

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 7 • 2011

The Golden Circle
Westfjords Wandering
A Feast of Festivals



Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, It still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'breath'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'



The beginning of a new year brought with it many changes to the Icelandic Times. A new design, complemented by better paper will, hopefully bring you a much brighter and enjoyable publication.

We are also introducing a number of new features to make it easier for you to get the most out of the magazine.

Along with changes to the printing, you will also find changes to the online magazine that we hope will, over the next few months, become an increasingly invaluable resource for tourists, travel agents, tour operators and, in fact, anyone interesting in learning about this unique country.

As we make these technical changes, we are also taking the opportunity to take advantage of the latest technological developments. One of these is the QR code you will find at the end of each article that enables smartphone users with freely downloadable scanner applications to make immediate contact directly with the organisation featured in the article.

In this issue, our main focus is on the remote and enigmatic West Fjords, the

least inhabited place in all Europe!

Despite its remoteness and sparse population, it has become a 'must-see' location for those who enjoy the outdoor life. If you find daily life too stressful, there can be no better place to unwind that the untouched landscape of the West Fjords - and, when you do want some company, you'll find a warm welcome in its villages and communities! You will also find a number of articles covering the dramatic North of Iceland, with its many different features.

May we all at Icelandic Times wish you a very happy and prosperous New Year and a wonderful holiday experience in the dramatic countryside of Iceland.

How to make use of QR-codes



Icelandic Times

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Höfðatún 12 • 105 Reykjavík
 +354 534 1880
 info@icelandictimes.com
 www.icelandictimes.com

Publisher:

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

Editor and General Manager:

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson
 einar@icelandictimes.com

Sales and Marketing:

Anna Margrét Bjarnadóttir
 anna@icelandictimes.com
 Elin Björg Ragnarsdóttir
 elin@icelandictimes.com

Articles written by:

Andrew Scott Fortune
 andrew@icelandictimes.com
 Anna Margrét Bjarnadóttir
 anna@icelandictimes.com

Marie Valgardsson

elaine.marie.valgardsson@gmail.com
 Nanna Hlin Halldórsdóttir
 nanna@landogsaga.is
 Vignir Andri Guðmundsson
 vignir@icelandictimes.com

Front cover photo:

Kristel Elva Þóðrardóttir
 Langeyri in Álftafirði, Suðurvík
 by Þórður Sigurðsson

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.

Copyright © February, 2011 Interland ehf. All rights reserved

We specialize in your adventure!

Special Offer

ONLY 19.900.- ISK. PR. DAY

GPS included

Our special offer car is a Jeep Grand Cherokee 4WD specially equipped for Icelandic gravel and highland roads. This car comes equipped with GPS navigation, unlimited mileage and an extra fuel can is supplied free of charge, if requested. All our cars are thoroughly inspected and overhauled to ensure trouble-free rental experience.

ICELAND 4X4 CARRENTAL



LUXURY SUITES AND VILLAS IN THE LAND OF ELVES

Hótel Glymur offers a magical experience and garners top reviews

Hótel Glymur truly delivers when it comes to customer satisfaction: take their customers word for it. One of the best reviewed hotels in Iceland on tripadvisor.com with comments like “simply the best,” “magical” and “the best hotel I ever stayed at.”

two kinds of fishing, bird watching, hiking, visits to church or art gallery.

Unique Dishes at Café Glymur and an á la carte Restaurant

Hótel Glymur's á la carte restaurant offers a wide variety of exciting dishes, including whale meat – no surprise as Hvalfjörður means ‘Bay of whales.’ Café Glymur is open



Set in the magical and tranquil Hvalfjörður Bay, the hotel takes its name



from Iceland's highest waterfall, the Glymur and takes its cue from the natural beauty, to provide a setting that is both refreshingly comfortable and uniquely beautiful in design. Consisting of a boutique hotel and 6 luxury villas, it is set on a mountainside overlooking the beautiful Hvalfjörður fjord, located 75 km from Keflavík Airport.

every day from noon until 17:00 offering a wide variety of unique home-made dishes such as the Rustic Sandwich, Bow tie Donut and the Halla Hnalla, Hótel Glymur's special cake with cream and other temptations.

Hótel Glymur Holiday Homes

The Villas – 6 individually designed luxury holiday homes with its own theme come fully equipped; the sunny verandas each have hot thermal Jacuzzis, barbeques and outdoor furniture.

A welcome relief from the stress of work and travel, Hótel Glymur offers 22 luxury split-level Executive Rooms, and three larger suites. All are fully equipped with wireless Internet, flat screen TV's and specially designed luxury furniture. Over 280 art pieces are on display. There is access to a spa with massages, an outdoor exercise area and hot tubs. Activities include golf - 5 different courses, horse riding, kayaking, swimming,

Any of the innovative themes can provide you with a vacation of your dreams.

- 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.
- 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
- Villa Couture is for connoisseurs, with a beautiful movable kitchen and state of the art culinary equipment.

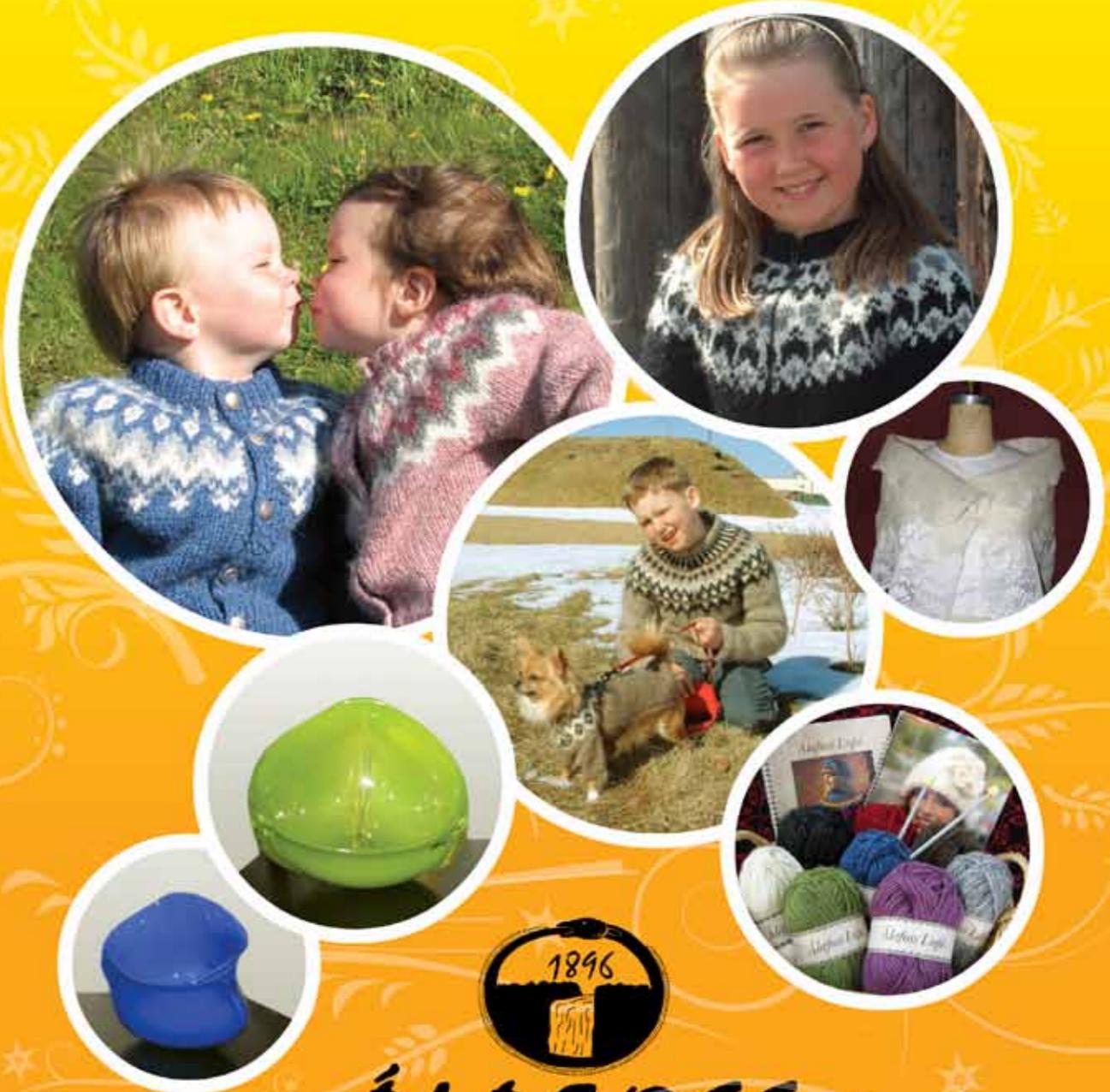


Hótel Glymur



Hvalfirði • 301 Akranesi
 +354 430 3100
 info@hotelglymur.is
 www.hotelglymur.is

www.alafoss.is



ÁLAFOSS

WARMTH FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY!

WOOL SWEATERS,
 BLANKETS & ACCESORIES,
 TRADITIONAL CRAFTS
 AND SOUVENIRS



LAUGARVEGUR 8,
 REYKJAVIK CITY CENTRE
 & ÁLAFOSSVEGUR 23,
 MOSFELLSBÆR



KRAUM: SIZZLING DESIGNS

Kraum offers unique design items by over 200 designers



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

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

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

Verne once said the entrance to the centre of the earth was located. An ideal present for major achievements is a silver Birki twig, which symbolizes the prosperity of Icelandic flora despite the harsh conditions in which it lives.



Wool products play an important role in the design of many of Kraum's contributors. Among the wool products you can find are the ever popular fuzzy chair, knitted neckties, modern designs of the Icelandic sweater and the ram's wool cap, which

comes with knitted 'horns.' For the sinners out there, be sure to not leave home without the 'Virtue quilt,' which is based on the old Icelandic tradition of sewing desired virtues onto a quilt. One famous story tells of four priest's daughters who were each made to embroider virtues for their proposed marriages, but the youngest one couldn't be bothered to make one and thus her marriage failed tragically. The new virtue quilt comes with pre-embroidered virtues, which have been updated to accommodate the modern man.

Products made out of fish skin have also proven very popular, including clothes, chandeliers and various smaller items. Iceland's geology is well represented in Kraum; check out the notepad which emulates the volcanic activity of Hekla and Askja, where each page of the notepad represents a particular layer of ash or lava with the year of the eruption indicated.

A good way to remember Iceland in the kitchen is a replica of Herðubreið Mountain which you put under a steaming saucepan or Iceland shaped ice cubes. Kraum is located in Aðalstræti 10, which is in fact the oldest house in Reykjavík and home to the first wool design house in the country. You can also find various exciting exhibitions within, both historical and design oriented. For those of you visiting over the holidays be sure not to miss the Christmas exhibition, where craft designers display their incredible array of Christmas items.

Kraum

📍 Aðalstræti 10 • 101 Reykjavík
☎ +354 517 7797
✉ kraum@kraum.is
🌐 www.kraum.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



Only the Best in Reykjavik

Choose between 2 great hotels Upon your next visit!

Radisson Blu Saga Hotel

- 209 rooms with a view of city and its surroundings
- Complimentary spa and internet access
- Two Restaurants and a Lounge Bar
- 10 conference and meeting rooms

Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel

- Contemporary design boutique hotel
- 88 rooms and suites
- Lounge Bar and Restaurant
- 3 meeting facilities

Radisson Blu Saga Hotel

V. Hagatorg, 107 Reykjavik, Iceland
 Tel: +354 525 9900
sales.saga.reykjavik@radissonblu.com
www.radissonblu.com/sagahotel-reykjavik

Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel

Posthusstraeti 2, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland
 Tel: +354 599 1000
reservations.1919.reykjavik@radissonblu.com
www.radissonblu.com/1919hotel-reykjavik

www.radissonblu.com





THE LOBSTER HOUSE

Made From the Finest Ingredients Available



The Icelandic Lobster is a delicacy you simply must try during your stay in Iceland and few are more experienced in preparing delicious lobster dishes than The Lobster House, situated in the heart of Reykjavik.

However, what most Icelanders call lobster is probably not what you think it is. The crustacean on offer in The Lobster House is actually a much smaller species called langoustine which is commonly found in the north-eastern Atlantic Ocean and North

gourmet foods available.

The langoustine's smaller size however does not mean less taste – on the contrary, the chefs at The Lobster House claim that it outshines the common lobster in most aspects. “Even though it is smaller than the lobster most people are used to, I have found that the giant lobster doesn't come anywhere near the langoustine when it comes to taste and texture. The langoustine is considerably softer and the taste is much more concentrated. It is one of the bests



small crustaceans, thinking a mistake has been made. “They are often sceptical at first, but after the first bite, their doubts are removed instantly,” says Ottó.

The most popular dish in The Lobster House is the grilled lobster with garlic, a dish most Icelanders savour on sunny summer evenings. But as the name implies, the chefs at The Lobster House are experts in coming up with innovative ideas on preparing this delicacy.

The Lobster House is located in one of Reykjavik's oldest houses on Amtmannsstígur 1, which was originally built in 1838. If you are walking north, away from the pond towards the sea on the right side of Lækjargata you should notice a cluster of old houses behind a small peculiar garden with an oversized chess board. On the most prominent building you'll see a sign with the langoustine on it and inside the feast awaits.

possible materials a chef can work with, making my job that much easier,” says one of the Lobster House's expert chefs, Ottó Magnússon.

But appearances can be deceiving and Ottó says that it is not uncommon to see a look of surprise on the faces of customers when they receive a plate of these relatively



Sea. The langoustine is usually around 17 cm (6.7 inches) in length and weighs up to 400g, whereas the common lobster usually ranges from 20-40 cm (8-16 inches). The history of commercial langoustine fishing in Iceland only dates back around fifty years, but since its introduction to the Icelandic cuisine it has been considered one of the top

Humarhúsið

Amtmannsstíg 1 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 561 3303
 humarhusid@humarhusid.is
 www.humarhusid.is

Icelandexcursions

GRAY LINE ICELAND



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



Truly,
 The Local Expert



Visit our sales office at Lækjartorg square, call us at (+354) 540 1313 or go to www.grayline.is.



THE ABC'S OF CENTERHOTELS IN REYKJAVIK



CenterHotels has got the perfect formula for your stay in Reykjavik: Comfortable, Clean, Cost-effective, Cosy and Convenient. How does this add up? It all adds up to an A+ experience at any one of CenterHotel's 5 locations in Reykjavik!

*Since when does 5C+B = A+ ?
 How crazy is that?*

C is for Convenience!

CenterHotels are the perfect solution while staying in Reykjavik. Conveniently located just minutes from some of the best sights and night life in the city centre, it's clear the answer is CenterHotels.

If location is your priority in Reykjavik, then it doesn't get any better than this!

C is for Cost Effective!

We know you'll love our prices! Affordable accommodation that's hard to beat. Good news for the cost-conscious customer!

C is for clean, cosy and comfortable!

For a good night's sleep, CenterHotels have got you covered!

And what about B? B is for our breakfast buffet always included in the price!

