

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 22 • 2014



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Journey to the Centre of the Earth  
The House that Disappeared  
Your Guide to the Best of Iceland

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Dear reader, welcome to Iceland. Whether you came by ship or plane, were enticed by an airline's special offer or driven to fulfill a lifelong dream to visit this obscure island, we welcome you to what we hope will be the best travel experience of your life.

Iceland has a lot to offer in terms of natural treasures and a rich history, not to mention culture, arts, crafts and design—along with inspiring innovation.

At the Icelandic Times, we strive to bring you up to speed with all the information you will need for your visit, so you'll spend less of your valuable time struggling to search for it and can rather use it reaping the benefits, experiencing and enjoying all the country has to offer.

For your convenience, we've placed QR codes on the articles, which provide electronic calling cards when scanned with smartphones or iPads, to bridge the printed page and the Internet. But we want to take it even further and offer you, dear reader, a platform to share your experiences with others on our Facebook site at [www.facebook.com/IcelandicTimes](http://www.facebook.com/IcelandicTimes), where we have launched a photo contest for both amateurs and more advanced photographers alike, to tell your stories in photos.

We hope you enjoy this feature-packed issue and that your stay will be everything you had hoped it would be. Enjoy your adventure and have a great trip—we'd love to hear how it went!



Einar Th. Thorsteinsson

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 Ásbýrgi, North Iceland

### 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 'that'
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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# VOLCANO HOUSE

volcano cinema • café • geological exhibition

## CINEMA ON FIRE

Volcano House features two documentaries chronicling two of Iceland's most famous volcanic eruptions of the last 40 years

### Eyjafjallajökull 2010 Eruption

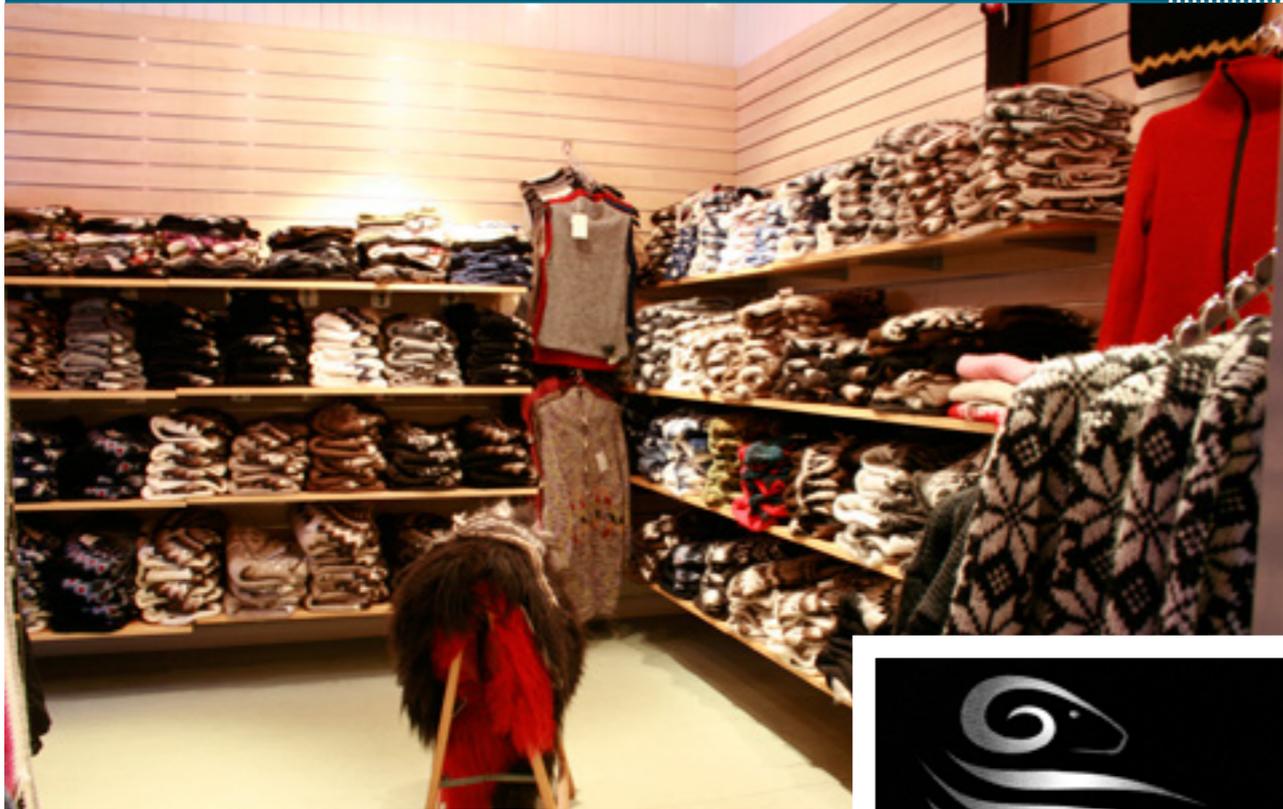
This powerful documentary made specially for Volcano House was filmed and directed by the Emmy-nominated Icelandic film maker, Jóhann Sigfússon

### The Westman Island's 1973 Eruption

began without warning on the night of January 23rd, 1973 where 400 homes perished under ash and lava

### Showtimes:

English: 10:00 to 21:00 Every hour on the hour  
 German: 18:00 From June 1st – September 1st



## THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Assn. sells Icelandic wool and products

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

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

### From home to market

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

### Find the real thing

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

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

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

### Traditional and modern styles

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago, the designs took the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young



Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours.

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

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

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

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

-ASF

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## THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

The little Christmas shop that is festive all year round

Anne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, is what you might call a 'one woman wonder'. When she lost her job in tourism ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. She already has an extensive range, most made exclusively for her by a number of craftsmen, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials such as wool, glass and clay. In addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Yule Lads and the Christmas Cat.

### In the Land of Eternal Christmas

Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas obsession and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though



Anne Helen loves is to tell customers about Icelandic Christmas traditions. Visitors often stop by simply because they've heard of her hospitality and the shop's friendly atmosphere. They rarely leave empty handed. After all, placing an Icelandic Yule Lad on your Christmas tree every year is a great way to remember your visit to Iceland.

-Hp

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## TAPASHÚSIÐ

*Romance, style and excellent food at Reykjavik's old harbour*

Reykjavik's old harbour, probably one of the most romantic places in town, is a small oasis of peace, only a few steps away from bustling Laugavegur. Need a break? Check out the Mediterranean-green houses by the small marina, where seawater softly gurgles between the boats. In one of the historic warehouses next to the quay hides the perfect place for spending special moments in the company of good friends or for indulging in one's passion for good food: Tapashúsið, (Tapas House).

### Celebrating food, wine and life

Tapashúsið receives its guests in the warm and friendly manner of Spain. The open, bright house with its wooden interior and tastefully arranged furniture, mixes modern with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century style, that harkens back to the days when the cod trade was at its height. Built in 1921, the warehouse was named 'Sólfell' (Sunny hill) and was used for the production of dried saltfish bound for the Spanish market as bacalao.

Today the wheel has come full circle. The celebrated Spanish tradition of tapas has come back to Sunny hill where Tapashúsið tempts its guests, not only with bacalao, but with a variety of sophisticated dishes made from fresh fish, seafood or game. The menu, passionately created by head chef Vigdís Ylfa Finnsdóttir, was the first woman to reach the finals in Iceland's 'Chef of the Year Competition 2009'.

The Spanish word 'tapas' means a 'festival of diversity' and Chef Vigdís' unique menu will help you celebrate food, fine wine and life, before you embark on a tender, fullmoon night down by Reykjavik's old harbour.

-DT



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## SPREADING THE TASTE

*You can enjoy authentic Thai food in Reykjavik or Akureyri*

The discovery of the wonderful flavours in genuine Thai food only reached Iceland in 2001 when, down by the Old Harbour in a cosy, small white building, Krua Thai first started the

taste revolution. For hundreds of years, Icelanders had grown accustomed to a rather bland diet, so the introduction of Thai cuisine had a major impact.

Icelanders have a reputation for pioneering and they plunged into this new taste sensation with gusto. A second restaurant opened in Bæjarlind, near the Smáralind shopping centre, also providing home deliveries. Take away also gained great popularity and now you can find the same delicious menu in Krua Siam in Akureyri, close to the harbour. With prices set so that a whole family can eat for less than a single person would pay in fancy restaurant, you can understand its popularity.



Krua Thai's cuisine is unique as it blends authentic Thai cooking, with all its special spices and ingredients imported directly from Thailand, with Icelandic meats and vegetables.

As the food is prepared to order, it reaches you with all the flavour as fresh as possible. It has proven a popular spot for visiting Thai tourists for good reason. The Thai-Icelandic blend is truly a delicious experience and one that any Thai food aficionado should savour while here.

-ASF



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## THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

*The Sea Baron's Fish Meals attract visitors from all over the world*

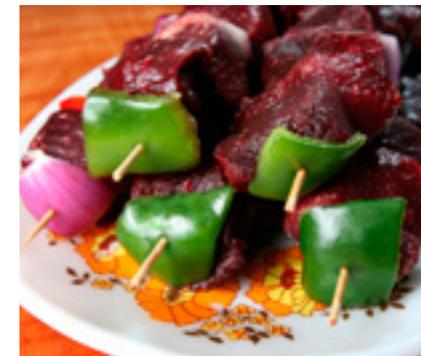
Iceland has many 'different' foods which have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods and their traditions continue to this day. Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!

### The Sea Baron himself

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of unusual fish dishes. His lobster soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title of 'the world's greatest lobster soup'. While he doesn't reveal the secrets of his recipe, that doesn't stop his restaurant from being filled every day with aficionados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware store to buy a grill—and was in business! His

visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out to make room for tables and chairs. He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no one else had thought of. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and made meals that have established his reputation around the world.



### In true spirit

Kjartan, the true Sea Baron, recently retired and passed his mantle to Elísabet Jean Skúladóttir, an energetic and vibrant young woman who bought the restaurant three years ago at the Sea Baron's request. Kjartan wanted to make sure his place would be well taken care of in the years to come. Kjartan jokes that, not only did Elísabet make a great investment by purchasing the restaurant, but he was included in the deal himself. Karan's spirit is palpable as visitors will not only feel his energy but he is there to greet them in the form of a wax sculpture!



### Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia donated by old sea captains and their families that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats, pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together.

Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, it is an experience that will leave you with both good memories, a satisfied appetite—and perhaps, a rather shocked mind that you would actually have eaten fermented fish and that it tasted so, so good. Moby dick on a stick (minke whale on a spear) for example, is a play on words with great impact, delicious and stirring—as are the great variety of other fish spears with a mix of cod, blue ling, salmon, trout, lobster and giant shrimp, to name a few. Also worth mentioning is an Icelandic specialty dish, available at noon, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays—a combination of fermented fish, (skate on Saturdays) with heaps of hamsatólg (fried fat), potatoes and rye bread with butter. This delicacy is only available from 1<sup>st</sup> September – 30<sup>th</sup> April. For desert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónagrautur—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

-ASF



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## ICELAND'S MASTER WATCHMAKER

*JS Watches are masters of time*

How many parts are there in a top-notch time piece? It happens to be a well-kept secret, unless you find a master watchmaker who allows you to observe the intricacies of his meticulous work.

One such master, Gilbert O. Guðjónsson and his son Sigurður Gilbertsson, along with their partners Júlíus Heiðarsson and Grimkell Sigurðsson, pioneered what may be the world's smallest watch manufacturer in 2005.

As typical Icelanders, they do everything themselves—from design to production, and even the photography in keeping with their motto, 'no secrets, no fakes'. It is the



extraordinary quality, the use of materials such as sapphire crystal and surgical steel from Germany and the limited production of each design that makes the difference, attracting collectors and celebrities from all over the world. The latest fan of Master Gilbert's watches is Tom Cruise, who sent a personal note of satisfaction—just one more affirmation among the list of many other satisfied customers that includes Viggo Mortensen and the Dalai Lama.

### Watches for every occasion

The Icelandic Search and Rescue Team, who daily put their lives at risk, have no time for anything less than the best. They are officially equipped with the 'Sif', a special edition of water resistant watches.

Each watch has its own fascinating story. The impressive Frisland Goð engraved watch celebrates Viking power by fusing traditional design with volcanic materials. The Frisland 1941 Pilot watch was created in 2011, in honour of Reykjavik domestic airport's 70 year anniversary.

When a Dutch customer could wait no longer for the watch he had ordered, Master Gilbert invited him to see it in its final stages of completion. The Dutchman found himself one of those few who know the secrets of the inner workings of his timepiece.

You can follow in his footsteps. Just give Gilbert a call and step into the secrecy of his small watch-making cabinet, where screws, parts and tools are kept in neat boxes and the watchmaker's magnifying glass oversees the ticking of his precious movements.

-DT

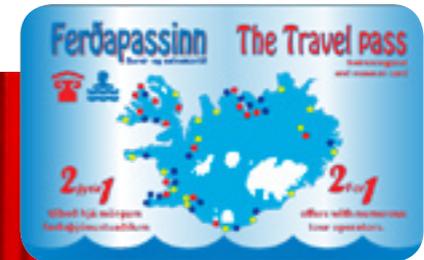


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# THE TRAVEL PASS

*How to get the most out of Iceland and save money.*



In Iceland there is a rich culture regarding museums and swimming pools with over 200 museums and more than 170 swimming pools—quite an accomplishment considering the small population of the country.

The Travel Pass is an interesting innovation in the tourist industry and should be especially handy for families and individuals who plan on travelling around Iceland this summer.

The Travel Pass gives free access to over 50 swimming pools and museums for up to two adults and their children, as well as a 2-for-1 unlimited discount at leading adventure and leisure tourism retailers throughout the country. These include, for example: whale watching, horse riding, caving, boat rides, guided glacier tours, quad tours and sea angling.

The cost of the card can be paid off with one whale watching trip or a quad bike ride. Then you still get to enjoy all those swimming pools and museums for free.

The cardholder may use the card twice in every swimming pool and once in every museum and it can be used for the 2-for-1 offer as often as one wishes.

It is the Perfect Travel Companion!

More information is found on the website [www.thetravelpass.is](http://www.thetravelpass.is) and [www.ferdapassinn.is](http://www.ferdapassinn.is)



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# WE'LL MEET IN THE POOL!

## Laugardalslaug—the most popular swimming pool in Reykjavik

Swimming in one of Reykjavik's seven geothermal swimming pools or the unique Ylströnd geothermal beach is very invigorating. The pools, which are open all year round, attract nearly 2 million visitors and for a good reason! Enjoy soaking in the warm water originating from a geothermal drill hole within the city limits.

### Cool like a pool

Reykjavik's swimming pools are definitely cool—as in hip. The water in the main pool is about 29° Celsius / 83° Fahrenheit which is quite comfortable. In warmer countries people jump into the pool to cool off—here in Iceland, it is exactly the

opposite. You want to jump in to keep warm! The children's pool is even warmer than the main pool and if that is not warm enough, then you have 7 hot tubs to choose from, ranging in temperature from 37°C to 43°C. The largest hot tub in Laugardalslaug swimming pool has space for 50 people.

### Reykjavik's most popular pool

Laugardalslaug Olympic size swimming pool is the largest and most popular pool in Iceland. Originally built in 1968 and renovated periodically since then, it was visited by 750,000 people in 2013. The main pool has several 50m lanes for casual

swimming, exercise and competition. There is an indoor pool for training and competition, a children's pool with slightly warmer water than the main pool, 3 children's water slides, a wipe-out-style challenge, 7 hot tubs of various temperatures and a steam bath. In addition, it is possible to order a massage prior to your visit.

### New at the pool from 2012

A saltwater hot tub is now available in Laugardalslaug. It is the first one of its kind in Iceland. The saltwater comes from a drill hole near the sea on the northern side of the Reykjavik peninsula, about one kilometre from the pool. The saltwater is

cold when it comes from the ground but it is heated to 40°C. Children love the new wipe-out style 'iceberg challenge' which consists of a mesh of ropes overhead and iceberg-like floats in the water. The challenge is to walk on the icebergs over a distance of 7 metres without falling into the water. Finally, the tallest waterslide at Laugardalslaug swimming pool has been revamped and now has LED-lights in the ceiling for a part of the ride.

### Great place to meet the locals

Swimming pools and hot tubs are an important meeting place for local people of all ages. Many of the most frequent visitors come to the pool first and foremost to socialise rather to exercise. They typically come to the pool on a certain day of the week and time of day when they know their friends are there, too. Because nearly everyone in Iceland enjoys

going to the pool, you might bump into Iceland's most famous singer, the mayor of Reykjavik, pop stars, TV-personalities, actors, members of parliament, university lecturers and students.

### Pool etiquette

It is considered very important to shower naked and wash thoroughly before entering the pool for hygiene reasons. Visitors who don't conform may have one of the staff, or even guests ask them to do so. Most people leave their towel behind in a special area near the showers while they go into the pool. Bath robes and sandals are hardly ever seen around pools but people with long hair are expected to wear a shower cap. Be considerate of other swimmers. Try not to swim in a lane with faster swimmers so they won't have to overtake you. When it looks like you're going to swim into a person you're supposed to veer to the right.

### Great water quality

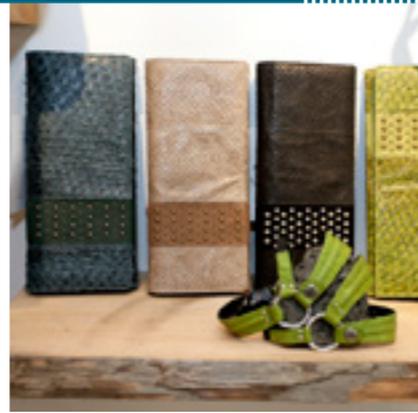
The water in Reykjavik's swimming pools is of the highest quality. It comes from drill holes in three different areas, in and near Reykjavik. The quality of the water is inspected four times a day by the pool staff and four times a year by independent health and safety inspectors. The clean natural geothermal water and regular inspection ensures the highest water quality possible.

Laugardalslaug opens at 6:30am and closes at 10pm on weekdays in summer. Saturdays and Sundays it is open from 8am. The price in 2014 is 600kr. for adults and 130kr. for children under the age of 18. Entry is free for disabled and senior citizens.

-SHV



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## AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES AT ISAFOLD TRAVEL

*Iceland with a personal touch.*

This coming winter, Isafold Travel will introduce a tour that includes a handicraft workshop at the local Tannery in Sauðarkrókur Village, cosy accommodation and gourmet meals. Tour participants will be able to create items from fish leather and animal skin, under the guidance of local craftsmen. The cost of materials is included in the tour price and customers will go home with their

very own handmade fashion goods, such as iPad covers or tote bag.

For families with children, Isafold Travel proposes an action packed adventure on the South Coast, where you will visit some of Iceland's most treasured places for recreation and exploration. Seven days of hiking, horseback riding in beautiful surroundings and going on a fun and educational visit to a geothermal energy

plant are bound to be an unforgettable experience for the whole family.

Isafold Travel is all about personal experiences, so scheduled tours can be customised to meet your wishes and needs.

-DT



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## THE ICELAND 4x4 OFF-ROAD ACADEMY

*Take your 4x4 driving to a whole new level*

ISAK 4x4 Rental is a specialized 4x4 rental company, offering tourists the opportunity to explore the Icelandic highlands safely in winter. This year, in collaboration with Nature Explorer and Isafold Travel, the company will offer advanced courses in 4x4 winter driving techniques.



### Iceland—the ideal place to learn how to drive in adverse weather

The next course, scheduled for late October 2014, provides in-depth training by professional instructors, that will enable drivers to dramatically improve their driving technique, acquire confidence behind the wheel and learn safe driving practices. Due to its diversity of natural conditions and the short distances between different types of terrain, Iceland is the ideal place for drivers to gain experience in driving in adverse conditions that will ultimately benefit them on their travels anywhere in the world.

### An action packed programme in beautiful surroundings

The course will take place on the South Coast, where participants will stay at Hotel Fljótshlíð. The carefully structured programme includes informative lectures and practical training such as emergency repairs, rescue techniques, and of course, driving. The best part of the day will be used to get in as much driving experience as possible, under various challenging

conditions—mud, sand, steep banks, unbridged rivers, snow and ice, etc. Additionally, there will be scenic tours into the surrounding area, giving participants a chance to enjoy the spectacular landscapes of South Iceland.

-HP



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## FISH SPA ICELAND

*The rejuvenation your feet have been dreaming about.*

Fish Spa Iceland is the first spa in Iceland to offer an unusual but increasingly popular type of pedicure, using the lovely Gurra Rufa fish to exfoliate and reinvigorate tired feet.

### A rewarding leap of faith

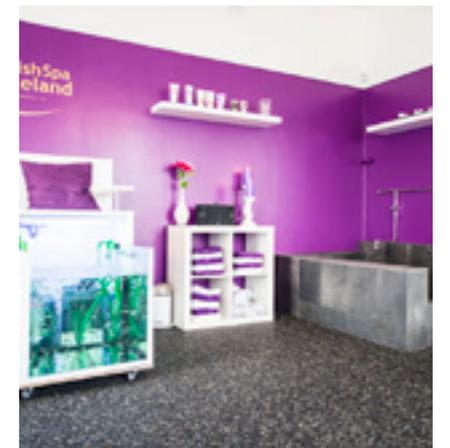
“It’s not that I don’t like fish. I just prefer me eating them over them eating me”, I replied to my friend who recently encouraged me to try this peculiar method which, in her opinion, was just what my former dancing—currently running—feet needed. I was sceptical. In my opinion, my feet were beyond saving. And besides, I’m ticklish.

But my curiosity had been raised and therefore, a few days later, I’m sitting in the bright and tidy environment of Fish Spa, staring into an aquarium full of very lively little creatures who seem eager to get to work.

The Guarra Rufa, sometimes nicknamed doctor fish, is a fish species that feeds on dead skin by instinct. The fish have no teeth and thus can not bite or cause any harm or pain, instead they massage the skin with their tongue which works a bit like sandpaper, leaving your skin incredibly soft and clean. But the benefits

are by no means only in appearance. A member of the staff explains to me that the fish’s micro-massage stimulates the nerve-endings in the feet, which promotes blood circulation and aids the skin renewal. The fish also release a certain enzyme, called Dithranol, which relaxes and creates an overall feeling of well-being in the body. I have to admit that this doesn’t sound bad at all. Plus, it’s eco friendly.

I look at my less than pretty toes—that have just been disinfected—take a deep breath and dip my feet into the water. I gasp. These little fellows sure have excellent work ethics! No one has ever been quite this enthusiastic about my feet before. What’s surprising is that it really doesn’t tickle that much; if anything it almost feels like being massaged with small water jets or soft electric waves. Within a minute I’m starting to relax and really enjoy myself. When my twenty minutes are up the staff practically has to order me out. I pull my feet out and dry them with amazement. They feel so cool and smooth that I’m reluctant to put my socks and boots on. I’ve had a pedicure before but this is a completely different feeling, much fresher and cleaner. No wonder the spa has



a lot of returning clients; the treatment is effective and pleasant and, last but not least, so much fun it not only revives your feet but your heart and soul as well!

The Fish Spa is open Monday to Saturday from 1 pm–7 pm and welcomes both groups and individuals. Just call in advance and make an appointment. It’s more than worth it.

-HP



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# A VISUAL FEAST

Reykjavík Art Museum brings you the highlights of Icelandic art.

Reykjavík Art Museum is located in three unique buildings; Hafnarhúsið, Kjarvalsstaðir and Ásmundarsafn, all situated in the heart of the city. You can easily walk from one to the other and the entrance ticket is valid to all the houses on the same day. The summer exhibitions form a fascinating profile of Icelandic art from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, giving viewers an interesting insight into the country, culture and history.



## Hafnarhúsið

This former warehouse is located in the city centre and focuses on contemporary art today. The museum offers a permanent exhibition of the art of Erró, Iceland's most renowned Pop artist. This summer, it is showing a collection of recent works that present a new period in the artist's career. The exhibition, entitled 'The World Today', consists of pieces created using diverse methods – oils, watercolours, collages and enamels – that clearly show the artist's love for life and the playful creativity of his visual world.



Kjalval, Ari, 1957-1958.

Your compound view—Selection from the collection from 1970–2010' shows the works of fifty of the most interesting artists in the Icelandic art scene over the last thirty years, among them Ólafur Elíasson, Ragnar Kjartansson and Gabriela Friðriksdóttir. The exhibition varies in both medium and concept and reflects, in spite of its diversity, how generations of artists influence one another.

