

RANGÁ REVIEW

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SEASONAL MAGAZINE

WWW.HOTELRANGA.IS

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ANNIVERSARY

Hotel Rangá has celebrated its 20th anniversary all year long with cake, giveaways on social media and practical jokes on the radio.

page 06/07

BLUE BOOTS BRIDE

A story about a unique wedding day for couples in search for something special.

page 20/25

THE HIGHLANDS

The Icelandic highlands is the place to go if you want to get away from the crowds, enjoy the silence and take the most spectacular photographs.



SUMMER COCKTAILS

We all have an extra stomach when it comes to desserts but if you are feeling a little full after your main course, these summer cocktails will satisfy your sweet tooth without blowing your belt buckle off. Give them a try at home or join us for a drink under the midnight sun!



Picture by Rowell Photography

BAKEWELL TART

This cocktail is based on a traditional British dessert made of shortcrust pastry, jam and almond crust.

INGREDIENTS:

30 ml Chambord
30 ml Maraschino Bols Liqueur
30 ml Disaronno Amaretto
Topped with a layer of gently whipped cream and dark chocolate

BANOFFEE MARTINI

A classic mix of banana and caramel flavours combined to create a refreshing cocktail.

INGREDIENTS:

30 ml Karmel Stolichnaya Vodka
15 ml Banana Liqueur
3 cm of fresh, ripe banana
30 ml cream
Banana and cocoa powder garnish

RANGÁ'S ESPRESSO MARTINI

Try this Espresso Martini with our home-made dark chocolate and orange zest syrup.

INGREDIENTS:

30 ml Katla Vodka
30 ml Orange/Chocolate Syrup
30 ml Espresso
Chocolate and orange zest garnish

Front cover photo by Rafn Sig,- Landscape and Nature Documentary Photographer.
For more beautiful landscape photos from Iceland we recommend his webpage: www.discoverwildiceland.is



LAVA SHOT GLASSES

Brennivín, Iceland's traditional clear, unsweetened schnapps, is a drink best served cold. At Hotel Rangá, we serve it at freezing temperatures in shot glasses that once were lava.

"We make them from basalt, Icelandic columnar basalt," says stonemason Þór Sigmundsson.

"They are handmade, carved with a hammer and chisel, so every shot glass is unique."

Basalt is a dark, fine-grained volcanic rock. Sometimes, it displays in column like structures such as the beautiful rock formations in Reynisfjara.

"The idea is that it looks like a crater and cliffs, there's a wildness to it," Þór continues. "The basalt drinks in the cold so when you put it in the freezer it gets frosty."

Þór and his small company of six, Steinkompaníið, have been making these shot glasses twenty years. He says they don't do all that well in tourist shops - people often mistake the glasses for candle holders. People have to see the magic in action like they do at Hotel Rangá to understand how exciting the glasses are.

Þór actually gave the crown prince of Denmark a set of basalt shot glasses a few years ago. Þór had been tasked with fixing up the royal rocks at Geysir, which had been carved each time a king of Denmark visited Iceland, and the crown prince came for the celebration.

"He seemed to really like them, but he may have just hidden them away in a drawer somewhere," Þór says with a laugh.

We like to think his royal highness keeps his shot glasses on hand for when he wants that fresh, cold taste in his mouth and a warm, fiery feeling in his heart.

In any case, at Hotel Rangá we keep our set in rotation so that you can have your Brennivín on the rocks, literally. If you love the shot glasses, you can even take them home! Ask your waiter during dinner or contact our front desk to purchase.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

The 25th of April marked the official start of summer on the Icelandic calendar and Hotel Rangá's 20-year anniversary - hip hip hooray!

Our small, family owned luxury hotel has now been in business for 20 years. We have added rooms and suites, our menu has grown and so has our reputation as we continue to provide a personal and intimate experience to guests from all over the world. We are very proud and so thankful to all our friends and guests through the years.

We are also incredibly grateful to the local community here in the South of Iceland. It is an integral part in our day to day operations and so, to

celebrate the first day of summer and Hotel Rangá's 20th, we decided to give back and delivered a very special birthday cake, our Hnallþóra to the two local retirement homes in Hella and Hvolsvöllur.

Of course, we are nowhere done celebrating and will continue to treat our guests and friends on social media to gifts and special offers throughout 2019. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay updated. Oh, and happy summer to all!

Picture by Caroline Bauer

NO FOOL'S ERRAND AT HOTEL RANGÁ

In Iceland, an April Fool's prank isn't complete without the prankster crossing a threshold. That's why many people were skeptical of Hotel Rangá's ad on a local radio station for free rooms for the first 20 callers on April 1st. But, we delivered! Among the lucky callers was Sigurður Bjarnason who was still very skeptical as he drove with his wife from Akranes to Hotel Rangá. "Frankly I didn't feel sure until we got there, but I decided to just go for it - if it turned out to be a hoax I would at least get a funny story out of it," Sigurður said. Find the detailed story on our blog.

WHAT IS A BIRTHDAY WITHOUT A BIRTHDAY CAKE?

April was our birthday month and that's why we added a very special birthday cake to our menu for a limited time.

It's called Hnallþóra and it's a traditional Icelandic sponge cake with whipped cream and fruits. Hnallþóra's are thick and rich - juicy even - and often heavily decorated. Their name derives from the 1968 novel *Under the Glacier* by Halldór Laxness, where Þóra, who bakes such cakes, earns the nickname Hnall-Þóra (e. Pestle-Þóra) for how fierce she is with a pestle and mortar.

Why Hnallþóra? Simply because it's Friðrik's, Hotel Rangá's owner, favorite cake.

REWARDING POETIC GUESTS

On June 20th we announced a poetry competition about Hotel Rangá across our social media platforms. We got more submissions than we could have dreamed off – over 100 poems on Facebook alone. There were so many great submissions that we ended up doubling the prize, giving two poets a gift certificate for the hotel and restaurant rather than just one.

HÓTEL RANGÁ BY PÁLL EYÞÓR JÓHANSSON

Ætti ég, um eitthvert pláss að velja
yrði varla lengi að hugsa um það.
á Hótel Rangá helst eg vildi dvelja
höfðinglegum unaðsdvalarstað.

