



TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 8 • 2011

Reykjavik's Old Harbour - PAGES 4 - 15

West Iceland Highlights - PAGES 22 - 60

The Iconic Jökulsárlón - PAGES 76 - 79

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# TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS ISSUE 8 • 2011

# ICELANDIC TIMES

Welcome to this new edition of the Icelandic Times - our largest yet. It is packed with ideas, information, history and culture from the moment you land at the airport.

This edition focuses mainly on the West and South West of Iceland. That includes the Reykjanes peninsula on which the airport is located, the capital, Reykjavík and all the towns around the bays below the West Fjords.

Reykjanes is one of the most popular areas for tours and justifiably so, as there is so much of interest there. Its coastline is wild and extreme in winter, with bountiful fishing but summer brings a completely different face to the peninsula.

A whole section of Reykjavík has recently undergone a major transformation. Down by the harbour you will find a group of fishermen's sheds that have been transformed into a bustling cultural community, with

restaurants, shops and interesting events. Across the Faxaflói Bay, you can see Akranes. We take a look at this town and its many activities, where its Celtic history still influences life there today.

Just as Spring is bringing new life to the land, so we are seeing new initiatives blossoming after the economic problems of the last few years. That can only be a good thing for the visitor and, with the help of this magazine, we hope you will enjoy that resurgent growth.

You can use the QR codes with a smartphone to easily contact any of the places you are interested in. (Scanner applications can be downloaded free of charge for all the major makes of phone.) If you visit our website, you will find all the links there, too, along with the articles in both this magazine and earlier issues.

We look forward to seeing you and hope you enjoy both this magazine and your visit.

### 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

### Article writers:

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

Marie Valgardsson  
emvalgard@gmail.com  
Stefán Valsson  
valsson@centrum.is  
Vignir Andri Guðmundsson  
vignir@icelandictimes.com

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Golden Rocks Reykjanes Peninsula  
by Johannes Frank  
www.johannesfrank.com

## 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 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

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Höfðatún 12 • 105 Reykjavík  
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# THE OLD HARBOUR IN REYKJAVIK

*A Bustling Scene of Art, Food and Shopping*

The old harbour in Reykjavik is getting close to being a hundred years old and has seen many a ship come in filled to the brim with fish. With the advent of the modern age, the fisheries and shipyard have

day. There, you'll find amongst other things, delicious seafood restaurants, whale- and bird-watching tours, innovative and stylish designs, a documentary cinema hall, crafts and souvenirs and a cosy coffee shop. But

huts and erect more modern and efficient buildings on the harbour front was, thankfully, rejected and a new plan was made instead to reinvigorate the area. The twenty or so businesses owners who are now down by the Old Harbour didn't think twice when the chance came to open up shop in this unique location.

Now it is a tight-knit community of



slowly been finding new homes.

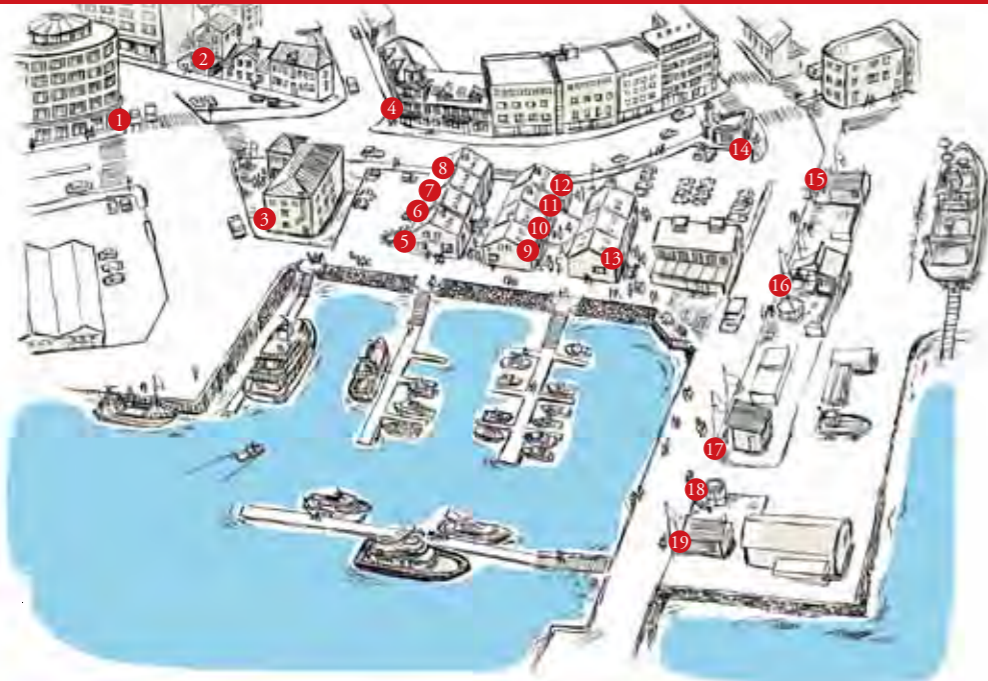
Over the last few years, the Old Harbour has been changing into a bustling neighbourhood where a group of industrious individuals decided to renovate the old fishermen's huts to recharge this historic area, while honouring the old maritime traditions. Today, a stroll down to the Old Harbour could keep you busy for an entire

above all, you'll find that the docks are full of life again.

The charm of the Old Harbour speaks for itself; the ocean, the boats, the view and the smell, - not to mention the occasional old fishermen who still visit their old home, sitting down for a cup of coffee and sharing tales of the sea.

A plan to tear down the old fishermen's

highly motivated individuals, where everyone is working together towards a common goal – that of making the Old Harbour a better place. You can almost feel the sense of community in the air while you work your way through their shops. They all seem like age-old friends who are more than willing to accept you into their group for a day.



1. Volcano House
2. Krua Thai
3. Sjósigling
4. Icelandic Fish & Chips
5. Höfnin Restaurant
6. Café Haíti
7. Viking loft
8. Cinema 2
9. Sjóhatturinn
10. Sædís
11. Galleri Dunga
12. Sægreifinn - Sea Baron
13. Sushismiðjan
14. Hamborgara búllan
15. Life of Whales
16. Elding
17. Special Tours
18. Puffin Scooters
19. Christina

# WHALE WATCHING in Reykjavik



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10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00
	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	
		17:00	17:00	17:00		
15 JUL - 15 AUG			20:00	20:00		

PRICES	Adults: 45 euros
	Children 7 to 15: 20 euros
	Free for children under 7 years

PUFFIN TOURS*			
MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
8:30	8:30	8:30	8:30
10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30
12:30	12:30	12:30	12:30
14:30	14:30	14:30	14:30
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# SÆGREIFINN RESTAURANT

*A Legend Down by the Docks*

A true legend and a trailblazer in Reykjavik harbour is the Sea Baron, a retired fisherman and Coast Guard chef, who came up with the recipe for what has been called the “world’s greatest lobster soup.” You’ll find his restaurant, Sægreifinn,

and hired himself as a chef for the Coast Guard, where he would prepare meals during their often long tours. Then he pioneered marketing smoked eel to Icelanders and, to this day, he smokes his own eels down by the docks, the pungent smell forcing him to



down by the old harbour in Reykjavik in a green-painted, old fisherman’s hut, where you can have your choice of fresh seafood barbecued on skewers or see if there is any truth to the bold statement about the lobster soup.

## Smoking Eel All Night Long

In his early days, the Sea Baron, who is better known as Kjartan Halldórsson, was a fisherman who sailed from Reykjavik’s harbour during the 1950’s. Kjartan then decided to take a week-long chefs’ course

smoke them during the night. Later, Kjartan opened up a fish shop, selling all sorts fresh fish products directly from the dock.

Kjartan’s transition from fishmonger to restaurant owner was based more on coincidence than anything else. One day, standing by his boxes of fish packed in ice, a group of foreign visitors asked if it were possible for Kjartan to prepare the fish for them. Quick to spot an opportunity, Kjartan ran to the nearest shop, purchased a grill and cooked the fish right there, inviting the visitors to dine inside his fish shop – which



is where the Sægreifinn restaurant stands today. Word spread and more people asked for his grilled seafood, so Kjartan got rid of the boxes and became a restaurant owner.

## The Best Possible Materials

Here you’ll always find a fresh assortment of the best seafood, the selection depending on the catch of the day. How does Kjartan make sure he has the best ingredients available? He owns the fish shop across from the restaurant, so it’s a problem solved. Shortly after opening the restaurant, Kjartan invented his lobster soup, which has now become world famous for its delicious flavour and taste. Kjartan sadly refuses to disclose the secret to his recipe!



## Aphrodisiac Soup

A true pioneer, Kjartan is always coming up new ideas. One is named Sea-agra Soup. Its key ingredient is the Sea Cucumber, which according to Chinese folklore, has an aphrodisiac effect on those who eat it. There is only one way to find out if that is true – drop down to the legendary Sægreifinn restaurant at the harbour and enjoy!

**Sægreifinn**



Geirsgata 8 • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 553 1500  
 info@sægreifinn.is  
 www.sægreifinn.is



# SJÓHATTURINN SOUVENIRS

*The Little Shop with a Big Heart*

You will find the essence of Iceland in the Sjóhatturinn (The Sea Hat) souvenir shop that actively scours the country in search of innovative and interesting crafts and souvenirs straight from the source.

Husband and wife, Garðar and Brynja, opened the store just three years ago in the same old fisherman’s hut where Garðar used to bait lines. The hut’s original character and feel have been preserved and old fishermen who worked there frequently gather in the shop’s lounge, overlooking the harbour to exchange tales from the sea.



## Down to the Grassroots

Garðar and Brynja’s ambition is to offer as wide a selection of interesting crafts and souvenirs as possible. “We leave no stone unturned in our search. We stop at every single farm and craft house to see what the people are doing. We talk to old fishermen and whalers, farmers, painters, potters, knitters - everyone who is creating something which captures the essence of Iceland. We get right down to the grassroots and thus our products are as genuine as possible. We want to be able to



tell our customers where they come from, who made them and how,” says Brynja.

All wool sweaters in Sjóhatturinn are knitted in Iceland and each comes with a special label identifying who knitted it, so you know you’re buying an authentic Icelandic wool sweater. Sjóhatturinn also



offers affordable, quality outdoor clothing from Icewear to keep you warm both here and at home.

## Unique Selection of Bird Memorabilia

Sjóhatturinn offers a wide selection of bird memorabilia – especially the colourful puffin. They have their own taxidermist who supplies them with stuffed puffins you



can take home. Garðar and Brynja are more than happy to reserve one and send it to your home country. They also search for quality bird wood carvings and offer a selection that is hard to find elsewhere.

Other items include yarn, which a mother of four from Northern Iceland makes from her own sheep’s wool; ceramic bowls made by the disabled; hand-made Icelandic Santa Claus and trolls; jewellery

made from lava rocks, fish skin products, books, Icelandic cosmetic and health products and, of course, sea hats. Animal collectors should enquire about the sperm whale teeth.

## Have it Sent Home

If you’re short on luggage space or weight, or you forgot something, Brynja and Garðar can send items to your home. Just send them an e-mail and they will ship it to you. “People have been extremely grateful for our services and wide selection. In fact, many have expressed their regrets of not finding us until the end of their trip when their funds were depleted,” says Brynja. So make a point to visit Sjóhatturinn early on in your stay.

**Sjóhatturinn**



Geirsgata 5c • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 552 7777  
 sjohatturinn@simnet.is  
 www.sjohatturinn.is

# PUFFIN TOURS

*Catch Your Own Meal*

One of the most peculiar and interesting inhabitants of Iceland is undoubtedly the colourful puffin and what better way to get to know this 'sea parrot' or 'clown of the ocean' than to visit Puffin Island? And as you surely know by now, Iceland was built on the fish and the ocean, so what better way to experience what this country is all about than to go out to sea, catch your own fish, cook and eat them on the way back to shore? It just so happens that Puffin and Sea Angling Tours can provide you with both options.

you get a delicious serving of mussel soup included in the price. But the true reward is seeing the puffin in his home territory on Lundy. Taking care not to disturb him, the ship captain turns off the boat engines when you're close up to the island, giving you ample time to take in the sights and sounds – and of course, unique photo opportunities.

Naturally, the puffins are not the only inhabitants of the island; they share it with the gannet, the largest seabird in the North Atlantic, the Arctic Tern, which migrates further than any bird on earth and the



## Free Mussel Soup

If you are in Reykjavik, the Puffin tour is, of course, a must. It only takes little more than an hour, is reasonably priced and

Fulmar. You can count yourself lucky that you stay on the boat because if you get too close to a Fulmar and its nest, he would spit a vomit-like substance on you which has



such a foul odour that it would stay with you for days! The tour guides include a marine biologist so you can be sure to get full detailed information on the birdlife in Faxaflói Bay.



## Catch your Own Meal

The sea angling tour is the perfect chance to experience Iceland's oldest industry. On an 18 metre fishing boat, you'll set sail out to the Faxaflói Bay, looking for suitable thriving fishing grounds and once there, you'll bait your line and try your luck. In fact, luck isn't really a deciding factor since the tour has a 100% success rate so far. It's just a matter of how many will be caught on the trip.

The real beauty of the Sea Angling tour is that the skilled staff will help you prepare and cook your catch while you are sailing back to shore. Few experiences are more satisfying than sitting on the deck of a ship cruising home, appreciating the beautiful view, while enjoying a meal that you caught yourself.

Among the types of fish you can expect to catch are cod, haddock, pollock, whiting, sometimes even halibut and the hideous catfish, which is actually quite delicious despite its fearsome appearance.

Puffin and Sea Angling Tours' vessel, 'The Christina', has an indoor dining area, toilet facilities and outside viewing decks. All you need to bring is weather-appropriate clothing and a camera.

**Hvalalif**



Geirsgata 11 • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 562 2300  
 hvalalif@hvalalif.is  
 www.hvalalif.is

# GALLERY DUNGA

*Unique Designs Down by the Old Harbour*

After decades of male-dominated presence, it was time to bring a feminine and artistic touch to the Old Harbour, which Gallerí Dunga does well. The gallery was opened by two female entrepreneurs and includes innovative designs which capture the details and essence of Icelandic culture and nature through an artistic eye.

The gallery was opened last year by ceramic artist Ingibjörg Klemenz, (Inga) and designer Gunnhildur Þórarinsdóttir, (Dunna) who combined their nicknames to form the name 'Dunga'. They took over from the fishermen who formerly used the hut for baiting lines and turned it into a gallery to present a broad selection of elegantly designed clothing, jewellery, paintings, ceramics and various other ornaments. In addition to their own creative designs, Inga and Dunna offer a selection from ten fellow designers – all of whom are female.

All the designers have the common theme that everything they create uses Icelandic materials and motifs. You'll find classy bracelets, purses and even neckties and a belt made out of fish-leather, which is, of course, the perfect gift for the man in your



life. You'll find stylish and modern clothing made from Icelandic wool; abstract and portrait paintings; designer jewellery made from dried bladder-wrack seaweed. Seaweed jewellery may not sound like much on paper but that just goes to show how adept Dunga's

**Gallery Dunga**



Geirsgata 5A • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 527 1200  
 ingaklemens@isl.is  
 www.dunga.is

# CINEMA No. 2

In a renovated loft of an old fisherman's hut down by the Old Harbour, you'll find one of Iceland's most original theatres, Cinema No. 2. There you can enjoy dramatic movies, made especially by Cinema No. 2, which capture Iceland's nature and people on film.

The people behind Cinema No. 2 are all veteran cinematographers who have accumulated decades of experience and footage which make their pieces a delight to watch. A popular film is aptly named 'The Eruption!', which follows the world-famous volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajökull. The film is set to an atmospheric soundtrack composed

especially for it and includes incredible aerial footage and breath-taking ground shots which make for a stirring experience. Cinema No. 2 films generally don't follow the standard documentary traditions and focus more on feeling and experience rather than simply showing and telling.

Other films cover topics such as the secluded and beautiful Þórsmyrk, the great Þingvallavatn lake, the unusually-shaped lava formations of Dimmuborgir and the history of volcanic eruptions in Mount Hekla since the late 1950's.

The cinema hall used to be the loft of an old baiting shack, but has now been restored to modern standards, while keeping the old atmosphere alive. The hall has the original creaky floorboards, the same unadorned crossbeams in the ceiling and the staircase railing is made from rope from the original baiting shack.

The cinema schedule should suit most visitors. During the winter months there are shows every weekday, but from 15th May, they begin at 12:15, focusing on shorter pieces, and making for a welcome breather

during a busy day of exploring the city and harbour. The last showing of the day starts at 8 pm and lasts for two hours, making it a



perfect way to spend an evening in a genuine fishing hut watching genuine Icelandic films. Cinema No. 2 can also arrange for special screenings for groups of ten or more.

**Cinema No. 2**



Geirsgata 7B • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 898 6628  
 cinemano2@lifsmynd.is  
 www.lifsmynd.is

Images by © Valdimar Leifsson



# CAFÉ HAÏTI

*For Quality Coffee and Live Music*

The explosion of restaurants, cafés, and businesses in Reykjavik serving a whole range of exciting and exotic foods from around the globe is phenomenal. As recently as 10 years ago, there were comparatively few 'foreign' eateries in town and many Icelanders were just waking up to a whole new world of international cuisine.

Joining the café scene is the recently-opened Café Haïti, one of the most friendly and warm little coffee houses in Reykjavik



and the recipient of rave reviews.

When I arrived late one Saturday night, I was met by the owner, a friendly and smiling Icelander who goes by the unlikely name of Methusalem. His Haïtian wife, Elda, had already gone home, so unfortunately I missed my chance to meet her.

I thought it was fascinating that Café Haïti actually roast their own coffee beans. It had always seemed a complicated process, as presented by the big coffee manufacturers. "In Haïti, people often roast their own beans and Elda grew up with it. My own



Icelandic grandmother also roasted her coffee beans, so together, we have kind of de-mystified the process," says Methusalem.

The marked difference in coffee quality and taste is a result of roasting in small batches, which Elda and Methusalem do right on the premises every morning. The whole process only takes about 20 minutes, which came a bit of surprise. Good to know!

That evening, Café Haïti was filled with live music from Brazil, to the delight of the mostly Icelandic clientele, some of whom sat with a glass of wine or beer, others swaying gently in rhythm to the mellow voice of native

Brazilian singer Jussanam Dejah DaSilva.

The walls are decorated with colourful, naïve Haïtian works of art. A massive, gleaming espresso machine sits impressively on the counter and you know you're in the right place!

**Café Haïti**

Geirsgata 7A • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 588 8484  
 kaffi@cafe-haiti.com  
 www.cafe-haiti.com



# ICELANDIC FISH & CHIPS

*The simple delights of a new Icelandic cuisine*

It was a busy Friday night at Icelandic Fish & Chips when I sat down with owner Erna Kaaber, curious to know how the idea for the restaurant came about.

"We wanted to do an Icelandic version of the British fish & chips, but prepared in a healthy way and with all the purity of Icelandic ingredients. We make everything right here from scratch and have replaced, for example, the traditional mayonnaise with skyr and instead of deep fried chips, they are hand-cut and oven baked with skins intact," Erna explains.

"We are in the planning stage of



'skyronnaise' which complement the fish and side dishes. The staff are happy to recommend which fish to pair with which sauce and several types of fresh fish are offered daily.

The onion rings, fried in spelt and barley batter, seasoned with just the right amount of fresh herbs and crunchy sea salt, were just...wow! A couple of fresh salads, mango or mixed greens were delicately flavoured and perfect.

The meal ended with the traditional skyr and cream, topped with a mixed berry sauce—the simple delights of Icelandic cuisine.

Located just across the street from Reykjavik's old harbour, under the Alliance Française, the restaurant is housed in a

expanding our menu to include mussels, possibly, or a cold arctic char salad and I would love to try something along the lines of Japanese sashimi—similar to sushi but without the rice" says Erna.

"I'm also looking into finding more ways to use hand-picked Icelandic moss, angelica and seaweed and incorporating them into other dishes on the menu as well" she says.

Clearly, this is a woman who is not afraid of bringing traditional Icelandic ingredients into new spheres and is sincerely dedicated to the celebration of food.

There are 10 different flavoured skyr-based dipping sauces, very aptly named



lovely old wooden building that somehow breathes the harbour culture of times past. Precisely as I took my first few bites of food, La Vie en Rose, sung by Edith Piaf could be heard wafting over the patter of the nearly full restaurant. The timing was impeccable... Thank you, ma chère Edith. My sentiments exactly! And thank you Erna, it was wonderful.

**Fish & chips**

Tryggvagata 8 • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 511 1118  
 erna@fishandchips.is  
 www.fishandchips.is



# THE EXOTIC FLAVOURS OF THE EAST

*Krua Thai Restaurants*

Serving traditional Thai dishes in three separate locations, the aromatic and warming curries at Krua Thai provide a refreshing change from the ordinary.

The popular downtown location, across from the old harbour, with its white exterior and bright, cheerful interior can lift your spirits if ever the weather in Iceland should happen to get you down.

The Kopavogur restaurant, close to the Smáralind shopping centre in Bærlind serves the same delightful dishes and also provides a home delivery service.



For people in the north, there is now a branch in Akureyri, too. At all the locations, a take-away service is available.

In contrast to what Icelandic restaurants are doing these days, most of the ingredients are imported straight from Thailand to guarantee

On 19th July 2011, the restaurant will celebrate its 10th year birthday celebration. As a thank you to all their loyal patrons, along with the festivities, they will offer a 50% reduction in prices on that day.

When the restaurant first opened, many visitors didn't understand the cuisine but Krua Thai's influence has opened up a whole range of new tastes and flavours to the Icelandic palate, enriching the culture and encouraging people to step out and try new dishes. Those who know real Thai food will be found in one of Krua Thai's restaurants.



**Krua Thai**

Tryggvagata 14 • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 561 0039  
 kruathai@kruathai.is  
 www.kruathai.is

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a genuine Thai flavour, such as the fragrant and spicy basil that is a key element in many of Krua Thai's dishes.

Krua Thai is also a favourite amongst visiting tour groups from Thailand to Iceland - showing the appreciation of the experts in Thai food.

# VOLCANO HOUSE

*Experience the Force of Nature*

Opening 7th May, 2011, The Volcano House will offer visitors a lively and entertaining look at the geology of Iceland.

Behind the concept are three brothers, Svavar, Þórir and Hörður - all of whom were looking for a change of direction in their careers. When the idea of opening The Volcano House presented itself, they



leapt at the opportunity.

Located across from Reykjavik's old harbour, two excellent 40-minute films will be shown every hour, on the hour, in the in-house cinema, which seats up to 50 guests. The films cover two of Iceland's 20th century eruptions - the 1973 eruption in the Westman Islands and the most recent 2010 eruption of Eyafjallajökull.

A brief synopsis of Iceland's geological



history and volcanic system in English, German and Icelandic, will be displayed together with hands-on exhibits of lava rock and ash, making The Volcano House a kind of 'learning oasis' for those on a quest for knowledge.

"We hope to eventually include an earthquake simulator," says Þórir, "where guests will be able to experience the feeling of earthquakes of different magnitudes on the Richter scale, bringing home the reality and impact of any of the earthquakes that have rocked the world in recent months".

Superb volcano and related nature photographs by some of the best photographers in Iceland today will be exhibited. The gift shop will have a lovely selection of handcrafted items by top Icelandic designers and artists, whose work is related to Iceland's volcanoes and nature. Digital prints of the exhibited photographs

will also be available in the gift shop.

In The Volcano House café, guests can enjoy excellent coffee, light refreshments and a selection of wines and spirits.

*Welcome to the Volcano House!*

**Volcano House**

Tryggvagata 11 • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 555 1900  
 info@volcanohouse.is  
 www.volcanohouse.is

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# THE HARBOUR RESTAURANT

*Höfnin - Eating as an Experience*

Iceland is the land of the unexpected and contrasts. Who, for instance, would imagine a high quality restaurant would be tucked away on the harbour front in a converted fishermen's building, just a 5 minute stroll from the new glass and steel Harpa concert hall?

character and class, providing 'Cordon Bleu' levels of cuisine at reasonable prices, Brynjar, his wife, Elsa and son, Logi teamed up to make a dining experience that is simply outstanding, supported by excellent service from their staff. This is borne out by comments left on [www.TripAdvisor.com](http://www.TripAdvisor.com).



A top award-winning father-son team of chefs wanted to bring character to dining. The Harbour Restaurant embodies the spirit of the Icelandic seafarers from whom the family descends, in a warm, comfortable ambience.

