The Frozen Playground of Langjökull
The Arctic Promised Land of Greenland
The Islands of the Faroes
The Magic of the Northern Lights

www.icelandictimes.com
Volcano House features two documentaries chronicling two of Iceland’s most famous volcanic eruptions of the last 40 years:

**Eyjafjallajökull 2010 Eruption**
This powerful documentary made specially for Volcano House was filmed and directed by the Emmy-nominated Icelandic film maker, Jóhann Sigfússon.

**The Westman Island’s 1973 Eruption**
Began without warning on the night of January 23rd, 1973 where 400 homes perished under ash and lava.

**Showtimes:**
English: 10:00 to 21:00 Every hour on the hour
German: 18:00 From June 1st – September 1st
Visiting Iceland in winter allows you to experience quite a few of life’s simple pleasures; a stroll through Reykjavík’s 101 district in the brisk, refreshing air, enjoying the late morning sunshine and taking in all that this tiny capital has to offer.

One could start by savouring a leisurely breakfast at Café Paris in Austurstræti (Austurstræti 14) and then head over to the Kraum design store, at Adalstræti 10. Kraum has gained quite a reputation in recent years for its select array of Icelandic designer products. Laugavegur is Reykjavík’s main shopping street, and The Little Christmas Shop or Jólabúðin at Laugavegur 8, is bound to put a smile on your face. Open year-round, with a remarkable variety of beautiful Christmas decorations from across the globe, the Yuletide spirit truly permeates the air. On the corner of Laugavegur and Frakkastígur, visitors to The Treasure Chest or Gullkistan, (Frakkastígur 10), are warmly welcomed by its owner, Dóra, one of Iceland’s finest goldsmiths, who specialises in fine gold and silver filigree jewellery.

If Iceland’s winter weather proves a bit too chilly, make sure you check out the Hand-knitting Association or Hættetrínisambandsins (Skólavördustígur 19) for woolen goods created by some of the most talented knitters from around Iceland.

After hitting the town, it’s time to relax in one of Reykjavik’s many indoor or outdoor heated swimming pools and hot tubs. The oldest is ‘Sundhóll’, located at Barónstígur 45, just outside the city centre. To complete a perfect day, dine late at Þrír Frakkar Restaurant, (Baldrsgata 14), for all that word, wonderful, yet delicious Icelandic food that you have heard so much about.
Iceland’s Master Watchmaker

How many parts are there in a top-notch time piece? It happens to be a well-kept secret, unless you find a master watchmaker who allows you to observe the intricacies of his meticulous work.

One such master, Gilbert O. Guðjónsson and his son Sigurður Gilbertsson, along with their partners Julíus Heiðarsson and Grimkell Sigurðsson, pioneered what may be the world’s smallest watch manufacturer in 2005. As typical Icelanders, they do everything themselves—from design to production, and even the photography in keeping with their motto, ‘no secrets, no fakes’. It is the extraordinary quality, the use of materials such as sapphire crystal and surgical steel from Germany and the limited production of each design that makes the difference, attracting collectors and celebrities from all over the world. The latest fan of Master Gilbert’s watches is Tom Cruise, who sent a personal note of satisfaction—just one more affirmation among many other satisfied customers, including Viggo Mortensen and the Dalai Lama.

Watches for every occasion

The Icelandic Search and Rescue Team, who daily put their lives at risk, have no time for anything less than the best. They are officially equipped with the ‘Síf’, a special edition of water resistant watches.

Each watch has its own fascinating story. The impressive Frisland Goð engraved watch celebrates Viking power by fusing traditional design with volcanic materials. The Frisland 1941 Pilot watch was created in 2011, in honour of Reykjavík domestic airport’s 70 year anniversary.

When a Dutch customer could wait no longer for the watch he had ordered, Master Gilbert invited him to see it in its final stages of completion. The Dutchman found himself one of those few who know the secrets of the inner workings of his timepiece.

You can follow in his footsteps. Just give Gilbert a call and step into the secrecy of his small watch-making cabinet, where screws, parts and tools are kept in neat boxes and the watchmaker’s magnifying glass oversees the ticking of his precious movements.

Experience Iceland with Vodafone!

Keep connected in Iceland with Vodafone

If you want to stay fully connected while travelling in Iceland and keep your phone bill on a tight leash at the same time, the easiest option is to get a Vodafone prepaid SIM card. With our prepaid service you get the best rates for local calls, calls abroad and data usage – and you’ll never spend more than you want on calls and data.

The easiest option is to purchase a starter pack, which is offered at the 10-11 shop in the arrival hall at Keflavík International Airport and the Elko stores at the airport. If you’re already here you can get your starter kit at the Vodafone stores in Reykjavík (Kringlan Mall and Skútuvogur 2), Kópavogur (Smáralind Mall) or Akureyri (Glerártorg Mall). Furthermore, Vodafone has partners and resellers all over Iceland, including the 10-11 convenience stores, 1 petrol stations and various tourist boutiques. The starter pack includes a SIM-card and credit for both calls and data.

Keep connected in Iceland with Vodafone!

Vodafone also offers a Prepaid Mobile Internet Starter kit for Data only, which is ideal for those travelling with a tablet computer or 3G mobile internet equipment. The kit includes a regular SIM/Micro SIM and a 3 GB data credit which allows you to stay connected to our extensive mobile network throughout the country.
The All-Icelandic Wool Shop

S

heep came to Iceland with the Viking settlers and quickly proved their value, 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 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’ woolen 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 Assoc.’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 woolen 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.

Lasik

The world is reflected in our eyes. Almost 80% of our perceptions come through our eyes and it is a privilege to be able to experience them without visual aids. A LASIK operation takes only ten minutes and makes it possible to get rid of spectacles and contact lenses. During this operation an ultra-precise laser reshapes the surface of the cornea making it possible for the light to focus on the retina, making the image sharper. This illustrates how important the development of the computer technique was to the history of laser refractive surgery—a procedure shaving a fraction of a millimeter can actually make it possible to stop wearing glasses or contact lenses. To perceive the world through the eyes without looking through glass, plastic or silicone.

If you wish to be evaluated for laser refractive surgery we can check whether you are a candidate. If you are, we can make this happen.

With gratitude to: Dr. Johannes Kristinsson MD PhD
Cornea and External Diseases
Refractive Surgery

Johannes Kristinsson MD PhD
Cornea and External Diseases
Refractive Surgery

ESTIcTIsM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS
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www.handknit.is
It’s possibly the trendiest of upmarket shops in Reykjavik, where over 200 of Iceland’s most talented designers have been hand-picked to show off the best of Icelandic design. Located at Ádalleri 10, the charming wooden house from 1726 is Reykjaviq’s oldest building and the former home of one of Iceland’s most creative and innovative sons, Skúli Magnússon. Nominated as the Tourist Attraction of the Year by Reykjavik City in 2008, Kraum has made its mark as a retailer for Icelandic designers who are on par with some of the world’s top designers, offering a wide array of products ranging from small decorative ornaments and practical clothing to full-sized furniture.

The quirky, the unusual and the downright daring
The marvellous Notknot pillows from umemi.com are a great example of ingenuity and simplicity. The inspiration for Notknot pillows originally came from scout knotting, and the resultant design is both unconventional and beautiful.

Designers from ‘Hár úr hala’ who get their inspiration from folk tales, nursery rhymes and children’s adventure stories, have come up with practical objects enjoyed by old and young alike. Best known for their whimsical clothes hangers called ‘Cockerel, Raven, Dog and Pigi’, the company’s newest items of intrigue are its cat-shaped bookends, available in a range of colours.

For a splash of Iceland to liven up your walls, don’t miss Yegg’s Icelandic themed wall stickers—puffins, dried-fish and historic scenes from Reykjavik’s rural past are among some of the favourites.

From Pancakes to Plywood
An old-fashioned pancake pan with a twist is another eye catcher. Five designers from different backgrounds have come up with their own take on the pancake handle. Choose from five beautifully-finished designs on this most useful kitchen utensil.

Furniture designer Erla Sóley Öskaradóttir is the creator of ‘Hyrna’, a solid oak two-piece nesting table with its nod to the Scandinavian design era of the 70’s. The birch plywood tabletop, overlaid with rich oak veneer is both attractive and functional.

Elm by Matthildur offers wonderfully warm and well-fitting sweaters made of alpaca and are inspired by Iceland’s dramatic landscape, art, and culture. Another favourite is Huginn/Muninn Design whose dresses and unconventional unisex shirts are the work of the young, female designer, Guðrún Guðjónsdóttir.

Finally, the best of Icelandic musicians such as Sigur Rós, Of Monsters and Men, Björk and even classical artists now have their CDs on full display and ready for purchase in the lovely Kraum Design Store.

Get a Bargain and Make a Difference by Supporting the Salvation Army’s Youth and Welfare Programme!
Be a Highland Rover

Isak 4x4 Land Rovers take on the worst terrain

If you have a passion for independent travel, then Iceland, with its reputation as a nation of rugged individuals, is your destination of choice. Winter driving in Iceland can be tricky, as road and weather conditions may not be comparable to what you are used to at home. Many gravel roads are off limits for smaller vehicles, and you wouldn’t want your travel plans to be thwarted by unforeseen, but entirely avoidable circumstances.

The specialists at Isak 4x4 Rental know what Icelandic roads require and they also understand the thrill of exploring the uninhabited Icelandic Highlands. Their professionally-modified ISAK Land Rover Defenders for self-drive will get you safely over rough terrain any time of the year. Equipped with 38-inch tyres, air compressors and communication devices such as VHF radio and GPS, Iceland’s winter landscape will be all yours.

A Journey of Discovery Awaits

Isafold Travel’s Highland Treasures

Iceland’s rich winter landscape is like a treasure chest, full of exciting gems just waiting to be discovered. With 16 years of experience in making travellers’ dreams come true, Isafold Travel can help you carve out a tailor-made tour with your special desires in mind or suggest one of its own scheduled tours for small groups.

Highland Challenge and Comfort Tour

This 3 night/4 day self-drive package using specially modified ISAK 4x4 Land Rovers, allows you to experience the full extent of Iceland’s mystical interior, as well as the more well-trodden paths toThingvellir, Gullfoss and Geysir. Spend 3 easy nights in a welcoming hotel at the edge of the Icelandic highlands and, during the day, launch out into the vast, uninhabited hinterlands at the end of the Sprengisandur trail. This unforgettable experience concludes with a hearty BBQ feast in Reykjavik.

A Winter Photo Safari

Whether your dream is to capture the elusive Northern Lights or to learn how to get the most from your camera in Iceland’s mesmerizing winter light, Isafold’s Winter Photo Tour is for you. Professional Icelandic photographer Haukur Snorrason will accompany you along the south coast to Jokulsarlon, leading the way to all the best spots, keeping in mind the light levels throughout the day. You will spend the night at Haukur’s remote guesthouse, get a taste of some authentic Icelandic cuisine, and come away with many envy-inducing photographic jewels ready for posting to your favourite social websites.

A Downtown Village

Reykjavik Hostel Village offers Budget Travellers the Best

In the centre of Reykjavik, surrounded by the main shopping street, a major art gallery, a park, and a short distance from the local and up-country bus stations, Hotel Flöki has been transformed into a small village of pleasant houses for budget-conscious visitors, families, groups and travellers who are touring the country. Each of its 5 houses has a suburban feel to it, with its own garden—great for sunbathing and barbecues. Visitors feel almost as if they are living in an Icelander’s house—except for the friendly, multinational clientele, many of whom are returning to explore more of the country.

Your Reykjavik base

The Village makes an ideal spot to base from. It’s within easy reach of every kind of restaurant, café and eating place—not to mention shops of all types, too. The local bus, or stræti, passes right in front of the main building and a large bus station is only a short walk. When coming from the airport, the transit buses will drop you off right at the door. When planning an up-country trip or tour, both the Reykjavik airport and the BSÍ bus station are close by. The Reykjavik Hostel Village can supply rental cars and book tours for you and will also take care of luggage, bikes, etc., while you head out on a trip and you can pick them up on your return. So the more adventurous can try different areas to explore without having to lug everything with them.

Conference accommodation

Increasingly, Reykjavik has also been the centre for conferences, so it’s valuable to know there’s a clean and comfortable room in a nice house within easy reach of the major conference centres. Langavegur, the main shopping street, is a hub of restaurants and eateries of all kinds, of art and cultural shops, clothing shops and places of interest. It leads to the centre of town and the nightclub scene. Friday and Saturdays, things get started late, so there’s plenty of time to eat before enjoying events that go on right through the weekend nights. When you want to get home, the Hostel Village is right there.

Book ahead for the best

It’s wise to book in advance to secure your place to enjoy Iceland.
Spreading the Taste
You Can Enjoy Authentic Thai Food in Reykjavík or Akureyri

The discovery of the wonderful flavours in genuine Thai food only reached Iceland in 2001 when, down by the Old Harbour in a cosy, small white building, Krua Thai first started the taste revolution. For hundreds of years, Icelanders had grown accustomed to a rather bland diet, so the introduction of Thai cuisine had a major impact.

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

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

Krua Thai
Tryggvagötu 14 • 101 Reykjavík
+354 561 0039
kruathai@kruathai.is
www.kruathai.is

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Reykjavík’s Thermal Pools

Thermal pools and baths in Reykjavik are a source of health, relaxation and pureness. All of the city’s swimming pools have several hot pots with temperatures ranging from 37˚ to 42˚C (98˚–111˚F). The pools are kept at an average temperature of 29˚C (84˚F).
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 brave to say the least, and it takes the adventurous 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. Sporting 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.

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.

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. Kjartan’s visitors were invited to dine in his shop.

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

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. Kjartan’s visitors were invited to dine in his shop.

The Brave get the Best

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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 good.

Guardian Spirits

The knives match perfectly with the carved tulipaks made from horn. No doubt, the grimmaces of these traditional shamanic ghosts will provide inviolable powers for those who decide to give them a new home. Tulipaks are Greenland’s charms and are well known among art collectors.

Spirit Charms

As the Icelandic twilight casts its spell on Laugavegur, the last rays of light turn amulets, keeping watch over the shop. Greenland’s black raven, both stuffed, sit silently near by thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge animal, carefully polished and threaded onto claws and teeth from Greenland’s wild animals, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge animal, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge animal, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords.

Sealskin Design to Keep You Warm

Tuneful music from Greenland takes you on its wings while you explore the well laid-out shop with its range of hats, incredibly soft gloves, designer bags and elegant sneakers. For hundreds of years, sealskin clothing has helped the Inuit to survive Greenland’s arctic cold, and it continues to do so today. Women in Greenland still wear sealskin trousers, in extraordinary contrast to the delicate bead necklaces you see displayed in the glass display cabinets. These colourful necklaces are traditional women’s jewellery, and can be used to embellish both a décolleté as well as worn over warm clothes.