LJÚFIR DAGAR LÍÐA HRATT BY GUÐFINNA RÚNARSDÓTTIR

Ljúfir dagar líða hratt
lífsins við að njóta.
Hlýja, fegurð, hjarta glatt,
himinstjörnur þjóta.

Landið fagurt, lax í á,
leyndir draumar rætast.
Veisluföngin vinir dá,
varir heitar mætast.

Tvítug áfram tiplar sátt,
tímans vegir færir.
Hótel Rangá hefur mátt,
heillar, seiðir, nærir.



A BRIDE IN BLUE BOOTS

Alexander Parkes and Margo Pare tied the knot at Hotel Rangá in August 2017. It was a beautiful and intimate wedding that included a sightseeing tour for the happy couple and their guests. We loved hosting this gorgeous duo and often reminisce about their gorgeous photoshoot under Skógarfoss where Margo paired her wedding dress with bright blue boots. Below, Margo shares their origin story, their engagement story and of course, the story of how they ended up getting married in Iceland.

A WILL THEY/WON'T THEY LOVE STORY

"Our love story starts how all love stories start... with a text to the wrong number! I had just started working at the Student Union bar at University that Alex worked at in 2009. Phone numbers were shared between colleagues when someone needed to plead for a shift to be covered and such, so it was natural that we had each other's numbers. My parents were coming to visit and I wanted to know the opening times of the bar; knowing that there was an 'Alex' that always seemed to be on shift, I decided to text him to ask for the opening times and although he wasn't the Alex I thought I had texted, he replied.

That one text opened up a year of constant texting, almost daily, sharing the trials and tribulations of student life with each other, seeing each other regularly on staff social events and out with friends. But never one on one. We flirted, we became friends but there was always something (or someone) that stopped it from being the right time to take our impromptu friendship one step further. I remember sharing almost everything with him via text and pretending to fall asleep so I could reply to his message the next day and make the conversation carry on another day. Something it took me a few years to admit.

The time was finally right one year after that fateful text, something serious and natural grew out of a mistaken text. There was no pressure, no expectation and I think it took us both by surprise when things become serious."

PROPOSAL MID-CRUMPET

"The proposal came on the morning of Saturday, the 17th October 2015; six years after meeting and five years after making our impromptu friendship something more serious. We were due to fly to Venice the next day and I was preparing my outfits in my head. I had made sure I had my nails done and that we were going to visit as many romantic places as possible. I thought this had to be it: 'The proposal' that I had been hinting at for years. Had he finally taken all those subtle hints? I'd almost given up hope but no, he was taking me to Venice – the city of love, right? I was half right!

Alex knows that I normally take on the role of chief packer (so I can sneak some of my clothes into his for more space) and with only hand luggage allowance getting an engagement ring past airport security was probably going to be easier than getting it past me when packing! So, Alex decided to make me breakfast in bed and he proposed as I was mid crumpet. It was perfect, I was completely taken by surprise and it meant we could go share the news with our families before we jetted off and celebrated in Venice."

WHY GET MARRIED IN ICELAND?

"We first visited Iceland in February 2015 and immediately fell in love with the country. Alex was the first to suggest a wedding in Iceland and I laughed it off saying I would never get married abroad. We visited a range of UK venues with our parents and as we saw more and more venues that just 'weren't us' I started to question if an idea abroad was such a bad idea.

After hours of research and endless conversations of what we wanted to prioritize in a wedding (intimate ceremony and amazing photos to last a lifetime!) we put the idea of getting married in Iceland to our friends and family. After a positive reception we made the decision to take the plunge

and arrange a wedding in Iceland.

Hotel Rangá stood out for us. The location with the mountains and volcanoes in the background and the fresh river running close by took our breath away. We didn't look back after making our decision and upon reflection we would make the same decision over and over again in a heartbeat."

THE BIG DAY!

"Eyrún, the wedding coordinator, was an absolute star and dream to work with. Our almost daily emails became a staple of my morning routine – check my inbox for replies from Eyrún. They were always there and always comprehensive, answering all of my questions with care from the very small details to the bigger decisions we made.

As soon as I made an enquiry with Hotel Rangá we received an extensive information pack with prices which covered everything from accommodation, food, flowers and recommendations for photographers. It had everything we needed all at once, which also aided our decision in having our wedding at Hotel Rangá. Nothing was ever too much to ask and Eyrún was really supportive in planning our day. Hair and make up was planned and organized by Eyrún in a private room upstairs, the serving staff were amazing and the food was exceptional.

To make our wedding day a bit different (and because I love a good geography trip) we took our guests to two waterfalls and the black sand beach for photographs. Even though we were a little late for dinner, Eyrún didn't make us feel as though it was a problem and the food was outstanding. My brother and cousins had organized to film messages from family and friends who could not be there and it was lovely to watch after our meal.

The biggest thing Eyrún did was become a friend. My father was diagnosed with cancer 11 weeks before our wedding and had to undergo a huge operation. This meant that he couldn't attend the wedding and as heartbreaking as this was Eyrún made sure that all arrangements were handled.

We have the woolen bride and groom, which Eyrún left in our room, pride of place in our front room at home to remind us of how thoughtful she was with the gifts that Hotel Rangá gave us. The room was made up with candles and rose petals too and it was a lovely way to finish our wedding day.

People still talk about what an amazing day it was and we can't thank Hotel Rangá enough. We promise to come back soon – if only for the amazing waffles at breakfast!

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

"My advice for anyone getting married in Iceland is to do it! It is a once in a lifetime experience which wedding guests will be talking about for years to come. The photographs are amazing and don't be afraid to be a little different. As for Hotel Rangá – nothing is ever too much and all the staff took really good care of us. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend them to anyone thinking of staying there and we just wish we could have our wedding over again. Ask the silly questions and become friends."

Picture by Bragi / Iceland Wedding Photo

GOING GREEN

Here at Hotel Rangá we see an ever growing interest in eco-friendly tourism among our guests. Some are curious about our practices and we want to provide some answers:

Hotel Rangá utilizes only renewable energy sources. All electricity for the hotel's operations comes from a nearby hydro-electric power station and all hot water for heating of the buildings and other needs comes from a nearby geothermal power station.

