

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

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Christmas in Iceland
An Explosion of Design
Healthy Winter Activities

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ICELANDIC TIMES

The nights are long; the lights are bright and the snow is thick. Excited children gaze at Christmas lights and sing carols whilst mothers prepare for the biggest festival of the year. The smell of freshly-baked bread wafts down the street as the bakers bring out their special Christmas cakes and cookies. On the mountains, skiers of all ages thrill to the challenge of the slopes whilst whales jump alongside sightseeing boats as cameras click on board. All the signs of winter are here.

Since the Crash of 2008 which devastated many lives, there has been a strong resurgence of innovation, especially in the area of design. In one shop alone, 200 designers are displaying compared to only 30 just six years ago. The field of design is revealing both great talent and innovating use of a wide range of materials. In this issue we look at designers in all parts of the country.

The number of visitors to Iceland in winter is growing rapidly, as more people realise that it's as if they are seeing a new country.

Winter activities, from skiing to snowmobiling to cycling, from health spas to hiking to horse riding, from whale watching to glacier jeep tours to Northern Light coach tours provide visitors with a holiday packed with inspiration, energetic exercise and both spiritual relaxation and stress relief.

Iceland's winters are mild compared to much of Europe and North America making it more enjoyable—a pleasant break from home.

This winter brings the climax to the Northern Light cycle. Many tour operators offer special tours to see this fantastic phenomenon. There's not going to be a better time for years to come.

Christmas and New Year are celebrated with all the energy and gusto of a nation a hundred times its size.

Christmas trees adorn squares, illuminating the surrounding area with their lights. The Advent period holds a tradition unlike any other nation. Iceland's own Yule lads come, one after another, on a daily basis. You can see them at the National Museum of Iceland and learn what each does. These are not your genial Father Christmases but the progeny of two ill-tempered trolls who failed to instil any discipline in their children.

Then there is their Christmas cat—bearing no likeness whatsoever to Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer in either character or demeanour.

Christmas is celebrated across the country in homes and churches with a lot of joy and happiness, as is fitting for the Saviour's birth.

New Year's eve is the biggest party of the year, which many come to enjoy from across the world, with massive fireworks displays.

Welcome to winter in Iceland and, on behalf of all the staff of Land & saga, may I wish you a very Happy Christmas and both a prosperous and inspiring New Year.

—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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CHRISTMAS ALL YEAR ROUND

The Holiday Spirit is Preserved in the Little Christmas Shop

While some would argue that Christmas has been overly commercialised and become too fast and impersonal, the Little Christmas Shop on Laugavegur Street is living proof that the spirit of Christmas is being kept alive by those who cherish it.

The Little Christmas Shop was opened over ten years ago and the owner, Anne Helen, says she never gets tired of Christmas, even though the shop is open all year round. "I had always been a bit fanatic about Christmas and over ten years ago, I decided to let my dream come true and open my very own Christmas shop. At first, I operated out of my garage and the initial response was so good that people started showing up at the strangest times to do some Christmas shopping. Then I decided to relocate to the centre of Reykjavik five years ago and it has been my second home ever since."



her search for new and exciting items. "I regularly scour conferences and markets for days on end looking for something unique for my store. I try to find something that you can't easily find elsewhere and my customers seem to appreciate that. The creative types in Iceland have also been very enthusiastic and frequently contact me with their ideas and products," says Anne Helen.

Specialities in a Small Size Shop

Even though the shop is, by most comparisons, rather diminutive in size, you'd be amazed by the amount of Christmas items in there. Anne Helen is relentless in

Only in Iceland

The Icelandic holiday traditions are, of course, prevalent in the store, as Anne Helen will tell you. "The Icelandic Yule lads are a unique heritage and I'm especially proud to have many

different variations of them. Their mischievous ways, their troll mother and her giant cat provide inspiration for so many imaginative items that you can't find anywhere else on the planet," says Anne Helen.

The age old tradition of making special deep fried bread, called Laufabrauð, with elaborate geometric leaf-like patterns has also inspired some of the local craftspeople. "Families and friends would gather before Christmas and cut the patterns in the flat bread before it was fried and it has since become a tradition. The patterns are like the Icelandic wool sweater—uniquely Icelandic," says Anne Helen.



Due to popular demand from both old and new customers abroad, who've either heard about the store or regretted not buying enough while they were there, Anne Helen is in the finishing stages of opening her own web-store.

Little Jólábúðin -VAG

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CHRISTMAS IN ICELAND

The Yule Lads Bring Their Own Celebration at Christmas

Christmas and New Year is the most festive time in Iceland. For most, it is the best time of the year because of the special foods, great music, the long dark nights, Christmas lights and, last but not least, the opportunity to spend quality time with the family.

Advent

The period four weeks before Christmas is called Advent. One of the signs of the Advent in Iceland is the Advent candle decoration, which became popular in Iceland after WWII. The four candles are lit, one by one, each Sunday before Christmas. The first candle is lit on the first Sunday in the Advent. Thereafter, one more candle is lit every Sunday until all four are lit at the same time. The candles are placed on a tray and typically decorated with branches of an evergreen and a red ribbon. Another sign of Advent is the 7 light candelabras often seen

in windows. Contrary to popular belief, these are not menorahs as in the Jewish tradition. These 7 light arrangements became popular several decades ago after a businessman started importing and selling them for Christmas. The light decoration instantly became popular and continues to be.



Christmas

Christmas in Iceland is an important family event. At this time of the year, close and extended families come together, enjoy good food and exchange gifts. Many visit a place of worship during the Advent and Christmas to listen to Christmas concerts.

The special family days around Christmas include: Þorláksmessa (St. Thorlak's Mass) 23rd December, Jóladagur (Christmas Day) 24th December, Annar í jólum (Boxing Day) 25th December, and Gamlársdagur (New Year's Eve) 31st December.

December 24th is the most special Christmas time in Iceland. At 6 pm, families gather and enjoy a special meal together. In some families, it is a tradition to serve ptarmigan—a chicken-like ground-dwelling bird which resides in Iceland all year, while others serve deboned smoked pork, or smoked lamb. After the meal, people



exchange gifts. Children find it very hard to wait until this time. In Iceland, there's a legend that tells of a black cat, the so-called Christmas cat, that eats children who don't get at least one piece of clothing. Perhaps the existence of this cat in modern times has something to do with the fact that children today take clothing for granted. They would much rather receive digital media devices and branded plastic toys made in China.

The Yule Lads

Jólasveinar (The Yule lads) are the 13 mischievous sons of Grýla and Leppalúði, two bloodthirsty child-eating trolls, whose story can be traced back to the 13th century. The history of the Yule lads can only be traced back to the 17th century and Jólakötturinn (The Christmas cat) was added to the family still later.

The Yule lads have names which describe their character. They come from the mountains

one by one. The first one, Stekkjarstaur (Gimpy), arrives 12th December. Then comes Giljagaur (Gully rumbler), Stúfur (Shorty), Þvörusleikir (Ladle licker), Pottasleikir (Pot licker), Askasleikir (Wooden eating bowl licker), Hurðaskellir (Door slammer), Skyrgámur (Skyr gobbler), Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage snatcher), Gluggagægir (Window peeper), Gáttaþefur (Doorway sniffer), Ketkrókur (Meat snatcher), and finally, Kertasníkir (Candle snatcher) who arrives on the 24th December.



At night, while the children sleep, the Yule lads bring a little present. The children place a shoe in their window before going to bed and look forward to getting up to see what the Yule lad left in the shoe. Clever children put a tall boot in the window at night instead of a regular shoe in the hope the Yule lad might just fill it with presents. Badly behaved children risk getting a plain potato in their shoe.

The first Yule lad goes back to the mountains on the 25th December and all have left 13 days after Christmas, which is 6th January.

New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve is the biggest party night of the year in Iceland. For most people, this day starts off like any other public holiday. Anticipation increases throughout the day until midnight. In the early evening, families gather for dinner while the children get all excited about bonfires, star lights, firecrackers and fireworks.

Many go to bonfires with the children between 8 and 10 pm and then gather in front of the television for the ever-so-popular annual take-off comedy poking fun at politicians, in particular, in a comic but somewhat scathing fashion, called Áramótaskaup in Icelandic.

If you're in a town or a city, you can expect to see an improvised firework display second to none as nearly every family spends a fair bit of money on fireworks.



EDUCATIVE HOLIDAYS

The National Museum of Iceland is No Ordinary Museum

When people think of museums, fun and games isn't usually the first thing that comes to mind. The National Museum of Iceland however invites its visitors to explore its exhibitions in a special holiday treasure hunt. The traditional Icelandic Christmas cat has thus been hidden all over the museum and it is your job to look for clues that take you through Iceland's rich history towards your ultimate goal. Other holiday specialities at the museum include the daily arrivals of the thirteen Icelandic Yule lads from December 12th onwards, a Christmas house, music, lectures on Icelandic Christmas traditions and food tastings.

Holiday Treasure Hunt

Ólöf Breiðfjörð, at the National Museum, says that the treasure hunt has been a big success since its inception a few years ago. "I was watching the games over the last holidays and it was a real treat to see entire families enthusiastically exploring the museum together. We wanted to present the idea that museum visits don't always have to be silent and purely academic. We want our guests to be able to have fun while they're here," says Ólöf.

The treasure hunt is now available in five different languages; Icelandic, English, Polish, French and German and will be

available until January 6th. It is centered around finding the Christmas cat, which is a uniquely Icelandic creature, believed to be the pet of the Yule Lads' parents—which devours children who don't wear new clothes on Christmas Eve.

Touch & Feel

A part of that interactive theme is the Christmas house in the reception hall of the museum. The house is meant to capture the essence of Christmas in Iceland as it was several hundred years ago and it's not just meant to be gazed upon—you can smell and touch the things in it. "We wanted



to invite people, and especially children, to get a real feel of how the holidays were celebrated before their time. There will be a traditional smoked leg of lamb hanging from the windows, which gives an incredibly thick aroma and traditional utensils and related items will be available to fondle and touch," says Ólöf.

The National Museum's role is, of course, to safeguard Iceland's heritage and traditions and Christmas traditions are, of course, not exempt. The 13 Icelandic Yule Lads, for example, each has his own agenda and

theme and some are connected to historical artefacts that are no longer present in modern society. The seventh Yule Lad is thus named Askasleikir, a name derived from his unsanitary habit of licking the inside of special carved mini-troughs that Icelanders used instead of plates when the winters were so harsh that they had to eat in bed.

The Christmas house enables people to see and feel what an Askur is and thus better understand where the stories came from.

The Yule Lads are Coming

Starting on December 12th, one of the Icelandic Yule lads will make an appearance in the museum at 11 o'clock. According to Ólöf, this is naturally extremely popular with the children, as their appearance is followed by singing and dancing. In addition, when the Yule lads come to the National Museum they don their traditional garb, instead of the more commonly known red and white costume of Father Christmas. Ólöf emphasises the importance of maintaining the authenticity of the Icelandic Yule Lads, even though they weren't always particularly nice.

Enjoy Christmas Traditions

For those looking for a more thorough introduction to Icelandic Christmas traditions, be sure to check out Terry Gunnel, Professor in Folklore's lecture on the subject on December 15th.

A more modern Christmas exhibition will be found on the top floor where dolls and puppets of the Icelandic Yule Lads will be on display. To ring in the holiday spirit, Christmas trees from throughout the generations will also be on display.

On the day before Christmas, (take note that Icelanders usually celebrate Christmas on the 24th) and on December 30th, there will be special events in the museum where you can taste the best of Iceland's holiday cuisine, while listening to one of the countries most celebrated singers, Egill Ólafsson, followed by an audio guided tour through the museum.

-VAG

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CHRISTMAS WITH CLASS

Einar Ben's Christmas Buffet brings Traditional Elegance to Eating

Set in a century-old gentry townhouse right at the end of the walking street in central Reykjavik, Einar Ben is a classic restaurant for those who enjoy a relaxed meal in elegant surroundings. The restaurant is set in the home of one of Iceland's most famous poets and heroes, after whom it is named.

A Christmas Dining Experience

In keeping with tradition, Einar Ben is hosting a Christmas Buffet every evening throughout December, bringing the spirit of Christmas to the town.

The Red Bar is the place to start the evening—and to finish it, too, as it offers a comfortable ambience to relax and enjoy a

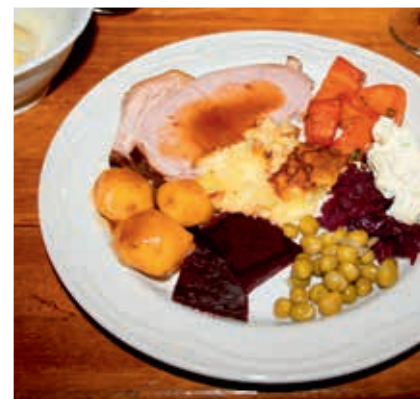
drink or two before and after your dinner. Set on the third floor of the building, it provides a warm and quiet place to unwind after a busy day.

Dinners are served in the warmly-decorated dining rooms by a professional and discreet staff who enjoy catering to their guests in the calm and quiet atmosphere.

The buffet itself is delicious beginning with wild mushroom and walnut soup. Then, served on trays laden with small bowls, diners are treated to a constant stream of different flavours—none too large or small, just right. First come fish dishes and, perhaps you wonder, “Is that it?”, only to see a tray of meats arriving with different lamb and pork plates. Supported by a choice of good wines, the experience is almost complete—until the riz à l'amande, soaked in cherry sauce, with a selection of Christmas cookies and petits fours adds the final touch to the whole experience.

Traditional Viking Dinner

Tradition is an important part of Icelandic life and, at lunch time on the 23rd December, Einar Ben is hosting the centuries-old skáta and salted cod—the famous Bacalao that is so popular in Mediterranean countries. This unusual



meal from the Viking era is something visitors should try at least once in their lives!

Moving the Mediterranean to Iceland

Speaking of the Mediterranean, throughout January and February, Einar Ben will be hosting a Mediterranean food festival daily, looking forward to the arrival of Spring. The blending of both Icelandic and Mediterranean ingredients will provide a very delicious combination, heralding the freshness of Spring, as the daylight hours rapidly grow longer in the new year.

The restaurant opens daily at 6 pm, with the exception of the special lunch on December 23rd, when it opens at noon.

Einar Ben -ASF

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VIKING STYLE CHRISTMAS

Enjoy a Feast as You Step Back in Time at Vikingakráin

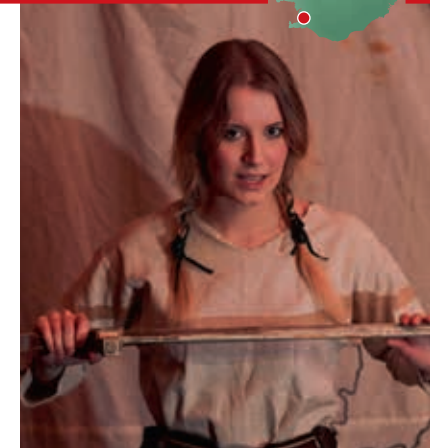
Have you ever wondered just what Viking life was like? Here's an opportunity for you and your friends to find out! Set in the heart of downtown Reykjavik, the home of the Vikings, you will find Vikingakráin, the Viking restaurant.

If you are planning a group event, incentive tour, conference or meeting, this is the restaurant that will be talked about long after the other discussions are forgotten.

Live it Up, Viking Style

You get the feel for the Viking way of life the moment you walk in. A longship stretches almost the full length of the restaurant, serving as a bar. The wood tables and benches add that air of authenticity to the rough-hewn beams and ceiling.

For special events, which is what any Viking feast is, the actors, poets and storytellers perform in such enthralling manner that you



will, for the moment, forget you are in the 21st century, as you are transported back in time almost a thousand years.

Give them a call to book your dinner, as this is a popular venue year-round. Vikingakráin is located above the Dubliner pub, known as both the oldest and happiest pub in town.

Vikingakráin -ASF

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THE IRISH CELEBRATION

Christmas, New Year and The Dubliner's Birthday

The world knows how much the Irish love to celebrate. Any excuse for a party and some good drinks with friends. Christmas and New Year give the perfect excuse for a good night out – every night. When you add that it's the Dubliner's birthday, the celebration becomes a wee bit longer.

