

# NORTHERN **HIGHLIGHTS**

ISSUE 1, 2014

GO FOR IT

WINTER  
**PARADISE**

UNIQUE MAP  
OF **REYKJAVIK**  
CITY CENTER

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GOING ON?

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CLIMBING

THE **FLEA**  
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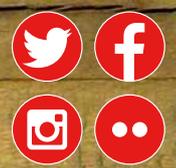


**M** Mountaineers of Iceland



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# NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

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# IN THIS ISSUE

6

## BITS AND PIECES

Some places to visit.

10

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

Just try to have some fun.



16

## REYKJAVIK WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL

Do not miss this event.

20

## UNIQUE MAP OF REYKJAVIK CITY CENTER

26

## ICELANDIC CAKE.

If you feel like baking.

28

## ICELANDIC BEER.

Be careful, it's good.

30

## THE FLEAMARKET

No flea's but lot of interesting stuff to buy.



36

## MAKE YOUR SELF AT HOME.

Things you have to experience.

38

## FISHING IN THE WESTFJORD'S

44

## MOUNTAIN CLIMBING.



48

## WINTER PARADISE



54

## THE ICELANDIC HORSE

Please don't call them ponies

66

## HEKLA

Next in line?

68

## OUR BEST FRIENDS IN THE EAST

Faroe Islands

76

## SAFETY IN ICELAND

Please please read this!

80

## CELEB'S THAT LOVE ICELAND



82

## POPULAR DISHES.

For the hungry ones.



## *Heritage fashion* ICELANDIC STYLE

### REYKJAVÍK

#### FARMERS & FRIENDS

Our flagship store - Hólmastóð 2  
Fishpacking District - Old harbor area  
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#### GEYSIR

Skólavörðustíg 16

#### KRAUM

Aðalstræti 10

#### HERRAFATAVERZLUN KORMÁKS & SKJALDAR

Laugavegi 59

#### MÝRIN

Kringlan Shopping Centre

### OTHER LOCATIONS

#### GEYSIR

Haukadalur & Akureyri

#### KAUPMÁÐURINN

Ísafjörður

#### KRONKRON

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#### BLUE LAGOON

#### DUTY FREE FASHION

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**Farmers Market**

ICELAND

[WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS](http://WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS)



## WORTH THE VISIT: **12 TÓNAR**

**MUSIC SHOPPING RECORD LABEL**

The 12 Tónar shop is known as a friendly place where you can sit down, listen to a wide selection of music on two floors, enjoy free espresso or tea, read magazines and relax. They sometimes have concerts in their shop. Especially on Fridays during the summer when their lovely garden becomes the venue for all kinds of music. In 2006 the 12 Tónar shop in Reykjavik was awarded the prestigious title Shop of the Year by the City of Reykjavik.

12 Tónar is also an independent record label. Their position as a label is unique as they regularly meet with many musicians in their shop. Therefore they are in good contact with emerging talent.

Since 2003 they have released over 50 albums from a variety of musical genres and artists. Some of their releases are being distributed in Europe through Cargo Records Germany, and a number of releases have also been licensed to territories like Japan, US, and Korea.



## FEED THE BIRDS:

**POND BIRDLIFE**

Whether it's frozen to perfection like a frosted mirror or dressed in the dazzling shades of summer, Tjörnin pond is enchanting in any season and one of Reykjavik's most photographed attractions.

Tjörnin, which is dramatically framed by the impressive Reykjavik City Hall and numerous beautifully coloured old houses, is a natural pond and home to countless ducks, swans and geese that even stay for the entire winter season thanks to a little geothermal heating. Apart from being a great place to frame a photograph, it's also a great place to wander and a popular destination for families in Reykjavik, who are often seen feeding bread to the bustling birdlife.



## THE LANDMARK:

**LANDMARK CHURCH**

Presiding majestically over the capital area is Hallgrímskirkja - the crowning landmark and star attraction of Reykjavik city. Its iconic tower rises symmetrically and incrementally to a magnificent 74.5m peak and stands powerfully erect atop the rising heights of Skólavörðustigur – arguably one of the city's most attractive locations. Not only a significant point of reference for visitors to Reykjavik, but also an exceptional observation tower offering incredible panoramic views across the whole of the city.

This magnificent construction was designed by the late Guðjón Samuel in 1937, who was often inspired in his endeavours by the fascinating shapes and forms created when lava cools into basalt rock. Construction of the church began in 1945 and ended in 1986, with the tower completed long before the rest of the building. The crypt beneath the choir was consecrated in 1948, the steeple and wings completed in 1974 and the nave consecrated in 1986.

