



TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

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China's 70th Anniversary  
A Close Relationship  
Geothermal can Save the World  
Moving Mountains in China  
Opening Huge Fish Markets

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China in Asia is almost 10 million square kilometres with 1,400 million inhabitants. Iceland in Europe is 110,000 square kilometres with 360,000 inhabitants. There are more than 4,200 Chinese for each Icelander. Yet despite these amazing figures, ties between the countries have, in a quarter of a century become close and friendship deeper with mutual respect the core of their relationship. The nations have much to learn from each other, not least their rich cultures and innovation.

China celebrates the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic and this edition of Icelandic Times is dedicated to China and the two countries' amazing ties. The Chinese have discovered Iceland. Over 100,000 Chinese tourists visited Iceland last year. Tianjin Airlines are starting scheduled flights between the countries. Icelandic Times and the Chinese Embassy are co-operating closely on connecting the countries as can be seen in this

edition. Icelandic Times is also working with AliPay, the world's most popular mobile phone payment solution with 870 million users. AliPay handles more than 70% of Chinese payments through mobile phones. Iceland opens up to Chinese tourists through QR codes in the Icelandic Times magazine and the colossal Chinese market opens up to Icelandic firms.

China and Iceland established diplomatic relationships almost 50 years ago, in 1971. China soon opened an Embassy in Iceland, which in turn waited almost a quarter of a century to open its Embassy in Beijing in 1995, just as a phenomenal economic rise was taking place in Iceland and China was taking its giant steps towards prosperity. Now, as China celebrates its 70th anniversary, the ties are stronger than ever.

For both nations, the future is bright.

Einar Th. Thorsteinnsson



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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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# BEST OF ICELAND

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# REYKJAVÍK





# THE *Iceland-China* MODEL SAVING THE WORLD?

*Interview with  
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson,  
former President of Iceland*

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland [1996–2016], was born in 1943 in the town of Ísafjörður (Fjord of Ice) in Iceland's remote Westfjords. Isolated, out at the farthest point in the High North, until World War II, Iceland was one of the world's poorest nations, still under the Danish rule of King Christian X. .

Iceland's rise is one of the 20th century's biggest adventure stories ...

## **Iceland's silent revolution**

A silent revolution was taking place in Iceland in the 1930s. Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, started using geothermal water to heat houses instead of coal, which was responsible for the heavy

pollution that turned the skies black. They began drilling for hot water in the 1940s – which intrigued UK Prime Minister, Winston Churchill at the time. They began harnessing glacial waters in the 1960s, creating abundance of electrical power and springboarding the country's industrialisation.

Fifty years after Reykjavík municipality had started the geothermal revolution, the groundwork was laid for the 'big leap', with the Geothermal Power Plants at Svartsengi (Black Meadow) that created the magical Blue Lagoon, and Nesjavellir (Peninsula Fields) just south of Pingvellir (Parliamentary Fields), where the world's oldest and longest running national Parliament was founded in AD 930.

These power plants were Iceland's crown jewels, generating electricity and producing hot water for district heating. Iceland had become the cleanest country on the Earth and a world leader in geothermal energy. Living standards rocketed to the world's top five.

Iceland's first PhD in political science

In 1962, the young Grímsson had gone as a student to Manchester, England to study and became Iceland's first Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Science in 1970. He returned to Iceland and in 1973 became the University of Iceland's first professor of Political Science. He served as a member of the Althing, Iceland's Parliament, for the People's Alliance between 1978-1983. He was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and became President of Parliamentarians for Global Action, receiving the Indira Gandhi Prize in 1986. He then served as finance minister 1988-1991 and was re-elected to the Althing and served from 1991-1996, when he was elected the country's President. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson served as President of Iceland from 1996-2016. He succeeded Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who in 1980, was the first woman elected Head of State. The four focal points

## **The four focal points**

I sat down with the former President at Reykjavík's Hilton hotel in late August. It is three years since Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson stepped down from the Presidency. However, he is very active with the annual Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavík. When Ólafur Ragnar was elected President of Iceland in 1996, a new millennium was approaching; the 21st century was just around the corner.

"In the first years of my Presidency I pondered what would matter most to Iceland in the coming century. I came to the conclusion that four main issues would dominate; global warming; geothermal energy; the Arctic and the rise of Asia. So, in my second New Year Address to the Nation, I started to discuss some of these issues," Mr. Grímsson says.

On 1st January 1998 President Grímsson addressed climate change and advocated Iceland taking a lead among the nations as dramatic melting was taking place in the Arctic. "We Icelanders should lead international demands for immediate radical measures to counter climate change, embrace cooperation among nations, advocate abandoning fossil fuels and promote new technologies of environmentally friendly energy. Joyfully we should embrace opportunities in the Century of the Environment as we tackle projects that present themselves with our wit and knowhow."

## **World leader in Hydro- & Geothermal Energy**

President Grímsson stressed Iceland's unique experience as world leader in Hydro- and Geothermal Energy, abandoning coal and oil for heating. In September 1998, in a speech at Rovaniemi University in the north of Finland, President Grímsson put forward the idea of Arctic cooperation. "Few were in attendance; scholars and nerds. There were many sceptics but I was convinced that this was the way forward," he stresses.

Emerging Asian markets, with China's and India's populace growing middle classes and colossus economies, offered huge opportunities. To prosper and stay on top of the world, Iceland needed to keep its focus on the East, as



*Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, former President of Iceland*

well as what was happening in Europe and America, the President argues.

"It was imperative to create a vision of Iceland's role on the global stage in a new millennium. The US had become our most important trading partner in the middle of the 20th Century. New challenges were imperative as Iceland defined its role in the 21st Century. Asia's phenomenal economic rise could be a similar springboard for Iceland as had been the case with the US fifty years before," President Grímsson says.

## **Outspoken on the rise of Asia**

During these years Mr. Grímsson was outspoken on the rise of Asia, with India and China becoming economic powerhouses. He advocated closer relationships and trade deals with Asia. He was much criticised for his stance by those who wanted to join the European Union as the EU had started its expansion to Northern & Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union in 1991. While Sweden and Finland joined the EU, Iceland joined the European Economic Area in 1995 along with Norway but refused full membership of the EU. The energy rich Norway, Iceland and Switzerland went their separate ways among the European nations.

## **Personal tragedy & a letter to President Jiang Zemin**

However, personal tragedy was to strike as the First Lady, Guðrún Katrín Þorbergsdóttir, became seriously ill with leukaemia. In the summer of 1998, she

flew to Seattle for treatment but sadly passed away later that October.

While staying at Guðrún Katrín's bedside at the hospital in Seattle, the President started working on an extensive letter to the then President of China, Jiang Zemin. President Grímsson already had close ties with Indian leaders and had a great personal relationship with the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi but was less informed on China. He had gone to China in the early nineties with former Prime Minister Steingrímur Hermannsson as a member of what they called the 'Hermannsson's delegation'. In Shanghai they were shown a Lego-model of skyscrapers, reminiscent of Manhattan and their hosts were adamant that Shanghai would be a thriving city in the 21st century.

The United Nations University Geothermal Training Program had been operating in Iceland since 1979 with many Chinese students. Iceland had opened an embassy in Beijing (Peking) in 1995. It became active in promoting geothermal solutions and assisted with establishing a geothermal laboratory in Beijing's port city, Tianjin. Then, at the turn of the century, the Icelandic geothermal company Enx advised on the geothermal heating of the Olympic village in Beijing (Peking). However, the relationship between the two countries was about to go to the highest levels.

In his letter to President Zemin, President Grímsson proposed co-operation between the nations on many of the issues which would become



important in the 21st century; including clean energy transformation to combat climate change. China was experiencing economic growth unparalleled in history as hundreds of millions were coming out of poverty and the middle-class grew at a rate never seen before. China was also seeing the peaceful return of Hong Kong from Great Britain and of Macau from Portugal.

### President Grímsson's trip to India

President Grímsson was invited on a State Visit to India in the year 2000, at the turn of the new millennium. India showed President Grímsson exceptional respect. He was the first President of Iceland to visit India and was warmly greeted by K.R. Narayanan, President of India.

The same year he got engaged to Dorrit Moussaieff and they were married on President Grímsson's 60th birthday in 2003. Iceland's new First Lady was born in Jerusalem and raised in the United Kingdom from a young age.

### President Zemin's visit to Iceland

In June 2002, after four years had passed since the letter was written, President Zemin came to Iceland on a State Visit. The two Presidents went to Nesjavellir Geothermal Power Plant. President Zemin, an engineer himself, and his delegation, many of whom were also engineers, were highly impressed at what they saw. Green Energy had increasingly become a pressing issue as China's oil and coal consumption had rocketed and black skies full of pollution were overwhelming its cities.

President Zemin's visit to Iceland was very successful, to say the least, and President Grímsson's letter turned out to be the foundation of future relationships between Iceland and China. Nesjavellir is an engineering masterpiece and the visit made a lasting impression on President Zemin.

### China fast tracks Geothermal Energy

When President Zemin arrived back in China, inspired by the Icelandic model, he gave orders to fast-track Geothermal Energy to replace oil and coal for district

heating. China was going to copy the Icelandic model. In 2003 President Zemin stepped down and Hu Jintao became his successor. China was emerging as a major world power on the global stage.

### Presidential visit to China

In 2005 Mr Grímsson made a one-week State Visit to China, accompanied by 400 fellow countrymen, including many business leaders, travelling by Boeing 747. The Icelandic President met with President Hu Jintao for the first time and also Premier Wen Jiabo as well as other dignitaries. President Hu had been in

office for two years. "Having established close relationships with China during President Zemin's time in office, my visit to China was highly successful and President Hu continued where President Zemin had left off. As well as visiting Peking, we visited Qingdao and Shanghai. It was an amazing experience as the Lego model I had seen on my visit in the early nineties had materialized into real skyscrapers, with people everywhere on the streets. The Chinese are truly exceptional people. They think long term and 50 years are, in their mind, a short time span," President Grímsson says.



*President Zemin and President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson*



*President Hu and President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson*

### Grímsson meets Xi Jinping in Peking

President Grímsson went again to China, this time attending the 2008 Olympics in Peking, where the Icelandic handball team had reached the final of the handball event. At a luncheon, President Grímsson met the future President, Mr. Xi Jinping, for the first time. "I asked Mr. Xi a question on what he thought were the most pending issues facing China. I found his answer especially interesting and I have often quoted his answer: "Our mission is to create prosperity for our people without harming others."

### Crisis in Iceland & Icesave Referendums

However, just a few months later, disaster struck. The Icelandic banks collapsed in October 2008. Iceland was in desperate need of support. The collapse of the banking system was the largest experienced by any nation in economic history. The country came under economic attack by the UK with Brussels' support and was put on the UK terrorists list. Europe demanded billions of dollars for so-called Icesave accounts in the UK and Netherlands. The old colonial powers

put on an ugly face. The US turned its back on Iceland.

The leftist government that came into power in February 2009 wanted to appease Europe and applied for membership to the European Union and agreed to the UK's demand to pay the Icesave reparations. The Althing twice passed bills to agree to Europe's demands. President Grímsson twice refused to confirm the bills. The Icelandic Nation, as a consequence, twice went to the polls in national referendums. The nation twice refused the bills, basically refusing to pay the bankers' reckless negligence that was jeopardising the nation's independence and threatening to cast it into poverty. The stakes couldn't be higher. The Icelandic nation's right to refuse payments was later confirmed by the European EFTA court.

Iceland turns to China in hour of need Iceland was in need of a friend. "China's support during Iceland's hour of need must never be forgotten as Europe, as well as the USA turned against the country. One of the primary leaders of the Federal Reserve simply stated: Iceland is not any longer in the US area of interest," President Grímsson comments.

"I wrote a letter, after consultation with then Prime Minister Geir Haarde, to President Hu Jintao outlining Iceland's difficulties. It was by no means a foregone conclusion for China to assist tiny Iceland—a western nation and a member of NATO. Subsequently, a currency agreement was signed between China and Iceland and China later sent a high-ranking delegation to Iceland.

The preoccupied Icelandic media, with their focus on Brussels, did not pay attention to this unprecedented act of friendship. However, China's support did not go unnoticed in London, Washington, Berlin, Brussels and Scandinavia's Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Helsinki—all countries that had turned against Iceland. China was a staunch supporter of Iceland within the International Monetary Fund, as the European nations made crisis loans to Iceland conditional on payments of billions of dollars of Icesave demands. Iceland refused and China stood by Iceland in the IMF at these times of crisis. The following year China's President of the Central Bank paid Iceland a visit. The signal was as clear as daylight. China is a friend of Iceland.





*President Hu Jintao greets President Grímsson and First Lady Dorrit Moussaieff*

India, too, showed Iceland exceptional respect by again inviting President Grímsson on a State Visit, this time in 2010, when he was honoured with the Nehru Award. India's President Abdul Kalam had been to Iceland in 2005. The respect Asia's most populous nations were showing Iceland was out of the ordinary, to say the least.

### Xi Jinping & Relativity of Size

Xi Jinping became President in 2013. He went on high profile visits to the United Kingdom and the United States and addressed the Global Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Times were changing. The same year, Iceland became the first European country to sign a Free Trade Agreement with China. Washington, London, Brussels and Berlin took notice. The Agreement was signed as Iceland's left-wing government's bid to join the European Union was collapsing due to the EU's insistence on taking control of Iceland's fishing grounds and thus turning the results of the Cod Wars on their head.

### Arctic Circle Assembly

China received observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013 on the initiative of Sweden's Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt,

with US Secretary of State John Kerry's agreement. At the same time, President Grímsson launched the international Arctic Circle Assembly. Held annually in Reykjavík, its mission is to facilitate dialogue among political and business leaders, environmental experts, scientists and indigenous representatives. The Assembly has been a huge success. "China has been a prominent attendee at the Arctic Circle Assembly," President Grímsson says, and continues, "People ask why the world's biggest and most powerful nations should be talking to tiny Iceland. The answer is straightforward. Size doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether you come from a nation of 300 million or 300 thousand. It matters what you have to say. Iceland's geothermal knowhow is unique. China is copying Iceland's model with dramatic effect. It's part of China's escape from oil, coal and black skies. The model could help China to move away from pollution as it saved Iceland," Mr. Grímsson says.

He points out that approximately 50% of energy consumption is for heating and cooling cities; with oil and coal overwhelmingly heating houses and water. If mankind masters city pollution, the battle against global warming will be won. The Iceland-China model could

contribute to saving the world. Arctic melting leads to violent storms in China and around the world. Higher sea levels threaten cities and even nations. Science has changed public perception and awareness. As a rising economic power on the world stage, China needs energy and raw materials. Its leaders are aware of the challenge as are the public. The protection of the environment has become a major issue. The Icelandic leadership on the Arctic is there for all to see.

### Arctic Green Energy and Sinopec

In spite of the political storms in Iceland in 2008 which delayed the implementation of the geothermal model, the tide was not to be turned on Iceland-China cooperation. In 2011 Arctic Green Energy emerged under the leadership of Haukur Harðarson, who had settled in Saigon, Vietnam in 1992. The mission was to export Iceland's success in geothermal energy. Haukur joined hands with the Sinopec Group – China's largest and the world's 3rd largest company.

An agreement of co-operation between Arctic Green Energy and the Sinopec Group was signed, witnessed by Icelandic Prime Minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir and China's Premier, Wen Jiabo. The leaders were keen to follow the geothermal journey as they believed it had something special to offer the world. Sinopec Green Energy was founded and President Grímsson would visit Sinopec Green Energy in China. Haukur Harðarson would later say, "President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson's role in building the geothermal relationship between Iceland and all of Asia cannot be overstated. As a head of state, he stood out among his peers as a man of vision and passion, with a strong credible voice for environmental affairs, long before it became fashionable."

### Sinopec Green Energy's phenomenal success

As we approach the third decade of the 21st century, the Icelandic-China Geothermal model is gathering pace beyond belief. Sinopec Green Energy's success in China is phenomenal; in fact, revolutionising China just like

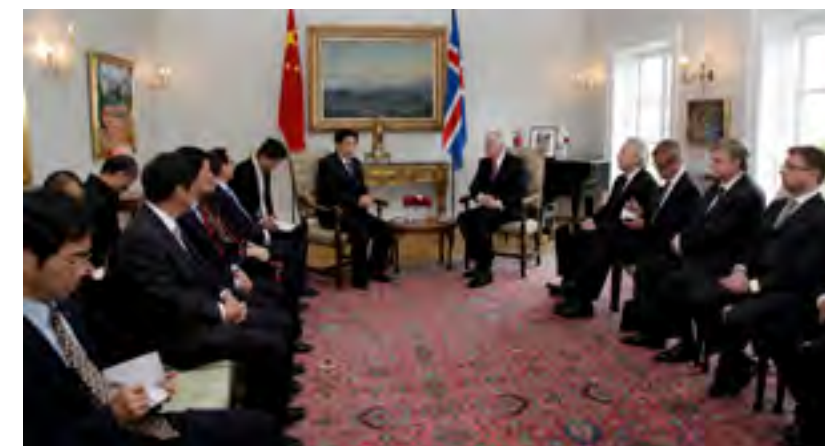


*Vice Premier Ma Kai with President Grímsson 2013*

it revolutionised Iceland in the 20th century. In just a few years, Sinopec GE has become the world's largest geothermal company and drilled over 520 wells and started operations across 60 cities and counties in China; mostly in Hebei, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong and Tianjin, now working in Xiongan city outside Beijing; China's first "smog free city" is emerging as a global showcase of sustainability.

### China's geothermal revolution

Sinopec Green Energy operations have reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dramatically. SGE has close to 50 million square metres heating capacity, serving more than 2,000,000 customers with 399 heat centrals. All in just a few years. Sinopec GE has proven that the most effective way of reducing air pollution and greenhouse emissions is to replace oil and coal with district heating systems driven by geothermal energy. China is emulating Iceland's miraculous rise to good effect



*A meeting at Bessastaðir, residence of Iceland's Presidency*

and is itself being revolutionised by the Icelandic model.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson stepped down as President of Iceland in the summer of 2016. A few months later, he was invited to China to witness the Sinopec Green Energy miracle with his own eyes. The reason was the 10th

anniversary of geothermal cooperation and the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iceland and China. It was their way of saying thank you, President Grímsson, for the Iceland-China model that may be turning out to be saving the world.

*Author: Hallur Hallson*



# CHINA'S GLORY IN 70 YEARS



1<sup>st</sup> October, 2019 marks the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. In 1949, when the People's Republic was founded, the Chinese people faced a devastated country that needed to be rebuilt from scratch after decades of warfare and chaos.

After decades of unremitting endeavours and dedication, the Chinese people have forged ahead as one and made great strides that have truly impressed the world. The past seven decades have

witnessed remarkable achievements in China's development. The nation has made a historical transformation in terms of social productivity and comprehensive national strength and delivered initial prosperity to its people, who were formerly struggling to meet their basic living needs.

From the founding and building of the People's Republic to the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy and the shifting of focus to economic development, China has moved away

from revolution to reform, from a planned economy to a market economy and from isolation to all-round opening-up. Four to five generations of Chinese have, going through twists and turns, probed a way forward. Thanks to 70 years of hard work and dedication, China has turned from a weak and impoverished agrarian country with backward productivity into the world's second largest economy, the largest industrial manufacturer, and the largest trader of goods, creating bright prospects for the great renewal of the Chinese nation.

## China has become the world's second largest economy from scratch.

Last year, China's GDP hit 90.03 trillion yuan (about 13.14 trillion U.S. dollars), accounting for 16 percent of the world's total, which was 175 times higher than that of 1952. The average annual growth of China's GDP stays at 8.1 percent over the past almost 70 years. Last year, the growth rate of GDP stayed at 6.6 percent, seemingly slower compared with its own record-breaking miracles over the years, yet it was worth noting that it was still well above those of the G7 economies, and the added value of China's GDP per year was worth more than Australia's whole economy. It is even more of a global significance to realise that China accounted for nearly 30 percent of the worldwide increase in gross domestic product over years, becoming truly the leading engine of world economic growth.



*With Mao Zedong as their main representative, the Chinese Communists led the Chinese people to secure a victory in the new democratic revolution, founded the PRC and established the basic socialist system. The photo shows at 3pm on 1st October, 1949, Mao Zedong announcing the establishment of the PRC's central people's government during the founding ceremony.*

China's fiscal strength has improved remarkably during the past seven decades, leaping to 18.34 trillion yuan last year, compared with 6.2 billion yuan in 1950. China's foreign exchange reserves soared up to 3.07 trillion U.S. dollars at the end of 2018, topping the world for the 13th straight year.

## China has become the world's largest industrial manufacturer

As early as in the 1940s, Chairman Mao Zedong began to emphasise the importance of developing industries, envisioned the transformation of a country with an underdeveloped agriculture-based economy into an advanced industrial country with an independent and complete industrial system. China began industrialisation in the 1950s. During the first three decades of the PRC, Chinese people tightened their belts to develop the industrial sector. But it wasn't until 1978, when China introduced a raft of economic reforms and restructured the industrial sector, that it began to shift the priority from heavy industry to light industry, and adopted a strategy aimed at improving people's livelihoods, seeking an overall development of industry, opening up to the outside world, and promoting the development of diverse economic sectors. China's entry into the WTO in 2001 ushered the country into the globalisation



*China has been pushing forward the supply-side structural reform since 2015. This photo, taken in November 2016, shows the automatic floating glass production line at a glass factory in Shabe, "China's city of glass", in North China's Hebei Province. Through technical transformation, innovation and talent introduction, the factory has built a batch of production lines with advanced equipment.*

era with the second revolution in China's social productivity. Driven by exports, investment, and domestic consumption, China grew into an international manufacturing power. China today is facing the new challenge of upgrading its industrial structure, the ongoing supply-side structural reform, which could also serve as new opportunities for both China and the world.

Over the past 70 years, China's industrial added value has increased from 12 billion yuan in 1952 to 305.16 billion yuan in 2018, with an average annual growth rate of 11 percent, 970.6 times increase at constant prices. China's manufacturing industry exceeded that of the United States for the first time in 2010, becoming the world's largest manufacturing country since then. Currently, China is the only country in the world that enjoys a full coverage of all industrial categories listed in UN, and its output of over 200 industrial products ranks first in the world.



*China has vigorously implemented the rural vitalization strategy, renovating the rural environment and making villages take on a new look. Countryside tourism has become a new source of income. This photo, taken in June 2018 shows the scenery of Daimei Village of Dongyuan Township in Longhai City of Fujian Province.*

Meanwhile China is also constantly strengthening its agricultural bases and highlighting the service industry for a more balanced development in upgrading its industrial structure. China's total grain output has increased from 113 million tons in 1952 to 658 million tons now. It is a staggering accomplishment that China is able to feed 20 percent of the world's population with less than 9 percent of the world's arable land. China's ever-growing

service industry has become the dominant driving force for national economic development and the top choice for foreign investors in China. In 2018, the service sector's contribution to China's economic growth approached 60 percent, and foreign direct investment in the service industry accounted for 68.1 per cent of the total FDI in China, up from 24.7 per cent in 2005.

## China's infrastructure in transport, telecoms network and energy production sees significant improvement over 70 years.

The country's transport network saw notable expansion from 1949 to 2018. By the end of 2018, the total railway operation mileage reached 131,000km, five times higher than 1949, while the high-speed railway network exceeded 29,000km,



*The Beijing-Shanghai high-speed railway, stretching 1,318 km, is the world's first railway for commercial use with a designed speed of up to 350km per hour. The railway has cut the travel time between Beijing and Shanghai to roughly four hours. The photo taken in January 2019 shows the debut of the extended version of the "Fuxing" high-speed train.*



*This photo, taken in May 2017 shows the successful maiden flight of China's first independently developed passenger jet C919 at Shanghai Pudong International Airport.*



accounting for more than 60 percent of the world's total. Civil aviation flight routes surged 734 times from 1950, to 8.38 million km in 2018.

Traditional telecoms networks and the modern communication network reported fast expansion. Postal service branches increased 9.4 times over the seven decades, reaching 275,000 across the country. China's mobile broadband network user base expanded to 1.31 billion in 2018, the world's largest mobile broadband network, and made it possible for China's 500 million tech-savvy consumers to buy almost everything from shampoo to cars online and, in most cases, by just using their smart phones. With the next-generation 5G network underway, Chinese consumers are expected to account for one-third of 5G-enabled handsets globally within five years. E-commerce is reshaping the retail industry through big data, cloud computing and the internet, and China is marching towards a technology-powered "new economy" fuelled by deep integration between the real economy and advanced technologies.