Recognising the need for a restaurant in downtown Reykjavik that brings together both

### Cooking for Excellence

When two master chefs cook your dinner, you can be sure of something special. Brynjar and Logi really deliver in beautifully presented dishes, meals that have been thought through, with each ingredient designed to complement the others.

Traditional Icelandic foods, cooked using the 'slow food' method in a traditional style in a unique setting. This is the experience that they want to bring to everyone, old and young alike, individuals, families or groups.

I was treated to a salmon steak that was so tender and soft, a beautiful colour complementing an absolutely amazing taste as the fish just seemed to melt in my mouth.

Whether with seafood, fish, lamb, beef, chicken or duck, the vegetables Brynjar and Logi like to use are local organic foods whenever possible. Their cooking style is also health-conscious. For instance, no flour is added to the soups or sauces for

thickening but they are allowed to mature naturally. Every dish clearly demonstrates the cooking prowess that led them each to receive a gold award in international competitions.

The deserts are equally mouth-watering! I tried the carrot cake with whipped cream cheese sauce, carrot sorbet and nuts. I've tried many a carrot cake, some like lead and some better but this cake was like the sorbet - it just melted in the mouth.

As one would expect from such culinary masters, there is a wine list to suit each item on the menu beautifully, along with a range of coffees and teas to round out a very enjoyable lunch or dinner.

Throughout the summer months, tables are set up outside on the waterfront, for 50 people in addition to the 90 seats inside, so diners can enjoy the view of the harbour and watch as the sun slowly dips towards the bay, turning the mountains to gold and filling the sky with a heavenly light that matches the dining experience perfectly!

The restaurant is open from 11.30 am to 10 pm at night - or later, depending on the diners.



**Höfnin**  
 Geirsgata 7C • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 511 2300  
 hofnin@hofnin.is  
 www.hofnin.is

# BRING OUT THE VIKINGS!

*Viking Loft*



Iceland, the Land of the Vikings. Wouldn't it be neat to dress like a Viking? It would be sensational at work or at a party!

There is only one shop that makes and sells authentic Viking clothing, located in one of the green-painted buildings at the harbour, right in the centre of Reykjavik.

These are sexy, raw clothes that bring out the Viking in you! They have a style all their own made with comfortable material! These unique clothes can also be made to order for children of all ages.

However, the Viking Loft also takes the style of the Vikings and brings it up to date in a line of fashionable women's clothes: sweaters, shawls, hats, vests - truly one-off items.

Icelandic wool keeps you comfortable at a constant temperature. The wool has two layers, one soft and so cosy and the other, rougher and practically waterproof. Together, they provide a

material that breathes, yet insulates, totally naturally. The wool is woven by a weaver in the old town of Vík on the south coast.

The shawls complement the sweaters beautifully and are available in white, black or stunning purple. A pendant, made from Icelandic pearl - Djupalónsperlu completes the ensemble, hanging on a fine leather necklace and enclosed by a delicate silver wire cage.



**The Viking Loft**  
 Geirsgata 7A • 101 Reykjavik  
 +354 862 1082  
 kolsoe@simnet.is  
 www.hotelshopping.com

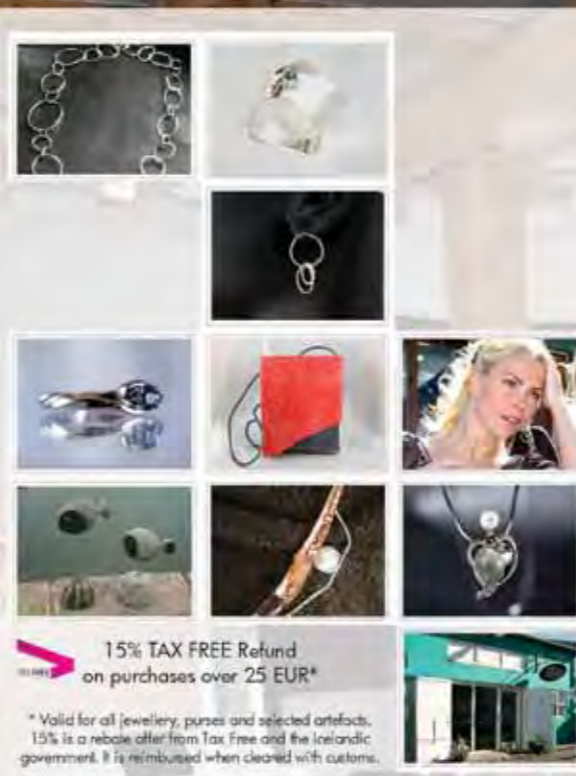
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# ARGENTÍNA STEAKHOUSE

*A Gourmet Experience to Remember*



Iceland is a land of secrets, waiting to be discovered. For those who love good food, wines and spirits, the only give-away is a flag hanging above two gates on a side-street just off Laugavegur's shopping street. Here, at the end of a dark hallway is a large wooden door with an ornate handle that opens into one of the most popular and respected restaurants in Iceland. Popular, that is, with people in the know! This hidden epicurean jewel has been sought out by visitors from all over the world for the past 22 years!

Argentína Steakhouse won the coveted 'Restaurant of the Year' award in 2000 with good reason. You are not just offered a meal, as this is not an 'eat-and-run restaurant' but an evening's gourmet experience. No matter what your choice from the menu, you are guaranteed a meal to remember for its presentation, flavour, texture and originality.

However, the meal is the culmination of that experience. Before anything touches your taste buds, your other senses are immersed in the rich leather and wood, the intimate lighting and atmosphere of the rustic, Argentinean-style decor, the music and the tantalising aromas. Enjoying a drink from the large selection of fine wines

and spirits stocked at the bar in front of the fire crackling in the hearth, relaxing in the comfortable chairs of one of the lounges, provides the perfect ambiance to the start of your evening.

Steaks are the hallmark of Argentína's cuisine. Icelandic beef is untouched by



drugs, additives or steroids. They have been genetically unaltered over the 1,000 years since the first settlers. Allowed to grow slowly, they have developed just the right amount of fat necessary for the meat to grill perfectly and the muscles are finer, so the steak is

succulent and tender.

Icelandic lamb is renowned for its unspoilt, natural growth as they roam unrestrained in the mountain wilderness pastures, also free from additives or hormones, colouring or enhancers – and that shows in its tenderness and taste! Also on the menu is a wide range of carefully selected fresh seafood, shellfish and lobster, to provide a choice for every palate.

Char grilled to perfection, the steaks are complemented by the red and white wine selection from all the major countries and regions, or Champagne and sparkling wines, all served by attentive waiters and waitresses. The desert menu complements the main meal with its range of both Icelandic and international choices.

There is no incentive to rush out once you have finished your meal. There are plenty of comfortable couches and chairs in which to relax and enjoy an after-dinner glass of quality cognac, whiskey, port or liqueurs. Argentína is also the most popular venue to buy cigars, though the restaurant is now a smoke-free area.

Although the restaurant can seat up to 120 guests, including two banquet rooms that seat up to 16 and 20 guests respectively, Fridays and Saturdays should be booked in advance. It is open Sunday-Thursday from 6 pm to midnight and on Friday-Saturday from 5:30 pm to 1 am. (The kitchen closes 90 mins. before closing time.)



**Argentína**

Barónsstígur 11A • 101 Reykjavík  
**+354 551 9555**  
 salur@argentina.is  
 www.argentina.is



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# IN PRAISE OF FULL-FIGURED WOMEN



For the past 23 years, one shop in Reykjavik has been changing lives. Women would enter discouraged or shy or depressed only to leave with radiant glow of rekindled self-confidence a short time later. Others, clearly tired from a long search would reappear with a satisfied smile and a spring in their step.

Stórar stelpur was opened a quarter of a century ago to meet a need that has only grown over the years. As the fashion industry focussed on increasingly waif-like girls to model their clothes, women who needed larger sizes were sidelined then left totally out of the fashion world. Forced to resort to unflattering, old-fashioned styles, for many, their self-assurance and confidence to a daily pounding or frustration and anger set in at not being able to dress as they would like.

Women all over the world faced the same problem: no shops catered to their needs. In Stórar stelpur, they are increasingly finding the wardrobe that they had only dreamed of previously. They are cared for by staff who

understand their dilemma and who go out of their way to provide stylish and fashionable clothing for every occasion, specifically designed for the woman who has a larger size than chain stores stock.

The style and grace of larger women has been a common theme in art and society throughout past ages and Stórar stelpur is bringing the concept up-to-date with beautiful, well-designed outfits that help restore those feelings of beauty, satisfaction and self-assurance that being attractively dressed can bring.

Situated opposite the police station at Hlemmur, Stórar stelpur opens daily between 11 am and 6 pm to offer women a fresh look at life.

### Stórar Stelpur



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# WELCOME

## TO THE EXCITING WORLD OF GENTLE GIANTS – HÚSAVÍK ICELAND

Gentle Giants is located in the famous whale watching town of Husavik by Skjalfandi bay, on the northern coast of Iceland. We have a 98% success rate of spotting whales on our tours. Our staff has vast experience at sea, in particular around the Skjalfandi bay. We will do our best to make your tour an unforgettable experience.



# VEGETARIAN DELIGHTS

at *Á næstu grösum*

In the house of the first restaurant in Reykjavik, built in the old style in 1903 on the corner of Klappargstíg and Laugavegur's shopping street, is one of the country's best-known vegetarian restaurants. It's Icelandic name is a play on words, *Á næstu grösum* (lit. 'nearby herbs').

The restaurant is now upstairs and features a range of vegetarian foods for lunch, dinner

In many countries, wholesome vegetarian meals come with a high price premium - but not here! You can try everything, filling your plate, for a very reasonable price - about the cost of a hamburger and infinitely healthier! Even if you do eat a lot, the food is not heavy and leaves you feeling comfortable. The children's menu includes pizza. Desserts, too, are particularly appetising. The barley



or snacks. Being genuine vegetarian food, the ingredients are sourced from different parts of Iceland, where possible. Slow cooking is the order of the day and the menu changes regularly with the different seasons and availability of ingredients. There are always vegan (no dairy, eggs or meat) options available. Every Friday, the focus is on Indian- or Nepalese-style meals but there is always a good choice available.

cake won the Best Health Cake Award in 2009. Organic wines are available, to complement the meal.

This is a fresh, light restaurant with a homey feel to it. You can relax and enjoy your meal while others face the pressure of shopping on the street below. A range of coffees, natural teas and other drinks rounds off the meal.

An unusual feature of the restaurant is

the art displayed on its walls. Every six weeks or so, a new artist is invited to display and guests can buy the paintings right there. It is open from 11:30 to 10 pm Mon-Sat and 5 pm to 10 pm on Sundays.

In the Kringlan shopping centre is another branch of *Á næstu grösum* under the escalators on the ground floor by the *Útílf* sports shop. Here, it is more of a café style, with pies and a different taste to much of the food for variety. (It has the same opening hours as Kringlan.)



You can take a meal home! In the Departure Lounge at Keflavik International airport, the Nord restaurant offers meals to eat while you wait for your flight and will provide take-away boxes, so you can eat the healthiest food on the plane!

**Á næstu grösum**



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# THE SPIRIT OF ICELAND

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ride for beginners or a multi-day tour for the more experienced rider somewhere in the far reaches of the country.

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*For the authentic Icelandic experience this year, let Íshestar show you the way*

### Join one of Íshestar's most popular tours

The Lava Tour is an excellent ride for beginners wanting to get a feel for the Icelandic horse. This tour suits ages 8 to 99. You will take a 1½ - 2 hour ride through ancient lava fields surrounding Íshestar's Riding Centre.

Horse and Blue Lagoon Tour: After a ride of 1½ - 2 hours you will be driven to the fabulous Blue Lagoon, the perfect place for a soothing swim in the mineral rich waters, get a massage for those achy muscles or just relax and enjoy the facilities. (Blue Lagoon entrance fees are not included in the tour price.)

loyal, handsome and hardy. Can these words not describe both horse and man?

The Icelandic horse was part and parcel of Iceland 1,000 years ago and continues to be an important part of Iceland today. So your trip to Iceland will hardly be complete without experiencing a riding tour, whether it is an easygoing

It can be said that the true spirit of a country is reflected in the nature of its native animals. The spirit of Iceland can therefore be found in its own cherished friend and companion, the Icelandic horse. Independent yet gentle, standing strong in the face of the conflicting winds of adversity, hard working and



**Íshestar**



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# Kraum of the Crop

## Designer unite!



Kraum, the nation's first store dedicated entirely to Icelandic design, has breathed new life into Reykjavik's oldest house, just off Ingólfstorg square downtown. The store features work from over 200 designers including textile, jewelry, household items, and a variety of other utilitarian objects, all selected by a professional committee to ensure a fair representation of Iceland's best. Kraum, meaning simmer, is appropriately named as the first and only forum for Iceland's auspicious design scene, which centers on organic elements like wool, lava and fur from the nation's unique nature.

Because the space was conceived as a store and not a gallery, the offering focuses on production items instead of one-of-a-kind pieces, and prices reflect Kraum's sentiment of design's place in everyday life, and not just on the mantelpiece.



**TAX FREE SHOPPING**

**Opening hours**  
 Monday-Friday 9:00 - 18:00  
 Saturday 10:00 - 17:00  
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Aðalstraeti 10 · 101 Reykjavik · www.kraum.is

# GUÐMUNDUR TYRFINGSSON

*Travel & Tours—specialising in group tours around Iceland*

Founded in 1969, the trade-mark turquoise green buses of Guðmundur Tyrfingsson Travel & Tours are by now a very familiar part of the Icelandic landscape and can be seen criss-crossing the country at

any given time year-round. Offering a variety of tours around Iceland for groups of all sizes, this family-run company can arrange special interest tours, day tours, short and long tours, cultural tours, highland tours and can be of service with airport transfers or city transfers. What's more, GT Travel offers guidance in all the major European languages and can



any given time year-round.

Offering a variety of tours around Iceland for groups of all sizes, this family-run company can arrange special interest tours,

arrange accommodation, activities to suit, coach service and meals.

All of GT Travel's group tours depart from either Reykjavik or other conveniently

located departure points for tours to the south coast such as the Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon Tour, the South Coast Tour, Landmannalaugar Tour, Northern Lights Tours and, of course, the Golden Circle Tour.

### Hire a Coach for a tailor made tour

For a truly endearing experience in Iceland, let GT Travel tailor-make a tour that encompasses an area of special interest to you and your group. History buffs will appreciate Iceland's rich culture, folklore and Saga history. Bird watching enthusiasts can plan a guided tour around Iceland's varied bird life. Coaches can be hired for virtually any occasion.

Whatever your reasons for visiting Iceland, be it business or pleasure, you can be confident that GT Travel & Tours has your best interests at heart. Its fleet of nearly fifty coaches, amongst the newest in the country, can carry 9 to 62 passengers and are all fitted with either 2- or 3-point seat belts. Most coaches are equipped with air-conditioning, ABS brakes, comfortable reclining seats and footrests.

### Finally, here is some recent feedback from just one of many satisfied clients

*Dear Madam, .. I was the group leader on a recent school trip to Iceland. We used a bus from your company and I would like to thank you for a wonderful service. Our driver's sense of humour and relaxed manner with the staff and children was wonderful. He is a wonderful driver and showed concern and care for the group at all times... Best wishes for the future and I hope to enjoy the beauties of Iceland again soon.*

*GT Travel and Tours has recently received the award of being one of Iceland's strongest companies, achieving top marks in strength and stability.*

Guðmundur Tyrfingsson



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**The Rock 'n' roll steakhouse**

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# LAXNES HORSE FARM RIDING

Pop stars to Presidents, politicians to film stars, businessmen and tourists. What inspires all these people from such a wide variety of backgrounds and lifestyles to go horse-riding at Laxnes?

The valleys here are known for their great beauty and diversity. Riding a horse is just so natural in such surroundings, with streams and rivers flowing down the mountains into the valley, from bare rock

and humour. It offers the excitement of riding out into a land and nature never before experienced. It's a lifestyle that might leave you envious - but glad you took the time to indulge in.



Maybe you're thinking of holidaying in Iceland this year and doing some horse riding but are perhaps concerned that you'll be put on an old nag that takes all your energy to get moving!

Póri and Heiða, who founded Laxnes Farm in 1968, have built up a stock of over 100 good horses suited to every kind of rider and skill level. The family knows each horse, its temperament and training. They share their experience with a great sense of humour. Not just a family-run business, the farm is their home - a rustic, country style of living and enjoyment of nature, Icelandic horses and life itself. Laxnes is the epitome of country life at its best, where they offer top quality riding all year round.

The horses are well cared for and well-shod and the staff take time to carefully choose a horse to match your experience. Each rider is supplied with all the riding equipment necessary for safety and weather conditions and receives basic instructions on how to ride before the tour starts.

Riding Icelandic horses brings a new dimension to the sport. Being a smaller breed, they have smooth gaits and an easy disposition. They are very strong for their size and have good temperaments.

to verdant pasture.

Some people come for the morning or afternoon, others come for the day. There is the 'Day at the Farm' that starts with a tour in the morning followed by lunch



Tours with Laxnes Farm can be booked directly, where a minibus can pick you up at your hotel or as part of another tour, such as the Golden Circle tours. Be sure to ask your agent to book this experience

with another ride in the afternoon. For many, the 2 hour 'Laxnes Special' tour, which has been running daily for 43 years, will be just right to include on their itinerary - but it will leave enduring and warm memories!

If you are planning an event such as an Incentive tour or a conference, Laxnes provides a great location for riding, followed by dinner, line dancing, music

into your tour.



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# ÁLAFOSS WOOL

Around a beautiful waterfall has formed a community epitomising Icelanders' penchant for creativity and innovation, art and design.

The water in the river was formerly warm, giving it the name 'Varmá' (Warm River) and in 1896 an enterprising farmer, seeing its value, imported knitting machinery and thus began almost 100 years of production of woollen goods on the site. Today, it is a thriving centre for artists in many fields.

It's less than 20 mins. from Reykjavik and only 25 mins. to Þingvellir (Thingvellir)

National Park. The Laxnes Horse Farm and Halldór Laxnes' house are only 10 mins. away. Hótel Laxnes and the Fitjar Guest House are a mere 5 mins.



## The Álafoss Wool and Sewing Shop

The Álafoss factory has been turned into a shop with a warm atmosphere and wide range of interesting articles from past and present. They sell everything associated with wool, from the yarn to the beautiful, multi-coloured finished articles, from patterns to buttons and zippers. Hand-knitted articles from individuals all across the country hang side-by-side with machine-made woollen clothing - all at really good prices. Whilst the women do their shopping, the men find all the historical and technical exhibits from past generations fascinating. However, if they want to keep their women happy, there are ranges of beautiful artistic jewellery, glassware, pottery and silverware to choose from.

## Ásgarður Handwork Shop

Right across the road from the shop is an unusual workshop: the Ásgarður Handwork Shop. Since 1993, disabled artisans have produced a large range of handmade wooden toys and lifestyle items. They emphasise the development of simple, strong and beautiful toys, taking Icelandic wood and creating unique works that you can take home, based on Rudolf Steiner's philosophy.

## The Swimming Pool Recording Studio

Another example of Icelanders' creativity is the old swimming pool, originally built in 1931 but replaced by another and fallen into disuse. The building has been transformed into the state-of-the-art Sundlaugin (The Swimming Pool) Recording Studio, by the Sigur Rós band, and has been used by a steady stream of musicians since its inception.

## Kaffihúsið á Álafossi

The Kaffihús á Álafossi is, in some ways, like an English pub. Unlike a pub, the coffee house and restaurant is also an art gallery. In addition to their private collection, works by a different artist each month are displayed and are available for purchase from the Kaffihús. It is very child-friendly and a location where dogs are welcome. It's a great place to sit on a summer's day - which,

of course, lasts till late in the evening - and enjoy a wide range of snacks, cakes, meals\* and drinks, including beer and stronger drinks which can be taken onto the veranda or the balcony that overlooks the waterfall and river, with the tranquil hills beyond.

*\*Meat dishes consist of fish, lamb or chicken.*

The Kaffihús can accommodate groups of up to 50. It is a hive of activity and a place to meet people from the locality, staying open until 10 pm and to 11 pm on Thursdays-Saturdays. Every month, there is a 'Living Room Concert' and on 5th May, the Icelandic Eurovision singer, Eyjólfur Kristjánsson, will be performing. You can find their news on Facebook!



Álafoss Wool Store



Álafossvegur 23 • 270 Mosfellsbær  
 +354 566 6303  
 addi@alafoss.is  
 www.alafoss.is

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# THE ULTIMATE SOUVENIR

By Palli the Knife Maker

In a quiet and secluded dale just outside Mosfellsbær, you'll find a narrow street, bustling with creativity, centered around the diminutive Álafoss waterfall. There you'll find Palli the Knife-maker toiling in his workshop, making timeless pieces of art in the form of knives. Each knife, being unique, makes it the ultimate souvenir, a matchless item for the collector, the absolute tool of the hunter or simply a thing of great beauty.

A visit to Palli's open workshop in Álafoss, Mosfellsbær is an experience—the blades, dangling from the ceiling, his collection of animal skulls, the piles of exotic materials, the 75 year-old dentist drill he uses for delicate carvings and the view of the waterfall outside his window all make for a delightful visit.

obtained, of course.) He hand-sews each hardened leather sheath specifically to fit each knife. The blades themselves are either hand-made copies of Iron Age or Viking Age designs from Denmark, Damascus steel, or factory-produced blades from other parts of Scandinavia.



## Exotic Materials

The knives are what make your visit worthwhile. Palli is a true pioneer and an exceptional artist who labours over his craft for days on end. He uses materials from all over the world and is particularly fond of using Icelandic reindeer, sheep and cattle horns and horses' hooves, and wood from various types of Icelandic trees.

Palli is always looking for exotic materials to work with, including walrus and whale teeth, and ivory (legally

## A Labour of Love

A testament to Palli's dedication to his craft is his use of ancient brown coal, which he has to dry for six years. Palli exposes the brown coal to more and more oxygen by piercing a tiny hole each day with a needle through an insulating plastic covering. For those less patient, the brown coal, which is actually a fossilised tree, would dry too fast, splinter and crumble.

Palli has made over 2,500 knives but never tires of his craft. "No knife is the

same, even if I use the same components, it never comes out the same. I try to let the material I'm working with each time decide what the final product will look like, so I'm never repeating myself and I'm always equally excited with each knife I make. In fact, my friends tell me I never work, instead I just play all day long," he says.

It's best to phone Palli before visiting – he might be out looking for fresh

materials. He has a good selection of knives available in his shop, but he can also custom-make knives to your specifications, which can be shipped to your doorstep, as well as those you'll find on his website.

Palli the Knife Maker



Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbær  
 +354 566 7408  
 palli@knifemaker.is  
 www.knifemaker.is

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## GUESTHOUSE BORG IN GRINDAVÍK

*A Home Away From Home*

Iceland's multitude of exciting attractions and activities are enough to fill weeks of scheduling! Just be sure not to forget to take a breath to imbibe the culture and meet the people! What better way to do that than to set up camp in a homestay accommodation in a traditional Icelandic fishing town. Guesthouse Borg in Grindavík offers you exactly that chance.

Husband and wife Björk and Magnús decided to renovate their three-story house

to offer travellers who are looking for a more up-close view of Iceland a modestly priced cosy homestay in the quiet town of Grindavík. They offer a family-suited environment where visitors are offered a personal and relaxed way of staying in Iceland. There is a communal fully-equipped kitchen where you can cook your own meals and prepare breakfast suited to your own liking. Washing facilities enable you to clean your travelling clothes and in the communal living room you'll find a computer with free Internet access to plan your activities for the following day.

While staying at Guesthouse Borg you'll get the chance to see what life in a small fishing town is like. The town offers all the services you might require, including groceries, restaurants, a bakery, gym, and an outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs, to name a few. But most importantly you'll get a chance to meet the locals, who have



made their living by the ocean and its bounty for centuries now and are always glad to greet visitors.

Grindavík is only minutes away from the Blue Lagoon, 20 minutes from the airport and 40 minutes to the capital. The multitude of geological and historical attractions of the Reykjanes peninsula are close by as well, of course.

Borg provides five double rooms and two single rooms with made up beds. All the rooms have a mirror, wardrobe, desk, chairs, lamps and night stands. Families travelling with small children are offered special children's beds with children's bed linen. One of our rooms is a family room that up to five people can sleep in and is perfect for a family with children. For groups of up to 16 persons the Guesthouse Borg is the perfect option.