Open daily from 10am – 5pm and from 10am – 8pm Thursdays. Tel: +354 590 1200.  
 Guided tours every Thursday at 6pm between June and August.

## Kjarvalsstaðir

Here the key works of Jóhannes Kjarval, one of Iceland's most beloved painters, are exhibited all-year round. Kjarval's vision of Icelandic nature is incomparable, in his work land and saga become one and the otherworld of folklore and myth merges with the landscape. The summer exhibition, 'The seasons in Kjarval's art', offers a selection of

his paintings that depict the changing of the land with the seasons.

'Affinities' and 'Reykjavik, City, Structure', showcase works from various periods in Icelandic art history. In 'Affinities' works of different artists, in some way linked or alike, are juxtaposed. The show does not have a certain thematic approach, rather it creates a dialogue by pairing works that somehow speak together, creating a whole new experience for the viewer. 'Reykjavik, City, Structure' explores the transformation of Reykjavik from town to city as depicted in the works of various artists. The exhibition is decorated with ten poems about Reykjavik, chosen by Reykjavik UNESCO City of Literature.

Open daily from 10am – 5pm.  
 Tel: +354 517 1290. Guided tours every Friday at 1pm throughout June and August.

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



## Ásmundarsafn

This magical house is literally the 'house' of pioneer sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson since it was mostly designed by the artist himself and partly served as his studio and home. The museum is surrounded by a garden filled with the artist's marvellous creations, works that show his love for Icelandic folklore, nature and the common people of the country. The sculptures span his entire career and clearly show his growth and development as an artist.

Open daily from 10am – 5pm.  
 Tel: +354 553 2155.



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# CATCH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS THIS SUMMER

Aurora Reykjavik's Northern Lights Center lets you see the Lights all year

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

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



## Hot coffee and choice gifts

Before leaving, be sure to grab a free cup of coffee in the Northern Lights Center gift shop and check out the impressive display of clothing, glassware, paintings and woollen knitwear by some of Iceland's most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it.

## Soothing Sights and Sounds

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

## A Unique Experience

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



## Setting the record straight

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

-EMV



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

# CALL OF THE WILD

Enter the lives of the seamen and fishermen at Reykjavik's Maritime Museum, Víkin

The sea has helped the Icelanders survive down through the centuries but it hasn't been a free ride. Whilst shoals of fish swim the oceans surrounding this remote northern country, getting them to the dining table can be challenging, to say the least. Iceland's fishing grounds have provided a rich harvest for generations of fishermen but often, the cost has been very high.

Until recent years, almost all international trade was conducted by sea. In today's industrialised world, most people know little of the life of the seaman and the fisherman and their communities. Their fish appears in the supermarkets in shrink-wrapped polystyrene packets. So it's a special experience to enter into the world and lives of the fishermen and



sailors - something that brings out a childhood wonder at being able to see, touch, feel and even dress like they did.

The Icelandic Maritime Museum is filled with the feeling of life with the sea. You can see how former generations struggled with the challenges and the boats they used. You imagine just what it must have been like to go out in a small open boat, rowing for your life when the skies filled with storms and the waves rose as high as houses. It was a battle for survival that everyone took part in together - men, women and children. The communities pulled together and worked together to harvest the sea's bounty. The young grew into responsibilities at an early age in this tough environment. Though the women generally took care of the hard work of processing and cleaning of the fish once they were

landed, many's the time that they would also go out on the boats to ensure their family's livelihood and very survival.

With the modernisation and mechanisation of the fishing industry, conditions have improved considerably. Using real and reconstructed collections and dramatic video footage, the museum gives a very clear understanding of Iceland's maritime history down through the years, covering each of its periods with its hands-on realistic exhibitions.



Where else could you jump into a fisherman's bed without upsetting someone?

It was not only the fishermen who braved the seas but also the Icelandic coastguard, part of whose role was to rescue ships that got in distress. For all those that were lost in the wild storms and winter blizzards, there were many more that were rescued. Just in the 46-year service of the Óðinn, the first modern Icelandic coastguard ship, over 200 ships were rescued and more crews were saved, often in extreme weather conditions. Its crew also took part in rescue operations when

land transport was practically impossible, due to the weather. It carried doctors, nurses, supplies and rescue workers from Reykjavik in atrocious, violently stormy weather when an avalanche struck in the West Fjords, serving as a base of rescue operations while there.

When Iceland had to defend its fishing rights in each of the three Cod Wars, it was the Óðinn that fended off British frigates, trawlers and tug boats and enforced the fishing limits designed to protect fish stocks that were being severely depleted by foreign fishing boats.

Today, the Óðinn is a living museum that visitors can tour. It has the feeling of being lived in, with everything still in place from its times of active duty. This provides a very special opportunity to see what life is like on the high seas for adults and children alike. A DVD story of its history, available in the museum's shop, makes very interesting viewing.

There's nothing sterile about this museum. It's an action museum where visitors get the feeling of becoming part of the seafaring community. This is heightened when meeting some of the former crew of the Óðinn who regularly get together in the museum's cafeteria with wives (or husbands) and friends.

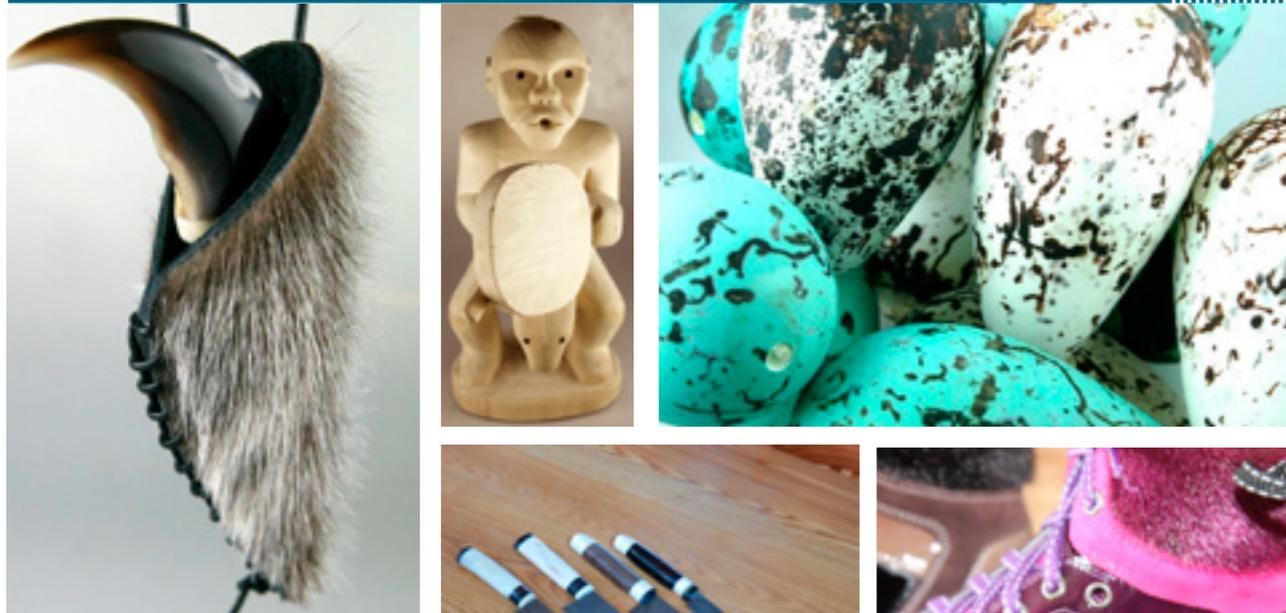
The museum is located at Grandi - just at the end of the road that runs along the harbour, and a 5-minute walk from the centre of town and it is open daily in winter, from Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 5pm, weekends from 1pm to 5pm. Summer opening times are from daily from 10am to 6pm, from 1<sup>st</sup> June-1<sup>st</sup> September.

-ASF



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## GREENLAND CHARMS

*Mystic Gifts From the Wild*

In the middle of busy Laugavegur, in the heart of Reykjavik, you'll find a door to another world. The Ravens' shop door is always open; the atmospheric sounds coming from within invite passers-by to come closer, to bury their hands in the silky reindeer skins at the entrance and to get in touch with Greenland. Ravens is not only a specialist shop for jackets and waistcoats made from quality arctic fur, it is probably the only place in Iceland where you can purchase sealskin that can be used for your own designs and also one of the very few places to find horsehide leather.

### Sealskin Design to Keep You Warm

Tuneful music from Greenland takes you on its wings while you explore the well laid-out shop with its range of hats, incredibly soft gloves, designer bags and elegant sneakers. For hundreds of years, sealskin clothing has helped the Inuit to survive Greenland's arctic cold, and it continues to do so today. Women in Greenland still wear sealskin trousers, in extraordinary contrast to the delicate bead necklaces you see displayed in the glass display cabinets. These colourful necklaces are traditional women's jewellery, and can be used to embellish both a décolleté as well as worn over warm clothes.

### Nature's Masterpieces

Ravens' hand-crafted items originate from Kulusuk, a small island off the East Greenland coast where a group of native

artists, solely men, transform natural materials into unique masterpieces—traditional items like carved amulets, rings and backscratchers. The selection of aesthetically carved knives comes with high quality blades from the famous Danish knife maker Poul Strande. Chefs, cooks and knife aficionados will surely not leave the store empty handed once they see



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

the traditional women's knife known as an 'ulo', which can be used for anything from cooking to skinning—a gem in every hunter's collection!

### Guardian Spirits

The knives match perfectly with the carved tupilaks made from horn. No doubt, the grimaces of these traditional shamanic ghosts will provide inviolable powers for those who decide to give them a new home. Tupilaks are Greenland's charms and are well known among art collectors.

### Spirit Charms

As the Icelandic twilight casts its spell on Laugavegur, the last rays of light turn amulets, hanging from a reindeer antler, golden—claws and teeth from Greenland's wild animals, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge black raven, both stuffed, sit silently nearby keeping watch over the shop. Greenland's wild spirit is inherent in its fauna and will charm you at Ravens.

-DT



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## FROM HUNTERS TO HOME

*Palli now makes knives and forks for the kitchen and dining room*

Long known for his beautifully crafted hunting knives of various sizes, each with its own handmade handle, Palli is now creating works of art for the kitchen—and soon for the dining room—that any cook or hostess will be proud to own.

### Made with rare materials

Ornately engraved knives and forks—including kitchen and carving knives are now receiving Palli's unique craftsmanship. What makes his knives special is that he diligently sources his materials, researches the best methods for making long-lasting handles that are comfortable and safe to use—often from rare materials sourced from all over the world. Frequently, he blends different materials such as reindeer antler, goat horn, a hippo's tooth or a horse's hoof with wood such as ebony, elm or even fossilized wood that has been carefully dried over a period of years to harden it for a handle.

### Created for Connoisseurs

As a result of his passion for excellence and enthusiasm for creating a work of art from a tempered steel blade and these different handles, his knives are now to be found in over 85 countries, in use by hunters who appreciate these qualities.

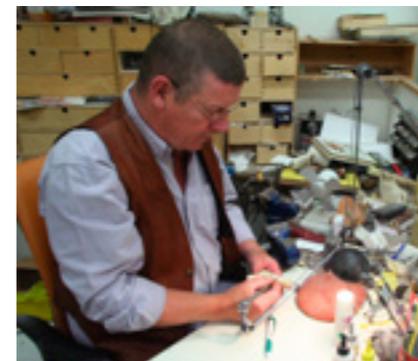
When he creates a special knife, there is often a lot of bidding for it on the internet, such is the demand for them.



### Now for cooks and diners

Recently, Palli worked with one of the best Damascus steel blade makers to bring their crafts first to the kitchen and soon, also to the dining room.

With typical care and research, he is producing a range of, initially, 4 kitchen knives, to be followed by a full dining cutlery set, using his 66 year-old dentist drill that he brought out of retirement for carving the handles and creating both individual pieces and sets that will be a conversation piece in dining rooms around the world.



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



### Inspired by a waterfall

You can find Palli in his studio in Mosfellsbær, right beside the Álafoss waterfall and the famous mill of the same name, just a 15 minute drive from the centre of Reykjavik. He is open from 9am to 6pm. His knives can also be found at the Brynja hardware store at Laugavegur 29, on the main shopping street in downtown Reykjavik or ordered online.

### Custom made for years of use

If you have specific materials you would like your hunting, kitchen or carving knife to be made from—or the dining cutlery, you can always let him know. Many knives are made to order and every one is individual and unique.

You can look closer at the variety Palli has to offer on his website, [www.knifemaker.is](http://www.knifemaker.is). Furthermore, you may not know it but Palli's wife is also a skilled knifemaker herself. Her selection can be observed at [www.kitchenknives.is](http://www.kitchenknives.is).

-ASF



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 www.knifemaker.is



# YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST OF ICELAND

Sterna travel is one of the leading bus tour companies in Iceland, praised and recommended by clients from all over the world for its passion and professionalism. Whether you need a scheduled bus to take you across the country or a guided tour to one of Iceland's jewels, this is the best travel companion you can ask for.

## The Golden Circle —one trip to rule them all

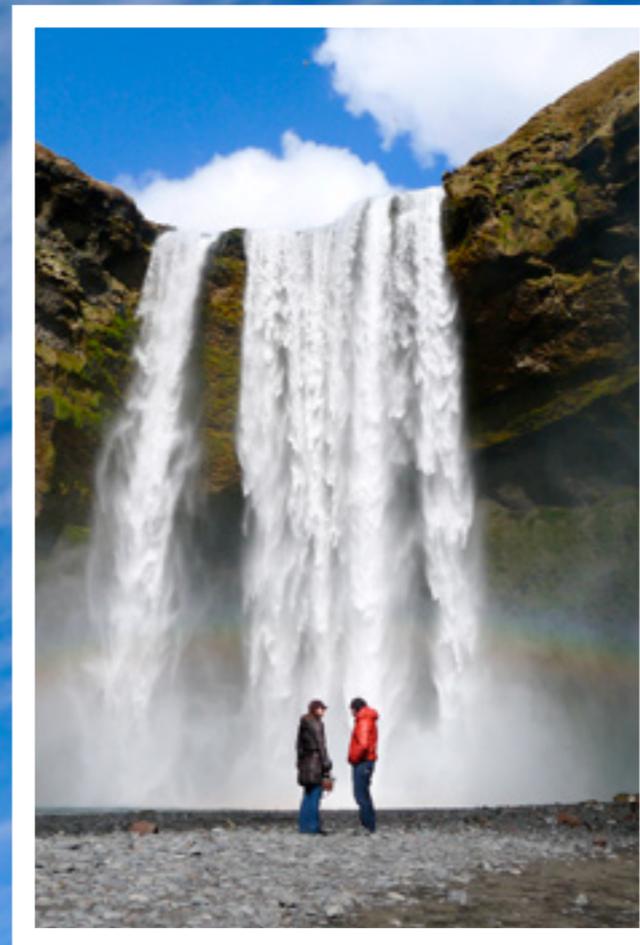
Waterfalls, hot springs and a national park where the Earth's crust is slowly being pulled apart; this trip is without a question the perfect introduction to Iceland and the mesmerizing but yet frightening forces that have shaped and continue to shape this island.

Throughout the year, Sterna departs twice a day for the Golden Circle route, in the morning and in the afternoon. The

drive takes you through the beautiful planes of the south of Iceland and a stop is made at a Geothermal Power plant where you can learn about volcanic activity and energy utilization. At Gullfoss and Geysir you will enjoy short walks around the area to admire the mighty waterfall and the erupting Strokkur hot spring. A few additional stops are made before heading to Þingvellir national park, a UNESCO heritage site and a spot of great beauty and historical significance.

## Kerlingarfjöll —a feast for the senses

One of Sterna's most fascinating destinations during the summer season is Kerlingarfjöll highlands, a unique place that will satisfy anyone seeking something a bit outside the box. This is one of the most active hot spring areas in Iceland and the color formations in the rocks due to the geothermal activity are simply magical. Here the strange contrasts in Iceland's nature are



clearly visible; one minute you can feel the heat in the ground beneath your feet and the next you're touching the ice of a glacier. The intensity of this experience often leaves visitors feeling as if they are on another planet.

## The Beautiful South Coast —the scenery of dreams

The open spaces and poetic beauty of the south coast make it a wonderful area to explore. Each of the destinations visited

are truly something out of the ordinary but how often do you get to stand behind a waterfall, not in front of it, like you'll do at Seljarlandsfoss, or walk along a black beach from where you can see the magnificent cape Dyrhóley and touch the ancient, melting ice of Sólheimajökull glacier. In addition a stop is made at Skógarfoss waterfall, a tremendous beauty.

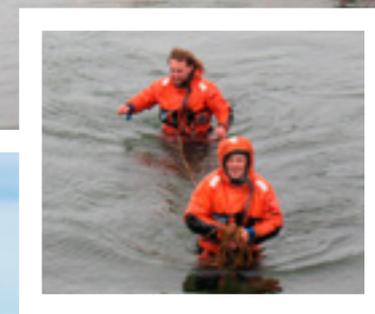
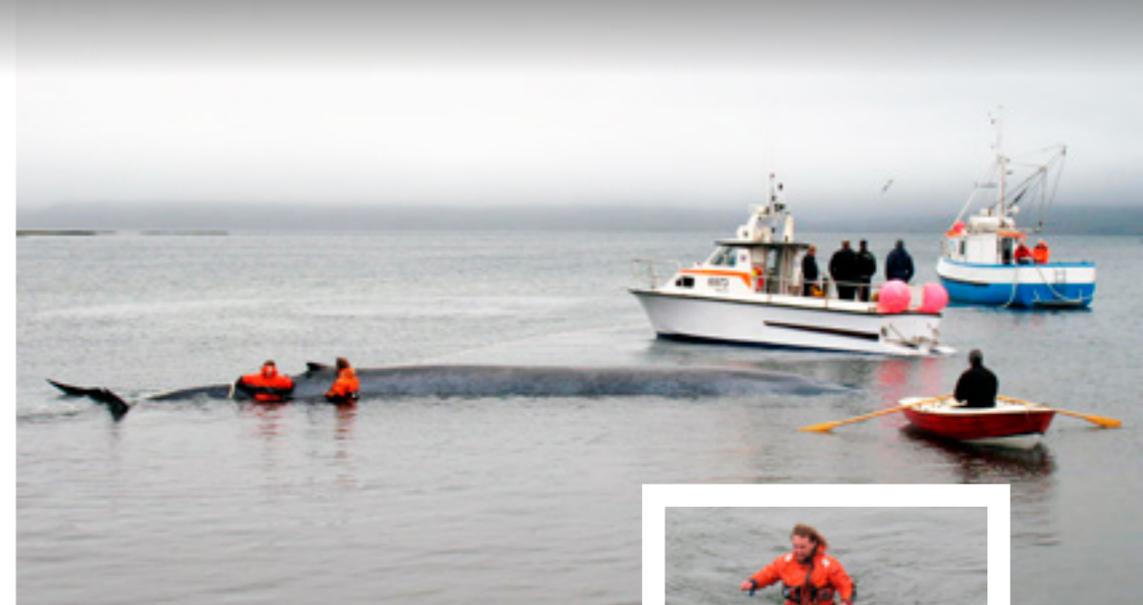
The staff of Sterna travel prides itself of always going the extra mile to give

their customers something more than just the average tour. They strive to keep their groups moderately sized for a more personal touch and try to schedule their trips at hours when the sites are less crowded, still offering a competitive price and outstanding service. *-HP*



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# INTERVIEW WITH A WHALE

*An incredible story from the Westfjords by Magnús Kristjánsson*

On the first weekend of August in 2009, which is a national holiday in Iceland, I had an experience that has changed my life. I was staying with my family on the Hella farm in Steingrímsfjörður in the Westfjords. It's a wonderful place where you can immerse yourself in nature, and listen to the grass growing.

On the far side of the fjord you'll find Hólmavík, a fishing village with a few hundred inhabitants. At the mouth of the fjord there is Drangsnæs with a similar population, and finally, the island of Grimsey, which is only inhabited by puffins.

## Adventure in the morning

On this morning, our kids had made their way to the beach early, looking for adventure. Usually nothing happens when you are looking for adventure. But this morning was very different. Our kids found a whale on the Hveravík beach. A real blue whale that was still alive, blowing water fountains into the air. We all rushed to the beach and gazed at one of the largest living animals in the world, right in front of us. It must have been hunting for mackerel and got too close to the beach and became stranded in the shallow water. Mackerel have previously not been so far north, but marine

scientists believe that the increased temperature of the oceans is responsible for this new development.

## With the whale in the water

I dressed in my wetsuit, my friends tied a rope around my waist to secure me and I started wading through the water to the colossus. What an incredible feeling to touch him, to sit on his back, to feel its gurgling and bubbling, while little fountains of water escaped from its blowholes! It seemed like the whale knew exactly that we wanted to help. That was not easy, as it must have weighed 200 tons.

## To the rescue!

The 20-ton MS Sundhani from Drangsnæs came to our aid and, with the help of the approaching high tide we would try to drag the whale into deeper water. We tied a rope around its tail and succeeded, using all the machinery to the full, to actually move the colossus. It responded initially with some panic movements, which is understandable, but then it calmed down and followed the ship out into the fjord. Half of the rescue of this magnificent creature was done!

## Magic between whale and human

In the end, the removal of the rope was rather a larger problem, and we finally decided to just cut it. This was the start of

the second incredible story, as the whale remained close to the ship. Not only that but it swam around it several times and picked up the rope with its head, as if it wanted us to understand that the loose, hanging rope would cause its death. So I went into the water one last time—this time on my own and in full confidence that the whale would trust me. And the miracle happened—the whale lay calmly in the water and waited, until I had removed the rope. Only then did it swim quietly away.

Later, from the beach, I could watch my friend for a long time, breaking through the waters of the fjord, on his way to freedom. We both learned a lot that day.

## Focus on French

Magnús company, Aðalsendibílar focusses on the needs of French visitors, with all the guides being graduates in French.

## Tours for groups large and small

Tours run throughout the year, with vehicles to suit the conditions and the groups' needs. Whether a coach for large groups or SuperJeeps for smaller groups, the tours visit all the main sites and custom tours are a speciality.

-DT

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# FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WALTER MITTY

## Reykjavik Excursions' Wonders of Snæfellsnes Tour

If you have seen 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' you probably know that many of the scenes take place in Iceland. What you may not know is that places that the filmmakers would have you believe is, say, a small town in Greenland, or the Himalayas or Afghanistan were also shot in Iceland and this is one film where the breath-taking Icelandic landscapes take centre stage in their own right.

### From daydream to reality

Should you be feeling a little like Walter Mitty yourself and that longing to break free from the daily grind, Reykjavik Excursions can help you get in on the act and experience some epic adventures to call your own. Here are some of the highlights from my recent trip to the Snæfellsnes Peninsula with the 'Wonders of Snæfellsnes' Tour.

### First stop—Stykkishólmur

The comfortable coach heads north from the BSI bus terminal in Reykjavik at 0800 sharp. Our guide is full of interesting details about life in Iceland and soon we arrive in Stykkishólmur, a small picturesque, harbour village, which appeared as 'Greenland' in the movie. Here we get a chance to explore this quaint village on foot, take in the sea views and have lunch at one of the local cafés.

### Travelling the north shore

Along the north shore of the peninsula, we travel over moss-topped lava fields called Berserkershraun, or 'lava field of the Berserkers' that have a certain energy of their own. It's a rather intangible feeling but nevertheless present, lending a measure of excitement and intrigue to the rugged landscape. We stop to gaze at the freestanding and iconic Kirkjufell mountain at Grundarfjörður, (which also had a bit part in the movie) before continuing our counter-clockwise journey around the peninsula.

### Djúpálónssandur—Dritvík

A bit of history, mixed with jagged lava formations and miles and miles of wild, windswept coast, is a recipe for some striking visuals at Djúpálónssandur, where we pile out of the coach to take in the dramatic scenery. The black stone beach is littered with rusting pieces of wreckage from a British fishing trawler from Grimsby that ran aground here in 1948. The now deserted beach at Dritvík was once a major fishing



half-troll Bárður Snæfellsás, stares out to sea; he is the guardian spirit who watches over the peninsula, we are told. After spending a good half hour exploring the landscape we take a break at the adorable turf-house café that overlooks the cove. Steaming coffee, or hot chocolate with whipped cream, and a slice of cake—just perfect for a mid-journey pause.