Nature’s Masterpieces

Raven’s hand-crafted items originate from Kulusuk, a small island off the East Greenland coast where a group of native artists, solely men, transform natural materials into unique masterpieces—traditional items like carved amulets, rings and backscratchers. The selection of aesthetically carved knives comes with high quality blades from the famous Danish knife maker Poul Straade. Chefs, cooks and knife aficionados will surely not leave the store empty handed once they see the traditional women’s knife known as an ‘ulo’, which can be used for anything from cooking to skinning—a gem in every hunter’s collection!
The Joyful Wonderland
The little Christmas shop that is festive all year round

Anne Helen, owner of ‘The Little Christmas Shop’ on Laugavegur, Reykjavik’s main shopping street, is what you might call a ‘one woman wonder’. When she lost her job in tourism ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

In the Land of Eternal Christmas
Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas obsession and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handwork and ornaments. She already has an extensive range, most made exlusively for her by a number of craftsmen, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials such as wood, glass and clay. In addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Yule Lads and the Christmas Cat.

Anne Helen loves is to tell customers about Icelandic Christmas traditions. Visitors often stop by simply because they’ve heard of her hospitality and the shop’s friendly atmosphere. They rarely leave empty handed. After all, placing an Icelandic Yule Lad on your Christmas tree every year is a great way to remember your visit to Iceland.

The Treasure Chest
A Master Craftsman Creates Works of Art in Precious Metals

Dóra Guðbjört Jónsdóttir is one of Iceland’s finest and most productive goldsmiths using, with great understanding, the ways of Icelandic masters before her time.

Between 1949-53, Dóra started learning the trade in her father’s workshop, gaining her Master’s degree in 1953. Additionally, she studied at Tärna folk high school in Sweden, Konstfackskolan in Stockholm around 1950, graduating with honours, and at Vereinigte Goldschmiede-, Kunst- und Werkschule in Pforzheim, Germany in 1954.

Dóra took over her father’s workshop in 1970 and relocated it, opening her company called Gullkistan, on Frakkastígur street in Reykjavik. Her speciality is national costume jewellery, or filigree, a delicate kind of jewellery metalwork, usually of gold and silver. Her outstanding skills can be seen in her superb work, honouring Icelandic tradition. Dóra likes to work with very old jewellery templates, often well over 100 years old.

She has always actively participated in exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, and served as chairperson of the FIG (The Icelandic Goldsmiths’ Association) from 1974-75, being the first Nordic woman to take that position.

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

www.icelandictimes.com
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, Sædís jewellery shop at Reykjavik’s Old Harbour, Snorrastofa in Reykholt and directly from Guðrún. More information can be found on Facebook: Ark.art leather design.
### Blue Lagoon Schedule

Pickup at hotel in Reykjavik upon request
- 09:00 / 10:30 / 12:30 / 14:45 / 16:45

Blue Lagoon to Reykjavik
- 12:30 / 14:00* / 16:00 / 18:00 / 20:30

Blue Lagoon to Keflavik Airport
- 14:00 / 21:00**

**Please book in advance.

* Via Keflavik Airport

Please notice: You can join The Blue Lagoon evening tour after arrival.

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### The South Coast - Skógafoss - Vik

Our tour takes us along the south shore and on to the charming village of Vik. Highlights on this tour: Waterfalls Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss. The basalt columns at sandy beach of Reynisfjara and the glacier Sólheimajökull, where you can touch the ice. We drive along the volcano Eyjafjallajökull, last eruption in 2010.

**Pick up time:** Mon/Wed/Fri at 08:00
**Duration:** 10 hours
**Professional English guidance**

### Grand Golden Circle

Highlights visited: The farming districts in the south, Faxi waterfall and the spectacular Geysir. The waterfall Gullfoss, the national park Thingvellir, including the Rift valley and the Rock of law which was the site of the first Viking parliament.

**Time for lunch at Geysir (not incl. in price).**

**Pick up time:** Daily at 08:00
**Duration:** 8 hours
**Professional English guidance**

### Golden Circle Afternoon

Highlights visited: The national park Thingvellir, the waterfall Gullfoss, the spectacular Geysir.

**Pick up time:** Daily at 12:30
**Duration:** 5-6 hours
**Professional English guidance**

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**Explore the unique volcanic and arctic nature of Iceland**

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**ICELAND PHOTO TOURS**

Iceland photo tours is operated by Look North Travel
Karfavogur 22, 104 Reykjavik
Tel +354 863 5540 and +354 863 0300
info@phototours.is — www.phototours.is

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**More Iceland for less money**

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Segways and Bicycles in the City
Iceland’s premier bicycle and Segway tour company

Reykjavik Bike Tours specialises in city tours by bicycle and day tours from the capital. Started in 2009, the company was the first to specialise in bicycle tours in the country. A city tour and private tours are on offer all year but in summer the company runs six scheduled tours.

Insider’s perspective
“The bicycle takes us quickly, comfortably and safely between points of interest,” says Stefan, the owner of Reykjavik Bike Tours. “The added value we give our guests, apart from the ride itself, of course, is the local perspective. We like telling the stories that bring a seemingly uninteresting building or a place to life. I like to describe our tours as ‘infotainment’ because we present history and facts as accurately as we can but at the same time we never forget that most of our guests are on a holiday and like to be entertained.”

Regular complaints
“We regularly get complaints,” Stefan says, with a smile. “People who join our tours on their third or fourth day in the city tell us with regret they’d wished they’d done the tour sooner because the commentary unlocks countless city secrets known only to the locals. Of course, we take this as a compliment. From the start we’ve been getting excellent reviews. We humbly thank our guests who have spent some of their valuable time to tell other travellers how much they enjoyed their experience with us. We certainly do not take positive reviews for granted but they certainly encourage us to maintain our good reputation every day.”

Biggest fleet of bicycles
Reykjavik Bike Tours rents bicycles as well. “We’ve got city bikes, mountain bikes, road bikes and touring bikes as well as tandems and bicycles with trailers for children. We also have a couple of electric bikes for those who like a bit of assistance when going up the hill or against the wind. Basically we try to cater to different cyclists and provide the best service we possibly can.”

Segways in the city
The fun and popular Segway self-balancing personal transporters came to Reykjavik in 2013. “Everyone enjoys riding the Segway,” Stefan says convincingly. “The fun starts as soon as people step onto the Segway. The sense of self-accomplishment and also learning about the city at the same time is the best possible combination.”

Reykjavik Bike Tours
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A Wish Come True
Your Wishlist at Óskalist

For the mother and daughter who run Gallery Óskalist, creating personal art from their immediate surroundings is a wish come true. Their delightfully whimsical painted rock houses are a result of them scouring nearby beaches for uniquely shaped rocks, which they transform into one-of-a-kind decorative statuettes.

Valdís Ósk, co-founder of Óskalist, says that they almost always manage to see some form in the rocks they come across and take great joy in working the original natural shape into the final piece. “We usually let the shape itself define how we work on each piece. We don’t even mind if the stones are a bit odd or uneven, just as long as they stand on their own. That way each piece has its own character and we can safely say that no two pieces are even remotely alike,” says Valdís Ósk.

Valdís Ósk and daughter Karen Ósk reside in Kjalarnes, overlooking the bay toward Reykjavik. They always wished to intertwine their love for their home and their artistic talents. Valdís jokingly explains that the name of the company reflects that combination. ‘Ósk’ literally means ‘wish’ and ‘list’ means ‘art’ in Icelandic—while both mother and daughter even have ‘wish’ as their middle name.

Their gallery in Grundarfjörður in Kjalarnes is a perfect stop, just off the main road to the north of Reykjavik. Valdís Ósk and Karen Ósk welcome visitors into their gallery, and are more than happy to show them around the area. It’s best to call ahead. They also only accept cash for purchases.

From Hunters to Home
Palí 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, Palí 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 Palí’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 receiving Pallí’s unique craftsmanship. Made with rare materials, including kitchen and carving knives, to be followed by a full dining cutlery set, using his 66-year-old dentist drill that he borrowed 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.

Custom made for 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.

Inspired by a waterfall
You can find Pallí in his studio in Mosfellshöfn, right beside the Álafoss waterfall and the famous mill of the same name, just a 15 minute drive from the centre of Reykjavik. He is open from 11:30 am to 3 pm. His knives can also be found at the Brynja hardware store at Laugavegur 29, on the main shopping street in downtown Reykjavík or ordered online.

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Living in the Lava

The town where they live with Hidden People and boiling pools.

Visitors to Iceland expect something different. They’ve heard about the volcanos. Then, there are the stranger stories.

Take Hafnarfjörður, the small town you reach first when you come from the airport. It has a colourful history, as one of the oldest Icelandic communities. It’s a fishing town, but that’s only part of the story.

Built literally in and on the lava that flowed from the Búrfell volcano, you’ll quickly notice the huge, black rocks, craters and caves out of which houses peek. The whole area is a massive lava and geothermal area.

Home for the Huldufólk, too

Exploring the town, you’ll come to a quiet street and Hellisgerði Park. It’s a magical place, known for its elves, dwarves and other mystical beings. It’s easy to imagine these ‘huldufólk’ living here amidst the lava rocks that fold and twist, forming tiny caves and strange shapes. Beside the pond winds a pathway past the rocks, many coloured with bright emerald or contrasting olive.

Art, Culture and a Living Past

The town is a vibrant centre. Besides the sports and the geothermally heated swimming pools, it has a rich cultural life. Its museums are spread in different buildings across the town, adding authenticity to the history they portray. Take the Pakkhúsið or Office here that will explain where all the items from the past and a third exhibition building, it displays two permanent exhibitions, the history of the town and one of classic children’s toys and lifestyle. You’ll also find a Tourist Information Office here that will explain where all the other museums, art and cultural centres are, as well as all that can be enjoyed and experienced during your stay in the town. And it is a town you will want to stay in.

On fire in the basement

Geothermal means heat from the ground—and there’s plenty of evidence of it here, along with where it came from. At Krýsuvík, a little outside the town, are steaming mud pools, bubbling hot springs, brilliantly coloured lakes—all surrounded by equally brilliantly coloured hills. Hikers who climb up to the top of the hill are rewarded by the sight of the spectacular steaming vent and the view of ocean, fields and lakes. Well-maintained boardwalks wind through the area—but don’t try to touch the pools. Remember where they’re coming from!

These lava fields make for a marvellous hiking area, with mountains like Helgafell, with its panoramic view of the peninsula or the Krýsuvíkurborg cliffs, teaming with birdlife.

The Warmth of Iceland

One might wonder how Icelanders have kept warm through the years on a seemingly barren arctic island. ‘Varma— the warmth of Iceland’ has the answer with its brand of wool products made entirely in Iceland and based on the traditional skills and craftsmanship that kept Icelanders warm during the hardships of past winters. The main focus of Varma is on Icelandic wool, but other types of wool like angora and lambs’ wool are also used in production. Varma offers a wide range of woolen goods, from socks, gloves, shawls and hats to sweaters and cardigans. Being the only manufacturer in Iceland using Icelandic sheepskin, you can also find items like vests, mittens, hats, collars and bags in the collection. Varma also offers a little home collection with woolen blankets, pillows and cushions from sheepskin and a traditional Icelandic guestbook coated in sheepskin.

Varma is produced by Glófi, one of the leading manufacturers of woollen goods and traditional sheepskin products in Iceland with production facilities in three different locations around the country.

Varma’s products are produced in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner and at the same time with an emphasis on classic virtues of traditional quality and style. Varma is thus committed to continuous improvement and development in design and usage of material with respect for its heritage and tradition.

Fjörurkraín

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

Varma is thus committed to continuous improvement and development in design and usage of material with respect for its heritage and tradition.
Reykjavik Excursions offers three tours to see the amazing Northern Lights

The Northern Lights can be elusive but the local expert tour operator Reykjavik Excursions takes you to the best viewing spots, away from the bright city lights for most ideal opportunities to see them.

The season for Northern Lights typically starts early September and ends mid-April. Some people wonder why there are no Northern Lights tours in summer—which is a valid question as the Northern Lights exist all year around. However, Iceland is blessed with up to 24 hour daylight in summer which makes it impossible to see the Lights at that time.

Each Northern Lights experience is different. Ideally, the Lights are bright and displays last for hours in the late evening and early mornings. The expert tourist guides at Reykjavik Excursions know the characteristics of the Lights and maximize your chance to see them, even on nights when the Northern Lights activity is low and the sky is partly cloudy. On occasion trips are cancelled due to heavy cloud cover.

This season, Reykjavik Excursions offers three exciting tour options to see the Northern Lights.

Northern Lights Tour

The Northern Lights Tour is Reykjavik Excursion’s tried and tested tour that has been hugely popular in the past. It is available every night from September through mid-April. On this 3-4 hour tour you’ll travel with a local English-speaking professional tourist guide who is an expert in finding the right places to stop, effectively maximizing your chance to see the Lights.

The route changes each night according to the cloud cover and weather conditions. Several tours are available and Reykjavik Excursions’ staff have a lot of experience with reading the cloud forecast to maximize the chances of seeing the Northern Lights. Reykjavik Excursions cannot guarantee Northern Lights activity and sightings. However, if they are not visible one night, the company invites its guests to take a second tour another night for free. You can just book it.

Glacier & Monster Truck Adventure

New in 2013 is the 8.5 hour Glacier & Monster Truck Adventure. On this tour you’ll visit Langjökull, Iceland’s second largest glacier. The bus meets up with a specially modified 8x8 Monster Truck along the way, which brings you to one of the most unique places you’ll ever set foot on, the Langjökull glacier. You’ll have the opportunity to learn about the Northern Lights, the glacier itself, the area’s nature — and hear some local stories. A stop at a nearby farm provides guests with the opportunity to enjoy optional light refreshments, coffee, and Icelandic farm style ice cream.

In 2013 the tour starts on 20th September and runs to 31st December. In 2014 it will start on 21st January and run until 15th April.

Warm Baths & Cool Lights

Also new in 2013 is the Warm Bath & Cool Lights Tour. In addition to the hunt for the Northern Lights, you’ll enjoy a relaxing bath and a steam bath in geothermally heated water in the open air Laugarvatn Fontana spa.

Included on this tour are the bus fare with an English-speaking tour guide, a buffet with light refreshments and the entrance fee to the Laugarvatn Fontana spa. This tour runs from 15th September 2013 until 15th April 2014 and lasts about 6.5 hours.

What to bring

Warm clothing is essential as you’ll hopefully spend some time outdoors enjoying the Lights. Wear a hat, gloves, warm shoes and several layers of clothes. Photographers love shooting the Northern Lights for good reason. They can usually get a picture that far exceeds what the human eye can see. Photographers should bring a tripod and an external shutter release for time exposures. After manually setting the focus to infinity your camera settings should be as follows: ISO 200, f.2.8 and expose for 30 seconds. Please note that the use of built-in or external flashguns disturb other guests as the eyes need some time to adjust to the darkness for Northern Lights viewing.
Frequent flyers know the ropes. They get through Passport Control and Customs and head to the Duty Free stores. They need to think. Are they entitled to it or not? Then, laden with bags, they struggle to the plane, showing their precious cargo into already-stuffed overhead lockers. At the end of their flight, they lug the same bags down miles of walkways, stairs and escalators, before picking up their luggage and struggling to the taxis, coaches or trains, hoping they don’t drop or break the bottles on the way.