### Gistiheimili Borg



Borgarhraun 2 • 240 Grindavík  
 +354 895 8686  
 bjorksv@hive.is  
 www.guesthouseborg.com

## SALTHÚSIÐ RESTAURANT OF GRINDAVÍK

*The Art of Bacalao*

Call it bacalao, salted cod, morue or saltfisk in Icelandic, the cod fish was

Benefiting from its proximity to the sea, Salthúsið's á la carte menu features

stove in the dining room that serves to warm and brighten those rainy days that are sometimes a part of life in Grindavík. Aside from the á la carte evening menu, there is more casual fare for the lunch crowd, a café with free Internet access and a bar which is popular with the locals on weekends.

Salthúsið Restaurant, just 5 minutes drive from the internationally acclaimed Blue Lagoon, is housed in a warm and inviting log house, made of solid Estonian pine. The restaurant, spanning 2 floors, is an elegant venue for banquets, parties, conferences and reception dinners accommodating a total of 200 guests. The large premises can host conferences, workshops and meetings in 3 dining rooms, each with its own separate sound system, wireless Internet and an overhead projection system.

### Salthúsið Restaurant



Stamphólsvégi 2 • 240 Grindavík  
 +354 426 9700  
 salthusid@salthusid.is  
 www.salthusid.is



once so important to Iceland's economy that it featured prominently on the Icelandic Coat of Arms. The Salthúsið (Salt House) Restaurant of Grindavík is the first restaurant in Iceland specialising in the lowly codfish, bringing it up to new heights. Once the staple of the poor, bacalao has long been a celebrated ingredient in Mediterranean, African, and Caribbean cuisine for many centuries.

beautifully presented seafood that couldn't be more fresh: whether it's cod, haddock or catfish or even lobster-it all depends on the 'catch of the day'. Not a fish lover? The menu also features items such as marinated fillet of lamb, beef tenderloin and BBQ ribs amongst others.

Linger over a glass of wine from Salthúsið's extensive wine list while listening to the soft ambient music in front of the wood-burning



## “ROW FOR YOUR LIVES!”

Fishing has always been dangerous around the Reykjanes coastline. Until 1928, rowing boats were used, often in terrible weather and high seas. Calm seas turned into a churning inferno with waves taller than houses, within a matter of minutes. There were no harbour facilities along the whole south coast, so fishermen would have to wait for a particularly big wave to take them to the beach, whereupon the cry, “Row for your lives!” would be heard and a grim desperation took hold. They could miss the beach, be overturned in the

surf or swept out to sea. Their lives were at stake! Having reached the beach, the heavy boat would have to quickly be hauled up to safety. For this reason, no larger boats could be used.

As a stark testament to the dangers of the sea, there are over 100 shipwrecks in the area. The rescue service is now 80 years old. In 1931, a breeches buoy was first used to rescue 38 crewmen from the French trawler ‘Cap Fagnet’. It was not until 1985 that the first lifeboat was introduced, followed by a second, bought

from the RNLI in 1998. Every year on the first Sunday in June, the country shows its appreciation to the fishermen with Seamen's Day, a major festival that is especially popular in Grindavík.

According to Landnáma (the Book of Settlements), the oldest historical record of the country, two Vikings settled in Reykjanes in 934 AD. For many generations, agriculture was the area's main occupation. Fishing, though, was a key element in the survival of the people but, due to the lack of a harbour





and the rough seas, many lives were lost. In the 1500's, salted fish was sold to the British and Germans but the main industry was dried fish, called 'stockfish'. Today, however, saltfish or Bacalao is a big industry here. It has become a national delicacy of four countries: Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy.

A story is told of Columbus being shipwrecked in the Bay of Biscay, where he was rescued by a British gunboat. At this time, the British had stations in the Westmann Is., Grindavik and Snæfellsnes. There are speculations that he may have stayed in Grindavik, where he heard about

canal and nine years later, the first harbour was competed, built by hand with picks and shovels, which enabled motorised



creatures around Iceland. He opened up the whole field of marine biology as a science in Iceland, writing numerous books. A naturalist at heart, he loved nature in all its forms. Such was his impact that Iceland's second research vessel is named after him.

**Look Below!**

When the Oil Crisis of the 1970's struck, the Lions Club of Grindavik took innovative action. They drilled for hot water just outside the town. What they discovered and developed has become famous world-wide as the Blue Lagoon. Not only did they discover a source of hot water that could be tapped

for both heating and electrical energy but, in the 1980's, the water was found to contain minerals that had healing properties. No



visit to Iceland is complete without testing its waters, and the range of skin products produced from them!

Reykjanes is very 'young' geologically speaking and to get an idea of the power you are standing on, the immersive Earth Energy exhibit at the Art and Cultural Centre in Grindavik opens up the earth under your feet.

**A World Apart**

There are comfortable guesthouses and a hostel in the town or, if you are camping or caravanning, take advantage of the new, state-of-the-art campsite from which to

lava mountains, from fishing to art galleries, from horse riding to bike riding, from museums to volcano tours, there is more than meets the eye



Vikings who travelled to America...and the rest is history! Things were not always peaceful with the British. In 1532, the first of numerous 'Cod Wars' took place in Grindavik, when Germans and Icelanders attacked the British.

In 1930, a stream from a freshwater pool to the sea in Grindavik was enlarged into a

boats to be used - and a revolution in fishing began. The town's population has risen to over 2,800 today, making it a thriving centre and Grindavik is always one of the top three towns of fish landed.

**Bjarni Sæmundsson**

Little was known about the different fish species or their lives until the 20th century. In 1867, a boy was born in Grindavik who would change that. Growing up, Bjarni Sæmundsson went fishing with his father. He studied and drew Icelandic birds, fish, animals, flora and fauna. He went to study in Copenhagen. Travelling on fishing trawlers, he catalogued all the sea



base while you visit all the sights that make the area so interesting and unusual. After a day's sightseeing, the swimming pool offers a great place to relax and chat with the local folk - before enjoying an evening's entertainment at one of the town's inns or restaurants.

See what it is really like at a fishing port - and what it was like in the past at the Saltfish Museum, with its vivid depictions of the struggle for survival against all odds. From shipwrecks to boiling hot mud pools and geysers, from sailing to craft centres, from lighthouses to crevasses splitting the continents, from birdwatching to quad bike tours across

when you drive down from the Blue Lagoon to the town!

Grindavik is a child-friendly town. Even more, it brings out the childish curiosity in adults and children alike, leaving them with images and experiences that will linger in the memory of a world so different and so fascinating that next time, you will book a much longer visit!



**Grindavik**  
 Vikurbraut 62 • 240 Grindavik  
 +354 420 1100  
 grindavik@grindavik.is  
 www.grindavik.is



# SALTY TOURS OF REYKJANES PENINSULA

From the looks of the many beaming reviews that SaltyTours has been getting recently, it seems like this is one tour company in Iceland that you might not want to miss.

Operating comfortable coaches and mini buses, SaltyTours owner, Þorsteinn, is a true

heads out in one of 3 possible directions, depending on weather conditions and the inspiration of your driver. After choosing a small tree from a local plant nursery, you are off to carefully plant your darling little sapling, somewhere in Iceland that needs trees...;) 'And every time you come back



Icelander, full of passion and details about Iceland that he communicates in effortless English, full of wit and sparkle.

A long time resident of the Reykjanes Peninsula, Þorsteinn has conceived the Plant Your Own Tree in Iceland Tour which has been a huge hit among his fans. If you prefer a bit of spontaneity in your travels, this tour unquestionably meets the criterion. The tour

to Iceland you can visit your tree', says Þorsteinn with a twinkle in his eye.

With so many choices in Iceland all vying for one's attention, SaltyTours 'Grand Volcano and Lava Circle Tour' also piqued my interest because it takes you right around the peninsula and finishes at the Blue Lagoon, another favourite spot of mine. Reykjanes Peninsula is enchanting



in all weather but it is possibly even more beautiful on those days when the mist rolls over the mossy lava, adding even more drama to its already other-worldly persona.



And I leave you with this quote from one of SaltyTours happy customers, writing in Trip Advisor, who sums up his experience this way:

"Considering that the Reykjanes area is between the international airport at Keflavik, and the city of Reykjavik, most visitors tear straight through it and have no idea how incredibly interesting it is. As far as I'm aware, SaltyTours offers the best means of exploring the area with someone who is passionate about the place and can communicate that to his clients."



**SaltyTours**  
 Borgarhrauni 1 • 240 Grindavik  
 +354 820 5750  
 tgk@saltytours.is  
 www.saltytours.is



# ATV-ADVENTURES IN GRINDAVÍK

*A Quad-bike Trip to the Moon*

Although exploring foreign landscapes through the window of a moving car and the occasional stop can be quite efficient and comfortable, there is really nothing which compares to scaling volcanic craters and speeding across sandy beaches on a quad-bike! ATV-Adventures in Grindavik

of having to arrange different modes of transport for each activity, ATV offers you a pick-up at your hotel in Reykjavik or Keflavik and several options for further activities the same day. A popular choice is to make the most of your last day in Iceland with a car waiting for you and your luggage

up from underneath, an alien and foreign landscape for sure – hence the name. The tour also includes a stop at a hot spring which rumours say is haunted, an old lighthouse, a look into a volcanic crater and a chance to pick up a lava rock that feels actually still warm to the touch. The 6-7 hour Volcanic Safari offers you the chance to see all of Reykjanes' most dramatic locations in one exciting trip that includes the birdlife in the area, lunch down by the



offer you a unique chance to explore through practical and thrilling tours on the volcanic landscapes of the Reykjanes peninsula.

Being the 'youngest' part of Iceland and the upper-most part of the North-Atlantic ridge, the Reykjanes peninsula is abundant with geological wonders and splendid landscapes, including immense lava fields, hot springs, multi coloured landscapes and, the most famous of all, the Blue Lagoon. All of which you can explore in the wide array of tours ATV-Adventures has on offer.

## Make the Most of Your Last Day in Iceland

The practical aspect of ATV-Adventures is the ability to combine excitement with the often tedious logistics of travelling. Instead

at your hotel in the morning, then some adrenaline pumping quad-biking, then winding up in the Blue Lagoon while ATV safely stores your luggage before finally heading off to the airport in the afternoon.

## Alien and Foreign Landscapes

The tours include the compact Panorama Tour, which takes you up a hard mountain path for some splendid views and a ride along the coastline with stops at the various shipwrecks. The Lava Beach Tour goes further into the culture and history of the area in two hours and explores the lives of the local fishermen in the past. The Trip to the Moon tour takes you for a three-hour ride on top of a relatively recent lava field, so recent that vegetation has yet to get a foothold on it and smoke actually steams

docks in the fishing town of Grindavik, the multi-coloured landscapes of Vigdísarvellir and all of the activities in the other tours.

## Safety First

ATV places special emphasis on safety and quality equipment in their tours. All of the tour guides are required to complete strenuous safety and first-aid courses and the company works closely with the local rescue team to map out all possible safety scenarios. All the quad-bikes are specially built for two persons, which means both riders are fully insured.



**ATV-Adventures**  
 Tangasund 1 • 240 Grindavik  
 +354 857 3001  
 info@atv4x4.is  
 www.atv-adventures.com

# STAKKAVÍK

*Where Does That Fish Come From?*

The rougher the sea, the better the fishing! Around the Reykjanes peninsula are some very rough seas. The number of shipwrecks is testament to that fact! However, you can take a trip to see how it's done without leaving the comfort of your chair - and relish the freshness in the most

deciding their own fate! Following the video, visitors can see how the fish is prepared once it is landed from a special platform overlooking the processing area, where it is boned, prepared and packed, ready to be flown out on the afternoon flight daily to Europe and the USA, where it can be on

boiled. This is a great visit for everyone who loves good food and would like to see how it gets to them. The reputation for freshness that Stakkavík possesses cannot be beaten!

And those rough seas? You can see actual film that will forever make you thankful for the fishermen! Even though a well-built



exquisite seafood soup you have ever tasted!

Stakkavík is unique in showing visitors all the steps from the time the fishing boat prepares to leave harbour to catch the fish until you eat the freshly-landed and freshly-cooked catch in the form of a delicious bowl of seafood soup. In their Grindavík visitor centre, you can view a film in the comfort of their dining lounge as you enjoy that soup! This video is fascinating for all ages as it shows all that goes into the fishing, from start to finish. On board, you see the lines being prepared and baited. You see scenes filmed underwater, showing the fish

diners' plates for lunch the following day!

The difference between the fresh fish and frozen fish is in its quality, texture and taste. Once you have tasted the fresh fish, you will be hooked!

Not only do you get to see the whole process, but you can learn about the different ways to cook the fish that make it so full of flavour, whether fried, steamed, baked or

harbour has been constructed, those seas may seem like scenes from 'The Perfect Storm' outside its walls at times!

**Stakkavík**



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

📍 Bakkalág 15b • 240 Grindavík  
 ☎ +354 420 8000  
 ✉ stakkavik@stakkavik.is  
 🌐 www.stakkavik.is



# BRYGGJAN CAFE

*Grindavik's award winning cultural café*

A rather nondescript building sits at the edge of the pier in Grindavik. Outside, piles and piles of black fishing nets lay heaped on the ground, waiting their turn to be repaired.

A quick walk around the building reveals a large repair shop for trawler fishnets that

The attractive little café, which celebrates the life and times of Grindavik's 500 year-old fishing industry, is decorated very much as you might expect. From the ceiling hang all sorts of artifacts including a 150 year-old ship's rope and pulley and the walls are adorned with photos of

you might well imagine yourself in a museum, however small.

Owners Aðalgeir and Kristinn, happen to be big Beatle fans, even hosting a special musical evening last October in honour of John Lennon's 70th birthday. But culture is culture and the Beatles have left their mark in people's hearts and minds even here in Grindavik.

Bryggjan is an 'early bird café' opening at 8:00 in the morning and serves a hearty



can hold up to a thousand tons of fresh fish. Spread out on dry land these nets are an incredible 700 meters long. In the front, large glass windows and wooden tables and chairs on the terrace give away the secondary purpose of this building- the home of Bryggjan Café.

retired fishing vessels that once played a part in Grindavik's history. There is even a small bookshelf where locals can sit and read about the history of their village.

If it weren't for the upright piano in one corner, a guitar in another and an almost life-size photo of John Lennon on the wall,

'fisherman's breakfast'. For lunch there are lamb and vegetable soups with bread as well as excellent espresso, cappuccino, regular coffee and homemade cakes. On a sunny day, the terrace, which looks out over the harbour is a pleasant spot to stop for lunch or afternoon coffee and breathe in the fresh sea air. And if you are really lucky you just might be there in time to watch the passing fishing vessels as they arrive to offload their catch.



**Bryggjan Café**



Miðgarður 2 • 240 Grindavík  
 +354 426 7100  
 kaffibryggjan@simnet.is  
 www.kaffibryggjan.is

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# RÁIN

*Salmon in every possible form*

There are many different ways to prepare salmon and the experts are only 10 minutes from the International Airport. Ráin, in Keflavik town, are specialists in this delicious fish and have so many different

ways to prepare it that there is always more to choose from than you are able to eat!

In its 23rd year and recently renovated, this elegant restaurant has the cosy style of the 1930's 'Golden Years' and all the modern trappings needed for conferences, celebrations, events or shows. Its windows offer a restful, panoramic view of the ocean to the horizon, making it a popular venue for

locals and visitors alike.

The personalised service and well-stocked bar complements the chefs' works of culinary art that would not be out of place in any of the world's top restaurants.

You could get so lost in your enjoyment of the meal that, if you're on your way home, you could miss your flight! However, you would find it worth the sacrifice! After all, home is always there, but meals like this are an dining experience you would be hard-pressed to match.



**Ráin Restaurant**



Hafnargötu 19 • 230 Keflavík  
 +354 421 4601  
 rain@rain.is  
 rain@rain.is



Now available at Eymundsson book store and online [www.eymundsson.is](http://www.eymundsson.is)

## Moments from Iceland

by Jóhannes Frank

Icelandic landscape in black and white



# ICELAND IN EASY REACH



Just 10 minutes from the Leif Eiriksson International airport. You probably saw the collection of buildings clinging to the coastline as you came in to land, yet you really had no idea of what lay there.

A little way out to sea lies a rich fishing ground where Steinunn the Bold, the cousin of the first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, used to fish and here begins a dramatic history that belies the calm façade of Sandgerði. That rich fishing means that the harbour is busy – very busy – when the flotilla of small fishing boats return. In fact, it is one of the busiest harbours in the country and it is this relationship with the sea that forms the foundation of its history.

As you drive into the town today you can see a dramatic sculpture by Steinunn Þórarinsdóttir depicting three stainless steel waves, representing the timeless ocean and the rusting figure of a man, cast in iron, a reminder of the transient, perishable nature of man.

The town's relationship with the sea has never been a cordial one. It is a dangerous coastline and many a ship has foundered there. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, over 1,300 lives were claimed by the sea off a nearby headland, Rosmhvalanes. As a busy trading post, it received many vessels but in January, 1799 a flood devastated it. The 'Jamestown', one of the largest English sailing ships of its type ran aground in 1881 and its valuable cargo of high quality timber was used to build houses in the district. Efra Sandgerði, the oldest standing building in the town, was one. It has recently been restored by the Sandgerði Lions Club.

Huge rollers often batter the coastline and as recently as 1928, the trawler 'Jón forseti' ran aground and many drowned. The following year, however, the town fought back with the formation of the Sigurvon Rescue Team and the introduction of its first lifeboat – still to be seen in the rescue team's

headquarters in the town. Today, the team has one of the best-equipped lifeboats in the country, always on stand-by in the harbour.

Sandgerði's history also features fights of another kind, as it has been the scene of skirmishes, fighting and, in 1551, the first battle using firearms. A famous folktale about Rauðhöfði has its roots in Melaberg.

Sandgerði today, however, is a vibrant town with art and culture high on its list. A sculpture at the harbour celebrates the centenary of the motor-powered fishing boat industry in Sandgerði. Ný-Vídd is an art workshop where aspiring artists of all ages produce works of art in clay, glass, paint, wood and other materials. Close by, Gallery Listatorg in Vitaborg has a display of works produced with local materials and a shop where local items can be purchased.

The Nature Centre brings together man and his relationship with nature in an amazingly realistic 4-part exhibition featuring a large number of preserved birds of many species and animals such as mink, foxes, seals, and a walrus on show in seashore, fish, bird and freshwater settings. Scientists use the sea water, filtered through the lava for their experiments and research.

The centre also lets you experience the life and times of French explorer Charcot, whose ship foundered close to Borgarnes as he was returning to France in 1936, with the loss of all but one man. His research is now carried on by a team from the Suðurnes University at the centre. Parties of excited schoolchildren also learn about sea life. This is really worth a visit!

After visiting the town, your appetite can be assuaged at the Vitinn restaurant, with its beautiful ambience and whilst the Mamma



Mia Café provides light refreshments and excitement with live broadcasts of sporting events and Shellskálinn has hamburgers and other snacks.

Speaking of sports, Sandgerði has excellent facilities with Reynir Football Club providing a natural grass pitch, along with a clubhouse where a swimming pool, hot tubs, steam bath and sun beds provide a range of options for both exercise and relaxation. The Golf Club offers a 9-hole course that is often ready to play a month earlier than others in Spring.

The town's other facilities are no less impressive for a small – but growing – community of 1,760. Varðan, a new

building in the centre, houses the council office, library, bank and apartments and the recently-renovated Samkomuhúsið is one of the best community centres in Suðurnes. That sense of community is fostered by the well-designed parish hall, a music school, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. A new camping area with electricity for campers is open from 1st April to 30th Sept.

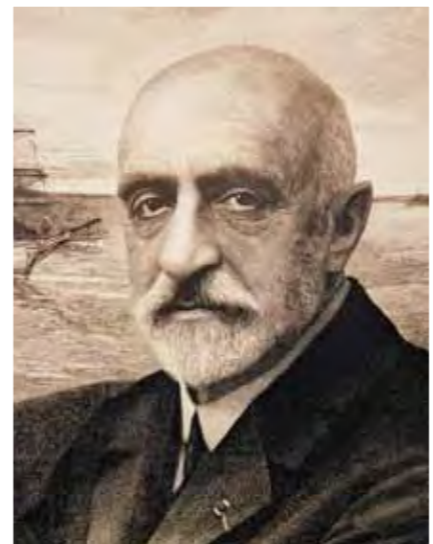
An ideal time to visit Sandgerði is on arrival at the airport, as it is so close by but a visit at any other time will also provide you with a memorable experience. Perhaps, though, a visit by boat in a storm would not be so advisable! The sea here is a powerful

adversary at such times! The view from the land can be both thrilling and memorable, however. After all, don't you want to visit Iceland because you want to experience something different?



## SAIL WITH A POLAR PIONEER

Jean-Baptiste Charcot was born to a famous French neurologist in 1867. Although trained as a doctor, adventure and exploration were in his blood. His first voyage was when he was 3 years old. He took an old soapbox, scrawled "Pourquoi Pas?" on its side and set sail - in a pool in his garden!



It was fortunate he tested his boat there, as it sank, leaving him wet but undaunted!

He found French society to be too superficial for him. In 1892, aged 25, he bought his first boat, sailing north to the Shetlands, Hebrides, Faroes and Iceland.

His father died the following year,

leaving a large inheritance, allowing him to leave medicine behind for a life of scientific investigation and sea-faring adventure. He married the granddaughter of Victor Hugo, but it did not last and she divorced him on the grounds of desertion while he was away.

He had planned another trip to the Arctic but news of the missing Swedish explorer, Nordenskjöld, led him to head south instead. He charted more than 600 miles of new Antarctic coastlines and islands. A second, equally successful expedition followed. Scott of the Antarctic nicknamed him, 'The Gentleman of the Pole'.

After the 1st World War, he set out, sailing north to lead numerous expeditions to the Færoe Islands, Jan Mayen Island, Iceland and Greenland. The 'Pourquoi Pas?' was a scientific research vessel with a library and three laboratories on board.

The ship stopped often in Iceland, where Charcot made many friends, including the eminent Icelandic naturalist, Bjarni Sæmundsson. In fact, when the 'Pourquoi Pas?' put into Reykjavik to repair its boiler, Charcot and Bjarni had a meeting that was to prove to be their last.

The ship set sail on the 16th September, 1936, heading for France when a sudden, very violent storm drove them off course, across the Faxafloi Bay onto the rocks off Mýrar. Of the crew of over 40 souls, only one survived. The news shocked all

Iceland and a memorial service was held in Reykjavik for them.

You can get an idea of what it was like on the 'Pourquoi Pas?' at the Suðurnes University Research Centre in Sandgerði, where part of the ship has been reconstructed with many items from both the ship and



Charcot's personal belongings on display. This is a dynamic display that really gives a clear impression of life on board the ship and is well worth a visit to the centre, close to the harbour.

Fræðasetrið Sandgerði



Garðvegi 1 • 245 Sandgerði  
 +354 420 7555  
 fsetur@ismennt.is  
 www.sandgerdi.is

# VITINN

*From Famished to Feasted in 10 minutes*

You've just landed at Iceland's international airport and your stomach is rumbling! It's at least an hour before you can settle into your hotel in Reykjavík – and longer before you can find somewhere to eat. What you need is a good meal – and now! You could eat a

be enjoyable at any time but its owners, Stefán Sigurðsson, the restaurant's chef, and his wife Brynhildur Kristjánsdóttir have surrounded the diners with antiques and relics from both the area's agricultural and fishing past to make this a unique and fascinating experience.



standard snack to be found the world over or...

A short, 10-minute ride will bring you the quickest introduction to the Icelandic speciality cuisine – and the most delicious relief to that rumbling stomach that you could imagine that's nonetheless easy on the wallet! Whether you are alone or with a large group, Vitinn (Lighthouse) restaurant can satisfy your appetite with a culinary and visual feast that sets the bar for quality, taste and ambiance.

Set next to the lighthouse, right by the harbour where the fishing fleet lands its catch, Vitinn prepares fish that could not be fresher! The rich coastal fishing ground has been the source of delicious fish since the days of Steinunn the Old, cousin of the first settler in Iceland, Ingólfur Arnason in the 800's.

Eating in this restaurant, with its warm wood panelling and cosy atmosphere would

The menu and the presentation of each course show off Icelandic cuisine at its best. Besides seafood, there is also a delicious offering of Icelandic specialties such as lamb steak. However, it is not restricted to classic Icelandic foods alone but provides a truly international variety. Vitinn is the only restaurant in Europe that provides Rock Crab fresh from the sea. Rock Crab is a delicacy found only on the US coast and in Iceland.

