

# *Iceland* **Explorer**

February - March 2002



A SPECIAL WELCOME MAGAZINE FOR VISITORS TO ICELAND



# Welcome to Iceland

## Mid-Atlantic Seminar Participants

On behalf of Iceland Explorer Tours and Iceland Explorer Magazine we would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the participants, new and old to the annual Icelandair Mid Atlantic Seminar. Those of you coming to Iceland and this seminar for the very first time will quickly realize what an incredibly great vacation destination Iceland is.



We hope we get to meet as many of you from all the other participating countries as possible during your four day stay here in the land of Ice and Fire. If there is any information or assistance you might need concerning that perfect vacation destination for those very special clients, we hope you'll be in touch with us. Velkominn til Islands.

*Iceland Explorer Tours*

*"All you need in Iceland"*

### WINTER:

*The winter finally just eeked past  
mid-point we thought we would not last.  
With wind and rain most every day,  
No snow in Iceland in which to play.  
Northern Lights were hiding in the gray  
Along with the stars most every day*

*But winter now is on the wane  
I can see it on the weather vane  
Sunrise now at nine or so  
Sunset waits till five to go  
Invigorated, waiting for the sun of June  
When day and night could still be noon*

### Observations on a January Morn

*Inspired by an Article from  
ICELAND DAILY NEWS*

*On this January morning,  
as I walked down the steps of my house  
A thin film of ice covered cars and road alike  
twinkling like stars.  
I scraped the stars from my car window,  
A giant sun had just started to peek at the city life  
behind the Blue Mountains  
Purple clouds floated in a yellow-green sky.  
It's a wonderful war; the battle between night and day.*

*The air is so still, yet so fresh and clean  
I could walk endlessly in the stillness of this new day  
And listen to the birds wake up  
the starfish jump in the early waves  
Let the mild frost bite my face and fingers  
Iceland is a magic land, No winter, No wind, No pollution  
Just love and peace.*

*I can clearly hear the dolphins laugh, the fishermen sigh  
over the glorious blue Atlantic beauty.  
Now the eastern sky is ice-white,  
contrasting with the blackness of the western stretch.  
And I hear someone calling my name from Atlantis  
Come, come, come to the sea  
Ride upon the next trawler to me  
I'll await you in a giant silver shell  
where you can still see Mother Esja  
And together  
we will attend the mermaid's cocktail party below.*



# Iceland Explorer

First, let me apologize for listing a story for the Christmas/New Year's edition and then not running it. Let's just refer to it a senior moment and leave it there. It was called the "Temple of Dreams." The story runs in this issue, along with the magazine cover. Check out the story about the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, called I Hear a Symphony. You've all heard the phrase "when in Rome". Well you're in Iceland and over the next two months there are several special days, not necessarily holidays, you might observe or take part in. The story that will help is called the Name Game. Easter Sunday by the way is on the 31st of March this year.

FINALLY, there is some snow in Iceland. With that, a short story about Akureyri, where snow finally fell, opening the ski lift and lodge. There were 4 winners to the contest in the last issue in about 87 entries at last count. Winners were from New York, Arizona, Paris, and the UK. All said that we should give the prize to a local winner. There weren't any, so we live to challenge you another day. Enjoy this edition of Iceland Explorer... OH YES !! The Grandfather was 59 years old.



Bob Murray

## IN THIS ISSUE

**LOST AND FOUND - WINTER**

**THE TEMPLE OF DREAMS**

**I HEAR A SYMPHONY**

**THE NAME GAME**

...and the regular stuff, some new stuff, some old stuff... and some other stuff that's been lying around the office for ages

### EXPLORER. Vol 5, no. 2.

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Akureyri: Kaupvangsstræti 1



# The Name Game

Bob Murray



These are just a few of the special days on the Icelandic Calendar between February 1st and March 31st. Well, actually we cheated just a little bit. We actually listed one of them, Bondadagur (ahem!!) pay attention ladies, MEN'S DAY, that actually occurred on January 25th this year.

Now, they are not all holidays, but they all have significance and the purpose of this story is to tell you what that significance is. So, if you're ready...or not...here we go.

Clearly, one of the most important would be the first one, Bóndadagur, AKA, Men's Day. That, unfortunately, has already passed. Just remember ladies, there is always next year. It is on this day when traditionally men receive flowers from the women they love and I've heard in a few cases from some women they don't...but the flower shops do very well. The married men are supposed to take the "day off" at home. Those chained to their desks at work are still chained there, but the day is supposed to be lighter and filled with good wishes, and with a little luck, flowers and a free lunch. Yea Right!!



Then we have Bolludagur. This comes on Monday, February 11th this year. Bollurs are baked pastries, like a popover, if you know what those are. (it's a New England thing). These "Bollurs" can be filled with whipped cream, smothered in chocolate (well some of them) and possibly a jelly filling of any type or even all three. While this is mainly a day for the kids, big kids participate too, like around my age. Tradition says, that on this day, initially before sunrise, actually any time of the day, the youngster, no matter how



old, fashions a special paddle usually made of cardboard. The idea is to sneak up on and pat the backsides of the unsuspecting parents three times and say, bollur, bollur, bollur. With that, the parents are supposed to give the "spanker" one of the fluffy pastries. More often than not the "spankee" also wolfs down one or two as well. This is a good day.

