

# ICELANDIC TIMES



Tourism, Culture and Business

Issue 3, May 2010 [www.icelandictimes.com](http://www.icelandictimes.com)

**Western Iceland  
Stunning  
Landscapes Close to  
the Capital**

**Eyjafjallajökull  
The Volcano up  
Close and Personal**

**Sagafjords  
The Ultimate  
Learning Experience  
in the West Fjords**

**Reykjavík  
Your Guide to  
Iceland's Capital**

**Whale watching  
In the Presence  
of Earth's Largest  
Mammals**



**LAND**  
& SAGA





The volcano of Eyjafjallajökull.



Sightseeing at the volcano of Eyjafjallajökull.



Photographing journalist Wenjing Zhang documents current events at Eyjafjöll.



Farmer Thorarinn Olafsson tries to lure his horses back to the stable as a cloud of black ash looms overhead in Eyjafjöll. Photos: Ingólfur Júlíusson

**Editorial**

Until a few weeks ago most of the world was unaware that such a thing as Eyjafjallajökull existed, but when it started erupting a few weeks ago and resulted in the closure of a substantial portion of Europe's airspace, it became famous overnight. Some people viewed the eruption as an irritating inconvenience in their flight schedules, others started exploring various worst-case-scenarios and yet others speculated on possible supernatural catalysts behind the eruption. Most Icelanders however took the news more stoically.

these unruly neighbours as facts of life. We have top scientists monitoring volcanic activity around the clock and detailed evacuation plans for any foreseeable scenario so there is little point in obsessing over unpredictable events. The fact of the matter is that there are hundreds of volcanoes all over the world which can erupt at any point in time, but that shouldn't deter us from travelling.

It came as a pleasant surprise to hear that the Government of Iceland, Iceland's municipalities and tourism operators will collectively contribute 4.3 million Euros (\$5.5 million) to a marketing campaign aimed at promoting Iceland as a safe and exciting destination this summer. In fact Iceland is even more exciting now than ever – when do you think you'll have the chance to see a volcanic eruption again?

While certainly a catastrophic event, most Icelanders carry on with their daily lives throughout the country – except of course for those living near base of the eruption. Through centuries of cohabitation with volcanoes the Icelandic people have come to accept

The next issue of Icelandic Times will be published in June/July 2010.

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

**Publisher:**  
Interland ehf.  
Postbox 514  
121 Reykjavík  
(+354) 534-1880  
www.landogsaga.is  
www.icelandictimes.is

**Editor and General Manager:**  
Einar Th. Thorsteinsson  
einar@icelandictimes.com

**Sales and Marketing:**  
Elín Björg Ragnarsdóttir  
elin@icelandictimes.com

**Photography, Design and Layout:**  
Ingólfur Júlíusson  
auglysingastofa@gmail.com

**Text by:**  
Vignir Andri Guðmundsson  
vignir@icelandictimes.com  
Nanna Hlín Halldórsdóttir  
nanna@landogsaga.is  
Guðrún Helga Sigurðardóttir

**Front page:**  
Gentle Giants

**ICELANDIC  
TIMES**  
Tourism, Culture and Business

**LAND  
& SAGA**

**Icelandexcursions**  
GRAY LINE ICELAND



**About us**

We are one of the leading tour operators in Iceland and offer professional services, flexibility and safety for travellers in Iceland.

Allow us to introduce you to the variety that Iceland has to offer; from it's richness in culture and history to its breathtaking beauty in nature and daily life.

Enjoy Iceland with  
Iceland Excursions – Gray Line Iceland



Summer is coming!  
Go to [www.grayline.is](http://www.grayline.is)

**7ruly,**  
**The Local Expert**  
24 hour booking service (+354) 540 13 13



Gullfoss



Jökulsárlón



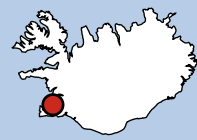
Pingvellir

Visit our sales office in the city center at Lækjartorg or go to [www.grayline.is](http://www.grayline.is)



New Nordic Kitchen at it's Best!

# Exciting and Delicious



**DILL restaurant offers meat, fish, vegetables and wild herbs from the Icelandic nature in a completely new way. While finding the Nordic culinary roots the result is exciting and delicious.**

Recently the New Nordic Kitchen has proven to be the biggest thing of the culinary world, recent award for NOMA restaurant of Copenhagen proves that. Two of the pioneers of the New Nordic Kitchen in Iceland, Chef Gunnar Karl Gíslason and Sommelier Ólafur Örn Ólafsson opened DILL restaurant in 2009 and have since then had rave reviews. They were chosen Iceland's restaurant of the year and nominated as one of the best restaurants in the Nordic Countries. The restaurant offers dishes of meat, fish, vegetables and wild herbs from the Icelandic nature. The owners are nature lovers who want to know the origins of their ingredients. Being able to collect herbs and seaweed from the Icelandic wilderness, mountains and seaside and select raw material from the farmed or planted they will always go for organic if possible. The Kitchen at DILL restaurant uses modern technology and creativity to make the diners' experience unique using familiar flavours in new and surprising ways.

## Seasonal menu

"The difference between our restaurant and other New Nordic Restaurants is that we get our ingredients from surrounding communities here in Iceland. We believe that food shouldn't travel so we don't want ingredients that have been transported from a far. We like to use the nature around us and the farmers we know are offering the most beautiful and most fresh ingredients



"We believe that food shouldn't travel so we don't want ingredients that have been transported from afar." Photos: Ingo

in the world," owner Ólafur Örn Ólafsson says passionately. "Sometimes we use traditional cooking methods, e.g. the smoking and try to make something new and exciting out of it. We have for example developed courses using spruce and Icelandic birch. We love to experiment with the ingredients you can find in the nature whether we burn them or use them fresh," he says.

The Dill menu is seasonal. Every week the owners arrange a new seven-course tasting menu with a wine menu to match each course. "We like vegetables, so from spring to autumn you will find a lot of lovely fresh vegetables on our menu accompanied with the fish or meat of the season," Ólafur says. "When the hunting season starts our menu fills

up with lovely Icelandic game such as Reindeer, geese and ducks."

## Informal and laid back

While DILL restaurant is rated among the finest in Iceland, even in the Nordic Countries, the atmosphere is intimate and laid back. The restaurant is appropriately located in the Nordic House, a cultural house that was designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. All the design of the restaurant is Nordic, the lamps and furniture are original design by Aalto. The rest, "everything from the beautiful Royal Copenhagen China, to the chefs' jackets is Nordic Design. We want to go all the way in being Nordic," Ólafur explains.

For lunch guests have a chance to sample the DILL style of cooking in a more rustic style, traditional Icelandic dishes, such as "plokkfiskur" get a New Nordic face lift, served in clay pots on the tables.



# ICE WEAR

... for all conditions



**ICEWEAR clothes and products are available at the following stores:**

### REYKJAVÍK:

Handprjónasambandið,  
Laugavegur 64  
The Viking, Hafnarstræti 3  
The Viking, Laugavegur 1  
Islandia, Kringlan

Icefin, Nóatún 17  
Ull og Gjafavörur, Hótel Saga  
Ísey, Laugavegur 23  
Hitt hornið, Laugavegur 100  
Álafoss, Mosfellsbær

### OTHER LOCATIONS:

The Viking, Hafnarstræti 104, Akureyri  
Sport og útivist, Á stéttinni, Húsavík  
Selið, Mývatn  
Mývatnsmarkaður, Mývatn

Gullfosskaffi, Gullfoss  
Geysir Shop, Haukadal  
Byggðasafnið, Skógar  
Vikwool, Vík í Mýrdal

Drífa ehf, Suðurhraun 12 C, 210 Garðabær, Sími 555 7400, Fax. 555 7401, icewear@icewear.is, www.icewear.is



-Elding Whale Watching

# Whale Watching from Downtown Reykjavík



Elding's tour guides can even find the whales by scent.



One of the best things about Iceland is that most of its wonders are within a few hours drive. But many may not realize that you can enjoy a cup of coffee downtown Reykjavík and then thirty minutes later stand in the presence of some of the earth's largest mammals.

Elding Reykjavik Whale Watching company is conveniently located in Reykjavik's old harbour from where whale watching tours depart several times a day out to Faxaflói Bay during the summertime. So if you have a few hours to kill in Reykjavik a stroll down to the old harbour is definitely worth your while.

The various types of whales commonly sighted in Faxaflói Bay include minke whales, white-beaked dolphins, harbour porpoises and the popular humpback whales. Sea birds such as gannets, puffins, guillemots, cormorants, gulls, kittiwakes and arctic terns are also commonly seen.

### Experts on Board

Elding is one of the largest and most experienced whale watching company in Iceland with over ten years of experience in the field. Elding puts special emphasis on providing skilled and experienced tour guides so as your trip will be both enjoyable and highly informative. Most of Elding's tour guides are marine biologists who never get tired of talking about the sea and its inhabitants and can use their extensive knowledge to sniff out the best whale

watching locations, and that is meant in a literal sense as some whale species have a particularly pungent odour around them. Elding's staff have been researching the whales' behaviour in Faxaflói Bay and have seen that the same animals return every year and have since gotten to know their individual characteristics and even given them names. The tour guides and ship captains can also pick up tiny clues such as bird formations, marks in the ocean, popular feeding

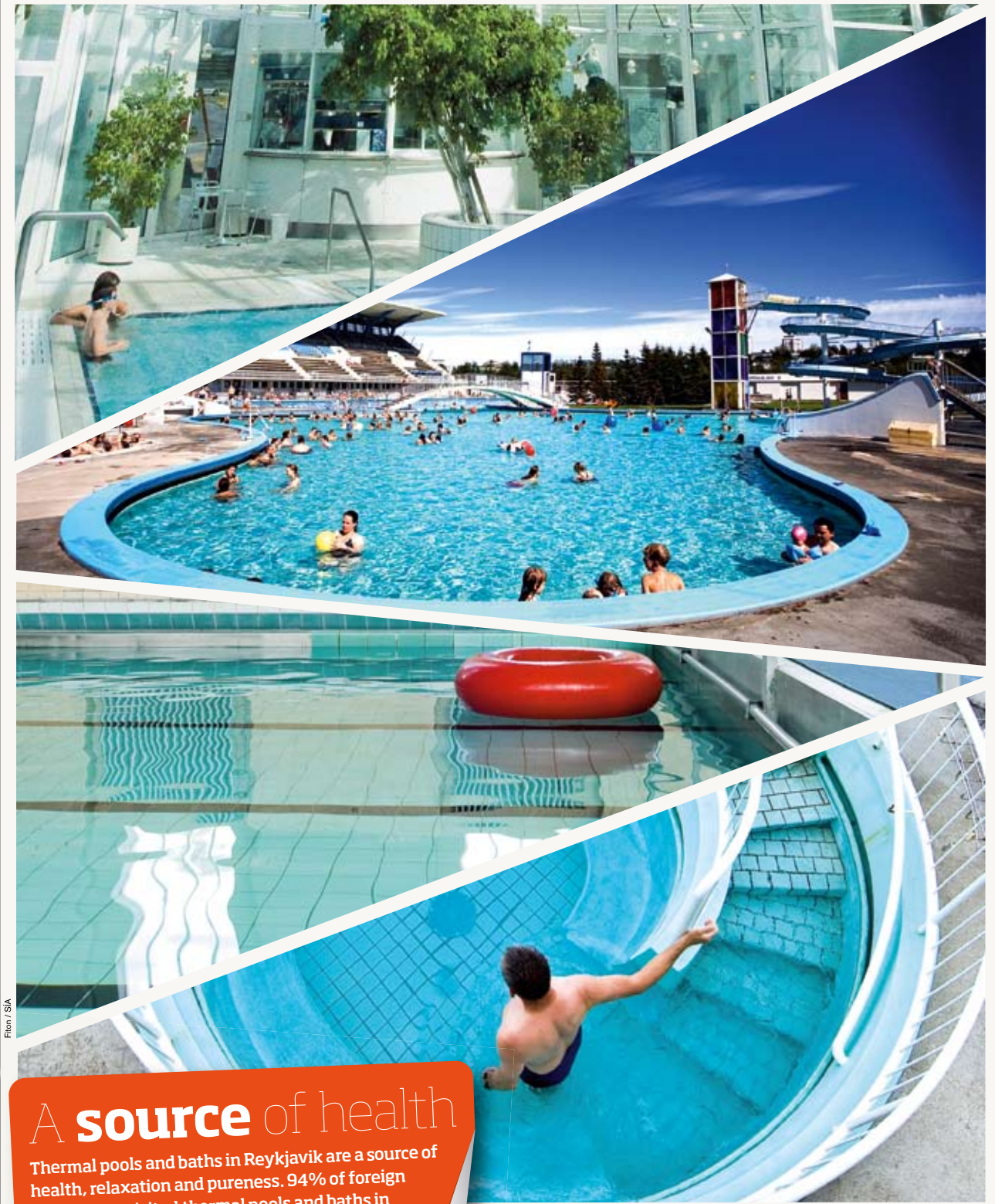


spots and years and years of experience— giving them over a 95% success rate. You can even follow sightings in an online diary at [www.elding.is](http://www.elding.is)

### Not Just Whales

Other exciting tours Elding has on offer give you the chance to go sea angling, birdwatching or a trip to Viðey Island, which is an important historical site where archaeological excavations have revealed that the island was already inhabited in the 10th century. The colorful puffin is one of the many inhabitants of Faxaflói and a trip up to Puffin Island is truly a rewarding experience. All of Elding's trips include sightseeing around the Puffin Islands during the puffin season, from May 15th to August 15th. This summer Elding will give you an exciting opportunity to see the whales of Faxaflói Bay surfacing under the midnight sun. A more picturesque opportunity is almost unthinkable. Elding also operates the Whale Watching Centre housed in a converted fishing vessel alongside the touring vessels, where you can see a multimedia presentation about whales, seabirds and other marine life.

Elding has a strict environmental policy, both in terms of polluting and interacting with the whales. For more information and booking visit [www.elding.is](http://www.elding.is) or call **+(354) 555 3565**



Flora / SIA

## A source of health

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

Welcome to Reykjavik's Thermal Pools



Tel: +354 411 5000 • [www.itr.is](http://www.itr.is) • [www.spacity.is](http://www.spacity.is)





Víkin – Reykjavík Maritime Museum

# The Heart of the Icelandic People

If you are looking for the heart of the Icelandic people you need look no further than Víkin – Maritime Museum, which offers you the unique chance to experience Iceland's rich fishing history. Víkin not only exhibits unique maritime artifacts, it also gives you the chance to experience Iceland's fishing culture first-hand, as the museum is located in Reykjavik harbour.

missions up to 2005. Inside you'll experience what life inside a 910 ton cruiser was like, which many would imagine being quite difficult. The fact of the matter is that many of Óðins crew members give their work in maintaining the boat up to this day and meet in Óðins mess hall every week.

In addition to permanent exhibitions, Víkin will offer unique new and exciting projects this summer. Among those are in-house short plays and puppet shows – which tell the stories of Iceland's heroes and master seafarers. Other additions include a night out at Víkin, including a tour, meal and a play.

The museum is less than ten minutes away from the downtown area and ticket prices are very reasonable, so

Víkin has recently opened an impressive balcony overlooking the harbour and downtown Reykjavik, which gives you the ultimate museum experience. After examining the splendid exhibitions Víkin has on offer you can sit down and have a drink or a bite to eat while you watch the ever-active life of the harbour.

The exhibitions within depict various themes and time periods with great detail. Topics include the great changes that took place around 1900 when rowing boats were replaced by trawlers, the development of trade routes in the 20th century and a unique exhibition dedicated to the construction of Reykjavik harbour which started in 1913.

One of the main exhibition is a tour inside the coast guard vessel Óðinn, which was built in 1959. Óðinn played a pivotal role in the 20th „cod wars“ and hundreds of rescue



there is really no reason not to go to Víkin.

**Óðinn is maintained on a regular basis and is still fully functional.**

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



Conditions for Icelandic sailors weren't always optional. Photos: Ingo



Aurora Adventure Tours Events Gourmet Luxury Romance

## HOTEL RANGÁ

Luxury Resort & Dining  
★★★★

Your Volcano Base  
South Iceland's Top Resort

Perfectly located in a mystical Wonderland  
for the trip of your dreams  
One hour from Reykjavik on Hwy 1

Hótel Rangá | 851 Hella | Tel.+354 487 5700 | [hotelranga@hotelranga.is](mailto:hotelranga@hotelranga.is) | [www.hotelranga.is](http://www.hotelranga.is)

SPECIAL HOTELS OF THE WORLD

# EXPERIENCE ICE

ICELANDIC MOUNTAIN GUIDES

**SINCE 1994**

- Glacier Walks - Ice Climbing - Hot Springs - Caves - Volcanoes -
- Superjeep tours through magnificent landscape -

Easy and accessible day tours for everyone with ICELANDIC MOUNTAIN GUIDES

MOUNTAINGUIDES.IS - [mountainguides@mountainguides.is](mailto:mountainguides@mountainguides.is) - Further information: +354 587 9999



The Lobster House –

# Fresh Seafood Right in the Heart of Reykjavík

**The Lobster House has been one of the most popular restaurants in Reykjavík for a long time, a fact that will not come as a surprise for anyone who has ever tasted the ambitious lobster dishes that have earned the place its reputation. Situated in one of Reykjavík's older houses, originally built in 1838, it offers a tasteful environment as well as tasty food.**

If you are walking north, away from the pond towards the sea on the right side of Lækjargata you will without doubt notice a cluster of old houses behind a small peculiar garden with an oversized chess board. The most prominent of these old buildings houses a restaurant whose name is quite suggestive of their main speciality and is certain to get your mouth watering at once. Giving in to the temptation by treating yourself to a feast at the Lobster House will not disappoint you. All material used is Icelandic and as natural as possible like the restaurant's head chef, Ólafur Haukur Magnússon, explains: "We try to use as much local material as utterly possible, it would be a shame not to use the good Icelandic material we have."

The restaurant's main dish is, as most would have guessed, the Icelandic lobster, although technically it is not actually called a lobster. "No, this kind goes by the name of langoustine and is much smaller than the actual lobster," Ólafur explains. What it lacks in size, though, it makes up for by its other more important qualities. "It's small but it's much tastier than the big one, and much much softer," Ólafur says. "Americans who are used to the bigger type are sometimes a bit surprised when they get the Icelandic lobster," he continues, but guarantees that the first bite will remove all doubt about the langoustine's excellent qualities.

Although it is renowned for its lobster dishes, the Lobster House does not

limit its menu to their signature material, or even to creatures of the sea. It offers a variety of Icelandic food, always bearing in mind the freshness and quality of the materials used, from wild berries to ducks. "We mostly emphasize the lobster, of course," says Ólafur, "but the menu ranges from A-Z, really. We always have salted cod on the menu, for example, and some other fresh fish," continues Ólafur, who, legend has it, searched all over the country to find someone who could supply him with salted cod treated in the old tradition, finally finding one old man who met his demands.

"We also get red beets and salad from local suppliers. We always try to keep it local," he says. The other dishes include minke whale, horse meat, as well as beef and lamb. When questioned how tourists view the presence of horse meat on the menu he says many are sceptical of it until they taste it: "It's the most delicious, tenderest meat you can find. Every nation uses the material they find in their environment, the Australians have the kangaroo while we have the horse!"

For a pleasurable evening out, the Lobster House can easily be recommended. The cuisine can be described as traditional Icelandic in just as traditional surroundings. "We do honest cooking," Ólafur says, "no unnecessary meddling with the materials. I guess you could say that it's classical cuisine with an Icelandic touch." The house itself and its interior would also be worth the visit, even if the Lobster House did not offer delicious food. "It's like Iceland in the days of our grandparents - and decorated in that spirit." If you wish to feast on exquisite lobster while imagining yourself in 19th century Iceland you will be sure to find the Lobster House a most adequate solution, with its fresh material and comfortable surroundings.

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



**What the langoustine lacks in size, it makes up for by its other more important qualities. Photos: Ingo**



## Great deals on some of the best electronics... ... at Kringlan, Reykjavík's largest shopping center!

Great products from Sony, Canon, Lenovo, Vivanco and Lexar.