Children are not only welcome but are provided with a special reward when they finish their scrumptious lunch from the children's menu.

Just married, celebrating an anniversary, special event, just looking for something distinctive for your friends or a group? Vitinn makes a celebration to remember for a lifetime for groups with its service, supplied by waiters and waitresses dressed in national costume.

In some countries, when travelling in a group, you may feel as if you are being herded like cattle so it is a great relief to visit a restaurant like Vitinn, where large groups can be accommodated but each one is treated to personalised service and warm Icelandic hospitality. For those used to the smog and pollution of the cities of the world, the freshness of the air and the relaxed lifestyle of this coastal town add to the pleasure of being able to unwind in comfortable surroundings and enjoy a meal without stress or pressure.

Open for lunch all the year round, from May to September, Vitinn is open all day, too, so diners can enjoy the garden, or watch the surf as the boats come in to the harbour, laden with fresh fish as the sun gently dips to the horizon in the light evenings.

The town is worth a visit and has its own blend of unique features and a fascinating history. After taking a stroll, stop back in at the highly-praised coffee house in Vitinn for a snack of cakes, waffles and specialties from the Icelandic home-baked cuisine, including an inexpensive lunch. After that, you'll be ready to face the challenges and excitement that awaits you with a fresh perspective of what Iceland has to offer you, along with a very pleasant memory of your experience on the wild coast of Sandgerði.



**Vitinn Restaurant**

Vitatorg 7 • 245 Sandgerði  
 +354 423 7755  
 info@vitinn.is  
 www.vitinn.is

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# A FORGOTTEN DELICACY

*Canned Cod Liver, Foie Gras of the Ocean*

Although many of the Icelandic traditional courses originate from feasible means of preservation and efficient use of raw materials, some of them just happen to be delicious. One of them is the unique canned cod liver, which has been called the 'Foie Gras of the Ocean'.

used for both consumption and heating and thus has undoubtedly played a vital role in the history of Iceland, which is why the people at MC09 are particularly proud to present their product at this time.

"Many Icelanders had, in fact, forgotten about the canned cod liver and had stopped

is the low level of dioxin contamination in Icelandic waters. The use of cod liver for consumption has, in fact, been discontinued in many fishing jurisdictions due to dioxin contamination, as the cod processes such undesirable materials through the liver, whereas the Icelandic waters remain relatively pure and well below the international health limits. The cod liver comes fresh off the docks from the historic Icelandic fishing



For centuries, Icelanders have been quite resourceful in finding ways of utilizing the wealth from the ocean to the utmost to get them through harsh times and often unforgiving climate conditions. Building on that legacy, fish processing company MC09 in Sandgerði has recently started producing a delicacy which some here in Iceland had long ago forgotten – canned cod liver.

## A Vital Role in Iceland's History

Cod liver is particularly rich in vitamins and Omega-3 unsaturated fatty acids, to which some have attributed the survival of the Icelandic settlers and their descendants. In fact, some claim Icelanders' high longevity stems from eating so much fish and fish liver.

Since The Settlement, cod liver has been

eating it, but now it's entering the market very successfully," says Guðmundur Davíðsson, manager of MC09. "Part of the reason could be that we're so used to getting fresh fish products right from the docks that we tend to overlook the processed goods. But the fact of the matter is that the canned cod liver is a completely unique product and a welcome addition to the fresh materials. Its taste is quite distinct and considered a delicacy by connoisseurs in many European countries, but our ambition is to introduce it to new cultures and markets," says Guðmundur.

## Pure Waters and Fresh Materials

One of the things which make the cod liver from Iceland a particular rarity today

village of Sandgerði and neighbouring villages where the fishing industry has been accumulating experience and knowledge for centuries.

The canned cod liver comes in two varieties here in Iceland, either smoked or natural, depending on the markets' preference, and can be bought in most stores in Iceland. Also look out for exciting starters with cod liver in Reykjavík's seafood restaurants.

**MC09 fiskframleiðendur**

Frikirkjuvegi 3 • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 511 5999  
 gudmundur@mc09.is  
 www.mc09.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



# AKRANES

*A fun place for adults and children alike*

It's time to get out of Reykjavik and see what the rest of the country has to offer. Across the bay, Akranes beckons to you in the sunlight. If you're travelling light, the easiest thing is to catch a regular city bus that will take you there for a few euros.

If you're driving, it's just as easy. Head out of town, taking the ring road north. After passing under Mt. Esja, you come up to the tunnel. You have a choice: speed or sights. If you want to get there quickly, dive into the tunnel; but if you want to enjoy the sights, turn right and take the scenic route to Kjós.

Passing the farms, you can't help but enjoy the beauty of the countryside. Surrounded by summerhouses is Lake Meðalfellsvatn. If you enjoy fishing, you can buy a license, sit down and wait for the fish to bite. Or, you can continue down Hvalfjörður. At the bottom of the fjord stand the spectacular Glymur Falls, considered the most beautiful waterfall in Iceland. At a height of 198 m., it is also the highest.

Hvalfjörður was, in times past, used for whaling and you pass the old, disused whaling station on your way around the fjord and the huts left over from World War II, when convoys used to gather here. Arriving at the roundabout, you will meet those who chose the tunnel route.

The mountain on the right, Mt. Akrafjall, is a popular place to climb, as the view is quite spectacular in all directions. Be sure to sign your name in the Visitors' Book when you reach the top! (It is an easy climb taking the route from the water works to Háahnúkur. Marked maps are



available at information centres and petrol stations.) Watch for the gulls, as this is home to the one of the largest colonies of black-backed gulls in Iceland.

Bird life in the Akranes area, both along the seashore and inland, makes it a popular choice for birdwatchers. The casual observer doesn't even need binoculars, to enjoy them.

There is a lot to see and do, so it's a good

idea to plan a stay, if you have time, in one of the guesthouses or on the well-equipped campsite - a popular place in summer for visitors from many countries to camp under the midnight sun.

Sports and pastimes of almost every description are available in the town. There

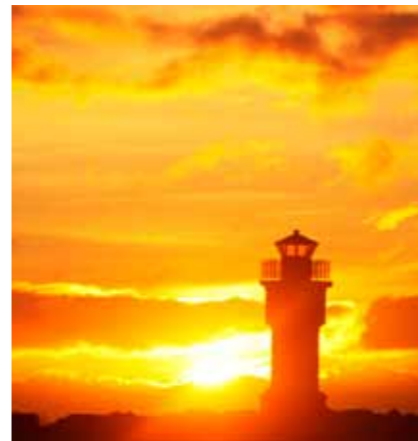


is the excellent Garðavöllur 18-hole golf course on the edge of the town. Renowned for its beautiful surroundings, it is popular with golfers with its roofed practice stalls, special practice greens - and a course that is a surprise even for experienced golfers with one of the longest fairways in the country, dotted with sand bunkers - beware!

Next to the course is the Garðalundur recreational area, where you will find



outdoor entertainment for the whole family - and a grill to cook a meal on after you have built up an appetite. While the children play in the playground, you could join a football or volleyball game. Be warned - football is the town's sport and several international players now playing



in different countries began their careers here!

Iceland doesn't suffer the sweltering heat, overcrowded beaches and polluted seas of the Mediterranean but Akranes has a beach where the children can build sandcastles or look for shells or colourful stones to take home. Here, the water is comfortably warm to swim in and it's clean. Langisandur (Long Beach) is a place

to relax and let the stresses of everyday life be soothed away by the gentle sounds of the surf.

Many people like to swim every day - though most use the swimming pool and take advantage of the hot pots, also. The pool is open to all and is a good place to



meet people and discuss everything under the sun - literally!

Akranes' Museum area is an unusual grouping of Folk Museum, Sports Museum and the Mineral Kingdom. The Folk Museum houses a collection of exhibits covering farming, housekeeping



and social conditions in and around Akranes. A seafaring section shows an 1874 fully-rigged rowing boat, models of other boats and ships, along with interesting items from the Cod Wars with the British. The largest exhibit won't fit in the museum: the cutter

Sigurfari, built in 1885 is a twin-masted ship on display outside, though there are hopes of raising the capital needed to put it under cover and protect it from the violent Icelandic weather. The only ship of its type in Iceland, you can go on board and get the feeling for what it was like to sail in. There is a wide range of exhibits that anyone interested in the past will find fascinating. The Sports Museum features memorabilia from Akranes FC and from different Olympic disciplines. The Mineral Kingdom contains the country's largest collection of rocks, minerals and fossils. Some are cut and polished to present a different perspective and many may be handled by visitors.

Over the past few years, efforts have been made to not only preserve the past but to present it in a living way. Old houses connected to the history of the town have been moved to the museum area and renovated in the style of their day. For instance, the minister's old house, Garðahúsið, was the first concrete-built house, not only in Akranes but in the whole Nordic region.

Each summer, everyone enjoys the celebrations that make the days so much fun - whether the fish feast, the doughnut-baking competition, the market or Irish days.

# TOSKA

*The Akranes School of Music*

When it was formed in 1955, the Music School had just 23 students. Since then, it has grown tremendously, drawing students from all over the area. Today, with 310 students, taught by 22 teachers, the school thrives because a strong emphasis is placed on meeting the individual student's needs and aspirations - whether young or mature, giving each one a deep insight into the world of music. Popular and classical music are taught with equal prominence.

## A State-of-the-Art School

2007 was a landmark in the school's history and development. The new state-of-the-art school opened right next to the shopping area. It provides class rooms and practice rooms with computers connected to the Internet so students can download and print music scores and do research. The Tónberg auditorium, seating 177 guests



Called 'Kling kling', it is based on Davíð Stefánsson's poem. That performance will be continued from September through the winter.

The group has travelled extensively, bringing their style and genre of music to a much wider audience than just Akranes.

There is a lot of talent in and around Akranes in the music field and teachers



has facilities for every kind of production, including conferences.

The school has a variety of ensembles who live up community life with their exciting and creative musical performances.

## The Celtic Influence

One example is the folk music group comprising 27 girls aged between 11 and 24. In their sparkling concerts, they sing and play violins and are backed up with a bass, piano and drums. They focused initially on Irish and Scottish Celtic music but have expanded their repertoire to include some Jewish music and

are now turning Icelandic songs into their own style of folk music.

They have produced a DVD and one CD and are preparing another for release this year.

They are also introducing their new concert program on 18th May.

from TOSKA visit schools in the area to give the same kind of personalised attention that has borne such positive fruit under the direction of its Principal, Lárus Sighvatsson and Assistant Principal, Skúli Ragnar Skúlason.



**TOSKA**  
 Dalbraut 1 • 300 Akranes  
 +354 433 1900  
 toska@toska.is  
 www.toska.is

# A BLEND OF TWO CULTURES

The Irish Festival on the first weekend of July in Akranes is a reminder of the heritage of this part of the country. Iceland, the only nation to be formed during the Viking period, is predominantly a mix of Vikings and Celts. A body of evidence shows that Celts from both Ireland and Scotland settled in the West part of Iceland. However, precise dating is not possible and this gives rise



Over time, the two ethnic groups integrated. A genetic test of the current population showed that 63% of the women are descended from Celtic forebears and 20% of the men.

The Celtic Christian Queen Auður sailed to Iceland in 895 and settled in Hvammur í Dölum, near Búðardalur. This area became a seat of literature and learning.

Nothing resembling Icelandic medieval literature can be found in Scandinavia but was well-known in Ireland. In Celtic Christianity, writing was valued as highly as prayer and monasteries were devoted to it. However, there is no evidence that the Vikings were writers. It was Icelanders who wrote the Scandinavian history. All the Sagas about the Nordic countries were written in Iceland: Heimskringla about the Norwegian kings, Inglingasaga about the Swedish and Skjöldungasaga about the Danish kings.

to considerable debate in academic circles.

Landnámabók (The Book of Settlements) tells us that a chieftain from Ireland, Ketill Bresason and his brother, Þormóðir settled in Akranes and that his son, Gufa Ketilsson, lived in Seltjarnarnes. When the first settler from Norway, Ingólfur Arnason, arrived in Reyjavik, he drove Gufa out - indicating that at least two generations of Celtic settlers were living in the region about the same time as the Viking settlement.

Another notable settler who lived and

died in Akranes was the Celtic Christian Saint Ásólfrur. Such was his spiritual power that it is said he filled all the lakes with fish.

Research has shown there to be very few pagan graves in the West - most are in the mid-South, mid-North and Flótsdals area and almost no early Christian graves in the East or North of the country.

As the settlement progressed, a steady stream of Vikings arrived, many with slaves and royal princesses, predominantly from Ireland.

Just as the two nationalities merged, so did their languages. Many Icelandic words are not of Scandinavian origin, whilst many place names can be explained in Gaelic, but have no Scandinavian root.

Today, everyone just enjoys the Celtic spirit - especially in the Irish Festival days.



**Akranes**  
 Stillholti 16-18 • 300 Akranes  
 +354 433 1000  
 akranes@akranes.is  
 www.akranes.is



# GEIRABAKARÍ

*The Bakery by the Bay*



Driving north from Reykjavik, crossing the bay to the beautiful coastal town of Borgarnes makes a perfect time to take a break. Just after the causeway, turn off the road and you will find a bakery with a wide array of freshly-baked breads, delicious soup, healthy sandwiches, pastries and cakes. With hot coffee and teas, you are set up for

a welcome snack break with a view over the bay to the mountains. Geir's bakarí is a modern and tasteful place to eat. With all the food prepared on the spot, it makes a refreshing change from mass-produced, pre-packaged meals. Sitting outside at one of the tables in the sunshine, you have a view of the whole of Borgarfjörður. Inside, there is plenty of room at the comfortable couches and chairs for groups of all sizes. The large bay windows offer the same beautiful view of the bay. The bakery is naturally a favourite with children of all ages and there are baby seats available for the youngest members of the family. Lunch time is a perfect time to arrive for the soup and bread, light pasta, prawn salad or one of the range of sandwiches and buns. There's never a bad time to stock up with cakes or pastries for your trip onwards.

**Geirabakarí**



Digranesgata 6 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 1920  
 geirabak@internet.is  
 none

# BRAUTIN CAR RENTAL

*Great Service and Great Prices*



Brautin Car Rental, based in Akranes, is one of the oldest car hire companies in Iceland. Brautin has been in operation since 1971. Founded by Sigurgeir Sveinsson and his wife Erla Björk Karlsdóttir, the company is now run by their 3 sons who pride themselves on great personal service and who also oversee all the maintenance of their fleet themselves. Getting you to your destination in comfort and style The rigours of Iceland's nature demand a lot from a car and that's why the folks at

Brautin Car Rental offer some of the best and most recent cars in its fleet. Zipping about Reykjavik? Try the economical VW Polo or the Ford Focus. For negotiating the mountain roads in security and comfort, a 4x4 such as the Suzuki Grand Vitara is a classic choice and one of the latest additions to Brautin's fleet.

**Door to door service**  
 Brautin Car Rental can have your car ready and waiting for you as you step off the plane at Keflavik International Airport\*, or you can have your car delivered to your door at any hotel, guest house or even camp ground in the greater Reykjavik area, free of charge.

*\* an extra fee for Keflavik applies and includes both delivery and drop off.*

**Brautin Car Rental**



Dalbraut 16 • 300 Akranes  
 +354 431 2157  
 brautin@braut.is  
 www.braut.is



# BORGARNES B&B

Borgarnes is becoming known as a town for artists and designers but, long before they started to arrive, the most beautiful house in Borgarnes was built in 1947. Designed by Halldór Jónsson,

for the children in the neighbourhood to enjoy themselves in a beautiful location. Each room also has a TV and free wireless Internet access. Guests can use the very large, beautifully laid-out kitchen, to cook for themselves if they wish - but there is a delicious breakfast available every day.



It has many very unusual features. The house is bright and airy, with paintings on the walls and other beautiful works throughout, making it a very special place to stay.

Its owner, Inger, has now opened it up for visitors to stay and enjoy the beauty of the house and the area it overlooks. The house is ideal for groups wanting some time together. Either a single floor or the whole house is available to rent. Its size and its calm style is just right for small retreats or conferences where a warm comfort is more important than an extravagant hotel's luxury.

After farming for over 30 years, Inger decided that she wanted to buy a house in Borgarnes. A friend told her of this house at 11 am and she had bought it by 3 o'clock the same afternoon! When you visit, you

There are 7 rooms including a 4-bed family room. The house is very child- and baby-friendly. The garden has a play area with swings and a trampoline but, right

Located at the tip of the peninsula, the lounge looks out over the rocks towards the sea. The view is stunning and the sun puts on a spectacular show every clear



next door is a famous play park that an older man crafted specially out of timber

evening as it dips towards the horizon. The patio below the lounge provides a lovely sheltered spot to enjoy the warmth, the garden and the view.

Bird-watchers can enjoy the wide variety of birdlife, both in the tall fir trees and amongst the rocks in the sea. Birds such as eider are frequently seen.



**Borgarnes B&B**



Skúlagata 21 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 434 1566  
 borgarnesbb@internet.is  
 www.borgarnesbb.is



## BRÚDUHEIMAR CENTRE FOR PUPPET ARTS

**B**rúðuheimar has made its mark on the cultural landscape of Iceland and is renowned for its ability to combine storytelling and puppetry in a way that



captivates and delights both children and adults alike. The centre, which was opened in 2010 by master puppeteer Bernd Ogrodnik and his wife Hildur Jónsdóttir, has proven to be a popular destination for both locals and tourists, and it received over 20,000 visitors in its first year.

The Brúðuheimar Centre is a multi-functional facility comprising a theatre

seating 75 people, a museum with interactive exhibits of all things puppetry, small conference facilities and a café that serves exceptionally well-received home-made dishes. The Ocean Café opens onto a large deck that sits just a stone's throw from the beach - an idyllic spot where you can enjoy a light meal from the menu. Many dishes served in the café are derived from Hildur's own recipes - fresh vegetable soups and salads, home-made pizza, appetising wraps and a variety of lovely cakes and deserts. "The ingredients used in our dishes are fresh, healthy and sourced locally as much as possible. Having been actively involved in bringing holistic food to Iceland for over 20 years, it was very natural for me to carry over my own approach to eating to our café menu. Many of the recipes used are my own creations and it has been exciting to be able to extend this to the public," says Hildur.

Brúðuheimar also boasts an 'adventure loft' above the café where kids can play and dress up, as well as a reading corner where the book-worms can retreat for a quiet read. All told, Brúðuheimar may just be on its way to becoming one of the most sought-after child-friendly havens in Iceland.

This summer's piece de resistance in Brúðuheimar's collection of puppet theatre productions is the well known (in Iceland)

folk tale Gillitrutt. The story involves a troll (Gillitrutt) and a farmer's wife (Freya) and could very well be a social commentary describing the social, political, economic and ethical landscape of the Icelandic nation as it stands today. "This is my declaration of love to Iceland," says Bernd, "and I believe that just as Freya learned from her mistakes,



the government and bankers can learn their lessons as well." There are many lessons to be learned from this little story, which despite its obvious relevancy, is nevertheless great entertainment for children of all ages.



**Brúðuheimar**  
 Skúlagata 17 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 530 5000  
 bruduheimar@bruduheimar.is  
 www.bruduheimar.is

## LIVING A DREAM

Hótel Brú

**H**ow many hotels focus on setting the highest standards of design and lavish decoration whilst overlooking the needs of the spirit of their guests?

How many dreams come to life? One man's dream has been to transform an older hotel into an experience to enrich the lives of people from all over the world. His goal of sharing a beautiful location and making

Situated close to the bridge crossing Borgarfjörður bay, across the water from the town of Borgarnes, Hótel Brú sits amidst the bushes where people have stopped for centuries for a break or a picnic to enjoy the view overlooking the bay on one side and sheltered by the mountain range on the other. Just a few hundred metres from the main road going round the country, this



it a place from which visitors can take home special memories is now coming to pass.

Hótel Brú - The Bridge Hotel provides the simple comforts of home in a cosy atmosphere, where you feel unrushed and at ease, a place where you can sit and chat as the sun turns the bay first golden, then fiery red.

hotel has a homey feel to it, whilst providing the facilities expected in a hotel. On all the walls are beautiful pictures highlighting rarely seen views of the countryside, adding to the atmosphere.

Brú is a bridge in many ways - a place where tourists can chat and share experiences over a drink, basking in the



setting sun, as the many bird varieties do the same in the bushes around them.

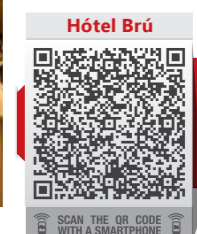
In the distance, the famous Snæfells volcano and glacier rises from the ocean, a reminder of the romance of Jules Verne's novel, "Journey to the Centre of the



Earth". Veigar Freyr Jökulsson, whose name means, 'son of the glacier' is the man who is seeing the vision he has held for so long coming to fruition, step-by-step. Through the winter, he has been painstakingly restoring the hotel, which has become a labour of love, where tourists can drop in for a meal in the restaurant or a few nights' stay in one of its rooms before continuing on their travels around the country.

The restaurant provides a genuine Icelandic cuisine with ingredients drawn from the region round about.

It's easy to find, easy to drop in - but you may not find it so easy to leave!



**Hótel Brú**  
 Hafnarskógur • 311 Borgarfjörður  
 +354 437 2345  
 hotelbru@hotelbru.is  
 www.hotelbru.is

# HRAUNSNEF

*The Place with the Country-style Gate*

Daddy, please! Can we? It's not so far! It's just past Bifröst on the left when we go north - that's not even an hour and a half away. It's got that cool, big tall gate, just like on that cowboy TV show. You can't miss it! It's such a special place, with all the animals - it's like a zoo. The dogs do such funny tricks. The little pigs like to play with them, too. I heard they may have a mare with its foal and a cow with its calf for the summer this year and maybe some rabbits, as well.

And Daddy, it's really healthy food, too. I know I don't like eating my vegetables at home, but that's because they're frozen and don't taste so great. They grow their vegetables right there, so they're as fresh as they can be! Almost everything comes from the land right there or from the surrounding

from Glitstaðir, goat meat from Háafell, and their own pork and eggs. She said there was a vegetarian menu that they tried. It has so many choices they all got something different and it was so good, Daddy.

You know they even have a special children's menu: burgers, chicken nuggets, fish fingers, sandwiches and a very popular rice pudding and ice cream from Erpsstaðir. She said it was super yummy.

We don't have to go to the restaurant, if you don't want to because they've got this Barn House where we can eat a delicious buffet. You know the students really like it and go there a lot, too. The lunch buffet has home-made, home-grown organic salad and two kinds of soups: one with meat & the other vegetarian. They bake their own rye bread. Plokkfiskur with rye bread and

have a nice soak in one of the hot pots. They're sheltered from the wind, so we won't get cold.

They have a stream and a pond there where they're going to put some fish but the water wasn't so good. So do you know what they did? They went way up into the mountains and found this delicious, crystal



clear, fresh water stream coming out and now they have the best water.

We could stay there for awhile, Daddy. You know, all the rooms are named after the different Norse gods and goddesses. There's one called, 'Freya' - the goddess of fertility and it's a bridal suite! One couple had a baby girl 9 months after their honeymoon there. Guess what they named her! All the rooms are done in different colours and have showers and toilets. They have three nice cottages on the mountainside, too, where families like ours can stay. My friend said the view was the best! It's high up, so you can see for miles up and down the valley. You hear the birds but you don't hear the traffic!

They're opening a Farmers' market with woollen products, goat soaps, bath salts, jams, candy, handicrafts like silver jewellery and embroidery - all sorts of crafts & products from the local farms, so we can get some nice gifts, too.

You can look at their website or call Brynja and Jóhann, Daddy.

**Hraunsnef**

Norðurárdal • 311 Borgarbyggð  
 +354 435 0111  
 hraunsnef@hraunsnef.is  
 www.hraunsnef.is



farms, so it's not stuffed with additives, like the meat we had in Europe.

My friend went there with her family and she said they had a fantastic choice on the menu for lunch. On the á la carte menu, there is lamb from Brekka, beef

pasta & chicken, different salads, with home-made sauces. They make everything themselves except the pasta.

They have a projector and screen so you could have one of your business meetings there, while we play with the animals or



# TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

A new Tourist Information Centre has opened in the most popular spot in Borgarnes where most travellers take a break or fill their tanks. Located in Hyrnatorg, the shopping centre next to the Hyrna restaurant and the N1 petrol station, this modern office has a wide range of information covering all the West of Iceland. Whether you're looking for accommodation, restaurants, activities, tours, nature, culture, museums - or any place of interest, the details are here. You can also get information on the other regions in Iceland, from this office. Look for the black information 'i' on the window. Open 5 days a week from 9 to 5 throughout the year and on weekends in summer.