Then on the very next day, Tuesday, February 12th, we have something called Sprengidagur. This day comes very close to the American Thanksgiving holiday. On occasion, I suppose, can exceed it, if that's possible. Today is the day of celebration, sort of a last blast with food and drink, even a Thorri Feast before the next day, Wednesday, February 13th. That is Öskurdagur, the first day of Lent.



Öskurdagur, the first day of LENT, which in many Christian religions means giving up and/or fasting for forty days and nights before Easter. This day in Iceland has double duty. Children, once again both large and small come to school, work or home in costume, just like



the American Halloween. It's most interesting to watch, even more fun to participate in. Many folks do, even in offices. You'll find the children coming to stores, especially candy stores, door to door and even to many offices, generally in small groups. They are supposed to sing a short chorus or two of a popular song. Then, they are to be rewarded with a small treat of some sort.

On Sunday, February 24th this year we have Konudagur. Konudagur is wives or women's day.

The flower shops really do well on this day. Over the last few years, flower shops have also done a brisk business on the American Valentines Day, just ten days earlier. Valentines Day is NOT a holiday, not even in America. It is NOT a special day or even officially recognized in Iceland. Note, I said "officially". In many Icelandic households these days however, men forgetting either day can have grave circumstances.







afternoon, some will be closed all day and a few just for a few hours. Banks for example and many offices will be closed from March 28th through April 2nd. Tourist functions will for the most part still carry on, but at a considerably reduced level in many cases. On Easter Sunday in addition to the obvious religious meanings and celebrations of all faiths, the children get chocolate everything's just like in America. The one difference, like Christmas in Iceland, there is a second day of Easter. That is on Monday, April 1st.



The end of March the 31st to be exact brings the official celebration of Easter this year. Easter in Iceland is a very High Holiday and holyday almost on an equal basis as Christmas. Good Friday, or in Icelandic, Föstudagurinn langi (Long Friday), is very visibly observed here in Iceland. Some stores close for the

## DAY-OH !!! DAY-A-A-OH !!!

Daylight Comes and We Cannot Stay Home

The days are getting longer according to the meteorological tables. The only problem is that with a rare exception over the last several weeks, we haven't seen that old orange colored ball rolling around anywhere, in our cloud covered skies. Oh well, faith my friends, my brothers and my sisters. Soon enough it will be daylight a lot more than dark. We cross the threshold of that change on the 18th of March. Here are the sunrise and sunset tables for you to ponder.

DAY AND DATE:	SUNRISE:	SUNSET:
Bollurdagur: February 11th	9:40 AM	5:45 PM
Valentines Day: February 14th	9:30 AM	6:00 PM
Konurdagur: February 24th	8:55 AM	6:31 PM
Sunday: March 3rd	8:30 AM	6:55 PM
Friday: March 9th	8:10 AM	7:15 PM
St. Patrick's Day: March 17th	7:37 AM	7:38 PM
Monday: March 26th	7:10 AM	8:05 PM
Easter Sunday: March 31st	6:53 AM	8:24 PM

### Cry Me a River !!

We certainly had a rather ominous start to winter. Between November 6th and December 6th, there were 30+ odd periods of snow showers, even a snow squall or two but NO real snowstorm. The end result was snowfall that came to just over 10 inches. That as is turned out, NEARLY DOUBLED the previous winter's entire total. These snow things for lack of a better description, lasted from just over a minute to about 15 minutes. The temperatures hovered between 25°F and 30°F. Then the temperatures went up and in no time the snow was gone. We got a dusting of snow in the early morning hours of December 25th, giving us an official, but barely White Christmas. Then, the rains came back. This time, they brought their friend, very high wind...again...and again...and again. At times, the puddles were so many and so deep, that you could almost stock them with fish. Some areas in Iceland where it SHOULD be snowing, got nearly a foot...of RAIN. Temperatures for January that should be near 30°F were closer to 55°F.



### FEBRUARY

<b>AVE TEMP:</b>	33° F or +1° C	Getting warmer, not by much
<b>AVE MIN:</b>	29° F or -1° C	Very slight winter touch
<b>MAX TEMP:</b>	50° F or +10° C	Hey my friend, can this be Spring
<b>LOW TEMP:</b>	1° F or -17° C	Nope, it's not... only kidding
<b>AVE WIND:</b>	17K or 20 Mph	Just above this time of year
<b>MAX WIND:</b>	95K or 109 Mph	Blows you around from there to here
<b>AVE RAIN:</b>	4.3 Inches	Same as Jan: make that note
<b>MAX RAIN:</b>	12.4 Inches	Keeps the January boat afloat
<b>AVE SNOW:</b>	14 Inches	Less again and just enough
<b>MAX SNOW:</b>	55 Inches	Shovel this pile of fluffy white stuff

