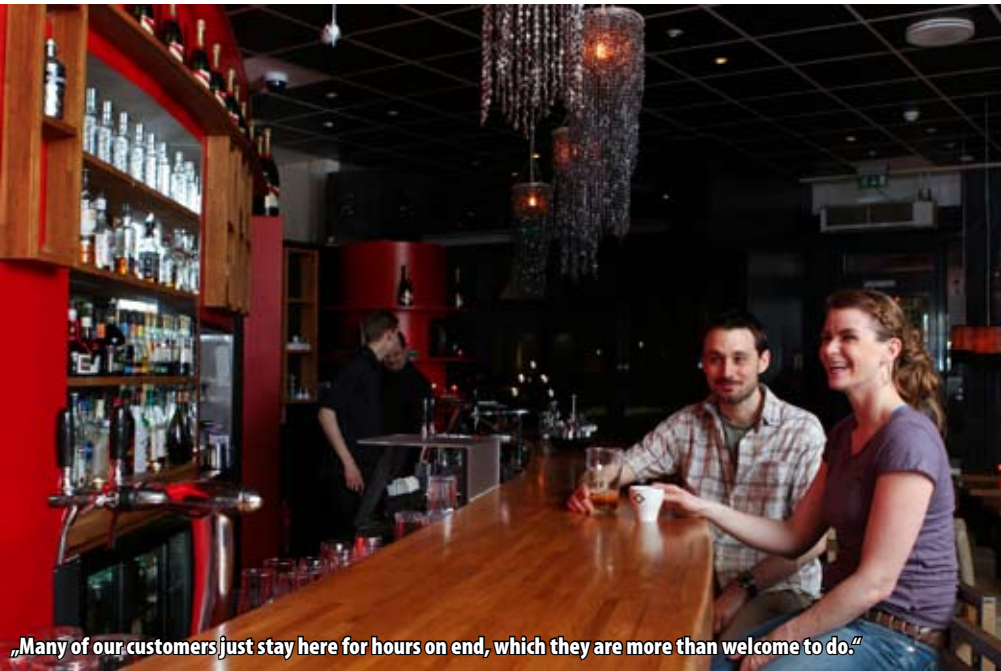
Thorvaldsen is owned and run by three sisters who take equal part in management and service to customers. Kolbrún Yr Árnadóttir, one of the owners, says that they put special emphasis on creating a relaxed atmosphere and giving customers a personal and pleasant experience in Thorvaldsen.

### Prepare to be surprised

Thorvaldsen offers a wide array of snacks and meals, including steaks and pizzas. Be sure to try the Jungle Curry or their selection of salad. „All our dishes are prepared on location and garnished with great care. Because we operate a bistro people often don't expect a great deal in terms of quality but are almost always pleasantly surprised. One person came in here asking for direction to a steak house and we told him to look no further and he couldn't believe the quality of the steak and stayed here from three in the afternoon until nine in the evening“

### Stay all day

„We really want people to feel comfortable here and stay for as long as they want. We're never rushing to clear tables because we value the customers enjoyment much more than squeezing in as many customers as we can. The music is pleasant and never too loud to hold up a conversation. We try to keep



„Many of our customers just stay here for hours on end, which they are more than welcome to do.“

an experienced and pleasant staff on hire and we even take part in the service ourselves. This is why most of our customers keep coming back and for so many people Thorvaldsen is a home away from home“, says Kolbrún.

The members of parliament and officials at the town hall are among those who frequent Thorvaldsen. After a long day of speeches and meetings a few rounds in Thorvaldsen probably sound mighty tempting. Among others of Thorvaldsen's celebrity clientele is a member of the cast of the NBC hit series the Office who dined in Thorvaldsen four times during a five day stay.



The nights at Thorvaldsen are particularly rousing.

### Wild nights

The nights at Thorvaldsen are particularly rousing and enjoyable. The crowd is usually in the thirty something region and always ready to dance. Check out salsa nights every other Thursday and dance the night away. Thursday nights also has special offers on Mohitos.



### Fun in the sun

Thorvaldsen's location is also a major attraction – overlooking the Icelandic parliament and Austurvöllur, Reykjavik's most crowded square during the summertime. „Many of our customers just stay here for hours on end viewing the street life. During the summer we offer outside tables and that's when things get really hectic. Austurvöllur comes alive and people are out enjoying the summer weather by sipping a cold one or having a light snack“, says Kolbrún.

For those who are looking for some privacy Thorvaldsen offers two

lounge areas which can be reserved for the night. The rooms can contain 30 and 55 seated persons and can be conjoined for one hall containing 85 seated persons. If you buy meals for the guests the room charge is for free. For those wondering who the place is named after – it is Bertel Thorvaldsen, a Danish/Icelandic neoclassical sculptor whose works can be found throughout Europe. For more information go to [www.thorvaldsen.is/](http://www.thorvaldsen.is/)



One of the oldest houses in Reykjavík is located in Aðalstræti 10, where design shop Kraum currently offers unique design by over 200 designers. It is very fitting that Icelandic products are being sold in this historical building since it was originally built to promote Icelandic production.

In the mid 17th century there was very little production going on in Iceland and what we now know as Reykjavík was little more than farmlands and empty fields. An entrepreneur called Skúli Fögeti wanted to change that and had several factories set up in what became Reykjavík's first street. Aðalstræti 10 is now the only house left of Skúli's enterprise and therefore one of the oldest houses in Reykjavík. After the factory was shut down the building was changed to a residence, where some of Iceland's most prominent citizens have stayed, including Jón Sigurðsson, the leader of the 19th

century Icelandic independence movement.

### The perfect fit

When a housing conservation committee gained control of the house and started renovations it was decided that it was desirable for such an historical building to house a business connected with its origin. Halla Bogadóttir, manager of Kraum, was at that time looking for a venue for an ambitious business idea. "I felt that me and many of my colleagues were too scattered across town and for

many operating a business was taking too much time from the design part. We wanted to find a venue in which we could present the best Icelandic designers have to offer in one place and when Aðalstræti 10 came our way we knew it was a perfect fit. We wanted to put special emphasis on Icelandic products and products with a close connection to Iceland's culture, nature and history. What we didn't want was to sell souvenirs mass produced in different continents. So in a way we feel as if we are carrying the torch for Skúli Fögeti," says Halla.



Hang your clothes on Icelandic wood and rocks.

### Be Profound like Halldór Laxness

As a part of that effort Kraum started a competition where designers were invited to come up with products in the spirit of one of Iceland's most prestigious painters, known simply as Erró. "The results were incredible and we now have on offer many of the items which came about from the contest at reasonable prices," says Halla. One of these is the winning piece; a writing board in the shape of a caricature Erró made of Iceland's most beloved author Halldór Laxness. Halldór, a Nobel Prize winner, was considered extremely witty and eloquent so whatever notes you write on the speech bubble emanating from his mouth will surely automatically become profound. This year a new competition has started and this time it is the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson who sets the motif. "Last time we wanted to focus on more practical designs, but this time around we're expanding and calling for clothing and ornamental items as well.



A helpful reminder of excess and immoderation is this plate, which show you the Icelandic consumption pattern while you eat. Photos: Ingolfur Juliussen

We wanted to put special emphasis on Icelandic products and products with a close connection to Iceland's culture, nature and history.