### She should see seals at the seashore

We are now headed to one of the final destinations along the peninsula's south coast—Ytri Tunga—to see if we can spot any grey seals, which are known to congregate along the shore. We set off again on a little walk down to the sea where a small group of seals watch us warily. It's amazing to see seals in their natural habitat like this!

### South bound to Reykjavík

Finally the coach begins the journey back to Reykjavík by way of Borgarnes, (which also had its 5 minutes of fame in the movie) and I am feeling very content. They say that Snæfellsnes Peninsula is Iceland in miniature; you can find a little bit of everything there and, if your time is limited, it's a great way to see what Iceland is all about.

station in the summer months, with up to 600 workers living there. This is also where you will find the well-known 'lifting stones' by which hopeful fishermen of old used to test their strength and thereby gauge their suitability for life at sea.

### The blowholes at Arnastapi

It is a very picturesque place, a lava-field-meets-sea kind of place resulting in some impressive natural architecture not found anywhere else in Iceland. There are three circular cliffs, known in geology as blowholes, where fulmars fuss over egg-sitting duties while the waves crash inside the cliffs, making for a very impressive sight indeed. A statue of the half-human,

Walter Mitty would wholeheartedly agree.

-EMV



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# THE CULTURAL CORE



*Kópavogur's vibrant cultural scene draws visitors internationally*

**I**celand's second largest municipality bids you welcome to visit the town's cultural centre, built on a high hill within a short walking distance of the beautiful church from where you have a breathtaking view over the sea and surrounding areas.

**A musical town**  
Since its opening in 1999, Salurinn, the first specially designed concert hall in Iceland, has been highly celebrated by musicians and guests alike for its brilliant acoustics. Here, Icelandic and international musicians of every genre give concerts throughout the year. The building itself displays an unusual use of Icelandic materials in its architecture; clad on the outside with stone tiles and driftwood from the most isolated places of the island.  
[www.salurinn.is](http://www.salurinn.is)

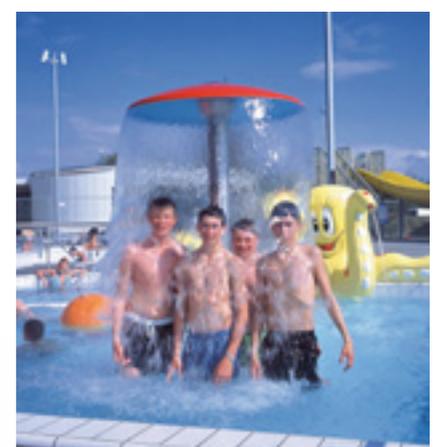
Just steps away from Salurinn you'll find the Icelandic Music History Museum which collects, preserves and communicates everything regarding Icelandic music since the time of the settlement to today. This is a place for anyone fascinated by the country's impressive music scene.  
Opening hours Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm (closed in July).  
[www.tonlistarsafn.is](http://www.tonlistarsafn.is)

**Museums and Art**  
Gerðarsafn museum is home to the art of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir. The museum, which focuses on modern and contemporary art, is situated in the heart of Kópavogur and the building alone, with its wavelike forms in the spirit of the nearby church, is worth a visit. The museum shop offers designer's souvenirs inspired by the art of Gerður Helgadóttir. Open Tuesday through Sunday at 11am to 5pm.  
<http://english.gerdarsafn.is>

The Natural History Museum focuses on the fauna of Iceland, mostly birds and molluscs, as well as the island's geology, with an emphasis on rocks and minerals. On display are various mammals and live animals and plants in small aquariums.  
Open Monday to Thursday from 10am to 7pm, Friday 11am to 5pm and Saturday from 1pm to 5pm.  
[www.natkop.is/english](http://www.natkop.is/english)

The public library is a wonderful building to visit, Icelandic architecture at its finest and, of course, the staff are more than happy to help you with anything regarding your trip and destinations.  
Open Monday to Thursday 10am to 7pm, Friday 11am to 5pm, Saturday 1pm to 5pm.  
[www.bokasafnkopavogs.is](http://www.bokasafnkopavogs.is)

**The blue gem**  
The town prides itself immensely on its swimming pools, which some say are the



best in the country. Having been almost completely renovated in 2008, the state of the art recreational centre has a 50m outdoor pool and a 25m indoor pool, four waterslides, a wading pool, hot pots and a sauna.  
It's simply divine to spend the day here, relaxing and soaking in the luxury of earth's blue gold—water!  
Open Monday through Friday 6:30am to 10pm, Weekends 8am to 6pm.  
[www.kopavogur.is/thjonusta/ithrottir/sundlaugar](http://www.kopavogur.is/thjonusta/ithrottir/sundlaugar)



# THE ULTIMATE TOURS



*Gray Line Iceland's Day Trips to Magnificent Látrabjarg and the Enchanting Westman Islands*

When it comes to travel, part of the fun is getting there and this is especially true of Gray Line Iceland's outstanding 'Edge of Iceland' tour to the Látrabjarg Cliffs in the Westfjords.

From Reykjavik, the coach travels to the picturesque town of Stykkishólmur where you board the 'Baldur' car ferry for the 3-hour crossing of the scenic Breiðafjörður fjord, with its thousands of islands and flourishing birdlife. Have lunch (not included) in the ferry's cafeteria while enjoying the view.

Next stop is Hnjótur, where there is time to visit the folk museum, discover how locals collected seabird eggs and learn about the courageous and daring rescue of twelve seamen from the shipwrecked Dhoon, a British trawler that ran aground 500m



from the cliffs on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1947 in freezing and treacherous weather.

### First Impressions

Standing on the great sheer cliffs at Látrabjarg, looking out over the wide expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, one cannot help but be in awe. After all, it is not every day that you come face to face with the mother of all cliffs that is Iceland and Europe's westernmost point.

On a clear day you can see all the way to Greenland, just 278km (138mi) away. Impressive to say the least!

### Posing Puffins steal the show

The highest point at Látrabjarg is a dizzying 441m (1,447ft) high and the cliffs stretch over 14km (8.6mi) in length.

The sheer number of birds is also dizzying—razorbills, guillemots, fulmars and puffins make this cliff their summer nesting grounds and arrive by the thousands every year from May to August. Impressive also is the way these birds so skilfully organise themselves on the face of the cliff—each tier is home to a specific type of bird. The very bottom of the cliff is inhabited by razorbills. Then come the fulmars that prefer the grassy lower ledges, and above them are the kittiwakes. Next up come the guillemots and then another layer of fulmars and razorbills. At the very top of the cliff, the adorable puffins lay their eggs in burrows and, luckily for us, they just happen to be especially tame. They seem

to love to pose for pictures, and you can often get within a few feet of them, but be careful not to venture too close to the edge of the cliff, as sometimes they have burrowed underneath the turf, making it very unstable.

### The journey home

Finally the time has come to start the journey back to Reykjavik, and there is not one of us on this tour who has not been humbled by the immensity of Látrabjarg and all those who have been touched by the magnitude of its beauty and its power.

*They that go down to the sea in ships,  
 that do business in great waters, These  
 see the works of the Lord and his wonders  
 in the deep.*

Psalms of David  
 107:23,24

### Westman Islands Tour

Just off the south coast of Iceland lie the Westman Islands, an archipelago of volcanic origin, surrounded by crystal-clear turquoise waters and brimming with colourful puffins, still-warm lava and an archaeological dig—all the elements you need for a truly exciting tour.

### Puffins, Pirates, Volcanoes and a Singing Cave

Our coach takes us down along the south coast, through villages and farmlands with

glaciers and volcanoes visible in the distance. The famous Eyjafjallajökull glacier provides for a quick stop for photos before we reach the harbour from where ferries cross the short stretch of sea separating us from the Westman Islands. The pleasant 30-minute crossing brings us into the sheltered harbour of Heimaey where we are greeted by the friendly folk at Viking Tours—native Westman Islanders, who will be our guides for a 90-minute boat tour around the archipelago. Highlights include the teeming bird life that nest high in the cliffs above and the hauntingly beautiful live music that fills the singing sea cave of Klettishellir.

### Explore!

Back at Heimaey, we stop for an included light lunch at Kaffi Kro and then take a coach tour around the island where we learn some of its history, visit a real pirate's cove, observe puffins and walk on still-warm lava from the 1973 eruption. Before heading back to Reykjavik, we have two hours of free time to do some exploring on our own—the recently-opened Eldheimar Museum (included) and the top notch Einsi Kaldi Restaurant are worth a visit.

-EMV



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## LIVING IN THE LAVA

*The town where they live with Hidden People and boiling pools*

Visitors to Iceland expect something different. They've heard about the volcanoes. Then, there are the stranger stories.

Take Hafnarfjörður, the small town you reach first when you come from the airport. It has a colourful history, as one of the oldest Icelandic communities. It's a fishing town, but that's only part of the story.

Built literally in and on the lava that flowed from the Búrfell volcano, you'll quickly notice the huge, black rocks, craters and caves out of which houses peek. The whole area is a massive lava and geothermal area.

### Home for the Huldufólk, too

Exploring the town, you'll come to a quiet street and Hellisgerði Park. It's a magical place, known for its elves, dwarves and other mystical beings. There are two tours that explain more about the park, that celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013. It's easy to imagine these 'Huldufólk' (hidden people) living here amidst the lava rocks that fold and twist, forming tiny caves and strange

shapes. Beside the pond, winds a pathway past rocks, many coloured with bright emerald or contrasting olive coloured moss. But, for many people, this is not the place of myth but of another world that occasionally reveals itself. A number of these people have recounted meetings these beings. So don't get surprised if you come across city signs that read 'Town of Lava', 'Town of Vikings' or 'Town of Elves'.

### Art, Culture and a Living Past

The town is a vibrant centre. Besides the sports and the geothermally heated swimming pools, it has a rich cultural life. Its museums are spread in different buildings across the town, adding authenticity to the history they portray. Take the Pakkhúsið or warehouse, for example. A typical Icelandic building, it displays two permanent exhibitions, the history of the town and one of classic children's toys and lifestyle items from the past and a third exhibition whose theme changes throughout the year.



You'll also find a Tourist Information Office here that will explain where all the other museums, art and cultural centres are, as well as all that can be enjoyed and experienced during your stay in the town. And it is a town you will want to stay in.

### On fire in the basement

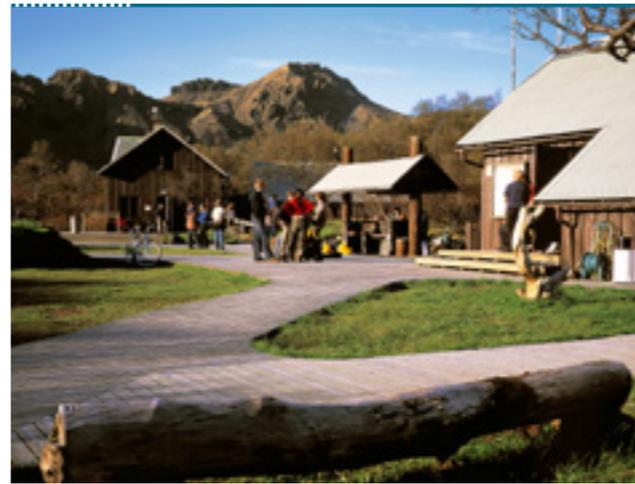
Geothermal means heat from the ground—and there's plenty of evidence of it here, along with where it came from. At Krýsuvík, a little outside the town, are steaming mud pools, bubbling hot springs, brilliantly coloured lakes—all surrounded by equally brilliantly coloured hills. Hikers who climb up to the top of the hill are rewarded by the sight of the spectacular steaming vent and the view of ocean, fields and lakes. Well-maintained boardwalks wind through the area—but don't try to touch the pools. Remember where they're coming from!

These lava fields make for a marvellous hiking area, with mountains like Helgafell, with its panoramic view of the peninsula or the Krýsuvíkurborg cliffs, teaming with birdlife.

-ASF

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## Hike over glaciers, volcanoes and mountains

*Básar in Goðaland provides the accommodation*

Básar in Goðaland is a place with mountain huts in the great hiking area of Þórsmörk. It is owned by Útivist, the Icelandic hiking club. It is located at the junction of two of Iceland's most famous hiking trails, Fimmvörðuháls and Laugavegur.

The huts can accommodate 80–90 people and are occupied by wardens from early

May until October. In the summer there is running water and water toilets near the huts and on many of the campsites. The huts are heated with oil stoves. Útivist has published a hiking map with descriptions of paths around Þórsmörk and Goðaland. If you are looking for a good hiking area this might be exactly

what you are looking for, a place where you can find glaciers, volcanoes and beautiful landscape. GPS coordinate: N 63°40.559' W 19°29.014'

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# DUTY FREE THE ICELANDIC WAY

*Start your Icelandic journey in the unique Duty Free Arrival Store*

Frequent flyers know the ropes. They get through Passport Control and Customs and head to the Duty Free stores. They need to think. Are they entitled to it or not? Then, laden with bags, they struggle to the plane, showing their precious cargo into already-stuffed overhead lockers. At the end of their flight, they lug the same bags down miles of walkways, stairs and escalators, before picking up their luggage and struggling to the taxis, coaches or trains, hoping they don't drop or break the bottles on the way.

## Iceland—a Different Way

The Vikings do things differently. At the International Airport at Keflavik, you will find a rare opportunity: a Duty Free Store in the Arrivals section right at the

luggage pick-up point, where there are trolleys available. Mere feet from the luggage carousels, passengers can shop at huge discounts compared to city prices, especially on wines, spirits and tobacco products. Before their luggage arrives, they have done their shopping and saved a lot of money.

## Don't lug it with you—get it here

Opened in 1970, the Arrivals Duty Free Shop was an instant success with passengers. With the airport expansion in 2008, it was enlarged to accommodate a much larger range of international and Icelandic brands, providing an opportunity to offer a very good selection of products. New changes this June bring a new buying experience,

with the wines and spirits easily visible at the front of the shop and branded gondolas so it's easier to make your choice.

Today, the Duty Free shop has the largest range of wines, spirits and beers in the country—larger, even, than many other countries' airports—and it includes the international award-winning Egils Gull beer—and all at a much reduced price.

Cosmetics, confectionery, tobacco products, toys and electronic products – including the latest DVD titles—are all available at discounted prices, so it is a good time to take advantage of the opportunity to get low prices on things you want to use during your visit. Here you will find all the top brands at knock-down prices. Think of it as a holiday discount!



**No Discrimination—Duty Free for all**  
 Icelanders don't mind which country you're coming from or going to: the Duty Free discount applies equally to all travellers.

You don't need to worry about buying Icelandic currency first, either, as all major cards are accepted at the checkout.

## Go Home well stocked

Of course, most of the things you buy in the Arrivals Duty Free will probably be finished by the end of your visit and you



will be looking for something special to remember your trip and for gifts to loved ones and children.

There is a large Duty Free Store in the Departures Lounge for those uniquely Icelandic items and a wide range of international brands that make perfect gifts and souvenirs that is worth paying a visit. Duty Free fashion clothing by Burberry, Mulberry and Boss and a special range of clothing by Icelandic designers are on sale. Unlike most other modern



airports, the walk to the plane is short and trolleys can carry the load almost to the planes. Passengers from non-Schengen countries do not even have to carry their goods from the Departure Lounge as there is a shop close to their planes with the same products and prices.

-ASF



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displaying each its own fragrant character. And where else in the world can you get a peeling soap made with real volcanic ash? The 'Eyjafallajökull' and 'Soap Eruption' soaps combine Icelandic rapeseed oil with ashes from the latest volcanic eruption. Sounds incredible? You are very welcome to visit Soap Viking's workshop and watch the creation process.

### Handy washing pieces

If you're not fond of square items, choose the roundish wool felted soap—a cool idea, as the foam emerges through the woollen felt, which makes a wash cloth, leaving a haptic memory of sheep.

The Soap Viking additionally offers a range of handmade souvenirs that will bring Iceland back to your memory, just like the smell of a piece of their unique soap. You can also order online and the products will be shipped to your door.

## PURITY AND VOLCANIC PEELING

*Handmade soap following old traditions*

It simply is a myth that Vikings were dirty, scruffy fellows, using their bad smell as a conquering weapon.

On the contrary, archaeological findings reveal a variety of tools for personal grooming and, as blonde hair was quite popular in the old days, Vikings also bleached their hair, by using soap.

### Pamper your skin

The Soap Viking in Njardvik, close to the International Airport, follows tradition and offers a wide choice of handmade soaps, based on Icelandic products such as tallow, herbs and leaves, that will pamper your skin. Two soap pieces are dedicated to the most dramatic lovers in the Icelandic sagas,



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-DT

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# SANDGERÐI

## – LIFE BY THE SEA

The friendly fishing town of Sandgerði is an ideal place to visit for those who have an interest in Iceland's close connection to the ocean—not only because of its importance concerning fishery but also as it boasts an interesting research centre open to the public, focusing on the environment's eco-system.

Driving around Reykjanes peninsula where Sandgerði is located can be of interest for nature enthusiasts, especially those awed by Iceland's unique scenery.

Camping in Sandgerði could be a convenient choice for the beginning or the end of one's trip as Keflavik International Airport is located within Sandgerði's municipality.



### The magnificent coastline

Access to the Reykjanes peninsula has changed drastically following the departure of the American army base; the major difference being that you can now drive around the coastline, parts of which were formerly closed off.

A recommended drive would include the coastline from Grindavík to Sandgerði and its sister town, Garður. Not only is the coastline itself magnificent but there are also many interesting places to visit such as Gunnhver, the geothermal area west of Grindavík and the Reykjanes lighthouse.

Driving west and north, you have the coastline on your left side with relatively low and sandy beaches, but dangerous reefs just off the coastline, which have been the cause of many tragic accidents throughout the centuries. On the right side, the Midnesheidi moor rises up from the lowlands with many hiking routes popular with local people, some of which served as ancient routes between farms and towns.

### Historic places by the coast

You will come across various interesting places on your way. One such place is Básendar. It used to be an important market town until 1799 when it was destroyed by a big flood. Básendar was also of great importance for fishing as was Stafnes, but the reefs just by Stafnes are quite dangerous. The trawler, 'Jon the President' was wrecked off Stafnes in 1928. As a response to that tragedy rescue teams were founded across Iceland, such as the Sigurvon rescue team in Sandgerði.

You will find the church of Hvalneskirkja close to Sandgerði. The church was built of stone in 1887 and one of Iceland's most cherished poets, Hallgrímur Pétursson, served there as a priest for a number of years. Finally, in Hafurbjarnastaðir, between Sandgerði and Garður, there are graves from pre-Christian times discovered in 1947. This discovery was a breakthrough in historical understanding of Iceland and

some of the remains found there are now on display at the National Museum of Iceland.

### By the harbour in Sandgerði

The town of Sandgerði has 1600 inhabitants—not a small number if one bears in mind Iceland's small population. The community was established around the end of the 19th century, about the time fishery was revolutionised by technology. More often than not, it is the harbour that gives fishing towns in Iceland their character. Sandgerði is no exception; and improved harbour facilities have been built there in recent years. Walking around the harbour, watching the ocean and imbibing the smell of the sea life is a good way to enjoy nature.

This part of Iceland knows how small and insignificant human existence can be when dealing with the powerful ocean yet the source of rich fishing-grounds just off its coast is vital for Sandgerði's community. Our vulnerable physical existence is



reflected in Álög, the monument by the sculptor Steinunn Þórarinsdóttir found at the entrance to the town.

One can certainly say that the harbour is the heart of the town, as most of Sandgerði's services are located there, including restaurants, shops and galleries.

Sandgerði boasts a nice swimming pool in addition to an 18-hole golf course. In the northern part of town, there are some cute summerhouses one can rent. Just outside town, the pond is a perfect spot to watch some birdlife as hundreds of migratory birds gather there every spring.

### Sudurnes Science and Learning Centre

A great way to understand the environment and the history of Sandgerði and its surroundings is to visit the Sudurnes Science and Learning Centre. Sudurnes is actually another name for the Reykjanes peninsula, its literal meaning being 'the peninsulas of the

South'. The centre is run in cooperation with Southwest Iceland Nature Research Institute and University of Iceland's Research Centre in Sudurnes. The research facilities include unique clean seawater and possibilities, found nowhere else, to conduct research in ecotoxicology, behavioural ecology and fisheries.

Additionally, the centre has two exhibitions: one presenting nature and the other history. These exhibitions are both fun and enlightening at the same time. In the nature gallery you can touch various stuffed animals from Icelandic wildlife and see various exotic sea creatures. There is also a collection of plants and shells and the only stuffed walrus in Iceland.

The history gallery houses the 'Attraction of the Poles' exhibition. The research vessel Pourquoi-Pas was wrecked on the rocks of Faxaflói Bay in 1936. Many of the crew perished, along with the French medical doctor and polar

scientist Jean-Baptiste Charcot, who acquired the nickname 'Gentleman of the Pole' because of his excursions to the Polar Regions.

### A challenging interaction with nature

The centre also organises a treasure hunt which is very entertaining, especially for children. By bringing a car and a camera for exploration, you will experience the environment around Sandgerði in a fun yet challenging way!

For those about to leave the country, driving to Sandgerði a day earlier, camping near the services such as the swimming pool, exploring the area via the entertaining treasure hunt might just be the best way to end an Icelandic vacation.

-NHH



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## WEST ICELAND AND THE WESTFJORDS

The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere in the West of Iceland. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with gushing geothermal activity. Land and history form an unbroken whole as the setting for sagas like Sturlunga, Egil's Saga, Eyrbyggja and Laxdaela, not to mention the rich folklore and tales of adventure. Tours bring history to life as museums and historical sites abound.

### Westfjords

The 'Lonely Planet' guide put Westfjords on its list of the top 10 regions of the world to visit in 2011 and the area won a 'European Destination

of Excellence' (EDEN) award. A very sparsely populated region of Iceland, it is home to the Arctic fox, a dizzying variety of birdlife and a nature that is simply breathtaking. With precipitous cliffs that plunge almost vertically to the deep blue seas below, its multitude of beautiful fjords, its hot springs, pure streams and waterfalls, it's a place for the nature-lover to be awed by its silence and tranquility, pierced only by the birds. The mystical Breiðafjörður bay, with its countless islands is home to all kinds of sea life and tours out into the bay will visit islands covered in birds, with some offering sea fishing.

The tourist information office in Borgarnes provides a wealth of helpful material.





## SOAK UP SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA

*Kast Guesthouse provides accommodation, camping and nature*

The silver and white lines of Kast Guesthouse stand out in stark contrast to the earthy tones of the surrounding nature here on the south shore of Snæfellsnes Peninsula. To the south, the waters of Faxaflói Bay lap gently upon the shore and to the north, craggy rhyolite mountains rise up directly behind the guesthouse. In the distance, the glacier-topped Snæfellsnes Volcano sits serenely in all its splendour, just waiting to be explored.

### Sleep in Heavenly Peace

Family-run Kast Guesthouse opened for business just 3 years ago and still retains that squeaky clean, brand new feel with a

minimalist approach to interior design. All 27 rooms (21 with ensuite bath and 6 with shared facilities) are equipped with soft white bed linens, modern bathrooms and comfortable double beds, ensuring you have a restful night's sleep in the absolute peace and quiet of the Icelandic countryside.

### The Sparkling Waters of Lýsuhólslaug

Just a few minutes walk from the guesthouse is the Lýsuhólslaug swimming pool; one of the few pools in Iceland where you can bathe in naturally carbonated geothermal water with not a drop of chlorine. The water is rich in minerals and its healing properties are especially effective for eczema and psoriasis.

### Horse riding and fishing

The guesthouse offers guided horse riding tours from one to three hours long in the surrounding area, and relatively inexpensive fishing licenses can be arranged for fishing in nearby lakes.

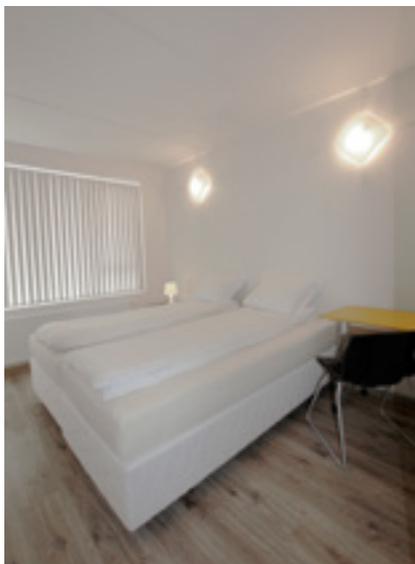
### Wake up to freshly baked bread

A light and typically Icelandic breakfast is served in the main dining room every morning from 7.00 to 10.00 and a variety of breads are baked daily on the premises. During the day, the café is open for snacks and sandwiches and, in the evening, a basic, fixed menu is served from 19.00 to 22.00.

