

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 15 · 2012



**Why Birds Flock to Iceland
The North Prepares for Winter
Take a Step Back in Time**

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Autumn arrives from one day to the next in Iceland. The weather changes are dramatic—as are the colours, both in the vegetation and in the sky. Spectacular sunsets lead to ever-earlier nightfalls, after which the skies are filled with the Northern Lights.

The sheep are brought down from the mountains, the harvest is brought in before the inevitable storms that signal the onset of winter.

Iceland puts on an entirely different set of clothes after basking in the warm summer sun.

Visitors who have seen the country in summer, see a very different landscape in autumn—and then, an even more different scene in winter.

It's an exciting time, especially in the North of Iceland where, in Akureyri, commonly known as the country's winter capital, after the cruise ships have left, the skiing and winter sports begin, drawing visitors from all over the world to experience the uniqueness of an Icelandic winter in all its glory. The evenings are filled with lights and entertainment.

Sports feature highly, also, in Mývatn, where the lake freezes over. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the horse riding competition on the ice. It's not all cold there, though, as the geothermal baths are more enticing than ever, making a visit well worth the trip.

Birds feature highly in this edition, both at the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay and around the northern towns and villages. In particular, Lake Mývatn is home to many species of birds, a number of which stay through the winter.

It's a different Iceland—but one that is all the more exciting, challenging and memorable. It's a visit you will never forget!

Andrew Scott Fortune

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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'
ð	Like 'th' in 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

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SOMETHING OLD AND NEW

Reykjavik Excursions reveals the heart of Reykjavik



How to get to know a country when you are only here for a week or two? It's a dilemma which many people solve by taking advantage of the tours to the major places of interest.

Don't forget the home base

In Iceland, there is simply so much that you will never find anywhere else that it can seem a little overwhelming. To give you a good foundation and start to your holiday, it's a good idea to look at the capital itself. Here, there is much to see and do - but you could waste a lot of time wandering.

Reykjavik Excursions has two tours that give you a perspective of not only the capital, but the country itself, which will help you make the most of your stay. These are fascinating tours that encompass history, nature, the main attractions and popular spots.



Reykjavik Grand Excursion

An afternoon tour, 3 hours long, this begins with a pick-up at your hotel. Reykjavik is not a large city, nonetheless, it can take awhile to both get your bearings and make your way from one spot to another. On a tour like this, you don't want to be stuck in a bus, just gawking at the sites; you want to experience them. So this tour uses the bus to quickly get you from site to site, with a guide using the opportunity to give you an insight into the many varied aspects of the life and history of the city.

It's a fascinating tour, filled with anecdotes, folk tales, fun facts and history. In this short time, you get an appreciation for much of the town and what it contains, so you can then more knowledgeably use your stay.



You visit the key landmarks, such as Hallgrímskirkja and The Pearl, overlooking the city, Reykjavik City Hall and the University of Iceland. It also delves into the unusual, such as Höfði House, where the

famous meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev took place in 1986, Elliðaár river and Laugardalur valley.

The tour finishes in time for you to choose where you would like to eat your evening meal. By then, you will have had the opportunity to build up quite a photo collection. It's a popular tour that runs every day of the week.



A Sense of Reykjavik

Between Thursdays and Saturdays, there is also a 3-hour early evening tour that uncovers more of the history of the capital - past and living, taking you first of all to Seltjarnarnes where you can see how close to nature Reykjavik is. This is especially of interest to bird lovers, but everyone will find the variety of both the birdlife and flora to be quite amazing both in a country so far north and less than 10 minutes from the city centre, where the tour moves to next.

Taking advantage of the warm, light summer evenings, you stroll through parts of the town that even long-time residents may have missed. Having grown from a small fishing village, the old and the new mingle together, fascinating galleries next to enticing restaurants - at two of which you pop in to try their delicacies. You quickly get an appreciation for both Icelandic culture and the international variety that makes up the city today.

You see the old preserved and renovated to fill new roles. Nowhere is this more evident than at the oldest house in Reykjavik and the old harbour, where the bright green, former fishermen's huts have found a whole range of new purposes, from jewellery workshops to gift shops to Viking speciality stores to bustling restaurants and cafés. This is a popular spot you will doubtless want to revisit.

These tours give you such a good overview of the capital in all its aspects that you will have a list to follow up on by the time the tour returns you to your hotel. You'll just be left wondering how to fit everything in—which is why so many make return trips to discover more.

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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 four exhibitions now showing:



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.

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



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 major event 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 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.



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.

PLUCKED FROM STORMY SEAS

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

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

A week later, the fishermen were caught 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, with no thought for their personal safety. 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

The Museum's Photo Gallery displays photos by Óskar Gíslason taken while filming "Rescue at Látrabjarg", the cliffhanger rescue against almost impossible odds that gripped the world at Christmas time in 1948. The film will be shown at 3 pm on Sundays for the duration of the exhibition.

TRAVERSING TIME AND TECHNIQUE

Four artists, two centuries, drawing together timeless qualities

The year is 1789. Aboard Sir John Stanley's Northern Seas expedition is John Baine, a mathematician, astronomer and artist. Baine used the latest techniques to calculate and render ground plans with passion and empathy.

Add three 21st century artists, Per Kirkeby, Anna Guðjónsdóttir and Þóra Sigurðardóttir and a whole new dialogue begins through the pictures' qualities: their force, mystery and tactility.



The countryside inspiration

All the drawings deal, in some way, with the countryside, its land, minerals, soils and nature. Their focus is on observation of substances, environments, and conditions through the abstract methods entailed in drawing.

Danish artist Per Kirkeby

A geologist, two centuries later, he engraves his drawings in the field directly on copper or zinc, his work being transferred later to paper. He has worked in Greenland, Iceland, the Faroes, drawing as he hikes.

Anna Guðjónsdóttir

A long-time resident of Germany, she often delves into forms such as matted roots and grasses, her plays of fine brush-lines coming across as swirling streams.

Þóra Sigurðardóttir

Her works focus on minerals used as glazes on fired clay—cobalt, kaolin, iron, copper. Her source is the immediate environment, whether creases in skin, cracks in a wall or sprouting twigs.

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-ASF



FOCUS ON FASHION

Top designers are developing fashion for men and women at Kraum

Iceland is a country with inspiration in its blood. It pours out through an ever increasing number of talented designers for everything from the humble pancake pan to the latest developments in fish skin to make top quality men and women's shoes.

When Kraum first opened in Reykjavik, a group of just 30 designers presented their ideas. Their number has swelled to more than 300 all over the country and the range of products has multiplied likewise.

Designed with Men in mind

Women's clothing and accessories found a natural home in the shop but the latest development is for men's designer clothing to join them. Starting with a range of shirts, named after Huginn & Muninn (The Mind and The Memory), the ravens of Norse god,



Odinn, they look really stylish. A range of pants complements them, making an ideal ensemble whether for business or partying.

A Mecca for the unique

The Vikings were renowned for their engineering and craftsmanship skills that their descendants have amplified over the years, producing a range of unique ideas and designs, skillfully using both common and unusual materials in totally new ways.

Whether it is living jewellery or a stool that is a light or a shaggy lambskin seat, a butterfly formed by the play of light and shadow or a pair of fishskin shoes, it is immediately obvious that each is the work of a thoughtful, inspired designer, creating something never found in today's mass-produced world.



Searching for a memorable gift for someone special, the choice from over 300 designers could seem a little overwhelming but the way the shop is laid out, it is easy and quick to find what you're looking for—or even find something you didn't know you were looking for but which fits the bill more precisely than you could have hoped.

Being designer products, they are designed to be easily shipped. Kraum can handle it for you if you have too much to take on your flight and, if you forgot something, it is easy to order from their website, too.

Finding Kraum

The oldest building in Reykjavik, originally built by the Icelandic reformer, Skúli Magnússon as a factory to produce goods for his needy countrymen, is found by Ingólfstorg, the square just down from the Post Office and it is there you will find Kraum.

Kraum -ASF



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HANDS ON TRIPS

Gateway to Iceland prepares the details to make your tour terrific

It certainly says something that a company has been awarded TripAdvisor's Certificate for Excellence for the last two years in a row—the only tour operator in Iceland with that record. There's a good reason for it. People appreciate the personalized service. When somebody posts, "...it truly felt like we had a friend who was taking us around on a personal tour" and others echo their sentiments, you know the company has something special.

GTI can handle every aspect of your stay—and they do it with style. They don't charge extra for all the planning involved and go out of their way to make your stay as successful as possible, filled with humour, stories, explanations—and consideration.

Whether you're on a honeymoon or a business trip, a school group or travelling alone, your adventure and fun will begin before you even leave home as they work with you to make your visit everything and

more than you desire, from meeting you at the airport to the guided tours in anything from luxury cars to comfortable mini-buses. Keeping the groups small ensures that personal attention wherever you're travelling with them in Iceland.

GTI also has standard tour packages from day tours to the key Icelandic destinations.

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FINE DINING, CLASSIC TASTE

Dine in style at Einar Ben, in downtown Reykjavik

In this day of fast food and tasteless eating, it is a good to know that there are restaurants where their motive is to give you a dining experience you will think back on with contentment. Einar Ben is one of those select few restaurants that has been able to maintain the delicate balance of class, comfort and top-rate food that inspires customers to return.

A Classic Calm

Upon entering the dining room 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. 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, rather than a garish or bare and minimalistic dining hall.

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 barely 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.

Dishes Designed to Delight the Palate

Philip Harrison, Einar Ben's English chef, takes great pride in only using the freshest Icelandic ingredients. "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 hearty sauces", says owner Jóhann.

For starters, we were treated to a delicious langoustine and pumpkin soup, which set the mood for what was to come. The Arctic char served with a celeriac pureé, 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 pureé 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.

Innovation is a key ingredient in Einar Ben's menu, which is revised regularly to introduce new twists to the classic dishes, so you can be assured of a fresh presentation each time you dine there.

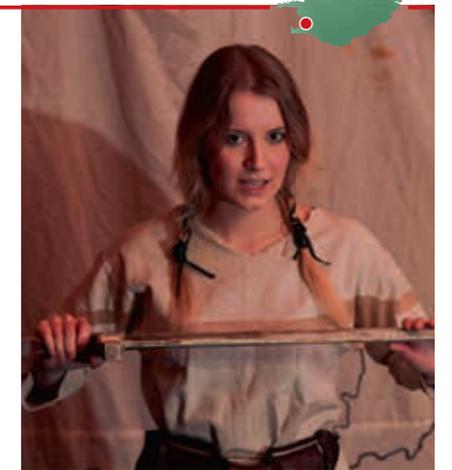
Relax at the Red Bar

Whether you're looking for a place to start a night out on the town or relaxing after a delicious meal, the Red Bar on the third floor offers a quiet atmosphere and comfortable ambience.

Einar Ben -ASF

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VIKING HOSPITALITY

Eat, drink and be merry in the Viking Hall

You may not see their long boats in the harbour today, but this is the land of the Vikings—and there's one in the Vikingakráin tavern. 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. Walk through the entrance gate in the high wooden stockade and you can feel you're back in a Viking hall in the 900's.

Bawdy Banquets with the Bards
 No Viking feast would complete without their actors, poets and storytellers performing every night. The experience is so authentic that, as you enjoy the food and drinks, sitting at massive wood tables, you are totally immersed in the life and culture of the Vikings—which will doubtless give you a few surprises and something to tell people when you get home. After

all, how many people encounter Vikings and escape to tell the tale?

Vikingakráin is located above the Dubliner which is the oldest pub in town. Give them a call to book your dinner, as this is a popular venue.

Vikingakráin -ASF

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THE SECRET OF THE CELTS

The Pub the Irish come to Iceland to drink at

What did the Vikings find when they raided Ireland? Beautiful girls, for sure. But when they brought the Celts to Iceland, something they didn't expect came, too: The Dubliner. Cold beer, smooth whiskey and plenty of Celtic music—live music every night.

Lubricate an Irishman and you get a lot of singing, story-telling to stretch

the imagination and plenty of laughter as the poets wax lyrical. No wonder it's known as the happiest pub in town.

Today, the Dubliner is still totally Celtic in every way. It's easy to find down in the centre of town but just don't try to follow their road signs after you've had a few drinks. If you fancy yourself as a singer, they'll even let you try out on their Thursday open mic evenings.

You'll even get a sympathetic audience and you can always get warmed up first at the bar.

It would have mystified their forefathers, but now you can often watch little men on a big screen kicking a ball back and forth, while everyone yells and cheers. Now, there's a tall tale to tell.

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HANDKNITTERS UNITED

The One Stop Shop for All Things Woollen at the Handknitting Assn.

Sheep came to Iceland with the Viking settlers and they quickly proved their worth, not only for their meat but also their wool. Living conditions were very basic and especially tough in the cold and dark winter months. Sheep helped keep the settlers alive.

These Icelandic sheep have two types of fleece—an outer, weather and water repellent layer and a soft, warm fleece close to the skin. Combined, they have provided warm clothing for farmers and seamen, adults, children and babies for centuries. Making sweaters became a tradition in farmhouses, cottages and houses around the country.

The Handknitting Association of Iceland was founded in 1977 to help overcome problems that knitters were having in getting their handiwork marketed. A group of women formed the association, established standards and guidelines for the production that was - and still is, an

important supplement to many family incomes and shortly thereafter, opened a shop to sell their members' woollen goods on Skólavörðustígur, the main shopping street that descends from Hallgrímskirkja, the cathedral overlooking the city.

As the name indicates, these woollen creations are hand made. The motto from the outset has been, 'Buy directly from the people who make them'. Walking into the shop, one cannot help but be amazed at the skill and productivity of these ladies—and some men, too, from all walks of life, living in all parts of the country. Every item has that sense of individual uniqueness that only handmade items carry.

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago, the designs took on the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which



has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours. There is a wide range of sweaters, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, bags and many other items in sizes to suit everyone from a Viking warrior (or farmer) to a pretty fashion model to a newborn baby.

The store has become a centre not only for selling the finished products but also for supplying the wool and all the accessories required to make woollen items.

The association has established high standards for the wool they supply the knitting community so as to get an equally high quality product back to sell. This is all the best genuine Icelandic wool with its unique characteristics.

Visitors can have their purchases shipped to them and they can also email orders from the website in the comfort of their own homes. That includes the patterns, wool, needles and accessories, not just the clothing. If knitting is your hobby, there is a world of warm designs just waiting for you.

-ASF

Handprjónasamband

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SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



ENTER THE VOLCANIC CAFÉ

Feel the Shakes and Tremors of Earthquakes and Volcanos

What is it like living on a small island where eruptions occur on average every four years and earthquakes of various sizes occur daily, is a question Icelanders are frequently asked. An island where ice and fire are constantly battling, moulding and reshaping the island's appearance and the islanders' mood and emotions. The only reply we can give is: We wouldn't know how to survive in a country which is not alive.

But if you are curious about the reality of the Icelandic life—force enter the Volcano House, a café in the centre of Reykjavik and experience for yourself the impact of an eruption or an earthquake while enjoying a cup of tea or coffee, or munching on a slice of cake or homemade bread.

Volcano House is no ordinary café. It is also a cinema and a museum, specialising in the tremors and shakes, the colours, the smells and the touch of living in this strange, remote corner of the world.

Volcano House' in-house cinema offers two back-to-back documentaries. First up,



a film about the eruption in the Westman Islands in 1973. The second one, 'The Volcano Island', by the Icelandic film maker Jón Sigfússon, is a documentary on the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010, nominated for the 2011 Emmy Award for outstanding location cinematography.

The Westman Island documentary contains unforgettable footage from the 1973 eruption which started without warning in the middle of the night on January 23rd. The entire population—over five thousand individuals—were evacuated by boat to the Icelandic mainland where they stayed until the end of the eruption seven months later. The documentary contains truly dramatic and unforgettable footage.

The Eyjafjallajökull eruption caused millions of people to be stranded across Europe due to thousands of flights being cancelled over several weeks. This documentary contains some breathtaking aerial views and footage and is truly a gem.

Additionally, Volcano House offers a hands-on geology exhibition where guests can handle various samples of pumice, ash and lava from Icelandic volcanos.



An interesting exhibition

A large collection of semi-precious rocks and minerals from around the country are also on display and are available for purchase. Volcano House offers guidance and information throughout the exhibition which is particularly interesting for school groups and students of geology. Volcano House occupies an enviable location in the heart of Reykjavik, with large bay windows overlooking the colourful old harbour. It is open seven days a week from 10.00 to 22.00. The documentaries in English can be viewed hourly from 10.00 to 21.00. German language commentary is available for groups or private screenings.

-SS

Volcano House

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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 daring 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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A CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

Welcome to the enticing and inviting Café Haiti

In autumn, when the weather inevitably starts cooling down, Café Haiti serves as one of those cosy, unpretentious places where you can pop in to warm your toes and enjoy an excellent cup of coffee from beans roasted every morning right on the premises. Here you can start your day early with a hot latte or cappuccino, along with a freshly

baked croissant or two, for this is one of the few places in the downtown area that opens for breakfast—8.30 am to be precise. There is also an enticing array of home baked cakes and pastries should you feel the inclination for a little something sweet.

The laid back atmosphere is also a favourite with locals for lunch—quiche,



fish and vegetable soups served with freshly baked bread are offered. Try the smoked salmon on toast, or the always fresh 'catch of the day', fished right from the waters of Faxaflói Bay. A steaming bowl of plokfkiskur, a traditionally Icelandic fish stew, is just the thing to warm you after an afternoon of whale watching at the Old Harbour.

Café Haiti is great place to do some 'people watching', for it's as popular with tourists as it is with Icelanders. You might even spot a well known Icelandic celebrity or two while you're at it. Enjoy!

Café Haiti -EMV



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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 cool autumn 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 desert, 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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excellent viewing decks, providing you with a great sailing experience. Guests can have a nice cup of coffee or hot chocolate indoors or borrow a sweater to wear outdoors on colder days.

LIFE OF WHALES

Watch whales, porpoises and dolphins from the 'Andrea'

Whales and humans coexist harmoniously in Faxaflói bay in these first sunny days of summer. The whales have been playing and enjoying riding along Life of Whales' ship 'Andrea', while the humans enjoy the view of these magnificent animals.

The whales by the shores of Iceland, are without a doubt, some of the most spectacular sights Iceland has to offer. Four types of whales live in Faxaflói bay, which makes them quite accessible from Reykjavík. Those species are: the Minke Whales, White-Beaked Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Humpback Whales.

they visit the puffin islands in the bay, where one can easily see the peculiar puffin among other seabirds, hundreds and thousands of which have already nested in these islands.

The 'Andrea' is the biggest whale watching ship in Iceland; thus it is very stable, comfortable and—most importantly—has



Tour the bay on a stable ship

Life of Whales is a small family company, which runs three tours a day from the old harbour in Reykjavík, each one lasting three hours. In addition to the whale watching,

Notes from a guide's diary

According to the guide's diary to be found on Life of Whales website, the beginning of June was really exciting on the bay. One day, for example, a Minke whale stayed with the ship for awhile during a thick fog, a description one normally only encounters in mystic fairy tales! Another entry tells of some harbour porpoises competing with Minke whales to show off only ten metres from the ship in front of the eager human audience.

Yet another entry tells of a playground of Minkes, a group of five staying a secure 60 metres distance from the ship, while a group of three others dared to come much closer, surfacing at the same time in the same direction. This same tour also witnessed some dolphins, mothers and calves alike jumping out of the water and turning in the air. Whales are just like us humans, some of them are more suspicious, keeping their distance from the ship while others are more daring, playing along and perhaps even communicating with us!

Make your visit complete

Staring at the unbelievable sight of a whale surfacing from the sea is something one should not miss while staying in Iceland. On board the 'Andrea', you are provided with both the comfort and facilities to enjoy that experience to the fullest.

Life of Whales

-NHH

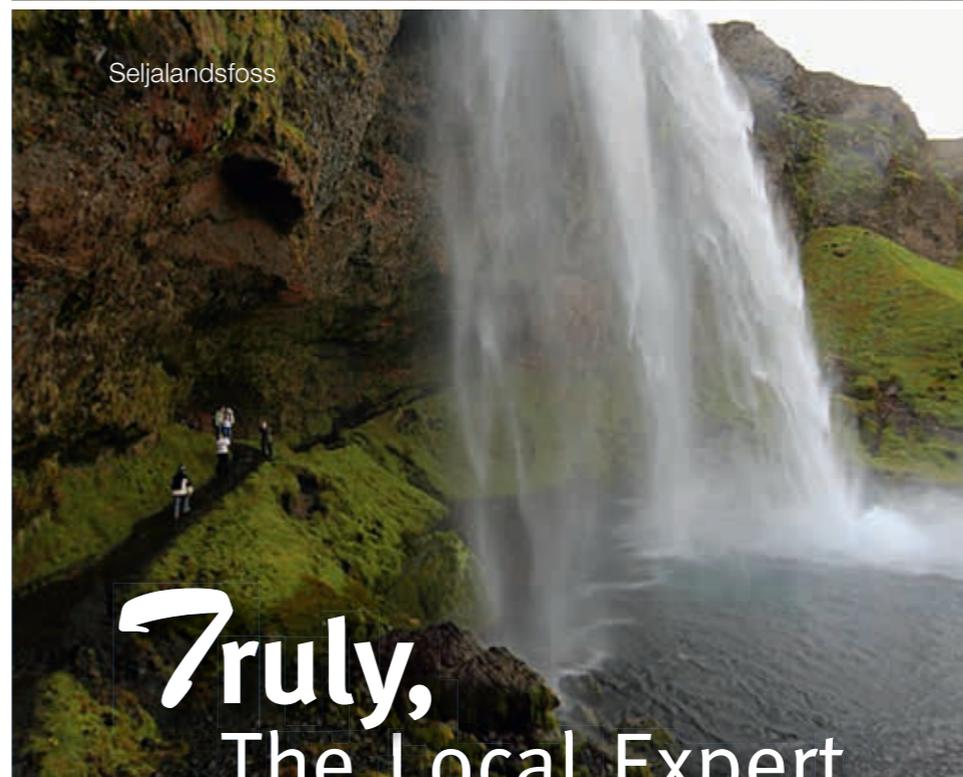


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Northern Lights



Sejaldandsfoss



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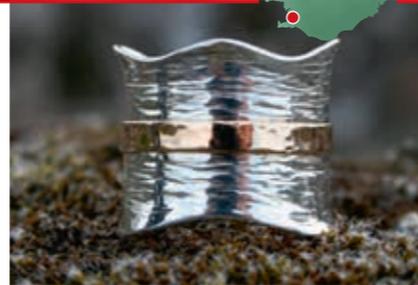
We are one of the leading tour operators in Iceland and offer professional services, flexibility and safety for travellers in Iceland.

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Custom-made Beauty

Sædis 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.

You'll find her creations for sale online at saedis.etsy.com and through her website, where you can order from abroad but if you're in Reykjavik, a visit to her open workshop and gallery is a worthwhile experience.

Sædis the Jeweller -ASF



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JEWELS & ART BY THE SEA

Sædis hand crafts jewellery in her studio at the Old Harbour

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.

Sædis 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.

Sædis, 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.



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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REYKJAVIK ART MUSEUM

Where It All Started

Although Iceland is a young nation in terms of art history, you'd be surprised to discover the quality and unique character of Iceland's finest artists. Reykjavik Art Museum offers the chance to experience the best of classic and contemporary art in Iceland in one enlightening day. The museum is situated in three different buildings in the city centre: Hafnarhús, Kjarvalsstaðir and Ásmundarsafn, each with its own theme and character.

The Must-See

Those wondering who the stately gentleman staring at you from the 2,000 krónur bill is and where the unique imagery comes from, would be well advised to visit Kjarvalsstaðir, home to Iceland's most beloved painter, Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885-1972). While it is hard not to be inspired by Iceland's colourful landscape, few have managed to capture its essence and tie it so securely into the Icelandic psyche as Kjarval did.

Among the dozens of celebrated paintings you'll find now on display the exquisite Fjallamjólk, which Icelandic art scholars claim has contributed more to the Icelandic identity than any other painting, making it an absolute must-see and worth the trip to Kjarvalsstaðir by itself.



Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17, 101 Reykjavik



Kjarvalsstaðir, Flókagata, 105 Reykjavik

The Kjarvalsstaðir museum is dedicated to permanent exhibitions of Kjarval's works, a sizable portion of which he donated to the city of Reykjavik before his death, as well as exhibitions of paintings, sculptures and design by established Icelandic and international artists.



Kjarval, Mountain Milk, 1941

Get With the Times

While Kjarvalsstaðir covers the more conventional forms of artistic expression, Hafnarhúsið has the liberty to experiment and take on ambitious projects with contemporary artists from all over the world.

While Hafnarhúsið has six different galleries devoted to the most exciting current happenings, one of them is dedicated to a permanent exhibition of the works of Erró, the acclaimed pop-artist who has donated over 2,000 works to the museum.

Being located close to the city centre in an intriguing building and due to its ambitious undertakings, Hafnarhúsið has become a center-of-sorts for the creative arts in Reykjavik.

The Hidden Pearl

Probably the least known of the three buildings is Ásmundarsafn, which is quite remarkable considering that it is dedicated to the wonders of one of Iceland's foremost sculptors, Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982).

The museum is housed in a unique building, designed mostly by the artist himself, who sought inspiration from



Erró, The Grand Children of Mao, 2007

the Mediterranean, the domed buildings of the Middle East, and the pyramids of Egypt. Ásmundur's sculptures can be found surrounding the house and on the inside, making a magical land inspired by Icelandic landscapes, literature and its people.

All in One Day

The famous landscapes of Iceland are well known and easily accessible, but only through the eye of the artistic mind can one fully comprehend their significance to the nation's identity, making it an unmissable part of your discovery of Iceland. Reykjavik Art Museum offers its guests a chance to do it all in one day with their museum day passes. What really makes it an outing worth your time is that it also gives you the chance to experience the culture of Reykjavik while you stroll between the museums and relax in their coffee shops where patrons of the arts spend their time. You can even get souvenirs and informative books to commemorate your day.

Look out for Reykjavik Art Museum's autumn programme for upcoming exhibitions.

www.artmuseum.is -VAG



Ásmundarsafn, by Sigtún, 105 Reykjavik



ART TO ENJOY AND OWN

Find Fine Art at Gallerí List

Art is a major part of Icelandic culture. There are probably more artists, musicians, writers and poets per capita than in any other country. Walk into almost any house or business and there will usually be at least one work of art hanging there, as many of those who are not artists themselves tend to be collectors or patrons.

