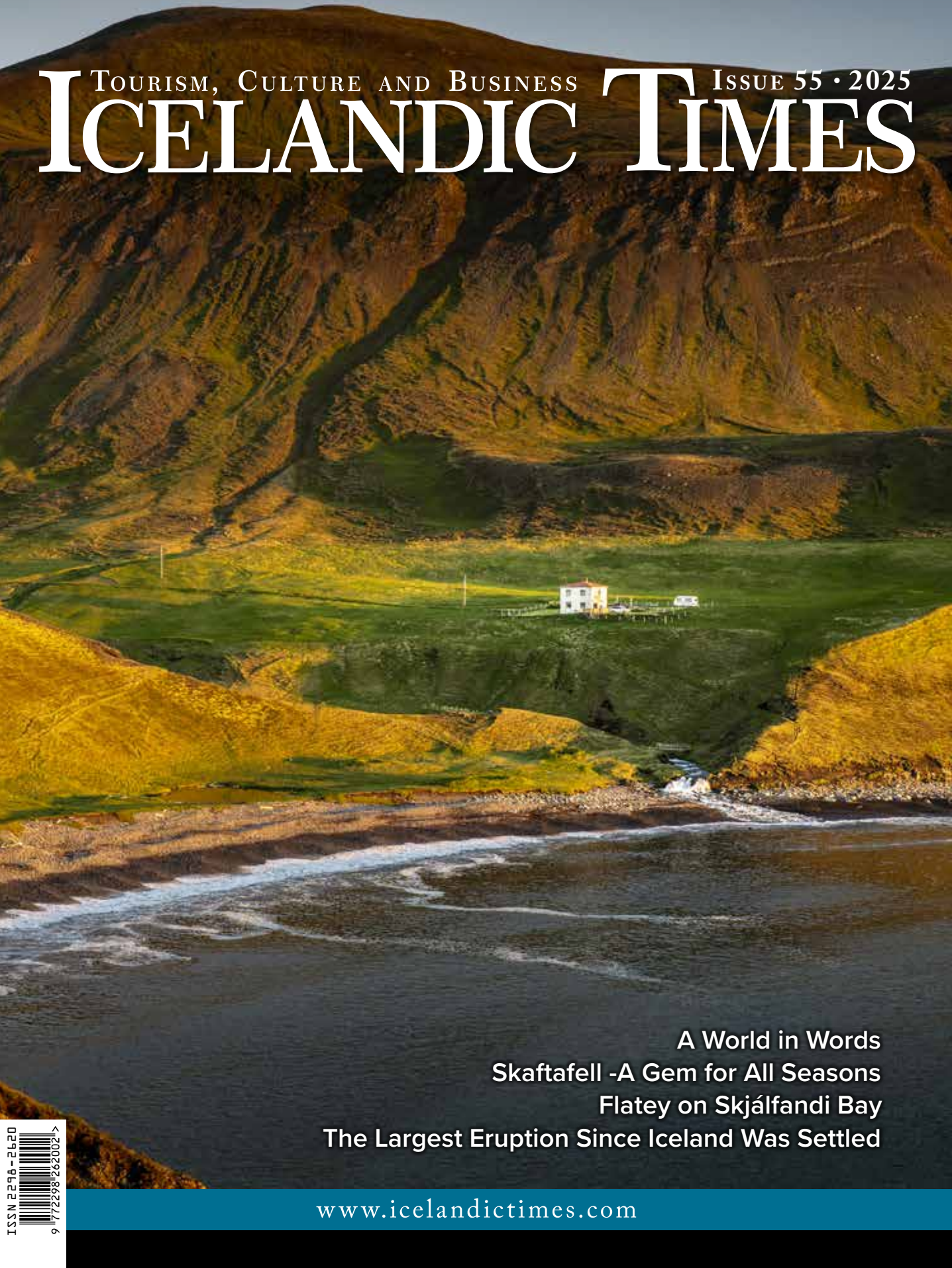


TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 55 • 2025



A World in Words
Skaftafell -A Gem for All Seasons
Flatey on Skjálfandi Bay
The Largest Eruption Since Iceland Was Settled

www.icelandictimes.com

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SARGANDI SNILLD

Ad víta hugv frá fjar stölu
 At þú þerfan fátka geysirhæð
 a deaða græni og labblöð
 ur líttu á vinnu fötu þínu
 rðin og sofa þvinnu.



THE SCREAMING MASTERPIECE! - BY ARTIST/DESIGNER GODDUR



ÍSLENSK TÓNLIST Í ÞÚSUND ÁR

AMÍNA · APPARAT · BARBÍ JÓHANNSSON · BANG GANG · BJÖRK · CURVER · EGILL SÆBJÖRNSSON · EINAR ÖRN BENEDIKTSSON ·
 EIVÖR PÁLSDÓTTIR · ERPUR EYVINDARSON · HILMAR ÖRN HILMARSSON · GHOSTIGITAL · FINNBOGI PÉTURSSON ·
 JÓHANN JÓHANNSSON · MÍNUS · MUGISON · MÚM · NILFISK · HRAFNAGALDUR · PURRKUR PILLNIK · QUARASHI · SIGUR RÓS ·
 SINGAPORE SLING · SJÓN · SLOWBLOW · STEINDÓR ANDERSEN · SYKURMOLARNIR · TRABANT · VINYL · PEYR

PALOMAR PICTURES, ERGIS KVÍKMYNDAFRAMLEIÐSLA OG ZIK ZAK KVÍKMYNDIR | SAMYINDI VIB ANGEL FILMS OG A-FILM KYNNA „SARGANDI SNILLD“ OG JÓHANNES KLARTAK KLARTAKSSON KVÍKMYNDAFRAMLEIÐSLA BERGSTEINN BJÖRÐOLFSSON
 KLIPPING JÓN YNEVI EYLFASON TÓNLIST PÓR ELÐON FRAMVEGABRITTARÓM HLÍN JÓHANNESDÓTTIR SAMYINDI VIB ERGIS KVÍKMYNDAFRAMLEIÐSLA JÓHANNA GIBRÓN GUNNARSÓTTIR, MOGENS GLAD, ÁRMANN GUNNARSSON, PÓL, ERIK LINDBERG, SAN FÚ MALTHA
 HÖNNUNARFRAMLEIÐSLA ÁRI ALEXANDER ERGIS MAGNÚSSON, PÓRIR SNAER SIGURJÓNSSON, SKJÓLF FR. MALMQUIST FRAMLEIÐSLA SIGURJÓN SIGURVESSON HANDBYTT OG LEIÐT ÁRI ALEXANDER ERGIS MAGNÚSSON

The Westman Islands: Iceland's Hidden Gem in the South While much of Iceland draws attention for its wondrous waterfalls, vast glaciers, and bubbling geothermal wonders, just off the south coast lies a destination that many travellers still overlook, the Westman Islands. Known as Vestmannaeyjar, this volcanic archipelago offers some of the most awe-inspiring scenery and attractions on the island, within easy reach.

A short ferry ride delivers visitors to Heimaey, the only inhabited island, where nature, history, and culture combine. Towering emerald cliffs rise from the ocean, home to the world's largest puffin colony each summer. Eldfell volcano, whose 1973 eruption reshaped the island and tested the resilience of its people, offers hikers a chance to walk across lava fields and take in sweeping panoramic views.

But the Westman Islands are far more than a nature stop. The Sagnheimar Museum in Heimaey gives visitors a window into the island's rich history, from Turkish pirate raids in the 1600s to rare collections of Icelandic Bibles and artwork by the island's own Júlíana Sveinsdóttir. Families can enjoy interactive exhibits, scavenger hunts, and even a pirate dress-up corner for younger visitors.

For those craving more adventure, high-speed boat safaris offer close encounters with seabirds, whales, and dramatic sea stacks. And after a full day of exploring, visitors can relax in well-appointed accommodations and sample some of Iceland's most divine delicacies in restaurants.

The Westman Islands may not be on every Iceland itinerary, but they should be. Wild, welcoming, and full of surprises, Vestmannaeyjar offers a perfect blend of nature, culture, and family-friendly adventure.



Make sure you consider Vestmannaeyjar while travelling around Iceland.

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson
 Editor-in-Chief and Publisher

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The farm, Vellir, at Rauðanes, Melrakkasléttur peninsula, North East Iceland
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Icelandic language

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

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

How to make use of QR codes



Use your QR code reader application on your smartphone or iPad to scan the QR codes. QR code reader applications can be downloaded free for all makes of smartphones



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The Althingi building viewed from the parliamentary garden. Kringlan, built in 1908, was the first annex to the main building



Ingibjörg H. Bjarnason, fyrst íslenskra kvenna að taka sæti á Alþingi, fyrir framan Alþingishúsið og Skálann, viðbyggingu sem var vígð 2002. Stryttan af Ingibjörgu var vígð í tilefni 100 ára afmælis kosningaréttar kvenna, árið 2015



Smidjan and the Oddfellow House on Vonarstræti



The Althingi building, constructed in 1881, by Austurvöllur



Smidjan viewed from Tjarnargata

THE ALTHINGI DISTRICT

The Althingi of Iceland, the world's oldest legislative assembly, was established at Thingvellir ("Parliament Fields") in the year 930, 1,095 years ago. Since 1881, when the current parliamentary building in central Reykjavík was constructed, the national parliament has operated at Kirkjustræti by Austurvöllur square. In recent years and decades, the activities of Althingi have expanded significantly, and now all the buildings in the district between Reykjavíkurtjörn pond and Austurvöllur—bordered by Kirkjustræti, Vonarstræti, Templarasund, and Tjarnargata—serve as office spaces for parliamentary operations, except for one: the Oddfellow House on Vonarstræti. The newest building, Smidjan ("The Forge"), a newly constructed office space for parliamentarians,

was inaugurated around the turn of the year 2023–24. The building, which won an international competition, was designed by Studio Granda, led by architects Margrét Hardardóttir, and Steve Christer. They also designed Reykjavík City Hall, which stands across from Smidjan. The oldest building in the district dates back to 1880 and is thus one year older than the Althingi building itself.

There are just over a hundred parliamentary staff members, in addition to party staff, ministerial assistants, and various experts. There are 63 members of Althingi—plus one, as the Minister of Finance, Mr Dadi Már Kristófersson, is not a sitting member of parliament. Icelandic Times took a tour around the Althingi district.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Looking west along Kirkjustræti, with houses built between 1880 and 1906



Looking east along Kirkjustræti, towards the Althingi building, with Smidjan peeking through between the buildings



Edda – House of Icelandic Language

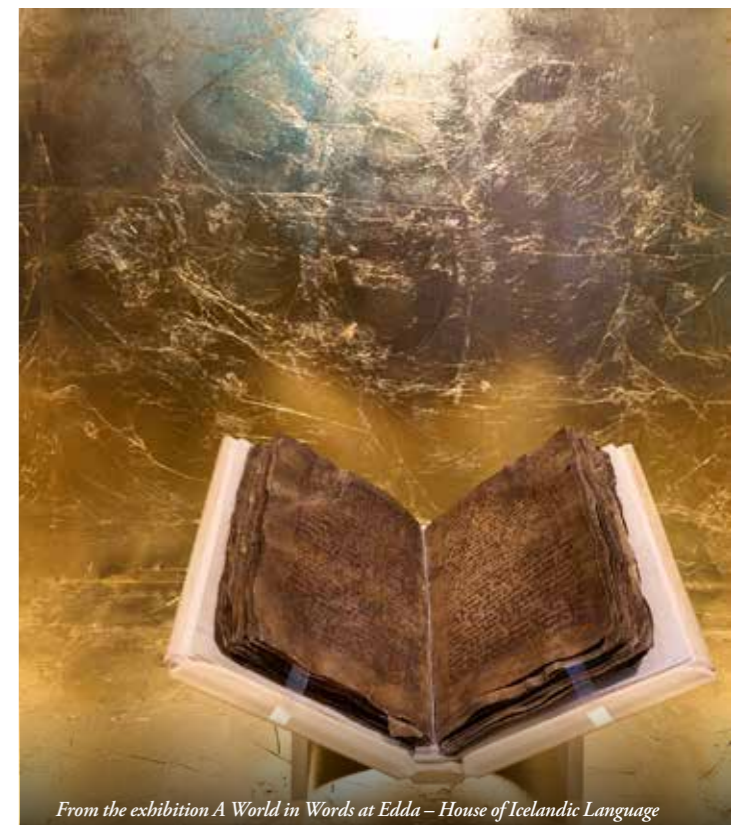
A WORLD IN WORDS

In the newly opened building, Edda House of Icelandic Language, the exhibition A World in Words has just launched. Visitors can explore over twenty Icelandic manuscripts that preserve the cultural heritage of Iceland and the world. These manuscripts include ancient stories, renowned poems, and various other texts that reflect the ideas of past generations about their lives and societies.

The exhibition strives to unveil the rich and diverse world of these manuscripts to its visitors. Among the featured works are the most famous Icelandic medieval manuscripts, The Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda and The Flateyjarbók. These manuscripts provide a glimpse into an ancient world and the medieval worldview. The exhibition emphasizes the unique content of these manuscripts, both in text and

illustrations, the Icelandic language, and the influence of Icelandic literary heritage abroad. This exceptional exhibition celebrates the invaluable cultural legacy of these manuscripts. The Árni Magnússon Manuscript Collection, to which they belong, is listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



From the exhibition A World in Words at Edda – House of Icelandic Language



The City of Reykjavík is responsible for felling the trees, as it owns the land in Öskjuhlíd



Seventy years ago, Öskjuhlíd was nothing but barren gravel and rocks



Trees marked for removal



Looking east along the closed east-west runway, with Öskjuhlíd in the background



Windsock at the east-west runway

THE AIRPORT IN THE CAPITAL

During World War II, on May 10, 1940, British forces occupied Iceland. One of their first major projects was to construct a permanent airport—Reykjavík Airport—in Vatnsmýri, just south of the city centre. At the end of the war, Iceland gained full control over the airport, and it has since served as the country's hub for domestic and medical flights.

For decades, there has been ongoing debate about whether an airport should remain in the middle of the capital, occupying one of Reykjavík's most valuable building sites. Proposals have been made to relocate the airport to Löngusker in Skerjafjörður (between Álftanes and Seltjarnarnes), Hvassahraun (just south

of Hafnarfjörður), or Hólmshéidi (above Grafarholt), but no final decision has been reached, leaving the airport in Vatnsmýri.

Now, trees are being felled in Öskjuhlíd—trees that airport staff planted nearly 70 years ago. One of the runways has been closed, even to medical flights, because trees at its end have grown too tall for safe take-off and landing. To ensure full safety, up to 1,400 trees need to be removed.

Icelandic Times visited Öskjuhlíd, home to what is likely the largest forest in the capital, with trees reaching nearly 20 meters high—right at the end of Reykjavík Airport's runways.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



The tallest trees are now being felled

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.



