With his legendary concentration and 45 years of experience our Master Watchmaker and renowned craftsman, Gilbert O. Gudjonsson, inspects every single timepiece before it leaves our workshop. All the watches are designed and assembled by hand in Iceland. Only highest quality movements and materials are used to produce the watches and every single detail has been given the time needed for perfection.

At JS Watch co. Reykjavik we’re committed to provide a personal quality service and we pride ourselves on the close relationships we have with our customers. We’re always happy to assist and we provide a friendly and reliable service where our customers speak directly to the designers and manufacturers of the brand.

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Yet despite these amazing figures, ties between the countries have, in a quarter of a century, become closer 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. Thorsteinsson
REYKJAVÍK
The Iceland China Model Saving the World?

Interview with Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, former President of Iceland

Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, President of Iceland (1996-2016), was born in 1943 in the town of Isafjordur (Fjord of Ice) in Iceland’s remote Westfjords. Isolated, out at the farthest point in Iceland in the 1930s. Iceland’s capital, Reykjavík, started using geothermal isolated, out at the farthest point in Iceland in the 1930s. Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, started using geothermal energy. Living standards rocketed to the world’s top five.

Iceland’s first PhD in political science

In 1962, the young Grimsson had gone as a student to Manchester, England to study and become 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 1975-1983. He was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and became President of Parliamentarians for Global Action, receiving the Indira Ghandi 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. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson served as President of Iceland from 1996-2016. He succeeded Vigdis Finnbogadottir, who in 1980, was the first woman elected Head of State. The four focal points

Iceland’s role in the 21st century was just around the corner. Joyfully we should embrace opportunities and challenges were imperative as Iceland tackled projects that present themselves with our wit and knowhow.

World leader in Hydro- & Geothermal Energy

President Grimsson 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 Grimsson 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 significantly, and the rising middle classes and colossus economies, had gone to China in the early nineties for their technology. 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 Enex 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 Grimsson proposed cooperation between the nations on many of the issues which would be become
Visiting the year 2000, at the turn
when President Zemin arrived back in
2003. Iceland’s new First Lady was born
Zemin, an engineer himself, and his
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skies full of pollution were overwhelming
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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
The Icelandic President met with
President Hu Jintao for the first time and
also Premier Wen Jiabao as well as other
dignitaries. President Hu had been in
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
power on the global stage.

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President Zemin and President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson

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.

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cities.
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 Reykjavik, 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 skins. The model could help China to move away from pollution as it saved Iceland,” Mr. Grímsnson says.

He points out that approximately 50% of energy consumption is for heating and cooking 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 Hasharson, 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 Jiabao. 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 Hasharson 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 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 CO₂ emissions dramatically. SGE has close to 50 million square metres heating capacity, serving more than 2,000,000 customers with 399 heat centrales. 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 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 Hallum

A meeting at Bessastaðir, residence of Iceland’s Presidency

Vice Premier Ma Kai with President Grímsson 2013

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President Hu Jintao greets President Grímsson and First Lady Dorrit Moussaieff

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President Hu Jintao greets President Grímsson and First Lady Dorrit Moussaieff
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 globalization 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 11.7 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 revitalisation 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, stretching 3,118 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 times 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.

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 Shafei, “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.

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 times 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.
Engineering Research Institute in southwest China, a worker uses a 5G-based remote control to manage solar panels, wind turbines, and other equipment. Consumers are expected to account for one-third of the country's high-income households within five years. E-commerce is reshaping the retail industry through big data, cloud technology, and advanced manufacturing, making it possible for China's retail industry to grow by more than 13.3 times over the seven decades since 1978. Over the decades, compulsory education coverage in China has expanded to the average level of high-income countries as the country has provided universal 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 since 1978. China's science and technological development has been a golden period for China's science and technological development, with its atomic energy, space, high-energy physics, biology, and computer technology making significant advancements. Education has been expanding in the country since 1978, with the total enrolment in primary and secondary schools reaching 197 million trillion Yuan in 2018, making up 38.3 percent of the country's total installed power capacity. China is now the world's largest producer, exporter, and importer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles. China also 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 literacy 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 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 since 1978. China's science and technological development has been a golden period for China's science and technological development, with its atomic energy, space, high-energy physics, biology, and computer technology making significant advancements. Education has been expanding in the country since 1978, with the total enrolment in primary and secondary schools reaching 197 million trillion Yuan in 2018, making up 38.3 percent of the country's total installed power capacity. China is now the world's largest producer, exporter, and importer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles. China also 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.