Gallerí List is the longest running and most successful art house in town. Since 1987 and, under its current owner, Gunnar Helgason, it has gone from strength to strength. A few years ago, a move was made to its current and larger home to accommodate their growing collection, and

growing reputation as the leading art house in the city. Gunnar was able to completely redesign the interior and its lighting to best exhibit each picture. With its high ceilings, large works can now be displayed in the best ambience. The Gallerí is currently housed in the spacious ground floor of Skipholt 50a, an elegant modern round house, just a stone's throw from Reykjavik's main street, Laugavegur. Exquisitely lit in a sweeping open space design, Gallerí List showcases the cream of Icelandic artistic talent.

The works of between sixty and eighty Icelandic artists are on display at any given time. With all the major media represented,

from graphics, watercolours, oil paintings and acrylics to ceramics, porcelain and glass, the art aficionado can experience the full wealth of Icelandic artistry under one roof.

In addition, the Gallerí also holds a monthly exhibition devoted to either new or established Icelandic talent. Gunnar says that variety is the spice of life and, in the case of Gallerí List, it seems to be a successful route, as well. "I think one of the keys to our longevity in a competitive world is the diversity of our collections.

"We pride ourselves on our wide customer base with something to suit all artistic tastes", he says. The same philosophy extends to the price tags, and of course professional packaging and international shipping is available upon request.

From the expert art collector to the more modest, but conscientious gift shopper, there always something unique for everyone at Gallerí List that makes a visit worthwhile.

-ASF



Gallerí List

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A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Bringing French and Icelandic cuisine together in Prír Frakkar

On a little corner in the little big city in the North is a small haven for the food lover. Behind the beautiful rouge exterior of Prír Frakkar með Úlfar is a romantic dining room, small and intimate, like a French bistro in the Parisian Saint Michel, yet rich in Icelandic heritage through chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson's artful fusion of French and Icelandic cuisine using primarily fresh Icelandic produce.

Specialising in fresh fish and known for his superb skills in creating rich flavours and a tender texture to seafood, Úlfar has earned a reputation as one of Iceland's most skilled chefs, marrying local traditions and fine French cuisine.

Úlfar's list of prestigious clientele is long and President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson is a regular customer, ordering take away to

the presidential residence weekly and occasionally dining in-house.

Úlfar Eysteinnsson and family bought the restaurant in 1989 and opened in the very last days of the beer prohibition. Úlfar kept the peculiar name, a name with dual reference to a long trench coat and the previous owners, two Frenchmen and a Frenchman's wife.



Prír Frakkar með Úlfari is truly one of Reykjavik's hidden gems where fine dining and Icelandic family values come together in a feast for the palate!

-JB

Prír Frakkar

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FINE ART AND DESIGN

Gallery Dunga's Gallery and Ceramic Studio is at the Old Harbour

Design and handicraft has always been part of the Icelandic women's daily life. Over the centuries, they have had to use their creativity to make clothes and jewellery, decorations and practical knickknacks from scratch, working with the material provided by Icelandic nature and farming. Thus, the tradition goes way back and today it is stronger than ever.

Gallery Dunga, next door to the Seabaron Restaurant by the old harbour, is an excellent example of the ingenuity of Icelandic women when it comes to design and creativity. The gallery sells bags and belts made from fish-leather, lovely feminine clothes from Evuklæði (Eve's Clothing), exquisite ceramic and glassware, oil and acrylic paintings and has an absolutely new take on Icelandic

wool. Owner Ingibjörg Klemenz works in her own workshop on the premises.

All the designers aim to use mostly Icelandic material in their work, thus creating quite unconventional pieces. Thus, a visit to Gallery Dunga is a must when in Reykjavik.

-SS

Gallery Dunga

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COME OUT TO PLAY

The Activity Parks in Gufunes and Smáralind provide hours of fun

Through play, children learn to understand the world, relate to each other and develop skills. Adults who keep in touch with the child inside and play all their lives will always be a step ahead of others.

The activity park in Gufunes and its sister park in Smáralind Mall provide an opportunity for fun and amusement.

Gufunes is a former settlement. In the early days of Iceland there was a harbour there where goods were traded. The pirate ship watching over the park could just as well have docked there centuries ago.



Because the staff are experts in event management, the park is ideal for orienteering. They can create games that will promote team building, sharpen your attention and help develop resourcefulness. The park also offers mini golf, laser tag and paintball.

In Ketill's hut, where the settler Ketill Gufa is remembered, food and refreshments are offered.

Joy is the key to a long life

It is said that laughter strengthens the heart and is the key to good health and there is plenty to go around in Smáralind Park. The park is a small world full of fun and exciting challenges with over 100 games offered: bumper cars, a sledgehammer that spins you 14 metres in the air, a drop tower and arcade games which provide a challenge for people of all ages. The first 7D motion theatre on earth takes participants into the world of animation during which they can affect the film's outcome.

Open from early afternoon till late evening, you can spend time in the various attractions, watch live sports, play pool or darts or try to set a new record in the games in the arcade hall. If it's competition you want, grab a scorecard and create your own competition with your friends.



Food nurtures the soul

If you are hungry, the Forest Snack offers treats such as candy floss, ice cream, popcorn and soda. For those who prefer something more substantial, try the Fun Café on the second floor. The best thing about amusement parks is the atmosphere of excitement and romance that lets us nurture the child within.

-ST.S

Skemmtigarðurinn



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FOOD FIT FOR KINGS

Ethiopian culture in the North Atlantic

Minilik is an Ethiopian restaurant serving exquisite food. Located near the Smáralind Mall in Kópavogur, at Hlíðarsmári 15, Minilik is owned and operated by an Ethiopian couple, Lemlem Kahssay and Yirga Mekonnen.

The restaurant derives its name from Prince Minilik, son of the Queen of Sheba. According to the Bible, the Ethiopian queen visited King Solomon of Jerusalem to study his wisdom and presented him with gold and other precious gifts. They became lovers and upon her return to Ethiopia she gave birth to a child who she named Minilik, which means 'the son of a wise man.'



Ancient culture

Lemlem, a professional marathon runner and Yirga, a former journalist, have been living in Iceland for a number of years, raising their four children. Though they are both from Ethiopia, they met in Germany. "I persuaded her to move to Iceland," says Yirga and adds playfully, "It is impossible to 'escape' from Iceland!"

When asked why they decided to open a restaurant, the couple reply, "Ethiopian culture is 3-4,000 years old and has a great culinary tradition. We wanted to share our tradition which is little known today as most of the news the world gets from Ethiopia is of hunger and famine. But Ethiopia has another huge side to it. We have 85 tribes, thus 85 dialects, 85 cultures with their own traditional songs and dances and culinary traditions. So, it is a rich and diverse culture and we are offering dishes which were served in Ethiopian palaces 3,000 years ago. Ethiopian restaurants are very popular all over Europe and the US and we were convinced the same would apply to Iceland."



Joyful tradition

Minilik has been very well received by the Icelanders and it's no wonder. The food is authentic and delicious, with herbs and spices imported from Ethiopia—a joy for the palette and fingers as guests use traditional Ethiopian bread (similar to crepes) instead of forks, to scoop up the food with their fingers.



The jewel in the Minilik crown is the coffee ceremony. Be sure not to miss it. Ethiopia is known as the 'Mother of Coffee' and at Minilik, guests can observe the process from start to finish; from the roasting of the washed coffee beans to the hostess pouring the aromatic and delicious brew into cups—as traditionally, only women can perform this ceremony.

The service at Minilik is warm and lovely. One cannot help feeling welcome and at home in this part of Africa moved to the northern Atlantic.

Minilik Restaurant



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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 www.minilik.is



MAKE YOUR TRIP MEMORABLE

Iceland Excursion's Tours bring you the country's essence

As you plan your holiday, you're probably wondering how to do it all, see it all, enjoy it all and, when you come back, remember it all. That's a lot to fit in but there are clear shortcuts to making it happen.

Say you'd like to ride a horse, see the famous Icelandic sights and learn some history but not have the trouble of driving yourself. Among its many tours, Iceland Excursions has one tour that covers those criteria pretty well.

Starting with a pick up at your hotel around 9 am, this particular tour takes you out past Mosfellsbær to Laxnes Horse Farm, where a horse is selected to match your riding

skills. After putting on helmets and riding gear, you're off into the beautiful countryside for a two-hour ride. Run by Þorí and his family, the Laxnes Horse Farm has built a reputation for safety and quality, with many famous celebrities riding there.

After a break for an optional lunch with a delicious soup and hot, fresh bread, the coach arrives for the remainder of the tour. Now that the roads are paved to the major sites, the coaches are the same modern luxury coaches found all across Europe.

This is where a tour beats driving yourself hands down! The guides are all highly trained and very knowledgeable and



make the most of the drive to point out things you would have otherwise missed or share an anecdote from history—both ancient and recent. This turns the tour into an enjoyable and memorable experience, allowing you to focus on taking photos to later jog your memory when sharing your experiences with your friends. These tours are certainly something you will want to share, too, as the combination of the nature, people and guide's talks will leave you feeling as if you really know this part of the country, rather than having just seen it.

I talked with a young couple who had rented a car to go sightseeing. When I told them about my experiences of taking a tour to where they had been, they were dismayed, feeling they had wasted their time and missed so much—and, in many respects, they had. Just as you wouldn't ride a horse without the proper equipment, getting the most from your visit to Iceland really requires someone experienced to share their knowledge with you.

If you take a look at their website, you will notice Iceland Excursions' professional approach to their tours. You can also read the reactions of others who have taken a tour. After all, if you are spending your time and money coming all the way to Iceland, you will doubtless want to make the most of it.

The gratifying thing about the tours is that they are not intrusive. They get you to the places you want to see, tell you all about the sights and history so that when you arrive, you are prepared to fully enjoy them and will know what you want to focus on. By taking the strain out of the

driving, you arrive fresh at each place—and you do arrive—you don't get lost!

A nice thing about Icelanders is that they sincerely want you to enjoy the country they



love and get the most out of your visit. They want to share it all with you. You don't feel disappointed or ripped off. On the contrary, you come away feeling you have lived your holiday to the full and are taking home very special memories. You will probably not have time to see everything in one holiday, but Iceland Excursions will be here to take you to other equally amazing destinations on your next trip. And you will want to return! You have but scratched the surface of an astounding country.

—ASF

Iceland Excursions



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STAY WARM THIS WINTER

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

Iceland is known for its ferocious winter storms. Generations of Icelanders have stayed warm, dry and comfortable wearing woollen clothing from the sheep that roam the mountains in this wild country. Icelandic wool is noted for its special qualities. It has a virtually waterproof outer layer and a soft, warm inner layer. The clothes are warm and shower-proof. This makes them especially comfortable and suitable for all weathers—unlike many wool clothes that end up a heavy, sodden mess when it rains.

Made in Iceland, Found in Álafoss

All the woollen clothing to be found in Álafoss is made in Iceland from Icelandic wool, ensuring that you can find these authentic qualities you are looking for. Today, the clothing ranges from traditional to high fashion. Many young designers have taken the Icelandic wool to create a whole new range of designs and colours, which gives plenty of choice for men, women and children alike. You'll find them at Álafoss alongside a stock of the traditional designs that have become a fashion statement in themselves the world over. For those



A Living History

Álafoss is also a virtual museum. Built in 1896, it was here that the Icelandic woollen industry began and flourished. The mill itself has closed but the building now houses the Álafoss store. There are looms, pieces of machinery, vintage-style cash registers, original early phones and examples of equipment used to make the original company the powerhouse that drove Icelandic society for so many years in the 20th century. There is a small café 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.

Just 20 minutes from Reykjavik lies the town of Mosfellsbær on the road to the north. There, after passing under the two bridges you will find a roundabout. Most traffic continues straight but if you turn right, you'll immediately see the red-roofed building of the old mill, built next to the álafoss or ála waterfall, from which the mill took its name.

-ASF

Álafoss Wool Store



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CONNOISSEUR'S DELIGHT

Hand-made knives by Palli are treasured across the world

Carefully carved out of diligently researched and prepared materials, often rare and always unusual, Palli's knives are now found in at least 85 countries of the world. When he makes a special knife, there can be quite a competition to own it.

Born from enthusiasm

Palli started carving knife handles over 25 years ago as a personal hobby. He enjoyed finding unusual materials to create the handles and took delight in carving each one carefully to match the individual blades.

Under the blade

Visit his workshop and you will most likely find yourself seated right under a collection of blades magnetically held to a bar on the ceiling above you. None has fallen yet! A true craftsman, he always chooses the best blades, sourcing them from as far away as Pakistan. Others come from a blacksmith in Denmark. Factory made blades come from Norway, Sweden and Germany. They are either made from fine Damascus steel, stainless steel or single high carbon steel: which keeps its sharp edge the best.

Nature's provision

What is special about these handles? Palli loves to wander the countryside, looking for new materials for his handles. Often,



he will blend different materials together to form a composite handle that, when carved, will be unique. A horse's hoof, a reindeer's antler, a goat's horn, a hippo's tooth, elm, fossilized wood, ebony or even different Icelandic stones—these are but a few of the materials he uses to create a handle. Whilst most are found within Iceland's shores, his search also takes him to many different parts of the world.

The Patience of a Master

Sometimes, materials will require special treatment if they are to last and that can take time. Some woods need to dry slowly or they will split. Others, such as the fossilized tree he pulled from the water that was turning into brown coal, need more



patient treatment. In this case, he wrapped it in plastic and for the next 6 years, he daily pricked a tiny hole in the covering to let just a bit more air in to dry it. Had he done it faster, it would have splintered and crumbled to dust. Such is the thought and care applied to each individual material that each handle stands out as carrying the touch of a master craftsman, a quality much sought-after.

Custom or catalogue—all are unique

Because each knife is hand made, it is a unique creation. He does have a catalogue but the images are just samples, as no knives are completely identical. He loves the challenge of experimenting with new materials. A 65 year-old dentist drill is pressed into use for intricate carvings. They can be ordered online or, in Iceland, can be found at Brynja, the handyman shop on Laugarvegur 29, Reykjavik's main shopping street and at his workshop in Mosfellsbær. It's worth the 15 minute trip there (from down town Reykjavik) to see the environment from which he draws his inspiration in his workshop next to the Álafoss waterfall.

-ASF

Palli the Knife Maker



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BAKED TO PERFECTION

30 Years supplying delicious hand-made baked goods at Mosfellsbakari

Just over 30 years ago, a young couple worked together at a summer job in the Westman 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 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 Hafliði, 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 pastries. 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? You might not want to tell your friends or relatives. They are just too good!

-ASF

Mosfellsbakari

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THE GRINDAVÍK EXPERIENCE

So Much More than Just the Blue Lagoon

All too few visitors to the famous Blue Lagoon realise that, just beyond the surrounding hills is a wonderland of geology and history—at the centre of which is the tranquil fishing town of Grindavík. Having survived extreme conditions throughout the centuries, the industrious people of Grindavík have now united to give their visitors a chance to get the full ‘Grindavík Experience.’

Extreme Conditions

Grindavík retains a special place in history as one of Iceland’s prime locations for the production of salted cod. While present day Iceland has welcomed modern comforts and technology, it’s important to remember that until only a few decades ago this was one of the most inhospitable places imaginable. Extreme weather conditions, lack of vegetation, unforgiving tides, isolation, darkness, disease, famine, poverty and even pillaging pirates from Algeria are among the struggles that the people of Grindavík have had to deal with over the centuries and the only way out of these dire circumstances was through the salted cod.

With Grindavík Experience, visitors are now able to get a better sense of how history has moulded the nation of today. “Through this initiative we’ve been able to merge all these divergent sources of interest into one experience. As a result you can, for example, enjoy the lava fields and craters and learn about the many shipwrecks and ship rescues in the area. With their involvement in the project, smaller operators have been able to present their services on a much bigger scale, giving visitors a unique way of experiencing the area,” says Sigurður.



Unique Geology, Tranquility by the Sea
Sigurður Óli Hilmarsson, chairman of Grindavík Experience, says the initiative has exceeded most expectations, but the biggest reward is giving people a chance to experience the area which the people of Grindavík are so proud of. “The attractions here are really limitless, with a history so rich that it would take days to recount. I myself have done some guiding in the area and found I could spend an entire day talking just about one particular cape, called Hópsnes, without anyone becoming even remotely bored,” says Sigurður.



Geological Wonderland

The peninsula on which Grindavík is positioned is actually the Mid-Atlantic Ridge rising out of the Atlantic Ocean as a result of powerful underwater volcanic eruptions. As you can imagine, the area is bursting with energy. The region is home to over 100 volcanic craters, over 200 lava tubes, lava fields, hot springs and much more. These phenomena have however been somewhat hidden and hard to reach, but via the Grindavík Experience, the area has been made easily accessible by walking tours, all-terrain vehicles, bus tours, bicycle tours and even on horseback. Signposts and paths have already been placed throughout the lavafields and historical sites and a new direct path from the Blue Lagoon to Grindavík is underway. A park guiding you through one hundred volcanic craters was established recently and the creation of a Geopark is in the works.

The Geopark concept is a collective venue where visitors can experience history, modernity, landscape, geology, cuisine, arts, crafts, flora and fauna of the area.

-VAG

Grindavíkurbær



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A DIFFERENT ICELAND

Salty Tours takes you to places other tourists will miss

Visiting Iceland is a thrill. Time is limited and you promise yourself to return and see more. Most people have heard of the Golden Circle tour encompassing a few of the country’s highlights. However, there is so much more to this country of hidden secrets than this.



Salty Tours’ owner, Þorsteinn, is an expert guide. Visitors he takes on tours consistently give him rave reviews on sites like TripAdvisor.com because he takes them to see and do the unusual, sights commonly missed by tour groups but which are easily as inspiring and interesting. His commentaries alone are worth the trip.

Whether you plant your own tree or visit a rare goat farm, stand on the continental divide or enjoy the multi-coloured landscape around boiling mud pools, you will certainly have fascinating memories to take home—and, hopefully, plenty of film and photos to prove it to your friends. Yes, he can also take you to the Golden Circle, if you ask, but you’ll miss the crowds and see them in a different light.

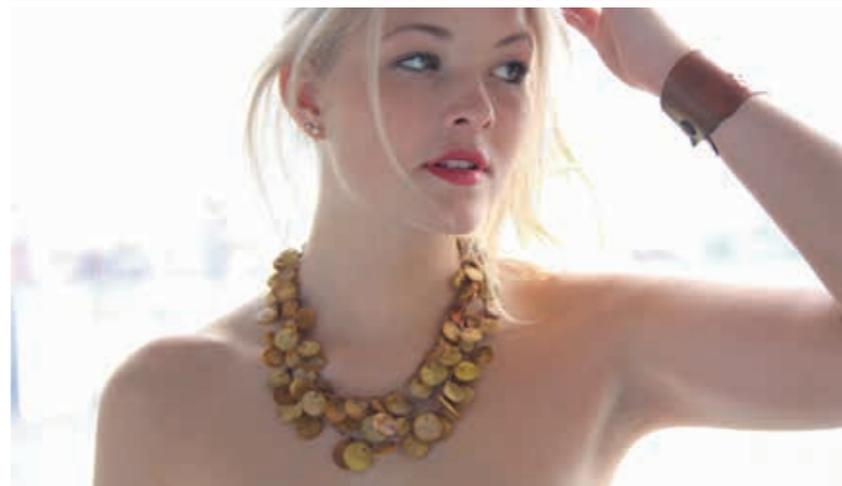
He’ll pick you up from your hotel for a day you will not forget, leaving you with that, “Can we do that again?” question on your lips.

-ASF

Salty Tours



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LEATHER DESIGNER

Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs. Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use

the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”



Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours.

Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After working at an architect’s office, she started her own business. “I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.”

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Sæðis jewellery shop at Reykjavík’s Old Harbour and directly from Guðrún.

More info on facebook: Ark.art leather design.

-NHH

Arkart



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Sailing across the Atlantic might not seem that impressive with the technology and materials we have today, but one cannot but be impressed when looking at the 18 tons of wood and 5,000 nails used to make a wooden behemoth which could survive the unforgiving high seas of the Atlantic Ocean – Viking style!

THE WORLD OF THE VIKINGS

The Complete Viking Experience

Much has been made of Iceland's Viking heritage and many Icelanders proudly claim they possess some of the Vikings' most desirable traits; strength, courage and persistence. The modern day Icelander can, however, hardly be considered an accurate representation of the Viking lifestyle. Outside of witnessing history buffs dressing up in traditional garb in county festivals, the full extent of the Vikings' incredible way of life is nowhere more visible than in Víkingaheimar, The World of the Vikings, in Reykjanesbær.

Millennial Voyage

One of its prize displays is the Viking ship Íslendingur, an exact replica of a genuine Viking ship, dated back to 870 AD, which was excavated almost entirely intact in Norway in 1882 and is considered one of the best examples of the era's engineering and maritime knowledge. What makes the Íslendingur so amazing is that it was actually used to cross the Atlantic in the year 2000 to commemorate Leif Eiriksson's discovery of North-America.

The Whole Viking Package

Víkingaheimar is full of informative and entertaining exhibitions, which delve into the story of the Viking expansion across the Atlantic, their unique mythology, myths and the archeological findings in the Suðurnes region which tell the story of the settlement of Iceland. After your visit you'll no longer wonder why so many Icelanders cling so adamantly to their Viking ancestry. The Vikings' accomplishments and ingenuity in face of extremely harsh environments on display in Víkingaheimar speak for themselves and when you show up at home with your Viking helmet on, you'll actually be able to retell the incredible heritage that it signifies.

Iceland at Your Doorstep

When arriving to Iceland all too many tourists hop on the first bus they see and head straight to Reykjavík, missing out on the wonders of the Reykjanes peninsula —geological, historic and cultural. You'd be well advised to book your first night in Reykjanesbær and work your way from there. Despite its proximity to the airport, Reykjanesbær is no ordinary airport town; it's actually a vibrant village with a unique history, countless activities and natural phenomena to be discovered.

Reykjanesbær -VAG

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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 the Guests are Saying

"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.



Hótel Berg -ASF

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ENJOY ICELANDIC FARM LIFE

A Superb View of the Dale from Steindórsstaðir

Steindórsstaðir in Reykholtisdalur Valley is a fully functional farm that offers bed and breakfast in a warm and welcoming farmhouse. Just a stone's throw away are some of the most beautiful places in Borgarfjörður. The Icelandic highlands await above the farm with glaciers, lava caves and panoramic views of extraordinary mountains.

The same family has owned the farm since 1828 and the old residential home, where the guest rooms are, was built in 1937 after a fire had destroyed the turf house that had been the homestead for centuries. The fire occurred during a dry spell so it was impossible to control and the family lost nearly all their belongings. They only managed to save some



of their better clothing and odds and ends from the living room. The household, a total of eleven people, took up residence in the sheep shed where they lived for three months until they could move into the then new house.

Rising from the ashes

The top floor was added around 1950 and the first floor was enlarged around 1965. Total renovation of the building was conducted from spring 2009 until the opening of the guesthouse in June 2010. A large terrace with a hot tub is situated in front of the house where guests can relax, enjoy the view and languish after a long day of travelling.



In the vicinity are Reykholt, Deildartunghver, the largest hot spring in Europe in terms of volume of water, Barnafoss, Hraunfossar and Húsafell. An interesting hiking route along Rauðsgil offers a wonderful view of the many waterfalls in the canyon and the forest of Steindórsstaðir is peaceful and inviting. It's an ideal base to travel from around the valleys of Borgarfjörður, seeing all the sights and returning in the evening for some pampering and rest.

Enjoy the comforts of home

Adding to the attraction is the fact that this is a working farm with cows, horses, sheep, forestry and corn growing. The farm animals and the fact that this is a home make it exceptionally interesting and inviting. Staying at such a diverse Icelandic farm is educational as well as comfortable. Enjoy Icelandic hospitality—it's first class.

Steindórsstaðir



-S.T.S

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DEEP IN NATURAL WONDERS

Gamli Bærinn Bed & Breakfast at Húsafell

Driving north towards Akureyri in the spring, I decided to wander off the ring road near the town of Borgarnes to do some exploring. Forty minutes later, I found myself at Húsafell—an area rich in history with several extraordinary waterfalls, two scenic glaciers and some pretty amazing people.

Húsafell is a service village nowadays, but in former times it was a sprawling estate with a farm and rectory under the care of the 18th century Pastor Snorri Björnason.

The old farmhouse from 1908, known today as Gamli Bærinn, has been renovated and turned into a quaint bed and breakfast that offers sleeping bag accommodation and made up beds. Owners Steinunn and Sæmundur will be more than happy to point you in the right direction to the natural wonders in the area, among them:

- Surtshellir—a lava tube, the longest cave in Iceland at (1970 m or 6463 ft)
- Hraunfossar—a series of low cascading falls that come up through the lava plain.
- Barnafoss falls
- Langjökull and Eiríksjökull Glaciers



Beautifully sculpted rocks, the work of sculptor and musician Páll Guðmundsson, himself the great, great, great grandson of Pastor Snorri, are scattered around the grounds. A fascinating artist and musician, Páll is also known for his marimba-like instrument made of stones. Páll and the Sigur Rós band did a performance using the 'steinnharp', as it is called in Icelandic, several years ago in the Surtshellir lava tube cave.

Gamli bærinn Húsafelli



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MYSTICAL SNÆFELLSNES

Four Hotels Cover All the Varied Aspects of the Peninsula and its Beauties



Snæfellsnes was immortalised by Jules Verne’s ‘Journey to the Centre of the Earth’, with its intrepid explorers descending the volcano that, while currently dormant, has scarred the surrounding land with a huge lava field, clearly visible today.

The glacier-covered volcano rises 1,446 metres and is clearly visible from Reykjavik. It makes a thrilling tour on either

snowmobile or snowcat from Arnarstapi, on the south side of the peninsula.

Snæfellsnes has long been thought of as a spiritual place, with its ley lines and reports of the Huldafólk or Hidden People being common, as well as other spiritual influences being felt by visitors. The spring at Mariulind—the Virgin Mary’s spring—is considered to have healing powers.