Canon Ixus & PowerShot cameras, Canon EOS DSLR cameras, Canon EOS lenses, Canon Camcorders, Sony Bravia LCD's, Sony Alpha DSLR, Sony CyberShot cameras, Sony Camcorders Sony Walkman MP3 players, Bose Headphones, Bose SoundDocks, Bose Speakers, Lexar Memory Cards, Vivanco Accessories and Lenovo Computers.

Easy claim of your tax-free cash refund (VAT in Iceland is 25,5%).

Come visit us at Kringlan, only 5 minutes away from the city center.



Sony Center  sense center

Kringlunni  
103 Reykjavík  
Sími: 512-3300  
[www.sonycenter.is](http://www.sonycenter.is)  
[www.sense.is](http://www.sense.is)





Kraum's selection ranges from small decorative ornaments to practical clothing to full-sized furniture. Photos: Ingo

# Kraum – a Paradise for Design Lovers

**While walking in downtown Reykjavik, you will probably notice an abundance of energetic design products represented in a wide variety of design shops. If you visit the oldest quarter of the town, beginning in Aðalstræti, you will find a design store that fully represents the bloom of Icelandic design, as you can find products from no fewer than 200 designers in the store Kraum.**

Kraum is actually located in the oldest standing house in Reykjavik, built in 1762 by Skúli Magnússon, a prominent figure in the history of Iceland as a pioneer of industrialization. He is sometimes called the father of Reykjavik as historians argue that Reykjavik would not have become the capital of Iceland if it had not been for Skúli's enterprise.

Walking down Austurstræti from Lækjartorg you will pass the more modern square of Ingólfsborg on your way to Kraum. There, this oldest house of Iceland will lay before you on the right side, a black little house right next to some taller and newer buildings. To enter the store you will go to the right, up a small and charming road leading to the "Grjótaþorpið," a small, uphill area, where most of Reykjavik's oldest houses stand. Behind the black house you will notice a connecting annex made of glass, and then a newer extension to Skúli's old house. Enter the annex and enjoy the hidden treasures you will find in Kraum.

The results of a design competition in the spirit of the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson were recently announced. This competition was held in collaboration with the Reykjavik Art Museum and the winning design was a 3D puzzle by the name "My Ásmundur." This design as well as few others will be on offer both in Kraum and in the Reykjavik Art Museum. "We had all sorts of different designs in this competition, first of all the spectacular puzzle, a clock, a vase and many more. Those objects are certainly going to fit well with the rest of the products in the store," says Halla Bogadóttir the owner of Kraum. Kraum's selection of design products, range from small decorative ornaments to practical clothing to full-sized furniture. In between, one can find clothing, glasses, bowls, hangers and many more objects, that could beautifully decorate one's surroundings. "We have objects made of fish skin, which always amazes foreign travellers and hangers that look like whale teeth. Last but not least, we have a notepad which emulates the volcanic activity of Hekla and Askja, where each page of the notepad represents a particular layer of ash or lava with the year of the eruption indicated," says Halla, who adds that even though the ash cloud of Eyjafjallajökull has caused much

irritation and even destruction for the farms around the glacier and their animals, volcanos keep being a strong motive in Icelandic art as well as fascinating phenomena of nature.

The oldest part of the house, closest to the street, houses an exhibition room run by the city of Reykjavik. In this space there are always some exhibitions going on, the next one being from The Reykjavik City Museum, which will exhibit the British occupation of Iceland 10th of May 1939. Together, Kraum and the exhibition space produce a charming entity, which is interesting, both pleasurable and satisfying to visit.

More information is available on [www.kraum.is](http://www.kraum.is)



The winners of Kraum's design competition, which was in the spirit of the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson.

## JS Watch co.

REYKJAVIK






**Probably the world's smallest watch manufacturer**

The JS Watch co. Watch manufacture and exclusive retail shop located in the trendy "101" area of Reykjavik, provides our customers with unique opportunity to meet the watchmakers who assemble and test their timepiece.

Gilbert Gudjonsson is our Master watchmaker. A watchmaker since 1966 and watch shop owner since 1975, Gudjonssons experience and attention to detail ensures the quality of JS Watch co. timepieces.

- JS Watch co. Reykjavik

**GILBERT**  
ÚRSMÍÐUR  
Laugavegi 62 - tel: 551-4100

JS WATCH CO. REYKJAVIK - LAUGAVEGUR 62 - 101 REYKJAVIK - ICELAND - WWW.JSWATCH.COM



The Blue Lagoon City Spa:

# The Ultimate Relaxation

When staying in Reykjavik there is no need to miss out on the relaxing effects of the Blue Lagoon. In the heart of Reykjavik, near the city's outdoor area named Laugardalur, you'll find the Blue Lagoon City Spa. A visit to the spa is therefore an ideal part of the visit to the capital.

The Blue Lagoon spa menu consists of treatments based on Blue Lagoon active elements minerals, silica and algae and creative use of selected Icelandic elements including lava dust from the lava field surrounding the Blue Lagoon. The treatments are developed in-house exclusively for the Blue Lagoon company by its team of spa and skin care professionals.

## Signature Treatments

The signature treatments are: silica wrap treatment combined with body and face massage, nourishing and relaxing algae treatment, lava deluxe exfoliation, silica massage and special deluxe Blue Lagoon massage. This unique massage is designed by Blue Lagoon's specialists who have selected the strokes that work most effectively

with the special Blue Lagoon products to provide maximum effects. All general beauty treatments are also available.

Blue Lagoon Skin Care products are an important part of each treatment. The skin care line is a true naturceutical product line based on the Blue Lagoon geothermal seawater and its active ingredients; minerals, silica and algae and represent a perfect harmony between nature and science. The Blue Lagoon active ingredients are sustainably sourced and production methods are green and environmentally friendly.

For those looking for the ultimate relaxation the floating treatment is an ideal solution. A deep meditation treatment floating in a strong salt solution with natural Blue Lagoon minerals. It is an unusual experience for both body and mind and the rejuvenating effect has been shown to be the equivalent of eight hours of sleep.

## Relaxing Environment

A visit to the spa is a perfect choice for smaller groups looking for relaxation



The Blue Lagoon spa experience is founded the Blue Lagoon geothermal seawater, which is known for its healing powers.

in a unique setting. Light refreshments can be ordered to enjoy in the spa. Guests can unwind in the warm and comfortable relaxation area with access to steam baths and saunas indoor and outdoor and hot tubs with both fresh thermal water and salt water. Guests at the Spa have access to Hreyfing Health Club offering modern facilities, the newest equipments and a selection of variety of group fitness classes.

Blue Lagoon spa experience is founded on a unique natural source – the Blue Lagoon geothermal seawater known for its healing power and active elements: minerals, silica and algae that cleanse, boost and nourish skin. The treatments are developed on the site by Blue Lagoon's experienced team of specialists.

The original massage and treatments take place in the lagoon itself under the open air. Use of Blue Lagoon skin care based on the active elements and the pure white Silica mud mask is the foundation of these extraordinary treatments.

For more information and reservations visit [www.bluelagoonspa.is](http://www.bluelagoonspa.is)



Unwinding in the warm and comfortable relaxation area.



-Icelandic Excursions

# Visiting the Volcano

The effects of volcanic eruptions can change from day to day, and it is very hard to predict what the situation will be like once you get to Iceland. Our experienced tour guides here at Iceland Excursions can however help you get as close as possible to the sites – whether it will be to drive up to a plume of spouting ash and smoke, witness bubbling hot lava or to examine new lava fields and mountains, it is a unique opportunity to witness nature's awesome powers up close and personal.

Iceland Excursions will offer guided tours to the volcano and surrounding areas this summer. The tours available are likely to change according to Eyjafjallajökull's activity, so it is advisable to check for updates regularly. It should be noted that the Civil Protection Department has closed off the area surrounding the newest crater for to safety reasons so it is highly advisable to utilize Iceland Excursion's years of experience to give you the safest and most enjoyable volcano experience.

## Hiker's Paradise

For hikers and outdoors enthusiasts alike the trip to Þórsmörk is not to be missed, that is if the Eyjafjallajökull volcano will allow it. Iceland Excursions offers regular scheduled tours to the hard-to-reach Þórsmörk starting in May. Þórsmörk is a nature reserve shielded on three sides by glaciers and mountains where you'll find a multitude of small gullies and valleys, clad with low birch-



The Majestic Svartifoss.

trees that create seemingly endless possibilities for nature lovers. The area is very popular with both locals and visitors alike.

## The Majestic Jökulsárlón

With the coming of spring a visit to the picturesque glacial lagoon Jökulsárlón is a must. It is truly a majestic lake which is around 18 km<sup>2</sup> in size and almost 200 meters deep. The lake is filled with both huge and small icebergs from the Vatnajökull glacier, and it is therefore an unforgettable experience to sail in their impressive presence. On



Iceland Excursions will get you safely up to the volcano.

the way to the Lagoon we'll also visit Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss waterfall, renowned for their beauty, and make a short stop at Skaftafell National Park. Iceland Excursions offers a wide variety of trips to Jökulsárlón and Skaftafell, starting on May 16th.

Iceland Excursions puts a special emphasis on passenger safety and economical driving. Our car fleet is renewed regularly and every vehicle is 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 world's leader in sightseeing, ground transportation services and unique tours at over 150 destinations around the world.

Visit [www.grayline.is](http://www.grayline.is) for more information and booking.



The always impressive Jökulsárlón.





"I think it's safe to say that we have one of the largest selections of souvenirs around." Photos: Ingo

The Viking –

# Take Something Memorable Home with You

You will see majestic mountains, lava fields, cliffs, the huge wilderness in Iceland. You will witness spectacular wild-life, birds with colorful beaks, great whales, sheep everywhere and the Icelandic horse. You will hear enough folk tales about trolls, elves and you will get to know about the vikings, who went on viking voyages all around Europe and

parts of America, of whom some settled down in Iceland. You will want to have something at home to remind you of this all. You will find such a souvenir in one of the Viking souvenir shops in Reykjavik, Akureyri and from June onwards, in Isafjordur as well.

Sigurður Guðmundsson, owner of the Viking, says that the shop has always put

emphasis on offering quality products at fair prices. "I think it's safe to say that we have one of the largest selections of souvenirs around. We want to offer our customers great souvenirs, which can be reminiscent of Iceland. It can both be in the form of a warm winter coat and a little puffin statue," says Sigurður. "It depends on what interested you the most about Iceland; was it the nature or the literature? We will have something here to remind you of what you experienced in Iceland."

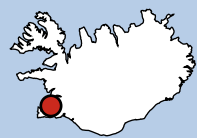
Various products designed to battle the weather and winds of Iceland can be acquired in The Viking. You can buy knitted wool sweaters there, mittens and socks, winter coats, fur shoes and Icelandic design products. "Puffin items are always popular and also some viking items like the viking helmet and sword," says Sigurður.



Viking items are always in high demand.

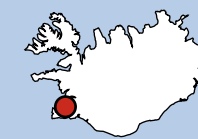


You can find The Viking in both Laugarvegur 1 and Hafnarstræti 1 in Reykjavik as well as in Hafnarstræti in Akureyri and soon in Isafjordur as well.



Director Harpa Þórsdóttir, Museum of Design:

# Shoes and Bags Made of Fish Leather



The Museum of Design celebrates its 12th anniversary this year by opening the museum in a new location at the end of May. The opening exhibition is called "From Fish to Leather" and there you can see bags from houses such as Dior and Salvatore Ferragamo and shoes from Donna Karan made of Icelandic fish leather.

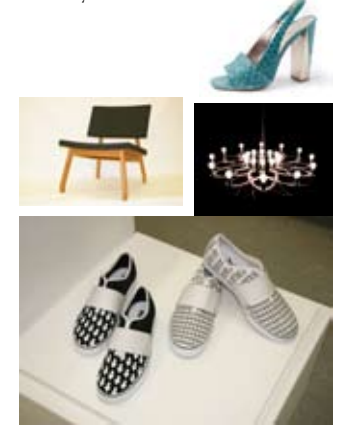
"By opening our in new location on May 28th we are getting a fantastic new museum where we can



preserve our items and have regular exhibitions. Our first exhibition is called "From Fish to Leather." It is an idea we have been working on for some time. We are trying to give our visitors some idea what kind of raw materials are manufactured in Iceland and designers are using," Museum Director Harpa Þórsdóttir says.

"We will have on display all kinds of Icelandic and International artifacts made of Icelandic raw materials, e.g. fish leather. Fish leather is manufactured in Iceland and mainly exported. We connect this to the industrial history. Traditionally fish leather has been used to produce e.g. hand-made shoes but nowadays shoes made of fish leather are fashion items with brand names like Donna Karan, Nike and Christian Dior," she says. The Museum of Design is the only design museum in Iceland. The goal

is not only to be a design museum welcoming guests of all ages but also to be a research center for experts and scientists. The new location is Garðatorg 1, Garðabær. Opening hours: Every day 12-17. Closed on Mondays.



"We are trying to give our visitors some idea what kind of raw materials are manufactured in Iceland and designers are using."

-New Icelandic Calendars for 2011

# A Daily Reminder of Your Stay in Iceland

What better way to remember your visit to Iceland than with an all-Icelandic calendar, so that every time you check the date you're greeted with majestic landscapes, the peculiar puffin and the graceful Icelandic horse?

Snerra publishing house has printed such calendars for over 25 years now and is renowned for its quality photos and professional workmanship. Snerra has now printed a new line of calendars for the year 2011. The calendars come in various shapes and sizes and with different themes; including landscapes in all seasons, birdlife, horses and one is dedicated entirely to the puffin. The calendars come with text in Icelandic, English, German and French and some have official Icelandic holidays marked. That way you won't forget to celebrate the 17th of June in 2011 or the first day of Icelandic summer.

The Snerra publishing house was originally founded by photographers

and pilots who felt that in the 80's there were no adequate photographic portrayals of Iceland in the souvenir market and decided to



photography books.

The pictures of the Icelandic horse are however photographed by a farmer in Búrfell, named Jón Eiríksson. Somewhat of a free spirit and an undeniable artist, Jón takes his camera with him in his tractor



whenever he goes to feed his horses where he captures the majesty of the Icelandic horse in its natural surroundings.

Snerra also has on offer other exciting souvenirs such as Icelandic beer steins, jewelry, antique maps of Iceland, playing cards and even christmas items.

Snerra's calendars and other products are sold in bookshops and souvenir shops throughout the country and you can also purchase the online at [www.snerra.is](http://www.snerra.is)





# Reykjavik city guide

The city of Reykjavik has a fascinating history stretching back for over a thousand years, having first been inhabited in the eighth century by a band of hardy Norsemen.

Since then Vikings, monks, sailors, musicians, fishermen, politicians, writers, artists and all manner of folk have played their part in shaping the rich history and culture that makes Iceland's capital such a vibrant and fascinating place.

Visitors leave Reykjavik with a renewed sense of vigour that can be attributed to Iceland's pristine air and unique energy, which is evident all around the city - from the geothermal vents steaming in the midnight sunshine to the great open spaces that adorn the area with a stunning natural landscape along with the many year-round activities and events that can fill the diary of any interested traveller. Reykjavik is also home to the world's oldest parliament - the Althing, which

was founded in 930 AD - but today the city is the epitome of a modern European capital with a world-class infrastructure, excellent transport links to Europe and North America and 200,000 welcoming Icelanders helping you enjoy your stay.

Renowned for its art scene, sight-seeing and nightlife, as well as the annual film and music festivals plus numerous shops, museums and restaurants, there's no other city like the world's most Northerly capital, which is situated a relatively-short distance from the Arctic Circle.

Visitors from all round the globe also enjoy whale and wildlife watching, relaxing in one of the many thermally-heated spas and pools (such as the famous Blue Lagoon), viewing spectacular sights such as the Imagine Peace Tower (a spectacular tribute to John Lennon) or the Hallgrímskirkja church or touring the amazing countryside - all with the beautiful snow-covered Mount Esja in the background.

However long you stay you won't be short of things to do in Reykjavik, surely one of the world's most interesting and stunningly-located capital cities.

## Energising Reykjavik

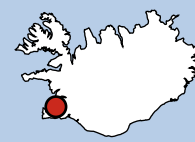
In Reykjavik, nature is literally at your doorstep. Half-surrounded by a horizon of majestic mountains rising thousands of feet into the sky - visible from just about everywhere in the city on a clear day - you'll fall in love with the natural beauty of the city's setting.

Offshore Viðey Island is a lovely spot, just minutes away by ferry. The island, which is a historical site, harbours varied bird-life and interesting sculptural art. The extensive Heiðmörk nature reserve, on the outskirts of Reykjavik, has a splendid volcanic landscape and spectacular views. Just a short drive or bus ride away is the majestic Mount Esja (914 metres) with accessible paths, a favourite place for hiking enthusiasts.



Reykjavik's inhabitants are quick to take to the parks when the sun comes out.

For those wanting more action-packed nature-based activities, whale- and bird-watching tours leave from the downtown harbour area and horse riding, golfing or salmon fishing are all available within the city limits. The perfect way to experience Reykjavik's healing energy is to visit one of its many thermal pools and luxury spas, filled with geothermally heated water. A healthy swim, a soak in the thermal hot pots or a relaxing visit to a state-of-the-art spa leaves you feeling in tune with body and



However long you stay you won't be short of things to do in Reykjavik, surely one of the world's most interesting and stunningly-located capital cities.

soul. The world-famous Blue Lagoon is just a forty-minute drive from the capital. Reykjavik's abundant supply of geothermal water is even used to heat its Atlantic Ocean coast, creating a warm inlet by a sandy beach at Nauthólsvik just ten minutes from the city centre. Or if you want something truly invigorating, join the new trend of cold-water sea swimming next door!

The city's thermal pools are always pleasantly warm, whatever the weather, and most pools are open-air. All have outdoor whirlpools, or „hot pots“ as they are locally known, and most have waterslides for the young (and young at heart). Reykjavik's thermal pools are open from early morning until late in the evening; swimming costumes and towels are available for a small fee. There is simply no cheaper or healthier way to experience Reykjavik and to get to know the locals!

## Inspiring Reykjavik Art and Culture

The city centre has a broad array of museums and galleries that are open year-round. They vary from displays of national historic treasures and texts to small eclectic galleries of the latest works on a local artist. Many have free admission at least one day a week and the Reykjavik Welcome Card provides free access to them and many other sites in the city.

Reykjavik is characterised by an unusually vibrant artistic community. In recent years, the city has become well known for its happening music scene. The established Iceland Airwaves music festival draws an



Reykjavik is renowned for its art scene.

international crowd every year to experience what is new in Icelandic and international rock and pop music. Jazz and classical music is well represented too. The Reykjavik Jazz Festival and regular concerts by the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra are just some of the musical events that can be enjoyed in Reykjavik. As

for the performing arts, Reykjavik hosts several theatre companies, the Icelandic Opera and the highly acclaimed Icelandic Dance Company. Numerous high quality cinemas showing international films in their original language are also dotted around the city.

## Shopping and Design

Whether you are after designer brands, unique Icelandic design or quality souvenirs, you will be spoilt for choice when shopping in Reykjavik. Even better, you can take it home tax-free!

Reykjavikers are known for their innovative design style. Walk up Laugavegur or Skólavörðustígur, the city's main shopping streets, and you'll spot arts and crafts galleries, music and bookstores, jewellery shops with one-of-a-kind Icelandic designs that often incorporate local semi-precious stones or pieces of lava rock, and locally created fashion like a handbag made of fish skin or a delicate woollen top.

On weekends, you will find the Flea Market (Kolaportið) by Reykjavik Harbour overflowing with bric-a-brac and Icelandic delicacies, such as fermented shark, dried fish, tons of liquorice and much more!