Hildur makes her pieces out of soft materials and her speciality is hats

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 www.ofeigur.is



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
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www.phallus.is



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



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THE HARBOR BY THE FJORD: HAFNARFJÖRDUR

By nature, Hafnarfjörður is likely one of the best natural harbors in Iceland. In fact, when German Hanseatic merchants dominated trade with Iceland from 1450 to 1602, Hafnarfjörður was their capital—and, in the process, the country's cultural and commercial center.

Today, the port of Hafnarfjörður is the most vibrant harbor in Iceland—the heart of the republic's third-largest town. There is a kind of energy here found perhaps only at the harbor in Bolungarvík.

To the east lies the town center, to the north a residential area, while the southern and western shores are occupied—mostly, but not entirely—by harbor-related activity, bustling with life.

This harbor is a true treasure for outdoor enthusiasts, cultural explorers, and seafarers alike—and also for the rest of us who simply enjoy people-watching, good food, variety, and the beauty of Hafnarfjörður's harbor.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

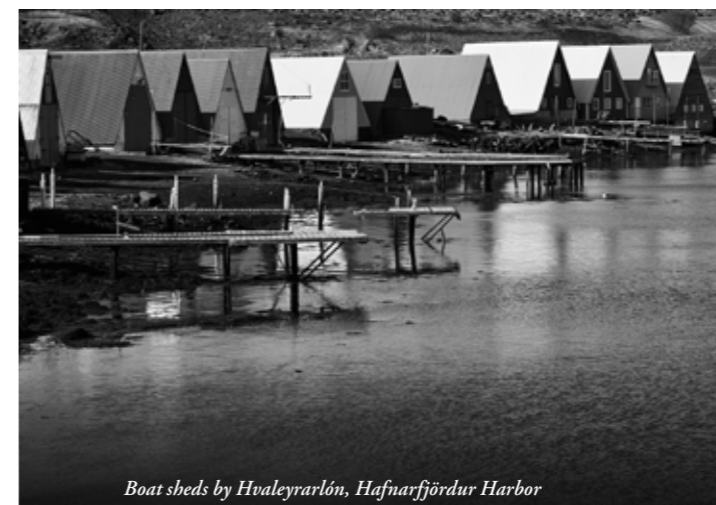
The Fjörukráin Viking Restaurant in Hafnarfjörður



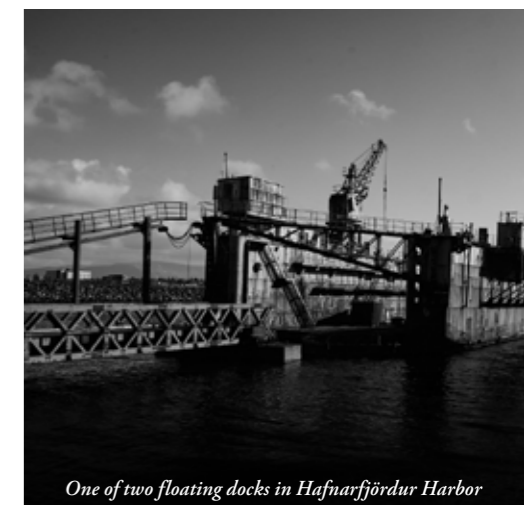
Lausfey Lín—In storage at Hafnarfjörður Harbor—Iceland's biggest musical act today



A bit of salt by the harbor



Boat sheds by Hvaleyrarlón, Hafnarfjörður Harbor



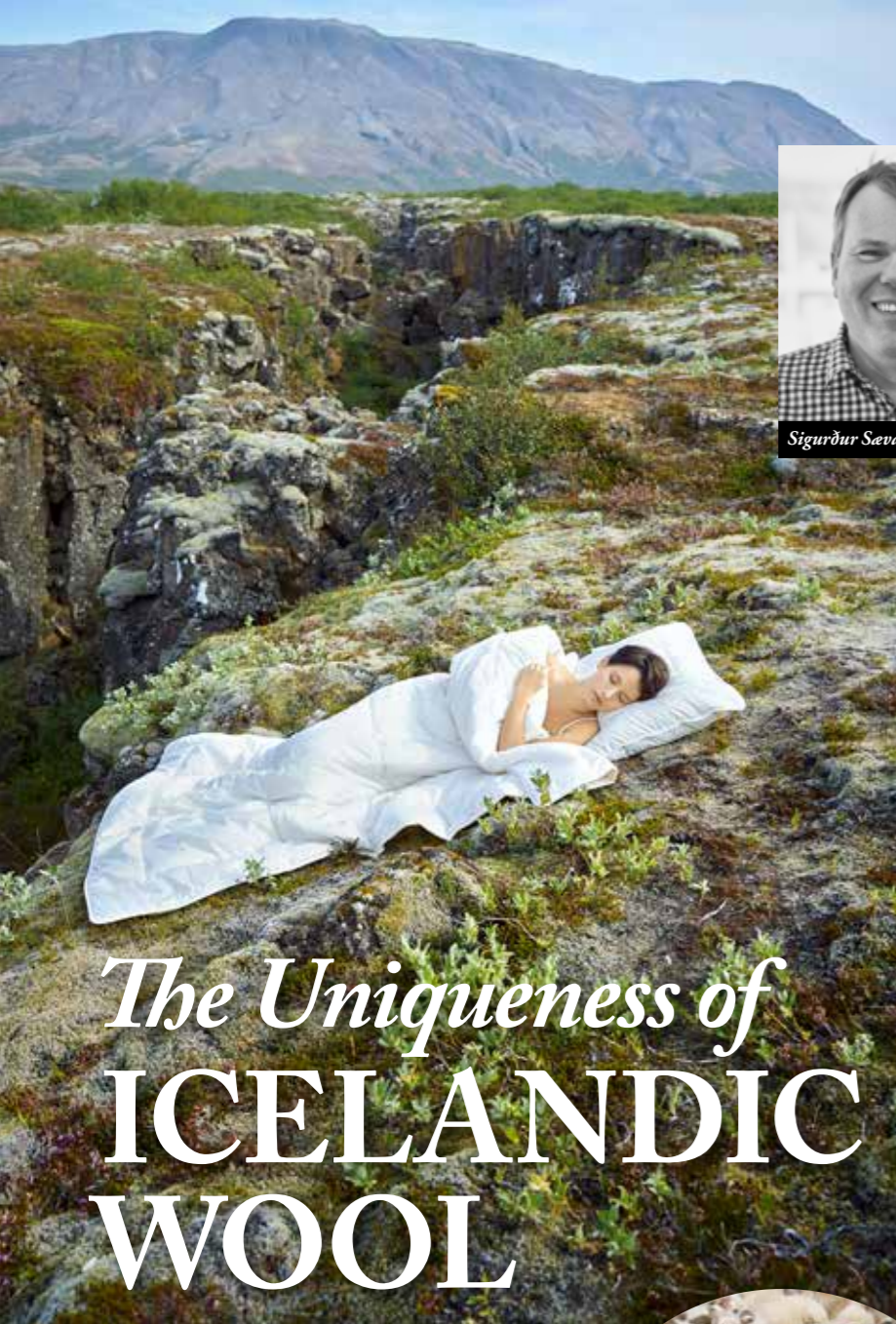
One of two floating docks in Hafnarfjörður Harbor



Hafnarfjörður Harbor and the Marine & Freshwater Research Institute



The restaurant Sól by Hafnarfjörður Harbor



The Uniqueness of ICELANDIC WOOL

Ístex is a wool processing company that aims to create the most value from Icelandic wool producing high-quality products for those who choose natural, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products. The company is built on a tradition that dates back to late 19th century, and the unique properties of Icelandic wool are reflected in the company's diverse products.



Sigurður Sævar Gunnarsson

It Began with Hot Water and Stubborn People

“Ístex buys wool directly from farmers, and over 80% of the company is owned by farmers,” explains Sigurður Sævar Gunnarsson, CEO of Ístex. The

company’s headquarters are in Mosfellsbær, where wool processing has been continuous since 1896, previously under the name Álafoss. Ístex took over the operation in 1991, and the company washes and processes about 99% of all Icelandic wool.

“The key to Icelandic wool processing is hot water and stubborn people,” says Sigurður with a smile, referring to the hot water that flowed through narrow basin at Álafoskvos which enabled people to begin washing and processing wool at the end of the 19th century. “The company in its current form was founded in 1991, decidedly against the odds because there was severe economic recession, bankruptcies were common, and synthetic fabric dominated the market. But people did not give up,” he adds. Icelandic stubbornness over the decades has certainly paid off because Icelandic wool is today a world-renowned product and sought after for its unique properties.

Wool Yarn and Indispensable Blankets

Ístex produces hand-knitting yarn in a total of seven different versions from Icelandic wool yarn, including Álafosslopi, Einband, Jöklalopi, Léttlopi, and Plötulopi. “The versions have different properties and are therefore suitable for various knitting projects,” Sigurður points out. “For example, Álafosslopi is warm and suitable for outdoor clothing, while Fjallalopi, which is our newest yarn, is thinner and therefore well suited for delicate and lightweight garments. Hosuband is a version especially durable and is therefore great for socks.”

Ístex also publishes hand-knitting books with diverse designs. The latest is number 43 in the series and is titled “Skýjaborgir” or In the Clouds. It includes patterns for a variety of sweaters and other

knitted garments, designed by artist Védís Jónsdóttir. Védís is also the designer behind most of the wool blankets, available in various colours and patterns under the name Lopi. “Our blankets have been exceptionally popular as gifts since they are Icelandic designs made from Icelandic wool,” says Sigurður. “Icelandic woollen blankets are an essential item in every home. Everyone should own at least one good blanket.”

Unique Icelandic Wool Duvets

Ístex has also started producing duvets and pillows from Icelandic wool under the name Lopidraumur. The company buys the wool directly from farmers, and it is STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX® certified. “Wool is actually an excellent material for duvets and pillows because research has shown that wool products improve sleep,” says Sigurður. “Icelandic wool is temperature regulating because it has the property of maintaining a unique moisture balance, thus maintaining a comfortable temperature. This breathability ensures a good sleep regardless of temperature, and the duvet is therefore suitable for all seasons.”

*Text: Jón Agnar Ólason
Photos: Ljósmynd/Ístex*





British WWII naval base at Hvítanes



Cows in Kjós on a summer night



Cows in Kjós on a summer night



Laxá in Kjós on a spring night



Allied barracks

TOWERING GLYMUR AND TRICKY LEGGJABRJÓTUR

Just north of Reykjavík lies one of Iceland's most magnificent and beautiful fjords, Hvalfjörður. Today, the fjord is unfortunately sparsely visited, as Route 1 bypasses its inner part, heading west and north. Hvalfjörður didn't exist 700,000 years ago, but Ice Age glaciers and shifting volcanic activity to the east carved out this 30 km long fjord over the past 100,000 years.

The fjord offers numerous hiking trails, including one to Glymur, one of the country's tallest waterfalls at the fjord's

innermost point. You can also hike the trail Leggjabrjótur (which means 'Leg breaker') to Thingvellir or stroll around Medalfellsvatn in Kjós, an exceptionally easy and rewarding route. During World War II, the Allied Forces established a large base for ships and submarines deeper within the fjord. It is also home to Iceland's only whaling station. Less than an hour's drive from the capital, Hvalfjörður feels like another world altogether.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Whaling boats on an extended summer break at the whaling station



Upper section of Glymur



Looking over Hvitá river, with Brekkufjall and Hafnarfjall in the background



A summer cabin beneath Brekkufjall



Rock formations in Hafnarfjall

SKESSUHORN AND SKARDSHEIDI



Skessuhorn reflected in a small pond



Hafnurdalur in Hafnarfjall



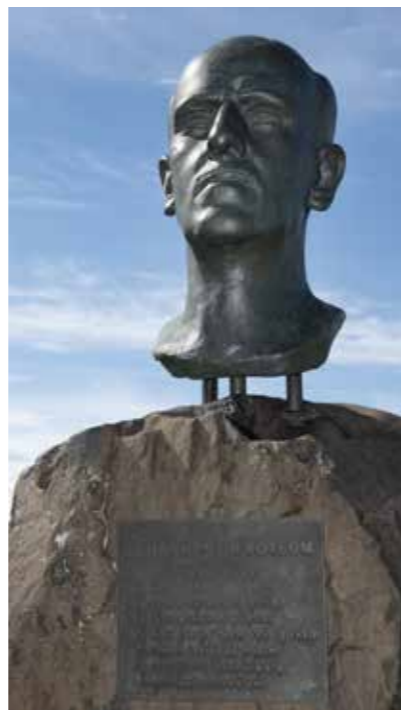
View down Nordurárdalur, with Hafnarfjall to the right

Skardsheidi is an expansive mountain range located between Hvalfjörður and Borgarfjörður in western Iceland. It is an extinct volcano that last erupted four to five million years ago. Much of the range is over 1,000 meters high and has been significantly shaped by glacial erosion during the last ice age. Skardsheidi makes a striking impression both in Borgarfjörður and, no less so, from the capital area, where parts of it can be seen in the distance between Akrafjall and Esja.

A good hiking trail, nearly 20 kilometers long, runs along the entire mountain

ridge from Heidarhorn in the west to Hádegishyrna in the east. The view from Skardsheidi is beautiful, offering sights of Borgarfjörður and reaching as far as Snæfellsnes in the west. However, as a traveler, one should be cautious around Skessuhorn. This distinctive peak, located in the northern and eastern parts of Skardsheidi, is said to be home to a supernatural being, a troll, who lies in wait for travelers and causes them mischief.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



PRISTINE NATURE, HISTORY, AND GOURMET FOOD IN DALIR

Dalir region in Western Iceland not only offers some of Iceland's most significant historical sites from the Settlement Age but also provides unique nature where one can ground themselves, enjoy tranquility, and experience a retreat from the pace and bustle of modern life.

The rhythm in Dalir region is generally calm and pleasurable because that's how the locals want it. People of Dalir are known for their hospitality, that combined with scenic natural surroundings are something that visitors appreciate. Even though the Ring Road is not far away, Dalir offers a unique setting to take a break from the stress of urban life.

A glance at a map of Iceland shows that Búðardalur, the only town in Dalir, is only about a 30-minute drive from Route 1.

That is a short distance to enter a surrounding where you can savor delicious local food, renowned cheeses, explore historical sites and enjoy all that nature has to offer.

History and culture in Dalir

In Dalir it's often said that you can find history in every hill. At Eiríksstaðir, visitors can see the birthplace of Leif the Lucky Eriksson, the first European to discover America, while experiencing the way of life and conditions of his family

during the Settlement Age. Here you step in to the surroundings where the famous Icelandic sagas, Laxdæla saga, Saga of Eirík the Red and Sturlunga, took place.