Hótel Hellnar

Situated on the southern tip of Snæfellsnes, this tranquil country hotel is favoured by guests from all over the world. With the glacier towering above it on one side and the Faxaflói Bay on the other, it is a beautiful place to stay. The hotel has won Green Globe certification since 2002 and the Icelandic Tourist Board Environmental Awards twice.

Dolphins and whales are frequently to be seen sporting close to the hotel and the whole area is a bird paradise and is thus popular with photographers. Guests’ praise for this beautiful spot, surrounded by nature, the national park and lots of wildlife, is well-founded.

Activities include horse riding, whale watching, hiking and glacier tours, hiking and bird watching. The people we spoke to found the photo opportunities outstanding, with some returning year on year.

Snjófell Guesthouse

Just before Hellnar, this former trading post has a lovely guesthouse and restaurant and several historical buildings. The stone image of the giant half-man, half-troll, Bárður stands guard to protect the area from evil. Its harbour is still in use by fishing vessels under the rugged cliffs. The hike between here and Hellnar through the lava field with its bird cliffs and unique rock formations takes about an hour and



is very popular. The distinctive Mt. Stapafell rises over the village, adding to the nature highlights of the area.

The guesthouse sleeps 45 in a 2-storey renovated house and the restaurant next door seats 55 in a traditional turf-roofed farmstead-style building.

Hótel Ólafsvík

With Snæfellsjökull towering above the small town and the Breiðafjörður Bay stretching

out to the north, Ólafsvík is a good spot to take a break for a night or two. The hotel is placed across the road from the harbour where the fishing boats land their catches. The 3-star hotel has a restaurant and bar and WiFi Internet. It has 19 studio apartments, 18 rooms with double or twin beds with a bathroom and 13 rooms with shared facilities. It is open from May to September, making it a convenient place to base from while exploring the north end of the peninsula.



Hótel Stykkishólmur

The largest of the hotels in the area, Hótel Stykkishólmur is on top of a hill with a stunning view of the bay and its many islands. It’s a beautiful hotel for both individuals and groups, with a top class á la carte restaurant that also serves Scandinavian-style breakfasts each morning, a bar and large function room with a stage, dance area and dining tables for up to 300 people. The 79 rooms are all very comfortable, each with bathroom, TV, Internet, phone and hair dryer. There is a luxury suite with comfortable dining area, lounge, a large TV—and a view right up the fjörd to the mountains in the distance.

The swimming pool is a minute’s walk away, with its mineral waters that are so good for the skin and overall health. A golf course, free for guests, lies besides the hotel.

The standard of service from the English-speaking staff was very good and we greatly enjoyed each one of the hotels. No pretensions—just friendly, helpful and informative in a natural way.

-ASF

Hótel Hellnar



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ICELAND TO YOURSELF

Autumn in Grundarfjörður reveals a different world

Hotel Framnes sits right on the bay in Grundarfjörður, enjoying a clear view over the waters of Breiðafjörður, with its myriad islands. Jutting out into the bay to the left rises the most photographed mountain in Iceland, Mt. Kirkjufell.

The hotel was built to be a fisherman's hostel but, following extensive renovation, it is now popular for its comfort, service and warm friendliness.

An ever-changing landscape

Grundarfjörður is particularly easy to get to from Reykjavík, being just a two-hour drive through amazing countryside. It is the central of the three fishing villages on the northern coast of the Snæfellsnes peninsula. Hikers love

the coastline and the mountains, lakes and waterfalls behind the village, while the bay itself is popular for fishing as well as being a photographer's hot spot. Glacier trips and horse riding are both inspiring experiences here and all the main attractions on the peninsula can be easily reached from Grundarfjörður.

Colours and comfort

As August draws to a close, it is the time for the independent traveller who likes to enjoy the serenity of the mountains. Colours begin to change—in both the landscape and the sky, with spectacular sunsets on a regular basis. As the evenings cool, the northern lights begin to appear, dancing across the night skies. Travellers can enjoy them from the comfort of the hot tub, which has a screen protecting them from any sea breezes without interrupting the view. A massage chair and sauna provide soothing for sore muscles.

It is little wonder that this 29-room hotel, with a 60-seat dining room and free wireless Internet has won the approbation of visitors as TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence attests.



Láki Tours

Sailing in the mystical bay aboard a traditional oak fishing boat holds a magic all of its own. Sea angling from the boat is fun for any age and the catch can be a good size. Islands like Melrakkey are home to thousands of puffins and different sea birds and, out in the deeper waters, the dolphins, porpoises and whales swim. Last year, the tours had 100% success in seeing whales.

The powerful orca or killer whales are most often seen in the first months of the year and are a truly amazing sight. They follow the herring that come into the fjord, providing a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Group bookings are accepted in September and October. Bookings can be made for the daily trips at Hotel Framnes.

Láki Tours -ASF

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 framnes@hotelframnes.is
 www.lakitours.com



THE MOUNTAINS AND THE BAY

See the Snæfellsnes peninsula from the Old Post Office Guesthouse

The mountains of Snæfellsnes and Breiðafjörður Bay are two outstanding sights in West Iceland. Beautiful waterfalls cascade down the mountains while snow still covers their upper reaches. Kirkjufell, the strange mountain that juts out into the bay is one of the features of Grundarfjörður, the middle of the three fishing towns on the north of the peninsula.

From the Old Post Office Guesthouse or gamla pósthúsið in Grundarfjörður, this is the view from the bedrooms and the balcony. It is a 7-room guesthouse that offers comfortable beds, free Internet connection and IPTV in each room for very competitive prices. The bedrooms comprise 1 twin, 2 single and 4 double-bed rooms. This represents good value for the budget-conscious visitor.



It offers self catering, with free use of the kitchen. The supermarket is just a couple of minutes away, as is Kaffi 59, with its range of full meals.

The summer months bring a beautiful evening light to the area and, in winter, the Northern Lights are a spectacular display—especially with the mountains and sea as a backdrop.

Gamla pósthúsið -ASF

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 gisting@tsc.is
 www.gamlaposthusid.is



THE LIFE OF THE TOWN

Kaffi 59's meals draw diners who love delicious Icelandic meals

What is on your mind after a day's hiking or exploring? Food! The mountains of the Snæfells peninsula offer some memorable experiences, photo opportunities of nature, birdlife, outstanding landscapes and more but then hunger strikes!

Kaffi 59 is a very popular restaurant, café and bar on Grundarfjörður's main street where you can get a delicious and filling meal at almost any time of the day. On the weekends, it stays open late into the night, too.



On warm days or summer evenings, you can sit out on the veranda, surrounded by spectacular mountains and a magnificent view of the bay. Whenever there is a major sports event, it is shown on the large screen. The ambience makes meals enjoyable—especially on the weekends, when live musicians and karaoke make it an exciting place to spend the evening.

Here, you will find home-baked cakes and traditional Icelandic food, as well as pizzas, hamburgers and sandwiches. This is where we always come to eat when we're in the area because we're guaranteed good food and warm, friendly service.

Kaffi 59 -ASF

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SUPERB VIEWS AND FOOD

Let Your Senses Imbibe the Spirit of Snæfellsnes at Langaholt

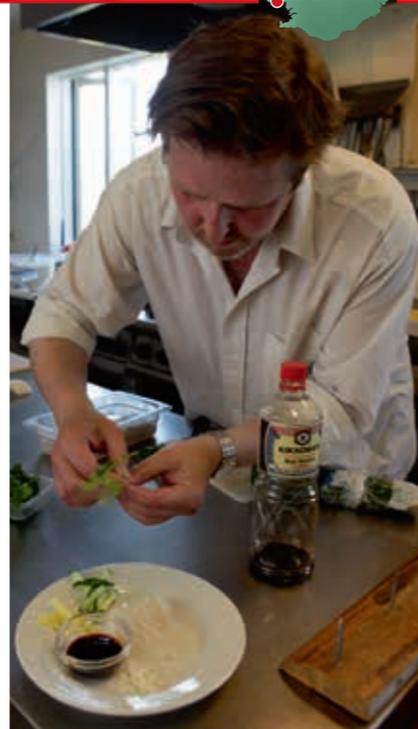
Whether you rent a car, ride a bike or take the bus, spending a day in the middle of all the sites of interest on the Snæfellsnes peninsula will leave you both refreshed and inspired by the beauty of the nature and the tranquility with which it refreshes your spirit.

Langaholt is a 20-room guesthouse with a campsite, golf course and restaurant, with probably the best view of the Snæfells mountain and glacier from the beach by the campsite.

This is a great place to come for a weekend getaway, to spend a night or two enjoying the Icelandic countryside, eat a delicious meal or

few and enjoy both the natural and historical sites of the area, which are no doubt very different from any other country you've visited!

Speaking of meals, this is a restaurant with a top chef who wants you to enjoy a wholesome meal, not a fancy work of art but you will get good-sized portions that will fill that hole left from a busy day's exploring. A number of the vegetables and spices are grown in their own gardens and you won't find food that comes from outside the area. With its proximity to the sea, you would be surprised if seafood wasn't on the menu.



If you arrive for a good lunch, there is a choice of fish or vegetable soup, fish of the day and fish stew. The deserts are that delicious chocolate cake or waffles with whipped cream, caramel sauce and mint—something you must try!

For dinner, starters include fish soup, vegetable soup, trout marinated in dill, or mussels - these as a starter or main course.

Other main courses could be fish stew, catfish with ginger and soya, cod steak fried in butter with rose pepper, basil and sun-dried tomatoes or lamb with red wine sauce. The menu varies depending on the availability of the fresh ingredients.

For desert, there are pancakes or chocolate cake and there is a good selection of red or white wines.

After a satisfying meal, you might be forgiven for booking a room and enjoying a good night's sleep before exploring the area some more.

Take a walk outside and look at the glacier. With your left ear, you'll hear the relaxing sound of the surf, whilst in your right, the whispers of waterfalls. Swirling around you are the many varieties of birds like the arctic terns and the different gulls. You can watch the clouds rolling over the mountain peaks while you play a round of golf or set up your tent on the campsite.

Langaholt -ASF



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SNACK IN THE SUN AT SNÆFELLSNES

Fjörúhúsið is a relaxing setting for a break in Hellnar

Hiking around the Snæfells peninsula is a beautiful experience. The walk from Arnarstapi to Hellnar is especially spectacular, with its bird cliffs filled with screeching arctic terns and gulls. In the background is the Snæfells glacier peak.

Right down at the harbour at Hellnar is Fjörúhúsið, probably the most picturesque café I have seen, surrounded as it is by the rocky bird cliffs, right under the Snæfells glacier. The cosy café seats two dozen inside

but, on a sunny day, it is the outside seating that is always filled, as walkers take a rest and imbibe the beauty of the surroundings whilst enjoying a delicious snack or lunch.

Tour guides know the best places to stop and this is one of them, so it's popular. Open from Easter to October, the little family café provides seafood soup, homemade bread, vegetable or chicken quiche, pasta, waffles, a range of delicious cakes and drinks of all kinds, all with friendly service.



Fjörúhúsið Café



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 www.fjoruhusid.is

-ASF



DINING IN THE OLD TOWN

A meal in Narfeyrarstofa is a delicious trip back in time

The small fishing town of Stykkishólmur is home to a restaurant with excellent food, an extensive à la carte menu and an innovative chef who has worked in top international restaurants. In addition, the ambience takes you back to the early days of the last century, and its close connections to Denmark.

Narfeyrarstofa was converted into a restaurant in 2001 and quickly gained a reputation for such quality of food and service

that royalty dined there. The current chef, Gunnar, received awards in Denmark for his deserts and, as a chocolatier par excellence, you may not want to leave after the main meal!

Situated next to the old church close to the harbour, it's well placed to get the freshest seafood and this restaurant takes seafood to the next level. A group of visiting chefs from Norway rated the restaurant as the highlight of their trip to Iceland—praise indeed.



Narfeyrarstofa



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 narf@narf.is
 www.narfeyrarstofa.is

-ASF

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BIRDS IN BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR

The Mystical Bay with Marvellous Birdlife

Breiðafjörður is an expansive and shallow bay located on the west coast of Iceland. The bay is the largest area of shallow waters and beaches in the country, and rich wildlife can be found both above and below its surface. The area has greater tides and tidal currents than elsewhere in Iceland, and it is believed that about a quarter of the country's beaches are located in Breiðafjörður. The bay has more diverse benthic species than have been detected elsewhere in the country. While folk belief holds that the islands in Breiðafjörður are infinite, estimates put the number at approximately 2,500. Breiðafjörður was once a great source of food and numerous islands were inhabited. The islands are now mostly deserted, with only two which are inhabited year round—but many houses are maintained and used as summer dwellings.

The birdlife in Breiðafjörður is unique and one of the most important in Iceland and the whole of the North Atlantic. Breiðafjörður is protected according to law, in addition to being identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International. The outpost of Breiðafjörður to the north and west is Látrabjarg, the largest bird cliff in the North Atlantic.

The microcosm is characterised by birds which are wholly dependent on marine life, and many of them nest in large colonies. Furthermore, the beaches in Breiðafjörður are an important stop for migratory birds on their way to and from wintering grounds east of the Atlantic and breeding grounds in Greenland and the Arctic Islands of Canada. The reason for this rich bird life is an abundance of food, which is based on an interplay of landscape, significant tides, and the fertility of the sea.

As an example of the importance of Breiðafjörður to birds, one can mention that

two thirds of the Icelandic White-tailed Eagle population and the vast majority of Great Cormorants and European Shags nest by the bay. By far the world's largest Razorbill colony is on the Látrabjarg bird cliffs, and about one third of the Common Eider population is in Breiðafjörður. The largest Glaucous Gull breeding grounds in Iceland are in Breiðafjörður, and the bay is also home to large colonies of Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and Arctic Terns. In addition, a large part of the world populations of Brent Geese, Red Knots and Ruddy Turnstones pass through the beaches of Breiðafjörður in the spring and autumn.

The White-tailed Eagle is known as the king of Icelandic birds. This majestic bird of prey was almost extinct in Iceland in 1960, but BirdLife Iceland was able to save the population with its fight against narrow-mindedness and ignorant views. When the population was at its lowest, it managed to prevail in Breiðafjörður, which was and still is its main habitat in Iceland. Currently, the White-tailed Eagle mostly nests on islands and islets and on low peninsulas and cliff edges, but during the population slump, it nested quite a lot on steep, unscalable mountainsides. The eagle is wholly protected and its nest may not be approached unless permitted by the Ministry for the Environment. The Sæferðir company, which sails from the town of Stykkishólmur, has a permit to sail near an eagle's nest and show tourists this magnificent bird.

The Atlantic Puffin is one of the most common birds which nest in Breiðafjörður, nesting in tight colonies on grassy islands which are plentiful in the bay. It dives for fish and, in late summer, it is often seen in flight carrying sand eels for its young. The Puffin is very popular with tourists and Breiðafjörður is a good spot for viewing it.

The Baldur ferry stops on the island of Flatey on its trips between Stykkishólmur and Brjánslækur. A day can be spent on the island between ferry stops or a longer period if preferred. The bird life on Flatey is special and diverse and well worth paying attention to as many birds on the island are unusually tame. Prominent along the coast of Flatey are the jet Black Guillemots sporting white wing patches, red legs and the inside of their mouth is bright red. Their main source of food is butterfish which they hunt in the seaweed along the shore. Puffins are quite common under Lundaberg cliff and on the islands around Flatey. Other prominent sea birds are Shags, Fulmars, Kittiwakes, and Eiders. The Snow Bunting sings its wistful song from rooftops or rocky outcrops. The Red-necked Phalarope swoops and swirls on most ponds and pools but can also be seen at sea, while its cousin, the Red Phalarope, may also appear on the beach. Redshanks call from fence posts, Common Snipes drum overhead, and Arctic Terns dive at unwelcome visitors on the nesting grounds.

One cannot discuss the birds of Breiðafjörður without mentioning the Látrabjarg bird cliffs, even though it is not within the area covered by laws on the protection of Breiðafjörður and even though it is a different IBA. Látrabjarg is the largest bird cliff in the North Atlantic, and it is home to hundreds of thousands of sea birds: Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Common Guillemots, Brünnich's Guillemots, and Puffins. Bjargtangar is the best place in the world for photographing Puffins; in the evenings, they are so tame that you can almost touch them, and nowhere else in the world can you take their portraits using a wide-angle lens!

Happy birdwatching! **JÓH**

Images by © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson



Puffin with food



A playful pair of Red-necked Phalaropes



Black Guillemot on Flatey Island



Brünnich's Guillemots at Snæfellsnes



A pair of Black-legged Kittiwakes with their chick



A Common Eider drake on display



A White-tailed Eagle in flight in Breiðafjörður



A male Snow Bunting on Flatey Island



Breiðafjörður is the domain of the Glaucous Gull



European Shag in Breiðafjörður



STEP BACK IN TIME

A stay in Hotel Flatey is a trip into the life of the past

It seems that time stopped about a century ago when you get off the Baldur ferry in Flatey. Life is slow here, far from the frenetic pace of most of the world's cities. You feel a wave of peace and calm flow over your spirit as you walk past small coloured cottages, with the sheep grazing just outside their doors.

Was there life before the Internet? Here, there is freedom from the tyranny of email



and the web—and it's a real relief. The world goes on and you really miss very little of it. It seems out of place to even have a laptop or mobile phone here.

The island of Flatey is the largest of the thousands of islands in the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay. It has been inhabited since the days of the Settlement. This small community has a rich history. It had its own church and doctor and its library held a treasury of old manuscripts. The library still stands today behind the church and has been an inspiration for authors, musicians and artists for centuries.

The Hotel with a History

Hótel Flatey started life as a 'pakkhús', or warehouse for the goods brought by large sail boats that moored in the natural



harbour. Today, it has 11 rooms, consisting of 1 large family room, 3 suites and 7 double rooms for the many visitors who want to spend a little more time on the island. The rooms retain the style of the past, complete with magazines from the early 1960's.

It's popular with photographers for the rich birdlife and interesting landscapes on the island. Many of the birds are unafraid and approach the house, day and night.

The restaurant has been used for many purposes: It began life as a warehouse, then a meeting house, a radio communication house, young people's association, gym and theatre. It is still used for music concerts of every genre, especially on the weekends.

Downstairs, there used to be a salt storage and a place for tanning sheep skins. Now converted to a bar - the Salt Bar, you'll be reminded of your childhood with seats from the old school, the wooden vaulting box and benches from the old church. It's full of character and good drinks.

A Summertime Special

The hotel opens at the end of May and closes at the end of August. Nowadays, only the two farming families stay on the island throughout the year. They still collect bird eggs, including puffin eggs and farm the sheep on the island.

Hotel Flatey -ASF

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 info@hotelflatey.is
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SOFT AS SILK SPA

Sjávarsmiðjan's Seaweed therapy brings health and relief

If just the word 'spa' evokes feelings of comfort and well-being, you should try the real thing—especially after a day's hiking in the beautiful Reykhólar area, with its birds, seals and whales—not to mention the spectacular countryside. Soaking in Sjávarsmiðjan's hot pots, with its natural hot water, is both relaxing and invigorating.

Add to this the wonderful proven health benefits of seaweed gel and you will come out rejuvenated, with your skin as soft as silk, strengthened and with improved elasticity.

Seaweed detoxifies the body by stimulating the release of excess body fluids. Toxins are replaced by minerals. Scientists report that Seaweeds are rich in vitamins A₁,



B₁, B₂, B₆, B₁₂, C, E, K, pantothenic acid, folic acid, and niacin. They are an important supply of 60 trace elements and an excellent source of over 12 minerals, especially sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, zinc and manganese.

Other health benefits of seaweed baths include reduction of tension, muscle pain and fatigue, improved circulation, aiding weight loss and cellulite control and easing menopausal discomforts. Those with asthma, arthritis, insomnia, inflammation, dermatitis and psoriasis find great improvements.

Sjávarsmiðjan -ASF

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 www.sjavarsmidjan.is



SAILING BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR BAY

Eyjasigling takes tours, photography and birdwatching to sea

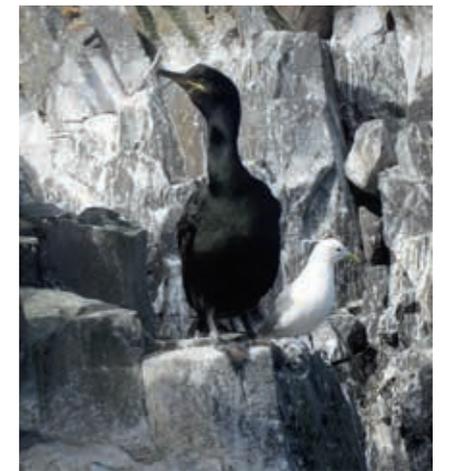
Eyjasigling or Island Cruises is very aptly named as they sail Breiðafjörður Bay with its innumerable islands, many teeming with birdlife. The bay itself is home to seals, dolphins and the occasional whales, presenting opportunities to the wildlife photographer and a wonderful experience for anyone interested in seeing these creatures close-up.

Sailing from Staður's harbour, less than a dozen kilometres from the village of Reykjólar on the southern Westfjords, Eyjasigling's

19-passenger boat, the Sula, takes enthusiasts out twice a day at 10:30am and 4pm.

Enjoying the wildlife in its natural environment is a fulfilling experience and, with guide, Björn Samuelsson, bringing the bay's history to life and taking you to the best spots to see the birds, seals and dolphins, it's one of those truly defining moments in a holiday.

Björn also takes you to Flatey or Skáleyjar, the only islands inhabited year-round. Here, you will feel as if time stood still a century ago.



The farmers still live a simple self-sufficient lifestyle, collecting eider down, birds' eggs, fishing and seal hunting.

There is a rich history going back to the Settlement days of the 900's AD, which Björn tells his guests all about.

Eyjasigling -ASF

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I DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST

The Small Community of Búðadalur has a Rich Heritage

West Iceland is filled with history and three of its most famous characters lived around the small village of Búðadalur on the spectacular road to the West Fjords.

Iceland's famous pioneer

As you enter the village, an information sign points to the left, down to a clean, grey building by the shore. Leifsbuð houses an impressive display of pictures, ancient manuscripts, models and more, detailing the exploits surrounding the discovery of America centuries before Columbus. Historians now generally accept that this courageous Viking pioneer was the first to not only discover, but found settlements in the New World such as the one in L'Anse-aux-Meadows in Newfoundland with 2,400 recently discovered Viking objects.

In 2000, as further confirmation, an accurate reconstruction of a Viking longship, the Íslendingur, sailed to New York, retracing Leif Eiríksson's voyage across the Atlantic.

Erik the Red settled in Greenland

Leif's father, the fiery Erik the Red—was fiery not only in hair but in temperament, too. Arguments with his neighbours got violent and led to his exile, first from Norway, then from his home just outside Búðadalur and finally, from the island of Öxney. His farm has been reconstructed in Haukadalur and gives a fascinating insight into his life before he became the first permanent European settler in Greenland.

The Queen lived here

Queen Auður the Deepminded, daughter of a Celtic king, after building her own ship in secret in Scotland, established a Christian community in the area. She was well-known for her deep connection with God and practice of her faith. She built up a centre of learning in a time of deep ignorance and superstition and influenced future generations with her example.



Activities in the area

In Hvítadalur, you can go horse riding through the countryside. Cycling, especially around the coastline is much enjoyed. There are beautiful salmon fishing rivers. Bird watching and photography are increasingly popular, especially with a number of eagles adding to the many species and the natural beauty of the area.



Camping and Accommodation

The campsite received a 5-star accolade from the DV newspaper, who hailed it as the best campsite in Iceland. Bjarg Guesthouse is in the centre of the village and, a little farther north, Þurranes, a country guesthouse set in a beautiful valley between high mountains, can receive up to 30 guests—great for individual or group get-aways.

Still an area for pioneers, Erpsstaðir farm produces its own ice cream, cheese, skyr and other dairy products. The Handverk craft shop is well worth a visit as it sells beautiful woollen sweaters and many other items made in the area at good prices.

Dalabyggð -ASF

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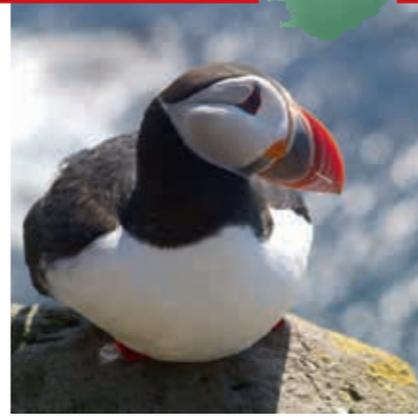
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Images by © Karl Eggertsson

PEACE WITH NATURE AND BIRDS

Hótel Látrabjarg brings back the simple joys of life

On Europe's western-most tip, Hótel Látrabjarg is set amidst a photographer's and birdwatcher's paradise at the furthestmost point of the Westfjords. It's a rugged countryside here, with sheer cliffs rising high above the fjords. Although the road is paved from the ferry terminal to Patreksfjörður, the nearest town, from the end of the fjord, a gravel road takes you to the beaches of Rauðasandur, the bird cliffs of Látrabjarg and the hotel. The route is

studded with spectacular vistas, ending in a bay that, with its curved white sand beach and clear blue waters looks as if it belongs in a travel brochure for the Caribbean. The hotel has a commanding view of the fjord, where whales can sometimes be seen, and of the bay and valley below, where sheep graze peacefully. It's an almost idyllic situation during the summer months, when it is open from 15th May to 20th September. It was originally built as a boarding school for local children.

Although it can handle up to 40 guests, owners Karl and Sigríður like to maintain a close, homely atmosphere and therefore do not take groups during the high season. This has made it popular with individuals who appreciate its simple style, delicious meals and tranquil surroundings, with their constantly changing colours.

Hótel Látrabjarg -ASF



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© Guðbjörg Þorunn Sigurðardóttir

DINE WITH THE VIKINGS

Taking the Westfjords with a tasteful touch

It's an area that can be challenging to reach but those who take up the challenge win the rewards of some of the country's most thrilling landscapes, spectacular views, fascinating legends and mystifying monsters. EagleFjord travel service provides a comprehensive menu of tours to take in all tastes and top it off with terrific culinary possibilities. This is what retired sea captain,

Jón Þórðarson has dreamed up. Whether you take his sea angling tour, catch and cook your own fish (or take them with you, to eat later), his 'Gísli the Outlaw' tour, with tales of tragedy told in dramatic form on the hills of his demise or any of his equally innovative tours, prepare for a day to remember. You may have a little barbecue at home but Jón's is about 5 metres long—and it



travels on his boat, on the mountainside, wherever the food is to be cooked! Perhaps you would rather eat in the comfort of his dining room—only to find probably the most innovative dining table you've seen. Shaped in a 'U', it has a broad channel in the centre filled with water, with shells on the bottom! Food is 'shipped' to the diners in glass Viking boats, sailed down the channel.

