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It is available in five languages: English, French, German, Icelandic and now, Chinese. Besides the printed edition, all the material – and more, is on our website.

Since its founding, approx. two and a half million copies have been printed. They have been distributed in hotels, airports, bus stations and tourist locations around the country as well as being sent to travel agencies and individuals in Europe, America and China.

In 2011 the first Icelandic Times videos were produced. Since that time, over 80 videos have been posted on the website and on YouTube. TV programmes in English and Chinese are now being broadcast worldwide, introducing Iceland to a global audience.

A new series of films is currently being made, with the first, focusing on the Westman Islands, expected to be released late this summer.

Icelandic Times Media is a growing company that is promoting all the country's varied tourist offerings and business investment opportunities in a way that informs, inspires and encourages travellers to get the most from their visits.



Einar Þ. Þorsteinsson
 Managing Editor and Publisher

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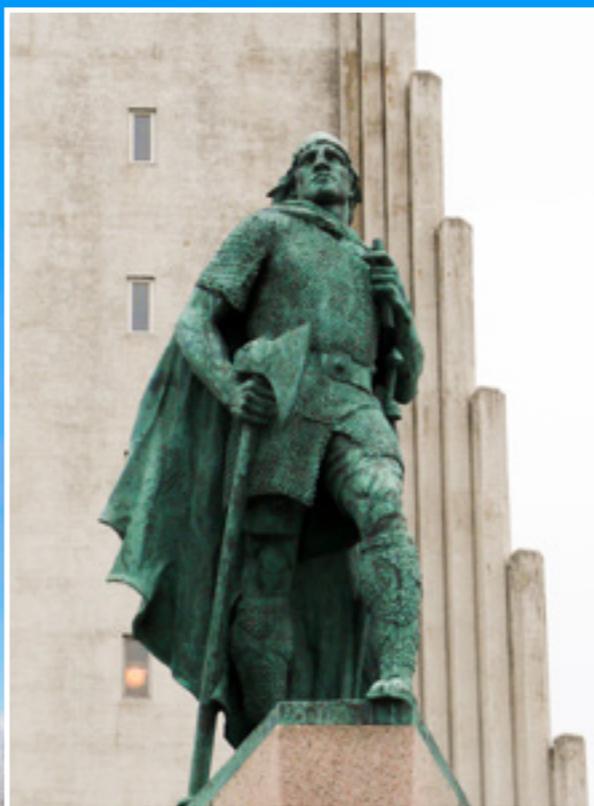
One of the world's smaller capitals, Reykjavik is surrounded by the towns of Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Álftanes (where the President lives), Hafnarfjörður and the country town of Mosfellsbær, combining to make up the Greater Reykjavik area.

It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900s, 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.



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 WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE WATCHMAKER

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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 1,000 metres. 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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ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

Healthy Food Direct from the Earth



In the old days, people still had an understanding of nature's richness. They used what Mother Earth provided them with. They 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 Natural 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 variety of herbal teas. Nothing is added or changed in the production of the products.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland.

He was the first 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 gift packages (a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe) are available in the Saga Shop on board Icelandair's aircraft.

Hand-Picked and Healthy

The hand-picked Icelandic 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

nutritious food. By adding this 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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THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The 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



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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 minute drive from Reykjavik, 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.

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 spread throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items, they sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the internet.



and Soffía are happy to work with you to 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 place special orders online.

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 a much sought after souvenir from Iceland.

Custom-made

Should you have your own design ideas or materials that you would like to use, Palli

Walk-ins Welcome

Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvegur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are from 9am – 6pm, Monday through Friday, and on Saturdays from 9am – 4pm, 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 Reykjavik.

—EMV



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Refinement in Reykjavik

Einar Ben Brings Style and Class to Dining in the Capital

Einar Ben is one of a select few restaurants in the highly competitive Reykjavik scene, where new, trendy places come and go on a monthly basis, that has found its way into the Icelandic psyche and has been able to maintain the delicate balance of class, comfort and top-rate food at reasonable prices that inspires customers to return.

Home of a Hero

The restaurant is, in fact, the former home of one of Iceland's greatest heroes, after whom it is named. Einar Ben was a poet and pioneer who personified the dreams and ambitions of Icelanders in the early 20th century.

It is easy to see why the restaurant has become a part of Reykjavik's culture. It retains the romanticism and grace of the Golden Age period and yet it is free of pretense and excess. You'll find none of the modern, careless, fast food rush here. The staff enjoy taking time to provide a quality service in an open, friendly manner.



Dishes With a Difference

Of course, what matters most is the food, and here, Einar Ben's reputation is well known. Its dishes are built around the classics: fish and lamb. They are justifiably



proud of their menu, from the hors d'oeuvres, the main course to the desserts and coffee drinks, the master chef creates sublime tastes which blend together for an amazing dining experience.

Fortified for the night

Up on the third floor of the house is fun surprise: Rauði barinn, Einar Ben's lounge. It's the perfect place to relax with some after-dinner drinks. Reykjavik's nightlife is legendary, so the 'Red Bar' will prepare you to start a night on the town.

Einar Ben is found on the corner of Ingólfstorg, at the end of Austurstræti, right in the city centre. *-ASF*



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 www.einarben.is



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) is 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 1 September – 30 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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venue with a high ceiling, and it can be set up with a large projector screen and all the equipment necessary to host a professional conference or a large private meeting. It is also frequently modified and decorated to handle special requests, including private parties for companies, weddings and birthdays. A free transport service is available for groups. Both floors have internet connections.

Nothing but the best

New owners took over the business in 2009, but the restaurant has operated since 1992, so it has an established network of suppliers that guarantees the very best quality raw materials are available at any time. The chefs deliver magnificent meals that range from modern takes on traditional fish and meat dishes to gourmet vegetarian dishes, and the various more exotic specialities that the restaurant is famous for.

A full menu

Skólabrú is well known for its traditional rack of lamb and salted cod (bacalao). For those looking for more exotic meals, the chefs offer exquisite specialities such as seawolf (Atlantic Wolffish,) and wild goose carpaccio.

The dessert menu is mouth watering and the wine list has the perfect red, white, and sparkling wines to complement your meal and dessert. An assortment of beers and strong drinks is also available.

Skólabrú is the perfect restaurant for people who love gourmet food in a nice setting, and the service provided to groups is unparalleled. *-SF*

THE ICELANDIC HOUSE OF SPECIALITIES

Skólabrú Gourmet Restaurant feeds connoisseurs of good food

Skólabrú is one of the most respected restaurants in Iceland. It is located in one of downtown Reykjavík's most iconic older buildings. The nearly 120 year old house delivers a very relaxed and elegant setting, right next to the Pond and the almost 220 year old Reykjavík Cathedral, Dómkirkjan.

A perfect service for the world's clientele

Skólabrú caters to international clients who love gourmet food and wine and awesome service, but still expect reasonable prices. The restaurant is known for handling parties and meetings for very demanding clients, including foreign embassies and the large crews that

accompany the foreign film productions that Iceland has attracted in recent years. The restaurant has also handled some very unusual requests, such as setting up a dedicated mobile restaurant in order to keep film crews well fed when they are on location somewhere far away from Reykjavík and civilization in general.

Different strokes for different folks

Skólabrú can easily handle 150 people, and the second floor can accommodate up to 80 people in a private setting. The main floor has a small separate room which can accommodate up to 14 people. This room has a wall mounted large screen TV and is perfect for a private meeting or a small seminar. The second floor is a spacious

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JOE & THE JUICE

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 the needs of today's traveller 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

Unforgettable 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.

www.icelandictimes.com



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 Reykjavik's Kringlan Shopping Mall, Kópavogur's Smáralind Shopping Mall, Laugar Fitness Centre and Keflavik Airport's check-in lounge. A great way to take off. This is one place to check out!

—EMV



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ICE CAVE ON TOP OF A GLACIER

Reykjavik Excursions takes you on a tour into the ice

Iceland is famous for its volcanoes, glaciers and hot springs. It is possible to experience all of those things any time of the year, but during the summer months you get the added bonus of 24-hour daylight. This summer, a man-made ice cave was opened on top of Langjökull glacier. It offers the chance to go to a permanent winterland and see it from the inside.

Reykjavik Excursions offers two different tours to Langjökull's new man-made ice cave: The Langjökull Ice Cave Experience and Langjökull Ice Cave, Gullfoss, Geysir & Þingvellir. The glacier is Iceland's second largest and covers an area of about 950 sq km. At the highest point it rises about 1200 metres above sea level.

Both tours start at BSÍ bus terminal from whence you will be driven through the beautiful Húsafell and up to the foot of Langjökull. On the way to the top of the glacier, you change into a specially modified

monster truck. It is important to dress well because it can get very cold on the glacier – even in the summer time.

The main difference between the ice cave and other natural ice caves is that this one is on the top of a glacier while the natural caves are at the edges of glaciers and are formed by glacial rivers or hot springs.

On days with clear skies, the view from the top of the glacier is spectacular. When you get there you will see the opening to the ice tunnel. Inside, the walls are lit up with led lights which have been embedded in the ice.

In the tunnels you will get the chance to read interesting information about the glacier, glacial exploration and research and the effect that global warming is having on the glacier.

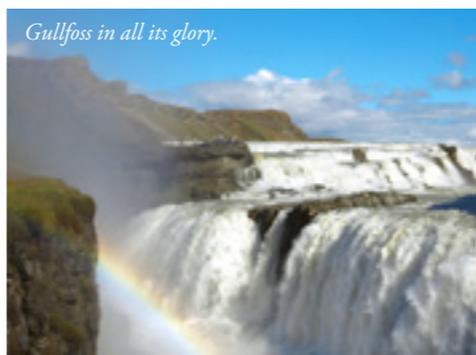
It is a once in a lifetime experience to see a glacier from the inside. There's even a cave room which can be rented for weddings, parties, meetings and other events.

Enjoy the Golden Circle Afterwards

After Langjökull Ice Cave Experience, you see the rugged desert of Kaldidalur valley, which is in stark contrast to the lushness of Húsafell, before heading back to Reykjavik.

If you join the Langjökull Ice Cave, Gullfoss, Geysir & Þingvellir tour you will visit some of Iceland's most popular natural pearls after seeing the ice cave.

A drive through Kaldidalur valley will take you to Þingvellir, Gullfoss and Geysir, which make up the Golden Circle. The bright summer nights give those sites a different look.



Gullfoss in all its glory.



Strokkur's plume can reach up to 20 metres.



You can to rent the cave room for unique parties and meetings.

Þingvellir National Park became a UNESCO heritage site in 2004 and has a special place in the heart of Icelanders. It is the place where the world's first parliament was founded and is the only place where you can see the Eurasian and North-American tectonic plates above sea level. Part of the national park is Lake Þingvellir, which is the largest natural lake in Iceland. The water in it is mostly made up of melt water from Langjökull, but it has taken the water around 20 to 30 years to trickle through the lava fields to the lake. This makes the water very clean, cold and nutritious which explains the varied plant and animal life in and around the lake.

Gullfoss is one of the most famous waterfalls in Iceland. It is three tiered and falls into a deep canyon which, at some angles, makes it look as if it vanishes into the earth. The waterfall is fairly powerful so it is important not to go too close to the ledge. But due to the spray, you can usually see one or two rainbows above it.

You will also stop at Geysir in Haukadalur, which is only a few minutes away from Gullfoss and from which other geysers got their name. The area is named after the now mostly dormant Geysir, but a smaller geyser, Strokkur, erupts approximately every eight minutes. Strokkur can reach up to 20 metres in height. Apart from Strokkur, there are over 40 other small hot springs, fumaroles and mud pots in the area.

Reykjavik Excursions is one of Iceland's oldest travel companies. They offer many different day tours and everyone should be able to find something that suits them. With its decades-long experience and knowledgeable travel guides, you cannot find a better company to travel with. *-HDB*



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NATURE RELAXATION IN ICELAND

Creative Tours Iceland Offers a Unique Experience

My main focus is on personal and relaxing tours for all ages. I want to give people the time they need to really see and feel what Iceland is about," says Birgit Fork, the owner of Creative Tours Iceland.

Birgit, who moved from Germany to Iceland in 2008, says that individuals and families can choose day tours where the aim is to photograph or paint or play in the nature.

Creative Tours Iceland offers 8 different day tours: The Golden Circle (a 'Meet the Natives' course is optional); Volcano Kids (summertime), Reykjanes; Whalefjord (visit to whale museum included); Northern Delights (wintertime); Creative Tour; South Coast (Jökulsárlón optional) and the 'Just for You' tour.



where people have the possibility to let their creativity flow by painting, photographing or writing in Icelandic landscapes.

Creative Tours Iceland offers trips for groups of up to 12 people. Available languages are German and English. Pick-up from accommodation is flexible, especially in summertime "because it never gets dark and we are out to catch the best moments," says Birgit.

-KB

Paint, Photograph or Play

The Volcano Kids tour is for families with children. The aim is to see Iceland through children's eyes, play and visit the lambfarm

Bjarteyjarsandur in Hvalfjörður. Birgit is a pedagogue and loves to offer tours where the children can enjoy themselves.

Birgit is also a painter and she decided to offer a unique tour, the Creative Tour,



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



www.icelandictimes.com



THE VOLCANO HOUSE

Near the old harbour close to Reykjavik city centre, Volcano House gives a unique insight into making of Iceland

Would you like to know more about the powerful forces that have made and shaped Iceland through millions of years up to this very day? The geology of Iceland is unique. The Volcano House is a friendly family enterprise in downtown Reykjavik where you can learn how Iceland is being formed by volcanoes, earthquakes, glaciers, and other geological events that oblige the people in Iceland to live with the dangers they pose.

Volcano House has a geological exhibition where visitors can come to see and touch various forms of ashes from the famous Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull volcanoes and a large and beautiful collection of various rock formations made by the volcano activity.

The Volcano House also has a boutique where visitors can find Icelandic handcraft, stones, artwork, books related to Iceland's volcanoes and nature to take home with them. Staff members have

a broad knowledge of geology, geography and tourism.

The cinema in the Volcano House offers a documentary film about the two most dramatic eruptions in Iceland. The show tells the story of the eruption in the beautiful Westman Islands off the south coast of Iceland that began in the middle of night in January 1973. Nearly 5,000 inhabitants suddenly

woke up to discover that a tremendous eruption of blazing lava and steaming hot ash had begun almost in the middle of the town.

Next, you can gain an insight into the story of the eruption in Eyjafjallajökull in 2010. Never in recent times have the Icelanders had to cope with such tremendous power. Eyjafjallajökull spread awe, horror – and a crisis in air traffic, leaving millions of passengers delayed or stranded worldwide. Large areas of Iceland were covered in a thick blanket of volcanic ash.

The film also covers other famous volcanic eruptions like those of Grímsvötn, Hekla and Katla.

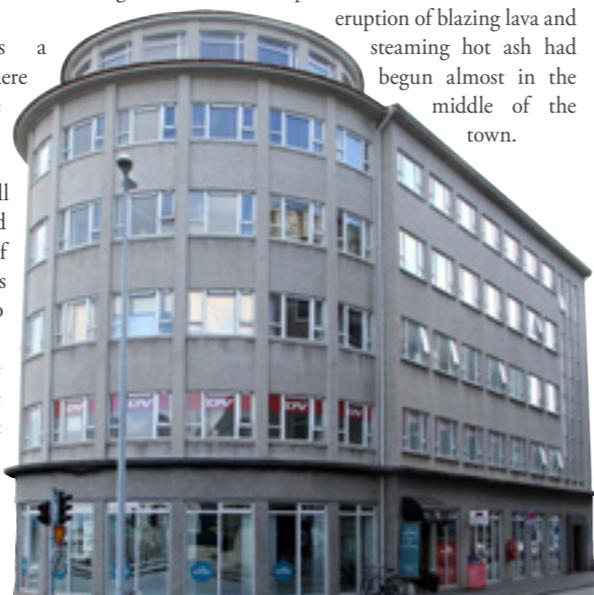
Here you can see both great beauty and also the horror when humans stand against the geological forces of creation.

If you are visiting Iceland, a trip to the Volcano House down by the old harbour is something you must not miss.

The films are shown in a 53-minute sequence every hour, on the hour, every day from 10:00am to 9:00pm.

From 15 June to 15 September Volcano House also offer a show in German every day at 6:00pm.

-MPH



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 www.volcanohouse.is



INTO THE ICE ON LANGJÖKULL GLACIER

Gray Line Iceland takes you deep into an Ice Cave



The thought of exploring the inside of a glacier may sound downright daunting. Other words come to mind as well: challenging, intimidating and maybe even a little bit crazy!

But the irresistible invitation to go where few others have ever gone is hard to pass up. And so, on a gloriously sunny Thursday afternoon in late June, our small coach set off from Gray Line Iceland's main bus terminal in Reykjavik to the man-made ice cave inside Iceland's 2nd largest glacier, the formidable Langjökull glacier.

Drop Dead Gorgeous Landscapes

The passing scenery on the journey north is a treat in and of itself – lush green pastureland flecked with freely roaming sheep and horses; the placid blue waters of Hvalfjörður fjord. One could linger all day in a spot like this, just basking in the utterly peaceful landscape.

A Rendezvous with Our Guide

After stopping briefly at Europe's most powerful hot spring, the boiling Deildartunguhver, we carry on towards our rendezvous with our guide and a specially converted 8-wheeled former military vehicle known as a 'monster truck' that will shuttle us to the entrance of the ice cave.

Arrival at the Top

The meeting with our guide, a tall, athletic Icelander with decades of guiding and rescue work under his belt, immediately put any lingering doubts to rest. Leading us forth into the cave, back-lit with the soft glow of LED lights, we enter a decidedly solid structure that is not going anywhere anytime soon. Layer upon layer of ice and snow forms any glacier and the striated walls before us have their own story to tell. A thin grey line running along the whole length of the cave serves as a reminder of the ash fall from the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull

volcano, 200km away. As the path slopes imperceptibly downward, our guide stops every now and then to point out this feature and that fissure, with explanations of how the ice cave was created.

Moment of Truth

At last we reach the ice cave's moment of truth and most important feature: an 8-metre wide/30-metre high fissure that was discovered quite by accident during excavations. The spectacular fissure, its shimmering icicles sparkling in the softly lit atmosphere will be forever engraved on my mind as the unforgettable experience that Gray Line Iceland's Inside the Glacier Tour truly is.

-EMV



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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 growth in tourist numbers has been steadily rising for the last few years, with a predicted increase of over 20% in 2014, resulting in close to one million annual visitors. Given this increasing growth, 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*

Tech House ehf.

OFFERS EXCITING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

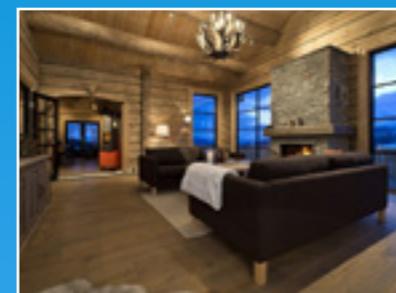
It is hard to resist the cosy appeal of a rustic log house, especially after a long day spent enjoying the outdoors. Tech House ehf. understands the functional beauty of high-quality log homes and cabins, and looks to share its passion with new international clients.

Investment Opportunities

Specialising in import, export, contracting and steelwork, Tech House ehf. is benefitting from Iceland's booming tourism industry and is seeking investors for a wide variety of development opportunities in Iceland and abroad, especially within the tourism market. While currently supplying products to partners in Portugal, Tech House ehf. is interested in drawing international investors for similar large contracts such as the construction of a series of holiday cabins and homes, and potentially, for a hotel in the beautiful Icelandic countryside.