Iceland—a Different Way

The Vikings do things differently. At the International Airport at Keflavik, you will find a rare opportunity: a Duty Free Store in the Arrivals section right at the luggage pick-up point, where there are trolleys available. Mere feet from the luggage carousels, passengers can shop at huge discounts compared to city prices, especially on wines, spirits and tobacco products. Before their luggage arrives, they have done their shopping and saved a lot of money.

Don’t lug it with you—get it here

Opened in 1970, the Arrivals Duty Free Shop was an instant success with passengers. With the airport expansion in 2008, it was enlarged to accommodate a much larger range of international and Icelandic brands, providing an opportunity to offer a very good selection of products. New changes this June bring a new buying experience, with the wines and spirits easily visible at the front of the shop and branded gondolas so it’s easier to make your choice.

Today, the Duty Free shop has the largest range of wines, spirits and beers in the country—larger, even, than many other countries’ airports—and it includes the international award-winning Egils Gull beer—and all at a much reduced price.

No Discrimination—Duty Free for all

Icelanders don’t mind which country you’re coming from or going to: the Duty Free discount applies equally to all travellers. You don’t need to worry about buying Icelandic currency first, either, as all major cards are accepted at the checkout.

Go Home well stocked

Of course, most of the things you buy in the Arrivals Duty Free will probably be finished by the end of your visit and you will be looking for something special to remember your trip and for gifts to loved ones and children. There is a large Duty Free Store in the Departures Lounge for those uniquely Icelandic items and a wide range of international brands that make perfect gifts and souvenirs that is worth paying a visit. Duty Free fashion clothing by Burberry, Mulberry and Boss and a special range of clothing by Icelandic designers are on sale. Unlike most other modern airports, the walk to the plane is short and trolleys can carry the load almost to the planes. Passengers from non-Schengen countries do not even have to carry their goods from the Departure Lounge as there is a shop close to their planes with the same products and prices.
You’ve fallen in love with Iceland and have decided that now is the time to visit the country to see what everyone is raving about. Congratulations! We are rather proud of our patch of volcanic rock and there’s no better place to begin and end your journey than at Keflavik International Airport or KEF for short.

A small airport for a small country
The compact airport means that you never have too far to walk to get to your flight and the modern architecture makes use of Iceland’s abundant summer light to the full with high skylighted ceilings. The clean, spacious and sleek contemporary look is completed with the recent addition of new sofas and extra seating that have been added to ensure a comfortable wait. Having won the 2011 Best Airport Award for airports with less than 2 million passengers from the prestigious Airports Council International, KEF continues to strive to improve on all fronts as Iceland’s popularity as a tourist destination continues to soar.

Savour your last hours in style
I can’t think of a better way to spend one’s last few hours in Iceland than to relax in the comfortable and cozy departure hall, reflecting on all you have seen during your stay. Grab yourself a sandwich and a coffee-to-go from Kaffitár or Bistro Atlantic or allow yourself the luxury of an unhurried light meal at one of the airport’s more elegant bistros such as Café Europe, designed for those departing to mainland Europe, or Café International, which serves passengers bound for the USA and the UK.

Up to 50% discounts on wine and spirits
Keflavik Airport is one of the few airports in Europe that offers passengers the possibility to shop tax and duty free, not only on departure but on arriving as well. It’s well stocked range of wine and spirits is the largest in the country and also offers tobacco, perfumes and cosmetics at prices that are up to 50% below Reykjavik prices. Given the renaissance of crafts in Iceland, a fine selection of hand crafted items are also stocked.

Tax Free Shopping at its best
If you didn’t manage to do much shopping during your stay, now is the perfect time to find thoughtful gifts and souvenirs at prices at least 15% below prices in town. Epal Design, for instance, offers a wide array of imaginative and whimsical Icelandic designed items: jewellery and accessories, handbags, glassware and tableware, household items and even Christmas tree ornaments. The top names in Icelandic design from around the country, as well as several Scandinavian designers, are all conveniently located under one roof, giving you an unparalleled opportunity to find that special gift.

Now, for something to read on your long-haul flight... Eymundsson offers the largest selection of newly released, foreign and domestic books and magazines in the country. Paperback editions of classic works of fiction by all the most famous Icelandic authors are available in English, German and French. For the children there is a good selection of colouring books, crayons, puzzles and games to keep them happily occupied, while you get started on Nobel Prize writer Halldór Laxness’ epic novel, Independent People.

Lastly, the stylish Panorama Bar offers a range of imported and Icelandic wines, liqueurs schnapps and beer. Here you might want to indulge in a celebratory drink or toast to having completed a successful trip to Iceland, while enjoying the expansive views across the Reykjanes Peninsula.

We wish you a pleasant journey home, and see you again soon!
Connected by Energy and History

A new Path between the Blue Lagoon and Grindavík village is officially opened

The fishing town of Grindavík and the world famous Blue Lagoon have been linked together by geography, geology and history from the beginning, but it wasn’t until earlier this year that they were connected by an actual path. Last May, the five kilometre-long two-part path was officially named, giving visitors and locals a chance to travel between the two locations, while enjoying the fantastic surrounding scenery.

The Contest

The township of Grindavík put up a contest to find the best names for the paths and the winning suggestions are well fitting. The path from the Blue Lagoon right up to the Selskógur forest is aptly named Energy Lane, due to the harnessing of the rich geothermal energy in the area on which the Blue Lagoon is based.

From Selskógur to Grindavík village, the path was given the name Ingibjörg Lane. Ingibjörg was a local woman and a community leader who, at the age of sixty, decided to utilize a fund dedicated to her to plant a forest at the foothills of Þorbjörn Mountain. In 1957 she planted the first tree in an area she called Selskógur. The area has since become a cherished nature resort for the local people and leads up to several hiking paths on Þorbjörn Mountain.

What makes Grindavík interesting

Grindavík is one of the true Icelandic fishing towns, where the harbour area is its life and worth a visit in its own right. All around it 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 is to be expected, 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. Then, there is the informative House of Culture and Natural Resources named Kvikan where you can learn all about how the Blue Lagoon came into being and the area’s rich cultural history.

Grindavíkurber
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The Garðskagi Natural Pearl

The open-air museum in Garðskagi is located in a natural garden, which blends the beauty of the landscape with its rich animal and bird life. The museum has both a Folk and Maritime Museum and has an outstanding collection of machines. Open daily from 1 pm to 5 pm.

From the terrace of the restaurant you can watch whales in their natural environment. One of the two lighthouses in the region is open to visitors. A campground offers affordable accommodation.

The Bridge Restaurant

This elegant restaurant in the fishing town of Grindavík seats 120. On the menu, you will find fish fresh from the sea along with a wide selection of pastries and a steady flow of coffee. Relax and enjoy the beautiful views of the harbour and the mountains while you enjoy a delicious Icelandic meal. There is a well-stocked bar along with television and Internet access. It’s a perfect opportunity to buy a genuine Icelandic sweater and other crafts.

The Bridge
Restaurant
Hafnargata 26, 240 Grindavík +354 426 7080

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**ICELANDIC TIMES**

**HOT AS THE SUN**

*Ice Glass creates art in glass*

With over 20 years experience working together, mother and son team of Gulla and Lírur 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.

The chef regaled me with one of the specialties of the house, the ‘Seafood Trio à la Duus’, comprising 3 types of fish, plus shrimp and lobster tails on a mound of fresh vegetables. Arriving steaming hot, served on a wooden platter, it was impressive and delicious. Also on the menu are succulent Icelandic meat.

**HARBOUR DINING IN OLD KEFLAVIK**

*Authentic Icelandic and international cuisine at Kaffi Duus*

It’s the classic seafood restaurant setting overlooking Keflavík’s small harbour. From our window seat, we are treated to a view of the deep blue waters of Faxaflói Bay and the snow capped mountains of Snæfellsnes Peninsula on the horizon. A pair of kittiwakes glide overhead, completing the picture-perfect setting. From its simple beginnings as small café, Kaffi Duus has evolved into a sizable restaurant with an extensive menu, suitable for an intimate two–to–four or a special occasion dinner for large groups.

A pair of kittiwakes

**GRINDAVÍK’S HARBOUR CAFÉ**

*The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers’ café is spreading fast*

This is a fishing town and the café is a fishermen’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.

**ICELANDIC TIMES**

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**Guesthouse BORG**

Guesthouse BORG is open all year for you to enjoy our homely atmosphere. Guesthouse BORG is only 5 min drive from the Blue Lagoon and 20 min 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.
Four Star Comfort in Keflavík

Hotel Keflavík has been transformed to meet travellers’ needs today

Hotel Keflavík opened in 1986 and was the first 4-star hotel to open in Keflavík. 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”. Complete renovations

The hotel was renovated, both inside and out, this last winter to accommodate the burgeoning influx of visitors coming for a holiday to see Iceland’s amazing sights and it now has 70 comfortable rooms available. With its proximity to the airport, Keflavík 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.

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.

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Dine 10 min from the Airport

Vitinn, at Sandgerði’s harbour makes dining a delight

A for a long flight, getting your baggage 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–possibly an hour or more, at least.

Less than 10 minutes drive away, however, is one of the most famous restaurants in Iceland. It is probably the only restaurant in all Europe to cook the delicious rock crab. The lunches and dinners here feature really fresh seafood. The fishing boats deliver their catch only a few metres away from the restaurant itself, so you can see why. For those with a preference for meat, the roasted fillet of Icelandic lamb is highly recommended.

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.

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.

Vitinn 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.

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41
Photographers’ Secrets
Akranes provides prize-winning possibilities

A kranes, in West Iceland, has been a special place ever since it was founded by two Irish brothers during the Settlement Era. Being part of the Faxaflói bay, it has attracted settlers throughout the centuries for both fishing and farming. The ancient market place is one of Iceland’s most important fishing towns, a 50 km drive from Reykjavik and easily accessible via the Hvalfjörður tunnel.

Fertile lands
The Icelandic name Akranes can be translated to ‘corn field peninsula’, which suggests that it had been a fertile area in the days of the Vikings. As Akranes is a coastal town, the ever-present sea breeze easily changes one’s perception of the vastness and eternity of waves, sand and sky.

A treasure trove for any thoughtful wanderer and for hunters of the moment, Akranes may quite rightly be called a photographer’s paradise, providing an inexhaustible number of fleeting photo opportunities, ever-changing according to the whims of nature.

Solitude within reach
In contrast to other towns, it’s only a short journey to reach the magnificent trio of sand, sea and sky in complete solitude. Akranes’ two lighthouses are a few minutes’ drive from the centre, along the Suðurlöss Peninsula. The taller one, Akranesviti, is operational today, but the older one serves perfectly as an atmospheric background. Akranesviti, has recently been opened to the public by the Akranes Photographer’s Club, who also maintain an exhibition inside the lighthouse. The climb to the top is worth the effort, for it is here that you can enjoy the breathtaking panorama which offers up innumerable photographic possibilities.

Professional photographers appreciate the sublime scenery around Breið, and numerous photographs taken here have been awarded prizes and have been published in magazines. The pristine beach of Langisandur, close to the lighthouses, is the perfect backdrop for taking marvellous photos of the sun playing with shadows or of delicate sand sculptures formed by the waves. Your only company will be the sea birds and maybe some lone, late season wanderer, attempting to take a swim in the sea. The old ship Höfrungur I, silently anchored on the shores of Akranes reveals its story to the attentive visitor, while serving as an ideal focal point in the panoramas of the Snaefellsness Peninsula. A short drive in the opposite direction will take you to Akranes’ own twin peaked mountain, Akrafjall. It needs no experienced hiker to reach either summit, Geirmundartindur or Háihnjúkur, to find sights worth shooting.

Winter’s prize: the Northern Lights
The autumn light in Iceland is unique. With Iceland fortuitously situated close to the north pole, the angle of the sun’s rays enlighten all it touches with intense colours not seen at lower latitudes, pouring out its magic gold across the landscape. While summer days seem to be made of pure intensity, winter brings the dark nights dark again, and the heart of a photographer starts beating faster in anticipation of the Northern Lights being visible once more. The amazing display of green-white light, silently appearing in one second and vanishing in the next, then reappearing some minutes later in a completely different way, places a paradoxical veil of eternity on the spectator’s mind, who takes in this grand scenery without distraction.

Akranes is an excellent location for Northern Lights’ hunters, as there is a minimum of light pollution around the lighthouse and the beach, facilitated by the sea breeze which seems eager to blow disturbing clouds away. While you may be staying in one of Akranes’ cozy guesthouses, you might find it more exciting to spend part of your evenings down at the old lighthouse, enjoying the ocean’s solitude and chasing nature’s magnificence with your camera. Good things come to those who wait.
Through windows that stretch from floor to ceiling, you can view the spectacular sights that Iceland is so famous for from an entirely different perspective. While the people on the ground run around like ants, with only a limited view, soaring above them, you can truly take in the magnificent panoramas.

Time is short
Visiting Iceland, your time is necessarily limited and you want to make the most of it. Trips that might take all day in a coach can be accomplished in a matter of hours with time at more sites.

Specialists in photography
Since you are not restricted to following the roads when flying in a helicopter, a whole new world of sights is opened up to you. You go places that even off-road jeeps never reach. Taking to the air offers a realm of unique photo opportunities that those on the ground would never even dream of. Different perspectives and angles, the play of light and shadow all take on a new dimension never seen by the earth-bound cameraman.

The Big Bell
Flying in a helicopter today is an experience in comfort travel. The new Bell 407 has a spacious cabin, comfortable seating and those big windows onto the world below. Seating up to six passengers, it’s a great opportunity for a family or incentive group. Helo has two other helicopters and all three can provide either group or exclusive flights.

Tours of a lifetime
There are four tours that are especially popular. The Reykjavík Panorama is a half-hour view of the capital from the air in which passengers can see everything from fishermen’s houses to the mountains of Esja.

The Geothermal Wilderness tour takes you further to Hvalfjörður fjord, where Allied ships prepared for the dangerous Atlantic crossing in the 1940s, before taking in the beautiful Glymur waterfall, the tallest in Iceland. On to Pingvellir, the lake and geothermal areas. In about 3 hours, you get to take in more than road-based tours do in 12, with more flexibility and certainly, amazing views.

The Golden Experience
This flight takes in the sights of the Golden Circle—and a lot more. Spectacular from the air, you see the same fjord and waterfall before landing on Langjökull glacier, from which you can see both the Arctic Sea to the north and the Atlantic to the south on a clear day. Then, it’s on to see the magnificent Gulfoss waterfall, lunching at Geysir before heading back to Pingvellir, the lake and geothermal areas. On to Þingvellir, where the world’s longest running parliament first met. From the air, you view the earth’s surface, as the American and Eurasian tectonic plates pull apart.