People and places in Dalir are not only linked to the Saga Age. It's worth mentioning that the beautiful church at Hjardarholt was designed by Iceland's first formally educated architect, Rögnvaldur Ólafsson. Also, many poets come from Dalir, including Steinn Steinarr, Jóhannes úr Kötlum, Theódóra Thoroddsen and Stefán from Hvítadal. And let's not forget artist Asmundur Sveinsson and Hreinn Fridfinnsson also have roots in Dalir.



The cheese region of Iceland

Dalir offers not only the chance to nourish the spirit but also serves as a treasure trove for cheese loving travelers. Dalir is among largest cheese-producing regions in the country. You can find cheeses from Dalir in almost every grocery store and supermarkets in Iceland. But you could also come to try cheese, ice cream and more from Erpsstaðir creamery.

Agriculture is a major industry in the district, with sheep farming being the most important. That makes Dalir also among the regions in Iceland that produces most lamb. Dairy production, cattle and horse breeding have also been practiced in Dalir for decades. Vegetable growing has been increasing in the area in recent years. So, when you travel through Dalir, it's important to stop and enjoy some of the local food made with care, tradition, and a touch of Icelandic magic.

Enjoy just to be in Dalir



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.

IN THE GRÁBRÓK LAVA FIELD

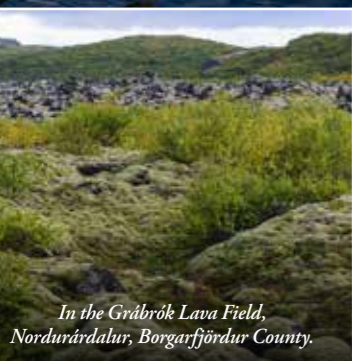
In Nordurárdalur valley lies Grábrók and the Grábrók Lava Field, situated on 13-million-year-old rock, among the oldest in Iceland. Grábrók, a stunning crater just north of Bifröst University, erupted 3,200 years ago. It marks the easternmost part of the volcanic belt stretching from Snæfellsjökull eastward into Nordurárdalur in West Iceland. The Grábrók lava field, about 20 meters thick and covering seven square kilometers, originated from three craters: Grábrók, the largest; Grábrókarfell;

and Smábrók (Little Grábrók). The lava altered the course of the Nordurá River—creating the Glanni waterfall near the lava—and dammed a small valley south of Bifröst, forming the beautiful Hredavatn lake. Grábrók is just over an hour's drive from Reykjavík. While the lava field and craters are listed as nature conservation sites, they are not officially protected.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.

www.icelandictimes.com



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.



In the Grábrók Lava Field, Nordurárdalur, Borgarfjörður County.

GO WEST

EXPLORE THE WONDROUS WESTFJORDS

Enjoy hiking tours and other adventures with West Tours

In a country full of beauty, the Westfjords may be the most stunning region of all. Endless coastlines, jaw-dropping cliffs, and gorgeous mountain landscapes await those who make the trip. Travellers will find that the Westfjords are the most sparsely populated inhabited area on the island, which is part of the region's charm. There is striking nature every which way you turn, from mountains to empty beaches to winding roads where you may not encounter another car for hours.

The Westfjords are an amazing peninsula characterised by steep, flat, and peaked mountains between deep blue fjords and beautiful colourful beaches, with residents who welcome travellers. West Tours Travel Agency and Tour Operator is run by a highly professional team with years of experience in assisting travellers with their travel plans to and around the region.

Hiking tours spanning the breathtaking landscape

West Tours offers organised hiking tours, ranging from a day tour to multiple days, in some of the most spectacular areas on the island. For instance, travellers can enjoy a day hike in the remote and pristine nature reserve of Hornstrandir, which is known for its stunning scenery and unspoiled nature, adding it to many hiker's bucket lists. The area is the northernmost part of the Westfjords and is extremely remote, with almost no infrastructure.



Hikers can enjoy more than 250 species of flowering plants and ferns that are known to grow in the nature reserve area. Wildlife is also a draw as Arctic foxes are the prevailing mammals, seals, and about 30 species of birds nest in the nature reserve.

Up for some adventure?

In addition to hiking tours, West Tours offers numerous activities, from boat rides to Vigur and Grimsey islands to whale watching, sea kayaking, Jeep tours, rib safaris, and horseriding tours. There is truly something for everyone in any season, from puffin watching in the summer to hunting northern lights in deep winter.

Local company with decades of experience

West Tours is a well-established travel agency and tour operator that began in Ísafjörður in 1993. West Tours offers a great selection of day tours and activities, along with private tours and tailor-made

travel experiences. They focus on the uniqueness of the region and try to open the doors to the hidden gems of the Westfjords.

Based in idyllic Ísafjörður

West Tours is based in Ísafjörður, the unofficial capital of the Westfjords, but don't let that "title" fool you; it's just a tiny town of about 4,000 people. Ísafjörður is a good base for exploring the Westfjords. You'll find towering mountains, interesting rock formations, and more sheep than people in a short drive outside town. West Tours' clients can choose between many services. If you plan a day trip, a weekend or a longer trip in the Westfjords during summer or winter, West Tours will be happy to make it an unforgettable experience.



West Tours
Adalstraeti 7, 400 Ísafjörður
Tel: +354 456 5111
www.westtours.is





Glacial streams merging into Thjórsá

THE CENTRE OF ICELAND

At an elevation of 880 meters, in the Skagafjörður region, at the north-eastern corner of Hofsjökull glacier, lies the geographical centre of Iceland. The coordinates are 64°59'11 N and 18°35'12 W.

Hofsjökull is a temperate glacier, the third largest in the country, situated between the two largest glaciers—Langjökull to the west and Vatnajökull, the largest, to the east. Hofsjökull's highest point reaches 1,765 meters, and its area spans 830 square kilometres, just under one percent of the country's total land area.

The glacier is named after the nearby settlement of Hof in Vesturdalur, Skagafjörður, which is about 30 kilometres from the glacier's terminus. Many significant glacial rivers originate from Hofsjökull, the largest being Blanda, which flows north into Húnaflói Bay, and Thjórsá, Iceland's longest river. Thjórsá flows south along the border of Árnessýsla and Rangárvallasýsla counties before emptying into the sea between Hella and Selfoss. It is also home to the largest number of hydroelectric power stations in Iceland.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Rock outcrop extending into Hofsjökull



On Kjölur route between Hofsjökull and Langjökull



Varied-coloured lakes near Hofsjökull's terminus



Rainbow over Reidgötubryggur in Hríúafjörður



Sudurlandid - a shipwreck in Djúpvík



Hay bales at Kjörvogur by Reykjarfjörður, with the mountain Kambur in the background



Driftwood in Trékyllisvík



One of Iceland's most beautiful swimming pools at Krossnes in Árneshreppur



Ingólfsfjörður



A small fishing boat in southern Steingrímsfjörður

SNAPSHOTS FROM STRANDIR

Strandasýsla, a county stretching from Hríútafjörður northward along Húnaflói Bay on the eastern side of the Westfjords peninsula, is one of Iceland's most underrated regions. From Ring Road 1 at the head of Hríútafjörður, you can drive approximately 250 km (150 mi) north to Ófeigsfjörður in Árneshreppur, Iceland's least populated municipality. Only about fifty people live there, and just around a

thousand reside in the entire district—about 0.25% of Iceland's population. Yet, Strandasýsla is both beautiful and tranquil, where livestock farming and fishing sustain this small community.

Here are images from this remarkable region—worth noticing and visiting this summer.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

AKUREYRI

Heart of the North



The dozen inhabitants in 1786, clinging to the side of Eyjaförður, 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



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
www.visitakureyri.is





THE SILENCE OF THE LAMB CHOPS: ICELAND'S PALATE MOVES ON



Rams, Sudursveit, Austur-Skaftafellssýsla

Lamb meat and wool have sustained us Icelanders for nearly twelve centuries. However, significant changes have taken place in Icelandic society and consumption habits. For almost twelve hundred years, lamb was by far the most consumed meat here. Four years ago, chicken claimed the top spot, and a year later, pork moved into second place, leaving lamb in third. According to statistics recently published by Bændablaðið, a local bimonthly newspaper covering agricultural matters, sheep farmers continue to face challenges. This year, 404,000 lambs

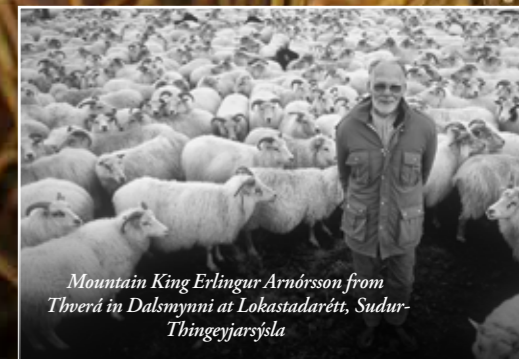
were slaughtered—a decrease of 150,000 in just six years, and down by 13,000 from last year. However, the average weight per lamb has increased by a kilogram, from sixteen to just over seventeen kilograms. Currently, only eight slaughterhouses operate in Iceland, with six being much larger; the smallest of these large ones is Fjallalamb in Kópasker, while the biggest are SS in Hvolsvöllur, KS in Sauðárkrúkur, KVH in Hvammstangi, and Norðlenska in Húsavík.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

Sheep in Bárðardalur, Sudur-Thingeyjarsýsla



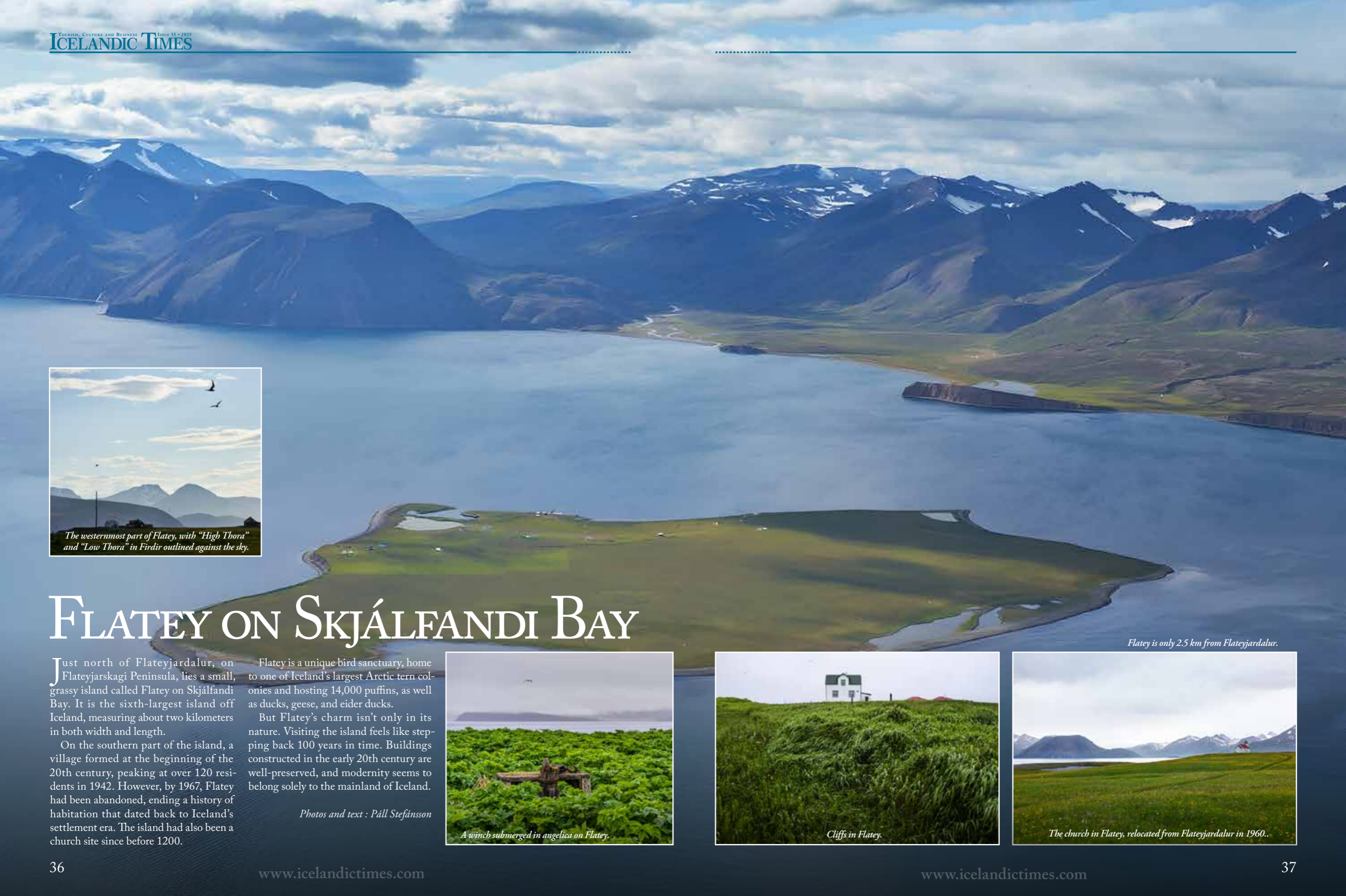
Flateyjardalur, Sudur-Thingeyjarsýsla



Mountain King Erlingur Arnórsson from Thverá in Dalsmynni at Lokastadarétt, Sudur-Thingeyjarsýsla



Thverá, Dalsmynni, Sudur-Thingeyjarsýsla



The westernmost part of Flatey, with "High Thora" and "Low Thora" in Firdir outlined against the sky.

FLATEY ON SKJÁLFANDI BAY

Just north of Flateyjardalur, on Flateyjarskagi Peninsula, lies a small, grassy island called Flatey on Skjálfandi Bay. It is the sixth-largest island off Iceland, measuring about two kilometers in both width and length.

On the southern part of the island, a village formed at the beginning of the 20th century, peaking at over 120 residents in 1942. However, by 1967, Flatey had been abandoned, ending a history of habitation that dated back to Iceland's settlement era. The island had also been a church site since before 1200.

Flatey is a unique bird sanctuary, home to one of Iceland's largest Arctic tern colonies and hosting 14,000 puffins, as well as ducks, geese, and eider ducks.

But Flatey's charm isn't only in its nature. Visiting the island feels like stepping back 100 years in time. Buildings constructed in the early 20th century are well-preserved, and modernity seems to belong solely to the mainland of Iceland.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



A winch submerged in angelica on Flatey.



Cliffs in Flatey.



The church in Flatey, relocated from Flateyjardalur in 1960..

Flatey is only 2.5 km from Flateyjardalur.



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 Reykjaahlíð, 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.

