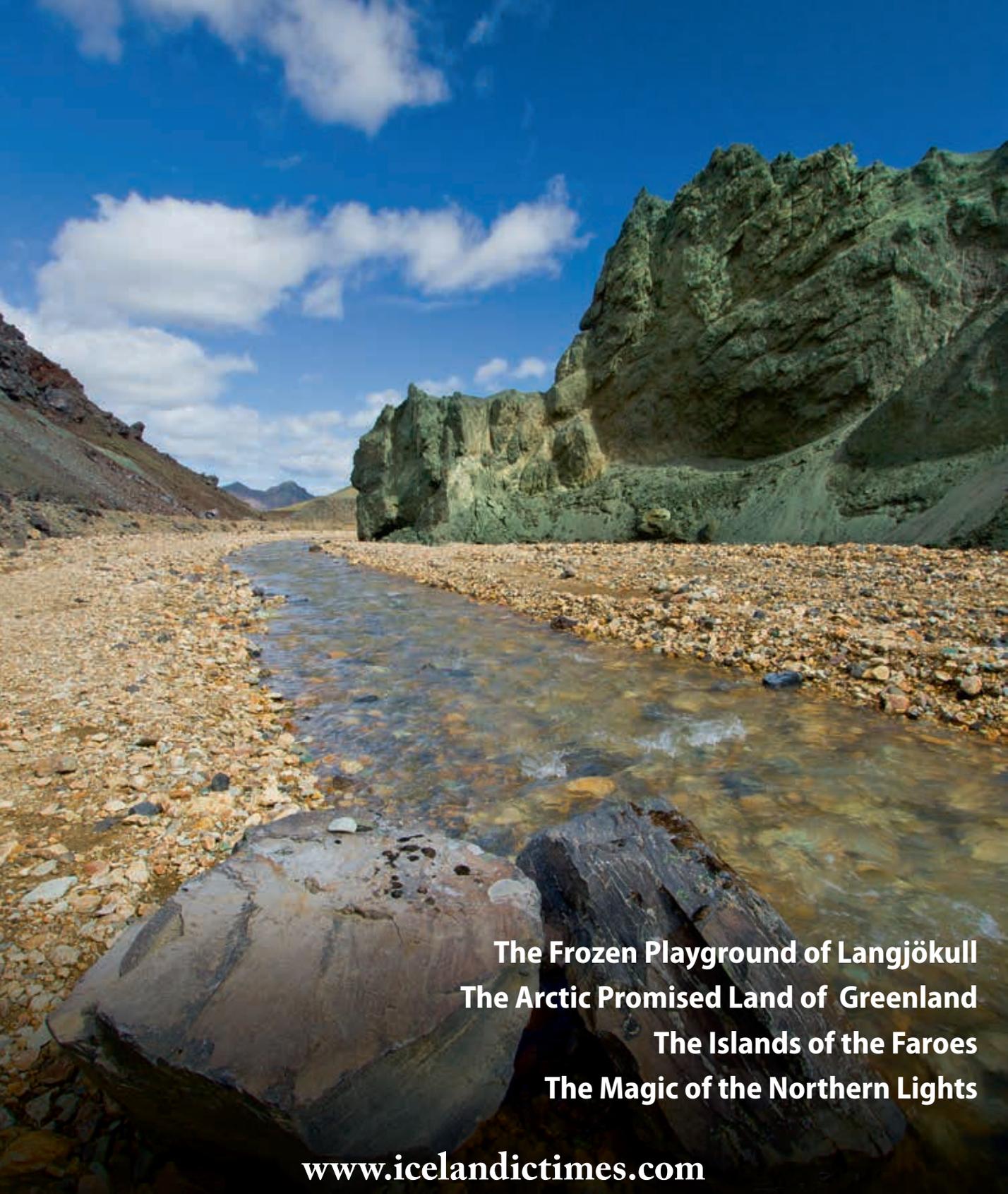


TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 20 • 2013



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Einar Th. Thorsteinsson

Visiting Iceland in winter allows you to experience quite a few of life's simple pleasures; a stroll through Reykjavik'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 Aðalstræti 10. Kraum has gained quite a reputation in recent years for its select array of Icelandic designer products.

Laugavegur is Reykjavik's main shopping street, and The Little Christmas Shop or Jólubúðin 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 Frakkastigur,

visitors to The Treasure Chest or Gullkistan, (Frakkastigur 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 Handprjónasambandið (Skólavörðustigur 19) for woollen 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 'Sundhöll', located at Barónstígur 45, just outside the city centre. To complete a perfect day, dine late at Þrír Frakkar Restaurant, (Baldursgata 14), for all that weird, wonderful, yet delicious Icelandic food that you have heard so much about.

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Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, it still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

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ICELAND'S MASTER WATCHMAKER

JS Watches are masters of time
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 Júlíus 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 'Sif', 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 Reykjavik 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.

-DT



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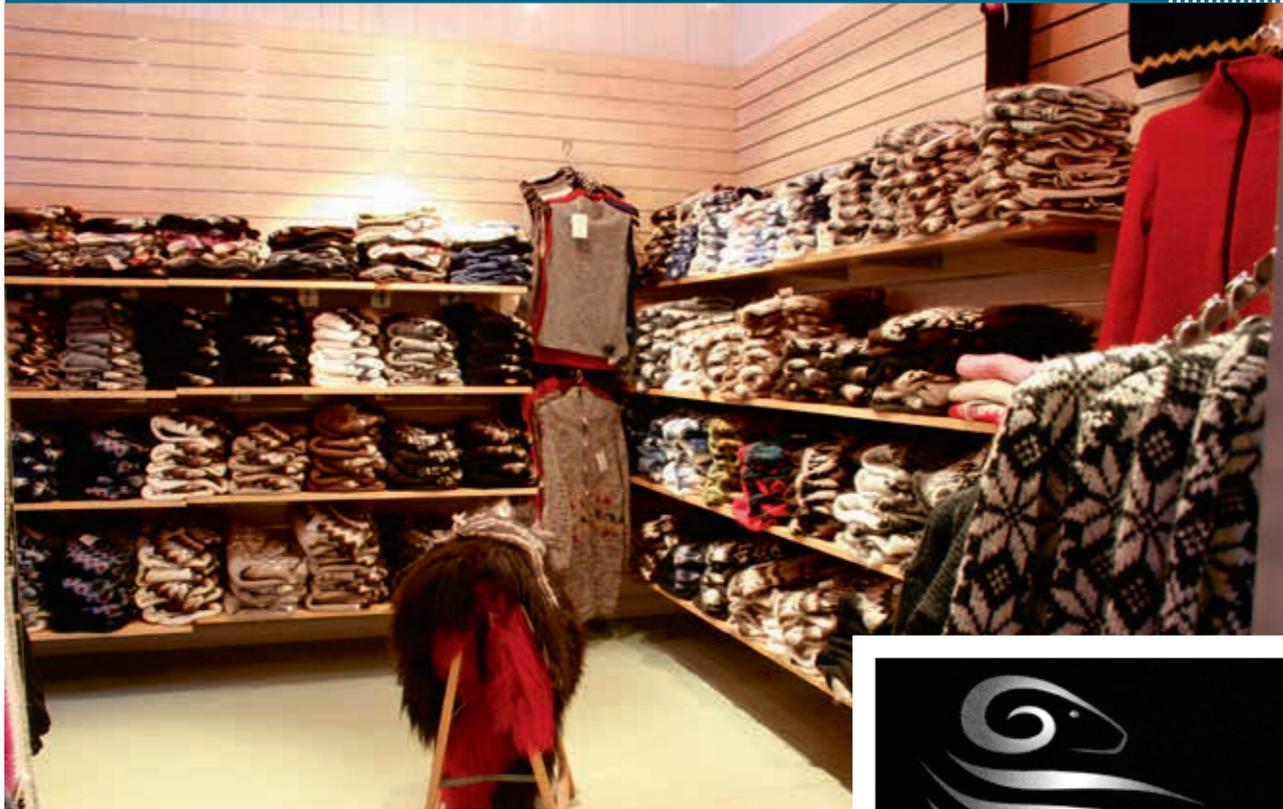


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The easiest option is to purchase a starter pack, which is offered at the 10-11 shop in the arrival hall at Keflavík International Airport and the Elko stores at the airport. If you're already here you can get your starter kit at the the Vodafone stores 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, N1 petrol stations and various tourist boutiques. The starter pack includes a SIM-card and credit for both calls and data.

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

The Icelandic Handknitting Assn. sells Icelandic wool and products

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

Find the real thing

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

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

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

Traditional and modern styles

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

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

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

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

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

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

-ASF

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Johannes Kristinsson MD PhD
 Cornea and External Diseases
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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.



EYELIGHT

LASER REFRACTIVE SURGERY



ICELAND BY DESIGN

Indulge your passion for Icelandic creativity

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 Aðalstræti 10, the charming wooden house from 1726 is Reykjavik'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 the some of

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 Pig', 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 Vegg'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 Óskarsdóttir 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.

Don't miss it!

-SP/EMV

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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 Jökulsárlón, 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.

-DT

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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 individualists, is your destination of choice.

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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.

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Check out their new website and booking service and follow your dream.

-DT

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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, Hótel Flóki 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 stræto, 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.

Enjoy the Reykjavik Scene

In recent years, Iceland has become famous world-wide for its dynamic music and cultural scene like Iceland Airwaves, for example. Many want to come to enjoy the concerts but find hotel costs somewhat off-putting. The conversion of Hótel Flóki to a Hostel Village means that nobody should feel excluded as there is now a reasonably-priced option in a very good location, with all the concert locations in easy reach.

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.

Laugavegur, 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.

-ASF

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SPREADING THE TASTE

You Can Enjoy Authentic Thai Food In Reykjavik or Akureyri

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

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

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



Krua Thai's cuisine is unique as it blends authentic Thai cooking, with all its special spices and ingredients imported directly from Thailand, with Icelandic meats and vegetables.

As the food is prepared to order, it reaches you with all the flavour as fresh as possible. It has proven a popular spot for visiting Thai tourists for good reason. The Thai-Icelandic blend is truly a delicious experience and one that any Thai food aficionado should savour while here.

-ASF



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37° to 42° C (98° -111° F). The pools are kept at an average temperature of **29° C** (84° F).



*Admission January 2013. Price is subject to change



THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

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

Iceland has many 'different' foods which have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods and their traditions continue to this day. Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!