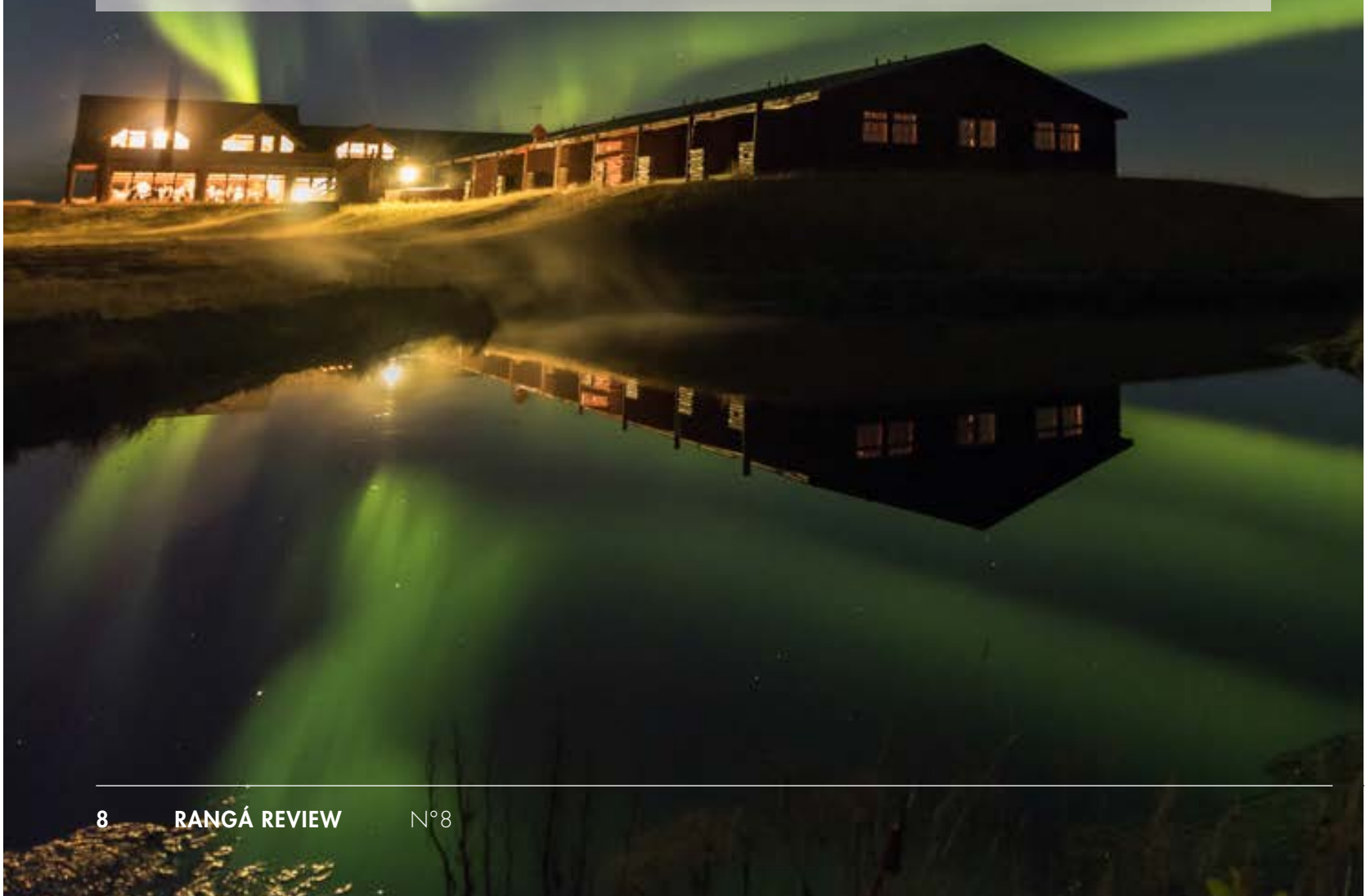
We emphasize using local raw materials. The numerous greenhouses in South Iceland supply us with fresh vegetables year-round. In addition, we use salmon, Arctic char, seafood and meat from nearby areas. All the meat and dairy products we use are free of hormones or antibiotics. We sort all our waste to minimize impact on nature. In fact, our staff takes home much of the food waste to feed their farm animals.

Our pillowcases and duvet covers get a second life at nearby village Hella's elementary school. The children learn how to sew by making small bags for the yule lads out of the bed linens and the yule lads then use the bags to give our guests small treats.

We have already switched out all our light bulbs for more energy efficient ones and we are also decreasing our use of plastic - switching plastic straws to paper and plastic laundry bags to linen ones. We recently revamped our lunch boxes and now they are entirely biodegradable. We have "to-go cups" with biodegradable lids and we try to limit all printing by using electronic communications and billing.

We choose our furniture well. Rather than follow the winds of fashion we choose design that's consistent with the spirit of Hotel Rangá, focusing on quality and durability. When something breaks we fix it rather than throw it away.

Nature is the world's greatest luxury and we will continue to do our best to protect it.





TIPS FOR ECO-FRIENDLY TOURISM

1. Drink straight from the tap.

This one is a no brainer - Icelandic water is among the cleanest in the world. Bottled water is an unnecessary expense and the plastic bottles harm the environment. Drinking from the tap is a win-win! You can learn more about the wondrous qualities of Icelandic water on our blog.

2. Stay on marked paths when driving

It is illegal to drive off-road in Iceland. Make sure to always stay on roads and marked trails as cars can leave permanent wounds in the fragile landscape. Icelandic nature is much better enjoyed on foot anyway - a true adventure includes feeling the elements on your skin and under your feet.

3. Buy local

It is almost impossible to only buy local 100% of the time in Iceland as much of our food items and most of our clothing is imported. Ordering local dishes at restaurants, such as Icelandic lamb or seafood, is a great start. Buying souvenirs that are actually made in Iceland also helps as they have a smaller carbon footprint. We especially recommend Icelandic wool sweaters and socks.

4. Carry small reusable bags for trash

There aren't many trash cans stashed in the highlands or even by Route one for that matter. It's a good idea to carry a small reusable trash bag in your backpack and then safely dispose of your trash in a bin or hand it over to Hotel Rangá's reception staff.

5. Plant trees

Donating to the Kolviður fund is a great way to compensate for emissions made through travel. You can use their carbon calculator to figure out how many trees it would take to carbon offset your travel, be it by plane, boat or car. When you make a donation to the fund Kolviður's staff and volunteers plant the trees. You can find more about Kolvidur on their website: www.kolvidur.is.