The Volcanic Adventure
This flight flies you to the notorious volcanoes in South Iceland that brought air travel to a halt. Landing close to the Askja, a volcanic, you’ll feel the ground: still hot from the eruptions.

The Exclusive Flights
Offering both freedom and flexibility, you can go where and for as long as you like, creating your own experience. You could have lunch on a glacier, for example, or swim in a hot pool or dine at a fine country restaurant, as the sun sets low on the horizon. It’s your choice—and the experienced staff will not only make it possible but will give you background information, too.

Book ahead
You can imagine, the trips are very popular—especially in summer, so it’s wise to book. Helo in advance to book the tour of your choice.

Prepare to be Amazed
Helo flies you into panoramas only visible from the air.

Fulfilling a Dream

Sometimes, people have ‘impossible dreams’. Take, for instance, the ‘bucket list’ wish of one man to take in the view from the top of Iceland’s highest peak, Hvannadalshnúkur, rising up from the midst of Vatnajökull’s vast ice sheet. For a fit person, it would be a challenge, but, for this man, crippled by a devastating disease and now bound to a wheelchair, it could have seemed an impossibility. However, his colleagues decided that, with help from Helo, it would happen.

The dream came true on a brilliantly sunny day. Helo’s helicopter lifted off with this courageous man and, about half an hour later, he was on top of the mountain, his dream fulfilled, surveying a view only few get to see.

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History Brought to Life

The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre is in Reykholt.

Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), Iceland’s best known Saga writer and scholar, is the author of such important and famous works as Heimskekringla, 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 Egil 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 reading even today a fascinating reading.

Snorri was a wealthy and powerful chiefman 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.

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 upbringings, education, writing, properties and mansions. 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 Guðnýn Samuelsen, is administered 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 Birgisdóttir) 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 throughout the year. During the summer season, (1st May —31st August), the opening hours are from 10 to 18 every day, and during the winter season, from 10 to 17 on weekdays and, if booked in advance, during weekends.

Snorrastofa

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.

Hot from the Oven

Gein’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 ‘sníður’ in Icelandic. His special version of Icelandic puffin eggs for grandma? She will love the unique taste of the combination of chocolate and liquorice that is so popular on an Icelandic sea cliff and be wowed by the beautiful painting of a typical puffin colony on an Icelandic sea cliff and be wowed by it.

One of the things on the “to do” list while visiting Iceland is to pick up some really cool and fun souvenirs for family and friends. To fill this need, Island Treasures has a range of souvenir candies to suit almost every taste.

Sweet Memories of Iceland

Icelandic Souvenirs Your Friends and Family will Love

One of the things on the “to do” list while visiting Iceland is to pick up some really cool and fun souvenirs for family and friends. To fill this need, Island Treasures has a range of souvenir candies to suit almost every taste.

Why not pick up a cute box of Icelandic Puffin Eggs for grandma? She will love the beautiful painting of a typical puffin colony on an Icelandic sea cliff and be wowed by the unique taste of the combination of chocolate and liquorice that is so popular with Icelanders. That golf-playing uncle would just be thrilled to receive the funny golfers’ version of Icelandic Puffin Eggs with the puffin and the golfer confused over which white ball is theirs.

People may like some Icelandic Lava Sparks—traditional Icelandic toffee in a red crispy shell which come packed with an amazing painting of Eyjafjallajökull erupting in 2010 or Icelandic Lava Pebbles—traditional Icelandic liquorice toffee with a hint of chocolate wrapped in a black crispy shell packed with a beautiful painting of Skógafoss waterfall.

Hopefully you will get the chance to view the Northern Lights dancing across the Icelandic skies on your visit but if not, why not take home some Icelandic Northern Lights—hand made, all natural, peppermint sugar candies in the amazing colours of the Northern Lights. Available in all the best tourist shops, hotels and the duty free store at Keflavik airport.
Experience Iceland

All of our shops and restaurants offer you
Icelandic memories to take home.

One of few airports in the world that is both tax
and duty free — meaning up to 50% off city prices.

Godafoss
On your way into Reykjavik, you can see thick columns of steam rising over the mountains. The source of much of the capital’s heating, the water is heated deep in the earth on the burning rocks of volcanoes long dormant.

The tour to Jökulsárlón takes you over those mountains, past the powerful steam vents from the geothermal power station at their foot, to the south of the country. It’s easy to use superlatives in describing Iceland’s many features but this is one tour in which they are justified.

Nestled on the other side of the mountains is the little garden town of Hveragerði, where the hot springs that bubble up are also used for cooking and growing food, among other things. It’s a volatile region, where earthquakes have shaken things up in recent years. However, it looks placid now, with green fields and small farms stretching to the sea.

All will be revealed

One of the greatest benefits of taking a tour is that the knowledgeable guides can tell you all about the area while you are enjoying the comfort of being a passenger and not having to be concerned about the driving. Through their narration, you become immersed in the history, geology, culture and lifestyle of both past and present whilst soaking in the beauty of the countryside.

Some of everything

Travelling down to Jökulsárlón, you pass through the countryside where Njál’s saga was enacted. In the small town of Hvolsvöllur, the Saga Centre tells the whole tragic story.

Mount Heiða, known as the ‘Gateway to Hell’ is clearly visible before the town as you enter this area of volcanos both old and new. It is also an area of beautiful waterfalls and the tour stops at two very different falls: Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. The glaciers you pass grow increasingly massive in size until you find yourself travelling under Europe’s largest, the mighty Vatnajökull.

These glaciers are deceptive: under the ice, they hide increasingly violent, fiery volcanos, from Eyjafjallajökull to Katla to the biggest, Öræfajökull, hiding just behind Iceland’s highest peak.

Arriving in a fantasy

As the ice melts, glacial tongues stretch down towards the road. However, at one point, something unique takes place. It began in the early 1920s, when melting ice couldn’t reach the sea and formed a lagoon. Since that time, it has grown in size year by year and now some of the melting icebergs will make it to the sea.

Often, the ocean swell will sweep fish into the lagoon. The seals know this makes a good restaurant for them and they are often to be seen basking on an iceberg after a good meal. Even from the lagoon’s edge, this is a fantastic sight, as the sunlight plays off the blocks of ice. However, the tour continues on an amphibious boat, winding its way through the icebergs, up towards Vatnajökull itself. Sometimes, the ice can actually be seen breaking off this massive glacier, starting its journey to the sea.

The photo opportunities at the lagoon are quite amazing but it’s the experience of just being there, in the silence, amongst the ice, formed into fantastic shapes that really counts. The photos you take will provide beautiful memories of this trip into a fantasy world and a talking point with friends for years to come.

Iceland Excursions’ tour encapsulates Iceland

FROM FIRE TO ICE

FROM FIRE TO ICE
Síglunes Guesthouse offers a comfortable stay with an old world charm. A new guesthouse just opened in the very north of Iceland, in Síglufjörður. The building has been totally renovated and yet, with the wood panelling in the upper floors, it has that feeling of staying in a warm, comfortable family home with helpful and friendly staff. The trip alone is worth it and it’s a perfect place to stop when taking the scenic ‘Arctic Bow’ route around the north.

The beds are all new, high quality and very comfortable—something you’ll appreciate after travelling or hiking in the mountains. The second and third floor bedrooms all have private bathrooms and a mountain view. The six rooms on the ground floor have shared bathrooms. All have Wi-Fi access.

Síglunes Guesthouse provides healthy choices for breakfasts throughout the year. For a day out hiking or other outdoor activities, they can provide food packs and from mid-June until the end of August, the restaurant will be open for dinners in the evenings. Where possible, locally grown food is offered.

A picture of tranquility and beauty

On the Troll Peninsula, Hotel Brimnes surrounds you with nature. It’s as if the birds know the photographers and nature lovers are coming. They put on their most colourful attire and their singing can be heard all around the lake and surrounding mountains in the summer months. We’re up in the north of Iceland, on the banks of Ólafsfjörður lake. The view is stunning, like a picture postcard—but it’s real.

Hotel Brimnes has recently refurbished its 11 hotel rooms. Its 8 popular log cabins on the lake’s edge, each with its own private hot tub, fed by a nearby geothermal source, accommodate families or groups of up to six, perfect for those who love to go trout fishing, kayaking, diving, horse riding, hiking or cycling around this beauty spot.

The Arctic Bow

This part of North Iceland, known as the Arctic Bow, is also known for its spectacular scenery. With the opening of the new tunnels, access to the whole Troll Peninsula is easy.

Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter, you will find plenty to enjoy here.
TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ISSUE 20 • 2013

Playground

Akureyri, the Base from which 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 available 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 huskeriding tours, boat trips, bird watching, shopping—in 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, it maximises 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 island of Hrísey, with its powerful healing energy and Grímsey, straddling the Arctic Circle, see volcanoes and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.

Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavík international and Reykjavík airports take just 40 mn. Scheduled buses leave from Reykjavík 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.

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Akureyri has it all and an outgoing friendly welcome, too.
Ambassador to the Whales
See the whales from Akureyri’s specialised whale watching ship

This is the first year of scheduled tours from Akureyri with the ‘Ambassador’ whale-watching ship. The beautiful town of Akureyri itself, full of old historic houses, is simply captivating.

The Whales’ home
The North of Iceland is home to all the species of whales found around the country. Eyjafjörður, particularly, is home to Humpback Whales—gigantic animals who love singing and slapping their fins and tails! It is beautiful to watch these magnificent creatures jump up out of the ocean!

Additionally, Minke Whales, Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Blue Whales are seen in the fjord.

Sailing with the ‘Ambassador’
The name ‘Ambassador’ refers to its function of connecting whales and humans and it has great viewing facilities to do that. It sails three times a day during summer from Akureyri’s central harbour, next to the Hof cultural house. Tours take from three to four hours, during which you get guidance about the nature of the whales, the sea, the fjord, the mountains—the whole eco-system. Being protected from winds and weather by the mountains ensures that it’s calmer than the open sea.

The sailing schedule
Morning tours leave at 8.30, afternoon tours at 13.00—and 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!

The North Eats Thai
The Popular Krúa Siam Restaurant Feeds Folk in Akureyri

What inspired experienced Thai cooks and kitchen assistants to leave the exotic lands of South East Asia to venture to the Land of the Vikings, I cannot imagine. But I’m very glad they did. After opening the Reykjavik food scene to their unique blend of Thai ingredients and Icelandic meats and vegetables, the intrepid cooks continued north to Akureyri.

Established in 2007 and now under the same management as Reykjavik’s Krúa Thai, it is easy to find Krúa Siam opposite the famous Hof concert hall by the harbour.

Set Apart
Besides the experienced Thai staff, what sets these restaurants apart is that all the spices, rice and noodles that are uniquely Thai are brought in directly from Thailand. However, the meat and vegetables are pure Icelandic and this is what contributes to the delicious flavour in every meal. Each meal is freshly prepared and cooked to order on the spot to get the most flavour.

Eat What You Like for Less
Both Krúa Siam and Krúa Thai are known for their reasonable prices. In addition, Krúa Siam offers a full five course lunch buffet every day between 11:30 and 13:30. Here, you can eat all you like for the same good price.

With a large range of dishes to choose from, you can eat like a Thai—taking a piece from a number of different dishes. It’s a great way to eat as a family or with a group of friends.

Drinks to go with the meal
A number of wines and spirits go well with Thai food, so Krúa Siam has a bar and stocks alcoholic beverages—along with juices and soft drinks.

Catering to the Need
The restaurant also provides Take Away and Home Delivery options, but to get the most flavour, eat it right away.

Krúa Siam
Strandgötu 13 • 600 Akureyri
+354 466 3800
kruasiam@kruasiam.is
www.kruasiam.is
Where Fitness Folk Eat

Besti bitinn’s fresh food is a hit with health-loving people

Healthy food and prices don’t compete

Of course, some people are not so concerned about their health but just want to eat something that tastes good and isn’t expensive, so the usual carbonated drinks are also available with their meals. Whether they realise it or not, though, they are eating fish fresh from the boats that just landed or chicken that’s never been frozen or lost its food value in the cooking.
In recent years, the village of Seyðisfjörður at the far reaches of East Iceland, has become something of a trendy place for musicians and artists. In summer, the colourful fishing village attracts visitors from all over Iceland and abroad, who come to partake in the popular LungA Art Festival and the flourishing cultural scene, where the most recent addition is the opening of Iceland’s first Folk High School with a focus on art and personal development. While the 26 km paved road from Egilsstaðir to Seyðisfjörður is steep with a number of hairpin turns, the view to the fjord is absolutely magnificent and should not be missed. Photo opportunities abound and the immensity of the panoramic proportions will present a challenge for even the best professional photographers.

Where to stay
Hotel Aldan is a small, upscale hotel located in what used to be the bank of Seyðisfjörður of almost a century. Elegantly furnished and steep with a number of hairpin turns, the view to the fjord is absolutely magnificent and should not be missed. Photo opportunities abound and the immensity of the panoramic proportions will present a challenge for even the best professional photographers.

Hotel Aldan offers an affordable hotel option in the town, with a total of 9 rooms in a charming timber house built in 1908. It is located at the mouth of the Fjørðará River with views across the fjord. Recreational highlights include midnight kayaking on the fjord (in summer only), attempting the challenging ‘Seven Peaks Hike’, mountain biking, sea angling and bird watching at Skálanes.

Eating in Seyðisfjörður
Shaffell Bistro is an informal arty kind of place that serves possibly the best pizzas in Iceland. The bistro is open all year round. Enjoy the thin crust langoustine pizza with a glass of red wine, or the rich Thai vegetable soup with coconut cream and a plate of fresh tapas. The bistro’s interior design is inspired by the late German artist Dieter Roth and today serves as an artists’ residency and cultural centre. The upstairs gallery offers exhibitions by local artists.

Hotel Aldan’s reception centre at the town’s entrance also houses the high class Hotel Alden Restaurant, featuring traditional lamb and langoustine dishes as well as fresh fish from the fjord. Many dishes are seasoned with mountain herbs, handpicked from the mountains above the fjord every autumn. Collected specially for the restaurant, these fragrant flowers and herbs give Hotel Aldan’s signature dishes their distinctive flair. The restaurant is perfect for a romantic dinner in elegant surroundings in this beautiful town.

Hotel Snæfell offers a choice hotel option in the town, with a total of 9 rooms in a charming timber house built in 1908. It is located at the mouth of the Fjørðará River with views across the fjord. Recreational highlights include midnight kayaking on the fjord (in summer only), attempting the challenging ‘Seven Peaks Hike’, mountain biking, sea angling and bird watching at Skálanes.

Eating in Seyðisfjörður
Shaffell Bistro is an informal arty kind of place that serves possibly the best pizzas in Iceland. The bistro is open all year round. Enjoy the thin crust langoustine pizza with a glass of red wine, or the rich Thai vegetable soup with coconut cream and a plate of fresh tapas. The bistro’s interior design is inspired by the late German artist Dieter Roth and today serves as an artists’ residency and cultural centre. The upstairs gallery offers exhibitions by local artists.