You could drive all over this region and never know its fascinating history, the hidden secrets, the off-the-beaten-path places to visit - but the Information Centre reveals all this and more.

Now there is a new Managing Director of the West Iceland Marketing Bureau, Rósa Björk Halldórsdóttir. "We want to make West Iceland more visible, since we have a lot to show

people. We have a lot of interesting places. For example, this is one of the best bird-watching areas in Iceland. Snæfellsnes is the only area of Iceland that has a Green Globe certification of Environmental protection & policy.

"In the West of Iceland, made up of 10 municipalities and many small towns and villages there is history behind every stone, sites of the most important Sagas with many fascinating immersive exhibitions. Culture is so varied among the different communities - horse riding, dancing, music and literature, arts and crafts almost everywhere - a list that barely scratches the surface. In the Icelandic countryside, there is a high degree of active participation in all kinds of cultural activities. All kinds of sports and outdoor activities are popular throughout the area, with some of the best kayaking in both sea and rivers. Adventures abound on the glaciers, whether snowmobiling, hiking, superjeep tours, climbing or seafood buffets on ice. Boat trips offer fishing, amazing birdlife that you can get very close to, seals and whales, including blue whales. Nature itself offers a grand variety

from endless black rocky or soft white beaches, mountains, currently dormant volcanos, fertile farmlands, infertile lava fields, thousands of islands, waterfalls, rivers, canyons and geothermal heat. Sustainable and ecological lifestyles and experiments abound from the harvesting of eggs and eider down to self-sufficiency, using geothermal heat to grow food."



**Tourist Information**

Hymutorg • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 2214  
 info@westiceland.is  
 www.westiceland.is

# GAMLIBÆR HÚSAFELL

*A Stone's Throw from Glaciers and Waterfalls*

Host Steinunn Jóhannsdóttir says, "The guesthouse was originally a farmhouse built by a woman in 1908".

Tourist attractions in the area include two glaciers, waterfalls and a lava field about 1,100 years old. "We're a

church used for christenings, weddings and funerals. "Inside there's a stone-bar xylophone made by Páll Guðmundsson, a well-known artist in Iceland who lives next door."



"Many people, who wondered why she needed such a large house stopped wondering when a new road to Þingvellir (Thingvellir) national park (F-35) was opened in 1930, making it a favourite place to stop over."

stone's throw away from Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls as well as Eiríksjökull and Langjökull Glaciers," says Steinunn.

Next to Gamli bærin, there is a farm

**Gamli bærin**

Húsafell • 311 Borgarbyggð  
 +354 895 1342  
 sveitasetrid@simnet.is  
 www.husafell.is

# STEINDÓRSSTAÐIR



Like all the world's cities, Reykjavik is a busy place, filled with all the trappings of modern city life. To enjoy peace and beauty, you have to get out of the city and into the countryside.

Just an hour and a half away is the village of Reykholt. Every direction you look, there are beautiful rolling hills. Horses, sheep and cows graze peacefully. Birds sing in the trees but, otherwise, it is peaceful. You think, "I could settle down here!"

At Steindórsstaðir, a sheep and milk farm

set on the side of a hill, you can stay as long as you like. The house, originally built in 1938, has been beautifully restored and re-designed with everything you need for a comfortable break. Hot showers, underfloor heating, self-catering in a fully-equipped kitchen, cosy lounge and comfortable beds - they are all there.

After a day's hiking in the area, it is so nice to come back to a hot shower and a relaxing soak in the hot pot, sheltered from any wind, overlooking the beautiful countryside, a

drink in hand, enjoying the company of friends you've just made. Or you can sit on the patio, watching the sun going down at midnight, unwinding from the stress of daily life at home.

This is a family-run guesthouse where you can visit at any time of the year and enjoy each season's special characteristics in all their fullness. There are 7 rooms, single, double and a triple with space for 12 guests at



a time at very economical rates. Families find this a wonderful place for a holiday, letting the children enjoy that special experience of being around the animals, giving them a love and appreciation of nature. Jón Helgason, the poet, lived nearby, getting his inspiration from the hills, canyon and many waterfalls. Now, there are 25 hectares of trees growing in a reforestation project that makes a very enjoyable area to stroll in.

Give Guðfinna and Þórarinn a call or send them an email to reserve your room.



Steindórsstaðir



Reykholt • 320 Borgarfjörður  
 +354 435 1227  
 steinda@emax.is  
 www.steindorsstadir.is

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# HISTORY BROUGHT TO LIFE

Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre

Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), Iceland's best known Saga writer and scholar wrote such famous works as *Heimskringla*, which remains today one of the most important sources of Scandinavian history; *Snorra Edda*, a handbook on writing poetry and probably *Egil's Saga*, the story of the Viking poet Egill Skallagrímsson. Snorri's records of the Old Norse language and Nordic mythology are invaluable to modern scholars.

The quality of his writings made him the foremost historical writer of medieval times throughout Europe. His style, bringing his characters to life, makes his accounts fascinating reading even today. A wealthy and powerful chieftain in the age of unrest and civil war preceding Iceland's loss of independence, Snorri Sturluson was murdered by his enemies in his home in Reykholt in Borgarfjörður in 1241.

The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre, founded in his memory, is situated in his ancient homestead, considered one of Iceland's most noteworthy historical



sites. Snorrastofa manages various research projects, a library and museum, providing reception and information for tourists and scholars. A small gift shop offers books, postcards, and locally handmade souvenirs.

The museum has several exhibitions:



'Snorri Sturluson and his time' addressing issues as upbringing, education, writing, religion, music, properties and manors, the use of hot spring water, armament, warfare, sea voyages etc.; 'Snorri Sturluson and the history of Reykholt' and an exhibition on the archaeological excavation in Reykholt. Today remains of his farm with its tunnel to the bathroom and hot pot can be seen. Snorri piped water to the pool from the nearby Skrifla hot spring so, according to tradition, he could dictate his writings while relaxing in the pool.

A statue of Snorri by Gustav Vigeland

stands in front of the building used as a country school from 1931 to 1995. Now the beautiful building, designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, is used for meetings and conferences with apartments and study facilities for scholars.

There are two churches in Reykholt: the old church, consecrated in 1887, now beautifully restored and the new church, built between 1988-1996, connected to Snorrastofa. The latter has state-of-the-art facilities for musical presentations. It is famous for the quality of its year-round concerts.

Visitors not only come to Reykholt for its history but also to enjoy the rich cultural life and peaceful stay in this lovely country village. At Fosshótel Reykholt there is an excellent restaurant. Accommodation is available in the three star hotel, Steindórsstaðir farm across the river and Nes farm, which has a 9-hole golf course.

The main attractions of the area are the Hraunfossar waterfalls; Húsafell (a woodland area between lava fields and glaciers and popular holiday resort with a nice swimming pool); Deildartunga spring, (the largest hot spring in Iceland); and the snowmobile tours available on the Langjökull glacier.

Snorrastofa



Reykholt • 320 Borgarfjörði  
 +354 433 8000  
 snorrastofa@snorrastofa.is  
 www.snorrastofa.is

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# GOLFING IN THE DALES



After farming for over 44 years, first with his father and later with his son, Bjarni, with his wife, Sigrún, found that the milk farm was getting too much for them to handle as they grew older. They were faced with a choice: retire and quit or...pioneer something new. Having been in the forefront of new developments in the area all their lives, they decided to take a big step into the unknown. They sold their livelihood and poured their lives into a bold new idea.

They built a golf course on their farm in the beautiful Reykholtsdalur. Then they built a club house and restaurant for the golfers to relax in, with massage facilities and a jacuzzi. The restaurant also has excellent facilities for small conferences and meetings (up to 60 people). Breakfast is also offered in the restaurant, if reserved in advance.

Golf is a popular sport and golfers are always looking for new courses to play and challenge their skills. Iceland is becoming increasingly known as an interesting location to play. The par 70 course is enjoyable for anyone interested

in the sport, regardless of their skill level. They converted two of the houses on the farm into a guesthouse for both made-up bed and sleeping bag accommodation, with bathing and cooking facilities in each house. It is open all year for travellers to enjoy each season's special features.

The area provides a lovely place to relax in. This is a very central location



Now, less than 2 hours from Reykjavik, is a 9-hole golf course, complete with putting green and driving range for all the world to enjoy, the result of Bjarni and Sigrún's tenacity and vision. Their positive energy and optimism is an inspiration to everyone who visits. You can find them by following the road no. 518 to Reykholt.



### Nes in Reykholt



Reykholt • 311 Borgarnesi  
 +354 435 1472  
 bgnes@vesturland.is  
 www.farmholidays.is

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from which to enjoy the beautiful nature, with its waterfalls and hills and the rich historical sites of the entire Borgarfjörður area. Practically next door is Snorrastofa, the medieval culture centre in Reykholt, with its library and fascinating museum.

# FJÖRUHÚSIÐ

Restaurant in Hellnar

Home-made cooking, fresh bread and pastries in beautiful coastal surroundings.

“Our seafood soup is the most popular item on the menu,” says the proud owner, Sigríður Einarasdóttir. She’s been running the restaurant since 1997 in a building which used to be a fishermen’s storage built in 1956. It is nestled in a small cove surrounded on three sides by volcanic rock intersected with caves eroded through the ages by the relentless pounding of the sea waves.

Fjörúhúsið on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula is a real find for travellers. Sigríður serves seafood soup made from freshly caught fish and shrimp accompanied by freshly baked bread and traditional Icelandic butter. Sigríður makes her own pastry, bakes cakes of various sorts and serves waffles with whipped cream and jam.

A scenic 2.5 km coastal hiking trail

along a lava field starts at Fjörúhúsið and leads to Arnarstapi, another popular place to visit on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. This hike is always rewarding but especially on a quiet summer evening when the sun is low on the horizon and one can hear the

is 1,800 years old and looks like a braded river — except it is solid volcanic rock with various shades of green moss growing on it.”

Fjörúhúsið is open every day May through September from 10.00 AM to 10 PM.



birds going about their business.

“The environment surrounding Hellnar is its greatest charm,” says Sigríður. “The ocean is full of fish which benefits the local sea birds. The lava field on the western side of the ice-capped volcano Snæfellsjökull

### Fjörúhúsið café



Hellnar • Snæfellsnes  
 +354 435 6844  
 fjoruhusid@isl.is  
 www.fjoruhusid.is

# UNIQUE ADVENTURE TOUR

A Trip Into the Fantasy World of Breiðarfjörður Bay

You watch the net being hoisted aboard, laden with seafood. Open a scallop or urchin at the table and pop it into your mouth, wash it down with white wine and you have a unique, delicious experience! Undoubtedly the freshest sushi in the world! How often can you taste food that fresh at home?

The West coast town of Stykkishólmur is the base for Seatours, whose boats sail the mysterious Breiðarfjörður bay with its innumerable islands. Here, you can see puffins, eider ducks, shags, kittiwakes and sometimes, the magnificent white-tailed eagle. The catamaran tour boat takes you almost within touching distance of the bird colonies on the towering cliffs. This is a big, comfortable boat, with an on-board restaurant, mind you. It’s a trip into a fantastic world of incredible basalt rock formations like ‘God’s Bookshelf’ and the island of Eiriksey, where Eric the Red fled after being outlawed before sailing off to Greenland.

This tour earns its name and is highly

recommended for those wanting something different.

Another tour you can try is Sea Angling in the rich fishing grounds of the bay. As the seagulls look on, you bring up your dinner from the ocean’s depths. You can have it cooked for you in one of Stykkishólmur’s



restaurants after the tour. Cod, halibut, redfish and coalfish are the most common catch.

You can take your car across the bay, visiting the island of Flatey, where it seems time has stood still in the 19th century.

These are thrilling experiences for all age groups and families, especially, will find it one of the best day’s out with so much to see, do and experience. You’ll want to remember this day, so a visit to the largest souvenir shop in W. Iceland in Stykkishólmur will give you a wide range of choice.



### Seatours



Smjöjustigur 3 • 340 Stykkishólmur  
 +354 433 2254  
 seatours@seatours.is  
 www.seatours.is

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# BLACK & WHITE OR COLOUR?

*Which experience will you take home?*

What's the difference between a black & white picture and a colour one? They display the same image but there's a world of richness in the colour version that is missing in the black & white. That's the difference between driving yourself around to see Iceland and taking a guided tour.

I have visited Snæfellsnes for the last 10 years. I know the scenery - and love it! However, I got more out of one day tour than in all those 10 years of trips put together. I saw places I had never been to - places off the beaten track. I learnt the background behind places I had merely

driven past with barely a passing glance. A plain drive was transformed with a richness of history, nature, geology and understanding.

Here is a trip to one of the most famous parts of Iceland - brought to a wider public through Jules Verne's 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth'. Despite its fame, however, there are so many secrets to be revealed on this 500 km. round trip that make this tour of such greater value than just looking at sights on your own.

This is no stale see-the-sights coach tour. It is a plunge into a vibrant, living

realm that brings you into the world of Iceland and makes you a part of it. The guide brings the tour to life with anecdotes from the Sagas, history that helps you understand the kind of people the Vikings of today call their ancestors.

You go down to the seashore to see the geese swimming and the seals sunning themselves whilst so many varieties of birds swoop and plunge around you. This is up-close and personal.

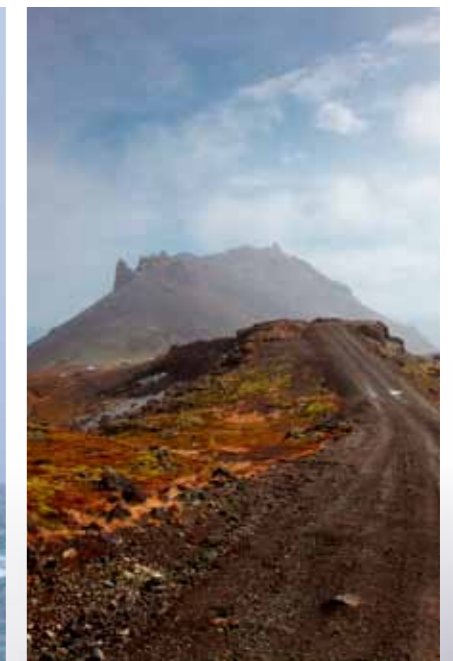
If I pick up a 20 kg. stone and carry it, I think I'm pretty strong - but I'd be classed as 'useless', if that was all I could carry! I'd



never heard of the 'useless' stone, the 'weak' stone, the 'half-strength' or 'full-strength' stones used to test a man's fitness to be a fisherman.

Seeing the rusting bits of twisted iron from the ship-wrecked trawler washed up on the black beach and seeing the pounding surf gave me more of a clear idea of the tough lives these men lived and the risks they took fishing these seas. I never knew how many men lost their lives fishing in open row boats, trying to make a living and provide for their families in past centuries. Here is living history!

That sculpture of the giant, brilliant in its



simplicity but powerful in its presentation! How had I never seen that before, nor heard about the pool he bathed in or where he lives?

Then there are nature's own sculptures - dramatic rocks down to delicate moss, clinging precariously to the lava.

I took a tour today and took away a totally different experience from my own visits to the area. I came home much richer for it.

Reykjavik Excursions offers trips to many different parts of the country; each one as unique as the locations they visit, brought fully to life by professional guides.



**Reykjavik Excursions**



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

# LANGAHOLT

Guest House & Restaurant

Langaholt Guest House looks out over Faxaflói bay on the southern side of the Snæfellsness Peninsula. In summer, Arctic Terns preside over the landscape. To the west, Snæfellsjökull perches on the horizon, providing guests with quintessential post-

family. And while certainly coming close to hotel status with its spacious accommodation and á la carte restaurant, Keli prefers nevertheless to retain the true character of a country guesthouse with a warm and inviting atmosphere, where guests can feel at home.



card views of this mysterious glacier-topped mountain.

Owner/manager Þorkell, or Keli as he likes to be called, says that the guest house has been in his family since 1978. Today, most operations of Langaholt Guest house, camping site and 9-hole golf course are all overseen by members of Keli's extended



The restaurant employs a couple of top notch chefs who specialise in a variety of fish & seafood dishes. They use the freshest possible trout and salmon from nearby rivers, while the cod, catfish, monk fish, halibut or plaice come straight from

the fishermen on Breiðafjörð and Faxaflói Bays. "I never know exactly what is going to be on the day's menu - it really just depends on what the fishermen bring in that day," Keli explains. Fish stock, patés and several types of bread and cakes are all made here.



The restaurant is open daily from 8 am to 9 pm and travellers are welcome to stop in for a hearty breakfast or enjoy a delicious bowl of fresh seafood soup served with home-made bread for lunch. Relax with glass of wine or a cold Icelandic beer while perusing the á la carte menu in the evening, which offers starters, main courses and deserts.

Langaholt Guest House is centrally located on the south coast of Snæfellsness Peninsula, 89 km from Borganes and 164 km from Reykjavik. Well situated for exploring the wonders of the area, activities such as horse riding, whale watching, bird life, hiking tours and fishing are just some of the possibilities.

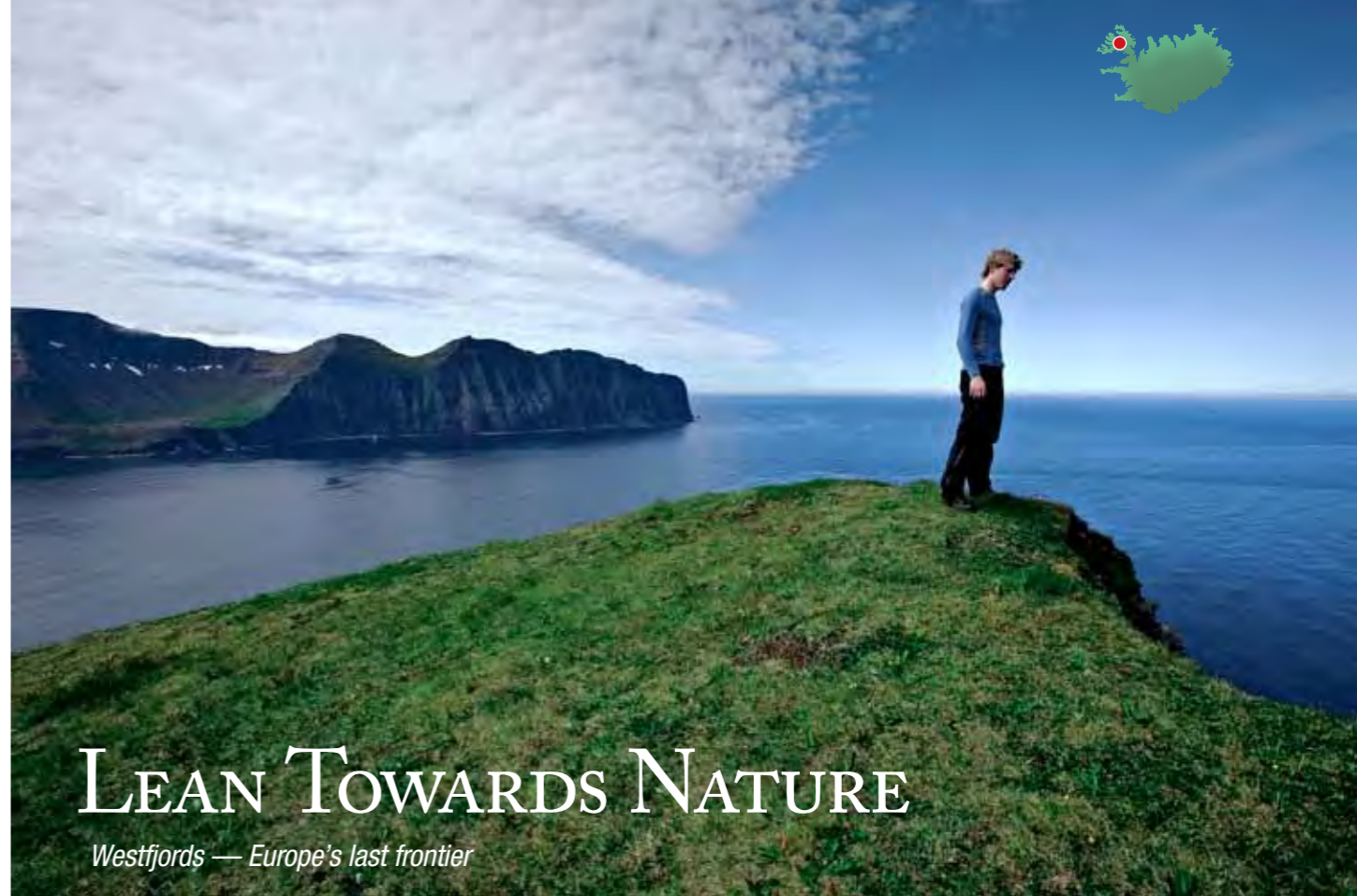
Langaholt



Ytri-Garðar • 356 Snæfellsbær

Langaholt@langaholt.is  
www.langaholt.is

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## LEAN TOWARDS NATURE

Westfjords — Europe's last frontier

Wilderness, peace, unique experiences and great hospitality is what you'll experience in the Westfjords – one of Europe's least populated and most remote regions. About 7,400 people live in the Westfjords, which makes up roughly nine percent of the land area of Iceland. Statistically speaking, it is the least inhabited part of Europe. Less than one person occupies each square kilometre opposed to, for example, 400 people in the Netherlands.

Some say the Westfjords is the 'most famous unknown place in Iceland' which hits the nail on the head. Famous, because everyone knows it exists, but unknown because it used to be hard to get to. As a result, the area has been largely ignored by tour operators and travel agencies. Instead, it has been enjoyed by individual travellers who seek the highest level of authentic travel experience in incredible natural surroundings.

Uninhabited fjords, steep sea-cliffs, Dynjandi waterfall, natural geothermal pools, teeming birdlife and the arctic fox cast a spell on every visitor. So much so

that it inspired the publisher of the *Lonely Planet* guide to honour it as one of top 10 regions worldwide to visit in 2011. Last year the region won the European Destination of Excellence award (EDEN). The EDEN award's destination criteria are commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability.

Farmers have abandoned some fjords which show little or no sign of ever having been inhabited. Fishing towns and villages which, on a map, look as if they are near each other are often separated by an imposing natural barrier such as a high mountain. Steep sea-cliffs are home to some of the world's largest seabird colonies in the world.

Beaches are black, red or white and are sometimes inhabited by seals. Lowland is scarce but instead there's a narrow strip of land alongside the foothills of the mountains. As a result, traditional farming is difficult.

Fishing is the predominant industry in the small communities. Fishermen go about their business every day as they've done for centuries. Their hard and sometimes

dangerous occupation is what makes the towns and villages tick. Practically everything revolves around the local fishing fleet and processing plant.

The village inhabitants endure long harsh winters but are then rewarded with exceptionally beautiful summers and plentiful vegetation. Literature is rich in folklore with stories of witches, sorcerers, hidden people, elves, light fairies, ghosts and menacing trolls.

The Westfjords offer local and foreign visitors a truly unique experience. When Icelanders from other parts of the country visit the Westfjords for the first time they're in for just as big a surprise as visitors from abroad.

In winter, the Westfjords is an ideal place to scout for the northern lights and in summer, to enjoy the midnight sun.

Marketing Office



Aðalstræti 7 • 400 Ísafjörður

+354 450 4040

gustaf@westfjords.is  
www.westfjords.is

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# 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.

This bright and cheerful all-day restaurant, looking out over the fjord, also serves light lunches and traditional 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



## 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 from which to explore the peninsula. The comfortable and well-appointed rooms have exceptional views of the nearby mountains and harbour. A hearty buffet breakfast greets you in the morning in the ground floor restaurant.

in the town centre, just a few minutes walk from Hotel Ísafjörður. Clean, bright and comfortable rooms await you in this cosy, 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.

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 Reykjavik. Flying time is 35 minutes.



**Hótel Ísafjörður**  
 Silfurtorgi 2 • 400 Ísafirði  
 +354 456 4111  
 info@hotelisafjordur.is  
 www.hotelisafjordur.is



# WEST TOURS

The remote Westfjord peninsula at your Doorstep

One would think that the remotest part in one of the remotest countries would be near impossible to access and require months of planning, but the fact of the matter is that you can simply hop on a plane in Reykjavik in the morning and start exploring the magnificent Westfjords of Iceland 40 minutes later.

afternoon walk in the peninsula, horseback riding and kayaking tours, a trip to the puffin-inhabited Vigur Island and hikes to some of the most untouched places in Iceland. All you need to do is take a plane in Reykjavik and the secrets of the Westfjords are yours to discover.