No, this is no ordinary dining room, for here, you are dining in an art gallery of works by different artists, which are available to purchase.

EagleFjord -ASF



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 www.bildudalur.is



PIRATES IN PATREKSFJÖRÐUR

Pirates welcome at the Pirate House: Travellers at Hotel Ráðagerði

Down by the shore, an old workshop has been taken over by pirates, teaching children the pirates' life. Making knots, navigating by the stars, choosing a sailing route and what to eat, it's a pirate school for all the family where children learn useful nautical training, all dressed up to take their place in the crew. What would a pirate hall be without food and drink?—Only in this case,

it is good food and drink—not the typical pirate's fare, eaten at long wooden tables. It's just getting started—but ye landlubbers watch out; thar'll be pirates about!

A Travellers' Haven

Safe from those pirates, on the hillside with a beautiful view of the bay, Hotel Ráðagerði has just re-opened after extensive renovation. The



8 rooms, including 2 family rooms that can take 4 guests each, are all beautiful, with wi-fi throughout. The linen has been specially made by Icelandic designer, Linda Björg Árnadóttir, and can be purchased at the hotel.

Whale watching without the boat

The large windows look out onto the fjord where, in recent years whales have often been seen jumping clear out of the water and swimming close to shore.

Open all year, this is a beautiful hotel to base from when exploring Látrabjarg or the beaches at Rauðasandur.

Sjóraeningjahúsið -ASF



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The Arctic Fox Centre
 A non-profit research and exhibition centre, focusing on the arctic fox. At the centre is a cosy café, Rebbakaffi, where visitors can enjoy refreshments. Open all year - days during summer from 10 to 22 and during winter from 10 to 18.

↑ Eyraudal • 420 Súðavík ☎ +354 456 4922 ✉ melrakki@melrakki.is 🌐 www.melrakki.is



Þurranes

Offering accommodation in three new cottages and an old farmhouse. Each cottage is 43 m² with two lovely double-bed bedrooms and a deluxe jacuzzi on the veranda. The farmhouse has five double-bed bedrooms, bathroom w/shower, kitchen and dining room, seating up to 40 people, living room and an attic with made up beds or sleeping bag accommodation for ten people. Deluxe jacuzzi just outside, keeping guests warm at heart. Single rooms or the whole house are available for rent. Cottages can both be rented out for one night or a whole week.

The Þurranes travel service is open every day of the year

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COSY NOSTALGIA

Hótel Blönduós brings a romantic ambience to its rooms

For those looking for excitement, Blönduós may not look like much to the casual observer. In fact, from your car window you will only see petrol stations, a church, a river and a camping site. But all is not what it seems: the river Blandá, which courses through the town, is one of

the best salmon fishing rivers in Iceland and the town is the starting point for numerous hiking trails into the highlands and along the shoreline. It is a paradise for birdwatchers and, during the winter, offers a variety of winter-sports. Blönduós also has a great variety of interesting museums.



By the Blandá estuary is Hótel Blönduós, a delightful little country hotel with a fully licensed bar and a restaurant specialising in traditional Icelandic cuisine, what Icelanders refer nostalgically to as ‘grandmother’s cooking’. From the cosy lounge one can observe the beautiful sunset, the calm or raging sea and depending on the weather and the season, the dance of the northern lights.

The rooms and suites are beautiful, each with its own style, colour range and private bath. The suites are especially romantic with sloping ceilings, soft lighting and lovely linen. It is quite a treat to spend a few days at this lovely hotel in charming Blönduós.

Hótel Blönduós



Aðalgata 6 • 540 Blönduós
+354 452 4205
 hotelblonduos@simnet.is
 www.hotelblonduos.is

-SS



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 No.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 time 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



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 and Textile Museum.

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.

Glaðheimar



Melabraut 21 • 540 Blönduós
+354 820 1300
 gladheimar@simnet.is
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-HP



LOVE AND JOE

Traditional Pastries and Local Food at Áskaffi Café

“I love what I do and do what I love,” says Herdís Sigurðardóttir, owner of Áskaffi coffee shop and restaurant in Glaumbær Folk Museum.

On the edge of North Iceland, this old wooden house, whose stone foundation dates back to 1886, makes people immediately feel at home. Guests can enjoy traditional Icelandic pastries such as kleinur (twisted fried pastry) lagterta (four layer white cake with rhubarb jam) brúnkaka (four layer brown cake with buttercream) and soðbrauð (fried bread).

While all these sweet treats are made from well known recipes, Herdís has kept one special recipe secret for close to two decades, before deciding to print it on postcards she designed herself, in English and German. “It’s my sherry cake!” she says with pride. “It’s a recipe which has belonged to the coffee shop since its opening and has real sherry in it—generously measured!”

Open sandwiches have always been popular domestically as well, and freshly made soðbrauð served with local smoked trout is



nothing but delicious, washed down with a cup of ‘joe’ (coffee). Other delicacies are the Áskaffi’s signature dishes which include seafood soup made with locally caught trout and locally caught shrimp and lamb soup, made with fresh lamb and vegetables—meat and bones boiled together is the secret to success, according to Herdís. The soups can be ordered for groups of 10–40 at a time.

So if you are in the mood for something extra delicious, Áskaffi looks forward to welcoming you!

Áskaffi



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-SP



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TRÖLLASKAGÍ'S MYSTIC BEAUTY

The beauty of the northern towns with their vibrant lifestyle

Hótel Brimnes

Located right at the top of the Troll Peninsula, Iceland's cradle for great backcountry skiing and ski touring, less than an hour's drive north of Akureyri, Hótel Brimnes in Ólafsfjörður, Fjallabyggð is the perfect place to unwind.

As well as standard rooms in the hotel, it offers log cabins (accommodating 4-6) each with their own private hot tub. A delicious restaurant menu includes Icelandic seafood and meat specialities.



Welcome to the mystical Troll Peninsula!

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HANNES BOY CAFÉ & KAFFI RAUÐKA

Lively weekends and cheerful surroundings at the 'End of the World'

Siglu fjörður 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 Reykjavík.

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

Rauðka



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 ✉ raudka@raudka.is
 🌐 www.raudka.is

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AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

Experience Siglu fjörður's beauty from Hvanneyri Guesthouse

Many visitors looking for the real essence of Iceland find it when visiting the northerly town of Siglu fjörður, 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 Siglu fjörður'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.

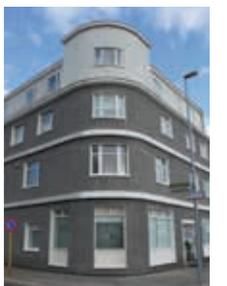
Returning Friends

A family-run business, Hvanneyri Guesthouse 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 Siglu fjörður are particularly proud of their museums: the award-winning 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 Siglu fjörður, 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 itself.



-ASF

Hvanneyri Guesthouse



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A PERFECT DAY IN HRÍSEY

Travel back in time on the Pearl of Eyjafjörður



Hrísey, Iceland's second largest island, is in the middle of Eyjafjörður. With 200 inhabitants, it is part of the municipality of Akureyri and always referred to as the Pearl of Eyjafjörður.

Visiting Hrísey is pure fun and makes an inspiring day trip for groups or individuals. The village is really cute and clean, as all the houses are very old, though beautifully renovated and painted in bright colours. Travellers cannot take their cars to the island, so it is peaceful. There are a few cars on the island but most transportation is by tractor. The number of tractors give the island a special flavour and it is common to see a tractor parked outside a home instead of a car. As a matter of fact, there is nowhere else in Iceland with as many tractors per capita as on Hrísey. The island is easy to reach as there are trips every two hours from the morning until 9 pm, all year round by the Sævar ferry from Árskógssandur Village, 35 km from Akureyri. It only takes 15 minutes to sail there.



It is possible to take in many of the key spots—and more—in the two hours between the ferry trips, making it an interesting visit for tour groups. From the pier, there is a fun trip with the tractor taxi—a hay cart towed by an elderly, sedate tractor. The driver serves as a guide, telling his passengers tales and history during the



forty minute trip around the island. You still have ample time to enjoy a meal at the Brekka restaurant, Kaffi Hrísey or Júllabúð and pick up some handmade souvenirs from the Perlan souvenir shop or take a stroll.

Staying longer enables you to thoroughly enjoy the island, swim in the beautiful new geothermal pool, go fishing and have a good



sleep during the arctic nights, either in one of the guesthouses: Jónatanhús, Mínukot (www.visithrisey.is) or Brekka (www.brekkahrisey.is), or at the island's camp site. There are numerous pleasant hiking trails and other types of tours are available by land or sea.

The Tourist office, located in the Museum of Shark-Jörundur is open daily during the summertime.

All bookings for accommodation, activities and tours can be made there all year around, on the website or by phone at the number below.

Museums of Life at Sea and Home

There are two interesting museums on the island. In the oldest house, built by a legendary figure called Shark-Jörundur, visitors can learn about the history of the island as well as shark fishing in Iceland. Shark fishing was not for the faint of heart in earlier times, only those of exceptional strength and endurance could survive in the arctic cold and tumultuous seas.

Holt, the Memorial Museum of Alda Halldórsdóttir, shows a typical working-class home from 1900 onwards, a story of the old world meeting the new, with furnishings, gadgets, handicraft embroidery and photographs of old times.

A Birdwatching Paradise

The island is known for its bird life, as about 40 bird species nest there, the most abundant being the ptarmigan. One reason there is an unusually large concentration of birds is that all hunting of birds and gathering of eggs is banned on the island and there are no predators such as foxes, minks, mice or rats. Therefore a number of the birds are so unafraid of man that you can come up very close to them.

-AMB

Hrísey



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hrisey@hrisey.net
www.hrisey.net



THE HEART OF THE ISLAND

Island Cuisine at it's Finest

If the way to people's hearts is through their food, then there is really no way to get closer to the heart of Hrísey Island than through the diverse Brekka Restaurant menu.

In an island of less than 200, the restaurant works as both a centre of culture and culinary delights. The house in which Brekka is operated is especially grand and,

when it was built in the early 1930's it was referred to as the Count's Palace. It was transformed into a restaurant in the 1980's and has since earned itself a place in the hearts of both visitors and nationals.

Elís Árnarsson, owner and chef, originally come to the island as an apprentice chef over twenty years ago and has since been unable

to leave. "The island has a completely different tempo from anywhere else. Time seems to stand still here and we try to make Brekka reflect that," says Elís.

Brekka is famous for its Galloway tenderloin steak, for which many make a special trip to the island. Because of its isolation, Hrísey serves as a breeding ground for the exquisite purebred Galloway cattle giving Brekka a unique opportunity to provide its customers with one of the finest products available. The chefs at Brekka obviously don't have to go far to collect fresh sea products as the island is less than 8 square kilometres, surrounded by sea.

Being a meeting-point of sorts, Brekka does not limit itself to fine gourmet culinary experiences, as it also provides a lighter and more family oriented setting, offering burgers, pizzas, and the like. Brekka also offers accommodation for visitors who are unable to escape the island's charms.

Veitingahúsið Brekka -VAG



Brekka
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 www.brekkahrisey.is



AN OUTDOOR PARADISE

Why Húsabakki is a Smart Choice to Enjoy Nature

Nature based and education tourism is Húsabakki's focus, located at the edge of the Friðland Svarfðala Nature Reserve in the north of Iceland, a 30 minute drive from Akureyri. Open all year, Húsabakki is an excellent choice for nature lovers surrounded, as it is, by the high mountains of the Troll peninsula, providing numerous hiking routes and both easy and challenging conditions for back-country skiing and mountaineering.

Húsabakki is owned and run by local firms and individuals and is connected to

vast hiking trails with signboards and bird observation points. It is a birdwatcher's paradise with the oldest wetland reserve in Iceland, created by the valley farmers in 1979.

Húsabakki offers a range of accommodation that can easily house 62 people in 18 rooms of various sizes and prices. A sleeping-bag facility in a 16-bed dormitory, large and spacious family rooms and double rooms are available. It also has a lovely campsite with access to a washing machine, cooking facilities, internet connection and bathrooms.



At the location is a sports field, a playground, an outdoor kitchen with a fireplace and, nearby in the valley, opportunities to play golf, go swimming, canoeing and take a whale watching boat tour, go horse-riding, take yoga classes and so much more. There are also excellent hiking guides, experts on the history and nature of Svarfðardalur and the Nature Reserve.

Far from the madding crowd, the atmosphere at Húsabakki is tranquil and cosy, the service warm and personal and staying there for a few days is relaxing and certainly power-boosting.

Húsabakki -SS



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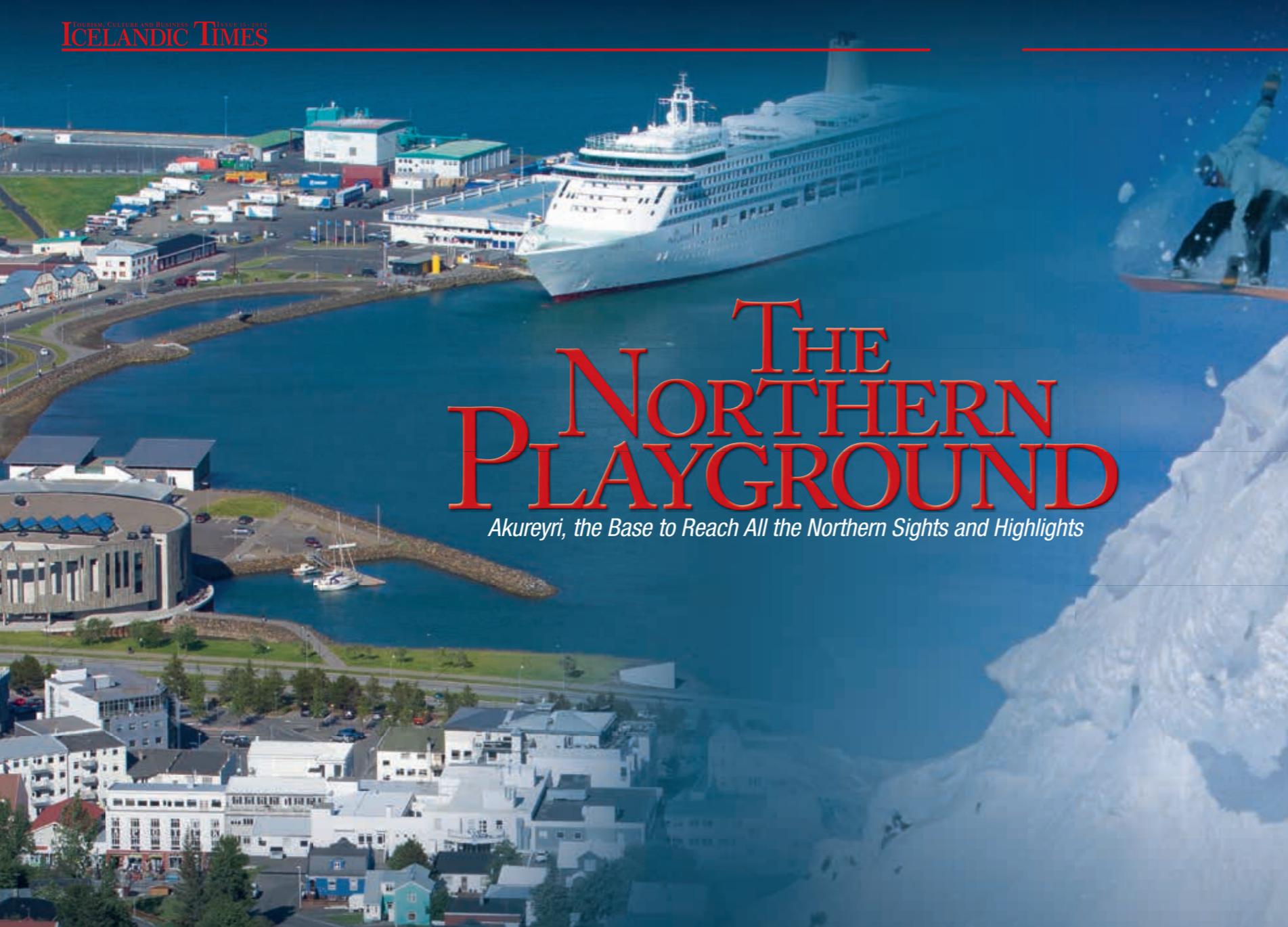


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- Troll Peninsula Northern Iceland -





THE NORTHERN PLAYGROUND

Akureyri, the Base to Reach All the Northern Sights and Highlights

The dozen inhabitants in 1786, clinging to the side of Iceland's longest fjord, Eyjafjörður, probably never imagined their brave struggle would ultimately produce a town of 18,000 people with all the services of a major city.

Akureyri is not as big as any of the world's cities but it provides all the features and services expected of a big city in a very compact form, so that everything is within a short distance.

Take, for instance, winter activities like skiing. The family-friendly slopes are under 10 minutes from the airport and the hotels. Likewise the horseriding tours, boat trips, bird watching, shopping—to name a few—are all so close, you can almost touch them. You name it, it's close-by.

The weather, with its combination of crisp, dry snow and Northern Lights—at the peak of their cycle this winter—makes a holiday here memorable.

Cultural Centre of the North

When it comes to culture, Akureyri has it all: museums, art galleries, international exhibitions, conference facilities, music concerts of all genres, opera, theatres and cinemas showing the latest films.

It has well over 20 restaurants, covering both Icelandic and international cuisine, with top chefs who create their own innovative cuisine. Cafés, each with their individual speciality abound, while local micro-breweries and farms offering food tasting are a fascinating addition to the food scene.

For groups and incentive tours, Akureyri offers such a wide range of activities, events and opportunities, maximising the time available. There are a multitude of tours covering every interest from flying to caving, from fishing to the Hidden People, walking to whale-watching.

Sports of all kinds

Sport activities are very popular in the North and many sports are represented in this dynamic community.

The geothermally-heated swimming pools, with their hot pots and jacuzzi are open—and very popular—all year round.

The Arctic Open Golf championship is played on the most northerly 18-hole course in the world, just outside the city under snow-covered mountains and the midnight sun. You can hire clubs if you need them and relax in the club house afterwards.

See the Sights

Akureyri is also a service base for many of the most important tourist destinations in North Iceland. From here, you can visit Mývatn, Dettifoss—the most powerful waterfall in Europe, the islands of Hrísey, with its powerful healing energy and Grímsey, straddling the Arctic Circle, see volcanos and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.

Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavik international and Reykjavik airports take just 40 min. Scheduled buses leave from Reykjavik Bus Station. There are numerous tours, some of which go through the highlands during summer months. The bus service is free in town.



Naturally, every common form of transport is available: car, bike, boat, horse, ATV, plane rentals. Every type of accommodation is also on hand, from 4-star hotels to camp sites.

Akureyri has it all and an outgoing friendly welcome, too.

-ASF



Akureyrarstofa



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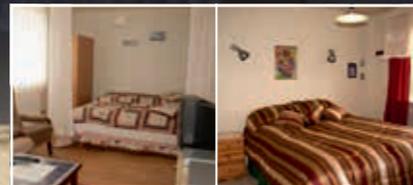
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One of Akureyri's best kept secrets is the recipe for North Iceland's most famous ice cream. Treasured in the family for over 100 years - more delicious than anything you ever tasted!

Welcome to Brynja!

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DINE WITH THE SADDLER

One of the oldest houses in Akureyri has opened its doors for visitors

Built in 1906, in what is now the centre of Akureyri's walking street, Kaffi Ilmur started out as a saddler's shop. Later, it became a goldsmith's, overlooking the fjord before the land was extended and more shops were built.

Today, after extensive restoration, the granddaughter of Ingimar, the saddler, has opened a café, enabling visitors to take a step back in time, surrounded by the original

walls, pictures and furniture—as well as the novel use of the former flooring and roof and some of the artifacts excavated from the area.

With the healthy lunches served upstairs and the delicious snacks served with the drinks downstairs, this is a winning combination that is very attractive to customers. On warm days, you can sit outside at the tables, sheltered from any wind.



It's easy to feel like you're eating with Ingimar, back in the early 1900's. It still feels like his home. The lunches are designed to be both wholesome and healthy, whilst the snacks are both traditional Icelandic favourites and fresh creations.

It's a lovely spot to take a break from sightseeing or shopping while enjoying Eyjafjörður—the beautiful fjord in which Akureyri lies.

-ASF

Kaffi ilmur

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 www.kaffillmur.is

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ENJOY AKUREYRI ON A BUDGET

A Warm and Friendly Guesthouse that has All You Need

Súlur Guesthouse is popular with budget-conscious travellers to Akureyri. It has 8 rooms with both made-up beds and sleeping bag accommodation. With two kitchens, one on each floor, it offers self-catering and has a laundrette. There is free wireless internet and TV.

Set on the hillside next to the campsite, overlooking the town and the fjord, it is close to the geothermally heated swimming

pool, the beautiful botanical gardens and a grocery shop. If you'd rather not walk, the free bus service will take you down to the town for quick access to all the amenities, or on a tour around the town.

Súlur is open all year-round, so it makes a great choice for skiers taking a winter break to enjoy the slopes above the town. During the summer months, from 1st of June to



mid-August, an additional 12 rooms are available which are ideal for families or small groups. They consist of 3 apartments, comprising 4 bedrooms each, again, with self-catering facilities in every apartment.

-ASF

Súlur Guesthouse

Pörunnarstræti 93 • 600 Akureyri
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 sulur@islandia.is
 www.sulurguesthouse.is

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drawn to the Romanticist and Reform movements like the Unitarian church. He read the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and was said to be Iceland's most able proponent of the liberal religious position.

He translated many works from different languages, including a number of Shakespeare's works, but it was his prolific poetry that made him popular. He wrote his most famous poem for the 1,000 year celebration of Ingólfur Árnason's pioneering of the country. This was destined to become Iceland's national anthem.

He was the first poet to be granted a pension and the title of National Poet by the Alþingi, the Icelandic governing body in 1900, when he retired as a clergyman. Through his religious poetry, hymns and funeral elegies, along with his heroic narrative poems, he continued to preach Christian faith and humanity.

MEN WHO MADE ICELAND

Matthías Jochumsson, poet and writer of Iceland's national anthem

The West Fjörds have produced some of Iceland's outstanding leaders in different fields, particularly in the 19th century, at a time when many of the world's greatest names were born.

Matthías Jochumsson (11 November, 1835–18 December, 1920) was born on the Skógar farm on the south part of the West Fjörds to a poor farming family. He did not begin school until a comparatively late age when his talents were recognised and he attended the Latin School in Reykjavík.

During the Christmas holiday in 1861, he wrote a play called, 'The Outlaws' which his fellow students performed the following year. It became an instant success, thereby distinguishing Matthías as a major poet, which marked the beginning of modern Icelandic drama.

The play tells the story of the outlaw Skugga and his companions and their conflicts with the locals, and was inspired by the stories of outlaws living in the Icelandic wilderness. It has since been performed many times and Matthías, who had been planning to become a businessman, discovered his love of languages and literature that was to define his life.

On graduating, he became a priest but, when he lost his second wife, it led to great mental anguish and a reconsideration of his religious beliefs. He took a break from the priesthood for some years, becoming the editor of the most popular weekly Icelandic journal, Þjóðöldfur.

Although he returned to the Lutheran priesthood, his was a liberal thinking in contrast to the harsh religious dogmatism of the day. He travelled extensively, being



He moved to the northern town of Akureyri, where he built a house in 1903, where he lived until his death. The house is now open as a museum and study centre.

-ASF



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A HUNDRED YEARS OF FLOWERS

Akureyri's Botanical Gardens has thousands of plants and trees

Lystigarðurinn Akureyri is one of the northernmost botanical gardens in the world. It was founded in 1912 by four of the most prominent ladies of Akureyri. They dreamed of creating an oasis where the townspeople could relax and enjoy the colours of spring and summer after the trials and tribulations of the harsh island winters. Although the town council agreed to a public park and provided money to start the creation, the botanic section had to wait. It wasn't opened until 1957. Today, there are about 6,600 alien varieties growing in the garden in beds and the nursery. A further 430 species of the native varieties are to be found there, with more being constantly added to the collection.



The park has been enlarged three times since 1912 and is now about 3.6 ha and lies at 40-50 m altitude on Eyrarlandsvegur road near midtown. There are several aims to the Botanical Garden's activity. The most important task is to provide northern Iceland in general with trees, shrubs and



perennials that fulfil the demands of beauty and hardiness. The garden also functions as a gene bank for hardy plants suitable to the weather conditions in Iceland. The Icelandic Flora contains rather few species compared to other countries. There are around 500 species at the moment and most of them are displayed in Akureyri's Hortus Botanicus. Further, the general idea is for multiple use, such as a seed-exchange, public information, education and recreation.

Part of the ladies' dream was to have a café in the park but they did not live to see that part realised. Indeed, the townspeople had to wait a hundred years for the café which finally opened in June this year.

The park has been immensely popular right from the start, both with Icelanders and foreign visitors. It is a tranquil and colourful place, with wonderful aromas, a good café – and exceptionally family friendly.

-SS

Lystigarður Akureyrar

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 www.lystigarður.akureyri.is

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THE CAFÉ IN THE FLOWERS

The newly opened café brings refreshment to the Botanical Gardens

This year is the centennial anniversary of the Akureyri's Botanical Gardens. In June, a new café opened to provide food and drinks to visitors to this beautiful garden. Tall trees line the pathways, evidence that, even at such a high latitude, it is possible to grow here. The café reflects these lovely trees in its large picture windows on either side, the varnished brown wooden window frames forming trunks and branches.

These windows give a panoramic view of the gardens from the comfort of couches and chairs inside the café. Since it is open all year round, visitors can enjoy the changing seasons,

whether sitting outside in the sunshine or inside, sheltered from the elements. A range of snacks and drinks are always available, making this a very enjoyable spot to meet, to relax or simply to take in the beauties of the plants and trees that surround it. Unlike most cafés that just have tables and chairs to sit at, there are two lounge areas with couches and arm chairs along with a low lounge table between them, making for a very congenial atmosphere.

