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ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 23 • 2014

An aerial photograph of a volcanic eruption. In the foreground, a dark, jagged ridge of lava flows is visible, with bright red and orange lava glowing from within. A massive, billowing plume of white ash and steam rises from the eruption, dominating the left side of the frame. In the background, a vast, flat, dark landscape stretches towards a range of snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky.

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Lake Mývatn area
Waterfall Goðafoss
Skútustaðagígar
Dimmuborgir (Dark cities)
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The Land of Fire and Ice

These are exciting times as Iceland has certainly lived up to its reputation over the past weeks with the awakening of a large volcano system buried deep under Dyngjufjökull, an outlet glacier of the country's largest glacier, Vatnajökull. In this feature packed edition we bring you insights into the science behind mother nature's ferocious display, along with a stunning feast for the eyes capturing these events—and what a sight it is! Already, the new lava field covers an area larger than the entire capital area and it continues to grow by the day and who knows what the future holds?

Share Your Story!

We asked our Facebook friends to give us a glimpse of their adventures here in Iceland by sharing their holiday photographs with us. We were overjoyed by the responses we received, when friends from all over the world submitted their work to us for others to enjoy. We are happy to

share a gallery of these entries with you in this issue. For the complete collection, you can visit our website, www.icelandictimes.com.

The Magical Autumn

The changing of the seasons is always an enchanting time. Icelanders prepare for the winter darkness when, at midwinter, the luxury of daylight can only be enjoyed for few hours a day. Along with staples such as candles and Christmas lights, sanguinity and optimism are no lesser of importance. Many claim that this romantic season is their favourite, with the possibility of sights of Northern Lights, snow covered mountain tops and brilliant autumn colours in vegetation as it prepares for winter mode.

We hope you will find that this issue is filled with a lot of interesting content as well as an abundance of helpful information. Of course, we wish you the best autumn holidays you could ever have and, by visiting Iceland, they no doubt will be!

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FRONT COVER PHOTO
Völundur Jónsson / Saga Travel
Eruption in Bárðabunga
Rafn Sig. - /islandsmyndir.is
Eruption in Bárðabunga

Icelandic language

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

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

How to make use of QR codes



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volcano cinema • café • geological exhibition

CINEMA ON FIRE

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

Eyjafjallajökull 2010 Eruption

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

The Westman Island's 1973 Eruption

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

Showtimes:

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



THE GREATER REYKJAVIK AREA

The Cosmopolitan Capital - where History and Culture meet today's world



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.

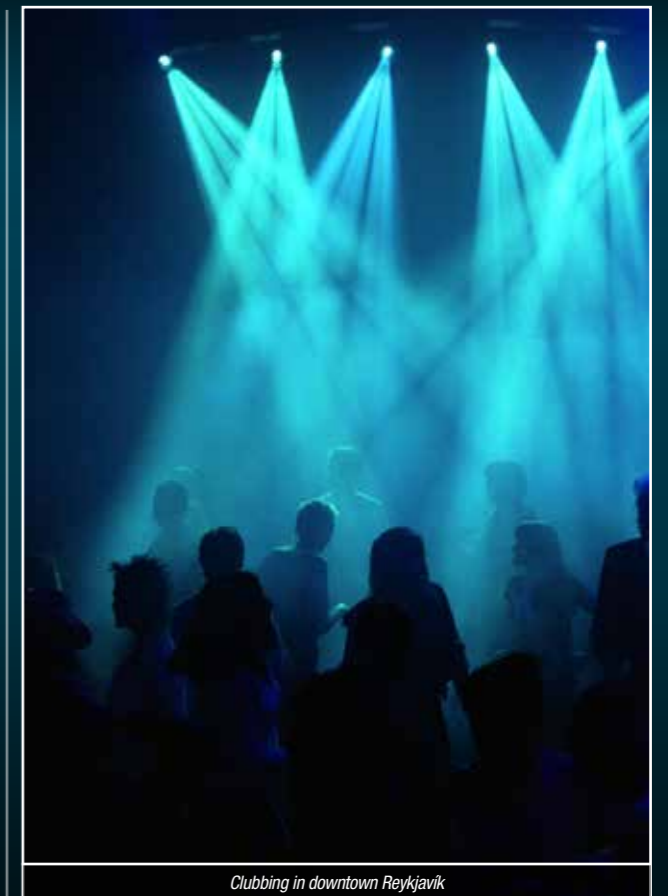
It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900's, Ingólfur Arnarson, it has grown from a handful of houses a few centuries ago to a compact and thriving metropolis.

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 horse-riding 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.

Photos: courtesy of the Reykjavik Marketing Office.



Clubbing in downtown Reykjavik



THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

The little Christmas shop that is festive all year round

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

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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THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE WATCHMAKER

They sell to the stars but are known only to the few

It is probably the world's smallest watchmaker, located in a very small shop in one of the world's smallest countries and yet they produce the most exquisitely crafted and sought-after hand made watches.

In this era of electronic, battery-powered watches, you might expect that automatic mechanical watches had passed into history. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a greater demand for high quality timepieces that will outlast the temporary electronic watch phenomenon.

The choice of connoisseurs

You can be defined by your choices. There are watches for the mass market and there are those watches that are individualised, personalised collectors' items, works of art that are cherished for generations. These are investments - especially those limited editions. Yet, they have a key place in the lives of the wearers.

Kings, princesses, international leaders from East and West, film stars, rock idols - all have made their way to the small shop on Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, to select their own watch, have it assembled and personalised just for them, a testament to their discernment of true quality.

While I was visiting the shop, it's wall filled with photos of well-known personalities who are now wearing their watches, I couldn't help but wonder if it was only the rich and famous who could afford such time pieces. My answer came as I was standing there. A beautiful young woman came to pick up a watch she had ordered and two tourists selected watches



for themselves. They would return later in the day after their selections had been assembled specifically for them in the tiny studio at the back of the shop.

Others, wanting something even more personal, have their watches engraved on the inner rotor with special messages.

Relying on reliability

Pilots and the Icelandic coastguard have to be able to trust their watches. Lives could depend on them. The coastguard are issued with the "Sif" watch, designed especially for them. The only watch in the range without a transparent back, it has a 4mm Sapphire non-reflective glass and can be used to a depth of at least 1,000m. It is also available to the general



public, along with pilots' watches, likewise known for their dependability and absolute reliability.

Wear the volcano

Iceland used to be known as "Europe's Best Kept Secret" but it was thrust into the limelight in 2010 with the Eyjafallajökull volcanic eruption. The fine ash that brought Europe's air traffic to a halt now coats the face of the most sought-after watch, the Goð. Ornate Viking engravings on the case make this watch stand out - especially as some of the engraving can be personalised to make it totally unique.
- ASF





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FROM HUNTERS TO HOME

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

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

Made with rare materials

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

Created for Connoisseurs

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

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



Now for cooks and diners

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

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

Inspired by a waterfall

You can find Palli in his studio in Mosfellsbær, right beside the Álafoss waterfall and the famous mill of the same name,



just a 15 minute drive from the centre of Reykjavik. He is open from 9am to 6pm. His knives can also be found at the Brynja hardware store at Laugavegur 29, on the main shopping street in downtown Reykjavik or ordered online.

Custom made for years of use

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

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

- ASF

Palli the Knife Maker

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www.knifemaker.is



GREENLAND CHARMS

Mystic Gifts From the Wild

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

Sealskin Design to Keep You Warm

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

Nature's Masterpieces

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

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

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

Guardian Spirits

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

Spirit Charms

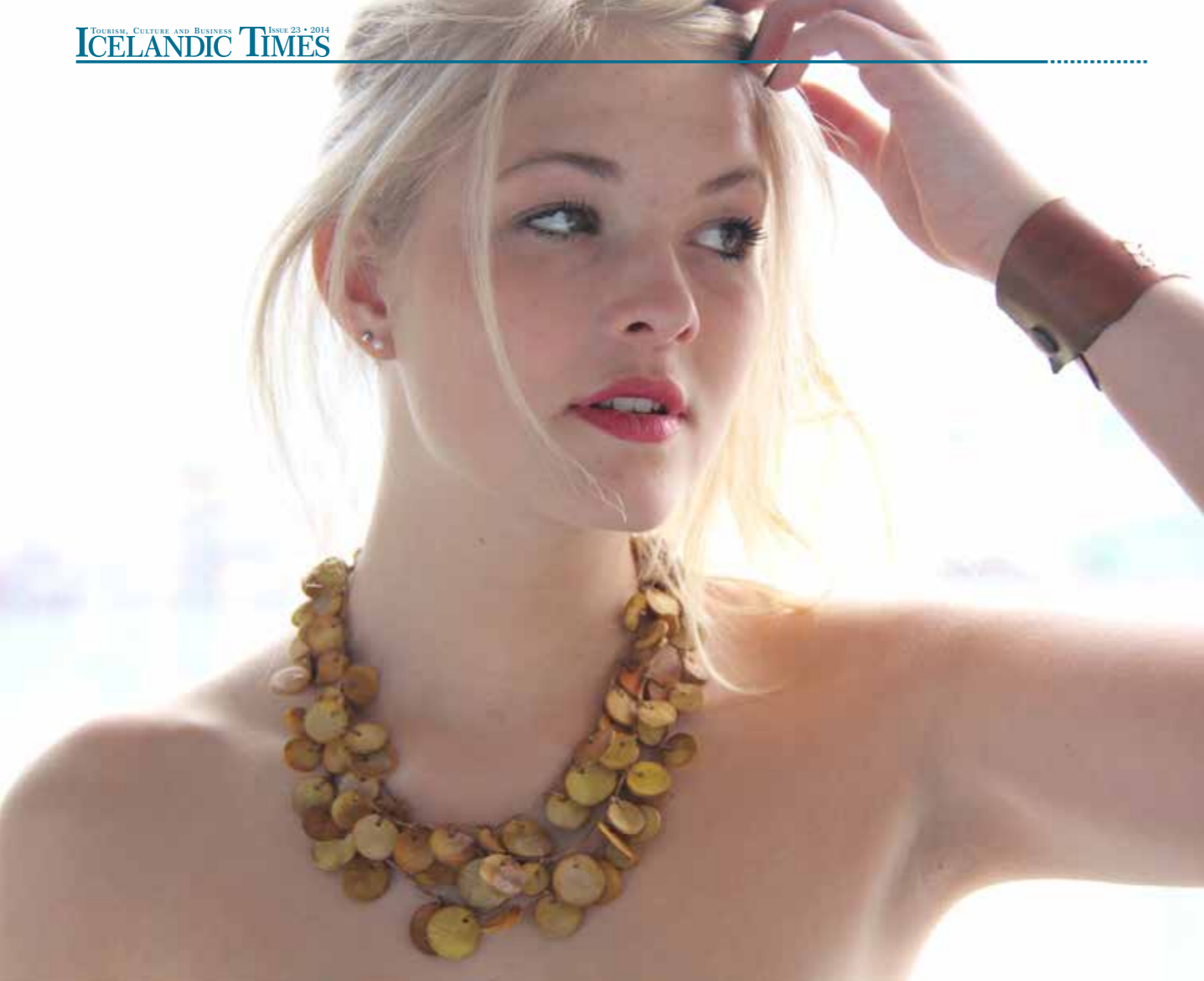
As the Icelandic twilight casts its spell on Laugavegur, the last rays of light turn amulets, hanging from a reindeer antler, golden—claws and teeth from Greenland's wild animals, carefully polished and threaded onto thin leather cords. A guillemot and a huge black raven, both stuffed, sit silently nearby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

- DT



Raven Art

Laugavegur 15 • 101 Reykjavik
 +354 551 1080
ravensravens.is
www.ravens.is



LEATHER DESIGNER

Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces

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

Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a

sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours.

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

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

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Rammagerðin stores around the country and at Keflavík



International Airport, Snorrastofa in Reykholt and directly from Guðrún, herself.

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



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FROM ROCK QUARRY

TO CITY LANDMARK

A Brief History of Skólavörðustígur

One of Reykjavik's most notable landmarks is Hallgrímskirkja, which towers over the cityscape from a hill in the city's centre. The street leading up to the church is famous for its bustling street life, diverse restaurants, art galleries, innovative design shops and quality shopping.