Robust growth has been registered in China's energy supply. The country's energy output totalled 3.77 billion tonnes of standard coal in 2018, increasing 158 times compared with 1949. China has taken a lead in renewable energy, which last year accounted for 38.3 percent of the country's total installed power capacity. China is now the world's largest producer, exporter and installer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles. China also



*The year of 2019 marks the beginning of the era of 5G licenses for commercial use in China. In the research centre of the China Automotive Engineering Research Institute in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, a technical worker uses a 5G-based remote control system in a simulation room to operate a car on urban roads.*

has a clear lead in terms of the underlying technology, with over 150,000 renewable energy patents as of 2016, 29% of the global total. With the aim of generating 15 percent of its energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2020 and 20 percent by 2030, the country plans to take proactive measures to further the expansion of facilities that can deliver high-quality renewable energy.

### China has made great leaps in developing basic and higher education as well as scientific and technological development over the past 70 years.

In the early days, after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the illiteracy rate in the country stood at 80 percent. Today the newly-added labour force has received, on average, over 13.3 years of education. Over the decades, compulsory education coverage in China has been expanded to the average level of high-income countries as the country has given strategic priority to education and included compulsory education in legislation. Today China has built the world's largest higher education system with the gross enrolment ratio in higher education rising to 48.1 percent from 0.26 percent in 1949.

Scientific and technological strength has been significantly enhanced. The period since 1979 has been a golden period for China's scientific and technological development with its atomic energy, space, high-energy physics, biology, and computer and information technologies reaching or approaching the international advanced levels. Investment in science and technology has been increasing ever since, and innovation output has been expanded. Expenditures in research and experimental development amounted to 1.97 trillion yuan last year, growing 138 times larger than in 1991. By the end of 2018, valid patents in China have reached 8.38 million and have ranked first in the world for 8 consecutive years. With the implementation of the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education, China has made a series of landmark achievements in science and technology, such as the launch of the Wukong dark matter probe satellite, the

Tiangong-2 space lab, the Mozi quantum science satellite, the Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST) and so on. The most recent is China's Chang'e-4 probe, making the first-ever soft landing on moon's far side.

### China has seen huge social development and tremendous changes in people's lives.

The past 70 years witnessed, not only notable economic development, but also remarkable social progress in China. The vision of people-centred development has seen a whole raft of initiatives to benefit the people, whose sense of fulfilment has grown ever stronger.

The wellbeing of the people improves continuously. The urban employed



*In October 2003, China's first manned spacecraft "Shenzhou V" was launched into space, realising the millennium dream of space flight of the Chinese nation. This marked China becoming the third country in the world to master manned space technology.*



*On 3 January, 2019, China's Chang'e-4 probe made a soft-landing on the far side of the moon. The photo was taken by a camera on the lander of the Chang'e-4 probe, showing the lunar rover Yutu-2 travelling on the moon.*



*In October 2015, Tu Youyou, a researcher with the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, won the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine as she discovered artemisinin, a drug that could significantly reduce the mortality rates for patients suffering from malaria. The discovery of artemisinin has saved millions of lives in the world, especially in developing countries.*



*The photo shows Tu Youyou, then a research intern, studying Chinese medicine with her teacher, Lou Zhicen, at the Institute of Chinese Materia Medica of the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences in the 1950s. On Dec. 10, 2015, Tu Youyou received the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.*

population leapt from 15 million in 1949 to 434 million last year. Citizens' per-capita disposable income stood at 49.7 yuan in 1949, and topped 28,200 yuan (\$4,030) in 2018, a growth of 59 times factoring inflation. The consumption expenditures surged from 88.2 yuan in 1956 to 19,853 yuan in 2018, growing 28.5 times in real terms. Decisive progress has been made in the fight against poverty. By the end of 2018, China's poverty-stricken population was reduced to 16.6 million, lifting over 800 million people out of extreme poverty since 1978, contributing more than 70 percent to global poverty alleviation in the past four decades. China is determined to eliminate absolute poverty by 2020.

China has vigorously promoted the development of various social undertakings over the years. With an enhanced public

cultural service in China, public libraries have reached 3,173 nationwide, nearly 57 times more than 1949, and television coverage has expanded to 99.3% of the whole population. The Chinese culture has attracted more and more overseas students, and by the end of 2018, there were already 548 Confucius Institutes and 1193 Confucius Classrooms in 154 states and regions worldwide.

The medical and health system improved markedly, the life expectancy of the Chinese people has increased from 35 years old in 1945 to 77 years old in 2018. The nation has built the world's largest social security system, with the basic old-age pension covering more than 90 million people and medical insurance covering 1.3 billion people.

China has honoured its commitment to environmental protection. The government and whole society have realized that clean waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets and implemented the fundamental national policy of conserving resources and protecting the environment. China is pushing forward the 'Beautiful China' initiative to create good working and living environments for the people and playing their part in ensuring global ecological security. As an active participant in the global course for addressing climate change, China has played a key role in securing the Paris Agreement, and China's CO2 emissions per unit of GDP had



*The Chinese government has been strengthening the social security system in big strides, and has gradually established a multi-tiered social security system that covers the entire population in both urban and rural areas. The photo, taken in January 2010, shows senior citizens over 60 years old in Wuchuan County of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region receiving the first batch of pensions under the new rural pension scheme.*

declined by approximately 46% by the end of 2017 compared to 2005.

China attaches great importance to the development of ecological civilisation and is implementing a revised Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China, which entered into force in January 2015. China firmly pursues a model of sustainable development, featuring increased production as well as healthy ecosystems, and follows a green production and consumption pattern that conserves resources and protects the environment.

### China has made notable progress in foreign trade and economic cooperation in the past 70 years.

Thanks to the reform and opening up, China has grasped the historic opportunity of rapid development of global trade and achieved leap-forward development ever since. Joining WTO in 2001 was another milestone in China's integration into economic globalisation. Since then, China has pressed ahead with reform and development by taking part in international economic cooperation and competition, unleashing market dynamics and effectively advancing the reform and opening-up process. In 2018, China's total goods imports and exports had reached 4.6 trillion U.S. dollars, expanding 223 times from those in 1978, and a huge jump from the 1.13 billion U.S. dollars recorded in 1950. As a champion of a multilateral trading system, China has been committed to the promotion of trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. Multilateral economic and trade relations and regional economic cooperation have seen rapid development, particularly in the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Since its inception over 6 years ago, the BRI has received strong



*This is an aerial photo of the Yuanjiang Wind Farm in Xing'an, Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region taken on July 3, 2017.*



endorsement and warm support of the international community, and has become a popular international public product. To date, the trade volume between China and countries joining the BRI has exceeded 6 trillion US dollars, with investment of more than 80 billion US dollars.

China has also become the most attractive destination for foreign investment. It works hard to maintain a fair, transparent and predictable business environment, slash restrictions on market access, and provide increasingly better services for all market entities, including foreign invested enterprises. In doing so, China has seen a huge increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). The materialized non-financial FDI reached 135 billion U.S. dollars in 2018, increasing 146 times from that in 1983 with an annual growth rate of 15.3 percent. As China opens more sectors to foreign investors with the full implementation of the pre-establishment national treatment and the negative list management system, the service sector has become a new magnet for foreign investment, attracting 68.1 percent of the total foreign investment last year.

#### China's international status has improved significantly

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China 70 years ago, the Chinese people have united as one and made remarkable achievements. On the diplomatic front, China has broken new ground, overcome many difficulties and travelled an extraordinary journey.

In the early years of the People's Republic, China faced a severe international situation. Affected by foreign blockades, China had little interaction with the rest of the world. In the 1950s, the country had only maintained contacts with the former Soviet Union, Eastern European countries and a limited number of western countries, like the Nordic countries. In the 1960s, more diplomatic relations were established with some countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. By 1969, only 50 countries had diplomatic ties with China. With the restoration of its lawful seat in the UN on 25th October, 1971, China ushered in a new wave of the establishment of diplomatic relations with a large number of countries,



*Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the annual high-level general debate of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly and delivered an important speech titled "Work Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind" at the UN headquarters in New York, the United States, 28th September, 2015.*

including with Iceland on 8th December, 1971. Since its reform and opening up in 1978, China's foreign relations have entered a new era of development. Since then China has actively integrated into the international community and the friendly exchanges between China and the rest of the world have increased significantly. At present, China has established diplomatic relations with 178 countries and has become the largest trading partner of over 120 countries and regions. It has reached 17 free trade agreements with 25 countries and regions. China has become the second largest contributor to the UN among all member states, dispatched the largest peacekeeping force among the five permanent members of the UN security council, and played an irreplaceable role in a series of international hotspot issues.

The guiding principles of China's foreign policy are to hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, uphold its fundamental goal of preserving world peace and promoting common development, remain firm in its commitment to strengthening friendship and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and to forge a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation. To this end, China actively advocates and promotes the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and works together with other countries to build an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that

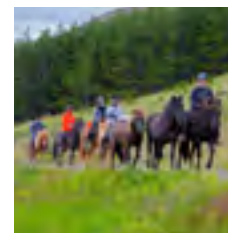
enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity. China firmly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace, respects the right of peoples of all countries to choose their own development path and endeavours to uphold international fairness and justice, never imposing its own will on others and opposing acts of interference in the internal affairs of others as well as the practice of the strong bullying the weak. Meanwhile, following the principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration in engaging in global governance, China stands for democracy in international relations and the equality of all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor. It maintains that dialogue and consultation should be pursued in the interests of peaceful resolution of differences and disputes among countries, and that the wilful use or threat of force should be rejected. China supports the United Nations in playing an active role in international affairs. In the meantime, China has actively developed global partnerships and expanded the convergence of interests with other countries. China will promote coordination and cooperation with other major countries and work to build a framework for major country relations featuring overall stability and balanced development. Guided by the principle of upholding justice while pursuing shared interests and the principle of sincerity, real results, affinity, and good faith, China will work to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries. It will adhere to the fundamental national policy of opening up and actively promote international cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative. In doing so, China hopes to achieve policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity and thus build a new platform for international cooperation to create new drivers of shared development.

China will remain on the path of peaceful development, work for win-win outcomes, uphold existing international systems and shoulder more international responsibilities. The Chinese people are willing to work together with all other countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind and contribute more to world peace and human progress.

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# THE AMAZING STORY OF ICELAND, CHINA AND *Ambassador Zhijian*

PHOTO: FRÍÐJÓFUR HELGASON

*Jin Zhijian – China’s Ambassador to Iceland – is not the average diplomat. He arrived in Iceland to become Ambassador in January 2018. „Ég man eftir þér,” he says in perfect Icelandic, meaning “I remember you”, as he greets me in the Chinese Embassy in Reykjavík, and continues: “You were a journalist at the State TV and TV2 back in the old days when I was a student at the University of Iceland”. Ambassador Zhijian is very forthcoming, open and friendly as he looks me in the eye. I am a little taken aback*

“It is true! I was a TV-reporter and you, a foreigner, remember after all these years”, I reply hesitantly. Ambassador Zhijian smiles and explains. “I arrived in Iceland in 1985 to study at the University of Iceland at the invitation of the Icelandic government. I studied Icelandic and English and was here for six years until 1991. I was chosen by the Chinese government to go to Iceland to study and worked in our Embassy as well before going to our embassies and consulates generals in London, England; Copenhagen, Denmark; Chicago, USA and Christchurch, New-Zealand. I returned last year, well prepared to take on the Reykjavík post, 27 years after leaving Iceland. You can say that I have been preparing for this dream job of mine for over a quarter of a century. You see, Iceland is my second home.”

What a way to start an interview! What they say is true. The Chinese do plan for the future. It is a gorgeous Thursday afternoon, September’s first Thursday and the weather outside is truly wonderful, as has been all this summer in Iceland. Ambassador Zhijian invites me and Einar Thorsteinsson, publisher of Icelandic Times, to seats in the Ambassador’s quarters of the Embassy. He sits beside us smiling, relaxed yet enthusiastic.

## Brand new Iceland

“Iceland really is brand new and has, like China, gone through incredible and amazing changes since I was here approximately thirty years ago. You no longer experience Iceland as an isolated island but rather, as a thriving, sophisticated country and Reykjavík an international metropolis. Amazing. I could hardly recognise the Embassy quarter and the Borgartún

area of banks and high-tech when I came back. It is a privilege, working to link Iceland and China as closely as possible, to deepen our nations’ co-operation”, Ambassador Zhijian says.

He points out Iceland’s advances which he states are for all to see. The fishing industry was vibrant but the progress and modernisation are beyond belief. It is highly sophisticated and has managed to increase the value of the seafood. The nation is reaping the benefits of hydro and geothermal energy, with powerful factories opening in the East fjords, North-East and South-West and increasing exports.

And there is the development of innovation in the Icelandic tradition of pioneering and the progress that has come along. “I’ve just visited Iceland’s Innovation Centre, where entrepreneurs are working on lowering carbon fossil CO<sub>2</sub> in cement. I don’t know how they are going to do it but I know it would be appreciated in China,” he says and goes on: “Iceland is neither big nor small. Iceland’s story is of huge success like China’s story is of huge success. My mission is to link China and Iceland as closely as possible and find new areas to deepen co-operation”.

## Chinese close ties with Iceland

Ambassador Zhijian points to e-commerce and China’s endless products on offer at incredible prices. However there many obstacles in the way which must be overcome. At times of climate change and protection of the environment, he points out that China is the largest manufacturer of cars in the world and would like to introduce electric cars to Iceland. He would like to find local partners to import Chinese cars.

Then there are infrastructure projects, such as building tunnels in the Eastfjords and Sundabraut, connecting Reykjavík to the west. China has amazing construction firms who offer exceptional prices. He points to Chinese construction workers’ successful involvement at Kárahnjúkar Power Plant. I ask Ambassador Zhijian about a meeting he had with the mayor of Þorlákshöfn regarding plans to build an international harbour on Iceland’s south-west coast. “There is strong interest at Þorlákshöfn and big ideas, like always in Iceland. It’s early days yet. We’ll see”, he answers and points out that China overseas investment in 2018 was \$130 billion, while Chinese investment in Iceland was only \$28 million and Iceland’s investment in China, \$143 million.

He points to the Icelandic-China geothermal model, which really took off after President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Iceland back in 2002. Arctic Green Energy’s venture with the Sinopec Group is a revelation, with Sinopec Green Energy becoming the world’s largest geothermal company. There are important regions in China that are rich in geothermal energy. The model leads to eco-civilisation. Besides China, there are certainly exciting opportunities in neighbouring Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

## Vice-President Mike Pence’s accusations

US Vice-President Mike Pence had been on State Visit to Iceland the day before. He had warned Iceland about China being a national security threat, specifically on Huawei technologies and infrastructure projects. Ambassador Zhijian states that accusations made by Vice-President Pence are not true and





*Ambassador Zhijian*

along with Luxembourg, to join and Switzerland has signed a memorandum of understanding.

“We stress that the Belt & Road is open to everybody interested. Iceland has been invited to join but no decision has been made. I hope Iceland will join like other European countries. The Belt & Road covers key areas of policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and closer people to people ties. It is no Marshall plan or strategic agenda. China is not seeking dominance. It simply wishes to increase trade beneficial to China and the world,” Ambassador Zhijian says.

#### China's incredible success

Chinese GDP – Gross Domestic Product – is 90 trillion Yuan, which is equivalent to over \$13 trillion. China's increase of 6.6% in 2018 equals Australia's entire GDP. China's development has been phenomenal. The middle class is 400 million, overseas trips by Chinese citizens number 170 million. Next year, Ambassador Zhijian argues, China is on the verge of wiping out extreme poverty. In its 70 year existence, China has lifted 800 million people out of poverty. The People's Republic was founded in 1949 but the first GDP figures are from 1952, when GDP was 68 billion Yuan and now it's 90 trillion Yuan. The GDP has grown 175 times at a rate of 8.1% annual growth. We have gone from an agricultural society to the world's largest industrial country. Life expectancy has gone from 35 years to 77 years. These are hard facts.

Iceland's and China's incredible rise In fact, probably no other two countries have gone through similar rise as China in the East and Iceland in the West. It is of great interest to ponder why these countries, that have established such close friendship, have made these immense inroads to prosperity despite natural challenges that create hardship. I believe it lies in the character of the nations, their hard work and proud histories. China has a history of five thousand years, Iceland a history of 1100 years. The importance of their rich cultures cannot be overstated and both peoples know where to head.

there is not a shred of evidence to support them. Huawei is a private company in China, expanding incredibly and now world famous. The Chinese government has never sought information from Huawei, nor does it intend to, he stresses and points out that both Icelandic companies Vodafone and Nova are using Huawei systems and smart phones to good effect.

“I myself am a long-time Huawei customer. I sincerely hope that Iceland will make its own decisions without third party interference,” he says and adamantly stresses that the Chinese don't want to cause trouble to local communities.

What about claims of the Chinese intentions in Greenland and Arctic interference, I ask Ambassador Zhijian. “China has no presence in Greenland. Chinese construction firms made their intentions clear that they were willing to take part in bidding of airports. Due to some reasons, they were excluded from bidding. China is a world trading country. We care

about the Arctic and have concerns about the effects of climate change on China, as well as the world. We are active in Arctic research and have a research base in Northern Iceland. We follow closely the possibilities of new Arctic sea routes. They say that, if routes open through the Arctic, it will save sailing times by 40% and costs by 30%. The Chinese shipping company, Cosco, has tested the route and the Snow Dragon icebreaker has made exploratory voyages”, he says.

#### We don't seek world hegemony

The Belt and Road Initiative was adopted by President Xi Jinping in 2013, involving infrastructure development in 152 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle-East and Americas. It refers to the road, rail and marine routes named the Silk Road Economic Belt. Iceland has been invited to participate but Vice-President Pence, during his visit, said that he hoped that Iceland would refuse. In March 2019, Italy became the first European country,



#### Far cry from the Soviet Union

Then what about one party rule and the democratic will of the people? “Take note of this”, Ambassador Zhijian replies and stresses. “The Chinese support the market economy and China is a far cry from the Soviet Union. It is correct that we do not see eye to eye on human rights. We truly believe that individual rights should be protected in line with communities and ethnic groups. The reason is the large population of 1.4

billion and immense size of the country. If we were to emulate western democracy, we would have a thousand parties and endless elections with consequent chaos.

We have nine political parties in China and, while it is true that the Communist Party is the ruling party, there are eight other parties in government. Decisions are made after consultations. We have the People's Congress. In the west, disagreements and political debates are part of the

system. We have different views on human rights and we ask our friends to respect that.

If you look at the rate of satisfaction made by foreign polls, there is 90% satisfaction among the Chinese population. People have confidence in the future, believing in open markets; relying on the government to secure justice for all, rich and poor”, Ambassador Zhijian says.



# EVOLVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1971

## Interview with Ambassador Ólafur Egilsson

PHOTO: FRÍÐJÓFUR HELGASON

Iceland and China established diplomatic relations in 1971. In February 1972, US President Richard Nixon met with Mao Zedong in what was described at the time as a geopolitical earthquake. China was opening up to the western world. China wasted no time in opening an embassy in Reykjavík, but it took Iceland almost quarter of a century to open its embassy in Beijing. In the meantime, Iceland's ambassador in Copenhagen, and later, a home-based Ambassador residing in the capital, Reykjavík, served as ambassador to China. Iceland finally, so to speak, arrived in China in 1995, as Hjálmar W. Hannesson became the first Icelandic Ambassador to China, with residence in Beijing.

### Ambassador Egilsson's tenure 1998-2003

At that point in time, Iceland itself was on its own march towards prosperity, in the fishing sector, with its sustainable quota system's success and the environmentally friendly geothermal power plants increasingly paving the way for industrialisation; both revolutionising the country.

Ólafur Egilsson became Ambassador to the P.R. of China in 1998, having already served in Paris, Brussels, London, Moscow and Copenhagen. He was to spend five years in Beijing. China soon became interested in Iceland's own brand of market economy and the Chinese leaders were intrigued with the country's extraordinary prosperity on the basis of the fisheries quota system and Iceland's strong position in the main fish markets in both W. Europe and the United States. Also, Iceland's leading role in the harnessing of geothermal energy appealed to Chinese leaders, bearing in mind the geothermal potential of China's huge landmass, where this important source of energy is known to exist in more than 3,000 locations.

"Our presence in Beijing led to relations between our two peoples growing tremendously, as China, on its march forward towards a market society looked to Iceland's version of capitalism as a huge success. Our cultural relations also grew, with prominent artists performing in Beijing, Harbin and elsewhere, art exhibitions taking place in Hong Kong, Beijing, Dalian, Qingdao and Xiamen, and the

medieval literary gem of our country, the Icelandic Sagas, poetry and novels being published. Fishing vessels for Iceland were built in Chinese shipyards, while fish processing machinery developed in Iceland was being installed in an avant-garde factory in Qingdao.

"I used every opportunity to draw attention to our geothermal expertise, and our willingness to share our experience with the Chinese. Also, I pointed to the benefit Chinese fish producers might find in cooperating with the long-established Icelandic marketing companies in the countries of Western-Europe and America, where the most favourable prices could be obtained for high quality fish products.

Chinese and Icelandic leaders in various fields increasingly exchanged visits, culminating in President Jiang Zemin's 3-day State Visit to Iceland in 2002. His visit to the technically advanced and highly modern Nesjavellir Geothermal Power Plant, where he was met by Minister of Industry, Mrs. Valgerdur Sverrisdóttir, and leading technical staff, proved a particular success", Ambassador Egilsson says in an interview with Icelandic Times.

### "We were busy to say the least"

When President Zemin returned to Beijing, he gave orders to fast track geothermal energy and basically implement the Icelandic model. Iceland-China relationships were at the highest level and the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, arrived on a State Visit in 2005.

"We were busy, to say the least," Ambassador Egilsson says, looking back on his hectic time in Beijing. "Icelandic experts had earlier assisted with establishing a geothermal laboratory in Beijing's port city, Tianjin. An impressive swimming pool was also built there, based on the geothermal resource, and became popular among the inhabitants. Now, the Chinese were looking towards the Olympics in Beijing in 2008 becoming a showcase for China's modernisation. Black skies were a major problem because of coal burning and that was to be tackled. Iceland's geothermal company, Enx, and the Reykjavik Geothermal company advised on the construction of a geothermal central heating system for Beijing's Olympic village. The project turned out to be a landmark project towards geothermal heating. A number of other cities and regions in China expressed interest in cooperating with Icelandic experts, in a desire to make an early use of their geothermal resources for the benefit of their people".

### Zoëga's visit to China 1981

The United Nations University Geothermal Training Program in Iceland had started back in 1979, supported by UN Secretary General U Thant. Chinese students began to arrive in Iceland and to date, approximately 90 have participated in the training program. Jóhannes Zoëga (1917-2004), Director of Reykjavik Geothermal company, had gone on a visit to Beijing and Tianjin already in 1981 where he lectured on drilling and geothermal heating.

"The trip was a big adventure, with the local people hospitable, friendly and eager to learn", he wrote in his memoirs. He visited Beijing's low temperature areas where they had drilled for warm water for industrial use. Each entity drilled for their own use. "I suggested



Presentation of Credentials in Beijing, March 1998: President Jiang Zemin and Ambassador Ólafur Egilsson discussing relations between China and Iceland, i.e. possibilities for increased cooperation on the harnessing of environmentally friendly geothermal energy and enhanced trading linked to the much shorter northeastern sea route between Asia and Europe.



Prime Minister Zhu Rongji greeting Ambassador Ólafur Egilsson in Beijing, 2002.



Icelandic Embassy staff outside Landmark Tower 1 in Beijing, where the chancery was located from 1998 (l to r): Yan Xuesong Assistant & Chauffeur, Zhang Lin Secretary, Gudrun Margret Thrastardóttir, Secretary, H.E. Ólafur Egilsson Ambassador, Ragnar Baldursson Counsellor, Petur Yang Li Commercial Counsellor.



Medieval Icelandic literature, the world famous Icelandic Sagas, as well as modern Icelandic poetry have been translated into Chinese.

they cooperate and form a company for accessing more water at economical prices. The engineers were quick to get the point", Mr. Zoëga wrote.