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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. Tu Youyou, then a research fellow at the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, discovered the artemisinin in 1971 and 1972. The compound was later named “artemisinin” by the World Health Organization (WHO). Artemisinin has been shown to be effective in treating malaria, and its discovery marked a significant breakthrough in the fight against malaria. Tu Youyou continued to work on the artemisinin derivative, artesunate, and other related compounds, which have been shown to be even more effective in treating malaria. Tu Youyou's work has had a profound impact on global health, saving millions of lives, especially in Africa and Asia. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2015, becoming the first Chinese citizen to win this prestigious award.

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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 FDI of China 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 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, 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 hotspots.

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 endorses and upholds 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 willful 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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“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 hasn’t 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 C0₂ 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 Sundabær, 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 Pórðarkóshofn regarding plans to build an international harbour on Iceland’s south-west coast. “There is strong interest at Pórðarkóshofn 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. “We’ll see how the 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
China has no presence in Greenland. Huawei systems and smart phones to Huawei, nor does it intend to, he stresses.

Customer. I sincerely hope that Iceland and points out that both Icelandic companies Vodafone and Nova are using Chinese construction firms made a good effect.

Airports. Due to some reasons, they adamantly stresses that the Chinese are not a world trading country. We care and there is not a shred of evidence to support China's intentions in Greenland and Arctic interference, I ask Ambassador Zhijian.

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 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 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 hardships. 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.

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 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.
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 a 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, 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 to meet a market economy, looked towards 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 in 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 Sverrisdottir, and leading technical staff, proved a particularly successful”, 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, Enex, and the Reykjavík 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 (1991–2004). Director of Reykjvik Geothermal company, had gone on a visit to Beijing and Tianjin already in 1981 where he lectured on technology 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 places such as Tianjin’s low temperature geothermal power plant, where he was invited to drill for their own use. “I suggested 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 Zoëga signed the Agreement on behalf of Iceland and China’s Aviation Minister Yang Yangyan 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 travelled 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: Halldór Hallon

Presentation of Credentials in Beijing, March 1998:
President Jiang Zemin and Ambassador Ólafur Egilsson discussing relations between China and Iceland, i.a. possibilities for increased cooperation on the harnessing of environmentally friendly geothermal energy and enhanced trading linked to the much closer north-eastern sea route from Korea and Europe.

Icelandic Embassy staff receive the Landmark Tour 1 in Beijing, where the ceremony was hosted from 1998 (l to r): Yan Xuesong Assistant & Chauffeur, Zhang Lin Secretary, Gudrun Margret Thrastardottir, Secretary. H.E. Ólafur Egilsson Ambassador, Ragnar Baldursson Counsellor, Peter Yang Li Commercial Counsellor.

Icelandic literature, the world famous Icelandic Saga, as well as modern Icelandic poetry have been translated into Chinese.
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 HALLISON, ICELANDIC TIMES

A Piece of History
In 1930 the people of Reykjavík – “Smoky 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. 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 its 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.

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 baring had failed to migrate into Icelandic waters from the Norwegian Sea. Thousands of Icelanders migrated over seas, mostly to Sweden but Canada and Australia as well. Iceland was in the custod y 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 smell that covered Reykjavík 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 Enex 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 Enex 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 Johanna 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...
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 Olafur Ragnar Grimsson’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 CO₂ 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 addition 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 through 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 utilizing Iceland’s miraculous rise to good effect and is itself being revolutionised by the Icelandic model.

The Icelander 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 Energy 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.

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.

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 Times 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.”

“President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson’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 CO₂ 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 addition 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 through 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 utilizing Iceland’s miraculous rise to good effect and is itself being revolutionised by the Icelandic model.

The Icelander 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 Energy 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.