### MARCH:

<b>MAX TEMP:</b>	51° F or +11° C	This kind of weather we can bear
<b>AVE MIN:</b>	30° F or -1° C	Barely freezing anywhere
<b>MIN TEMP:</b>	-4° F or -20° C	Now get out the thermal wear
<b>AVE WIND:</b>	16K or 18 Mph	Moving air here and there
<b>MAX WIND:</b>	93k or 107 Mph	This will move YOU everywhere
<b>AVE RAIN:</b>	4.3 Inches	Wet enough to get our note
<b>MAX RAIN:</b>	16.75 Inches	Now enough to need a boat
<b>AVE SNOW:</b>	13 Inches	Finally!! Skiing we can go
<b>MAX SNOW:</b>	50 Inches	Avalanche from the sky... hello-hello

### WORLDWIDE WINTER 2002

Albany, Georgia had a "trace",  
Sylvester had a "dusting"  
Atlanta had an inch.

While Iceland's snowmobiles are rusting:

North Carolina had a foot,  
Unusual don't you know.  
But then along came Buffalo,  
with 7 feet of snow.

In Iceland there's been rain  
and a little bit of wind  
But compared to southern goings on  
we'd take it all again

If you're coming up on vacation  
We would like for you to know  
Leave SUMMER'S heat down there in GEORGIA  
But, could you bring a little SNOW



# The Temple of Dreams

High atop Reykjavik's highest hill, nearly 200 feet above sea level sits a place called the Pearl.



It is perhaps one of the most talked about buildings by every visitor that sees it for a host of reasons. First, of course is its most unique design. It is firmly nestled between the six Reykjavik reserve hot water tanks like the flying saucer from the acclaimed as best science fiction movie of its time, Forbidden Planet. That movie was released in 1955; the Pearl was opened in June of 1991, the concept for the designed dates back to 1930. The building and all it contains is clearly 21st century, considerably ahead of its time. The master artist, Johannes Kjarval actually envisioned a structure like the Pearl on that very hill over 70 years ago. He wrote:

*The sides of the temple should be covered with mirrors  
So the Northern Lights can approach the feet of men  
The roof should be decorated with crystal of every color  
Floodlights in the eaves should illuminate the entire area  
It should answer to the light of day  
And be the symbol of the night*

Simply put, those words from 1930 perfectly envision and describe the Pearl of Reykjavik.



Technology of the time has helped the Pearl become a most special place. Hollow steel framing supports the glass dome



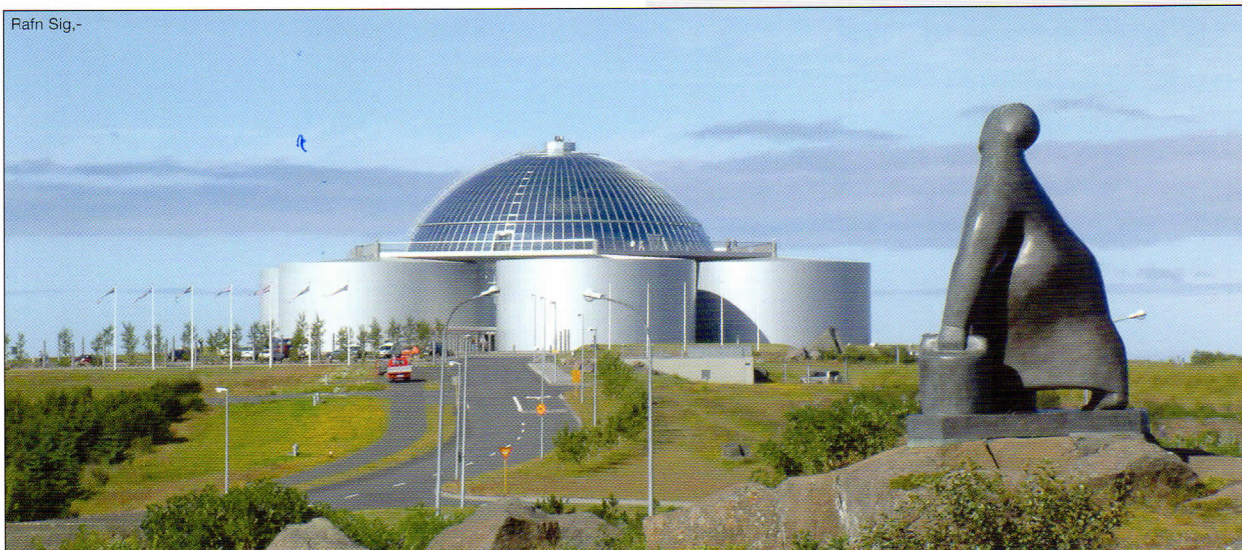
and walls linking the six, aluminium sided water tanks. Hot water is pumped through the metal framework in the winter months and cold water in the summer months, giving the Pearl a most comfortable environment, year-round. Hard to envision, especially from the outside, the Pearl is actually seven stories. The one level below ground hosts a state of the art conference room that can a meeting place for up to 80 people. The conference room can also be linked to the winter garden area on the first floor. The second and third floors of the building are administration and maintenance facilities. True to the unique thought in design, the elevators carrying guests to the people use facilities, are not programmed to stop on either floor. The fourth floor of the Pearl is home to the 360-degree observation deck. There are several speaker units at many points along the walk that describe in several languages what you can observe from your location far and near. Inside the dome are a Coffee Shop and lately an art gallery of sorts featuring the works of many Icelandic artists. There is also a souvenir area that features the smaller items you might want to look over from postcards to key chains and a few unique items that demand your attention. The coffee shop is a great place to sit and relax with friends, or take a short break from the walking tour with a cup of freshly brewed Icelandic coffee, a sandwich, or pastries. Then there is the incredibly delicious home made ice cream, made right on location, every day.

