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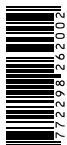
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Watch the Majestic Aurora Borealis
When Tourism Meets Design
The Mansion of the Icelandic Soul
Winter Adventures - Where to Go - What to Do

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In the 20th century, Iceland attracted very little attention besides its strategic position in the 2nd World War and the Cod Wars with Britain over fishing rights in the 1970's. It was a quiet, unassuming country that only achieved independence in 1944, where survival depended upon good harvests and good fishing and its simple way of life disturbed nobody.

Throughout the early 20th century, intrepid explorers and nobility would come to challenge its glaciers or fish its plentiful salmon rivers and a few must have talked about it with their friends as, towards the close of the century, visitor number slowly increased. The country that had been Europe's Best Kept Secret was awakening to the beauties and amazing natural conditions that had been simply accepted as normal. They proved anything but normal to the visitors, however, and tourism

took off big time, with people visiting from as far away as China. The sleepy little airport at Keflavik had to have a massive transformational makeover to enable it to handle the increased visitor numbers and offer services travellers expected. Throughout the country, there has been an equally massive investment in infrastructure and services to help visitors get the best possible experience from their visit.

Icelanders realised just what treasures they possess and wanted to share them with the world—but in a sustainable way that wouldn't destroy the very precious sites people come here to see. This is a work in progress that will be ongoing for the foreseeable future but, as a result, the country has been opened up and taken its place on the world stage, not just as a tourist destination but also as a world player, introducing numerous political, cultural

and environmental initiatives. It is using its experience in disaster and earthquake rescue to help others. Its expertise in the field of geothermal development and technology that has led to most of the country being heated and powered by nature, has likewise been shared across the globe. Iceland has become a country of entrepreneurs, pioneers and designers.

Welcome to one of the world's most dynamic and inspiring countries. There is far too much to see in one visit, so we hope this taste will encourage you to return for more.

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson
MANAGING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER



Contents

REYKJAVÍK AREA

Kaffitár: Quality Coffee in Vibrant Cafés..... 8

Keflavik International Airport is Growing!..... 10

Duty Free Iceland..... 12

Reykjavik City Museum..... 16

Rammagerðin: When Tourism meets Design..... 18

The Mansion of the Icelandic Soul..... 20

Mountaineers of Iceland..... 21

Flóki Whisky..... 22

See the Northern Lights by Boat..... 23

Glacier Walks and Outdoor Adventures..... 24

The Quiet Elegance of Hotel Holt..... 26

A Sweet Explosion in Iceland..... 28

Urta Islandica's Gourmet Local Products..... 29

64° Reykjavik Distillery Quality Crafted Spirits..... 30

Reykjavik Helicopters..... 32

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum..... 34

A Taste of Nepal..... 35

The Fine Art of Knifemaking..... 36

The Joyful Wonderland..... 37

Leather Designer..... 37

The World's Most Exclusive Watchmaker..... 40

Journey to the Inside of a Glacier..... 42

Catch the Northern Lights All Year Around..... 44

Ancestors' Knowledge..... 46

Grandi's Brewery & Bistro..... 48

A Taste of the Good Life..... 49

The All-Icelandic Wool Shop..... 50

Le Bistro..... 51

Spaks Fashion Design Studio..... 52

Iceland 4x4 Rental..... 54

REYKJANES PENINSULA

Reykjanes - A Geological Wonder..... 56

As Fresh as it Gets..... 58

The Town of Grindavík..... 59

geoSilica Local Supplement Promotes Health..... 60

The Place to Stay in Grindavik..... 61

Grindavik's Harbour Café..... 61

Park In by Radisson Keflavik Airport..... 62

WEST ICELAND

Discover West Iceland's Rich Culture and Nature..... 64

The Mystical Peninsula..... 66

Everything Volcanic..... 68

Hótel Búðir: Love is in the Air..... 70

Icelandic Lamb..... 72

Hótel Laugarbakki..... 74

Stóri Kambur Horse Rental..... 75

WESTFJORDS ICELAND

The Pastors of Aðalvík..... 78

Iceland's First Settler..... 80

NORTH ICELAND

The Klondike of the Atlantic..... 84

Where Past, Present and Future Meet..... 85

Explore the North..... 86

EAST ICELAND

Laugarfell..... 90

The East Iceland Heritage Museum..... 91

Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection..... 92

SOUTH ICELAND

The Surround Sounds of Silence..... 96

Dreaming of Iceland..... 98

Dine in the Langoustine Capital..... 99

Digging Deeper into Iceland..... 100

Vestrahorn: A Beautiful Slice of Iceland..... 102

See Iceland in Safety, Comfort and Style..... 104

Hotel Gullfoss..... 106

Experience the Glaciers..... 108

Dining out at Icelandair's Hotel Klaustur..... 110

The House that Disappeared..... 112

Going Above and Beyond around the Golden Circle..... 113

The Enchanted Island..... 114

A Little Bit of Icelandic Paradise..... 115

A Taste of Iceland's Wild & Sweet..... 116

Refreshing Vik..... 117

Harmonious Hjarðarból Guesthouse..... 118

Stracta Hotel Hella..... 119

Hótel Smyrlabjörg..... 120

Discover an Ice-Blue World..... 121

Researching Iceland's Puffins..... 122

About the Icelandic Times..... 124

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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 'with'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

How to make use of QR codes



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REYKJAVÍK



KAFFITÁR: QUALITY COFFEE IN VIBRANT CAFÉS

The local company produces a delightful range of coffees that can be enjoyed in a number of cafés in Iceland.

Coffee culture is strong in Iceland, and Kaffitár leads the way. A big part of Kaffitár's story is their seven coffee houses, with the newest location at Perlan (The Pearl). The cafés feature vibrant hues, cheerful décor, and an engaging staff. The company aspires to combine the hominess of coffee house culture in a playful environment. You won't find a pretentious, stuffy aura in Kaffitár cafés. The culture emphasizes a friendly feel that offers a fun

ambience with a background of bright oranges, deep reds, and primary yellows for customers to enjoy while they feast on artisan sandwiches, gourmet cakes and pastries, and fine Icelandic treats.

Direct trade is important

Sourcing, roasting, brewing and serving great coffee is the reason why Kaffitár exists as a business and what makes employees excited to go to work every day. The coffee is carefully sourced and comes from different parts of the world, but the producers are very much part of the Kaffitár family. The company is proud to buy 85% of their green coffee beans directly from the farmers themselves. They also employ a direct trade concept that allows the company to provide donations and offer cooperation to the farms they buy from in order to enhance the quality of life for their workers. These are important principles to Kaffitár and they are pleased to bring a bit of Icelandic cheer to their communities.

Sustainability is key

The sustainability issue is also near and dear to Kaffitár, and by having their cafes certified by Nordic Ecolabelling (The Swan), they

can assure sustainability from seed to cup. Kaffitár is the first café in Iceland to receive the Nordic environmental certification. The Swan is the official ecolabel of the Nordic countries that helps consumers choose products and services that are more environmentally friendly than others on the market. In accordance with The Swan, Kaffitár has taken specific measures to reduce the use of disposable packaging, like cardboard and plastic, which reduces trash. The company strives to use recyclable packaging as well as eco-friendly cleaning products. Strict requirements related to The Swan designation ensure that Kaffitár's activities and services are at the forefront of minimizing negative environmental and health effects. In collaboration with customers, Kaffitár has worked hard to focus on reducing waste and promoting positive environmental factors.

Great coffee and cosy atmosphere

You can expect a fun, light-hearted atmosphere when you visit a Kaffitár café and the new addition at the Pearl is a welcome addition to the neighbourhood, where tourists and locals enjoy quality coffee in comfortable surroundings. Kaffitár is popular for a reason: customers get quality coffee and delicious food, along with a company that cares about its environmental impact in the world. Enjoy a break at Kaffitár during your trip to Iceland!

-JG



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KEFLAVIK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS GROWING!

Isavia's plans meet increasing tourism needs

Keflavik International Airport, or KEF, is one of the fastest growing in Europe and has seen 28.6% annual expansion since 2013. During the summer months, Isavia, which oversees Keflavik International Airport, reports that 25 airlines are flying to more than 80 destinations. Iceland is clearly having a moment; tourism is booming and travellers can't get enough of the island's natural wonders.

Increase in flights

Flight numbers have grown very quickly. There has been a 260% increase since 2009, a challenge for all staff. There are hard working and positive staff members working for Isavia and the other companies providing services at the airport. It can be very demanding to maintain a high level of passenger satisfaction at a time of very rapid growth over several years. However, it can be seen from the Airport Council International's Airport Service Quality surveys, that the airport staff work hard to keep the very highest level of service, even under a lot of pressure.



When arriving at KEF

Apart from its expansion, there are several conveniences to enjoy at KEF. For instance, travellers can sign into free wifi to let know friends and family that they have arrived safely and to catch up on news. There are

numerous eateries at KEF and, after passing through immigration, travellers can get something to eat before going on their way and exploring Iceland's natural wonders. For instance, the airport is home to international chains like Joe and the Juice and Dunkin



Donuts, as well as Ginger, which serves healthy food options. Before collecting their baggage, travellers can also visit the Duty Free shop, which is located in the same area as baggage claim. Everything from perfume and candy to alcohol and skincare products are available, all tax- and duty-free.

When Departing from KEF

Travellers are advised to arrive 2.5 hours before departure. If travelling with Icelandair, WOW Air, Norwegian or Primera Air, the simple self check-in counters and bag drops can be used. There should also be

plenty of time to enjoy the shopping area. Travellers are welcome to sign back into the free wifi and enjoy the many shops, where souvenirs and gifts to take home to family and friends can be bought.

Shopping at KEF

Keep in mind that KEF is one of the few airports in the world where all retail, food and beverage outlets are duty free for all passengers. You can find all major Icelandic designers and high end international brands like Hugo Boss, Max Mara, Gucci, Chrome Hearts and many

more, with prices almost 20% cheaper than traditional downtown retail prices. The shops are both Duty Free and Tax Free for all passengers regardless of what passport they hold or which country they're flying to, or from. The shops are also open day and night. That's a nice touch from the Vikings!

-JG



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Keflavik DUTY FREE

Duty Free Iceland provides a great shop window on almost everything Icelandic from sweet treats to unique spirits to natural skincare products

As tourism to Iceland continues to grow, it has fuelled demand for quality Icelandic products. Happily for travellers, Duty Free Iceland provides a great shop window on almost everything Icelandic from sweet treats to unique beers, wines and spirits to natural skincare products.

Duty Free Iceland is tax- and duty-free and is conveniently open day and night. Shopping is available to arriving and departing passengers, regardless of origin or destination, and it carries all the common international brands and items, plus a growing range of unique Icelandic products.

Unique Icelandic spirits

There is always a great selection of Icelandic duty-free wines and spirits in store, featuring local favourites like Brennivín, a clear, unsweetened schnapps that is considered to be Iceland's signature distilled beverage.

Icelandic Mountain Vodka is a year-old product that started its adventure in the Duty Free shop in Keflavik. The gluten free brand, which is made with pure Icelandic water, has grown over the past few months and can now be found in eight different countries and has received fantastic reviews

in the media. Supercall and The Spirit Business named the vodka both 'Top trends to look for in 2017' and 'One of the best newcomers in vodka 2016'. The Icelandic Mountain Vodka is distilled seven times so it feels extra smooth while still standing strong at a 40% alcohol level.

Vor premium gin from Eimverk distillery is made with organic barley and is bursting with the flavours of the Icelandic countryside. Also from the Eimverk Distillery is Flóki, a handcrafted single malt. Its special taste comes from barley grown organically in volcanic soil at the Arctic Circle. Reykjavik Distillery incorporates local Icelandic ingredients into spirits perfectly. Their rhubarb and juniper berry liqueurs capture the freshness and purity of Icelandic nature and offer a new way to enjoy a distinct and much-loved flavour in a cocktail or on its own.



The award winning Reyka and Katla vodkas are available as well as the tasty Birkir schnapps and Bjork liqueur, which are smooth and uniquely Icelandic. For those interested in shots, Tópas and Opal Vodka shots are not to be missed. And don't forget about the beer—Duty Free carries brands such as Viking, Boli and the award-winning Egils Gull.





Duty Free Iceland also carries a large selection of other beers, which have also earned many international awards. A wide range of flavours is on offer, from numerous smaller breweries, as well as larger companies.

Sweet Iceland

Confectionery is a big thing in Iceland, and when it comes to chocolate, the Icelandic brand Noi Sirius is one to look for. The company, established in 1920, is the largest confectionery manufacturer in Iceland. It produces a tasty line of chocolates, encompassing semi-sweet, bitter and milk chocolate in a variety of shapes and sizes, including the company's well-known chocolate gift boxes.

Omnom is another local chocolate maker that is quite special. The company sources

premium organic beans from a range of cocoa fields around the world and tailors its chocolate-making process to ensure that each variety of chocolate achieves its full potential. The only additions to the mix are raw cane sugar and, in the milk chocolate range, creamy Icelandic milk. Its design conscious packaging makes this the ideal gift to bring home.

Another name to check out is Hafliði Ragnarsson, one of the world's top 100 chocolatiers and something of a purist in terms of the mighty cocoa bean. He works his magic to combine classic blends with more exotic flavours of pistachio, passion fruit, star anise and even Earl Grey tea.

Freyja and Stefan B Chocolatier are among other popular brands that offer sweets and liquorice that would guarantee you a warm reception back home—if only you can resist temptation during your flight!

Quality Skincare Products

Icelandic herbal oils and cosmetics sit next to international brands, offering health-giving benefits from the country's mountains, pristine valleys and hot springs. A recent scientific breakthrough in Iceland, based on 10 years of biotechnology research, has

resulted in a new concept that is marketed here as BIOEFFECT® skin care (serum and day cream). It nourishes and replenishes skin cells, bringing a youthful glow to even the most stressed or sensitive skin, without harmful chemical compounds.

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 minimizes the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

A number of other companies use local Icelandic ingredients as well.

Sóley Organic, for example, uses hand-picked wild Icelandic herbs in their environmentally-friendly and preservative-free products.

Taramar uses Icelandic seaweed and organic herbs in its pure, safe skincare products.

Villimey specialises in biological salves and ointments made of Icelandic herbs in products such as anti-aging facial oils, lip balms and muscle and joint creams.

The Purity Herbs brand produces natural skin care products including joint relief oils and volcanic body scrubs.



No discrimination

The shops are both duty free and tax free for all passengers regardless of what passport you may hold or which country you are flying to or from and are open day and night, which is a nice touch from the Vikings!

Whether you're starting your holiday, stopping over, or concluding your trip, Duty Free Iceland will give you lasting warm memories of the Land of Fire and Ice.

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REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM

Multiple exhibits focus on historical and cultural aspects of the capital city

Reykjavík City Museum gives travellers the opportunity to experience the history of Reykjavík in a fun and engaging way. The museum, which comprises five separate sites, aims to preserve Reykjavík's cultural heritage, which dates back to the days of settlement in the late 9th century.

Four of the museums are conveniently within walking distance of downtown Reykjavík, while the Árbær Open Air Museum is only a 15-minute drive from the city centre. The ferry to Viðey Island leaves from the Old Harbour in downtown Reykjavík. —JG

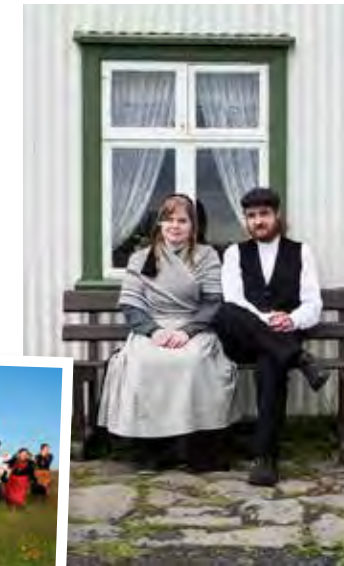
The Settlement Exhibition

The Settlement Exhibition is as authentic as it gets as it was built around the actual ruins of a Viking Age longhouse that has been preserved in situ. The exhibition gives visitors a look into the life of the first people who called the Reykjavík area their home and the ways in which they adapted to their new life. The construction of Viking Age buildings is explained using multimedia technology. Computer technology is used to give an impression of what life was like in the hall. The exhibition is suitable for all ages and includes an activity centre for children.



Árbær Open Air Museum

The Árbær Open Air Museum is a treasure. The museum, which was founded in 1957, gives visitors a visual sense of Reykjavík's past. The site comprises a village-like collection of more than 20 houses, each of which is a separate exhibition. Visitors learn how Reykjavík developed from a few isolated farms into the capital city of Iceland that is home to more than 120,000 people. During the summer months, staff members are clad in period costumes that are quite charming and fun. The museum is suitable for all ages and includes a playground and a toy exhibition where children can play freely.



Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Fishing has been the backbone of Iceland since the days of settlement. Fish nourishes Iceland's inhabitants and is an important industry, exporting Icelandic fish abroad. The Reykjavík Maritime Museum, which is located in



the old harbour, focuses on exhibitions that show the importance of fish to the nation. Today, Icelanders fish on modern trawlers, but in the old days, fishermen regularly put their lives at risk on primitive boats in order to feed their families. The museum shows the equipment fishermen used through the ages. However, one of the main attractions at the museum is the Coast Guard ship, Óðinn, which took part in all three cod wars with Britain. Guided tours are offered daily at 13:00, 14:00, and 15:00.



Viðey Island

Viðey is a little gem of an island just off the coast of Reykjavík and is accessible by ferry. The island, which is just 1.6 km² in size, hosts unspoiled nature with vast stretches of grassy plains and rich birdlife, as well as the John Lennon Peace Tower, an installation created by Yoko Ono, along with art by world renowned artist Richard Serra. Viðey is a favourite among birdwatchers, as the island is a nesting ground for more than 30 bird species. In the summer, there are daily ferry trips from the Old Harbour, Ægisgarður harbour and Skarfabakki harbour. Please visit www.videy.com for the ferry schedule.



Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Reykjavík is home to some great photographers, past and present. The Reykjavík Museum of Photography has an impressive collection, which now comprises about six million photographs. The oldest photos date from around 1860, giving a glimpse of city life decades ago. The museum preserves photographs from professional, and amateur photographers, including industrial and commercial photographers, as well as portrait and press photographers. Reykjavík is a vibrant city with rich history and contemporary culture. Stop by to check out the latest exhibitions.



Family Friendly Fun

Reykjavík City Museum is family friendly and all museum sites have something that caters to children. For example, the exhibition "Come and play" at Árbær Open Air Museum has a playground, furnished rooms with everything in child sizes as well as lots of toys to play with. The Settlement Exhibition has a special family corner where children and parents can have a fun time together. The Reykjavík Maritime Museum offers a fun treasure hunt for kids during their museum visit.



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Rammagerðin:

WHEN TOURISM MEETS DESIGN

The downtown shop has unique Icelandic products for sale, including by talented designer, Sunneva.

Icelandic design is having a moment. For a country with only just 340,000 inhabitants, there are so many talented designers making waves on this small island in the North Atlantic. Everything from clothing to accessories, jewellery, ceramic, graphic design and everything in between, Icelanders are a creative group.

Rammagerðin is a shop with several locations in Iceland, including a shop in the heart of downtown Reykjavík, on Skólavörðustígur. Here, visitors can buy goods from well known, established Icelandic brands and independent designers alike, including clothing from local designer Sigríður Sunneva.

Passion for design

Sunneva is an educated fashion designer specialising in fur garments, mainly producing warm coats and cold weather wear. She



studied fashion design in Italy at Polimoda University of Fashion and decided then to specialise in fur. After working in Florence for a number of years, she returned to Akureyri, her hometown in North Iceland, to establish her fashion studio and creative base. “I’m very happy with the decision because I have worked with fur in my profession ever since, both in my small business which I founded in 1995, and for larger companies,” she says.

Natural materials

Sunneva has always emphasised the importance of using only natural materials in her designs. The use of natural fabrics reflects her respect for nature and has shaped her personal style. Sunneva combines influences of Italian aesthetics she became familiar with when studying, with a chic Nordic look.

New for Rammagerðin

The new collection VEDRABRIGÐI is a unique collection that uses untraditional materials like lamb skins. “I’ve always had it in mind to design a product line from raw materials that are not as seasonal as past collections,” she says.

