

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

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**Discover an Ice-Blue World  
The House that Disappeared  
In the Shadow of the Giantess  
Researching Iceland's Puffins**

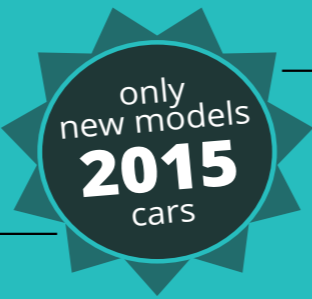
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The country that had been known as “Europe’s Best Kept Secret” until just a few years ago, has opened its doors to welcome visitors. Today, what started as a trickle of adventurers has turned into a flood, as people the world over wanted to see and experience for themselves what makes Iceland so different. Of course, a few volcanic eruptions have also helped put the country on the map!

In the past decade, many changes have taken place. Icelandic cuisine is now on a par with anything the world has to offer—and offers both locals and visitors a taste of the international with a local twist. You can go out to sea and meet whales up close and personal, learn about sea monsters, strange creatures and a land guarded by a dragon—not to mention elves, dwarves and hidden people. Flights, coaches and rental cars transport you to the remotest areas while horse riding, hiking, camping and touring open up the countryside and specially-converted vehicles take you on the glaciers.

One of the most iconic creatures that draws visitors in great numbers is the little puffin. Over half of the world’s puffins are found nesting around Iceland’s coasts. They are tame, inquisitive birds that allow you

to get up very close to them—resulting in many photo opportunities. However, this beautiful little bird is in crisis, with its numbers dwindling at an alarming rate everywhere it is found. In this issue, we examine both this little bird and the challenges it faces.



The Westman Islands are home to about half of Iceland’s puffin population. Boat tours take visitors close to their teeming nesting cliffs and every year, the island’s children mount a ‘Puffin Patrol’, rescuing lost chicks by their hundreds and releasing them at the end of summer to the sea’s safety.

Other major communities are to be found on the steep cliffs of Látrabjarg in the Westfjords, on Hornbjarg and the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve. Other popular sites are in Breiðafjörður Bay and the little island of Lundey, ‘Puffin Island’, just 3 minutes sailing from Reykjavík. For many visitors, the puffin has become a highlight of their trip.

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson  
 Managing Editor and Publisher

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**Icelandic language**

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

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like ‘ow’ in ‘cow’
æ	Like the personal pronoun ‘I’
ð	Like ‘th’ in ‘that’
þ	Like ‘th’ in ‘thing’

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THE GREATER  
*Reykjavík* AREA

One of the world's smaller capitals, Reykjavik is surrounded by the towns of Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Álftanes (where the President lives), Hafnarfjörður and the country town of Mosfellsbær, combining to make up the Greater Reykjavik area. It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900s, Ingólfur Arnarson, it has grown from a handful of houses a few centuries ago to a compact and thriving metropolis. The National Museum holds the history of the nation, while the National Library, just opposite it, has the nation's books and records. There are many art galleries and museums throughout the area

and the new concert hall complex by Reykjavik's harbour, Harpa, has a full programme each month. Innovation and inspiration play a major role in the city's life. From here, visitors can reach the whole country. The countryside is always very close by. Activities such as tours, whale- or bird-watching, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking and horseriding are very popular. There's even ice skating. On weekends especially, the city is filled with nightlife that continues till morning. There are plenty of pubs and restaurants with both genuine Icelandic food and international cuisines. So you never need to go hungry. From youth hostel to guesthouses and hotels, there's accommodation for every budget.



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# THE ICELANDIC SECRET TO A HEALTHY LIFE

*SagaMedica focuses on natural solutions for health*

SagaMedica provides quality natural products from Icelandic medicinal herbs, with a special emphasis on angelica, which grows wild in Iceland. Some research claims that Icelandic herbs are more potent than others due to the short growing season in the summer months under the midnight sun. Today, scientific evidence backs up this claim. Research has proven that the Angelica archangelica plant is, in fact, an effective way to treat health problems such as cold symptoms, an overactive bladder, and frequent urination.



## Impressive history

Angelica has a long history in Iceland. The plant was considered an asset to the Vikings who first settled in Iceland, as they knew its value full well. The root, stem seeds and leaves were all used, both as food and medicine. This is documented in an Icelandic medical book over 150 years old.

SagaMedica has been selling natural dietary supplements made from Angelica since the company was founded by academics from the University of Iceland in the year 2000. Dr. Sigmundur Guðbjarnason, a former



dean of the university, was a pioneer in research into Icelandic medicinal herbs and their health benefits. He laid the foundation for SagaMedica, which has grown steadily through the years, and now offers a range of products that improve the lives of consumers. SagaMedica combines 1100 years of history and scientific research with the pristine Icelandic nature to create innovative health products.

## Harvested on Hrísey

Angelica grows wild on the island Hrísey, which is situated in the northern Eyjafjörður fjord. The soil is fertile and pure and the air is clean. In fact, Hrísey was awarded an organic

certification due to its clean, positive environment. The herb is picked by hand on the island and every measure is taken to ensure its purity and the protection of the Icelandic nature. The process takes the natural environment into account from harvesting the herbs to the manufacturing of the final products.

## The voice of Iceland

Voxis is a popular SagaMedica product that is produced from the leaves of Angelica. The throat lozenges, which are available in shops in Iceland and in the Duty Free area in Keflavik International Airport, contain antiviral phytochemicals which can help to prevent cold or flu infections. Voxis has been shown to relieve irritating coughs and has a soothing effect on sore throats. The lozenges contain menthol and eucalyptus and have a pleasant, refreshing taste.

SagaMedica's products are available for purchase in Iceland's grocery stores, pharmacies and on the company's website [www.sagamedica.com](http://www.sagamedica.com). -JG

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# RELAX - ENJOY - EXPERIENCE



- WELCOME TO MÝVATNSSVEIT -



# THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

*Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present since 1990*

In the town of Mosfellsbær, just a 15 minutes' drive from Reykjavík, master craftsman Páll Kristjánsson (or Palli) and his co-creator Soffía Sigurðardóttir are hard at work in their rustic atelier, where they create an array of handsome knives for collectors, chefs, and all those who appreciate the workmanship that goes into a finely crafted tool.

## Icelandic Artisans at Work

Damascus steel, well known for its durability and razor sharp blades, as well as stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden are choice materials favoured by Palli and Soffía. Many of the blades are Viking Age replicas decorated with finely etched designs that are then expertly paired with a handle carved by Palli. Traditional Icelandic materials are all used to create beautifully carved handles—birch, rowan, horse's hooves, reindeer antler, goat and sheep horn and even fossilised wood. Palli's knives can be found scattered throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items, they sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the Internet.



## The Woman's Touch

For her part, Soffía, who has worked under Palli's tutelage for several years, has created a line of beautiful professional kitchen knives and forks which are gaining in popularity. Blades for these knives come in various shapes and materials (Japanese, Damascus steel or high carbon steel) and the finely balanced handles make them a joy to use in the kitchen. Chefs, cooking schools and cooking enthusiasts tend to love to show off these one-of-a-kind handmade kitchen tools that have become something of a sought after souvenir from Iceland.

## Custom-made

Should you have your own design ideas or materials that you would like to use, Palli

and Soffía are happy to work with you to produce a custom knife made to your specifications. More information can be found at their websites listed below where you can browse their collections and even special order online.

## Walk-ins Welcome

Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvegur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are 9–6, Monday through Friday, from 9–4 on Saturdays or if you are in the neighbourhood outside of those hours, you are always welcome to pop in for a chat.

Though a visit to their workshop would be well worth your time, you can also find their products available in Brynja hardware store on Laugavegur 29 in the centre of Reykjavík. *-EMV*



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# FOOD, BEER, AND GOOD TIMES

*Enjoy The Beer Garden during your stay in Reykjavík*

Björgardurinn (The Beer Garden) is a welcome addition to Reykjavík. Opened in 2015 in Fosshotel Reykjavík, it has become a popular spot to dine on delicious food, grab a refreshing beer and spend time with friends or family. It's a great meeting place for beer lovers and foodies alike. The Beer Garden offers a variety of good beer on tap as well as bottled beer from breweries all over the world. Staff members are specialists when it comes to pairing the right food with the right beer and they firmly believe that beer enhances every meal.



## Best Beers

The beer menu is so impressive that it may take some time to order. Guests can choose from English-style beers, ales, wheat beers, nitro draughts, Belgian beers, lagers, Trappist beers, stouts, porters, and fruit beers. For the adventurous, there are 'wild beers', which have earthy characteristics that produce a sour beer. Wild beers go perfectly with spicy and pickled foods, for instance.

## Cool Cocktails

The Beer Garden offers an eclectic range of cocktails, some of which include beer as an ingredient. Again, it will be difficult to make a choice! The Weissen Sour mixes bourbon, lemon, sugar, marmalade, bitters and white ale, while the Dark and Stormy Shandy consists of butter-washed rum, ginger, lime, saison/IPA/pilsner, topped with dark rum. Classic cocktails are available like Old Fashioned, Manhattan, and Sidecar and, for those not interested in alcoholic beverages, there are Mocktails like a classic Shirley Temple and a Tutti Frutti, which is a mix of fruit juices, fresh berries and lime.

## Scrumptious Food

The food on the Beer Garden menu has been carefully selected to pair with the rotating selection of beer. The sausage bar is a favourite, with handmade Grillowa cheese sausages straight from Iceland's finest sausage maker, served in brioche bread. The sausages come with inventive toppings on



choice sausages like peppers and dill, chili tomato and cheese, carrots and Jerusalem artichokes as well as dates, duck and bacon. Slow cooked beef ribs are popular along with fish 'n chips and a grilled cheese sandwich on a sourdough bun with smoked Gouda and Icelandic mozzarella cheese. The Beer Garden also offers small bites that perfectly accompany beer such as sweet potato fries, pickled cucumbers, marinated Kalamata olives, and potato salad.

For a memorable meal and delicious drinks, stop by the Beer Garden during your stay in Reykjavík. There is always great beer, tasty food and good times to be had. *-JG*



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# VÍN OG SKEL

*Icelandic and French cuisine join forces in the first mussel restaurant in Reykjavik*

Ingredients from the sea have always featured prominently in Icelandic cooking, but at the newly-opened Vín og Skel, the focus is more unique. The first mussel-oriented restaurant in Reykjavik combines Icelandic ingredients, French recipes, and a creativity on its own to give new flavour to the popular shellfish. Fresh on the scene – having opened on January 2nd of this year – the mussel menu is already sophisticated and adventurous, spanning tried and true favourites such as Moules Provençale to the elegant innovation of mussels with blue cheese and hazelnuts. The restaurateur brings extensive experience to the table, and the dishes are all made in-house. The name of the establishment translates as ‘Wine and Shell’, a phrase which perfectly encapsulates the focus of the food and reflects the neat, modern décor. The bright, alluring colours of the

mussel platters stand out against the soft greys and mint greens of the surroundings. Its open design makes the room remarkably versatile. Tables for two are an intimate setting for a date, but the booth along the wall could easily accommodate a larger party. Mussels are a dish for lovers of variety; because we each ordered a different kind, it was easy to share. The mango chutney mussels came awash with flavour, and the classic Provençale were delightfully creamy. The fresh trout was served with lemon, bringing out the

pepper with which it was seasoned. Warm flax-seed bread accompanied the meal, and served to take up every drop of the rich, tangy sauce. We had just enough room for dessert: crème brûlée and chocolate mousse. Had we dined some time later, we might have faced a dilemma, as chocolate cake will soon join the French-inspired dessert menu. There are flavours on offer for all tastes. Although it is possible to order mussels for every course – and with such variety, it is tempting – both fish and Icelandic lamb provide alternatives, and the list of options will continue to grow. The drinks selection combines the best of both regions. Vín og Skel is the only restaurant in Iceland to serve wines from the Domaine Charles Guitard in France, notably, the Rosé Pamplemousse. The wines are chosen to pair with each mussel dish, and there is also a fine range of Icelandic beers – the latter a key ingredient in Moules à l’Islandaise. As the restaurant expands its horizons, the best thing to do is to dine with friends – and try every mussel on the menu. Vín og Skel is accessible via Austurvöllur or through the lobby of the City Centre Hotel on Austurstræti 6, and it’s open from 18:00-22:00 every night. -SP



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# THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

*From penises of elves to those of whales*

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum in Reykjavik is, without a doubt, one of a kind. It contains a collection of phallic specimens that belong to various types of mammals. In the museum you can see a collection of more than 220 penises and penile parts that belong to all the land and sea mammals found in Iceland. It even has on display the penis of an old, Icelandic gentleman who died in 2011 at the age of 95. Furthermore, the museum has between 40–50 specimens from foreign mammals including a giraffe and an elephant.

“The purpose of the museum is showing these specimens,” says the curator, Hjörtur Sigurðsson, “but it’s also a scientific museum. Many professionals, such as biologists and doctors visit the museum to study. The purpose is also to educate and amuse people and, of course, to lift the taboo that has shrouded this subject for so long. It’s just a part of the anatomy; people should be able to discuss these things.”

Hjörtur says that what gets the most attention are the big things, like the penis



of a sperm whale that is 1.7 metres long and weighs somewhere between 70–80 kilos. Strangely, the human penis gets a lot of attention too!

For the foreigners, the folklore section is popular. “They find it very funny that we can display penises from elves, trolls and the hidden people.” Regarding the hidden

people: some claim they can see the hidden man’s penis; especially the women. -S/



**The Icelandic Phallogological Museum**  
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# THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

*The Icelandic Handknitting Association of Iceland 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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# CINTAMANI

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## REYKJAVIK'S OLDEST BAKERY

*Bernhöftsbakarí, the source of delicious cakes, pastries and breads*

**B**ernhöftsbakarí is one of Reykjavík's treasures that has served downtown Reykjavík residents and visitors with cakes, breads and pastries since 1834. A family business, it is not only the oldest bakery, but also Iceland's oldest company. The bakery focuses on using quality local ingredients including Skyr, Icelandic cream and butter.

Bernhöftsbakarí's professional bakers proudly produce traditional Icelandic baked goods in the small artisan bakery, where everything is created by hand. Bernhöftsbakarí has been recognized for its quality products, and won the "Cake of the Year 2011" contest in Iceland. They are known for their delicious, fresh breads with a variety including Italian bread, croissants, rolls and buns.

Bernhöftsbakarí provides cakes and pastries for any event, including fun cakes for children's birthday parties, decorated



with everything from a favourite superhero character, sports club logo, or the child's picture. Their ideas are limitless. Expert



bakers also make cakes for weddings, confirmations, christenings, anniversaries and every type of special occasion. Cakes can be ordered with a minimum of one day's notice. They're the 'go to' place to contact for any special requests and special occasions, not to mention delicious everyday purchases as well.

-JG

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## HIKE OVER GLACIERS, VOLCANOES AND MOUNTAINS

*Básar in Goðaland provides the accommodation*

**B**ásar in Goðaland is a place with mountain huts in the great hiking area of Þórsmörk. It is owned by Útivist, the Icelandic hiking club and 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 landscapes. GPS coordinates: N 63°40.559' W 19°29.014'

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More info: [InsideTheVolcano.com](http://InsideTheVolcano.com)





# 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.” Available upon your request

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Snorrastofa in Reykhol, at Rammagerðin at the Keflavik International Airport, and directly from Guðrún. More information can be found on Facebook: Arkart-leatherdesign. -NHH



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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 in True spirit

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, was 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 never revealed the secrets of his recipe, that didn't prevent the 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.