Icelandic firms excluded

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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 energy 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

Interview with Guðni A. Jóhannesson, director general of Orkustofnun

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Tiny Iceland is moving mountains with China in the geothermal field

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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 Zongqian 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.
Geothermal Exhibition
Tel: (+354) 591 2880
www.geothermalexhibition.com
exhibition@on.is

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 CO2 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

ON POWER:
Hot in Iceland

Geothermal energy is on display at an interactive exhibition at Hellisheiði power plant
ICELANDIC CHINA SEAFOOD
led by Brim of Reykjavík

Free Trade Agreement leads to Iceland’s quest to China’s huge markets

Brim 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.
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 companies 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.

Photo: Kristján Maack
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.

A New Way of Doing Business
In 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.

For more information: danielle.neben@epassi.is www.epassi.is

Connecting Iceland and China

Danielle P. Neben, Marketing Director for ePassi in Iceland
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 wanted to learn the language. 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 cooking 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, 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

“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 reap 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!
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. 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 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!
Árbær Open Air Museum

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

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Fishing has been the backbone of Iceland since the days of settlement. Fish nourishes Iceland’s inhabitants and is an important industry, exporting Icelandic fish abroad. The Reykjavík Maritime Museum, which is located in the old harbour, focuses on exhibitions that show the importance of fish to the nation. Today, Icelanders fish on modern trawlers, but in the old days, fishermen regularly put their lives at risk on primitive boats in order to feed their families. The museum shows the equipment fishermen used through the ages. However, one of the main attractions at the museum is the Coast Guard ship, Óðinn, which took part in all three cod wars with Britain. Guided tours are offered daily at 13:00, 14:00, and 15:00.

Viðey Island

Viðey is a little gem of an island just off the coast of Reykjavík and is accessible by ferry. The island, which is just 1.6 km² in size, hosts unspoiled nature with vast stretches of grassy plains and rich birdlife, as well as the John Lennon Peace Tower, an installation created by Yoko One, 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, Ágúsgarður harbour and Skarfabakki harbour. Please visit www.videy.is for the ferry schedule.

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

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

Reykjavík City Museum

Reykjavík City Museum gives travellers the opportunity to experience the history of Reykjavík in a fun and engaging way. The museum, which comprises five separate sites, aims to engage visitors in a fun and interactive way. The museum, which dates back to the days of settlement in the late 9th century. Four of the museums are conveniently within walking distance of downtown Reykjavík, while the Árbær Open Air Museum is only a 15-minute drive from the city centre. The ferry to Viðey Island leaves from the Old Harbour in downtown Reykjavík.

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.

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 offers a fun treasure hunt for kids 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.
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.

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 Klambratún Park a walk away from church Hallgrímskirkja.

Flókagata 24, 105 Reykjavík
Open daily 10-17

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Ásmundur Sveinsson
Under the Same Sky – Art in Public Spaces
19.01.2019 Opened
16.02.2020 Closes

The sculpture garden at Sigtún 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 sculptor has 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.

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 nutrition. His task was to reawaken folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved to be a success, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Spiced Salt (a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe) is an excellent contribution to your cuisine and a perfect gift.

HAND-PICKED AND HEALTHY
The hand-picked Iceland moss is ready for use in tea, bread or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient food. By adding seaweed to your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters. Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method.

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

ANCESTORS’ KNOWLEDGE
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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 made only 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.

**Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús**

**Erró**

*Mao’s World Tour*

*01.05.2019 Opened*

*05.01.2020 Closes*

The Icelandic Phallological 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.

**The Icelandic Phallogical Museum**

*Laugavegur 116 • 105 Reykjavík
+354 561 6663
phallus@phallus.is
www.phallus.is*
A Unique Experience

The center is the unique creation of enthusiastic 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 Northern Lights Center, where the Northern Lights are always on display.

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 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 some of Iceland’s most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it.

Multi-language private groups and SIC tours

Do you need a private tour in Mandarin or Cantonese? What about special interest tours such as nature, geology, glaciers, hiking, whale and bird watching, culture, agriculture, farming, horses & fishery, educational, Viking history, international movie locations such as Game of Thrones, James Bond & Batman Begins?

Experience built on history

For more than 85 years, the company has hosted travellers from all corners of the world. The founder, Gudmundur Jonasson, drove the USA astronauts of NASA for all Apollo missions to the moon around Iceland, including Neil Armstrong. Today GJ Travel owns the newest fleet of comfortable buses with free Wi-Fi in Iceland.