The Dubliner has been a staple part of Reykjavik for many years now, well known for its Irish hospitality, music, drinking and fun. The Vikings knew what they were

doing when they raided Ireland and brought all the beautiful women and the Dubliner pub with them to Iceland.

The Happiest Pub in Town

Cold beer, smooth Irish whiskey and plenty of Celtic music, live every night is guaranteed. Lubricate an Irishman and you get a lot more – story-telling to stretch the imagination and plenty of laughter, as the poets wax lyrical. It's no

wonder that The Dubliner is known as the happiest pub in town.

What with Christmas, New Year and a birthday to boot, The Dubliner is celebrating all December, culminating in the biggest blast on New Year's Eve. There's no better time to drop in to fill your heart with happiness and the rest with good drink.

Dubliner -ASF

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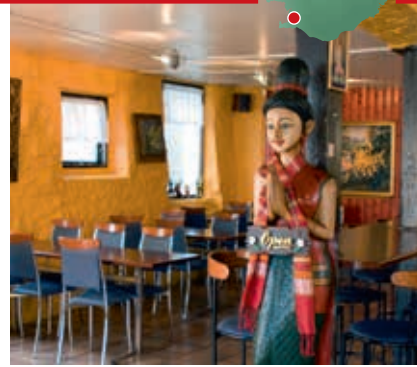
SPREADING THE TASTE

You Can Enjoy Authentic Thai Food In Reykjavik or Akureyri

The discovery of the wonderful flavours in genuine Thai food only reached Iceland in 2001 when, down by the Old Harbour in a cosy, small white building, Krua Thai first started the taste revolution. For hundreds of

years, Icelanders had grown accustomed to a rather bland diet, so the introduction of Thai cuisine had a major impact.

Icelanders have a reputation for pioneering and they plunged into this new taste sensation with gusto. A second restaurant opened in Bæjarlind, near the Smáralind shopping centre, also providing home deliveries. Take away also gained great popularity and now you can find the same delicious menu in Krua Siam in Akureyri, close to the harbour. With prices set so that a whole family can eat for less than a single person would pay in fancy restaurant, you can understand its popularity.



Krua Thai's cuisine is unique as it blends authentic Thai cooking with all its special spices and ingredients imported directly from Thailand with Icelandic meats and vegetables. As the food is prepared to order, it reaches you with all the flavour as fresh as possible. It has proven a popular spot for visiting Thai tourists for good reason. The Thai-Icelandic blend is a delicious experience.

Krua Thai -ASF

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HARBOURSIDE SUSHI

Sushimiðjan—Midori, a Top Class Restaurant at the Old Harbour

In one of the bright green buildings down at the old harbour is Sushimiðjan, 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.

Sushimiðjan -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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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 volcanoes.



An exhibition from the ground

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



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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

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 Display

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.

Hafnarhúsið has six different galleries devoted to the most exciting current happenings, one of them being 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 centre 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 programme of upcoming exhibitions at their website, www.artmuseum.is -VAG



Ásmundarsafn, by Sigtún, 105 Reykjavik



CAKES, COOKIES & CHOCOLATES

Celebrate Christmas with Mosfellsbakari

One of the major highlights of the year, when families strive to be together more than at any other time is, of course, Christmas. Advent builds up the excitement for the children as the day draws closer.

Then, like a tidal wave of family fun, the celebrations begin. Tables, lit with candles, are laden with delicious pastries, cakes and cookies, savoury delicacies on different kinds of bread to tantalise the taste buds. They don't last long! Then, in the lounge, the chocolates appear. Little wonder so many look forward to this time of year!

Chocolates for Kids and Connoisseurs

At Mosfellsbakari, Hafliði, the International Chocolate Ambassador, brings out his latest handmade creations alongside the old favourites. The 'golfballs'—looking like the real thing but made with white chocolate covering a delicious filling. Now, the volcanos—each totally different,

named after one of Iceland's famous volcanoes but with exquisite taste and appearance. Those tins look as if they're caviar—and the little chocolate balls inside look like it but certainly don't taste like it. The pralines, a long-time favourite, each filled with a different filling, coming also in beautifully packed boxes, a welcome gift to any chocolate lover.

The Best of Baking

The bakeries—at Háaleitisbraut and the shopping centre in Mosfellsbær—are laden with delicious breads, pastries, sandwiches and much more almost every day of the year, but Christmas is special. Here come the rich fruit English Christmas cakes and Stollen bread, the delicate, crispy laufabrauð, the decorated biscuit houses and all the delights that make the Christmas meals distinctive. The decorated candles, also, take on a new meaning at this time of year.



Take Time for a Drink and Snack

If you relish this time of love and giving, you'll feel right at home in the bakeries. It's as if Hollywood's Christmas classics are being played out here. The smell of freshly baked bread draws you in. You feel like a child again. The shelves are packed with crisp loaves, with pastries, cakes and everything that brings back happy memories. You have time for a hot chocolate or coffee together, enjoying one another's company in the comfortable couches or chairs, surrounded by the warmth of the Christmas displays. Which pastry or biscuits to choose is oh, so hard—and those chocolates, well they would never last till Christmas Day, would they? You'll just have to get some more closer to the date!

Mosfellsbakari -ASF

Háholt 13-15 • 270 Mosfellsbær
 +354 566 6145
 mosbak@mosbak.is
 www.mosfellsbakari.is



A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Bringing French and Icelandic cuisine together in Þrír 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 Þrír Frakkar með Úlfari 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.



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

Þrír Frakkar -JB

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 frakkar@islandia.is
 www.3frakkar.com

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In Reykjavík Eyjaslóð 7, by the harbor
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ICELANDIC

DESIGN

Designed to be Tax Free

One of the greatest advantages to shopping in Iceland is that visitors can reclaim the tax back, thereby getting designer goods for a substantial discount—not to mention today's currency exchange rate that is very favourable compared to pre-2008 levels.

How to shop Tax Free: Three easy steps:

1. SHOPPING

Make your purchase where you see the Iceland Refund sign and simply ask for a Tax Free form at the register.

2. CUSTOMS VERIFICATION

If the refund amount on a single Tax Free form exceeds ISK 5.000.- You have to show the goods to customs when leaving the country and verify export with a customs stamp. This does not apply for woollen goods.

3. GET YOUR REFUND Credit card Refund

Insert your credit card number on the Tax Free form and mail it in an Iceland Refund envelope for a direct refund to your credit card.

Cash Refund

Have the cheque refunded in cash by one of our agents where you leave Iceland.

Prepaid Refund

Get your refund prepaid, before you leave the country, at the malls. Then simply put your forms in the mailbox departure hall in Keflavik airport or mail it from abroad in an Iceland Refund envelope.

How to get your refund

The places where you can get your refund in Iceland are as follows:

Airports

- Keflavik - Landsbanki
- Reykjavik - Information desk
- Akureyri - Duty Free Store
- Egilsstaðir - Mailbox

Ships

- **Cruise ships:** Our agents meet major cruise ships before departure. If not, get a customs stamp from Icelandic customs officers on board and mail the forms in an Iceland Refund envelope.
- **Smyril Line - Seyðisfjörður:** Agents from Landsbanki are on board before departure.

Prepaid refund

- **The Information Centre:** - Aðalstræti 2

Shopping Malls

- **Kringlan or Smáralind:** Information desk.

Joy from the creative roots

The identity of Icelandic design is in the materials, the Nordic forms and patterns from the Saga age, along with modern ideas and innovation. Icelandic designers use resources from fish skin to lamb skin, fish bone to wool, silver to glass, lava rocks and natural stones, recycled metal, porcelain and wood for carving. Handicraft has always thrived quite well in Iceland.

When walking through the centre of Reykjavik, the capital, one cannot but wonder at the sheer number of designer and handicraft stores and galleries. And indeed the Icelanders are exceptionally creative and love their heritage. The likely reason is their way of life for centuries, closed-in on their farms by darkness and forces of nature for months during the winter. To make it bearable, they

had to create beauty and enjoy making clothes, shoes, accessories, toys, furniture, pottery and tools. One can simply go to the National Museum to see how the islanders tolerated their isolation. It was their journey from darkness to light.

After the second World War, the Icelanders were eager to join the Western World and for some time the heritage was generally frowned upon as being unfit for the modern culture—but it was not forgotten. Even during the feminist era, the women would be seen knitting during meetings, whether political, cultural or educational.

The joy of creating returned with a vengeance after the financial crisis in 2008. Suddenly, all those who had used their creative talents on mere gifts for families and friends, dared to show their products to the world. In general, the

nation was relieved to be rejoined with its beautiful heritage; to be able to find new approaches for old ideas, use old patterns for modern pieces of clothing, accessories, pottery, toys and tools.

Icelandic designers are quite eco-conscious. They work wonders from recycled materials and prefer material provided by Mother Nature to express their creativity, with the Icelandic sheep wool being the favourite, by far. Their pieces are designed to last a long time and quite a number of them have already become classics—such as the Icelandic 'lopapeysa' sheep wool sweaters and cardigans.

So, when in Iceland, look for the beautiful designer wares. Though most designers sell their products to shops in Reykjavik, you will most surely find designer shops and galleries all over the country. -SS



WHERE THE DESIGNERS DISPLAY

Kraum has the Widest Range of Icelandic Designer Products

With 200 designers exhibiting their work, Kraum is the largest centre for Icelandic designers in the country. It is fitting that they are housed in the oldest building in Reykjavik, where Skúli Magnússon, the first Icelandic Governor to be appointed by the King of Denmark and known as the 'Father of Reykjavik', established the first design studio and factory for manufacturing Icelandic products in 1750.

Kraum was formed 6 years ago when a group of thirty designers displayed their ideas

in the distinctive newly-renovated building on Aðalstræti. From the outset, it was decided to promote only the work Icelandic designers.

The concept took hold and very quickly, the number of designers from all over the country swelled to reach today's figure of over 200. With so many designers in one place, visitors can not only get a clear overview of the Icelandic design world, but have the widest range of products to choose from. It is indeed a wide range, covering everything from clothing to jewellery to household products to lights. The list is far too long for an article of this size and a catalogue of everything available would fill a good-sized book.

Christmas Gifts

With the season of giving here, Kraum is exhibiting a special range of Christmas items, a number of which have won design awards and competitions. You will not find any of



the run-of-the-mill mass-produced plastic products here. Rather, there is a fascinating world of unique ideas, concepts and designs which make really nice gifts for all ages.

Of course, many of the designs not specifically produced for Christmas also make excellent gifts as the whole house is a treasure-trove of the different and unusual. The quality of the designs on display is outstanding.

Practical and attractive fashion items abound, made by designers who recognise the need for comfort in style and practicality in daily life.

Whether for Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries or simply love gifts, these designer creations are bound to be greatly appreciated and admired. The world of Icelandic design is a vibrant and constantly changing one, with new ideas appearing regularly. Kraum is where you will find the cream of the crop. They can also be purchased online and shipped internationally.

-ASF



Kraum



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RADIANT JEWELLERY AND REFLECTORS

Stay beautiful and Safe in the Dark with Tíra's Reflective Jewellery

The Canadian born mosaic-artist, Alice Olivia Clarke, has found a way to make Icelanders visible during the long, dark winter days. With the traditional reflective adhesives insulting the least bit of vanity, men and women have refrained from sticking them on their overcoats. Which, by the way, is quite unfortunate as black is a favourite colour in Iceland.

On a dark winter's day four years ago, Alice wondered at all the black-clad people and decided there must be a way to make beautiful reflective accessories men and women would be happy to wear. And she found a solution.

A Flower Blooms into a Whole Range

It started with a flower, a completely handmade flower, made from the Icelandic wool, Loppi. To begin with, Alice and her mother-in-law made them, but due to demand they had to add two more knitters to the group, all working in Alice's studio. Women were happy to add the radiant flowers to their overcoats, but the men were still very much in the dark. So, the next product was a band that one can circle

around an arm, leg, scarf, bag or rucksack—and they became instantly popular. There are short bands and long bands and even Icelandic men are happy to wear them.

But Alice's creativity was not finished. Not by a long shot. The next item was a beautiful necklace, long enough to wear over any jacket, coat or parka, with reflective buttons on each end hanging down front and back and thus making the one wearing it quite visible. All the accessories can also be worn as beautiful jewellery. Everything is made from Loppi and reflective thread, not just on the surface, but throughout. All the flowers are crocheted, all handmade and the knitted bands are machine knitted by the Icelandic knitting company, Glofi. The bands inside the knitted cover are reflective, so is the leather on the end. All the buttons on Tíra's radiant accessories are recycled and it takes several metres of reflective thread to fasten them onto the flowers.

Where to Find Them

The result is beautiful quality accessories. The latest product is multi-coloured necklaces, based on the colour of indigenous Icelandic

birds. All Tíra's accessories are available at the National Museum, National Gallery, Epal (also at the Keflavik International Airport), and in the Icelandic design store, Kraum, in the centre of Reykjavik.

From the Family to the World

The Tíra's aim is to combine the traditional with the contemporary, focusing on Icelandic material where possible. Only the reflective thread and the buttons are imported. Actually, the whole concept is quite the family affair, as Alice's husband, architect Kári Eiríksson, co-designs and their daughter makes the box illustrations.

Tíra is already exporting the radiant accessories to the Netherlands and Alice has a long list of countries wanting to buy her extraordinary products. "This little idea I had is certainly blossoming," says this married mother of two, who is presently working on another of her mosaic installations in Hafnarfjörður. She has worked on this newest piece, aptly named 'The Tree of Life' for over three years along with nearly three hundred, thirteen year-old children, each

one making their own leaf. Alice created the centrepiece a 3 metre high mosaic Celtic cross, in the form of a tree and each of the leaves have been added to its crown. This community project can be found in the community hall of Hafnarfjarðarkirkju—Hafnarfjörður church.

Her installations can be found in several places in Iceland. In her studio in Hafnarfjörður, she gives courses and seminars to teach her craft to Icelanders who are always ready to learn a new do-it-yourself craft. From Alice, they learn to make their own mosaic creations: mirrors, tables, candleholders and hotpads.

When in Iceland be sure to look for Tíra – Radiant Accessories when buying gifts for family and friends back home. The beautiful pieces will make your loved ones visible in the dark.

Images by © Gabriel Rutenberg



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 alice@aok.is
 www.tira.is

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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



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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 www.alafoss.is



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

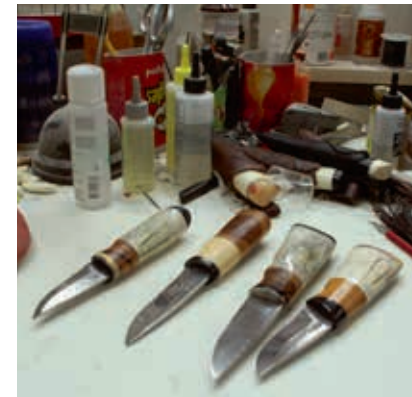
Palli started carving knife handles over 25 years ago as a personal hobby. He enjoyed finding unusual materials to create the handles and took delight in carving each one carefully to match the individual blades.

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

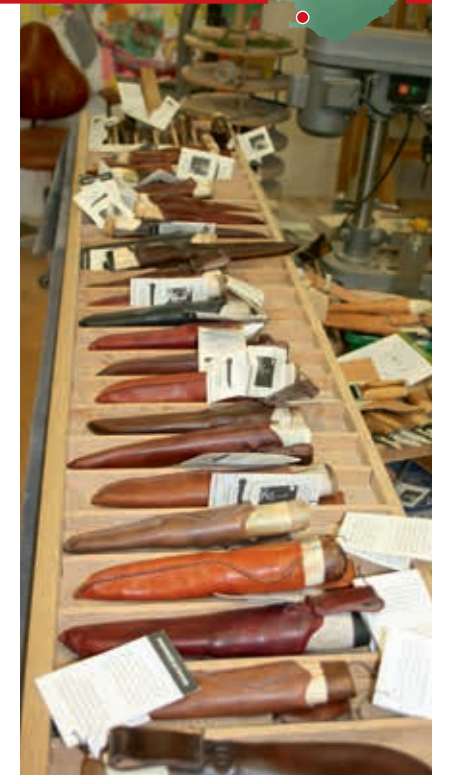
What is special about these handles? Palli loves to wander the countryside, looking for new materials for his handles. Often,



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



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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 palli@knifemaker.is
 www.knifemaker.is

INUIT IN REYKJAVIK

An Exclusive Store with a Rare Collection

In 1998, Kulusuk Art was established in Greenland, opening in Reykjavik, Iceland, in February 2007. Named after Kulusuk village in Greenland, this beautiful store, located at Laugavegur 15, specialises in authentic Inuit art. The store is bright and spacious with a very attractive setup. The choice of products shows impeccable taste.