We're very excited to see the results, which will be made clear on May 1st, the same day of the summer opening of Ásmundarsafn," says Halla. During the so-called DesignMarch Kraum will be especially crowded. From March 18-21 six new designers will display their works in Kraum. During this event Reykjavík is expected to be full of interesting lectures and exhibitions reflecting the diversity in Icelandic design. For more information, visit [kraum.is](http://kraum.is)



"Elephants of the North" Highly original whale sculptures made out of glass.



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# Vatnajökull



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◀ Climbers on Hvannadalshnúkur, Iceland's highest summit  
Hafragilsfoss, 2 km downstream from Dettifoss ▼



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▲ Reindeer in the northeastern highlands  
Laki craters ▶



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Visit our website [www.vatnajokullpark.is](http://www.vatnajokullpark.is) to find more information  
on Vatnajökull National Park.

PORT hönnun





It is estimated that one of every eight people on Earth don't have ready access to clean drinking water and that millions of people die from water-related diseases every year.

# Water is life

-Icelandic water company Brúarfoss meets growing global demand for fresh drinking water

An Icelandic water company, Brúarfoss ehf., has invested in an innovative business idea - to export fresh drinking water in large bulk across the globe. You may wonder what is so special about that in today's world when you can buy an "authentic Arctic ice cube" to drop into your "oxygenated" beverage. Well, bulk water shipping is innovative because of one simple fact; filling a super tanker with drinking

water and transporting it across the globe has neither been technically possible nor a viable business model. That is, until now. Fresh water would go stale and/or bacterial infections could jeopardize the quality or make it unsuitable to drink and even smaller options such as freight containers were also a risk. The combination of two factors have transformed this idea into reality; A growing demand for fresh drinking

water worldwide, and a new processing and storage technology developed by Brúarfoss. It is now possible to transport water over longer distances while maintaining its freshness and quality. And as for the business side of the issue; fresh Icelandic water is in demand everywhere.

**Unbridled Access to Clean Water**

Traditionally speaking, Icelanders have always enjoyed an unbridled access to

clean water. The country is in the path of just about every North-Atlantic low pressure system providing ample precipitation which subsequently contributes to either ground water, rivers and streams, or glacial reserves. Iceland's water sources are typically self-sustainable and for the most part accessible to the local population. There is so much water in Iceland that most of it runs unharnessed into the sea and has for centuries. The average Icelander hasn't really given it much thought, other than that is just the way it has always been. After all, it is just water. Not anymore. Icelanders have realized their water has become both a valuable and a coveted commodity to the outside world. The question is

how to harvest it, package it and bring it to a global market without it losing quality and taste? Over the last decade or two, Iceland has exported bottled water to consumer markets in the US and the EU. Many exporters failed, perhaps because they thought such a pristine product would sell itself and be exempt from the rules of market access and distribution. They were wrong, of course, but that did not deter others from trying. However, a new world order with a growing demand for drinkable water has changed the rules of the game. With growing environmental concerns and new economical provisions such as carbon footprint concerns, recycling requirements and transport costs, the focus is changing away from the small

to the large. The new buzz word for Icelandic water is ibulki and a lucrative market for large water transports has emerged.

**Growing Global Demand**

It is estimated that one of every eight people on Earth don't have ready access to clean drinking water and that millions of people die from water-related diseases every year. Economical factors, infrastructure or the lack of it, and of course politics determine if these areas are candidates to receive bulk water transports or not. The list of potential buyers is long. Even developed nations which are faced with purifying or recycling their municipal water to satisfy an ever-growing demand are potential bulk customers. The quality

and taste of Icelandic water makes it a tempting alternative. Brúarfoss acquired the rights to export water from the West-Fjords of Iceland. The company plans to employ conventional freight containers filled with water which will be delivered directly to the buyer. Once empty, the containers are returned to Brúarfoss to be filled again. The manufacturing and shipping facility has a capacity to export shipments of water within the Western hemisphere or to the Middle East on relatively short notice. Shipments can also be deployed to drought affected areas, as well as in response to natural disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti. In the near future an even larger transport capacity can be achieved

Dynjandi in Arnarfjörður. Photo: Steini Fjall

using super tankers which can be hooked up to a municipal water grid, or smaller customers such as hotels, or even refugee camps. The company projects a growing need for bulk water transports in the decades to come as the supply of fresh water becomes ever more scarce. Brúarfoss is working with a number of private and public organizations offering alternative fresh water solutions. Interest grows as governments worldwide, the World Health Organization and the United Nations have begun to address this as a global problem.

For more information, visit [www.brufarfoss.com](http://www.brufarfoss.com)



# The Kitchenware revolution on display

Although just over a year has passed since Icelanders revolted against the then ruling government by banging on pots and kettles outside the parliament house, The National Museum of Iceland has already opened an exhibition displaying various artifacts from the period.

When Iceland's banking system came crashing down in late 2008 Iceland's citizens took to the streets armed with kitchen utensils which later supplied the revolution with its name – The Kitchenware Revolution. The protests were heated and soon escalated to conflicts with the police and burning of public property. Although successful to the extent that the residing government was overthrown many Icelanders differ in opinion regarding the protests.

### Tear gas and peace ribbons

According to Helga Vollertsen, from the National Museum of Iceland, the exhibition does not seek to decree on whether the protests were righteous or not, but rather to portray the dividing opinions. „We are now in the process of collecting items from the protests because we fear valuable historical evidence might otherwise be lost. So far we have received a wide range of



Protest signs, paint splattered police uniforms, pots and pans from the protests in Iceland.

donations from participants in the protests. But we are also asking if there are perspectives which are not represented in the exhibition – if the story is fully told. We have a large roll of paper on which visitors are free to express their views of the period. It has been very interesting to see that in some cases dialogues are formed where one party claims the protests were the greatest thing that could have happened and the other expresses shame and resentment towards the protesters,” says Helga. Among the items on display are orange pieces of cloth which some of the

protesters donned to object to violence against police officers, empty tear gas capsules, police uniforms and shields with paint splattered over them, various protests signs and of course pots, ladles and metal candy containers beaten to shreds.

### Knitting nation

Among other exhibitions is Embroidery of Life which displays the works of Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir which were inspired by Old Icelandic manuscripts from the 15th century. The exhibition consists mostly of extremely detailed tapestries some of which Guðrún

labored over for up to a decade. The museum will simultaneously exhibit Icelandic textile works from the 17th, 18th and 19th century, which partly inspired Guðrún in her works. Helga says that since Iceland has been rediscovering knitting and sewing and their cultural legacy in recent years these exhibitions come up at exactly the right time. Then there is of course the permanent exhibition Making of a Nation - Heritage and History in Iceland, which is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.



In Álafoss you'll find all the wool products you'll ever need.

-Álafoss Wool Store

## The birth of Iceland's Wool Industry

The birth of the Icelandic wool industry took place just outside of Reykjavík at the end of the 19th century when the Álafoss wool factory was started in Kvosin in Mosfellsbær. Today the original factory building houses the Álafoss wool store where you can find almost any wool product you can think of and explore the history of this important industry in Iceland's history.

