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As the weather is finally getting more mirthful after this unusually long and harsh winter, as are the spirits and hearts of the Icelanders. They now look upbeat forward with delight and optimism, ready to meet and greet the foreign friends who have come to visit this remote destination.

It is common knowledge that this little island of fire and ice rests on top of a geothermal hotspot and is hence subjected to a great deal of seismic activity. This has shaped the landscape drastically as frequent volcanic eruptions have created an outlandish terrain

of great lava fields and dramatic mountains, geysers, and vast geothermal areas that sport quixotic colors. The geographic location of the country as well as mountain ranges and pervasive high-level plateaus make for ultimate conditions for glaciers – and there are plenty to contrast with the rest of the environment. All of these elements contribute to the creation of an unusually diverse landscape and sights that are rarely found so densely packed in a small area. Our foreign friends know this and the nature remains the number one reason listed as a reason for visiting.

However, this relatively young country also has a surprisingly rich history which has shaped the culture and the national spirit even to modern times. Regardless of where you choose to bound, you will be sure to find an abundance of museums and carefully preserved relics and historical sites. It is evident that the hard-working locals strive to show visitors the best of what their area has to offer. So remember to really take your time when you visit the villages and towns and absorb the local hospitality along with the stunning scenery.

- Edda Snorradóttir

Contents

The Greater Reykjavik Area 6	Iceland's Best Kept Secret 38	Ambassador to the Whales..... 68
The World's Most Exclusive Watchmaker 9	Grindavik's Harbour Café 40	The Old Post Office 68
The Joyful Wonderland..... 10	A10 Deluxe Bed and Breakfast..... 41	Where Past, Present and Future Meet..... 69
The All-Icelandic Wool Shop..... 11	The Place to Stay in Grindavik..... 41	
Ancestors' Knowledge Healthy Food 13	We Specialize In Your Adventure 42	East Iceland 71
Culture and Fun in the North 14	Business Insider: Not just Fire and Ice 44	Reserved Luxury 73
The Fine Art Knife Making..... 17	Entrusted with Complex Projects 45	A Guide Through the Mesmerising East Iceland . 74
Leather Designer..... 18	A Call for Information and Support 46	The Little Hotel with a Big Heart 78
The Cultural Core 19	Saw an Opportunity and Made the Most of it 48	Cow Shed Corner – Fjóshornið..... 79
Elves 20	Island Luxury 50	Breiðdalsvík -The Hidden Gem of East Iceland... 80
Living in the Lava 21	On Top of the World..... 52	On Top of the World..... 82
Getting Juiced in Iceland..... 22	West Iceland and the Westfjords 54	South Iceland 84
Great Value and Good Fun 23	I Discovered America First 55	A Delightful Experience in Stokkseyri..... 85
The Brave Get the Best 25	Hotel Flatey in Breiðafjörður Bay 57	A Taste of Iceland's Wild & Sweet 86
Gray Line Iceland 26	Iceland's First Settler 58	Refreshing Vík..... 87
Fire under the Snow..... 28	Gamla Kaupfélagið 59	Eat in Iceland - Scenic Food Tours in Iceland 88
Volcano Tours Day Trips 29	Celebrating 30th year of operation..... 59	The Hidden Pearl of Iceland..... 90
Take a Ride on the Wild Side..... 29	Far from the Madding Crowd..... 60	Take Time to Discover Vestmannaeyjar 92
Experience the Icelandic Summer 30	North Iceland 63	The House that Disappeared 94
Seeing Iceland with Mercury-Grail Tours 33	Akureyri Heart of the North 64	A Look at Museums in Vestmannaeyjar 95
Hike over glaciers, volcanoes and mountains 33	A Corner of Paradise – Here in Eyjafjarðasveit ... 66	Viking Tours of the Westman Islands..... 97
"Different and Proud of It" 35		Pictures Are Our Language 98
The Sport of Lords and Kings 36		

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

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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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THE GREATER REYKJAVÍK AREA

The Cosmopolitan Capital - where History and Culture meet today's world

One of the world's smaller capitals, Reykjavik is surrounded by the towns of Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Álftanes (where the President lives), Hafnarfjörður and the country town of Mosfellsbær, combining to make up the Greater Reykjavik area.

It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900's, Ingólfur Arnarson, it has grown from a handful of houses a few centuries ago to a compact and thriving metropolis.

The National Museum holds the history of the nation, while the National Library, just opposite it, has the nation's books and records. There are many art galleries and museums throughout the area and the new concert hall complex by Reykjavik's harbour, Harpa, has a full programme each month.

Innovation and inspiration play a major role in the city's life. From here, visitors can reach the whole country. The countryside is always very close by. Activities such as tours, whale- or bird-watching, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking and horse-riding are very popular. There's even ice skating.

On weekends especially, the city is filled with nightlife that continues till morning. There are plenty of pubs and restaurants with both genuine Icelandic food and international cuisines. So you never need to go hungry. From youth hostel to guesthouses and hotels, there's accommodation for every budget.



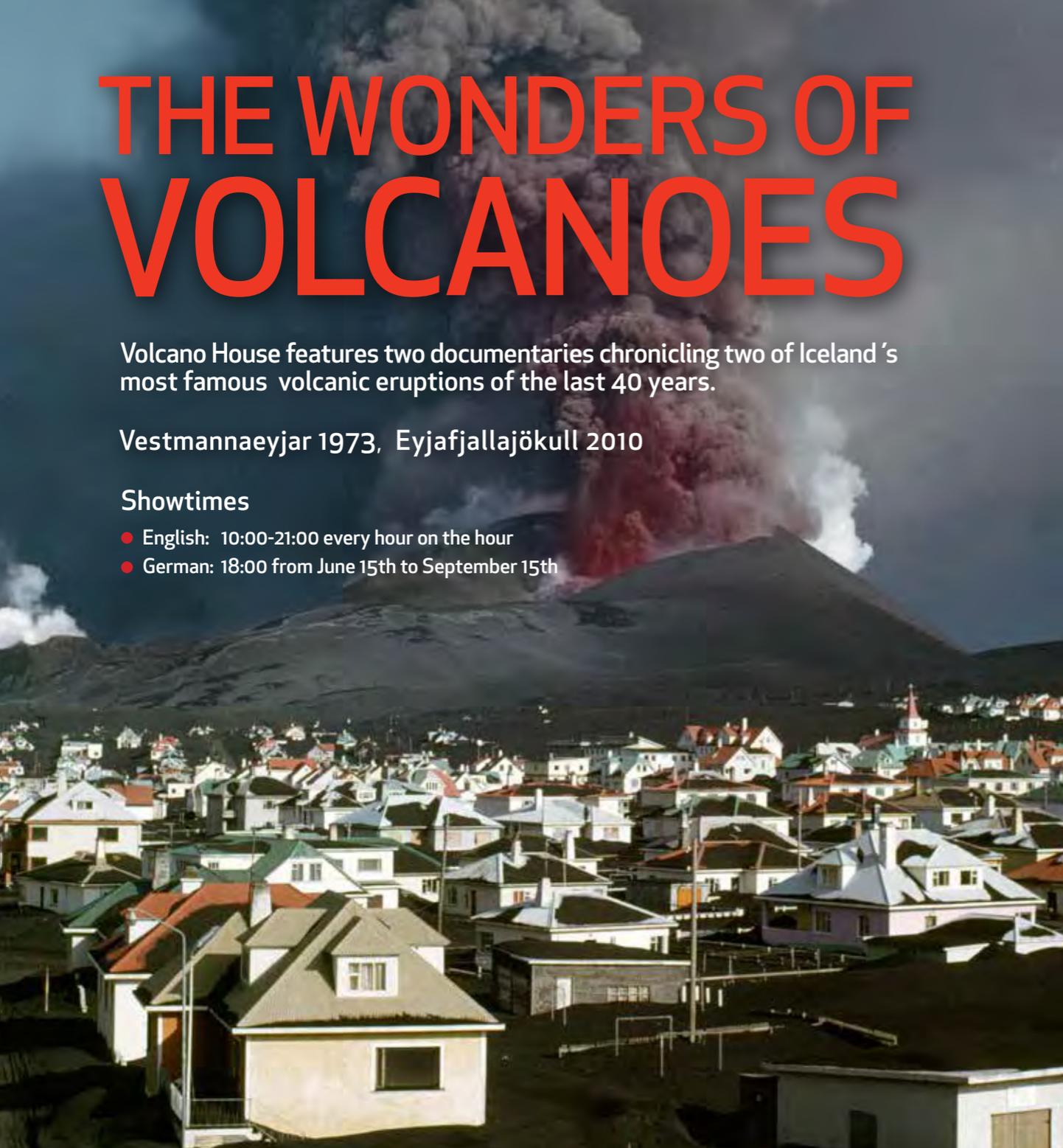
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THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE WATCHMAKER

They sell to the stars but are known only to the few

It is probably the world's smallest watchmaker, located in a very small shop in one of the world's smallest countries and yet they produce the most exquisitely crafted and sought-after hand made watches.

In this era of electronic, battery-powered watches, you might expect that automatic mechanical watches had passed into history. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a greater demand for high quality timepieces that will outlast the temporary electronic watch phenomenon.

The choice of connoisseurs

You can be defined by your choices. There are watches for the mass market and there are those watches that are individualised, personalised collectors' items, works of art that are cherished for generations. These are investments - especially those limited editions. Yet, they have a key place in the lives of the wearers.

Kings, princesses, international leaders from East and West, film stars, rock idols - all have made their way to the small shop on Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, to select their own watch, have it assembled and personalised just for them, a testament to their discernment of true quality.

While I was visiting the shop, it's wall filled with photos of well-known personalities who are now wearing their watches, I couldn't help but wonder if it was only the rich and famous who could afford such time pieces. My answer came as I was standing there. A beautiful young woman came to pick up a watch she had ordered and two tourists selected watches for themselves. They would return later in the day after their selections had been



assembled specifically for them in the tiny studio at the back of the shop.

Others, wanting something even more personal, have their watches engraved on the inner rotor with special messages.

Relying on reliability

Pilots and the Icelandic coastguard have to be able to trust their watches. Lives could depend on them. The coastguard are issued with the "Sif" watch, designed especially for them. The only watch in the range without a transparent back, it has a 4mm Sapphire non-reflective glass and can be used to a depth of at least 1,000m. It is also available to the general public, along with pilots' watches, likewise known for their dependability and absolute reliability.



Wear the volcano

Iceland used to be known as "Europe's Best Kept Secret" but it was thrust into the limelight in 2010 with the Eyjafjallajökull volcanic eruption. The fine ash that brought Europe's air traffic to a halt now coats the face of the most sought-after watch, the Goð. Ornate Viking engravings on the case make this watch stand out - especially as some of the engraving can be personalised to make it totally unique.

- ASF



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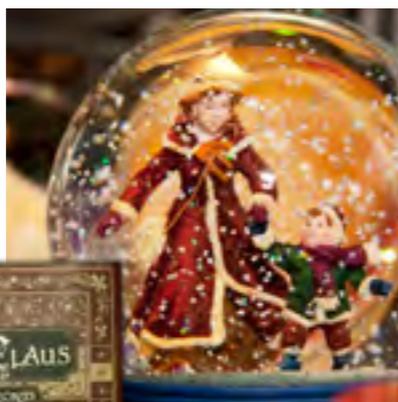
THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

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'. Ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

In the Land of Eternal Christmas

Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas obsession and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to



specialise in Icelandic 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

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THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Association of Iceland 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 that lacks 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



The Handknitting Association of Iceland
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ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

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In the old days, people still had knowledge about nature's richness. They used what Mother Earth provided them: picked leaves and herbs, or searched the shores for the ocean's supplies such as seaweed. The shore is a garden; you just have to know where to harvest and what to collect.

A Pioneer

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta (Icelandic Wholesomeness), aiming at the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness, such as cheese and a varieties of herbal tea. Nothing is added or changed in the production of the products.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first one to revive

the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack and adding Iceland moss, angelica and birch leaves into cheese making. He was also the first to create a bath salt from Icelandic geothermal salt, using seaweed and Mount Hekla pumice. The country is rich in natural resources when it comes to nutriment. His task was to reawaken folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved to be a success, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Northern Lights Salt (a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe) gift packages are available in Icelandair's Saga Shop on board your aircraft.

Hand-Picked and Healthy

The hand-picked Iceland moss is ready for use in tea or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more

nutrient food. By adding seaweed to your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters. Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method. The light and compact Seven Spices Gift Packet containing tea, salt and seaweed is an excellent contribution to your cuisine.

"Mother Earth knows what is best; we pick it for you, and you just have to take it home," says Eyjólfur.

- DT



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CULTURE AND FUN IN THE NORTH

Life in the northernmost capital of the world

When you visit Reykjavik today, you find a modern city with all the services and facilities one would expect in a city ten times its size fitting comfortably into what might be considered a town elsewhere. Yet, here, with its population of about 120,000, is the dynamic, vibrant capital of a young nation that achieved its independence only in 1944. Harpa, the recently-opened concert hall and convention centre epitomises the innovative spirit of the city, having already won many major awards for its radical, yet practical architectural design. Situated right by the harbour, it has already had over 3 million visitors since its opening in 2011.

Bound to the sea

With a history going back only just over a millenium, it is a young city but one that treasures its past, in all its forms. Its harbour is still the main port for imports



and exports and its fishing fleet still sails from here. Iceland's vital relationship to the sea is recorded at the western edge of the harbour in the Reykjavik Maritime Museum, where exhibitions in six halls trace the evolution of its fishing and seafaring culture. Outside, floats the Ódinn, the coastguard ship that played a pivotal role in search and rescue missions that saved many lives over a number of years. It was also one of the vessels that protected Iceland's fishing rights in the notorious Cod Wars.

The Settlement Exhibition

The history of Reykjavik has also been preserved. When digging the foundations for a new hotel in 2001, workmen discovered the ruins of a Viking age hall or longhouse from about 930 AD and parts of a turf wall going back even earlier, to around 870. Archeologists painstakingly uncovered and documented the find. While the hotel was built, it was clearly recognised that this was a find of outstanding value and the site was preserved and turned into a dramatic exhibition, utilising modern media tools.

The exhibition, named Reykjavik 871±2, after the dating of the volcanic ash layer found there, is remarkably only a few metres from the oldest building still in use, built by Skúli Magnússon, a forward-thinking reformer, who built the first factory there.

Another Step in Time

At Árbæjarsafn, once a farm surrounded by countryside but now part of the Reykjavik conurbation, visitors enter another time. Around 150 years ago, when Europe was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, Reykjavik's



population numbered just 2,000 or so. It was a hard, simple life lived by farmers and fishermen and their families for the most part. Gradually, as the town grew more affluent, better Danish style houses were built. Now, at this large open-air museum, visitors can experience many different lifestyles as a number of the buildings have been carefully moved stone-by-stone and beam-by-beam and placed here. Although most come from Reykjavik, one of the first to arrive is a tiny church that was originally built in the northern village of Skagafjörður.

The houses are complete and furnished according to their time period. Being a farm, during the summer, farm animals graze there and the ancient arts and skills are demonstrated. Handicraft, National Costumes and Haymaking days, along with annual Christmas celebrations complement special exhibitions that are held throughout the year. Visitors can sample freshly-made pancakes and sweets over a coffee whilst absorbing this trip into the past.

Art, Sculpture and Culture

Not all the museums focus on history, for Reykjavik is home to a vibrant art and cultural scene. There are three main art centres: Hafnarhús—or The

Harbour House—is situated, unsurprisingly, downtown very close to the harbour. Established in 2000, it has six interconnected exhibition rooms, a multi-purpose space and a courtyard. Its focus is on local and international contemporary art, hosting numerous festivals throughout the year, whilst also being the permanent home for the works of the eclectic Icelandic artist, Erró.

Kjarvalsstaðir: The collection of one of Iceland's most beloved artists, Jóhannes S. Kjarval, famed for his ability to capture the beauty and mysticism of the Icelandic landscapes, is housed in an imposing building set in a park just minutes from the city centre. It also regularly features exhibitions of both Icelandic and international art, architecture and design, focussing on the 20th century.

Ásmundasafn: The third centre, found in Laugardalur (Pool valley), a short bus ride from the town centre, displays the works of sculptor and artist, Ásmundur Sveinsson. He designed the building himself, employing Arabic and Mediterranean influences, in a break from the common architectural styles of his time.

Geothermal Swimming pools

While visiting Ásmundasafn, it is a good time to take a break in one of the many

geothermal swimming pools and hot pots that are a major part of Icelandic culture, their warm waters making them a year-round attraction. The largest pool complex, with jacuzzi, steam baths, sun pool and slides, is Laugardalslaug, 5 minutes walk from Ásmundasafn. Also close by is the Reykjavik Zoo and Family Park and a number of other sporting facilities. However, wherever you are in the city, you are never far from a swimming pool. Because of the warm water, you can swim or bathe comfortably—even in the depths of winter. Besides a regular swimming pool, you will find warm pools for relaxing in, and both hot pots, jacuzzis, saunas and steam baths in almost every pool complex.

The Reykjavik City Card

To make it easy for visitors to get the most out of their time in Reykjavik, the City Card has been introduced to give free access to buses, museums and galleries, swimming pools, zoo and family park and a trip to the island of Viðey. Cards are available for 24, 48 or 72 hour periods, with special discounts for children.

Reykjavik is packed with fascinating features, tours, shops, fine restaurants, nightlife and cultural events. It makes full use of the 24-hour daylight in summer to provide guests with a fulfilling visit to the world's most northern capital. -ASF



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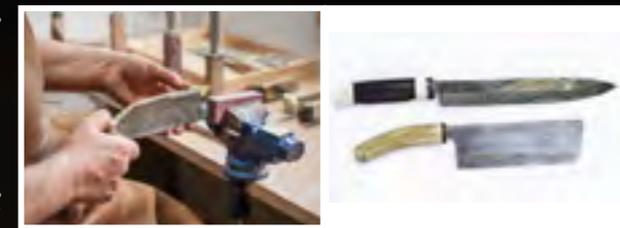
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THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present

In the town of Mosfellsbær, just a 15 minutes' drive from Reykjavík, master craftsman Páll Kristjánsson (or Palli) and his co-creator Soffía Sigurðardóttir are hard at work in their rustic atelier, where they create an array of handsome knives for collectors, chefs, and all those who appreciate the workmanship that goes into a finely crafted tool.



produce a custom knife made to your specifications. More information can be found at their websites listed below where you can browse their collections and even special order online.