## Wining and dining

Foodies will find plenty to keep them happy when wining and dining in the nation's capital. Reykjavik has an astounding variety of restaurants, offering both traditional and international cuisine cooked using the freshest ingredients. Icelandic cuisine is characterised by an imaginative use of pure Icelandic ingredients such as fresh fish and seafood, organic lamb and wild game. Be sure not to miss the Icelandic hot dog. The highly acclaimed "city's best" can be found at the „Bæjarins Beztu“ hot dog stand on Tryggvagata near Reykjavik Harbour. Reykjavik boasts a great café culture, with residents regularly meeting up



State Architect Guðjón Samúelsson is said to have designed Hallgrímskirkja to resemble the basalt lava flows of Iceland's landscape.



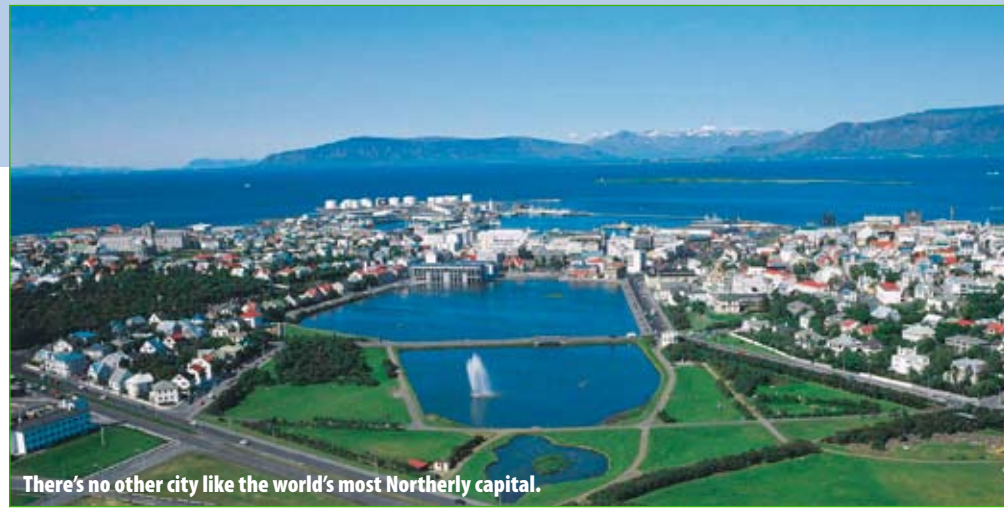


Festival and regular concerts by the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra are just some of the musical events that can be enjoyed in Reykjavík. As for the performing arts, Reykjavík hosts several theatre companies,

with friends and family for coffee, cake and conversation and simple food at affordable prices. An Icelandic hot chocolate is a great way to warm those cold bones after a day spent exploring the city and many also host live music and entertainment. Reykjavík is also well known for its vibrant nightlife. On summertime weekends the streets of downtown are just as bright and busy at 3 a.m. as they are at 3 p.m.! There are dimly lit bars, cozy cocktail lounges, trendy nightclubs and loud dance or live music venues to suit every taste.

#### Family friendly Reykjavík

Families will find plenty of interesting activities in Reykjavík - splashing about in a thermal pool, trying on Viking armour, or viewing some of the largest mammals on earth at close quarters - there is fun to be had for all ages in the city.



There's no other city like the world's most Northerly capital.



restored timber house on Aðalstræti. The Centre has all the latest details on accommodation, dining, tours and nightlife in this busy city. The friendly staff can book everything for you, like last-minute guest houses or day trips around the Golden Circle. You can pick up various brochures, from walking tours of the city to details on the latest music festival, change money and even get your tax-free

refund early! You can also plan the rest of your trip in Iceland with the expert advice of the staff at the Centre.

You can also find extensive tourist information on the official Visit Reykjavik website, [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is). Or find us on Facebook to stay updated!

[info@visitreykjavik.is](mailto:info@visitreykjavik.is)

There are plenty of family-friendly events on the festival calendar too. Firm favourites include the Children's Cultural festival (April), First Day of Summer (April), Festival of the Sea (June), Independence Day (17 June) and Reykjavik Culture Night (August). The Official Tourist Information Centre - all you need for a great holiday

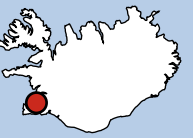
To help make your trip memorable, visit the official Tourist Information Centre, housed in a beautifully



There are plenty of family-friendly events on the festival calendar.

-Kaffi Kidda Rót in Mosfellsbær

# Romantic Burgers and Crazy Pizzas



Kaffi Kidda Rót is renowned throughout Iceland for its romantic burgers, crazy pizzas and its relaxed atmosphere. Ever since Kaffi Kidda Rót opened a few years ago it has quickly established a loyal fan base which always seems to come back for more. In fact Kiddi Rót, whom the restaurant is named after, insists that no customer ever leaves unsatisfied, if he can help it.

Kiddi Rót is somewhat of a legend in Iceland. He was a roadie for many of Iceland's most popular bands during the 70's and 80's and a chauffeur for one of Iceland's most prominent politicians. Kiddi is quite a colourful character who has put his undeniable mark on the restaurant - whether it comes to interiors, decorations, naming of dishes or simply his presence at the bar.

Kiddi's involvement in the restaurant business came by accident and he says himself that it is one of the main reasons for his success. „Because I had no idea of what I was getting into I probably made every mistake possible in the beginning. But that is how I learned what makes a good restaurant. We decided to focus on high class for less money and instead of making things too complicated we decided to put together a more direct menu with quality dishes which we have later become famous for,” says Kiddi.

Kaffi Kidda Rót is famous for its Romantic Hamburgers, which are barbequed and come in two sizes; either teenager or adult. The hamburgers are made out of 100% Icelandic meat without any additives. Kiddi's Crazy pizzas are also fan favourites and known for their crispiness. The Muscle Pitas, pork sandwiches and oriental dishes are also definitely worth trying. Kiddi is also especially proud of his steaks which he says are fully comparable to top steak houses in Reykjavik. “In fact, if you can't find anything you don't like on our menu, you simply must not be hungry,” says Kiddi.

Kaffi Kidda Rót is located in downtown Mosfellsbær, so it's the perfect stop to grab a satisfying meal on your way out of Reykjavik. It is easy to find - on the first house on the left after you arrive



People from all walks of life are welcome into Kaffi Kidda Rót.



Kiddi standing proudly in front of his musical exhibition.

We decided to focus on high class for less money and instead of making things too complicated we decided to put together a more direct menu with quality dishes which we have later become famous for,”

in Mosfellsbær you'll see a sign with Kaffi Kidda Rót and that's where it is.

The place itself is especially spacious and can accommodate up to a 100 persons seated. Kiddi emphasises that he wants all his guests to feel at home, whether they are dropping by after work in their work clothes or after scaling mountains or glaciers in hiking boots and outdoors clothes.

Though Kiddi has not done any roadie work for years he still has a close connection to music. He is known to utilize his connections in the music industry and frequently sets up mini-concerts in the restaurant - jazz combos, big band, troubadours or any artists he feels fitting. The restaurant is also decorated with a musical exhibition documenting the history of music in Iceland from 1966 to 1988.



-Glúfrasteinn Museum

# In the Presence of Genius

One of Iceland's most beloved authors is without a doubt the Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness and if you want to really know Iceland and its people you have to familiarize yourself with Laxness – both the character and his works. What better way to get to know this eccentric genius than to explore his longtime home and workplace, which has been opened to the public as a museum.

Laxness settled in Gljúfrasteinn in 1945 with his wife and family, where he lived until his death in 1998. The museum is for the most part unchanged from when Laxness lived there and many say that the house feels like Laxness has just stepped out for a moment. You'll see where

he ate, slept, read, played music and his workstation, where you can see the worn down pencil stubs he'd use to write with.

The museum comes with a guided audio commentary, in which you can even hear recordings of the author himself, as if he were still there, guiding you through his own home.

Although it is highly recommended to pick up one of his timeless novels which are available in over 40 languages it is not a prerequisite to enjoy the wonders of Gljúfrasteinn. Laxness was a unique man who enjoyed the finer things in life and decorated his home accordingly. You'll see paintings by many of Iceland's most prominent painters



and art pieces from all over the world. Laxness was also an avid nature lover and there are several beautiful walking paths around the house.

The current proprietors put special emphasis on keeping Gljúfrasteinn alive and busy, like Laxness himself would have wanted it. There are a wide variety of exciting events held in Gljúfrasteinn all year round. Among those are the Sunday living room concerts, which are held all summer.



## Bjarteyjarsundur in Hvalfjörður Bay Visit a working farm

Bjarteyjarsundur is a working farm that offers active involvement in the activities of the farm. In Bjarteyjarsundur you can rent a room or a cottage or even a camping place, go on hikes, walk the beaches and get to know the families and the animals in the area. When you stay in Bjarteyjarsundur you can take part in the family life, eat the traditional Icelandic food, chat

with the family and get to know the life of Icelanders.

Bjarteyjarsundur is a meat producing farm with over 600 sheep plus horses, cats, dogs, hens and wool producing rabbits. There is also a vegetable garden and a hot-house in Bjarteyjarsundur. The families are even experimenting with mussel farming. On the beaches you can watch the birds and pick some mussels.

Bjarteyjarsundur has been special

izing in visits of young people, families and school groups of all ages. In Bjarteyjarsundur there is an emphasis on introducing the farm work, presenting the animals and the history and nature in the area. This area is the site of one of the sagas and genetically the animals are the same as the animals brought to Iceland at the time of the settlement except for the rabbits. Staying at Bjarteyjarsundur gives a great chance for young groups of foreign origin to get to know the country life in Iceland.

Bjarteyjarsundur farm has a nature-based policy. The families work in the spirit of ecological and sustainable way of life and respecting the environment.

In Bjarteyjarsundur there is Gallery Álhöll with home-made craft from the farm. Bjarteyjarsundur offers a wide variety of activities. You can go on hiking tours, e.g. to the neighbouring highest waterfall in Iceland, or you can listen to stories about the settlement in the area. Just ask and you can get tailor-made tours in the area. For more information about Bjarteyjarsundur go to website [www.bjarteyjarsundur.is](http://www.bjarteyjarsundur.is).



Take part in the daily life of Icelandic farmers.

[www.alafoss.is](http://www.alafoss.is)



# ÁLAFOSS

WARMTH FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY!

WOOL SWEATERS,  
BLANKETS & ACCESORIES,  
TRADITIONAL CRAFTS  
AND MODERN ART



ÁLAFOSSVEGUR 23  
MOSFELLSBÆR  
OPEN: MON -FRI 9:00 - 18:00  
& SAT 9:00 - 16:00

SJÁLDRÍD 2010



# A Paradise for Outdoor Activities

Do you want to run barefoot on the beach? See the sun set from an old lighthouse? Climb a mountain? Dare the local boys and girls to a game of football? In addition to soaking in culture, knowledge and history? Then Akranes is certainly a place for you to visit. The town is renowned for its sports teams and every Icelander connects Akranes, or "Skaginn" as it is called, with football. Akranes is certainly worth a visit, representing a more relaxing choice if you seek to dwell in the Southwest corner of Iceland, or perhaps as a good, refreshing daytrip from Reykjavik.

## The town and its mountain

Akranes is a town of 6600 people, situated on a peninsula just north of the capital. Reykjavik is actually visible from Akranes on a clear day through the blue straits. It is sheltered by the mountain Akrafjall, the town's pride and one of the best known mountains on the Southwest corner. Akranes boasts not only of an active sports scene, but also of great cultural life, taking its form in various interesting cultural events throughout the year as well as in a whole area dedicated exclusively to diverse and interesting museums.

"On the whole, Akranes is a splendid place for those seeking sports practise and enjoying nature while getting healthy exercise," says Tómas Guðmundsson, representative for public relations in Akranes. "A good example of this is our picturesque mountain Akrafjall. It's not only the view of the mountain you can enjoy while staying in Akranes, it's also



"Langisandur is a unique phenomenon, it is certainly refreshing to walk along the long coastline and maybe even dive into the somewhat refreshing, but certainly cold sea."

quite a recreative hike. It takes about three or four hours to walk up and down the mountain, at a casual speed. Sometimes the walk is a little steep but I have seen a five year old complete the walk easily, so a hike up Akrafjall suits almost everybody."

This symbolic mountain of Akranes actually has two peaks, the one on the right side seen from Akranes is the Peak of Geirmundur, which is 643 meters high and on the left side is High Peak, which is 555 meters high. Walking Akrafjall has been popular for a long time with the locals, but recently outsiders have also been taking interest. Actually, mountain

hiking has become popular among Icelanders in general, who have in increasing numbers started to "collect" the mountains they have beaten.

## The Langisandur beach

After a good trek up and down Akrafjall it would be ideal to head down to the beach at Langisandur. This beach is of a particular pride for the locals, as it is probably the only good bathing beach in the whole country, situated right in the heart of Akranes. "Langisandur is a unique phenomenon, it is certainly refreshing to walk along the long coastline and maybe even dive into the somewhat

refreshing, but certainly cold sea," says Tómas.

In fact, sea bathing has become a very fashionable sort of exercise among Icelanders, especially in Akranes. One may not think that Iceland is the ideal place for bathing in the sea, but after the first ice cold gush of water, it actually becomes fairly comfortable. Afterwards, you might feel like you just experienced metamorphosis, like your body was brand new. After the sea bathing you can, fortunately, have a nice hot shower on the beach. The swimming pool in Akranes is also in a comfortable walking distance from the beach, where one can enjoy a good sauna, hot tubs and a warm swimming pool after the refreshing sea bath.

Langisandur is also a perfect place to build sandcastles, gather beautiful shells and stones and last but not least to observe the sea, stare into the strong everlasting surf and lose all sense of time and space.

## Enjoy the view from Akranes lighthouse

Another picturesque location is without doubt the lighthouse on the outmost point of Akranes. The point, which goes by the name of "Breið" in Icelandic, is a perfect outdoor area as well as Langisandur, where you can enjoy the coastline, the birdlife and the surf.

The lighthouse was erected in 1918 and was the first concrete lighthouse in Iceland. If you climb up to its top you will be able to enjoy a nice view over the vast sea onwards to Reykjavik, or over the whole of Akranes town to Akrafjall.

"In the summertime we often have photography exhibitions in the lighthouse. The recurring theme of these exhibitions has most often something to do with the surrounding region, the birds, the sea or the history of the area," says Tómas.

## Town full of activities

Akranes also offers various options for all sorts of different activities. Birdlife is rich in the area by the coastline as well as in Akrafjall. "We have a protected area in a short driving distance from Akranes. The diversity of birds is incredible, but to name one, we have a lot of brent goose going through here on their way to their breeding grounds," says Tómas. "Akrafjall also contains one of the largest colonies of great black-backed gulls in Iceland."

Akranes has the biggest golf course in the West of Iceland, Garðavöllur, which is an 18-hole course. It is renowned for its beautiful and charming surroundings in addition to its excellent putting greens. There are also 12 roofed practise stalls and special practise greens, resulting in the course being the golfer's dream. Just try to stay clear of the many sand traps!

Right next to the golf course you will find Garðalundur area as well as the museum area. Garðalundur is a nice green, wooded spot, popular among the locals, unsurprisingly as it is a haven for outdoor activities. There is



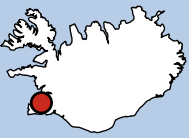
a playground for the children and you could have a barbeque or a picnic before putting on a match in the volleyball field or the football field.

The newest activity on offer in the area is to rent a bike. "Akranes is quite flat, so one might say that it was the most convenient area in the Southwest to cycle in. Therefore, we are just about to start a bicycle rental, so people can have the opportunity to cycle to all these diverse and interesting outdoor areas," says Tómas.

## Sport and culture gatherings all the year round

The people in Akranes get together all year round both to watch all sorts of sports events and to participate in cultural events. Therefore, it is highly likely that you will witness one of these events while visiting Akranes. Perhaps you will witness a football game, children's sports tournament, crowded with both children and parents, a cultural festival or a market in the museum area.

In the end of October, a cultural festival under the name of "Vökudagar" takes place in Akranes. It is a local art and culture festival, in which both young and old people of the area participate as well as outsiders. You will witness all kinds of artistic events there; art



their Irish origin, as the original settlers of Akranes were two Irish brothers.

This year, the Irish days will be held the 2th-4th July. During this time, the town's population increases greatly and the atmosphere becomes quite festive, of which the huge barbeque feast where everybody dines together on the street is a very good example. During the Irish Days, Akranes is decorated in the colours of the Irish flag. Flags and banners are everywhere, ribbons and decorations to uphold a festive Irish ambiance.

This is a celebration for the whole family with its various sports events, an outdoor market and a sandcastle competition on Langisandur; just to name a few. Of course there is also a competition for the Icelander with the reddest hair, reminiscent of the famous red hair of the Irish.



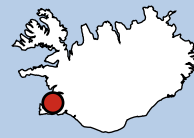
More information about Akranes is available on [visitakranes.is](http://visitakranes.is)



The people of Akranes are avid soccer followers.



# — Interesting and Diverse Museums



Just above the town of Akranes you can find various old and new buildings as well as some old boats. This is the “Museum Area” where not only can you learn some interesting facts about the life in Akranes throughout the centuries by experiencing all sorts of historic items, but also learn to know different minerals or everything about Iceland’s achievements in the Olympics. You will probably be able to lose yourself in these museums and spend a whole day examining every small object, taking a break to enjoy a nice cup of coffee in the Garðakaffi coffeeshop.

### The Folk Museum

The Folk Museum presents the history and life of Akranes and the district of Hvalfjörður. The museum preserves a comprehensive collection of exhibits that bear witness to days long gone, relating to farming, housekeeping and the social conditions in the area.

Jón says a lot of items come to mind when asked to name the most precious ones. “The ship Sigurfari has to be considered one of our most precious objects. In fact it’s the only preserved ship of this kind from the first years of decked fishing ships in Iceland, made in 1885.”

The oldest items in the Folk museum date from the tenth century but the youngest are only five or six years old. The former are ancient lanterns,



found during archeological digs, but the latter are computers and mobile phones. “It might sound funny, but with technology developing so fast in the Western world we can already laugh at ten years old mobile phones and find them fit for a museum display case,” says Jón.

### The Museum Hall

The first exhibition to mention in the Museum Hall is The Mineral Kingdom. It is especially interesting these days as the eruption in Eyjafjallajökull is a reminder of the strong forces of nature, creating new lava fields. It has the biggest collection of Icelandic rocks under one roof in Iceland according to Alma Auðunsdóttir who works for the Museum Area. “The mineral specimen derive from all over Iceland and some of them are cut and polished to give a different perspective,” says Alma. Among the minerals you can also find a good collection of ancient fossils. You can even take many of them in your hand to feel their weight and texture.

Inside The Mineral Kingdom there



Interesting and Diverse Museums

is an exhibition dedicated to the making of the tunnel under the fjord of Hvalfjörður which opened in 1998. The tunnel is one of a kind in Iceland, being the only undersea tunnel. “The exhibition includes a model of the tunnel and its position under the sea, as it reaches astonishingly deep. There are also examples of hammer-drills and minerals alongside many photographs from the work in progress, drill cores and interesting rocks and minerals from the tunnel,” says Alma.

You will also find a lively exhibition called Sports in Iceland featuring the history of sports in Iceland. All sports practised in Iceland are introduced and numerous exhibits connected with sports are on display, such as photographs, equipment of various kinds, flags, pennants, trophies and other memorabilia associated with sports. A part of this exhibition is dedicated to sports in Akranes, the town being renowned for its sports enthusiasm.

In the extra exhibition room in the museum hall you will find quite an interesting exhibition about the Icelanders who emigrated to North-America in the late 19th century. “The exhibition especially focuses on the tale of a boy who went from Akranes at the age of 12 to Canada. On the way he got lost and was thought to be dead. But 12 years later he knocks on his mother’s door in Akranes, a fine young man. He had got separated from his relatives but had found some other people he knew and came into the possession of a piece of land in Canada. But he always wanted to go back to Iceland and live there so he ended up in Akranes where he started a family,” says Alma.