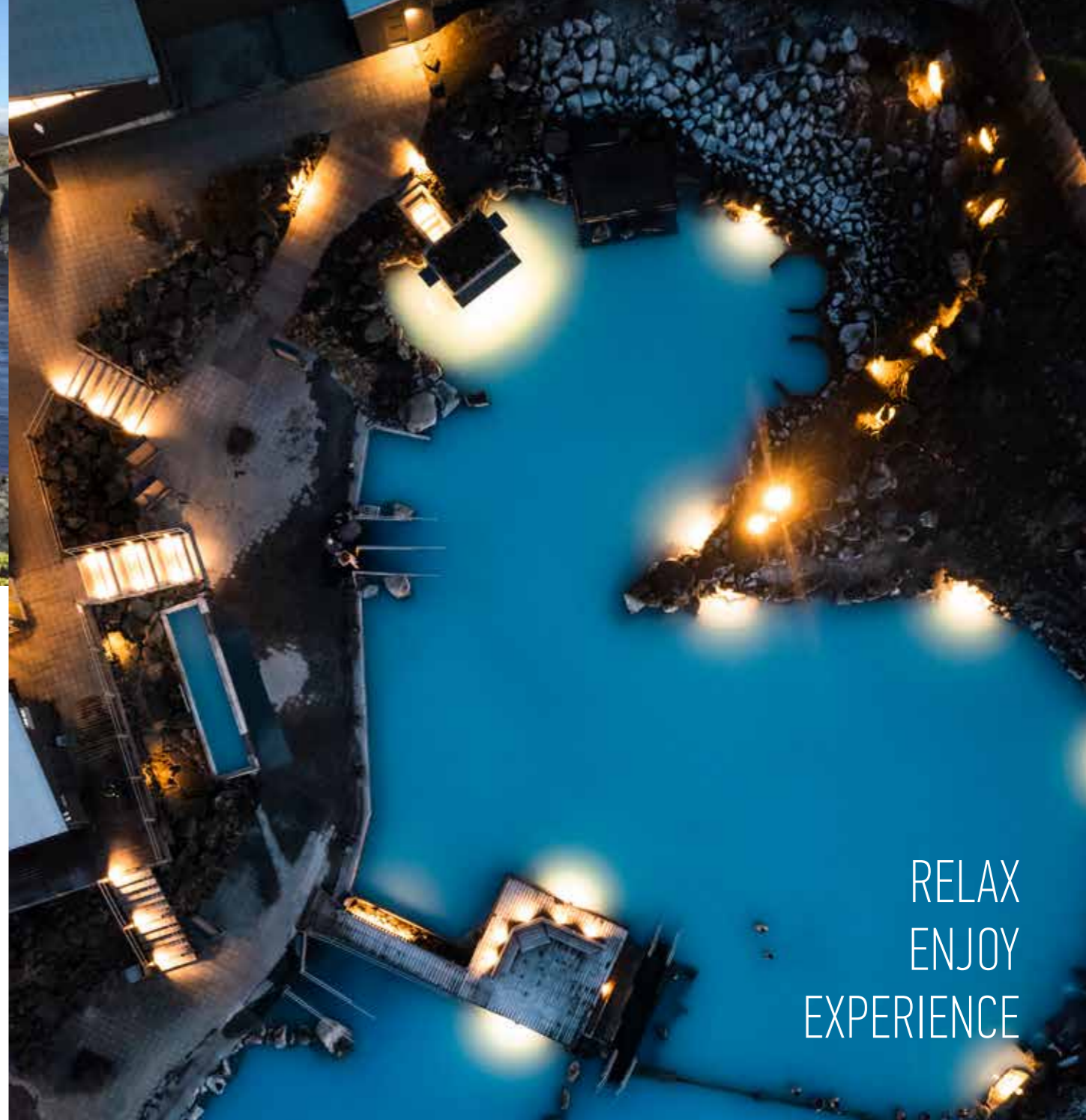
When the bus arrives at the parking space in Askja around 12–1pm, passengers get 2–2½ hours to explore the area. There is an



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

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HUSAVIK MUSEUM

The District Cultural Center of Þingeyjar Counties (DCC) in the northern district of Þingeyjarsýsla is a non-profit organization and operates four museums and exhibition venues in the area.



Husavík Museum

The Husavík Museum celebrates the vibrant and progressive history of the Þingeyjar Counties. The permanent exhibition “Daily Life and Nature” examines a century in the history of people whose relationship with nature was immediate and intimate in the years 1850–1950. Natural objects and man-made artefacts are displayed along with contemporary personal accounts by local people. The museum's other permanent exhibition is at the Maritime Museum, which provides a vibrant insight into the evolution of fishing and boat building in the area from the time of the rowboat until the age of the motorboat. Additionally, there are two galleries that hold a diverse range of multi-annual art exhibitions.



The Husavík Museum is open to visitors all year.
15 May–31 August: Every day 11–17.
1 September–14 May: Tue–Fri 13–16 & Sat 11–16.
Admission: ISK 2.200.
Seniors and students: ISK 1.700.
Children under 16: Free.
Groups 10 or more: ISK 1.900.



Grenjaðarstaður

The historic settlement of Grenjaðar-staður in Aðaldalur is one of Iceland's largest turf houses and was, in its heyday, a prosperous and prominent vicarage. The oldest part of the existing turf house was built in 1865, and it was inhabited until 1949. Today Grenjaðarstaður is a museum, and through the myriad of traditional hand-crafted and ingenious home-made items on display, guests will gain an understanding of how arduous survival was in those days. Visitors can walk through this unique house that is primarily insulated with lava rocks, which are abundant in the surrounding area, while taking in the vicarages' development over time.



Grenjaðarstaður is open to visitors in the summer.
1 June–15 August: Every day 11–17.
Admission: ISK 2.200.
Seniors and students: ISK 1.700.
Children under 16: Free.
Groups 10 or more: ISK 1.900.



Snartarstaðir

Just outside the town of Kópasker lies Snartarstaðir, which houses the captivating folk museum of the North-Þingeyjar county. In the museum, you will see a wide variety of cultural and historical objects, with the main emphasis being on handicrafts and the beauty in everyday things. The museum is a good representation of the lives of the people in the area during the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th.

Snartarstaðir is open to visitors in the summer.
15. June-15 August: Tue-Sun 13-17.
Admission: ISK 1.500.
Seniors and students: ISK 1.100.
Children under 16: Free.
Groups 10 or more: ISK 1.300.

Sauðaneshús

The oldest stone house in Þingeyjar Counties, Sauðaneshús, is located 7 km's north of the town of Þórshöfn. Today, it serves as the home of the region's folk museum, which tells the story of life in Langanes Peninsula and how its residents have used their prosperous surroundings to endure through the ages in this unforgiving yet spectacular environment. A new exhibition opened in 2022, curated by two Icelandic artists who are also the caretakers at Sauðaneshús during the summer.



Sauðaneshús is open to visitors in the summer.
15. June-15 August: Tue-Sun 11-17.



Lónsörefi wilderness, Austur-Skaftafellssýsla



A river runs near Vopnafjörður, Nordur-Múlasýsla



Looking over Hérad on a summer night in Nordur-Múlasýsla



The capital, Seyðisfjörður, by the fjord of the same name in Nordur-Múlasýsla. The only car ferry to Iceland docks weekly in Seyðisfjörður, arriving from Denmark with a stopover in Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands.

OF COURSE EAST ICELAND

It's a drive of just over 600 km (about 360 miles) from Lómagnúpur, where East Iceland begins at the tail end of the south, to Finnaþjórdur in Bakkaflói (Bakkafjörður), where the north either ends—or begins.

The six municipalities (plus half of Langanesbyggd) that make up the East Iceland region are home to around four percent of the country's population—just over thirteen thousand people.

The fewest live in Bakkafjörður, with just over sixty residents—a community that is the farthest from the capital area in terms of driving distance.

The majority live in Fljótsdalshérad and Fjardabyggd, with just over five thousand residents between them.

Yet East Iceland boasts natural beauty and tranquility that is truly exceptional—not just by Icelandic standards.

Here is a small selection of images from the east—an area that, of course, deserves to be visited more often by both locals and foreign travelers alike.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Bustarfell in Vopnafjörður, Nordur-Múlasýsla—one of Iceland's best-preserved turf farms, now part of the National Museum of Iceland



Geese at Jökulsárlón, Austur-Skaftafellssýsla



JÖKULSÁ RIVER — AT BRÚ OR AT DAL

Jökulsá á Dal, the longest river in East Iceland, is known by three names: Jökla, as it's called by the locals in Jökulsárdalur, Jökulsá á Dal, and Jökulsá á Brú. Along its course lies one of Iceland's most iconic natural landmarks, Studlagil, which has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in East Iceland. However, Studlagil only gained recognition about a decade ago.

Before Jökla was harnessed in 2007 at Kárahnjúkar, Iceland's largest hydroelectric plant, the canyon carried murky glacial water, concealing the beautiful columnar basalt formations along its 500-meter stretch. Things are different now, and

visitors can take a short walk from the farm Grund to viewing platforms built at the canyon. For a more striking experience, it's recommended to hike for about half an hour to view Studlagil from the eastern side. However, caution is crucial—this past autumn, a young American woman tragically fell to her death in the canyon. Visitors must tread carefully and respect Iceland's natural wonders. From Reykjavík, it's about a ten-hour drive east to Studlagil, whether taking the northern or southern route along Ring Road 1.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



At Studlagil

WELCOME TO BAKKAFJÖRDUR

Few places in Iceland are as far from Reykjavík as Bakkafjörður, located 700 km (400 miles) away. In the summer, it's a ten-hour drive, while in winter, you can add two to three hours depending on road conditions. But it's well worth the journey to this remote northeast corner of the country. Despite having just 100 residents, Bakkafjörður has no accommodations, restaurants, or shops. Instead, it offers tranquil serenity and unique beauty in a fjord south of Langanes.

Bakkafjörður is Iceland as it once was. The nearest shop or lodging is 30 km south in Vopnafjörður, or 40 km north at Þórshöfn on Langanes, though Bakkafjörður itself is part of the Langanesbyggd municipality. The local economy revolves around fishing, fish processing, and sheep farming. The area also boasts some of the country's best salmon rivers.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

Driftwood, carried all the way from Siberia, is abundant in Bakkafjörður.



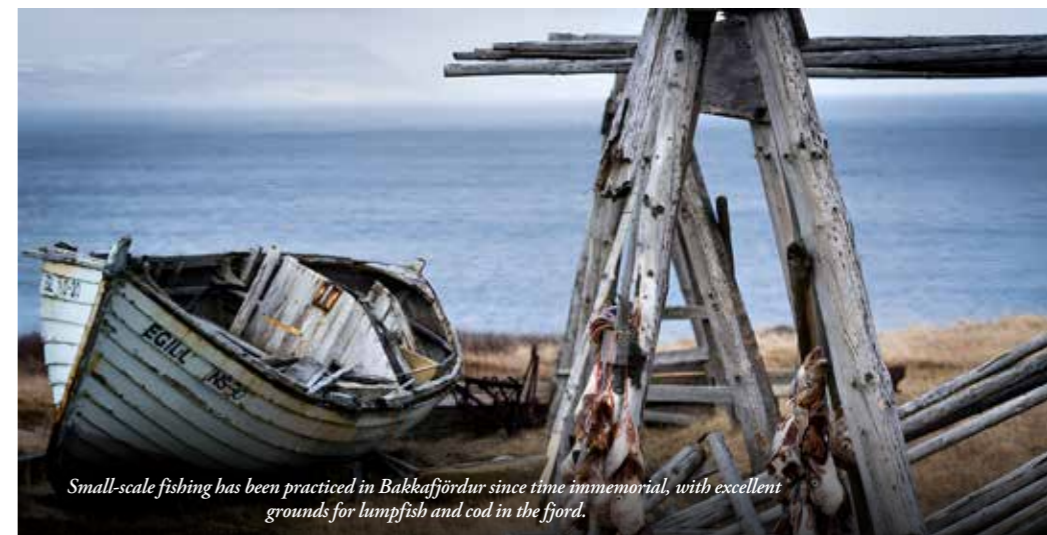
Skeggjastadakirkja Church in Bakkafjörður, built in 1845.



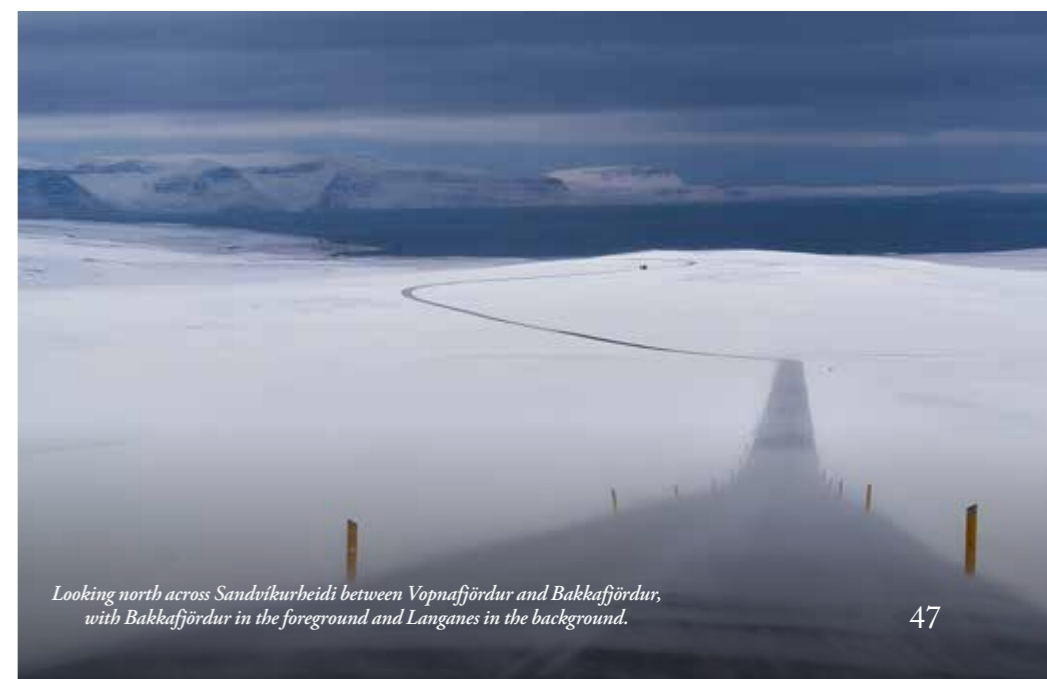
Sheep grazing during winter in Bakkafjörður.



Looking north across Sandvíkurheiði between Vopnafjörður and Bakkafjörður, with Bakkafjörður in the foreground and Langanes in the background.



Small-scale fishing has been practiced in Bakkafjörður since time immemorial, with excellent grounds for lumpfish and cod in the fjord.



Looking north across Sandvíkurheiði between Vopnafjörður and Bakkafjörður, with Bakkafjörður in the foreground and Langanes in the background.



In Álftaförðu

TWO BUCKS FROM FINNMARK

Reindeer inhabit regions around the Arctic Circle and are domesticated in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and as far east as Siberia. In the Americas, from Alaska to Greenland, they remain wild herd animals, unlike in Iceland, where they roam freely in the highlands, primarily near Snæfell.