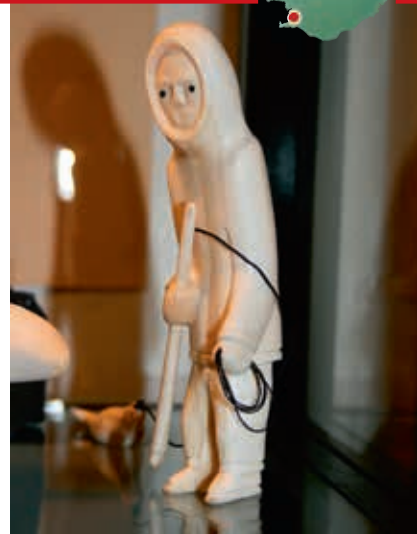
Furs, Skins and Trolls

Among their merchandise are arctic fur and fashionable seal skin products such as stylish bags and shoes, along with the attractive Greenland national costume. Exceptional skin rugs, custom made knives, troll sculptures and nature collectables from both Greenland and Iceland are on display.

These are items definitely not to be found elsewhere in Reykjavik. Customers can truly enjoy the spirit of a Greenland adventure.

Even with a variety of Icelandic collectable items, this unique store, Kulusuk Art, does not sell mass produced Icelandic souvenirs to their customers but prefers the exclusiveness of careful selection.

Working with the Feldur fur company, Kulusuk Art also has a wide range of beautiful



fur and leather hats, gloves and scarves that should be able to fulfil any customer's wishes.

Outstanding, adventurous and inviting, Kulusuk Art is truly one of a kind.

-SP

Kulusuk Art

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 +354 551 1080
 kulusuk@simnet.is
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-SP

Gullkistan

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OPENING THE TREASURE CHEST

A Master Craftsman Creates Works of Art in Precious Metals

Dóra Guðbjört Jónsdóttir is one of Iceland's finest and most productive goldsmiths using, with great understanding, the ways of Icelandic masters before her time. Between 1949-53, Dóra started learning the trade at her father's workshop, gaining her Master's degree in 1954. Additionally, she studied at Tärna folk high school in Sweden and Konstfackskolan in Stockholm around 1950, graduating with honours.

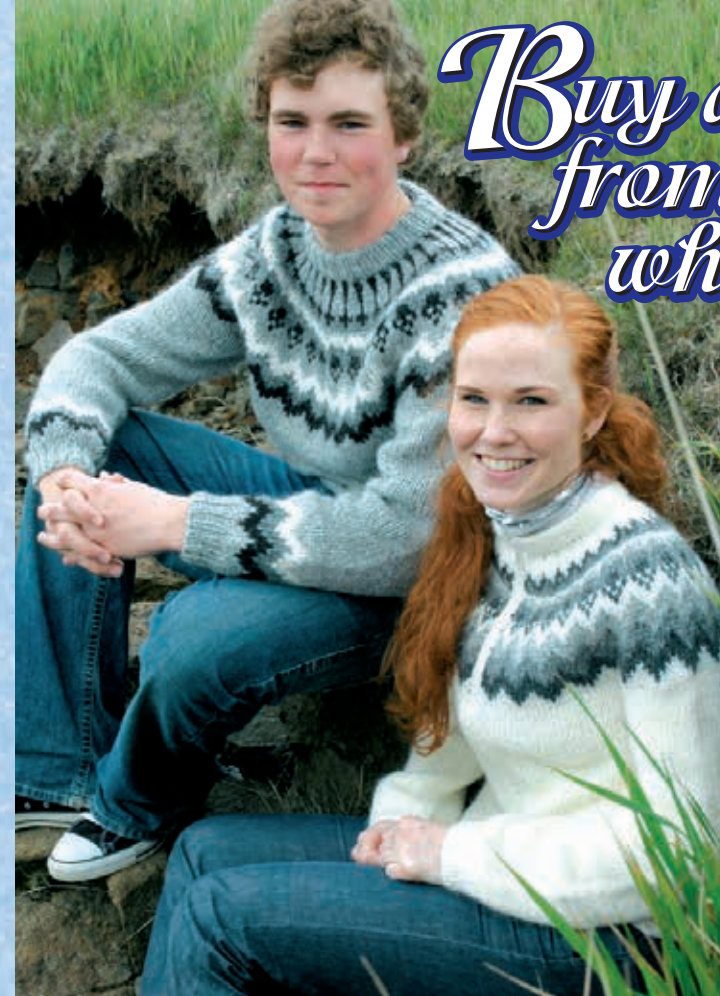
Dóra took over her father's workshop in 1970 and relocated it, opening her company called Gullkistan, on Frakkastígur street

in Reykjavik. Her expertise is national costume jewellery, or filigree, a delicate kind of jewellery metalwork, usually of gold and silver. Outstanding skills can be seen in her superb work, honouring Icelandic tradition. Dóra likes to work with very old jewellery templates, often well over 100 years old.

She has always actively participated in exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, and served as a chairman of the FIG (Icelandic Goldsmiths Foundation) from 1974-75, being the first Nordic woman to take that position. A true

artist, she has always striven to put national crafts in a new context and associate her designs with modern trends which combine the artist's desire to experiment with a thorough knowledge of templates and patterns of the past.

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BY THE SKIN OF A SALMON

Gastu's Creative Leather Work is the Work of a Master

Before entering the world of leather design, Guðrún Ásdís Sturlaugsdóttir imagined a life in civil engineering, sketching and constructing. After graduating, however, she was struck by a wild insight—why not air her creativity by crafting leather? Within months, and

while carrying her first child, Guðrún set off to America to purchase the leather stock of a closing business. Within a few more months, her talent had lines of customers queuing in downtown Reykjavik.

When she started in 2008, Guðrún only made bags and simple earrings from

fish-skin leathers. Over the years, however, she's built a repertoire of salmon-skin flasks, jewellery, and purses that only continues to grow in quality. Her trademark patterns include fish-skin leather flowers and, inspired by a period she spent living on the East coast in Höfn, bags that reminded her of the waves.

A Master at Work

In Guðrún's new location in the Dyngja store at Suðurlandsbraut 10, visitors can see a master at work. The leather-working tools, salmon skin and sewing machines are all present, and Guðrún is happy to demonstrate the beautiful process that transmutes fish-skin into Icelandic fashion.

Gastu's products are available in their workshop, in stores throughout Iceland and online. When flying with Icelandair, you can purchase Gastu's fish-skin flasks in the Saga Shop on board the plane.

Gastu -NC



Suðurlandsbraut 10 • 108 Reykjavík
 +354 867 6604
 gastu.com@gmail.com
 www.gastu.is



DESIGNED FOR OUTDOORS

With a truly original approach to the usual outdoor gear, KUSK Collection, established in Reykjavik in 2011, displays both ballsy, beautiful and unique products. An artist by nature, founder Hrónn Sigurðardóttir designs from either hand felted or moss stitched Icelandic wool, leather or fish skin. Hats, ear and hand warmers, amazing shawls that are extremely popular and even decoration for boots!

Customers can find Kusk Collection at Jólaborpið, The Christmas Market in Hafnarfjörður, where the opening hours are on Saturdays and Sundays from 13-18 and from 13-22 on the 23rd of December. Also at Jólabærinn, Ingólfstorgi open daily, 12-18 from the 14th of December, then 12-23 on the 23rd of December.

KUSK Collection
 +354 618 8188 | hronnsig@gmail.com



UNIQUE HANDMADE JEWELLERY

Guðbrandur Jósef Jezorski and his daughter Tina are highly esteemed goldsmiths known for their exceptionally designed jewellery where they make use of Icelandic stones, lava, precious metals and various other natural materials.

Family Partnership

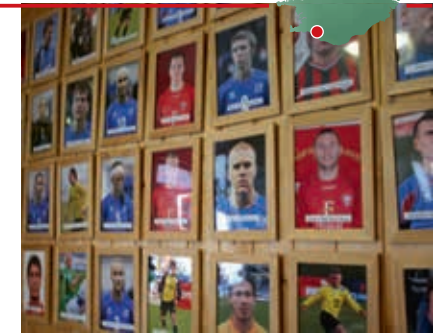
The father and daughter partnership, run from a small gallery in the centre of Reykjavik, has gained great recognition for their exclusive handmade jewellery.

Creating Collections in Contrasts

Guðbrandur and Tina combine a fine craftsmanship, enhancing the contrast between the main elements of the Icelandic nature.

From their collection, customers can choose from rings, necklaces, beads, brooches and pins, all equally stunning and unique.

Guðbrandur Jósef Jezorski
 +354 552 3485 | jezorski@mi.is



THE FAMOUS FOOTBALL CAFÉ

The Litla Kaffistofan is a Mecca for Football Fans and Food Lovers

On the Ring Road between Reykjavik and Hveragerði, Litla Kaffistofan's atmosphere has authenticity and warmth in welcoming its customers which has, over the years, since opening in June 1960, received about all possible awards for excellent customer service.

Football History from Near and Far

Packed with football memorabilia, this remarkable place has walls filled with photos from Icelandic football history dating from the early 20th century, even including several generations of families.

Flags and other memorabilia are also displayed, sent from towns and countries all over the world. Europe's best known teams flags are hanging there—some even autographed. Brazil and South Africa have sent their native football flags and the fame of Litla Kaffistofan has even travelled all the way to Munich, in Bavaria, where an article regarding this extraordinary collection was published in the local sports paper. This winter, they plan to put up glass walls facing the road outside the Litla Kaffistofan containing more collectibles of football history, in cooperation with Samverk glass factory in Hella.

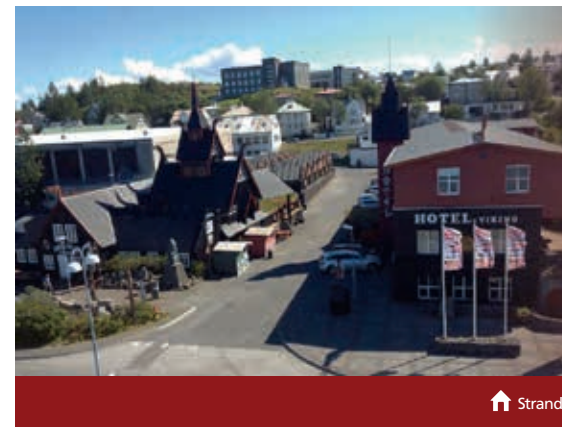
Favourite Foods for Travellers

Sitting down amidst all this glory, customers can truly enjoy the high quality traditional Icelandic food Litla Kaffistofan offers. No less than 37 different servings of smörrebröd—homemade bread with thick layers of salmon, herring and other ingredients, their famous meatsoup (kjötsúpa) and pankakes are available. Put that with steaming cups of hot chocolate or rich coffee and travellers will head back on the road energised and refreshed.

Litla Kaffistofan -SP



Suðurlandsveggi • 110 Reykjavík
 +354 557 7601
 none
 www.leit.is/servefir/litla



Fjörúkráin

A Viking village, set in the heart of Hafnarfjörður, Fjörúkráin consists of two restaurants, where you will be served and entertained by Viking-clothed staff. There is also a modern hotel and 14 Viking cottages, with all modern conveniences.

Strandgata 55 • 220 Hafnarfjörður | +354 565 1213 | vikings@vikingvillage.is | www.fjorukrain.is



SG Textil

Designer Sígga creates beautiful products made from wool and silk, decorated with fish leather. Outlets are in Kjósarstofa Ásgarður and at Kleppsvegur 128, 104 Reykjavík.

Kleppsvegur 128 • 104 Reykjavík | +354 8963 361
 sigga@sgtextil.is | www.sgtextil.is



Lavaland

Handmade jewellery proudly made in Iceland. Melted lava from Eyjafjallajökull glacier is combined with silver to make simple, outstanding and unique jewellery.

Nesvegur 17 • 350 Grundarfjörður | +354 777 0611
 lavaland@lavaland.is | www.lavaland.is

A UNIQUE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE

A Windy Weekend and Iceland Airwaves

Describing the Iceland Airwaves music festival is not something that can be done simply in terms of the enormous supply of quality music, as it represents a complete departure from the ordinary, where community, culture, people, partying, networking, freedom, fashion & music are fused into one incredible long weekend in the heart of Reykjavík city.

The concerts are held in various venues around Reykjavík and despite the especially harsh winds this weekend it always seemed as exciting to move around and see what was going on in the other side of the centre. The supply of music is staggering, bands and artists of almost every conceivable genre are counted in the hundreds. Some of the concert venues were centered around loosely based themes, so you could go to see gentle acoustic music in an old church, experimental neo-classical music in an old theatre, hard rock in a smoky bar, artsy bands in a museum or DJ sets in downtown clubs. The main venue, however, was the striking new Harpa concert complex, where hundreds of bands played by the harbour.

But amazingly enough, the festival is not all about the official concert schedule—although it is a big part of it—as there are literally hundreds of off-venue concerts held in the most unimaginable places, including the smallest concert hall in Iceland—a single tiny room located in the middle of a square.

The festival officially started on a Wednesday and, walking down Reykjavík's main street of Laugavegur, music could be heard from most cafés, bars and shops and by the time you reached the centre you would have seen or heard about a dozen shows. One other thing you'll notice is that the people on the streets are in a special festival mode—everyone is wearing highly fashionable clothes, in high spirits and seems to be connecting with each other much more than on an average Reykjavík night on the town.

It almost never fails that the people you meet have just come from an 'amazing' show in some obscure, weird venue with a similarly obscure artist—and they can't wait to tell you about it. After a few hours in the festival, you'll soon see why and get caught up in the mood. After stumbling in on a folksy band in the backyard of a downtown café, I couldn't wait to tell everyone about the concert, so that fellow festivalgoers would have a chance to see them later during the weekend.

The festivalgoers are a strange mixture of people from all over the world and each one comes to Iceland for a different reason—some come to see specific artist (this time around, Sigur Rós & Of Monsters and Men seem to be in the highest demand), some come to find something new and others come for the nightlife. But they all seem to unite around a singular theme—to have a good time.

—VAG



"We had known about Iceland Airwaves for as long as we can remember and finally decided to come this year. So far it has been fabulous, the atmosphere is great and we are having a lot of fun. This building, Harpa, is phenomenal, but we also love going to the smaller venues. Yesterday we saw 'Of Monsters and Men' in a bar with about 200 people which was pretty amazing. The range of bands playing is quite staggering—this afternoon we hadn't quite decided what we wanted to see and we counted around 20 shows we wanted to go to."

—Jennifer & David Parmenter, Boston.



"I've known about the festival for at least 10 years and have always wanted to come. I've been a fan of Icelandic music for a long time and have found there is a certain joyfulness that is contrasted by a certain quietness, almost like the contrasts between spring and winter. The festival is great, it reminds me of a colder South by Southwest, a music festival held in Texas. The atmosphere is really enjoyable, I've been going around town to these smaller venues and talking with the people and I feel as if I could move to Reykjavik and be part of the community instantly."

—Mai Le, Photographer, San Francisco



"Iceland Airwaves is out of this world. You meet all these weird and wonderful people; you meet old friends and make new friends. I've been talking to people from places that I haven't really paid much attention to before but they know our music, which is amazing. We also enjoy the off-venue programme as it gives us an opportunity to play to a different crowd and the people who didn't get tickets get a chance to experience the festival. We played in a small bar yesterday which was a lot of fun, almost like a giant house party."

—Kristján Páll Kristjánsson, bassist, Of Monsters and Men





WE'LL MEET IN THE POOL

Laugardalslaug—the most popular swimming pool in Reykjavik

Swimming in one of Reykjavik's seven swimming pools and the unique Ylströnd geothermal beach is very invigorating. The pools, which are open all year, attract nearly 2 million visitors and for a good reason! Enjoy soaking in the warm water originating from a geothermal drill hole within the city limits.