The rock collectors

Given Reykjavik's relatively short history, it is hard to imagine that, only two centuries ago, a group of schoolboys

collected rocks and stones from the area, scaled the hill and proudly raised a cairn to honour their newly built school nearby. The year was 1793, only seven years into Reykjavik's official trading town status, and the hill had not yet been built upon and, in fact, was registered as a falcon reservation at the time.

No horses allowed

The hill was thus named Skólavörðuholt, which literally translates School cairn's

hill. The cairn didn't prove to be a durable construction and fell into disrepair, so city officials took action. A seven-metre high tower was raised in 1834 on the top of the hill, providing splendid views over the city. The city also committed to maintain the tower and the surrounding area and thus a road leading up the hill was built. The road was given the name Skólavörðustígur and was meant as a scenic pedestrian street and therefore all traffic by horse was forbidden (also to



Modern day view over Skólavörðustígur.

Photo: Rafn Sig-

minimize the road's maintenance). The ban on horse traffic proved to be difficult as the hill was also used as a rock quarry for constructions in the city, especially the harbour area, which meant hauling rocks down the slope had to be done by manpower.

A man with a vision

The first buildings started rising around Skólavörðuholt in the mid-19th century, some of which are still standing and preserved by the city, including the still-used city prison. In the early 20th century, Guðjón Samúelsson, the state architect of Iceland had big plans for Skólavörðuholt as a centre of culture, education and religion. Although those ambitious plans didn't work out as the university was given land further to the west, he did design the majestic church that stands there today.

Make room for Leif

The statue of Leif Eiríksson, the first European to discover North America, on Skólavörðuholt was a gift from the United States for Iceland's millennium celebration of Althingi's founding in 1930, but to make room for the generous gift, the tower on Skólavörðuholt was demolished, leaving people without a favourable view over the city.

This was remedied as Samúelsson's plans for Hallgrímskirkja, the grand church on top of Skólavörðuholt named after Iceland's primary psalm composer, Hallgrímur Pétursson, were made into reality. He started designs in 1937 and construction started in 1945, though the church wasn't completed until 1986 - 36 years after Samúelsson's death.

A Lasting Monument

The church has proven to be a lasting monument, as the surrounding area has changed from a rock quarry with a cairn on top into a lively and colourful neighbourhood where Reykjavik's top chefs, designers, craft folk and artists congregate.



THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Assn. sells Icelandic wool and products

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

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

From home to market

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

Find the real thing

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

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

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

Traditional and modern styles

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, ljósmynd/Photo: E.S.P.TV.

NINE EXHIBITIONS AT THREE VENUES

Reykjavik Art Museum's Autumn 2014 Exhibitions

The Reykjavik Art Museum has been showcasing contemporary art since 1973. This autumn, the museum will present nine exhibitions in its three venues at different locations around the city:

Hafnarhús (Harbour House)

The downtown location which is the museum's institute of contemporary art, will display six exhibitions:

Future Crash/Tribal TV, by Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, from 6th September to 19th October 2014. This is a large video installation comprising ten works that reference films set in the future. They all feature mystical beings that appear in mysterious places, but perhaps these beings in the future are fragments from our ancient memories.

Flatland, by Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir, from 1st November, 2014 to 25th January, 2015. This show integrates video, text, movement, and sculpture. The title, 'Flatland' refers to an 1884 book that used



Ásmundur Sveinsson, Tröllkonan, 1948.

the language of mathematics and geometry to portray social hierarchy in a satirical way.

Synthesis, by an international team of seven artists, from 20th September, 2014 to 18th January, 2015. Tomas Saraceno (Argentina), Ernesto Neto (Brazil), Ragna Róbertsdóttir (Iceland), Ryuji Nakamura and Rintaro Hara (Japan), Mona Hatoum (Lebanon) and Monika Grzymala (Poland). Three-dimensional installations reflect the fabric of the world.

Erro and Art History, from 6th September, 2014 to 27th September, 2015. Erro presents his unique visual world in collages that often borrow famous images by world renowned artists such as Picasso and Léger.

Reactive Wall, by artist Mojoko and computer programmer Shang Liang, from 6th September to 19th October, 2014. This interactive artwork changes form as it reacts to sounds that you make.

Worlds and Ways, by Gunther Damisch, from 1st November, 2014 to 25th January, 2015. Selection of his graphic works from the 1980s to 2013.

Kjarvalsstaðir

Kjarvalsstaðir is devoted to painting and sculptures by established artists. From 27th September, 2014 to 4th January, 2015, Kjarvalsstaðir will host two exhibits by Andreas Eriksson, who is one of Sweden's most acclaimed young artists: Roundabouts and Topsoil. Ericson displays selected



Andreas Eriksson, Kofi Ted Kaczynskis / Ted Kaczynskis Cabin, 2004.

paintings and drawings by Kjarval, his inspiration, along with some of his own works derived from his appreciation for Kjarval.

Ásmundarsafn

The sculpture museum presents A Posteriori: Houses, Sculptures from 13th September, 2014 to 1st February, 2015. The museum that is itself a work of art, hosts a selection of artworks by eight artists. The Curator is Yean Fee Quay. - SF

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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. 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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SPREADING THE TASTE

You Can Enjoy Authentic Thai Food In Reykjavík or Akureyri

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

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

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



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

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

- ASF

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THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

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

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

The Sea Baron himself

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

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware

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



In true spirit

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



Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavík. 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 1st September – 30th April. For desert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónagrautur—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

- ASF

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THE ICELANDIC HOUSE OF SPECIALITIES

Skólábrú Gourmet Restaurant feeds connoisseurs of good food

Skólábrú is one of the most respected restaurants in Iceland. It is located in one of downtown Reykjavik's most iconic older buildings. The nearly 120 year old house delivers a very relaxed and elegant setting, right next to the Pond and the nearly 220 year old Reykjavik Cathedral, Dómkirkjan.

A perfect service for the world's clientele

Skólábrú caters to international clients who love gourmet food and wine and awesome service, but still expect reasonable prices. The restaurant is known for handling parties and meetings for very demanding clients, including the local foreign embassies and the large crews that accompany the foreign

film productions that Iceland has attracted in recent years. The restaurant has also handled some very unusual requests, such as setting up a dedicated mobile restaurant in order to keep film crews well fed when they are on location somewhere far away from Reykjavik and civilization in general.

Different strokes for different folks

Skólábrú can easily handle 150 people, and the second floor can accommodate up to 80 people in a private setting. The main floor has a small separate room which can accommodate up to 14 people. This room has a wall mounted large screen TV and is perfect for a private meeting or a small seminar. The second floor is a spacious venue with a high ceiling, and it can be set up with



a large projector screen and all the equipment necessary to host a professional conference or a large private meeting. It is also frequently modified and decorated to handle special requests, including private parties for companies, weddings and birthdays. A free pick up service is available for groups. Both floors are internet connected.

Nothing but the best

New owners took over the business in 2009, but the restaurant has operated since 1992, so it has an established network of suppliers that guarantees the very best quality raw materials are available at any time. The chefs deliver magnificent meals that range from modern takes on traditional fish and meat dishes to gourmet vegetarian dishes, and the various more exotic specialities that the restaurant is famous for.

A full menu

Skólábrú is well known for its traditional rack of lamb and salted cod (bacalao). For those looking for more exotic meals, the chefs offer exquisite specialities such as seawolf (Atlantic Wolffish,) and wild goose carpaccio. The dessert menu is mouth watering and the wine list has the perfect red, white, and sparkling wines to complement your meal and dessert. An assortment of beers and strong drinks is also available.

Skólábrú is the perfect restaurant for people who love gourmet food in a nice setting, and the service provided to groups is unparalleled. - SF

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TURNING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

The Pearl, a five star revolving restaurant with a remarkable view of the city.



On top of the hillside of Öskjuhlíð, one of the city's most popular green areas, stands The Pearl, an unusual building consisting of a huge glass dome placed upon six hot water tanks. Due its height and geographical position, it provides its visitors with a breathtaking 360° view of Reykjavik and it's surroundings.

A moveable feast

Under the impressive glass dome revolves one of the country's finest restaurants, recently rated as one of the world's ten best revolving restaurants. The floor turns constantly, but slowly—so slowly actually that, if it wasn't for the changing view, guests probably wouldn't notice it. Over your starter you might be admiring Mount Esja to the north but once your dessert arrives you may be gazing at the ocean to the south!

The Pearl prides itself in a team of chefs second to none and a menu best described as

an inventive cross between an international cuisine and Icelandic ingredients. The menu changes with the seasons. In autumn, the summer's á la carte is replaced with a buffet of wild game that continues into the Christmas season, when traditional dishes are added. The new year always kicks off with a menu created specially to bring food lovers culinary excellence at the best price in town! The only thing that stays on the menu throughout the year is the signature lobster soup originated by the legendary Belgian chef Pierre Romeyer who, after a friendly encounter with the Pearl's head chefs, simply gave them all his recipes!

The Pearl's status as a first class restaurant is a result of the ambition and passion of it's owners and staff who relentlessly try to refine their cooking, bringing in chefs from all over the world and travelling regularly to learn from the best and gather new ideas. Therefore it's no surprise that this year, head chef Stefán Elí won the esteemed 'Taste of



Photos: Óskar Páll Einarsson

France' award for creating an outstanding fusion of French and Icelandic cooking.

I'll have a gelato ... with a view

But pots and pans also sizzle during the day in The Pearl's Cafeteria, from where you can walk directly out onto the viewing deck to enjoy your cup of coffee. At The Pearl, authenticity is not a word to be taken lightly. Everything is made from scratch: soups, crêpes and a wide selection of breads and pastries. They even brought in a pastry chef from France and went all the way to Italy to learn how to make the perfect gelato—and perfect it is!

However you look at it, The Pearl is a unique spot in the capital, a place bound to satisfy your appetite for both delicious food and jaw dropping panoramas—a revolving world of delight. - HP



The Pearl
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SNORKELING AND DIVING IN SILFRA

The clearest water between two continents

You might not immediately think of snorkelling and diving when forging out vacation plans for this island in the North Atlantic. Yet Iceland is one of the world's top five diving destinations. If you enjoy swimming and feel comfortable in water, or have a PADI licence for diving, the Land of Fire and Ice will present underwater perspectives that are unparalleled. Iceland's largest and oldest diving school DIVE.IS prides itself with knowing the best places and is keen on guiding you safely through the elements.

Silfra - the earthly ordeal

Born from a lava-oozing rift, where the continental plates drift apart, the mid-Atlantic ridge has, in some places, risen

above sea level. One of these rare places happens to be Iceland. In the Þingvellir National Park, the continental drift can be observed, thanks to a huge chasm that started to open between the continents around the year 1798 and formed the famous Silfra underwater fissure in Lake Þingvallavatn. Not more than a 40km drive from Reykjavik, Silfra is located in a sheltered environment that is easily accessible even during the winter months.

There is hardly a spot in the world where you can get closer to the drama of the Earth's genesis in its original element, water, – and you will hardly find a spot with at view on things as clear as in Silfra.

Pure water, pure drama

Be prepared to dive in one of the purest waters in the world. Glacial melt water, filtered through a huge lava bed proves to be a unique Icelandic phenomenon. The water's journey through the lava takes 30 to 100 years before it bubbles up from an underground source into Silfra – water that can't be purer. You can try and drink it while diving or snorkeling.

Clearwater's Credence

The clarity of the water allows a visibility of up to 120 metres, with scenery that you won't forget. All four sections of Silfra can be explored by both snorkelling and diving. With expert guidance, this scenic dive or snorkel trip will take you through

the 'Big Crack' where, at its narrowest point, you can touch both continents at the same time. Surrounded by incredibly pristine water you will pass through the 'Hall' and finally float into the silent grandeur of the continental drift.