### Got bedding?

Kast Guesthouse also has its own camping ground with showers and cooking facilities as well as sleeping bag accommodation for those with their own bedding. There are electrical hook-ups for travellers with trailer tents and caravans and paid access to the onsite washer and dryer is also available to guests. The centrally located guesthouse is approximately 2 hours drive from Reykjavik and a 40-minute drive from Stykkishólmur. Open year round, Kast Guesthouse welcomes you. -EMV

**Kast Guesthouse**  
Lýsuhól - 356 Snæfellsnes  
+354 421 5252  
kast@kastguesthouse.is  
www.kastguesthouse.is



## A SETTING FOR EVERY MOOD

*Gamla Kaupfélagið Extends its Selection*

On a tranquil peninsula in Akranes you'll be pleasantly surprised to find Gamla Kaupfélagið, a high quality restaurant, well-known for its menu's wide range and popular with the locals and visitors alike.

### Indian in Akranes

Gamla Kaupfélagið has recently added a tandoori oven to its repertoire, offering a variety of exciting Indian dishes. Gísli Sigurjón Práinsson, restaurant manager, says that the Indian addition is another reflection of Gamla Kaupfélagið's ambition to satisfy every customer. "We're always looking for something new and exciting to keep things interesting and our customers seem to appreciate that," says Gísli.

### Catering to all customers

Gamla Kaupfélagið can cater to almost all of their customers' tastes, whether it be road-weary travellers looking for a quick snack, gourmards looking for something fresh and inspiring, romantic couples looking for a cozy night out or larger families looking for a complete package. "The pizzas and pastas are always popular, as well as our plentiful salads, for those who know they want those. But for those looking for a more unique culinary experience, our lobster dishes never fail to satisfy," says Gísli.



Gamla Kaupfélagið is located in a spacious house that was formerly a general store, providing each customer with an experience to suit their personal taste. After 10 o'clock on the weekends, the restaurant changes to a bar, where the friendly locals tend to gather after the working week. -VAG

**Gamla Kaupfélagið**  
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## MEET THE OCEAN'S BIG FIVE

*Láki Tours takes you to meet the whales and more*

Anyone who has met them will agree that whales are amazing animals—especially seen close up. Whether they be orcas, humpbacks, minke or pilot whales—or dolphins, for that matter, meeting them is a real experience.

### Basking in the Bay

Grundarfjörður and Ólafsvík lie on the mystical Breiðafjörður Bay—a fantasy world of countless islands, birds, fish, dolphins and whales. They are sighted almost daily through the year here. Recently, for instance, 100 pilot whales put on a show for visitors aboard Láki's boat. Such a high rate of sighting a range of these maritime creatures makes this area tops for both experience and photo opportunities. The tour to the whales leaves from Ólafsvík.

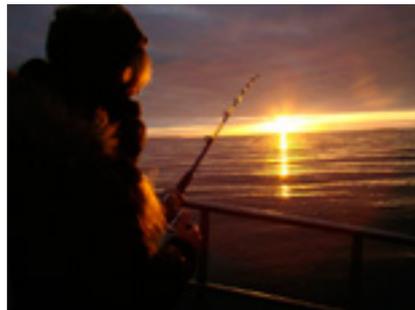
### Fins and Feathers

While the whales are very popular, the tour to the islands to see the birdlife and catch some fish is not to be missed. Sea angling is a lot of fun, if you haven't tried it—and if you catch your dinner yourself you can certainly

guarantee its freshness. You're in the perfect position to spot any whales or dolphins who are curious enough to see what you're up to and if you're taking their dinner!

The photographers on this tour will have a feast of their own, with so many photo opportunities including, of course, the elusive little puffin.

This 3–4 hour tour from Grundarfjörður on the Láki is an experience that many want to repeat. During the summer months, as the evening sun paints the sky red, the bay takes on a wholly different, romantic character. Sea angling in this setting is quite special, too.



### Stay by the Bay

Tours on the Láki are not all that this area has to offer. It is very popular for hikers, photographers, bird watchers and horse riders, as all these activities are available—not to mention tours up onto the famous Snæfells glacier. No one has yet replicated Jules Verne's 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' but the glacier is spectacular.



There is wildlife in the area that you won't want to miss from killer whales and diving gannets to the fox and the white-tailed eagle.



Staying at the Hótel Framnes, situated right by the bay, is a very good choice, as it perfectly located for whale watching. It is a comfortable, homey hotel that provides very friendly and personal service. You can watch the sky changing over the bay in the evening as you relax in the hot pot. Its restaurant offers delicious freshly-caught fish on its gourmet menu.

Open all year round, the hotel makes a very good base for all your activities on and around the peninsula.

-ASF



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framnes@hotelframnes.is  
www.lakitours.com



## DEEP IN NATURAL WONDERS

*Gamli Bærinn Bed & Breakfast at Húsafell*



Driving north towards Akureyri in the Spring, I decided to wander off the ring road near the town of Borgarnes to do some exploring. Forty minutes later, I found myself at Húsafell—an area rich in history with several extraordinary waterfalls, two scenic glaciers and some pretty amazing people.

Húsafell is a service village nowadays, but in former times it was a sprawling estate with a farm and rectory under the care of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pastor Snorri Björnason. The old farmhouse from 1908, known today as Gamli Bærinn, has been renovated and turned into a quaint bed and breakfast that offers sleeping bag accommodation and made up beds. Owners Steinunn and Sæmundur will be more than happy to point you in the right direction to the natural wonders in the area, among them:

- Surtshellir—a lava tube, the longest cave in Iceland at (1970m or 6463ft)
- Hraunfossar—a series of low cascading falls that come up through the lava plain.
- Barnafoss falls
- Langjökull and Eiríksjökull Glaciers



Beautifully sculpted rocks, the work of sculptor and musician Páll Guðmundsson, himself the great, great, great grandson of Pastor Snorri, are scattered around the grounds. A fascinating artist and musician, Páll is also known for his marimba-like instrument made of stones. Páll and the Sigur Rós band did a performance using the steinnharp, as it is called in Icelandic, several years ago in the Surtshellir lava tube cave.

-EMV



**Gamli bærinn Húsafelli**  
Húsafell • 311 Borgarfjarðarbyggð  
+354 895 1342  
sveitasetrid@simnet.is  
www.husafell.is







EARTHCHECK



# SNÆFELLSBÆR



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## Where the glacier meets the sky!

Here you can find many wonders of nature. Take the round trip and start off in the natural spring pool of Lýsuhóll or build a sand castle in Búðir. Try to catch a mackerel off the pier in Arnarstapi or search for the centre of the earth like Jules Verne. Maybe it's through Vatnshellir?

Test your strength by lifting the stones in Djúpalónssandur and read the story of Bárður Snæfellsás or see the theatre play in Rif. Take a stroll in cozy little villages and search for the best coffee but, above all, enjoy yourself in the beautiful nature that even has an 'earth check' certification, meaning that the community is eco-aware. To be under the glacier is considered magnificent; experience it in your own way and enjoy all that Snæfellsbær has to offer!

Net: LYSUHOLL / Net: BUDIR / Net: ARNARSTAPI / Net: HELLNAR / Net: SNÆFELLSJOKULL

# JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

Vatnshellir Cave Tours take you in the footsteps of Jules Verne's intrepid explorers

Vatnshellir Cave, on the south coast of Snæfellsnes Peninsula, is a lava tube cave over 200 metres long; one of 56 caves in the immediate vicinity of the small subsidiary volcano Purkhóll and one of hundreds of caves found throughout the peninsula. Thanks to recent improvements such as stairways and guide ropes, the previously inaccessible cave is quickly becoming one of the most visited caves in Iceland. The professional guides at Vatnshellir Cave Tours conduct tours daily, so now you can experience your own journey to the centre of the earth.

## Geology class comes alive

Our guide, Ægir, leads the way as we descend the circular staircase into the first chamber that is filled with light from the skylight above us. Then, with torches or flashlights in hand, we proceed into the darkness... The porous lava creates a natural ventilation system within the cave, rendering the air remarkably fresh. Every now and then we come across bizarre stalactites, stalagmites and other geological curiosities, some of

which are found only at Vatnshellir and one of the reasons for the cave's status as a protected natural site.

## The colours of the earth

Down the sturdy steel steps we go, into a second, larger chamber. By now our eyes have adjusted to the darkness as we inspect the walls of the cave with their rich chocolate colour and the silvery greys that line the ceiling. Here, Ægir explains with a straight face that this room is still used as a meeting place by a famous 9th century local named Bárður Snæfellsás. According to the ancient sagas, Bárður's mother was human and his father was half giant/half

troll. Bárður eventually disappeared into the Snæfellsjökull icecap, becoming a guardian spirit over the peninsula. Hmm...

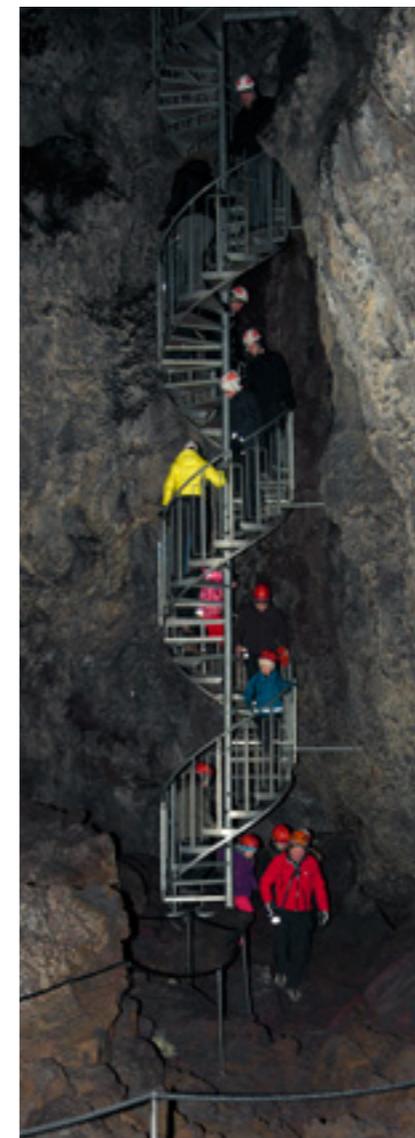
## The perfect rainy day activity

Finally, we come to a second circular staircase that winds its way 12 metres down to the deepest part of the cave, 35m below the surface. We listen in awe to the magnificent silence, penetrated only by the sound of our breathing and the intermittent patter of water droplets falling from the ceiling high above.

It has been an awesome experience that I will not soon forget. Only one question remains. Does Ægir, a young guy in his mid 20s actually believe in trolls? You'll have to ask him and find out for yourself!

To visit this most popular cave in Iceland, just follow road no 574 about 1km north of the Malariff intersection - a good 10 minutes' drive from the West of Hellnar, Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

-EMV



Vatnshellir Cave

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vatnshellir@vatnshellir.is  
www.vatnshellir.is



Information centre  
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## I DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST

*The Small Community of Búðadalur has a Rich Heritage*

**W**est Iceland is filled with history and three of its most famous characters lived around the small village of Búðadalur on the spectacular road to the West Fjords.

### Iceland's famous pioneer

As you enter the village, an information sign points to the left, down to a clean, grey building by the shore. Leifsbuð houses an impressive display of pictures, ancient manuscripts, models and more, detailing the exploits surrounding the discovery of America centuries before Columbus. Historians now generally accept that this courageous Viking pioneer was the first to not only discover, but found settlements in the New World such as the one in L'Anse-aux-Meadows in Newfoundland with 2,400 recently discovered Viking objects.

In 2000, as further confirmation, an accurate reconstruction of a Viking longship, the Íslendingur, sailed to New York, retracing Leif Eiriksson's voyage across the Atlantic.

### Erik the Red settled in Greenland

Leif's father, the fiery Erik the Red—was fiery not only in hair but in temperament, too. Arguments with his neighbours got violent and led to his exile, first from Norway, then from his home just outside Búðadalur and finally, from the island of Öxney. His farm has been reconstructed in Haukadalur and gives a fascinating insight into his life before he became the first permanent European settler in Greenland.

### The Queen lived here

Queen Auður the Deepminded, daughter of a Celtic king, after building her own ship in secret in Scotland, established a Christian community in the area. She was well-known for her deep connection with God and practice of her faith. She built up a centre of learning in a time of deep ignorance and superstition and influenced future generations with her example.



### Activities in the area

In Hvítadalur, you can go horse riding through the countryside. Cycling, especially around the coastline is much enjoyed. There are beautiful salmon fishing rivers. Bird watching and photography are increasingly popular, especially with a number of eagles adding to the many species and the natural beauty of the area.



### Camping and Accommodation

The campsite received a 5-star accolade from the DV newspaper, who hailed it as the best campsite in Iceland. Dalakot Guesthouse is in the centre of the village and, a little farther north, Þurranes, a country guesthouse set in a beautiful valley between high mountains, can receive up to 30 guests—great for individual or group get-aways.

Still an area for pioneers, Erpsstaðir farm produces its own ice cream, cheese, skyr and other dairy products. The Handverk craft shop is well worth a visit as it sells beautiful woollen sweaters and many other items made in the area at good prices.

-ASF



Dalabyggð

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+354 430 4700  
dalir@dalir.is  
www.visitdalir.is





## A NATURE PARADISE

*Hótel Djúpavík, comfort and care at the edge of the world*

Untouched nature and interesting history are among the attractions of Djúpavík at Strandir. In this remote part of Iceland, a special breed of people found a

way to live off the land and, when all the fjords were filled with herring, it became an important player in the hunt for the 'silver of the sea'. Now it is a paradise for walkers and nature lovers who come to Hotel Djúpavík from early spring till autumn.

### Old factory and dormitory

Hótel Djúpavík was established in 1985 when Eva Sigurbjörnsdóttir and her husband Ásbjörn Þorgilsson decided to cultivate guests rather than fish. "We had planned to start a fish farm but were unable to get a loan," says Eva. "We had bought



the women's dormitory along with the old herring factory and the hotel started there."

Most guests stay at Hótel Djúpavík in search of a nature experience. Many walk from one fjord to another but others use cars, kayaks or boats to get from place to place. Eva and Ásbjörn provide guidance and advice on what to see and how to get there along with comfort and rest after a long day's exploration.

### A Historical Exhibition

The Herring Factory is now the site of Djúpavík's Historical Exhibition, where old photographs and texts lead viewers through the life and times of people in this quiet cove at the edge of the world. There are guided tours provided daily at 10am and 2pm.

-JB

**Hótel Djúpavík**  
 Djúpavík • 524 Árneshreppur  
 +354 451 4037  
 djupavik@serpa.is  
 www.djupavik.com



## WEST TOURS FOR THE WESTFJORDS

*The expert on travel in the entire Westfjords peninsula*

The Westfjords are an amazing peninsula characterized by steep, flat and also peaked mountains between deep blue fjords, beautiful colourful beaches with residents who make travellers feel warmly welcome.

West Tours Travel Agency and Tour Operator is run by a highly professional team with 21 years of experience in assisting travellers with their travel plans to and around the region.

West Tours' office is based in Ísafjörður in the Cultural House of Ísafjörður town, Edinborgarhúsið. West Tours' objective is the presentation, marketing and selling of all the tourism-related services available in the region.

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.



### Activities offered in 2014:

- Boat Schedules
- Cultural Walks
- Hiking
- Packages
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- Workshops
- Kayaking
- Bike Tours
- Horseback Riding
- Car Rental
- Excursions
- Accommodation
- Whale Watching
- Hornstrandir Nature Reserve
- Bird Watching
- Sea Angling
- Local Food Tasting

Our newest activities are sea angling tours and sunset sail on a Viking longship from Þingeyri, but just take a look at all the categories on our website, where you will find a lot of different tours listed.

We look forward to seeing you in the Westfjords!

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## ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

*Find the furtive little arctic fox in Súðavík in the Westfjords*

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

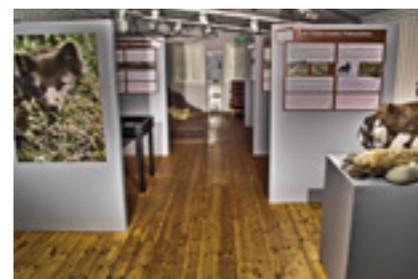
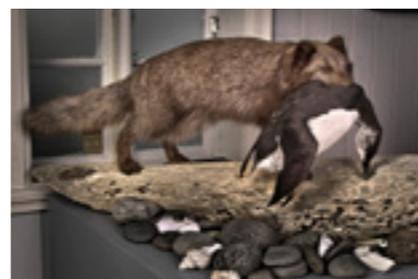
### Exhibition of the first native

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



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

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



of the fox and the hunters themselves, the last mentioned containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and of course there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round. The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland.

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

-HP

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## A DAY CLOSE TO ‘THE VIKING’

*Experiencing past and present with Dýrafjörður’s Eagle Tours*

The silent beauty of the Westfjords is revealed in a very particular way when seen through the eyes of the settlers—by boat. And who better than a seafarer to show the majestic mountains and solitude of the fjords?

### Join a fisherman

In the village of Þingeyri on the banks of Dýrafjörður in the western part of the Westfjords you can share this experience and join a seafarer on his Viking boat. Whether you choose a romantic sail on a glassy sea into the midnight sun or the adventure of a fishing trip, it might all seem like a dream and Jón Þórðarsson the maker of it.

It’s a real thrill to sail with him, heading out into the fjord to catch your own fish from Iceland’s arctic waters. Then comes the satisfaction of bringing it to shore and preparing it right there, between the ancient stones and drift wood, spicing it with the mountains’ fresh summer herbs!

### The Viking

They call him “The Viking”. There is not much that Jón can’t tell about Dýrafjörður’s deep blue waters, after having been a full-time fisherman in the Westfjords for almost 57 years. He really likes to talk about the

life, culture and the history of Iceland’s remote North West, that has been so popular down through the centuries, right from the beginning, 1,000 years ago, when Saga hero Gisli Sursson dwelt in the area.

### Hunting Saga spirits

The valleys of Dýrafjörður witnessed one of Iceland’s most dramatic family feuds, and Jón knows every detail of that story. He offers to take you hiking on the paths of history, through the picturesque corners of the fjord. Should you happen to meet Gisli’s brother Þorkell, he might just be in the mood to discuss his fatal jealousy that led to the feud. Or maybe you might find Gisli’s wife, Auður, picking herbs but nevertheless willing to open her heart and talk about her deep love for Gisli.

### Dinner host

Jón definitely knows how to intertwine past and present in his stories. His dinner events are legendary, as they are never just about food, rather more of a ceremony, serving all your senses.

You feast on fresh fish from the fjord and lamb from the mountains, while listening to traditional live music and storytelling, plunging into the past of this remote Icelandic community life.

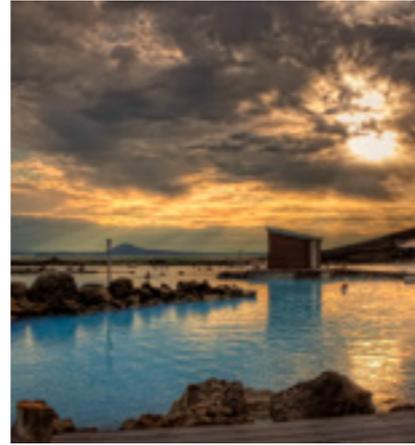
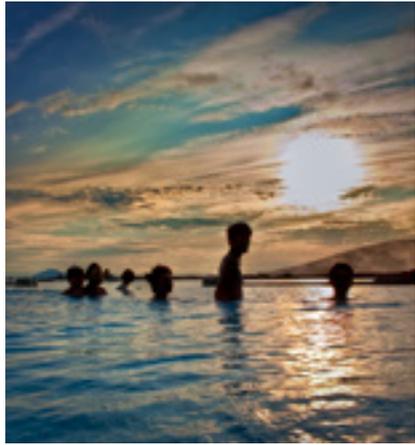


A sense of community is what Jón offers in everything he shares with you. His way of receiving guests is marked by a genuine jovial warmth and closeness that will simply make you want to stay—and keep on listening. This is the culture and lifestyle of the fjords in real life.

“Just ask me,” he will say. “I can tell you stories...”

-DT

QR code, Eaglefjord logo, and contact information: +354 894 1684, +354 456 2101, info@eaglefjord.is, www.eaglefjord.is



# Myvatn Naturebath

*Experience Relax Enjoy*



### Myvatn Naturebaths

Enjoy a relaxing visit to the Naturebaths. Begin with a relaxing dip in clouds of steam rising up from fissures deep in the Earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water, drawn from depths of up to 2500 metres. Myvatn Naturebaths is perfect for those who enjoy close contact with nature and want to relax their body and soul in the warm natural waters overlooking the scenery of Lake Myvatn and the volcanic crater of Hverfjall.

### Restaurant

Kaffi Kvika or "Magma Café", is the newest addition at the Naturebaths. Our guests can enjoy light meals, drinks and sweets in a beautiful setting with a great view over the area.

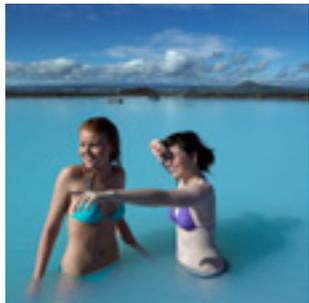
### Opening hours:

**Summer - June, July, August - 09:00-23:30**  
**Winter - September- May - 12:00-21:30**

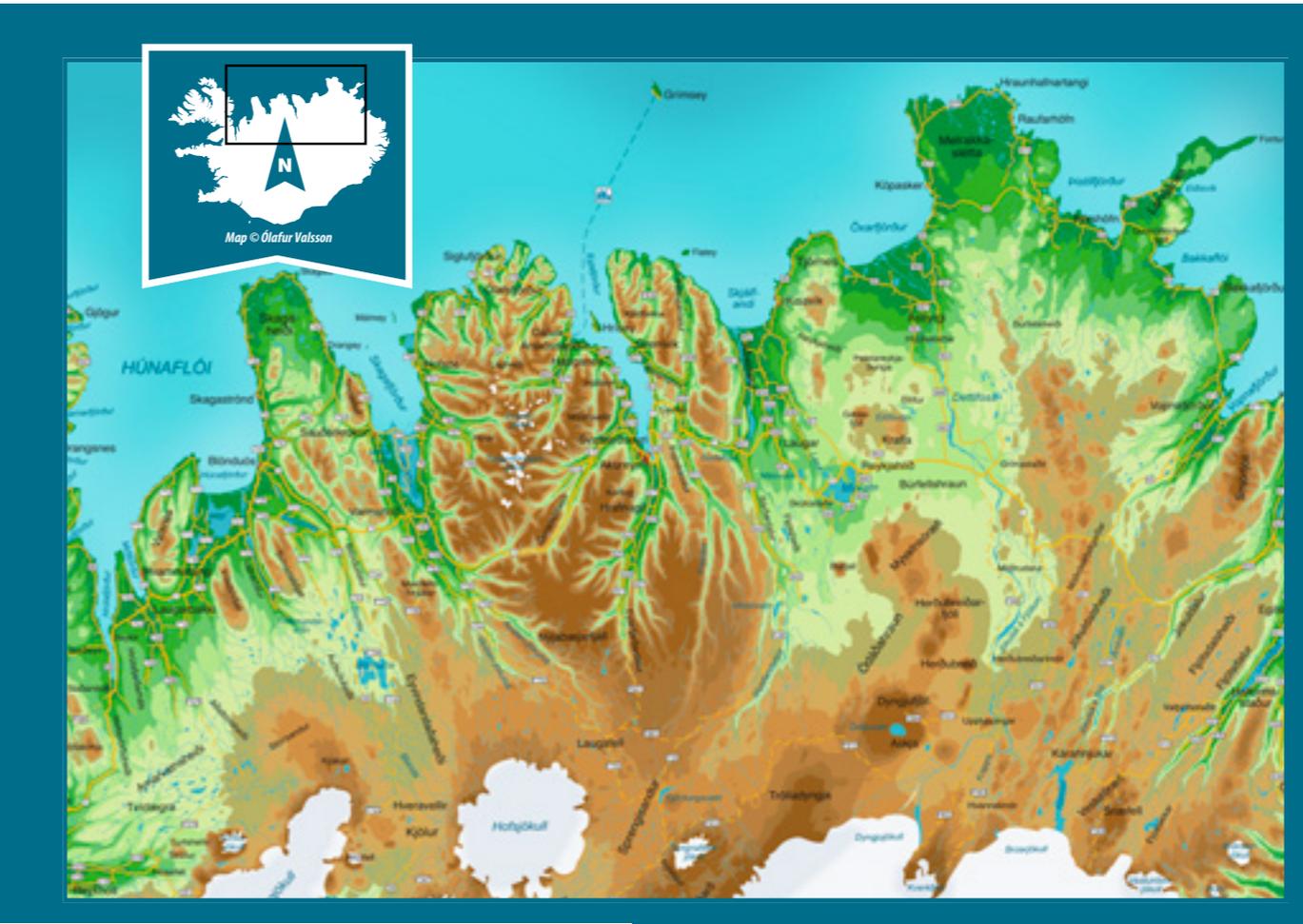
### Lake Myvatn

The region is one of Europe's greatest natural treasures. Shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions and seismic activity down through the ages, the landscape around the 36 km<sup>2</sup> lake is spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife which are also home in summer to the swarms of midges from which the region takes its name.