Icelandic Artisans at Work
Damascus steel, well known for its durability and razor sharp blades, as well as stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden are choice materials favoured by Palli and Soffía. Many of the blades are Viking Age replicas decorated with finely etched designs that are then expertly paired with a handle carved by Palli. Traditional Icelandic materials are all used to create beautifully carved handles—birch, rowan, horse's hooves, reindeer antler, goat and sheep horn and even fossilised wood. Palli's knives can be found scattered throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items, they sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the internet.

The Woman's Touch
For her part, Soffía, who has worked under Palli's tutelage for several years, has created a line of beautiful professional kitchen knives and forks which are gaining in popularity. Blades for these knives come in various shapes and materials (Japanese, Damascus steel or high carbon steel) and the finely balanced handles make them a joy to use in the kitchen. Chefs, cooking schools and cooking enthusiasts tend to love to show off these one-of-a-kind handmade kitchen tools that have become something of a sought after souvenir from Iceland.

Walk-ins Welcome
Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvetur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are 9 - 6, Monday through Friday, from 9 - 4 on Saturdays or if you are in the neighbourhood outside of those hours, you are always welcome to pop in for a chat. Though a visit to their workshop would be well worth your time, you can also find their products available in Brynja hardware store on Laugavegur 29 in the centre of Reykjavík.

Custom-made
Should you have your own design ideas or materials that you would like to use, Palli and Soffía are happy to work with you to



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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, Snorrastofa in Reykholt and directly from Guðrún.

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



Arkart

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THE CULTURAL CORE



Kópavogur’s Vibrant Cultural Scene Draws Visitors from Around the World

Iceland’s second largest municipality invites you to visit the town’s cultural centre, built on a high hill within a short walking distance of the beautiful church from where you have a breathtaking view of the sea and surrounding areas.

How To Get There

The cultural centre is only about a five minutes’ ride with the fast lane city express buses of Strætó, the public city buses in Iceland. Buses number 1, 2, 4, 28 and 35 all stop in Hamraborgin, just a few steps away from the cultural centre.

A Musical Town

Salurinn music hall has been highly praised by musicians and guests alike for its brilliant acoustics. Here, Icelandic and international musicians of every genre give concerts throughout the year. Just steps away from Salurinn you’ll find the Icelandic Music History Museum which collects, preserves and communicates everything regarding Icelandic music since the time of the settlement to today. This is a place for anyone fascinated by the country’s impressive music scene. Opening hours are from Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed in July). www.tonlistarsafn.is, www.salurinn.is



Museums and Art

Gerðarsafn museum is home to the art of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir. The museum, which focuses on modern and contemporary art, is situated right in the heart of the cultural centre. The building alone, with its wavelike forms in the spirit of the nearby church, is worth a visit.

Illumination is an exhibition of the works of contemporary Icelandic artists inspired by Gerður’s noted stained-glass windows. The exhibition is scheduled this summer from May 15th to August 2nd.

The museum shop also offers designer souvenirs inspired by the art of Gerður Helgadóttir.

Open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. <http://english.gerdarsafn.is>

The Natural History Museum focuses on the fauna of Iceland, mostly birds and molluscs, as well as the island’s geology,

with an emphasis on rocks and minerals. On display are various mammals and live animals and plants in small aquariums. Open Monday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. www.natkop.is/english



The Blue Gem – The Swimming Pools of Kópavogur

The town prides itself immensely on its swimming pools, located a short distance from the cultural centre, which some say are the best in the country. Having been almost completely renovated in 2008, the state-of-the-art recreational centre has a 50 metre outdoor pool and a 25 metre indoor pool, four waterslides, a wading pool, hot pots and a sauna. It’s simply divine to spend the day here, relaxing and soaking in the luxury of earth’s blue gold—water! Open Monday through Friday 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., weekends 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. www.kopavogur.is/thjonusta/ithrottir/sundlaugar -HP



ELVES

Much has been written about the curious belief that many Icelanders hold: that of the existence of elves, trolls and hidden people. Now you might just be of the opinion, along with many other foreigners, that this is nothing more than silly superstition, seen only in Disney movies and in the kitschy gardens of old people. Well, that might be true for you, but here in Iceland things are a tad different, in case you haven't noticed.

Like it or not, it will be just a matter of time before you are compelled to confront the issue once and for all. Eventually you come face to face with entirely sober and lucid Icelanders who recount their personal experiences of the elf phenomenon.

Surveys taken over the years reveal that Icelandic opinions of whether elves exist have not changed very much. The most recent survey from 2006 found that only 13.5% of the sample population believed that this is all basically a bunch of hooey. With only 8% of the sample unwilling to commit to any opinion either for or against, that leaves 78% of the population as either firm elf believers or at least open to the possibility of their existence.

Even a very famous geothermal lagoon has an elf story and reports of elves interfering with plans to expand this particular popular tourist destination, soon surfaced.

Apparently, during the excavation of the site, the machinery suddenly came to a



complete halt. Suspecting 'elf involvement', management finally called in a medium to find out what the problem was. The elves explained that they were upset because they had not been consulted. They wanted to inspect the building's blueprints and asked that the plans be downloaded to a USB stick, put into a box in a hole in the rocks and they would get back to management after they had discussed the matter.

The elves eventually accepted the plans

and agreed that construction should go ahead.

If you are in Iceland, or are planning a visit, come with an open mind and suspend your own beliefs at least for the time being. Then, should you happen to run into an Icelander who is convinced of the existence of these beings (which is very likely), you might gain a new Icelandic friend.

Just try not to laugh. They take these matters seriously. —EMV



LIVING IN THE LAVA

The town where they live with Hidden People and boiling pools

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

Take Hafnarfjörður, the small town you reach first when you come from the airport and is only about 20 minutes' away from Reykjavik centre with fast lane city express bus number 1. It has a colourful history, as one of the oldest Icelandic communities. It's a fishing town, but that's only part of the story.

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

Home for the Huldufólk, too

Exploring the town, you'll come to a quiet street and Hellsisgerði Park. It's a magical place, known for its elves, dwarves and other mystical beings. There are two tours that explain more about the park, that celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2013. It's easy to imagine these 'Huldufólk'

(hidden people) living here amidst the lava rocks that fold and twist, forming tiny caves and strange shapes. Beside the pond, winds a pathway past 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. So don't get surprised if you come across city signs that read 'Town of Lava', 'Town of Vikings' or 'Town of Elves'.

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



The Viking Village is a unique place and it is the only Viking theme Hotel and restaurant in Iceland. We have step by step been developing our facilities over the last 25 years and will hopefully continue to do so in the future. We offer Hotel accommodation and Viking houses. Good for families and groups.

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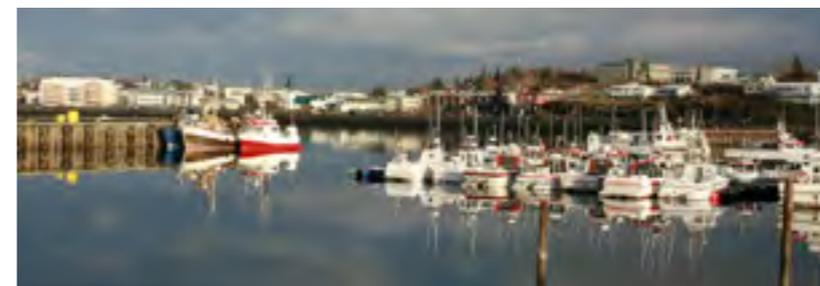
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JOE & THE JUICE GETTING JUICED IN ICELAND

Joe & the Juice is an on-trend coffee shop/ juice bar that opened in January 2015 at Keflavik International Airport. The concept answers today's traveller needs for a quick pick-me-up in the form of great espresso drinks, freshly pressed smoothies and juices, and a variety of sandwiches prepared on the spot.

A Winner Is Born

Created by the Danish entrepreneur Kaspar Basse, Joe & the Juice won the prestigious FAB Awards in the category of 'Best Airport Coffee Shop of the Year' in Copenhagen for 2013 and 2014.

Whew! Hot!

The popular brand, known for its attractive 'juicers' and hip electronic dance music, can be found all over Denmark, and has been popping up elsewhere in Europe—Norway, Sweden, Germany, the UK, France and more recently, here in Iceland. According to Joe & the Juice's Icelandic manager Daníel Kári Stefánsson, "People come for the atmosphere as well as for the healthy drinks, and it's been going even better than we initially expected. The reaction from the Icelandic public has been great".

Flavour, Nutrition and Hydration

Unmistakable names for freshly pressed juice combinations such as 'Sex Me



Up'—passion fruit, ginger and apple, 'Joe's Green Kiss'—spinach, ginger and apple and one called 'Hell of a Nerve'—strawberry, elderberry and banana, are sure to grab your attention. For a distinctly Danish touch, Joe's sandwiches are made with traditionally baked rye bread, using flavourful combinations of fillings such as Serrano ham, mozzarella and tomato, and a touch of pesto.

Size Matters

Joe & the Juice uses a unique blend of coffee beans that have been specially cultivated in South America. There's no extra charge



if you want to up your caffeine intake with a double shot in your latte and you choose your cup size—in pink, purple, yellow or grey. How about a ginger shot for a natural boost of energy? Coming right up! Just ask!

Where to Get Juiced in Iceland

You can find Joe & the Juice at Reykjavík's Kringlan Shopping Mall, Kópavogur's Smáralind Shopping Mall, Laugar Fitness Centre and Keflavik Airport's check-in lounge. A new Joe & the Juice will open in KEF airport's departure lounge on March 15th. This is one place to check out! -EMV

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GREAT VALUE AND GOOD FUN AT GAMLA VÍNHÚSIÐ RESTAURANT



Gamla Vínhusið offers a welcome change of pace after a busy day of sightseeing. With popular locations both in Hafnarfjörður and Reykjavik, it is the downtown restaurant at Laugavegur 73 that is perfectly situated to attract diners on the city's main thoroughfare.

Great Value on the Grill

Stepping into the restaurant from the rustic stone courtyard, customers are greeted by

friendly staff and the earthy ambience of an Italian wine cellar. Although spacious enough to seat 120 guests, Gamla Vínhusið maintains an intimate and comfortable atmosphere. Grilled steaks are the house specialty – from sizzling beefsteak with béarnaise sauce and delicious Icelandic lamb in madeira, to tender peppercorn horse fillet and even minke whale, you are guaranteed to enjoy the fresh, local flavours of Iceland at Gamla Vínhusið.



Impressive Wine List

Of course excellent wine features prominently in any great meal at the 'Old Winehouse', and the restaurant purveys an impressive range of labels from South America, Australia, the United States and Europe. The restaurant's owners have studied extensively in wine regions around the world and are the children of Master Chefs – it goes without saying then, that an understanding of simple, good food and wine is in their blood. Gamla Vínhusið is popular for its appetizing dishes and good prices, excellent service, and an atmosphere that promises to make your experience an enjoyable one. Book your table today at www.gamlavinhusid.is.

- MJA

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THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

The Sea Baron's Fish Meals Attract Visitors from All Over the World

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

The Sea Baron in True spirit

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 never revealed the secrets of his recipe, that has never stopped the 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 to make room for tables and chairs. He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no one else had thought of. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

The Passing of the Sea Baron

Kjartan, the true Sea Baron, has recently passed away. But his legacy will surely live on for many years to come. A few years ago, Kjartan passed his mantle on to Elísabet Jean Skúladóttir, an energetic and vibrant young woman who actually bought the restaurant at the Sea Baron's request. Kjartan wanted to make sure his place would be well taken care of in the future, but he used to joke that, not only did Elísabet make a great investment by purchasing the restaurant, but he was included



in the deal himself. Kjartan's spirit will surely remain palpable as visitors will not only feel his energy but he will actually be there to greet them in the form of a wax sculpture!

Dining as a Seafaring Experience

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. Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, it 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. Moby Dick on a Stick (minke whale on a spear) for example, is a play on words with great impact, delicious and stirring—as are the great variety of other fish spears with a mix of cod, blue ling, salmon, trout, lobster and giant shrimp, to name a few. Also worth mentioning is an Icelandic specialty dish, available at noon on Thursdays, a combination of fermented fish. On the first Saturday of the month they offer skate with heaps of hamsatólg (fried fat), potatoes and rye bread with butter. This delicacy is only available from 1st September – 30th April. For desert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónagrauttur—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

Bon Voyage Sea Baron!

The Sea Baron will be missed dearly by all who knew him. His heritage will live on and there is no doubt that his recipes will continue to warm the bellies of both Icelanders and travellers alike for generations to come. This man has surely put his mark on the restaurant landscape and changed the way we perceive a grand dining experience.

- ASF



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TAKE A BITE OUT OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE, GET INSIDE GAME OF THRONES AND SAIL THE GLACIER LAGOON WITH GRAY LINE ICELAND

The Delicious Golden Circle Food Tour

Iceland's spectacular "golden circle" features a trinity of natural wonders that perfectly exemplify the elemental power and beauty of the country. An easy day trip from Reykjavik, it would seem difficult to improve upon this popular scenic route that includes the Geysir geothermal area, Gullfoss waterfall and UNESCO heritage site Þingvellir National Park, but Gray Line Iceland has done just that with their new Golden Circle Food Tour.

Your Golden Circle Food Tour includes the opportunity to enjoy Icelandic specialties directly from local producers. The family run Efsti-dalur farm will welcome you for a delicious lunch of regional favourites, homemade with ingredients grown on-site. The folks on the farm are happy to meet and chat with visitors, so don't hesitate to strike up a conversation.

Later is a tour of the Friðheimar Greenhouse, famous for tomatoes that are bursting with tangy sweetness. The greenhouse focuses on eco-friendly practices and the utilisation of natural resources like geothermal heat to grow the purest, most flavourful produce possible. Why not try some of their tasty jams and chutneys while you're at it?

The cultural jewel "Íslenski Bærinn" Turf House is the last stop before returning to Reykjavik, and is one of Iceland's best preserved turf farms. This unique style of architecture will take guests back to a time when hard work and a connection to nature created some of Iceland's most well-loved traditions. The Turf House Kitchen offers a variety of local delicacies, and you will have the chance to sample traditional flatbread and smoked lamb, knotted doughnuts,

dried fish and seaweed, crepe-like pancakes filled with rhubarb jelly and whipped cream, as well as the local wildflower honey and mead.

Punctuating some of Iceland's most dramatic scenery with scrumptious local cuisine, the Golden Circle Food Tour is the ideal way for travelers to taste the cultural heritage of Iceland. The tour includes a professional guide, round trip transportation, and complimentary pick-up at major hotels and guesthouses within Reykjavik.

Where the Wildlings Are

One of the most gripping series on television today, Game of Thrones, has garnered a formidable and dedicated following from around the globe. Season four brought production of the show back to Iceland, where the rugged and often otherworldly landscape



served as a backdrop for some of the most exciting action the series has seen.

Fans of George R. R. Martin's work will be thrilled to follow in the footsteps of some of their favourite characters on Gray Line's Game of Thrones Tour, where Iceland's first parliament, Þingvellir National Park, features prominently as parts of Westeros. Hike along the trail of the Wildlings North of the Wall, and explore the dramatic territory of the White Walkers before visiting a settlement era Viking lodge in Þjórsárdalur, used as the site of a massacre in season four. Expert narration throughout the tour also emphasises the historical significance of the sites on this trip. At last you will even get a chance to meet and great some of the show's

regular „cast members“ as there tour will take you to Fákasel, the only Icelandic horse theatre, where the quadruped stars are resident. They also give live performances on daily basis which is truly a sight worth seeing. The Game of Thrones Tour is a convenient excursion packed full of some of the best literary sightseeing and Viking history you'll find anywhere.

Ancient Ice at the Glacier Lagoon

One of Gray Line's longer tours, the South Coast and Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon Tour promises incredible natural contrast.

From Reykjavik, the tour follows along Iceland's picturesque South Coast, through landscape famous in the sagas, on to Skógafoss,

where you can get up close and feel the refreshing spray of one of Iceland's most beautiful and well-known waterfalls.

Later on, the grandeur of Vatnajökull National Park greets you as the tour stops in Freysnes for lunch. Upon arrival at the breathtaking Jökulsárlón, the lagoon at Breiðamerkurjökull glacier, the chill air focuses the senses – it is mesmerising to watch as ancient chunks of ice, striped with ash from past volcanic eruptions, float silently in the frigid water on their way out to sea. A boat tour on the lagoon is the perfect way to experience the magnitude of the icebergs and the truly remarkable natural forces at work. On the way home, the black sand beaches of the stunningly situated village of Vík welcome travelers to enjoy a barefoot amble along the coast before the tour's last stop at the striking Seljalandsfoss waterfall.

Gray Line's professional guides provide invaluable insight into the range of sights on the South Coast and Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon Tour, a trip which highlights the enchanting variety of the sensational South Coast. For more information on these and other tours offered by Gray Line Iceland, visit www.grayline.is. - MJA



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The Game of Thrones Tour

FIRE UNDER THE SNOW

Under the mountains behind Reykjavik lies a hidden power

The columns of steam, rising high into the sky, are clearly visible from the capital. Deep below the mountains, the earth is still burning hot and today, that heat provides a source of warmth and electricity for all the capital area.

The Geothermal Energy Exhibition on the Mountain

Just about a 20 minute drive by car, Sterna line or Iceland Excursions-Grayline Iceland coach, the Geothermal Energy Exhibition



on Hellisheiði makes a fascinating and educational visit at any time of the year. In many ways, it is even more spectacular in the snowy winter months, providing such a contrast between the conditions on the surface compared to those below ground.

This is the newest and largest geothermal plant in Iceland and Orkusýn provides a rare look into the one of the world's most powerful clean energy resources. Multimedia displays and experienced guides explain how Iceland has become a leader in this form of clean energy and you can get a close look at its production.