The Álafoss wool store offers all sorts of wool products, ranging from traditional wool sweaters, whole sheepskins, wool caps and mittens to high-end wool designs. Guðmundur Jónsson, owner of Álafoss, says his customers are often surprised by their low prices and that some even think that the products might be of inferior quality. “This however could not be further from the truth. All our products are made from the finest possible materials and we have a much wider selection than most stores. We try to keep our prices low since we are located a bit outside of town, but once you get here you can find everything you need for reasonable prices,” says Guðmundur. In addition to wool products Álafoss offer a wide selection of souvenirs, including baseball caps, refrigerator magnets and t-shirts, to name a few.

### Artist haven

The Álafoss wool store is located in Mosfellsbær just 20 minutes outside Reykjavík. The old factory house is located just below the river Varmá which was used to clean the wool and since the river was warm it was also used for swimming lessons. For decades the surrounding area has served as a haven for artists and all creative types, so it was no surprise that the internationally known Icelandic band Sigur Rós located their studio there a few years ago.



The Álafoss wool store honours the area's rich artistic history by exhibiting works from local artists in Mosfellsbær. Kvosin still houses a few

creative ventures: Palli the knife maker, a local legend, designs and makes his knives right next to the Álafoss factory outlet. Also be sure to visit Ásgarður, a

Among Álafoss' satisfied customers are prominent world leaders such as Hillary Clinton and Ronald and Nancy Reagan, whose thank-you notes are displayed in the store. Not to forget the world's first female head of state, Iceland's own Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.

workshop where disabled people make some extraordinary toys, furniture and other wood crafts. Ásgarður is open for visitors week days from 9 am to 4 pm.

### Wool museum

The Álafoss Wool store also serves as a makeshift museum for Iceland's wool industry. Although not an official museum it houses some very interesting items from the early days of wool production in Iceland. If you look closely you'll see that some of the store items are displayed on old looms and other knitting machines. Be sure to examine the sock-making machine from 1930 - an incredibly complex machine with a seemingly infinite amount of features. On the walls you'll see black and white photographs of the old factory and the people who worked there. Among Álafoss' satisfied customers are prominent world leaders such as Hillary Clinton and Ronald and Nancy Reagan, whose thank-you notes are displayed in the store. Not to forget the world's first female head of state, Iceland's own Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. For more information and home delivery go to [www.alafoss.is](http://www.alafoss.is)



# brúarfoss

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The Lobster House

# A Night Your Taste Buds Won't Forget

In 170 year old house in downtown Reykjavik you'll find one of Iceland's most popular restaurants – The Lobster House. With over 17 years of experience in preparing the Icelandic lobster, a night out in the Lobster House is an experience your taste buds won't regret.

## All Icelandic Materials

The Lobster House takes pride in using only Icelandic materials (when possible) and chief among those is of course the Icelandic lobster, which Head chef, Ottó Magnússon, says is one of the best raw materials a chef can work with. "Its formal name is actually langoustine and is much smaller than the giant lobsters most people are used to. But I have found that the giant lobster doesn't come anywhere near the langoustine when it comes to taste and texture," says Ottó.

The Lobster House's staple dish is the Grilled Icelandic lobster with garlic, which has been on the menu since the beginning and never fails to satisfy. But don't be afraid to try the various other lobster dishes, after all it's called the Lobster House.

## Try Something New

The Lobster House does not limit itself to lobster dishes and has a wide variety of exciting all-Icelandic dishes. One of those is the classic Icelandic dish - the salted cod. Ottó however emphasises that the salted cod found in the Lobster House is not the mass produced kind you'll find in the store. "I actually scoured the country trying to find someone who prepares it like in the old days and I finally found an old man who is probably among the last to still do it. It is a complicated process which takes over a year, but in return it is truly a genuine Icelandic dish", says Ottó. You'll also find Minke Whale dishes of various sorts on the menu, but Ottó says that with material of such high quality it is best served sashimi, i.e. raw.

## Personal Touch

For those who enjoy a succulent steak, try out the horse tenderloin instead of beef. „You can't really get a more tender steak than a horse tenderloin. It is a very delicate art to prepare it but when done right there is no steak more tender“, says Ottó. Another intriguing dish is the wild goose

with Icelandic crowberry dressing. The cuisine experience can't get any more personal than this particular dish since some of the geese were



„The giant lobster doesn't come anywhere near the langoustine when it comes to taste and texture.“ Photos: Ingolfur Juliussen

„The giant lobster doesn't come anywhere near the langoustine when it comes to taste and texture.“

actually hunted by Ottó himself and the crowberries picked by the Lobster House staff.

The Lobster House's interiors are of the classic sort, suited for a relaxed and pleasant evening. To complete the theme of Icelandic materials, the Lobster House only plays Icelandic music while you enjoy your meal. For those who like to take their meals early, or are on a tighter budget, The Lobster House offers excellent deals in the lunch hour.

The Lobster House is located in Amtmannstigur 1, Reykjavik.

For more information visit [www.humarhusid.is](http://www.humarhusid.is)



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-Reykjavík – the modern Icelanders food and saga tour

# Experience the Unique and Authentic Icelandic way of life

Icelanders are known by some for their entrepreneurial spirit and hard working morals. One of those is the jack-of-all-trades, Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson, or Chef Tyffi, who simultaneously works as a shop keeper, tour guide and an expert chef. Tyffi latest enterprise, the *Reykjavík – the modern Icelanders food and saga tour*, is a unique offer for you to experience the unique and authentic Icelandic way of life.

Tyffi will of course be both your tour guide and chef in an unforgettable afternoon in Reykjavík. Tyffi will pick you up to your hotel in a comfortable minibus around three in the afternoon. He will then tell you all about the settlement and how Reykjavík and its suburbs were built, as well as showing you many of its important historical sites. This is a unique opportunity to catch a glimpse of the real Icelandic reality.

## Gourmet stops

While learning about Reykjavík and its inhabitants you'll be making several stops along the way to



Tyffi preparing a gourmet meal for the evening.

prepare for the ultimate gourmet food experience. You'll be making a stop in a cheese shop where you'll meet a woman who Tyffi claims is both an expert in mysticism and knows all there is to know about Icelandic cheese. She'll make sure you won't be leaving there without the best Iceland has to offer when it comes to cheese. You'll also be making a stop at a gourmet butchers shop where Tyffi will find the perfect

steaks for the evening, cross your fingers and hope the butcher has some quality horse tenderloins. No gourmet evening in Iceland is complete without seafood, so Tyffi will take you to a genuine Icelandic fish salesman, where hopefully the catch of the day will be no more than a few hours old. A stop in the liquor store is also included, but you'll have to purchase your own wine.



Tyffi's IceFin store has a wide variety of outdoor clothing and gear.

## Dine Like an Icelander

The tour will be concluded with an invitation to dine in of Chef Tyffi's own home, nestled within the lively suburb of Kópavogur, where it is said the elves are still the oldest inhabitants. Using the groceries bought over the day Chef Tyffi will prepare a gourmet meal while learning firsthand how Icelanders lived off the land developing timeless recipes from ocean delicacies and mountain lamb. Tyffi will offer several samples of traditional Icelandic cuisine and who knows, he might give you a shot of the infamous Icelandic Brennivín vodka as an appetizer. After a satisfying evening Tyffi will then drive you back to your hotel. As this is a one man operation Tyffi is able to offer all this for a very reasonable price, only 16 thousand ISK, including both the tour and the food.

