

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

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Vikings & History
Seals, Whales & Birds
Hidden Pearls Revealed

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Birdsong has spread quickly across the land as the arrival of the migratory birds heralds the retreat of winter. And what a winter it has been—an outdoor sports enthusiast's dream, with plenty of snow on the slopes. Mind you, it was pretty wild.

When visitors come to Iceland, perhaps they have heard about the Blue Lagoon and the Golden Circle. With this issue, we want to also highlight some of the many other spectacular sights and features of interest around the country that normally only the Icelanders and the seasoned visitor would know about. You'll

need your to charge your camera battery and have plenty of memory cards!

For instance, you step off your plane at Keflavík into a rich historical and geological area even before reaching Reykjavik. It's possible to spend your whole holiday here—but then there is still a lot more to the country. It's time for Viking hospitality.

Are you a golfer? A fascinating course awaits you in Reykholt, amongst others, as the opportunity to play under the midnight sun is very beguiling. A horse rider? There are so many places, each with its own character

to enjoy these beautiful, five-gaited animals. A fisherman? Welcome to Paradise!

Did you include seals on your 'must see' list? If so, see pages 52-55. Whales are to be seen in many places but we feature the north and the Whale Museum in Húsavík.

Are you a photographer? There is a major competition you could win. See pages 68-69.

If you love the outdoors, you'll build up an appetite and every town and village has good restaurants of all types to satisfy while enjoying the company of the local residents.

In Mosfellsbær, just outside Reykjavik, Palli the Knifemaker works next to the old mill, Álafoss, a popular place for woollens.

Welcome to a vibrant Iceland in the Spring!

-ASF

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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' |
| ö | Like 'th' in 'that' |
| þ | Like 'th' in 'thing' |

How to make use of QR codes



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ART IN THE CITY

Reykjavík Art Museum

Reykjavík Art Museum is the largest art museum in Iceland, situated in three different locations: Hafnarhús, Kjarvalstaðir and Ásmundarsafn. Each museum has its own characteristics and emphases; the different exhibitions, as well as the buildings themselves, providing you with a unique experience. If you yearn to soak in art and culture as well as the city itself, you should get yourself a day pass and stroll between these different parts of Reykjavík Art Museum and experience the city on the way.



Kjarvalstaðir

Kjarvalstaðir is located in the so-called Klambatrún, one of Reykjavík's most popular outdoor spots just east of the city centre. This fine building is named after Iceland's most beloved painter Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885-1972). Kjarval's roots lay in the old Icelandic rural community, but his life and art are tightly bound to the cultural awakening of the nation in the first half of the 20th century. His mystic vision of Icelandic landscape enables the viewer more often than not to experience the Icelandic mountains and mosses in a different way. There is a permanent exhibition of the key works of Kjarval in Kjarvalsstaðir along with other exhibitions of various themes and media.



Hafnarhús

The Harbour House

Just by the harbour, this is the biggest of the three locations. With its wonderful view over the bay, the building itself is interesting to visit, its raw elements creating an interesting harmony with each different exhibition along with the café and museum shop one can find there.

Hafnarhús is dedicated to contemporary art and has six galleries, one of which always contains a permanent exhibition of the works of Erró, who donated a huge part of his life's work to the Reykjavík Art Museum. The art of this Paris-based pop-artist has acquired international critical acclaim and the museum's collection contains more than 4,000 of his artworks. Currently there are two exhibitions by the artist on show, the one showcasing 200 of his drawings and the other, seven fairly large ceramic tea pots.



Ásmundarsafn

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

This is located in a spectacular building in the east side of Reykjavík. Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) was a sculptor, who built this house and used it as his home and studio. He sought inspiration for his magnificent sculptures in Icelandic nature, literature and the common people. Both the garden surrounding the museum and the museum itself are filled with Sveinsson sculptures and produce a wonder-world which is magical to visit.

Each of these three parts of Reykjavík Art Museum shows the visitor a different side, a different period, and a different medium of Icelandic art through the 20th century. A walk between the museums may be a bit of an exercise (Icelanders would call it a long walk although it's surely short on the scale of big city walks); perhaps you might want to take the bus. On a lovely day, however, it is a good opportunity to get to know the city while taking in the art and culture of the city.

-NHH



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Image by Gabriel Rutenberg

THE CENTRE OF ICELANDIC DESIGN

Top Icelandic Designers' Work from Kraum to Take Home

In Reykjavik's oldest house, first built as a clothing factory in the 18th century, Kraum continues the spirit of innovation and design begun by its famous founder, Skúli Magnússon, making creations available to the world from the hands of almost 300 designers.

The house was completely renovated between 2005–6 and expanded in an attractive, unobtrusive style, to open in 2007 as a one-stop shop for designer items made initially by an group of 30 designers.

A new concept catches the imagination

The idea quickly caught on and more designers in different fields began presenting their work. From clothing and jewellery, the range expanded to include ceramics, glass, wood, metal, leather, card and creations from fish skin.

Kraum has continued to innovate, with the recent addition of a chocolate boutique, an organic cosmetic range, made from Icelandic herbs and a new range of foods: jams, salts and herbal teas, again from locally-produced herbs. Both the scope and quality of today's products would have amazed the building's founder.

A Design Mecca

The Design Centre introduced a new event called 'Design March' – which Kraum is participating in, marching forward with innovative ideas. The event actually took place in the month of March and brought together five young designers, who were asked to take an old object from the past, a pancake pan, march it forward to the present, turning it into a contemporary work of design.



Image by Gabriel Rutenberg

Made to Go, Not just for Show

The shop is not just a display for designers. Most items have been thoughtfully designed for convenient shipping overseas. Visitors from many countries have returned home with some very special souvenirs from the land where the skill of the Vikings and the creativity of the Celts has blended together to produce works that are currently sought after the world over.



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ENJOY THE AMBIENCE

Einar Ben brings style and class to dining

Einar Ben is one of a select few restaurants in the highly competitive Reykjavik scene, where new, trendy places come and go on a monthly basis, that has found its way into the Icelandic psyche and has been able to maintain the delicate balance of class, comfort and top-rate food that inspires customers to return.

Discreet and Tasteful

Upon entering the refined hall on the second floor of this century-old gentry's townhouse, it is easy to see why Einar Ben has become a part of Reykjavik's culture. It is free of pretense and excess whilst offering one of the best dining experiences in town.

The interiors are elegantly decorated, honouring the building's rich history and, when walking around the restaurant, you feel you're passing through a home, instead of garish or bare and minimalistic dining halls.

The restaurant is, in fact, the former home of one of Iceland's greatest heroes, after whom it is named. Einar Ben was a poet and pioneer who personified the dreams and ambitions of Icelanders in the early 20th century.

You'll also notice the quiet, professional, yet friendly staff who seem to take pride in catering to their visitors, as opposed

to rushing in and out as many paying customers as possible in one night.

Classic Dishes With a Twist

All of this is a pleasant addition to what matters the most: the meals. Philip Harrison, Einar Ben's English chef, takes great pride in only using the freshest Icelandic ingredients. When I dropped by Einar Ben's on a cosy Sunday evening, a new delivery of game reindeer had just arrived in Reykjavik.

"Our dishes are based on the classics: fish and lamb. We're proud of our menu and have no interest in following trends which would ultimately compromise what Einar Ben stands for. The menu's subtitle of 'pure Icelandic' refers to its ingredients, whereas the dishes are also based on French and Danish traditions. We pride ourselves on healthy portions and



heartly sauces", says owner Jóhann. That doesn't prevent innovation, however, and the restaurant has just developed a new menu that builds on their experience.

For starters, we were treated to a delicious langoustine & pumpkin soup, which set the mood for what was to come. The Arctic char served with a celeriac puree, mashed potatoes and spinach confirmed that Jóhann's claims of Einar Ben's seafood expertise were not exaggerated—truly exquisite. The lamb loin served with crushed potatoes and parsnip puree was cooked to perfection and shows what he means when he says that Icelandic lamb is the best in the world when cooked correctly. The skyr and ice cream desserts are not to be missed: true delicacies made with unique Icelandic ingredients, including freshly picked blueberries and rhubarb.

Unwind at the Red Bar

The 'red bar' on the top floor is ideal for following a top class meal with a drink in a tranquil atmosphere. Those looking for a place to start a night out on the town should try the red bar as well.

Einar Ben -ASF



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Images by Gabriel Rutenberg



DINE IN A VIKING HALL

Enjoy the Entertainment at the Viking Tavern

Welcome to the Land of the Vikings! You may not see their long boats in the harbour today, but there's one in Vikingakráin's restaurant. With their love of food and drink, is it any wonder that it has been converted into the bar for this most Viking of restaurants, set in the loft of one of the old buildings in the centre of Reykjavik.

As you walk through the entrance gate in the high wooden stockade, you feel you're entering a Viking hall.

Every night, diners are regaled by entertainment similar to the Vikings of old with actors, poets or storytellers. The experience is so authentic that, as you enjoy their hospitality with food and drinks, sitting at massive wood tables, you can easily imagine yourself as a Viking.

Give them a call to book your dinner, as this is a popular venue. It's the way to be totally immersed in the life and culture of the Vikings—and will doubtless give you a few

surprises and something to tell people when you get home. After all, how many people encounter Vikings and live to tell the tale?

Vikingakráin -ASF



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THE PUB THE IRISH BROUGHT

The Emerald Isle's gift to Iceland: The Dubliner

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and the best beer and some of the men. Everyone knows what the Irish are like with some beer inside them. Out come the greatest singers and musicians, the most spellbinding story-tellers, the most eloquent poets...Need I say more?

You can meet them yourself in this downtown pub where pleasure is just a pint away. And if you fancy yourself as a singer, go on Thursdays for their open

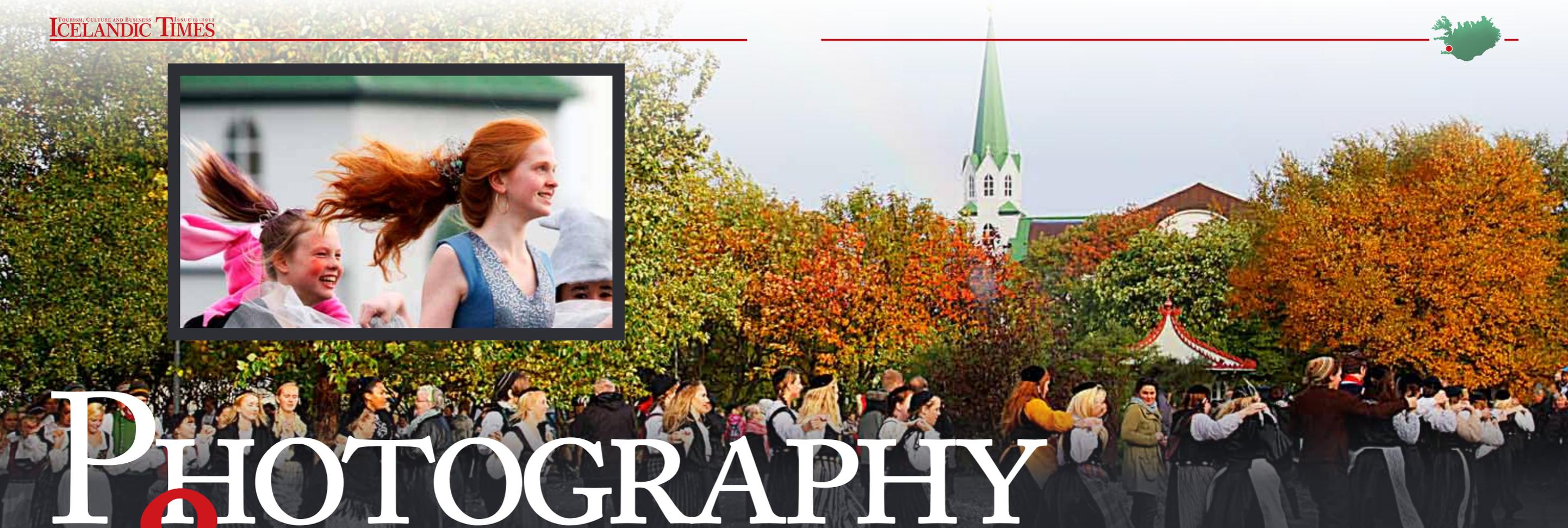
mic evenings. You'll find the audience very sympathetic, won't yer now?

Dubliner -ASF



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PHOTOGRAPHY & FOOD

Esja Travel's Special Interest Tours

Iceland is one of the most amazing treasure troves in the world when it comes to landscape photography. Summers are characterised by brilliant greens, blacks and blues and winters with great black and white opportunities and northern lights.

Iceland is also well known for both its fresh fish caught in the Atlantic Ocean, its free-ranging sheep and its genetically superior milk products.

Photography Tours

Are you a professional or amateur photographer? Look no further. Iceland is the right country for any landscape photographer. Esja Travel has put together 1-, 2-, 3- and 6-day itineraries which include the highlights of the southern part of the country—arguably the best photographic area in Iceland.

The tours include some classic waterfalls, such as Gullfoss, Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. Gullfoss is always impressive because of its size; Seljalandsfoss has a path behind it for an unusual angle; and Skógafoss is a classic waterfall with perfect proportions. On sunny days one can expect a rainbow in all of the waterfalls.

The route also covers each one of the country's major glaciers. It also includes the world-famous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, some black sandy beaches and sea stacks. This programme is tried and tested and participants have given it rave reviews.

Local Food Tours

Are you a fan of tasty, healthy food or interested in submersing yourself in Iceland's food culture? Esja Travel has put



together two different programmes to suit the traveller who's ready to look behind the scenes and taste some of the local fare. The first programme concentrates on fish and the second programme focuses on farm products, such as the Icelandic lamb.

Iceland prides itself on its pollution-free air and water. Fish is and has been the main export from Iceland since around 1400. Fish caught in the Atlantic Ocean include cod, haddock, halibut and rose fish—to name but a few of the most important species.

The Icelandic lamb is of excellent quality and is free-ranging in the summer. In fact, one of the oldest still-surviving customs in Iceland is to round up the sheep in the autumn after they've nurtured themselves grazing on the short-lived, but nutritious, arctic mountain grasses and mosses.



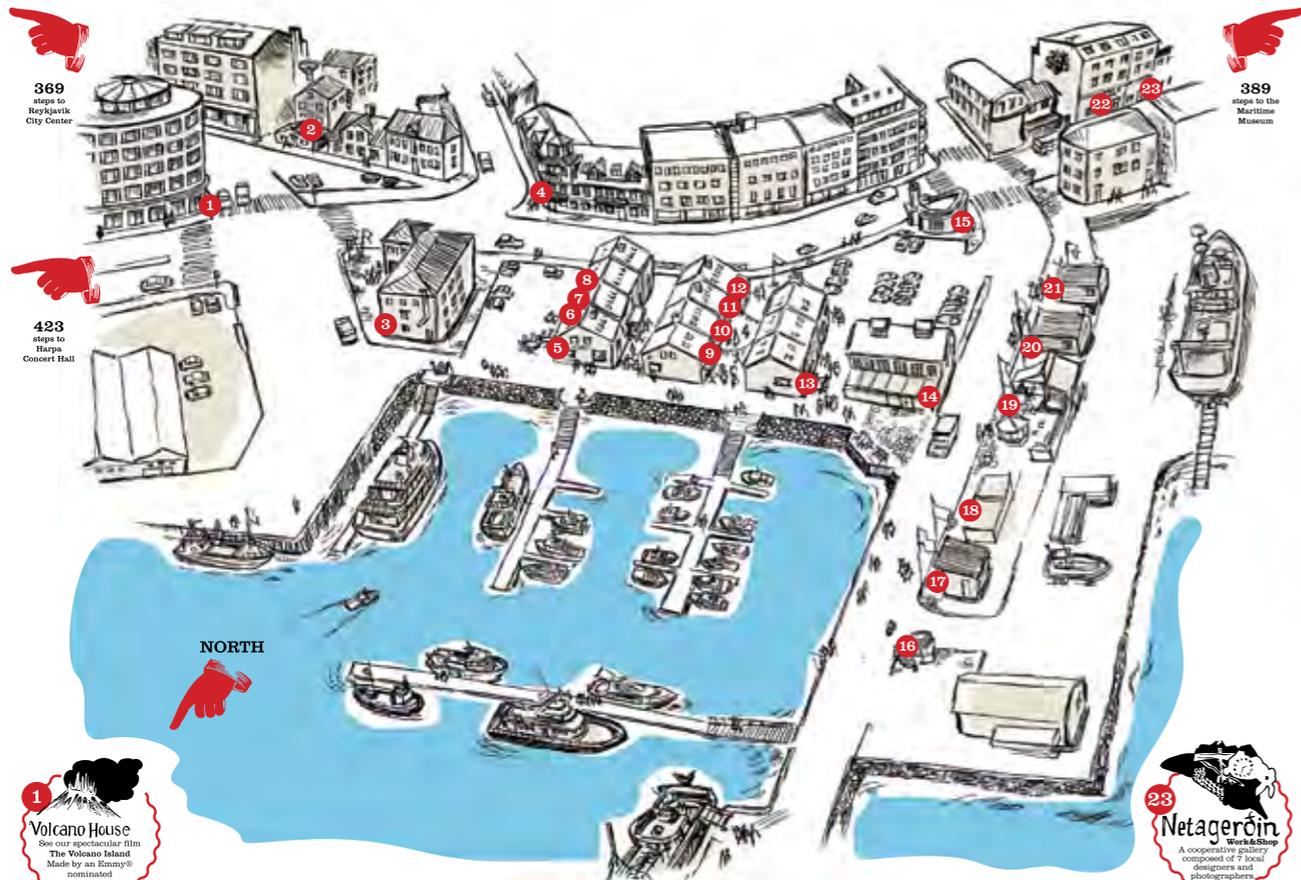
Cow's milk in Iceland has a unique enzyme composition, which is why very few people in Iceland suffer from lactose intolerance.

ESJA Travel provides a personalised service to meet every guest's expectations. Esja is a licensed tour operator and travel agency which specialises in scheduled and private sightseeing tours, adventure activities, food and photography tours.



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ICELAND VS. THE VOLCANO

On fire in the basement, on show at Reykjavik's Volcano House

With its intriguing round facade, floor to ceiling windows and bright yellow signage, Volcano House is steadily growing in popularity. It's an inviting café, decorated in warm earthy colours and furnished with teak Scandinavian furniture from the 60's and 70's, is as popular with the locals as it is with foreign visitors.

Who better to run this unique combination of cinema, geology exhibit, café and gift shop than a family from the Westman Islands? Three siblings, Dagbjört, Hörður, Þórir, and their spouses, are all involved in the daily operations of this multitasking

establishment that aims to provide visitors with a friendly environment in which to get acquainted with Iceland's geology. It's also an excellent café on its own merit, where you can order coffee, teas, home-baked goods or take a shot at that infamous Icelandic snack – shark and brennivín.

In the heart of Volcano House lies a small paying cinema that shows two short 20 minute films starring two of Iceland's most notorious volcanoes of the last 50 years, the first of which takes you back to the 1973 eruption in the Westman Islands. The real protagonists in all of this volcanic drama

however, are the Icelanders themselves, who valiantly evacuated all 5,000 residents from the island in just a few hours in the middle of that fateful night.

The second film covers the recent eruptions of Fimmvörðuháls and Eyjafjallajökull, in all their fiery splendour and glory, and will undoubtedly leave you with a better understanding of what brought most of Europe's air traffic to a standstill just a few short years ago. The accompanying dramatic music and breathtaking aerial photography contributes all the more to this riveting documentary's impact and power.

If this is your first time in Iceland, a visit to Volcano House will provide you with a splendid overview of how volcanic activity has moulded and shaped Icelandic society and its impact on the country as a whole. Icelanders, after all, have always had to deal with ever unpredictable mother nature, who usually has the last word in the matter of how one plans one's day, or, as the case may be, one's life.



Volcano House



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Images by Gabriell Rutenberg



THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

The Sea Baron's Fish Meals attract visitors from all over the world

Iceland has many 'different' foods which have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods and their traditions continue to this day.

Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!

A True Fisherman

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of unusual fish dishes. His lobster soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title

of 'the world's greatest lobster soup'. While he doesn't reveal the secrets of his recipe, that doesn't stop his restaurant from being filled every day with afficianados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware store to buy a grill—and was in business! His visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out of the way to make room for tables and chairs.

He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no-one else had thought of trying. He took old recipes, some of

which sounded revolting, and from them, made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia donated by old sea captains and their families, that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats, pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together and where the fishermen used to sleep when coming to land.

Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, is an experience that will leave you with both good memories, a satisfied appetite—and perhaps, a rather shocked mind that you would actually have eaten fermented fish and that it tasted so, so good.

Smoked in Succulence

A true pioneer, Kjartan is always coming up new ideas. Besides the smoked eel, Kjartan has taken to smoking mackerel and the special grey halibut, the delicious flat fish with both eyes on top. His technique imbues the fish with a delicious flavour that has to be tasted to be believed.

Sægreifinn -ASF



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JEWELS & ART BY THE SEA

Sædís hand crafts jewellery in her studio at the Old Harbour



Sædís, whose name means 'Goddess of the Sea', works with all the precious metals, which she combines with gemstones, blue, appropriately, being her favourite and Icelandic stones like the lava stone. Her respect for the environment and a strong emphasis on quality is evident in all aspects of her work. She uses green practices in choosing her elaborately handcrafted materials and fair trade stones.



For centuries, jewellery has had a special place in the heart. An object of art and beauty, a gift of love to be treasured. To find craftsman-made jewellery is a rarity in today's mass-produced world.

Sædís creates designs that range from the most feminine to pieces for both men and women. They evoke images of Iceland's most distinct symbols, nature and pure water.



Custom-made Beauty

Sædís also makes pieces embodying the wishes of clients using whatever metal they request, making a unique and precious gift from the heart.

She also sells quality fish leather products and fine art pieces by significant Icelandic artists.

Sædís sells her creations online at saedis.etsy.com and through her website, making her designs available worldwide but if you're in Reykjavik, a visit to her open workshop and gallery is a worthwhile experience.

Sædís the Jeweller -ASF



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EAT THAI IN ICELAND

Delicious Downtown Thai Dishes at Krua Thai

Down by the Old Harbour in the centre of Reykjavik is a restaurant that serves such good Thai food that visitors from Thailand and groups know to go there. All the key ingredients are imported straight from Thailand to be cooked by experienced Thai chefs. This results in that genuine experience of a truly delicious meal, which is so enjoyable.

A full range of Thai meals with a wide range of options is available, each being made to order and freshly cooked on the spot.

The restaurant itself lends authenticity to the experience, being decorated in traditional Thai style.

Take-away and home delivery are available. There is a second branch close to the Smáralind



shopping centre, one in Grafavogur and one in Akureyri, called Krua Síam.

After having lived many years in Thailand, I can attest to the range and taste of Krua Thai's dishes. It is definitely my restaurant of choice when dining out, Thai food being my favourite.