The fissure's awe-inspiring rock walls rise up to 20 metres, and the 'Cathedral' bears its name quite rightly. Boulders give evidence of bygone earthquakes in an area that now seems to be one of peace and eternity. Nature is lost in contemplation, fish only rarely stray into the fissure. Here and there, drifting algae float like green mermaids' hair through the stillness of the water. The charming 'Lagoon' reveals a breathtaking panorama of underwater's infinity.

Diving with the pros

Numerous top-trained guides from DIVE.IS provide undiluted diving pleasure. The company boasts long experience and offers not only perfect equipment servicing and PADI training, but also professionally guided diving and snorkelling tours that leave nothing to be desired.

And if you are out there diving or snorkelling anyway, why not continue with the guys from DIVE.IS for your next adventure? The combo-tours make things easy. Get out of the drysuit and into outdoor jackets and safety helmets, and head for a walk into Icelandic lava caves, where impressive lava formations speak of the Earth's power. Or stay with the element of water and combine your Silfra trip with a

visit to Gullfoss and Geysir on the Golden Circle, or a with relaxing bath in the Blue Lagoon.

If the weather is really unsuitable for diving, DIVE.IS comes with a cheerful alternative: The organized 'Storm hike' with a subsequent visit to the famous Icelandic rescue unit will transform a bad weather day into a real highlight.

On the company's website you will find the entire programme with comprehensive information as well as tempting photos and videos.

- DT



Diver in Silfra Lagoon



Diver touching Two Continents

Snorkler in Silfra Cathedral



Dive.is
Hólmaslóð 2 · 101 Reykjavík
+354 578 6200
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AWESOME NORTHERN LIGHTS

Enjoy the Heavenly Light with Reykjavik Excursions

As it gets darker earlier in the evenings, the Northern Lights become visible - at least to those away from city lights. As darkness descends, you'll see coaches leaving the BSI bus terminal and, believe me, you will want to be on one. Out in the countryside, far from man-made lighting, the sky can be ablaze with constantly dancing swirls of light for hours at a time.

You take the Highlands...

A coach takes you up through Þingvellir National Park, crossing the continental



divide, where you can choose to dine at a cosy farm restaurant to fortify you for the night watch. A modified vehicle then

handles the work of travelling the rugged highlands around Langjökull glacier. The panoramic windows mean you won't miss a moment as the aurora bathes the area around the glacier in a mystical light. With snacks and warm drinks available, photo opportunities abound in this unusual view of the highlands.

...and I'll take the Lowlands

With a specially low price, the 'Warm Baths and Cool Lights tour' takes you to Laugarvatn, where the open air steam

baths at Laugarvatn Fontana provide a luxurious view of the skies and the surrounding lake and hillsides. All the water is warm and you'll never notice the cold - even, surprisingly,

when you get out. It's like watching a show while you luxuriate in this recently rebuilt spa complex on the lakeside.

Speaking of Shows...

Leaving Reykjavik's BSI bus station at 6pm, the 'Horse Theatre and Northern Lights tour' takes you first over the mountains to Hveragerði, past the billowing columns of steam rising up over the plateau from the geothermal power station that brings both electricity and hot water to the capital.



Coming off the mountain, more plumes of steam can be seen on the side of the valley as Hveragerði is one of Iceland's hot spots. On the outskirts of the little town is the horse theatre.

Here there is fun for all the family - old and young alike - as you become enthralled in the 'Legends of Sleipnir'. This multimedia show brings to life the history of the relationship that the special Icelandic horses have had for hundreds of years with



men, women and children across the land. It's a musical tapestry of mythology, history, theatre and music, woven together in a drama you won't forget.

Following the 50min show, the coach, with an English-speaking guide whose commentary alone is worth the trip, continues into the countryside for the best possible opportunities to see the Northern Lights.

Pioneering the Night

The original Northern Lights tour now has 3 different departure times. You could call these the 'magical mystery tours' as their destinations vary with the expectation of where the best sightings will be found at the time.

The organisers are very experienced and attuned to the conditions and offered tour times that should suit everyone. More



details on tour times can be found on Reykjavik Excursions's website.

My experience

Naturally, they are like the will 'o the wisp and they appear and disappear seemingly at their own will. My experiences have been memorable, sometimes watching them for hours sweeping across the sky in a seemingly never-ending dance of swirling designs. Other times, I've had to wait and watch beautiful shows of fleeting

streams. You simply never know what will come. If the weather is unsuitable for seeing the Lights, the company will notify you. It's good to book your tour early in your stay, so you will have an opportunity to really enjoy this amazing sight.

- ASF



Reykjavik Excursions

BSI Bus Terminal - 101 Reykjavik
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www.re.is





CAPTURING A WONDERLAND

Isafold Travel opens Iceland for photographers in Winter

Iceland in winter has its own beauty and challenges. The light conditions can be truly amazing during the short days and the Northern Lights are often visible at night. To get the most out of your trip, you need to know where to get those prize shots. Isafold Travel's professional photographers take you

to their favourite spots as any photographer knows how much goes into getting the picture just right.

This winter Isafold Travel is offering two tours in vehicles equipped for winter conditions with professional Icelandic English-speaking photographers. They

handle the logistics of getting to the right spots, food and accommodation. Having a photographer experienced in the conditions and locations is a golden opportunity to hone your skills in such a different environment.

The 5-day trip covers a great variety of locations in South Iceland including Þingvellir, Gullfoss, Geysir, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull, the South Coast, the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, glacial landscapes and a spectacular ice cave.

The 2-day tour travels to West Iceland, providing 2 nights to catch the Northern Lights and 2 days covering waterfalls, hot springs, beaches (and possibly seals), basalt columns, lava fields and craters around the Snæfells glacier, quaint towns and villages and other hidden gems.

In both tours the guides try to avoid light pollution at night, in order to capture the Aurora, given the right conditions. The two tours can also be combined into a 7-day tour.

- ASF



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 info@isafoldtravel.is



LEARN TO DRIVE IN THE WILD



Iceland's Off Road Driving Academy teaches off road driving skills

Are you an outdoor adventure person who enjoys challenges like negotiating steep, rocky banks to ford unbridged rivers, cross lava fields, climb steep mountains on slippery, potholed mud tracks, taking a 4x4 to its - and your - limit? Weather can change in minutes from still to storm, sun to snow, rain to ice and getting unstuck in

mud or snowdrifts, changing flat tyres or fixing a tyre that has come off its rim in knee-deep snow on a mountainside is just par for the course.

School for the Wilderness

Iceland's Off Road Academy trains drivers for the final driving frontier that

is just a dream for a city commuter: the overpowering beauty of the mountain wilderness where silence and solitude surround you, miles from civilisation - and the nearest garage, petrol station or shop.

You're on your own, facing a constant stream of hazards, any one of which could lead to disaster if you're unprepared or untrained to handle them.

Formed by a team of internationally acknowledged experts in their field, the school teaches the theory of off road driving and provides practical experience driving specially modified Land Rover Defenders in the Icelandic wilderness under the watchful eye and immediate counsel of long-time leaders in the field.

Graduates can face driving any terrain with confidence and security, with the knowledge to handle situations when things go wrong. Applications are being accepted now.

- ASF



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NORTHERN LIGHTS BY BOAT



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JOIN THE GAME OF THRONES



It wasn't all fantasy as Gray Line Iceland's tour shows

Iceland's dramatic terrain lends itself to film makers' creativity. It's history, too, with its warring family clans, struggle for survival against the harsh elements and tales of extreme courage can often seem like a movie plot.

Actually being there, where the Game of Thrones was filmed, can add a touch of realism to the series, showing that they are real locations, not merely computer graphics.

More dramatic than TV

If erupting volcanos don't provide enough drama, the earth is being torn apart by the tectonic plates ripping right through Iceland and leaving some very dramatic scenery, which film producers take full advantage of.

The tour takes you to Þingvellir, a national park with a difference. Whilst it forms the background for the White Walkers and the Wildlings, it is also the gorge where the country's leaders originally met to form the world's longest running parliament and judge civil and criminal cases. The Viking settlers held their meetings each year for generations under the lee of the massive rock escarpment, travelling sometimes for weeks to attend.

You could spend days here, enjoying the craggy scenery, and many do, but the tour moves on through ever-changing countryside up into the interior through the dale cut by the Þjórsá river, a verdant area amidst the barren landscape, to the Settlement Era Viking lodge.

You might recognize this as the place where the great massacre took place in the series. However, it is a careful reconstruction of the large, wealthy Stöng turf farmhouse

nearby which was buried by pumice from the Hekla volcanic eruption in 1104, and excavated in 1939.

Take a few minutes to take in the culture and lifestyle, with its beauty and struggles, and you can imagine how easily the Game of Thrones can come to life for you.

Then, it's back to today and the trip home through countryside that oozes natural beauty at every turn and scenery unlike any you would see outside Iceland.



DELICIOUS GOLDEN CIRCLE

A gourmet tour for food lovers



Visitors to Iceland find the landscapes spectacular. In a week, you can barely scratch the surface of the incredibly diverse natural gems, so many opt for a tour that takes in the most stunning sites known as the Golden Circle. It encompasses Þingvellir, Geysir and Gullfoss waterfall.

Þingvellir truly is amazing. This UNESCO World Heritage site is one of few places in the world where you can see the tectonic plates tearing the earth's crust apart. It is also where the world's longest running parliament, the Alþingi was formed in 930AD.

Geysir, from which all the world's steam eruptions are named, is a hot spring area where the smaller geyser, Strokkur erupts every few minutes; and Gullfoss, the spectacular and powerful two-step waterfall rated as one of Iceland's most beautiful sights.

Food for the eyes and the stomach

This tour adds stops that will light up your taste buds and satisfy your stomach. The first is at Efstidalur farm hotel, where freshly-made ice cream, skyr (you have to taste skyr!), feta cheese and mysa, another Viking drink follow delicious homemade soup and bread, roast beef and freshly-caught trout.

After visiting Gullfoss and Geysir, the next stop is Friðheimar, where greenhouses allow year-round tomato and vegetable growing. Make sure you try them - their flavour is unmatched and their tomato schnapps! You'll be glad you're not driving!

You've seen the wonders of the Golden Circle but there's one more stop at Íslenskiðbærinn, a classic turfed farm where you can taste traditional Icelandic food: dried fish with seaweed; flat bread with smoked lamb; pancakes with whipped cream and rhubarb jam, fresh honey and herbal tea. It's another delicious experience, as uniquely Icelandic as the others.

More sights on the way home that make this tour, with its food experiences one of the most fulfilling.



Northern Lights Deluxe - with catering

Recognising the need for refreshments on their tours, Gray Line Iceland has also introduced food and hot drinks on their Northern Lights tours in new coaches with much more space in them. Now you can enjoy the hunt for the best photos, knowing a hot drink is waiting for you. -ASF



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A10 DELUXE BED AND BREAKFAST



Located just 5 minutes from the Keflavik Airport

Photo: Eva Björk

A10 Deluxe BnB is family-operated in a residential area within walking distance of different restaurants, pubs and shops. Many people are surprised to realize that this is no ordinary Bed and Breakfast but more of a home-style boutique hotel.

However, they can also receive personalised tour planning with an American-based travel agency located right in the building. Each tour has been tested, so they know the offers and will help plan each excursion.

Personal Tour Planning

Free buses operate throughout the day, so visitors can tap into the local

A Perfect Place to call Home

In a clean, comfortable, domestic atmosphere, the two owners, mother and

son, work together to provide personal, family-style service. For example, the mom prepares the meals, while the son organizes trips.

The beds are very comfortable with crisp linens. Each room is meticulously maintained while retaining a tranquil home-style ambiance.

Complimentary breakfasts are served between 7-10am but, if you have an earlier flight, you can take a homemade snack with you.

The Beauty is in the Details

Prearranged transportation plus extra amenities such as free WiFi, a Jacuzzi and the Northern Lights Hall, where guests can meet and mingle, are a feature of A10 Deluxe BnB, which is a non-smoking house.

The beautifully decorated rooms range from small cosy bedrooms to larger rooms with private bathrooms.