5 Convenient locations are yours to choose from:

- CenterHotel Plaza - cosy and unpretentious
- CenterHotel Skjaldbreið - comfortable and refined
- CenterHotel Arnahvoll - sophisticated and stylish
- CenterHotel Klöpp - a clean modern design
- CenterHotel Thingholt - classy and contemporary



CenterHotels

Laugavegi 16 • 101 Reykjavik
 +354 595 8500
 reservations@centerhotels.com
 www.centerhotels.com

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Whale Watching

Authentic Adventure
 Modified Icelandic Fishingboat

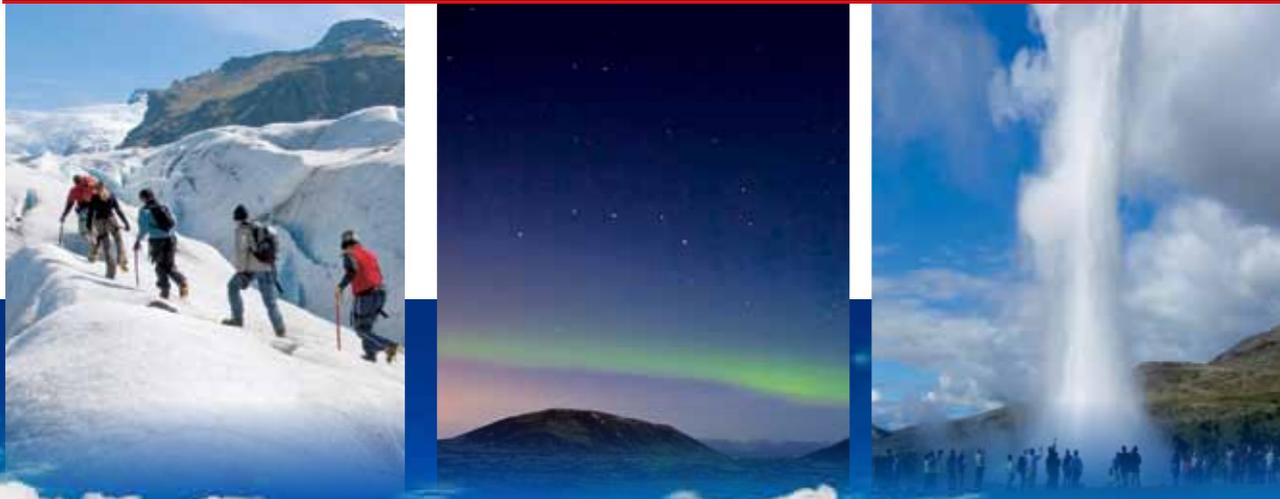


**Included:
 Seafood soup
 and warm
 Bread rolls**



Phone +354 562 5700
 Mobile +354 863 5700
 www.sjosigling.is - info@sjosigling.is

Sjósigling
 From Reykjavik Old Harbour



Reykjavik Excursions

-Enjoying Iceland in comfort and security

Reykjavik Excursions is one of the oldest touring companies in Iceland. Founded in 1968, it offers professionally guided tours around Iceland, in English, German, French and the Scandinavian languages.

Here are just a few highlights of what Reykjavik Excursions offer:



South Shore Adventure Tour

In this 10-hour day tour of the south coast, you will take in some of the most impressive scenery in Iceland. Stopping at Seljalandsfoss, you will get a chance to walk behind this 60 metre 'bridal veil' waterfall - beautiful in any season! The dramatic cliffs

almost touch the shore, and glimpses of Myrdalsjökull Glacier peek out from above the craggy mountain tops. There's a stop at Skogar with its broad curtain waterfall and history waiting for you to discover at Skogar Museum. The approach to the village of Vik with steep slopes rising on one side and the view down to the ocean beyond the village is priceless.

Thorsmörk (Þórsmörk)

Visiting Thorsmörk is high on a many traveller's list of things to do in Iceland. But the tricky part is actually getting there! It's a rocky road and one that is interlaced with glacial rivers and rivulets and not necessarily

something you would want to try to drive yourself. So what to do? Problem solved! Reykjavik Excursion's specially-equipped buses and their experienced drivers will put you at ease, so you can relax and enjoy the scenery in comfort and security. This tour runs from 15th June to 11th Sept.

Super Jeep Tour – Aftermath of a Volcanic Eruption

Witness with your own eyes how the recent eruption of Eyafjallajökull changed the landscape for miles around. You will travel



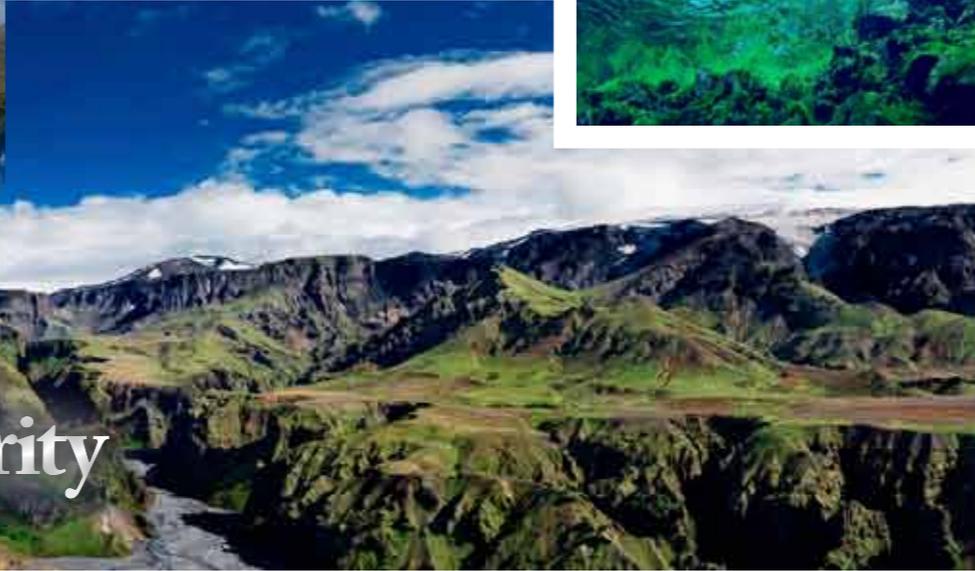
to Gigjökull glacial lagoon, going deeper into Thorsmörk where tour buses cannot manoeuvre, giving you a chance to see for yourself Eyafjallajökull's enormous impact on the area.

'Super Jeeps' are specially modified jeeps that are able to handle rocky terrain and easily ford the ever-changing Markafljót

glacial river. This tour is available year-round.

Northern Lights Tour

Your chances of seeing the Northern Lights this year are, in a word, excellent! Just one more reason to visit Iceland in winter! Let Reykjavik



Relax at the Blue Lagoon Tour

Finish off your trip to Iceland with a dip in the Blue Lagoon. After all, a trip to Iceland without going to the Blue Lagoon would be like going to Paris and not seeing the Eiffel Tower! A great way to end your journey, bathing in the relaxing milky waters of this exquisite example of Iceland's unique use of



Excursions show you the sights and the lights, but don't forget your camera and tripod. The tour runs daily from 15th Sept. to 15th April.

Take a Walk on the Ice Side

Easily one of the most popular tours on offer, *Take A Walk on the Ice Side* takes



place on the Solheimajökull glacial tongue at Myrdalsjökull, South Iceland. Just a 2½ hour drive from Reykjavik, you will be taught the basics in using ice equipment and walking on crampons. A safe and easy walk on the glacier, this tour gives you a chance to explore the ridges, ice sculptures and crevasses under the watchful eye of

experienced mountain guides. This tour is offered daily, year-round.

Gullfoss-Geysir Direct

If you want to maximise your sight-seeing into a short space of time, the Golden Circle Tour is no doubt one of the best of the best. The big 3 sights are:

- Gullfoss - one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Europe, guaranteed to inspire you!
- Geysir Geothermal Area - The famous Geysir has gone quiet these days but its 'little' brother Strokkur is the more active of the two geysirs now, erupting regularly every 10 minutes or so.
- Thingvellir - besides its historical significance, this is where you can straddle the two mid-Atlantic tectonic plates simultaneously. Thingvellir has been recognised by UNESCO as a cultural site connected to Viking culture and is the only place in the world bearing this distinction.

geothermal energy. Afterwards, Reykjavik Excursions can either drop you at Keflavik Airport, in time to catch your flight home or can get you back to Reykjavik, either way.

Prefer to tour Iceland on your own? Discover Reykjavik Excursion's *Iceland on Your Own* and be the master of your own vacation.



Enjoy your holiday in Iceland and let Reykjavik Excursions take you there!

Reykjavik Excursions



BSI Bus Terminal • 101 Reykjavik
+354 580 5400
 main@re.is
 www.re.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



BREAK OUT FROM THE CROWDS AND THE POLLUTED, PAVED CITIES

Take an adventurous trip into Mother Nature's back yard!



Wouldn't you like to breathe fresh, clean air for a change? Let your ears expand in the silence? Let your eyes stretch to the horizons amid the rich colours and textures of nature and drink the purest of waters, straight from its source in the mountains? How about bathing in a naturally-heated pool surrounded by real flowers – and be your own master?

Leave the city behind to wallow in its smokey pollution and take an unforgettable adventure into the largest open area of unspoilt nature in Europe, the Icelandic Highlands, with breathtaking landscapes and raw nature in all their glory!

We have Grand Cherokee 4WD Jeeps, specially equipped for Icelandic gravel and highland roads, with GPS navigation and unlimited mileage. An extra fuel can is supplied free of charge, if requested. All our cars are thoroughly inspected and overhauled to ensure trouble-free rental experience.

Our special offer car is suitable for safe travel to all popular highland attractions in Iceland such as:

- Askja
- Hagavatn
- Herðubreið
- Herðubreiðarlindir
- Hveravellir
- Kaldidalur
- Kerlingarfjöll
- Kjölur
- Kverkfjöll
- Landmannalaugar
- Sprengisandur (Sprengisandsleið F26)

Even though our special offer cars are especially prepared, maintained and inspected for highland road conditions,

the driver must still show care and caution when driving in adverse conditions such as crossing rivers, negotiating rock strewn roads, passing and/or overtaking other vehicles on gravel roads.



Icelandic 4x4 car rental

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Tangabryggja 14-16 • 110 Reykjavík
 +354 535 6060
 info@rent4x4.is
 icelandic4x4carrental.com

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



REYKJANES PENINSULA

Teeming with bird life, endless lava fields, geothermal wonders, spectacular cliffs and the relentless pounding surf all around its coastline, Reykjanes Peninsula is a magical location with plenty to keep you busy year round. Almost every travel brochure and website about Reykjanes Peninsula includes information about its most famous attraction, the Blue Lagoon - and rightly so, for that is not a place you would want to miss! Nevertheless, this issue of Icelandic Times would like to turn your attention to a few of the Peninsula's other star attractions...

The Viking World Museum

One of best museums devoted to Viking history in Iceland can be found on the Reykjanes Peninsula at Vikingarheimar or the Viking World Museum in Njarvík. The imposing modern architecture of the building contrasts sharply with the nearby turf farm and the mossy lava fields that surround it. Through the huge glass

(km) from Reykjavik to New York in 2000 in the wake of Leif Eiriksson, who first discovered America. Thus he paid tribute to the 1,000 years of Viking character, culture, and craftsmanship, becoming a huge sensation the world over.

Vikingaheimar is also home to the exhibition The North Atlantic Viking Saga, which was originally shown at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C in the summer of 2000. Both of these immensely popular and interesting exhibits are on permanent display in museum's main building, Vikinga Aldan, or Viking Wave.

Lighthouses & Shipwrecks

Reykjanes has eleven spectacularly-sited lighthouses along its treacherous coast, including Iceland's oldest, Reykjanesviti, dating from 1878. Iceland's highest lighthouse is at Garðskagi, in Garður. Only 5 lighthouses were built in Iceland by the 20th century but



'The Happy Sailors' Day'

Towns across Iceland hold all sorts of events and festivals in summer and among the country's largest is the Seamen's Day Festival in Grindavik, held annually over the first weekend in June. The week-long programme of events includes art exhibitions, fairground rides, competitions and live music, culminating in Sjómannadagur - Seamen's Day. The eclectically varied schedule includes a dog show, helicopter rides, a golf competition, water fights, pillow fights and special offers in local shops and eateries.

Power!

Power Plant Earth is an exhibition located in Reykjanesvirkjun, Hafnir, a geothermal power plant located not far from the edge of Reykjanes, the Reykjanes lighthouse and Bridge between two Continents. The exhibition's most impressive showpiece is a geothermal turbine generating 50 MW of 'green' electrical power, enough to keep Reykjavík City running on a good day. For a peek at what awaits you, see: www.powerplantearth.is



The Sunset Festival

The Sunset Festival on Garðskagi is truly a festival for the whole family. The festivities are held annually at Garðskagi in the middle of the summer. The facility is ideal for campers with tents, trailer tents, caravans and Winnebagos. Sunset on Garðskagi presents an awe-inspiring spectacle and the timing of the festival is perfect because then the summer solstice will have passed. The setting sun glitters on the ocean while the inhabitants of Garður and their guests sing and celebrate around the campfire.

For more information about the festival's date each year as well as the schedule visit the following website:

www.svgardur.is/ferdathonusta/solseturshatid

Ljósanótt - The Night of Lights

As the bright nights of summer give way to the shorter days of autumn, the first Saturday of September sees the staging of the highly popular Night of Lights, the Reykjanes Festival of Culture and Family. Now a fixed event in Iceland's cultural



windows that make up at least half the building, a viking ship is visible from quite a distance, appearing as if frozen in mid-air.

The Íslendingur is an exact replica of the viking vessel Gokstad, found almost completely intact in Norway in 1882, and believed to have been built in 870. Built by the sailor and master shipbuilder, Gunnar Marel Eggertsson from 1994-1996, the Íslendingur sailed the 2,600 miles (4,200

by 1954 there were over 100 at strategic points all around the coast of Iceland. Numerous shipwrecks around Reykjanes have been a tragic fact of life in the history of the peninsula. At Garðskagi, you can read more about these tragic events and there is a map showing shipwreck sites and their dates.

For more information, contact the Icelandic Lighthouse Society at their website: www.vitafelagid.is

calendar, the event, which despite its name, is now staged over four days from Thursday to Sunday. An ever-growing celebration of local culture, last year's festival included more than 100 separate events and attracted some 30,000 visitors. The Night of Lights offers something for everyone, ranging from art, theatre and music performed by groups and individuals, to a spectacular finale under a blaze of fireworks. Whatever

your cultural interests, The Night of Lights has something to offer you, so make a date to come, see and sample this unique event during the first weekend in September.

Markaðstofa Reykjanes



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Krossmót 4 • 260 Reykjanes
+354 421 3520
info@visitreykjanes.is
www.visitreykjanes.is



A HIDDEN PEARL IN THE WESTFJORDS

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 Westfjords peninsula. A relatively small and peaceful community in terms of population, 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.