Even though set high on the hill above the town, close to the hospital and the church that stands as a landmark over the town, the gardens themselves are a tranquil spot, sheltered



by the trees from the worst of the winter winds. However, there is nothing more welcoming than the lights of the café after wandering the paths of the garden and the prospect of a nice, hot drink and snack, relaxing with friends at one of the tables or lounge areas.

On the warm, sunny days though, you don't really want to be inside and the café has a large patio where the tables and chairs are set so you can enjoy the ambience of the gardens, soak up the sun while enjoying your coffee and cakes. A display of large photos of different flowers forms an attractive wind-break and backdrop to your conversation.

-ASF



Café Björk

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BAKING THE BEST IN AKUREYRI

The Bakery with a Healthy Dose of Delicious Innovation

Open every morning at 6.30 for the early risers and travellers, Bakarí við brúna is a natural stop for a healthy breakfast, lunch or evening take-away. The shelves are packed with all kinds of breads, pastries, cakes and sandwiches—which, along with coffee make a hearty meal.

Invite your girlfriend for poetry

The café area is a cosy place; the walls are tastefully decorated with pictures of a number of different bridges around Iceland. The hand-painted tables deserve special mention, too; each with a different map on it, showing the direction from one of Iceland's towns right to the bakery and each one inscribed with a small poem!

Bread Bowl—with a difference

A very tasty idea is the bread bowl. Take a round loaf, cut off the top, scoop out the insides and pour in fresh, hot soup. You may have had bread with soup before—but never like this. It was a delicious lunch—especially with the



buns or sandwiches filled with a variety of salads, meats and cheeses. Hot pizza is also available and on Thursdays, the bakery serves a traditional Icelandic fish dish. Everything is hand-made here with the healthiest of ingredients.

The delicatessen has a range of natural, locally-produced herbal teas and jams, fish oils and fresh pesto.



Après-ski Party

The bakery aims to provide the best possible service. You can order ahead—handy for groups and parties. After skiing the slopes less than 10 min away, it's the ideal place to come to the bakery to warm up over coffee or soup and some of those delicious pastries with your friends.

You'll find the bakery right behind the Gleratorg shopping centre.

-ASF

Bakaríð við brúna



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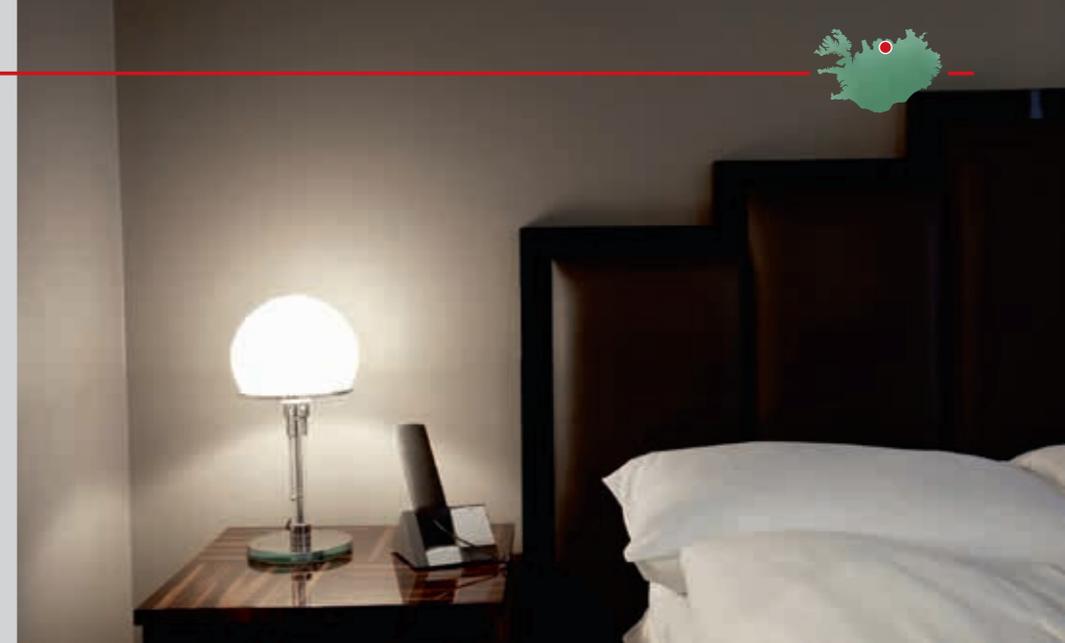
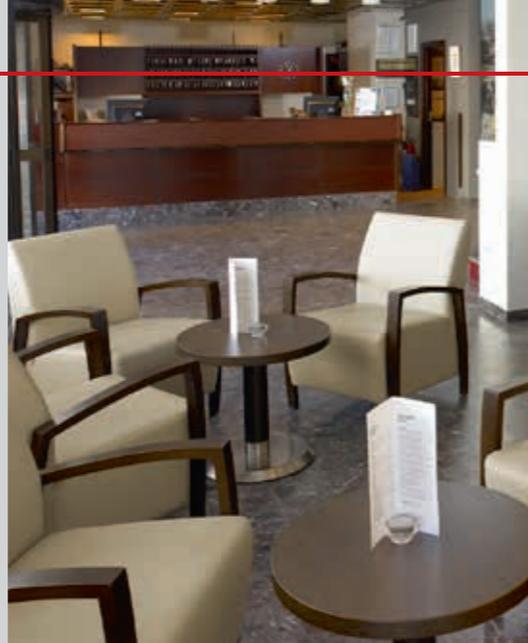
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16
 Rental locations
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BÍLALEIGA AKUREYRAR
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ENJOY WINTER THIS YEAR

Comfort and friendliness make for a memorable stay at Hotel Kea

Why don't you go, then? My colleague's question led me to the brief flight to Akureyri, right across the highland centre of the country to the spectacular descent down into the fjord where this northern town lies, a few moments later. No hours of waiting for the baggage carousel, either. Before we knew it, we were in the car for the 5 min. drive to the hotel.

Hotel Kea is right in the centre of the town. The pace is relaxed here. Everything is within a few minutes walk. Even the ski slopes are just a short drive away. "Why aren't more cities like this," I wondered.

Hotel Kea was built in 1944 as a 4-star hotel and now has 104 rooms, receiving groups and individual travellers throughout the year. It has that old-world, comfortable feel to it.

Staying here myself, I understand why it is a popular choice. The view of the fjord from the windows of the restaurant and my bedroom are just beautiful. I can step out onto the balcony

and enjoy the sun and fresh air. I can walk out of its front door and I'm just a few steps from shops, restaurants, galleries and gardens.

Dining at the restaurant is relaxed, with each dish both beautifully presented and uniquely flavourful. Even though it was almost full when I ate there, its design and lighting provide a discreet, calm ambience. The staff epitomised the Icelandic culture with their good natured, friendly service, being there just when needed and providing knowledgeable counsel about the menu when asked.

The town is filled with art, music and culture that continues throughout the year. Top opera singers and avant garde groups perform at the cultural centre whilst art is everywhere.

Akureyri offers very special autumn and winter experiences that are hard to find elsewhere. From late August, the Northern Lights begin to sweep the skies. The hills offer great skiing whilst the mountains, waterfalls,

lakes, horse riding, jeep tours present a totally different picture that is even more inspiring and fulfilling than in the summer.

At the centre of it all, is Hotel Kea; a 4-star hotel with 5-star friendliness.

Hotel Norðurland

At the other end of the walking street is the 3-star Hotel Norðurland. The rooms are a little smaller and simpler—but the warm, friendly service is the same. Although it doesn't have a restaurant, the dining room provides the same range of breakfast foods as the Kea.

This hotel is understandably popular with cost-conscious visitors and takes in groups, too, with 41 rooms on two floors, including a room with access for handicapped guests. It is a comfortable place to base from when visiting the area.

Hotel Gígur

Visitors to North Iceland almost invariably want to see Lake Mývatn, with its amazing birdlife and natural beauty, flanked by volcanos and geothermal areas. Set on the lakeside itself, you would never know that this hotel was once a school, so well has it been converted and upgraded and it is rated as 2-star only because the rooms are more compact.

The beds are very comfortable and there's no problem in getting a good night's sleep with only the gentle sound of the birds to wake you in the morning. It's service is just as good as other Kea group hotels, friendly and right there when you need it.

The dining room and lounge area is beautiful, with large windows offering an unparalleled view of the lake and the sunset over the mountains. It is lit with ornate chandeliers. The meals are delicious. We tried all the choices during our stay here and they are equally recommended.



grazing—but they can be rented for a ride in the beautiful nature around the hotel.

Flying back home, I couldn't help thinking that for both individuals and incentive groups, a visit in winter to North Iceland would be the experience of a lifetime. The wide range of activities, including horse riding or go-karting on the ice to skiing the slopes to bathing in the natural hot baths, surrounded by snow, provide unique bonding opportunities. Having stayed in the Kea hotels, I can't imagine any more convenient and comfortable.

-ASF

Hotel Kea



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 kea@keahotels.is
 www.keahotels.is

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AT LAST IN REYKJAVÍK!

At Rub23 the chefs make sure to play with all your senses

Rub23 has surely been the most talked about restaurant in Iceland over the last few years and is a regular destination for Icelanders travelling to Akureyri, where it opened in 2008.

Newly opened in Reykjavík, it is perfectly located in the basement of the Geysir House (where the Tourist Information Centre is to be found) with the interior of brick walls and ship-deck floors adding a mysterious feeling to the exotic atmosphere of unique spices; a promise of an extraordinary journey.

Rub23 plays on all the senses. Apart from smell and atmosphere, every dish is a piece of art; it looks colourful and sounds wonderful, sizzling and crackling on the plate and in the mouth. That may sound a bit outlandish—but it is, in fact, quite Icelandic with the most loved types of fish on the menu: cod, halibut, flounder, salmon and trout. The only

thing left to do is choose the spice—blend—or rub—that most agrees with your palette. Do you wish to rub your taste buds with a sense of summer gardens, mountains and lakes, the Orient, the Americas or Africa today? And all without interfering with the taste of the fish caught and brought in earlier this morning.

The world is an herb and a spice oyster

For the renowned chefs, Einar Geirsson and Kristján Þórir Kristjánsson, it is not merely another day at work. Being a chef is their passion—their calling, if you like. They mix all the rubs themselves, constantly improvising and creating new and different spice—blends. Travelling widely around the world with the Icelandic fishing company, Samherji, to introduce the wonderfully fresh and tasty North Atlantic seafood, they are constantly on the lookout for different herbs and spices. At

the Akureyri restaurant there is a room full of herbs and spices, gathered and imported from all over the world. The aim is perfection.

Of course you can also get rubbed meat: lamb, beef or chicken and then there is Sushi.

Icelandic sushi

Sushi was first introduced to Icelanders a very few years ago, but has caught on quite fast. Icelanders simply love this Japanese delicacy. The combination of fish, seaweed, wasabi, soy and rice seems to agree perfectly with the Icelandic taste buds. And of course, at Rub23, the chefs take the Sushi to quite another level, working with typically Nordic ingredients to create their own artistic bites. Even if you're not keen on Sushi, be sure to try their Sushi—pizza. Made with marinated fresh arctic char, it will most surely prove to be the best pizza and best sushi—bite you have ever experienced. Indeed, if you are pressed for time, during lunch, for instance, step into Rub23 and have a Sushi—pizza and a glass of lovely chilled white wine. It is such a joyful experience.

—SS



Rub23

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FLAVOUR FESTIVAL IN AKUREYRI

Rub23 blends mixtures of herbs in an exotic fantasy

From the moment the entrée is set on the table to the last bite of the meal, our taste buds are treated to flavours both brash and subtle, in combinations unheard of in the average restaurant.

Even in a single appetiser dish of salad, the different raw vegetables combined in different bites, mixed with herbs into what seemed like a fairground of flavour and aroma.

Our main course was fresh salmon, caught locally and cooked to perfection in a choice of different herbs. The result was amazing. I have never tasted fish like this—and neither had my wife, born and raised by a salmon river.

The chefs are clearly passionate about their art and pour their energies into creating each plate to be the best it can be. The staff, too, obviously enjoy explaining not just the differences between the dishes but the whole concept of Rub23 and its method of blending herbs into the fish or meat.



While the portions are a good size, this is not a heavy meal and, in the unrushed comfort of the restaurant overlooking the blue waters of the fjord and the multicoloured mountains on its far side, there is time to savour every bite and enjoy each new flavour as it spreads over the tongue.

This is healthy eating taken to an entirely new level. Apart from the fish and meats, everything presented was raw food, thus retaining all the freshness and living goodness. It proves that the raw food alternative can easily exceed traditionally prepared food in every area—taste, flavour, texture and health benefits, when prepared by someone who has a mastery of the blending of the different ingredients with the right spices and in the right combinations.



The name, Rub23 comes from a blend itself: the method of mixing spices with the fish or meat and the original address of the restaurant. Now, residents in Reykjavik and the south can find a Rub23 restaurant in the capital at Aðalstræti, thus avoiding the long drive to Akureyri for dinner.

—ASF



Rub23

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HOME TO THE RAVEN'S ROOST

Hrafninn Guesthouse, one of Akureyri's Finest

One of the most comfortable, yet reasonably priced guesthouses in Akureyri is located in the heart of the downtown area. Hrafninn Guesthouse occupies a rather stately, classic, double storied house built in 1932, which greatly adds to its character and charm, lending more of a hotel atmosphere to it. Each room is tastefully furnished and comes with a flat-screen tv, and private bath. The comfy beds are made up with fluffy duvets and quality linens.



Close to Everything

From its central location, everything is within easy reach; 5 or 10 minutes on foot are all you need to pop out for a movie or shop for supplies to make your own meals in Hrafninn's fully equipped communal kitchen.

In summer, be sure to make use of the barbecue on the furnished terrace for the ultimate touch of summer living. Open year round, Hrafninn Guesthouse is one of Akureyri's finest.

Hrafninn is the Icelandic word for Raven.

Gistihúsið Hrafninn

-EMV



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SPACIOUS, CLEAN AND CENTRAL

Centrum Hostel is a smart choice for families and smaller groups

When in Akureyri with friends or family, an ideal place to stay is Centrum Hostel at Hafnarstræti 102. Smack in the centre of town with restaurants, cafés, shops and museums within a few minutes walking distance, the Hostel offers large rooms with bedding for up to six people.

At the moment, the hostel provides seven bedrooms and offers beds for 28 people, but as the rooms are quite big, there is plenty room for additional mattresses. In the spring seven more rooms will be added to this clean and cosy hostel. With either made-up beds or sleeping-bag accommodation, the



Centrum Hostel is a nice choice, as each room has its own refrigerator and TV attached to a satellite dish with over 200 channels to choose from.

Although guests cannot cook meals in the hostel, the living room has a grill and a microwave, so preparing your breakfast is easy.

There are two separate toilets on the floor and two separate showers. The third shower/toilet is especially designed for the disabled. Access to the hostel is also designed for the disabled and an elevator to adds to the comfort.

For those staying during wintertime, the hostel has a room for storing skiing gear and can offer its guests parking space.

Centrum Hostel

-SS



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ARCTIC WINTERS CONQUERED

Making the Most of Your Winter Vacation

Southerners in Iceland often jokingly bicker with northerners about which has the better weather in the summer, but few will contest that northerners have the better winters. Snow covered valleys, forlorn mountaintops, glacial rivers and unpredictable weather are what you can expect, but for newcomers, the Icelandic winters can appear quite intimidating and impenetrable and that's where Akureyri's Icelandic Adventures can be of help.

Ice fishing, skiing, snowmobiling, ATV tours and holiday festivities are among the activities available and Iceland Adventure can tailor-make your winter adventures according to your needs. If you're in Iceland



around the holidays it is an absolute must to inquire about their Christmas tours, which take you to unique Christmas houses, cosy home-stay hotels, holiday feasts and to visit the mischievous Icelandic Yule Lads in the ominous Dimmuborgir.

Taking a snowmobile or an ATV and driving to secluded northern valleys and up treacherous mountains is an experience not easily forgotten. There is a feeling of conquering the unconquerable and a brief separation from the often complicated modern world.

For those looking for a completely unique experience, a day of ice fishing should be considered. Icelandic Adventures can take you—by jeep, ATV, snowmobile or even by horse—to a frozen lake where you'll make a hole and catch your meal for the night.

Icelandic Adventures offer skiers, both novice and experienced, full five-day ski trips on one of Iceland's best ski slopes. The Northern Lights are of course a must-see and Icelandic Adventures will find you the optimal conditions and locations. But first and foremost, Icelandic Adventures aims to give their customers a personal experience which accommodates the often very different needs of travellers.

Icelandic Adventures

-VAG



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LOCAL FISHING SECRETS SHOWN

No One Comes Home Empty Handed

Fishing in Iceland can be a rewarding and unforgettable experience, but if you don't know the right places or times to go, you might be disappointed. Recognising this, the staff of Iceland Fishing Guide Tour Company decided to share their secrets and decades of experience of fishing in Northern Iceland.

Iceland Fishing Guide places special emphasis on keeping its operations on a personal scale and Matthías, the manager, says that they form friendships rather than business relations. "All our guides are experienced fishermen from the area who have amassed a great deal of knowledge about the region through the years. As a result we are almost always able to find something which suits our customers' needs and this summer we've never failed to yield at least one fish," says Matthías.

Working on a relatively small scale has given the company freedom to change locations as the fish pop their noses up, instead of being bound to a specific location. "This gives our customers the opportunity to tailor their experience according to

their needs. We can take more experienced fishermen to secluded locations to chase the bigger fish or we can take those less experienced where there is a higher yield percentage," says Matthías. So if you want to tackle a weighty brown trout, the prized Atlantic salmon or the arctic char, but don't know where to look, Iceland Fishing Guides are willing to give up some of their secrets.



Iceland Fishing Guide

-VAG



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THE OLD TOWN OF AKUREYRI

One Hundred and Fifty Years Back in Time

The town of Akureyri has been called the capital of the north and rightly so, as it serves as a centre for transport, services and culture, connecting the north to the rest of the country. Akureyri, however has a unique and distinctive character which makes it an essential stop for anyone travelling north. The core of its character can be found in the Old Town of Akureyri —called Innbærinn.

Only a few minutes walk from the city centre, the area is a monument to Akureyri's culture and history. Many of the city's oldest houses have been preserved and today are homes to people, businesses, cafés and museums, giving visitors a chance to experience the town's rich history. The Old Town's location plays no small role in its charm as a cliff forms a natural border to the north and the ocean to the east.

Where the Past Meets the Present

In recent years, steps have been taken to secure the Old Town's legacy, both in terms of preservation and accessibility. Informative signposts have recently been placed throughout the Old Town giving visitors a chance to learn about life in a different era.

Hanna Rósa Sveinsdóttir, at the Museum of Akureyri, says it has been important to take these steps to preserve and maintain the Old Town, but at the same time, adapting it to modern day life. "In my mind, the Old Town is a historical monument which connects the town's history to the present, making it completely unique," says Hanna Rósa. "We've managed to maintain the original street planning even though the Old Town has been inhabited all this time. The townsfolk respect the town's history and when it comes to renovations and new buildings, it is always done with that in mind," says Hanna Rósa.

Akureyri is now celebrating the 150 years that have passed since it was given its official

title as a township. The name Akureyri however, dates back to the 15th century, but it was in 1778 that the first dwelling was built. The oldest standing building is Laxdalshús, built in 1795, which today houses a restaurant & café that serves local dishes. The Old Town is replete with old picturesque timber houses which give the town its relaxed and charming ambience.

History Captivated in Museums

Fittingly, the Old Town is home to many museums. Nonnahús is the childhood home of one of Iceland's most celebrated writers, Jón Sveinsson, author of a series of books about the adventures of a boy named Nonni, and translated into over 30 languages. Built in 1850, it has been renovated into a museum dedicated to his life and works—a landmark in Akureyri.

The Museum of Akureyri is located in Akureyri's first villa with an extensive garden where forestry was started in 1899 and explains why the city is so blessed with vegetation. The museum is dedicated to everyday life from historic times to the present, and includes art and photography displays.

You'll also find museums dedicated to motorcycles, industry and aviation. A day in the Old Town visiting museums will thus leave you enlightened about almost every facet of life in the north imaginable.

The Best Ice Cream in all the Land?

Icelanders have a strange obsession with ice cream and will bicker to no end about which shop has the best. Considered a strong contender by many is Brynja, the shop in the Old Town, where ice cream connoisseurs from all over the country stop by every time they're in Akureyri.

However you choose to spend your time, a visit to Akureyri's Old Town it is well worth your while, taking in the sights and going just a little bit back in time.

-VAG





PURE AND NATURAL

North Iceland's only Certified Organic Skin Care Producer

The mountains reach high above North Iceland's Eyjafjörður. With the flowers and herbs gathered by hand on their slopes, Urtasmiðjan or the Herbal Workshop creates the Sóla range of pure organic skin care oils, balms and creams.

Iceland's pure air and unpolluted soil provide the ideal conditions for the plants to grow slowly, thus increasing their potency.

Pure sources, pure process, pure product

The Herbal Workshop products are all produced by hand, without the use of machinery. No chemical or petroleum base, artificial colourings or fragrances are used in any of the products—just pure herbal oils and bees wax, with natural vitamin E oil providing the anti-oxidant. Urtasmiðjan imports high quality, expensive carrier oils, such as Moroccan oil and coconut butter.

All the products contain Omega 3 and 6 oils that store vitamins and are so vital to the protection and nourishment of the skin. The herbs that are used are known for their proven positive effects on the skin and for healing.



Protect your skin from pollution

Today's lifestyles in polluted cities, make it important to look after your skin and Sóla products organic purity provides the best possible care. The product line is available online and from selected health and tourist shops. Your skin is vital to your health, so protecting it makes sense.

-ASF

Urtasmiðjan



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THE DEEP VALLEY IN THE NORTH

In Eyjafjarðarsveit you can take part in the farm life

All is not always what it seems in Iceland. A town is not merely a town and the countryside is not either wilderness or farmland. The valley south of Akureyri in the north of Iceland is one of those areas difficult to define. It has the atmosphere of farmland, offers a variety of tourist attractions and activities any town would be proud of and accommodation ranging from camping sites to lovely hotels. The Eyjafjarðará river runs through this narrow valley, which is surprisingly long at about 50 kilometres. The farms are mostly located along the riverbank with the road crisscrossing the river via a number of bridges, making access to everything on offer to the tourist quick and easy.

Comfortable guesthouses

Eyjafjarðarsveit has, of course, an excellent outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs and fun slides, a lovely playground for youngsters, museums, cafés, an ice-cream factory with an ice cream bar, a vegetarian restaurant which also offers a raw food menu, horse rental farms, river-fishing and two golf courses.



When planning a holiday with your family and friends in Iceland, the many guesthouses in Eyjafjarðarsveit are a real treat. There is Brúnalaug Guesthouse, a bungalow situated 700 metres from the main road providing absolute peace and quiet. Further north is Öngulsstaðir, where the old barn has been renovated and now houses a tiny hotel where all rooms come with en suite bathrooms, and the lovely Lamb Inn restaurant. Nearby, is Hóll Guesthouse, an apartment with two double rooms and all necessary facilities and Uppsalar Guesthouse which can accommodate up to ten individuals. Uppsalar and Hrafnagil Guesthouse, 12 kilometres south of Akureyri, invite their guests to take part in their beautiful farm life, which is especially loved by city youngsters. Family-friendly Hrafnagil Guesthouse offers five large rooms and facilities for babies and children.

Then there is the Leifsstaðir, one of the loveliest hotels in Iceland. An hotel with a view, lovely verandas and its very own golf course.

Kátur is a Horse Rental at Kaupangsbakkar, offering guided tours ranging from 1 to 3

hours, every day of the week from 8th June to 1st September each year. They also offer custom horseback riding trips for groups of any variety.

Raw food and farm ice cream

The real treat in Eyjafjarðarsveit has got to be Holtsel, offering their very own farmhouse ice cream, labelled Holtsels-Hnoss. The ice creams are made from cream, milk, yoghurt, full-fat, low-fat, non-fat and sorbets. Something delicious for everyone.

A short distance away is Kaffi Kú or Café Cow, a bar specialising in whisky along with a vast selection of beer and, of course, coffee and quite different cakes, like their liquorice cake. A truly original place.

The Silva vegetarian restaurant is steadily becoming one of the most popular raw food restaurants in Iceland, offering a good vegetarian and raw food menu, fresh shakes and juices.

When travelling in this area in late summer, try not to miss the handicrafts celebration held each year in August.

As you drive around Eyjafjarðarsveit, be sure to visit the various old churches in the area, each with its own special history and architecture.

And last, but not least, do not miss the Smámunasaftnið, an original and fun museum containing one man's collection of odd and everyday pieces. A day spent in Eyjafjarðarsveit is a day well spent.

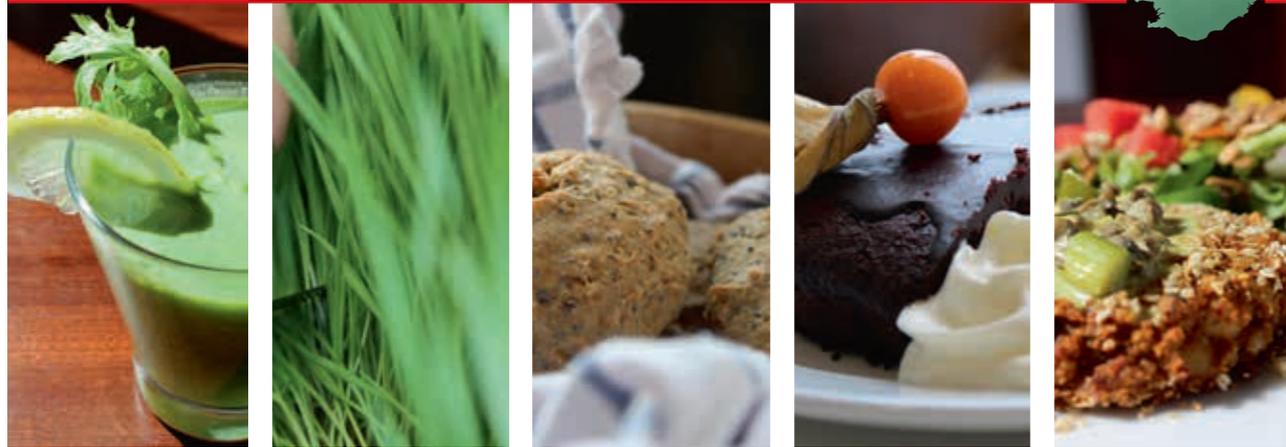
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Eyjafjarðarsveit



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EAT VEGAN IN AKUREYRI

The only vegan restaurant outside Reykjavik is Silva, in Hrafnagil

The beautiful valley that extends from Akureyri into the countryside is watered by clear mountain streams and so unpolluted, the rich farming land is ideal for growing organic vegetables.