Cool like a pool

Reykjavik's swimming pools are definitely cool—as in hip. The water in the main pool is about 29° Celsius / 83° Fahrenheit which is quite comfortable. In warmer countries people jump into the pool to cool off—here in Iceland, it is exactly the opposite. You want to jump in to keep warm! The children's pool is even warmer than the main pool and if that is not warm enough, then you have 7 hot tubs to

choose from ranging in temperature from 37°C to 43°C. The largest hot tub in Laugardalslaug swimming pool has space for 50 people.

Reykjavik's most popular pool

Laugardalslaug Olympic size swimming pool is the largest and most popular pool in Iceland. Originally built in 1968 and since renovated periodically, it was visited by 750,000 people in 2011. The main pool for training and competition, a children's pool with slightly warmer water than the main pool, 3 children's water slides, a wipe-out-style challenge, 7 hot tubs of various temperatures and a steam bath. In addition, it is possible to order a massage prior to your visit.

New at the pool in 2012

A saltwater hot tub just opened in Laugardalslaug. It is the first one of its kind in Iceland. The saltwater comes from a drill hole near the sea on the northern side of the Reykjavik peninsula, about one kilometre from the pool. The saltwater is cold when it comes from the ground but it is heated to 40°C. Children love the new wipe-out style 'iceberg challenge' which consists of a mesh of ropes overhead and iceberg-like floats in the water. The challenge is to walk on the icebergs over a distance of 7 m without falling into the water. Finally, the tallest waterslide at Laugardalslaug swimming pool has been revamped and now has LED-lights in the ceiling for a part of the ride.

Great place to meet the locals

Swimming pools and hot tubs are an important meeting place for local people of all ages. Many of the most frequent visitors come to the pool first and foremost to socialise rather to exercise. They typically come to the pool on a certain day of the week and time of day when they know their friends are there, too. Because nearly everyone in Iceland enjoys going to the pool you might bump into Iceland's most famous singer, the mayor of Reykjavik, pop stars, TV-personalities, actors, members of parliament, university lecturers and students.

Pool etiquette

It is considered very important to shower naked and wash thoroughly before entering the pool for hygiene reasons. Visitors who don't conform may have one of the staff, or even guests ask them to do



so. Most people leave their towel behind in a special area near the showers while they go into the pool. Bath robes and sandals are hardly ever seen around pools but people with long hair are expected to wear a shower cap. Be considerate to other swimmers. Try not to swim in a lane with faster swimmers so they won't have to overtake you. When it looks like you're going to swim into a person you're supposed to veer to the right.

Great water quality

The water in Reykjavik's swimming pools is of the highest quality. It comes from drill holes in three different areas, in and near Reykjavik. The quality of the water is inspected four times a day by the pool staff

and four times a year by independent health and safety inspectors. The clean natural geothermal water and regular inspection ensures the highest water quality possible.

Laugardalslaug opens at 06:30 in the morning and closes at 22:00 at night on week days in summer. Saturdays and Sundays it is open from 8 in the morning. The price in 2012 is 500 kr. for adults and 120 kr. for children under the age of 18. Disabled and senior citizens go free.



Laugardalslaug
 Sundlaugarvegur • 104 Reykjavik
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 laugardalslaug@tr.is
 www.swimminginiceland.com



A NEW SET OF EYES

See Your Dream Holiday Through Refractive Surgery at Sjónlag

Standing on top of an Icelandic glacier, with its clear and unblemished majestic views in all directions, is something you can only truly experience with your own eyes and that is exactly what Sjónlag eye clinic wants to offer to potential visitors with imperfect eyesight—an affordable refractive eye surgery and Iceland’s grandeur, all in one trip.

A Perfect Match

While many people wouldn’t necessarily equate having lasers pointed into your eyes with a relaxing holiday, Kristinn Ólafsson, manager of Sjónlag, says they are a better match than one might think. “What we propose is a holiday with a lasting benefit. What we offer has to do with quality of life and helping people get the most of it. We

want to help people see life with their own eyes and we feel that there is no better place to begin with than the beautiful landscapes of Iceland,” says Kristinn.

A surgery would require only three short appointments—one pre-check-up, the procedure and a follow-up appointment. The procedure itself only takes a few seconds. “The very next day you’ll be able to go sightseeing with a brand new set of eyes, as it were,” says Kristinn.

Highest Standard of Quality

Kristinn says that Sjónlag would only suggest such a holiday if they were absolutely sure that the clinic was up to the highest standard of quality. “We have bought two new state of the art lasers, all our staff are highly experienced, both abroad and here in Iceland, and the clinic has done thousands of procedures with excellent results,” says Kristinn.

Sjónlag offers a wide variety of ophthalmological procedures, as different sets of eyes require different treatments. “It is important that we find the correct solution for each individual, which is why we do thorough research and consultation at the beginning stages,” says Kristinn.



Two in One

“Iceland’s many qualities have been well documented recently—we have all these incredible natural phenomena, high quality accommodation and food, good infrastructure and it is very clean, making complications from infection almost unheard of. The current currency situation is really the icing on the cake for potential visitors, as we can offer the procedure at a fraction of the price that neighbouring countries are currently offering. You can get your eyes fixed and an unforgettable holiday in Iceland for the same price as just the procedure elsewhere,” says Kristinn.

-VAG

Sjónlag



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+354 577 1001
 sjonlag@sjonlag.is
 www.sjonlag.is

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Enjoy a relaxing holiday in **Laugar Spa**



Located in the heart of Reykjavik, the Laugar Spa offers a wellness center for your whole family.

Enjoy our luxury health spa and ensure your body and soul feel their best.

Laugar’s outdoor and indoor thermal pools, beauty and massage clinic, unique fitness center combined with luxury spa will help you breeze into a wonderful and relaxing holiday.

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 Sundlaugarvegur 30a
 105 Reykjavík
 Tel. +354 553 0000
 worldclass@worldclass.is
 www.laugarspa.is

Laugar Opening hours
 Mon - Fri 06:00 - 23:30
 Sat 08:00 - 22:00
 Sun 08:00 - 20:00





BEHIND THE SCENES

The Future of Iceland's Tourism



It's hard to believe that only a few decades ago Iceland's tourism infrastructure was virtually non-existent. Means of transport were limited, access to sights was often difficult, the food was uniform, activities were scarce and accommodation options were few and far between. The current variety and quality of services available did however not come about by chance – The Icelandic Tourism Association has diligently been expanding and improving the industry through co-operation and co-ordination between the multitudes of different parties involved in the industry.

To give you an insight into the inner workings of Iceland's tourism industry, we take you to a recent conference arranged by the Capital Area's branch of the Icelandic Tourism Association where innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship were on display.

Mutual Goals

Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir, chairman of the Capital Area's branch, says it was very enjoyable to see the amount of originality and fresh ideas at the conference. "There are always new parties coming up with new and exciting ideas and the human imagination seems to be the only limitation we have. This steady flow of new enterprises makes The Icelandic Tourism Association all the more important, as we need to ensure that everyone operates on the same level of quality and safety. We also make sure that the environment is such that newcomers with quality products or services receive the support and information they need to set up their business," says Ingibjörg. The association also serves as a platform where tourism operators can compare, share



and co-operate. "In our opinion, both the industry and customers are better served when the operators are aware and informed of what is currently on offer. Thus an operator providing activities, but not accommodation can direct his customers to a suitable option and vice versa," says Ingibjörg.

Guarding the Treasures

The protection of natural resources is a matter of great importance for the association. "There is a growing concern that some of Iceland's treasures could be in

danger by the increasing number of people visiting them. It is our opinion that this does not need to be the case and with proper infrastructure and funding we can preserve our nation's treasures and, at the same time, allow the world to enjoy them. We have also seen that, as the industry grows, people have started presenting new hidden pearls from all over, as an alternative to the staple attractions," says Ingibjörg.

Smartphone Take Over

The arrival of smartphones into the industry is bound to revolutionise the way we approach travelling, according to Ingibjörg, as is evident by the number of mobile solutions at the conference. "The way we plan our trips and activities has already changed fundamentally, as you can plan entire trips

without even leaving your bed. Smart phone applications seem to be taking this evolution to the next level and it is an exciting time to be working in this field," says Ingibjörg.

Among the novelties being presented at the conference was a mobile phone application, Be Iceland, which enables you to discover whatever restaurants, museums or activities are available in the immediate vicinity in which you are standing. Another application, from Locatify, takes you on an informative treasure hunt of sorts, where you race around an area looking for clues to take you to your next location, each filled with information, pictures and media.

Iceland is known worldwide for its gay rights, as gay marriage is legal, its prime minister is outspokenly gay and Reykjavík's mayor is a frequent



spokesman for gay rights. Pink Iceland capitalises on Iceland's open-mindedness and provides gay, bisexual and transgendered people tailor-made vacations suited to each lifestyle.

Also on display were exciting adrenaline fused tours, standardised quality control systems, guided elf visiting tours and diving courses in between the tectonic plates of North America and Europe. A brief inside look into Iceland's tourism industry thus reveals a landscape as diverse and unique as Iceland itself. -VAG



BEST WAY TO SEE THE CITY

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

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

No. 1 on Trip Advisor

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

Classic Reykjavik Tour – 2.5 hrs / 7 km

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

Holiday Bicycle Tour

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



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

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

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

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

-SHV

Reykjavik Bike Tours



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

↑
 #Egisgarður 7 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 694 8956
 bike@icelandbike.com
 www.icelandbike.com



GATEWAY TO ICELAND'S CULTURE

Languages, History and Cooking in The Tin Can Factory

When discovering a new culture in a short period of time, most visitors fail to really penetrate the core of a nation's identity. While visiting monuments and attractions is rewarding in itself, the true Icelandic experience comes from within and there is no better way to find discover it than through the language, history and the cuisine, according to Gígja Svavarsdóttir, the driving force behind the newly opened Tin Can Factory, an old factory house, converted into an energetic centre for language and culture.

Reykjavik in the Heart

Visitors to the Tin Can Factory are welcomed with a range of choices to discover Iceland's culture, structured upon

Gígja's decades of experience in language teaching. "I've seen that my pupils never seemed to fully comprehend the culture until they'd learned about Iceland's history and connected it to our present. I remember taking people who had been living here for a while on a tour of Reykjavik, explaining the city's origin and history and, after the tour, one of the group members said, with a sigh of relief, "Finally, now Reykjavik has come into my heart!", says Gígja.

Why Are Icelandic Pancakes so Thin?

Using her experience, Gígja decided to offer visitors who are staying for a shorter time the same experience. The Tin Can Centre thus offers an informative crash-course in Iceland's



history, culture and language, giving you just enough to understand the subtle nuances of daily interaction in Iceland. "The language is an inseparable part of our culture and a gateway to a richer experience," says Gígja.

Another innovative course takes you on an excursion in Reykjavik, where you compare the cityscapes of 1900 and today, through collaboration with Iceland's Museum of Photography. At the end of both courses, there will be a traditional tea-break buffet where you'll make authentic Icelandic pancakes and learn what caused them to be so thin.

The cooking course centres on either brunch or dinner, where you'll prepare traditional Icelandic courses with local ingredients, while learning Iceland's history through slideshows and conversation.

Walk Straight Into the Community

The Tin Can Factory has a strict environmental policy and only uses vintage furniture and interiors. High ceilings, massive wooden tables, ancient pump-organs and classic drapes make for a unique and welcoming mood. "We wanted to create something different, something that gives our visitors direct access to Iceland's culture and history, where people can simply walk in the door and feel like they are a part of a community," says Gígja.

-VAG

Tungumálaskólinn



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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TOURS TAILORED TO TASTE

Isafold Travel offers flexible tours to fit your wishes

Isafold Travel was founded 1997 as a family based company, which is run by Jón Baldur Thorbjörnsson. The word 'Isafold' is a poetic name for Iceland. The company has now grown up to be a dynamic all-round tour operator, still focusing on tailored private tours for small groups.

The team of Isafold Travel strongly believes in the advantage of small groups, resulting in more flexibility, more personal service and higher customer satisfaction. It's quite a challenge to 'invent the wheel' every time a new tour is created, however the Isafold Team loves creativity!

Tailored for Season and Style

Isafold Travel offers a selection of guided scheduled tours that take individual bookings. The company guarantees departure with a minimum of 2 persons and normally not exceeding a maximum of 10.

There are a variety of themes offered. For example, there is the culinary tour 'Taste of Iceland', summer and winter family tours, various photography tours, authentic tours with the best seller, 'Iceland Break' and finally 'Winter Trophy', a challenging highland adventure operated in modified 4x4 ISAK's.

Celebration Year

In 2013, Isafold Travel is celebrating its 16th birthday. All of its vehicles are 4-wheel drive, so 4x4=16 will be the theme of the year. So this is the best time to try out the Winter Trophy or Highland Challenge and Comfort Self-Drive tours in the Land Rover Defenders.

Gifted Guiding

Both the tailored and scheduled tours are conducted by excellent driver-guides and Isafold Travel focuses on finding the right guide for each group, depending on language and theme.

Isafold Travel



Sudurhraun 2B • 210 Gardabaer
+354 544 8866
 info@isafoldtravel.is
 www.isafoldtravel.is



DRIVE A SUPERJEEP

Isak 4x4 Rental has specially modified Land Rovers for any conditions

On the summer solstice in 2013, it will be 6 years since the innovative Isak 4x4 rental was established. Isak was the first car rental in Iceland to offer exclusively modified 4x4's for individual rental and self drive purposes. The rental accommodates the many requests by individuals and

incentive groups to drive a modified SUV, which the Icelanders call a 'Superjeep'.

Drive where others cannot go

Isak owns and operates 16 modified 4x4 Land Rover Defenders, either type 110 or 130. They have been mounted on big 38"

tyres for increased flotation for driving on snow, sand or on other soft surfaces, just by deflating the tyres as far down as one tenth of the normal pressure in extreme situations. Then the wonder happens: the footprint of the Defender will be less deep than a footprint of someone standing alongside it.

Equipped for the Extreme

Apart from the construction modifications, every Defender is equipped with an air compressor, ice bumper, snorkel and a VHF radio for communication between the vehicles—along with a shovel and a rope, of course.

Challenge yourself and the Country

Isak 4x4 rental opens up a unique and challenging way to experience Iceland by driving a superjeep, either individually rented, on guided convoy tours, on scheduled challenging winter tours or on explorative U-Drive Tours in the summer.

Isak 4x4 Rental



Sudurhraun 2B • 210 Gardabaer
+354 544 8860
 info@isak.is
 www.isak.is

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE



DRIVE IN ICELAND

Reykjavik Rent a Car Provides Cars for Your Comfort and Convenience

Reykjavik Rent a Car is a leading car rental company in Iceland that specialises in 4x4 car hire as well as low fuel consumption smaller family cars.

"We offer a selection of high performance vehicles that are comfortable to drive and are fit to tackle anything that Iceland's volcanic terrain has to offer," says owner, Halldór Baldvinsson.

Reykjavik Rent a Car have a fleet of vehicles which includes top models such as Jeep, Dodge, Suzuki and Ford; all

available with automatic transmission and considerable engine power—which is needed in remote areas of Iceland.

"All our cars can be equipped with a range of useful extras, often needed in rural Iceland, such as Garmin GPS Navigation System, roof boxes, child safety seats and other accessories" says Halldór.

Reykjavik Rent a Car offers a delivery service and can deliver your rent-a-car directly to any hotel or guesthouse in the Greater Reykjavik area. They also offer a

pickup service from Keflavik International Airport, Reykjavik domestic airport and the BSI coach station in downtown Reykjavik.

"In addition, we offer discounts on car rental all year which make it more affordable to rent a car," says Mr. Baldvinsson.

Detailed information is available on Reykjavik Rent A Car's website.

Reykjavik Rent a Car



Hlíðasmári 13 • 201 Kópavogur
+354 569 3300
 rentacar@reykjavikrentacar.is
 www.reykjavikrentacar.is

-SHV

Pizzeria

tel. 578 8555



Lækjargata 8

Downtown

Probably the best pizza

in town



www.gamlasmidjan.is



A CHRISTMAS GETAWAY

A Christmas Village Rises by the Sea

The metropolitan hustle and bustle leading up to Christmas can often be quite daunting and a getaway, celebrating a calm and friendly holiday spirit, can seem like a faraway dream. Many will be surprised, however, that a 20 minute bus ride from Reykjavik's city centre will take you straight to a local small-town setting of choral singing, calm Christmas shopping, holiday pastries, dancing around the Christmas tree, friendly banter and general holiday spirit in the Christmas Village of Hafnarfjörður.