Krua Thai -ASF



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HARBOURSIDE SUSHI

Sushismiðjan-Midori, a Top Class Restaurant at the Old Harbour

In one of the bright green buildings down at the old harbour is Sushismiðjan, a bright and busy sushi restaurant.

Serving a range of tasty sushi dishes with sake, wine or beer, this is a very popular eating and meeting place.



Sitting on the patio on a warm summer day, enjoying a delicious sushi and the view over the harbour to Mount Esja across the bay, this is the life! For freshness, the harbour is the place to be. The combination of Icelandic fish and sushi cannot be beaten for quality and flavour - and its presentation is top class.

The menu offers Makis, Nigiris and Sashimis, along with a mixed vegetable sushi and different children's dishes. Japanese noodles with chicken, vegetables or Tiger prawns, fish or miso soup, seafood or beef salad round out the main courses. For dessert, there is chocolate cake with cream, ice cream and fresh berry smoothies.

The restaurant is open from 11:30 am to 11 pm. Take-away meals can be ordered by phone or on the web. They cater for companies, parties and lunches, too.

Sushismiðjan

-ASF



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DELVE INTO THE OLD WORLD

Experience the Viking Ways at Viking Loft

This is where the Vikings lived and died. But their culture did not die with them. It carries on to this day. In Viking Loft, you can find authentic Viking clothing and Viking-style clothing - beautiful designs based on the Viking concept but brought up-to-date with modern materials, created in the traditional manner. The result is a range of outfits that will turn heads anywhere for their flair and beauty.

Set in the loft of one of the renovated green fisherman's buildings down at the old harbour in central Reykjavik, Viking Loft is a centre for Viking culture and lifestyle. Besides the clothing for men and women, it is a resource centre with books, crystals, stones, herbal infusions and incense sticks created from a variety of Icelandic botanical elements.

For a deeper look into Viking life, there is a chance to get a reading from a Völva - a

Viking medium. The kings and leaders of old would never make a major move without first consulting these spiritual people. Perhaps you shouldn't either!

The Viking Loft

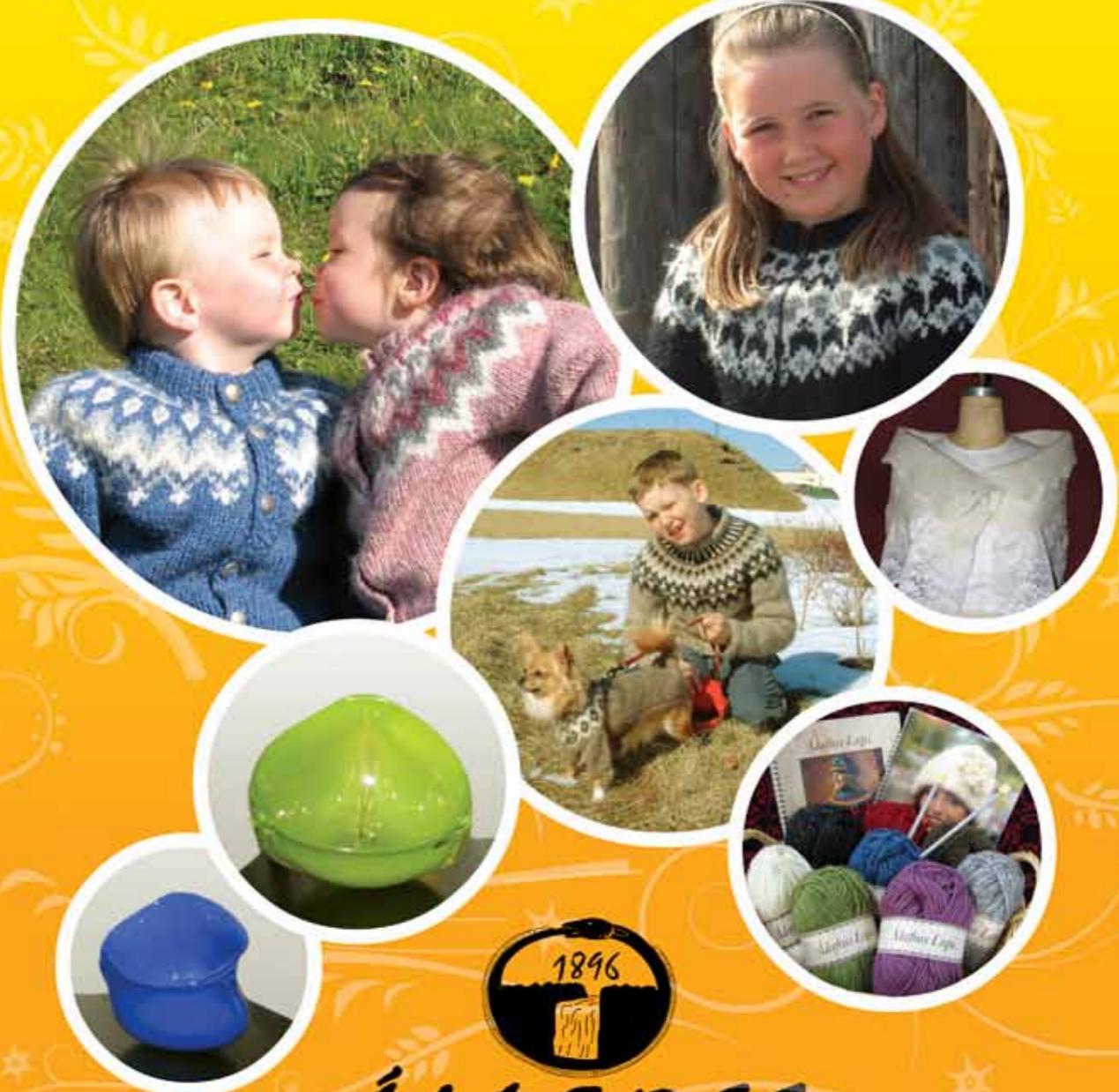
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MEN WHO MADE ICELAND

Jónas Hallgrímsson changed the face of Icelandic poetry

Many of Iceland's greatest heroes were not fearsome warriors but all were fighters for what they passionately believed in. They were not from the cities, as Iceland didn't possess any. Their education was not in a monolithic edifice, churning out spiritless robots but in the home and the fields and on the sea, where character was built in the face of adversity.

Jónas Hallgrímsson was born the third of four children in 1807 in the beautiful valley of Öxnadalur, a narrow dale enclosed on both sides by high mountains with jagged peaks.

From these humble beginnings, surrounded by a culture of oral story-telling of folklore, poetry and sagas, in the pristine beauty of the nature he would later write about, he rose in his short lifetime to become the nation's most loved and popular poet.

A Stale Diet

From the sagas of the Middle Ages, Icelandic poetry had fallen into a stale regimen of pathos and criticism. Even the poems of

Jónas' role model, Eggert Ólafsson, who broke new ground with his writing, are considered stale and dull by comparison.

Jónas was schooled for six years at the Latin school in Bessastaðir, now the home of the Icelandic president, with a rigorous training in Latin and Greek classics that would stand him in good stead. He developed an interest in science that was ahead of his time but didn't live long enough to codify his ideas.

University in Revolution

In 1832, he sailed to Copenhagen, where he started studying law at the university. After 4 years, he switched to literature and natural sciences, excelling in both. Revolutionary fervor was sweeping Europe, with independence movements fighting for freedom from the established order. With three friends, he founded a magazine, Fjólñir, for which he wrote for the rest of his life. Its goal was to inspire patriotism in Iceland.



On graduating, he was given a grant to do scientific research in Iceland, which gave him the opportunity to follow his interest in botany. He had only really just begun to formulate his ideas when he fell down the stairs at his home in Denmark. Blood poisoning set in and led to his untimely death.

A Literary Legacy

Thus, it is for his poetry that he is best known, rather than his scientific work. He first published many of his poems in Fjólñir. His poetry expresses his love for his country, its beauty and landscapes that so influenced his early life, in particular. He is considered to be a founding father of the Icelandic Romanticist movement and his style completely changed the direction and form of Icelandic poetry, breathing new life and vigor into its expression.

Such was his influence on Icelandic literature that his birthday, 16th November, is celebrated as Icelandic Language Day. Each year, the Minister of Education gives the Jónas Hallgrímsson Award to an author in recognition of their contribution to Icelandic literature.



BEST WAY TO SEE THE CITY

Reykjavik Bike Tours' original way to see Reykjavik is also the best

If you're in good health and know how to balance a bicycle, you'll enjoy riding with one of Reykjavik Bike Tour's entertaining and professional guides. They offer bicycle tours and rentals in Reykjavik all year. In summer, they also do day trips out of town in a minibus with a bicycle combination to places not to be missed.

No. 1 on Trip Advisor

Reykjavik Bike Tours has enjoyed top position on the Trip Advisor social traveller website for the past three years. It is Ursula and Stefan's family business, founded in 2009. Travellers appreciate the friendly welcome, knowledgeable guides, the outdoor activity and excellent quality bicycles.

Classic Reykjavik Tour – 2.5 hrs / 7 km

This tour is the perfect introduction to the capital city of Iceland and is offered all year. You can expect to see some of the city's hidden secrets while learning about its history from a professional and enthusiastic local tourist guide. You get to know what the city is all about – in terms of its history, best museums, best restaurants, current special events and much, much more. Perhaps the most important aspect of this tour, apart from the exercise, of course, is the direct access to the local guide giving the tour.

Holiday Bicycle Tour

Reykjavik Bike Tours offers one scheduled tour in winter, and five scheduled tours in summer; two in the city, and three which



require the assistance of a minibus and trailer. Combine all five and you've got yourself a holiday bicycle tour.

The two city tours are the Classic Reykjavik – 2.5 hrs / 7 km, and the Coast of Reykjavik – 2.5 hrs / 18 km. The Classic tour has plenty of stops and is quite easy for anyone in good health. The Coast tour is also fairly easy but covers more than twice the distance of the Classic tour.

The three tours that involve the use of a minibus and trailer are: Golden Circle & Bike – 8 hrs / 25 km; Westman Isles & Bike – 9 hrs / 11 km and Blue Lagoon & Bike – 8 hrs / 18 km. For more information, please visit Reykjavik Bike Tour's website.

Ursula and Stefan love what they do and receive every visitor with a friendly smile.

Reykjavik Bike Tours



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-SHV



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NOW SHOWING AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

The National Museum of Iceland offers an insight into Icelandic history and culture. The Museum's permanent exhibition "Making of a Nation—Heritage

and History in Iceland" is designed to illuminate the country's history by placing the cultural heritage in a historical context, guided by the question, "What makes

a nation?" Temporary exhibitions are arranged on a regular basis, with new ones opening every few months.

Here are three exhibitions now showing:



THE MATCH OF THE CENTURY

In the Land of Chess, History was Made

For many people the world over, the 'Match of the Century' refers to one event: the 1972 chess match between defending champion, the Russian, Boris Spassky and the 29 year-old American, Robert Fischer. In the midst of the

Cold War, the match was fraught with political overtones.

Iceland, being half-way between the two protagonists' countries and a chess-playing nation, was the natural venue. Today, visitors can catch the spirit of the match

in the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavik, right next to the university. The special exhibition is just one of a very diverse range of exhibitions, both temporary and permanent at this museum, known for its creativity in bringing history to life in very interesting ways.

'Bobby' Fischer, started the match with a disastrous loss of the first two games after his eccentric behaviour had almost led to its abandonment. He had never won a game from Spassky, though he had beaten other grand masters. In a match full of drama and controversy, Fischer beat the Russian master by 7 games to 3, with 11 drawn.



Fischer, who was later given Icelandic citizenship, after feeling persecuted by his own country, died in Iceland aged 64 in 2008 and is remembered as one of the greatest chess players. Spassky remains the oldest living former world chess champion at 75 years old.

struggles against all the odds provide the background of a special exhibition at the National Museum of Iceland. The dramatic story of his search and all he went through, risking life and limb with his faithful dog and bellwether sheep, is told in equally dramatic black and white photos from the area of North Iceland where the story is set by photographer, Sigurjón Pétursson.

A folk tale with meaning

A folk tale, penned by Gunnar Gunnarsson, who was nominated for the Nobel Prize, the story is both a parable and a gripping story, the shepherd's survival a matter outside his own control, and the eventual outcome, a moving testimony to the simple standards of service to others that are often overlooked in today's society.



ADVENT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Iceland's mountainous wastelands are no place to be in December

Winter in Iceland can be both beautiful and dangerous, with sudden storms, blizzards, ice and bitter cold—especially up in the mountains of the north. Every year, in the autumn, a big festival takes place, bringing the sheep down to the safety of the sheep barns before the storms set in. However,

there are always a few who get lost. They face almost certain death in the winter.

A Photo Story with a difference

Every year, a farmer set off at the beginning of Advent to look for those lost sheep and bring them to safety. His

This summer, the Museum's Photo Gallery displays the cliffhanger rescue against almost impossible odds that gripped the world at Christmas time



PLUCKED FROM STORMY SEAS

A daring rescue at the remote Látrabjarg was heard around the world

On the 5th December 1947, the trawler Dhoon slipped out of Fleetwood, bound for the West Fjords area to fish.

A week later, the trawler was caught in a ferocious storm. Mountainous seas, storm-force winds and blizzard conditions made it impossible to see more than a few metres and then, in the darkness, a sickening crunch. They were stuck fast on the rocks. A sailor's nightmare.

Dawn showed the full horror of their predicament. Towering over them was a sheer cliff, 600 feet high, covered in snow and ice. Rescue looked impossible. The skipper and

two crewmen were lost overboard in the storm. Twelve crew members were still alive.

Their distress call was picked up in Reykjavik and a message was sent immediately to the nearest farm. No vehicles were available. The farmers hiked to the cliff, finally finding the stricken ship and a rescue operation began. Twelve courageous men from the nearby farms, young and old set out in terrible weather. The trek was slippery and hazardous.

They set up a base on the exposed cliff top then rappelled down to a small ledge some 80 metres (240 feet) above sea level. From there, four continued down to the shore. They

climbed and slid over the icy rocks for 4 km, laden with the heavy ropes and rescue gear, in constant danger of falling rocks and lashed by the spray in the bitter cold of the storm.

Arriving at the site of the wreck, they spotted some men at its stern. On the second attempt, a rocket reached the ship and the rescue began. Before darkness fell, all 12 crewmen had been rescued and 7 had been hauled up to the ledge with one of the rescuers before the tide cut them off. The remaining men spent the night on the shore where two were injured by falling rocks.

Those on the narrow ledge had to stay the night, their feet hanging over the edge, with their rescuers keeping them warm and safe.

The men were almost dead from exhaustion when they reached the cliff top where villagers had set up a tent. From there, they were taken on horseback to the farms and nearest village, where the womenfolk fed and cared for them. By now, everyone was exhausted by the hard work, the bitterly cold weather, exposure and lack of sleep.

A Royal Navy ship collected the 12 survivors who were all safely home for Christmas. The rescue team was later specially honoured by Queen Elizabeth for their successful but extremely hazardous mission.

—ASF



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HEALTHY EATING IN REYKJAVIK

Grænn kostur—Vegetarian Classic Restaurant in the centre of town

When Icelanders hear the phrase ‘vegetarian cuisine’, the first place that comes to mind is probably Grænn kostur. Literally meaning ‘a green choice’, this cosy restaurant has been on the same spot in Skólavörðustígur for over 15 years. A pioneer in providing a vegetarian and healthy food choice in Reykjavik, Grænn kostur serves classical dishes loved by their many regular customers.

A hidden health gem

Grænn kostur is not a big restaurant, but is repeatedly complimented for its cosiness by customers, many of whom visit this hidden gem of the central area frequently.

While the address is Skólavörðustígur, the street leading towards Reykjavik’s landmark Hallgrímskirkja, one enters the restaurant from the back, round the corner on Bergstaðastræti.

Grateful for the response

“We are proud of our pure vegetarian cuisine and grateful for the response from our customers, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian,” says Jóhanna Jónasdóttir, the service manager of Grænn kostur. “Recently, we made a survey among our customers, asking about their experience of the restaurant and the quality of the food and service. We were pleasantly surprised by the response from the around 200 people who participated. 94% of them gave us between eight-to-ten on a scale from zero-to-ten.”

Jóhanna herself combines her vegetarian and health-oriented lifestyle working at

Grænn kostur with a career as an actress and bellydance teacher. Many of the customers also participate in the recent, but growing health-conscious lifestyle in Iceland. Grænn kostur was, in fact, a pioneer in health matters fifteen years ago, introducing ideas on the importance of organic, vegetarian and healthy eating.

Classic vegetarian dishes

Jóhanna adds that, according to the survey, their customers not only loved their hearty food but were pleased with the warm service



of the staff. “Many people come nearly every week for our renowned spinach-lasagna, knowing the menu by heart. Sometimes we even see queues start outside our door!” says Jóhanna. “We list the ingredients of the dishes so people can see what’s in them and our staff help with special wishes. We also have a vegan alternative for most dishes if they are not already vegan.”

“We want our food to be natural and full of life, thus we use as many organic ingredients as possible and make everything from scratch, knowing exactly what we are serving people,” says Jóhanna.

What’s on the Menu?

The daily menu consists of the dish of the day, in addition to the soup of the day with hummus and bread. The pies at Grænn kostur have become a classic in Iceland, both the Indian and the spinach pies.

Grænn kostur also serves an assortment of cakes and cookies, including super-healthy raw cakes, with a full and flavoury taste. The cake selection is completely free of white sugar and wheat, enabling you to have a treat without a guilty conscience.

This lovely restaurant is a great choice for anyone wanting to eat healthy, yet delicious food. When eating at Grænn kostur, you know that you’re treating your body right while your taste buds swoon with pleasure from the delicious taste.

-NHH

Grænn Kostur



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LIVING AND BREATHING MARKET

Reykjavik’s source of fresh and healthy food and meals

LIFANDI markaður – literally meaning ‘a living market’ is an organic grocery store and a restaurant where you can get all the healthy food you need in one place. The grocery store offers a wide variety of high-quality local and organic choices and, at the same time, you can sit down at the in-store restaurant and have a nice meal, delicious juices or smoothies.

Close to hotels and shopping centres

The flagship store and restaurant is within a fifteen minutes walking distance of the city centre, in a spacious, stylish location that includes both the market and the restaurant on Borgartún in Reykjavik and its second store and restaurant is found in Hæðarsmári, close to the Smáralind shopping centre in Kópavogur.

Whether you will be cooking while staying in Reykjavik or want to eat healthy travelling around the country, LIFANDI markaður is a great place to go to do your shopping. An assortment of healthy bread, fresh fish, organic fruits, Icelandic blueberries; these are all among the various choices of delicious food you can buy at LIFANDI markaður. And you can trust that its products do not contain any artificial additives, sweeteners, colourings and preservatives.

Smell the aroma of fresh health

When entering the market, one is greeted with a fresh cooking aroma while taking in the wide selection of colourful groceries. Just by the fridge full of fresh fruits and vegetables,

one can find Icelandic seaweed, like ‘söl’, which might be an exotic choice to try for many newcomers. Beside that, you will find a good selection of jams and chutneys made in Iceland. Production of organic, healthy food of all kinds has increased gradually these last few years in Iceland. One hardly needs to mention that LIFANDI markaður has a great selection of veggie products.

Relax in the restaurant

When shopping in LIFANDI markaður, make sure you don’t miss the delicious meals or amazing smoothies, full of energy. In fact, the restaurant itself is a great reason for visiting LIFANDI markaður. There, you can have the day’s special, both vegetarian and non vegetarian, the



Image by Gabriel Rutenberg

soup of the day, a fresh salad bar along with selection of cold dishes. Care is taken only to choose as healthy and wholesome ingredients as possible, along with as much organic as possible.

High energy smoothies power your day

The smoothie-and-juice bar is constantly growing in popularity among the customers; especially a smoothie called “Green Thunder,” which, in spite of its green spinach colour, is full of flavour caused by the sweet mango mixed with the spinach. All the smoothies are 100% real fruit and are low in fat and high in energy, making them a good start for the day.

If you are looking for top-quality, healthy, organic food on your vacation, Lifandi markaður is the place for to go, both for shopping and to have a taste of one of Iceland’s best in the field of healthy eating in the lovely restaurant.

-NHH

Lifandi markaður



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THE CALL OF THE WILD

Enter the lives of the seamen and fishermen at Reykjavík's Maritime Museum, Víkin

The sea has helped the Icelanders survive down through the centuries but it hasn't been a free ride. Whilst shoals of fish swim the oceans surrounding this remote northern country, getting them to the dining table can be challenging, to say the least. Iceland's fishing grounds have provided a rich harvest for generations of fishermen but often, the cost has been very high.

Until recent years, almost all international trade was conducted by sea. In today's industrialised world, most people know little of the life of the seaman and the fisherman and their communities. Their fish appears in the supermarkets in shrink-wrapped polystyrene packets. So it's a special experience to enter into the world and lives of the fishermen and sailors - something that brings out a childhood wonder at being able to see, touch, feel and even dress like they did.

The Icelandic Maritime Museum is filled with the feeling of life with the sea. You can see how former generations struggled with the challenges and the boats they used. You

imagine just what it must have been like to go out in a small open boat, rowing for your life when the skies filled with storms and the waves rose as high as houses. It was a battle for survival that everyone took part in together - men, women and children. The communities pulled together and worked together to harvest the sea's bounty. The young grew into responsibilities at an early age in this tough environment. Though the women generally took care of the hard work of processing and cleaning of the fish once



they were landed, many's the time that they would also go out on the boats to ensure their family's livelihood and very survival.

With the modernisation and mechanisation of the fishing industry, conditions have improved considerably. Using real and reconstructed collections and dramatic video footage, the museum gives a very clear understanding of Iceland's maritime history down through the years, covering each of its periods with its hands-on realistic exhibitions. Where else could you jump into a fisherman's bed without upsetting someone?

It was not only the fishermen who braved the seas but also the Icelandic coastguard, part of whose role was to rescue ships that got in distress. For all those that were lost in the wild storms and winter blizzards, there were many more that were rescued. Just in the 46-year service of the Óðinn, the first modern Icelandic coastguard ship, over 200 ships were rescued and more crews were saved, often in extreme weather conditions. Its crew also took part in rescue operations when land transport was practically

impossible, due to the weather. It carried doctors, nurses, supplies and rescue workers from Reykjavik in atrocious, violently stormy weather when an avalanche struck in the West Fjords, serving as a base of rescue operations while there.

When Iceland had to defend its fishing rights in each of the three Cod Wars, it was the Óðinn that fended off British frigates, trawlers and tug boats and enforced the fishing limits designed to protect fish stocks that were being severely depleted by foreign fishing boats.



Today, the Óðinn is a living museum that visitors can tour. It has the feeling of being lived in, with everything still in place from its times of active duty. This provides a very special opportunity to see what life is like on the high seas for adults and children alike. A DVD story of its history, available in the museum's shop, makes very interesting viewing.