Refreshments are available in the café while books and DVDs about geothermal energy are to be found in the souvenir area. If you would like to get a better understanding of clean energy, this is the best place to visit.

- ASF



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VOLCANO TOURS DAY TRIPS

Volcano Tours is a small family owned company that specialises in luxury jeep tours around the south-west corner of Iceland. They offer several day trips with pickup from hotels in Reykjavik and Keflavik.

The Volcano Garden, Blue Lagoon

The Volcano Garden trip is a 5- to 6-hour journey around Reykjanes peninsula, which is known for its 100 volcanic craters, 200 caves, numerous lava fields, and the Blue Lagoon. A stop for a bath in the Blue Lagoon is optional.

Eyjafjallajökull and Þórsmörk

Another option is an 8-hour tour to explore the volcano Eyjafjallajökull. It is famous for halting international flights when it erupted in 2010, and causing spectacular floods in Iceland. An 8-hour jeep tour brings you to the volcano, several glaciers and waterfalls, as well as many beautiful highland places along the way.



The Golden Circle and South Shore

This is a 10- to 12-hour journey that takes you to Þingvellir National Park; famous volcanoes such as Eyjafjallajökull and Sólheimajökull; many beautiful waterfalls, including the impressive Gullfoss; and the original Geysir, which all other geysers are named after.



Northern Lights

Iceland is one of the best places to view the northern lights. During the winter, trips are available nightly from the beginning of October until the end of March. If you don't see any lights you can re-book a second aurora tour for free.

- SF

Volcano Tours
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TAKE A RIDE ON THE WILD SIDE OF ICELAND WITH BIKING VIKING

Boasting tours like "To Hell and Back", it's pretty clear that the guys at Biking Viking know how to have fun. Founded in 1998, Biking Viking Motorcycle Tours deals exclusively with BMW motorcycles and has an unrivaled reputation for top-notch tailor-made trips.

Biking Viking offers up flexible trip planning so that clients get the most out of every day on the road. Tours range from twenty-four hours up to ten days in length, and activities like fly fishing, kayaking or whale watching can be great additions to the itinerary. Rentals are also available for those who wish to explore



Iceland on their own, but be warned—if you want to ride the highland F-roads, you're going to need a guide.

Biking Viking's expert guides Hjörtur L. Jónsson, Þorgeir Ólafsson and Eyþór Örlygsson have decades of riding experience and a love for Iceland's lesser known roads. Their technical expertise and extensive knowledge of Iceland's history and landscape is an indispensable part of every tour, making it possible for clients to discover the best Iceland has to offer, wild and up close.

Whether you're a beginner biker or an accomplished rider, part of a group or on a solo



tour, Biking Viking offers highly professional, personalised service to make your motorcycling adventure in Iceland the experience of a lifetime. Book your tour today at www.biking-viking.is.

- MJA

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EXPERIENCE THE ICELANDIC SUMMER IN GOOD COMPANY

Reykjavik Excursions Will Help You Get There



Reykjavik Excursions is one of the oldest and most popular travel companies in Iceland and has been operating since the late 1960s. It operates dozens of tours all year round but offers specialty tours depending on the season.

The summers are spectacular in Iceland, even though it doesn't get particularly warm. Breathtaking mountains show their true colours when the snow melts away, as do the moss and the lava fields. And with the 24-hour daylight, it is possible to go sightseeing during the night.

Relaxing Under the Midnight Sun

This tour offers a chance to relax in a natural hot spring in the evening while it is still bright. From BSÍ Bus Terminal, where all Reykjavik Excursions tours start, you are driven to the geothermal baths at Laugarvatn Fontana. There are three steam rooms which are collectively called Gufan (or the Steam).



The rooms have been built over a natural hot spring, which locals have used for over 80 years. The steam rooms aren't always the

same temperature; it varies depending on the hot spring and the weather. Usually, it is between 40° and 50°C. The floors have

grids which allow guests to smell and hear the boiling natural hot spring and it creates a natural and totally unique experience.

Apart from the steam rooms, Fontana has a Finnish steam room, called Ylur (Warmth), where the temperature is between 80° and 90°C. The humidity is lower there than in Gufan. There are also a few mineral baths that vary in depth, size and temperature. While some are suitable for relaxation, others offer space for movement and playful moments.

Since the spa is next to Laugarvatn lake, it is possible to reach the lake through a gate at the location. Ströndin, or the Beach, has warm black sand and has been beneficial for those who suffer from arthritis and other joint illnesses.

On the way back from Laugarvatn, a small detour is taken through the countryside. It's not every day you can go sightseeing late in the evening. This tour starts on 15 May.



middle of the fissure zone of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge which traverses Iceland. The hot springs, mud pots and fumaroles have coloured the soil around it a bright yellow, red and green.

Mountain Bike Tour

Those who want a little bit more exercise can take the Mountain Bike tour. From BSÍ, the course is taken towards the Blue Lagoon. There you will meet your guides, get a bike and a helmet.

You will bike on three different paths during this tour. One is a gravel path from the Blue Lagoon through the black lava and moss, which changes colour from grey to green, depending on the weather. From there you go onto Mt. Þorbjörn on a mountain road. On the way back you get to bike on the paved Ingibjörg path towards the fishing village of Grindavík. This tour is not suitable for those under the age of 10. The tour offers a different way to experience the breathtaking Icelandic nature.

For those who want a more traditional tour, the ever popular Golden Circle tour is on offer all year round, with multiple departure times. In the tour, you will go to Geysir geothermal area, Gullfoss waterfall and the national park Þingvellir which collectively are called the Golden Circle.

Reykjavik Excursions has something on offer for everyone and gives you a chance to experience Iceland in a different way. -HDB

The Horse Theatre – The Legend of Sleipnir

The Icelandic horse has a reputation for being small and friendly—just don't call it a pony; Icelanders are very proud that it is classified as a horse. Reykjavik Excursions' Horse Theatre tour is for equestrian and animal lovers alike. It is set in Fákasel Horse Park, just outside Hveragerði in South Iceland. The show is both entertaining and educational for the whole family; history, mythology and exhibition riding is woven together to show the horse's role in Icelandic history and culture. At the end of the show, guests get a chance to interact with the riders and horses which is followed by a bowl of traditional Icelandic meat soup at the in-house restaurant. The soup is very filling and consists of lamb and various vegetables.

Afterwards, the course is taken back to Reykjavik but with a detour through the scenic Krýsvík hot spring area. It is situated in the

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Viking Travels

Have you ever joined a tour where you were simply one of the crowd visiting one place after another, for nothing more than taking pictures?

We have, too.

And it's one of the reasons why we created Viking Travels. We thought there had to be a way to provide a personal service where we create a great group dynamic and have great fun, while also seeing the best of what Iceland has to offer - and we believe we have managed to do just that.

Be sure to check out our flagship tours "Njála" and "Baugur" - see more details on our website www.vikingtravels.is

Both of these tours are action-packed and stretch over many days. We visit many of the most beautiful natural gems which Iceland has to offer, while also giving you a first-hand look at how people live in the countryside. Prepare to spend time outdoors, enjoy picnics, and be mesmerised by unique natural landscape.

If you are more interested in shorter tours, we do of course provide day tours to many of the country's main tourist attractions such as to the beautiful Þórs mörk, the Blue Lagoon or to the Golden Circle. For the brave and adventurous, we can even prepare a "destination unknown" trip!

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SEEING ICELAND WITH MERCURY-GRAIL TOURS

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Iceland is one of those rare places on earth that delivers so much in terms of breathtaking scenery. Everywhere you look you are confronted with soul-stirring and even life-affirming natural sites that really do take your breath away.

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Let Mercury-Grail Tours show you the magic of Iceland in their own special way, making sure your trip to Iceland is everything you dreamed it would be. - EMV



Mercury Grail ehf

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HIKE OVER GLACIERS, VOLCANOES AND MOUNTAINS

Básar in Goðaland provides the accommodation

Básar in Goðaland is a place with mountain huts in the great hiking area of Þórs mörk. It is owned by Útivist, the Icelandic hiking club. It is located at the junction of two of Iceland's most famous hiking trails, Fimmvörðuháls and Laugavegur. The huts can accommodate 80-90 people and are occupied by wardens

from early May until October. In the summer there is running water and water toilets near the huts and on many of the campsites. The huts are heated with oil stoves. Útivist has published a hiking map with descriptions of paths around Þórs mörk and Goðaland. If you are looking for a good hiking area this might be exactly what you are looking for, a

place where you can find glaciers, volcanoes and beautiful landscape. GPS coordinate: N 63°40.559' W 19°29.014'



Útivist Travel Assn.

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GREEN ENERGY TRAVEL: “DIFFERENT AND PROUD OF IT”

Green Energy Travel organises small groups and uses biodiesel to minimise the impact on our fragile natural sites. The company specialises in guided tours to all the obligatory tourist sites, along with detours by less travelled roads. Along the way, you will see little gems that few others get to see.

From Mild to Wild

Green Energy Travel offers every kind of tour and activity that one can think of, ranging from Blue Lagoon bus trips to glacier hikes, horseback riding tours, rafting and snowmobiling. The company has organised tours for families and friends for all sorts of opportunities and events, including weddings. The Wedding Special gives you a wedding ceremony in a truly unique location - all paperwork and local licence



included. In general the tours are in English, German, and the Scandinavian languages. But guidance in other languages is possible if booked in advance.

Golden Circle/Blue Lagoon 2 in 1

Green Energy Travel's most popular package is the Golden Circle and Blue Lagoon two-in-one day tour, which includes an additional stop in beautiful Krísuvík. This package does not require switching buses and taking detours into Reykjavik, as is the norm with rival



companies. Green Energy Travel also offers unique options, including an impressive array of themed tours. You can explore the geology of Iceland, its nature, folklore, Viking settlements, and the locations of our famed Sagas. The possibilities are too numerous to list, but the glowing reviews on TripAdvisor speak for themselves. - SF



Green Energy Travel ehf

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THE SPORT OF LORDS AND KINGS

Fly fishing with the Fishing-international-service-holidays

After working long hours, weeks and months in an office, travelling back and forth through crowded, congested cities, choking with pollution, it's time to take a break and enjoy the sport of kings. They know the importance of getting away from it all into the clean air and spectacular beauty of the countryside, where the freshness of the free-flowing rivers relaxes the mind and expands the spirit.

After wrestling with challenges in the office or on the computer, it's time to enjoy a different kind of wrestling: a chance to catch and land a large trout or salmon in the pools and eddies of one of Iceland's famous fishing rivers.

Fly fishing is a popular sport in Iceland, with many anglers returning year after year for the fishing, nature and the unspoiled beauty of Iceland. Fishing-international-service-holidays

offers both individual fishing and small, exclusive groups of no more than 6 to 12 rods the opportunity to fish in Iceland's best rivers.

F-i-s-h.co offers both full service and self-service options. By full service, they do mean full. The different river associations vie for the best chefs in the country to cook at the lodges - denuding Reykjavik of the cream of the top chefs for the summer months to prepare the most deliciously appetizing feasts you could hope for. On the trout fishing destinations, this is an available option.

The guides have fishing in their blood and usually forsake their winter jobs to provide anglers with the best counsel regarding locations and methods for catching their fish. Their experience can be a great help, as they know the rivers like the back of their hands.

The trout season begins 1st May and the salmon fishing season starts in June, continuing

all the way to October, in some cases. The fish pour into the rivers in extraordinary numbers from the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, leaping their way upstream. These are mountain rivers, cascading over rocks in beautiful waterfalls and rapids. The salmon take a break in the pools below these falls to rest before continuing their journey upstream.

While many of the best rivers are in remote locations, there are a number within easy reach of the capital, making day trips easy. The air is pure. The fish are plentiful and clearly visible in the crystal clear water. The surrounding countryside is considered some of the most beautiful in the world. The sound of cars is noticeably absent, with only the sounds of the nature and the water.

Throughout the summer, the sun barely dips below the horizon. At night, the sky gives a heavenly, warm glow to the landscape.

Although the weather can changeable - that's part of Iceland's unique charm and challenge, as the fisherman pits his wits against the conditions to land what could be a trophy trout, or the largest char or salmon he has ever caught.

On arrival at the international airport in Keflavik, the individual or group is met and chauffeured to their hotel or lodge. After a long international flight, most visitors prefer to stop in Reykjavik for a night or two to rest up before heading to the lodge. F-i-s-h.co can arrange this - as well as a stay before heading home, to give time for shopping and sight-seeing.

Some of the rivers are found in the north and east of Iceland, so flights from Reykjavik airport to the closest airport are provided, where they are met by chauffeured 4WD jeep or SUV transportation for the final leg to the lodge.



The rivers and lodges are normally heavily booked, so making reservations early is crucial to gain a place to fish Iceland's rivers. Since the 1930s, laws have been put in place to ensure the best development of the rivers and competition between the river associations is fierce to provide the best conditions for fishing. Every river has a very different character, presenting different challenges to the groups, many of whom return year after year.

For those who like to take care of their own catering, the Fishing-international-service-holidays also offers self-catering facilities on 5 rivers in Iceland.

Not everybody can spend their whole visit fly fishing - as much as they might like to. To ensure that such keen fishermen are not left out, f-i-s-h.co offers day tours for trout or salmon fishing. The locations of the tours depend on the fishing conditions and their availability, but f-i-s-h.co knows all the best spots for a good day out. As its name suggests, the Fishing-international-service-holidays is not confined to Iceland alone. It provides opportunities to fish in both Russia, Norway and Sweden for large salmon weighing between 30 to 40lb or more

- a catch of a lifetime. Norway is a well-known salmon fishing destination whilst Sweden offers the chance to fish for the large Baltic salmon.

In coming seasons, f-i-s-h.co will be offering more rich fishing destinations in North Atlantic countries and more in Sweden but, for now, the challenges that are currently available provide a holiday that will be remembered for years to come - with the photos to show family and friends to prove it. You can keep up to date by checking their Facebook page.

The owner of f-i-s-h.co puts it this way, "I have been spoiled for choice abundant fly fishing in Iceland for salmon, wild brown trout and Arctic char since moving here 25 years ago. Iceland for me has been, and will always be, an amazing place to fish. The scenery is by far the best I have experienced on all of my fishing travels. The tranquil settings that surround you while fishing are always inspiring, and any visitor who has cast a fly here in Iceland will always talk of wonderful memories of the untouched nature, the valleys, the midnight sun and, of course, the abundance of fish to be caught. All this just adds to the passion that I have for this most amazing of sports." -ASF



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DUTY FREE ICELAND: ICELAND'S BEST KEPT SECRET



Iceland was once called “Europe’s Best Kept Secret”, but tourism has grown exponentially this century. And in 2015, it is predicted that this country of around 330 thousand citizens will receive over one million visitors, most of whom will pass through Keflavik International Airport, which has an exceptional duty free shopping centre. Duty Free Iceland is tax-free and open day and night. It is available to arriving and departing passengers regardless of origin and destination, and it carries all the common international brands and products, plus a growing range of unique Icelandic products.

Award Winning Icelandic Spirits and Beers

The Duty Free Iceland shop carries all the popular international brands, but it has also brought in some of the very best examples of local spirits and beers. The pioneering

family at Eimverk Distillery produces environmentally friendly high-quality spirits from pollution-free botanicals, using only geothermal energy. They bring us Flóki whiskey, the first entirely Icelandic whiskey, and Vor Gin which won the 2014 San Francisco World Spirits Double Gold Award. Iceland’s first micro distillery, 64° Reykjavik Distillery, has won many international awards for its products, including the Grand Gold Quality Award in the Belgian Monde Selection, the Silver award in the British International Spirit Challenge, and the Red Dot award for great design. It also received the 2011 Silver ISW International Spirit Award in Berlin, for its crowberry liqueur. Duty Free Iceland also carries a large selection of local beers, which have also earned many international awards. A wide range of flavours is on offer, from numerous smaller breweries, as well as larger companies.

Internationally Acclaimed Icelandic Cosmetic Products

In addition to the traditional international brands, Duty Free Iceland offers numerous locally produced cosmetic products from several Icelandic manufacturers, including Sóley Organics, Villimey, Purity Herbs, Blue Lagoon and Zopure. Their products are becoming internationally known for high-quality ingredients, lack of harmful chemicals, and of course their effectiveness. Sóley Organic, for example, has acquired an international reputation for its signature product, Græðir (Healer), which can heal various forms of eczema, psoriasis, skin irritations, burn wounds, yeast infections, diaper rashes, dry skin, and even minor wounds. The scientists at Bioeffect won a Nobel prize for their work, and their company offers a range of revolutionary biotech skin care products, including the recently introduced EFG Day Serum which



rejuvenates the skin and minimises the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Icelandic Confectionery

Duty Free Iceland stocks the popular international brands as well as some purely Icelandic brands with growing reputations, such as Omnom and Hafliði Ragnarsson. Their mouth-watering chocolate confectionery has become extremely popular and almost impossible to resist.

Don't Wait Until Departure

Duty Free Iceland also has a store in the arrivals section, in the luggage hall. You can shop while you wait for your luggage, and save up to 50% on city prices. - SF

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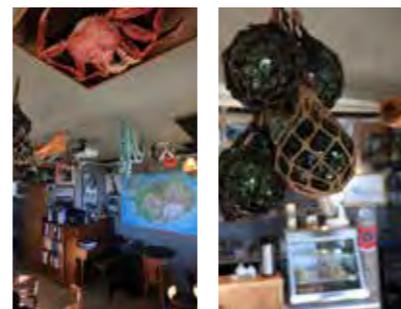


GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

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



Images © Gabriel Rutenberg

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

Café Bryggjan
 Miðgarði 2 - 240 Grindavík
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 www.kaffibryggjan.is



panorama.is
© Brynjar Agustsson

A10 DELUXE BED AND BREAKFAST



Located just 5 minutes from the Keflavik Airport

Photo: Eva Björk

A 10 Deluxe BnB is family-operated in a residential area within walking distance of different restaurants, pubs and shops. Many people are surprised to realize that this is no ordinary Bed and Breakfast but more of a home-style boutique hotel.

culture. However, they can also receive personalised tour planning with an American-based travel agency located right in the building. Each tour has been tested, so they know the offers and will help plan each excursion.