## The Passing of the Sea Baron

Kjartan, the true Sea Baron, recently passed away. But his legacy will surely live on for many years to come. A few years ago, Kjartan passed his mantle on to Elísabet Jean Skúladóttir, an energetic and vibrant young woman who actually bought the restaurant at the Sea Baron's request. Kjartan wanted to make sure his place would be well taken care of in the future, but he used to joke that, not only did Elísabet make a great investment by purchasing the restaurant, but he was included in the deal himself. Kjartan's spirit will surely remain palpable as visitors will not only feel his energy but he will actually be 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 on Thursdays, a combination of fermented fish. On the first Saturday of the month they offer skate 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 dessert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónnagratut—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

## Bon Voyage Sea Baron!

The Sea Baron will be missed dearly by all who knew him. His heritage lives on and there is no doubt that his recipes will continue to warm the bellies of both Icelanders and travellers alike for generations to come. This man has surely put his mark on the restaurant landscape and changed the way we perceive a grand dining experience.

- 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'. 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.

## 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 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.

Anne Helen loves 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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# JOE & THE JUICE GETTING JUICED IN ICELAND

Joe & the Juice is an on-trend coffee shop/ juice bar that opened in January 2015 at Keflavik International Airport. The concept answers today's traveller needs for a quick pick-me-up in the form of great espresso drinks, freshly pressed smoothies and juices, and a variety of sandwiches prepared on the spot.

### A Winner Is Born

Created by the Danish entrepreneur Kaspar Basse, Joe & the Juice won the prestigious FAB Awards in the category of 'Best Airport Coffee Shop of the Year' in Copenhagen for 2013 and 2014.

### Whew! Hot!

The popular brand, known for its attractive 'juicers' and hip electronic dance music, can be found all over Denmark, and has been popping up elsewhere in Europe—Norway, Sweden, Germany, the UK, France, and more recently, here in Iceland. According to Joe & the Juice's Icelandic manager, Daníel Kári Stefánsson, "People come for the atmosphere as well as for the healthy drinks, and it's been going even better than we initially expected. The reaction from the Icelandic public has been great".

### Flavour, Nutrition and Hydration

Unmistakable names for freshly pressed juice combinations such as 'Sex Me



Up'—passion fruit, ginger and apple, 'Joe's Green Kiss'—spinach, ginger and apple and one called 'Hell of a Nerve'—strawberry, elderberry and banana, are sure to grab your attention. For a distinctly Danish touch, Joe's sandwiches are made with traditionally baked rye bread, using flavourful combinations of fillings such as Serrano ham, mozzarella and tomato, and a touch of pesto.

### Size Matters

Joe & the Juice uses a unique blend of coffee beans that have been specially cultivated in South America. There's no extra charge if you want to up your caffeine intake with



a double shot in your latte and you choose your cup size—in pink, purple, yellow or grey. How about a ginger shot for a natural boost of energy? Coming right up! Just ask!

### Where to Get Juiced in Iceland

You can find Joe & the Juice at Reykjavik's Kringlan Shopping Mall, Kópavogur's Smáralind Shopping Mall, Laugar Fitness Centre and Keflavik Airport's check-in lounge. A new Joe & the Juice opened in Keflavik airport's departure lounge on March 15<sup>th</sup>. This is one place to check out!

-EMV



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# JOURNEY TO THE INSIDE OF A GLACIER

*Experience a Glacier from the Inside with Into the Glacier*

Exploring the surface of a glacier is thrilling, but actually getting inside one is a once in a lifetime experience. The staff behind Into the Glacier offer travellers that rare opportunity. Situated in the western part of Langjökull, the second largest ice cap in Iceland, and 1,260 metres above sea level, the ice cave stretches 40 metres deep underground, giving visitors the chance to see ice that's been forming over centuries. The ice cave stretches more than 550 metres into the glacier.

### Trip to the Top

The classic guided tour begins in Húsafell, which is 130km from Reykjavik, when guests board one of the most unique vehicles ever made, a customised super truck. This truck, which seats up to 35 passengers, was acquired from NATO, who originally used as a cruise missile launcher. The 20km trip up to the glacier is an experience in itself in good weather or bad. Clear days offer exquisite views of the vast icy desert, while poor weather conditions reveal the power and unpredictability of Icelandic weather.

### Enter the Glacier

Once inside, travellers, with crampons attached to their feet, get to experience



something very few have seen. Lit by LED lights, guests begin to explore the tunnel, with a knowledgeable guide leading small groups, sharing many interesting facts about Iceland's glaciers. Travellers are treated to views of gaping crevices as they look above. Additionally, there is a special area in the cave, which developers named 'the chapel', with LED-lit blocks of ice supporting

wooden beams, which serves as a venue for weddings, marriage proposals and concerts.

Into the Glacier offers daily departures from Húsafell at 12:30pm and the tour lasts about four hours during the winter. Day tours from Reykjavik to the ice cave are available as well. For those that would like to treat themselves to a meal, you can buy a scrumptious lunch at Hotel Húsafell before you head out on your excursion. So be sure to put Into the Glacier on your list of 'must do's in Iceland!' -JG

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## CATCH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ALL YEAR AROUND

*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—and certainly not in the summer months. 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.

### 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 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.

### 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.

### 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. *-EMV*

### 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.



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# ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

Healthy Food Direct from the Earth



In the old days, people still had knowledge about nature's richness. They used what Mother Earth provided them: picked leaves and herbs, or searched the shores for the ocean's supplies, such as seaweed. The shore is a garden; you just have to know where to harvest and what to collect.

## A Pioneer

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta (Icelandic Wholesomeness), promoting the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness, such as cheese and varieties of herbal tea. Nothing is added or changed in the production of the products.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first to revive the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack and adding Iceland

moss, angelica and birch leaves into cheese making. He was also the first to create a bath salt from Icelandic geothermal salt, using seaweed and Mount Hekla pumice. The country is rich in natural resources when it comes to nutriment.

His goal was to reawaken folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved successful, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Northern Lights Salt gift packages, a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe, are available on board Icelandair's aircraft in their Saga Shop.

## Hand-Picked and Healthy

The hand-picked Icelandic moss is ready for use in tea or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient-rich food. By adding seaweed to

your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters.

Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method. The light and compact Seven Spices Gift Packet containing tea, salt and seaweed is an excellent contribution to your cuisine.

"Mother Earth knows what is best; we pick it for you, and you just have to take it home," says Eyjólfur. -DT


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# THE PLACE TO STAY IN GRINDAVÍK

*Guesthouse Borg offers economical comfort in a friendly house*

In most countries, the opportunity to experience life in a fishing town has all but disappeared. Not so in Iceland, where Grindavík is one of the busiest. Situated a few kilometres from the world-famous Blue Lagoon, 20 minutes from Keflavík's International airport and 40 minutes from the capital, the town is packed with history going back as far as the first settlers.

A geological hotspot, the area offers such a wide array of other tours, sights and experiences that one holiday is not enough.

Guesthouse Borg is an ideal place to stay, meet interesting people and enjoy the facilities and fun the town offers. It caters for individuals, couples, families and groups of up to 16 people in a clean,



modestly-priced homestay accommodation. You'll find a full kitchen where you can cook your own meals, a laundry and a computer to go online. Breakfasts are provided on a self-service basis.

Owners Björk and Magnús make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. -ASF

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explaining the area and showing them on a map the best places to visit.

It's in the evenings and on weekends that things really take off, though. It's a small place, but packed with character. A piano in the corner is often pressed into use, making it a fun and inspiring evening. Whether you are a local or just visiting, you'll feel at home.

Bryggjan is open from 8am-11pm on weekdays and from 9am-midnight or so if there is a lot of action, on weekends. Bryggjan can also be found on Facebook by the name of "Bryggjan Kaffihús". -ASF

**Bryggjan**  
 Kaffihúsið í Grindavík  
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# GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

*The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast*

Walk down to Grindavík's harbour and you may see the nets. Then you'll know you're there. Bryggjan's main work is repairing fishing nets and lines—nets that would completely cover the nearby mountain and lines that would stretch way beyond Reykjavík, over 50km away.

This is a fishing town and the café is a fishermen's café—though, with the

growing number of visitors from all over the world finding it, it is quickly becoming the café of choice in the area. Little wonder, as the help and friendliness of the owners is only matched by the delicious food they offer. My suggestion: don't leave without having a bowl of their soup. It's really good.

While I was there, one of the owners was spending time with visiting tourists,

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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 Miðnesheiði 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 available to rent. Just outside town, the pond is a perfect spot to watch the 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. Suðurnes is actually another name for the Reykjanes peninsula, its literal meaning being 'the peninsula 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 'The 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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# A TRUE GEM

*Keflavík's Diamond Suites Boutique Hotel*

Iceland's magnificent nature is in a class of its own with few, if any, rivals when it comes to its scope, diversity and utter uniqueness. Many a first time visitor has been virtually stopped in their tracks as they take in the beauty of the land that confronts them. Words never seem to do the subject justice, but one American writer, Stephen Markley, records in his book, 'Tales of Iceland', "The problem with driving around Iceland is that you're basically confronted by a new soul-enriching, breathtaking, life-affirming natural site every five minutes". Totally!

### Step into your own world of luxury

Surrounded by all this natural magnificence, it is only fitting that visitors to the country should have access to equally impressive accommodation. The Diamond Suites Boutique Hotel is the only five-star hotel in Iceland. The hotel opened officially on 17<sup>th</sup> May to a discerning clientele who are looking for something above and beyond the norm. For some it's the hotel's attention to detail and superior craftsmanship, for others it's the unsurpassed customer service. For others, for whom privacy is not just a luxury but a necessity, Diamond Suites is the only option.



With your own private entrance, you will step into your own exclusive domain where your privacy and peace of mind are assured.

### The Five Gemstone Suites

The hotel's five suites, named after precious gemstones, each have their own unique theme and are decorated in a chic contemporary design with touches of elegance throughout—Versace marble tiles and wallpapers, glass taps by the renowned



*Steinþór Jónsson*

French designer, Philippe Starck, bathroom fixtures by Duravit, in-room whirlpool baths, private balconies and many other singular items found nowhere else in Iceland, if not the world. Other highlights include a beautiful solid oak headboard carved from a single, solid piece of wood, exquisite recessed lighting by Moooi, a decadent Versace dinner service, and the high-tech bathroom of your dreams.

"Having stayed in some of the most exclusive hotels in the world, we have tried to incorporate the best we have found throughout our travels into our concept", says owner/manager, Steinþór Jónsson.



"Virtually everything—from the choice of bevelled mirrors to the original artwork on the walls, right down to the smallest details I, with my wife, Hildur, have carefully and purposefully chosen."

### The Diamond Suite Luxury Pack

If you opt for the best of the best, the Diamond Suite Luxury Pack meets that requirement in every way. All five suites can be opened up to form one spacious, 3,000 sq. foot private apartment with an sophisticated array of amenities including a personal butler, concierge and full time access to the hotel's service team, who are on hand to attend to your every need. "We understand that everyone has different needs and requirements, and it is our pleasure to accommodate each guest to the best of our ability", says Steinþór.

To help you make the most of your stay in Iceland, the luxury pack also includes a Range Rover and your own private driver/guide, so you can see Iceland in full comfort and style.

### Kef Restaurant at your service

Enjoy your meals, either in your suite or in Hotel Keflavík's glass enclosed conservatory restaurant, run by chef Jenný Rúnarsdóttir, who won Iceland's Masterchef competition in 2012. Fresh Icelandic ingredients form the basis of Jenny's inspirational dishes which are best enjoyed with a glass of wine from the hotel's exclusive wine list—a small Barolo Cannubi 2008 with your dinner, sir?

### A family of hoteliers

With 30 years experience of managing Hotel Keflavík behind him, Steinþór is well

positioned to open Iceland's very first five star hotel. "17<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 is in fact the 30 year anniversary of Hotel Keflavík, which we opened with my parents in 1986. So it is a great honour for us to inaugurate the Diamond Suite in their memory."

In the months leading up to the grand opening, the hotel has hosted dignitaries, famous actors and well known singers as well as several exclusive visitors seeking a high-end hotel experience. "We are grateful for the enthusiastic feedback and positive reviews we have received from our guests", concludes Steinþór.

—EMV



**Hotel Keflavík**  
Vatnsnesveg 12-14 • 230 Keflavík  
+354 420 7000  
steini@kef.is  
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**T**ARAMAR is a company at the forefront of natural pure skin care in Iceland. The Reykjavik-based company provides a line of products that use fresh, organic ingredients instead of murky formulas that many “natural” products claim to use. The products are based on many years of scientific research, including elements of food science. Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir, Professor at University of Iceland, founded the company whose core themes are: science, slow cosmetics and purity. TARAMAR offers creams and serums that are designed to reconstruct collagen fibers, restart healthy metabolism and protect the skin cells from aging due to oxidation and environmental factors.

**Natural Ingredients**

A multitude of products tout “natural” and “organic” ingredients, but that does not always equate to high quality as many companies also use harmful compounds in their products. TARAMAR, however, uses only high quality and pure ingredients including Icelandic seaweed, lava filtered water and local medicinal herbs. The formulas are based on cutting-edge technology and scientific principles. These ingredients, along with naturally derived peptides and enzymes, work to improve the strength and health of the skin. TARAMAR has incorporated these potent ingredients and used their bioactivity to create pure and safe products that work with nature, not against it. Icelandic seaweed and herbal extractions are known to have high antioxidant values and help decrease inflammation and redness, while promoting healthier cells. In these products, TARAMAR encapsulates the bioactive compounds—enzymes and peptides—into liposomal delivery systems, thus ensuring beneficial actions at intercellular levels.

**Comprehensive Product Line**

TARAMAR offers a day treatment that is a moisturizing and cell activating cream light enough to wear under makeup. It goes on smoothly and has a pleasant, natural smell. You won’t find strong, unnatural perfumes in the products. Also available is an anti-aging serum that strengthens the collagen fibers and hydrates skin for a smoother and firmer appearance. Next is a purifying treatment: an algae cleansing oil that helps awaken



*Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir*

skin cells and firm the skin. Rounding out the product line is TARAMAR’s night treatment that stimulates and restores skin cells while users sleep, reducing wrinkles and leaving the skin silky smooth.

All the products are based on innovative research using live cell models to understand how potent bioactives interact within cells and the damage that dirty formulas can cause. The products are so pure that, technically, they could be eaten.

**Ancient Methods, Modernised**

No other company in Iceland creates skin care products like TARAMAR. “We are modifying ancient techniques,” says Guðrún. “Most companies buy their ingredients and mix them together and 30 minutes later, there’s a cream. In contrast, we use slow cosmetic methodology; some of the extracts take 6 months to prepare. Nearly all the ingredients are made from scratch by us or Icelandic organic farmers, starting with seeding in early spring to become powerful extracts one year later. All the procedures are done by hand. When extracts are ready, they are hand pressed and your hands simply glow from the very beneficial power of the medicinal herbs”. The final product is extremely satisfying, with a deep, mature, luxurious feeling of a total harmony of all the compounds.



**Unique Packaging**

The majority of skin care products are packaged in clear or light bottles that can actually hurt the bioactive properties of the ingredients. Indeed, the powerful bioactives isolated from the seaweeds are

especially fragile and can break down when exposed to light. Clear containers don’t offer the necessary protection. Therefore, TARAMAR decided to use black glass bottles to contain the products. While there is science behind

the decision, the bottles are also chic and eye-catching.

**Available for Purchase**

TARAMAR accepts orders on its website, [www.TARAMAR.is](http://www.TARAMAR.is), and they have products available at a duty free kiosk in Keflavik International Airport. For travellers visiting Reykjavik, products can be ordered and delivered to their hotel.