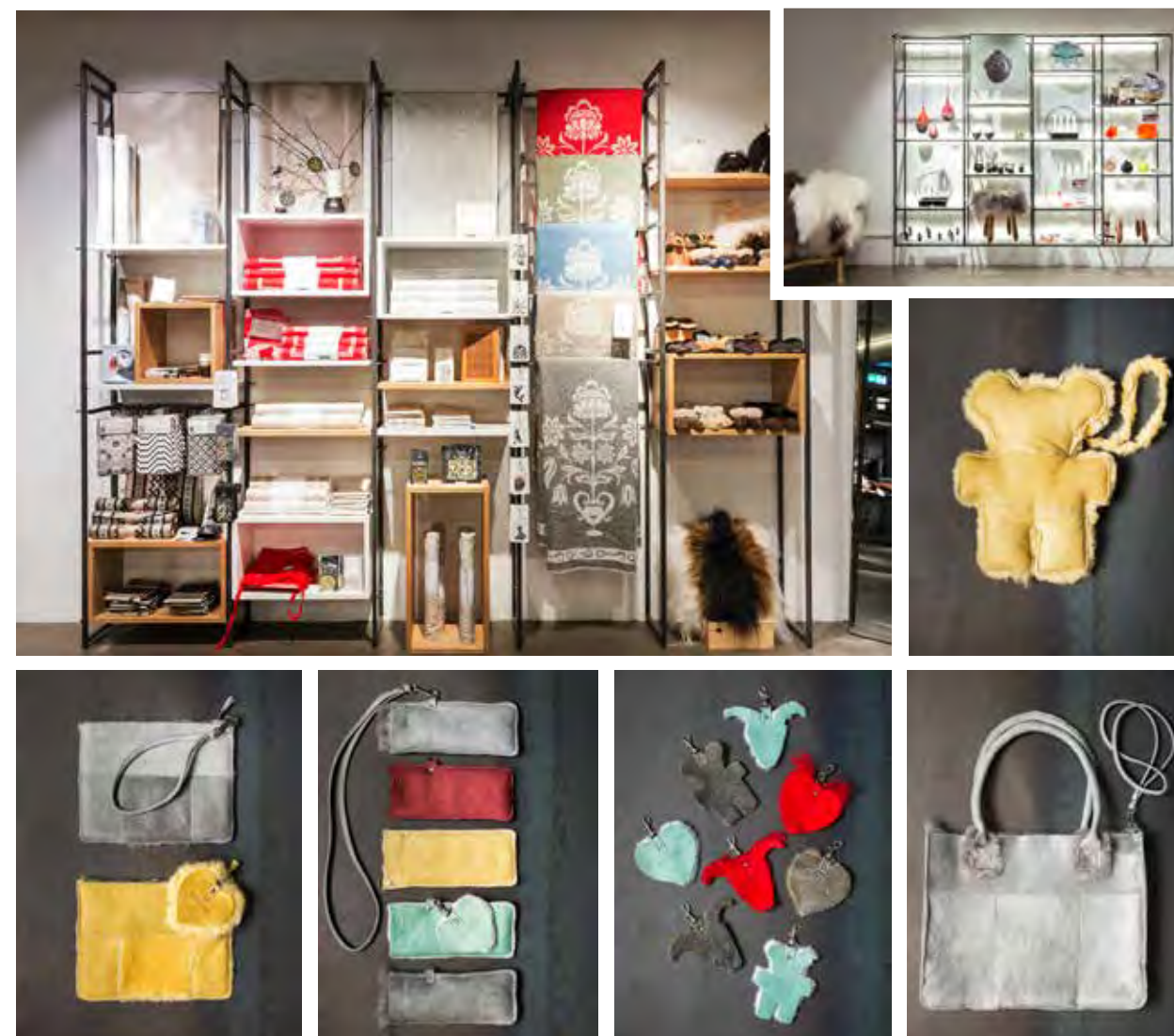
The product line includes three sizes of bags, key rings and teddy bears in three sizes. “Earlier this summer I was working with Elizabet Jónsdóttir, the designer of the Volk brand, on a new version of a teddy bear, in which we “propped” him up with colourful woollen material on one side and lamb sheepskin on the other and now the first bears of this type are at Rammagerðin.”

For a large selection of unique Icelandic designs, drop in to Rammagerðin during your visit to Iceland!

-JG



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THE MANSION OF THE ICELANDIC SOUL

Gljúfrasteinn Museum is the Former Home of Icelandic Writer Halldór Laxness



Gljúfrasteinn-Laxness museum, in the Mosfellsdalur valley, is only 20 minutes away from Reykjavík on the way to Þingvellir National Park. It was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955, and his family for more than half a century. It is now open to the public as a museum. Hardly anything has been changed in or around the museum since Laxness lived there and thus, it is a perfect example of how the cultural families of Iceland lived during a century of stunning changes, an era when Iceland took a leap from being a remote and tad reclusive fishing and farming community to becoming a player on the world stage.

Capturing the Soul

Laxness, who was born in 1902 and died in 1998, absorbed society's players and all

its tiny steps as well as its big jumps, often foreseeing their consequences, and creating his much-loved literature from the fast-paced journey and characters the Icelanders discuss and refer to as if they had actually existed. He totally captured the Icelandic soul.

In the reception building at Gljúfrasteinn, you can watch a multimedia presentation dedicated to Laxness' life and work. Indeed, it is worth your while, as the writer was both interesting and fun, with a tremendous sense of humour. There is also a souvenir shop on the premises where Laxness' books can be obtained in various languages.

The Source of Inspiration

The reason Laxness built his home here was his love for the Mosfellsdalur valley. He was born and raised in the valley. It was there, at his grandmother's knee, that he learned to appreciate the different destinies



of the human race and develop a kindness towards those less fortunate—which is quite apparent in his novels. The area where Laxness spent his childhood became his source of inspiration throughout his life.

The garden at Gljúfrasteinn is open to the public and a number of pleasant walks can be taken throughout the area. Halldór Laxness spent long hours roaming the beautiful countryside around Gljúfrasteinn and visitors are encouraged to walk along both the river Kaldakvísl and around the valley, which were both his childhood haunts and his inspiration in later life.

If you already know Laxness' work, you will love this museum. And if you don't know it, the museum is your first step towards an unimaginably versatile and rich world.

If you are planning to visit during the summer check the museum's schedule first. During June, July and August there are chamber concerts in the living room, which sports a grand piano, as Laxness was an excellent pianist himself.

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 www.gljufrasteinn.is



MOUNTAINEERS of Iceland

Mountaineers of Iceland is a fully-licensed travel agency based in Reykjavík, specialising in super trucks and snowmobile tours. The company was founded in 1996 and has been operating adventure tours ever since. The company's owners are Herbert Hauksson and Ólöf Einarsson.

Mountaineers own and operate super jeeps and trucks which have been specially modified to get to glaciers and other remote areas over the rugged mountain tracks of the highlands.

Mountaineers offer open day tours as well as private tailor-made tours for groups of all sizes. Along with their friendly team at their headquarters in Reykjavík, they can create the adventure tour of your dreams!

They have extensive knowledge of Iceland and everything it has to offer. Whatever your idea or wish might be, Mountaineers will make it happen. Careful planning, flexibility, entertainment, and safety are their top priorities. With knowledge and experience they are committed to providing unforgettable experiences.



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 mountaineers.is





Flóki is the first Icelandic Single Malt whisky. Produced by Eimverk Distillery, which is located in Garðabær, just a 10 minute drive from Reykjavík city centre, offers distillery tours by appointment.

Eimverk Distillery is a family run distillery dedicated to making premium Icelandic spirits from 100% local ingredients. The journey began in 2009 with the the first experimental batch of Flóki being made from just a couple of kilos of Icelandic barley. The goal was always to make a great and truly Icelandic whisky. Over the course of four years, the recipe was developed and improved, and the final recipe for Flóki took 163 different iterations.

Today, Eimverk produces Flóki, Icelandic Young Malt as well as a Flóki, Sheep Dung Smoked Reserve. They also pot distill an



authentic Icelandic gin called Vor along with a small batch distilled Aquavite called Víti Brennivín. This year, Eimverk will be releasing their first 3-year-old Flóki Single Malt and you can say that this Icelandic whisky adventure is truly just beginning, with further aging styles and future releases planned into the next decades.

The taste and spirit of Icelandic nature

Flóki Whisky is handcrafted and produced from 100% local Icelandic barley. The Icelandic barley is a hardy strain that thrives during the short, intense Icelandic summer, and it has a sweet breadly maltiness with complex spice notes. Much of the barley is sourced from the family farm, at the base of the Hekla volcano, where Flóki is slowly maturing in oak casks in the family barn.

Perhaps one of the more interesting things about how Eimverk Distillery produces Flóki is that their Smoked Reserve uses an age-old tradition of smoking with sheep dung rather than the traditional peated smoke which is the prevalent way of smoking whisky. This smoking method imparts sweet and subtle

smoky notes that perfectly compliment the taste derived from the Icelandic barley and Flóki, Sheep Dung Smoked Reserve has been getting great reviews from whisky connoisseurs all over the world.

A premium pot distilled gin and the original Icelandic schnapps

Vor Gin, a small batch pot distilled gin is not your typical Gin. Rather it is made in the style of the 19th century Icelandic gin, triple pot distilled and using only native Icelandic ingredients available to the gin makers of that time. Vor is handcrafted in small batches of only 500 bottles, and all herbs and botanicals are native to Iceland and steeped in the spirit for the third distillation. Eimverk is also bringing back the roots of Icelandic spirits with Víti, their handcrafted Icelandic Brennivín. Víti is a small-batch triple distilled aquavite made from local barley, caraway seeds and other native Icelandic botanicals.

Visits and availability

Eimverk Distillery is located a 10-minute drive from downtown Reykjavík and is the perfect destination for whisky fans and anyone with an interest in Icelandic spirits. Flóki and all of Eimverk's spirits are available locally in Iceland and in the duty-free store in Keflavik International Airport. The company also exports to 14 countries around the world. -JG



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SEE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS BY BOAT

Watch the majestic Aurora Borealis off the coast of Reykjavík

Viewing the Northern Lights in Iceland is truly magical. Watching the green and white lights flicker and dance in the sky, fading, only to reappear brighter and stronger. It's no wonder that people travel from all around the world to hunt the Aurora Borealis! While hunting Northern Lights by land is fun, seeing them from the ocean is breathtaking. Travellers sail from the Reykjavik harbour out to sea, leaving the capital city and towering mountains in the distance.

A special experience with Special Tours

Special Tours operates the original Northern Lights by Boat tour in Iceland, departing from the Old Harbour in the heart of Reykjavik. The tours, which are led by an experienced and enthusiastic guide, run for 2-3 hours and operate from 1st September to 15th April. The boats are comfortable, with a café/bar on board as well as free Wi-Fi. The staff provide warm overalls to keep you comfortable and it is recommended to wear layers with a hat, scarf and gloves. After just 10-15 minutes, you will be far from the bright city lights, sailing to a perfect location to spot Northern Lights. But if you don't get to see them, don't fret; you will receive a free ticket to try again. You have to keep in mind that this natural phenomenon is unpredictable, but guides monitor the forecast closely and sail to the clearest area.

A variety of tours

The company specialises in a number wildlife adventures at sea. You can book whale watching and puffin watching tours, allowing you to get up close to numerous whale and dolphin species as

well as Iceland's adorable mascot, the puffin. Travellers can also book sea angling tours, a Reykjavík by Sea sailing tour, and the spectacular New Years Fireworks Cruise, where guests can watch the sky light up with one of the most amazing fireworks display in the world.

Experience and excellence

Special Tours was founded in 1996 as a Puffin Watching & School Trip Sea Tour Operator. Over the past 21 years, the company's main focus is providing personal service, making sure to meet customers' expectations and also protect and respect the environment. Special Tours offers sea adventures year-round, to individuals and groups, offering competitive prices, excellent service and a great experience on the tours. -JG



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GLACIER WALKS AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Essentially, it is Iceland's beautiful and unspoilt nature that makes it such a unique destination. Iceland is the outdoor enthusiast's dream, where volcanoes, glaciers, hot springs and waterfalls set their mark on the landscape.

Outdoor Adventures – Iceland & Greenland

Icelandic Mountain Guides was established in 1994 by four pioneering mountaineers and outdoor enthusiasts whose aim was to introduce the wonders of the Icelandic nature to travellers from all over the world. Today, the company is considered to be Iceland's premier adventure tour operator, offering outdoor adventures in both Iceland and Greenland. The tours range from short and easy glacier walks to hiking, trekking and multi-day expeditions.

Glacier Walk Pioneers

Icelandic Mountain Guides offers the original glacier walks on a daily basis, all year round from both Sólheimajökull glacier in the south and Skaftafell in Vatnajökull National Park. The glacier

tours range from 2–7 hours, so everyone should be able to find a tour to their liking. On the glacier walks, you are guided through the magical landscape of the outlet glaciers, exploring the wonderland of ice sculptures, water cauldrons, ridges, and deep crevasses. Even though there are no technical requirements needed for the tours, safety is a big issue when travelling on glaciers. Therefore, all Icelandic Mountain Guides go through a strict training programme to make sure you enjoy your adventure in a fun and safe way.

Day Tours from Reykjavík

On the outdoor adventure day tours from Reykjavík, you can sit back, relax and enjoy being driven between your tour highlights by an experienced and knowledgeable driver-guide. A perfect way to enjoy a great day out in the Icelandic nature. All tours are operated on small mini buses for a more personal small group experience. The tours can include everything from glacier walks and ice climbing tours to hot spring hikes, caving, waterfalls, geysers and Northern Lights hunts, depending on your tour selection.

Ice Cave and Northern Lights Short Breaks

The Icelandic Mountain Guides winter short breaks to the natural ice caves in the Vatnajökull National Park region have become very popular amongst those looking for a 2-3 day winter adventure from the capital of Reykjavík.

On these tours, you get a chance to explore black sand beaches, glaciers, glacier lagoons, waterfalls and even the Golden Circle. In the evenings you will get a chance to look out for the natural phenomenon being the Northern Lights.

Years of Experience

The company has more than two decades of experience creating exciting tours that accommodate and adapt to different needs, preferences, and languages. Whether you are a solo traveller, a family, or you are coming to Iceland in a large group, Icelandic Mountain Guides has you covered.



Icelandic Mountain Guides

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www.mountainguides.is

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THE QUIET ELEGANCE OF HOTEL HOLT

A hotel of distinction

It's like stepping back into another era and another time. Touches of old world charm, elements of classical interior design and nearly 500 works of art by renowned Icelandic artists are what set this mid-century, boutique hotel apart from the rest.

Steeped in history

The elegant Hotel Holt is located in what can be perhaps called the most quintessential neighbourhood of Reykjavík with its quiet streets and quaint 19th century timber and corrugated iron clad houses. Over the years, the 4-star hotel has attracted many of Reykjavík's artistic, social and political vanguard, and continues its tradition of quality and excellence.

A permanent art collection

The hotel is home to part of the country's largest privately owned art collection and features numerous works by several of Iceland's most cherished late 19th century and early 20th century artists such as Johannes Kjarval, Jón Stefánsson, and Ásmundur Sveinsson, among others. Many of the works on the hotel's ground floor are by Kjarval, while the upper floors are lined with old maps and 134 lithographs by the artist M. August Mayer who accompanied French naturalist Joseph Paul Gaimard on his voyage to Iceland between 1835 and 1836. The 460 works of art scattered throughout the hotel are numbered and catalogued and a guided tour of the hotel museum is available upon request.

The geode effect

As with many Icelandic buildings, Hotel Holt's façade belies its rich interiors; marble floors, persian carpets and gilded antiques grace the hotel lobby while the breakfast area is laid with ornate Italian ceramic tiles. Some forty-two rooms spanning four floors are furnished with the clean lines of contemporary Icelandic decor and include all modern amenities, ensuite bathrooms and of course it goes without saying—comfortable beds!

The classy Gallery Bar

The sofas and chairs are leather; the drawings on the walls are pure Kjarval—delightful and playful. On one wall, a large glass cabinet is stocked with an impressive collection of

Cognac, Scotch, and whiskey from around the world. Another wall of shelves stocks an equally impressive collection of spirits, craft beers, wines and liqueurs that help liven things up every evening from 4 to 9PM. Tempting snacks and amuse-bouches are also available at the bar.

Setting the standard for fine dining in Reykjavík

I would be amiss if I didn't mention Hotel Holt's restaurant which has been one of Reykjavík's finest dining establishments since it opened in 1965. The restaurant is known for its classical cuisine with a vibrant Icelandic twist. It comes as no surprise that the restaurant has earned top marks in international rankings and has had the honour of hosting dinners and events for visiting ambassadors, dignitaries and royalty down through the years. Among the seventeen paintings that adorn the walls, *The Picnic* (1939) by Jón Stefánsson has become something of an icon and is one of the first paintings that captures your attention as you enter the room.

The Old Library

Take your time to take in the atmosphere of the hotel's exceptional library with its beautifully preserved collection of leather bound volumes on a variety of subjects, including poetry, the Icelandic Sagas, and even a Bible from 1728.

Hotel Holt is located in central Reykjavík, on Bergstaðastræti 37 in the 101 neighbourhood of Reykjavík, five minutes' walk from the main streets of Laugavegur and Skólavörðustígur and within easy walking distance to Hallgrímskirkja Church and the Old Harbour area. —EMV

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A SWEET EXPLOSION IN ICELAND

Haflíði Ragnarsson's Artisanal Chocolates

Had you arrived in Iceland even 15 years ago, you would have been hard-pressed to find much in the way of luxury food items that other destinations are known for. France, Switzerland and Belgium, for example, have long been celebrated for their culinary excellence and their mastery of the fine art of pastry and confectionery.

Over the last few years however, Iceland's gastronomic landscape has been changing rapidly with new restaurants and foods that were not seen here a decade ago, bringing a wave of excitement to the industry. And now there is one enterprising Icander who is raising the bar for fine chocolates in Iceland and has the field pretty much to himself.

Iceland's Ambassador of Belgian Chocolate

His name is Haflíði Ragnarsson who comes from a long line of bakers— his great grandfather, his grandfather and his father all had a passion for baking and ran the family bakery for as far back as he can remember. "I would help out in the bakery when I was 12 or 13 years old, sweeping floors and doing odd

jobs around the shop. As a teen I became interested in cake baking, and entered many competitions, gradually working my way up to chocolate confectionery. In 2003 I won 1st place for best cake and best dessert and 2nd place overall in the International Belgian Chocolate Awards competition."

When dreams come true and only the best will do

The prestigious award paved the way for Haflíði, and that same year saw the opening of a café and bakery in downtown Reykjavík, Mosfellsbakarí, which had been his dream for many years. Here you will find signature boxes of hand-dipped chocolates lining the shelves and a glass display case full of his most exclusive chocolate confections, sold by the piece. At Christmas and Easter especially, Haflíði pulls out all the stops with beautifully packaged new creations that show off his artistry to the full.

It goes without saying that the master chocolatier insists on quality ingredients for all his creations. His beautiful



creations are made from only the best raw materials— almonds from Spain, hazelnuts from Italy and of course the holy grail of chocolate from producers such as Barry, Callebaut and Valrhona.

The Ultimate Icelandic Indulgence

Do make it your mission while in Iceland to search out these fabulous hand-crafted sweets that also make wonderful gifts for friends and family back home. For more information, go to www.konfekt.is or pop in at one of Mosfellsbakarí's two locations, in Reykjavík and Mosfellsbær, on the way to the Golden Circle. -EMV

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 Háholti 13-15 • 270 Mosfellsbær
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URTA ISLANDICA'S GOURMET LOCAL PRODUCTS

The family company that produces delightful teas, syrups, salts, and jams.

Urta Islandica is a family-run business that specialises in producing and selling artisan products made from local Icelandic ingredients. The products, which are sold at retailers around the country, include unique herbal salts, teas and syrups, along with jams and gift boxes.

The Icelandic wild nature's variety

Urta Islandica uses more than 70 types of wild herbs and berries in their products. The herbs are handpicked, dried and stored in good conditions so their freshness lasts longer. The company's salt comes in many flavours, which perfectly complement the food or cocktails you are preparing. For instance, their Arctic Herbal, Blueberry and Black Lava Salts go very well with meat dishes, while Rhubarb and Angelica, and Licourice salts accompany desserts and cocktails very well. Kelp and Garlic salt is the perfect topping for your baked potato or homemade garlic bread.

Urta Islandica's herbal tea line is impressive, with teas including Birch, Arctic Thyme, Kelp and Ginger, and their famous 100% Bilberry tea. If you enjoy sweets, you will love the company's range of syrups all made with organic sugar and wild harvested herbs and berries like Crowberry, Rhubarb, Birch, and Rowan berry. If you are looking for a tasty jam, it will be difficult to pick just one, as their Traditional Caramelized Rhubarb jam, along with Wild Blueberry and Red Currant jams are divine, especially as a topping on their unique Black Lava Crackers which are made from Icelandic barley and herbs.