Just outside Hrafnagil, in the old school house on the hill, a new vegan and raw food restaurant has opened. All the food is made fresh there from vegetables grown mostly in the valley. Besides full meals, they make delicious smoothies and

snacks—cakes, cookies and gluten-free bread, all without wheat, sugar, dairy or yeast.

This is just what the health-conscious family is looking for: living food at a reasonable price. So if you're travelling around Iceland, Silva is just 12 km from Akureyri. There is easy access for disabled guests and a children's play area, too.

They make take-away meals and can have them ready for you if you give them a call

before leaving town—even out of normal opening hours. Although, if you are there at lunch or dinner time, it makes sense to relax and let the spectacular tranquil views of the valley and fjord bring peace to your spirit.

Kristín also runs a series of short courses, teaching how to create raw food meals yourself.

-ASF

Silva

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A GUESTHOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

The Farm at Ytra Laugaland offers an invigorating stay

In the unspoiled valley of Eyjafjörður, some 12 km from Akureyri, the Ytra Laugaland farm has been opening its doors to families and independent travellers for the last five years. The house has large, comfortable

rooms: one suite for a family and three twin bedrooms. One of the bathrooms has a jacuzzi—so relaxing after a long day out.

The farm was built in 1927 and is beautifully decorated. Owners Óttar and



Vilborg have created a cosy, family-friendly home. The beds have health mattresses for a comfortable sleep and breakfasts are wholesome and healthy for a good start to the day. There are facilities for self-catering and there is a health-food restaurant just a minute's drive away. Also close by is the swimming pool, less than 5 min away.

A TV lounge and Internet access provide access to the outside world, should you need it while the farm is in a most beautiful valley, with a view clear up the fjord to the Arctic Sea.

-ASF

Gistiheimili Vilborgar

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THE COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

A Family-friendly stay at Hrafnagil Farm Guesthouse

You'll find the village of Hrafnagil just 12 km south of Akureyri in Eyjafjörður. The valley is protected on either side by steep mountains and provides rich farmland and lovely views all the way to the Arctic Sea.

A farm for families

You feel you're in the depths of the countryside. It's a beautiful place to stay and the guesthouse has the added benefit of being part of a working farm, so you'll see horses outside the windows, sheep on the

hills above, chickens in the yard and cows in the fields across the road, not to mention the cat and dogs. It's a great opportunity for children to learn about and enjoy farm life. There are cots, changing tables and safety gates in the house for the babies.

A traveller's rest

The guesthouse is warm and spacious with comfortable beds and a delicious breakfast every morning. The 5 rooms are spacious and the largest bedroom, with 4 beds has

plenty of room for families. There is a large lounge where you can read, write or watch the TV or surf the Internet.

Travellers of all ages we met here spoke very highly of their stay and of the thought and care that went into making them both welcome and comfortable. It's a very convenient place to base from when travelling the North.

-ASF

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ICELANDIC TIMES

Meeting the World's Thirst for Knowledge about Iceland

In the last few years, Iceland has been showing up more and more on the prospective tourist's radar the world over. Thanks to many positive articles, guidebook reviews and the overwhelming approval of visitors who unanimously voted Iceland as a top tourist destination, the country continues to climb in popularity and the number of visitors to the country continues to swell.

Icelandic Times magazine provides a valuable source of information, not only about Iceland's fascinating natural phenomena but also its culture, its people and its vibrant business sector.

Published by Land og Saga ehf in Reykjavik, the magazine has been well received since its launch in 2007 and is becoming a one of the fastest growing

tourist magazines on the market today. It is distributed free of charge around Iceland with more than 500,000 copies published annually. The magazine is available in all major hotels, restaurants, airports, Icelandic tourist offices, and on all Wow Air flights, providing an inflight magazine that helps them get the most from their holiday.

As a complementary service, Icelandic Times offers a video advertising platform, enabling clients to promote their business via their own website or on the Icelandic Times website, www.icelandictimes.com which receives over 30,000 individual visitors and over 100,000 page views per month. The entire magazine can also be downloaded free from the website.

New in 2012

The magazine is now available in 3 languages, English, French and German, each with its own unique focus.

-DB



Icelandic Times

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IT'S A BIRD'S LIFE

One year in the life of the birds in the Lake Mývatn area

Mývatn is known to birders throughout the world for its rich birdlife, particularly its abundance of breeding wildfowl. No other site in Europe can boast such a diverse range of breeding ducks as the Mývatn area. Fourteen of the sixteen species of duck which breed in Iceland can be found here; the Common Eider and Common Shelduck are coastal species and are therefore rarely seen at Mývatn. Three other species of wildfowl, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose and Pink-footed Goose, also breed in the area. Two species of divers and one grebe breed: Great Northern Diver, Red-throated Diver and Horned Grebe. Their habits resemble those of ducks in many ways, at least during the summer.



A pair of Horned Grebes feeding young

Different habitat

The Mývatn area offers you a wide range of excellent bird watching sites. Bird life and bird habitats are extremely diverse, typified in this region by highland oases, lakes of global importance for birds, rich birch woods and scrubland. Wetlands and small lakes are frequently encountered and moorlands are found widely.

Spring

In April, as spring arrives and the ice on the lake melts, migratory birds flock to Iceland. Fields, ponds, lakes and rivers are swamped with birds arriving from Europe and Africa. The first breeders, like Raven and Gyr Falcon, have already laid their eggs and at

the end of April the Horned Grebe starts its magnificent courtship display.

In May, the elaborate display of numerous species of ducks reaches its climax. May and June are the best months for birdwatching. Nature is recovering from the long, hard winter and the birds are extremely active and conspicuous. The countryside is filled with the sound of bird song, courtship and lively displays, the sun barely dips below the horizon and the symphony of nature seems endless. Drakes are particularly impressive at this time of year, with Long-tailed Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye fighting vigorously for mates and territory. Harlequin Ducks hurtle along the River Laxá and the Great Northern Diver can be heard wailing out on the lake.

The Remaining Months

In July, everything seems to calm down and the adult birds get on with quietly feeding and raising their young. The drakes moult and group. Drake Harlequin Ducks and Common Scoters head for the sea.

In August, the birds gather for migration and those that travel the longest distances, like the Whimbrel

and the Arctic Tern, leave for their wintering grounds. Mývatn is by now swarming with ducks if the breeding season has been successful.

September is the main migration month in north-east Iceland but geese and some ducks and passerines do not leave until October. However, numerous birds remain in the area during the winter. At Mývatn and River Laxá some areas remain open all winter and attract resident Whooper Swans, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Goosanders and Mallards. Even a few Harlequins can sometimes be found on the river in winter.

Other birds

Waders often nest in or close to rich, vegetated marshland, which is a common habitat in the Mývatn area. They take advantage of the abundance of midges and can often be seen on the shores of the lake, picking up insects which have drifted ashore. One of the most characteristic birds of the Mývatn area is the Red-necked Phalarope. Eight species of waders breed in the area, including Black-tailed Godwit, and several more species are seen regularly.

Black-headed Gull is the most common gull in the Mývatn area and the only species which breeds in any number. Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls are summer visitors to the lake. The Arctic Tern is a common breeder but it does not



A drake Harlequin Duck

breed in large colonies at Mývatn. Arctic Skuas breed on the surrounding moorlands.

The varied habitats around Mývatn attract a range of passerines and the abundance of insects provides rich pickings for them and other birds in the area. Birch scrubland and woodlands are home to Iceland's typical forest birds, like the Redwing, Common Redpoll and Eurasian Wren, for example.



Pair of Harlequins on the fast flowing water of River Laxá

Snow Bunting and Northern Wheatear nest in lava fields, stone walls and craters.

Other land birds are the resident Gyr Falcon and Rock Ptarmigan, and the migrant Merlin and Short-eared Owl.

Midges

The midges at Mývatn (which means Midge Lake in Icelandic) and the River Laxá are the mainstay of the local birds' existence. If the midges were absent, there would be far fewer birds. The larvae of non-biting chironomid midges live in the lake itself; they develop in the mud on the lake bed and live on diatoms and decaying organic matter. Black fly larvae, on the other hand, attach themselves to rocks in the River Laxá and feed on passing debris. Only the black fly bites; chironomids simply irritate people, livestock and birds by flying into their noses, eyes and ears.

JÓH



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BIRDWATCHING IN PARADISE

Birding sites around Lake Mývatn

Mývatn is a shallow and highly fertile lake with powerful fresh water springs and extensive areas of geothermal heat. Invertebrates thrive in the lake and they provide the food for the huge number of birds living in the area.

Mývatn is one of the best known birdwatching sites in Iceland and is also a Ramsar site. Fifteen species of ducks breed regularly at Mývatn and the River Laxá, and there are few places in the world with such a diversity of breeding wildfowl. Barrow's Goldeneye is the area's flagship species and the greatest density of breeding Harlequin Duck in the world is found in the upper

reaches of the River Laxá; these species breed nowhere else in Europe but Iceland. The same is true of the Great Northern Diver, which also breeds at Mývatn. Other species which breed at Mývatn include Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Red-throated Diver, Horned Grebe, Gyr Falcon, Merlin, Rock Ptarmigan, various waders, including large a population of Red-necked Phalarope, Black-headed Gull, Arctic Tern, Short-eared Owl and Eurasian Wren. Almost 120 species have been recorded at Mývatn.

Take a Tour from Reykjavíð

Let's take a tour clockwise around Mývatn, approximately 35 km by road, and visit a few of the best birdwatching sites. Just below the old hotel at Reykjavíð is a pretty stretch of the lakeshore with a number of small islets. Horned Grebes breed commonly here and various dabbling ducks can be seen here too—sometimes Northern Shovelers are present. It is a very pleasant place to go birdwatching.

Just south of the village of Reykjavíð, there is a bay called Helgavogur. The bay is ice-free

in the winter and often attracts large numbers of birds at that time of year. In winter the water often gives off a lot of steam owing to the presence of geothermal heat and it sometimes makes for an impressive sight. In winter it is one of the main sites for dabbling ducks at Mývatn; in summer all species of dabbling duck which breed in Iceland can be found here, including the rarest, the Northern Shoveler. Other species breed here, including several pairs of Horned Grebe, and waders and gulls can often be seen on spits of land jutting out into the bay.

The Dry Rocks of Dimmuborgir

Dimmuborgir is a special place. Apart from the lava formations and bizarre landscape, the bird life here differs from elsewhere around the lake. It is a very dry place and cliff-nesting birds such as the Common Raven, Merlin and Gyr Falcon all breed here. Redwing and Eurasian Wren are conspicuous in the scrubland.

At Höfði, there are native birch woodlands with patches of rowan, and numerous introduced species have been planted. There

are a variety of birds, with a range of passerines, including Eurasian Wren, Redwing, and Common Redpoll. In the bay to the north of Höfði there are large numbers of ducks and Barrow's Goldeneye breeds in the lava formations; there is often a great commotion in the spring when the females are fighting over the best nesting sites and chase each other around and are then joined by the males.

Around the Klasar Rock Pillars

Along the shore at Ytrivogar there is a path leading to the Klasar rock pillars, which must feature on every second postcard of Mývatn. There are various birds along this path, including Horned Grebe which breeds

in the reeds right by the path, and a range of breeding ducks. There are often a lot of birds at Birtingarjörn, on the other (eastern) side of the road but unfortunately there is nowhere to stop the car to watch them.

Lake Stakhólstjörn forms part of the protected area around the pseudocraters at Skútustaðir. The islet in the lake is home to nesting Great Northern Divers. You can often hear the haunting call of the divers on beautiful spring and summer evenings.

Kritartjörn is separated from the lake by a long, narrow spit of land. To the south and west there are large expanses of sedge, which are home to Horned Grebes and numerous dabbling ducks. There are often lots of Whooper Swans here and at Álftagerði, near Skútustaðir, the bay is often teeming with birds.

A Parade of Harlequins

The River Laxá in the Mývatn area is one of the best known breeding sites for Harlequin Duck in the world. Food is plentiful and the birds dive to the bottom of the river to catch black fly larvae. It is also one of the best sites for brown trout fishing in Iceland.

In years when there is little food in the lake itself but there are still plenty of black flies, lots of other birds come to the river. Barrow's Goldeneye raise their young here and the river hosts plenty of other ducks.

On the western side of the lake from Vagnbrekka to Neslandavík there are numerous good sites for birdwatching. The road closely follows the lakeshore. As this is a protected breeding area from May to July, it is not recommended that you leave your car or walk around here—it is much better to watch the birds from your car. There are often flocks of dabbling ducks, diving ducks, Great Northern Divers, geese, Horned Grebes, waders, gulls and Arctic Terns here. The western shore is the best place to find Common Scoters at Mývatn. It is less common on the eastern shore but can be found there too.

The bird museum at bay Neslandavík is one of the best birdwatching sites at Mývatn. A flock of several dozen Whooper Swans moult there and in late summer you can find hundreds, if not thousands, of ducks on the bay. Horned Grebe, geese, ducks and various other birds breed around the bay. **JÓH**



Drakes Barrow's Goldeneye fighting for territory



A pair of Horned Grebes feeding young



A male Tufted Duck taking off



A male Harlequin Duck in current



A pair of Horned Grebe in courtship dance



Great Northern Diver calling



An aggressive Long-tailed Duck drake



THE MAGICAL MYSTERY

Lake Mývatn and the surrounding areas will never cease to amaze you

The breathtaking beauty of the Lake Mývatn area is unique. It has been created by volcanic eruptions and seismic activity throughout the ages – and sculpted by wind and rain, ice and snow. It is the ultimate creation of Fire and Ice.

It is beautiful during the light nights of summer with the lake mirroring the rays of the midnight sun sweeping around the mountain tops. It is beautiful during the dark days of winter, with natural snow sculptures forming and constantly reshaping, giving the landscape the illusion of dancer-like movements in the perpetual Northern Lights.

Dancing lights

Lake Mývatn and the surrounding areas are the one place in Iceland protected by the highlands from the harsh northern winds and wet southern winds thus retaining relative tranquility all year round and giving the blissful Northern Lights free reign. No matter where or how you move around the area, magical lights are always within reach. You can chase them on horseback, on skis, on skates or snowmobiles, but you'll never catch them. They will just change their form or colour, their playfulness filling you with delight.

The real treat is to sit in the warmth of the Mývatn Nature Baths with geothermal water drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres, gazing at the Northern Lights' movement across the sky. Or, you can go on an highland tour on snowmobiles towards Askja, to find out where the lights and the land meet.

Due to the extraordinary display of the nature, all the tourist services around Lake Mývatn are open all year around. Hotels and restaurants, swimming pools



© Johann Oli Himarsson



© Þorgeir Gunnarsson

and nature baths provide excellent service for tourists.

And guess what! In Dimmuborgir by Lake Mývatn, the Yule Lads can be found.

The Yule Lads

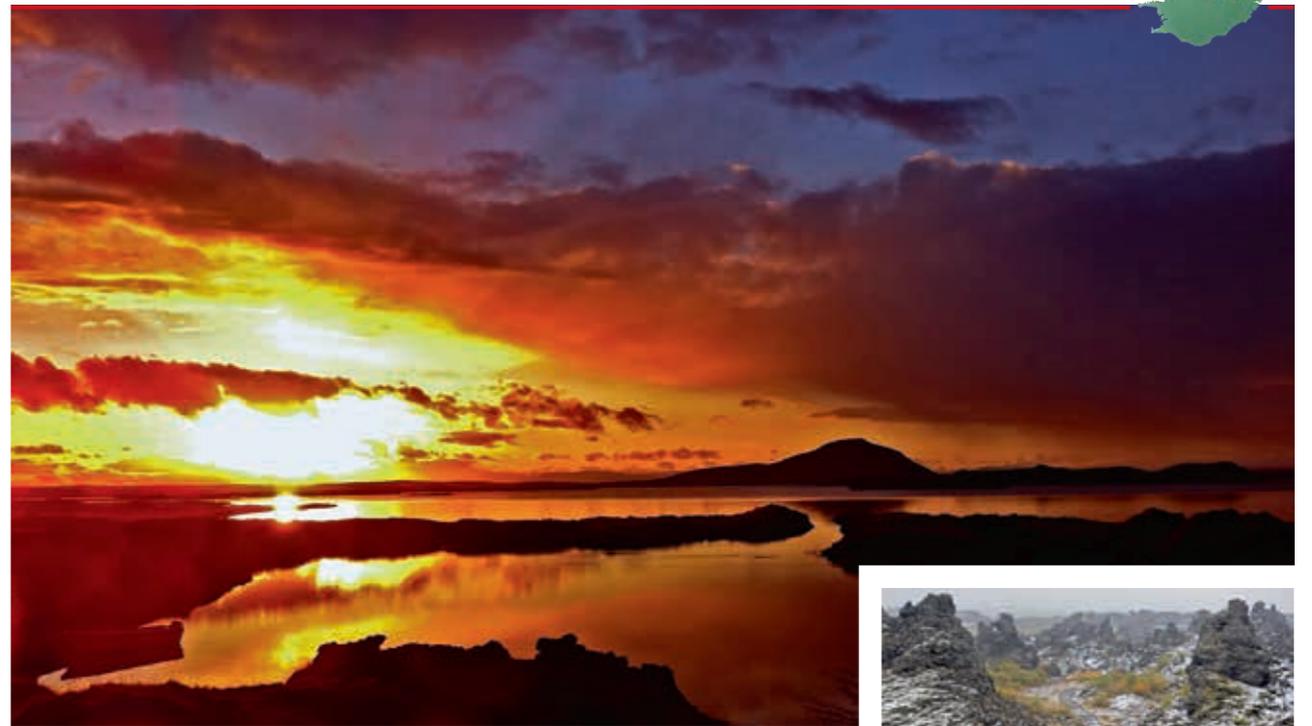
Thirteen days prior to Christmas the thirteen Yule Lads start descending from the mountains – one each night. The sons of the ancient, vicious trolls, Grýla and Leppalúði, the kind lads decided to leave home and settle in Dimmuborgir. There they found their perfect home and during the month of December they receive visitors every day between 13.00 and 15.00. Furthermore, during the first December Saturday, all 13 brothers come for their annual Christmas bath in the Mývatn Nature Bath. Be sure to join this raucous lot at the baths on that exact day for a lot of fun and laughter.

Horse riding on Ice

This winter celebrates the 10th Anniversary of the horse riding competition held on the frozen Lake Mývatn on 23rd February. No wonder this part of the island is so popular with tourists visiting Iceland. -SS



© Johann Oli Himarsson



DIMMUBORGIR GUESTHOUSE

Sharing the secrets of the illustrious Lake Mývatn

Lake Mývatn is one of the absolute highlights of any visit to Iceland, but due to its fragile ecosystem, access to the lake is somewhat limited. The family-run Dimmuborgir Guesthouse has however, built up their business on the age-old traditions of fishing and farming by the lake shore, giving its visitors unparalleled access to the lake—with breath-taking sunsets in the spring and Northern Lights in the winter.

The owners of Dimmuborgir Guesthouse have taken special care to integrate Mývatn's history and nature into their operations. "We realise that people come here because of the unique nature, so we've placed special emphasis on accommodating those demands," says Helgi Héðinsson, manager of Dimmuborgir. "We want to provide our guests with a comfortable and relaxed home base which reflects the landscapes and culture they're in. Our cottages are therefore placed with optimal views in mind, privacy, tranquillity and giving visitors free access to the lake's beaches," Helgi says.

Being a family business, visitors are given a unique perspective to the area, as the family knows all there is to know and are extremely willing to share this information. Safeguarding Mývatn's history, the family at Dimmuborgir Guesthouse still operate an over 50 year-old smokehouse where fishermen would 'cook' their catch from the lake and guests are thus treated to locally smoked trout at the breakfast buffet.

Birdwatcher's Haven

Mývatn is famous for its extremely diverse birdlife and rare birds in Iceland such as the Horned Grebe, Gyrfalcon, the Great Northern Diver and the Barrow's Goldeneye can all be found in close proximity to the guesthouse. "We've seen nests only a few metres from the house and the Barrow's Goldeneye and Horned Grebe are seen almost every day during the spring and summer, right in front of the breakfast hall. This summer during a guided walk we came within five metres of a curious falcon,



which is an extremely rare occurrence although the falcons are frequently found close by. Furthermore, we've recently constructed a platform which overlooks the lake, making it one of the best bird watching spots available," says Helgi.

Open in Every Season

Northern Iceland's prime attractions are all within easy reach from Lake Mývatn—be it nature baths, volcanoes, waterfalls, fishing towns and of course the volcanic rock formations which the guesthouse is named after.

Lake Mývatn is no less enjoyable during the winter than in the summer. "In fact all the attractions and activities people associate with summer are just as enjoyable during winter, but with a different character. In fact, due to the area's low rainfall and northern latitude it is one of the best and most beautiful locations for enjoying the northern lights. There's really no need to chase after them, you can just enjoy them within the comforts of our windowed lounge area," Helgi concludes.

-VAG



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WINTERLAND WONDERS

Enjoy Mývatn's total winter transformation at Hótel Reyhlið

Winter is cold—and often miserable in most countries of the Northern Hemisphere. In England, for example, the damp and cold seep into your bones and bitter rains soak you to the skin.

Now, Iceland is different. It is further north, for sure—but in this case, that's an advantage. Surrounded by the Gulf Stream, the winters are not nearly as severe as most of Europe.

Winter without Pain

Winter offers so much that's enjoyable, inspiring and awesome. The cold is dry and crisp—especially around Lake Mývatn in Northern Iceland. The snow doesn't turn to a wretched, wet slush that soaks your shoes and socks...and feet. It's crisp and powdery. The air is clean. There's no pollution here—just pristine beauty.

If you're thinking of a holiday or taking your company on an incentive trip, this is the trip everyone will be talking about for years to come with brightness in their eyes. It's an experience difficult to effectively portray in words, but let's give it a try.

Lights in the Sky

Nights are not pitch black but are lit almost every night by a display of Northern Lights sweeping across the sky in an endless dance of swirling colour, beautifully offset by crisp white snow. Warm clothes are a must, of course, but you don't need to worry about the cold. You can even stand outside in a sweater to enjoy the night. This year, the Northern Light cycle reaches its peak. There won't be such an opportunity to enjoy them so much for over a decade to come.

Ride on the Lake, Snow and Mountains

This area has so many features that people travel across the world to visit it. Winter just adds a new dimension to the activities that are possible. It's the driest and stillest part of Iceland. The lake freezes hard—so hard that you can enjoy the thrill of horse-riding on the ice. These beautiful animals are known for their friendliness and good disposition—along with their enjoyment of giving you a smooth ride over practically any surface.

Recently, go-karts have taken to the ice, too, in a thrilling drive on special tyres. Others like to try hiking across the lake or mountains on snowshoes or skis.

This is a birdwatcher's paradise, whatever the time of year, offering new ways to enjoy the birdlife, with photo opportunities everywhere.



Hot in a Frozen world

During spring and summer, nearby Dettifoss waterfall, the most powerful waterfall in Europe pours over 600 cubic metres of water per second into the canyon below it. In winter, it is equally awesome—especially when silenced into a frozen ice monolith. SuperJeeps and snowmobile tours, crossing this volcanic terrain are another thrilling day's excursion to several such sites. You can also see the massive cracks in the rocks caused by the movement of the tectonic plates and stand on two continents just a short walk from the hotel.

Not everything is cold, however. Volcanos surround Mývatn, leaving plenty of hotspots and fascinating features. There's no memory to beat swimming in a natural geothermal, mineral-rich, hot pool in the middle of the snow. Your body is so warm from the water that you don't feel the cold.

Catering for Body, Mind and Spirit

Because of the area's pure conditions in winter, it can do wonders for the body, mind, soul and spirit. Hótel Reyhlið, for example, besides arranging all the activities above, also runs a Health and Wellness Programme that has become very popular, adding a practical and spiritual aspect to your holiday.

It brings its 4-star rating to every aspect of its service. Just take a look at the reviews in TripAdvisor.com and you get the picture.

What about fun when you're in the depths of the countryside, if being surrounded by snow, steam, ice, geothermal hot pots, horses and SuperJeeps isn't enough? You have to get to know the Yule Lads in nearby Dimmuborgir if you come before Christmas.

Hótel Reyhlið was the only hotel in Mývatn, providing weary travellers in their arduous trek between Akureyri and the



villages of the East with rest, refuge and sustenance in the last century. Today, it boasts a good restaurant with an extensive menu and a nice bar to relax in after a day's activities. Its experienced staff are very knowledgeable and will be happy to help you get the best from your visit—and your visit will be your best, too.

-ASF

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MEMORIES OF A COUNTRY CHILDHOOD

Growing up in one of the oldest Settlement areas



© Andrew Fortune



© Ragnar Þoresteinsson



© Ragnar Þoresteinsson



Have you ever wondered what it is like to live in a remote valley, far from the city? Margrét Hólm Valsdóttir shares the experience that shaped her life.

It was May, 1976 and I was 8 years old. I was excited and a bit nervous. We were moving from the small town of Akureyri to the valley where my father oversaw the generators at the hydroelectric power station at the head of the Aðaldalur valley.

Summer

The summer was very hot, so we were outside every day. The sun never went down. There was no school, so we had lots of fun the whole time. I celebrated my 9th birthday there. There were lots of flies in June, but they never came inside. The fish and the birds live on them, so we had lots of fish and birds that year. It was beautiful.

The river came rushing into the valley from the mountains. After the power station it flows to the Arctic Sea. There were lots of trout in the river, so we fished and played by the water.