The church features, most notably, a gargantuan pipe organ designed and constructed by the German organ builder Johannes Klais of Bonn. Standing tall at an impressive 15m and weighing a remarkable 25 tons, this mechanical action organ is driven by four manuals and a pedal, 102 ranks, 72 stops and 5275 pipes, all designed to reproduce powerful notes capable of filling the huge and holy space with a range of tones - from the dulcet to the dramatic. Its construction was completed in December 1992 and has since been utilized in a variety of recordings, including some by Christopher Herrick.

Standing guard and gracing the grounds in front of the church, which it predated by 15 years, is a fine statue of Leifur Eiriksson (c. 970 – c. 1020) – the first European to discover America. Records suggest that Leifur landed on the shores of the new world in the year 1,000 A.D., that's 500 years before Christopher Columbus. The statue, which was designed by Alexander Stirling Calder was a gift from the United States in honour of the 1930 Alþingi Millennial Festival, commemorating the 1,000th anniversary of the establishment of Iceland's parliament at Þingvellir in 930 AD.



## The disappearing café

# TÍU DROPAR

## Le Chateaux Des Dix Chuttes

Tíu dropar (Ten Drops) is a café located in the cellar of Laugavegur 27. This is one of the oldest cafés in Iceland and for the last 30 years to this very day they serve freshly baked pancakes and waffles á la the grandmothers of Iceland, with lots of whipped cream and Icelandic jam.

Ten Drops is also known for its homemade cakes, baked from scratch according to old recipes, and of course, their hot cocoa, known by many of their guests as 'The Only Real Hot Cocoa on Earth'. If you're not in the mood for old fashioned Icelandic goodies you can choose from an assortment of light dishes, tea, wines and beer. We recommend the French meat soup, a popular dish and another old favorite

### WHERE DID THE CAFÉ GO?

Don't be surprised if you can't find the café after 18:00. Something happens around that time that transforms this little cellar into a French wine room known as Le Chateaux Des Dix Chuttes or the Castle of the Ten Drops. This is a lovely place to sit and enjoy good wines along with cheese, ham or other light dishes for as little as 500 ISK a plate, and don't worry, the coffee, cocoa and pancakes are still there! Lovely French music sets the mood and the ambiance is perfect for a deep conversation. Guests wanting to break out in song can have their turn after 22:00 on the weekends, as long as they can find someone to play the antique piano given to the café's owner, David Bensow, by a regular.

### CHOOSE YOUR WINE

Guests can have their say on the wine list of Le Chateaux Des Dix Chuttes and David will make special orders to fulfill their wishes. In fact, he welcomes any suggestions making the wine list one of the more, well-endowed in Reykjavik. He's especially interested in serving good Port to his clientele.

### INTIMATE CLIMATE

The little wine room and café seat only 40 guests and the mood is set in the early evening. It's safe to say this is just the kind of place that was missing from the brimming Icelandic bar and café scene a perfect setting for a small group of friends to reminisce over the good old days or for a first date. Be sure to taste David's "wine of the week" or let his fair beer prices amaze you.

Check out the ten drops twitter feed and find both café and wine room on Facebook.

### TÍU DROPAR / LE CHATEAUX DES DIX CHUTTES

Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavík  
Tel: 00 354 551 9380





## TO THE BEACH - NAUTHÓLSVÍK

**COLD HOT CRAZY**

The city of Reykjavík operates the Geothermal beach in Nauthólsvík.

The farm, Nauthóll, was built around the mid 19th century. It was one of many farms that were constructed around Reykjavík at the time. In the beginning of the 20th century, following a typhoid fever, the houses were burned and the ruins can still be seen north of the car parking.

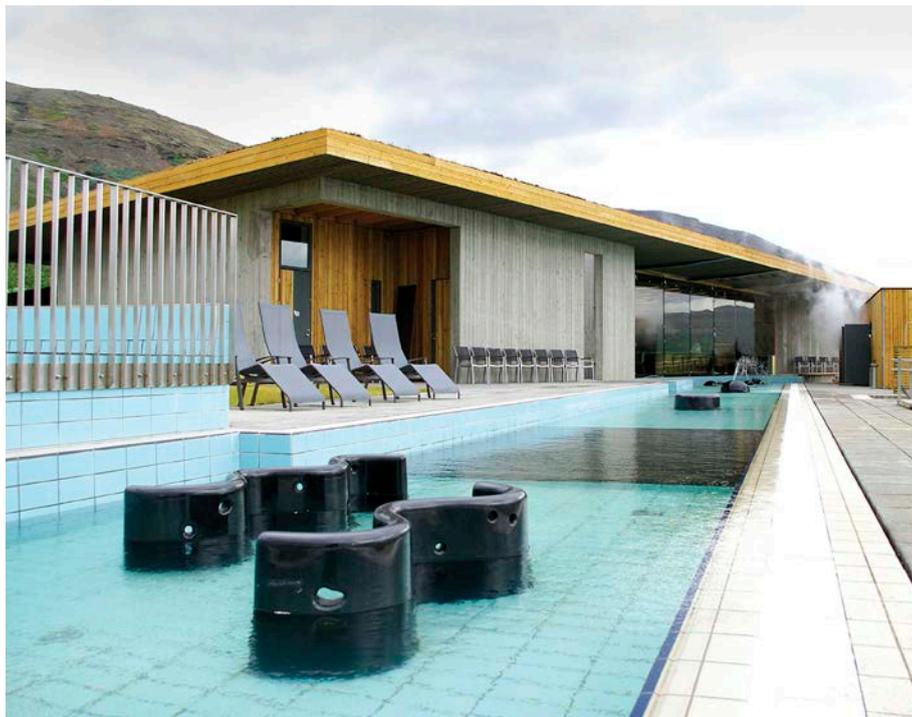
During the World War Two the British Army was quite extensive around the airport close by. In the bay, Nauthólsvík, was the location for the seaplanes but those kind of planes were very important in the battle of the Atlantic Ocean. At the time there was also a Norwegian aviation squadron here. A monument of their stay is located next to the service center at the Geothermal beach.