A True Fisherman

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of unusual fish dishes. His lobster

soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title of 'the world's greatest lobster soup'. While he doesn't reveal the secrets of his recipe, that doesn't stop his restaurant from being filled every day with aficionados.

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

out of the way to make room for tables and chairs. He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no-one else had thought of trying. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and from them, made meals that have established his reputation around the world. Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled

with memorabilia donated by old sea captains and their families, that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats, pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together and where the fishermen used to sleep when coming to land.

Dining as a Seafaring Experience

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

Smoked in Succulence

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

-ASF

Sægreifinn
Geirgata 8 • 101 Reykjavík
+354 553 1500
info@sægreifinn.is
www.sægreifinn.is



GREENLAND CHARMS

Mystic Gifts From the Wild

In the middle of busy Laugavegur, in the heart of Reykjavik, you'll find a door to another world. The Ravens' shop door is always open; the atmospheric sounds coming from within invite passers-by to come closer, to bury their hands in the silky reindeer skins at the entrance and to get in touch with Greenland. Ravens is not only a specialist shop for jackets and waistcoats made from quality arctic fur, it is probably the only place in Iceland where you can purchase sealskin that can be used for your own designs and also one of the very few places to find horsehide leather.

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

Ravens' 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 Strande. 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!

Guardian Spirits

The knives match perfectly with the carved tupilaks made from horn. No doubt, the grimaces of these traditional shamanic ghosts will provide inviolable powers for those who decide to give them a new home. Tupilaks 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, hanging from a reindeer antler, golden—claws and teeth from Greenland's wild animals, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge black raven, both stuffed, sit silently nearby keeping watch over the shop. Greenland's wild spirit is inherent in its fauna and will charm you at Ravens.

-DT



Raven Art
Laugavegur 15 • 101 Reykjavík
+354 551 1080
ravens@ravens.is
www.ravens.is



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.

she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. She already has an extensive range, most made exclusively for her by a number of craftsmen, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials such as wool, 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 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. *-HP*

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





Litla Jólábúðin
 Laugavegi 8 • Reykjavík
 +354 552 2412
 none
 none





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.

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.

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. *-SP*

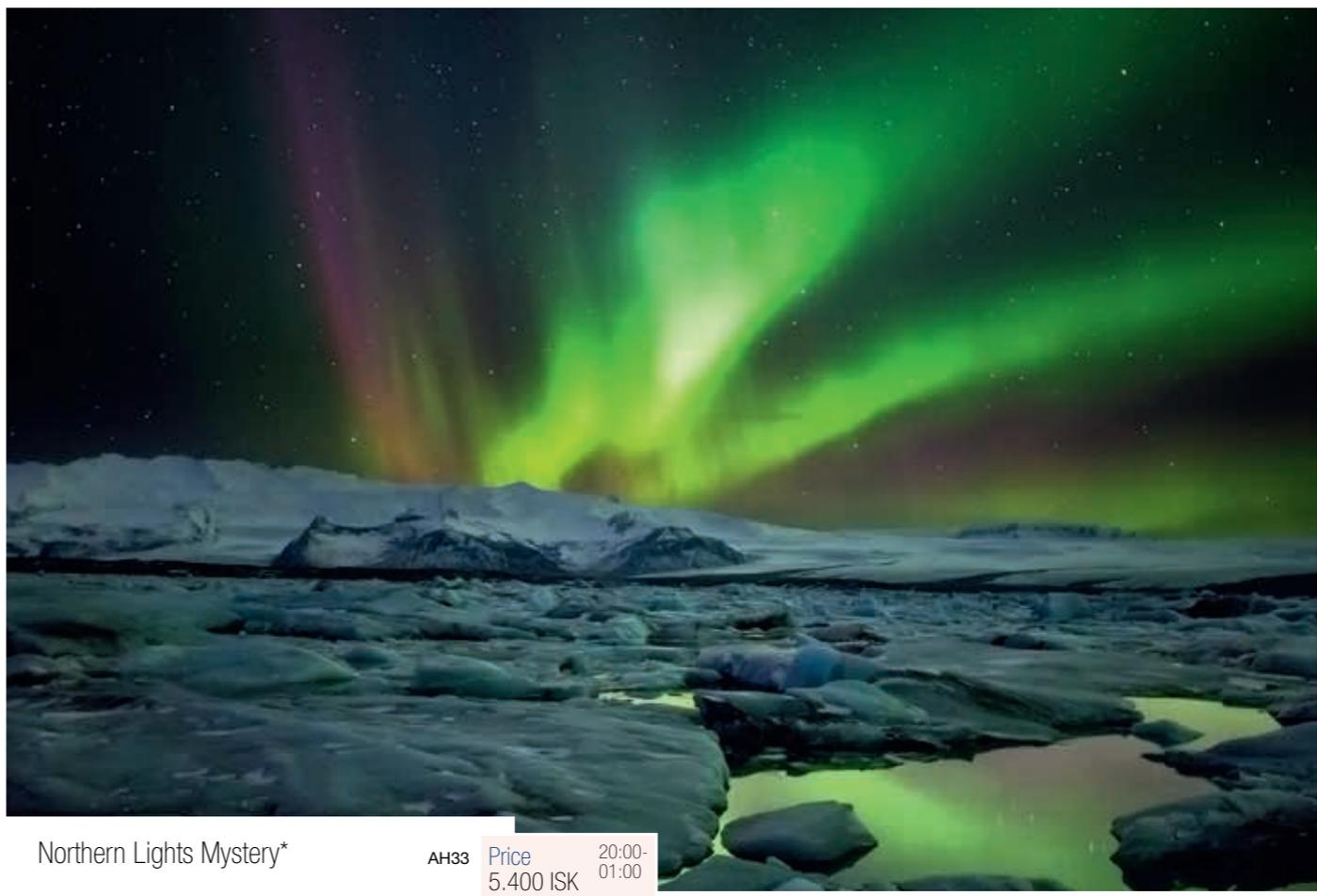
Between 1949-53, Dóra started learning the trade in her father's workshop, gaining her Master's degree in 1953. Additionally, she studied at Tärna folk high school in Sweden, Konstfackskolan in Stockholm around 1950, graduating with honours, and at Vereinigte Goldschmiede-, Kunst- und Werkschule in Pforzheim,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

She has always actively participated in exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, and served as chairperson



Gullkistan
 Frakkastíg 10 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 551 3160
 gullkistan@vortex.is
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Northern Lights Mystery*

AH33

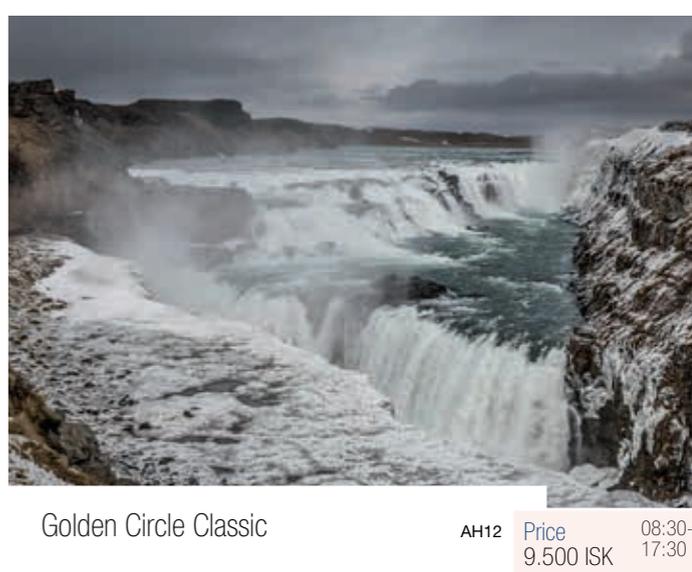
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AH12

Price 08:30-17:30
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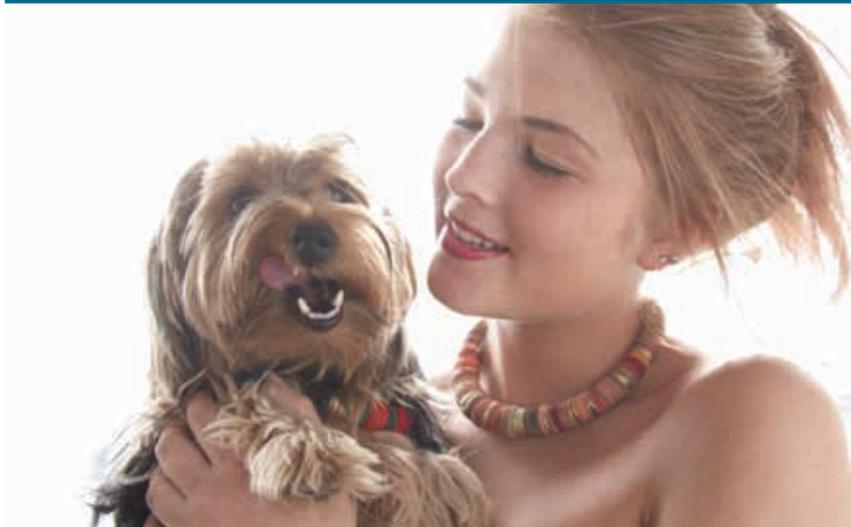


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LEATHER DESIGNER

Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs. Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”

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

Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After working at an architect’s office, she started her own business.

“I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.”

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

More information can be found on Facebook: Ark.art leather design.

-NNH





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Blue Lagoon to Reykjavik
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* Via Keflavik Airport

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

** From 15. June – 15. Sept.

- Please book in advance.
- Be ready in front of your hotel. Pickup can take up to 30 min.

The South Coast - Skógafoss - Vík

Our tour takes us along the south shore and on to the charming village of Vík. Highlights on this tour: Waterfalls Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss. The basalt columns at sandy beach of Reynis- fjara 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
Please notice: You can join The Blue Lagoon evening tour after arrival.

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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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."

-SHV



Reykjavik Bike Tours

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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 Grundarhverfi 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.

-VAG

Óskalist Gallery
 Bláugrund 13 • 116 Kjalarnes
 +354 566 6035
 frontist@front.is
 www.front.is/list

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

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FROM HUNTERS TO HOME

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

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



Made with rare materials

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

Created for Connoisseurs

As a result of his passion for excellence and enthusiasm for creating a work of art from a tempered steel blade and these different handles, his knives are now to be found in over 85 countries, in use by hunters who appreciate these qualities.

