

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

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The Viking Village  
Under The Mountains

The award winning architect HJARK

Volcanic Vestmannaeyjar

Explore Art Up North

ISSN 2284-2620



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## Three Locations

In the Center  
of Reykjavík

# A unique scene for magical moments in Reykjavík

Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre is located in the heart of Reykjavík, Iceland. This unique architectural artwork is situated in the city centre, on the picturesque Reykjavík harbour, and features stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the North Atlantic Ocean.

Harpa's Conference Department has received the **Nordic Swan Ecolabel** and hosts international events and conferences of all sizes. Harpa's goal is to reduce the environmental impact of events and be as environmentally friendly as possible in the process. Event organizers at Harpa can receive an Event Impact Report after their event.

harpa.is



Fríkirkjuvegur 7  
101 Reykjavík

## Listasafn Íslands National Gallery of Iceland

Þórarinn B. Þorláksson (1867–1924)  
*Upstilling / Still Life with Apples and a Vase, 1924*



Hverfisgata 15  
101 Reykjavík

## Safnahúsið The House of Collections

Gunnlaugur Scheving (1904–1972)  
*Sumarnótt / Summer Night, 1959*



Bergstaðastræti 74  
101 Reykjavík

## Hús Ásgríms Jónssonar Home of an Artist

Ásgrímur Jónsson (1876–1958)  
*Kvöld í Reykjavík / Evening in Reykjavík, 1916*

Tens of thousands of earthquakes and tremors have hit the Reykjanes Peninsula causing roads to split in half and houses to buckle in the town of Grindavík on the Reykjanes Peninsula. Iceland continues to wait for the looming eruption but then there are those who believe that it will not erupt this time. Among them is Iceland's world re-nowned volcanologist, Haraldur Sigurdsson. In an article he points to one of the facts which is remarkable, that all the earthquakes that are now happening in Grindavík are shallow. The Earth's crust under Reykjanes seems to be quite thin, like the oceanic crust. There are almost no earthquakes measured at depths greater than 7 to 8 km under Reykjanes.

The evacuation of the people from Grindavík coincided fifty years after the Westman Island's eruption where in 1973 a volcanic eruption changed the lives of the people. The eruption in Heimaey without warning lasted for five months, displaced more than three thousand people. Ash from the eruption fell for weeks, destroying homes, livestock, and personal possessions. Eldfell, a volcanic cone which means "fire mountain" in Icelandic, was formed. It stands 200 metres high and has become some of Iceland's newest land. Today, Icelanders and tourists alike hike in the region and soak up the scenery.

The Icelander's are used to volcanoes and eruptions with the famous Eyjafjallajökull eruption little more than a decade ago. These are existential threats looming over the islanders of beautiful and unpredictable Iceland. Exactly 240 years ago, the biggest volcanic eruption in Iceland's history began in 1783, southwest of Vatnajökull in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla. The eruption opened a series of craters 25 km long, known as the Laki craters well over one hundred. The eruption lasted eight months and caused deaths of thousands and famine leading to speculations of moving the people to Jutland heights in Denmark. Ash and volcanic fumes spread as a poisonous fog spread over Europe, America and Asia. Heavy pollution caused livestock to die in great numbers which, in turn, led to famine— not just in Iceland but all over the Northern Hemisphere. Historians claim the eruption triggered the French Revolution.



Einar Th. Thorsteinsson

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<b>PUBLISHER</b> 	<b>PHOTOGRAPHY</b> Páll Stefánsson Friðbjörgur Helgason Þorsteinn Ásgeirsson	<b>TRANSLATIONS</b> Úna Jóhannsdóttir
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<b>MANAGING EDITOR &amp; GENERAL MANAGER</b> Einar Th. Thorsteinsson einar@icelandictimes.com	<b>WEBSITE</b> Vilhjálmur Langfeldt	<b>FRONT COVER PHOTO</b> Þorsteinn Ásgeirsson
<b>ENGLISH EDITOR</b> Andrew Scott Fortune	<b>GRAPHIC DESIGN</b> Jacqueline Sanz	

#### Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, it still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'with'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

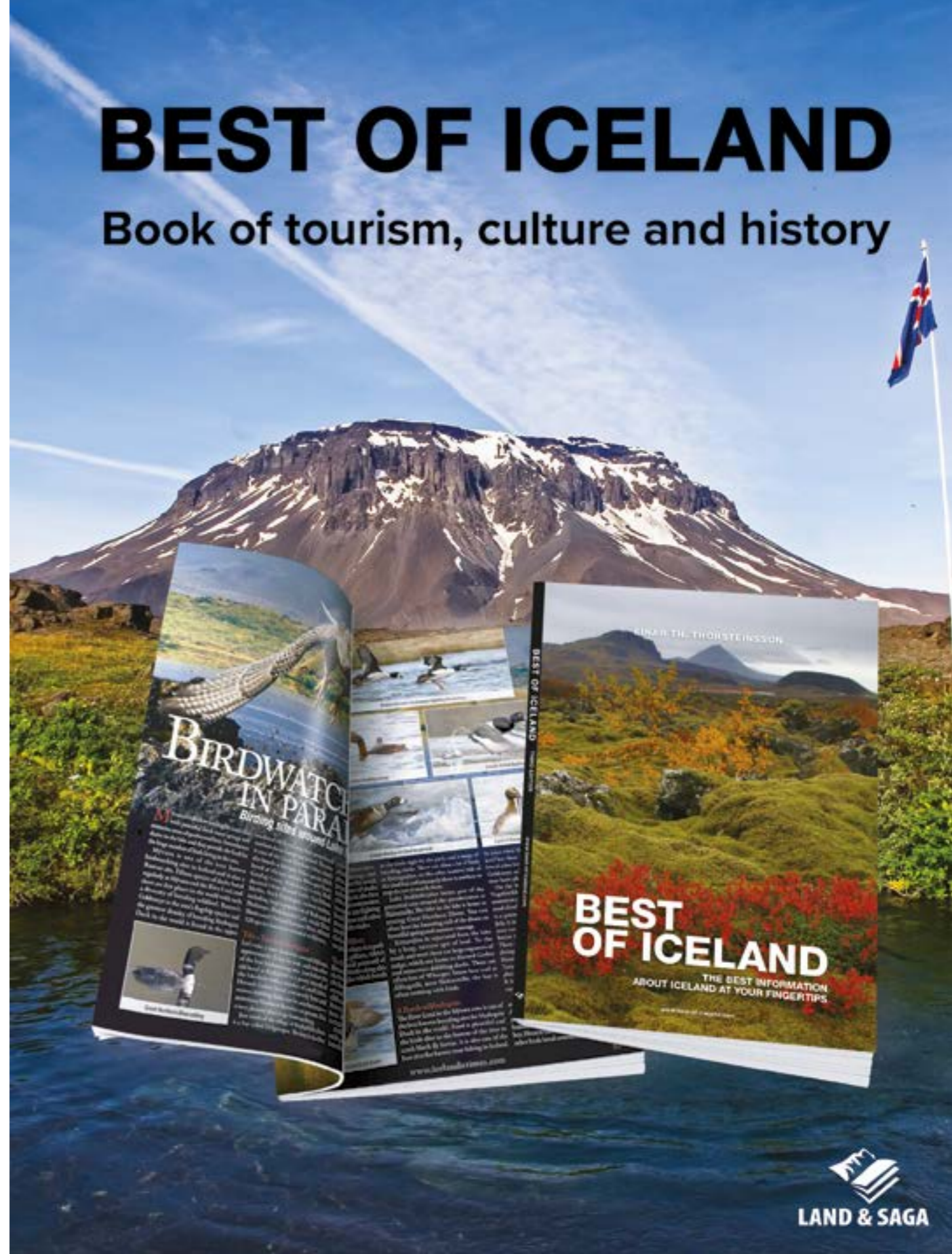
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**Icelandic Times**  
 Síðumíla 29 • 108 Reykjavík  
 +354 578 2600  
 info@icelandictimes.com  
 icelandictimes.com

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# Spectacular SAFNAHÚSIÐ

Explore four floors of art in Reykjavík's House of Collections

Safnahúsið (The House of Collections) features four floors of Icelandic art in the exhibition, Viðnám (Resistance), which is on view until 2028. This interdisciplinary exhibition features artworks related to the discourse on sustainability and the ethical issues related to the work promoting further sustainability development. The pieces allow the viewer to ponder existence, nature, how people choose to live their lives, and what impact they want to have.

On the 4th floor, Air is the theme, and you can travel through the sky and mountains of Iceland, which is constantly shaped as an active volcanic area. Here you can find works showing Icelandic glaciers retreating rapidly due to climate change. Manufactured emissions of greenhouse gases cause climate change, and the consequences of these changes on Earth include the melting of glaciers and an increase in weather extremes. The approach of the artists who have works here is everything from showing a realistic picture of nature to pointing out what is common in the biosphere and what is unique.

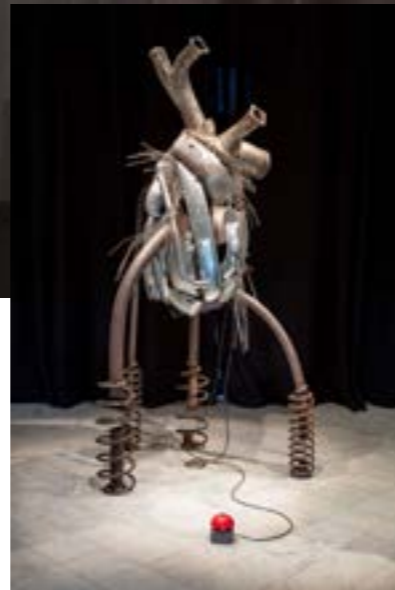
Meanwhile, on the third floor, Land is the theme and works related to the earth, biodiversity, plants, and animals can be found. Soil is essential to the ecosystem and not least to humans because it is the basis of all food production on dry land. In earlier times, people lived in (turf) houses such that it was not always clear where the land left off,

and the house took over. The works show different plants and varieties of the same species and depict how nature changes with the seasons.

The Sea inspires many artists to create art, and the second floor is dedicated to artworks around the ocean theme. Some discuss its beauty, while others examine how it gives or takes. The world's oceans are connected and cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface. Some works show a different attitude towards the sea, where humans either belong to nature or dominate it.

Artists have always worked with interdisciplinary issues, and the artworks on the first floor deal with issues related to the Laws of the world in physics and chemistry. In the same way that science inspires artists, a work of art can bring out unique and often unpredictable perspectives that challenge scientific ideas and assumptions. All things in the universe, including the human body, are composed of energy, which connects and comes together in closed circuits. Energy is constantly flowing and ever-changing.

In the basement of Safnahúsið, there is a world of legends and folktales preserved for centuries. Folktales provide a wide range of inspiration, not only in books but also in movies, video games, advertising and artwork. By looking at Iceland's folklore, you can connect strong feelings towards the issues of the earth that are important to understand and act on.



## NATURALLY DELICIOUS

ICELANDIC LAMB - BEYOND COMPARE

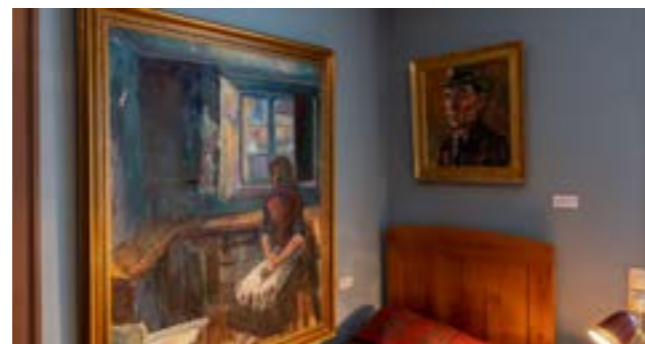
The taste of Icelandic lamb is unrivaled. Our pure bred lambs graze free in the pristine wilderness of Iceland, eating luscious green grass, berries and wild herbs such as red clover, Arctic thyme, sedge, willow, thrift and angelica. The end result is a tender fine-textured meat that is both naturally rich in Omega-3 and iron and infused with the flavor of nature.

Icelandic lamb is a taste experience beyond compare.

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



Photo from the home of the artist Ásgrímur Jónsson, (1876-1958) at the exhibition.



# A piece of ICELANDIC ART HISTORY

## Ásgrímur Jónsson's house is home to a stunning collection

Artist Ásgrímur Jónsson (1876-1958) is one of the pioneers of Icelandic art history and became the first Icelandic painter to make art his main occupation. He studied at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, and after completing his studies, he travelled around Denmark, Italy and Germany before returning home to Iceland.

Icelandic nature was Ásgrímur's main subject, and his work laid the foundation for Icelandic landscape art. His view of nature was shaped by the romanticism of the 19th century, and he remained faithful to it, although his focus and working methods changed during his nearly 60-year career as an artist. Ásgrímur also pioneered the illustration of Icelandic legends and fairy tales and is one of Iceland's most active folklore illustrators. Ásgrímur painted in nature and made a special effort to interpret the light of the land. He painted with watercolours and oils and occupies a special place in Icelandic art as a watercolour painter. Ásgrímur died in 1958 and bequeathed to the Icelandic nation all his works of art, together with a house at Bergstaðastræti 74 in Reykjavík. In 1960, Ásgrímssafn

was opened in his house. In 1987, when the Icelandic Museum of Art moved to its premises, Ásgrímur's collection was merged with the Museum of Art according to the provisions of his will.

The current exhibition at Ásgrímssafn is *Gluggi í Reykjavík* (Window in Reykjavík), a selection of works by Ásgrímur. The view from the window in Vinaminni, where he first lived after his return to Iceland, became a familiar motif for him, with Reykjavík harbour and Esja facing each other. Also, the view to the south from the studio's skylight at Bergstaðastræti 14 became another inspiration. The watercolours capture the light of the land in his work.

Ásgrímur's life's work, his art, spans a long period in the nation's history, a time when rural society began to disperse, and Reykjavík changed from a town to a city. Many of Ásgrímur's paintings from Reykjavík, painted in the first half of the 20th century, depict a peaceful small town where houses are huddled on the far side of the sea but also display a vibrant city. Paintings show people working on street construction in an urban society in the making. The artist's perspective looking



View from the artist's window, 1948 Ásgrímur Jónsson, (1876-1958)

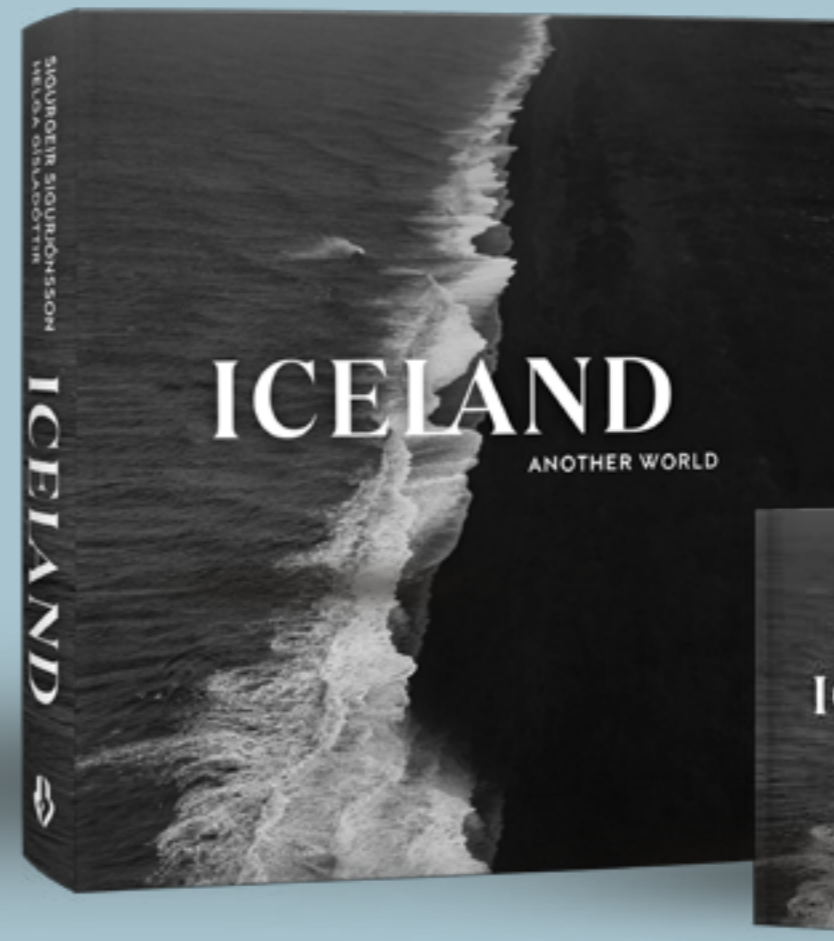
out the window is a common subject in art history. The intimacy with the artist is excellent in these works, and in Ásgrím's house, you can see through the window the same perspective that Ásgrímur captured on canvas and paper. The unique shades of the houses in the town are enjoyed, and despite the changing times, the Reykjavík that Ásgrímur knew so well and in his works can be seen many of the city's well-known landmarks today, such as Tjörnin. -JG



**Ásgrímssafn**  
 Bergstaðastræti 74  
 101 Reykjavík



# ANOTHER WORLD



Stunning photography from around Iceland, connecting to its old sagas and landscape formation.

Big or small



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# What Disappears: A POETIC IMAGE OF ICELAND'S PAST



Poet Aðalsteinn Ásberg Sigurðsson presents his latest book in English, German and French



Renowned Icelandic poet Aðalsteinn Ásberg Sigurðsson has published bilingual editions of his latest work, *Það sem hverfur* / What Disappears. The book, now available in English, German and French, presents a moving and unique image of an Iceland that once was. Photographs of abandoned houses by Nökkvi Elíasson accompany the book, providing striking images to Aðalsteinn Ásberg's hauntingly beautiful words.

In *What Disappears*, poetry and photography complement one another with a poignant effect and arouse a strong feeling for the ephemeral. Sorrow-filled beauty amplifies the echoes of the past that, in some way, continues to move us. Readers are treated to themes of nature, time, dreams, and relics of the past. Each bilingual edition features the poem in its original Iceland, next to either English, French or German.

This book isn't the first time Aðalsteinn Ásberg and Nökkvi have worked together. Their first book, *Eyðibýli* / Abandoned Farms, was published in 2004 when it garnered well-deserved attention. Their collected works have since travelled far and wide in various forms and have received excellent reception. Music has been composed together with the poetry, and the photographs have adorned book covers and magazine pages.

Aðalsteinn Ásberg, who was born in the north Iceland town of Húsavík and is currently based in Reykjavík, is a well-respected figure on the Icelandic literary scene. He made his literary debut in 1977 with a book of poetry, *Ósáнар lundur* / Virgin Soil. Since the '70s, he has published many books of poetry, poetry translations, one novel, a collection of short stories and a dozen children's books. His poems have been

translated into numerous languages. Apart from his writing, he has produced recordings of his lyrics and songs and has collaborated with several well-known musicians.

Aðalsteinn Ásberg is the founder and editor of Dimma Publishing, which focuses on Icelandic literature and translations of foreign literature. Dimma is also a music label mainly for folk music and jazz.

Meanwhile, Nökkvi, who was born in the north Iceland town of Sauðárkrúkur, launched his photography career in 1987, focusing mainly on black and white images. Photographing abandoned houses and deserted farms is a personal passion, and his work has appeared widely on book jackets, as well as in newspapers and magazines in Iceland and abroad.

