

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 18 • 2013



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The winter was surprisingly mild in Iceland this year and it seemed to attract the largest ever number of visitors. The idea of visiting Iceland in the winter might have seemed crazy to some but what these visitors saw and experienced was unlike anything most city dwellers could imagine. Scenes of beauty that defied description, a land that had changed totally from its summer appearance. Short days were forgotten as the nights filled with startling displays of the famous Aurora Borealis.

Now, with the advent of Spring, the weather initially turned paradoxically colder. That didn't deter the birds, however, as they

started arriving in droves, knowing that the cooler days were just the last fling of winter.

Following hard on the migrating birds come the photographers, eager to snap that special, unique photo for the 'Bird for a Million' competition up in the northern area of Trollskagi - the Troll peninsula.

As increasing numbers of tourists visit Iceland, they are realising that there are so many sites that are off the beaten track of the Golden Circle. More and more people are branching out, taking advantage of the tour companies' new offerings to places such as Reykjanes or as far afield as Látrabjarg at the far westernmost tip of the Westfjords.

Others are coming to take advantage of the health benefits the country offers. Whether it is to get their eyes or their teeth fixed or their diet revolutionised, many are coming to experience a healthy lifestyle that they haven't found in their own countries. There are so many top quality restaurants offering delicious meals made from local products that there really is no reason to eat unhealthily here.

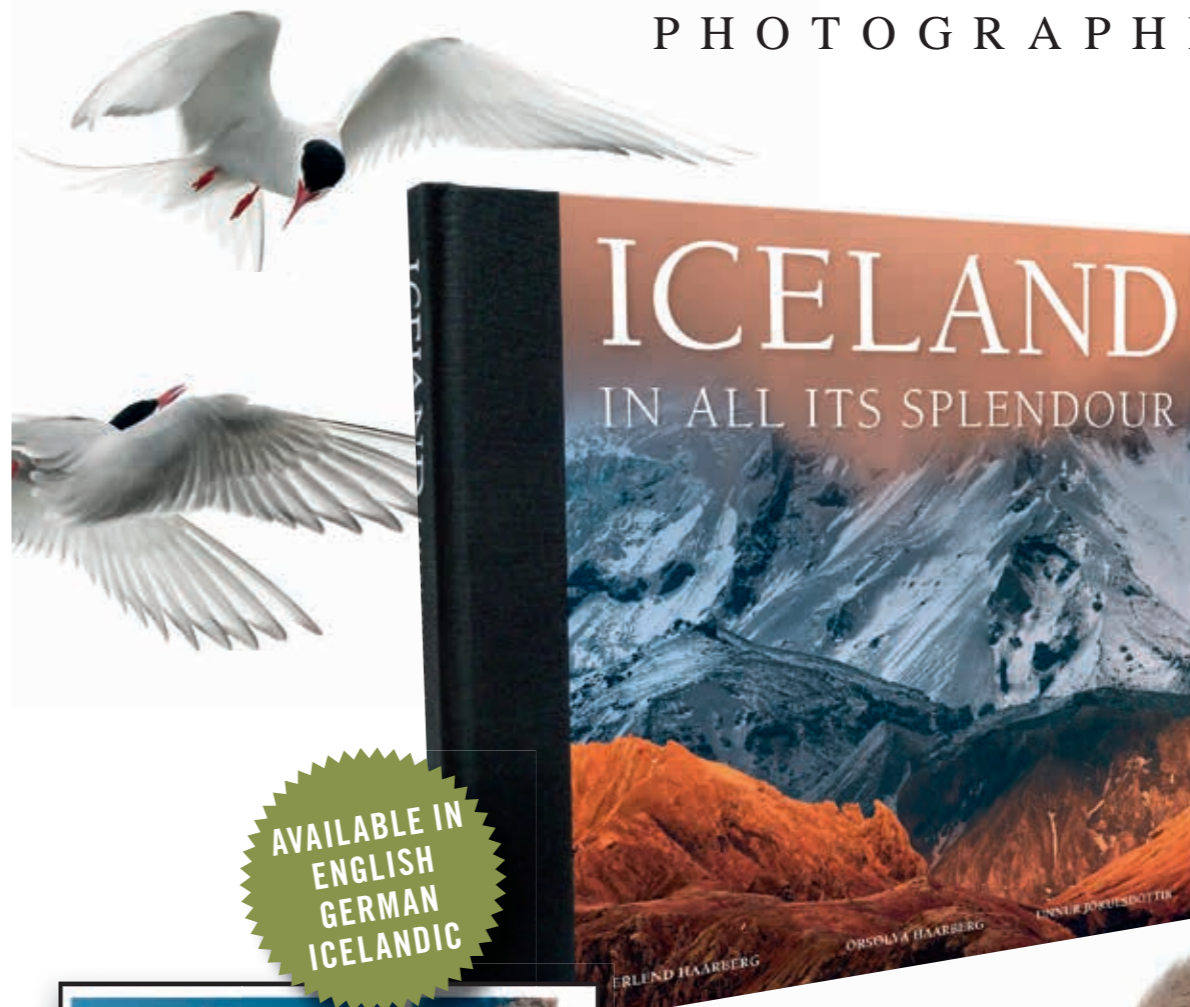
We hope you will take good health back home with you after a refreshing holiday.

Andrew Scott Fortune

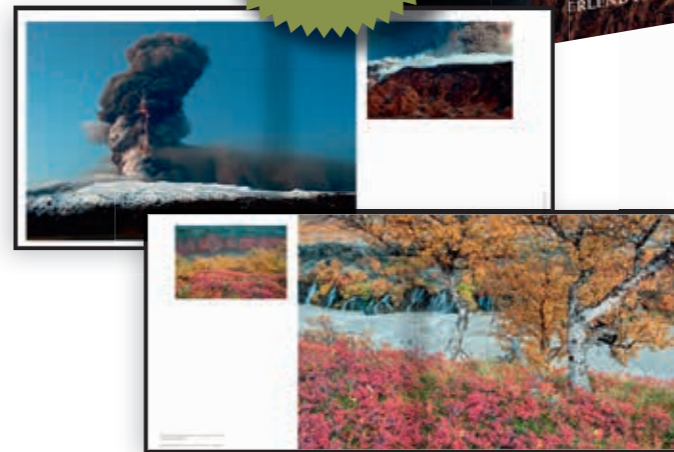
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### Icelandic language

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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## SENSUAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Iceland's largest gallery provides a plethora of cultural exhibits*

Are you looking for some cultural pleasures this spring in Reykjavik? Then Reykjavik Art Museum might be the very place to go. Its three locations offer multiple choices of exhibitions, each in pleasurable surroundings. In the coming months many new and ongoing exhibitions will provide visitors with sensual experiences as well as intriguing food for thought.

Each of Reykjavik Art Museum's three sites, Hafnarhús, Kjarvalstaðir and Ásmundarsafn, provides a different experience. Each has its own characteristics and emphases: Hafnarhús with its urban, rough charm; while one could say that Kjarvalstaðir and Ásmundarsafn, located in beautiful, modern buildings, acquire their charm by an interesting mixture of art, architecture and natural surroundings.



### Ásmundarsafn

The Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum is located in a spectacular building on the east side of Reykjavik. Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) was a sculptor who built the house and used it as his home and studio. He sought inspiration for his

magnificent sculptures in Icelandic nature, literature and the common people. Opening at the beginning of May is, 'Tales from the Vault – Sculptures Inspired by Literature', where his works, inspired by literary motifs, will be exhibited. Through Sveinsson's great storyteller's imagination, amazing representations of the stories spring to life!



### Kjarvalstaðir

Named after Iceland's most beloved painter Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885-1972), the museum just celebrated its fortieth anniversary. Now its visitors can enjoy the biggest exhibition of Icelandic artworks ever to be held in Iceland. 'Zoom Out – Salon Exhibition from the Collection' will be in a state of perpetual flux, as new works are constantly installed and others removed, even as visitors roam through the gallery space.

In the beginning of June, another exhibition will open in Kjarvalstaðir: 'Icelandic Art 1900-1950: From Landscape to Abstract Art,' of interest to those who want to examine the roots of Icelandic painting tradition.

### Hafnarhús

Located in the city centre, Hafnarhús is dedicated to contemporary art. There are two upcoming exhibitions of great interest: Firstly, the exciting 'Interval' installation by the Icelandic artists Huginn Þór Arason and Andrea Maack. The exhibition revolves around the perception of fragrance, time and space; how these elements particularize every moment and experience of our lives. By presenting a three-dimensional experience of a period-room installation, which still remains flexible in form, the aim is to acknowledge the elusive, atmospheric, and temporal qualities of scent.

Secondly, the performances of Magnús Pálsson, one of Iceland's most renowned artists, will be on view in the exhibition, 'The Sound of a Bugle in a Shoebox: Performances 1980-2013.' Magnús, whose art is an interesting fusion of different art forms, focuses on experimental approaches in order to play with language, sounds and space in his performances.

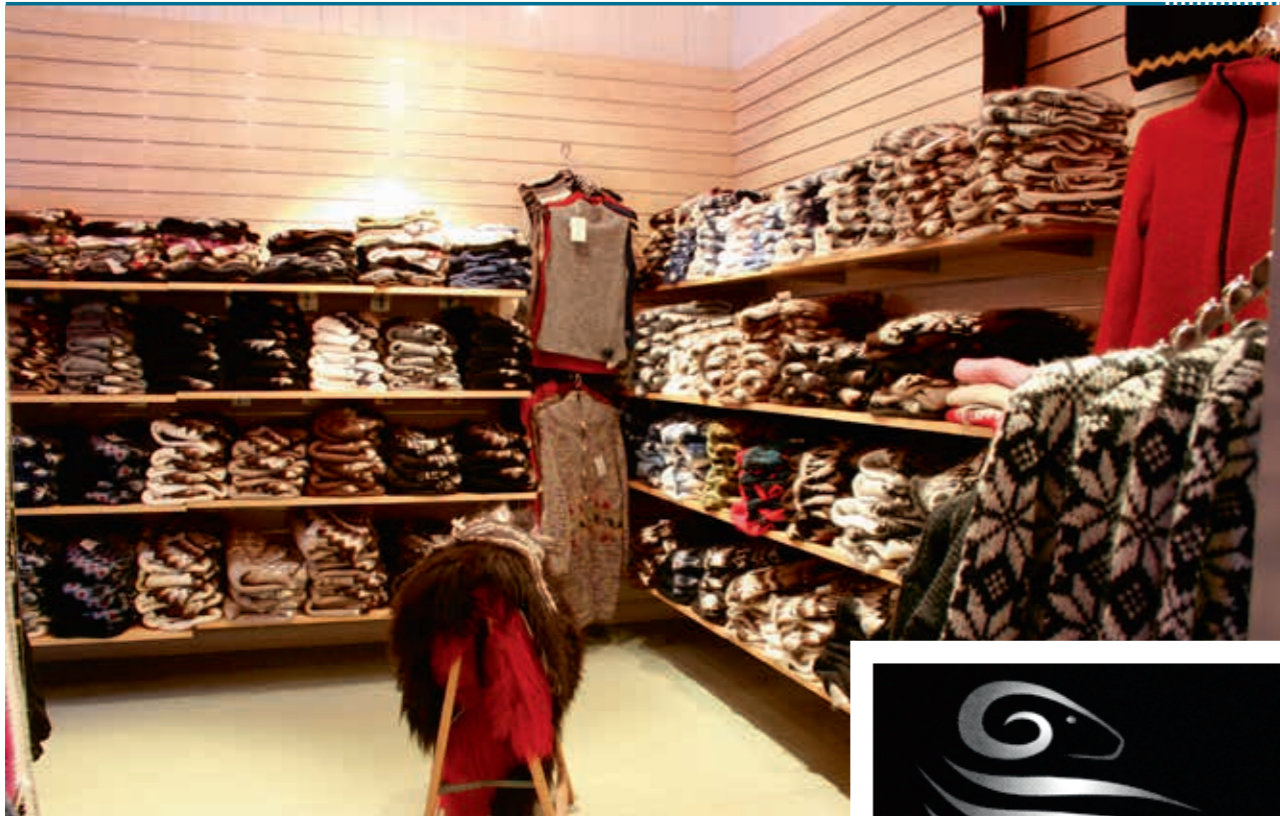
-NHH

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## THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Assn. sells Icelandic wool and products

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

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

### From home to market

The Handknitting Association of Iceland was founded in 1977 to help knitters to get their handiwork marketed. A group of women formed the association, establishing standards and guidelines for the production that was - and still is, an important supplement to many family incomes. Shortly thereafter, they opened a shop to sell their members' woollen goods at Skólavörðustígur 19, the main shopping street that descends from Hallgrímskirkja, the cathedral overlooking the city.

### Find the real thing

In today's globalised society, it is increasingly difficult to be sure you are getting a genuine article, rather than one made thousands of miles away, with wool without the characteristics that has made Icelandic wool so special for hundreds of years.

The Handknitting Assn.'s shop only stocks genuine Icelandic wool and clothing made by professional Icelandic knitters, so you can be certain you are getting the true, well-made product. Look for the logo to be sure.

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

### Traditional and modern styles

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago, the designs took the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young



Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours.

Today, there is a wide range of sweaters, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, bags and many other items in sizes to suit everyone from a Viking warrior (or farmer) to a pretty fashion model to a newborn baby.

The store is a centre, not only for selling the finished products, but also for supplying the wool and all the accessories required to make woollen items. If knitting is your hobby, there is a world of warm designs just waiting for you.

Icelandic wool wears very well and it is not uncommon for people to wear sweaters many years and for them to still look fresh.

Visitors can have their purchases shipped to them and they can also order from the website. That includes the patterns, wool, needles and accessories, not just the clothing. -ASF

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## FOOD FIT FOR KINGS

Ethiopian culture in the North Atlantic

Minilik is an Ethiopian restaurant serving exquisite food. Located on Rauðarársstígur, near the Hlemmur bus station, Minilik is owned and operated by an Ethiopian couple, Lemlem Kahssay and Yirga Mekonnen.

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



### Ancient culture

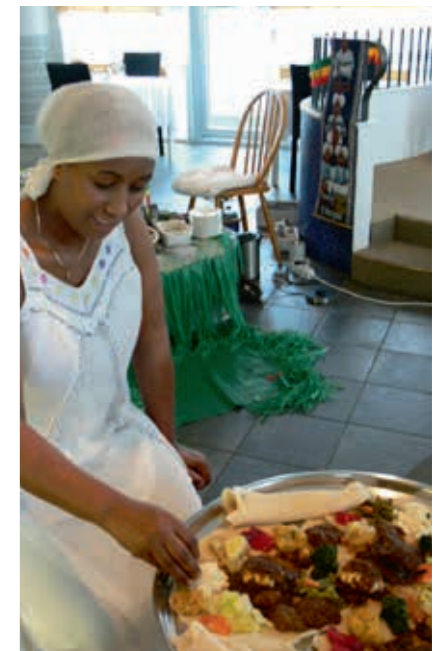
Lemlem, a professional marathon runner and Yirga, a former journalist, have been living in Iceland for a number of years, raising their four children. Though they are both from Ethiopia, they met in Germany. "I persuaded her to move to Iceland," says Yirga and adds playfully, "It is impossible to 'escape'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

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



### Joyful tradition

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



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

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

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 yirga@minilik.is  
 www.minilik.is



## DESIGN MARCH

*Kraum plays a key role in Reykjavik's design extravaganza*

Whenever I visit Kraum, in Reykjavik's oldest building on Aðalstræti in the city centre, I always find myself intrigued by the new ideas and designs that constantly appear there. At this time of the year, when the design festival is held, drawing visitors from all over the world, there is even more to see.

### Exclusive design contribution

Last year, Kraum held a competition for a redesign of the pancake pan - a utensil found in almost every Icelandic household. This year, a design was commissioned to create a laufabrauð cutter.

What, you ask, is a laufabrauð cutter? This is a special type of delicious crisp bread, popular here at Christmastime. The solid brass cutter is a work of art in itself, beautifully envisaged and perfectly crafted as a tool that will last for generations.



### Nine guest designers

In addition to their own contribution, Kraum is featuring the work of nine guest designers from different fields.

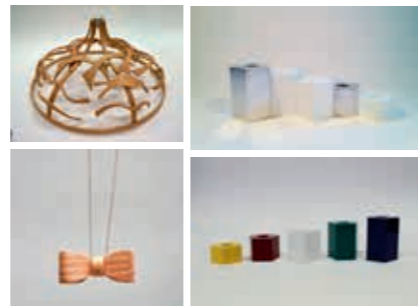
Take, for example, the work of Helgi H. Eyjólfsson, who has produced a range of eye-catching ladies' handbags - each hand-made in wood. I've never seen anything like them. Two dramatic lamps are on show: the Raven's nest, by Daníel Þ. Magnússon and the Home, by Sonja, which are certain to be attention-gatherers. Sonja has also produced a set of candleholders she calls '5': 5 colours, sizes and shapes.

Also in the ladies accessories' field, Elín Hrund Þorgeirsdóttir presents handbags, purses - and a range of cushions - using the 'Slow Design' concept of materials from the past or recycled in brilliantly simple ways.

Behind the brand 'Hring eftir hring' is the designer Steinunn Vala. Rings and necklaces are made from a wide range of different materials; from coloured clay and ceramic to wood and silver.

Naturally, clothing designers feature prominently with Erna Óðinsdóttir's 'Kurl project', focusing on the use of Icelandic wool in elaborate and beautifully fitting or flowing robes.

Milla Snorrason is premiering her first collection featuring patterns based on the



architecture of Guðjón Samúelsson and Reykjavik's harbour surroundings, designed by Borghildur Gunnarsdóttir.

### Bursting with design

Kraum presents the work of over 250 designers in many different fields and the shop is a magnet for those seeking something new and interesting. Whether clothing, accessories, home items or creative cards, Kraum stimulates the imagination of both designers and visitors. The best part is that you can take home what you like (or have it shipped) and be a part of the design revolution that is sweeping Iceland.

-ASF

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Aðalstræti 10 - 101 Reykjavík  
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www.kraum.is



## CULINARY DELIGHTS AROUND ICELAND

*Isafold Travel offers Personalized and Customized Tours*

There are countless ways to explore Iceland, but all too many leave out the diverse and unique Icelandic cuisine. Isafold Travel has a solution with their innovative culinary tours, which combine authentic Icelandic food experiences with the famous attractions Iceland offers.

Imagine, instead of grabbing a quick roadside snack, you get a personalized Master chef's introduction to the savory langoustine, tasting caramel made from rhubarb and savor some locally brewed beers. Isafold Travel's aim is to get as

close to the source and give as authentic an experience as possible. The tours will thus, on occasion, take you into chefs' homes to get the inside scoop on Icelandic cuisine; into geothermal greenhouses or out into Breiðafjörður Bay, to taste 'Viking sushi' by catching some fresh sea urchins, to be consumed just moments after coming out of the ocean.

### Customize Your Own Tour

Isafold Travel places special emphasis on giving a personalized experience to its



customers, offering easily customized trips that focus on small groups. If you are a bird enthusiast and a gourmand, then Isafold Travel will blend them together, whereas if you're more of a burger and pizza person, but a photography enthusiast, they will also build the right package for you.

If you like to drive yourself, Isafold Travel offers the U-drive rental package, using the modified Land Rover Defenders of sister company, ISAK 4x4 Rental. You can travel around the highlands by yourself using pre-arranged routes in the GPS devices, with a detailed written itinerary and pre-booked accommodation.

-VAG

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## RENT YOUR OWN SUPER-DEFENDER

*The Icelandic 4x4 Culture Uncovered*

Because of the often-harsh landscapes of Iceland, ordinary vehicles can't always take you to the places you want to go. This is why ISAK 4x4 Rental rents specially modified 4x4 jeeps that open up new territories for adventurous travellers.

When diving into Icelandic culture, some go for the rich history, while others go for the music scene, but perhaps the most 'Icelandic' of them all is the 4x4 culture. Icelanders have developed special skills in modifying 4x4 vehicles and maneuvering them in extreme conditions, and this

has sprouted a whole new culture, where conquering the hardest-to-reach places of Iceland is the ultimate goal.

Thanks to the people of ISAK 4x4 Rental, you don't have to spend countless hours and money modifying your truck and amassing experience. They provide fully equipped jeeps to rent and the necessary training and information required.

The 4x4 jeeps are Land Rover Defenders, specially modified with 38" tyres and equipped with air compressors (to inflate or deflate the tires according to surface density); ice bumper; snorkel; GPS; a radio to communicate between vehicles, and all other necessary equipment - including, of course, a shovel! But don't worry, getting into rough terrain is all part of the adventure.

All you need is a valid driving license, maybe just a bit of courage, and you'll be crossing the un-bridged Icelandic highland rivers in the in no time.

-VAG

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## THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

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

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

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

### A True Fisherman

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

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

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

He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no-one else had thought of

trying. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and from them, made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

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

### Dining as a Seafaring Experience

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

### Smoked in Succulence

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

-ASF



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# GIFTS FROM THE VIKING

*Take home a part of Iceland with you for posterity*

The etymology of 'souvenir' lies in the similar French word meaning 'to remember', 'to recall'. For almost sixty years, travellers have been buying their gifts and souvenirs from 'The Viking'.

## The Tailor from the North

Sigurður Guðmundsson opened the first store in the '50s in the northern town of Akureyri. In the beginning, the shop sold souvenirs in the summer and mainly wooden toys in the winter. Sigurður was a tailor and that's where the tradition of selling local products began, a tradition continuing to the present day. Tinna Berglind Guðmundsdóttir, Sigurður's

granddaughter and shop manager has helped in the store since she was 7 years old.

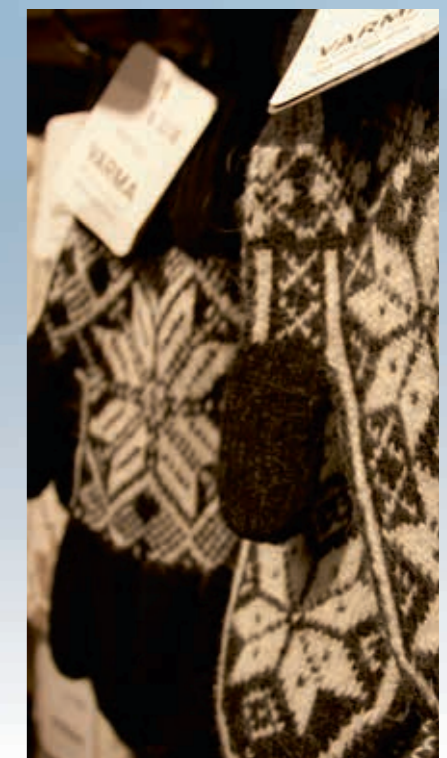
## Symbols of Iceland

Ice, Vikings and volcanoes. Big symbols of Iceland. "We have one of the biggest collections of gifts and souvenirs in Iceland", says Sigurður Guðmundsson, the shop owner. The six stores around the country offer great gift options to fit everyone's budget: photo albums or books about Vikings and their sagas; traditional and warm lopapeysa (wool sweaters); Yule lads or troll statues; cool T-shirt designs by 'The Viking'. For something more fancy, there is the silver

and lava stone jewellery or a fine set of wine glasses of Icelandic design. Children would love to play with a puffin stuffed toy. All the products are provided by local producers.

## Feel the warmth of Iceland

The traditional knitted sweaters started to become popular in the 1950's. The yarn used, lopi, is made from 100% natural Icelandic sheep wool, which has the property of keeping you warm, letting your skin breathe and being waterproof at the same time. It is believed that the origin of 'peysa' comes from the French word 'paysan' (peasant). As French sailors arrived



in Iceland they pointed at the farmers and said, "Paysan!" and the Icelanders thought they were referring to their wool sweaters.