Picture by Sævar Helgi Bragason



THE AURORA IN THE WALL

Visual artist Arngunnur Ýr has an inviting smile in her eyes that perfectly matches her sunny personality. She brightens any room she steps into so it only made sense for Hotel Rangá to ask her to leave a bit of herself behind, by painting a very special piece for our bar and lounge area. The piece is in fact so special that hotelier Friðrik Pálsson didn't just want it on the wall – he wanted it inside of the wall.

"They tore down the wall and rebuilt it to fit the piece inside," Arngunnur explains. "It makes it a lot more fun; this way the art becomes a part of the space."

The piece shows one of Hotel Rangá's neighboring volcano's Hekla, bathed in Northern lights. Arngunnur, who likes to experiment with different materials in her art, painted it on very thin silk that she prepped with emulsions until the material was "as strong as a drum." She then used French pigments with Icelandic volcanic ash, without knowing exactly how the materials would react to each other once combined, to create the image itself.

She often likes to leave different emulsions and pigments embracing and drying in her studio for days or even weeks at a time. That way, she lets the alchemy of it all become a part of her pieces lending an element of coincidence to her work. "I felt like it was appropriate because you never know what Hekla wants to do," Arngunnur says.

She's very attracted to volcanic energy; she even chose to build a summer cabin at Hekla's roots. She also created a wall painting of Hekla in Room #2 and in Room #42 she painted the infamous Eyjafjallajökull glacier.

"There's some magic in these places that no one can quite understand. They are dangerous for sure but that's also what's appealing – playing with fire."

Arngunnur's piece is backlit inside of the wall. Although strong, the thin material remains somewhat see-through, and while the light streaming through it helps produce the ethereal feeling of the aurora it can also be interpreted as the fire below. The piece has four sister pieces in the Reykjavík headquarters of biopharmaceutical company deCODE Genetics. She worked with similar materials for those pieces, focusing on the micro and macro as her subjects – from human fingerprints to Jupiter's atmosphere.

Much of Arngunnur's work is in some way inspired by this dualism, humans and nature. These days she's working on a new series about the world's shrinking glaciers. "It's almost a lament to the nature that is disappearing in front of our eyes," she says. "I'm very passionate about it and want to travel to Patagonia and Greenland next year to document places outside of Iceland."

Arngunnur describes her recent body of work as an ode to the power and beauty of nature. She chooses to depict places that remind us to respect nature's upper hand. "Maybe that's why I keep painting the volcanos over and over," she says. "They are gorgeous and magnificent but at the same time we know their history and, as is often the case in Iceland, nature always has the last word."

You can learn more about Arngunnur and her work on her website: arngunnur.com

RANGÁ RECOMMENDS

Feel like staying in? Here are a few ways to wind down at Hotel Rangá.

RELAX WITH A RUB

Take your Rangá experience to the next level by booking a massage for you and your partner. It's a great way to wake up those sore muscles but also for unwinding after long days of sight-seeing. We offer 20, 30 and 60 minute sessions – contact our front desk for more information.

GET IN THE TUB

Top off the day with a glass of wine and a dip in one of our hot tubs overlooking the serene Rangá river. It's the perfect way to enjoy the midnight sun and its glorious pink skies in summer and in winter you might just get to see the northern lights.

PLAY SOME POOL

Get some practice in on your own or shoot a round of pool with a partner. Our game room, which features a large light fixture made of reindeer antlers is a frequent site for wedding ceremonies and has a gorgeous view of the river.

CHECK MATE

Our game room also has a chess set, meaning you can challenge your travel companion to a battle of wits. Have a cup of coffee or hot chocolate while you strategize on how to circumvent the queen slaying your opponent's king.

PIECE IT TOGETHER

If you are in the mood for something less competitive you can grab a chair and do a jigsaw puzzle. There's often a large one already going in the game room – you can contribute to it, finish it yourself or maybe even start a different one.

GRAB A COCKTAIL

In our lounge, every hour is cocktail hour. Stick to the classics or try something new like a cocktail with Iceland's signature spirit, Brennivín. Get one sent to your room as you get ready for dinner or to the hot tub as you soak in the day.

READ A GOOD BOOK

There are lots of comfortable quiet places around the hotel to spend the day diving into a good mystery novel or that biography you've been meaning to read. We especially recommend the couches in our upstairs lounge. If you are too lost in the pages to move, our staff will happily bring you snacks, drinks and food from our menu.

WALK ALONG THE RIVER

If you feel like getting some air but want to stay close to the comfort of our premises, you can take a leisurely stroll by the Rangá river. It's one of Iceland's top rivers for salmon fishing and boasts beautiful flora and fauna during the summer.

Picture by Ása Steinarsdóttir



Picture by Ása Steinarsdóttir



INSIDE THE AFRICA SUITE

Take a sneak peak behind the scenes of Hotel Rangá's Africa Signature Suite

For Hotel Rangá's African Suite, specialists in the continent's design hunted down original furniture and ornaments to give the room an authentic feel. Details such as a zebra skin wall hanging, wooden masks, carved giraffe figures and bold African prints on the bedcovers lend a hand to guests' imaginations. The room also boasts a luxurious bathroom with pitchblack walls but the pièce de résistance is actually the suite's ceiling.

"It needed to look a bit crooked but still be logical enough so that it wouldn't be complicated to make," says hotelier Friðrik Pálsson. "We managed it somehow by centering the room off-center and keeping the same inclination on all the rafters from the walls."

Like the other suites at Hotel Rangá, the African Suite was a group effort designed and built by the owners and members of staff as well as outside contributors. They decided the room should have a small false ceiling

made of straw in its off-kilter center, much like an African hut.

"I ended up going to Þorvaldseyri to meet with the farmer there and ask him if we could cut a bit of his wheat before he threshed it but after it was fully grown so that it would be as long as possible," Friðrik says. "He found the request amusing and we ended up visiting him two more times to collect a whole heap of the wheat."

When it came to actually building the small hut ceiling, Friðrik and the builders had no idea how to put it together or even how to hang it. After a few failed attempts and lots of laughter, they finally managed to put their heads together and get the job done.

"Up it went and it's still hanging on after all these years."

For a sneak peak of the Africa suite ask one of Hotel Rangá's reception staff.