When he creates a special knife, there is often a lot of bidding for it on the internet, such is the demand for them.

Now for cooks and diners

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

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



Inspired by a waterfall

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

Custom made for years of use

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

-ASF

Palli the Knife Maker
 Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbær
 +354 899 6903
 palli@knifemaker.is
 www.knifemaker.is



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 volcanoes. 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 Huldafólk, 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 'huldafólk' 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

coloured moss. But, for many people, this is not the place of myth but of another world that occasionally reveals itself. A number of these people have recounted meetings these beings. There are two tours that explain more about this park that is celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2013.

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 warehouse, for example. A typical Icelandic building, it displays two permanent exhibitions, the history of the town and one of classic children's toys and lifestyle items from the past and a third exhibition whose theme changes throughout the year. 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.

-ASF

Hafnarfjarðarbær
 Strandgata 6 • 220 Hafnarfjörður
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 www.visithafnarfjorður.is



THE WARMTH OF ICELAND

All-Icelandic wool products from Varma

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 woollen 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 woollen 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.

-VAG

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 birgitta@varma.is
 www.varma.is





Fjörúkráin

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

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THE MAGIC OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS



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 chances to see the Lights.

The route changes each night according to the cloud cover and weather conditions. Several routes 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 bathe 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 tourist 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, f2.8 and expose for 30 seconds. Please note that the use of built-in or external flashguns disturbs other guests as the eyes need some time to adjust to the darkness for Northern Lights viewing.

SHV



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DUTY FREE THE ICELANDIC WAY

Start your Icelandic journey in the unique Duty Free Arrival Store

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, shoving 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.

Cosmetics, confectionery, tobacco products, toys and electronic products – including the latest DVD titles—are all available at discounted prices, so it is a good time to take advantage of the opportunity to get low prices on things you want to use during your visit. Here you will find all the top brands at knock-down prices. Think of it as a holiday discount!

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.

-ASF



Duty Free
Keflavik Airport - 235 Reykjanesbæ
+354 425 0410
dutyfree@dutyfree.is
www.dutyfree.is



KEFLAVIK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

A Modern Airport for a Modern Nation

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 cosy 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. Make sure to take advantage of this tremendous saving before you start your Icelandic adventure!

Duty Free Area Shops

Nothing says "I've been to Iceland" better than an Icelandic wool pullover or cardigan. Worn by generations of Icelanders down through history, the 'lopapeysa' as it is called in Icelandic, is probably as close to a modern-day national costume as you can get, sported by virtually everybody. You will find a large selection handknit wool items for sale at Rammagerðin Gift Shop, including sweaters, hats, gloves, mittens, scarves and beautifully designed, pure wool blankets. 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.

And if by chance you have lost or forgotten your glasses, or need to replenish your supply of contact lenses, Optical Studios can provide vision tests, using state-of-the-art equipment and can have standard prescription glasses ready in 15-20 minutes. How about a new pair of sunglasses or reading glasses?

Now, for something to read on your long haul flight...Eymundsson's 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.

Nord Restaurant features early morning breakfasts, hot coffee, freshly baked croissants, takeaway food and open-faced sandwiches overflowing with smoked salmon, just to name a few of their offerings, all made with the freshest of Icelandic ingredients.

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.

With Ingibjörg Lane and Energy Lane, the Blue Lagoon has now become a part of a much bigger journey that takes you closer to the heart of the area's immense energy, history and culture.

-VAG



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Tveir Vitar
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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.

🏠 Bygðasafn Garðskaga, Skagabraut 100 • 250 Garður ☎ +354 422 7220
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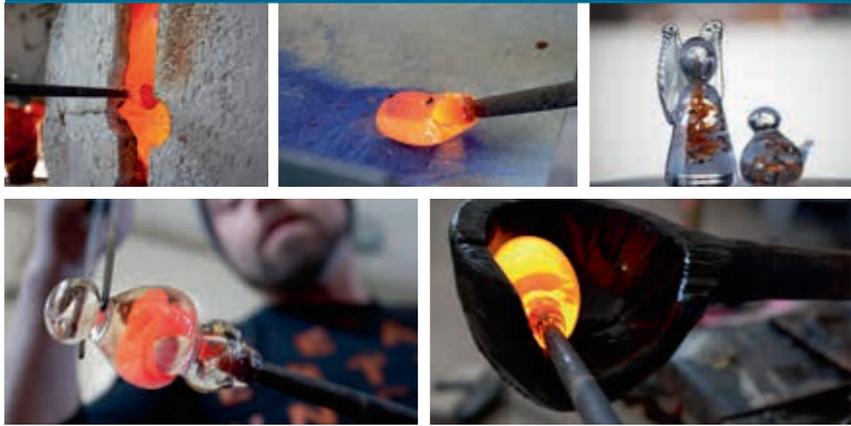




The Bridge Restaurant BRÚIN

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.

🏠 Hafnargata 26, 240 Grindavík ☎ +354 426 7080



HOT AS THE SUN

Ice Glass creates art in glass

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

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

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

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

ship anything that catches your fancy so it arrives safely.

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

-ASF

Ice Glass
 Gröfin 2 • 230 Reykjaneshar
 +354 857 0850
 gulla@iceglass.is
 www.iceglass.is



HARBOUR DINING IN OLD KEFLAVIK

Authentic Icelandic and international cuisine at Kaffi Duus

It's the classic seafood restaurant setting overlooking Keflavik'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 tete-à-tete or a special occasion dinner for large groups.



The chef regaled me with one of the specialties of the house, the 'Seafood Trio á 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: authentic Indian vegetable stews, pasta dishes and a range of fresh fish, lobster and all manner of seafood dishes. If you are not a seafood lover, the 'Grilled Trio of the House'—lamb fillet, beef and pork tenderloin, served with grilled vegetables and baked potato allows you to sample some of the best cuts of succulent Icelandic meat.

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

-EMV

Kaffi Duus
 Duusgötu 10 • 230 Reykjaneshar
 +354 421 7080
 duus@duus.is
 www.duus.is



GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast

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

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.



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

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

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

-ASF

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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 Grindavik where you can enjoy the hospitality of its people and its life.

🏠 Borgarhraun 2 • 240 Grindavík
✉ bjorksv@simnet.is ☎ +354 895 8686
🌐 www.guesthouseborg.com



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.

DINE 10 MIN FROM THE AIRPORT

Vitinn, at Sandgerði's harbour makes dining a delight

After a long flight, getting your luggage and getting out of the airport at Keflavík, 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.



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

-ASF



Vitinn
 Vitatorg 7 • 245 Sandgerði
 +354 423 7755
 info@vitinn.is
 www.vitinn.is





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".

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.

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

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

-ASF

Complete renovations

The hotel was renovated, both inside and out, this last winter to accommodate the burgeoning influx of visitors coming for a

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



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PHOTOGRAPHERS' SECRETS

Akranes provides prize-winning possibilities

Akranes, 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 still 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 Suðurlíös 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 panorama 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' cosy 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.

DT



Akranes Tourist Information Office

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+354 433 1065
info@akranes.is
www.visitakranes.is





PREPARE TO BE AMAZED

Helo flies you into panoramas only visible from the air

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 Reykjavik 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 Þingvellir, where the world's longest running parliament first met. From the air, the view of the earth's surface, as the American and European tectonic plates pull apart is unique. On

the south side of Þingvallavatn lake lie the geothermal plants providing eco-friendly heat and hot water to Reykjavik from the hot volcanic rocks deep under the surface.

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 mighty Gullfoss waterfall, lunching at Geysir before heading back to Þingvellir, 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.



Fulfilling a Dream



Image by © Ingi R. Ingason

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 as, one 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.

The Volcanic Adventure

This flies you to the notorious volcanos in South Iceland that brought air travel to a halt. Landing close to the Fimmvörðuháls volcano, 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 sinks 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 contact Helo in advance to book the tour of your choice.

-ASF



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HISTORY BROUGHT TO LIFE

The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre is in Reykholt

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

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

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



Snorrastofa

Snorrastofa, the Cultural and Medieval Centre in Reykholt in West Iceland, was founded in memory of Snorri. It is situated on his ancient homestead, which is considered one of Iceland's most noteworthy historical sites. Snorrastofa manages research, a library, an exhibition about Snorri and conference facilities. It also runs a tourist reception and a souvenir shop, which offers books, postcards and Icelandic designs, some exclusively for sale in Snorrastofa.

A new exhibition

'The Snorri Sturluson Saga', can now be visited in Snorrastofa. It tells the story of Snorri's exciting life, addressing issues such as upbringing, education, writing, properties and manors.

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

A statue of Snorri by Gustav Vigeland stands in front of the old district school, which was used between 1931 and 1997. Today the beautiful building, designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, is 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 Bergsdóttir) and its acoustics. The church is famous for its concerts all year round. A classical music festival of the highest quality, The Reykholt Music Festival is held annually on the last weekend in July.

Snorrastofa's exhibition, 'The Snorri Sturluson Saga', can be visited 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.

-AMB

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Reykholi • 320 Borgarfjörður
+354 433 8000
snorrastofa@snorrastofa.is
www.snorrastofa.is



HOT FROM THE OVEN

Geiri's Bakery and Coffee Shop in Borgarnes

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

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



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

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

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

-SHV

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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, Ísland 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.

Friends at work might 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.