The Westfjord peninsula is renowned

and culture of the area are no less interesting than its landscapes and West Tours offer ample opportunities to experience them simultaneously. One of their tours gives you the chance to be an Icelander for a day – where you'll see how the local people live and work, what they eat and drink and how people cope with living so close to the Arctic Circle, where you only see the sun nine months out of the year. You'll also have the chance to visit the 'ghost-town' of Hesteyri, which



Local tour company, West Tours, arranges a wide array of tours in this remote region, suitable for all types of travellers – be it families, groups or thrill seekers. These include a tranquil

for both its remarkable beauty and tranquillity, thus it comes as no surprise that the guidebook publisher, *Lonely Planet*, ranked the Westfjords as one of the top 10 places to visit in 2011. The history

was abandoned in the 1950's due to its inaccessible location. The town has been maintained so visitors can see how the life was in such extreme conditions.

The flight to the Westfjords only takes around 40 minutes and flights depart 2-3 times a day all year round. They land at 3 different locations: Gjögur, Ísafjörður and Bíldudalur, each of which has its choice of activities and tours. West Tours arrange the whole package – including the airport collection and experienced local guides who will guide you through the narrow fjords and steep cliffs of the Westfjord peninsula.



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



# VESTURBYGGÐ

Westfjords' southernmost municipality

The Westfjords of Iceland are often passed over by those who dare not venture too far off Iceland's main ring road. But it's time for a fresh look at this remote part of Iceland which was recently named one of the 10 top regions of 2011 by *The Lonely Planet*, describing it as "an outdoor adventurer's dream destination".

## Látrabjarg

Vesturbyggð's most famous natural phenomenon, Látrabjarg, is the far west



of Iceland and the most westerly point in Iceland and Europe.

Millions of puffins arrive here in May every year to nest on the 14 km-long towering cliff, departing again around the 1st of July. Optimum viewing times are in the late afternoon and early evening when the birds come home to roost. Látrabjarg is also the summer home of one of the world's biggest Black Guillemot colonies.

Accommodation and a coffee shop are available at Breiðavík farm, located just 12 kms before Látrabjarg.

## Ólaf Egillsson Folk and Aeronautical Museum

Another point of interest on your way to Látrabjarg, 40 km from Patreksfjörður, is the Ólaf Egillsson Folk and Aeronautical Museum at Hnjótur. For a first-hand look at life in Iceland over the last hundred years, the museum is a convenient stop for a mid-afternoon coffee break. Coffee, cakes, sandwiches and ice cream are offered in the cozy café located inside the museum.



## The Red Sands of Rauðisandur

While much of the rest of Iceland is renowned for its amazing black sand beaches, the red sands of Rauðisandur, as their name suggests, are a stripe of a different colour. Wide expanses of fine shell-sand beaches give rise to a pinkish-reddish hue that glistens magically when the sun shines and is the perfect place for an exhilarating trot on a beautiful Icelandic horse. The tiny coffee shop near the beach affords idyllic views, especially on a sunny day.

## Samuel Jónsson Museum

This is an intriguing story of a retired farmer who realised his boy-hood artistic ambitions through painting and sculpture. Samuel Jónsson spent virtually his whole retirement from the age of 65 until his death in 1969, tirelessly creating various naive sculptures cast from poured concrete, including a (grotesque) replica of the lions of the fountains at the Alhambra Palace, in Granada, Spain and other pieces. Located 15 km from the village of Bildudalur, it is open year-round.

## The Pirate's House Café

The Pirate's House Café in Patreksfjörður is an example of the entrepreneurial spirit of the region. Dedicated to the concept of sustainable tourism, the café offers homemade bread, cakes, salads and light lunches, all made from locally grown fresh produce. If you have kids in tow, The Pirates' House is for you - a treasure hunt, dress-up and a musical programme aimed at younger children, is a welcome addition to the growing list of child-friendly options in the West Fjords this summer.

Finally, an interesting historical exhibit at the French Seamen's Exhibition documents the lives of the many thousands of French sailors who came to fish in the waters around the West Fjords from the 1820's onwards. It is just one more hidden cultural gem to be found in Patreksfjörður.

### Vesturbyggð



Ábálstræti 63 • 450 Patreksfirður  
 +354 450 2300  
 vesturbyggd@vesturbyggd.is  
 www.vesturbyggd.is

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# WHO'S WATCHING WHOM?

Seal Watching from the Sea

A treat for children and adults alike, this summer it will be possible to take an unforgettable seal watching tour with Seal Watching ehf. From the decks of their most recent acquisition, the 'Brimill', you will get a chance to observe seals at one of the very best seal watching locations in Iceland - Miðfjörður fjord along the Vatnsnes Penninsula.



Seals are often one of the star attractions of aqua-parks and zoos around the world with their graceful swimming and cute antics. It's one thing however to see them in captivity and quite another to see them in their natural habitat. Playful and curious by nature, the seals often swim quite close to the boat for a better look at you. Then it is a question of who is watching whom!

Seal watching tours are offered twice daily from June through August at 10:00 and 13:00. Sightings ranging anywhere from 12 to 95 seals are possible and, as the boat approaches, the captain will turn off the engines, getting you within about 45 metres of the seals, much closer than is possible on land. Puffins, as well



as other migratory birds, inhabit the area every summer and are also great to watch. Other tours on offer are a 3-hour sea angling tour and a 2-hour 'midnight cruise' which starts at 23:00 (only from 10th June to 20th July).

## A few surprising facts...

With puffins and whales grabbing many headlines in recent years, it may come as rather a surprise to find that Icelandic coasts are home to about 12,000 Common seals and 4,000 Grey seals—the two native seal

species that are thought to rarely leave the Icelandic shelf. The common seal, being the more outgoing and curious of the two species, congregates in small groups on skerries and rocky beaches and is more easily spotted than the shyer Grey seal. Solitary vagrants such as Harp seals, Ringed seals and Hooded seals are sometimes seen during the winter, while Bearded seals and Walrus are very rare.

(Information courtesy of the Icelandic Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture)



Sealwatching ehf is located in the small village of Hvammstangi, on Miðfjörður fjord, on the west side of Vatnsnes Penninsula. The village is easily accessible, just 7 km off the main ring road, about half way between Reykjavik and Akureyri.

### Sealwatching



Höfðabraut 13 • 530 Hvammstangi  
 +354 897 9000  
 selasigling@simnet.is  
 www.sealwatching.is

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# THE ICELANDIC SEAL CENTRE

*Hvammastangi*

The Icelandic Seal Centre & Museum of Hvammastangi, is located on the picturesque Miðfjörður fjord and provides a



perfect mid-journey stop between Reykjavik and Akureyri. The centre, which opened its doors to the public in 2005, is devoted

to ongoing research, education and the promotion of sustainable tourism in the vicinity of Húnaflói Bay.

Housed in a historical building in the village of Hvammastangi, the Seal Centre multitasks as a museum, research centre and tourist information desk for the area, conveniently located all under one roof. Via its various exhibits, cultural displays, documentaries and even seal folklore, the Seal Centre offers a non-partisan view of seals in Iceland, their role in Icelandic history and present day sustainability issues surrounding this sometimes controversial creature. Seal watching remains, nevertheless, a favourite activity with Icelanders and tourists alike and has been gaining in popularity in recent years.

All information related to the viewing of seals in their natural habitat, whether at sea or on land, is available at the Centre. Offering guided tours by boat or on land, the

Centre provides visitors with all the necessary information about how to best see these intriguing creatures without harming their natural habitats, thus insuring the specie's continued survival in and around Icelandic coasts.

### You're Invited!

The Great Seal Count of 2011, will be hosted by the Seal centre and will take place once again this year over the weekend of 16th & 17th July. Volunteers are welcome!

### Opening hours

June through August- 09:00 - 17:00  
 1st - 31st September - weekdays 10:00 - 14:00  
 Also open by request outside of the above hours.  
 Admission: 900 kr ages 12 and up  
 Under 12's free of charge

Iceland Seal Centre



Brekkugata 2 • 530 Hvammstanga  
**+354 897 9900**  
 info@selasetur.is  
 www.selasetur.is

# VÍÐIGERÐI RESTAURANT AND GUESTHOUSE

*Horse burger, milk-curd and traditional lamb stew*



With a welcoming smile, guesthouse owner and restaurateur Guðmundur Steinsson says, "Tourists brighten our day!" He used to be a car salesman in Reykjavik before Iceland's economic setback in October 2008. "I quit

my job in Reykjavik and moved up here with my spouse some months before all the trouble started. We were determined to try our luck in what I call 'the best business in the world'" referring to his guests' positive attitude to life.

Víðigerði's old-fashioned restaurant offers perhaps the most unique breakfast in the country. "We serve traditional Icelandic breakfast, common in Iceland until late 20th century. It consists of porridge, boiled egg, liver sausage, cod liver oil for good health, lamb paté spread on bread, and finally – Skyr with fresh cream," Steinsson explains. "Skyr is the Icelandic name for milk-curd which is actually a popular low fat cheese product that looks and tastes much like yoghurt."

Traditional food is served for lunch and dinner. It is prepared from locally-farmed lamb, horse and beef. Try lamb chops with bread crumbs or traditional clear broth lamb stew with vegetables. If you're into eating horse meat, this is the right place for

you! "Our menu includes horse steak, horse goulash and horse burger," says Steinsson who admits that horse meat may be too exotic for some.

Víðigerði guesthouse is one of the most conveniently located and affordable accommodations in Iceland. It has 8 double rooms and sleeping bag accommodation. Rooms share private facilities and there's a living room and a kitchen available to guests.



Víðigerði restaurant



Víðigerði next to the Ring road  
**+354 451 2592**  
 vidigerdi@vidigerdi.is  
 www.vidigerdi.is

# RIDING THE NORTH

*Polar Hestar's Summer Group Tours*

Polar Hestar Tours of North Iceland is one of Iceland's top destinations for the ethereal experience that is horse riding in Iceland. The serenity of countryside in the vicinity of Eyjafjörður fjord near Grenivik, is the backdrop to an array of exciting excursions for intermediate to advanced riders of all ages, taking place this summer at Polar Hestar Tours.



### First a little introduction to set the scene...

After crossing the sea-level road from Akureyri that bridges the east and west flanks of Eyjafjörður fjord, the road winds its way to the top where you are met with an astonishing view—snow-capped mountains in the distance, the little

picturesque town of Akureyri far below and the fjord itself, the longest in Iceland, silently stretching out to the Arctic Sea. Tranquil farms with fresh coats of red paint and flocks of white sheep dot the hillsides, the lush greens of the cultivated land are complimented by the deep blues of sky and sea. This then, is the road to Grýtubakki farm, home of Polar Hestar Tours.

### Gods and Sagas Tour

Iceland comes alive on this 5-day, 4-night tour that takes you on an unforgettable journey. Your horse is your constant companion through the verdant valleys of the North, as you wind your way over ancient sheep paths to visit the diverse landscape around the historic



Goðafoss, Ullafoss and Barnafoss waterfalls and listen to stories of Viking gods and warriors. This tour is for intermediate riders.

### Ride with the Elves Tour

An 8-day, 7-night tour for intermediate riders. Ride to Grenivik, stop at the Laufás Turf farm and museum. Beautiful views over the fjord and the island of Hrisey. Extinct volcanoes, silent glaciers and hidden waterfalls surround you and, at the highest point, a tremendous view out to the North Atlantic awaits your gaze.



### Fascinating North Iceland

This is a challenging tour of 8 days and 7 nights for very experienced riders. You will ride from Fremstafell farmhouse to the impressive Goðafoss waterfall, into the Bárðardalur valley and up to the famous Aldeyrfoss waterfall, known for its intriguing basaltic columns and onwards to explore the volcanic region of Lake Mývatn.

Polar Hestar Tours which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2010, is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers everywhere, many of whom return year after year.

Pólar hestar



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



# CONSIDER DALVÍK

Although the population of Dalvík is just under 2000, it is an active community. The new Berg Cultural House, for example, is one of the happening places in Dalvík, where one can enjoy various concerts, performances and exhibitions throughout the year. The cultural house also serves as the information centre for the community, where you can find all the information

paint ball and laser tag or explore the local folk museum. More information on these activities can be found at the cultural centre.



for a very special fish soup tasting event which is free of charge.

## Tröllaskagi Mountains

The area around Dalvík is known for its phenomenal off-piste skiing and there is also a skiing area with ski lifts just above the town. Hiking is another activity that is gaining popularity in the local community. Ferðatröll Hiking Club offers a variety of organised hikes during their Hiking Week (24 June -3 July) with hikes into the surrounding Tröllaskagi mountains. Hikes range from easy to strenuous and you are welcome to join in.



## Hrisey, a bird watchers paradise (pop. 200)

Just off the coast of Dalvík lies the 2nd largest island in Iceland. A ferry from Dalvík will get you there in 15 minutes and views of the surrounding mountains and fjord are incredible.



## Access to Grimsey (pop. 100)

Dalvík is also the place where you can take a ferry to the island of Grimsey, which is a must if getting a certificate proving that you have crossed the Arctic Circle is on your list of things to do while in Iceland....and really, why not?

## Dalvík's annual all-you-can-eat fish festival: Fiskidagurinn Mikli

Dalvík is well known for its annual summer festival The Great Fish Day that will take place this year on August 6th. This popular event serves all sorts of traditional fish dishes free of charge. Various forms of entertainment enliven the festivities with local bands, musicians, a kids theatre, a puppet show, face painting & balloons, free boat rides on the fjord and even exhibitions of sea creatures. As the sun sets, fireworks light up the August sky, bringing The Great Fish Day to a close.

## House-to-house soup tasting

If you happen to arrive in Dalvík on the Friday before The Great Fish Day, you are in for a treat. From about 8pm onwards, residents of the village open their homes



you need about area activities and events. Needing to go online? There is a computer available in the library (for a small fee) and a hot-spot for Internet access in the Cultural Centre's café.

Activities abound in and around Dalvík. You can go whale watching, bird watching, horse riding, swimming, play

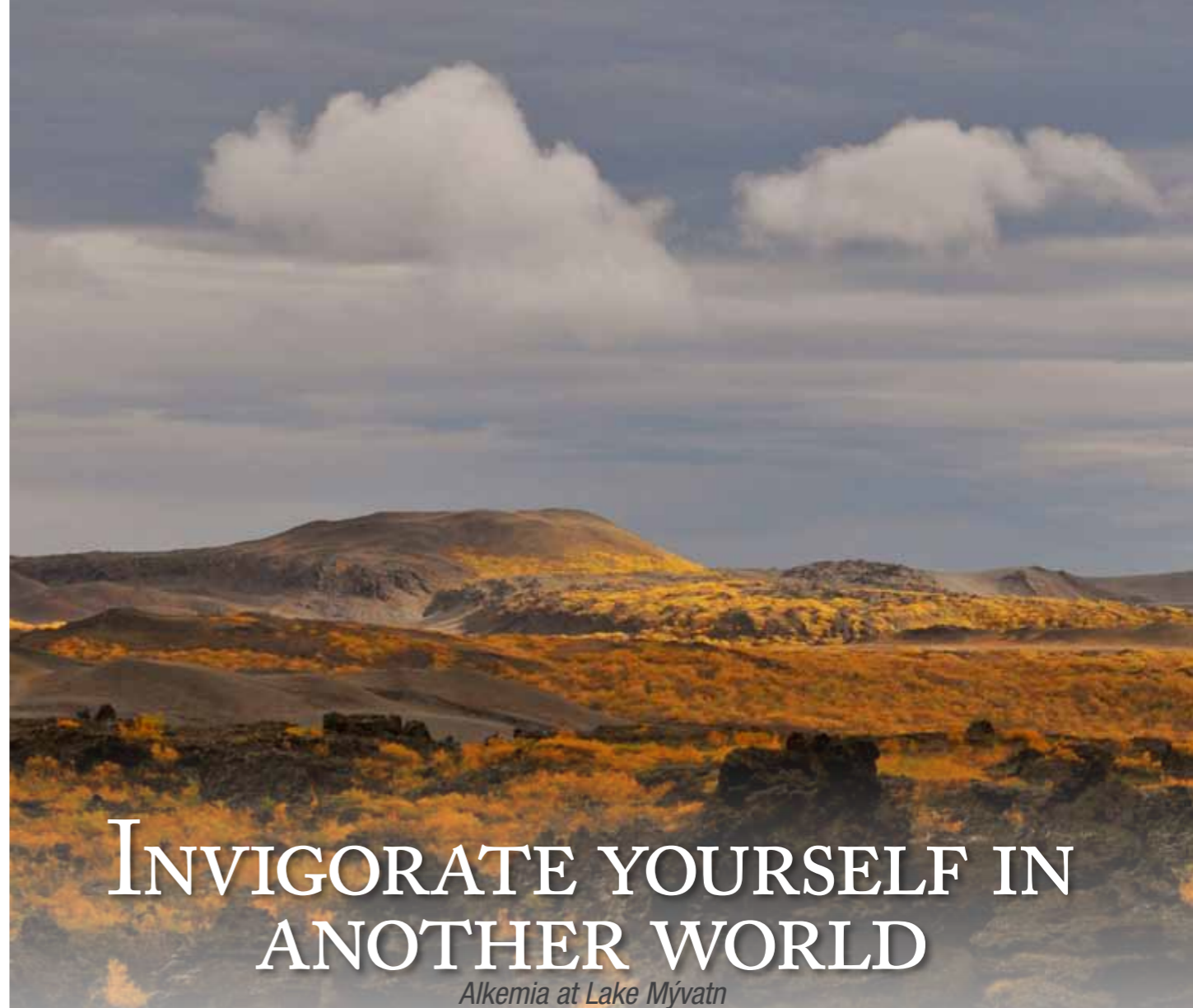


Dalvík



Goðabraut • 620 Dalvík  
 +354 460 4000  
 berg@dalvik.is  
 www.dalvik.is

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# INVIGORATE YOURSELF IN ANOTHER WORLD

*Alkemia at Lake Mývatn*

Alkemia is the first travel agency, to specialise in wellbeing holidays in the Mývatn area and in organising workshops (Qi gong, yoga, meditations, massage...) in the heart of the elements in Iceland.

*Alkemia's trips are an art of living - a deep experience of encountering nature.*

## Mývatn:

Lake Mývatn is located in the northern part of the country at latitude of 65.6°N, exactly over the active mid-Atlantic Ridge that emerges in Iceland. The rift is gradually widening at a rate of slightly less than an inch per year, continually pushing the European and American continental plates

further and further apart. Hence the great volcanic activity in the region, which is in constant formation. This beautiful lake is a sanctuary for waterfowl (ducks, swans and geese), of which seventeen American, Eurasian and Arctic species all come here to breed: a paradise for the bird-watcher. For the contemplative spirit, the site offers exceptional variety, one of the most beautiful but strangest places on the planet. The imagination is continually drawn to the bizarre shapes of the landscape and the trolls, elves and fairies who, no doubt, live there. A stay at Lake Mývatn is an immersion in a very powerful primeval natural environment, where man has developed and maintained traditions such as baking bread on the hot ground, fishing below the

ice, etc. The Mývatn region offers incredible diversity within a limited area, so there is no need for long trips by car.

You can stay with Alkemia for periods in any season. Depending on the time of year and the prevalent conditions, you can trek with snowshoes or cross-country skis or on foot, and if the weather prevents your going out, you can take advantage of the opportunity to meet the local people with their age-old traditions. Without a doubt, every outing provides an opportunity to discover the rich and subtle features of the lake: its legends, culture and culinary traditions such as peat-smoked trout or lamb, and many others just waiting to be discovered...



# THE FOUR SEASONS IN MÝVATN

## Mývatn in winter

*The dominant colours are white and blue, often with magical skies*

In contrast to those who encounter Mývatn in summer with its chaotic lava, winter provides an opportunity to experience a landscape 'smoothed out' by the snow, from which only the most unruly lava peaks and major craters emerge. Crossing the Krafla caldera or the frozen lake on cross-country skis is an unforgettable experience. You hike on snowshoes, cross-country skis or on foot, depending on the snow conditions. The air is extremely pure at this time of year and the skies are often magnificent, exhibiting the renowned 'glitský' (multicoloured clouds) during the day and the aurora borealis at night. The frost glistening on the trees creates a fairytale landscape. It is not uncommon to come across a flock of fine ptarmigan or to catch sight of an Arctic fox. In December, you are likely to meet 'sausage-swiper', 'door-slammer', 'candle-beggar' and other Yule lads - the 13 Icelandic Father Christmases, little pranksters who can be quite startling, and who do not have much in common with the globalised red Santa Claus. The aurora borealis, Christmas, and New Year's Eve fireworks all contribute to bringing light and explosions of joy during the darkest moments of the year.

## Mývatn in spring

*Green and black emerge from the snow, reborn after the long winter*

Now is the time for the return of large flocks of migratory birds from Africa, Europe and America that converge at the lake sanctuary. Wild swans, greylag geese, fifteen species of duck, grebes, great northern divers, wheatears, phalaropes, snipe - all are enthusiastic to begin their new lease of life. Courtship is the order of the day and these birds, which have not yet fully acquired their wild habits, are more trusting than they will be in a few weeks, once they start raising their broods. This is also the lambing season, which comes into full swing before the snow has completely disappeared and winter still seems to have trouble



admitting defeat before the eternal summer light invades the roof of the world.

## Mývatn in summer

*This is the warm season of green and black*

The northern summer has come at last, full of life and light. But its duration is short, and with all its outpouring, nature senses that its days are numbered. The snow has disappeared even



from the peaks and almost all the paths are accessible on foot. This is a great time for bird-watching. Life overflows on and around the lake and we can admire the last male harlequin garrots in their nuptial plumage on the rapids of the Laxá river, and observe the first hatching of their broods, whilst waders freeze at the slightest alarm, requiring their chicks in the foam to remain absolutely still and trust in their powers of mimicry to protect them.

## Mývatn in the autumn

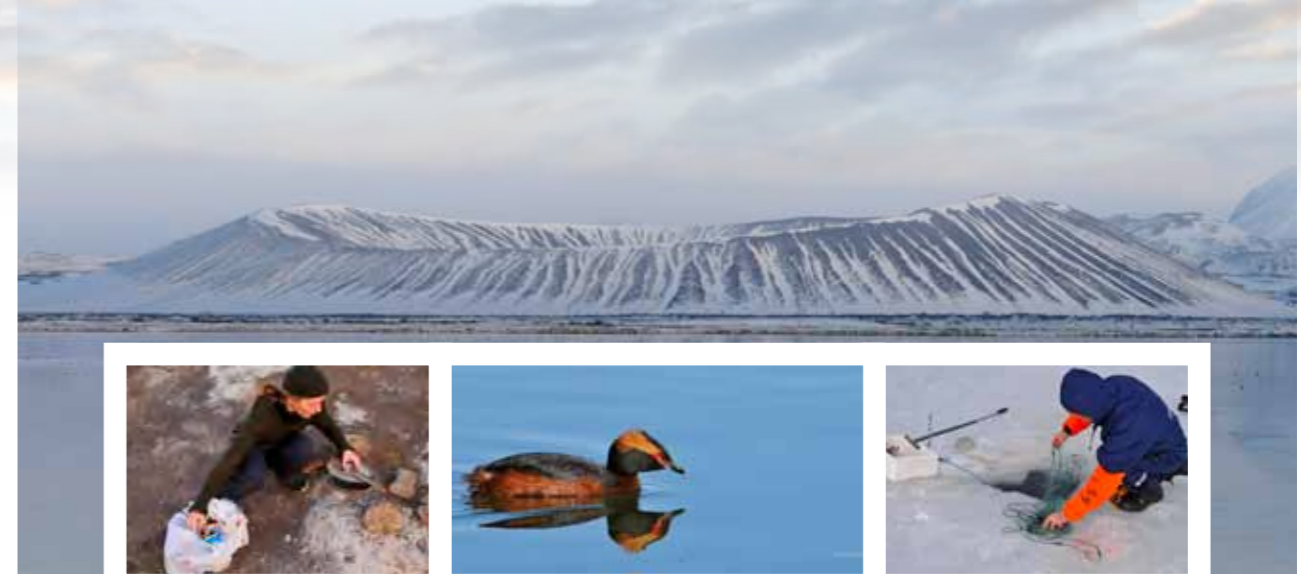
*The colours are flamboyant, with red and yellow dominating*

With the arrival of September, the spectacular aurora borealis begins to light up the starry night sky. Night is gradually gaining more and more of a foothold over the summer's light. With the early night frosts come the first mirrors of morning ice. The peaks become powdered over with an icing sugar coating of snow and the sheep are brought down into the valleys, gathered together by riders on horseback. The sun now falls obliquely and the fiery tones of autumn light up the Arctic vegetation: dwarf birch, woolly willow and rowan now display their resplendent colours and redwings feast on red berries and blueberries. The tundra, with its thousand shades of colour, hosts gatherings of large flocks of geese for their dress rehearsal before their great flight southwards. The world is once



again preparing to sink into the storms and night of the northern winter but first, the ephemeral beauty of the autumnal season confirms its place in the natural cycle, thrilling our senses and desire for harmony.