'The Viking' collaborates with local producers and has a big collection of sweaters in different sizes and colours along with the very popular hats and fluffy woollen mittens.

## Six locations around the country

Five years ago, the family decided to expand their stores. Now, there are three in Reykjavík at Hafnarstæti 3 and on the city's main shopping street, Laugavegur 1. A new shop opened at Laugavegur 4 in June, 2012. In their home town, of Akureyri, you

can find them again on Hafnarstræti and down by the old harbour and in the West Fjörds, in the town of Ísafjörður.

The family business is making a full circle going back to Akureyri. In the beginning of June 2012, Cafe Björk opened in the one of the most beautiful locations in town, the Botanical Garden. With a terrace and surrounded by flowers, this is a must if you are in Akureyri.

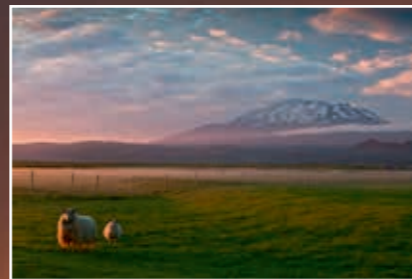
## Forget about taxes

Don't forget to have your taxes refunded at the airport or in the last port where your ship stops in Iceland. You'll get 15% back. And here's another tip: you can get discounts with 'The Viking' coupons from the Visitor's Guide handbook!

-AB

**The Viking**  
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www.theviking.com





# ICELAND THROUGH THE LENS

*Travel in style with a Native Expert Photographer*

Native landscape photographer and tour operator Skarpi invites you to join him on a photographic adventure in Iceland. His images have appeared in many national and international publications, books and calendars, including USA Today, Discover Magazine, Digital Photo Magazine, Daily Mail, The Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Daily Express and The Independent to name but a few.

Skarpi's full name is Skarphéðinn Þráinsson but his friends, colleagues and photo tour guests use his short name most of the time. Along with running a stock photography website, he works on various photography projects, publishes postcards and offers photo tours and workshops in Iceland for photographers who wish to experience the magic of landscape photography.

## Favourite techniques

Skarpi specialises in subjects such as volcanoes, ice-caves, animals and classic landscapes. His impressive portfolio includes top class images taken in every corner of the country. He loves shooting images of moving water, whether it is a small creek in the Vatnajökulsþjóðgarður National Park, or a part of the rugged Icelandic Atlantic coastline. His images are expertly composed, exposed and reproduced and are sure to inspire master photographers and novices alike.

Although most of Skarpi's photographs are taken during the day, his vast portfolio includes shots from every time of day and night – often employing long exposures.

## Photo Tours and Workshops

Skarpi offers private and scheduled photography tours from Reykjavik lasting from one to 13 days. His photo tours and workshops are incredibly good value for money considering the small size of his groups and his professional attention.

In winter, he focuses on ice-caves, frozen waterfalls and glacier views along with the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights dancing across the night sky. In summer, he turns his lens towards the amazing colours of the vegetation and strikingly vivid colours of the many geothermal areas displaying yellow, green and red with an endless variety of shapes and patterns.

## Favourite Photo Locations

Iceland offers amazing opportunities for photographers but there are some places which are more photogenic than others. According to Skarpi, these include Þórsmörk and Vík areas in the south of Iceland; Snæfellsnes peninsula north of Reykjavik; the south coast of Iceland with its ice-caves, which are generally considered safe to access from November through March; Jökulsárlón Glacier lagoon with myriads of shapes, sizes and colours; the Golden Circle with Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir geothermal area; Landmannalaugar Nature Reserve in the rugged volcanic highlands in south Iceland; Hveravellir geothermal area - also in the highlands of Iceland - as



well as the colourful rhyolite Kerlingarfjöll mountains and geothermal areas.

Skarpi operates a comfortable 8 seater 4x4 Mercedes Sprinter, which means the maximum number of participants on any given tour is 8 in addition to Skarpi himself. If you're into photography you'll enjoy taking one of Skarpi's tours and travelling the country with him.

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[skarpi@skarpi.is](mailto:skarpi@skarpi.is)



## UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

*Season Tours gives personalised service to make your holiday great*

Whether you are interested in sailing, hiking, driving, strolling or flying above Iceland, Season Tours can fulfill your dreams and cater to all your wishes. Specialized, knowledgeable guides provide the rest as they educate, inform, entertain and inspire you on your travels.

the Vikings, the Icelandic Sagas, the history of this country, its geology, culture, cuisine, flora and fauna. The interesting and well documented 1100 years of human habitation of this volcanic island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean will come alive at the places where the most significant events took place.

### Guides open up the country

Season Tours is a company that specializes in small groups and personalized services. Their staff are dedicated to rendering quality service. Their guides were educated at the University of Iceland and will not only show you around the beautiful and inspiring nature of Iceland but also tell you all about

### Gourmet guiding

Among the staff are gourmets interested in all types of food and with expert knowledge of the New Nordic Cuisine. Join their extremely popular gourmet tour and enjoy tasting while learning about Icelandic food through the ages. Season Tours will make sure you stay at the best accommodation

available and dine at Slow Food restaurants offering local ingredients and dishes. It is a great adventure to visit a farm and then taste its products prepared by master chefs.

Season Tours cater to all your needs and plans your stay from A-Z. A number of interesting and specialized tours from Reykjavik and Akureyri are available but you can also list your wishes and something personalized will be scheduled just for you. Season Tours can also arrange a rental car of your liking or lend you one of theirs. A guide can be a part of the package or assistance given with the planning and scheduling of your travels. Guides are hired for a half or a full day and can meet you wherever you like.

### Year-round personal tours

Season Tours operates all year round. In winter, they hunt the Northern Lights with great success. For larger groups, the company offers buses, accommodation and activities at desired levels. Tours are always customized to fit the individual need of any given group and in accordance with all the customer's wishes. Season Tours is your friend and travel organizer in Iceland. You cannot go wrong in their hands.

-S.T.S



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+354 863 4592  
info@seasontours.is  
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## 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 hjá 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 hjá Úlfari is truly one of Reykjavik's hidden gems where fine dining and Icelandic family values come together in a feast for the palate!

-JB



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## 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 – 11 hrs / 11 km and Lake Challenge & Bike – 6 hrs / 64 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

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## ICELANDIC SMILES

*A lovely smile lights up the countenance of the wearer*



In today's sugar-fed society, our teeth take a battering and very often it shows. Many modern food habits are harmful to our teeth and can lead to unsightly fillings. That's not to mention all the problems that arise with gum diseases and with teeth being discoloured, uneven or crooked. However, modern dentistry has progressed to not only keep pace with the problems but to help resolve them better than at any time in the past.

### Iceland as a Health Tourism location

In recent years, Icelanders have become aware of the health treasures they have in their hands and Iceland is fast becoming one of the world's hottest health tourism spots. With highly trained professional specialists and a currency that was recently devalued, it has become an economical way to get treatments which could be prohibitively expensive in other countries.

### Dedicated dentistry to resolve problems

Icelandic Smiles is located close to some of the major hotels in Reykjavik. Two dentists working in different dental fields have pooled their talents to provide a top class service to help resolve problems with both teeth and mouths that are troubling people.

Þorður focuses on aesthetic dentistry. He uses both the latest technology and the best, most trusted materials. The results are quite outstanding.



Very often, unsightly diseases develop in the gums, which can cause functional and aesthetic problems. Gunnlaugur focuses on the treatment of periodontal diseases and takes care of the implants that can restore your smile to its natural radiance and enable you to eat properly once again.

### Enjoy your holiday, return with a smile

If you're taking your holiday, you hardly want to spend all your time in a dentist's chair but you will find that a lot can be accomplished in even one or two appointments that can be geared to your schedule. Their quick and efficient service will leave you feeling fine with lots of time still available for seeing the sights and enjoying the culinary delights and nightlife that Reykjavik is famous for. Best of all, you'll return home with a winning smile and renewed confidence.



-ASF

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## LEADERS IN THE GEOTHERMAL WORLD

*Iceland GeoSurvey provides research, counsel, education and training*

Winters in the Northern Hemisphere have short days and long hours of darkness. At the beginning of the 20th century, matters were made much worse by the use of coal to heat homes and run industry. Reykjavik's skies were blackened by dark clouds of pollution, like many other countries.

However, by 1928, Reykjavik's skyline was about to change. Iceland was one of the first countries to recognise the potential of geothermal energy and exploit it for domestic heating. Advances in research and technology led to a slow decline in CO2. In 1975, the number of houses in Reykjavik connected to the hot water rose to 96% and carbon emissions plunged to approx. 20,000 tonnes/year. Improvements continued and today, with nearly every house connected, emissions are negligible and the skies are completely clear once again.

### Foundation of Specialization

Research and development in the geothermal field has been spearheaded by Icelandic engineers and academics, working together with industry and the power companies. In 2003, Iceland GeoSurvey or ÍSOR, was spun off from its parent company, the National Energy Authority of Iceland, Orkustofnun, and tasked to provide research, training and consulting services worldwide to the geothermal industry, much of it hands-on in the field.

### Education and Training

ÍSOR has become the leading provider of scientific and technical expertise, not only in Iceland but throughout the world, based on over 60 years experience.

Iceland GeoSurvey handles the major part of teaching at the UN Geothermal Training Programme, taught both in



developing countries, at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik University and REYST. Engineers are trained to PhD level and graduates maintain close contact once in the field in their own countries. Since 1979, ÍSOR has trained over 480 engineers, working in Africa, Asia, Europe and Central and South America.



### Geological Mapping

For several decades now, ÍSOR's specialists have been involved in creating highly detailed geological maps all over Iceland for the energy companies, municipalities and private clients.

As part of their remit for education, they have recently published a map of the Reykjanes peninsula in S.W. Iceland for the general public - the first of a projected series.

Their mapping techniques are now being used in Ethiopia, in the northernmost

part of the African rift valley. 2011 also saw the start of a cooperative project with nine northern European nations and participation in the European Thermomap research project, which aims to obtain and harmonize geographical information to assess the prospects of harnessing heat from the upper levels of superficial deposits.

### Countries using Geothermal Energy

After a slow start in the 20th century, more countries have been recognising the potential of harnessing geothermal energy. In 1985, 24 countries were using it. By 1995, there were 28, with 38% of production coming from developing countries. By 2000, there were 58 countries, with 47% of the world total production coming from the developing world.

Capacity has also expanded considerably. In 1995, Iceland produced 50 MWe, but by 2000, this had risen to 170 MWe. World production in 1975 was only 75 MWe but saw a 500% increase in the following 5 year period to 462 MWe, a further 223% rise to 1495 MWe by 1984 and 150% by 2000. A very large part of this increase is attributable to the efforts of Iceland GeoSurvey's engineers and their graduates.

Although state-owned, it is a self-financing, non-profit organisation that receives no direct government funding.

In 2011, almost one third of Iceland Geosurvey's revenue came from abroad, with its main projects being in Chile, Croatia, Dominica, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nicaragua and Turkey.



This is not the white, air-filled bread that you can squeeze in your hand into a messy dough ball, but a loaf that makes a filling meal, packed with goodness.

If you're looking for sandwiches, packed with fresh meats and crunchy vegetables that will leave you feeling comfortably full for lunch, drop by Björns Bakarí. You'll find a lot of eye-teasing, mouth-watering pastries, with a range of drinks and dairy products—all packed into a little shop close to the bay, where you can eat on the rocks or benches—your choice. Open 7 days a week, it makes your mealtimes healthy and happy.

-ASF



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 on facebook



## BAKERY BY THE BAY

*The traditional bakery in downtown Reykjavik with a view across the bay*

As you stroll along the Faxaflói Bay, around which Reykjavik is built or while you shop on its main street, Laugavegur, you can get a bit peckish.

It's easy to recognise a good bread and cake shop—the master chef with his white hat and the word 'bakarí' are

pretty clear indications of a stomach-saving solution at hand.

Björns Bakarí is known for its range of healthy breads without gluten, sugar or whey. Judging from the way they fly off the shelves, a lot of people have discovered that bread can be tasty and healthy at the same time.



## GOURMET DISHES AT FAIR PRICES

*Gamla Vínhúsið prides itself in Good Wines and Services*

Gamla Vínhúsið, or the Old Winehouse Restaurant, is to be found both in Reykjavik and Hafnarfjörður—the original one being in Hafnarfjörður. Both restaurants are right in the town centres and their popularity is due to both good services and excellent food.

The menus differ slightly, with the traditional Icelandic kjötsúpa (lamb meat soup) and fish balls being available at the Reykjavik restaurant. Both courses are a great favourite amongst the Icelandic people and the lamb meat soup is loved by all children. It is simply delicious.

### Meats from Hardship

Icelanders love their fish but they also love their meat. The islanders are quite the gourmets and Gamla Vínhúsið does not

dissappoint them. The most popular dishes at Gamla Vínhúsið is beef, the second is horse fillet and the third is minke whale. Yes, you might be taken aback, but it's a fact that the islanders have had to survive harsh weather, eruptions, earthquakes and other natural disasters during the centuries and have had to adapt to available food. With their wild herbs and spices they have developed lovely dishes from the animals at hand and still like them very much.

One more favourite dish at Gamla Vínhúsið is, of course, the lobster. Differing from the lobsters of other seas, the Icelandic lobster is small, firm and extremely tasty. The Icelandic lobster is possibly the most loved seafood in Iceland, especially with just butter and fresh garlic.

The owners of Gamla Vínhúsið pride themselves on excellent ingredients, excellent steaks, fair prices and a friendly atmosphere. The steaks are their speciality and their aim is to offer lower prices than their competitors with similar service standards. All the ingredients come straight from either an Icelandic farmer or Icelandic fishermen and thus are always at their freshest.

### Thriving in Economic Hard Times

The Hafnarfjörður restaurant opened in 2007, a year before the notorious financial collapse. The Reykjavik restaurant opened in 2010, when a quite number of restaurants in Iceland went bust. So, the hosts at Gamla Vínhúsið most certainly are doing something right.

As to be expected, Gamla Vínhúsið has an excellent wine list and the hosts do their best to cater for everyone's taste and wishes. Their house wine is invariably very good and at the Reykjavik restaurant, they additionally offer a special winelist with more expensive wines.

*Both restaurants are large and can seat big groups (120 in Reykjavik and 150 in Hafnarfjörður).*

-SS



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SWEATERS AND SOUVENIRS, NO KNITTING MATERIAL:




# LET'S GET HEALTHY

*A session in The Icelandic Health Hotel's detox programme will leave you feeling great*

Unlike most countries of the world, Iceland has very little pollution. The water is clean and tastes wonderful. The meat is not stuffed with steroids or drugs. The air is fresh and pure. The fruits and vegetables are grown in unpolluted soils and are not covered in pesticides. What, for most countries, is just a distant memory, Iceland is living today: a health paradise.

## Getting out of the pollution and the pollution out of you

Modern society may have its perks and benefits but it comes with a heavy price. Everything from stress to processed foods, from polluted cities to junk food affect that miraculous creation called our body. Diabetes has seen a dramatic rise and a whole industry has grown around weight loss. Take a look at most food labels and you'll see just how many unnatural, unhealthy additives, preservatives, chemicals of all kinds, sugar and its artificial substitutes you're taking in on a daily basis. Is it any wonder that chronic disease and sickness of all kinds have reached near epidemic proportions?



## The beginning of a new lifestyle

The Icelandic Health Hotel's detox programmes introduce you to a lifestyle that most glamorous glossy adverts offer – but cannot deliver: a life with vitality and vigour, health, enjoyment and fulfilment. You don't have to be overweight, lethargic or burdened with so many of modern society's diseases.

It takes just two weeks to introduce you to this new lifestyle and you will probably find it doesn't cost you nearly as much to live it as your previous life did. You'll develop

new tastes and you will find yourself feeling better than you could have dreamed, ready to face the world with a new perspective.



## What is Detox?

Getting rid of the toxins, the poisons that build up both in and on our bodies through incorrect eating habits, lack of exercise and a frenetic lifestyle and bringing the body and spirit back into balance is the goal of detox. It has proven results and, when practiced on a long-term basis, builds a healthy life filled with vigour and the kind of strong immune system that prevents diseases gaining a toehold in your body.

Detox is accomplished through a programme that focuses on a vegetable and fruit diet with plenty of drinks of water and herbal teas - but no caffeinated drinks or sugar. Effective detoxing is hard work on the body, so there is plenty of opportunity for rest and relaxation. It is supported by light exercise, massage, infra red and regular saunas, hydro colon cleansing, yoga and gymnastics, trips to the Blue Lagoon and its famous spa waters - and lots of fun and laughter.

There are personal consultations with a qualified nurse, classes on nutrition & diet, massage and other health related topics, how to shop for healthy products and how to continue to progress at home.

While there is no simple route to good health, detoxing offers a good start and

solid foundation, along with the range of activities that the hotel offers.

## Get relief

Look at the list of common problems that can be helped by detoxing along with the consequent lifestyle change and see what you can avoid - or obtain relief from: anxiety, arthritis, depression, diabetes 2, drug and alcohol abuse, diseases of the colon and gastric tract, headaches and migraines, heart and cardiovascular diseases, heartburn, insomnia, mental confusion, obesity, skin ailments and so many more.

Many guests report that they have gained energy levels they have not experienced since their youth.

## Infra red sauna

While a normal sauna extracts 2% of toxins through sweat, infra red saunas can remove up to 20%. It only takes a couple of half-hour sessions a day for your skin to feel noticeably clean. The Icelandic Health Hotel has two of these saunas - after which, a shower and a soak in the jacuzzi leaves you feeling fantastic!

A stay at Iceland's Health Hotel can be the start of a new and reinvigorated life, free from the health problems that may have dogged you for years. Not only that, but the hotel can arrange for you to experience Iceland's natural treasures while you're here to make your holiday a truly memorable experience.





## THE SMALL TOWN THAT ENJOYS LIFE

*Hafnarfjörður has everything you need for a visit in a small town*

Just over 7,000 years ago, one of Iceland's famous volcanoes erupted, spreading lava across a huge area. A small town grew up on the lava by the coast, surrounded by beautiful scenery and with a perfect harbour, which became Iceland's main port for many years. The English and German merchants squabbled for its control. The Germans won and ran the town in the 16th century until Danish King Christian IV decreed only Danish merchants could buy and sell in Iceland.

That town today is Hafnarfjörður and, at just over 100 years old, it's one of Iceland's oldest towns. It is home to some 26,000 people, mostly living in colourful houses - and the unnumbered elves and Hidden People, who still live in the rocks and are known to influence events. The Helliggerði park is a magical spot to learn about them as you walk the pathway twisting through rocks and tiny lava caves.

For those interested in culture, the arts, history, shopping and food, there is the Hafnarborg Centre for Culture and Fine Arts, a folk museum, (both with free entrance), a Viking themed restaurant and hotel, a small shopping mall and lots of restaurants and services - all without losing its small town, friendly atmosphere and charm. Hafnarfjörður is a centre for art and design - especially designer jewellery and clothing.

### Celebrate Spring and Summer

Icelanders love to celebrate and Hafnarfjörður's four most popular Spring and Summer festivals are Bjartir dagar (Bright Days) at the end of May, the annual Seamen's festival on the first weekend in June and the major Viking festival in mid-June, where 10th century Vikings almost take over the town. (There is also the National Day celebration, of course, on the 17th June.)

With camping, guesthouses and hotels, you need never want for a place to stay.



### What to do

Besides the festivals, this is a town that enjoys sports like handball, swimming and horse riding, golfing, mountain climbing and hiking, birdwatching and photography, all of which are open to visitors.

There are tours to the natural and historical sites, so with all there is to do, you will want to plan your stay. For example, at Krýsuvík, the hills are brightly coloured in red, yellow and green, surrounding bubbling fields of mud, overlooked by a massive, steaming vent. It's an area outside the town, attracting over 100,000 people each year.

A cheap, regular bus service can take you into Reykjavik and, when you need to fly home, the airport buses can pick you up in the town.

-ASF



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 info@hanarfjordur.is  
 www.visitthafnarfjordur.is





## LIVE WITH THE VIKINGS

*The Viking Village gives you a baptism into Viking life*

There are rumours that busloads of tourists have been snatched from their coaches in Hafnarfjörður by wild Viking warriors and held in a rock wall cave, watched over by a polar bear at one end and the Viking god, Thor, at the other.

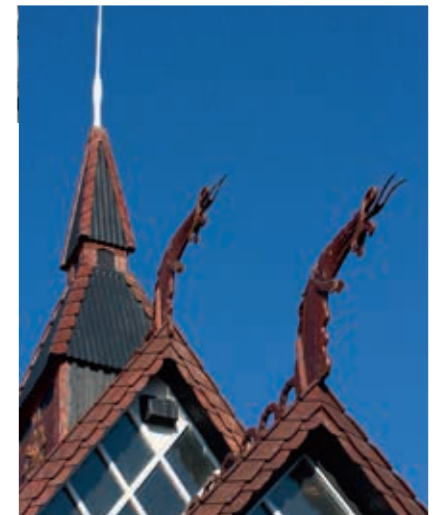
The reports say that they were treated mercifully, given plush rooms to stay in, a chance to bathe in the geothermal hot pool sheltered by a rock wall, overlooked by gods, before being brought into the Viking long

hall - a restaurant in modern parlance - with rough-hewn wooden tables, under the watchful gaze of Freyja, the goddess of fertility, a large wooden carving over the upstairs bar. Viking shields that look as if they've been used recently and the heads of wild animals like reindeer, hang on the walls alongside murals of major events from history.

The bar dispenses drinks of all kinds, while above it, fish swim in a large tank, held up by hand-carved wood pillars. An equally massive stone throne awaits a worthy chieftain. The abductees are treated royally, given large wooden plates of food and jugs of drinks, regaled with stories and songs by minstrels, in an evening to be remembered a lifetime. Fish from the harbour across the road, sheep's head and lamb and other Icelandic cuisine is on the menu.

Those taken in mid-June, found themselves guests at the Viking market where, under rough tents, artisans made and sold their wares. They sat enthralled as competing tribes fought a pitched battle.

Vikings love to celebrate and the Valhalla hall is set aside for groups of up to 50. It's a the place for wedding celebrations, for schools or incentive groups to get together. Many are even inducted into the warrior clan, given helmets and certificates, certifying their valour.



Not only is the hotel state of the art in every one of its 42 rooms that early Vikings would envy - or snort at, depending on their disposition, but there are also 14 Viking cottages for families or couples who want something different. For the modern guests, there is also WiFi and parking space. You don't have to wait to be abducted, you can book in advance. Horses are stabled elsewhere, nowadays.

The Viking crafts have lived on and can be seen - and taken home with you, for a little bit of silver - crafts from the Nordic countries, Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland, itself. Probably the best thing you'll take home is the experience of real Viking hospitality.

-ASF



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## THE NATURE ACTIVITY TOWN

*Mosfellsbær celebrates the nature that surrounds it*

Iceland is best enjoyed outdoors. It's a land for hiking, climbing, horse-riding, biking, sailing, kayaking, fishing, bird-watching, photography and more. The air and water are fresh and clean and the land is unlike any other-made for enjoyment.

More visitors are discovering the benefits of the relaxed tranquillity of Mosfellsbær, a quiet country town, just 15 minutes away from the busy activity of the capital, set in a poetically beautiful landscape. It's a town where health is celebrated, embraced by countryside - from mountains just begging to be hiked, streams and rivers filled with fish, valleys waiting for you to tour on horseback and a picturesque bay and coastline filled with birdlife.

Here you will find children, teens and people up to their 70's and 80's with their walking sticks, hiking up the surrounding mountains or enjoying a relaxing walk amongst the rich vegetation around the rivers and coastal paths.