High-Quality and Energy Smart

Attractive, practical and energy efficient, Tech House ehf. pre-fabricated spruce log houses are factory built in Eastern Europe, and are straightforward to assemble on location. Clients can choose from a range of log and frame houses in several types



and sizes, with logs available in widths from 20mm to 90mm. Tech House ehf. has the capacity to produce structures up to several hundred square metres in size.

Through many years of experience in the Icelandic construction industry, Tech House ehf. has fostered an extensive network of international producers and distributors that allow them to provide the best materials at competitive prices. In addition to pre-fabricated housing

units, Tech House ehf. is able to source a varied range of materials to complete the building process, including central heating systems and piping, sliding glass doors, window fittings, and tiles.

For clients interested in custom builds, Tech House ehf. offers flexible layouts and completely customised interiors and finishings, as well as masonry and exterior stone accents. The possibilities are endless, and the final results guaranteed to please.

Potential for Growth

Potential is the keyword for Tech House ehf. With a broad network of business contacts, a thriving wholesale dealership, and a reliable supply chain, Tech House ehf. looks forward to a future of innovation and expansion. Prospective investors can expect an abundance of exciting opportunities, and a business relationship based on trust and excellent service. To learn more about Tech House ehf., visit www.multikerfi.com or contact icelava@outlook.com. *-MJA*



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ICELAND FROM ABOVE

One Man's Journey to Get to Know His Native Country

Getting to know a country is a lifelong journey and, while most of Iceland's visitors have to make do with first impressions, majestic as they might be, they can now expand their experience through the arduous work of pilot and photographer Björn Rúriksson. In his photography book, 'Iceland From Above', he has captured the essence of Iceland in a breathtaking manner, soaring countless times above its landscapes in a plane, camera in hand.



Björn has been doing this for decades and proudly claims that the distances he's covered flying over Iceland during his photography missions equals flying 15 times around the globe. Getting the perfect shot requires repeated approaches and finding

optimal conditions, which means that Björn has, on some occasions, visited locations up to forty times just to get the perfect shot. But according to Björn, it's worth every minute as he feels it is the best way to truly comprehend what Iceland is made of. Iceland is, of course, ever-changing with its contrasting dark winters and bright summers, melting ice and burning fires and by visiting these same locations again and again Björn says he feels



like he's getting closer to really knowing Iceland. "You truly get the whole context when viewing from above, which is not easily available otherwise, and I try to present this experience in my book", says Björn.



which has not gone unnoticed by Björn, as he has flown over and photographed 16 different volcanic eruptions all over the country.

The book is clearly divided into chapters by regions and each chapter begins with concise information where the region's distinctive features are accentuated and put into context with Iceland's ongoing geological history. 'Iceland From Above' thus has three different functions, as it were: as a reference book for tourists while touring Iceland, as a souvenir from a memorable trip to Iceland and simply as a work of art.

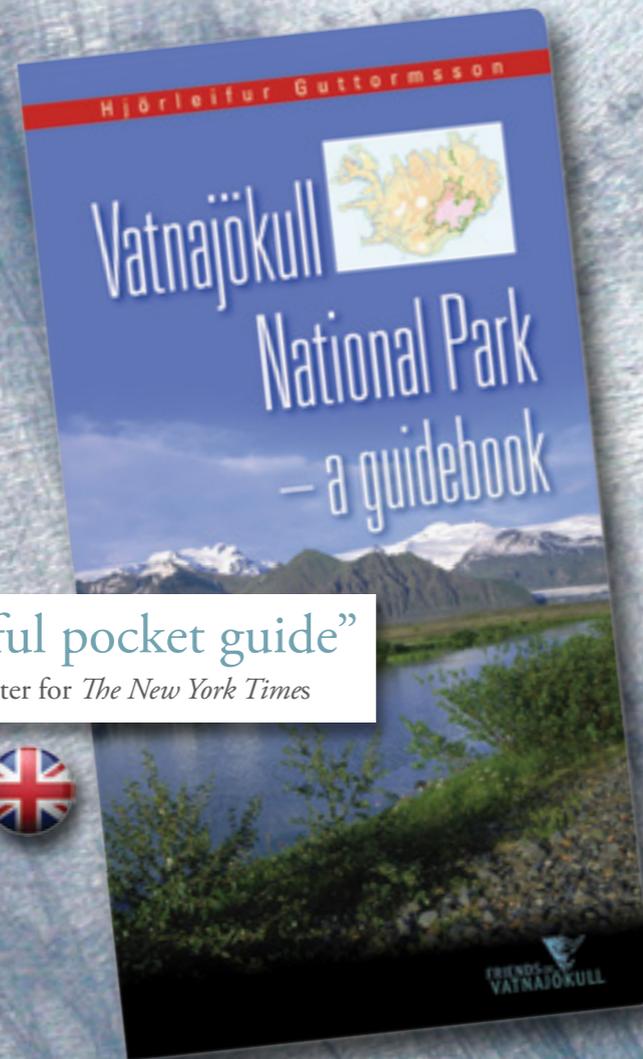
Available in Six Languages

A Work of Art
Volcanic activity in Iceland is a large part of its identity and is constantly changing and forming the island,

'Iceland From Above' is available in six different languages: Icelandic, English, French, German and now Russian and Chinese. It comes in two formats; regular size and a pocket sized version, both printed on high quality paper to give the photos added depth and quality. -VAG



Whether you want to picnic beside Lake Mývatn or climb the glaciers above Skaftafell Vatnajökull National Park — *A Guidebook* is your ideal companion. The handy little tome provides essential and thorough information about all the best sights in the park. Available in Icelandic, English and German.



“A wonderful pocket guide”

Eric Hansen, reporter for *The New York Times*



Friends of Vatnajökull - nonprofit association supporting Vatnajökull national park



THE REYKJANES PENINSULA

You could spend your whole holiday on the Reykjanes peninsula. Stand on the bridge spanning the continents. Take a thrilling ATV ride up to a moonscape of mountains, volcanoes and lava fields. Bathe in the world-renowned Blue Lagoon, with its warm, healing waters. Ride the Icelandic horse. Go hiking and caving. Catch your breath – you are just beginning! Here, some of the first pioneers set up home. You can see their ancient ruins. Their rich fishing fields just offshore still provide large catches but winter storms are so fierce they can throw ships many metres inland. Their salt fish is famous in the Mediterranean countries. Here, you will find the Viking longship that sailed to America in the steps of Leif the Lucky, the first European to discover North America in the year 1000 AD, and the museum for one of the world's most famous polar explorers, Jean-Baptiste Chacot. Take a tour with a knowledgeable guide to explore the area yourself: the birdwatching sites, the ancestral Viking house, the boiling mud springs and steam vents, bubbling lakes, the cultural centres. Enjoy a stay in one of the hotels, guesthouses or camp sites and eat delicious meals in a wide variety of restaurants, pubs and cafés. This is the Land of the Vikings!



Picture compliments of www.visitreykjanes.is.

GRINDAVÍK

THE PERFECT START TO YOUR TRIP

While travelling through Iceland, be sure to take your time to explore this historical district where the Icelandic sagas come to life and the nature consumes you with its quiet grandeur

All too many of Iceland's visitors miss out on one of the country's most interesting geological locations even though it's right under their noses. Many are content glimpsing the moonlike landscapes of moss-covered lava fields on the way from the airport to the city of Reykjavik from a bus window, failing to realise that the Reykjanes peninsula itself is the perfect start – or end – to the trip.

The peninsula has numerous interesting geological, cultural and historical phenomena and it requires at least a few days to take in all its sights and atmosphere. The perfect place to set up base is the charming village of Grindavik on the southern coastline of the peninsula.

Grindavik boasts many attractions and activities; the most famous of which is undoubtedly the ever popular Blue Lagoon.

The town is like so many Icelandic coastal towns, centered around fishing, and a visit to the harbour area is where you'll find the spirit of the town. Seeing the local fishermen bustling about bringing in the catch of the day is always exciting; you'll even see retired fishermen snooping around when the boats come in – and getting to enjoy the fish at one of Grindavik's exquisite restaurants in the evening is all the more rewarding.

You'll find all the amenities in Grindavik; a variety of different quality accommodations, the recently renovated geothermal swimming pool, assorted superb restaurants and reliable tour operators.

A visit to the Magma house of culture and natural resources is an excellent way to get a deeper understanding of what makes the area so interesting. The Saltfish Museum exhibition tells the story of

how salted cod drastically affected Iceland's history, while the Earth Energy exhibition gives insight into the fascinating formation of the peninsula and its constant geological activity.

Despite Grindavik's proximity to the capital, you'll find you won't have to venture far or need special equipment or vehicles to find yourself in the wilderness. Reykjanes is actually the only place in the world where the Mid-Atlantic ridge comes ashore and thus has great diversity in volcanic and geothermal activity.

The Reykjanes Geopark is thus home to countless interesting geological formations, some of which are completely unique, including numerous types of volcanoes in at least four separate volcanic zones, with hundreds of open fissures and faults.

–VAG





Bryggjan Café The Heart of the Town

The harbour is the heart of Grindavík and the heart of the harbour is Bryggjan Café, with its phenomenal view of the harbour and ever-popular specialty soups.

Bryggjan is a fisherman's café at its core and has been servicing fishermen from the outset, without pretension or affectation – 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.

It's a small place, but packed with character and really takes off in the evenings and on the weekends. 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 surely feel at home.

Opening hours: 8am – 10pm

Miðgarði 2 | +354 426 7100
kaffibryggjan@simnet.is | www.kaffibryggjan.is



Volcano Tours Standing Inside the Volcano

Seeing Iceland's unique geological phenomena is one thing but actually standing inside them is an experience not soon forgotten. Volcano Tours in Grindavík offer special excursions that explore the multitude of craters, caves, lava fields, hot springs and geothermal areas found on the Reykjanes peninsula, as well as action-packed tours to staples such as the Golden Circle and the south shore and the now world famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano. When some of the volcanoes became inactive hundreds of years ago they suddenly emptied themselves and are now hollowed out, which gives visitors the golden opportunity to explore them from the inside. The experienced staff of Volcano Tours have come to know all the peninsula's secrets, so their tours are very varied and frequently include around 20 to 25 different stops at various geological and historical locations, depending on the customers' field of interest.

For those waiting for the Northern Lights, conditions will be right from 1 October and Volcano Tours' experienced guides are sure to find the perfect spot to catch them.

Vikurbraut 2 | +354 426 8822
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Papa's Restaurant The Best Fish and Chips in Town

Going to Grindavík without trying some fish dishes would be something like going to Italy and not having pizza and many claim the best fish and chips in town are to be found down by the harbour at Papa's Pizza. Don't let the Italian sounding name throw you off, Papa's Pizza is as local and authentic as they come. Their fish and chips dish comes with either delicious deep-fried or pan fried cod – always fresh of course – and keeps satisfied customers coming back. Papa's pride themselves on their gourmet burgers, made of course with all-Icelandic quality beef as well as authentic lamb dishes. As the name would imply, Papa's Pizza also make some seriously delicious pizzas. The restaurant offers a pleasant, clean, relaxed atmosphere with friendly staff. You can take a break for a quick lunch or relax there in the afternoon for a full meal and mingle with the locals at the bar in the evening.

Opening hours: Weekdays: 11:30am – 3:00pm & 5:00pm – 9:00pm
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papasbarinn@gmail.com | www.papas.is



Guesthouse Borg Family Hospitality and Small Town Flavour

Those looking for a friendly, economic and snug place to stay while exploring the Grindavík area, need look no further than Guesthouse Borg. A guesthouse based on family hospitality with a small town flavour, it caters to 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. Breakfast is provided on a self-service basis. Owners Björk and Magnús are always open to conversation and offering recommendations on how to make the most of your trip and are sure to make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. Guesthouse Borg is thus an ideal place to stay, meet interesting people and enjoy the facilities and fun the town has to offer.

Borgarhraun 2 | +354 895 8686
ghborg@simnet.is | www.guesthouseborg.com



Max's Restaurant Just a Stone's Throw Away

After a busy day of soaking in the wonders of the Blue Lagoon many will have worked up a healthy appetite. The no-nonsense Nordic cuisine of Max's Restaurant is just what the doctor ordered. Right next to the geothermal wonders that created the Blue Lagoon, you'll find this charming restaurant with panoramic views of the lava fields. Max's Restaurant places special emphasis on using fresh prime ingredients and takes slow food's principles of "good, clean and fair food" close to heart. The fish is usually caught the morning of the day it's cooked and the meat is always local. The chefs at Max's are well aware of the quality of their ingredients and are not afraid to let them speak for themselves with minimal extravagance – but always with elegance. Dropping by for a light lunch after a soak in the Blue Lagoon or a snack in the afternoon is always a good idea, as Max's offers some tasty homemade pastries to go along with a hot beverage.

Breakfast is served between 7:00am & 10:00am
À La Carte Menu from 12:00 noon – 2:30pm
Homemade pastries from 2:30pm – 5:30pm
À La Carte Menu from 5:30pm – 9:30pm

Norðurljósavegur 1 | +354 426 8650
info@nli.is | www.nli.is/restaurant



Visiting Anna and Sólveig As Authentic as It Gets

The perfect local authentic experience in a foreign place often turns out to be elusive and fleeting, but you're in luck, as local artists and guides Anna and Sólveig have decided to open the doors to their special scenic home on the coastline at Þórkötlustaðir, just outside Grindavík. They have both worked as guides and, from time to time, stopped by their house with groups and everyone enjoyed it so much that they've decided to offer other interested visitors the chance to stop by. Having lived there for over a decade they have come to know the area – its history, geology and culture – so well that Sólveig says almost every rock and cranny has a story to tell.

The landscapes are also a constant inspiration as Anna can attest to. Her workshop is on the premises where she welcomes visitors and shares how these influences show up in her work as a sculptor. Getting coffee, going for a walk, sharing stories, inspiration and experiences is indeed as local as it gets. They can accommodate small groups of up to 25.

Anna GSM: +354 866 4567
Sólveig GSM: +354 898 6162



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 both numerous smaller breweries and 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 ranges of mouth-watering chocolate confectionery have 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

 **Duty Free Store Ltd.**
 Keflavik Airport • 235 Keflavik
 +354 425 0410
 dutyfree@dutyfree.is
 www.dutyfree.is 

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+354 695-8103



5 MIN DRIVE TO THE CITY
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FREE-WIFI

PRIVATE BATHROOM
AND SHOWER

KITCHINETTE IN
ALL ROOMS

LATHER UP WITH SOAP VIKING BATH PRODUCTS

Ever wonder how the Vikings managed to keep clean? According to sources, early Icelanders actually enjoyed regular ablutions, washing up after a hard week's work with homemade soaps. The art of soap making is an ancient practice, and Soap Viking aims to follow the traditional soap formulas of days past to produce high quality Icelandic soaps and bath products.

Viking Soap Formula

Soap Viking is a family-run company specialising in entirely handmade soaps and bath products that are light, cleansing and naturally based. The company's 'Viking Soap Formula' utilises Icelandic ingredients whenever possible, including pure Icelandic water, tallow, local canola oil, and fragrant herbs like wild thyme.

Natural Inspiration and Traditional Culture

With several varieties to choose from, some of Soap Viking's most popular soaps are connected to Iceland's landscape and culture. 'Soap Eruption' and

'Eyjafallajökull' are both blended with volcanic ash from 2010's famous eruption, and the ash acts as a mild exfoliant to brighten the skin.

'Aurora Borealis' is a dark-tinted soap beautifully marbled to resemble the mysterious Northern Lights for which Iceland is renowned.

It's easy to spot Soap Viking's 'Wool Felted Soap' – the brightly coloured bundles of felted Icelandic wool foam well and make for a refreshing scrub.

Soap Viking supports Icelandic farmers and producers to ensure that the best possible ingredients are used.

Porvaldseyri farm, located at the base of Eyjafallajökull is

Soap Viking's supplier of canola oil, and their namesake soap, 'Porvaldseyri', can only be purchased at the Porvaldseyri Visitor Centre.



Soaps, Scrubs, and Sea Salt

In addition to handmade soaps, Soap Viking also produces lightly scented bath bombs, bath salts and body scrubs made with fine Icelandic sea salts and essential oils. The 'Viking Bath Formula' products will soften and nourish your skin and help you relax, Icelandic style.

Soap Viking's products are available in fine gift shops across Iceland, including Eymundsson bookstores, Rammagerðin, Islandia, and the Keflavík International Airport, and Soap Viking's producer, Sápan ehf., is located

in Reykjanesbær only minutes from the airport. Soap Viking bath products contribute to an indulgent bathing experience, something the ancient Vikings knew all about! – MJA



Soap Viking
Brekustigur 41 • 260 Reykjanesbær
+354 618 7272
info@soapviking.com
www.soapviking.com



WEST ICELAND

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.



Pictures compliments of Ragnar TH and thor-photography Marketing Office of West Iceland www.west.is



GOATS AND ROSES

Saved from Extinction, Goats breed in Borgarbyggð



Photos: Yulia Yudinova

The Icelandic goats at Háafell in Borgarbyggð are the oldest and purest goat stock found in Europe today. Their arrival dates back to the Settlement of Iceland, around 930 AD. For centuries, they were the main source of food for the islanders but, due to a long climate cooling period during the Middle Ages, they were replaced by sheep with their coarse wool being better suited for long periods of freezing cold weather. Since then, the emphasis has been on the sheep, resulting in the goats becoming nearly extinct in Iceland. Today there are only 800 in the country, so they are still an endangered species.

The farmers at Háafell, Jóhanna and Þorbjörn, were running a traditional Icelandic



eleven years. In 1999 they had adopted the last four goats without horns left in Iceland, which contributed to their decision.

“The goats are very likeable, playful and more like pets than livestock,” says Jóhanna. From her stock, she makes ointments, soaps and fine cashmere wool; from the skin, inner soles, hats and cases for cognac flasks. Then, in the autumn, she sells the goat meat—which is as rich of protein as beef and has as little fat as chicken.

Another attraction at Háafell is Jóhanna's Rose Garden. With 180 types of roses – which is no mean achievement in the harsh Icelandic climate, along with lavender, violets and herbs and grasses from the moor – she makes bath-salts and scrubs. Her little homestead shop is both interesting and original. –SS

farm with cows and sheep until 2000 when they decided to focus solely on goat farming, after working to increase their goat herd for



Háafell Goat Farm

Háafelli / Hvítársíðu • 320 Reykholt
+354 845 2331
haafell@gmail.com
www.gettur.is



BORGARNES IN BORGARFJÖRÐUR

THE HEART & SOUL OF
ICELAND'S CHERISHED SAGAS



Whether you're off to visit Akureyri, the Westfjords, or Snæfellsnes Peninsula, the journey to Iceland's north always includes a stop in the village of Borgarnes. It's time to stretch one's legs, have a bite to eat and soak up nature's magnificence in this most picturesque spot, where mountains, sea and sky converge... and to take time out for some in-depth exploring of this important historical region that is oft overlooked. *-EMV*



Geiri's Bakery (Geirabakari)

Considered by some to be one of the best bakeries in Iceland, Geirabakari of Borgarnes is a well-known pit stop for those making the journey north. Light lunches of soup and sandwiches, slices of traditional cakes and pastries, excellent coffee and the exceptional view are all a part of the charm. Popular treats include 'love balls' – similar to the traditional Icelandic 'kleinur' but with raisins and 'snúðar' – sweet cinnamon rolls iced with a layer of chocolate. Geiri's Bakery made headlines as the location that was used for 'Papa John's Pizza' in the movie 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' and relevant clips from the film are shown in the bakery throughout the day.