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

Birdwatchers are in for a treat as a wide variety of species make their nests on both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and the islands of Breidafjörður Bay. Perhaps one of the most impressive bird-spotting opportunities in the area is the majestic and elusive whitetailed 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 numerous 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



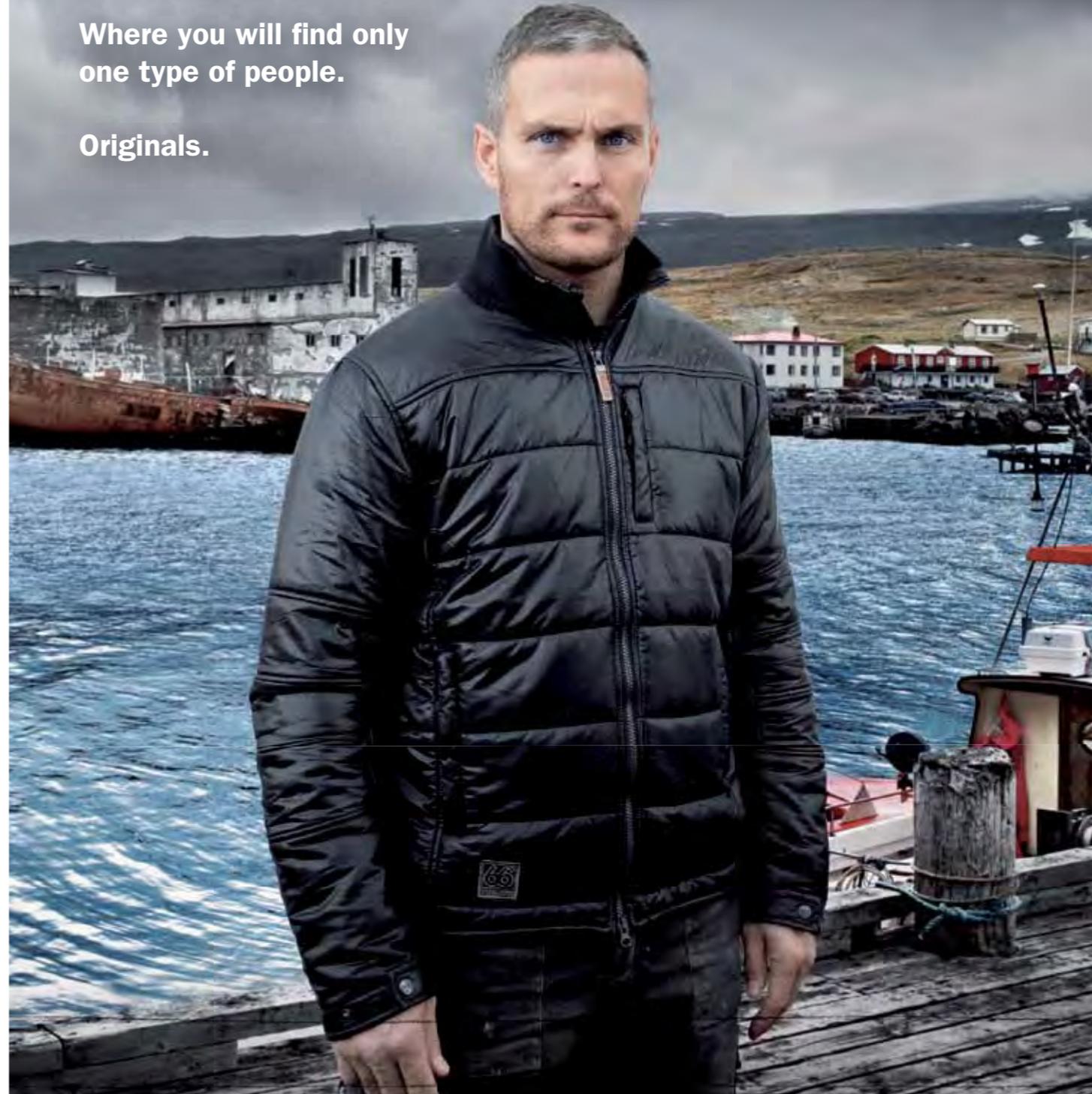
arrange for a cruise at Reykhólar taking you to inhabited islands and those uninhabited except for the plethora of birds that make their homes there.

The second largest island in Breidafjörður is called Flatey Island and it 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. You'll find reminders of past times – including a monastery built in 1172 and Iceland's first library built in 1864.

This is Djúpavík.

Where you will find only one type of people.

Originals.



Reykjavík Capital Area: Bankastræti 5, Faxafen 12, Kringlan, Smáralind, Miðhraun 11 **Akureyri:** Glerártorg **Keflavík:** Airport and retailers across Iceland

www.66north.com

Keeping Iceland warm since 1926





WESTFJORDS WANDERINGS

The people of the West Fjords have long been known for their very special social life, with culture and history highly esteemed. In addition, in recent years organised entertainment has increased markedly, with annual festivals such as Sæluhelgi (Family weekend) at Sudureyri, Bryggjuhátíð (Harbour Festival) at Dranganes, Djúpavíkurbátíð (Djúpavík Festival), Þjóðahátíðinni (West Fjords Feasts of Nations), the Ski Week at Ísafjörður, and Seamen's Day at Patreksfjörður.

In the summer, there are also all kinds of events for all the family. There is a sand castle competition by the shore, walks with experienced leaders who know every bump

golf course nearby. There are six 9-hole golf courses in the West Fjord Region, three in Ísafjörðar County, two in Barðastrandar County and one in Strandir.

Then it is always possible to go for a dip in one of the West Fjord swimming pools. Those who have been there will well remember the large pool in Reykjanes by Djúp or the Krossneslaug pool in Árneshreppur District in Strandir, the first by the Atlantic and the second with the mountain towering over the landscape.

Boat trips, sea fishing and kayaking

Boat trips afford the traveller a chance to approach and experience the impressive

adventure trips, among them in Jökulfjörður in the northern part of the Djúp.

Walking and trips on horseback

The West Fjords offer many and varied possibilities for walking trips and horseback riding. In fact, there are uncountable opportunities to go out on one's own to enjoy the natural surroundings, discovering gems of nature and places of historical interest almost everywhere one looks. Everywhere there are interesting walks, both along the shore and up into the mountains, both for those who want to climb a harder trail and those who want to take it easy. The wide expanses are breathtaking and it is no



in the landscape, evenings reliving the cultural heritage, family day on the shore - all of it unforgettable entertainment for young and old.

In order not to miss out on anything, it is best to visit the West Fjord Information Centres regularly. Still others think the most fun is to poke around a good West Fjord handicrafts shop and look at the art treasures and mementoes made by the local people. The social life excites others and each town has its own charm and magnetism.

Fishing, golf and swimming

People who enjoy the great outdoors have ample opportunity in the West Fjords. Anglers, young and old, can fish the rivers and lakes, and golfers can usually find a

natural environment of the West Fjords. In fine weather, taking the boat over Breidafjörður and stopping over on the island of Flatey is an unforgettable experience. Or reliving the atmosphere of past ages and going for a day trip to Hornstrandir or sailing over the Djúp to visit the island of Vigur, where time has almost stood still. On the Dranganes Peninsula in Strandir, groups can go sea fishing and sailing, or out to the island of Grímsey, known as the pearl of Steingrímsfjörður.

Little creates more feelings of freedom, peace and natural beauty in the West Fjords than to paddle silently and with little effort over smooth water in a kayak. In several places it is possible to rent kayaks, and it is also possible to join longer organised

trouble to go alone to enjoy the solitude or with your family for an evening stroll or a walk along the shore.

The West Fjords Tourist Association has published a map for all areas that shows and describes short walks. The map can be obtained in tourist centres in the West Fjords and other selected shops.

It is no less fun to ride horseback. There are several horse rentals in the West Fjords which offer both short and long trips. For the more adventurous who are used to riding, there is an 8-day trip over the uninhabited land around the Drangajökull Glacier, an area that is rewarding to see close-up.

The remains of bygone ages

The traveller in the West Fjords can

easily discern the marks of previous habitation. Some of the remains go back to Commonwealth times in the Middle Ages, like the walls of Flókatóftir at Brjánslaekur, which may be the oldest remains of habitation in Iceland. Everywhere there are signs of the lives of past generations. Old boathouses to shelter the ships in winter and fishermen's turf huts by the seaside, summer pastures and abandoned farms up the valleys.

There are interesting museums and exhibits that should not be passed over. There are a great many important artefacts in the Egill Ólafsson Museum at Hnjótur in Örlygshöfn that show the tools and equipment used for farming and fishing. There is also a museum of flight and in Bíldudalur, the Melódíur music museum in a home that is open to guests in the summer.

Hrafnseyri on Arnarfjörður boasts the Jón Sigurðsson Museum, where the life and work of this hero of Iceland's fight for independence is well portrayed. A trip to the doll museum in Flateyri, housing dolls from a



great many countries, is fun for all the family. Nedstikaupstaður in Ísafjörður is the site of the most complete grouping of houses from the 18th century in Iceland, all protected by law. There are both commercial buildings and dwellings. Everyone who goes to Ísafjörður should take a trip to Nedstikaupstaður to enjoy going through these houses and the associated Maritime Museum. Bolungarvík has a fine natural history museum. No one will be disappointed by a visit to Ósvör, the restored fishing hut from the time of using rowboats, where the museum director, Geir,

will greet you, dressed like the fishermen of the old days. The atmosphere of the museum is impressive. There is also an interesting museum north in Trékyllisvík in Strandir and a handicrafts house at Hótel Djúpavík which shows many of the old relics, pictures and mementoes from the years when the herring catches were huge. The Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft at Hólmavík, in the Strandir area, demonstrates the seventeenth century belief in sorcery in an informative and lively way.



BOLUNGARVÍK

Coastal mountains stand guard over Bolungarvík (pop. 800). It sits on the edge of Ísafjarðardjúp, making it the most northerly village in the Westfjords. Bolungarvík is surrounded by mountains and valleys that include magnificent scenery and rich bird life and flora.

Bolungarvík has been a fishing port since Iceland was settled. The rich fishing grounds

at the mouth of Ísafjarðardjúp made it an important site for fishing stations in the era of the rowboat. Opposite is the village of Ósvör, where an old fishermen's hut from this time has now been restored to its original look.

For travellers, Bolungarvík offers many opportunities, with accommodation possibilities that suit everyone, together with



coffee houses, restaurants and museums for everyone to enjoy. In town, there are excellent sport facilities with an indoor swimming pool, but outdoor hot pools with a small water park for the children. Only a few minutes from town, an 18 hole golf course is open all summer long.

In Bolungarvík the Centre for Natural Research has an extensive bird and mammal collection that gives a comprehensive overview of the animal life in the Westfjords.

In the maritime museum in Ósvör, the bygone times of the first fishermen in Iceland come to life with a living museum open every day over the summer.





DISCOVER THE MAGNIFICENT WESTFJORDS WITH WEST TOURS

The Lonely Planet guide book has rated the Westfjords of Iceland as one of the Top 10 places to visit in 2011. "The top regions list means getting out the hiking boots and camping equipment; many of these places are tourist-free and don't have luxury hotels. But they do offer pure natural experiences with incredible wildlife, regional food and possibly a more authentic adventure," says the Lonely Planet Guide to Iceland.

Indeed, the region is Iceland's most sparsely populated area. The main service town of Ísafjörður, in contrast to the nature that surrounds it, has been described as a friendly mini-metropolis, and is surprisingly cosmopolitan. It is here in Ísafjörður that you will find West Tours. Operating since 1993, West Tours prides itself on being one of the most friendly and creative tour agencies and operators in the country.

The hauntingly beautiful landscape of Hornstrandir

The place is so remote that the only way to get there is by boat. There are no roads, no airstrips, no electricity and not even sheep grazing on the hillsides. Milla, managing director of West Tours, tells me that the last



of the area's residents all packed up and left with only their clothes and a few belongings in tow. Some of those homes are preserved today, intact, as they were when the occupants suddenly left in 1952. One such house is the 'Doctor's House' in Hesteyri, which today serves as a cafe, guesthouse and memorial to the last residents of the region. Now a protected nature reserve,

Hornstrandir is a true wilderness where flora and fauna have been allowed to flourish undisturbed by human civilization for almost 60 years.

West Tours offers a variety of popular tours to Hornstrandir, including but not limited to:

- History at Hesteyri - a leisurely tour 4 - 5 hours long
- Hiking in Hornstrandir - a moderate hike, 12 hours
- Backpacking in Hornstrandir (a more strenuous hike - choose a 4-day or 6-day hike)

The King and Queen of Cliffs

The name says it all! Once you've seen these cliffs you might be spoiled for life!

This 12-hour tour takes in all the grandeur of these magnificent cliffs at Hornvik at the very tip of Hornstrandir. Millions of birds descend upon these cliffs every summer, making it the one of the biggest bird cliffs in the whole of Europe. A boat will take you around the cliffs and then you will be able to take an exhilarating walk to the top.

It's just a hop, skip and a jump to the Westfjords from Reykjavik.

The 40 minute flight will get you on your



way, making day tours an excellent and viable option when planning your vacation in the Westfjords with West Tours.

Ask Milla at West Tours for more information.

West Tours



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

 Aðalstræti 7 • 400 Ísafjörður
 +354 456 5111
 westtours@westtours.is
 www.westtours.is

SAILING WITH THE BIRDS INTO HISTORY

in Breidafjörður Bay



In Breiðafjörður fjord there are an vast number of islands, traditionally said to be uncountable, but officially numbered at about 2700 and they are famous for their teeming bird life. The area's astonishing wildlife is best observed by sailing amongst the islands where one can see sea birds, seals, dolphins and, with a little luck,



an occasional whale, all in their natural habitat.

Eyjasigling (Island Cruises) operates a 19-person leisure boat, Súlan, from Reykholar village in Breidafjörður bay. Scheduled trips to the magical islands in Skaleyjar and Flatey offer a breathtaking view of the rich bird life in the bay as well as a peek into the charming culture of these beautiful islands.

Skaleyjar Islands and Flatey Island are the only islands in Breidafjörður bay which are inhabited throughout the year. The islands have the smell and atmosphere of old times when the farmers lived a self-sufficient life, raising sheep, collecting eggs from the eider ducks for food and hunting seals. Fishing was, and is, an important part of life in the islands. Flatey is maybe the island that time forgot. Around the year 1100, there was a monastery on the island that became the

centre of Icelandic literature. Flatey village is one of the oldest and best preserved in Iceland. It boasts some of the finest timber buildings in the country, beautifully restored and painted in beautiful strong colours, typical for old Iceland.

The Súlan departs from Staður, a few kilometres from Reykholar village, to the islands. There, guests take a guided walk around the islands. The guide will enlighten you about life and existence on the islands both nowadays and in the past.

You can also go to Flatey Island directly from Staður in Reykholar or from Skaleyjar Islands.

Eyjasigling



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

 Reykhólum • 380 Reykhólahreppur
 +354 849 6748
 eyjasigling@eyjasigling.is
 www.eyjasigling.is



EAGLEFJORD TOURS IN BILDUDALUR

Where almost anything is possible!

Accommodation galore!

This family-run travel and tour operator in the Westfjords has recently renovated their comfortable and fully-furnished apartments.

Eaglefjord Tours offers:

- 3 fully-furnished apartments, each with two double bedrooms
- 2 fully-furnished apartments, each with 4 double bedrooms
- 1 fully-furnished apartment with 7 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, Internet access, washer and dryer and able to accommodate 14 guests
- House with three bedrooms that can accommodate five people, with kitchen, two living rooms, bathroom with shower and Internet connection.
- Accommodation can be arranged for up to 50 guests, and more by special arrangement.

It's an on-board grill party!

Why not try your hand and see if you can catch a few haddock for dinner, which will then be prepared for the pan, the pot or the grill and can on some tours be cooked and eaten right on board? Eaglefjord Tours will provide everything you need for a memorable fishing expedition, including fishing equipment, a skipper, an engineer and an on-board chef (and, of course, a boat!) Included in these popular day tours is a finely prepared 3-course

Jón Þórðarsson says, "You haven't really experienced Bildudalur or Arnarfjord until you have experienced the saga of Gisli Súrsson". We'll let the saga tour speak for itself!

Before you leave this corner of the Westfjords, be sure to stop in at the Sea Monster Museum of Bildudalur. If you are feeling a bit incredulous, just check out their website: www.skrimsli.is and get the information straight from the horse's mouth!