There's nothing sterile about this museum. It's an action museum where visitors get the feeling of becoming part of the seafaring community. This is heightened when meeting some of the former crew of the Óðinn who regularly get together in the museum's cafeteria with wives (or husbands) and friends.

The museum is located at Grandi - just at the end of the road that runs along the harbour, and a 5-minute walk from the centre of town and it is open daily in winter, from Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 5pm, weekends from 1pm to 5pm. Summer opening times are from daily from 10am to 6pm, from 1st June-1st September.

-ASF

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WONDERS AT MY DOORSTEP

Look at all these people with backpacks and maps and picnicbags,” I said to my sister in genuine surprise last summer when the stream of travellers to my lovely little hometown reached a whole new level. “Seriously, why do they come here?” My sister, (being the sharper knife in the drawer) looked at me with a raised eyebrow. I answered: “Don’t they have every reason to want to come here? I mean, just look around you.”

In the routine of daily life I guess we all have a tendency to become a little dispassionate about the obvious wonders in our everyday

surroundings, even though they’re right there in front of you, staring you invitingly in the eye. An old Icelandic saying states that “A guest sees with a clear eye,” so I decided to look at my hometown with the eyes of a guest and discover it anew. What I found is that I live in the most wonderful little “goody bag”, a real treat for your spirit and senses.

With its humble population and beautiful scenery, Mosfellsbær offers its residents and visitors a little bit of everything you can ask for; a relaxed, safe and especially family-friendly community in the midst of a gorgeous landscape, with proximity to both sea and mountains, plenty of green areas, playgrounds and interesting local attractions. Plus you’re just minutes away from both the capital as well as the more rural places of note such as Þingvellir and the Golden Circle.

A mere fifteen minute drive from Reykjavík, the town rests in a cosy embrace of seven hills and stretches down to the shore of Kollafjörður fjord. Across the fjord, mount Esja rises in all its splendour and bids you welcome; white in its snowy bridesveil

in winter, indigo blue from the spreads of lupine in summer. There is certainly no shortage of beauty in this place but that’s by no means all there is to it.

The possibilities to enjoy outdoor activities are endless and the numerous walking and hiking paths, with information signs for further insight into the area’s nature and wildlife, make this place perfect for those who like to get around on foot or by bike. The town has two swimming pools, one brand new, with great waterslides for the kids to play in as well as several hot tubs, saunabaths



and top notch facilities. It also prides itself on a gorgeous golf course stretching along the shore with a breathtaking view of the ocean.

For families, the outdoor recreational areas that form what locals call “The Adventure Park,” should be a real hit. With their unusual equipment and natural surroundings, they’re a great excuse to kick of your shoes and find the kid in you. Those who dare can walk up to Kaldakvísl waterfall, somewhat of a hidden gem, and jump in like the town’s teenagers do in the spring- and summertime.

Mosfellsbær really has the feel of country living and the numerous horses and stables in the area bear strong witness to that. The Icelandic horse is a big part of the country’s history and some say that the best way to experience Iceland is from a horse’s back. A horse ride through the beautiful scenery is nothing less than invigorating and in the summertime there’s even a riding school for kids.

Through the years one of the town’s main attractions has been the Álafoss area and its old woollen factory where nature and culture



come together. This little village is the home and workplace of artists and craftsmen who seek inspiration in its serenity. The river Varmá runs through it and all around it are spaces perfect for a picnic and lazy walks.

In the summertime, when the town really comes to life, local markets, both in Álafoss and Mosfellsdalur, are a regular event, selling homemade goods, flowers and arts and crafts.

And last but not least, the town’s bakery is an entire world of its own! Its reputation has travelled far out of Mosfellsbær and attracts customers from all over. Run by Hafliði Ragnarsson, a master baker and chocolatier, it’s a state of the art gourmet shop and café, selling not just bread and pastries but all sorts of delicatessen as well as Hafliði’s handmade chocolates.

So after giving it a second thought, it’s really not at all surprising that travellers seem to have such great interest in my “backyard”. I feel extremely proud to welcome those who visit it and there’s no doubt in my mind that it offers each and everyone something that will absolutely make their day and live in their memory long after they leave and return to their own ‘backyards’. I, on the other hand, am so grateful for never having to leave and will gladly remain a permanent traveller in Mosfellsbær!

-HP

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CAN WE INVITE YOU OVER?

Mosfellsbær opens a new tourist information office at the lovely Hotel Laxnes

As the hometown of Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness, Mosfellsbær has long been a popular stop for travellers. Every year, thousands of tourists visit his former home, now a museum. The area has a lot more to offer, however and consequently the town, in collaboration with the local Hotel Laxnes, has set up an excellent information office for visitors.

Perfect location, plenty to do

Located at Hotel Laxnes, in the heart of town, the Information Office helps both people passing through and hotel guests organise their stay and get the most from their visit. This makes the world of a difference for visitors and can save both time and money, of course. Hotel manager,

Shaun Roberts, says most people come to Mosfellsbær to visit Álafoss woollen factory or hike up nearby Mount Esja but are pleasantly surprised by the range of other activities and services at hand.

The mountainous area around the town is ideal for walks and hikes and opportunities for outdoor activities, such as horseback riding, fishing and swimming, are numerous. Shaun adds that much of the growing popularity of Mosfellsbær is due to its brilliant location. Right on Route One, it's a natural stop when heading both west and north but it's also the perfect place for those who want to stay in a relaxed environment surrounded by untouched nature, just minutes away from the city.

The no. 15 bus stops literally at the doorstep of Hotel Laxnes and it only takes about fifteen minutes to get to Reykjavík and less to Esja. You can easily stroll from the hotel to the most interesting sites in Mosfellsbær, such as Álafoss, where you'll find, in addition to the famous woollen outlet, a café and restaurant with a veranda and an excellent menu. Across the street from the hotel, you have the popular local bakery and café, a nice pub and restaurant serving, among other meals, fresh fish and great salads as well as a lovely giftstore where local craftspeople sell their creations. In summer, you can buy homegrown vegetables and other goods at the farmers' markets at nearby Reykir and Mosfellsdalur.

Hotel Laxnes

The hotel, open since 2008, has played a significant role in making Mosfellsbær attractive for tourists. The house is a country lodge with spacious and tastefully decorated rooms. The upper floor has a beautiful view of mount Esja and this summer, the hotel will have bicycles for rent and an outdoor hot tub. Customers agree that the hotel's cheerful, personal atmosphere and the staff's eagerness to please, really makes it stand out.

By increasing its service to tourists, Mosfellsbær is making the town's attractions as accessible to visitors as possible. Whether you're looking for a beautiful place to spend your day or an invigorating holiday resort, Mosfellsbær is sure to satisfy. Just stop by and see.

-HP

Hotel Laxnes



Háholt 7 - 270 Mosfellsbær
+354 566 8822
 info@hotellaxnes.is
 www.hotellaxnes.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



Image by Gabriel Rutenberg



THE SHEEP STAY WARM

Álafoss' wool keeps you warm and dry—just like the Icelandic sheep

Just 20 minutes from the centre of Reykjavik lies the town of Mosfellsbær on the road to the north. There, after passing under the bridge you will find a roundabout. Most traffic continues straight, but if you take a right turn, you'll immediately see the red-roofed building of the old mill, built next to the warm

álafoss or ála waterfall, from which the mill took its name. Built in 1896, the mill was used to knit woollens. It was here that the Icelandic woollen industry began and flourished.

The mill itself has closed but the building now houses the Álafoss store, where visitors find a very wide range of designs of woollen clothing, the yarn and everything associated with making the clothing, art and craft supplies and souvenirs.

The clothing ranges from traditional to high fashion and the wide range of styles and colours gives plenty of choice for men, women and children alike.

The Icelandic wool is noted for its special qualities. The fibres are made up of two different types of wool: a virtually waterproof outer layer and a soft, warm inner layer. This makes



clothing especially comfortable and suitable for all weathers. Sweaters made from this wool have been used for generations by farmers, fishermen, mountaineers - and the man or woman on the street, too. They are warm, shower-proof and comfortable.

Today, many young designers have taken the Icelandic wool to create a whole new range of designs and colours, whilst the store still carries a stock of the traditional designs that have become a fashion statement in themselves the world over.

Browsing clothing and knitting articles may not be to every man's taste but there is a lot to keep all the visitors interested, as the store is also a virtual museum. There are pieces of machinery, vintage-style cash registers, original early phones and examples of equipment used to make the company the powerhouse that it was in Icelandic society for so many years.



There is a small café at the back which overlooks the waterfall that started it all. It is the kind of store where you can relax and browse, enjoy the ambience and find those special gifts and personal items that are so rarely found in Europe or the rest of the world.

-ASF

Álafoss Wool Store



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

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



BAKED TO PERFECTION

30 Years supplying delicious hand-made bread and cakes at Mosfellsbakari

Just over 30 years ago, a young couple worked together at a summer job in the Westmann Islands. Later, they met again, working with the herring in the very east, in Seyðisfjörður. Love blossomed and Ragnar and Áslaug married.

They decided to start a bakery in Mosfellsbær. They wanted it to provide a real service to the then tiny community, so they added some tables and chairs in the cosy atmosphere of the warm bakery, so people could sit and chat over a coffee and cookies. That thoughtfulness, along with their growing range of delicious breads, cakes and pastries made them very popular. Travellers from Reykjavik would stop off on their way to the north.

Chocolate Lovers

An opportunity presented itself to open a branch in the capital and this, too, was soon thriving. Its reputation was enhanced when

Haflíði, Ragnar and Áslaug's son, started making his chocolate creations. These are real chocolates in contrast to the mass-produced bars in supermarkets and you can just taste the quality! Is it any wonder, therefore, that a branch has recently opened in Reykjavik's oldest house on Aðalstræti, specialising in these delicious delicacies?

The best of baking

Icelanders relish real, freshly-baked bread and pasties. Family events and parties always have a range of delicious cakes. Mosfellsbakari is now celebrating its own 30th anniversary in each of its 3 shops: downtown in Reykjavik's oldest house on Aðalstræti, in Háaleitisbraut and in Mosfellsbær. Their range of handmade breads, cakes, pastries, cookies, sandwiches and buns are so wholesome and delicious. In the latter two bakeries, there is also a delicatessen, showing their continued

commitment to service and innovation. The original bakery in Mosfellsbær has moved to larger premises at the shopping centre but it still retains its comfortable café, with more seating.



Start the day deliciously

Whether you are on a day trip or travelling around the country, stopping off at one of the bakeries will certainly give you a good start—and a good opportunity to stock up on delicious lunches, snacks and coffee to fortify you. The glittering silver Italian machines offer a good reminder of just how good coffee can taste when made right. And those chocolates? Don't tell your friends or relatives. They are just too good!

-ASF

Mosfellsbakari



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Háholti 13-15 • 270 Mosfellsbæ
 +354 566 6145
 mosbak@mosbak.is
 www.mosfellsbakari.is

Images by Gabriel Rutenberg



CRAFTSMAN AT WORK

In his workshop next to a waterfall, Palli carves knives for connoisseurs

Palli started a hobby 25 years ago. He took knife blades and carved handles for them. In the world of the mass-produced, an article made by a craftsman is something appreciated by connoisseurs in over 85 countries. It's very different from the mass-produced equivalent. In fact, there is often no equivalent. It is unique. It has been designed, created. A lot of thought, attention to detail and care have been poured into every aspect of it and that shows in the final product. For instance, Chippendale is famed for his furniture, Stradivarius for his violins. These were craftsmen whose creations stood out of the ordinary, becoming sought-after worldwide. There will always be people who seek and treasure the unique, the one-and-only: this is also what Palli offers.

An Outdoors Man's delight

Palli makes knives predominantly for people who love and live in the outdoors. He has made over 2,500 of them. Each one is different, each hand-crafted to perfection. What makes them different is the materials he uses for the handles.

Exotic Materials

A horse's hoof, a reindeer's antler, a goat's horn, a hippo's tooth, elm, fossilized wood, ebony - these are but a few of the materials

he uses to create a knife handle. Palli is always on the lookout for new materials and he carefully brings each one to its perfection to use with a knife. Each is carefully carved - sometimes using his 65 year-old dentist drill for the delicate parts.

How much patience do you have?

Could you wait for 6 years for a piece of wood to dry? Palli took a fossilized tree from the water that was turning into brown coal. He



wrapped it in plastic and, for the next 6 years, regularly pricked a tiny hole with a needle in the covering to let in more oxygen. Dry it too quickly, and it would splinter and crumble to dust. When he gets it right, the wood makes a strong, beautiful addition to a handle.

Swords of Damocles

Walk into Palli's workshop and you might find yourself sitting under about 50 blades from 2.5 cm to 15 cm in length - all hanging right over your head. Made of fine 3-layer, Damascus steel, they are work of a Danish blacksmith. Others are sourced from Norway, Sweden, Germany and as far afield as Pakistan. As you would expect, he only selects the best for the particular project he has in mind.

Made to Order, Made for Pleasure

Palli accepts custom orders and because he enjoys his craft, he also makes knives just for fun. There can be quite a competition for one of the custom rare knives.

You can find them in Brynja, the tool store on Laugavegur 29, the main shopping street and at Palli's workshop close to the old wool factory at Álafoss in Mosfellsbær.

-ASF

Palli the Knife Maker



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbæ
 +354 899 6903
 palli@knifemaker.is
 www.knifemaker.is



NOTHING BEATS A TASTY PIZZA

Dig in at Rizzo Pizzeria

Ever since it's opening a few years back, Rizzo Pizzeria has been a household name in Reykjavik. It soon became known as an authentic Italian pizzeria, high in quality, low in prices. It's simply where you go if you're craving a truly great pizza.

Several locations

Rizzo Pizzeria now has four restaurants operating in Reykjavik and the surrounding areas. The most recent one just opened in Mosfellsbær and is nicely situated in the town's centre. This summer, the place will have lovely outside facilities so guests can enjoy their meal in the open air. Rizzo's restaurant at Grensásvegur, not far from the centre of Reykjavik, is a great stop for those looking for a casual and cheerful atmosphere, where patrons can enjoy their meal with a glass of wine or a cold beer.

Great food, good price

Rizzo's menu is overflowing with mouth-watering compositions. For example, their four cheese pizzas served with jam are absolutely delicious! All the pizzas are Italian-style, oven-baked with a thin crust and rich tomato sauce. There's a great variety of cheeses to choose from and they place much emphasis on all the ingredients being as fresh as possible and of the highest quality. Customers who favour healthy options will find plenty to their liking since the menu also offers pizzas on a healthy note, topped with salad and dressing, in addition to other tasty, wholesome meals such as salads and wraps, stuffed with chicken and fresh vegetables and served with a delicious yogurt sauce. The lasting popularity of Rizzo is no coincidence; people have come



to know that they never let their standard drop and the price is more than fair.

Rizzo Pizzeria has an excellent website where you can see their menu, find out about offers and see the location of the restaurants on a map. They're open from Sunday to Wednesday between 11-21 and Thursday to Saturday between 11-22. They also offer home delivery and take away.

Locations

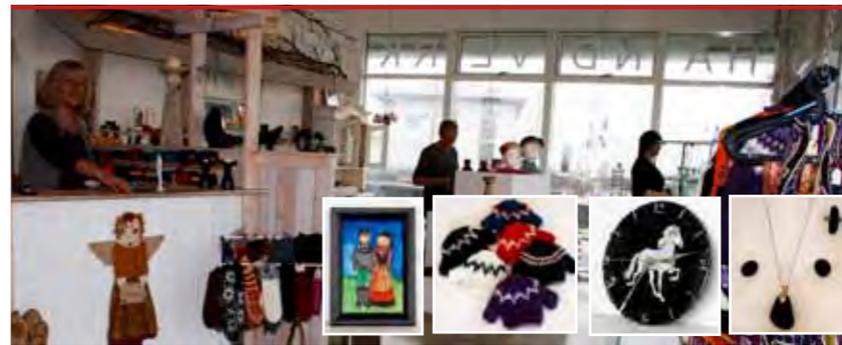
Bæjarlind 2, Kópavogur
 Urðarholt 2, Mosfellsbær
 Hraunbær 121, Reykjavík
 Grensásvegur 10, Reykjavík

Rizzo Pizzeria -HP

Urðarholt 2 • 270 Mosfellsbær
 +354 577 7000
 rizzo@rizzo.is
 www.rizzo.is



Images by Gabriel Rutenberg



THE CRAFTY SIDE OF MOSFELLSBÆR

Local craftwork at Handverkshúsið

In the very centre of Mosfellsbær, just across the street from Hotel Laxnes, you'll find an art and craft giftstore packed with beautiful handmade objects. The store, which also serves as a workshop for its owners, offers a broad selection of craftwork, utility design and decorative ornaments which clearly reflect the diversity of the seven craftswomen who have been running it for the past eleven years.

A wide collection of all things pretty

Not only does their work vary in method and material of use but also in style, so there's

quite a lot to choose from and whether you're looking for a special souvenir or a present, you're bound to find something that suits.

In its range of products you'll find beautiful crochet and woollen knitwear, like mittens and sweaters, but wool is also used in a more unusual manner, for example in colourful guestbooks and the prettiest lamps and candleholders that give the most wonderfully soft light.

There's also an assortment of ceramics in all shapes and sizes, everything from large bowls and centerpieces to the world's cutest thimbles! In addition,



there are various beautiful glass objects and delicate jewellery.

Handverkshúsið is open all weekdays from 14-18 and on Saturdays from 13-17 but arrangements can be made for other opening hours, especially for groups. Simply call one of the numbers on the front door.

Handverkshúsið -HP

Háholt 14 • 270 Mosfellsbær
 +354 847 7405
 katagretars@hotmail.com
 www.handmoso.com

BEST SPICE IN TOWN

Thai Express gives you a healthy bite from the exotic East

Thai Express in Mosfellsbær, with their authentic Thai cooking and reasonable prices, has been an instant success. It was a great addition to the local life and is a perfect stop for lunch or dinner for people passing through town who are looking for an alternative to the typical fast food meal. It's a nice place to sit down in but yet has a quick service and tasty, healthy food. Its also a great choice for the growing number of tourists

staying in Mosfellsbær since what could be nicer on a beautiful spring night than to have a picnic with your take away!

The menu has all the classic Thai favourites such as rich curries and stir-fry dishes, fried rice and noodles with either meat or vegetables, deep-fried dishes such as shrimp and spring rolls with an assortment of sauces to choose from, like the classic satay and the delicious mango and coriander. As an extra



healthy choice they offer freshly pressed juice from fruit and vegetables and protein shakes with berries. They also have a special children's menu and various offers and guests can buy beer and wine with their meal.

Thai Express is located on first floor in the small shopping centre of Mosfellsbær, Kjarninn.

Thai Express -HP

Pverholti 2 • 270 Mosfellsbær
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 thaiaexpress@thaiaexpress.is
 www.thaiaexpress.is

Images by Gabriel Rutenberg



piece one of a kind, a unique blend of art and nature. Karen, having a keen artistic eye, also makes jewellery and ornaments from seashells and decorative pearls, which make great presents. Also, their little heart-shaped stones, small enough to fit into a child's hand, and their funny little 'houses' are wonderful souvenirs. After all, what could be more perfect to bring home with you than a small piece of Iceland in your pocket?



Gallery Front -HP

Búagrund 13 • 116 Reykjavík
+354 695 9652
frontlist@front.is
www.front.is

YOUR OWN PIECE OF ICELAND

Art and nature collide at Gallery Front

In soothing closeness to the sea and nature, artists Valdís and her daughter, Karen, have made their long term dream come true. At their gorgeous home, by the shores of Kjalanes, they have opened a gallery, selling their distinctive craftwork made mostly from stones found on the slopes of the nearby mountain and on the beach by their doorstep.

Valdís, who has been fascinated by stones since childhood and an avid collector, says

they constantly look for stones shaped in a way that allows them to transform them simply by painting them.

The stones, elaborately painted in beautiful colours, take on a whole new life, and become their own element. The brilliant thing is that they don't change the shape of the stones in any way, their natural form drives the creative process and the final outcome, making each

4th Floor Hotel

located downtown Reykjavik

4th Floor Hotel now operates both as a boutique hotel and a budget conscious hotel with affordable rooms that offers various facilities. We are located in the heart of the city and the main Laugavegur shopping street begins at our doorstep. Museums, art galleries and many other attractions are within walking distance.

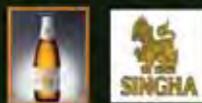


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To do in Iceland

Golden Circle!

We pick you up at your hotel or lodging at 08.30-09.00. We drive the world famous golden circle to Gullfoss, the incredible waterfall and Geysir, the magnificent hot spring.

★★★ Duration: 5-7 hours Minimum passengers: 4

Highland Day!

(June - October) We pick you up at your hotel or lodging at 08.00-08.30. We drive directly to the highlands where we find two world famous locations, Hekla and Landmannalaugar. The extraordinary nature in the highlands of Iceland is unforgettable. This is a long but unmissable day so we are not back in town until late in the evening.

★★★ Duration: 12-14 hours Minimum passengers: 4

Farm Day!

We pick you up at your hotel or lodging at 08.00-08.30. On the south coast of Iceland is the Eyjafjallajökull glacier. We will spend the day visiting locations in the neighbourhood of the glacier. We will also visit a typical Icelandic farm and see how the country life is. Skógarfoss and Seljalandsfoss are locations we visit on this tour.

★★★ Duration: 8-10 hours Minimum passengers: 4

Perfect Day!

We pick you up at your hotel or lodging at 08.00-08.30. We start the trip and drive to the magnificent Geysir and stop there for approx. 30 min. Next stop is Gullfoss, the incredible waterfall and from there we go to the entrance of the highlands (Hólaskógur). Hot Soup and bread is served and everyone gets ready for a 2-3 hour ATV tour. An exclusive offer on this tour due to a special deal and cooperation with the ATV rental Company.

★★★ Duration: 10-12 hours Minimum passengers: 3

Twin Day!

We drive directly to the south side of the country and to a farm for 1-2 hours Horse riding and from there to Hólaskógur, the entrance of the highlands for a 2-3 hour ATV tour. We can also split the group and leave some for horse riding while the others take an ATV tour. All the group will be brought back to their hotel or lodging before 19.00. An exclusive offer on this tour due to a special deal and cooperation with the ATV rental Company and the horse farm.

★★★ Duration: 10-12 hours Minimum passengers: 3

Village Day!

We pick you up at your hotel or lodging at 08.00-08.30. We drive to the west coast of the country to Stykkishólmur, Grundarfjörður and Ólafsvík near the Snaefellsjökull glacier and Dritvík. We stop at many locations on the way. In the villages, you can find fishing boats and fish factories so you can see the basis of Icelandic export throughout the ages. The bay in which these villages are located is called Breiðafjörður. The nature and birdlife there is fantastic.