A WILD RIDE FOR SUMMER

X-Treme nature calls for X-Treme buggies. So reads one of Buggy X-TREME ICELAND's main slogans and frankly, it's not wrong.

Icelandic nature is gorgeous but fierce. It takes powerful vehicles to traverse it, especially when it comes to those hidden treasures in the highlands. Buggy's can travel places where regular cars can't go, all the while offering the safety of a seatbelt and an overhead cage, gliding in comfort over hills, rocks and obstacles on Iceland's most challenging terrain.

According to owner and tour guide, Fjalar Kristjánsson, offering the off-road experience in comfort and small groups is what sets Buggy X-TREME apart.

"I only have three cars so there are only five people on each trips. It's all very small and personal," Fjalar says.

Fjalar started the company last summer and so far, the buggies have gotten rave reviews.

"Even if people have been on safaris and the like, they have never experienced anything like this before," he says. When asked about his favorite adventures he has a hard time choosing just one.

"Going down to the black sand beach at Þykkvabæjarfjara is a brand new experience every time as the sands are ever changing. And driving up to the highlands can feel like visiting the moon!"

While buggy tours are available all year round, the summer is the perfect time to take on places in the highlands such as Landmannalaugar, which isn't accessible during winter.

Don't hesitate to reach out to our front desk for further information or to book the right tour for you.



Pictures by Buggy X-Treme Iceland and Lucas Raven



THE BEST SUMMER PHOTO

Happy moments should be shared! We are celebrating summer across our social media platforms with a competition for the best Hotel Rangá Summer Photo.

THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO DO

- Post a beautiful photo from your stay
- Tag: @Hotelranga and mark the location as Hotel Rangá
- Hashtag #rangaexperience

THE WINNER WILL RECEIVE A GIFT CARD FOR:

- Two nights in a suite
- Breakfast
- Evening meals and wine selected by management



Pictures by Gunnar Freyr / @Icelandic_Explorer



Picture by Ása Steinarsdóttir

TOMATOES FOUR WAYS

Want a taste of Hotel Rangá in your own kitchen? Try out our head chef's recipe for tomatoes four ways with quinoa salad, a great starter for four and a part of our menu collaboration with the Friðheimar thermal greenhouses. Run by husband and wife duo Knútur and Helena, Friðheimar use green energy, pure water and organic pest controls to harness the power of nature and produce delicious tomatoes all year round. Contact our front desk for a tour of the greenhouses and taste their produce at Hotel Rangá's restaurant. .

TOMATOES FOUR WAYS - A STARTER FOR FOUR

TOMATO POWDER:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg tomatoes

METHOD:

1. Chop the tomatoes into thin slices
2. Dry them in the oven for 48 hours on 60°C
3. When they are fully dried, throw them in a food processor until they are powderized

TOMATO CHUTNEY

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 plum tomatoes
- 140 g finely chopped onions
- 110 g peeled and chopped green apples
- 10 g lemon juice
- 6 g Salt
- 45 g sugar

METHOD:

1. Dice the tomatoes. Take the seeds out and keep them for later
2. Fry the onion in oil for 3 minutes
3. Stir in the apple, the tomatoes and the sugar. Fry for 4-5 minutes
4. Add the other ingredients and simmer over a low temperature for 15 minutes
5. Cool the chutney in the fridge



Picture by Brent Darby



To serve, put a spoonful of chutney at the bottom of a deep plate and the quinoa salad on top. Arrange the dried tomatoes over the salad and then pour the tomato powder over the fillo pastry before laying it on top of the tomatoes. For the final touch, pour the soup over the pastry in front of your guests.

HALF DRIED PICCALO TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 box piccalo tomatoes
- Salt
- Pepper
- Sugar

METHOD:

1. Slice tomatoes in half and line them on a baking sheet
2. Season with salt, pepper and sugar
3. Bake at 100°C for 3 hours

QUINOA SALAD:

INGREDIENTS:

- 100 g black quinoa
- 300 g water
- 3 tomatoes
- 1/2 a cucumber
- 1/2 a red onion
- 15 g parsley
- 5 g mint
- Lemon juice
- Olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper

METHOD:

1. Boil Quinoa in water (or vegetable stock) for 15 minutes, drain it and cool it
2. Take the tomato and cucumber seeds out and keep them for later
3. Dice all the vegetables
4. Chop the herbs finely
5. Mix everything together and season with salt, pepper, lemon juice and olive oil

TOMATO SOUP:

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 tomatoes and the tomato seeds from the chutney and quinoa salad
- 110 g onions
- 300 g cucumbers and the cucumber seeds from the quinoa salad
- 180 g red bell pepper
- 10 g basil
- 2 garlic cloves
- 180 g olive oil
- 30 g sherry vinegar
- 15 g salt
- 4 pinches of white pepper

METHOD:

1. Chop everything and then pureé in food processor
2. Drain and season

DEEP FRIED FILO PASTRY:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 sheet fillo pastry
- Oil for deep frying
- Salt

METHOD:

1. Deep fry the dough at 170°C until it reaches a golden brown color
2. Dry the dough and season with salt

HOW IT ALL WENT DOWN

While you may not have heard of Sólheimasandur before you have almost definitely seen it. It's a black sand beach stretching along the Southern Coast and home to an abandoned DC-3/117 plane that features heavily in commercials and music videos shot in Iceland, most notably Justin Bieber's „I'll show you." It even made an appearance in a recent Bollywood film.



Picture by Anthony Bogdan

The plane is no prop. It's a real DC-3/117 plane, originally used for cargo transport by the United States Navy. November 21st 1973 the plane was on the way from southeastern village of Höfn í Hornafirði to Keflavík Airport when the weather suddenly turned. The temperature dropped, the plane was hit with strong wind and then both engines gave out due to icing. Captain James Wicke sent out a distress call as he desperately tried to get the engines going again.

There were five people aboard the plane. The first officer, Gregory Fletcher, took over command, deciding to go south and try to land the plane in the North Atlantic Ocean. He knew the freezing water would lead to hypothermia in seconds but then again plummeting into an icy mountain would kill them instantly.