Personal Tour Planning

Free buses operate throughout the day, so visitors can tap into the local

A Perfect Place to call Home

In a clean, comfortable, domestic atmosphere, the two owners mother and son work together

to provide personal, family-style service. For example, the mom prepares the meals, while the son organizes trips.

The beds are very comfortable with crisp linens. Each room is meticulously maintained while retaining a tranquil home-style ambiance. Complimentary breakfasts are served between 7-10am but, if you have an earlier flight, you can take a homemade snack with you.

The Beauty is in the Details

Prearranged transportation plus extra amenities such as free WiFi, a Jacuzzi and the Northern Lights Hall, where guests can meet and mingle, are a feature of A10 Deluxe BnB, which is a non-smoking house.

The beautifully decorated rooms range from small cosy bedrooms to larger rooms with private bathrooms. -OAB

A10 Deluxe Bed and Breakfast
 Aðalgata 10 - 230 Reykjanesbær
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 info@a10deluxe.com
 www.a10deluxe.com

THE PLACE TO STAY IN GRINDAVÍK

Guesthouse Borg offers economical comfort in a friendly house

In most countries, the opportunity to experience life in a fishing town has all but disappeared. Not so in Iceland, where Grindavík is one of the busiest. Situated a few kilometres from the world-famous Blue Lagoon, 20 minutes from Keflavik's International airport and 40 minutes from the capital, the town is packed with history going back as far as the first settlers. A geological hotspot, the area

offers such a wide array of other tours, sights and experiences that one holiday is not enough.

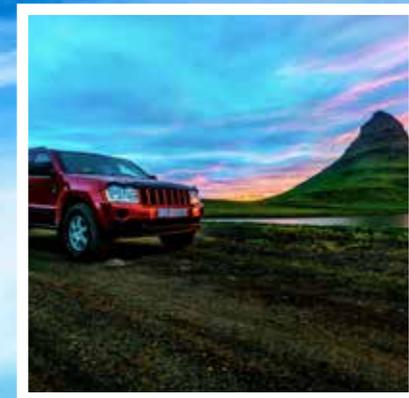
Guesthouse Borg is an ideal place to stay, meet interesting people and enjoy the facilities and fun the town offers. It caters for individuals, couples, families and groups of up to 16 people in a clean, modestly-priced homestay accommodation. You'll find a full kitchen



where you can cook your own meals, a laundry and a computer to go online. Breakfasts are provided on a self-service basis. Owners Björk and Magnús make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. -ASF

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NOT JUST FIRE & ICE

Investment Opportunities in Iceland

When thinking of foreign investment opportunities, a small island nation in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean may not necessarily be the first location that comes to mind, but the fact of the matter is that Iceland has quite a lot to offer.

Iceland's economy is considered quite advanced and was, for example, ranked 23rd on the 2014 Index of Economic Freedom and operates within the European and Scandinavian regulatory framework and quality standards. Iceland's relatively low corporate taxes and incentives for foreign direct investment provide evidence for this, with the current corporate tax rate at 20%, compared to the global average of 23.57%.

Competitive Green Energy

The country itself and its people are what truly set it apart. The country's strategic location, midway between Europe and North America, has obvious benefits. As the demand for sustainable energy in the world increases, Iceland's abundance of hydro and geothermal energy resources provide multiple opportunities for energy dependent industries looking for competitively priced green energy. The people of Iceland are known for their willingness to pursue innovation and for overcoming obstacles. Iceland maintains a highly skilled and educated workforce with a flexible labour market.

Tourism Boom

Iceland is currently in the midst of a tourism boom where the increase in tourists has been on a steady rise for the last few years with a predicted increase of visitors of over 20% in 2014, resulting in close to one million annual visitors. Given this growing increase, coupled with strong political and business support and the relatively short development of Iceland's tourism industry, the opportunities are seemingly endless. Iceland's location works to the industry's benefit, along with the plethora of incomparable natural phenomena and Iceland's strong cultural identity.

The tourism industry has so far been focused on a select few sites, which leaves many exciting locations and activities open for exploration. Iceland's high tourist season is also getting longer and tourist visits are spread more evenly throughout the year, which in turn creates new seasonal opportunities for tourism operators. High-end services and accommodation are also in great demand, leaving potential investors with countless ways of meeting the demands of more affluent tourists who are looking for upscale services and accommodation.

-VAG

ENTRUSTED WITH COMPLEX PROJECTS

The roots of the construction company Sveinbjörn Sigurðsson Ltd. (SS) go back to the year 1942. That year, the founder, Sveinbjörn Sigurðsson master carpenter, started a contracting business. The company has been owned by his family ever since, and the current owners are the three sons of Sveinbjörn. Ármann Óskar Sigurðsson, Director of the Development Division, and Bjarni Þór Einarsson, Finance Director, say that the company is the oldest construction firm in the country and that one of its main strengths indeed lies in having a successful history that goes back 73 years.

Bjarni says that during the first few years, Sveinbjörn built a considerable amount of residential housing. He soon, though, started participating in the bidding market and working on many construction projects, mainly for the city and state. "The City Theatre, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, sports centres, churches, bridges, and movie theatres, as well as several other buildings that complement their environment, and that SS has built in a little more than seven decades, testify to the trust that the company has enjoyed throughout this period," says Bjarni. "We have mainly operated in the bidding market and have not invested much in projects."

The largest current project is the construction of residential housing by Mánatún in Reykjavík. In that location, the company manages for investors the construction of 175 apartments. The first phase, 91 apartments, is about to come to a close, and work on the second phase, 44 apartments, is about to begin. The construction at Mánatún started about two years ago and Bjarni says that it will presumably take two more years for the company to finish the work. The last large project prior to Mánatún

was the construction of student housing for the University of Iceland, a total of 299 apartments and rooms. The work began in the beginning of 2012, and the construction was completed in two years.

Important Experience at Grundartangi

In addition to larger projects, such as the residential housing at Mánatún and the student housing, Bjarni says that SS usually attends to various other projects as well, both large and small, as well as various maintenance work. This includes the permanent presence of the company at Norðurál in Grundartangi. "We have been at Grundartangi since 2004 and are therefore very familiar with that setting. This has turned out to be important and valuable to us, because safety requirements are nowhere more extensive than in aluminium plants. One could say that the aluminium plants to a certain extent set the agenda as regards safety issues in the construction industry. It is very important to us to be trusted to attend to those tasks that arise in such a workplace. This is an experience that significantly strengthens the company."

Around 100 Employees

There are a little over eighty employees at SS. In addition, between ten and twenty own-account workers operate as subcontractors bringing the total number of employees to a little less than one hundred. The number of employees has increased somewhat in recent periods. Bjarni says that the turnover of SS is now approximately two and a half billion ISK per year. When it was lowest, the turnover went down to about 800 million ISK in 2011.

"We did not run into problems right after the

banking crisis of 2008 and managed to keep our employees engaged in work for the most part," says Bjarni. "This was mostly thanks to agreements which held, for example, with the City of Reykjavík and Norðurál. Later, however, we had to undergo asset restructuring with our commercial bank, a process that we completed in 2011. No write-offs were necessary at that time, because it was possible to pay off debts with existing assets. We, however, ran into problems because of our work on the student housing and needed to undergo a debt adjustment with creditors in the beginning of 2014. We are now completing that process and everything has gone according to plan. It is in some ways interesting and worthy of respect that the vast majority of those who negotiated with us and had to write off debt are still working for us today."

Trust Is Important

Ármann says that it applies equally to suppliers, subcontractors and individuals, who incurred losses because of the debt adjustment of SS in the last year, that they are still working for the company. He says that the history of SS is important in that regard, as well as other factors. "It is also important that we, for example, have a low employee turnover. In addition, those who have been added to our group are quite experienced. These points are important because of what they say about the company. They in fact create trust in the company, which has an effect at all levels."

-GJG



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A CALL FOR INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

The Office of Property Management and Economic Development of the City of Reykjavik is responsible for promoting Reykjavik as a business location. Óli Örn Eiríksson, Head of Economic Development for the City of Reykjavik, says that foreign direct investment (FDI) is challenging, including tasks related to so-called expats.

In addition to being responsible for promoting Reykjavik as a business location, the Office of Property Management and Economic Development of the City of Reykjavik assists local and international companies considering locating or expanding in Reykjavik to reach their business objectives, as well as develop new economic areas in the city of Reykjavik. These responsibilities of the office are part of the overall construction, operation and maintenance of buildings and structures owned by the city as well as land, lots and other properties in the city's ownership, including rental agreements, land leases, communications with the Public Road Administration and other parties regarding construction projects in the city.

In the year 2014, fDi Intelligence, a division of the Financial Times, ranked Reykjavik number two on its list of "Top 10 Northern European Cities Excluding UK and Ireland" as part of its business report titled "European Cities and Regions of the Future 2014/2015". The list is based on collected data regarding salaries, GDP, infrastructure, education, job

creation and price inflation. Óli Örn Eiríksson, Head of Economic Development for the City of Reykjavik, says it is inspiring for the office staff to get this recognition. It indicates that the office is on the right track.

"Foreign investment in the City of Reykjavik is divided into direct investment, on the one hand, and indirect investment, on the other. Investment in operating companies is indirect investment. This is much more common for foreign investment in Reykjavik than a direct investment, where foreign

investors start their own activities. I believe the ratio is about 80% indirect foreign investment compared to about 20% direct investment."

Eiríksson comments that the direct investment is a much more complicated process for foreign investors in Iceland than the indirect one. "Direct investment calls for governmental intervention and their support to ease the process. There is need to explain the investment process in Iceland. American investors coming here find it, for instance, difficult to understand laws and regulations

relating to the lease of land. They usually know about purchasing land for economic activity. Here, on the other hand, land is leased for 50 years, which is usually regenerated automatically, unless urgent planning reasons require otherwise. This must be explained. Foreign investment, therefore, calls for information and support in various fields."

Expats

Foreign persons residing temporarily or permanently in a country, which they are not

citizens of, are often named expats. They tend to be experts or specialists, who are needed to improve the competitiveness of companies. These are therefore persons that cities or regions usually want to attract. Expats may stay for maybe three to five years in a foreign country and, therefore, need certain services. Óli Örn Eiríksson says that, according to a recent survey, Icelandic export companies estimate that they will need a few hundred additional experts or specialists in the coming years, and that about one third of those will need to be



foreign expats. "We at the Office of Property Management and Economic Development of Reykjavik have been working with others to analyse the situation in this regard. We are also cooperating with the congress, with Althingi, in this regard, which is preparing new law about immigrants. Our request is that the legal framework for foreign experts or specialists, the expats, will be similar to that in the Nordic countries. We hope to see simpler resident permits and tax incentives, so that the business sector will be more competitive. Conditions for expats have become a major issue around the world. Also in Iceland." - GJG



Invest in Reykjavik

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SAW AN OPPORTUNITY AND MADE THE MOST OF IT



The engineers Jónas Már Gunnarsson and Hjalti Gylfason established the consulting, constructions and development company Mannverk in 2012 when few construction projects were being undertaken in Iceland following the banking crisis of fall 2008. They saw an opportunity to make a niche for themselves in the construction market and build on what they had learned from the crisis. Many construction companies faced great difficulties because of the banking crisis and numerous people who worked in the field lost their job due to the great contraction in building operations.

Jónas Már and Hjalti were project managers at ÍAV during this time. "Almost everything came to a stop and virtually nothing was built for a few years," says Jónas Már. "The need for new apartments was again in place. It just accumulated. We therefore saw a certain opportunity in the middle of the crisis, an opportunity that would, for example, build on what could be learned from the crisis. It consisted mainly in doing as careful a job as possible in all areas. Construction projects are very complex, and good, careful project management is of paramount importance. It was in these

areas that we saw opportunities." Mannverk specialises in operation contracting, consulting, project management and development. "We look for opportunities, look into what possibilities various lots offer, whether it be hotels, apartments, or whatever else is appropriate at each time. We often go through possible changes to land use plans, if we so choose, and try to create the products that we feel good about and that the market is asking for. Everything ends with that, but we strive to be proud of what we deliver. Quality is of greatest importance. We therefore have technically



skilled people for managing and for quality control and we believe that good people are the foundation of successful company and our most important resource.

Great Knowledge of Data Centre

According to Jónas Már, Mannverk has two hotel projects currently underway in downtown Reykjavik: one at Hlemmur, a 168 room hotel, in addition to a hotel that is being developed in the so-called Tryggvagata lot, which is demarcated by Tryggvagata, Norðurstígur, and Vesturgata. He says that besides this, Mannverk is working on various apartment projects. "In addition to these projects, we serve as managing contractors and consultants for various companies. One of these is the Verne Global Data Center by Keflavik Airport. We are probably the only party in Iceland that possesses the specialised knowledge necessary for such a large data centre. In that location, we are building and managing construction for Verne. This is among the more complex projects that can be undertaken. A data centre is significantly more than processing computers. Processing computers do not need the security and auxiliary equipment that data centres need. Data centres store information but are at the same time in direct and constant communication with various companies all over the world. The

computer equipment must therefore never fail. No matter what. And to ensure this, triple reserve capacity is, for example, needed. The temperature must furthermore be kept within certain limits, which naturally requires an advanced cooling system. And all this must of course be automatic. A security system for possible fire and break-ins as well as access controls must also be of the highest quality. Data centres therefore entail a bit more than placing computer equipment inside a room." Jónas Már believes that there are great possibilities for Iceland in connection with data centres and comments that the progress in these matters has been rapid in recent years and that development has so far occurred accordingly. He furthermore says that conditions in Iceland are extremely suitable for further development in this market. This being thanks to various factors, such as a stable environment in many regards; well educated people; a suitable temperature, neither too warm nor too cold; and green energy, a factor that can attract various large companies. "We have managed to build up considerable knowledge in relation to data centres. Currently, six employees at the company work on managing that project and it is presumed that the number will increase in

the near future. I have high hopes for this operation, which we have specialised in. We know what this is about and what is needed, and we are able to participate in projects in this field; everything from design to delivery of a fully equipped data centre."

Want to Be Careful

Mannverk recently delivered a project for CRI, Carbon Recycling International, which just built a methanol plant in Svartsengi. Mannverk handled construction management and oversight of the Icelandic contractors for the plant. "We are also looking into various projects in the centre of Reykjavik, apartments and more, in addition to handling construction management for buyers. It could also be mentioned that we have been contacted in regard to construction management and oversight for an expected silicon metal plant." In the first year after Jónas Már and Hjalti established Mannverk, they were the only employees at the company. here are now 17 people on the payroll and Jónas Már says that the number of employees is expected to further increase in the coming periods. "We are growing but want to be careful. We want to choose our projects with care. Thus, we have, for example, not participated in tender offers. This has not been feasible so far. As things are, we are very busy with our own projects and our contract projects and havetherefore not needed tender projects." - G/JG



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ISLAND LUXURY

Exclusive apartments in a prime area downtown with spectacular views



In 2006, no-one imagined these would be the last luxury tower blocks to be built right downtown. Positioned so that the noise of the city would not be audible on the shores of Faxaflói Bay, with views stretching out across the ocean to snow-covered mountain ranges beyond and, in the other direction, an equally dramatic panorama of the city, these are apartments that are much sought-after by foreign investors and local residents alike.

How often can you walk out of your apartment and, in 5 minutes, be sitting in a theatre, cinema or restaurant right downtown? Or take a stroll along the shore to the world famous Harpa concert hall and conference centre just 500 metres across the road?

Vibrant and safe

Unlike most of the world's major cities, Iceland has a very low crime rate and no-one would think twice about walking around

its vibrant centre, filled with fascinating art and culture, entertainment, shops, coffee houses and restaurants covering a wide range of both Icelandic and international cuisine. Healthcare centres, schools and kindergartens are also within a very close vicinity.

There is frost-free, secure underground parking for each apartment. The walking areas around the tower entrances are heated to keep them clear of snow and ice in winter. A superintendent oversees the security and maintenance of each tower.

These are the tallest apartment towers in the country. When the first of the 18-floor towers were built, they were quickly snapped up, so undoubtedly, the last two towers in the project will be equally as popular. In this final phase, a total of 77 apartments are being constructed, though some have already been sold even before the building stage.

Take a tour

With a range of different sizes available - from 80m² to a two-floor penthouse over 300m² in size, there are apartments to meet the needs of everyone. To take full advantage of the views, the windows stretch from floor to ceiling. The company has selected the strongest and most long-lasting Protec windows, having them imported from the manufacturers in Denmark. Underfloor heating has been installed, so as not to interrupt the view with unsightly radiators and each apartment is air-conditioned. The balconies offer a spot to relax and enjoy the beauty of the panorama in the fresh air, with glass panels under the railing to maximize the view.

The interiors are designed by one of Iceland's top interior designers, with a choice of colour schemes and surfaces. Slipstone, a higher quality stone than granite, has been chosen for the surfaces and is also available in a variety of finishes.

As one would expect in quality apartments of this type, they have been designed for soundproofing, fire protection, for security and the future. Fire alarms are built-in and connected to a central system.

Making your house your home

While still at the building stage, there are a wealth of custom options available that can be incorporated for purchasers of the apartments. Wall surfaces, flooring, kitchen and bathrooms can all be custom designed.

In planning for future options, the design of the wiring, for instance, takes into account the advances being made in home automation, so that buyers may install their system of choice at their own convenience.

A home with a history and a future

This part of Reykjavik has a fascinating history, with the first structure being built around 1800, turf houses giving way



to timber around 1900 and the Skuggi website gives a dramatic portrayal through photos from different time periods, providing a perspective on the past. The website also provides a panoramic view like the inhabitants of the towers can expect to see and a detailed overview of the project.

Iceland is the advanced hub of a fast-developing region with excellent fast and efficient communications between the continents, powered by green, renewable

energy, independent of fossil fuel price fluctuations and pollution. With the countryside only 15min away, sport and relaxation are close at hand, making for a healthy, invigorating lifestyle.