★★★ Duration: 9-11 hours Minimum passengers: 4

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Guesthouse Borg is open all year for you to enjoy our homely atmosphere. Guesthouse Borg is only 5 mins. drive from the Blue Lagoon and 20 mins. drive from the international airport. Guesthouse Borg is in the centre of the wonderful town of Grindavík where you can enjoy the hospitality of its people and its life.

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KANTURINN
 Bar & Restaurant

Vikings know how to enjoy themselves—the fishing community, especially. That makes Grindavík popular with tourists who want to experience the real culture of the country.

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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 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.

-EMV

THE ART OF BACALAO IN GRINDAVÍK

Salthúsið Restaurant takes this famous fish to a new level of taste

Call it bacalao, salted cod, morue or saltfisk in Icelandic, the cod fish was 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 been a celebrated ingredient in

Mediterranean, African, and Caribbean cuisine for many centuries.

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

Salthúsið Restaurant



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

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GRINDAVÍK'S HIDDEN WORLD

There's more than the Blue Lagoon in Grindavík

Most visitors who come to Iceland go to the most popular tourist spot in the country, the Blue Lagoon, listed as one of the 25 wonders of the world by National Geographic. However, few people know that the Blue Lagoon is located in Grindavík about 5 min. from the town centre. Grindavík is the foremost fishing town in Iceland with a population of 3,000 people.

After having bathed in the Blue Lagoon, it is great to dine in Grindavík as there are a range of restaurants catering to all tastes.

There is a guest house, a beautiful and popular camp site, one of the best golf courses in the country, just enlarged to 18 holes, a fascinating new museum, which

offers exhibitions on fishing, mineral and energy resources and some fun entertainment. The tourist information centre is also located there.

Experience life around the harbour, as Grindavík is one of the largest fishing centres in the country. The harbour is very popular with visiting tourists, watching the boats come in and landing their catches. In Stakkavík, you can see what happens to the fish after it is landed. You can try a delicious fresh fish soup while watching their unique film about the fishing.

If you want adventure, you can ride an ATV, see volcanoes, go caving, horse riding or tour-biking. The nature surrounding



Grindavík is one of the country's best kept secrets but interesting information boards have been set up for visitors. Other sights to see are the Reykjanes lighthouse, the bridge between the continents, and the birdlife.

It's a lot of fun to be a tourist in Grindavík in summer. Seamen's Day is one of the biggest family holidays in the country. Midsummer Walking enjoys great popularity, Nature Week in Reykjanes and the Grindavík walking festival on that weekend enjoy growing popularity.

From Grindavík, there are tours that take the new south coast road and visit South Iceland where, among other things you can find Gullfoss and Geysir.

-ASF

Grindavíkurbær



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 +354 420 1100
 grindavik@grindavik.is
 www.visitgrindavik.is

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LIFE IS NEVER DULL HERE

From the Blue Lagoon to a vibrant fishing harbour in Grindavík

Life in Grindavík revolves around the harbour. Its economy depends on fishing and fish exports to Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Today, the harbour entrance of Grindavík is treacherous but once inside, it's a feather bed to a modern fleet of trawlers. The waters have claimed the lives of hundreds of sailors since Grindavík's settlement in the 11th century. In former times, farmers-come-sailors heroically rowed for their lives while riding a large wave that would hopefully carry them and their vessel high enough onto the beach for them not to drown. Today, Grindavík is Iceland's third most important fishing town. Yet the town offers many attractions and activities for visitors.

Lions Created the Blue Lagoon

We have Grindavík's Lions Club to thank for the creation of the now world-famous Blue Lagoon less than 5 minutes drive from the town. During the 70's oil crisis, the club facilitated explorations for hot water, drilling in the lava field north of the town in the hope of finding hot water to heat

the homes and businesses in Grindavík. The exploration revealed not only hot water but an immense pressure source for generating electricity. The Blue Lagoon is the most popular man-made attraction in Iceland and its mineral-rich saline water is said to have exfoliating, moisturising and rejuvenating properties for skin.

Seaman's Day and the Happy Sailor

Seaman's Day is celebrated all over Iceland on the first Sunday in June each year and is an important event to Grindavík's 2,800 inhabitants. The town also has its own festival between Friday, 1st June and Sunday, 3rd June 2012 called the "Happy Sailor". For three days, there are a stream of events ranging from sea angling in the harbour for the children to a 'pillow fight' for adults—which ends when one or all the participants end up in the sea.

What to do in Grindavík

The modern geothermal swimming pool and waterslide are particularly popular with children. The Saltfish Museum covers



the history of salted cod and its export to Spain and Portugal early last century. The coastline is dotted with ship wrecks, each with explanatory signs. There are ample opportunities for bird watching and the hills and small mountains are ideal for hiking, cycling and quad biking. There are lighthouses and two geothermal power stations close by, resting on the lava fields.

Accommodation includes cosy guesthouses, a hostel and a recently improved campsite and caravan park near the harbour. There are restaurants and convenience stores to satisfy everyone's needs.

-SV





COSY CULTURE-CAFÉ

Café Bryggjan

What I love about Café Bryggjan is its solid authenticity in a town that has served as one of Iceland's most important fishing centres for the last 500 years. Located on the quay of Grindavík's harbour, the popular fisherman's café has an almost museum-like feel to it. It is decorated with an interesting variety of sea-related memorabilia. Photo after photo of retired fishing vessels line the walls. The well-worn wooden floor would no doubt have some stories to tell, if



floors could talk. About the only thing that might seem out of place is the plaster bust of John Lennon that is suspended from the ceiling and a large poster of the Beatle above the piano in the corner of the room. The owners are retired fishermen who just happen to be big Beatle fans!

When the weather allows, you can sit outside on the deck to sip your coffee, tea or glass of wine, or enjoy the cosy atmosphere inside where light lunches of soups and sandwiches or home-made cakes are served. On Wednesdays, the house specialty is a traditional lamb soup and on Fridays it's lobster soup, using the freshest ingredients, of course.

Every year, Café Bryggjan hosts its very own 'Cultural Week' with some of Iceland's well known poets, writers, and musicians, performing their works. And if you stick around long enough, someone may just strike up an old Beatle song on that piano in the corner!

Café Bryggjan

-EMV



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Bustadur.is connects travellers and second home owners

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Second homes offer more convenience, more flexibility and more independence to holidaymakers than any other kind of accommodation—especially for small groups and families with children.

Staying in a second home is quite economical, especially for small groups and families—but perhaps even more importantly—they're often most conveniently located. Sometimes they're even closer to main scenic attractions than hotels and guesthouses.

Northern lights are best viewed away from city lights from mid-September to mid-April. This is why second homes are the perfect place to be to view this beautiful but elusive natural phenomenon. The surroundings range from

coastal scenery, farm meadows to volcanic landscape—even volcanoes.

Bústaður lists 40 quality second homes on its website. The second homes are available for rent all year to locals and visitors from abroad alike. Most of the 14,000 second homes in Iceland are privately owned and come in different sizes and level of luxury.

Bústaður

-SHV



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+354 615 4550
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www.bustadur.is



MAMMA MIA

Tantalise Your Taste Buds and Satisfy Your Stomach

Grindavík's a great place to stay when exploring and touring the amazing sights of the Reykjanes peninsula—but, wherever you stay, there's always the question of where to eat! Just 200 metres from the campsite—and right opposite the newly-opened Magma museum, close to the harbour, is one of the hottest additions to the restaurant scene, Mamma Mia.

This comfortable restaurant is a pizzeria with a full complement of pizza sizes and types, all hand-made and stone-baked with a delicious crunchy crust. They produce their own 'Mamma Mia' pizza topped with tuna, shrimp and mussels—a real speciality.

No restaurant in a fishing town would be complete without a selection of seafood dishes. Grindavík is famous for its saltfish or bacalao, as the Spanish call it, that is so popular in Mediterranean countries. Alongside this delicious cod dish, you will also find the freshest plaice, straight from the harbour just metres away.



Mamma Mia is open from 11:30 until 10 pm - or later, and you can order their pizzas to be delivered to your hotel, guesthouse or the campsite - even the Blue Lagoon and Northern Light Inn.

Mamma Mia

-ASF



Hafnargata 7a • Grindavík
+354 426 9966
mammamia@mammamia.is
www.mammamia.is





FINE DINING IN OLD REYKJANESBAER

Delightful taste in Kaffi Duus

Kaffi Duus may have started life as the name implies, as a simple café, but make no mistake about it, Kaffi Duus has evolved into a full blown restaurant, that can seat up to 200 guests. The setting couldn't be more picturesque—a lovely wooden building, in the post-card perfect location overlooking the deep blue waters of Faxaflói Bay.



The choices on the extensive menu include authentic Indian vegetable stews, hearty pasta dishes and of course a whole range of incredible fresh fish, lobster and

all manner of seafood dishes. But in case you are not a seafood lover, there is a tempting dish called 'Grilled Trio of the House'—lamb fillet, beef tenderloin and pork tenderloin, served with grilled vegetables and a baked potato. Yum!

I wanted the chef to surprise me, so I let him choose. He regaled me with one of his specialties of the house, the Seafood Trio á la Duus, which has 3 types of fish, plus shrimp and lobster tails on a mound of fresh vegetable and salad, which arrived steaming hot, on a wooden plank. It was impressive and delicious, I must admit, and since I was quite hungry after a long day of exploring Keflavík and the Reykjanes Penninsula, I had no trouble polishing the whole thing off.

Kaffi Duus, will undoubtedly fulfill your expectations for authentic Icelandic cuisine and more, in a charming seaside location, just 5 minutes from the airport.

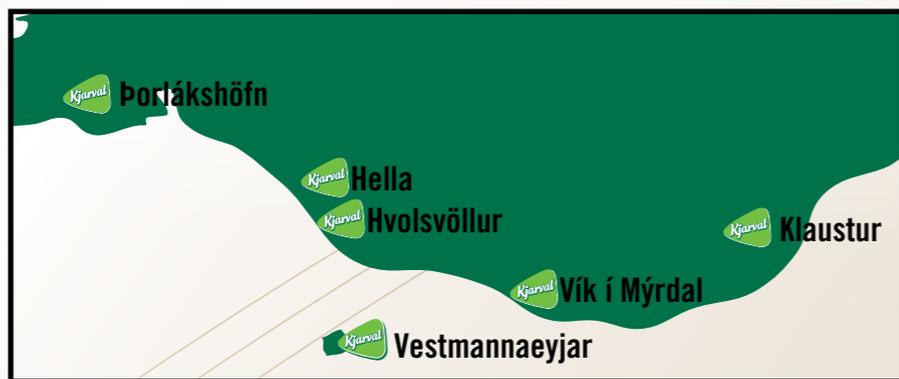
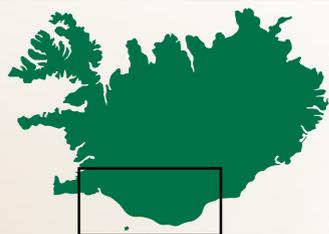
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Kaffi Duus



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Supermarket in the country



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Salty Tours takes you to the hidden and unusual

When you look at TripAdvisor's reviews for Salty Tours, you'll see how popular these tours are. Plenty of people visit the most famous sights and Þorsteinn will also take you there but he specialises in showing the Iceland that most tourists would never see.

Þorsteinn sees the value of the unconventional and this makes his tours different. Beaten paths are for beaten men - but mountain peaks are for the mighty pioneers. We visited him and he took us on a short tour to give us the idea.

From shipwrecks, thrown a hundred metres up on the shore to the bridge between the continents to a geothermal area of boiling mud pools and rocks coloured by the chemicals in the steam; it's an area rich in history. All the time, Þorsteinn was telling us anecdotes, history, nature pointers and more. It's no wonder his tours attract so many good reviews.

Plant Your Own Tree

Iceland is not known for its forests, but if Þorsteinn has his way, there will be a tree with your name on it growing here. He started his 'Plant Your Own Tree in Iceland' tour that has proven a big hit with visitors. Part spontaneous, part planned, this tour varies according to the weather - and weather changes quickly here! After picking out your tree from a plant nursery, you drive off in

one of three directions to plant it - and leave your mark on the country for generations to come. On the way, he regales you with folk tales, history, and more as you see sights that few will ever see in a day filled with interest and adventure.

The Pure West

Goats? You want to see goats? Well, these are not just any goats and Háafell farm is no ordinary farm. On the way to Borgarfjörður in the West, it is the only farm in the world with Icelandic goats. They were almost extinct only a few years ago until the farmer, Jóhanna Bergmann, took an interest in them. Now, she is building up the stock of this very rare breed of Icelandic goats. You can see how she makes ointments and soaps, blending

herbs and roses from her large rose garden. The goats' milk is unpasteurised and is well-known for its health properties.

The tour starts at Hvalfjörður, 'Whale fjord' and Borgarfjörður. There's a lunch stop at the Ferry House, built in 1880 by an Englishman. It's situated on the banks of the Hvítá river and is home to the best museum of salmon fishing. The tour then heads to the farm, followed by the Hraunfoss waterfall and Deildartunguhver, the greatest flow of hot water in Europe.



This tour is all about nature and it's a tour that takes you off the beaten tracks and main roads. Another car would be a rare sight on these roads so you get a much greater appreciation of the countryside.

-ASF



Salty Tours



 Borgarfrauni 1 • 240 Grindavík
 +354 820 5750
 tgk@saltytours.is
 www.saltytours.is

THE WORLD OF THE VIKINGS

Your plane lands in Reykjanesbær—right in the home of the Vikings

Did you say you were visiting Iceland? You do know what that means, don't you? It's the Land of the Vikings. You may fly in on a plane, but you'll land in Viking World. Take my advice, book yourself in at a hotel just a few minutes from the airport, because you're already in Reykjanes, one of the most interesting parts of the country.

Here is the home of Viking World where you can see for yourself what it's like to sail with the Vikings.

The Íslendingur was built as an exact replica of the ships that sped over the waves, striking terror into the hearts of many an English or Irish villager. These were boats that carried many thousands of men, women and children to new lands—the Faroes, Iceland, Greenland and, 500 years before Columbus, to the shores of North America.

The voyage to the New World was relived in the year 2000 by Captain Gunnar Marel Eggertson, sailing the Atlantic Ocean with a crew of fellow Vikings to New York in his hand-built viking ship, the Íslendingur, a voyage of 4,200 nautical miles. His painstaking construction and trip was a triumph of not merely archeology and craftsmanship but of seamanship, also.

Part of the exhibition documents this amazing achievement with 3D graphics and video clips, photos and memorabilia, bringing to life the pivotal role such ships played in the expansion of Viking influence as they spread across Europe, trading and pillaging as far south as Constantinople, east through much of Russia, north to Iceland and Greenland and west to N. America.

You'll find records of some of their journeys in the famous Sagas. These were men, women and children willing to sail into the unknown,

with the most primitive of navigation equipment, not knowing what they would face, be it new life or painful death.

Their engineering and design brilliance as exemplified in their boats extended to many other aspects of their lives. All around Reykjanes you can see examples of their daily life, culture and history.



At Víkingaheimar, you can also delve into the fascinating world of Norse mythology. The belief in the spiritual world, its gods, goddesses, permeates every aspect of their lives, their arts, crafts, storytelling and music. It is an amazing cultural heritage about which most of the world knows little and yet it is one that played a key role in shaping the early medieval world.

Reykjanesbær was settled very early on and you can see how the people lived. For instance, close to Víkingaheimar is one of the few surviving turf houses that used to be very common forms of dwelling. In Hafnir, there is an ongoing excavation of a cabin and storehouse from the early Settlement period. All around the area, you will find fascinating historical evidence of Viking life.

Then there is the landscape: this is a wild area, a turbulent hot spot on the planet Earth. Volcanos give mute

testimony of the power that has poured out here. Hot springs and thermal areas, with their bright colours are matched by man-made harnessing of these same forces in the Blue Lagoon and Power Plant Earth with its exhibitions of geological and astronomical forces. Here, you can stand on the bridge between the continents—one foot in Europe and the other in America. Look down and you see the powerful tectonic plates grinding against each other in an endless struggle.

Welcome to a world that most people imagine exists only in films but which the Viking descendants live in every day. Welcome to Reykjanesbær!

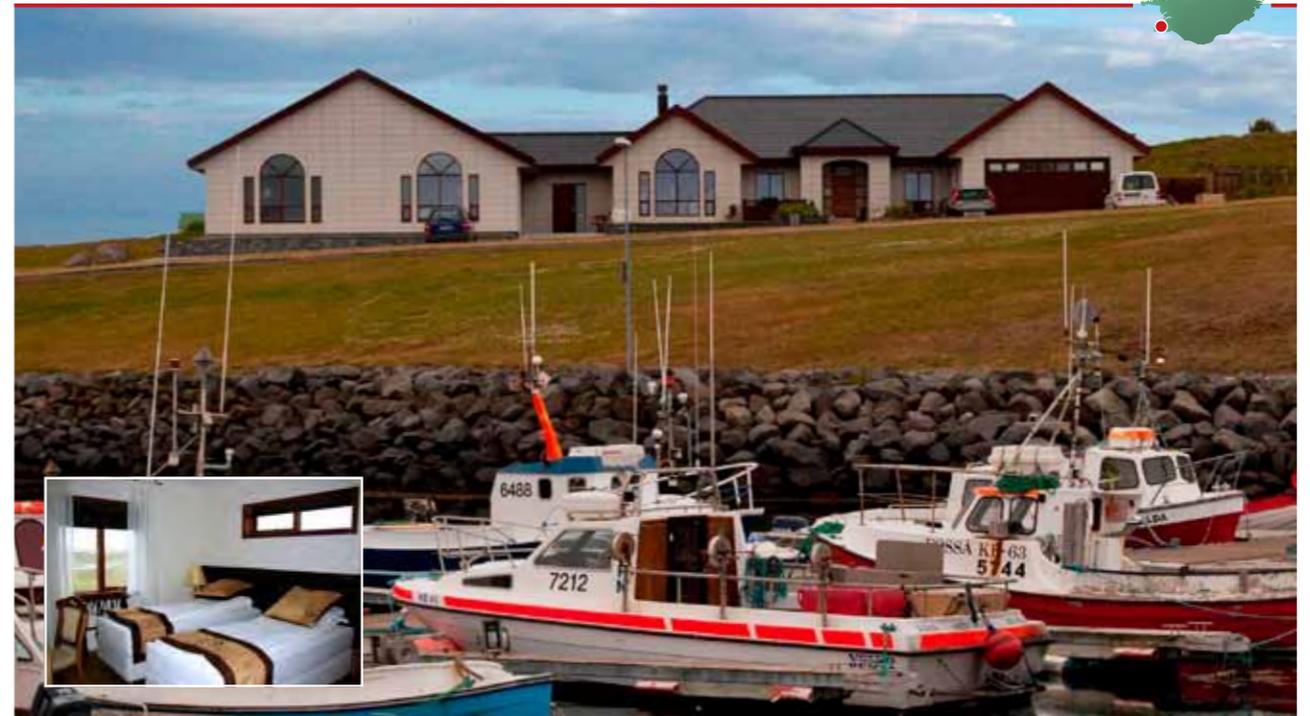
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Reykjanesbær



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Tjarnargötu 12 • 230 Reykjanesbær
 +354 421 6700
 reykjanesbaer@reykjanesbaer.is
 www.reykjanesbaer.is



HOTEL WITH CHARM

A quiet, picturesque spot by the Harbour just 5 min from the airport

Hotel Berg, the cosy family hotel in Keflavík, has been open less than a year and yet it is garnering a lot of top reviews on sites like booking.com and TripAdvisor.com. Whether just overnight or for a holiday, many go to these websites to read the reviews. After all, it's an important aspect of your stay and the reviews give you a good picture from other guests' perspectives.

What Guests say

"Very close to the airport, which was great since we flew in at 23:30 at night. Very quiet, comfortable and clean, and a nice landing spot to begin our trip in Iceland." "The quaint harbour location makes you feel removed

from the airport though. Lovely rooms and very homely. Breakfast was plentiful and well prepared. Highly recommended." "Lovely, new, small hotel in a residential area next to the 2nd (quieter) harbour of Keflavick(sic). The owners do free transfers from the airport for all guests. Very comfortable rooms, good breakfast, good value. What mroe(sic) to say? Stay here on your way out of Iceland and you won't regret it."

I could have chosen any of the 220 recommendations on these sites and they would have echoed these sentiments.

Soothing and Inspiring

Many reviewers mentioned the quiet location. The airport could be a million

miles away rather than a mere 5 mins. There are beautiful walks, all the facilities of the town only a 5 min. walk away, with a range of good restaurants, and all the usual facilities. Mind you, each room has a TV and DVD player and there is a library of DVD's to watch if you want to stay in. Right outside the front windows, the small harbour is lined with little boats, adding to the charm of this family hotel's location.

After a long flight, a visit to the hotel's hot pot will soothe aching muscles and tension in the best possible way.

In winter and early spring, you can sit there with a glass of wine, watching the Northern Lights dance across the sky overhead and feel that all is well with the world!

See the Sights

It's not necessary to stay in the capital to be able to visit all the landmark sites. It's just as easy from here, as there are tours with expert guides who will uncover the region's hidden secrets which you might otherwise miss. Then, when it's time to return to your old life, the complimentary airport transfer will return you to the airport in time—and before the rush—for your flight.

-ASF

Hótel Berg



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 berg@hotelberg.is
 www.hotelberg.is





SPRING IN SNÆFELLSNES

See more than Jules Verne ever dreamt of

Where do you begin? There are so many places to see and so many tours that Reykjavik Excursions offers that it would take weeks to see everything! In this article, I'll take a look at some of my favourites: trips to the Snæfellsnes peninsula. Even here, there are 2 different tours to take. They are full-day trips, leaving at 8 am, with a pickup from your hotel about half an hour earlier.

500 km of secrets revealed

Snæfellsnes peninsula is a nature lover's paradise. When I took this tour, I thought I'd already seen it all. I've been there many years. What more was there to see?

I learnt that there's always more. Iceland is full of hidden gems and, for the nature lover, this tour is no exception. I saw more than I had ever seen driving myself. Through the inspired direction of the tour guide, I enjoyed more history, geography, botany, biology and geology than I thought possible. This was a veritable university of life course that was both fun



and instructive. I came back with so many photos and memories.

Just off the main road there's a spot to see the geese swimming, another reveals a cliff face where many varieties of birds nest, swoop and plunge around you and yet another where the seals sun themselves. A shipwreck is reached through a gorge of moss-covered rocks.

The fishermen's proficiency test

If I pick up the 20 kg. stone, I'd be classed as 'useless'. Next is the 'weak' stone, the 'half strength' and 'full strength' stones used to test a man's fitness to be a fisherman on these wild seas. You get a good idea from these scenes of what life was like in previous centuries.

Then there's the stone giant – a sculpture both brilliant in its simplicity but powerful in its presentation, a reminder of the folk lore of the area.

This tour runs every Sunday in spring and three times a week in summer, with an extra stop for a taste of shark meat – enjoy!