Open daily Monday – Thursday, 7.00am – 7.00pm, Friday 7.00am – 6.30pm
Weekends 8.30am – 5.00pm

Digranesgata 6, 310 Borgarnes | +354 437 1920
geirabak@internet.is



A Blast from the Past
The Agricultural Museum of Iceland
Landbúnaðarsafn Íslands takes you back in time to visit 19th and 20th century Iceland when 90% of the population lived on farms. The museum gives an insightful picture of 'olden day' Iceland via an impressive number of antique farm implements from simple ploughs to the first imported tractors and a wide variety of household tools that were common on every farm.

The museum will be holding an open day on Saturday, 11 July, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first tractor-mower in Iceland. Festivities include a teaching demonstration on how to use the hand-held grass cutting instruments of former times. Antique tractor-mowers from all over the country will be on display and coffee, tea and refreshments will be served. Open from 10.00am – 5.00pm Admission free.

Open daily June – August: 12.00 noon – 5.00pm
Entrance fee: adults - 1,000 ISK
14 years and under – free
65 and over – 800 ISK

Landbúnaðarsafn Íslands, Hvanneyri, 311 Borgarnes
+354 433 5000 | bjarnig@lbhi.is | www.landbunadarsafn.is





**Not to Be Missed!
Authentic Icelandic Products**

Ljómáland Farmer's Market specialises in exclusive regional products. Small batch production of items such as traditional skyr from a local creamery, fresh farm eggs, dried fish, grass-fed beef and smoked salmon from local producers ensure top quality products. Sugar free chocolate candies, skyr confect, jams, ice cream and a variety of handcrafts and woollen knitwear, make unique gifts or snacks for the road. Unlike the big supermarkets, small production sometimes means limited quantities so you never know what you will find offered at the market, which makes the experience all the more exciting. Open year round including bank holidays.

*Summer opening hours
Daily from 11.00am – 6.00pm
Location: beside the Borgarnes Tourist
Information Office*

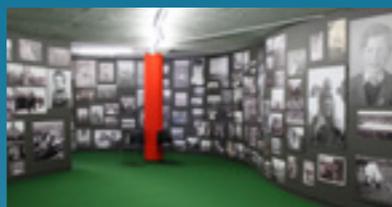
Brúartorg 4, 310 Borgarnes | +354 437 1400
ljomalind@ljomalind.is | www.ljomalind.is



A Journey Into the Glacier

Undoubtedly Iceland's most daring and unusual attraction to date, Into The Glacier is the world's largest man-made ice cave where visitors can take guided tours deep inside the ice-blue heart of Iceland's second largest glacier, Langjökull. The gently sloping 1640 foot-long tunnel makes its way downwards to a series of chambers and ultimately to an impressive ice cathedral that was discovered quite by accident during the excavation of the cave. The exquisite find has become a highlight of the tour, although there are surprises to be had all throughout, including banquet halls for private events, educational exhibits and even an ice chapel for an off-the-charts marriage ceremony. You can book tours online and be sure to check the website for driving information and GPS coordinates before driving to the departure point, Hotel Húsafell, 50km from Borgarnes.

+354 578 2550 | info@intotheglacier.is | www.intotheglacier.is



**Borgarfjörður Museums
(Safnahús Borgarfjarðar)**

Safnahús Borgarfjarðar is a collection of small museums in one location containing a natural history collection, a local history museum, an art collection, as well as the local archives and library. Two intriguing permanent exhibitions, designed with the uniquely innovative and artistic flair of Icelandic artist, Snorri Freyr Hilmarrson, are also housed within the museum. 'Children Throughout a Century' – an extraordinary exhibition portraying the lives of 20th century Icelandic children, via photographs, old toys and other memorabilia. 'Oh to be a bird!' – an interesting look at the rich bird life of Iceland from a new perspective.

*Summer opening hours:
May – August 1.00pm – 5.00pm
Library: Weekdays only, year round
1.00pm – 6.00pm*

Bjarnarbraut, 4-6, 300 Borgarnes | +354 433 7200
safnahus@safnahus.is | www.safnahus.is



**Glamping in Iceland?
New 'Camping Pods' at Fossatún**

Set on spacious grounds on the banks of the Grímsá river, Fossatún Country Hotel & Guesthouse offers guests an unparalleled country experience – camping pods! Bed down for the night (sleeping bag accommodation only) in a cosy wooden pod that affords a comfortable alternative to traditional camping and a perfect solution for camping in the unpredictable Icelandic weather. Bring your own camping gear and do your own cooking or have meals in Fossatún's restaurant overlooking the beautiful Troll waterfalls with views to the Skarðsheiði mountain range. Each pod sleeps 2 adults and one child. Guests have access to camping facilities – showers, toilets and hot tubs on the property. All four available pods are equipped with electricity and free wi-fi connections. Fossatún is located just 18km from Borgarnes in this tranquil and picturesque farming area of Borgarbyggð municipality.

Fossatún ehf, 311 Borgarnes | +354 433 5800, +354 893 9733
info@fossatun.is | www.fossatun.is



**Staðarhús Countryside
Guesthouse & Horse Farm**

Located 17km from the centre of Borgarnes, and 2km from the ring road, Staðarhús Countryside Guesthouse offers nine comfortable double and single rooms and a self-contained holiday cottage set amidst the idyllic surroundings of a modern Icelandic horse farm. This is where you will fall in love with the Icelandic horse, renowned for its gentle temperament and 5 gaits. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned rider, Staðarhús offers an array of riding tours ranging from 30 minutes to 2-hour rides into the breathtaking Icelandic countryside. In the evenings, guests are welcome to make use of the outdoor grill, the communal dining room and bar or relax in the hot tub whilst enjoying views all the way to Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Staðarhús Countryside Guesthouse, 311 Borgarnes
+354 865 7578 | stadarhus@gmail.com | www.stadarhus.is



**A Pool by the Sea
Borgarnes Municipal Pool**

At the end of the day, it's great to relax in one of Iceland's wonderful geothermally-heated swimming pools and the Borgarnes municipal pool is no exception. The pool boasts three hot pots of varying temperatures, an inside and outside lap pool, a paddling pool for children, and three water slides of various heights. There is a sauna for groups of at least five, as well as a steam bath that is fed by hot steam from Deildartunguhver and claims the distinction of being the most powerful hot spring in Europe. Located in the old town centre at the sports house (Íþróttamiðstöðin Borgarnesi)

*Open year round (except major holidays)
Weekdays: 6.00am – 10.00pm
Weekends: 9.00am – 6.00pm*

Þorsteinsgata 1, 300 Borgarnes
+354 433 7150 | sundlaug@borgarbyggd.is



While travelling through Iceland, be sure to take your time and explore this historical district where the Icelandic sagas come to life and the nature consumes you with its quiet grandeur.

SHAPED BY THE BAY

A Place to Launch Out from on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula



On the northern part of the Snæfellsnes peninsula lies Stykkishólmur, a picturesque seaside town that overlooks the beautiful Breiðafjörður bay. The town's rich history as a centre for trading, transportation, culture and service for the bay area gives it a unique sense of antiquity and historical significance. The town's centre is home to some of the most colourful and oldest houses in the country – almost making the whole town a museum in itself.

Stykkishólmur is viewed as one of Iceland's most charming towns by many

Icelanders. The town's close proximity to Breiðafjörður bay contributes largely to its character, surrounding it with exclusive natural beauty. So likewise, the town's historical significance, as a former centre for trade and commerce centuries ago, and a seat of government. The inhabitants have consciously made an effort to preserve the town's old spirit, by retaining its appearance and maintaining old traditions from the bay area.

Visitors have the chance to experience this when dining out in Stykkishólmur, where they'll get fresh ingredients from the

bay and surrounding area, served on plates made by local chefs from local ingredients.

Sail Away in Breiðafjörður Bay

If you only have time to partake in one activity while you're in Stykkishólmur, a chance to go sailing in Breiðafjörður bay is not to be missed. There are numerous professional guides available in the area that will happily provide you with this unforgettable experience. A calming cruise navigating the stunning islets gives a unique opportunity to view the splendid wildlife in the area close-up – such as the seals and

the colourful seabirds inhabiting the holms, and the distinctive puffin – from just metres away. You will have a chance to taste the freshest sushi you will probably get in your lifetime. A common practice is to invite guests to sample whatever seafood delicacy comes up when the nets are pulled, such as sea-urchin or scallops, while sailing between the seemingly countless islands and enjoying the quiet grandeur of the scenery.

A Trifle of Culture

History and culture are prominent in Stykkishólmur as the town has three museums. In the 'Norwegian House', the oldest two storey timber house in Iceland, you will find the Snæfellsnes district museum. There you can receive a lot of information about the region and its history. The house itself was built in 1832 by Árni Thorlacius, who was a merchant and ship owner in the 19th century.

A Library of Water

Stykkishólmur also prides itself on fine museums that represent the two prevailing elements of Icelandic nature: fire and water, in both original and conventional ways. In



the case of water, on the highest point of Stykkishólmur, with its splendid views, the old town library has been changed into a museum of water, weather and words. In the museum you'll find 24 glass columns with specimens of water from all the primary glaciers of Iceland, in a piece made by renowned artist, Roni Horn.

The Volcano Museum

Dr. Haraldur Sigurðsson, the world-famous volcanologist, founded the Volcano Museum in 2009. In the museum, you not only learn about everything connected with volcanoes, eruptions and other geological matters, but can also see how these strong forces of nature have been expressed in art throughout the centuries, in Iceland and around the world.

The Perfect Base

Accommodation and services are plentiful in Stykkishólmur, with options ranging from a quality campsite, budget hostels and high-class hotels.

You'll find quality restaurants, a supermarket, golf course and an amazing swimming pool, in which the water has received a quality certification from Institut Fresenius, two hot pots with water straight from the earth and an excellent waterslide.

–VAG



Stykkishólmur
 Hafnarqútu 3 - 340 Stykkishólmur
 +354 4338120
stykkisholmur@stykkisholmur.is
www.visit.stykkisholmur.is



Sjávarpakkhúsið

With an old charm still lingering from the past, dining at Sjúvarpakkhúsið (the old fish-packing house) is a truly fulfilling experience. Located right by Stykkishólmur harbour of since 1918, Sjúvarpakkhúsið offers guests beautiful harbourfront outdoor seating in one of Iceland's most magical places.

Delicious fish soup, enjoyed while overlooking the ocean, freshly caught fish or blue-shell mussels from the surrounding seas, meals prepared from wonderfully flavourful, exceptionally lean lamb meat – perhaps with a glass of wine and some music – what could be more enjoyable on a mild summer night on an isolated island located in the North Atlantic Ocean? As one guest put it:

“The almighty Icelandic god of awesome food has to be the owner of this restaurant.”

Hafnargata 2 • 340 Stykkishólmur | +354 438 1800 & +354 847 1934
 sjavarpakkhusid@gmail.com | Find them on Facebook



Hotel Egilsen

Hotel Egilsen is a small boutique hotel exemplifying the town's charm, tying it to the region's heritage while seamlessly offering all the high-end amenities of any modern hotel.

You are guaranteed a good night's sleep in the COCO-mat beds, made of natural materials from renewable sources. Then wake up to homemade breakfast consisting of freshly baked bread, jams from local blueberries and dandelion honey along with other goodies.

There's a small library to enjoy where you can even trade in one book for another. Enjoy a drink in the beautifully decorated lounge and participate in storytelling with the locals or other guests from all over the world. If a guest submits a story, they receive a discount on their stay!

Aðalgata 2 • 340 Stykkishólmur | +354 554 7700
 greta@egilsen.is | www.egilsen.is



Plássíð

Known for high-quality food, the chefs of Plássíð restaurant make special efforts to find regional, quality ingredients both in food and drink. Mussels and scallops are particularly popular, fresh right from Breiðafjörður bay.

Suitable for family members of all ages, with various seating options inside and out on the veranda. Larger groups are also welcome, as the main room accommodates up to 50 guests. Located right in the heart of Stykkishólmur, Plássíð is named after the old downtown area, which was commonly known as 'The Place' (Plássíð) but the current owners did a complete renovation between 2012-2013.

Offering excellent service, Plássíð is open from May to November, but further information on opening hours and catering can be found on their website or Facebook page.

Frúarstígur 1 • 340 Stykkishólmur | +354 436 1600
 plassid@plassid.is | www.plassid.is



The Snæfellsnes peninsula is a must to visit when coming to Iceland. It is strewn with natural, historical and mystical phenomena and Stykkishólmur is the ideal base to explore it.

TOURING SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA AND WEST ICELAND

WITH GRAY LINE ICELAND

Everything Quintessential



*Gray Line Iceland's
 hash tag says it all:
 #FindAReasonToGo*

If you are out for some sunshine in Iceland, you have to choose your spot, or rather sometimes the weather forecast will choose it for you. It just so happened that sunny days were forecast for West Iceland, and I had wanted to see Snæfellsnes peninsula for some time, so off I went with Gray Line Iceland's Snæfellsnes National Park early morning tour.

Oceans of Azure, Fields of Blue

Snæfellsnes peninsula is positioned somewhat away from the well-trod tourist track, but is nonetheless enchanting with its unspoiled landscapes that contain just about every element of quintessential Icelandic countryside that you could hope for.

Westward Ho!

Driving north from Borgarnes, our coach passes ancient lava fields interspersed with waving patches of indigo blue Alaskan lupines. We follow the peninsula's coastline in a clockwise direction; the endless azure ocean always to our left; the mountainous

spine of the peninsula, culminating with the mystical Snæfellsjökull glacier, on our right.

She Should See Seals on the Seashore

Seal spotting is first on the agenda at Ytri-tunga, the site of one of Iceland's rare golden sand beaches as opposed to the more ubiquitous black sand found elsewhere in Iceland.

Alas, no seals could be seen this day, although it was fun exploring the beach and admiring the view over Faxaflói bay.

The Blow Holes of Arnarstapi

It is a very picturesque place – a lava-field-meets-sea kind of place resulting in some unusual architecture not found anywhere else in Iceland.

Three small circular cliffs, known as blowholes, with the sea crashing inside them, are a very impressive sight indeed. Near the shore, a huge statue of the half-human, half-troll Bárður Snæfellsás, the guardian spirit of the area, keeps watch over the peninsula. Screeching arctic terns keep a wary eye on us, lest we get too close to

their nests, during our refreshing walk from Arnastapi to Hellnar where we stop for a bite to eat at a traditional café.

Magnificent Seascapes of Djúpalónssandur and Dritvík

The wild and windswept coast at Djúpalónssandur provides some striking visuals – the black stone beach, littered with rusting pieces of wreckage from a British fishing trawler that ran aground in 1948, for example. The once sprawling fishing station at Dritvík, is now a deserted, albeit remarkable beach, surrounded by high basalt cliffs.

Vatnshellir Cave

With helmets on and torches in hand, our professional guide takes us down a circular staircase and into the blackness of Vatnshellir lava tube cave, where fragile stalagmites, stalactites and other geological curiosities give this cave its designation as a protected site. Or is it because this is where Bárður Snæfellsás is believed to have hung out, back in the day? Just wondering.

The Iconic Kirkjufell Mountain

Pushing onwards, we round the peninsula towards the village of Grundarfjörður. The unmistakable Kirkjufell Mountain (463m), Grundarfjörður's iconic landmark, sought after by today's throngs of photographers, is optimally situated right in the middle of the village. You can't miss it.

Home Again, Home Again

Our tour heads back to Reykjavik through the still warm Berserkjahraun lava fields to our final stop at the National Heritage Site at Gerðuberg. The stately basalt columns, lined up neatly in near perfect precision could possibly serve as some sort of elf fortress or perhaps elf castle of some kind. Just a guess.

West Iceland Waterfalls and Glacier Tour

This is a shorter, sweeter, all-round relaxing tour that takes you through some amazingly graceful landscapes here on

Iceland's west side. If you don't happen to be a fan of outrageously monstrous waterfalls (like me) but prefer your waterfalls to be of the gentler, prettier sort, then this tour is for you.

Deildartunguhver

As Europe's most powerful thermal spring and West Iceland's source of hot water, you might be expecting more. Be thankful that most of the action takes place underground, allowing you to get quite close to the steaming, bubbling 100C spring... just don't get too close!

Snorrastofa

Next up, we visit Snorrastofa in Reykholt for a taste of what those wild and wooly Vikings were up to in their hey day.

Two Waterfalls

The mystery of Hraunafoss, unlike the nearby river fed Barnafoss, is that the waterfall is unique in that the water seeps

from under the lava and its source has never been found. Barnafoss gushes through a small canyon before it joins with Hraunafoss just 100m away.

Kaldidalur Pass, Langjökull Glacier and Þingvellir

Our route takes us over Iceland's second highest pass, the desolate Kaldidalur pass, giving us a feel for the famed Icelandic highlands. We get a chance to walk to the edge of Langjökull glacier before heading to Þingvellir National Park, home to Iceland's first and still running parliament. *—EMV*



Gray Line Iceland
 Hátharstræti 20 • 101 Reykjavík
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 iceland@grayline.is
 www.grayline.is



SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA A UNION OF POWER & BEAUTY

While Snæfellsnes peninsula's stunning landscape has captured the imagination of people all over the world, even before Jules Verne wrote his well known 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' – one must know that it is an endless source of magic. As for facts that might put a spark in someone's heart, here are a few as follows:

Though black sands are most common, golden and pink beaches do exist in Iceland's rugged nature – right on the Snæfellsnes peninsula at Hraunlandarífi, between Búðir and Arnastapi, for instance. If you have an eye for extraordinary rock formations, one of the

peninsula, the highest being about 10–14 metres.

Thirsty for some fresh, perhaps a bit warm, carbonated water? You guessed it – in Snæfellsnes there are several natural mineral springs where carbonated water comes straight from the ground. Perfect for drinking. These springs can be found, for example, at Rauðamelsölkelda and Lýsuhóll – they are so natural that you may find clumps of algae bobbing on the surface! Lýsuhóll also has an old pool with warm, naturally carbonated, geothermal water, rich in minerals that is an amazing treat to visit.

Last but not least, in June 2008, the people of Snæfellsnes reached certification status as an EarthCheck community becoming the first EarthCheck-certified area in Iceland and Europe and only the fourth in the world. Pure magic. *-SP*



longest and most beautiful basalt column belts in Iceland can be found on Snæfellsnes



Vatnshellir Volcanic Cave

Vatnshellir offers a rare glimpse into the underworld
 Located in Snæfellsjökull National Park, but hidden from the outside world for thousands of years, the 8,000 year old Vatnshellir lava cave, created in a volcanic eruption, offers an amazing experience.

The professional cave guides and mountaineers at Cave Vatnshellir shed light on this captivating geological phenomena, immortalised by Jules Verne's 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth'.

Visitors descend spiral staircases to the deepest part of the cave, 35 metres below the surface. The total silence is pierced only by falling drops of water splashing into lava pools and the darkness by the torchlights that reveal strange, beautiful forms and colours all around.

Tours depart on the hour from 10am - 6pm, mid-May to September, and at 1, 2 and 3pm in wintertime.

Vatnshellir Volcanic Cave | + 354 665 2818 |
 vatnshellir@vatnshellir.is | www.vatnshellir.is



West Iceland Travel

Known for their inviting and friendly manner, the hosts at West Iceland Travel have excelled in their quest for making tourists feel like old friends rather than strangers.

West Iceland Travel offers seasonally themed day trips where guests visit local farms and get the whole Icelandic experience accordingly. Springtime gives opportunities to witness the lambing process; there is the annual sheep roundup in autumn; while winter, with its twelve yule-lad figures from Icelandic folklore is followed by the midwinter festival called Þorrablót, where the selection of food ranges from rotten shark to sheep testicles.

The trips, filled with all the wonders and surprises of Icelandic history, include gourmet lunches and dinners made from local products, which complete the whole adventure!