In the years following the war there were ideas of exploiting Nauthólsvík as a place for seabathing but soon seabathing was banned by the reason of pollution.

In the 80's the "hot stream", Heiti Lækurinn, that runs from some hot water reservoir tanks situated close by, was very popular until it was closed in 1985. Shortly after, during the cleansing of the city's shoreline, the idea of the seabathing facilities in Nauthólsvík was carried forward. The Geothermal beach was opened in the summer of 2000 and the service center, with changing rooms, showers, hot tubs and refreshments, was opened the year after.

In the most preferable circumstances the seawater in the lagoon is around 15°-19°C and the hot tubs are around 30°-39°C hot. The lagoon and the hot tubs are heated up with the same kind of water as was in the hot stream, Heiti lækurinn, before. The water comes from the hot water tanks, that are underneath the dome Perlan, and has been used previously to heat up people's houses in Reykjavík.

The service center is ideal for runners that have a choice of numerous variation of paths in the area.



## LAUGARVATN FONTANA:

-Where Historic Hot Springs Meet Modern Amenities

**SPA UNIQUE**

In Laugarvatn, at the centre of the famed Golden Circle, steam rises from the bubbling earth, grand mountains surge in the distance, and the peaceful Laugarvatn Fontana geothermal spa beckons. Today, this charming town and lake are home to modern mineral baths, but the history of the region with the powerful hot springs runs deep.

The springs at Laugarvatn have been used by Icelanders since the year 1000 when the coolest spring, Víðdalaug, was the site of a mass baptism for the entire parliament. The parliament, called Alþingi, used to gather at Þingvellir, 25 kilometres away. Under much pressure from the Norwegian king, the pagan parliament adopted Christianity and, rather than use the cold waters of Þingvellir, they were all baptized in this warm spring at Laugarvatn.

One of the springs has now been used since 2011 by Laugarvatn Fontana for gorgeous contemporary mineral baths. In an elegant, well-appointed spa, visitors can soak in the hot water, but there are four interconnected mineral baths vary in depth, size and temperature. In three wet-steam rooms, built directly over the bubbling earth, guests smell and hear the bubbling water underneath and inhale steam as it rises straight from the core of the earth just as Icelanders have through the ages.

And too, for centuries Icelanders used the geothermal energy from the springs to cook, baking bread in the steaming sands. Today,

the locals still harness this same power from the hottest of the three springs at Laugarvatn for geothermal district heating. This primary energy source provides heat and energy to all the buildings and business in the region. Just like in the olden times, today Fontana Baths offer traditional Icelandic rye bread baked in the hot sandy shore and trout caught and smoked at a nearby farm. Guests can also take part in the making of the bread if they wish (they can book that experience beforehand, small fee).

Through tasteful, cutting-edge architecture, the Fontana Baths are able to preserve the sanctity of the natural landscape and pay homage to the historical importance of the site. The turf roof, clean stark lines, and floor-to-ceiling windows highlight the spectacular views, bringing nature inside and luxury out-of-doors. Of course too, the plush towels, organic, sweet-smelling Sóley skin products, and heated floors make spending time at this ancient lake feel like a modern-day indulgence.

Note: Laugarvatn Fontana is in the heart of the Golden Circle: a fifteen-minute drive from Geysir and a twenty-minute drive from Þingvellir. Make sure that your Golden Circle Day Tour includes a visit to Laugarvatn Fontana.