*What Disappears* is an ideal souvenir to bring home from your trip to Iceland. The poems, enjoyed in English, French or German, will stay with you, as will the desolate and delicate photos of Iceland's past.



# THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Visit one of the most unique museums on the planet

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum is one of the most unique museums in the world and one of the most-visited in Reykjavík. The museum contains a collection of more than 300 penises belonging to every species of mammal found in Iceland and scores of foreign species. Visitors to the museum will see specimens belonging to whales, a rogue polar bear, seals and walruses, and specimens originating from many different kinds of land mammals. "The collection began in 1974 and it's been constantly growing," said Þórður O. Þórðarson, the manager of the museum. "We have well over 300 penis specimens and 300 penis themed art and cultural pieces."

## History of the museum

The founder, Sigurður Hjartarson, a historian and teacher, began this collection in 1974 when colleagues who worked at the nearby whaling station in West Iceland began giving him whale penises to tease him. The idea of collecting specimens from more mammalian species was born. Collecting the organs progressed and by 1980, he had collected 13 specimens, four from whales and nine from land mammals. In 1990 there were 34 specimens and, when the museum opened in Reykjavík in August 1997, the specimens totalled 62. In the Spring of 2004, the museum moved to the small fishing village of Húsavík, the whale watching capital of Europe.

It was moved back to Reykjavík in 2011 and opened under the direction of a new curator, Siguður's son.

## New and exciting location

"The first location in Reykjavík was great, but we had to relocate because the collection grew and the number of visitors grew as well," said Þórður. "We are now located at Hafnartorg, which is a great area of Reykjavík near Harpa." The museum has undergone extensive changes to improve the visitor experience. There is more space for guests to roam and view the specimens and the technology has been enhanced, with touch screens adding a modernized feel. Another exciting addition has been a phallus-themed bistro where locals and tourists can enjoy food, coffee and beers on tap from local breweries.

A visit to the Icelandic Phallogological Museum is a unique, must-see experience when visiting Reykjavík. The museum, which is open every day from 10:00 – 19:00, is a great way to spend a couple of hours in the capital, and it will be a conversation piece for years to come! - JG



**The Icelandic Phallogological Museum**  
 Hafnartorg, 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 561 6663  
 www.phallus.is

# 64° REYKJAVÍK DISTILLERY: QUALITY CRAFTED SPIRITS

*An independent distillery with unique spirits and liqueurs*

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

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



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

### Something for everyone

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

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

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**DRINK DIFFERENT.**



**REYKJAVIK  
DISTILLERY**  
THE ORIGINAL FROM ICELAND



## LISTASAFN ÍSLANDS: Introducing Icelandic Art

*See the treasures of Icelandic art in diverse exhibitions*

Listasafn Íslands' National Gallery of Iceland has a long and proud history; it was founded in October 1884 in Copenhagen by Birni Bjarnarson (1853-1918), a county commissioner. The museum's works were displayed in Alþingi from 1885 to 1950 when it moved to the Museum House on Suðurgata, which it shared with the National Museum of Iceland. The art museum was officially opened there in 1951. In 1987, the gallery moved to its current home at Fríkirkjuvegi 7, one of the best places to explore Icelandic art in Reykjavík.

The National Gallery puts on beautifully curated exhibitions featuring an exciting array of Icelandic artists. Its latest exhibition, Fram fjörðinn, seint um haust, by Sigtryggur Bjarni Baldvinsson, features large watercolour works that Sigtryggur painted focusing on a late autumn theme in the northern region of Héðinsfjörður. Over the past several years, an increasing number of Sigtryggur's pieces have originated in Héðinsfjörður, a desert fjord on Tröllaskagi, where the artist has documented nature in the fjord.

Sigtryggur views the work in Héðinsfjörður as an attempt to listen to nature, seek information and convey an important message. Still, the artist has followed the changes in the fjord's ecosystem with exhibitions. The works at the exhibition Fram fjörðinn are the result of the artist's work in Héðinsfjörður for the

past two years and reflect the state of the landscape in a larger context where autumn prevails, and a harsh winter can be expected.

Another hall in the National Gallery features the exhibition Glerregn by visual artist Rúrí, which is on display until the end of August. The work consists of 500 razor-sharp pieces of glass, each ending in a point, spanning from the ceiling to the floor. Each glass hangs on a clear thread, so the air moves when you walk by the piece, and the glass starts to rotate on the lines. By entering the work, the viewer is exposed to an experience that cannot be obtained by merely looking, and when the sharp glass closes around the viewer, the threat seems almost palpable.

Guests can also view a private collection of artworks that were donated to the gallery in 2022 by the couple Ingibjargar Guðmundsdóttir and Þorvaldar Guðmundsson. The exhibition, Síld og Fisk, consists of paintings, drawings, graphic works, and sculptures, is one of the largest private collections in Iceland and includes around 1400 works by many of the nation's leading artists. Of these, there are about 400 works by Jóhannes S. Kjarval, who was a great friend of the couple.

There's always a lot to look forward to as the exhibitions rotate a few times a year. In



September, the exhibition Nokkur nýleg verk, will open, a comprehensive and diverse collection ranging from works from the 16th century to 2022. The show will reflect the complexity of unique Icelandic contemporary art. There are now over 15,000 works in the art collection, which grows yearly. The museum has almost 30 million ISK at its disposal to purchase works of art per year, and this exhibition will shine a light on a portion of the collection.

The National Gallery is ideal for art lovers to spend a couple of hours during a holiday in Reykjavík. The exhibitions change during the year and it's best to visit the Listasafn Íslands website for information on current and upcoming exhibitions. It's open every day from 10 am to 5 pm, closed on Mondays. Be sure to stop by during your trip!



**Listasafn Íslands**  
 Laufásvegur 12  
 101 Reykjavík



*Haust 1 / Autumn 1,  
 2022 Sigtryggur Bjarni  
 Baldvinsson (1966)*



*Glerregn / Glassrain,  
 1984 Rúrí, (1951)*



*A jewellery brand with  
 a surprising history*

## Vera Design A PIECE OF ICELANDIC SAGA

Vera Design's jewellery is sold in 24 stores in Iceland and one in the Faroe Islands. The design is classy, based on traditional symbols and has roots in Icelandic history.

Íris Björk Jónsdóttir is the woman behind Vera Design. Her road towards becoming a jewellery designer is not a traditional one. She began designing at a young age, building houses out of rocks in her parents' garden. When she was 25, she bought her first apartment and decided to gut it and design it from scratch. But when she was 30 years old, she was gifted a beautiful bracelet. This bracelet, unbeknownst to her, would point her in a direction that would lead her to become a jewellery designer a few years later.

This sounds dramatic, but the story is not. "At the time, I had no idea who the designer was. It wasn't until a few years later

I found out it was the father-in-law of my blood sister, Kristín Ósk. And what's more, she designed it with him!" The designer, Guðbjartur Þorleifsson, was born in 1931 and raised in Reykjavík. He started studying to become a goldsmith at 16 years old and later became a painter and sculptor. In 2012, Íris bought Guðbjartur's jewellery designs.

"We started working together at that time, and he taught me everything I know about jewellery making", she says. Guðbjartur sadly passed away a few years ago. "I try to keep his spirit alive in everything I do, and nearly all of my designs have some story behind them. After I started Vera Design, the first item I made was a necklace with the serenity prayer, based on the Infinity bracelet I had been gifted", Íris says. "I was sitting in my kitchen wondering how I could finish the design when Nadía, one of my

twin daughters, comes to me and asks, 'Why don't you add a cross in the middle? That way, it is all connected'. And she was right; the design was complete when I added the cross."

Íris works with a team of goldsmiths who used to work with Guðbjartur as well. She says she's slowly expanding the store with a new partner and they will be marketing the designs more abroad as well as at home. "My jewellery is sold in 24 stores in Iceland, and one in the Faroe Islands. Then I have the online store veradesign.is, which has grown a lot in the past year.

"Design has always been easy for me, and it is always fun. It doesn't matter if I'm designing jewellery, whole houses or kitchens. It is always easy because I love what I do", Íris says cheerfully. "However, if it weren't for Guðbjartur and his work, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today." - HDB



**Vera Design**  
 veradesign.is  
 sales@veradesign.is







# ICELANDIC LAMB

*Roaming free since the Settlement*



*Enjoy the delicious and distinctive flavour of Iceland's favourite meat*

The Icelandic lamb is a protected species with a pure lineage of 1,100 years. Grazing freely in wild pastures, lamb is a crucial part of Iceland's heritage and a proud tradition dating back to the Viking age. Icelandic lambs graze in Iceland's rugged mountainous pastures on lush green grass, wild herbs and fresh berries, which make Icelandic lamb instantly recognisable for its delicious and distinctive flavour.

What makes Icelandic lamb so unique? The sheep have adapted to the harsh conditions of Iceland and have kept Icelanders alive for centuries. They have survived inclement weather and volcanic periods in Iceland's history. "Icelandic lamb has been feeding us with meat and milk for centuries and provided us with fur and wool to clothe us," says Hafliði Halldórsson, the CEO of Icelandic Lamb. "It's important to the survival of this nation, and it's a favourite among most Icelanders if they want to cook something Icelandic."

Iceland's environment is also beneficial to the sheep raised in Iceland as the water is clean, the air quality superb, and they have a vast landscape to roam. Icelandic

lambs work their way from the lowlands to the highlands, from where the farmers bring them down in the autumn. "All sheep farming is done through small family farms," says Hafliði. "The animals follow a natural lifecycle in good conditions. Lambs are born in May; in June, they are left free to roam in diverse landscapes. In the autumn, they are brought back to the farms with some slaughtered and sent to market."

A tradition in Iceland called the Réttir is quite remarkable to witness. During September, many Icelanders head to the countryside to participate in the Réttir, the annual sheep round-up. Réttir is one of the country's oldest cultural traditions. Icelandic sheep farmers reunite with family and friends and invite anyone interested to help round up the sheep from their summer grazing period in the mountains. Réttir involves a lot of walking and horseriding, followed by a night of celebration, with some festive singing and dancing. The first round-ups of the year start early in September and continue across the country until early October.

Lamb is one of the most delicious and authentic foods to eat in Iceland.



*Hafliði Halldórsson Managing Director of [icelandiclamb.is](http://icelandiclamb.is)*

Served in all seasons, Icelanders love to grill lamb in the summer, enjoy kjötsúpa (meat soup) in the autumn and have lamb on the table for holidays like Christmas and Easter. Travellers are encouraged to sample Icelandic lamb on a trip to Iceland. Hundreds of restaurants and cafes around the country offer fresh, local lamb on their menus. The locals love it and travellers can't get enough. In fact, according to Gallup surveys from the last seven years, lamb is the most popular food choice for tourists visiting Iceland, followed by Cod, Skeyr and Salmon. For information on lamb recipes and some restaurants that serve Icelandic lamb, visit [www.icelandiclamb.is](http://www.icelandiclamb.is).

# Idyllic Ásmundarsafn



The sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893–1982) designed, worked and lived in a unique, dome-shaped building that now houses Ásmundarsafn. The structure is surrounded by Ásmundur's sculptures in the garden, and the inside of the building, inspired by vernacular Mediterranean architecture, is a stand-alone work of art. His work is often exhibited along with the works of other modern or contemporary Icelandic artists.

Ásmundur studied at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm under the guidance of sculptor Carl Milles and later lived in France, Italy and Greece

before returning to Reykjavík. Several of Ásmundur's works can also be seen in public spaces throughout Reykjavík. Upon his death in 1982, Ásmundur bequeathed his works and his home/studio to the City of Reykjavík, and the museum was formally opened in the spring of 1983. The collection spans his entire artistic career and shows how his work evolved and changed over his long life.

The current exhibition, Mentor: Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles, features the works of both sculptors and is part of the collaboration between Millesgården Museum and Ásmundarsafn, the museums

## Beautiful works by a pioneer of Icelandic sculpture

dedicated to the life and work of the two artists. Carl Milles is one of Sweden's most respected sculptors, and, like Ásmundur, he donated his house, studio and work to the public after his death.

Carl Milles was Ásmundur's mentor during his student years in Stockholm and had a lasting impact on Ásmundur's art. The two museums have preserved records that shed light on how strong the bond between the two men was, and it can be found in their careers and works.

Milles used the history and culture of Sweden as inspiration for his works. Similarly, he encouraged Ásmundur to seek inspiration from Icelandic cultural heritage, as seen in his sculptures throughout his career. Both men emphasised that art belongs in public spaces where most people can access it. Ásmundur made most of the outdoor artworks in the Reykjavík area; some of his works can be found in other parts of the country. Milles' work can also be found in many places in Sweden, and he is primarily known for his fountains and water creatures. His works can also be found in other parts of the world, most notably in the United States, where he lived and taught for several years.



# ANNA MARÍA Design

## The influence of the Icelandic nature

Anna María Sveinbjörnsdóttir is an Icelandic jeweller and designer who runs her own jewellery store, Anna María Design, on one of the main shopping streets in the city, Skólavörðustígur 3, in the heart of Reykjavík. Anna María studied both in Iceland and Denmark and has run her own company for more than three decades.

Anna María's design is pure, timeless and modern at the same time. She stresses exceptional attention to detail and craftsmanship and has eye for the smallest detail.

The jewellery is both for women and men and encompass silver, gold, white gold, Icelandic stones as well as precious stones like diamonds. In the store, you can find one of the biggest selections of jewellery with Icelandic stones in the country like Agate, Mose-agate, Jasper, Basalt and Lava.

When it comes to emphasis and style, Anna María mentions free and organic forms based on the Icelandic nature. Iceland is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and its waves inspire the jeweller and much of her jewellery where you can see the forms of the waves on rings, necklaces, bracelets or ear-rings.

Filigree represents a delicate form of jewellery metalwork usually made in silver and is well known regarding the traditional Icelandic women's costume. In some of Anna María's designs you can find this extraordinary delicate work, which reminds one of the Icelandic heritage. -SJ



**Anna María Design**

Skólavörðustígur 3 • 101 Reykjavík

+354 551 0036

[annamaria@annamariadesign.is](mailto:annamaria@annamariadesign.is)

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



# HISTORICAL EXHIBITION

On the occasion of the National Museum's 160th anniversary, for the first time the precious treasures of Icelandic art history, all fifteen of the surviving Refil tapestries, are together in one place at the exhibition, Creative Hands. The oldest garments are from just before 1400, the most recently created one is almost 300 years younger from 1677. Nine are preserved at the National Museum, the others are on loan from the Louvre in Paris, the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen and

from the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede, in the Netherlands. As it says in the exhibition catalog, refil sewing is a type of sewing that derives its name from the word refill. Refills were decorative tents made of wool or linen that were used for covering the insides both churches and people's homes in the past. Refil stitch is just one of the embroidery stitches used in the Middle Ages and is a variation of embroidery known as the laid stitch. These masterpieces of medieval Icelandic art were created by skilled women who possessed knowledge and training in weaving and embroidery. The exhibition is the result of decades of research by Elsa E. Guðjónsson (1924-2010) on needlework. Elsa worked at the National Museum of Iceland for more than three decades. On the occasion of the exhibition, a magnificent 400-page book, *Með verkum handanna*, published by the National Museum, by Elsa, will be published. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*From the exhibition Með verkum handanna / Creative hands in the National Museum*



*Gróttuviti built in 1947 and Snæfellsjökull 109 km away*

Incredibly beautiful, they have brought Snæfellsjökull closer to Reykjavík, I thought as I crossed Öskjuhlíð on my way to the center of Reykjavík. The course was changed, and the course was set to the west of Gróttu in Seltjarnarnes, where it is best to capture the glacier from the capital. "Incredibly beautiful" said a Danish traveler who stood by his tripod and photographed the mood. "How far is it in a straight line to Snæfellsjökull from here" he then asked. "I have no idea." But then with the help of HERE maps, we saw that we were 109 km / 66 mi away from this 1446 m / 4744 ft high volcano in the west of Snæfellsnes, in the northwest across Faxaflói. The western part of Snæfellsnes is a national park, Snæfellsjökull which is almost 200 square kilometers in size. Snæfellsjökull last erupted in 272, the year Constantine I the Great, Emperor of the Roman Empire was born. He was the first Christian Emperor. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople, now Istanbul, which he of course named after himself. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*The Snæfellsjökull lights up in the January sun from Gróttu*



*Akranes, seen from Seltjarnarnes across Faxaflói. Snæfellsnes to the left in the distance, the mountains rising up from Mýrar to the right*

# The one and only GRAFARVOGUR

If Grafavogur, a neighbourhood in Reykjavík, were an independent town, it would be the fourth largest in the country. More than 20,000 people live in the area, in a mixed settlement of single-family, terraced, and apartment buildings.

Development began in the 1990s and is still ongoing. Now, there is even a Vínbúð (the state liquor store). Residents pointed out a few years ago that there was no such store in the city's largest neighbourhood. At the same time, Kópasker, one of Iceland's smallest towns in North Iceland, had one!

Grafarvogur can be broken down into eight smaller districts; Hamrar, Foldir, Hús, Rímar, Borgir, Vík, Engi, Spöng, Staðir, Höfðar, Bryggjuhverfi, Geirsnef, Gufunes and Geldinganes. The last one is the only one still uninhabited, but there are plans for future construction there. The view over Reykjavík and Seltjarnarnes is breathtaking from there. Mount Esja gives Geldinganes, and the whole neighbourhood, good shelter from the cold northern winds.

The Grafarvogur neighbourhood is named after a cove of the same name, which is, itself, named after the now deserted farm, Gröf. It used to stand at the edge of the gorge where Grafarlækur flows into the sea. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



Looking across Grafarvogur Cove to the Grafarvogur neighbourhood and the Grafarvogur church. It's the neighbourhood's only church and stands by the cove. Mount Esja and Móskarshnjúkar (on the right) can be seen in the background.



The Bryggjuhverfi district stands south of Grafarvogur; you can see Sundaböfn, Reykjavík's large shipping port, across the cove.



Hallsteinsgarður Park in Grafarvogur. It's on a hill east of Gufunes. It has 16 aluminium sculptures by artist Hallstein Sigurðsson, made from 1989 to 2012, and is part of the Reykjavík Art Museum.



Korpúlfsstaðir was originally a dairy farm built by Thor Jensen around 1925. The City of Reykjavík bought the land in 1942, and it is now an art centre, restaurant and facilities for golfers, while Korpúlfsstaðarvöllur Golf Course is on the old farm fields.



A large outdoor recreational area and an amusement park are in the neighbourhood.

# A TASTE OF THAI

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

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

## Impressive Menu

Quality ingredients, friendly service and a comfortable environment make Krua Thai a favourite among locals and travellers. The menus feature many of the staples you expect to see such as savoury spring rolls, tasty rice and noodle dishes, and glorious plates of Pad Thai. Main courses include delicious options like Pad Grapow, which is a fried dish with chilli and basil leaf in oyster sauce, served with rice and either chicken, pork, beef or lamb. There are also soups and salads on the menu. There is truly something for everyone.