Each year, the people of the calm port-town of Hafnarfjörður, located just outside Reykjavik, erect a Christmas market in the city centre and ring in the holiday cheer with activities and performances every weekend up until Christmas. The market consists of several holiday cabins where the locals display their goods; including crafts, pastries and hot chocolate.

A Packed Schedule
 Ásbjörg Una Björnsdóttir, manager of Hafnarfjörður's Christmas Village, says that, because Icelandic Christmas traditions are quite unique, the Christmas town is not only about the market. "We want to provide people with the complete Christmas package and offer a wide array of entertainment in

the Christmas Village. The afternoons, from one o'clock to about four, will be action-packed for the children and families—with outdoor singing and dancing, magic and various performances. After four we'll calm things down a bit with cosy accordion or jazz music and a more traditional Christmas mood. We're open each weekend up until



Christmas from 13-18 and whatever time you come you can be sure that something will be going on," says Ásbjörg.

A Traditional Holiday

The Christmas Village places special emphasis on traditional Icelandic Christmas customs. "We want people to be able to get away from it all and experience real Icelandic holidays. Everything here is done by the locals for the good of the community, as opposed to strictly marketing purposes. The local choirs will be performing and presenting their products. One of the few abbeys in Iceland is located in Hafnarfjörður and the nuns sell their quality products at the market. We have authentic Icelandic food, genuine local crafts and real Icelandic entertainment," says Ásbjörg. To celebrate Icelandic Christmas tradition the presenter for all the acts on stage is none other than



Grýla—the Yule Lads' troll mother! She acts as a presenter, performer and also mingles with the children in the crowd. Those who are lucky can even spot her giant cat roaming around.

A Welcoming Village

Even though the Christmas Village in Hafnarfjörður is a local event, Ásbjörg places special emphasis on the fact that

everyone is most welcome to enjoy the festivities with them. "The whole town of Hafnarfjörður is extremely welcoming to visitors. There will be activities going on all over town and there are quality design and jewellery shops close to the market, as well as a small shopping complex in the vicinity. We even have small local lava fields with elven inhabitants and guided tours to visit them. The number one bus goes directly from the main bus terminal and stops right in front of the market, so there really is no reason not to check out our cosy Christmas village," says Ásbjörg.

-VAG



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© Images: Gabriel Rutenberg



THE LAND OF HEALTH

Reykjavik Excursions' Tours Take in Riding and Health Spas

That little rock in the Arctic that is Iceland might seem to have little to offer, but what it does have is beginning to be very much appreciated. Pure air, pure water, unpolluted food, beautifully relaxing vistas, wonderful animal and bird life, nature and geology that is unrivalled are just a few examples.

In today's stressful societies, peace and tranquility are becoming much sought-after commodities. The benefits of unwinding and enjoying life without pressure are well known and now Reykjavik Excursions makes it possible for you to enjoy your holiday and gain the benefits the Icelanders have been accustomed to all their lives.

power of Gullfoss waterfall, Reykjavik Excursions has added the option to enjoy the spa at Laugavatn Fontana, horse riding in the countryside, or snowmobiling on the Langjökull glacier.



The Golden Circle With Extras

Now Reykjavik Excursions has introduced tours that take in the famous Golden Circle but which also add some extra spice. Besides seeing the unique sites such as Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates can clearly be seen pulling apart at the site where the world's longest-running parliament began or the geothermal area at Geysir, with its soaring columns of steam and after which all such spouts are named or the thundering



The Fontana Spa

The recently totally renovated and rebuilt steam baths and pools on the edge of Lake Laugarvatn are one of those experiences to remember. The sauna and steam baths sit



over a natural hot spring and you can hear it bubbling through the open flooring at your feet. Not only do the baths and pools help improve your health, but those with arthritis can benefit from walking on the warm sands on the edge of the lake. and includes the Golden Circle sites.

Riding Man's Most Valued Friend

Icelandic horses are unusual in that they have two additional gaits that make them wonderful to ride. Of course, you can trot, if you like bouncing up and down, but they have a gait called the 'tolt' which is so smooth and comfortable, you could ride for hours without getting saddle-sore. Reykjavik Excursions has teamed up with top stables, Eldhestar, to give an inspiring 1½–2 hour ride, followed by a light lunch and a continuation of the Golden Circle tour.



Ride the Ice

For the ultimate adventure on the Golden Circle, you can head up onto Langjökull glacier for a thrilling ride on the ice using powerful snowmobiles. We're talking about an hour-long ride on Iceland's second largest glacier and the views and experience this will give you are amazing.

All the tours include pick-up from your hotel half-an-hour before departure and drop off when arriving back in Reykjavik. The luxury coaches all have wireless Internet access so you can immediately Tweet or post your experiences on Facebook as you live them, with photos to prove it. You'll appreciate the comfort as you travel and the guide fills you in on the background, history and

anecdotes associated with the sights you both pass and stop at, so you're able to get the most out of the tour.

Taking a winter tour is all the more spectacular, as the countryside changes and you may well see one of the most powerful waterfalls silenced, frozen in an ice sculpture that is astounding to view. This is what makes Iceland so special—its seasonal diversity is so great, it's as if you're visiting a different country.



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THE WORLD OF THE VIKINGS

The Complete Viking Experience is Found in Reykjanesbær

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.



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 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, historical 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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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.'



Unique Geology, Tranquility by the Sea

Sigurður Óli Hilmarrsson, 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.

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.



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.

Grindavíkurbær -VAG

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THE FISHERMAN'S FRIEND

Grindavík's cosy café culture

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



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

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

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

Café Bryggjan

-EMV



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THE ART OF BACALAO IN GRINDAVÍK

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

Call it bacalao, salted cod, morue or saltfish in Icelandic, the cod fish was so important to Iceland's economy that it featured prominently on the Icelandic Coat of Arms.

The Salthúsið (Salt House) Restaurant of Grindavík is the first restaurant in Iceland specialising in the lowly codfish, bringing it up to new heights.

Once the staple of the poor, bacalao has been a celebrated ingredient in

Mediterranean, African, and Caribbean cuisine for many centuries.

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

Linger over a glass of wine from Salthúsið's extensive wine list while listening to the soft ambient music in front of the wood-burning stove in the dining room that serves to warm and brighten those rainy days that are sometimes a part of life in Grindavík.

Aside from the á la carte evening menu, there is more casual fare for the lunch crowd, a café with free Internet access and a bar which is popular with the locals on weekends.

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

Salthúsið Restaurant

-EMV



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WINTER JEEP TOURS

Get the Most Out of a Winter Trip to Iceland with Salty Tours

When you travel to Iceland with a small group of friends, you may be tempted to simply rent a car and see the sights. To be frank, driving in Iceland in winter can be quite a challenge and, by driving yourselves, you will miss a lot.

Luxury Travel Filled with Fun Stories

Travelling in the comfort of a luxury jeep with a guide who really knows the region

like the back of his hand means you will get a lot out of your trip. Not only that, but the drive is filled with fun anecdotes, history, geology and lots of interest that makes the hours fly by too fast.

One of the most highly reviewed tour operators on TripAdvisor.com, Salty Tours offers personalised tours to the Golden Circle with a lot of extras thrown in that you would never see or experience otherwise.



Would you like to do something different on your trip but are not quite sure what? Owner, Þorsteinn, has enough ideas to make your head spin. You are promised a great day, no matter what the weather.

Salty Tours

-ASF



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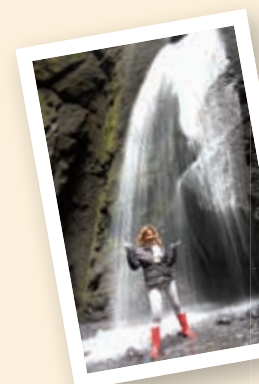
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LIGHTING THE NIGHT

The spectacular Northern Lights captured by Olgeir Andr sson for all to enjoy^{ASF}

Winter in Iceland is a complete contrast to its summers. Those long summer nights, when the sun barely dips below the horizon are replaced by darkness settling in early in the afternoons. However, all is not blackness as the snows transform the landscape into an ethereal picture of beauty unlike any other. Not only that, but those frosty nights, when the skies are crystal clear, the unique Aurora Borealis can fill them with works of art that are constantly changing in an entrancing display that draws many to Iceland just to enjoy them.

The 2012—2013 winter is expected to provide the most spectacular season of Northern Lights for the next decade as

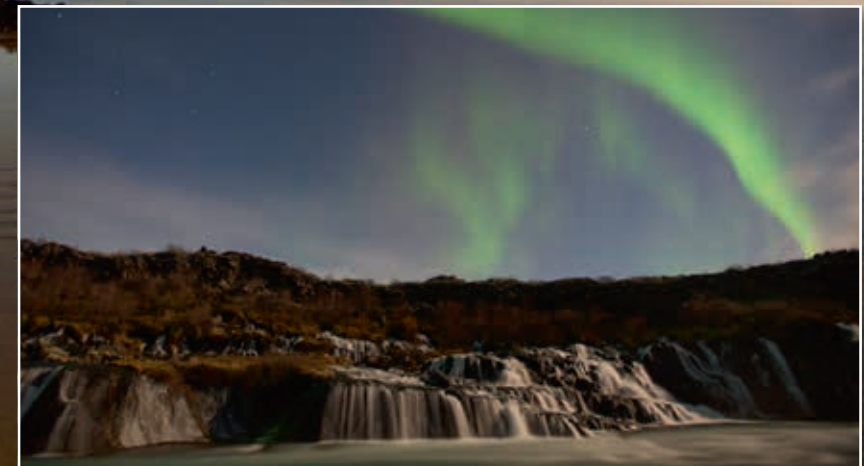
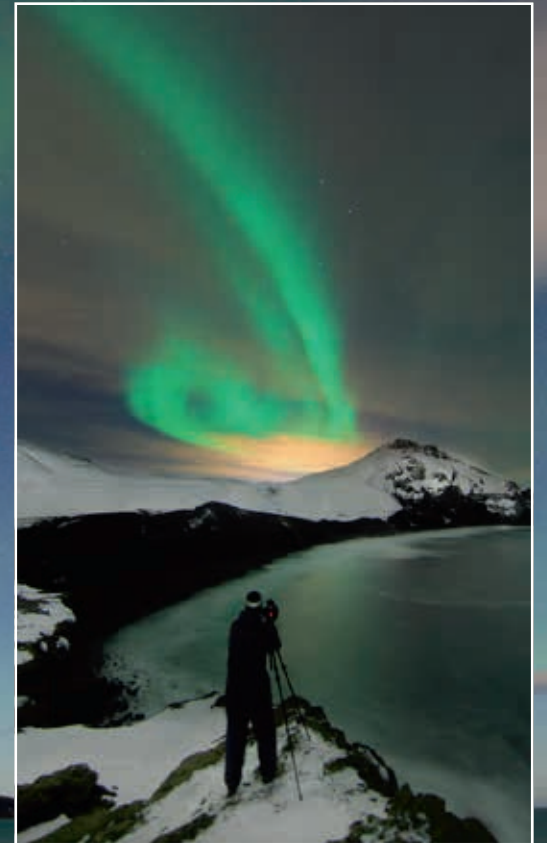
the solar cycle reaches its peak. Across the entire country on almost every clear night, these brilliant, swirling lights in the sky There is never one night the same as another. They appear, dance across the sky in a ballet of light, only to disappear as abruptly as they came.

This will be the best time to view them and the time when the chance of viewing them is higher than in past years. Experiencing the Northern Lights display in person can be awesome. The nights generally need to be chilly and clear. Any time from 6 pm onwards, the Lights can appear, starting as a glow and frequently becoming so bright that everything around is clearly visible.

Their shape and patterns change by the moment and they really do appear to be dancing as they sweep across the sky. Whilst they can be seen in Reykjavik, the city lights don't allow their full beauty to be visible and so it has become popular to take a tour out into the countryside or to travel to different parts of the country to enjoy them.

Just as they are never the same any given night, so they appear differently according to where you are viewing them in the country. Photos you see are a moment, frozen in time of an event that will be very different just a minute later. Thus, this is a performance that can be enjoyed every night they appear, often for hours at a time. ASF

Capturing the beauty of the Northern Lights has been a life-long project for Olgeir Andr sson. He travels for hours to find the spots he feels they will be at their best and then spends hours filming them, sacrificing sleep and comfort to get the best shots. Over the years, he has developed numerous techniques to portray both them and his surroundings at their best. Using a good camera with long exposures, he has produced some stunning displays of this phenomenon that most would never get the opportunity to see in their lifetime. He has become a master in his craft and his masterpieces could adorn any art gallery, company or home.





A VERY DIFFERENT LAND

Grayline-Iceland Excursions Takes You on Tours You'll Not Forget

When Iceland dons its winter coat, the country changes dramatically. The long summer days turn to nights, to start with. You might think that's bad news—but how else would you be able to see the spectacular Northern Lights sweeping across the sky?

Then, the land changes, too. The snow reflects the light, so the darkness takes on a

glow. Not that it's dark the whole day—far from it. The sun, being lower in the sky, casts lights of beautiful colours on all the surroundings. It's a very special time to take some very special tours.

With 34 distinct tours on offer in the winter and about 55 in summer, Iceland Excursions-Grayline Iceland is one of the most popular tour operators. We'll take a look at just four here.

The Night Belongs to the Lights

This winter, the cycle of the Northern Lights, will be at its peak. They will not be visible as often or be as spectacular for another decade. The tour leaves every evening at 8 pm on a magical mystery tour far away from the city lights to find and enjoy the elusive, ever changing Northern Lights, weather permitting. They rely on both their experience and the reports online to find the best chance for each night. The displays can last anywhere from minutes to hours—and they are constantly

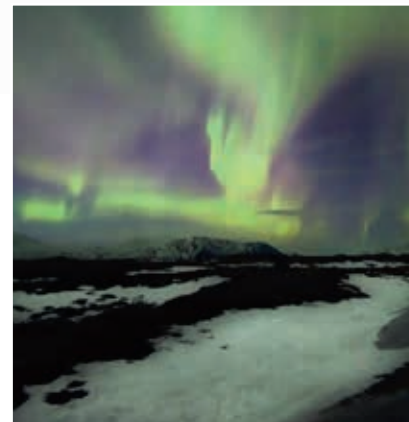
changing, appearing and disappearing in a swirling dance. A good camera, tripod and warm clothing are recommended to get the most from the evening.

Days Display Cold, Heat and History

Over the Christmas period, from the 23rd December until 1st January, the special Summer Reprise takes place, with tours heading out west to the Reykjanes Peninsula. The first takes you to a landscape covered with lava fields, volcanoes, fissures and geothermal areas. Starting with a visit to Hvalneskirkja, a church built in 1887, the scene rapidly changes, visiting the bridge between two continents, the European and American tectonic plates. Then, it's on to Gunnhver hot springs before ending at the Blue Lagoon. You can either enjoy a relaxing soak in these mineral-rich spa waters, simply head back to Reykjavik or take the next tour.

This tour can be joined either in Reykjavik or at the Blue Lagoon so, after your soak in those soothing warm waters, you can continue discovering the area's riches—hidden from most travellers behind the mountains of lava.

The first stop is just down the road at Grindavík. This is a fishing town with a history going back to the Settlement. The tour then passes through the dramatic lava fields to the Krýsuvík boiling mud pools and the nearby bubbling Kleifarvatn Lake, both even more spectacular if there is snow on the ground for photo opportunities.



In the Steps of Jules Verne

A full-day trip that will exceed your expectations is the tour to Snæfellsnes Peninsula. I took this trip in the middle of a snow storm and learnt more than in all the trips I had driven myself. But whether it is clear and fine or a winter storm, the weather only adds to the experience and enjoyment.

This tour has it all—history, geology, bird life, photo opportunities, dramatic landscapes, energy, fishing villages. It's one of the most interesting trips, being so full of diversity and the guide brings it all to life.