### Aviation Agreement 2003

One of Ambassador Egilsson's achievements in Beijing was to ensure the success of negotiations on an Icelandic-Chinese Air Services Agreement, initialled in Beijing in late 2002 and formally signed in Reykjavík in early 2003. The Agreement paved the way for mutual 10 weekly scheduled flights from three cities. Each country was to nominate destination cities. Iceland's Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson signed the Agreement on behalf of Iceland and China's Aviation Minister Yang Yuangyuan for China. Mr. Ásgrímsson maintained at the time that the Agreement was more favourable for Iceland than other European countries had signed.

Icelandair's direct flights between Iceland and China have not yet materialised, due to lack of suitable long-range aircraft in its fleet and problems getting permission to overfly Russia, Icelandic Times understands. However, Icelandic media has reported that Tianjin Airlines is planning three flights a week to Iceland from Wuhan via Helsinki, Finland, beginning later this year. Approximately half a million passengers travel annually with Finnair from destinations in China to Helsinki. "Chinese tourism in Iceland is steadily growing and the relationship between the countries in all fields can certainly be labelled a very successful one", concludes Ambassador Egilsson, who retired from the Foreign Service in 2007, but has remained active in various spheres, such as promoting exchanges with China as Chairman of the Chinese-Icelandic Cultural Society for a period of 3 years.

Author: Hallur Hallsson



# THE ICELANDIC GEOTHERMAL MODEL IS CHANGING CHINA

*Arctic Green Energy's joint venture with China's Sinopec has become the world's largest and fastest growing geothermal district heating company which is revolutionising China at time of Global Warming*

BY HALLUR HALLSSON, ICELANDIC TIMES

## A Piece of History

In 1930 the people of Reykjavík – ‘Smokey Bay’ – began to use hot water coming from the ground to heat their houses. The tiny capital was given its name when the first settlers saw the steam rising from hot springs. Coal burning pollution had become a massive problem, so the locals were turning to the hot water to heat houses. Iceland was poor and isolated out at the furthest point in the North Atlantic. In the mid-thirties, Austurbæjarskóli, an elementary school in Reykjavík, became the first building to be heated with geothermal energy.

In August 1941 during World War II, Winston Churchill visited Iceland after meeting President Roosevelt to sign the Atlantic Treaty. During his visit to Iceland, Churchill put up the V-sign for victory for the first time. At that point, the Nazis ruled Europe, bombing London and English cities, while Japan ruled Asia and occupied China.

The prospects were grim but changes were coming. Churchill marvelled at the locals' use of hot water which, he believed, was a sign for the future. He visited Reykjadal – Smokey Valley – to the East of the capital where they were drilling for hot water. It

was only natural to tap into it. The locals use had been limited basically to swimming in warm water pools and the women washing their laundry in the warm water around the country. That had been about it.

As houses were heated with the hot water, Reykjavík became the cleanest capital of the World. Little did they know that their drilling would springboard Iceland to the top of the world of geothermal energy. It would take time but slowly and surely the tiny nation progressed, though the road was quite bumpy at times.



Winston Churchill

## Industrialisation based on green energy

There are two main methods of harnessing geothermal energy. High temperature Geothermal with over 150° Celsius has traditionally been harnessed to generate electricity. The other method, the direct use of the geothermal water, is perhaps even more important and has been used for everything from house heating, to greenhouses, aquaculture and tourism.

In the late sixties – fifty years ago – Iceland was in a deep economic crisis as the herring had failed to migrate into Icelandic waters from the Norwegian Sea. Thousands of Icelanders migrated over-



Churchill visiting geothermal pools in Iceland



seas, mostly to Sweden but Canada and Australia as well. Iceland was in the custody of the World Bank. However ambitious industrialisation plans started to transform the country as Iceland began harnessing its powerful glacier waters and built its first Aluminium smelter.

In the late eighties construction began on the high-enthalpy geothermal system at Hengill Mountain by the Thingvellir National Park. The plant combined geothermal hot water for heating and an electricity generating power plant for Reykjavík. Nesjavellir geothermal power plant was in operation by 1990. Iceland had become the geothermal world leader and living standards rocketed to the top five with the abundance of energy. Electricity generated from geothermal sources is now responsible for over 35% of Iceland's primary energy generation, with the rest of the primary energy generated from hydroelectric. Iceland was, until recently, the only country around the globe that generated 100% of its primary energy from renewables. Now Costa Rica has become the 2nd country of this prestigious club.

## Higher life expectancy

Since that time the geothermal district heating systems of Iceland have reached over 95% of all heated areas in the country. Geothermal is the only renewable energy that does not require batteries of some sort and therefore the only renewable suitable for heating and cooling cities, since

there are no batteries that can handle such tasks. As Icelanders soon discovered, geothermal has brought many benefits to the environment, public health and the economy. Older Icelanders will still remember the smog that covered Reykjavik on still winter days and the pollution that accompanied the import and burning of coal to stay warm. Medical studies have shown a higher life expectancy materialising with the elimination of coal. Respiratory disease cases dropped fast. On the economic front, Iceland is now saving significant amounts of foreign currency that would have been required to replenish the coal supplies needed previously every winter.

## Arctic Green Energy's partnership with Sinopec

In 2006 Enx China – which became Arctic Green Energy – was originally established by Reykjavík municipality Power Company and partners. This effort was a direct result of former Chinese President Jiang Zemin visiting his Icelandic counterpart Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who showed him the Icelandic geothermal infrastructure. The mission of the new company was to export Iceland's success and

leadership in Geothermal energy. The company in China was still small when Sinopec – the world's 3rd largest company – acquired the Chinese partner in 2009 and Haukur Harðarson acquired Enx China in 2011.

Sinopec Green Energy was founded with the Chinese side holding 51% and the Icelandic side 49%. Milestone agreements for the rapid expansion of the partnership were signed in Reykjavík by the chairmen of Sinopec Group and Arctic Green Energy. The signing was witnessed by Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir and Katrín Jakobsdóttir who, in 2018, became Prime Minister in Iceland, along with Premier Wen Jiabao on the Chinese side. President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson would visit Sinopec Green Energy in China. Iceland's leaders were keen to follow Sinopec Green Energy's journey as they believed the country had something special to offer the world.

## Phenomenal success

Sinopec Green Energy's success in China has been phenomenal; in fact, it has been revolutionising China just as geothermal energy revolutionised Iceland. SGE has become the world's largest geothermal



The start. Fu Chengyu and Haukur Harðarson sign the agreement attended by China's Premier Wen Jiabao, Iceland's PM Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir and present PM Katrín Jakobsdóttir



President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson visited Sinopec Green Energy





company and has drilled over 520 wells and started operations across 60 cities and counties in China; mostly in Hebei, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong and Tianjin and is now working on Xiongan; China's first "smog free city" emerging as a global showcase of sustainability.

"President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson's role in building the geothermal relationship between Iceland and all of Asia cannot be overstated," says Haukur Harðarson and continues. "As a head of state, he stood out among his peers as a man of vision and passion, with a strong credible voice for environmental affairs, long before it became fashionable. He has carried this torch with him to his new role as the chairman of the Arctic Circle, the global platform on Arctic Affairs. For us and our partners, the Arctic Circle Assembly has become our central and preferred platform when it comes to signing milestone agreements or sharing with the renewable energy world our work in China and elsewhere on the Eurasian continent."

#### China's geothermal revolution

Sinopec Green Energy operations have reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dramatically. It's the first geothermal company in China to apply large scale re-injection and owns some of the most valuable patents in the industry, including re-injection technology patents. SGE has close to 50 million square metres of heating capacity, serving more than 2,000,000 customers with 399 heat centres – all in just a few years. Sinopec Green Energy has proven that the most effective way of reducing air pollution and greenhouse emissions is to replace coal driven district heating systems with geothermal energy. Sinopec Green Energy is expanding to other branches of renewables in addi-

tion to geothermal. Geothermal will, however, as the only renewable available 24/7 and needing no battery storage, remain the backbone of such multiple renewable energy systems. Thus, Iceland's expertise and leadership in geothermal and clean tech has been extremely beneficial to China.

SGE leadership in China is not only in its market share (about 40%) but also in having shaped the industry. Its projects in Xiongan are now the official showcases for harnessing geothermal energy for district heating and geothermal exploration. The company was the first geothermal company globally to get carbon trading accreditation by the UN. It was the first to introduce large scale geothermal re-injection of used geothermal brine and is today owner of over 50 patents. The green energy potential has really been a surprise and the first officially recognised smog free city in Xiongan New Area outside Peking will be a benchmark for the future. China is emulating Iceland's miraculous rise to good effect and is itself being revolutionised by the Icelandic model.

#### The Iclander living in Saigon

The man behind Arctic Green Energy, Haukur Harðarson, and his family have been living in Saigon, Vietnam since 1992 with intervals, this time since 2008. Harðarson is educated as an architect. One of his last projects in Iceland was the Stock Exchange building in Reykjavík.

Arctic Green is based in Singapore and is working on assignments in Vietnam, Singapore, Kazakhstan and moving into Europe and Central Asia, working – as in China – with local partners.

IcelandicTimes met with Mr. Harðarson at AGE offices in Reykjavík. "The Sinopec Group and its subsidiaries are a brilliant

partner and our co-operation has been exemplary. The Icelandic know-how is brought to the mix with results that really have been astounding. We've proven the concept. The geothermal solution, as one of the more important parts of the global green energy transition, is not only a viable way to take down the pollution-spewing chimneys but the most effective weapon in the global fight against air pollution and climate change."

Mr. Harðarson points out that approximately half of all energy generation is for heating. Cities consume 70% of all energy consumed and most of that is for the purposes of heating. As an example, when the energy use of an average home in the Northern hemisphere is studied, we find that over 80% is only for heating and hot water. The lights and the various electric appliances are only responsible for under 20%. "It goes without saying that it's a huge challenge to reduce carbon energy heating in our homes. That however is the way forward and Iceland's expertise has proven to be crucial," Harðarson points out.

#### Icelandic firms excluded

Arctic Green Energy and partners have received project loans from the Asian Development Bank but, as Iceland is the only country within the OECD not being a member of the Bank, Icelandic engineering companies can't be involved in projects financed through the Bank. "This is a strange situation and is keeping some of our partners, the brilliant Icelandic engineering companies, out of projects funded by the Bank. I strongly recommend to policy makers in Iceland that they resolve this and thereby support the growth of this valuable export industry," Harðarson says.

## L A P R I M A V E R A R I S T O R A N T E

LA PRIMAVERA IS ONE OF ICELAND'S LONGEST ESTABLISHED AND BEST ITALIAN RESTAURANTS, OFFERING HIGH QUALITY ITALIAN CUISINE MADE FROM THE FRESHEST INGREDIENTS AVAILABLE.



SITUATED IN A SPECTACULAR HARBOR ENVIRONMENT OVERLOOKING THE GULF OF FAXA AND HARPA MUSIC HALL.

LA PRIMAVERA — EST 1993

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## Interview with Guðni A. Jóhannesson, director general of Orkustofnun the National Energy Authority of Iceland

Orkustofnun – the National Energy Authority of Iceland – is based in the centre of Reykjavík at Grensásvegur — which, only about fifty years ago, was on the outskirts of the capital. Orkustofnun was formed in the late sixties, when plans were laid for harnessing the Þjórsá, Iceland's first glacier river, at Búrfell. The hydropower plant along with ISAL's aluminium smelter marked Iceland's industrialisation.

Orkustofnun is a government institute under the Ministry of Industries and Innovation. Its main responsibilities are to advise the Government of Iceland on en-

ergy issues and related topics, license and monitor the development and exploitation of energy and mineral resources, regulate the operation of the electrical transmission and distribution system and promote energy research.

### From bottom to top five in 50 years

Fifty years ago, Iceland was in deep economic crisis when the shoals of herring, that had boosted the economy for decades, failed to migrate into Icelandic waters from the Norwegian Sea. This led to thousands of Icelanders migrating overseas, mostly to Sweden but to Canada and Australia as well. However, the ambitious industrialisation plans transformed the country and ever since, Orkustofnun has been at the forefront of Iceland's hydro-power and geothermal industrial revolution. From being in the custody of the World Bank fifty years ago, Icelanders' living standards are presently in the top five worldwide.

Orkustofnun's director general since 2013 is Guðni A. Jóhannesson Ph.D. In the early seventies, Mr Jóhannesson went to Sweden to study engineering and in 1990 became a professor at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, leading the Building Technology Division. "The research facilities and the multidisciplinary research environment of Orkustofnun have given the institution a status as one of the leading geothermal energy research institutions in the world for over three decades," Mr Jóhannesson said when I sat down with him at Orkustofnun's headquarters at Grensásvegur. "Orkustofnun has been instrumental in the execution of government policy regarding exploration and the development of geothermal resources, and in advising communities, companies, individuals and foreign governments about their utilisation of these resources," he adds.

### Deregulation to meet new challenges

From the beginning of the 21st century, the Authority has undergone fundamental changes, with a major restructuring to meet new challenges, as the electricity and power transmission companies were separated. Mr Jóhannesson explains that: "The Icelanders unbundled the companies and now transmission and distribution are totally autonomous in operations from electricity generation. The energy companies are now decoupled from transmission and distribution of electricity. Thus electricity generation becomes a competitive industry."

Since 2003, steps have been taken to outsource exploration and monitoring services to ensure the financial independence and integrity of Orkustofnun. As a result of changes in energy legislation, the GeoScience Division was separated from the Authority and a new government-

owned institute was established under the name of Iceland GeoSurvey. Then in 2008, the Hydrological Service Division merged with the Icelandic Meteorological Service to form The Icelandic Meteorological

Office. Administration of the funding of government-financed research, surveying and monitoring remains with Orkustofnun, which also has the responsibility for filing research reports and data, maintaining



Guðni A. Jóhannesson,  
director general of  
Orkustofnun

PHOTO: FRÍÐÞJÓFUR HELGASON

# TINY ICELAND IS MOVING MOUNTAINS WITH CHINA IN THE GEOTHERMAL FIELD



databases and providing access to open domain information for all. Orkustofnun also runs a library with a unique collection of literature and research reports on geosciences and related energy exploitation.

#### United Nations University Geothermal Training Program

This brings us to an institute which is high on Mr. Jóhannesson's agenda and which has been in operation since 1979 and of which Mr Jóhannesson is now chairman of the board. The United Nations University Geothermal Training Program is run as a separate unit within Orkustofnun, based on a contract with Iceland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations University in Tokyo, which was established in 1975 on the initiative of UN Secretary General U Thant. The UN Training Program began offering fellowships for Master studies and Ph.D fellowships in 2008 and since that same year, the Icelandic Branch has been exclusively financed by Iceland whereas financing was equally split previously. That was a big statement by Iceland.

"We offer various courses and activities to students from all over the world. We are able to choose from all the expertise here in Iceland, which makes the program one of a kind. Teachers come in for whatever lectures or supervision are required, as we source specialists from Icelandic companies and institutions. Thus, each year we have about one hundred teachers working with the program," Mr Jóhannesson says, pointing out that in 2015, training in project management was added and since 2016, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals were integrated into all courses to fight climate change.

"The program has been providing short courses in East Africa on an annual basis for about 60 people of whom about 30 are from Kenya. Kenya is ranked 9th in the world in terms of the amount of electricity generated by geothermal energy. In fact they are fast approaching Iceland in terms of geothermal electricity generation. The same type of program has been offered in El Salvador for Spanish-speaking experts since 2006," Mr Jóhannesson says.



#### The Magic of Two Companies' Cooperation in China

The Icelandic company, Arctic Green Energy, was formed in 2006 with the mission to export the Icelandic success and leadership in geothermal and other renewables to Asia. Arctic Green Energy's success in China in cooperation with the Sinopec Group is phenomenal. Sinopec Green Energy was also established in 2006. It has become the world's largest geothermal company with 700 employees, having built 328 heat centrals and drilled over 500 wells across 40 cities and counties in China; mostly in Hebei, Shaanxi, Shandong and Tianjin.

Sinopec Green Energy is expanding to branches of renewables other than geothermal such as solar and wind. Thus has Iceland's expertise and leadership in geothermal and clean tech been extremely beneficial to China's huge market and green energy potential and it's the first

geothermal company in China to apply large scale re-injection. Sinopec Green is now working on the planning for the first officially recognized smog free city in Ziongxian City outside Peking.

"We are extremely proud of the tremendous work being done in China so far and are proud of having been able to be of assistance. In total more than 60 experts from China have been trained at the Geothermal Training Program In Iceland thus creating expertise in a field of extreme importance for China. But as China is now planning to exploit geothermal energy for heating and cooling of 26 major cities, a training programme will be set up in Beijing to provide the necessary human resources based on the experience and knowledge from the Icelandic training programme. This shows how a small country like Iceland can make a difference in helping the most populous country in the world to move mountains," Mr Jóhannesson concludes.





# ON POWER: *Hot in Iceland*

*Geothermal energy is on display  
at an interactive exhibition  
at Hellisheiði power plant*



Iceland sits on a hotbed of renewable geothermal energy that, in part, powers the island. Iceland is one of the top 10 countries in the world in terms of geothermal installed capacity, with approximately 20 percent of the country's electricity coming from geothermal energy. On a per capita basis, Iceland is the largest producer of geothermal energy. Travellers can learn about this fascinating energy source at the Hellisheiði power plant, which is just a 30-minute drive from Reykjavík. Visitors can opt to take an hour-long guided tour through the facility, learning about how Earth's heat can be sustainably harnessed.

## Important power source

ON Power, which operates Hellisheiði, supplies half of Iceland with its electricity and half of the Reykjavík area with its heating. The process isn't easy, but extremely worthwhile. Geothermal energy plants generate power by drilling holes about 2,000 metres deep into the Earth's crust. They tap into groundwater that has met with bedrock that was heated by the Earth's mantle. The water reaches a temperature of about 300°C, and the steam from the heated water powers turbines to generate heat and electricity.

## Iceland's unique location

Geothermal energy is most productive at the meeting of the tectonic plates that make up the planet's crust, which means that Iceland's location is ideal as the island sits on the meeting place of the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. What Iceland lacks in terms of fossil fuels, is more than made up for in renewable geothermal energy. In Iceland today, about 90 percent of homes use geothermal energy for heat, and Iceland is the only country in the world where 100 percent of its electricity comes from renewable energy.

## A focus on the environment

ON Power is not only focused on providing heat and electricity to Iceland's inhabitants. In fact, ON Power is committed to eliminating vehicle emissions in Iceland and the plant has been working on



infrastructure for electric vehicles and charging stations. Carbon neutrality is a big focus, with ON Power executives believing that geothermal energy could be used for realistic and sustainable energy solutions. Just one example is their CarbFix project where CO<sub>2</sub> is converted into minerals to prevent it from reaching the atmosphere.

Travellers are encouraged to visit the plant and learn about how Iceland, and ON Power, are trying to take on the challenge of climate change through renewable sources. Stop by Hellisheiði on your next visit to Iceland. —JG

[www.onpower.is](http://www.onpower.is)





**Geothermal Exhibition**  
Tel: (+354) 591 2880  
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# ICELANDIC CHINA SEAFOOD

## *led by Brim of Reykjavík*

### *Free Trade Agreement leads to Iceland's quest to China's huge markets*

**B**rim of Reykjavík is Iceland's largest fishing company, along with Samherji based in the north. Brim is Iceland's only major publicly listed fishing company. Its fleet of eight ships catch approximately 150,000 tons of fish per year.

When Iceland became the first European nation to sign a Free Trade Agreement with China in 2013, Brim took the lead within Iceland's fishing industry in exploring opportunities in Asia and in China specifically. Brim operates Icelandic China, a marketing and sales firm in Qingdao, where the Olympic sailing competitions took place, in addition to Icelandic Japan and Icelandic Hong Kong. The Chinese love seafood and it is estimated that they consume 37% of world's consumption and it is growing quite dramatically, outweighing Europe, North-America, Latin-America and Africa by far.

#### **Still early days in China**

Iceland has traditionally exported its fish to Europe, the United States and Russia. It is still early days for Icelandic seafood companies trading fish in Asia and Guðmundur Kristjánsson, CEO of Brim, stresses that the company is learning its trade in China. "Iceland has much to offer to the emerging markets in Asia. China is of specific interest to us. We need to learn to please the Chinese customers and handle the fish the way they like; whether it be fresh or frozen, whole or fillets. We firmly believe that the Chinese will take to our fish. The markets are huge and we know that the Chinese people appreciate quality seafood. It is basically a question whether we are quick enough learners to offer the quality and right products at the right time. If we are, then I'm confident

we will establish a long term commercial relationship with China. We certainly want to be part of China's march towards prosperity," Mr. Kristjánsson says.

#### **"We really do care"**

"We firmly believe that Icelandic fish are the best in the world. The Fishery Managing System is the key to Iceland's green sustainable fishing. The fishing industry has been revolutionised since Iceland won the Cod Wars back in the late seventies. We constantly pursue ways to improve the system and be responsible in our approach to Iceland's rich fishing grounds while delivering excellence and quality. We know what is at stake, since the fishing industry is of immense importance to the welfare of Iceland's inhabitants. We really do care," says Guðmundur Kristjánsson CEO of Brim.



*Guðmundur Kristjánsson CEO of Brim*





# ICELAND'S STRUGGLE FOR ITS FISHING GROUNDS

PHOTOS: KRISTJÁN MAACK

Iceland's rich fishing grounds in the High North of the North Atlantic reach an area beyond the Polar Circle more than seven times the size of the country. The British learnt to sail the high seas in the 15th century when they were fishing in Icelandic waters. That was before the discovery of America. After learning their trade in the High North, the British went on to sail the Seven Seas. Britannia ruled the waves. The Germans, French, Belgians, and Basques fished in the High North as well, as did the Icelanders in their tiny, open rowboats. Iceland was under Danish rule, a colony governed by Copenhagen.

At the beginning of the 20th century the European colonial nations started to send trawlers to Iceland's fishing grounds. The Icelanders themselves bought trawlers and put engines into their boats. Their quest for freedom gathered pace. The country of 100 thousand inhabitants became a sovereign nation in 1918 under

King Christian X and fully independent in 1944. However, by that time their fishing grounds were rapidly being depleted.

The Icelanders started their struggle to gain control of their fishing grounds, considered the world's best. In 1901 the Danes had granted the English rights to fish to three miles and, in reality, to fish as they pleased. In 1948 laws were passed for protection of fishing stocks. In 1952, as the treaty from 1901 finally expired, the Icelanders declared 4-mile fishing limit. The old European colonial powers, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Germany protested. The UK declared a landing ban on Icelandic trawlers sailing to British ports to deliver fish. Only a decade earlier, Icelandic sailors had risked their lives on the Atlantic bringing the starving British nation fish, defying Nazi Germany's U-boat threats. Hundreds of sailors lost their lives as their trawlers and boats were sunk.





Iceland's struggle for its fishing grounds took place at the height of the Cold War. Iceland, being a member of NATO responded with the unthinkable, or so London thought. Iceland made trade deals with the Soviet Union and started exporting fish to Russia, establishing close ties with Moscow.

In 1958 Iceland extended the fishery limits to 12 miles; in 1972 to 50 miles and in 1975 to 200 miles. Warships of the British Navy sailed into Icelandic waters to protect British trawlers against the Icelandic coast guard's tiny ships. Iceland, however, was not to be denied despite the might of the British Navy. Iceland won full rights to its fishing grounds with the Oslo Accord in 1976.

Iceland was finally free and in control of its fishing grounds, ready to pursue its destiny...

However, its own fleet was too large and overfishing was still a problem, even though foreign trawlers no longer fished in Icelandic waters. In the eighties, quotas were introduced according to Total Allowable Catch (TAC) issued annually, based on scientific research by the Marine Research Institute. The quotas were made transferable in 1990. Basically, it became the interest of the fishing companies to care for the fishing grounds, much like gardeners care for gardens. It is stipulated in the Icelandic Constitution that the people own the fishing grounds and the fish swimming in the sea. The fishing compa-

nies have rights to harvest fish according to the quotas they own and no single company is allowed to own more than 12% of the total quota.