**For more information visit:**  
[fontana.is](http://fontana.is)

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

## WHAT'S GOING ON?



FEBRUARY 13 – 15

# SÓNAR REYKJAVIK – INTERNATIONAL

FUN DANCE PARTY

Second Icelandic edition of the International Festival of Advanced Music held annually in Barcelona every June. Last years festival was a great success. 2014 line-up looks even more appetizing and most of the electronic sound fans in Iceland can barely wait for it.

Apart from Icelandic international stars like Gus Gus and FM Belfast there will be plenty of fresh Icelandic artists and DJ's, which are climbing up to the top of music levels and totally worth checking out. Then there are

giants like Paul Kalkbrenner, Jon Hopkins, Trentemøller, Bonobo, Ryuchi Sakamoto and Taylor Dupree and many more. If you like to dance, meet interesting people and have loads of fun, and you happened to be spending time in Reykjavik between 13th and 15th of February – again, Harpa is the place to be!

Sónar Reykjavik takes place at one of Europe's most unique concert venues: Harpa. Situated by the harbour in downtown

Reykjavik, the venue is in the midst of the city's heartbeat - in walking distance from its prominent hotels, museums, bars and restaurants. The festival takes place at five different stages: Silfuberg, Norðurljós, Kaldalón (seated), Flói and the underground car-park, which will quickly become a classic.

For more information go to:  
[sonarreykjavik.com](http://sonarreykjavik.com)



FEBRUARY 6 - 15

# REYKJAVIK WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL

ART LIGHT DARK

The long winter days of darkness in Reykjavik will be illuminated magnificently at the city's next annual Winter Lights Festival. Taking place between 6 -15 February 2014, the festival promises another superb collection of sparkling events, all delivered with our customary commitment to quality and diversity. The main objective of the festival is

to illuminate the dramatic darkness of winter with a collection of sparkling events, which both celebrate and emphasize the beauty of Reykjavik City. The festival slogan is Amazing Darkness!

For more information go to:  
[vetrarhatid.is](http://vetrarhatid.is)



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# WHAT'S GOING ON?

MARCH 17 - 23

## ICELANDIC MUSIC EXPERIMENTS

CONCERT PARTY TALENT

This is the most awaited event for new artists, talent hunters and people, who are curious about new things and like to follow careers of the most interesting bands since the very start. This competition gives fresh artists a chance to perform in front of big crowds on a very professional level. Yes, Músíktílaunir is seeding hopes in the young up coming bands. It is the event one should perform at, to be noticed. Groups like Agent Fresco, Mínus, Vök, Maus or Mammút started their careers after participating in this competition.

Anyone between 13 and 25 years old can participate. All they need to do is to fill in application, attach 2-3 songs in mp3 format with a short description of the group in text format and a high quality photo of the band members. Participation fee is 7000 ISK.

The event will be held in Harpa Concert Hall.

**To read more or fill in application go to: [musiktilraunir.is](http://musiktilraunir.is)**



FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 2

## FOOD & FUN 2014

DELICIOUS COZY FOOD

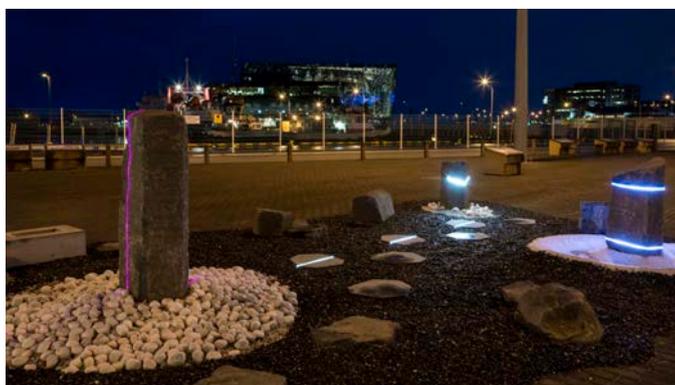
Food and Fun mixes outstanding culinary skills, fresh natural ingredients, Icelandic outdoor adventure and the world-famous Reykjavik nightlife to create the ultimate recipe for fun.

The core element of the festival involves world-acclaimed chefs collaborating with Reykjavik's finest restaurants. Each chef is assigned to one of the participating restaurants, where they prepare a special menu crafted from Icelandic ingredients only, commonly held to be the

best in the world by Icelanders. The menus are presented at all the restaurants for an entire week.

In addition, the chefs themselves are on site for three nights during the festival week. The second element of the festival is the chef competition, which takes place on the last day of the festival. The chefs compete by making three courses, made out of only Icelandic ingredients.

**For more information go to: [www.foodandfun.is](http://www.foodandfun.is)**



MARCH 27 – 30

## DESIGN MARCH

DESIGN ART FUN

DesignMarch is Iceland's most important annual design festival. Organized for the fifth time, it will be the largest and most significant yet, with an expected 150 or so events that will transform the most northerly capital in the world into one big venue for design.