West Iceland Travel | + 354 8570774 |
 annaberg@westicelandtravel.is | Find them on facebook



Kast Guesthouse

Popular since they opened, Kast Guesthouse recently added an additional house to their accommodation. Known for great atmosphere and hospitality, this hidden gem offers both double, triple and family rooms, all spacious yet cosy.

Surrounded by magnificent nature, Kast Guesthouse is close to an old charming pool, Lýsuhólslaug, with naturally carbonated water, rich in minerals and considered both healthy and healing. Lunch and dinner menus have great variety, the breakfast buffet is excellent and if guests are in need of snacks to go – they are ready to order. Emphasis is on regional quality ingredients and the baked goodies are all homemade. Refreshments are offered from morning to evening and the dining area is large enough for up to 60 people.

Kast Guesthouse | Lýsudal | 356 Snæfellsbær
 kast@kastguesthouse.is | www.kastguesthouse.is



Stóri Kambur

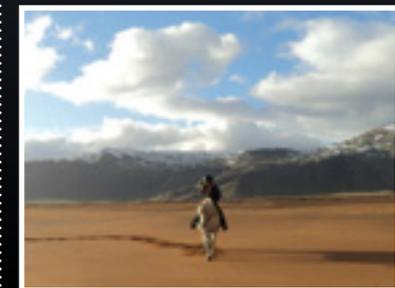
Emphasising high standards of personal service, the Stóri Kambur horse rental is a family owned business offering short trips for small groups.

Known for their welcoming and friendly demeanour, the guides at Stóri Kambur make visitors feel both secure and comfortable, whether they are accomplished riders, ready to gallop at full speed on the beach surrounded by the magnificent nature, or simply first time riders, children and adults alike.

If you are looking to experience the full range of the 5 gaits of an Icelandic horse with tremendous views of a glacier, waterfall, beach, and lush green meadows, this is your best bet. Groups of up to ten people are perfect.

Open from 1 June – 15 September

Stóri Kambur | 356 Snæfellsbær | + 354 852 7028 |
 info@storikambur.is | www.storikambur.is



VISIT WESTFJORDS

westfjords.is



WESTFJORDS



The 'Lonely Planet' guide put the 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, 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.

Picture compliments of Agúst Atlason, Marketing Office of the Westfjords, www.westfjords.is.

THE WESTFJORDS OF ICELAND STANDING ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD



A part of Iceland's appeal is certainly its remoteness and untouched landscapes and nowhere are these more apparent than in the Westfjords. The lonesome peninsula is overlooked by many as it is not officially part of the Highway 1 Ring Road, but those who make their way there will be awed by its winding fjords, imposing mountains, towering waterfalls, red sand beaches, secluded natural pools,

wildlife, diverse culture – not to mention the sense of standing in a pristine environment at the edge of the world.

Even though the Westfjords are not connected to the main road by name, circling the peninsula is easily managed by car during the summertime in only three days time – or even less if you're in a hurry. There are also regular flights going to the Westfjord's capital, Ísafjörður, where you can arrange for rental cars or guided tours around the area.

A Wide Variety of Activities

A highlight for many are the majestic cliffs of Látrabjarg, which is the westernmost point of Iceland (and thus, of Europe) that truly give you the feeling that you're at the world's end. The drop is up to 1500 feet (440 metres) high, so those suffering from vertigo should come prepared. Látrabjarg is the largest bird cliff in Europe and is home to millions of birds, including puffins, guillemots, razorbills and northern

gannets. As you can imagine, the daily life in the Westfjords is closely connected to the ocean – both its abundance and dangers. Visitors are invited to experience this connection with a multitude of experiences out on the Atlantic ocean – including sea angling tours, kayaking, visiting remote islands or the friendly seals, observing the birdlife, whale watching or just hanging around the small town harbours.

far north of the peninsula accessible only by special boats which just go there a few times a week. As the area is so remote, careful planning and proper equipment are necessary.

But whatever your preference is, you'll be sure to leave the Westfjords truly having experienced life in one of the most remote places you can find.

-VAG



Finna Hotel

Your Base in the Westfjords

Hólmavík is a sparsely populated fishing village situated in a special slice of the Westfjords called Strandir.

The town is perhaps best known for the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft where the unique history of witchcraft, sorcery, and witch-hunting from the 17th and 18th centuries is exhibited. Other attractions include a golf course, the swimming pool, riding tours, hiking trails and restaurants.

Finna Hotel offers 21 rooms in two houses, Finna Hotel and Steinhúsið. Finna Hotel has stunning views from the hill to the town centre, the church and the Steingrímsfjörður fjord. Steinhúsið is located in the heart of the old town, just opposite the Witchcraft museum and is the oldest concrete building in town, built in 1911. The hotel can offer both standard rooms with breakfast included or an apartment where you can make your own meal in a cosy environment.

Finna Hotel is ideal for families and independent travellers with many attractions just a short drive away.

Borgabraut 4 • 510 Hólmavík | +354 451 3136
www.finnahotel.is | finnahotel@finnahotel.is



Broddanes Hostel

The Gate to the Westfjords

Located on the south side of Kollafjörður fjord is the tiny community of Broddanes, which serves as a gate of sorts to the Westfjords peninsula. There you'll find Broddanes Hostel, a family-run tranquil beauty spot with access to matchless natural phenomena and fantastic birdwatching spots right on your doorstep. The hostel is housed in an old two storied school building, with oceanic views from all rooms. The coastline is a sight to behold with small peninsulas and bays, creeks, islets and skerries. Just outside the hotel you'll see a small island covered with puffins during the summertime as well as a variety of other birds like eider ducks, black guillemots, arctic terns and oystercatchers, while a short walk from the hostel leads to some friendly seals. Broddanes

Hostel provides accommodation for all needs: family rooms, singles, doubles and communal kitchen-, dining- and living rooms. Broddanes is open from May to September. A local family runs the hostel and they'll be more than happy to help out with any questions you might have.

Broddanes • 510 Hólmavík | +354 618 1830
broddanes@broddanes.is | www.broddanes.is



Westfjords Adventures

Your Guide to the Far West

The small village of Patreksfjörður rests comfortably in the far west of the Westfjords by the eponymous fjord and acts as a base from which you can visit the countless attractions of the area. Tour operator Westfjords Adventures is based in Patreksfjörður and offers a wide variety of tours in the area. Their most popular tour, which is aptly named, 'The Grand West', takes visitors to two of the area's highlights – Látrabjarg and Rauðasandur. In cooperation with a local farmer, Westfjords Adventures have launched a new unique service in which you are invited to join the farmer on a tractor-pulled wagon onto Rauðasandur to visit the local seal population. Sea-angling and scenic boat tours on the fjord are also very popular as they give a unique chance to take in the landscapes, birdlife and the fjord itself. Hiking tours also come recommended as they give a feel for the area and access to places only a few have been before. Whatever your preference is you can be sure Westfjords Adventures can be of assistance. You'll find a tourist shop, car rental, ferry tickets and expert guidance for all your Westfjords adventures there.

Aðalstræti 62 • 450 Patreksfjörður | +354 456 5006
info@westfjordsadventures.com | www.westfjordsadventures.com





Mánafell
A Home at the Edge of the
Inhabitable World

Staying way up north in the Westfjords, close to the edge of what the locals call the “inhabitable world” is an experience in itself and what better way to do it than in your very own fully furnished apartment. A local mother and her five daughters decided to offer visitors the opportunity to feel right at home for longer or shorter periods of time in their hometown of Bolungarvík. Surrounded by mountains and the untamed ocean you’ll have a hard time finding a more peaceful sanctuary on your travels. Staying at Mánafell you’ll experience the unique balance of intimacy and privacy of small town life in Iceland. Many come there to write or work on special projects, while others come just to breathe the fresh air and take in the sights. Mánafell is ideal for families, small groups or individuals and has all amenities. The local geothermal swimming pool is just around the corner and there are a variety of activities in the area. During winter excellent ski slopes are only 10 minutes away.

Stígahlíð 2-4 • 415 Bolungarvík | +354 863 3879 | +354 696 1368
disa@orkudisa.com | www.orkudisa.com



SIMA Hostel and Sea Adventures
An Authentic Small Town Experience

Heading out from a tiny Icelandic fishing village into the Westfjords on a forty year old fishing boat is an experience not soon forgotten. The joint venture of SIMA Hostel and Sea Adventures offers this unique, authentic experience in the village of Flateyri by Öndurfjörður fjord. Flateyri still has the feel of a fishing town, even though the golden years of small-town fishing have long since passed. You’ll find small open motorboats sailing in and out of the harbour. One of them is a preserved fishing boat from 1974, owned by the Westfjords Heritage Museum – on which you’re invited to go sea angling or to catch the evening sun reflecting on the waters. The fjord is, of course, closely connected to Flateyri’s identity and going out on its placid waters, guided by a local sea captain, is the perfect way to get a feel for the place – its culture, nature and history. Depending on the weather and season, you can catch fish, check on crab traps or just take in the tranquility and stillness of the fjord, which the locals proudly claim to be one of Iceland’s most beautiful.

The SIMA Hostel is located in a renovated post and telecommunications office and the interiors of the upper floor are based on the original design, whereas the lower floor has a more modern feel. Owned and operated by locals, the cosy and clean SIMA hostel offers a variety of rooms with splendid views on the top floor. Cosy living- and dining rooms and self-service kitchens provide guests with an opportunity to share and experience Flateyri’s many offerings.

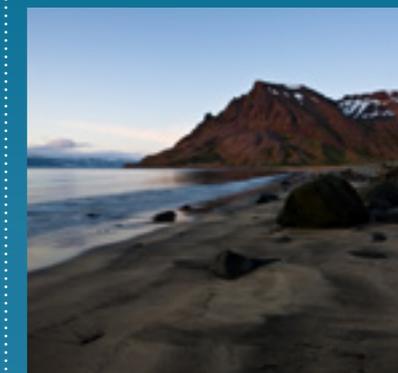
Ránargata 1 • 425 Flateyri | +354 897 8700
sigurbjorn@icelandwestfjords.com | www.icelandwestfjords.com



Urðartindur
Way Off the Beaten Path

In the remote Norðurfjörður in the northwest of the Westfjords peninsula you’ll find a little piece of heaven called Urðartindur. Norðurfjörður is actually Iceland’s least populated municipality with just over 50 inhabitants, one of whom was faced with the decision of what to do with his family’s deserted farm. He decided to renovate the barn as a comfortable guesthouse and has since built two cosy cottages. You’ll also find a fully serviced campsite on the premises. One of Iceland’s more famous geothermal pools, Krossneslaug, is located close to Urðartindur, where you can bathe under a splendid deep red sunset with the untamed power of the ocean just a few metres away. It is the perfect location to stay for a few days and walk around in the majestic Westfjords, way off the beaten path, where few others dare to go. Most visitors who initially intend on staying only one night tend to regret not having more time there.

Norðurfjörður 1 • 524 Árneshreppur | +354 843 8110
urdartindur@urdartindur.is | www.urdartindur.is



Bolungarvík

The Hidden Treasure of the Westfjords

In a small cove in the massive fjord of Ísafjarðardjúp you’ll find the hidden treasure of Bolungarvík, one of Iceland’s oldest fishing villages, surrounded by towering mountains and steep cliffs.

This remote village was once mainly accessible only by sea, but now you could say its doors have been opened with the arrival of a 5.4 kilometre tunnel, connecting it to the neighbouring Hnífsdalur. Despite its remoteness and isolation, Bolungarvík is a friendly and accommodating Icelandic fishing village, true to its origin and culture.

The Ósvör Maritime Museum gives a glimpse into 19th century fishing with a double fishing base, salt hut, fish drying area and drying hut, as well as the old rowboat named Ölver. The Natural History Museum tells the story of Bolungarvík’s close relationship with its surroundings, including a stuffed polar bear and an impressive rock collection. Hiking around Bolungarvík reveals the 600 metre tall Bolafjall with amazing panoramic views, not to mention the tantalising Hornstrandir across the fjord. Bolungarvík’s geothermal swimming pool is always popular with outside hot tubs, perfect to relax in after a long day. The fully serviced campsite on the riverbanks of Hólsá is a beautiful spot and just taking in the sights down by the harbour is an experience in itself.



Images by © Þóður Sigurðsson

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



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*

Arctic Fox Centre
 Eyraudalur • 420 Súðavík
 +354 456 4922
 melrakki@melrakki.is
 www.melrakki.is

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 haven 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 10am and 2pm. *-JB*

Hótel Djúpavík
 Djúpavík • 524 Árneshreppur
 +354 451 4037
 djupavik@snerpa.is
 www.djupavik.com



MYSTIC HISTORY

Reykholahreppur: Overlooking Breiðafjörður from the Westfjords

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

A Service Centre with a History

A two and a half hour drive on paved roads from Reykjavik takes you to Reykhólar village, the county's centre. It provides a full range of services, including a campsite,

stores, museums, Sjárvarsmiðjan, a unique seaweed spa and a geothermal swimming pool. Quality accommodation, dining and picturesque views are provided at Hotel Bjarkalundur, Iceland's oldest summer hotel. Throughout history Reykhólar has been home to many of Iceland's most prominent chieftains and is frequently mentioned in the Icelandic sagas.

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



Birdwatchers' Paradise

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

Uncountable Islands

Some say Breiðafjörður Bay's islands are uncountable though cartographers estimate there are around 3,000. There is a 6 metre difference between high and low tides at the time of a spring tide, whereas neap tides reveal far fewer islands. *-ASF*

Reykholahreppur
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 skrifstofa@reykholar.is
 www.reykholar.is



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 into earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water, drawn from depths of up to 2500 meters. 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 Myvatn 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 great view of the area.

Opening Hours

High season (June, July, August) 09:00-23:30
Low season (September - May) 12:00-21:30

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 km² lake is spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife which 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. Its 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 also 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, the horse riding tours, boat trips, bird watching and hiking —to name a few. They are all so close, you can almost touch them. You name it, it's close-

by. Whale watching is rapidly growing in popularity in Akureyri due to the fact that Eyjafjörður, the fjord that nests Akureyri, is exceptionally generous when it comes to sights of these magnificent creatures.

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.

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 volcanoes and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.

Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavik international and Reykjavik airports take just 40 minutes. Scheduled buses 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 in 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 or 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.*



Akureyrarstofa
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+354 450 1050
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www.visitakureyri.is



A CORNER OF PARADISE

EYJAFJARÐARSVEIT'S PRISTINE BEAUTY

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

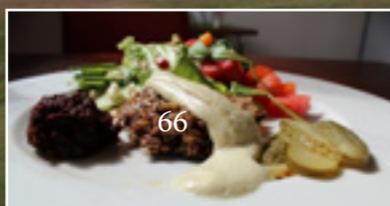
to 1318 and Saurbær Church, which dates back to before the year 1200, is one of the few remaining turf-walled churches still existing in Iceland today. All of them have played their parts, big and small in the lives of the Icelandic nation over the centuries ever since Iceland officially adopted Christianity in 1000 AD.



Hrafnagil Pool and Campsite

After a long day of exploring 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. Especially so for those camping out on the Hrafnagil campsite. The campsite is family friendly and calm and has all of the essential services close by. Those include good campsite facilities, a nearby convenient store, Silva Restaurant and loads of activity areas for the younger generation, like sports grounds and play areas. The campsite is a quiet and amicable base for those exploring the North on a budget.

+354 464 8140 | esveit@esveit.is | www.esveit.is



Silva Restaurant

Silva Restaurant, located just 2km 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.

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

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 clubhouse 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.

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



Revitalised in the North

Hotel Kjarnalundur opens in the Kjarnaskógur Forest



“We opened a brand new and very beautiful hotel last June in the attractive wooded area of Kjarnaskógur and named it Hotel Kjarnalundur. We are surrounded by nature, so our guests can really relax and get refilled with energy”, says Erna Kristín Hauksdóttir, the new hotel's manager.

Hotel Kjarnalundur stands on the edge of Kjarnaskógur, only 5km from downtown Akureyri. The hotel provides a unique setting for outdoor enjoyment, health and well-being. Kjarnaskógur, which is one of the most popular outdoor areas in Akureyri, offers endless possibilities. There are two playgrounds, picnic areas, barbecue facilities, rest rooms and a volley ball court, for instance.

For bird lovers, the area has a very varied bird life and there is a bird watching shelter by the Hundatjörn marsh in Naustaborgir.

There are many attractive hiking trails and a specially designed mountain biking track around the area. The walking paths for skiers are plowed in winter.

Health Centre

“We look forward to meeting our many new guests in the new hotel. There is a nice atmosphere in the house and a friendly spirit. “It was built as a health centre to begin with and we are going to offer a new health centre here”, says Erna Kristín. She says that, in the near future, the health centre will be equipped with hot tubs, infra-red sauna and a massage and fitness area.

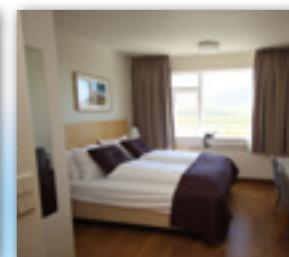
Hotel Kjarnalundur has 46 rooms on four floors. The rooms range in size and prices to give guests affordable options. A suite comprises a sitting room, bedroom and bathroom.

There is a restaurant on the 2nd floor where guests can enjoy breakfast and a buffet dinner.

The building has elevator service and handicapped access to all four floors. There are also five rooms specially designed for wheelchair access.

Free Wi-Fi is available everywhere on the hotel premises. -KB

Hotel Kjarnalundur
 Kjarnalundur • 600 Akureyri
 +354 460 0060
info@kjarnalundur.is
www.kjarnalundur.is



The Klondike of the Atlantic

Siglu fjörður remembers its Golden Age



Siglu fjörður is a small fishing town on the north coast of Iceland, about one hour drive from Akureyri (sometimes referred to as the Capital of North Iceland). The town, which is a part of the Fjallabyggð municipality, is flanked by rugged mountains and blessed with a history that is quite literally rich. The town was once nicknamed the Klondike of the Atlantic – a reference to the famous gold producing region in Alaska. The gold in this case was an abundance of ‘the silver of the sea’, the herring, which gave the town its second nickname: The Herring Town. Today Siglu fjörður is a haven for hiking, sailing, fishing, skiing and other activities. You will also find a nice swimming pool there and a 9 hole golf course.

Golden Age of Herring

The golden age of herring lasted just over 100 years, from 1867 to 1968. Icelanders generally refer to this era as the ‘herring fairy tale’. The country was still impoverished and essentially an undeveloped Danish colony at the time, but the resulting economic boom helped to turn Iceland into a developed country – that ultimately led to its independence.

Initially, the boom was mostly confined to several towns in the north of the country, but later it also moved to towns in the eastern fjords. At times, the export of herring accounted for up to half of the country’s total export income.

Siglu fjörður was at the forefront of this economic boom, and often the herring exports from this one town alone provided more than 20% of the country’s total export income.

As one would expect, given any kind of gold rush, the town blossomed and grew rapidly, fostering a colourful culture that is still remembered and honoured today.

The Herring Era Museum

Siglu fjörður’s ambitious Herring Era Museum is the largest industrial and marine museum in Iceland. It has five exhibition buildings, totalling 2,500 square metres, and it is most likely the only one of its kind in the world.

The town itself is a piece of history and the museum has essentially endeavoured to rebuild a part of the old town as it was during its heyday, complete with herring boats, a herring port, boatyard, and a herring factory. In addition, it puts on live re-enactments. It

won Iceland’s Museum Award in 2000, and the Micheletti Award in 2004 as the best new industrial museum in Europe.