Trails, of various distances, are clearly marked on each of the seven mountains that surround the town, throughout the valleys and coast and feature points to take in the scenery, the different vegetation and the birdlife. The town has published a map, with all the trails and points of interest marked on it.

The area has a very diverse flora and fauna and the best part about it is that you can enjoy it all, following the marked trails or just strolling, for instance, around the Varmá river or along the beautiful coastline. You're

bound to meet others who are doing the same thing. For visitors in their 60's or over, it can be a lot of fun in an informal setting to join with groups in the same age range for walks or hikes. Birdwatchers, whether professional or casual, will enjoy the bird life at Leirvogur Bay, where they can observe from a hide. The mountains are easy to reach and there are car parks at the base of each one.

In summer, the town celebrates with the 7 Peaks Run that encompasses the mountains that surround it. It's a tough endurance event for very fit people. The full 7 peaks cover a distance of 37 km, though you can try just one - a distance of 12 km over Úlfarsfell, for instance.

While there are many who enjoy the challenge of the race, there are many others who like to hike up to the different peaks or, perhaps, have a picnic on one of the slopes.

### Horse riding

This is one of the most popular horse riding areas, with a large stable area and riding hall along with plenty of riding trails. Riding tours are a popular way of enjoying the countryside.

### Golf

There are two golf courses in the municipality. One is a 9 hole course up in the countryside in Mosfellsdalur. Another 18 hole course is set on the side of the bay, offering beautiful views over the ocean while golfers get good exercise playing the greens.

### Cool in the Pool

After any good, vigorous exercise, a popular activity amongst visitors and Icelanders alike is a trip to the swimming pool. Mosfellsbær is blessed with two pools, each close to one of the schools - and each with hot pots

of different temperatures. There are well-equipped gyms alongside both pools.

The Lágafellslaug pool is widely recognised as being one of the newest and best pools in the Greater Reykjavik area. It also has a Jacuzzi that soothes sore muscles, a sauna and steam room, children's pools and slides. The geothermally-heated pools are used year-round, the fresh air and sunshine adding to the health benefits of swimming.

For the adventurous, the Kaldakvísl waterfall offers a different kind of bathing. Somewhat of a hidden gem, it's a spot where the town's teenagers like to jump in during the spring and summertime.

There's a frequent bus service between Reykjavik and Mosfellsbær that stops right outside both swimming pools and the Tourist Information Office for the area. The office can

offer suggestions of scenic walks or of interesting sites to visit.

### A Bohemian lifestyle

Artists have flocked to the area, finding inspiration in the beauty of the nature. You'll find art and crafts shops both in the town centre and at Álafoskvos, along with numerous cafés and different types of restaurants to satisfy any taste to relax in after your activities in the nature. Local markets are regular events, selling homemade goods, flowers, arts and crafts.

Best of all, however, is the feeling of health one gets in the fresh air, drinking in the beautiful views. It's a precious, but free, gift to enjoy.

-ASF



**Mosfellsbær**

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 moso@moso.is  
 www.mosfellsbaer.is







## 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.

balls of yarn, knitting accessories, patterns and everything associated with making the clothing, are available in the shop.



### 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 who enjoy knitting themselves,

### 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

**Alafoss Wool Store**  
Alafossvegur 23 • 270 Mosfellsbær  
+354 566 6303  
addi@alafoss.is  
www.alafoss.is



## FROM HUNTERS TO HOME

*Palli now makes knives and forks for the kitchen and dining room*

Long known for his beautifully crafted hunting knives of various sizes, each with its own handmade handle, Palli is now creating works of art for the kitchen - and soon for the dining room - that any cook or hostess will be proud to own.

### Made with rare materials

Ornately engraved knives and forks – including kitchen and carving knives are now receiving Palli's unique craftsmanship. What makes his knives special is that he diligently sources his materials, researches the best methods for making long-lasting handles that are comfortable and safe to use – often from rare materials sourced from all over the world. Frequently, he blends different materials such as reindeer antler, goat horn, a hippo's tooth or a horse's hoof with wood such as ebony, elm or even fossilized wood that has been carefully dried over a period of years to harden it for a handle.

### Created for Connoisseurs

As a result of his passion for excellence and enthusiasm for creating a work of art from

a tempered steel blade and these different handles, his knives are now to be found in over 85 countries, in use by hunters who appreciate these qualities. There is often a lot of bidding for his knives on the internet, such is the demand for them.

### Now for cooks and diners

Recently, Palli worked with one of the best Damascus steel blade makers to bring their crafts first to the kitchen and soon, also to the dining room.

With typical care and research, he is producing a range of initially, 4 kitchen knives, to be followed by a full dining cutlery set, using his 66 year-old dentist drill that he brought out of retirement for carving the handles and creating both individual pieces and sets that will be a conversation piece in dining rooms around the world.

### Inspired by a waterfall

You can find Palli in his studio in Mosfellsbær, right beside the Álafoss waterfall and the famous mill of the same name, just a 15 minute drive from the centre of Reykjavik. His knives can also be found at



the Brynja hardware store at Laugavegur 29, on the main shopping street in downtown Reykjavik or ordered online.

### Custom made for years of use

If you have specific materials you would like your hunting, kitchen or carving knife to be made from – or the dining cutlery, you can always let him know. Many knives are made to order and every one is individual and unique.

-ASF

**Palli the Knife Maker**  
Alafossvegur 23 • 270 Mosfellsbær  
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# SOUVENIR CANDY

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.

### A Sweet Way to Promote Business

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.



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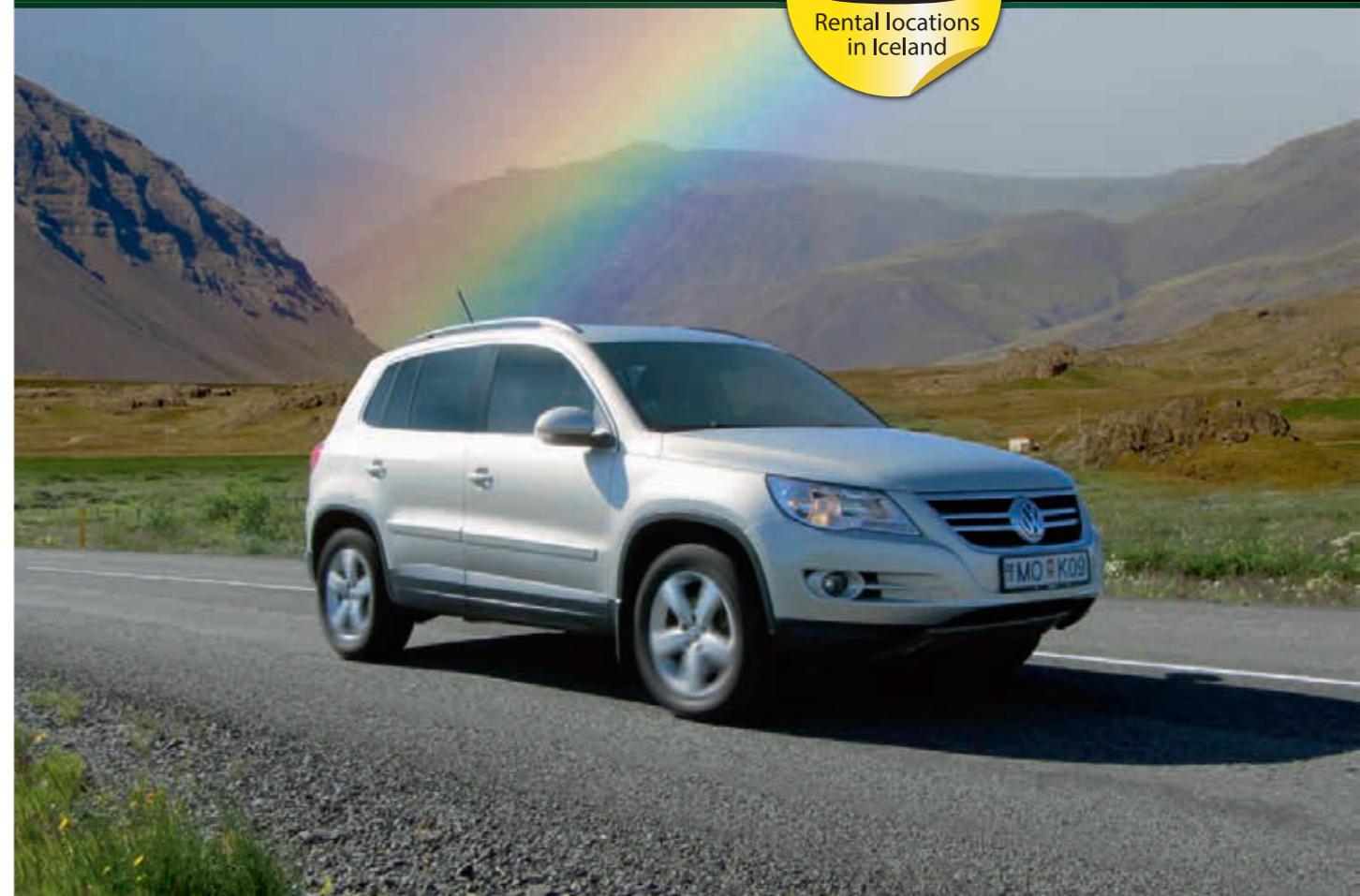
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# SECRETS REVEALED

*Reykjavik Excursions offers tours to some of the hidden jewels of Iceland*

Iceland is quite far from everywhere, so landing at Keflavik's International airport, probably one of the first things on your mind is to get to your hotel.

## Flybus to your hotel

Waiting outside the terminal for every flight, you will find the Flybus, ready to deliver you smoothly to your hotel door. Likewise, when you have to leave, the Flybus will be there to take you to your plane. Started in 1979, it is one of the most appreciated services for travellers.

The coach also leaves from the downtown BSÍ bus terminal and stops en route at the Viking Hotel in the centre of Hafnarfjörður.

Flybus can also take you to your hotel via the Blue Lagoon. There are numerous

departures daily from there to Reykjavik - and to the airport, to catch your flight. If you would prefer to visit the Blue Lagoon later, there are frequent departures from Reykjavik, with pickups from your hotel.

## Fly me to the moon

As the Flybus glides towards Reykjavik, you'd be forgiven for wondering if you have landed on the moon, with the views of volcanoes, lava and massive rocks. A plume of steam can be seen rising against the mountain backdrop: the famous Blue Lagoon, a bright blue crystal oasis in the midst of the lava field.

From the main road, there doesn't seem so much of interest but, just out of view is a wealth of fascinating sites that visitors rave about.

Reykjavik Excursions has a trip leaving Reykjavik at 9 am to take you around the area with its bubbling hot springs and brilliantly coloured mountains, its cliffs, teeming with birdlife and the lighthouses that have saved many a seaman's life.

Here, you can walk on the bridge that spans two continents, as the Eurasian and American tectonic plates pull apart in dramatic form.

Close by, you'll see the steaming mud pools and coloured rocks and hear how a priest set a trap for a troublesome female ghost some 400 years ago, causing her to fall into one of the pools and giving the area her name.

This is Viking territory, where some of the first settlers lived, farmed and fished centuries ago. The tour visits the Viking museum that houses the replica longship,

Íslendingur, that sailed to America in 2,000, celebrating the discovery of the New World by courageous Vikings hundreds of years before Columbus was even born. The multimedia presentations are fascinating and visitors marvel at the skills and bravery of these intrepid explorers.

Vikings are still skilled craftsmen and this tour takes you to a glass blowing workshop. Their designs are world famous and you can take some of the finished products home with you - or have them shipped.

The tour ends at the Blue Lagoon, where you have the choice to bathe and dine or you can take the coach back to your hotel. The former is recommended, as you can take a later coach home after enjoying this unique experience.

## Feast and Fly

With time being so limited, everyone wants to take advantage of every moment, so Reykjavik Excursions has a special tour for your last day. Picking you up from your hotel in Reykjavik, with your luggage safely stowed for the afternoon flight, the coach takes you to the little town of Sandgerði, famous for its shipwrecks, rough winter seas and, above all, its fish and the tasty rock crab.

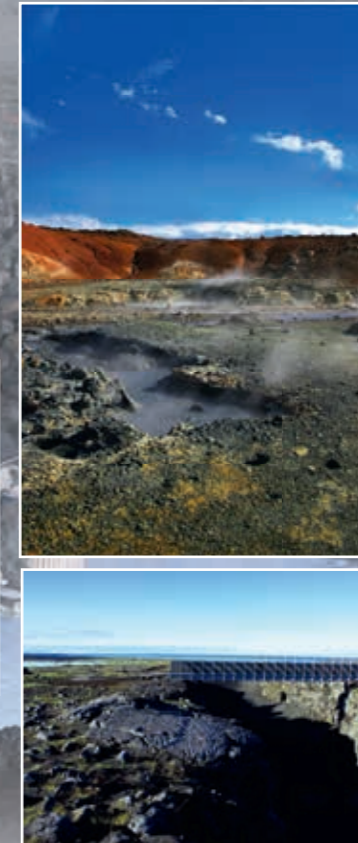
The Vitinn restaurant, where you'll dine, is the only place it is to be found in all Europe. Vitinn means 'lighthouse', so it's little surprise that it is right down by the harbour, next to the lighthouse. So the fish cannot be fresher than that and you can enjoy your meal outside in the sunshine (on the many days with good weather). Vitinn also has delicious

Icelandic lamb. Eating in this classic wooden restaurant, surrounded by paraphernalia from the area's agricultural and seafaring past, is a nice memory to take home.

Across the road are handicraft shops for unique last-minute gifts and the marine life exhibit, with a display about the famous explorer, Jean-Baptiste Charcot, whose research vessel, the *Pourquoi-Pas*, was shipwrecked in a fierce storm in Faxaflói bay in 1936.

Then, with the airport just minutes away, the coach will deliver you to the terminal in plenty of time for your flight home.

-ASF





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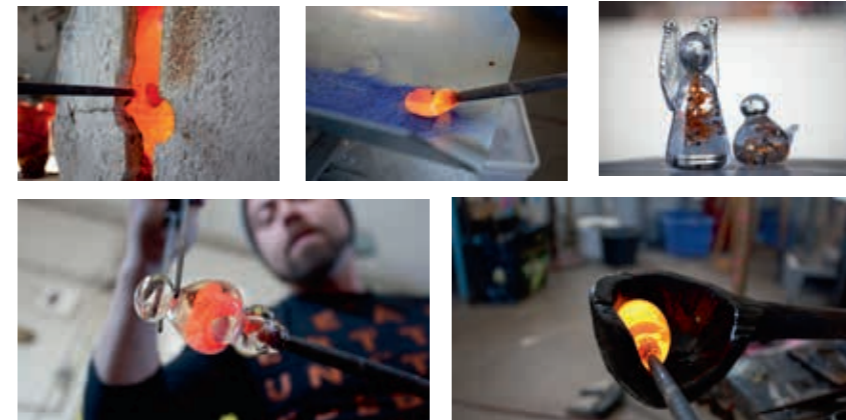
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### HOT AS THE SUN

*Ice Glass creates art in glass*

With over 20 years experience working together, mother and son team of Gulla and Lárus are producing awesome works of art in glass in their small glass foundry, next to Kaffi Duus in Keflavík.

Glass making is highly technical science and art combined. With ovens burning as hot as the sun or a cooler 500°C, this is not work for the timid. Much of the skill of the glass maker lies in intuition and experience, in knowing at exactly what moment to work it.

The glass factory is open from 12-6pm weekdays and visitors are welcome. Not only do you get to look around at the wide range of creations but, if you have something in mind, they'll try to make it for you on the spot.

The gallery offers a glimpse into the prodigious creative abilities of the artists - and you're more than likely to find a use for a lot of the items in your home! Knowing that most visitors return home heavy-laden, Ice Glass will

ship anything that catches your fancy so it arrives safely.

Ice Glass is experimenting with recycling glass products rather than sending them to a landfill and creating beautiful works of art from them.

-ASF



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## LEATHER DESIGNER

*Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces*

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



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

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

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

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

-NHH



**Arkart**

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 arkgunna@simnet.is  
 www.arkart.is





## FOUR STAR COMFORT IN KEFLAVIK

*Hotel Keflavik has been transformed to meet travellers’ needs today*

Hotel Keflavik opened in 1986 and was the first 4 star hotel to open in Keflavik. It predominantly served the traveller who was just staying one night on arrival or before flying out. Since then, however, Iceland has gone from “Iceland’s Best Kept Secret” to the “Destination of Choice”.

burgeoning influx of visitors coming for a holiday to see Iceland’s amazing sights and now has 70 comfortable rooms available.

With its proximity to the airport, Keflavik is naturally a handy place to stay but it is its proximity to a wide range of sights and experiences that is making it so popular that many visitors now use it as their base.

### Complete renovations

The hotel was renovated, both inside and out, this last winter to accommodate the

### Great for Groups

Incentive groups find the hotel especially convenient, as it can host meetings for up to



60 with its separate dining room for groups in addition to the restaurant and bar. Its breakfasts, known to be among the best in Iceland, are served from 5 am especially for travellers leaving or arriving on a flight.

The hotel offers a free transfer service by taxi to or from the airport. It’s only a 5 minute drive, which is a real relief when you’re tired or rushed.

-ASF



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few metres away from the restaurant itself, you can see why. For those with a preference for meat, the roasted fillet of Icelandic lamb is highly recommended.

However, flights often arrive and depart early in Iceland, so Vitinn opens at 7 am to offer groups delicious breakfasts that will sustain them for hours to come. Here, again, the food is freshly cooked.

## HUNGER SATIED IN 10 MINUTES

*Vitinn, at Sandgerði’s harbour makes dining a delight*

After a long flight, getting your luggage and getting out of the airport at Keflavik, that gnawing feeling in your stomach needs to be satisfied but you still have the trip to your hotel, checking in and so on.

Less than 10 minutes drive away, however, is one of the most famous restaurants in Iceland. It is the only restaurant to cook the delicious rock crab, probably in all Europe. Lunches and dinners here feature really fresh seafood. With the fishing boats delivering their catch only a



Dining at Vitinn is a very inspiring introduction to Iceland. The restaurant interior, with its richly coloured wooden walls and beams, is adorned with mementos from both Sandgerði’s agricultural and seafaring past. In summer months, diners can enjoy their meals outside with a view over the harbour and sea, the clean and fresh air adding to the experience.

-ASF



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*GK Ceramics is an open pottery and ceramics workshop close to Sandgerði harbour where you can see the artist at work and buy beautiful handmade pottery direct from the potter.*

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## BY THE HARBOR IN KEFLAVIK

Duus Café

You could take a walk by the seaside and harbour of Keflavik, following a great meal in Duus Café at either the very start or end of your journey to Iceland. Perhaps the unique element of visiting Iceland is the interrelation of everything; here, you're only five minutes from the international airport yet you can find an authentic seaside experience.

This warm restaurant is located right by Keflavik's small boat harbour, the very heart of the town. Thus, the view from Duus is inspiring, even hypnotizing; while eating your meal and enjoying your drink the sea outside

will have your full attention. Originally a small restaurant, it now hosts over 200 people and is a favourite with the locals. The owner, Sigurbjörn built the house and its interiors all by himself, little by little over the last fifteen years. Sigurbjörn, like many other Icelanders, does not limit himself to one profession; apart from running a restaurant, he is educated as a carpenter. That certainly comes in handy when one wants to built a restaurant using wood!

Such is the variety of food at Duus that everybody will find something to their own liking. But the speciality of the

restaurant is, of course, the fish. Whether you fancy a buttery lobster or the national dish, cod, Duus makes sure to produce a fairy-tale for your taste buds!

This spring, Duus not only provides you with great food and fantastic view over the harbour but also enables you to further your sea-experience with a vivacious rib safari tour! If you would like to watch some jumping whales, cheery dolphins or the gallant Northern Gannet birds living on the island of Eldey, such a tour might be the very adventure you seek. Going out on those fast, open speed-boats gives the tour a thrill you do not experience in the more traditional whale-watching tours.

The setting of Duus couldn't be more picturesque – a lovely wooden building, in the post-card perfect location, overlooking the deep blue waters of Faxaflói Bay. Whether you're in town during lunch or dinner-time you will be able to choose from a wide variety of dishes. The combination of a cosy environment, good food, a great stroll by the seaside and a lively tour on the sea sounds like a great day in Keflavik.


-ST.S







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## CONNECTING TWO PEARLS

*A new path from the Blue Lagoon links to Grindavík*

It might be tempting to just make a short stop at the famous Blue Lagoon on the way to or from the airport, but that would be ignoring the incredible beauty and natural phenomena just around the corner that made the famous lagoon possible to begin with.

The tranquil nearby fishing town of Grindavík has close ties Blue Lagoon that have now been strengthened even further with a brand new walking path that connects the two with a beautiful 4 km walk. The new path, which is ecofriendly and blends with its surroundings, passes through foreign-looking lava fields, beautiful forested areas and the foothills of the impressive Þorbjörn mountain.

Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, Development Manager in Grindavík, says that both the

people of Grindavík, as well as its visitors are ecstatic with the new walking path. "It really opens up new locations and opportunities for everyone interested in enjoying the area. The new path passes through Selskógur forest, which has been a cherished nature resort for the locals and leads to several hiking paths on Þorbjörn Mountain for those looking for some healthy exercise. Those who are visiting the Blue Lagoon have jumped at the opportunity to stroll through the impressive landscape to our cosy town and experience what it has to offer," says Þorsteinn.

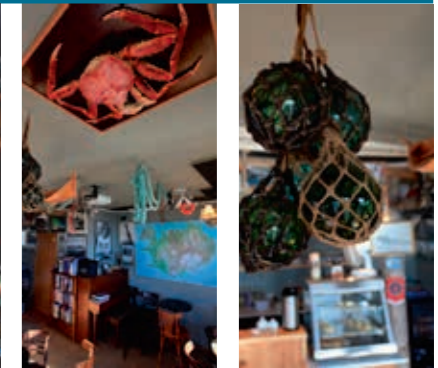
Grindavík is one of the true Icelandic fishing villages, where the harbour area is the life of the town and worth a visit for itself. In the harbour area you'll find cafés,

museums and a chance to see the everyday work of Icelandic fishermen as they bring in the day's catch. For the gourmands, there is no lack of exciting culinary experiences to be found and, as you might expect, the fish don't get any fresher than in the quality restaurants of Grindavík. In addition, there are plenty of exhilarating activities available in Grindavík, such as Quad-bike tours, cave exploring and horseback riding tours in the nearby lava fields.

So if you're thinking about visiting The Blue Lagoon, consider strolling over the hills to see a whole new world open before your eyes.

-VAG

**Grindavíkurbær**  
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 grindavik@grindavik.is  
 www.visitgrindavik.is



My suggestion: don't leave without having a bowl of their soup. It's really good.

While I was there, one of the owners was spending time with visiting tourists, explaining the area and showing them on a map the best places to visit.

It's in the evenings and on weekends that things really take off. It's a small place but packed with character. A piano in the corner is often pressed into use, making it a fun and inspiring evening. Whether you are a local or just visiting, you'll feel at home.

-EMV

## GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

*The reputation of Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast*

Walk down by Grindavík's harbour and you may see the nets. Then you know you're there. Bryggjan's main work is repairing fishing nets and lines - nets that would completely cover the nearby mountain and lines that would stretch beyond Reykjavik, over 50 km away.

This is a fishing town and the café is a fisherman's café - though, with the growing number of visitors from all over the world finding it, it is quickly becoming the café of choice in the area. Little wonder, as the help and friendliness of the owners is only matched by the delicious food they offer.