### Boats and houses

Various boats and five old houses are situated in the Museum Area, two of the houses being on display. In recent years old houses connected with the history of Akranes have been moved to the Museum Area and renovated in order to keep the past alive. But one of the old houses still stands in its original location. The Garðar house was built in 1876 and was the first concrete dwelling of its kind to be built anywhere in the Nordic countries. Firstly, it was built as a parsonage and shows in a very real

way an Icelandic upper-class home, typical for a pastor’s household in the 19th century.

Neðri-Sýrupartur, which is the other house on display, was built in 1875 and is the oldest preserved house made of timber in Akranes. Formerly situated close to the Akranes lighthouse, it represents the typical home of a fisherman’s family in the old days.

The museum’s largest artefacts constitute its expansive collection of ships and boats of various sizes and shapes. Possibly the most notable item on display at the museum is the aforementioned 86-tonne two-mastered ketch Sigurfari, built out of oak in 1885. It was used for handline fishing in Icelandic waters until 1919. (Sigurfari needs to be restored and therefore it is no longer possible to step on board and enjoy the view from the deck, but the museum unfortunately lacks resources to renovate the ship.) Next to Sigurfari is also a pier where various small boats are lined up.

These museums are somewhat different in nature but surely form a unity in their connection with Akranes and the life in the area. The museums themselves also provide guests with lively events. Next June, for example, a group of blacksmiths both Icelandic and foreign, will make items similar to those on display in



the Folk Museum. There will also be held a market day in the museum area in June, where various handicraft artists will offer their work on sale.

It just might be an ideal day of culture to go with your family or friends to the museum area in the summer, have

lunch at Garðakaffi and then get a guided tour to the museums at one o’clock.

More information is available on [museum.is](http://museum.is)





# The World of Puppets

This summer the town of Borgarnes, in the West of Iceland, will be able to boast of yet another cultural treasure when husband-and-wife team Bernd Ogrodnik and Hildur Jónsdóttir invite you to take a peek into The World of Puppets – a museum dedicated entirely to puppetry.

The museum opens on May 20th in the oldest part of Borgarnes in a historical building with splendid ocean views. The center contains a various exhibition rooms, a cozy café, and a puppet theater, where guests can see performances both for children and adults and a reception with a gallery.

## Interactive Exhibition

Bernd and Hildur are both experienced puppeteers and have collectively designed a seemingly uncountable number of puppets over the years. The idea for The World of Puppets actually sprang from the increased interest people had been showing their legacy of puppets. "We have been making puppets and doing shows in Iceland for ten years and Bernd has been working in puppetry for 25 years now. During this time we have created hundreds of puppets in different shapes and sizes – for theater, film and television and recently all kinds of groups started visiting our workshop to see these puppets. We then realized that it would be ideal to start a center where everyone who

wanted could experience this amazing world that puppets somehow bring to life," says Hildur.

However they did not let it suffice to simply display the bulk of their work and instead opted for interactive exhibitions where people are invited into the magical world of puppetry.

## The Puppets Come to Life

Bernd Ogrodnik is a German-born artist who soon decided to dedicate his life to the art of puppetry. Most of the puppets which Bernd makes are wooden and his puppets are thought to exhibit a very personal style.

His biggest work to date was as a Chief Puppeteer in the renowned Danish film Strings, which went on to win several awards.

Bernd has also made various characters from children literature and fairytales into puppets. For example he made the Ugly Duckling and the Little Match Girl for the anniversary of H.C. Andersen in the national Theater of Iceland. "In a grand spectacle The Ugly Duckling changed into a swan on the stage, right in front of the audience. The neck lengthened, the wings spread out and the swan took off," says Hildur. "Bernd says that he got his biggest compliment after that show when a five year old boy, who saw him walk past with the life-size Little Match Girl puppet, asked his mother: "Why is the man holding the girl?" He believed she was alive." Bernd and Hildur have also recently



done a puppet show based on the Alfie Atkins books (Einar Áskell in Icelandic) by Gunnilla Bergström. "Bergström had seen a TV show about Bernd in Sweden and contacted him to ask whether he could do something with Alfie Atkins. So now we have already done a puppet show and we might even produce a TV show about this little fellow in the near future," says Hildur.

## Giftware Gallery

The World of Puppets will be open this summer, every day from 10-22, both the exhibition and the café. A detailed information guide on the art of puppetry will be available at the center.

The café has a proper coffee & cakes menu as well as some smaller dishes and soups. There is also a reception which also functions as a gallery with

giftware, which has been created in Bernd studio. More information is available on [bruduheimar.is](http://bruduheimar.is)



Fossatún in Borgarfjörður

# The Ultimate Family Experience

The ultimate family experience can be found at Fossatún Campsite and Restaurant in Borgarfjörður Bay, a one and a half an hour drive from Reykjavik. There you'll find a family run restaurant, beautiful scenery, a five star campsite and incredible outdoors games for the entire family – not just the kids.

Fossatún was founded by a noted figure in Iceland's music industry, Steinar Berg and his family. Through hard work and a good eye for opportunities they have turned an old slaughterhouse into a riverside restaurant and have discovered and mapped out a hidden nature pearl in the process. The restaurant faces the beautiful Grímsá river and in the vicinity you'll have the chance to see the splendid Tröllafoss waterfall. In recent years Steinar and his family have laid walking paths around the area giving you access to places few have had the opportunity to see. Fossatún is also rich in folklore and be sure to pay a visit to the giant troll on the premises.

## Family Values

Steinar puts special emphasis on family values and activities which the whole family participate in. On location you'll find incredible and imaginative outdoor games such as an outdoors giant chessboard, an 18 hole mini-golf course, a giant play castle, football area, Frisbee golf, skittles, shuffle board, trampolines and even a home-made game which you'll not find elsewhere.

"We wanted to create a haven for younger families who want to share a quality time together in an



environment with similarly minded people. You can count on your family being welcome here, there are never any "closed" events, on the contrary we've seen people meeting for the first time bonding instantly in an afternoon of playing games," says Steinar.

## Five Star Campsite

The Fossatún campsite is as luxurious as they come and Steinar even claims it is the first and probably the only five star camp-site in Iceland. There is room for 150 tents, camping trailers, caravans or motor homes with excellent cleaning and toilet facilities, access to electricity, hot tubs, sauna, and even an internet hotspot, computer access and satellite TV at the restaurant. Starting this summer Fossatún will offer four comfortable rooms in what Steinar calls a "mini-hostel".

Unique Home Made Food with Class Steinar and his wife run the restaurant – including all the cooking and coming up with the recipes. The menu is filled with exciting dishes such as fillet of arctic char, salmon butterfly and southern bacalao, along with more traditional dishes. Group menus are on offer at lunch hour as well as a dinner buffet which will surely take your taste buds for an adventure. For more information visit [www.fossatun.is](http://www.fossatun.is)





-Eiderdown Duvets and Pillows

# Nature's Best Insulation Material

The people of Breiðafjörður Bay have been collecting eiderdown in Hrappsey Island since the 15th century and continue to do so today. Family company Eiderdown still collects, processes and sells quality duvets and pillows made out of nature's finest insulation material.

Eiderdown collecting in Hrappsey is entirely sustainable and done without any harm to the birds or their offspring. On the contrary, the people of Eiderdown provide the birds with shelter which provides

protection from predatory birds and harsh weather conditions.

To insulate their nests the Eider Bird (*Somateria mollissima*) remove their own feathers and line their nests with them. With hundreds of years of experience the people of Breiðafjörður have found a way to harvest the down manually while the birds go in search for food and replace it with appropriate substitutes.

A man named Jón Pétursson, born in 1584, discovered a successful way of cleaning the eiderdown and today his descendant's in Eiderdown are still producing eiderdown based on his techniques.

As soon as the down is collected it is heated in an oven up to 130° and afterwards put in special machines which process it to give it full volume and softness. It is then cleaned manually and given to the down inspector for approval.



Finally it is stuffed into duvets and pillows and washed with a special technique which ensures that the down does not decrease in levels of natural fat.

The final products are guaranteed to keep you warm and comfortable during cold winter nights.

For further information and shopping visit: [www.eiderdown.is](http://www.eiderdown.is)



-Hótel Hamar

# Plan the Holidays in Iceland



While many are satisfied by seeing Iceland only by its staple tourist attractions others are looking for the human element and what better way to find it than to spend the holidays with the locals? Hótel Hamar in Borgarnes invites you to spend Christmas and new years with them, giving you a chance to get to know some of Iceland's more eccentric and curious traditions.



and share with them charismas carols and cookies.

Christmas preparations are also an integral part of the holidays and Hótel Hamar does not fail to deliver in that department. For example the intricate laufbrauð-bread requires that all the members of the household gather around to carve elaborate and beautiful patterns into the dough before it is boiled in grease. And if you're behaving nicely and put your shoe out in the window you just might get a treat in it in the morning – or a potato if you've misbehaved.



Although these traditions may differ from those you are used to, the family friendly atmosphere at Hótel Hamar will leave you with Christmas memories you won't soon forget.

During the whole of December there will be a program of Christmas



activities. New Years Eve at Hótel Hamar is no less extravagant, including brunch, buffet and entertainment.

Hótel Hamar is of course open during the summertime as well, offering beautiful landscapes, fascinating attractions in the vicinity and of course comfortable rooms. Golfers are in for a treat as the hotel is located on a 18 hole golf course – midnight golfing is a recommended experience.

For more information and booking visit [www.icelandairhotels.is](http://www.icelandairhotels.is) or call +354 433 6600



-Hótel Búðir on Snæfellsnes Peninsula:

# A Historical Hotel under the Glacier

The Snæfellsnes peninsula is a place of many wonders – natural, historical and mystical. Situated on the southern shore of the peninsula, Hótel Búðir is the perfect place to set up base while you experience the best Snæfellsnes has to offer.

Hótel Búðir's kitchen has long been one of the main attractions of the hotel, and is renowned for its unique fish dishes, original starters and lavish desserts. Hótel Búðir's chefs have somewhat of an obsession with using fresh and seasonal materials, even using local flowers for making salad oil and local Parsley for seasoning. The fish is of course brought from the local markets as soon as it is brought to land.

## Spectacular Surroundings

In the 17th century, long before there

was a hotel there, Búðir was a prominent trading center and remains from that time can be seen around the hotel. The hotel's surroundings are especially spectacular; Snæfellsnesjökull glacier towering above, white sandy beaches, lava fields and the ocean will certainly leave no one untouched. Many say Hótel Búðir is an extremely romantic place, which is made evident by the dozens of people from all over the world who choose to get married at Búðir every summer.

The hotel is only 15 minutes away from the glacier where Jules Verne famously claimed the entrance to the centre of the earth was to be found. The hotel staff can help arrange for a snowmobile trip to the top or you can drive up to the glacier by car.

## Activities for All

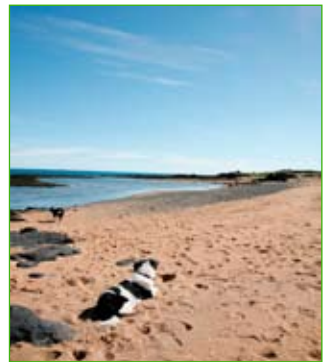
Other activities in the area are abundant and include horseback riding tours, small fishing towns golfing and plenty of historical and mythological sites, most of which have been marked with informative signs and markers. The Hótel Budir's staff can provide additional information and help make arrangements.

Groups looking for excitement should definitely try the Hotel Budir's murder mystery, a whole weekend of fun where you have to solve a complex fictional murder case in the hotel. This is of course all done in good fun and guaranteed to entertain.

The rooms are very comfortable and come in various sizes. Every room comes with a TV, DVD, telephone,

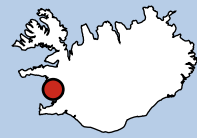
clock wireless net and a hairdryer. Breakfast is included.

For more information and booking go to [www.hotelbudir.is](http://www.hotelbudir.is)





# Icelandic Fishing Adventures



For an up close and personal nature experience Icelandic Fishing Adventure (Icefa) is the way to go. Icefa is a family company which provides unique personal boat-tours both around Reykjavík and longer trips up on the Icelandic highlands.



The smaller boats allow you to get up close and personal.

Icefa sails out on 17 feet long ribbed inflatable boats with 25 horsepower motors. Of the smaller boats available and according to Erlingur Einarsson, the founder of Icefa, they are the safest kind. The boats are very wide and spacious and thus will not capsize. All passengers are supplied with a safety suit, boots and gloves. Passengers are invited to take part in all the activities – including operating the boats under supervision. Erlingur claims that by using this type of boat you'll get a much closer look at Iceland's best. „All those who have been on our tours agree that this is the ultimate nature experience. By taking an active part in a tour of this small scale they say they've truly felt one with nature,” says Erlingur.

you're looking for a pleasant afternoon of nature watching, the four hour tour of Faxaflói Bay is the tour for you. The tour starts with a pickup at your hotel or residence and departs from Reykjavik harbour. You'll tour the city from the sea before sailing around the islands in the bay, where you'll get up close and personal to its inhabitants – the birds, including the colourful puffin. For those

in the mood for fishing Icefa offers you the chance to go sea angling in



## Pleasant Afternoon in Faxaflói Bay

Icefa's tours are of a varied nature. If



Whaling in Hvalfjörður Bay.

Icefa can also arrange tours to fit your request – in fact their motto is to give the customer as much flexibility as possible. So just call or send an email and arrange the vacation of a lifetime.

the bay – quality fishing rods and bait are of course included.

## Bay of Whales

Hvalfjörður Bay was once one of Iceland's primary whaling centres. Erlingur has lived in the bay for over three decades and used to work there as a whale cutter. Erlingur utilizes his experience of the area to the fullest in the various tours he offers in Hvalfjörður Bay. In an unforgettable tour Erlingur will follow the whaling boats as they come into the bay and all the way into the bay, where you might be able to see the whalers make the first cut into the freshly caught whale. Also check out the Hvalfjörður evening, where you'll watch birds and seals under the midnight sun. Erlingur also knows the freshwater fishing opportunities in Hvalfjörður like the back of his hand and can easily arrange for such trips.

## Highland Adventures

Smaller groups looking for the ultimate fishing experience should ask Erlingur about freshwater fishing in the highlands of Iceland. It is at least a two day trip which will take you to some of the most remote fishing lakes around. Icefa provides accommodation in a camper trailer and supplies food and all equipment needed – all you have to do is show up and have fun.

Icefa can also arrange tours to fit your request – in fact their motto is to give the customer as much flexibility as possible. So just call or send an email and arrange the vacation of a lifetime.

More information and booking at [www.icefa.is](http://www.icefa.is)



-Hótel Glymur in Hvalfjörður Bay

# Luxury Suites and Villas in the Land of Elves

While many hotels and tourism providers boast of customer satisfaction – Hótel Glymur in Hvalfjörður invites you to take their customers word for it. Being one of the best reviewed hotels in Iceland on [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com) with comments like “simply the best”, “magical” and “the best hotel I ever stayed at”, Hótel Glymur truly delivers when it comes to customer satisfaction.

## Unique Dishes at Cafe Glymur and A la carte Restaurant

Hótel Glymur's a la carte restaurant offers a wide variety of exciting dishes, including whale meat – which comes as no surprise as Hvalfjörður means “Bay of whales.” Cafe Glymur is open every day from noon until 17:00 offering a wide variety of unique home-made dishes such as the Rustic

Hótel Glymur is almost a village in its own right, located 75 km from Keflavik Airport in the magical Hvalfjörður Bay. Hótel Glymur offers 22 two story fully equipped luxury rooms and three larger suites, with wireless internet, flat screen TV's and specially designed luxury furniture. You'll have access to a spa with an outdoors exercise area, hot tubs and massages, to name a few. The hotel also serves as an art gallery of sorts, with over 280 art pieces on display.



Sandwich, Bow tie Donut and the Halla Hnalla, Hótel Glymur's special cake with cream and other temptations.

## Hótel Glymur Holiday Homes

The latest additions to the “village” are the Hótel Glymur Villas – six individually designed luxury holiday homes each with its own theme. Each villa of course comes fully equipped with top quality furniture and the sunny verandas are equipped with hot thermal Jacuzzis, barbeques and outdoor furniture.

The themes are extremely innovative and should provide you with the vacation according to your desires. The Villa Elegance is for those who enjoy the finer things in life with Italian designs to please the eye, Villa Family provides the perfect family retreat with an assortment of games and a playing, Villa Nature puts the focus on nature's tranquillity – complete with a small stream running parallel to the house, Villa Creativity is designed for meetings and creative workshops with state of the art technology in house, Villa Romance is for the romantics

out there – whether you are on your honeymoon or rekindling the old flame and finally the Villa Couture is for the connoisseurs out there designed with a beautiful movable kitchen with state of the art culinary equipment.



## Crossroads of the Hidden People

Hótel Glymur's road to success was not an easy one however as some claim that the beginning stages were plagued by supernatural events. It turned out that the hotel was built on the crossroads between lands of elves and the hidden people and to make things worse it was done without consulting them. A cloud of bad luck seemed to hover over the building for many years until the current proprietors took over the business. They soon found out the cause for the long run of bad luck and through psychic assistance, negotiated with their unseen neighbours. Today the hotel business is blooming and everything is done in cooperation with the hidden people – although the proprietors have never disclosed the details of the negotiations.

Close by the hotel you'll find the Elven trail, where rumour has it you can even contact the elves through a certain ceremony which the hotel staff will undoubtedly help you with.

For further information and booking visit [www.hotelglymur.is](http://www.hotelglymur.is)





# The Picturesque Town of Stykkishólmur

–See Volcanoes Beautifully Expressed in the Volcano Museum

In the north of Snæfellsnes peninsula lies the beautiful town of Stykkishólmur, the center of services and commerce in the area. Centuries ago, the town became a center for trading, transportation, culture and service for the Breiðafjörður bay, resulting in many of the town's houses being older than most houses in Iceland. Those old and colorful houses, standing in the old town of Stykkishólmur, form a beautiful unity, which is a sight to behold. Stykkishólmur remains to this day the cultural center of the area, a good example of which is the Volcano Museum, which concentrates on the cultural and artistic representation of this strong eruptive force in Iceland.

## The town by the bay of thousand islands

The people of Stykkishólmur have put a great deal of effort into preserving the town's old houses, which therefore have a great influence on the appearance of downtown Stykkishólmur. The town has also concentrated on being environmentally sustainable, for which the town has received a "Green globe" certification. Stykkishólmur is an ideal place to dwell in if one wants to travel along the Snæfellsnes peninsula as everything can be found in a convenient driving distance. You also have all the services you need in one place, various accommodation options; all sorts of activities and culture; restaurants, supermarket and a swimming pool.

Stykkishólmur lies at the bay of Breiðafjörður, which has an uncountable number of islands, rich in wildlife and natural wonders. One can cross the bay of Breiðafjörður with the ferry Baldur, towards Brjánslækur on the Westfjords. Baldur also stops at the bay's most famous island, Flatey, where there is a cute little village with a long history. Various tours around the bay are on offer in Stykkishólmur if you wish to witness this lovely bay of islands.

## Healing hot tubs

The swimming pool in Stykkishólmur is quite recent and contains a lot of options, especially for the kids. There is both an indoor and an outdoor swimming pools, various options of hot tubs and last but not least, one of



Stykkishólmur lies at the bay of Breiðafjörður, which has an uncountable number of islands, rich of wildlife and natural wonders.

the biggest water slides in Iceland. In addition, the hot tubs have certificated pure water that comes straight from the borehole.

The water is famed for its healing powers, as it is full of minerals and works well for all sorts of skin problems. The inhabitants of Stykkishólmur, or "hólmarar" like they are called in Icelandic, had always suspected that there was something magical about both their cold and hot water, which was proven to be the case when a German water organization examined the water.

The camping site in Stykkishólmur is brand new, situated next to the Stykkishólmur's golf course. The Golf club Mostri has a 9 hole golf course and its golf center is actually located within the boundaries of the camping site. This area is on the right side when one drives into Stykkishólmur



Soaking in Stykkishólmur's swimming pool.



A vivid lecture at the Volcano Museum.