Reindeer were introduced late to Iceland, brought as domesticated animals from Finnmark in northern Norway between 1771 and 1787 to various regions, including Reykjanes, South Iceland, East Iceland, North Iceland, and even the Westman Islands. However, attempts

to domesticate them failed, despite the Sami accompanying the animals to teach Icelanders reindeer husbandry.

All groups perished except the one relocated to Vopnafjörður. This herd thrived and has spread across the eastern half of Iceland, from Langanes to Sudursveit. Today, the population stands at around 7,000 in summer, the largest ever recorded in Iceland. All are descendants of 35 animals that arrived in Vopnafjörður in the summer of 1787 from Finnmark.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Early spring in Lón



Two bucks in Berufjörður



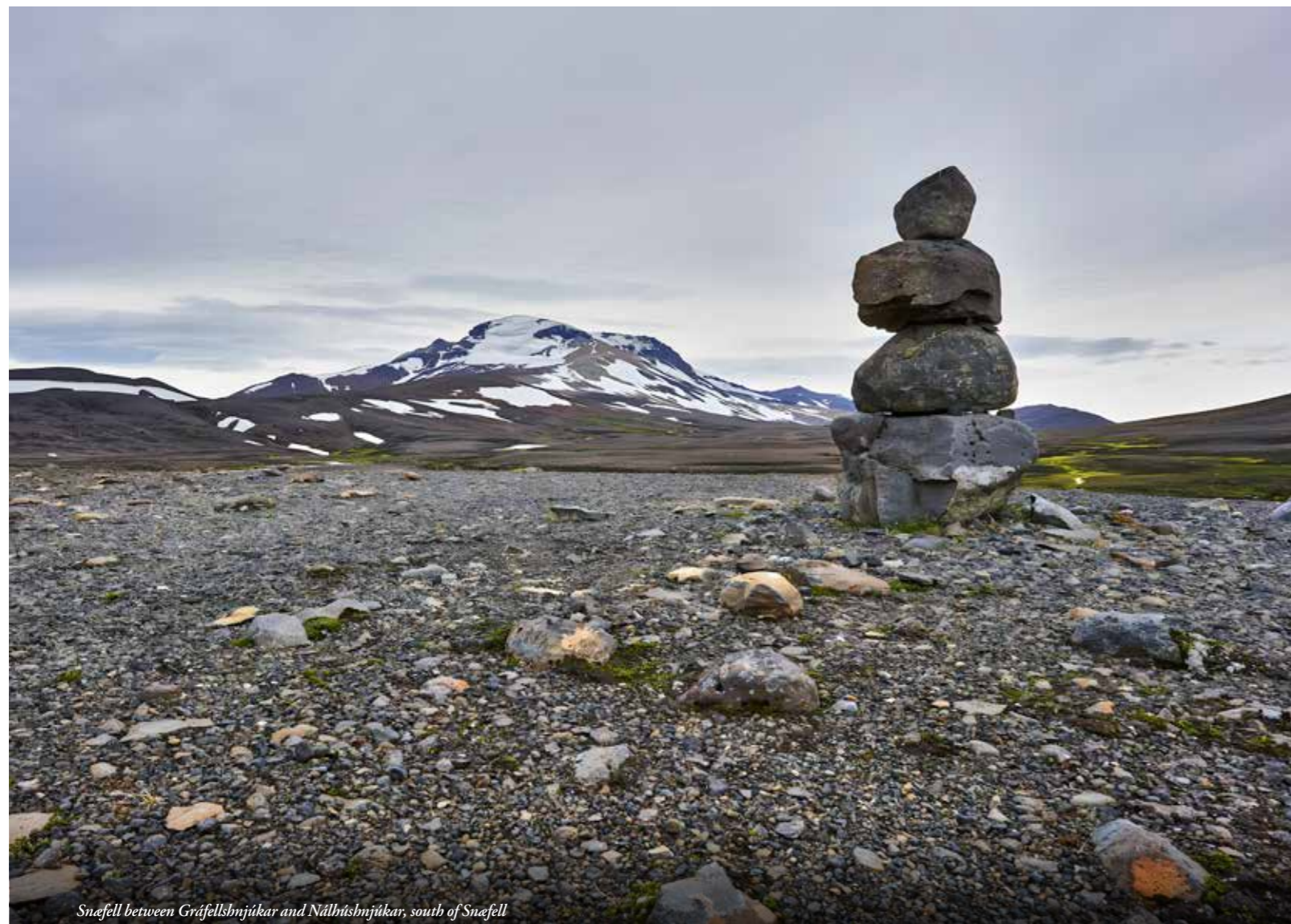
Reydarfjörður



In Sudursveit, Vatnajökull in the background



Near Snæfell



A BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN

If there were an election for the most beautiful mountain in Iceland, Snæfell—the queen of the East Fjords’ mountains—would surely rank highly, especially among the residents of East Iceland. Snæfell is a tall mountain, standing at 1,833 meters, making it the highest mountain in the country outside of Vatnajökull. This ancient volcano formed about 500,000 years ago and has been building up ever since. Although it has been a long time since the mountain last erupted, geologists believe that Snæfell is still an active volcano. The area around the mountain has little vegetation due to

its elevation, located northeast of Vatnajökull. However, in the summer, nature around Snæfell comes alive. It serves as a primary habitat for the reindeer population, and more than twenty different bird species currently nest in the area, particularly swans and pink-footed geese. From the hiking lodge near the mountain, there is a good 14-kilometer hiking trail to the summit, which takes about eight hours for a round trip. Snæfell is part of Vatnajökull National Park.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Snæfell as seen from Vesturöræfi



Ljósurdarjökull in Snæfell



Near Sandfell, Vatnajökull in the distance



Eastern slopes of Snæfell



Midnight sun at Snæfell



Thjórsá River, Árnes- and Rangárvallasýsla



Dynjandi waterfall, Arnarfjörður



Frozen pond near Grjótnes, Melrakkaslétta



Studlagil canyon, Jökuldalur



Cascade series at Kaldalón, Ísafjardardjúp



Hot stream, Krafla area, Mývatn region

THE STRUGGLE WITH WATER

Iceland is a rich country—especially when it comes to water. While 96.5% of all water on Earth is found in the oceans, far from this island, the freshwater we're so abundantly blessed with makes up only 1.7% of the planet's total water.

Some experts say that one of the greatest threats facing humanity is water management, which is poor in many of the world's large and densely populated areas.

When traveling around Iceland, rivers, streams, and waterfalls are a major part of

the experience—they're everywhere you look, except perhaps on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

As a photographer, water is a joy to wrestle with. It creates atmosphere, shapes, and beauty—rewarding, yet always challenging to capture.

Here are a few glimpses of water in all its various forms.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

Studlagil canyon, Jökuldalur



Skjaldbreidur to the right, adorning the Thingvallavatn mountain circle



The crater at an elevation of 1,066 meters



Heidarvatn lake and Skjaldbreidur



Skjaldbreidur rising from Kerlingarmelur in Kaldidalur

A PERFECTLY SHAPED SHIELD



Skjaldbreidur is a shield volcano formed in a massive eruption 9,000 years ago, located northeast of Thingvellir. Shield volcanoes are created when extremely fluid lava flows from a single crater and its slopes in all directions, forming a cone-like structure that appears almost identical from any angle. The thin lava travelled great distances, reaching as far as Thingvellir, where it now lies beneath younger lava flows.

Iceland has three major shield volcanoes: Trölladyngja, north of Bárðarbunga in Ódádahraun; Stóra Vítisdýngja in the southern part of Óxarfjörður; and Skjaldbreid

above Thingvellir, the second largest. Skjaldbreid is protected as a natural heritage site due to its unique formation.

From Skjaldbreidarvegur (F338), accessible only by larger jeeps, it takes about three hours to hike to the summit of Skjaldbreid. The view from the top is stunning, offering sights of Thingvellir to the west and south, Langjökull (Iceland's second-largest glacier), Thórisjökull, Kerlingarfjöll, and Hofsjökull to the north.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Skrida, Skjaldbreidur, and Thórisjökull



Skjaldbreidur lava field

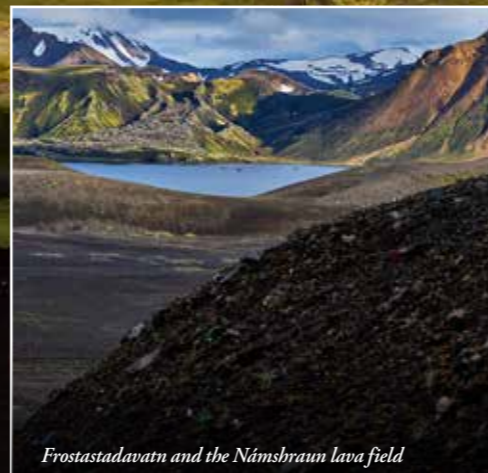


A PRETTY UGLY POOL

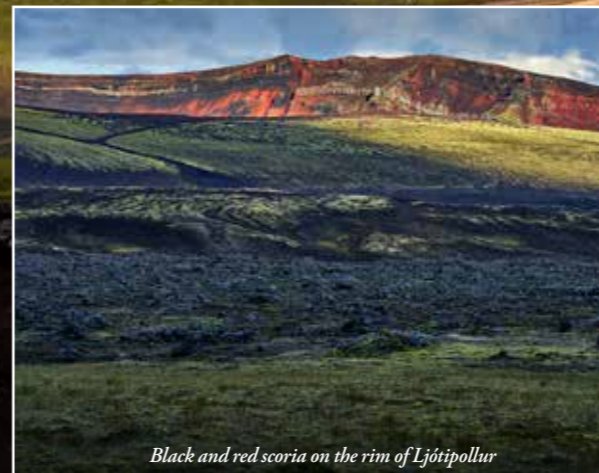
Ljótípollur („Ugly Pool“) is a majestic and strikingly beautiful explosion crater near Frostastadavatn, just west of Landmannalaugar in the Fjallabak Nature Reserve. It was formed in a massive eruption in the Veidivötn region in 1477. During this event, a 60 km-long volcanic fissure was created by magma that traveled an 80 km path from Bárðarbunga beneath Vatnajökull. The Bárðarbunga volcanic system, part of Iceland’s second-highest mountain, is the

largest and most extensive volcanic system in the country. It straddles the center of Iceland’s hotspot, where the Mid-Atlantic Ridge intersects with the mantle plume. Many of the largest lava eruptions of modern times have originated from the Bárðarbunga system. Few places in Iceland showcase the destructive forces of nature and their breathtaking beauty as vividly as the stunning Ljótípollur.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Frostastadavatn and the Námshraun lava field



Black and red scoria on the rim of Ljótípollur



The beautiful Ljótípollur

The crater Strútur between Ljótípollur and Frostastadavatn



SKAFTAFELL — A GEM FOR ALL SEASONS

Skaftafell is a unique place, a beautiful green oasis nestled between two glaciers of Vatnajökull in the Öræfi district. Skaftafell and its immediate surroundings became Iceland's second national park in 1967, following Thingvellir, which was established half a century earlier. Today, Skaftafell is part of Vatnajökull National Park, which spans 15% of the republic, founded in 2008. Skaftafell offers a well-equipped visitor centre for travellers and one of the best camping sites in Iceland.

Thanks to the shelter provided by Vatnajökull, Skaftafell enjoys favourable weather conditions and features many natural wonders in and around the area. Below are a few highlights, as Icelandic Times / Land & Saga frequently visits this national park, conveniently located along Ring Road 1, just over four hours' drive from Reykjavík.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Svartifoss waterfall in Skaftafell

A swim in Skaftafell



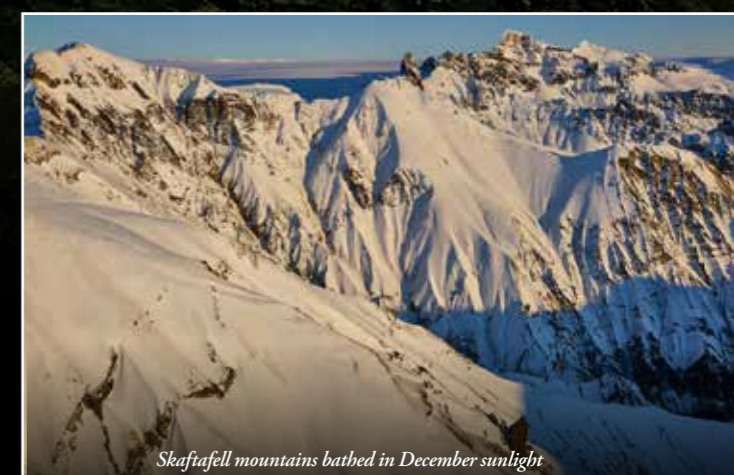
View of Hvannadalshnjúkur, Iceland's highest peak, from the Skaftafell campsite at midnight in June



Deep within Morsárdalur valley



Morsá floodplains



Skaftafell mountains bathed in December sunlight



HEKLA

Hekla is one of Iceland's best-known and most active volcanoes, often called the Queen of Icelandic volcanoes. The mountain is 1,491 meters tall and relatively young—around 7,000 years old—located in the uplands of South Iceland, in Rangárvallasýsla. However, the Hekla volcanic system is much older, estimated to be up to 700,000 years old.

Hekla has erupted 23 times over the last 1,150 years, or since Iceland was settled. Its most recent eruption occurred in this

century—a small eruption in 2000. The volcano is situated on a thick crust where the South Iceland Fracture Zone and the South Iceland Volcanic Zone meet. What sets Hekla apart from other Icelandic volcanoes is that its magma chamber lies deep beneath the surface—approximately 11 kilometres into the Earth's crust. The largest eruptions since Iceland's settlement occurred in 1104 and 1947.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



The first rays of the sun kiss the eastern slopes of Hekla



The summit of Hekla



Dawn by the Rangá river, not far from Hekla

The 2000 eruption of Hekla



Dawn at Jökulsárlón



On the banks of the Skaftá River



By Fjallsárlón



Svartifoss, in Skaftafell National Park

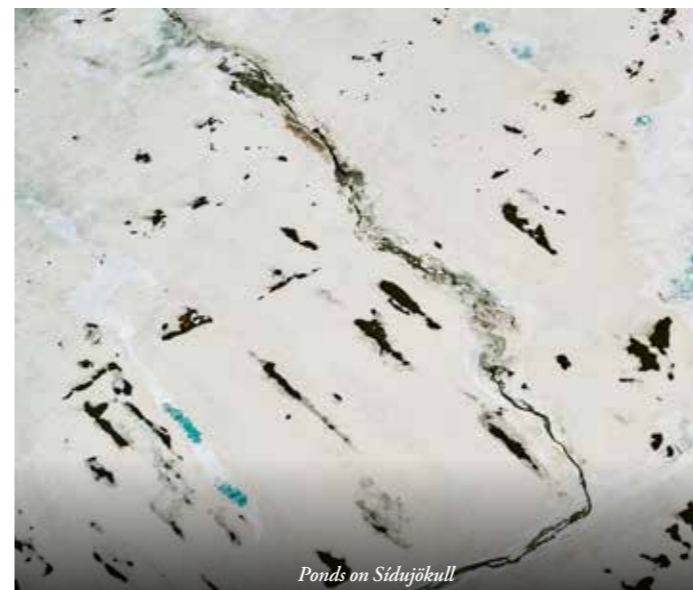
BY VATNAJÖKULL

Vatnajökull is located in the southeast corner of Iceland. Covering 7,700 km² it is the largest glacier in the world outside the polar regions. It is the third-largest glacier in Europe, following the Severny Glacier on Novaya Zemlya in Russia and Austfonna in Svalbard. The average thickness of Vatnajökull is about 400 meters, with its thickest areas reaching up to one kilometre. The glacier lies entirely within Vatnajökull National Park, and many of Iceland's most beautiful locations are found in its vicinity. Covering nearly eight percent of Iceland, Vatnajökull is home to three massive volcanoes: Bárðarbunga, which is currently showing some activity;

Öræfajökull, the country's highest and largest mountain; and Grímsvötn, Iceland's most active volcanic system, located in the centre of the glacier.