Summer specials

If you love the sea as well as the nature, the second tour takes you to Stykkishólmur where a specially-designed, modern boat awaits to take you out into the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay, with its countless islands, myriad bird life and the chance to sample the freshest of the fresh marine life in all its diverse forms.

Like the first tour, the trip to the boat is full of history and interest. The countryside is amazing and you will doubtless see landscapes totally foreign to your experience. Out in the bay, you will be able to get close to colonies of birds and see the special flora and fauna of the islands. Even some of these islands have a history that goes back centuries. On your return, the Shark Museum offers a snack of shark meat for free. Then it's on to see the seals and, if time permits, another couple of fascinating stops.

The Saga Circle

A third tour is the Saga Tour. For someone with an interest in history, this is perfect. Many have heard of and even read some of the Sagas. Here's where you step into that history and experience where a number of these Sagas were lived.

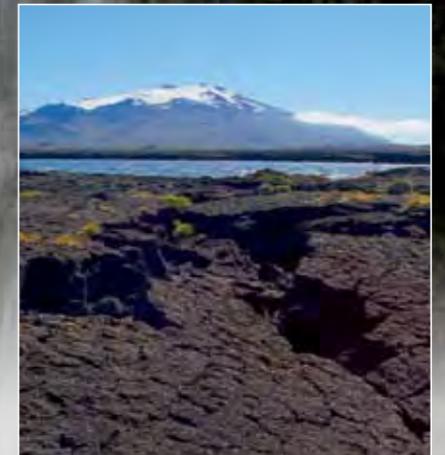
The Viking warrior and poet, Egill Skallagrímsson lived just outside the town of Borgarnes and the land has changed little since he lived. At the Icelandic Settlement



Centre, there is an exhibition filled with interesting and dramatised scenes.

Then the tour moves to nearby Reykholt, the village where Snorri Sturluson lived from 1206 until his assassination in 1241. He was a man with many sides to his life. A lawmaker, poet, wealthy landowner, he wrote some of the most famous works of medieval times.

Snorrastofa has an excellent library. Snorri is considered to be the foremost historian



and most significant poet of the Nordic region during the Middle Ages. He provides a unique insight into the life and times and his writing style marked a departure from the sterile writings of the period.

The beauty of the countryside cannot be overlooked and the tour visits the Hraunfossar waterfalls and the largest hot spring in the Northern Hemisphere, Deildartunguhver.

Your camera will get a workout on these tours, so be sure you have a full battery and an empty memory card.

An article of this size cannot do justice to all that these tours offer. You will find many more on their website. What is certain is that they will fill your holiday with experiences you would never get sunbathing on a beach!

-ASF

Reykjavik Excursions



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AH! SPRINGTIME IN ICELAND

Put your feet up and stay awhile at Munaðarnes

After the long, dark Icelandic winter, one feels a sense of rejuvenation returning once again to the island in Spring. Days are becoming noticeably longer, while upwardly mobile mercury in the thermometer tells us that Spring has indeed arrived, with the promise of summer following close on its heels. April and May are also the time of year when migratory birds flock to the country; the dead quiet of winter gives way to the happy chatter of the winter wrens who make their home in the birch trees surrounding Munaðarnes. The pink-footed goose is seen

from mid-April to mid-May in the farmlands around Munaðarnes before heading for their breeding grounds in the highlands.

And so it is at Munaðarnes, owners Þór and Stefania are busy making preparations for visitors who also flock to Iceland in spring and summer. The energetic couple put their all into making Munaðarnes a genuinely fun and friendly place to stay, with lots of activities for guests, such as bingo, karaoke, a Sunday afternoon cake buffet, guided nature walks, bouncy castles for the kids and even an Indian curry night. On cool spring

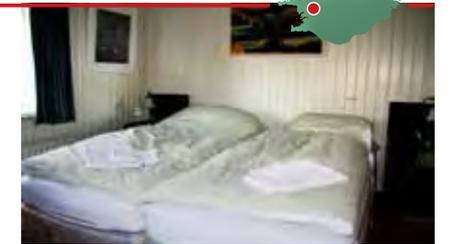
evenings, you can cosy up on the deck in colourful wraps, while the kids play in the playground or have a round of mini-golf just outside the door, all of which contribute to Munaðarnes' popularity as the go-to place for families with children of all ages.

Nestled among the birch trees of Munaðarnes are 56 self-contained cottages that sleep 4–6 comfortably. If you are not in the mood for cooking, let Stefania rustle up a few of her signature dishes such as savoury crêpes filled with grilled chicken, smoked lamb or trout, with rice and fresh vegetables. Perfectly situated for exploration of Snæfellsnes Peninsula, Munaðarnes is located on the banks of the Norðurá River, a great place to get away from it all and where tranquility truly abounds, just 95 km from Reykjavik.

Images by Gabriel Rutenberg

Munaðarnes -EMV

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 munadarnes@munadarnes.is
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NORTHERN LIGHTS RETREAT

Gamli bær Guesthouse in Húsafell

Húsafell is one of the best places in Iceland to see the Northern Lights and is only two hours' drive from Reykjavik. Its surroundings include lava fields, an amazingly beautiful river and waterfalls which make the ideal setting for prize-winning photographs.

A local source of geothermal hot water provides the guesthouse with its space heating as well as hot water for the hot tub. "After dark in winter, it is the best place to sit and watch the Northern Lights," says host, Steinunn Jóhannsdóttir.

Gamli bær Guesthouse was originally a farmhouse built by a woman in 1908. "At the time it was very unusual for a woman to build

a house", says Steinunn. "Many wondered why she needed such a large house but it turned out to be a good investment. A new mountain road to Þingvellir National Park (F-550) was opened in 1930 and since then, Gamli bær Guesthouse has been a popular place to stay."

Tourist attractions in the area include two glaciers, waterfalls and a lava field about 1,100 years old. Gamli bær Guesthouse is only a stone's throw away from Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls as well as Eiríksjökull and Langjökull Glaciers.

A farm church stands next to Gamli bær. It is used for christening, weddings and funerals. Local artist Páll Guðmundsson,

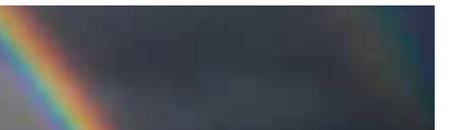
who lives next door, has made a stone-bar xylophone for the church as well as dozens of sculptures on and off the property.

In winter, families and small groups can rent the 10-bed Gamli bær Guesthouse in its entirety for a modest price.

-KB

Gamli bærinn

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 +354 895 1342
 sveitasetrid@simnet.is
 none



GOLFING IN THE DALES

Golf balls on the greens replace cow herds in the pastures

After farming for over 44 years, first with his father and later with his son, Bjarni, with his wife, Sigrún, were faced with a choice: retire and quit or...pioneer something new. They sold their livelihood and poured their everything into a bold new idea. They built a golf course, a club house with massage facilities and a jacuzzi and a restaurant on their farm in the beautiful Reykholtsgalur. The restaurant also has excellent facilities for small conferences and meetings for up to 60 people.

Golfers are always looking for new courses to challenge their skills. Iceland is becoming well 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 have a guesthouse with both made-up beds and sleeping bag accommodation, bathing and cooking facilities. It is open all year for travellers to enjoy each season, providing a lovely place to relax in and enjoy the beautiful nature, with its waterfalls and hills and the rich historical

sites of the entire Borgarfjörður area. Close by is Snorrastofa, the medieval culture centre, with its library and museum. Now, less than 2 hours from Reykjavik on road no. 518, 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.

-ASF

Nes in Reykholtsgalur

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TROLLING THE WESTFJORDS

Living Legends in Drangsnæs

According to an old Icelandic folk tale, the Westfjords were nearly separated from Iceland by a relentless trio of trolls, furiously digging away at the narrow strip of soil fanning off to form the Westfjords.

One troll woman competing against her conspirators realised that her monumental task would not be accomplished and slammed the spade of her shovel down in a rage, breaking off a chunk of land with her ox on it, thus forming Grimsey, the small island near Drangsnæs and home to the world's most concentrated puffin colony.

Though the trolls were unsuccessful in breaking off the Westfjords, the choppy

coastline of a tiny fishing village called Drangsnæs at the far end of Steingrímsfjörður bears marks of the troll woman's handiwork. Her grim profile, transformed into stone by the first rays of sunlight, watches over Grimsey.

Happy accidents have helped Drangsnæs both in legend and reality. A source of geothermal water was discovered when someone forgot to shut off the water supply feeding into the fish factory. When the town furiously sought water by boring holes, they struck geothermal gold: a hot water source that now heats the entire village and provides free hot tubs on the beach from where visitors watch birdlife,

seals, and occasionally whales. Large stones sheltering them from strong coastal winds have teardrops carved in them, created by artist Mireyja Samper.

An annual festival, held in the middle of July, celebrates Drangsnæs' livelihood by tickling the palette with tastes of minke whale, puffin, seal, and a wide variety of fish from the fjord. Kids and adults can try their hand at sea-angling, while braver visitors attempt to swim through strong currents to Grimsey. The festival has steadily expanded over sixteen years of celebration and has grown to host thousands of people. The festival is run entirely by volunteers who pour into Drangsnæs to help the 65 townspeople prepare to receive guests.

Drangsnæs has a long relationship with volunteers who have travelled to help not only with the festival, but with various projects such as building the community centre. "Cooperation is an important part of life here," says Jenny Jensdóttir, "without it we couldn't survive."

Too bad the legendary trolls were too busy to realize this. Perhaps if they had adopted the spirit of Drangsnæs' residents, they would be floating on an island called Westfjords rather than sitting in stony silence.

-KB

Kaldraneshreppur



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The Wool Factory Shop
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 The Wool Factory Shop enables you to buy directly from the people who make traditional natural Icelandic wool products and ornaments in original colours.
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Sealwatching
 A treat for children and adults alike to take an unforgettable seal watching tour where you get the chance to observe the seals in their natural habitat close up at one of the best seal watching locations in Iceland. The seals are playful and curious by nature and often swim quite close to the boat to get a better look at you. Then it is a question who is watching whom? Amazing photo opportunities.
 Departures at 10:00, 13:00 and 16:00—Duration 1 hour 45 mins.
 📍 Hvammstangi Harbour ☎ +354 897 9900 ✉ selasigling@simnet.is 🌐 www.sealwatching.is



GATEWAY TO THE VATNSNES PENINSULA

The Icelandic Seal Centre at Hvammstangi

The Icelandic Seal Centre of Hvammstangi, the gateway to the picturesque Vatnsnes Peninsula, provides the perfect starting point for the exploration of this outstandingly beautiful but little-visited corner of North West Iceland. Heralded as the ultimate seal-viewing destination in Iceland, the Vatnsnes Peninsula offers visitors a unique opportunity to observe both harbour seals and grey seals in their natural habitats. And

what a better way to learn about these gentle creatures than a stop at the Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi? Now operating in its new 280 sq. metre premises, the centre multi-tasks as a museum, research centre and tourist information desk, all under one roof. Through its varied educational exhibits and cultural displays that include seal folklore, the centre offers a comprehensive view of seals in Iceland, their role and



importance in Icelandic history and present day sustainability issues surrounding this sometimes controversial marine mammal. At the tourist information desk, visitors can book seal watching tours, either on land or by sea, as well as accommodation in the area. Established in 2005, the centre is dedicated to ongoing seal research, educational outreach and the promotion of sustainable tourism, particularly as it pertains to seal populations in and around the Vatnsnes Peninsula.

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these gentle creatures and their offspring, rolling around on the shores and in the sea.

This area is without a doubt one of the best spots in Iceland for viewing seals, the main locations being Svalbarð, Illugastaðir and Ósar. You can also go seal-watching and sea-angling on a boat from Hvammstangi. The summer midnight-sailing is something you won't forget!

Rest and play

You'll find accommodation in all price ranges in Húnaþing vestra. There are several excellent camping sites to choose from situated in Hvammstangi, Sæberg and Laugarbakki. The holiday farm, Dæli in Víðidalur, has a camping site and a lovely guesthouse, a hot pot, sauna and a mini golf course. There are guesthouses in Hvammstangi and the highly rated Hotel Edda in Laugarbakki. Gauksmýri in Línakradalur is a beautiful farm that has reclaimed the area's wetland and put up facilities for birdwatching as well as running a horse rental and a restaurant. Brekkulækur in Miðfjörður also offers riding tours and accommodation and is a popular stop for travellers. Ósar at Vatnsnes peninsula, situated right by Hvítserkur, is a popular hostel and a great spot for viewing the seals.

Museums and Exhibitions

The Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi is a highly informative research centre and a museum that has an ongoing exhibition and is well worth a visit. Other museums of note are Reykir Regional Museum in Hrótafjörður and the Commercial Museum in Hvammstangi which both offer interesting exhibitions about the area's history. Also be sure not to miss the wonderful Bardúsa craft gallery in Hvammstangi. Unwinding in the town's swimmingpool after an eventful day is a must. *-HP*



SEALS SUN ON THE SEASHORE

A day in Húnaþing vestra on the North-West Coast

The beauty of Húnaþing vestra, conveyed in its grassy heaths, majestic mountains, pillar rocks and sparkling lakes and rivers, truly sums up the uniqueness of Icelandic nature. It's vast heathlands contain the largest untouched wetlands in Iceland, very popular for angling and a habitat for numerous bird species. From there you can drive into the highlands over the gravel roads. Kolugljúfur, a magnificent canyon in Víðidalsá river named after the giantess Kola, is another unforgettable site. The river runs through the canyon over two spectacular waterfalls named Kolufossar. Borgvirki fort is a 10-15 m high columnar basalt formation which is believed to be the site of an old battle and a fort for the district. There's an observation platform at its top and a breathtaking view over the Húnaflói Bay.

A Troll, surrounded by seals

But one of the biggest attractions in Húnaþing vestra is Hvítserkur, the 15m tall rock, popular as a bird nesting spot, believed to be a troll who stayed out too late at night and got caught as the sun rose with the dawn, turning her to stone.

Making it special is a colony of the region's most adorable inhabitants surrounding it; the seals. Every year, travellers flock to the beautiful Vatnsnes peninsula, cameras in hand, to observe



THE WONDERFUL WILD NORTHWEST

Beauty in nature, animal and birdlife in Húnaþing vestra

Húnaþing vestra, (pron: hoo-na-thing vest-ra) on the northwest coast of Iceland, is a region renowned for its amazing wildlife and natural beauty. Consequently, each year, thousands of tourists, native and foreign alike, visit the area as a great place to enjoy the outdoors and experience all the best of the Icelandic wilderness. Húnaþing vestra also offers a wide range of possibilities in both accommodation and recreation.

The mesmerizing landscape alone is reason enough for spending a good part of your trip in the region, as some of Iceland's most stunning natural wonders can be found there. The imposing Hvítserkur is without a doubt the area's most distinct symbol. A 15 m high monolith and a home to numerous bird species, it rises from the sea of Húnaþing vestra fjord resembling a giant, prehistoric monster wading ahead to the shores that brim with life as one of the largest seal habitats in the country. There aren't many places where these beautiful animals can be viewed in such closeness in their natural environment, so this is truly a unique experience that is bound to captivate both young and old.



Húnaþing vestra is a grassy district, well fit for farming and rich in natural resources. It's the home of three of the most plenteous salmon rivers in the country and has a varied birdlife which attracts ever more birdwatchers each year. Walking, hiking and riding paths have been laid systematically over the past

years, making access to the area as inspiring as possible. Additionally, information signs have been put up and panoramic viewpoints created which are sure to enrich the visitors' experience of the area even further.

But the region's cultural history is no less interesting than it's natural surroundings. This is the birthplace of one of Iceland's most notorious heroes from the old sagas, Grettir the Strong. The beloved poet Skálda-Rósa, of the 19th century, lived and wrote her most famous poems here. There are also various farmers markets, museums and exhibitions of interest, cultural as well as educational. In spite of it's humble population of around 1200, Húnaþing vestra has a remarkably high service standard and the area is, to say the least, bursting with life and activity, which is sure to leave no one untouched. *-HP*

The magnificent area of Húnaþing is highly recommended. To explore Húnaþing in full the Sterna scheduled bus connects Hvammstangi twice a day with Akureyri and Reykjavík. Sterna offer a day trip to Húnaþing and multi day tours visiting the Highlands, the North and Húnaþing.

Enjoy and explore Húnaþing!

FOR INFORMATION AND BOOKING

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We also help with accommodation if needed.

EAT ICELANDIC

Homemade cooking right on the Ring Road

Víðigerði guesthouse is one of the most conveniently located and affordable accommodations in Iceland set just on the left side of the main ring road, past Hvammstangi. On the upper floor it has 8 double rooms that share private facilities and on the lower floor, a diner and a small store selling snacks and various goods. This summer there will be a fenced off playground in the back garden as well as tables for dining or having a drink outside.

The owner, Karen, who runs the guesthouse with her husband and daughter, says that in her experience, tourists really love Icelandic food and therefore she wants to give guests a taste of the way Icelanders eat at home. For breakfast, she serves popular Icelandic milk products like skyr as well as toast and cereal. She uses ingredients from local farmers and the nearby regions for her cooking that consists of classic national dishes, like fish with butter and potatoes and the ever popular



meat-soup which will be served every day this summer. Made out of lamb and fresh vegetables it's as wholesome as it is tasty and just about everybody's favourite dish. Prices are more than reasonable since Karen is determined to make Víðigerði a place where families can come and eat a good meal without much expense. She also has offers for groups.

Víðigerði

-HP



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 www.vidigerdi.is



FAMILY LEISURE, COMFORT AND BEAUTY

A warm welcome at Hvammstangi

Though the most densely populated area in the beautiful west Húnaþing County, Hvammstangi has a population of a mere 580 and welcomes visitors with all the warmth and hospitality of a small village. Being in close vicinity to Vatnsnes, with its

gorgeous scenery and historical sites, and with a seal habitat within walking distance, it's an interesting and highly memorable place to visit. The town has a great swimming pool with a waterslide and well-reviewed guesthouses, not to mention one

of the most wonderful camping grounds in the country. Situated in a peaceful dale and sheltered by the surrounding mountains, it's a paradise for families: secluded but yet with all services to hand, including sanitary and leisure facilities and stores.

The town's general store, as indicated by the name, sells practically everything you might need: groceries, hardware and farm produce, while also housing the local liquor store. First founded in 1909, it's a joint ownership of the farmers and the people of Hvammstangi and as such, sticks to old values and trade practices. In many ways it's the heart of the community and sums up the spirit of the village.

Summer time opening hours

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Monday - Thursday | 9 - 18 |
| Friday | 9 - 19 |
| Saturday | 11 - 18 |
| Sunday | 12 - 16 |

Kaupfélag Vestur-Húnavatnings

-HP



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OUTLAWS HORSES & HISTORY

The towns of Blönduós & Skagaströnd in North Iceland

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The Museum of Prophecies
 An exhibition on Þórdís the Fortune teller, of Skagaströnd in the late 10th century. A painted tapestry tells her story. A guided tour features interesting information about prophecies and fortune telling. Visitors can have their fortunes told and their palms read on request. Children can examine Þórdís's gold chest for hidden things.

📍 Oddagata 6 • 545 Skagaströnd 📞 +354 861 5089
 ✉ dagny@marska.is 🌐 www.spakona.is

Kantrybær
 The Country Museum and Restaurant are dedicated to the King of country music in Iceland, Hallbjörn J. Hjartarson and country music in general. The restaurant offers steaks, trout, hamburgers and pizzas in a warm and inviting log house.

📍 Hólansvegji 11 • 545 Skagaströnd 📞 +354 452 2829
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The Salmon Museum of Iceland
 An information and a research centre about salmon fishing and the Icelandic Salmon. Opening in June 2012.

📍 Efstubraut 1 • 540 Blönduós 📞 +354 452 2900
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a swimming pool, a 9-hole golf course, cafés and restaurants and a grocery store. Museums include the Atlantic Salmon Museum, Sea Ice Exhibition Centre and the Icelandic Textile Centre.

Glaðheimar is an ideal place from which to explore. "Blönduós has enough things to do for visitors for a day. For those who choose to stay with us for a few days, there are at least four distinctive day drives," says Lárus. Just ask him or one of his staff when you're here!

-SHV

Glaðheimar

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cooked lamb on the bone and a divine blend of rye-bread and rhubarb. Fjalla-Eyvindur was known for his craftsmanship and the crockery at Eyvindarstofa is designed in the manner of his handiwork. The feel of his stay in the wilderness also comes across in the beautiful interiors that simulate wild nature.

Eyvindarstofa is located at Potturinn Restaurant, right by Route One, and welcomes guests all year round. In its vicinity, you'll find the lovely Hotel Húnaveilir and the enchanting café Við Árbakkann that will further enrich your visit to Blönduós.

-HP

Potturinn Restaurant

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SLEEP BY THE RIVERSIDE

Glaðheimar Cottages and Campsite in Blönduós

Glaðheimar Cottages and Campsite are on the northern shores of the River Blandá in the town of Blönduós in the north of Iceland. This moderately priced accommodation stands quite close to Route 1 which circumnavigates the entire country. Glaðheimar is therefore a very convenient place to stay for those travelling around Iceland, as well as those who might wish to spend a week in the area.

"We're open all year round," says Lárus B. Jónsson, who is the man in charge. "We have 20 fully equipped cottages suitable for 3-8 persons each. Hot tubs come standard with most of the cottages, and four cottages have a sauna in addition. We also run a campsite and a caravan park."

Blönduós has only 900 inhabitants. However, it is blessed with a wide range of services and leisure opportunities. There's

A LEGEND COMES TO LIFE

Iceland's most famous outlaw now has a home

Fjalla-Eyvindur (Eyvindur of the Mountains) was an Icelandic outlaw in the eighteenth century whose story is a well-known legend among Icelanders. For almost forty years, he managed to survive in the harsh surroundings and difficult conditions of Iceland's wilderness and his amazing cunning to tackle the forces of nature and abilities to both find and preserve food, earned him respect and popularity among his contemporaries.

Into the wild

Eyvindarstofa, situated at Blönduós on the north west coast of Iceland, is an exciting stop dedicated to the lifespan of this rather remarkable character. The story of Fjalla-Eyvindur is presented through photographs and written material and this summer, there will be a short theatrical performance depicting his life. For groups, a special menu has been put together using the cream of Iceland's crop, such as fresh salmon, slowly



A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Blönduós, the Town by the Bay

Blönduós, on the northwest coast, is beautifully situated on the banks of Húnaflói bay. The town is named after the river Blandá, one of the largest fishing rivers in the country, which runs through the town all the way from Hofsjökull glacier and into Húnaflói Bay.

One of the area's most treasured locations is Hrótey, a small protected island which lies in Blandá. Hrótey is accessible by a footbridge and is a wonderful place to spend the day hiking and picnicking. There's a rich birdlife on the island and therefore it's closed between April 20th and June 20th, for the protection of the nesting and eggs.