## Vegetarian-friendly dining

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

## Central location

Krua Thai at Skólavörðustíg 21a, is conveniently located in the heart of city centre, and is a delightful location for a meal. It has a cosy atmosphere and friendly staff who are eager to ensure you have an ideal dining experience. It's the perfect place for a meal after some time exploring museums, shops, and cafes in the trendiest and liveliest part of Reykjavík. If you want to spend the evening in at your hotel or guesthouse, you can order food to take away, and with delivery. Delivery is available daily until 21:00. -JG



**Krua Thai**  
Skólavörðustíg 21a, Reykjavík 101  
+354 551-0833  
www.kruathai.is



# BACK 200 YEARS



*Alba Davíðsdóttir and Kári Pálsson going back 200 years in time at Árbæjarsafn*

66 years ago, the city of Reykjavík decided to turn Árbær, then a rural country town that was becoming deserted, into a museum, named Árbæjarsafn. The best spot in Ártúnsbrekka, it has a great view of the capital. Old houses that formerly made up the city centre, were moved and rebuilt on the site for the sake of future generations. The oldest house is Hansenhús, built 200 years ago, in 1823 at Austurvöllur by Simon Hansen, a merchant who lived there until 1847. Many important people later lived in the house, such as Jón Árnason, the folklore collector, Sigurður Guðmundsson, Iceland's first real painter and Sigfús Eymundsson, the bookseller and photographer. The house was moved to Árbæjarsafn in 1960. All the buildings in the museum have a significant history, and there is no place or museum in Iceland where you can travel to the past as quickly as in Árbæjarsafn, which, today, is almost in the centre of the capital area. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Sleeping area in Árbær*



*Árbæjarkirkja, built in Silfrastaðir in Skagafjörður in 1842, moved to Árbæjarsafn in 1960*



*The exhibition Neyzlan in Reykjavík in the 20th century*



*A typical living room for the wealthy from around 100 years ago*



## TINY HOUSE - LONG HISTORY

The Guard's House in Grjótaþorpið, at Garðastræti 23, is believed to have been built around 1845 by Guard Guðmundur Gissurason. The Grjótaþorp could be called the first suburb of Reykjavík, but poor people built their homes there on a slope west of Kvosin in downtown Reykjavík. The Guard's House is probably the first wooden house built in Grjótaþorpið. It can be said that guards were the predecessors of police officers. They walked around the town and checked to ensure everything was alright, for instance, raising the alarm if there was a fire and being on the lookout for anything that could be considered abnormal.

The guards also had hourglasses and sang so-called watch verses every hour according to an old and good European custom so that the people of Reykjavík knew how the time was passing. Guðmundur Gissurason and his family lived in this house, as he was Reykjavík's guard from 1830 to 1865. The house was preserved in 2001. The Antiquities Preservation took over the building in 2008 from the City of Reykjavík for restoration, which was completed in 2010.



*The Guard's House, Garðastræti 23, built around 1845*





# TORFHILDUR HÓLM'S HOUSE

*Torfhildur's house was built at Laugavegur 36 in 1896, moved to Reykjavik's West Side in 2015 and restored.*

**T**he writer Torfhildur Þorsteinsdóttir (later Hólm) was a remarkable woman. She was born in Kálfafellsstaður in Austur-Skaftafellssýsla in 1845. She lived in the pictured house, built at Laugavegur 36 in 1896, from 1898 when she bought the house until she died of the Spanish flu in 1918. Torfhildur became the first Icelander to become a professional writer. She was also the first woman to receive a grant from the Icelandic Parliament, 500 ISK. However, not everyone was satisfied with a woman receiving a poet's grant, so the grant was reduced to 200 ISK and called the wife's grant. Although Torfhildur was a widow, she had married Jakob Hólm, a merchant at Skagaströnd, in 1874, but he died a year later. Torfhildur was the first Icelander to write historical novels. She wrote novels about the two bishops, Jón Vídalín and Benedikt Sveinsson, in the house on Laugavegur. She was then the first Icelander to be a magazine editor, but Torfhildur published *Draupnir* in 1891-1908, the *Tíbrá* annual for children 1892-1894 and the magazine *Dvöl*, which was published monthly from 1901 until her death.

The bakers Guðmundur Ólafsson and Stefán Sandholt bought the house in 1925. When they built the magnificent building that still houses the Sandholt bakery

on Laugavegin in 1936, the house was moved to the back of the plot and raised to a concrete floor. When it was allowed to build a hotel on the back part of the plot in 2015, the house was not in good condition and was in the way of the new hotel. The City of Reykjavík and Minjavernd agreed to move this historic building and restore it. Torfhildur's house, or the bakers' house, was given a future location at Starhagi on Reykjavik's west side and slightly modified by Argos Architects. Torfhildur's home is now privately owned, a stone's throw from the end of the runway at Reykjavík Airport.

*Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Torfhildur Þorsteinsdóttir The writer*



*Torfhildur's house was built at Laugavegur 36 in 1896, moved to Reykjavik's West Side in 2015 and restored.*





## SUSTAINABLE ARTISAN KNIFEMAKING IN ICELAND

*One of a kind knives that will last you a lifetime*

When people think about knife-making, nature and waterfalls are probably the last things that come to mind. However, that is precisely what you find when you visit Páll Kristjánsson and Soffía Sigurðardóttir's world-renowned sustainable knife atelier. Situated in the idyllic Álafossvöskvós in Mosfellsbær, only a 15-minute drive from downtown Reykjavík, the atelier offers some of the best knives you could ever own.

Páll Kristjánsson, or Páll as he likes to be called, has been making knives for over 30 years. His craftsmanship is renowned worldwide, but his knives are unique because he only uses sustainable materials. "Soffía and I use materials that otherwise would be thrown away and

give them a new life", Páll says. "Some of the materials we use are birch, rowan, horses' hooves, reindeer antlers, sheep horns and whale teeth." As a result, every knife is one of a kind and made with Japanese Damascus steel or stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden.

Soffía Sigurðardóttir's artisan kitchen knives are made with only the best blades, which have to be handled with care. She is also the only kitchen-knifemaker in Iceland. "I get inspiration from nature and my surroundings when I'm creating the knives. One colour combination of rust-red and green, I got from a ship in the shipyard in the Old Harbour in Reykjavík", Soffía says.

"Sustainability and the environment are very important to us. No animals are hunted for us. The ram horns and horse hooves come from slaughtered animals, and the ivory comes from beached

whales. If we buy wood, we only buy from specially certified companies in the USA, which can reliably prove that the trees were legally chopped down." Additionally, they get wood from old trees in Iceland that need to be cut down.

It's not only Páll and Soffía who sell their art in the atelier. Páll's brother Bjarni is also an artist. His primary medium is ebony and ivory, from which he carves out small animals and other figures. Just like Páll and Soffía, his materials are sustainably sourced.

Visiting the atelier gives a particular sensation of calmness. It is evident the work done there is done with care. The smell of the different woods and leather of the sheaths, combined with the calm sounds of birds chirping and the waterfall, which is literally in their backyard, makes for an exceptional experience. One which is highly recommended. -HDB



## HAFNARFJÖRÐUR & HANSEATIC MERCHANTS



*The sailing into Hafnarfjörður*

Hafnarfjörður was the main port of the German Hanseatic merchants in Iceland. It was also the country's largest import and export port from 1480 and throughout the 16th century. In 1602 Christian IV, the Danish king, issued a decree on monopoly trade, in which anyone not a citizen of the Danish state, was forbidden to trade in Iceland.

One of the greatest periods of decline in Icelandic history began at that time, but the monopoly trade lasted until 1787. The king also issued the decree in 1608 that all the buildings of the Hanseatic merchants in Hafnarfjörður were to be demolished, including the first Lutheran church in Iceland, a wooden church with a copper roof.

The church was established and constructed by Hanseatic merchants in Hafnarfjörður and Straumsvík and captains who spent time on Icelandic voyages.

Not much reminds us of the Hanseatic period in Hafnarfjörður today, except for a monument to the first Lutheran church built there by the harbour in 1533. The work is by the German artist Lupus; the gate commemorates the relations between Icelanders and Germans and points the way into the future. The presidents of the two countries unveiled the monument almost twenty years ago.

*Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*A monument to the first Lutheran church in Iceland, built by the Hanseatic merchants in 1533 in Hafnarfjörður. Flensborg School can be seen to the left of the 6 metres high artwork.*



*Hafnarfjörður port in the mild weather today.*



*The new headquarters of the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute at Hafnarfjörður harbour.*

# Uniquely Icelandic

## THE ÓFEIGUR FAMILY WORKSHOP

*“What can I buy that is truly unique to Iceland?” is a question Icelanders often get from visitors. The answer is: Handmade pieces created by local master craftsmen!*

On Skólavörðustígur, Reykjavík’s most distinctive shopping street, there is a beautifully restored green timber house from 1881. It houses a family and a family business of master goldsmiths – started by the now deceased family father Ófeigur, his son Bolli is now at the helm

carrying on his legacy – as well as a master dressmaker, Hildur, the wife and mother. Here they each have their own small working spaces where they design and make their very unique pieces; Bolli works mostly using metals such as gold, silver and titanium with different kinds

of Icelandic stones, lava or imported stones like his father did. Hildur makes her pieces out of soft materials, with hats being her speciality. Each hat is unique and handmade from wool and lined with cotton. Most have a drawstring for adjusting the size. She also makes classic dresses out of materials that make the dress especially nice fitting – and she can make a dress to size for you before you leave Iceland. To decorate the solid colour dress, one can buy a hand painted silk wrap or a beautiful unique piece of jewellery made by Hildur’s husband or son. When Bolli was growing up, his father had his workshop at home, so Bolli got to try his jewellery-making skills at a very early age, which led him to study the art and become a master goldsmith like his father. There is a piece on display in the shop that he made when he was 8 years old. Goldsmiths in Iceland study their craft in



such a way that they can easily sit down at a 200 year-old goldsmith’s workbench and start working, such are their skills. Today more modern tools are used but almost everything is still made by hand, so each piece is unique. Ófeigur was also an artist and, among other things, he made big sculptures that can be seen on the walls of the shop. He also refers to his pieces of jewellery as sculptures – just on a smaller scale.

When Hillary Clinton visited Iceland some years ago she was given a copper brooch made by Ófeigur that Madeleine Albright saw and liked so much that she bought four; three made by the father and one by the son. The next time Albright was seen on international TV, she was wearing one of the beautiful brooches. (There is also a thank you letter from Mrs Clinton on the wall in the shop). These signature brooches of Ófeigur’s workshop, each one unique, can still be bought at the shop. Bolli can make jewellery to order. Bolli likes to make jewellery pieces out of titanium, which is lighter than silver, never tarnishes and does not cause any allergic reactions. He uses other metals and materials as well. For example, he makes necklaces with old Icelandic symbols for magic spells and for the wayfarer, to help him find his way safely, even in bad weather. Bolli likes to pick up rocks out in nature and make them into unique items. He also uses lava in his jewellery, sometimes from Iceland’s latest volcanic eruptions. Bolli had an idea for jewellery in the manner of the Northern Lights but he needed beads in those colours, so he asked Troll Beads if they could make them. They didn’t think it would be possible but, within about 4 months, they had managed to make beautiful Northern Lights coloured beads which Bolli now uses in his jewellery.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that a new art exhibition is put on display on the second floor every month, so all lovers of art and craftsmanship who want to experience something uniquely Icelandic, should not miss a visit to the green house at the bottom of Skólavörðustígur. Best of all, they will be sure to meet some of the members of this skilled Icelandic family.







# LANDSVIRKJUN

## CRUCIAL IN ICELAND'S ENERGY TRANSITION

Ljósafoss Power Station

*Landsvirkjun will provide a significant role in the energy transition in Iceland and already reduces its carbon emissions*

Landsvirkjun believes that energy issues are environmental issues and sees renewable energy as the way forward, with fossil fuels becoming a thing of the past. The energy transition is necessary if we are to counteract global climate change. Landsvirkjun is leading by example, and its status in environmental issues is excellent, as the company only generates energy from renewable sources and has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world. The EU's benchmark for electricity as climate change mitigation is 100 grammes of carbon dioxide emissions per kilowatt-hour, and Landsvirkjun's operations only emit 3.6 grammes per kilowatt-hour.

### Achieve carbon neutrality by 2025

Landsvirkjun's goal is to become carbon neutral by 2025, and the company is already well on its way to achieving that goal. As such, the carbon footprint from the company's operations has been reduced by 61% since 2008. Landsvirkjun's most significant challenge

is reducing emissions from geothermal power by 60%, which the company plans to achieve in three years. Indeed, these emissions are equal to 2.5% of Iceland's obligations on emissions reduction under the Paris Agreement.

### Green hydrogen and methanol for energy transition

The company is working on two projects for electricity fuel: a green hydrogen project and a methanol project intended to support the energy transition in transport. These projects are in a developmental phase. The first project, which aims to develop green hydrogen production, will be used to adapt the energy transition in heavy goods transportation. The project will advance the possibility of reaching Iceland's targets in climate issues, at least regarding land transport. Hydrogen can replace fossil fuels as a completely carbon-free fuel, reducing emissions considerably, as one large commercial vehicle's emissions equal dozens of private cars emissions.

Meanwhile, the second project explores the possibility of producing methanol, a fuel considered suitable for the maritime energy transition. Methanol, which is a product made from hydrogen and carbon dioxide, can be effective and is growing in popularity. Engines

running on methanol are already in use, and international shipping liners have commissioned new vessels running on methanol. Several Icelandic companies have shown interest in the methanol option, seeing it as a practical first step in their energy transition.

### Exporting Icelandic energy expertise

Landsvirkjun is not just committed to energy transition at home in Iceland; it supports the international energy transition via its subsidiary, Landsvirkjun Power, for international projects. Indeed, Landsvirkjun Power exports the knowledge gathered in Iceland regarding renewable energy sources. Landsvirkjun Power provides consultation regarding the preparation, construction, and operations of renewable energy power stations and is involved in their development. The latest project is a 10 MW hydropower station in the country of Georgia. The subsidiary is currently exploring projects in Greenland and Canada to support the energy transition in the Arctic region.



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



Búrfell II Power Station



Sogið Area



Steingrímsstöð Power Station



Sogið Area



Peistareykir Geothermal Station



*Alþingishúsið Austurvöllur, in December 2022, next to the Cathedral which was built in 1796, 85 years before the Alþingishúsið*



*Here is probably one of the most important halls of the Alþingishúsið, next to the Parliament hall*

# THE HOUSE OF THE NATION, ALÞINGISHÚSIÐ

Alþingishúsið at Austurvöllur was built between 1880 and 1881. Since then, two annexes have been built next to the original building, Kringlan in 1908, and Skálinn in 2002. It was at Alþingi 1867 that it was approved to build an Icelandic stone

parliament building in Reykjavík to commemorate a thousand years of Iceland's settlement in 1874. However, it was not until 1879 at Alþingi that a budget was approved to build a house that would not only be a building for Alþingi, but also a house for the country's museums and higher educational institutions. Ferdinand Meldahl, president of the University of the Arts in Copenhagen and master builder was commissioned to draw up designs for the house. The design was to be the subject of a great controversy for it was not to be built at Arnarhóll, because Governor Hilmar Finsen used fields there, but in the baker's slope, where Bankastræti 7 is now. In the autumn of 1879, they started digging the foundation in Bankastræti but when the master carpenter, F. Bald arrived in the country to build the house,

with an entourage of fine stonemasons from Borgundarhólmur, he refused to build the building there on the steep slope, so again disputes over the location began. Finally, the cabbage patch located west of the Cathedral and owned by Halldór Kr. Friðrikson's, a member of parliament and a teacher, was bought for a great price. The stones that make up the house were taken from Þingholt, where you can now find Óðinsgata. Alþingishúsið was inaugurated during the assembly ceremony on July 1, 1881, and the first governor from 1873 to 1882, Hilmar Finsen (1824-1886), gave an inauguration speech after Mass in the Cathedral. After Hilmar retired as head of state a year later, he became mayor of Iceland's capital, Copenhagen, until his death. In the speech, he says; "...and there it now stands the most

beautiful and safest house that has ever been built in Iceland, to the pride of the country and it's people... and that the Icelandic Parliament, in cooperation with the administration, had the will and ability to carry out such a beautiful and magnificent work." Alþingishúsið is somewhat reminiscent, although smaller in size, of the Medici-Riccardi palace in Florence, built in 1444, with its roughly hewn stone, arched window arrangements and projecting roof edge. Nothing was spared in the construction. The walls of Alþingishúsið are 80 cm thick at the bottom, and the cavity in between is filled with lime, sand and cement. At the top, they are about half as thick. This remarkable house has served the nation well for 132 years, with three Governors, and 33 Prime Ministers during that time. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Alþingishúsið Austurvöllur, in December 2022, next to the Cathedral which was built in 1796, 85 years before the Alþingishúsið*



*Old and new times, the corridor between Alþingishúsið and Skálinn. Kringlan can be seen on the right, built in 1908*



*Alþingishúsið on the far left, seen from Tjörnin in the December light*



*Pictures of former members of Parliament can be seen on the walls*



*Vér mótmælum allir, painting by Gunnlaugur Blöndal, from the National Assembly in 1851. Jón Sigurðsson president standing in gray on the right. The painting hangs in the lobby of Alþingishúsið, but the event was a great boost to Iceland's struggle for independence.*



*The hall, the Icelandic Parliament has 63 members of parliament*



*One of the many parliamentary meeting rooms*



*Dining room for employees and members of the Parliament in the new extension, Skálán built in 2002*

# KJALARNES & KOLLAFJÖRÐUR

*Looking over to Reykjavik, Hallgrímskirkja can be seen on the left and Keilir mountain on Reykjanes in the middle of the picture. In front of the mountain, the contours of Landakot Hospital and Landakot Church can be seen.*



At the foot of Esja, there is a promontory, named Kjalarnes, with about 1,400 inhabitants. This beautiful promontory, north of Kollafjörður and south of Hvalfjörður, belongs to the capital, Reykjavík, although Mosfellsbær, with its dense population, lies in between. In Kjalarnes, in the settlement of the first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, the first regional parliament in Iceland, Kjalarnesþing, was founded, the precursor to Alþingi in Þingvellir. The assembly was then moved to Elliðaavatn, but was still called Kjalarnesþing. From Kjalarnes there is a beautiful view, south to the capital at Seltjarnarnes, and all the way to Reykjanes over the Kollafjörður in Faxaflói. The village in Kjalarnes is called Grundarhverfi, it's about a 25-minute drive from there to the centre of Reykjavík. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Horses under at the foot of Esja in -12 degree winter temperatures.*



*More than 700 people live in Grundarhverfi in Kjalarnes, close to the sea, nature and the capital. Kjalarnes is the northernmost part of the capital.*



*Klébergsskóli, which has been operating for nearly a hundred years with Esja in the background.*



*Brautarholtskirkja, the westernmost part of Kjalarnes with Esja in the background. The church is a replacement of the first church in Iceland that the settler Örlykur Hrappson built on Esjuberg just before 900. The current church was built in 1857 by Eyjólfur Þorvarðsson, from Bakki on Kjalarnes.*

# Keflavík's Marriott Hotel STRATEGICALLY LOCATED



The Marriott Hotel Keflavík is only five minutes away from Keflavík International Airport, thirty minutes from the capital, Reykjavík, twelve miles from the famous Blue Lagoon with the Fagradalsfjall volcano – Beautiful Valley Mountain only few miles further. Close by is the bridge between the continental plates of America and Europe, where one can literally walk from one continent to the other and where Clint Eastwood filmed his 'Flags of our Fathers' in tribute to the six soldiers who, in 1945, raised the flag on Iwo Jima.

and drinks during evenings. Guests also enjoy inviting, flexible spaces, whether working or relaxing, free Wi-Fi throughout and easy access to the latest news, weather and airport conditions. Brand new meeting spaces are perfect for interviews, corporate training and other events, such as hold corporate meetings. All rooms offer blackout curtains for quality sleep at any time, sleek, tiled bathrooms and a choice of a double or twin beds. Whether visiting Iceland for business or pleasure, the friendly staff at the Courtyard Reykjavík, Keflavík Airport guide guests and help make their visit to Iceland a success. -HH

## Brigde restaurant

The new state-of-the-art lobby at Courtyard provides greater flexibility and choices for guests. At the centre of it all is The Bridge restaurant, for great breakfast, or dinner

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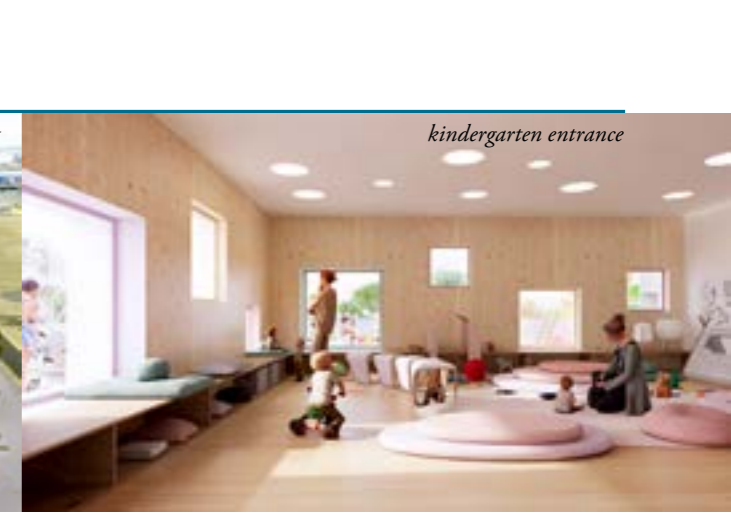




Kinderegarten view from playground



Kindergarten view from street



kindergarten entrance

# THE INTERNATIONALLY AWARDED HJARK

The architectural firm HJARK, founded in 2019, has attracted attention for what is called parametric design. The owner of the studio, Hulda Jónsdóttir, explains such design as the creation of unusual forms in architecture where, at the design stage, factors such as the weather, the use of daylight and the sun are taken into account in the foreground as well as the fact that the wind is blocked - and problems such as wind tunnels is avoided to the best of their ability.