**Café Bryggjan**  
 Miðgarði 2 • 240 Grindavík  
 +354 426 7100  
 kaffibryggjan@simnet.is  
 www.kaffibryggjan.is



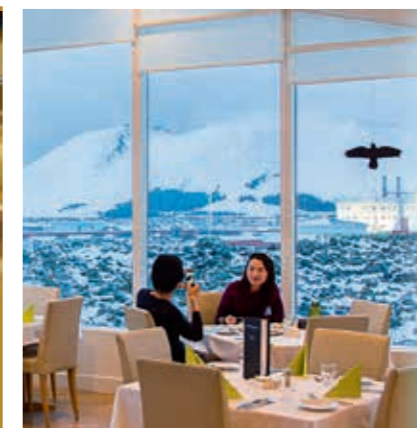
## Guesthouse BORG

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

🏠 Borgarhraun 2 • 240 Grindavík  
 ✉ bjorksv@hive.is

☎ +354 895 8686  
 🌐 www.guesthouseborg.com

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## NORTHERN LIGHT INN

The Northern Light Inn is the only hotel in Iceland near the Blue Lagoon. 32 cozy rooms, family hospitality, delicious foods - and Max - await you. 20 minutes from KEF Keflavik International Airport.

Complimentary International Airport and Blue Lagoon transfers are available anytime. Wi-Fi internet access is free throughout the hotel.

☎ +354 426 8650 🌐 www.northernlightinn.is  
 ✉ info@nli.is 🏠 Blue Lagoon Rd. • 240 Grindavík

# BIRDLIFE & THE LIGHTHOUSE IN AKRANES

Breiðin is the westernmost part of the Akranes peninsula and it is the site of one of the country's oldest concrete lighthouses, built in 1918. At low tide, it is possible to walk out to and go up into the smaller lighthouse to enjoy the beautiful view it provides. This summer, the larger lighthouse will also be open to the public.

From Breiðin, there is an impressive view over the whole of Faxaflói bay, its rich birdlife, and surf-beaten rocky beaches. The sight will leave an impression on anyone, whether in nice weather or storm-tossed seas. The view from the lighthouse is unique and photographers have taken full advantage of the facilities.

The birdlife by Breiðin is diverse all year round. Common Eider is by far the most conspicuous species of bird. The largest flocks are seen in late winter when capelin migrates to the area, at which time the birds can number in the thousands. There are usually one or more King Eiders in the flock and they are even seen inside Akraneshöfn

harbour. This colourful relative of the Common Eider comes here from Greenland where it nests, and the drakes sometimes pair up with local female Common Eiders and settle in Common Eider colonies.



Other species of ducks can also be found around Breiðin and Akranes. Small flocks of the colourful Harlequin Duck are seen there throughout the winter. The loud and lively Long-tailed Duck is also a sea bird in winter and often mixes with flocks of Common Eiders. Red-breasted Mergansers are seen year round, but Mallards are most frequent in the winter time.

Purple Sandpipers are the most common waders on the rocks around Breiðin where they often form flocks. A few Eurasian Oystercatchers are seen all winter, but they increase in number during the spring and even nest high up on the beach which is something Ringed Plovers also do. A few Ruddy Turnstones are found among the Purple Sandpipers.

Northern Fulmars are common sea birds around Akranes where they feed on, for instance, capelin and fish waste. They sometimes appear in large flocks by sewers and in the harbour. Gulls are attracted by similar food, and the main gull species seen by Breiðin

are Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Black-headed Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake. The Iceland Gull is a winter visitor from Greenland, but the others are Icelandic nesting birds. Eurasian Wrens are sometimes seen among the rocks, and European Starlings and Ravens search for food on the beach.

One may expect to see various other birds, but they are too numerous to mention here.

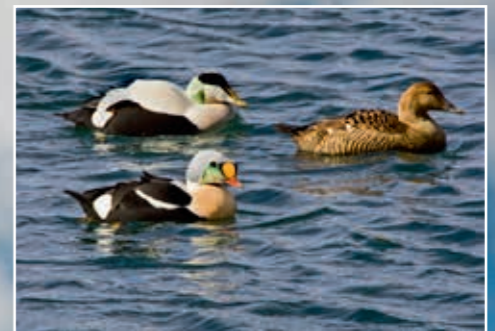
When schools of fish are close to shore and even at other times, it is not uncommon to see whales rolling at the surface. Mostly seen from land are White-beaked Dolphins and Killer Whales, but Minke Whales also appear. Common Seals sometimes lie on the rocks out from Breiðin.

If we move a bit beyond Breiðin and specifically north and east along the shore, we see a number of coves and inlets with diverse birdlife. Among these are Kalmansvík, Höfðavík, and Mjóivogur. Blautós is a long, narrow cove which is enclosed by

Innstavogsnes peninsula. The cove and peninsula are protected by nature conservation laws. At low tide, the cove dries up and great mudflats are revealed which attract birds by the thousands; for example, Red Knots and Brent Geese. These birds stop here on their way between wintering grounds in Europe and breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic. Brent Geese stop here for two months each spring to build up fat reserves for the long and difficult migration over the Greenland ice sheet and then begin egg-laying while vegetation is still sparse on the nesting sites.

Still further along the shore, we see Grunnafjörður fjord. The fjord is large and shallow and contains vast lugworm flats that are revealed at low tide. Grunnafjörður is one of six so-called Ramsar sites in Iceland, which means that the area has been designated a protected area under the international Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands that are of major importance for birdlife. Grunnafjörður

is important for many species of birds. The area is internationally important for Brent Geese, Red Knots, and Sanderlings. Approximately 25% of the Brent Goose population stops in Grunnafjörður on its way from the European mainland to the Arctic in both spring and fall, as well as around 1% of the Red Knot population. This is the largest wintering ground of Eurasian Oystercatchers in Iceland, and a staging ground for great numbers of Ringed Plovers, Dunlins, Purple Sandpipers, and numerous other birds. Rare breeding birds include Common Shelduck, and White-tailed Eagles are sometimes seen soaring overhead. A number of other birds may be expected in Grunnafjörður, but access to the area is rather difficult.



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 Suburgata 57-300 Akranesi  
 +354 433 1065  
 info@akranes.is  
 www.visitakranes.com





# A SETTING FOR EVERY MOOD

*Gamla Kaupfélagið Extends its Selection*

On a tranquil peninsula in Akranes you'll be pleasantly surprised to find Gamla Kaupfélagið, a high quality restaurant, well-known for its menu's wide range and popular with the locals and visitors alike.

## Indian in Akranes

Gamla Kaupfélagið has recently added a tandoori oven to its repertoire, offering a variety of exciting Indian dishes. Gísli Sigurjón Práinsson, restaurant manager, says that the Indian addition is another reflection of Gamla Kaupfélagið's ambition to satisfy every customer. "We're always looking for something new and exciting to keep things interesting and our customers seem to appreciate that," says Gísli.

## Catering to all customers

Gamla Kaupfélagið can cater to almost all of their customers' tastes, whether it be road-weary travellers looking for a quick snack, gourmards looking for something fresh and inspiring, romantic couples looking for a cozy night out or larger families looking for a complete package. "The pizzas and pastas are always popular, as well as our plentiful salads, for those who know they want those. But for those looking for a more unique culinary experience, our lobster dishes never fail to satisfy," says Gísli.



Gamla Kaupfélagið is located in a spacious house that was formerly a general store, providing each customer with an experience to suit their personal taste. After 10 o'clock on the weekends, the restaurant changes to a bar, where the friendly locals tend to gather after the working week.

-VAG



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 Kirkjubraut 11 • 300 Akranesi  
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 gamlakaupfelagid@skaginn.is  
 www.gamlakaupfelagid.is





# HOT FROM THE OVEN

*Geiri's Bakery and Coffee Shop in Borgarnes*

Travellers coming from Reykjavik spot the bakery from the Borgarnes bridge. There's plenty of parking right outside the shop. Geiri's customers immediately feel welcome the moment they step into the bakery, where delicious pastries and breads are made on the spot.

Geiri is an affable man who takes pride in what he knows best, which is baking breads and pastries of all sorts. His personal favourites are the 'love balls', which are oil fried balls of pastry a little larger than a golf ball, and a cinnamon bun commonly called snúður in Icelandic. His special version



on this popular theme comes with a thick chocolate crust and a large glass of fresh milk. They can all be enjoyed sitting at the comfortable seats and sturdy wooden tables of the coffee shop.

The view is so extraordinary that visitors should be charged an entrance fee! Right outside the window, there is a tidal plain filled with birds at low tide and the second longest bridge in Iceland. Beyond the bridge one sees the impressive local mountains, snow-capped in winter. In the distance lie the Eiríksjökull and Langjökull glaciers.

*Geiri's bakery is the perfect spot to stop for refreshments on your travels on the Ring Road.*

-SV



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 www.facebook.com/geirabakarileh





# MAGIC WORLD OF MYTHOLOGY

*The Edduveröld Exhibition in Borgarnes*

Norse mythology is one of the most fantastic legacies of the ancient Nordic heritage of which Iceland is an integral part. Edduveröld – Edda's World – offers local and foreign visitors alike an accessible glimpse into this hitherto largely hidden heritage with a model and a professionally made audio guide available in several languages.

## Norse Mythology in Borgarnes

Several large size wall hangings with images from the Norse mythology make up this unique exhibition. The centre piece is a 25m<sup>2</sup> model of the ancient world designed by artist and visionary Haukur Halldórsson, who's ambition is to build a life-size amusement park like the one seen in the model. Visitors can enjoy a 20 minute audio guide commentary

in English, German, Norwegian or Icelandic for adults and in Icelandic for children.

Edduveröld Exhibition is owned and operated by Erla Jónsdóttir and Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir from Borgarnes. "I love the Norse mythology," says Jónsdóttir. "The more I read about it the more I enjoy it because I love adventure. It is possible to view the stories in so many ways and I guess everyone will picture it in his or her own way."

The source of the Norse heathen mythology was recorded by Christian chieftain and scholar Snorri Sturluson in the manuscript Snorra Edda in the 13th century. Sturluson happened to live at the Borg farm in Borgarfjörður, only 10 minute drive from the Edduveröld in Borgarnes, and later at Reykholt which is about 30 minute drive from Borgarnes.



## Homely restaurant and coffee shop

Edduveröld restaurant offers home-style lunch at affordable price, and á-la-carte menu in the evening. "We make everything from scratch, so we know exactly what goes into our food and pastries," says Jónsdóttir. Mythology plays a big role in the naming of the dishes on the á-la-carte menu. There's a lamb dish named Óðin and the fish catch of the day is called Miðgarðsfiskur. More information about the restaurant and special lunch and dinner offers of the day is available on [www.edduverold.is](http://www.edduverold.is).

The restaurant is open from 10 in the morning until 11 at night every night except Fridays and Saturdays when it stays open until 1 am.

-SV



**Edduveröld**  
 Skúlagötu 17-310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 1455  
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 www.edduverold.is





## HISTORY BROUGHT TO LIFE

*The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre is in Reykholt*

**S**norri 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

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, 'The Snorri Sturluson 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.

-AMB



**Snorrastofa**

Reykholt - 320 Borgarfjörður  
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 snorrastofa@snorrastofa.is  
 www.snorrastofa.is





## IT'S ALL ABOUT LOCATION & COMFORT

*Fosshótel expands & improves its already extensive coverage*

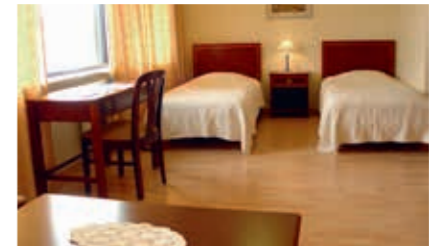
**W**hen travelling in foreign places there's always the chance that disappointing accommodation will spoil a rewarding day of sightseeing. This is why Fosshótel maintains a chain of conveniently located hotels around the country, maintained at a high standard of quality. That way, you know that a clean bed awaits you close by when you're touring the country.

Fosshótel does not maintain its standard of quality with complacency – on the contrary, there are seemingly constant renovations and innovations on their horizon. Their two hotels in Reykjavik have undergone extensive changes in the last two years. Fosshótel Lind

now sports a breakfast area with Nordic designs, new flooring, doors, bathrooms, beds, furniture and artwork and specially themed rooms are in the making. Fosshótel Baron (also in Reykjavik) has also seen significant improvements in the last two years.

### Stay on ice

The largest glacier in Europe is obviously a 'must visit' while in Iceland and being in a national park, accommodation is scarce. Therefore Fosshótel is expanding its already large hotel, making the glacier and its attractions even more accessible.



### Stay in the whale town

The often-overlooked North of Iceland is, of course, on Fosshótel's radar with three hotels in the region. The newest is in the charming seaside town of Húsavík, the unofficial whale watching capital of Iceland.

### Stay way out west

The remote Westfjords will be represented in Fosshótel's listing in June 2013 in the fishing town of Patreksfjörður, in an area renowned for breathtaking scenery. Finally, the East of Iceland will be inducted in Fosshótel's circle in 2014, completing the circle around Iceland for its customers' convenience.

All in all there are 10 hotels, each location selected according to proximity to attractions and the main road. Each hotel is set up according to local tradition and most of the hotels have quality restaurants that emphasize the local cuisine and many of the staff are, in fact, local people, who are more than happy to give you advice and information for your travels.

-VAG



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 +354 562 4000  
 sales@fosshotel.is  
 www.fosshotel.is



# THE OLD-ICELANDIC SAGAS

While other nations of Europe take pride in preserving castles, priceless art and great monuments of monarchies and churches, Iceland has not much of that. In fact Icelanders have very little to show in terms of buildings and monuments.

Icelanders lived mostly in turf houses till the beginning of this century made from turf, mud, stones and drift wood. They only built a very few houses out of wood, then mainly churches, because of lack of wood.

Poverty and the harsh nature, along with isolation and colonial rule by the Danish, resulted in a struggle for mere survival for the few people who lived here.

The nation's treasure and it's heritage from the past is however of great value. The medieval literature, especially the Sagas of the Icelanders are Iceland's outstanding contribution to the world's culture and the nation's gems from the past consisting of stories of the settlement period, powerful families in Iceland, their feuds and conquests.

Astonishingly modern in style, approach and subject matter, the sagas deal with the lives, characters, daily life and exploits of leading Icelanders of 10th and 11th centuries. They have been translated into many foreign languages and have appeared in numerous English versions; notably Njáls Saga, Egils Saga, the Saga of Gísli, Saga of Grettir the Strong and many others.

Among the Germanic nations, the British are the only nation to preserve literature equivalent to the Icelandic Sagas. The pre-classical English literature is older than our sagas, but very different, mainly because of greater influence from the church. It wasn't until printing was introduced in Iceland in the 15th century that the churches gained greater control over literature.

The sagas were written in 13th and 14th centuries. Most of their events took place 200 years earlier and some have certainly gone through oral transmission until they were written down.

They were written with herbal ink on calf skin with quills. Calf skin was considered the best material because it was thick and the writers could write on both sides without it being transparent. It was soft and of light colour.

Around 1100 AD, Icelanders began writing in Icelandic. Before that all written material had been in Latin or earlier runes.

In 11th century, the laws of the parliament or Alþingi were documented and can be found in the book of Grágás, the famous book of Icelanders by Ari fróði, written about the settlers. It is the history of the nation during the first centuries after the settlement.

The Book of Settlement by Sturla Þórðarson contains valuable information about the first 430 settlers, where they built their farms and where they came from, mostly Norway.

The chieftain and law-speaker, Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), the great Icelandic writer, poet and historian of the Middle Ages, who lived most of his life in Reykholt in Borgarfjörður in West Iceland, wrote the history of the kings of Norway, traditionally called Heimskringla (the circle of the world) and acclaimed as one of the classics of world literature. He also wrote a textbook of poetry known as Prose Edda. He was probably also the author of Egil's Saga, the story of the Viking poet Egill Skallagrímsson, one of the great innovators in Scandinavian poetry who lived in West Iceland, near what is now Borgarnes, in the 10th Century.

The heroic mythological poetry of the Poetic Edda Cycle is the only extant source of the beliefs, cosmology and outlook of the Germanic peoples in pre-Christian times. The Eddic poems in their present form were composed between ca 800 and 1200, but portions of them might date back to the sixth century. They rank among the great heroic and mythological epics of world literature.

The Old-Icelandic Sagas were scattered around the country and almost lost at the beginning of the 18th century when an Icelander, Árni Magnússon, took on a journey around the island to save the the old manuscripts. He found them in mud cabins and barns and transported them to a museum in Copenhagen Denmark. That museum burned down in 1728 and many of the books with it. But fortunately the majority were saved.



Since the early 18th century most of the Icelandic manuscripts were preserved in Denmark. After Iceland got its independence, they demanded their return and 1965 a treaty was signed to send the books back, little by little over a period of 25 years. The first shipment of 1900 books came to Iceland 1971 and thousands of people were standing on the docks in Reykjavik, cheering when they were carried to the shore.

Certain documents about Danish or Scandinavian history and culture, mainly stories related to the monarchy and the church, will remain in Denmark, even though they are written by Icelanders. Most of the manuscripts covered by the treaty have now been returned.

The old manuscripts are kept at the Árni Magnússon Institute at the University of Iceland and can be seen at The National Centre for Cultural Heritage (Þjóðmenningarhúsi). It was indeed a noble gesture of the Danish people to return the manuscripts, since it rarely happens that nations return such treasures to their former colonies. Old Icelandic literature can also be found in museums elsewhere, such as Britain and Sweden.

-AMB

þa þá í tíðum þessum... (Icelandic text from a manuscript page)

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## THE HOMEY TOUCH

*Enjoy the beauty of the dales at Nes farm*

Situated in one of the most beautiful farmland areas in Iceland, the Nes in Reykholtsdalur farm offers comfortable accommodation near some of the most magnificent sites on the island with homey atmosphere and friendly service.

The farm was started in 1937 and the oldest part of the farmhouse dates from that era.

Now the third generation descended from the founding farmers runs this agreeable establishment. It is located in the middle of the valley with a view to Reykholt, a great historical site, majestic glaciers in the highlands and magnificent mountains in the east.

One of Iceland's most recently built golf courses is literally at the doorstep and



whether you stay to enjoy your favourite pastime or to simply relax after sightseeing in this beautiful area, the farmer and his wife can provide you with a serene room to rest in, appetizing meals and interesting information about the surroundings and the environment. Staying at Nes offers a unique opportunity to see Iceland through the eyes of the locals. *-S.T.S*

**Nes in Reykholtsdal**

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bignes@vesturland.is  
www.farmholidays.is



## SPRING BRINGS NEW LIFE

*Hótel Framnes is the base for Snæfellsnes and the whales*

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

The hotel was originally built as a fisherman's hostel but a complete renovation has made it popular for its comfort, service and warm friendliness with visitors internationally.

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

### Colours and comfort

As Spring arrives, colours begin to change as life returns to the land and the snows retreat. The days get brighter and longer and travellers begin arriving in greater numbers to enjoy all the activities.

At the end of the day, the hotel's comfortable hot tub, which has a screen protecting bathers from any sea breezes without interrupting the view, a massage chair and sauna provide soothing for sore muscles.

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

### Activities on land and sea

Grundarfjörður is particularly easy to reach from Reykjavik, being a two-hour drive through amazing countryside. It is the central of the three fishing villages on the north coast of the Snæfellsnes peninsula.



### See the ocean's big five with Láki Tours

Sailing in the mystical bay aboard a traditional oak fishing boat holds a magic all of its own. Last year, Láki Tours had great success in seeing whales during the winter season. This year, Láki Tours offers a unique whale watching tour from Ólafsvík on their new boat, the Brimrún.

Nowhere else in Iceland is there a better chance to see the ocean's big five whales - Blue Whale, Fin Whale, Humpback Whale, Minke Whale and Killer Whale - than along the Snæfellsnes Peninsula coastline.

The landscape is magnificent around the Glacier and even more so viewed from the sea. The Snæfellsjökull Glacier rises majestically into view from wherever you are at sea, competing with the wonderful sight of breaching whales. Bookings can be made for the daily trips at Hotel Framnes. *-ASF*

**Láki Tours**

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framnes@hotelframnes.is  
www.lakitours.com

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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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## BIRDS OF THE NORTHERN BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR

**B**reiðafjörður is an expansive and shallow bay. It has a large area of shallow waters and greater tides than anywhere else in Iceland. It is estimated that a quarter of the country's shoreline is located in Breiðafjörður. A great number of islands, islets and skerries can be found in the bay and its islands are thought to be infinite, though some claim that the number is approximately 3,000. The bay is one of the most important areas in the country for birds, and the islands and inner part of the bay are protected by special laws. The bird life is characterised by birds that are wholly dependent on marine life and nest in large colonies. Breiðafjörður is a stronghold for the White-tailed Eagle, and it managed to prevail there when it had almost been

eradicated in Iceland during the middle of the last century. There are great numbers of Common Eider in the bay and it is the kingdom of the Glaucous Gull in Iceland.

### **Borgarland and Reykhólar**

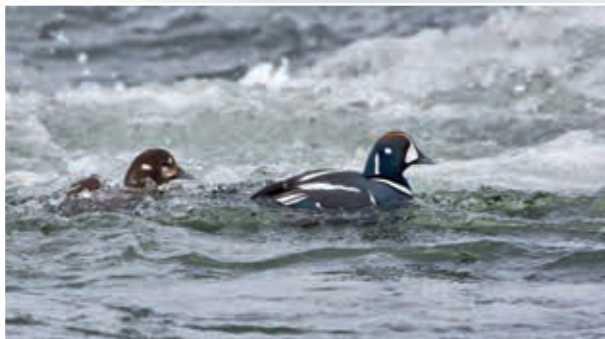
The coastline by the northern part of Breiðafjörður is a birdwatcher's paradise, as well as that of other nature enthusiasts. We will travel from east to west and begin our journey in Króksfjörður fjord. Between Króksfjörður and Berufjörður is the beautiful Borgarland peninsula. The landscape is adorned with ponds, marshes, and rock formations, and there are fine views in many directions. The ponds and wetlands attract diverse bird life, the flora is interesting and, in many places, marine artifacts can be found up on dry land. It was at this site

that the author saw the king of Icelandic birds, the White-tailed Eagle, for the first time and indeed the odds of seeing this majestic bird are higher in the areas we travel through in this article than in most other places.

Our next stop is Reykhólar village. In the area below Reykhólar can be found vast heathland and marshland and ponds and lakes where various scarce species of bird live. Birdwatching trails have been laid from the swimming pool at Reykhólar, Grettislaug, through marshes and heaths to Langavatn and Neðravatn lakes. There is a bird watching hut by Langavatn. The nesting birds here include Horned Grebes, Red-throated Divers, Long-tailed Ducks, Black-tailed Godwits, Whimbrels, Red-necked Phalaropes and Rock Ptarmigans.



A fullgrown White-tailed Eagle nesting



Harlequin Ducks are comm on Vatnsdalsá in Vatnsfjörður



Puffins at Látrabjarg



Kittiwake at Látrabjarg



### The fjords

Next, we come upon a myriad of fjords with a very diverse bird life. In the bottom of the fjords are mudflats that are revealed at low tide. Thousands of migratory birds stop at these beaches on their way between nesting sites in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic and wintering grounds in Europe and Africa. Among these birds are Brent Goose, Red Knot, Sanderling, and Ruddy Turnstone.

The Road Administration has had a tendency to dam these fjords or lay roads through the mudflats. Gilsfjörður, for example, was ruined in this manner. The

Icelandic Wren sings far and wide in thickets within the fjords. This bird is an endemic subspecies which could soon become a separate species. Purple Sandpipers nest on heaths and hills between the fjords.