The last main stop is Stykkishólmur fishing village on the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay, with its countless islands. The bay looks like the set for a fantasy film. You may also see some whales as you travel its coastline.

Then, driving home over the mountain pass, you are treated to yet another different landscape, with volcanoes, lakes, waterfalls and rivers. In this one tour, you get to appreciate many of the different sides to this

country and understand why people love coming here so much, whatever the season, rain or snow, sun or storm.

Celebrating New Year's Eve

If you're in Iceland over New Year's, you're in for quite an experience. Icelanders bring in the New Year in style. You'll doubtless want to enjoy the festivities—they're spectacular. There's a tour for that and you can join it. It starts around 8 pm with a bonfire. There's a break for a light meal at a restaurant before moving to a viewing spot to enjoy the main event. It's as if the whole of Reykjavik is shooting up fireworks in a breathtaking 360° display that reaches its climax at midnight.

-ASF

Iceland Excursions



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SOUVENIRS WITH TASTE

Take a Sweet Gift Home from Ísland Treasures Delicious Delicacies

Ísland Treasures ehf. introduced a range of souvenir Icelandic candies in the summer 2012. These were 'Icelandic Puffin Eggs' – milk chocolate treats with a soft chewy liquorice centre, 'Icelandic Northern Lights' – all natural, hand made, peppermint sugar candies, in the colour of the Northern Lights, 'Icelandic Lava Sparks' – traditional Icelandic toffee wrapped in a crisp red shell, and 'Icelandic Lava Pebbles' – traditional Icelandic liquorice toffee with a hint of chocolate, wrapped in a crisp black shell. They were an instant hit in select tourist shops and sites around the country. Very quickly, these souvenir candies began to be snapped up by tourists and Icelanders looking for unique Icelandic gifts to take to friends overseas.



Promotions Fondly Remembered
 Ísland Treasures also designs small packages for hand outs at conferences and smaller, lighter versions of their flagship 'Icelandic Puffin Eggs' gift boxes aimed at companies, business people and anyone interested in promoting Iceland. These come in 2 designs: their traditional puffin scene and another humorous one aimed at golfers. Both of these small boxes have a space on the

back for your business card to be affixed before they are individually wrapped in cellophane, giving you a unique business gift which also promotes Iceland. If you are interested in taking advantage of this unique promotional gift, please contact by email or visit the website.

Ísland Treasures

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Master goldsmith and designer of jewellery, **Dýrfinna Torfadóttir** has a personal style, characterised by an original & daring execution. Her designs can be found and bought in Epal Design Store at Keflavik Airport, in Listhús Ófeigs in Reykjavik, at Goldsmith Sædis in the old harbour, Reykjavik and in Gullauga, Ísafjörður.

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Arts & Crafts Gallery SÓLA

Designer Snjólaug Guðmundsdóttir creates beautiful crafts from felted wool & jewellery from bones and shells. Known for her talents, she also weaves wall carpets, often with beautiful reference to Icelandic nature. Snjólaug teaches courses upon request and encourages people who are interested to contact her.

Brúarland 2 • 311 Borgarnes +354 437 1817 sola@emax.is

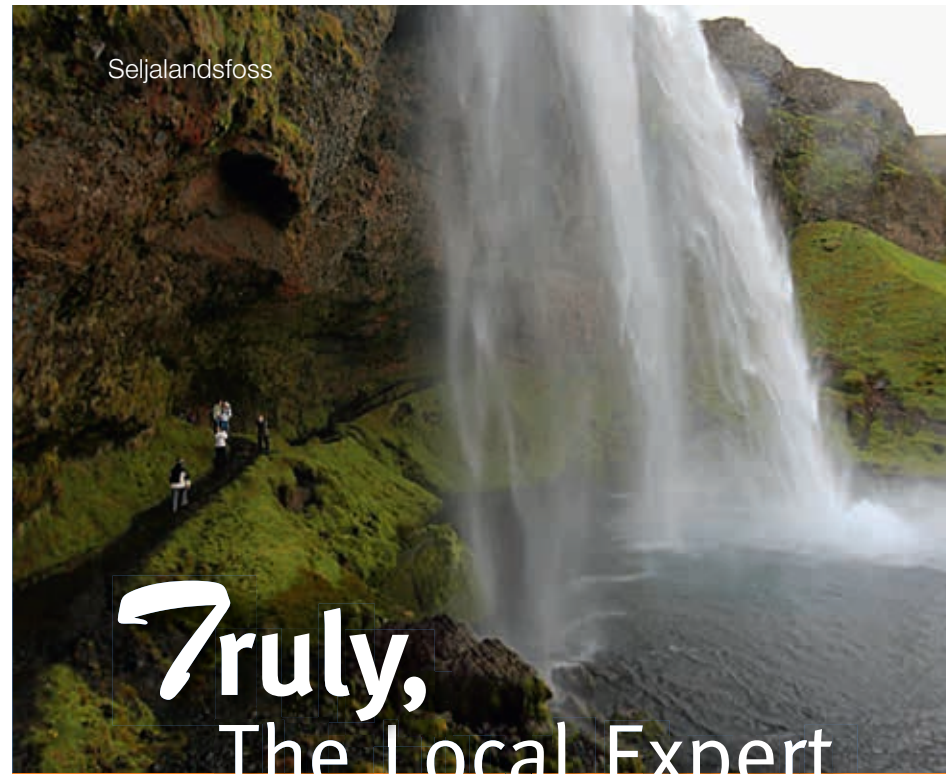


Ullarselið in Hvanneyri is a shop with handcrafted goods, wool products from Icelandic wool and handcrafted items from many more Icelandic materials.

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Northern Lights



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DINE WITH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

A Popular Sightseeing Spot Comes with Dinner and a Place to Stay

You'll see Hótel Brú set back off the road as you drive down the side of Borgarfjörður Bay, just a short distance from the causeway bridge (or brú) that gives the hotel its name.

For generations, this area has been a popular picnic and sightseeing spot and now, through the hotel's owner, Veigar Freyr Jökulsson, it has become one of the most popular restaurants serving a special fish buffet.

Restaurant by the Bay

Veigar is an experienced chef—and it shows. His fish buffet, prepared from locally-caught fish and fresh local ingredients is gaining rave reviews on travel sites as well as amongst the Icelanders. This is the kind of dinner that is worth driving out of town for.

The fresh fish is fried with a mixture of vegetables and spices, creating a light, refreshing dinner. There is an extensive wine list to complement the meal, served in a quiet, relaxed manner that encourages a good digestion.

The restaurant itself looks out onto the bay. It has comfortable, subdued lighting and candles at each table. It's clear that the staff want you to enjoy your meal in this comfortable atmosphere.

Northern Light Dinner

This year, as the Northern Lights reach their peak, the opportunity to see them is better than ever—if you are in the right place. As you can see from the pictures here, Hótel Brú is definitely one of those 'right' places.



On a cold, clear evening, without city lights to distract, the view is beautiful. The Northern Lights can be seen clearly both outside and from the bedrooms. In fact, if you wish, the hotel runs a service to notify guests staying there of the appearance of the Lights in the night. You can let the staff know if you have any limits to when you can be disturbed but, for some, this has been the only time they have seen them during their visit to Iceland, so it's an option well-liked by guests.



The hotel has recently been renovated and so those beds are very inviting—but then, so is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the Northern Lights. This is a time to wrap up warmly, turn off your flash and open your camera shutter. You will be amazed at the quality of the photos you can take home with you—not to mention the memory of the experience.



The Hotel

Hótel Brú is a country hotel, warm and welcoming on a cold night, with hot drinks and a bar to warm you up. It has 8 rooms with private bathrooms and 8 with shared bathrooms. Each of the ground floor rooms has both a private bathroom and entrance and all the rooms have free Internet access. The rooms are charming and snug with comfy furniture. A hearty breakfast welcomes guests in the morning in the restaurant or out on the lovely balcony overlooking the bay on the one side and sheltered by the mountain range on the other. From here, you can see all the way to the famed Snæfellsjökull when the weather is clear—which it is very often, to the surprise of some guests.

In the winter months, if you have a later start from Reykjavik on your way north, being only 65 km from the

capital, it makes a very convenient place to dine, watch the Northern Lights and turn in for a good, comfortable night's sleep, before continuing your journey. It is only a few minutes away from a rich and fascinating history, with many of the country's famous figures having lived and left their mark in the vicinity.

It's great to be able to base in a place that you know you can come back at the end of a day's exploring or enjoying the area's activities to a delicious dinner and the possibility of an evening's ethereal entertainment in the heavens.

-ASF

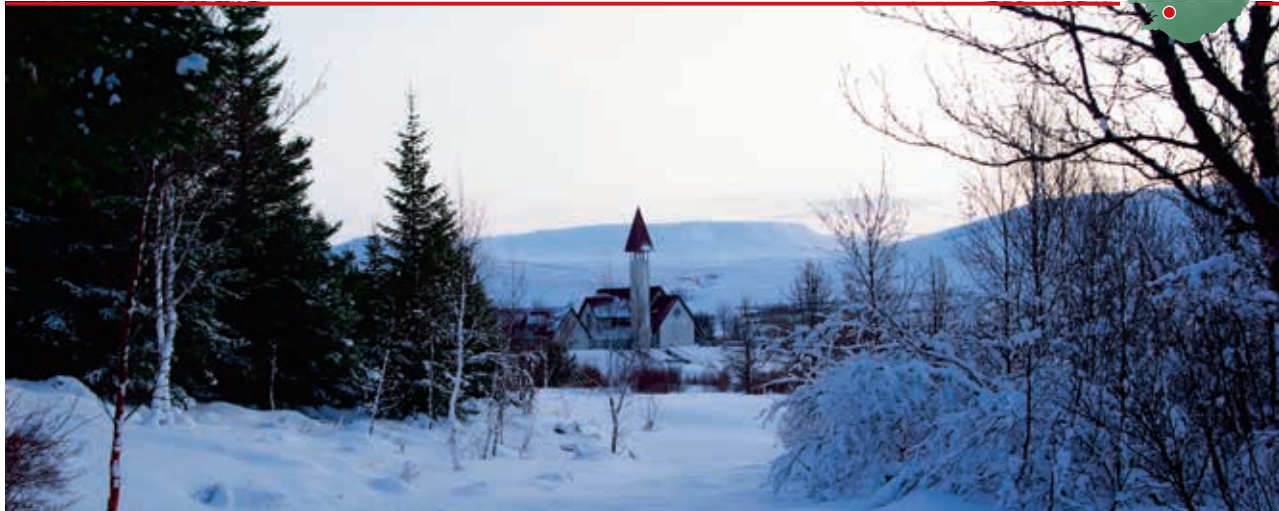


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HISTORY BROUGHT TO LIFE

The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre is in Reykholt

Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), Iceland's best known Saga writer and scholar, is the author of such important and famous works as *Heimskringla*, which is one of the most important sources of Scandinavian history, *Snorra Edda*, a handbook on poetry and mythology and probably one of the very best Sagas of Icelanders, *Egil's Saga*, the story of the Viking poet Egill Skallagrímsson.

Snorri's records of the Old Norse language and Nordic mythology are invaluable to modern scholars. The quality of his writing made him the foremost historical writer of medieval times throughout Europe. His style, bringing his characters to life, makes fascinating reading even today.

Snorri was a wealthy and powerful chieftain in the age of unrest and civil war preceding Iceland's loss of independence. He was murdered by his enemies in his home on the 23rd September 1241.

Snorrastofa—A Living Memorial

Snorrastofa, the Cultural and Medieval Centre in Reykholt in West Iceland, was founded in memory of Snorri. It

is situated on his ancient homestead, which is considered one of Iceland's most noteworthy historical sites. Snorrastofa manages research, a library, an exhibition about Snorri and conference facilities. It also runs a tourist reception and a souvenir shop, which offers books, postcards and Icelandic designs, some exclusively for sale in Snorrastofa. A new exhibition, 'The Snorri Sturluson Saga', can now be visited in Snorrastofa. It tells the story of Snorri's exciting life, addressing issues such as upbringing, education, writing, properties and manors.

Snorri's bath (a geothermally heated pool) can be seen outside along with the tunnel which led from his private manor directly out to the pool.

A statue of Snorri by Gustav Vigeland stands in front of the old district school, which was used between 1931 and 1997. Today the beautiful building, designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, is administrated by Snorrastofa, offering apartments and study facilities for scholars, along with meeting and conference facilities.



The Reykholt Churches

There are two churches in Reykholt: the old church, consecrated in 1887, now beautifully restored by the National Museum of Iceland, and the new church built between 1988 and 1996. The new church is known for its strikingly designed windows (designed by Valgerður Bergsdóttir) and its acoustics. The church is famous for its concerts all year round. A classical music festival of the highest quality, The Reykholt Music Festival is held annually on the last weekend in July.

Snorrastofa's exhibition, "Snorri Sturluson's Saga", can be visited all year round. During the summer season, (1st May – 31st August), the opening hours are from 10 to 18 every day, and during the winter season, from 10 to 17 on weekdays and, if booked in advance, during weekends.

Snorrastofa -AMB

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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



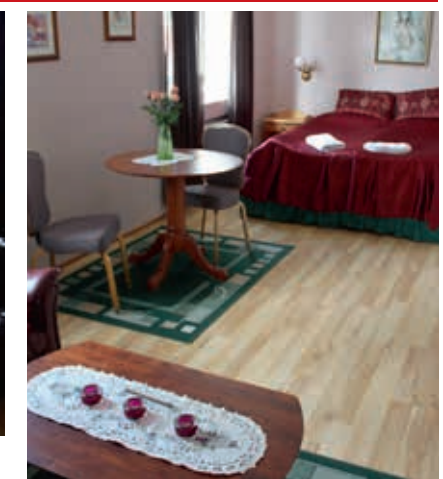
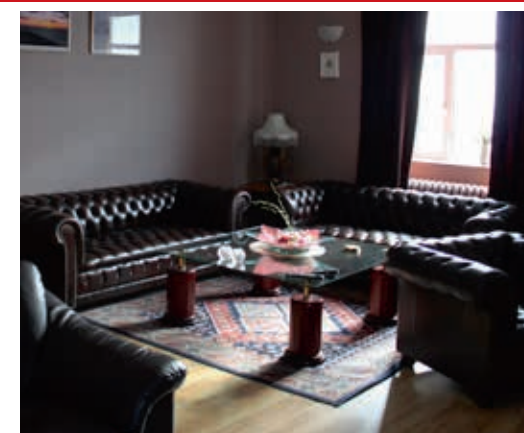
up beds. Owners Steinunn and Sæmundur will be more than happy to point you in the right direction to the natural wonders in the area, among them:

- 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 -EMV

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 none



A HOME IN THE NORTH

Siglu fjörður is a Winter Paradise Worth Visiting Any Time of Year

Located in the heart of Siglu fjörður, Hvanneyri Guesthouse offers great service for travellers wanting to enjoy the beautiful nature and winter sports the area has to offer. Siglu fjörður's community is both vibrant and entertaining. In winter, for example, the town turns into a skier's paradise a dream come true for the outdoor lover.

Hvanneyri Guesthouse has been operating since 1992 and offers good accommodation for up to sixty people with either sleeping

bags or made up beds. Rooms are cosy, each with a charm of their own.

Hvanneyri offers single, double and family rooms as well as one double room with a living room and private facilities. All rooms have wash basin and television, except the rooms on the ground floor, which has wheelchair access.