Moving up to the sixth floor we find the highest lounge in Iceland called the Perlan Bar. It's here you might get to sample the creations of world champion mixologist, Barðar Guðlaugsson.





Rafn Sig,-



Then, “crème de la crème,” the fantastic Perlan Restaurant. It is here on the fifth floor where you can take a “tour” while dining. The restaurant revolves around the city once every two hours almost perfectly timed from the pre-dinner cocktail to the sumptuous dessert, coffee, and a confection or two after one of the most exquisite meals you will ever enjoy. This is elegant dining found very few places in the world, with eight master chefs and twelve assistant full chefs making international cuisine almost beyond belief.

Among those is presidential and multiple award winning master chef Sturla Birgisson and again, multiple award winning master chef Elmar Kristjánsson. Both these gentlemen along with the entire staff have prepared culinary delights for all the Kings and Queens of Scandinavia and many of the Presidents and Prime Ministers of other countries. One that might come to mind immediately would be now former president Bill Clinton and his wife, current New York Senator Hillary Clinton.

A professional wait staff of twelve, among them Þorkell Ericson and Bergþór Pálmasson in tuxedo tie and tails, attend to your every need and excel in the proper serving of wine to the personal attention of each and every special dinner guest.

Now, with that description your first thought is that a meal at the Pearl is beyond the financial reach of all but the rich and famous. That would be completely incorrect. If you enjoy the finest and some of the world’s most expensive wines and cognacs, sure, dinner for two could easily approach \$300.00 or more. But an exquisite full course dinner, for just about any occasion, with the exact same superior service, might not even amount to a third of that. At special times of the year, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, the special buffets offered at the Pearl are simply second to none. It will be an experience you won’t ever forget and always pleasantly remember.

The grounds of the “Pearl” are an excellent description of it’s name. Meticulously manicured and always spotlessly clean the Pearl has two geysers on the premises. Now while both of them are man-made, they operate on the exact same principles as the geysers of the Golden Circle and all over the world. The only difference is perhaps that these can be turned off when the building is not open.

I do not know what more can be said of absolute must stop for everyone who travels to Iceland. Whether they be businessman, conventioneer, or touring visitor to the “land of Ice and Fire,” a visit to the Pearl of Reykjavik, for just a walk around, a coffee and rest stop or better yet for one of the most incredible dining experiences ever, the Pearl is one place that will come out near the top of your list of all the places you visit while in Iceland. The Pearl, in Icelandic, “Perlan” really and truly a Temple of Dreams.