The westernmost fjord is Vatnsfjörður. The fjord is a special conservation area. Approximately twenty species of birds live in the reserve on an ongoing basis. There are large numbers of Common Eider in the fjord. Harlequin Ducks can be found on Vatnsdalsá river, from its outlet from Vatnsdalsvatn lake to the sea in spring and into the summer. These ducks can number in the dozens in

May. Harlequin Ducks are also seen on the upper part of the river which runs into the lake. One pair of Great Northern Divers usually nests at Vatnsdalsvatn, and the Red-breasted Merganser also nests at the lake. White-tailed Eagles and Gyr Falcons are often out and about and nest nearby. There are some field mice, foxes, and minks in the area, but it is easier to spot the seals which often lie on the rocks by Hörgsnes peninsula. The tidal flats of Hagavaðall and Rauðisandur beach are important stops for migratory birds, and there is also a diverse nesting bird fauna in that area.

### Látrabjarg

The outpost of Breiðafjörður to the north is the Látrabjarg bird cliff, the second westernmost point in Europe. It is an unforgettable experience to arrive at Bjargtangar, park by the lighthouse, and walk east along the cliff edge. Atlantic Puffins skitter on the edge, coming and going, and carrying on their domestic lives, oblivious to the people observing them close by. Nowhere can you more readily view Atlantic Puffins than at Bjargtangar, and in few places are they tamer. This is one of the best locations in the world for observing

Atlantic Puffins; you can take a close-up picture of one there with a wide-angle lens. Razorbills are also found on ledges and, lower down on the cliff, Common Guillemot and Brünnich's Guillemot nest in the tens of thousands, while Fulmars and Kittiwakes are more scattered. The largest Razorbill colony in the world is in Stóruð under Látrabjarg, well east of Barð, a cliff edge which extends to the sea and from which the county derives its name. Though not a natural cliff bird, the Black Guillemot makes its nest on rocky slopes under the cliff. The inhabitants on the cliff probably

number well over two million. Under the cliff swim dignified Common Eiders, while colourful Harlequin Ducks and European Shags strut on rocks and boulders. Great Skua, Arctic Skua, and Gannets are often seen in flight. At low tide, Grey Seals lie on boulders, and whales are sometimes seen blowing or rolling by the cliff. In late evening, foxes skip to the edge and dart beneath it to get hold of a bird.

Please note that, of course, nature should be treated with the utmost respect, and birds should not be disturbed at their nest or bothered in any way.



## WESTWARD HO!

*Iceland Excursions opens up the Westfjords and its famous bird cliffs*

This year, for the first time, it is possible to travel all the way to the westernmost tip of Iceland in a day trip that encompasses history, geology, myth, legend and thrilling sights.

The Westfjords are an oft-neglected spot on the tourists' map though those who have visited it have written rave reviews about it. This tour takes you to Europe's furthest point, a dramatic region where cliffs higher than the Eiffel Tower plunge vertically down to the rough Atlantic seas.

### Látrabjarg – Home to birds

These massive, sheer cliffs are the home of thousands of birds, their nests clinging

precariously to the craggy rocks. It's a sight bird-lovers have, in the past, been willing to endure arduous treks to reach, for the reward of the spectacular sight from the cliffs' edge. The birds are unafraid of humans, who can get within a couple of metres of them, without disturbing their busy lifestyles.

### The shipwreck that had the world holding its breath

In winter, the area takes on a very different nature. It has been the site of several shipwrecks down through the years. One, in particular, was immortalised on film. It happened just before Christmas, 1947. The

trawler *Dhoo* had sailed from the town of Fleetwood, bound for the rich fishing grounds off Iceland's north-west coast. Caught in a violent storm, typical of the area at that time of year, it was smashed onto the rocks in this, one Europe's most inaccessible spots, under the soaring cliffs, which were whipped by the wind and covered in snow and ice, setting in motion one of the most courageous rescues that gripped the world for days.

A film crew went to make a re-enactment of the scene the following year, only to find themselves caught in a second rescue, this time of the trawler *Sargon*, which they were able to catch on film, despite the dreadful weather conditions.

19th century. If you only reached this point, the tour would have been wholly worth it, as there are so many interesting sights on this section of the trip. However, disembarking on the south coast of the Westfjords marks the start of an entirely new land.

### A land of contrasts

When most people visit Iceland in the summer, they get no idea of the change in weather that takes place with the passing of the seasons. The summer months mean the whole country is open to visit, making tours like this possible. The warmth of the sun brings everything to life, making the Westfjords a stunning place to visit.

### A tour to a different world

Driving up to the Snæfells peninsula, itself rich in history and legend, the tour takes the ferry across the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay, stopping briefly at the island of Flatey, where time seems to have stood still in the

The newly paved road makes the drive smooth and easy to Patreksfjörður, so you can take in the beauty of the region. The coach then moves on to the unspoiled area that takes you to Látrabjarg's cliffs, along the side of the fjord, where whales can often be seen swimming, round a bay that could have come from the Caribbean. Here, your imagination takes you back to the wildness of the winters, while in the comfort of the coach, as the guide fills you in on everything associated with the area.

It has been said that, "Beaten roads are for beaten men, but mountain peaks are for the mighty". Here, you are uncovering secrets of Iceland that only few know about. It's a day filled with photo opportunities.

For instance, on your return, you'll be crossing the bay with the sun heading toward the western horizon. At this latitude, it just kisses it before rising back up in the morning mists. Here, too, there is so much bird and marine life to enjoy. On the drive back, the volcanos cast a shadow over the land, coloured red with minerals; the river, starting from the mountain lake, rushes over waterfalls alongside the road. As you head back towards Borgarnes, with the Snæfells glacier behind you, made famous by Jules Verne in 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth', you pass areas famous for the Huldafólk - the Hidden People, with whom many have had experience down through the centuries, and the house of the famous warrior-poet, Egil Skafte-Grimsson, at Borg.

If you had driven this by car, you would never have known all the background that the guide explains that turns this trip into an experience you won't forget. You may be tired when the coach drops you back at your hotel, but you'll be inspired and fulfilled. Better than baking on a beach somewhere!

ASF



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## MYSTIC HISTORY

*Reykholahreppur: Overlooking Breidafjörður from the Westfjords*

The Westfjords' south coast holds one of Iceland's hidden pearls. It's a small, peaceful community with natural phenomena and a grand landscape. Over a dozen fjords surround the island-dotted mystical Breidafjörður Bay with its beautiful scenery, historical and poetic references and exceptional birdlife.

A Service Centre with a History Two and a half hour's drive from Reykjavik on paved roads, Reykhólar village is the County's centre, providing a full range of services, including a campsite, stores, museums, a unique seaweed

spa at Sjavarsmiðjan and a geothermal swimming pool. The oldest summer hotel in Iceland, Hotel Bjarkalundur, provides quality accommodation, dining and picturesque views.

Throughout history Reykhólar has been home to many of Iceland's most prominent chieftains and is frequently mentioned in the Icelandic sagas.

Flatey Island is an important cultural site. A visit takes you back to the year 1900. Reminders of past times include a monastery built in 1172 and Iceland's first library built in 1864.



### Birdwatchers' Paradise

A wide variety of species nest around both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and on the islands of Breidafjörður Bay. One of the most impressive are the majestic and elusive whitetailed eagles (*haliaeetus albicilla*), that both nest in the area and can be seen flying over Reykhólar.

### Uncountable Islands

Some say Breidafjörður Bay's islands are uncountable but cartographers estimate there are around 3,000. Eyjasigling at Reykhólar offers cruises to islands inhabited and those uninhabited except for the plethora of birds.

-VAG



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## SOFT AS SILK SPA

*Sjavarsmiðjan's Seaweed therapy brings health and relief*

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

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

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



B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, C, E, K, pantothenic acid, folic acid, and niacin. They are an important supply of 60 trace elements and an excellent source of over 12 minerals, especially sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, zinc and manganese.

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

-ASF



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 www.sjavarsmidjan.is



## SAILING BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR BAY

*Eyjasigling takes tours, photography and birdwatching to sea*

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

Sailing from Staður's harbour, less than a dozen kilometres from the village of Reykjólar on the southern Westfjords, Eyjasigling's 19-passenger boat, the Sula, takes enthusiasts out twice a day at 10:30am and 4pm.

Enjoying the wildlife in its natural environment is a fulfilling experience and, with guide, Björn Samuelsson, bringing the bay's



history to life and taking you to the best spots to see the birds, seals and dolphins, it's one of those truly defining moments in a holiday.

Björn also takes you to Flatey or Skáleyjar, the only islands inhabited year-round. Here, you will feel as if time stood still a century ago. The farmers still live a simple self-sufficient lifestyle, collecting eider down, birds' eggs, fishing and seal hunting.

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

-ASF



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## PEACE WITH NATURE AND BIRDS

*Hótel Látrabjarg brings back the simple joys of life*

On Europe's western-most tip, Hótel Látrabjarg is set amidst a photographer's and birdwatcher's paradise at the furthestmost point of the Westfjords. It's a rugged countryside here, with sheer cliffs rising high above the fjords. Although the road is paved from the ferry terminal to Patreksfjörður, the

nearest town, from the end of the fjord, a gravel road takes you to the beaches of Rauðasandur, the bird cliffs of Látrabjarg and the hotel. The route is studded with spectacular vistas, ending in a bay that, with its curved white sand beach and clear blue waters looks as if it belongs in a travel brochure for the Caribbean.



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



-ASF



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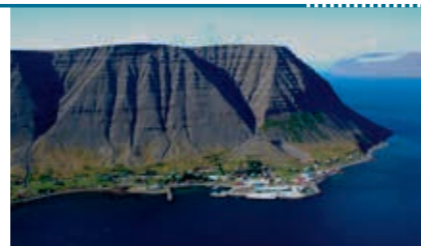


## WHERE MONSTERS RULE

*Sea Monster Museum of Bíldudalur*

Tales of sea monsters have played an important and colourful role in Icelandic folk culture for centuries, and several written accounts of them can be found in all parts of the country.

These elusive creatures have been given a worthy home at the Iceland Sea Monster Museum, located in the village of Bíldudalur, which nestles on the shores of Arnarfjörður fjord. This fjord is reputed to be one of the most prolific centres of monster activity in the country.



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

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

Those with monster appetite will appreciate the museum's cafeteria which offers a range of light refreshments and snacks.



**Monster Museum**  
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 info@eaglefjord.is  
 www.eaglefjord.is





## WESTFJORDS REVEALED

*Let EagleFjord Tours in Bíldudalur be your guide*

Would you like to take a bath in a natural hot spring in the Westfjords only the locals know? Jón at EagleFjord Tours in the village Bíldudalur is the local guide for Arnarfjörður and Tálknafjörður fjords – and he's not just an average local guide.

Jón loves showing visitors his part of the world. He has been submerged in the local culture and business life of the area his whole life but turned his full attention to tourism in 2007. Before, he used to be a commercial trawler fisherman, fish factory owner and shopkeeper. Jón takes great interest in his surroundings, the nature, history and culture



for some time and visitors help him appreciate it even more. "I used to sail back and forth in and out of Arnarfjörður fjord for decades as a professional trawler fisherman without recognising the scenic beauty. Showing people the amazing things we have here has helped me 'see' what I never saw before and to appreciate the things I used to take for granted," he says.

### The One-Stop Shop

EagleFjord Tours offer an amazing range of activities which truly makes it a one-stop shop for visitors. Whether you like exploring Viking Age burial sites, sea angling, whale watching, hiking or great food – Jón at EagleFjord Tours offers it all. Visit his website for details.



**EagleFjord Travel Service**  
 Dalbraut 1 • 465 Bíldudalur  
 +354 894 1684  
 info@eaglefjord.is  
 www.eaglefjord.is





## WESTFJORDS WONDERS

*West Tours help you get the most from this amazing area*

The Westfjords are an amazing peninsula characterized by steep, flat and also peaked mountains between deep blue fjords, beautiful colourful beaches with inhabitants who make travellers feel warmly welcome.

West Tours is the most experienced travel agency and tour operator in the region, celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2013. The West Tours office is based in Ísafjörður and small booking offices are planned to operate

in Hólmavík and in one of the villages in the southern part of the region during summer.

West Tours' objective is the presentation, marketing and selling of all tourism-related services that are offered all over the peninsula. West Tours is now owned by about 60 tourism-related companies and individuals that all, in some way, are connected to the Westfjords. Good co-operation between the companies is seen as the key for a positive outcome.



West Tours' clients can choose between many services. If you plan a day trip, a weekend or a longer trip in the Westfjords during summer or winter, we will be happy to make an unforgettable experience happen.

### Activities we offer in 2013

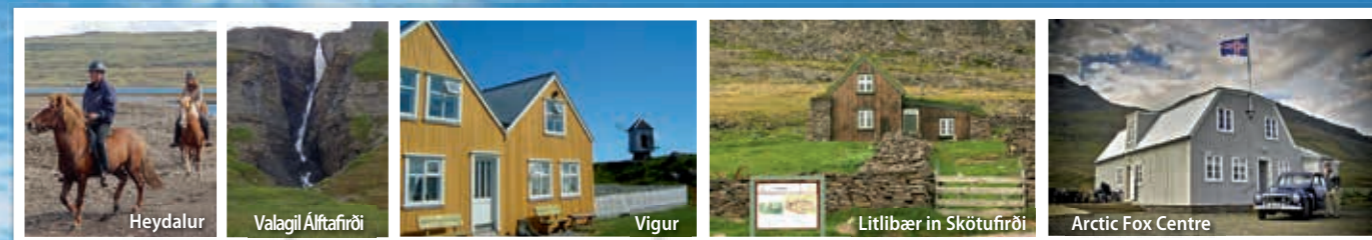
ATV tours, bike rentals, bird watching, horseback riding, hikes and walks, various kayaking tours, local food tastings, RiB-boat safaris, scooter rentals, sea angling, sightseeing tours by car or boat, whale watching, winter activities, Northern Lights tours and many kinds of package services.

*We look forward to seeing you in the Westfjords!*



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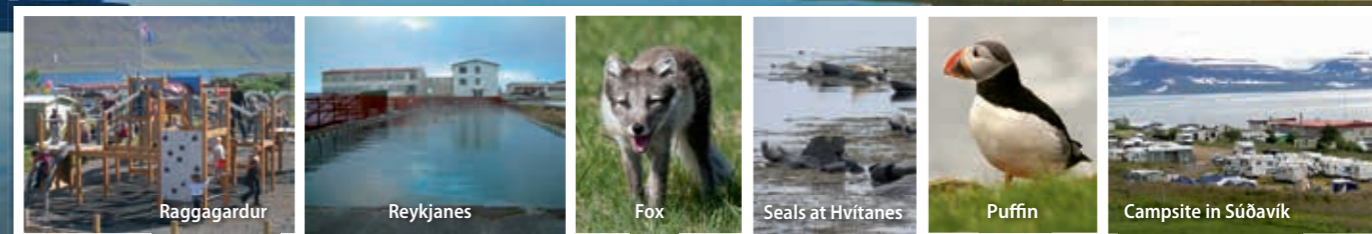


## A beautiful area to visit

- A wide range of wildlife
- Many hiking trails
- Helpful tourist services
- Arctic Fox Centre celebrates its 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary on 9<sup>th</sup> June
- 'Deep Fjord Day' on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August.
- Blueberry Day will be held from 16 – 18<sup>th</sup> August



See you in  
**Súðavík**  
 www.sudavik.is





## ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

*The furtive little arctic fox is found in the Westfjords in Súðavík*

The arctic fox is an enchanting creature. At some point in the distant past, it travelled across the frozen sea and, in spite of the inhospitable climate, found a home on this small, isolated island. The arctic fox is Iceland's only native terrestrial land mammal and has been the subject of curiosity by scholars and lay people alike. For this reason, The Arctic Fox Centre was established in the village of Súðavík in 2010, since the fox is commonly found in the area.

### Exhibition of the first native

The Centre is located in the oldest house in Súðavík, a 120 year-old farm that was renovated by the local authorities and is situated between what locals call the 'old village', destroyed in a devastating avalanche in 1995, and the 'new village', built in its stead at a safe distance from the mountain.



The Centre serves as an educational and cultural hub and offers an extensive exhibition on the arctic fox as well as regularly exhibiting local arts and crafts. Its main aim however, is to collect and preserve everything of importance regarding the arctic fox and its long-lasting relationship with man as surprisingly, fox hunting is the oldest paid occupation in Iceland.

The exhibition is divided into three sections: the biology of the fox, the hunting



of the fox and the hunters themselves, this last mentioned containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and, of course, there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round. The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland.

A nice little café at the Centre sells home-baked pastries, light courses and wonderful coffee, which guests can enjoy out on the patio overlooking the beautiful mountains and the sea. The café has open Internet access. On Friday nights, live music is performed in the loft, where it's nice to sit down for a drink in the cosy atmosphere. The Centre also has a small boutique selling specially made souvenirs and craftwork.

-HP

Images by © Þorbjörg Sigurðsson



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## TROLLING THE WESTFJORDS

*Living Legends in Drangsnæs*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

-KB



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Holiday cottages Restaurant for 60 people  
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**Spes Farmers Market**  
 A fascinating market with local foods eg. fresh, smoked and dried fish, cheese and jams, handicrafts and special crafts created using ancient Viking methods and materials gleaned from the area.

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**The Folk Museum of Reykir**

On display are a number of famous old boats and ships, amongst them the famous shark ship Ófeigur from Ófeigsfjörður. We also show how Icelanders used to live by displaying the living arrangements of an old house named Syðsti-Hvammur, which used to be near Hvammstangi.

Many spectacular 19th - 20th Century pieces are found inside the museum. New & exciting crafts from the local community will be on sale at the museum. On-site restaurant.

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**CAPITAL OF COUNTRY**

*The north's most musical town*

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

town's annual Country festival which is held in mid August each year. Recently a Country museum was opened at Skagaströnd in honour of Hallbjörn and his work.



**Kántrýbær**

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



**The village**

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

**The Museum of Prophecies and Cape Spákonufellshöfði**

The first inhabitant in Skagaströnd is believed to have been Þórdís the Soothsayer, a widely known woman of the 10<sup>th</sup> century whose name is mentioned in many of the Icelandic sagas. Þórdís was famous for her ability to see into the future and at the Museum of Prophecies, her story is told on a painted tapestry. The exhibition provides information about prophecies and visitors can have their fortunes told and palms read. Þórdís lived by the foothills of Mountain Spákonufell and stories tell of her daily walks up the mountain where she'd comb her hair with a special gold comb.

Cape Spákonufellshöfði is a protected area and a popular hiking route. A telescope and information signs have been put up to give insight into the cape's rich history.

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

-Hp



www.icelandictimes.com



Sveitarfélagið Skagaströnd  
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## THE ARCTIC BOW

Amazing range of scenes, history and nature

The Arctic Bow is the name of the remarkable 184 km scenic and historic route along Tröllaskagi (Troll Peninsula) on the north coast of Iceland, stretching from Varmahlíð in the west to Akureyri in the east, passing through the recently built 11 km long tunnels between the towns of Siglufjörður and Ólafsfjörður. Along this route, there's beautiful nature, excellent accommodation, fresh local food and a variety of activities to enjoy.

### Hólar

A small university community and episcopal see started in the early 12th century. The current cathedral dates back to 1763 and those interested in Icelandic horses will surely enjoy the Icelandic Horse History Centre. The nearby village of Hofsós hosts the Icelandic Emigration Centre and an award-winning swimming pool, neatly located on the seaboard.

### Siglufjörður

Best known for its 'Herring Era' in the 40's and 50's. Visitors can watch local boats bringing in the catch of the day from

the comfort of one of Rauðka's excellent harbour-side restaurants with stunning views of nature.

### Ólafsfjörður

Also known for its stunningly beautiful surroundings, it is best enjoyed on foot. Visitors can choose to hike with a map and a compass, or make use of one of the sign-posted hiking routes. Scheduled whale watching trips are available in summer and kayaks and bikes can be rented at the quiet Brimnes hotel and bungalows by the town's beautiful lake.

### Dalvík

In Eyjafjörður, Dalvík's annual August event, The Great Fish Soup Day, is attended by thousands who enjoy the free seafood soup and entertainment for the whole family.

Dalvík's Hvoll Folk Museum provides insight into the life and work of the local people. Amongst other things, it commemorates 'Jói the Giant', the tallest Icelander ever, thought to have been 231 cm. Sea angling and whale watching tours are available from Dalvík's pier; horseriding tours



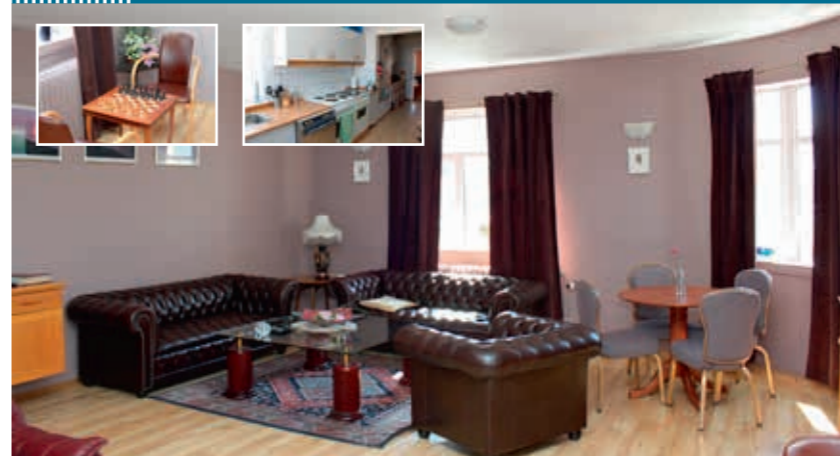
can be taken in the Svarfadardalur nature reserve and a ferry sails from Árskógssandur to the beautiful island of Hrísey.

### Grimsey

Grimsey Island is the northernmost settlement of Iceland. The Arctic Circle crosses this small island whose 90 inhabitants depend on the fishing industry. The island can be reached by ferry from Dalvík and by air from Akureyri.

### The Photographers' dream

The Trollaskagi peninsula, and its islands of Hrísey, Grimsey, Málmei and Drangey are renowned for an amazing birdlife. Photographers interested in photographing the birds should register and participate in the 'Bird for a million' photo contest. There is a ISK 1 million cash prize for the winner. Visit [www.birdforamillion.com](http://www.birdforamillion.com) for more information about the contest. -SHV



## AT THE CENTRE OF THE ARCTIC BOW

Hvanneyri Guesthouse accommodates all budgets

Siglufjörður, nestled in one of Iceland's most scenic fjords, is becoming better known to travellers today. Following the opening of the new tunnels linking it with Ólafsfjörður, travelling to this town at the end of the world has become much easier and enjoyable.

There are so many good reasons to travel to this northernmost town on the Troll peninsula. The trip itself is stunning in its beauty, there is culture and history

at every turn and, for nature lovers and photographers enough to enjoy for weeks on end. This area is known as the Arctic Bow.

Right in the centre of it all is Hvanneyri Guesthouse in Siglufjörður. It provides a perfect base for forays into the surrounding areas. With accommodation ranging from lavish suites to dorms, Katrín and her family are justifiably proud of being able to offer a room to fit every budget.



This is a family run guesthouse that has the warm atmosphere of a home, where a special emphasis on friendly service is felt by all who stay here.