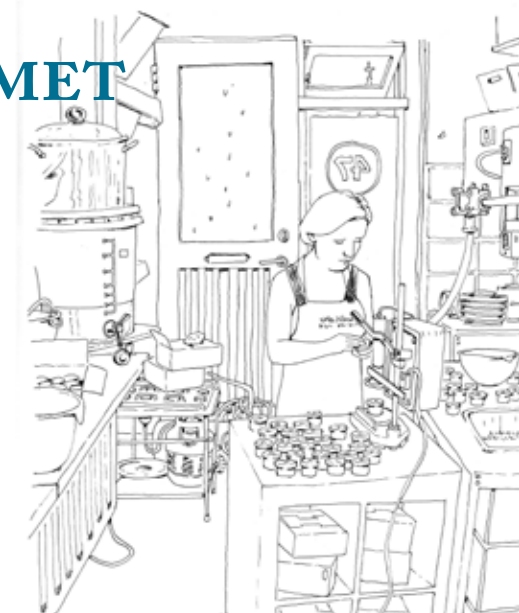
Add Urta to your cooking

There are so many ways to incorporate these delightful gourmet products into food and drinks. For instance, for a fillet of Arctic Salmon, Urta Islandica's Kelp and Garlic Salt pairs nicely with the fish along with Rhubarb Chutney with Angelica. For a simple treat, consider the company's syrups for homemade Rice Krispie Treats. Mix Rice Krispies with butter, white chocolate, Birch syrup and Arctic salt, or Licourice salt and Licourice syrup for a more savory option. As for Urta Islandica's syrups, they are perfect in cocktails; with their variety, all sorts of cocktails both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, can be made. For instance, for an Urta Cocktail, mix apple juice, beet juice, soda water, and lime juice with Urta's Crowberry and Wild berry syrups. Top off with a pinch of parsley and three slices of cucumber.

All products are handmade and can be purchased online, at Urta Islandica's shops, and in shops around Iceland. Urta Islandica also offers customised labels for all kinds of occasions, company meetings or weddings. It's the perfect food souvenir or gift from Iceland. -JG

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64° REYKJAVIK DISTILLERY: QUALITY CRAFTED SPIRITS

An independent distillery with unique spirits and liqueurs

64° Reykjavik Distillery is a family-run, independent micro-distillery that handcrafts unique Icelandic-inspired spirits and liqueurs. Popular among locals and visitors alike, the spirits feature flavours including blueberry, juniper, crowberry and rhubarb. The distillery, which was founded in 2009, uses handcrafted processes to create the spirits including natural infusion and

small batch distillation. The ingredients are sourced sustainably, and are proudly foraged locally in Iceland. Great care is spent in selecting the best ingredients as the unique quality and intensity of the berries are key to the rich flavours of the spirits. There is a short window for foraging berries in Iceland, so the pickers must time the season perfectly to collect the best berries.

The spirits, which can be enjoyed in mixed drinks or on their own, can be found in the finest restaurants and bars in Iceland as well as in state-run liquor stores.

Something for everyone

There is a flavour to suit every taste: the blueberry, crowberry and rhubarb liqueurs are on the sweet side and are great for cocktails or to enjoy along with a dessert.

Reykjavik Distillery's Einiberja (juniper) is a delicious gin that has an elegant, pure, yet intense and crisp flavour. Meanwhile, the company's Brennivín packs a bit of a punch. Distilled from the best organic caraway seeds and local angelica seeds, 64° Brennivín is enjoyed neat with traditional Icelandic food. Lately, local and international bartenders have discovered 64° Brennivín, along with other 64° Reykjavik Distillery spirits, to design fantastic cocktails. -JG



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DRINK DIFFERENT.



**REYKJAVIK
DISTILLERY**
THE ORIGINAL FROM ICELAND



REYKJAVIK HELICOPTERS

In a truly amazing country – the experience is multiplied from above



Seeing a panorama of the colours of the season, experiencing the feeling of soaring securely on a cloud over all the most beautiful characteristics that Iceland has to offer, is thrilling. The rotors are spinning. The pilot is a safe professional, knowledgeable and unpretentious. Your first thought: “This is what I have always dreamed off”. It is already worth it from the first minute. The take-off is soft and dreamlike. Then you are flying over the colourful roofs of central Reykjavík. Harpa Opera House stands out below. The pilot explains the story of the city’s main landmarks as you pass over Viðey, the island in the middle of Reykjavik bay, where Yoko Ono, the

widow of John Lennon, comes every year to illuminate the sky with the light tower she gave the city.

Fascinating from the first minute to the last, the journey continues over the dwelling of the Nobel literary prize winner, Halldór Laxness, across the Thingvellir National Park, where the tectonic plates of the European and American continents slowly tear apart through the centre of Iceland, and then into the breath-taking desolation of the country’s interior. You feel in a privileged position. Now imagine the rest of the journey. It is a dream come true as the start of the trip described above is only one of many tours that Reykjavik Helicopter could take you on.

main priority. Under their control, your journey will be unforgettable. The company offers 24/7 service and will get you closer to the historical secrets of Iceland and some of its cultural issues.

Reykjavik Helicopters can take you to most of Iceland’s most fascinating nature pearls including volcanoes or the majority of Iceland’s “postcard” sites in only one day in a journey called The Full Monty. The country that immediately gets so remote and unexpected as you leave the ground reveals its fascinating qualities in the best possible way as you sit in the helicopters of the Reykjavik Helicopters – the transportation route of the near-supernatural. Feel it – the softness, the little pleasant turbulence that reminds you that this is reality, after all.

You want to feel a bit privileged? It is easy. Reykjavik Helicopters can arrange to pick you up just about anywhere in the country from their base at Reykjavik Airport. -VI

See Iceland from above in comfort and safety

Reykjavik Helicopters is Iceland’s premium helicopter tour provider. Their fleet comprises the most modern and meticulously maintained helicopters on the market. The pilots are trained to the highest standards, experienced, friendly, multilingual individuals with great knowledge of Iceland’s spectacular nature. The safety and comfort of their customers is always their



Reykjavik Helicopters

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THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

From the penises of elves to whales

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum in Reykjavík is, without a doubt, one of a kind. It holds a collection of phallic specimens that belong to various types of mammals. Here in the museum you can see examples of more than 220 penises and penile parts that belong to all the land and sea mammals found in Iceland. It even has on display the penis of an old Icelandic gentleman who died in 2011 at the ripe old age of 95. Furthermore, the museum has between 40–50 specimens from foreign mammals including a giraffe and an elephant.

“The purpose of the museum is showing these specimens,” says the curator, Hjörtur Sigurðsson, “but it’s also a scientific museum. Many professionals, such as biologists and doctors visit the museum to study. The purpose is also to educate and amuse people and, of course, to lift the taboo that has shrouded this subject for so long. It’s just a part of the anatomy; people should be able to discuss these things.”



Hjörtur says that what gets the most attention are the big things, like the penis of a sperm whale that is 1.7 metres long and weighs somewhere between 70–80 kilos. Strangely, the human penis gets a lot of attention too!

For the foreigners, the folklore section is popular. “They find it very funny that we can display penises from elves, trolls

and the Hidden People.” Regarding the Hidden People: some claim they can see the hidden man’s penis; especially the women. *-SJ*

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A TASTE OF NEPAL

Nepalese Kitchen has delicious food, a warm atmosphere and friendly service.

Nepalese Kitchen is a cosy restaurant on Reykjavík’s Laugavegur that is truly a feast for the senses. Upon walking inside, guests are greeted by the aroma of delicious spices as well as a welcome from its friendly owner, Deepak Panday. Deepak, who was born in Nepal, has been living in Iceland for about 10 years, and takes great care in creating a warm atmosphere, first class service, a diverse menu and absolutely delicious food. “I have been a chef for 34 years and I enjoy serving quality food and authentic spices for Icelanders and tourists,” says Deepak. This passion for food started when he was a child and led him to work as a chef in many countries including England, India, Nepal, France and the United States, before settling in Iceland.

Inventive Dishes

The dishes, prepared by Deepak and his wife, are perfectly spiced, while the chefs are eager to cater for any dietary restrictions. “We have guests that have a gluten allergy, or a number of other food sensitivities and we are happy to prepare food just how they like it,” says Deepak. “All our dishes are made from scratch for each individual guest.” The menu is so diverse, it could be difficult to choose just one dish! Diners will find chicken, lamb, seafood, and vegetarian choices with sauces ranging from delicate to hearty.

Special Spices

The key to Nepalese food is the spice used. Deepak is very concerned about the spices; not just how they taste but also how they impact the body and soul. “We have spices that can be helpful to diabetics, people that are stressed, and those with some food sensitivities,” says Deepak. Every summer, he travels to India to hand-select the herbs and spices used in the restaurant. “I want to see the plants for myself, to see that they are the best quality,” he says.

Beautiful Space

The restaurant is tastefully decorated with a nod to Nepali culture in the art, linens and even music. It’s clear that the restaurant is a



labour of love and Deepak’s passion for quality food shines through. “It is so important to cook good food for people; it gives them so much. People feel loved when they get good food,” says Deepak. One of his favorite dishes on the menu is a Nepali curry. “The spice mixture is unique and it comes directly from my mother.” Plan to stop by Nepalese Kitchen

during your visit to Reykjavík for tasty food, a wide selection of beer and wine, and warm service. *-JG*

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THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present since 1990

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

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 distributed throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items. They sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the Internet.



The Woman's Touch

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

Custom-made

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

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

Walk-ins Welcome

Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvegur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are 9am–6pm, Monday through Friday, from 9am–4pm on Saturdays or, if you are in the neighbourhood outside of those hours, you are always welcome to pop in for a chat.

Though a visit to their workshop would be well worth your time, you can also find their products available in Brynja hardware store on Laugavegur 29 in the centre of Reykjavík. *-EMV*



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THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

The Little Christmas Shop that is festive all year round

Anne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Laugavegur, Reykjavík'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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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." Her services are available upon request.

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Snorrastofa in Reykholt, at Rammagerðin at the Keflavík International Airport, and directly from Guðrún. More information can be found on Facebook: Arkart-leatherdesign. *-NHH*



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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, with 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 to collect their watches 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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JOURNEY TO THE INSIDE OF A GLACIER

Experience a Glacier from the Inside with Into the Glacier

Exploring the surface of a glacier is thrilling, but actually getting inside one is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The staff behind Into the Glacier offer travellers that rare opportunity. Situated in the western part of Langjökull, the second largest ice cap in Iceland, and 1,260 metres above sea level, the ice cave stretches 40 metres deep underground, giving visitors the chance to see ice that's been forming over centuries. The ice cave stretches more than 550 metres into the glacier.

Trip to the Top

The classic guided tour begins in Húsafell, which is 130km from Reykjavík, when guests board one of the most unique vehicles ever made, a customised super truck. This truck, which seats up to 35 passengers, was acquired from NATO, who originally used it as a cruise missile launcher. The 20km trip up to the glacier is an experience in itself in good weather or bad. Clear days offer exquisite views of the vast icy desert, while poor weather conditions reveal the power and unpredictability of Icelandic weather.

Enter the Glacier

Once inside, travellers, with crampons attached to their feet, get to experience



something very few have seen. Lit by LED lights, guests begin to explore the tunnel, with a knowledgeable guide leading small groups, sharing many interesting facts about Iceland's glaciers. Travellers are treated to views of gaping crevices as they look above. Additionally, there is a special area in the cave, which developers named 'the chapel', with LED-lit blocks of ice supporting

wooden beams, it serves as a venue for weddings, marriage proposals and concerts.

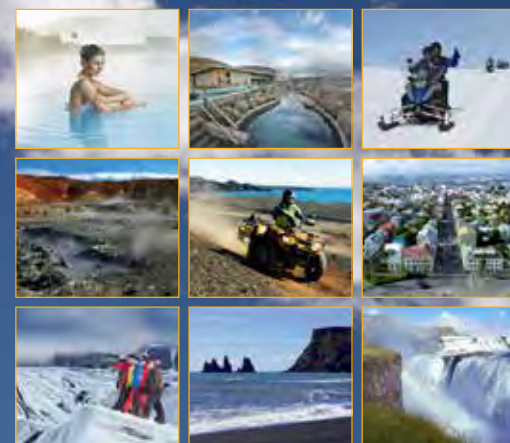
Into the Glacier offers daily departures from Húsafell at 12:30pm and the tour lasts about four hours during the winter. Day tours from Reykjavík to the ice cave are available as well. For those that would like to treat themselves to a meal, you can buy a scrumptious lunch at Hotel Húsafell before you head out on your excursion. So be sure to put Into the Glacier on your list of 'must do's in Iceland! -JG

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CATCH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ALL YEAR AROUND

Aurora Reykjavík's Northern Lights Centre lets you see the Lights all year

There is perhaps nothing more magical and unforgettable than witnessing the beauty of a Northern Lights display in one's lifetime. It's the dream of many who come to Iceland, but alas, those unpredictable, frenetic lights tend to have a mind of their own and don't always show up on cue—and certainly not in the summer months. So it is with great joy that we welcome one of Iceland's most recent additions—Aurora Reykjavík's Northern Lights Center, where the Northern Lights are always on display.

A Unique Experience

The centre is the unique creation of four enterprising young Icelanders who recognised the need for just such a place—a kind of one-stop-shop for all things Northern Lights. Located on the far side of Reykjavík's Old Harbour, the centre serves both educational and inspirational purposes. Here you can read up on the auroras through stories and legends from around the world,

learn something about the science behind this amazing phenomenon and gaze at spectacular Northern Lights photography from top Icelandic photographers. There is even a specially equipped 'photo booth' where you can learn how to adjust your camera's settings should you want to try your hand at capturing an auroral display yourself.

Soothing Sights and Sounds

However, Aurora Reykjavík's real pull and ace up its sleeve is its fantastic HD time-lapse film of recent auroral activity. Projected onto a 7 metre-wide screen, you can sit back and enjoy this 13 minute film that features a dazzling display of auroral activity, accompanied by relaxing music. Therapeutic and restful are two words that come to mind to describe this zen-like experience.

Hot coffee and choice gifts

Before leaving, be sure to grab a free cup of coffee in the Northern Lights Center



gift shop and check out the impressive display of clothing, glassware, paintings and woollen knitwear by some of Iceland's most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it. *-EMV*

Setting the record straight

While in Iceland, you might be told that the outside air temperature needs to be around 0°C or below in order to see the Northern Lights. The oft quoted but erroneous assumption is that the Northern Lights only appear at these temperatures. We would just like to set the record straight that while it is true that the Northern Lights do happen to be visible more often when the air is cold and the sky is clear, their appearance has nothing to do with actual temperature of the air.

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ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE HEALTHY FOOD DIRECT FROM THE EARTH

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

A PIONEER

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta, aiming at the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first one to revive the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack. 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. Spiced Salt (a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe) is an excellent contribution to your cuisine and a perfect gift.

HAND-PICKED AND HEALTHY

The hand-picked Iceland moss is ready for use in tea, bread or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient food. By adding seaweed to your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters.

Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method.

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



ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

Healthy Food Direct from the Earth



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

A Pioneer

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

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first 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 goal was to reawaken the folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved successful, 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 on board Icelandair's aircraft in their Saga Shop.

Hand-Picked and Healthy

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"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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BY HJALTI TH. THORSTEINSSON

GRANDI'S BREWERY & BISTRO

Bryggjan Brugghús is a lovely addition to the trendy neighbourhood.

Bryggjan Brugghús is Iceland's first microbrewery and bistro, situated in the up-and-coming Reykjavik harbor area called Grandi. The brewery produces and serves a variety of beers, carefully selected wines and an exciting menu incorporating fresh, local Icelandic ingredients. Locals and tourists alike love to spend time in Grandi, visiting unique shops, cafés and strolling along the harbour before heading to Bryggjan Brugghús for a freshly-brewed beer and delicious meal.

Beer fresh to the tap

The bar holds 12 beer pumps that pump beer straight out of the brewery and there are always three to five beers that are brewed

on tap. The brew master, Bergur Gunnarsson, is a chemist and brewer educated in Scotland and Hungary. Bryggjan Brugghús brews various styles of beers such as Lager, IPA, Pale Ale, Belgian Duppel, Session IPA and other great beers. Beers from other top selected breweries such as Borg, Mikkeller, Brewdog and To Öl are served.

The Beer Academy

Bryggjan offers an entertaining hour-long seminar that beer lovers will love! The seminar offers a tasting platter of 3 beers, with up to 1.5 litres of their signature lager. But, make sure you come with an appetite. The academy offers 8 slow-cooked chicken wings tossed in Bryggjan's homemade hot sauce, along with blue mussels cooked in beer, fennel, garlic and coriander. Along with the food and beer, guests are treated to a knowledgeable tutor explaining everything about the platters. The Beer Academy takes place, in English, every day

at 17:00, and the minimum age is 20. It's a fun way for travellers to spend the afternoon!

Scrumptious menu

The lunch and dinner menus offer a good variety of local seafood, including lobster, mussels, shrimp and catfish, as well as offering meat and vegan options, soups, salads, steaks and desserts. Some favourite dishes are the bistro's Icelandic lobster feast that includes a whole lobster and tails with chili, garlic, parsley, potatoes and garlic bread, as well as a delicious confit de canard. For vegan customers there are plenty of options like a vegan club sandwich, baked carrots and oven-roasted cauliflower.

Be sure to explore Grandi during your next trip to Reykjavik and live like a local. Bryggjan Brugghús is open everyday for drinks, lunch and dinner, and on Sundays at 20:00, the brewery hosts live jazz music. -JG



Bryggjan Brugghús
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A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Bringing French and Icelandic cuisine together in Þrír Frakkar

On a little corner in the little big city in the North is a small haven for the food lover. Behind the beautiful rouge exterior of Þrír Frakkar hjá Úlfari is a romantic dining room, small and intimate, like a French bistro in the Parisian Saint Michel, yet rich in Icelandic heritage through chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson's artful fusion of French

and Icelandic cuisine using primarily fresh Icelandic produce. Specialising in fresh fish and known for his superb skills in creating rich flavours and a tender texture to seafood, Úlfar has earned a reputation as one of Iceland's most skilled chefs, marrying local traditions and fine French cuisine.

Úlfar Eysteinnsson and family bought the restaurant in 1989 and opened in the very last days of the beer prohibition. Úlfar kept the peculiar name, a name with dual reference to a long trench coat and the previous owners two Frenchmen and a Frenchman's wife. Today Úlfar's son Stefán Úlfarsson has taken over running the restaurant.




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THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Association of Iceland sells Icelandic wool and products

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

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

From home to market

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

Find the real thing

In today's globalised society, it is increasingly difficult to be sure you are getting a genuine article, rather than one made thousands of miles away, with wool that lacks the characteristics



that has made Icelandic wool so special for hundreds of years.

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

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

Traditional and modern styles

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago,

the designs took the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours.

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

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

waiting for you.

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

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

—ASF



The Handknitting Association of Iceland
Skólavörðustígur 19 • 101 Reykjavík
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handknit@handknit.is
www.handknit.is

LE BISTRO

A Taste of France in the Heart of Reykjavík

Strolling along downtown Reykjavík's famous Laugavegur shopping street is always a treat. Here you will find a mix of eclectic businesses ranging from souvenir shops to the latest in chic Icelandic designer accessories. For the hungry, there are any number of possible eateries to choose from, but one rather unexpected, yet very welcome restaurant stands out from the crowd—Le Bistro.

A long-standing tradition comes to Iceland

Le Bistro takes its cues from the long-established tradition of Paris bistros that originated in the early 1800s. In France, bistros typically serve hearty home-style dishes in an informal setting and Reykjavík's very own bistro does an excellent job of bringing this timeless tradition to our doorstep. The menu sports many well known 'casseroles' such as lamb ragoût, boeuf bourguignon, and coq au vin—the perfect slow-cooked comfort food for a chilly Icelandic night out. And then there are classic dishes such as soupe à l'oignon, duck confit, and a gorgeous roasted salmon à l'Alsacienne that may have you swooning with delight. Pair your meal with wine by the bottle or by the glass from Le Bistro's impressive imported wine list, or maybe order a diablo menthe or a panaché (beer with lemonade) just for fun—c'est très français.

The Upper Room

Le Bistro offers a Fondue Feast and a Raclette Feast, which are served in a cosy little 'Swiss Chalet' on the 2nd floor. Whether you choose the cheese, meat or chocolate fondue (or all three), these quintessential Swiss dishes are perfect for celebrating special occasions among friends. (Note: You should reserve one day in advance.)