Jarðböðin - Myvatn Naturebaths - Jarðbaðshólar, 660 Myvatn - Tel: (+354) 464 4411 - info@jardbodin.is - www.jardbodin.is



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



Summer in the North is characterised by the midnight sun. You can play golf, go seal and whale watching, horse riding, hiking, swimming, fishing, river rafting, bird-watching, camping or simply enjoy the disparate forms of nature. The region wears a different coat in winter, when you can ride the Lights or ski the slopes just minutes from Akureyri town centre. Northern Iceland is probably Iceland's most diverse region—in every sphere. Nature varies from the mystical area around Mývatn Lake, a

and volcanoes, or islands like Drangey, to name a few. The region is bursting with vibrant history, just waiting to be enjoyed. Museums are found in almost every town, with fascinating insights into fields such as the seals at Selasetur in Hvammstangi or the Whale Museum in Húsavík to the turf house of Glaumbær horses on the frozen lakes in Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltdal valley in Skagafjörður is Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of the first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, Askja's calderas

# NORTH ICELAND





# HORSES, HISTORY & NATURE

*Skagafjörður—Diverse Nature, Great Adventures and Historical Experiences*

When the Icelandic traveller thinks of Skagafjörður, what undoubtedly comes to mind is the steep, picturesque cliff of Drangey, which towers majestically in the midst of the big fjord from which the district derives its name. Resulting from countless references to Drangey both in history and culture, this small island is firmly embedded in the Icelandic psyche.

Secondly, what comes to mind is the Icelandic horse. Skagafjörður is an important breeding place for this beautiful, humble servant that enabled people to survive throughout the centuries in harsh conditions. These two distinctive features frame the different possibilities Skagafjörður has to offer; an area of natural wonders and an abundance of cultural and recreational activities.

## An important historical area

Skagafjörður is a municipality in the North of Iceland which covers the area from most of the peninsulas creating the fjord itself to the broad valley that bears the name of the fjord and goes all the way to

the highlands. Thus, it is an area of great natural variety with steep mountains, fertile inlands and a varied coastal environment. The biggest town in the area of Skagafjörður is Sauðakrúkur after which come the village of Hofsvós and other smaller villages.

Skagafjörður could also be said to be the centre of a historic circle ranging from Blönduós, west of Skagafjörður to Siglufjörður in the north and Akureyri in the east. Hólar í Hjaltadal, the old bishopric of the North, in fact used to be the most important in the North. Many who served as bishops of the North are arguably some of Iceland's most important figures.

## Sites of Interest

The battle of Örlygsstaðir, the biggest battle in the history of Iceland, also took place in Skagafjörður, when the great families in the age of Sturlungs fought. Historic facts such as these can be learned in Skagafjörður through various museums and places of historic importance. For example, the turf farmhouse at Glaumbær shows clearly how life used to be in rural Iceland; the

Mínjáhúsið museum in Sauðarkrúkur is unique for showing how artisans' workshops used to be and the Icelandic Emigration Centre in Hofsvós focuses on the mass emigration from Iceland to North-America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## The Bad need Somewhere to Be

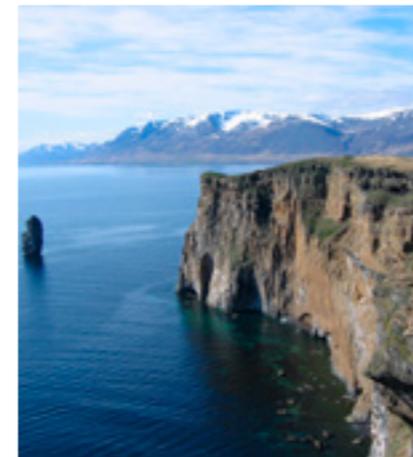
This cliff in Skagafjörður certainly has a mystic character to it. According to old folktales, the cliff itself is an old female troll who turned to stone at daybreak while traversing the fjord, as trolls can't handle sunlight. Grettir, in the famous Icelandic saga bearing his name, was an extremely strong but ill-tempered man, who ended his days in Drangey as an outlaw.

One of the historic bishops at Hólar, Guðmundur the Good decided he was going to bless all of Iceland by ridding the land of vile beings. But once, as he hung from the cliffs of Drangey, to expedite this work, the story says that a big hand came out of the cliff and grabbed him. He heard a voice say, "the bad ones need somewhere to be." The bishop decided not to bless Drangey.

This story does not frighten the locals, who go every Spring to collect eggs and birds on the cliffs of Drangey.

## An inspiring way to enjoy water

By Hofsvós, you can find a great way to enjoy the view of Drangey. The new swimming pool is a masterpiece of design. Once you are in the pool you get the impression that you are swimming to the sea and to



Drangey while swimming in the warm water of the pool.

Skagafjörður has, in total, seven pools across the area as well as various hot springs to bathe in, the most famous one being Grettislaug at Reykir.

## Being in Nature among Horses and Birds

Skagafjörður is a fitting place to enjoy horses. Not only do the various horse-riding companies in the area provide a variety of trips but you can also visit a breeding farm, see horse shows and even experience a horse corral if you are in Skagafjörður at the right time of year!

Skagafjörður is a nice area to explore on horseback. There are many uninhabited places not too far from town providing you with the tranquility to enjoy nature. Whether you like a short trip, or a multi-day excursion to the highlands, you will be able to experience it here.

There are various other ways to enjoy the nature of Skagafjörður; watching and listening to the rich birdlife, pumping some adrenaline in your body by river rafting in the glacial



rivers, hike the various trails in the area or sail on a boat to Drangey and Málmei.

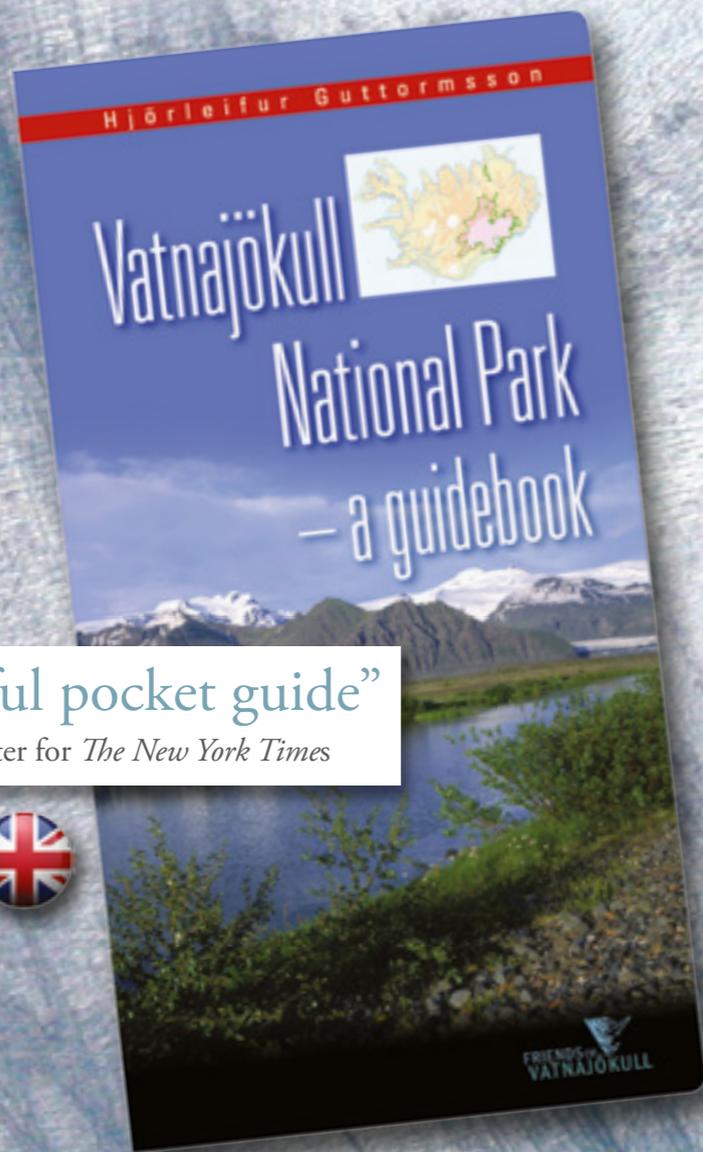
At the end of a day, you can visit one of the many restaurants in the area serving high-quality food made under the Food Chest concept, which encourages the eating of local produce.

Whether you are travelling with the whole family, by yourself, with your partner or friends, you will find that Skagafjörður has something for everybody!

-NHH

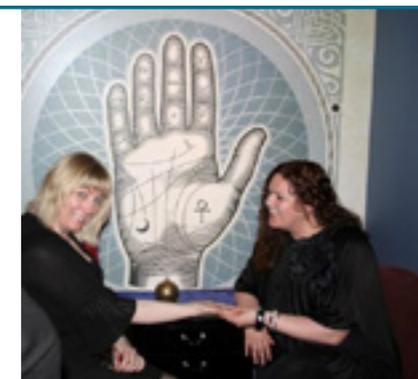
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Whether you want to picnic beside Lake Mývatn or climb the glaciers above Skaftafell Vatnajökull National Park — *A Guidebook* is your ideal companion. The handy little tome provides essential and thorough information about all the best sights in the park. Available in Icelandic, English and German.



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Eric Hansen, reporter for *The New York Times*



## CAPITAL OF COUNTRY

*The most musical town of the North*

Ask Icelanders what first comes to mind when the name Skagaströnd is mentioned and chances are they'll say, 'country music'. Strange? Perhaps, since a small fishing village in the northwest of Iceland isn't exactly what you would typically associate with cowboys and line dancing. Nonetheless, that's the case here. Nonetheless, Skagaströnd has been having an ongoing love affair with country music ever since Elvis Presley captured the hearts of generations of Icelanders.

### The village

Apart from its close ties to music, Skagaströnd is primarily a fishing village. In the summer, the small port is a lively whirlpool of boats and people, ever coming and going. On a fine day, it's lovely to stroll along the harbour and take in the smell of the sea before going for some refreshments at the beautiful Café Bjarmanes which stands on the cliffs overlooking the harbour and the open sea. Close to Café Bjarmanes you'll find Árnes museum, a tiny and utterly charming house, originally built

in 1899 and therefore the oldest house in Skagaströnd. The house was renovated a few years ago by the town and now serves as a window into the past for those who visit it. All interiors are from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and give a good picture of fairly well-to-do Icelandic homes from this period.

### The Museum of Prophecies and Cape Spákonufellshöfði

The first inhabitant in Skagaströnd is believed to have been Þórdís the Soothsayer, a widely known woman of the 10<sup>th</sup> century whose name is mentioned in many of the Icelandic sagas. Þórdís was famous for her ability to see into the future and at the Museum of Prophecies, her story is told on a painted tapestry. The exhibition provides information about prophecies and visitors can have their fortunes told and palms read. Þórdís lived by the foothills of Mountain Spákonufell and stories tell of her daily walks up the mountain where she'd comb her hair with a special gold comb.

Cape Spákonufellshöfði is a protected area and a popular hiking route. A telescope and information signs have been put up to give insight into the cape's rich history.

The town's camp ground is nicely situated in a quiet sheltered area and has good facilities, a playground for kids and a service house with a dining area and a washing machine. Skagaströnd also has a nice swimming pool and a 9-hole golf course.

-Hp



Sveitarfélagið Skagaströnd  
Túnbraut 1-3 • 545 Skagaströnd  
+354 455 2700  
skagastrond@skagastrond.is  
www.skagastrond.is



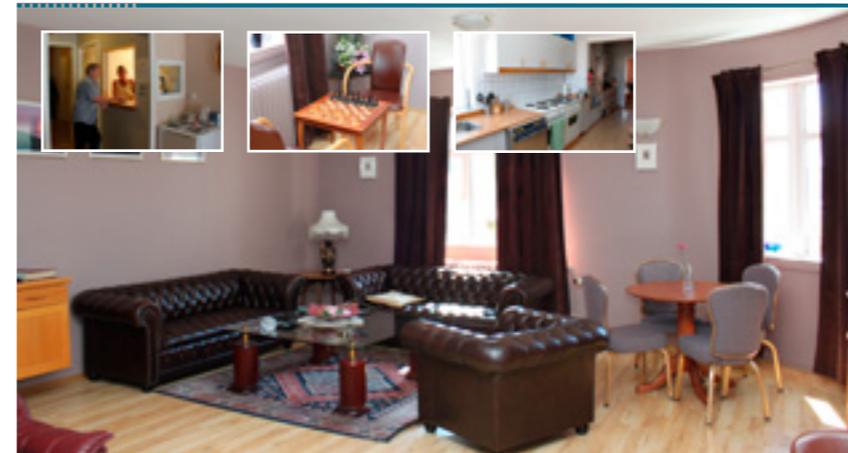
Iceland charms with magic light

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## TREASURE AT THE WORLD'S END

*Siglufjörður Hostel provides great accommodation for travellers*

One of the most glamorous hotels in Iceland in the hey-day of the herring bonanza in the 1930s, Hvanneyri guesthouse and hostel is still the place to stay when you are in far north of Iceland in Siglufjörður on the Troll peninsula.

Today, it is a family-owned and run hostel and it has that feeling of staying in a warm, comfortable family home with helpful family members who take an interest in you.

Whether you are travelling alone, with a family or in a group, you will find a friendly welcome and comfortable stay for budget-conscious travellers with all the facilities one expects in a modern guesthouse and hostel. That includes free Wi-Fi, parking, a barbecue grill, a guest kitchen—and free coffee, too.

This has been an international centre ever since it was built. Its reputation has spread across the continents and it is a hub

for travellers from many different nations, some of whom return year after year.

Located on the main street, it is surrounded by the town's bakery, restaurants and shops, making it a perfect place to set up base for hiking or photography—or just simply enjoying the spectacularly beautiful countryside with its mountains and fjord.

-ASF

**Hvanneyri Guesthouse**  
 Adalgata 10 • 580 Siglufjörður  
 +354 467 1506  
 order@hvanneyri.com  
 www.hvanneyri.com



## Allinn

Allinn restaurant specialises in Icelandic home cooking and pizzas. It is situated in a beautifully restored house overlooking Siglufjörður's main square. It is reasonably priced and suits people of all ages.

Adalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður ☎ +354 467 1111



## VISIT SIGLÓ, ICELAND'S MOST ROMANTIC TOWN

*Hannes Boy, the bright yellow house, is among Iceland's most unique restaurants*

Siglufjörður feels like it is as far north as you can go. This former herring centre is set in a beautiful fjord and is a very popular place to hike from and enjoy the extraordinary birdlife and nature. The pristine beauty of the landscape is matched only by the atmosphere of the town, where there is much to see and do.

When you have built up a good appetite in the nature, you know you can dine at one of the best restaurants outside Reykjavik.

Hannes Boy is the bright yellow building right on the harbour, just a few feet from the boats, landing their fresh fish. Inside, the wood-beamed restaurant, with its lantern wall lights, wooden tables and chairs is bright and cheerful. The menu includes fish and lamb and you're guaranteed a delicious meal in the inspiring atmosphere of this warm and welcoming fishing town.

If you'd rather have something lighter,  
[www.icelandictimes.com](http://www.icelandictimes.com)

the Kaffi Rauðka in the equally bright red building next door is your place. This is a lively place—especially on Friday and Saturday nights, with its live bands. It's a great spot for lunch, for getting to know the local people and enjoying their lifestyle.

-Hp

**Rauðka**  
 Gránugata 5 • 580 Siglufjörður  
 +354 467 1550  
 raudka@raudka.is  
 www.raudka.is



## The Herring Museum

The Herring Era Museum in Siglufjörður is an award-winning museum bringing to life the 'glory days' of Iceland's herring fishing industry in three different buildings.

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## THE NORTH EATS THAI

The popular Krua Siam Restaurant feeds folk in Akureyri

What inspired experienced Thai cooks and kitchen assistants to leave the exotic lands of South East Asia to venture to the Land of the Vikings, I cannot imagine. But I'm very glad they did. After opening the Reykjavik food scene to their unique blend of Thai ingredients and Icelandic meats and vegetables, the intrepid cooks continued north to Akureyri.

Established in 2007 and now under the same management as Reykjavik's Krua Thai, it is easy to find Krua Siam opposite the Hof concert hall landmark by the harbour.



### Set Apart

Besides the experienced Thai staff, what sets these restaurants apart is that all the spices, rice and noodles that are uniquely Thai are brought in directly from Thailand. However, the meat and vegetables are pure Icelandic and this is what contributes to the delicious flavour in every meal. Each meal is freshly prepared and cooked to order on the spot to get the most flavour.

### Eat What You Like for Less

Both Krua Siam and Krua Thai are known for their reasonable prices. In addition, Krua Siam offers a full five-course lunch buffet every day between 11:30 and 13:30. Here, you can eat all you like for the same good price.

With a large range of dishes to choose from, you can eat like a Thai—taking a piece from a number of different dishes. It's a great way to eat as a family or with a group of friends.

### Drinks to go with the meal

A number of wines and spirits go well with Thai food, so Krua Siam has a bar



and stocks alcoholic beverages—along with juices and soft drinks.

### Catering to the Need

The restaurant also provides Take Away and Home Delivery options, but to get the most flavour, eat it right away.

-ASF



## TRAVEL INTO THE HIGHLANDS

Mývatn Tours take you into the wilds of North Iceland

Mývatn Tours take visitors up to the highlands of Iceland to the Askja caldera and Víti crater. You will also go through the Herðubreiðarlindir nature reserve area. This tour provides scenes of unforgettable Icelandic nature and geology. The tour offers trips with 4x4 buses because they go through rough lava fields and rivers. In the highlands, you will see lunar landscapes, glacial rivers, the deepest lake in Iceland, sand, lava, mountains, craters and lot more. You will go home with amazing memories of a unique landscape.



You can bathe in the waters in Víti in the middle of Iceland, 1100m above sea level, when conditions are good.



### Information about our tour in 2014:

Departure from the Tourist Information Centre in Reykjavíkurhlíð (Lake Mývatn Area) at 8am every day.

- Price: 21.000 IKR
  - The tours are scheduled as follows:
  - 18–30 June:  
Mondays – Wednesdays – Fridays – Sundays
  - 1 July–31 August: Daily
  - 1–7 September:  
Mondays – Wednesdays – Fridays – Sundays
- You can book and buy tickets by e-mail or phone

The tour takes approximately 11 to 12 hours. Please note that food is not included in the price and there are no restaurants or supermarkets on the way, so you have to bring your own food.

Please bring warm clothes and good shoes and bear in mind that the weather can change suddenly, especially in the highlands. Askja is 1100m above sea level.



www.icelandictimes.com

# THE PERFECT SOUNDTRACK TO ICELAND

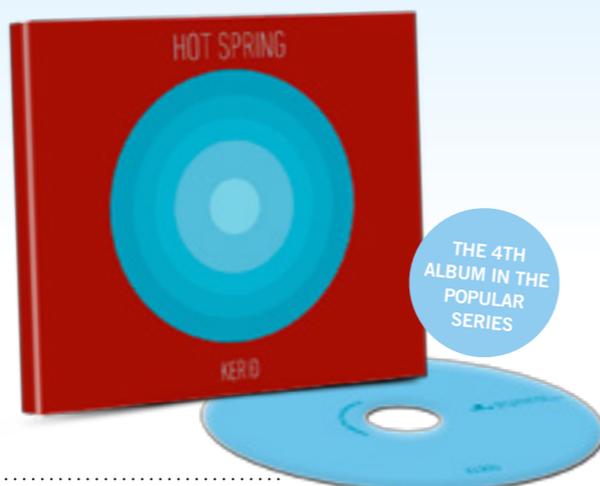
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An excellent discovery tool for all fans of Icelandic culture, consisting of 38 carefully selected songs that portray the diversity of Icelandic folk tradition.



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## ÁSGEIR TRAUSTI

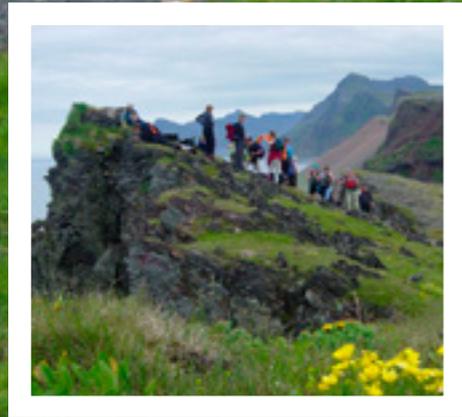
Asgeir's beautiful, melancholic songs and their unusual poetry have captured Icelandic popular imagination.



# EAST ICELAND

Tiny, tight-knit communities extend a warm welcome here. A well-developed infrastructure, with regular flights from Reykjavik to Egilsstaðir, the main hub of the area, enable visitors to enjoy the beauty of the region. The ferry from Europe docks at the 19<sup>th</sup> century town of Seyðisfjörður, making the East a good starting point for a holiday. Tours of all types take visitors to Europe's largest glacier, stark highland mountains and sweet-smelling heathlands and, for fishing and kayaking, to mirror-smooth fjords. The hiking nature-lover can discover countless spectacular routes, with frequent waterfalls and reindeer sightings. The beauty of this area has drawn artists and designers to the little towns, which have developed their own cultural flavour, many with a strong European—and especially, French or Norwegian—influence. There is a long history of folklore here. Borgarfjörður eystri is known as the capital of the elves. It's also an area of hiking trails and birdwatching, with puffins being especially plentiful. Brilliantly coloured semi-precious stones are found in the mountains and Petra's Stone Museum in Stöðvarfjörður holds probably the world's largest private collection. The numerous hotels, guesthouses and camping areas attest to the rising popularity of the area.





# EAST ICELAND

– *A haven for hikers*

East Iceland is a magnificent wonderland where hikers, wanderers, bird-watchers, kayakers and nature lovers find everything their heart desires; wilderness, solitude, challenge, new horizons—and for some, even peace of mind. But more than anything, East Iceland is known for great outdoor activities, hiking, riding, fishing, exploring, and friendly fishing villages for après adventure.

## Hikes and treks for everyone

Hiking is by far the East Iceland traveller's best way to enjoy the refreshing wilderness. The region is renowned for interesting and

diverse routes, ranging from day hikes to adventure-rich multi-day treks. Good hiking maps of the whole region are available at Tourist Information Centres and a number of paths have been marked for safer hiking and optimum enjoyment.

### Mt. Snæfell—Lónsöræfi

Mt. Snæfell, the 1833 extinct volcano and Iceland's highest mountain outside the glacier massif of Vatnajökull, presents a magnificent view from the top.

There are guided tours up and around this impressive volcano and the surroundings offer some great sights, such as lush green moss and springs, sparkling in between black sands. Herds of wild reindeer and pink-footed geese roam around. Nearby, Brúarjökull probably offers one of the easiest accesses to explore a tremendous ice sheet.

For the avid hiker, the Snæfell–Lónsöræfi trail, with stunning landscapes in the Vatnajökull National Park, is a tempting and trying solitary route across the Eyjabakkajökull glacier before dropping down to the the stunning Lónsöræfi highlands, and the view of expansive green valleys with countless waterfalls, such as Geithellnadalur, Hofsdalur or Viðidalur.