-ASF

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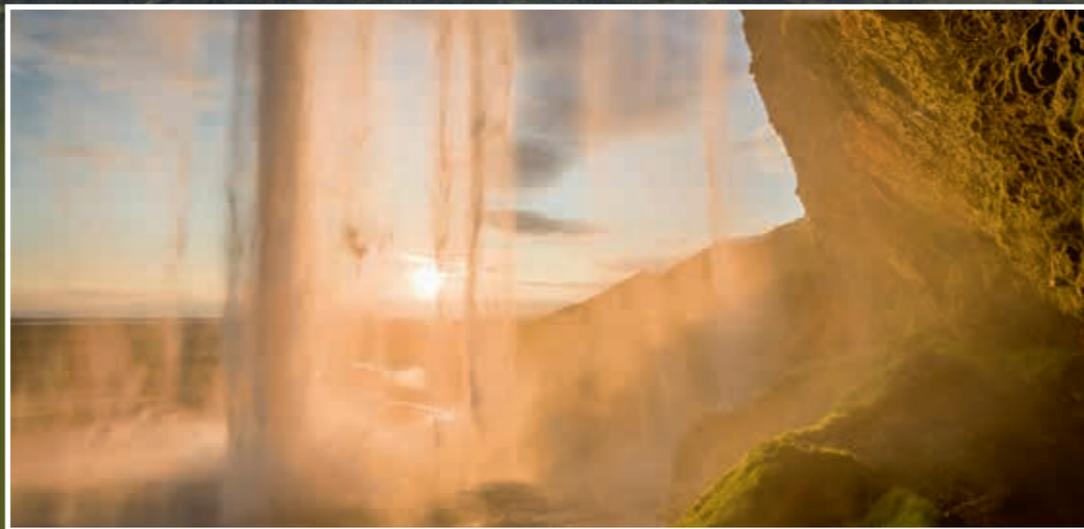
Goðafoss





Iceland Excursions' tour encapsulates Iceland

FROM FIRE TO ICE



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 Hekla, 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, Öräfajökull, 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

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iceland@grayline.is
www.grayline.is



ASF



JUST OPENED

Siglunes Guesthouse offers a comfortable stay with an old world charm

A new guesthouse just opened in the very north of Iceland, in Siglufjörður. The building has been totally renovated and yet, with the wood panelling in the bar and lounge and the old style furniture, you feel you have stepped back in time.

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.

Siglunes 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.

Siglufjörður is a good base for hiking and bird photography. The views are nothing short of spectacular at any time of the year and the birdlife is amazingly varied. It is a popular place for sport, culture and history and my personal favourite town for its beauty and friendliness. The trip alone is worth it and it's a perfect place to stop when taking the scenic 'Arctic Bow' route around the north.

-ASF



Siglunes Guesthouse
Lækjargata 10 • 580 Siglufjörður
+354 467 1222
info@hotelsiglunes.is
www.hotelsiglunes.is





TREASURE AT THE WORLD

Siglufjörður Hostel provides great accommodation for travellers

One of the most glamorous hotels in Iceland in the hey-day of the herring bonanza in the 1930s, Hvanneyri guesthouse and hostel is still the place to stay when you are in far north of Iceland in Siglufjörður on the Troll peninsula.

Today, it is a family-owned and run hostel and it has that feeling of staying in a warm, comfortable family home with helpful family members who take an interest in you.

Whether you are travelling alone, with a family or in a group, you will find a friendly welcome and comfortable stay for budget-conscious travellers with all the facilities one expects in a modern guesthouse and hostel. That includes free Wi-Fi, parking, a barbecue grill, a guest kitchen—and free coffee, too.

This has been an international centre ever since it was built. Its reputation has spread across the continents and it is a hub for

travellers from many different nations, some of whom return year after year.

Located on the main street, it is surrounded by the town's bakery, restaurants and shops, making it a perfect place to set up base for hiking or photography—or just simply enjoying the spectacularly beautiful countryside with its mountains and fjord.

-ASF



Hvanneyri Guesthouse
Adalgata 10 • 580 Siglufjörður
+354 467 1506
order@hvanneyri.com
www.hvanneyri.com





Allinn

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

Adalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður +354 467 1111



Sauðanes Mountain Horses

Go horse riding in the Midnight Sun with Mountain Horses at Sauðanes farm that offers a wide variety of tailor made riding tours to suit anyone from fanatical horse enthusiasts to first-time riders in the beautiful landscapes of the fjords and valleys of Tröllaskagi only about 40 km away from the Arctic Circle. The tours can vary in time from one or two hours up to 4 days. Beautiful evening tours in the summer's Midnight Sun in one of the best areas in the world to enjoy this spectacular phenomena. Enjoy the fun of riding happy, healthy and well kept horses in beautiful natural surroundings.

Sauðanes • 580 Siglufjörður +354 467 1375
sauðanes@visir.is fjallahestar.is



SINGING IN THE SILENCE

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.

A picture of tranquility and beauty

On a still day, the lake is like a mirror, reflecting the surrounding mountains on its surface. It's a place to come to be refilled, far from the madding crowd of cities and



smog. The pristine beauty restores the soul and provides a different perspective on life.

Of course, the world is out there and, if you need it, there is free Wi-Fi in all the rooms. The hotel's restaurant provides delicious meals with ingredients from the area and has a great wine selection to go with them.

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.

-ASF



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THE NORTHERN 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 horseriding tours, boat trips, bird watching, shopping—to name a few—are all so close, you can almost touch them. You name it, it's close-by.

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

Cultural Centre of the North

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

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

For groups and incentive tours, Akureyri offers such a wide range of activities, events and opportunities, 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 volcanos and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.



Easy Access

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

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

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

-ASF



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 +354 450 1050
 akureyristofa@akureyri.is
 www.visitakureyri.is





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!

-NNH/ASF



Ambassador

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 www.ambassador.is





THE NORTH EATS THAI

The Popular Krua 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 Krua Thai,

it is easy to find Krua 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 Krua Siam and Krua Thai are known for their reasonable prices. In addition, Krua 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 Krua 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.

-ASF



Krua Siam

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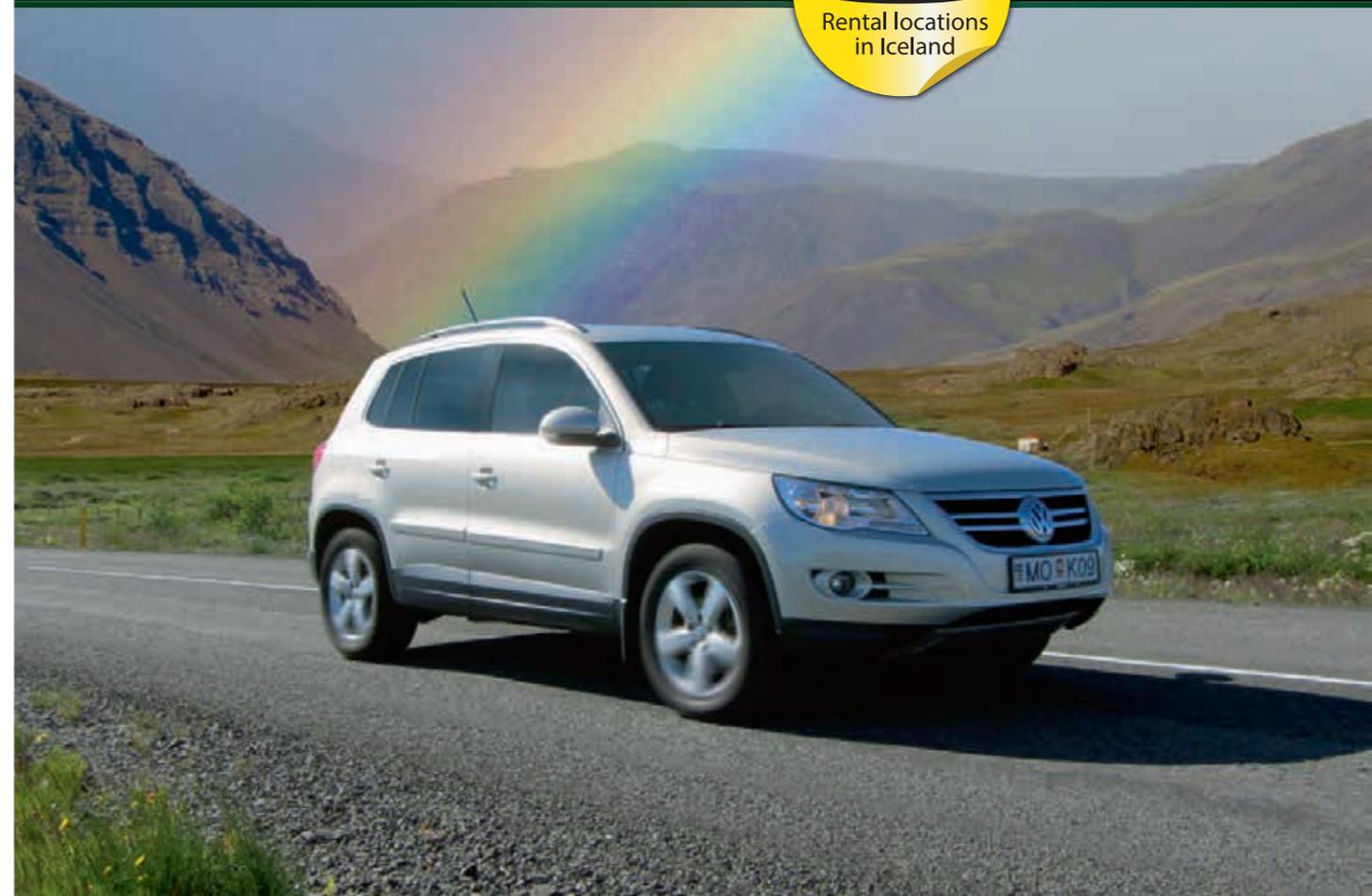
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BÁSAR GUESTHOUSE IN GRÍMSEY

Where Everybody Knows Your Name

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

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

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

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

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



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

Básar offers 18 beds in eight different rooms, either made up or for sleeping bags. Breakfast is available, as well as full meals if requested. The guesthouse is located next to the Arctic Circle and you only have to take three steps outside the guesthouse to cross it.

From 12th June until 20th August, flights depart for Grímsey daily at 13:00 from Akureyri. Prior to that, flights depart three times a week. A ferry also leaves from Dalvík at 9:00 am three times a week (Mon, Wed, Fri).

-EMV



Básar

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 +354 467 3103
 gaggae@simnet.is
 none





WHERE FITNESS FOLK EAT

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

Close to Akureyri's walking street and the harbour is a good location for people who want to get their meal quickly but eat something fresh and healthy.

Besti bitinn is well known for its fish and chips, so I decided to try, too. It surpassed what I'd heard about it—fresh, firm but soft and full of flavour. My partner tried the chicken salad and I saw why so many people in the health and fitness community in Akureyri come to eat here.

Healthy food and prices don't compete

Of course, and 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.

The nice thing about this restaurant is that you can sit in a friendly, comfortable atmosphere and mix and match the ingredients to your own taste when ordering. We liked that and will be joining the regulars whenever we're in Akureyri.