Unique museums

Blönduós especially prides itself on four splendid museums, some of which are one of

a kind in the country and give a fascinating insight into the nation's history and way of life.

The Icelandic Salmon Centre

The town's proximity to one of the best salmon rivers in Iceland and the popularity of fishing as a sport has led to the foundation of The Icelandic Salmon Centre which will open in the beginning of June, 2012. The centre will provide extensive background of the biology and habitats of the salmon as well as their part in Icelandic food culture and the history of salmon fishing. The exhibition is sure to be both educational and entertaining and has a special area for children.

The Icelandic Textile Centre

The Icelandic Textile Centre is located in the old Women's handcraft college and works

to promote textile art and design. It has an ongoing project which involves creating an embroidered tapestry depicting a stormy family saga from the area, written in the 13th century.

The Sea Ice Exhibition Centre

Through the ages, the people of the north coast of Iceland have had to deal with the difficulties stemming from sea ice, the very thing which gave the country its name. The Sea Ice Exhibition Centre offers visitors an understanding of this natural phenomena and its impact on people's lives in the northern regions.

The Textile Museum

The Textile Museum was originally founded by the Women's Union and is housed in the old handcraft college. In 2003, it moved to a beautiful new house, specially designed for its ambitious operation. It's a unique museum that celebrates the artistry of women's handcraft and has an impressive collection of homemade wool and textile items as well as beautiful Icelandic national costumes, artistic embroideries and many of the tools and equipment used to produce them. It also exhibits the work of contemporary textile designers.



Amenities in Blönduós

Blönduós has a good camping area, guesthouses and a hotel as well as several restaurants and cafés and there are plenty of recreation opportunities. You'll also find horse rental, a small golf course and an excellent swimming pool with hot tubs, a waterslide and a kids' pool.

Blönduósbaer -HP

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CAPITAL OF COUNTRY

The north's most musical town

Ask Icelanders what first comes to mind when the name Skagaströnd is mentioned and chances are they'll say, 'country music'. Strange? Perhaps, since a small fishing village in the northwest of Iceland isn't exactly what you would typically associate with cowboys and line dancing. Nonetheless, that's the case here.

Kántrýbær

Veteran musician Hallbjörn Hjartarson, a native of Skagaströnd, has promoted country music for years and is a household name in Iceland. He runs the famous Kántrýbær (Country Town) restaurant, a must stop for anyone visiting Skagaströnd, as well as a country and western radio station. Hallbjörn is often referred to as the 'Cowboy of the North' and he is the originator of the town's

annual Country festival which will be held between 17th-19th August this year. Recently a Country museum was opened at Skagaströnd in honour of Hallbjörn and his work.



The village

Apart from its close ties to music, Skagaströnd is primarily a fishing village. In the summer, the small port is a lively whirlpool of boats and people, ever coming and going. On a



good day, it's lovely to stroll along the harbour and take in the smell of the sea before going for some refreshments at the beautiful Café Bjarmanes which stands on the cliffs overlooking the harbour and the open sea. Close to Café Bjarmanes you'll find Árnes museum, a tiny and utterly charming house, originally built in 1899 and therefore the oldest house in Skagaströnd. The house was renovated a few years ago by the town and now serves as a window into the past for those who visit it. All interiors are from the beginning of the 20th century and give a good picture of fairly well-to-do Icelandic homes from this period.



The Museum of Prophecies and Cape Spákonufellshöfði

The first inhabitant in Skagaströnd is believed to have been Þórdís the soothsayer, a widely known woman of the 10th century whose name is mentioned in many of the Icelandic sagas. Þórdís was famous for her ability to see into the future and at the Museum of Prophecies, her story is told on a painted tapestry. The exhibition provides information about prophecies and visitors can have their fortunes told and palms read. Þórdís lived by the foothill of Mountain Spákonufell and stories tell of her daily walks up the mountain where she'd comb her hair with a special gold comb. Cape Spákonufellshöfði is a protected area and a popular hiking route. A telescope and information signs have been put up to give insight into the cape's rich history.

The town's camping ground is nicely situated in a quiet sheltered area and has great facilities, a playground for kids and a service house with a dining area and a washing machine. Skagaströnd also has a nice swimming pool and a 9-hole golf course.

Sveitarfélagið Skagaströnd -HP

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LIVING INSIDE

Glaumbaer's Living Museum

A remarkably well preserved turf house and farm called Glaumbaer still withstands Iceland's harsh weather after three centuries of punishment. Glaumbaer, a fully intact eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farmhouse near Varmahlíð, just off the Ring Road, presents life in rural Iceland with everything left as though awaiting the return of the family that once lived there. Walking through restored rooms of this well-to-do family's farmhouse gives an insight into what life was like in this era.

Though a wealthy home, the people who lived at Glaumbaer still had to produce all of their own food and clothing by hand and unlike today, wealth did not imply ease in the remote countryside.

A dark and narrow corridor with side rooms for storage and food preparation winds up in the large room known as the *badstofa*, centre of the household's domestic life and the bedroom for the entire family.

Dark nights were spent shuttered away in this room where the family huddled together to knit their winter clothes or sometimes to play games like chess or backgammon to pass the time. Bonds grew

strong as families toughened up over several winters, labouring for their livelihoods.

At small country farms, connections to the outside world and supplies were relatively limited. People were forced to use anything that came their way to create the tools necessary for daily life. The results of this inventiveness are placed around Glaumbaer in the context of their purpose. Jaw bones from sheep and horses were turned into tools found in the *badstofa*. Driftwood that washed ashore was carved into storage chests, bowls, and spoons. Even Glaumbaer's turf construction was an ingenious way around using wood, which was precious and in short supply at the time the farm was built.

The museum at Glaumbaer was started at the request of residents around Skagafjörður to preserve part of their past. The farm shows how much people can do with limited resources and the creativity that emerges in tough circumstances. Glaumbaer stands as a reminder to Icelanders' past and shows its visitors how well they survived and thrived in Iceland's harsh environment.



Glaumbaer -EMV/AMB

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TRADITIONAL PASTRIES AND LOCAL FOOD

Áskaffi Café at Glaumbaer Folk Museum

Have you ever walked into a place and immediately felt at home? Áskaffi coffee shop and restaurant is one of those rare finds which more and more people include as a part of their travels in the north of the country.

Auður Herdís Sigurðardóttir has been in charge of Áskaffi since 2001. "I love what I do and do what I love," she says. And it shows. Her coffee shop is in an old wooden house with a stone foundation which dates back to 1886. Its furniture and decorations match the period.

Postcards with popular recipes

After being inundated with requests for the recipe for her Sherry cake for close to two decades, Herdís finally found the solution. She's designed two postcards with the recipe, one in English and one in German. "It's a recipe which has belonged to the coffee shop since its opening," Herdís says, and confesses that there's real Sherry in it—generously measured!



Soups for Small Groups

Tourist guides and their guests love Áskaffi's signature dishes which include seafood soup made with locally produced trout and locally caught shrimp, and lamb soup made with local lamb and vegetables. "The secret to success when making lamb soup is to first boil the meat and the bones together before adding the vegetables and removing the bones," says Herdís. Soups can be ordered for groups of 10-40 at a time.



Delicious Bread and Pastries

Delicious pastries which, in essence, look and taste the same as people used to serve in Iceland between 1940-1960 are on offer every day. There are *kleinur* – twisted doughnuts, *lagturtur* – four layer white cake with rhubarb jam, *brúnkaka* – four layer brown cake, and *soðbrauð* – fried bread. The open sandwiches are made with freshly baked bread served with simple but delicious toppings – local smoked trout, for example.

New in 2012

Salting, smoking and pickling preceded refrigeration as a way to preserve food in Iceland. This summer, Herdís offers a taste of traditional food preserved in the old style served on a plate which she designed. "The idea is to give our customers the opportunity to taste traditional salted, smoked and pickled food without having to buy three separate dishes." The plate designed by Herdís is a souvenir and is included in the price.

Áskaffi -SHV

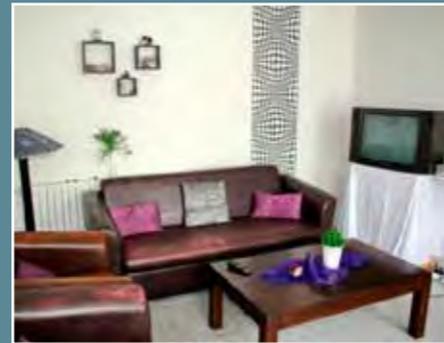
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TRÖLLASKAGI'S MYSTIC BEAUTY

The beauty of the northern towns with their vibrant lifestyle



Tröllaskagi Guesthouse

A homey guesthouse in Siglufjörður's centre. All the rooms are spacious and each room has a special character. There are 12 double rooms, 6 singles and 4 triple rooms. The North restaurant and bar serves an à la carte menu. It seats 100. The bar is open until 1 am each night.

🏠 Lækjargötu 10 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2100 ✉ northhotels@northhotels.is 🌐 www.northhotels.is

TORGID RESTAURANT

A cosy restaurant situated by Siglufjörður's main square renowned for making the best pizzas in Siglufjörður while offering a range of fast foods, soup, salad bar, coffee and cakes. The most popular dishes are the deepfried fish served with salad and chips and the chicken salad—grilled chicken breast mixed with fresh crisp lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and bacon!

🏠 Aðalgötu 32 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2323

Aðalbakari

Bakery is by the main square of Siglufjörður

Great variety of freshly baked breads, buns, sandwiches, pastries and cakes along with a lunch menu with soups and pasta.

🏠 Aðalgötu 28 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 4671720



The Folk Music Centre presents

Icelandic traditional music and dance through video recordings of people singing folk songs and playing traditional instruments. It also portrays the life of the Rev. Bjarni Thorsteinsson who is the most important collector of Icelandic folk music. The Centre organises the only annual Folk Music Festival in Iceland (July 4-8, 2012), where music from all around the world is performed alongside traditional Icelandic music.

Opening hrs: 12-6 pm daily June-August.

🏠 Norðurgötu 1 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2300 🌐 www.siglo.is/festival



Allinn

Allinn restaurant specialises in Icelandic home cooking and pizzas. It is situated in a beautifully restored house overlooking Siglufjörður's main square. It is reasonably priced and suits people of all ages.

🏠 Aðalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður ☎ +354 467 1111



EATING AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Siglufjörður feels like it is as far north as you can go. This former herring centre is set in a beautiful fjord and is a very popular place to hike from and enjoy the extraordinary birdlife and nature. The pristine beauty of the landscape is matched only by the atmosphere of the town, where there is much to see and do.

When you have built up a good appetite in the nature, you know you can dine at one of the best restaurants outside Reykjavik.

Hannes Boy is the bright yellow building right on the harbour, just a few feet from the boats, landing their fresh fish. Inside, the wood-beamed restaurant, with its lantern wall lights, wooden tables and chairs is bright and cheerful. The menu includes fish and lamb and you're guaranteed a delicious meal in the inspiring atmosphere of this warm and welcoming fishing town.

If you'd rather have something lighter, the Kaffi Rauðka in the equally bright



red building next door is your place. This is a lively place - especially on Friday and Saturday nights, with its live bands. It's a great spot for lunch, for getting to know the local people and enjoying their lifestyle.

-HP



The Herring Museum

The Herring Era Museum in Siglufjörður is an award-winning museum bringing to life the 'glory days' of Iceland's herring fishing industry in three different buildings.

🏠 Snorrögötu 16 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 1604 ✉ safn@sild.is 🌐 www.sild.is



Rauðka

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OUTDOOR LIFE TO THE FULL

Anyone who loves the outdoors will find all they can wish for in Fjallabyggð

You would think that, as you get closer to the North Pole, all you would see is snow and desolation. In winter, possibly—only that just makes the snow sports all the more exciting with awesome ski slopes, skating and snowmobiles and fishing through the ice.

Fjallabyggð is almost as far north as you can go. You feel like you're at the end of the world. Yet here, above Akureyri, the towns of Ólafsfjörður and Siglufjörður are alive with activity year round. They merged as one county in 2006 and, with the completion of the tunnel linking them that opened in 2010, travel became much easier.

Lively activities and long days

With the Spring, everything is completely different. The birds know it and fly in by droves—followed by the experienced bird watchers and photographers. The beautiful nature opens up to the hiking community, with a multitude of different hikes marked, with various degrees of difficulty. There is an excellent map produced by the University of Hólar. The countryside is breathtaking in its beauty and is so easily accessible from the two towns. It's a landscape of mountains and valleys, streams, waterfalls and hidden meadows, lakes and black sand beaches, with picturesque vistas at every turn.

The longer days make other activities both possible and really enjoyable like taking midnight sailing trips across the Arctic Circle or whalewatching from Ólafsfjörður. Fishing—whether from the harbour piers, on the lakes, in the rivers and streams or out on the sea—is also very popular. Many visitors like to combine hiking, sailing, fishing or boating trips together, getting the most out of their days.

There are two 9-hole golf courses, where you can play under the midnight sun and two swimming pools, with jacuzzis to relax in after a day's hike.

There are plenty of different types of accommodation and restaurants, fast-food and cafés with live music in both towns to suit every taste as the people here love to enjoy life.



Centre of Culture

Fjallabyggð has made up for their relative isolation by investing in cultural activities. There is a rich heritage of award-winning museums like the Herring Museum, the Folk Music Centre (with many activities for all ages and tastes), the Poetry Museum (where you can buy poetry old and new), Natural History Museum (specialising in the birdlife of the area), Art Museum (with probably the best private collection in the country) and festivals such as the Music festival in Siglufjörður in the first week of July.

Fjallabyggð is a vibrant community in which you will find a warm welcome.

-ASF

Fjallabyggð

Gránuvegata 24 • 580 Siglufjörður
 +354 464 9100
 none
 www.fjallabyggd.is

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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Experience Siglufjörður's beauty from Hvanneyri Guesthouse

Many visitors looking for the real essence of Iceland find it when visiting the northerly town of Siglufjörður, the former herring capital of Iceland.

The fishing boom eventually ended, but the people stayed, including the family in Hvanneyri Guesthouse. The family patriarch had, in fact, worked in Siglufjörður's fishing industry since he was six years old until the last fish processing plant closed this year.



The Guesthouse is located on the main street and is thus within arms' reach of the town's restaurants, shops and bakery, making it an ideal place to set up base during a stay in Tröllaskagi.

Accommodation ranges from dorms to lavish suites, something of which Katrín and her family are especially proud—offering each customer a room to fit their taste and budget.



Returning Friends

A family-run business, Guesthouse Hvanneyri puts special emphasis on friendly service. "We feel our customers appreciate

this and many of them keep returning. In fact, I just received baby gifts for my newborn from one of our customers. I guess it doesn't get any more personal than that," says Katrín.

A Trip into Icelandic Culture

The town has a lot to offer in itself. The people of Siglufjörður are particularly proud of their museums: The Herring Era Museum and the Folk Music Centre, where you can delve into Iceland's folk music heritage, thanks to Rev. Bjarni Þorsteinsson, a former resident of Siglufjörður, who diligently collected and documented hundreds of folk songs from the year 1880 onwards. That's not to mention the beauty of the Tröllaskagi area.



-ASF

Hvanneyri Guesthouse

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 +354 467 1506
 order@hvanneyri.com
 www.hvanneyri.com



HEAR THE SINGING

All that breaks the stillness is the song of the birds

In the early Spring, birds arrive from all parts of the world. They are dressing in the finery of their summer colours for the mating season while the days are growing longer as summer approaches. The lake is as clear as glass in the stillness of the evening twilight, broken only by the birdsong.

We are high in the north, on the Tröllaskagi Peninsula at the Brimnes Hotel and Bungalows, located on the banks of

Ólafsfjörður. It offers 11 double rooms with bath, and 8 Finnish-style log cabins, accommodating 5 - 6 people each. The self-contained holiday cottages are perfect for families or groups and include a lounge, kitchenette, bath, ground-floor bedroom and sleeping loft for the kids, as well as a cosy, private hot-tub on each veranda, where you can relax over a bottle of wine from the hotel's extensive wine list. Whether you are relaxing

or involved in the exertions of an active sport, the hotel's restaurant offers everything from quick snacks to full course meals.



Hotel manager, Axel Pétur Ásgeirsson, is always on hand to advise and organise sightseeing and activities in the region: boat trips, trout fishing on the lake, whale-watching, mountain hiking, kayaking, diving, skiing, horse riding, golf, river rafting, snowmobiling, art exhibitions, museums historical places of interest and, of course, bird watching and more.

-ASF

Brimnes hótel

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

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Image by © Giorgio Giampieri

BIRD FOR A MILLION

The most amazing bird photo is worth a million Icelandic kronor

Between the 14th of May and 31st of August 2012, visitors to the Troll peninsula, can participate in a photography competition for the best bird photo taken in the Tröllskagi area. There is such a rich variety of bird life on Tröllaskagi that there are many different possibilities for photographers to get great bird photos.

The Potential

There has always been considerable interest in bird life among Icelanders, and bird-watching tourism in Iceland is growing quickly as visitors realise its possibilities.

With high cliffs, many lakes, wetlands and a nature reserve in the valley of Svarfaðardalur, Tröllaskagi, or the Troll peninsula, in the North, where the towns of Ólafsfjörður, Siglufjörður and Dalvík are located, has among the largest variety of bird species living there. As you can see from the photos, there is a wide range of different possible settings to produce beautiful photos.

The Procedure

You can register at any time before or during the competition by sending an email to either the Brimnes Hotel or Rauðka. The following box has all the information you need:

Registration Information

Brimnes Hotel hotel@brimnes.is
Rauka raudka@raudka.is

The entrance fee for participation is 5,000 krona of which 1,000 krona is donated to Fuglavernd – BirdLife Iceland. The deadline for submission is the 5th of September.

Full details are on the website www.birdformillion.com

“What people need to do to have a chance to win the award is to capture a photo of a bird in Tröllaskagi or the islands of Hrísey and Grímsey, that the selection committee judges to be of outstanding quality and originality as well as being of value for the area,” says Axel Pétur, who runs the Brimnes Hotel.

When you are ready with your photos, you can send them to the same email addresses, take them personally or mail them on CD to either:

Brimnes Hotel,
Bylgjubýggd 2, 625 Ólafsfjörður/Fjallabyggd

Rauðka restaurant,
Sudurgata 10, 580 Siglufjörður/Fjallabyggd

The Prize

The finalists will receive the ‘Trollbird Awards’ and the winner gets the ‘Trollbird Statue’ as well as the amount of:

1,000,000 ISK.
approx. \$7,800/€6,000 in April 2012

The Promoters

Brimnes Hotel - www.brimnes.is is in a spectacular location in Ólafsfjörður. “We want to draw attention to the Tröllskagi area as this is the ideal place to see so many unique bird varieties in Iceland”, says Axel.



Image by © Einar Gudmann

Rauðka restaurants, Hannes Boy and Kaffi Rauðka www.raudka.is are ideally located at Siglufjörður’s picturesque marina and cater to all kinds of visitors to Siglufjörður, which is a bird-watcher’s paradise. It’s a hobby that builds up a healthy appetite that the Rauðka restaurants satisfy in the best possible way.

The jury is led by the veteran bird photographer and ornithologist Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson, who also is the chairman of Fuglavernd—BirdLife Iceland. The aim of the organization is both the protection of birds and also to make access to bird-watching better all around the country, by building information signs, parking lots etc. in popular bird watching areas.

A home for the Harlequin Duck and the Great Northern Diver

Most of the birds seen on Tröllaskagi are migratory, as rather few bird species live in Iceland all year around. “One cannot forget the Atlantic Puffin. Grímsey is home to one



Image by © Gísli Kristjánsson

of the largest puffin colonies in Iceland. Then we have species found in Iceland but nowhere else in Europe, such as the colourful Harlequin Duck and the Great Northern Diver, which might therefore be



Image by © Einar Gudmann

of a great interest to visitors. Those who have an interest in watching birds are often also people who care for nature and wildlife conservation.” says Magnús Sveinsson, one of those who have the greatest knowledge of birdlife in the area. He has created the website www.arcticaves.is to serve as an information bank for bird enthusiasts.

According to Magnús, the best time visit Iceland is during the breeding season from mid-May through June. That is when the birds become the most colourful both in their plumage and their behaviour between the genders. Most of the birds keep their colourful appearance throughout the whole summer, though. Who really wants to change summer clothes for winter outfits?

This is the second time the contest is being held. In the first one, the winning photo was shot by Mr Einar Gudmann, an excellent and well-known bird and wildlife photographer. <http://photos.gudmann.is>

ASF



MUCH MORE THAN FREE SOUP

Dalvík is a great place to visit for outdoor activities year-round

Dalvík's 2,000 inhabitants have a lot more to offer than the free seafood soup they serve up for 20,000 visitors in August each year.

Wide range of tourist services

Attractions offered to visitors include whale watching, sea angling, hiking, horse-riding, skiing, heli-skiing, rock climbing, bird watching, laser-tag, golf, musical events, swimming pool, museums and, naturally, internet access. Available accommodation spans the entire range from hotels to sleeping bag accommodation. Berg Cultural Centre hosts numerous concerts, performances and exhibitions throughout the year. It also serves as a tourist information centre, where travellers find any information they may need about the area, activities and events. Internet is available in the library and there's a Hot Spot for internet access in the coffeshop at the Cultural Centre.

Arctic Island Hopping

The imaginary Arctic Circle crosses Grímsey Island (pop. 100). The Sæfari ferry makes a 10 hour round trip Mon, Wed and Fridays. It leaves Dalvík at 9 in the morning, stops on the island for 4 hours, and returns to Dalvík around 7 in the evening. Sævar, the local ferry, provides frequent daily trips between Dalvík and Hrísey Island (pop. 200). The crossing takes 15 minutes. Visitors in summer

can visit the local tourist information centre, galleries, souvenir shop, swimming pool and a restaurant. There are holiday cottages, a campsite and a food store on the island.

The Great Fish Day

Fiskidagurinn mikli, or 'The Great Fish Day' in English, is Dalvík's annual all-you-can-eat fish festival. This year, the festival starts on Thursday, 9th August and ends on the following Sunday. This once-a-year event is not to be missed should you be in the country. On Saturday, everyone is invited for seafood soup. Music events, children's theatre, face painting, and a free boat ride are amongst the things on offer. The festival finishes with a firework display on Sunday night.



Hiking, bird watching and skiing

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 popular activity in the local community. Svarfðælir Hiking Club offers a variety of organised hikes during their Hiking Week (23rd June-30th June) Hikes range from easy to strenuous and everyone is welcome to join in.

In summer, about 30 bird species can be spotted at Dalvík's wetland bird sanctuary. Two bird hides allow easy access. The Birdland Exhibition in Húsabakki gives an excellent overview of the wetland and its wildlife.

Dalvíkurbyggð -SHV

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UNDER SAIL TO WATCH THE WHALE

North Sailing's traditional oak schooners sail to the whales

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

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

Challenges and memories

Sailing the arctic seas in a schooner being driven by the wind at up to 10 knots under full sail, following the world's largest

creatures is an experience for but few - but the memory will last a lifetime! Perhaps this stress-free, environmentally friendly travel is the way of the future.