### Kverkfjöll

A tour to Kverkfjöll, experiencing the unique interplay of ice and fire in the imposing surroundings, is an experience. Climb to the hot spring valley for a magnificent view of boiling mud springs melting a labyrinth of caves through the great Vatnajökull glacier. Try soaking your sore feet in the warm volcanic waters flowing from the mouth of the great Kverkfjöll ice cave. Although the white giant looks peaceful enough, never forget that there are many dangers hidden in the moving ice.

### Víknaflóðir

The 150km marked paths of the Víknaflóðir (Desert Inlets) in Borgarfjörður eystri, enable you to have views of beautiful coastlines, mountain ridges, abandoned

farmhouses, birdlife, arctic fauna and, with a little luck, maybe even reindeer. The area is known for colourful mountains and semi precious stones, as well as one of the best places to watch puffins. Some of the best day hikes are without a doubt to be found here, including one of Iceland's best kept secrets—the monumental Stóruð, a labyrinth of enormous rocks through which a little river winds its way and calm turquoise ponds of icy water lie hidden among the huge boulders, lined by flat banks of short, green grass. Just the perfect way to enjoy the best unspoilt, breathtaking nature.

### Skálanes

For those preferring to enjoy a maritime view, a unique opportunity to experience the beauty and calm of East Iceland are its fjords. Visit the wonderful Nature heritage centre at Skálanes at the furthest shore of beautiful Seyðisfjörður or enjoy the ride to Mjóifjörður, one of Iceland's most celebrated fjords, with the breathtaking Klifurbrekkufossar waterfalls.

### Eskifjörður—Norðfjörður

Different, but no less attractive, is the easternmost part, the Gerpissvæði



between Eskifjörður and Norðfjörður, where skyscraping peaks join forces with the heavy waves of the Atlantic. The great variety in coasts is phenomenal. Brightly coloured pebble beaches, black sand beaches of Vöðlavík, awesome sheer cliffs, pristine fjords lined with eider ducks, old ruins of ancient farmsteads and the occasional reindeer herd in deserted coves give you an 'out of this world' feeling of freedom and eternity. Then, finish with a short hike to Helgustaðanáma, the old Iceland Spar mine in Eskifjörður.

### Around Egilsstaðir

For some shorter options, the Hiking Pearls of Fljótsdalshérað, the area around Egilsstaðir give you some great

possibilities. Don't miss the 40-minute climb to Iceland's 2<sup>nd</sup> highest waterfall, Hengifoss, the beautiful basalt pillars of Litlanesfoss in Fljótsdalur, or a stroll in the Hallormsstaður arctic birch forest. They are all truly something to write home about, as are the solitude of Hjálpleysa, the ½ day hike by Stóra-Sandfell, through mindblowing monuments of the Ice Age. Enjoy a stroll at Húsey or spend a day at Iceland's strangest beach, Þerribjörg, by the Hellisheiði pass to Vopnafjörður. Visit the Elf-lady trail and the Earth history landbridge by the Bustarfell folk museum in Vopnafjörður. This is to name just a few of the wonderful options open to you in this hikers' paradise.





## RESERVED LUXURY

*Hildibrand Hotel is for the fastidious aesthetic and the seriously passionate about food*

**H**ildibrand Hotel is a brand new, state of the art, apartment hotel in Neskaupstaður, a small fishing village in one of Iceland's remote Eastfjords. The hotel is located in what was the town's old Co-Op store, built in 1948, which has now been completely renovated. It offers both double rooms and luxury apartments, all bright and beautifully decorated in warm colours with classic art and quality furniture. The house sits by the sea and every room has a view over the fjord where whales are spotted almost daily and the surrounding wilderness offers endless opportunities for outdoor activities and exploration.



### Local food—tradition meets creativity

Hildibrand is way more than just a pretty package and the hotel restaurant, the Co-Op Bistro, is without a doubt the cherry on top of the cake. The area has a long tradition of fishing and farming and Hildibrand is passionately dedicated to local products and working in the spirit of the slow-food philosophy. Everything is made from scratch with fresh ingredients, using nature's treasure trove and the knowledge and skills of past generations to create original dishes of the utmost quality. The bistro serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers fish and wild game in addition to traditional bistro food with Hildibrand's own personal twist.

### The Milk Shop: the delicatessen at the doorstep

Next door to the hotel, in the town's former dairy plant, Hildibrand runs a local gourmet shop, The Milk Shop. This charming little place is packed with local goods along with gourmet food products from all over Icelandic and overseas. The shop always has a variety of fresh delicatessen and take-away food on offer, from sushi to sandwiches, which gives guests an additional option to dining in the restaurant; you can get a delicious meal to take up to your room or, if staying in an apartment with your own kitchen, simply buy whatever you please to cook for yourself. It seems that whatever your



preference is when it comes to food, Hildibrand is nothing short of amazing.

The Eastfjords are a magnificent area, partly desolate, rich in wildlife and strikingly beautiful. A stay at Hildibrand is destined to be one of the highlights of your visit to Iceland. During the day, you can walk or sail into one of the nearby fjords, fish or go for a horse ride, Hildibrand even runs it's own catering service and will happily prepare you a picnic or a lunch box for your day. This is a place to dwell in, to take your time and enjoy. The reward will be handsome, without a doubt. *-HP*



**Hildibrand Hotel**  
 Hafnarbraut 2 • 740 Neskaupstaður  
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# THE HOME OF THE ICELANDIC HORSE

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**The restaurant and café are open daily, 10 am - 10 pm, all year round. Group menus available.**

Looking forward to your visit!





*Puffins normally live at sea,  
but you can see them  
on land in the summer*



*Reindeers are wild  
in East Iceland,  
you might see one!*

### Routes in East Iceland

- Dettifoss 1 hour
- Vopnafjörður - Sænautasel - Möðrudalur 3,5 hours
- Sænautasel - Möðrudalur 1 hour
- Egilsstaðir - Laugarfell - Kárahnjúkar - Jökuldalur 4 hours
- Egilsstaðir - Valþjófsstaður - Fellabær 1,5 hours
- Borgarfjörður eystri 2,5 hours
- Seyðisfjörður 1 hour
- Mjóifjörður 2 hours
- Egilsstaðir - Reyðarfjörður 30 minutes
- Reyðarfjörður - Eskifjörður 10 minutes
- Eskifjörður - Neskaupstaður 30 minutes
- Egilsstaðir - Fáskrúðsfjörður - Stöðvarfjörður - Breiðdalsvík - Breiðdalsheiði 2,5 hours
- Egilsstaðir - Fáskrúðsfjörður - Stöðvarfjörður - Breiðdalsvík - Djúpivogur - Öxi 3,5 hours

The estimated driving and hiking time is based on a comfortable travel speed. The return trip is included but stops along the way are not.



## Langabúð

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An exhibition of sculptor Ríkarður Jónsson  
The café serves light lunch & delicious cakes  
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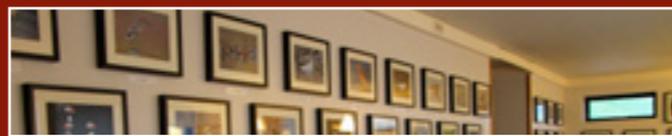
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Restaurant

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## COW SHED CORNER—FJÓSHORNID

*Straight from Egilsstaðir farm*

Practically everyone has heard of the curds and whey that Little Miss Muffet made famous. But not many people know that the skyr that is so popular in Iceland is, in fact, a variation of those curds (minus the whey).

Because of the growing demand for

pure Icelandic dairy and beef products, Egilsstaðir Farm recently opened a farmer's market on its premises, offering pure Icelandic dairy products, straight from their own milk production as well as a variety of cuts of beef from their own cattle herds. Open in summer only, weekdays



from 14.00 to 18.00, visitors are welcome to pop in for the reasonably-priced variety of traditional skyr desserts, pancakes, waffles and other sweet treats.

All Egilsstaðir Farm products are sold retail to consumers. Mince, fillet, prime rib and rib-eye steaks can all be bought at the shop in precut frozen form.

Dairy products include plain and blueberry skyr, skyr desserts, feta cheese, yogurt and milk—all packaged and labelled with the attractive Fjóshornið logo on the containers.

-EMV



## EMBRACED BY THE NATURE OF EAST ICELAND

*Fishing, Hiking and Hunting in the Tranquillity of Breiðdalur Valley with the Elves and Trolls*

There are still many areas of Iceland that have not attracted mass-tourism. Breiðdalur Valley in East Iceland is one of them. As remote as it's beautiful, the valley has only a few farms scattered here and there and you can easily have the entire valley pretty much to yourself. There are a good variety of marked trails which are excellent for day hikes and you will also find three of Iceland's most beautiful fishing rivers, Breiðdalsá and its attractive waterfall Beljandi, the Tinnudalsá and Norðurdalsá Rivers. While autumn is the ideal time for hunting geese, ptarmigan and even reindeer, fishing for brown trout is possible throughout the year.

Hotel Staðarborg, is the natural place to stay while here. So deep is the peace and quiet

that guests often wake up to see a herd of reindeer grazing right outside their window. In the small stand of trees behind the hotel, small birds flit from branch to branch, singing and chattering.

Owner/manager Arnór Stefánsson tells me that many tourists ask him if this is the right place to see elves and trolls. "I always tell them, yes, this is exactly the right place!"

Hotel Staðarborg can accommodate 54 people in 30 spacious rooms complete with private facilities and television. Sleeping bag accommodation and a camping site are also available.

The hotel's restaurant serves á la carte meals and refreshments are available throughout the day. Facilities at Hotel

Staðarborg include a jacuzzi and a grassy sports field.

The hotel is located on Route 1, about 7km from the village of Breiðdalsvík. It is 625km from Reykjavík and 75km from Egilsstaðir.

The hotel is also an ideal stop for those who are travelling by the Norræna ferry, as it is only about 100km from Seyðisfjörður.

So will you finally get a glimpse of one of those elusive elves or trolls here in the natural paradise that is Breiðdalur Valley? You'll have to find the answer to that one yourself!

-EMV





# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

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

*Bed down for the night in the heart of the Vatnajökull district at Vagnsstaðir Youth Hostel, just 28km east of the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Sleeping bag accommodation, linen rental, well-equipped kitchen, dining and lounge areas, as well as 3 fully equipped cottages are available. There is a campground with good sanitary facilities. The coast, just 1500m from Vagnsstaðir offers numerous possibilities for scenic walks and bird watching. Maps of the area are available at the hostel.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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EMV

# WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK!

Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland's newest protected area, established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 13,200 km<sup>2</sup> it is by far the largest national park in Iceland as well as in Western Europe.

Key features of the park are the ice cap of the Vatnajökull Glacier (8,200 km<sup>2</sup>) and several highly active volcanic systems within and outside the ice cap. The interplay of ice and fire is the single most important force in shaping the nature of the park. As a result, one can find in one place an unparalleled range of volcanic-, geothermal- and other landscape features.

We offer information at our three Visitor Centres, Gljúfrastofa, Snæfellsstofa and Skaftafellsstofa. Information Centres are situated at Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Höfn. More information at our website [www.vjp.is](http://www.vjp.is)



Gljúfrastofa



Snæfellsstofa



Gamlabúð



Skaftafellsstofa



Skaftárstofa



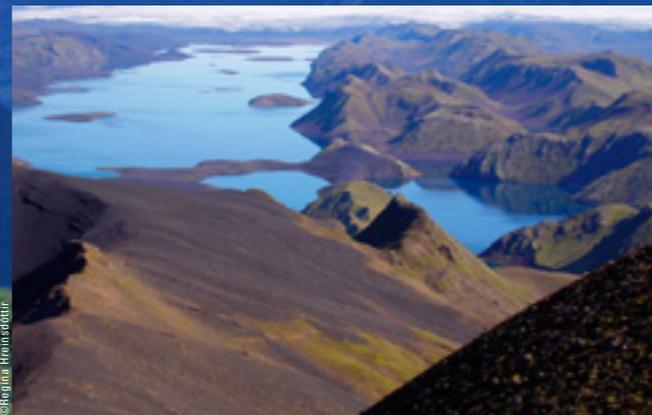
▲ Svartifoss



▲ Dettifoss



▲ Hiking Geldingafell, Snæfell in the distance



▲ Langisjór



▲ Morsárdalur



▲ Askja and Lake Öskjuvatn





## DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

*Jökulsárlón Boat Tours tours Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon*

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

### Sail Among the Icebergs

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 25 years. Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting 1 hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

### A Waffle with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where traditional Icelandic waffles with rhubarb jam and whipped cream are served throughout the day, as well as homemade soup with bread, 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 approximately 24 square km (9.2 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 250 m (820 feet) deep, four 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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## SAIL A FANTASY WORLD

*The Ice Lagoon Team reveal the secrets of Jökulsárlón*

It's one of the unique features of Iceland—one of those 'must see' spots. Located under the massive Vatnajökull glacier, the lagoon is one of the world's natural wonders. Huge icebergs break off from the tongue flowing down from the glacier itself, plunging into the waters of the lagoon. The sunlight shining on and through the ice produces beautiful effects, while the multi-faceted blocks of ice form shapes that are just other-worldly.

### A recent natural wonder

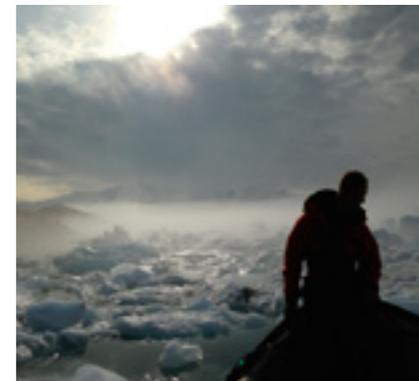
It hasn't always been like this. The lagoon started to form in 1934, and has grown steadily larger since then as the Vatnajökull glacier began retreating and ice started moving slowly down towards the sea, breaking off in huge chunks in the lagoon. It is now the deepest lake in Iceland at around 260 metres.

It's also a photographer's dream, presenting many different photo opportunities to get unique shots. Since the volcanic eruptions of 2010 and before, some of the icebergs are stained with streaks of ash. Many are so huge that they dwarf the little Zodiac boat as it wends its way between them.

It's not just peaceful on the lagoon, the silence is almost eerie, adding to the sense of awe. It's not without life, however, as seals can frequently be seen basking on a chunk of ice or chasing after fish—or, quite often, just curiously observing those strange humans in their red jackets.

### Tours that win Excellence Awards

Ice Lagoon-Zodiac Boat Tours has 7 scheduled tours daily. Each lasts an hour and the Ice Lagoon team takes you all the way up to the glacier edge, about 7km away. The company focuses on personal service with a



maximum of 10 passengers in each Zodiac boat and with professional guides who will point out the jewels and the secrets of the lagoon. This has earned them TripAdvisor's 2013 Certificate of Excellence. It is worth reading TripAdvisor's reviews to see why.

They have three kinds of tours: the Adventure Tour, the Evening Tour and private tours where you have the whole boat and the guide for yourself.

Before starting a tour, one of the experienced guides will tell you about what you can expect to see and will make sure you have your floatation suits and lifejackets.

The Evening Tour is remarkable as the sun is lower in the west, casting beautiful colours over the entire area. With fewer visitors at that time, the silence is all the more profound.

Jökulsárlón is easy to reach from Reykjavik, as it lies on the Ring road in the south, some 78km before the fishing town of Höfn.

-ASF

**Ice Lagoon - Zodiac Boat Tours**

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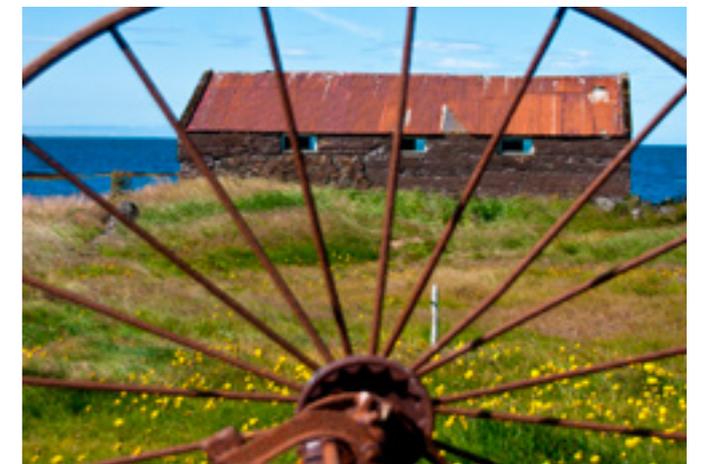
Icelandic design since 1972



## SOUTH ICELAND

The wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be experienced in the region. This region has geological wonders such as Geysir; the Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss waterfalls; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Keríð caldera; world-famous volcanoes like Hekla, the Gateway to Hell, Lakagíggar, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; Jökulsárlón. Here are historical sites like the world's longest-running parliament

at Þingvellir; museums, churches, the Stöng settlement, the Saga centre and villages like Eyrarbakki. Activities abound. Tours take you to all the sites, including the glaciers. Horse riding tours are popular. Try the Riverjet, boat trips or kayaking; scuba diving in clear waters, skiing or caving. Independent travellers can try hiking and cycling, camping or caravanning. Winter activities are just as thrilling. Fortunately, there is plenty of accommodation available throughout the region from camping to high-class hotels and restaurants to suit every taste. A developed infrastructure helps you get the most from your trips.



# WHERE VOLCANOES MEET THE OCEAN

*Dreaming yourself away on Mýrdalur's black shores*

There is hardly a place in Iceland that offers more dramatic scenery than Mýrdalur, the southernmost district of the island. Formed by the enormous powers of glacial ice, volcanic impacts and the eternal movements of the North Atlantic Ocean, and protected from the fierce north winds by its mountain ridges, Mýrdalur is a kind of oasis of supernatural beauty, perfect for a day trip away from the busy capital but you could easily spend many days in that area.



## My neighbour, the volcano

Approaching Mýrdalur on the smooth ring road is an adventure all its own, as it seems to be absolutely necessary to make a stop after each bend of the road. The contrasting landscape is breath-taking and more so when you realize where you are in fact travelling: Mýrdalur's colourful heaths and lush green pastures are the results of eruptions from the two volcanoes that are located just behind the area: Katla, under the icecap of the Mýrdalsjökull glacier, and the famous Eyjafjallajökull.



## Charm and good life

The 300 inhabitants of Vík, Mýrdalur's cultural and economic centre, appear pretty calm about their cantankerous volcanic neighbours, that statistically raise their voices every 42 years, usually sending floods of melted ice down to the sea. Vast sand deserts east of Vík tell stories about floods of the past and, as Katla is one of Iceland's most active volcanoes, the area is closely monitored.

The charming village of Vík ('bay') was founded around the year 1900 and offers all the services of a country town. Accommodation ranges from hotel and guesthouse to the Þakgil campsite in a remote canyon between Mýrdalsjökull and the deserts of Mýrdalssandur. Brýðebúð, one of Vík's oldest buildings, houses the tourist information office and Kötlusetur, with

exhibitions on nature and birdlife, and, of course, the volcanoes' history.

Restaurants and cafés offer the best quality local food, and you can be sure to find some delicious Icelandic cake with cream, while preparing for a hiking trip into the steep mountains behind the village, or maybe a guided tour to Sólheimajökull, the glacier accessible west of Vík.

## Drama and romance: Vík's black shores

Turn your back on the mountains and you will experience seaside scenery that has attracted Vikings, poets and film directors. Vík's vast black shores are world-famous for their mighty waves, dramatically hitting Mount Reynisfjall and the caves of Hálsanefshellir and for the rocky pillars of Reynisdrangar, mystically rising out of the sea next to Reynisfjall. These bizarre rocks, surrounded by golden waves during sunset, with seabirds floating in the pink night sky will make any photographer's dream come true.

And if the wind is getting too cold during a romantic midnight date on Reynisfjara beach, or on the birds' island of Dyrhólaey, you might just drop in at Víkurprjón, Vík's knitting shop that is open day and night. Get yourself one of those warm sweaters made from Icelandic wool and produced in the house workshop and, heading back to the shore, feel like a real Viking, ready to brave the wild elements.

-DT

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 www.visitvik.is



# KEEPING WARM WITH ICEWEAR

*Since 1972, Víkurprjón has been knitting non-stop*

The Víkurprjón wool manufacturer and outlet shop is one of Vík's oldest and most popular stops for tourists who are looking for the perfect memento of their trip to Iceland. Marking its 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary this year, Víkurprjón is perhaps the largest wool factory outlet in Iceland and continues to increase production on a yearly basis. Inside you will find a treasure trove of sorts—from lovely hand knitted items and machine knit woollens to a wide assortment of Icelandic souvenirs. On the upper floor you can observe the looms at work and get a glimpse of how the garments are made. Guided factory tours are available upon request and staff is more than happy to answer your questions.

Víkurprjón stocks an extensive collection of Icewear's outdoor clothing range that includes everything you need to keep warm—from woollen sweaters, mittens, gloves and hats, to down parkas designed with an emphasis on new fabrics and the latest trends. The rapidly growing company, which prides itself on its friendly customer service and competitive pricing, will open two new shops this summer—one at the cruise ship port in Reykjavik and one in the northern town of Akureyri.

## Charmingly Popular

Counted among the most picturesque villages in Iceland, Vík-í-Mýrdal is one of those must-see places that no tourist in Iceland should

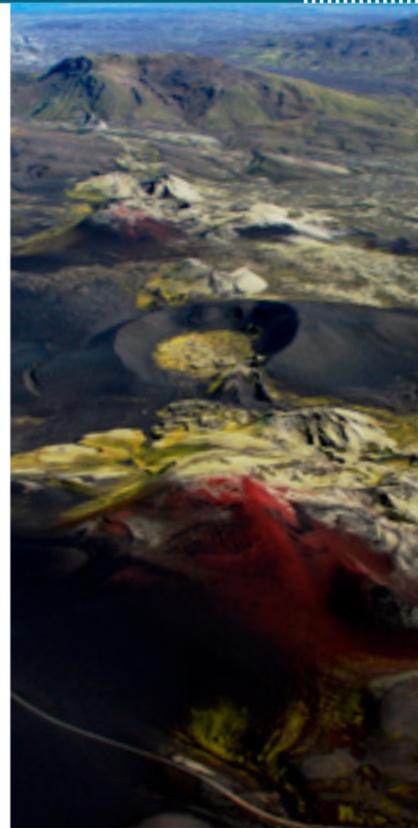


miss. Looming high above the tiny village of 330 inhabitants, the white expanse of Mýrdalsjökull Glacier shrouds the notorious Katla Volcano which slumbers just underneath the glacier's icecap. The sheer-faced mountains, black sand beaches and stunning landscapes full of startling contrasts are all part of what makes Vík the 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited town in Iceland after Reykjavik.

-EMV



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## FAMILY-FRIENDLY KIRKJUBÆJARKLAUSTUR

*The Centre of the South*

One hour east of Vík-i-Mýrdal, you will come to Kirkjubæjarklaustur, or just Klaustur as its usually called, a tiny village set on the edge of an ancient lava field. Part of Katla Geopark and Vatnajökull National Park, it's like driving into an open-air natural history museum—springy hummocks of woolly fringe moss and conical volcanic mounds topped with little vents, called rootless cones, dominate the landscape for as far as the eye can see. The entire region is bursting with mysterious tales connected with events that occurred hundreds of years ago when Klaustur was the site of a convent. It's home to the greatest lava flow from a single volcanic eruption in the history

of the world, the Laki Eruption of 1783–1784. Exciting stuff indeed and just waiting to be discovered!

### Yes there's an app for that!

Now you can take a guided tour of the area using Locatify's SmartGuide, a downloadable audio-guide app, which takes you to 26 locations all connected to the Laki Eruption. Available in English and Icelandic, the app can be accessed by GPS from anywhere using your smartphone. There is also a SmartGuide that covers the 20km Klaustur trail or you can get a detailed brochure with a map of the route

at the Skaftárstofa Information Centre in Kirkjubæjarklaustur.