TARAMAR is looking at international markets like the United States, Germany and Japan. It is also possible to invest in the company in the form of B shares. For more information, email the company. -JG





# WEST *Iceland*



#WESTICELAND

**T**he 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.

# DELVING INTO HISTORY

*The Settlement Center in Borgarnes Takes You on a Trip Through Time*

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

### A Warehouse of Exhibitions

In 2006 an Icelandic couple, actor Kjartan Ragnarsson and news reporter Sigríður Margrét Guðmundsdóttir, decided to dedicate a project to the story of the Settlement. They found a charming old warehouse in Borgarnes in West Iceland and started building up two



exhibitions on the brave pioneers who followed their curiosity into the unknown.

Provided with an audio guide available in 15 languages, visitors find themselves in an elaborate labyrinth that displays history in a really exciting way. Step onto a moving boat and get the feeling of how it must have been to cross the ocean in an open boat! Listen to stories, while figures behind the glass silently watch over you. On the lower floor the



exhibition of Saga hero and settler's son, Egill Skallagrímsson, takes you right into the story, with Egill's spirit at your steps.

### Transformed through Art

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

-DT/ASF



**The Settlement Center**

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







## FRESH FOOD IN A HARBOUR TOWN

*Just a stone's throw from Reykjavík, there's a lot to see and do in Akranes*

West Iceland is known for its hot springs, rivers, black sand beaches, quiet fishing towns, and a glacier, accessible on foot. Just 40 minutes outside Reykjavík, a trip to the west is ideal for those with limited time who want to enjoy some of the countryside.

Travellers who want to visit an authentic, small Icelandic fishing town should spend some time in Akranes. With just 6,900 residents, Akranes is charming, tranquil, and yet has a lot of outdoor activities and a great campsite. After a day, Galito Restaurant is the ideal place to sample fresh, local food, in a warm and cosy atmosphere.

### Galito Restaurant

Galito is a favourite among locals and travellers alike. The 13-year old family business focuses on fresh fish, homemade sauces and local ingredients in its inventive, tasty dishes. The chefs buy fresh fish daily and source local, seasonal vegetables whenever possible. Guests can choose from

the restaurant's fine dining menu options such as tender lamb, beef tenderloin, or fresh Icelandic fish such as salmon, catfish and pan-fried cod. Galito also offer a good bistro menu which includes salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza, along with a good variety of starters and desserts and several healthy dishes such as Naan sandwiches and Jamaican jerk chicken.

In May, Galito begins offering sushi made from fresh salmon, shrimp and tuna, an exciting first for the restaurant. The same owners have operated the restaurant since it opened in 2003 and they are proud to be the top choice among locals.

### Outdoor Activities

Akranes really comes alive during the summer. Locals love to spend as much time outside as possible. Visitors can enjoy one of the town's two swimming pools, tee off at the Garðavöllur 18-hole golf course, stroll along the golden sand beach, or rent bicycles to explore the

charming town. Hiking Mount Akrafjall is an easy climb with a spectacular view from the top, especially on clear days when you can see Snæfellsjökull. The mountain can be reached by the road no. 51 and is 11 kilometres east from the town.

### Akranes Lighthouse

Akranesviti, the Akranes Lighthouse, is delightful to visit any time of year. Away from bright lights, tourists and town folk catch a display of the Northern Lights dancing in the sky in winter. In the summer, you can see locals picnicking outside the lighthouse, and visitors can climb to the top during opening hours. Built in 1947, the lighthouse has been used to host concerts and art exhibitions in recent years. -JG

**Galito**  
 Stilholt 16-18 • 300 Akranes  
 +354 430 6767  
 galito@galito.is  
 www.galito.is



## TOKENS OF ICELAND: HANDCRAFTED JEWELLERY

*Oddný Braga designs timeless pendants inspired by Iceland's nature*

Tokens of Iceland is a handmade jewellery line that evokes four distinct Icelandic features—magma, glaciers, auroras, and hot springs. Created and designed by Oddný Braga, Tokens of Iceland is a dynamic brand that is the perfect souvenir from an idyllic Icelandic holiday.



Oddný Braga

Each necklace, with its own unique stone, is handcrafted in the West Iceland town of Borgarnes. The jewellery, which is made with natural mineral pearls wrapped in Sterling Silver, represent the geology and uniqueness of Iceland. The Magma below the ground, the Glaciers shaping the land, the Aurora Borealis lighting up the sky and the Hot Springs boiling below the very rocks we walk upon.

### Molten Magma

Iceland is a volcanic island constantly in flux, with magma breaking through fissures and periodic eruptions that reshape the rocky landscape. Iceland's land is made up of igneous rock, most of which is basalt, which forms from cooling magma. Most of Iceland's volcanoes are fissures, like the 2014 Holuhraun eruption, where lava pours out of the cracks

in the earth's crust. Holuhraun produced fountains of lava shooting out of the earth. Oddný created the Magma pendant to reflect the fire-like intensity of the eruptions and the cooling magma left behind.

### Gorgeous Glaciers

Like the air, Iceland's water is perfectly pure and that could, in part, be credited to the island nation's vast glaciers. Ice covers about 11% of the country, mostly in the form of Iceland's largest glaciers, Vatnajökull, Langjökull, and Mýrdalsjökull. Travellers love to explore the icy expanses by hiking, snowmobiling and even visiting ice caves. The Glacier pendant has a pure, crystal clear feeling that reminds us of Iceland's gorgeous glaciers.

### Haunting Aurora Borealis

The biggest winter attraction in Iceland is the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). People travel from around the world to catch a glimpse of the green, white, blue and red lights dancing in the night sky. Tokens of Iceland offer a striking green

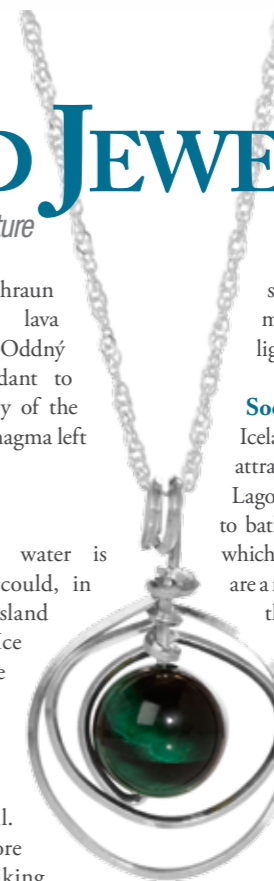
stone pendant that represents the movement of the dancing green lights.

### Soothing Hot Springs

Iceland's waters also serve as tourist attractions. The man-made Blue Lagoon near Grindavík allows visitors to bathe in geothermally heated water, which soothes and heals the skin. There are a number of hot springs throughout the country that locals and tourists enjoy. Tokens of Iceland's blue Hot Springs pendant captures the striking blue colour of the Blue Lagoon. Tokens of Iceland pieces can be purchased at Kristý Borgarnesi and are also available online at:

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

-JG



**Tokens of Iceland**  
 Kristý • Borgarbraut 58-60 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 2001  
 kristy@simmet.is  
 www.tokensoficeiland.is



# LJÓMALIND FARMER'S MARKET

*Authentic Icelandic Products—Not to Be Missed!*

Ljómalind Farmer's Market specialises in exclusive regional products. Small batch production of items such as traditional skyr from a local creamery, fresh farm eggs, dried fish, grass-fed beef and smoked salmon from local producers ensure top quality products. Sugar-free chocolate candies, skyr confect, jams, ice cream and a variety of handcrafts and woollen knitwear, make unique gifts or snacks for the road. Unlike the big supermarkets, small production sometimes means limited quantities, so you never know what you will find on offer at the market, which makes the experience all the more



exciting. The market is open all year round including bank holidays.

**Open every day as follows:**

Winter opening hours: From 1.00pm to 6.00 pm. Summer opening hours: From 11.00am to 6.00pm.

Location: beside the Borgarnes Tourist Information Office. —EMV

**Ljómalind Farmers Market**  
 Brúartorg 4 • 310 Borgarnes  
 +354 437 1400  
 ljomalind@ljomalind.is  
 www.ljomalind.is



# WELCOME TO AKRANES

*Spend some quality time in this tranquil west coast town*

Many travellers who visit Akranes are in no hurry to leave and there are a couple of guesthouses that are perfect for any length of stay.

Kirkjuhovoll Guesthouse is a comfortable 8-room guesthouse, housed in a classic, historic building. The rooms are airy, with a lot of light and the owners offer guests the opportunity to borrow tandem bicycles to explore this lovely town.

In addition, the Apotek Hostel & Guesthouse is located in a house that used to serve as the town's pharmacy. The rooms

are tastefully furnished and are close to the town square. The owners also offer accommodation during the summer in the high school dormitory, which is a great option for the budget traveller.

Just a short drive from Reykjavik, Akranes is the first detour for those looking to explore the charming west coast before continuing on to Snæfellsnes. A town of 6,900 people, Akranes is a classic fishing village that also has deep industrial roots. It's peaceful, friendly and home to a beautiful beach, a quaint folk museum and

a lighthouse that is open regularly to visitors, offering great views from the top.

For hikers, Mount Akrafjall is the pride and joy of the town and it's known as a relatively easy climb. The views from its peak are breath-taking, especially on clear days, when you can see the Snæfellsjökull glacier. —JG

**Stay Akranes**  
 Merkiqerfi 7 • 300 Akranes  
 Suðurgata 32 • 300 Akranes  
 +354 868 3332  
 www.stayakranes.is

# A PASSION FOR ICELAND

*Iceland Guided Tours*

There was a time when I thought independent travel was the only way to travel. Organised tours are for sissies, I thought. Guidebook in hand, I would do it my way. After a tour with Iceland Guided Tours I had to change my tune quite drastically as I came to the realisation that even the best guidebooks to Iceland can only scratch the surface of a country that has been quietly churning out more documented history, primarily in the form of Sagas for over 1,000 years.

**Storytellers Par Excellence**

Like all of Iceland Guided Tours' guides, Helgi Davidsson knows Icelandic history and those Sagas well and is full of stories and anecdotes that bring his tours to life. "Iceland has a particularly rich history that has been well documented since at least 930 when the Settlement Period began. Being able to draw from this wealth of information is what sets us apart from many others and in this way our tours really come alive", Helgi explains.

**A magical mystical tour**

One of Iceland Guided Tours newest tours is a day trip to Snæfellsnes National Park in West



Iceland. The tour takes you right around this mystical peninsula with its very own glacier-capped active volcano, Snæfellsjökull. Several of the most well known sites on the peninsula also happen to be quite unique to the island. Take Arnastapi for instance; a popular spot on the peninsula's south coast where lava from a long ago eruption came oozing its way right down to the edge of the sea, creating three unusual circular formations known as 'blow-holes'. Here, on windy days (read: almost daily), waves crash spectacularly inside them, making for a very impressive sight.

Snæfellsnes is also home to some of Iceland's most extraordinary citizens; a 17<sup>th</sup> century serial killer, a well-travelled Viking woman who married Leif Eriksson's younger brother, and a half-man, half-troll, Bárður Snæfellsás, who is thought to be the guardian

spirit of the peninsula. These are just some of the intriguing personalities, found only on Snæfellsnes Peninsula, whom Iceland Guided Tours will fill you in on.

**Small groups and personal service**

With a fleet of modern minibuses that take no more than 18 passengers at a time, Iceland Guided Tours specialises in small groups and personalised service at very reasonable prices. And with one of Iceland Guided Tours ultra-knowledgeable guides at your service, you may just want to leave your guide books at home!

—EMV

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# GOATS AND ROSES

*Saved from Extinction, Goats breed in Borgarbyggð*



Photos: Yulia Yudinova

The Icelandic goats at Háafell in Borgarbyggð are the oldest and purest goat stock found in Europe today. Their arrival dates back to the Settlement in Iceland, around 930 AD. For centuries, they were the main source of food for the islanders but, due to a long climate cooling period during the Middle Ages, they were replaced by sheep with their coarse wool being better suited for long periods of freezing cold weather. Since then, the emphasis has been on the sheep, resulting in the goats becoming nearly extinct in Iceland. Today there are only 800 in the country, so they are still an endangered species.

The farmers at Háafell, Jóhanna and Þorbjörn, were running a traditional Icelandic farm



with cows and sheep until 2000 when they decided to focus solely on goat farming, after working to increase their goat herd for

eleven years. In 1999 they had adopted the last four goats without horns left in Iceland, which contributed to their decision.

“The goats are very likeable, playful and more like pets than livestock,” says Jóhanna. From her stock, she makes ointments, soaps and fine cashmere wool; from the skin, inner soles, hats and cases for cognac flasks. Then, in the autumn, she sells the goat meat—which is as rich in protein as beef and has as little fat as chicken.

Another attraction at Háafell is Jóhanna’s Rose Garden. With 180 types of roses—which is no mean achievement in the harsh Icelandic climate, along with lavender, violets and herbs and grasses from the moor—she makes bath-salts and scrubs. Her little homestead shop is both interesting and original. „Háafell Goat Farm is on Facebook as Geitfjársetur and Save Haafell goat farm (a group).

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**Háafell Geitabú**  
Háafelli / Hvítársíðu • 320 Reykholt  
+354 845 2331  
haafell@gmail.com  
www.geitur.is



## Lead us in temptation - and thou shalt have a good time

For twelve years Bar 11 has been the home of Rock n' Roll in Iceland and those hungry for a good time out have been heading to Bar 11. They've not been disappointed.

With live music and a broad spectrum of Icelandic bands playing the place is crammed full every weekend.

With a dj and reasonably priced selection of beverages until the early hours of the morning, Bar 11 is sure to guarantee a good night to remember.

There's nothing off limits here musically. Come over and have fun. That's what it's all about.

Having a good time.  
And those who are about to rock we salute you.



Opening hours: Thursday - Saturday from 9 pm - 4:30 am

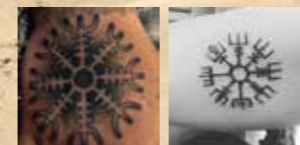


*Reykjavik Ink*  
tattoo shop

## GET INKED THE ULTIMATE SOUVENIR

Never mind the chocolate, silver spoon or a key ring.  
If you really want a souvenir that will last,  
a tattoo is the way to go.

Reykjavik Ink is the biggest tattoo shop in Iceland,  
we have tattoo artists for any style you want.



Check us out on:  
Facebook.com/reykjavikink  
Instagram.com/reykjavikink  
reykjavikink@reykjavikink.is



We are open from Monday - Saturday from 12 pm - 9pm  
We are located on Frakkastígur 7, 101 Reykjavik.



# PURE, SMOOTH, BREATHTAKING

REYKA VODKA—SERVE ON ICE, SO IT REMEMBERS ITS SOURCE

High in the North, far from the pollution of civilization, the arctic rains and snows fall on porous, 4,000 year-old lava fields. The lava does an amazing job of filtering the springs seeping slowly through its layers, resulting in the delicious, crystal-clear, clean water that is Iceland is famous for.

That is a key factor in the distillation of Reyka vodka, but to make it stand head and shoulders above the crowd, the company takes that filtration a step further. In a bottle of 80 proof vodka, there is still 60% water. The purity of that water thus has a great impact on the taste. To produce the very purest water in the world, Reyka filters the distilled water through its own lava filter on the still near the final point of production. Reyka Vodka is filtered through lava rocks that are collected at Grábrók lava fields, the source for Reyka water. Using lava rock filtration isn't only unique, it also gives Reyka extra smooth taste and lets the fine flavour of the vodka shine through.