About thirty outlet glaciers extend from Vatnajökull, and some of Iceland's most powerful rivers originate from it, including Jökulsá á Fjöllum, Jökulsá á Brú/Dal, Jökulsá á Breidamerkursandi, Jökulsá í Lóni, Lagarfljót, Skjálfandaflljót, Thjórsá, Kolgríma, Núpsvötn, Skeidará, and Skaftá. Vatnajökull and its surroundings are truly unique—here are a few glimpses of its breathtaking beauty.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Ponds on Sídujökull

THE LARGEST ERUPTION SINCE ICELAND WAS SETTLED

Nearly 250 years ago—on June 8, 1783—an eruption began in the Laki craters in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla county in South-Eastern Iceland. This massive volcanic event, known as the Skaftá Fires, occurred north of Kirkjubæjarklaustur and produced the largest lava flow on Earth in the past millennium. When the eruption ended eight months later, in February 1784, the lava field, Eldhraun, covered an area of 580 km², with a total volume exceeding 13 km³.

The eruption released vast amounts of ash and toxic gases, which spread across Iceland, killing 80% of the sheep, 60% of the horses, and about half of all cattle. The

resulting famine claimed over ten thousand lives—roughly 20% of the Icelandic population at the time. This catastrophe, known as the Móduhardindin ("Haze Hardships"), is believed by some historians to have contributed to the French Revolution of 1789; the cooling effect of the volcanic haze led to widespread crop failures in Europe, considered by many to be the tipping point of the uprising against the French aristocracy. The Laki craters, from which the deadly haze originated, were designated a protected natural site in 1971.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson

View over Skaftártunga, Skaftá River, and Eldhraun in the foreground



The Laki craters, with Mount Laki itself in the distance



The Laki craters form a 25 km-long volcanic fissure—here, several craters peek through the snow



The circular road passing through the Laki craters



Eldhraun, just west of Kirkjubæjarklaustur—the lava covers an area of 580 km²



Evening calm beneath Sveinstindur, with the Skaftá River flowing east of the mountain



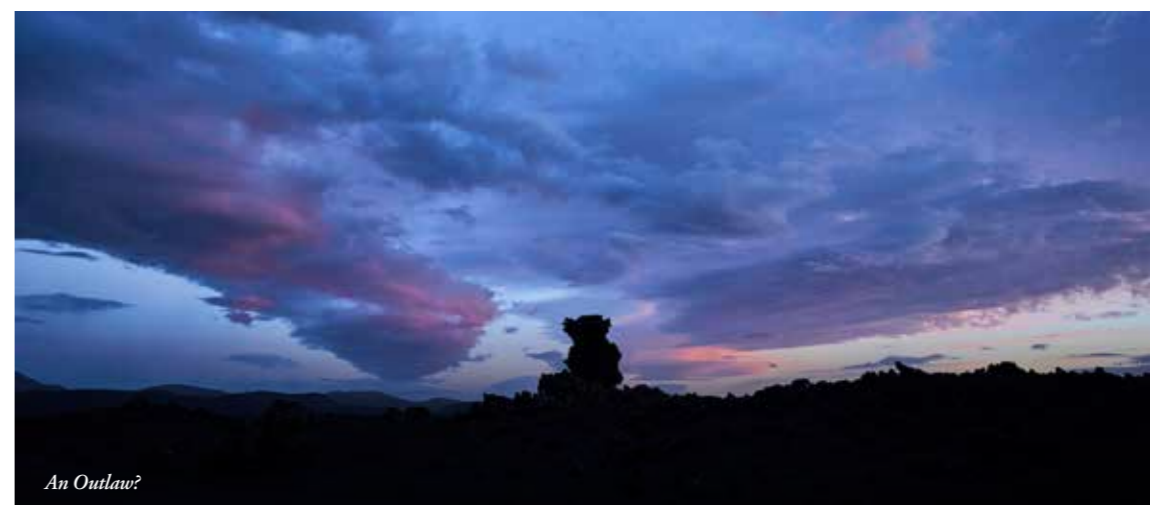
Eldhraun, Sveinstindur í fjarska



Holuhraun



Auðn Ódádabrauns



An Outlaw?

ÓDÁDAHRAUN: A PLACE FIT FOR OUTLAWS



In Ódádabraun in winter

Ódádahraun (“The Lava Field of Evil Deeds”) is the largest lava field in Iceland, covering nearly 5% of the country’s total land area. It stretches across the northern part of Sudur-Thingeyjarsýsla, from Vatnajökull in the south to Mývatn in the north, bordered by rivers Skjálfandaflljót to the west and Jökulsá á Fjöllum to the east. Within and around Ódádahraun lie both Herdubreid and Askja, as well as Trölladyngja—the largest shield volcano in the world—just north of Bárðarbunga in Vatnajökull. The oldest lava formations in Ódádahraun date back around 12,000 years, while the most recent, Holuhraun, erupted 11 years ago in Iceland’s largest volcanic

eruption of this century, spreading across the plains between Askja and Vatnajökull.

The name Ódádahraun first appears about 500 years ago in Bishop Gissur Oddsson’s book *Undur Íslands* (Wonders of Iceland). At the time, unlike today, it was believed that many outlaws found refuge there, living in the grassy oases of the lava field, with access to hot water in this geothermal volcanic region of the Icelandic highlands. However, in reality, the area has remained uninhabitable since Iceland was first settled, as it is little more than an immense lava desert where hardly any grass grows.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Herdubreid



Trölladyngja



This is what Ódádabraun looks like—The Lava Field of Evil Deeds



Pétursey in winter attire



The Elf Hill—Eyjabóll beneath Pétursey



Pétursey in the center, seen from Route 1, with Dyrhólaey in the distance



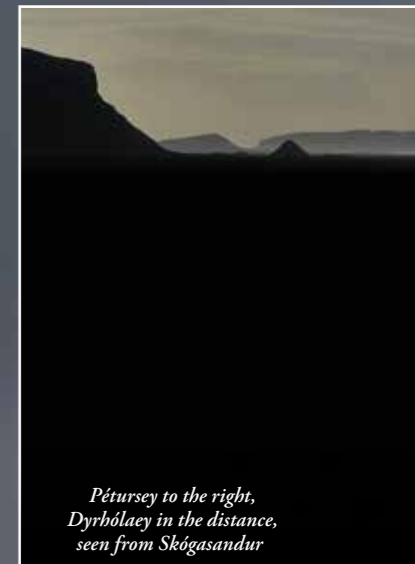
Pétursey in the center of the image, Eyjafjallajökull in the background, seen from Dyrhólaey

PÉTUR'S ISLAND

Pétursey stands alone—surrounded by cliffs on the flatlands halfway between Vík and Skógafoss, to the south and east of Eyjafjallajökull, and west of Dyrhólaey. Grassy and full of birdlife, the land encircling the island was once known as Eyin há (“The High Island”). Since the 12th century, a church stood beneath the mountain, dedicated to Saint Peter the Apostle. Over time, the island took his name and is now called Pétursey (“Peter’s Island”).

There is a well-marked hiking trail leading up Pétursey from the farm Sindravellir. The view from the top is excellent, with sweeping vistas of the south coast to the south, and of Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull to the north. The Ring Road (Route 1) runs right past Pétursey, about a two-hour drive east from Reykjavík. According to old tales, the island is richly inhabited by hidden people and elves.

Photos and text : Páll Srefánsson



Pétursey to the right, Dyrhólaey in the distance, seen from Skógasandur



Winter storm over Pétursey

THE COAST

Iceland is a large island—103,000 km² in size—with a circumference of just over 1,500 km (940 mi). That's slightly longer than the Ring Road, which stretches about 1,400 km (875 mi), though it skips the plains at Melrakkaslétta, the Westfjords, and Snæfellsnes peninsula. But the coastline is much longer: no less than 8,500 km (5,300 mi) when you follow all the inlets, bays, and fjords.

Iceland's shores are strikingly varied. The south coast—from Thorlákshöfn on the Reykjanes Peninsula eastward to Höfn in Hornafjörður—is a black-sand

shoreline stretching hundreds of kilometers, without harbors, both fearsome and breathtakingly beautiful.

In the East and Westfjords, steep mountains plunge straight into the sea. In earlier centuries, this made land travel difficult, and boats and ships were the primary means of transportation between settlements.

Here are a few glimpses of Iceland's long and diverse coastline—well worth exploring when traveling around the country.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Hvesta, in Arnarfjörður



Shoreline rocks in Berufjörður



Playing by the shore at Seltjarnarnes



Ósvör, near Bolungarvík

Dyrhólaey, the southernmost point of Iceland



A colorful band of bikers at Sólheimajökull glacier



Dyngjujökull, the source of Iceland's most voluminous river, Jökulsá á Fjöllum



Snæfellsjökull glacier



The Svínafellsjökull glacial lagoon, near Vatnajökull

ICELAND OF GLACIERS

Glaciers cover around 11,400 km², or 11% of Iceland's total area. The largest by far is Vatnajökull, spanning 8,100 km². Next in size are Langjökull and Hofsjökull, each just under 1,000 square kilometers. Iceland was ice-free, or nearly so, about nine thousand years ago, but as the climate cooled, the glaciers we know today began to form. They reached their maximum extent around 1900 and have since retreated significantly. Vatnajökull, for example, has shrunk by nearly five square kilometers per year

throughout this century. Roughly a quarter of all river runoff in Iceland originates from the glaciers. The glacier Ok in Borgarfjörður disappeared at the beginning of this century—becoming the first of the larger glaciers to vanish. Torfajökull, near Landmannalaugar, is likely next to go. After that, it may be the turn of Snæfellsjökull—the westernmost glacier in the country and the only one visible from Reykjavík... on a clear day.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Torfajökull glacier



Cracks and volcanic ash, Hofsjökull glacier



Kvítárjökull, at Hofsjárjökull glacier



There are no skills required in the workshop, a staff member will do the sewing



Alma Björk Ástþórsdóttir

Make your own **WOOL MONSTER** Join a workshop to design the cutest Icelandic souvenir

Are you looking for a unique and adorable souvenir from your trip to Iceland? The Skrimslis are unique stuffed “monsters” made from 100% Icelandic wool and locally sourced fabrics; they are sewn and made with love by Icelanders.

In the workshop they have prepared a great variety of bodies, hands, feet, hairs, tails and horns that you choose from. After you have chosen everything, you want for your monster, a staff member will sew it together. Then it is time for the fun part! Creating the face. You choose the eyes and how you want the mouth, and a staff member puts it on for you. Then you get to fill your monster before a staff member closes it up. You will have your unique monster, that no one else in the world has!

History of The Skrimslis

Alma Björk, a mother of three and an entrepreneur with a diploma in finance and a master’s in business, owns Monstri ehf.

After a road trip around Iceland in 2009, she stopped in Vik, a small country town in the south of Iceland, to stay with a friend. They visited a wool manufacturer in town to buy wool to make some sweaters for themselves and their family, and the beginning of the Skrimslis adventure was born!

She began selling her products in local stores, and as leftover fabrics piled up, Alma Björk found it a waste to throw them out. She wanted to make something useful with them, and the first Skrimslis were sewn.

The demand for the Skrimslis increased, and soon, Alma Björk was buying leftover fabric from her local wool manufacturer to keep her production as sustainable as possible.

Join the fun workshop!

If you are in Iceland, a great way to spend some time is to join a Skrimslis workshop hosted by Alma Björk, who welcomes groups to her home. All ages are welcome, and a typical workshop lasts about one hour. The workshop is located by the beachfront at Álftanes, just 15 minutes away from Reykjavik. It offers stunning views of the ocean and the city, surrounded by abundant birdlife. It is a peaceful and inspiring spot to create and craft.



Who is the workshop for?

The workshop is fun for both kids and adults. Many different groups join, from friends to families and groups of kids.

Private experience

The workshop is always a private experience. You book the session for your group, and no one else will be there but your group. The workshop is the best place to celebrate if you or a group member have a birthday! You can contact Alma in advance, and she can arrange the cake and decorations for you at an extra cost.

The launch of "The Skrimslis of Lavaland"

In 2017, Alma Björk published her first book about the Skrimslis, which Alma Björk and the Icelandic writer Eyrún Ósk Jónsdóttir co-wrote. The book tells the story of how the Skrimslis came to be and how, due to technology, they were suddenly forced to leave their homes and, for the first time in their lives, prepare for the

cold, harsh winter of the north on their own. Later this year, Alma will be publishing the next book, so stay tuned!

Buy your own Skrimslis

Buy your own Skrimslis You can find The Skrimslis for sale in 17 stores across Iceland, including Duty-Free Iceland at Keflavik International Airport, to make sure you don't have to leave the country without a local monster. However, if you don't find yourself currently in Iceland, you can get in touch with the designer directly through the website www.skrimslis.eu, and Alma Björk will ship your monster abroad



Monstri ehf
 Lambhagi 17, 225 Álftanes
skrimslis@skrimslis.eu
www.skrimslis.eu



GEO THERMAL EXHIBITION: *Embracing Resource Circulation*

At ON Power's Hellisheidi Power Plant, various entities operate with sustainability as the guiding principle. The Geothermal Exhibition in the main building presents visitors with a new perspective on multifaceted value creation and resource circulation. The forces of nature play a central role, presented to the audience in vivid, interactive fashion.

Sustainability at the Centre

The surroundings of the Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Plant are quite awe-inspiring, varying dramatically with the weather each day. The striking architecture and alien-looking equipment outdoors appear almost like something from science fiction, and when the backdrop of moss-covered mountains is added, these contrasting elements create an impressive tableau.