Images by © Jean-Marc Plessy



Harpa Barkardóttir and Jean-Marc Plessy, the founders of Alkemia, emphasise quality over quantity in their trips by choosing to do as little overland driving as possible, keeping the cuisine as local as possible and selecting accommodation with character and tranquility.

They organise individual journeys and trips with respect for the environment, local people, themselves and their guests. Guiding is possible in English, French and Icelandic.

Jean Marc Plessy is French, an Aikido and Qi gong teacher, Shiatsu practitioner, musician and a photographer.



Harpa Barkardóttir is Icelandic. She has studied Anthropology. She took her guiding diploma 10 years ago and has since accompanied groups in Iceland - often with a geological theme. She is a Kundalini yoga teacher, specialising in the field of pregnancy. She is also a musician and a singer - talents that she puts to great advantage in these trips.

Harpa and Jean-Marc like to accompany people into the sacred dimension of nature. They have a sensibility and respect for the 'unseen world' - and a solid knowledge of the material one. Encountering nature is, for them, first and foremost the encountering of your own nature. Join them on a trip to a surreal world!

## Alkemia:

Alkemia's guides love to take time ('slow travel') to feel, encounter and explore hidden places off the beaten track. The hikes will depend on the weather and the inspiration of your guides. They may be gentle or energetic, mysterious or dazzling, but they will always finish in the evening with a wonderful relaxing bath in the milky blue silica-rich water of natural hot springs (between 37° and 42° C). To bathe like this in winter under the starry sky, the body warm as toast, and the head in the cool air, virtually alone in the midst of an immense natural landscape is an unforgettable experience, which has become an essential for some. This is a sort of thalassotherapy at the origins of time. The immensity of the landscape, the low density of the population, the quality of the water, air, silence and light make Mývatn a perfect place to recharge one's batteries.

### Alkemia Tours



Bræðraborgarstígur 13 • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 847 4133  
 contact@alkemia.is  
 www.alkemia.is

# PINGEYJARSVEIT COUNTY

Spectacular Skjálfandafljót River

Goðafoss is one of the most famous waterfalls in Iceland and undoubtedly the most famous one in Þingeyjarsveit county. At least four more waterfalls on Skjálfandafljót river are certain to impress visitors but usually go unnoticed even though they're only a stone's throw away from the Ring road.

All five waterfalls are in the Skjálfandafljót river which flows in a northerly direction from Vatnajökull glacier – Europe's largest glacier – and exits in Skjálfandaflói Bay.

Goðafoss waterfall is easily spotted from the Ring road and there's ample parking available on both sides of it. At Fosshóll on

capture its essence any time of the day.

**An ancient legend explains the name of the waterfall.**

Chieftain Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði converted from the heathen custom Ásatrú to Christianity in the year 1000. On his return from Iceland's national assembly – Alþingi – he gathered his heathen icons and threw them into the waterfall. Hence the waterfall's name in English – Waterfall of the Gods.

Aldeyjarfoss waterfall is the most awesome waterfall in the Skjálfandafljót River. Black vertical and bent columnar basalt formations form the backdrop for this



the eastern side there's a tourist information office, fuel station, grocery store, restaurant, handcraft market and a guesthouse. The river majestically cascades 17 metres from a horseshoe-shaped rim into a ravine of volcanic origin. The waterfall is accessible from both sides of the river which presents a great opportunity for photographers to

amazing sight which never fails to impress. Late afternoon in summer is the best for photography. The waterfall is 40 km south of Goðafoss and can be reached in a normal car along route 842 from June until the first snow in the autumn. From Goðafoss follow the road along the west bank of Skjálfandafljót River past Mýri farm where

the road makes a sharp left hand turn. Let yourself in through the gate but make sure you close it behind you to prevent animals from wandering off.

Ingvararfoss waterfall is about 700 metres upstream from Aldeyjarfoss and can only be reached on foot.

Hrafnabjargafoss waterfall is one of the hidden secrets of Þingeyjarsveit County



and is found a few kilometres further south in the same river. From Aldeyjarfoss continue to drive along the same road you came in on (842). This road changes into a tertiary road, F-26, a so-called 'fjallvegur' or mountain road which is only accessible in summer. Continue until you get to a fence that leads down the hill to Íshólsvatn lake on your right hand side. Drive or hike in the opposite direction to the lake, alongside the fence until you reach the river where you'll find Hrafnabjargafoss waterfall.

Barnafoss waterfall is in a 100 metre-deep ravine. From Goðafoss drive along the Ring road in the direction of Akureyri. Turn north along route 85 for 2-3 km and look for sign on the right hand side saying 'Fremstafell' which is the name of an abandoned farm. From there follow a track for 3-4 km which in summer is suitable for larger cars and 4x4 vehicles.

Tourist information regarding, waterfalls, local handcrafts, fishing, accommodation and activities is readily available at Fosshóll tourist information centre at Goðafoss waterfall.

**Fosshóll Tourist info**



Fosshóll • 641 Húsavík by Goðafoss  
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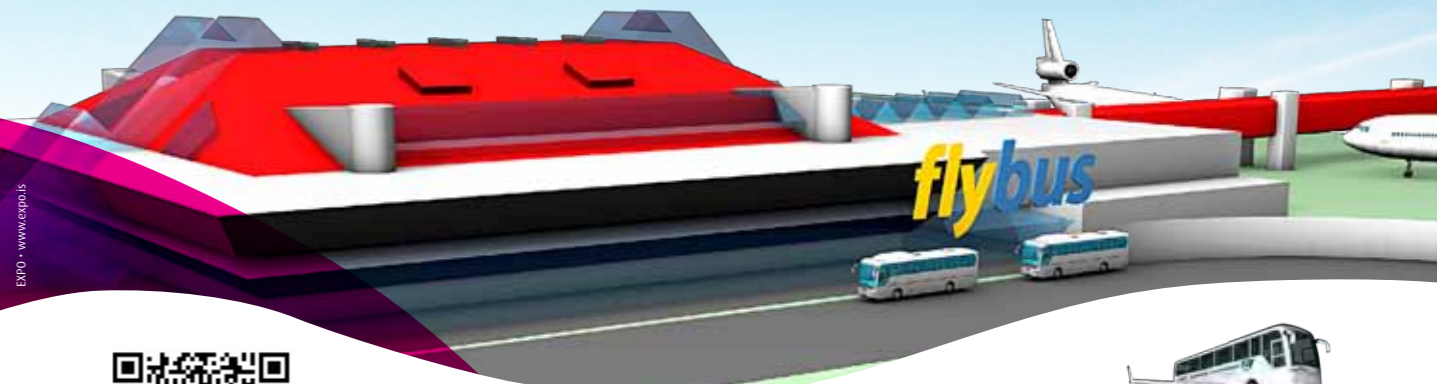
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# ROMANTIC HOTEL BLÁFELL OF EAST ICELAND

Ever since the days when tourism to Iceland was in its infancy in the 1980s, Hotel Bláfell has been a traditional stop for travellers around the country and known as a place where you can get a good night's sleep or a hearty Icelandic meal.

Located in the small town of Breiðdalsvík, on Iceland's east coast, Hotel Bláfell is a welcome oasis after a long day of driving,

a wonderful day of hiking, taking an area excursion or after an invigorating stroll along the beach. Soak away tired muscles in the hotel's sauna, curl up in front of the fireplace with a good book from the library or just gaze into the relaxing fire.

The restaurant is well known for its

hand-picked blueberries from the nearby mountain slopes. The restaurant can seat up to 150 guests, catering to individuals who casually drop in for cake and coffee, intimate dinners for 2 or buffet dinners for large and small groups and special occasion dinners.

### Get yourself a good night's rest

Hotel Bláfell offers 25 standard and deluxe rooms, all with private bath, TV and telephone. A wireless Internet connection is available in the common areas. Outside of the June-August high season, please



hiking or exploring. Constructed of pine logs from Finland, the hotel's interior is reminiscent of an alpine ski lodge and the cheerful log fire that often roars in the central fireplace gives the hotel a cosy romantic charm.

It's the perfect setting in which to end

lunch specialties such as fish casserole, seafood soup, Icelandic lamb soup, home-baked bread and apple cake, as well as a tempting cheese cake made from Icelandic skyr. The hotel prides itself on its traditional Icelandic cuisine, using mostly local ingredients in all its dishes—even

check the hotel website listed below for special offers.

The area around the hotel offers a variety of natural attractions and activities year-round. In summer, it's a bird watcher's paradise. There are popular marked hiking trails into the mountains that surround Breiðdalur or you might like to try your hand fishing for salmon or trout on one of three beautiful fishing rivers: the Breiðdalsá, Tinnudalsá or Norðurdalsá. Autumn is an ideal time to pick blueberries, bilberries or crowberries which proliferate on the surrounding hills or to spot reindeer foraging for food at lower elevations before they head back to the hills and the mating season begins.

*An oasis in East Iceland*

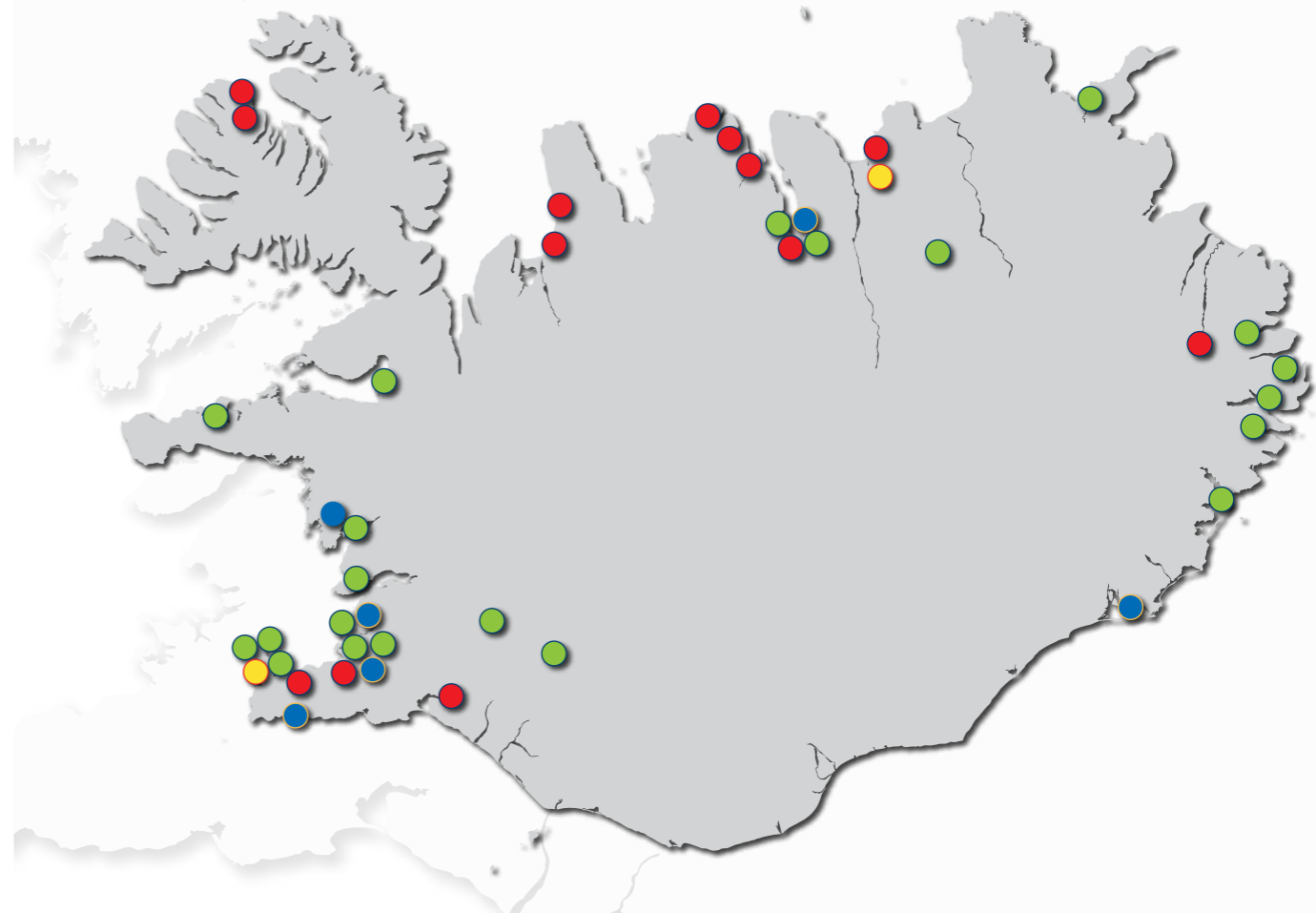
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# NO NEED TO GO HUNGRY AROUND ICELAND



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- Hafnarfjörður
- Húsavík
- Ísafjörður
- Neskaupstaður
- Ólafsfjörður
- Selfoss
- Siglufjörður
- Skagaströnd

### Samkaup strax

- Akranes
- Akureyri
- Bifröst
- Borgarfjörður eystri
- Búðardalur
- Djúpivogur
- Eskifjörður
- Fáskrúðsfjörður
- Flúðir
- Garður
- Kópavogur
- Laugarvatn
- Mývatnssveit
- Reykjanesbær
- Reykjavík
- Sandgerði
- Seyðisfjörður
- Þórshöfn

### nettó

- Akureyri
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- Grafarvogur
- Grindavík
- Höfn
- Kópavogur
- Reykjanesbær
- Reykjavík



- Húsavík
- Reykjanesbær



- Borgarnes

# THE ICONIC JÖKULSÁRLÓN

Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

The Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon is without a doubt at the very top of my list of places to see in Iceland. Not only is it one of my favourite places, it is one that most definitely deserves all the superlatives of the English language—unbelievable, stunning, magnificent are three that instantly spring to mind. It's the place, given only three or four days in the country, that I would go to first—and for two reasons:



First, just because of the unparalleled destination in itself.

The second reason is that the drive from Reykjavik to Jökulsárlón takes you along the whole southern coast, which is

so varied and dramatic that it makes the drive totally worth it. You could easily spend your entire vacation exploring the south coast and not run out of things to see and do.



## So accessible

There are not many glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none that are this accessible. Located just a stone's throw from the main ring road, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring 23 square km (36.8 square miles) in size, you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to



spare. It's 250 m (825 feet) depth would fit five Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of another!

## Scenic boat tours

Upon arrival at the lagoon, you will find a small café where you can enjoy coffee, hot chocolate, waffles, or soup and sandwiches. Jökulsárlón ehf offers guided boat tours using specially equipped amphibious boats which take you further into the lagoon, sailing among the icebergs.

Across the road, where the lagoon flows into the sea, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the baby 'bergs' that dot the shoreline- a truly amazing sight!

## Boat tours are available daily

June, July and August - 9.00 to 19.00  
15th May - 31st May - 10.00 to 17.00  
15th Sept. - 30th Sept. - 10.00 to 17.00

### Jökulsárlón



Kirkjubraut 7 • 780 Hornafirði  
+354 478 2122  
jokulsarlon@jokulsarlon.is  
www.jokulsarlon.is

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Images by © Emily Bulajewski

# ICE & ADVENTURE TOURS

## Glacier Jeeps

Located not far from Jökulsárlón in East Iceland, Glacier Jeeps Ice and Adventure tours offer exhilarating guided glacier adventures that might be the one stop in Iceland that changes your life. Exhilarating is the only word that adequately describes the view from Europe's largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull.



Glacier Jeeps offers year-round adventure jeep tours using specially fitted 4WD vehicles, snowmobile tours and hiking tours. All equipment - helmets, snowsuits, snow boots, and snow climbing or hiking gear is included in the price.

Tours depart twice daily at 9:30 or 14:00 from road F985, where you will begin the 16 km drive up to Jöklael Restaurant, which also serves as a base. This is where guests get their gear for their respective tours and then, you're off! Each tour is approximately 3 to 3½ hours in length and there will be plenty of time for photo breaks and enjoying the view. It is possible to stop at Jöklael for refreshments after the tour.

## A Mountaintop Restaurant

Jöklael Restaurant, at an altitude of 840m, is the highest restaurant in Iceland and serves as a base for most Glacier Jeep activities. The restaurant, which comfortably seats 80 to 90 guests, offers a soup and salad buffet

lunch, a variety of cakes and coffee, teas and soft drinks. A seafood buffet for groups, freshly caught arctic char (trout) and salmon are available by special arrangement. Incentive groups can enjoy a delicious buffet lunch right on the glacier while enjoying breathtaking views of both the glacier and the Atlantic Ocean.



Tours need to be booked one day in advance.

### Glacier Jeeps



Silfurbraut 15 • 780 Hornafjörður  
+354 478 1000  
glacierjeeps@simnet.is  
www.glacierjeeps.is

# SÖLUSKÁLINN IN SKAFTAFELL

## Quick Meals with Amazing Views

While travelling to Skaftafell National Park and Jökulsárlón, the road may be long but there's no need to go hungry! Skaftafell Söluskáli is a welcome stop by Highway 1 for some traditional Icelandic food in a family-run restaurant.

The restaurant is just 5 km east of the national park, so you can enjoy your lunch while gazing at the spectacular landscape. After lunch, you can take in the view of the awesome Hvannadalshjúkur, the highest peak in Iceland and part of Vatnajökull glacier.

The proprietor, Anna María Ragnarsdóttir, was born and raised in the area and has been running the restaurant for many years now, so she knows what her guests like – fast, but quality food. Over the busy lunch hour, you'll have your choice of 2-3 hot home-cooked meals and for dinner there is always the day's special.

They also have sandwiches, hamburgers and all the necessities a traveller might need.



### Skaftafell Söluskáli



Freysnes • 785 Öraefi  
+354 478 2242  
freysnes@gmail.com  
none

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icebergs and the view from the left bank incredible - a 28 square km lagoon choc-a-block with icebergs of all sizes as far as the eye could see.

On the return journey, the clouds started to disperse just in time to give us a good view of the immensity of the Skaftafell National Park. A full-on sunny afternoon replete with clear blue skies accompanied us throughout the rest of the trip until our dinner stop at Vík, where the waning rays of



# PREPARE TO BE IMPRESSED!

*Iceland Excursion's South Coast • Glacial Lagoon Tour*



I met up with Iceland Excursion's Tour Bus at the N1 petrol station in Hvolsvöllur, the little service community that sits right at the doorstep of Eyafjallajökull volcano. Our destination - the South Coast and Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon. It had just snowed lightly the night before, so a new coat of white graced the foothills under Eyafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull glaciers, while patches of sunshine and blue broke through the clouds and wisps of steam skirted the volcano's summit.



We travelled past the farms and fields that just one year ago, had been threatened with the prospect of being submerged under a thick carpet of ash - the evidence of which was still apparent in places. The craggy peaks on the way to Vík were even more hauntingly beautiful shrouded, as they were, in mist and rain. Behind us, a

dazzling strip of silver ocean glistened in the bright sunlight. Ahead of us, distant dark

clouds told of a passing spring downpour of freezing rain which was moving in to greet us from the coast. The weather was perfect the whole trip... and by that I don't mean blue skies and sunshine all the way, for no trip to Iceland would be truly complete without the entire range of ever-changing weather conditions to set the mood.

This was my first proper tour in Iceland. I had read somewhere that seeing Iceland without a tour guide was like leaving your glasses at home —and I would have to say that I wholeheartedly agree! It was wonderful to be able to leave the driving to someone else, so I could just relax and enjoy the constantly changing weather and landscape as it unfolded before us. Our driver/tour guide was full of interesting knowledge about the area, not only about what we were seeing, but a whole lot of

insider information that the guidebook writers know little about. Having thrown in some geology and history notes, our driver then told us some fascinating stories about why Icelanders believe in elves, how long it takes to learn Icelandic, stories about a few famous Icelanders whose farms we were passing, where the best place to see puffins is on the South Coast and even bits about the present day economic situation. Clearly he knew his stuff!

After a stop for lunch at Kirkjubæjarklaustur, we eventually reached Jökulsárlón. This is the place where a massive glacial tongue from Vatnajökull stops abruptly to deposit huge chunks of 1,000 year-old ice into the lagoon. The startlingly beautiful blues and brilliant whites of the icebergs suddenly come into view from behind several hills of ancient lava

which had been obscuring the lagoon from the road. The lagoon itself was packed with



sunlight crept across the village. The driver kept us entertained with stories about the chest of gold that was once at the bottom of Skogafoss and my favourite, which I will call 'Katla and her magical skin trousers'. Seljalandsfoss awaited us in the twilight and soon it was time for me to say goodbye at the little town of Hvolsvöllur, where my journey began. The Iceland Excursions' bus sped on its way back to Reykjavik, in high hopes of catching the northern lights that were due to appear, thus perfecting an already perfect day on Iceland's south coast.

*Would I do it all over again any time soon? In a heartbeat!*

**Iceland Excursions**



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





# HVALSÖLLUR IN BLOOM

The 21st of April marks the first day of summer in Iceland. Schools and most businesses close and the national flag flies high throughout the land. This is also the day that the unassuming little inland village of Hvalsöllum springs to life, gearing up to receive the many thousands of visitors who stop here every year. Tourists and Icelanders

alike all converge to top up their petrol tanks, their water bottles and their bellies before going onwards. With 350 km of magnificently varied but sparsely-populated land separating Hvalsöllum and next major town of Höfn, it's not just a good idea to stop here, it's a must!

### Family Friendly Hvalsöllum

The Farmers' Market in the town centre, just next to the post office is one of the main gathering spots for residents of Hvalsöllum. Here you will find a variety of locally-produced food stuffs for sale, hand knitted items of all kinds, handicrafts by local artisans, original wooden toys and superb organic ice cream. A lovely green space for stretching your legs is adjacent to the farmers' market and hosts an outdoor exhibition by local area photographers.

### Take it slow

Icelanders who know their country well, flock out to their summer houses, rent a summer cabin or make use of one of the many camp grounds in Hvalsöllum every summer. Our mission is to divulge a few of the area's hidden gems to you. Hvalsöllum is, after all, one of the portals to the some of



the best that Iceland has to offer...

Only 106 km from Reykjavik, Hvalsöllum is surrounded with plentiful recreation areas and natural wonders all within 15 minutes to one hour's drive:

**Fimmvörðuháls:** This already famous hiking route got even more famous when underground lava tunnels cracked the earth open right across the hiking path in March 2010. Thousands of people from around the world made the 10-hour round trip trek to watch the lava show, while others hired a helicopter to get the view from above. The mountain pass is open once again to visitors.

**Thórsmörk (Þórsmörk) Mountain Reserve** is one of the most popular hiking areas in Iceland and with Icelanders. It is only reachable by specially-fitted 4x4s or tour buses which can ford the many glacial rivers in the area. A great place to see the geological changes that the recent eruption brought to the area.

**Seljalandsfoss** is the only waterfall in Iceland that you can walk behind. Located at the foot of Eyjafjallajökull glacier, it is a 10 minute drive from Hvalsöllum. Many a marriage has been proposed at this waterfall!

**Skogarfoss** waterfall, the **Skogar Folk Museum**, with its indoor and outdoor exhibits, its fantastic turf houses and 19th century buildings that take you back 100 years or so.

**Westman Islands:** The new harbour opened in July 2010 and you and your car can hop over to the island in just a short 25 minute ferry ride, a great way to see this

mountainous archipelago and home to 10 million puffins, or roughly half of the puffin population in Iceland.

To herald the 1st anniversary of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption, Thorvaldseyri Farm opened an exciting visitor centre in

April 2011. Providing visitors with breathtaking photos and videos chronicling the events, before, during and after the eruption, the centre also will also house a cinema and gift shop with books, brochures and souvenirs. Located on the



ring road, 15 km east of Hvalsöllum.