The town's restaurants, shops and bakery are practically within arms' reach, as are the Herring Era museum and Folk Music Centre. Many activities are possible here, though hiking and photography are probably the most popular. -ASF



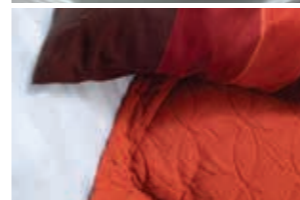
**Hvanneyri Guesthouse**  
 Adalgata 10 - 580 Siglufrið  
 +354 467 1506  
[order@hvanneyri.com](mailto:order@hvanneyri.com)  
[www.hvanneyri.com](http://www.hvanneyri.com)



## Hótel Varmahlíð welcomes you

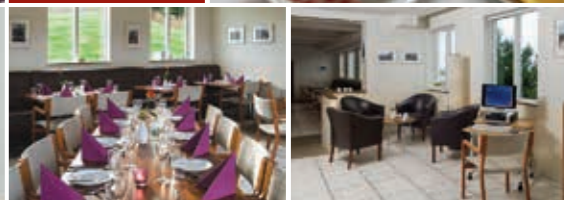
We offer personal service and casual atmosphere in a small, comfortable, three star hotel. Hotel Varmahlíð has 19 rooms with private facilities and is conveniently located by route 1.


Our **Restaurant** focuses on local cuisine from the Skagafjörður region and welcomes all travellers who want to try some tasty dishes from our menu.



Skagafjörður welcomes you all year round. Experience summer joy or winter pleasure

Check out our website [www.hotelvarmahlid.is](http://www.hotelvarmahlid.is) for online booking





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## A BOUTIQUE LIFESTYLE IN THE NORTH

*A Tranquil Setting for a Beautiful Break at Lónkot*

The northern region of Skagafjörður is famous for a number of things. The Food Chest concept, created at Lónkot and used all over the area, encourages sustainability and the use of locally grown vegetables and locally sourced foods, such as game, ptarmigan, duck, geese and fish like arctic trout.

At the cosy boutique hotel at Lónkot, they have taken the concept a step further. Using the slow cooking method, the bucolic

restaurant has earned a name for delicious meals with the addition of flowers and herbs.

The hotel itself has six rooms for between 17—20 guests. This makes it a perfect location for incentive groups wanting an unusual get-away together, though individual travellers have found it just as inspiring. It is intentionally kept small and personal and has just reopened after a complete renovation.



In winter, groups have the added advantage of experiencing the Northern Lights, winter sports in the area while enjoying the seasonal foods.

All the reviews on TripAdvisor.com rate both the hotel itself and the restaurant as 100% excellent but nothing can match the personal enjoyment of this beautiful experience.

-ASF

**Lónkot**  
 Lónkoti • 566 Hofsós  
 +354 453 7432  
 lonkot@lonkot.com  
 www.lonkot.com

## DINE IN THE DANISH ERA

*Delicious Food, Delightful Views at Sólvík in Hofsós*

Next door to the Icelandic Emigration Centre in Hofsós, in a beautifully restored 19th century wooden building, is the Sólvík restaurant and café.

### Renovated History

Hofsós is one of the oldest trading centres in Iceland. Recently, many of the houses surrounding the harbour have been renovated, giving the village back the spirit of the trading centre of bygone days. Sólvík was the home of the agent for the Danish monopoly and previously stood in Grafarós, which was a trading centre from 1835-1915. It was moved to Hofsós and erected in its current location in 1920.

### Fresh Food at its Best

Its terrace, overlooking the charming harbour of Hofsós, is a lovely place to sit and enjoy the wonderful cuisine of Dagmar Ásdís Þorvaldsdóttir: freshly caught cod and trout, mountain lamb from Skagafjörður, chicken fillet, hamburger, lobster, soup and bread or a coffee and cake.

Dagmar has been running Sólvík for about 10 years. She says the courses she has on the menu are her clients' most popular choices over past years. The restaurant is open every day, all day



long in summer, offering a full menu and she is happy to open for groups of 4 or more in winter.

-KB

**Sólvík**  
 Vesturfarasetrið • 565 Hofsós  
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 samstarf@visir.is  
 www.hofsos.is



## FAR FROM HOME

*The Icelandic Emigration Centre Links Past and Present*

Immigration is often viewed from an outside perspective, which follows immigrants' lives as they become established once arriving in a new country, rather than seeing the reasons for leaving their homeland. Pioneering Icelanders left for faraway lands in pursuit of prosperity or a new adventure. The Icelandic Emigration Centre in Hofsós tells stories of emigration from Iceland during its height from 1870 until 1914.

### Poignant Mail

The voices invoked through records and letters mailed back home tell the perils of life in a new land. Most fared well with easily acquired land parcelled out to any newcomers, but some saw all of their children perish in lands where they lacked stronger links like those left behind in Iceland. Most of the immigrants settled in North America, setting up communities throughout parts of Canada



and the United States. It is estimated that the equivalent of another Iceland, 300,000 people with Icelandic heritage, live scattered across North America.



### Poverty and Class

Poverty prompted mass emigration from Iceland, with people often looking to escape conditions close to feudal servitude. Numerous people had no land and worked for large farms owned by the wealthier classes. The emigrants made up approximately one quarter of the entire population and their difficult lives made leaving an easier decision. Starting out fresh in countries where land was plentiful and class distinctions negligible allowed poor emigrants a chance to free themselves from the rigid social mores of Iceland's lower classes.

### Vagaries of Nature

The Icelandic Emigration Centre links harsh winters with heavy pack ice that ruined farms and diminished fish stocks to spikes in migration during the following years. Famine was always a threat, as the weather often caused living conditions to teeter on the brink of being

uninhabitable. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, led to entire villages fleeing the fallout and resettling in countries where nature's violent forces were less volatile.

### The Journey

Each room in the Emigration Centre

tracks different stages of the emigrants' journey from Iceland. Following the reasons for departure are rooms recreated to resemble the hold of a ship that took the Icelanders to their new homes. Initially, ships were packed with people, sleeping head to toe in cramped quarters that they frequently shared with animals. The final section of the museum displays photos and letters written by Icelanders detailing their lives in new countries.

### Finding Family

People of Icelandic descent can even trace their heritage by talking to museum staff who have access to many genealogical records from Iceland and settlement areas in North America.

-KB

**Emigration Centre**  
 Vesturfarasetrið • 565 Hofsós  
 +354 453 7935  
 hofsos@hofsos.is  
 www.hofsos.is



# TRÖLLASKAGI'S MYSTIC BEAUTY

*The beauty of the northern towns with their vibrant lifestyle*



## Sauðanes Mountain Horses

Go horse riding in the Mid Night Sun with Mountain Horses at Sauðanes farm. Offers a wide variety of tailor made riding tours to suit anyone from fanatical horse enthusiasts to first-time riders in the beautiful landscapes of the fjords and valleys of Tröllaskagi only about 40 km away from the arctic circle. The tours can vary in time from one or two hrs up to 4 days. Beautiful evening tours in the mid night sun in one of the best arias in the world to enjoy this spectacular phenomena of Mid Night Sun. Enjoy the fun of riding happy, healthy and well kept horses in beautiful natural surroundings.

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

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



## Hótel Brimnes

*Welcome to the mystical Troll Peninsula!*

📍 Bylgjubýggð 2 • 625 Ólafsfjörður 📞 +354 466 2400 ✉️ hotel@brimnes.is 🌐 www.brimnes.is



## Aðalbakarí

*Bakery is by the main square of Siglufjörður*

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

📍 Aðalgötu 28 • 580 Siglufirði 📞 +354 4671720



## TORGID RESTAURANT

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

📍 Aðalgötu 32 • 580 Siglufirði 📞 +354 467 2323



## Allinn

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

📍 Aðalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður 📞 +354 467 1111



## EATING AT THE END OF THE WORLD

*The bright yellow house is the restaurant and the red one, the café in Siglufjörður*

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

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

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

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



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

-Hp



## The Herring Museum

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

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



**Rauðka**  
 Gránugata 5 • 580 Siglufjörður  
 +354 467 1550  
 raudka@raudka.is  
 www.raudka.is



## MUCH MORE THAN FREE SOUP

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

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

### Wide range of tourist services

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

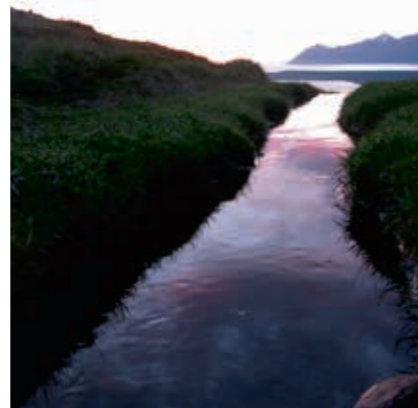
### Arctic Island Hopping

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

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

### The Great Fish Day

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



### Hiking, bird watching and skiing

The area around Dalvík is known for its phenomenal off-piste skiing and there is also a skiing area with ski lifts just above the town. Hiking is popular activity in the local community. Svarfdælir Hiking Club offers a variety of organised hikes during their Hiking Week (23<sup>rd</sup> June-30<sup>th</sup> June) Hikes range from easy to strenuous and everyone is welcome to join in.

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

-SHV

**Dalvíkurbyggð**  
Ráðhugi - 620 Dalvík  
+354 460 4900  
dalvik@dalvik.is  
www.dalvik.is



## AN OUTDOOR PARADISE

*Why Húsabakki is a Smart Choice to Enjoy Nature*

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

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

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

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



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

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

-SS

**Húsabakki**  
Svarfaðardalur - 621 Dalvík  
+354 859 7811  
husabakki@husabakki.is  
www.husabakki.is

## SYSTRAGIL CAMPING

The Systragil camping site is conveniently situated for excursions and sightseeing tours around the north of Iceland. The Flateyrdalur valley, the Laufás parsonage (an old farmhouse, built in the traditional style of the 18th century) and Goðafoss (the Waterfall of the heathen Gods of old), are all a short distance away. Lake Mývatn is about 60 kilometres away and the town of Húsavík some 90 kilometres away.

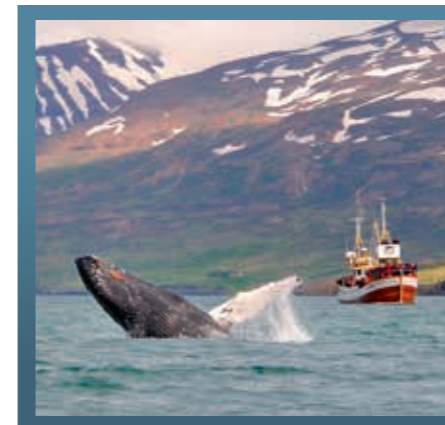
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## Guesthouse Hóll 2

We offer accommodation in a two bedroom apartment, which sleeps four. The apartment is fully furnished, available from one night and by agreement. Swimming pool and a beautiful golf course nearby.

**Welcome to Eyjafjörður!**  
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## Niels Whale watching

Daily from Hauganes in North Iceland from 25. maí - 5. Sept. Kl: 09:30 og frá 25. júní - 20. ágúst kl: 18:00

Sailing on the beautiful, long and narrow fjord of Eyjafjörður in search of whales. A unique opportunity to enjoy witnessing whales, fish and birds in their natural habitat on board a traditional Icelandic oak boat. In every tour we offer our guests also to try catching some fish if interested. This is a fully guided tour and including coffee and homemade pastries.

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niels@niels.is www.niels.is



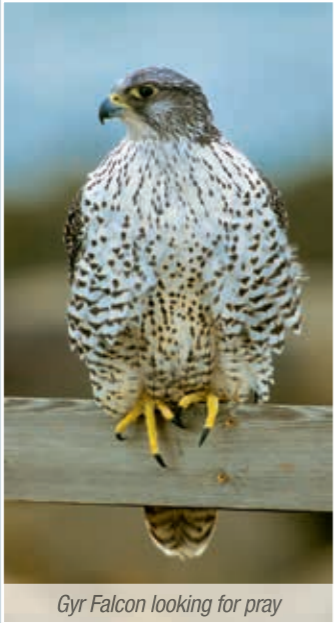
Ptarmigan hen incubating in a garden



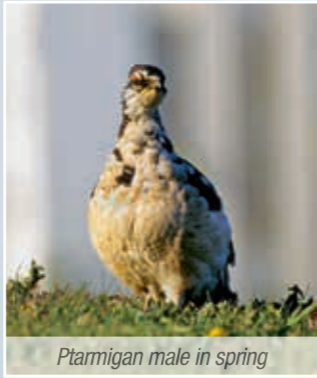
Black-tailed Godwit



Pair of Eiders in Hrísey



Gyr Falcon looking for pray



Ptarmigan male in spring

Gyr Falcon taking off

# THE BIRDS IN HRÍSEY

Hrísey is known for its rich and diverse bird life. Approximately 40 species of birds nest on the island. Hrísey, though, is best known for Ptarmigans.

## The Ptarmigan in Hrísey

The Ptarmigan is truly a signature bird of Hrísey and adorns the island's coat of arms. The Ptarmigan is tame, especially in the fall when it waddles in flocks through streets and gardens on the island. Research on Ptarmigans has been conducted in Hrísey for 50 years. Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (Steini rjúpa [ptarmigan]), a native of Hrísey, has participated in the research from the beginning. The size of the breeding population is assessed early in the spring; the male birds are counted where they posture on the knolls and hillocks of their territory and defend it against other males. At that time, fighting often occurs among the males

with accompanying burping sounds and feathers flying. The males stay white much longer than the females, moulting into summer camouflage up to a month later.

There can be a tenfold difference in the size of the Ptarmigan population between maximum and minimum years; the lowest number of males has been 30 and the highest number has been 270.

The Ptarmigans nest all over the island, even in the gardens of Hrísey inhabitants. The birds stay on the island all year round and the population is largest in late summer and autumn, when the chicks are fully fledged. During that time, the Ptarmigans stay in flocks.

The only natural enemy of the Ptarmigan in Hrísey is the Gyr Falcon, which has abundant prey on the island. During the nesting season, nearby nesting birds from the mainland go to the island in search of Ptarmigans, but in the winter, a few Gyr Falcons often stay in Hrísey.

## Diverse bird life

There is a large Arctic Tern colony and Common Eider colony on the island and many ducks and upland birds also nest there.

The Arctic Tern colony is believed to be one of the largest in Iceland and consists of thousands of birds. There is a large Common Eider colony in Ystabæjarland in the northern part of Hrísey on privately owned land. Other interesting nesting birds on the island are Black-tailed Godwits and Common Gulls.

The main reasons for this unusually rich bird life are that all killing of birds and taking of eggs are banned on the island and there are no foxes, mink, mice, or rats to be found there. There are ideal conditions for several bird species due to the low heathland which covers the island and the plentiful food supply for sea birds, such as Arctic Terns, Fulmars, Black-headed Gulls, Common

Gulls, and other gull species, as well as Black Guillemots; all nesting birds in Hrísey.

The fauna in Hrísey is diverse. Wetlands only constitute about 4% of Hrísey but are nevertheless rich and important for birds on the island, dabbling ducks like Mallards, Teals, and Wigeons, as well as waders like Godwits, Redshanks, and Snipes. Greylag Geese prefer the dry land for grazing. Pink-footed Geese have nested on the north part of the island, but it is unusual for this highland bird to nest so close to the sea.

## Land changes

The main threats to bird life on the island are currently changes in vegetation. There was a great deal of soil erosion on the northern part of the island and lupins were planted to impede it. This was successful, but the lupins have since spread to the southern part of Hrísey, and in their wake came other large plants, angelica and sweet cicely. An effort by the Akureyri Environment Committee is currently underway to prevent the spread of these plants and it will be interesting to see the result of that work.

A forest has also been cultivated on the island to provide, for example, shelter for the

inhabited area. So far, the densest Ptarmigan nesting ground is around the forest groves and even in the angelica fields. But what will the situation be like in 50 years? Upland birds will decrease in number, but those birds that can make use of the forest will remain. Ptarmigans will presumably also decline in number, as their habitat consists of moorland and open country.

## Bird watching in Hrísey

It is pleasantly different to sail on the Sævar ferry out to Hrísey and take a nice walk and look at the bird life. The Sævar sails every two hours during the summer, but less frequently during the winter.

It is inspiring to stay on the island, either at the Jónatanshús, Mínukot or Brekka guesthouses or at the camp ground. There are three marked trails on the south island. Hrísey's bird life is well described on many signs situated by the trails. A bird watching hut has been set up by Lambhagatjörn pond where many species of ducks and waders can be seen. The pond is on the left side when walking towards Ystibær farm or on the right side when walking towards the quarantine centre.

Text and photos Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson





# A FLAWLESS PEARL

*Spend a Perfect Day in this Idyllic World of Hrísey*

The island of Hrísey has been called the Pearl of Eyjafjörður. This wonderful untouched island has been organically certified and the beautifully renovated old houses are relics from another era. Indeed, stepping off the boat is like going back in time into a clean, self-sustaining world where man and animals live together in harmony.

## Time-tested transport

Hrísey is just a stone's throw away from Akureyri. The little village of Árskógssandur is only some 35 km from Akureyri and a ferry leaves every 2 hours from there to the island. The ride is comfortable and takes just fifteen minutes to get a traveller safely to this idyllic world.

No cars are necessary on the island. It's much more fun to get around by Tractor Taxi. Sitting in an old hay wagon towed by an elderly tractor will provide the ideal pace to enjoy all the sights and stop at exactly the right spots. The tractor takes about 40 minutes, round trip, exploring the village and surroundings.



## The old lighthouse

For a further guiding light in one's life, take a trip to the old lighthouse. The view from this tower is spectacular. The majestic mountains on either side of Eyjafjörður, the sea in its entire splendour and the whole island all lay before the visitor's eye and this is a perspective that should

not be missed. The lighthouse is one of seven such that has been conserved in Iceland. These tours take 1.5 to 2 hours.

## Interesting hiking trails

An invigorating walk will get you wherever you want on the island. Numerous hiking trails are marked and the 'leylines' on the island are considered by many to be a special source of energy. Many locals and visitors claim that they feel the earth's raw energy here and it gives them a chance to recharge their batteries in a unique way. Any amount of power drawn from this source is absolutely free of charge. There is a great deal to see and many lessons to be learnt as information signs dot the side of the pathways with interesting and educational facts.

## A sanctuary from Christmas dinner

Hrísey is a bird sanctuary and the ptarmigan, otherwise a popular Christmas dinner in Iceland, is revered here as a household friend rather than food. These plump and pretty

birds walk through the village and huddle down for a nap in the flowerbeds. The Arctic Tern screams above if one ventures to near her nesting grounds and eider ducks enjoy domestic bliss on the beaches. It is worthwhile to keep one's eyes open to spot these and numerous other feathered friends that have learnt to trust the inhabitants of this island.

## Everything you need and more

After a brisk walk, there is nothing as satisfying as sitting down to a good meal. Brekka is a gourmet restaurant offering steaks, fish and other scrumptious Icelandic delicacies. Júllabúð is a wonderful village shop carrying household goods, food, and toys and just about anything one might need. No wonder that their motto is: 'Everything you need'. It is also a café and a pizzeria with a friendly, personalized service and a good place for families as the children's corner provides entertainment for the youngest visitors. If you are in for an adventure, be sure to do as the Icelanders do and have a hot dog at Júllabúð.

## Handcrafts with organic tea

Souvenirs always give pleasure and provide a wonderful reminder of good times. Hrísið is a handicraft workshop that makes old Icelandic farm tools of all shapes and sizes and harvests organically grown angelica for tea and spices. Their beautifully crafted and carefully made products allow travellers to savour their visit long afterwards.

## Stay and enjoy

If half a day or a day on this island paradise is not enough, you can stay at Brekka, Jónatanshús or Mínukot, comfortable and friendly guesthouses or at the island's camp site. Then you can swim in the rejuvenating new geothermal pool, go fishing, enjoy the midnight sun and sleep soundly through the arctic night.

## The House of Shark Jörundur

In the oldest house of Hrísey, the House of Shark Jörundur, you will find an exhibition about the history of the island and the history of shark fishing in Iceland in earlier

### Hrísey ferry Schedule (March 1st - October 31st)

From Hrísey	From Árskógssandur
07.00	07.20
09.00	09.30
11.00	11.30
13.00	13.30
15.00	15.30
17.00	17.30
19.00	19.30
21.00	21.30
23.00 *	23.30 *

\* June 1st – August 31st

On Saturday mornings, the first ferry (07:00) is not scheduled unless you order it specifically.

On Sundays, you must order the 09:00 ferry specifically.  
 Attention: There is no 07:00 ferry on Sundays and holidays.  
 Ferry phonenumber: (+345) 695 5544. For more information  
[www.hrisey.net](http://www.hrisey.net).



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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.

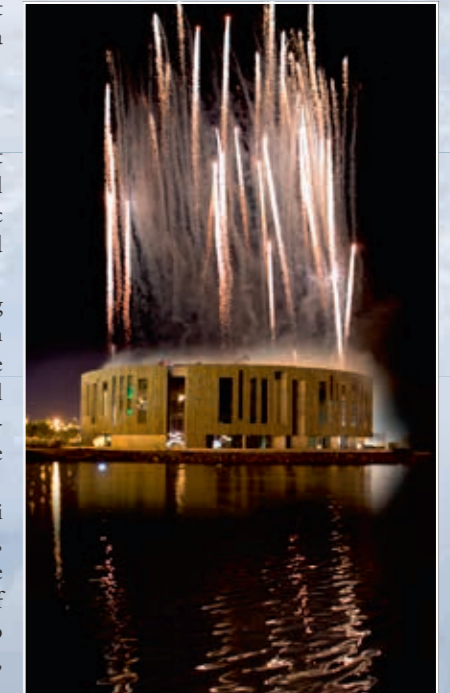
The Arctic Open Golf championship is played on the most northerly 18-hole course in the world, just outside the city under snow-covered mountains and the midnight sun. You can hire clubs if you need them and relax in the club house afterwards.

### 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



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## THE PLANT OF ANGELS

*The Latest Breakthrough at SagaMedica*

Some claim that Icelandic herbs are more potent than others due to the short growing period in the summer months and unique midnight sun. Now scientific evidence seems to back this claim and recent research has proved that the plant of angels, *Angelica archangelica*, is an effective way to treat an overactive bladder and frequent urination.

### The Vikings knew its value

This plant was an asset of this new country in the eyes of the Vikings who first settled in Iceland, as they knew its value full well. The root, stem, seeds and leaves were all used, both as food and medicine. This is documented in an Icelandic medical book over 150 years old.

### Academics developed quality treatments

SagaMedica was founded by academics from the University of Iceland. Indeed, the former dean of the University, Dr. Sigmundur Guðbjarnason, was a pioneer in research into Icelandic medicinal herbs and their benefits. He laid the foundation for SagaMedica, which has grown steadily through the years, while keeping their academic affiliations and upholding the highest standards of quality.

SagaMedica has been selling natural dietary supplements from this powerful plant for over a decade and now one of their products, SagaPro, has been validated by the scientific community after a recent clinical study showed that it does indeed reduce the symptoms of those who suffer from an overactive bladder or low bladder volume.

### Harvested on a small Island

*Angelica* grows wild on Hrísey, a small island in the northern Eyjafjörður fjord. There, the soil is fertile and pure and the air clean. Indeed, Hrísey island as a whole has been awarded an organic certification. Every measure is taken to ensure the purity and essence of Icelandic nature remains constant through to the final product.



### Reaching the world online

Recently, SagaMedica began exporting SagaPro to North America. They also ship to customers around the world through their online store and website, where there is an extensive history of the company and the numerous benefits of their products.

Perhaps, most interesting are the comments and stories from satisfied users who feel not only the benefits of being relieved of symptoms but are more rested and energetic after having begun using the products.

### Healing herbs

SagaMedica products are quality natural products from Icelandic medicinal herbs, with a special emphasis on *angelica*. SagaPro is their top selling product while *Voxis* lozenges and *SagaVita* work very well to prevent cold and flu and reduce symptoms when they occur. *SagaMemo* is used to maintain a healthy memory and the *Viking Tea* to invigorate and induce the robustness of the Vikings in its users.