Great customer service

Many GJ Travel customers return time and time again–often together with their families and friends, to experience Iceland’s unique, beautiful nature and historical traditions.
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 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 mainstream 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’.
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 flavors 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 flavors 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 flavor 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 Einibærja (juniper) is a delicious gin that has an elegant, pure, yet intense and crisp flavor. 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.
The Fine Art of Knifemaking

Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present since 1990

I

n the town of Mosfellsbær, just a 15 minutes’ drive from Reykjavík, master craftsman Pall Kristjánsson (or Pallí) and his co-creator Soffía Sigrunardóttir 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 Pallí 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 Pallí. 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. Pallí’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 Pallí’s tutelage for several years, has created a line of beautiful professional kitchen knives and her own collection of small 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, Pallí 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.

www.knifemaker.is
www.kitchenknives.is
palli@knifemaker.is
soffia@knifemaker.is
+354 899 6903

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 out things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her aim is to specialise in Icelandic handwork 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 custom made Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Yule Lads and the Christmas Cat.

Anne Helen loves is 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.

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 best—making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

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The Joyful Wonderland

The Little Christmas Shop that is festive all year round

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I t’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 Þingholt 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
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 cozy 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 cozy 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 where, 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.

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The World's Most Exclusive Watchmaker

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 individualized, personalised collectors' items, works of art that are cherished for generations. These are investments - especially those limited editions. Yet, they have a key place in the lives of the wearers.

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

While I was visiting the shop, with its windows 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 luxury watches. I couldn’t help but wonder if it was only the rich and famous who could afford luxury watches. The choice of connoisseurs, their sense of individuality and their desire for exclusivity.

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.

From home to market

The Hand Knitting Association of Iceland was founded in 1977 to help knitters to get their handiwork marketed. A group of women came together to sell their products and to help farmers and seamen, adults, children and babies for centuries. Making sweaters became a tradition in farmhouses, cottages and houses around the country.

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.

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

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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 Iceland’s 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? Wouldn’t you rather see the beautiful blue waters instead of the horizon? 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 whenever 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/
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 cozy 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
**BREIDHOLSLAUG** is a cozy 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. Sauna and steam baths for both men and women.

**GRÁFARVÖGSLAUG** is often used for swim competitions for the younger generation as the indoor pool is the perfect size. Nice open space includes an area offering hot tubs, steam baths and sauna, and two fun slides.

**KLÉBERGSLOUG** 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.

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

**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.

**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, foot hot tubs, steam bath, sauna and gym.

**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.

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**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).
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 Gallery 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, Eco, 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 Gallery. -JG

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**Bambus Asian Cuisine & Lounge**

Borgartún 16  •  105 Reykjavík

-354 517 0123

www.bambusrestaurant.is
**Urta Islandica**
A LITTLE TASTE OF ICELAND

Iceland is one of the World’s purest countries. 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 and 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 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.
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.
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 Keflavík 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

82 minutes from Keflavík International Airport and 40 minutes from downtown Reykjavík, the Blue Lagoon’s Home Town is for you. Located just 5 minutes or less, you have arrived in Grindavík! 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 cozy 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 Reykjanes 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.
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 Ingí 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 Reykjavik, 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, Egill’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
Sheep have roamed the Highlands and mountains of Iceland ever since Vikings started settling the land in the 9th 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 Hrútafjörður – Fjord of Rams. The Viking settler Ingimundur gamli – Old Ingimundur, who named the fjord, had come from Norway.

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

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

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, thorn 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
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, Sjávarsmiðjan, 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 Breidafjörður 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 Breidafjörður 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

Mystic History
Reykhólahreppur: Overlooking Breiðafjörður from the Westfjords
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.
To tourism, Culture and Business is issue 42 • 2019

Ingimundur gamli – the Viking settler at Hof in Húnaflói – Bay of Bears.

The story goes that Ingimundur gamli later 96
arrived in Hof in Húnaflói – Bay of Bears.

In 1970, Pétur Eggertsson, along with his brother in-law, Pall Vidarsson, 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.”

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

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Eggertsson’s store once a popular focal point for farmers and their spouses. However, By 1940-1943.

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

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quest for sovereignty

Iceland’s quest for sovereignty started in the late 19th century. 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.

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.

Kolahlíður, is a magnificent canyon named after the goddess, Kol. It is an unforgettable site, with the Víðidalsá river running through it, over two spectacular waterfalls, named the Kolufossar.