Hulda Jónsdóttir

Copenhagen (KADK). Only one such award is given to architecture students each time. Helga's focus in studies was parametric design, which is leading with ease in all her projects.

When asked, Hulda says that during her twelve years abroad, she has worked in France, Spain, London and most recently at BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group) in Copenhagen. The architecture firm BIG architecture firm is at the forefront of modern architecture and has gained a reputation for ecological and resourceful design solutions. After her time at BIG, Helga made the decision to come home



TheTeam with theThophy WAF awards category winners

and start her own studio here in Iceland.

In December 2022, HJARK - in collaboration with Tiago Sa, architect and owner of the Portuguese studio Sastudio, together with Áslaug Traustadóttir landscape architect and co-owner of Landmótun - won first place at the WAF award festival, for their proposal for the design of Leiðarhöfði, a destination and outdoor recreation area in Höfn in Hornafjörður. They competed against some of the biggest architectural firms in the world, so winning was a pleasant surprise.

WAF, The World Architecture Festival, is an international architectural conference intended for the world's leading architectural firms. When Hulda and her colleagues won the prize for Leiðarhöfði, around 500 proposals were received from over 50 countries.

The proposal also won the WAN (World Architecture News Awards). "We received the bronze awards that time" says Hulda, who can be proud of her success, since in a very short time HJARK has become a world-awarded architectural firm.

HJARK, in collaboration with Sastudio, had also worked on the project A Kindergarten in Urriðaholt, which was also nominated for a WAF award, although in a different category. The kindergarten won first prize in the Iceland Kindergarten competition and got praised for the way the building adapts to its

environment as well how the internal flow emphasizes daylight. In addition, the design meets the requirements of the Nordic eco-label Svanurinn, which stands for high environmental and sustainability standards, the kindergarten in Urriðaholt being the first of its kind in Iceland.

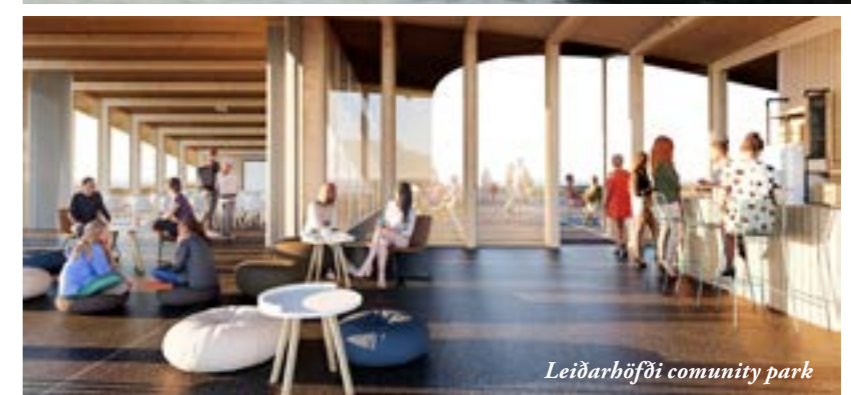
"Tiago, the owner of Sastudio is my co-designer in the projects for the kindergarten in Urriðaholt and Leiðarhöfði, as well as other projects - but we work extremely well together and both have very big and innovative ideas," says Hulda, who says she is very happy with the results so far. The direction is to continue to participate in competitions and to work well on the projects they are involved with each time. "The most important thing is to build a good team because you can't do anything alone", points out Helga, but they are just getting started and therefore have much more to offer in the world of architecture.

Due to its success, HJARK has received further requests for designs and collaborations. "Among the other projects we have currently, says Hulda, are various residential projects in Iceland, small and large, old as well as new, store renovation for Fraiser Group UK and more. We always give 100% in each situation to understand what each project needs. The needs can be quite different - an old house in the center of Reykjavík, a modern kindergarten or even a luxurious hunting lodge on a mountain. That's what I like so much about the job - how varied it is, she says with a smile. No day is the same.

She adds that these days HJARK is looking for more team members because recently four employees went back to school. In case anyone is interested in working at an award-winning architectural firm!



Leiðarhöfði community park Overview



Leiðarhöfði community park

# THE MANTLE BELOW REYKJANES

## Are there only about 8 km down to the mantle below Reykjanes?

A number of questions arise in connection with the upheaval under Reykjanes. One of the facts that is remarkable is that all the earthquakes that are now happening in Grindavík are shallow, as the picture shows. There are almost no earthquakes measured at depths greater than 7 to 8 km under Reykjanes. The Earth's crust under Reykjanes seems to be quite thin, like an oceanic crust.

What information do we have about the thickness of the crust and the temperature under it in Reykjanes? We know, for example, from the geothermal drilling that it heats up very thoroughly in the lower part of the earth's crust on the outside of Reykjanes. When the Reykjanes deep well was down to a depth of about 4.5 km in 2017, the temperature had reached about 535 °C and was rapidly increasing when drilling stopped. Geological studies show that temperatures have even reached 650 °C near the bottom, but the rock needs to go well above 1000 °C to start melting.

Most of the physical characteristics of a rock change when the temperature rises, and science talks a lot about the change in the properties of a rock when it heats up and changes from a hard and solid rock to a warm and soft rock. Scientists call this brittle to ductile transition. Some say that the change starts at about 550 °C, while others believe that rock becomes soft only at about 700 to 800°C, which is more likely. As soon as the rock heats up to this point and becomes soft, the rock stops carrying seismic waves altogether. They die out and disappear in this heat and depth.

Let's look back to the crustal break and the drift valley at Grindavík. Why do no earthquakes occur at greater depths? It can be caused by two things. We know that beneath the Earth's crust, we have the mantle and it is too hot to break and cause earthquakes. Under the crust, at a depth of more than 8 km, there is a completely different world, which is the world of the mantle, which extends about 2900 kilometers into the earth, or all the way down to the surface of the core. The other possibility is that under the 8 km crust there is a layer of basaltic magma, but all earthquakes are suffocated in such a layer.

It's really striking, I think, that all earthquakes die out when you get down to a depth of about 8 km.

The boundary between the earth's crust and mantle is unmistakable under Reykjanes, which reminds us thoroughly that the cause of all these things must come from the mantle, and it is too hot to break like normal

rock. There is, after all, movement and pressure in the earth's crust, which causes the crust to break and send out earthquakes. However, the mantle is partially molten, which means it is partially completely molten magma. It's perhaps not a very good analogy, but you can think of the mantle as wet sand at the beach, where a thin film of sea water lies between the grains of sand. Similarly, the mantle is wet, but there is a very thin film of lava magma that penetrates between the grains of sand or crystals in the partially molten mantle. The lava magma is created there.

*Text: Haraldur Sigurðsson  
Photos: Páll Stefánsson*



*Haraldur Sigurðsson Eldfjalla  
Photo: Friðbjófur Helgason*



# KRAUMA

## *Geothermal Baths*

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

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 what was the Ok glacier, Iceland's smallest glacier. Visitors can see Deildartunguhver next to the baths, with its water bubbling up and splashing against bright green moss and jagged rocks. Seeing where the heated water comes from adds to this unique experience. Be sure to keep your distance, though, to avoid being splashed if you get too close.

### Important hot water source

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

### West is best

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



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

### Visit Krauma

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



**Krauma**  
Deildartunguhver, 310 Borgarbyggð  
www.krauma.is





# ARNARVATNSHEIÐI

Looking over to Reykjavík, Hallgrímskirkja can be spotted on the left, Keilir mountain on Reykjanes in the middle of the picture. In front of the mountain, the contours of Landakot Hospital and Landakot Church can be seen.

It is said, whether it is true or not, that there are three uncountable places in Iceland. The islands in Breiðafjörður, the hills in Vatnsdalur and the lakes in Arnarvatnsheiði. Icelandic Times / Land & Saga went up to this heathland, from Miðfjörður north in Vestur-Húnavatnssýsla in the summer of 2021. The road F578 runs over Arnarvatnsheiði between Miðfjörður and Hvítársíða in the eastern part of Borgarfjörður. The heath has abundant vegetation, great bird life and countless lakes, full of trout, and low-key beauty. Arnarvatnsheiði is one of Iceland's jewels, which few people visit, as it is only possible to get around the area for a short time of the year in well-equipped cars, or well-equipped on foot. Yes, there are a great many lakes, but the silence is even greater. *Photo and text: Páll Stefánsson*



Arnarvatnsheiði—Sunset



# DALABYGGÐ

No experience like it



If you start your trip from Reykjavík you should arrive in the Dalir region, in the West, in about two hours drive. It's a beautiful region of pristine nature, exquisite scenery, charming local businesses, family farms, regional food and leisurely atmosphere. Relaxing after a day of sightseeing, having tasted food directly from the farms all around Dalir, bathing in the geothermal pools and walking across black sandy beaches, can be very nurturing for both body and soul. Take a moment when stepping out to the winter mornings in Dalir and smell the frost - with both feet on the ground and relaxed shoulders, take a slow, deep breath. Be sure to also bring your sunglasses while sightseeing, because even if you are visiting in the wintertime,

when everything gets covered with the bright white snow, and though it's the most beautiful sights, it can get a little too bright for the eyes. There is a lot to see and explore, learning about the first settlers of Iceland, the work of the first Icelandic architect Rögnvaldur Ólafsson, looking out over the landscapes that hosted the battles of the Vikings in earlier centuries. A part from that, crisp ground from frost, white tops of mountains, agricultural sites all around and the food to match it. There are many reasons why we are proud of our region of Dalir and even though winters can be cold, our people welcome you with warm hearts and local culture that can melt your stress away so come join us this winter for a nice relaxing experience.

## ICELANDIC TIMES

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



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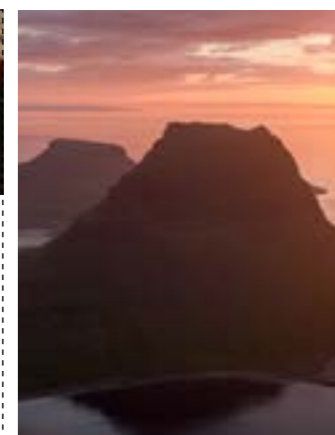
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## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FIRST SETTLERS IN ICELAND?

*The Settlement Center is only a one hour drive from Reykjavík*

Some 1100 years ago, Iceland was a place covered with impenetrable forests and dangerous bogs, and it took groups of bold men to cross the rough North Atlantic sea, to discover the remote island and determine to settle there in order to start a new life. They were the first to name rivers, mountains and places that are world famous today, and many farms are still able to trace their history back to the days of the Settlement. As the most important source of Iceland's history, the Sagas are a collection of exciting stories built around these first settlers. Understanding Iceland completely means paying tribute to their achievements, which made the country what it is today.

### A Warehouse of Exhibitions

In 2006 an Icelandic couple, actor Kjartan Ragnarsson and news reporter Sigríður Margrét Guðmundsdóttir, decided to dedicate a project to the story of the Settlement. They found a charming old warehouse in Borgarnes in West Iceland and started building up two exhibitions on the brave pioneers who followed their curiosity into the unknown.

Provided with an audio guide available in 15 languages, visitors find themselves in an elaborate labyrinth that displays history in a

really exciting way. Step onto a moving boat and get the feeling of how it must have been to cross the ocean in an open boat! Listen to stories, while figures behind the glass silently watch over you. On the lower floor the exhibition of Saga hero and settler's son, Egill Skallagrímsson, takes you right into the story, with Egill's spirit at your steps.

### Transformed through Art

Visual artists from Iceland and abroad contributed their work to both exhibitions, transforming it into a unique experience. Each audio tour takes 30 minutes, leaving the visitor with the deep desire to learn more. The Settlement Center's shop serves as a treasure chest of books on Saga literature, as well as Viking-themed handicrafts and woolen items created by local artists. Take your time to complete your visit with a dinner in the cosy restaurant that catches the atmosphere of the house perfectly and boasts a range of sophisticated Icelandic food at reasonable prices. -DT/ASF



### The Settlement Center

Brákarbraut 13-15 • 310 Borgarnes  
+354 437 1600  
landnam@landnam.is  
www.landnam.is/eng/



## FROSTY WHITE HVÍTÁ RIVER

The Hvítá is the tenth longest river in Iceland. Its source is at Eiríksjökull and Langjökull, in many small rivers that then merge. There is some fishing in the Hvítá, although more in its tributaries. Grímsá, Þverá and Kjarrá, which flow into the Hvítá, have the best and most expensive salmon fishing in the country. The bridge over the Hvítá, which stands on road 510 near Ferjubakki in Borgarfjörður, was designed by Árni Pálsson, an engineer at The Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration. The bridge has a single lane and is 106 metres long. It was chosen by the Icelandic Society of Engineers as one of the engineering achievements of the last century in Iceland. For fifty years, the bridge was the main national road between the south and southwest of the country before the Borgarfjörður bridge, the largest bridge in Iceland, was inaugurated in 1979, south of Borgarnes. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*The bridge over the Hvítá by Ferjubakki, built in 1928 and cost 169,000 ISK.*



*Looking southwest along the icy Hvítá, to Borgarfjörður. Hafnarfjall to the right, Brekkufjall to the left.*



## THE ELDBORG VOLCANO

*The rough Eldborg lava field. Eldborg rises from the lava in the distance*

Eldborg is a peculiarly shaped oval crater in the middle of the Eldborgarhraun lava field in Hnappadalur. It rises 60 metres over the beautifully overgrown lava field surrounding it. Eldborg was formed in two eruptions, the later about a thousand years ago. Eldborg belongs to the eruption system of Ljósufjall, a little north of Snæfellsnes. The Book of Settlement tells the story of a blind elder, Sel-Þór Grímsson, who first saw the volcanic eruption from the Hripi farm, the farm which stood where the crater is now. Eldborg and the surrounding lava was protected as a natural phenomenon in 1974. From Snorrastaðir in Hnappadalur, there is a 3 km long hiking trail up to Eldborg. When you reach the crater, there is a stunning view west of Snæfellsjökull and south of Skessuhorn and Skarðsheiði, south of Borgarfjörður. Eldborg is 120 km / 75 miles from Reykjavík. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



# Go West: Visit Lovely *Akranes*



Charming towns await travellers who drive north through the Hvalfjörður tunnel from Reykjavík. Just 50km from the capital is Akranes, a popular detour for those looking to explore the west coast and spend time in the countryside. Akranes is a traditional fishing village, peaceful and friendly, and home to a famous lighthouse that is open to the public.

The Akranes Lighthouse (Akranesvíti) is a delightful place to visit at any time of year. Away from the bright lights, tourists and locals flock to the site in winter to enjoy the view of the Northern Lights dancing across the sky. In the summer, people picnic outside the lighthouse and, during opening hours, guests are invited in and can climb to its top. Built in 1947, the lighthouse has been used to host concerts and art exhibitions in recent years. Visit @akraneslighthouse on Instagram for photos and videos and its Facebook page for opening hours.

### Rich town history

To get familiar with the town's history, visit the Akranes Folk Museum, which is dedicated to exploring what Akranes was

like from the time of the Settlement to the present day. The museum recently underwent an extensive renovation, re-opening in 2020, and the revamped museum hall features multimedia exhibitions and historical and cultural artefacts from the town. There's an audio guide available in the price of admission. Outdoors, there are various houses and boats crucial to the town's history. Visitors can explore the houses. Visit [www.museum.is](http://www.museum.is) and the Akranes Folk Museum's Facebook page for more information.

### Bathe in soothing Guðlaug

After exploring the lighthouse and folk museum, there is no better place to relax

than in Guðlaug, a heated natural pool situated along Langisandur, Akranes' sandy beach. The two-tier structure is the perfect place to take some time off. For opening times and prices, visit Guðlaug's Facebook page and visit @gudlaugbaths on Instagram for picturesque photos.

Akranes is a family-friendly destination, so ensure you take time to visit the town on your next trip to Iceland.



# HRAFNSEYRI

## BIRTHPLACE OF JÓN SIGURÐSSON

*He laid the foundation of Iceland's independence and sovereignty*

A small, very remote farm, on a mountainside almost at the end of the world; the home of two men who served their country, separated by 6 centuries. A Viking chieftain in the late 12th century and a young scholar who was later to become known as the 'Father of the Nation'.

Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson was a Viking leader who travelled to England, France and to Italy, where he studied to become a physician in Salerno. He returned to become a popular leader in the West Fjords, only to be assassinated by one he had helped. He lived on the farm in Eyri, to which he gave his name.

Six centuries later, from this same little farm, came a young man, the son of a pastor, who was to change the destiny of Iceland. Hrafnseyri has become synonymous with Jón Sigurðsson, the man who, without a shot being fired or a man being killed, brought Iceland from servitude to the Danish crown to internal self-rule with a rekindled self-respect.



Today, the farm is a museum, a testament to the man who brought freedom to his nation. However, this is no dead memorial but rather a living extension of the lives of both these great men, each a hero in his time, taking their work forward in new ways whilst enshrining the values and achievements they made.

In 1944, Jón's birthday had been chosen as the birthday of Iceland as a nation, in recognition of the key role he played in bringing its freedom and independence from foreign rule, becoming a nation in its own right. It is celebrated each year as Iceland's National Day. On the 17th June, 2011, Iceland celebrated the 200th birthday of their most famous freedom fighter, who fought with words and wisdom, as opposed to the guns and bullets favoured by most governments and revolutionaries alike. The President of Iceland visited Hrafnseyri to open the celebrations marking, not only Jón Sigurðsson's birth but the rebirth and reopening of the museum dedicated to his memory on the same spot where he was born.