"All the structures at Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Plant house activities that, in one way or another, aim to utilise the area's geothermal resources in a natural and sustainable manner," says Laufey Guðmundsdóttir, the director of the Geothermal Exhibition at the Hellisheidi Power Plant. "Everything we do is geared toward ensuring that our operations leave the land in at least as good condition as it was in before utilisation."

In the Geothermal Exhibition, the natural water cycle and the path of hot water

from boreholes to homes, along with other aspects of the operation, come to life for visitors. In one designated and enclosed space, both art and science converge in a way, offering a unique 14-minute experience through captivating video footage captured by drones, accompanied by soothing music and the subtle hint of an exclusively made scent called "Agndofa," creating an enchanting ambiance.

The exhibition staff, also known as Science Communicators, expertly guide visitors through the wonders of geothermal energy. Among them are geologists, resource specialists, and environmental scientists who are well-versed in the subject matter.

Resource Circulation and Geothermal Utilization

The Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Plant is one of the largest of its kind in the world, and the Geothermal Exhibition sheds light on various aspects of its operation—from the very extraction of hot water deep within the earth to its delivery all the way to end-users. The exhibition educates visitors interactively and informatively about how geothermal energy is harnessed to generate electricity for the country and provide hot water for the capital area.

Several other entities operate alongside the Hellisheidi Power Plant within the ON Geothermal Park. Notably, there's the trail-blazing startup Carbfix, a leader in



Laufey Guðmundsdóttir

combating climate change by transforming CO2 into rock formations. Also within sight from the power plant, an organisation called Climeworks has facilities at the forefront of global efforts to capture CO2 from the atmosphere. Finally, VAXA Technologies has a presence in the ON Geothermal Park, where they cultivate microalgae and produce, among other things, vitamins.

Despite the abundant natural resources in the Hengill area, all the companies operating there are acutely aware that they must tread carefully and respect the environment. Balancing water and energy utilisation is crucial to ensure a sustainable future. "We need to treat these resources as well as we can, not only directly through our operations but also by thinking beyond them. That includes substantial reforestation efforts," explains Laufey. "Endless extraction is not sustainable; we must give back in return."

Behind Every Detail—A Reason

Just as the utilisation of the area's resources is carefully planned to efficiently harness the geothermal energy of the region, the main building of the Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Plant is a deliberately designed structure. The roof of the power plant and the roof of the exhibition space lean toward each other, imitating the intersection of tectonic plates where Iceland lies. But that's not all—the distinctive shape of the glass dome in the exhibition space, as well as the pattern in the paving stones in front of the building,

points at Snæfellsjökull glacier, which is by many considered one of the world's seven major power centres. Thoughtful design prevails wherever one looks; no aspect of the architecture is left to chance. Various architectural elements in the main building directly reference features such as tectonic boundaries, geological layers, and other environmental factors which collectively contribute to the presence of geothermal heat beneath the Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Plant.

Otherworldly, Everchanging View

The view from the exhibition space is at once magnificent and variable, according to Laufey. "Some days, the surroundings are shrouded in mysterious fog, while at other times, everything is covered in snow, creating a truly enchanting scene. In clear weather, the mountain peaks stretch out under the blue sky as far as the eye can see, almost completing a full circle."

Today, the sky is overcast, and fine mist hangs in the air. The green moss appears to glow vividly, covering both lava fields and nearby mountains.

First Stop on the Golden Circle

Increasingly, visitors exploring the Golden Circle make the Geothermal Exhibition their first stop to witness the power and marvels of geothermal water in Iceland. This choice is fitting enough because water and Iceland's geology are the common thread connecting the sites that form the aforementioned circle: the tectonic boundaries, Öxarárfoss waterfall, the Silfra fissure, and the iconic Thingvallavatn Lake at Thingvellir; the unique and impressive Gullfoss waterfall; and finally, the geothermal heat that propels hot water dozens of meters into the air in the Geysir area. It's all interconnected and situated in the same part of the country as well.

"We are indeed fortunate to have at our disposal this remarkable educational hub in geology, which Iceland represents. Starting a journey through this unique region here on Hellisheidi is an obvious and natural choice," says Laufey.



Jarðhitasýning ON
 Hellisheidarvirkjun
 Phone 591-2880
 syning@on.is
 www.on.is/en/geothermal-exhibition/



PHOTOGRAFER: *Kristinn H. Benediktsson*

VOLCANIC VESTMANNAEYJAR



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

Vestmannaeyjar (the Westman Islands) is a hidden gem in south Iceland, an area with rich birdlife, culture and natural beauty. With fewer than 5,000 residents, it's an isolated community surrounded by beauty.

Volcanic eruption of 1973

On the morning of 23 January 1973, a volcanic eruption changed the lives of the people that called the Westman Islands home. The eruption, which came without warning, and lasted for five months, displaced more than 3,000 Icelanders. Ash from the eruption fell for weeks, destroying homes, livestock, and

personal possessions. 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.

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.

At the Eldheimar Museum, there is also an exhibition about **THE VOLCANIC ISLAND SURTSEY**, which was formed during an eruption that began on November 14, 1963, and lasted for approximately four years. Today, Surtsey is a unique natural wonder, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



DISCOVER THE SAGNHEIMAR MUSEUM'S NEW EXHIBITION

View rare books, Kjarval, and Júlíana Sveinsdóttir's works

Just a short ferry ride away, the Westman Islands are considered a hidden gem by many locals. The remoteness, outdoor activities, and jaw-dropping nature are enough to put the islands on your Iceland itinerary. But, there's also culture. Indeed, when visiting Iceland's charming Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar), there's one place that brings the rich local history and culture to life: Sagnheimar Museum. This year, the museum is pulling out all the stops with an extraordinary new exhibition that promises to captivate art lovers, history buffs, and curious travellers alike.



Kicking off with an official opening on May 18, this ongoing exhibition invites you to step back in time through

rare books, historic Icelandic Bibles, and iconic artworks by two of Iceland's most celebrated artists, Jóhannes S. Kjarval and Júlíana Sveinsdóttir.

This museum is a must-visit for art enthusiasts, history lovers, or anyone curious about Icelandic culture. Sagnheimar's staff is dedicated to preserving and sharing these cultural gems, making sure that every visitor gains a deeper appreciation of Iceland's unique culture. Be sure to stop by the Sagnheimar Museum; you'll be glad you did.

A treasure trove of rare books and historic Bibles

On display is a remarkable collection of rare books, including a copy of all 11 Icelandic Bibles that have been published, the earliest from 1584. The centrepiece is an ancient book from 1498, printed shortly after the famed Gutenberg Bible. This priceless artefact connects visitors to a pivotal moment in human history, when printed books began to spread knowledge across Europe. The museum's staff is so proud to share this important piece of history with the public.



For Icelanders, these Bibles and other old books are more than historical relics. They symbolise the preservation of the Icelandic language, culture, and faith across centuries. Sagnheimar takes great pride in showcasing these treasures, making them accessible for everyone to appreciate.

Kjarval's magic: 40 illustrated masterpieces

No exhibition about Icelandic art would be complete without mentioning Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval, one of Iceland's most beloved and influential artists. Guests can marvel at

40 stunning illustrations by Kjarval, which capture the mystical connection between Iceland's dramatic landscapes and its folklore. His art is a must-see for anyone wanting to understand the spirit of Iceland.

Celebrating Júlíana Sveinsdóttir: A Westman Islands icon

Of course, the Westman Islands have their very own art icon, Júlíana Sveinsdóttir. Born in Heimaey, she went on to become one of Iceland's most recognised female artists, spending much of her life in Denmark. However, her roots always pulled her back to the islands, and Iceland is reflected in much of her work.

This exhibition proudly features six original paintings by Júlíana, offering a rare opportunity to admire her delicate yet powerful portrayal of Icelandic nature. Her works often reflect her connection to both Iceland and Denmark, blending Nordic minimalism with the rugged beauty of her homeland. For locals, Júlíana's art holds a special place, symbolising the creative spirit of the Westman Islands.

Grand opening ceremony: A cultural milestone

The exhibition will be inaugurated with a special ceremony on May 18, attended by two government ministers and the Bishop of Iceland. This event marks not only the opening of a new display but also a celebration of Icelandic heritage, faith, and artistic expression. For travellers, it's a chance to experience the island's community spirit firsthand, while being part of a critical cultural moment.

This exciting exhibition is more than just a display; it's a journey into Iceland's heart and soul. With rare books, historical bibles, and captivating artworks, Sagnheimar Museum brings the past to life in a way that's not just educational but deeply inspiring.

Text: Jenna Gottlieb

Location: Sagnheimar Museum, Heimaey, Westman Islands
Opening Date: May 18
Exhibition Duration: Ongoing
Opening Hours: Visit sagnheimar.is en for details.



SAGNHEIMAR: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME IN ICELAND'S WESTMAN ISLANDS NEW EXHIBITION

Explore one of Iceland's hidden cultural gems

Tucked away in the charming town of Heimaey in the Westman Islands lies a historical treasure that too many travellers overlook—Sagnheimar Folk Museum. While the islands may be small in size, their story is anything but. With tales dating back to 627 AD and continuing through modern cultural milestones, Sagnheimar offers a profound and personal exploration of Iceland's past like no other.

The Westman Islands: Iceland's Hidden Gem

If you're planning a trip to Iceland and haven't considered the Westman Islands, it's time to change that. Just a short ferry ride from the mainland, this volcanic archipelago delivers breathtaking natural beauty, puffin-filled cliffs, and a rich human story. Heimaey, the only inhabited

island, is home to Sagnheimar, a museum that brings these stories to life.

History That Spans Centuries

Sagnheimar may seem modest from the outside, but its collection spans centuries of fascinating history. Think Turkish pirate raids in 1627, where islanders were captured and enslaved. What makes the museum stand out is how personally it's curated. You're not just reading plaques on the wall. You're engaging with locals who know the stories—some of them have lived them or grown up hearing them firsthand.

Ever-Changing Exhibits That Keep You Coming Back

Unlike many museums that stay the same year-round, Sagnheimar is constantly evolving. From April to December, they

introduce new exhibitions every month, often themed around unique aspects of local life or untold stories drawn from their vast collection of artefacts. Whether it's old fishing tools, handwritten letters, or traditional Icelandic garments, every visit offers something new and unique.

Fast forward to today, and the island hosts one of Iceland's most anticipated annual events, the Þjóðhátíð music festival in August, a wild celebration rooted in tradition and modern Icelandic culture.

Fun For the Whole Family

Got kids or just young at heart? You're in for a treat. Right outside the museum, you'll find a local park area designed to keep everyone entertained. Inside the museum, there's a pirate-themed dress-up section, where kids (and playful adults) can dive into imaginative play. One of the museum's most beloved new features



is the sensory section. With toys inspired by older times, such as bones, shells, and handcrafted curiosities, visitors are given a sense of what childhood was like before the days of iPads and plastic toys.

The best part? The recently added play area was assembled by the museum's in-house handyman, who drew inspiration from an old house and its hidden treasures. It's this kind of grassroots dedication that gives Sagnheimar its authentic charm.

Additionally, the library, housed in the same building as the museum, offers a summer reading program for children every year, encouraging them to continue reading during the summer. They always have a theme, and this year's theme is Candyland. The museum will participate in this program by creating games related to the theme of the reading program for our museum. This year, the museum will host a scavenger hunt, a word search, and bingo, and will keep these games available throughout the summer.

Why Sagnheimar is Worth Your Stop

So, why should Sagnheimar make your travel shortlist? It's intimate; not too big, not too small, just right for a couple of immersive hours. It's authentic as it's run by locals who know their stuff and are always ready to chat. The museum features engaging interactive exhibits, rotating themes, and spaces designed



for kids, making it more than just your average museum. Furthermore, its central location is the perfect addition to a day of exploring the Westman Islands.

Before You Go

Visit the Sagnheimar website for opening hours, current exhibitions, and additional visitor information. Remember, Sagnheimar isn't just a stop on the map; it's an experience, a window into the heart and soul of the Westman Islands. It reminds us that even the smallest places can hold the biggest stories. So next time you're planning your Iceland adventure, carve out time for the ferry ride, soak in the coastal views, and make your way to Heimaey.

Text : Jenna Gottlieb



THE WONDROUS WESTMAN ISLANDS

Why the Westman Islands should be on your Iceland travel itinerary

While many travellers flock to Iceland's iconic Golden Circle or the glacier-filled South Coast, few realise that just a short ferry ride away lies a hidden gem that rivals them all—the Westman Islands. Known as Vestmannaeyjar in Icelandic, this archipelago is bursting with natural wonders, dramatic volcanic landscapes, and a rich history.

A Natural Wonderland Unlike Any Other

The main island, Heimaey, is a playground for nature lovers. Picture emerald-green cliffs, black sand beaches, and jagged volcanic terrain that begs to be explored. One of the best ways to take it all in? Hit the hiking trails. Hike up Eldfell, the volcano that famously erupted in 1973 and reshaped the island, literally. It's a relatively short climb with jaw-dropping panoramic views.

Travellers can also walk the coastal trails where seabirds soar overhead and the Atlantic Ocean crashes below, and explore lava fields where locals fought back during the eruption, saving the harbour from destruction.

The World's Largest Puffin Colony

The Westman Islands are home to the largest puffin colony in the world. Each summer, millions of these adorable birds nest on the cliffs around the islands. Puffin watching here in the summer isn't a maybe, it's practically guaranteed. You can spot them from hiking paths, but for a closer look, consider taking a guided tour or hopping on a boat for a seabird safari. Watching them dart across the water or peek out from their burrows is pure joy, especially for kids.

Family-Friendly Fun (With a Dash of Adventure)

The Westman Islands are a fantastic destination for families as they're safe, compact, and packed with activities; there's no shortage of things to do together. Families can visit museums like Sagnheimar to delve into local legends and pirate tales, explore natural caves and regional parks, and engage with interactive exhibits that bring history to life. And if you're feeling adventurous, don't miss a volcanic ATV ride, a high-speed, heart-racing excursion that's a hit with older kids and teens.

A Deep, Volcanic History

The Westman Islands have a story to tell, one of fire, resilience, and survival. In 1973, the volcano Eldfell erupted with little warning, forcing the evacuation of over 5,000 residents. Homes were buried, lava flowed toward the town, and the island's very existence was threatened. Today, you can walk through areas shaped by that eruption and visit museums dedicated to preserving those memories. Eldfell is still warm, in fact, and some local guides bake bread during tours.

Wildlife, Whale Watching and Water Adventures

Beyond puffins, the surrounding waters are rich in marine life. Whale watching is a popular activity, with minke and humpback whales often sighted during the summer months. For those craving a bit more adrenaline, RIB boat safaris take you zipping around, offering views of seals, seabirds, and towering rock formations.

Easy Access with Plenty of Comfort

Getting to the Westman Islands is part of the adventure. Hop on a ferry from the



south coast of Iceland, and you're transported to a whole new world. It's an easy day trip, but you'll definitely want to stay longer. And if the ferry is fully booked for cars, don't worry; you don't need it. The island is small, making it easily walkable, and there's plenty of transportation available.