Autumn

In early September, the farmers brought the sheep down from the mountains. They were all mixed together from different farms, so they are brought to the 'réttir', where they are all divided up. It's a big celebration and lots of fun as we all helped to sort out whose sheep were whose. There was no school until after the réttir, so my new friends and I would play in the valley. We would eat dinner at whichever house we were closest to—and would often sleep there, too. It was over 15 km across the valley and yet, we were all like a big family.

When school started, there were 15 in my class: 10 boys and 5 girls. Today, there are about 40 children in the whole school. The farming dictated our school life, however. For instance, in 1979, the summer was bad but the weather improved in October, so the farmers had to harvest then. The school was closed so everyone could help bring in the harvest before the storms began and the snow buried everything in a pristine white. Also, there were never any meetings between 5 and 7pm because that was milking time.

We children grew up learning to take responsibility for the animals and our siblings. We helped with the work, too. There was no crime—our education in life taught us to be well-rounded. We learnt respect for our surroundings, the people and our friends and family.

When one of the animals was sick, we would fight for its life, so we learned to value life.

Sometimes, teenagers with problems from Reykjavik and other big towns were sent to live in the valley with a family and it would have a healing effect on them, changing their lives.

Life was so beautiful: the nature, the valley itself, the people; all together they created the best experience growing up. When you needed it, all the community was there to help.

Winter

Living at the head of the valley, we didn't need pictures on our walls as the big picture windows gave us the best views we could want. In winter, the snows were offset by the Northern Lights. We were so used to seeing them, we didn't think anything of it when they appeared.

Snowstorms are common in the northern winters. Sometimes, the river providing the water to the power station would freeze, damaging the generators. The electricity from the power station was used all across the valley but it often broke down, leaving the houses without light and heat. Everyone had candles but it got cold if there was a long power cut. The farmers would hook up their tractors to run the pumps to milk the cows.

Communal Life

My mother started working in the little store that served as a community meeting place, too. It was a general store that seemed to have almost everything but sometimes, we would have to get some things from the town of Húsavík or even Akureyri. What today is an hour trip could take over 2½ hours over heavily rutted gravel roads in snow and ice, so we didn't make that trip more often than necessary! The mountain road would often be closed anyway.

The old phones were communal. If you phoned someone, the others could listen, too. In the early 70's, black and white televisions reached the valley. Programmes were shown only a few hours a day. On Sundays, at 4 o'clock, we all watched 'Little House on the Prairie'. Colour TV's didn't arrive until 1980. When neighbours bought a VHS video machine in the same year, everyone went to watch.

It was not always easy, but I had a wonderful childhood—a childhood that shaped my life in a beautiful way. I'll forever be thankful for that move to the valley.

Today, Margrét is married, with two children, to a farmer by Lake Mývatn, where she is also a manager at the Reynihlíð Hotel.

-ASF



LOGHOUSE LIFE NEAR THE LAKE

Bread from the Earth, Dinner with the Cows at Vogafjós

Eat dinner in a cowshed with bread dug up from the ground? Are you serious? Is this some strange Icelandic joke? Not at all! The Cowshed restaurant is a unique idea in Mývatn, where they serve bread baked in a geothermal oven at the hot springs nearby.

Recognising that visitors needed a place to eat when visiting Mývatn, the farmers at Vogafjós built a farmhouse, with the cowshed on one side of it and a beautiful restaurant with picture windows overlooking the farm and the lake. You can see the cows through windows into the cowshed—milking cows and calves of different ages.

Many people enjoy the experience of meeting the cows up close—and especially, the baby calves. The animals respond to the affection and clearly enjoy the experience, too.

The restaurant provides very wholesome and natural meals in the beautiful environment of the Mývatn lake. You can have wines or spirits from their collection. On the walls are implements and equipment from the farm's history. The surrounding stone walls outside are made from lava painstakingly picked up from the fields to allow for cultivation.

Fancy Fish Skin Shoes

In recent years, a company in North Iceland perfected the tanning of fish skin. As a result, it has been made into many different distinctive fashion items. There is a small boutique at the restaurant, with handmade fish skin items, accessories and shoes. The designer is the oldest daughter on the farm, who studied Footwear design at the London College of Fashion. She now

focuses on creating sustainable high fashion accessories and shoes under her label HALLDORA, inspired by the magnificent nature of the Lake Myvatn area. The fish skin is surprisingly strong and very long-lasting.



Live in a Loghouse

The Vogafjós Guesthouse, run by the same farming family, consists of 3 log houses that can accommodate up to about 60 people. The rooms all have private bathrooms and the houses are set in the copse just across the road from the restaurant.

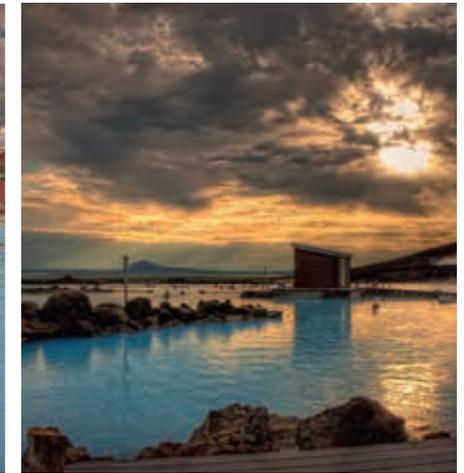
From here, it is easy to get to popular spots like Dimmuborgir and Dettifoss. In winter, before Christmas, you can meet the Yule Lads and see the mighty power of Dettifoss waterfall silenced. There are also many different activities from SuperJeep tours to horse riding on the ice.

-ASF

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Myvatn Naturebath

Experience Relax Enjoy



Myvatn Naturebaths

Enjoy a relaxing visit to the Naturebaths. Begin with a relaxing dip in clouds of steam rising up from fissures deep in the Earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water, drawn from depths of up to 2500 meters. Myvatn Naturebaths is perfect for those who enjoy close contact with nature and want to relax their body and soul in the warm natural waters, overlooking the scenery of Lake Myvatn and the volcanic crater of Hverfjall.

Restaurant

Kaffi Kvika or "Magma Café", is the newest addition at the Naturebaths. Our guests can enjoy light meals, drinks and sweets in a beautiful setting with great view over the area.

Opening hours:

Summer - June, July, August - 09:00-23:30
 Winter - September- May - 12:00-21:30

Lake Myvatn

The region is one of Europe's greatest natural treasures. Shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions and seismic activity down through the ages, the landscape around the 36 km² lake is spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife which are also home in summer to the swarms of midges from which the region takes its name.

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THE ENTRANCE TO THE EAST

Quality handcraft at the East Iceland Crossroads

On the banks of Lagarfljót river located in East Iceland, we find the capital of the east, Egilsstaðir. With a population of just over two thousand people, the town of Egilsstaðir can trace its urbanization to a farmer who laid the groundwork for increased commerce and services by constructing a large residential building there at the start of the 20th century. The farmer was confident in his choice of land and predicted ‘the crossroads will be here’, which later proved true.

Magic Happens at the Crossroads

According to old Icelandic folklore, when coming to a crossroads, one should stop and envision what greatness lies ahead and by magic it will all come true.

In the heart of Egilsstaðir, at the busiest crossroads in East Iceland, sits the enchanting Hús Handanna, known for its creative and quality handicraft from around East Iceland. The gallery specialises in selling and promoting East Icelandic quality design, both creative and skilfully made.



Filled with some of the most intriguing designs that East Iceland has to offer, there is a wide selection of paintings, beautiful ceramic products, quality handcrafts made of reindeer skin, reindeer antlers and local woodwork.

While the majority of items come from East Iceland, some of the design work comes from other areas of the country. All beautifully designed and crafted, many items transcend the boundaries between memorabilia and art.

Local food delicacies from Austfirskar Krásir (East Iceland Delicacies) which oversees the production of local artisanal foods, is also featured at Hús Handanna.

East Iceland Delicacies was founded in February 2009 in Egilsstaðir to reinforce the East Iceland food heritage and to combine the forces of those involved in local food production.

Snacking on Souvenirs

Souvenirs in the form of food are a relatively new feature in Iceland. Now every region has their specialities and the variety of those edible keepsakes grows daily.

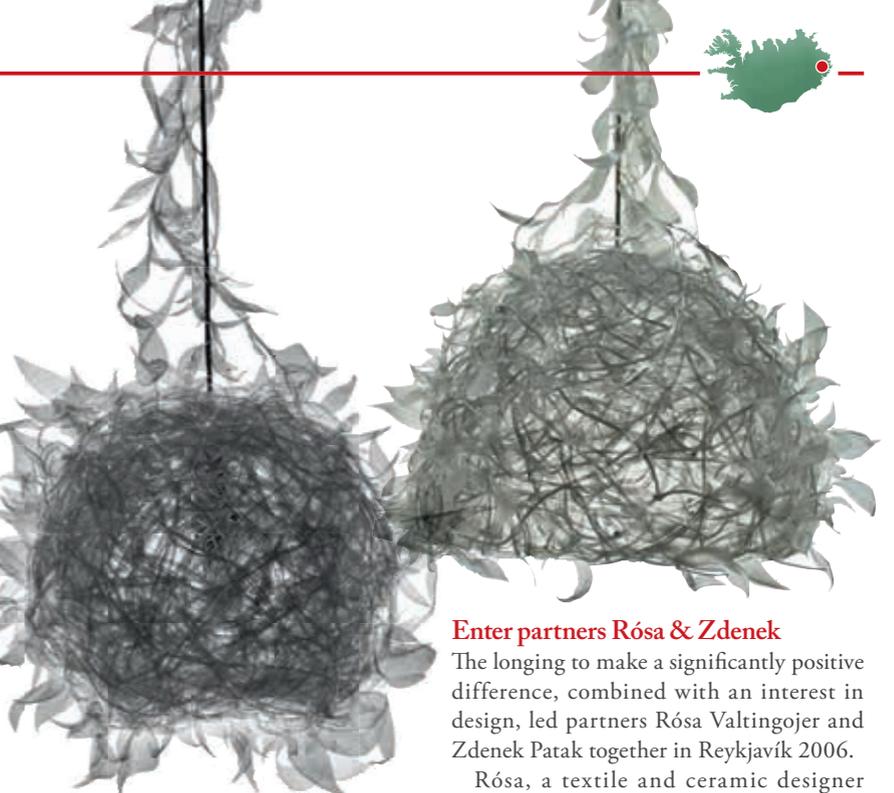
Hús Handanna has quite a few East Icelandic delicacies meant to tickle your taste buds or bring to loved ones for a delicious surprise.

Golden turnip, chutney with apricots and angelica are among these savoury bits and with Austfirskar Krásir offering a wide range of organically grown products, friends and family back home will be able to enjoy their pancakes with Icelandic birch syrup or rhubarb jam and cream while listening to stories about the native elves and trolls.

With attention on the excellence of their products, the gallery of Hús Handanna prides itself on nothing but the best for sale and show. An atmosphere of warmth and creativity welcomes its visitors, while the interiors, displays and installation of the products are expertly done under the supervision of local designers.

Every month sees a special emphasis on one particular artist of the month—as well as the designer of the month—with special focus on their work and often special offers on their creation.

Hús Handanna shares their building with the local Tourist Information Centre, so after enjoying the arts and crafts, visitors are able to find useful information before heading towards another adventure.



Introducing local designers

Born in 1974, Ríkey graduated spring 2003 from the Haandarbejdes Fremmes Seminarium in Copenhagen, majoring in textile and embroidery. Since graduation she has been designing and working effectively on projects under her own name as well as co-designing a successful clothing line for boys, Húnihún.

Ríkey started creating collars in 2006 with the idea of design which would combine both fashion and functionality.

Knowing that jackets and coats can often use a little pizzazz, her beautiful designs around the neck can embellish and completely change an outfit. Inspired by lace and embroidered collars from the Romantic era, Ríkey believes that such mystic femininity adds a great touch to modern style fashion.

Handmade from the finest wool, sometimes mixed with mohair, silk or kashmir, the collars are often decorated with Ríkey's old jewellery from her days travelling the world.

The main decor is recycled vintage lace doilies—usually crocheted or tatted, that the designer dyes, arranges and mixes with embroidery, gems and pearls, giving each and every collar a unique feel.

Tatting is a technique for handcrafting a particularly durable lace constructed by a series of knots and loops. Tatting can be used to make lace edging as well as doilies, collars, and other decorative pieces.

Enter partners Rósa & Zdenek

The longing to make a significantly positive difference, combined with an interest in design, led partners Rósa Valtingoer and Zdenek Patak together in Reykjavík 2006.

Rósa, a textile and ceramic designer originally from East Iceland, introduced graphic designer, Zdenek, to her hometown in Stöðvarfjörður, where they now live and envision future locations for sustainable communities all over Iceland and worldwide.

Designing for, and running Mupimup! Recycled by Design, the couple's design approach is focused on post-consumerism and recycling industrial waste.

An example of their design made from recycled plastic bottles is a beautiful light called Crystalline Globe, Blossoming Flower or 42 PET. (PET referring to material widely used for plastic bottles).

Created from forty-two, two litre plastic bottles, the lampshade is delicately woven into branches that are curled together forming whimsical leaves.

The material is about 400 metres of hand-cut bottles which would take approximately 600 years to decompose in the ground. The inner construction is made out of plexiglass, industrial waste from plexiglass company Plexigler ehf.

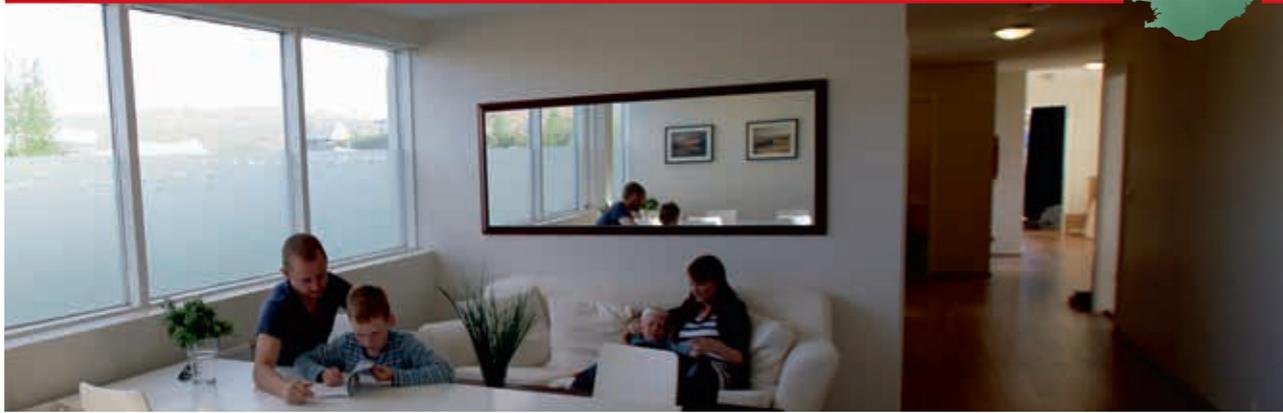
Hús Handanna is definitely a place where magic happens! Welcome to the Entrance to the East!

-SP

Hús Handanna



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NEAT AS A PIN

Egilsstaðir's Lyngás Guesthouse is fresh and clean

Opened in 2010, Lyngás Guesthouse gives guests in Egilsstaðir the option of good quality accommodation at an affordable price. Lyngás is located in the centre of town and has six rooms suited for individuals, couples or groups of up to seven. White walls, accented with bright photos of plant life emphasise clean cut minimalism. All rooms share bathrooms, kitchen, and the living room with free wireless access throughout the guesthouse.



From the start of autumn, guests can get excellent bargains at this clean and modern guesthouse just a few minutes walk from Egilsstaðir's pool and art museum. Guests on a tighter budget can bring their sleeping bag for a reduced price or pay a small fee for the convenience of a made up bed.

Lyngás Gistiheimili

-KB



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AT THE EASTERN CROSSROADS

Egilsstaðir Guest House

Egilsstaðir Guest House, on the shores of Lake Logurinn in the town of Egilsstaðir is a remarkable old world hotel that has been accommodating guests since 1884. Eighteen renovated double rooms, all with en suite bathroom, plus a fine dining restaurant, complete with white linen tablecloths and views overlooking the garden and lake, make this a cosy and romantic choice for an overnight stay or longer.



A Bit of History

The guest house shares sprawling estate grounds with Egilsstaðir Farm, which has been operating continuously for centuries. The town of Egilsstaðir grew up around the farm and eventually became the site of the major crossroads of East Iceland. Today, the farm continues its operations with 70 cows that provide the hotel with all its dairy products, such as milk, skyr, yogurt and cheese, as well as some of the highest quality beef products in Iceland.

The kitchen is overseen by Hulda Danielsdóttir who is fast gaining a reputation for her creative cooking skills and blending of traditional and progressive cuisine, sourcing most of the ingredients either locally or from around East Iceland.

The restaurant prides itself on its beef tenderloin from Egilsstaðir Farm as well as its delectable handmade ice cream and sorbets, both of which come highly recommended.

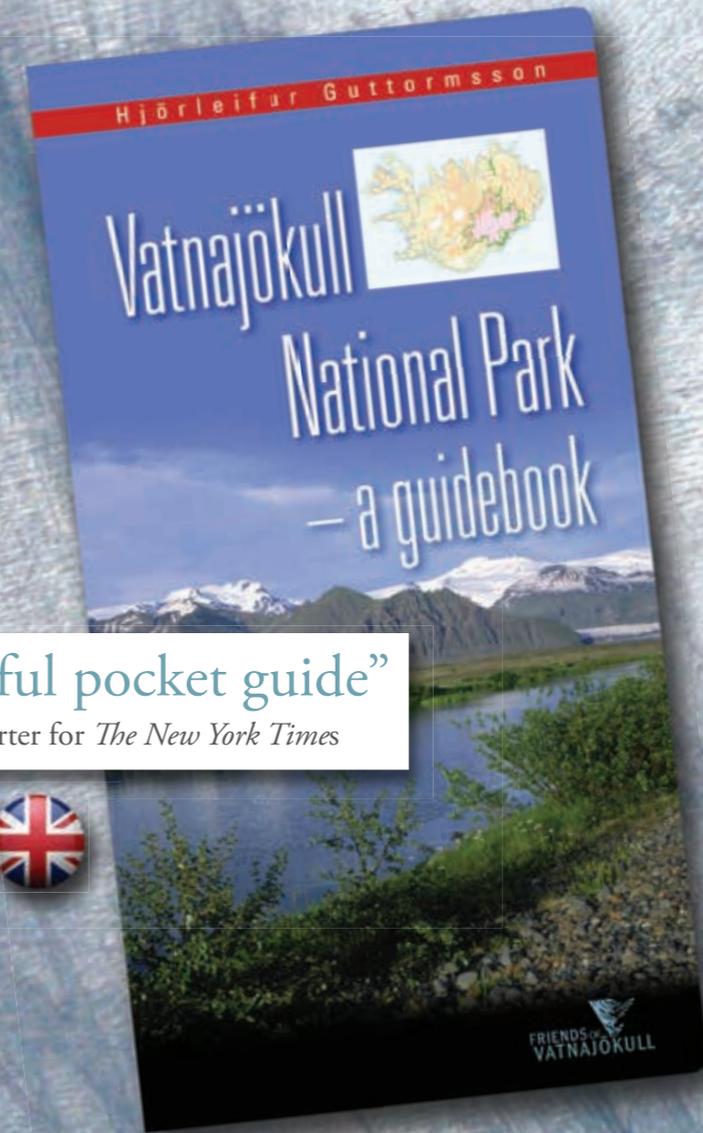
Gistihúsið Egilsstaðir

-EMV



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Whether you want to picnic beside Lake Mývatn or climb the glaciers above Skaftafell Vatnajökull National Park — *A Guidebook* is your ideal companion. The handy little tome provides essential and thorough information about all the best sights in the park. Available in Icelandic, English and German.



“A wonderful pocket guide”

Eric Hansen, reporter for *The New York Times*





THE MYSTERY OF RANDULF'S SEA HOUSE

Mjóeyri Travel Service reveals Eskifjörður, past and present

The saga of Randulf's Sea House is one of the most unusual and remarkable stories in Iceland today. Built in 1890 by the Norwegian fisherman Peter Randulf, the building was used for landing and processing herring, as well as providing fishermen with lodging in the upstairs quarters.

After the demise of the herring era in 1930, the Sea House sat unused and abandoned for almost 80 years. When it was finally opened in 2008, the interior was found untouched and perfectly preserved as if frozen in time. Upstairs, trousers were still hanging on hooks, several pairs of boots were left under the bunk beds and a large collection of letters to loved ones on the continent were discovered. Curiously, no Icelander had ever seen the inside of the building until it was opened in 2008.

Dine back in Time

Mjóeyri Travel Service organises tours and events at Randulf's Sea House, now operating as a restaurant within a museum. Visitors can tour this fascinating building and afterwards enjoy a traditional meal with starters such as fermented shark, dried fish and herring on rye bread, chased by a shot of brennivín. The menu includes dishes made with ingredients from around the fjord. Try the reindeer meatballs with rice and chili sauce or the smoked and cured reindeer with salad and blueberry sauce. Traditional fish, meat soups, and roast East Iceland lamb can also be provided for group lunches or dinners with advanced booking. As a travel service, Mjóeyri offers a wide variety of activities in the area, including boat rental, reindeer watching and/or hunting,



nature hikes and bird watching tours and skiing in winter. Tailor made tours according to your wishes, can be arranged.

Iceland Spar

It has been speculated that the 'sunstone' mentioned in medieval Icelandic texts was Iceland spar and that Vikings used its light-polarizing property to tell the direction of the sun on cloudy days, for navigational purposes. The mineral, known formerly as Iceland Crystal, is noteworthy for its extraordinary properties of double refraction, which was studied at length by prominent scholars such as Christiaan Huygens and Sir Isaac Newton. Intriguing visits to Helgustaðir Cave, where Icelandic spar was mined from the 17th—20th centuries are made possible with Mjóeyri Travel Service, guidance and equipment included.

Mjóeyri Travel's striking summer houses stand tall against the jaw droppingly beautiful background of the setting sun beyond the mountains. Owners Berglind and Sævar welcome you to spend a day, a week, a month on the blissfully tranquil shores of Eskifjörður in East Iceland.

-EMV

Mjóeyri Gistiheimili



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A CLASS FROM THE PAST

Seyðisfjörður's Hótel Aldan surrounds Guests with elegance

When arriving at one of the furthest points in East Iceland, surrounded by magnificent views, one can almost feel the sparks of creativity combined with the peacefulness the area has to offer. Known as something of a trendy place, musicians and artists from all over Iceland and abroad have been attracted to Seyðisfjörður's flourishing cultural scene.

Starry Nights and Stellar Food

Seyðisfjörður's Norwegian-style wooden houses, dating from early 20th century, make the village unique in Iceland. Hótel

Aldan is located in two of those gems, divided into Hótel Aldan and Hótel Snæfell.

Hótel Aldan is in what used to be the bank of Seyðisfjörður for almost a century. Elegantly furnished with antiques imported from Denmark and soft furnishings from India, the bedrooms are the picture of gentle relaxation, especially when guests can cherish the starry night sky from the skylights above their beds.

Several of the rooms boast adjoining sleeping quarters in a recessed alcove, which are sure to be a popular cosy nook for children. Immaculately clean rooms with quality linens and down duvets add a touch of luxury.



IDYLLIC DAYS AT ÞAKGIL

One of Iceland's best kept secrets

Just 15 km off the ring road and 5 km from Vík, lies a small enclosed canyon, sheltered on all sides by steep moss-covered vertical mountains, creating a cosy amphitheatre of sorts. The floor of the canyon is a grassy plain, about the size of a football stadium, which serves as a camping site along with nine recently built, snug pine huts that are also available to rent. Several magnificent day hikes to the nearby Mýrdalsjökull Glacier are possible and in

the evenings, a dining hall set in a large natural cave, replete with cooking grill and a fireplace for warmth, is especially welcoming on cooler summer nights.

An Alternative to Landmannalaugar?

Getting to Þakgil is also part of the adventure itself. You will see all manner of weird and wonderful rock formations, scenic panoramic views that go on forever and even the remains of no less than two

Hótel Aldan also houses the restaurant, a treasure on its own, where traditional lamb and langoustine dishes, as well as fresh fish from the fjord are featured. Many dishes are seasoned with herbs, handpicked from the mountains above the fjord every summer.

Collected specially for the restaurant, these fragrant flowers and herbs give Hótel Aldan's signature dishes their distinctive flair. The classy restaurant is perfect for a romantic autumn evening dinner in elegant surroundings on the edge of the world.

Hótel Snæfell, a more budget option, has total of nine rooms in a charming wooden house from 1908 located at the mouth of the Fjarðará River with views across the fjord.

Recreational highlights include midnight kayaking (in summer only), attempting the challenging 'Seven Peaks Hike', mountain biking, sea angling and bird watching at Skálanes.

-SP

Hótel Aldan



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movie sets, Beowulf and the American television show, Game of Thrones, parts of which were filmed here.

The gravel road is well maintained and an average passenger car can make it all the way to the campsite in about 30 minutes. Þakgil has no trouble competing with the famous Landmannalaugar, where you will find many tourists at the height of the season. If you are short on time, Þakgil is a wonderful way to peek into Iceland's interior and possibly, a great alternative to Landmannalaugar.

-EMV

Tjaldstæðið Þakgili



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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull

Bed down for the night in the heart of the Vatnajökull district at Vagnsstaðir Youth Hostel, just 28 km east of the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Sleeping bag accommodation, linen rental, a well equipped kitchen, dining and lounge areas, as well as 3 fully equipped cottages are offered. There is a campground with good sanitary facilities. The coast, just 1500 m from Vagnsstaðir provides numerous possibilities for scenic walks and bird watching. Maps of the area are available at the hostel.

The weather report was looking good—a full day of sunshine ahead of me and temperatures above 10°C. I was on my way to a face to face encounter with the world's 3rd largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull. This trip would mark a couple of firsts for me—my first time ever to set foot on a glacier, and my first time to travel by snowmobile. Needless to say I was really excited!