Iceland became a world leader in adopting market solutions to manage its marine resources and continues to this day. The goal became clear: minimize cost and maximize revenues of fishing. In general, that meant making fishing as economical as possible; saving fuel, increasing product yields and productivity, enhancing quality, raising product value and caring for the fishing grounds. Today Icelandic fisheries are the most responsible and efficient in the world.

PHOTOS: KRISTJÁN MAACK







# CONNECTING ICELAND AND CHINA

## *A New Way of Doing Business*



*Danielle P. Neben,  
 Marketing Director  
 for ePassi in Iceland*

**I**n recent years Iceland has become an increasingly popular location for tourists in China and they can now use an innovative app called Alipay to facilitate financial transactions, as well as to help them navigate in a foreign culture. With a few touches on Alipay's app its users can see which stores, restaurants, hotels and tour companies are offering Alipay, with a description of their businesses in Chinese. Alipay's partner in Iceland, ePassi, has the goal to make their users' holidays more enjoyable and fulfilling and have introduced their solution to Icelandic tourist service providers. There are many Icelandic companies offering Alipay services all around the country.

[www.icelandictimes.com](http://www.icelandictimes.com)

### Over 820 million users

Since its launch in 2004 Alipay's total number of users has ballooned to over 820 million and is now the preferred method of payment in China, outnumbering sales made with cash, credit and debit cards. Seeing this development, Alipay has started seeking out partners outside the Chinese market, so that its customers can use a familiar setting for payments all across the globe. Alipay has partnered up with ePassi, a Finnish company, which helps connect Alipay users to tourist companies both in the Nordics and in Europe

### A familiar way of doing business

The Alipay app is quite convenient to use, as the user can simply scan a QR code provided by the seller and then complete the transaction in the app. Danielle Pamela Neben, Marketing Director for ePassi in Iceland, says customers who are accustomed to using Alipay in their own country are delighted to discover its availability while on holiday abroad. "It's a great way to facilitate mutually beneficial transactions. Chinese customers no longer need to worry about language barriers and using an unfamiliar currency. In fact, our numbers indicate that Chinese tourists spend up to four times more than they would otherwise when they can use Alipay."

### A bridge between cultures

Alipay isn't limited to making financial transactions, as it can help customers find service and goods providers and vice versa. By using the user's current location the app displays companies in the area that provide Alipay services. Iceland is thus divided into regions and when the user enters the region he will immediately be aware of where he can find what he needs. Danielle says that this can serve as a sort of communication channel between customers and businesses. "Companies can now reach the customers directly and display what they have to offer and even offer bargains, discounts and coupons. And customers can now find products they might not have found otherwise and find information about them in their own language."

### Safety first

Danielle furthermore says the Alipay app in Iceland can help Chinese tourists have a safe and positive vacation in Iceland, by getting useful information across to visitors. "Part of Iceland's charm is how untouched it is and the app can provide information and guidelines about how tourists can best interact with the often delicate nature. Iceland's ruggedness also means that special safety precautions apply and we can inform users about weather conditions, condition of roads, potentially hazardous areas and other safety risks," says Neben.



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[www.icelandictimes.com](http://www.icelandictimes.com)



# ICELANDIC AND CHINESE TWINNED TOWNS

The Icelandic town of Hafnarfjörður and the Chinese city of Baoding have been twinned in friendship since 1996. Tryggvi Harðarson, who was a town councillor in Hafnarfjörður at the time, and is now the district manager of Reykhólar in the Westfjords of Iceland, set up the arrangement and since then, several Icelandic companies have been working together with Chinese counterparts in Baoding.

Tryggvi Harðarson moved to China in 1975 and lived there for four years. “I first studied Chinese at the Beijing City Institute and then Chinese and History at Beijing University.

I decided to move to China because I thought it was an exciting country. At that time, the country was closed and there were many big upheavals taking place but when a scholarship was advertised for Icelanders to go to study there, I applied, got the grant, so decided to give it a shot and went out there. China was a very poor country at that time and different from what I was used to. However, China surprised me much more later when I saw all the changes and advancements that had occurred. At that time, there were few Western-style toilets, for instance. They were mostly just holes in the floor where you had to do your

business. I thought it was scary at first but then I got used to them but I would have a difficult time using them today. There were no refrigerators or cooling in general so it was very hot during the summer time.”

## Hafnarfjörður and Baoding

Tryggvi has good Chinese friends whom he met during his academic years in China. One of them lives in Baoding and when the idea of establishing a twin town relationship with a town in Iceland arose, that friend contacted Tryggvi, who was then a town councillor in Hafnarfjörður. That resulted in Baoding and Hafnarfjörður establishing a twin town relationship, in spite of there being an enormous difference in population between these two places. Hafnarfjörður now numbers almost 30,000 inhabitants, while the population of Baoding is about 11 million!

“The idea was that people could learn from each other’s cultures, even though they were living in different societies, always getting to know new things and attitudes by meeting other people. This did lead to some communication and business,” says Tryggvi, “but otherwise, the idea of twin towns didn’t really go very far, in reality. A number of Icelandic companies subsequently entered into business agreements with companies in Baoding, but there is not much formal communication between Hafnarfjörður and Baoding. I can cite an example of an Icelandic company that produces bedding and more that is manufactured in Baoding and also that Icelandic companies import, among other things, machines from companies in Baoding.”

## Education and Business

Tryggvi says that he personally was most interested in establishing more communication in connection with education. “Not much has happened in that regard. Residents of Baoding have gone to university in Iceland even



though it has not been through a twin town and my daughter studied in the city for a year. I have found that people may not have fully taken advantage of the opportunities offered by this twin town partnership. Although it is easier today than 15-20 years ago to do business with China, it could have been important to have had someone who held the hands of those who were thinking of doing business with China. Now there is a free trade agreement between the countries which offers great opportunities.”

## Geothermal Energy

Tryggvi also mentions geothermal cooperation, something Iceland and China have been working on together. “It has been over 20 years since I began discussing possible cooperation between the Icelanders and Chinese on geothermal energy, and since then many have come from China and there has been a strong connection between Icelanders and the Chinese people in geothermal development. For example, I was at a time associated with the Chinese who were studying at the United Nations University Geothermal Training Program in Iceland.

Baoding is, like Hafnarfjörður, a great sports town and many world champions came from there. I was very interested in establishing relationships in the sports field at the time but nothing came of it.”

## The trend is ahead

Tryggvi says that he really likes China because he knows the country very well and the same often happens to people who have studied in other countries. “I hope the peoples of the world can maintain good relationships. It’s always very unfortunate when you enter into a trade war. Countries’ methods of governing vary and there is a tendency for some of them to think they know better than others. The trend is moving forward and you feel things are improving and that is positive, no matter where you are in the world.”



# Seaweed Mecca OF ICELAND

*Reaping the Health Benefits of Seaweed and Kelp*

“I have sometimes said that Reykhólar is the seaweed mecca of Iceland,” says Tryggvi Harðarson, district manager of Reykhólar, which is in the Westfjords of Iceland.

Geothermal seaweed processing has been in operation at Reykhólar for about 50 years, producing mainly seaweed meal for export. There are also start-up companies that produce nutritional supplements and nutrients for flowers and trees.

“It is full of minerals and vitamins, and people have begun to talk about seaweed and kelp as the future storehouse of humanity. Therefore, I believe there are several options for promoting further processing of seaweed and kelp. For example, an idea has come up to create a seaweed group or kelp cluster where many companies would come together under one hat and would produce different products from seaweed. I believe there is a good likelihood that seaweed products can be marketed in many forms. For example, soaps and fertilizers

are produced with it because there is so much health content in there. It is believed, for example, that it greatly reduces the gas emissions of cattle which cause considerable pollution but, by giving them seaweed meal, it may reduce the emissions by up to half.”

The Icelandic sea and its fish are known for their purity and are very clean. “The seaweed in Breiðafjörður, on which Reykhólar stands, is sustainable; people reap a certain area and then grow there for four to five years until the area is ready to be reaped again.”

The geothermal resource at Reykhólar offers unusually warm waters and ideas about bathing facilities and even health hotels have been linked to it. “Both domestic and foreign parties have shown interest.”

Tryggvi speaks Chinese, as he lived in China for several years. Some Chinese tourists who visit Reykhólar find it strange when a local resident walks up to them and starts talking to them in Chinese!





# YOUNG MAN ON A MISSION WITH XIAOMI'S PHENOMENAL RISE

*Böðvar Blær Guðmundsson is MI's guy in Iceland*

Örvar Blær Guðmundsson is a young man on a mission; at only 25, he's MI's guy in Iceland and CEO of MI Iceland. MI stands for Mobile Internet which, in a few years, has become the world's 4th largest smartphone brand. That certainly sounds like Mission Impossible but not for Xiaomi Corporation, which was founded in April 2010 and eight years later is listed on Hong Kong's Stock Exchange Main Board. How is that for success?

Örvar Blær was preparing for his final exam in Computer Science at Reykjavík University in early 2017 when he came across MI while surfing the internet. "I immediately shelved plans for the final exam and, with assistance from my dear friend, Össur Skarphéðinsson, I got in contact with Xiaomi—which led to MI-Iceland. Iceland is in the perfect situation for a business relationship with China for the famous Free-Trade-Agreement, led by Össur during his time as the Minister for Foreign Affairs", he says and smiles as he mentions that, at the beginning of 2019, he finished the final exam and graduated from Reykjavík University. Örvar Blær had just returned from Sweden as MI wants to make powerful inroads into Scandinavia as it's already present in 80 other countries. So that begs the question: what is all the fuss about?

## Smartphones from the coolest company

Xiaomi Corporation is an internet company with smartphones and smart hardware connected by the IoT platform at its core. Its vision is clear. MI wants to be friends with its users and be the coolest company in the heart of its users through continuous innovation, with a focus on quality and efficiency. It has already established the world's largest IoT platform with 160 million smart devices connected to its platform.

"MI products in Iceland are available through a few stores, though most of the variety can be found on our website, [www.mii.is](http://www.mii.is). The reception has been incredibly positive and the reason is quite simple: we are selling high-quality smartphones at half of our competitor's prices. Another reason for such a positive reception can be explained by the wide variety of products, from laptops to projectors, electric toothbrushes to electric scooters, robot vacuums to security systems, and everything between. It really is incredible. It's one of this decade's big corporate success stories", Örvar Blær says.

## Into world of labels

China is at a cross-roads, as Japan was half a century ago and S. Korea in the eighties. China is producing its own high-quality



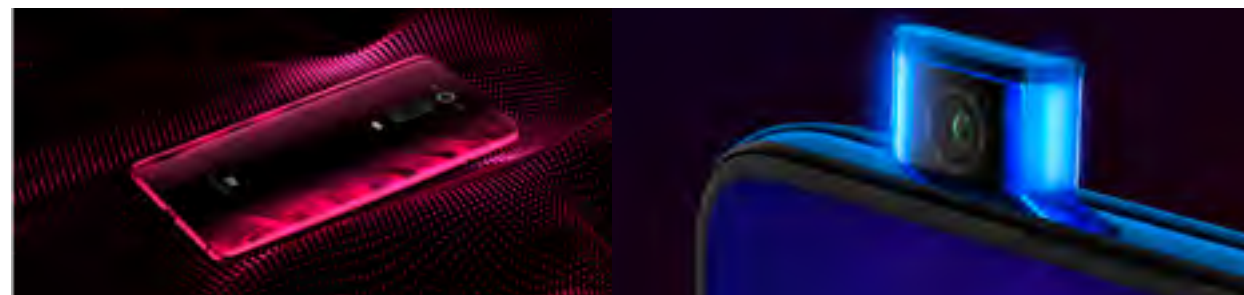
Örvar Blær Guðmundsson

labels at extremely competitive prices and thus changing the world. Örvar Blær says that, as well as the public, Icelandic companies are taking notice of MI's incredible offers to lower costs without risking quality. MI's first mobile phone was on the market a year after Xiaomi's foundation and only three years later, it was the 3rd largest mobile phone producer in the world. Since 2014 Xiaomi has been Asia's largest mobile producer; truly a world leader.

The Chinese are proving to be remarkable entrepreneurs with a bright future ahead. Mi Iceland wishes the People Republic of China their best wishes with 70 years of progress!



**Mi**  
 108 Reykjavík  
 +354 537 1800  
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[mii.is](http://mii.is)







**R**eykjavík 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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

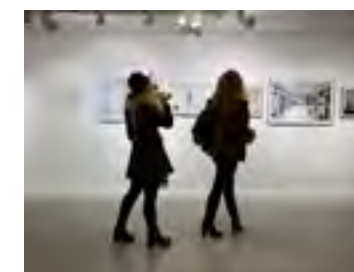
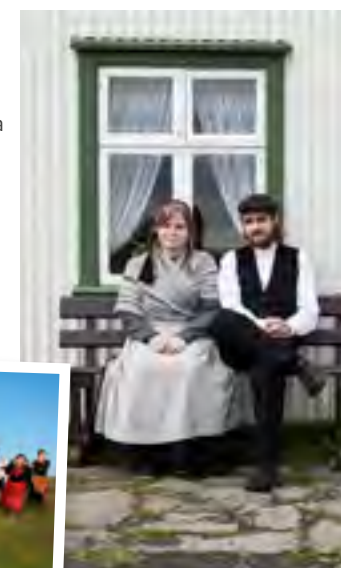
#### The Settlement Exhibition

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 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.



#### 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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](http://www.videy.com) for the ferry schedule.



#### 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.

#### 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.



**Borgarsögusafn Reykjavíkur**

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[www.reykjavikcitymuseum.is](http://www.reykjavikcitymuseum.is)







**Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalsstaðir:** houses the works of one of Iceland’s most influential and recognised artists, Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885-1972). The building is a fine example of Nordic modernism, it features floor to ceiling windows that look onto the beautiful Klambatún Park a walk away from church Hallgrímskirkja.

Flókagata 24, 105 Reykjavík  
Open daily 10-17

# REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM – KJARVALSSTAÐIR

## JÓHANNES S. KJARVAL Can't Draw a Harebell

25.05.2019 - Opened  
05.01.2020 - Closes

The artist Eggert Pétursson (b. 1956) has assembled an exhibition of the floral works of Jóhannes S. Kjarval. Upon undertaking this project for Reykjavík Art Museum, Eggert decided to examine the floral factor in Kjarval’s work and approach it from an artistic viewpoint. According to Eggert, Kjarval’s flower works are more extensive than his own. Kjarval traverses all over. He does not limit himself to botany but paints and sketches flowers around him, be they ornamental plants, potted plants or wildflowers, and last but not least, he paints the flora of the mind. Eggert resolved to categorise the works by their elements and figurative connection and display them as he

would his own work. His selection is intended to create a coherent exhibition rather than as a historical overview of Kjarval’s floral works. The artworks are divided into three main groups in the three exhibition halls. The centre hall contains floral landscapes and images from wild Icelandic flora. This includes works where Kjarval first grapples with wildflowers, mainly heather. In his sketches, common plant species are often recognisable, and these kind of sketches can be viewed in the display cases. Landscape and flowers are intertwined in Kjarval’s works and, in his last years, he painted landscapes of the mind, a grey world, illuminated by flowers. The north hall contains what may be called festive flowers, i.e. cut flowers, potted plants and flower baskets, artwork which Kjarval created as



gifts, both from himself and others. Lastly, the south hall is where we find his floral fantasies, where faces and creatures are interlaced with flowers in paintings and sketches.



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# REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - ÁSMUNDARSAFN

**Reykjavík Art Museum – Ásmundarsafn:** The sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893–1982) designed, worked and lived in this beautiful building. The white dome structure is surrounded by Sveinsson's sculptures. The inside of the building is inspired by vernacular Mediterranean architecture. Ásmundarsafn is by Iceland's National Stadium in Laugardalur.

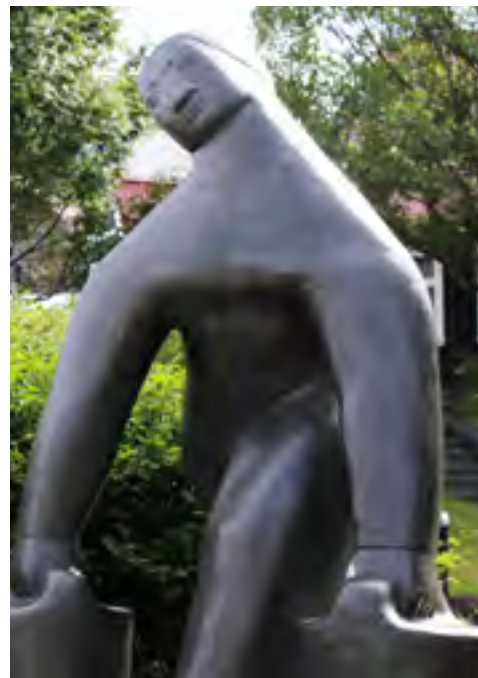
Sigtún, 105 Reykjavík  
Open daily 10-17

## ÁSMUNDUR SVEINSSON Under the Same Sky – Art in Public Spaces

19.01.2019 Opened  
16.02.2020 Closes

The sculpture garden at Sigatún is dedicated to the works by Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982). It is also the point where the exhibition, 'Under the Same Sky' extends its view to some of the numerous outdoor pieces that the late sculptors have created and installed in Reykjavík and around and outside Iceland. The works in the exhibition are more meditative in comparison to the outdoor sculptures: smaller in scale, made of different materials, and three-dimensional studies to the enlarged works that Ásmundur realised in the end. Art in public spaces is one of the museum's programme highlights in 2019. During the year, works by five artists will be featured at separate times in the exhibition 'Under the Same Sky' together with Ásmundur Sveinsson. These artists are

Sigurður Guðmundsson, Brynhildur Þorgeirsdóttir, Jóhann Eyfells, Helgi Gíslason and Ólöf Nordal. Ásmundur Sveinsson was born in 1893. He grew up in the countryside, in Dalir, and started his art studies with sculptor Ríkarður Jónsson at the age of 22. He later studied art in Denmark, then Sweden and finally in Paris, France. Ásmundur is one of the pioneers of Icelandic sculpture. Upon his return to Iceland, he built two houses where he lived and had his studio. Reykjavík Art Museum now runs a museum dedicated to his work in one of them, Ásmundarsafn in Laugardalur. Ásmundur sought inspiration in Icelandic myths and folktales, and in the forms of nature. Later, he became preoccupied with various technological novelties of the 20th century. Ásmundur was a prolific artist. His work can be seen in public places around the country, and this is in accordance with Ásmundur's beliefs that the art is not meant for the chosen few, but a part of the everyman's daily life. Ásmundur Sveinsson died in 1982, at the age of 89.



## 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.



**Íslensk  
hollusta**  
-frá náttúrunnar hendi!





**Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús:** the old harbour warehouse is located in the oldest part of Reykjavík where the town's boats docked. The building was erected in the 1930s and at the time it was one of Iceland's largest buildings. Hafnarhúsið is by downtown Reykjavík.

Tryggvagata 17,  
101 Reykjavík  
Open daily 10-17  
Thursdays 10-22

## REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

**ERRÓ**  
Mao's World Tour

01.05.2019 Opened  
05.01.2020 Closes

Erró was one of the first Western artists to adopt the legend and images of Mao Zedong. Between 1972 and 1980, Erró painted the series Chinese Paintings – over 130 paintings which tell the story of a great leader who travels around the world. Each painting, like most other paintings by Erró from 1964 onwards, is based on a collage where Erró matches two images of different origins against each other: Chinese propaganda posters and Western tourist pictures from famous places. Erró pictures Chairman Mao and his comrades on a triumphant tour around the world, but in reality Mao

only made two trips out of China, both times to attend the Communist Party Convention in Moscow. The series Chinese Paintings is fiction, where the staging and the presence of Mao in various locations is a sarcastic reference to the wave of Maoism which seized groups of Western artists, intellectuals and politicians following the student riots in Paris in May 1968. The series objectifies both the utopian dream of the future and the fear of the Chinese Cultural Revolution spreading around the world.

The Chinese Paintings made Erró famous internationally. The exhibition in Hafnarhús contains paintings, collages and engravings from the Reykjavík Art Museum's collection.



## 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



**The Icelandic Phallogological Museum**  
Laugavegur 116 • 105 Reykjavík  
+354 561 6663  
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www.phallus.is





# CATCH THE AURORA BOREALIS ALL YEAR ROUND



There is perhaps nothing more magical than witnessing the beauty of a Northern Lights display. However, those unpredictable, ever dancing lights don't always show up on cue – and fade away during the summer months. So, it is with great joy that we welcome Aurora Reykjavík – The Northern Lights Center, where the Northern Lights are always on display.

## A Unique Experience

The center is the unique creation of four enterprising young Icelanders – all photographers and Northern Lights enthusiasts – who recognised the need for just such a place: a kind of one-stop shop for all things Northern Lights.

Located at Grandi, the old harbour, the most upcoming area in Reykjavík, the center serves both educational and inspirational purposes.

## Soothing Sights and Sounds

Aurora Reykjavík's pull and ace up its sleeve is its fantastic HD time-lapse film of the Aurora Borealis.

Projected onto a 7-meter-wide screen, you can sit back in bean bags and enjoy this 30 minute-long film that features dazzling displays of auroral activity captured all over Iceland.

## World's first 360° Virtual Reality Videos

Aurora Reykjavík's latest addition are virtual reality goggles featuring the world's first 360° movie of aurora displays entirely shot in Iceland. If you can't catch

the Northern Lights yourself, this utterly realistic experience is definitely the next best option to witness the beauty of this truly amazing phenomenon.

## Northern Lights Photo Simulator

Capturing the Northern Lights with your own camera can be challenging, but, at Aurora Reykjavík, you get taught by the experts: bring your camera and try the right settings at the Northern Lights Photo Simulator.

## Northern Lights Selfie Booth

A photo of yourself under the Northern Lights is probably the best souvenir you can bring back from Iceland. No matter the season nor weather, Aurora Reykjavík has you covered.

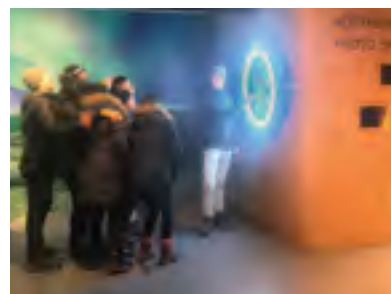
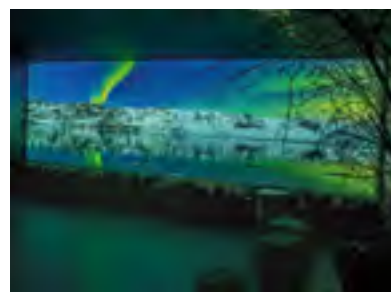
In the exhibition you will find an entertaining selfie booth – have fun looking all fabulous under the Northern Lights!

## Tour booking, camera rental and the best advice for your own hunt

Looking for the best tours, the most beautiful spots to photograph the lights, the weather forecast and some insider tips? The friendly and helpful staff will gladly share all their knowledge with you.

## Hot coffee and choice gifts

Before leaving, grab a free cup of coffee in the boutique and check out the impressive display of clothing, jewellery, photography, and woollen knitwear by some of Iceland's most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it.



**Opening hours**  
Every day  
09:00 – 21:00



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# YEAH MAN, THE DUDE ABIDES

*At Downtown Reykjavík's Lebowski Bar*

Whether you're a longtime fan or a complete newbie to the whole 'Dude' subculture, Reykjavík's Lebowski bar delivers in spades. Named after the 1998 film *The Big Lebowski*, it's like stepping back in time and into the movie itself. The walls are plastered with memorabilia connected to the film and an eye catching three-dimensional bowling lane runs the length of the east wall. A retro American diner, replete with '50s style bar stools and sleek counter tops doubles as a dance floor from 11pm onwards when things really get hopping!

Mouthwatering burgers and fries are served daily from 11am to 10pm and do check out the 'Burger of the Month' for some innovative takes on the classic burger. A milkshake to go with that? Of course, you sexy thing!\* Upstairs you will find additional space where private parties can be held, as well as a large terrace that's a great place to sit when the sun is shining.

## Lebowski's secret sauce

It's the music at Lebowski Bar that has the sweeping power to transport you back in time and serves as the primary vehicle to get you that blast from the past and good times vibe. Every night from 9pm onwards, DJs crank out carefully chosen '50s through '80s classic rock that sets the mood and definitely pulls the room together.