## Distilled at the Top of the World

Bring in the essence of barley, grown in the Scottish glens; malted spirit that is 96%



alcohol, blend it with that Icelandic crystal-pure water to bring it to 70% or 140 proof. Then distill it in small batches in the rarest of stills, the only copper Carter Head still that is used to make vodka, under the watchful and experienced eye of master



distiller, Þórður. He heats the spirit and water to boiling point using the totally green, clean, geothermal energy from the nearby Deildartunguhver hot springs. He then eases the steam pressure to gently separate the heavy elements in the malted barley. After some 20 minutes, he raises the steam pressure again, causing the alcohol to rise and then condense on the copper plates inside the still that give the unique smoothness to the final product.

The result is the purest vodka, without additives—just malted barley and Icelandic water—a winning combination. As he pours the precious liquid from the still, Þórður separates it into three parts, the 'head'—the first 20 litres, which he tests for taste and purity, the centre, which is where the best quality lies, and the 'tail', with the dregs that are discarded.

He blends the sparkling liquid with more pure water to bring it down to a

deliciously palatable 40% or 80 proof, before it is bottled.

## Glaciers in a bottle

All over the world, the sight of a glacier invokes impressions of purity. Here in Iceland, we have many of them, including one of the world's largest. We drink the water that comes from these natural wonders.

Since 2005, Reyka has added an extra kick to it, creating an award-winning vodka

in inventive Viking tradition, that reflects the breathtaking smoothness of the glaciers and put it in a bottle for all to enjoy—provided they're adults, of course!

Today you can find Reyka vodka all over the world—with the UK and USA being especially fond of it. So, now you know where it comes from and what makes it so special, there's nothing to prevent you enjoying the smoothest, purest vodka from the Land of Fire and Ice.



# MASTER OF COLOUR

*Harry Bilson creates joyful, colourful paintings inspired by nature*

Iceland is an idyllic place to create for many artists, with its striking landscape and quirky culture that lends to endless inspiration. Natural wonders include active volcanoes, gurgling geysers and vast glaciers, while there always seem to be a colourful cast of characters among Iceland's 330,000 inhabitants.

Harry Bilson, the artist who was born in Reykjavik in 1948 to an Icelandic mother and British father and who grew up in London, now calls Iceland home.

Harry is a master of colour whether he's capturing the dark subtleties of Icelandic life or the gentle power of the 'Bower Bird Lady'. Nature is a theme never far from his paintings and prints, such as the 'Last Leaf Leaving' painting that features a family in a barren Icelandic forest with a gorgeous blue owl soaring above. The contrast of colours and brushwork is beautiful.

## Lifelong painter

Harry began painting at an early age as he was a highly creative child. His talent was recognized immediately and at the age of six, he won an international Exhibition of Children's Art competition in Prague. At the age of 19 he became a full-time professional, one who was self-taught, self-propelled and completely self-supported. He has painted ever since, honing his craft and finding inspiration around the world.

## International Artist

He has lived and worked in several countries, including Australia, China, USA, Canada



and Ireland but he now happily resides in Iceland. Harry has shown his work in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, including the US, South America, Japan, Australia and Europe. He continues to travel and exhibit worldwide.

Those interested in purchasing Harry's works should email him at [harrybilson@googlemail.com](mailto:harrybilson@googlemail.com) or visit Galleri Fold close to the Hlemmur bus station while in Reykjavik.

-JG



PHOTO: KRISTJÁN INGI EINARSSON





# WESTFJORDS *Iceland*



#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 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.

# BEAUTIFUL BÍLDUDALUR

*A Westfjords village full of surprises*

The Westfjords are simply beautiful. Endless coastlines, jaw-dropping bird cliffs with millions of nesting birds, and gorgeous mountainous landscapes await those that make this trip. The Westfjords also have charming villages, well-maintained hiking paths, quirky museums, and some of the most striking beauty on the island.

Bíldudalur is a village of fewer than 200 people, situated on the coast of Arnarfjörður, one of the larger fjords. Although the population of Bíldudalur is small, music and culture have thrived in the village for years. In fact, the village hosts an annual folk music festival and has an exhibition of Icelandic



music memorabilia called 'Visit Melodies of the Past'. Arnarfjörður is also well known for reports of its numerous sea monsters. These creatures have played a colourful role in Icelandic folk culture for centuries as stories

have been passed down for generations. The Icelandic Sea Monster Museum offers a dramatic and thought-provoking multimedia display of these stories, something that the whole family can enjoy together.



## Bíldudalur Hostel

Bíldudalur HI Hostel is a green and quality-certified hostel that is part of the Hostelling International chain. The hostel is a lovely place to stay when travelling around Arnarfjörður with clean and comfortable rooms. They range from dormitory beds to private rooms; single rooms for solo travellers to family rooms with four beds. The hostel has a well-equipped guest kitchen and a BBQ available out on the terrace. There's a comfortable living room to relax in with a TV, books and magazines. Wireless Internet is free of charge and breakfast is served from 1<sup>st</sup> June until 31<sup>st</sup> August.

**Bíldudalur Hostel**  
 Hafnarbraut 2 - 465 Bíldudalur  
 +354 456 2100  
 bildudalur@hostel.is  
 www.facebook.com/bildudalurhostel

## Stiklur-Steppin' Stones B&B

Stiklur-Steppin' Stones B&B is a cosy, family-owned guesthouse situated in this beautiful part of the Westfjords. The twin and double rooms are airy, bright, and tastefully decorated, with shared bathroom facilities. The seven rooms have beautiful views of both the fjord and mountains, and the owners offer free Internet access, a communal lounge with a television, and breakfast. The guesthouse is open year round, and bed linens, towels and bathrobes are included.



**Stiklur-Steppin' Stones B&B**  
 Edinborg, Dalbraut 1 - 465 Bíldudalur  
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 stiklur.steppingstones@gmail.com  
 www.stiklur.is



## Vegamót – Bíldudalur

Vegamót – Bíldudalur is a quaint local restaurant and coffee shop that serves homemade cakes as well as ice cream, hot dogs, sandwiches, soups, burgers and other light meals. You can enjoy your food sitting in the bustling restaurant downstairs or take a seat on the second floor in 'Unustofa' to enjoy a more relaxed environment. On sunny days, most of the guests like to sit in the outside area, to watch life in Bíldudalur.



**Vegamót**  
 Tjarnarbraut 2 - 465 Bíldudalur  
 +354 456 2232  
 vegamot@live.com  
 www.facebook.com/vegamotinokkar/



# GO WEST!

*Air Iceland is opening up the Westfjords*



Air Iceland offers twice-daily flights to Ísafjörður, the unofficial capital of the Westfjords. The Westfjords have some of the best nature in Iceland. There are endless coastlines, steep bird cliffs, and gorgeous mountainous landscapes that await those that make the trip.

Ísafjörður, which is home to about 4,000 people, is the ideal place for tourists to base from when exploring the region. Given the small size of this remote town, you could feel a bit isolated, but that's just the feeling many tourists relish. The town itself is quaint, with shops and restaurants in the small downtown area while the mountains offer a picturesque backdrop to the bustling harbour. Take a short drive out of town and you'll find fascinating rock formations amongst towering mountain ranges—and more sheep than people.

Air Iceland's two daily flights leave from the Reykjavik domestic airport to Ísafjörður. The experienced and professional staff take great pride in providing travellers a seamless and convenient travel experience with friendly service.



### Exciting Westfjords day tours

Air Iceland partners with several tour operators around the country and offers three different day tours to the Westfjords, including the flight from Reykjavik to Ísafjörður.

The 'Ísafjörður Day Tour', available all year round, gives travellers a taste of the local nature, history and food in the Westfjords. The tour begins with a trip to the oldest fishing station in Iceland, Ósvör Bolungarvík, before heading to the Maritime Museum in Ísafjörður. The afternoon is spent exploring the surroundings and nature of Ísafjörður followed by a visit to the eco-friendly



fishing village of Suðureyri to enjoy some fresh, local fish. The second tour, 'Dyjandi & the Westfjords', takes travellers to Dyjandi, where guests can take a hike up to the top tier of this majestic waterfall. Dyjandi is one of the most impressive and beautiful waterfalls in the Westfjords. Additionally, guests get to see the spectacular Önuundarfjörður, Dýrafjörður and Arnarfjörður fjords, offering jaw-dropping views. This tour, which is available from 1<sup>st</sup> May—31<sup>st</sup> October, also stops at the golden sand beach at Holt and the cosy Þingeyri (Thingeyri) fishing village and gives travellers the opportunity to explore Ísafjörður on their own.



The third tour takes you to some of the most isolated and beautiful parts of the Westfjords. The 'Under the Westfjords' tour starts with a circle around the Svalvogar peninsula, which is remote and off the beaten path. You will be in awe as you follow the rugged coast, hiking to see the dramatic cliffs, calm creeks, rich birdlife and colourful mountains. You might have a chance to see arctic foxes, seals and whales, as well as a lot of roaming sheep. The tour is available from 1<sup>st</sup> June—30<sup>th</sup> September.

### Gorgeous Greenland

Air Iceland also flies to our close Nordic neighbours, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, in addition to its domestic flights around Iceland. In fact, in June 2016, Air Iceland is adding a new gateway to Greenland at Kangerlussuaq on the west coast. Kangerlussuaq means 'big fjord', and they mean it—the fjord is 170km long and, at its halfway point, is crossed by the Arctic Circle.

The main event for many travellers is seeing the Greenland Ice Cap, which is easily accessible from Kangerlussuaq. The Ice Cap is a true wonder of the world as the glacier edge calves into roaring river rapids below, leaving a choppy face of ice in its place. In addition to exploring the remarkable Ice Cap, a local tour operator



runs a number of excursions, including trips to see local wildlife, such as arctic foxes, reindeer, oxen, falcons, eagles and ravens, as well as boat trips, horse riding, guided hikes, sightseeing flights and a

visit to the US military museum. Besides Ísafjörður and Kangerlussuaq, Air Iceland flies travellers to Grimsey in the north to cross the Arctic Circle, to Akureyri, the capital of the north, Egilsstaðir, in the east, to explore the vast and breathtaking East Fjords, as well as Vopnafjörður and Þórshöfn (Thorshöfn), both in the east. Air Iceland also flies to Kulusuk, Nuuk Ilulissat, Narsarsuaq, and Ittoqqortoormiit in Greenland.

Air Iceland is ready to accommodate you, whether you are a flying for business or leisure. The warm, capable and friendly staff are ready to welcome you and make your dream trip come true. -JG



**Flugfélag Íslands - Air Iceland**  
 Reykjavíkflugvöllur • 101 Reykjavík  
 +354 570 3000  
[www.airiceland.is](http://www.airiceland.is)







## FINNA HOTEL

*Your Base in the Westfjords*

Hólmavík is a sparsely populated fishing village situated in a special slice of the Westfjords called Strandir. The town is perhaps best known for the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft where the unique history of witchcraft, sorcery, and witch-hunting from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is exhibited. Other attractions include a golf course, the swimming pool, riding tours, hiking

trails and restaurants. Finna Hotel offers 21 rooms in two houses, Finna Hotel and Steinhúsið. Finna Hotel has stunning views from the hill to the town centre, the church and the Steingrímsfjörður fjord. Steinhúsið is located in the heart of the old town, just opposite the Witchcraft museum and is the oldest concrete building in town, built in 1911. The hotel can offer both standard rooms with



breakfast included or an apartment where you can make your own meal in a cosy environment. Finna Hotel is ideal for families and independent travellers with many attractions just a short drive away. -JG

**Finna Hotel**  
 Borgbraut 4 - 510 Hólmavík  
 +354 451 3136  
 finnahotel@finnahotel.is  
 www.finnahotel.is



## MYSTIC HISTORY

*Reykhólahreppur: Overlooking Breiðafjörður from the Westfjords*

The Westfjords' south coast holds one of Iceland's hidden pearls. It's a small, peaceful community with both natural phenomena and a grand landscape.

Over a dozen fjords surround the island-dotted mystical Breiðafjörður Bay with its beautiful scenery, historical and poetic references and exceptional birdlife.

### A Service Centre with a History

Two and a half hour's drive from Reykjavik on paved roads, Reykhólar village is the county's centre, providing a full range of services, including a campsite, stores, museums, a

unique seaweed spa at Sjárvarsmiðjan and a geothermal swimming pool. The oldest summer hotel in Iceland, Hotel Bjarkalundur, provides quality accommodation, dining and picturesque views.

Throughout history Reykhólar has been home to many of Iceland's most prominent chieftains and is frequently mentioned in the Icelandic sagas.

The island of Flatey is an important cultural site in the Bay. A visit takes you back to the year 1900. Reminders of past times include a monastery built in 1172 and Iceland's first library built in 1864.



### Birdwatchers' Paradise

A wide variety of species nest around both the coastline of Reykhólahreppur and on the islands of Breiðafjörður Bay. One of the most impressive are the majestic and elusive white-tailed eagles (*haliaeetus albicilla*), that both nest in the area and can be seen flying over Reykhólar.

### Uncountable Islands

Some say the islands in Breiðafjörður Bay are uncountable though some cartographers estimate that there are around 3,000. Eyjasigling at Reykhólar offers cruises to both inhabited islands and those uninhabited except for the plethora of birds. -JG

**Reykhólahreppur**  
 Reykhólar - 380 Reykhólahreppur  
 +354 434 7880  
 skrifstofa@reykholar.is  
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# BOLUNGARVÍK: ONLY A TUNNEL AWAY

*Spend some time in Bolungarvík, a beautiful spot in the Westfjords*

Bolungarvík is a beautiful village in the Westfjords of Iceland that has been inhabited since the time of Iceland's settlement. Þuríður Sundafyllir (Þuríður 'the channel-filler') and her son, Völu-Steinn, settled in Bolungarvík and lived at Vatnsnes at the north end of Lake Syðradalsvatn. Today, about 900 people call this village home, a place where fisheries have always been important for the residents and their survival over the centuries.

### Rich Fishing History

Bolungarvík is one of Iceland's earliest fishing outposts and is located close to rich fishing grounds. Some 20-30 boats fished from Bolungarvík in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and by the year 1900, this number had risen to around 90. There were numerous fishermen's huts in Bolungarvík but no actual community was formed. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were 18 fishermen's huts situated in the inlet. Today, the village is still an active fishing port and fishing vessels can be seen bringing in their daily catch in the harbour.

### Panoramic Mountain Views

Bolungarvík is surrounded by high, steep, sloped mountains and Bolafjall Mountain, which rises 638 metres, is approachable by road from July to August. On the top of the mountain, the Icelandic Coast Guard now operates the former US radar station. The view is breathtaking and open with nothing



but sharp mountain edges—and nothing to hold on to or stop you from falling, so extreme caution is strongly advised. The view from the top is completely overwhelming with picture-perfect views of the landscape. The surroundings of Bolungarvík are quite popular destinations for hiking, biking, fishing and bird watching.

### The Region's Museums

The Ósvör Maritime Museum is a restored fishing hut that is reminiscent of the old days of rowboat fishing. The museum is contained in a building that doubles as a 19<sup>th</sup> century fishing base, salt hut, fish drying area and drying hut. Among the pieces displayed, there is the Ölver rowboat that shows the

kind of vessels that were used for fishing over the years. The museum also displays fishing equipment and various tools that were used for fishing and fish production at the time the fishing base operated. Meanwhile, the Natural History Museum in Bolungarvík has many mammals and birds on display. When entering the museum, guests are greeted first by a hooded seal, then a polar bear surrounded by a seal, a fox and a mink.