Twice the experience

Today, North Sailing's fleet of six vessels sails from both Húsavík and Ólafsfjörður, just about an hour's drive up the fjord from Akureyri. These are prime locations for whale watching - literally just minutes from the feeding grounds of whales, dolphins and porpoises!

The new tunnel between Ólafsfjörður and Siglufjörður, famed for its herring museum, and music means that it is quicker and safer to travel between the towns.

Tours for all tastes

Regular tours last approx. 3-4 hours and include hot chocolate and local snack refreshments. Warm overalls, hats, gloves, blankets and raincoats are available in case of any changes in weather. There are

up to 10 tours daily during high season. The evening trips are special in summer, sailing under the midnight sun! There is the option to combine a trip with a 2-hour horse riding tour from Saltvík Horse Centre, south of Húsavík.

For the more adventurous, there is a 2-day 'Edge of the Arctic' tour eating and sleeping on board, stopping off at Flatey and Grímsey islands. What food could be fresher than fish caught en route and grilled on board! Eagle Air flies passengers directly from Reykjavik airport to Húsavík for this tour so if you have limited time, you really get the most from your visit.

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

Lunch or Dinner at the Harbour

The beautiful Gamli Baukur restaurant, with its large verandas overlooking Húsavík harbour, offers a great dining experience, surrounded by maritime memorabilia to complete your tour. With its fresh seafood, both local and international dishes, it is a hot venue for live music.

-ASF

North Sailing



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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 info@northsailing.is
 www.northsailing.is



THE BIGGEST BONES YOU'LL EVER SEE!

Whale bones hang from the roof at Húsavík Whale Museum

If you'd like to see whale bones and learn how whales impacted Icelandic culture throughout the ages, visit the popular Húsavík Whale Museum in the north of Iceland. "People visit the museum because it is the best way to learn about whales and their environment without actually diving into the ocean," says curator Hermann Bárðarson, a biologist with a keen interest in whales. "Last year, 21,000 people of all ages visited the museum."

Whale Skeletons

The crown jewel of the museum, so to speak, is the 13 metre-long skeleton of a sperm whale. There are 8 more skeletons on display. "Only when one is close to one of these skeletons does one realise how large whales actually are and how strikingly

similar their anatomy is to human anatomy," says Bárðarson. "Most people never have the opportunity to come in close contact with a whale - simply because their ocean habitat is so different from ours. This is a real pity. It is our mission at the museum to interpret everything about whales to the general public. We are here to spark curiosity, disseminate knowledge and foster respect for these animals."

Museum for all Ages

"Our museum is perhaps the most family-friendly museum in the country," says Bárðarson. "Its content comes from the depths of the sea which is normally hidden from humans. It comes from a place that is generally thought of as dangerous, lifeless, cold and dark—but nothing could be

further from the truth, of course. Children are especially receptive to the mysterious nature of this hidden world. We like to believe that we're successful in delivering a positive experience for children by bringing this hidden world a little closer. The museum receives school groups from all parts of Iceland throughout the winter. The visits are an integral part of the children's education about the environment."

Fosters Community Spirit

The Whale museum has become an integral part of the local community. It is an attraction in its own right but it also supports the budding whale-watching industry in the Skjálfandafloi Bay. "Last year 50,000 people visited Húsavík exclusively to go whale watching and visit the Whale Museum. The Whale Museum supports the overall visitor experience and fosters the community spirit—everyone in Húsavík is proud of the museum. It also provides an important employment opportunity for professionals, academics, unskilled people and volunteers in a disused slaughterhouse," says Bárðarson. "Come and see the whale skeletons and learn how whales have impacted Icelandic culture."

-SHV

Hvalsafnið



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 info@whalemuseum.is
 www.whalemuseum.is





GUARDED BY A FIREY DRAGON

The Otherworldly Landscape of Vopnafjörður

Imagine sailing towards a rough coastline and a range of magnificent blue mountains. Not only are you confronted by an utterly foreign and otherworldly landscape but also an otherworldly creature flying over the countryside; a dragon protecting this land of fire and ice. This was the sight facing a seafarer, who sailed to Iceland in ancient times, according to *Heimskringla*, an Old Norse kings' saga.

Nowadays, Vopnafjörður stands as a spectacular example of the grand, harsh, but yet beautiful, Icelandic landscape. Fortunately, this magnificent landscape is more welcoming to travellers now, when one certainly does not need to worry about escaping the fire of a dragon, though it would certainly be exciting to catch a glimpse of one.

The dragon is Vopnafjörður's icon and one of the four so-called *landvættir* – guardians of Iceland, who are pictured on Iceland's coat of arms. This ancient, mythical figure



leads one to wonder about Vopnafjörður's nature and history. Its history reaches back 1100 years when the bay was first settled by Viking seafarers from Norway. It derives its name (literally meaning Weapon Fjord) from one of the settlers, who was called Eyvindur

vopni. Vopnafjörður also boasts of its own *Saga*, *Vopnafirðinga saga*, which is centred around a dispute between local chieftains.

The wide-stretching sandy coastline hosts a myriad of marine life forms and the magnificent cliffs and rocky islets of Vopnafjörður make a superb sight. They culminate in natural wonders such as *Skjól fjörur*, easily accessible by driving the old highway east of Vopnafjörður village, which then becomes the high pass of *Hellisheiði* between *Fljótsdalshérað* and Vopnafjörður and provides travellers a spectacular view.

The village of Vopnafjörður lies on the small peninsula of *Kolbeinstangi*, creating a lovely scene with its colourful old wooden houses just by the sea, surrounded by rocky cliffs and islets. It became one of Iceland's major harbours for commerce in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the last half century, the



fishing industry has grown considerably, and is today the largest business sector in the area.

The museum of *Kaupvangur* is located in the village in a large old wooden house down by the harbour. The museum is in remembrance of the thousands of emigrants who left the region in the great emigration from Iceland to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the wake of the devastating *Askja* volcanic eruption of 1875. Also in this house, there is a museum commemorating brothers *Jón Múli Árnason* and *Jónas Árnason*, who wrote several jazzy musicals in the fifties and sixties, which have become classics of Icelandic popular culture.

One of Iceland's most renowned novels, *Independent People*, by the Nobel Laureate *Halldór Laxness*, was greatly influenced by the struggle of poor farmers in the countryside surrounding Vopnafjörður village.

Independent People follows the struggles of *Bjartur of Summerhouses*, a stubborn sheep farmer and former servant, who lives in poverty with his family in the vast emptiness of

the highlands. The story is deep and dramatic, but the prose is nevertheless full of sardonic humour, ensuring a highly entertaining read. It is a favourite of many Icelanders.

The countryside around Vopnafjörður is the childhood home of another big figure of 20th century literature in Iceland, *Gunnar Gunnarsson*, who grew up on *Ljótstaðir*. This most famous Icelandic writer of his generation wrote a lot about the countrylife of Iceland, influenced by the people, nature and culture of the Vopnafjörður area.

Through the large area of untouched landscape surrounding Vopnafjörður Bay, two great salmon rivers leave their mark



on the landscape. On the banks of one of them, *Selá*, one finds a cosy geothermal swimming pool with a nice view over the river. Among other interesting sights inland is the historical farm of *Bustarfell*, a regional museum where history comes alive through storytelling and workshops each summer. The same family has lived on *Bustarfell* since 1532 in a large turf farmhouse until 1966. It is one of only a few farmhouses of its kind preserved today.

Vopnafjörður is an interesting site for all those travellers yearning for an experience of the pristine nature of Iceland while soaking in the history of Iceland's settlement, the Nordic myths and the harsh conditions of life throughout the centuries.

NNH



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 www.vopnafjarðarhreppur.is

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A WARM WELCOME IN THE EAST

A blend of tradition and modernity equals a comfortable stay

Lakeside paths wind around Egilsstaðir Guesthouse, a stately eighteen-room hotel in Egilsstaðir, just a few minutes off Route 1. Built by owner Gunnlaugar Jónasson's great grandfather, this former farmhouse has hosted guests since it was finished in 1903. However, Egilsstaðir Guesthouse has changed to meet the needs of its growing number of visitors and was renovated in 1998. As Egilsstaðir transformed into East Iceland's hub, Gunnlaugar improved on his great grandfather's original idea of a comfortable guesthouse by adding modern conveniences such as an ensuite bathroom, wireless Internet access and a television for each room. Guests are also served a complimentary buffet

breakfast each morning in Egilsstaðir Guesthouse's spacious restaurant. Egilsstaðir Guesthouse holds onto its 'lived in' feeling mainly because Gunnlaugar's family lived in the house for generations and Gunnlaugar lived in a section of the hotel with his wife and children until one year ago, giving the service and style of the hotel a personal touch. "My children used to play in the halls and help welcome visitors. This was not a hotel, but our home and we still receive guests in the same way today." Egilsstaðir Guesthouse holds onto the unmistakable warmth of a house, while treating guests to a hotel's quality of service. Food plays an important part at Egilsstaðir Guesthouse and its restaurant has gained an impeccable reputation for its food and

decor. Gunnlaugar's wife, Hulda, is the mastermind behind the menu, adding variations to Icelandic dishes and including at least one vegetarian dish of the day. Hulda's mastery of the art of local food is mainly

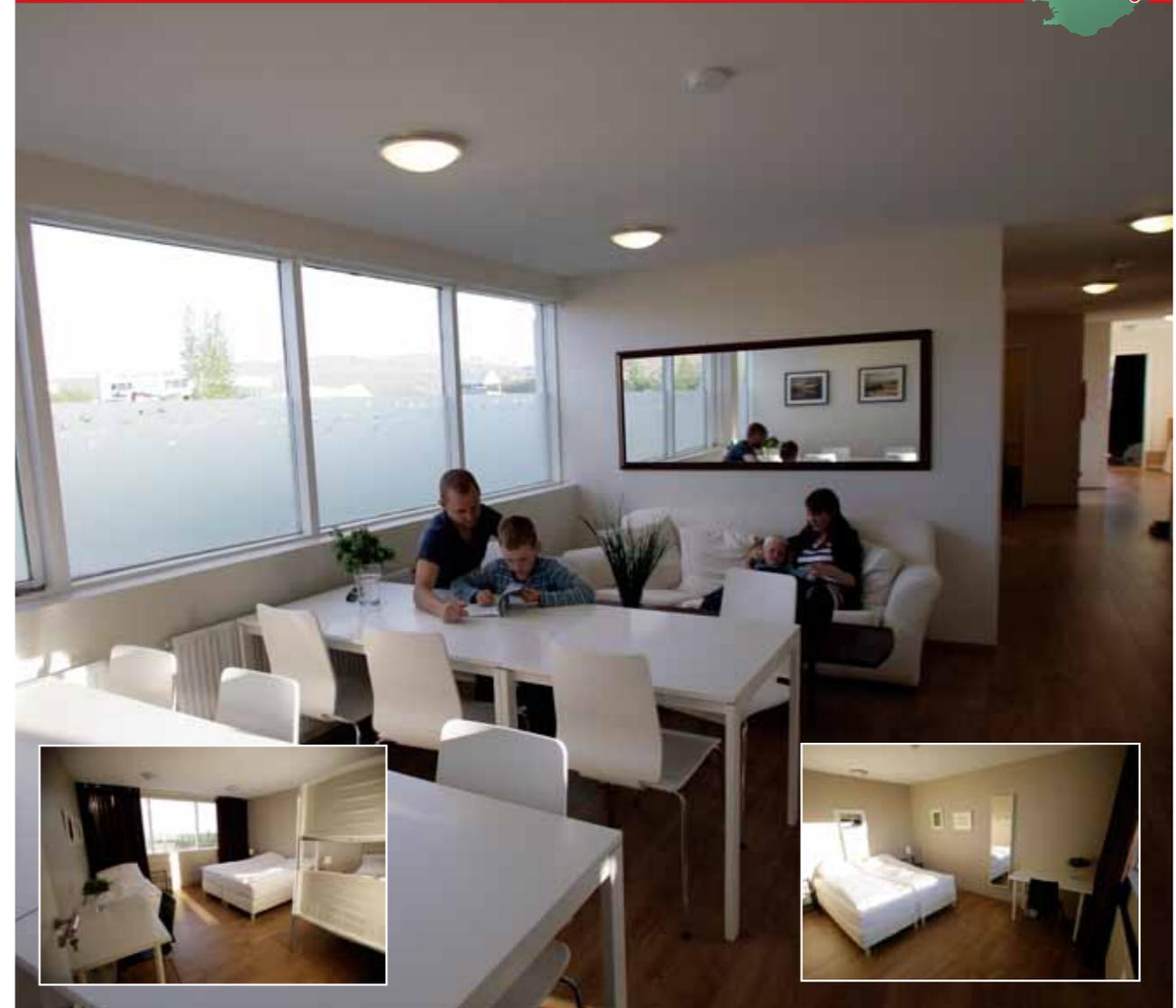


due to establishing a network of farms and fishermen to supply the restaurant with fresh ingredients year round. Menus share tips on Icelandic dining decorum and the names and stories of the people who supply ingredients to the restaurant, connecting dishes to their source. Most ingredients come from less than 50 kilometres away, like the beef and dairy products that come from the farm right across the street and deliveries of fresh vegetables from Vallanes, a farm 12 kilometres away.

-KB

Gistihúsið Egilsstaðir

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A FRESH PLACE TO STAY

Egilsstaðir's Lyngás Guesthouse offers simple, clean rooms to stay.

Opened in 2010, Lyngás Guesthouse gives guests in Egilsstaðir good quality accommodation at an affordable price in a modern house. It has six bedrooms ranging from those suited for individuals, to rooms for couples or groups of up to seven people. Being a new guesthouse, all the furnishing are also new and carry that fresh feeling. Guests on a budget can bring their sleeping bag for a reduced price or pay a small fee for the convenience of a made up bed.

Good quality in a minimalist style
White walls, accented with bright photos of plant life emphasise clean cut minimalism.



It gives a fresh atmosphere to the guesthouse, as all the comfortable furniture also carries a fresh feel to it. The large picture windows offer attractive views. All rooms share bathrooms, kitchen, and the living room and there is free wireless Internet access throughout the guesthouse. Egilsstaðir is the service hub for the entire East and is an ideal location from which to base while exploring the region. The guesthouse is just a few minutes walk from the swimming pool and art museum. Lyngás is also very conveniently located for all services in the centre of town.

-ASF

Lyngás Gistiheimili

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EMBRACED BY THE NATURE OF EAST ICELAND

Fishing, Hiking and Hunting in the Tranquility of Breiðdalur Valley with the Elves and Trolls

There are still many areas of Iceland that have, for whatever reason, not yet attracted too much in the way of mass-tourism. Breiðdalur Valley in East Iceland is just one of those places. As remote as it is beautiful, the valley has only a few farms scattered here and there and you can easily have the entire valley pretty much to yourself. There are a good variety of marked trails which are excellent for day hikes and you will also find three of Iceland's most beautiful fishing rivers, Breiðdalsá and its attractive waterfall Beljandi, the Tinnudalsá River and Norðurdalsá River. While autumn is an ideal time for hunting geese, ptarmigan and even reindeer, fishing for brown trout is possible throughout the year.

So where to stay while surrounded by so much natural beauty? Hotel Staðarborg, of course! So deep is the peace and quiet

that guests often wake up to see a herd of reindeer grazing right outside their window. In the small stand of trees behind the hotel, small birds flit from branch to branch, singing and chattering.

Owner/manager Arnar Stefánsson tells me that many tourists ask him if this is the right place to see elves and trolls. "I always tell them, yes, this is exactly the right place!"

Hotel Staðarborg is formerly the schoolhouse in Breiðdalur which has now been thoroughly renovated and can accommodate 54 people in 30 spacious rooms complete with private facilities and television. Sleeping bag accommodation and a camping site is also available.

The hotel's restaurant serves à la carte meals and refreshments are available throughout the day. Facilities at Hotel Staðarborg include a jacuzzi and a grassy sports field.



The hotel is located on Route 1, about 7 km from the village of Breiðdalsvík. It is 625 km from Reykjavík and 75 km from Egilsstaðir. The hotel is also an ideal stop for those who are travelling by the Norraena ferry, as it is only about 100 km from Seyðisfjörður.

So will you finally get a glimpse of one of those elusive elves or trolls here in the natural paradise that is Breiðdalur Valley? You'll have to find the answer to that one yourself!

Hótel Staðarborg

-EMV



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HOTEL FRAMTÍÐ OF DJÚPIVOGUR

Accommodation for every budget

It's rather rare in Iceland to find so many types of accommodation owned by just one company, but Hotel Framtíð has got it all covered; kind of a one-stop shop for all your accommodation needs, right in the centre of Djúpivogur.

Facilities are centrally located within the vicinity of the main building at the harbour. There is a camp site, a separate building for sleeping bag accommodation, 3 self-contained apartments which are great for families and small groups and 4 brand-new self-contained cottages that sleep 2-3 persons each. The century-old main house boasts a new wing with 18 double rooms and en-suite bathrooms, a large breakfast/

meeting room, the restaurant and 8 cosy bedrooms with shared and private facilities on the upper floor.

The postcard setting for Hotel Framtíð couldn't be more delightful. The restaurant overlooks a small harbour with colourful fishing boats and even the passing sailing yacht. We joke that the fish in the harbour are so close that they simply jump out of the water and land directly on our plates. Owner Thorir explains, "Well, its not too far from the truth, as the fishermen are only going out maybe one kilometre from the harbour to fish".

A favourite of tour guides in Iceland, the popular daily special at Hotel Framtíð

is always the catch of the day, whether it be cod, trout, halibut, haddock, redfish or plaice. Other excellent menu items include starters such as mussels (local of course), cooked in white wine, an almost addictive goose breast carpaccio and main dishes such as the heavenly roast lamb fillet or grilled langoustine with garlic butter.

Now that you are comfortably settled into your lodging, you'll want to spend a day or two exploring Djúpivogur and its surroundings. The Island of Papey, believed to be the home of Irish monks and hermits before the Settlement, makes for an interesting day trip. The 2 km-square island was inhabited until 1966 and is now home to many thousands of pairs of puffins. Only reachable by boat, tours to the island leave the harbour daily at 13:00, returning at 17:00. Seals are often visible resting on the skerries and tours to the island include a guided hike and visit to Iceland's oldest and smallest 18th century wooden church.



Hótel Framtíð

-EMV



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HUMARHÖFNIN OF HÖFN

Langoustine finds its niche in the New Icelandic Cuisine

Iceland is known for some of the finest fresh fish in the world and a large share of the country's catch is landed at Höfn í Hornafirði, on the south-east coast. Höfn (which sounds like 'Hup' to our

restaurant that can do justice to the lovely little crustacean? This is the idea behind the sea-food restaurant Humarhöfnin which has been a big success since it was opened 5 years ago by Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, her brother Ari Þorsteinsson and their spouses.

Popular with tourists from the Mediterranean countries, Humarhöfnin is the only restaurant in Iceland that serves whole langoustine. (The concept is so new in Iceland, that each diner who orders langoustine receives illustrated instructions on the finer points of using the lobster cracker and fork that come with the dish.) The menu was developed and created by the French chef Jacques DuPont and many of his dishes, such as the beautifully presented 'Mix of Whole Langoustine and Tails', the famous 'Black Magic Sauce' and Duck Confit have been very successful. Paired with one of Humarhöfnin's specially selected wines, you are in line for an absolute feast. The crème brûlée, made from local eggs and imported Madagascar vanilla will have you swooning and you might want or need to order a double portion.

The casual, bright and lively décor fits Humarhöfnin's harbour location and the friendly wait staff will be happy to



point out the very boat that brought in the day's catch, moored at the docks just a few hundred metres away. The building was formerly the town co-op which has been renovated and taken over by the restaurant. There is an exhibit of the history of the house, located on the 2nd floor.

Confit

Confit is one of the oldest methods used to preserve food and is a speciality of south western France. It is mostly used to preserve the legs of cooked ducks and geese

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-EMV



ears and means harbour) is also known as the langoustine capital of Iceland, with a several thousand visitors in town over the first weekend in July for the annual Humarhátíð (Langoustine) Festival.

So what's the langoustine capital of Iceland doing without a fine-dining



FISH IN THE FJORD

Let your mind relax in the beauty and peace of Mjóeyri

After working hard, it's time to relax, far from the bustling crowds and loud, polluted cities. In Mjóeyri, it's about as great a contrast as you will find. The placid fjord, hemmed in by the steep, high mountains of East Iceland's Eskifjörður on either side, beckons.

Bird watchers know this too and they flock to this area to enjoy its beautiful birdlife.

After a few hours out in the fjord, you're ready for a delicious meal. It's all here at Randulf's Sea House restaurant. If you only have a weekend break, this is the effective way to de-stress and enjoy yourself.

Unwind with the fishing

Mjóeyri rents out its motor boats, just over 4 m. long that seat 6. As any fisherman knows, one's spirit is totally restored when out on the water.

Race of the Titans

During the 3rd June Seaman's Day celebrations, you can experience one of the world's most



unusual races: the area's fishing trawlers racing down the fjord to see who can be first to dock. Here's a community that appreciates its tranquility but loves to enjoy itself, too.

Mjóeyri Gistiheimili



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-ASF



A GUESTHOUSE IN PARADISE

The picturesque Stöðvarfjörður has a high quality place to stay

Stöðvarfjörður is a quiet fishing village of barely 200 inhabitants, nestled on the banks of the fjord. Here you will find the renowned Petra's Stone and Mineral Museum, one of the most visited places in East Iceland with some 30 to 40,000 travellers stopping there every year!

Just a stone's throw away from Petra's is the Guesthouse Kaffi Steinn, the only café in town where you can pop in for a fish lunch, soup of the day, pizza or cakes with a proper espresso or cappuccino from their new Italian coffee machine.

The guesthouse was, at one time, a supermarket that sat empty until two families transformed the property in 2010. It now

boasts 14 well appointed, hotel standard double rooms all with attached private baths. The rooms are brand new and top quality.

A large meeting and event room with a stage has just been completed.

Here, you can enjoy the impressive view of the Sulur Mountains which rise dramatically out of the cobalt blue waters of the fjord. When the sun is shining it's especially stunning!

Across the street is the old 'Salthusið' which was used for salting fish years ago, which they have now converted into a popular handicraft market. Many local people contribute hand-made items including woollen and crocheted



goods, glass art, embroidered table linen and sheets, paintings and handmade stationery.

Steinn Guesthouse



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-EMV



ICEWEAR TAKES ON VÍKURPRJÓN

Taking the knitwear industry to new levels

Easily among the most picturesque villages in Iceland, Vík-i-Mýrdal is one of those must-see places for the tourist. With its black sand beaches, formidable landscapes, sheer-faced mountains and a church perched on a hill above the town, the postcard-like scenery is the picture of perfection. The white expanse of Mýrdalsjökull Glacier looms high above the tiny village of 291 inhabitants, one of the smallest population centres in the country.