As the plane dropped below the clouds, Fletcher saw something that "looked like the moon". It was Sólheimasandur. Minutes later, he managed to land the plane on the frozen black sand beach about six meters from

the ocean. The landing left the plane wrecked but all five crew members emerged unscathed. One of them, Howard Rowley, later remarked that it was the most "comfortable" landing he had ever experienced. They were rescued by a navy helicopter about an hour later and the navy immediately removed everything that could be saved from the wreck. In fact, the local farmers had seen the plane go down and immediately jumped in their (albeit very slow) tractor to see what was going on. When they arrived the crew had been flown out and demolition was already under way. The farmers used the wreck to store driftwood for some years and allowed their friends to use it for target practice - it has a few very noticeable bullet wounds. As Iceland gained international attention as a destination, so did the plane.

The DC-3/117 plane is located about 2.5 miles (four kilometers) away from the main road. While the distance is walkable there are also special shuttles and tours that can take you there in comfort. Contact our front desk for more information and guidance.



Picture by Lucas Raven

THE STORY OF HRAMMUR

One of Hotel Rangá's most popular staff members and certainly the fuzziest is Hrammur the resident polar bear. Hrammur, who's originally from Greenland, has the special role of greeting each and every one of Hotel Rangá's visitors as they enter into the lobby.

He's not shy, but he is quiet, so we asked hotelier Friðrik Pálsson to share the story of how Hrammur came to live at Hotel Rangá. It all started with a visit to Manuel's Taxidermy Parlor on the outskirts of Reykjavík.

"As we are looking around at birds and foxes and so on, I notice a picture of the polar bear from the Nanoq in Kringlan mall," says Friðrik, referencing the outdoor sporting goods store that opened in 1999 but went bankrupt in 2002. At the time, the polar bear was one of the mall's main landmarks along with a 49 feet tall, fully functioning climbing wall.

"I asked Manuel if he the polar bear was his work. He said yes so, I asked where he was now but he didn't know," Friðrik says. "I can't remember how I found him but I finally learned that he was holed up in a warehouse owned by Baugur group, the investment company behind Nanoq."

He contacted one of the company's directors, Finnur Árnason, who said the bear was not for sale but Friðrik wouldn't budge. He had made up his mind so he pleaded with the director to at least let him borrow the bear.

"Finnur asks me if I even realize how big it is. I reply that of course I know he is quite big but I ended up going to the warehouse to see him in the flesh," Friðrik says. "I'll admit, his height was a bit of a shock, but I got to measure him and took the measurements back to Hotel Rangá."

This was before the west end of the hotel, where Hrammur now lives, was built. According to Friðrik's measurements, he would just barely get into the foyer where the Iceland Quilt now hangs, and he would almost touch the ceiling.

"So, I went back to Finnur and said: I have a space for him."

In the end, Friðrik got his wish. The bear arrived in a large moving truck and even though the staff had to remove a ceiling light to get him in, Hrammur found his new home at Hotel Rangá. But of course, he wasn't named Hrammur then – in fact, he didn't have a name at all.

Hotel Rangá decided to get the local children involved and invited them to partake in a naming competition.

"There were dozens of excellent suggestions and one girl suggested Hrammur," Friðrik says. "There was a very distinguished panel of judges and we invited all the kids to come celebrate with us."

Hrammur means "paw" in Icelandic, and today Hrammur stands with his two front paws and huge grin in a new part of Hotel Rangá's lobby, specifically designed for his 13 feet stature. He's happy to be photographed and especially enjoys selfies. If you share any on social media, remember to use the hashtags #Hrammur and #HotelRanga so he can add them to his own collection.

HIDDEN HIGHLANDS

If you want to experience untouched nature, the highlands are for you. They offer exquisite colors, otherworldly textures and silence like you have never heard before. Here are a few places worth visiting close to the Highland Center Hrauneyjar.

DYNKUR

Dynkur is a waterfall that is about 38 m high in the Þjórsá River, southeast below the Kóngsá River in the Flóamanna district. The river flows over many ledges as small falls that together make one system of waterfalls, but most important is the wondrous beauty and changeable rainbows that form so that it becomes an eruption of color over the falls when the sun shines. The people in the Holt area call it Búðarháls Waterfall but those living in Gnúpver call it Dynkur (Thudding).

GJÁIN

This beautiful natural phenomenon and oasis at the edge of the central highlands should not be passed by, if you are travelling in the Þjórsár Valley. The Red River (Rauðá) cascades into and through this gorge and the surroundings are amply vegetated. River Þjórsá ran through before a dike was built between the mountains Sandafell and Skeljafell to redirect it.

HÁIFOSS

The Fossá River cascades from the edge of the highlands into the narrow valley of Fossársdalur, at the head of the valley of the Þjórsá River. The river pours over steep cliffs in two falls, the larger one is named Háifoss (High Falls). It is 122 metres high and is the second highest in the country (after Glym in Hvalfjörður). The other falls, slightly lower, appears a short way from Háifoss is named Granni.

The strata by the falls are nearly 2 million years old and are composed of thick, successive layers of lava lying on top of palagonite and compacted layers of volcanic ejecta that erupted before the ice age.

HEKLA

An active volcano for centuries, Mount Hekla is one of the most famous volcanoes in the world. Hekla is one of Iceland's most active volcanoes, erupting approximately every ten years for

the past century. The mountain is about 1491 m high and rising. Hekla at a distance has a similar appearance to that of Mount Fuji in Japan, much to the delight of many Japanese visitors here. Mt. Hekla is clearly visible from Hotel Rangá's front door. It is our "backyard volcano".