I first met Kristján and Bjarney, of Glacier Jeeps, at our pre-arranged meeting place: the crossroads of Route No.1 and F985. This is the official meeting place for all Glacier Jeep summer tours. Glacier Jeeps has years of experience conducting jeep, snowmobile and hiking tours on the glacier since 1994. (Bjarney has been helping run the family business since she was 14 years old.) I parked my car and joined them in their sturdy 4WD which wound its way slowly ever upwards, following the undulating gravel road, which twisted and turned around hairpin bends, past waterfalls and deep canyons. My guides fill me in on the details of the landscape, pointing out how the glacier has crawled across the terrain, devastating everything in its path along with other interesting facts.

Thirty minutes and 830 metres above sea level later, we arrive at Jöklašel, Iceland's highest restaurant and owned by Glacier Jeeps. Jöklašel will serve as our base camp where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

Now it's time to test drive the snowmobiles. I am a little hesitant at first and Kristján shows me the ropes. It looks easy enough but I decide that I prefer to let him drive over the glacier with me sitting safely behind him on this 'skidoo for two', at least until I get a better feel for it. 'Off we go over the wild white yonder, climbing high into the sun' to paraphrase an old song, with cloudless blue skies above us and the wind in our faces. Further along we

stop and dismount, to take in the magnificent panoramic views over the glacier, the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Höfn far below in the distance. I felt like I was on top of the world and it was truly a cause for celebration!

Kristján jokes that we cannot go onwards unless I drive. By now I am feeling a little more sure of myself and agree to give it a try. This time we are off to inspect a massive sheer rock face that rises straight up from the glacier at an elevation of 1200 metres. Finally, our one hour snowmobile adventure comes to an end and it is time to return to Jöklašel for a well deserved bite to eat and a hot drink. The view out the restaurant windows is as one would expect: magnificent.

Glacier Jeeps also offers a hiking tour of the glacier that comes with all the equipment such as safety helmets, climbing irons and ice axe, instruction and a guide, included in the price.

In case you just don't think a strenuous hike or a thrilling snowmobile adventure is for you, then Glacier Jeeps offers an alternative to see the glacier in a comfortable, specially equipped 4WD and is available year round, weather permitting. Each tour is only 3 to 4 hours in total, giving you plenty of time to do other things with your day, even though once you are up there you may not want to come down. Although it's best to book one day in advance, you can also just show up at the crossroads (F985) at either 9.30 am or 2.00 pm and join the tour from there.

Vatnajökull Glacier Jeep tours: a must for your bucket list!

EMV



Glacier Jeeps

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EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE

Hótel Lundi brings eco-aware service to South Iceland

Located in the heart of Vík, surrounded by beautiful landscape, Hotel Lundi is a jewel about 10 minutes walk from Vík's famous black sand beaches. A cosy little hotel, its goal is to ensure you enjoy your stay.

Hotel Lundi provides excellent service and a lovely atmosphere. An eco-conscious hotel, they respect nature and follow environmentally friendly standards in both the hotel and restaurant. Of the 22 double ensuite

rooms, twelve were built in 2011, spacious and beautifully decorated with reference to the astonishing landscape of Vík village and its surroundings. Free wi-fi is available for guests.

The restaurant serves outstanding meals for both lunch and dinner, using only fresh Icelandic fish, eggs, dairy and other high quality ingredients from local farmers. The outcome is delicious traditional Icelandic food with a modern touch.



The restaurant seats up to 75 people and, during high season (June-August), offers an excellent á la carte menu. During low season, a solid selection of home cooked meals is provided. Group menus are available on request all year round, provided they are ordered in advance.

All local services, such as supermarket, swimming pool, information centre and bank, are within walking distance of the hotel.

Hótel Lundi -SP

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

Halldórskaffi -KB

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ÁSÓLFSSKÁLI FARM HOLIDAYS

Living under Eyjafjallajökull Volcano

It's one of those places that is easy to miss if you are rushing along the ring road on Iceland's majestic south coast. Sharing the peaceful location just below Eyjafjallajökull with a handful of

other farms, Ásólfsskáli Farm seems to magically come into focus in a way that you might not expect.

It won the 2011 award for being the most beautiful farm in Rangárthingeystra



county and the honour is wholly fitting for this neat and tidy dairy farm that opened its doors to travellers in 1991.

There are two self-contained cottages that can sleep up to 6 people each and come complete with jacuzzi and gas barbecue, making it an ideal retreat in a picture post-card perfect setting. Visitors are welcome to watch the milking of Ásólfsskáli's 50 cows, hike the foothills along marked trails or visit the picturesque 19th century Ásólfsskáli church that presides over the landscape.

Ásólfsskáli -EMV

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THE OLD COWHOUSE RESTAURANT

Sitting Pretty on Iceland's South Coast

Location wise, The Old Cowhouse Restaurant couldn't be in a more perfect position for feasting your eyes upwards to the misty, craggy, moss-covered peaks of Eyjafjallajökull. It's a welcome addition to Iceland's ever-growing list of new amenities that have been popping up all over the country.

The remodelled former barn easily seats 50 to 60 dinner guests while retaining its unpretentious character and sweet bovine simplicity, making this a thoroughly

enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast.

The menu boasts grass-fed beef, as is the norm in Iceland, coming straight from restaurant's own cattle herds. A hearty and warming meat soup called Volcano Soup, served with homemade bread, is a favourite.

Open year-round, the Old Cowhouse plans monthly events including an October evening of traditional food, a November evening of game (reindeer and geese), a December buffet of traditional Christmas



dishes, as well as musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the year.

For opening hours in winter, please contact The Old Cowhouse Restaurant directly. Large and small groups welcome.

Gamla Fjósíð -EMV

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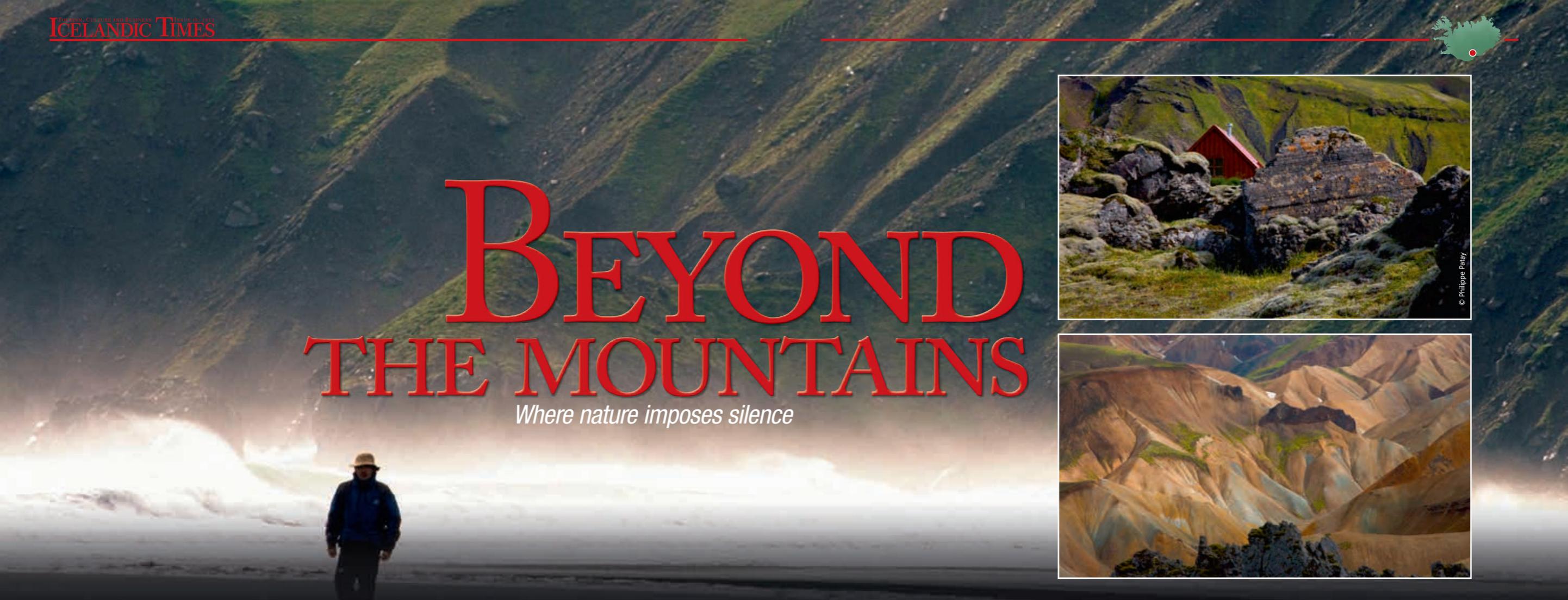


BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS

Where nature imposes silence



© Philippe Patay



Fjallabak means ‘beyond the mountains’ in Icelandic. It’s the name of an old walking route that meanders through a tangle of paths crisscrossing the volcanic highlands of Iceland’s interior. This track is the birthplace of the sport of hiking in Iceland.

Transcendence

If you dream of exploring the great outdoors, observing raw nature and volcanic phenomena, Iceland is undoubtedly one of the best places for this type of adventure. There’s nothing like total immersion to uncover the secrets of this country.

Leave Highway No. 1 behind, go with a professional guide and discover the vast and extraordinary scenery of the interior. Feelings of awe, peace and a sense of revitalization are among the emotions you may feel during your stay and whether you prefer hiking, riding or skiing, a variety of treks to the highlands are possible. Offering a subtle mix of effort and pleasure, highland treks are very conducive to some great encounters, whether via a small group of hikers or with Icelanders themselves.

Travelling is, above all, a way to realise your dreams, to satisfy your curiosity or to keep the nomadic spirit alive, all the while storing visual mementos in one’s heart and soul.

Depending on the time and budget you have available, between one and four weeks are needed to truly discover Iceland and choose the trip that suits you best.

The Fours Seasons Tour

‘The Four Seasons of Iceland’ tour around Iceland is open to all. The approximately 3,000 km route takes 27 days, averaging 125 km per day, with plenty of time for beautiful walks, nature watching and contemplation. It takes into account the climate and seasons, the flora and birdlife.



You can choose to participate in all or part of this tour, join up with it at any point along the way or leave before the end.

Off the Beaten Path

Total immersion in the heart of this unforgettable country is something that is sought out by hikers. There are countless routes in Iceland which, were they in mainland Europe, would be famous hiking trails, well documented and certainly well trod. But here in Iceland, apart from a few arctic foxes and flocks of migratory birds, visitors to them have been few and far between ever since Iceland rose out of the ocean. With the advent of walking as a sport discipline, certain paths have only just been discovered and have become globally known, such as the Laugavegur trail. While well maintained with trail markers and strategically located huts, its raw beauty is just a tantalising taste of the mysterious hidden beauties to be found within Iceland.

Beyond the Mountains

Hike Mount Hekla, one of the most famous volcanos in Iceland or the volcanic highlands of Öraefi along the shores of the Elves’ Mountains on the east of the island—a trek ranked among the 25 most beautiful in the world according to National Geographic. The isolation of the region accompanied by sudden mood swings of the elements require everyone to be in good physical shape. These treks are for adventure purists, contemplative healthy types, free spirits and lovers of the great outdoors who wish to immerse themselves in the raw nature and to discover landscapes that are only barely imaginable. Expeditions on foot or Nordic skis are only for the most hardy and experienced hikers and mountaineers, who delight in pitting their skills against the likes of the sheer slope of a volcanic ridge.

For visitors who hesitate between a trek in a particular area and seeing a broad spectrum of the Icelandic landscape, there

are treks that combine the most beautiful sites of South Iceland with hiking in the remote highlands of the Fjallabak region in centre of the country.

Philippe Patay, founder and director of Fjallabak has lived in Iceland for over 40 years and is one of the trekking pioneers in Iceland. With nearly 30 years of experience leading specialised treks around the country, the Fjallabak team expertly attends to the details of organisation, safety and planning, allowing you to relax and enjoy yourself to the full. Let Philippe, with his team of professional guides, take you on a journey of discovery into Iceland’s vast and remote hinterlands, truly at the ‘end of the world.’

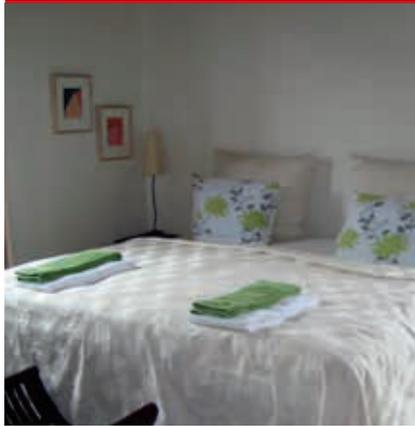
DB/EMV

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SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



WITHIN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Gallerí Guesthouse is surrounded by famous attractions

The small but lively town of Laugarvatn lies within the Golden Circle, created by Thingvellir, Geysir, and Gullfoss. The centrally located Gallerí Bed & Breakfast was begun by owners Thuriður and Joel after their children had flown the nest; the three extra bedrooms 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, Eyjafjallajökull and Hekla are clearly visible.

Gallerí's knack for handicrafts is apparent in light fixtures made by Thuriður and small decorations scattered throughout the rooms. The Gallerí gift shop is where Thuriður and Joel's artistry shines, allowing travellers to take home a small piece of Icelandic design. Joel and Thuriður extend an invitation to their guests to come along and find out the secret to their tasty

bread, baked in a natural hot spring close to Geysir. The bread is served along with slices of salmon each day at Gallerí's café. Gallerí Guesthouse is open year round.

Gallerí Laugarvatn



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-KB



DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS

Caving with Laugarvatn Adventure

The mouth of Gjáðakkahellir cave 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.

All Laugarvatn Adventure guides have had over a decade of experience in caving and can navigate through almost any of these caves. Tours vary in difficulty from Gjáðakkahellir'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 are professional cavers and are active members of the Icelandic Search and Rescue Team. Children over five can go on some of the easier tours, while adults tackle the challenge of rock climbing on Thingvellir's craggy cliffs or crawling through a small hole at the opening of

'Litli Björn' cave. Tours are offered daily from May through August with a two person minimum necessary for departure.

Laugarvatn Adventure



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-KB



A TASTE OF WILD AND SWEET

Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro

Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro, located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, stands on a firm foundation of culinary excellence that has attracted patrons from around the world. Owner and head chef, Baldur Öxdal Halldórsson trained at the Culinary Institute of America in New York in 1986–1987, and received training as a pastry chef at the prestigious Richemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988–1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert.

After his training abroad was completed, Baldur began something of a culinary revolution in Reykjavik, working at many of the top hotels and restaurants, creating spectacular and sophisticated desserts that were hitherto unknown in the capital.

Mecca of Icelandic wild game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which is known as the 'Mecca of Icelandic wild game', priding itself on its year round menu

featuring only wild caught fish and seafood, game and lamb. Exotic dishes like grilled reindeer and cormorant with wild mushroom sauce and arctic char tartare with coconut sauce are featured on the menu. Always ahead of his game, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his bilberry skyr mousse with crow berries and rhubarb.

Only the freshest

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients—not too difficult a task when you are located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt' where he can take his pick of the choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil and red and black currants.



The Verdict

Taking our coffee and dessert out on the spacious terrace overlooking a lush lakeside garden, no less than 2 famous volcanoes, Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull were both visible on the eastern horizon. The setting was magical, the coffee, among the best we've tasted in Iceland and the chocolate mousse... was, well...simply divine.

In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, beside the natural steam baths and pool at Fontana Spa. The 45 min scenic drive from Reykjavik takes you through enchanting landscapes between Geysir and Gullfoss and Thingvellir, making this an excellent day trip in one of the most scenic areas of Iceland. Check the opening times on the website.

-EMV



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ANOTHER TASTE OF ETHIOPIA

Ancient African Cuisine in Upcountry Flúðir

Flúðir is possibly one of the best locations in Iceland for an Ethiopian restaurant. Ethiopians are famous for their fasting 150 days a year, which means they are not allowed to eat any kind of meat. With Flúðir being one of the largest green-house areas in Iceland, the access to vegetarian ingredients has to be the best. Even when serving the traditional Ethiopian chicken and beef dishes, the plates are loaded with very fresh vegetables.

The owners of Minilik, Flúðir are Árni Hannesson and Aseb Kahssay and the restaurant was opened in June 2011. It has proved to be popular, especially with tourists and the locals are catching on, too, warming to this exotic and wonderful food with locally grown vegetables and imported Ethiopian herbs and spices. Chicken and beef come from Icelandic stocks.

One cannot enter an Ethiopian restaurant without getting acquainted with their lovely

coffee ceremony and at Minilik, Flúðir it is a real treat as the Ethiopians are second to none when it comes to coffee.

The restaurant can seat 25 diners and also serves as a take-away. And, if you are staying in a summerhouse near Flúðir, you can also order their splendid dishes for both large and small parties.

As Minilik, Flúðir is a small restaurant, be sure to book your table ahead.

Minilik Restaurant -SS



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HIGH ADVENTURE

Adrenalin—High Rope Adventure

Fly high in a swing or challenge yourself ten metres above the ground while staying in a magnificent environment of geological wonders. This is 'Adrenalin—High Rope Adventure' at Nesjavellir Rift Valley for you.

Situated a short distance from the capital area, this entertaining fun park offers you a

great chance to pump some adrenalin round your body—whether you prefer to do it one, five or ten metres above the ground.

Each obstacle course has its own characteristics. In some, you are climbing between tyres, in another, you are walking a thin line and yet another, taking one step

at a time over a quite unstable bridge. And there's no need to worry: safety is a priority at Adrenalin and the staff is highly trained in security measures. Once you start to trust the line you're fastened to, you will forget the height and lose yourself in the experience!

This highly entertaining adventure park is a great choice to do something fun with your family on your way to Thingvellir National Park or the Golden Circle or if you want to add yet another element to your nature experience and adrenaline activities in Iceland.

Adrenalingarðurinn -NHH



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EAT AT THE SOURCE

Dine on Delicious Langoustines at Eyrarbakki's Rauða húsið

A visit to Iceland is not complete without a visit to the birthplace of the Icelandic lobster industry. Here, you can indulge in a feast of the finest Icelandic seafood at the Rauða húsið (Red House) restaurant, found in the picturesque seaside village of Eyrarbakki. In this beautiful red house, a short drive from Reykjavik, langoustines are served in a charming atmosphere amidst a rich and well-preserved history. Now a tranquil village, Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900's and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere. Iceland

was late to discover this seafood delicacy. Lobster fishing was born off the shores of Eyrarbakki in 1954. In fact, it was not till then that the langoustine was discovered to be not only edible, but delicious, too!

Care is taken to maintain the sense of history within the restaurant. The red house boasts beautiful original wooden floorboards dating back to 1919. If you arrive by noon, a hearty bowl of langoustine soup or a light seafood salad sets you up for the day. Choose an evening of indulgence and you can savour the Catch of the Day, consisting of three different seafood dishes. 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, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients. Enjoy a walk around the village either before or after a meal at the Rauða húsið.

The walk could continue along the beautiful black beaches only few minutes away from the village. A relaxing stroll by the water makes the visit complete.

Rauða Húsið -ASF



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- In Reykjavík Eyjaslóð 7, by the harbor**
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 Phonenumber: 858 5908
- In Reykjavík Áliabakka 12 at Mjódd**
 Charity shop open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays 13-18
 Opening soon!





THE ICELANDIC SHEEP

Strong and hardy, Icelandic Sheep contributed to the nation's survival



Sheep. They seem to be everywhere, wandering freely all over the mountains and highlands as if they own the country. They are one of the most common animals in Iceland.

Icelandic sheep are so called short-tailed animals, an ancient Nordic Breed which was formerly common in the north part of Western Europe, but now only found in a few areas of the world. It is a strong, hardy breed which has adapted well to Icelandic conditions.

The Icelandic sheep is special in many ways. Part of the breed is called 'leader sheep' and possesses unique qualities, not found in any other sheep breed in the world. Many stories have been told of their rescuing both men and other sheep from danger.

Around 1980, there were about 10 times more sheep than people in the country or around 2,000,000 sheep (including the summer lambs) and 226,948 inhabitants. The number has now been reduced by almost half, because of overgrazing in some cases but also market developments.

In former times, sheep were allowed to graze freely all year round, even in winter. This had disastrous effects when the climate became cooler. The interaction of natural

forces: water, wind, fire and ice, as well as the encroachment of men and animals has, in the course of time, disturbed the layer of surface vegetation. When destroyed, a chain reaction of soil erosion begins which is difficult to stop. This shows how hard the struggle for survival has been in Iceland. The sheep has been called one of the keys to survival the country in the old times. The animals could survive on winter grazing, and the people fed themselves on their meat and milk and made warm clothes from the wool.

Since the last decades of the 20th century, steps have been taken to fight erosion by reforestation, reseeding and other programmes to protect sensitive areas from overuse by men and animals. Government regulation now prohibits unsustainable use of land. One of these steps has been to reduce the number of sheep so now there are 475,000 adult sheep in the country or 1,100,000, including the summer lambs.

Lambing Time

The mating season is in December. The farmer registers the individual matings, and their dates. So when the lambing season starts, he can look into his book to see who



their father is and on which dates his lambs are due. It's important to know the date of delivery so that he can keep the mother indoors when she gives birth and to be able to shelter the newborns on their first days. Each farmer has a special earmark, cut into one of the lamb's ears soon after its birth.

This traditional book-keeping method would make it easy for farmers to provide a genealogical tree of the meat you are purchasing! Today, the lambs are also tagged with modern plastic eartags.

Nowhere else in the world are sheep bred by this method because in most countries the sheep simply have their lambs outdoors and no one knows anything about their genealogy.

The lambs are born in May and stay with their mothers all summer long. After the first few days indoors, they graze on grass fields on the farm for 3-4 weeks. Then they are sent out to graze the hills and mountain pastures all over the country, running free until the middle of September, feeding on the rich and nourishing vegetation. During the intervening time, the farmer harvests the hay to feed his sheep during the winter. Only about 1% of Iceland is cultivated. This means that most of the grass and plants the sheep feed on is wild.



The Réttir (Round-up)

Farmers gather their flocks in the autumn. Systematically, they round up the sheep all over the country. There is practically no place in the wilderness of the highlands of Iceland where sheep cannot be found during the summer—except maybe on the glaciers. The round-up is conducted on horseback or on foot with the assistance of sheepdogs. The entire process may take up to a week and, during this time, participants stay overnight in mountain huts, where they pen in the sheep they have gathered so far, then hang up their damp clothes, uncork their hip flasks and swap stories and songs.

When the search is over and all the sheep are accounted for, the fat frisky lambs, ewes and rams are herded down to the lowlands and into a corral called a 'réttir', where they are identified by their earmarks and sorted into the correct pens, belonging to individual farms.

The réttir is a popular event across the country and most Icelanders like to take part in it, be they bureaucrats or bankers, school-children or teachers, sailors or seamstresses. Some travel companies offer foreign travellers the opportunity to participate also.

After the sheep have been herded into the correct pens they are divided up. Those destined for the slaughterhouse are removed from the flock. Those destined to live graze on fields on or near the farm, until November, when they are housed for the winter.

Sheep used to be sheared before they were released to roam the pastures. Nowadays, most farmers shear them in winter when they are indoors, as this wool fetches a higher price.

A Valuable Resource

Wool was one of the country's most important exports during the Middle Ages (along with dried fish, known as stock fish). It became the basis of a valuable export industry again in the 20th century.

The fleece of the Icelandic sheep, which varies in colour from white through grey and browns to near black, is made up of two layers. The inner layer of short, fine fibres, called 'thel' was used for knitting delicate laces, underwear and baby clothes while the coarser, longer, outer fibres, called 'tog' were used for warm and water resistant winter garments. Today the soft spun 'lopi wool' is used in traditionally patterned hand knitted sweaters, the most popular souvenirs from Iceland.

-AMB



TENDER IS THE MEAT

It is Lamb-season in Iceland when the year's fresh meat is celebrated throughout the country

Icelanders love their lamb and autumn is the traditional lamb-season with the 4–5 month-old livestock being slaughtered after roaming the highlands throughout the summer. Closer to game than farm-animals, the meat is exceptionally tender, its texture fine and nutritious enough to have carried many an Icelander, adult and child, through relentlessly harsh winters.

Traditional Quality

When producing high quality meat, you need unpolluted raw materials and Icelandic sheep farmers can guarantee as much.

Sheep farming in Iceland is as old as the settlement of Iceland itself. To this day farmers are rearing their sheep by a method established by centuries of tradition, with most farms still family-owned and operated. The breed is still the same as in the time of the Vikings—sturdy small animals, well adapted to the environment.

The Protective Cold

Much of Iceland's lamb production is simply based on sustainable harvesting of the bounties of nature. The use of hormones is prohibited and antibiotics are strictly regulated. The Icelandic weather,

clean air and an abundant supply of fresh mountain water make the use of pesticides and herbicides unnecessary. The cool climate protects the land against many diseases and pests which plague agriculture in warmer latitudes. Due to Iceland's geographical isolation and agricultural regulation, which prohibits the importing of live animals, many common animal diseases are unknown in Iceland.

The lambs are entirely reared outdoors. Their natural diet of sedge, willow, thrift, mass campion, and berries makes the Icelandic lamb instantly recognizable for its delicious and distinctive taste.



Nutritional Facts

In an environment where consumers are increasingly conscious of their health, food must be safe to eat, pure and nutritious. For these reasons, Icelandic lamb meat is becoming recognised throughout the world for its healthy nutritional value and unique taste. The Icelandic sheep is a direct descendant of the sheep first brought to the island by the Viking settlers. It has not been crossbred by importing other breeds.

The cold climate influences the composition of the plants the sheep graze on. The lambs also move freely through extensive wild pastures in pristine mountainous landscapes. This, and the young age at slaughter (4–5 months), gives the meat unique quality and properties. The average

carcass weighs around 16 kg (35 lbs). The muscle has a high proportion of Omega-3 fatty acids and iron, giving the meat its wild game flavour. The distinctive taste is a result of the wild pastures; the grass and the aromatic and spicy herbs on which the lambs graze.

Some subtle differences have been noted between the flavour of meat from lambs grazing in the highlands, the lowlands, and by the seashore. The meat is very tender and has a fine texture due to its high amount of red muscle fibres, which is influenced both by the breed and its grazing habits. The tenderness is enhanced by electrical stimulation and strict control of chilling rates.

And the best thing about the Icelandic lamb: It is the perfect match to any kind of herbs and spices. **SS**



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