### Soothing Swimming Pool

After a day exploring the area, a dip at the local indoor swimming pool is in order. It's a real treat, with a steam room, a room for relaxation, outdoor hot tubs and a water slide. There's much to see and do in the region, so be sure to spend some time in Bolungarvík during your trip to Iceland. -JG

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 +354 450 7000  
 bolungarvik@bolungarvik.is  
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# NORTH *Iceland*

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 horses on the frozen lakes in Mývatn under the Northern 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 birdwatching paradise, to the awesome horse-shoe canyon of Ásbyrgi, the thunderous waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, Askja's calderas 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 farm in Skagaströnd. Then Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltadal valley in Skagaströnd stands Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of Iceland's first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest town of the north, along with its art galleries and rich culture.



#NORTHICELAND





# SCENIC SKAGAFJÖRÐUR

Explore the beautiful deep bay of the North

There's so much to see and do in Skagafjörður. The region is often described as horse country, and that's very true. It's the only county in Iceland where horses outnumber humans. There are a number of farms and horse riding tour operators in the region. Skagafjörður

is just 40km long and 15km wide, with the towns of Sauðárkrúkur and Varmahlíð being the main areas for tourism. Here, farms reign supreme and most residents are involved in agriculture in one form or another. Tourism has been increasing in recent years as there are a number of

museums, historical sights, and plenty of outdoor activities to entertain visitors. Skagafjörður's landscape is heavenly with sloping mountains, a beautiful coastline and chunks of glacial ice dotting the fjord. Visit the area for farmstays, horse riding, angling, sailing and birdwatching.

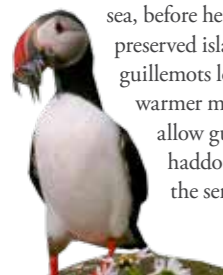


## Sailing in Skagafjörður

Haf og Land offers a number of sailing, angling, kayaking and birdwatching tours from Hofsós, in Skagafjörður, from May to the end of August. The sailing tour visits some of the most interesting spots in the North including the Bæjarklettur cliffs, where visitors can see magnificent basalt columns.



The tours also explore Þórðarhöfði, once a volcano, which rises 202 metres from the sea, before heading to Malmey, a well preserved island where puffins and guillemots love to nest during the warmer months. Sea angling tours allow guests to fish for cod, haddock, and catfish among the serene landscape.



**Haf og Land**  
Suðurbraut 15 • Hofsós 566  
+354 453 5537  
hafogland@gmail.com  
www.hafogland.is



## Discovering the North

Hóperðabílar Skagafjarðar specialises in transporting travellers to a variety of destinations around Iceland. The Skagafjörður-based company provides a range of vehicles ranging from vans to mini buses to full-sized coaches, with some vehicles providing wheelchair access. The experienced and friendly staff can pick up travellers at Keflavik International Airport and guide them through their dream holiday. The family-run business arranges tours around the island, whether it's sightseeing in Reykjavik, navigating the north, or exploring the west. The company was founded in 1999 and the founder has worked in professional transportation in Iceland since the 1970s.



**Hóperðabílar Skagafjarðar**  
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steinn@fjoi.net.is

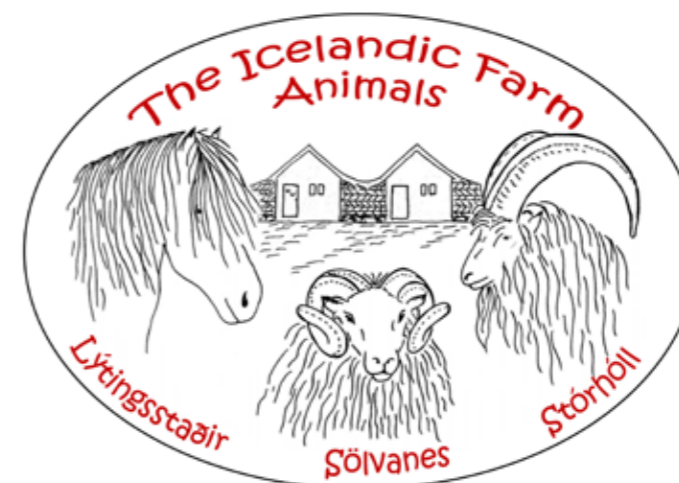


## Iceland Horse Tours

On a gorgeous stretch of land, Helluland Farm/Iceland Horse Tours offers comfortable accommodation and exciting horse riding tours all year round. A farmstay allows guests to go riding, get to know pigs, sheep and other animals on the farm and to just enjoy Icelandic farm life. The warm and accommodating owners offer horse riding tours ranging from a 1-hour ride through the mountainous landscape and the black sand beach up to longer tours and riding holidays with sightseeing for everybody.



**Helluland Farm/Iceland Horse Tours**  
Helluland • 551 Sauðárkrúki  
+354 847 8577  
www.icelandhorsetours.de  
info@icelandhorsetours.com



## Lovely Lýtingsstaðir Horse Farm

Lýtingsstaðir is an Icelandic-German family farmstay where the owners love to share their passion for Iceland and its wonderful horses with their guests. Lýtingsstaðir is a horse farm that is operated with love, soul and ambition. Travellers can go on long or short horse riding tours in scenic Skagafjörður and learn about the unique Icelandic horse breed during the 'Horses & Heritage' presentation. The 'Old Stable—Made from Turf' contains an exhibition that displays how horses were kept at farms in the old days. Accommodation is provided all year round in three cosy wooden cottages, which are perfect for families, couples or friends travelling together. Nearby are hiking trails, swimming pools, river rafting and bird watching across the amazing landscape.



**Lýtingsstaðir Horse Farm**  
560 Varmahlíð  
+354 453 8064, 893 3817  
www.lythorse.com  
lythorse@gmail.com



## Serene Sölvanes

Sölvanes offers a farmstay on a beautiful stretch of land. The welcoming and friendly owners run a traditional Icelandic sheep and horse farm and love to share their passion and knowledge about sheep and farming with their guests. The farmstay provides a perfect opportunity to get up close and personal with the animals. The hosts provide cosy accommodation in a separate guesthouse with single, double and family rooms. Meals where guests can dine with their hosts can be booked in advance. The food is locally sourced and the farm offers cooking facilities. There are several good hiking routes around Sölvanes, both within the farmland and up to Mælifellshnjúkur, one of Skagafjörður's iconic mountains.



**Sölvanes Farmholidays**  
560 Varmahlíð  
+354 453 8068  
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solvanes@gmail.com



## Splendid Stórhóll (Gallery Rúnalist)

On Stórhóll, Sigrún and her family run a farm where they are breeding the pretty but rare Icelandic settlement goats, keeping them, along with other farm animals, including ducks, hens, sheep and horses. Being part of the 'Beint frá býli' programme, the family sells meat and eggs straight from the farm, and Sigrún is happy to introduce guests to wool and sewing workshops. Right next to the farm, Sigrún runs 'Rúnalist', an art gallery that is home to beautiful handmade crafts created from natural materials, where she sells unique handbags, wallets, purses and everything her imagination allows her to create. Stop by the farm and pick up one of Sigrún's creations!



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# AKUREYRI HEART OF THE NORTH



The dozen inhabitants in 1786, clinging to the side of Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord, probably never imagined their brave struggle would ultimately result in a town of 18,000 people with all the services of a major city.

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

Take, for instance, winter activities like skiing. The family-friendly slopes are under 10 minutes from the airport and the hotels. Likewise the horse riding tours, boat trips, bird watching—to name a few—are all so close, you can almost touch them. You name it, it's



close-by. The weather, with its combination of crisp, dry snow and Northern Lights—at the peak of their cycle—makes a holiday here memorable.

### Cultural Centre of the North

When it comes to culture, Akureyri has it all: museums, art galleries, international



exhibitions, conference facilities, music venues, music of all genres, theatre and cinemas showing the latest films.

It has well over 20 restaurants, covering both Icelandic and international cuisine, with top chefs who create their own innovative cuisine. Cafés, each with their individual speciality abound, while local micro-

breweries and farms offering food tasting are a fascinating addition to the food scene.

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

### Sports of all kinds

Sport activities are very popular in the North and many sports are represented in this dynamic community.

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



### Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavik international and Reykjavik airports take just 40 min. Scheduled buses drive twice a day between Reykjavik and Akureyri. The trip from Reykjavik to Akureyri takes about 6 hours, although in the summer time you can choose a longer route over the highlands if you wish to turn your trip into a journey rich with sights and natural beauty.

The city bus service is free in town. Naturally, every common form of transport is available: car, bike, boat, horse, ATV, plane rentals. Every type of accommodation is also on hand, from 4-star hotels to camp sites. -ASF

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

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

### See the Sights

Akureyri is also a service base for many of the most important tourist destinations in North Iceland. From here, you can visit Mývatn, Dettifoss—the most powerful waterfall in Europe, the island of Hrísey, with its powerful healing energy and Grímsey, straddling the Arctic Circle, see volcanoes and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.

**Akureyrarstofa**  
Strandgata 12 • 600 Akureyri  
+354 450 1050  
info@visitakureyri.is  
www.visitakureyri.is





**G**rímsøy is a beautiful, wind-swept, secluded island, situated just 40km off the coast of North Iceland. The island is about 5 square kilometres in area and just 100 people live there. The inhabitants come from hardy stock, battling arctic temperatures and isolation. Tourists come to explore the tiny island, hike, birdwatch, and experience 24 hours of daylight in the height of the summer. Night does not reach Grímsøy until late July when the sun sets around midnight, only to rise a short time later.

#### Remote, Unspoiled Nature

Travellers marvel at the cliffs on the east side of the island, which, at their highest, tower to 100 metres. In the old days, the basalt cliffs served as a major source of food as locals collected eggs along the rifts. Today, the egg collection practice is safer and more modern, but the cliffs are a reminder of the past and the importance they played in feed the island's population. Their formations are also interesting and serve as a great



backdrop when photographing the birds. And birdwatchers are in for a treat, as the island is home to a diverse mix of seabirds.

#### Crossing the Arctic Circle

Grímsøy is the ideal place to witness the midnight sun. That's when the sun remains above the horizon for a full 24 hours during the summer solstice on 21<sup>st</sup> June. Grímsøy is one of the best places you can experience this phenomenon in Iceland: where the Arctic Circle crosses the country's northernmost point. Travellers love to walk over a symbolic bridge to cross the Arctic Circle, which can be found at 66°33'N, just

north of Grímsøy's airport terminal. Next to the bridge is a signpost, showing the distances to many well-known cities in the world, including London and New York. Tourists who make the pilgrimage receive proof of their trip in the form of a diploma when flying with Norlandair.

#### Convenient, Professional Service

Norlandair offers daily flights to Grímsøy from Akureyri, as well as flights to Þórshöfn, Vopnafjörður, and Constable Point in the east of Greenland, which services the town of Ittoqqortoormiit. Norlandair offers a range of aviation services for travellers who are looking for private air travel, charter flights, or scheduled flights to Greenland. The Norlandair team has decades of experience in arctic aviation and arctic travel, and is ready to accommodate travellers' needs. -JG

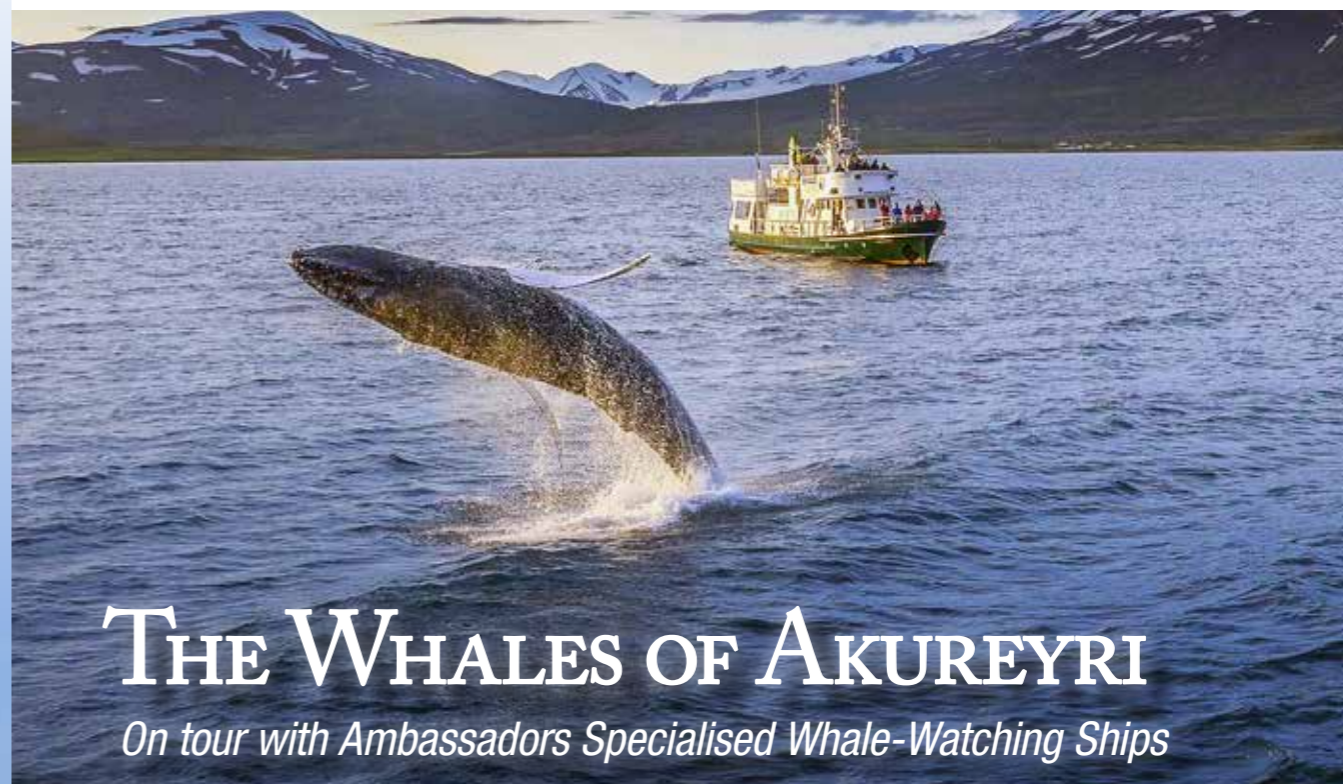


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www.norlandair.is




# FLY TO GRÍMSEY WITH NORLANDAIR

Explore the spectacular northern island with daily flights from Norlandair



## THE WHALES OF AKUREYRI

On tour with Ambassadors Specialised Whale-Watching Ships

**I**n their fourth year of scheduled tours, the Ambassadors whale-watching ships offer cruising through prime whale viewing areas in first class comfort on board. Departing daily, starting at 9:00 am, from Torfunefsbryggja harbour right in the heart of Akureyri - next to the Hof cultural house.

#### The Whales' Home

At the fringe of the Arctic Circle, Akureyri is an area of outstanding natural beauty and home to all the species of whales found around the country. Dramatic landscapes, rich history and the wealth of species that choose to make it their home should place it on the „bucket list” list of anybody with an interest in the natural world.

Eyjafjörður, particularly, is home to Humpback Whales—gigantic animals that love singing and slapping their fins and tails! It is beautiful to watch these magnificent creatures jump up out of the ocean! Additionally, Minke Whales, Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Blue Whales are seen in the fjord.

#### Sailing with the Ambassador Boats

As the name Ambassador refers to its function of connecting whales and humans,



it has great viewing facilities to do just that. Custom built for whale watching, the Ambassadors fast, stable and safe boats are led by professional guides that help to enrich their guests knowledge and understanding of the fjord's ecosystem, geology, history and folklore. Tours take roughly three hours, and being protected from winds and weather by the mountains, ensures that it's calmer than the open sea. Depending on the season there are number of departures per day.