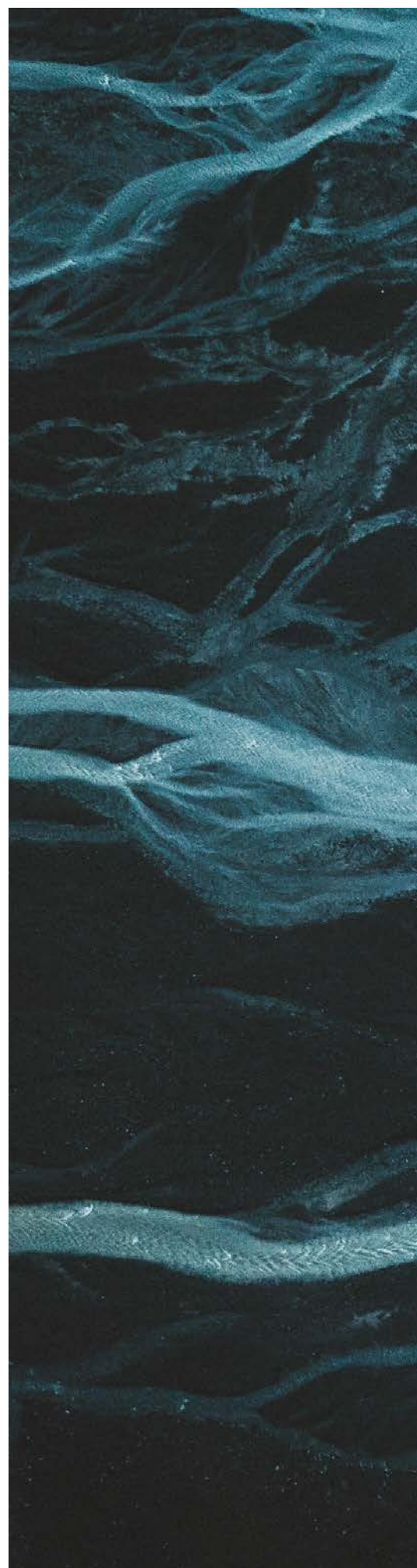
LANDMANNALAUGAR

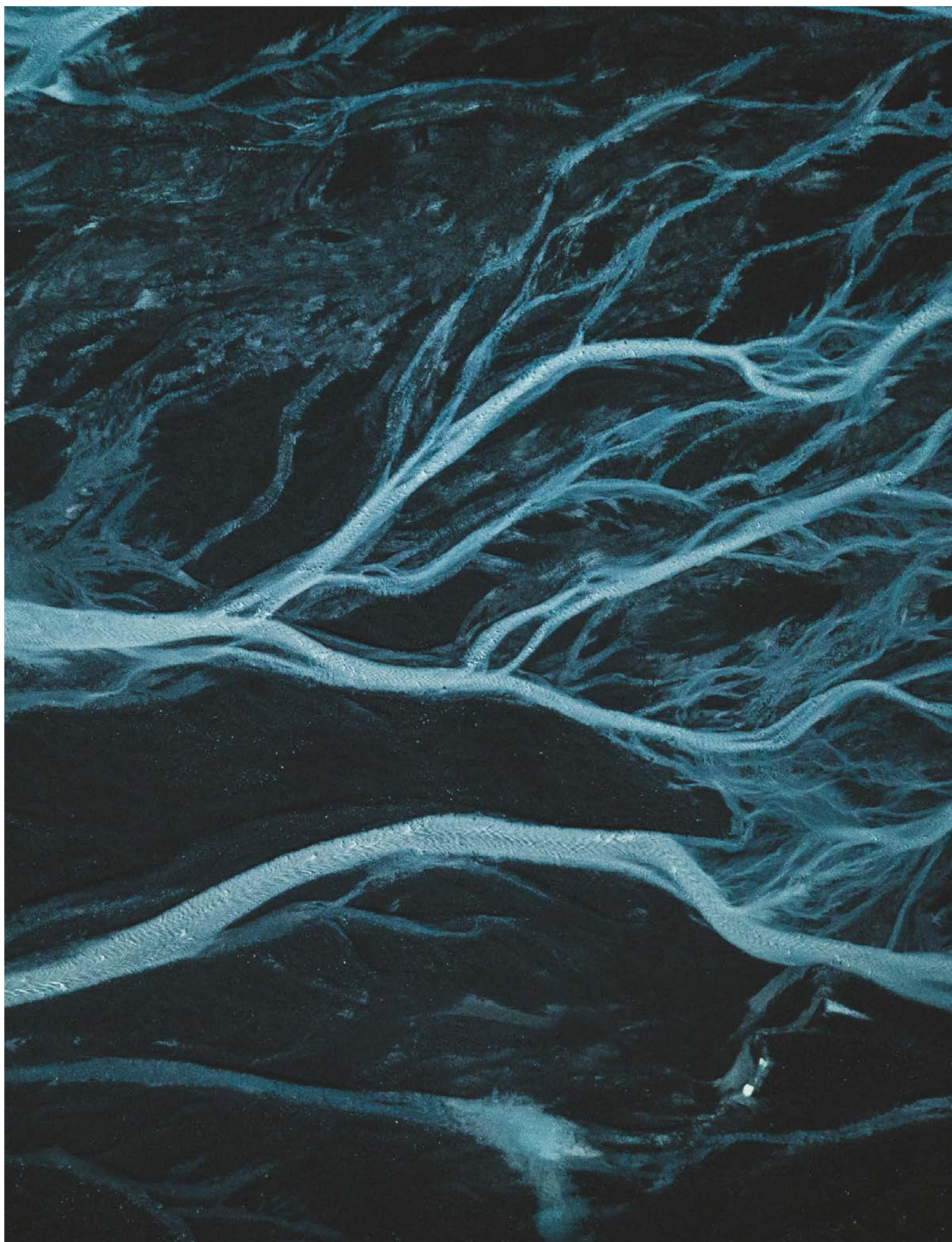
Landmannalaugar – inviting natural geothermal pools set amid colorful rhyolite mountains, a popular tourist spot on the Fjallabak road northeast of the volcano Mt Hekla. The road is passable in summer, though there are winter tours. This is part of one of the largest geothermal areas in the country, the Torfi Glacier area. Landmannalaugar is justly famed for geothermal baths and its natural beauty, with its red rocks that include the black of obsidian and other minerals.