The museum is open daily from June to September. This summer the museum broke its attendance record in June, with 4,000 visitors – thanks, in part, to big cruise ships that visited the fjord.

Saturday admissions in July include a ‘Salting Show’ at 3pm, where ‘Herring girls’ re-enact the gutting and packing of herring into barrels, in the way it was done in the old days. Traditional songs and dances are also performed and guests are invited to join in.



Síldarminjasafn Íslands

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 +354 467 1604

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 www.sild.is

A Modern Fairy Tale

There are several festivals in the Fjallabyggð municipality in the summers, where camping is often combined with organized singing and dancing. To name just few, there is the *Folk Music Festival* in Siglu fjörður in July, two festivals dedicated to music in Ólafsfjörður town, a blues festival called the *Blue North Music Festival* in June, and a music feast touting classical music, called the *Berry Harvest Days*, in August.

Siglu fjörður is one of the hot-spots and the proud host to many well-known annual events. The flagship, without a doubt, is the herring festival, with a full week of herring related – and none herring related – events and entertainment, with renowned musicians and artists performing throughout the week. The festival is family friendly and suits everyone from young age to the more mature.

The festival starts on July 23 with the launch of the *Herring Fairy Tale Festival*, and peaks during the holiday weekend on July 31 – August 3, with the *Great Herring Adventure Festival*. There are, of course, hotels and guesthouses available for those that love the idea of joining the festival but do not like the idea of camping. -SF

For more details visit www.fjallabyggd.is and www.visitrollaskagi.is



Fjallabyggð

The Great Herring Adventure Festival

July 31 – August 3

in Siglu fjörður Town

The Historic Siglo Harbour Hostel and Apartments

Another testament to the Herring Era can be found at Siglo Harbour Hostel. In its heyday, the upper floor housed the many workers who came from all over Iceland to help process the fish. The ground floor served as a warehouse, where hundreds of barrels of herring were kept before being shipped off to Europe. Now the completely renovated building is a full-fledged hostel with an array of sleeping options, including 3 fully furnished apartments right across the street from the hostel.

Nearby, the Harbour House Café serves up a much-loved

seafood soup that some claim is the best in the world.

The café’s friendly owner, Valgeir Tómas Sigurðsson, is on hand every day, overseeing operations himself, making sure everything is tiptop and his guests are happy.

Black Death Craft Beer on Tap



Craft beers have been taking the world by storm in recent years, and it was only a matter of time before Iceland entered the fray with its own unique brands. Despite its ominous name, ‘Black Death’, don’t be

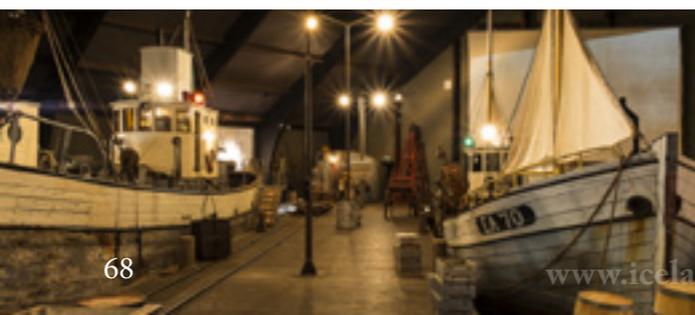
put off. This English-style stout beer is making a name for itself and has been very well received since its debut in 2011.

If you haven’t yet had the opportunity to try this beer, described as ‘spicy sweet, with hints of chocolate and coffee, with a smoky aftertaste’ by those in the know, now is the time to make it over to Harbour House Café for a taste of the real deal. -EMV

Harbour House Café

Gránaþata 5b • 580 Siglu fjörður
 +354 659 4809

mailto:info@harbourhouse.is
 www.harbourhouse.is





SIGLUFJÖRÐUR'S NEW MARINA VILLAGE

Sigló Hótel Complements the Town's Vibrant Cultural Life

Staying at the top of the world has just taken on a new meaning. Driving up the coast to Siglufjörður in North Iceland is filled with beautiful vistas but nothing can prepare you for the spectacular view as you come out of the tunnel into the fjord, surrounded by snow capped mountains. The town itself is set picturesquely on one side of the fjord, overlooking the Herring Museum and the marina area.

Completing the Marina

Carefully designed to blend into the surroundings and taking full advantage of the spectacular views in every direction, the new 68-room Sigló Hotel has just opened to provide full 4-star accommodation, dining and activities for visitors to this northern fishing town.

Speaking of fishing, watching the fishing fleet sail down the fjord while you're eating a delicious breakfast in the restaurant or outside on the patio as the sun climbs over the mountains and burns off the mist, is an experience you will always remember.

The hotel's Sunna restaurant overlooks the marina where the fresh catch is landed every day and the best are selected and cooked by the skilled chefs for dinner that evening. It's a beautiful dining spot with plenty of space for individuals, couples or groups.

The high quality service is matched by the rooms. There is a good choice of rooms, with 3 suites – two full deluxe suites and a junior suite, large deluxe rooms 29 sq metres in size, classic rooms averaging 23 sq metres, and all equipped with a range of amenities including complimentary WiFi, HDTV, alarm clock, work desk, window blinds, walk-in shower and more.



Restaurants with Character

Part of the charm of visiting this northern town is meeting the people and the Marina Village is complemented by the Hannes Boy restaurant and Kaffi Rauðka – the bright yellow and red buildings on the other side of the marina. Hannes Boy is a cosy, romantic environment, offering salted cod and lamb dishes that are favourites for lunch or dinner.

Kaffi Rauðka, the bright red house is the hot spot in town. With a casual, relaxed family atmosphere, the restaurant's menu has everything from sandwiches, cakes and coffee to BBQ ribs and traditional Icelandic hashed fish and is open all year round.



Romance, Relaxation, Business and Sport

Siglufjörður is a vibrant, all-year town, with festivals, sports and activities taking place throughout the year. It is a popular ski resort and the new hotel provides the ideal après ski centre. With an outdoor hot tub to soothe sore muscles, an infrared sauna and a fireplace room and bar, you have everything you need to relax. It is a truly unique location for honeymoon couples while meetings of up to 150 people can be held here, making it an innovative location for incentive tours. –ASF

Sigló Hotel
Snorrageata 3 · 580 Siglufjörður
+354 461 7730
siglohotel@siglohotel.is
www.siglohotel.is



CROSS THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Stay, eat and enjoy the life on Iceland's northernmost outpost

Básar Guesthouse has two unique attributes: it has the Arctic Circle and the local airport in its garden! It's not busy, so planes don't disturb the guests. It's hard to miss your flight, when it comes right to your doorstep – unless you're on the boat tour around the island, fishing!

The guesthouse is open year round, since the little island of Grímsey is a popular destination with those with a penchant for something different. A wholesome breakfast is included and lunch and dinner are available on request.

Local food is served – fish and lamb dishes,

puffin and sometimes, whale and shark – with a shot of the powerful brennivín to wash it down. Kaldi beer is shipped in from a micro brewery on the mainland a few miles away.

It's a cosy guesthouse with 8 rooms accommodation for both made-up beds and sleeping bags. WiFi is also available.

Eat in the Arctic

Kriuveitingar Restaurant serves local and seasonal food, including fresh fish daily and puffin. You can try bird eggs in May, for example, or the new plate: a tasty



puffin appetiser – cooked 3 different ways. There is a good menu selection available, including hamburgers, sandwiches, local lamb dishes.

It is open daily for lunch and dinner from 15 May – 15 Sept. and whenever there's an event on the island. In winter, the restaurant opens specially for groups. –ASF

Básar & Krían
611 Grímsey
+354 467 3112
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basar@gistihelmidbasar.is

AMBASSADOR TO THE WHALES

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

This is the fourth 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



Sailing Schedule – Daily Departures

Tours leave in the morning at 9:00am, in the afternoon at 1:30pm, and evening tours start at 8:30pm in June, July and until 9 August. From 10–31 August there are daily tours at 6:00pm, giving you the opportunity to watch the whales and enjoy the bright and beautiful colours of the northern evening sun simultaneously! The famous Northern Lights tours are offered throughout 15 September–31 October, with an evening cruise starting at 9:30pm.

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. –NHH/ASF

Ambassador
Torfunefsbryggja Harbour ·
600 Akureyri
+354 462 6800
info@ambassador.is
www.ambassador.is

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE VIKINGS LIVES ON

The Icelandic Sagas preserve knowledge about the religion of the Vikings, Ásatrú, most notably in the Prose Edda. It's interesting to find that it is also preserved in the names of people and places in Iceland – and as an officially recognised religion. Ásgrímur (masks of god) is a common man's name for example, and Ásbyrgi (shelter of god) is one of the most beautiful canyons in Iceland. The horse-shoe shaped canyon was created when Sleipnir, the eight legged horse of Odin, put one of his hoofs down, according to the ancient mythology. The state officially recognised Ásatrúarfélagið (The Fellowship of the Believers in the Eses) in 1973.

Faith in the Gods

Ásatrú means faith in the Eses (plural). The name is derived from the principal race of godly beings, the Eses, but it also encompasses their godly rival race called the Vanir. Ásatrú can therefore be taken to mean faith in the gods. Eses is the plural of the word for God in Old English, ós, which is preserved as the prefix „os“ in names such as Oswald and Oscar.

The Roots

Currently, the best known Eses are most likely Odin (Óðinn) and Thor (Þór). Odin is the chief of the Eses and, along with his two brothers, the creator of the first two humans, Askur and Embla. Odin was known as Wóden in Old English and Wodan in Old High German. The root word 'wod' referred to being possessed or mad, but in Old Norse, Odin means the master of the force of life. Thor, the god of thunder, is the protector of Eses and men. His name is derived from the word þunraz (or thunraz) in Common Germanic, which became thunder in modern English. The English speaking world is reminded of Odin and Thor every week because Wednesday means Woden's day and Thursday means Thor's day.

The Sagas

Christianity officially replaced the old faith as the state religion around the year 1000 AD, although the worship of the old gods was still allowed as long as it was done in



secret. Thus, our culture preserved the old mythology until the Sagas were compiled in the 12th and 13th centuries. The old faith then became all but forgotten until the 1970s. Ásatrúarfélagið was founded on the first day of summer in 1972, and the Icelandic government recognised it as a registered religious organisation in 1973 – despite objections by the Church.

With Thor's Help

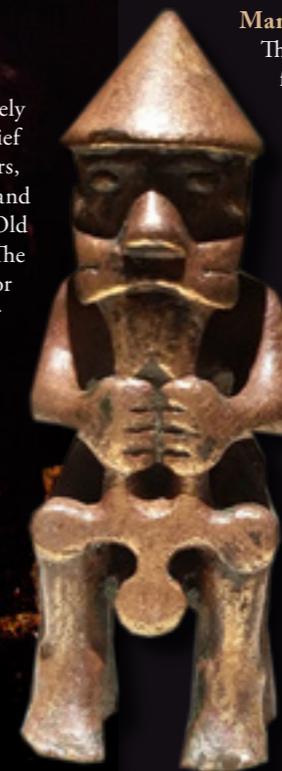
The minister of justice and ecclesiastical affairs did not respond too enthusiastically to the initial request for renewed state recognition of the old pagan faith. When two representatives visited him at his office, he is said to have given rather evasive answers. Rumour has it that Thor was not very pleased. A thunderstorm broke out while the minister was showing the two guests the way out, leaving the good minister alone in the dark as the power went out. Whether or not this event helped to persuade the government of the merits of acknowledging the old gods has not been confirmed.

Many Truths for the Individual

The new Icelandic fellowship does not have any fixed dogma or theology, and even though it is based on the old mythology, it does not emphasise worship of the Eses. It does, however, specifically reject animal sacrifice, militarism, and racial supremacy ideologies. The current allsherjargoði (the high priest) is Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson. He is perhaps best known for his work on the Oscar nominated film 'Children of Nature', and for his collaborations with the acclaimed band Sigur Rós. He may have given the best description of the philosophy of his fellowship, as he sees it, in an interview in 2010:

“Monotheism is one truth for the masses, but polytheism is many truths for the individual... Basically, you can believe in whatever god or goddess you would like at any given time. You may have a need for Freya on Monday morning, and Thor may be absolutely essential for you on Tuesday afternoon. Nobody can teach you. You have to find it yourself.”

–SF



THE BEAUTIFUL ÁSBYRGI

The Canyon Created by a Mythical Horse



Open from
 1 May to 30 September
 Outside this period, the centre
 is open by arrangement.

One of Iceland's most amazing places is the Ásbyrgi canyon, a part of Vatnajökull National Park. It is both beautiful and mystical. According to local folklore, Ásbyrgi is believed to be the home of 'the Hidden People', where elves dance and frolic by Botnstjörn pond at night. Botnstjörn is situated at the deepest end of Ásbyrgi; it is a small pond that is abundant with vegetation, where visitors can picnic and enjoy watching the flowers bloom and the birds flying and swooping overhead.

Ásbyrgi is a must stop for pleasure seekers who want to savour the Icelandic experience. It is a place that offers grand adventure and a quiet place for respite.

Sleipnir – The Giant Horse

Whilst Ásbyrgi was most likely formed by catastrophic glacial flooding of the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum after the last Ice Age, first 8-10,000 years ago, and then again some 3,000 years ago, the legend explains the unusual shape of the canyon differently.

It is said that the canyon was formed when the old god Óðinn rode his eight-legged giant horse Sleipnir over the area.

Sleipnir touched one of its feet to the ground and formed Ásbyrgi.

Gljúfrastofa

Gljúfrastofa is the name given to the National Park Visitor Centre in Ásbyrgi,

in the northern territory of Vatnajökull National Park. Its purpose is to provide comprehensive information about the park, its surroundings, hiking trails, natural attractions, history, services and recreational options.

The Ásbyrgi campground is open from 15 May to 30 September.

It is considered one of the most beautiful camping places in Iceland. -KB

Gljúfrastofa Ásbyrgi

Ásbyrgi • 671 Kópasker
 +354 470 7100
 asbyrgi@vjp.is
 www.vjp.is

RIDE WITH ÓÐINN AND SLEIPNIR

Active North Tours Take You Into the World of the Norse Gods

When you drive in a car or coach, you cover the ground quickly but you miss so much. When you take the natural way, riding a comfortable Icelandic horse, biking or hiking, you see and hear much more – especially when you're in a place like the unique Ásbyrgi canyon – one of the natural wonders of the world.

Riding or hiking with Active North, the guides regale you with stories of ancient mythology and folklore as you pass under the strangely-shaped landscape. You might sense the elves and the Hidden People or 'huldafólk', living high in the cliffs, spying on you. The stories of monsters suddenly seem believable, coming to life as you pass beside the steep rock face.

When you see the two ravens circling above, you'll think of Óðinn's two black ravens, Huginn and Muninn (Thought and Memory) watching over the world. You'll both see and hear many other varieties of birds from soaring falcons to the Common



Snipe swooping around the tour or strutting busily through the flowers and undergrowth.

For the scientifically minded, the guides explain the geological and botanical features that abound in the canyon and its surroundings, too.

A tour through Ásbyrgi is one of those

inspiring experiences that will live forever in your memory. -ASF

Active North

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TRAVEL INTO THE HIGHLANDS

Mývatn Tours Take You into the Wilds of North Iceland

Mývatn Tours take visitors up to the highlands of Iceland to the Askja caldera and Víti crater. You will also go through the Herðubreiðarlindir nature reserve area. This tour provides scenes of unforgettable Icelandic nature and geology. The tour makes trips in 4x4 buses because they go through rough lava fields and rivers. In the highlands, you will see lunar landscapes, glacial rivers, the deepest lake in Iceland, sand, lava, mountains, craters and a lot more. You will go home with amazing memories of a unique landscape.

You can bathe in the waters in Víti in the middle of Iceland, 1,100 metres (3,609ft.) above sea level, when conditions are good.

Information about tours in 2015:

Departure is from the Tourist Information Centre in Reykjavík (Lake Mývatn Area) at 8am every day.

- Price: 130 EUR
- The tours are scheduled as follows:
- 26–30 June: Mondays – Wednesdays – Fridays – Sundays
- 1 July–7 September: Daily
- You can book and buy tickets by e-mail or phone

The tour takes approximately 11 to 12 hours. Please note that food is not included in the price and there are no restaurants or supermarkets on the way, so you have to bring your own food.



It's important to bring warm clothes and good shoes and to bear in mind that the weather can change suddenly – especially in the highlands. Askja is also 1,100 metres (3,609ft.) above sea level.

Mývatn Tours

Arnarnesi • 660 Mývatn
 +354 464 1920
 askjatours@mývatntours.is
 www.mývatntours.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, as it's coloured bright red. Once having stepped inside, you won'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 harks back to the old times and which have garnered much attention. You will find brand new comfortable beds, basins, closets, and, of course, free WiFi. Dark curtains in front of every window guarantee a good sleep, even through bright Icelandic summer nights. The two bathrooms 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, head downstairs into Kaffi Klara, the 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.joeguesthouse.is

The Great Fish Day Festival

On 7–9 of August 2015 the fish fly at Dalvík's Annual Fish Festival

Everybody is invited to a huge sea food buffet in Dalvík – for free! The Great Fish Day is an annual festival in Dalvík, in N. Iceland, held on the second Saturday in August this year. Fish producers and other members of the town invite guests to this popular festival, where the scene is full of fun and joy and welcoming local people mingle with visitors of all nationalities.

Fish soup evening

It all starts with 'Fiskisúpukvöldið' on Friday night, when the town's residents invite you to their homes and gardens to try their personal fish soup recipes. Just look for the welcome sign: two blazing torches outside means you

are invited. Wander around, try a selection and enjoy meeting your hosts.

The Great Fish Day

On Saturday, the sea food buffet is open to all from 11:00am to 5:00pm at the harbour in Dalvík. This generous offer is to get as many people as possible together to taste fish and enjoy a good day in Dalvík.

The Great Barbeque

Every summer, several tons of grilled fish literally fly off the shelves. The 'shelf', in this case, is actually an eight metre-long barbecue, grilling thousands of delicious fish burgers to be devoured by hungry festival goers during the festival.

The popular event, now in its 15th year, attracts visitors

from all over Iceland – and the world, with a whole range of entertainment, with fish exhibits, art shows, street theatre, a free cruise on the fjord and children's activities.

Music and Fireworks

While music of all kinds plays throughout the day, the evening sees the biggest concert in Iceland, with popular live bands and singers playing way into the night.

The culmination of the festival is a massive fireworks display – popular with adults and children alike.

This year it is all happening between 7 – 9 August and is certainly an event that would be the highlight of your visit to Iceland.

See you in Dalvík, then.

–EMVIES



Though the festival is a great time for the whole family, a visit to the charming little harbour village of Dalvík is a good idea at any time!



Dalvík's Kondó Bar & Grill

The Right Ingredients for a Good Time

While in Dalvík, be sure to check out the Kondó Bar & Grill located just by the harbour, where colourful fishing boats lay at anchor. By day, the laid back, unfussy atmosphere is a great place to bring the kids for an irresistibly tasty home-made pizza, especially the chicken pizza – a local favourite. A variety of freshly-made pizzas

and fish & chips made with cod, and fried arctic char, caught straight from the fjord are a specialty. When the weather is fine – as it often is around Eyjafjörður, you are welcome to take your meal to the outside seating area where you can relax and enjoy the view over the fjord.

At night, Kondó's bar scene comes alive and you can get a taste of the cosy bar scene and mingle with the locals. For a perfect finish to your day of adventure, savour the long-lingering summer sun as it dips beyond the mountains, skimming the northern horizon at the far end of the fjord.



Kondó's most popular beer?