Enjoying life's little pleasures

The only way to really get around the Westfjords is by boat and Eaglefjords can arrange a one hour or longer combined sightseeing and hiking tour. Eaglefjord Tours also offers scheduled sea angling tours on the fjord that last anywhere from 3 to 6 hours. If the fishing has been good, guests are allowed to take home with them, up to 20 kg of fish per person. Back at the harbour, your catch will be cleaned, processed, frozen and packaged all as a part of Eaglefjord's excellent service to their clients.

grilled dinner of freshly caught cod, haddock, whale and mussels, right on board!

The 'Legend of Gisli Súrsson' Tour

An impressive hiking tour, guided by a modern day Viking, tells the story of Gisli Súrsson from the Icelandic sagas. You will learn the inside story of how the Vikings survived, how they lived and how they thought. Eaglefjord Tours owner, Jon Þórðarsson, plays the part of Gisli Súrsson. Dressed in Viking period costume, he brings the saga to life with drama and authenticity.

A final note:

Eaglefjord Tours go the extra mile for their guests. If requested, we can arrange transport from Keflavik International Airport to the Westfjords, where the team at Eaglefjords Tours awaits your arrival.

Eaglefjord



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

 Dalbraut 1 • 465 Bildudalur
 +354 894 1684
 bildudalur@bildudalur.is
 www.bildudalur.is

SEA MONSTER MUSEUM OF BILDUDALUR

Tales of sea monsters have played a colourful role in Icelandic folk culture for centuries, and several written accounts of them can be found all around the country. Today, these elusive creatures have been given a worthy home at the Icelandic Sea Monster Museum, located

in the village of Bildudalur on the shores of Arnarfjörður fjord, said to be one of the most prolific centres of monster activity in the country.

Visitors to the Sea Monster Museum watch these remarkable creatures brought to life through a lively mix of words, images and videos, an action-packed multimedia display that culminates in a spectacular interactive plinth, the first of its kind in Iceland.

First-hand accounts from eye-witnesses are joined on-screen by academic theories on the nature of sea monsters, while a variety of relics and artefacts relating to this mysterious branch of zoology appear throughout the museum as tangible evidence for their existence.

And to feed monster appetites, the museum cafeteria offers a range of light refreshments and snacks.



Skrimslasetur



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

 Strandgata 7 • 465 Bildudalur
 +354 456 6666
 skrimslis@skrimslis.is
 www.skrimsli.is



AIR ICELAND

www.airiceland.is

Fly and discover Action-packed day tours 2011

Air Iceland is your West Nordic airline, a customer-driven service company responsible for scheduled domestic flights and flights from Iceland to the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Air Iceland offers a variety of day tour packages, in Iceland and to Greenland, which include flight, bus transfer and guidance. All these magical locations are but a short, comfortable flight from Reykjavik. **Come fly with Air Iceland**



Day Tour

Jewels of the North

→ Mývatn



Day Tour

Highlights of the North

→ Mývatn



2 night Hotel Package

A Different World

→ Greenland - Kulusuk - Ammassalik



Day Tour

The Back Streets of Ísafjörður

→ Ísafjörður

websales@airiceland.is / tel. +354 570 3030

Contact Air Iceland or travel agent for reservation.



HRAFNSEYRI

A farm that changed a nation, a museum for the future



A small, very remote farm, on a mountainside almost at the end of the world; the home of two men, separated by 6 centuries. A Viking chieftain in the late 12th century and a young scholar who was later to become known as the Father of the Nation.



Hrafn Sveinbjarnason was a Viking leader who travelled to England, France and Italy, studying to become a physician in Salerno. He returned to become a popular leader in the West Fjords, only to be assassinated by one he had helped. He lived on the farm in Eyri, to which he gave his name.

Six centuries later, from this little farm, came a young man, the son of a pastor, who was to change the destiny of Iceland. Hrafnseyri has become synonymous with Jón Sigurðsson, the man who, without a shot being fired or a man being killed, brought Iceland from servitude to the Danish crown to internal self-rule with a rekindled self-respect.

Today, the farm is a museum, a testament to the man who brought freedom to his nation. However, this is no dead memorial but rather a living extension of the lives of both these great men, each a hero in his

time, taking their work forward in new ways whilst enshrining the values and achievements they made.

On the 17th June, 2011, Iceland will celebrate the 200th birthday of their most famous freedom fighter, who fought with words and wisdom, as opposed

to the guns and bullets favoured by most governments and revolutionaries alike. In 1944, Jón's birthday was chosen as the birthday of Iceland as a nation, in recognition of the key role he played in bringing its freedom and independence from foreign rule, becoming a nation in its own right. It is celebrated each year as Iceland's National Day. This year,

on the 17th June, the President of Iceland will visit Hrafnseyri to open the celebrations marking, not only Jón Sigurðsson's birth but the rebirth and reopening of the museum dedicated to his memory on the same spot where he was born.

Why would anyone want to live in such an inhospitable spot? The road linking it with the rest of the West Fjord towns in the north is often impassable in winter. The rest of the year offers an answer. It is located on the north slopes of Arnarfjörður,

surrounded by scenes of great natural beauty, including Iceland's most beautiful waterfall, the 100 m high Dynjandi (Thunderer), often also called 'The Bride's Veil'. Hiking trails abound in the almost-untouched landscape of mountains, fjords, valleys and cliffs where wildlife is plentiful. Both the remoteness and peace of the fjord provide a good opportunity for anyone to contemplate their lives and roles.

In 1829, when Jón Sigurðsson was 18 years old, he left the farm, first moving to Reykjavík before moving to Copenhagen to become a student in 1833. An upright and forthright man, he had the calm authority of a leader. He was able to converse with king and commoner alike - a trait that won him much respect and support as he argued, using his knowledge of the historical archives as his platform, to justify his claim

for Icelandic independence. This was a time when revolutionary fervour was sweeping the western world. Independence movements in Germany, France and the USA provided inspiration to the students in Copenhagen. Jón sought self-rule for Iceland under the Danish crown. Through his annual writings, he kept his supporters in Iceland informed.

In 1851, a new Danish government sought to annex Iceland, making it merely another district of Denmark. The Alþing (the Icelandic parliament) which had become

an advisory body on Icelandic matters, under Jón's leadership boldly resisted these attempts. Despite Danish warships and military presence in the harbour, force was not used and a stalemate existed for a decade, during which Jón continued to argue so successfully that it became accepted fact that Iceland should rule itself. It was just a matter of how much money the Danish government would pay. A committee was set up in Denmark, on which Jón served. He delivered his own report, however, demanding five times as much as the Danish committee was considering, claiming reparations for damage done in the past. His motive was apparently to buy time, as Iceland was not ready to stand on its own either economically or politically and he wanted it be understood that the money was given as a right, not a gift.

Through his wisdom, diplomacy, eloquent argument and Godly conviction, Jón was able to bring a peaceful transition to self-rule at a time when most other European countries were suffering violently turbulent revolutions, in which many were tortured, killed or maimed in the battle for change.

of the farm buildings. The museum is being renovated in time for the celebrations in June with a dramatic new presentation designed by Basalt architects, who designed the Blue Lagoon's new structures.

The museum uses its facilities to continue to educate and provide a unique setting for conferences and courses run in cooperation with University Centre of West Fjords, University of Iceland, University of Akureyri and the National Gallery of Iceland. Visiting lecturers from Denmark, USA and UK have taught innovative courses such as the 2009 Conference on National Identity in a Globalised World.

Provocative questions are asked with a view to stimulate debate and argument in order to provide a platform for change based on discussion rather than violence whilst addressing questions that have no easy answers. For example, "What place do national heroes have in a cosmopolitan world?" "What is the place of National Identity in a Multi-Cultural Society?"

Jón Sigurðsson's legacy is very relevant in a modern world. The Viking chieftan, Hrafn Sveinbjarnason's was willing

Visitors today can stay in a variety of accommodations in the nearby town of Þingeyri. The road over the mountain is fine to travel from Spring to Autumn. Refreshments are provided in the replica turf house - delicious home-made cakes, bread, waffles and jam, with soup or coffee that make it the most popular café in the area! This special experience is augmented by other locally produced items, along with souvenirs that will provide a constant reminder of this farm for heroes!

A unique feature of the farm is its old chapel, which is fast becoming a hot favourite for couples wanting to get married in a very special location! It is also the venue for the conferences and courses held there during summer months, turning the museum into a forward-thinking university, building on the educational foundation that led to both its former famous inhabitants leaving such a mark on the country's history.

Interested couples, students and course providers should contact the museum's curator, Valdimar J. Halldórsson. Tel. +354 845 5518 Email: hrafnseyri@hrafnseyri.is

The museum is open in 2011 from 17th June (Grand opening) daily from 10:00 - 20.00 or by appointment with Valdi mar.



Although it wasn't until 1944 that Iceland became totally independent, the foundation for independence and national identity was laid by Jón Sigurðsson. The museum at Hrafnseyri is a testament to his life and legacy, giving a clear insight into his early years, through the chapel and the replicas

to brave many perils to travel through different countries, listening to new ideas, experiencing different cultures and to bring the best to help his countrymen. If one remote farm can produce two such leaders, there must be something very valuable to learn from it!

Hrafnseyri



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Hrafnseyri • 471 Þingeyri
 +354 456 8260
 hrafnseyri@hrafnseyri.is
 www.hrafnseyri.is



A FISHING TRIP WITH A DIFFERENCE

Suðureyri leads visitors in an eco-Fisherman's Life

As you burst out of the tunnel high on the mountainside at the end of the fjord, the view down to the sea is enough to inspire even the most jaded tourist. However, it is what goes on in the village below that is completely out of the norm. Frommer's calls it "the best small



village or town to visit in Iceland," so there is clearly something to experience here that would make the trip to the far north-west fjords memorable and special. For generations, the only forms of transport were boats, the hardy Icelandic horse or simply walking. However, the massive mountains separating the main

town of Ísafjörður from the surrounding villages meant that trips were arduous and in winter hazardous or impossible for long periods. It is only in recent times, with the building of tunnels and modern transport that it has become much easier to reach them.

A village with fresh ideas

Suðureyri (pronounced Soo-ther-ay-ri) is a traditional, yet eco-conscious fishing village that is pioneering a new concept that draws visitors into the daily work life of the village.



"Work? Not while I'm on holiday! That's what I'm taking a break from!" you might say. However, a change is often as good as a break and an opportunity to try your hand at something you would never normally get to do. Whether joining a fishing boat crew or touring a fish-processing factory, these are authentic cross-cultural experiences you're unlikely to forget!

Here you will find a village that is working together as a team to provide the visitor with an understanding of their way of life - a life they are justifiably proud to

share. Here you can learn about all the steps involved in bringing that delicious fish from the sea to your plate. After your fishing trip, you can process your own catch.

Self-catering facilities are available, as is wireless Internet access, which is free of charge. If you would prefer to camp, there is a campsite and they can also help you



The Talisman Restaurant

Finally, to crown the evening, the fish can be cooked by the chef and served on hand-made plates under the glow of handmade designer lamps, both created by local artists, as you dine in a cosy atmosphere at the Talisman Restaurant in the Fisherman Hotel. At the restaurant, every visitor has the opportunity to relish the

find a summerhouse in the village, if you would like that option.

Feed the Fish

A visit to Suðureyri would not be complete without feeding the fish! The lagoon in the village is full of fish so tame that they will even take food from your hand! Take care,



66° North

The famous clothing company, 66° North, was founded by Hans Kristjánsson in Suðureyri in response to the need the sailors had for warm, waterproof clothing. He travelled to Norway to find out about the clothing used by Norwegian sailors. Suðureyri is 66° North of the equator, where good clothing is a must. The company's clothing is not just for fishermen but its wide range has become some of the warmest, most fashionable clothing that is now sold and worn worldwide!

though, as they might try to take a bite of the hand that feeds them! You can buy fish food in the Fisherman mini market. Although they are free to swim out to sea, they have chosen to stay in the lagoon, where they receive a great deal of attention



flavourful experience of some of the village's top quality fresh products, far removed from the factory mass produced 'foods' most people have to endure in today's world. The restaurant provides excellent personal service, whether you are alone or part of a large group. It offers a high quality 'à la carte' fish menu, displayed in artistically-created catfish skin menus in the evening that should not be missed.

Fisherman Hotel

After eating so well, you will be glad you booked into the Fisherman 3-star hotel.

from visitors. Make sure you pay them a visit, too!

While we're talking about swimming, the open-air pool is geothermally-heated and there are also saunas and hot pots to relax in.

Fisherman



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Skipagata 3 • 430 Suðureyri
 354 450 9000
 fisherman@fisherman.is
 www.fisherman.is



ÍSAFJARÐARBÆR



Ísafjörður Municipality includes the area from Langanes in Arnarfjörður, all the way north to Horn, and from there to Geirólfsnúpur in the southern part of Reykjarfjörður, where the boundary lies between Ísafjörður and Strandir.

In the heart of the municipality is the town of Ísafjörður, the largest town in the Westfjords. Referred to by many as 'surprisingly cosmopolitan' with its coffee houses, hotels, restaurants and vibrant cultural life.

Ísafjörður is the service centre of Ísafjörður and can fulfill all travellers needs in terms of services, attraction and activities. Ísafjörður is a lively town that has many surprises. It's rich culture comes from being one of the oldest towns in

Iceland. The natural harbour situation made Ísafjörður a attractive place for Icelanders throughout the history of Iceland. Thus the old town of Ísafjörður gives a wonderful insight into the bygone times and, together with the excellent cultural museum in 'neðstikaupstaður,' visitors can learn about the interesting story of Ísafjörður and the life of it's inhabitants.

The main characteristics of the spectacular landscape are the long narrow fjords with steep mountains that in many places descend directly into the sea. The highlands are flat, almost as if the mountaintops had been sliced off with a sharp knife.

One emphasis in tourism is on boat

trips and enabling visitors to experience nature in its purest form. The Hornstrandir Nature Reserve is one of the areas biggest secrets. Hornstrandir, once a prosperous area, is no longer inhabited and is only accessible by boat and small planes. It is left to nature's firm grip, where arctic foxes, seals and sea birds call it their home.

In the surrounding areas, there are other numerous places of interest such as the beautiful Dynjandi waterfall or the mountains between Dýrafjörður and Arnarfjörður, that are unlike most others in the Westfjords. They are sometimes referred to as the Westfjords Alps. The mighty Kaldbakur, the highest mountain in the Westfjords, is probably the most imposing among them, being 998 metres high.



SUÐAVÍK

Suðavík is a small fishing village in Álftafjörður, Ísafjardardjúp. 20 km from the town of Ísafjörður.

The town is divided into two halves. The first half, referred to as the 'old town of Suðavík', was hit by an avalanche in 1995 destroying a part of the village. In an effort to restore the village free from the danger of further avalanches, a new village was built a few minutes from the "old town". Now called the "new town", Suðavík is an exciting new village that offers new and unique



opportunities. The houses in the old town are now free for a summer vacation village used by travellers in the summer.

In town and the surrounding areas, nature is always close by with many attractions. In town a family orientated play ground is situated in the heart of the old town.

Suðavík is the ideal place for families wanting to experience the life in a small fishing village and at the same time feel close to nature and experience all the wonderful experiences the nature of the Westfjords will give us.



HÓTEL ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

Time flies when you are having a blast in the Westfjords...and you'll want to see it all! Packing in the scenery, the waterfalls, the magnificent mountains, the pure energy of it all leaves you refreshed and inspired. But then it comes time to turn your attention to where you will spend the night...

Ready, steady...stay!

Right in the heart of the Ísafjörður, the capital of the Westfjords, you will find Hotel Ísafjörður - a modern 3-star hotel with 36 double rooms that serves as a perfect base



Icelandic dinner dishes using a variety of local ingredients.