For more information and booking visit [www.reykjavik-cuisine.net](http://www.reykjavik-cuisine.net)

When not guiding or cooking, you'll find Tyffi in his small but comfortable store, IceFin, in Nóatún 17. You'll find a wide range of outdoor and recreational clothes and equipment for very agreeable prices. The selection includes both Icelandic and international designs, hunting gear, fishing rods, footwear and much more.

For more information visit [www.icefin.is](http://www.icefin.is)



Tyffi will pick you up at your hotel and drop you off after a satisfying evening.



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-SagaMedica Produces Herbal Supplements based on Ancient Viking Traditions

# Angelica – Iceland’s Most Popular Medicinal Herb

Out of Iceland’s many medicinal herbs, Angelica archangelica is the one most deeply rooted in the country’s history. Iceland’s founding fathers held this potent plant in high esteem and used it for various medicinal purposes. Through research, Icelandic natural products developer SagaMedica has discovered that the Vikings knew what they were doing. The company now offers a product line which addresses various health issues, ranging from frequent urination and dementia to cold and flu prevention.

**Modern Research Explains Traditional Use**

SagaMedica’s director of research, Dr. Sigmundur Gudbjarnason, is a professor emeritus of biochemistry and former president of the University of Iceland. He has studied Icelandic flora extensively since 1992. As any good researcher would do, he initially started looking into the matter out of plain curiosity. Since Icelandic herbs hadn’t been widely studied in his particular field, Dr. Gudbjarnason was a skeptic at first. However, the historical evidence was too compelling to ignore and he sought to explain it with scientific methods. It is probably no coincidence that Iceland’s highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, is named after angelica, or “hvönn”, as Icelanders call it. Other places named after angelica can be found throughout the country suggesting that Iceland’s settlers held the plant in high regard.



SagaMedica’s scientists have identified many bioactive compounds in angelica which are widely thought to serve a purpose in preventing diseases, says Perla Björk Egilsdóttir, biochemist and marketing manager of SagaMedica. Photo: Ingolfur Júlíusson

Written accounts of angelica use are also plentiful, including a 150-year-old medical book, which is still in use today and details how angelica may be used for medicinal purposes. Iceland’s oldest law book, Grágás, written in the early 12th century, even has a law strictly forbidding the theft of angelica

plants. Those who could not resist the temptation of snatching a few plants from their neighbour’s backyard faced the punishment of being outlawed.

**For Viking Health**

SagaMedica’s research even included a field trip to Greenland, where the settlement of Erik the Red was examined. It turned out that angelica found around Erik’s farm was similar to angelica growing in Iceland, but



unlike the one growing further north in Greenland. This opens up debate on whether Erik might have taken angelica with him from Iceland and planted it around his new home in Greenland. This also poses another interesting question; Did Erik’s son, Leif, bring Icelandic angelica with him on the epic voyage during which he discovered America? Although the Vikings had, rather understandably, no possible means of proving the usefulness of the angelica plant, SagaMedica’s researchers have all but nailed it on the head. They have identified many bioactive compounds in angelica which are widely thought to serve a purpose in preventing disease. SagaMedica currently produces four different products; SagaPro, SagaMemo, Voxis and SagaVita. These are used for frequent urination in men, memory improvement, for sore throats and cold prevention, respectively. SagaMedica is planning many new products and is working with other manufacturers in Iceland to bring natural products of excellent quality to foreign markets.

**Angelica Through Your Mail Slot**

SagaMedica’s supplements can be bought in Icelandic pharmacies, health stores, supermarkets and in the Duty Free store at Keflavik airport. Most of them can also be purchased online at [www.sagamedica.com](http://www.sagamedica.com). SagaMedica ships its products worldwide and they are designed and packed for easy delivery through your mail slot. Attaining and maintaining Viking health for everyday battles has never been easier.



The tranquil and family friendly environment of Arnarstapi.

-Hótel Framnes

# Explore the Mysteries of Snæfellsnes Peninsula

The Snæfellsnes peninsula is home to some of Iceland’s most remarkable natural and historical phenomena. Situated in the middle of the peninsula, Hotel Framnes is the perfect place to set up base in a tranquil and family-friendly environment while you visit the peninsula’s many attractions. Snæfellsjökull Glacier is of course the most famous, but is far from the only

attraction Snæfellsnes peninsula has to offer - you can soak in the area’s rich history and folklore, visit its peaceful fishing villages, go horseback riding, sea angling bird watching or explore some of adjacent Breiðafjörður bay’s hundreds of islands.

**Just Like Home**

Hotel Framnes is itself an old fisherman’s hostel, which has



Splendid views just outside the doorstep.

been renovated into a cosy and family-friendly hotel. There are 29 comfortable rooms, each with a private bathroom, wireless internet and television. Families can find rooms accommodating up to six persons and children’s beds can be arranged. After a busy day of activities you can unwind in Hotel Framnes’ hot tub and sauna. The hotel restaurant offers gourmet seafood as its speciality and takes great pride in offering fresh fish every day caught by local fishermen. The hotel is located in Grundarfjörður village, surrounded by the “Hell’s Gate” mountain range, Mt. Kirkjufell and splendid ocean views. You’ll find most services available in Grundarfjörður, including a grocery store and a swimming pool. The management and staff are known for their friendly and helpful demeanour. They are, of course, experts on the area and can give you invaluable advice for your travels. For example, it is not much fun to go hiking in ferocious winds so be sure to ask for help in choosing the best day for each activity, as the weather in Iceland can change drastically within a few hours.

After a busy day of activities you can unwind in Hotel Framnes’ hot tub and sauna. The hotel restaurant offers gourmet seafood as its speciality and takes great pride in offering fresh fish every day caught by local fishermen.

When planning your day, the staff will help you with information, opening hours, reservations and whatever else you may need.

**A Passage to the Centre of the Earth**

The Snæfellsjökull glacier is thought by many to be shrouded in mystique, which has been the inspiration for artists for hundreds of years. The most famous is undoubtedly Jules Verne, who in his book from 1864, A Journey to the Center of the Earth, wrote about a passage leading to the center of the earth found on Snæfellsjökull. Snæfellsnes also provided the setting for one of the most important Icelandic sagas, Laxdæla saga, which tells the tale of Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir and her profound and complicated marriage problems, the cause of much bloodshed. An ancient trail in the Berserker lava field provides the material for an interesting folk legend. It tells the tale of two Swedish berserker slaves who were killed by their owner while clearing a trail through the lava field. Obviously a young maiden was involved in the Berserkjagata tale somehow. For more information go to [www.hotelframnes.is](http://www.hotelframnes.is)





-Esja Travel Caters to Your Every Need

# The Perfect Visit Planned For You

For some the most arduous part of travelling is planning the trip itself. Instead of combing the internet in search for the right hotel for you, the right food or the best tours, Esja Travel will do the work for you. From the moment you land until the plane is in the air, Esja Travel will make all your arrangement and help plan the perfect visit to Iceland.

All you have to do is decide what kind of tour you're looking for. Whether you're looking for awe-inspiring landscapes, action sports, historical sites, glaciers or any other combination you can think of, Esja Tours will then find the right tours for you, including accommodation according to your budget, meals and all other land arrangements. All you have to do is book the flights.