Many locals prefer Boli, a premium lager named after one of the four guardian spirits of Iceland. Icelandic schnapps, craft beers or your favourite imported wines and spirits are also available.

Kondó Bar & Grill's ambitious new owner, Stéfan, is keen to make this an exciting upbeat addition to Dalvík's growing list of amenities and it's sure to be a hit this summer.

–EMV

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 Find them on Facebook



AN OUTDOOR PARADISE

Why Húsabakki is a Smart Choice to Enjoy Nature

Húsabakki's focus is nature- and education-based tourism. It is to be found at the edge of the Friðland Svarfdæla Nature Reserve in the north of Iceland, a 30 minute drive from Akureyri.

Open all year, Húsabakki is an excellent choice for nature lovers surrounded, as it is, by the high mountains of the Troll peninsula, providing numerous hiking routes and both easy and challenging conditions for back-country skiing and mountaineering.

Húsabakki is owned and run by local firms and individuals and is connected to vast hiking trails with signboards and bird

observation points. It is a birdwatcher's paradise with the oldest wetland reserve in Iceland, created by the valley farmers in 1979.

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

At the location is a sports field, a playground, an outdoor kitchen with



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

Far from the crowded cities, the atmosphere at Húsabakki is tranquil and cosy, the service warm and personal and staying there for a few days is a very relaxing and power-boosting experience.

–SS

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



Torgið Restaurant

A cosy restaurant situated by Siglufjörður's main square renowned for making the best pizzas in Siglufjörður while offering a range of fast foods as well as coffee and cakes.

Torgið Restaurant & Café • Snorrágata 16 • 580 Siglufjörður ☎ +354 467 2323

Magic in the air



VISIT
EAST ICELAND
www.east.is / #easticeland

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.



Picture compliments of Ingi Ragnarsson
Marketing Office of the Visit East Iceland
www.east.is

EGILSSTAÐIR

THE CAPITAL OF EAST ICELAND



Home to about 2,300 inhabitants, Egilsstaðir is the largest town in East Iceland and serves as the region's main service and transportation hub. It sits on the bank of the Lagarfljót river, surrounded by a wealth of natural treasures and interesting sights. The area is a major attraction for outdoor lovers, with its abundance of meticulously planned hiking paths all over its magnificent countryside. The area is rich in wild life and home to the Icelandic reindeer, one of the few mammals able to survive in the wild. Found only in the East, they are often spotted in the wilderness, though they have been known to visit urban areas at times. Egilsstaðir's vibrant daily life is an attraction in itself, sizzling with culture and with a surprising variety of recreation and activities.

-ES



Hús Handanna TIC and Local Art and Design

Hús Handanna is an elegant art and design shop in the heart of Egilsstaðir. The gallery specialises in local quality design and handicrafts, offering a wide selection of artefacts and souvenirs, ranging from graphic art, jewellery, ceramics and treasures from reindeer products and more.

East Iceland's Entryway

Located at the East's main crossroads, the boutique also serves as the area's main Tourist Information Centre. If you need assistance or are simply curious about the East's hidden secrets and treasures, pay Hús Handanna a visit – and imbibe the lovely offerings on display while you are at it.

+354 471 2433 | hushandanna@simnet.is | Find them on Facebook



Pure Dairy products for over a century

Egilsstaðir Farm has been providing Icelanders with pure dairy products for more than 120 years. A few years ago they opened a café and farmers' market – Fjóshornið, welcoming visitors to stop in for their reasonably-priced products – a range of traditional skyr deserts, pancakes, waffles and other sweet treats, made from their own pure produce and various cuts of beef from their own herds. All Egilsstaðir Farm products are retailed to consumers. Dairy products include plain and blueberry skyr, skyr desserts, feta cheese, havarti cheese, yogurt and milk. Mince, fillet, prime rib and rib-eye steaks can all be bought at the shop in pre-cut frozen form – all labelled with the distinguishing Fjóshornið logo on the containers, to ensure pureness and authenticity.

*Open in summer only on weekdays
 from 2pm to 6pm*

Fjóshornið | +354 471 1508 | Find them on Facebook



Taste the Magic

Travel East is the main activity booking centre in the East. The travel agency was founded in 2011 by two local women who enjoy new challenges. Additionally, they run a full service campsite in town, providing a greatly appreciated laundromat and other essentials. Lastly, they run the Egilsstaðir Visitor Centre. In co-operation with local tour guides and travel companies, they arrange all the activities one might desire. They focus mostly on local tours but can arrange activities across Iceland. Popular tours include hiking trips to stunning places like the majestic Stóruurð and glacier hiking in Kverkfjöll. For adventure seekers they offer sea angling, horse riding and Super Jeep tours to the highlands. Their website is a well organized fount of information. The main office is based in the Egilsstaðir Visitors' Centre, located at the campsite, where travellers can discuss tours in detail with well informed and helpful staff.

+354 471 3060 | traveleast@traveleast.is | www.traveleast.is



Take time to explore the beautiful scenery around town, and enjoy all that Egilsstaðir's townsfolk offer!



Photo: Skarphéðinn G. Þórisson



East Iceland Heritage Museum

The East Iceland Heritage Museum (Minjasafn Austurlands) in Egilsstaðir vibrantly displays objects from the old rural society where self-sufficiency for every household was essential to survival.

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 their behavioural characteristics and habits, reindeer hunting and hunting regulations and, in short, everything you might find interesting about reindeers is displayed. Elegantly presented tidbits, footage and items made from reindeer products truly breathe life into the exhibition. It also hosts a small gallery with various temporary exhibitions, often displaying arts and crafts from local artists.

+354 471 1412 | minjasafn@minjasafn.is | www.minjasafn.is

FLJÓTSDALUR VALLEY – ENJOY NATURE AND SERVICE ON THE EDGE OF THE HIGHLANDS



Fljótsdalshreppur is among the most sparsely populated municipalities in Iceland, with less than 100 inhabitants. In Fljótsdalur valley, one nevertheless finds a great number of natural treasures and historical sites, as well as diverse services and recreation for tourists.

When driving into Fljótsdalur along Lagarfljót lake, it is best to keep one's eyes open because the Lagarfljót Worm (www.ormur.com) might raise its back above the water. The most popular tourist spot of Fljótsdalur and East Iceland is without a doubt the Hengifoss waterfall (www.hengifoss.is).

Tens of thousands of tourists walk to this second highest waterfall in the country (128 metres) where it cascades off the edges of Fljótsdalsheiði heath into a magnificent canyon by the innermost part of Lagarfljót. In the same river, the Litlanesfoss waterfall is surrounded by high basalt columns. The walking route to Hengifoss is relatively short but those who wish to exert themselves more can make their way to other majestic waterfalls in Fljótsdalur. In Suðurdalur valley, one can see Strútsfoss and in Norðurdalur valley, there are many gorgeous waterfalls in Jökulsá river, such as Faxi and Kirkjufoss. Services for tourists in Fljótsdalur have expanded rapidly in recent years and people can easily spend a few days enjoying recreation, food and drink both down in the valley and up on the heath.



Vatnajökull National Park

At Skriðuklaustur, you will also find Snæfellsstofa, the elegant visitor centre of Vatnajökull National Park where you can familiarise yourself with the nature, flora and fauna of the east area of the national park, which reaches from Kverkfjöll mountains south to Lónsöræfi. This is a good place to stop before continuing up into the highlands and driving, for example, to Snæfellskáli lodge where the rangers of Vatnajökull National Park offer guided walks and inform visitors about fun walking routes at the roots of Snæfell mountain (1833 metres).

+354 470-0840 | info@vjp.is | www.vjp.is



Skriðuklaustur Cultural Centre Klausturkaffi Restaurant

At Skriðuklaustur, you can have a look at the ruins of a medieval monastery from the 16th century and visit the manor house that author Gunnar Gunnarsson built when he returned home from Denmark in 1939. You can also visit the Klausturkaffi restaurant, which offers, for example, a lunch and cake buffet every day. The restaurant places an emphasis on using ingredients from the area, such as brambleberries, Larch Boleté mushrooms, and reindeer meat.

+354 471 2990 | klaustur@skriduklaustur.is
www.skriduklaustur.is



Fljótsdalsgrund Guesthouse

A short distance from Valbjófsstaður is the Fljótsdalsgrund guest house at the end of Tröllkonustígur (Giantess's Path), a dyke that cuts through Valbjófsstaðafjall mountain. At the guest house, you can stay in spacious rooms with cooking facilities and bathroom en suite and enjoy fire-side chats with your fellow travellers in the evenings in a cosy sitting room with a fire place. The option of a welcoming home style dinner in the evenings is offered during the high-season from 20 June to 30 August. If you are travelling on a budget, you can make use of the sleeping-bag accommodation or the full service camping site with electricity and barbecue facilities.

+354 865 1683 | fljotsdalsgrund@fljotsdalur.is
www.fljotsdalsgrund.is



Laugarfell Highland Hostel

Those who head up into the highlands to view the large dams at Kárahnjúkar or to enjoy the nature of Vatnajökull National Park, can take a dip in the natural pools at Laugarfell. There they will find a highland hostel with warm outdoor pools, refreshments and accommodation in rooms, which is rare in the Icelandic highlands. It is not unlikely that visitors will encounter reindeer, but whether they show themselves down in the valley or up on the heath depends on the season. There is also rich bird life in the area and it is mesmerising to observe the numerous species of ducks that can be seen on rivers and lakes.

+354 773 3323 | info@highlandhostel.is | www.highlandhostel.is



The Wilderness Centre

Fljótsdalur is located at the edge of the wilderness, and at Óbyggðasetur Íslands (The Wilderness Centre) in the innermost part of Norðurdalur valley, you can learn about life in the highlands. Guests can stay in a baðstofa (communal living/sleeping room) and rooms designed in the spirit of the past, enjoy refreshments, go horseback riding and venture out on short or longer walks. It is also fun to pull oneself across Jökulsá river in Fljótsdalur on a newly renovated aerial ropeway.

+354 440 8822 | info@wilderness.is | www.wilderness.is

ÁLFHEIMAR COUNTRY HOTEL OF BORGARFJÖRÐUR EYSTRI

A Seaside Hotel with a Mission

Álfheimar Country Hotel, set in a prime seaside location, overlooks the wide expanses of Borgarfjörður fjord on the edge of the colourful fishing village of Bakkagerði.

The country hotel's affable owner, Arngrímur Viðar Ásgeirsson, born and raised in the area, is fairly brimming over with local knowledge. Proud of his background and heritage, Arngrímur, and his local staff, often take on the role of chief tour guide, much to the delight of the hotel's international clientele.

Álfheimar Country Hotel offers 32 rooms from single rooms to family size, all with private bath. Each evening, the hotel restaurant emphasises a main course using quality fresh fish or lamb supplied by the area's fishermen and farmers.

Puffins Galore

If puffin spotting is on your to-do list this summer, Borgarfjörður eystri could well be called the best place on earth to do just that. Each year, 10 to 15 thousand of these charming little birds arrive in mid-April and stay until mid-August. Quite tame, these little guys allow you to get within a few metres of them for that highly sought-after puffin close-up and can often be seen circling the harbour, which provides an ideal lookout point for avid bird-watchers.

The area of Borgarfjörður Eystri has a well-maintained hiking infrastructure with over 300km of marked trails criss-crossing the fjord's wild, deserted inlets.



According to Arngrímur, "We are a hidden treasure in the trekking world and therefore our guests can enjoy the peaceful area with day tours ranging from a few hours long to multi-days treks, led by experienced local guides. I like to call it 'comfort hiking' because we carry only our daypack, and afterwards you will sleep in a comfortable hotel room – and of course enjoy our 3-course dinner with wine in our restaurant, surrounded by good company. For even more comfort, our neighbour, Blábjörg Guesthouse, offers a wonderful

spa and wellness centre with a hot tub and sauna that is relaxing after a good day's hike in the mountains. For those who

are new to hiking or those who are not keen on the 'mountain hut' lifestyle, our service would be an excellent option."

Eco-tourism

The community has its roots in eco-tourism, placing a special emphasis on respect for nature through environmental stewardship. This has earned it recognition from the EU's Blue Flag programme for Hafnarhólmi, its environmentally friendly harbour, and for their sound, sustainable practices.

Iceland's Elf/Hidden People Debate

To believe or not believe. You decide. Here in the Elf Capital of Iceland you can visit Álfaborg, a rocky mound that is purportedly home to the Queen of the Elves. There are some 172 folk stories about hidden people, elves and trolls that attest to the vast number of these beings that are thought to have populated the area for centuries.

Slow Travel Tips from Arngrímur

"Rushing around the Ring Road, attempting to see the whole country in a week, is one

way to see Iceland, but not the only way", says Arngrímur, who suggests picking one to three 'slices' of Iceland as a base and exploring from there.

"If you need a place to relax and get out of ordinary city life, you will find a quiet zone of Iceland at Álfheimar Country Hotel... It's only a one hour flight via Air Iceland from Reykjavik to the East.

"We are more than happy to help you plan your stay, suggest itineraries, fetch you from the airport and basically do everything we can do to make your holiday memorable and enjoyable. That's our mission!" –EMV



Elf Tours
 Brekkubær - 720 Borgarfjörður eystri
 +354 861 3677
 info@elftours.is
 www.elftours.is
 www.borgarfjordureystris.is
 www.puffins.is





THE MAGICAL EASTFJORDS

Berunes Hostel Offers a Cosy Stay in the Picturesque East



Don't forget about the Eastfjords during your trip to Iceland. Visitors to the region are treated to spectacular surroundings, including ranges of towering mountains, charming villages and the unmissable Papey island that is home to hundreds of adorable puffins.

Berunes Hostel is the perfect place for visitors to base themselves in the Eastfjords. Situated just 300 metres from the Ring Road, Berunes Hostel is located on a farm along the coast that has been home to five generations of the same family and has operated as a hostel since 1973. The spectacular nature attracts new visitors and returning guests.

Local Attractions

"What you can experience in the East is unlike anything you see in the rest of Iceland" said Sigríður Ólafsdóttir, the daughter of the owners of Berunes Hostel. "The Eastfjords tend to be forgotten as people rush around the Ring Road. Berunes Hostel occupies a slice of Iceland that boasts amazing views with Papey island to the left, the little village of Djúpvogur in the front and a towering mountain range behind the hostel."

Tourists tend to visit the Eastfjords to hike, climb mountains, and watch birds in a remote tip of Iceland. "This is a great place

to observe birds nesting by the sea," said Sigríður. "We are also close to Papey island which is a must-see for birdwatchers as there are thousands of pairs of puffins."

Explore Djúpvogur

Berunes Hostel is located next to Djúpvogur, a charming little village centered on the harbour, which happens to be the southernmost harbour of the Eastfjords. Here, visitors can catch boat trips to Papey along with bird and seal watching trips. The original hostel was converted from a century old farmhouse and the family has expanded the property to include private cottages, and double and family rooms with shared facilities. The in-house restaurant serves up delicious traditional Icelandic fare. For a quiet stay in a scenic stretch of the Eastfjords, Berunes Hostel has all you need. *-JG*



Berunes Hostel
 Berufjörður • 765 Djúpvogur
 +354 478 8988
 berunes@hostel.is
 www.hostel.is/berunes




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's four children and their families.

A cafeteria was recently opened within the museum, where guests can enjoy light meals of healthy sandwiches and soups as well as coffee and cakes in a pleasant environment, following their stroll around the unique collection. A visit to this endearing museum is therefore sure to satisfy your geological enthusiasm as well as your appetite in the most delicious way.

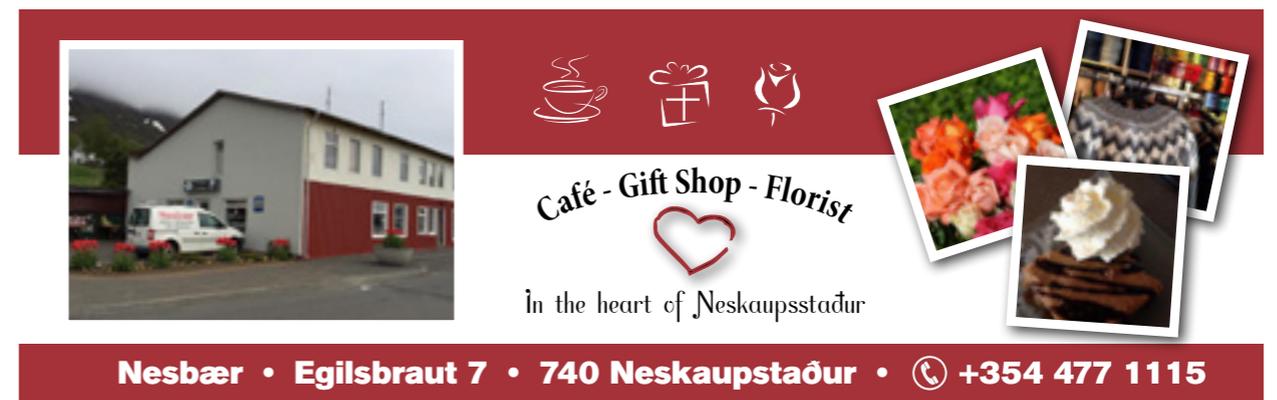


The museum is open from 1 May – 30 September from 9am to 6pm and the cafeteria serves refreshments from 10am to 4pm each day.

-EMV-ES



Petra's Stone and Mineral Collection
 Fjarðarbraut • 755 Stöðvarfjörður
 +354 475 8834
 petrasveins@simnet.is
 www.steinapetra.is

Nesbær • Egilsbraut 7 • 740 Neskaupstaður • ☎ +354 477 1115



Sumarlína Cafe
 Cafe, bistro, pub, Internet access

Kitchen open daily from 11am until 9pm

Búðavegur 59 / 750 Fáskrúsfjörður / Tel : +354 475 1575 / www.sumarlina.is / sumarlina@sumarlina.is

Maritime Memories

Eskifjörður holds fascinating glimpses of its fishing past

The Maritime Museum of the East is one of six great museums in Fjarðabyggð municipality, all of which attract well-earned attention for interesting and lively exhibits. The maritime museum is in Eskifjörður town, a small fishing town with fewer than 1100 inhabitants.



The museum is situated in Gamla búð (the Old Shop), one of the oldest houses in East Iceland. Its exhibits are overseen by an enthusiastic group of Eskifjörður's elderly citizens. The building, which has a noteworthy history as a store, warehouse and fish processing facility, harmonises particularly well with the museum's exhibits. Though it focuses on the sea and seafaring, this friendly museum

not only spans the diverse work history of the region, but also gives a good account of the various industries and health services at a time when economic development was on the verge of modern industrialisation in the early 20th century. Here, visitors can familiarise themselves with mass manufacturing in candy production, shoemaking and the milk industry, as well as dentistry, to name a few examples, in the early days of these professions. Visitors experience up close how people went about their work in the past, and as a result, the 'stories' that the museum covers, in addition to seafaring and the diverse fishing techniques of centuries past, become interesting and memorable. Gamla búð is, like most old houses in Iceland, rather small. The museum is packed with exhibits. You feel as if you are discovering something



new at every turn – a fascinating experience.

After you have looked at the main exhibits, do not forget to check out the items in the small lobby. The old store furnishings are still in place in this spot, and various interesting items can be found. For example, there are old calculators and typewriters from the early part of the 20th century which demonstrate the technical development that brought us today's equipment, so often taken for granted.

East Iceland's Maritime Museum
 Strandgata 39b • 735 Eskifjörður
 +354 476 1605
 solni@fjarabyggd.is
 www.facebook.com/sjomijasafn





Photos complimentary of Yulia Yudinova



Photos compliments of Atli Eglisson

PLAN FOR A COMFORTABLE STAY

at the Puffin Hotel Eskifjörður

The Eastfjords are some of the most remote and unspoiled parts of Iceland. Eskifjörður, one of the East's 14 fjords, has its own unique charm. With a population of under 1100 people, it is home to tremendous nature and outdoor attractions, such as horse riding, fishing, golfing and boating.