## 24 versions of the White Russian cocktail

Lebowski Bar's popular happy hour, (daily from 4 to 7pm), offers reasonably priced drinks ranging from Icelandic craft beers to draft beers, from mainstay cocktails to an entire menu devoted solely to the legendary White Russian that the film made famous. The bartenders get creative with drinks such as El Duderino, Jack Treehorn, Green Toe, and The Other Jeffrey Lebowski – all named after characters or scenes in the film. Be on the lookout for the 'White Russian of the Month' specials.

## For more fun and frolic

Last but not least, music quiz nights, shown on five full HD screens, are held every Thursday from 9 to 10pm and the monthly 'dress up' theme nights are always a hit. Special events include a thrice yearly film night featuring...of course, *The Big Lebowski* and reduced-price drinks. Additionally, all the big international sports events, such as the FA Cup, the Super Bowl are covered.

## The Comeback Kid

Although *The Big Lebowski* was not initially well received by critics or the public when it first came out, times and attitudes have changed. Now, twenty-one years later, the film has developed something of a cult following and a new, younger audience is finding resonance. The annual 'Lebowski Fest', which started in 2002 in Louisville, Kentucky, has spread to major cities such as New York, San Francisco, and London. While



the film's plot may be all over the place, its brilliance lies in its portrayal of the two main characters- the Dude, Jeff Lebowski, an unambitious slacker who contrasts sharply with his aggressive, warmonger of a bowling buddy, Walter Sobchak. Set in 1990s Los Angeles, it is this push/pull dichotomy between the two main characters that gives 'The Big Lebowski' its enduring legacy.

In keeping with the main character's laid back, down home personality, Lebowski Bar is a 'come as you are' place to unwind and relax from the rigours of life.

The Dude would approve. -EMV

\* Refers to one of Lebowski Bar's signature milkshakes, named 'You Sexy Thing'.



## Lebowski Bar

20a Laugavegur, 101 Reykjavík  
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www.lebowski.is  
info@lebowski.is





# 64° REYKJAVÍK DISTILLERY: QUALITY CRAFTED SPIRITS

*An independent distillery with unique spirits and liqueurs*

**64°** Reykjavík 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.

Reykjavík 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° Reykjavík Distillery spirits, to design fantastic cocktails. -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



Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbær  
+354 899 6903  
palli@knifemaker.is  
soffia@knifemaker.is  
www.knifemaker.is  
www.kitchenknives.is



## 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 it 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



**Litla Jólábúðin**  
Laugavegi 8 • Reykjavík  
+354 552 2412  
lindsay@simnet.is



## 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



**Arkart**  
Síðumúli 1 • 105 Reykjavík  
+354 551 5533  
arkgunna@simnet.is  
www.facebook.com/pages/Arkart-leather-design/





# 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 is located in what can be perhaps called the most quintessential neighbourhood of Píngholt with its quiet streets and quaint 19th century timber and corrugated iron clad houses. Since in its beginning in 1965, the 4-star hotel has attracted many of Reykjavík's artistic, social and political vanguard, and continues this tradition by supporting local artists and events as a part of its ongoing mission.

### A permanent art collection

The hotel houses the largest privately owned art collection in Iceland and features numerous works by several of Iceland's most cherished late 19th century and early 20th century artists—Johannes Kjarval, Jón Stefánsson, and Ásmundur Sveinsson along with works by notable women artists of the same period—Kristín Jónsdóttir, Gerður Helgadóttir and Júlíana Sveinnsdóttir. The walls of 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. Nearly 500 works of art are scattered throughout the hotel and are numbered and catalogued for easy reference. Hotel guests, as well as restaurant patrons are

invited to book a guided tour (known as The Art Walk) of the ground floor art collection.

### The Geode Effect

As with many Icelandic buildings, Hotel Holt's façade belies its rich interior; marble floors and gilded antiques grace the hotel lobby. The events hall contains brilliant works including three impressive bronze sculptures by Jón Benediktsson which were commissioned for the hotel in commemoration of the return of Saga manuscripts to Iceland from Denmark in 1971. The adjoining "Kjarval stofa" (or Kjarval's living room) is a wonderfully quirky room where an early Kjarval b&w sketch from his studio that covers the walls from floor to ceiling.

### The lay of the land

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 it goes without saying—comfortable beds throughout. Standard rooms are cozy and comfortable and then there are 4 spacious suites and 8 junior suites, all with king size beds.

Fourth floor rooms are all equipped with balconies where you can enjoy fabulous views of the city and beyond.\*

### The Holt Bar

The plush armchairs are upholstered in rich, tawny leather; the portraits on the walls are pure Kjarval—delightful and playful. Taking center stage, an imposing stone fireplace, lit every evening, makes this possibly the coziest... and the classiest bar in Reykjavík. Behind the counter, an

impressive collection of craft beers, wines and spirits stand ready to liven things up. Tempting snacks, amuse-bouches and fish of the day are also available at the bar.

### Where the visual arts meet the culinary arts

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, known for its classical cuisine incorporates Icelandic culinary creativity into its distinguished menu. 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 17 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 greets your eye as you enter the room.

### The Old Library

Relax in the old library with its beautifully preserved collection of leather bound volumes including Icelandic poetry, the Sagas and even a Bible from 1728.

Hotel Holt is located in Bergstaðastræti 37, 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



#### Hotel Holt

Bergstaðastræti 37, 101 Reykjavík  
 Tel +354 552 5700  
[www.holt.is](http://www.holt.is)  
[holt@holt.is](mailto:holt@holt.is)





# The Cinema OF FIRE, ICE AND NORTHERN LIGHTS



Volcanic eruptions, ice and the Northern Lights are symbolic of Iceland – and you can enjoy them all in 25 minutes at THE CINEMA, at the Old Harbour, in downtown Reykjavík.

The films shown at the Cinema are all made by renowned Icelandic film maker, Valdimar Leifsson, and The Cinema is run by him and his family. Its setup is a bit like coming into a family home; while watching the films on a big screen, you can choose to sit in a sofa or cosy chair and enjoy coffee, hot chocolate or other refreshments by candlelight.

Valdimar (everyone goes by their first name in Iceland) studied filmmaking in Los Angeles, California and has been working in his field ever since he returned to Iceland, making mostly documentaries and educational TV shows, shown on the State TV of Iceland. When the opportunity arose in 2010 to open a small cinema at the Old Harbour

in Reykjavík, he saw a great niche to offer visitors the Icelandic nature through his films and slow down a bit on travelling and filming throughout the country (though he has not done that yet).

It took a lot of time and effort to make the old fishermen's dwelling and working place at Reykjavík's Old Harbour into the cosy cinema it is today. When transforming it into a cinema, it was decided to let the old place keep its charm and original look as much as possible. Visitors often comment on the good vibes they feel while they enjoy the shows.

In 2010 the great Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted and Valdimar was the first to be ready with a film about its eruption – which, of course, is shown at The Cinema. It is a short film, intended to give visitors the experience of both the power and the beauty of nature when it decides to spew its innards up into the air and the threat and danger

volcanic eruptions can cause. When asked, viewers said they wanted to know more about volcanic activity in Iceland, therefore it was decided to make the film "Birth of an Island – the Making of Iceland". It shows and explains why Iceland is one of the most volcanically active regions on Earth, expecting an eruption every 3rd to 4th year (the last one was 2014-2015).

Then people began flocking to Iceland during the winter months from all over the world. Why was that? Well, the Northern Lights are often high in the sky above Iceland, making it one of the best places to see them – providing all conditions are right. What are the right conditions for seeing them? This is all explained in Valdimar's film, "Chasing the Northern Lights" – which could be your only chance of seeing the elusive Lights if you are in Iceland during the summer months and even at some times in winter, if the conditions are not right.

The films are shown daily at 5:00, 5:30 and 6:00 pm but if you are at the Old Harbour at other times and the door to The Cinema is open, you are invited to come up to the loft of the old fisherman's dwelling when, most often, it is possible to put on a special show for you. There are also more films to choose from and a small exhibition of interesting Icelandic rocks on display.

Valdimar and his family have extensive knowledge of places and things to do in Iceland and have often given their visitors good advice for their travels, as can be read in the reviews about The Cinema.

PHOTOGRAPHER: LJÓSMYNDIR.  
RAGNAR TH SIGURDSSON



**THE CINEMA**  
Gelirgata 7b, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 898 6828  
cinemano2@lifsmynd.is  
www.thecinema.is





# THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE WATCHMAKER

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

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

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

## The choice of connoisseurs

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

Kings, princesses, international leaders from East and West, film stars, rock idols - all have made their way to the small shop on Laugavegur, Reykjavík'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



**JS Watch co.**  
Laugavegur 62 • 101 Reykjavík  
+354 551 4100  
info@jswatch.com  
www.jswatch.com



# 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  
+354 552 1890  
handknit@handknit.is  
www.handknit.is





# WE SPECIALISE IN YOUR ADVENTURE

## Iceland 4x4 Car Rental

*We take pride in flexible and personal service*

Iceland 4x4 Car Rental specialises in four-wheel drive vehicles intended for safe and comfortable travels in Iceland. Their fleet ranges from medium sized 4WD hatchbacks to 4WD jeeps and light pickup trucks that are especially adapted for Icelandic road conditions all year round. In addition, they offer specially equipped vehicles for travelling deep into Iceland's Interior highlands (see their Special Offer Car). Iceland 4x4 Car Rental is a local brand and they take pride in flexible and personal service, as well as competitive prices.

### 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?

How about bathing in a naturally-heated pool surrounded by real flowers—and be your own master?

### Iceland 4x4 Self-drive

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.

Their friendly, knowledgeable and professional staff will help educate and inspire their customers to have wonderful travels in our amazing country.



### Iceland 4x4 Car Rental

Grænásvegur 10, 230 Reykjanesbær  
+354 535 6060  
info@rent4x4.is  
www.iceland4x4carrental.com/



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





# A TASTE OF THAI

*Krua Thai serves an enticing cuisine in the heart of the capital city*

Reykjavík's culinary charm is quite impressive for a small city, with a growing number of choices to suit all tastes. While there are traditional Icelandic restaurants serving fresh fish and tender lamb dishes, there are also fantastic restaurants specialising in food that you may not expect to see in Iceland. For instance, Krua Thai features classic and inventive Thai food in Reykjavík.

## Impressive Menu

Quality ingredients, friendly service and a comfortable environment make Krua Thai a favourite among locals and travellers. The menus feature many of the staples you expect to see such as savoury spring rolls, tasty rice and noodle dishes, and glorious plates of Pad Thai. Main courses include delicious options like Pad Grapow, which is a fried dish with chilli and basil leaf in

oyster sauce, served with rice and either chicken, pork, beef or lamb. There are also soups and salads on the menu. There is truly something for everyone.

## Vegetarian-friendly dining

Non-meat eaters will feel more than welcome as Krua Thai has a large vegetarian section that is big on flavour. For instance, guests can enjoy vegetable noodle and rice dishes, as well as fried vegetables with tofu in oyster sauce, and a spicy vya salad served with rice.

## Central location

Krua Thai at Skólavörðustíg 21a, is conveniently located in the heart of city centre, and is a delightful location for a meal. It has a cosy atmosphere and friendly staff who are eager to ensure you have an ideal dining experience. It's the perfect



place for a meal after some time exploring museums, shops, and cafes in the trendiest and liveliest part of Reykjavík. If you want to spend the evening in at your hotel or guesthouse, you can order food to take away, and with delivery. Delivery is available daily until 21:00. -JG



**Krua Thai**

Skólavörðustíg 21a, Reykjavík 101  
 +354 551-0833  
[www.kruathai.is](http://www.kruathai.is)

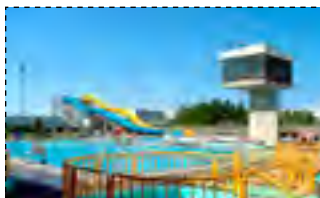






**ÁRBÆJARLAUG** is a beautiful swimming pool right in midst of a wooded area. Large swimming pool, kiddie pools, hot tubs, steam bath, waterfalls and two slides along with an indoor baby pool. Easy to get in and out of the facilities.

Fylkisvegur 9, 110 Reykjavík  
+354 530-2200 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Tue 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 09-18



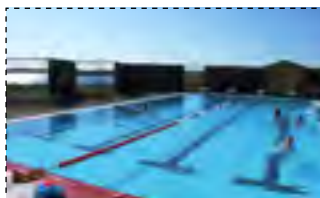
**BREIDHOLTSLAUG** is a cosy pool with three really fun slides, hot tubs, kiddie hot pool and a great swimming pool. Indoors there is an additional pool for children that is very popular. Steam bath and sauna for both men and women.

Austurberg 3, 111 Reykjavík  
+354 557-5547 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Thu 06:30-22,  
Fri 06:30-20, Sat, Sun 09-18



**GRAFARVOGSLAUG** is often used for swim competitions for the younger generation as the indoor pool is the perfect size. Nice open space identifies Grafarvogslaug's area, offering hot tubs, steam baths and sauna, and two fun slides.

Dalhús 2, 112 Reykjavík  
+354 411 5300 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Thu 06:30-22,  
Fri 06:30-20, Sat, Sun 09-18



**KLÉBERGSLAUG** is located in a short distance from Reykjavík, surrounded by nature. Small comfortable swimming area with two hot tubs. Sometimes there are Zumba and other fun activities going on, and then there is a gym close by.

Kléberg, 116 Reykjavík  
+354 566-6879 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Fri 15-22,  
Sat, Sun 11-15



**LAUGARDALSLAUG** is one of the most popular pools with various activities for the children. The slide is very popular for any age, as are the hot tubs, cold tub and the seawater tub. Steam baths and sauna are available. A cafeteria for after swim refreshment.

Sundlaugavegur 30, 105 Reykjavík  
+354 411 5100 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Fri 06:30-22,  
Sat, Sun 08-22



**VESTURBÆJARLAUG** is a small and friendly neighbourhood pool, located within walking distance of the city centre. The pool has an outdoor pool and children's pool, waterslide, four hot tubs, steam bath, sauna and gym.

Hofsvallagötu, Reykjavík  
+354 411-5150 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Thu 06:30-22,  
Fri 06:30-20, Sat, Sun 09-18



**SUNDHÖLL REYKJAVÍKUR** is the oldest public bath in Iceland. It opened in 1937 and is located in the centre of Reykjavík. It recently reopened after renovations that include a new outdoor pool area.

Barónsstígur 45a, Reykjavík  
+354 411-5350 • [www.sundlaug.is](http://www.sundlaug.is)  
Open Mon-Thu 06:30-22,  
Fri 06:30-20 Sat 08-16 Sun 10-18



**NAUTHÓLSVÍK GEOTHERMAL BEACH** is a paradise for people who love splashing around in the ocean or sunbathing in the golden sand. The beach is equipped with changing facilities and showers, steam-baths and hot tubs.

Nauthólsvík 108 Reykjavík  
+354 511 6630  
[www.nautholsvik.is/en](http://www.nautholsvik.is/en)  
Open Mon - Fri, Sat-Sun 10-19



## Reykjavík's Thermal Pools

# A source of health

thermal swimming pools

Hot tubs and jacuzzi

Saunas, steam baths

the place to meet locals

### Admission

Adults 1000 isk. Children 160 isk.

Thermal pools and baths in Reykjavík are a source of health, relaxation and pureness.

All of the city's swimming pools have several hot tubs with temperatures ranging from

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



Tel: +354 411 5000  
[www.spacity.is](http://www.spacity.is)

REYKJAVÍK  
LOVES

#reykjavikloves





**BÆNDUR Í BÆNUM** is a developed concept of a farmers market. Here you can visit the grocery store or order online for fresh, organic vegetables from the owners' farms in South Iceland.

Grensásvegi 10, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 586 8001 [postur@www.baenduribaenum.is](mailto:postur@www.baenduribaenum.is)  
[www.baenduribaenum.is](http://www.baenduribaenum.is)  
[baenduribaenum.is](http://baenduribaenum.is)



**BLIK BISTRO & GRILL** is located in Mosfellsbæ with a panoramic view. The tranquility and the majestic view boost the enjoyment of the cuisine by master chef, Joost Van Bommel.

Æðarhöfði 36, 270 Mosfellsbæ  
+354 566 8480  
[blikbistro@blikbistro.is](mailto:blikbistro@blikbistro.is)



**KRUA THAI IN KÓPAVOGUR** is a favourite for many. With their reputation to always deliver fresh, tasty food, both at the restaurant & to your door, it is no wonder they are such a popular choice.

Bæjarlind 14, 201 Kópavogur  
+354 552 2525  
[www.kruathai.is/en/](http://www.kruathai.is/en/)  
[kruathai@kruathai.is](mailto:kruathai@kruathai.is)



**KRUA SIAM** is a family restaurant in downtown Akureyri. A very popular Thai restaurant among locals as well as tourists. On their menu you'll find many typical Thai dishes with pork, fish, different meat or veggies.

Skólavörðustígur 21, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 551 0833  
[www.kruathai.is/en/](http://www.kruathai.is/en/)  
[kruathai@kruathai.is](mailto:kruathai@kruathai.is)



**SÆGREIFINN** is a seafood restaurant in the Old Harbour in Reykjavík. The lobster soup & the grilled fish on skewers are their signature dishes. Sægreifinn also has a variety of vegetarian dishes.

Geirsgata 8, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 553 1500  
[www.saegreifinn.is/en/](http://www.saegreifinn.is/en/)  
[seabaron8@gmail.com](mailto:seabaron8@gmail.com)



**SHANGHAI IN HAFNARFJÖRÐUR** is the newest Shanghai in a chain of 3 restaurants. When it opened its door in 2018, it was well received by the locals & is a welcome addition to the food scene in Hafnarfjörður.

Reykjavíkurvegi 74, 220 Hafnarfjörður  
+354 517 9688 / 537 5888  
[shanghai@shanghai.is](mailto:shanghai@shanghai.is)  
[shanghai.is/hafnarfjordur/](http://shanghai.is/hafnarfjordur/)



**SHANGHAI ON LAUGAVEGUR** in Reykjavík is the first restaurant in the Shanghai chain. As one of the first Chinese restaurants in Reykjavík, it has its share of loyal clients, who keep on returning for more.

Laugavegur 60, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 517 9688 / 537 5888  
[sjanghae.is/laugavegi/](mailto:sjanghae.is/laugavegi/)  
[shanghai@shanghai.is](mailto:shanghai@shanghai.is)



**TIME TOURS** travel agency and tour operator arrange tours for individuals or groups in small coaches, which makes them different from other bus companies. The service is much more personal & more focused.

Borgartún 34, 105 Reykjavík  
+354 578 7111 / 820 0245  
[timi@timi.is](mailto:timi@timi.is)  
[timetours.is/](http://timetours.is/)



**ELDER OG ÍS.** This small mom and pop shop in Reykjavík offers delicate Artisan Crepes with fresh and organic based ingredients from sweet to savoury Crepes, ice-creams to coffees & teas. Gluten & lactose free friendly!

Skólavörðustígur 2, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 571 2480  
[benefitsehf@gmail.com](mailto:benefitsehf@gmail.com)  
[facebook.com/eldurogis/](https://facebook.com/eldurogis/)



**ICELANDIC FISH & CHIPS** serves a healthier version of Fish & chips than most using only Icelandic ingredients & in the process manages to create a more crispy & delicious fish & chips.

Tryggvagata 11, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 511 1118  
[info@fishandchips.is](mailto:info@fishandchips.is)  
[www.fishandchips.is](http://www.fishandchips.is)



**FELDUR WORKSHOP** is an Icelandic furrier who specializes in high quality, Icelandic fur products and Icelandic design. Products made to last a lifetime.

Snorrabraut 56, 105 Reykjavík  
+354 588 04880  
[www.feldur.is](http://www.feldur.is)  
[info@feldur.is](mailto:info@feldur.is)



**THE NATIONAL GALLERY** of Iceland is exhibiting a retrospective work of the artist Hulda Hákon, a career that spans over 40 years. Hulda set herself apart from the mainstream artists in the early 80's with her reliefs.

Frikkirkjuvegi 7, 101 Reykjavík  
[list@listasafn.is](mailto:list@listasafn.is)  
[www.listasafn.is/english/exhibitions/hulda-hakon-1-2](http://www.listasafn.is/english/exhibitions/hulda-hakon-1-2)  
+354 515 9600



**URTA ISLANDICA** makes the finest salts, herbs, jam, syrups & honey from the nature of Iceland. They offer a wide array of salts like lava & blueberry salt, gift-boxes, syrups and tea.

Austurgata 47, 220 Hafnarfjörður  
Tel. 354/470-1300  
[www.urta.is/en](http://www.urta.is/en)



**ART GALLERY 101** is a cooperative gallery of 14 local artists, committed to supporting the growth of the creative vitality of our community. We specialize in fine art and fine gifts to accommodate every budget.

Laugavegur 44, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 544 4101  
[artgallery101.is](http://artgallery101.is)



**ÞRIR FRAKKAR RESTAURANT**

The chef, Stefán Úlfarsson, has continuously placed emphasis on fish courses and the restaurant has become well known for its delicious fish fare. Other specialties on the menu include whale meat and sea bird entrees.

Baldursgata 14, 101 Reykjavík  
+354-552-3939  
[info@3frakkar.is](mailto:info@3frakkar.is)



**GUÐLAUGUR A. MAGNÚSSON**

A family jewellery store in Downtown Reykjavík who has, since 1924, designed and hand made jewellery and silverware. Stop by the store or order online.

Skólavörðustígur 10, 101, Reykjavík  
+354 562 5222  
Jewelry store since 1924  
[www.gam.is-gam.is](http://www.gam.is-gam.is)

# DINE AT ELEGANT BAMBUS CHINESE RESTAURANT

*Located in the heart of the financial district, Bambus offers authentic Chinese cuisine*

Iceland is a dream destination for travellers, as you spend your days surveying the gorgeous landscapes of vast glaciers, bubbling geysers and towering mountains. After a full day of sightseeing, you will want to relax over dinner and enjoy the company of your fellow travellers. Bambus Restaurant is Iceland's largest Chinese restaurant, catering to both Asian and Western guests. Bambus serves Asian fusion cuisine and is located near Reykjavík's business district.

## An inventive menu with classic flavours

As the number of Asian travellers to Iceland increases, Bambus Chinese Restaurant has become a must when visiting the capital city. The restaurant owners have built up quite a reputation in the financial district in Reykjavík for excellent Chinese cuisine, and are committed to maintaining the highest standards. The dishes feature fresh ingredients with a contemporary flair. The food is in the hands of top chefs who bring their vast experience from Europe and Asia to Bambus' kitchen. You will find Icelandic-inspired dishes like steamed Icelandic langoustines with garlic and butter to Icelandic salmon sashimi, served with

wasabi. Other delectable choices include stir fried pork with Chinese mushrooms and black bean sauce, and Guang dong style stir fried noodles with sliced beef and vegetables in soy sauce. There's truly something for everyone.

## Set Your Sights on Shopping

Before leaving Iceland, you will of course want to spend a little time shopping for gifts for friends and family back home. Borg Galleria is an independent high end store focused on fashion and everyday luxury lifestyle, offering the finest quality of both men's and women's fashion, accessories, outdoor clothing, skincare and health products. You will find local brands like 66° North, Feldur, and Tulipop, as well as international wares from designers you know and love like Ugg, Ecco, and Holzweiler.

When you're travelling to Reykjavík be sure to stop by Bambus Asian Cuisine for an elegant, authentic meal, and fulfill your luxury shopping needs at Borg Galleria. -JG



**Bambus Asian Cuisine & Lounge**

Borgartún 16 • 105 Reykjavík  
+354 517 0123  
[betty@bambusrestaurant.is](mailto:betty@bambusrestaurant.is)  
[www.bambusrestaurant.is](http://www.bambusrestaurant.is)







**SUPERJEEP.IS** is a team of highly experienced jeep drivers with the aim to thrill & educate & take customers to places way beyond the beaten path.

Fossháls 15, 110 Reykjavík  
+354 660 1499 / 569 8000  
info@superjeep.is  
www.superjeep.is/



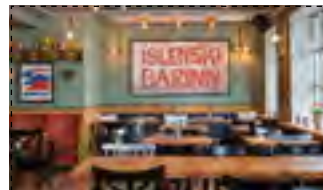
**TULIPOP** is Icelandic characters founded in 2010. The world of Tulipop appeals to all those young at heart. A world where traditional gender lines are swept away & flaws are accepted.