VEIÐIVÖTN

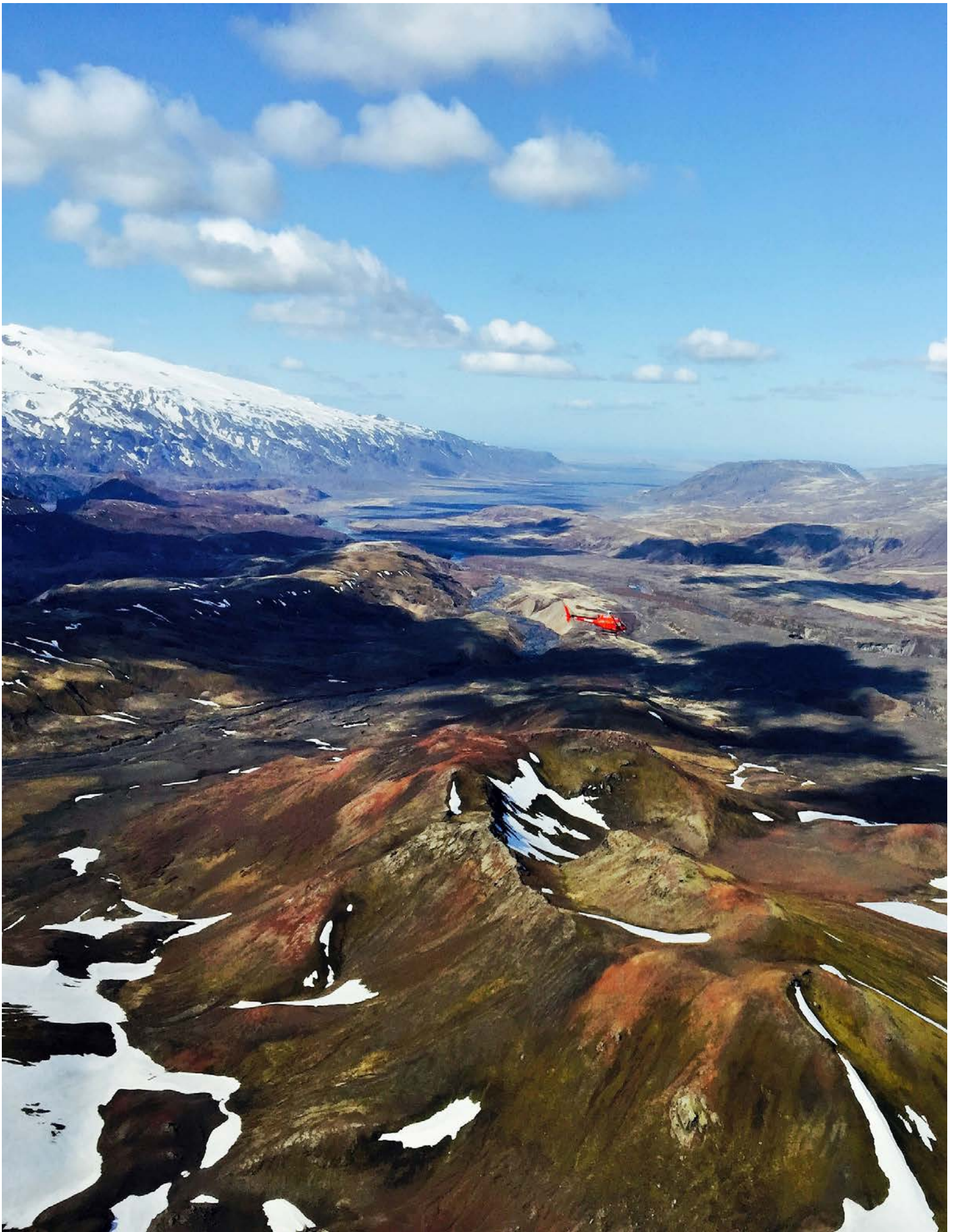
Veiðivötn Lakes are a magnificent highland oasis. They are a friend in the desert, which no one should miss. They are only 130 km away from Hotel Rangá, and about 30 km from The Highland Center Hrauneyjar. The crater formations are of a true extraterrestrial character and the contrast between black sand and gin-clear water is truly unique. Many travelers find this to be the highlight of their visit to Iceland. The lakes are rich in trout that are believed to be from one of the oldest stocks in Europe. They vary in size, 3-6 pounders being common, and are known for their excellent taste. During the winter months Veiðivötn are only accessible by Super Jeeps.

Find photos from the highlands on Instagram @hiddenhighlands





Picture by Tom Kahler





Picture by Essential Iceland Astar in air/Norðurflug

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Here are a some fun facts we have shared:

- The hiking trails in the Icelandic Highlands are magical. One can walk for hours without ever seeing another traveler.
- There are no permanent inhabitants in the Icelandic Highlands.
- The Icelandic Highlands contain three of the country's largest glaciers: Vatnajökull, Hofsjökull, and Langjökull. As you can probably guess, "jökull" means "glacier".
- Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnúkur, is located in the Highlands.
- Of the 40.000 km² that the Icelandic highlands cover, 14.000 km² are protected as a national park.
- Glaciers cover approximately 10% of Iceland.
- There are hundreds of waterfalls in the Icelandic Highlands.
- There are 15 geothermal hot spots in the Icelandic Highlands, creating colorful landscape with steam rising up from the ground.
- One of them, Landmannalaugar, is less than an hour drive from the Highland Center. Our guests frequently go there to bathe or hike the magical trails. Landmannalaugar translates to „The People's Pools“. It's been a protected area since the 1979 due to its immense beauty.
- There are over 20 active volcanoes in Iceland.
- You need a car with a four-wheel drive to reach the Icelandic Highlands. The mountain roads in Iceland are called F-Roads. Many of them are gravel roads and in some cases the cars must be able to cross through rivers.

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HOTEL RANGÁ'S LITTLE SISTER

Here in Iceland, most folks will refer to our guesthouse in the highlands by its Icelandic name: Hrauneyjar. The name means lava islands and is quite fitting as the guesthouse neighbors vast fields of coagulated lava. The region boasts great diversity in terms of nature and is also home to considerable volcanic activity, making the Highland Center perfectly placed as a rest stop in between days filled with adventure.

The atmosphere in the highlands is relaxed and comfortable. Whether you want action packed outings like volcano tours and cross-country skiing or to get away from it all on a solo hike or by relaxing in hot springs, Hrauneyjar is the place for you. All you need to bring is the desire to stray off the beaten track.

The guesthouse is open all year round. Each hallway is named for weather, as the Icelandic word for hallway, "gangur", is also a common suffix for different types of storms: Élþagangur hallway, for example, takes its name from intermittent snowstorms. The Highland Center has over 90 rooms and accommodates individual travelers as well as groups of varying sizes. You can buy both fishing licenses and gas on site and of course you can get a stiff drink should you need one.

The Hrauneyjar restaurant offers excellent home-cooked cuisine and is known for great hamburgers. We recommend Strekkingur, one of our most popular burgers, which has mushrooms, bacon and eggs on top of the more traditional lettuce and tomato combo. Strekkingur means strong wind – did we mention some of our burgers also have weather names?





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