#### Tour Fact Sheet and Reviews

- Different whale watching platforms.
- 360° panorama from top deck.
- Commentary through on board sound-system.

- Heated indoor cabin with toilet facilities.
- Comfortable cushioned seats, tables and ample space.
- Light snacks, sandwiches, coffee, beer and soft drinks available on board.

While Ambassador tours seem like the perfect day-tours, the reviews on their website are a confirmation of that. In general, the customers feelings are like this; *“It was very impressive. I really did not expect to see that many whales! I recommend this tour to everybody.”*

- NNH/ASF



**Ambassador**  
Torfunefsbryggja Harbour • 600 Akureyri  
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✉ info@ambassador.is  
www.ambassador.is







# THE KLONDIKE OF THE ATLANTIC

*Siglufjörður remembers its Golden Age*

**S**iglufjörður is a small fishing town on the north coast of Iceland, about an hour's drive from Akureyri (sometimes referred to as the Capital of North Iceland). The town, which is a part of the Fjallabyggð municipality, is flanked by rugged mountains and blessed with a history that is quite literally rich. The town was once nicknamed the Klondike of the Atlantic—a reference to the famous gold producing region in Alaska. The gold in this case was an abundance of 'the silver of the sea', herring, which gave the town its second nickname: The Herring Town. Today Siglufjörður is a haven for hiking, sailing, fishing, skiing and other activities. You will also find a nice swimming pool there and a 9 hole golf course.

## Golden Age of Herring

The golden age of herring lasted just over 100 years, from 1867 to 1968. Icelanders generally refer to this era as the 'herring fairy tale'. The country was still impoverished and essentially an undeveloped Danish colony at the time, but the resulting economic boom helped to turn Iceland into a developed country—that ultimately led to its independence.

Initially, the boom was mostly confined to several towns in the north of the country, but later it also moved to towns in the eastern fjords. At times, the export of herring accounted for up to half of the country's total export income.

Siglufjörður was at the forefront of this economic boom, and often the herring exports from this one town alone provided more than 20% of the country's total export income.

As one would expect, given any kind of gold rush, the town blossomed and grew rapidly, fostering a colourful culture that is still remembered and honoured today.

## The Herring Era Museum

Siglufjörður's ambitious Herring Era Museum is the largest industrial and marine museum in Iceland. It has five exhibition buildings, totalling 2,500 square metres, and it is most likely the only one of its kind in the world.

The town itself is a piece of history and the museum has essentially endeavoured to rebuild a part of the old town as it was during its heyday, complete with herring boats, a herring port, boatyard, and a herring factory. In addition, it puts on live re-enactments. It

won Iceland's Museum Award in 2000, and the Micheletti Award in 2004 as the best new industrial museum in Europe.

The museum is open daily from June to September. Last summer the museum broke its attendance record in June, with 4,000 visitors—thanks, in part, to big cruise ships that visited the fjord.

Saturday admissions in July include a 'Salting Show' at 3pm, where 'Herring girls' re-enact the gutting and packing of herring into barrels, in the way it was done in the old days. Traditional songs and dances are also performed and guests are invited to join in.



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 safn@sild.is  
 www.sild.is

## SKAGASTRÖND

# WHERE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE MEET

**O**ne might think that life in a small remote fishing town would result in a reserved population wary of outsider influence. This is not the case in the town of Skagaströnd in the north-west of Iceland, where international artists mingle freely with local fishermen, creating a unique atmosphere where the past meets the present without judgment.



## Fish Is Life

Like many Icelandic towns, Skagaströnd's history is centered around fishing, which is very much a part of Skagaströnd's identity today. The harbour is usually bustling with life, with boats coming and going, people and forklifts moving about trying to get the fish from the boats and to the stores as quickly and securely as possible. Just watching the harbour life is an activity in itself, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike—just be careful not to get in the way. There is also a pleasant coffee shop, Kaffi Bjarmanes, in a renovated old house right by the seaside just across from the harbour, giving an excellent view of the harbour life, the ocean and the ever-watchful seabirds around.

## What Does the Future Bring?

The first documented settler in Skagaströnd was a woman named Þórdís who resided there in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century with substantial influence in her community. She was known to be a spirited and fierce woman, with the gift of prophecy, who made no compromises when it came to dealing with powerful men at the time and is noted as such in several of the old Icelandic Sagas. Although the people of her time might have been glad to be rid of her, present day inhabitants of Skagaströnd celebrate her legacy

and have opened a museum in her honour. Visitors are taken through her fascinating life with various exhibitions and artifacts—as well as given the chance to have a prophecy given about them.

Another museum can be found in a charming tiny old house, named Árnas, which gives an impression of daily life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Art and Fish

You might not think that modern day artists and small town fishermen would have much in common, but as it turns out, they have co-existed in Skagaströnd with great success for several years now. The Nes Artist Residency was opened in 2008 and has resulted in a colourful atmosphere where past and present traditions find common ground. The mayor of Skagaströnd, Magnús B. Jónsson, says the success of the artist residency is a testament to the positivity and open-mindedness of the people of Skagaströnd. "We have all types of people coming here from all over the world and staying with us for extended periods of time working on their craft and the fact that it has gone seamlessly really says something about our community." Magnús says

that the advent of the Nes Artist Residency has livened up the town and the creative atmosphere has proven to be quite contagious. "Now it is not at all uncommon to have all sorts of happenings and events that would have seemed strange before, but today are considered part of everyday life here in Skagaströnd." The town itself is also decorated with creative art. You'll find a very striking exhibition centered on the old Nordic gods made from scrap metal, carefully selected to represent each one. Loki, the god of mischief and deception, is for example made from an old manure spreader and Odinn, the highest god of all, is made from scraps from a power station. The Sunwatch is also a quite striking piece, made from four basalt columns that guide sunrays according to an old Icelandic time-telling tradition.

## Plenty to Do

A popular activity is hiking to the top of the Spákonufell mountain or along the sea cliffs at Spákonufellshöfði, which is where Þórdís lived. Some even claim that her face can be seen, petrified in the mountain.

Detailed trail descriptions and maps are available in town. You'll find a traditional Icelandic swimming pool, with the obligatory relaxing hot pot, a nine-hole golf course and Borgin, a restaurant in a unique log house with a maritime theme.

- DT/ASF

**Skagaströnd Municipality**  
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 +354 455 2700  
 skagastrond@skagastrond.is  
 www.skagastrond.is







**K**átur - Ferðafákar is located a short distance from Akureyri, the capital of the North. We offer one- to two-hour guided riding tours every day for riders of all abilities. For larger groups, we adjust our schedule to meet your needs. In addition, evening rides are offered nightly from 1st June to 15th August. Our horses are well-trained and cared for.



An optional pickup and drop-off service at your hotel. Enjoy an unforgettable ride along the banks of the beautiful



Eyjafjarðará river, with a magnificent view of the mountains and Eyjafjörður fjord. -ASF

**Kátur - Ferðafákar**  
 Kaupvangsbakkar - 601 Akureyri  
 +354 695-7218  
 ferdafakar@gmail.com  
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## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

*Iceland on Horseback with Pólar Hestar of North Iceland*

One of Iceland's most iconic symbols can be found in its own special breed of horse, known for its friendly nature and its two extra gaits. The hardy and sure-footed Icelandic horse is an excellent introduction to the world of riding, and what better way to experience Iceland than from the back of one of these magnificent creatures that have been part of the Icelandic landscape for over a thousand years.

Now you can get a feel for the real Iceland with Pólar Hestar Tours of North Iceland who offer a range of riding tours that appeal to all levels of ability, from the absolute beginner all the way to the most seasoned rider. The tours can be arranged for from 1 to 4 hour periods.

Short Duration Tours are perfect for beginners or those with a little riding experience. These reasonably priced tours run from just one hour to two hours up to half-day tours of 4 hours and are also available in winter, weather permitting. This is a wonderful introduction to the Icelandic horse and great fun for both adults and children.



For intermediate riders there are many options to choose from, including the popular 'Between the Fjord and the Valley of the Elves Tour'. This 6-day, 5-night tour takes you through lovely landscapes, with breathtaking views, delightful deep green valleys with rushing brooks and along a fascinating scenic coastline.

### Ring Around the Midnight Sun

The fragrance of early spring, bright nights and the awakening nature are characteristics of this tour, which consists of several rides and sightseeing by bus. You will experience the days around the midnight sun visiting the famous

turf houses of Laufás, the whales in Eyjafjörður fjord and the amazing area around the breathtaking Lake Mývatn. A Midnight Ride, as a highlight of the week at this special time of year, when the sun hardly sets, is included.

### Fascinating North Iceland Tour

Take part in this exhilarating 8-day, 7-night tour—a wonderful opportunity to experience the diversity of Iceland's mesmerising nature.

The tour's itinerary includes some of North Iceland's well known waterfalls as well as Europe's most active volcanic area. You can witness the breathtaking Highlands, once the domain of outlaws, elves and trolls, and journey over ancient lava fields in this unforgettable tour that is suitable for more experienced riders.

-ASF/EMV

*Pólar Hestar Tours is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from around the world for over 30 years.*

**Pólar Hestar**  
 Gryttubakki II - 601 Akureyri  
 +354 463 3179  
 polarhestar@polarhestar.is  
 www.polarhestar.is





# SPEND AN AFTERNOON AT KAFFI KÚ

The coffeehouse near Akureyri is a fun outing for families and tourists

Kaffi kú is one of the most unique and enjoyable coffeehouse experiences you can have in Iceland. The coffeehouse, which is located just 10km south of Akureyri, is situated on the top floor of a cowshed. Guests can enjoy coffee, drinks and snacks while watching the cows getting milked, or enjoying the view over the fjord. The cowshed is separated from the coffeehouse by glass. There are two seating areas: one is located in the front hall, with seats for 30 people and a small play area for children. The other area overlooks the cowshed, separated by the glass, with seats for a further 30 people.

## Delicious Snacks

Kaffi kú was founded in 2011 by locals Einar Örn and Sesselja Ingibjörg Barðdal Reynisdóttir and is enjoyed by Icelanders and tourists alike. On the menu are Belgian and Icelandic waffles, pancakes, tasty baked pastries, milkshakes, and homemade soup with freshly baked bread. All the milk used in the drinks and food comes directly from the 120 cows onsite.



## Advanced Technology

Kaffi kú's operations are based in the largest and most technologically advanced barn in Iceland. In addition to seeing the animals, guests can also monitor all the devices that are used in the cowshed, where automated machines do all the hard work. It's a fascinating process and it's interesting to get a behind-the-scenes view.

## Fun Experience

Those who are interested can enter the cowshed, pat the calves and observe the milking. In addition, guests can enjoy meeting the local people working in the barn. For instance, the owner's father is the farmer



and other locals love to come and visit. The owners also process and sell beef straight from the farm. Customers can pick up fresh or frozen hamburgers, tenderloin, rib eye, fillets and more.

Swing by Kaffi kú the next time you're up north! The coffeehouse is a lovely little spot to have a truly unique experience in Iceland. The owners are planning to expand the coffeehouse and make it larger to accommodate the growing interest from tourists. More travellers to Akureyri are stopping by Kaffi kú to have a great snack and meet some Icelandic cows. From 1<sup>st</sup> June, Kaffi kú will be open daily from 10:00-18:00.



**Kaffi kú**  
Garður farm - Akureyri  
+354 867 3826  
nauf@naustakjot.is  
www.kaffiku.is



# 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 makes trips in 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 a 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, 1,100 metres (3,609ft.) above sea level, when conditions are good.

## Information about tours in 2016:

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

- Price: 140 EUR
- The tours are scheduled every day from: 22 June - 7 September
- 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.

It's important to bring warm clothes



and good shoes and to bear in mind that the weather can change suddenly – especially in the highlands. Askja is also 1,100 metres (3,609ft.) above sea level.



**Mývatn Tours**  
Arnarnesi • 660 Mývatn  
+354 464 1920  
askjatours@mivatntours.is  
www.mivatntours.is



# HÓTEL HÚNI

Hótel Húni offers 28 bright and cosy double and single rooms, all newly renovated with a beautiful nature view. Every room has a wash station. In the halls you will find bathrooms and showers just outside your bedroom door. We supply slippers and robes to all our guests so you can walk the halls comfortably. Additionally four of our double rooms will have private bathrooms. Hótel Húni offer a warm and calming bathing experience at our beautiful swimming pool, located right outside our window. Camping is also an option, with great facilities, just outside the hotel. And finally, all our guests can enjoy an amazing dinner buffet every night, until the 20 th of August.



HÚNAVALLASKÓLI | 541 BLÖNDUÓS ICELAND | TEL. +354 456 4500 +354 691 2207 | INFO@HOTELHUNI.COM



# STUNNING ÞÓRSHÖFN



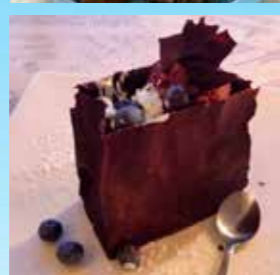
Visit this northern village for outdoor activities and a terrific meal at Bárán Restaurant

Þórshöfn is a charming fishing village on the coast of the Langanes Peninsula, a beautiful slice of northeast Iceland. Travellers love to visit the village for its remoteness. Þórshöfn is as far as you can get from Keflavik International Airport—so no crowds of tourists—just nature, rich birdlife and a variety of outdoor activities.

Langanes is a 40km long, narrow peninsula with a sloping coastal landscape with steep sea cliffs that is ideal for birdwatching and photography. Here, you are likely to see puffins, gannets and terns.

Bárán Restaurant, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, is one of the best restaurants in the north. The cosy restaurant has a warm, friendly atmosphere and focuses on fresh, local ingredients, emphasising fish and shellfish from local fishermen. Diners can also enjoy soups, salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the harbour that's an ideal spot to enjoy a meal and a beer. In fact, Bárán has an impressive beer menu, with more than 17 beers from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Bárán Restaurant's owners operate kayaking tours in Þórshöfn and Langanes, as well as to Skálar and Fontur. Many different sea birds, seals and sometimes,



whales can be seen while sailing the crystal clear water from May to August. It's possible to fish during the tour and the restaurant can prepare your catch to your liking. Put Þórshöfn on your itinerary. -JG

**Bárán restaurant**  
 Eyravegur 3 • 680 Þórshöfn  
 +354 468 1250  
 knaveitingar@gmail.com  
 www.baranrestaurant.is



Réttarfoss (Waterfall) in the glacial river Jökulsá á Fjöllum - North-East Highlands of Iceland

## YOUR NEW FRIENDS IN ICELAND

*Riding Iceland offers some of the best horse-riding tours in the country.*



Icelandic horses have fans around the world who admire their stocky frame, silky mane and thick coats. These horses are built to cross the rugged highlands, swim a glacial river and run over vast lava fields.

Riding Iceland is a small family business that offers multi-day horse-riding tours around the island, allowing travellers to get up close and personal with beautiful

Icelandic horses as they traverse the unique landscape. Tours are planned and guided by the company owners, operators and their families, welcoming travellers to be part of the close-knit community of horse-riding friends in Iceland. They have made it their personal objective to invite guests to follow the old Icelandic tradition of trail riding, preserving an important aspect of Icelandic culture.