Whether you might be thinking of a new home, a pied de terre for the times you visit the country or you are looking for an investment opportunity, the Skuggi development provides a unique moment to own a property in what is undoubtedly the best location in town in respect of easy access to the Reykjavik's centre, the countryside and spectacular views of both city and nature. Nothing like it will be built again, according to the city's current plans. - ASF

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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

-THE 10 HIGHEST PEAKS IN ICELAND

panorama.is
© Brynjar Agustsson

Hearing about Iceland's majestic landscapes is one thing, but actually standing at the very top and conquering its awesome peaks is an experience that leaves many breathless - and not only because of the physical effort. Here is a list of the 10 highest peaks of Iceland.

You'd be surprised that some mountains in Iceland are within reach of non-professional climbers and don't require specialised equipment, but you should always be sure to come prepared and seek information from relevant parties to make sure it's safe, as conditions can change rapidly in Iceland. Scaling glacial peaks especially should never be done without consulting professional guides, doing extensive preparation and bringing proper equipment, including a GPS if you should get into trouble. You should also take note that many of these locations are only accessible on 4x4 vehicles.

1. Hvannadalshnjúkur

The southern part of Vatnajökull is called Öraefajökull and there you'll find Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, a pyramidal peak, standing at 2,110 metres (6,920 feet) above sea level. Öraefajökull is

actually an active volcano and has erupted twice in historical times, in 1362 and 1727. The first eruption was an explosive one which turned the surrounding area into a wasteland, from which the glacier got its name. The later eruption lasted a whole year and filled the air with ash, so there was no way to tell night from day at the beginning stages of the eruption.

Standing on top of Iceland's highest peak is understandably an experience that many dream of and luckily it does not require mountaineering experience. The hike does take 10-15 hours and is quite strenuous, so it does require potential climbers to be in decent shape of mind and body. Several tour operators offer regular guided hikes to the peak.

2. Bárðarbunga

You might have seen the name of Iceland's second highest peak in the news last year when news of volcanic activity were broadcast all over the world. Bárðarbunga itself is actually a stratovolcano located underneath the north-western part of Vatnajökull glacier and stands 2,009 metres tall (6,591 feet).

The eruption started in August 2014 and didn't stop until February 2015, having then created a lava field covering 82 square kilometres (20 square miles). The area north of Bárðarbunga has recently been reopened, but the new lava field is a restricted area; seek information in Vatnajökull National Park for optimal viewing locations of the brand-new lava field.

3. Kverkfjöll

The impressive mountain range of Kverkfjöll reaches 1,920 metres (6,300 feet) at its highest peak and is situated on the north-eastern border of Vatnajökull. There is a large hot magma chamber underneath the mountain, which has formed fascinating glacial caves, but be sure to only admire them from the outside as they can collapse at any moment and cause serious injury.

There are several hiking paths in the remote Kverkfjöll area, which is only accessible from the north via a 4x4 vehicle and thus is quite remote so once you get there you can truly feel like you've found undiscovered land. The surrounding area is one of Iceland's largest active geothermal areas.

4. Snæfell

Iceland's highest peak outside of Vatnajökull glacier (even though it is located within Vatnajökull National Park) is Snæfell, which rises 1,833 metres (6,013 feet) above sea level and is located to the north-east of Vatnajökull glacier. It is a relatively easy, but extremely rewarding hike. It is a dormant conical volcano which gives majestic views of the East of Iceland. You could even catch sight of the local reindeer population there.

5. Hofsjökull

Iceland's third largest glacier is home to its fifth highest peak - situated in the west of Iceland's highlands and reaching 1,765 metres (5,791 feet) at its peak. It is an almost perfectly round icecap of around 40 kilometres in diameter. The glacier is the source of several large glacial rivers, including Iceland's longest river, Þjórsá.

6. Herðubreið

A very prominent flat-topped mountain in the north-east highlands is the iconic Herðubreið, which rises 1,682 metres up towards the sky in the middle of a seemingly barren desert. On a good day the views from the top are incomparable and you can see to the ocean all

around the country. Herðubreið is not an easy climb due to the loose soil and the only access is on the north-west side, but it is very steep.

At the roots you'll find a vegetated oasis in the desert, called Herðubreiðarlindir. It is by many considered a gem of the highlands, where Iceland truly lives up to being called a land of contrasts. One of Iceland's most famous outlaws is supposed to have resided in Herðubreiðarlindir.

7. Eiríksjökull

The largest table mountain in Iceland and seventh tallest peak is Eiríksjökull, rising to a height of 1,675 metres (5,495 feet) above sea level. It was formed by a sub-glacial eruption that melted the ice and formed a crater, which is now covered by the glacier. Eiríksjökull is now dormant and a difficult hike, as it is very steep.

8. Eyjafjallajökull

Now probably the most famous glacier in Iceland, whose name no one seems to be able to pronounce correctly (and understandably so.) Eyjafjallajökull made world headlines in 2010 when a volcanic eruption spewed a gigantic cloud of ash into the atmosphere that covered large areas of Northern Europe,

shutting down commercial flights in the process, affecting around ten million travellers.

A reminder of mankind's inability to predict or control nature's awesome powers, Eyjafjallajökull stands 1,666 metres tall and is clearly visible from the ring road around Iceland.

9. Tungnafellsjökull

Located north-west of the Vatnajökull glacier is Iceland's ninth tallest peak, Tungnafellsjökull, reaching 1,540 metres or 5,036 feet. A hike to the summit, called Háhyrna, is relatively easy and has splendid views. Tungnafellsjökull's central volcano contains two calderas, one of which is filled by the glacier, while the other one contains rhyolitic lava.

10. Kerling

The highest peak of northern Iceland is Kerling, a mainly basalt rock mountain, rising up to 1,538 metres (5,030 feet) at its summit. There is no marked trail to the top, but it isn't considered a very difficult hike. However, as always make sure to come prepared in proper clothing. The view from the top offers outstanding panoramic views on a clear day.

- VAG

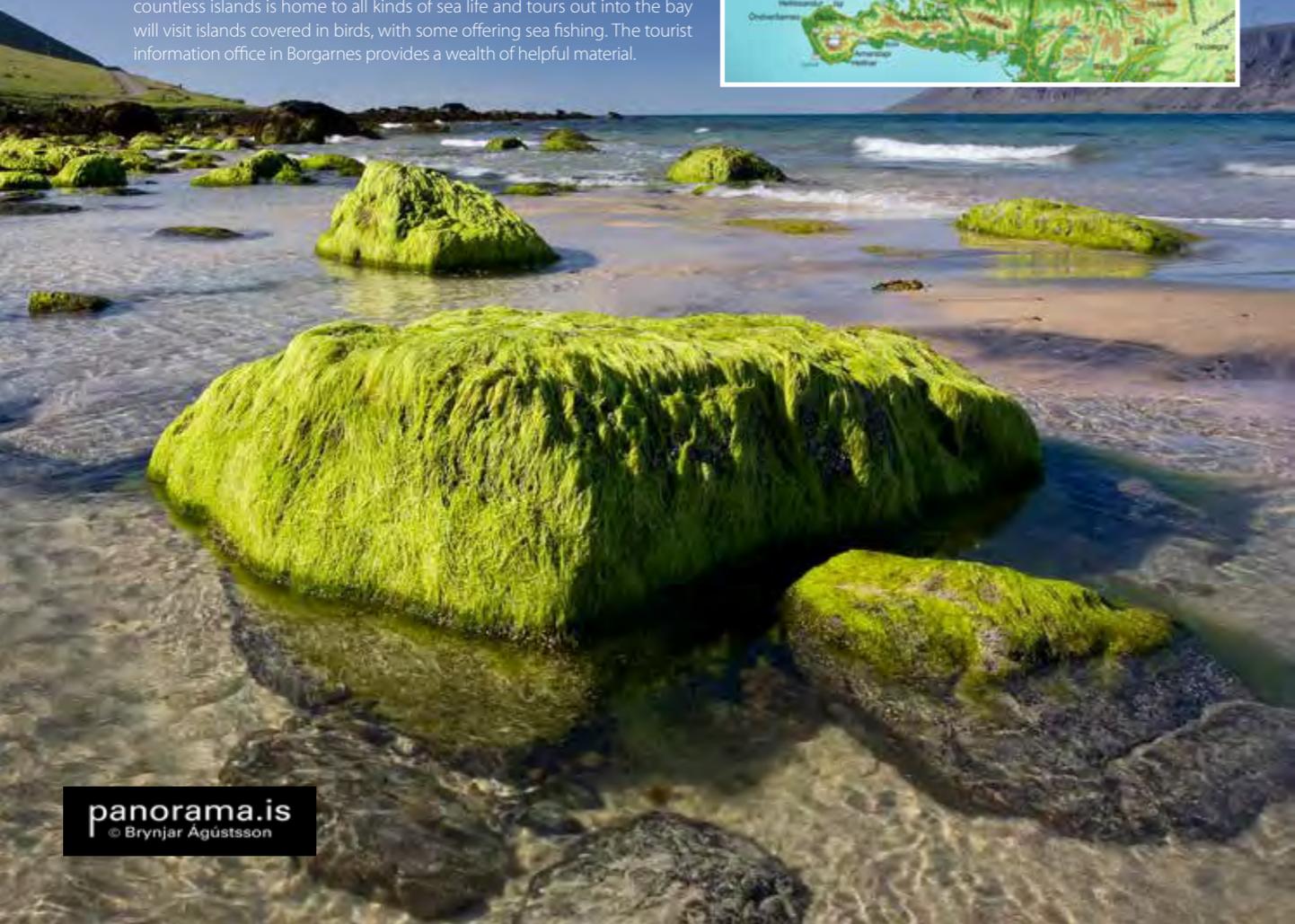
WEST ICELAND

AND THE WESTFJORDS

The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere in the West of Iceland. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with gushing geothermal activity. Land and history form an unbroken whole as the setting for sagas like Sturlunga, Egil's Saga, Eyrbyggja and Laxdaela, not to mention the rich folklore and tales of adventure. Tours bring history to life as museums and historical sites abound.

Westfjords

The 'Lonely Planet' guide put Westfjords on its list of the top 10 regions of the world to visit in 2011 and the area won a 'European Destination of Excellence' (EDEN) award. A very sparsely populated region of Iceland, it is home to the Arctic fox, a dizzying variety of birdlife and a nature that is simply breathtaking. With precipitous cliffs that plunge almost vertically to the deep blue seas below, its multitude of beautiful fjords, its hot springs, pure streams and waterfalls, it's a place for the nature-lover to be awed by its silence and tranquility, pierced only by the birds. The mystical Breiðafjörður bay, with its countless islands is home to all kinds of sea life and tours out into the bay will visit islands covered in birds, with some offering sea fishing. The tourist information office in Borgarnes provides a wealth of helpful material.



I DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST

The Small Community of Búðadalur has a Rich Heritage

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

Iceland's famous pioneer

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

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

Erik the Red settled in Greenland

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

The Queen lived here

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



Activities in the area



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

Camping and Accommodation

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

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

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HOTEL FLATEY IN BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR BAY



A Dining Experience Not to Be Forgotten

Time spent visiting the tranquil island of Flatey in Breiðafjörður bay on the west coast of Iceland is a rewarding experience in itself, but a meal at the unique and innovative restaurant at Hotel Flatey is the icing on the cake that makes the trip truly memorable.

Hotel Flatey is renowned for its culinary delights by locals and visitors alike and people have been known to cross the fjord just to enjoy a meal there and go back. The restaurant has a close connection to the island life and finds much of its ingredients in the immediate surroundings.

The Ocean Inspires

Proprietor, Ingibjörg Ásta Pétursdóttir, says the ocean and Breiðafjörður bay are a constant source of inspiration for cooking and that the fresh fish and ingredients are a delight to work with. Experiments with cooked seaweed and kelp are thus not uncommon. They also have their own vegetable garden from which they gather various local spices and herbs. Ingibjörg says that though experimentation is always a joy, when perfection is



reached there is no point in trying anything else; and thus their blue mussels speciality dish will probably never be tampered with.

Life on an Island

You'll soon find that life on the island works at a different pace than in most communities; it is obviously much smaller than most people are used to, but you get the feeling that time passes more slowly and without the many distractions of modern life. Ingibjörg says the island's influence can be felt in the restaurant, giving it a unique atmosphere. "When everything is so small and close there



is a sense of togetherness, which I think is unique to this island," says Ingibjörg. A short trip during the day while the ferry makes its routine is ample time to discover the island and enjoy a meal at Hotel Flatey. But to really get to know the island an overnight stay is recommended - staying at Hotel Flatey, enjoying the relaxed evening mood at the restaurant and truly experiencing being on an island. If you're feeling up for it, try ordering the Flajito - a now staple cocktail concocted with local herbs when a thirsty customer asked for a standard Mojito and the ingredients weren't available. - VAG



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times.com



ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

Find the furtive little arctic fox in Súðavík in the Westfjords

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

Exhibition of the first native

The Centre is located in the oldest house in Súðavík, a 120 year old farm that was renovated by the local authorities and is situated between what locals call the 'old village', destroyed in a devastating avalanche in 1995, and the 'new village',



built in its stead at a safe distance from the mountain.

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

The exhibition is divided into three sections; the biology of the fox, the hunting of the fox and the hunters themselves, the



Images by © Þóður Sigurðsson

last mentioned containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and of course there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round. The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland. A nice little café is run at the Centre, selling home baked pastries, light courses and wonderful coffee which guests can enjoy out on the patio, overlooking the beautiful mountains and the sea. The Café has an open Internet access. On Friday nights, live music is performed in the loft, where it's nice to sit down for a drink in the cosy atmosphere. The Centre also has a small boutique selling specially made souvenirs and craftwork. -HP

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CELEBRATING THEIR 30TH YEAR OF OPERATION THIS YEAR

Same management from the beginning

Untouched nature and interesting history are among the attractions of Djúpavík at Strandir. In this remote part of Iceland, a special breed of people found a way to live off the land and, when all the fjords were filled with herring, it became an important player in the hunt for the 'silver of the sea'. Now it is a paradise for walkers and nature lovers who come to Hotel Djúpavík from early spring till autumn.

Old factory and dormitory

Hotel Djúpavík was established in 1985 when Eva Sigurbjörnsdóttir and her husband Ásbjörn Þorgilsson decided to cultivate guests rather than fish. "We had planned to start a



fish farm but were unable to get a loan," says Eva. "We had bought the women's dormitory along with the old herring factory and the hotel started there."

Most guests stay at Hotel Djúpavík in search of a nature experience. Many walk from one fjord to another but others use cars, kayaks or boats to get from place to place. Eva and Ásbjörn provide guidance and advice on

what to see and how to get there along with comfort and rest after a long day's exploration.

A Historical Exhibition

The Herring Factory is now the site of Djúpavík's Historical Exhibition, where old photographs and texts lead viewers through the life and times of people in this quiet cove at the edge of the world. There are guided tours provided daily at 10 am and 2pm. -JB

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GAMLA KAUPFÉLAGIÐ

Restaurant and Bar in Akranes



Gamla Kaupfélagið in Akranes (The Old Cooperative) is a really nice restaurant and bar in the small town of Akranes. Less than an hour's drive from Reykjavík, along Highway 1, you will find this historic old town by the beautiful west coast of Iceland. Please drop by for fantastic food and service at modest prices in a really nice setting.

Perfect Location

Akranes is a very popular tourist destination, and all the travellers with their tents and campers make this a really merry place during the summer. Gamla Kaupfélagið is located in the heart of the old town of Akranes, which puts it within walking distance of all the major lodging and camping places. The restaurant is also a bar and a café, and there



is outdoor seating for those beautiful summer days. The weekends are made special with extended opening hours and live music.

Multicultural Menu

The menu has everything from a simple kids' menu and traditional European food, to Mexican and Indian food. You can have your regular sandwiches, pastas and pizzas, hamburgers and steaks. But there is also a surprising variety of dishes available, including soups, dedicated gourmet dishes for vegetarians, and various Mexican and Indian dishes. This impressive menu is complemented with a good selection of beverages and desserts, and a healthy dose of hospitality. -SF

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FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Icelandic landscape and wildlife in all its grandeur

Ísafjarðardjúp is the biggest fjord in the Westfjords. Divided into smaller inner fjords, the area offers an abundance of opportunities for experiencing Iceland far away from the crowded paths of the mainland. So take your time to enjoy your trip from Hólmavík to Súðavík. Enjoy driving in the immense vastness of the Steingrímsfjarðarheiði highland road and celebrate the moment when the country road takes you down to the inner part of the fjord. Why not take a refreshment break here at Hotel Reykjanes?

A Hot Spring Pool

The hotel is situated on the peninsula between Ísafjarðardjúp and the smaller Reykjarfjörður. Besides offering all kinds of outdoor activities, its sparkling gem is a swimming pool, built on one of the rare hot springs in the Westfjords, its water constantly being renewed from the spring, so no chemicals are needed. It is so relaxing to soak in the warm water and enjoy the clear air of the North after a long day's drive! Why not add some spice to your life by visiting Saltverk ehf., the salt processing company where the world's only artisan salt

is produced with 100% geothermal energy, following a 200 year-old method.

Eagles and Lava in Heydalur

It is hardly possible to drive in the Westfjords without admiring the numerous sights of its huge mountains. Take your time for breaks. Your next stop could be in Mjóafjörður, visiting Heydalur, a remote valley that saw its first settlers in the year 1100. Hotel Heydalur offers various outdoor activities and it's inspiring to stay in the majestic silence of an old volcanic area, which displays extraordinary lava formations, rich vegetation and, of course, vivid Icelandic birdlife. You might be lucky and find eagles sailing on the northern winds, and falcons and merlins are also regular sights.