The Golf club Mostri has a 9 hole golf course and its golf center is actually located within the boundaries of the camping site.

and is in a walking distance to all services. So if you want to combine your enthusiasm for golf with the enjoyment of camping around Iceland, Stykkishólmur could not be a more convenient place to visit.

## History and ice

History and culture are prominent in Stykkishólmur as the town has three museums. In the "Norwegian house" you will find the district museum of Snæfellsnes. There you can find various information about the region and its history. The house itself was built in 1832 by Árni Thorlacius, who was a merchant and ship owner in the 19th century.

Stykkishólmur has also two fine museums that represent the two strong elements of Icelandic nature, ice and fire, in both original and conventional ways. In the case of ice, on the highest point of Stykkishólmur, where the view is amazing, the old town library has been changed into a museum of water, weather and words. You will find in the museum 24 glass columns with specimen of water from all the primary glaciers of Iceland. It is made by the American artist, Roni Horn, who is known for the emphasis on water and ice in her art.

## Volcanoes expressed throughout time

At this moment the newest museum in Stykkishólmur, the Volcano Museum, is without doubt quite interesting for all travelers visiting Iceland. There, you can not only learn about everything connected with volcanoes, eruptions and other geological matters, but also



If you want to combine your enthusiasm for golf with the enjoyment of camping around Iceland, Stykkishólmur could not be a more convenient place to visit.

see how these strong forces of nature have been expressed through the centuries, not only in Iceland but also around the world.

The Volcano museum just opened last year and is still expanding its activity. It is open from 11-17 during the summertime and you can get an introductory talk daily from one of Iceland's finest volcanologist, Haraldur Sigurðsson. His talks are about volcanoes and their impact as well as geology in general, suited for those having minor knowledge of the field.

But the academic geology is not the main factor in the museum. According to Haraldur, the aim is to blend together the cultural, geological, historic and environmental context of volcanoes. Haraldur has himself researched volcanoes all over the world and has on his voyages

collected various items and art work connected with volcanoes. Those items come from miscellaneous countries like Japan, Italy, Indonesia, Mexico, islands in the Caribbean Ocean and of course Iceland and



are exhibited in an international exhibition in the museum. One can also go on a geology excursion around the Snæfellsnes

peninsula, which are organized at the Volcano museum. Snæfellsnes is of a great variety geologically speaking, so great that one could say that the peninsula is a sort of a pocket book version of all the geological variety of

Iceland. The tour will also provide a comprehensive picture of the geology and geomorphology of the region. The rich history of the Snæfellsnes peninsula will also be described, especially in connection with the Icelandic sagas.

Right now a new exhibition has just opened in the Volcano museum, which obviously has the theme: Eyjafjallajökull. There are many photographs of both the eruption in Eyjafjallajökull and its consequences as

well as of the minor eruption on Fimmvörðuháls. In this exhibition you can see photos from one of Iceland's most renowned photographers RAX, or Ragnar Axelsson, who has dedicated his career as a photographer to the nature of Iceland. You will also see the first art work of the eruption by Vignir Jóhannsson, who has painted the eruption in watercolors.

Whether you seek activities, culture, relaxation or even geological enlightenment, you will find it in Stykkishólmur. This picturesque town by the bay has a lot to offer, not only all the services you will need, but also a comfortable location in an interesting region of Iceland.

More information is available on stykkisholmur.is





# The Settlement Centre in Borgarnes

- A picturesque approach to the past

Borgarnes is a historical place in Iceland as it is the scene of one of the most notable Icelandic Sagas, Egils saga. In 2006, a cultural centre opened in the heart of this little town with the aim to present clearly and visually to its visitors the history of the settling of Iceland, especially emphasizing the environment that fed and bred the robust and poetic Egill Skallagrímsson. Now, four years later the Settlement Centre has won many awards for its activity and is adding yet another option for travellers; the Smart Guide, a guided tour with an iPhone around the Borgarnes area.



## Two exhibitions and a restaurant to visit

"Our aim is mainly to offer our visitors a strong basis to understanding the history of Iceland and the Icelandic Sagas. It makes all your travels to various places in Iceland so much clearer if you have a good sense of the history, and especially of the time of the settlement," says Sigríður Margrét Guðmundsdóttir who runs the centre along with her husband Kjartan Ragnarsson.

The centre is located in some of Borgarnes's oldest buildings, which have been connected by a ingeniously made annex, using the rocky outcrops behind the houses as one of its walls. This annex functions as a reception hall, leading you to the exhibition rooms and the restaurant.

"The Settlement Centre has two exhibitions running, the Settlement Exhibition and the Egils Saga Exhibition. Everybody gets a guided tour through an iPod and can choose from ten languages plus a special version for children," says Sigríður.

Each tour of the exhibitions lasts for thirty minutes.

The Settlement exhibition provides insight into the time of Iceland's settlement, how Iceland was discovered and why the Vikings left their home in Norway. You also get to hear the tales of certain prominent settlers. The Egils saga exhibition takes you through this colourful story that gives a good insight into the tumultuous years of the settlement. The Saga follows Egill through the various stages of his eventful life, as he wrote some of Iceland's finest poems from a young age, killed men since the age of seven, got into battles in his voyages, became known for his severe temper and grieved the loss of his son in his old age.

Both of the exhibitions are presented to the visitor through a visual and theatrical use of all sorts of props and media, made by various artists. The curved wooden figures in the Egils saga exhibition are really memorable as they capture the essence of this peculiar story.



"The restaurant provides hungry travellers with a healthy and nutritious meal. We both have traditional Icelandic dishes, such as Icelandic meat soup and some more international cuisine, like Italian and Mexican. We know what it feels like to be a tired traveller and therefore we have tried to create a nice and relaxing atmosphere while keeping the prices reasonable," says Sigríður.

## To experience the settings of Egils saga

The newest addition to the Centre's options is the Smart Guide, an innovative guided tour with an iPhone to the main settings of the story of Egill Skallagrímsson. With the help of the newest GPS navigational technique the phone leads you around the Borgarnes area and as it detects certain locations it automatically begins narrating.

"With this new technique, you certainly get a lively guidance through the area, it is just like the guide is there with you in person," says Sigríður. "You just turn on the program and a voice tells you exactly what to do. It guides you to where you are supposed to walk and when you are on the right spot it begins narrating the background story of wherever you are. Then it tells you to drive to the next spot and when you have reached it, the iPhone tells you to stop, what to do next, etc."

One can both rent an iPhone from the Settlement Centre, starting next summer onwards, and download the program from the Apple store, starting late next summer. "This is quite a unique experience, which we are really proud to present to our guests in addition to the exhibitions," says Sigríður.

For all those seeking better understanding of the Icelandic cultural heritage, the Settlement Centre is without doubt a good option. Both the exhibitions themselves and the whole environment of the Settlement Centre radiates creativity and obvious care for the subject, which results in an interesting and lively experience for the guests.



## Cafe 59 in Grundarfjörður

# Dine With the Locals

In the quiet and peaceful fishing town of Grundarfjörður you'll find the cozy Restaurant Kaffi 59, where you can enjoy homemade meals while you enjoy the splendid ocean view.

check out the 59 burger specialty and traditional food during the lunch and dinner hours. During the weekday afternoons you'll find a lively Kaffi atmosphere where you can enjoy hot beverages and home baked cakes, while you blend in with the locals.

Kaffi 59 offers a wide selection of pizzas, hamburgers and sandwiches –

During the weekends Kaffi 59 really

comes to life with live music and karaoke nights. Major sports events and other major happenings are broadcasted onto a big screen in the bar – often resulting in an especially lively atmosphere.

Grundarfjörður is town of around one thousand inhabitants on the north of the Snæfellsnes peninsula.

Kaffi 59 can be easily found on the main road. The town is surrounded with majestic mountain views and inhabited by friendly people. A visit to Grundarfjörður and a meal at Kaffi 59 is definitely a stop worth your while on your tour of Snæfellsnes peninsula.

For more information visit [www.cafe59.is](http://www.cafe59.is)



# Guesthouse in Ensku húsin

Ensku húsin is a guesthouse with history and soul in only one hour's drive from Reykjavík. The name translated in English is "the old English lodge" which refers to the Englishmen that owned the house for a period of time.

The oldest part of the house was imported from Norway and assembled by a farmer in 1884. It was originally a house for his family, but with new owners around 1900 it was used as a fishing lodge on the banks of Langá, one of Iceland's most famous salmon rivers. From 1960 until today Jóhannes Guðmundsson, his daughter and family run the fishing lodge that served the river until 1998 when it was turned into a guesthouse.

The atmosphere is peaceful with pure nature all around. The Old English Fishing Lodge at the River Langá is 6 km to the west of the small town of



## The Old English Fishing Lodge in Borgarnes, only one hour drive from Reykjavík.

Borgarnes, about one hour drive from Reykjavík. The guesthouse consists of two houses, the Old English Fishing Lodge and old farmhouse Lambalaekur. The houses were bought from the same factory in Norway and imported to Iceland. The Old English Fishing Lodge was built by a farmer in 1884. Lambalaekur, built 1894, was used as a farmhouse about 20 km from Ensku húsin but in 2002-

4 was renovated and moved to our location by the family.

The guesthouse is now a family company striving to keep the atmosphere cozy and tranquil. The rooms are 19 in total, 11 of them

Even though the oldest part of the houses are 100 years old the rooms remain peaceful and the atmosphere by the river has been the same throughout the years,

with private facilities. "Even though the oldest part of the houses are 100 years old the rooms remain peaceful and the atmosphere by the river has been the same throughout the years, with a feeling of being welcomed to the family," says manager Anna Dröfn.



The atmosphere is cozy and tranquil. No TV in the rooms, only peace and quiet.



## Car Rental

Cars and 4x4 for the highland  
Contact us at [Braut.is](http://Braut.is) or 3544312157







Snæfellsnesbær County

# Industrious People under the Glacier

The Snæfellsnes peninsula is a place of many wonders – both geological and cultural. The majestic Snæfellsjökull Glacier towers above magnificent lava fields, beautiful coastlines lined with tremendous basalt columns, dazzling waterfalls and the diverse birdlife. Nestled underneath the awe inspiring glacier is the peaceful county of Snæfellsbær from where you can explore the peninsula's many wonders.

Snæfellsbær is on the outermost part of the peninsula and has around 1700 inhabitants, the largest populations being Ólafsvík, Rif and Hellissandur. The center of the county is of course Snæfellsjökull Glacier National Park. Snæfellsjökull has been the inspiration for many poets and authors throughout history and was recently chosen by the Guardian as one of the 10 „best“ volcanoes in the world when it comes to literary inspiration and coverage. The most famous author to write about Snæfellsjökull is of course Jules Verne, who once claimed that it contained the entrance to the center of the earth. While it is unlikely that you'll ever find said entrance it is

highly recommended to explore the glacier and its surroundings by whichever means most suits you – by car, snowmobile or foot.

Snæfellsnes, Snæfellsbær and

Snæfellsjökull were named by the settler Bárður Snæfellsás who relocated from Norway to Iceland at the end of the 9th century. Apparently Bárður was the descendant of trolls and skilled in the arts of magic as well.

Rumour has it that while building his settlement farm he stayed at Sönghellir cave at the base of the glacier. Sönghellir (Cave of echoes) can be easily reached by road so you can try your singing voice.



The birdlife around Snæfellsbær is especially vivid.

## Diverse Landscapes

What characterizes Snæfellsbær County is the incredible diversity of attractions found within. You can find hot and cold mineral water sources with supposed healing powers, gigantic fields of lava in different shapes and sizes and massive craters and mysterious caves. The wildlife around Snæfellsbær includes various bird species, seals swimming along the shore and various types of fish waiting to be caught and cooked.

## Industrious People

The people of Snæfellsbær are industrious people and constantly exploring new possibilities in their small community. A part of that is the founding of „Áttagastofa“, a program which offers the whole community a common platform to forward ideas which promote what the land and the people have to offer. One of the ideas sprung from said program is coast-angling – as opposed to the more common sea angling. Coast-angling employs completely different techniques and equipment and is of course a much cheaper activity. You'll get to spend more time with the sea and the fish and enjoy the company of the people around in a tranquil setting.

## Get Hooked

The people of Snæfellsbær and surrounding communities are specialists when it comes to preparing seafood dishes – which comes as no surprise given the rich fishing history

The people of Snæfellsbær and surrounding communities are specialists when it comes to preparing seafood dishes – which comes as no surprise given the rich fishing history of the area.

of the area. They invite you to „Get Hooked“ on the best seafood on the peninsula on the Snæfellsnes Seafood Trail, where you'll move between six restaurants and coffee shops trying the various types of dishes they have on offer. All the food in the seafood trail is certified as being made with local produce. The seafood trail is part of the project Life by the coastline – Destination Snæfellsnes, where all those working with services or products connected to the ocean in



anyway join hands and create a trail of exciting sea-related destinations around the peninsula.

## Mysterious Rock Formations

A visit to the small town of Arnarstapi is highly recommended with its exciting walking trails and splendid rock formations. Take a stroll to the town pier and from there along the shoreline where you'll see how the barrage of the ocean has carved out some pretty interesting shapes in the rocks – including a cliff with a mysterious hole through its middle. Other attractions include Bárðarlaug pool where Bárður Snæfellsás is rumored to have bathed when he arrived as soon as he reached the shores of Iceland, and a memorial to Guðriður Þorbjarnardóttir, a unique woman who traveled the world around the year 1000.

## Feats of Strength

At Malarrif you can see the impressive Lóndrangar towering above the waves and the beach. At Djúpalónssundur you'll see four rocks which the itinerant workers in Dritvik would compete with each other by lifting and as you'll see their measurement of manhood is quite high. The lightest rock is 23 kg and is called Amlóði or weakling, the second one is 54 kg and called Hálfdrættlingur or half-a-man, the third heaviest one is 100 kg and called Hálfsterkur or half-strong, the heaviest rock is a full 154 kg and is called Fullsterkur or fully strong. So it is now easy for you to see if you're a fully strong person by Icelandic standards.

For further information visit [www.snb.is](http://www.snb.is) or send an e-mail to [info@snb.is](mailto:info@snb.is)



Notice the elaborate rock formations along the coastline.





## A Sail through a Labyrinth of Magnificent Islands

Do you want to go so close to the birdcliffs that the birds surround you without being bothered by you at all? Then you should definitely take a tour with Seatours, that leads you through the labyrinth of islands on Breiðafjörður bay to show you the amazing wildlife as well as a nature that will not disappoint you.



and beautiful houses. The "Unique Adventure Tour" is their most popular tour, according to Nadine Walter from Seatours. "In this tour, one gets the opportunity to see some of the most interesting islands on Breiðafjörður, which have multi-faceted bird-life and beautiful columnar cliffs.

Seatours have various sorts of tours on offer. They are located in Stykkishólmur, which itself is a sight to see as it contains numerous old

"But if you really want to do the fishing yourself, I would definitely recommend the "Sea Angling" trip. Its popularity is ever-growing, especially among families with children," says Nadine. You will get your own fishing pole and it won't take long until fish bites, most often the fish that has fed Icelanders throughout the centuries, the cod. One could say that this is a perfect day out for families as Seatours have made an agreement with the local restaurants in Stykkishólmur to cook the fish you and your family catch. It is certainly a special feeling to eat something that you have caught yourself, especially for the kids. This tour runs twice a day, at 10 and 13 o'clock during the summertime.

In addition, there are also some special customized trips for groups on offer at Seatours. "Those trips are taken on a catermeran "Særún", which has a bar and a kitchen so you will get a proper feast with a buffet and everything. The same route is taken as in the Unique Adventure tour but the trip lasts longer as people are dining," says Nadine.

Seatours also run the ferry Baldur, which goes from Stykkishólmur to the Westfjords. Baldur stops at the small and renown island of Flatey in Breiðafjörður, which is a sight one cannot miss. Flatey has various old and picturesque houses, which have, for example, been use as the surroundings in numerous Icelandic films. Seatours offer you to take the ferry to see Flatey and then take whichever ferry you want back. You can even take your car on the ferry and stay behind leaving your car on the ferry, and sightsee in Flatey until the next ferry comes. "We also offer special customized tours for groups to Flatey for those who are interested" says Nadine.

More information is available on [seatours.is](http://seatours.is)

"For example, if you are lucky you will see the eagle on this trip as we try to spot their nests beforehand and as we have a special permit to approach its areas. Then there is a great variety of other birds, like the puffin," says Nadine. The sail itself is relaxing and comfortable, which makes the whole experience more enjoyable. This trip runs twice every day during the summertime, at 11 and 14.30 and lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes. "On this trip we also fish some scallops and sea urchins and give people the chance to taste this strange and beautiful sea food.

**YOUR CHOICE ON SNÆFELLSNES**



**HOTEL**  
*Framnes*  
Nesvegur 6, 350 Grundarfjörður  
email: [framnes@hotelframnes.is](mailto:framnes@hotelframnes.is)  
Tel: 00 354 4386893



**EXPERIENCE MORE IN ICELAND**

**Puffin express offers Whale watching, puffin watching, sea angling and dinner cruises.**

**Our ticket sale in Reykjavik Old Harbour is open from 8 am to 8 pm.  
Booking by phone: +354 892 0099 | Online booking: [www.puffinexpress.is](http://www.puffinexpress.is)**





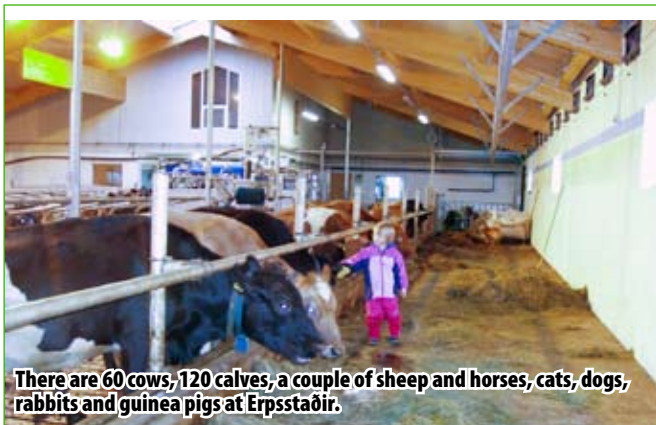


The Erpsstaðir ice cream is a hit among visitors.

## Erpsstaðir – A Genuine Icelandic Farm Experience

In the Northwest of Iceland, on the road 60 to the Westfjords, one can find plenty of farms. But one of them stands out. There you can buy milk products firsthand as well as having the opportunity to visit the animals on the farm. You can even stay there overnight in an old farmhouse, away from other tourists. This farm is called Erpsstaðir, named after an Irish son of an earl, who was freed from enslavement in Ireland and came to Iceland where he acquired this piece of land back in the days of the settling of Iceland.

Þorgrímur Einar Guðbjartsson bought Erpsstaðir in 1997 together with his wife, Helga Elinborg Guðmundsdóttir. They have been living there ever since with their five children, building up the farm both as a technically advanced dairy farm and a pleasant place to visit for all those seeking to experience a real Icelandic farm and to visit the animals living there. On



There are 60 cows, 120 calves, a couple of sheep and horses, cats, dogs, rabbits and guinea pigs at Erpsstaðir.

the farm, there are 60 cows, 120 calves, a couple of sheep and horses, cats, dogs, rabbits and guinea pigs in addition to the family itself.

Erpsstaðir specializes in home made dairy products, which they sell on the farm. This mode of trade has grown hugely in popularity in Iceland since the Icelandic bankcrash in the year 2008, as people have started to reevaluate what kind of lives they want to live as well as being more conscious of what they are buying and from whom they are buying.

"I had always been interested in making my own dairy products on the farm as I'm educated as a dairy technician. When we built the new cowshed a couple of years back, we decided to make a space both for processing the dairy at home and to have a reception so guests could come and buy our products and see the cowshed," says Þorgrímur. "Now we are working on decorating the reception, or the shop, to have a bit of an information center about the



You can buy milk products first hand from Erpsstaðir.

we had planned to start slowly and only have it open during weekends. But the icecream was such a hit that we needed to have the shop open every day!" Secondly, if you love the white, wet cheese that is originally from Greece, you will find one like that on Erpsstaðir called "The Greek". Thirdly, one can get the traditional Icelandic "skyr" there, yet to be named. "We just started the dairy production but it has been a success although it takes a lot of work. Already, we have an extra employee working in the production," says Þorgrímur.