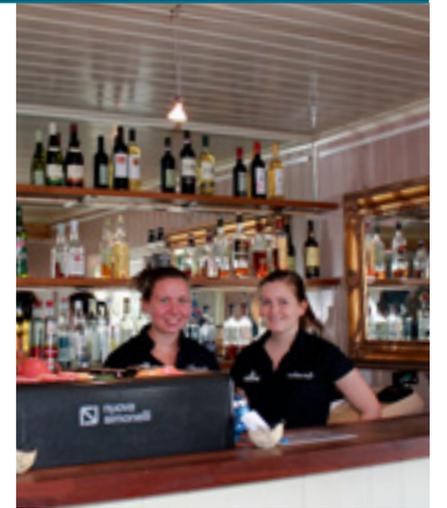
### Design your own nature souvenir

A fun activity that is unique to Kirkjubæjarklaustur is called 'Natural Treasure'. From local shops you can purchase a special glass bottle with a map that leads you to a little turf house filled with samples of moss, air, lava, lichen and wool, which are sustainable and have been collected with approval. Fill your bottle with a sample of your choosing, which will then be officially sealed and voilà!—you have designed your very own souvenir to take home with you. The Icelandic team at HAF Design, in collaboration with visitklaustur.is, has created this unique-to-Iceland tourism concept.

See you this summer in  
 Kirkjubæjarklaustur

-EMV

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## REFRESHING VÍK

*Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike*

Guests at Halldór's Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vík's shoreline with its black sand beaches, Halldór's Café serves dishes like soup of the day or salads with tuna, chicken or just feta, along with bigger meals of fish, lamb or chicken. Deserts include home-baked cakes and ice cream from a local

farm. Originally, Halldór's Café was a general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vík. Today, it continues to satisfy patrons with its menu, which has something for every taste, with a local produce, where possible.

Halldór's Café supports artists with a rotating display of local talent featured on its walls, and serves up steaming cups of coffee and cake, ideal for meeting and greeting

old friends or new acquaintances. Halldór's Café is open all year round. Its hours are 11:00 to 22:00 or 23:00, but Fridays and Saturdays can turn into late nights, with the café remaining open until 1:00 am with its fully stocked bar providing a late night place to grab a drink.

-KB

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## A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

*Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro*

**L**indin Restaurant & Bistro Café, located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, has a firm foundation of culinary excellence that attracts patrons from around the world. Owner, Baldur Öxdal Halldórsson, pastry and master chef, trained at the Hotel and Restaurant School of Iceland. But it was between 1980–1984, as he received training as a pastry chef at the Culinary Institute of America, New York and worked with two pastry chefs at the Palio restaurant in Manhattan that he got his inspiration to specialise in chocolate and desserts that, in 1986–1987, led him to the prestigious Richemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988–1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert. He was also a successful cafehouse owner in Reykjavik in the years between 1992 - 2010.

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

### Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002, which has become known as the 'Mecca of Icelandic wild game', with its lamb, fish, seafood and game caught in the wild. His menu is seasonal and features exotic dishes that can be made from reindeer, goose, duck, cormorant, guillemot, puffin, minke whale or pan-fried arctic char. Always on the cutting edge, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his almond pie with rhubarb crow- and blueberries and Icelandic skyr mousse.

### Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's 'greenhouse belt', he can take his pick of the

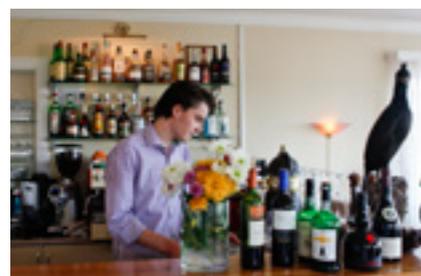
choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden, providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil, red and blackcurrants. The lamb and venison come from N.E. Iceland and are known for their delicious flavour, fed on mountain herbs. The Arctic char are caught fresh from either Lake Þingvellir or Lake Apavatn daily.

### In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, right beside the lovely natural sauna, steam baths and pool at the Fontana Spa. The 45-minute scenic drive from Reykjavik takes you through enchanting landscapes. Laugarvatn is half-way between Þingvellir and Geysir and Gullfoss, making it an excellent choice for a day trip to in one of the most scenic areas of Iceland. You can also now stay at any time of year in Laugarvatn at either the Golden Circle Apartments next to Lindin, the Gallerí Guesthouse or the village hostel to enjoy the Northern Lights in winter and the midnight sun in summer and the spectacular views from Lindin's terrace and garden across the lake to the Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull volcanoes.

-EMV/ASF

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## THE OLD COWHOUSE RESTAURANT

*Sitting Pretty under the volcano on Iceland's South Coast*

**L**ocation wise, The Old Cowhouse Restaurant couldn't be in a more perfect position for feasting your eyes upwards to the misty, craggy, moss-covered peaks of Eyjafjallajökull. It's a welcome addition to Iceland's ever-growing list of new amenities that have been popping up all over the country.

The remodelled former barn easily seats 50 to 60 dinner guests while retaining its unpretentious character and sweet bovine simplicity, making this a thoroughly

enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast.

The menu boasts grass-fed beef, as is the norm in Iceland, coming straight from restaurant's own cattle herds. A hearty and warming meat soup, called Volcano Soup, served with homemade bread, is a favourite.

Open year-round, the Old Cowhouse plans monthly events including an October evening of traditional food, a November evening of game (reindeer and

geese), a December buffet of traditional Christmas dishes, as well as musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the year.

For opening hours in winter, please contact The Old Cowhouse Restaurant directly. Large and small groups welcome.

-EMV

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## SLAKKI PETTING ZOO AND FAMILY PARK

*Enjoy life's simple pleasures in Laugarás*

**I**f you are travelling with small children in Iceland this summer, Slakki Petting Zoo and Family Park is a delightful stop on the Golden Circle Route. The park is bursting with all manner of cute and cuddly creatures that are just as curious about you as your children will be about them: hens and chicks,



calves, kittens, puppies, ducks, geese, mice and even aquariums full of tropical fish. On display this year are a couple of newcomers to the zoo—two Icelandic foxes! While they are not for petting, these normally elusive wild animals are fun for adults and children alike to observe up close. When the weather is fine, you can relax outside on the terrace and enjoy a variety of food and refreshments from the restaurant/café, including home-made cakes, sandwiches and hamburgers with fries. The little ones will be able to burn off energy on the playground, and older children and adults

can have a round of indoor mini-golf or try their hand at a game of billiards. No day out would be complete without ice cream, and Slakki Restaurant offers a selection of frozen treats from Kjörís, one of Iceland's largest ice cream manufacturers.

Slakki Petting Zoo and Family Park is open daily from 11.00 to 18.00 all summer long and is located near the Skálholt Cathedral in Laugarás.

-EMV

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## EAT AT THE SOURCE

*Dine on Delicious Langoustines at Eyrarbakki's Rauða húsið*

A visit to Iceland is not complete without a visit to the birthplace of the Icelandic lobster industry. Here, you can indulge in a feast of the finest Icelandic seafood at the Rauða húsið (Red House) restaurant, found in the picturesque seaside village of Eyrarbakki. In this beautiful red house, a short drive from Reykjavik, langoustines are served in a charming atmosphere amidst a rich and well-preserved history.

Now a tranquil village, Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900s and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere.

Iceland was late to discover this seafood delicacy. Lobster fishing was born off the shores of Eyrarbakki in 1954. In fact, it was not till then that the Langoustine was discovered to be not only edible, but delicious, too!

Care is taken to maintain the sense of history within the restaurant. The red house boasts beautiful original wooden floorboards dating back to 1919.

Arrive by noon; a hearty bowl of langoustine soup will set you up for the day.

Serving a variety of delicious fish and meat dishes, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients. Choose an



evening of indulgence and you can savour the Catch of the Day, consisting of two different seafood dishes. The lamb dishes are absolutely delightful. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of the Rauða húsið's signature desserts.

Enjoy a walk around the village either before or after a meal at the Rauða húsið. The walk could continue along the beautiful black beaches only few minutes away from the village. A relaxing stroll by the water makes the visit complete.

-ASF



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 +354 483 3330  
[raudahusid@raudahusid.is](mailto:raudahusid@raudahusid.is)  
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## Folk Museum in Eyrarbakki

The South Coast Museum

Árnæssýsla folk museum is the historical home that the Danish merchants built in 1765, called Húsið, the House. Húsið is one of the oldest houses in Iceland and a beautiful monument of Eyrarbakki's time as the biggest trading centre on the south coast.

Today, one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region. A famous piano, a shawl made out of human hair and the king's pot, are among items on view. Húsið prides itself on its warm and homelike atmosphere.



Address: "The House" 820 Eyrarbakki  
 Tel: +354 483 1504 & +354 483 1082  
 e-mail: [husid@husid.com](mailto:husid@husid.com) • [www.husid.com](http://www.husid.com)  
 Opening hours: Summer: May 15th – September 15th daily 11.00-18.00 or by agreement  
 Winter: By agreement

# A PILGRIMAGE OF MY OWN

*Off the beaten path to Þorlákshöfn*

Heading east from Reykjavík, I follow the steady stream of cars that are making their way across the mossy lava fields of Leitarhraun. Most of these will continue over Hellisheiði heath towards Hveragerði, Selfoss and beyond, but I will be taking a road less travelled and one that, in my mind, is even more magical. I've passed the tiny, old fashioned petrol



station and coffee shop 'Litla Kaffistofan' on my left and soon reach road no. 39, the turn off to Þorlákshöfn (Thorlakshofn) in the Ölfus District. This is where the masses and I part ways, at least for now, and I've got the road pretty much to myself.

## The Hauntingly Beautiful Þrengsli Pass

The drive through the powerfully energizing landscape, known as Þrengsli Pass, is exhilarating. Other-worldly even. Just a few metres off the road is Raufarhólshellir—a 1350m lava tube cave that is open for exploration. Further on, I come to Icelandic Glacial, where water that has been naturally filtered through the ancient lava is bottled via an enormous underground, spring-fed reservoir that holds some of the purest water on earth.

## More than a one-horse town

Soon I am in Þorlákshöfn, Ölfus District's one and only town. Located right on the coast, the village is flanked by miles of pristine black sand beaches where a few daring surfers gather in hopes of catching the relentless waves. As is typical of any Icelandic fishing village, the harbour is the centre of activity where colourful boats and noisy gulls vie for attention.

A brand new sports complex includes fully equipped indoor and outdoor sports facilities, indoor and outdoor geothermal swimming pools, a fitness centre and an adjoining campsite. The swimming pools are especially popular with families on



weekends, and for golfers, the challenging 18-hole golf course which lies just east of the village is equally popular.

## A hallowed place for latter-day pilgrims

Finally, I make my way west following the windswept coastline towards Selvogar's Strandkirkja—one of Iceland's most famous churches with a long and fascinating history dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the church still attracts visitors from the four corners of the country, who like pilgrims on a pilgrimage, journey here to make a vow. The combination of the sound of the pounding surf, the smell of the salt air and the cry from a lone Sterna flying overhead make this a very special place indeed. My own pilgrimage has been accomplished.

-EMV

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# IT'S NOT JUST FOOD, IT'S AN EXPERIENCE

*Hendur í Höfn Kaffihús in Þorlákshöfn*

The cool white interior, interspersed with delicate hues of soft pinks and warm greys, greets your eyes upon entering Hendur í Höfn Kaffihús, smack in the middle of the fishing village of Þorlákshöfn. The decidedly romantic ambiance is an oasis of sorts and a welcome contrast to the fish processing plants that surround it. Owner/artist Dagný greets us as if we were long-time friends and we feel immediately at home. One side of the room is an art-glass gallery and the other, a most elegant and charming café.

## No shortcuts allowed

"Life is too short for bad food," says Dagný with a smile. "It's all about the freshest and finest ingredients one can find but it also has to be appealing to the eyes." Only the best here as one would expect, but Dagný goes the extra mile, serving her delicious food on decorative antique china plates to complete the experience. She makes everything herself right on the premises—the cakes and desserts, several types of bread (some gluten free), the sandwiches and even the pasta.

Þorlákshöfn to enjoy the local geothermal swimming pool and afterwards head off to Dagný's for a light lunch, scrumptious desserts and possibly the best coffee in Iceland.

Spiffing I tell you. Simply spiffing!

-EMV



## From hobbyist to pro

It all started when Dagný's interest in glass-art began in 2000. A natural teacher, Dagný soon found herself instructing others and then after class they would gather over coffee and some delicious treat that Dagný had whipped up the night before. As the classes grew in popularity, so did Dagný's renown as a talented chef and soon foodies all the way from Reykjavík and beyond were seeking her out.

## Understanding Food Allergies

Since Dagný herself has had food allergies in the past, she is well aware of the problem that families can face when eating out. Whether you are gluten intolerant, lactose intolerant, allergic to nuts or are trying to keep to a special diet, feel free to make your needs known and Dagný will make every effort to rustle up something special just for you. Gluten free cakes and treats are a specialty!



## Kids are welcome

On weekends, Hendur í Höfn is a favourite of families with children who come to

**Hendur í höfn**  
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 hendurhofn@hendurhofn.is  
 www.hendurhofn.is



## THE SIMPLE LIFE OF THE ICELANDIC COUNTRYSIDE

*Budget-Friendly Guest House Ljósafossskóli*

Should you happen to be travelling on a tight budget during your holiday to Iceland, then finding inexpensive accommodation can sometimes be challenging. The newly opened Guest House Ljósafossskóli with its down to earth simplicity in the heart of the Grímsnes district near Þingvellir, caters to all those who must be mindful of expenses.

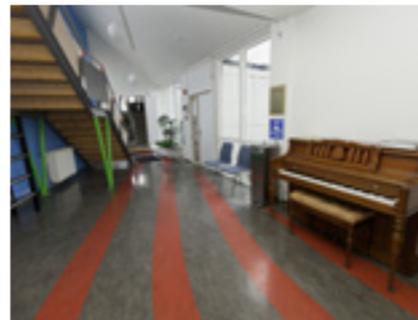
Originally built as a boarding school in the 1940s, this former centre of education served up to 50 pupils in its heyday. Once overflowing with chattering students, the now quiet building retains a certain stature with its wide passageways and graceful curving stairways, giving it an unpretentious and typically Scandinavian look and feel. Brightly coloured stained glass windows in the main foyer were crafted and installed by the students themselves and stand out against the stark white walls, serving as a

charming reminder of the guest house's pedagogical past.

A modern wing was added in 1994, and it is here that you will find a fully equipped kitchen that guests are welcome to make full use of, as well as a spacious dining hall which overlooks a well maintained indoor football (soccer) pitch/basketball court, also free for guests to use.

Ljósafossskóli Guest House is ideal for school groups and offers bunk bed and twin bed sleeping arrangements in private rooms on the first floor and more bunk beds in the downstairs dormitory. A large family sized room that sleeps up to six is also available. A buffet style continental breakfast is served in the dining room and is included in the room price. All rooms have shared facilities.

For those who prefer more spacious and private quarters, Ljósafossskóli Guest House also offers a fully furnished 4 bedroom/



2 bath house which sits just a hundred metres from the main building. Completely refurbished in a modern and relaxing style, the house is perfect for families and includes a self-contained kitchen, bed linens, towels, sleeping up to 8 people.

Ljósafossskóli Guest House is well situated with easy access to nearby natural attractions—Geysir–55km, Þingvellir –20km, Selfoss–20km, Reykjavik–70km and around 100km from Keflavik International Airport.

-HP



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## SOMETHING SAVOURY, SOMETHING SWEET

*Café Mika—One of Iceland's Best Kept Secrets*

It's not often that you'll find such an unlikely gem 'in the middle of nowhere'. In this case 'nowhere' is in Reykholt, a small horticultural village with a grand population of 200 souls on the historic Golden Circle. The gem in question is Café Mika. The relatively new restaurant is one of Iceland's best-kept secrets and has been awarded Trip Advisor's Certificate of Excellence for 2014.

### Every week, a tempting new dessert

The café/restaurant is run by Polish Mikki and his wife Bozena who put their heart and soul into everything they do. Five years ago, Mikki decided to finally get to grips with

his passion for chocolate and took a course in Belgium to learn the fine art of chocolate confectionery. Mikki uses only quality chocolate from Belgium and France and when combined with Reykholt's own raspberries and strawberries, you can be assured of a dessert that will surpass your expectations. The café's equally delicious, rich, thick, hot chocolate is in fact quite stunning and unparalleled anywhere in Iceland.

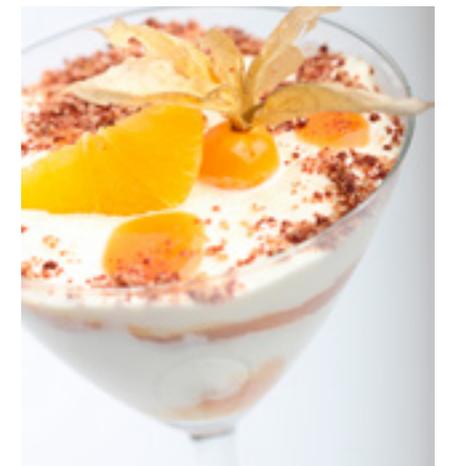
### Putting the wow factor on the plate

Hmmm, freshly baked pizza oozing with melted cheese, garlic-butter sauce and a variety of toppings is just the ticket when hunger strikes. Café Mika offers 13 varieties of this Italian delight, and in summer, when the weather is fine, the chef fires up the wood burning pizza oven out on the patio where you can sit with glass of wine in hand, enjoying Iceland's mid-summer sun. Sizzling, hot-off-the-grill chicken, langoustine, lamb or beef steak dishes are also on the menu, along with items such as langoustine soup, fresh garden salads, pasta dishes, and hearty sandwiches. It all sounds so tempting, doesn't it? Should you have any dietary restrictions, the chef will make every effort to accommodate your needs.



### Go home in style

Last but not least, Café Mika's gift shop offers a fine selection of hand-knit woollen lopapeysas, (Icelandic pullovers), gloves, hats and mittens, lovingly produced by local craftsmen and women. Did you say chocolate? How about a box of fine, hand-made chocolates for your chocoholic friends and family back home? Of course!



-EMV



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# A WHIRLWIND CULTURAL TOUR OF SELFOSS, STOKKSEYRI AND EYRARBAKKI

What I love about Iceland are the layers upon layers of captivating history that are hiding just beneath the surface of this land that was for so long ensconced in isolation. Every little community has its own trove of fascinating cultural finds that will delight and surprise you. Here is a brief overview of just some of what South Iceland's Árborg Municipality has to offer.

**Selfoss on the banks of the Ölfusá River**  
 New places are popping up everywhere in Iceland to meet the needs of the influx of tourists, not the least of which can



be found in Selfoss and its most recent addition, Tryggvaskáli Restaurant. Located in the town's oldest building from 1890, Tryggvaskáli is fast becoming one of South

Iceland's premier fine dining establishments. Fannar, the head chef, received his culinary training in Iceland and in 2007 did a stint at the London restaurant, Texture, working under Iceland's only Michelin starred chef, Agnar Sverrisson.

### Haute but not haughty

Tryggvaskáli's summer menu includes Chef Fannar's signature dish: slowly cooked salmon served with Icelandic barley and wild blueberry noisette. The salmon couldn't be any fresher, as local fishermen catch it daily in the river that runs just outside the restaurant's windows. A deceptively simple yet spectacular rhubarb-skyr dessert is the perfect finishing touch to a superb dining experience. The chef brings together the best locally sourced ingredients with such innovative culinary talent that dining at Tryggvaskáli becomes a singular treat that should not be missed.

### Is chess your game?

New in Selfoss is the Bobby Fischer Centre, located on the second floor at Austurvegur, 21. The centre was created in honour of the late chess grandmaster who defeated Boris Spassky in what became known as the 'Match of all Time' in Reykjavik in 1972.

### Relax in Stokkseyri

If you have never been kayaking, consider a maiden voyage with Kajak Stokkseyri in the calm waters of the lakes and canals of Stokkseyri, just 15 minutes drive from Selfoss. For beginners, there is a relaxing and therapeutic one-hour trip that gives you

a feel for the sport, and for more seasoned kayakers, there is a 2½-hour trip that goes out into the skerries of the nearby lagoon. Afterwards, you can enjoy an excellent lobster bisque at the popular seaside restaurant Fjöruborðið while the sun begins its slow descent on the northern horizon. End your day with an evening stroll along the shore or drive out to Knarrarósviti lighthouse, 3km from Stokkseyri.

### The Icelandic Wonders Museum

Despite its unconventional name The Ghost Centre/Icelandic Wonders Museum is a far cry from those obnoxious 'haunted houses' found elsewhere. The centre is dedicated to elves, trolls and hidden people—tales of whom have abounded throughout Icelandic history for the past thousand years. The sagas attest to many accounts of encounters with such beings, which have undoubtedly contributed to the fact that Icelandic



society, as a whole, is quite open minded on the subject. Take your time to look a little deeper into this riveting aspect of Iceland's past. You might just come away with a whole new outlook on the supernatural side of life.

### The Pipe Organ Workshop

An interesting cultural highlight in Stokkseyri is Orgelsmiðjan or 'The Organ Builder', located behind The Ghost Centre. The workshop is open to visitors, who will meet the master builder Björgvin Tómasson himself, learn something of the history of traditional music and the proliferation of pipe organs throughout Iceland. On display is a beautifully carved Austrian organ that dates from 1734 and may well have been played by Mozart himself.

### Eyrbakki's Heritage Museum

Take a peek into Húsið (The House), Iceland's oldest timber house, now a heritage museum where rooms are set up as they were in times past, with period furnishings and interesting details about some of Eyrbakki's most illustrious townspeople. Eyrbakki served as Iceland's main harbour and trading station from 1765 to 1925. It was the centre of art, music, fashion and European culture and occupants of The House played a major role in defining Iceland's bourgeois standards during that period.

Please go to the Tourist Information Office at Hotel Selfoss for maps and further details about all the above places and more.

-EMV





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# VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

*Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale*

Mountainous and mysterious, the Westman Islands are one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the skyline of Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade.

## The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands is with Viking Tours' Circle Tour. This 90-minute tour takes you around the main island of Heimaey where you will peek into sea caves and observe towering cliffs teaming with a variety of birdlife. The tour concludes with the sensational live sounds of haunting instrumental music, filling the singing cave of Klettshellur which is renowned for its superb acoustics.

## The Coach Tour

Another delightful way to explore the island is by taking the Viking Tours' coach tour which departs from the harbour every day, year round. The guided tour takes you around the island where you will learn something of the history and culture as well as get the the opportunity to observe puffins at Stórhöfði.

In staggering numbers, these adorable birds flock to the archipelago year after year, the first arriving on schedule around the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> of April. "The best time of day to see them is in the late afternoon and early evening when the puffin parents return to their burrow to feed their young, after spending the day fishing in the sea", says Sigurmundur.

## From hot Soup to hot Lava

All Vikingur II tours begin and end at the cozy Café Kró down at the Vestmannaeyjar harbour where you can enjoy a bowl of hot



soup and later on take in a free 55-minute film about the 1973 volcanic eruption of Eldfell and learn how this singular event changed the face of the Westman Islands.

## New Tours Available for Groups Only

Viking Tours is now offering exciting new group tours on its newly christened boat, the Vikingur,—a large 90-passenger boat which sails from the harbour at Landeyarhöfn. Options include a 'quick look' 90-minute boat tour of two small outer islands, a three hour 'island hopping' tour which takes you to six of the islands in the archipelago and

a full-on six hour Bus+Boat combo tour for the ultimate Westman Island tour!

See you this summer in the Westman Islands!

-EMV

**Viking Tours**  
 Tangagötu 7 • 900 Vestmannaeyjum  
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 viking@vikingtours.is  
 www.vikingtours.is



# THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

*The Eldheimar Volcano Museum on the Westman Islands*

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

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

## Heroes Saving a Home

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

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

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

## A Museum as a Mirror

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

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m<sup>2</sup> museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman Island's Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a height of 220 metres out of the blue not existing before its eruption.

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

Nature protection laws protect Surtsey and only scientists are allowed to access the island for research reasons. The island



is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2008.

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

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## FEEL THE BEAT—FEEL THE FREEDOM

*Horseback riding on the beach with Alhestar*

If you're looking for an inspiring day, with wind, salt on your face, smoked lamb, strong coffee and most of all, with beautiful horses, you should look out for the small town of Þorlákshöfn. Not much more than fisheries, you might think. But one of the buildings in Þorlákshöfn belongs to Magnús and houses his thirty horses, and he runs a horse-rental.

### The man from Skagafjörður

Magnús was born and raised in Skagafjörður and so were his horses. Skagafjörður horses are said to be the toughest as well as the softest, and so are their people. Magnús has been working with horses since his young years, and although he worked on fishing vessels for thirty years, he is absolutely passionate about his horses. You will immediately feel their close relationship

when you enter the clean and bright stable and pet his friendly companions for the first time. All of them are suitable, soft and calm for beginners but he also offers horses for experienced riders.