Hotel Aldan’s reception centre at the town’s entrance also houses the high class Hotel Alden Restaurant, featuring traditional lamb and langoustine dishes as well as fresh fish from the fjord. Many dishes are seasoned with mountain herbs, handpicked from the mountains above the fjord every autumn. Collected specially for the restaurant, these fragrant flowers and herbs give Hotel Aldan’s signature dishes their distinctive flair. The restaurant is perfect for a romantic dinner in elegant surroundings in this beautiful town.

Open for dreams
Hotel Bláfell relaxes your senses

Travelling East Iceland in winter is a journey with additional flair. Summer’s business has faded away; nature has changed its colours. Mountains and roads are taking a rest and silently await visitors who are looking for a unique experience, like the dancing Northern Lights on a clear winter’s evening. While walking the ancient paths, you will hear nothing but the wind between the bushes and the colourful stones, as most of the birds have left for southern climes and the cattle are by now in the cowsheds. You can hear the sound of your own breathing. The solitude creates an overwhelming tranquility, a oneness in close connection to the earth—and opens one’s mind to thoughts and dreams.

The end of a perfect day
There is nothing like ending such a perfect day in a cozy countryside hotel at the East Icelandic seaside. Nothing like lounging on soft leather sofas, enjoying delicious hot chocolate in front of an open fire, reading a good book from the library and later having dinner made from the best local ingredients such as lamb or fresh-caught fish.

Tranquility and relaxation by the bay
Situated on a peaceful and broad bay in the Eastern fjords, Hotel Bláfell is both comfortable and charming. The old timber house with its eye-catching blue roof in the middle of the small fishing town of Breiðdalsvík impresses with its warm and welcoming atmosphere. The cozy wooden interior has been tastefully decorated by owners Fírsti Arnason and his wife Hrafnhildur Hafsteinsdóttir.

The hotel’s history dates back to 1982 and has attracted guests who appreciate the peaceful atmosphere with a touch of romance. For decades it has been a well-known weekend retreat just off National Road No. 1, between Djúpivogur and Egilsstaðir.

A comfortable stay
Hotel Bláfell prides itself on its restaurant and its log cabin-like 34 rooms with free Wi-Fi. There are single-rooms, double- and family-rooms, all with adjoining bathroom and TV. The rooms are bright and spacious, each with its own charm and character. When the days get shorter and colder, you want to feel at home while travelling—and that’s exactly what Hotel Bláfell is made for.

Just relax in the hotel sauna after your promenade along the endless black beach of Breiðdalsvík or dream away in front of the fireplace. Refreshed and with renewed energy, you might make your way into the silent East Icelandic night to discover some unforgettable Northern Lights.
Icelandic fishers and processors have their own unique story.

**A Vision of the Future Becomes Reality**

The Story of Sildarvinnslan in the East Fjords

In the late 19th century, Norwegian fishermen arrived in the Eastfjords to fish for herring, and this is how their Icelandic counterparts learned about the ‘silver of the sea’. There was a certain excitement surrounding this activity due to the fact that salted herring was able to fetch high prices on the export market. As the new industry began to take off on the East Coast, the process of salting cod also found its beginnings there, fetching high prices especially in Southern Europe. As a result of these successes, people’s attitudes towards fishery in Iceland began to change, and more and more were convinced that fisheries should be developed into an independent industry.

**A Society Built on Fish**

The growing emphasis on fisheries also changed society in the East fjords. Small fishing villages sprang up between the mountainous fjords where the growing population made a living mainly from fishing and the fishing industry to a lesser extent, farming. The stories of the villages are, to a degree, marked by economic ups and downs—sometimes fishing was successful, sometimes not. Prices for fish fluctuated and the development of the industry itself, along with evolving processing methods, influenced every aspect of daily life. Most of the ups and downs were determined by the herring itself—during the herring’s golden era its numbers increased steadily, but suddenly the fish disappeared without warning. ‘Herring comes and herring goes’ is a saying in the fjords.

**Neskaupstaður—A Powerful Fishing Town**

At the end of the 19th century, a village arose on the shores of Nordfjörður Fjord. It was a convenient place for setting sail and, as the number of fishing vessels increased, the need for manpower to process the catch also increased. By 1929, the population of village had grown to 1100 and had become an independent municipality known as Neskaupstaður.

In 1952, a new herring era began in the East fjords, leading to a so-called ‘herring boom’. Fish were salted in Neskaupstaður, but in order for the town to be considered a genuine herring town, it had to build facilities to produce fish-meal and fish oil.

In 1957, a public holding company was founded in order to build these facilities. ‘Sildarvinnslan’, as it came to be called, was owned by many local firms and individuals, while the fishermen’s cooperative held a 60% majority of the shares.

**Diversity of Production**

However, Sildarvinnslan’s owners did not settle for just fish-meal and fish oil production. In 1965, the company bought two herring boats, and in 1967, two more were added to the fleet. In the same year the company began salting and freezing fish. Sildarvinnslan continued to diversify; when the herring disappeared once again, it was time to develop new fields, such as capelin fishery and deep sea fishery. The company decided to sell the herring boats and invest in modern ships suitable for capelin and cod fishing. With the new ships, the pelagic catch grew significantly.

By 1969, approximately 107,000 tons of herring passed through the production lines. The activity of the plant laid the foundation for this powerful company in the coming years.

**The Disaster of ’74**

On 20th December 1974, a disaster hit Neskaupstaður and Sildarvinnslan. Two avalanches swept down the mountains above Neskaupstaður, demolishing the fish-meal plant and causing extensive damage to the freezing plant and other facilities. Twelve men lost their lives, among them, seven workers from Sildarvinnslan. Rebuilding started immediately after the rescue operations were finished. For a time, production was limited to salting, as repairs to the freezing plant and other facilities moved forward and, along with the building of a brand new plant for fish-meal and oil at the new Nordfjörður harbour, Sildarvinnslan’s new facilities were fully operational in 1976.

**Leading the field in Iceland**

Sildarvinnslan is one of the most successful fishing companies in Iceland today. The company runs a fully equipped fish processing plant in Neskaupstaður and fish-meal and fish oil production in Neskaupstaður, Seyðisfjörður and Seyðisýrar. It also operates five ships—three for pelagic fishery and two for deep sea fishing.

Neskaupstaður’s and Sildarvinnslan’s stories are linked inextricably together. It is the saga of a small 19th century fishing village that developed into an industrious fishing town using the highest technological advances available. From humble beginnings, Sildarvinnslan has had a considerable influence on the development of the fishing industry in Iceland, and it can be rightly said that its vision from the beginning has been fulfilled in every way.

Visitors to Neskaupstaður can see many of the places that have contributed to the history of the town and the maritime museum is full of many interesting artifacts and displays that bring Neskaupstaður’s colourful past to life.
Entranced by the East
Quality handcraft at the East Iceland Crossroads

On the banks of East Iceland’s Lagarfjót River, lies the peaceful town of Egilsstaðir. With its present population of just over two thousand, Egilsstaðir can trace its urbanization to a farmer who laid the groundwork for increased commerce and services by constructing a large residential building for increased commerce and services by 1900. Nowadays, every region has its own specialties and the variety of edible keepsakes continues to grow. Founded in 2009 with the aim of preserving and strengthening East Iceland’s food heritage, Austfyrskar Krásir/East Iceland Delicacies oversees the production of local foods, and provides a platform for emerging East Iceland artisanal food entrepreneurs to flourish.

Hús Handanna features a variety of tempting local foods from ‘East Iceland Delicacies’ range of organically grown products. Try the wonderful savoury condiment—golden turnip chutney with apricots and angelica, the Icelandic birch syrup or the rhubarb jam, all of which could make wonderful gifts for friends and family back home. Fancy a snack? Grab a pack of Móðir Jörð/Mother Earth’s barley crackers and a cute little jar of dandelion honey and you are all set.

Introducing local designers

Born in 1971, Ingunn Þráinsdóttir, a noteworthy graphic designer from Egilsstaðir, established Flóra-Icelandic Design in the autumn of 2010. The idea for the company came about after Ingunn’s stay in Vesterålen, Norway where she studied and compared local plants to those of her native East Iceland. The outcome was an abundance of beautiful botanical drawings, which soon evolved into three dimensional textile products.

A unique and beautiful mix

Working from her studios in Egilsstaðir’s Cultural Center, Ingunn’s textile products are elegantly decorated with silkscreened drawings of plants, both recognizable from East-Iceland and Vesterålen. Her line of products for the home include silkscreened cotton table napkins, kitchen towels and decorative cushions with the same delicate designs carried over onto note-cards, journals and wrapping paper. Best known for her eye-catching creation of clothes hooks, Hulda Eðvaldsdóttir, was fascinated by her great-grandfather’s inventions of hooks and other utilitarian objects made from horn. After an inspirational design course in winter 2010, Hulda decided to develop her great-grandfather’s concept further by painting lamb horns in lovely colours - with an amazing result. Sold under the name Gibba Gibb, the hooks have been exhibited at Reykjavik’s DesignMarch 2011 and in conjunction with Iceland’s contribution to the 2011 Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany. Every month sees a special emphasis on one particular artist of the month—as well as the designer of the month, highlighting their work and often offering discounts on their products.

Simple Gifts

For a truly old fashioned Icelandic Christmas, there is a simple oak Christmas tree/candle holder, a fine handmade birch box which is used to store laufabrauð, and also a laufabrauð press.

Laufabrauð is a deep fried, savoury flat bread made of flour, baking powder, milk, and butter. The dough is rolled out, paper thin and is then ornately decorated using a special tool to make small v-shaped cuts that are peeled back to form a geometric design. The rounds of dough are then plunged into boiling oil or sheep fat for a few seconds until they are crispy and golden brown. Laufabrauð is served as an accompaniment to the traditional Icelandic Christmas dinner of smoked lamb, boiled potatoes, green peas, red cabbage and sweet bérchamel sauce.

An East Iceland Christmas

Hús Handanna is getting ready for the holiday season with its uniquely Icelandic Christmas hampers. Four types of hampers, each overflowing with all sorts of local goodies are available. A true Icelandic Christmas dinner would not be complete without several items that go into the ‘East Iceland Unique’ Hamper—beautiifully decorated laufabrauð made from barley flour, dried fish and a smoked leg of lamb or ‘hangikjöt’ which takes the place of honour at practically every Icelandic dinner table on the 24th of December. The ‘Branch Hamper’ contains herring, crackers, local feta cheese, forest berry jam, paté and waffle mix. The ‘Romantic Hamper’ is filled with dried fish and butter, a candle and poems. Finally, the ‘Desert Hamper’ contains waffle mix, berry syrup, serviettes, a candle and a special homemade ice cream recipe.

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Seyðisfjörður’s Autumn Coat of Many Colours

Silent, majestic, eternal. Whether you enter the Seyðisfjörður fjord from the east by ferry or drive down the serpentine Fjarðahögl mountain pass from the west, you will be enveloped by the incomparable beauty of one of East Iceland’s most spectacular fjords. Known equally well for its rich cultural life as for its truly breathtaking landscapes, Seyðisfjörður’s notable attributes embrace each other in an ethereal and unforgettable way. Lonely Planet has placed the fishing village seventh on its list of 15 Icelandic must-see destinations.

Cultural Gems

Located only 26 km from Egilsstaðir and a 30 minute drive from the main Road No. 1, this storybook village with its 700 inhabitants offers visitors a flourishing cultural life year round. Carefully preserved timber houses dating back to the days of Danish rule, decorate the fjord like colourful baubles strung across a spectacular panorama. Live exhibits like the sound-dome sculpture above the fjord, or the Winter 2013 exhibition of paintings by Dieter Roth at the Skafafell Art Centre could be one of the high points of your stay.

Did you know?

For centuries, Seyðisfjörður played an important role in the modernisation of Iceland. Not only was the harbour the main port that connected the island with the continent, it also opened extensive trade routes to Europe and the rest of the world. And did you know that Seyðisfjörður also carries the distinction of being the first Icelandic village to have an undersea telephone cable, as well as the first power plant?

Slow down and simply enjoy

As summer fades into autumn, Seyðisfjörður becomes an oasis of peace and romance with its deep blue waters and breathtaking snow-covered mountains, inviting the traveller to slow down and enjoy its winter persona.

Activities such as hiking, jeep tours and skiing are all possible. Hike the mountains above the fjord or contemplate the hounds of man and wilderness at the Skálanes Heritage Centre and Guesthouse in a setting, that allows you an unparalleled glimpse of Iceland’s beguiling nature.

Book yourself a night or two in Seyðisfjörður’s elegant Hotel Aldan or in any one of the comfortable guesthouses to experience Iceland in a way that the more hurried traveller misses.

Evenings in Seyðisfjörður have a magic all their own; a multitude of stars in the night sky shimmer in the quiet waters of the fjord, and the Northern Lights, should they appear, will only be all the more spectacular, the darker the Icelandic night.

There is a lot to discover at Iceland’s East End. Take time for the extraordinary.

The Mystery of Randulff’s Sea House

Mjóeyri Travel Service reveals Eskifjörður, past and present

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

After the demise of the herring era in 1930, the Sea House sat unused and abandoned for almost 90 years. When it was finally opened in 2008, the interior was found untouched and perfectly preserved as if frozen in time. Upstairs, trousers were still hanging on hooks, several pairs of boots were left under the bunk beds and a large collection of letters to loved ones on the continent were discovered. Curiously, no Icelander had ever seen the inside of the building until it was opened in 2008.

Visitors can tour this fascinating building and afterwards enjoy a traditional meal with starters such as fermented shark, dried fish and herring on rye bread, chased by a shot of brennivín. The menu includes dishes made with ingredients from around the fjord. Try the reindeer sausages with rice and chili sauce or the smoked and cured reindeer with salad and blueberry sauce. Traditional fish, meat soups, dried fish and herring on rye bread, chased by a shot of brennivín. The menu includes dishes made with ingredients from around the fjord. Try the reindeer sausages with rice and chili sauce or the smoked and cured reindeer with salad and blueberry sauce. Traditional fish, meat soups, 

Dine back in Time

Mjóeyri Travel Service organises tours and events at Randulff’s Sea House, now operating as a restaurant within a museum. Visitors can tour this fascinating building and afterwards enjoy a traditional meal with starters such as fermented shark, dried fish and herring on rye bread, chased by a shot of brennivín. The menu includes dishes made with ingredients from around the fjord. Try the reindeer sausages with rice and chili sauce or the smoked and cured reindeer with salad and blueberry sauce. Traditional fish, meat soups, 

Iceland Spar

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

Mjóeyri Travel’s striking summer houses stand tall against the jaw-droppingly beautiful background of the setting sun beyond the mountains. Owners Borglind and Sævar welcome you to spend a day, a week, a month on the blissfully tranquil shores of Eskifjörður in East Iceland.
Eating well in Höfn
Kaffi Hornið Hits the Spot

Kaffi Hornið in Höfn í Hornafirði has a friendly, laid back atmosphere that puts you at ease the moment you walk in the door. The Finnish wooden interior and cozy tea lights flickering on each table lend a feeling of warmth to this established and cosy tea lights flickering on each table. The Finnish wooden interior puts you at ease the moment you walk in and texture than their larger cousins.