From fashion to furniture, architecture to food design, the festival showcases the best of the local design scene alongside exciting international names,

opening with DesignTalks, a day of lectures by internationally acclaimed designers and the foremost local design thinkers.

DesignMarch is organized by Iceland Design Centre, the promotion agency for Icelandic design and architecture.

**For more information see: [designmarch.is](http://designmarch.is)**



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MARCH 27 – 30

## REYKJAVIK FASHION FESTIVAL

**FUN FASHION**

The fifth edition of the Reykjavik Fashion Festival (RFF) will be held on March 27-30, 2014 in conjunction with the renowned Icelandic design festival DesignMarch.

Established in 2009, the Reykjavik Fashion Festival has proven itself as the main platform for the always daring and talented Icelandic fashion designers. The main goal of RFF is to market Icelandic fashion design and introduce the development and possible opportunities in the Icelandic fashion industry. Media

from around the world, fashion bloggers and key people in the fashion industry are invited to experience a unique festival; and of course, Reykjavik Fashion Festival also welcomes all fashion enthusiasts to discover Icelandic fashion culture.

Designers 2014: Cintamani, ELLA, Farmers Market, JÖR by Guðmundur Jörundsson, magnea, REY, Sigga Maija, Ziska

**For more information see:**  
[rff.is](http://rff.is)

MARCH 29 - 30

## ALDREI FÓR ÉG SUÐUR

**PARTY LOCAL UNICUE**

One of the most beautiful festivals you will attend. Never Went South (eng.) is basically a huge family gathering in the capital town of the West Fjords, Ísafjörður. It's for everyone: people with children, adults and youngsters, rock stars and hipsters; everybody join together for these two days and enjoy the music of bands which perform there in the name of great fun! And the festival is for free!

The main concerts are held in a partially open air, but many bars offer off venues in the mean time. Some of them start already on 28th of March.

It needs to be mentioned that Ísafjörður and surrounding area is one of the most charming, beautiful, romantic, magnificent towns you will see in Iceland, so the trip is totally worth it.

You can travel there by a car or a plane. Plane tickets you can purchase at Icelandic domestic airlines [www.flugfelag.is](http://www.flugfelag.is). There also are several numbers of car rentals, which offer deals especially for this event. There are also groups on facebook with advertisements for accommodation.

**For more information see:**  
[aldrei.is](http://aldrei.is)





The steak house by the harbor

# A WARMHEARTED RESTAURANT

if you like steak this is it! steikhúsið, which simply means “The steak house”, is a trendy new restaurant in the middle of reykjavik. The vibrant, beating heart of the premises is the spanish Mibrasa coal oven where guests can watch the deft hands of the cook, artfully preparing the sizzling steaks.

The beautiful coal oven, visible to guests above a bar table is used for grilling and baking. The distinct flavor from the coals gives the food a richer taste and enhances the tenderness of the meat, and speaking of tenderness, if the texture of supple, butter soft meat is to your liking, be sure to taste the “28 days” tendered meat specially cured by the chef. The excellent selections and innovative side dishes are all tantalizing and be sure not to miss the grilled Icelandic fish, a tasty delicacy worthy of your indulgence. Although the focus is primarily on steaks the vegetarian choice is excellent. A myriad of flavorful starters served with freshly baked bread will set the mood for your meal. The exciting list of side dishes gives every one the opportunity to design their favorite meal or why not be daring and try something new?

How about deep fried tempura vegetables or sweet potato French fries?

If selecting becomes too much of a dilemma there is always the set menus. These vary with the seasons and offer the freshest and most popular dishes available at any given time. The owners take pride in catering to the whole family so as you would expect the children’s menu is excellent.

## ROUGH AND READY STYLE INTERIOR

The raw decoration and furniture made partly out of recycled materials create an ambiance of old fashioned charm and history. The restaurant is situated just above the old harbor by the whale watching center of Reykjavik and therefore the interior, reminiscent of old harbor pubs, is fitting and apt. Also it reflects on the

history of the house which was built to house a blacksmith’s smithy and metal works. But the main focus here is really on steaks so back to basics, this restaurant is situated firmly in the modern world. The drinks menu arrives on the table in the form of an iPad making it easy to browse, create a wide selection and change it when something new and exciting catches the sommelier’s attention. After a good meal in the warm atmosphere of The Steak House, a stroll along the harbor or through the lively neighborhood, of restaurants, cafés, artisan stores and workshops will give a fitting ending to a fun and enjoyable evening.

**STEIKHÚSIÐ**  
**Tryggvagata 4-6, 101 Reykjavík**  
**Tel: 561 11 11**  
**steik.is**



Marcos Zotes " Rafmögnuð Náttúra" Vetrarhátíð 2012. Mynd Raggi Th. Sigurðsson.