This year, 2018, marks another anniversary. It is the centenary of Iceland's sovereignty, received from Denmark in 1918, thanks to Jón and his supporters whom he led in their struggle for the country's freedom.

Why would anyone want to live in such an inhospitable spot? The road linking it with the rest of the West Fjord towns in the north is often impassable in winter. The rest of the year offers an

answer. It is located on the north slopes of Arnarfjörður, surrounded by scenes of great natural beauty, including Iceland's most beautiful waterfall, the 100m high Dynjandi (Thunderer) waterfall, often also called 'The Bride's Veil'. Hiking trails abound in the almost-untouched landscape of mountains, fjords, valleys and cliffs where wildlife is plentiful. Both the remoteness and peace of the fjord provide a good opportunity for anyone wishing to contemplate their role in life.

In 1829, when Jón Sigurðsson was 18 years old, he left the farm, first moving to Reykjavík before moving to Copenhagen to become a student in 1833. An upright and forthright man, he had the calm authority of a leader. He was able to converse with king and commoner alike – a trait that won him much respect and support as he argued, using his knowledge of the historical archives as his platform, to justify his claim for Icelandic independence. This was a time when revolutionary fervour was sweeping the western world. Independence movements in Germany, France and the USA provided inspiration to the students in Copenhagen.

Jón sought self-rule for Iceland under the Danish crown. Through his annual writings, he kept his supporters in Iceland informed. In 1851, a new Danish government sought to annex Iceland, making it merely another district of Denmark. The Alþing (the Icelandic parliament), which had become an advisory body on Icelandic matters, under Jón's leadership boldly resisted these

attempts. Despite Danish warships and military presence in the harbour, force was not used and a stalemate existed for a decade, during which Jón continued to argue so successfully that it became an accepted fact that Iceland should rule itself.

A committee was set up in Denmark, on which Jón served. He delivered his own report, in which he said, that the Danish constitutional government had no right to rule over Iceland, because there never had existed any contract between it and the Icelandic people. There had been a contract between the Icelanders and the Danish king, but when the king abdicated his power in 1848 and the monarchy became constitutional, the king had also abdicated his power over Iceland, which was entitled to become a fully sovereign state like Denmark. This was then enshrined in the Danish-Icelandic Act of Union, signed on 1st December, 1918. In addition, Jón also demanded five times as much as the Danish committee was considering, claiming reparations for damage done in the past. His motive was apparently to buy time, as Iceland was not ready to stand on its own either economically or politically and he wanted it be understood that the money was given as a right, not a gift.



Through his wisdom, diplomacy, eloquent argument and Godly conviction, Jón was able to bring a peaceful transition to self-rule at a time when most other European countries were suffering violently turbulent revolutions, in which many were tortured, killed or maimed in the battle for change.

Although Iceland received its sovereignty in 1918, it wasn't until 1944 that it became totally independent, the foundation for that independence and national identity having been laid by Jón Sigurðsson. The museum at Hrafnseyri is a testament to his life and legacy, giving a clear insight into his early years, through the chapel and the replicas of the farm buildings. The museum was renovated in 2011, with a dramatic new presentation designed by Basalt architects, who designed the Blue Lagoon's new structures. The museum uses its facilities to continue to educate and provide a unique setting for conferences and courses run in cooperation with Jón Sigurðsson's Professor's seat at the University of Iceland, as well as other Icelandic and foreign universities.

Visiting lecturers from Denmark, USA, Canada and the UK have taught innovative courses, such as the 2009 Conference on National Identity in a Globalised World. Provocative questions are asked with a view to stimulating debate and argument in order to provide a platform for change, based on discussion rather than violence, whilst addressing questions that have no easy answers. For example, "What place do national heroes have in a cosmopolitan world?" "What is the place of National Identity in a Multi-Cultural Society?" Jón Sigurðsson's legacy is very relevant in a modern world.



The Viking chieftain, Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, was willing to brave many perils to travel through different countries, listening to new ideas, experiencing different cultures and then bringing the best to help his countrymen. If one remote farm can produce two such leaders, there must be something very valuable to learn from it! Visitors today can stay in a variety of accommodations in the nearby town of Þingeyri. The road over the mountain is fine to travel from Spring to Autumn. Refreshments are provided in the replica turf house – delicious home-made cakes, waffles and jam, with coffee that make it the most popular café in the area!

This special experience is augmented by other locally produced items, along with souvenirs that will provide a constant reminder of this farm for heroes! A unique feature of the farm is its old chapel, which is fast becoming a hot favourite for couples wanting to get married in a very special location! It is also the venue for the conferences and courses held there during summer months, turning the museum into a forward-thinking university, building on the educational foundation that led to both its former famous inhabitants leaving such a mark on the country's history.

Interested couples, students and course providers should contact the museum's curator, Ingi Björn.

**The museum is open** in 2023 daily from 11:00 – 17.00 or by appointment with Ingi Björn Guðnason.



**Hrafnseyri**  
471 Þingeyri  
+354 456 8260  
hrafnseyri@hrafnseyri.is  
www.hrafnseyri.is



# BETWEEN TWO CLIFFS

*Hælavík bjarg in the foreground, overlooking Hornvík. Hornbjarg is on the far side of the bay*



*Hornbjarg*



*Hælavík Cliff above Hornvík Bay*

**H**ornvík Bay in Hornstrandir lies between two of the largest bird cliffs in Iceland, Hælavíkurbjarg to the west and Hornbjarg to the east. In past centuries there were three families' houses in the small bay: Horn, which was abandoned in 1946, Höfn, which was abandoned in 1944, though the rangers' service house is still there at Hornstrandir, and Rekavík behind Höfn, which was abandoned in the same year. Hornstrandir is the northernmost part of Vestfirðir, and was made a nature reserve along with Jökulfjörður in 1975. A well populated community existed there, even though living conditions were very tough, until the middle of the last century, when the whole area was abandoned. There is no road transport to or in the reserve, so walking is the only option to view and explore this area, which is one of the most remote, coldest, and also the most beautiful parts of Iceland. Almost everyone who has been to Hornstrandir agrees on that. Hornvík is the best place to start exploring the area, though it involves both a steep climb and incredibly diverse nature. Whether in its dark cold fog, it's calmness or sunshine, there is nothing to compare to it in the whole country. Boat trips into the area, Jökulfjörður and Hornstrandir are available from both Bolungarvík and Ísafjörður. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Hornbjarg lighthouse and weather observation station at Horn below Hornbjarg peak*



*The Horn house in Hornvík Bay was abandoned in 1946, but is now used as a summer house*



*Road 643 runs from Hólmavík and north to Ófeigsfjörður, past the deserted Naustavík farm by Reykjarfjörður*

# BEAUTIFUL & SPARSELY POPULATED

The least populated, and also the most remote municipality in Iceland, is Árneshreppur at Strandir, in the Westfjords. The population of this rugged and beautiful region is now just over 40 people and around four thousand sheep. The road conditions north from Hólmavík are hard to rely on during the winter months, but residents are guaranteed transport by air, to Gjögur from Reykjavík, and Norlandair flies there once or twice a week, with passengers and goods. There is a lot to see in the district, including two huge herring factories that operated for a short time before the middle of the last century. It has a great swimming pool and hiking trails that are hard to match. It is best to visit the area in late summer, when everything is in bloom. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Driftwood and the herring factory in Ingólfsfjörður*



*Suðurland, a ship that was run aground at the herring factory in Djúpuvík, and used as accommodation for staff.*



*Ingólfsfjörður with the remains of a big herring factory*



*The small village of Gjögur, now deserted*

# UNIQUE EYJAFJÖRÐUR



Road no. 83 from Akureyri to Grenivík

In the middle of the North is Eyjafjörður, a 60 km long fjord, between high mountains. The Eyjafjörður area from Siglufjörður in the north and west to Grenivík in the northeast is the second most populated area in the country with around 30,000 inhabitants. The vast majority, or two thirds, live at the bottom of the fjord, in Akureyri. Icelandic Times / Land & Saga took a trip, and photographed the landscape and mood today around the beautiful Eyjafjörður. The name of the fjord is derived from Hrísey island, the second largest island off the coast of Iceland, which is in the middle of the fjord. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



The lighthouse at Svalbardseyri



Old herring factory at Hjalteyri



Horses by Eyjafjörður



Hjalteyri between Akureyri and Dalvík, a film village, because filming of True Detective, as you can see, takes place in the neighborhood

# JÓLASVEINAR

(The Yule lads) are the 13 mischievous sons of Grýla and Leppalúði, two bloodthirsty child-eating trolls, whose story can be traced back to the 13th century. The history of the Yule lads can be traced back to the 17th century and Jólakötturinn (The Christmas cat) was added to the family still later.

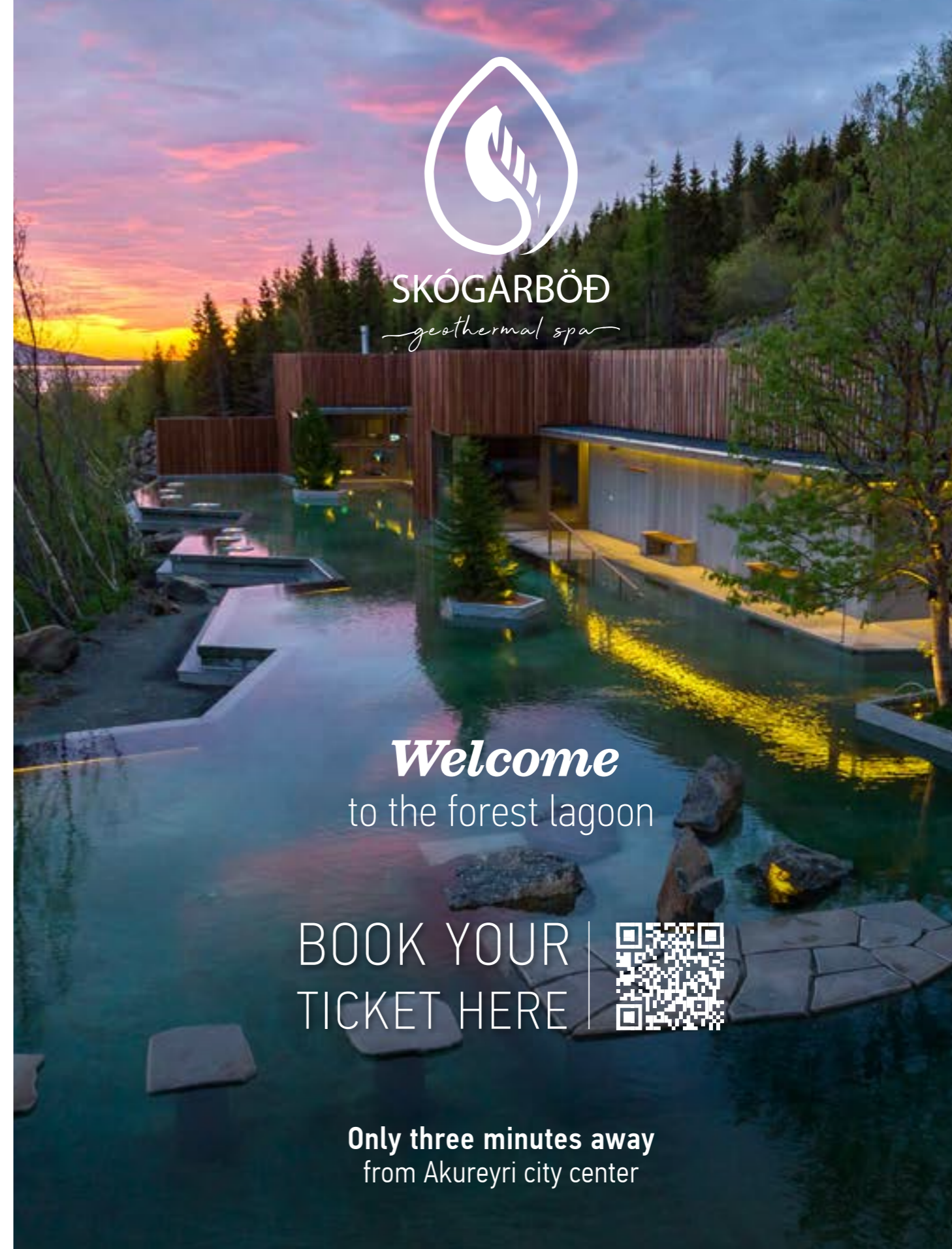
13 days prior to Christmas the Yule Lads start coming down from the mountain one each night. At night, while the children sleep, the Yule lads bring a little present. The children place a shoe in their window before going to bed and look forward to getting up to see what the Yule lad left in the shoe. Clever children put a tall boot in the window at night instead of a regular shoe in the hope the Yule lad might just fill it with presents. Badly behaved children risk getting a plain potato in their shoe.

The Yule Lads have made Dimmuborgir their home and visiting them in their natural habitat is an unforgettable experience for children of all ages.

Dimmuborgir is an enchanting area to explore on a nice summer day but visiting Dimmuborgir at Christmas time, however, is truly magical! Please visit <https://en.jolasveinarniriddimmuborgum.com/> for more information and visiting hours in Dimmuborgir.



**HÚSHEILD/HYRNA** is a top company in civil engineering and constructions both for official authorities and individuals, as well as producing quality interiors, windows and doors. One of their biggest projects at the moment is the new construction of the Mývatn Naturebaths, where Húsheild/Hyrna is building a new impressive facility for the Naturebaths. The building will be over 2,600 square meters with catering space, facilities for holding meetings, spacious changing facilities as well as private rooms, relaxation space and massage facilities to name a few. The lagoon it self will then be connected to and adapted to the new facilities when the time comes. Construction began in the spring months of 2023 and is scheduled for completion in the first half of 2025.



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# MÝVATN TOURS

## EXPLORE THE INTERIOR OF ICELAND

### Enjoy the breathtaking landscapes of Askja and Viti

Iceland's uninhabited interior is home to an otherworldly landscape that must be seen to be believed. It's full of dramatic and wild scenery, swept by endless wind and marked by vast expanses of ice and desert. It's the most distinctive landscape on the island, replete with lava fields and volcanoes.

#### Explore the highlands with Mývatn Tours

You can venture deep into the highlands on a day tour with the family-run business, Mývatn Tours. The Askja Classic tour, which has been operated for more than 40 years by Mývatn Tours, brings you to Askja on a unique 4x4 bus. Askja is a caldera (sunken crater) within the surrounding Dyngjufjöll mountains which offers dramatic volcanic features that were formed by collapsing land after a volcanic eruption. They are essentially huge volcanic craters. The area is remote and

awe-inspiring. Askja, which stands at 1,510 metres, emerges from the Ódáðahraun lava field, amidst rocky terrain.

#### The awe-inspiring Askja

Askja is in the middle of the Highlands and it takes between 3 to 4 hours to drive there. The trip starts and ends in the village of Reykjahlíð, in the Lake Mývatn area. On the way up to Askja, the bus stops several times to have a closer look at the amazing landscapes and geological wonders, such as lava fields, glacial rivers, fresh water rivers, natural springs and towering mountains.

#### Travel in a vehicle equipped for the Highlands

Getting to the Highlands is no easy feat as basic rental cars are not suitable for the journey. With Mývatn Tours, you sit up high in a special vehicle designed to navigate the rugged Highlands, with a lot of space for your feet and your belongings. The 4x4 buses can handle the unforgiving lava fields and rivers. You are in safe hands with the experienced and professional drivers, so you can relax and listen to the guide while he tells you about the area.

When the bus arrives at the parking space in Askja around 12–1pm, passengers get 2–2½ hours to explore the area. There is



an approximately 35-minute easy walk from the parking area to Askja and the Viti crater area. Viti is a tremendous crater, filled with a pale blue lake, that emerged after the great eruption of the Askja volcano in 1875 where you can go for a swim, if conditions allow.

The Highlands are an unforgettable slice of Iceland and the guides of Mývatn Tours can't wait to introduce you to the hauntingly beautiful landscapes of its interior. - JG

**Mývatn Tours**  
660 Mývatn, Iceland  
Tel: +354 464 1920  
www.myvatntours.is  
myvatntours@gmail.com



# DALVIK Nature Reserve

*A protected outdoor paradise in the north of Iceland*

The Friðland Svarfdæla Nature Reserve is a beautiful slice of North Iceland, an 8 km<sup>2</sup> wetland located near Dalvík on both sides of the Svarfaðardalsá river. The reserve stretches from the sea up to Húsabakki in Svarfaðardalur. The area has been a protected region since 1972 and is the oldest of its kind in Iceland. Svarfaðardalur is a vast, densely populated valley in North Iceland, about 30 minutes from Akureyri. Small farms, babbling brooks and towering mountains surround the region.

Friðland Svarfdæla is an outdoor oasis with numerous hiking trails and bird-watching opportunities. In fact, the protected area is the home and nesting area for more than 35 bird species, making the area perfect for bird watching. The site has marked trails, information about birds, flora and fauna, and bird-watching houses and bridges for easy access. You can reach the nature reserve from Húsabakki in Svarfaðardalur or from Hrísatjörn, close to the town of Dalvík. From Húsabakki, travellers can walk through the nature reserve to the Svarfaðardalsá river, crossing it by a short footbridge and walk to the small forest of Hánefsstaðareitur.

Svarfdæla Nature Reserve was protected in 1972 with the help of farmers in Svarfaðardal to preserve the nature and landscape of the nature reserve. Wetlands characterise the reserve, and the area is an essential habitat for various wetland birds, but it is believed that more than 35 bird species breed within this protected area.

The primary conservation value of Svarfdæla Friðland is the area's bird life and bird habitat, but the reserve breeds, among other things, species that are listed as endangered and in imminent danger on the list of the Icelandic Institute of Natural History. In addition, various ecosystems in the area have a very high conservation value.

The management and protection plan for Friðland Svarfdæla is intended to be a strategic document, worked in collaboration with landowners, municipalities and stakeholders, and is intended as a management tool to shape the future vision for the area. The aim of its creation is to propose a strategy for the protection of the nature reserve and a plan to maintain its conservation value so that there is as much harmony as possible. The plan presents 10-year strategic goals, along with a rolling three-year action plan.



# AKUREYRI

## *Heart of the North*



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

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

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

### Cultural Centre of the North

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

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

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

### Sports of all kinds

Sport activities are very popular in the North and many sports are represented in this dynamic community. We have already mentioned the ski slopes, but other popular

facilities are the big skating rink, football fields and recreational areas ideal for running, hiking and downhill biking.

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

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

### See the Sights

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

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

### Easy Access

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

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

 **Visit Akureyri**  
+354 450 1050  
[info@visitakureyri.is](mailto:info@visitakureyri.is)  
[www.visitakureyri.is](http://www.visitakureyri.is) 







# EXPLORE ART UP NORTH

*Akureyri Art Museum hosts exciting exhibitions throughout the year*

Akureyri is commonly called Iceland's "second city," a moniker many of the town's 20,000 residents find amusing given its small size. Akureyri has its own personality, and it feels and looks quite different from Reykjavík, more low-key and relaxed than the capital city, with a booming art scene. Listasafnið Á Akureyri (Akureyri Art Museum) is at the centre of it all.

There's perhaps no better representation of Akureyri's art scene than the Akureyri Art Museum. The museum hosts numerous exhibitions during the year, including works from painters, sculptors, textile artists, and multimedia artists. Those featured range from well-known Icelandic artists to up-and-coming students attending art school in Iceland. The collections are fascinating and a must-see for art lovers.