- OAB



A10 Deluxe Bed and Breakfast
 Aðalgata 10 • 230 Reykjanesbær
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THE BEST OF ICELANDIC ROCK 'N' ROLL

Rocking the history of Icelandic Music

Situated only five minutes away from Keflavik International Airport is Iceland's only Rock & Roll museum. It's in Keflavik which has been dubbed the Beatle-town of Iceland because the nation's biggest Beatle-esque band, Hljómar started it's journey there. Owing to the town's proximity to the former USA Army base, which is next to the airport, the townspeople were amongst the first to be introduced to Rock 'n Roll music in Iceland. It is thus very fitting Keflavik hosts the museum. It is in a newly built house called Hljómahöllin, which is both a nod towards the band and a play on words, since hljómar means both sound and chords.

The museum is for anyone who is interested in Icelandic music, since it covers it's history from 1830 to today. It isn't like traditional museums where you have to buy a brochure to get further information about the pieces, because when you arrive, the museum lends you an iPad which has the Rock 'n' Roll app installed. It allows you to dive deeper into the history of each artist, as well as listen to their music and watch videos.



The museum has a lot to offer. For example, you can see the airplane-suit worn by drummer Sigtryggur Baldursson from the music video for Sugarcube's Regina; an electric guitar that formerly belonged to Brynjar Leifsson from Of Monsters and Men which he used on the band's first tour and the LED-light outfit of Páll Óskar. The museum's manager, Tómas Young, says you can try your hand at an electric drum kit, guitar, bass guitar and a keyboard. "There's a sound lab where you can try out different instruments," says Tómas. "It is a lot of fun; there's something for everyone. It's enjoyed equally by adults and young children. Just recently we also added a sound mixer where people can have fun with the multi track

recordings of Of Monsters and Men's hit, 'Little Talks'. For example, if you want the guitars to be louder you simply raise the volume on the guitar track. Then we also have our own cosy little cinema, which runs documentaries all day on Icelandic music like Heima by Sigur Rós and Rokk í Reykjavík."

Every good museum has a shop where you can buy memorabilia and the Icelandic Rock 'n' Roll museum is no different. You can buy the newest releases of current musicians as well as older releases. For those who want deeper knowledge of Icelandic music and artists, the shop sells various different books and documentaries on the subject. There's also a coffee house run by one of Iceland's better coffee-makers, Kaffitár. It's a local roasterie and specialises in importing, roasting and serving the finest coffee beans from Arabica.

- HDB



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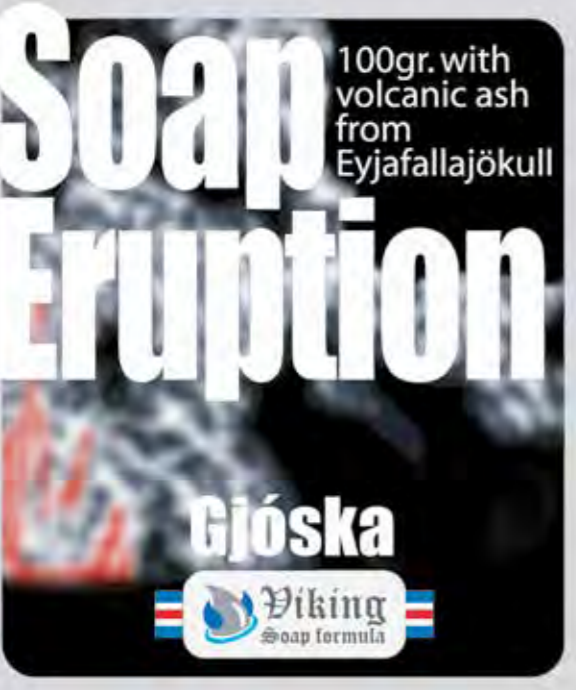


Geothermal Area in Krísuvík, Reykjanes Peninsula

Rafn Sig.

Buy it in the best souvenir stores

Soap Eruption 100gr. with volcanic ash from Eyjafallajökull



Gjóska
 Viking Soap formula

A SETTING FOR EVERY MOOD

Gamla Kaupfélagið Extends its Selection

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

Indian in Akranes

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

Catering to all customers

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



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



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DEEP IN NATURAL WONDERS

Gamli Bærinn Bed & Breakfast at Húsafell



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

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

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



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

- EMV

Gamli bærinn Húsafelli
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WORLDS OF MAGIC & MYTHOLOGY

Take a trip into other worlds at the Edduveröld Exhibition

Norse mythology is one of the most fantastic legacies of the ancient Nordic heritage of which Iceland is an integral part. Edduveröld – Edda's World – offers local and foreign visitors alike an accessible glimpse into this hitherto largely hidden heritage with a model and a professionally made audio guide available in a number of languages.

Norse Mythology in Borgarnes

Several large size wall hangings with images from the Norse mythology make up this unique exhibition. The centre piece is a 25m2 model of the ancient world designed by artist and visionary Haukur Halldórsson, whose ambition is to build a life-size amusement park like the one seen in the model. Visitors can enjoy a 20 minute audio guide commentary in English, German, Norwegian or Icelandic for adults and in Icelandic for children.



Edduveröld Exhibition is owned and operated by Erla Jónsdóttir and Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir from Borgarnes. "I love the Norse mythology," says Erla, "The more I read about it, the more I enjoy it. It is possible to view the stories in so many ways and I guess everyone will picture it in his or her own way."

The source of the Norse heathen mythology was recorded by Christian chieftain and scholar, Snorri Sturluson in the manuscript Snorra Edda in the 13th century. Sturluson happened to live at the Borg farm in Borgarfjörður, only 10 minute drive from the Edduveröld in Borgarnes, and later at Reykholt which is about 30 minutes from Borgarnes.

Homely restaurant and Coffee House

Edduveröld restaurant offers home-style lunch at an affordable price and an á-la-carte menu in the evening. "We make everything



from scratch, so we know exactly what goes into our food and pastries," says Erla. Mythology plays a big role in the naming of the dishes on the á-la-carte menu. There's a lamb dish named Óðin and the fish catch-of-the-day is called Miðgarðsfiskur. More information about the restaurant and its special lunch and dinner offers of the day is available on their website and Facebook.

The restaurant is open from 10 in the morning until 11 at night every night except Fridays and Saturdays when it stays open until 1 am.

- SHV

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ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

Find the furtive little arctic fox in Súðavík in the Westfjords

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



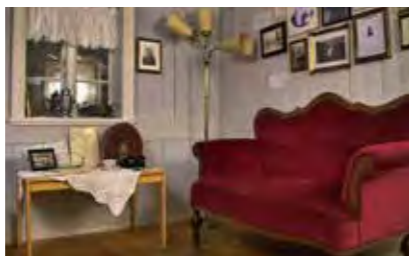
The Centre serves as an educational and cultural hub and offers an extensive exhibition on the arctic fox as well as regularly exhibiting local art and craft. Its main aim however, is to collect and preserve anything of importance regarding the arctic fox and its long-lasting relationship with man as,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

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

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

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

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Images by © Þorbjörn Sigurðsson



A NATURE PARADISE

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

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

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



Old factory and dormitory

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



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

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

A Historical Exhibition

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

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WEST TOURS FOR THE WESTFJORDS

The expert on travel in the entire Westfjords peninsula

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

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

West Tours' office is based in Ísafjörður town, in the Cultural House of Ísafjörður town,



Edinborgarhúsið. West Tours' objective is the presentation, marketing and selling of all the tourism-related services available in the region.

West Tours' clients can choose between many services. If you plan a day trip, a weekend or a longer trip in the Westfjords during summer or winter, West Tours will be happy to make it an unforgettable experience.

Activities offered in 2014:

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

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

We look forward to seeing you in the Westfjords!

West Tours
Aðalstræti 7, 400 Ísafjörður
+354 456 5111
westtours@westtours.is
www.westtours.is

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Icelandic landscape and wildlife in all its grandeur

Ísafjarðardjúp is the biggest fjord in the Westfjords. Divided into smaller inner fjords, the area offers an abundance of opportunities for experiencing Iceland far away from the crowded paths of the mainland. So take your time to enjoy your trip from Hólmavík to Súðavík. Enjoy driving in the immense vastness of the Steingrímsfjarðarheiði highland road and celebrate the moment when the country road takes you down to the inner part of the fjord. Why not take a refreshment break here at Hotel Reykjanes?

A Hot Spring Pool

The hotel is situated on the peninsula between Ísafjarðardjúp and the smaller Reykjarfjörður. Besides offering all kinds of outdoor activities, its sparkling gem is a swimming pool, built on one of the rare hot springs in the Westfjords, its water constantly being renewed from the spring, so no chemicals are needed. It is so relaxing to soak in the warm water and enjoy the clear air of the North after a long day's drive! Why not add some spice to your life by visiting Saltverk ehf., the salt processing company where the world's only artisan salt is produced with 100%

geothermal energy, following a 200 year-old method.

Eagles and Lava in Heydalur

It is hardly possible to drive in the Westfjords without admiring the numerous sights of its huge mountains. Take your time for breaks. Your next stop could be in Mjóafjörður, visiting Heydalur, a remote valley that saw its first settlers in the year 1100. Hotel Heydalur offers various outdoor activities and it's inspiring to stay in the majestic silence of an old volcanic area, which displays extraordinary lava formations, rich vegetation and, of course, vivid Icelandic birdlife. You might be lucky and find eagles sailing on the northern winds, and falcons and merlins are also regular sights.

From Remoteness into Bustle and Back

The road along the pretty inner fjords takes you into Skútufjörður, where you can visit the old turf house at Lítili Bær, dating back to 1894, which was inhabited until 1969. Step in and get a feeling for how it might have been in the old days! Just 500m away at Hvítanes, seals can be seen just metres from the coastline offering a nice opportunity to

meet a species that rarely shows itself to travellers on land.

The village of Súðavík, on the banks of the Álftafjörður fjord and under the impressive Kofri mountain, has a special place in the hearts of many Icelanders. In January 1995 the town was hit by a huge avalanche, destroying many houses and taking many lives. It led to the entire village moving to an avalanche safe zone a little further into the fjord. The homes which could not be moved are now rented out in summer time, and this 'old village' bustles with life between May and September. Súðavík's history began in the 10th century. Its oldest house dates back to 16th century, being the home of the adventurer Jón Indíafari, the India traveller. The village still has a lot to offer, like meeting the arctic fox in its museum at Melrakkasetur, or following fishing tradition with a sea angling trip 'into the Djúp'. Or simply hiking to the Valagil canyon, where lava has formed an exceptional landscape with waterfalls and hidden recesses. -DT





Súðavík

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+ 354 450 5900
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www.sudavik.is





MÝVATN NATURE BATHS

EXPERIENCE - RELAX - ENJOY

The Mývatn Nature Baths

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

The Kaffi Kvika Restaurant

Welcome to Kaffi Kvika or "Magma Café" located at the Mývatn Nature Baths. Here our guests can enjoy light meals, drinks and sweets in a beautiful setting with great view of the area.