Additional accommodation can be found at Gamla Guesthouse, a 2-star guesthouse in a historic building right in the town centre, just a few minutes walk from Hotel Ísafjörður. Clean, bright and comfortable rooms await you in this cozy, turn-of-the-century Norwegian wood guesthouse. There's even a bathrobe waiting for you in the cupboard! These are the little extras that add to the charming ambiance of Gamla Guesthouse.

Event Planner 2011

Not to be missed are this year's musical events:

- Annual music festival and summer courses Við Djupíð, which offer a series of concerts and master classes from contemporary to jazz to classical, 21-22 June, 2011
- "I Never Went South" Rock Festival to be held over Easter Weekend, 22-24 April, 2011.

Ísafjörður is a small town where the local attractions are easily accessible on foot. There's the Westfjords Maritime Museum, for an interesting look into Ísafjörður's



history. Stroll about in the old town amongst 19th century wooden houses, have coffee or lunch at one of the inviting little cafés and restaurants, and enjoy this relaxing yet international capital of the Westfjords.

The newly surfaced roads to the Westfjords make getting here a breeze. There are also regular daily flights all year round between Ísafjörður and Reykjavík. Flying time is 35 minutes.

Hótel Ísafjörður



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Silfurtorgi 2 • 400 Ísafirði
+354 456 4111
 info@hotelisafjorur.is
 www.hotelisafjorur.is



DRANGSNÆS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN THE WEST FJORDS



It may be the smallest fishing village in Iceland. With only 65 residents, Drangsnæs in the West Fjords has nevertheless become a destination visited by over 2,000 people every year. It is also the only village in Iceland with hot

tubs of the town from a local fisherman. The very first hot tub was washed out to sea one winter and was subsequently replaced by three new ones. Buttressed by boulders which have been turned into works of art by the famous Icelandic artist, Mireya

of tourists and are a friendly bunch," says Jenny Jensdottir, head of marketing and tourism for the area. Festival highlights include local art and photography expositions and an exhibit chronicling the history of lump fish caviar which was first produced in Drangsnæs in the 1930's. Free samples of cod, lump fish, crab, seal and whale specialities from the village chefs, cooked to perfection, are another of the day's highlights. Join locals as the festival culminates in song around a bonfire and a late night dance for young people.



tubs sitting right on the beach and where villagers can be seen shopping or walking to and from the hot tubs in their swim suits, 'tub robes' and 'tub shoes.' In 1997, hot water was discovered and the town immediately switched over to geothermal heating for their houses, and thus the hot tub idea was born as a gift to the people

Samper, the hot tubs are a unique feature of Drangsnæs.

Every summer, the town holds its annual 'Harbour Festival,' one of the largest in the area, where the locals come together to help make this event a success. "The close-knit community is very welcoming

Drangsnæs, renowned for its beauty and tranquility, boasts excellent possibilities for seal and whale viewing, often right from the shore. Sightings of minke whales and dolphins are common and even the occasional blue whale has been seen in Steingrimsfjörður Bay. The offshore island of Grimsey (not to be confused with the island of the same name on the arctic circle above Iceland), is accessible by boat in summer with daily trips for puffin watching. It is home to millions of the little birds, making this the second largest puffin colony in Iceland.

ICELAND EXCURSIONS

-Grayline Iceland

Getting to the airport on time can be one of the most stressful parts of anyone's journey but Iceland Excursions has got you covered. Starting at the end of March 2011, the company will be offering daily direct bus transfers between Reykjavik and Keflavik International Airport. Transfers include a complimentary pick-up/drop-off hotel service and get you to the airport in plenty of time to relax and enjoy the friendly and modern facilities of Keflavik airport; recently voted as the best airport in Europe in the Airports Council International passenger survey in 2010.

Just Arrived?

The Airport Express direct bus transfers also



"City Sightseeing and Golden Circle Afternoon" (AH23) - one of their most popular tours.

take you to Reykjavik 45 to 65 minutes after every incoming flight, making it easier than ever to reach your destination in Reykjavik with a complimentary hotel drop-off service to all major hotels in the capital.

Sightseeing and Day Tours with Iceland Excursions

And now that you are here, why not let Iceland Excursions show you around? Combine the sights of Reykjavik with an afternoon feasting your eyes on some of Iceland's most famous natural wonders with

You will start off with a tour of the Presidential Residence at Bessastaðir and then visit the nearby town of Hafnarfjörður, where humans and "hidden people" live side by side. Then its on to the

hilltop revolving restaurant Perlan with its 360-degree spectacular views over Reykjavik and beyond. You'll also get to have a look at Hallgrímskirkja church, the University area and the old town centre where the Icelandic parliament, the Althing is located.

The tour pauses for a break in the city centre where you can stop for lunch (not



included in the price) or enjoy a stroll through this quaint quarter of Reykjavik with its narrow streets and unique shops.

After the break, you will join the Golden

Circle Afternoon tour and head for the countryside to the Thingvellir National Park; renowned for its historic legacy and geological intrigue.

From there your journey continues to the geothermal area that encompasses the hot springs of Geysir and Strokkur and then to the mighty Gullfoss glacial waterfall. Lastly,



the tour makes a stop in Hveragerði, the greenhouse village, before returning to the city over the mountain heath Hellisheiði.



Relax! The new Airport Express Bus Transfer has got you covered

Iceland Excursions



Hafnarstraeti 20 • 101 Reykjavik
 +354 540 1313
 iceland@grayline.is
 www.grayline.is



THE HORSE SHOW TO BEAT ALL SHOWS

Landsmót, the famous National Horse Show of Iceland is coming to the horse capital of the North - Skagafjörður. From 26th June to 3rd July, horses from all over the country will be pouring in to compete

known as the most famous horse breeding area in Iceland. It is an area of fertile farming and thriving fishing villages. The beautiful fjord and valley region stretches from the Arctic Ocean to the highlands. In the fjord

in the country, surrounded by picturesque mountains. The district is 50km long, divided in two at its southernmost end. Both valleys are called Skagafjörður. However in Saga times, they were known as Goðadalir - Valleys of the Gods.

Skagafjörður is renowned for being one of the 'cradles of Icelandic history'. Historical sites are many, including museums and exhibits. Drangey was a hideout for outlaws including the legendary Saga figure, Grettir the Strong, for example.

Varmahlíð is a small village where you can participate in an 'Introduction to the



Icelandic Horse' course with a lecture, horse show and refreshments. You can also go on a riding tour with a well-trained Icelandic horse. Skagafjörður is also one of the most important areas for river rafting in the country. Booking information: Hestaspport Adventure Tours - Tel. 453-8383

Glaumbær (located on Road 75 some 9 km north of Varmahlíð), is an old manor with turf buildings in traditional style, some

parts of which date back to the 18th century. Within the original buildings, everyday tools are displayed in their natural environment. In Áshús, a 19th-century wooden house, is a coffeehouse and museum store, so visitors can absorb the historical atmosphere while tasting delicious breads and pastries baked in traditional Icelandic fashion. Glaumbæjarkirkja church is also well worth a visit. Finally, there are several monuments on the site, including one to Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, the first European woman to sail to America and who gave birth to the first American of European origin. She lived at Glaumbær in the 11th century.

Nearby Sauðárkrúkur is the second largest town in northern Iceland with a population of around 2,600 on the site of an old trading



post around 1870. The exhibition centre at Adalgata hosts an exhibit of the old workshops and above the town is a viewing platform providing wonderful views of the old town, the countryside and the fjord. The 9-hole golf course is considered one of the best in Iceland. The town's name is derived from the river Sauðá (Sheep river) krókur (hook) i.e. Sheep-river-hook. In the Sauðá valley is Litli Skógur (little forest), which has wonderful walkways through birch and

beech trees and is a lovely place for a picnic. On the eastern shore of Skagafjörður is the little village of Hofsó, one of the oldest trading centres in Iceland. The lower town near the harbour has a particularly cosy atmosphere. Here are two interesting museums: The Icelandic Emigration Centre, a museum and information centre focusing



Just below the town at Staðarbjargavík are the amazing basalt formations which can be found on the coast. The capital of the elves in Skagafjörður is said to be located in this area.

The ancient bishopric of Hólar in Hjaltadalur is one of the most famous historical places in Iceland, founded in

in Iceland's most prestigious riding event. Cancelled last year due to a sickness among the horses, the 60th year celebrations take place this year and Skagafjörður makes the ideal host. All of Iceland's best horses and riders gather to Landsmót to compete in various disciplines and breeding classes. It is an event like no other and the atmosphere is unique, with guests from all over the world sharing their common enthusiasm for the Icelandic horse.

Exciting competition, beautiful horses, great riders, tingling atmosphere, modern showgrounds, the fun people and the awesome nature – all these and much more will make you want to come back again and again.

Skagafjörður is an ideal place to enjoy the outdoors with the whole family. It is mainly

itself are two prominent islands, Málmei, with a lighthouse near the mouth of the fjord and Drangey, in the middle. Drangey offers awesome natural beauty and diverse birdlife. Reykir is the site of Grettislaug, a natural hot water pool. Towards the end of Skagafjörður is one of the largest valleys



on the mass emigration of Icelanders to North America in the 19th century and Pakkhúsið, a timber warehouse from the days of the Danish trading monopoly, now restored and housing a small regional folk museum focusing on the island of Drangey.

1106. See the article in this issue dedicated to this special site.

It is often said of Iceland that the country has an artistic soul. Skagafjörður is renowned for its rich musical life and especially, for its singing and very active choral activities. The two most famous choirs are the men's choir Heimir, the mixed choir Rokkurkórinn. Singing and horses are synonymous with Skagafjörður!

Skagafjörður

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Varmahlíð • 560 Varmahlíð
 +354 455 6161
 info@visitskagafjordur.is
 www.visitskagafjordur.is



HÓLAR IN HJALTADALUR



Located some 130 km from Akureyri, Hólar comes into bloom in summer with a variety of concerts held in Hólar Cathedral every weekend. The musical weekends include performances by small ensemble classical artists, recitals by up and coming Icelandic singers, as well as popular music and song. Also found at Hólar are many interesting historical and natural treasures which are well worth seeing, such as:



- Hólaskóli, the main building housing a permanent exhibition of the Bishops of Hólar.
- Auðun's House, a replica of the original house of the Norwegian, Auðun the Red, bishop of Hólar from 1313 to 1322.
- Nýibær, a fine example of a 19th century North Iceland turf house.
- Hólaskógur (the wood) - a lovely place for walks. Follow the signs, for example,



up to Gvendarskál (the rock-ledge half-way up the Hólabyrða mountain), or just take a random hike and see where it leads you.

- New at Hólar is the recently-opened Museum of the Icelandic Horse. Under the auspices of the Icelandic Horse History Centre, it presents an informative exhibit, open from 1st June to 15th September.

Fast becoming a popular tourist destination, Hólar also maintains its own year-round tourist service providing accommodation for guests including apartments, cottages and a camping site in a peaceful forest setting. The university restaurant is open to the public and is known for its innovative cuisine based on local ingredients. Freshly caught Arctic char spiced with local herbs is a specialty as is their delightfully refreshing summer



angelica soup.

Once the capital of northern Iceland, Hólar in Hjaltadalur is one of the most important historical and architectural sites in Iceland. Its presence dates back to

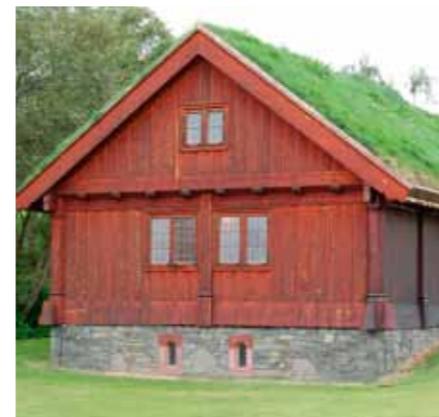
degrees in three highly specialised fields: equine science, aquaculture and fish biology, and rural tourism.

More recently, Hólar has been the site of an exciting archaeological excavation.



1106 when it was established as one of two Episcopal sees (the other being in Skalholt in the south). Over seven centuries, Hólar was home to no less than 36 bishops, many of whom made their own unique contributions to the wealth of cultural and educational heritage found at Hólar. The original cathedral school, built in 1106 continued as a centre for education until 1801. In 1882, the school was revived as a prominent College of Agriculture, attracting students from all over Iceland. Today, Hólar is a modern university, granting undergraduate

Unearthing more than 40,000 artifacts from past ages, the project will undoubtedly help to shed more light on this fascinating place. Guests can visit the archaeological excavation site and an exhibit devoted to the archaeological finds in the school building.



Hólar

Hólum - 551 Sauðárkróki
 +354 455 6333
 booking@holar.is
 www.holar.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

▶ general information ▶ holar ▶ tourist information



FJALLABYGGD

-A Tale of Two Villages

It's a happy tale of how two villages, separated by huge mountain ranges were joined together. Miles and miles of intimidating and boldfaced mountain peaks, stretch out as far as the eye can see and stand between Siglufjörður and Olafsfjörður, two

260 km detour in winter! One can only imagine the challenges of transportation, communication, safety and a host of related issues that residents of these remote fjords have had to contend with all their lives. But no longer! In 2003, after much back



small fishing villages on the very northern peninsula of Tröllaskagi, in North Iceland. Although it is only 17km as the crow flies between the villages, the geography of the area dictates a 62 km detour around the mountains in summer and a

and forth discussion and negotiation, plans for a tunnel connecting the two villages were finalised, making it the most ambitious project ever undertaken by the Icelandic Road Administration. Then, in 2006 the residents of the two communities voted to



herring which lasted from 1867 to 1968 and had an enormous impact on Icelandic society and economy. Lively theatrical performances depicting life and times from the Herring Era of the 1950's are scheduled every Saturday in July. It is open from 10.00 to 22.00 12th June - 18th August, and 13.00 to 17.00 in Spring and Autumn.

Their website is: www.sild.is

Music in their Bones

Another gem in Fjallabyggd is the Folk Music Center, which opened in 2006 in Siglufjörður. Music has always played an important role in the everyday lives of

Icelandic folk music, a talented composer and is considered by many to be the 'father of Siglufjörður'. Since 2006 the Folk Music Center in Siglufjörður has organized a Folk Music Academy to coincide with the Folk Music Festival held there in the beginning of July every year. www.folkmusik.is

The Red, the Yellow and the Blue

The unmistakable bright red, yellow and blue buildings on the Rauðka Marina serve as the main gathering place and landmarks in Siglufjörður. Named after a well-known local sailor, the Hannes Boy Café, with its cozy rustic ambiance is reminiscent of the

door, the Red House Café & Bar is scheduled to open in May or June 2011 and will be the place to enjoy light lunches, a glass of wine, and live music. Finally, the Blue House, also on the marina, will serve as a gallery hosting the works of local artists. www.raudka.is

Whale Watching in Olafsfjörður

Exciting new developments in whale watching are now on the horizon for North Sailing, one of the leading companies in North Iceland for whale watching. In June 2011, the well-known company will be offering its tours from Olafsfjörður as well. Traditional oak boats just add to the

merge into one municipality, under the name of Fjallabyggd. The tunnel, or shall we say, tunnels, as there are two of them, are 11km in combined length and already has had an huge impact on residents of the now-unified villages. The official opening of the tunnel took place in October 2010.

Life in Tröllaskagi has been forever transformed and the community has felt its effects already. According to Sigurður Valur Ásbjarnarsson, mayor of Fjallabyggd, the merging of the two municipalities would not have been possible without the tunnel. The residents of the two previously separated towns can now enjoy richer cultural, educational, and employment opportunities, and the tunnel will provide better and more varied services in tourism and business.