### A Photographer's Delight

Esja Travel offers many exciting and unique tours. One of which is the



Among the many photography opportunities Esja Travel will help you discover. Photo: Copyright 2010 by Tim Vollmer

photography tour, in which an experienced photographer will guide to the perfect locations and the perfect conditions. The tour can

be both suited to skilled and amateur photographers. The photographer on staff is always available for advice and assistance. Each night

the group will meet and discuss the photographs taken during the day. One such tour would for example take you for a two day visit to Vík in Mýrdalur where you'll be given opportunities to photograph majestic rock pillars in the ocean, the barren black sands, the impressive Þakgil canyon, the ice sheets of Mýrdalsjökull glacier and the areas many waterfalls. Also included in the tour is a professional guide which gives you the opportunity to experience Iceland properly in between photo shoots.

### Bird-Watching or just Relaxing

Esja Travel also operates similar tours for birdwatchers, where a bird-watching expert will guide you through many of Iceland's finest bird watching locations. For those who are looking for a relaxing trip be sure to check out the Spa Tour, where you'll be pampered to a state of bliss.

Esja Travels caters to both individuals and small groups. For more information visit [www.esjatravel.is](http://www.esjatravel.is)



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**Welcome to Reykjavik's Thermal Pools**





# The Essential Tours with a Twist

Discovering exciting new locations where only a handful of people have set foot before can be exciting, but that doesn't diminish the impact of visiting Iceland's most famous locations. Standing in the awesome presence of Gullfoss and Geysir still packs the same punch after having been Iceland's staple attraction for decades and the Blue Lagoon is still the same magical place. To spice things up tour company Iceland Excursions offers an exciting range of combination tours to include your preferences in one and the same trip. You can for example go horseback riding and see staple attractions in one trip. You can even go to Gullfoss and Geysir and the Blue Lagoon all in the same tour.

### The Golden Circle

The Golden Circle is one of Iceland's most popular attractions for a reason – it is a culmination of everything great about Iceland. The Geysir geothermal area is surely not to be missed, after all it provides the name for all the hot springs in the world. The first written accounts of Geysir date back to 1294 and it is therefore the earliest documented source of any geyser in the world. Geysir itself has erupted quite sporadically throughout the ages, depending on earthquake activity at each given point in time. Strokkur is however the geyser that erupts most regularly and is equally impressive. It erupts several times within one hour and has been known to shoot water up to 60 meters in the air – surely a sight to behold.

Close by is the majestic waterfall Gullfoss which flows at an average rate of 109 cubic metres per second. Although not the highest waterfall in the country it is certainly one of the most impressive with its three-step plunges and awesome power. Completing the Golden Circle is Þingvellir National Park, designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Iceland's most important historical sites as well as geological phenomena. Iceland's parliament was established in Þingvellir in 930 A.D. and remained there until the late 17th century. There Iceland's



Iceland Excursion's combination tours offer you the best of Iceland in one outing.



Iceland Excursions puts special emphasis on safety and economical driving.

leaders from all around the country would assemble every year and settle disputes, trade and socialize.

### Snorkelling in crystal clear fissures

Þingvellir is also home to Iceland's largest natural lake, Þingvallavatn and the quite impressive rifts, fissures and canyons, which are actually the continental drift between the North American and Eurasian plates. Be sure to make your wishes come true by throwing coins into Peningagjá (it accepts all currencies, but not credit cards.) Iceland Excursions also offers you the unique chance of either

diving or snorkelling in the crystal clear Silfra fissure. The question is therefore not if you should tour the Golden Circle, the question is whether to combine your visit with whale watching, horseback riding, sightseeing in Reykjavík, diving, snorkelling, with a historical theme, if you want to go by night, by super jeep or in a hurry. Iceland Excursions offers you all of these options and many more.

### Safety first

Iceland Excursions offers tours going to all the best southwestern Iceland has to offer. The company puts special emphasis on safety and

economical driving. The car fleet is renewed regularly and equipped with special monitors which ensure economical driving and optimal safety. 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

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.



# Ströndin

## BISTRO & BAR

*The restaurant "Ströndin" is only 100 meters from the beach. The view from there is superb: The sea, the beach, the sea stacks and the village of Vík. The restaurant serves traditional Icelandic food and the speciality is the Icelandic lamb soup*

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-Dún og fiður

# Heavenly Sleep with Icelandic Eider Down

**What better way to remember your visit to Iceland than to curl up with an Icelandic eider down duvet?**

Family business Dún og fiður has over 50 years of experience in making pillows, duvets, and cushions made out of down and feathers. "At Dun og fidur we take pride in making the best possible comforters, from materials that are extremely light and warm and from the best insulation material invented by mother nature. For us however it is not only a question of getting a warm night's sleep, it's also feeling the comfort of the down as it caresses you to a heavenly sleep," says Anna Bára Ólafsdóttir, one of the owners of Dún og fiður.

Dún og fiður's down and feathers come from either eider bird, goose or duck. Eiderdown is the highest quality of down and is known for its extreme insulation qualities and incredible softness. The eider duck has adjusted to the extreme climate of the north and uses its own down to insulate their nests to keep their young warm.

The Icelandic people too have enjoyed the insulating qualities of the eider down since Iceland's settlement in the 9th century. Through centuries of cohabitation the down collectors and the eider ducks have learned to live together harmoniously –



the collectors guard the eider ducks against their natural enemy, the mink, and in return collect the down from their nests and replace it with an appropriate substitute, causing no harm to the nest.

The duvets and pillows come in various traditional sizes, although eiderdown duvets and pillows are only made by customer order. All the products are made within the firm (excluding some of the bed linen) and are stamped by the year of production to confirm their duration.

Dún og fiður is located at Laugarvegur 87 in Reykjavik. tel. :511 2004 . For further information visit [www.dunogfidur.is](http://www.dunogfidur.is)

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



Are you local?  
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Hangikjöt, plokffiskur and harðfiskur are as interesting to eat as they are to pronounce. After dinner, stay for the "frábæra" live music and the "fræga" Reykjavik nightlife.

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## Reykjavik Excursions: Plan Your Perfect Trip

**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. 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 colours 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.

### The Best of Reykjanes Peninsula in One Day

Starting March 1st Reykjavik Excursions will offer you the chance to experience the best of Reykjanes peninsula in one day. All too many visitors simply go straight to the Blue Lagoon and back, missing out on the myriad of geological and historical attractions in Reykjanes. The Wonders of Reykjanes & Blue Lagoon combines the two for you – you'll visit some of Reykjanes peninsula's bubbling hot springs, dramatic lava fields, migratory birding cliffs, lonesome lighthouses, and walk across the bridge between the Eurasian and North American continental tectonic plates. The area's history is represented in the Salted cod Museum of Iceland and Viking Worlds, where you'll be given a chance to board the only Viking ship in Iceland. The last stop is fitting after a busy day of sightseeing: the relaxing and renewing Blue Lagoon, where you can stay for as long as it's open.

### Top of the World

Though the Icelandic winters can appear harsh and unwelcoming, they offer unforgettable opportunities for outdoor activities. The Glacier Snowmobile Adventure tour takes you up to the top of Myrdalsjökull glacier, where you are invited to explore its surface by snowmobile for a full hour. Standing on top of a glacier is a truly



The ever popular Blue Lagoon.