Rafn Sig,-



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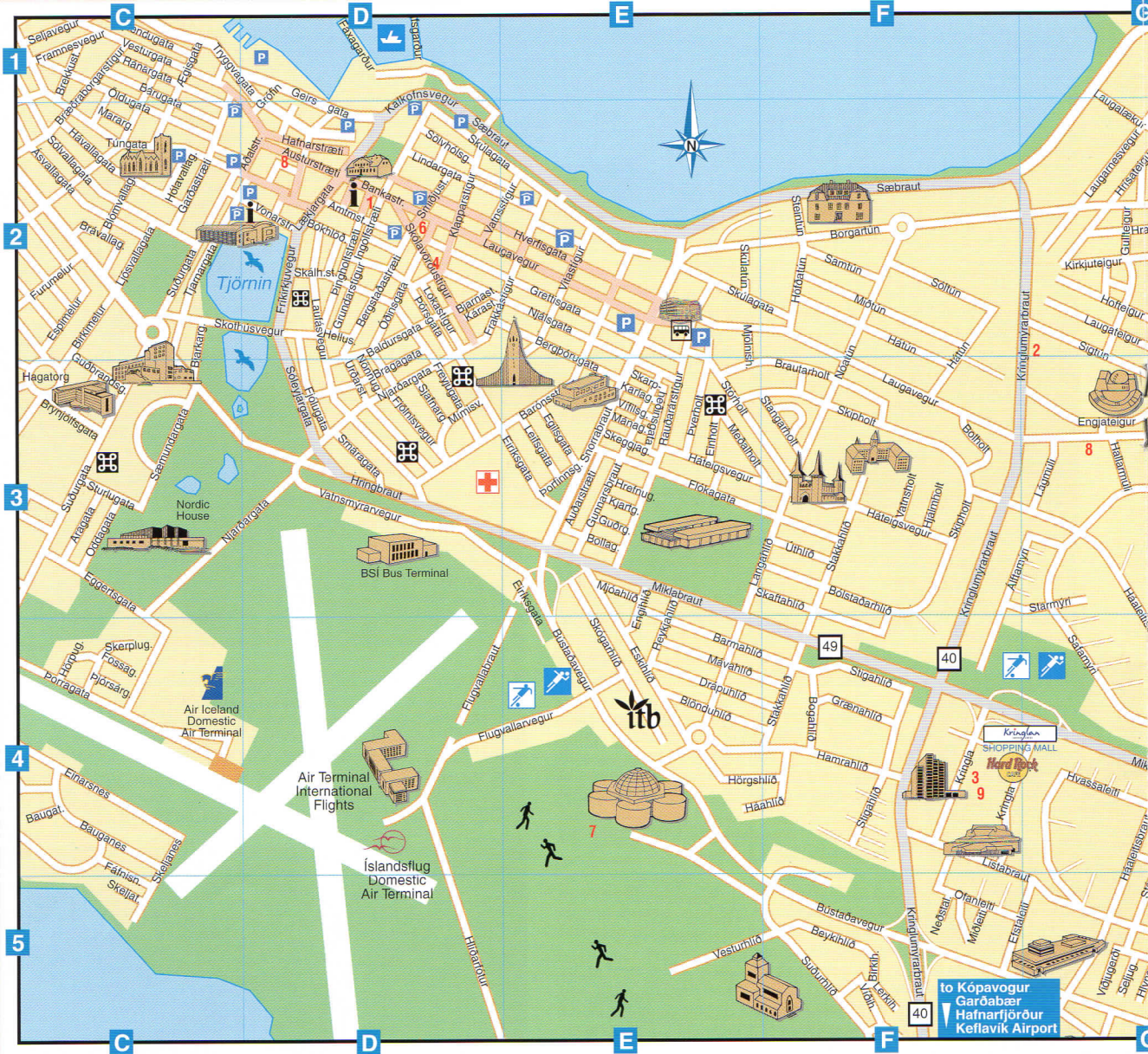
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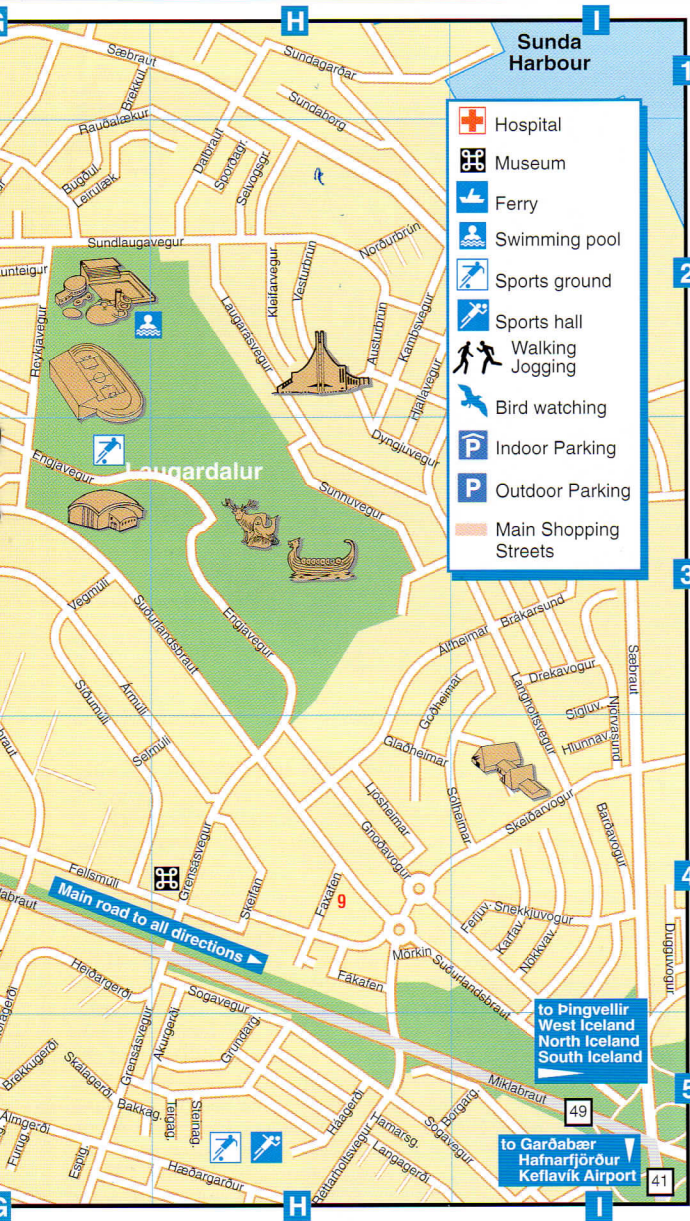
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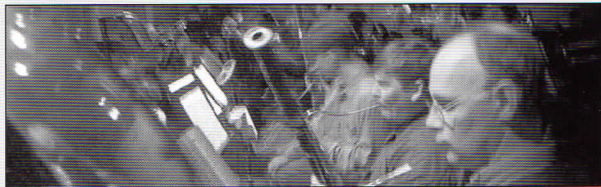
Bob Murray

The cultural inheritance for which Iceland is best known is the Icelandic Sagas. These have been the pride of the Icelandic nation for centuries. The Sagas are known to many students, classroom teachers, some professional educators, historical clubs and societies that deal with this type of material and best of all to those who have actually visited Iceland to, "see for themselves."