Borgarfjörður 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 Hánaflói 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 a 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

A day in Húnaþing vestra on the North-West Coast

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 Reykjavik Regional Museum in Húnaþing vestra 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 swimming pool after an eventful day is a must.

Borðeyri revisits its amazing heritage

The 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 Húnaflói Bay.

1848. Slowly but surely traffic increased and hundreds of farmers and their spouses gathered in the busy village to trade aboard the ships. Pétur Eggertsson 1831-1892, educated in Germany, is recognised as Borðeyri’s founding father. He was the first merchant to move to Borðeyri. Eggertsson built a turf farm in 1858 and two years later, a warehouse. In the 1860’s, Eggertsson built the faktorshouse. His son Sigurður Eggertsson 1875-1945 was Iceland’s Prime Minister 1914-15 and 1922-24.

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This area is without a doubt one of the best spots in Iceland for viewing seals, the most locations being Svalbarði, Blagastaður and Ósafjörður.

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, Saebraut and Laugarbakki. The Dalvík 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. Gaukamýri in Línakraðar is a beautiful farm that has reclaimed the area’s woodland and put up facilities for birdwatching as well as running a horse rental and a restaurant.

Brekkulækur in Múlafjörður also offers riding tours and accommodation and is a popular stop for travellers. Ósafjörður is a popular hostel and a great spot for viewing the seals.

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Museums and Exhibitions

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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 Hrútey — ‘Ram Island’ — is found there, with its natural wonders and walking paths.

Women, churches and monastery

Women certainly have 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.

Events at Illugastadur shook Iceland at the time. Agnes (33) herself reported to a nearby farm that Illugastadir 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 Fríðrik Sigurðsson. Was jealousy and revenge the reason?

Agnes and Fríðrik 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 woman. 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?

GLAÐHEIMAR, 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.

Húnabraut 2, 540 Blönduós +354 692 0118
ommu@ommukaffi.is
www.facebook.com/ommukaffi/

HÔTEL 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

GALSÍ 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

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.

Húsabraut 2, 540 Blönduós +354 692 0118
ommu@ommukaffi.is
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BÖLUNDÚOS
SALMON RIVERS, WOMEN AND AN EXECUTION
The cooperative of VESTUR HÚNVETNINGA 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
+354 451 2340
www.kvh.is - kvh@kvh.is

HOTEL HVÍTSERKUR 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 20 passengers was built in 1973.

Höfðabraut 13, 530 Hvammstanga
+354 8979900
sealsafar@sealsafar.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.

Núpsdalur 15, 530 Hvammstanga
+354 8979900
sealsafar@sealsafar.is
www.sealwatching.is/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.

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

The seal watching company’s main mission 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.

Brekkugötu 2, 530 Hvammstangi
+354 451 2343
selasetur@selasetur.is
www.selasetur.is/en/

THE ICELANDIC SEAL CENTER’S main mission 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.

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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, skaring rink, football fields and recreational areas ideal for running, hiking and downhill skiing.

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.

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.is

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

Akureyri
Heart of the North
The Experience of a Lifetime

Iceland on Horseback with Pólár 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 handy 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 Pólár 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 riders. 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. The tours can be arranged for from 1 to 4 hour periods.

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, breathtaking fjords, and whales in the area. You can witness the breathtaking scenery around the Lake Myvatn, Eyjafjörður fjord and the amazing area around the breathtaking Lake Mývatn.

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 famous tourist houses of Laufás, the whales in Eyjafjörður 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.

For more information, please visit the website www.polarhestar.is or contact them at +354 463 3179 or polarhestar@polarhestar.is.
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 GeaSea
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.
STUNNING PÓRSHÖFN

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

Bórhöfn is a charming fishing village on the coast of the Langanes Peninsula, a beautiful slice of northeastern Iceland. Travellers love to visit the village for its remoteness. Pórhöfn 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 to 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 cozy restaurant has a warm, friendly atmosphere and focuses on fresh, local ingredients, emphasising fish and seafood 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.