From Remoteness into Bustle and Back

The road along the pretty inner fjords takes you into Skötufjörður, where you can visit the old turf house at Lítlí Bær, dating back to 1894, which was inhabited until 1969. Step in and get a feeling for how it might have been in the old days! Just 500m away at Hvítanes, seals can be seen just metres from the coastline offering a nice opportunity to meet a species that rarely

shows itself to travellers on land. The village of Súðavík, on the banks of the Álftafjörður fjord and under the impressive Kofri mountain, has a special place in the hearts of many Icelanders. In January 1995 the town was hit by a huge avalanche, destroying many houses and taking many lives. It led to the entire village moving to an avalanche safe zone a little further into the fjord. The homes which could not be moved are now rented out in summer time, and this 'old village' bustles with life between May and September. Súðavík's history began in the 10th century. Its oldest house dates back to 16th century, being the home of the adventurer Jón Indíafari, the India traveller. The village still has a lot to offer, like meeting the arctic fox in its museum at Melrakkasetur, or following fishing tradition with a sea angling trip 'into the Djúp'. Or simply hiking to the Valagil canyon, where lava has formed an exceptional landscape with waterfalls and hidden recesses. -DT



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MÝVATN NATURE BATHS

EXPERIENCE - RELAX - ENJOY



The Mývatn Nature Baths

Enjoy a relaxing visit to the Nature Baths. Begin with a relaxing dip in clouds of steam rising up from fissures deep in the earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water, drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres. Mývatn Nature Baths are perfect for those who enjoy close contact with nature and want to relax their body and soul in the warm natural waters, overlooking the scenery of Lake Mývatn and the volcanic crater of Hverfjall.

The Kaffi Kvika Restaurant

Welcome to Kaffi Kvika or "Magma Café" located at the Mývatn Nature Baths. Here our guests can enjoy light meals, drinks and sweets in a beautiful setting with a great view of the area.

Opening Hours

High season (June, July, August) 09:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.

Low season (September - May) 12:00 noon - 9:30 p.m.

Lake Mývatn Area

The region is one of Europe's greatest natural treasures. Shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions and seismic activity down through the ages, the landscape around the 37 square kilometre lake is a spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife and are also home in summer to the swarms of midges from which the region takes its name.

Our staff is happy to help you out with information about things to do or see in the area.

Mývatn Nature Baths / Jarðböðin við Mývatn
Jarðbaðshólar, 660 Mývatn, Iceland
Tel: (+354) 464 4411, Email: info@naturebaths.com

www.naturebaths.com



NORTH ICELAND

Summer in the North is characterised by the midnight sun. You can play golf, go seal and whale watching, horse riding, hiking, swimming, fishing, river rafting, bird-watching, camping or simply enjoy the disparate forms of nature. The region wears a different coat in winter, when you can ride horses on the frozen lakes in Mývatn under the Northern Lights or ski the slopes just minutes from Akureyri town centre. Northern Iceland is probably Iceland's most diverse region—in every sphere. Nature varies from the mystical area around Mývatn Lake, a birdwatching paradise, to the awesome horse-shoe canyon of Ásbyrgi, the thunderous waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, Askja's calderas and volcanoes, or islands like Drangey, to name a few. The region is bursting with vibrant history, just waiting to be enjoyed. Museums are found in almost every town, with fascinating insights into fields such as the seals at Selasetur in Hvammstangi or the Whale Museum in Húsavík to the turf house of Glaumbær farm in Skagafjörður. Then Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltadal valley in Skagafjörður is Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of the first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest town of the north, along with its art galleries and rich culture.



AKUREYRI HEART OF THE NORTH



The dozen inhabitants in 1786, clinging to the side of Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord, probably never imagined their brave struggle would ultimately result in 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—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—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 venues, music of all genres, theatre 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 individuals, 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.



Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavik international and Reykjavik airports take just 40 min. Scheduled busses drive twice a day between Reykjavik and Akureyri. The trip from Reykjavik to Akureyri takes about 6 hours, although in the summer time you can choose a longer route over the highlands if you wish to turn your trip into a journey rich with sights and natural beauty.

The city 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. -ASF

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

The Arctic Open Golf championship is played on the most northerly 18-hole course in the world, just outside the city under both 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.

Akureyrarstofa
Strandgata 12 • 600 Akureyri
+354 450 1050
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www.visitakureyri.is





A CORNER OF PARADISE HERE IN EYJAFJARÐARSVEIT

Photos: Jóhannes Geir Sigurgeirsson

Protected by flanks of towering mountains on either side, the broad valley of Eyjafjarðarsveit lies at the very end of Iceland's longest fjord, Eyjafjörður. It's one of Iceland's most prolific agricultural areas with a hospitable farming community just outside of the capital of the north, Akureyri. Eyjafjarðarsveit is chock full of unexpected historical and cultural gems that are interspersed all along the circular route around the valley. Out of 25 historically important churches in North Iceland, several of them are scattered throughout the area; Kaupangur Church can trace its foundations all the way back to 1318 and Saurbær Church, which dates back to before the year 1200, is one of the few remaining turf-walled churches still existing in Iceland today. All of them have played their parts, big and small in the lives of the Icelandic nation over the centuries ever since Iceland officially adopted Christianity in 1000 AD.



Silva Restaurant and Hrafnagil Pool and Campsite

After a long day of exploring and/or hiking in the area, a welcome dip in the pool or a long relaxing soak in the hot tub at Hrafnagil Municipal Pool is just the ticket. Silva Restaurant, located just 2 km from the pool and its adjoining campground, is ideal for refreshments. This 'green' restaurant in the heart of Eyjafjarðarsveit offers a selection of vegetarian dishes as well as raw diet options for lunch and dinner - and in July 2015, Silva will be open for breakfast. Delicious smoothies and compressed juices, wheat grass and ginger shots are offered throughout the day, along with organic coffee, teas, hot cocoa and a selection of healthy cakes and desserts. Enjoy Silva's balanced menu made with only the finest ingredients and suitable for everyone.

www.silva.is / silva@silva.is / +354 851 1360



Ytra Laugaland Guesthouse

The charming Ytra Laugaland Guesthouse is situated on the eastern slopes of the valley, just a 12-minute drive from Akureyri. Once a flourishing dairy farm, Ytra Laugaland's retired owners Óttar and Vilborg have graciously opened their home and hearts to travellers. The large farmhouse comprises four spacious and comfortable rooms with a main bath on each floor. The copious Icelandic breakfast includes homemade breads and jams made by Vilborg herself, and the panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and the fjord are unmatched.

www.ytra-laugaland.net / +354 868 8436 / villag@nett.is



Lamb Inn

Lamb Inn of Öngulsstaðir Farm is a lovely place to go for traditional lamb roast with all the trimmings and for which the hotel/restaurant is well known. Comprising 17 bright and spacious rooms, all with private bath, this well kept rural hotel sports a Jacuzzi on the deck, allowing guests to soak away their cares in an idyllic setting. On an historical note, guests are invited to peek into the past with a guided tour of the old farmhouse - one of the best-preserved 18th century farmhouses in Iceland today. Located on the east side of the valley, the hotel is a pleasant 8.2 km drive from Akureyri.

www.lambinn.is / lambinn@lambinn.is / +354 463 1500



Kátur Horse Rental

If you have always wanted to go horse riding, there is no better time or place than with Kátur Horse Rental, who offer the ultimate in horse riding activities: a beautiful summer evening ride into the peaceful countryside of Eyjafjarðarsveit, while the sun begins its slow descent over the fjord. The tour pauses midway for a picnic stop, making this an enchanting and unforgettable way to experience Iceland. Kátur Horse Rental also offers short one- and two-hour riding tours and will do their best to match your personality and level of riding experience with one of their friendly horses.

www.hestaleiga.is / hestaleiga@hestaleiga.is / +354 695 7219



Silva Restaurant

Silva Restaurant, located just 2 km from the Hrafnagil campsite and municipal pool, is ideal for refreshments after an afternoon of swimming. This 'green' restaurant in the heart of Eyjafjarðarsveit offers a selection of vegetarian dishes as well as raw diet options for lunch and dinner - and in July 2015, Silva will be open for breakfast. Delicious smoothies and compressed juices, wheat grass and ginger shots are offered throughout the day, along with organic coffee, teas, hot cocoa and a selection of healthy cakes and desserts. Enjoy Silva's balanced menu made with only the finest ingredients and suitable for everyone.

www.silva.is / silva@silva.is / +354 851 1360



The Traveling Viking

It has been said that seeing Iceland without a guide is like leaving your glasses at home. The Traveling Viking, a small family-run tour company based in Akureyri, is known for their breadth and depth of knowledge of local culture, as well as their unique insights into the history and geology of Iceland. Delivered with wit and wisdom, Traveling Viking owners, Rachel and Jón Þór, offer a wide variety of tours throughout Eyjafjarðarsveit and beyond. One of their most requested tours is the Game of Thrones tour that even HBO crew and producers have gone on themselves.

www.ttv.com / ttv@ttv.is / +354 896 3569

Þverá Golf Course

There's nothing like a round of golf under the midnight sun in the stunning surroundings of Þverá Golf Course in Eyjafjarðarsveit. Enthusiastic golfers from around the world flock to this nine-hole golf course every year to indulge their passion and to take in the magnificent views of the mountains and the fjord. At the club house you can rent a set of golf clubs at very reasonable prices, have a cup of coffee, or for those midnight forays onto the course, you are welcome to BYOB - bring your own bottle. Located just 5 minutes from Hrafnagil and 10 minutes from Akureyri.

www.tgolf.is / jonbergur@hotmail.com / +354 862 5516

Welcome to a corner of paradise, here in Eyjafjarðarsveit.

AMBASSADOR TO THE WHALES

See the Whales from Akureyri's Specialised Whale-Watching Ship

This is the third 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 ecosystem. Being protected from winds and weather by the mountains ensures that it's calmer than the open sea.

The Sailing Schedule – Every Day Departures

Tours leave in the morning at 9:00 a.m., in the afternoon at 1:30 p.m., and evening tours start at 8:30 p.m. in June, July and until 9

August. From 10–31 August there are daily tours at 6:00 p.m., giving you the opportunity to watch the whales and enjoy the bright and beautiful colours of the northern evening sun simultaneously! The infamous Northern Lights tours are offered throughout 15 September–31 October, with an evening cruise starting at 9:30 p.m. - NNH/ASF

Ambassador
 Tortunefsbryggja Harbour • 600 Akureyri
 +354 462 6800
 info@ambassador.is
 www.ambassador.is



THE OLD POST OFFICE

Jóa Guesthouse connects people and places

In Ólafsfjörður, on the Troll peninsula, a cherry-red heart is beating for guests and travellers. Jóa Guesthouse, in the middle of this beautiful North Iceland town, can easily be found, due to its bright red colour. Once having stepped inside, you don't want to leave.

The town's old post office has been renovated brilliantly by a young couple, Bjarkey and Helgi. They offer six elegant rooms on the first floor, all of which are furnished with a different type of wooden floor, that refer back to the old times and

which have gained much attention. You will find brand new comfortable beds, basins, closets, and, of course, free WiFi. Dark curtains in front of every window will guarantee a good sleep even through bright Icelandic summer nights. The two bathrooms on the floor are fully equipped.

A Breakfast for exploring

When you wake in the morning and open your curtains, you will enjoy the amazing panorama across the bay. Then, to start

the day off right, you head downstairs into Kaffi Klara, the just recently opened book-café, where guests are served a delicious buffet breakfast to get ready for their day.

If you need any help with your plans or directions, you can find any assistance you need at the desk.

It is like the old post office has come to a pulsating new life as a place for connecting people and places. -DT

Jóa Guesthouse
 Strandgata 2 • 625 Ólafsfjörður
 +354 868 5287
 gistihusjoe@gmail.com
 www.joesquesthouse.is

SKAGASTRÖND

WHERE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE MEET

One might think that life in a small remote fishing town would result in a reserved population vary of outsider influence. This is not the case in the town of Skagaströnd in the north-west of Iceland, where international artists mingle freely with local fishermen, creating a unique atmosphere where the past meets the present without judgment.

Fish Is Life

Like many Icelandic towns Skagaströnd's history is centered around fishery, which is very much a part of Skagaströnd's identity today. The harbour is usually bustling with life with boats coming and going, people and forklifts moving about trying to get the fish from the boats and to the stores as quickly and securely as possible. Just watching the harbour life is an activity in itself, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike—just be careful not to get in the way. There is also a pleasant coffee shop, Kaffi Bjarmanes, in a renovated old house right by the seaside just across from the harbour, giving an excellent view of the harbour life, the ocean and the ever-watchful seabirds around.

What Does the Future Bring?

The first documented settler in Skagaströnd was a woman named Þórdís who resided there in the late 10th century with substantial influence in her community. She was known to be a spirited and fierce woman, with the gift of prophecy, who made no compromises when it came to dealing with powerful men at the time and is noted as such in several of the Icelandic old Sagas. Although the people of her time might have been glad to be rid of her, present day inhabitants of Skagaströnd celebrate



her legacy and have opened a museum in her honour. There visitors are taken through her fascinating life with various exhibitions and artifacts - as well as given the chance to have their prophecy told. Another museum can be found in a charming tiny old house, named Árnes, which gives an impression of daily life in the early 20th century.

Art and Fish

You might not think that modern day artists and small town fishermen would have much in common, but as it turns out they have co-existed in Skagaströnd with great success for several years now. The Nes Artist Residency was opened in 2008 and has resulted in a colourful atmosphere where past and present traditions find common ground. The mayor of Skagaströnd, Magnús B. Jónsson, says the success of the artist residency is a testament to the positivity and open-mindedness of the people of Skagaströnd. "We have all types of people coming here from all over the world and staying with us for extended periods of time working on their craft and the fact that it has gone seamlessly really says something about our community." Magnús says that the advent of the Nes Artist

Residency has livened up the town and the creative atmosphere has proven to be quite contagious. "Now it is not at all uncommon to have all sorts of happenings and events that would have seemed strange before, but are considered part of everyday life here in Skagaströnd." The town itself is also decorated with creative art. You'll find a very striking exhibition centered on the old Nordic gods made from scrap metal, carefully selected to represent each item. Loki, the god of mischief and deception, is for example made from an old manure spreader and Odinn, the highest god of all, is made from scraps from a power station. The Sunwatch is also a quite striking piece, made from four basalt columns that guide sunrays according to an old Icelandic time-telling tradition.

Plenty to Do

A popular activity is hiking to the top of the mountain Spákonufell or along the sea cliffs at Spákonufellshöfði, which is where Þórdís resided and some even claim that her face can be seen petrified in the mountain.

Detailed trail descriptions and maps are available in town. You'll find a traditional Icelandic swimming pool in town, with the obligatory relaxing hot pot, a nine-hole golf course and Borgin, a restaurant in a unique log house with a maritime theme. - VAG

Skagaströnd Municipality
 Túnbraut 1-3 • 545 Skagaströnd
 +354 455 2700
 skagastrond@skagastrond.is
 www.skagastrond.is

RELAX BY THE MARINA OF ICELAND'S NORTHERNMOST TOWN SIGLUFJORDUR



EAST ICELAND

Tiny, tight-knit communities extend a warm welcome here. A well-developed infrastructure, with regular flights from Reykjavik to Egilsstaðir, the main hub of the area, enable visitors to enjoy the beauty of the region. The ferry from Europe docks at the 19th century town of Seyðisfjörður, making the East a good starting point for a holiday. Tours of all types take visitors to Europe's largest glacier, stark highland mountains and sweet-smelling heathlands and, for fishing and kayaking, to mirror-smooth fjords. The hiking nature-lover can discover countless spectacular routes, with frequent waterfalls and reindeer sightings. The beauty of this area has drawn artists and designers to the little towns, which have developed their own cultural flavour, many with a strong European—and especially, French or Norwegian—influence. There is a long history of folklore here. Borgarfjörður eystri is known as the capital of the elves. It's also an area of hiking trails and birdwatching, with puffins being especially plentiful. Brilliantly coloured semi-precious stones are found in the mountains and Petra's Stone Museum in Stöðvarfjörður holds probably the world's largest private collection. The numerous hotels, guesthouses and camping areas attest to the rising popularity of the area.



ANTON&BERGUR

SIGLÓ HÓTEL

You can find more about Sigló Hótel
and what we have to offer at our webpage

www.siglohotel.is





living the dream....

VISIT EAST ICELAND
www.east.is / #easticeland



RESERVED LUXURY

Hildibrand Hotel is for the fastidious aesthetic and the seriously passionate about food

Hildibrand Hotel is a brand new, state of the art, apartment hotel in Neskaupstaður, a small fishing village in one of Iceland's remote Eastfords. The hotel is located in what was the town's old Co-Op store, built in 1948, which has now been completely renovated. It offers both double rooms and luxury apartments, all bright and beautifully decorated in warm colours with classic art and quality furniture. The house sits by the sea and every room has a view over the fjord where whales are spotted almost daily and the surrounding wilderness offers endless opportunities for outdoor activities and exploration.

Local food—tradition meets creativity
 Hildibrand is way more than just a pretty package and the hotel restaurant, the Co-Op Bistro, is without a doubt the cherry on top of the cake. The area has a long tradition of fishing and farming and Hildibrand is passionately dedicated to local products and working in the spirit of the slow-food philosophy. Everything is made from scratch

with fresh ingredients, using nature's treasure trove and the knowledge and skills of past generations to create original dishes of the utmost quality. The bistro serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers fish and wild game in addition to traditional bistro food with Hildibrand's own personal twist.

Everything you need for a dreamy picnic
 Next door to the hotel, in the town's former dairy plant, Hildibrand runs a local gourmet workshop called The Milk Shop. There they produce a variety of gourmet food products made from ingredients from all over Iceland and overseas. To name just few of the offerings, there are fresh delicatessen and takeaway food, from sushi to sandwiches, masterfully handmade Icelandic chocolates and a selection of Icelandic specialties such as dried fish and fermented shark. A visit to The Milk Shop is essential for all food enthusiasts travelling in the area. The fresh offerings are on display in the hotel lobby.

Aside from providing guests with an additional option to dining in the restaurant,



The Milk Shop specialises in the making of dreamy, custom made picnic baskets for travellers who plan to experience the stunning nature in the Eastfords close up. Ask around in the hotel lobby and be sure to receive helpful information on the natural treasures that the Eastfords are noted for.

The Eastfords are a magnificent area, partly desolate, rich in wildlife and strikingly beautiful. A stay at Hildibrand is destined to be one of the highlights of your visit to Iceland. During the day, you can walk or sail into one of the nearby fjords, fish or go for a horse ride, Hildibrand even runs its own catering service and will happily prepare you a picnic or a lunch box for your day. This is a place to dwell in, to take your time and enjoy. The reward will be handsome, without a doubt.