Vík is also home to the popular woollen goods and souvenir shop, Víkurprjón, a favourite stop of independent travellers, as well as tour buses bringing visitors to the south coast. Inside you will find treasures of all sorts: lovely hand knitted items, machine-knit woollens, and a wide variety of Icelandic souvenirs to take back home with you such as mugs, magnets and t-shirts to name a few.

The Icelandic outdoor clothing company, Icewear, has recently taken over Víkurprjón, who has been a major employer in the village for many years. The move coincides with Icewear's 40th birthday and comes at a time when the company felt ready for expansion into other markets. Icewear director, Ágúst Eiríksson says that the shop in Vík will continue selling Víkurprjón products along with its own Nordic Design—Heritage Collection.

Icewear carries an extensive collection of outdoor clothing ranging from woollen sweaters, mittens, gloves and hats, to down



parkas, with an emphasis on new fabrics and trends. The company prides itself on friendly customer care and competitive pricing. Sold in shops all over Iceland, Icewear clothing is also available internationally.

-EMV

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NO ASH – JUST BEAUTIFUL CAMPING

Hike in the freedom of the mountains in comfort

Camping in Iceland? Are you joking? Isn't it freezing? What about the volcanos and all that ash? Pakgili Camp Site is a popular spot for Icelanders who love beauty and enjoy the hiking in the area. Do you really think they would go there in such numbers if it were covered in ash?

Set at the base of a spectacular canyon with a beautiful river running through it, there is no ash here. A climb to the top of one of the surrounding mountains offers

a view of range after range waiting to be conquered, green expanses contrasting with craggy rocks and sparkling waterfalls.

There is plenty of room to breathe here. You can bring a tent, a camper or caravan or, if you prefer, stay in one of the summerhouses. All the normal facilities are available. It's nice to know that, after a day's hike, you can take a refreshing shower before grilling your dinner as the sun slips behind the mountains.

If you enjoy the freedom of the mountains, this camp site is the perfect place to base from.

-ASF

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REFRESHING VÍK

Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

Guests at Halldór's Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vík's shoreline with its black sand beaches, Halldór's Café serves up small dishes like soup of the day or salads with tuna, chicken or just feta along with bigger meals of fish, lamb or chicken. Originally, Halldór's Café was a general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vík. Today, it

continues to satisfy patrons with its menu which has something for every taste.

Halldór's Café supports artists with a rotating display of local talent featured on its walls, and serves up steaming cups of coffee and cake, ideal for meeting and greeting old friends or new acquaintances. Halldór's Café opens in the middle of April and closes for the season in the middle of September. Its hours are 11:00 to 22:00 or 23:00, but Fridays can turn into late nights,

with the cafe remaining open until 1:00 am with its fully stocked bar providing a late night place to grab a drink.

-KB

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FANTASY TOURS

Iceland Excursions takes you to see other-worldly sites.



You've no doubt seen 'Lord of the Rings'. It could well have been filmed in Iceland. Besides being a land of elves, dwarves and hidden secrets, it's also a land of similarly spectacular, fantasy-like landscapes. The world has heard about the volcanos but it's a land where ice and water play an important role, too. The largest glacier in Europe covers part of the south, with powerful rivers going north and south. Water is plentiful and results in some of the most beautiful waterfalls in Europe

To see Iceland properly, you also need to understand its culture and history. If you drive yourself, you will only see one part. The solution is to take a tour with a guide who can synthesize 1,000 years of history and culture down to a meaningful and enjoyable account that puts each landmark into perspective and highlights what you would otherwise have missed.

Two of Iceland Excursions' tours head south and both will take you to other-worldly scenes of magnificent beauty and awe. After leaving Reykjavik and crossing the desolate mountain heath with its plumes of steam billowing up into the sky, the rough, craggy

landscape suddenly gives way to a spectacular view of verdant farmlands stretching from mountains, punctuated with steam spouts, all the way to the sea. The trips head first for the village of Hvalsöllur, where there is a refreshment break. It's an area of beauty and history which the guide explains.

Pörsmörk - Thor's Woods

One tour stops next at the beautiful Seljalandsfoss. It's quite an experience to walk behind this waterfall. It will then head in to the interior, past Eyjafjallajökull into an area as desolate as any moonscape except for the rivers criss-crossing the dusty grey terrain. According to the GPS, there's a lake here but all you see is a little puddle in a sea of grey dust. Prior to the 2011 eruption, there was a lake, but so great was the ash fall that the land rose and the lake disappeared.

Those little rivers can, in a matter of minutes, turn into a foaming tumult that has swept vehicles away. However, the tour drivers know just how to navigate these waters and you press onwards, feeling as if you have arrived on the moon. As you wonder if this is joke, you round a towering

cliff and a completely new vista opens up: the verdant area of Valaknúkur, a veritable Shangri-La, with its own micro-climate, bordered by rivers and surrounded by mountains. The contrast couldn't be greater.

Now is the time to enjoy your lunch at this popular leisure spot and a good hour-long hike on one of the many different trails amongst the woods and meadows. It's a nature-lover's paradise. On leaving the area, the tour continues to the Stakkholtsgjá gorge and another hour's hike up to its end where the river is crossed on stepping stones. Climbing up a small rock face will bring you to another refreshing waterfall.

Jökulsárlón

The second tour, meanwhile, continues south, taking in sights like the awesome Skógafoss falls before driving past Iceland's biggest volcano and its highest peak, Öräfajökull and arriving at the climax of the tour: the fantasy lagoon of Jökulsárlón.

From early May, there is time for an amphibious boat tour to take in the amazing, other-worldly sights in the stillness of the afternoon, as it weaves its way past giant

blocks of ice from the glacier. The lagoon began forming in the early 1920's and continues to grow, year by year. It has been featured in at least a couple of films.

Returning, the tour passes by Skaftafell, the beautiful park that is home to both massive volcanos and glaciers and the stately Svartifoss waterfall, noted for its black basalt columns, reaching Hotel Núpar for lunch, followed by a 45-min stop in the small town of Vík for dinner, a quick trip around the town or down to the black sand beaches and a look the strange rock formations of Drangey. Seljalandsfoss falls is the next stop. They look very special in the soft evening summer light.

As one traveller put it, "An amazing day! Jokulsarlon was the aim of the day but you get to see much more en route making the whole experience unforgettable. I fully recommend this trip to anyone."

-ASF

Iceland Excursions



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A SPRING EVENING IN STOKKSEYRI

Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant

Chef Robert was busy pouring drinks when we arrived. The well known song *Vorkvöld í Reykjavík*, (a Spring Evening in Reykjavik) was playing softly in the background. A table of tourists who had spent the day exploring a glacier with a guide, talked animatedly over dinner in the front room. The low slung building with pleasantly creaky wooden floors, once serving as the search and rescue building of Stokkseyri, is now one of the most popular lobster restaurants in Iceland, with over 35,000 patrons dining there in 2011.

15 tons of lobsters can't be wrong.

Fjöruborðið's website says that some 15 tons of lobster are used annually to make its famous soup, aka langoustine soup. Hmm...impressive statistics but does it really live up to its reputation? After all, there are many fine restaurants right in the capital, so is it really worth the 45 minute drive over a mountain in sometimes dubious weather conditions? Yes! I am happy to report that the soup was sublime. And just forget the word soup, how pedestrian! Chef Robert informs me that it is, in fact, a classic bisque de langoustine.



Whatever name you go by, it was delicious and I would have happily eaten another bowlful had I not needed to move on to taste everything else that was set before me: lobster tails that were perfect in themselves, homebaked bread with various dipping sauces and if, per chance, you are not partial to sea food, there is a wonderfully tender roasted fillet of lamb served with baby potatoes and red wine sauce that is excellent. A crisp salad made with local produce was refreshing and nicely complemented the seafood and meat dishes. Right on cue as soon as we had finished the lobster tails, our attentive server brought a warm wet cloth for our, by then, messy hands, which was much appreciated.



From the outside, Fjöruborðið appears deceptively small but in fact, it can seat several hundred all told, something that those having a tête-à-tête in the main building would never guess. Facing the ocean out back, a large permanent marquee can seat another 100 or so guests. All that to say, groups are welcome.

Favoured by tour guides who often bring their clients here as the ultimate finish to a perfect day of sightseeing, the restaurant has received several well known personalities such as Prince Frederik of Denmark, the Rockefellers, Clint Eastwood, Martha Stewart, Bette Midler and Cherie Booth (wife of Tony Blair).

-EMV

Fjöruborðið

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Gullfoss CAFÉ

Warm and friendly restaurant

Welcome to our warm, friendly restaurant, just a few steps away from the famous waterfall Gullfoss. Enjoy the beautiful mountains and glaciers of Iceland, along with a taste of the country - our famous Icelandic meat soup, "kjötsúpa". We also offer sandwiches, homemade cakes, excellent coffee, drinks and fresh salad.

Seating for up to 350 people

Gullfoss Café has seating for up to 350, where guests can enjoy food and drink in comfortable surroundings. The ideal group stop for lunch or dinner when sightseeing by Iceland's most waterfall.

Tax Free souvenir shop

Gullfoss Café has a souvenir shop with a wide selection of woollen products and other clothing, jewelry and Icelandic crafts. Guests from abroad can shop tax free, saving up to 15% from the original price.



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REYKHOLT'S HOTSPOT

The Gorgeous South – Green Energy and Gourmet Meals

The south of Iceland is absolutely one of the island's most beautiful regions. With its wide plains and magnificent scenery, it is a real feast for the eyes as well as possessing many of those majestic Icelandic landmarks: waterfalls, volcanoes and hot springs. Oh yes, and greenhouses. A lot of greenhouses.

Where does it come from?

Reykholt in Biskupstungur is a beautiful little town on the Golden Circle that has plenty to offer to those who visit it. It is a convenient stop on your travels around the south region, with a guesthouse and a camping site, a swimming pool and facilities for plenty of outdoor activity.

Reykholt is rich in geothermal energy and the first greenhouse in the region heated in this way was built there in the thirties. The hot spring of Reykholt is very old and there are stories of how people would come from the nearby church at Skálholt to block it, partly because occasionally animals would fall into it, but also out of a superstition since, naturally, boiling hot water coming out of the ground could only have its origin in one place!

Eventually though, despite all superstition, the area became inhabited early in the 20th century precisely because of its geothermal energy. Even though it has actually been capped today, the old hot spring still erupts every 10 minutes and the water is utilized to heat both residents' homes and



the greenhouses in the area. Hot springs apparently do come in handy, after all: you can even bake the traditional rye bread in them, as Steinunn at Kaffi Klettur does!

And speaking of bread...

Whatever your interest in geothermal energy, Reykholt has a hot spot that you do not want to miss. Kaffi Klettur, the local bar and restaurant with its mouth-watering menu is more than enough reason to stop by. Known for top-notch cooking and romantic surroundings, the restaurant works in the spirit of the Slow Food philosophy, honouring fair business trades and using fresh, organic locally-produced ingredients. The result is an utterly delicious cuisine with dishes that range from traditional Icelandic food like freshly-caught trout with locally-grown vegetables to more international dishes like the homemade lasagna. Everything is home-baked and make sure you don't leave without tasting their cakes and desserts, rumour has it they're sublime! Steinunn's kleynur are so popular, she ships them all over the country.

-HP

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ELEGANT EATING

Delicious dishes in the old town of Eyrabakki at Rauða Húsið

What is better than a succulent lunch or a seafood dinner on your travels in the southern part of Iceland? The Rauða Húsið restaurant is renowned for its delicious seafood dishes, not least the fresh lobster. You could even take a special day-trip from Reykjavik to Eyrabakki.

Rauða húsið, The Red House, is one of the most beautiful houses in the village, standing by the coastline. Guests will appreciate the sense of history within the restaurant and its ambience, with its windows and lovely wooden floor. The house is quite spacious and has about 200 seats but



is not crowded, making dining both comfortable and suitable for groups. It used to belong to Guðmunda Nielsen. She built its oldest part in 1919, after returning home from Copenhagen where she studied business management. She was considered to be an exceptional lady and opened her retail shop right after building the house.

Old World Village Charm

Eyrabakki was once one of the most important trading centres in Iceland but has evolved into a charming and tranquil village of less than 600 inhabitants. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900's and the village has maintained a turn-of-the-century, freewheeling charm and atmosphere. Eyrabakki boasts many beautifully restored fine timber buildings. The oldest of them, The House, built by a Danish Merchant in 1765, now houses the Árnes Folk Museum.



Langoustines from the Birthplace of Lobster Fishing in Iceland

Lobster fishing in Iceland was born off the shores of Eyrabakki in 1954. Icelanders were late to discover the various seafood delicacies. In fact it was not till the mid-20th century that the locals discovered that not only was the small Langoustine lobster edible, it was delicious!

Menu Suggestions

One of the most popular dishes besides the lobster which the restaurant is famous for is the Catch of the Day, which consists of three different seafood dishes prepared from the freshest ingredients available: Lobster soup, with a hint of Cognac

topped with coriander cream; Oven baked bacalao in olive and tomatconcasé; Seafood trio with mixed vegetables and potato purée. Or you might even like to taste oven-roasted cod with slowly roasted tomatoes and hollandaise



sauce. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of the Rauða húsið's signature desserts. Serving a variety of delicious

fish and meat dishes, guests will find the restaurant's cuisine is a nice mixture of both international and Icelandic, but local ingredients figure prominently.

Return to Reykjavik with a Full Stomach

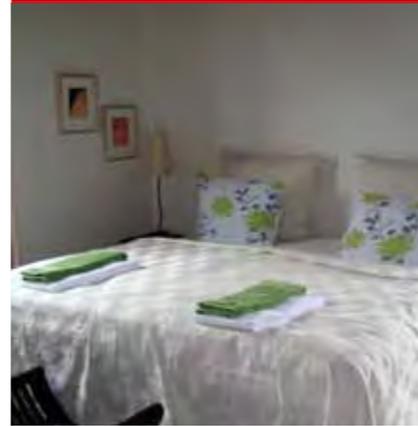
Rauða Húsið is a popular spot for travellers returning to Reykjavik or wanting a pleasant evening trip, as it is just 50 km from the capital, with an easy and beautiful drive.

-AMB

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WITHIN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Gallerí Guesthouse is surrounded by famous attractions

The small but bustling town of Laugarvatn lies in the Golden Circle and in the middle is the quaint and quiet Gallerí Bed and Breakfast. Started by owners Þuríður and Joel after their kids had flown the nest, three extra bedrooms are now filled with tourists wanting more than the normal day trip to Iceland's most famous attractions. From an enclosed patio, that will soon feature a fireplace, two of

Iceland's active volcanoes: Eyafjallajökull and Hekla are clearly visible.

Breakfast is included in the price of the room. Gallerí's knack for handicrafts shows in light fixtures made by Þuríður and small decorations found throughout the rooms. The Gallerí store is where Þuríður and Joel's artistry shines, allowing travellers to take home a small piece of Icelandic design. Joel and Þuríður's hospitality extends an invitation to their guests to come along

and find out the café's secret to tasty bread, baking it in a natural hot spring close to Geysir. This bread is served along with slices of salmon each day at the Gallerí café.

-KB

Gallerí Laugarvatn



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THE MAN BEHIND SKÓGAR FOLK MUSEUM

Preserving Iceland's past for future generations

There are probably few natives of South Iceland more worthy of the title 'local expert' than the 90 year-old curator of Skógar Museum, Þórður Tómasson. Born in a turf house at Valnatún farm, just 17 km from the museum itself, Þórður has spent most of his life right here in Skógar, never venturing too far from the place his family has called home for the last 300 years. He knows just about everything there is to know about 'the olden days' of Iceland, and, with his vivid memory and keen mind he is, for all practical purposes, a walking encyclopedia of sorts.

Although he is slowing down just a little these days, the sprightly old man is still giving tours of the museum in English or the Scandinavian languages, which he speaks with ease. He can often be seen giving demonstrations of wool spinning and carding, or singing the old Icelandic folk tunes while playing the dulcimer or zither, to the delight of his audiences.

Wander around the Open Air Museum with its historical buildings and turf houses, reconstructed piece by piece by Þórður himself. The small chapel, while new on the outside, is filled with fine church relics gathered from churches around South Iceland. There, you will often find Þórður at the harmonium, playing hymns from his youth; the music transporting visitors to another place in time.

A museum is born

Þórður began his collection at the age of 14, at a time when the modern technology of the 20th century was fast replacing hundreds of years of cultural tradition. Realising the importance of preserving Iceland's unique cultural history, Þórður would often go from farm to farm, writing down the stories and anecdotes of the older generations living there. Household items, farming and fishing implements, ornate wooden chests, decorative items of brass, silver and



gold, and as well as traditional clothing and artefacts dating back to the Viking Age are just a fraction of the 15,000 plus items that Þórður has collected in his lifetime. His foresight and enthusiasm has inspired many others around Iceland to follow his example, thereby ensuring that Iceland's beautiful and unique cultural heritage is not lost.

-EMV

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DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS

Caving with Laugarvatn Adventure

The mouth of Gjáðbakkahellir leads down to rocky paths hollowed out by lava flows that pushed through earth, forming the cave's smooth and polished walls near Laugarvatn, the town within the Golden Circle.

The experienced guides of Laugarvatn Adventure have had over a decade of training in caving and can navigate through almost any of these caves. Tours vary in difficulty from Gjáðbakkahellir's relatively

gentle descent to Tintron's vertical drop accessible only by abseiling down a rope.

Laugarvatn Adventure's three cave tours let visitors safely delve into the depths with the help of guides who were educated in caving and are active members of the Icelandic Search and Rescue Team. Children over five can even go on some of the easier tours, while adults tackle the challenge of rock climbing on Þingvellir's craggy cliffs or crawling through a small hole at the opening

of Litli Björn cave. Tours are offered every day from May through August with a two person minimum necessary for departure.

-KB

Laugarvatn Adventure



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SLAKKI ZOO & PLAY CENTRE

Where Children and Animals Get to Know One Another



Summer is here. The newborn lambs are skipping and jumping in the fields. The flowers are blooming in all their glory and Iceland has turned green once again. The volcanic eruptions have only served to fertilise the grass and the blue skies are encouraging everyone to get out into the countryside once again.

Of course, the countryside is synonymous with animals. In Laugarás, close to Skálholt cathedral is the Slakki Zoo and Play Centre, which is one of the country's most popular animal centres. It would be a mistake to think this was just for children, however. It has activities for all the family, adults included and it makes a great day out in a place where the simple joys of life can be indulged in by everyone.

For the children to be able to experience animals close up, to be able to touch and hold many of them, is such a treat nowadays. They love the opportunity to play with

animals of all kinds and to look at the birds and fish in their own environments.

A Safe and Fun Activity Day

There are animals of all sizes from horses to mice, pigs to ponies and everything in between. Some are inside and others can be enjoyed in the gardens. The kittens, for example, are a favourite inside their own little house, where children can hold and pet them for as long as they wish - and that can be a long time.

This is a safe environment where parents can relax, knowing their children will be enjoying themselves without harm. Families often make a day of it, as there is plenty to do. Besides the animals, there is a large aquarium and many different species of birds to enjoy. Even farmers come with their families - often wondering why their children love it so much when they have animals at home!



It's not just the animals, though. There are other games to play which unite the family in a fun entertainment such as the putting green and crazy golf.

Relax with Restaurant Refreshments

Naturally, when you're staying all day in a centre such as Slakki, refreshments are very important and here you will find a restaurant and café filled with home-made snacks, including delicious hamburgers with salad and apple cakes with cream.

The café is in a small turf house, with plenty of seating outside where you can enjoy the sun and the yummy, locally-made Kjörís icecream.

Stuffed animals may be fine at home, but nothing can replace the experience of holding or playing with live animals. No computer or TV can take their place, either, so it's no surprise that many families return again and again.

Slakki's indoor zoo is open every day throughout the summer months until the end of August. It is one of Iceland's secrets that is being revealed on the Internet, with pictures and videos being posted by satisfied customers and their happy children. If you're driving the Golden Circle trip, see for yourself. It's only a few minutes off the main road to Geysir.



-ASF

Slakki

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VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale

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 Hvolsvöllur, 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 peek 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.

Westman Islands Whale watching

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!*

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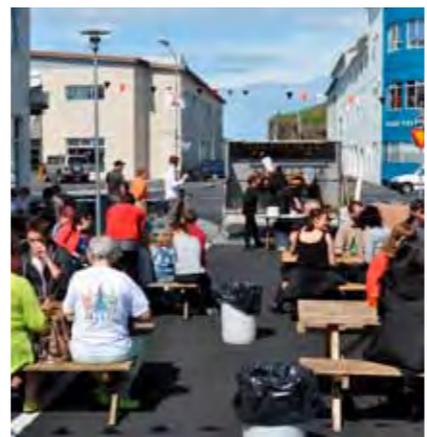
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A WORLD IN A NUTSHELL

The Intriguing Westman Islands

For an excellent day-trip or even a weekend jaunt, there is almost nothing better than time spent in the Westman Islands, off Iceland's south coast. Soak up the fascinating mixture of unspoiled nature, cosmopolitan culture and the laid-back lifestyle of the Westman Islanders. It is a must for those travelling by way of the south shore and is an easy 25 minute ferry ride from the new harbour at Landeyarhöfn, 20 minutes to the east of the village of Hvolsvöllur. There are also direct flights from Reykjavik city airport, if you must hurry, but taking the double decker car-ferry is decidedly much more fun!



You can take your car over on the ferry or just go as a foot passenger. Whichever way you choose, the main island of Heimaey is so small that getting around is a cinch. The ferry drops you off at the harbour at the centre of the village and from there you have several options.

Take a walk around and explore the still-warm earth that surrounds Eldafell, the mountain that was created as a result of the 1973 eruption on the island. Visit the Pompeii of the North excavation site, a fascinating, ongoing project which has been digging out several homes that were buried during the eruption of 1973. The project, which began in 2005, aims to uncover a total of 7–10 houses, one of which should be entirely dug out and ready for visitors to walk through in the summer 2013. Visitors are welcome to visit the excavation site and see how the project is progressing.

A visit to the Westman Islands would not be complete without touring the uninhabited outer islands by boat. Viking Tours offers a 90 minute boat tour, taking you right up to the immense cliffs where thousands of birds nest, as well as doing a bit of cave exploration to boot. Have a blast on a RIB safari tour of the islands or get around the streets of Heimaey on one of those fun contraptions called a Segway Personal Transporter.

Tourists are encouraged to have their eyes open for some of the new restaurants that will open this summer. At the end of April, Hotel Vestmannaeyjar will be opening a first class restaurant specialising in local cuisine in a Volcano themed atmosphere,



run by the ambitious local chef, Einar Björn Árnason. The menu will include speciality seafood dishes, as proximity to local fishing grounds provides the opportunity to obtain fresh ingredients daily.

Vestmannaeyjabær -EMV

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