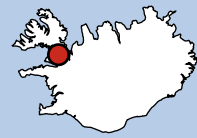
The farm itself is just by the road, which makes it really easy to find and a convenient place to visit if one is driving through. "We get a lot of young families with children," says Þorgrímur. "Which is maybe not surprising as this is the ideal place to visit with your children. They can have a treat in the form of an icecream and see

the animals. I always recommend that people give themselves some time to stop so the kids can have a good look and connect with the animals, instead of just grabbing an icecream and driving off. During the summertime one can get a guided tour around the cowshed on weekends and even on other days if someone is available. People can, of course, always call ahead to guarantee a tour" Þorgrímur and his wife also rent out the old farmhouse as an accommodation for 6-10 people in a group. "What we want to offer is the quietude of the Icelandic countryside. You are not surrounded by other

tourists, you are completely by yourself, even in a good distance from us, the farm itself," says Þorgrímur. "In fact, you only need a toothbrush, everything else is already there, even the food!"

Erpsstaðir is rather central in the West of Iceland, so if one wishes to examine that part of the country, it might be a good idea to stay on Erpsstaðir for a couple of days to explore the area. "Erpsstaðir is in a convenient driving distance to both the Snæfellsnes peninsula, Hólmavík on the West fjords and even all the way south to Borgarnes, so there are plenty of things to do. The neighbouring area also offers a lot of entertainment, such as Eiríksstaðir in Haukadal, birthplace of Leif the lucky" says Þorgrímur.

Further information and booking can be reached through the website [www.erpsstadir.is](http://www.erpsstadir.is) and the email address: [erpur@simnet.is](mailto:erpur@simnet.is).



Reykhólahreppur

## A Hidden Pearl in the Westfjords of Iceland

One of the best things about Iceland is that there are still hidden pearls to be found which have not been over-saturated with tourism. One of these pearls is Reykhólahreppur County on the southern coast of the Vestfirðir peninsula. A relatively small and peaceful community in terms of population, but in terms of natural phenomena and landscape it is as grand as it gets. With over a dozen fjords overlooking the island-dotted Breidafjörður Bay, beautiful scenery, historical and poetic references and exceptionally vivid birdlife, Reykhólahreppur is truly one of the hidden pearls of Iceland.

Though by looking at a map you might think a pearl such as this could only be reached by helicopter or special transportation, but the truth is that it can be reached in a two and a half hour drive from Reykjavík – all on an asphalted road.

### Birdwatchers Paradise

The village of Reykhólar is the centre of Reykhólahreppur County and provides a full range of services for its visitors, including a campsite, stores, museums and a geothermally heated swimming pool named after one of

Iceland's greatest heroes – Grettir the Strong. Throughout history Reykhólar has been the residence of many of Iceland's most prominent chieftains and is frequently mentioned in the Icelandic sagas. Reminders of that time are plentiful – including a boat



Birdwatchers are in for a treat as a wide variety of species make their nests on both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and in the islands of Breidafjörður Bay.

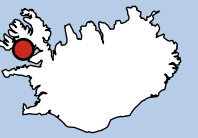
museum which has a vast collection of the boats which were used in Breidafjörður Bay. The oldest summer hotel in Iceland, Hotel Bjarkalundur, just outside Reykhólar, can provide you with quality accommodation with picturesque views.

Birdwatchers are in for a treat as a wide variety of species make their nests on both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and in the islands of Breidafjörður Bay. Perhaps one of the most impressive bird-sighting opportunity in the area is the majestic and elusive white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), who make their nests in the area and can even be seen flying over Reykhólar.

### Uncountable Islands

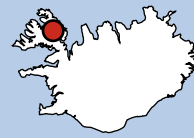
The islands of Breidafjörður Bay are so many that some people say that they are uncountable, but cartographers have estimated that there are around 3,000 islands in the fjord, most of which belong to Reykhólahreppur County. You can arrange for an island cruise at Reykhólar taking you to inhabited and uninhabited islands – except for the plethora of birds which make their homes there.

The second largest island in Breidafjörður is called Flatey Island and was once one of the most important cultural sites in Iceland. Perhaps nowhere else in Iceland has the turn-of-the-century atmosphere been better preserved and walking around Flatey in the summertime you'll almost think it is the year 1900. There you'll find reminders of past times – including a monestary built in 1172 and Iceland's first library built in 1864.





# Visit the Cheerful Villagers in Iceland's Smallest Fishing Place



The parish of Kaldrananes in the Westfjords, where the small village of Drangsnæs lies, is one of the smallest parishes in Iceland with only 114 inhabitants. This area has many things to offer; on a good day you will see a whale from the coast, various puffin colonies, old relics of a Basque whaling station since the 17th century, hot pools on the coast as Kaldrananes is a geothermal area, the Pier festival in July and last but not least a community of cheerful people who all know each other and help out making their surroundings as enjoyable as possible.



## Many options for the traveler

Kaldrananes is on the northern side of the Westfjords near to the bigger village Hölmavík. Fishing has always been important for the area and its inhabitants, especially of the female lumpfish. The area is rich of whales, as Jenný Jensdóttir, the reeve of Kaldrananes explains: "We have a good whale-watching trip here, which always amazed my kids as they saw them regularly when they were playing by the coast and did not see the need for whale watching."

"The tourism here on Kaldrananes has been growing rapidly those last years as the area offers many interesting possibilities," says Jenný. You have plenty of options concerning the sea; sailing, whale-watching, sea angling and trips to Grimsey in Steingrímsfjörður, where there are huge puffin colonies. We nowadays have both accommodation options in the village of Drangsnæs and further in Bjarnafjörður fjord. We actually have swimming pools in both those places, the one in Bjarnafjörður

was built in 1947 and is next to a natural pool as Bjarnafjörður is a hot spot. There is a natural hot tub by the swimming pool, in which the warm water just runs from the ground. The one in Drangsnæs is newer, smaller and really cozy."

But the most spectacular use of the hot water in Drangsnæs is on the coast where a couple of hot tubs have been put to wind down in for whoever is passing the town. "In '96, they suddenly found hot water in Drangsnæs. We did not have a swimming pool then, so an old, venerated man in the area gave the children some fish tubs to place in the coast and there they piped the hot water into them. The surf is strong by the coast so one winter it took the fish tubs with them. Then we decided to put proper tubs there and carefully fasten them down with rocks. There is even a piece of artwork, "LAGRIMA", chopped into the rocks by the artist Mireya Samper, who visited us once. Jenný says that those hot tubs are

used a lot by the locals. "Every one in the villages has his own "tub-robe" and "tub-shoes" and you will probably spot someone on the street, going to or coming from the tubs. Even in the shop, you could commonly see someone in the tub-robe on his or her way from the tubs!"

## The Pier festival

Kaldrananes has a festival every year in July called the "Pier festival". Every inhabitant of the town works voluntarily to make the festival as amazing and fun as possible. "This is a family festival, where parents are supposed to have fun with their kids," says Jenný who adds that this year is going to be the 15th anniversary of the fest. "We take a whole day for the feast, this year the 17th of July, which is a Saturday. The day begins with jig fishing on the pier for the kids, but we also have a song contest and many more activities for the kids."

"The hallmark of the festival is certainly the sea food tasting on the plane in front of the freezing plant put up by the local women's society. There are various different kinds of sea food you can taste there, which are probably exotic for many people, like minke whale, grilled seal meat, grilled female lumpfish and grilled puffin. We offer people to taste both more traditional food as well as this same material cooked in new ways," says Jenný. On the Pier festival the culture is also held in high esteem with art and photography exhibitions. "We always try to show old photos from the

area, the theme this year being "The Great Snowy Winter of 1995" but the magnitude of snow that winter was unbelievable and it has hardly snowed since," says Jenný.

During the evening the feast continues with an entertainment program, a campfire and in the end a proper Icelandic country ball. "I would also like to mention the scarecrow competition as well as the new names all the houses and streets get after the different fishwaters of the sea, those things certainly enliven the place."

## Old relics from the Basques

In Kaldrananes, more precisely in Hveravík, an old whaling station from the 17th century has been found. It is believed that the Basques ran the fishery, which was probably a big industry at that time. "They have found relics of the oven, actually the oldest relics of bricks in Iceland. It is also believed that Icelanders got to know tobacco for the first time through the Basques, but they have found a lot of tobacco pipes there," says Jenný. Kaldrananes contains a small society and consequently people there still care for each other, your neighbour is your friend and family, an atmosphere that might be lost in many bigger towns or cities. The people of this cheerful community not only lives at peace with each other and their surroundings, the sea being important as ever; they also welcome travelers to their region and to participate in their society and experience the feeling of union.



-The Learning Journey Workshop

## Sagafjords - The Ultimate Learning Experience

Although travelling through Iceland is a good way to learn about the country and its inhabitants, the knowledge you acquire is always limited to the things you see and the people you meet. Imagine getting the chance to learn extensively about Iceland from respected university scholars through informative lectures and lively field trips in the remote and beautiful Westfjords of Iceland.

Next August the Sagafjords *Learning Journey Workshop* will be held for the first time in the friendly town of Patreksfjörður in the municipality of Vesturbyggð. The lectures cover such diverse topics such as the *Geology of Iceland* with a special focus on



the geology of the West Fjords, *The Ancient Manuscripts* cover the origins of the Icelandic Sagas, their authors and their characteristics, *Modern Iceland* addresses the economic sectors, government and infrastructure of Iceland, *Icelandic Nature* of course covers vegetation and wildlife among others and *Icelandic Culture* discusses modern Icelandic literature and cinema. Each lecture is followed by a field trip relative to its topic – you'll examine geological formations, historical sites mentioned in the Saga of Gísli Súrsson, stunning landscapes and bird cliffs, visit Icelandic businesses and Institutions and watch Icelandic films.

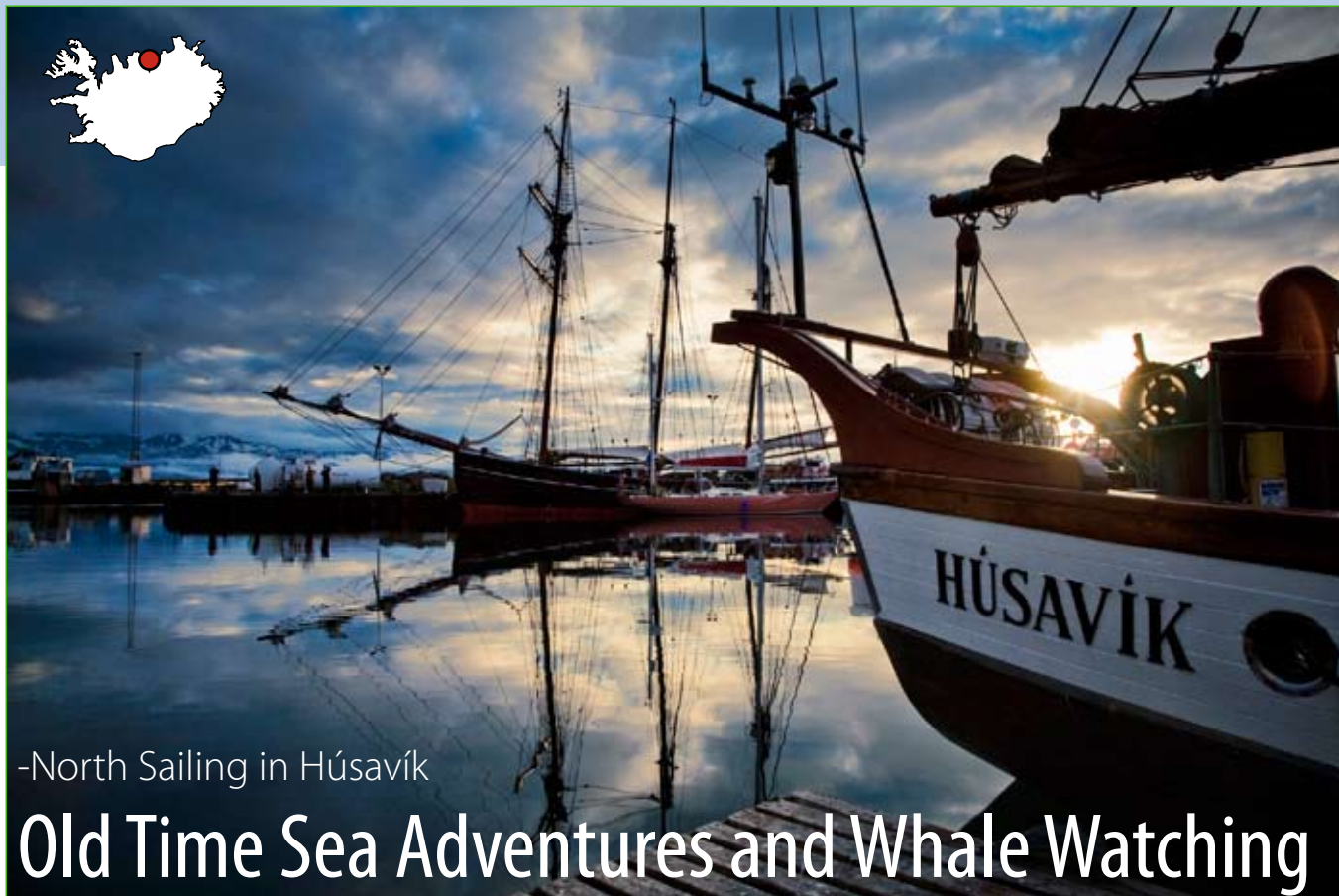
All the lecturers are renowned scholars and teachers at the University of Iceland who are waiting in anticipation to share their knowledge with those willing to hear. The workshops are conducted in either English, German or a Scandinavian language and after completion you are given a certificate issued by the University of Iceland.

Upon arrival participants will settle into comfortable flats in the seaside town of Bildudalur, which is in Vesturbyggð municipality close to Patreksfjörður. The apartments come furnished with all modern conveniences. During the course of the program you'll interact with the lecturers, locals and other participants – including eating local food together and enjoying local entertainment. There is of course plenty of free time during the program where you can explore the wide array of activities Vesturbyggð has to offer, such as hiking, sea angling, golfing, swimming, horseback riding and many more. A visit to a small village in the Westfjords is a memorable experience in itself, as the people are known for their friendly and hospitable demeanour. The surrounding region has some of Iceland's most beautiful and pristine nature: statuesque mountains, deep fjords, verdant valleys, awesome bird cliffs and more.

For more information visit [www.sagafjords.is](http://www.sagafjords.is) and [www.vesturbyggd.is](http://www.vesturbyggd.is) For booking e-mail to [info@sagafjords.is](mailto:info@sagafjords.is)







-North Sailing in Húsavík

## Old Time Sea Adventures and Whale Watching

**As if standing in the awesome presence of the earth's largest creatures wasn't enough, imagine doing so on a traditional oak boat in the style of Iceland's forefathers. Whale watching company North Sailing in Húsavík offers you the chance to simultaneously experience some of the sailing traditions of pre-industrial Iceland and enjoy one of the most spectacular nature tours on earth.**

modern standards and to give you the optimal whale watching experience. In 2002 North Sailing introduced a 51 feet schooner to its fleet with a total of 6 sails which can give her a speed of up to 10 knots under full sails. There are probably few experiences that bring you closer to the forces of nature than sailing on the open sea with nothing but the wind driving you forward and whales swimming in the vicinity. The schooner has been met with such

enthusiasm that North Sailing has purchased another one which will be fully operational in the summer. A tour on a schooner is a unique experience which combines whale watching, bird watching and a sailing adventure. On board you experience the aura of past times by setting sails or assisting the skipper as a lee helmsman. The tour also includes a stop at Lundy, the puffin island, as well as the traditional whale watching areas.

For the adventurous types the two day schooner tour is an opportunity not to be missed. The tour includes birdwatching, whale watching, a trip up to the Arctic Circle in Iceland's northernmost inhabited territory, Grimsey island and perhaps most importantly sailing through the open ocean with the wind in your face and a sturdy boat under your feet. For information and booking visit: [www.northsailing.is](http://www.northsailing.is)



North Sailing is one of the leading whale watching companies in Iceland and was the one to start scheduled whale watching trips from Húsavík. In Skjálfandi Bay, you'll have the chance to see Humpbacks, Minke Whales, Blue Whales, Dolphins and others. As you can see by the accompanying pictures North Sailing's staff are extremely skilled in finding and getting up close to these majestic creatures. All of North Sailing's vessels are primarily made out of oak, a tradition which has long since been replaced by the introduction of metals and plastics. North Sailing started in 1994 when the company's founders renovated a 20 ton oak boat and has now since become one of the leading Whale Watching companies in Iceland. All the boats have been renovated to accommodate

-Hestasport Riding Tours

## Get in Touch With Nature on the Icelandic Horse

Since early settlement horseback riding has been an integral part of Iceland's culture and is now one of the most popular activities in the country. While most consider horseback riding an enjoyable pastime activity, the people of Skagafjörður Bay consider it a way of life. It is the only county in Iceland where horses outnumber people and has some of the most experienced horse breeders and riders in the country. You are therefore guaranteed to have the ultimate Icelandic horseback riding experience with riding company Hestasport in Skagafjörður Bay. In addition to providing a wide selection of riding tours suited to your preferences and experience, Hestasport offers family friendly and comfortable accommodation overlooking the vast plains and distant mountains of the charming Skagafjörður valley.

The riding tours last from a few hours up to several days in length, depending on your preference. If you have never tried horseback riding before Hestasport will arrange beginner's lessons which can either serve as a preparation for a longer tour or just an enjoyable afternoon getting to know the Icelandic horse. Hestasport has over 30 years of experience in the field so your first encounter with the Icelandic horse is sure to be a pleasant one.

The longer tours can last for up to nine days and are truly an unforgettable experience – surely there is no other means of getting to know Iceland's



Riding tours can last from a few hours up to several days.

people, nature and history than to traverse the Icelandic highlands by horse with the locals. During the tour you'll get to know your horse like the back of your hand and there is something about sitting on top of such a powerful creature which seems to bring you closer to the primal forces of nature, as it were.

The people of Skagafjörður are known for their friendly and welcoming

Hestasport offers you a natural hot tub from where you can enjoy Skagafjörður Bay's splendid landscapes in the midnight sun.

demeanour and also for their rich singing tradition. So don't be surprised if they break out in song when you camp for the night. During the tour you'll ride, eat, drink and rest with your fellow travellers in mountain cabins, making memories which will last a lifetime.

Even though the Icelandic horse is known for its docile nature and comfortable walks, a day of horseback riding can be quite straining and what better way to wind down than to relax in Hestasport's natural hot tub from where you can enjoy Skagafjörður Bay's splendid landscapes in the midnight sun? Hestasport has some

very affordable and family friendly cottages just off the main road from Varmahlíð.

Other activities available in Skagafjörður are white water rafting, hiking, sea angling, museums and historical sites and many more. So if you are taking a trip around Iceland be sure to stop at Skagafjörður for an unforgettable experience.

For more information and booking go to [www.riding.is](http://www.riding.is)



Relaxing in Hestasport's hot tub after a long day of riding.





# A Bird for a Million – The most amazing bird photo

Between the 15th of April and 31st of August, people visiting Tröllaskagi, the Troll peninsula, are able to participate in a photography competition with the simple yet splendid theme of birds in the area. The bird life on Tröllaskagi is rich in nature so there are many different possibilities for the photographers to get a great photo of a bird.

## The participation

Recently there has been an awakening in bird-watching tourism in Iceland as the country has plenty of birdlife to offer. There has always been considerable interest in bird life among Icelanders, but perhaps a lack of realization that foreigners might find the Icelandic birds interesting too.

One of the areas where bird-watching has become very accessible in the recent years is Tröllaskagi, or the Troll peninsula, in the North, where towns like Ólafsfjörður, Siglufjörður and Dalvík are located. The nature you find on the peninsula is multi-faceted, with high cliffs, many lakes, wetlands and a nature reserve in the valley of Svarfaðardalur. That means that the variety of bird species living there is among the highest in Iceland.