The summer season is exquisite as currently on display until the middle of August is Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, a film of friends and musicians gathered in the natural surroundings of a farm in Upstate New York. The location of the farm, mixed with the music, becomes a scene for what Kjartansson calls a feministic



nihilistic gospel song. It's a multilayered portrait of the artist's friends and an exploration of film and music.

Meanwhile, *Blood & Honor* by Steinunn Gunnlaugsdóttir is also on display until mid-August. The work features four flags that flutter on flagpoles on the balcony of the Akureyri Art Museum. The flags are the result of an experiment where three factors were merged into one concept: the Icelandic national flag, the humorous font Comic Sans and the letters from the Icelandic alphabet that represent the sounds that people make when they feel pain: A, Á, Ó, Æ.

There are also works on display from the artists Ásmundur Ásmundsson, Inga Lía Middleton, Sara Björg Bjarnadóttir, and Guðjón Gísli Kristinsson, among other artists.

Akureyri Art Museum has a rotating schedule of exhibitions carefully curated by the museum's staff. There is always something worthwhile to see at the museum, and this autumn/winter is no different. Locals and tourists can look forward to a primitive sculpture exhibition by Brynhildur Kristinsdóttir, opening in late August, paintings by Katrín Jónsdóttir, intricate woodcuts by Dröfn Friðfinnsdóttir, work from Portuguese/Brazilian artist couple Hilda de Paulo / Tales Frey and a mesmerizing film and sound presentation by Sigurður Guðjonsson.

The museum is a lovely place to spend some time when visiting Akureyri. It's located in the heart of the town and is open 10:00-17:00 June to August and noon-17:00 September to May. For those looking for a more personal experience, there are guided tours every Thursday in English at 12:30.



Ásmundur Ásmundsson



Guðmunda Andrésdóttir



Ragnar Kjartansson, *The Visitors*, still by Elisabet Davids

# THE ICELANDIC FOLK AND OUTSIDER ART MUSEUM



Outside the museum one can look at sculptures and walk through the old garden.



The museum library contains hundreds of books and an impressive amount of source material on visual arts, design, architecture, textile and crafts.



Exhibitions 2023. Sísí Ingólfsdóttir's work takes on a dialogue with the embroidery from Jenný Karlsdóttir's collection.

*Explore this fascinating museum just outside Akureyri*

The Icelandic Folk and Outsider Art Museum was founded in 1995, and the museum collects and displays works by folk-, contemporary and outsider artists - who have an honest and direct connection to an original creative spirit; authentic, unspoiled and free. The core collection consists of thousands of artworks and sketches by more than 460 artists, dating from the mid-19th century to the present.

The museum's exhibition space has ten separate galleries of various sizes, a total of 500 square metres of exhibition space. There are rotating exhibitions each year featuring works from the collection and visiting artists.

This summer, until September 10th, the museum is presenting 12 new exhibitions featuring the works of various



artists. The emphasis is on fresh ideas and refined craftsmanship, including glassblowing, embroidery, silverwork, ceramics, photography, screen printing, and woodwork. One of the themes explored in 2023 is how visual art can help individuals cope with self-harm and contain it. Despite the seriousness of the content, the museum's exhibitions are bright, colourful and accessible to all.

This summer, the museum showcases three visual artists whose lives were marked by great adversity in the Created from Collections exhibitions. In the Middle Room, there is a memorial exhibition featuring works by Pálmi Kristinn Arngrímsson (1930-2015) titled The Garden at Home, while the West Room presents In a Bright Room, a series of paintings by Hjalmar Stefánsson (1913-1989). In the East Room, there is another memorial exhibition of works by artist Nonni Ragnas (1951-2019) titled Love is a Lovely Game.

In the foyer and Flower Room, the exhibition Family and Friends show works by Guðjón R. Sigurðsson, Helgi Þórsson, students from Valsárskóla elementary school, and children from the Álfaborg nursery school in Svalbarðseyri.

Meanwhile, in the Doll Room, an exhibition features dolls and costumes from around the world and a collection of works by B. Sóley Pétursdóttir entitled Silenced – Never Again.

This year, the museum received a gift of 2,500 textile works collected by Jenný Karlsdóttir, which will be stored in a special department dedicated to her. Embroidery works from her collection are displayed in the exhibition Home Adornments as well as embroidery works and plates by Sísí Ingólfsdóttir.

This summer the museum also displays works of art by Stefán Tryggva- og Sigríðarson, Klemens Hannigan, Anna Hallin, Olga Bergmann, Hildur María Hansdóttir, Guðmundur Ármann and Brynhildur Þorgeirsdóttir.

The Icelandic Folk and Outsider Art Museum is located in North Iceland, near Svalbarðseyri, about 10 minutes' drive eastwards from the town of Akureyri, on the opposite side of the fjord.



Asgier G. Gunnlaugsson & Co. had a clothing and textile store in Reykjavik. Today the shop's fixtures and fittings are used to frame exhibitions at the Museum relating to textile, needlework, and handicraft.



Sculptures by Ragnar Bjarnason that are inspired by Icelandic folklore and legends, greet people outside the Museum and also inside the entrance



Exhibitions 2023. B. Sóley Pétursdóttir has created a powerful internal and external world with diverse and personal expression.



Exhibitions 2023. When creating his work, the artist Pálmi Kristinn Arngrímsson approached the primal human instinct with humility and sensibility.



Exhibitions 2023. The children in the local nursery school display their work in the Flower Room.



Exhibitions 2023. Nonni Ragnas never got to display his artwork in public, but he never gave up. He transformed his home in Reykjavik into an exhibition and dance space where no surface went untouched by his hand.



Every year the museum displays a national costume. This year the museum shows faldbúningur - a festive national dress. Faldbúningur is the oldest type of national costume of Icelandic women.

# MÝVATN



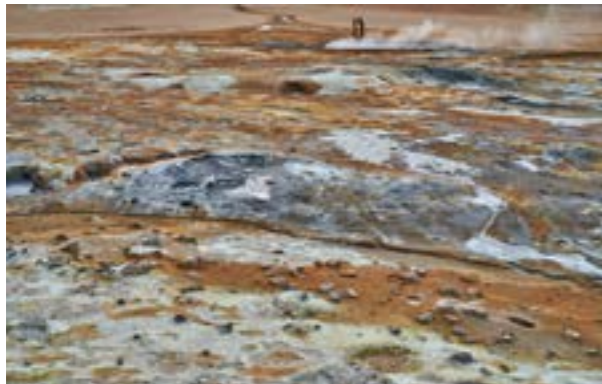
Mývatn in Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla in the north-eastern corner of Iceland, is not only one of the most visited tourist destinations in Iceland. The area by and around the lake, which is the fourth largest in the country, is world-renowned for its unique bird life and great and remarkable volcanic activity. One of the best known and most prosperous salmon fishing rivers in the country, Laxá in Aðaldalur flows from Mývatn. By the lake, there are a number of places that not only attract tourists, but are unique nationally and globally, such as Dimmuborgir, the pseudo craters by Skútustaðir, Hverfjall, Námafjall, Hverarönd and Leirhnjúkur. The lake itself exists in its current form after a volcanic eruption in Lúdentborgir and Þrengsbotnar 2000 years ago. Five hundred years before, Hverfjall, which leaves a strong and beautiful impression on the landscape round Mývatn, had erupted in one big explosive eruption. The last eruptions at Mývatn were Kröflueldar, nine small eruptions, from December 1975 to September 1984. Tourism in the Mývatn region has been exemplary in recent decades, as the area can be visited all year round. From Mývatn, it's 500 km to Reykjavík, almost 100 km to Akureyri, and just over 50 km to Húsavík or Dettifoss. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Hverfjall with its popular hiking trails. The crater was formed in an explosive eruption over 2500 years ago.*



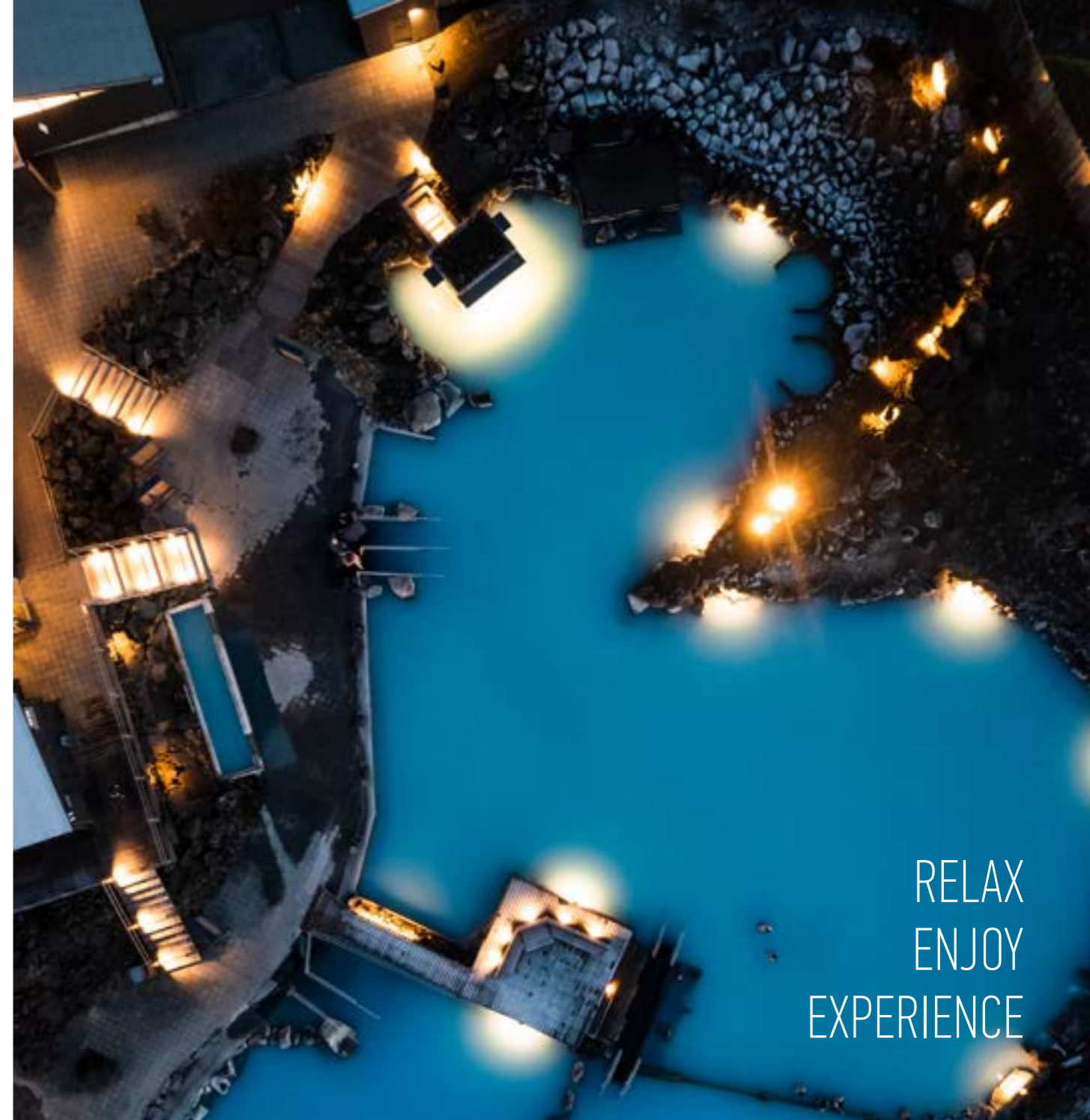
*Lava fields from Kröflueldar*



*Colour splendour in the hot spring area at Námaskarð*



*Travellers by Hverarönd*



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## MÝVATN NATURE BATHS

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# BIRD PARADISE

In the mouth of the Fáskrúðfjörður fjord lies Skróður island. The island is one big rock made of basalt and acid volcanic rock that rises 160 metres out of the sea. The island belongs to the Vattarnes land and was protected in 1995; it is 530 metres wide and 590 metres long. Over the centuries, there has been a lot of egg harvesting on Skróður, as 18 bird species nest on the island. The birds number in the hundreds of thousands. There are, for example, 300,000 puffins in Skróður alone. It is the most common nesting bird along with the gannet, which started nesting on the island in 1943. Fulmar and black-legged kittiwake are also common nesting birds on Skróður. There is a remarkable cave on the island coast named Skróðhellir. It is estimated at around 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>, 125 metres long, and 80 metres wide at its widest point. Many puffins nest in the cave. Decades ago, fishermen sailed from Skróður and between rowing tours, they stayed in the cave. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Skróður Island in all its glory*



*Nesting gannets on Skróður*



*Gannets in flight*



*The gannet settlement on the east side of Skróður*



*Looking at Skróðhellir*

# EXPLORING BEAUTIFUL *Vopnafjörður*



The scenic town is home to striking nature and fun outdoor activities. Vopnafjörður is full of picturesque mountains, wondrous waterfalls, historical farms and one of the best spots on the island to enjoy Iceland's peace and tranquility. It's scenic, steeped in medieval history and home to an array of wildlife. The history of the village dates back 1100 years as the bay was first settled by Viking seafarers from Norway. Foreign merchants frequently sailed to Vopnafjörður in the early modern age, and a settlement gradually formed on a peninsula where the village of Vopnafjörður now stands.

## Stunning nature

The village has numerous opportunities for relaxation and outdoor activities. Many well-marked walking trails lead through the region's natural pearls. One of them, "the elephant", is a significant rock pillar on the east side of Vopnafjörður that resembles an elephant. Fuglabjarganes is a prominent cliff that juts out on the northern coast of the town. You can get a good look at it from a marked hiking path from the Strandhafnarvegur road, which is along the Fugla River. The scenery is beautiful with white beaches, towering cliffs and impressive rock caverns and pillars. Vopnafjörður is only 1-1.5 hours away from pearls of Iceland like Dettifoss, Mývatn and Langanes and only 2-3 hours from Herðubreið the queen of Icelandic mountains, Askja and Holuhraun.

## Outdoor activities

Vopnafjörður is a birdwatcher's dream and the Tangi peninsula north of the village is a beautiful and remote spot to watch seabirds. Vopnafjörður also offers several hiking routes that vary from easy to challenging. Beginners will find a wide range of mapped routes and marked trails that offer scenic views of the whole of Vopnafjörður —the bay, the Tangi Peninsula, inland areas and mountains. Hike to the end of the Tangi Peninsula to find interesting rock formations and beaches. Other fun activities include a round of golf at the well-maintained 9-hole course and taking a tip in the town's heated swimming pool.

## Culture and history

The old farm of Bustarfell is one of the best-preserved of the traditional Icelandic turf houses, which Icelanders called home for centuries. The museum offers a great opportunity to see how people's ways of living have changed through the centuries. The foundations of the current house are from 1770, but the house has undergone alternations over the years. Meanwhile, the East Iceland Emigration Center is dedicated to the emigration years 1870-1914, the years after the great Askja eruption of 1875 that displaced hundreds. The center is focused on the history of the region and renewing contact with emigrants' descendants. There are documents and photos on display. Stop by the village on your next trip to Iceland! -JG



**Tourist Information Center**  
Hafnarbyggð 4a, 690 Vopnafjörður  
+354 473 1331  
www.vopnafjordur.com



# TENTH THOUSAND YEARS



It has been 10,000 years since the highest mountain in the country outside of glaciers, Snæfell, last woke up. Snæfell, which is in Vatnajökull National Park, is the youngest volcano in East Iceland, 1826 metres high, made of rhyolite and tuff. The mountain is impressive as it rises a thousand metres from the plateau 20 km northeast of Vatnajökull. To the east of the mountain are Eyjabakkar, a green area, ideal for heather geese. To the west of the mountain is Vesturöræfi, the main home of reindeer in Iceland. The ascent of the mountain is quite easy from Snæfellsskáli, and the hike is 28 km long in total. There is a decent road to be found to Snæfell, known as the Queen of the East.

*Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*The many faces of Snæfell*



## SKÓGAR MUSEUM

### THE CROWN JEWEL AMONG REGIONAL MUSEUMS

*This year its former director, Þórður Tómasson celebrated his 100th birthday*

Skógar Museum can be found by the majestic Skógafoss waterfall in South Iceland, 150 kilometres east of Reykjavík. It is a cultural heritage collection of over 18,000 artefacts exhibited in three museums. The Museum displays a variety of tools used for fishing and farming, as well as some artefacts dating back to the Viking Age. There is also the Open Air Museum, showcasing historic buildings from the area, and the Technical Museum, which exhibits many historic vehicles and features from the transportation history of Iceland. This museum is the Crown Jewel of Icelandic regional museums.

#### Fisheries and Agriculture

The Maritime section of the Folk Museum contains a large collection of objects related to fisheries along the south shore of Iceland. Fisheries in this region were unusual because Iceland's sandy south coast has no proper harbours; boats had to be launched from beaches open to the North Atlantic waves. The centrepiece of the section is Pétursey, the eight-oared fishing boat, built in 1855 and used until 1946. The Agriculture section contains tools and utensils used on farms in past times; riding gear, haymaking tools, wool-working and iron-working equipment. In a subsistence economy, farming households had to be self-sustaining, making and repairing all their own tools and utensils. The Folk Museum also has an esoteric collection of everything from textiles to natural history to rare books.

#### Turf houses & Technology

In the original turf houses rebuilt in the Open Air Museum one can catch Skógar Museum The Crown Jewel among

regional museums the atmosphere of times long gone and experience the living conditions in Iceland throughout the centuries. The Technical Museum tells the story of technology and transportation and its development in Iceland in the 19th and 20th century. Among the many automobiles and two airplanes on exhibit is the world's best preserved Kégresse P15N track – a must-see for all car enthusiasts!

#### Þórður Tómasson

Þórður Tómasson, the former curator and one of the founders of Skógar Museum has now sadly passed away. Þórður was born in 1921 in Vallnatún in South Iceland and as he was growing up he quickly developed an interest for folkloristics and the cultural heritage of Iceland. At a young age he started to notice the swift changes taking place in the daily life of what was essentially a farming culture that had not changed for centuries. As working methods modernized and old equipment became redundant, the tendency of the farmers was to get rid of it. Þórður started to collect old equipment that was being discarded. He also spent a long time listening to the elderly as he was growing up and later started to document this oral history.

In 1949 a new boarding school opened in Skógar and the first exhibition of the museum took place in the basement of the new school December 1st the same year. The museum expanded rapidly and in 1954 - 1955 a new exhibition building was built east of the boarding school where the museum is currently located.

Initially Þórður Tómasson took responsibility for the museum, and in 1959 he was appointed as curator. He was an organist in two churches and for many years he was a member of the parish councils of both. For ten years he was also a member of the Rangárvellir county council. In 1997 Þórður was awarded an honorary doctorate by the



University of Iceland for his contribution to research in the public interest.

Þórður was one of the most knowledgeable scholars in Icelandic cultural heritage and folkloristics. He has written many books and articles about the subject. The artifacts that he has collected and researched over the years is of great value for the cultural heritage of Iceland. For over 60 years Þórður also took an active part in greeting the visitors of the museum. He would gladly guide people around the museum and usually he would end the visit singing and playing the harmonium. Þórður's heritage and life's work can be seen in Skógar Museum.

#### Skógar Museum

Safnavegur 1, Skógum,  
861 Hvolsvelli  
+354 487 8845  
booking@skogasafn.is  
www.skogasafn.is





# A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

## Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro

Located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, has a firm foundation of culinary excellence that attracts patrons from around the world. Owner, Baldur Ödál 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 Rlichemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988–1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert.