Magnús' stable is not a posh one, but a very honest and authentic place. Safety always comes first. You will be equipped with a helmet and, if you like, a vest and he will personally join you during your first steps on your Icelandic horse to help you feel comfortable.

### The freedom of horseback riding

Nature around Þorlákshöfn, be it the sand dunes or the lava fields, seems to be endless and timeless. No fences, no boundaries and no people. Nothing compares to discovering the countryside on horseback—it is exactly the right speed to find all the miracles that you miss while driving the main roads.

Experience the spirit of these great little horses, which safely and tirelessly carry people over hill and dale, as they have done for hundreds of years. Enjoy the feeling of being on your own with the elements, with nothing between you, your Icelandic horse and the North Atlantic Ocean.

You will be riding on a comfortable horse either to the west to Strandarkirkja, a beautiful white church situated in the dunes, watching out for seafarers, or to the east along the amazing coastline towards the fishing town of Eyrabakki. You can also choose the trip into the lava fields north of Þorlákshöfn and find the incredible solitude of an ossified landscape.

### Try out, try longer

Magnús offers riding tours all year round from one hour up to a whole day. Just let him know what you would like to do. It's mostly about having fun on horseback together. If the riders and horses are happy and having a good time, Magnús might keep on riding with you along the shore. Afterwards you can enjoy a good cup of coffee and Icelandic refreshments in a loft above the stable. And if you happen to be hooked on horses and beaches, he can also arrange accommodation for you, and you can meet his horses again, the next day.

-DT





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www.alhestar.com



# IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVING IT, THEN IT WILL BE FINE

*Picture hunting with the photographer Rafn Sig*

The soft light of a sunset and dawn's freshness are part of the magic that the island exerts on hunters of the moment. For photographers, Iceland is among the most magical places in the world.

If you like to live your passion for taking stunning pictures under professional guidance, you should get in touch with 'Rabbi' Rafn Sig, one of the big names among Iceland's photographers.

### Small groups, big chances

Being a professional tour operator, he knows that the best way to elicit secrets from the country is by travelling in small groups. "You have to be relaxed for landscape shooting," says Rafn, "everyone needs his time for a picture. And, after all, you want to enjoy the moment." He offers tours travelling in a comfortable four-wheel drive Mitsubishi, suitable for any highland trip.

He doesn't conceal the fact that photo hunting is still a lot of fun for him, even after 30 years of professional work. When he was a boy, he found places of incredible beauty in the highlands. Their special magic had to be captured—and a lifelong passion was born. "It's all about loving it," says Rafn, "Then it will be fine."

### Like-minded travelling companions

This professional photographer's pictures have been published all over the world. He likes to share his passion for travel with like-minded people. His offers of customized, all year round photo trips and workshops range from a day to a fortnight long.

During the summer, he prefers the gentle midnight light of highland gems such as Landmannalaugar, the summit Hrafninnusker, or the impressive Kerlingarfjöll, with its colourful rhyolite mountains and geothermal valleys. Going south, he is fascinated by the black beaches of Vík, the incredible diversity of Skaftafell National Park, and of course, the goddess for all photographers: the famous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon. When you join him in his car, he might have a few more secrets to share.

### Fascination of the Westfjords

Rabbi likes to travel to the Westfjords—Iceland's forgotten paradise and one of the least visited areas of the island. Everything in the Westfjords is extreme—from the almost vertical cliffs to the terrible storms that have created the coastline's wrinkled face. Iceland's most famous cliff, Látrabjarg, offers an opportunity to experiment with your camera's exposure

timing to capture flying puffins and other seabirds. A photo trip so far in the north is not for the timid, with temperatures rarely reaching 10 degrees, and frequent icebergs drifting past the coast.

### Treasure Hunting

The winter, with only a few hours of daylight, is a particular challenge to any photographer. Long twilights, with sunny gold pouring over the hills, and nights when the sky is full of Northern Lights that appear to be closer than anywhere else, are a real treat and best to be enjoyed in a group.

You can find a sampling of Rafn's photo art and his tour offers on his websites:

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

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

-DT



*Rafn Sig,-*



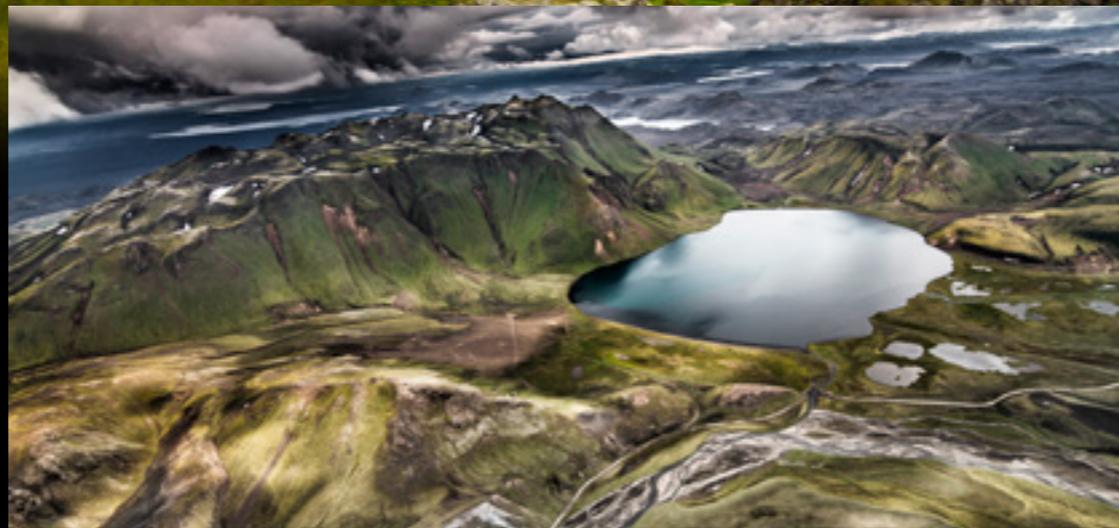


Rafn Sig.

Landmannalaugar



Núpsvötn



Dómadalsvatn



Frostastaðavatn



Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík



Geothermal Power Plant at Svartsengi



Sundahöfn í Reykjavík



Reykjavik



Ljósafossstöð



Dalshraun 1. Hafnarfjörður



Strokkur



Þjófafossar, Búrfell

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Námaskarð



Saxhólar



Blue Lagoon



Víti and Askja

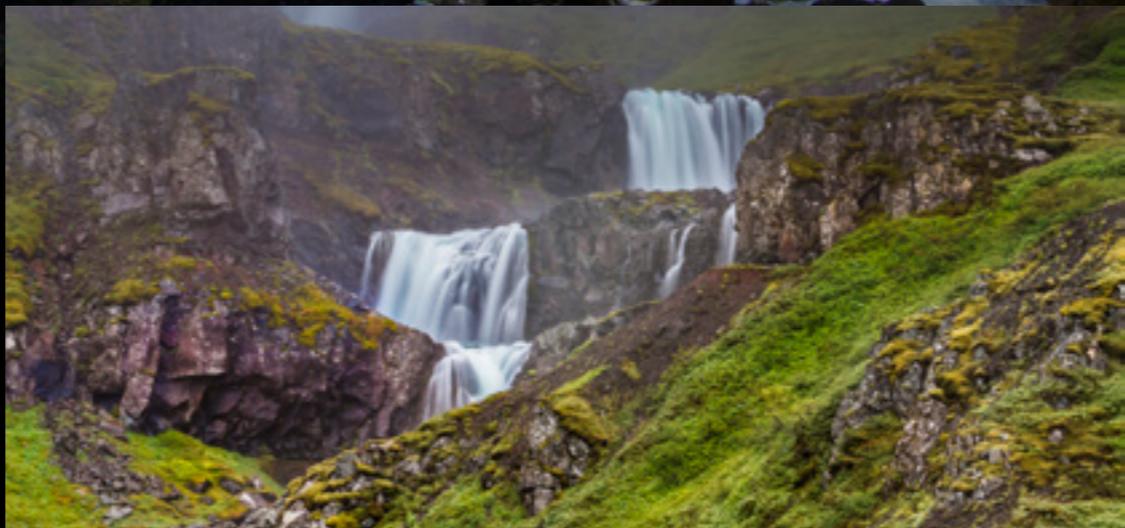


Rafn Sig,-

Goðafoss



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# THE ICELANDIC HORSE

*A true companion through rough times*

When Iceland was settled before the year 1000 AD, settlers not only brought sheep and household items on their small sailing vessels. Horses joined the dangerous trip across the northern seas. First findings of saddles and bridles date back to 10<sup>th</sup> century, when Iceland still was pagan and people believed in the god Odin who rode Sleipnir, an eight-legged shamanic horse with magic powers.

Icelandic saga literature is filled with stories about horses, not only as a means of transport in daily life, but as a sign of wealth and object of desire. The most famous example was the horse Freyfaxi in Hrafnkel's saga. Nobody was allowed to ride Freyfaxi, and a fatal feud started when Hrafnkel's shepherd, Einar, ignored the ban and was subsequently killed by his master.

## Brave partners

The Icelandic horse is a small, sturdy breed from Scandinavia that came with the settlers. It must have been a brave one, too, with strong nerves, considering the long boat-trip to Iceland. In post-settlement centuries, merchants added horses from the continent, and the Icelandic breed developed into what we have today: a small riding horse with a height of around 138cm (54in or 13.6 hands) to the highest point of the withers; sure-footed, with a nice and willing temperament; tough and resilient in its physical strength, a friendly and independent, gregarious animal.

Icelandic horses have survived harsh winters, famine, and volcanic eruptions and assisted man as partners in ploughing, harvesting and carrying heavy loads like fish, timber, hay or stones.

Cars only came to Iceland after World War II. Until then, a group of horses would carry people long distances, through deserts of lava, ice and sand, crossing glacial rivers on small boats or by swimming. Machines have taken over labour and traffic now. However, for one job, the Icelandic horse still is practically irreplaceable: gathering the free-ranging sheep from the Highlands in early autumn. Here the secret bonds between man and horse are still tangible.

Famous poems have praised the horse through the ages. In olden times, horses were often buried next to their late owners



© Brynjar Eggertsson

to demonstrate the strong relationship. This, of course, is no longer allowed, but as late as 1920, a farmer in South-Iceland decided to share a grave with his horse, on the slope of a mountain they both loved to explore.

## Tölt – the long-distance gait

Unlike other breeds, Icelandic horses have two additional gaits: tölt and pace. Tölt is a four-beat lateral gait with only one foot carrying the weight at a time, providing a smooth and comfortable ride on long distances. The pace is a fast, two-beat lateral gait used for racing over short distances.

In the Middle Ages in Europe, the special tölt gait almost disappeared in breeding, as it was not suitable for carriages. In the inhospitable Icelandic landscape, carriages have never been used, and the tölt survived.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Icelandic horses were sought after by Danish shepherds because of their tölt. Tölt is still enjoyed today, riding for pleasure through Iceland's beautiful landscape. Just as in the old days, people

join highland and cross country riding trips with 2-4 horses, changing their riding horse about once an hour to keep them fresh and willing. Visitors can also enjoy the qualities of the horses in numerous shows and competitions during the summer.

## Today's athletes

In order to protect the stock's health, Iceland banned the import of horses in 1909. Since the 1950s the export of Icelandic horses to the continent has increased, in the post-war years as working horses, and later as athletic riding companions. With a total population of 300,000 Icelandic horses worldwide, they can be found in almost any European country, the US and New Zealand. Every second year, a world championship takes place to present the best horses of the breed. Due to their hardiness, they are also popular in endurance competition. One of the most successful endurance horses in Europe is an Icelandic horse. In the US, a 25 year old Icelandic endurance champion, Remington,

just completed his 209<sup>th</sup> ride of 50 miles and will be the highest mileage gaited horse in equestrian sports.

Horses form a strong part of Icelandic culture. Colourful herds, graze calmly on endless meadows, braving the elements. There is nothing so peaceful as being with them on a sunny day and no freedom like riding them through lava fields and across rivers, as men did hundreds of years ago.

-DT



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# THE ICELANDIC SHEEP

*Strong and hardy, Icelandic Sheep contributed to the nation's survival*



Sheep. They seem to be everywhere, wandering freely all over the mountains and highlands as if they own the country. They are one of the most common animals in Iceland.

Icelandic sheep are so called short-tailed animals, an ancient Nordic Breed which was formerly common in the north part of Western Europe, but now only found in a few areas of the world. It is a strong, hardy breed which has adapted well to Icelandic conditions.

The Icelandic sheep is special in many ways. Part of the breed is called 'leader sheep' and possesses unique qualities, not found in any other sheep breed in the world. Many stories have been told of their rescuing both men and other sheep from danger.

Around 1980, there were about 10 times more sheep than people in the country or around 2,000,000 sheep (including the summer lambs) and 226,948 inhabitants. The number has now been reduced by almost half, because of overgrazing in some cases but also market developments.

In former times, sheep were allowed to graze freely all year round, even in winter. This had disastrous effects when the climate became cooler. The interaction of natural

forces: water, wind, fire and ice, as well as the encroachment of men and animals has, in the course of time, disturbed the layer of surface vegetation. When destroyed, a chain reaction of soil erosion begins which is difficult to stop. This shows how hard the struggle for survival has been in Iceland. The sheep has been called one of the keys to survival in the country in the old times. The animals could survive on winter grazing, and the people fed themselves on their meat and milk and made warm clothes from the wool.

Since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, steps have been taken to fight erosion by reforestation, reseeding and other programmes to protect sensitive areas from overuse by men and animals. Government regulation now prohibits unsustainable use of land. One of these steps has been to reduce the number of sheep so now there are 475,000 adult sheep in the country or 1,100,000, including the summer lambs.

### Lambing Time

The mating season is in December. The farmer registers the individual matings, and their dates. So when the lambing season starts, he can look into his book to see who



their father is and on which dates his lambs are due. It's important to know the date of delivery so that he can keep the mother indoors when she gives birth and to be able to shelter the newborns on their first days. Each farmer has a special earmark, cut into one of the lamb's ears soon after its birth.

This traditional book-keeping method would make it easy for farmers to provide a genealogical tree of the meat you are purchasing! Today, the lambs are also tagged with modern plastic eartags.

Nowhere else in the world are sheep bred by this method because in most countries the sheep simply have their lambs outdoors and no one knows anything about their genealogy.

The lambs are born in May and stay with their mothers all summer long. After the first few days indoors, they graze on grass fields on the farm for 3–4 weeks. Then they are sent out to graze the hills and mountain pastures all over the country, running free until the middle of September, feeding on the rich and nourishing vegetation. During the intervening time, the farmer harvests the hay to feed his sheep during the winter. Only about 1% of Iceland is cultivated. This means that most of the grass and plants the sheep feed on is wild.



### The Réttir (Round-up)

Farmers gather their flocks in the autumn. Systematically, they round up the sheep all over the country. There is practically no place in the wilderness of the highlands of Iceland where sheep cannot be found during the summer—except maybe on the glaciers. The round-up is conducted on horseback or on foot with the assistance of sheepdogs. The entire process may take up to a week and, during this time, participants stay overnight in mountain huts, where they pen in the sheep they have gathered so far, then hang up their damp clothes, uncork their hip flasks and swap stories and songs.

When the search is over and all the sheep are accounted for, the fat frisky lambs, ewes and rams are herded down to the lowlands and into a corral called a 'réttir', where they are identified by their earmarks and sorted into the correct pens, belonging to individual farms.

The réttir is a popular event across the country and most Icelanders like to take part in it, be they bureaucrats or bankers, school-children or teachers, sailors or seamstresses. Some travel companies offer foreign travellers the opportunity to participate also.

After the sheep have been herded into the correct pens they are divided up. Those destined for the slaughterhouse are removed from the flock. Those destined to live graze on fields on or near the farm, until November, when they are housed for the winter.

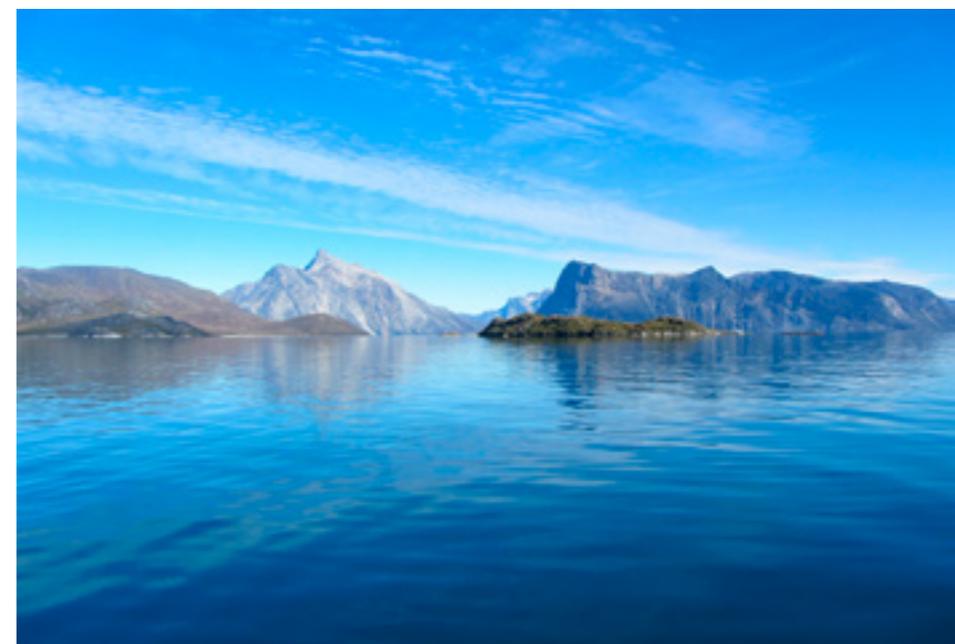
Sheep used to be sheared before they were released to roam the pastures. Nowadays, most farmers shear them in winter when they are indoors, as this wool fetches a higher price.

### A Valuable Resource

Wool was one of the country's most important exports during the Middle Ages (along with dried fish, known as stock fish). It became the basis of a valuable export industry again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The fleece of the Icelandic sheep, which varies in colour from white through grey and browns to near black, is made up of two layers. The inner layer of short, fine fibres, called 'thel' was used for knitting delicate laces, underwear and baby clothes while the coarser, longer, outer fibres, called 'tog' were used for warm and water resistant winter garments. Today the soft spun 'lopi wool' is used in traditionally patterned hand knitted sweaters, the most popular souvenirs from Iceland.

-AMB



## GREENLAND – THE ARCTIC’S PROMISED LAND

*The Gateway to Wilderness of the North*

For thousands of years, Greenland has attracted nomad settlers with its numerous fertile fjords and abundant seafood. Most of these nomads crossed the arctic ice cap from Alaska and settled on the west coast of the world’s largest island. The first western immigrants arrived in 982 AD with the outcast Eric the Red and his people from Iceland. He and his descendants created an independent Viking community that lasted until 1450. The disappearance of Greenland’s Vikings is still a mystery to historians. Silent remnants are all that remain of a forgotten era, leaving us to ponder the power of nature over man.

### Destructive Beauty

Nature seems untamed in Greenland. Anything man can achieve is easily destroyed by the frost, storms and melting water. Greenland’s remote beauty is overwhelming; relentlessly demanding respect from all who dare to challenge it. The Inuit learned to adapt to the harsh wilderness and survive by humbly

becoming part of it. Walking in their footsteps and following their example is the safest way to discover this strange world.

Whale and seal meat was the ‘gold’ of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when Scandinavian hunters arrived and began to trade with the native Inuit. Still a source of income for many today, Greenlanders depend on the use of dog sleds, kayaks and traditional hunting weapons to continue to provide their basic foods.

### Tradition Meets the Present

Greenland’s southern coast benefits from a mild climate and thus has provided man with berries, herbs and enough food for the sheep that have been bred there since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A diet of aromatic tundra grasses ensure that Greenland’s lamb meat needs no additional spicing.

Everything in this country seems to be pure, yet exotic at the same time. Even the bustling capital, Nuuk, presents itself as a surprisingly modern town with all the comforts of a contemporary city and a

well-developed tourist sector that spans the entire country. A population of only 57,000 inhabitants live on this huge island with its endless coastline, connecting tradition with modernity. Art, music and fashion play an important role on this vast continent which has found its own unique style.

Venturing northwards from Nuuk, the surrounding vegetation becomes noticeably sparse, compelling inhabitants to preserve their traditional nomadic lifestyle by hunting reindeer, musk oxen and polar bears. Arctic storms make it quite an uncomfortable place, and due to the hidden crevasses resulting from glacial melting, also a fairly dangerous one.

### The Summer Country

In summer, the flora has established itself—more than 4,000 different plants, flowers and herbs can be found on both coasts and the numerous islands. The short summers give rise to a kind of growth frenzy, where plants compete for their place in the sun and almost every soil-covered spot sports a

multitude of flowers. The two-month long festival of nature celebrates the short arctic summer, when temperatures indeed can reach up to 20°C in June and July. Despite the ever-changing weather, the dry arctic air assures clear views of the spectacular scenery. Even distant mountain ranges seem nearer than they actually are and the complete silence gives one a feeling of reverence.

Admiring the colourful south coast from the sea, its green meadows protected by huge grey mountains, while the deep blue arctic sea gently rocks impressive icebergs through the fjords, it is easy to understand why Eric the Red had been so fascinated by this ‘green land’.

### Icebergs Everywhere

There is hardly anything more magical than bathing in the hot spring of Uunartoq while watching icebergs float by. Greenland’s hot springs can reach up to 60°C and icebergs can be seen everywhere. However, no place is as suitable for experiencing the dramatic sight of inland ice as in Kangerlussuaq, West Greenland. Serving as Greenland’s international airport, the town is also called the ‘Gateway to Greenland.’ From here you can easily reach Russel Glacier by foot, dog sledge or helicopter or lose yourself in the

picturesque fjords of King Frederik’s Land on a kayak trip. The ethereal calm and clear weather of Kangerlussuaq makes it an ideal winter destination—nowhere in the world are your chances of spotting the Northern Lights as high as in this town with 300 cloudless nights per year!

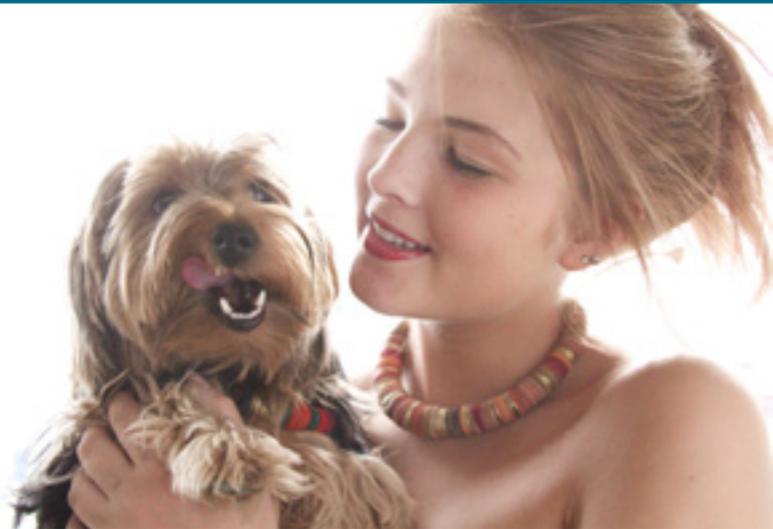
### The Gateway to the Wilderness

For those who seek adventure and solitude, the gateway to the wilderness is accessible from the country’s east coast. Until the last century, East Greenland had literally been cut off from the rest of the country and the outside world by an impenetrable wall of rock and ice. Thus the inhabitants of this isolated location were forced to develop their

own culture, language and oral tradition. To this day, the people there are still deeply connected to nature.

Take a break from civilization in Ittoqqortoormiit, and discover the borders of the world’s largest national park with its rich animal life and remnants of Inuit culture which date back one thousand years. The national park is reserved for rangers and scientists, but its outskirts are open to cruise ships and smaller tours.

Visiting this very last outpost of man is truly humbling and serves as a reminder to treat our planet’s northernmost treasure with care.



## LEATHER DESIGNER

*Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces*

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs. Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”

Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours.

Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After working at an architect’s office, she started her own business.

“I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.”

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Rammagerðin stores around the country and at Keflavík International Airport, Snorrastofa in Reykholt and directly from Guðrún, herself.

More information can be found on Facebook: Ark.art leather design.

-NNH





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