Brimnes Hotel & Bungalows in Ólafsfjörður (brimnes.is) is the main driving force behind this competition. "We want to draw attention to the Tröllaskagi area as bird-watching tourism is gaining ground here, unsurprisingly as this is the ideal place to see so many of the unique birds of Iceland," says Axel Pétur that runs Brimnes Hotel & Bungalows. "All our customers in Brimnes have the possibility of participating and winning one million Icelandic krona [ about \$8000; about € 6000, in april 2010].

The finalists will receive the "Trollbird Awards" and the winner gets the "Trollbird Statue" as well as the amount of 1.000.000 ISK. "What people need to do to have a chance to win the award is to capture a photo of a bird in Tröllaskagi or the islands Hrísey and Grimsey, that the selection committee judges to be of outstanding quality and originality as well as being of value for the area," says Axel.

The entrance fee for participation is 4000 krona and the deadline is the 5th of September. 1000 krona of each entrance fee paid is destined to Fuglavernd – BirdLife Iceland, but one of the judges, Hrafn Svavarsson



The ever colourful puffin.

is a board member of BirdLife Iceland. The aim of the organization is both the protection of birds and also to make access to bird-watching better all around the country, by building information signs, parking lots etc. in popular bird watching areas.

## The home of birds like the Harlequin Duck and the Great Northern Diver

Most of the birds that you will see on Tröllaskagi are migratory birds, as rather few bird species live in Iceland all year around. Magnús Sveinsson is one of those who have the greatest knowledge of birdlife in the area. He has created the website arcticaves.is to serve as an information bank for bird enthusiasts. "If one wants to mention birds living here, one cannot forget

the Atlantic Puffin. Grimsey is home to one of the largest puffin colonies in Iceland. Then we have species found in Iceland but nowhere else in Europe,



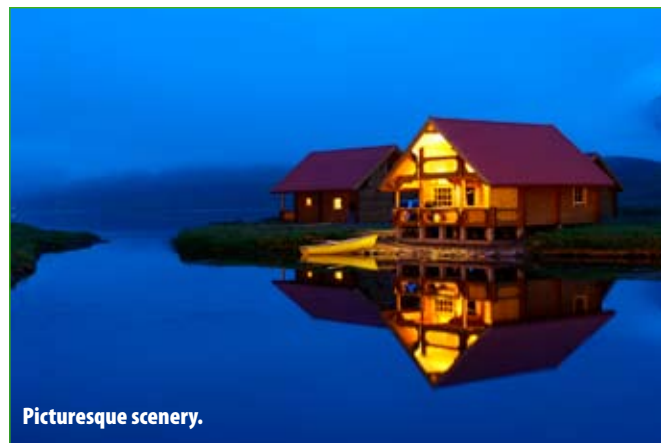
such as the colorful Harlequin Duck and the Great Northern Diver, which might therefore be of a great interest to Europeans," says Magnús.

"My favorite bird is always the Tern. That's because I have such great respect for it. This little bird flies from the other end of the earth, the South of Africa or Antarctica, all the way here to the North. It is really enjoyable to see its skillfulness in flying. The Tern is the bird that sees the most daylight of all birds because it always stays where the sun is.

"I really welcome all bird enthusiasts to Tröllaskagi. Those who have this interest, to watch birds, are often also people that care for nature and wildlife conservation. I often say that one has to push bird enthusiasts out of the closet as they keep kind of quiet about their hobby. When I started the homepage I found out that many people here in the region are monitoring the birds," says Magnús.

According to Magnús, the best time visit Iceland is from mid-May through June, during the breeding season. That is when the birds become the most colorful both concerning their plumage and the behavior between the genders. But most of the birds keep their colorful appearance throughout the whole summer, obviously: Who really wants to change summer clothes for their winter clothes?

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



Picturesque scenery.



**The National Seaman's Day – Festival in Siglufjörður**  
4. - 6. june

**Midsummer Night Festival in Siglufjörður**  
26. june

**Blues Festival in Ólafsfjörður**  
2. - 3. july

**Folk song Festival in Siglufjörður**  
7. - 11. july

**Midnight Sun Race in Siglufjörður**  
10. - 11. july

**Nikulásarmót in Ólafsfjörður Youth football matches**  
9. - 11. july

**The Herring Era Festival in Siglufjörður**  
23. july - 3. august

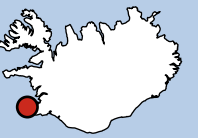
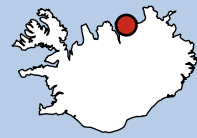
**Pæjumót in Siglufjörður Youth football matches**  
6. - 8. august

**Berry Days in Ólafsfjörður**  
20. - 22. august

[www.fjallabyggd.is](http://www.fjallabyggd.is)



# Gentle Giants of the Sea



Whales are mysterious creatures in many ways and in contrast to most land animals much of their behaviour has yet to be explained. Scientists are still researching the migration patterns of many whale species and no one really knows where the whales around Iceland go during the winter. But through 150 years of experience Húsavík's whale watching company Gentle Giants has gotten to know these giants more than most people will ever do.



The Humpback whale is known to be playful around the boats.

Stefán Guðmundsson, Managing Director of Gentle Giants, comes from a long line of fishermen who originally went to sea in rowing boats and then later motorboats. Through years of experience around whales he says they've definitely discovered that individual whales and whale species have unique characteristics. "We've seen that the older animals are usually much calmer and seem to be more indifferent of visitors than the younger animals. But as with other species each animal has its own character – some are especially curious and show more interest in visitors, while others are more playful and can even showboat in front of visitors, much like dolphins are known for," says Stefán.

on the water's surface. Others say it is a part of a power struggle between animals and yet others say it's an act of intimidation against intruders. But in my experience I think they are in many cases just playing around and showing their might and majesty to those who want to see," says Stefán.

Stefán says the Humpback whale is the most common sighting on Gentle Giant tours and often also the most enjoyable ones. "Sometimes when the Humpback swim up to the boats to see their visitors we just turn off the engines and watch them while they frolic in the ocean and enjoy themselves," says Stefán.

When asked about why some whales sometimes jump up in the air, like you can see on the front cover, Stefán says there are many theories. "Some say that they have an itch which they are trying to relieve the annoyance by crashing

The largest animal on earth is the blue whale and they happen to be fairly frequent visitors in Skjálfandi bay, where Gentle Giants operate. "The blue whales don't seem to mind our presence, but due to their enormous size they only have to flick their tail a few times to be miles away. But we can often get fairly close to them and it is truly an awe-inspiring experience to be in their presence," says Stefán. Just to give you an idea of their size – a blue whale's heart is around the size of a small automobile and a full grown animal can weigh up to 190 tons.

Other whale species commonly

"The blue whales don't seem to mind our presence, but due to their enormous size they only have to flick their tail a few times to be miles away. But we can often get fairly close to them and it is truly an awe-inspiring experience to be in their presence "

found in Skjálfandi Bay are the Minke Whale and Harbour Porpoise, while others are less common. Although not whales, dolphins are no less spectacular to behold. "We often see the dolphins doing various aerial aerobatics and it is always as magnificent to behold," says Stefán.

Gentle Giants offer guided tours departing multiple times a day during the summer with a 98% success rate of spotting whales on tours. For more information and booking go to [www.gentlegiants.is](http://www.gentlegiants.is)



In modern Western societies, everything happens fast, maybe too fast. As a result of this we have fallen into the habit of eating too fast, communicating too fast, working too stressfully, hurrying between places. We have disconnected from nature, we are no longer aware of what our body is telling us about food and exercise. Therefore we may need to do something to make peace with our body, like relaxing, getting healthy exercise and food and simply let it heal. The Jonina Ben's Detox might be a perfect option for such peacemaking.



a diet or colon cleansing. According to the doctrine, it is healthy for the human body to clean the colon once a year. The main emphasis is on regaining the balance which has been disturbed by our modern lifestyle. The program during the therapy is simple, the main objective being to invigorate your own body with new and healthier nutrition, to exercise by a great variety of gymnastics, walks and to take part in various kinds of treatments of your own choice. Rest is of great importance during the therapy; taking walks, having a massage or relaxing in the sauna, the salt chamber or in the hydro colon therapy. The therapy is



conducted under the supervision of professionals, who advice each and every individual according to the doctrine.

The first treatment most often takes two weeks and starts every Friday. Those who have already been treated in Jonina's detox center can also have shorter treatments.

In Ásbrú on the Reykjanes peninsula, near to the Keflavik airport and the Blue Lagoon, the Jonina Ben's Detox Center is situated along various other health practises, which form a sort of a health village. The detox center is a health hotel where you can stay during the two to three weeks long treatments.

Jonina has been a prominent figure in Iceland in the recent years. She is educated as a sports scientist and has run various kinds of businesses and programmes connected to her profession. Therefore, her views concerning health and exercise have been duly noted in Icelandic media. The Jonina Ben's Detox therapy is a recognized medical method in Iceland but was originally developed in Poland by doctor Dr. Eva Dabrowska and aims at enabling the body to heal itself. It follows the ideology that the body needs cleaning, whether it is in the form of

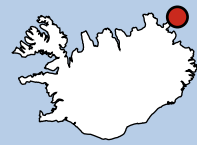


There are 50 spacious rooms in the health hotel. They have wooden floors, large American beds and both bathtubs and showers. All the rooms are equipped with wireless Internet and plasma-screens with DVD-players. The utmost care has been taken to offer guests a comfortable environment completed with elegant dining- and living rooms, a gym, a sauna, infra-red cell and a hot tub. There is a strict schedule concerning meals; three times a day, at 9 a.m., 1.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. Between meals, people can take strolls, do some light gymnastics or partake in a treatment of their own choice. In the evenings you will find lectures, meetings and entertainment. The lectures concern the fasting (detox), nutrition, the body, the colon and the hydro colon therapy. It is really important to rest, though, during the therapy and therefore guests are advised to choose activities of their own interest.

If you are engaged in a treatment at Jonina's Detox Center you also have the possibility to go on three sight-seeing tours, the Golden Circle Tour, whale watching and a horse riding trip. You can also visit the Blue Lagoon on certain times for a special discount rate. In addition, one can get the receptionists at the health hotel to plan customized tours like city tours, river rafting, hiking tours and snow mobile tours to mention a few.

Hydro colon therapy and its effects have been controversial. Jonina Ben's detox emphasizes on integral treatment concerning the cleansing, not only the use of medicine and the enema but also the correct diet and exercise. The purpose is to give people the possibility of a better quality of life, by any means possible. Therefore the detox center does not hesitate to mix together traditional Western medicine with alternative ones like herbal medicine or other methods instead of putting the main emphasis on drugs and medicine. The Jonina Ben's detox's main objective is to offer their visitors a new possibility to gain better health and balance. So if you seek a better physical balance it could be ideal for you to have a treatment at the Jonina Ben's detox and visit Iceland in the way. Further information is available on [www.detox.is](http://www.detox.is)





activities in the area are bird-watching and egg collecting, horseback riding, hiking tours and angling, to name a few. The staff at the hostel is extremely friendly and can arrange transportation or guided hikes out to the peninsula.

The stay at the hostel is also an experience in itself, as the proprietors also run a sheep farm on location. You can observe the day-to-day life of Icelandic sheep herders and if you're lucky you can witness and partake in the "sauðburður" season, which is when the sheep start giving birth. Sauðburður usually starts in May.

Ytra Lón offers a wide variety of accommodation – including sleeping bag, made-up beds and has recently opened a new wing with fully equipped apartments, which are ideal for families and groups.

Ytra Lón have also set up a new venture named Art Hostel – Ytra Lón where artists and art students from all over the world will convene and work together using Langanes as an inspiration. Ytra Lón will of course provide accommodation and a working space for the artists.

For further information and booking contact +354 468 1242, +354 846 6448 or ytralon@visitlanganes.com Website: www.visitlanganes.com

-Ytra Lón at Langanes

# At World's End

For many Iceland's biggest appeal is its remoteness and tranquility and Iceland doesn't get more remote and tranquil than Langanes peninsula. On Langanes you'll find Ytra Lón, a friendly farm hostel run by a Dutch-Icelandic family, from where you can explore Langanes' abundance of beautiful and splendid landscapes.

Situated on the north-eastern corner of Iceland, the peninsula is virtually

void of inhabitants, except for a large bird population. It is therefore the ideal place for nature lovers who want to experience nature far away from the bustle of city life - in fact no other hotel in Iceland is situated further from Reykjavik than Ytra Lón.

Birdwatchers and nature lovers are in luck, as just 25 km from Ytra Lón you'll find the best conditions in Europe to view the Northern Gannet

**Ytra Lón offers you some of Iceland's best bird watching locations.**

and other species as well, even the rare Brünnich's Guillemot.

Visiting the furthest peak of Langanes, named Fontur, is a unique experience in itself and if not for the diligent work of cartographers throughout the centuries you'd be forgiven thinking that it's the world's end. Except for a single lighthouse and your travelling companions you'll be totally free from all signs of civilization. Among other



Participate in the daily life of Icelandic sheep farmers.

# Special Menu a la Carte and Buffet



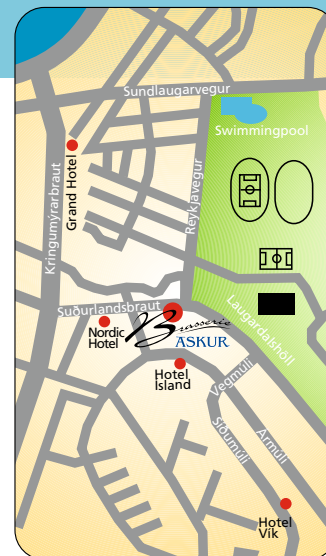
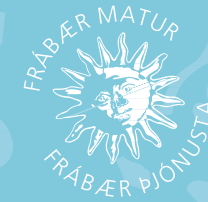
## Lunch Buffet

Best choice for lunch in Reykjavik

Soup and Salad included  
Monday-Friday  
from 11:30-13:30

**Only Íkr. 1.990.-**

Lunch Buffet includes for example:  
Traditional Icelandic Fish  
Lamb  
Pork  
Chicken  
Potatoe gratin  
Vegetable gratin  
Herring  
Salmon  
Pasta  
Various Vegetables  
Soup  
Bread



## Lamb - Fish - Steaks

Main courses  
from Íkr. 2.390.-  
Soup and Salad included

## Steak Buffet

**Sundays** from 18:00  
Steak Buffet includes for example:  
Starters, Soup, Saladbar,  
Steaks, Fish and Desserts...  
and you can eat as much as you like!

**Only Íkr. 3.390.-**

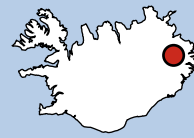
Open daily from 11:30-22:00

Restaurant with fine dining and wine at moderate prices





# East-Iceland The Hiker's Paradise



What better way to get to know the nature of Iceland than to explore it on your own two feet? Seeing landscapes passing by from a car window can never be more than a quick overview while walking and hiking is the full deal, using all your senses to appreciate every detail and slight nuance. Some of the best hiking paths and trails happen to be in the East of Iceland and no other part of the country can boast of as many marked walking trails. Whether you're looking for majestic landscapes, fjords, birds, reindeer, seals, folklore, forests, glaciers, historical sites or the tranquillity of isolated fishing towns, East-Iceland will deliver.



Taking a break from hiking in the beautiful scenery of East-Iceland.

The region is renowned for interesting and diverse routes ranging from day hikes to longer trails for trekking. Good hiking maps of the whole region are available at the tourist information centres and a number of the paths have been marked for to safer hiking and optimal enjoyment. Birdwatchers are in for a treat with several marked trails giving you the opportunity to see various species of ducks, skuas, eider birds, swans, geese, falcons, puffins, waders, scoters and many, many more.



Some of the best hiking trails can be found in East-Iceland.

## Land of the Hidden People

One of the best day hikes is without a doubt to be found in Víknarslóðir (Desert Inlets) in the East-Borgarfjörður area, which was selected as one of the 25 best hiking trails in the world by National Geographic in 2005. The trail takes you to one of Iceland's best kept secrets – the monumental Stóruð, a labyrinth of enormous rocks through which a little river winds its way and calm turquoise ponds of icy water lie hidden among the huge boulders, lined by flat banks of short, green grass.

## Fascinating Fjords

Great hiking trails are also to be found in the eastern Fjords. The great variety in coasts is phenomenal. Brightly coloured pebble beaches,



The 150 km marked paths on the Víknarslóðir enable you to have views of beautiful coastlines, mountain ridges, abandoned farmhouses, birdlife, arctic fauna and with a little luck maybe even reindeer. The area is known for colourful mountains and semi precious stones, as well as one of the best places to watch puffins.

black sand beaches, awesome sheer cliffs and bird cliffs with puffins and eiderducks, old ruins of ancient farmsteads and the occasional reindeer herd in deserted coves give you an out of this world feeling of freedom and eternity.

## Glaciers and ancient volcanos

For those with a little more time on their hands the Snæfell-Lónsöræfi trail is the way to go. This 3-7 day trek takes you across magnificent landscape, glaciers, volcanoes and rivers with interesting flora and great

views in the Vatnajökull National park. You can climb the dormant volcano Snæfell with some of the best views in Iceland, you'll scale glaciers, visit the home of Trolls and perhaps most importantly get a chance to be alone with nature's awesome powers. The vicinity of Snæfell is also the prime area to view reindeer. The Snæfell hut can easily be reached by car and the climb of the mountain makes a great day.

## Forrest Walks

A common riddle in Iceland is "What do you do if you get lost in an Icelandic forest?" The answer is simply "stand up." This is not entirely true as Hallormsstaður-Woods, the largest "forest" in Iceland is in fact quite large and extremely pleasant. It is a lovely arctic birch forest, characterized by a lush forest floor of flowers and berries and in the late summer an abundance of mushrooms.

There are several well-marked trails throughout much of the surrounding woodland, shown on a clear map published by the Forest Service. There you will also find the world's northernmost arboretum, comprising a collection of around 70 tree species.

Information on hiking in east Iceland on the website [www.east.is](http://www.east.is).



# WELCOME!

Vatnajökulsþjóðgarður is Europe's largest national park. You are invited to see Iceland's highest mountain along with volcanoes, waterfalls, lava fields, sand deserts, and glaciers. Green oases, rich flora and birdlife.



© Remur Th. Sigurðsson

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

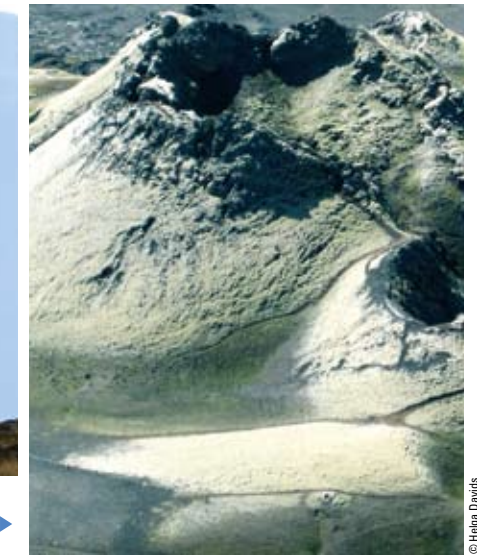


© Sigurður Sigurðsson



© Skarphellir G. Þórisson

▲ Reindeer in the northeastern highlands



Laki craters ▶

© Helga Davíds

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





The hotel is surrounded by one of Iceland's most beautiful mountain ranges.

Hotel Bláfell –

# Relax in a Romantic Environment

In the East of Iceland, surrounded by high, steep, magnificent mountains on the one hand and the sea on the other hand; lies a sweet little village by the name of Breiðdalsvík. In this village you will find Hotel Bláfell, named after the blueness of the mountains; a charming, wooden building, which will without doubt fill your days with a nice relaxing feeling while you hike during the day and sit by the hearth in the evening.



Sitting by the open fire is perfect for enjoying the moment.