But, this story is not about the Sagas. It is about the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, known to far to few foreigners. Those who have experienced the Icelandic Symphony in concert however, continuously marvel at its professionalism, sound and incredible flexibility.

In the age Old Icelandic tradition of doing it right, sometimes seemingly against all odds, the Symphony can easily qualify as a legend in its own time. It all began around the start of the 20th century, with a very few people. This small number of individuals, travelled abroad to seek music lessons since nothing like this was available in Viking Iceland. Upon returning, they in turn gave music lessons to others and the number of musicians started growing. The first attempt at founding a Symphony Orchestra was for the visit of the King of Denmark in 1920. Following that concert, Icelanders began to truly appreciate the beauty and fulfilment of music. Ten years later another concert opportunity arose at the 1000th anniversary of the Althing. In 1930 the Reykjavik College of Music was founded. Two years later, the Icelandic Musicians Union and the Reykjavik Philharmonic Society was born. The rest as they say is, well, "almost" history.

The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra we know today, had the term "provisional" in it's name when it was "sort of" founded in 1950. Indeed, it wasn't until 1982 when laws were passed firmly establishing the orchestra. From that day to this, the symphony, now with its host of world famous conductors, 70 to as many as 100 contract musicians, unbelievable versatility and ambitious concert series is a true gem in the crown of the orchestras of the world. In the scheme of world things, for something like the Icelandic Symphony to exist in a city this size, in a country so small, at a location in the far North Atlantic, would on the surface appear to be impossible to most. Once you hear them, as many have, you too will understand. It is certainly something not to miss if their season and your visit to Iceland cross paths. Their music is available on discs, and many visitors who hear them, live in concert can't help to take a part of them home to share with others.





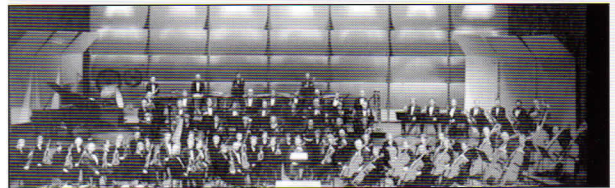
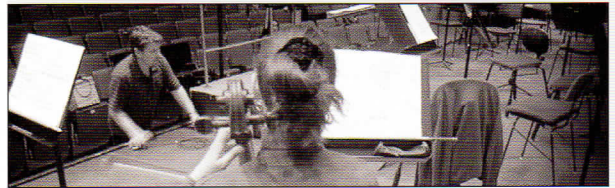
The "season" now in full swing, and nearly half complete has already done everything from full concerts in their home theatre, the University theatre, Háskólabíó in west Reykjavik to on the road performances in many forms and sizes in other town and city venues. In February look for varied programs from the Reykjavik Music School graduation concert to the music of Debussy, Mozart, Schubert, and Hayden with conductors Bernharður Wilkinson and Thomas Kalb.

In March, March 16th to be exact, conductor Martin Yates will lead the orchestra in a "Symphonic Queen Spectacular." Yes, the music and styling of the world famous rock group led by the late Freddie Mercury comes to life on the stage at Laugardalshöll, beginning at 5:00 PM.

It will most likely be a sell-out, it certainly shouldn't be missed. I already have my tickets. There are still some left and you can get them by calling the symphony box office.

Then in April, among all the other great concerts, there will be yet another musical gala, led by none other than the world famous conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy. If you know anything about music, real music, you'll know who this is. The season closes on May 30th.

The Icelandic Symphony orchestra is one of the world's finest, yet perhaps least known by the world population at large. Once again, that is until you hear them. Once that happens, no matter who you are, you will never forget them.





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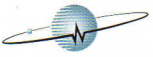
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## EXPLORER ON THE MOVE

Iceland Explorer is "movin on up" to the northside of town. Effective February 1st, ISLANDSVINIR h.f. the company that includes Iceland Explorer Magazine and Iceland Explorer Tours, moved to new larger offices at Bæjarhraun 14 in Hafnarfjörður. This new group of companies also takes aboard the very popular Óvissuferðir, which features "Mystery Tours" for other companies employees that have always proved very popular.

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# HOT Flashes

HOT STUFF AS OF Feb/Mar-2002



## THAR SHE BLOWS !!

In an interview on the National Radio with Halldór Ásgrímsson, Iceland's Foreign Minister, it was stated that Iceland will start whaling again in the future. No date was set as the Foreign minister said that would be determined by the Minister of Fisheries. There is a ready market in Japan wishing to purchase whale meat. When Iceland was whaling, over 13 years ago, the countries whalers were always environmentally conscious and extremely selective in the whales eventually hunted, caught, and brought to shore. Regardless, there can be little doubt that when and IF Iceland does resume limited whaling, some criticism no doubt, will resume as well. On what scale that might be is yet to be determined.