The Rise and Fall of Iceland's Herring Boom

Possibly one of the best, if not the best museum of its kind in Iceland, Siglufjörður's Herring Era Museum has a creative and entertaining way of bringing the subject of herring to life. The museum was awarded the Micheletti Award for the best new industrial museum in Europe in 2004. Spread out over several buildings, the exhibits revisit Iceland's golden age of



Icelanders and continues to this day. The museum is located in one of the oldest houses in Siglufjörður, where the 19th century Rev. Bjarni Thorsteinsson lived from 1888-98. Bjarni was an avid collector

glory days of the herring era. Opened in 2010, Hannes Boy Café is actually a brand new restaurant serving quality food at reasonable prices and using the best local ingredients as much as possible. Right next

authenticity of your journey out on the open waters of the North Sea, where the chance to spot various whale species is optimal. Watch for it!

VARIOUS FESTIVALS TO BE HELD IN 2011 INCLUDE

- Folk Music Festival, Siglufjörður, 6-10 July
- Seaman's Day in Olafsfjörður, 3-5 July
- Blues Festival of Olafsfjörður, 1-2 July



Fjallabyggð



Gránugötu 24, 580 Siglufirði
 +354 464 9100
 Form on website
www.fjallabyggd.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



LAND OF CONTRASTS

The geology of Iceland

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

Geological Hot Spot

On a geological time scale, Iceland is a very young country. It is situated astride a divergent plate boundary, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and on top of a hotspot presumed to be fed by a deep mantle plume. At the plate boundary the two major plates, the Eurasia and North America Plates, move apart today with a velocity of about 19 mm/year. The divergence continues today and is accompanied by earthquakes, reactivation of old volcanoes and creation of new volcanoes. The best place in the world to study divergent plate boundaries is Þingvellir (Thingvellir), a short drive from Reykjavík where one can observe both faults and tension fissures related to the rifting and drifting of the North American and Eurasian plates away from each other.

Volcanic Eruptions Every Five Years

Iceland is one of the most active volcanic regions on Earth, with eruption frequency of ± 20 events per century. Iceland is home to more than 100 volcanoes and on average, a volcano erupts about every 5th year. Volcanoes define a wide spectrum of forms, ranging from a crack in the ground to the stately strato volcanoes like the Hekla volcano. Icelanders have learned to live with natural disasters and there is a risk that eruptions could take place at any time. Laki's great eruption in 1783 is the largest lava eruption known to the world in historical times. Enormous quantities of lava poured out and devastated immense areas of land. Poisonous gases and ashes from the eruption led to crop failure and livestock deaths. In the famine that followed, one fifth of Iceland's population died. Fortunately for Iceland, such cataclysmic events are rare. A recent major eruption took place in 1973 when, without warning, a new volcano erupted on the eastern side of Heimaey in the Westman Islands. In 1963, further south, accompanied by columns of fire, clouds of ash and rumbles of thunder, a completely new island emerged from the sea. This

island is called Surtsey after Surtr, the fire giant from Nordic mythology.

Melting the Ice Age Away

After the last Ice Age, the land had changed and great mountain ranges had grown from the sub-glacial eruptions. Composed mainly of crumbly rocks, like easily eroded tuff and rhyolite, they are the beautifully coloured mountains at Landmannalaugar, the moss-clad cliffs of Þórsmörk and the grey ridges that transect the northern desert. Where the eruptions were long enough, they broke through the ice and a hard cap of lava formed. After the ice melted, flat-topped "table" mountains appeared, of which Herðubreið is the most striking. The older parts of Iceland, the east, north and north-west of the island were eroded during the Ice Ages and steep-sided valleys and fjords were formed. Those mountains are made of many layers of basalts from eruptions that built the foundations of the island. Because of Iceland's location, on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the island will be in the process of formation and transformation. Its old parts, the east and west carried away by the elements, while new parts are created by volcanic action.



DIVING & SNORKELING TOURS IN ICELAND

- Scuba diving & snorkeling in a crack right between the continents. The dive and snorkel site SILFRA offers the clearest water on this planet with a visibility over 100m.
- SILFRA is rated as one of the worlds top 5 dive sites. The scenery is stunning.
- DIVE.IS offers a variety of diving and snorkeling tours all year around.
- Contact us, we pick you up at your hotel in Reykjavik and bring all necessary gear including dry suits that will keep you warm and comfortable.



DIVE.IS
 PADI DIVE CENTER ICELAND

Hólmaslóð 2 - 101 Reykjavik - Iceland
 Tel.: + 354 663 2858 - dive@dive.is - www.dive.is



AKUREYRI

- Winter Sports Capital of Iceland

Akureyri is, in many ways, one of the most idyllic towns in Iceland and is sometimes compared to the cosy alpine villages of Switzerland. Set deep in the far reaches of Eyjafjörður, this close knit town is the second largest in Iceland with a population of 17,800, and is the centre of culture, education and leisure activities of the North. Blessed with relatively warm



front entrance.

Akureyri's compact centre makes getting around town on foot enjoyable and healthy, with hotels, the main swimming pool, restaurants and shops all clustered in an easily accessible radius. The free bus service is another welcome addition and way to get around.

Akureyri, the ideal sports and leisure town

With healthy annual snowfalls in recent years, Akureyri is, without a doubt, one

of the top skiing spots in the country. The Skiing Centre provides all that you need



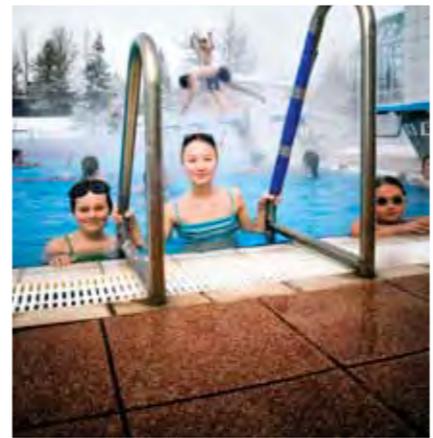
the town and is a 10 minute drive from the airport and the city centre. See their website: www.hlidarfjall.is

The Annual Eljagangur Winter Sports Festival

Eljagangur, is the name given to a new, four-day winter festival to be held in Akureyri from the 10th to the 13th of February 2011. Highlights of this exciting event will include:



- snowcross competition
- mountain climbing
- snow track racing
- ski touring courses
- giant snowman on the town square
- ice sculptures at the Hof Cultural & Conference Centre
- sledding races



Swim in Winter!

Icelanders love their geothermally-heated pools and even go swimming on a snowy winter's day. One of the most popular swimming pools in the country is the Akureyri Swimming Pool. The pool area has two large outdoor swimming pools

Spring Adventures at Easter

Every Easter there are a great variety of events in and around Akureyri. The locals celebrate by taking some time off for hiking, skiing, and treks into the surrounding mountains, afterwards attending a local concert in town or having a few drinks with friends in their favorite downtown restaurant or nightclub. Easter is a beautiful time in North Iceland with many spring flowers beginning to bud in local gardens and the longer days giving promise of the onset of summer.



In the wake of this popularity surge that Akureyri has been enjoying as a top winter destination in recent years, new accommodation has opened and still more is on the way. A new Icelandair Hotel will open there in the Spring of 2011 and plans for new holiday accommodation on the slopes of Mt Hlidarfjall are on the drawing board, including a variety of new studio apartments and holiday flats.

summers, cold winters and plenty of snow, its location has one of the warmest summer



climates in Iceland even though it is a mere 100 km from the Arctic Circle.

It's got that 'small town' feel to it, laid back and unruffled, yet a surprisingly stimulating cultural life with many art galleries, art museums, and a theatre

company. The town centre comes to life - especially on Friday and Saturday nights - with restaurants, nightclubs, bars and hot spots which rev into gear, catering to tourists and locals alike.

Akureyri, the ideal conference town

The new Hof Cultural and Conference Centre, opened in August 2010, is the latest addition to Akureyri's growing cultural life, providing a state-of-the-art venue for music concerts, the performing arts, conferences, exhibitions, special occasions and events. The centre comprises two auditoriums, a restaurant and various conference rooms, with facilities for groups of all sizes. The Hof is also the new home to Akureyri's Tourist Information Centre, located just inside the

of the top skiing spots in the country. The Skiing Centre provides all that you need



to indulge in downhill and cross-country recreational skiing, including ski rental and a ski school. The ski area is located just above

Akureyrarstofa



Strandgötu 12 • 600 Akureyri
 +354 450 1050
akureyrarstofa@akureyri.is
www.visitakureyri.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

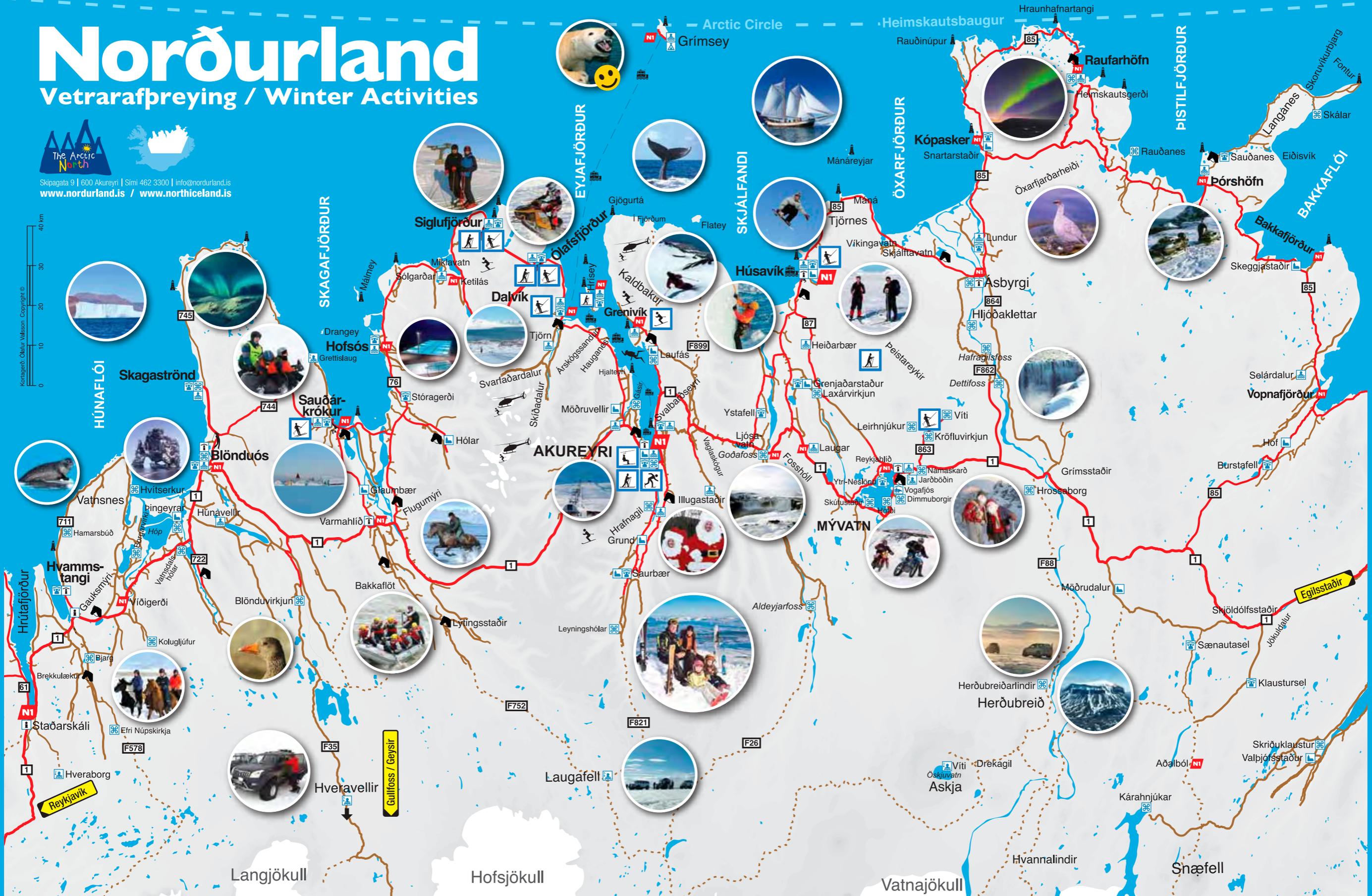
Norðurland

Vetrararþreying / Winter Activities



Skipagata 9 | 600 Akureyri | Sími 462 3300 | info@nordurland.is
www.nordurland.is / www.northiceland.is

Kortagerð: Ólafur Valsson. Copyright ©



- Tindastóll, Sauðárkróki**
www.tindastoll.is/skidi
- Skarð, Siglufirði**
<http://skarð.fjallabyggd.is/>
- Ólafsfjörður**
www.simnet.is/skiol
- Böggvisstaðarfjall, Dalvík**
www.skidalvik.is
- Bergmenn**
www.bergmenn.com
- Hlíðarfjall, Akureyri**
www.hlidarfjall.is
- Kaldbakur**
www.kaldbaksferdir.com
- Húsavík**
www.nordurthing.is
- Skíðasvæðið við Kröflu**
www.kroflulyfta.is
- Góð gönguskiðasvæði**
 Siglufjörður, Ólafsfjörður, Akureyri og Húsavík



POLAR HESTAR RIDING TOURS

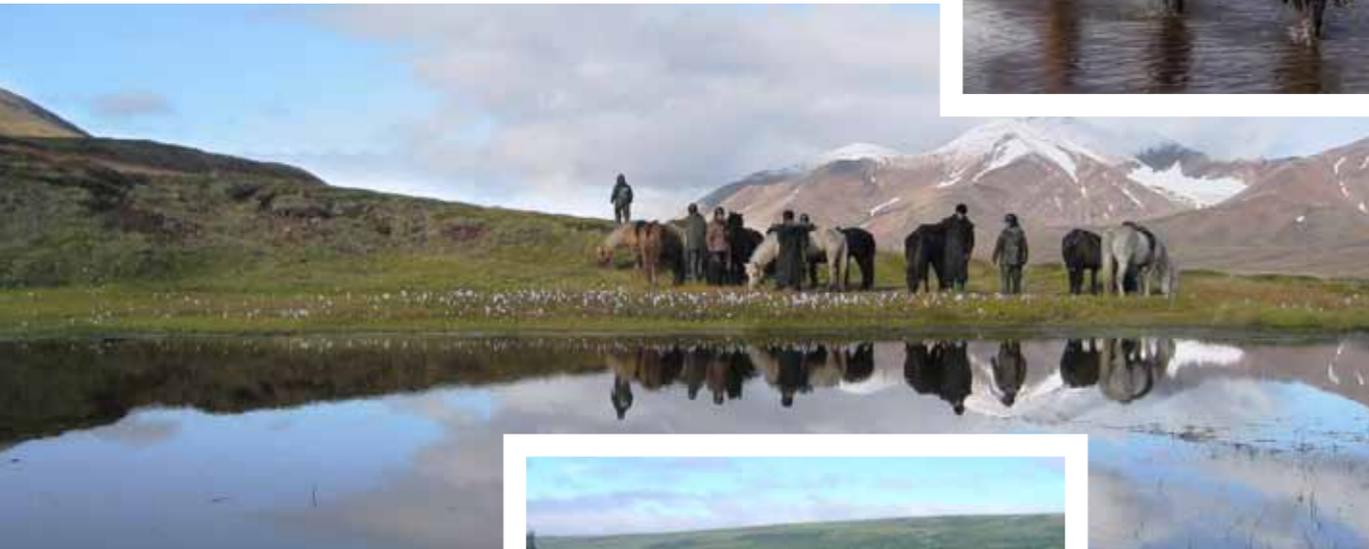
Where the magic of Iceland unfolds beneath your feet

One of the most intriguing aspects of Iceland is the laid back friendliness of the people, especially in the countryside. Polar Hestar Riding Tours is one of those places, where the warmth and unpretentious hospitality of owners Stefán and Juliane are part and parcel of this ideal farm and country experience of North Iceland.

who helps him in all aspects of the business - as does their son, Simon, 11, who is an avid horse-lover and up-and-coming farm hand.