And don't worry about roughing it - there are comfortable accommodations ranging from cosy guesthouses to family-friendly hotels. Plus, some restaurants serve fresh local fare, including some of the best seafood you'll ever taste.

Ready to Explore?

The Westman Islands may not be on every Iceland bucket list, but they absolutely should be. It's wild, welcoming, and full of surprises, offering a perfect blend of nature, culture, and adventure. Make sure to carve out a few days for this incredible archipelago; you'll wonder why it took you so long to discover it.

Text : Jenna Gottlieb



SKÓGAR MUSEUM

The Crown Jewel among regional museums

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

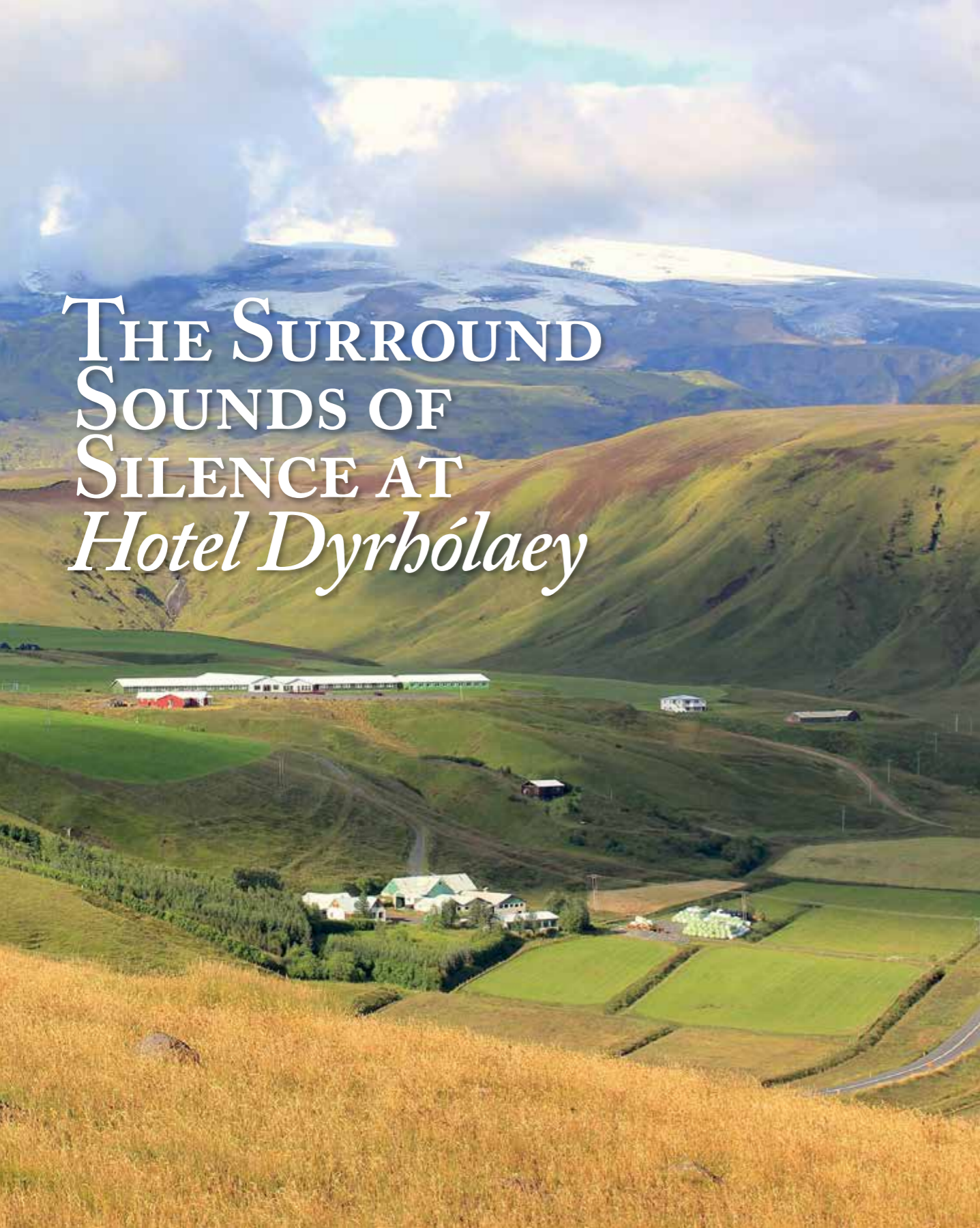


researched over the years is of great value for the cultural heritage of Iceland. For over 60 years Þórður also took an active part in greeting the visitors of the museum. He would gladly guide people around the museum and usually he would end the visit singing and playing the harmonium. Þórður's heritage and life's work can be seen in Skógar Museum.

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THE SURROUND SOUNDS OF SILENCE AT *Hotel Dyrhólaey*



A picture is worth a thousand words

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

A bit of history

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

A passion for the Northern Lights

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



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

Surrounded by nature

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

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



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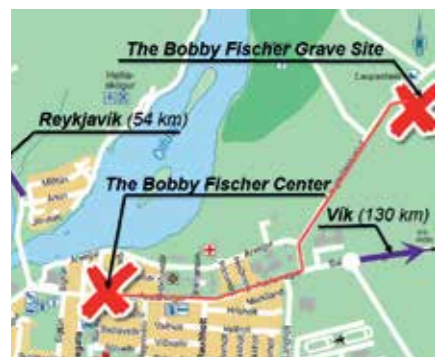


THE BOBBY FISCHER CENTER

Housing the memorabilia of the 11th World Chess Champion **BOBBY FISCHER**, the Match of the Century and the Selfoss Chess Club.

The American Bobby Fischer became the World Chess Champion when he defeated the Soviet grandmaster and reigning World champion Boris Spassky in Reykjavik in the summer of 1972. Taking place at the height of the cold war, the match is generally referred to as the Match of the Century, showdown between the American Fischer and the Soviet Spassky. This match was significant not only for its intense gameplay but also for its political symbolism, as it represented a clash between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, who dominated the chess world at that time, mirroring the tense relations between the two superpowers. Since 1948 Soviet chess players had held the World championship title – uninterrupted for a quarter of a century. Fischer won the match—making some historic moves along the tournament like game one’s iconic 29...Bxh2—becoming the first American to win the World Chess Championship. His victory subsequently ignited the “Fischer Boom”, a surge of interest and popularity in chess across the United States and other parts of the world.

The match was a great spectacle and attracted massive attention worldwide, putting Iceland on the map. At FIDE 100th Anniversary earlier this year, the Match of the Century in 1972 was named Most Memorable FIDE Tournament, making a visit to the Bobby Fischer Center even more enticing. On display at the Bobby Fischer Center in Selfoss are among other things Spassky’s and Fischer’s scoresheets, a printout from the radiation measurements demanded by Spassky’s delegation after the 17th game and a replica of the chess board used during the match which was staged in Laugardalshöll in Reykjavik. In addition many curious items related to Bobby Fischer’s stay in Iceland during his last years (2005-2008), for example his chair from the antiquarian bookshop Bókin in Reykjavik. He died on 17th of January 2008 at the age of 64. Bobby Fischer’s final resting place is at Laugardælir cemetery, a few hundred meters away from Bobby Fischer center.



DREAMING OF ICELAND

Glacier Journey’s Adventure of a Lifetime

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

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

Let the adventure begin

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

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

A magical-mystical world of ice

The 1st of November to the beginning of March marks a very special moment in the year when it’s cold enough to go ice cave exploring! Glacier Journey offers a 2.5 hour ice cave tour with a tremendous opportunity to explore the glacier inside and out. Experienced guides will lead the way into one of the ice caves that form at the edge of the glacier when the temps drop down below freezing and these icy-blue, fairy tale caves are safe to enter. The ice caves are ever changing but always remain beautiful and interesting and never cease to amaze.

Small groups and families welcome

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

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



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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. Served in all seasons, Icelanders love to grill lamb in the summer, enjoy kjötsúpa (meat soup) in the



Hafliði Halldórsson Managing Director of icelandiclamb.is

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, Skyr and Salmon. For information on lamb recipes and some restaurants that serve Icelandic lamb, visit www.icelandiclamb.is.



THE HOMELY HERD'S LAIR

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

Hotel Hjarðarból – Herd’s Lair – is a friendly family-run guesthouse in the countryside close to Hringvegurinn – The Ring Road or Route #1 – mid-way 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 Hjarðarból 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 sou-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



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THE MANSION OF THE ICELANDIC SOUL

Gljúfrasteinn Museum is the Former Home of Icelandic Writer Halldór Laxness

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

Capturing the Soul

Laxness, who was born in 1902 and died in 1998, absorbed society’s players and all its tiny steps as well as its big jumps, often

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

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

The Source of Inspiration

The reason Laxness built his home here was his love for the Mosfellsdalur valley. He was born and raised in the valley. It was there, at his grandmother’s knee, that he learned to appreciate the different destinies of the human race and develop a kindness towards



those less fortunate—which is quite apparent in his novels. The area where Laxness spent his childhood became his source of inspiration throughout his life.

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

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

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



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 www.gljufrasteinn.is



Kleifarvatn at minus eleven Centigrade.



Straumur, near Straumsvík.



Ferðalangar á leið í Bláa lónið



Mount Thorbjörn and the Blue Lagoon at midday sun.

LAVA COOLING MANAGER + REYKJANES

It was fitting today, in the -10°C frost (14°F) on Reykjanes, that Iceland's Word of the Year (2024) was “hraunkælingarstjóri” or lava cooling manager. Despite the cold, the day was beautiful on this southern peninsula, located south and west of the capital. Icelandic Times / Land & Saga ventured out to the area to witness the changes, the atmosphere, but above all, the beauty as the sun finally rose ever so slightly above the horizon, in a region that has experienced ten volcanic eruptions in less than four years.

It's incredible to see and feel the contrast of these conditions—boats arriving in Grindavík with their catch while the

town remains largely deserted after over a year of being officially deemed uninhabitable. Meanwhile, the Blue Lagoon adapts, relocating its parking areas to accommodate visitors who come to experience the warm lagoon on top of layers of volcanic rock. Next door, the Svartsengi power plant continues to provide electricity and heat to 10% of Iceland's population.

It's a miracle—a marvel of engineering and resilience made possible by bulldozer operators and lava cooling teams, supported by the government and the nation's people.

Photos and text : Páll Stefánsson



Mount Thorbjörn and the Blue Lagoon at midday sun.



Travelers on their way to the Blue Lagoon.

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

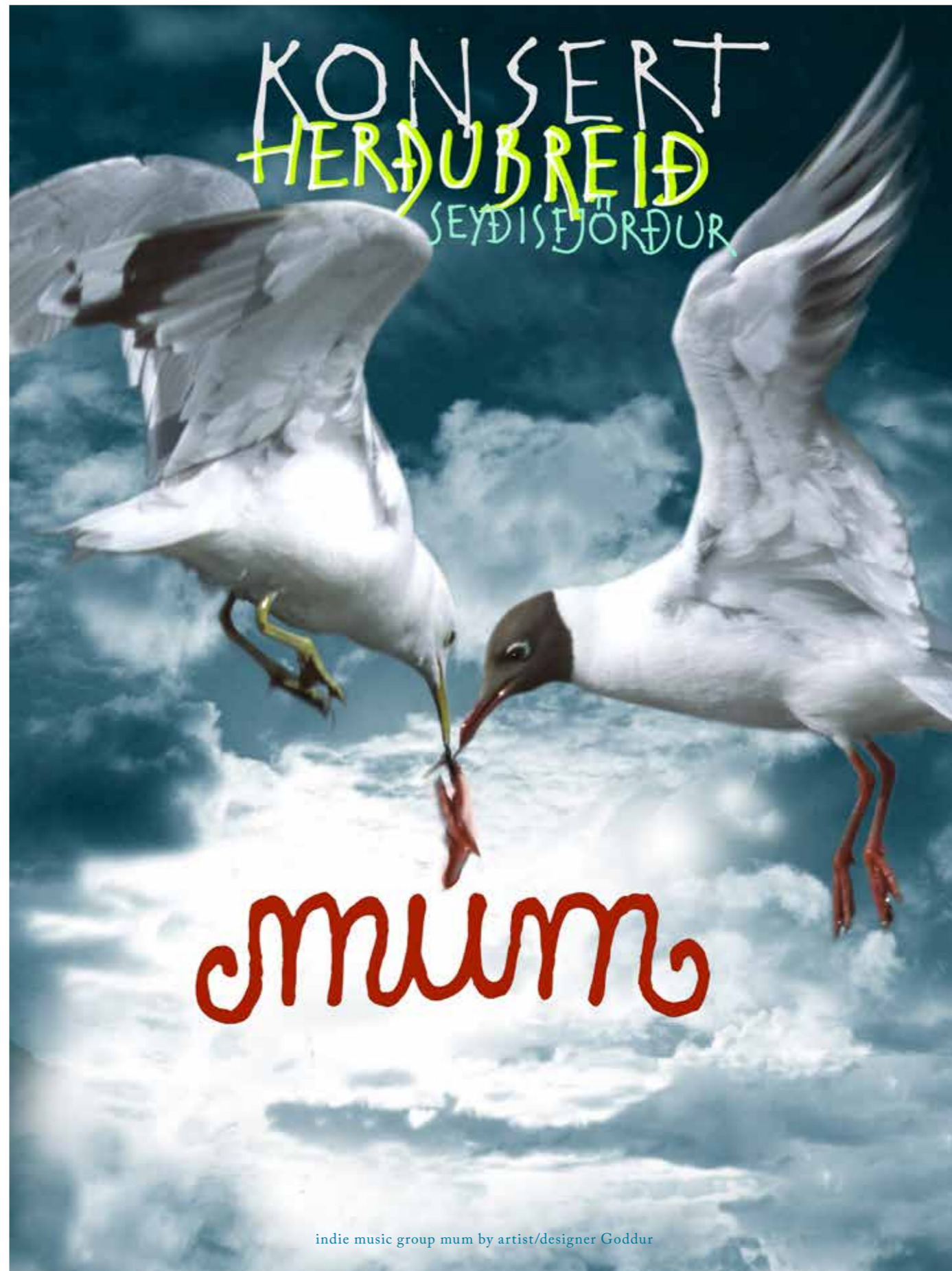
The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described without a doubt as one of the most memorable fireworks shows on earth. The event, held annually in late August, starts at 11.30 pm, with proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.

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

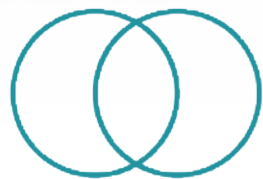
km (9.6 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 300m (984 feet) deep, five Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare. With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water 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

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indie music group mum by artist/designer Goddur



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