Opening Hours

High season (June, July, August)	09:00-23:30
Low season (September - May)	12:00-21:30

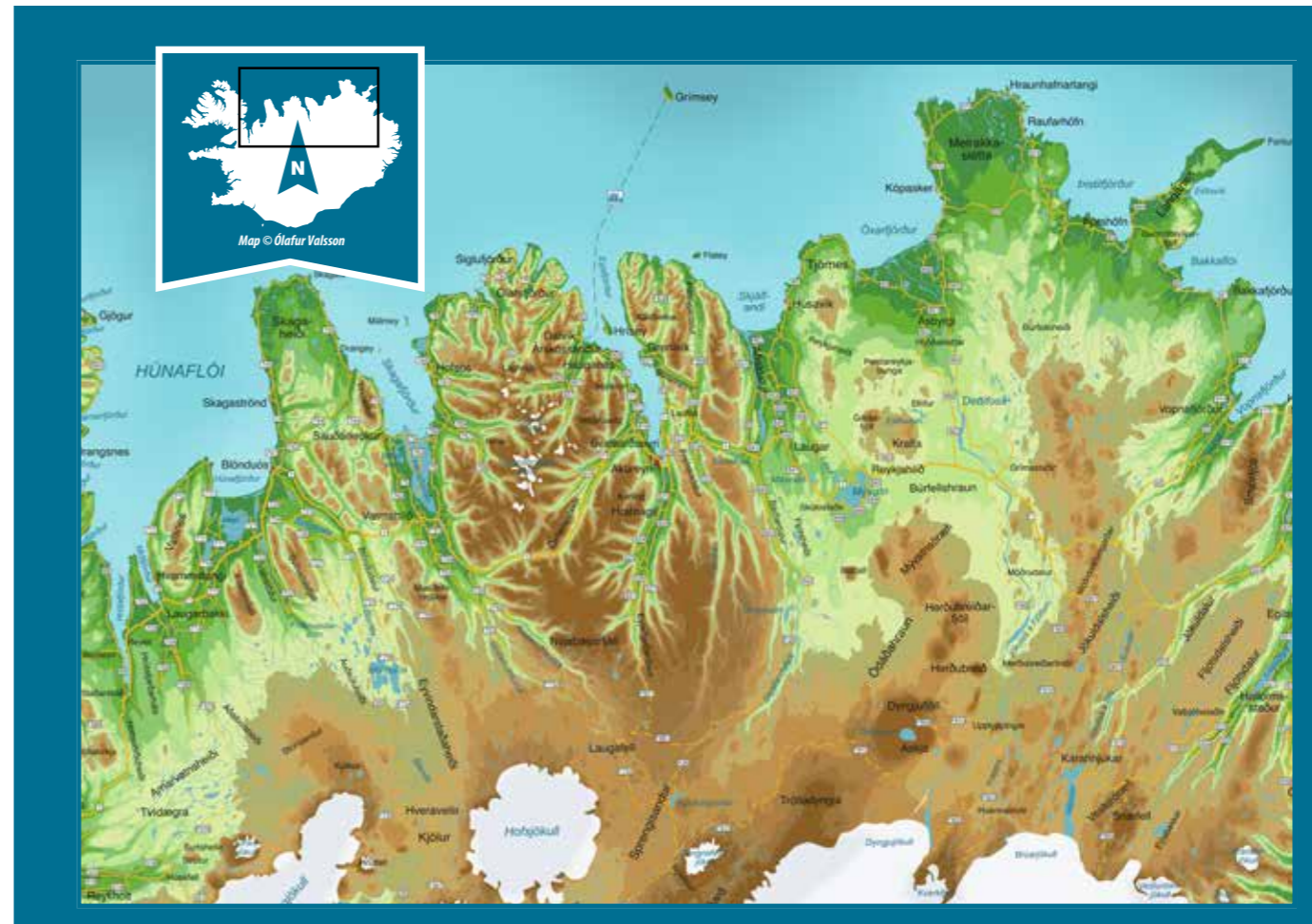
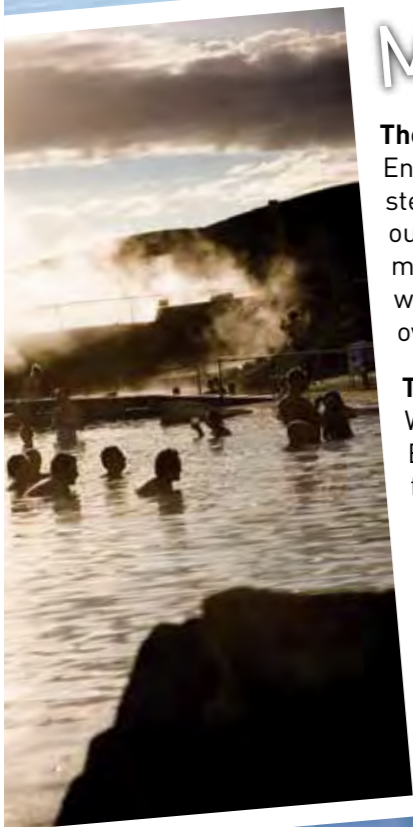
Lake Mývatn Area

The region is one of Europe's greatest natural treasures. Shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions and seismic activity down through the ages, the landscape around the 37 km² lake is spectacular panorama of surreal lava, crater and cave formations. The wetlands around the lake are teeming with plant and birdlife which are also home in summer to the swarms of midges from which the region takes its name.

Our staff is happy to help you out with information about things to do or see in the area.

Mývatn Nature Baths / Jarðböðin við Mývatn
 Jarðbaðshólar, 660 Mývatn, Iceland
 Tel: (+354) 464 4411, Email: info@naturebaths.com

www.naturebaths.com



Summer in the North is characterised by the midnight sun. You can play golf, go seal and whale watching, horse riding, hiking, swimming, fishing, river rafting, bird-watching, camping or simply enjoy the disparate forms of nature. The region wears a different coat in winter, when you can ride 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 Skagafjörður. Then Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltadal valley in Skagafjörður is Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of the first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest town of the north, along with its art galleries and rich culture.

NORTH ICELAND



AKUREYRI HEART OF THE NORTH

The Focal Point of Culture and Sights



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 horseriding tours, boat trips, bird watching, shopping—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 this winter—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 concerts of all genres, opera, 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 incentive tours, 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.

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 volcanos and boiling mud pools and, in fact, reach all the pearls of the north in under 2 hours.



Easy Access

Flights from both Keflavik international and Reykjavik airports take just 40 min. Scheduled busses drive twice a day between Reykjavik and Akureyri. There are numerous tours, some of which go through the highlands during summer months. The 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.

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

- ASF



Akureyrarstofa

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www.visitakureyri.is





POTENTIALLY AN EPIC ERUPTION

Bárðarbunga Stratovolcano is keeping everyone on the edge of their seats

Every now and then we are reminded that Iceland really is the Land of Fire and Ice. These days, the largest glacier in Europe by volume, Vatnajökull (Glacier of Lakes), is announcing that it actually hides beneath it part of one of the most impressive volcanic systems in Europe, if not the world. One of Earth's most powerful volcanoes covered by one of Europe's largest glaciers is the perfect depiction of the extremes that Iceland is famous for.

The Facts and Figures

The roughly 3,000km³ glacier blankets a small part of a huge volcanic system with a diverse range of volcanoes, and Bárðarbunga (Bardarbunga or Bart's bump) is but one of them. This roughly 2,000 metre-tall stratovolcano under the glacier is part of the 200 kilometre-long volcanic system that sits along the border of the eastern and northern volcanic rift zone, where the North American Plate meets the Eurasian Plate.

The two tectonic plates drift apart over a mantle plume, meaning magma flows in to fill the expanding rift. To give some idea of the potential lurking in this volcanic hot spot beneath all that ice, remember that this volcano once produced the largest

lava flow ever known over the past 10,000 years, some 8,600 years ago. That eruption resulted in a nearly 30km³ lava field that covered about 950km².

Recent Developments

Historically, there have been large eruptions at Bárðarbunga every 250 to 600 years, but the last major activity was between 1701 and 1864, or 150 to 300 years ago. Seismic activity has been steadily increasing since 2007, and Bárðarbunga started to rumble again in August. During that time, some 20,000 earthquakes have occurred. Most have been below magnitude 3, but more than 200 have gone over 3, and some had topped magnitude 5 by mid-September.

The seismic activity continues, and the whole Bárðarbunga caldera has been sinking. Scientists are not sure why but the physical movement of the 10 kilometre wide, and 700 metre deep caldera is a sure sign of massive volcanic activity underneath it. The molten lava, however, has actually been escaping to the surface at the Holuhraun fissure, which is located a few kilometres north of the glacier.

This eruption may be draining magma from under the Bárðarbunga

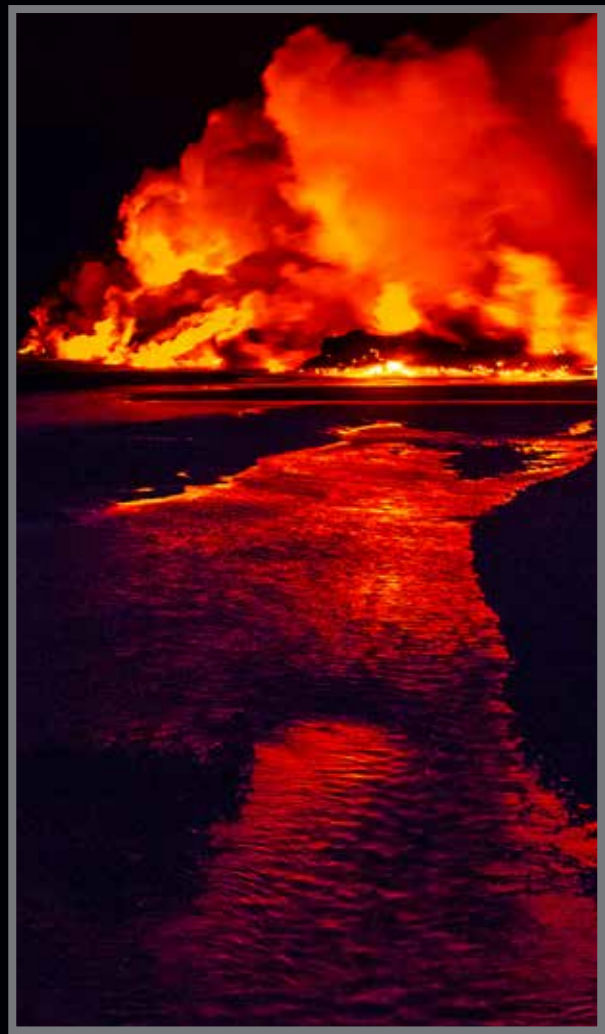
caldera, causing it sink. The centre crater at Holuhraun, called Baugur, has been responsible for most of the erupting lava, and it has been slowly forming a new caldera. The eruptive activity there is decreasing and some speculate that it might end within days.

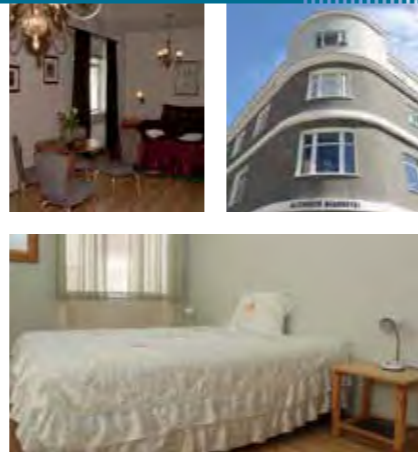
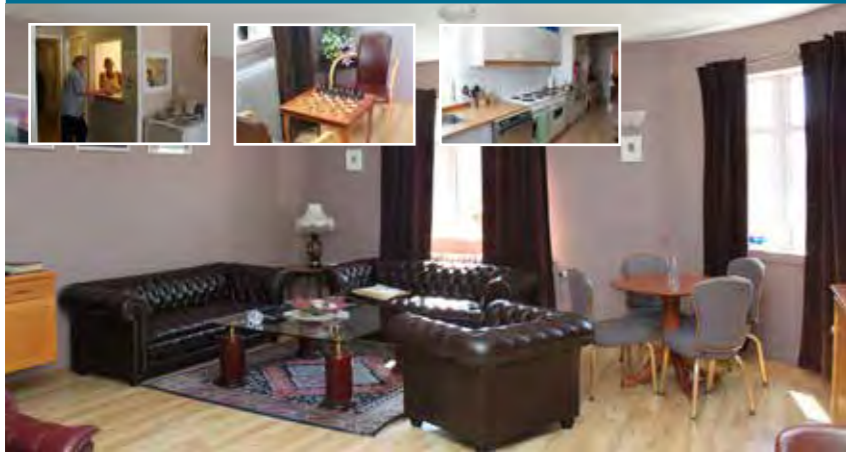
Mother Nature's display continues

This, however, does not signal the end of the show, by any means. In fact, local scientists predict that a new eruption will commence within days or weeks, but it is impossible to say anything for sure. The driving force is the activity under Bárðarbunga, so as long as it continues, the closing of the Holuhraun fissure just builds up pressure which will have to find its way out in new fissures somewhere along the 200 kilometre ridge, or worst of all, at the Bárðarbunga caldera itself. A sub-glacial eruption could bring devastating floods of epic proportions, so the authorities remain on high alert.