- EMV

Hildibrand Hotel
 Hafnarbraut 2 • 740 Neskaupsstaður
 +354 477 1950
www.hildibrand.com
hildibrand@hildibrand.com




A GUIDE THROUGH THE MESMERISING EAST ICELAND

A CULTURAL FEAST TOPPED WITH A BREATH-TAKING SCENERY

If you have come to Iceland to experience the renowned landscape and the raw nature that the country is so well known for, a trip to East Iceland will not disappoint. The East boasts an abundance of dramatic mountains towering over the narrow fjords like silent giants, providing shelter from the ocean winds, resulting in an unusually mild climate - or as the East is sometimes referred to, a "good-weather spot". In the summertime the scenery is characterised by a diverse range of green patches, tinted by intricate vegetation sprouting from the rich soil. You can even find forests in the area – a rare sight indeed in Iceland. The area is home to the country's largest forest, Hallormsstaðaskógur, located only 27 kilometres away from Egilsstaðir, the East's largest town. Rivers and waterfalls are prevalent sights in the steep fjords adding to the majestic surroundings. Other popular attractions include the red cliffs at Rauðubjörg, the ferocious terrain at Stóruð and the stunning wilderness of the highlands, to name just a few.

The Hiker's Paradise

The East is a major attraction for the outdoorsy with its abundance of

meticulously planned hiking paths and trails that are found all over the magnificent scenery. If you conquer some of the proud mountains that grace the region, be sure to leave your signature in the guest books which are commonly awaiting on the mountaintops. Tourist information centres will provide maps and further details on walking paths but if you would prefer a guided tour you could contact a local guide.

The Reindeers' Official Residency

Reindeers are one of the few species of wild mammals in Iceland. They were imported from Norway in the 18th century and have since become regional in the East. The total population counts around 3,000 animals, which live in small herds. They are regularly spotted during winters and have even been known to pay visits to urban areas, as they travel closer to the shore in search for food. In the summertime they are mostly based on more elevated areas in the highlands, although sights of travelling reindeer herds are certainly not unheard of during warmer weathers.

The Fetching Little Fishing Villages

The calming drive through the fjords provides a truly meditative experience and each fjord seems to open up a world of its own. Regular viewing platforms are provided along the way, even in the most remote locations, to allow you to stop and take in the sights before you. The numerous small and eminently charming fishing villages along the coastline are a true delight and certainly worthy of a visit.

In every village you will find a surprising amount of interesting things to see and experience. There are plenty of museums exhibiting everything from local art and handicrafts to historical lore and carefully preserved relics for us modern day people to enjoy. There are restaurants and cafés as well as guesthouses and hotels. Innovative travel agencies, usually owned and operated by the locals, endeavour to provide guests with experiences that are sure to create unforgettable memories.

It is eminent that the hard-working townfolk strive to make for interesting atmosphere and they are eager to boast the best of what their area has to offer. -ES

Photo: Yulia Yudinova



East Iceland Heritage Museum

Speaking of absorbing the Icelandic culture! The East Iceland Heritage Museum (Minjasafn Austurlands) is located in Egilsstaðir and vibrantly displays objects from the old rural society where self-sufficiency of every household was essential for survival. The way of life in earlier times is unveiled through the careful retention of the display items, that once were considered mundane but are now viewed as exotic and thrilling. The museum's main pride is the permanent reindeer exhibition where guests get a unique opportunity to learn in-depth about these fascinating animals. From the history

of the reindeer settlement in Iceland to the animal's behavioural characteristics and habits, the hunting of reindeer and hunting regulations and, in short, everything you might find interesting about reindeers. Elegantly presented tidbits, footage and items made from reindeer products truly breathe life into the exhibition.

There is also a small gallery that hosts various temporary exhibitions, often displaying arts and crafts from local artists. The museum is open from 1 June - 31 August, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

For more details visit www.minjasafn.is or call +354 471 1412



Hús Handanna

In the very heart of Egilsstaðir is the elegant art and design shop Hús Handanna. The gallery specialises in Icelandic quality design and handicrafts, offering a wide selection of various pieces of workmanship, artefacts and souvenirs, ranging from paintings, jewellery, ceramics and items made from reindeer products, as well as much, much more. The items come from all over the country but a great portion originates from the local area.

The boutique recently took on the task of serving as the main tourist information centre in the town and aims to maximise services and dissemination of information to passing travellers. So if you are in need of assistance or simply want to satisfy your curiosity about something that caught your interest, be sure to pay Hús Handanna a visit, and drink in the lovely offerings on display while you are at it.

For more details e-mail to hushandanna@simnet.is or call +354 471 2433

Photo: Skarphéðinn G. Þórisson



Kaffi Egilsstaðir Café, Restaurant, Bar

Not far from the town centre is Kaffi Egilsstaðir, a family-run restaurant and café. The house was built in 1957 and originally served as a wood workshop. Following substantial renovations in 2010 the restaurant first opened. It has remained popular among the locals ever since, thanks to great food and friendly service.

Among the kitchen specialities are dishes you would commonly find in a typical Icelandic home, including grilled lamb with potatoes and pan-fried, lemon-glazed salmon. They also serve pizzas, burgers and soups, as well as much more. At lunch time they offer a sturdy home-cooked meal, a true delight to weary and hungry travellers.

The restaurant's opening hours are from 11:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. On Fridays and Saturdays the bar is open until 3:00 a.m. where you can have your liquid refreshment and pizzas, as long as the bar is open.

For more information send an e-mail to kaffiegilsstadir@gmail.com or call +354 4 700 200



Skriðuklaustur

A noteworthy historical spot in the East is the Skriðuklaustur, Centre of Culture and History. Many important archaeological findings have been discovered in the ruins of the medieval monastery that flourished at the site in the 16th century. Today, the main attraction is the unique mansion, formerly the home of one of Iceland's most beloved authors and a Nobel Prize nominee, Gunnar Gunnarsson. Additionally there is a small gallery on the first floor hosting contemporary art exhibitions, mainly by artists from the region. Exhibitions and a guided tour covering the medieval monastery and Gunnar Gunnarsson are offered between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily, throughout the summer. Once you have engulfed yourself with the historical references in the museum, it is time to relieve the hunger in Klausturkaffi café and restaurant. There you will find light meals and home-baked cakes and breads, as well as more filling dishes that are representative of Icelandic cuisine, such as the free-range lamb and reindeer steaks – all made from local food products. With an impressive rating of a full house on TripAdvisor, you can be sure that Klausturkaffi will complete your journey gallantly.

For more details visit www.skriduklaustur.is or call +354 471 2990



Blábjörg Guesthouse

Blábjörg is a friendly guesthouse located at the base of Borgarfjörður Eystrí, in the northern part of East Iceland. The guesthouse is set right on the shore, providing a splendid view of the surrounding untouched wilderness and the rich birdlife – which makes for a real haven for birdwatchers as the birds are undaunted and can be approached with ease. The house itself was formerly a fish factory, although the fresh renovations would make it impossible to know.

Although the guesthouse is small, it is spacious and offers 11 comfortable double bedrooms with three shared bathrooms and a fully equipped kitchen. There are also 2 modern studio apartments with private facilities. Hot tubs and saunas are both inside and outdoors where guests can relax and mingle amongst themselves.

For more information visit www.blabjorg.com or call +354 861 1792



Tærgesen Guesthouse

The Tærgesen is a family-run guesthouse and restaurant in the heart of Reyðarfjörður town, located in the eponymous fjord in the centre of the Eastfjords, only a short distance away from many of the attractions in the East. The guesthouse's main building is the oldest house in town and dates back to 1870. The owners have made sure to treasure the intricate history of the house and maintain its old-fashioned charm.

There are 17 rooms in the main building that share three bathrooms and a TV lounge, except for one room which has a bathroom en suite. Those who prefer more modern-day comforts can choose to stay in a recently added annex where all of the 22 rooms have a private bathroom, TV and Wi-Fi.

Breakfast at the restaurant is always included in the overnight stay fee so you can start your day full of energy. The restaurant is open to everyone until 10:00 p.m. and offers a great variety of options: light courses such as soups and omelettes, comfort foods like sandwiches, pizzas and burgers, as well as dinners of pasta, meat or fish.

For more information visit www.taergesen.com or call +354 470 5555



Photo: Jónas Helgason



Petra's Stone and Mineral Collection

In the beautiful and quiet town of Stöðvarfjörður, you will find one of East Iceland's greatest treasures, the amazing stone and mineral collection of Petra (Steinasafn Petru). The museum is the legacy of Ljósbjörg Petra María Sveinsdóttir who was born in 1922. She spent most of her life passionately collecting rare and quaint stones and rocks, even from her early childhood. The result of her diligence is the truly stunning geological feast presented in the museum, which has been carefully preserved by her descendants. Petra passed away in 2012, then 90 years of age, but the museum is now affectionately run by Petra's four children and their families. Whether you are a geology enthusiast or just looking for a stimulating experience, we assure you that a visit to the museum will not disappoint. You will be sure to receive a warm welcome and the experience will probably live in your memory for the rest of your life.

The museum is open from 1 May through 30 September from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

For more details visit www.steinapetra.is or call +354 475 8834

Those who really want to absorb the core of the Icelandic culture should without a doubt pay the East a visit during their journey in Iceland. You will be faced with a wealth of cultural and national pearls presented in an originaive and entertaining manner that delights the minds and thoughts of travellers. Take the time to explore the beautiful scenery in the region and make sure to give special attention to the enchanting villages and towns that cross your path – whilst imbibing the local hospitality in the process.

EAST ICELAND'S AUTHENTIC HOTEL CAPITANO

THE LITTLE HOTEL WITH A BIG HEART

A true hotel and not a guest house, Hotel Capitano is located in the typically Icelandic fishing town of Neskaupstaður, on Iceland's fjord-strewn east coast. It is true, the outside of the hotel may need a coat of paint, but inside, the hotel is as authentic and friendly a place as you'll find.

Owner/manager Magni has lived his whole life in this village and knows every nook and cranny by heart. The retired sea captain is your go-to man for personal guided tours, and this summer, Magni will be offering boat tours in and around the nearby fjords. „You are welcome to do some fishing right from the boat and I can guarantee that you will make a catch“, says Magni with a grin. Once back on land, Hotel Capitano cooks will prepare your freshly caught fish for your dinner in typical Icelandic fashion. You just can't get fish any fresher than this! Hotel Capitano is best summed up by the following quote from a recent guest:



"A warm welcome, clean and spacious rooms and a view over the fjord - one cannot ask for more. The captain is an adorable man with a big heart and the epitome of the Icelandic spirit and generosity". - EMV

Hotel Capitano
 Hafnarbraut 50 • 740 Neskaupstaður
 +354 477 1800
 islandia@island.is
 www.hotelcapitano.is





from their own cattle herds. Open in summer only, weekdays from 14.00 to 18.00, visitors are welcome to pop in for the reasonably-priced variety of traditional skyr desserts, pancakes, waffles and other sweet treats.

All Egilsstaðir Farm products are sold retail to consumers. Mince, fillet, prime rib and rib-eye steaks can all be bought at the shop in precut frozen form.

Dairy products include plain and blueberry skyr, skyr desserts, feta cheese, yogurt and milk—all packaged and labelled with the attractive Fjóshornið logo on the containers. -EMV

COW SHED CORNER – FJÓSHORNIÐ

Straight from Egilsstaðir farm

Practically everyone has heard of the curds and whey that Little Miss Muffet made famous. But not many people know that the skyr that is so popular in Iceland is, in fact, a variation of those curds (minus the whey).

Because of the growing demand for pure Icelandic dairy and beef products, Egilsstaðir Farm recently opened a farmer's market on its premises, offering pure Icelandic dairy products, straight from their own milk production as well as a variety of cuts of beef

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LANGABÚÐ
 Museum, Cultural Centre & Café



Langabúð is the oldest building in Djúpivogur, dating back to 1790. It hosts an exhibition of sculptor Ríkhartður Jónsson and other cultural treats. The café serves light lunch and delicious cakes.

LANGABÚÐ 765 DJÚPIVOGUR 478 8220 WWW.RIKHARDSSAFN.IS

BREIÐDALSVÍK - THE HIDDEN GEM OF EAST ICELAND

Hotel Bláfell and Tinna Adventure Company Join Forces

Cozy Hotel Bláfell lies at the harbour in the tiny fishing village of Breiðdalsvík, on Iceland's fjord-strewn east coast. The family-run, log cabin style hotel is imbued with the scent of fresh pine that greets you as you enter. In the common room, guests can relax on lovely sprawling leather sofas with a nice cup of tea, or make use of the free wi-fi. Choose between any one of 41 recently renovated standard, family or deluxe rooms, all with private bath, TV and telephone. The hotel is known for its down-to-earth home-style cooking, offering guests a full menu of satisfying traditional Icelandic and international favourites. Owner Friðrik Árnason



and his staff are more than happy to help with suggestions of what to see and do in the area.

The Old Co-Op Café, Mini-Market and Tourist Information Centre

The village's former general store, known as The Old Co-Op has been renovated into a charming supermarket and café, complete with a wide selection of groceries and souvenirs, plus a tourist information centre and free wi-fi. The interiors have been decorated with recycled and vintage findings from the local area and pay tribute to the history of the house and its connection to the village. This gives The Old Co-Op an old-fashioned and cozy look. The café menu has light dishes ranging from sandwiches to salads as well as home baked breads and pastries. Everything is freshly made, something that has also been a trademark of the restaurant at Hotel Bláfell.

A Most Fascinating Museum

The Old Co-Op is also Breiðdalsvík's oldest building, dating from 1906, and



Photo: Páll Jökull

houses the district's heritage and geology museum. Here, the lives and works of two of Breiðdalur's most famous scholars are showcased: Stefán Einarsson, prolific writer, linguist and grammarian and the world-renowned British volcanologist Dr. George P. Walker who spent many years doing research in and around Breiðdalur valley. Both men are recipients of the distinguished Order of the Falcon, Iceland's highest honour.



The Broad Valley of Breiðdalur

Breiðdalur valley shares in the rich heritage of East Iceland that is often overlooked by mainstream tourists. As one of Iceland's hidden treasures, the wide and verdant valley is just begging to be explored. Uncountable waterfalls descend from Breiðdalur's many peaks, and a 'private' waterfall backs just about every farm in the valley.

Discover East Iceland with Tinna Adventure

What better way to get to know East Iceland than with Tinna Adventure, the tour company that knows the area best? Tinna Adventure is run by a small team of local tour guides who were born and raised in East Iceland and have extensive experience in mountain guiding as well as in search and rescue work. Tinna Adventure offers small group tours with a focus on slow travel and personalised guiding.

An exciting way to experience East Iceland in winter is with Tinna Adventure's 'super jeep' tours. Super jeeps are specially



modified 4x4 vehicles that are able to easily navigate the Icelandic winter landscape. The company offers a selection of unforgettable highland adventures where you will see some of the most unique and unspoiled winter landscapes in Iceland.

If catching the northern lights is on your 'must see' list of things to do whilst in Iceland, be sure to ask about Tinna Adventure's very popular northern lights tour.

In summer, check out Tinna's 'Adventure at Sea' day tour that allows you to step back in time aboard a traditional oak fishing vessel and sail around the islands of Breiðdalsvík bay. You will get to try your hand at sea angling, and should you so desire, your catch can be expertly prepared for dinner by the chefs at Hotel Bláfell. Observe seals in their natural



habitat on nearby islands and enjoy the spectacle of thousands of puffins that nest in the area on this fabulous summer sailing day tour in Breiðdalsvík bay.

Enchanting East Iceland welcomes you!

- EMV

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 Sólvöllum 14 • 740 Breiðdalsvík
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 info@hotelblafell.is
 www.hotelblafell.is





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 Vagnsstadur Youth Hostel, just 28km east of the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Sleeping bag accommodation, linen rental, well-equipped kitchen, dining and lounge areas, as well as 3 fully equipped cottages are available. There is a campground with good sanitary facilities. The coast, just 1500m from Vagnsstadur offers 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 on 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 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 9.30am or 2.00pm and join the tour from there.

-EMV

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



Glacier Jeeps

Sillfurbráut 15 • 780 Hornafjörður

+354 478 1000

glacierjeeps@simnet.is

www.glacierjeeps.is



SOUTH ICELAND

South Iceland has a long list of sights and activities

The wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be experienced in the region. This region has geological wonders such as Geysir; the Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss waterfalls; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanos like Hekla, the Gateway to Hell, Lakagígar, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; fantasy sites like Þórsmyrk and Jökulsárlón. Here are historical sites like the world's longest-running parliament at Þingvellir; museums, churches, the Stöng settlement, the Saga centre and villages like Eyrarbakki. Activities abound. Tours take you to all the sites, including the glaciers. Horse riding tours are popular. Try the riverjet, boat trips or kayaking; scuba diving in clear waters, fishing or caving. Independent travellers can try hiking and cycling, camping or caravanning. Winter activities are just as thrilling.

Fortunately, there is plenty of accommodation available throughout the region from camping to high-class hotels and restaurants to suit every taste. A developed infrastructure helps you get the most from your trips.



A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant

Chef Eiríkur Þór Eiríksson was busy pouring drinks when we arrived. The well known song *Vorkvöld í Reykjavík*, (a Spring Evening in Reykjavik) was playing softly in the background. A table of tourists who had spent the day exploring a glacier with a guide, talked animatedly over dinner in the front room. The low slung building with pleasantly creaky wooden floors, once serving as the search and rescue building of Stokkseyri, is now one of the most popular lobster restaurants in Iceland, with over 45,000 patrons dining there in 2014.

15 tons of lobsters can't be wrong

Fjöruborðið's website says that some 15 tons of lobster are used annually to make its famous soup, aka langoustine soup. Hmm...impressive statistics but does it really live up to its reputation? After all, there are many fine restaurants right in the capital, so is it really worth the 45 minute drive over a mountain in sometimes dubious weather conditions? Yes! I am happy to report that the soup was sublime. And just forget the word soup, how pedestrian! Chef Eiríkur informs me that it is, in fact, a classic bisque de langoustine.