SagaMedica combines 1100 years of history, the precision and diligence of science with the pristine Icelandic nature to create innovative products to benefit us all. *-ST.S*



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## BÁSAR GUESTHOUSE IN GRÍMSEY

*Where Everybody Knows Your Name*

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

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

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

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

Ragnhildur says island visitors are uniformly welcomed to the island and commonly invited to join in on whatever events the locals are celebrating. "We like to think of this environment as more personal than in many crowded populations. For example, I never leave my guests unattended and I often take guests staying at Básar for a



drive around the island and introduce them to our daily lives" says Ragnhildur.

Básar offers 18 beds in eight different rooms, either made up or for sleeping bags. Breakfast is on offer, as well as full meals if requested. The guesthouse is located next to the Arctic Circle and you only have to take three steps outside the guesthouse to cross it. From 12th June until 20th August, flights depart for Grímsey daily at 13:00 from Akureyri. Prior to that time, flights depart three times a week. A ferry also leaves from Dalvík at 9:00 am three times a week (Mon, Wed, Fri).



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 none





## AMBASSADOR TO THE WHALES

See the whales from Akureyri's specialized whale watching ship

Whale-watching in Iceland from Akureyri, the capital of the North, might turn out to be a splendid option given the legendary beauty of Eyjafjörður. This will be the first year one can hop on a scheduled tour from Akureyri with the 'Ambassador' whale-watching ship that aims to bring good communications between humans and whales.

More travellers prefer to head straight to the North of Iceland rather than linger in Reykjavik in order to enjoy the magnificent nature as well as less travelled areas than those of the South. The beautiful town of Akureyri, full of old, historic houses simply captivates you, even making you want to relocate completely to this northern gem. Thus it is certainly good news for the town to get its own whale-watching company.

The 'Ambassador' sails out three times a day during the summertime.

### The Whales' home

The Northern shores of Iceland are home to all the species of whales found by Iceland. Eyjafjörður, particularly, is home to the Humpback Whales — gigantic animals who love singing and slapping their fins and tails! It is beautiful to see these magnificent creatures jump up out of the ocean! Additionally Minke Whales, Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Blue Whales like to be seen on the fjord.

The Whales are also curious about humans and, in many ways, they are like us. Some are more suspicious, keeping a distance from the ship, while others are more daring, playing along and perhaps even communicating with us. And they love to sing!

### Sailing with the 'Ambassador'

The Ambassador has great viewing facilities, its length and many decks providing its guests with the opportunity to watch the whales from different angles. The name, 'Ambassador' is representative of its function of connecting whales and humans.



The 'Ambassador' sails from Akureyri's central harbour, right next to the Hof cultural house. The tour takes from between three to four hours, during which you get guidance about the spectacular nature of the whales, the sea, the fjord, the mountains — the whole eco-system! Being protected from winds and weather by the magnificent mountains certainly provides you with calmer sea than sailing in an open bay.

### The sailing schedule

From the beginning of May, you can choose from morning tours at 8.30 or afternoon tours at 13.00. From the start of summer you can also choose an evening tour at 20.30, giving you the opportunity to watch the whales and enjoy the bright and beautiful colours of Northern evening-sun simultaneously!

-NNH



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## RIDING THE NORTH

Polar Hestar's Summer Group Tours

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

### A little introduction to set the scene...

After crossing the sea-level road from Akureyri that bridges the east and west flanks of Eyafjörður fjord, the road winds its way to the mountaintop where you are met with an astonishing view of snow-capped peaks in the distance, the little picturesque town of Akureyri far below and the fjord itself, the longest in Iceland, silently stretching out to the Arctic Sea. Tranquil farms with fresh coats of red paint and flocks of white sheep dot the hillsides, the lush greens of the cultivated land are complimented by the deep blues of sky and sea. This then, is the road to Grýtubakki farm, home of Polar Hestar Tours.



### Gods and Sagas Tour

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

◆ This tour is for intermediate riders.

### Ride with the Elves Tour

Ride to Grenivik, stopping at the Laufás Turf farm and museum. Beautiful views over the fjord and the island of Hrisey. Extinct volcanoes, silent glaciers and hidden waterfalls surround you and, at the highest point, a tremendous view out to the Arctic Ocean awaits your gaze.

◆ An 8-day, 7-night tour for intermediate riders.

### Fascinating North Iceland

You will ride from Fremstafell farmhouse to the impressive Goðafoss waterfall, into the Bárðardalur valley and up to the famous Aldeyrfoss waterfall, known for its intriguing basaltic columns and onwards to explore the volcanic region of Lake Mývatn.

◆ This is a challenging tour of 8 days and 7 nights for very experienced riders.

*Polar Hestar Tours which celebrates its 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012, is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from a lot of countries, many of whom return year after year.*

-ASF



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## THE COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

*A Family-friendly stay at Hrafnagil Farm Guesthouse*

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

### A farm for families

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

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

### A traveller's rest

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



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

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

-ASF

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## A GUESTHOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

*The Farm at Ytra Laugaland offers an invigorating stay*

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

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

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

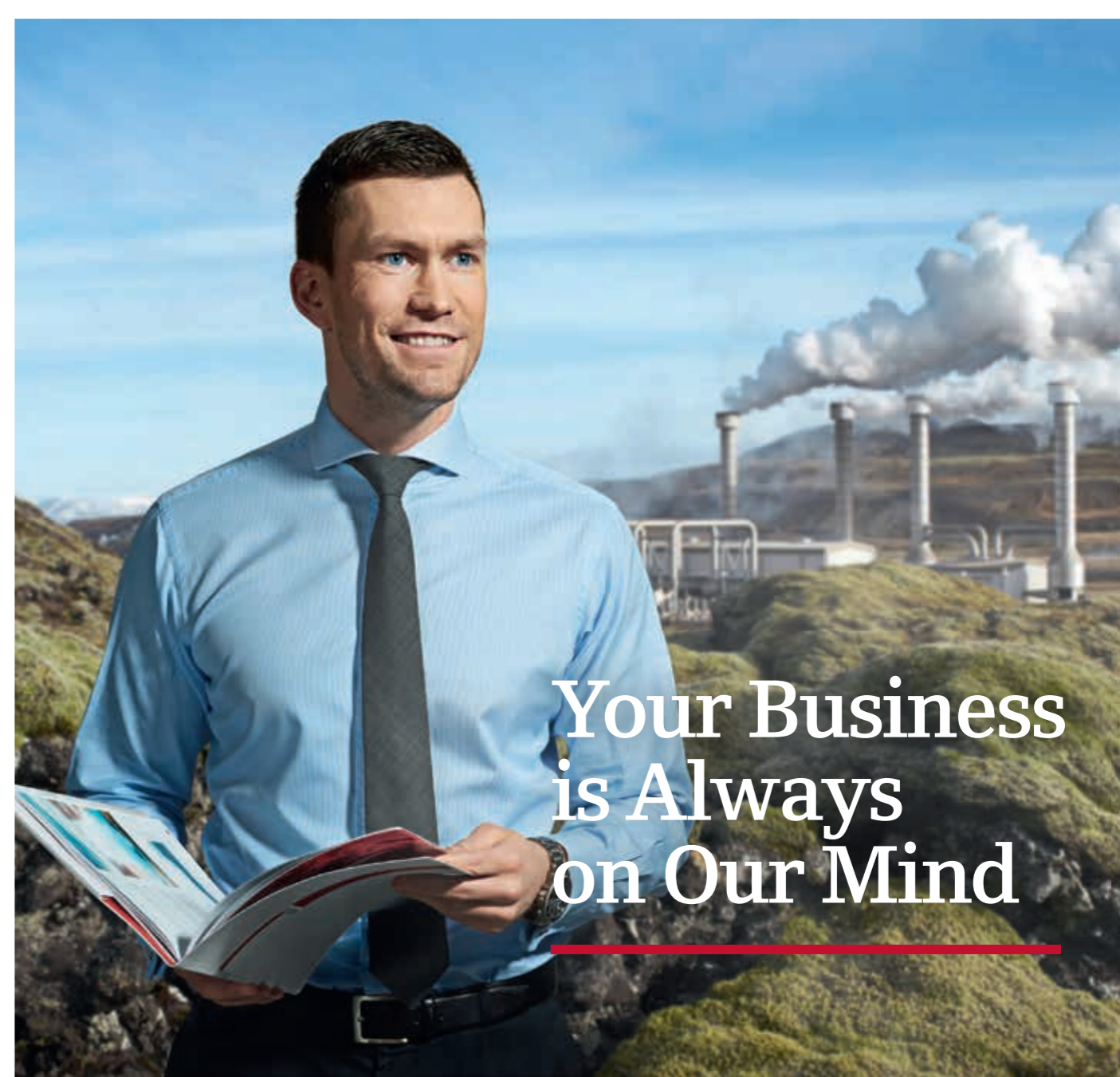


Vilborg have created a cosy, family-friendly home. The beds have health mattresses for a comfortable sleep and breakfasts are wholesome and healthy for a good start to the day. There are facilities for self-catering and there is a health-food restaurant just a minute's drive away. Also close by is the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

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

-ASF

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# Your Business is Always on Our Mind

Our goal is to make sure your business gets the financial services it needs to be successful. We go the extra mile to understand the challenges and opportunities facing your business and work closely with you to provide financial solutions that will help your business to grow.

At Íslandsbanki, we have put together a team of experienced professionals with a deep understanding of the energy industry. Our energy business is built on Iceland's history of successfully harnessing geothermal and hydroelectric power. We utilize that knowledge to help leading industry players succeed in a competitive environment.

**Expertise Grows from Enthusiasm**

Hjortur Thor Steindorsson has years of experience in the energy industry, both domestically and internationally.

Hjortur is the Executive Director of Energy at Íslandsbanki.

**We Offer Good Service**



## A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

*Sænautsel Turf Farm is restored to its original state and style*

Once buried in a thick layer of chalky ash from a volcanic eruption, the Sænautsel turf farm has been lovingly restored thanks to the hard work of Lilja Óladóttir and her family. Sænautsel was built in 1843 and its owners lived there until Dyngjufjöll erupted in 1875, covering the farm with ash that can still be seen in some of the uncovered remains of a sheep pen. Lilja has worked hard to get Sænautsel up and running and insists on keeping to the spirit of the original farm. Everything is handmade, often using the same tools that were used at the old farm.

### The Way of the Past

Constructed using driftwood found in Vopnafjörður, a town 60 kilometres away, all materials had to be brought in with a team of horses over rough terrain.

Initially, the farm had one house. The people stayed on the upper floor and kept their sheep on the ground floor. This was practical for keeping the sheep safe and warm as well as using the sheep's body heat to keep people warm but, as the farm got bigger, the people spread their livestock between different buildings, which are open to visitors today.

Lilja has also added a few touches like a chicken coup and a homemade refrigerator that runs without electricity.

### Life with a Volcano

This area of East Iceland was especially popular with poorer families just starting out because the land was cheap and gave them the chance to buy a farm and settle down. This led to farms cropping up throughout East Iceland, including Sænautsel.

Unfortunately, the family at Sænautsel had only thirty years of prosperity before they had to flee from their home, leaving most of their worldly possessions behind for five years. Yet, upon their return, they found that their sheep had thrived in their absence and they earned a tidy sum selling them.

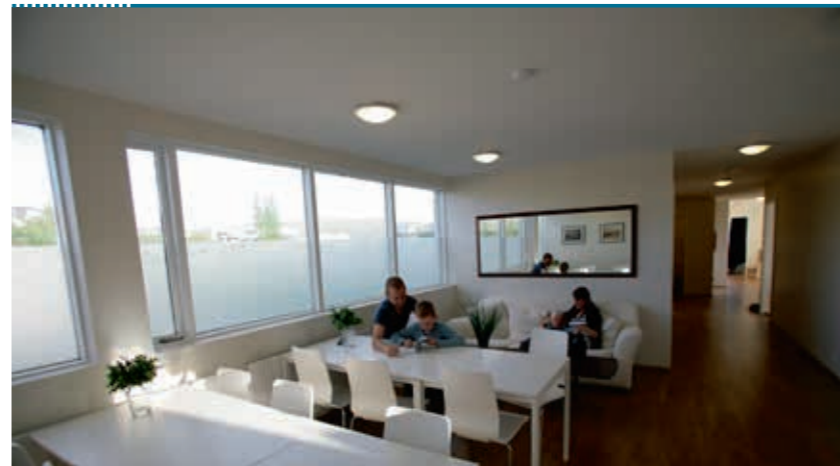


### Sample the Culture

Today, Lilja and her family raise their own sheep, a cow and chickens at the farm in the summer months while maintaining it as it was before the eruption, donning period costumes as they open the farm to visitors. For 1,500 kr, guests can take a tour of the old farm, sample Icelandic schnapps, smoked meat, made by Lilja and get endless coffee and pancakes with jam whipped up from scratch. Animals roam around the farm and their playful offspring are sure to delight children and adults alike.

-KB

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## RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

*Stylish and Affordable Accommodation at Lyngás*

Travelling through the seemingly countless fjords in eastern Iceland is an unforgettable experience, but obviously quite long, which is why recharging your batteries (as well as your actual ones) in Lyngás Guesthouse in the town of Egilsstaðir is a very good idea.

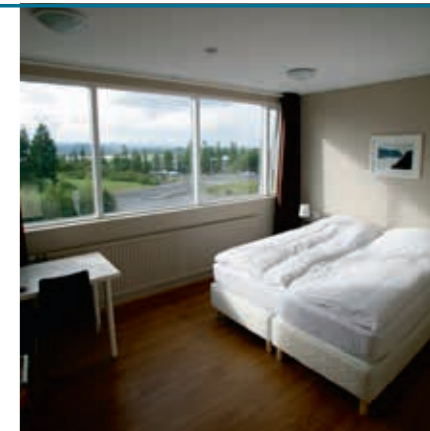
Lyngás is a new and modern guesthouse that places special emphasis on cleanliness, quick and simple booking and reasonable

prices. The guesthouse' interiors are a quite stylish, bright and minimalistic design.

The owner, Guttormur, can be found most of the time in the reception and is more than willing to give helpful tips about your travels in the east.

### Rooms for all

Rooms come in various sizes, suited for individuals, couples, families or groups of up



to seven. Being a modern guesthouse, Wi-Fi is present, of course, as well as a communal living room and kitchen, where you can compare books with fellow travellers.

The guesthouse is situated in the heart of Egilsstaðir close to all amenities, including the Tourist Information Office. Just outside of town you'll find incomparable attractions such as the Stóruð-area and the majestic Hengilfoss waterfall.

-VAG

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## DINE BACK IN TIME

*A museum makes a fascinating restaurant*

In 1890, a Norwegian, Peter Randulff, built a house near the end of Eskifjörður where herring were landed and processed. It was used until 1930, at which time, the herring had moved on and the old house was closed, frozen in time.

Now, under the leadership of the East Iceland Museum Society, the exterior of the house and the jetty have been

restored and in 2008, in co-operation with Mjóeyri Guesthouse and Tourism Centre, the house reopened.

### Fish in the fjord

Today, you can enjoy the fishing and the food. Mjóeyri rents out small boats with outboard motors so you can fish for cod and haddock, both of which are plentiful in the fjord.



### Traditional Icelandic fare

Meanwhile, the house, which has changed little in the past hundred years has a restaurant open all summer where you can enjoy traditional Icelandic food in a setting of bygone days.

Here you can sample shark meat (hákarl) and dried fish (harðfiskur) - both produced in Eskifjörður and acknowledged as being among the best in Iceland. Reindeer and pickled herring have to be experienced! Naturally, there is fresh fish from the fjord daily.

For groups, there is traditional Icelandic fish and meat soup available for up to 80 people, along with lunches and dinners with roast lamb. Musicians can serenade the group, if requested.

-ASF

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# EAST ICELAND

– a hiking haven

East Iceland is a magnificent wonderland where hikers, wanderers, bird-watchers, kayakers and nature lovers find everything their heart desires; wilderness, solitude, challenge, new horizons—and for some, even peace of mind. But more than anything, East Iceland is known for great outdoor activities, hiking, riding, fishing, exploring, and friendly fishing villages for après adventure.

## Hikes and treks for everyone

Hiking is by far the East Iceland traveller's best way to enjoy the refreshing wilderness. The region is renowned for interesting and diverse routes, ranging from day hikes to adventure-rich multi-day treks. Good hiking maps of the whole region are available at Tourist Information Centres and a number of paths have been marked for safer hiking and optimum enjoyment.



### Mt. Snæfell—Lónsöræfi

Mt. Snæfell, the 1833 extinct volcano and Iceland's highest mountain outside the glacier massif of Vatnajökull, presents a magnificent view from the top.

There are guided tours up and around this impressive volcano and the surroundings offer some great sights, such as lush green moss and springs, sparkling in between black sands. Herds of wild reindeer and pink-footed geese roam around. Nearby, Brúarjökull probably offers one of the easiest accesses to explore a tremendous ice sheet.

For the avid hiker, the Snæfell—Lónsöræfi trail, with stunning landscapes in the Vatnajökull National Park, is a tempting and trying solitary route across the Eyjabakkajökull glacier before dropping down to the the stunning Lónsöræfi highlands, and the view of expansive green valleys with countless waterfalls, such as Geithellnadalur, Hofsdalur or Víðidalur.



### Kverkfjöll

A tour to Kverkfjöll, experiencing the unique interplay of ice and fire in the imposing surroundings, is an experience. Climb to the hot spring valley for a magnificent view of boiling mud springs melting a labyrinth of caves through the great Vatnajökull glacier. Try soaking your sore feet in the warm volcanic waters flowing from the mouth of the great Kverkfjöll ice cave. Although the white giant looks peaceful enough, never forget that there are many dangers hidden in the moving ice.

### Víknaflóðir

The 150 km marked paths of the Víknaflóðir (Desert Inlets) in Borgarfjörður eystri,



enable you to have views of beautiful coastlines, mountain ridges, abandoned farmhouses, birdlife, arctic fauna and, with a little luck, maybe even reindeer. The area is known for colourful mountains and semi precious stones, as well as one of the best places to watch puffins. Some of the best day hikes are without a doubt to be found here, including one of Iceland's best kept secrets—the monumental Stóruð, a labyrinth of enormous rocks through which a little river winds its way and calm turquoise ponds of icy water lie hidden among the huge boulders, lined by flat banks of short, green grass. Just the perfect way to enjoy the best unspoilt, breathtaking nature.

### Skálanes

For those preferring to enjoy a maritime view, a unique opportunity to experience the beauty and calm of East Iceland are its fjords. Visit the wonderful Nature heritage centre at Skálanes at the furthest shore of beautiful Seyðisfjörður or enjoy the ride to Mjóifjörður, one of Iceland's most celebrated fjords, with the breathtaking Klifurbrekkufossar waterfalls.

### Eskifjörður - Norðfjörður

Different, but no less attractive, is the easternmost part, the Gerpissvæði between Eskifjörður and Norðfjörður,

where skyscraping peaks join forces with the heavy waves of the Atlantic. The great variety in coasts is phenomenal. Brightly coloured pebble beaches, black sand beaches of Vöðlavík, awesome sheer cliffs, pristine fjords lined with eider ducks, old ruins of ancient farmsteads and the occasional reindeer herd in deserted coves give you an 'out of this world' feeling of freedom and eternity. Then, finish with

a short hike to Helgustaðanáma, the old Iceland Spar mine in Eskifjörður.

### Around Egilsstaðir

For some shorter options, the Hiking Pearls of Fljótsdalshérað, the area around Egilsstaðir give you some great possibilities. Don't miss the 40-minute climb to Iceland's 2nd highest waterfall, Hengifoss, the beautiful basalt pillars of Litlanesfoss in Fljótsdalur, or a stroll in the Hallormsstaður



arctic birch forest. They are all truly something to write home about, as are the solitude of Hjálpleysa, the ½ day hike by Stóra-Sandfell, through mindblowing monuments of the Ice Age. Enjoy a stroll at Húsey or spend a day at Iceland's strangest beach, Þerribjörg, by the Hellisheiði pass to Vopnafjörður. Visit the Elf-lady trail and the Earth history landbridge by the Bustarfell folk museum in Vopnafjörður. This is to name just a few of the wonderful options open to you in this hikers' paradise.

—AP



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# WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK!

Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland's newest protected area, established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 13,200 km<sup>2</sup> it is by far the largest national park in Iceland as well as in Western Europe.

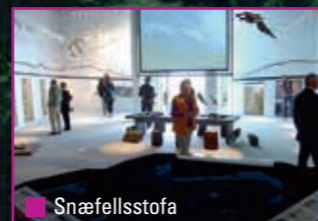
Key features of the park are the ice cap of the Vatnajökull Glacier (8,200 km<sup>2</sup>) and several highly active volcanic systems within and outside the ice cap. The interplay of ice and fire is the single most important force in shaping the nature of the park. As a result, one can find in one place an unparalleled range of volcanic-, geothermal- and other landscape features.

We offer information at our three Visitor Centres, Gljúfrastofa, Snæfellsstofa and Skaftafellsstofa. Information Centres are situated at Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Höfn.

More information at our website [www.vjp.is](http://www.vjp.is)



Gljúfrastofa



Snæfellsstofa



Skaftafellsstofa



Svartifoss



Dettifoss



Hiking Geldingafell, Snæfell in the distance



Langisjór



Morsárdalur



Askja and Lake Öskjuvatn





# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

*A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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EMV



# ETHEREAL STAY IN NATURE

*The Ion Luxury Adventure Hotel takes you into nature and the spirit of Iceland*

**Y**ou drive a winding road along the edge of one of the wonders of the world, the UNESCO World Heritage site of Þingvellir, craggy mountains on one side of the road and the lake on the other. It's just preparing you for an experience with nature and the natural forces. You see the steam billowing from a distance but wonder where the hotel is. If it weren't for the flags at the junction, you might miss it altogether, as it blends in so well with the lava behind it.

## Where nature and senses meet

Welcome to the Ion Hotel, where nature melds into the senses and you feel a relaxed excitement - a peace and tranquility in this haven of purity and oneness, where natural forces put on a powerful display in the serenity of a pastoral valley, surrounded by rugged mountains.

The hotel itself is built on the slopes of Mount Hengill and guests are drawn into the landscape by the full-length windows. No need for landscape paintings here, as the nature itself is the painting.

## Open to a full house

This brand new boutique hotel was filled as soon as it opened, as visitors from all over the world, hearing of its unique blend of relaxation, spa, and activities in a sophisticated yet sustainable setting in the midst of beautiful nature, risked the possibility of a wild Icelandic winter to be the first to try it.

## Natural dining

As it turned out, the weather was warmer than the rest of Europe and they got to enjoy fresh arctic char, fished from Lake

Pingvallavatn the same day and delicious Icelandic lamb from a nearby farm, garnished with vegetables from the local area, grown organically. No steroids, antibiotics, pesticides or other poisons to affect their digestion. Just pure food, the way it was intended to be, prepared by a top Icelandic chef, whose experience in Michelin-rated restaurants brings a special touch to the cuisine.

## Comfort, class and sophistication

Getting back to nature doesn't require discomfort and sacrifice. In fact, quite the opposite, with comfortable, organic bedrooms, a natural spa complete with sauna and a hot pool that can be used in virtually all weathers and at any time of day, as it's partly sheltered and partly exposed to the beautiful scenic surroundings. Luxurious

massages are also available, which can be a boon after a day's hiking in the area.

The architects created an exhilarating atmosphere that renews the spirit through both the proximity to nature and the use of natural materials in the construction. Not only that but they also incorporated a fully sustainable lifestyle, eco-friendly water conservation and cleansing and novel re-purposing of elements such as Astroturf (for the bar stools) and car tyres for very sophisticated bathroom sinks. Had I not been told, I would never have guessed as they fit the high class appearance of the bathrooms so well!