-ASF



Besti Bitinn

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 on Facebook





A GUESTHOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

The Farm at Ytra Laugaland offers an invigorating stay

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

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

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

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

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

-ASF



Gistiheimili Vilborgar

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TRENDY SEYÐISFJÖRÐUR

A Delightful mix of old and new

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.



soft furnishings from India, the bedrooms are the picture of gentle relaxation in an historical setting. Several of the rooms boast adjoining sleeping quarters in a recessed alcove, which are sure to be a popular cosy nook for children. Immaculately clean rooms with quality linens and down duvets add a touch of luxury.

Where to stay

Hotel Aldan is a small, upscale hotel located in what used to be the bank of Seyðisfjörður for almost a century. Elegantly furnished with antiques imported from Denmark and



Hotel Snæfell 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 Fjarðará 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

Skaftfell Bistro is an informal artsy 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.

-EMV



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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 cosy 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 cosy wooden interior has been tastefully decorated by owners Friðrik 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 Djúpvogur 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-rooms 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.

-DT



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With its nets completely full of fish, this herring boat comes into the port of Neskaupstaður town, summer of 1957.



Herring Town Neskaupstaður 1963. Smoke from the fish-meal and oil factory Síldarvinnslan seen in the distance.



The herring boom starting in Austfirðir fjords 1952.



The ruins of the fish-meal and oil factory Síldarvinnslan after an avalanche 20th of December 1974.



A VISION OF THE FUTURE BECOMES REALITY

The Story of Síldarvinnslan 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 and 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. 'Síldarvinnslan', as it came to be called, was owned by many local firms and individuals, while the fisherman's cooperative held a 60% majority of the shares.

Their vision for the company was that Síldarvinnslan should grow and prosper and become a leading company within the fishing sector. In 1958, Síldarvinnslan built a fish-meal and fish oil plant that processed a total of 4,000 tons of herring. The following years yielded extremely good catches and in

1966, 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.

Diversity of Production

However, Síldarvinnslan's owners did not settle for just fish-meal and 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. Síldarvinnslan continued to diversify; but 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.

The disaster of '74

On 20th December 1974, a disaster hit Neskaupstaður and Síldarvinnslan. Two avalanches swept down the mountains above the town, 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 Síldarvinnslan. 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, Síldarvinnslan's new facilities were fully operational in 1976.

Leading the field in Iceland

Síldarvinnslan 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, Helguvík and Seyðisfjörður. It also operates five ships—three for pelagic fishery and two for deep sea fishing.

Neskaupstaður's and Síldarvinnslan'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 its humble beginnings, Síldarvinnslan 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. -DT



ENTRANCED BY THE EAST

Quality handcraft at the East Iceland Crossroads

On the banks of East Iceland's Lagarfljót 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 there at the start of the 20th century. Confident in his choice of land, the farmer predicted 'the crossroads will be here', which later proved true.

Magic happens at the Crossroads

Thus, it was here at this historic intersection that the enchanting Hús Handanna Art & Design store set up shop in 2010.

The gallery specialises in East Icelandic design and handcrafts with a wide selection of paintings, ceramic products, quality items made of reindeer skin, reindeer antlers and local woodwork. All are beautifully designed and crafted, and you will find that many items transcend the boundaries between memorabilia and art.

With attention on the excellence of their products, Hús Handanna prides itself on nothing but the best in a welcoming atmosphere of warmth and creativity. The attractive interior, displays and installations have been professionally carried out under the supervision of local designers.

Snacking on Souvenirs

Souvenirs in the form of food are a relatively new concept in Iceland. Nowadays, every region has its own specialities and the variety of edible keepsakes continues to grow. Founded in 2009 with the aim of preserving and strengthening East Iceland's food heritage, Austfirskar Krásir/East Iceland Delicacies oversees the production of local foods, and provides a platform for emerging East Icelandic 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 Práinsdóttir, 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 studio 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 lively 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.



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—beautifully 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 'Brunch 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 'Dessert Hamper' contains waffle mix, berry syrup, serviettes, a candle and a special homemade ice cream recipe.

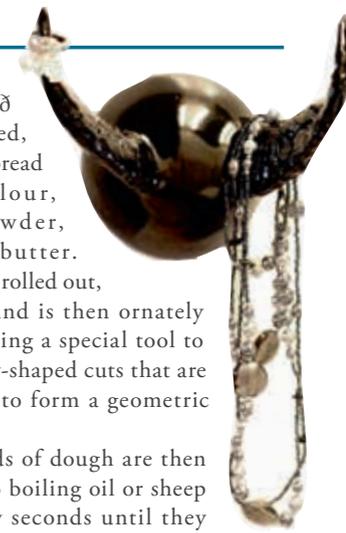


Simple Gifts

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 béchamel sauce.



A Laufabrauð Press

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

**Osnaburg is a coarse type of plain textile fabric, named for the city of Osnabrück (from which it may have been first imported into English-speaking countries). Originally made from flax yarns, it has been made from either flax, tow or jute yarns, sometimes flax or tow warp with mixed or jute weft, and often entirely of jute. The finer and better qualities form a kind of common sheeting, and the various kinds may contain from 20 to 36 threads per inch and 10 to 15 picks per inch!*

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TAKE TIME FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY

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 Fjarðarheiði mountain pass from the west, you will be enraptured 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 strewn 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 Skaftafell Art Centre could well 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 bonds of man and wilderness at the Skalanes 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.

-DT

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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.

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, and roast East Iceland lamb can also be provided for group lunches or dinners with advanced booking.

As a travel service, Mjóeyri offers a wide variety of activities in the area, including boat



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

Iceland Spar

It has been speculated that the 'sunstone' mentioned in medieval Icelandic texts was Iceland spar and that Vikings used its light-polarizing property to tell the direction of the sun on cloudy days, for navigational purposes. The mineral, known formerly as Iceland Crystal, is noteworthy for its extraordinary properties of double refraction, which was studied at length by prominent scholars such as Christiaan Huygens and Sir Isaac Newton. Intriguing visits to Helgustaðir Cave, where Icelandic spar was mined from the 17th 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 Berglind and Sævar welcome you to spend a day, a week, a month on the blissfully tranquil shores of Eskifjörður in East Iceland.

-EMV

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EATING WELL IN HÖFN

Kaffi Hornið Hits the Spot

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

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

Specialties of the House

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

A hamburger calling?

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



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

Craving vegetables

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

Not to be missed

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

-EMV



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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 Skaftafell 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 Skaftafellsjökull 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 glaciers 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.

-EMV





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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 multi-faceted 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 - or, quite often, just curiously observing those strange humans in their 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.

They have three kinds of tours: the Adventure Tour, the Evening Tour and private tours where you have the whole boat and the guide for yourself.

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 floatation 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 Reykjavik, as it lies on the Ring road in the south, some 78 km before the fishing town of Höfn.

-ASF

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AT THE EASTERN CROSSROADS

Egilsstaðir Guest House

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



A Bit of History

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

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

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

-EMV

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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull

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

The weather report was looking good—a full day of sunshine ahead of me and temperatures above 10°C. I was on my way to a face to face encounter with the world's 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 Jöklašel, Iceland's highest restaurant and owned by Glacier Jeeps. Jöklašel will serve as our base camp where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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EMV





HOSPITALITY IS WHAT WE DO BEST

Hotel Skaftafell 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 Skaftafell 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 Skaftafell 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 Skeiðarársandur 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 Skaftafell 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 Skaftafell 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.

Jökulsárlón is one of the most popular places to visit along the ring road because of its scenic beauty. Melting icebergs in various shapes, sizes and colours float towards the bridge which spans the narrow outlet from the lagoon. "Visitors from all corners of the globe are drawn to this place and for good reason," says Anna. "The combination of a calving glacier, icebergs, a lagoon, black sand beaches and the Atlantic Ocean, with a view of the highest peak in Iceland in ever changing light conditions is numbered among some of the most impressive landscapes in the world."

-SHV



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WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK!

Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland's newest protected area, established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 13,200 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



Gljúfrastofa



Snæfellsstofa



Skaftafellsstofa



Svartifoss



Dettifoss



Hiking Geldingafell, Snæfell in the distance



Langisjór



Morsárdalur



Askja and Lake Öskjuvatn



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 cosy 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 Pakgil Canyon which has served as the backdrop for many a movie, including Game of Thrones in 2010 and Beowulf and Grendel in 2004.

-EMV



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Höfðabrekku - 871 Vik
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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.

-ASF



Þakgil Campground
 Höfðabrekkuafretti • 670 Vík
 +354 893 4889
 helga@thakgil.is
 www.thakgil.is





REFRESHING VÍK

Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

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

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

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



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

-KB



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 www.halldorskaffi.is





THE SURROUND-SOUNDS OF SILENCE

at Hotel Dyrhólaey

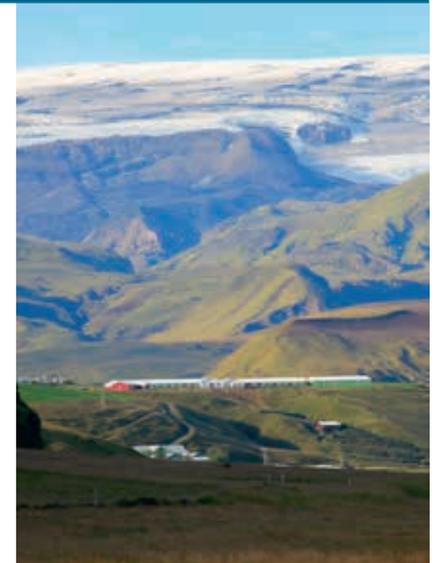
There is a saying that goes something like, 'When you have such a great view, who needs pictures on your walls?' and that was my feeling as I arrived at the top of the hill where Hotel Dyrhólaey is located, directly across from the Bay of Dyrhólaey. To my left, a dusting of newly fallen snow covered 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 the 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 its 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



Icelandic 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.

-EMV



Hotel Dyrhólaey
 Brekkur • 871 Vík
 +354 487 1333
 dyrholaey@islandia.is
 www.dyrholaey.is





GLACIERS, BLACK SAND BEACHES & PUFFINS

Mýrdalur region South Iceland



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 cut off by snow even 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.

Köttlusetur 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.

Köttlusetur 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.