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 ride on Langjökull glacier, Iceland's second largest glacier.

### Chasing 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 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.

### Standing in the Footsteps of Vikings

In the informative Saga



Snowmobiling on top of a glacier is truly an unforgettable experience.





Photo: Ingolfur Juliussón

-A new option for travelers

# Renting a Car with a Tent-trailer

**Living on an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean has made the Icelandic people resourceful. Not only do they know how to survive the ever-changing weather, they also know how to avoid it, especially during their summer vacations. One of the most efficient ways of doing so is to “elta sólina,” or follow the sun; drive their own car with a tent trailer to whichever part of the country that has the sunniest weather forecast. Now RB cars offer foreign travelers to go native.**

“We want to offer foreign travelers a new possibility,” says Arnar Barðason who runs RB cars. “Previously foreigners had only the possibility of either booking in to hotels and guesthouses or travel with a tent. Although both of those options are good, they certainly have their drawbacks. Accommodation in Iceland can be expensive and relying mainly on your tent can backfire as the weather changes every five minutes in Iceland. Therefore we are

glad to be able to offer people to rent a tent trailer when they rent a Suzuki Grand Vitara from us! “What we are offering is the possibility for all travelers to be more mobile.” By renting a tent-trailer, you do not need to go to some particular place in Iceland just because you had booked accommodation three months in advance and everything else is booked up. There are many reasons why you might want to change your itinerary; the ever-changing weather, for example, or new tips about hidden treasures in Iceland. With the tent trailer you can travel the Icelandic way, go where the sun is. It is quite common that Icelanders travel with a tent trailer to whichever area they want to visit, park it in an appealing camping area and roam from that spot for a couple of days without the trailer. Then they examine the local sights, on car or on foot return in the late afternoon or evening for a cozy night, camping in the trailer. Arnar points out that this mode of travel is really convenient for families

with children. “A family of four, five people would probably save up to 100 thousand Icelandic krónur by camping in a tent trailer for seven days,” says Arnar. “And there is enough space in the trailer for the whole family.” One can take the trailer nearly everywhere, even on many highland roads. Smaller rental cars are not allowed to drive in the highlands but if one has a jeep, it is a different story. “Seeing as Suzuki Grand Vitara is a 4wd jeep, it is equipped to handle most of the highland roads even with a tent trailer. Of course you need to be careful driving them in the highlands, but then you really need to be careful concerning everything in the highlands,” says Arnar.

The tent trailers are normally for 4 people but if one also rents a tent extension, there is a space for 5-6 people. They are rather light and easy to erect and put down again. If you are not accustomed to them, it would take about 15 minutes to set one up. With a little practise, it should not take more than 5 minutes. In all

the trailers there are kitchen facilities such as a sink, a gas stove, pots, pans and cutlery. In addition, duvets and pillows are included and it is possible to rent linen from RB Cars.

“The tent trailers are ideal for a small group of people who want to see a considerable part of the country,” says Arnar. “You get some of the luxury of staying indoors. The trailers are warmer than tents as you are not sleeping on the ground. At the same time you are surrounded by nature, you just have to take one step out of it and you can lie in the grass. And there is no bowing and crouching all the time like when you are travelling with a tent.

“I would say that you are getting the best out of the two former options for foreign travelers; you have the luxury of sleeping indoors in a comfortable space and you get the mobility of camping,” says Arnar. Further information and booking options are available on the websites: <http://www.rentacariniceiland.is/> and [rbcars.is](http://rbcars.is).



Suzuki Grand Vitara 4WD



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If you want to visit and enjoy Icelandic nature, then start your journey by visiting [www.rbcars.is](http://www.rbcars.is)



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If you bring this note to us when you rent a car or a trailer tent you will receive a gift.





-The Icelandic Bar on Austurvöllur

# Grandma’s Cooking with a Modern Twist

Although the effects of the Icelandic financial crisis have touched the lives of most Icelanders heavily, it has also been the inspiration for many brilliant ideas – one of which is the Icelandic Bar. There you'll find genuine traditional Icelandic food with a modern twist, served in an

environment free of the excess and immoderation of pre-crisis Iceland. The Icelandic Bar, probably the first and only gastropub in Iceland, is situated right next to Iceland's parliament and when the owners witnessed the powerful protests outside the parliament building in 2009 they

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The Icelandic Bar staff personally make sure the materials they use are of top notch quality.

knew it was time for a change. It was time to stop focusing on wealth and extravagance and start thinking about where Icelanders come from and what makes them a nation. "When we started thinking about it we realized that in the downtown area you can find restaurants representing almost all parts of the world – except for Iceland. So we decided to put the spotlight back on the Icelandic cuisine, but with a modern twist," says Eyþór Már Halldórsson, Head Chef at the Icelandic Bar. Don't let the name mislead you, the Icelandic Bar is a restaurant with a menu consisting of everything from traditional homemade ryebread with lamb pâté to full three course meals. All the materials are of course Icelandic and chosen especially by the chefs. You'll find gratinated salted cod, horse tenderloins, minke whale steak, Icelandic meat soup, fish stew, puffin

and all the courses most Icelanders know from their grandmother's kitchen. There are also more modern courses such as sandwiches, steaks and hamburgers (including reindeer hamburgers.) Adventurous types are in for a treat, as courses such as the fermented shark with Icelandic Brennivín and the Surprise main course will surely send your taste buds on an adventure ride. The kitchen is open from 11:30 to 23:30, but the bar is open till 01:00 during the week and up to three a.m. in the weekends. So you can stop by during the day and enjoy a cup of coffee and some light snacks, such as traditional Icelandic fish jerky with butter and then can enjoy a full meal in the evening and finally drink and enjoy the local's company through the night. Or any combination of the three. Visit [www.islenskibarinn.is](http://www.islenskibarinn.is) for further information.



## Do you want some Icelandic lobster?

On the southern shore of Iceland lies a little village called Eyrarbakki. It has become known in Iceland as the main spot for lobster fishing, making the lobster eaten in Eyrarbakki

some of the freshest you can find in. For a taste, a visit to the restaurant "Rauða Húsið" ("The Red House") is in order. They specialize in seafood, fresh from the harbor.

Both the village Eyrabakki and the house itself have their own interesting history. Eyrabakki used to be one of the most important merchant places in Iceland, famous for the ships that came into harbor during the spring, bringing both news from the outside world and goods for the people in the South. Back in they days, lobster was not considered a luxury food like it is today, people hardly knew that it was eatable. Therefore lobster fishing did not start off the shore until 1954, beginning in Eyrarbakki.