## View winter's wonders in warmth

One of Iceland's claims to fame is the ability to enjoy the Northern Lights during the cold winter months. You can stand outside,

wrapped in every shred of warm clothing but still shivering for hours or you can go to the Northern Lights Bar at the end of the hotel and enjoy them in warmth and comfort, protected from the harshness of the elements by the massive glass canopy that covers the whole bar. It's better than watching a wide-screen movie, as the ethereal lights dance across the night sky in a spectacular play between the sky and the landscape below it. You feel totally immersed in the beauty.

Then, if you like a real Icelandic experience, you can sit in the hot outside pool, drinks in hand and gaze up into the heavens as the aurora swirls around you, snug and warm as can be in the waters. Wet or dry, this is an awesome spot to view the heavens. Because the geothermal pool heats your body, you don't feel any cold either in the pool or when getting out.

## The land of adventures

Situated within the Golden Circle of some of Iceland's most famous attractions, the ION hotel makes an ideal base for adventure tours of all kinds. There is such diversity at your doorstep here - from horse riding to snorkelling, glacier trips to historical sites - not to mention the 300 km of marked hiking trails.

Because of its unique location, its cuisine and facilities, even if you can't stay at the hotel, a day trip for lunch or dinner will still provide a memorable experience and you will find yourself just as welcome. Of course, a stay will just make that experience all the better.

-ASF



**Ion Hotel**

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www.ionice.land.is





## OASIS UNDER THE GLACIER

*Freysnes Supermarket and Restaurant*

The drive along the steep south slopes of Vatnajökull glacier, from Kirkjubæjarklaustur to Höfn, is quite a stretch. Not just in kilometres, but also due to the scenery along the road. It has troll-like mountains and ever changing glaciers, glacial lakes, raging rivers, quiet streams, lava and sand fields, forests and extraordinary natural sculptures.

The area is within the Vatnajökull National Park, very popular with the Icelanders. The

mere sight of the majestic glacier makes you stop in your tracks. It is the largest glacier in Europe and one of the largest in the world.

Half way between Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Höfn is Freysnes – just 5 kilometres from Skaftafell, an excellent camping site. At Freysnes, you'll find the Freysnes Restaurant, Supermarket and Petrol Station, a welcome break and stop for all those driving through the area, such as bus tours and truck drivers.

The restaurant offers hot and cold light meals from a good menu throughout the opening hours from dawn till dusk. It is home-cooking, old and new style. At the supermarket you'll be able to obtain all the essentials on your long drive—or, even better, for your stay at the camp site at Skaftafell. The hiking trails around Freysnes and Skaftafell are one of a kind; to Bæjarstaðaskógur and to the glacier's edge, over moors which open up breathtaking views to yet more stunning glacial scenery and natural sculptures.

The trails are not difficult and it really is worth your while to stay in the area for a few days. Hurrying through would be a shame—not least if you like photography. Quite conveniently, you do not have to worry about food, because Freysnes Supermarket can provide you with everything you need—or, if you don't want to do your own cooking, choose something nice from the restaurant's menu. Also, Freysnes and Skaftafell are a short distance from such natural wonders as Jökulsárlón (35 km), where you can take a boat trip between the icebergs on the glacial lake. There are quite a number of those glacial lakes along the way, each and every one providing excellent photo opportunities. If ever there was a lovely place to refresh your soul on your fast pace through life, this is it.

-EMV

**Freysnes Restaurant & Shop**  
 Freysnes - 785 Öræfjum  
 +354 478 2242  
 freysnes@gmail.com  
 none



## NO ASH – JUST BEAUTIFUL CAMPING

*Hike in the freedom of the mountains in comfort*

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

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

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

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



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

-ASF

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## REFRESHING VÍK

*Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike*

Guests at Halldór's Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vík's shoreline with its black sand beaches, Halldór's Café serves dishes like soup of the day or salads with tuna, chicken or just feta, along with bigger meals of fish, lamb or chicken. Deserts include home-baked cakes and ice cream from a local

farm. Originally, Halldór's Café was a general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vík. Today, it continues to satisfy patrons with its menu which has something for every taste, with a local produce, where possible.

Halldór's Café supports artists with a rotating display of local talent featured on its walls, and serves up steaming cups of coffee and cake, ideal for meeting and greeting



old friends or new acquaintances. Halldór's Café is open all year round. Its hours are 11:00 to 22:00 or 23:00, but Fridays and Saturdays can turn into late nights, with the cafe remaining open until 1:00 am with its fully stocked bar providing a late night place to grab a drink.

-KB

**Halldórskaffi**  
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Images by © Tim Vollmer



# VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

*Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale*

Mountainous, mysterious, and one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the skyline from Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade.

The Herjólfur ferry, from its brand new port just outside of the town of Hvalsövellur, plies the waters that separate the islands from the mainland, making the easy 25–30 minute crossing several times a day. Now you have no excuse not to see the Westman Islands!



## The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands, Viking Tours' specially designed tour boat takes you around the main island of Heimaey, 2 or 3 times a day in summer.

The 90-minute tour gives you a chance to peek into caves, observe puffins and concludes with the haunting saxophone music which fills the singing cave of Klettshellur, renowned for its superb acoustics and performed beautifully by Sigurmundur Einarsson, director of Viking Tours.

## The Coach Tour

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

## 10 million puffins can't be wrong

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

## Westman Islands Whale watching

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

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

-EMV

**Viking Tours**  
 Tangagötu 7 • 800 Vestmannaeyjum  
 +354 488 4884  
 viking@vikingtours.is  
 www.vikingtours.is



# THE PERFECT BASE CAMP

*Stóra Mörk Farm opens up the South of Iceland*

Icelandic Farm Holidays are becoming increasingly popular amongst individual travellers and small groups. One of the farms offering quite a lot for your money is Stóra-Mörk in south Iceland.

Being the last farm before entering the highlands via the beautiful Þórsmörk and a stone's throw away from the Westman Island Ferry pier, Landeyjarhöfn, it's the perfect base camp for those who wish to explore the south part of Iceland at their

own leisure. There are quite a number of hiking trails in the area as well as tour operators who offer tours into the highlands and glaciers. So it's worth staying a few days.

Stóra-Mörk has a variety of accommodation. There is the farmhouse ground floor, with five rooms, with or without ensuite bathrooms, a kitchen and dining-room, as well as a living room. The rooms can accommodate between 2-4 persons and cribs and extra beds can be provided.

Secondly, there are two guesthouses, ideal for big families or small groups as they can accommodate ten persons each. Both houses have a very well equipped kitchen, a bathroom, living room and a veranda and are rented out as sleeping bag accommodation or with bedsheets.

Stóra Mörk offers breakfast every morning as well as pre-ordered meals for those who wish. It is an open farm, meaning the guests are welcome to have a close look at the livestock.

-SS

**Stóra Mörk III**  
 Storu-Mörk III • 861 Hvalsövellur  
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## A MAN AND HIS HORSE

*Kálfholt Riding Tours for all levels of experience make riding fun*

Riding an Icelandic horse through the sunny countryside of South Iceland on a delightful summer's day is the dream of many a horse enthusiast. Freedom fills your senses in the beauty of the open expanses, lifting the spirits of both man and horse. The power and majesty of these noble animals combine with the power and majesty of the Icelandic landscape as it stretches out before you.

This interplay between man, horse and nature is something that Eyrún and Steingrímur, proprietors of Kálfholt Riding Tours, have known for many years and now they offer their time and talent, expertise and services to travellers in Iceland.

### The Icelandic Horse—A True Friend

Icelandic horses are small and strong, with an additional couple of gaits that makes riding them both comfortable and inspiring. Gentle and friendly, they nonetheless have a spirit that makes riding fun and enjoyable—as can be seen by its popularity.



### Breeding for Excellence

Kálfholt is a well established breeding farm in southern Iceland that has produced some excellent horses for pleasure riding, breeding and competition. Amongst those are Röðull, which won the Class B at the National Icelandic Horse Show in 2008.

### Just a short drive to ride

Located 70 km from Reykjavik, between Selfoss and Hella, the farm is easily accessible from Ring road #1 and is perfectly situated for day tours in the area.

### Learn by Doing

Courses and private lessons taught by professional riding instructors are offered for advanced riders and beginners, using Kálfholt's well-trained horses.

**Popular tours include :**  
*Introduction to the Icelandic Horse*  
 - a gentle half hour ride for children 8 years and under.

*Introduction to the Icelandic Horse*  
 - a one hour tour for beginners of any age.

**90 minute, 2.5 hour and 5 hour tours**  
 - a ride in the country along the Þórsá riverbank to Urriðafoss waterfall for intermediate and advanced riders.



### Personalised attention is all yours

Kálfholt Riding Tours specialise in providing riding instruction and tours to individuals, couples and small groups of up to 12 participants. Eyrún and Steingrímur's patient and personal style is perfect for families.

### Immerse Yourself in a Week-Long Stay

Kálfholt offers an exciting week-long stay at the breeding farm, which includes full board, accommodation, a 4-day riding tour, airport pickup and drop-off and one day of sight seeing on the Golden Circle (Geysir, Gullfoss and Þingvellir).

Participants will receive basic riding instruction which is geared to their level of competence, allowing them to gradually progress in their riding skills. Evenings can be spent relaxing in the hot tub, enjoying traditional Icelandic songs, music and games.

-KB

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 kalfholt@kalfholt.is  
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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.

-SP

**Árhús**  
 Rangárbakkar 6 • 850 Hella  
 +354 487 5577  
 arhus@arhus.is  
 www.arhus.is

## Guesthouse Selfoss

THE STAR OF THE SOUTH

Called "The Star of the South" because of its location, this cosy accommodation is in the heart of Selfoss. 22 nice bungalows for 1-4 guests, private bathroom & shower, cooking facilities, refrigerator and TV. Also offering Wi-Fi connectivity in the public area.

Engjavegur 56 • 800 Selfoss • Tel. (+354) 482 3585 / (+354) 663 2449  
 gesthus@gesthus.is • www.gesthus.is



## Folk Museum in Eyrarbakki

The Southcoast Museum

Árnessýsla folk museum is the historical home that the Danish merchants built in 1765, called Húsið, the House. Húsið is one of the oldest houses in Iceland and a beautiful monument of Eyrarbakki's time as the biggest trading centre on the south coast.

Today, one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region. A famous piano, a shawl made out of human hair and the king's pot, are among items on view. Húsið prides itself on its warm and homelike atmosphere.



Address: "The House" 820 Eyrarbakki  
 Tel: +354 483 1504 & +354 483 1082  
 e-mail: husid@husid.com • www.husid.com

Opening hours:  
 Summer: May 15th - September 15th  
 daily 11.00-18.00 or by agreement  
 Winter: By agreement



## TAKE A BREAK AT THE WATERFALL

*Gullfoss kaffi is the place to stop for refreshments*

Set in the midst of a farming community, the spectacular Gullfoss waterfall was enjoyed by just a few. As Iceland was discovered as a tourist location, so its wonders began to be recognised as treasures to share with the world.

Travelling to the waterfall was, nonetheless, still quite a long trip from Reykjavik and visitors longed for some refreshments, so in 1994, one of the enterprising farming families set up a tent and offered delicious, traditional Icelandic food.

Some three years later, that tent became a large summerhouse, offering more comfort and facilities until another three years later, the current centre was built, providing all the facilities travellers and sightseers alike could appreciate. In 2004, a large seating area was added.

Gullfoss kaffi gained immediate popularity and whole bus loads of visitors descended on it. With seating for 450 guests to eat in comfort, looking out to a beautiful view of the nature and such friendly, fast service, no-one was left dissatisfied.

### Feeding the hungry

There were more reasons for the kaffi's popularity than just its proximity to the best known waterfall in Iceland. They do not just serve delicious, high quality coffee in all its styles and many flavours. By the time people reached Gullfoss, they were hungry and there can be little better than a genuine Icelandic lamb soup, with its fresh ingredients garnered from the surrounding area, to satisfy the largest appetite. Whilst the soup is probably what the kaffi is best



known for, they also have a small á la carte menu for diners offering options of lamb or fresh salmon. For those who want something with their coffee, there is a range of pastries and cakes, freshly baked on the spot that are more than just tempting!

### Warm clothing and souvenirs

Gullfoss is on the main route through the highland interior that is becoming an increasingly popular way to reach the north, so it is a natural stopping point for a break. The highlands, of course, can be a lot cooler and the kaffi has a range of clothing, including handmade Icelandic wool sweaters, hats, gloves and scarves, as well as other useful clothing. This is all part of the handcrafts section of the shop where visitors can browse a wide selection of souvenirs and locally-made crafts where the skill of the Vikings once again becomes apparent in the quality of the various products.

-ASF





**Gullfoss kaffi**

801 Selfoss Bláskógabyggð  
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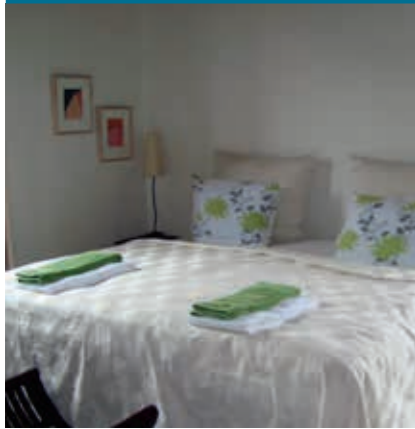


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## WITHIN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

*Gallerí Guesthouse is surrounded by famous attractions*

The small but bustling town of Laugarvatn lies in the Golden Circle created by Þingvellir, Geysir, and Gulfoss and in the middle is the quaint and quiet Gallerí Bed and Breakfast.

Started by owners Þuríður and Joel after their kids had flown the nest, three extra bedrooms are now filled with tourists wanting more than the normal day trip to Iceland's most famous attractions. From an enclosed patio, two of Iceland's active

volcanoes: Eyafjallajökull and Hekla are clearly visible.

Breakfast is included in the price of the room. Gallerí's knack for handicrafts shows in light fixtures made by Þuríður and small decorations found throughout the rooms.

The Gallerí store is where Þuríður and Joel's artistry shines, allowing travellers to take home a small piece of Icelandic design.

Joel and Þuríður's hospitality extends an invitation to their guests to come along

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

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## A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

*Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro*

Lindin Restaurant & Bistro Café, located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, has a firm foundation of culinary excellence that attracts patrons from around the world. Owner, Baldur Öxdal Halldórsson, pastry and master chef, trained at the Hotel and Restaurant School of Iceland between 1980–1984, received training as a pastry chef at the Culinary Institute of America, New York in 1986–1987, and attended the prestigious Richemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988–1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert.

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

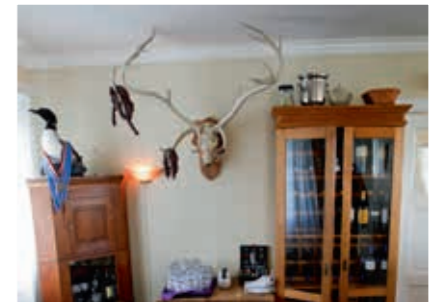
### Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which has become known as the 'Mecca of

Icelandic wild game', with its lamb, fish, seafood and game caught in the wild. His menu is seasonal and features exotic dishes that can be made from reindeer, goose, duck, cormorant, guillemot, puffin, minke whale or pan-fried arctic char. Always on the cutting edge, 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.

### Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt', 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, red and blackcurrants. The lamb and venison come from N.E. Iceland and are known for their



delicious flavour, fed on mountain herbs. The Arctic char are caught fresh from either Lake Þingvellir or Lake Apavatn daily.

### In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, right beside the lovely natural sauna, steam baths and pool at the Fontana Spa. The 45 minute scenic drive from Reykjavik takes you through enchanting landscapes. Laugarvatn is half-way between Þingvellir and Geysir and Gullfoss, making it an excellent choice for a day trip to in one of the most scenic areas of Iceland. You can also now stay at any time of year in Laugarvatn at either the Golden Circle Apartments next to Lindin, the Gallerí Guesthouse or the village hostel to enjoy the Northern Lights in winter and the midnight sun in summer and the spectacular views from Lindin's terrace and garden across the lake to the Hekla and Eyafjallajökull volcanoes. *-EMV/ASF*

Take a spin in an early Land Rover with Baldur



## DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS

*Caving with Laugarvatn Adventure*

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

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

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

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

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

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## A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

*Árborg is a worth the visit*

Árborg is a community of three towns: Selfoss, Eyrarbakki and Stokkseyri on the south coast of Iceland, where lush farmlands and large lava fields intertwine to create one of the most interesting landscapes in Iceland. It is also densely populated and with people come culture, history and entertainment.

the whole southern coastline, they went in open boats, rowing for their lives.



### Conquering the sea

The sea is a life giver as well as a life taker. Ever since the first settlers came ashore, boats have launched from these shores and brought back the catch of fish. With no harbour along

Þuriðarbúð in Stokkseyri is an interesting example of an old Icelandic fishing station and the exhibition inside is educational. From there the first Icelandic female cockswain sailed.

Nearby, sits the Icelandic Wonders Museum with the ghosts, elves and trolls that roamed the land in ancient times.

After a ghostly encounter it's time for a spot of bird watching. The country's largest river flows nearby. The vast marshlands have shrunk but are still home to thousands of birds each year. It is a very popular spot for birdwatchers who flock here.

### Culture In Eyrarbakki

Eyrarbakki has a heritage museum called, 'Húsið' - 'the House'. This beautiful old house, built as a home for a merchant in 1765 was a great centre of culture in its time.

There are many excellent restaurants and hotels in Árborg and in Selfoss two popular swimming pools. It's an excellent starting point to travel from to the many beautiful spots nearby.

-SS

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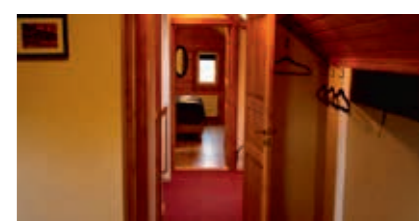
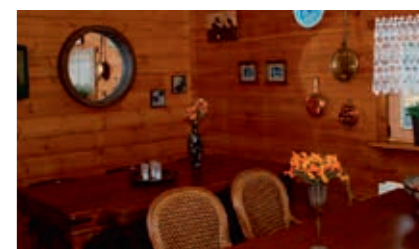
## AN IDYLIC STAY

*Fagrilundur Bed & Breakfast In the heart of the Golden Circle*

On your journey around the Golden Circle, you will undoubtedly pass through the village of Reykholt, known primarily for its horticultural farming methods that use geothermal energy.

It is here that you will find the newly-opened Fagrilundur Bed & Breakfast (formerly Kaffi Klettur), right in the centre of the village. The lovely wooden chalet-style building is set on one hectare of well-maintained grounds, adorned with a variety of trees, flowers and shrubs, giving it a park-like appearance.

It is evident that owners Guðfinna and her Dutch husband, Henk, have put a lot of thought and whole hearted effort into making Fagrilundur a special place to stay. Inside, it's just as you might expect - cosy, warm and inviting. Several well-chosen Dutch antiques decorate the walls of the breakfast room, and the lace curtains in the windows add to the rustic charm of the interior.



Fagrilundur comprises 6 rooms in total. On the upper floor, there are two large bedrooms that sleep up to 4 people, each with its own roomy attached bath. On the ground floor, there are 4 smaller bedrooms that sleep 1 or 2 persons each, with shared bath. Bathrooms are all well-appointed with brand new modern fittings, comfortable hot showers, hair dryers, etc.

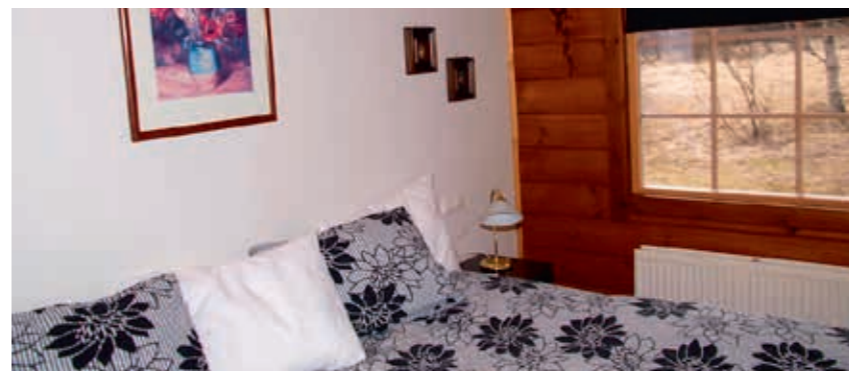
### Breakfast to the songs of birds

In the morning, wake up to the sounds of birds singing in the trees with the sun already high in the sky as the aroma of freshly made waffles and steaming hot coffee wafts through the house. You are invited to take your breakfast on the broad wooden patio that overlooks the garden, or inside in the breakfast room, as you wish!

The village of Reykholt offers a fine swimming pool, visits to the geothermal greenhouses and horticultural farm as well as a small grocery store and the 'Café Mika' Restaurant all within walking distance from Fagrilundur Bed & Breakfast.

-EMV

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 info@fagrilundur.is  
 www.fagrilundur.is



### Unique Ice Cream Flavour Blends

Naturally, you'll find ice cream here, too. The difference is that Mika mixes flavours, blending them with chocolate, nuts, fruits and more, so that each level has a different taste. The clever blend makes for an ice cream unlike any you have tried before. If you're like me, you'll want to come back for more!

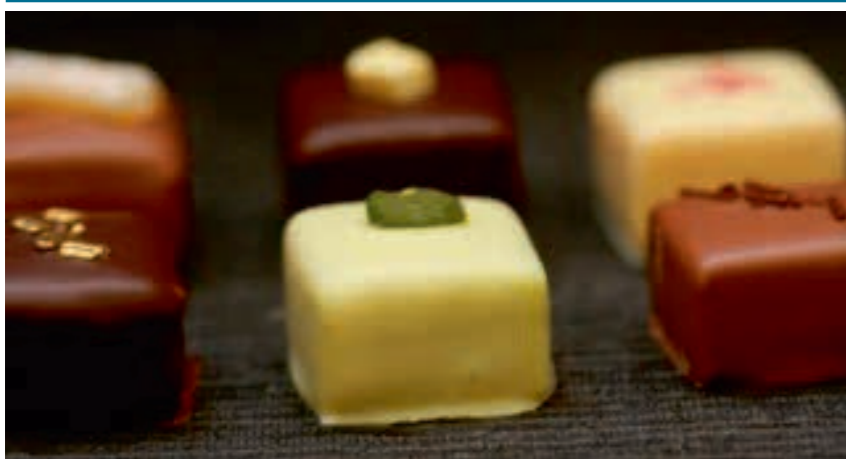


### Pralines - 22 and counting

Whilst ice cream isn't something you can easily take with you, Mika's pralines are a delicacy you will want to stock up on. You can take them in presentation boxes or eat some with your meals. You'll need a cast iron will to get a box of these home without dipping into them.

-ASF

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## CHOCOLATE ON THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

*Café Mika at Reykholt is an ideal stop for delicious refreshments*

Visiting Iceland's famous sites builds up a healthy appetite. Right on the Golden Circle road in Reykholt village is Café Mika where chef and chocolatier, Mika, puts this delicacy into unexpected forms, creating whole new taste experiences. Mika offers a special thick drinking chocolate drink. Each week, he selects one from a different part of the world, with its special flavour and blends it with different spices.

Open for lunch and dinner, the menu changes with the season, to take advantage of fresh local vegetables, Icelandic cheeses, arctic char, langoustines and meats, blended into mouth-watering meals for individuals or groups. A selection of drinks is also available to round off your meal, which you can also eat outside in the sunshine. For lighter meals, he makes pastries and breads.



# SLAKKI ZOO & PLAY CENTRE

Where Children and Animals Get to Know One Another



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

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

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

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

### A Safe and Fun Activity Day

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

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



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

### Relax with Restaurant Refreshments

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

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

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

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



-ASF

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