- SF

*Photography: Complementary of Saga Travel
Photographer: Völundur Jónsson*





TREASURE AT THE WORLD'S END

Siglufjörður Hostel provides great accommodation for travellers

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ASF



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





Hannes Boy and Kaffi Rauðka
 Among the top restaurants in the north of Iceland offer traditional specialities.
 Relax by the harbourside
Rauðka restaurant—food—live music



📍 Gránugata 5 • 580 Siglufjörður 📞 +354 467 1550 ✉️ raudka@raudka.is 🌐 www.raudka.is



Allinn

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

Adalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður 📞 +354 467 1111



PHOTOS: HAUKUR SMORRASON

HARMONISING WITH NATURE

North Aurora Guesthouse uses feng shui for energy and comfort

In Laugar, in the North of Iceland, you find North Aurora Guesthouse, a very beautiful and luxurious guesthouse where everyone is made to feel welcome. The house is designed with feng shui in mind so the flow of energy and comfort has been maximised. The guesthouse is also geopathic stress free.

The host and owner Bryndís Pétursdóttir says the North Aurora breakfast has a very

good variety of fresh and organic foods from local farms. "There is always free coffee or tea and our famous fresh baked cookies. Our guests are well nourished when they take off for the adventures of the day.

"They also tell me that this is a place where they can really get to know Icelanders. North Aurora is much more than just a place to sleep, even though the beds and



duvets offer great comfort. We provide an Icelandic home away from home."

North Aurora's guests can take short trips to Lake Mývatn (27 km), Húsavík for whale watching (40 km), Goðafoss (15 km), Dettifoss (96 km), Ásbyrgi (86 km), plus day tours to the Askja Volcano. North Aurora guests are welcome to book these trips with a licensed guide (kip.is) who lives on the premises.

Laugar is one of the best places to see the aurora borealis from September to April, and Kárhóll in Laugar has been chosen for the China-Iceland Joint Aurora Observatory (CIAO).

- HDB



North Aurora Guesthouse
 Lautavegur 8 • 650 Laugar
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 north@auroraguesthouse.is
 www.auroraguesthouse.is



THE NORTH EATS THAI

The Popular Krua Siam Restaurant Feeds Folk in Akureyri

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

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

Set Apart

Besides the experienced Thai staff, what sets these restaurants apart is that all the spices, rice and noodles that are uniquely Thai are brought in directly from Thailand. However, the meat and vegetables are pure

Icelandic and this is what contributes to the delicious flavour in every meal. Each meal is freshly prepared and cooked to order on the spot to get the most flavour.

Eat What You Like for Less

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

With a large range of dishes to choose from, you can eat like a Thai—taking a piece from a number of different dishes.

It's a great way to eat as a family or a group of friends.

Drinks to go with the meal

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



stocks alcoholic beverages—along with juices and soft drinks.

Catering to the Need

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

- ASF



Krua Siam
 Strandgötu 13 • 600 Akureyri
 +354 466 3800
 kruasiam@kruasiam.is
 www.kruasiam.is



OPEN FOR DREAMS

Hotel Bláfell relaxes your senses



Travelling East Iceland in winter is a journey with additional flair. Summer's business has faded away; nature has changed its colours. Mountains and roads are taking a rest and silently await visitors who are looking for a unique experience, like the dancing Northern Lights on a clear winter's evening.

While walking the ancient paths, you will hear nothing but the wind between the bushes and the colourful stones, as most of the birds have left for southern climes and the cattle are by now in the cowsheds. You can hear the sound of your own breathing. The solitude creates an overwhelming tranquility, a oneness in close connection to the earth—and opens one's mind to thoughts and dreams.

The end of a perfect day

There is nothing like ending such a perfect day in a cosy countryside hotel at the East Icelandic seaside. Nothing like lounging on soft leather sofas, enjoying delicious

hot chocolate in front of an open fire, reading a good book from the library and later having dinner made from the best local ingredients such as lamb or fresh-water fish.

Tranquility and relaxation by the bay

Situated on a peaceful and broad bay in the Eastern fjords, Hotel Bláfell is both comfortable and charming. The old timber house with its eye-catching blue roof in the middle of the small fishing town of Breiðdalsvík impresses with its warm and welcoming atmosphere. The cosy wooden interior has been tastefully decorated by owners Friðrik Arnason and his wife Hrafnhildur Hafsteinsdóttir.

The hotel's history dates back to 1982 and has attracted guests who appreciate the peaceful atmosphere with a touch of romance. For decades it has been a well-known weekend retreat just off National Road No. 1, between Djúpvogur and Egilsstaðir.

A comfortable stay

Hotel Bláfell prides itself on its restaurant and its log cabin-like 34 rooms with free Wi-Fi. There are single-rooms, double-rooms and family-rooms, all with adjoining bathroom and TV. The rooms are bright and spacious, each with its own charm and character. When the days get shorter and colder, you want to feel at home while travelling—and that's exactly what Hotel Bláfell is made for.

Just relax in the hotel sauna after your promenade along the endless black beach of Breiðdalsvík or dream away in front of the fireplace. Refreshed and with renewed energy, you might make your way into the silent East Icelandic night to discover some unforgettable Northern Lights. -DT




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EMBRACED BY THE NATURE OF EAST ICELAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Staðarborg include a jacuzzi and a grassy sports field.

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

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

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



Hótel Staðarborg
Staðarborg • 760 Breiðdalsvík
+354 475 6760
stadarborg@simnet.is
www.stadarborg.is



The Seahouse Restaurant / Randulffs-seahouse

**OPEN FROM
12:00 to 21:00**

**every day from
June to
September
2014**



**Also open
for groups by
arrangement.**



Strandgata 96 / 735 Eskifjörður / +354 477 1247 / mjoeyri@mjoeyri.is



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Hafnarbraut 42 / Höfn / Sími: +354 478 2600 / www.kaffihorn.is / kaffihornid@eldhorn.is



ON TOP OF THE WORLD

A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- EMV

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



Glacier Jeeps
Silfurbraut 15 • 780 Hornaförður
+354 478 1000
glacierjeeps@simnet.is
www.glacierjeeps.is





SOUTH ICELAND

South Iceland has a long list of sights and activities

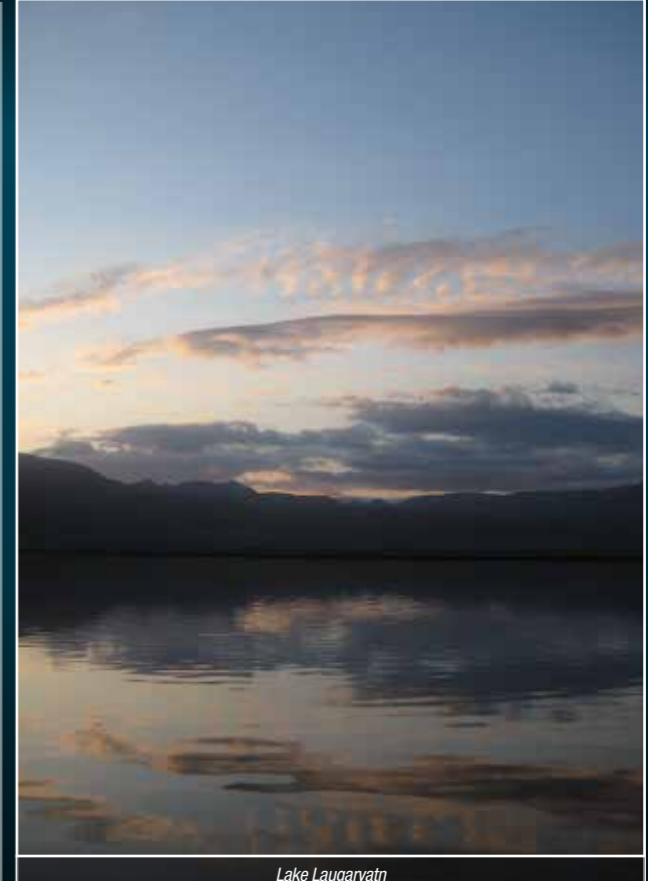
Pingvellir National Park



The wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be experienced in the region.

This region has geological wonders such as Geysir; the Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss waterfalls; Pingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanos like Hekla, the Gateway to Hell, Lakagígar, 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 Pingvellir; museums, churches, the Stöng settlement, the Saga centre and villages like Eyrarbakki. Activities abound. Tours take you to all the sites, including the glaciers. Horse riding tours are popular. Try the riverjet, boat trips or kayaking; scuba diving in clear waters, 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.



Lake Laugarvatn

Photos: courtesy of the South Iceland Marketing Office, Visit South Iceland.



A TASTE OF ICELAND'S WILD & SWEET

Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro

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

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

Mecca of Icelandic Wild Game

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



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

Passion for purity and freshness

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients. Located in the heart of Iceland's

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

In the heart of the Golden Circle

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

- EMV/ASF



Lindin Restaurant

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 www.laugarvatn.is



SHARING THE BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE

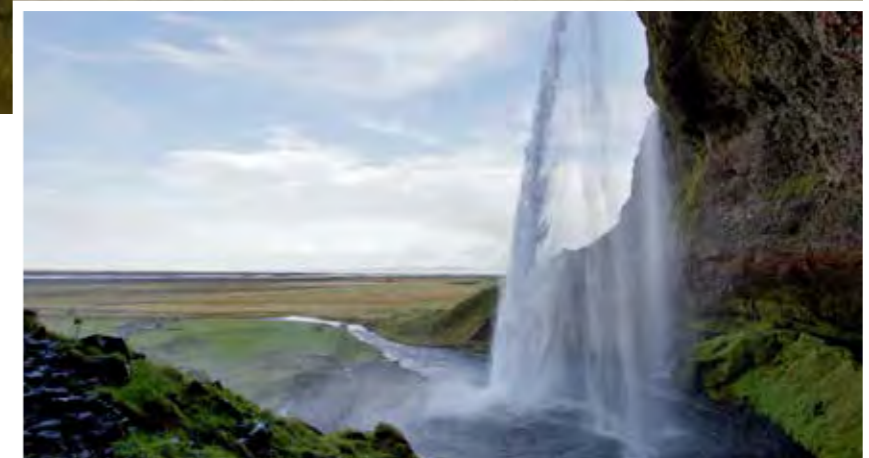
Hotel Laki is set in one of Iceland's most scenic spots



Hotel Laki is run by a family who have been living in Efri-Vík since 1968. At first, they were traditional farmers but since 1973, the family has also been involved with the travel services and started building Hotel Laki in 2005 beside their old home. Today there are 64 rooms available in different categories and 15 summer time cottages.

This clean and modern Scandinavian-style hotel is proud of its challenging golf course as well as the cosy gift shop which carries woollen goods and paintings by local artists, jewellery and various hand-made items.

Hotel Laki was designed to make the most of the abundant Icelandic summer light. It has very large vertical and panoramic windows which flood the spacious dining and recreation areas with natural light and on the far horizon, the



gargantuan Vatnajökull Glacier presides over the landscape.

The magical Northern Lights

You will find a warm welcome at Hotel Laki to experience the magic of the nature in the countryside, the bright summer nights or the darkness of the winter with the Northern Lights. They strive to fulfill all your needs and exceed your expectations by offering you simply the best possible service in the most amazing surroundings. There is 24-hour room service and free WiFi in all the rooms. They're located close to many of Iceland's best known natural gems and are more than happy to assist you in planning your stay.

In the area of Kirkjubæjarklaustur you will find all the different services, such as a bank, swimming pool, post office, a supermarket, a garage, a doctor, the information centre and a café, among others.

- Víkurflóð is a small lake 500m east of the hotel where you can go fishing. Fresh water fish, river trout and sea trout. Angling licences are sold at the reception.
- A 9 hole golfcourse is next to the hotel. Licences are sold at the reception.
- In the old barn by the hotel you can see bygone farming tools. Ask at the reception.
- Hólasport offers adventure tours on 4x4 quad bikes and in super SUVs. Further information on www.holasport.is or ask at the reception.

Hotel Laki is open all year for you to enjoy.