**The Open Farms Project** is an innovative programme which began in 2007, giving visitors to Iceland an opportunity to visit a working farm in rural areas all over the country. In cooperation with Icelandic Farm Holidays and The Farmers' Association of Iceland, there are two farms in the Hvalsöllum area which are a part in the project: Stóra-Mörk II and Ásólfsskáli.

**Hvalsöllum**

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Hlíðarvegur 16 • 860 Hvalsöllum  
 +354 488 4200  
 hvollur@hvollur.is  
 www.hvollur.is



## GOÐALAND GUEST HOUSE IN FLJÓTSHLÍÐ

*Visiting Iceland? We're just as excited as you are!*



volcano...you know, that one that nobody can pronounce—Eyafjallajökull.

The guest house is located in a building that was, once upon a time, a primary school. Recently refurbished in part as a guest house, it still retains something of its schoolish charm and personality. The sturdy building, built to withstand earthquakes and the onslaught of a small army of primary school-age kids, is now ready for the onslaught of visitors to Iceland!

We know Iceland can be expensive, so to celebrate the opening of Goðaland Guest House, we have a special offer! Show us your April/May edition of Icelandic Times and you'll receive a 20% discount off your entire stay, including breakfast, anytime during April or May 2011. Sweet!

Goðaland Guest House is easy to find—on paved roads all the way from Reykjavik. In Hvalsöllum, take road no. F261 in the direction of Fljótshlíð, for 10 km. Watch for

the signs just after a small bridge and sheep sorting pens on the right. We are set back from the road about 100 metres, on the right hand side.

*Enjoy your stay in Iceland and Goðaland Guest House looks forward to your visit!*



Goðaland Guest House



Fjótshlíðarvegur, 861 Hvalsöllum  
**+354 697 9280**  
 godalandguesthouse@gmail.com  
 www.godaland-guesthouse.com

With space for 20 adventurous guests, Goðaland Guest House is right in the heart of Fljótshlíð, South Iceland - one of the most picturesque farming districts in the country and within view of that



## Iceland Tour Services



We are a small fully licensed family bus and Travel agency in Iceland. Our fleet is of the highest quality and includes buses of all types and sizes.

We provide first class services to groups, individuals and travel agencies that need ground transportation or guided tours to any location in Iceland.

Quick transfer from or to the airport, we can also arrange for short or long sightseeing trips in and around Reykjavik.



Please feel free to contact us for more information via email or phone.  
 Best regards  
 Time tours and Time travel / info@timetours.is / www.timetours.is  
 Tel: +354 578 7111 / Mobil: +354 869 7111

## VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

Mountainous, mysterious, and one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the horizon of Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade. The Herólfur ferry, at its brand new port just outside of the town of Hvalsöllum, plies the waters that separate the islands from the mainland, making the easy 25 -30 minute crossing several times a day. Now you have no excuse not to see the Westman Islands!

### The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands, Viking Tours' specially designed tour boat takes you around the main island of Heimaey, 2 or 3 times a day in summer. The 90 minute tour gives you a chance to peak into caves, observe puffins and concludes with the haunting saxophone music which fills the singing cave of Klettshellur, renowned for its superb acoustics and performed beautifully by Sigurmundur Einarsson, director of Viking Tours.

### The Coach Tour

Another delightful way to explore the island is by Viking Tours' coach which departs from the main harbour every day, year round. The guided tour takes you to the still-warm Eldfell crater which erupted over the whole island in 1973, the effects of which are easily observable throughout Heimaey. You will also get a chance to observe puffins at Stórhöfði.



### 10 million puffins can't be wrong

In staggering numbers, these adorable birds flock to the archipelago year after year, the first arriving on schedule around the 12th-14th of April. "The best time of day to see them is in the late afternoon and early evening when the puffin parents return to their burrows after spending the day fishing on the sea", says Sigurmundur.

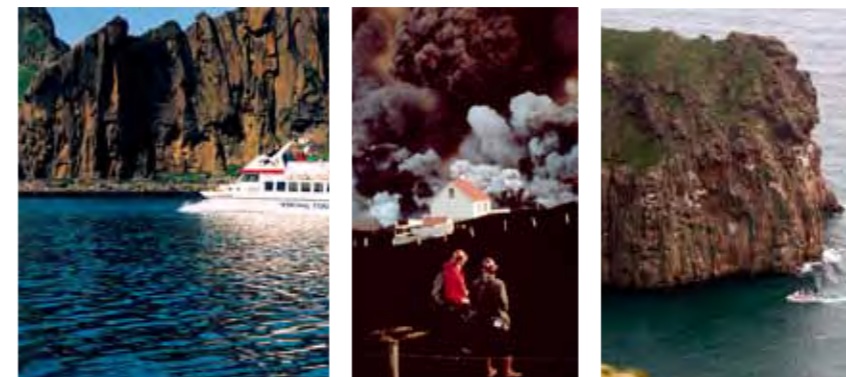


### Whale watching in the Westman Islands

With whole families of Killer Whales and dolphins arriving in July, the Westman Islands is a great place for whale watching, boasting the largest population of these sea mammals in Iceland. Viking Tours can organise a whale watching tour for you on request.

All Viking Tours trips begin and end at the cosy Café Kró down at the main harbour, where you can take in the 55 minute film about the 1973 eruption and learn how this singular event changed the face of the Westman Islands forever.

*See you this summer in the Westman Islands!*



Viking Tours



Suðurgerði 4 · 900 Vestmannaeyjar  
**+354 488 4884**  
 viking@vikingtours.is  
 www.vikingtours.is

# BJARKARHÓLL

Whether you're just stopping off for a coffee and hand-made pralines at Cafe Mika or taking a thrill on the RiverJet, or simply passing through Reykholt, this is a good opportunity to browse the tourist shop. Packed with souvenirs to remind you of Iceland, the shop also has a special feature.

Offering a fascinating pastime for young and old, Garn provides wool and knitting patterns to make sweaters, hats, gloves - or just about anything that can

Not a professional? No problem! Here, you can learn from people with experience in the special techniques for this kind of knitting. Once you're hooked, you'll want to get your own yarn and patterns to take home with you - and Garn provides a wide range of yarn, not only their own brand or from Iceland but also specially imported from China and Turkey. Everything you need to produce top quality items is available here.

When you have finished touring the shop, you may find you have too much to



be made with wool! They publish Björk magazine, packed with ideas and patterns for producing professional-looking knit wear, both by Icelandic designers and some translated from the Italian 'Filatura' and the Norwegian 'Drops' companies. This is not at all the province of old ladies, as many young designers have brought fresh new ideas and designs to complement the traditional patterns that are still so popular. Anyone with reasonable dexterity can produce beautiful products to be proud of!

take home with you. Again, this is not a problem. Garn will ship internationally and has a very modern facility set up for efficient processing of orders.

Should you get home and find you want more supplies, [www.garn.is](http://www.garn.is), their website, has a comprehensive presentation of everything available and an online shop where you can place your order. Never has it been easier to make fashionable woolen clothes or purchase ready-made knitwear of all types!

Take home a special Viking sweater to keep you warm all year round! Whilst at Bjarkahóll, you can also take advantage of the Internet connection to check your mail or go online.



**Bjarkarhóll**



Skólabraut 4 • 801 Reykholt  
 +354 587 6655  
[garn@garn.is](mailto:garn@garn.is)  
[www.garn.is](http://www.garn.is)

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# CHOCOLATE TAKEN TO NEW LEVELS

*Café Mika*

If you enjoy European chocolate, Café Mika will set your taste buds awirl hand-made pralines, created with delicious high quality chocolate as you sip your coffee. Made without additives, their taste is totally different from the mass-produced varieties. This rare treat is something you will want to savour longer, so you can stock up from the ever-growing range that Mika is creating and take home a box. They can last up to 3 months - but you only if you have an iron will or a huge stock for them to survive that long! If you're the sharing type of person, you will want to buy him out! Actually, companies will be able to make a special order with their company logo on them after the summer is over. Now you know what to ask your boss for Christmas!

Mika is not only a chocolatier but an innovative chef as well. Since you have no doubt built up a healthy appetite on your tour, a good meal is in order! Mika uses locally-produced ingredients in his dishes and has a

langoustine speciality. This is a small lobster that has much better texture and flavour than its larger cousin.

Mika may be experimenting with one of his sauces, giving you a new taste to your palate. You just have to try his langoustine with chilli glaze and white chocolate sauce!

For dessert there are, of course, chocolates and ice cream and here, too, Mika offers delicious creations, with a varied range of tastes and textures to tempt your palate.

A wide range of snacks and meals are available in Café Mika in the new Bjarkahóll, all home-made to a high quality, so don't be surprised if you are asking your tour guide to delay departure!

**Café Mika**



Skólabraut 4 • 801 Reykholt  
 +354 896 6450  
[mikaehf@simnet.is](mailto:mikaehf@simnet.is)  
 on Facebook

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# ICELAND RIVERJET

*Sightseeing the Viking way!*

The Vikings first travelled up rivers with their wooden boats over 1,000 years ago but their spirit is still here.

The boats are better; oars have been replaced with an engine and these Vikings are a whole lot nicer. Now you can go 'sightseeing the Viking way' with Iceland Riverjet.

Jet boating up the Hvítá River below the Gullfoss waterfall is extreme in excitement and thrills! Having no physical requirements, this adventure is for everybody over 10 years old.

The boats are custom built from thick aluminum and powered by specially adapted V8-400 hp engines. With a water jet instead



and white water rapids. The extreme tour takes about 2 hours, with bigger waves and stronger rapids, kicking the sightseeing up a notch! Trips run from April to October every day and every hour.

Iceland Riverjet is the first commercial



of a propeller, they can travel in depths as shallow as 10 cm at speeds up to 75 km/hr. They are highly maneuverable and can safely jump waves, go through rapids and do 360 degree spins on a coin.

The riverjet tour lasts half a day with a pick-up at your hotel in Reykjavik to the new Bjarkahóll in Reykholt. There are two tours: standard and extreme, varying only in length and degree of thrills. The 45-minute ride in the 11-seat boat takes you through spectacular lava canyons, beautiful scenery

jet boat company in Europe, founded in 2010 by the Norwegian, Cato Bergnord. He has over 17 years of white water experience and is a licensed jet boat pilot from New Zealand. Take a look at their website for further information and a movie of a trip!

**Iceland Riverjet**



Skólabraut 4 • 801 Reykholt  
 +354 863 4506  
[contact@icelandriverjet.is](mailto:contact@icelandriverjet.is)  
[www.icelandriverjet.is](http://www.icelandriverjet.is)

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# BAKED IN THE HOT SPRINGS!

*Kaffi Klettur brings refreshment to the Golden Circle*

Heading out to Geysir and Gullfoss, you've been driving for awhile and could do with a break. Coming to Reykholt, there's a lovely place to stop and experience a delicious meal made from locally-produced ingredients in the most captivating wooden 'Christmas House', surrounded by a copse. In fact, during the Christmas period, the lights on the house bring an old traditional charm to it, making it look like it comes straight from a Christmas card!

Snug and warm amid the winter snows, it is transformed in summer to an delightful place to eat outside, surrounded by green trees and soft grass, as you relax with your meal on the veranda, under the sun, sheltered from the wind by the surrounding trees.

For the children, there is a play area - if they haven't already built up a good appetite. They will also find some farming machinery from past generations on the lawn. Horses frequently pass by, adding to the experience.



Inside, Kaffi Klettur is decorated with farm and household items from the past. As you look around, you may well find things you don't recognise. They offer a fascinating insight into the life and history of the area. See if you can see how to harness a horse for pulling a plough or cart or guess the use of some of the other items hanging on the walls.

### Fresh from the fields and river

No matter how romantic or beautiful the house or its situation, it's the food by which a restaurant is judged. Here Steinunn and her

family excel! Whilst an international cuisine is available, this is the place to try traditional Icelandic food in its natural surroundings! Whether lamb or freshly-caught trout or salmon from the nearby Tunguflot river, garnished with locally-grown vegetables and potatoes, you'll enjoy the Icelandic cuisine. Make sure you try the delicious rhubarb pie for desert!

The Reykholt area specialises in vegetables of different varieties, so freshness is guaranteed. Food here is grown as naturally as possible - and you'll experience that in the rich taste of the meals here.

### Kleinur - the Icelandic pastry

Everything is home-baked. Steinunn's kleinur are so popular, they are shipped



all over Iceland. Unlike the store-bought kleinur found in other countries, these are hand-made, small and crisp. It is likely that you haven't tried this pastry that is so popular in this country, so this is the best place to do so.

What are kleinur? Kleinur are an Icelandic pastry, specially formed, that are both crisp and melt in the mouth. One you try them, you will see why they are so popular!



### Hot Spring Bread

The smell of bread, freshly-baked in the hot springs on the hill above the restaurant, is enough to stimulate the taste buds of the surrounding area. The springs give Reykholt its name - 'Smokey hill', as the steam can be seen for miles around, rising high into the sky. How often can you say you've tried 'hot spring bread'?



Kaffi Klettur is open every day in summer and every weekend in winter. Groups can be received at any time and there is plenty of parking space available.

If you like to eat food fresh from the fields or the river and you're in the Reykholt area,

property with all the services including electricity and, of course, hot water from the hot springs, giving you the freedom to enjoy the surrounding nature, river and mountains.



this is a meal not to miss. No booking is needed.

### Camping among the trees

If you have a camper, caravan, tent, or tent trailer, there is a sheltered campsite on the

### Guesthouse for travellers

No tent? The small guesthouse offers comfort at an economical rate and it is easy to venture out into the surrounding countryside using it as a base.

With your meals available from Kaffi Klettur, you won't have to worry about what to cook!

It is very easy to find both the restaurant, campsite and guesthouse. When you come into Reykholt, simply turn right just past the petrol station and they're immediately there on your left.

**Kaffi Klettur**



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

↑ Skólbraut 1 • 801 Reykholti  
 +354 486 1310  
 husid@best.is  
 www.kaffiklettur.is



# SLAKKI ZOO & PLAY CENTRE



**C**lose to Skálholt cathedral, in Laugarás, is a zoo and play centre that is very popular with families on a day out. With so much space, it never seems crowded. It's the kind of place where adults can enjoy themselves as much as the children, which probably accounts for its popularity!

It's a petting zoo with all the Icelandic farm animals that the children love to pet and enjoy in safe

surroundings. With birds from different parts of the



world, a large aquarium, a playground and an inside putting green and crazy golf course, pool table and lounge, Slakki makes a lovely place for the family! Children love the opportunity to play with animals of all

kinds and to play in the playground, whilst parents can enjoy themselves, too, knowing their children are safe. From horses to mice, from pigs to ponies and every size and shape in between, all the animals are enjoyed

inside the houses and outside in the gardens. The kitten house is always a favourite with many children, as they can hold and pet the

that is slowly being revealed as more people post pictures, videos and reviews on the Internet - but no



kittens for as long as they wish - and that can be a long time!

Even farmers come with their families, wondering why their children love it so much when they have animals at home!

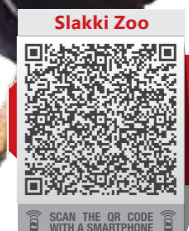
Families will frequently stay all day - even when they were only planning a short visit! It's hard to leave. It's good, therefore, that Slakki has a restaurant and café refreshments with home-made snacks, including delicious hamburgers with salad and apple cakes with cream, available. The café is in a small turf house, with plenty of seating outside to eat the yummy, locally-made Kjörís icecream in the sun.

Slakki's indoor zoo is open from 1pm - 5pm on the last weekend of April and the entire zoo is open every weekend in May and then every day throughout the summer months, until the end of August.

Slakki is one of Iceland's secrets

web browsing can replace the experience of happy children with shining faces enjoying nature in the safety of the zoo farm! With such a large range of animals so easily accessible and so patient with them, the children gain in so many ways. Compared to stuffed animals and TV, real life always wins hands-down!

Since it is on the Golden Circle, it makes a beautiful addition to a tour - and a great moment for a snack break and some fun, being just 5 minutes off the main road!



**Slakki Zoo**  
 Launrétt 1 • 801 Selfoss by Laugarás  
 +354 868 7626  
 helgi@slakki.is  
 on Facebook

# GRÍMSBORGIR

*Elegance in Tranquility*

A celebration, an event, a conference or simply a desire for a break from the norm - whatever the reason, finding the ideal location that projects the standard you seek can be quite a challenge. There are many options and countries to choose from. However, if you want something different that will be remembered, it really has to be exceptional.

A trip to Iceland certainly fits that category, but if you want to impress or simply enjoy an elegant lifestyle whilst surrounded by spectacular but tranquil beauty, a stay in one of the towns or cities would not meet your desires - even in Iceland!

A 45 minute car drive will take you out of all urban areas and into a natural wilderness of pristine beauty. To enjoy it would, until



close enough to the Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park to enjoy its beauty and visit its unique sights, without being disturbed by other visitors. The exceptional beauty



recently, have required a tent and sleeping bag, however. Not quite what you were after!

### Combining Luxury and Beauty

With a vision to bring luxury accommodation to the breathtaking Icelandic countryside, along with a high class restaurant, an international menu and wine list, Ólafur Laufdal and Kristín Ketilsdóttir built a group of spacious and finely-appointed houses by the river Sog and



and features that made the Park a World Heritage site extend to the surrounding area, making this truly a memorable place to spend a holiday or hold

an event.

When you want to do more than relax, there are opportunities for trout and salmon fishing, two 18-hole and three 9-hole golf courses, guided tours or personal trips to the many famous sights and horse riding centres.

This is like having your own house, fully furnished and equipped, with the option of either making your own meals or dining at the reasonably-priced restaurant. Whether you just want to enjoy the view from the comfort of your lounge or from the hot tub or take a walk in the nature to enjoy the wildlife and birds, this is a serene location that you will find to be reinvigorating and relaxing. In summer, the late night sun casts a heavenly glow and in the winter, the Northern Lights dance across the clear night skies.

The restaurant is open to both guests and visitors. Small and exclusive, it can seat 60 diners in comfort. The menu includes a wide range of traditional Icelandic courses and home-made breads and pastries.

Booking may be made online, by phone or email. Ólafur and Kristín live on site and are available to make your stay the best it can be - you only have to ask!

**Grímsborgir**



 Ásborgir 30 • 801 Selfoss  
 +354 555 7878  
 [guesthouse@grimsborgir.com](mailto:guesthouse@grimsborgir.com)  
 [www.grimsborgir.com](http://www.grimsborgir.com)

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# SURF ICELAND'S SOUTH COAST

*Affordable Iceland Activities*

Iceland Activities is one of only three companies in the whole of Iceland to offer this sport that is, let's face it, a rare phenomenon indeed in this arctic island nation. The south coast of Iceland offers endless possibilities for surfers, from novices to the more experienced, who are passionate about catching the waves. In



summer especially, the water temperature is not as cold as you might think...and for beginners, Iceland Activities can provide an experienced surfing instructor as well as all the equipment you need, at very reasonable prices.

Iceland Activities is based in Hveragerði, the small greenhouse town just 38 km from Reykjavik and one



of the most active geothermal areas of the country. With 20 years experience in Hveragerði behind them, Iceland Activities offers many exciting tours from 2 hours to all day tours—hiking tours, bike tours, bike rentals and group activities that are perfect for all levels of ability.



**Set your own pace - Iceland by Bike**  
 Exploring Iceland by bike is a healthy and enjoyable way to explore Iceland on your own. Iceland Activities rents quality bikes anywhere from 4 hours to 3 days or longer, and come complete with bicycle helmet, maps and suggested itinerary. Iceland Activities will even deliver your bike right to your hotel, guest house or campground,

(for those staying in Hveragerði and surrounding areas)

Guided hiking, biking and walking tours in and around Hveragerði and the Hengill Geothermal area are rated from easy to strenuous and suitable for all ages. You ride over 1,100 year-old sheep paths high up in the mountains that criss-cross this magnificent volcanic area and then take a dip in a geothermally-heated river. A memorable way to experience Iceland's

very special mid-summer midnight sun for the whole family.

### Hotsprings around Hveragerði Tour

Not many towns around the world can boast a geothermal area right in their own backyard. Iceland Activities offers an exclusive guided bike tour in and around Hveragerði and then takes you to observe the new geothermal park that was created by an earthquake in 2008. Have fun boiling eggs in one of the many hot springs and end the day at the Hveragerði swimming pool.

*'Your pace is our pace'  
 is the company motto*

**Icelandic Activities**



 Mánamörk 3-5 • 810 Hveragerði  
 +354-777-6263  
 [icelandactivities@icelandactivities.is](mailto:icelandactivities@icelandactivities.is)  
 [www.icelandactivities.is](http://www.icelandactivities.is)

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# FRUMSKÓGAR

Guesthouse & Holiday Apartments

The friendly Frumskógar Guest House, 38 km from Reykjavik, is located in the 'green' town of Hveragerði, known for its abundant geothermal energy and greenhouses.



## The Freedom of Self-Catered Apartments

Nestled amongst trees in the residential area of town, Frumskógar offers 5 self-contained, one-bedroom holiday flats, accommodating 2 to 4 people, at reasonable rates. Cook your own meals in the fully-equipped kitchen and after a full day of exploring nature just outside the door, a hot tub and sauna welcomes you out on the patio and is available for use by all guests.

## The Guest House

The small, painted timber guest house has 4 double rooms and 1 single room with shared bathrooms. All guests may order the hearty and nutritious breakfast in the large breakfast room which also doubles as a common area during the day and where you can take advantage of the free Internet access. Owners Morten and Kolbrún have prepared detailed day trip



Guesthouse Frumskógar



Frumskogar 3 • 810 Hveragerði  
+354 896 2780  
gisting@frumskogar.is  
www.frumskogar.is



suggestions and maps to help you get the most out of your stay in Hveragerði.

# Fosshótel Reykholt

Peaceful surroundings in a historic place. Restaurant Valhöll concentrates on local ingredients just waiting to tickle your tastebuds.

Come join us for a relaxing stay in one of Iceland's most important historic place.



WE ARE READY FOR YOUR VISIT

Book now at [www.fosshotel.is](http://www.fosshotel.is)



# FOSSHOTEL

AROUND ICELAND

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E-MAIL: [reykholt@fosshotel.is](mailto:reykholt@fosshotel.is) / [www.fosshotel.is](http://www.fosshotel.is)

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## WELCOMES YOU TO HVERAGERÐI



EDEN ALDINGARÐUR AUSTURMÖRK 25 • 810 HVERAGERÐI +354 527 3300

# ALMAR BAKERY

*Stone-baked Health*

Travelling the Ring Road's southern fork, you have probably been driving long enough to take a break when you reach the garden town of Hveragerði. Nestled under the mountains that separate Reykjavik from the south, steam rises up from hot springs, as this is one of Iceland's most prolific geothermal areas. Earthquakes have shaken things up a bit, too - but the more likely cause of the rumbling is your stomach hoping to be refilled!

Shopping before you leave is not necessary - why not just hop in the car and get your food as you're travelling. It's always good

grain taken out and replaced with additives then sealed in a plastic bag, the idea of fresh-baked, healthy bread must seem quite foreign, with its crunchy crust and delicious flavour.

Almar bakes its bread on hot stones in



to take a break - and you can be sure any children with you will definitely need one!

At the heart of Hveragerði's shopping centre stands Almar Bakery. To those used to shopping in large supermarkets with their mass-produced, air filled, bleached white bread, with all the goodness of the natural

geothermally-heated ovens. No polluting fossil fuels here. This is as natural as you can get - and the taste testifies to it!

The bakery has a whole range of healthy breads, buns and sandwiches, along

with pastries, pasta, cakes and biscuits. As much as possible, ingredients are organic local produce - and around Hveragerði is an area where a lot of food is grown, so it is really fresh.

In good weather, you can eat outside. It's the ideal place for a healthy break and a chance to stock up for your onward journey. The bakery also makes food packs up for you to take with you on your trip - or, if you're staying in a summer-house or campsite, to eat during your stay. A simple, yet inspired idea, it takes all the hassle out of shopping. Just grab a pack and you're set up for the next few days.



It's always nice when there are 'specials' and the bakery is no exception. A cheap snack is the delicious, freshly-made, wholesome soup. The soup with pasta or buns are a very healthy and filling meal that will sustain you for hours to come.

And the earthquakes? Don't miss out on the earthquake simulator in the Information Centre! It has some surprises!

**Almar Bakery**



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

📍 Sunnumörk 2 - 810 Hveragerði  
 ☎ +354 483 1919  
 ✉ ingibergsdottir74@gmail.com  
 🚗 none



Watchmaker Frank Michelsen, founder of Michelsen Watchmakers, at his desk in Sauðárkrúkur, N-Iceland, in 1920.

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