Leave room for dessert

Oven baked camembert with honey and nuts, served with sweet wine, a velvety mousse au chocolat, a 'skyramisú'

(tiramisu made with Icelandic skyr) or a heavenly crème brûlée are just some of the possibilities that will satisfy your sweet tooth and make a great meal truly complete.

Le Brunch et Le Petit Déjeuner

Le Bistro also offers breakfast, every day from 9am to 11.30am and brunch, everyday from 9am to 2pm. You can choose between the Icelandic, French, English or Healthy Brunch versions and be sure to grab a couple of freshly baked croissants or a pain au chocolat from the Le Bistro's on-site bakery to take away.

For a true taste of France, head on over to Le Bistro, located on the corner of Klappartígur and Laugavegur, downtown Reykjavík. —EMV



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SPAKS

Fashion Design Studio



Iceland's #1 Designer Label for Today's Woman

Fashionistas take note! If you're looking for something uniquely Icelandic to add to your wardrobe, you need to visit Iceland's number one specialist in women's designer clothing. The Icelandic fashion house, Spaksmannsspjarir, (or Spaks for short), translates roughly to "Clothing for Clever People" and is the oldest fashion design label in Iceland. And as one of the very first fashion designers in the country, with 25 years of experience under her fashionable leather belt, CEO and head designer Björg Ingadóttir is very intentional in her design process.

"My creations are influenced by the modern Icelandic women as well as Icelandic landscapes" says Björg. "The colours, the textures, the way the clothing accentuates a woman's body to bring out her best features, right down to the sourcing of sustainable materials—all the elements that go into my creations are a

reflection of Icelandic nature and have a strong Scandinavian influence."

Avant-garde fashion, Icelandic style
Materials are sourced from many countries—top quality, hand-picked fabrics are Björg's favourites fabrics to work with. Her forward leaning collections never go out of style as is the case with all good design and many pieces from earlier collections can be mixed and matched with her latest designs. Multifunctional, versatile, beyond short lived trends, sustainable and slow fashion are some of the keywords that are associated with Spaks.

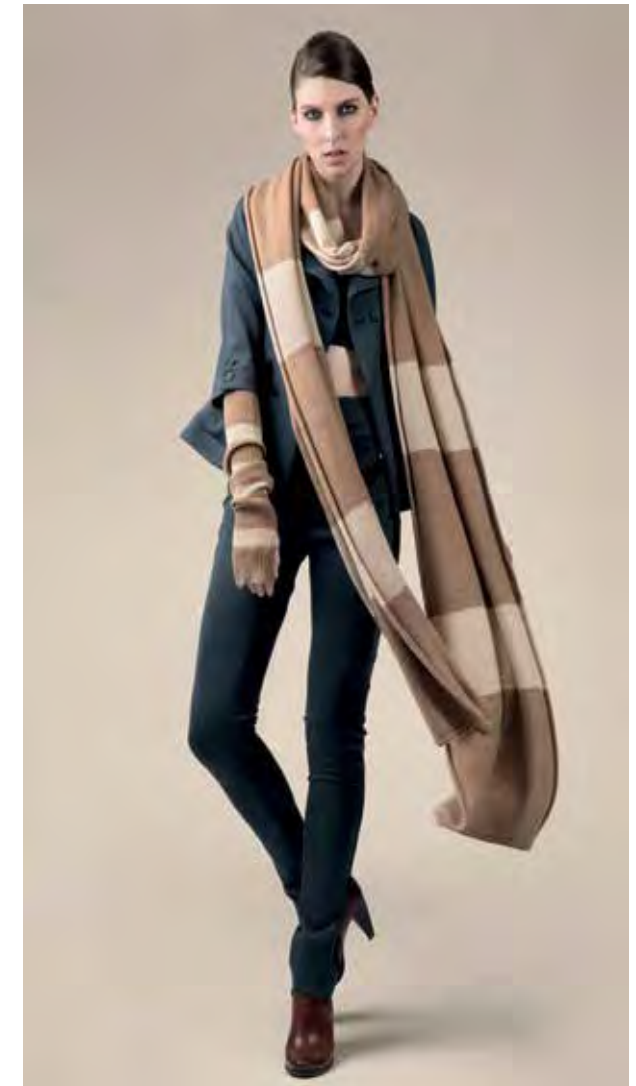
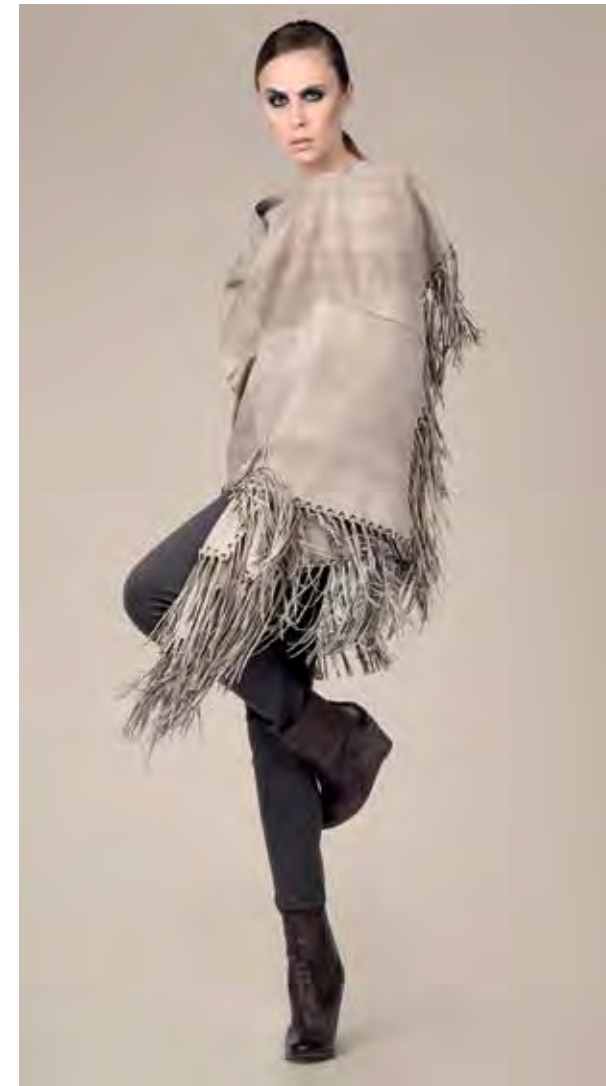
Dressing the whole woman
"We want a woman to look and feel her best in our clothing, and we pride ourselves on providing a service that doesn't exist in the "big box" clothing chains. I have a very loyal customer base who know they can count on

me to advise them on their wardrobe, and this is something that they value very much. Especially for those big events in their lives, be it an important job interview, a wedding, or other special occasions, I am by now kind of a mother figure and people know they can come to me for wardrobe and fashion advice."

Tips from the Pros
Famous people who have worn items from Spaks? "Oh yes, there are many," says Björg, as she reels them off without a moment's hesitation: "Pink, Helen Mirren, Uma Thurman, Teri Hatcher (Desperate Housewives), Charlotte Kemp Muhl, (Sean Lennon's girlfriend) Björk Guðmundsdóttir and many singers."
-EMV



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Adventurous times

Break Out From the Crowds and the Polluted, Paved Cities. Take an adventurous trip into Mother Nature's back yard. Wouldn't you

like to breathe fresh, clean air for a change? Let your ears expand in the silence? Let your eyes stretch to the horizons amid the rich colours and textures of nature and drink the purest of waters, straight from its source in the mountains?

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Taking a bus ride into the wilderness of Iceland is always fun but what they provide is the incredible feeling of being free and in total control of your own vacation. Renting a car with Iceland 4x4 Car Rental gives you the real opportunity to explore the deep interior of the untouched Icelandic

highlands and being able to stop and enjoy whatever it is that catches your eye.

Their mission

It is the mission of Iceland 4x4 Car Rental to provide their customers with great cars, exceptional service and rental rates, and a lasting impression of our amazing Icelandic nature.

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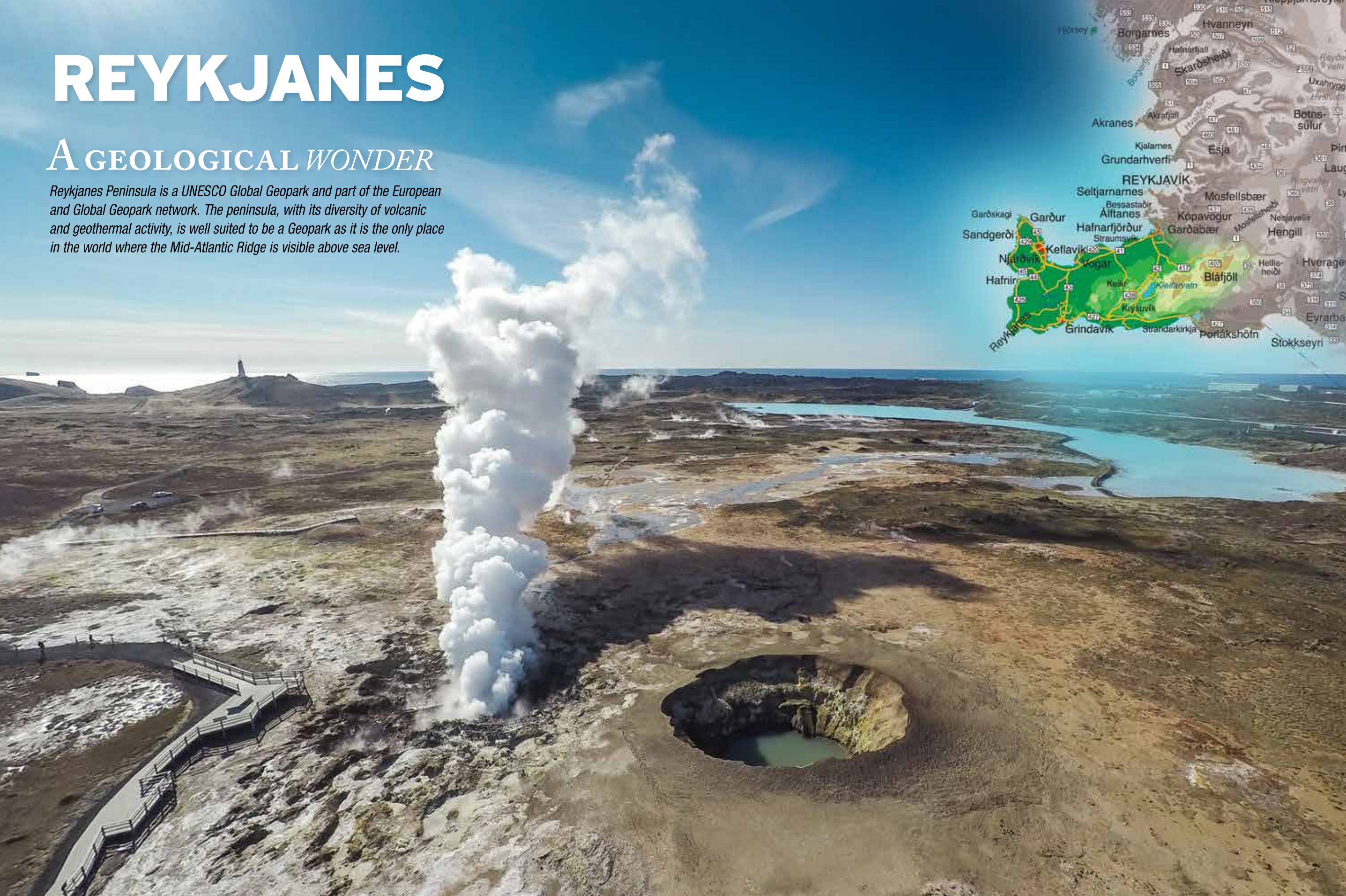
Take an adventurous trip into Mother Nature's back yard on our specially equipped Jeep Grand Cherokee



REYKJANES

A GEOLOGICAL *WONDER*

Reykjanes Peninsula is a UNESCO Global Geopark and part of the European and Global Geopark network. The peninsula, with its diversity of volcanic and geothermal activity, is well suited to be a Geopark as it is the only place in the world where the Mid-Atlantic Ridge is visible above sea level.



AS FRESH AS IT GETS

The fish practically jump from the sea to the Fish House Bar & Grill

In the fishing town of Grindavík, a dark brown, cabin-style house hosts the Fish House Bar & Grill. In front of the restaurant there are the remains of a whale's skull that washed up on shore many years ago. The logo is a fish skeleton and a colourful plaque is adorned with the poem "Eat fish and live long. Eat fish and love strong".

Their most popular dish is fish and chips. They have gained a reputation on Trip Advisor for having incredibly fresh fish. This makes perfect sense since they are only 100 metres away from the harbour, even offering guided walks there for guests who want to meet the fishermen or look at the fishing boats.

This proximity to the harbour makes it very easy for them to fetch more fresh fish if they need to—as was the case recently, when their pan-fried arctic char became the most ordered dish of the day.

Customers often ask if they offer anything else, aside from fish, and the owner points out that it is also a steakhouse and everyone should remember that steak is indeed on the menu. They also offer a variety of hamburgers, lamb chops and langoustine. One can choose the food by

the mood, as the menu offers a little bit of everything.

There are barrels under the bar, and with the dark brown wood, this could easily be the setting to an American Western film. However, some of the tables are surrounded by aquariums and the fish-skin art on the benches serves as a firm reminder that, indeed, you are in Iceland, a country where fishing and tourism are the primary sectors of the economy.

As is often the case in small towns, this restaurant doubles as a bar, and as a music venue. They have live concerts on Thursdays in summer, which have been well attended by both locals and tourists.

The last musician to play there was Mugison, a popular singer from Ísafjörður, and they have other local legends lined up for Seaman's Sunday, which is celebrated in style in Grindavík. It is a small venue, so any concert there is an intimate affair, one that musicians often enjoy as much as the guests.

Grindavík is located on the Reykjanes peninsula, close to both Keflavik Airport and the Blue Lagoon so it is easy to include a stop at Fish House Bar & Grill in your schedule, either when you land or after you bathe in the Blue Lagoon. Whether you're in the mood for fish & chips, or a dinner date with live music; Fish House Bar & Grill has it all. -JG



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The Town of GRINDAVÍK

Over the hills and not far away

Hiding in plain sight

If you love exploring new places and especially those little advertised spots that you had no idea even existed, the fishing town of Grindavík is for you. Located just 20 minutes from Keflavik International Airport and 40 minutes from downtown Reykjavík, the village lies just beyond the mountains that serve as a backdrop to the Blue Lagoon. Who knew? Drive past the lagoon; between the mountains and in just 5 minutes or less, you have arrived in Grindavík!

The Blue Lagoon's Home Town

Despite its small town feel, Grindavík boasts a relatively large population of just over 3000 inhabitants, many of whom can be found working in the fishing industry in

one capacity or another. The large fishing harbour is second only to Reykjavík. Here visitors can witness the fish being landed on the docks and sample fresh fish dishes served up by the many fine restaurants that take full advantage of their proximity to the ocean.

Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark

Besides the obvious advantage of having the Blue Lagoon right on its doorstep, Grindavík is also perfectly situated for those who come to the Reykjanes Peninsula to witness the geothermal and volcanic activity that the area is known for. Designated a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2015, the peninsula is home to many important geological formations, many of which can be found nowhere else in the world. With 55 geosites to visit, those with

an interest in the geosciences will have a wealth of opportunities to explore ancient lava fields, bubbling mud pools, steam vents, craters, volcanic fissures, not to mention the amazing variety of sea birds that populate the nearby cliffs.

Home base Grindavík

It goes without saying that Grindavík offers visitors a variety of options for accommodation—from modern camping facilities, to cosy guesthouses and quiet hotels. For eating out, there is something to suit every budget—from food trucks and fast food joints to high-end fine dining establishments. The local supermarket is well stocked with everything you'll need for doing a spot of home cooking. Relax in the town's geothermal pool, send postcards home from the local post office or visit the Icelandic Saltfish Museum and learn all about Grindavík's illustrious past.

All in all, Grindavík makes for an attractive and convenient home away from home while exploring the Reykjanes Peninsula. -EMV



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GEO SILICA

LOCAL SUPPLEMENT PROMOTES HEALTH

The local company combines minerals with pure Icelandic water, which has many health benefits.

GeoSilica is an Iceland-based company that utilises natural raw materials found in Iceland to produce high-quality health products. The company, which started as a university spin-off project that went from R&D to product in just three years, focuses on creating products incorporating Iceland's geothermal water. The company's first product is a highly pure silica supplement in the form of extremely small silica particles in clean ground water. geoSilica developed a unique two-step production process. First, the silica concentration in the separated geothermal water is increased without changing the chemical composition of the water. In the second step, the geothermal water is gradually replaced by clean ground water from the area while keeping the silica concentration consistent. No chemicals of any kind are used in the production or the product.

Benefits to the body

Silica supplements have clear benefits for the body. GeoSilica could help improve skin, hair and nails to garner

a healthy, youthful appearance. There are reports that silica could boost your immune system, help maintain bone health, balance hormones and stimulate metabolism. Silica can also improve joint function, promote healthy digestion, and help keep your heart healthy.

New Products

geoSilica has developed three new products. geoSilica Recover is a combination of minerals for oral intake made from 100% natural colloidal silica and magnesium citrate in pure Icelandic water for muscles and nerves. geoSilica Renew combines silica, zinc and copper in pure Icelandic water for hair, skin & nails, and geoSilica Repair consists of silica and manganese to promote bone and ligament health.

Well-received by the Icelandic market

geoSilica has received positive feedback on their products. Here are two feedback samples of the many that geoSilica received about their products:

"A few months after I had my younger daughter in November 2014, I began to suffer from hair loss," said Ásdís Geirsdóttir. "Along with that, I have very bad skin and nails. I was then advised to

try the silica supplement from geoSilica. One bottle lasted me for one month and after about 2 weeks I was starting to see a significant difference in skin, hair and nails. I decided to take another good session and bought bottles for two months and the results were outstanding!"

Meanwhile, Anna Guðmundsdóttir shared: "I broke my hip badly 10 months ago and also broke both of my wrists 2 years ago. I've been taking your Silica Supplement now for eight months and after 2-3 months, I found immediately a large difference in me and now I hardly feel that I have ever broken anything."

geoSilica's products are available for purchase on their webshop at www.geosilica.is and in shops around Iceland. -JG



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THE PLACE TO STAY

IN GRINDAVÍK

Guesthouse Borg offers economical comfort in a friendly house

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

A geological hotspot, the area offers such a wide array of other tours, sights and experiences that one holiday is not enough.

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



You'll find a full kitchen where you can cook your own meals, a laundry and a computer to go online. Breakfasts are provided on a self-service basis.

Owners Björk and Magnús make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. -ASF



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Images © Gabriel Rutenberg

GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast

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

This is a fishing town and the café is a fishermen's café—though, with the growing number of visitors from all over the world

finding it, it is quickly becoming the café of choice in the area. Little wonder, as the help and friendliness of the owners is only matched by the delicious food they offer. My suggestion: don't leave without having a bowl of their soup. It's really good.

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

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

Bryggjan is open from 8am-11pm on weekdays and from 9am-midnight or so if there is a lot of action, on weekends. Bryggjan can also be found on Facebook by the name of "Bryggjan Kaffihús".

-ASF



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PARK INN BY RADISSON KEFLAVIK AIRPORT

Treat yourself well while in Iceland



Start your day off right

The Park Inn by Radisson Keflavik Airport is a comfortable 4-star hotel in the town of Keflavik, located just minutes from Keflavik International Airport. Whether you have just arrived or are scheduled for an early morning flight, you can be assured of a good night's sleep and to wake up refreshed and ready for your day ahead. With a total of 81 rooms spread out over three floors, the hotel offers spacious rooms, comfortable beds and a relaxing, modern décor.

Which room will you choose, Standard, Superior or Junior Suite?

Ideal for longer stays, the Junior Suite is a beautifully appointed 51m² space with unique touches by well-known Icelandic designers, top quality bed and bath, lustrous hardwood floors, and a colour scheme of sophisticated grey with splashes of colour that make the Junior Suite an excellent choice for those looking for a touch of luxury. Amenities include luxury shower with upgraded bath products, terry bathrobes and slippers, a dining and sitting area, fridge, espresso machine, queen size bed, television, telephone, safe and free wireless high-speed internet.