Rauða Húsið, standing on Búðarstígur, right by the coastline, used to belong to Guðmunda Nielsen. She built its oldest part in 1919, after returning home from Copenhagen where she studied business management. She was considered to be an exceptional lady and opened her retail shop right after building the house. The mark of the old times is apparent in the interior decoration, for example in the old wooden floorboards. "The house is quite spacious, we have about 200 seats but the hall is yet not crowded, making the dining more comfortable" says Pétur, who runs the restaurant. "That makes the restaurant suitable for groups of

all kinds and we have also a special, convenient menu for them." One of our most popular dishes is the so called "Catch of the day" which consists of three different seafood dishes made from the freshest ingredients available right there," says Pétur. "In addition we have all sorts of delicious fish dishes as well as meat dishes, and we try to use Icelandic ingredients as much as possible, but at the same time we try to mix up international and Icelandic cuisine and make it our own. "In the summertime people can visit us all day long, grab lunch, coffee and cakes in the afternoon and then of course dinner in the evening," says Pétur. Further information, such as the menu, is available on the website [raudahusid.is](http://raudahusid.is), where one can also book a table, both for individuals and groups.

# SOUTH ICELAND

## Europe's best kept secret

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The South of Iceland is unique and that part of the country which by far the greatest numbers of foreign visitors come to. There is everything that makes Iceland interesting to visit and can be found the year around. Here history follows you at every footstep, both ancient and recent. There is creative art, culture and flourishing trade and endless possibilities to enjoy the outdoor life in all seasons. Above all there is the awesome and rugged nature from the mountains to the sea.

In all the seasons of the year tourists can find something to their liking. In the winter the sun is reflected from the pearly white snow, on long dark winter nights the northern lights dance around the starlit sky and the moon is in and out of cloud. Then beauty, peace and quiet reigns, unforgettable to those who experience it. Trips across the highlands as well as the lowlands are indescribable adventure trips during both summer and winter.

The farmer minds his farm. All the year is a busy time in the country, and in the spring the country is covered with its summer foliage. Life outdoors and trips assume a new form: hiking tours, riding trips, angling in rivers and lakes. Nature takes on a new look: hot springs, lava fields, volcanoes, waterfalls, the highlands, glaciers, rivers and lakes, nature and life is reborn after the frosts of winter and the countryside is at its most beautiful.

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# Galleri List (something unique)

Galleri List on Skipholt street is the longest running and most successful art house in town. Galleri List has been in business continuously since 1987 and, under the current stewardship of owner/ proprietor Gunnar Helgason, has gone from strength to strength. Two years ago a move to larger premises was made to accommodate their growing collection, and growing reputation as the leading art house in the city.

Currently housed in the spacious ground floor of Skipholt 50a, an elegant modern round house it is just a stones throw from main street Laugavegur. Exquisitely lit in sweeping open space design, Galleri List showcases the crème de la crème of Icelandic artistic talent. Between sixty and eighty Icelandic artists are on display at any given time and all the major media are represented; from graphics, watercolors, oil paintings and acrylics to ceramics, porcelain and glass, the art aficionado can experience the full of Icelandic artistic endeavor under one

“ I think one of the keys to our longevity in a competitive business is the diversity of our collections”

roof. In addition, Gunnar also holds a monthly exhibition devoted to both new and established Icelandic talent.

Gunnar say’s that variety is the spice of life and, in Galleri List case, it seem the route to success as well “ I think one of the keys to our longevity in a competitive business is the diversity of our collections, we pride ourselves on our wide customer base with something to suit all artistic tastes.” Happily this philosophy extends to the price tags too. From the elite art collector to the more modest but conscientious gift shopper there something unique for everyone at Galleri List.

www.gallerilist.is



# The Icelandic way of relaxing

– the swimming pools

In most other northern countries, swimming pools are just for swimming. To relax in them is not cozy at all, in fact it is rather chilly. Swimming pools in Iceland are the opposite. Surely you can have a swim there, but many locals just go there to spend some quality time with their friends and family or to have a chat with their fellow citizens. In Reykjavik alone you can find seven different swimming pools to visit for less than 2€ entrance fee. If you want to go local in Reykjavik, visit the pools.

Iceland is famous for its geothermal energy, which has been of good use to Icelanders. Not only is it utilized for heating houses and to create electricity, it also offers everybody living in Iceland the advantage of plenty of warm swimming pools that have a wide variety of hot pools and saunas.

Swimming in Iceland can have numerous positive effects, not only because of the exercise one gets out of swimming, but also when you want to unwind and socialize. In fact, socializing is a huge part of the swimming pool culture, this is the place in Iceland where people are most open to talk to strangers, it is generally accepted to chat to the next fellow in the hot pool. It is not uncommon that the people sitting in the hot pool start to discuss politics or whatever issue is in the spotlight at the time.

If they realize you don't speak Icelandic, it is quite common that they change to English and become really interested to hear where you are



If you have a stiff neck or sore feet after a day of sightseeing, letting your body relax in an Icelandic swimming pool will cure what ails you.

from, how the life is in your country and ask: “how do you like Iceland?” Don't be afraid to ask around in the hot tubs for any information or tips about good restaurants in Reykjavik or hidden natural attractions in the vicinity. People are normally eager

to share these kinds of tips as well as telling you their opinion on all sorts of things.

If you have a stiff neck or sore feet after a day of sightseeing, letting your body relax in Laugardagslaug in Reykjavik, Iceland's biggest swimming pool, is bliss. It is located in the valley Laugardalur, one of Reyjavik's biggest green areas. There you can choose between more than five different hot pools to relax in, as well as two or three saunas. The kids will probably go nuts in the big slide and with plenty of space to splash in and play. Another fun swimming pool for children is Árbæjarlaug, which is in the Árbær quarter near to Árbæjarsafn, the historical museum of Reykjavik. That pool is ideal for unwinding as it has plenty of hot pool space where one can comfortably lie and get some tan. If one is coming or going out of



Socializing in the hot tub is an important part of Icelandic swimming pool etiquette. Photos: Ingolfur Juliusson