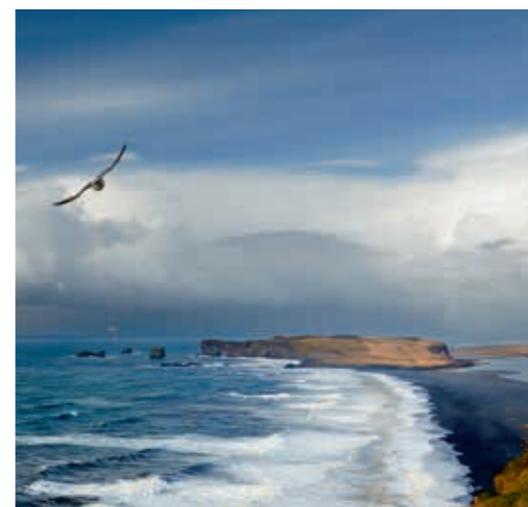
Accommodation offers in Vík and surroundings include; youth hostel, guesthouses, farm hotels and a four star hotel.

Fire, ice and black sand beaches

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

Walk along Víkurfjara 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.



-SHV



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 Víkurbraut 28 • 780 Vík
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 www.visitvik.is





THE OLD COWHOUSE RESTAURANT

Sitting Pretty on Iceland's South Coast

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

The remodelled former barn easily seats 50 to 60 dinner guests while retaining its unpretentious character and sweet bovine

simplicity, making this a thoroughly enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast.

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

Open year-round, the Old Cowhouse plans monthly events including an October evening of traditional food, a November



evening of game (reindeer and geese), a December buffet of traditional Christmas dishes, as well as musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the year.

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

-EMV

Gamla Fjósið

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ÁSÓLFSSKÁLI FARM HOLIDAYS

Living under Eyjafjallajökull Volcano

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

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

It won the 2011 award for being the most beautiful farm in Rangárthing-eystra



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

There are two self-contained cottages that can sleep up to 6 people each and that come complete with a jacuzzi and gas barbecue, making it an ideal retreat in a picture post-card perfect setting.

Visitors are welcome to watch the milking of Ásólfsskáli's 50 cows, hike the foothills along marked trails or visit the picturesque 19th century Ásólfsskáli church that presides over the landscape.

-EMV

Ásólfsskáli

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AN IDYLIC STAY

Fagrilundur Bed & Breakfast In the heart of the Golden Circle

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 cosy, 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.

-EMV/ASF

Fagrilundur guesthouse

Skólbraut 1, Reykholt • 801 Selfoss
+354 486 8701
info@fagrilundur.is
www.fagrilundur.is



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 the most delicious delicacies—pralines so full of rich flavour that they never seem to last. They're swiftly devoured by all who come in contact with them and it takes the strongest soul to actually make it home with them intact.

Café Mika is becoming a popular place to stop when taking the Golden Circle tour as it's found in Reykholt, not far from Geysir,

making it a nice break on your trip. But it's not just the pralines that are attracting visitors, as Mika has a menu that has your taste buds watering just reading it over.

For those interested in a snack, the rich hot chocolate drink, made fresh from beans sourced from all over the world, topped with whipped cream is stiff competition for traditional coffee.

For me, enjoying a meal at Mika's is always worth the time. He takes traditional meals

-ASF

Café Mika

Skólbraut 4 • 801 Reykholt
+354 896 6450
mikaehf@simnet.is
on Facebook



and adds that extra touch that makes them memorable. This summer, he is introducing a wood-burning pizza oven, a Big Green Egg grill for pizza, grills and smoking meats and fish and an ice cream maker to make his own specialities. See reactions on TripAdvisor and you'll make it a point to stop by.



GK Ceramics
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.

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Tel: +354 414 6960, email: norlandair@norlandair.is

Folk Museum in Eyrarbakki The Southcoast Museum



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

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



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

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



Rangárbing eystra
- Power and Purity -




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.

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

Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which has become known as the 'Mecca of Icelandic wild game', with its lamb, fish, seafood and game caught in the wild. His menu is seasonal and features exotic dishes that can be made from reindeer, goose, duck, cormorant, guillemot, puffin, minke whale or pan-fried arctic char. Always on the cutting edge, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his skyr mousse with crow berries and rhubarb.

Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt', he can take his pick of the choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the

area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden, providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil, red and blackcurrants. The lamb and venison come from N.E. Iceland and are known for their delicious flavour, fed on mountain herbs. The Arctic char are caught fresh from either Lake Þingvellir or Lake Apavatn daily.

In the heart of the Golden Circle

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



-EMV/ASF



Lindin Restaurant
Lindarbraut 2 • 840 Laugarvatni
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lindin@laugarvatn.is
www.laugarvatn.is





REYKJAVIK'S FROZEN PLAYGROUND

An opportunity to experience a glacier first-hand

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 or 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 Geysir 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 Geysir geothermal area. Jarlhettur (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 Geysir geothermal areas, 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.

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 Þingvallavatn about 50 km to the south west. Lake Þingvallavatn 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 plunges 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 Hallmundarhraun 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 Hvítársíða. The greatest tubular lava cave systems in Iceland are found in this lava field; Stefánshellir, Víðgelmir and Surtshellir. Hallmundarhraun lava field is named after Hallmundur who was a character in the Icelandic saga, Grettissaga.

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 Uxahryggjavegur (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 out either to the east or to the west of the glacier. A tour to the west usually includes a visit to attractions such as Reykholt cultural centre, the Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls, and Deildartunguhver hot spring. Attractions east of the glacier include sites such as Þingvellir national park, the world renowned Geysir 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.

-SHV



Images by © Jóhann Smári



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 spicing.

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 crevasses resulting from glacial melting, also a fairly dangerous one.

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 Uunartoq 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 Russel Glacier by foot, dog sledge or helicopter or lose yourself in the

picturesque fjords of King Frederik’s Land on a kayak trip. The ethereal calm and clear weather of Kangerlussuaq makes it an ideal winter destination—nowhere in the world are your chances of spotting the Northern Lights as high as in this town with 300 cloudless nights per year!

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 Ittoqqortoormiit, 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.

A church with history

Suitable walking shoes are advisable for the 40 minute walk from the village to the airport. Passing the old cemetery, visitors are regaled with stunning views of the island, with the endless Arctic Sea to the left and the harsh mountain ridge of the southeastern mainland to the right. Due to permafrost,

graves are built above ground and covered with stones. No names are engraved on the crosses—in Inuit culture the name of a deceased loved one is passed on to a newborn to ensure continuity. Kulusuk's church stands as a testimony to the dangers of the sea; built by the crew of a Danish sailing vessel, using the salvaged remnants of their ship that ran aground in 1908.

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.



-DT

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A FEW EXAMPLES



Day Tour

THE BACK STREETS OF ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

▶ Ísafjörður



8 hour Day Tour / Hiking Tour

REMARKABLE GREENLAND

▶ Greenland – Kulusuk



Day Tour

LAKE MÝVATN

▶ Mývatn



Day Tour

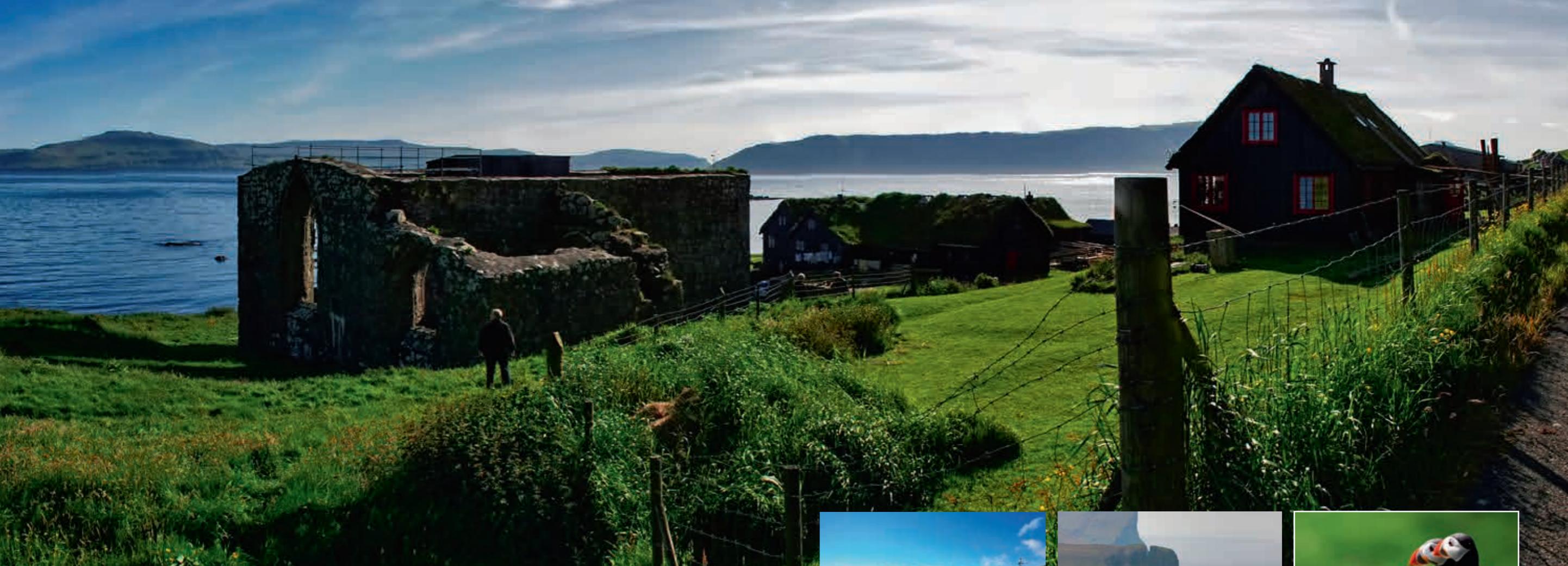
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NORTH

▶ Mývatn

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THAT ISLAND FEELING

The Faroe Islands

It might have been the fertile green hillsides, or the rich fishing grounds that enticed settlers some 1500 years ago to leave 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 the view of his secret paradise. Maybe he felt peaceful and secure on his island. Whatever it was, settlers must have felt a deep affection for this green place in the middle of the wild Atlantic ocean.

The Faroese however, have another story about their settlement: a giant and a witch, who tried to pull the islands back to Iceland, but not being fast enough, petrified with the dawn.

The latest archaeological findings suggest that man settled the Faroe Islands in an organized manner some 400 years before the settlement of Iceland.