Specialties of the House
Chef Ingólfur offers a variety of absolutely fresh langoustine dishes including pasta with langoustine in a cognac-cream sauce, roasted langoustine with vegetables and garlic sauce, grilled langoustine with salad and even an intriguing langoustine pizza. Many of the seafood dishes come from the Vatnajökull region as much as possible, Kaffi Hornið puts emphasis on its crushing effect upon the land beneath the glacier’s sheer magnitude, relentless in its pulling lunch option is the legendary club sandwich, which is popular among locals.

A hamburger calling?
In case you are homesick for a hamburger, Kaffi Hornið’s thick and juicy hamburgers will fit the bill, easily putting others to shame. Made with 120g of pure Icelandic beef from nearby farms, Kaffi Hornið’s even popular signature hamburger is topped with mounds of melted cheese, bacon, onions and mushrooms, and comes with a generous portion of French fries. Another filling lunch option is the fresh langoustine dishes including pasta with langoustine in a cognac-cream sauce, roasted langoustine with vegetables and garlic sauce, grilled langoustine with salad and even an intriguing langoustine pizza. Many of the seafood dishes come from the Vatnajökull region as much as possible, Kaffi Hornið puts emphasis on its crushing effect upon the land beneath the glacier’s sheer magnitude, relentless in its pulling lunch option is the legendary club sandwich, which is popular among locals.

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

Not to be missed
Located right on the main road that passes through the centre of Höfn, Ingólfur and Kristín welcome you to pop in for a friendly meal whenever you are in town.

The Vast Vatnajökull
In the Realm of the Vatnajökull Glacier

The region directly beneath the Vatnajökull glacier is a 260 km long, narrow stretch of land that spans from the west of Skafatfell National Park to the town of Höfn on its eastern border. The lives of people of the region have been shaped and moulded according to the dictates of nature, in a region which, until as recently as the 1970s, was one of the most isolated parts of Iceland. The majority of its roughly 2,100 inhabitants live and work in Höfn, the area’s largest population centre; the rest are on farms scattered throughout the region.

A Photographer’s Dream
Driving through this enchanted area, the vastness of the glacier, with its various glacier outlets, makes a compelling impression on the mind. The extensive views across the black sands of Skeiðarársandur towards Skafatfellsjökull glacier leave one in awe of the glacier’s sheer magnitude, relentless in its crushing effect upon the land beneath it. The beautiful Svartifoss waterfall, one of the main attractions within the Vatnajökull National Park, is well known for its underlying black basalt hexagonal columns.

Some impressive numbers
Vatnajökull is larger than all the glaciers in Europe combined. (there are smaller glaciers in Norway and Russia) and is one of the largest glacier in the world outside of the polar icecaps. It boasts the highest elevation in Iceland: Hvannadalshnúkur at 2,115 m or 6,870 feet, as well as the lowest point below sea level at the famous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon—260 m at its deepest. As a national park, it’s the largest in Europe.

Points of interest
Activities in the area are numerous—take a snowmobile, jeep or hiking tour on the glacier, cruise gently around blue-tinged icebergs on a boat ride at Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, observe puffins at Ingólfshöfði, or get a bird’s eye view over the glacier on a sightseeing flight. What could be more magical than basking in the midnight sun, in the warm natural hot baths at Hoffell? These are just a few of the possibilities in the Vatnajökull Region.

Local Festivities
Taste some of those lovely langoustine dishes during the annual Lobster Festival in Höfn, late in June, and don’t forget the not-to-be-missed annual fireworks extravaganza at Jökulsárlón on in late August.

For more in-depth information about Vatnajökull National Park, check out the visitors centre, a major hub for hiking and mountaineering expeditions in the area, open year round.
Sail a Fantasy World
The Ice Lagoon Team reveal the secrets of Jökulsárlón

It’s one of the unique features of Iceland—one of those ‘must see’ spots. Located under the massive Vatnajökull glacier, the lagoon is one of the world’s natural wonders. Huge icebergs break off from the tongue flowing down from the glacier itself, plunging into the waters of the lagoon. The sunlight shining on and through the ice produces beautiful effects, while the multifaceted blocks of ice form shapes that are just other-worldly.

A recent natural wonder
It hasn’t always been like this. The lagoon started to form in 1934, and has grown steadily larger since then as the Vatnajökull glacier began retreating and ice started moving slowly down towards the sea, breaking off in huge chunks in the lagoon. It is now the deepest lake in Iceland at around 260 metres.

It’s also a photographer’s dream, presenting many different photo opportunities to get unique shots. Since the volcanic eruptions of 2010 and before, some of the icebergs are stained with streaks of ash. Many are so huge that they dwarf the little Zodiac boat as it wends its way between them.

It’s not just peaceful on the lagoon, the silence is almost eerie, adding to the sense of awe. It’s not without life, however, as seals can frequently be seen basking on a lump of ice or chasing after fish—quite often, just curiously observing those strange humans in red jackets.

Tours that win Excellence Awards
Ice Lagoon–Zodiac Boat Tours has 7 scheduled tours daily. Each lasts an hour and the Ice Lagoon team takes you all the way up to the glacier edge, about 7 km away. The company focuses on personal service with a maximum of 10 passengers in each Zodiac boat and with professional guides who will point out the jewels and the secrets of the lagoon. This has earned them Tripadvisor’s 2013 Certificate of Excellence. It is worth reading Tripadvisor’s reviews to see why.

Before starting a tour, one of the experienced guides will tell you about what you can expect to see and will make sure you have your flotation suits and lifejackets.

The Evening Tour is remarkable as the sun is lower in the west, casting beautiful colours over the entire area. With fewer visitors at that time, the silence is all the more profound.

Jökulsárlón is easy to reach from Reykjavík, as it lies on the Ring road in the south, some 78 km before the fishing town of Höfn.

At the Eastern Crossroads
Egilsstaðir Guest House

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

Each room has underfloor heating, large comfortable beds, and an en-suite bathroom. The restaurant prides itself on its beef tenderloin from Egilsstaðir Farm as well as its delectable handmade ice cream and sorbets, both of which come highly recommended.

Post–Hostel
Post–Hostel offers six comfortable rooms including access to a fully equipped kitchen in addition to washing machine, clothes dryer and free wireless Internet.

A Bit of History
The guest house shares sprawling estate grounds with Egilsstaðir Farm, which has been operating continuously for centuries. The town of Egilsstaðir grew up around the farm and eventually became the site of the major crossroads of East Iceland.

Today, the farm continues its operations with 70 cows that provide the hotel with all its dairy products, such as milk, skyr, yogurt and cheese, as well as some of the highest quality beef products in Iceland.

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

The restaurant itself is a popular sightseeing stop for locals and visitors alike, as it has been accommodating guests since 1884.

Egilsstaðir Guest House
Sunnuhlíð • 781 Hornafjörður
+354 860 9996
info@icelagoon.com
www.icelagoon.com

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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 third 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 Jökulsarlon, Iceland’s highest restaurant and owned by Glacier Jeeps. Jökulsarlon 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 Jökulsarlon for a well deserved bite to eat and a hot drink. The view out the restaurant windows is as one would expect: magnificent.

Glacier Jeeps also offers a hiking tour of the glacier that comes with all the equipment such as safety helmets, climbing irons and ice axe, instruction and a guide, included in the price. In case you just don’t think a strenuous hike or a thrilling snowmobile adventure is for you, then Glacier Jeeps offers an alternative to see the glacier in a comfortable, specially equipped 4WD and is available year round, weather permitting. Each tour is only 3 to 4 hours in total, giving you plenty of time to do other things with your day, even though once you are up there you may not want to come down. Although it’s booking, 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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On Top of the World

A timid soul’s approach to the mighty Vatnajökull

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Hospitality is what we do best
Hotel Skáftafell in Freysnes, South Iceland

One of Iceland's most beloved country hotels nestles in the foothills of Iceland's highest mountain and Europe's largest national park. Owner Anna María Ragnarsdóttir, whose family has lived in the area for over 700 years, founded Hotel Skáftafell in Freysnes in southeast Iceland in 1989. "We recognised the potential for this region and took a chance on a career in tourism," she says. "We're 7 minutes by car from Vatnajökull National Park's visitor centre in Skaftafell, and 40 minutes from Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. The petrol station, mini-market, and restaurant across the road from the hotel also belong to the family."

Humble beginnings
Accommodation with private facilities was rather uncommon in the countryside in Iceland in the 80's and non-existent in the Skaftafell area. "In the first year we rented out rooms in our own house to travellers," says Anna thoughtfully—obviously reminiscing the past. "A trend towards accommodation with private facilities was developing at the time. We received some good advice and encouragement from people in the know, who recommended that we include private facilities in the rooms. As a result, we decided to open a hotel rather than sticking to the guesthouse concept."

Although the present hotel was started by Anna and her husband back in 1989, her career in the tourism service industry began at age 13. "I got a job at the Skáftafell Co-Op store and petrol station on the 13th of July, 1974. I remember the day very clearly because it was the day before the last and longest of the three bridges that cross Skaftárháls was completed and the ring road around Iceland was officially opened." Hospitality is what she does best, says the author of this article, who has stayed in Hótel Skaftafell several times over the past 15 years and can vouch for Anna's friendly and service minded attitude. "Besides, back when we started in the hotel business" says Anna, "tourism seemed to be the only viable option for self-employment here. The alternatives would have been to farm mink and fox for their pelts, or to get into fish farming. In hindsight, we made the right decision because both pelt and fish farmers have struggled right from the start."

Contrary to popular belief, the people in this region were not isolated. "Visitors have passed through this district ever since the Settlement," says Anna. "The rivers were forded on horseback and we had a pony postal service for a long time before the arrival of motorized vehicles and the Ring Road."

The petrol station, mini-market and restaurant across the road are a favourite stop with truckers and tourists heading for the national park or the glacier lagoon. The restaurant serves hot, home-style food at lunch and dinner, and grilled fare is available the rest of the day.

Tallest mountain and largest glacier
The Skáftafell region in southeast Iceland is perhaps the most beautiful part of the country. Vatnajökull National Park was established in 2008—the largest in Europe. "What makes this area so special is the contrast between the white glaciers and the black volcanic sand," says Anna, who obviously and not surprisingly, loves the place where she was born. However, she is not the only one who is passionate about the scenery. It has been featured in Hollywood films—Batman Begins, Laura Croft's Tomb Raider and James Bond's Die Another Day and With a View to a Kill—to name but a few. Several of the main attractions around Skáftafell can be seen from the comfort of one's car, including Vatnajökull Glacier and Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. The spectacular glacier covers about 8 per cent of Iceland and is the largest in Europe.
Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland’s newest protected area, established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 13,200 km² 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 km²) 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

WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK!

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Journeying Iceland’s South Coast
Hotel Katla offers the chance to enjoy the different seasons in style

If escaping the crowds is on your agenda this year, Iceland in winter is ideal for those looking to recharge one’s batteries in a place of peace and solitude. The flocks of migrating birds and the crowds of tourists are gone and a fine cloak of silence once again descends upon the land. Here on the outskirts of Vik, Hotel Katla settles into the more leisurely pace of its winter routine.

Having recently undergone a welcome name change from Hotel Höfðabrekka to the more pronounceable Hotel Katla, this family run hotel was for many years a proper sheep and horse farm and just happened to rent out a couple of spare bedrooms to travellers back in 1989. As tourism began to increase, many more rooms and amenities were added, such as underfloor heating by the hotel’s own private source of geothermal water, discovered on the property in 2003. A brand new, large hot tub and sauna were installed in the summer of 2013 and there is even a playground for the kids as well as several private ponds where you can try your hand at catching a fresh Arctic char (trout) for dinner.

Set on spacious grounds with views to the Atlantic Ocean, the hotel boasts 62 standard rooms and 10 tastefully appointed superior rooms in the brand new wing, all with private bath. Be sure to make use of the hotel-wide wi-fi or take some time to relax in the hot tub, enjoying the sunset or the Northern Lights, should they just happen to appear during your stay. The cozy bar/restaurant, which is also open to the general public, can seat upwards of 200 guests and serves a buffet breakfast, as well as lunch and dinner. Hotel Katla is a great place for a stop-over on your journey along the south coast. Besides all the well documented attractions in and around Vik, don’t overlook the enchanting Þakgil Canyon which has served as the backdrop for many a movie, including Game of Thrones in 2010 and Beowulf and Grendel in 2004.

Hotel Katla
Höfðabrekku • 871 Vík
+354 487 1208
info@hotelkatla.is
www.hotelkatla.is
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.

Refreshing Vik

Halldóri’s Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

Guests at Halldóri’s Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vik’s shoreline with its black sand beaches, Halldóri’s Café serves dishes like soup of the day or salads with tuna, chicken or just feta, along with bigger meals like soup of the day or salads with tuna, which suddenly took on new proportions, fallen snow covered the Reynisfjalla ridge which suddenly took on new proportions, now looking decidedly more imposing and grand than from the ring road, my usual vantage point. Down below, fields of cultivated grass stretch out before me until they reach the blue expanse of water that forms the shallow bay that reaches across to Dyrhólaey. To my left, a dusting of newly fallen snow covered the Reynisfjalla ridge and that was my feeling as I arrived at the top of the hill where Hotel Dyrhólaey is located, directly across from the Bay of Dyrhólaey. To my left, a dusting of newly fallen snow covered the Reynisfjalla ridge which suddenly took on new proportions, now looking decidedly more imposing and grand than from the ring road, my usual vantage point. Down below, fields of cultivated grass stretch out before me until they reach the blue expanse of water that forms the shallow bay that reaches across to Dyrhólaey promontory in the distance.

I feel like I could stay here all day, drinking in the fresh air and the outrageously sublime view.

The Hotel

This family owned and operated hotel has 88 fully equipped standard rooms, spread out along 3 wings that branch off from the spacious lobby and enormous dining room, that are at the hotel’s core. Hotel Dyrhólaey’s owners grew up here amidst all this splendour, and the family can trace it roots back to the 19th century when their great, great grandparents began the business of dairy farming and sheep breeding all those many years ago. As Iceland’s society gradually evolved from an agrarian society to a more modern one, the need for dedicated hotels became apparent at this juncture in time when tourism in Iceland was in its infancy. The family decided to go for it and the hotel was born.

The Bar/Restaurant

A full bar and an á la carte restaurant opens for guests in the evening in the dining room that overlooks that wide panoramic view that welcomed you on your arrival. Now is your chance to enjoy a meal under the blanket of stars in winter, or if you are lucky, accompanied by a lilting display of waltzing Northern Lights.