The hotel was first opened in 1982, when tourism hardly existed in Iceland, and has been enlarged since then. Friðrik Árnason, who owns the hotel together with his wife Hildur Hafsteinsdóttir, says that the weather in Breiðdalsvík is probably the most genial in the country, which makes gambling with the weather less risky for the traveller there than in other places.

"The village is calm and its habitants friendly, you will surely get the feeling that you are somewhere far off in the countryside, yet you will have almost every service you need in walking distance," says Friðrik. "Plus the region offers plenty of activities, of which

most are connected with nature in some way or another." According to Friðrik one has to spend two to three days in Breiðdalsvík to be able to experience the surrounding nature in a recreative way.

Breiðdalsvík is located right by road nr. 1, or the "Circle" as it is better known, among the magnificent mountains of the East. It is on the edge of a broad bay in the Eastfjords. Breiðdalur (or Broad Valley) is surrounded by one of Iceland's most

beautiful mountain ranges with lofty, jagged peaks and sheer cliffs.

There are plenty of walking routes around the village, for shorter tours one can go down to the coast Meleyri, which is rich of birdlife. For longer routes one can go towards the highlands and mountains on various hikes. The area is rich and geologically miscellaneous, which means that one can find various different sorts of colorful stones. In fact, the diversity is such that next to Bláfell Hotel, there is a special stone museum.

In Breiðdalur you will find three of Iceland's most beautiful fishing rivers, Breiðdalsá, Tinnudalsá and Norðurdalsá. Walking along Breiðdalsá you must visit Beljandi waterfall, the most beautiful fall in the area. If you want to see diverse wildlife you will not be disappointed, with birds all around and you will literally be able to watch them right

at the doorstep. If you are lucky you might even spot a reindeer and if you are really lucky you may see the elusive arctic fox, the largest indigenous land animal of Iceland.

The hotel itself is painted black outward with a blue roof making it quite attractive as you approach it. Most of its interior is wooden, giving you the nice feeling of being out of town in the middle of nature. The hotel has 25 rooms, all equipped with a bathroom, TV and telephone. There is a charming and comfortable sitting room with an open fire, perfect for enjoying the moment whether you are relaxing after a day exploring the local area, sitting with friends or just enjoying a good book. To perfect the relaxation, Hotel Bláfell offers its guests a sauna to wind down.

Hotel Bláfell has its own restaurant, which proudly presents you with a cuisine largely composed of local ingredients. The lamb, beef and vegetables come from the farmers in the area and the sea food from the fishermen. "We bake our own bread and cakes and we even pick the berries for the desert ourselves," says Friðrik.

Therefore, if you are looking for a pure nature experience, while staying in nice surroundings, near to all service, Hotel Bláfell is without doubt a splendid choice. Especially if you are seeking a romantic getaway as well.

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



The hotel is surrounded by one of Iceland's most beautiful mountain ranges.



## Breiðdalur

...with open arms



# Experience the East

- ★ **Breiðdalsvík** is the perfect place to stop-relax-enjoy and experience.
- ★ **Breiðdalur** offers natural gems that are waiting and wanting to be discovered.
- ★ **Packed with activities:** Walking/hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, adventure tours, museum, geology, swimming pool, playground, the sea shore, the awe invoking mountains and so much more!
- ★ **In Breiðdalsvík camping is free!**



★ For further info  
[www.breiddalur.is](http://www.breiddalur.is)





The Majestic Reymsdrangar backdrop the Vikurprjón Wool Factory.



Mýrdalshreppur –

# From fertile hills to black beaches



Vikurprjón's products are so popular that the factory can only supply its own factory shop, but since it is a factory shop Vikurprjón can offer very reasonable prices to its customers.

On the southernmost point of Iceland, you will find in the valley of Mýrdalur, between the sands and the hills, the charming village of Vik. This is the nearest inhabited area to the recently famous volcano Katla, which has actually not erupted since 1918. The people in Mýrdalur do not find the volcano to be an issue and have learned to live in peace with its existence. You will probably not find a more diverse landscape in the whole of Iceland than that around Vik, ranging from black, sandy beaches with steep cliffs, to fertile hills with various hiking routes and the glacier Mýrdalsjökull.



From Fertile Hills to Black Beaches.

### The natural treasures

Vik is only two hours from Reykjavik, the location being quite central in the South of Iceland. It is in a comfortable driving distance from most of the interesting sights in the region, from Vatnajökull glacier in the East to Gullfoss and Geysir in the West.

This suitable distance, along with the fact that there is such a huge variety of natural treasures around, has resulted in tourism growing rapidly in Mýrdalur. The best proof of this is the large number of accommodation offered in the area compared to the population, ranging from low budget options like hostels and camping sites to higher budget hotels. It might be wise to book in advance if you wish to visit Vik during the summertime, especially if you seek something more comfortable than camping.

It would probably fill more than a book to describe the natural treasures around Vik, so great is the number. It is enough to mention some of the most memorable scenes. First we have to name Reynisfjara, the vast black beach with the strong surf and columnar cliffs. The walk along the beach is quite an experience, but be very aware not to approach the surf too closely, it is stronger than you might expect. Dyrhólaey is the southernmost spit of Iceland and really picturesque with its gigantic black arch of lava standing in the sea. One can go on a sail around Dyrhólaey to observe the arch better. Þakgil and the area around it is really worth the visit, being located on the highlands above Vik. There is a camping place and various marked walking routes to see the mossgreen, hilly landscape. Finally one cannot avoid

mentioning the glacier Mýrdalsjökull, but the volcano Katla is situated in the glacier. It is really popular for hiking tours as well as for snowmobiling.

### Living in peace with Katla for centuries

The recent media coverage of the volcanic activity in Iceland has been a bit dramatic resulting in the common misjudgement that it is not safe to be in certain areas of Iceland these days. This could not be further from the truth. "People have been living near to Katla for centuries without any casualties or injuries to speak of," says Sveinn Pálsson the director of the local council of Mýrdalur. "The contingency plan for the region is really forceful as we have been practicing it now for forty years. If Katla would erupt it is not likely that it

would flood over Vik, but if that would be the case we have safe spots in the village, to which everybody would go. So in the time of eruption the rescue teams would go from house to house to get everybody to a safe spot. We would have 2-3 hours until the flood which is much more than enough."

Many people have speculated about when Katla will erupt as the history seems to suggest that it happens most often after an eruption in Eyjafjallajökull. What has been forgotten in this discussion is that it seldom happens shortly after the Eyjafjallajökull eruption. It might even erupt after ten years or even later. Right now, the earthquake frequency under the glacier is none to speak of, but frequent earthquakes can usually suggest that an eruption might be ahead.

"The volcano is carefully monitored, so

we are prepared for everything here. I have often said jokingly that Florida in the USA is a popular place to visit, still, you have hurricanes there every year. Volcano eruptions might be a bit unfamiliar to most people in the world, but if it is monitored well like here in Iceland, there should not be anything dangerous about them, not more than just passing over a busy street, although the ash has certainly turned out to be a source of irritation for the flight traffic," says Sveinn.

### Enough for a whole vacation

There is a reason why nearly all accommodation is booked in advance in Vik during the summertime. Not only is this a convenient place to stop for a couple of nights if you wish to drive the circular road around Iceland; you could also spend all of your vacation there. You have almost everything there, riding tours, sailing, snow mobiling, hiking and various other activities. You have a nice little village, with all the services you need in a walking distance. You have natural treasures, which will probably fill the memory card on your camera. Last but not least, you have a famous volcano close by, which is of great geological interest and a community, which has learned, from one generation to the next, that life surely goes on although nature can be both dramatic and influential.



Vik is only two hours from Reykjavik.

-Vikurprjón in Vik í Mýrdal

# Iceland's Oldest Wool Factory

Vikurprjón in Vik í Mýrdal is one of the oldest wool production companies in Iceland and now celebrates its 30th year of quality production. While travelling through the south of Iceland a stop at Vikurprjón's factory shop is an absolute must.

Vikurprjón puts special emphasis on providing authentic products made entirely in Iceland. In fact if you have any doubts you can simply look over the factory floor from the second floor of the shop. There you can see the production process and the complex machinery used to process the wool – be it knitting, cleaning, steam pressing, cutting or sewing.

The production is extremely varied but the largest part involves sewing all kinds of clothing from the Icelandic sheep wool. Vikurprjón uses traditional methods with the original colours and national patterns as well as designing and producing clothes. Vikurprjón's collection includes almost all types of clothing needed to keep you warm, or stylish for that matter, including socks, long underwear, tank tops, sweaters, blankets, jackets, mittens, scarves and caps.



An example of Vikurprjón's innovative designs to keep you warm.

on old Icelandic myths about seals and many other insightful variations of blankets and ponchos.

Vik í Mýrdal is the southernmost village in Iceland, located on the main ring road around the island, around 180 km from Reykjavik. It is a place of astounding landscapes and majestic ocean views, making the Vikurprjón Factory an essential stop on your tour of Iceland.

For more information and online store visit [www.vikurprjon.is](http://www.vikurprjon.is) or [www.vikprjonsdottir.is](http://www.vikprjonsdottir.is)



Vikurprjón's wool sweaters come in all shapes, sizes and colours.





# Life Goes on Around Eyjafjallajökull

„The people in the district are learning to live with the plume of ash hovering above them.“

Iceland has been quite prominent in the world media these last months because of an eruption in the volcano Eyjafjallajökull, the ash emitted from the volcano causing immense flight delays in Europe. Although the volcano caused a lot of damage for the farmers in the area because of floods and ash fallout, life goes on in the region while the volcano continues to be active. Eyjafjallajökull is located in the district of East Rangárþing, which has a great number of natural treasures. These days the most interesting place to visit in Iceland is undoubtedly Rangárþing as you are able to see a volcano in action and also experience all the other treasures of the region.

## Eventful weeks after the eruption

East Rangárþing is a vast district in the South of Iceland, which ranges from the highlands to the sea. It has a great number of geological wonders, a fact which has pushed the district, according to Þuríður Halldóra

Aradóttir, the district's representative for public relations, to seek to become a member of the European Geopark Network along with two other districts; Mýrdalshreppur and Kirkjubæjarklaustur. Hvolsvöllur is the region's biggest town and all operations relating to the eruption have been organized from there. The main industries in the area are agriculture and tourism and Hvolsvöllur is in fact the only town in Iceland which has not been



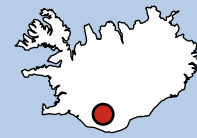
„The surreal thing about all this is the fact that the damage caused was much more in Europe than here.“

established by the sea or a river, but entirely as a center of service for the area. "We Icelanders have, of course, grown up living in a volcanically active country so one could say it was in our blood to deal with this strong force and therefore we have a great civil defense operation for that purpose," says Þuríður. "As soon as a lot of earthquakes began to be detected around the volcano, an operation was set into motion to

monitor Eyjafjallajökull and prepare to the utmost for a possible eruption. "The most dangerous issue concerning an eruption like this is perhaps in relation to the floods. Fortunately, our levees have been proven to be efficient. It has actually been said that they could hold four times more water than originally was believed. In fact, we are celebrating the levees' centennial, as it's a hundred years ago this year since the farmers started to load the original part of those we have today, using only wheelbarrows to transfer the gravel," says Þuríður.

According to Þuríður, people in the areas closest to the volcano were well informed about the clearance procedure. Because of the good cooperation between the inhabitants, rescue teams and local authorities, everything has been going according to plan. Right now, there is a great magnitude of water in the river Markarfljót which runs from under the glacier, although it is mainly caused by the yearly spring thaw.

"The eruption and the tremendous ash fall in the first days was of course a horrible experience, especially for



the farmers. But right now, the ash has become more or less harmless. Most of the farmers will be able to make hay this summer, but those who live next to the volcano will need to till their fields next summer and make use of the ash as a fertilizer. Right now, we are working on finding enough hay and fields for those farmers, so they can continue their farming successfully," says Þuríður.

Most of the animals remained in the area, although some horses, which were grazing near the volcano, were moved away. "We still had some horses outdoors when the ash fall was at its maximum, but it has not caused them any damage. The vets are amazed by how well they are holding out," says Hildur.

Many volunteers have been helping with the cleansing of the farms that were hit worst by the ash fall. "We've been getting more than enough help from people from all over the country. The houses and the roofs need to be cleaned as well as the surrounding area. The cleaning is still ongoing, but right now it's at a temporary standstill as we've just been hit with a new wave of ashfall."

eruption in Eyjafjallajökull is like an average eruption in Katla. Furthermore, there is nothing that suggests Katla is going to erupt any time soon, with no earthquakes under the glacier.

Travelers always need to be careful when they travel around Iceland, though, especially in the highlands. A big information center has been opened in Hvolsvöllur, where tourists can get all the necessary information about the volcano, where in the highlands it is safe to go and where it is not, both concerning hiking and driving and where to get the service needed. The information center is right by the highway when entering the town from the direction of Reykjavík.



## Various opportunities

The volcano is nevertheless not the only sight to see in East Rangárþing. The district contains many natural treasures as well as being the scene of one of the renowned Icelandic Sagas, the Saga of the burning of Njáll. Some of the more famous places



are for example Skógar, with its amazingly picturesque Skógarfoss waterfall; Seljalandsfoss waterfall, behind which it is possible to walk; and the Þórsörk, which is a beautiful and fertile mountain ridge north of Eyjafjallajökull with various trekking routes in the area and so is very popular among hikers. "Then we also have less known natural wonders, like an abundance of caves, some of which have been made into outhouses with man-made extensions. We also have this great ring of mountains and if you drive around it you will find plenty of waterfalls," Þuríður explains.

A new harbour will be taken into use this summer called Landeyjarhöfn, in a distance of only 30 minutes from Hvolsvöllur. There you will get to the Westmanna Islands in half an hour, which is a new and quicker way to reach the islands. "You can also go see the vast, black coast there, it is quite amazing," says Þuríður.

There are plenty of options for

accommodation in the area, ranging from camp-sites and hostels to high budget possibilities and then you will also find plenty of farmhouse accommodation in the area. " says Þuríður.

The people of East Rangárþing have gone through a lot lately, the ash fallout and floods causing a lot of extra work to be done as well as general uncertainties.

Despite everything, daily life goes on and at this moment the people in the district are learning to live with the plume of ash hovering above them, being constantly a part of the horizon. In all other ways, people continue doing whatever they were doing before. But to witness the geological wonders as well as hearing people's stories about the eruption, ash and floods, is a treasure for anyone yearning to take in new experiences, culture and nature.





# -Rauda Husid Restaurant in Eyrarbakki Catch of the Day

In the quiet and cosy town of Eyrarbakki on the south coast of Iceland you'll find an almost hundred year old red house which contains the excellent restaurant Rauda Husid. There you can enjoy some of the best seafood dishes in the country in a historical and peaceful environment.

Rauda Husid places special emphasis on using only fresh materials – straight from the source if possible. All the fish and seafood in Rauda Husid comes straight from the local markets and is therefore always fresh. As Eyrarbakki was once a primary

port in the South of Iceland it comes as no surprise that Rauda Husid specializes in seafood dishes. The „Catch of the Day“ course is always a pleasant surprise as the chef prepares a threesome of seafood dishes based on whichever types have been caught the same day. It is also no surprise that the Langoustine (small lobster) soup is a speciality at the Rauda Husid, as the people of Eyrarbakki were pioneers in introducing this delicacy into the Icelandic cuisine.

The base of the building was built in 1919 and has since been expanded and renovated. It is now a majestic



The people of Eyrarbakki were pioneers in introducing the langoustine into the Icelandic cuisine.

three story building with views out to the ocean from the top story. Rauda Husid's immediate surroundings are no less interesting. Right next to it you'll find Húsið (The House), which is one of Iceland's oldest buildings, built in 1765, and currently houses the Árnesinga Folk Museum. Across from Rauda Husid you'll see the church of Eyrarbakki, which was built in 1890.

It is quite an enjoyable experience to take a walk around Eyrarbakki

before or after a meal at Rauda Husid. It was once an important trading centre in Iceland, but is now a relatively peaceful town of less than 600 inhabitants. Many houses in Eyrarbakki were built early in the last century and sometimes seemingly without any advance planning, giving the town somewhat of a freewheeling atmosphere. Rauda Husid is only a few minutes away from the ocean and a walk along the beach is a perfect conclusion of a pleasant afternoon in Eyrarbakki.



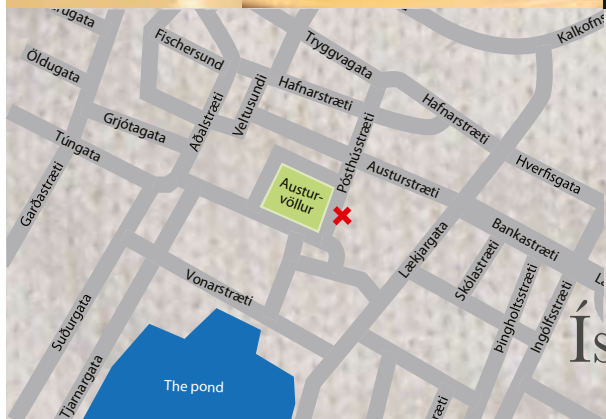
## Eat and drink like the locals at the original Icelandic Bar, the home of nostalgia



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

Hangikjöt, plockfiskur 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.

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



Íslenski Barinn  
Restaurant

Pósthússtræti 9  
101 Reykjavík  
Tel: (354) 578 2020  
info@icelandicbar.is  
www.islenski-barinn.is



Hótel Rangá offers you quality accommodation a safe distance away from the volcano.

Hotel Rangá

# Your Luxurious Volcano Exploration Base



As volcanoes are very unpredictable and can erupt without any warning and powerful eruptions can stop in a few hours, there is no way of knowing what the volcanic situation in Iceland will be when you read this. One thing is for sure is that in 2010 no trip to Iceland will be complete without exploring the sites of the eruptions which were heard around the world. The perfect base for any such expeditions is Hótel Rangá, which is located close enough to the sites for it to be convenient and far away enough for it to be safe.

From Hótel Rangá several volcano exploring options can be arranged for; including helicopter rides, guided jeep tours and many more. Experiencing nature's power and beauty through a volcano is a lifetime experience. But whatever you do, do not try to visit the volcano by yourself without consulting with experts.

Hótel Rangá is a four star log-cabin styled resort, renowned for its quality accommodation, service and gourmet food and wines. It is located on the banks of a famous salmon river in the countryside between the towns Hella and Hvalsöllum in the south of

Iceland. The panoramic view from Hótel Rangá offers you the majestic Hekla, several glaciers and even the



Panoramic views through Hotel Rangá's luxury suites.

It is the only hotel in Iceland holding membership in the prestigious international chain „Great Hotels of the World“.

Westman Islands from afar. The hotel is only an hour's drive from Reykjavik and close to staple attractions such as Thorsmörk, Landmannalaugar, The Westman Islands, Skogarfoss, Seljalandsfoss, Myrdalsjokull, Gullfoss, Geysir and Thingvellir, making it an ideal base from which you can explore the best the South of Iceland has to offer. All the regions activities can also be booked through the hotel.

The hotel recently underwent renovations and now boasts of 51 luxuriously decorated rooms and suites. Among those is a collection of seven luxury suites representing all the continents, taking you on fantastic journey to all the corners of the world. It is also known as one of the best places in the world to view the aurora borealis, from September through April. It is the only hotel in Iceland holding membership in the prestigious international chain „Great Hotels of the World“.



# WE'LL TAKE YOU THERE!

DAY TOURS TO ALL THE MOST  
EXCITING PLACES IN ICELAND



## EXPERIENCE A GREAT DAY WITH US!

Discover all the magical places not to be missed when in Iceland: Beautiful nature, multi-colored mountains, fertile farmlands, stunning views, plummeting waterfalls, natural wonders and geological phenomena.

Book now on [www.re.is](http://www.re.is) 

Book now by calling 580 5450 



BSÍ Bus Terminal  
101 Reykjavík  
 +354 580 5400  
main@re.is  
[www.re.is](http://www.re.is)



**Reykjavik  
Excursions**  
KYNNISFERÐIR