For hikers looking for a moderate trek, Mt. Hólmatindur,

which stands 985m high, towers over the fjord opposite of the town and provides a fantastic view of the East from the top.

Puffin Hotel Eskifjörður is situated centrally in Eskifjörður and is a great spot for tourists to base from while exploring the Eastfjords. "The hotel is close to a ski resort, a private precious stone collection, and the harbour, where tours are offered to see a

large puffin colony in the summer," says Björn Hauksson, the manager of the hotel. "Tourists should make time to explore this wonderful land with its spectacular nature, where the wildlife greatly outnumbers humans", he adds.

The hotel has 16 rooms all of which comprise the modern comforts of en suite bathrooms, flat-screen TVs, Wi-Fi and tea or coffee making facilities.

One of the rooms is family-sized and makes a comfortable accommodation for two adults and up to three children. -J/G



Puffin Hotel Eskifjörður
 Strandgata 47 • 735 Eskifjörður
 +354 476 0099
 info@puffinhotel.is
 www.puffinhotel.is




"I WANT THAT CHOCOLATE CAKE!"

Eskifjörð's Kaffihúsið Food is World Famous

There's a delicious chocolate cake whose fame has travelled around the world through TripAdvisor.

When travellers come to Eskifjörður they say, "I want THAT chocolate cake", and show its picture on their smartphone.



Have you tried a hamburger with jalapeno, pepperoni and garlic sauce? If not, take a trip to Kaffihúsið (The Coffee House) in Eskifjörður and try the 200g Hólmaborgari. Or before you try to climb the 985m high Hólmatindur Mountain outside the town,

you should grab its equally mountainous double burger namesake! It tastes fantastic and wild, like the Icelandic nature.

The à la carte menu of Kaffihúsið's master chef is an adventure for the taste buds as well. You won't be disappointed with the reindeer and the Icelandic lamb dishes, either.



Loving Life in Eskifjörður

The couple who run Kaffihúsið have been around the world, but are Reykjavik-born. Sigga and Völvi, the chef, run the cosy little guesthouse as well as the restaurant and just love living in Eskifjörður. They've been there for six years. "It's just such a beautiful seaside village and the people here are so nice", says Sigga with a smile. You might have a little problem pronouncing her name but she and Völundur want to make your stay as pleasant as possible. -UHJ

Opening hours in Summer
 Sunday-Thursday: 12am - 11pm
 Friday-Saturday: 12am - 3am

Kaffihúsið Eskifjörð
 Strandgata 10 • 735 Eskifjörður
 +354 476 1150
 siggavolli@gmail.com
 www.kaffihusid.is





www.icelandictimes.com

Randulff's Sea House Restaurant

Open Every Day From
 11am - 9:30pm

from June to September



Open for groups
 by arrangement

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BREIÐDALSVÍK – THE HIDDEN GEM OF EAST ICELAND

Hotel Bláfell and Tinna Adventure Company join forces to make your visit memorable

Cosy Hotel Bláfell lies by 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 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 cosy feel. The café menu has light dishes ranging from sandwiches to salads as well as home-baked breads and pastries. Everything is freshly made – 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 houses the

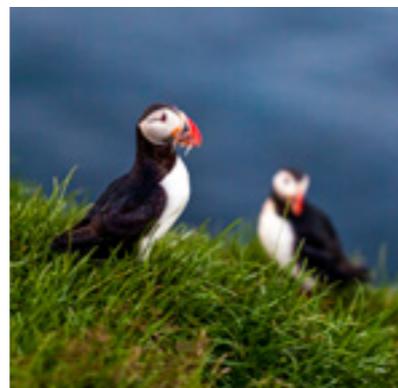


Photo: Páll Jökull

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 received the distinguished Order of the Falcon, Iceland's highest honour, for their work.



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 is to be found on 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 can 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

 **Hotel Bláfell**
Sólvöllum 14 • 740 Breiðdalsvík
+354 475 6770
info@hotelblafell.is
www.hotelblafell.is



SOUTH ICELAND

South Iceland is a rich source 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 Keríð caldera; world-famous volcanoes like Hekla – the Gateway to Hell, Lakagíggar, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; fantasy sites like Þórsmörk 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.



Pictures compliment of www.south.is

VISIT VATNAJÖKULL

Europe's Largest Glacier Region



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

A Photographer's Dream

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

Some impressive numbers

Vatnajökull is larger than all the glaciers in Europe combined, (there are smaller glaciers



in Norway and Russia) and is one of the largest glaciers in the world, excluding the polar icecaps. It boasts the highest elevation in Iceland: Hvannadalshnúkur at 2,115 metres or 6,870 feet, as well as the lowest point below sea level at the famous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon—260 metres at its deepest. As a national park, it's the largest in Europe.



Points of interest

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

Local Festivities

Do not forget the not-to-be-missed annual fireworks extravaganza at Jökulsárlón in the middle of August.

For more in-depth information about Vatnajökull National Park, check out the visitors centre, a major hub for hiking and mountaineering expeditions in the area, open year round.

—EMV



Ríki Vatnajökuls

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www.visitvatnajokull.is



BETWEEN VOLCANO AND SEA

FOR LOVERS OF MOUNTAINS, GLACIERS, RIVERS AND NATURE, ÖRÆFASVEIT IS A CHOICE LOCATION

When the first Viking settlers, Ingólfur Arnarson and his wife, Hallveig, reached Iceland in 874, they wintered on the south coast under the largest active post-glacial volcano in Iceland, Örfajökull, before moving on to Reykjavik.

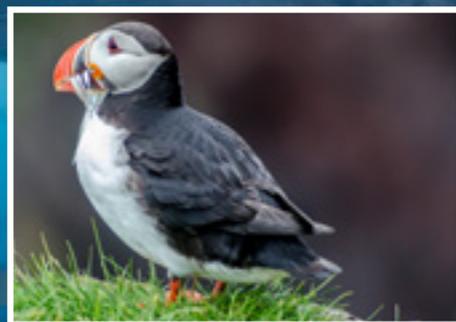
A spectacular location, the area became a wealthy, densely populated farming society, with many large farms, by the mid-14th century. All that changed in June, 1362 when Örfajökull erupted explosively, causing the inhabitants to flee and changing

the ecology of the area, as massive glacial bursts led to devastating floods that swept away a large number of farms.

The area became known as Öræfi – the Wilderness. Isolated, with large rivers on either side of it almost impassable except with skilled guides, few chose to live there for many years and few visitors struggled with the conditions.

The building of the Ring Road brought a major change as the rivers were bridged, opening up the area. Around the same time, tourism began to take off with visitors discovering what makes the region unique.

-ASF



Svínafell Accommodation and Camping

Just 3km from the Freysnes petrol station is Svínafell, nestled at the base of Örfajökull. In the settlement era, it was considered a place of great nobility, inhabited by Flosi, made famous in the Njáls saga.

If you have your sleeping bag, Svínafell has both accommodation and a camp site where you can stay to enjoy the area, with views of the mountains and glaciers and the sands of Skeiðará, the scene of devastating floods in 1996. With a large kitchen and dining room, where you are welcome to prepare and enjoy your own food, a laundry with a coin-operated washing machine and dryer and with shower facilities, it's an inspiring base from which to explore the area.

The staff are happy to provide any information you might need about the area and its services. The camp site is open until 30 September. Guides at the nearby Skaftafell National Park Centre can take you up onto the glaciers. (It's not safe to attempt a glacier trip without a guide.)

Svínafell - 785 Örfæfum | +354 478 1765 | GSM: +354 868 8193
svinafell@svinafell.com | www.svinafell.com



Ingólfshöfði Tour

Drive just a few more kilometres and you'll see a sign on the side of the road pointing to Ingólfshöfði – Ingólfur Arnarson's first winter home. You can't reach it by car but one family, whose ancestry living here goes back to the Settlement days, is offering a unique tour there. Their tractor and haycart have been converted to cross the sands to the nature reserve where thousands of puffins, great skuas and others birds have their nests. Whether you're a baby or an 80 year-old, if you have the spirit of adventure, this 2½-hour tour to see these colourful little birds alone makes this trip worth it, never mind the experience crossing the waters, marshes and sands, and the walk around the reserve.

For those staying in the area, the photography tour starts at 6:45am to get the best possible lighting conditions during this 3-hour tour from June to August. With a maximum of 15 people, the focus of this tour is on the photo opportunities. Remember, this is Iceland and you should be prepared for hot sun, winds, rain and even the occasional sand storm!

Hofsnes | 785 Örfæfum | +354 478 1682 | GSM: +354 894 0894
info@localguide.is | www.localguide.is



Fjallsárlón

Driving under the tip of the glacier and heading east about 47km from Skaftafell, you'll find a sign for 'Fjallsárlón Glacier Lagoon Boat Tours', which have become increasingly popular with top 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor.com.

Being less 'touristy' than its neighbour some way further down the road, and with small, intimate groups, each trip is also filled with spontaneity, fun, interesting and personalised commentary from the professional guides. Your photographic skills can be put to full use as the zodiac boats weave through the floating icebergs in the stillness and silence, in a dream-like creation.

Breidamerkursandur | 785 Örfæfum | +354 666 8006
info@fjallsarlon.is | www.fjallsarlon.is



Photos: Einar Rúnar Gunnarsson



GRAY LINE'S SOUTH COAST AND GLACIAL LAGOON TOUR

Go South Young Man, Go South

When it comes to deciding on where to go on your first visit to Iceland, given the myriad of available choices, I can let you in on a secret – Gray Line Iceland's South Coast tour is packed with all those memorable sights for which Iceland is so famous.

But First a Word About the Weather

Iceland is as renowned for its weather as it is for its landscapes and there's never a dull moment as far as that's concerned. You might experience a range of weather conditions over the course of the day – sunshine one minute, showers the next with the wind picking up speed along the coastline, and then back to bright blue clear skies with amazing cloud formations that

create stunning skies. Throw in the odd summer hailstorm for good measure; it's all part of the thrill of being in Iceland.

Hellisheiði Teaser

The South Coast tour departs Reykjavik heading out over the Hellisheiði heath giving us a taste of things to come – green moss-topped lava as far as the eye can see, billowing steam emanating from the Hellisheiðarvirkjun geothermal plant and on a clear day, the whole of the glacier-strewn south comes into view.

Small Town Life

When the days lengthen and the weather warms, many Icelanders head

out of Reykjavik to spend time in their summerhouses. As a result, small towns around the country are generally quite lively in summer and we'll get a feel for small town life Icelandic style, as we pass through the little communities along the south coast.

Let the Magic Begin

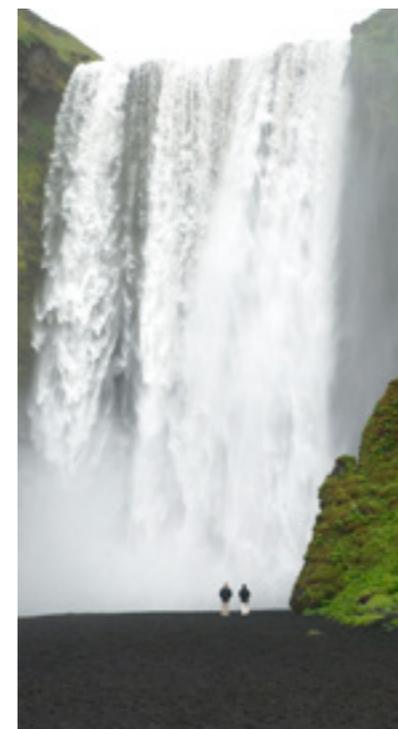
Once we arrive in the village of Hvolsvöllur, the magic begins. From here on in, the landscape unfolding before our eyes becomes intensely varied: we'll pass the infamous Eyjafjallajökull volcano, now peacefully slumbering on the northern horizon, iconic waterfalls, misty, craggy mountain peaks where seabirds keep watch high above the sheer scree slopes that descend

from the foothills of Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull glacier. Looking southwards, the distant peaks of the Westman Islands rise up out of the ocean about 10km from the coast.

An Insider's View of Iceland

On this particular journey, our driver/guide is just bubbling over with tall tales, elf and troll stories and anecdotes about life in Iceland. This is the kind of stuff that no guidebook can offer, and another reason why taking a tour of this kind is good value for money.

We speed onwards over the vast desert sands of Mýrdalssandur, and through the mossy lava mounds at Eldhraun that are just



and soul of Iceland. The sheer size of the vistas that lie before our eyes is astounding.

Hold it in your memory because no camera, no matter how fancy, can capture this panorama as well as the human eye. We visit the Skaftafell Visitor Centre on the return leg, where we can stretch our legs and peruse multimedia exhibits and have a bite to eat.

The moment we are all waiting for however is still yet to come: our first look at those gorgeous light turquoise-blue icebergs at Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, the star attraction of this tour. As we cross the suspension bridge, the lagoon itself in all its glory suddenly pops into view. It's an unforgettable moment.

Included in the tour is an amphibian boat cruise on the lagoon that's fun – and don't forget to look for the grey seals as they people watch from the shallows of the lagoon.

The return journey includes a dinner stop in the picturesque village of Vík, with time to walk down to the beach to check out the black sand. Last but not least, we take time for photos at the photogenic Seljalandsfoss waterfall, as the sun begins its graceful descent on the northwest horizon.

It has been a long day as we head back to Reykjavik, but I can already hear the words forming in my heart – 'Iceland... I'll be back'. – EMV

heaven to walk on. The springy moss is much thicker than it looks and you can bounce from mound to mound, or lie down between them for a little siesta. Ask your driver if you can stop for a moment to experience this surprising element of the tour.

Getting Into Iceland's Heart and Soul

Once we cross the Skeiðarársandur bridge and into the Skaftafell National Park, measuring roughly ten times the area of London, we are really getting into the heart

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DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

Jökulsárlón Boat Tours tours on Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

Only a few glacial lagoons exist in the world today and certainly none more awe-inspiring and accessible than the renowned Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, situated at the foot of Breiðamerkulljökull outlet glacier on Vatnajökull Glacier.

Sail Among the Icebergs

Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting one hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 25 years.

A Waffle with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café, where traditional Icelandic waffles with rhubarb jam and whipped cream are served throughout the day, as well as homemade soup with bread, sandwiches, cakes with coffee or tea which can be either taken out on the terrace or consumed inside.

The Show of Fire and Ice

The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described, without a doubt, as one of the most memorable firework shows on earth. The event, held annually in the middle of August, starts



at 11.30pm, with the proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.

Located within a few hundred metres of Route No. 1, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears.

With an area measuring approximately 24 sq km (9.2 sq miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare.

At over 250 metres (820 feet) deep, four Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare.

With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water enters into the lagoon bringing with it krill, capelin, herring and salmon. Curious seals know where the food is plentiful and can often be seen bobbing along with the currents, swimming in and out between the icebergs and appearing to enjoy the attention from onlookers on the shore.

Across the road, near the delta where fresh and salt water converge, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the rather surreal sight of baby 'bergs' beached on the shoreline.

-EMV

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High on Nature in Ársalir

You Get the Kick with Kolbrún in Vík

I am a nature freak and I try to assist my guests, who are interested in exploring the beautiful and powerful nature in Vík í Mýrdal and surrounding areas,” says Kolbrún Hjörleifsdóttir, the owner of the Ársalir guesthouse in Vík í Mýrdal. And Kolbrún truly can. She guides people around the area and also through the Katla Geopark.

Katla is Iceland’s most powerful volcano which sleeps under the thick ice blanket of Mýrdalsjökull.

Katla Geopark is Iceland’s first geopark and it opens up a natural wonderland to the visitor. A top priority of the park is to protect the natural environment, promote local sustainable development, introduce local culture and place a strong emphasis on nature tourism. The geopark is 9542 sq km or around 9.3% of the total area of Iceland with a population of around 2700.

Personal and Friendly Atmosphere

Ársalir is designed by the most famous architect in Iceland, Guðjón Samúelsson. It was built in 1947 and stands by the Víkurá river. The interior is much like it was in the old days.

There are 10 rooms available, with made-up beds and sleeping bag accommodation, either in dorms or in double rooms. Some of the double rooms with made-up beds can be changed into triples. Breakfast is served and guests can also use the kitchen to prepare a meal and sit together.



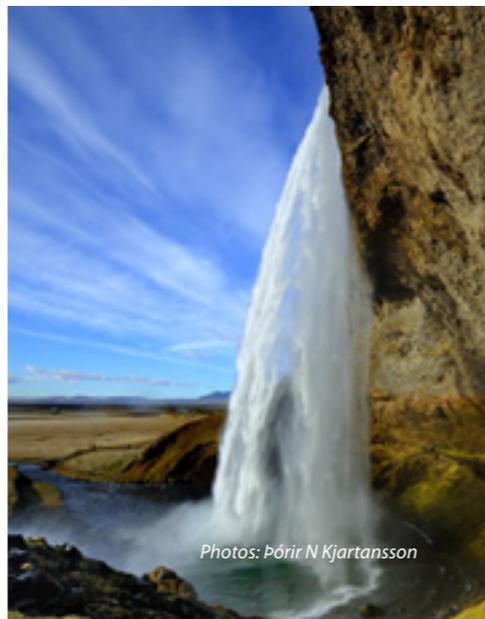
“I try to give my guests as much service as I can. The atmosphere in the kitchen is often very friendly and the discussion lively,” says Kolbrún.

Kolbrún is also an artist and a poet. She is not always traditional in her work. She uses, for example, driftwood from the beach by Hjörleifshöfði.



She is also a teacher and advocate for protecting the natural environment and promoting local sustainable development. So you can say that Kolbrún is a woman with many faces.

-KB



Photos: Þórir N Kjartansson

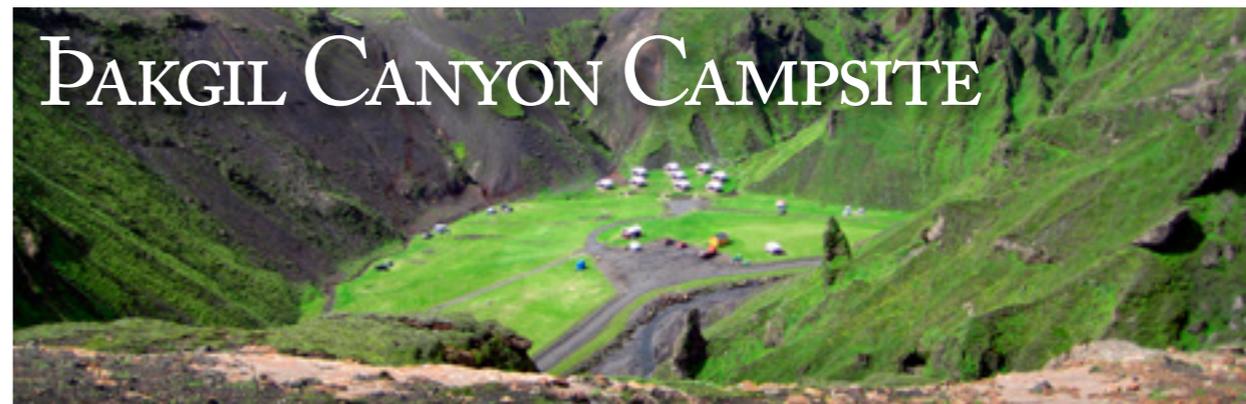
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ÞAKGIL CANYON CAMPSITE



Þakgil is a little known highland hiker’s paradise, very close to the south coast of Iceland. Þakgil (Roof Canyon) is a tiny sheltered canyon with a grassy plain floor which serves as the campsite.