Skólavörðustigur 43, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 519 6999  
helga@tulipop.com  
www.tulipop.com



**HIMALAYAN SPICE** is a Nepalese restaurant in downtown Reykjavík. Nepalese cuisine is a mix of foods based on ethnicity, soil and climate connected to Nepal's cultural diversity and geography.

Laugavegur 60A, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 517 7795  
info@himalayanspiceiceland.com  
www.himalayanspiceiceland.com/



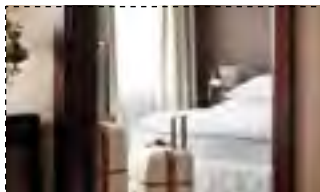
**THE ICELANDIC BAR** was literally born under the 2009 demonstrations when people were seeking shelter from tear gas. Quickly the bar was up and running with excellent, traditional Icelandic food on the menu.

Ingólfsstræti 1a, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 517 6767  
postur@islenkibarinn.is  
www.islenkibarinn.is



**BAMBUS CHINESE RESTAURANT** have built up quite a reputation in the financial district in Reykjavík for excellent Chinese cuisine. Innovative, fresh and with a contemporary and stylish plating.

Borgartún 16, 105 Reykjavík  
+0354 517 0123  
booking@bambusrestaurant.is  
www.bambusrestaurant.is



**HOTEL HOLT** in downtown Reykjavík is a hotel with a history, a flair for beauty coupled with a high end restaurant, original artwork on the walls and a world class cocktail bar. Bergstaðastræti 37

101 Reykjavík  
+354 552 5700  
holt@holt.is  
www.holt.is



**JS WATCH CO** is the first and only watchmaker in Iceland. All watches are handmade with Swiss accuracy and only with European parts making each and every timepiece unique.

Laugavegur 62, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 551 4100  
info@jswatch.com  
www.jswatch.com/



At **AURORA REYKJAVIK** - The Northern Lights center in Reykjavík, you can learn about the Aurora Borealis, the Northern lights. They also have a fantastic Aurora cinema + 360 goggles.

Grandagarður 2, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 780 4500  
info@aurorareykjavik.is  
aurorareykjavik.is/



Anyone who loves a burger knows the dude, **THE BIG LEBOWSKI**. This restaurant is downtown Reykjavík and they serve the juiciest burgers with a secret sauce and please try their hot wings.

Laugavegur 20a, 101 Reykjavík  
+354 552 2300  
info@lebowskibar.is  
lebowskibar.is/



ICELANDIC TIMES

www.icelandictimes.com



# Urta Islandica

## A LITTLE TASTE OF ICELAND

Iceland is one of the World's purest country. Its unique nature is not only beautiful but also tasty. Urta Islandica has managed to capture the nature at its best and found a way to harvest and preserve it in beautiful artisan herbal salts, teas, syrups & jams. The herbs and berries grow wild around Iceland and are handpicked every year. Urta Islandica has used old wisdom of folktales and innovation to create many of its products.

Behind Urta Islandica is a family that wants to utilise and share their knowledge of the pure Icelandic nature. The Urta family company is based in Hafnarfjörður and Keflavík's Unesco Global GeoPark where creation and packing takes place.

Urta Islandica uses pure organic Icelandic sea salt to create various flavours to complement food, but the salt is marinated or blended with Icelandic herbs and berries. For instance, their famous Black Lava salt is the perfect finish to all dishes. The Red Lava salt goes very well on everything that needs just a little taste of Iceland, especially roasted chicken or French fries and you will love the Kelp and Garlic salt on baked potatoes or bread with butter. The Blueberry and Liquorice salt have been used to pop up cocktails and desserts.

Urta Islandica's herbal tea line is impressive with teas including Birch, Arctic Thyme and their famous 100% Bilberry tea, but they are packed into teabags for daily use. If you enjoy sweets, you will love Urta's range of syrups all made with

organic sugar and wild harvested herbs and berries like crowberry, rhubarb, birch, and rowanberry. If you are looking for a tasty jam, it will be difficult to pick just one. Try their Traditional Caramelized Rhubarb jam, along with the divine Wild Blueberry and Red Currant jams, especially as a topping on their unique Black Lava Crackers which are made from Icelandic barley and herbs.

There are so many ways to incorporate these delightful gourmet products into food and drinks. For a simple treat, consider the delicious syrups for homemade almond creations, mixed with Birch syrup and Arctic blend salt. These can be made into all sorts of cocktails, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. For instance, an easy non-alcoholic cocktail is made with Arctic Thyme syrup, with soda water and lime.

All products are handmade and hand packed. They 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 a gift from Iceland.



**Urta Islandica**  
Austurgata 47, 220 Hafnarfjörður  
+354 470 1300  
urta@urta.is  
www.urta.is/en





# 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.





# 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 it's 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



## Grindavík

Víkurbraut 62 - 240 Grindavík  
grindavik@grindavik.is  
www.visitgrindavik.is



**BRYGGJAN KAFFIHÚS** is a cosy little Café located on the Pier next to the Grindavík Harbour in on Reykjanes peninsula, minutes south from famous Blue Lagoon.

**Bryggjan Grindavík**  
Miðgarður 2, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 7100  
info@bryggjan.com  
www.bryggjan.com



**THE GRINDAVÍK CAMPSITE** on Reykjanes peninsula is one of the more organised campsites in Iceland. They have BBQ's, electricity, playgrounds, a play castle, kitchen, laundry room and WiFi.

**Camping in Grindavík**  
Austurvegur 26, 240 Grindavík  
+354 660 7323  
camping@grindavik.is www.grindavik.is/tjaldsvaedi



**FISHHOUSE BAR & GRILL** in the romantic fishing village of Grindavík is an excellent seafood restaurant minutes south of the Blue Lagoon. They pride themselves with the use of delicious local produce.

**Fishhouse bar and grill**  
Hafnargötu 6, 240 Grindavík  
+354 426 9999  
kari@fishhouse.is  
www.fishhouse.is



**BORG GUESTHOUSE** is a family-run guesthouse in the middle of Grindavík. All rooms have wall-to-wall carpet, free WiFi, tea & coffee in the rooms, including a desk and a closet.

**Gistiheimilið Borg**  
Borgarhraun 2, 241 Grindavík  
+354 426 8686  
ghborg@simnet.is



**GRINDAVÍK SWIMMING POOL** is located in the middle of town, next to the lovely campsite. They have a 25m lap pool, a kid pool, waterslide, hot tubs, sauna, tanning beds and a gym.

**Austurvegi 1, 240 Grindavík**  
+354 426 7555  
ithrottir@grindavik.is  
www.grindavik.is/sundlaug



**HARBOUR VIEW LUXURY CABINS** in Grindavík offer small masterpieces of luxury cabins with a wonderful view of the harbour from all cabins. You will lack nothing in these wonderful cottages.

**Austurvegur 26 b, 240 Grindavík**  
+3457733993  
info@harbourview.is  
www.harbourview.is



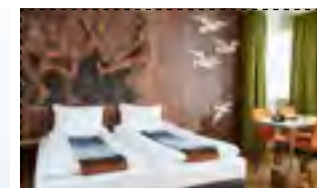
**PAPA'S RESTAURANT** is a restaurant specialising in fish 'n chips, pizzas and hamburgers. A family-friendly place where you can watch the game at the bar section with complimentary WiFi.

**Hafnargata 7a, Grindavík**  
+354 426 9955  
papas@papas.is  
https://papas.is/



**SALTHÚSIÐ RESTAURANT** in Reykjanes is the only seafood restaurant in Iceland that specialises in Bacalao, the salted cod. Once the staple food for the poor, now a sought after delicacy all over Iberia and Iceland.

**Stamphólsvegi 2, 240 Grindavík**  
salthusid@salthusid.is  
salthusid-english.weebly.com/



**GEO HOTEL** in Grindavík is a short drive from the airport and the Blue Lagoon, making it ideal as your first hotel in Iceland. The hotel also has complimentary transfer to and from the Blue Lagoon.

**Víkurbraut 58, 240 Grindavík**  
+354 421 4000  
booking@geohotel.is  
www.geohotel.is/



**BRUIN RESTAURANT** is a family run seafood place with delicious fish dishes and fish soup as specialities with a stunning view over the harbour. Their menu also include pizza, burgers and a kids menu.

**Hafnargötu 26, 240 Grindavík**  
+354 426 7080  
bruin@simnet.is  
www.restaurantbruin.com





# WEST *Iceland*



The west of Iceland is somewhat of a hidden pearl, which I think will become increasingly popular, especially the Snæfellsnes peninsula. There you have this magical region underneath the glacier which has some unexplainable power, which I think more and more people are discovering.

PHOTOS: KRISTJÁN INGI EINARSSON





Enjoy Iceland's sublime naturally-heated waters while bathing in geothermal baths in West Iceland. Krauma, the newly opened bathing facility, offers five relaxing natural baths, along with a cold tub, two soothing saunas and a relaxation room, where you can lounge by the fireplace while listening to calming music. This is the perfect way to experience Iceland's renowned waters in a more intimate setting than the more crowded Blue Lagoon.

#### Powerful hot spring

The water for the baths is heated by Deildartunguhver, which is considered Europe's most powerful hot spring. It provides 200 litres per second of hot water at 100°C (212°F). To achieve the perfect bathing temperature, Krauma mixes the hot water with cold water from Rauðsgil, which originates in the Ok glacier, Iceland's smallest glacier. Visitors can see Deildartunguhver next to the baths, with its water bubbling up and splashing

against bright green moss and jagged rocks. Seeing where the heated water comes from adds to this unique experience. Be sure to keep your distance, though, to avoid being splashed if you get too close.

#### Important hot water source

Deildartunguhver is crucial to the comfort of the region. Most of the water used for central heating in the West Iceland towns of Akranes and Borgarnes is taken from Deildartunguhver. The hot water pipeline to Akranes is 64 kilometres long, which is the longest in Iceland. It's still about 78-80°C when it reaches the town.

#### West is best

Krauma is conveniently located in West Iceland, where there are numerous attractions. Starting from Reykjavík, you can make stops at the popular fishing town of Akranes and climb to the top of its lighthouse for spectacular views, before continuing to Borgarnes to visit the Settlement Centre to get a taste of

the famous Sagas. In Reykholt, one of Iceland's most notable historical sites, you can stop at the Icelandic Goat Centre before visiting Snorrastofa, dedicated to Snorri Sturluson, one of the most famous and important figures in Icelandic literature. Snorri penned the Edda, Egil's Saga, and Heimskringla before his death in 1241. There is so much to see and do in West Iceland and Krauma is perfectly positioned.

#### Visit Krauma

Geology enthusiasts and spa lovers alike will enjoy a visit to Krauma. You can experience nature from its core while bathing in these unique geothermal baths in beautiful West Iceland. Make sure you pay a visit to Krauma during your visit to Iceland.

-JG



**Krauma**  
Deildartunguhver, 310 Borgarbyggð  
[www.krauma.is](http://www.krauma.is)



# KRAUMA

# GEOHERMAL BATHS



*Experience Iceland's  
geothermal energy in these  
soothing hot baths*





# WHERE SHEEP LIVE, MAN LIVES



Sheep have roamed the Highlands and mountains of Iceland ever since Vikings started settling the land in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. They brought sheep to the island from their Norwegian homeland. To the south of Húnaflói – Bay of Bears – far in the North, is one of Iceland’s longest fjords named Hrótafjörður – Fjord of Rams. The Viking settler Ingimundur gamli – Old Ingimundur, who named the fjord, had come from Norway.

**Came spring, they travelled north through the mountains and came onto a fjord where they found two rams; they named it Hrótafjörður – Fjord of Rams.**

*Book of Settlement*

Throughout the centuries, the lives of Icelanders have revolved around sheep. When the Vikings set foot on Iceland over 1100 years ago, their unique breed of sheep kicked and jumped into Iceland’s rich green wilderness. The country’s sheep farming tradition is older than the Icelandic nation and the sheep farms are family-owned businesses. Today’s robust breed is a direct descendant of the first sheep and genetically identical.

Icelandic sheep have evolved to become pure, strong and robust enough to endure and survive the harsh weather conditions in the High North. The farmers take a personal approach to the welfare of their livestock. In May, at the start of the lambing season, they prepare for the birth of a new flock. They take great care to track the lambs as they grow and develop in sheep sheds, preparing for a summer in wild mountain pastures. In the autumn, the farmers saddle

their horses and head for the Highlands and gather the sheep into folds. The whole nation takes notice. Nobel laureate Halldór Laxness grasped the essence of the Icelanders’ survival through the centuries:

**I and my people live in peace and tranquillity with our sheep. We are fine while the sheep are fine and we have enough of everything while the sheep have enough of everything.**

*Bjartur of Summerhouses. Independent People*

## Pastures like nowhere else

The Icelandic nation would probably not have survived the harsh conditions throughout the centuries without the Icelandic sheep. The breed, the characteristic meat and the natural environment of the farms, are an inherent part of the Icelandic heritage. “Where sheep live, man lives,” Laxness wrote.

Iceland is one of the world’s youngest land masses, surrounded by the North

Atlantic and on the cusp of the Arctic Circle. Icelandic Lamb is the world’s purest breed, reared in the world’s purest natural environment. The farmers’ methods and traditions are natural. Nature does the work, so when it comes to natural rearing and animal welfare, nothing compares to Icelandic lamb. The meat is free from pesticides, herbicides, hormones, growth-promoting antibiotics and GMOs. This Icelandic quality sets a standard that few can compete with.

## Taste unrivalled globally

The taste of Icelandic Lamb is unrivalled globally with its tender, fine-textured meat flavoured by the wild pastures of the untainted Icelandic nature. Icelandic lamb’s subtle spicy flavours originate in the wild herbs and berries the lambs graze on, from red clover to Arctic thyme, sedge, willow, thrift and angelica. Together with the breed being rich in Omega-3 and iron, Icelandic Lamb has a distinctive game-like flavour that creates a unique taste experience.





# WESTFJORDS

## *Iceland*





# MYSTIC HISTORY

*Reykhólahreppur: Overlooking Breiðafjörður from the Westfjords*

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

## A Service Centre with a History

A two and a half hour drive on paved roads from Reykjavík takes you to Reykhólar village, the county's centre. It provides a full range of services, including a campsite, stores, museums, Sjársmiðjan, a unique seaweed spa and a geothermal swimming pool. Quality accommodation, dining and

picturesque views are provided at Hotel Bjarkalundur, Iceland's oldest summer hotel. Throughout history Reykhólar has been home to many of Iceland's most prominent chieftains and is frequently mentioned in the Icelandic sagas.

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

## Birdwatchers' Paradise

A wide variety of species nest around both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and on the islands of Breiðafjörður Bay. One of the most impressive are the majestic and

elusive white-tailed eagles (*haliaeetus albicilla*), that both nest in the area and can be seen flying over Reykhólar.

## Uncountable Islands

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



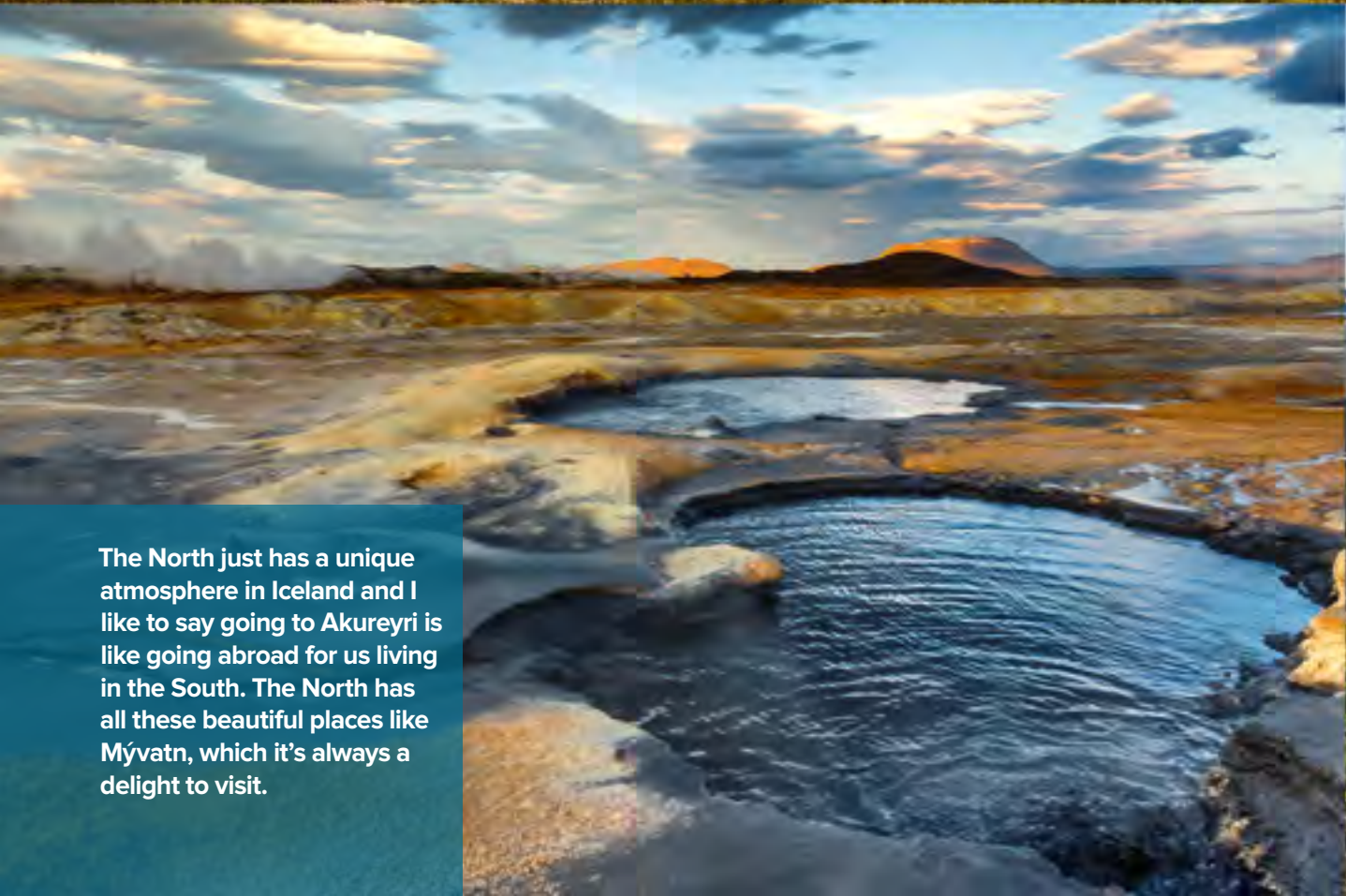
## Reykhólahreppur

Reykhólar • 380 Reykhólahreppur  
+354 434 7880  
skrifstofa@reykholar.is  
www.reykholar.is





# NORTH *Iceland*



The North just has a unique atmosphere in Iceland and I like to say going to Akureyri is like going abroad for us living in the South. The North has all these beautiful places like Mývatn, which it's always a delight to visit.





# BORÐEYRI

## REVISITS ITS AMAZING HERITAGE

*“... to get commerce into the hands of the Icelanders so that the dividend goes to the natives and not out of the country.”*

By Hrútafjörður – Fjord of Rams in the North West of Iceland is the tiny village of Borðeyri, with sixteen inhabitants in 2018. It is rich in history as it was one of Iceland’s busiest anchorages that dates back to the Settlement of Iceland in the 8th century. It was Ingimundur gamli – Old Ingimundur – the Viking settler at Hof in nearby Vatnsdalur who named the Fjord as he saw two Rams running down the hills as well as a huge plank by the sea-side. Hrútafjörður is a long fjord south of Húnaflói – Bay of Bears.

Ingimundur gamli fought along with Norwegian king Harald Fairhair in the historical battle at Hafangursfjord 872. The story goes that Ingimundur gamli later

gave the king two polar bear cubs captured in Iceland. The gift was much appreciated as polar bears had never before been seen in Norway. Ingimundur gamli was held in high esteem in the country of his ancestors.

### Tale of mixed fortunes

During Iceland’s Commonwealth era 930-1262, Borðeyri was a quite busy anchorage but as Iceland came under Norse rule 1262 and later Danish rule in the late 1300’s during the Kalmar Union as Norway collapsed, Borðeyri gradually declined. During the dark Monopoly Trade Period 1602-1787 there are no recorded ship arrivals as it was forbidden to trade at Borðeyri, with Iceland being a colony, sold to the highest trading bidders. However, Borðeyri was made a township by law by the Althing in 1846, as Iceland started its road to freedom. The tiny village was quite busy well into the 20th century.

The first ship to sail to Borðeyri arrived in June 1848. Slowly but surely traffic increased and hundreds of farmers and their spouses gathered in the busy village to trade aboard the ships. Pétur Eggerz (1831-1892), educated in

Great Britain, is recognised as Borðeyri’s founding father. He was the first merchant to move to Borðeyri. Eggerz built a turf farm in 1858 and two years later, a warehouse. In the 1860’s, Eggerz built the faktorshouse. His son Sigurður Eggerz 1875-1945 was Iceland’s Prime Minister 1914-15 and 1922-24.

In 1870, Pétur Eggerz, along with his brother-in-law, Páll Vídalín, and farmers in the district established a Community Store at the Faktorshouse. Their vision was clear, “... to get commerce into the hands of the Icelanders so that the dividend goes to the natives and not out of the country.” Eggerz became store manager. The Faktorshouse later became known as the Riis-house named after merchant Richard Riis who later moved to Borðeyri.

### Quest for sovereignty

Iceland’s quest for sovereignty started in the late 1900’s. In 1904, the country got home rule and sovereignty in 1918, under the Danish king. Iceland declared Independence in 1944 when the Danes were occupied by nazi Germany in World War II, when Borðeyri was occupied by the British from 1940-1943.

Borðeyri was alive and well then, with the main actor being Kaupfélag Hrutfirðinga—Fjord of Ramsers Co-op, a member of Iceland’s Co-operative Society, by then, far the largest company in Iceland. However, the Co-op crumbled in the early 1990’s, leading to the decline of Borðeyri.

Plássíð, in translation The Place, being the old Borðeyri of ten houses with 16 inhabitants, was declared a protected site by Iceland’s Ministry of Culture in April 2019. The rebuilding is underway as Borðeyri revisits its amazing heritage.



# SEALS SUN ON THE SEASHORE

## A day in Húnaþing vestra on the North-West Coast

The beauty of Húnaþing vestra, conveyed in its grassy heaths, majestic mountains, pillar rocks and sparkling lakes and rivers, truly sums up the uniqueness of Icelandic nature. Its vast heathlands contain the largest untouched wetlands in Iceland, very popular for angling and a habitat for numerous bird species. From there you can drive into the highlands over the gravel roads.

Kolugljúfur, is a magnificent canyon named after the giantess, Kola. It is an unforgettable site, with the Víðidalssá river running through it, over two spectacular waterfalls, named the Kolufossar.

Borgvirki fort is a 10-15 m high columnar basalt formation which is believed to be the site of an old battle and a fort for the district. There’s an observation platform at its top and a breathtaking view over the Húnaflói Bay.

### A Troll, surrounded by seals

One of the biggest attractions in Húnaþing vestra is Hvítserkur, the 15m tall rock, popular as a bird nesting spot, believed to be a troll who stayed out too late at

night and got caught as the sun rose with the dawn, turning her to stone. Making it special is a colony of the region’s most adorable inhabitants surrounding it; the seals. Every year, travellers flock to the beautiful Vatnsnes peninsula, cameras in hand, to observe these gentle creatures and their offspring, rolling around on the shores and in the sea.

This area is without a doubt one of the best spots in Iceland for viewing seals, the main locations being Svalbarð, Illugastaðir and Ósar.

You can also go seal-watching and sea-angling on a boat from Hvammstangi. The summer midnight-sailing is something you won’t forget!

### Rest and play

You’ll find accommodation in all price ranges in Húnaþing vestra. There are several excellent camping sites to choose from situated in Hvammstangi, Sæberg and Laugarbakki. The Dæli holiday farm in Víðidalur, has a camping site and a lovely guesthouse, a hot pot, sauna and a mini golf course. There are guesthouses

in Hvammstangi and the highly rated Hotel Edda in Laugarbakki. Gauksmýri in Línakradalur is a beautiful farm that has reclaimed the area’s wetland and put up facilities for birdwatching as well as running a horse rental and a restaurant.