Riding Iceland has many action-packed tours available ranging from a five-day ride around Vatnajökull to seven days exploring the Reykjanes Peninsula. Other tours include riding along the Diamond Circle, the highlands, and the King's Road. On a Riding Iceland tour, travellers enjoy horses that have been carefully selected and specially trained for the purpose of a highland tour. They are in good shape, have high spirits and have the necessary endurance to take you safely through the wilderness, and just as the tour guides, they are always happy to make new friends. -JG

**Riding Iceland**  
 Saltvík • 641 Húsavík  
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 bjarnipall@riding-iceland.com



# RESEARCHING ICELAND'S PUFFINS

*Náttúrustofa Suðurlands studies Iceland's puffin population, and reports dire findings*

**B**irdwatchers are delighted when they visit Iceland, as there are more than 300 species of birds that can be seen around the island. Iceland serves as a stopover for birds migrating between North America and Europe. Popular bird species are Gyrfalcons, Great Northern Divers, Harlequins, and Barrows Goldeneyes.

However, the birds that have become synonymous with Iceland are the adorable puffins, with their black and white bodies, bright orange feet and colourful red, blue and orange beaks. Puffins are remarkable swimmers and divers, able to stay underwater for over 2 minutes and surface with many small fish in their beaks. While exceptional in water, puffins are known for their uneven landings on land, which is part of their charm. It's possible to see puffins during the summer in many areas including the Westman Islands, Grimsey, the Látrabjarg cliffs in the Westfjords, Hafnarhólmi in Borgarfjörður Eystri, and Papey.

About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain, according to Erpur Snær Hansen, the Director of Ecological Research at Náttúrustofa Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands was founded in 1996 and has a team of scientists



conducting research on environmental and wildlife issues. Erpur has been investigating the puffin population of the Westman Islands since 2007 and has some startling data regarding Iceland's puffins.

If winter surface sea temperatures remain at current levels or higher, Erpur says, then much of the puffin population of south and west Iceland will disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. "We go around Iceland twice a summer to measure chick production," says Erpur. "We also study their diet and environment."

Iceland's puffin population has been struggling largely due to lack of food.

"They predominantly eat two species of fish around Iceland—capelin and sand eel," says

Erpur. "The sand eel population collapsed in 2003-2005 and has not recovered yet, and we believe that is a real problem." The main hypothesis the agency is working on is that warmer winter ocean temperatures are lowering young sand eels' survival as they exhaust their wintering energy reserves prior to the spring food appearance. The spring bloom has also been greatly delayed over the same time period. Lack of fat fish has caused famine for some colonies of Iceland's puffins.

The impact is clear. Adult puffins must forage farther and come back with fewer fish for their young. Researchers are seeing puffin chicks starve, nests are abandoned, and fewer adult birds are breeding.



*About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years, at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain. Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).*



"This has occurred before," says Erpur, explaining that the population dynamics are linked to a periodic warming cycle called the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO). Indeed, waters surrounding Iceland warmed for about 35 years, and then cooled off for another 35 years, and puffin populations have correspondingly dropped, then recovered. However, it appears to be different now.

Ocean temperatures have now climbed as much as two degrees since the last cold period, but similar to the last warm period (1920-1964). Now the spring bloom is very late but it's timing in the last warm period is unknown.

The puffin chicks

are feeling the impact. Even when the current warming cycle ends, around 2030, it won't perhaps be cool enough, depending on the effects of global warming. "The warming is definitely felt in Iceland," he says. "It makes things happen fast, and the birds are suffering."

Because of the declining puffin population, the government should consider some changes, says Erpur. "The hunting is unsustainable," he says. "We need to rethink our management system and base it on scientific measurements and on being sustainable, similar to the fishing industry here. Something needs to be done."

Puffins impact tourism as well, and that's something the government need to consider, says Erpur. "Many people come from all over the world to see Iceland's puffins during the summer months," he says. "It's a big part of business when you think of whale and puffin tours. Puffins are worth more money to the tourist industry alive rather than dead." And that goes for restaurants in Iceland. "Seeing puffin on the menu at some restaurants is both embarrassing and sad," he says.

"These birds are important and we're losing them. There needs to be a shift in thinking to help preserve puffins." An easy and responsible solution for the government would be to ban the trade of game.







# EAST *Iceland*

**T**iny, 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, enables 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.



#EASTICELAND



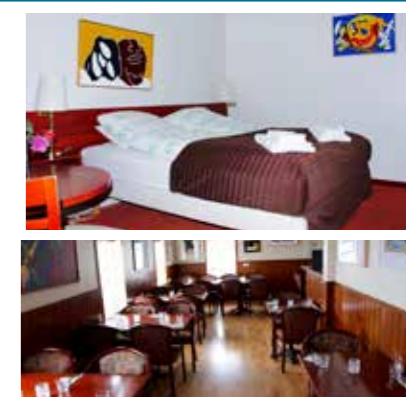
## HOTEL CAPITANO

*Small, cosy resort deep in East-Iceland*

**H**otel Capitano is a small, cosy resort deep into East-Iceland. It is located by the seaside, in a village called Neskaupstaður. They offer well-equipped rooms with or without breakfast. Every room has private facility, flat-screen TV and free Internet access.



On the first floor of the hotel is a bar, a lounge and a restaurant offering three-course meals along with lighter dishes such as pasta, pizzas, hamburgers and more. Breakfast is served in the restaurant. The centre of Neskaupstaður is in a walking distance from the resort,



where museums, a swimming pool, restaurants and more can be found. The Oddsskarð skiing area is 10km away from hotel Capitano.

The village is surrounded by mountains where are to find several hiking trails. The ocean is only 5 feet away and the Northern Lights are a common sight during wintertime.

*Please feel free to contact them.*

**Hotel Capitano**  
 Hafnarbraut 50, 740 Neskaupstað  
 +354 477-1800  
 info@fjardarhotel.is  
 www.facebook.com/hotelcapitano





# EAST ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

*Where elegant displays of old times please the eye*

The East Iceland Heritage Museum (Minjasafn Austurlands) in Egilsstaðir vibrantly displays objects from the old rural society where self-sufficiency for every household was essential to survival. Among what is showcased is a 'baðstofa' (communal living/sleeping room), that was part of an actual Icelandic turf house that was inhabited by a family until 1964. Visitors are encouraged to step in to the "baðstofa" and experience the nostalgic feel of former centuries.

However, the museum's main pride is the permanent reindeer exhibition.

Somewhat of a mystical creature, the Icelandic reindeer only lives in rural East Iceland, giving the area a sense of uniqueness. Throughout the years, the animals wild nature has prohibited people the opportunity to enjoy their presence, but as the number of animals increases each year, that has changed somewhat. Today

the wild reindeers live only in East Iceland, mostly at higher elevations in summer but seek lower grassland, closer to the coast in winter.

The Heritage Museum guides visitors through the history of the reindeer settlement in Iceland, their behavioral characteristics and habits, reindeer hunting and hunting regulations and, in short, everything you might find interesting about reindeers. This is a unique opportunity to learn in depth about these fascinating animals, where elegantly presented tidbits, footage and items made from reindeer products truly breathe life into the exhibition.

The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Helgi Valtýsson, writer, and Eðvarður Sigurgeirsson, photographer/filmmaker, who, in their journeys from 1939 to 1944 followed reindeer tracks in order

to open the eyes of Icelanders regarding the reindeer's dignity and struggle for life. Eðvarður's film, "In Reindeer Territory", is available for viewing at the exhibition. Visitors are also invited to watch a new documentary about Icelandic reindeer and a short animated film based on a section of the Independent People by Halldór Laxness, a twentieth-century Icelandic writer and a Nobel Prize winner. -SP

**Admission: Adults (18+) 1,000 ISK**  
**Opening hours: 1 June to 31 August:**  
**Mon—Friday 11:30-19:00.**  
**Sat—Sunday 10:30-18:00.**  
**Winter: Thu—Friday: 11:00-16:00**

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## GUARDED BY A FIREY DRAGON

*The Otherworldly Landscape of Vopnafjörður*

Imagine discovering a new land in the North in medieval days, only to be met by its protector—a mighty flying dragon. This was what greeted a Nordic seafarer according to the Old Norse saga of the kings, *Heimskringla*.

Today, Vopnafjörður stands as a spectacular example of the grand, harsh, but beautiful Icelandic landscape. First settled by Viking seafarers 1,100 years ago, its name means 'Weapon Fjord', coming from a settler called Eyvindur vopni. It also boasts its own saga, *Vopnafirðinga saga*, describing a dispute between rival local chieftains.

The dragon is Vopnafjörður's symbol and one of the four 'landvættir'—guardians of Iceland, pictured on Iceland's coat of arms.

The wide sandy coastline hosts a myriad of marine life forms and the magnificent cliffs and rocky islets are superb. They culminate

in natural wonders such as Skjölfjörur, accessed by driving the old highway east of the village, before it becomes the high pass of Hellisheiði between Fljótsdalshérað and Vopnafjörður, providing a spectacular view.

Vopnafjörður village, picturesque with its colourful old wooden houses, surrounded by rocky cliffs and islets, lies on the small Kolbeinstangi peninsula. It was one of Iceland's major commercial harbours in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the last half century, the fishing industry grew considerably and is the largest business sector in the area today.

### Remembering the past

The Kaupvangur museum is located in a large old wooden house down by the harbour. It remembers the thousands of emigrants who fled the region to America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

following the devastating Askja volcanic eruption of 1875. It also commemorates brothers Jón Múli Árnason and Jónas Árnason, who wrote several jazzy musicals in the fifties and sixties, which have become classics of Icelandic popular culture. The historical Bustarfell farm is a regional museum where history comes alive through storytelling and workshops each summer. The same family lived here in a large turf farmhouse from 1532 until 1966. Only a few such farmhouses are preserved today. A Literary inspiration One of Iceland's most renowned novels, 'Independent People', by the Nobel Laureate Halldór Laxness, was greatly influenced by the struggle of poor farmers in the countryside surrounding Vopnafjörður. The area is the childhood home of another great figure of 20<sup>th</sup> century Icelandic literature, Gunnar Gunnarsson, who grew up on Ljósstaðir. This famous writer wrote about the country life of Iceland, influenced by the people, nature and culture of Vopnafjörður. Two great salmon rivers flow through the untouched landscape surrounding Vopnafjörður Bay. A cosy geothermal swimming pool with a nice view over the river sits on the banks the Selá. -NNH/ASF



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# 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 waterfalls of Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanos like Hekla—the 'Gateway to Hell', Lakagígur, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; fantasy sites like Þórsmörk and 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 Eyrbakki. 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, fishing 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.



#SOUTHICELAND

# THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

*Hotel Borealis, a Countryside Hotel with Style and Soul*



While travelling in Iceland during autumn, the weather and the sun's changing light create a unique atmosphere in the countryside. Famous poet Rilke found appropriate words for this time of contemplation and retreat: "Lay your shadows upon the sundials, and o'er the isles allow your winds to vent".

### Enjoying Northern Lights

As darkness returns in autumn, the Northern Lights start illuminating the night skies, and as Hotel Borealis is situated far away from light pollution, the darkness makes them shine even brighter. And there is nothing like soaking in the hotel's hot tub after an exciting day as the Northern Lights dance above you!

### In Nature's Heart

Hotel Borealis, just a few kilometres from the charming town of Selfoss, offers the serene silence of an elegant countryside retreat while activities and bustling life are on hand a short distance away. The welcomingly neat white houses have been tastefully furnished by blending last century's Icelandic antiques with modern style and prove to be so cosy you might never want to leave!



Offering 20 comfortable rooms with bathrooms, cosy bungalows for families and a small villa, Hotel Borealis is able to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

The hotel has a special room for conferences and events and 'Hlaðan', a renovated barn that is a perfect location for a

romantic Icelandic country wedding. Hotel Borealis also serves well as a calm retreat for writing a book or contemplating the magic of the Icelandic changing light. When the autumn sun pours out her golden beams on the heather and red leaves, nearby Þingvellir National Park turns into an enchanted island. Cuddle up in a traditional wool sweater and take a stroll through the famous former site of Iceland's parliament, discover Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir on a day trip, try golfing on the nearby course or fishing in Lake Úlfjótuvatn. Then, with daylight slowly fading, return to Hotel Borealis for a marvellous dinner, served on antique tables in the spirit of good, old Icelandic hospitality. The chef prides himself on only using local products such as highland lamb, arctic char from Lake Þingvallavatn and vegetables grown in the area's greenhouses for his delicious meals. -DT



**Hotel Borealis**  
Brúarholt II Grímsnes • 801 Selfoss  
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**T**ourists enjoy different travel styles, and an organised tour doesn't work for everyone. Reykjavik Excursions' 'Iceland on Your Own' programme, offers bus passports and tour packages that allow travellers freedom to explore, while transportation is taken care of.

In the summer, Iceland On Your Own offers Bus Routes and Bus Passports. Bus Routes offer the ultimate flexibility and are ideal for adventurous, independent travellers. Visitors can buy tickets online for various bus route options. For instance, you can buy individual bus tickets online to travel between any destination available. As an example, travellers can buy tickets along one particular route, or between routes, according to their preference. Bus Passports range from 12,500 ISK to 91,500 ISK and are available from June to September.

#### **Pórsmörk on Your Own**

The Pórsmörk region offers spectacular views of the dramatic landscape, ranging from towering mountains to scores of glacial streams and kilometres of black sand. Pórsmörk, which means 'The Woods of Thor', is a mountain ridge in the south that was named after the Norse god, Thor. The name refers to the mountain ridge standing between the Krossá, Pröngá and Markarfljót rivers. In the valley, the river Krossá flows between the mountains, but the valley is closed by the Mýrdalsjökull glacier. The area is known to have a warmer climate than the rest of south Iceland and visitors will see a lot of plant life including moss, lichens, fern and birch wood.

Pórsmörk is a beautiful Nature Reserve and is a 'must see' during a stay in Iceland. It's a hiker's paradise as the area offers good access to endless hiking trails in a striking volcanic landscape, with views over three glaciers; Eyjafjallajökull, Mýrdalsjökull and Tindfjallajökull. For this reason, Pórsmörk is very popular among hikers. Travellers will see waterfalls, jagged peaks and vast, gorgeous nature.

#### **Special Mountain Bus**

Getting to Pórsmörk is no easy feat. It's actually part of the adventure as a stretch of the journey is driven in a specially equipped mountain bus that takes travellers into the rugged wilderness, safely crossing fast-



flowing glacial rivers and rough, rock-strewn roads. The bus ride is half the fun as you get to traverse terrain that is unthinkable with rental cars.

Upon arrival in Pórsmörk, the bus stops at the Volcano Huts in Húsadalur, where there is a cosy restaurant and an information centre that provides details of the different hiking trails available in the area. From here, travellers can easily access the trails and spend the day walking along marked routes in the beautiful volcanic Pórsmörk landscape.

For those who are not avid hikers and are looking for a bit of relaxation, there are plenty of sights close to the bus stop in Húsadalur. You can take a soak the sauna and small pool before heading back to the bus at 16:00. The day trip has everything. Beautiful scenery, river crossings and mountain roads, and unrivalled nature in one of the most beautiful spots in Iceland.

#### **The Laugavegurinn Trail**

Many travellers first hear of Pórsmörk when reading about the Laugavegurinn Trail,

a wildly popular 55-kilometre four-day hike that attracts backpackers and hikers from around the world. For those who are coming to Iceland to hike just one trail, this is the one to do. Its popularity stems from the variety of landscapes experienced along the way. During the day, hikers are treated to bubbling hot springs, vast glaciers, and

beautiful mountains, stunning waterfalls and roaring rivers. At night, they can rest their heads in mountain huts that are placed strategically along the trail.

The 'Pórsmörk On Your Own' ticket option departs Reykjavik at 8:00 and returns at 19:35. Pickup and drop off to Reykjavik hotels are possible. Among the

bus passports available are the 'Hiking On Your Own' passport that serves as an open ticket to Reykjavik to one of many hiking destinations and then back at your leisure. The 'Highlights', 'Beautiful South' and 'Combo' passports provide travellers the use of the 'Iceland On Your Own' bus system as often as they like during a fixed period of time, while the 'Circle', 'Beautiful South Circle' and 'Highland Circle' passports are valid for pre-defined circles along all the most interesting sights of Iceland.