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 of 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, cosy 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. But she never feels isolated, says Eva from Dímun, the smallest inhabited island of the archipelago. She runs a farm with her family, raising sheep and cows, and making a living from such products as milk, beef and lamb, sheep skins and handicrafts made from horns and bones.

Nature dictates the rhythm of each day, with the family working in harmony and closely connected to the earth. What has been a traditional lifestyle for Eva and her people for hundreds of years, can be a meditative retreat for the traveller, who is welcome to stay at her guesthouse.



Due to the whims of nature, life seems slower 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 ting* 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, guillemots and other seabirds. You can get quite close to the birds either by excursion boat, or by walking the majestic cliffs.

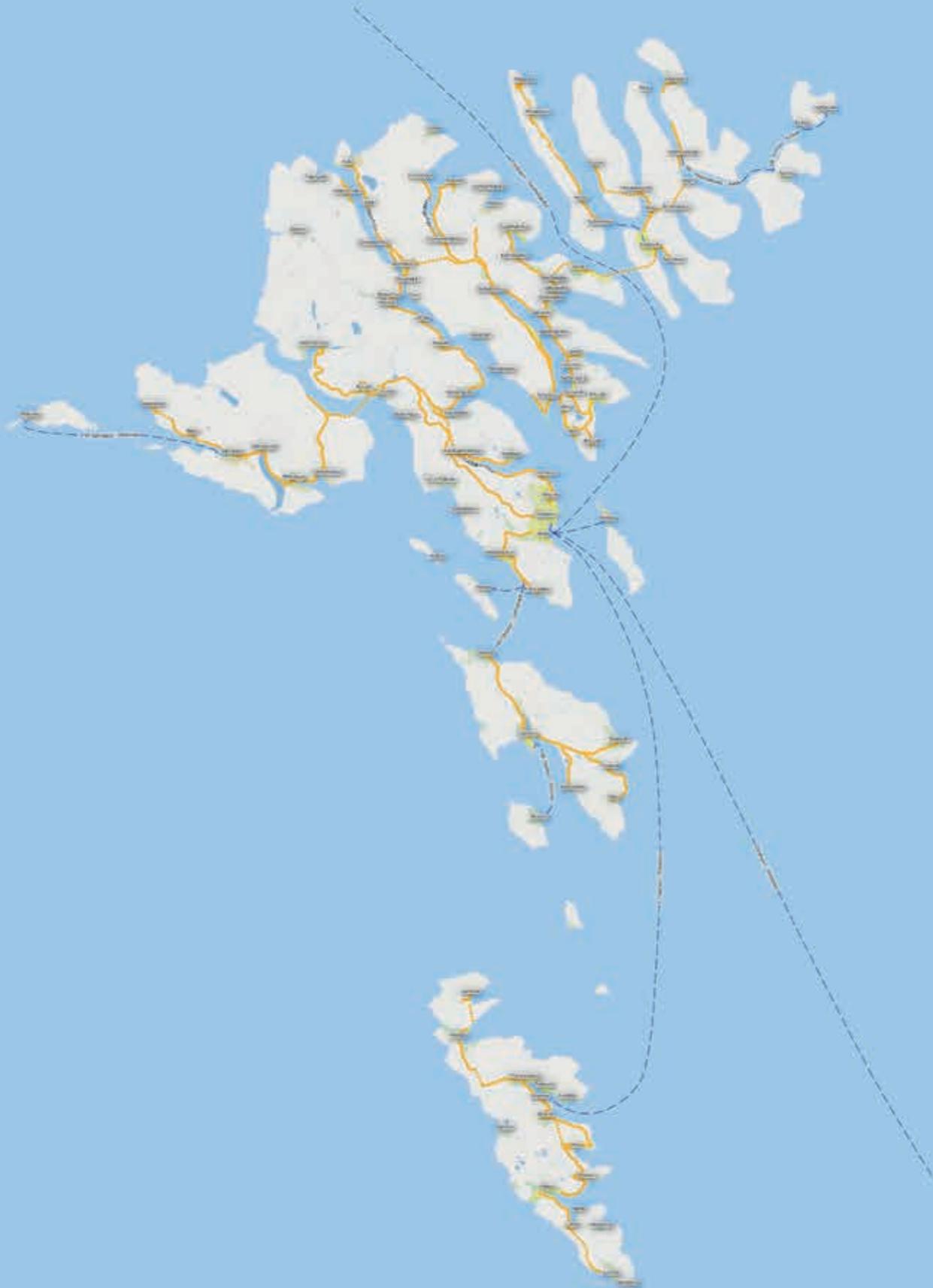
The Faroe Islands' remote location serves as a magnet for migratory birds. Around 300 bird species have been recorded in the islands, but only about a third of these are regular migrants or breeding birds. Another 200 species are rare migrants and new birds are added to the national list every year.

The Faroe Islands are among the lesser known destinations in Western Europe for birdwatching in spring and autumn.

Tórshavn—small yet lively

Explore one of the lively towns, like Tórshavn, one of the smallest capitals in the world, with its 4-star hotels, 5-star conference facilities, thriving music scene, designer shops and excellent restaurants that combine the freshest local ingredients in imaginative ways—fish, lamb, puffin, seafood and mountain herbs. The carefully restored houses with their characteristic grass roofs, white framed windows and black-tarred cladding show up as colorful dots on the hillsides, greeting all those who arrive by ferry with a most welcoming panorama.

*ting- From Old Norse þing meaning assembly, council, or business



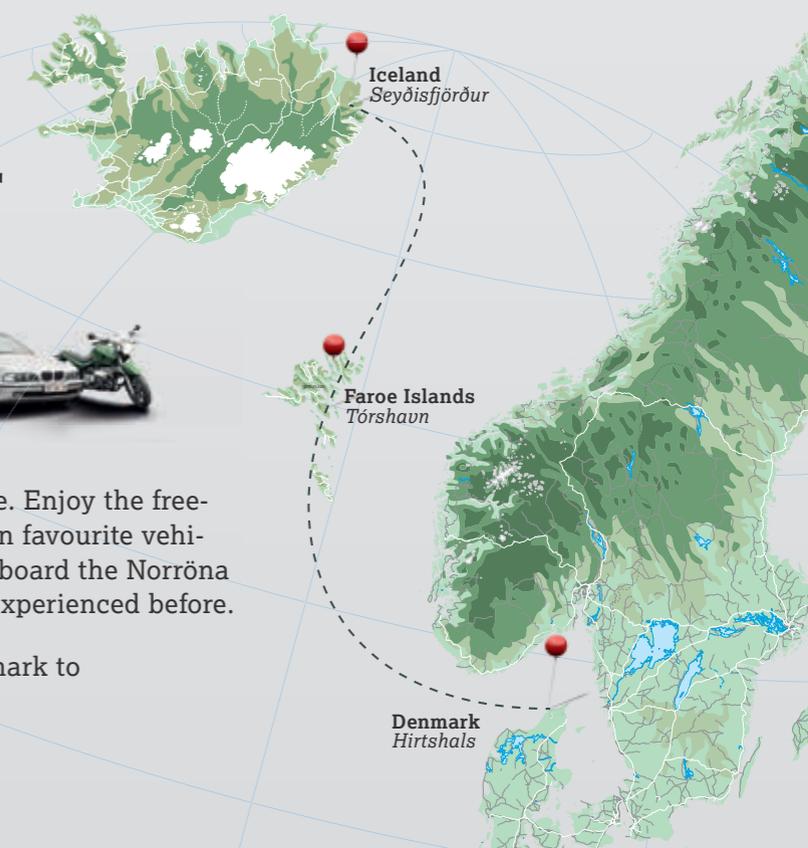
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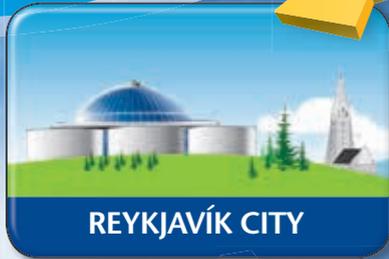
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THE HIGHLANDS

Iceland in a Nutshell - Step off the plane and step into history



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 lavafields 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. Any self-driving, cycling or hiking trip must be carefully planned. There are no roads in this area, just tracks and hardly any bridges across the rivers. Of all the various tracks, only two routes actually cross the whole way between north and south: Sprengrisandur (F26) and Kjöfur (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.



Kjöfur, the area between the Langjökull and Hofsjökull glaciers



Kerlingarfjöll is a mountain range situated in the Highlands



Veiðivötn (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

A Birdwatcher's Paradise



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 Stakksfjörður 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 Skaftafell 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 Dyrhólaey the chief birding sites. Puffins breed on the cliffs at Víkurhamrar above the village of Vík (the furthest colony from the sea in the world), on Mount Reynisfjall and the Dyrhólaey headland, while Common Guillemot and Razorbill breed at the sea stacks of Reynisdrangar and at Dyrhólaey. There is a huge Arctic Tern colony at Vík and a smaller one at Dyrhólaey.

Þjórsárver to the south of the Hofsjökull 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, Red-necked Phalarope, Arctic Tern and Snow Bunting. Part of Þjórsárver is protected and a Ramsar site.

Another key birding location in the highlands is the chain of lakes called Veidivötn. 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



Images by © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsen



particularly common, and other breeding birds include Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Scaup, 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 Rangarárvellir. Some of the best birding sites are Lake Skúmsstaðavatn 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.

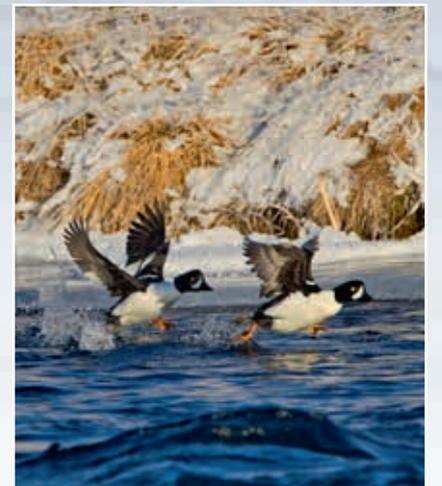
Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Goldeneye and Goosander winter here. Harlequin Ducks breed locally and hundreds of Scaup, Tufted Duck and Red-breasted Merganser stop off on passage and are also common breeders.