# AMAZING DAYS OF DARKNESS IN REYKJAVÍK!

The long winter days of darkness in Reykjavík will be illuminated magnificently at the city's next annual Winter Lights Festival. Taking place between 6 -15 February 2014, the festival promises another superb collection of sparkling events, all delivered with our customary commitment to quality and diversity.

**T**he main objective of the festival is to illuminate the dramatic darkness of winter with a collection of sparkling events, which both celebrate and emphasize the beauty of Reykjavík City. The festival slogan is Amazing Darkness!

Core events of the upcoming Winter Lights Festival include a number fantastic exhibition oflights installations together with the popular theme nights: Museum Night and Pool Night. Other key features include International Children's Day, Snow Sculpting, Denver Calling

Reykjavik concert and a conference dedicated to light-art installations.

## LIGHTS INSTALLATIONS

In pride of place at this year's annual Reykjavík Winter Lights Festival will be a number of sensational works of lights-art, all sponsored by the Nordic art and culture fund Kultur Kontakt Nord. These highly anticipated art commissions, which will also be exhibited in both Torshavn and Manchester, include pieces by: Tine Bech (Denmark); Inuk Silis





Marcos Zotes " Pixel Cloud " Vetrarhátíð 2013. Mynd Raggi Th. Sigurðsson.

Høegh(Greenland), Arild M. Kalseth (Norway) and Amelie Deschamps (France); Kitty Von-Sometime (UK); Kristján Kristjánsson and Örvar Halldórsson (Iceland); and Ulf Pederson (UK).

### DENVER CALLING REYKJAVÍK

A concert held after the festival's Opening Ceremony on February 6th at Iðnó, is a cross cultural celebration featuring top musicians from Denver, Colorado USA and Iceland. Musicians from Denver are paired with Icelandic artist to perform never before heard cross-cultural collaborations. The musicians are Tyler Ludwick (Princess Music), Esmé Patterson (Paper Bird) and Jesse Elliott (Ark Life) from Denver and Högni Egilsson (Hjaltalín & Gus Gus), Lay Low and Snorri Helgason from Iceland.

### MUSEUM NIGHT

Takes place on Friday February 6th, was established to shine a light on Reykjavík's culture by re-opening the museum doors at night-time and inviting city residents and guests the chance to explore the facilities during the more enchanting and magical hours leading up to midnight. A total of forty museums in Reykjavík City will open their doors to the public for free and stay open until midnight. Each museum will offer a tempting programme of fascinating and unusual events for guests of all ages to enjoy.

### INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Takes place on Saturday February 8th at Gerðuberg Museum. The goal of International Children's Day is to invite children and families to participate and engaging in a number of cross-cultural activities and workshops.

Snow Sculpting is a four day event that begins on Sunday February 9th and ends on Wednesday February 12th. Snow Sculpting artists from Breckenridge, Colorado USA will be visiting Reykjavík and introducing this beautiful form of art to festival's guests. Snow sculpting began in Breckenridge as a local pastime during the town's winter carnival in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Today, International Snow Sculpting Championships are held in Breckenridge, which is attended annually by more than 32,000 people.

### POOL NIGHT

Takes place on Saturday February 15th, was introduced at the 2012 edition of the Winter Lights festival and has since become a firm favourite on the programme of events. Pool Night invites guest to experience the facilities from 8pm until midnight, with the added attraction of thrilling in-pool activities, music and pool illuminations. This year guests will be able to enjoy the unique Reykjavík pool experience free of charge at Laugardalslaug, Sundhöll and Grafarvogslaug swimming pools.

### REYKJAVÍK WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL PROGRAM

- February 6th Opening Ceremony
- February 6th Lights installations
- February 6th Denver Calling Reykjavík concert
- February 7th Museum Night
- February 8th International Children's Day
- February 10th Snow Sculpting
- February 14th Conference
- February 15th Pool Night

Winter Lights Opening Ceremony will take place at Hljómskálagarður on February 6th at 19.30, where the talented Circle 6 will reveal their Spiritual Light Installation. Circle 6 consists of the multi-national team of Inuk Silis Høegh (Greenland/Denmark), Arild M. Kalseth (Norway), and Amelie Deschamps (France/Canada). Prepared to be amazed by the dramatic interplay of darkness and light at the Winter Lights Festival!

For further information please contact Bryndís Pjetursdóttir, Marketing & PR Manager of Visit Reykjavík. Tel: 590-1516. Email: bryndis@visitreykjavik.is.