- HH



Hotel Laki

Efri-Vík 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustur
 +354 412 4600
 hotellaki@hotellaki.is
 www.hotellaki.is





REFRESHING VÍK

Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

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

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

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



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



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 halldorskaffi@gmail.com
 www.halldorskaffi.is



A FOUR STAR TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

South Iceland Tourist Information Centre, Hveragerði

Located inside Hveragerði's Sunnumörk shopping centre, the spacious Tourist Information Centre is one of the most interesting and informative in Iceland.

Open all year round, it is home to a riveting geological exhibition detailing the aftermath of the 6.3 earthquake that shook the town on 29th May, 2008.

The free exhibition shows the damage to buildings and the environment and contains an earthquake simulator that allows visitors to experience for themselves how a 6.6 earthquake feels.

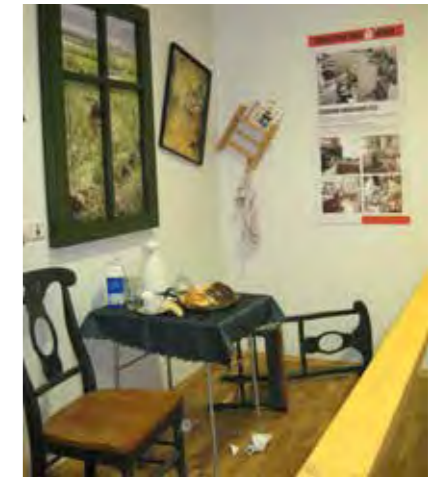
A shopping centre on two continents

While the ground was being prepared for the building of the shopping centre, a

large crack running deep in the earth was discovered on the site. Instead of moving to another location or scrapping their plans, it was decided to build the shopping centre right over the rift that was discovered to be a part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The exposed crack is now visible through glass panels in the floor, creating a very unique natural feature to the centre.

A post office within

Inside the Tourist Information Centre you will find a variety of useful detailed maps and brochures from around Iceland as well as helpful personnel who are on hand to answer your questions or even help you organize your trip around the country.



Glossy coffee-table books about Iceland are available to purchase, as well as souvenirs and postcards that can be sent on the spot from the post office conveniently located right inside the information centre. - EMV



South Iceland Tourist Information Centre
 Sunnumörk 2-4 • 810 Hveragerði
 +354 483 4601
 tourinfo@hveragerdi.is
 www.hveragerdi.is



Folk Museum in Eyrarbakki

The Southcoast Museum



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

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

Húsið prides itself on its warm and homelike atmosphere.



Address: "The House" 820 Eyrarbakki.
 Tel: +354 483 1504 & +354 483 1082.
 e-mail: husid@husid.com • www.husid.com

Opening hours: Summer:
 May 15th - September 15th daily 11.00-18.00 or by agreement.
 Winter: By agreement

EAT AT THE SOURCE



Dine on Delicious Langoustines at Eyrarbakki's Rauða húsið

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

Now a tranquil village, Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the

early 1900s and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere.

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

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

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

Serving a variety of delicious fish and meat dishes, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients. Choose an evening of indulgence and you can savour the Catch of the Day, consisting of two different seafood dishes. The lamb dishes are absolutely delightful. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of the Rauða húsið's signature desserts.

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





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HVOLSVÖLLUR SOUTH ICELAND

More than meets the eye

Just 100km southeast of Reykjavik lies the quiet little village of Hvolsvöllur. For all its apparent small size however, Hvolsvöllur nevertheless remains one of the most important service towns in the region. Don't be deceived by Hvolsvöllur's placid exterior, for there's more going on here than meets the eye.

First of all, Hvolsvöllur is the home turf of a few very famous and/or infamous volcanoes. Eyjafjallajökull is the one that was on everyone's lips in 2010. Nearby, the Hekla volcano has kept people on their toes throughout the years and last erupted in 2000, though it has been not showing any signs of activity recently. The present fissure eruption of Hólahraun in Vatnajökull Glacier is much too far away to have any impact in Hvolsvöllur, so there is nothing to fear as far as that is concerned.

Take the scenic drive into Fljótshlíð
 Road 261 takes you into one of the most charming and pastoral valleys of south Iceland, where one has the rare opportunity to gaze upon no less than three glaciers at once. The road opens up to a spectacular



view of Mýrdalsjökull straight ahead, Eyjafjallajökull to your right and the topmost peaks of Tindfjallajökull to your left. The paved road eventually turns to gravel and then you are looking right across the Markafjót River, with Eyjafjallajökull

looming large in front of you. The rustic Fljótisdalur Youth Hostel, with its traditional turf roof, sits high on a hill at the very end of Road 261, with amazing views to the volcano and the Thorsmörk Mountain Reserve. The youth hostel boasts one of the largest and oldest libraries of English language books about Iceland in the country and opens from 1st April to 31st October, 2015.

Accommodation in the Area

Throughout the valley you will find numerous possibilities for accommodation at various farms and guest houses. Hotel Fljótshlíð at Smáratún Farm, open year-round, offers comfortable rooms with en suite bathrooms, as well as a guest house with made-up beds or sleeping bag accommodation. Just nearby is Hellishólar, a popular location that offers cosy chalets and camping, plus an 18 hole golf course that could easily win the prize for being the most scenic golf course in Iceland. On a clear day, the view to the glaciers from both Smáratún Farm and Hellishólar is exceptionally beautiful.



Picturesque Church of Hlíðarendi

Further along, we come to the picturesque Hlíðarendi church, built in 1897. It is also one of the sites of Brennu-Njáls Saga, the longest and most celebrated of the Icelandic Sagas. You can drive up to the church, from where you can explore the area and get a feel for the immensity of the panoramic views that Gunnar of Hlíðarendi of Njáls Saga fame found impossible to leave behind.

The Icelandic Bayeux Tapestry

For those with an interest in history, Hvolsvöllur is also home to The Saga Centre, located across from Hotel Hvolsvöllur. The centre offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the vast and fascinating world of the ancient sagas, and Njáls Saga in particular, via a multilingual exhibition. The Saga Centre now boasts an intriguing version of the famous Bayeux Tapestry called Njálsrefill in Icelandic, or The Njáls Saga Tapestry, which depicts the events of the saga itself. For a small 7 euro fee, visitors may try their hand at embroidering a section

of the tapestry and thereby taking part in the creation of this living and breathing work of art. The finished tapestry is expected to be 90 metres long and is estimated to take another three years to complete. Winter opening hours are Tuesdays 19.00 to 22.00, Thursdays from 14.00 to 17.00 and Saturdays from 10.00 to 17.00.

An overview of the region would not be complete without mentioning the charming Anna Country Hotel, named after Anna from Moldnúpur who was born and bred on the very farm where the hotel is located. The hotel is steeped in the history and lore from Anna's colourful and adventurous life exploring Denmark and other European countries at a time when few Icelanders ever left Iceland, especially not a woman from the countryside.

Although hardly an exhaustive list of all there is to see and do, several highlights are covered here in an effort to give travellers a head start in their discovery of Hvolsvöllur in the beautiful Rangárthing-eystra district. -EMV



The Saga Centre

Hlíðarveggi 14 • 860 Hvolsvöllur
 +354 487 8043
 tourinfo@hvolsvollur.is







FEEL THE BEAT—FEEL THE FREEDOM

Horseback riding on the beach with Alhestar

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

The man from Skagafjörður

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

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

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

The freedom of horseback riding

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

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

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

Try out, try longer

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

- DT



Alhestar
Fjarborg - Reykjavík
+354 650 6200
info@alhestar.com
www.alhestar.com

SELFOSS HOSTEL



The only hostel with both a hot tub and a hammock in Iceland

Selfoss Hostel is a remodelled house in the centre of town. It has 1-7 person rooms without private facilities, and a guests' well equipped kitchen and laundromat. The patio is a great place to sit down and relax with a nice cup of coffee and write those postcards. Breakfast is provided. You can also purchase a take-away lunchbox and coffee and cakes. The receptionists are a fountain of knowledge

and can assist with your questions and book daytours in the area.

Selfoss is a lovely town of around 6,000 inhabitants in South Iceland. It is located on Road No. 1, a perfect stop for those who are travelling inland to Gullfoss and Geysir or the highlands, or who want to explore the south shore or are continuing onwards. There is a great swimming pool, with several hot tubs, sauna and a slide.



Selfoss is on the banks of Ölfusá river and there's a lovely evening walk along the riverbank. For golfers, there's a 9 hole course on town's outskirts. For hikers, Mt Ingólfsfall is close by with a magnificent view over the plains of South Iceland to the mountains in the north and east and all the way to the Westman Islands. The town has an Art Museum and its church has beautiful stained glass windows. The Bobby Fischer Chess Museum is a 1 minute walk away.

Selfoss Hostel
Austurvegur 28 • 800 Selfoss
+354 482 1600
www.selfosshostel.is

A TASTE OF ETHIOPIA

Ancient African Coffee and Cuisine in Upcountry Flúðir

Flúðir is possibly one of the best locations in Iceland for an Ethiopian restaurant. Ethiopians are famous for their fasting 150 days a year, which means they are not allowed to eat any kind of meat.

With Flúðir being one of the largest greenhouse areas in Iceland, the access to vegetarian ingredients has to be the

best. Even when serving the traditional Ethiopian chicken and beef dishes, the plates are loaded with very fresh vegetables.

The owners of Minilik in Flúðir are Árni Hannesson and Aseb Kahssay and they opened the restaurant in June 2011.

It has proved to be popular, especially with tourists—and the local people are catching on, too, warming to this exotic and wonderful food with locally grown vegetables and imported Ethiopian herbs and spices. Chicken and beef come from Icelandic stock and, blended together, they make a delicious meal that has to be tried.

Coffee in traditional style

One cannot enter an Ethiopian restaurant without getting acquainted with their lovely coffee ceremony and at Minilik, Flúðir it is a real treat as the Ethiopians are second to none when it comes to coffee.

The restaurant can seat 25 diners and also provides take-away. So, if you are staying in a summerhouse near Flúðir, you can also order



their splendid dishes for both large and small parties. As Minilik is a small restaurant, be sure to book your table ahead.

- SS

Minilik Restaurant
Gilsbakka • 845 Flúðir
+354 846 9798
azeb-kassay@hotmail.com
www.minilik.is

FIRE UNDER THE SNOW

Under the mountains behind Reykjavik lies a hidden power

The columns of steam, rising high into the sky, are clearly visible from the capital. Deep below the mountains, the earth is still burning hot and today, that heat provides a source of warmth and electricity for all the capital area.

The Geothermal Energy Exhibition on the Mountain

Just about a 20 minute drive by car, Sterna line or Iceland Excursions-Grayline Iceland



coach, the Geothermal Energy Exhibition on Hellsheiði makes a fascinating and educational visit at any time of the year. In many ways, it is even more spectacular in the snowy winter months, providing such a contrast between the conditions on the surface compared to those below ground.

This is the newest and largest geothermal plant in Iceland and Orkusýn provides a rare look into the one of the world's most powerful clean energy resources. Multimedia displays and experienced guides explain how Iceland has become a leader in this form of clean energy and you can get a close look at its production.

Refreshments are available in the café while books and DVDs about geothermal energy are to be found in the souvenir area. If you would like to get a better understanding of clean energy, this is the best place to visit.

-ASF



Orkusýn
 Jarðhitaáningin, Hellsheiðarvirkjun, Route 1 South
 +354 412 5800
 orkusyn@orkusyn.is
 www.orkusyn.is



HOTEL VESTMANNAEYJAR

A family friendly oasis in the unique Westman islands

Explore the uniquely breathtaking scenery of the Westman Island while staying at the comfortable and relaxing Hotel Vestmannaeyjar. The recently upgraded and renovated hotel offers 43 comfortably furnished rooms, all with en-suite bathroom, TV and Wi-Fi with the option of flexible room arrangements whether you are traveling alone, as a couple or in a family group.

Nearby hiking trails and bird watching areas are within walking distance and for thrill seekers, the hotel offers exciting activities and tours, ensuring that every guest finds an activity to their liking.

With the renovation of Landeyjarhöfn, transportations to the Westman Islands has drastically improved. The Herjólfur ferry now sails back and forth to the island 5 times a day during summer and 4 times during winter.