Brekkulækur in Miðfjörður also offers riding tours and accommodation and is a popular stop for travellers. Ósar at Vatnsnes peninsula, situated right by Hvítserkur, is a popular hostel and a great spot for viewing the seals.

### Museums and Exhibitions

The Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi is a highly informative research centre and a museum that has an ongoing exhibition and is well worth a visit. Other museums of note are Reykir Regional Museum in Hrútafjörður and the Commercial Museum in Hvammstangi which both offer interesting exhibitions about the area’s history. Also be sure not to miss the wonderful Bardúsa craft gallery in Hvammstangi. Unwinding in the town’s swimmingpool after an eventful day is a must.





# BLÖNDUÓS

## SALMON RIVERS, WOMEN AND AN EXECUTION

Blönduós is the largest town in Húnavatnssýsla – Húna waters County – in Iceland’s North-West with lakes and rivers all around the town of a thousand inhabitants. There and nearby you’ll find many of the best salmon and trout fishing lakes and rivers in Iceland.

The river Blanda – ‘The Mixed River’ – which runs through the town, is the longest and perhaps the most powerful salmon river in Iceland. The source of the river is the Hofsjökull glacier and it runs into Húnaflói Bay through Blönduós. There is found Hrutey – ‘Ram Island’ – is found there, with its natural wonders and walking paths.

### Women, churches and monastery

Women certainly have place a place of honour at Blönduós, with Iceland’s Women’s College located there for a century. So it comes as no surprise that Iceland’s textile and handcraft history is well documented throughout the centuries, along with the old College.

The quite extraordinary ‘Vatnsdæla á Refli’ project is the telling of the great Icelandic Saga of the People of Vatnsdalur through pictures

embroidered on a tapestry. Work began on the tapestry in 2011, and is expected to finish early in the next decade with the tapestry’s final length reaching 46 metres! Women certainly have a place of Honour at Blönduós.

The Blönduós Church, consecrated in 1993, finds inspiration from the surrounding mountains. It is an elaborate house of God, like many of Húnavatnssýsla’s beautiful farm churches and the Þingeyri monastery.

### Burial Rites: The story of Agnes

Then there is the story of Agnes and the last execution in Iceland, which the Australian Hannah Kent has so brilliantly documented in her gripping and epic award winning novel Burial Rites. Oscar Award Winner Jennifer Lawrence plays Agnes in the upcoming Luca Guadagnino Hollywood film.

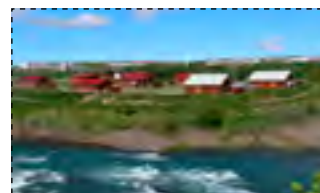
Agnes Magnúsdóttir was beheaded along with Friðrik Sigurðsson after being found guilty of brutally murdering her lover, farmer Natan Ketilsson, who had rejected her, at Illugastaðir in Vatnsnes to the west of Blönduós. Afterwards



the farm was set on fire. For this, at the Þrístapar – ‘The Three Rocks’ – they were beheaded on 12th January, 1830, and their heads put on vaults facing the passing road for all to see. Þrístapar is close to the main road running through Húnavatnssýsla. Passers-by still walk to the site in remembrance of Agnes.

Events at Illugastaðir shook Iceland at the time. Agnes (33) herself reported to a nearby farm that Illugastaðir was burning and that Natan had perished along with another man. When the fire had been extinguished, multiple stab wounds were found on the bodies and unburnt clothes. Natan had been a notorious womaniser and rejected Agnes for a 16 year old girl whom he had taken away from her fiancé, young Friðrik Sigurðsson. Was jealousy and revenge the reason?

Agnes and Friðrik were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. As there were no prisons in Iceland at the time, Agnes was held for the winter waiting her execution at a farm where she had lived as a young girl. Burial Rites tells the story of Agnes during the winter preceding her death. “They said I must die. They said I stole the breath from the men, and now they must steal mine,” Agnes says in Burial Rites. As the days to the execution draw closer, it begs the question: did she or didn’t she?



**GLADHEIMAR**, an all year round holiday resort with 20 well-equipped cottages for 110 people altogether & a camping area next to the cottages. Hotpots & sauna in most cottages. Close to all services.  
**Brautarhvammur, 540**  
**+354 820 1300 / 690 3130**  
**Blönduós**  
**gladheimar@simnet.is**  
**www.gladheimar.is/1index.asp**



**HOTEL BLANDA** is a boutique hotel in the old town of Blönduós. The hotel was built in 1900. The town is filled with old, quaint houses and is next to a black sand beach.  
**Aðalgata 6, 540 Blönduós**  
**+354 452 4205**  
**info@hotelblanda.is**  
**hotelblanda.is/**  
**+354 452 4205**



**GALSI HORSE RENTAL** just outside Blönduós in North Iceland is a family-owned horse rental with an emphasis on seminars for children. It’s a licensed horse rental run by couple Jón Ragnar & Gunnlaug.  
**Arnargerði 33, 540 Blönduós**  
**galsi@galsi.is**  
**www.galsi.is**  
**+354 692 0118**

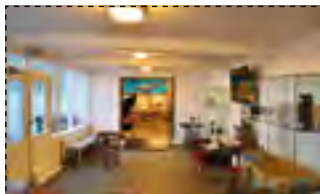


**ÖMMUKAFFI** in Blönduós is a small, cosy little restaurant in North Iceland that offers home-cooked, Icelandic meals for lunch and Ethiopian food in the evenings on their menu.  
**Húnabraut 2, 540 Blönduós**  
**+354 452 4040**  
**ommukaffi@ommukaffi.is**  
**www.facebook.com/ommukaffi/**



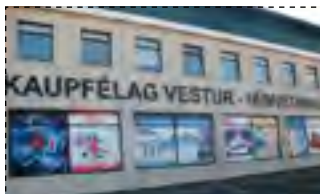
# LAND OF THE SEALS

## The Ultimate Seal-Watching Destination



**THE FOLK MUSEUM OF HÚNAVATNSHÉRA & STRÖNDAMANNA** was founded 50 years ago & displays a collection of unique objects showcasing local culture & history. On display are famous boats & the house Syðsti-Hvammur.

**Reykjun, 500 Stað**  
reykjasafn@hunathing.is  
www.northiceland.is/en/what-to-see-do/service/local-museum  
+354 8472735 / 868 8166



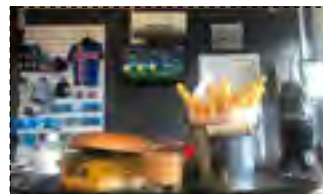
The cooperative of **VESTUR HÚNAVATNSHÉRA** is not your regular store. Here you will find whatever you may need on your holiday in Iceland. Everything from groceries, clothes, office supplies, tools, fishing & camping.

**Strandgötu 1, 530**  
Hvammstanga 4552300  
+354 455 2300  
www.kvh.is - kvh@kvh.is



**DAELI GUESTHOUSE** is a small rural family-run guesthouse with over 30 years of experience behind them. You can choose between single, double, family rooms and cottages.

**Dæli, 531 Hvammstangi**  
+354 451 2566  
daeli@daeli.is  
www.daeli.is



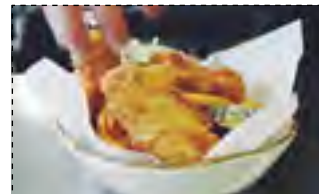
**NORTH WEST HOTEL & RESTAURANT** is a wonderful hotel/restaurant halfway between Reykjavík & Akureyri. The hotel is newly renovated, you can stock up your car and have a delicious meal in the restaurant.

**Vidigerði, 531 Hvammstangi**  
+354 511 4440  
www.facebook.com/vidigerdi/  
northwesthotel@outlook.com



**THE ICELANDIC SEAL CENTER'S** main missions is to promote seal research, responsible seal watching and contribute to the development of sustainable seal watching locations on Vatnsnes peninsula in cooperation with the local tourism board and NORCE.

**Brekkgötu 2, 530, Hvammstangi**  
+354 451 2345  
selasetur@selasetur.is  
selasetur.is/en/



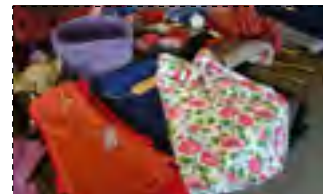
**SJÁVARBORG RESTAURANT** is found in an old slaughterhouse/freezer building and is inspired by local history. They specialise in local produce, meat & fish. The menu is very seasonal to ensure fresh and high-quality food.

**Strandgata 1, 530 Hvammstangi**  
+354 451 3131  
sjavarborg@gauksmyri.is  
www.sjavarborg-restaurant.is



**HOTEL LAUGARBAKKI** is a new hotel with 56 rooms with private baths, hot tubs, restaurant and a gym. The hotel also has a meeting room and public Wi-Fi making it perfect for business as well as family holidays.

**Skeggjagötu 1, 531 Laugarbakki**  
+354 519 8600  
hotel@laugarbakki.is  
www.hotellaugarbakki.is/



**LANGAFIT HANDCRAFT MARKET** in Laugarbakki village is not a standard gift shop. Here you'll find all kinds of handcraft from in & around the community. They also have a wonderful little guesthouse for max 13 people.

**Langafit, Laugarbakka**  
+354 451 2987 / 892 8487  
olina@simnet.is  
www.visitunathing.is/en/what-to-do/  
handicraft-artists/langafit-handcraft-market



**HOTEL HVAMMSTANGI** is located in the middle of town with a wonderful view of the fjord. Guests have free Wi-Fi, free access to the swimming pool across the road. All rooms have private baths.

**Norðurbraut 1, 530**  
Hvammstanga  
+354 855 1303  
alladora@hotelhvammstangi.is  
www.hotelhvammstangi.is



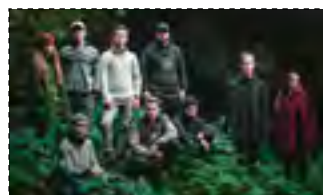
**HOTEL HVÍTSEKUR** is just around the corner from Lake Hóp & a shorter drive to the famous rock Hvítserkur aka Rhino rock aka Elephant rock. They have free Wi-Fi, fishing close by & fantastic hikes.

**Þorfinnsstöðum, 531**  
Hvammstanga  
info@hvitserkur.is  
www.hvitserkur.is  
+354 583 5000



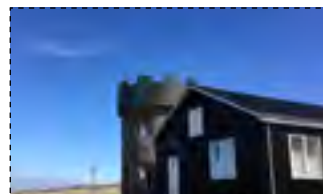
**THE SEALWATCHING COMPANY**, established in 2010, uses a wonderfully restored oak fishing boat for seal tours around the peninsula. The boat with a capacity of 30 passengers was built in 1973.

**Höfðabraut 13, 530, Hvammstanga**  
+354 8979900  
selasigling@simnet.is  
www.sealwatching.is/en/



**KIDKA KIDKA** is a knitting and sewing company with roots back to 1972. They have made high-quality Icelandic wool clothing and products since 2008, synonymous with beautiful and fashionable high-quality designs.

**Höfðabraut 34, 530 Hvammstangi**  
+354 451 0060 / 451 2827  
shop@kidka.com  
www.kidka.com/en/



**GEITAFELL SEAFOOD RESTAURANT** offers exquisite fish soups and other seafood delicacies served with locally grown salads and homemade bread. The fish is caught locally to ensure the freshest seafood and best possible quality.

**Geitafelli, 641 Hvammstangi**  
+354 8612503 / 8933380  
info@geitafell.is  
geitafell.is/





# AKUREYRI

## *Heart of the North*



The dozen inhabitants in 1786, clinging to the side of Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord, probably never imagined their brave struggle would ultimately result in a town of almost 20,000 people with all the services of a major city.

Akureyri is not as big as any of the world's cities but it provides all the features and services expected of a big city in a very compact form, so that everything is available within a short distance.

Take, for instance, winter activities like skiing. The family-friendly slopes are under 10 minutes from the airport and the hotels. Likewise, the horse riding tours, boat trips, bird watching—to name a few—are all so close, you can almost touch them. You name it, it's close-by. The weather, with its combination of crisp, dry snow and Northern Lights, makes a holiday here memorable.

### Cultural Centre of the North

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

It has well over 20 restaurants, covering both Icelandic and international cuisine, with top chefs who create their own innovative cuisine. There is an abundance of cafés, each with their individual speciality.

For groups and individuals, Akureyri offers such a wide range of activities, events and opportunities, it maximises the time available. There are a multitude of tours covering every interest from flying to caving, from fishing to the Hidden People, walking to whale watching.

### Sports of all kinds

Sport activities are very popular in the North and many sports are represented in this dynamic community. We have already

mentioned the ski slopes, but other popular facilities are the big skating rink, football fields and recreational areas ideal for running, hiking and downhill biking.

The geothermally-heated swimming pools, with their hot pots, jacuzzi and awesome water slides are open—and very popular—all year round.

The Arctic Open Golf championship is played on the most northerly 18-hole course in the world, just outside the city under both snow-covered mountains and the midnight sun. You can hire clubs if you need them and relax in the club house afterwards.

### See the Sights

Akureyri is also a service base for many of the most important tourist destinations in North Iceland. From here, you can visit Mývatn, Dettifoss—the most powerful waterfall in Europe, the islands of Hrísey, and Grímsey, straddling the Arctic Circle; see craters and boiling

mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the North in under 2 hours. If you are planning your visit, then it's recommended you check out the Arctic Coast Way with all its wonders. [www.arcticcoastway.is](http://www.arcticcoastway.is).

### Easy Access

Flights from Reykjavík airport take just 35 min. Scheduled buses drive twice a day between Reykjavík and Akureyri. The trip from Reykjavík to Akureyri takes about 6 hours, although in the summer time you can choose a longer route over the highlands if you wish to turn your trip into a journey rich with sights and natural beauty.

The city bus service is free in town. Every type of accommodation is on hand, from 4-star hotels to camp sites.

[www.visitakureyri.com](http://www.visitakureyri.com)

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



### Akureyrarstofa

Strandgata 12 • 600 Akureyri  
+354 450 1050  
[info@visitakureyri.is](mailto:info@visitakureyri.is)  
[www.visitakureyri.is](http://www.visitakureyri.is)







## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

### Iceland on Horseback with Pólar Hestar of North Iceland

One of Iceland's most iconic symbols can be found in its own special breed of horse, known for its friendly nature and its two extra gaits. The hardy and sure-footed Icelandic horse is an excellent introduction to the world of riding, and what better way to experience Iceland than from the back of one of these magnificent creatures that have been part of the Icelandic landscape for over a thousand years.

Now you can get a feel for the real Iceland with Pólar Hestar Tours of North Iceland who offer a range of riding tours that appeal to all levels of ability, from the absolute beginner all the way to the most seasoned rider. The tours can be arranged for from 1 to 4 hour periods.

Short Duration Tours are perfect for beginners or those with a little riding experience. These reasonably priced tours run from just one hour to two hours up to half-day tours of 4 hours and are also available in winter, weather permitting. This is a wonderful introduction to the Icelandic horse and great fun for both adults and children.



For intermediate riders there are many options to choose from, including the popular 'Between the Fjord and the Valley of the Elves Tour'. This 6-day, 5-night tour takes you through lovely landscapes, with breathtaking views, delightful deep green valleys with rushing brooks and along a fascinating scenic coastline.

#### Ring Around the Midnight Sun

The fragrance of early spring, bright nights and the awakening nature are characteristics of this tour, consisting of several rides and sightseeing by bus. Experience the days around the midnight sun visiting the famous turf houses of Laufás, the whales in

Eyjafljörður fjord and the amazing area around the breathtaking Lake Mývatn. A Midnight Ride, a highlight of the week at this special time of year, when the sun hardly sets, is included.

#### Fascinating North Iceland Tour

Take part in this exhilarating 8-day, 7-night tour—a wonderful opportunity to experience the diversity of Iceland's mesmerising nature.

The tour's itinerary includes some of North Iceland's well known waterfalls as well as Europe's most active volcanic area. You can witness the breathtaking Highlands, once the domain of outlaws, elves and trolls, and journey over ancient lava fields in this unforgettable tour that is suitable for more experienced riders.

-ASF/EMV

**Pólar Hestar Tours** is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from around the world for over 30 years.



#### Pólar Hestar

Grytubakki II • 601 Akureyri  
 +354 463 3179  
 polarhestar@polarhestar.is  
 www.polarhestar.is



**AKUREYRI ART MUSEUM** is one of Iceland's finest museums with a huge permanent collection, contemporary exhibitions, both local and international. The museum is located in the popular art gorge in downtown Akureyri.

Kaupvangsstræti 12  
 600 Akureyri,  
 +354 461-2610  
 listak@listak.is  
 www.listak.is



**AKUREYRI MUSEUM** has artifacts related to the region's history on display along with gardens & a 19th-century church, built in 1846 that you can visit.

Aðalstræti 58, 600 Akureyri  
 +354 462-4162  
 minjasafnid@minjasafnid.is  
 minjasafnid.is



**KRUA SIAM** is a restaurant in downtown Akureyri. On their menu you'll find many Thai dishes with pork, fish, different meat or veggies. They also have a dedicated children's menu and for the brave ones, very spicy food too which is so appreciated in Thailand.

Strandgötu 13, 600 Akureyri  
 +354 466 3800  
 kruasiam@kruasiam.is  
 www.kruasiam.is/en/



**POOL COMPLEX IN AKUREYRI** has two 25m outdoor swimming pool, one indoor pool, water slides, 3 hot tubs outside & 1 indoor and with both a sauna & an Icelandic steam bath. Very wheelchair friendly.

Sundlaug Akureyjar  
 Þingvallastræti 21, 600 Akureyri  
 +354 461-4455, sund@akureyri.is  
 www.akureyri.is/is/mannlif/  
 ithrottir-og-utivist/sundlaugar



**SHANGHAI CHINESE RESTAURANT** is an established restaurant in Akureyri. The food is always fresh and the interior is open and airy. A classic family place downtown where one always feels welcome.

Strandgötu 7, 600 Akureyri  
 +354 537 1888  
 shanghai@shanghai.is  
 sjanghae.is/akureyri-2/



**THE BEER SPA, BJÓRBÖÐIN** in North Iceland is one of the few places in the world where everything focuses around beer, even the spa & hot tubs. A must for any beer lover.

Ægisgata 31, 621  
 Árskógssandi, Dalvík  
 +354 414 2828  
 bjorbodin@bjorbodin.is  
 www.bjorbodin.is/







# CLIFFTOP BATHING

## *Húsavík's Unique GeoSea Hot Baths*

At the awesome GeoSea baths, set on top of Húsavíkurhöfði – ‘Húsavík Cliff’ – bathing guests view a majestic range of mountains to the west, old oak fishing boats silently sailing Skjálfandi Bay, the Puffin and Flatey Islands, the Arctic Circle on the Horizon and the serene town of Húsavík, with its majestic wooden Church. Húsavík, the whale watching capital of Europe, with its population of 2,500, is one of Iceland's main tourist attractions. Simply magical and unmatched anywhere else.

### Health benefits of GeoSea

The geothermal heat north of Húsavík has been well known to residents, who have used it for bathing and washing for centuries. Drilling for hot water at Húsavíkurhöfði in

the mid-20th century revealed water that turned out to be hot seawater, too rich in minerals to be suitable for heating houses.

Instead of letting the hot water go to waste, an old cheese barrel was installed at Húsavíkurhöfði. There, Húsavík residents could enjoy the health benefits of bathing in hot seawater. Many suffering from skin conditions such as psoriasis have found relief by bathing in the water, which is at an optimal temperature of 38°-39°C.

### The bore holes provide purity

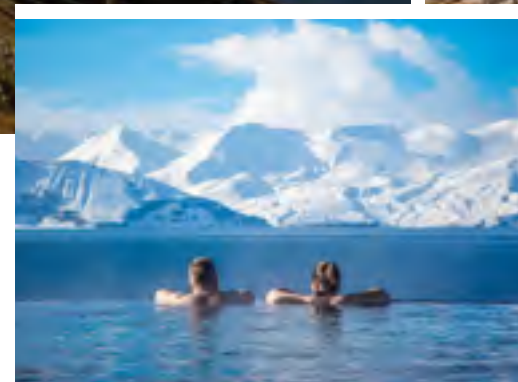
The water in the GeoSea baths comes from two bore holes, one located by the cheese barrel and the other by Húsavík harbour. There is no need to use any cleaning agents or equipment, as the steady flow of water

from the bore holes, between the pools, over their edges and into the sea ensures that the water stays within the limits stipulated by health regulations.

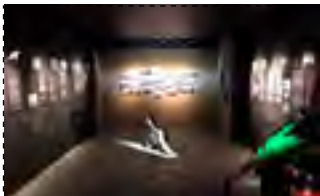
The GeoSea sea baths enable guests to enjoy nature in a unique manner. Thanks to the underground heat, the seawater in the baths is warm and comfortable and the mineral-rich water caresses the skin. While warm sea works its miracles, guests enjoy the spectacular view and health benefits.



**GeoSea**  
Vitaslóð 1, 640 Húsavík Iceland  
+354 464 1210  
geosea@geosea.is  
geosea.is





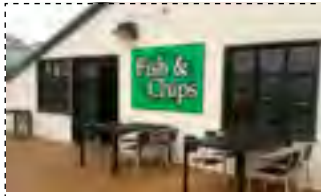


**THE HÚSAVÍK WHALE MUSEUM** is a non-profit organization, founded in 1997. The museum is also running an educational program for children. It is expected that every pupil visits the Children's Whale School at least four times during their schooling.  
**Hafnarstétt 1, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 414 2800**  
**info@hvalasafn.is**  
**www.hvalasafn.is/en/**



**SALT Vík** offers all kinds of riding tours, both short day-tours from their farm along with longer rides that last from 5 – 9 days in the Highlands of Iceland.

**Saltvík ehf, 641 Húsavík**  
**Hestamiðstöðin Saltvík**  
**+354 847 9515**  
**saltvik@saltvik.is**  
**saltvik.is/horse-riding/**



**FISH & CHIPS** in Húsavík harbour is fast-food restaurant with the freshest fish and excellent views over the harbour. This is a fantastic place to enjoy your fish & chips.

**Hafnarstétt 19, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 464 2099**  
**www.facebook.com/pg/Fishchips-152014694866754/about/?ref=page\_internal**



**NAUSTID SEAFOOD RESTAURANT** is situated in the middle of town in Húsavík. It's a business run by a family who love seafood. Their lobster soup and fish skewers are world famous.

**Ásgarðsvegur 1, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 464 1520**  
**naustidfood@gmail.com**  
**www.facebook.com/pg/naustid/**



**NORTH SAILING** is a whale watching company established in 1995. One of North Sailing's objectives is the preservation of Icelandic oak fishing boats and research on the different whales.

**Hafnarstétt 11, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 464 7272**  
**info@northsailing.is**  
**www.northsailing.is**



**HÚSAVÍK CAMPSITE** is located almost downtown. It's only a few minutes walk to everything and you are close to all big attractions like Lake Mývatn, Dettifoss, Ásbyrgi and Goðafoss.

**Héðinsbraut, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 840 0025**  
**camping@nordurthing.is**  
**www.visithusavik.com/**  
**accommodations/campsites/**  
**husavik-campsite/**



**GEOSEA**, a geothermal sea bath, is found north of Húsavík in one of the most stunning locations in Iceland. From the warm pool, you have a view over the whole bay outside Húsavík.

**Vitaslóð 1, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 464 1210**  
**geosea@geosea.is**  
**www.geosea.is**



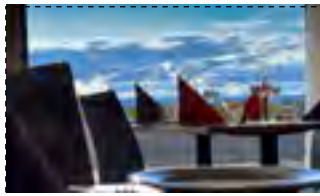
**GAMLI BAUKUR** Seafood Restaurant by the harbour in Húsavík, North Iceland, has a great reputation for innovative seafood, its positive atmosphere and a location famous for its fabulous view.

**Hafnarstétt 9, 640 Húsavík**  
**+354 464 2442**  
**gamlibaukur@gamlibaukur.is**  
**www.gamlibaukur.is**



**VISIT MÝVATN** is your official tourist guide to the area around Lake Mývatn in North Iceland. Follow us to find out about all events and everything you need to know about the area.