Each of Park Inn Keflavik's 30m² Superior rooms boast a sitting area and luxury shower complete with upgraded bath amenities, terry bathrobes and slippers, coffee/ tea provisions, 26-inch TV, telephone, safe and

free wireless high-speed internet. Standard rooms are a generous 24m² and come with bath amenities, coffee and tea provisions, fridge, shower, TV/radio, and free wireless high-speed internet.

The Library Bistro & Bar

Without a doubt, Park Inn Keflavik's newly refurbished restaurant, 'The Library Bistro & Bar' has to be one of the smartest restaurants in Iceland. Trendy décor by the Italian company Dialma Brown puts the restaurant squarely on the map as hip, go-to eating establishment. The bistro's extensive menu with reasonably priced options is a nice change from the more expensive Reykjavik. Here, you can be sure of getting flavourful and imaginative creation langoustine soup with mussels, scallops, coconut milk and a touch of star anise takes this traditional Icelandic starter up a notch, to be sure. Hamburgers with a twist on the usual, as well as a sophisticated bar and drinks menu are all treats to be tried. Lastly, the chefs at the Library are decidedly in the running when it comes to dessert, delivering a sugar sensation to set your taste buds awhirl. Trust me on this one!

-EMV



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WEST *Iceland*



Nature Steeped in History and Beauty

DISCOVER WEST ICELAND'S *RICH CULTURE AND NATURE*

There's much more to West Iceland than the spectacular Snæfellsjökull, made famous by Jules Verne, gleaming white in the sunshine. The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with gushing geothermal activity.

But West Iceland is more than magnificent nature. 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.

For the outdoor enthusiasts, there is enough to keep them busy all summer long. Horse riding tours are popular, as are hiking, fishing and golf. At the end of an active day, there are plenty of swimming pools and hot pots to relax in. Accommodation covers the complete range from sleeping bag to hotel.

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 tours offering sea fishing.

THE MYSTICAL PENINSULA

Snæfellsnes Excursions reveals the mysteries and beauty of Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Snæfellsjökull glacier is an inspiring sight, especially at sunset, when the sky turns pink and purple as a crimson globe disappears slowly behind this majestic mountain. Known in literary circles as the starting point in Jules Verne's story, 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth', it also gained a reputation as the planned meeting point for aliens and humans in the nineties. Locally, it is considered a magical place that radiates immense energy.

Snæfellsjökull is the crown jewel of Snæfellsnes peninsula, which offers many more inspiring gems and incredible landscapes. In the quaint village of Grundarfjörður, one of those tiny fishing villages with colourful houses and a population of less than 900 people, you will find the headquarters of Snæfellsnes Excursions. Their guides are well versed in

the local folklore to give you a taste of the local mentality and culture.

When you experience the force of nature as strongly as on the peninsula, it is easy to understand why people believe in elves. Once you see hills that are considered homes to hidden people and rock formations called trolls, and hear the stories behind each, you may wonder what you believe yourself. Founded in a deep respect for nature, this folklore is important to the local community. The diamond circle of the Snæfellsnes tour introduces the peninsula's history and its mystical components through stunning landscapes. This is a full-day tour, starting at the Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavík at 8:30. You can also join the tour at the Borgarnes N1 petrol station at 10:00—or for those who are already on the peninsula, pick-up can be at Stykkishólmur at 11:00.

On Snæfellsnes, you will find numerous mountains. Kirkjufell is a favourite amongst photographers since it is a bit too pointy, and looks like it is leaning over slightly to one side. Another bonus is that it can easily be framed with a nearby waterfall for a picture that will gain dozens of likes online. Geology enthusiasts may enjoy the Berserk lava field, which is between 3,600 and 4,000 years old and filled with mysterious sculptures.

Snæfellsnes Excursions refer to Snæfellsnes peninsula as the best kept secret in Iceland, and it is true that most tourists who visit Iceland focus on other areas despite the numerous attractions that the peninsula has to offer. Most visitors only make it there on their second or third visit to Iceland, allowing it to remain a hidden treasure.

-JG



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Everything VOLCANIC

Snæfellsnes is considered the jewel of the west coast, in part, because the region has a taste of everything Icelandic. If you're looking for mountains, they're there. If you want to attempt a glacier walk, Snæfellsnesjökull awaits. If you're interested in volcanoes, Eldfjallasafn Volcano Museum in Stykkishólmur is the place to visit. The museum showcases works of art, old and new, which depict volcanic eruptions, as well as artefacts, and volcanic rocks. The museum focuses on volcanoes around the world.

Volcanic hot spot

Iceland has a high concentration of active volcanoes due to its location on the divergent tectonic plate boundary



of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and also because it sits over a geological hot spot. The island has 30 active volcanic systems, of which 13 have erupted since the settlement of Iceland in 874 AD. The most recent eruptions occurred in 2014 at Holuhraun near the Bárðarbunga system and the eruption under



Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 that produced an enormous ash cloud.

Riveting museum

Diverse aspects of volcanoes are presented at the Volcano Museum, from the science, geology and their environmental effects to how they appear in art and literature. Talks



are given daily in the museum in English and Icelandic about volcanoes and their effects, as well as information on geology for people with little or no previous knowledge of volcanoes. For visitors who would like an in-depth tour of the geology behind volcanoes, the museum offers geology excursions that visit a number of dramatic locations along the Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Passionate curator

The world-renowned volcanologist Haraldur Sigurðsson created the Volcano Museum to share the wealth of knowledge he has accrued. Haraldur was born in Stykkishólmur in 1939, completed a BSc degree at Queens University in Belfast in 1965, and received his PhD from Durham University in England



in 1970. He worked at the University of the West Indies from 1970, conducting research on Caribbean volcanoes. He served as professor of volcanology at the University of Rhode Island for 40 years. His research has been principally in volcanology, both on land and on the ocean floor. He has worked in Indonesia, Italy, West Indies, USA, West Africa, Greece, South and Central America and elsewhere, but Iceland remains firmly his home where the Volcano Museum is close to his heart. -JG



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HÓTEL BÚÐIR: *Love Is in the Air*

This Snæfellsnes Hotel Boasts One of the Most Romantic Settings on the Island

The Snæfellsnes Peninsula is considered the jewel of the west coast of Iceland. In part, it's because the region has a taste of everything. If you're looking for mountains, they're there. If you want to attempt a glacier walk, Snæfellsjökull is your place. If whale watching is what you're after, this region has it. There's a reason why many locals refer to the region as 'Iceland in miniature'. The landscape is breathtaking with the long volcanic ridge spanning miles, rocky lava fields and towering mountains. The area is considered the most stunning place on the island by many Icelanders.

Romantic Getaway

Situated at the tip of the peninsula, Hótel Búðir is a romantic hotel isolated in a gorgeous stretch of the west, close to sand beaches, lava fields and an impressive mountain ridge. The hotel specialises in accommodating weddings, as it is the ideal setting to gather with friends and family to celebrate your special day. The

staff, who are experienced in handling small, intimate weddings as well as large receptions, commit to doing everything possible to create the wedding of your dreams. The ceremony can take place in the noted Búðarkirkja church, standing only a few steps away from the hotel – or, if preferred, in some of the spectacular nature scenes surrounding the hotel, such as the sparkling sandy beach, or on the moss in the middle of a lava field. The possibilities are endless!

A Journey to the Centre of the Earth

The natural surroundings of the hotel are magnificent, and there are various walking paths leading from the hotel to the nearby nature attractions. Looming large in the background is Snæfellsjökull, a glacier that became world famous after author Jules Verne described it in 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth' as the starting point of the terrific journey in the book. Snæfellsjökull lies on top of a volcano and it's situated in the centre of a national park. The glacier's peak reaches 1,446 metres and it



can be seen from Reykjavík on a clear day. The volcano is considered active, though the last eruption occurred 1,900 years ago. The hotel stands on the beautiful Búðarós shore, and offers the possibility of seal spotting with the ancient, but functional, telescope in the ground floor lounge.

A Superb Northern Lights Site

Another asset of the area is the striking view it offers of the iconic aurora borealis. The absence of light-pollution and strong Northern Lights activity in the area create unique conditions for observing the gorgeous phenomena. You can order a wake-up call from the hotel staff to ensure that you won't miss out, in case of an unexpected performance from the thrilling spectacle.

Warm Country-Style Getaway

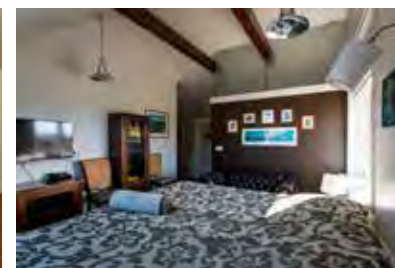
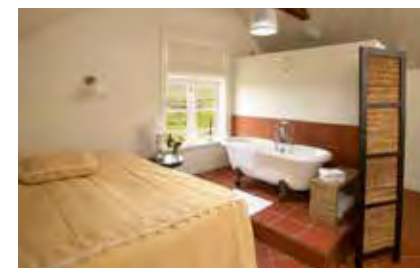
Hótel Búðir is extremely cosy and comfortable, but for the house stylists, every single item is arranged meticulously with motherly care. The result is a country-style haven, filled with warmth and suited to make anyone feel at home. There are sitting areas with fire places on each floor, where travellers can mingle and exchange their stories after an eventful day — or simply kick back and relax.

The rooms are comfy and spacious, equipped with private bathrooms and make for perfect love nests for couples celebrating their love in an unforgettable way. The rooms feature an awe-inspiring view of the gorgeous surroundings and deluxe rooms are situated at the corners and hence have two-way views of the area, and a slightly larger area for relaxation. The popular loft rooms have slightly sloping ceilings which provides a feeling of intimacy and you will feel tucked in like a bird in a nest. The entire hotel has Wi-Fi and all the rooms are equipped with traditional modern comforts.

The house that hosts the hotel is exceptionally well built, with a strong foundation. The original hotel, built in 1947, unfortunately burned down in 1999. It was then rebuilt in 2001, and though the fire was tragic, the new structure has an obvious new feeling to it, a freshness that isn't always found in countryside hotels in Iceland. Due to the popularity of the hotel, there are already plans add an additional building in the next few years.

Memorable Restaurant

The in-house restaurant features the creations of a great chef who designs playful and original dishes, using only the finest local ingredients from the region. The menu is small but offers something for everyone, and the quality ingredients often take on a surprising role in the capable hands of the chefs. The hotel manager, Daði Jörgensson, says that the restaurant is one of the hotel's main prides, and that, despite the small menu, he believes the restaurant would compare well with top restaurants in Iceland. Hotel guests love the breakfast buffet, which offers great variety, including freshly baked breads, homemade marmalades and



jams, fine cheeses, and quality ham, fresh fruits and cereals.

Krambúðin

Krambúðin is a charming little shop that stands right beside the hotel, and is the only part of the original building to have survived the fire. The shop offers various Icelandic handicrafts made by locals, as well as items from Icelandic nature, such as the samples of the characteristic sand, called Gold-sand, found near the hotel. The sand, which is a popular souvenir, got its name from the rare olivine minerals that are mixed with the light coloured shell sand and cause the beach to shimmer when hit by sunlight. The shop is run by the two Valkyries, Sigga and Agnes, who so tenderly care for the hotel.



Búðir attracts visitors from around the world with its ideal location, unrivalled customer service and romantic surroundings. It's no surprise why so many weddings are held at the hotel. Love is in the air at Hótel Búðir!
-ES/JG



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WHERE THE LAMBS GO WILD

Look for the logo to know you have the genuine Icelandic article



The Icelandic lamb has roamed the hills and mountains of Iceland ever since Viking settlers first brought sheep to the country in the 9th century. Today's robust breed is a direct descendant of these first animals and genetically identical. Nowadays it wanders all summer long in carefully defined extensive wild pastures in pristine mountainous landscapes under strict agriculture regulations and a quality control scheme which protects the integrity of the breed.

Sustainability

Iceland has always been a leader in sustainability, and remains one of the purest environments in the world. There's

little pollution, and farming is conducted in such a way that preserves the land for future use, incorporating aspects of social responsibility. The wool is a natural product and only eco-friendly energy sources are used in the manufacturing process.

The Wool

The Icelandic wool has kept the nation warm for more than 1100 years with the sheep originally brought here from Norway by the settlers. The Icelandic wool made it possible for the settlers to survive in the harsh northern climate. Due to the isolation and absence of contact with other breeds, the Icelandic sheep still carries

characteristics long disappeared from their relatives in neighbouring countries.

In order to endure the cold and harsh arctic climate the sheep have developed several specialities. The fleece is divided into two layers, tog and thel. The tog consists of long and coarse hair with water repellent qualities. The inner layer, thel, is shorter, softer and fluffier providing insulation and warmth. Combining the two provides an exceptional thread for producing clothing that gives warmth in spite of getting wet.

The fleece differs depending on the age of the animal with lamb's wool being the softest and finest but old rams bearing the roughest. The four basic colours of the Icelandic breed are black, white, shades of brown and grey

with numerous combinations and colour patterns, such as badgerface, grey and other bi-colour variations. Although many will admit to having a soft spot for various colour patterns, the white wool is the most sought-after, and therefore the most common sheep colour in Iceland.

The Meat

Flavoured by the wild pastures and raised without any hormones or antibiotics in a pure environment, Icelandic lamb meat is wonderfully lean, flavourful and tender. The distinctive taste is a result of the grass and the aromatic and spicy herbs on which the lambs graze. The taste of Icelandic lamb is unique. The meat is dark, with a bit of a gamey

flavour which some have described as being similar to venison. Lamb can differ in taste depending on where in the world it comes from and the conditions and environment the animals are reared in. In Iceland, the lambs live in outstanding conditions which, of course, is very important.

GMO Free

In October 2016, genetically modified sheep feed was banned by the Ministry of Industry and Innovations, making all Icelandic lamb meat GMO Free.

The close knitted relationship between farmers, restaurant owners and retailers is a key factor in maintaining the quality and integrity of the Icelandic lamb. Icelandic

Lamb's restaurant partners promise to offer only quality Icelandic Lamb on their menu, celebrating the diversity and uniqueness of Icelandic Lamb meat.

Look for the Logo

When you see our shield hanging in a restaurant you know that they offer excellent lamb dishes, that does the Icelandic lamb great justice. You can also find the Icelandic Lamb logo on wool and fleece products in Iceland. Only Icelandic design products made out of Icelandic wool are tagged with the logo, making it easier to find authentic Icelandic wool products. Look for our logo while travelling in Iceland for a real Icelandic Lamb experience.



BETWEEN REYKJAVÍK AND AKUREYRI

Hótel Laugarbakki is a comfortable hotel and perfect base for Northern Lights hunting

Hótel Laugarbakki is situated in a lovely slice of Iceland, midway between Reykjavík and Akureyri, where travellers can spend time exploring Viking relics, riding horses, swimming and, in the winter, hunting the otherworldly Northern Lights.

Northern Lights viewing

In fact, the hotel is an ideal location for viewing the Northern Lights, which can be seen from September to March. Guests can take just a few steps into the fields surrounding the hotel, far from light pollution and, if the conditions are right,

can see the shimmering green and white lights dance and flicker across the sky. It's such an unforgettable experience!

Comfortable, quality accommodation

Hótel Laugarbakki is all about location and Northern Lights. It's a high-quality 3-star hotel that is family-owned and decked out in Scandinavian style. It's clean and comfortable with amenities like free Wi-Fi, flat-screen TV, hairdryer, kettle and toiletries. Guests are also provided a bathrobe to wear to the hot tubs. There is a gym and a restaurant,

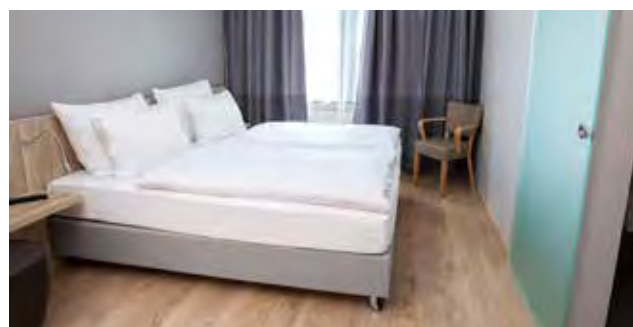
where breakfast, lunch and dinner are available. Restaurant BAKKI, which emphasises local food purchased directly from farmers in the area, offers an eclectic menu with something for everyone.

At Hotel Laugarbakki, you can count on personal service, comfortable rooms, good food and an ideal location to catch a glimpse of the majestic Northern Lights.

-JG



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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.

Stóri Kambur also offers a cosy studio apartment on the ground floor of the house at Stóri Kambur. The accommodation combines a living room, bedroom and kitchenette in one living space in addition to a bathroom with a shower. The accommodation is suitable for 2-4 people. Beds are made up for two guests, but guest beds can easily be added. The accommodation is self-catering. The view is amazing and the sense of tranquillity is otherworldly.

Groups of up to ten people are perfect and opening hours are from 1 June – 15 September.



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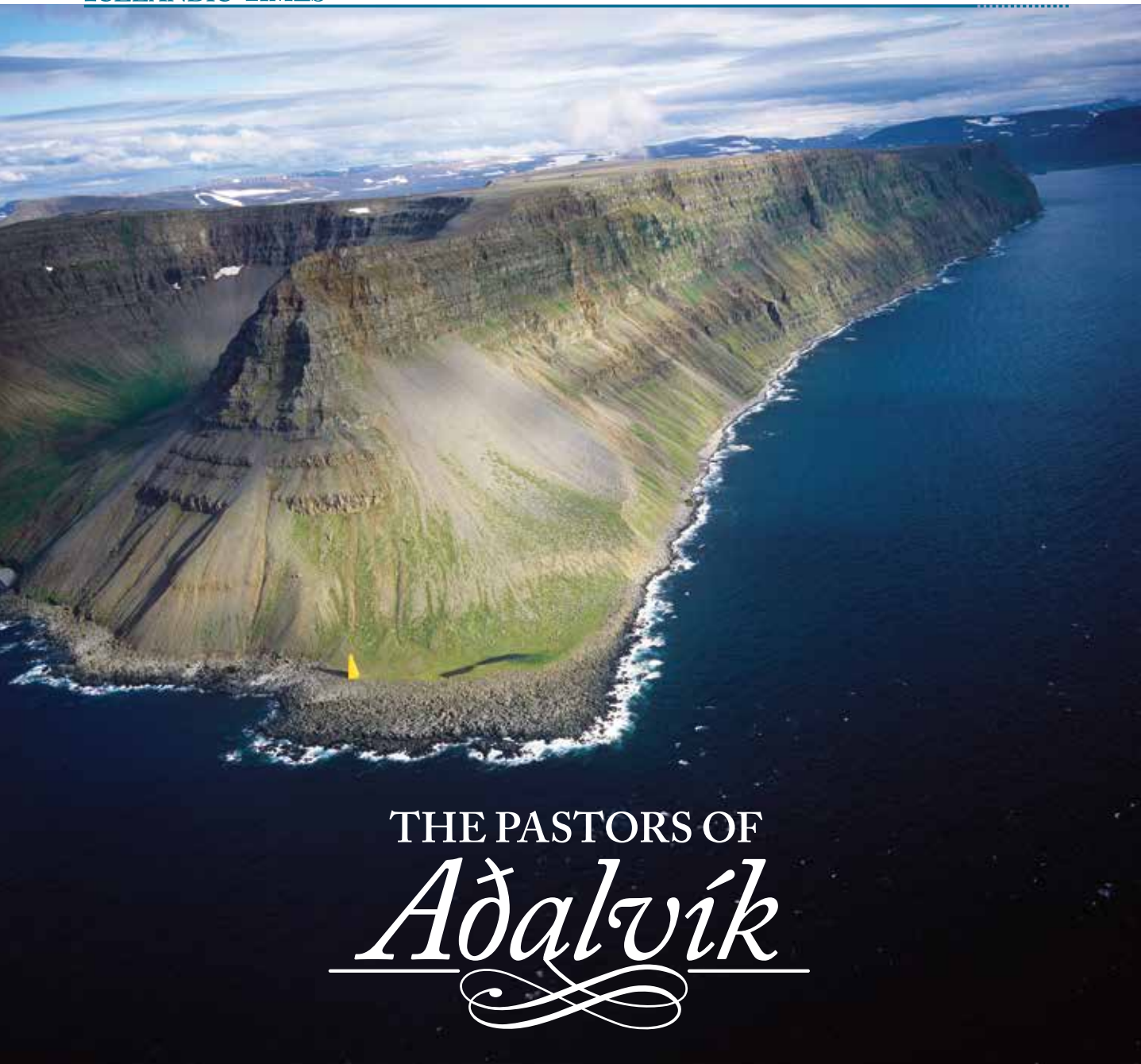




WESTFJORDS

Iceland





THE PASTORS OF *Aðalvík*

North of Ísafjarðardjúp lies Aðalvík bay, open to the sea. The Ritur mountain marks the southern end of the bay, while to the north, Straumnes rises, steep and majestic. The wreck of the *Goðafoss*, a ship that ran aground in 1916, may still be seen on the shore.