Worth mentioning is the hotel's relaxing spa, beauty and massage parlour (with Jacuzzi and sauna). The bar and restaurant offer a delightful area for guests to socialise in and the exquisite, locally sourced food, gives guests a true taste of the Westman Islands.



Low budget option

Guesthouse Sunnuhóll is managed by Hotel Vestmannaeyjar and provides guests with a low budget accommodation option right next door. Each room can accommodate from two to five people and Sunnuhóll guests are welcome to order breakfast in the hotel dining room as well as access the hotel's other amenities.

Sunnuhóll is a great choice for those looking for less expensive accommodation, without forfeiting comfort.

Hotel Vestmannaeyjar
 Vestmannabraut 28-900 Vestmannaeyjar
 +354 481 2900
 www.hotelvestmannaeyjar.is
 booking@hotelvestmannaeyjar.is

A dream come true

There are 8 beautiful cottages at Nupar. They are right outside Hveragerdi and it is a dream come true for everyone who wishes to be in a quiet and comforting surrounding but yet close to all services.

We offer four cottages for 2-3 persons, each with one bedroom, and four cottages for 4-5 persons, that have two bedrooms. The cottages are extremely beautiful and accomodating, with a hot tub and a grill on the porch.

Nearby Nupar you will find a horserental and lots of nice walking routes.

Núpar I-II - 816 Ölfus - www.nupar.is - nupar@nupar.is - Tel. (354) 857-2040



Come and join us for a day to remember

+354 661 1810
 info@ribsafari.is



VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale

Mountainous and mysterious, the Westman Islands are one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Formed during volcanic eruption centuries ago, Westman Islands also host one of the youngest volcano's in the world, Eldfell, that formed in 1973 during a major volcanic eruption. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the skyline of Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade.

The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands is with Viking Tours' Circle Tour. This 90-minute tour takes you around the main island of Heimaey

where you will peek into sea caves and observe towering cliffs teeming with a variety of birdlife. The tour concludes with the sensational live sounds of haunting instrumental music, filling the singing cave of Klettshellur which is renowned for its superb acoustics.

The Coach Tour

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

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

From hot Soup to hot Lava

All Vikingur II tours begin and end at the cozy Café Kró down at the Vestmaneyar

www.icelandictimes.com



harbour where you can enjoy a bowl of hot soup with bread and coffee.

New Tours Available for Groups Only

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

See you this summer in the Westman Islands! - EMV



Viking Tours
Tangagötu 7-900 Vestmannaeyjum
+354 488 4884
viking@vikingtours.is
www.vikingtours.is




THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

The Eldheimar Volcano Museum on the Westman Islands

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

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

Heroes Saving a Home

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

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii, which in 73 AD, was buried under thick layers of ash and

lava from Mt. Vesuvius. Huge parts of the historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

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

A Museum as a Mirror

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

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m² 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.




Eldheimar
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SHARE YOUR STORY!

We asked our Facebook friends to give us a glimpse of their adventures here in Iceland by sharing their holiday photographs with us. We encouraged professionals and amateurs alike to partake in the contest and tell us about their holiday experience here in Iceland.

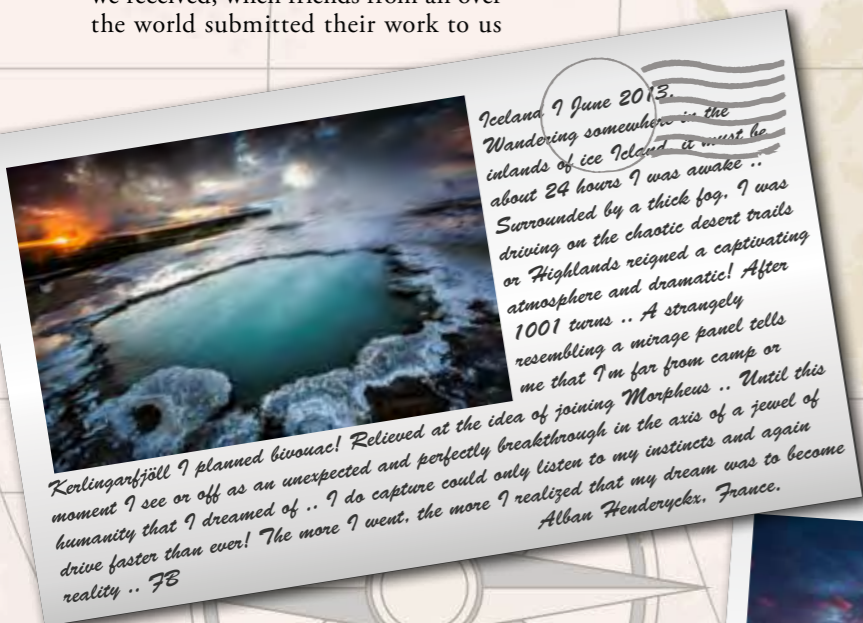
We left it open to interpretation weather the photograph should tell the whole story or if a short narrative could be added.

We were overjoyed by the responses we received, when friends from all over the world submitted their work to us

for others to enjoy. We are ecstatic to now share these entries with you in this edition.

Again, we want to thank everyone that participated and enabled the rest of us to reap the benefits of their experiences and art work. You are all simply awesome!

Dear reader, if you are intrigued to view the complete collection, you can visit our website at www.icelandictimes.com.

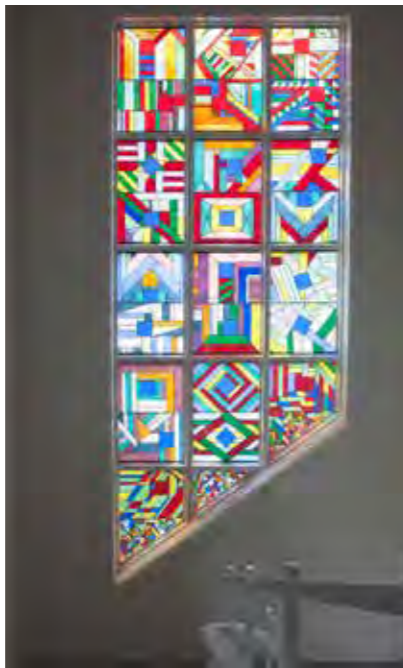


THE SIMPLE LIFE OF THE ICELANDIC COUNTRYSIDE

Budget-Friendly Guest House Ljósafossskóli

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

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



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

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

For those who prefer more spacious and private quarters, Ljósafossskóli Guest House also offers a fully furnished 4 bedroom/2 bath house which sits just a hundred metres from the main building. Completely refurbished in a modern and relaxing style, the house is perfect for families and includes a self-contained kitchen, bed linens, towels, sleeping up to 8 people.

Ljósafossskóli Guest House is well situated with easy access to nearby natural attractions—Geysir—55km, Þingvellir—20km, Selfoss—20km, Reykjavík—70km and around 100km from Keflavík International Airport. *- HP*

 **Ljósafossskóli Guest House**
Brúarás 1 • 801 Selfoss
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www.myguesthouse.is 

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

Picture hunting with the photographer Rafn Sig

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

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

Small groups, big chances

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

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

Like-minded travelling companions

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

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

Fascination of the Westfjords

Rabbi likes to travel to the Westfjords—Iceland's forgotten paradise and one of the least visited areas of the island. Everything in the Westfjords is extreme—from the almost vertical cliffs to the terrible storms that have created the coastline's wrinkled face. Iceland's most famous cliff, Látrabjarg, offers an opportunity to experiment with your camera's exposure timing to capture flying puffins and other seabirds. A photo trip so far in the north is not for the timid,

with temperatures rarely reaching 10 degrees, and frequent icebergs drifting past the coast.

Treasure Hunting

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

You can find a sampling of Rafn's photo art and his tour offers on his websites: www.islandsmyndir.is www.IceStockPhotos.com

- DT



Rafn Sig, -







Reykjavik at night by air



Bridge covered with fog by the City Hall



Höfði in Reykjavík



Northern lights outside Harpa Music Hall



Reykjavik in the twilight by air



Rafn Sig,-



Brennugjá at Þingvellir

Fissure at Þingvellir



Glacier Sólheimajökull



Mountain in the highlands



Lambatangi at Lake Kleifarvatn



Volcanic eruption at Holuhraun in the highlands



Candlelit glacier in Jökulsárlón



Volcanos from the air



Volcanic Eruption in glacier Eyjafjallajökull



Volcanic Eruption in glacier Eyjafjallajökull



THE ICELANDIC SHEEP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lambing Time

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



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

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

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

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

The Réttir (Round-up)

Farmers gather their flocks in the autumn. Systematically, they round up the sheep all over the country. There is practically no place in the wilderness of the highlands of Iceland where sheep cannot be found during the summer—except maybe on the glaciers.



The round-up is conducted on horseback or on foot with the assistance of sheepdogs. The entire process may take up to a week and, during this time, participants stay overnight in mountain huts, where they pen in the sheep they have gathered so far, then hang up their damp clothes, uncork their hip flasks and swap stories and songs.

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

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

After the sheep have been herded into the correct pens they are divided up. Those destined for the slaughterhouse are removed from the flock. Those destined to live graze

on fields on or near the farm, until November, when they are housed for the winter.

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

A Valuable Resource

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

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

–AMB





GREENLAND – THE ARCTIC’S PROMISED LAND

The Gateway to Wilderness of the North

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

Destructive Beauty

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

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

Whale and seal meat was the ‘gold’ of the 17th and 18th centuries when Scandinavian hunters arrived and began to trade with the native Inuit. Still a source of income



for many today, Greenlanders depend on the use of dog sleds, kayaks and traditional hunting weapons to continue to provide their basic foods.

Tradition Meets the Present

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

Everything in this country seems to be pure, yet exotic at the same time. Even the bustling capital, Nuuk, presents itself as a surprisingly modern town with all the comforts of a contemporary city and a well-developed tourist sector that spans the entire country. A population of only 57,000 inhabitants live on this huge island with its endless coastline, connecting tradition with modernity. Art, music and fashion play an important role on this vast continent which has found its own unique style.

Venturing northwards from Nuuk, the surrounding vegetation becomes noticeably sparse, compelling inhabitants to preserve their traditional nomadic lifestyle by hunting

reindeer, musk oxen and polar bears. Arctic storms make it quite an uncomfortable place, and due to the hidden crevasses resulting from glacial melting, also a fairly dangerous one.

The Summer Country

In summer, the flora has established itself—more than 4,000 different plants, flowers and herbs can be found on both coasts and the numerous islands. The short summers give rise to a kind of growth frenzy, where plants compete for their place in the sun and almost every soil-covered spot sports a multitude of flowers. The two-month long festival of nature celebrates the short arctic summer, when temperatures indeed can reach up to 20°C in June and July. Despite the ever-changing weather, the dry arctic air assures clear views of the spectacular scenery. Even distant mountain ranges seem nearer than they actually are and the complete silence gives one a feeling of reverence.

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

Icebergs Everywhere

There is hardly anything more magical than bathing in the hot spring of Uunartoq while watching icebergs float by. Greenland’s hot springs can reach up to 60°C and icebergs can be seen everywhere. However, no place is as suitable for experiencing the dramatic sight of inland ice as in Kangerlussuaq,

West Greenland. Serving as Greenland’s international airport, the town is also called the ‘Gateway to Greenland.’ From here you can easily reach Russel Glacier by foot, dog sledge or helicopter or lose yourself in the picturesque fjords of King Frederik’s Land on a kayak trip. The ethereal calm and clear weather of Kangerlussuaq makes it an ideal winter destination—nowhere in the world are your chances of spotting the Northern Lights as high as in this town with 300 cloudless nights per year!

The Gateway to the Wilderness

For those who seek adventure and solitude, the gateway to the wilderness is accessible from the country’s east coast. Until the last century, East Greenland had literally been cut off from the rest of the country and the outside world by an impenetrable wall of rock and ice. Thus the inhabitants of this isolated location were forced to develop their own culture, language and oral tradition. To this day, the people there are still deeply connected to nature.

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

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

-DT



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