A large natural cave serves as a dining hall, complete with a cooking grill and a fireplace. This unique setting also offers several day hike options to the nearby Mýrdalsjökull Glacier, which sits on top of the infamous Katla volcano. Access to a WC and hot showers is included. Small pine huts are also available, with their own WC, gas stove, and a refrigerator.

Getting There Is Also an Adventure

It is reached from Reykjavik by driving about 180km on the main road (the Ring Road) to the southernmost village in Iceland, Vík í Mýrdal, which is at the base of a unique black basalt beach, voted as one of the ten most beautiful beaches in the world.

The cliffs to the west are a known haven for seabirds, most notably the Puffin, the parrot of the north. You drive five more kilometres along the main road, and then about 15 more kilometres on a well maintained gravel road – accessible by car. The landscape is famous for its weird rock

formations, and as one of the set locations for the Game of Thrones TV series.

Þakgil is generally open during the summer from 1 June to the end of August, but some flexibility can be arranged upon request. It is usually open before the roads to the highlands are opened further inland, including the road to Landmannalaugar.

-SF





SUÐUR-VÍK RESTAURANT

Food, Culture, Nature and History Combined

Every visitor has a unique take on what makes a destination interesting; some come for the nature, others for the food, some for the culture and history and others for the people. The stately Suður-Vík restaurant in Vík í Mýrdal combines all of these and more with splendid views over picturesque rock pillars in the ocean, locally-made delicacies, historical building and being a local family owned business.

Making History

The house itself is positioned on a hill with a panoramic view. It's one of Vík's oldest houses, built in 1902. The house has been owned by the community for decades and has been an integral part of the it during that time. It has been utilised as a music school, retirement home, kindergarden and various other communal uses. The interiors



capture the building's history with romantic furniture and decoration, which makes for a very peaceful and warm place to be – with a rich sense of history in the air.

You might say Suður-Vík imaginatively blends past, present and different cultures, as the restaurant is based around local materials and traditions with a modern twist, with the welcome addition of Thai influences.

The restaurant is owned by local brother and sister Óðinn Gíslason and Þorgerður Gísladóttir, and Óðinn's wife Phatharawadee Saithong, most often called Ben, who brings the influence of her Thai origins.

www.icelandictimes.com

The Best Pizza in the County

The family tries to gather local materials and do business with local producers whenever possible – everything from getting fresh, locally caught fish, locally made ice cream and picking their own rhubarb for the traditional Icelandic rhubarb porridge.

The pride of Suður-Vík is their pizza, which they claim is the best in the area – a claim many of their customers support; there are even those who make a three-hour direct drive from Höfn just to get a pizza at Suður-Vík.

Other staples include the always popular steak sandwich, which Ben says has been developed to perfection by the kitchen staff, and of course, various quality Thai dishes to add welcome variety to a small Icelandic town.

Suður-Vík is open from 12:00 noon to 10:00pm, offering lunch and lighter dishes as well as an elegant evening dining experience, a welcome experience for weary travellers looking for culture, history, nature and of course exquisite food. *-VAG*

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 +354 487 1515
 sudurvik@gmail.com
 www.facebook.com/Sudurvik





BLACK BEACH RESTAURANT

At One With the Environment

The magical coastline of Reynisfjara is considered by many to be one of the highlights of a visit to the south of Iceland, so beautiful that it's been utilised for countless commercial and film opportunities. A new addition to the area is the tastefully designed Black Beach restaurant which offers local foods and services coupled with unforgettable views of the splendid shoreline and the power of the ocean.

The restaurant was founded by five local farmers who own the land surrounding the beach. With the steady

increase of visitors, a lack of facilities became more and more apparent. Guðni Einarsson, one of the owners, says that they all agreed that they did not want to tarnish the pure landscapes and decided on a design that would blend in with the landscape and even utilise it for construction materials. The walls and floors are thus covered with gravel from the beach, which gives the restaurant added character.



The owners also contribute to the kitchen in different ways; one produces turnips, one mutton and the other dairy and beef, some of which

are utilised in Black Beach's menu. The turnip soup is a favorite and always popular among hungry travellers on the go, while other lighter dishes and beverages are also available during the day, including of course the authentic Icelandic mutton soup.

After six o'clock during the summertime, the restaurant takes on a new character as the dinner menus are brought out and the atmosphere becomes more relaxed and refined. An elegant meal overlooking the evening tide is an experience not soon forgotten and the perfect way to wind down after a day of travelling in the South. *-VAG*

Black Beach Restaurant
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 +354 571 2718
 svartafjaran@blackbeach.is
 www.blackbeach.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 emphasises the use of only quality ingredients from the locality in their cooking. Whether be it a freshly caught salmon you crave, steaks from grass-fed cattle or free range lamb served with the 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 disappointed, as the menu includes home-baked cakes and home-made ice cream from a local farm.

Originally, Halldór's Café was the 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, using 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 11:00am to 10:00 or 11:00pm, but winter openings are from 11:00am to 9:00pm. 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. *-JB*

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 www.halldorscaffi.is




www.icelandictimes.com



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. *—EMVIASF*



Lindin Restaurant

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 www.laugarvatn.is



www.icelandictimes.com

EAT FROM EIGHT TILL LATE

Eyrarbakki's Rauða Húsið adds a Café and Bistro

It's news when one of Iceland's top restaurants opens a cosy café and bistro. Throughout the summer, customers can enjoy a good breakfast and lunch – or simply coffee and cakes or muffins as the café is open from 8am until 4pm.

As a bistro, it serves salads, soups, sandwiches, burgers and pizzas from 11am. A number of vegetarian and vegan dishes are also available – including gluten-free and vegan cakes and baked items. Should you be travelling further, there is a range of food and drinks to go.

The picturesque seaside village of Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900s and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere. It was here that Icelandic lobster fishing was born.

Indulge in a feast of langoustines at Rauða húsið (the Red House) restaurant from 11am to 10pm in summer or 9pm the rest of the year. Arrive by noon for a hearty bowl of langoustine soup to set you up for the rest of the day.

Serving a variety of delicious fish and meat dishes, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients. Choose an evening of indulgence and you can savour



the Catch of the Day, consisting of two different seafood dishes or try a tantalising lamb dish. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of Rauða húsið's signature desserts. *—ASF*



Rauða Húsið

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THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI

The House at Eyrarbakki

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.

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HÚSIÐ Á EYRARBAKKA
 The Southcoast Museum



www.icelandictimes.com

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

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 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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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 Reykjavík) 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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Ölfus On My Mind

Exploring the Majestic Ölfus District

Tourists travel to the Ölfus District for its pristine black sand beaches, vast lava fields and the charming town Þorlákshöfn. It's easy to fall in love with the remoteness and quiet of the region, while never feeling uninspired for even a second.

The beauty feels endless. Waves crash along the harbour, while sea birds bask in the summer sun, and locals take a stroll along the coastline or stop to visit the local Þorlákskirkja church.

The region has much to offer. A favourite for many is Skötubót, an expansive sandy beach, where you could find swimmers bathing in the sea and surfers trying to catch a roaring wave. If a heated swim is what you're after, a visit to the swimming pool in Þorlákshöfn is a must. The spacious 25-metre outdoor pool is one of the town's main prides. It also has a smaller indoor pool, water slides and climbing towers for the little ones and a variety of hot tubs at different temperatures.

Path to Health

In addition to a fantastic sports complex, the region also has a health path. You can follow the trail throughout the town and find signs that explain exercises one can do.

Local Food

After a day of exploring the beautiful surroundings, consider a stop at the lovely Hendur í Höfn café, which emphasises local, organic food. The food is delicious, children eat for free, and remember to save room for dessert – they have a delectable chocolate cake that has five types of chocolate in it.

Ölfus has something for everyone. –JG



Unforgettable Dining Experience Seafood Specialities at Hafid Blaa Restaurant

Dining against a backdrop of a dramatic coastline with sandy beaches and breaking waves is truly a treat. The Hafid Blaa Restaurant is situated in a secluded and beautiful part of the Ölfus District, where Icelanders and tourists gather to enjoy the breathtaking view and devour a delicious meal.

The restaurant offers delectable seafood dishes featuring fresh and local fish including monkfish, lobster, blue ling, mussels, cod and arctic char. Visitors are also treated to a choice local filet of lamb as well as specialities like lobster soup and traditional fish jerky.

Hafid Blaa is housed in an architecturally significant building with 360-degree views of mountains, the ocean and trees. Stop by for a memorable meal in a special location.

Hafid Blaa | Óseyrartangi • 816 Ölfus | +354 483 1000
hafidblaa@hafidblaa.is | www.hafidblaa.is



Fákasel – The Icelandic Horse Park A Unique Experience for the Whole Family

A trip to Iceland is not complete without getting up close and personal with Icelandic horses. The beautiful animals, with their signature stocky frames and thick coats, are a favourite among tourists and Icelanders alike. At Fákasel Horse Park visitors have a chance to meet and pet the horses as barn visits are offered every half hour from 10am–5pm. The highlight, however, is the Park's horse theatre performances – shows that delight spectators with exhibition riding from highly trained horses against a backdrop of multimedia special effects. Shows are held frequently; the 25 minute shows are at 10am, 1pm and 3pm every day and the main 45 minute exhibition is at 7pm. Horse enthusiasts should not miss this! Not a horse enthusiast? Don't worry, the supremely executed shows are sure to impress everyone, regardless of their general interest in horses. Afterwards, stop by at their restaurant to enjoy a delicious meal or a coffee and cake.

Fakasel Horse Park | Ingolfshvöll • 816 Ölfus | +354 483 5050
fakasel@fakasel.is | www.fakasel.is



Cosy Countryside Getaway An Ideal Home Away From Home Experience

Hjarðarból Guesthouse is nestled in a special part of the Ölfus District, with tall trees lining the perimeter of the property, mountains in the background, and scenic walking paths just a short distance away. Guests can also rent horses nearby to explore this beautiful region.

The family-owned guesthouse offers 21 comfortable rooms ranging from doubles to family accommodation, and the owners are in the process of building a hot tub facility on the property that will open in August.

The Old House

In addition to a modern building on the property, Hjarðarból has a structure affectionately nicknamed The Old House, which is the first house ever built in the area. The charming house was built in 1950 and represents the history of the area. Consider Hjarðarból Guesthouse for your cosy countryside getaway!

Hjarðarból • 816 Ölfus | +354 567 0045 & 840 1574
info@hjarðarbol.is | www.hjarðarbol.is



Nestled in Núpar Comfortable Cottages Close to Spectacular Nature

Núpar is a gorgeous gateway to beautiful nature and amazing attractions. Guests are treated to scenic walking paths in nearby Hveragerði town and a hot river in the valley where you can go in for a soak.

Horse rentals are nearby and there is also a Geothermal Energy Exhibition at Hellisheiði, where visitors can learn how Iceland harnesses its volcanic energy. The attractions of the Golden Circle—Gullfoss,

Geysir and Þingvellir—are also close. Just a 35-minute drive from Reykjavik, Núpar offers eight cottages for up to four people with all the creature comforts of home including cooking utensils, tableware, toasters, and coffeemakers.

Each cottage has its own private hot tub and a grill for barbecuing. The views from Núpar are breathtaking. On clear days you can see Eyjafjallajökull looming in the distance.

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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 23 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 1,000 sq metre 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 but did not even exist 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, the main island of the Westman Is.

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 sq kilometres, and a visit to the island's two museums is a must. 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, livens 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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Sæheimar, The Aquarium

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ICELAND'S LARGEST FESTIVAL

Þjóðhátíð offers four days of fun in the Westman Islands

Every summer thousands of Icelanders gather in the Westman Islands to celebrate Þjóðhátíð (Festival of the People). The first annual Þjóðhátíð was held in 1874 at the same time as the 1,000-year anniversary of the Settlement celebrations took place on the mainland. However, due to bad weather, Westman Islanders couldn't make it to the party. But that didn't stop them from celebrating as they began holding their own annual festival, one that continues to this day.

The festival is a huge draw and is the largest in Iceland, with as many as 16,000 Icelanders and tourists gathering during four glorious days. Festival participants camp out on the weekend before the first Monday in August on the island of Heimaey. Visitors will see family and friends reuniting, young people looking for a good party and tourists taking it all in.

Party Time

Indeed, during Þjóðhátíð, locals and tourists gather for four days of fun events, including blazing bonfires on Friday night, followed by fireworks on Saturday night and a sing-a-long of traditional Icelandic folk songs led by well-known Westman Islander Árni Johnsen. Throughout the festival, there are concerts held by well-known artists including Bubbi Morthens, Pall Oskar, Retro Stefson and Gus Gus.

As midnight approaches on the final night, it's a tradition to light numerous red torches that represent volcanic flames and the party goes on into the night.

-JG

Photots Complimentary of Oskar Pétursson, www.oskarp.is



Come and join us for a day to remember



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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.

-EMV



Einsi Kaldi

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FANTASTIC VIEW FROM TANGINN

Watch the nature and Vestmannaeyjar from the terrace

See a Puffin

Vestmannaeyjar is famous for the bird Puffin and the islands is the biggest Puffin colony in the world. It is a big chance to see Puffin flying while enjoying a meal at Tanginn.

The Vestmannaeyjar archipelago is young in geological terms. There are 15 islands, and about 30 rock stacks and

skerries. The islands lie in the Southern Icelandic Volcanic Zone and have been formed by eruptions over the past 10,000–12,000 years. The volcanic system consists of 70–80 volcanoes both above and below the sea. "We are extremely proud of our beautiful islands", says Hilmar Kristjánsson one of the owner of Tanginn.

-EMV

Tanginn is a brand new and lovely restaurant at the harbour in Vestmannaeyjar. It is a modern restaurant in a old style house. Tanginn offers delicious dishes from seafood soup and lobster to catch of the day and sandwiches.

Cool local artwork decorate the walls in this friendly house in Bäsaskersbryggja 8.

A large terrace surrounds the restaurant where people can relax and watch the ships and boats standing in the harbour or sailing by. The view over the islands, the rock stacks and skerries is spectacular.



Tanginn

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HORSES & NATURE

Photographer Kristján Ingi Einarsson Releases a New Book

Whether it's through horse riding, or observing the beautiful beasts from the side of the road, the Icelandic horses are a favourite for locals and tourists alike. Icelandic horses have a unique charm and aesthetic with their thick coats, muscular, stocky bodies and their short stature. Inspired by the beautiful creatures, renowned Icelandic photographer Kristján Ingi Einarsson has chosen Icelandic horses as the theme of his latest book, 'Horses & Nature'. The idea behind the new book



was to mix photos of unrivalled Icelandic nature with Iceland's special horses in their natural habitat, just as foreign guests see them as they travel around the island. "The horse is a part of Icelandic nature as they are unique and not like any other horse in the world", said Kristján.

Horses at Play

Photographing horses at play against a backdrop of Iceland's striking landscape is a favourite for Kristján. "A beautiful landscape



is always what charms me the most so I try to catch them in those circumstances", he said. Just as the horses are constantly moving and changing, so is the nature, which is a challenging, yet satisfying part of Kristján's work. "The nature is never the same because the rain, wind and lighting keep changing", he said. "Even if I have been to these places many times, it feels like the first time because I always see a new angle".

Landscape Photography

Kristján has published four other landscape photography books focusing on the unique beauty of Iceland.

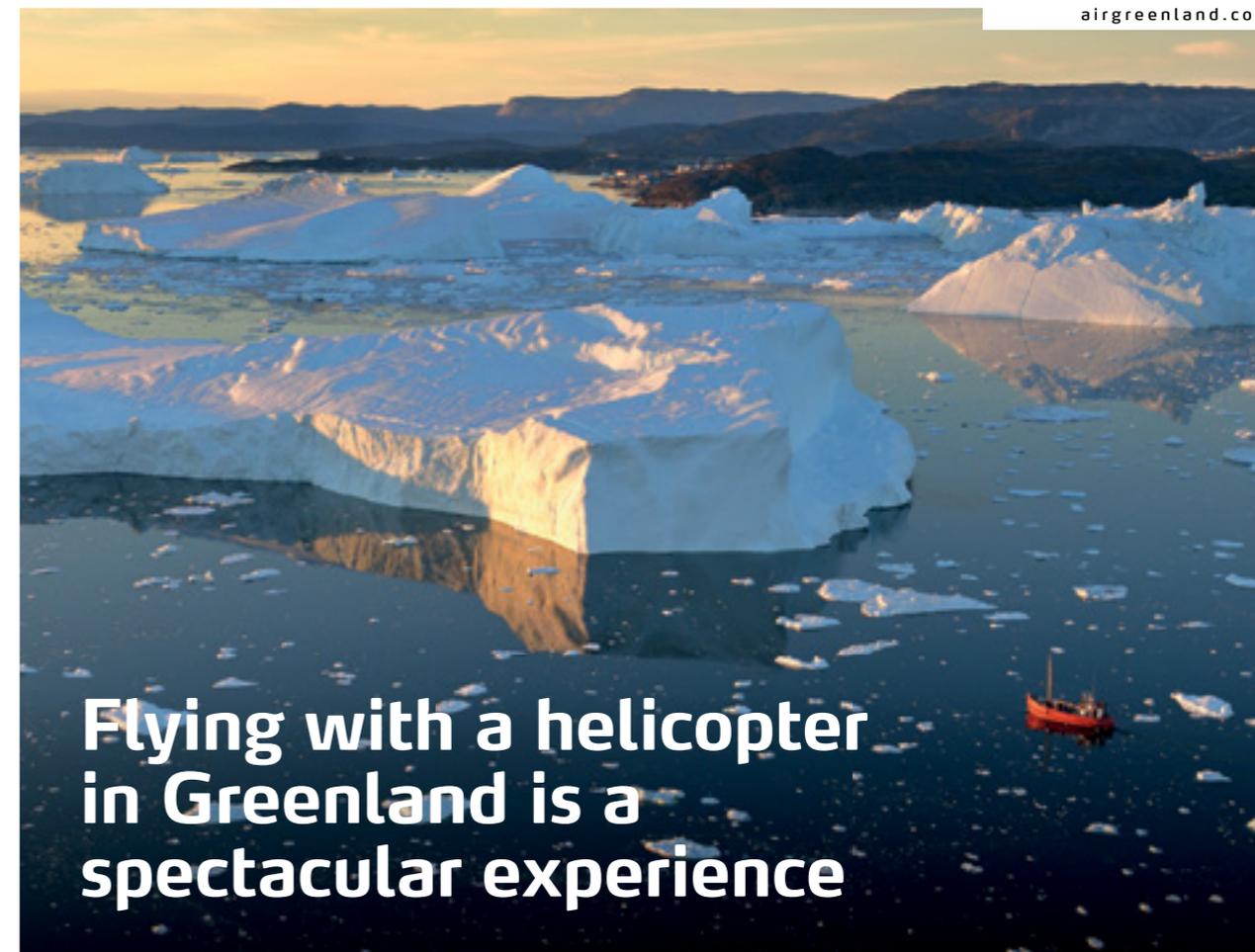
His books – 'The Essence of Iceland' (2009), 'Iceland So Quiet' (2010), 'I Was Here' (2013), and 'Niceland' (2014) – feature photos that aim to look as close to real life as possible so readers can experience the atmosphere at the place of the photo. "In all of these books, I have tried to interpret the diversity of light and colours, the stillness, shapes and the beauty of untouched Icelandic nature where the country constantly surprises you in its variability," he said.

The new book, 'Horses & Nature' which is out now, comes in a convenient panorama size in hard cover.

For more on Kristján's photography, check out his website at www.kristjaningi.is.

-JG

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