The 'Iceland On Your Own' network is a perfect option for those who want to make their Iceland holiday truly individual and special. -JG

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# IN THE SHADOW OF THE GIANTESS



## South East Iceland's Vatnajökull Region

The Vatnajökull region is a narrow stretch of land that lies just below Vatnajökull Glacier, spanning from Lómagnúpur in the west, to Hvalnes on its eastern border. From the highest peaks of Hvannadalshnúkur, down to the expansive glacial outwash plains that characterize the area, the region embraces over 200km of Iceland's main ring road.

Presiding serenely over the area, Vatnajökull Glacier rises to just over 2,000 metres and conceals a number of very active volcanoes under her massive ice cap. Formed as a result of the relentless grinding and crushing of everything in its path, many scenic wonders can be found at the very edges of the glacier. Glistening glacial lagoons, thundering rivers and waterfalls as well as numerous ice caves are just some of the natural gems that can be found within the borders of the region.

### Iconic glacial lagoons

The popular Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon has certainly been a popular destination in recent years, and now its sister, Fjallsárlón,

is set to join in the limelight. The beautiful lagoon, which lies hidden just 10km west of Jökulsárlón, now hosts a team of well-seasoned locals offering zodiac boat rides on its pristine waters.

### Into an ice-blue world

Should you have your heart set on visiting an ice cave, look no further. These crystal-ice-blue caves are only open from November to March for obvious reasons and several local companies run by experienced teams of caving experts offer tours into this ever-changing world of subglacial speleology.

### Kayaking for everyone

It's so relaxing taking a kayak out on the peaceful waters of Heinaberg Lagoon in the heart of the Vatnajökull region. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone from complete beginners to seasoned kayakers to experience the beauty of this very special corner of Iceland.



Of course, there are just oodles of other activities as well—take a snowmobile, jeep or hiking tour on the glacier, observe puffins at Ingólfshöfði, or get a bird's eye view over the glacier on a sightseeing flight, and don't forget the not-to-be-missed annual fireworks extravaganza at Jökulsárlón in late August.

For more in-depth information about the Vatnajökull region, check out their website listed below. -EMV

**The Vatnajökull Region**

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# DINE IN THE LANGOUSTINE CAPITAL

*Humarhöfnin satisfies the hunger for whole langoustine in Höfn*

Iceland is known for some of the finest fresh fish in the world and a large share of the country's catch is landed at Höfn í Hornafirði, on the south-east coast. Höfn (which sounds like 'Hup' to our ears and means harbour) is also known as the langoustine capital of Iceland, where several thousand visitors gather in the town for the annual Humarhátíð (Langoustine) Festival, to be held in June.

You would expect the langoustine capital of Iceland to have a fine-dining restaurant that can do justice to the lovely little crustacean. The Humarhöfnin sea-food restaurant, which has been a big success since it was opened over 7 years ago by Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, her brother Ari Þorsteinsson and their spouses, has definitely earned that accolade.

### A menu to entice any connoisseur

A favourite with tourists from the Mediterranean countries, Humarhöfnin was the first restaurant in Iceland to serve whole langoustine, though it has now become



popular in the town. The concept is still new in Iceland, so each diner who orders langoustine receives illustrated instructions on the finer points of using the langoustine cracker and fork that come with the dish.

The menu was created and developed by the French chef Jacques DuPont and his many dishes such as the beautifully presented 'Mix of Whole Langoustine and Tails' and the famous 'Black Magic Sauce' have been very successful. Paired with one of Humarhöfnin's specially selected wines, you are in line for an



absolute feast. Also on the menu, the arctic char is a delight. The crème brûlée, made from local eggs and imported Madagascar vanilla will have you swooning and you might want or need to order a double portion.

The casual, bright and lively décor fits Humarhöfnin's harbour location and the friendly wait staff will be happy to point out the very boat that brought in the day's catch, moored at the docks just a short distance away. The building itself was originally the town co-op before it was totally renovated and transformed into this beautiful restaurant. There is an exhibit on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor which portrays the history of the house.

If you are a langoustine aficionado, you can fly, drive or take a bus to Höfn where you will find your seafood haven awaiting you. -EMV

**Humarhöfnin**

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## 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 one hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

### 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 250m (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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# HELLISHÓLAR COTTAGES, GUESTHOUSE AND HOTEL A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



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

The sprawling Hellishólar property is located 17 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótislíð, a picturesque farming district sheltered by three glaciers: Mýrdalsjökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull.

### Cosy Cottages

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólar's 25 popular, fully-furnished cottages? Each cottage can sleep from 3 to 6 people and has a small kitchen for making your own meals. If you prefer, you can also have your meals in the on-site restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### So Many Choices!

At Hellishólar there is also a guesthouse and a brand new hotel called 'Hotel Eyjafjallajökull' with 18 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, all with ensuite bathroom.

### A Glorious View of Nature

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



pollution makes Hellishólar an ideal location for Northern Lights viewing.

In summer, the long days bring optimum opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólar—trout fishing on the lake, salmon fishing from the river that runs through the property and enjoying a round of golf on the

18 hole golf course. Hellishólar is the perfect base from which to explore South Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

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## ÖLFUS' CHARMING DALAKAFFI

*Dalakaffi is a lovely local café in Hveragerði*

Visitors travel to Ölfusdalur for its gorgeous nature—beautiful black sand beaches, well maintained hiking trails and charming



Magnea Jónasdóttir

towns and villages. It's easy to fall in love with the remoteness and beauty of this geothermal region, just a half-hour drive from Reykjavik. Tucked away in the scenic Ölfusdalur valley, is a welcoming café that serves delicious food with friendly service.

Dalakaffi offers home-made soups, freshly baked cakes and pastries, tasty coffee, drinks, and hot cocoa,



topped with fresh whipped cream. The cosy café is a favourite among locals and tourists, and many guests stop in after a morning of hiking the local trails or horse riding, exploring the geothermal park or bathing in the naturally warm river in Reykjadalur.



### Accommodating Host

Magnea Jónasdóttir is the owner of Dalakaffi and a resident of the Ölfusdalur valley, where she lives on a farm with her family. As a conservationist, Magnea knows the area well, and loves it. She opened Dalakaffi to enhance the visitors' experience of the region and to give travellers and locals a place to meet and enjoy the area. —JG

**Dalakaffi**  
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# EAT FROM EIGHT TILL LATE

*Eyrarbakki's Rauða Húsið adds a Café and Bistro*

It's news when one of Iceland's top restaurants opens a cosy café and bistro. Throughout the summer, customers can enjoy a good breakfast and lunch – or simply coffee and cakes or muffins as the café is open from 8am until 4pm.

As a bistro, it serves salads, soups, sandwiches, burgers and pizzas from 11am. A number of vegetarian and vegan dishes are also available – including gluten-free and vegan cakes and baked items. Should you be travelling further, there is a range of food and drinks to go.

The picturesque seaside village of 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. It was here that Icelandic lobster fishing was born.

Indulge in a feast of langoustines at Rauða húsið (the Red House) restaurant from 11am to 10pm in summer or 9pm the rest of the year. Arrive by noon for a hearty bowl of langoustine soup to set you up for the rest of 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 or try a tantalising lamb dish. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of Rauða húsið's signature desserts.

–ASF



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## THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI

*The House at Eyrarbakki*

Árnessýsla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.

Opening hours: May 1st - September 30th daily 11.00-18.00 or by an agreement  
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**HÚSIÐ Á EYRARBAKKA**  
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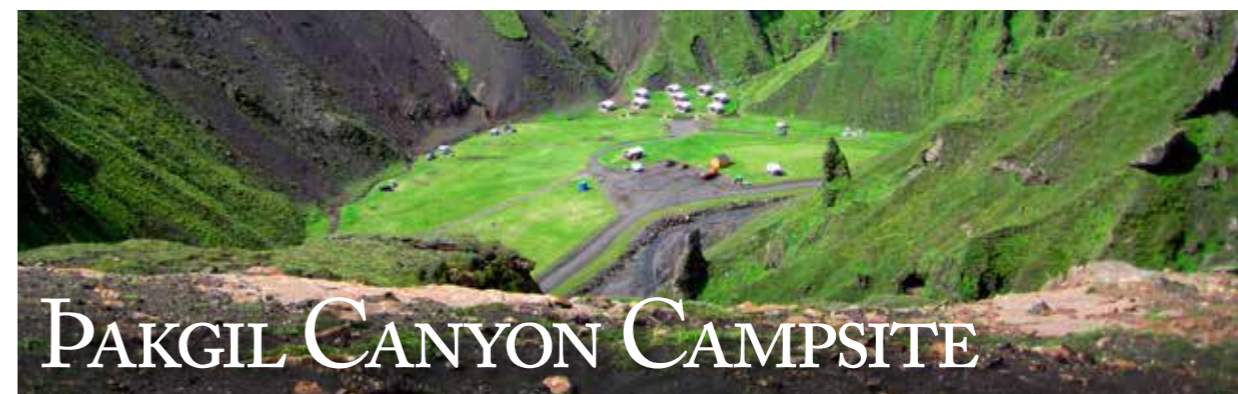
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# ÞAKGIL CANYON CAMPSITE

Þakgil is a little known highland hiker's paradise, very close to the south coast of Iceland. Þakgil (Roof Canyon) is a tiny sheltered canyon with a grassy plain floor which serves as the campsite. Access to toilets and hot showers is included. Small pine huts are also available, each with their own toilet, gas stove and refrigerator. A large natural cave serves as a dining hall, complete with a cooking grill and a fireplace. This unique setting also offers several day hike options to the nearby Mýrdalsjökull Glacier, which sits on top of the infamous Katla volcano.

### Getting There Is Also an Adventure

The journey from Reykjavik begins by driving about 180 km on the main highway (the Ring Road) to the southernmost village in Iceland, Vík í Mýrdal, which is at the base of a unique black basalt beach, once voted as one of the ten most beautiful beaches in the world. The cliffs to the west are a known haven for seabirds, most notably the Puffin, the parrot of the North. You drive 5 more kilometres along the main road, and then about 15 more kilometres on a well maintained gravel road - accessible by car. The landscape is famous for its weird rock formations, and

for being one of the set locations for the Game of Thrones TV series. Þakgil is generally open during the summer from June 1 to the end of August, but some flexibility can be arranged upon request. It is usually open before the roads are opened to the highlands further inland, including the road to Landmannalaugar.

–SF



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Lake in the Highlands with Lava in front.



## 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 emphasises the use of only quality ingredients from the locality in their cooking. Whether be it a freshly caught salmon you crave, steaks from grass-fed cattle or free range lamb served with the accompaniment of locally grown greens—you can be sure that Halldór's Café will deliver. They also offer a variety of lighter meals such as soup of the

day and light salads, and those with a bit of a sweet-tooth will not be disappointed, as the menu includes home-baked cakes and home-made ice cream from a local farm.

Originally, Halldór's Café was the 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, using local produce, where possible.

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

greeting old friends or new acquaintances. The café is open all year round. Summer opening hours are from 11:00am to 10:00 or 11:00pm, and winter openings are from 11:00am to 9:00pm. When travelling in the area around the beautiful Vík, be sure to stop at this charming café and get greeted with a welcoming smile and a seductive menu. *-JB*

**Halldórscaffi**  
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 halldorscaffi@gmail.com  
 www.halldorscaffi.is

# IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVING IT

Picture hunting in Iceland with the professional photographer Rafn Sig,-  
 Day tours / Photo and Photo Workshop tours / Winter and Summer tours

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 Super Jeep four-wheel drive Mitsubishi, suitable for any highland and low land trip.

He doesn't conceal the fact that photo hunting is still 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.

### Like-minded travelling companions

This professional photographer has published 8 books about Iceland and his pictures have been published all over the world. He likes to share his passion for travel with like-minded people. He offers customized, all year round photo trips and workshops range from a day to a fortnight long.

When you join him in his adventures, he might have a few more secrets to share.

### 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 goooooooood group.



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# A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

*Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant*

Chef Eiríkur Þór Eiríksson was busy pouring drinks when we arrived. The well known song 'Vorkvöld í Reykjavík', (a Spring Evening in Reykjavík) was playing softly in the background. A table of tourists who had spent the day exploring a glacier with a guide, talked animatedly over dinner in the front room. The low slung building with pleasantly creaky wooden floors, once serving as the search and rescue building of Stokkseyri, is now one of the most popular lobster restaurants in Iceland, with over 45,000 patrons dining there in 2014.

## 15 tons of lobsters can't be wrong

Fjöruborðið's website says that some 15 tons of lobster are used annually to make its famous soup, aka langoustine soup. Hmm...impressive statistics but does it really live up to its reputation? After all, there are many fine restaurants right in the capital, so is it really worth the 45 minute drive over a mountain in sometimes dubious weather conditions? Yes! I am happy to report that the soup was sublime. And just forget the word soup, how pedestrian! Chef Eiríkur informs me that it is, in fact, a classic bisque de langoustine.



Whatever name you go by, it was delicious and I would have happily eaten another bowlful had I not needed to move on to taste everything else that was set before me: lobster tails that were perfect in themselves, homebaked bread with various dipping sauces and if, per chance, you are not partial to sea food, there is a wonderfully tender roasted fillet of lamb served with baby potatoes and red wine sauce that is excellent. A crisp salad made with local produce was

refreshing and nicely complemented the seafood and meat dishes. Right on cue as soon as we had finished the lobster tails, our attentive server brought a warm wet cloth for our, by then, messy hands, which was much appreciated.

From the outside, Fjöruborðið appears deceptively small but in fact, it can seat several hundred all told, something that those having a tête-à-tête in the main building would never guess. Facing the ocean out back, a large permanent marquee can seat another 100 or so guests. All that to say, groups are welcome.

Favoured by tour guides who often bring their clients here as the ultimate finish to a perfect day of sightseeing, the restaurant has received several well known personalities such as Prince Frederik of Denmark, the Rockefellers, Clint Eastwood, Martha Stewart, Bette Midler and Cherie Booth (wife of Tony Blair). -EMV



## 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 that historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

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

### 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. -DT







# THE HIGHLANDS OF *Iceland*

Nothing in Iceland prepares you for the stark, desolate, raw beauty of the barren upland plateau called the Highlands. An uninhabited area, The Highlands are completely without towns or villages, just endless plains, glacial rivers and lava fields punctuated by ice caps, volcanoes and jagged mountains. The isolation is the reason why people visit and travellers are humbled by the sublime sight of nature in its rawest, barest form. Historically, trails in the highlands were used as summer short cuts between north and south and myths of ghosts and fearsome outlaws spurred travellers along the tracks with all speed. Today, it is probably wiser to worry about the weather, as conditions can be fickle

and snow is not uncommon, even in mid-summer. The solitude is exhilarating, the views are vast and it is immensely tough but equally rewarding to hike or bike these cross-country routes. Any self-driving, cycling or hiking trip must be carefully planned. There are no roads in the area, just tracks and hardly any bridges across the rivers. Of all the various tracks, only two routes actually cross the whole way between north and south: Sprengisandur (F26) and Kjölur (F35). The region is fully accessible only by four wheel drive vehicles. It is also possible to get a taste of this utter isolation in safety on bus tours, where you will discover amazing landscapes, similar to lunar landscapes. Which is the reason why the Apollo astronauts came there to train for moon landings!



#ICELANDSHIGHLANDS





# TWO AT THE TOP!



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