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

### Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

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

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

### Passion for purity and freshness

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

### In the heart of the Golden Circle

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



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

**Lindin Restaurant**  
Lindarbraut 2 • 840 Laugarvatn  
+354 486 1262  
lindin@laugarvatn.is  
www.laugarvatn.is

# DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

## Jökulsárlón Boat Tours on the Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

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

### Sail Among the Icebergs

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 30 years. Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting one hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

### Coffee with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where you can get homemade soup with bread, fresh sandwiches, cakes with coffee or tea which can be either taken out on the terrace or consumed inside.

### The Show of Fire and Ice

The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described without a doubt as one of the most memorable fireworks shows on earth. The event, held annually in late August, starts at 11.30 pm, with proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.

Located within a few hundred metres of Route No. 1, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring over 28 square

km (9.6 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 300m (984 feet) deep, five Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare. With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water enters into the lagoon bringing with it krill, capelin, herring and salmon. Curious seals know where the food is plentiful and can often be seen bobbing along with the currents, swimming in and out between the icebergs and appearing to enjoy the attention from onlookers on the shore. Across the road, near the delta where fresh and salt water converge, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the rather surreal sight of baby 'bergs' beached on the shoreline. -EMV

**Jökulsárlón**  
Reynivellir 3  
781 Höfn í Hornaförður  
+354 478 2222  
jokulsarlon@jokulsarlon.is  
www.jokulsarlon.is





# THE KATLA VOLCANO IS OVERDUE!

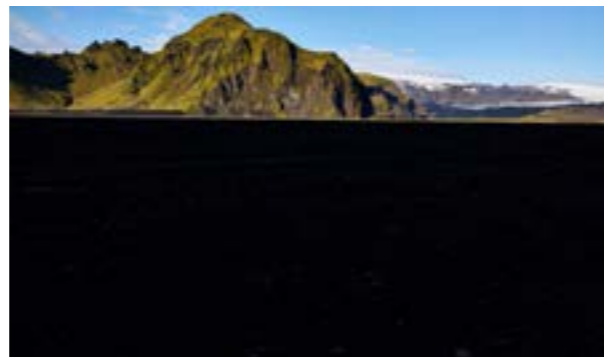
*The Katla Glacier Cave*

In Katla Glacier is one of the most beautiful and accessible ice caves in the country. The cave is charming, but danger looms above. The Katla volcano is overdue. Icelandic Times / Land & Saga, of course, went south today. You can't miss seeing such a wonder like the ice cave in Katla Glacier.

When Katla last erupted in 1918, it was catastrophic. Every hundred years or so, a major eruption happens in Katla, meaning it is over 100 years since the last large eruption.

It erupted in 1860, 1823, 1755, 1721, 1660, 1625, 1612, and 1580. Many were enormous eruptions, the largest in 1755 and 934 when there was a giant eruption in Katla. When will it erupt next? No one knows, but it'll be soon... probably.

*Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*The Katla volcano in Mýrdalsjökull is on the far left, next to Katla Glacier*



*Photographing the opening of the cave*



*Chinese ballet dancer filming a film scene in the cave*



*Iceberg at Fellsfjara by Jökulsárlón*



*Icecave under Breiðamerkurjökull*



*Tourists at Fjallsárlón in Örefajökull, Vatnajökull*



*On top of Mýrdalsjökull*

Glaciers cover more than a tenth of Iceland. The largest—and by far the largest, is Vatnajökull in the southeast corner of the country. It is the largest glacier in the world outside the arctic regions, covering 8000 km<sup>2</sup>. Next in line is Langjökull 950 km<sup>2</sup>, just a few square kilometers larger than Hofsjökull. Number four is Mýrdalsjökull, which is almost 600 km<sup>2</sup> in size. Then comes Drangajökull in the west, at Strandir, but it covers 160 km<sup>2</sup> of land. Other glaciers are much smaller. The smallest of the large glaciers and number thirteen in the series is Snæfellsjökull, which is about 3 square kilometers in size. Since 1995, for almost 30 years, Vatnajökull has shrunk by almost one and a half the size of Snæfellsjökull per year. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



# The Skaftareldar DISASTER

Tjarnargígur south of Laki



Summer night by Skaftá, wich runs through the area



Lakagígar in the foreground, with Fögrufjöll by Langisjór to the north and the west of the craters, as seen in the wintertime



Today the Lakagígar craters are grown with moss belying their catastrophic history. The area is charming for outdoor activities such and hiking and simply enjoying the power of nature.

Exactly 240 years ago, one of the biggest volcanic eruptions in Iceland's history began, on June 8, 1783 by Laki mountain, southwest of Vatnajökull in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla. The eruption opened a series of about 135 craters 25 km long, known as the Laki craters. The eruption lasted eight months. The lava field, the Skaftareldar lava field, is the second largest in historical times with about 13 km<sup>3</sup> total volume of lava covering an area of 580 km<sup>2</sup> of land. The lava actually has two names, the western part is called Eldhraun, while the eastern part is called Brunahraun. The Laki craters

were declared a preserved area in 1971 and are now part of the Vatnajökull National Park. Ash and volcanic fumes initially spread as a poisonous fog over Iceland that later also spread over Europe, America and Asia. Heavy pollution accompanied the haze, causing livestock to die in great numbers which, in turn, led to famine—not just in Iceland but all over the Northern Hemisphere. These were the Móðuharðindi, the greatest disaster to have befallen Icelanders both up to that time and ever since. About 20% of the population died in the Móðuharðindi. It was only a few generations ago. Will we get another eruption like this soon? Only time will tell. Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson



The road that goes around Lakagígar





## SAGNAHEIMAR FOLK MUSEUM *in the magical Westman Islands*

The Folk Museum of Vestmannaeyjar – the Westman Islands – is a museum built on old traditions. In addition to the many artifacts housed there, today’s technology gives the history and culture a new dimension. While the adults are learning about the stories of fishing, cliff hunting, the Eldfell eruption of 1973 and the Algerian pirate raid of 1627, the children can dress themselves in pirate costumes and search for hidden treasures in the Pirate Cave. Displays and exhibits showing the deep connection with the Mormons, the colourful sports history of the Islands, the reconstructed fishing shack from yester-year or the “Festival” tent where islanders entertain during the annual Þjóðhátíð – National Festival can also be investigated. At the end of the 19th century, when the population was about 600, great changes took place. In 1904, the first motorised boat was purchased, and more followed soon afterwards. By 1930, the population had risen to 3,470. Now the Westman Islands are Iceland’s most productive fishing centre.

### The Volcanic Eruption of 1973

The volcanic eruption in Heimaey shook the Islanders and indeed Icelanders fifty years ago. In the early hours of 23rd January 1973 the volcano, Eldfell,

erupted on Heimaey and the whole population of 5,300 had to immediately be evacuated to the mainland. That fateful night and the following days are chronicled in an array of photos. There are recordings of Islanders telling their personal experiences of the eruption and the rebuilding of their town in the aftermath.

### The Turkish Abduction

Another traumatic event befell on the Islanders 16th July 1627, when three Algerian ships sailed north up the Atlantic to the eastern shores of Heimaey. It is known as the Turkish Abduction because Algiers was under the control of the Turkish Ottomans. Three hundred Pirates disembarked and captured 242 islanders whom they brought to Algeria where they were sold into slavery. The story of this fateful day is vividly captured. The pirate cave is a wonderland for children. One of the captives, Lutheran minister Ólafur Egilsson returned in 1628 and wrote a book about the event. In 1636, ransom was paid for 34 of the captives but most spent the rest of their lives in bondage in the Muslim world. After this, a small fort was built at Skansinn – The Bastion – as armed guards kept watch from Helgafell mountain. The Islands

are famed for their annual Þjóðhátíð – National Festival – which attracts thousands of people from the mainland. The festival was first held in 1874, at the commemoration of the millennium of the settlement of Iceland. For the first time, a Danish King was visiting Iceland: Christian IX, who brought the Icelanders their Constitution that paved the way to sovereign statehood. The Westman Islanders were prevented from sailing to the mainland for the festivities by bad weather, so held their own celebration locally and have done so ever since.

### The Mormon connection

The Mormons also have their historical story exhibited at the museum. The first Icelandic Mormon missionaries, Þórarinn Hafliðason from Vestmannaeyjar and Guðmundur Guðmundsson from Rangárvellir on the south coast, worked in Vestmannaeyjar. Between 1854 and 1914 about 200 Islanders emigrated from the island to the Western World. The Mormon exhibit is in collaboration with Brigham Young University in Utah, along with a large group of enthusiasts who have researched the history and destiny of these pioneers. -HH



**Sagnaheimar – Folk Museum**  
 Ráðhúströð Safnahúsi,  
 900 Vestmannaeyjum  
 +354 488 2050  
 sagnaheimar@sagnaheimar.is  
 sagnaheimar.is



# WESTMAN ISLANDS



To visit the Westman Islands, the first step is to take the Herjólfur ferry. The sailing time is only 40 min and, on the way, you can expect to see seabirds and puffins, while sailing into the harbour is breathtaking.

The ferry is hybrid and aims to improve the environment towards a greener future. You can book your tickets on Herjólfur.is. The Westman Islands has so much to offer. It has the biggest puffin colony in the world and majestic nature. Viking tours are the leading tour operator on the Island. They offer private tours with a local guide in an electric Mercedes Benz. They also have bicycle rentals, where they offer 20 Trek mountain bikes, and buses in all sizes for large and small groups. On their website you can book all the activities that are available in Westman Islands. Book your tours here



# ON TOP OF THE WORLD *Glacier Jeeps*

*The largest glacier in Europe*



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: Vagnsstaðir. This is the official meeting place for all Glacier Jeep summer tours. Glacier Jeeps has years of experience conducting jeep, snowmobile and hiking tours on the glacier since 1994. (Bjarney has been helping run the family business since she was 14 years old.) I parked my car and joined them in their sturdy 4WD, which wound its way slowly every upwards on road F985 after a short drive on Route No. 1. The gravel road 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.

It is about a forty minute drive from Vagnsstaðir to the roots of Vatnajökull Glacier where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

Now it’s time to test drive the snowmobiles. I am a little hesitant at first and Kristján shows me the ropes. It looks easy enough but I decide that I prefer to let him drive over the glacier with me sitting safely behind him on this ‘skidoo for two’, at least until I get a better feel for it. ‘Off we go over the wild white yonder, climbing high into the sun’ to paraphrase an old song, with cloudless blue skies above us and the wind in our faces. Further along we stop and dismount, to take in the magnificent panoramic views over the glacier, the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Höfn far below in the distance. I felt like I was on top of the world and it was truly a cause for celebration!

Kristján jokes that we cannot go onwards unless I drive. By now I am feeling a little more sure of myself and agree to give it a try. This time we are off to inspect a massive sheer rock face that rises straight up from the glacier at an elevation of 1200 metres. Finally, our one

hour snowmobile adventure comes to an end and it is time to return to base.

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 Vagnsstaðir at either 9.30 am or 2.00 pm and join the tour from there.

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



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



# VOLCANIC VESTMANNAEYJAR

PHOTOGRAFER: *Kristinn H. Benediktsson*

*Marking 50 Years since the Eruption*



*The Westman Islands will remember the event this summer with exhibitions and concerts*



*Kristín Jóhannsdóttir, Director at Eldheimar - Volcano Museum. Photo Baju Wijono*

Most of Heimaey's residents left by boat, and thankfully there were no deaths. Following the eruption, Eldfell, a volcanic cone that means "fire mountain" in Icelandic, formed. It stands 200 metres high and has become some of Iceland's newest land. Today, Icelanders and tourists alike hike in the region and soak up the scenery.

## **Eldheimar museum**

Eldheimar is a fascinating interactive museum about the 1973 volcanic eruption. It includes photos, surviving structures, and an overview of the volcanic geology of the region. Videos illustrate the force of the volcanic eruption and destruction left in its wake, and maps light up on the walls, pointing out volcanoes around the island.

The collection continues to grow. Earlier this year, Eldheimar received for preservation a remarkable film that geologist Ingvar Birgir Friðleifsson shot during the first days of the eruption. He was then studying for a PhD in geology at Oxford. The day after the eruption began, the director of the school's geology department invited him to go to Heimaey to film to preserve the event for science.

This summer, Vestmannaeyjar will be holding a celebration at the beginning of July to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the eruption. At Eldheimar, events will be organised, including an art exhibition from two of Iceland's best artists, sculptor and painter Hulda Hákon and painter Jón Óskar. There will be music and stories told by Vestmannaeyjar-born Gísli Helgason and his band and a concert held by Magnus R. Einarsson, playing music from the year of the eruption.

## **Close to the mainland**

Visitors can get to the island through the Herjólfur ferry, which runs daily from May to September. Travellers can bring their cars on the ferry for an extra fee, but it isn't necessary, given the island's small size. The Herjólfur ferry departs from Landeyjahöfn in South Iceland, and the ferry ride is about 40 minutes, making it a quick and easy trip.

## **Great place to visit**

For a small island, there are a lot of activities and attractions to take advantage of. There are boat tours, rib safaris, ATV tours, hiking trails, bicycle rentals and chances to see wildlife.

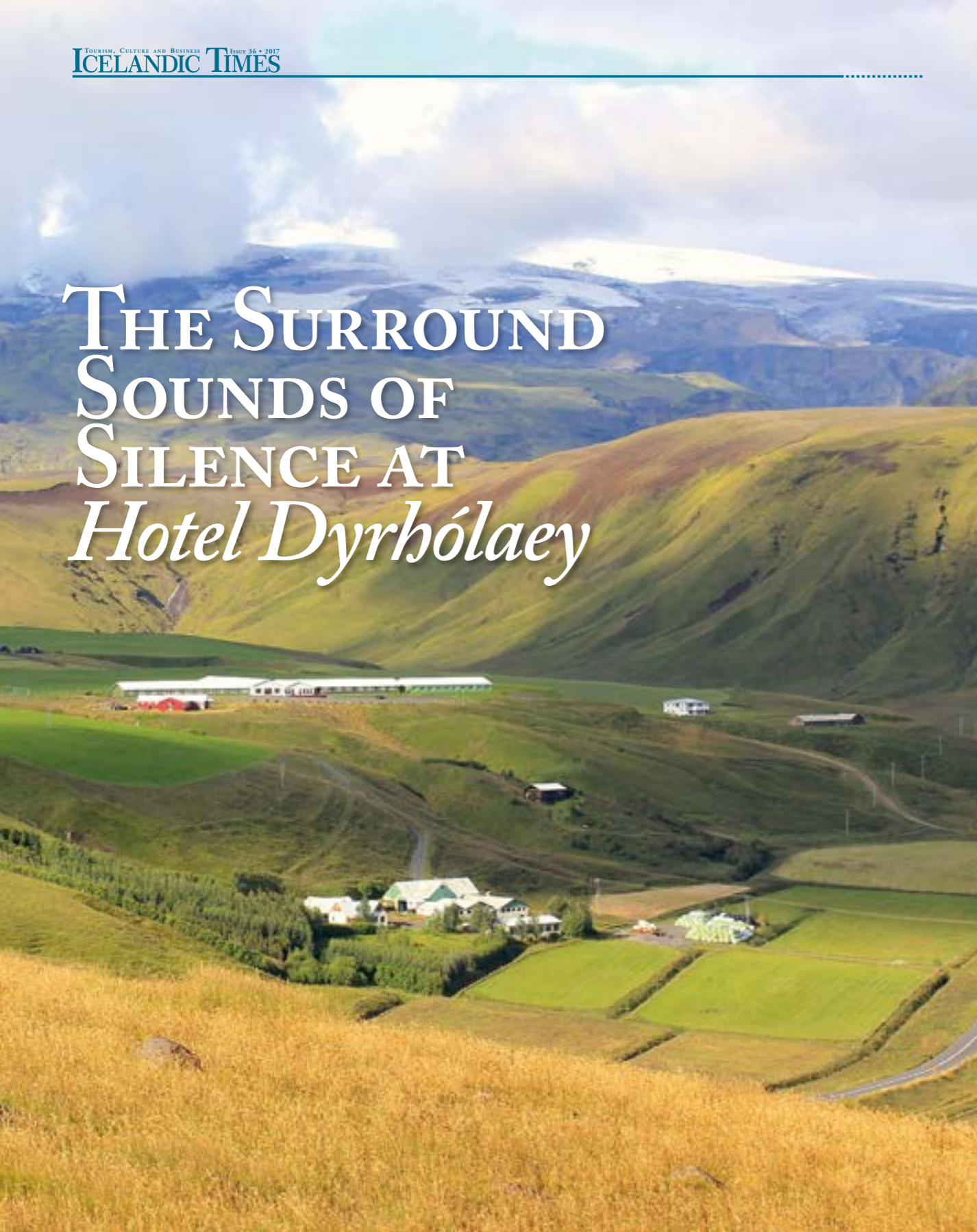
In fact, Westman Island's puffin population is the main attraction for tens of thousands of visitors as their bright orange feet, round bodies, and striped bills are irresistible, making them Iceland's unofficial mascot. It's lovely to walk along the sea cliffs and spend some time with the adorable birds, photographing them and taking in the landscape. The prime puffin-watching season is from June to August, so if you are visiting Iceland during the summer, make sure to stop over in the Westman Islands.

The Westman Islands' newest wildlife attraction is for whale lovers. The arrival of Little Grey and Little White, two beluga whales that were moved from China to Iceland in 2019, now call Vestmannaeyjar home. Sea Life Trust, a nonprofit, is behind the sanctuary, and guests can join a boat tour of the bay the whales now call home.

The Westman Islands are an ideal spot to spend some time when visiting the south of Iceland. There are numerous hotels, guesthouses and restaurants that make overnight stays irresistible. Consider travelling to the Westman Islands this summer and help mark the 50th anniversary of the 1973 volcanic eruption that has shaped the islands in multiple ways.



# THE SURROUND SOUNDS OF SILENCE AT *Hotel Dyrhólaey*



*A picture is worth a thousand words*

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



#### **A bit of history**

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

#### **A passion for the Northern Lights**

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



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

#### **Surrounded by nature**

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

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



**Hotel Dyrhólaey**  
Brekkuríás, 871 Vík  
+354 487 1333  
dyrholaey@dyrholaey.is  
www.dyrholaey.is





# THE HOMELY HERD'S LAIR

*Hotel Hjarðarból lies in the South-West between Selfoss and Hveragerði, 30 minutes from Reykjavík*

**H**otel Hjarðarból – Herd's Lair – is a friendly family-run guesthouse in the countryside close to Hringvegurinn – The Ring Road or Route #1 – midway between the towns of Hveragerði and Selfoss in South West Iceland, just 30-minutes drive from the capital, Reykjavík. Hotel Hjarðarból has a homely atmosphere reminiscent of a bygone era. Rooms come with shared or en-suite bathrooms. It provides a good base for sight-seeing and exploring around South Iceland and the Reykjanes peninsula and for day trips to Reykjavík, as most of the major attractions are within a relatively short driving distance.

### Old farm buildings

Hjarðarból is set in reconstructed farm buildings surrounded by woodland. This laid-back accommodation is in an amazing area of hot springs and waterfalls in Hveragerði's Geothermal Park with various activities, such as horseback riding and hiking, nearby. Hotel Hjarðaból

features 30 comfortable, down-to-earth and homely rooms with rustic furnishings that vary in size and set up, with double, triple, quadruple, and special family rooms with private or shared bathrooms suitable for all types of travellers.