Lake Þingvallavatn

Sogið, the river which flows out of Lake Þingvallavatn, 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 Þingvallavatn itself is known for its breeding Great Northern Divers.

Ölfusá River

The coastline between the mouths of the Ölfusá and Þjórsá glacial rivers is the largest lava shoreline in Iceland, forming the southern end of the vast Þjórsárhraun lava field which flowed 8,000 years ago and is the largest post-ice age lava flow on Earth. Inland 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, Sanderling, Turnstone, Brent Goose, Eurasian Wigeon and various other ducks.



On either side of the estuary of the Ölfusá river there are two large wetlands: BirdLife Iceland's reserve at Flói on the east bank, and Ölfusforir 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. Ölfusforir 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.



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

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

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



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. -ASF

MEN WHO MADE ICELAND

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

The Westfjords have produced some of 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 Reykjavík.

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

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

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

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



HALLDÓR LAXNESS

The Nobel Prize-winning Writer from Iceland

Halldór Laxness (1902-1998) stands as a luminary amongst the other Icelandic writers of the 20th century. He was a prolific author during his long career, writing thirteen major novels, five plays and a dramatisation of one of his novels, not to mention his collections of short stories, essays and memoirs. His books have been translated into forty-three languages and published in 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.

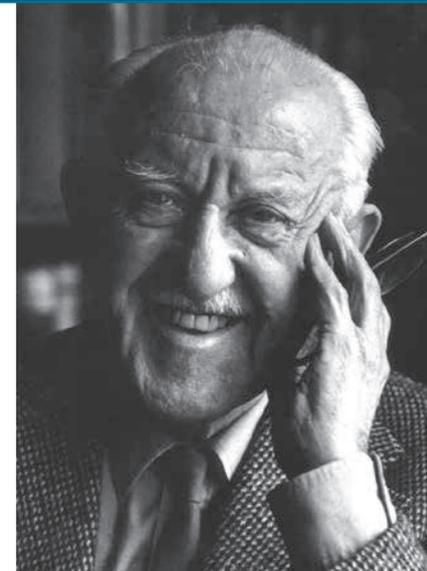


The Writings of a Master

In the 1920s, he wrote a modernist novel with a surrealist overlay, 'The Great Weaver from Kashmir' (1927), as well as progressive poetry, while in the 1930s, he wrote social realist novels, including 'Independent People' (1934-35) about Bjartur, the farmer of Summerhouses, 'the story of a man who sowed his enemy's field all his life, day and night. Such is the story of the most independent man in the country', as it says in the book. In the 1940s, he embarked on historical novels, including 'Iceland's Bell', his contribution to Iceland's campaign for independence, which was published 1943-46. Among other well known works by Laxness are 'World Light' (1937-40), 'The Atom Station' (1948), 'The Fish Can Sing' (1957) and 'Paradise Reclaimed' (1960). Laxness wrote absurdist plays in the 1960s and, 40 years after 'The Great Weaver from Kashmir' and, at nearly 70 years old, he began to flirt anew with the modernist in novel, along with a new generation of Icelandic novelists, in 'Under the Glacier' (1968).

Ideals and Beliefs

Laxness' ideals and beliefs changed with time, as reflected to a certain extent in his



works. He began his writing career as a Catholic, then turned to socialism, but later lost interest in all dogma—except perhaps Taoism. He never attempted to disown the earlier views which he subsequently repudiated, regarding them instead as an instructive part of his psychological development. Yet, from the earliest period to the latest, it is possible to detect the same basic themes in his books. He looked at things differently from other people, his writings were often barbed, and yet he always managed to see the comic aspects of his characters and their actions. His sympathy was invariably with the underdog.



Image by © Gabriel Rosenberg

MEN WHO MADE ICELAND

Skúli Magnússon

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 Keldunes 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 Skagafjörður in the north.

In the first year in his new position, a Dutch trading ship foundered in the fjörd. Skúli, on discovering the sailors illegally trading with the local people, seized their ship and its cargo which he used to build the village of Akrrar. 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 Skagafjörður, 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.

He was known as 'Skúli fógeti', as he was the representative for the king of Denmark. When the country's Danish Governor was dismissed in 1749 for drunkenness and bankruptcy, Skúli was appointed to his position—becoming the first Icelander to hold the Governor's post.

He moved south to Bessastaðir in 1750 and established a commercial enterprise, competing with the Danish merchants, which made enhancements and inventions in agriculture and industry. Within six months, he won the Danish king's approval.

He became known as 'The Father of Reykjavik' and was the only one bringing news and information to the country. Reykjavik was little more than a smattering of houses, farms and fields at this time.

Skúli built simple factories, focussing on agricultural machinery, sulfur processing, a wool weaving centre, dyeing, rope-making, leather work, shipbuilding and fishing. He wanted Icelanders to use decked boats so they could fish in deeper seas, increase their catches with less risk to life than the open rowing boats used at the time.

The only building from that time still standing is Aðalstræti 10, in Reykjavik's centre, which operated as a factory until 1803. It then became a private residence where some of Iceland's most prominent citizens have stayed, including Jón Sigurðsson, the leader of the 19th century Icelandic independence movement. Around 2000, the conservationists renovating it wanted a business reflecting Skúli's spirit of innovation and design to use it. Kraum was the company chosen.

Skúli set up a farm on Viðey island and built Viðeyjarstofa as his official house between 1753-55. He worked tirelessly before finally retiring in 1793. He died the following year.

In 1954 a statue of Skúli Magnússon was erected to commemorate the centenary of free trade in Iceland.

-ASF



MEN WHO MADE ICELAND

Jónas Hallgrímsson changed the face of Icelandic poetry

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

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

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

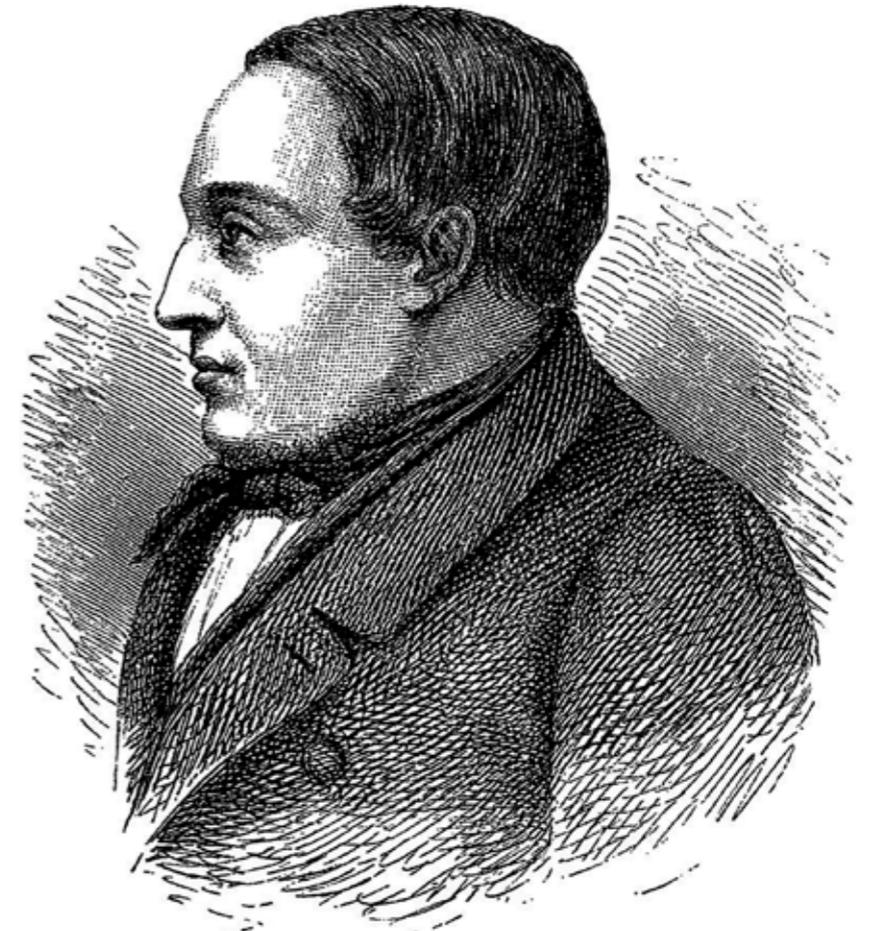
A Stale Diet

From the sagas of the Middle Ages, Icelandic poetry had fallen into a stale regimen of pathos and criticism. Even the poems of Jónas' role model, Eggert Ólafsson, who broke new ground with his writing, are considered stale and dull by comparison.

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

University in Revolution

In 1832, he sailed to Copenhagen, where he started studying law at the university. After 4 years, he switched to literature



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

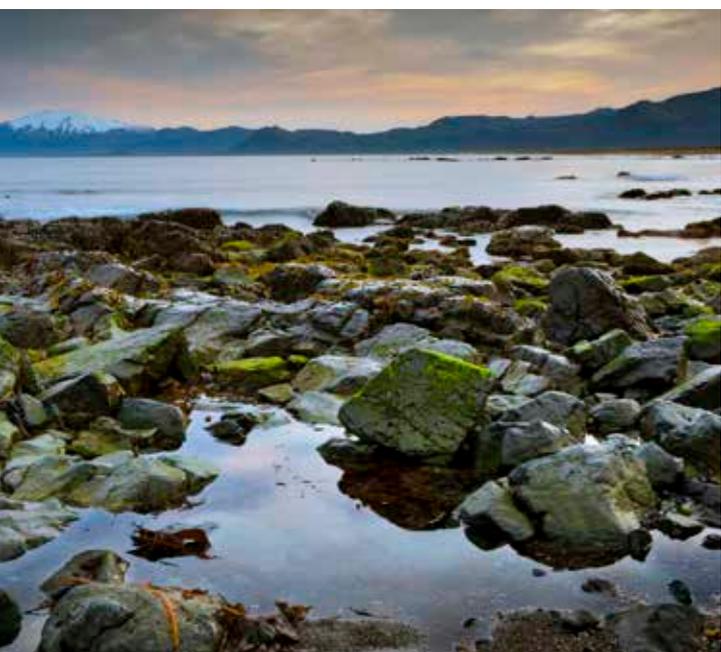
A Literary Legacy

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

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

-ASF







A BRAG BOOK FOR ICELAND

I Was Here — A New Landscape Photography Book

Brragging 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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