Above the bay is extensive lowland, much of it verdant and picturesque. Several valleys lie inland between the mountains, the southernmost being Staðardalur. In

this valley is Lake Staðarvatn, where a water-horse, or kelpie, is said to reside and play various pranks. A farm named Staður with a church stands by the lake.

On the shore by Staðardalur is Sæból, formerly a fishing centre, where a village existed at one time. Another fishing hamlet developed at Látrar, at the northern end of Aðalvík.

Aðalvík was once quite densely populated, like other places in the Hornstrandir region;

people lived by farming and fishing and exploiting various other resources. Today, however, the place is deserted – the last inhabitant left in the middle of the 20th century. Nevertheless, many houses remain standing and are used by their owners in the summertime. Although Hornstrandir is far off the beaten track, mainly accessible by sea, the region attracts growing numbers of tourists, who are drawn by the magnificent natural environment.

One of the many buildings that remain standing at Aðalvík is the church of Staður, a handsome edifice with a vestibule, tower and choir loft.

War in the Spiritual Realm

In past centuries many renowned clergymen served the parish of Staður in Aðalvík. One of them was Snorri Björnsson, generally known as Snorri of Húsafell, in reference to the parish where he later served. He spent 16 years at Staður in the mid-18th century. He was believed to have supernatural skills, which came in useful in his relations with the Hornstrandir folk: Snorri generally got the better of them with his magical tricks.

A story told of Snorri when he was at Staður says that the pastor was once doing some carpentry down by the sea, while nearby a neighbour, who had supernatural skills, was also doing the same. This neighbour was carving runes into a rod of wood, designed so that anyone who read the runes would go blind. He threw the rod into the sea and let it drift to where the pastor sat. The Rev. Snorri was unaware of the trick, read the runes and immediately went blind. But Snorri was a fine poet and in this situation he made use of his poetic skills and made up verses to regain his sight. Then he scraped all the runes off the rod, flung it back in the sea, and said: “Go back to your master and you shall cause his death, if he intends to use you for evil purposes again.” The farmer saw the rod and grabbed it. He planned to carve it with such powerful runes that the pastor would die. But the knife slipped off the rod and into the farmer’s chest, up to the hilt. Thus the farmer died, and so received his just deserts for his attempt on the pastor’s life.

The Rev. Snorri was succeeded at the parish by the Rev. Vigfús Benediktsson, who remained at Staður for 18 years. According to folklore, he was subjected to sorcery by some of his parishioners, but fortunately he had a wife who knew how to respond. The Rev. Vigfús first served the parish of Staður in Aðalvík. There were many sorcerers in the congregation, who were opposed to the pastor. One Saturday the pastor went with two brothers by boat out to an island with their lambs. When they reached the island they put the lambs ashore to graze. The pastor disembarked but the others stayed in the boat. When the



“...He was believed to have supernatural skills, which came in useful in his relations with the Hornstrandir folk: Snorri generally got the better of them in such magical tricks.

pastor returned, the brothers had gone with the boat and left him behind alone.

The pastor’s wife was named Málfríður. She was an intelligent and experienced woman, who was said to have magical powers. She came down to the sea when the boat arrived and asked the brothers where Vigfús was. They told her he was writing his sermon for the next day, and smirked. She replied that it was quite possible that he might address them tomorrow. Then they went their separate ways; the brothers went home and thought no more of the pastor.

Early the following day the same brothers came to church. When they entered the church the pastor was standing before the altar. He preached a fierce sermon over them, which they well deserved. After Mass Málfríður said to them: “Now you have had the sermon you need, and it serves you right”. They answered that they had not yet thanked the pastor for the sermon, but they would do so another time. And all summer they never came to church, until

the first Sunday of the winter. One of the brothers was a married man and sat in the choir, while the other was unmarried and sat in the nave. The pastor’s wife saw that they were continually smirking at each other, and as soon as the pastor stepped into the pulpit, both brothers walked out. Some time passed. When the pastor was in the middle of his sermon, Málfríður called out to him: “Fúsi, go out; the sooner the better”. The pastor immediately stopped the sermon and walked out of the church and up above the churchyard. He saw one of the brothers heating a pot, while the other was writing some magical runes. The pastor came up to them and made to empty the pot, but his wife had arrived by this time and stopped him. She took the pot and poured the contents over the head of one of the brothers, then threw the pot at the other and both fell down dead. Málfríður said afterwards that it was as well they acted at once, for the brothers had intended to kill the Rev. Vigfús in the pulpit with their sorcery. While the Rev. Vigfús was pastor of Aðalvík, he was constantly at loggerheads with magicians and in the end he had to leave, for his life was in danger. When he served in Austur-Skaftafellssýsla (at the other end of the country), his old parishioners were always sending ghosts to plague him, but his wife could always turn them back and ensure they did not harm him. The Rev. Vigfús said that all these spells would be the death of him if he lived longer than his wife. But it did not come to that, for she survived him and died peacefully in old age.

-JRH



ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

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

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

Exhibition of the first native

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

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

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

of the fox and the hunters themselves, this last containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and, of course, there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round.

The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland.

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

-HP



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 www.melrakkii.is





NORTH *Iceland*





THE KLONDIKE OF THE ATLANTIC

Siglufofjörður remembers its Golden Age



Siglufofjörður is a small fishing town on the north coast of Iceland, about an hour's 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': herring, which gave the town its second nickname: The Herring Town. Today Siglufofjörður 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.

Siglufofjörður 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

Siglufofjörður'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. Last 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.



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SKAGASTRÖND

WHERE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE MEET

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



Fish Is Life

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

What Does the Future Bring?

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

and have opened a museum in her honour. Visitors are taken through her fascinating life with various exhibitions and artifacts—as well as given the chance to have a prophecy given about them.

Another museum can be found in a charming tiny old house, named Árnas, which gives an impression of daily life in the early 20th century.

Art and Fish

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

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

Plenty to Do

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

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

-DT/ASF

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EXPLORE THE NORTH

Star Travel operates tours in the north of Iceland.

North Iceland is full of natural pearls and hidden gems and is a treat to all those that make the journey. Akureyri, which is often referred to as the capital of the north, is the perfect place to start your trip in north Iceland. Star Travel, a small family-run company based in Akureyri, offers numerous tours from Akureyri and Reykjahlíð in Mývatn.

Roaring waterfalls

There is so much to see and do in the north, and Star Travel has it covered, including trips to two spectacular waterfalls. In a country full of spectacular waterfalls, what sets Goðafoss apart is the sheer width of the tumbling falls. White water surges over the rim, thundering down, crashing into rocks and water. The waters of the Skjálfandafljót River fall from a height of 12 metres over a width of 30 metres. It's quite a show. Meanwhile, Dettifoss, which means 'tumble falls', is the largest waterfall on the island and the most powerful in Europe, with an average flow of 200 cubic metres of water per second. Spanning 100 metres wide and 45 metres high, Dettifoss is gigantic, and Star Travel is one of the few companies that operate tours to Dettifoss year-round.

Magnificent Mývatn

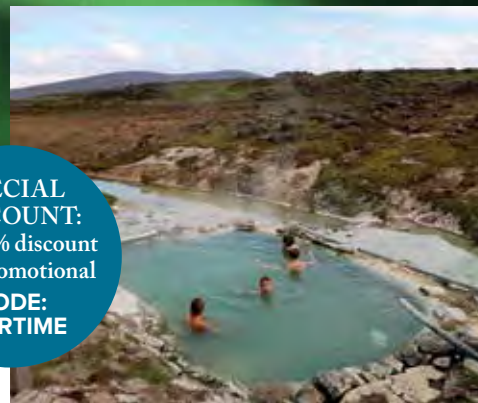
Mývatn is one of the fastest growing tourist destinations in the north. Gorgeous landscapes, activities along Lake Mývatn,

and the soothing Mývatn Nature Baths, which have the same type of milky blue water as the famous Blue Lagoon in the south, lure travellers. Star Travel runs tours to Dimmuborgir, which means 'dark cities' or 'dark castles'. It comprises interesting rock formations jutting out of the ground, resembling a fort from an ancient city. The black lava pillars were born from a collapsed lava tube from a large volcanic eruption more than 2,000 years ago. Another popular sight is the Krafla lava field, which is home to Víti (Hell), one of the best-known craters in Iceland. Víti is huge, about 300 metres in diameter, exposing interesting formations that resulted from lava flows and water over the ages. The area is another reminder of how active this island has been, and continues to be, with spectacular eruptions resulting in the reshaping of the land. Meanwhile, Námaskarð is a big draw for tourists because of its sheer otherworldly atmosphere. The yellow and brown colours of the clay along with the gray mud pools look like a movie scene from another planet.

The beautiful south

Star Travel has not forgotten about South Iceland. The company operates whale watching tours off the coast of Reykjavík, as well as Northern Lights tours in the winter. Catching a glimpse of the Northern

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-JG

Lights flickering and dancing in the sky is an unforgettable experience. For travellers based in Reykjavík who want to see a bit of the countryside, Star Travel has a 4x4 jeep tour of the Golden Circle, where guests can see Gullfoss waterfall, the bubbling Geysir region and Þingvellir national park.

Star Travel excursions are worth adding to your To Do list when you visit Iceland!

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EAST *Iceland*





LAUGARFELL

Laugarfell is located in the eastern part of the Icelandic Highlands, a bit north of Mount Snæfell. It is only 2 km from the road that leads to Kárahnjúkar to the hostel and it is the only part of road that is not paved. In the summer there is good access to Laugarfell in all kinds of vehicles.

Laugarfell offers accommodation for 28 people. Two natural pools are located in Laugarfell and according to old folk tales the water is known for its healing powers.

There are many interesting tracking paths around Laugarfell and a number of beautiful waterfalls. Additionally, one can expect to see reindeer wandering around the site. Laugarfell offers guided tours in the area.



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THE EAST ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

Appreciating the life and times of a bygone era in East Iceland

The East Iceland Heritage Museum in Egilsstaðir showcases life as it was in the bygone era of Iceland's rural society, where self-sufficiency was essential to survival.

On display is a traditional 'baðstofa' or communal living/sleeping room, taken from an authentic Icelandic turf house that was inhabited until as late as 1964. Visitors are encouraged to step into the 'baðstofa' and experience the nostalgia of life as it was in days gone by.

The museum prides itself, however, on its permanent reindeer exhibition.

Found only in East Iceland, the rather shy and sometimes elusive wild reindeer have a mystical air about them and contribute to the area's sense of identity. With their numbers on the increase, it is possible to see them as they descend from

their feeding grounds at higher elevations in summer, to lower elevation grasslands nearer the coast in winter.

The Heritage Museum guides visitors through the history of the reindeer settlement in Iceland, their behaviour, characteristics and habits, a look at hunting regulations and, in short, everything you need to know about reindeer in Iceland. This is a unique opportunity to learn about these fascinating creatures, via a variety of displays and multi-media presentations that bring the exhibit to life.

The exhibition commemorates two the reindeer enthusiasts, Helgi Valtýsson, writer, and Eðvarður Sigurgeirsson, photographer and filmmaker. In an effort to shed light on the plight of the Icelandic reindeer, the pair tracked the movements of various herds from 1939 to 1944.

Eðvarður's film, "In Reindeer Territory", is available for viewing at the exhibition.

Visitors are also invited to watch a new documentary about Icelandic reindeer and a short animated film based on a section of the book, Independent People by Halldór Laxness, a twentieth-century Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize winner. -SP

Admission: Adults (18+) 1,000 ISK
Opening hours: 1 June to 31 August
Mon-Fri: 11:30-19:00.
Sat-Sun: 10:30-18:00.
Winter: Thur-Fri: 11:00-16:00



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A FAIRY TALE HOME

Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection



Petra loved people as well as stones and her passion project became a museum that is open to the public. Her husband, Nenni, passed away in 1974 and on the day of his funeral she decided to open up their home so that those who wished

In the tiny town of Stöðvarfjörður in East Iceland, a young girl named Petra began collecting stones in the mountains surrounding her home—and continued to do so until she passed away at the age of 89. During her lifetime, her home became a museum and is now a popular tourist attraction: Petra's Stone & Mineral Collection.

In the story of *Burnt Njal* (*Brennu-Njálssaga*), it is said that a quarter of your personality comes from your name, the other three-quarters come from your mother, father and your upbringing. 'Petra' means stone, which is oddly fitting.

The collection is remarkable, as every stone is beautiful. While it is very interesting for geologists to see so many rocks from the same area, the stones have not been arranged according to their scientific value but rather in a way that pleases the eye, a tribute to the wonderful colours that can be found in nature.

At first, this was only her personal collection as, for the first two decades, Petra would only collect stones that were within walking distance of her house. As she arranged them in the garden, strangers would pull over in their cars to better see what was going on. Sometimes the children would be sent out to ask the drivers if they would like to come inside to see more stones and have a cup of coffee.

Petra spent her entire life collecting rocks, and would sometimes bring her young children along to search for new additions to the collection in the surrounding mountains. She arranged her stones in a garden that would be right at home in a fairy-tale. Petra believed in elves and hidden people and her colourful garden would be the perfect place to meet them. As her children moved out of the house, her stones moved in and the remarkable collection continued to grow.

to see the mineral collection could do so.

The stones and minerals have been chosen for their beauty and their colours, without regard to their scientific value or monetary worth. However, there are many semi-precious stones in the collection, such as amethyst.

Today, her children run the museum together and continue to add to the collection. Her youngest daughter, Þórkatla, says that she, herself, would prefer not to believe in elves—but maybe her mother had a helping hand when she went around searching for rocks, as she was incredibly lucky. *-EMV*

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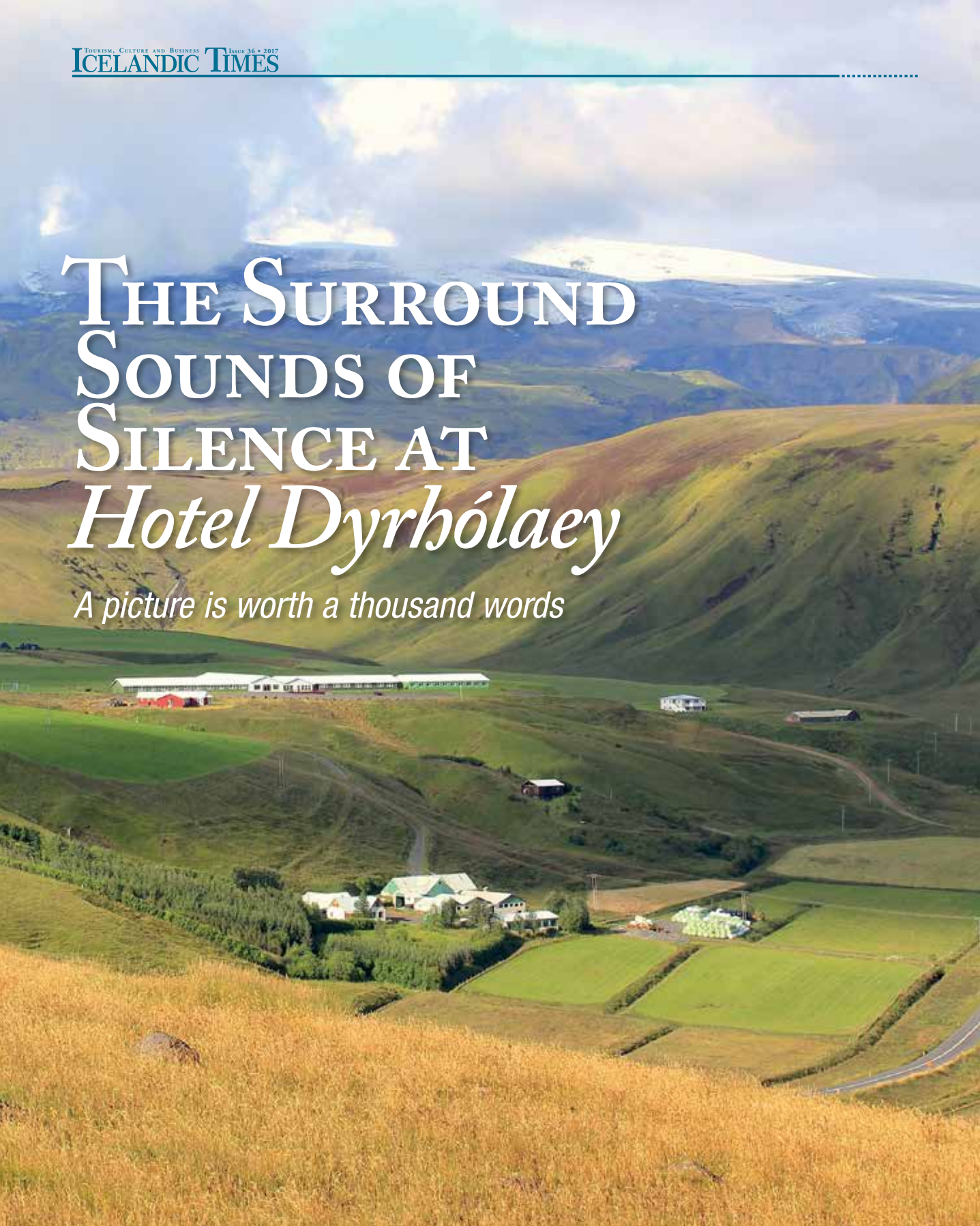


The wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be enjoyed in the area. This region has geological wonders such as the waterfalls of Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss; Geysir; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanoes like Hekla—"the Gateway to Hell", Lakagígar, 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 fully-developed infrastructure helps you get the most from your trips.

THE SURROUND SOUNDS OF SILENCE AT *Hotel Dyrhólaey*

A picture is worth a thousand words



There is an Icelandic expression that says “when you have such a great view, who needs pictures on your walls?” The phrase echoed my feelings exactly as I arrived at Hotel Dyrhólaey for the first time. A breathtaking panorama stretched out before me and far below, a dusting of newly fallen snow covered the Reynisfjall ridge, which suddenly took on new proportions. Bright green fields of cultivated grass lay before me and the blue expanse of water embraced the Dyrhólaey promontory in the distance. I felt as if I could stay here all day, drinking in the fresh air and the outrageously sublime view.

A bit of history

Hotel Dyrhólaey’s owners grew up here amidst all this splendour, and the family can trace its roots back to the 19th century when their great, great grandparents began the business of dairy farming and sheep breeding. As Icelandic society gradually shifted from a largely agrarian society to a more modern one, the need for dedicated hotels became apparent at the time when tourism in Iceland was in its infancy. The family decided to take the plunge and the hotel was born.

A passion for the Northern Lights

If one of your passions in life is to view the Northern Lights in a spectacular location, unperturbed by city lights, Hotel Dyrhólaey is the place to be. The hotel offers a wake-up

service should the Northern Lights appear overhead in the wee hours of the morning.

The hotel boasts 110 fully equipped standard rooms, spread out over three wings that branch off from the spacious lobby and dining room that make up the hotel’s core. A full bar and an á la carte restaurant opens for guests in the evening, and overlooks the dazzling panoramic view that welcomes you on your arrival.

Surrounded by nature

Hotel Dyrhólaey is conveniently located near many south coast attractions such as the iconic village of Vik, the famous Reynisfjara black pebble beach and sea stacks and of course the Dyrhólaey promontory after which the hotel is named. For horse lovers there is horse riding in the magnificent nature, and for the very adventurous, there are glacier walks and snowmobiling on Solheimajökull glacier—all within a 10 to 15 minute drive from the hotel.

If you are after that special moment in time where mountains, sea and sky converge, enveloped by the sounds of silence, consider a stay at Hotel Dyrhólaey and let the magic begin.

-EMV



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DREAMING OF ICELAND

Glacier Journey's Adventure of a Lifetime

For many, a trip to Iceland is the culmination of dream; a long-awaited journey that sometimes takes years of saving to achieve. And once you are finally here, the daunting task of choosing what to do, where to go and what to see begins. The good news is that Iceland is a fairly compact little country and many of the most sought after gems of Icelandic nature, particularly on the south coast, are within easy reach of the capital.

One of south Iceland's most awe inspiring natural phenomena is the formidable Vatnajökull Glacier that harbours no less than six volcanoes within its icy depths. The vast glacier spans a large portion of the south coast driving route and a visit to the glacier is undeniably one of the top "must-do's" that should be on everyone's bucket list.