### Built in the 1950s

The Hjarðarból farm was a part of a government project to give people who wanted to be farmers a chance to do so. The Old House was built in the 1950s, a beautiful farm with cattle, horses and sheep. Today's main building was a barn with two sour-hay towers and a cowshed. The towers are still standing, the barn is now the main hall and the lounge is in the old cowshed. There is also the old sheep shed, where the horses most likely stayed with the sheep. The last 'original' house is the shed where tools were kept. This has been converted today into rooms #13-14.

### Helga & Guðbrandur

Sigríður Helga, known as Helga, runs this unique hotel with her husband, Guðbrandur Sigurðsson. They have raised three children, lived in Denmark, where they started a restaurant, before returning and taking the risky decision to move their family from Reykjavík and 9-5 work. Guðbrandur is a carpenter. As he has worked in that field for most of his life, renovations haven't been a problem. -HH



**Hotel Hjarðarból**  
 Hjarðarból, 861 Ólfus  
 +354 567 0045  
 info@hjarðarból.is  
 https://hjarðarból.is/



# A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

*Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant*

**H**ave you strolled along the beautiful shore on Stokkseyri's beach? Have you been spellbound by the white foaming waves out by the horizon and let the silvery waves lapping at the shoreline chase and tease you? Under a blue-pink sky mirrored in the water, this surface tempts and draws, yet is the harrowing limit of our human world. It's where golden langoustines hook their claws together and dance a belly dance while mermaids serve tables amongst shrimp wrapped in seaweed, clapping shellfish and inquisitive haddock. This is a magic moment carrying you away to an intoxicated state of well-being and lust. Your greatest desire is to lick on langoustine in garlic butter, gulp down the soup that has been lovingly pampered - little changed through the years.



The soup is magical. It is suitable for numerous occasions and happy moments on ordinary days, but Fjöruborðið takes no responsibility for consequences or stirring adventures that could result from ingesting it. It has a will of its own and, as such, it is risky for those who don't want to venture beyond the average. This is the most famous langoustine soup in the Republic of Iceland, prepared by handsome cooks who step naked out of the ocean at Stokkseyri with their catch: the plumpest langoustines who desire only one thing - to get onto dry land. Adventurous creatures from the ocean world want to join us in just the same way as we want to join them in the depths.

People have struggled against storm after storm to get here and enjoy this

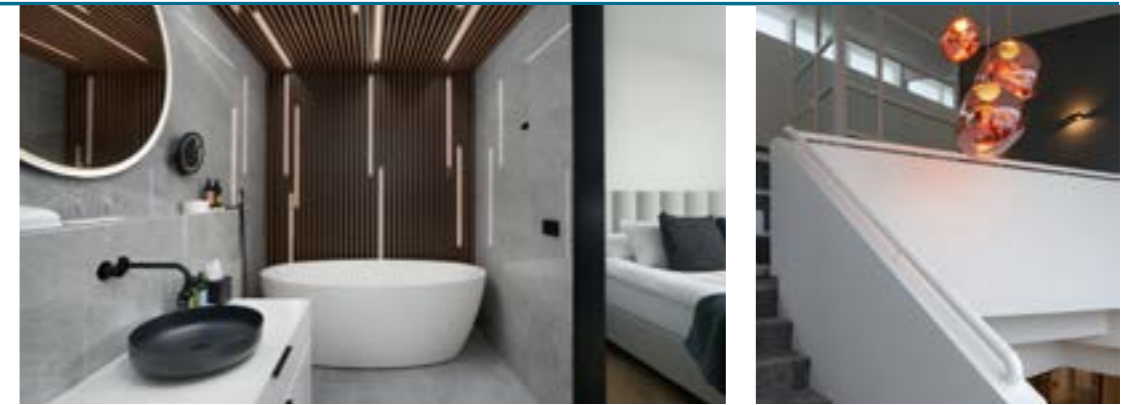
soup. The desire for it can be so strong that rational thinking simply blows away with the wind. Below the black rock face at the Þrengsli mountain pass, between mountain vistas, under the stars, people rush toward the sea to sit down with our guests and party-happy ghosts, surrounded by some tickling pleasure coming from magical bowls at The Seashore, where a thousand candles cast their glow on weathered faces and loving wineskins. Matarást, the Icelandic expression for "love of food" takes on a new meaning.

Fjöruborðið Restaurant in the village of Stokkseyri is an enchanted place of delight. People have to tear themselves away from it - but that's all right. There's only positive magic inside, tickling both stomach and soul. And now the magic has been sealed into jars for those who struggle with an irresistible craving for this great seafood delicacy from Icelandic waters, even when they're unfortunate enough to be not close to the restaurant. Enjoy! Remember to live life to the fullest, and enjoy every pleasure and suspense that a good day brings

**Fjöruborðið**  
 Eyrastraug 3a - 825 Stokkseyri  
 +354 483 1550  
 info@fjorubordid.is  
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# KIRKJUBÆJARKLAUSTUR'S BEST KEPT SECRET



## The All New Hotel Klaustur

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

## Off the beaten path

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

that surround the village in every direction. Of special interest is the breathtaking Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon located just 15 minutes' drive from the hotel.

## A modern look for a new brand

All 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 deluxe rooms, including a spacious suite with a magical glacier theme, 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.

## 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 Sisters). Here you can picnic, hike to the top of the falls or just do a bit of 'forest bathing' in this genuinely peaceful location, amidst some of the tallest trees in Iceland.

The village was the site of a convent of Benedictine nuns from 1186 to 1550 and both Kirkjubæjar Abbey and the waterfall and lake (Systravatn) above the village refer to this abbey. Magnificent hikes and day trips to places such as Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon and the Laki Craters are all close by.

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

## Local Specialties

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

The head chef, Einar Halldórsson, is committed to the slow kitchen movement using up to 80% of local produce in his

menus. Flavourful and local are keywords here as some of the ingredients travel no more than perhaps 5 km at most and arrive at the hotel at their peak of freshness.

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

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



**Hotel Klaustur**  
 Klausturvegur 6,  
 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustur  
 +354 487 4900  
 info@hotelklaustur.is  
 www.hotelklaustur.is





Hotel Eyjafjallajökull, Cottages and Golf Resort

# A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



Set in one of the most idyllic locations in South Iceland, Hellishólar offers a variety of accommodations for the weary traveller who is looking for a good night's sleep in peaceful surroundings. The sprawling Hellishólar property is located 10 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótslíð, a picturesque farming district sheltered by three glaciers: Mýrdalsjökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull.

### Cosy Cottages

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólar's 24 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 eat your meals in the on-site restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### Hotel Eyjafjallajökull

At Hellishólar, there is also a Hótel Eyjafjallajökull with 36 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, each with an ensuite bathroom. A Glorious View of Nature

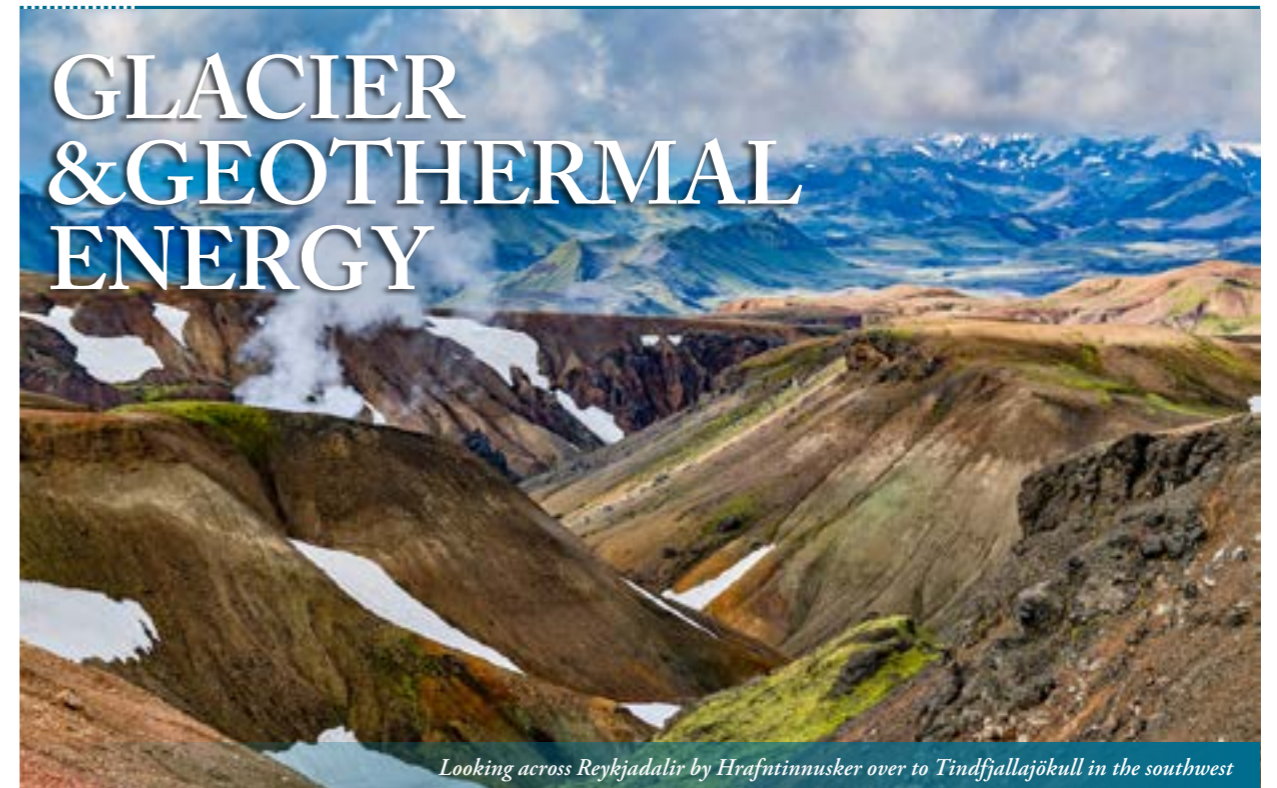
The views from Hellishólar are, in a word, stunning! In winter, when the Northern Lights are visible, one has only to step outside the door and look up. The lack of light pollution makes Hellishólar an ideal



location for viewing the Northern Lights. In summer, the long days bring optimum opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólar—trout fishing on the lake, salmon fishing from the river that runs through the property and enjoying a round of golf on the 9-hole golf course. Hellishólar is the

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

**Hellishólar ehf**  
 861 Hvolsvöllur  
 +354 487 8360  
 hellisholar@hellisholar.is  
 https://hellisholar.is/hotel/



# GLACIER & GEOTHERMAL ENERGY

Looking across Reykjadalir by Hrafninnusker over to Tindfjallajökull in the southwest

Hrafninnusker is a unique place in Iceland. Hrafninnusker is the first destination when walking the Laugavegur, the country's most popular highland hiking route, from Landmannalaugar over to Þórsmörk. There is a 12 km well-marked footpath, quite steep, as Hrafninnusker is the highest point of the Laugavegur, it has an altitude of 1,100 metres. At Hrafninnusker is the Iceland Travel Association's cabin, Höskuldarskáli, built in 1977. To the south of Hrafninnusker, the closest cabin is by Álftavatn. What makes Hrafninnusker so unique are the colours, hot springs, glaciers and piles of snow, which are still there in the middle of September even after a good summer. In this area, by Torfajökull is one of the biggest high temperature areas in the country. There is a jeep trail to Hrafninnusker, but it is only accessible to powerful mountain jeeps and only for a few weeks a year. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



Geothermal area below Hrafninnusker



The ice cave in Hrafninnusker



Looking down into a hot spring right by the ice cave



# Escape to THE MOUNTAIN'S EMBRACE AT VESTRAHORN

One of the most beautiful mountains in Iceland, and one of the few places in Iceland where you can find gabbro (a coarse-grained, dark coloured, intrusive igneous rock), is situated at Almannaskarð between Hornsvík and Papós. At its foot sits what at first glance might be thought to be a viking village, empty houses from the past, facing the sea.

We are talking about the Vestrahorn mountain range, but the village is a set that was built over 14 years ago. There are about seven houses of various types in a cluster, mostly built using driftwood, and interested travelers can access the area for 1000 ISK per person. It's great fun to look around among the houses and imagine the old days of the Vikings. Last year they added a viking ship to the lake next to the village, which you can admire from the outside or climb aboard and imagine yourself sailing across the unforgiving Atlantic Ocean.

It is worth noting that in this area the viking and early settler of Iceland, Hrollaugur Rögnvaldsson, built a town.



The old Viking Cafe, a lot has changed since then

He was considered a great ruler and a friend of King Harald according to the description in the Landnáma history book of the Settlement.

The Vestrahorn property is privately owned by a local family, who are pleasant and down-to-earth people. Refreshments are offered at the Viking Cafe which has come a long way since its humble beginnings 13 years ago as a small shed on the Stokksnes peninsula. Over the years, it has expanded its menu, space, and staff while retaining its charm and character. Make sure you try out their homemade Icelandic "vaffla", a delicious treat that has a long history and a special place in the hearts of Icelandic people. The Viking Cafe Guesthouse has space for about thirty people and camping is available at the Vestrahorn campsite which is fully equipped with dishwashing and cooking facilities amongst cold and hot water, WC, showers and electricity. Perfect for tourists who want to experience the unspoilt, magical nature of the area. Booking accommodation at the guesthouse or campsite gives you unlimited access to the viking village and surrounding nature.

In winter, this south-eastern part of Iceland is no less popular, as there are many opportunities to see and photograph the northern lights dancing above. Watching the green and



white lights sweep across the sky is a memorable experience on a frosty night. On their new website at [vestrahorn.is](http://vestrahorn.is) you can find a widget with local weather- and aurora forecast, sunset and sunrise time amongst other information from the area, a neat little tool for photographers. There, you will also find a detailed map of the surrounding area and its beautiful hiking trails. Make sure to check out the unique beach nearby which is owned by the family, where you can see the most beautiful stones – carried by the Hornafjarðarfjót river from the Vatnajökull glacier to the sea, where the pounding waves have rounded and smoothed them for thousands of years.

One thing is certain, the country's history can be found here. The history of settlement, the history of nature and how vast and magnificent it truly is. The hosts welcome their guests, and no one leaves Vestrahorn untouched.



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## Delightful Bakeries IN SOUTH ICELAND



*Almar Bakari offers delectable pastries and sandwiches in three locations*

Almar Bakari is ideal for enjoying delicious pastries and savoury sandwiches when travelling in South Iceland. The family-run bakery has locations in Hveragerði, Selfoss and Hella. The owners, Almar Þór Þorgeirsson and Ólöf (Lóa) Ingibergsdóttir, put passion and love into their baking. "We pride ourselves on having a great selection of pastries," says Lóa. "And if you are going on a picnic, we have a great selection of sandwiches." Customers can find delicious sandwiches like turkey breast on fresh-baked ciabatta bread with bacon and tomatoes, crunchy baguettes with ham and cheese and perfectly flaky croissants with cheese and salami.

Almar Bakari offers divine bread and pastries for the whole family. "Our bread takes 18-20 hours as they are slow-rising and handmade," says Lóa, adding that their sourdough bread, Hengill and Hilla, are the most popular. In all, the bakery makes 13 different types of bread.

As for the pastries, customers are tempted with many treats, from Icelandic classics like kleinur and vinarbrauð to doughnuts and cinnabuns. The cakes are exquisite, including carrot, chocolate, and caramel. The bakery is very inclusive as there are several vegan options available.

### Family-run business

Almar and Lóa opened their first bakery in Hveragerði in 2009. Since then, they have expanded to two other locations, and their four children and other family

members all work for the business. Almar is a passionate, creative baker and learned his craft in Denmark more than 20 years ago. "The family wants customers to experience beautiful, good food, with friendly service," says Lóa.

### Convenient locations

Almar's bakeries are situated close to Route 1, which makes them an ideal stop when travelling along the southern part of the ring road. There is good parking at the sites, and the family is ready to welcome you whether you choose to dine in or takeaway to continue your Iceland road trip adventure! -JG



**Almar Bakari**  
Sunnumörk 2, 810 Hveragerði  
354/483-1919  
[almarbakari@gmail.com](mailto:almarbakari@gmail.com)  
[www.almarbakari.is](http://www.almarbakari.is)







# HÖFN

## A GATEWAY TOWN TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK

Iceland earns its “fire and ice” reputation in the southeast as you see the mighty Vatnajökull glacier descend into black sands and hot streams of water erupting from frozen banks of ice.

There’s a good reason why this is such a popular region for tourists. The town of Höfn, which means harbour, is the

gateway to the Vatnajökull glacier and is a convenient base when exploring the southeast, with numerous restaurants, hotels and guesthouses, museums and a fantastic swimming pool with hot tubs and a sauna. The nature and hiking opportunities in the region are unrivalled, with breathtaking mountainous and glacial views.



The town serves as a gateway to Vatnajökull National park, a true scenic slice of Southeast Iceland.

Whether you are staying at Höfn for a few hours or a few days, you can experience something new all the time – as the nature all around is like a painting that changes constantly and every season has its charm.

Höfn is a lively community and has been known for the now rarely seen lobster. It’s a fishing town and like already mentioned, Höfn means “harbour“. At the vivid working harbour you can encounter the fishermen and see the catch of the day. There are numerous restaurants in town and why not enjoy fresh Icelandic fish or other local produce in one of them? The service level is high whether in one of the restaurants or wherever so you can be sure you get what you want all year round.

The town is culturally rich and it’s worth mentioning Svavarssafn, Svavar Guðnason Art Museum, which is a contemporary art museum in the town. And then its Nýheimar Cultural Center where you can find the local library where you’re sure to have a warm welcome. The library frequently hosts smaller art exhibitions that are worth the visit.

Ósland nature reserve is a short walk by the shoreline from the central area. Ósland is known for bird life and you’ll find walking trails by the beach and circling a pond. On the hill, Óslandshæð is a memorial about the local fishermen, and information boards about the surrounding natural area. Along the shore you can find a nature trail that takes you on a 2 km journey through the solar system, where the sizes and distances are in correct proportions.

If you prefer to relax after a busy day, why not enjoy the town’s swimming pool or find a convenient spot for Aurora chasing? If weather permits and you like playing golf, Höfn boasts one of the most scenic golf courses you’ll ever visit.

During the holiday season the little town is lit up with Christmas lights and you just might see the Icelandic Yule lads passing by.





# THE QUEEN, HEKLA

*Hekla seen from the Torfajökull area, where it rises up 1491 meters from the highland*

Hekla is the most active and probably the best-known volcano in Iceland. Hekla is a very young volcano, about 7000 years old, on a very active fissure, where the southern fracture zone and the southern gas zone meet in the country area of Rangárvallasýsla in the middle of the South. Under the mountain lie large magma chambers and craters, as Hekla has erupted many times since the land was settled, a total of 18 times in the last 900 years. But the biggest eruptions, truly cataclysmic eruptions, occurred before Settlement, 7000, 4500 and 2900 years ago. Hekla last erupted at the turn of the last century, in the year 2000, in a small eruption. The last major eruption in Hekla was in 1947. Since the Settlement, Hekla erupted in the years 1104, 1158, 1206, 1222, 1300, 1341, 1389, 1510, 1597, 1636, 1693, 1766, 1845, 1910, 1947, 1970, 1980 and in 2000. According to measurements, scientists predict that Hekla is due to erupt in the near future. It's just a matter of when the queen stirs, and whether it will be a big or a small eruption. Scientists cannot answer that as Iceland's nature is very unpredictable. *Photographs & text: Páll Stefánsson*



*Hekla's peak*



*Pumice on the slopes of Hekla*



*Hekla seen from the north-west*



*Lava fields in the slopes of Hekla*



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