Wake up to the smell of fresh coffee; a hot English breakfast of eggs and toast, or a steaming bowl of oat porridge—just the ticket to start your day of sightseeing off right.

If you are after that special moment in time where mountains, sea and sky meet, enveloped by the surround-sound of silence, drive up to Hotel Dyrhólaey just off the ring road and let the magic begin.
Volcanoes, glaciers and black sand beaches characterise Iceland’s south coast in the area near the small village of Vík in Mýrdalur. Vík is about two hour’s drive from Reykjavik (184 km) along Iceland’s Ring road and nestles on the foothills of the infamous sub-glacial Katla caldera which last erupted in 1918.

The area is truly beautiful and boasts some of Iceland’s most amazing black sand beaches, sea stacks and an island with an archway which is populated by puffins during the nesting season in summer.

Activities and sightseeing for all seasons
Blessed with relatively mild weather all year round, the south of Iceland is ideal for sightseeing and all sorts of outdoor activities both in summer and winter. The area is usually first to turn green in spring and stays green the longest in the fall due to its southerly location, proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and prevailing wind direction. The area hardly ever gets cut off in the middle of winter.

Summer activities include hiking, golfing and bird watching. Glacier ice-walks, ice-climbing, snowmobiling, super jeep safaris in modified 4x4s, and ATV-tours are available all year and the northern lights in winter are amazing.

Vík – the village with the short name
Vík village has a population of 300. Vík, the name, actually means bay in English and is named after the small bay where it stands. It is the only village along the coast of Iceland which doesn’t have a harbour of some sort, the reason being, of course, that it would be impractical to attempt to build a harbour along the black sand beach which is shifted every day by the powerful waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

Reynisdrangar sea stacks are the major landmark of Vík. They can be viewed, filmed and photographed from various vantage points along the beach, from the village and from the steep sea cliff above. Commercials, television series and motion pictures are regularly filmed in the area due to its unique scenic beauty and accessibility.

Kótnesur Tourist Information, Research and Cultural Centre in Vík has friendly staff who are happy to assist independent travellers find accommodation, activities and sightseeing spots in the area. A permanent exhibition displays the challenges for the local people living in such close proximity to a harbourless beach and the Katla volcano.

Kótnesur also offers a one hour walking tour around the village in summer called ‘Meeting the Locals’. Participants are shown how to catch puffins and fulmars. The tour ends with a visit to a gallery, where guests get to know a local glass-artist and her work.

Other activities in and near Vík include golfing, bird watching, hiking, ice-walking, snowmobiling and swimming in the local geothermal pool.

Accommodation offers in Vík and surroundings include; youth hostel, guesthouses, farm hotels and a four star hotel.

Fire, ice and black sand beaches
The area near Vík is blessed with some of the most amazing scenery in the world such as Vikarfjara black volcanic beach, Sólheimajökull valley glacier, Mýrdalsjökull ice cap, and Dyrhólaey Island with its impressive arch and puffin colony in summer.

Walk along Vikarfjara beach at sunset, walk with a guide on Sólheimajökull valley glacier, view puffins and a natural arch on Dyrhólaey island.

Attractions in the Vík area are generally accessible all year and open for business. The combination and interplay between brown and black volcanic mountains, black basalt sand beaches, white glaciers and green grass in summer make this part of Iceland one of the most outstanding places to visit.
THE OLD COWHOUSE RESTAURANT

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

The remodelled former barn easily seats 50 to 60 dinner guests while retaining its unpretentious character and sweet bovine simplicity, making this a thoroughly enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast. The menu boasts grass-fed beef, as is the norm in Iceland, coming straight from restaurant’s own cattle herds. A hearty and warming meat soup, called Volcano Soup, served with homemade bread, is a favourite. Open year-round, the Old Cowhouse plans monthly events including an October evening of traditional food, a November evening of game (reindeer and geese), a December buffet of traditional Christmas dishes, as well as musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the year.

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

AN IDYLLIC STAY

Travelling around the Golden Circle, you pass through the village of Reykholt, known primarily for its horticultural farming using geothermal energy.

Surrounded by trees, flowers and lawns, the newly-opened Fagrilundur Bed & Breakfast (formerly Kaffi Klettur), is right in the centre of the village. The lovely wooden chalet-style guesthouse is cozy, warm and inviting. Inside, several well-chosen Dutch antiques decorate the walls of the breakfast room, and the lace curtains in the windows add to the rustic charm.

Fagrilundur comprises 6 bedrooms. Upstairs, there are two large bedrooms that each sleep up to 4 people, with their own attached bathroom. On the ground floor, there are 4 smaller bedrooms that sleep 1 or 2 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

You wake to birds singing in the trees, the aroma of freshly made waffles and steaming hot coffee. You can have your breakfast on the broad wooden patio overlooking the garden, or inside in the breakfast room, as you wish! Reykholt offers a fine swimming pool, visits to the geothermal greenhouses, a small grocery store, ‘Café Mika’ Restaurant all close by.

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RAISED ON CHOCOLATE

Café Mika’s chocolates have a past, present and future

Mika was born and raised on chocolate. It flows in his blood and comes out in his work. Café Mika is becoming a popular place to stop when taking the Golden Circle tour as visitors can actually make it home with them intact.

For me, enjoying a meal at Mika’s is always memorable. This summer, he is introducing a wood-burning pizza oven, a Big Green Egg grill for pizza, grilled and smoked meats and fish and an ice cream maker to make his own specials. See reactions on TripAdvisor and you’ll make it a point to stop by.

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**Folk Museum in Eyrarbakki**

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.

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

**Address:**
“The House” 820 Eyrarbakki
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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. But it was between 1980–1984, as he received training as a pastry chef at the Culinary Institute of America, New York and worked with two pastry chefs at the Palio restaurant in Manhattan that he got his inspiration to specialise in chocolate and desserts that, in 1986–1987, led him to 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.

**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, corromant, 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 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 Pingvallur or Lake Ápavatn 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 Pingvellir and Geyir and Guflfoss, 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 Eyjafjallajökull volcanoes.

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**Iceland Handmade**

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.

GK Ceramics
The Southcoast Museum

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Langjökull glacier is at Reykjavik’s doorstep only 2-3 hours north west of the capital city by road. It is a fantastic winter wonderland which is accessible from Reykjavik all year round when using the right equipment. Several tour operators offer trips to the glacier throughout the year. Langjökull is the second largest glacier in Iceland after Vatnajökull glacier and covers nearly one per cent of the country’s surface area of 950 km². Its highest point reaches 1450 m above sea level. The glacier is quite thin in places, only 100-200 m, but its average thickness is 220 m and its maximum thickness is 700 m.

The name Langjökull is most likely inspired by the fact that the glacier is fairly long (55 km) but narrow (15 km) hence the English translation of the word which means ‘long glacier’. Lengthwise, it lies in a south-west to north-east direction just like the active volcanic belt in Iceland. Scientists forecast that Langjökull glacier, and in fact every single glacier in Iceland, will melt and disappear within the next one hundred years due to climate change.

Most visitors to Iceland visit at least some of the attractions near Langjökull glacier, like Geyseri geothermal area and Gullfoss waterfall (Golden waterfall). The glacier can be seen from the south on a reasonably clear day from the 10 km long road between Gullfoss waterfall and Geyseri geothermal area. Jarðhverir (934 m) is a jagged palagonite volcanic ridge, formed in a sub-glacial fissure eruption. It stands right in front of the icecap on the south side and frames it nicely. Looking at Jarlhettur ridge from the road between Gullfoss waterfall and Geyseri geothermal area, it looks like a crown or a coronet of sorts which most likely inspired its name; jarl meaning earl or chieftain, and hettur meaning headwear.

The glacier has an average thickness of 220 m and its maximum thickness is 700 m.

Source of Crystal-clear Water

The south west of Iceland would simply not be the same without Langjökull glacier. Melt water from the glacier travels via subterranean channels into Lake Pingvallavatn about 50 km to the south west. Lake Pingvallavatn is Iceland’s largest natural inland lake and contains an incredible amount of fresh clear and clean water. Melt water also flows in a westerly direction via subterranean channels to the geothermal areas in Borgarfjörður valley. The most famous hot spring in that region is Deildartunguhver which is also Europe’s most prolific hot spring. Then finally, melt water flows into the Hvítá Lake (White lake) to the east of the glacier. From there it turns into the Hvítá River (White river) which plunger down two cascades, 11 m and 21 m, at the Gullfoss waterfall.

Volcanic Activity

At least two volcanic systems exist under Langjökull glacier—on the south side and the north side. The area is quite volcanically active but written accounts of volcanic eruptions in and around Langjökull do not exist, except on Haldmundarhraun lava field. This lava field dates back to the early 10th century and flowed 50 km from its source on the western side of the glacier in a westerly direction to Hvítá River. The greatest tubular lava cave systems in Iceland are found in this lava field; Stefánshellir, Vígþyrnir and Suitshellir. Hálmundarhraun lava field is named after Hálmundur who was a character in the Icelandic saga, Grettis saga.

When the next volcanic eruption will take place in the area is anyone’s guess but it can easily be within our lifetime.

Frozen Playground

Langjökull is one of Iceland’s favourite winter sport playgrounds and it is accessible all year when using the right equipment. Generally speaking, the two mountain routes to the glacier are accessible by regular vehicles in the months of July and August. These routes are Útibugigavegur (F52) on the western side, and Kjalvegur (F35) on the eastern side. During other months of the year, the glacier is usually inaccessible to regular vehicles. This is when the so-called Super jeeps come into their own.

Tours typically start in Reykjavik and head north to the north east to the west of the glacier. A tour to the west usually includes a visit to attractions such as Reykholt cultural centre, the Haunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls, and Deildartunguhver hot spring. Attractions east of the glacier include sites such as Pingvellir national park, the world renowned Geyseri geothermal area with its spouting hot spring, Strokkur, and Gullfoss waterfall.

Northern Lights From a Different Perspective

For the very first time, there is a scheduled tour option from Reykjavik to the glacier with the idea of searching for the Northern Lights. Reykjavik Excursions offers an eight and a half hour ‘Glacier & Monster Truck Adventure Tour’. Participants are driven from Reykjavik in a regular tour bus but switch to a one-of-a-kind 8x8 monster truck along the way, which brings them onto the Langjökull glacier. Guests have the opportunity to learn about the Northern lights, the glacier itself, the nature and some local stories. A stop at a nearby farm provides guests with the opportunity to enjoy optional light refreshments, coffee, and local farm style icecream.
Greenland — the Arctic’s Promised Land
The Gateway to Wilderness of the North

For thousands of years, Greenland has attracted nomad settlers with its numerous fertile fjords and abundant seafood. Most of these nomads crossed the arctic ice cap from Alaska and settled on the west coast of the world’s largest island. The first western immigrants arrived in 982 AD with the outcast Eric the Red and his people from Iceland. He and his descendants created an independent Viking community that lasted until 1450. The disappearance of Greenland’s Vikings is still a mystery to historians. Silent remnants are all that remain of a forgotten era, leaving us to ponder the power of nature over man.

Destructive Beauty
Nature seems untamed in Greenland. Anything man can achieve is easily destroyed by the frost, storms and melting water. Greenland’s remote beauty is overwhelming; relentlessly demanding respect from all who dare to challenge it. The Inuit learned to adapt to the harsh wilderness and survive by humbly becoming part of it. Walking in their footsteps and following their example is the safest way to discover this strange world.

Whale and seal meat was the ‘gold’ of the 17th and 18th centuries when Scandinavian hunters arrived and began to trade with the native Inuit. Still a source of income for many today, Greenlanders depend on the use of dog sleds, kayaks and traditional hunting weapons to continue to provide their basic foods.

Tradition Meets the Present
Greenland’s southern coast benefits from a mild climate and thus has provided man with berries, herbs and enough food for the sheep that have been bred there since the beginning of the 20th century. A diet of aromatic tundra grasses ensure that Greenland’s lamb meat needs no additional spices. Everything in this country seems to be pure, yet exotic at the same time. Even the bustling capital, Nuuk, presents itself as a surprisingly modern town with all the comforts of a contemporary city and a well-developed tourist sector that spans the entire country. A population of only 57,000 inhabitants live on this huge island with its endless coastline, connecting tradition with modernity. Art, music and fashion play an important role on this vast continent which has found its own unique style.

Venturing northwards from Nuuk, the surrounding vegetation becomes noticeably sparse, compelling inhabitants to preserve their traditional nomadic lifestyle by hunting reindeer, musk oxen and polar bears. Arctic storms make it quite an uncomfortable place, and due to the hidden bears. Arctic storms make it quite an uncomfortable place, and due to the hidden vegetation becomes noticeably sparse, compelling inhabitants to preserve their traditional nomadic lifestyle by hunting reindeer, musk oxen and polar bears. Arctic storms make it quite an uncomfortable place, and due to the hidden vegetation becomes noticeably sparse, compelling inhabitants to preserve their traditional nomadic lifestyle by hunting reindeer, musk oxen and polar bears.

The Summer Country
In summer, the flora has established itself — more than 4,000 different plants, flowers and herbs can be found on both coasts and the numerous islands. The short summers give rise to a kind of growth frenzy, where plants compete for their place in the sun and almost every soil-covered spot sports a multitude of flowers. The two-month long festival of nature celebrates the short arctic summer, when temperatures indeed can reach up to 20°C in June and July. Despite the ever-changing weather, the dry arctic air assures clear views of the spectacular scenery. Even distant mountain ranges seem nearer than they actually are and the complete silence gives one a feeling of reverence.

Admiring the colourful south coast from the sea, its green meadows protected by huge grey mountains, while the deep blue arctic sea gently rocks impressive icebergs through the fjords, it is easy to understand why Eric the Red had been so fascinated by this ‘green land’.

Icebergs Everywhere
There is hardly anything more magical than bathing in the hot spring of Unnarqoq while watching icebergs float by. Greenland’s hot springs can reach up to 60°C and icebergs can be seen everywhere. However, no place is as suitable for experiencing the dramatic sight of inland ice as in Kangerlussuaq, West Greenland. Serving as Greenland’s international airport, the town is also called the ‘Gateway to Greenland’. From here you can easily reach Russell Glacier by foot, dog sledge or helicopter or lose yourself in the picturesque fjords of King Frederik’s Land.

The Gateway to the Wilderness
For those who seek adventure and solitude, the gateway to the wilderness is accessible from the country’s east coast. Until the last century, East Greenland had literally been cut off from the rest of the country and the outside world by an impenetrable wall of rock and ice. Thus the inhabitants of this isolated location were forced to develop their own culture, language and oral tradition. To this day, the people there are still deeply connected to nature. Take a break from civilization in Irossoortoornit, and discover the borders of the world’s largest national park with its rich animal life and remnants of Inuit culture which date back one thousand years. The national park is reserved for rangers and scientists, but its outskirts are open to cruise ships and smaller tours.