High Season Tours for 2011

Exciting longer tours are the main feature of what Polar Hestar offers, lasting anywhere from 5 to 8 days. Captivating names such



Grýtubakki Farm

Stefán has been providing friendly and informal riding tours since 1985 right from his home at Grýtubakki Farm, where he has lived for most of his life. You will get a chance to take a look at the more than 100 horses on the farm as well as the 250 sheep that also graze peacefully on the nearby slopes of Kalbakur. More recently in 1994, Stefán was joined by his wife Juliane,



A Spring and Autumn Tour for families

The perfect solution for the whole family, the 'Farm Holidays Tour' caters to those with little riding experience and also gives you a behind the scenes look at life on a typical Northern Icelandic farm. A wonderful and exciting 'kid friendly' experience for children of all ages!

*Polar Hestar Riding Tours
 - where the magic of
 Iceland unfolds beneath
 your feet.*

as the 'Ride of the Elves Tour' where you will learn about elf folklore of the region; 'Fascinating Northern Iceland Tour', 'Autumn Colours and Northern Lights Tour' and 'Gods and Saga Tours' are all popular choices and keep many customers returning again and again.

Pólar hestar



Grýtubakki II • 601 Akureyri
 +354 463 3179
 polarhestar@polarhestar.is
 www.polarhestar.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

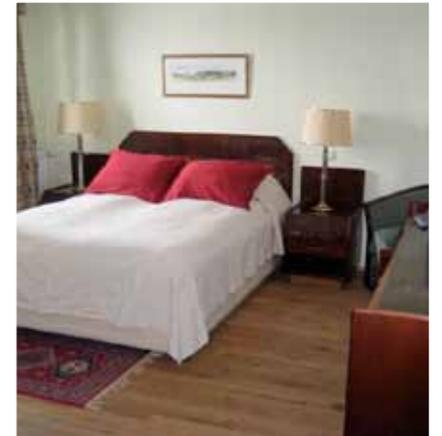


COUNTRY HOTEL SVEINBJARNAGERDI

The magnificent views of Eyafjörður fjord spread out from the hotel in all their splendour, the midnight sun sets over the fjord and guests at Country Hotel Sveinbjarnagerdi settle in for the night. As the summer sun sinks slowly on the northern horizon, the stillness is only broken by the

and personal service. Wireless Internet connection is available in some rooms.

Country Hotel Sveinbjarnagerdi's restaurant serves breakfast in style. The morning begins with a copious hot breakfast with an array of choices, including sausage and eggs, toast and jam, cereals and muesli, cheeses and hams. Plenty to keep you going throughout the day! In the evening, after a full day exploring the many natural wonders of the region, the extensive evening buffet will be a welcome sight. 3- or 4-course dinners served buffet style include Icelandic



cries of the arctic terns that nest nearby. These are the idyllic surroundings that make for a perfect relaxing holiday at Country Hotel Sveinbjarnagerdi in North Iceland.

The 3-star hotel is situated just off of Road No.1, conveniently located just 10 minutes from the town of Akureyri, the capital of the North. Thirty-three well appointed double



rooms and a family room, all with private bath, telephone and television await you. Now operating in its 10th year, this family-run hotel prides itself on its cosy atmosphere



roast lamb and potatoes, freshly caught grilled salmon, 4 types of herring dishes, plus lots of fish, soups and salads. These are just some of what's on the menu of this hearty summer buffet.

A Winter Offer!

Throughout February and March 2011, Country Hotel Sveinbjarnagerdi will be offering specially reduced rates on a two- or three-night stay. Don't miss out! Special discounts are offered throughout the year so be sure to check the hotel website: www.countryhotel.is

Open year round, Country Hotel Sveinbjarnagerdi is cosy and romantic on chilly winter nights. After a day on the nearby ski slopes, relax by the big log fire in the main hall, soak in the hotel hot tub, or order a soothing massage by the in-house massage therapist. Northern lights hunters need go no further than the hotel deck for optimum viewing away from city lights.

Countryhotel



Sveinbjarnagerdi 2 • 601 Akureyri
 +354 462 4500
 countryhotel@countryhotel.is
 www.countryhotel.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



BÁSAR GUESTHOUSE IN GRÍMSEY

Where Everybody Knows Your Name

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

here is much more energetic. For example our community centre is sometimes even booked the whole week through and when it's someone's birthday the whole island is invited," says Ragnhildur.

Activities in Grímsey are plentiful. You have the option of going sea angling, which

think of this environment as more personal than in many crowded populations. For example, I never leave my guests unattended and I often take guests staying at Básar for a drive around the island and introduce them to our daily lives" says Ragnhildur.

Básar offers 18 beds in eight different



population ensures that everyone has a share in the community's responsibilities and that everyone knows everybody.

For example one inhabitant, Ragnhildur Hjaltadóttir, shares the duties of being the manager of local guesthouse, Básar, operator of a small banking branch in Grímsey, airport manager and chairwoman for the local women's club. "In order to live happily in such a tight-knit community, you have to be 100% content with yourself and be generous to the community. We have an extremely active social life and there is really no other alternative than to take part in it. We tend to celebrate every occasion we can think of and most people I know from the mainland tell me that the social life

can be arranged in Básar. You can spend the day bird watching as the island hosts various species of birds. If in doubt as to where the best spot is, simply ask the locals who will gladly point them out to you. Then of course, you can just explore the entire island by foot, see the church, chat with the fishermen at the pier (though not all of them speak English but they'll welcome you anyway) or drop by at the community centre and see if there is a bingo game or a lottery going on.

Ragnhildur says island visitors are uniformly welcomed to the island and commonly invited to join in on whatever events the locals are celebrating. "We like to

rooms, either made up or for sleeping bags. Breakfast is on offer, as well as full meals if requested. The guesthouse is located next to the Arctic Circle and you only have to take three steps outside the guesthouse to cross it. From 12th June until 20th August, flights depart for Grímsey daily at 13:00 from Akureyri. Prior to that time, flights depart three times a week. A ferry also leaves from Dalvík at 9:00 am three times a week (Mon, Wed, Fri).

Básar



↑

Básur • 611 Grímsey

+354 467 3103

gagga@simnet.is

none

↓

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



Time Tours

www.timi.is

Call: +354 578 7111

Daytours

- Golden Circle**
- West Iceland**
- South Coast**
- Northern Lights**
- Glacier Lagoon**
- Snæfellsnes**
- Blue Lagoon**
- Blue Lagoon & Airport**
- Taylor-made & Private tours**
- Whale watching**
- Horse riding**

www.timetours.is

info@timetours.is



BRIMNES HOTEL AND BUNGALOWS

The lake is as clear as glass and the stillness of the summer evening envelops you with peace under the twilight skies of North Iceland. This is the setting for the Brimnes Hotel and Bungalows, located on the banks of Ólafsfjörður, on the Tröllaskagi Peninsula.

Brimnes Hotel and Bungalows is a family-run hotel offering 11 double rooms with bath, and 8 Finnish-style log cabins that can accommodate 5 - 6 people each. These self-contained holiday cottages are perfect for families or groups and include a lounge, kitchenette, bath, ground-floor bedroom

and sleeping loft for the kids, as well as a cosy and private hot-tub on the veranda of each cabin.

Let Brimnes Hotel's in-house chef whip up a quick bite or a 3-course meal in the restaurant or share a bottle of wine from the hotel's extensive wine list whilst relaxing in the hot-tub. Or maybe you'd like to try your hand at trout fishing on the lake - the hotel would be happy to supply you with all that you need. Even a boat!

Hotel manager, Axel Pétur Ásgeirsson, is always on hand to advise and organise sightseeing and activities in the region: boat



trips, fishing, whale-watching, mountain hikes, kayaking, diving, skiing, bird watching, horse riding, golf, river rafting, snowmobiling, art exhibitions, museums historical places of interest and more.

Hótel Brimnes

Bylgjubýggð 2 • 625 Ólafsfjörður
 +354 466 2400
 hotel@brimnes.is
 www.brimnes.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



A FEAST OF FESTIVALS

at the Whale watching capital of Europe



The colourful seaside village of Húsavík is becoming a popular spot for both whales and visitors, many of whom return year after year. Húsavík is often referred to



as the 'Whale watching capital of Europe' and for good reason, as no less than 24 separate species of whale have been sighted in Skálafandi Bay. Your chances of seeing whales is excellent, in fact, especially from May to September, when the whales are happily frolicking in their summer feeding grounds of the north. The Whale Museum



of Húsavík, right in the town centre, has a wealth of informative exhibits and multi-media presentations and giant whale skeletons. It supports ongoing research devoted to these gentle giants of the sea.



Puffins are also among the birds that return to Iceland every summer, and Skálafjandi Bay's own Lundy, or Puffin Island, is one place to see them. The Húsavík Tourist Information Centre located inside the Whale Museum, can point you in the right direction.

Sail Húsavík 2011

Local festivals are, of course, all a part of the colourful summertime events in Húsavík and this year marks the first Sail Húsavík 2011, aka the Nordic Coastal Cultural Festival, taking place on 16th - 23rd July. Sailing enthusiasts from all over the world will sail or fly in to converge in Húsavík for the week-long festival. This project is a collaboration between Scandinavian grass-root maritime organisations and individuals. The first festival will be held in Húsavík, Iceland in July 2011, then in Denmark in 2012 and in Sweden in 2013.

Kid-Friendly Húsavík

Coinciding perfectly with Sail Húsavík 2011 will be another very colourful local festival Mærudagar (SweetDays), where the streets, houses, buildings, people and virtually everything else is decked out in green, pink



and orange. This is a family festival with laser tag, a chess tournament, a poetry evening, beach volleyball, soccer games, jumping castles, competitions, music, a bonfire, disco and a midnight cruise on the bay. You are, of course, welcome to join in on the festivities.

Last but not least, The Art Festival of Húsavík will be held on 24th - 26th June this year, just after the summer solstice. Young artists from around Iceland will show their works. There will be plenty of music, sound & stage performances, as well as local theatre productions.



Húsavíkurstofa

Hafnarstétt 1 • 640 Húsavík
 +354 464 4300
 info@visithusavik.is
 www.visithusavik.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



WHALE WATCHING UNDER SAIL

North Sailing's traditional oak schooners sail to the whales

Sailing traditional Icelandic schooners used to be almost a memory of the past until brothers, Hörður and Árni Sigurbjarnarson painstakingly restored a 20-ton oak vessel to its former glory and started taking visitors whale and puffin watching from the northern town of Húsavík.

Their company, North Sailing, began

to Húsavík, North Sailing is expanding to offer new tours from Ólafsfjörður, just about an hour's drive up the fjord from Akureyri. This is a prime location for whale watching - literally just minutes from the feeding grounds of whales, dolphins and porpoises!

The opening of a new tunnel between Ólafsfjörður and Siglufjörður, famed for its

starting 1st April and include hot chocolate and local snack refreshments. Warm overalls, hats, gloves, blankets and raincoats are available in preparation for any changes in weather. There are up to 10 tours daily during high season. The evening trips are special in summer, sailing under the midnight sun! There is the option to



in 1994 with one vessel, the Knörrin, but news spread quickly and their tours became so popular that two more vessels were renovated. The Haukur was fitted with traditional equipment in the spirit of the 18th century shark schooners that used to fish off the coasts of northern Iceland. All the boats are outfitted to modern standards without losing the beauty and charm of the traditional oak wood finish.

Challenges and memories

Sailing the arctic seas in a schooner being driven by the wind at up to 10 knots under full sail, following the world's largest creatures, is invigorating, to say the least! It's a thrill that few get to experience today - but a memory that lasts a lifetime! Is this environmentally-friendly form of travel the way of the future?

Twice the experience

Today, with a fleet of six vessels, in addition

to herring and museum, means that it is quicker and safer to travel between the towns.

Tours for all tastes

Regular tours last approx. 3 - 4 hours,



combine a trip with a 2-hour horse riding tour from Saltvík Horse Centre, south of Húsavík.

For the more adventurous, there is a 2-day tour, 'NSE-1 Edge of the Arctic,' eating and sleeping on board, stopping off at Flatey and Grimsey islands. What food could be fresher than fish caught en route and grilled on board!

For the even more adventurous, there is an 8-day tour, flying from Reykjavik airport to Greenland, sailing on the schooner Hildur, with treks inland to breathtaking views and a BBQ on the beach, eating locally-prepared musk ox meat.

North Sailing



Hafnarstett 11 • 640 Husavik
 +354 464 7272
 info@northsailing.is
 www.northsailing.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

ASKJA TOURS



Travelling in the uninhabited interior of Iceland is unforgettable. In the safe hands of Myvatn Tours, with 30 years experience guiding visitors in this particular area of this terrain, it is nonetheless an adventurous day, driving across the largest open area of unspoiled nature in Europe with breathtaking landscapes, an environment of magnificently simple splendour, dominated by sandy deserts, stark or moss-covered lava plains, ever-present mountains and volcanoes, incredible colours, roaring waterfalls, unbridged rivers, colourful sulphurous



Created by an immense volcanic eruption thousands of years ago, followed by others, including one in 1875 and a smaller one in 1961, the main caldera measures 55 km

The tour takes 11-12 hours and starts at 8 am at the Information Centre in Reykjahlíð, Mývatn. From there you will be driven through the wondrous Mývatnsöræfi. The



fields, delicate but rich flora, young lava fields, and ice-cold glaciers. It was on this terrain that the US astronauts practiced for their lunar landing.

Located north of Vatnajökull, about 100 km south of Mývatn, there is little rainfall. Described as a 'complex of nesting calderas' in the rain shadow of Vatnajökull glacier, the area is known as Ódáðahraun, or the 'desert of crimes' - an intriguing name for the largest lava field in Iceland.

across, giving you some idea of the volume of material which has been thrown up. In the aftermath of the explosions, a series of craters were formed, and one such crater is the opaque milky blue Lake Öskjuvatn, the deepest freshwater lake in Iceland. It was this eruption in 1875 that caused much hardship around Iceland and resulted in the largest emigration of the Icelandic population to Canada and United States in subsequent years.

mountain road is surprisingly comfortable compared to many others. It's a rare privilege to stop and sip the clear water of the spring-fed rivers that you have just forded in this remote Highland paradise!

Mývatn Tours



Arnarnesi • 660 Mývatni
 +354 464 1920
 myvatntours@emax.is
 www.askjatorns.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



Jökulsárglúfur - Vatnajökull National Park



PHOTO BY © FRANK BRADFORD

Ásbyrgi's spectacular 'horseshoe'

It was only a few years ago that Iceland was called 'Europe's Best Kept Secret'. It wasn't a place to bake in the hot sun. It was at the north pole, wasn't it? Covered in ice? Today, many people are discovering just what treasures were being kept secret.