Let the adventure begin

Glacier Journey is a local, family-run company that offers a variety of year-round snowmobile and jeep tours to the glacier and has received many glowing reviews over the years. Even if you have never had any experience driving a snowmobile, the

friendly guides at Glacier Journey are with you all the way— and learning how to drive a snowmobile is all part of the fun! At base camp you will receive warm overalls, a helmet, gloves—and a face mask that you can take home with you as a souvenir and then you're off to explore the mesmerising beauty of Europe's largest glacier by snowmobile.

A magical-mystical world of ice

The 15th of November to the end of March marks a very special time in the year when it's cold enough to go ice cave exploring! Glacier Journey's three hour 'Combo Tour' offers you a tremendous opportunity to explore the glacier inside and out. Experienced guides will lead the way into one of the ice caves that form at the edge of the glacier when temperatures drop down to below freezing and these icy-blue, fairy tale caves are safe to enter. The tour then continues 'up top' with a fun-filled snow mobile adventure across the glacier, with incredible views of the whole south coast and beyond.

Small groups and families welcome

Glacier Journey caters to all sizes of groups, from company incentive tours to small groups and personal, private tours for the whole family. Young explorers under the age of eight are also welcome to visit the ice cave, accompanied by their parents, of course. It's sooooo exciting!

See you soon on a Glacier Journey tour for the ultimate trip of a lifetime! -EMV



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DINE IN THE LANGOUSTINE CAPITAL

Humarhöfnin satisfies the hunger for whole langoustine in Höfn

Iceland is known for some of the finest fresh fish in the world and a large share of the country's catch is landed at Höfn í Hornafirði, on the south-east coast. Höfn (which sounds like 'Hup' to our ears and means harbour) is also known as the langoustine capital of Iceland, where several thousand visitors gather in the town for the annual Humarhátíð (Langoustine) Festival, held in June.

You would expect the langoustine capital of Iceland to have a fine-dining restaurant that can do justice to the lovely little crustacean. The Humarhöfnin sea-

food restaurant, which has been a big success since it was opened over 7 years ago by Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, her brother Ari Þorsteinnsson and their spouses, has definitely earned that accolade.

A menu to entice any connoisseur

A favourite with tourists from the Mediterranean countries, Humarhöfnin was the first restaurant in Iceland to serve whole langoustine, though it has now become popular in the town. The concept is still new in Iceland, so each diner who orders langoustine receives illustrated

instructions on the finer points of using the langoustine cracker and fork that come with the dish.

The menu was created and developed by the French chef Jacques DuPont and his many dishes, such as the beautifully presented 'Mix of Whole Langoustine and Tails' and the famous 'Black Magic Sauce' have been very successful. Paired with one of Humarhöfnin's specially selected wines, you are in line for an absolute feast. Also on the menu, the arctic char is a delight. The crème brûlée, made from local eggs and imported Madagascar vanilla will have you swooning and you might want or need to order a double portion.

The casual, bright and lively décor fits Humarhöfnin's harbour location and the friendly wait staff will be happy to point out the very boat that brought in the day's catch, moored at the docks just a short distance away. The building itself was originally the town co-op before it was totally renovated and transformed into this beautiful restaurant. There is an exhibit on the second floor which portrays the history of the house.

If you are a langoustine aficionado, you can fly, drive or take a bus to Höfn where you will find your seafood haven awaiting you. -EMV





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DIGGING DEEPER INTO ICELAND

The Skógar Folk Museum of South Iceland

The esthetics of Icelandic nature are legendary. People are mesmerised by her beauty, often coming away with a profound sense of having discovered new realms that had hitherto only been found in the pages of books, or seen in the mystical landscapes of film and television. It's easy to get lost in the profound sense of wonderment that is Icelandic nature. The elements, however, can take their toll, as the wind- and rain-soaked landscapes sometimes force visitors to take shelter. While travelling the south coast road towards Vík, there is one such place in particular that stands out.

Where to imbibe Iceland's unique cultural aspects

A few hundred metres to the east of the iconic Skógarfoss waterfall lies the Skógar Folk Museum. While the unassuming

cluster of buildings is sometimes overlooked by the crowds who flock to the falls, it really should be on the radar of everyone who seeks a more in depth understanding of Icelandic history and culture.

Preserving Iceland's past for future generations

The museum was founded on the initiative of Thorður Tómasson, a forward thinking Icelander who began collecting as a young teen in the 1930s at a time when modern technology was swiftly replacing a thousand years of a traditional way of life. Realising the importance of preserving Iceland's unique cultural heritage, Thorður went from farm to farm, writing down the stories and anecdotes of the older generation and collecting thousands of cultural artifacts along the way. It was

Thorður's foresight and enthusiasm that has helped ensure that Iceland's

unique cultural heritage has not been lost for future generations.

The museum's modest admission fee of 2000 ISK gives visitors access to the entire museum complex that is spread out over three permanent exhibitions: the Heritage Museum, The Open Air Museum and the Museum of Transport and Communication, all of which provide visitors with a rare glimpse into the Iceland of a bygone era.

The Open Air Museum

It is without question that one of Skógasafn's most endearing elements is its open air museum with its beloved collection of 19th and early 20th century turf buildings and wooden houses. The buildings were brought in from surrounding counties and moved to Skógar, where they were restored to their original condition. The small chapel, while new on the outside, is filled with fine relics gathered from churches around South Iceland while the turf houses were a way of life in Iceland for hundreds of years.

The Heritage Museum

Household items, farming and fishing implements, ornate wooden chests, decorative items of brass, silver and gold, as well as traditional clothing and artifacts dating back to the Viking Age are just a fraction of the thousands of items to be found in the



Heritage Museum. The centrepiece of the museum is the eight-oared fishing boat, the Pétursey, built in 1855, which was in use in nearby Vík until 1946.

The Transport and Communications Museum tells the story of the history and evolution of transport, communication and technologies in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries, from the age of the work horse to the digital communication of today. Housed in a large and modern exhibition hall, the Transport Museum also contains an excellent café that serves soups, sandwiches and desserts, and a delightful souvenir shop that offers a variety of local handicrafts and other items not found elsewhere in Iceland.

The museum is located one minute from Skógar Waterfall, just off Ring Road 1, 30km west of Vík and 150km east of Reykjavík. -EMV



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Vestrahorn: A BEAUTIFUL SLICE OF ICELAND



Photo By Peter Fischer



Photo By Eva Frischling



This family company operates the Viking Café, guesthouse, old farm and a horse rental.

East Iceland is where you find the actual “ice” of Iceland, including Vatnajökull glacier, a giant white spot on the map that is truly breathtaking in person. You can see the glacier descend into black sands and hot streams erupt from frozen banks of ice. The landscape is remarkable with mountains jutting out of the earth close to the sea and sweeping regions like Stokksnes and Vestrahorn. Travellers come from around the world to the region to photograph the pristine, stunning

nature in the southeast, including professional and amateur photographers, the Game of Thrones production, and a famous Indian Bollywood film. Apple also visited the region to film some footage for scenery for its product launches. During the winter, this region is especially popular for the chance to see and photograph Northern Lights. Watching the green and white lights flicker and dance in the sky is a memorable experience.

Litlahorn, which is operated by a family with deep roots in southeast Iceland,

welcomes guests through a variety of businesses, including the Viking Café, a guesthouse, old farm and a horse rental.

COFFEEHOUSE AND ACCOMMODATION

Viking Café is a little oasis at the bottom of Vestrahorn near Höfn. The charming guesthouse offers 7 comfortable rooms for travellers and the coffeehouse is operated by a warm and accommodating manager, serving quality coffee, a choice of delicious cakes and pastries, as well as sandwiches and waffles. While the food and service

is top-notch, it’s understandable if visitors become distracted by the view. The Viking Café overlooks the beautiful and vast bay of Vestrahorn on one side and Vatnajökull on the other side.

HORSE RENTAL

A great way to survey the beautiful surroundings is by horseback. Litlahorn offers a horse rental service overseen by one of the owners, a skilled horse breeder with a passion for the family’s horses. Guests can take a riding tour along black

sand beaches close to Höfn. The groups are small (2-5 people) and the 2.5 hour tour offers stunning views while riding a good-natured stocky Icelandic horse, a unique breed. Litlahorn also breeds horses and sells them to customers around the world.

STONES AND MATERIALS FOR SALE

Litlahorn provides unique materials for sale from its land. The company utilizes its Stokksnes beach mine, which consists of material that has been carried by the glacier river Hornafjarðarfjót from the



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Vatnajökull glacier into the sea, where the harshest east coast sea waves have tumbled and smoothed the materials for thousands of years before returning them to shore. The stones and sand are used for stone carpets, bathstones, house sheathing and for asphalt and roads.

East Iceland has something for everyone and the Litlahorn owners are here to make your dream holiday a reality. Seize the opportunity to stay at Vestrahorn during your trip to Iceland!

-JG

SEE ICELAND IN SAFETY, COMFORT AND STYLE



Reykjavik Excursions Golden Circle and South Shore Adventure Tours

With Icelandic winter weather being rather unpredictable, it's good to know that you don't have to brave the elements on your own. Reykjavik Excursions is one of Iceland's oldest tour companies, with expert drivers and years of experience under its belt. With a large variety of tours to choose from, we take a look at two of their most popular day tours: South Shore Adventure and the Golden Circle.

First up, the South Coast

Reykjavik Excursions' South Shore Adventure tour is the optimal solution for seeing all those iconic places that the south coast is so well known for—Seljalandsfoss, Skógarfoss, Reynisfjara beach, Vík and Mýrdalsjökull. This 10½-hour day tour departs from the BSÍ bus terminal in

Reykjavík, taking you over the beautiful Hellisheiði heath that overlooks the south coast from its eastern flank. Passing several small villages, the tour makes its first stop in Hvolsvöllur, just a stone's throw from the famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano that erupted spectacularly in 2010.

A must for nature lovers, photographers and history buffs

On this tour, you'll get a chance to walk up to (but not on) a real live glacier, Sólheimajökull, that flows out of the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap. Then it's on to Reynisfjara, the black sand beach known for its massive columnar basalt cliffs and sea stacks. After lunch (not included) in the picturesque village of Vík, you'll have a guided tour of Skógar Museum where some 15,000 cultural artifacts are

on display. Here you will learn about the life and times of Icelanders over the centuries and gain an appreciation for the Icelandic way of life. Afterwards, you will visit the landmark Skógarfoss waterfall that thunders down from a 60 metre-high precipice and then onwards to Seljalandsfoss, the only waterfall in Iceland that you can walk behind.

The Famous Golden Circle

Located within 100km of Reykjavík, the Golden Circle continues to be one of Reykjavik Excursions' most popular destinations. The tour encompasses three of the most iconic Icelandic tourist spots, known for their geological, historical and scenic significance. Thingvellir National Park, the original site of the world's oldest running parliament, is unique in that

it sits on the divergent plate boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Next is the Haukadalur Geothermal Area where you'll see the dormant Geysir that gave its name to these steam spouts, a spouting geyser named Strokkur and bubbling mud pools in a steamy, otherworldly landscape.

Gullfoss, (Golden Falls), is a raging, double cascade waterfall, as spectacular as they come—and equally impressive when the temperature drops below freezing. En route, you will tour Friðheimar Greenhouse, where geothermal energy is used to grow pesticide-free tomatoes and cucumbers, year round. Friðheimar's refreshing homemade tomato soup (not included) is a tempting option, should you want a hot, filling meal during the tour. Shorter versions of the Golden Circle tour are also available.

Helpful tips

Should you decide that a Reykjavik Excursions tour is right for you, here are a few helpful tips to make the most of your tour. 1. First and foremost: dress warmly. The wind chill factor needs to be taken into consideration, particularly in winter, so do dress warmly in layers and don't forget your gloves and hat. 2. Wear sturdy shoes—you wouldn't want to scuff up your brand new Nikes. Iceland's volcanic nature is not always kind to the latest fashion footwear. Sneakers will not cut it! Lastly, all of Reykjavik Excursions tours are available with guidance in English, but did you know that most tours are also available in French, German, Scandinavian, and now Spanish?

Be warm, be well and enjoy Iceland this winter with Reykjavik Excursions. -EMV



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HOTEL GULLFOSS

The Golden Circle is the most popular tourist attraction in Iceland, it comprises of Thingvellir National Park, the great Geysir and Gullfoss waterfall. Each of the three stops are distinct and together they make for an interesting daytrip that covers a variety of scenery. It is easy to include more activities such as snowmobiling, river-rafting, horse-riding or visiting local farms.

For travellers starting their trip in Reykjavík who wish to fully explore the Golden Circle before continuing their travels to other parts of Iceland, it makes sense to stay at Hotel Gullfoss. This is a moderately priced hotel which is very close to its namesake, the famous Gullfoss waterfall (eng. Golden Falls) and a short drive away from Geysir and the surrounding smaller geysers.

Guests at the hotel can walk along the canyon of the river Hvítá to Gullfoss waterfall. They can also book tours comfortably at the reception to get to know the surrounding area and South Iceland better.



GULLFOSS is a beautiful waterfall often seen with a rainbow over it on a sunny day. It is easily accessible and a local favourite. It is situated on the Hvítá river (eng. White River) that has its origin at Langjökull glacier. Nowadays, more than half of the tourists who visit Iceland make their way to Gullfoss. A century ago, there was serious talk about building a dam to generate electricity at Gullfoss. Einar Benediktsson, a famous Icelandic poet, was one of the businessmen involved. Sigríður Tómasdóttir, a young woman who lived at the Brattholt farm, where Hótel Gullfoss is now located, fought for many years against these destructive plans. She has been called Iceland's first environmental activist and fits right into the long list of women who have been—and still are—fighting against the brutal destruction of nature all around the world.



GEYSIR is a hot spring that used to erupt regularly but has been inactive for some years now. Its name is the origin of the word geyser that describes this type of steam spout. Its smaller neighbour, Strokkur, erupts frequently and is a hugely popular attraction. The Geysir hot spring area is geothermally active, with hot water bubbling underground.



ÞINGVELLIR (eng. Thingvellir or Parliamentary plains), is an incredible place and notable for two reasons. Firstly, it is a UNESCO cultural world heritage site and major events in the history of Iceland have taken place there. The early settlers realised that they had to have the rule of law in their young society, so in the year 930 they founded a parliament at Þingvellir, called the Althingi. It is one of the oldest parliaments in the world.

The second reason is geological. Þingvellir, has been a nature reserve since 1928 due to its unique tectonic and volcanic environment. The faults and fissures of the area show the rifting of the earth's crust. Here you can see the tectonic

plates of North America and Europe meet and drift apart. Usually this happens below the surface or under the ocean but at Þingvellir it is clearly visible and you can walk between the plates.

Hotel Gullfoss is close to these attractions and more. It provides reasonable rates and clean rooms. Their restaurant also offers Icelandic cuisine and serves dinner. Both the restaurant and rooms are decorated in simple Scandinavian style and have a beautiful view over the valley.

-KT



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EXPERIENCE THE GLACIERS

Arcanum Glacier Tours take you on an unforgettable trip

Arcanum Glacier Tours is a qualified glacier tour operator with almost twenty years experience in taking customers up on the magnificent Mýrdalsjökull and Sólheimajökull glaciers. Under Mýrdalsjökull glacier, the Katla volcano lies dormant. The glacier is the 4th largest in Iceland and covers about 600km². The ice is on average 250 metres thick.

Arcanum's main services are Snowmobile tours, Glacier walk tours and ATV Quad bike tours. All the tours start at the Arcanum base camp, where they fit you with the relevant gear and go over safety instructions.

The Snowmobile tour is excellent for first time riders. Everything you need for a safe and comfortable ride is provided. Safety is the keyword with Arcanum so, before they head up onto the glacier, they give you a short briefing.

When the visibility is good, the view from the top of the glacier is awesome and there is some time available for photography.

Tour length: Total 2 hours (1 hour snowmobile + 1 hour glacier truck transfer)

Glacier Walk is another tour which they are very proud of. After providing you with the necessary equipment and a short lesson in ice walking, the tour begins. The route crosses amazing terrain with crevasses, sink holes and ice ridges.

Tour length: 2 or 3 hours

Quad biking. After gearing up, you head down to Sólheimasandur, the black beach with volcanic sand which is derived from glacial outbursts of the Katla volcano. On the way down to the beach they cross a few small rivers. The view towards the glacier and down to the coastline is awesome. On this tour, a stop is made at the famous aircraft wreck which has been sitting on the sand since 1973.

Tour length: 2 hours

Glacier walk and the south coast. The tour starts with a pick-up in Reykjavík. The drive takes you along the beautiful south coast of Iceland where the landscape changes dramatically along the route. At the Arcanum base,

everyone gears up and starts the ice walk across the dramatic glacial landscape. On the return to Reykjavík, you make a stop by Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss, two magnificent waterfalls by the south coast.

Tour length: Total of 10 hours, with a 3-hour glacier walk.

ATV AND THE SOUTH COAST. The tour starts with a pick-up in Reykjavík. On the way, you explore the beautiful south coast. At the Arcanum base, everything is ready for the quad biking and you go over safety instructions. On this tour, as on the ATV tour, you're able to enjoy the amazing view up to Mýrdalsjökull glacier, and along the coast all the way to the small Dyrhólaey peninsula, a much-visited tourist site on the South Coast.

Tour length: 10 hours, 2 hours ATV.

-KT



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DINING OUT AT *Icelandair's Hotel Klaustur*

Don't let Kirkjubæjarklaustur's tongue twister of a name (church-farm-cloister) intimidate you - even Icelanders use its more informal nickname, Klaustur. Armed with this new-found knowledge, consider a visit to the tiny village that has been in existence since the year 1186. Full of interesting history, geology and folk tales, Klaustur is a popular stopping point on the main south road and indeed, one of the only places where you and your car can refuel between Vík and Höfn.

Walk-ins welcome, but reservations are always good

Icelandair Hotel Klaustur's restaurant and bar, which opens from 6:00pm to 9:30pm, is not just for hotel guests; walk-ins are

welcome and it's a great place for a healthy and relaxed dinner. Talented head chef Einar Björn Halldórsson is a keen proponent of the Slow Food Movement and his cooking is a reflexion of this philosophy: his new summer menu focuses squarely on making use of a variety of ingredients from small-scale food producers located in the vicinity.

A menu for all seasons

The famed Arctic char is bred right here in a free-flowing stream of oxygen-enriched glacial waters that have been naturally filtered through layers of lava in the nearby Vatnajökull Glacier. The fish, which figures prominently on the restaurant's menu, tastes something like a cross between trout and salmon, is favoured by many chefs at top restaurants around Iceland.

Tempting your purse and palate with reasonably priced options

The 2017 summer menu offers a tempting range of starters, soups and main dishes and even tasty vegan options such as the mushroom pattie with broccoli salad and carrot purée. For the budget-conscious there are reasonably priced main dishes such as the grilled Klaustur Arctic char with dill hollandaise, baby potatoes, fennel and leeks. Flavourful and local are keywords here as some of the ingredients travel no more than perhaps 5km at most and arrive at the hotel at their peak of freshness.

Speaking of freshness, many of the herbs and greens used in the kitchen are picked fresh daily from the hillsides around the hotel. Slow food at its best!

What to see in Klaustur

Just a few minutes' walk from the hotel lies a small but beautiful pine forest at the foot of a double waterfall known as Systrafoss (Waterfall of the Sisters). Here you can picnic, hike to the top of the falls or just do a bit of 'forest bathing' in this genuinely peaceful location, amidst some of the tallest trees in Iceland. The village was the site of a convent of Benedictine nuns from 1186 to 1550 and both Kirkjubæjar Abbey and the waterfall

and lake (Systravatn) above the village refer to this abbey. Magnificent hikes and day trips to places such as Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon and the Laki Craters are all close by while the snowy, jagged peaks of Skaftafell and Vatnajökull Glaciers beckon in the distance.

Loving the new look!

The hotel has been undergoing some recent renovations; a new colour scheme of soft greens and greys and modern geometric patterns grace the café/bar and echo the moss and lava of the surrounding countryside. Extra touches such as l'Occitane bath products in every room, good Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, and a copious breakfast buffet to greet you in the morning are some of little perks that will make your stay just that much more enjoyable. When the weather is fine, (which does happen in summer!), you can enjoy an espresso coffee, or maybe an excellent Icelandic IPA craft beer out on the patio.

Hotel manager Sveinn Heiðar Jenson, who received his training in Switzerland, does a fine job with his staff who are friendly, welcoming and attentive to guests' needs.