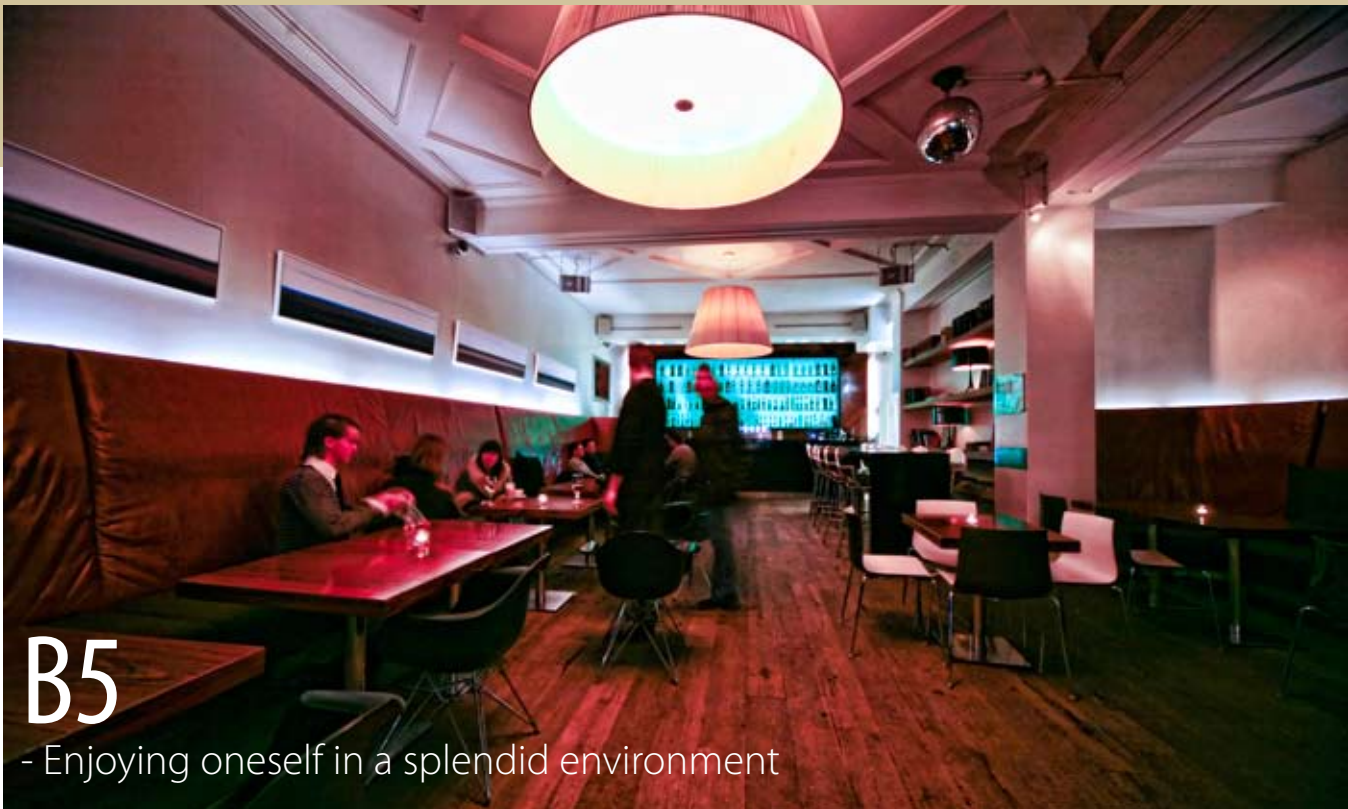
town it is quite convenient to visit Árbæjarlaug on one's way as it is near to the roads leading to both the North and Southeast of Iceland.

In the downtown area of Reykjavik, you can find two good swimming pools, in fact two of the oldest swimming pools in business in Reykjavik, this being its oldest quarter. Sundhöllin (the Swimming hall), the oldest one, has an indoor swimming pool with hot pools out on the balcony. The architecture of Sundhöllin is spectacular, designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, one of Iceland's greatest architects. Therefore, if one wants to be cultural while exercising and unwinding, swimming in the special environment of Sundhöllin is ideal.

Vesturbæjarlaug is right at the outskirts of the downtown area, the West side of town. It is an outdoor swimming pool and the best place to find lively discussions regarding life, the universe and everything if you wish to seek that kind of activity. It is often preferred of locals over Sundhöllin as it is situated outdoors. Reykjavikers often want to have the opportunity to wallow in the snow during wintertime and enjoy the clean, fresh air whilst sitting in a rather too hot pool.

Icelanders often have a special ritual in the swimming pool. This ritual consists of going between the hot and cold water. You begin in one of the “colder” hot pools. When it is getting too hot you move to the swimming pool and stay there until it is a bit too cold for sitting still. Then you may go to a hotter pool or the sauna and back again in the swimming pool. If you want to be extra tough you stay as long as you can in the hottest pool (+40 degrees), then you take an ice cold shower. Then you go to the sauna. At that point your body has become all good and warm, so you can both stay as long as you please in the sauna or sit outside without getting cold. This is the Icelandic trick, maybe the reason for the longevity of the nation. If you wish to make your stay in Reykjavik more enjoyable, the swimming pools should be visited, even every day. That is what the locals do if time permits, some even go at 7 in the morning. Experiencing the delightful feeling of moving slowly and stretching one's limbs in the swimming pool is too good to miss.





# B5

- Enjoying oneself in a splendid environment

**Walking up a hill that lies right in the center of Reykjavik, you notice, through a huge window, a big black horse, which seems to be guarding the place. Closer look will reveal B5, a café, a bar and a bistro where you can have a cup of coffee during the day and enjoy a nice dinner followed by a great night out witnessing the famous Icelandic nightlife.**

B5 stands for Bankastræti 5, the street that begins at the crossroads of Lækjagata and Austurstræti and is considered by many to be the exact center spot of downtown Reykjavik. Bankastræti runs up a hill that used to be called the Bakers Hill back in the days, because of a bakery that was situated there in the 19th century. Right when Bankastræti stops sloping, it turns into Laugavegur, the best-known “café” and shopping street in Reykjavik. The nightlife scene in Reykjavik is lively all year round, even in the worst of weathers during January and February. But it is in the summertime that things get really unbelievable. Walking down the Bankastræti hill at 4 o’clock in the morning, you could easily mistake it for 4 o’clock in the afternoon. It is completely bright outside and you can probably see more people walking up and down the hill than at the same time in the afternoon. The only difference being that the crowd is a bit louder. B5 has succeeded in making a name for

itself in the nightlife scene. If you want to dance your feet off without bruises and trampled toes due to a cramped and crowded dance floor, B5 is the ideal place to be. At the same time there is enough space to rest between dancing, as the bar has a huge lounge in the cellar, comfortably furnished for a nice chat over a drink. But one does not need to limit one’s visit to late evenings and nights. B5 also serves as a café during the day and a cozy bistro for suppertime. “Today we concentrate on a rather classy lounge atmosphere during the day and early evening, which turns into a lively club later on, where we can guarantee that your night out cannot fail, with everybody dancing and enjoying themselves tremendously,” says Guðmundur Gíslason who runs the multifaceted bar. B5 puts great effort in its interior decorating, every piece of furniture has been picked out to harmonize with each other and utmost care is taken that the space isn’t over-furnished, so you can easily move through. They also have a small library where one can always find something to read. Therefore, B5 is the ideal place to go when you have an idle hour to kill and want to relax over a good cup of coffee. “With the rising sun we are going to come up with a new menu for our bistro. We will emphasize a simple but good menu. We have been getting a lot of groups and both the place and the

menu is well suited for them. I have been getting really good feedback from those groups and many of them keep returning,” says Guðmundur. “During the summertime we have tables outside in front of the bar, we are quite lucky with the sun, it shines all day long at our side of the street, with nothing to cast a shadow on our spot. And people in the city use every minute of the sun there is, so the town is always lovely on a sunny summer day,” says Guðmundur. “On Thursdays we have live music, we have two amazing guys playing, Sjonni Brink and Vignir Snær. They have the great ability to be able to read the room, what people want to hear, so the dance floor is, more often than not, the most popular spot of the bar. Those events have become popular amongst Icelanders and foreign travelers alike. We often see people walking past

turning back to check out what is going on, entering the place and partying until closing! “In B5 you will hear music that you are probably familiar with to some extent, whether it is the DJ playing during the weekends or the live music on Thursdays. When they are playing live they quite often take cover songs that people know and can sing along with, whether it is Johnny Cash, the Beatles or even Bee Gees. The DJs play everything from Michael Jackson to new R&B songs. What all the songs have in common is that you get the urge to move along with them. “In the end it is just about creating an environment that you feel comfortable in, where you can hang out with your friends, wine and dine, easily meet new people and dance all night long if you please,” says Guðmundur. Visit [www.b5.is](http://www.b5.is) for more information.



Photos: Ingolfur Juliussen



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