Yes, there is ice and, along with the fire of the volcanos, it has shaped a land of unique beauty and challenges, a land for those not satisfied with just regular adventure and who will be filled with memories others can barely dream of. There are many jewels in this park in Iceland's north, each so different from the others that, together, they provide

days of new experiences and wonders.

It is thought that a massive glacial flood, caused by a volcanic eruption under the Vatnajökull glacier thousands of years ago, sent a torrent of water north, carving the Jökulárglúfur (Glacial river canyon) that forms the centrepiece of the National Park, which is 150 km² in size and was founded in 1973. The canyons are, in several locations, from 100 - 120 metres in depth and average 500 metres wide. They extend for about 25 km. in length.

The Jökulsá á Fjöllum (Glacial river in the mountains), the river that continues to

flow through the canyon, has the largest catchment area for any river in Iceland at 7380 km², with 1700 km² under ice. It is the most powerful river in Iceland and carries such a volume and flow of water that, when it reaches Dettifoss, it creates the most powerful waterfall in Europe.

Stretching about 200 km., the river's source is under the massive Vatnajökull glacier - Europe's largest ice cap (in volume). It flows north through the wilderness area of central Iceland before finally flowing into the Arctic Sea at Öxarfjörður. It carries 5 million tonnes of sand and sediment to the

sea annually. However, its route is not all barren. On the contrary, it is a route filled with contrasts. For instance, the three nature reserves of Hólmatungu, Hjólaklettur and Ásbyrgi are rich in diverse vegetation.

Hólmatungur highlights the contrasts along the river's path. Here, an expanse of rich vegetation meets the eye of the hiker who will experience one of the most beautiful hiking trails in Iceland. Bubbling up from the ground, countless streams of water then flow down towards the river, tumbling over ledges into Jökla. Beautiful columnar rock formations and the special Gloppehellir cave in Gloppe augment the beauty of the nature to be found here.

Ásbyrgi, (The shelter of the gods) is one of the most magical places in Iceland and one of nature's wonders that would not be out of place in 'The Lord of the Rings'. It is a horseshoe-shaped canyon with sheer cliffs up to 100 m high. It is 3.5 km long and over 1 km wide. In its centre, a massive rock formation, known as Eyan (the Island) rises dramatically from the flat base of the canyon. Legend has it that Sleipnir, the eight-legged horse of Óðinn, the chief god of Norse mythology, touched one of its feet on the ground here, leaving the horseshoe print that makes Ásbyrgi, also known as Sleipnir's footprint, unique. Today's scientists offer more prosaic theories of two catastrophic

floods, one 8 to 10,000 years ago and a later one, 3,000 years ago carving out the canyon. Both are certainly colourful explanations that match the view visitors see. The floor of the canyon is covered in rich woodland, vegetation and flowers, a beautiful oasis in a volcanic wilderness. A number of foreign species of trees were introduced between 1947 and 1977, including fir, larch and pine, adding to the natural richness. A variety of waterfowl species find their home in the small lake Botnstjörn, a very tranquil site that can be reached by car and a short walk, with outstanding views around it.

Ásbyrgi is also believed to be the capital city of the elves (álvar) or 'hidden people' (huldufólk). Psychic people have seen many homes, public buildings and concert halls belonging to them, adding to the many stories that abound about encounters with these special beings in Ásbyrgi and around the Botnstjörn pond or lake. Various rock formations in the cliff face on the walk from the car park look like faces.

Perhaps this is why the camping site there is so popular! The location is perfect and there is a nearby swimming pool. Children can't get lost here. They love it! It has space for 350 tents and there is a section for campers and tent-trailers, with access to electricity. Facilities include toilets, showers, a washing machine and drying closet.

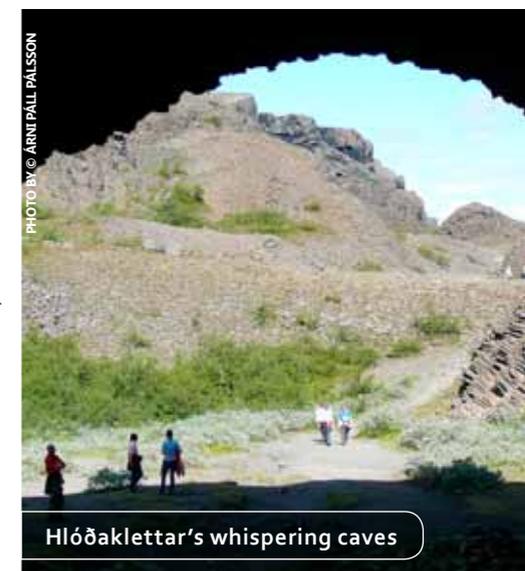


PHOTO BY © ARNI PALL PALSSON

Hlóðaklettur's whispering caves

Whilst there are no designated cooking facilities, dish washing can be done in sinks next to the service buildings. The campsite is open from 15th May to 30th September.

From the excellent Visitor's Centre, hikers can get detailed information about Ásbyrgi, the park, wildlife, vegetation, landscape and maps showing the hiking trails. It is open during the summer only from June to September. The centre also has a computer available to the public and wireless Internet access.

There is also a shop and restaurant by the road with a good selection of foods. During these summer months, there are scheduled bus



PHOTO BY © RAGNAR TH

The island in the middle of Ásbyrgi



PHOTO BY © JÖRGER GUÑNARSSON

Jökulsárglúfur Canyon

trips run by SBA-Norðurleið to Ásbyrgi from Akureyri at 8:15 Mon-Fri & 8:30 Sat-Sun that also stop at Hljóðaklettur and Dettifoss.

Hljóðaklettur (The Echoing Rocks) are about a day's hike from Ásbyrgi through lush vegetation in the Vesturdalur valley. They are a basalt formation of rocks which are unique in their pattern and caves that create strange echoes. It's a great labyrinth of vegetation and large rocks where it's not difficult to get lost, as there are many different paths - so it's wise to keep children close here.



Hljóðaklettur's strange formation



Dettifoss in all its power

Dettifoss Europe's most powerful waterfall earns its title! In Spring, the already big waterfall triples in size, with a phenomenal 193 m³/sec of water drawn from the river's massive catchment area plunging 45 m into the canyon below. Numbers like this, however, fail to do justice to the magnificence of this natural wonder

makes this area all the more spectacular. Just 1 km further south is the Selfoss waterfall at 10 m high, which derives its name from an abandoned farm, Holssel. It is a special, beautiful waterfall that is really worth the extra time to visit. The third waterfall, Hafragilsfoss, is found about 2 km north of Dettifoss, and is well worth the detour across



Hljóðaklettur

as the thunderous power of the water sends vibrations into the surrounding rocks whilst rainbows play in the spray mist in the sunshine. Located at the southernmost part of the park, it is advisable to check in at the nearest Information Centre to find out about the road conditions. (Any trip into the Interior Highlands should only be undertaken after such a check has been made. Conditions can change rapidly!)

Dettifoss is the largest waterfall but by no means the only one on the river, which

an interesting crater to reach it. At 27 metres high it, too, provides a spectacular sight.

Vocabulary box

á	river
foss	waterfall
fjöll	mountain
gjúfur	canyon
jökul	glacier

In 2008, the new Vatnajökull National Park was formed by the amalgamation of Skaftafell, Jökulsárglúfur and Vatnajökull National Parks. It is the largest in Europe, covering over 13% of Iceland.

Vatnajökulsþjóðgarður

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Gljúfrastofa Ásbyrgi • 671 Kópasker
 +354 470 7100
 asbyrgi@vjp.is
 www.vjp.is

Going places?
 Experience Iceland in a whole new way

Budget
 Car and Van Rental
 Tel. +354 562 6060
 www.budget.is

Budget Locations: Reykjavik, Keflavik, Akureyri, Egilsstaðir



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



ICELAND ERUPTS!

A new Visitor Centre rises from the ashes of seeming defeat

When the now famous Eyfjallajökull volcano erupted in the Spring of 2010, amazing photos of the billowing ash clouds went zooming around the Internet. Thorvaldseyri Farm, located directly underneath the summit of the volcano was the focus of one such photo that was published in the media around the world. The prevailing winds, often of a southerly direction meant that Thorvaldseyri Farm and others in the immediate vicinity would later receive the first fallout of ash before it went on to wreak more havoc in the lives of hundreds of thousands of others at distant airports thousands of kilometres away.

There was a time of uncertainty for the Thorvaldseyri Farm owner, Olafur Eggertsson and for about one month, the farm nearly came to a standstill. The 50 hectares of wheat, barley and rapeseed and virtually everything for miles around was

covered in a thick layer of volcanic ash. Then in July, hope sprang up in the form of new green shoots pushing their way through the deep layers of ash across the fields. In a



miraculous turnaround in circumstances, it turned out that the black colour of the ash actually absorbed more sunlight than under normal conditions, with the struggling crops

below benefiting from the ashfall. What is more, the minerals in the ash also benefited the plants, contributing to their nutrition content.

Out of the ashes of defeat...

To herald the 1st anniversary of the Eyfjallajökull eruption, Olafur Eggertsson will be opening an exciting Visitor Centre at

the farm on April 14, 2011. The centre will provide visitors with breathtaking photos and videos chronicling the events, before, during and after the eruption. A cinema



accommodating 50 people is a highlight of the centre, with amazing footage of the eruption as well as giving visitors a look at life at Thorvaldseyri Farm during those dark days. Moving through the daily events to the end of the eruption, the scene steadily changes as the farm returns to normality,



with green pastures and livestock returning to graze on this beautiful farm.

A gift shop with books and brochures in several different languages, as well as souvenirs are also available at the Visitor Centre.



Porvaldseyri

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

↑ Porvaldseyri • 861 Hvolsvöllur
 +354 487 8815
 oli@thorvaldseyri.is
 www.thorvaldseyri.is



THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Visitors come to Iceland for something different, away from the norm. Let others head south to the sun-baked beaches! - They want to experience something unique. In that respect, the whole of Iceland meets that desire. However, for some, they do not have the time to see everything the country offers and taking the Golden Circle is like

rocks reminding the visitor of the Huldafólk or Hidden People or the southern episcopal see at Skálholt, also the site of Iceland's first school.

However, what makes the Golden Circle so famous - and popular - are the three key sites that tours focus on:

The Þingvellir area is part of a fissure zone that runs through Iceland. These faults and fissures that mark the boundaries of the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The effects of the shifting of the plates can be seen dramatically here as they slowly pull apart in the fractured ground and rocks.

Besides history, natural beauty and a rare geological site, Lake Þingvallavatn is the largest natural lake in Iceland. South of Þingvellir is the largest high-temperature area in the country, where water, heated by contact with the rock still hot underground, is forced to the surface, where it much of it is converted into electricity and household heating.

Geysir



Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park

Þingvellir ('Parliament Plains') is the site on which the world's first parliament, the 'Alþing', an open-air assembly, was held in 930 AD. It continued to meet for two weeks a year until 1798. Following Ingólfur Arnarson's landing in 870 AD, many others followed and the population grew steadily. That brought the need for laws and a place to settle disputes and the Alþing was the result.

However, Þingvellir is not just a fascinating historical site. It possesses a very unusual natural beauty that could have been lost to posterity had it not been for the efforts of two early-20th century men, Matthías Þórðarson and Guðmundur Davíðsson. Citing examples of protection of such special sites in the USA, the two lobbied for a national park to be established. This was finally set up in 1930. It was then placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004.

seeing a microcosm of the whole.

The Golden Circle generally refers to a trip to see some key sites: the world's first parliament in Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park; the hot springs at Geysir, after which all the rest of the world's geysers are named; and the power of the waterfall at Gullfoss.

It is possible to take a trip around the Golden Circle in a few hours but the longer you can allow, the more you can see and experience. There are several tour companies who can take you on a Golden Circle Tour and their experience is very valuable, as they can point out a lot of features on the way that you might otherwise miss.

All along the route you will find features that are synonymous with, and often unique to, Iceland such as the caldera at Keríð (Kerith, crater lake) or the home of Nobel prize-winning author, Halldor Laxness, which has now been turned into a museum, the quaint little houses in the

For a country named, 'Iceland', there is an amazing amount of heat in evidence and nowhere more dramatic than the famous Geysir. Until a recent earthquake, it had gone quite quiet but when it does erupt, sending boiling water up to 70 metres high, it dwarfs its brother, 'Strokkur', which erupts every 5 - 8 mins. Strokkur is nevertheless a dramatic sight, sending a plume 18 - 30 metres high. Surrounding these two giants are smaller geysers, bubbling hot mud pools and bright blue coloured clear pools of hot water.

A beautiful hotel with a restaurant, café and giftshop is at the site to provide refreshment and a place to enjoy the sights in comfort over coffee or a larger meal.

Gullfoss



Just a few kilometres from Geysir stands the spectacularly powerful double waterfall of Gullfoss (Golden Falls) on the River Hvítá (White River). The Hvítá has its source in the Hvítávatn lake on the Langjökull glacier, 40 km away in the highlands. The glacier is clearly visible amidst the mountains of the highlands from Gullfoss.

It's a wild spot and as the river first plunges down a three-step staircase and, in two wide steps, plunges into a 32 metre-deep crevice, it throws up a terrific spray that displays multiple rainbows in the bright sunshine.

A bust has been erected to a nearby farmer's daughter, Sigríður Tómasdóttir, who fought to preserve the falls when the government of the time was considering building a large hydroelectric power plant there, destroying one of Iceland's natural wonders. The nation stood behind her and

the government purchased the land for a national park instead.

If you get close to the falls, you will undoubtedly get soaked by the spray but, by climbing the staircase up to the top of the cliff, you will find a café and giftshop where you can both dry off and enjoy their delicious hot soup and snacks.

Hekla

Named 'The Gateway to Hell', the Hekla volcano is one of the most famous and active volcanos in Europe. It is clearly visible from Gullfoss or Geysir, rising out of the plain in the east, normally covered by a large snow cap. It has begun erupting about every 10 years since 1970 and its eruptions are generally quite explosive. It is due to erupt

lies in a thermal hotspot under the Hellisheiði mountain plateau and has hot springs bubbling up all around it, with plumes of steam visible around the mountainside. The springs heat the greenhouses, along with bright electric lights that make them clearly visible for miles around. A lot of food is grown here and the town has a flower festival every year in June that attracts thousands. With a good hotel, golf course, good trout and char fishing in its rivers, numerous famous artists and authors, it is another example of Iceland's unique character.

Hellisheiði

Leaving Hveragerði in the valley, there is a climb up the steep side of Hellisheiði. Once at the top of this mountain, there is an awesome view of the countryside to the south and east. Lava fields are punctuated by plumes of steam rising high into the air that turn golden in the evening sun. Coming down off the mountain, the visitor can see an odd snake-like pattern of pipes carrying hot water to the capital from the new power stations that tap into the geothermal waters heated by the rocks beneath the mountain.

The Golden Circle encapsulates the unique flavour of Iceland in all its forms and beauty, its culture and history, past and present. A brief article like this can only hit some highlights but it's worth taking the time to investigate all the many features that surround the tour. Then, if you have the time available, the rest of the country will only build on what you have seen on this, the most popular tour of Iceland.

once again, though it has not shown any signs of doing so, as of writing.

Hveragerði

Returning towards Reykjavik, the garden town of Hveragerði is a popular place to stop for refreshments and buy local produce. It



ICELAND'S #1 WHALE WATCHING TOUR



HÚSAVÍK  ORIGINAL
**WHALE
WATCHING**
WITH *North Sailing*

NEW 2011
NOW ALSO IN
ÓLAFSFJÖRÐUR

► BOOK ONLINE: WWW.WHALEWATCHINGHUSAVIK.IS

► CALL: +354 464 7272