Visiting this very last outpost of man is truly humbling and serves as a reminder to treat our planet’s northernmost treasure with care.
Touching Greenland
Daytrips to Kulusuk with Air Iceland

There are hardly any icebergs in Iceland, but one doesn’t have to travel far to find them. Air Iceland offers a popular, often sold out, day tour to Kulusuk on the southeast coast of Greenland. Starting in the summer of 2014, customers will be able to choose between the traditional tour, Kulusuk Classic, and the new tour, Kulusuk Icebergs and Glaciers. The two-hour flight opens up a whole new world, with qualified travel-guides aiming to sharpen your senses to the beauty of Iceland’s truly icy neighbour.

Kulusuk Icebergs and Glaciers Tour
A two hour boat ride takes you to an abandoned settlement and past an imposing glacier that reaches to the sea. You will encounter an abundance of icebergs that float on the glittering strait between Kulusuk and the neighbouring island of Aputsijak. On your return to Kulusuk, you will have ample time to stroll through the village to admire the well preserved houses, or discover the unique handicrafts of local artisans. Greenlanders are amazing craftsmen, carving traditional items from walrus tusk and bone.

The hunter’s village
The village of Kulusuk, situated on the island of the same name, dates back to 1909 when Inuit hunters and fishermen decided to settle down and build their colourful houses. Kulusuk’s oldest inhabitants were born into nomadic Inuit culture. Hunting and fishing continue to be essential sources of income for the community. Kulusuk’s highest peak, Qalorujoorneq (676 m) dominates the island’s impressive mountainous panorama. In the 1950s, an airport was built here for military purposes, and is still in use today, providing for safe arrivals and departures.

Farewell Greenland
The aircraft awaits its passengers. Time permitting, you might feel like one last walk up to Stórasteinn, the scenic outpost, where in former times hunters scouted for their prey. If you haven’t yet spotted your favourite iceberg, now is your chance to take a visual memory of Greenland’s clear purity home with you. Check out Air Iceland’s homepage for departures. If you have been touched with Greenland’s striking beauty and would like to stay longer in Kulusuk, accommodation can be arranged.

For more Day Tours, look at our website www.airceland.is

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I it might have been the fertile green
hillsides, or the rich fishing grounds that
enticed settlers some 400 years before
organized manner some 400 years before
their homelands and set sail for a new life on
this small archipelago in the middle of the
Atlantic ocean. Maybe the first settler had
been climbing one of the steep mountains,
and, while drinking in the fresh air that
makes for lush grass for cattle, he savoured
whatever makes for lush grass for cattle, he savoured
and, while drinking in the fresh air that
been climbing one of the steep mountains,
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were climbing one of the steep mountains,
the settlement of Iceland. 

That Island Feeling
The Faroe Islands

Islands in the middle of nowhere
The archipelago is comprised of eighteen
islands, connected by modern bridges,
tunnels and ferries, with a total of 1289 km
coastline. From any point on land, it is
less than 5 km to the sea. Set approximately
halfway between Iceland and Norway, there
is hardly a more island feeling—the nearest
civilization being Scotland, some 320 km to
the southeast. Many people don’t even know
that the Faroes exist, as the archipelago is
too small for many world maps. If you do
manage to find them, they are often marked
by two or three small dots, hardly visible to
the naked eye, making you wonder what
these islands have to offer.

Experience the incredibly fresh, clean air
and the greenest of grass that even grows on
the roof tops of people’s houses. Dramatic
landscapes with steep mountains, fjords, a
rich bird life, cozy villages with colourful
houses and clean, tasty water are part
and parcel of the Faroese way of life. In a
country where every view is breathtakingly
beautiful, it’s not hard to imagine oneself
walking in the footsteps of the first settler
and understanding what made him stay.

An island for yourself
One of the eighteen islands is inhabited
by just one family. Because anchoring a
boat here is often too dangerous in the
rough seas, a helicopter service has to be
used for travel to and from the island.

Due to the whims of nature, life seems
slow here, but this unconventional lady
is not willing to accept any schedules or
departure times. Eva shakes her beautiful
hair and beckons you to follow—on sunny
days, it may be a hiking trip in the midst
of dramatic landscapes, along traditional
paths like those that once served as ancient
communication routes between villages.

Before roads were constructed, people
walked between the various villages or
gathered at the nearest thing* to buy and
sell goods, or to attend church services,
christenings, weddings and funerals. These
ancient paths are marked by stone cairns, so
that hikers past and present would not lose
their way.

A bird’s paradise

Maybe Eva will invite you to go bird
watching in places like the island of Mykines,
to discover its thousands of puffins, gannets,
guillermots and other seabirds. You can get
close to the birds either by excursion
boat, or by walking the majestic cliffs.

The Faroe Islands’ remote location serves
as a magnet for migratory birds. Around
300 bird species have been recorded in the
islands, but only about a third of these are
regular migrants or breeding birds. Another
200 species are rare migrants and new birds
are added to the national list every year.

The Faroe Islands are among the lesser
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Nothing in Iceland prepares you for the stark, desolate, raw beauty of the barren upland plateau called the Highlands. An uninhabited area, The Highlands are completely without towns or villages, just infinite plains, glacial rivers and lava fields punctuated by ice caps, volcanoes and jagged mountains. The isolation is the reason why people visit it and travellers are humbled by the sublime sight of nature in its rawest, barest form. Historically, trails in the Highlands were used as summer short cuts between north and south and myths of ghosts and fearsome outlaws spurred travellers along the tracks with all speed. Today, it is probably wiser to worry about the weather, as conditions can be fickle and snow is not uncommon, even in mid-summer. The solitude is exhilarating, the views are vast and it is immensely tough but equally rewarding to hike or bike these cross-country routes. Of all the various tracks, only two routes actually cross the whole way between north and south: Sprengisandur (F26) and Kjölur (F35). The region is fully accessible only by four-wheel-drives. It is also possible to get a taste of this utter isolation in safety on bus tours where you will discover amazing landscapes, similar to lunar landscapes— which is the reason why the Apollo astronauts came there to train for their moon landing.
Kerlingarfjöll is a mountain range situated in the Highlands.

Veidivötn (Fishing lakes), a group of lakes in a volcanic region.

The volcanic origin of Kerlingarfjöll is evidenced by the numerous hot springs and rivulets in the area.
Birds of Southern Iceland is a programme offering excellent year-round services for birdwatchers. Southern Iceland has a great deal to offer visiting birdwatchers with its wide variety of habitats, including wetlands, seabird colonies, highland oases and unique coastlines. The largest colonies of Puffin, Pink-footed Goose and Great Skua in the world are located within this region, together with Europe’s largest Leach’s Storm-petrel colony.

South Iceland has a wide range of accommodation from camp sites to 4-star hotels and some within a short driving distance from Reykjavik.

Lagoons and glacial sands

Hornafjörður and Stakkhólahraun are shallow fjords or coastal lagoons on either side of the village of Höfn. The area is home to large numbers of birds all year round. Not only is it an important staging area on migration, but breeding birds are well represented in spring and summer. It is also the region’s main wintering area for birds. A rich mosaic of wetlands stretches from Höfn all the way west to the glacial sands of Breiðamerkursandur.

The bird life of the great glacial sands of the south coast has a character all of its own. It is the kingdom of the Great Skua and is home to the largest colony of this charismatic species on Earth. Wherever there is sufficient water, vegetation sprouts up and attracts a range of birds. The spectacular Skarafoss National Park contains woodlands and a variety of species.

Freshwater hotspots

The areas Landbrot and Meðalland support a wide range of birds. The region’s wetlands are varied and include flood-meadows, lakes, springs, streams and lava fields. Breeding birds include Horned Grebe and various ducks. The freshwater springs attract numerous birds in the winter and form important wintering grounds for Barrow’s Goldeneye, Common Goldeneye and Goosander. White-fronted Geese are common visitors on spring and autumn passage.

Dales, highlands and lakes

The valley of Mýrdalur is a rich birding area, with Reynisfjall, Reynisdrangar and Dykhólaey the chief birding sites. Puffins breed on the cliffs at Vikurhamar above the valley of Vik (the furthest colony from the sea in the world), on Mount Reynisfjall and the Dykhólaey headland, while Common Guillemot and Razorbill breed at the sea stacks of Reynisdrangar and at Dykhólaey. There is a huge Arctic Tern colony at Vik and a smaller one at Dykhólaey.

Dykhólaey to the south of the Hofsþjökull glacier is the most expansive oasis in the central highlands. It is an area of spectacular scenery, with rich swathes of vegetation alternating with barren sands and glaciers. The area represents very important breeding and moulting grounds for Pink-footed Geese. Other breeders include Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Long-tailed Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Arctic Tern and Snow Bunting. Part of Dykhólaey is protected and a Ramsar site.

Another key birding location in the highlands is the chain of lakes called Veðivötn. This beautiful and unusual landscape has been shaped by repeated volcanic activity and most of the lakes are located in craters. Great Northern Divers are particularly common, and other breeding birds include Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Scap, Long-tailed Duck, Harlequin Duck, Ringed Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Arctic Tern and Snow Bunting. Barrow’s Goldeneye winters here and has recently bred.

Lakes, ponds and marshes can be found across the lowland areas of Landeyjar and Rangárþjóðeyjar. Some of the best birding sites are Lake Skómsstaðavatn and its surroundings, Oddaflóð (protected) and Lake Lambhagavatn. Large numbers of wildfowl and waders breed in the area and pass through in the spring and autumn.

Two of the larger lakes in the area, Apavatn and Laugarvatn, along with adjoining wetlands and rivers, are among the best sites for ducks in southern Iceland. Barrow’s Goldeneye. Common Goldeneye and Goosander winter here. Harlequin Ducks breed locally and hundreds of Scap, Tufted Duck and Red-breasted Merganser stop off on passage and are also common breeders.

Lake Pingvallavatn

Sog comparative”, the lake which flows out of Lake Pingvallavatn, is one of Iceland’s best locations for winter ducks. It is home to the largest flock of Barrow’s Goldeneye outside Mývatn and is the main winter site for Common Goldeneye in Iceland. Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser and Tufted Duck are common. White-tailed Eagles are often seen in winter and Harlequin Ducks move up the river in spring. Lake Pingvallavatn itself is known for its breeding Great Northern Divers.

Ölfusá River

The coastline between the mouths of the Ölfusá and Pjórsá glacial rivers is the largest lava shoreline in Iceland, forming the southern end of the vast Pjórsárbaug lava field which flowed 8,000 years ago and is the largest post-glacial river system in Iceland there are myriad lakes and ponds. The area hosts an array of birds all year and it is of particular importance for migrants such as Knot, Dunlin, Sandeater, Turnstone, Brent Goose, Eurasian Wigeon and various other ducks.

On other side of the estuary of the Ölfusá river are two large wetlands: BirdLife Iceland’s reserve at Flói on the east bank, and Ölfusafjörður on the west bank. Both are large expanses of pools and lakes which attract numerous birds in the breeding season and on passage alike. The Red-throated Diver is the characteristic bird of the Flói reserve and Dunlin and Black-tailed Godwit are particularly common here. Ölfusafjörður is an excellent birding location in winter, attracting large flocks of Teal, Mallard and Goosander, as well as Iceland’s largest concentration of Grey Heron.
Matthías Jochumsson (1835–1920) was Iceland’s most outstanding leaders in different fields, particularly during the 19th century, at a time when many of the world’s greatest names were born.

Matthías Jochumsson (1835–1920) was born on the Skógar farm on the south part of the Westfjords to a poor farming family. He did not begin school until a comparatively late age after his talents were recognised and he attended the Latin School in Reykjavik.

During the Christmas holidays in 1861, he wrote a play called, ‘The Outlaws’ which his fellow students performed the following year. It became an instant success, thereby distinguishing Matthías as a major poet. It was the play that marked the beginning of his career as a poet and writer of Iceland’s national anthem.

The play tells the story of the outlaw, Skugga and his companions and their conflicts with the locals, and was inspired by the stories of outlaws living in the Icelandic wilderness. It is said to have approached his readers from a narrative poems, he continued to preach Christian faith and humanity.

The play tells the story of the outlaw, Skugga and his companions and their conflicts with the locals, and was inspired by the stories of outlaws living in the Icelandic wilderness. It has since been performed many times and translated into more than five hundred editions. His career was unique, the diversity of his works almost without parallel and, with every book, he can be said to have approached his readers from a new and unexpected direction.

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

Skúli Magnusson

There are a number of people who had a great influence on the nation through their lives and work.

In the 1700s, Iceland was under Danish rule. They held a trading monopoly and the merchants were often corrupt, whilst the communities were small and wielded little economic power.

Skúli Magnússon (1711-1794) was born in the remote village of Kelduhrein in North-East Iceland. His family moved to Húsavík, where his father was a priest.

As a teenager, he worked in a Danish merchant’s company, learning the way business was conducted. The merchant told him to “Weigh it right” meaning to cheat the poor customers. This made him very angry and he swore to use his life to replace the dishonest merchants and set up a trading system to improve the living standards of the people.

In 1732-34, he studied at Copenhagen university, though he didn’t gain his degree. Instead, he took a position in South Iceland as the county magistrate before moving three years later to Skagaströnd in the north.

In the first year in his new position, a Dutch trading ship founder in the fjord. Skúli, discovering the sailors illegally trading with the local people, seized their ship and its cargo which he used to build the village of Akrar. He also procured new type for the printer, enabling the printshop to run the year round.

His vision was to use his wealth and power to destroy the corrupt system and strengthen the country. In Skagaströnd, he sued one of the monopolistic merchants for selling poor iron and mouldy flour and for selling over the maximum price allowed. He won the case and became very popular with the people.

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A Brag Book For Iceland
I Was Here — A New Landscape Photography Book

Bragging about your perfect holiday can become a bit tiresome after a while, as you keep repeating the same stories, but never fully capture your experiences. A good solution is a professional photography book with the best of what Iceland has to offer that does all the bragging for you—and, of course, keeps your memories alive. The book in question is aptly named ‘I Was Here’ and was just released in the summer of 2013.

Author, Kristján Ingi Einarsson, is one of Iceland’s most experienced photographers and respected in his field. He has two other landscape books to his name: ‘The Essence of Iceland’, published in 2009 and ‘Iceland so Quiet’ in 2010, as well as countless other projects and exhibitions.

Kristján is particularly enamoured with the tranquillity and stillness in the nature of Iceland and is always looking out for something new. “The unspoiled and peaceful landscapes in collaboration with the ever-changing weather and light seem to create endless photographic opportunities of both the grand and the tiniest details. You can thus take pictures on the same spot over and over again, but they will never turn out exactly the same. That’s why I often compare photography in Iceland to fishing, because you never know what you’re going to come home with,” says Kristján. He prefers to let the pictures come to him and, as an avid traveller in Iceland, there never seems to be a lack of inspiration.

His new book comes in a new and exciting panoramic format, which Kristján says gives certain pictures added value and presents them in a new light, while the book remains very compact and handy.

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