**The official website of Reykjavík's Winter Lights Festival is:**  
[winterlightsfestival.is](http://winterlightsfestival.is)



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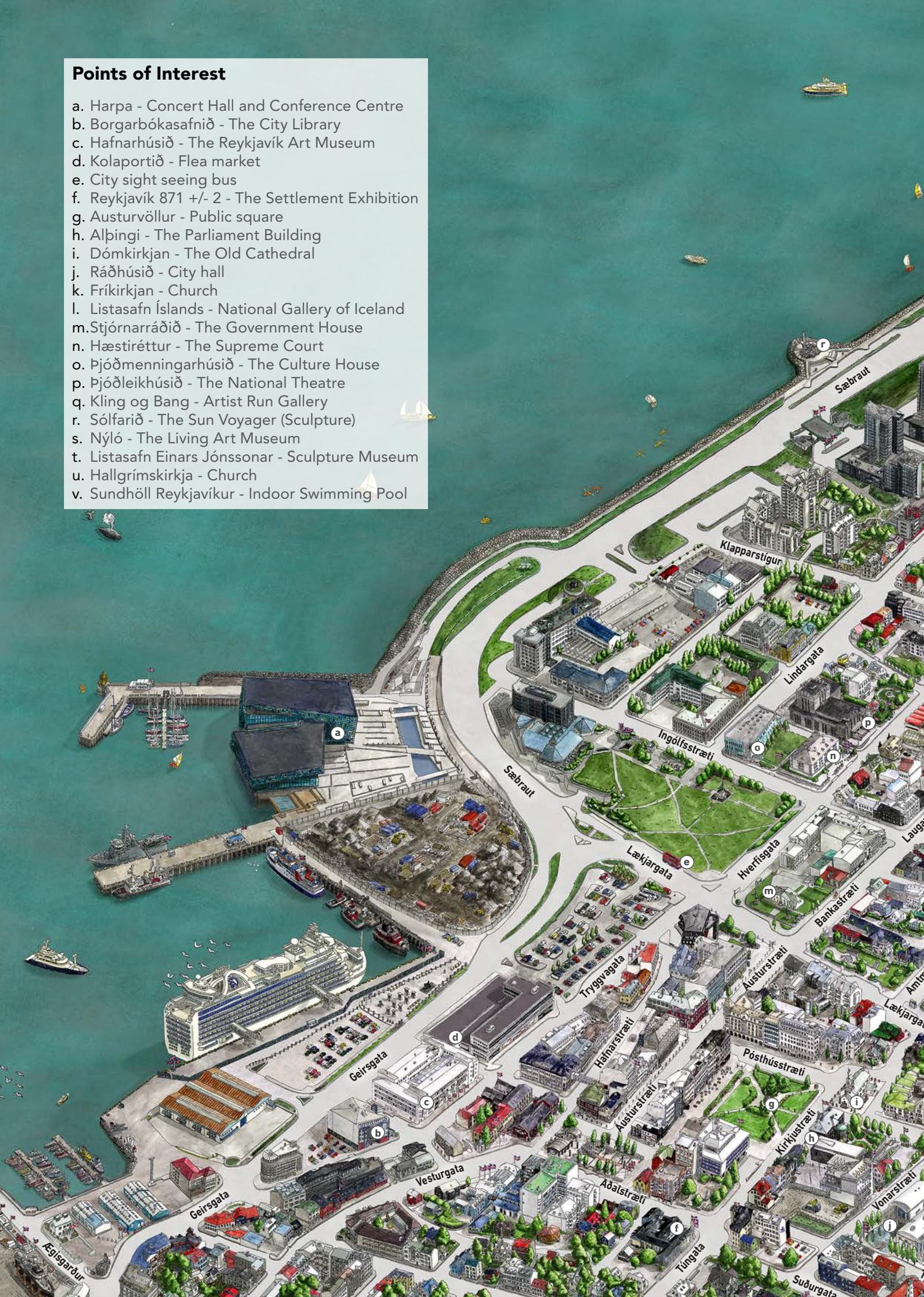
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## Points of Interest

- a. Harpa - Concert Hall and Conference Centre
- b. Borgarbókasafnið - The City Library
- c. Hafnarhúsið - The Reykjavík Art Museum
- d. Kolaportið - Flea market
- e. City sight seeing bus
- f. Reykjavík 871 +/- 2 - The Settlement Exhibition
- g. Austurvöllur - Public square
- h. Alþingi - The Parliament Building
- i. Dómkirkjan - The Old Cathedral
- j. Ráðhúsið - City hall
- k. Fríkirkjan - Church
- l. Listasafn Íslands - National Gallery of Iceland
- m. Stjórnarráðið - The Government House
- n. Hæstiréttur - The Supreme Court
- o. Þjóðmenningarhúsið - The Culture House
- p. Þjóðleikhúsið - The National Theatre
- q. Kling og Bang - Artist Run Gallery
- r. Sólfarið - The Sun Voyager (Sculpture)
- s. Nýló - The Living Art Museum
- t. Listasafn Einars Jónssonar - Sculpture Museum
- u. Hallgrímskirkja - Church
- v. Sundhöll Reykjavíkur - Indoor Swimming Pool