Báran Bar is a family-run tour operator that has been around since 1980. They specialise in tours to the Highlands and destinations where special equipment and vehicles are required. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, is one of the best restaurants in the north. The cozy restaurant has a warm, friendly atmosphere and focuses on fresh, local ingredients, emphasising fish and seafood 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, Báran has an impressive beer menu, with more than 17 beers from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

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Soak in the Amazing Scenery

Relax in the Mývatn Nature Baths’ geothermal waters

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 waters, which measure a deliciously warm 38°C, come from the National Power Company’s borehole in Bjarnarflag. The water reaches a boiling temperature of 150°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 Viti, one of the best-known craters in Iceland. Viti 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@jardbodin.is
www.myvatnnaturebaths.is
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 Ingí Einarsson
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.

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

The harvesting of 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.

A Unique Bathing Experience

in the Idyllic East

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.
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: KRISTJAN INGI EDNASSON
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 Höfn. The charming guesthouse offers 7 comfortable rooms for travellers and the coffeehouse is operated by a warm and accommodating manager, serving quality coffee, a choice of delicious cakes and pastries, as well as sandwiches and waffles. While the food and service is top-notch, it’s understandable if visitors become distracted by the view. The Viking Café overlooks the beautiful and vast bay of Vestrahorn on one side and Vatnajökull on the other side.

Horse Rental
A great way to survey the beautiful surroundings is by horseback. Litlahorn offers a horse rental service overseen by one of the owners, a skilled horse breeder with a passion for the family’s horses. Guests can take a riding tour along black sand beaches close to Höfn. The groups are small (2-5 people) and the 2.5 hour tour offers stunning views while riding a good-natured stocky Icelandic horse, a unique breed. Litlahorn also breeds horses and sells them to customers around the world.

Stones and materials for sale
Litlahorn provides unique materials for sale from its land. The company utilizes its Stokksnes beach mine, which consists of material that has been carried by the Hornafjárháls glacial river from the 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!
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 Jeeps 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 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 ‘ski-doo 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 jokily tells me 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 hour snowmobile adventure comes to an end and it is time to return to Jöklausel 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
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.

The All New Hotel Klaustur
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, Ernö, 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, Skaftafell 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 Sistres). 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 specialties 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 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 Héður Jóhansson and his team look forward to welcoming you this summer at Hotel Klaustur. See you soon!
**A Room for Every Budget**

The hotel encompasses a wide variety of Northern Lights Prime Time

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.

**Healthy Food Choices Abound**

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

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

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

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii which, in 73 AD, was buried under thick layers of ash and lava from Mt. Vesuvius. Huge parts of that historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

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

The Eldheimar museum is quite open and cultural life of the Westman Islands, offering 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.

Originally, Halldór’s Café was the general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vik. 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 Vik, be sure to stop at this charming café and get greeted with a welcoming smile and a seductive menu.

Rooms on the Slope of the Lava-spewing Volcano

Having been fully excavated, it displays life on the day of the eruption and now serves as a memorial for a lost homeland. In Eldheimar’s over 1,000m² museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman Islands’ Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a height of 220 metres out of the blue, not existing before its eruption.

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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.

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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 Vik’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.

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Hellishólár Cottages, Guesthouse and Hotel

A Little Bit of Icelandic Paradise

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

The sprawling Hellishólár property is located 17 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótshlíð, a picturesque farming district that was the centre of European art & culture in Iceland.

Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull of Fljótshlíð, a picturesque farming district. Travellers can sleep in peaceful surroundings.

So Many Choices!

A Glorious View of Nature

A Glorious View of Nature

So Many Choices!

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólár’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.

A Glorious View of Nature

A Glorious View of Nature

So Many Choices!

A Glorious View of Nature

In summer, the long days bring optimum cutthroat fishing opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólár—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. Hellishólár is the perfect base from which to explore South Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

HÚSID GUESTHOUSE

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STRÁCTA HOTEL

HALLDORSKARFÍ

Smyrlabjörg

Eldheimar Volcano Museum

Viking CAFÉ GUESTHOUSE

Viking CAFÉ HORSE RENTAL

HUSID GUESTHOUSE

RIBSAFARI

ICELANDIC LAVA SHOW

Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

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Lindin Restaurant & Bistro Café, located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, has a firm foundation of culinary excellence that attracts patrons from around the world. Owner, Baldur Óskar 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, coyote, 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 Pingvillir 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 Pingvillir and Geysir and Gulfoss, making it an excellent choice for a day trip to 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.
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