**660 Mývatn**  
**+354 591 2000**  
**info@visitmyvatn.is**  
**www.visitmyvatn.is/en**



**HOTEL LAXÁ** is a modern hotel by Lake Mývatn in North Iceland. All rooms are fully equipped with free WiFi, hairdryer, complimentary toiletries and tea and coffee.

**Olnbogaás, 660 Mývatn**  
**+354 464 1900**  
**hotellaxa@hotellaxa.is**  
**www.hotellaxa.is/en/home**



**MÝVATN TOURS** is a family-run tour operator that has been around since 1980. They specialise in tours to the Highlands and destinations where specialised vehicles are required.

**Arnarnes, 660 Mývatn**  
**+354 464 1920**  
**myvatntours@gmail.com**  
**www.myvatntours.is/en**



**DIMMUBORGIR GUESTHOUSE** offers very comfortable cottages on the banks of the wonderful Lake Mývatn. It is an all-year-around guesthouse in North Iceland.

**Geiteyjarströnd 1, 660 Mývatn**  
**+354 464 4210**  
**info@dimmuborgir.is**  
**www.dimmuborgir.is**



# ICELANDIC TIMES

[www.icelandictimes.com](http://www.icelandictimes.com)



**BÁRAN BAR/RESTAURANT** in Þórshöfn, northeast Iceland offers local cuisine like fish, lamb, vegetables or for those who dare, whale or Puffin. During summer they also serve breakfast.

**Eyrvægarvegur 3, 680 Þórshöfn**  
**+354 468 1250**  
**knaveitingar@gmail.com**  
**baranrestaurant.is/en/**



## STUNNING ÞÓRSHÖFN

*Visit this northern village for outdoor activities and a terrific meal at Bárán Restaurant*

Þórshöfn is a charming fishing village on the coast of the Langanes Peninsula, a beautiful slice of northeast Iceland. Travellers love to visit the village for its remoteness. Þórshöfn is as far as you can get from Keflavik International Airport—so no crowds of tourists—just nature, rich birdlife and a variety of outdoor activities.

Langanes is a 40km long, narrow peninsula with a sloping coastal landscape with steep sea cliffs that is ideal for birdwatching and photography. Here, you are likely see puffins, gannets and terns.

Bárán Restaurant, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, is one of the best restaurants in the north. The cosy restaurant has a warm, friendly atmosphere and focuses on fresh, local ingredients, emphasising fish and shellfish from local fishermen. Diners can also enjoy soups, salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the harbour that's an ideal spot to enjoy a meal and a beer. In fact, Bárán has an impressive beer menu, with more than 17 beers from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Bárán Restaurant's owners operate kayaking tours in Þórshöfn and Langanes, as well as to Skálar and Fontur. Many different sea birds, seals and sometimes, whales can be seen while sailing the crystal clear water from May to August. It's possible to fish during the tour and the restaurant can prepare your catch to your liking. Put Þórshöfn on your itinerary. -JG



**Bárán restaurant**  
 Eyrvægarvegur 3, 680 Þórshöfn  
**+354 468 1250**  
**knaveitingar@gmail.com**  
**www.baranrestaurant.is**





Mývatn is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the northeast, luring travellers with gorgeous hiking trails, rich birdlife, activities along Lake Mývatn, and the soothing Mývatn Nature Baths. The region has been shaped over time by punishing volcanic eruptions and it's the ideal place to soak in the rugged landscape, with its vast lava fields, gigantic craters, and towering mountains.

#### Bathe Among Striking Nature

A perfect start to exploring the region is stopping by the Mývatn Nature Baths. The bathing experience is heavenly, as you soothe your skin and relax every square inch of your body. The views of the landscape are striking, with the volcanic crater of Hverfjall and the edge of Lake Mývatn in the background as well as nearby roaring waterfalls, volcanic craters, and black lava rock pillars.

#### A unique experience, great for your skin

The milky-blue water, which measures a deliciously warm 38°C, comes from the National Power Company's borehole in

Bjarnarflag. The water reaches a boiling temperature of 130°C when it arrives in the basin next to the lagoon, but it cools significantly before being filtered into the beautiful man-made hot spring. The bottom of the lagoon is covered by sand and contains a large quantity of minerals. Because of its chemical composition, vegetation and bacteria are not a problem. There is some sulphur in the water, which is beneficial for skin problems such as eczema and psoriasis, and the Nature Baths also have a natural steam bath that derives steam directly from the earth.

#### Numerous sightseeing opportunities

There is so much to see and do in the Mývatn region. After your time at the Nature Baths, jump into your rental car and discover Dimmuborgir, which comprises interesting rock formations jutting out of the ground, resembling a fort guarding an ancient city. The black lava pillars were born from a collapsed lava tube created by a large volcanic eruption more than 2,000 years ago. Also nearby are the Krafla lava fields, which are home to Víti, 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 hydrologic forces. 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 grey mud pools, make it look like a movie scene from another planet. A path loops around the region; be sure to stay on it for safety reasons, as the mud pools can reach temperatures of 100°C.

The Mývatn region is perfect for independent travellers who prefers to roam in their own time, and the Mývatn Nature Baths are simply a must when in the area. Experience the beauty of North Iceland and be sure to pre-book and stop by for one of the best bathing sites on the island.



#### Mývatn Nature Baths

Jarðböðin við Mývatn, 660 Mývatn

+354 464 4411

info@jarðbodin.is

www.myvatnnaturebaths.is



# SOAK IN THE AMAZING SCENERY

*Relax in the Mývatn Nature Baths' geothermal waters*





# EAST *Iceland*



A big part of the East's charm is the small fishing villages that connect the fjords of the east. Driving through the seemingly countless fjords there is always something to catch the eye.

PHOTOS: KRISTJÁN INGI EINARSSON



*Vök Baths offers guests the only floating geothermal pools in all of Iceland*

Vök Baths is an exciting new geothermal bathing facility where guests can enjoy two heated floating pools among the beautiful scenery of Lake Urriðavatn. Situated just 5 kilometres from Egilsstaðir, Vök Baths is an ideal place to relax while sightseeing in East Iceland. The brand new baths, completed in the summer of 2019, take their shape from the ice-free patches on the lake ice, created by the bubbling hot springs in the lake.

**Harnessing the power of geothermal energy**

There are many advantages to the Land of Fire and Ice, and one is the abundance of

natural, renewable geothermal energy. The baths are gloriously warm, soothing your skin and muscles while you're enjoying the pristine nature of the region. The pools, whose water is so clean and pure it has been certified as drinkable, are especially welcome to the area, as East Iceland is home to few hot springs, compared to other parts of Iceland.

**Bathing facilities and changing rooms**

In addition to the floating pools there are two on-shore hot pools, and an outdoor pool bar. A steam bath and cold tunnel equipped with a cool mist shower inside will be available in October/November, 2019. The indoor shower facilities and changing rooms are

comfortable with nature-inspired designs. There are private showers and lockers to store your belongings while bathing. You can rent swimsuits and towels at the baths if you did not bring your own.

**Enjoy an onsite café, restaurant and bar**

Housed inside the facility, the café-restaurant offers a delicious array of soups, salads, cakes and fresh-baked bread. All ingredients are sourced locally, and chefs work closely with neighbouring farms for local, seasonal produce. The Infusion bar also serves an impressive selection of complimentary teas made from local herbs, brewed with the natural hot spring water.

Using the hot water from Lake Urriðavatn, Austri, the local brewery, produces a 4.5% Blond Kellerbier and a 4.5% Session IPA especially for Vök Baths from this special hot water. If you would like to enjoy a drink or two while bathing, there is a pool bar so you can relax with your drink while soaking in crystal clear waters surrounded by the unique Icelandic nature.

**Strong commitment to the environment**

The creators of Vök Baths have a deep respect for the environment and are committed to upholding excellent standards of sustainability in every aspect of their business. When it comes to maintaining the pools, the bar

and restaurant facilities, employees make a determined effort to avoid all use and disposal of plastic, where possible, and packaging is organic and recyclable. Additionally, all the wood furniture and features at Vök are made from ethically sourced trees raised in East Iceland.

Be sure to stop by Vök Baths during your next trip to East Iceland and partake of a special bathing experience.



**Vök Baths**

Vök við Urriðavatn, 701 Egilsstaðir  
+354 470 9500  
<https://vok-baths.is/>  
[hello@vok-baths.is](mailto:hello@vok-baths.is)



# A UNIQUE BATHING EXPERIENCE

*in the Idyllic East*



# SOUTH *Iceland*



The south is very dear to me as I've spent the most time there. There is so much to see just when driving on the main road, not to mention if you go a bit off the main road. You have all the waterfalls and prominent glaciers at your fingertips.

PHOTOS: KRISTJÁN INGI EINARSSON



# VESTRAHORN

## A BEAUTIFUL SLICE OF ICELAND

*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 the Northern Lights. Watching the green and white lights flicker and dance across the sky is a memorable experience.

Litlahorn, which is operated by a family with deep roots in South East Iceland, welcomes guests through a variety of

businesses, including the Viking Café, a guesthouse, the old farm and horse rental.

### Coffeehouse and accommodation

Viking Café is a little oasis at the bottom of Vestrahorn near Hofn. 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

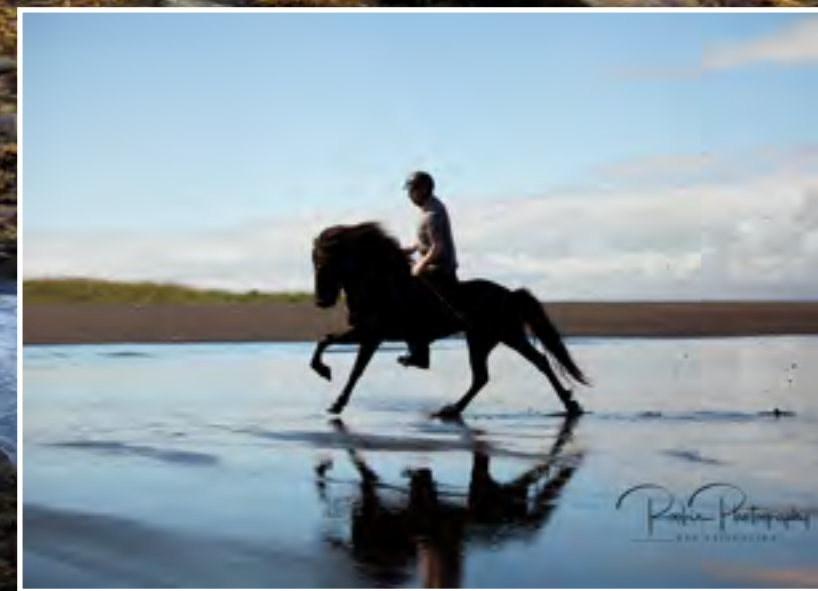


Photo By Eva Frischling

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 Hornafjarðarflót glacial river from the



**Litlahorn**  
Horni 781, Hofn  
+354 478 2577  
info@vikingcafe.is  
www.hornhestar.is  
www.vikingcafe.is



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, 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





# ON TOP OF THE WORLD - GLACIER JEEPS

## *A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull*

The weather report was looking good—a full day of sunshine ahead of me and temperatures above 10°C. I was on my way to a face to face encounter with the world's 3rd largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull. This trip would mark a couple of firsts for me—my first time ever to set foot on a glacier, and my first time to travel by snowmobile. Needless to say I was really excited!

I first met Kristján and Bjarney, of Glacier Jeeps, at our pre-arranged meeting place: the crossroads of Route No.1 and F985. This is the official meeting place for all Glacier Jeep summer tours. Glacier Jeeps has years of experience conducting jeep, snowmobile and hiking tours on the glacier since 1994. (Bjarney has been helping run the family business since she was 14 years old.) I parked my car and joined them in their sturdy 4WD which wound its way slowly ever upwards, following the undulating gravel road, which twisted and turned around hairpin bends, past waterfalls and deep canyons. My guides fill me in on the details of the landscape, pointing out how the glacier has crawled across the terrain, devastating everything in its path along with other interesting facts.

Thirty minutes and 830 metres above sea level later, we arrive at Jöklasel, Iceland's highest restaurant and owned by Glacier Jeeps. Jöklasel will serve as our base camp where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

-EMV



**Glacier Jeeps**  
Vagnsstaðir, 781 Suðursveit  
+354 478 1000  
info@glacierjeeps.is  
www.glacierjeeps.is





# KIRKJUBÆJARKLAUSTUR'S BEST KEPT SECRET

*The All New Hotel Klaustur*



For years it was known as Icelandair Hotel Klaustur, but as of January 2019, the newly rebranded Hotel Klaustur has struck out on its own, bringing change and excitement to the little town of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, South Iceland.

## Off the beaten path

You may be tempted to whizz right on by this quiet village of only 500 souls, but this quintessential Icelandic community is the perfect place for those who are wanting to get a feel for the real Iceland. Lying just off Road #1, Kirkjubæjarklaustur, or simply Klaustur as the locals call it, is ideally situated as a base from which to explore the panoply of Icelandic natural phenomena that surround the village in every direction. Of special

interest is the breathtaking Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon located just 15 minutes' drive from the hotel.

## A modern look for a new brand

Many of the rooms have undergone recent refurbishments and with a total of 57 modern rooms to choose from, you'll be spoiled for choice. The superior rooms, including a suite dedicated to the contemporary Icelandic artist, Erró, all come with free access to the local sports centre. Located just metres from the hotel, the sports centre boasts an outdoor pool, hot tub and gym. Extra touches such as l'Occitane bath products in every room, wifi throughout, as well as a copious breakfast buffet to greet you in the morning are some of the well thought out details that will make your stay memorable.

A relaxing colour scheme of soft greens and grays and modern geometric patterns grace the ground floor café/bar, echoing the moss and lava of the surrounding countryside.

## Our insiders suggested itinerary

After a good night's sleep, it's time to explore. Pack in a day of activities and sightseeing at unparalleled locations such as the beautiful Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, Skafafell National Park and Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, all less than 2 hours drive from the hotel. In the evening, Klaustur Restaurant awaits your return with a hearty dinner before you retire for the night.

Spend day 2 closer to home with a visit to the village of Klaustur -full of interesting history, geology and hair raising folk tales. 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.

The next day, take your time returning to Reykjavík and be sure to visit the black sand beach at Reynisfjara, the Dyrhólaey promontory, as well as Skogafoss and Seljalandsfoss waterfalls.

## Local Specialties

Klaustur Restaurant and bar, located on the ground floor of the hotel, is well known for its Arctic char specialities which is raised in the village in a free-flowing stream of oxygen-enriched glacial waters that have been naturally filtered through layers of lava in the nearby Vatnajökull. The fish, which figures prominently on the restaurant's menu, is favoured by many chefs at top restaurants around Iceland. Also worth mentioning is the Icelandic langoustine and baked Icelandic skyr, both local specialties that are brilliantly served at Klaustur Restaurant.

Every summer, Klaustur Restaurant's talented chefs create an inspiring seasonal menu whose primary ingredients come from small-scale farmers and producers in the area. Flavourful and local are keywords here as

some of the ingredients travel no more than perhaps 5 km at most and arrive at the hotel at their peak of freshness.

When the weather is fine you can enjoy your morning coffee out on the terrace or in the evening, try one of our Icelandic craft beers or one of our fruity mocktails from the new summer menu as the midnight sun dips beyond the mountains.

Hotel manager Sveinn Heiðar Jónsson and his team look forward to welcoming you this summer at Hotel Klaustur. See you soon!



## Hotel Klaustur

Klausturvegur 6 • 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustur  
+354 487 4900  
info@hotelklaustur.is  
www.hotelklaustur.is  
www.klausturrestaurant.is





# 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



# BLACK BEACH TOURS

*Fun and affordable adventures in South Iceland*

Like many travellers, a trip to Iceland is quite possibly something you have been dreaming about for years. Chances are good that it has been on your bucket list forever, so your expectations are high and a lot has gone into all the late-night planning of your perfect trip. And no matter the season, the big question on your mind is undoubtedly how to see and do as much as possible on a limited budget.

## Enter Black Beach Tours

You've seen all those stunning photos of the black sand beaches in Vík, but did you know that you don't have to travel vast distances from Reykjavík to enjoy this unusual phenomenon that Iceland is so famous for? Just 45 minutes drive from Reykjavík and 10-15 minutes off Highway 1, lies the little fishing village of Thorlakshöfn where a brand new company, Black Beach Tours, has recently opened with a range of heart pumping and affordable adventures in the area.

The company specialises in activities for the whole family. An emphasis on getting you into that heady space known as "adrenaline rush" via ATV adventures and RIB boat tours is Black Beach Tours' forté.

Black Beach Tours is run by Ossi Einarsson and family. The former sea captain grew up

in Thorlakshöfn, where his family has been in the fishing business for generations, giving him a keen eye and intuitive feeling for the land and sea in this peaceful stretch of coast along Iceland's south shore.

If reviews are anything to go by, (which they often are), you can rest assured that booking with Black Beach Tours at a price you can afford might just be the highlight of your trip to Iceland, as many reviewers can attest. From a 30-minute RIB boat adventure and 60-minute ATV ride to longer 3-hour south coast adventures, the company is keen to help you get the most out of your time in Iceland.

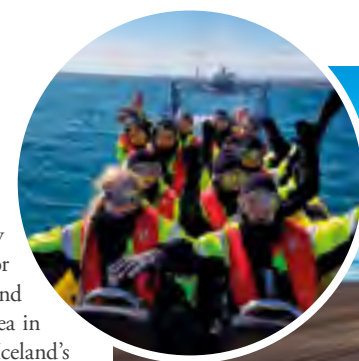
New activities for 2018 include luxury sea angling tours from the deck of a powerful 40-foot fly-bridge boat. One option is, for example, a tailor-made day tour to destinations such as the beautiful Westman Islands for a day of sightseeing and sea fishing.

Be sure to check out Black Beach Tours' comprehensive website for details. -EMV



## Black Beach Tours

Hafnarskeið 17 • 815 Thorlakshöfn  
Tel: +354 625 0500  
www.blackbeachtours.is  
info@blackbeachtours.is







# THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

None of Heimaey's 5,300 inhabitants had ever expected that a volcanic eruption could make them homeless. But on 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 1,000m<sup>2</sup> 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



## Eldheimar

Suðurvegur • 900 Vestmannaeyjum  
+354 488 2000  
eldheimar@vestmannaeyjar.is  
www.eldheimar.is



# 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



## Halldórskaffi

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





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 Fljótshlíð, 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



**Hellishólar ehf**  
861 Hvolsvöllur  
+354 487 8360  
hellisholar@hellisholar.is  
www.hellisholar.is  
www.hoteleyjafjallajokull.is



**ÁRNESSÝSLA HERITAGE MUSEUM** has one of the oldest buildings in Iceland. "Húsið" was built in 1765 for a Danish merchant. During that time, the house was the centre of European art & culture in Iceland.

Eyrargötu 50, 820 Eyrarbakki  
+354 483 1504  
info@byggdasafn.is  
www byggdasafn.is/english/



**ATLANTSFLUG** is a family-owned fly tour company. With three locations along the south side, they have easy access to all glaciers and water systems on the south side, including the highlands.

Flugvallarvegur 5, 785 Öræfi  
+354 555 1615  
info@flightseeing.is  
www.flightseeing.is/helicoptertours/



**ATLANTSFLUG** is a family-owned fly tour company with a new location conveniently placed by the border to Skaftafell national park. That means every second of your helicopter tour is high-end sightseeing.

Flugvallarvegur 5, 785 Öræfi  
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info@flightseeing.is  
www.flightseeing.is/helicoptertours/



**ASKA HOSTEL** is located in the village on the Westman Islands, with only a few minutes walk to most services and entertainment. The rooms available are for 2 to 4 people and large families.

Bárustíg 11,  
900 Westman Islands  
+354 662 7266  
www.askahotel.is/aska/  
info@askahotel.is



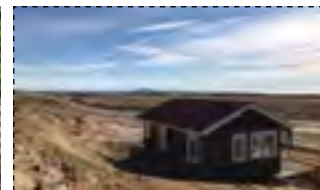
**STRACTA HOTEL** in South Iceland is located right in the middle of the majestic plains with stunning mountain views in all directions, except the south, where the horizon meets the ocean.

Rangárflátir 4, 850 Hella  
+354 531 8010  
info@stractahotels.is  
www.stractahotels.is/



**HALLDÓRSKAFFI** is a restaurant in Vik, South Iceland. It is located in the historic house Bryde's Store, Brydebúð. In a cosy, old-fashioned style, you are served wonderful refreshments.

Víkurbraut 2, 870 Vík  
+354 487 1202  
halldorskaffi@gmail.com  
www.facebook.com/pg/Halldorskaffi



**HESTHEIMAR COTTAGES** are 6 charming cottages right in the heart of South Iceland. With the Hekla volcano on one side and Eyjafjallajökull on the other, this big horse ranch has everything you need.

851 Hella  
+354 487 6666  
www.hestheimar.is  
hestheimar@hestheimar.is



**HOTEL GULLFOSS'S** location is as wild as you can get in Iceland without losing the comfort of modern life. Next door to the famous Gullfoss but far enough away to get the tranquility of rural Iceland.

Brattiholti, 801 Selfoss  
+354 486 8979  
info@hotelgullfoss.is  
www.hotelgullfoss.is



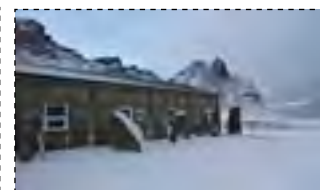
**SMYRLABJÖRG** is a working farm but they also have a hotel there, Hotel Smyrlabjörg. A spacious hotel in South Iceland, close to all the great attractions of South Iceland, like Vatnajökull & Jökulsárlón.

Smyrlabjörgum, 781 Hornafirði  
+354 478 1074  
smyrlabjorg@smyrlabjorg.is  
www.smyrlabjorg.is



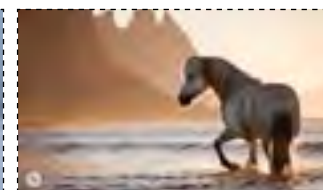
**ELDHEIMAR VOLCANO MUSEUM** is all about the huge 1973 volcanic eruption in the Westman Islands, one of the biggest in modern times in Iceland. It's also the eruption that created the new island of Surtsey

Gerðisbraut 10, 900 Vestmannaeyjar  
+354 488 2700  
eldheimar@vestmannaeyjar.is  
www.eldheimar.is



**VIKING CAFÉ GUESTHOUSE** is an oasis at the foot of Litla Horn outside Höfn on the east corner of Iceland. The hotel always has coffee brewing, served with delicious cakes, pastries, sandwiches, and waffles.

Horni, 781 Höfn  
+354 478 2577 – 892 0944  
info@vikingcafe.is  
vikingcafe.is/coffeehouse-and-accommodation/



**VIKING CAFÉ HORSE RENTAL** offers wonderful horseback tours on black sand beaches and in the other stunning nature just outside Höfn, in the east corner of Iceland.

Horni, 781 Höfn  
+354 478 2577 – 892 0944  
info@vikingcafe.is  
vikingcafe.is/horse-rental/



**RIBSAFARI** is a local company run by locals who love their islands. To fly around the island in a powerful RIB boat is a thrill you must experience, for the thrill, the fun and the adventure.

Basaskersbryggja 6,  
900 Westman Islands  
+354 661 1810  
info@ribsafari.is  
Rihsafari.is



**ICELANDIC LAVA SHOW** is the only place in the world where you can safely experience molten lava and feel the heat when it flows past you. Fun and educational for the whole family.

Víkurbraut 5, 870 Vík  
+354 823 7777  
info@icelandiclavashow.com  
www.icelandiclavashow.com



**HÚSID GUESTHOUSE**, built in 1929 as a school in the idyllic area of Fljótshlíð, South Iceland. From the house, guests have front row seats over Eyjafjallajökull and the Prihrningur mountain, a majestic mountain with three mountain peaks.

Húsínu, 861 Hvolsvöllur  
+354 892 3817  
gloa@gloa.is  
guesthousehusid.is/





# 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 Reykjavík, 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



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

—EMV/ASF

**Lindin Restaurant**

Lindarbraut 2 • 840 Laugarvatn

+354 486 1262

lindin@laugarvatn.is

www.laugarvatn.is

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