Whatever name you go by, it was delicious and I would have happily eaten another bowlful had I not needed to move on to



taste everything else that was set before me: lobster tails that were perfect in themselves, homebaked bread with various dipping sauces and if, per chance, you are not partial to sea food, there is a wonderfully tender roasted fillet of lamb served with baby potatoes and red wine sauce that is excellent. A crisp salad made with local produce was refreshing and nicely complemented the seafood and meat dishes. Right on cue as soon as we had finished the lobster tails, our attentive server brought a warm wet cloth for our, by then, messy hands, which was much appreciated.

From the outside, Fjöruborðið appears deceptively small but in fact, it can seat several hundred all told, something that those having a tête-à-tête in the main building would never guess. Facing the ocean out back, a large permanent marquee can seat another 100 or so guests. All that to say, groups are welcome.

Favoured by tour guides who often bring their clients here as the ultimate finish to a perfect day of sightseeing, the restaurant has received several well known personalities such as Prince Frederik of Denmark, the Rockefellers, Clint Eastwood, Martha Stewart, Bette Midler and Cherie Booth (wife of Tony Blair).
- EMV



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info@fjorubordid.is
www.fjorubordid.is





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. He was also a successful cafehouse owner in Reykjavik in the years between 1992 - 2010.

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 almond pie with rhubarb crow- and blueberries and Icelandic skyr mousse.

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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 www.laugarvatn.is



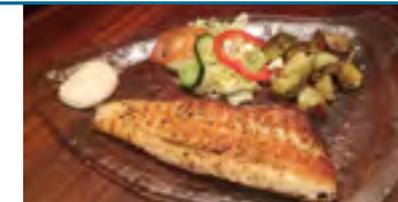

REFRESHING VÍK

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 emphasis on using only quality ingredient from the locality in their cookery. Whether be it a freshly caught salmon you crave, steaks from grass fed cattle or free range lamb served with accompaniment of locally grown greens - you can be sure that Halldór's Café will deliver. They also offer a variety

of lighter meals such as soup of the day and light salads, and those with a bit of a sweet-tooth will not be let down, as the menu includes home-baked cakes and home-made 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. The café is open all year round. Summer opening hours are from 11:00 to 22:00 or 23:00, but winter openings are from 11:00 to 21:00. When travelling in the area around the beautiful Vík, be sure to stop at this charming café and get greeted with a welcoming smile and a seductive menu. -KB

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 Víkurbraut 28 • 870 Vík
 +354 847 8844
 halldorscaffi@gmail.com
 www.halldorscaffi.is




THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI

The House at Eyrarybakki

Árnessýsla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.

Opening hours: May 1st - September 30th daily 11.00-18.00 or by an agreement
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EAT IN ICELAND - SCENIC FOOD TOURS IN ICELAND

A Culinary Journey from Past to Present

It's an exciting time to be in Iceland with so much happening here on this small isle. Many changes are taking place, not least in the area of Icelandic food culture that has been evolving rapidly over the last few years.

The idea of food tourism is a relatively new concept in Iceland. While there are many tours that focus on Iceland's renowned scenic wonders, very few, if any, focus on food.

„Food is often a bit of an afterthought on many tours in Iceland, whereas our goal is to give visitors the best of both worlds,“ explains Marie Valgarðsson, founder of Eat in Iceland. „I thought it would be a good idea to ferret out the best restaurants, eateries and food producers outside of Reykjavik and go on what is called a ‘moveable feast’, where we travel from one location to the other, eating a different course at a different

location throughout the tour, and all of this while being enveloped in the beautiful Icelandic nature that surrounds us.“

Eat in Iceland's Scenic Food Tours will also be taking a brief look at Iceland's food culture from a historical perspective, because so much of the past attitudes continue to influence modern food culture in Iceland today. „I find it all so fascinating,“ Marie continues. „Food is such an integral part of every society and I don't think you can really appreciate Iceland without at least some understanding of the hardships that people endured in times past when food was just a matter of survival.“

Things are different today and recently there has been a virtual explosion of culinary initiatives among a new breed of young, creative chefs and food producers who are taking a different approach to food

in Iceland, bringing it right into the 21st century.

Each of Eat in Iceland's handpicked locations must fulfill certain criteria in order to be included in the tour. Participants are chosen not only for their emphasis on local food, but also for their friendliness, their cultural and historical perspective, and their unique Icelandic approach to food.

„Our aim is to combine Iceland's renowned scenery with lots of interesting cultural and historical information and of course plenty of great local food. I think it's a recipe for a winning day tour,“ concludes Marie.

- EMV



Eat in Iceland

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www.eatiniceiland.com



Come and join us for a day to remember



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THE HIDDEN PEARL OF ICELAND

Dine on Rare Arctic Char at Icelandair Hotel Klaustur



Awaiting your arrival in the beautiful and peaceful village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, sits 'The Hidden Pearl of Iceland' as many guests have affectionately renamed the place.

Whether you are driving, hiking, or travelling in a large group through the South of Iceland, an authentic Icelandic gourmet dining experience can be yours to enjoy at Icelandair Hotel Klaustur.

This modern hotel is nestled between two majestic glaciers and near several renowned natural wonders of Iceland, such as: Jokulsarlon, Skaftafell, Lakagigar, and Landmannalaugar. The reason why guests call Icelandair Hotel Klaustur 'The hidden pearl' is because of its in-house restaurant which serves succulent gourmet dishes made with top quality Icelandic ingredients, including the rare fresh water fish, Arctic char.

Rare Arctic Char is the main ingredient in Icelandair Hotel Klaustur's own fish soup and many other popular gourmet dishes.

Arctic char is a cold-water fish which is closely related to both the salmon and the



lake trout. It is one of the rarest fish species in the world and can only be found in deep, cold, glacial lakes. In Kirkjubæjarklaustur, the Arctic Char is farmed in a free flowing stream that comes from pure oxygen-enriched glacial spring water which filtered through layers of natural lava rock originating from the Vatnajokull Glacier.

The char is fed high quality capelin fish meal enriched with soy protein, Omega 3 fatty acids and mineral supplements. At Icelandair Hotel Klaustur, it is prepared fresh daily by a knowledgeable chef as the primary ingredient in both main courses and starters.

Fire and Ice

The restaurant also has a really nice balcony that offers a spectacular view of Vatnajokull Glacier. Often guests find themselves in complete tranquillity out on the veranda as they take in this view while snuggled in comfortable lounge chairs, enjoying the warm summers or mild winters.

Desserts are also a speciality, and the combination of Iceland's two contrasting elements of fire and ice is portrayed in perfect harmony by joining hot rhubarb soup with cold vanilla ice-cream, served with fresh mountain berries. This combination creates

a wonderful balance of sweet and sour flavours with hot and cold temperatures and is a perfect way to indulge the senses.

The restaurant can seat up to 150 guests at a time and opening hours are:

Lunch 11:30 till 14:00

Dinner 19:00 till 21:30 during the summer season.

Leisure activities in the area include, but are not limited to: a nearby swimming pool, a golf course, hiking, glacier tours and sightseeing.

Furthermore, Icelandair Hotel Klaustur offers guests a choice between 57 comfortable modern rooms and is perfect for singles, couples or large groups.

For more information about Klaustur Char feel free to visit the official website www.klausturbleikja.is - ÖB



 **Icelandair Hotel Klaustur**
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TAKE TIME TO DISCOVER VESTMANNAEYJAR

ONE OF ICELAND'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS

Seen from the mainland, the jagged peaks of Vestmannaeyjar (also known as the Westman Islands) rise dramatically out of the sea with a 'come hither' look that is hard to evade. The largest and only inhabited island in this archipelago of 15 islands is Heimaey, only a hop, skip and a jump (8 kilometres) from Iceland's south coast and easily accessible by ferry or by air. The mountainous archipelago, full of mystery and intrigue, is replete with tales of puffins, 17th century pirates and a still warm volcano that changed the course of the island's history in 1973. In spite of Vestmannaeyjar's tiny size, you will find everything you need for your stay, including fabulous restaurants, cosy hotels, B&Bs, adventure tours, museums and thousands of seabirds and puffins to keep you company.



Getting the Bird's Eye View

The quickest and most exciting way to get to Vestmannaeyjar is with Eagle Air, a small family-run airline offering scheduled flights to and from the island seven days a week. Departing twice daily from Reykjavik, the 25-minute flight gives you an unforgettable bird's eye view of the island and the archipelago, as well as fantastic views over the entire south coast of Iceland. Eagle Air also offers chartered flights and can arrange day tours and air tours to the island as well as to other parts of Iceland.

Book a flight at www.eagleair.is or call +354 462 4200



Truly Memorable Dining

For an evening of fine dining in a relaxed atmosphere, Einsi Kaldi, situated within Hotel Vestmannaeyjar, is fast becoming one of Iceland's top restaurants. Run by the ambitious chef Einar Björn Árnason, who takes full advantage of the restaurant's proximity to local fishing grounds, the menu includes many fresh seafood dishes including



a gorgeous lobster feast as well as other exotic island specialties such as smoked puffin, gannet and a popular seafood starter, aptly named 'The Ocean and the Shore'. A variety of cocktails, fine wines and champagne are available to accompany your meal, making dining at Einsi Kaldi a truly memorable experience.

For more information visit www.einsikaldi.is or call +354 481 1415



Discover the Westman Islands with Eyja Tours

For a personal and private approach to sightseeing, Eyja Tours offer organised and privately guided tours around the Westman Islands. This friendly, family-run business strives to deliver noteworthy and personalised tours, including a brand new ribsafari tour to Elliðaey - the third largest island in the archipelago. The popular 'Puffin and Volcano Tour' includes a cliff swinging demonstration, for which Westman Islanders are world renowned, a visit to a large puffin colony and a drive right into the centre of the 1973 eruption.

For more details visit www.eyjatours.is or call +354 852 6939



Cozy and Convenient Hotel Eyjar

The recently renovated Hotel Eyjar is located within walking distance to the picturesque harbour of Vestmannaeyjar. There are comfortable standard rooms as well as spacious self-catering studio apartments for those who prefer to do their own cooking - perfect for families with small children. Prices include a full Icelandic breakfast that is very popular with guests. Hotel Eyjar's downtown premises, situated above the Eymundsson bookshop and coffee house, are a great place to base out of during your stay in Vestmannaeyjar.

Book your stay at www.hoteleyjar.is or call +354 481 3636

Photos complimentary of the Westman Islands Marketing Office, www.visitwestmanislands.com

Native Westman Islanders can be said to be among the most friendly of the Icelandic population and during your visit you will undoubtedly strike up a conversation with townsfolk who are happy to share with you their wealth of information about life on the island. You haven't really seen Iceland until you have visited Vestmannaeyjar!



THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

The Eldheimar Volcano Museum on the Westman Islands

None of Heimaey's 5,300 inhabitants had ever expected that a volcanic eruption could make them homeless, when on 23rd January 1973, earthquakes started to shake the small island south of the Icelandic mainland. Only hours later a 2,000 metre-long crevice opened just outside the town and close to the church, pouring fountains of lava and ash over Heimaey's houses and streets.

In less than one hour all the inhabitants had been evacuated, without any chance of saving their belongings. Some people never returned to the island.

Heroes Saving a Home

Two hundred brave men stayed in the danger zone to fight the devastation, and finally succeeded in slowing down the lava flow by cooling it with seawater and thus saved the port. However, when 5 months later, the eruption came to its end, around 400 houses had been completely destroyed.

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii, which in 73 AD, was buried under thick layers of ash and

lava from Mt. Vesuvius. Huge parts of the historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

'Pompeii of the North' deserves its name: 40 years after the disaster some 10 houses have been raised from the ashes, and an impressive museum tops off the excavation site, that had been open to visitors since the very first dig.

A Museum as a Mirror

Eldheimar's design is unique, rather ominous, and yet austere. It is an architectural masterpiece made of volcanic stone that perfectly mirrors the inexorability and harshness of nature. Its beating heart right in the centre of the building is Gerðisbraut No. 10, the house that had been situated on the slope of the lava-spewing volcano. Having been fully excavated, it displays life on the day of the eruption and now serves as a memorial for a lost homeland.

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m² museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman Island's Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a



height of 220 metres out of the blue not existing before its eruption.

It was similar to the submarine volcano that erupted in 1963 and lasted four years creating the island of Surtsey, south of Heimaey.

Nature protection laws protect Surtsey and only scientists are allowed to access the island for research reasons. The island is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2008.

The Eldheimar museum is quite open in both design and guidance in the exhibition halls as well as in the café and shop. It leaves enough space for walking around and contemplating the natural disaster and its impacts on the economic and cultural life of the Westman Islands, creating respect for the determination of its fearless inhabitants, who still brave the elements today. - DT



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A LOOK AT MUSEUMS IN VESTMANNAEYJAR

Fascinating and Family-Friendly



Vestmannaeyjar, also known as the Westman Islands, are by far one of my favourite places in Iceland. If you have only a short time to visit the country, then consider for a moment all that this unique and charming little corner of Iceland has to offer: millions of nesting seabirds, including puffins, a still warm volcano, an authentic pirate's cove, and some of the most spectacular views in Iceland.

It is easy to get around to all the major sites on the tiny island that measures only 17 square kilometres, and a visit to the island's two museums is a must-do. Sagnheimar (Vestmannaeyjar Folk Museum) and Sæheimar (The Aquarium and Museum of Natural History) are located right near the centre of the island's only town.

A Puffin Named Tóti

Sæheimar or 'The Aquarium' as it is called locally, is dedicated to Vestmannaeyjar's rich maritime traditions. First opened in 1964, the museum was the first of its kind in



Iceland and houses a variety of live exhibits, including a 'touch tank' where children can view and handle crabs, starfish, urchins, and small fish. The extensive mineral exhibit contains samples of almost every type of mineral found in the country and you can learn about Icelandic birdlife in the mounted bird exhibition. Last but not least, a puffin named Tóti, who came to the centre as an orphan nearly 4 years ago, lives up the museum with his friendly nature, funny antics and even sports a puffin-sized football jersey on special occasions, in honour of the local team.

Vestmannaeyjar Folk Museum

For a more in-depth understanding of Icelandic culture, no trip to Iceland would be complete without a visit to Sagnheimar, Vestmannaeyjar Folk Museum. Popular with tourists and locals alike, the museum contains several permanent exhibitions with guidance in English



and German. Highlights include exhibits about harbour life past and present in Vestmannaeyjar, the special role of women in the fishing community, the Algerian Pirate Raid of 1627 and of course an exhibit about the famous 1973 volcanic eruption on Heimaey. The museum's highly entertaining 'pirate cave' allows young visitors to dress up as pirates and run amok brandishing plastic swords, giving mom and dad a chance to enjoy the rest of the museum in relative peace.

Be sure to check out Vestmannaeyjar, one of Iceland's best-kept secrets. - EMV

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VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale

Mountainous and mysterious, the Westman Islands are one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Formed during volcanic eruption centuries ago, Westman Islands also host one of the youngest volcano's in the world, Eldfell, that formed in 1973 during a major volcanic eruption. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the skyline of Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade.

The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands is with Viking Tours' Circle Tour. This 90-minute tour takes you around the main island of Heimaey where you will peek into sea caves and observe towering cliffs teeming with a variety of birdlife. The tour concludes with

the sensational live sounds of haunting instrumental music, filling the singing cave of Klettshellur which is renowned for its superb acoustics.

The Coach Tour

Another delightful way to explore the island is by taking the Viking Tours' coach tour which departs from the harbour every day, year round. The guided tour takes you around the island where you will learn something of the history and culture. You will get the opportunity to visit a recopy of the first farm in Westman Islands, Herjólfsbær, as well as the possibility to observe puffins at Stórhöfði.

In staggering numbers, these adorable birds flock to the archipelago year after year, the first arriving on schedule around the 12th-14th of April. "The best time of day to see them is in the late afternoon and early evening when the puffin parents return to their burrow to feed their young, after spending the day fishing in the sea", says Sigurmundur, the captain and owner of Viking Tours.

From hot Soup to hot Lava

All Vikingur II tours begin and end at the cozy Café Kró down at the Vestmannaeyjar harbour where you can enjoy a bowl of hot soup with bread and coffee.



New Tours Available for Groups Only

Viking Tours is now offering exciting new group tours on its newly christened boat, the Vikingur,—a large 90-passenger boat which sails from the harbour at Landeyarhöfn. Options include a 'quick look' 90-minute boat tour of two small outer islands, a three hour 'island hopping' tour which takes you to six of the islands in the archipelago and a full-on six hour Bus+Boat combo tour for the ultimate Westman Island tour!

See you this summer in the Westman Islands!
- EMV

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Pictures Are Our Language

Brynjar Ágústsson is a renowned landscape photographer who has been in the business of photography since 1982. His pictures have earned him a reputation as one of Iceland's most respected photographers. Few years ago he discovered his passion for the historic scene portrait from the Viking era. He has captured stunning moments on film – moments with a whole story behind them that, with a fitting caption added, can unfold within the viewer's mind without letting him go. A photo could say more than many words. What kind of expression would we find on the face of a man like Gunnar, whose wife deliberately sent him to death, when she refused to give him a lock of hair to fix his longbow? The saga remains silent about Gunnar's feelings. A picture of the scene could present the drama in a memorable way.

"The photos tell entire stories", says Brynjar. From his point of view, at historical sites such as the old parliament at Þingvellir, or Borgarfjörður, where Egil's Saga takes place, visitors would be much better off with information boards that

display large-scale photos in the style he offers, subtitled by thrilling short texts, than with endless readings. "Pictures speak our language, in any language", he says.

Life Stage for the Photographer

Iceland's topography is startlingly varied, a fact that visitors to this tiny island will notice immediately. For photographers especially, the short distances from one point of beauty to another make Iceland a photographic paradise. From stark white icebergs floating in a gelid, turquoise lagoon, to blood-red lava coursing down an active volcano, and the subtle, ever evolving colours of the sea, Iceland offers a spectacular range of natural subjects. Brynjar's landscape photography is stunning evidence of this variety. "My photographs are actually an extension of what it is that travelers come here to see," he says. Those interested in seeing more of his photographs and getting in contact with him, check his website, panorama.is. -DT/-MJA



panorama.is
 © Brynjar Ágústsson

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A FEW EXAMPLES



Day Tour

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▶ Greenland – Kulusuk



Day Tour

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