## 007 ON ICE:



Location scouts working with the production company for the 20th James Bond film are seriously considering ICELAND as a POSSIBLE location for shooting some of the scenes in the script. The Snæfellsness glacier and of course the Glacial Lagoon are mentioned as potential favorites. Even the Icelandic rescue helicopter TF-LIF might make it's film debut as the producers are interested in contracting it for the day. Generally of course, the

helicopter is not for rent, contract or hire...but for Mr. Bond, exceptions can be made.

## KEIKO: NOT SURE IF HE'S COMING OR GOING:

The "exact" details are still either a secret, or in the process of being washed, dried and "ironed out". Free Willy star, Keiko the killer whale will be, probably, should be, might be, maybe, possibly, moving from his current location in the Westman Islands harbor, to the town of Stykkisholmur in an inner bay on the outskirts of town. Depending on whom you talk to and the Explorer spoke with both Ocean Futures, Keiko's caretakers, and the town of Stykkisholmur, the move if it happens, should be between the 15th of May and the 15th of June. If Keiko moves, plans call for him to be acclimated to his new surroundings and feeding station by being somewhat confined for the first couple of weeks. After that, the "net" would be removed and KEIKO will be free to come and go as he pleases. While nothing is certain of course, KEIKO still appears to be very much completely acclimated to people. Therefore, the really smart money says that he will most likely stick around close to the daily free meal no matter where he goes. More on the actual transfer and plans for Keiko will be in Iceland Explorer as details become available.



## THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING GLACIER:

VATNAJÖKULL, Iceland's and Europe's largest glacier is "shrinking." Over the last two years, the glacier has receded by a full meter, 39+ inches per year, or just over 6 .feet. This is due to considerably above normal temperatures and less than normal snowfall . Fear not however, Vatnajökull is on average, 400 meters thick to as much as 900 meters in places. Simply put, it will not disappear in our lifetime, but by the end of the 21st century could start to look a little puny.



## NATO CONFERENCE FILLS ALL MAJOR HOTELS:



If you're plans call to be in Iceland from May 10th — May 18th, and you don't already have your four star hotel rooms reserved, secured and deposited, chances are you are not going to get one. The NATO Conference with over 1500 participants and undoubtedly as many or more world press have pretty much locked up "everything in sight" for those 10 days. That said however, they still will

be excellent guesthouse accommodations that should be available. Contact Iceland Explorer Tours [www.explorer.is](http://www.explorer.is) if you still need a place or a complete tour and we will do everything possible to help you.

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# ... Winter Snow



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When someone, well most someone's, say to you, Iceland, you think "ICE".

If you know where Iceland is for someone shows you where on a map, you then think, ICE, COLD, and SNOW. Well in this year 2002, you might think it, but you would be wrong, until now.

After an entire winter of Almostly rain, and wind so far and temperatures far above normal, winter sports have finally come to the northern part of Iceland at least, Akureyri. In Reykjavik and all the surrounding areas of the south, where there should be snow, we still wait.

Last year, the Blue Mountain Ski Resort actually purchased Lsnow making equipment, something you would think unimaginable in Iceland year round, never mind just in winter. Every attempt to "make snow" resulted in it melting as fast as it could be made. This year, Akureyri put in a new ski lift on it's winter playground at Hlidarfjall.

They had a similar problem, NO SNOW until about two weeks ago. Things are looking up...up there, not here, not yet and we are closer to spring than winter right now.

So, if winter sports are your thing, now is the time to spend a Sweekend or longer in Akureyri.

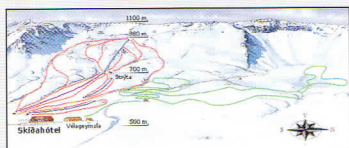
Diving takes about 5 hours, flying on Air Iceland about 45 minutes. No matter how you get there you'll find excellent facilities from guesthouses to restaurants and right now plenty of snow.

## ICELAND NEWS



Feb / Mar - 2002

### HERE YE!! HERE YE!!... THERE IS SNOW IN ICELAND:



But, not everywhere. Areas in the north and northwest of Iceland, some, usually inundated with snow in January...and most of the winter for that matter, have been

wondering if the island had somehow floated a thousand of so miles south with the unusually warm temperatures as of late countrywide. Checking the satellite, we found that the island is right where it's supposed to be, but the weather hasn't even been close to normal these winter months. SNOW has now fallen in Akureyri. There is now more than enough to open and use the new Ski lift at Hlidarfjall.

The mayor and the ski resort manager are now delighted and optimistic about the remainder of the winter, saying it will become the most popular ski resort in Iceland. We have no doubt, it is a fabulous ski area...and at the moment the ONLY ONE with any real snow. They win by default.

### GO WON'T GO...OR COME EITHER:



Citing landing fees at the Keflavik International Airport as being twice as much as other European airports, GO Airlines has, at least temporarily, decided to not fly to Keflavik from London's Stansted airport in the summer of 2002. In the press statement made on January 23rd, GO Airlines said that they would reconsider their position if the landing fees were brought more in line with everyone else. They stated that being a low-budget airline that they had to, "concentrate on destinations where we can keep costs to a minimum."