Enjoy your visit to Icelandair's Hotel Klaustur. -ÓB

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THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

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

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

Heroes Saving a Home

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

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii which, in 73 AD,

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

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

A Museum as a Mirror

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

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m² museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman



Island's Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a height of 220 metres out of the blue, not existing before its eruption.

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

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

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



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GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND AROUND THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Thrastalundur Restaurant & Mini Market

Located on the banks of the gently flowing Sog river just 10 minutes north of the town of Selfoss, Thrastalundur is a kind of one stop shop— stylish restaurant, mini market, pizza parlour and a family-oriented place that both parents and kids can really enjoy.

Just a 40 minute drive from Reykjavík

What's impressive about Thrastalundur is it's an unusually well thought-out concept. The list is long—a spacious and stylish restaurant with seating for 100, a mini market that stocks not only the basic necessities of life (toilet paper, shampoo, milk etc.) but fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh bread delivered daily, soft serve ice cream, premium coffee,

sandwiches and even Icelandic chocolate souvenirs. Out on the terrace, comfortable seating overlooks an enclosed grassy area with playground equipment for the little ones, where patrons can dine "al fresco" while enjoying the sublime views of the river and the mountains beyond. On chilly days or nights, guests can enjoy their meal, cozying up under blankets, while gas heaters radiate their warmth from above. On weekend evenings there is live music in candlelit surroundings that brings the ambience up to stellar levels.

The restaurant

Thrastalundur is well known for its 15 different kinds of pizzas, to eat in or to take out, and baked on the premises in a gorgeous wood-fired brick oven. A classic Icelandic meat soup, served with homemade sourdough and herb butter, fresh fish dishes and beautiful salads are just some of the choices on the



menu at Thrastalundur. Healthy choices on the kids' menu include lamb soup and an inventive "create your own plate" option that children love.

Break out the Brunch

No less than four different kinds of brunch are offered from 11 am to 4 pm on weekends—the Classic, the VIP Champagne Brunch, the Vegetarian, and a kid's brunch. They all sound scrumptious with tempting options such scrambled eggs, American pancakes and maple syrup, Berry boost and Lemon-Lime skyr mousse, among others.

Whether you're staying at a nearby hotel, an Airbnb, or are just on your way around the Golden Circle, a stop at Thrastalundur is highly recommended. -EMV



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THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

Hotel Borealis, a Countryside Hotel with Style and Soul

While travelling in Iceland during autumn, the weather and the sun's changing light create a unique atmosphere in the countryside. Famous poet Rilke found appropriate words for this time of contemplation and retreat: "Lay your shadows upon the sundials, and o'er the isles allow your winds to vent".

Enjoying Northern Lights

As darkness returns in autumn, the Northern Lights start illuminating the night skies and, as Hotel Borealis is situated far away from light pollution, the darkness makes them shine even brighter. There is nothing like soaking in the hotel's hot tub after an exciting day as the Northern Lights dance above you!

In Nature's Heart

Hotel Borealis, just a few kilometres from the charming town of Selfoss, offers the serene silence of an elegant countryside retreat while activities and bustling life are on hand a short distance away. The welcomingly neat white houses have been tastefully furnished by blending last century's Icelandic antiques with modern style and they prove to be so cosy you might never want to leave!

Offering 20 comfortable rooms with



bathrooms, cosy bungalows for families and a small villa, Hotel Borealis is able to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

The hotel has a special room for conferences and events and 'Hlaðan', a renovated barn that is a perfect location for a

romantic Icelandic country wedding. Hotel Borealis also serves well as a calm retreat for writing a book or contemplating the magic of the Icelandic changing light. When the autumn sun pours out her golden beams on the heather and red leaves, nearby Þingvellir National Park turns into an enchanted island. Cuddle up in a traditional wool sweater and take a stroll through the famous former site of Iceland's parliament, discover Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir on a day trip, try golfing on the nearby course or fishing in Lake Úlfjótvatn. Then, with daylight slowly fading, return to Hotel Borealis for a marvellous dinner, served on antique tables in the spirit of good, old Icelandic hospitality. The chef prides himself on only using local products such as highland lamb, arctic char from Lake Þingvallavatn and vegetables grown in the area's greenhouses for his delicious meals. -DT

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HELLISHÓLAR COTTAGES, GUESTHOUSE AND HOTEL

A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



Set in one of the most idyllic locations in South Iceland, Hellishólar offers a variety of accommodation for the weary traveller who is looking for a good night's sleep in peaceful surroundings.

The sprawling Hellishólar property is located 17 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótslíð, a picturesque farming district sheltered by three glaciers: Mýrdalsjökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull.

Cosy Cottages

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólar's 25 popular, fully-furnished cottages? Each cottage can sleep from 3 to 6 people and has a small kitchen for making your own meals. If you prefer, you can also have your meals in the on-site restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

So Many Choices!

At Hellishólar there is also a guesthouse and a brand new hotel called 'Hotel Eyjafjallajökull' with 18 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, all with ensuite bathroom.

A Glorious View of Nature

The views from Hellishólar are, in a word, stunning! In winter, when the Northern Lights are visible, one has only to step outside the door and look up. The lack of light pollution makes Hellishólar an ideal location



for Northern Lights viewing.

In summer, the long days bring optimum opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólar—trout fishing on the lake, salmon fishing from the river that runs through the property and enjoying a round of golf on the 18 hole golf course. Hellishólar is the perfect

base from which to explore South Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

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A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro

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

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

Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which has become known as the 'Mecca of Icelandic wild game', with its lamb, fish, seafood and game caught in the wild. His menu

is seasonal and features exotic dishes that can be made from reindeer, goose, duck, cormorant, guillemot, puffin, minke whale or pan-fried arctic char. Always on the cutting edge, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his bilberry skyr mousse with crow berries and rhubarb.

Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt', he can take his pick of the choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden, providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil, red and blackcurrants. The lamb and venison come from N.E. Iceland and are known for their delicious flavour, fed on mountain herbs. The Arctic char are caught fresh from either Lake Þingvellir or Lake Apavatn daily.

In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, right beside the lovely natural sauna, steam baths and pool at the Fontana Spa. The 45 minute scenic drive from



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



Lindin Restaurant

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REFRESHING VÍK

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, and 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*



Halldór'skaffi

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HARMONIOUS HJARÐARBÓL GUESTHOUSE

A Personal Touch in a Special Part of South Iceland

Hjarðarból Guesthouse is a family-owned business situated in a beautiful part of the Ölfus district, which has the feel of being far from the bustle of Reykjavik, but it is just a short drive away. The guesthouse offers 21 comfortable rooms ranging from doubles to family accommodation, and the owners debuted a hot tub facility on the property this past

summer that was a huge hit with guests. Taking a soak after a long day of exploring the region is an ideal way to relax and recharge for the next day of excursions.

Delicious Jams

Guests will also find a delicious breakfast buffet with homemade jams prepared by the owner, which is a favourite among



guests. Visitors are often thrilled to learn that jams are available to purchase in the lobby, and take a tasty souvenir of their visit home with them.

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. This delightful house was built in 1950 and represents the history of the area. The owners are renovating at least four rooms that will be ready by Christmas, focusing on tasteful décor and the comfort of first-time and returning guests.

Consider Hjarðarból Guesthouse for a home-away-from-home experience in South Iceland. -JG



Hjarðarból Guesthouse

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STRACTA HOTEL HELLA

A New Hotel on Iceland's South Coast



Located in the peaceful village of Hella in South Iceland, Stracta Hotel is one of Iceland's newest hotels, catering for every budget. Built in 2014, the hotel gets high marks for its ability to incorporate a pleasant, modern look seamlessly throughout its well thought out concept and design.



A Room for Every Budget

The hotel encompasses a wide variety of room options—from high-end deluxe suites, each with its own private hot tub and well-stocked mini-bar, right down to budget rooms with shared facilities. There are also studio apartments and spacious cottages, with simple self-catering facilities that are perfect for families with children. Whichever you choose, you can always count on comfortable beds, free access to the hotel's hot tubs, saunas and wi-fi throughout the hotel.

Northern Lights Prime Time

Stracta Hotel's prime location, situated far from the light pollution of the bigger towns, allows guests a fabulous opportunity to view the Northern Lights from October through April. Imagine yourself lounging in a cosy hot tub, glass of wine in hand, as the Northern Lights swirl through the skies

above. Should the auroras happen to make their appearance while you are sleeping, a wake-up call can be arranged so you don't miss this experience-of-a-lifetime event!

Healthy Food Choices Abound

Food options and choices are varied at Stracta Hotel. The bar and bistro located on the ground floor is where you can order healthy sandwiches, salads, cakes and deserts, coffee, teas and a variety of wines and spirits. They also offer asian food. Guests will enjoy the panoramic views of the surrounding countryside from the second floor dining room where a buffet style dinner is served every evening.

When the weather is fine you can take your dinner out onto the balcony, or sit outside on the patio below, where you can enjoy the long summer nights. Planning a day out? Why not purchase a freshly-made packed

lunch from the bistro to take with you on your journey?

Health, Wellness and Activities

Experience Iceland via a wide range of activities that can be arranged at the front desk. Horse riding tours, local farm visits, super jeep tours of nearby Eyjafjallajökull volcano or even an exciting helicopter tour over the most famous South Iceland sites are all possibilities. Rental cars are offered at a special price for hotel guests. Fancy a massage or healing treatment? Stracta Hotel is well connected! Local therapists make themselves available to hotel guests and offer massages, meditation, Reiki and cranial-sacral massages.

Hotel Stracta welcomes you!

-EMV



Stracta Hotels

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HÓTEL SMYRLABJÖRG

The Icelandic Country Hotel Experience

Imagine bedding down for the night, under a warm duvet, in the middle of the Icelandic countryside. Here, underneath the vast canopy of the Vatnajökull Glacier, there's a refreshing quality to the stillness out here in the "middle of nowhere."

As Icelandic as it gets

Hotel Smyrlabjörg is a working farm where six generations of the same family have lived since 1850. As is typical for many buildings in Iceland, it's not the outside, but the inside that really counts—spacious rooms with comfortable beds, clean and fresh linens,

friendly staff, coffee, tea and hot chocolate to be enjoyed in the common areas and a large, hot breakfast buffet that is served every morning.

Local and fresh

The restaurant at Hótel Smyrlabjörg focuses on fresh, local ingredients and everything is homemade as much as possible. The lamb comes straight from the hotel's own grass fed herd of sheep, while the potatoes, the beef and the eggs come from nearby farms. Fresh fish and langoustines are purchased directly from the fishing boats that dock in

the nearby fishing village of Höfn. Dinner is served in the large dining room that looks out over the vast landscapes that surround the hotel.

Hotel Smyrlabjörg is located 34km east of Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon and 45km from the town of Höfn in Hornafjörður. In winter there are local adventure companies that offer ice cave exploring or snowmobile tours on the glacier and there are many possibilities for doing a spot of hiking near the hotel, both in summer and winter. -EMV

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DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

Jökulsárlón Boat Tours tours Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

There are few glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none more awe-inspiring and accessible than the renowned Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, situated at the head of Breiðamerkulljökull outlet glacier on the peerless Vatnajökull Glacier.

Sail Among the Icebergs

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



Coffee with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where you can get homemade soup with bread, fresh 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 fireworks shows on earth. The event, held annually in late August, starts at 11.30 pm, with 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 over 25 square km (9.6 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 300m (984 feet) deep, five 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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RESEARCHING ICELAND'S PUFFINS

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands studies Iceland's puffin population, and reports dire findings

Birdwatchers are delighted when they visit Iceland, as there are more than 300 species of birds that can be seen around the island. Iceland serves as a stopover for birds migrating between North America and Europe. Popular bird species are Gyrfalcons, Great Northern Divers, Harlequins, and Barrows Goldeneyes.

However, the birds that have become synonymous with Iceland are the adorable puffins, with their black and white bodies, bright orange feet and colourful red, blue and orange beaks. Puffins are remarkable swimmers and divers, able to stay underwater for over 2 minutes and surface with many small fish in their beaks. While exceptional in water, puffins are known for their uneven landings on land, which is part of their charm. It's possible to see puffins during the summer in many areas including the Westman Islands, Grimsey, the Látrabjarg cliffs in the Westfjords, Hafnarhólmi in Borgarfjörður Eystri, and Papey.

About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain, according to Erpur Snær Hansen, the Director of Ecological Research at Náttúrustofa Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands was founded in 1996 and has a team of scientists



conducting research on environmental and wildlife issues. Erpur has been investigating the puffin population of the Westman Islands since 2007 and has some startling data regarding Iceland's puffins.

If winter surface sea temperatures remain at current levels or higher, Erpur says, then much of the puffin population of south and west Iceland will disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. "We go around Iceland twice a summer to measure chick production," says Erpur. "We also study their diet and environment."

Iceland's puffin population has been struggling largely due to lack of food.

"They predominantly eat two species of fish around Iceland—capelin and sand eel," says

Erpur. "The sand eel population collapsed in 2003-2005 and has not recovered yet, and we believe that is a real problem." The main hypothesis the agency is working on is that warmer winter ocean temperatures are lowering young sand eels' survival as they exhaust their wintering energy reserves prior to the spring food appearance. The spring bloom has also been greatly delayed over the same time period. Lack of fat fish has caused famine for some colonies of Iceland's puffins.

The impact is clear. Adult puffins must forage farther and come back with fewer fish for their young. Researchers are seeing puffin chicks starve, nests abandoned, and fewer adult birds breeding.



About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years, at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain. Suðurlands —(South Iceland Nature Research Centre).



"This has occurred before," says Erpur, explaining that the population dynamics are linked to a periodic warming cycle called the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO). Indeed, waters surrounding Iceland warmed for about 35 years, and then cooled off for another 35 years, and puffin populations have correspondingly dropped, then recovered. However, it appears to be different now. Ocean temperatures have now climbed as

much as two degrees since the last cold period, but similar to the last warm period (1920-1964). Now the spring bloom is very late but it's timing in the last warm period is unknown.

The puffin chicks

are feeling the impact. Even when the current warming cycle ends, around 2030, it won't perhaps be cool enough, depending on the effects of global warming. "The warming is definitely felt in Iceland," he says. "It makes things happen fast, and the birds are suffering."

Because of the declining puffin population, the government should consider some changes, says Erpur. "The hunting is unsustainable," he says. "We need to rethink our management system and base it on scientific measurements and on being sustainable, similar to the fishing industry here. Something needs to be done."

Puffins impact tourism as well, and that's something the government need to consider, says Erpur. "Many people come from all over the world to see Iceland's puffins during the summer months," he says. "It's a big part of business when you think of whale and puffin tours. Puffins are worth more money to the tourist industry alive rather than dead." And that goes for restaurants in Iceland. "Seeing puffin on the menu at some restaurants is both embarrassing and sad," he says. "These birds are important and we're losing them. There needs to be a shift in thinking to help preserve puffins." An easy and responsible solution for the government would be to ban the trade of game. -JG



ICELANDIC TIMES

Icelandic Times is an ambitious magazine, published in five languages, for the multitude of visitors Iceland receives all year round. Icelandic Times emphasizes everything that can be considered Icelandic – the people, the food, tourism, industry and in fact anything that might give visitors a better picture of the country and its people.

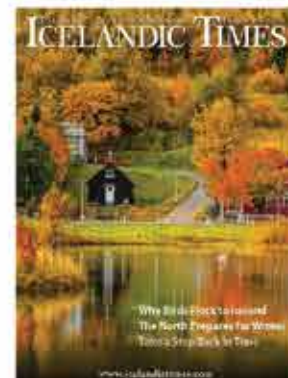
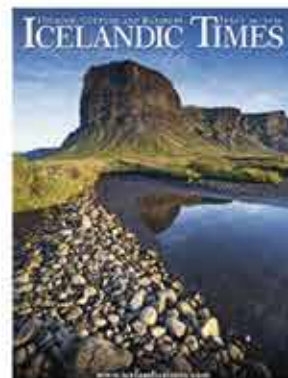
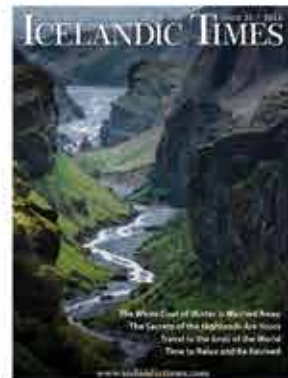
As you may know, Iceland has a lot to offer and there are countless individuals and companies who have meticulously laboured for years to make your stay more

memorable. Hundreds of mountain trails and caves have been mapped out, dozens of jeeps have been modified, millions have been spent on logistics, and thousands of sweaters have been knitted, just for you.

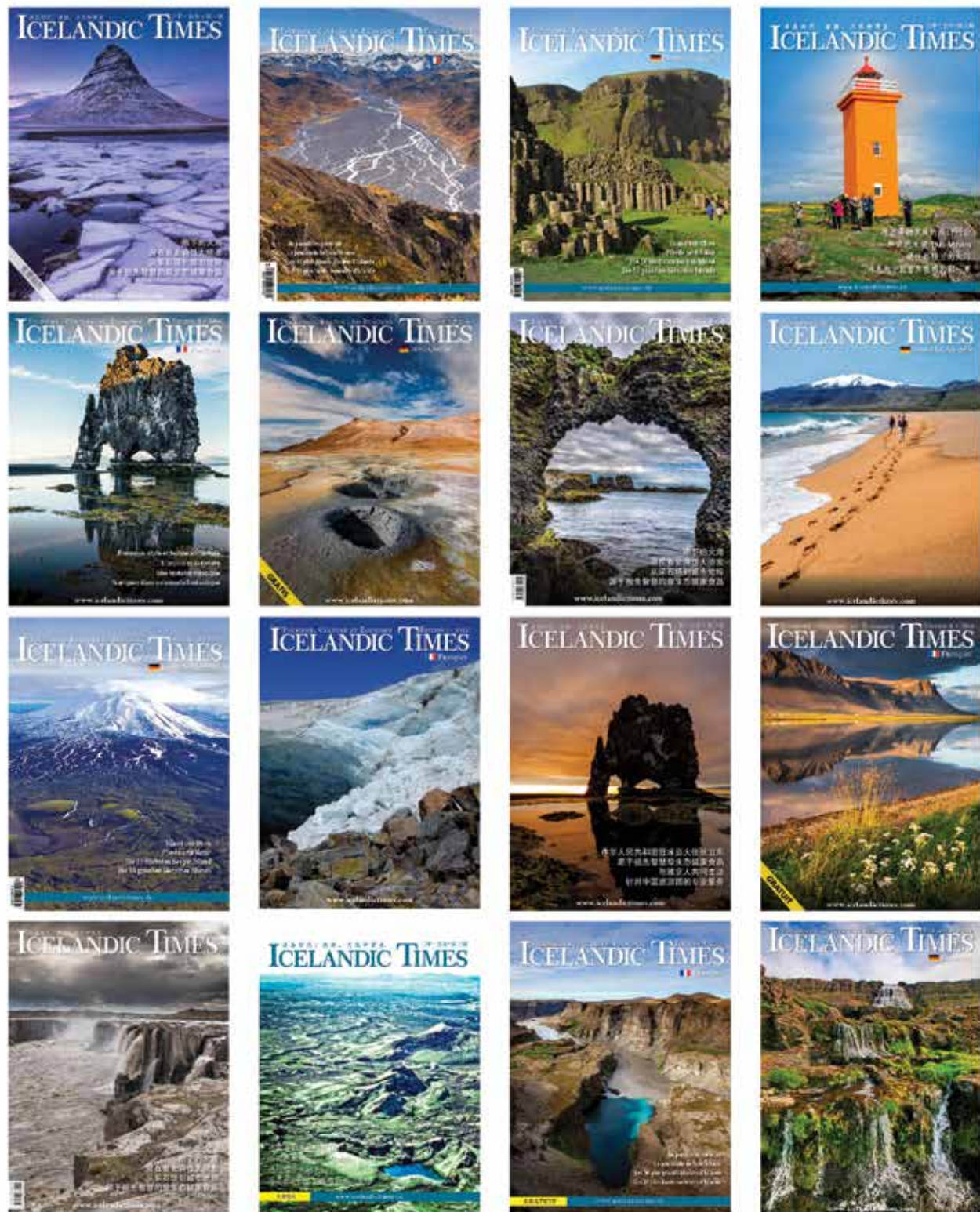
We hope you enjoy reading about these people and that this magazine will be helpful in making your stay more enjoyable.

Ólafur Þ. Þorsteinsson

Managing Editor and Publisher



IN CHINESE, FRENCH, GERMAN...!



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