Self-catering facilities in the kitchen, to which all guests have access and there are bathrooms on all floors. The Cognac

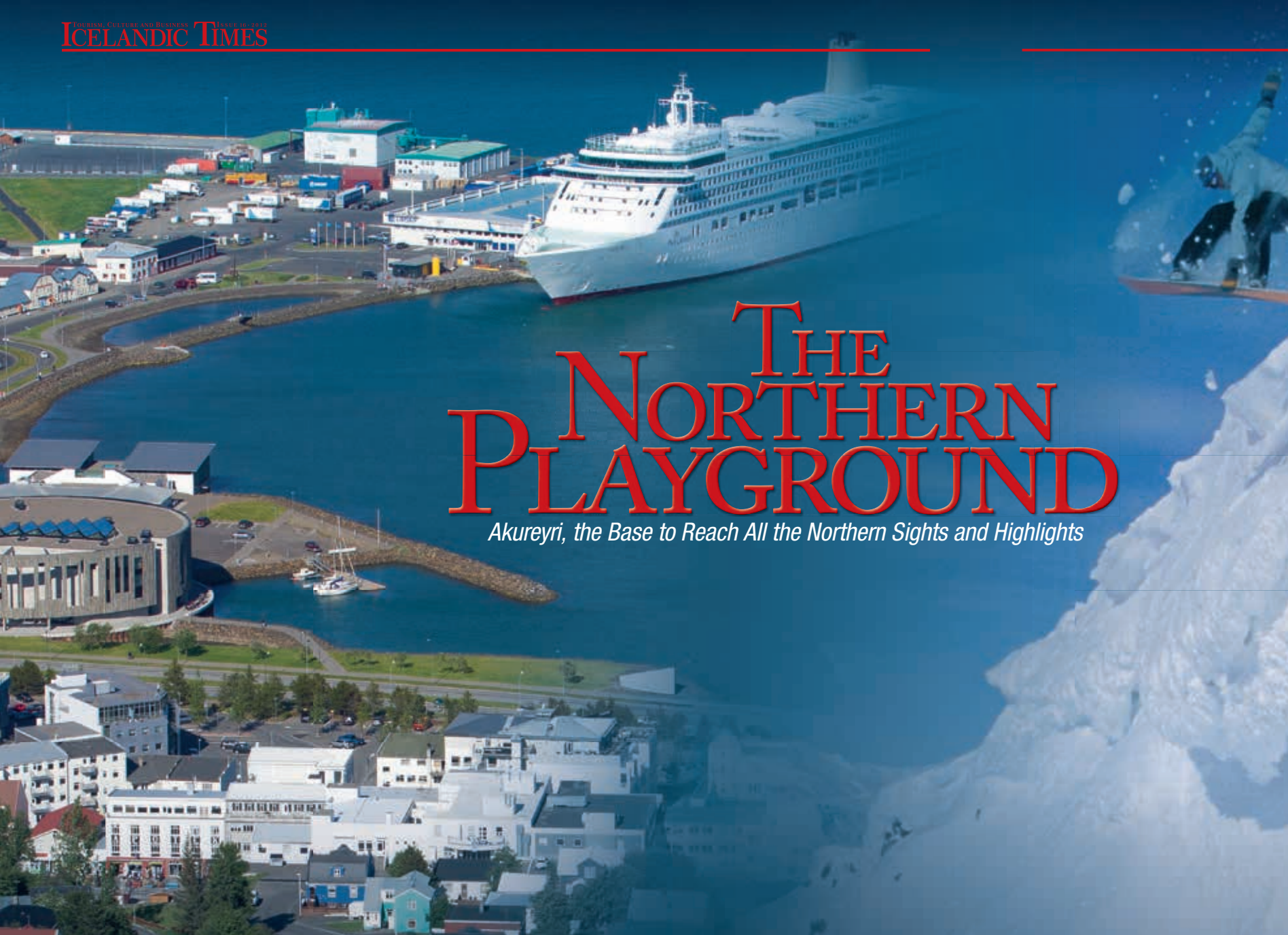
Room or lounge and the breakfast room are also suitable for meetings.

Hotel manager, Katrín Sif Andersen takes excellent care of her guests and welcomes you this winter as Hvanneyri has good facilities for winter sports enthusiasts.

Hvanneyri Guesthouse -AMB/SP

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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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WINTER WHALE WATCHING FROM AKUREYRI

North Sailing's Traditional Oak Schooners Sail to the Whales

Starting this winter, North Sailing goes whale watching right from the centre of the town of Akureyri. Interestingly enough, they are the first company to offer scheduled trips from Akureyri—just as they were the first to offer them from Húsavík 18 years ago. They're finding large humpback whales in groups right in the fjord just a short sail away.

Whale watching at any time is exciting, to see these massive creatures surfacing—and sometimes, jumping clear out of the water close to the ship. Thousands of people have taken photos but the experience of seeing the whales is something that will never be forgotten. It is amazing to get so close to them.

Get the Best of All Worlds

If you're visiting Iceland to enjoy the winter sports activities and to see the Northern Lights, the capital of the North, Akureyri, is the perfect place for you. In winter, Akureyri, on Eyjafjörður, the longest fjord in Iceland, provides the opportunity to see the families of whales feeding close up whereas the bay at Húsavík, where North Sailing is ranked as the No. 1 attraction, is more open to the common cold northerly winds in the wintertime.

The tour itself lasts a full three hours and includes hot chocolate and local snack refreshments. Warm over suits, hats, gloves, blankets and raincoats are available in case of any changes in

weather. With a comfortable viewing area on deck and a warm lounge below, the sturdy, well protected Náttfari is the ideal vessel for the tours and its success rate is very high. Take a look at the comments on TripAdvisor.com to get a feel for what to expect on the tours. The reviews are overwhelmingly positive.

Bringing History Back to Life

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

Their company, North Sailing, began in 1994 with one vessel, the Knörrinn, but news spread quickly and their tours became so popular that two more vessels were renovated.

The Haukur and then later The Hildur were fitted with traditional equipment in the spirit of the 18th century shark sailing schooners that used to fish off the coasts of northern Iceland.

Today, there are 6 vessels in the fleet. All the boats are outfitted to modern standards without losing the beauty and charm of the traditional oak wood finish.

Summer Tours for all tastes

During the summer months, there are up to 12 tours daily from Húsavík alone, not to mention sailings from

Ólafsfjörður and Akureyri in Eyjafjörður fjord. The evening trips, sailing under the midnight sun are special!

There is the option to combine a trip with a 2-hour horse riding tour from Saltvík Horse Centre, south of Húsavík.

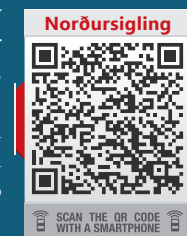
For the more adventurous, there is a 2-day 'Edge of the Arctic' tour eating and sleeping on board, stopping off at Flatey and Grímsey islands. What food could be fresher than fish caught en route and grilled on board!

Eagle Air flies passengers directly from Reykjavik airport to Húsavík for this tour so if you have limited time, you really get the most from your visit. The ultimate is an 8-day tour, flying from Reykjavik airport to Greenland, sailing on the schooner, 'Hildur', with treks inland to

brehtaking views and a BBQ on the beach, eating locally-prepared musk ox meat.

Lunch or Dinner at the Harbour

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



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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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THE PRISTINE QUALITY OF WINTER

Activity Tours with Sport Tours are Dynamic Whatever the Season

Iceland has amazingly diverse possibilities to enjoy in Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter. Until recently, the fantastic winter season was not available for tourists as the Icelanders themselves were not keen on the unforeseen adventures brought on by the magnificent northern winds, with their snow and ice. But, as winters in Iceland are often still and sunny, the beauty of the endlessly white landscape was undeniable and gradually the Icelanders learned to enjoy its vastness through a variety of sports. Then, of course, they wanted the whole world to enjoy them, too.

Sport Tours is an Activity Travel Agency in North Iceland but operating all over the country all year round, offering a variety of tailor-made and activity-packed tours for groups and individuals, both private and scheduled tours. They have been organising package tours for many years and are true specialists on the excitement and action to be experienced in Iceland's spectacular nature along with relaxation in geothermal water, the best culinary choices and very good accommodation.



From Ocean Bed to Northern Lights

Iceland is geologically young and, indeed, is still being sculpted—and that includes the ocean-floors. Sport Tours offer an exceptional diving tour to the unique diving sites in Eyjafjörður where you can inspect the steglamites, the geothermal chimneys rising from the interesting lava-moulded landscape underneath the waves.

The Super Jeep tours to all the natural wonders of North Iceland like Dettifoss, Ásbyrgi, Lake Myvatn, Goðafoss, Askja and many more, are truly mystical and inspiring. The other-worldly pristine days gradually fade into the afternoon dusk, bringing on the Northern Lights and possibly, the dancing elves.

Further west at Tröllskagi, The Troll Peninsula, Sport Tours offer Snowmobile Tours, Cat Skiing, Cat Boarding, Hiking and Horse riding in the mountains. Cat Skiing and Cat Boarding just below the Arctic Circle is quite unique. You can literally ski from top of the world to sea-level and as the mountains rise from the ocean.

Luxury Cottages

You can go deep sea fishing, whale watching and shore fishing in Eyjafjörður along the way. While enjoying all these various activities, the best place to stay is at the cottages provided by Sport Tours at the Ytri-Vík farm. It is a beautifully peaceful place, located on the west side of Eyjafjörður, between Akureyri and Dalvík, close to the shoreline, with a glorious and unobstructed view across the fjord. The cottages are of different sizes and can accommodate between 2–16 people. All the cottages have a fully equipped kitchen and bathroom and a private geothermal hot-tub on the verandah.

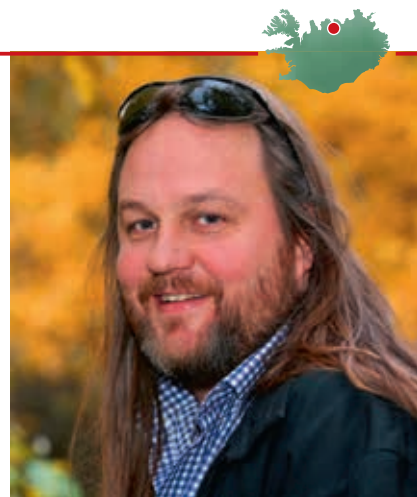
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Sport Tours



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LIVING HIS PASSION

Pedromyndir Camera Shop has been in Akureyri for two generations

Þórhallur Jónsson is an accomplished amateur photographer who once sold a photograph to the USA Today. His striking image shot at midnight in June some years ago, shows a man playing golf under the red and yellow glow of the Arctic midnight sun. Þórhallur regularly contributes photographs in the Icelandic Times.

Pedro-Pictures in Akureyri in 1965 but my wife and I took over the business in 2001.”

Þórhallur says the business has changed significantly since he started with the company at only 18 years of age. “We mostly used to develop films and print pictures, but today, our business depends on camera sales and service.”

Photography In Changing Times

“Photography has been my work and passion for the past 26 years,” says Þórhallur. “My father in law founded

Teaching, Training and Promoting

Þórhallur was one of the founders of the Akureyri Camera Club in 1991. He’s published a book on how to get the most out

of the Canon EOS camera. Today, he teaches photography in Akureyri and in Reykjavik.

“The autumn is my favourite time of the year to photograph because of the vivid autumn yellow and red colours. I love shooting in the outdoors, and I love capturing moments in a photograph which I can show others.”

Pedromyndir ehf



-SHV

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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.

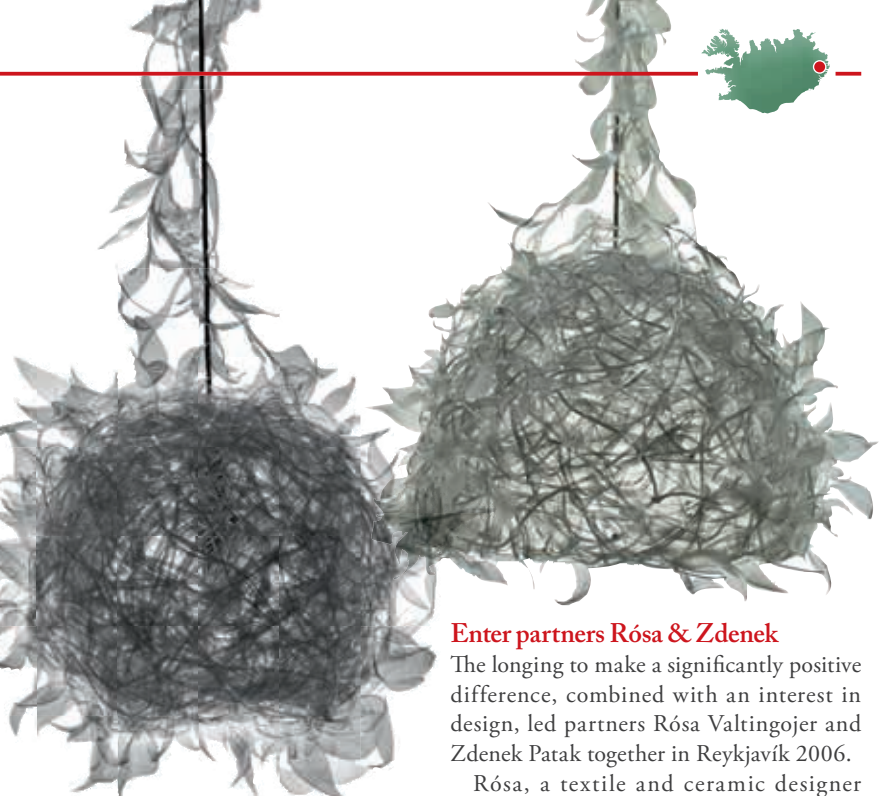
Hús Handanna has quite a few East Icelandic delicacies meant to tickle your taste buds or bring to loved ones for a delicious surprise.

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).

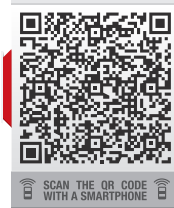
Created from forty-two, two litre plastic bottles, the lampshade is delicately woven into branches that are curled together forming whimsical leaves.

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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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.

BETWEEN MOUNTAINS AND FJORD

Reyðarfjörður's Fjarðarhótel opens up the beauty of the area

Fjarðarhótel, a hotel in the middle of Reyðarfjörður, which lies close to both fjord and mountains, provides ample room for conferences or special occasions. With room for 20 to 50 people, large and small

groups will find this hotel well-suited for their needs. All rooms feature an en suite bathroom, free wireless Internet access and a television. Guests are a short walk from Reyðarfjörður's expansive fjord and mountain



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 mid-night kayaking (in summer only), attempting the challenging 'Seven Peaks Hike', mountain biking, sea angling and bird watching at Skálanes.

Hótel Aldan

-SP



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 www.hotelaldan.com



hiking trails, which Fjarðarhótel's friendly staff will happily direct guests to.

Fjarðarhótel's restaurant melds local Icelandic fare like fish, lamb and beef with the flavours of a steak house, with entrées like flaming lamb crown alongside mouth-watering Western steak and spare ribs. Of course, no Icelandic restaurant would be complete without dishes of freshly caught fish featured daily. Fjarðarhótel also features a well-rounded selection of wines, spirits and beer.

Fjarðarhótel

-KB



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EATING WELL IN HÖFN

Kaffi Hornið Hits the Spot

Kaffi Hornið in Höfn í Hornafirði has a friendly, laid back atmosphere that puts you at ease the moment you walk in the door. The Finnish wooden interior and cosy tea lights flickering on each table lend a feeling of warmth to this established restaurant, which has been run by the same couple, Ingólfur Einarsson and Kristín Óladóttir since it opened 13 years ago.

Making use of the celebrated ingredients from the Vatnajökull region as much as possible, Kaffi Hornið puts emphasis on the prized langoustine for which Höfn is known. Not to be confused the North American lobster, langoustine is also called Dublin Bay prawns, Norway lobster or scampi and imparts a more delicate flavour and texture than their larger cousins.

Specialties of the House

Chef Ingólfur offers a variety of absolutely fresh langoustine dishes including pasta with langoustine in a cognac-cream sauce, roasted langoustine with vegetables and garlic sauce, grilled langoustine with salad and even an intriguing langoustine pizza. Many of the seafood dishes come with a fabulously crunchy Swiss rösti which attests to Ingólfur's 2 years of chef training in Zermatt, Switzerland.

A hamburger calling?

In case you are homesick for a hamburger, Kaffi Hornið's thick and juicy hamburgers will fit the bill, easily putting others to shame. Made with 120 g of pure Icelandic beef from nearby farms, Kaffi Hornið's ever

popular signature hamburger is topped with mounds of melted cheese, bacon, onions and mushrooms, and comes with a generous portion of french fries. Another filling lunch option is the legendary club sandwich, which is popular among locals.