### KEFLAVIK AIRPORT GETS IT RIGHT...AGAIN: E-MAILER DOESN'T:

On January 19th, a Virgin Atlantic Boeing 747 with over 350 passengers made an emergency landing at Keflavik International Airport. Someone either on or had boarded and left the plane at some point on it's route, wrote pro-taliban, Osama Bin Laden, anti-American messages on one of the aircraft's bathroom windows. The plane landed safely at Keflavik, was searched thoroughly, the passengers processed, spent the night and put on their way the next morning. Almost to the person, the flight crew and passengers remarked about how efficiently and courteously the Icelandic police and other security teams called to the airport, handled the entire affair.

A couple a days before, a man sent a bomb threat to the American Embassy in Reykjavik. He sent it by E-Mail from his computer. Police thoroughly searched the Embassy and the Icelandic special-forces team had the man in custody within three hours of the threat. It was a two-hour drive to the person's home. E-Mail of course is very traceable.

### SEEING STARS AT KEFLAVIK AIRPORT GIFTSHOP:

It was an optical shop but it wasn't an optical illusion as the stars came out at the Keflavik International Airport Gift shops on December 6th.

Gift shop employee Bergthóra Þórsteinsdóttir looked up from the register to see none other than Matt Damon smiling at her. Naturally, she said, she smiled back. Then if that weren't enough, she didn't have to look very far to spot George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Andy Garcia, and Julia Roberts. The stars were on a brief stopover in Iceland as they arrived by private jet from Los Angeles where their film "Oceans Eleven" had premiered the night before.

Berthóra described Matt Damon as "incredibly beautiful" and Brad Pitt as much cuter in person than on screen. She, and several others said all the celebrities were extremely nice and laid back while here in Iceland.





**AMERICAN NATO RESCUERS NOMINATED FOR PERSONS OF THE YEAR:**

In their annual viewer poll, Iceland's (Channel 2) viewers nominated the NATO Base helicopter rescue team for their Persons of the Year 2001 award. Specifically singled out were the helicopter pilot, Javier Casanova and rescuer Jay Lane who while suspended from the rescue cable in hurricane force winds and rain, saved the life of Eythór Gardarsson. Eythór was one crew member of the ship Svanborg SH that sank near Snæfellsness on that December 7th. Unfortunately, three other seamen aboard the boat were lost prior to the helicopters arrival in the terrible storm. In the annual country poll, conducted by Radio Station RAS 2, rescuer Jay Lane came within 15 votes of winning the official Person of the Year title. That honor this year went to Ólafur F. Magnússon, doctor and former member of the city council and Independence Party.

**NOW YOU FEEL IT, NOW YOU DON'T:**

During December and early January you could almost "follow the dots" along the fault line that runs the length of Iceland from well off the southwest coast to the North and Northeast. Earth tremors, even earthquakes, (3.0 Richter or above) occurred mainly off shore from 20 to 80 KM off the main Icelandic coast, at both ends, as well as on land.

First, a series of over 200 tremors and two quakes occurred from near the Dalvík shoreline in Northern Iceland to just southwest of Grimsey Island also in the North. Then a far smaller series of tremors occurred at Krisuvík and Lake Kleifarvatn. On December 29th, 3 "quakes", (3.5 Richter) and nearly 20 very minor tremors occurred from 80 KM off Iceland's Reykjanes southwest coast to right on shore. In each case however, the shaking stopped just as quickly as it started. Mýrdalsjökull Glacier in South Iceland, apparently not to be denied, also got into the act with two 3.5 quakes there near the infamous volcano KATLA on January 13th. Scientists are busy studying all the new data obtained from the latest multiple series of "earth adjustments" to look for any possible patterns.

**"ANDRE" TAKES HIS ACT ON THE ROAD:**



Well we don't really know if it was "Andre" the movie seal, but we have Keiko the Killer Whale so, hey, we can imagine at least. But, a stray seal did manage to come out of the ocean between Hafnarfjörður and Vogar on January 14th. Naturally, the police were called. Poor guys, they get called for everything.

At any rate, the seal patrol responded to the scene of the incursion and found the perpetrator wandering along the Reykjavík-Keflavík highway. He was confronted and according to the police he was fairly cooperative. He tried to bite only one officer, and then only once. They managed to get a red belt that the seal bit down on and was "towed" back about 100 meters to the sea. Last we knew he was swimming around in the bay quite content but we do not know what happened to the red belt.

**GREEN, GREEN GRASS OF HOME:**

The first part of January in Iceland was a tad windy, rain soaked but very mild with temperatures many days having no trouble touching near, even over 50°F or \*10°C.

This is right about 18 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. Not only that, the grass at many of the southwest Iceland area golf courses was turning green again, and in true Icelandic sports fans fashion, people were actually spotted playing the courses, one twosome in about a 50 knot wind. On one other relatively windy day 32 people were spotted playing golf at the Keflavík course.

The mossy lava fields in and around the Blue Lagoon were also an early "spring shade" of green instead of the brown normally seen this time of year.

However, it IS still winter and to folks we say..."ENJOY IT"...this too shall pass.

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