Craving vegetables

If somewhere along your way you didn't get your daily dose of fresh vegetables, Kaffi Hornið offers a lunchtime soup with homemade bread and your choice of vegetables from the salad bar, available daily until 4 pm. Last, but not least, there is a fine selection of homemade cakes and desserts including organic ice cream from the nearby Árbær dairy farm. The addition of Icelandic liquorice to many of the more ordinary flavours like chocolate and vanilla turns this ice cream into a uniquely Icelandic dairy treat that is hard to resist.

Not to be missed

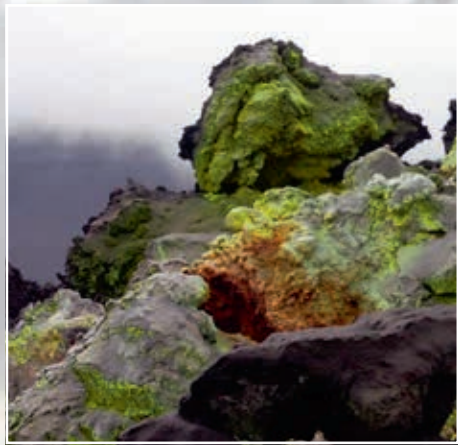
Located right on the main road that passes through the centre of Höfn, Ingólfur and Kristín welcome you to pop in for a friendly meal whenever you are in town.

Kaffi Hornið

-EMV



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WHAT IS A GEOPARK ANYWAY?

More than meets the eye

We keep seeing this word pop up in the media nowadays, but who knows what it really means? In the Greek language, geo means earth. From this root we get words like geography (the study of the earth and its surface features), geometry (measurement of the earth) and terms like geopolitics, which refers to the relationship between politics and geography. But a geopark as a concept, encompasses much more than just a vast tract of protected land, however magnificent, set aside for our enjoyment and however simplistic the word may sound at first glance.

Here is the official UNESCO definition of the word geopark: A territory encompassing one or more sites of scientific importance, not only for geological reasons but also by virtue of its archaeological, ecological or cultural v

A bit of history

The origins of the geopark concept date back to the late 1960's, when a group of scientists recognised the need for safeguarding the world's natural resources. Over the years, momentum slowly began to grow and by 1991, delegates from over

30 countries met in France to sign the International Declaration of the Rights of the Memory of the Earth, a document that advocates international consideration of the protection of geological heritage. In 1997, two geologists, a Frenchman and a Greek, came up with the idea of forming a network of geoparks across Europe.

The new concept began to catch on and in 2000, the European Geopark Network was formally created. Now with 50 members in 19 European countries, the movement continues to add more members to the growing geopark network every year.

A Worldwide Phenomenon

As other countries of the world became interested in forming their own geoparks, the European Geopark Network began discussing the possibility of forming a global network of geoparks with UNESCO, modelled on the long-established UNESCO World Heritage Site network. This led to the creation of the Global Geoparks Network in 2004, which today boasts 90 members in 26 countries around the world, with China leading the way with 26 geoparks.

Enter Iceland

Katla Geopark is Iceland's first and only Geopark, becoming a member of the European Geopark Network in 2011. It is located in the southern part of Iceland and follows the borders of three municipalities, Skaftárhreppur, Mýrdalshreppur and Rangárþing-eystra. Its name originates from one of the best known volcanoes in the area, Katla, which lies under the Mýrdalsjökull Icecap.

The mission of the Katla Geopark is to enhance co-operation between all three municipalities with the aim of promoting sustainable development within the territory in the field of geotourism together with the preservation of natural and cultural values.

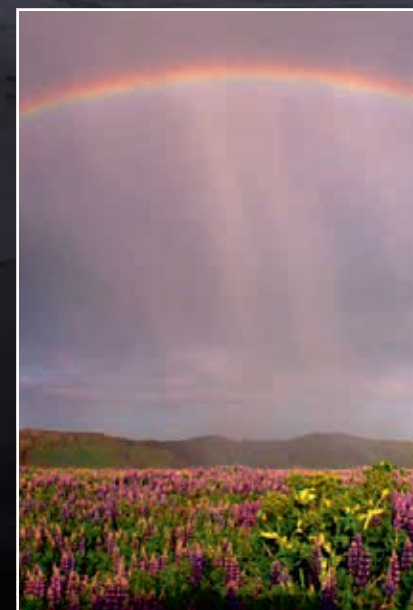
Katla Geopark is, in every sense, the land of fire and ice, with its towering glaciers and active volcanoes. These forces are constantly shaping the land and influenced where people settled. Through the centuries, man and nature have affected the region's history. However, there are other amazing landscapes in the area; mountains, lakes, black sandy beaches, green pastures and meadows, powerful glacial rivers, beautiful waterfalls and vast lava fields.

Various options for accommodation are available in the Katla Geopark. Everyone should be able to find accommodation to their taste from hotels, hostels, guesthouses and farm holidays, to camping grounds, summer cabins, mountain lodges or community halls. Restaurants and cafés offer gastronomic pleasures using local products which have appeared increasingly on menus in the last few years. Katla Geopark offers great opportunities for activities and adventures—ice climbing and glacier walking, hiking, caving, horse-riding, sightseeing, angling, jeep safaris, quad bike tours, snowmobile tours and golf.

Katla Geopark is accessible all year round; each season has its own magical charm in this spectacular natural paradise.

The Park of the Future

The plans for the next few years for Katla Geopark involve a holistic methodology which includes different activities, such as creating new opportunities for business development, such as encouraging local food production of culinary interest for visitors; improving the visitor infrastructure and facilities in



the Katla Geopark; providing educational material and services for tourists and students; carrying out targeted marketing activities to promote the area as an all year round tourist attraction and to provide specific information for geo-tourists. *EMV*





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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STAY BY THE SALMON

Árhús is a Beautiful Spot to Stay in South Iceland

Deep in the heart of South Iceland, close to Hella, a beautifully inviting area appears, just off the right side of the road. Surrounded by Icelandic nature, Árhús offers exclusive and peaceful accommodation by the River Rangá, one of the best known salmon rivers in Iceland. Riverfront cottages, alluring yet simple, are the perfect combination with the Café Árhús restaurant, its terrace overlooking the river.

Offering an á la carte menu with an emphasis on high quality Icelandic food, Café Árhús restaurant tempts its

guests with both traditional cuisine and specialities such as lobster, shellfish, salmon and the "catch of the day".

Abundance of Activities

Arriving at Árhús in winter, just off Iceland's Ring Road, the feeling is like stepping into a world filled with magic. While Árhús is a great location for viewing Northern Lights in the wintertime, this winter wonderland offers just about anything travellers can think off. Well-connected in their community, the staff at Árhús is more than happy to

suggest activities: everything from glacier tours, helicopter sightseeing, snowmobiling, Super-Jeep tours, horse riding and dog sledding to golfing, swimming, river rafting and fresh water fishing.

This is a well-priced accommodation in South Iceland, located in a peaceful environment, easy to get around during winter and ideal for you to experience the wonders of Iceland.

Árhús -SP



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THE ICELANDIC POOL CULTURE

A Secret Swimming Pool in Þorlákshöfn to Relax in

The Icelandic swimming pool culture is something that visitors shouldn't miss. Swimming pools serve as meeting points, where people from all walks of life meet and

discuss politics, gossip and the weather. Each swimming pool has its own character and Icelanders are constantly trying new pools, looking for the ultimate swimming pool.

The new swimming pool in Þorlákshöfn has been called a secret swimming pool by some Reykjavik residents, looking for a more relaxed setting and less crowded hot tubs, while giving the kids a swimming adventure land to play in.

The pool was built in 2008 and features a 25-metre outdoor swimming pool, two hot tubs, a sauna, water slide and an indoor swimming pool, filled with colourful





playthings where children and families can play together in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Ragnar Matthías Sigurðsson, youth- and sports councilman in Þorlákshöfn, says that the swimming pool is already known for its cleanliness and quiet atmosphere.

"Last week I was talking to a gentleman who has been coming here regularly from Reykjavik and he calls the pool his little secret. The reason is that this is not your typical swimming pool, where you have only an inch between you and the person sitting next to you. The inside pool is especially popular as it is hotter and shallower than usual indoor pools at 34-35°C, so during the colder winter days, our guests like to lie inside in the warmth and relax," says Ragnar.

The town of Þorlákshöfn is 30 minutes from Reykjavik by the coast. Close by the swimming pool you'll find walking trails to the coast and the exceptional Strandakirkja church.

Þorlákshöfn Pool -VAG



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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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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 Rlichemont 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.

Lindin Restaurant



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

-EMV

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BEAUTY AND COMFORT

ION Luxury Adventure Hotel frees you from the stress and mundane

Looking for the extraordinary? A brand new hotel is opening in Iceland in January 2013; a hotel which will revitalise your well being and pamper all your senses.

ION hotel is located at Nesjavellir, a 40 min. drive from Reykjavik, where the force of nature merges with exceptional tranquillity and the landscape tells stories of Mother Nature's more turbulent times. With relatively easy hiking trails crisscrossing the surrounding hills and mountains and through centuries-old lava fields to Lake Þingvallavatn, the breathtaking sights, the perfect stillness and purity are sure to nourish guests' inner peace.

Come Apart from the Busy Scene

ION Hotel is designed to inspire, revitalise and enable guests to escape the mundane. Inside and out, they are surrounded by a visual symphony. The restaurant embodies the local flavour and spirit of Iceland. The

menu is focused on contemporary native fare, with emphasis on sustainable, farm-fresh ingredients.

ION's softly lit lounge is the perfect place for guests to connect with family and friends over distinctive local ales or pick a perch from which to gaze up through the tall, cantilevered windows to the stars.

Become Revitalised

ION's spa seamlessly connects its interior to the outdoors through a series of textural transitions designed to help guests peel away urban stress. From the entry way, through naturally adorned treatment areas and out onto the stone deck of a lovely Jacuzzi, flowing continually like a river, guests are transported and revitalised.

Each ION private room boasts incredible views. Each private bath is environmentally responsible with water-saving shower systems. The king-size beds are hypo

allergenic and supremely comfortable, with fair-trade organic linens. Guests will notice a modern, natural and warm aesthetic that immediately makes them feel at home with a luxurious attention to detail. Through the Icelandic wool throws, art and flower vases, hand-blown by local artisans, guests will enjoy a new perspective on rural hospitality.

In the Centre of Activities

Adventurous visitors can truly experience south-west Iceland's remarkable ever-changing natural beauty by choosing from a wide range of activities year-round, from the extreme to the sublime. This region offers opportunities for hot spring picnics, ice climbing, horseback riding, bird watching, stargazing, diving or snorkelling, caving, white-water rafting, snowmobile safaris, jeep tours, glacier walks, fly fishing for trout and arctic char, and more.

Event and Incentive Tours Take Note

Looking to host an event that will be remembered for all the right reasons? ION hotel's conference and meeting facilities can accommodate up to 60 people in its larger venue and 20 in the smaller meeting room. ION hotel is already open for booking. For further information please contact them.

ION Hotel



SCAN THE QR CODE WITH A SMARTPHONE

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 www.ionice.land.is

-SS





NORTHERN LIGHTS ~ MY PASSION

But I Don't Want My Grandchild to be Cross-eyed

The Northern Lights are an amazing phenomenon for all but for one tourist guide in Iceland, it is more than just that—it is her great passion in life. “I love the Northern Lights and, in recent years, I’ve turned my attention increasingly to the sky and space phenomena,” says seasoned tourist guide Ragna Sigrún Sveinsdóttir.



Northern Lights and Civilisation

Iceland is perhaps the most accessible place in the world to view the Northern Lights. In winter, after dark, it is possible to see the lights the moment you step out of Iceland’s international airport terminal. The international airport is only 35 miles from the nation’s capital city. Other suitable places in the world in which to see the Northern Lights are quite remote. They include the northern parts of Canada, Southern half of Greenland, northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

How to View the Northern Lights

More and more people visit Iceland in the winter. First time visitors often expect to see the lights the moment they step foot in the country, which of course is quite possible but not always true. Viewing Northern lights must meet five criteria. First, it has to be night as daylight drowns out the faint light emitted by the Northern Lights. Second, skies must be clear or partly clear. Third, there has to be an eruption on the sun. Fourth, the solar wind which carries fine particles ejected from eruptions on the sun has to be directed towards Earth. Fifth, the particles from the eruptions must reach the Earth’s magnetic field.

Best Time to See the Lights

Ragna Sveinsdóttir says the lights are particularly good this year as we’re coming close to the 11-year peak in sunspot activity predicted in 2013. “More solar activity means more Northern Lights activity; it’s as simple as that. Closer to the peak, we can expect more nights lit by Northern Lights on the average than at other times. 2012 was excellent and we’re looking forward to another two or three fantastic years. It is possible to see the Lights in Iceland from end of August to mid-April. Depending on conditions, of course, it is possible to see the lights anytime it is dark. Statistically speaking, the best time of the day to see them is late evening through to early morning.”



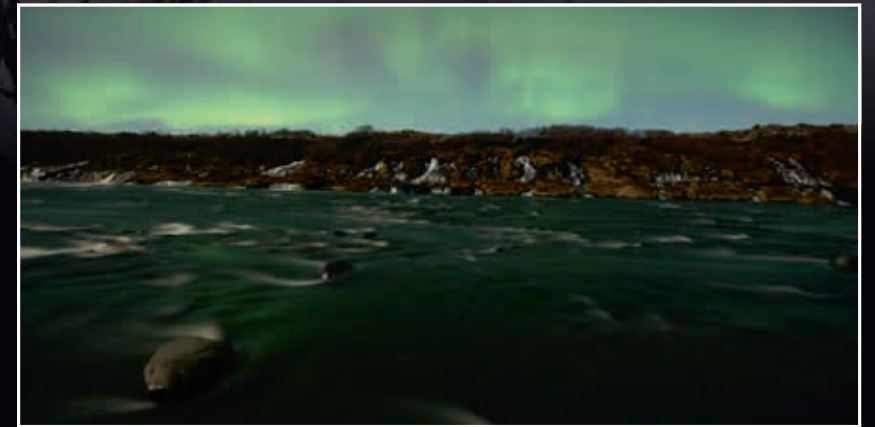
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Remember to Dress Warmly

The Northern Lights attract people from all over the world. “English and Americans are probably the most numerous. We also get people from various countries in Europe, Asia, Central America and Africa. It doesn’t seem to matter where people come from, everyone is interested in the Lights. The Japanese have a special interest in them because seeing them symbolises fertility and success in private life.”

One important thing to remember when searching for the Lights, Sveinsdóttir says, is to dress warmly. “It can get cold while standing outside the bus on a mountain pass in the middle of the winter. One might have to wait a while for the Lights. When they appear you want to spend time outside watching the amazing display and it is much more enjoyable if you’re not freezing cold. Personally, I wear warm shoes and warm socks, leather gloves



with thick lining, a scarf, a warm hat, one or two woollen jerseys and a heavy coat.”

The Expert’s Favourite Places

“It’s a great privilege to live in Iceland and to be able to admire the Northern Lights on most clear nights,” says Sveinsdóttir who has guided for the Reykjavik-based bus tour operator, Reykjavik Excursions for years. “Sometimes it’s possible to see the lights from Reykjavik but for the best view, it is necessary to drive out of the city to get away from the electric lights. The tours I lead take about 3 hours and I must admit that I’m still, after all these years, equally excited to see the Lights as my guests. My favourite places to search for the Northern Lights in the vicinity of Reykjavik are Þingvellir National park, Hvalfjörður fjord, Melasveit, Vatnsleysuströnd, Ölfus and Grímsnes in the south.

I Don't Want My Child to be Cross-Eyed

Superstition has surrounded the Lights from time immemorial. In France and Italy, the Lights struck fear into the population. They rarely appeared that far south and people were shaken by the sight, believing the Lights to be a warning of illness, plague or death. “It was a common belief, at least in some parts of Iceland, that pregnant women who looked at the lights would give birth to cross-eyed children. I know one story from Langanes peninsula in the north east part of the country. In 1960, a young foreign pregnant woman was visiting her Icelandic mother in law with her husband. One night the Northern Lights appeared. As the couple watched the display in awe the mother in law appeared, and dragged her daughter in law into the house exclaiming, “I don’t want my grandchild to be cross-eyed!” *SHV*



THE VIKING

FAMILY BUSINESS FOR 50 YEARS

THE VIKING : INFO

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