## Dimmalimm – a fairy tale china

# THE SWEET **PRINCESS** AND HER SWAN

Every child in Iceland knows the story of dimmalimm, the sweet and kind little princess that befriended a swan only to find out that he was a prince put under a spell by an evil witch. This beautifully illustrated story has become a part of Icelandic heritage and now a collection of endearing children's china and cutlery is available that will most certainly enlarge the number of dimmalimm fans.

by Steingerður Steinarsdóttir Photos: Emir Eyjólfsson

The painter Muggur is the author of Dimmalimm. His real name was Guðmundur Thorsteinsson, born on the 5th of September 1891 and died on July 26th 1924. His father was a great industrial entrepreneur in Iceland and the family was wealthy and close knit. Within their intimate circle strange nicknames were common and thus the story of Dimmalimm came into being when Muggur was entertaining his small niece Helga egilson. Her nickname was Dimmalimm and she was the model for the kind princess that with her tears freed an enchanted prince from the shackles of an evil spell. Muggur, a talented and exceptional young man was not only a great designer, illustrator and painter but also a great performer, a skill that earned him the main role in the Danish film, Sons of the Soil (Borgslægten's history) which was filmed in 1919.

### A HERITAGE OF A FAMILY AND A NATION

Muggur's story of Dimmalimm has been translated into many languages, delighting and charming young audiences of all nationalities with its simplicity and beauty. Dimmalimm represents the innocence and goodness of children. The artist that designed this wonderful dinner set is Helga egilson whose aunt and full namesake was the model for the original princess in the story.

"I love re-awakening Dimmalimm, to direct her back into the hearts of people and introduce her to new generations. There is always space for fairy tales in people's hearts and the message in the story of Dimmalimm, one of kindness and friendliness, always belongs," says artist Helga Egilson

The Dimmalimm collection has three illustrations from the book; three different

bowls and matching mugs, a bowl and a mug packed together, and three types of cutlery with different images on the handles. It is safe to say that these lovely porcelain pieces and charming cutlery are a wonderful new beginning of a porcelain set that will hopefully grow larger with time. The cutlery and china with the illustrations of Dimmalimm are available at the museum shop at the National Art gallery, The National Museum, Kraum on Aðalstræti 10, Atmo on laugavegur 91, Kokka on laugavegur 47, epal in Skeifan, Harpa and Keflavík Airport, líf og list in Smáralind shopping mall and at the Akureyri library.

**For more information visit:**  
[isafoldartanddesign.com](http://isafoldartanddesign.com)





## The English Pub

# SAVE WATER, DRINK BEER!

For years, Iceland has enjoyed a diverse selection of restaurants and often sophisticated bars. However, one tiny grumble occasionally surfaced from the country's Anglophiles – simply that there was no proper “pub”.

And so the English Pub was born. From modest beginnings it has built a hearty reputation, seeking out, with the advice and guidance of its dedicated customers, the finest ale available to mankind. Today it offers its enthusiastic clientele the chance to sample 50 beers from around the world, as well as a staggering 15 Icelandic brands.

### WHISKY GALORE

Not content to rest on its laurels, the English Pub has ventured north of its virtual border and also offers the finest selection of whiskies anywhere in the country. The choice of some 60 malts include many of Scotland's finest, ensuring that numerous Icelanders and worldly travelers make the pilgrimage to the pub's humble door.

Located at the very heart of downtown Reykjavik, the walls of the English Pub are adorned with hundreds of photographs – like an album of the city's history just waiting to be explored over a quiet beer.

### A SPORTING CHANCE

Live sporting coverage is amply catered for, with a choice of three big screens and TVs. In side the pub there is room for up to 150 people, and an outdoor terrace can accommodate plenty more on those balmy Icelandic evenings! Whether it is football (Premier and Champions League), rugby or golf, there are always special offers when live events are being broadcast.

Live music every night adds to the atmosphere and for anyone feeling lucky, there is the Wheel of Fortune. Regulars like nothing more than to spin the wheel and chance a “Sorry” or preferably win what used to be called a Yard of Ale. These days, it's inevitably known as a meter of beer, but the winners don't seem to mind!

**The English Pub Austurstræti 12  
101 Reykjavik  
Tel: +354 578 0400 Mobile: +354 697 9003  
enskibarinn.is**



# SKYR

– Total indulgence



If you've been to an Icelandic supermarket it is more than likely that you've noticed skyr. If you are wondering what it is let us sum it up for you: it is a super high protein, low-fat, calcium-rich dairy product. Until recently, finding skyr anywhere outside of Iceland was nearly impossible but recently that has changed as skyr has made its way into American fine foods stores and become somewhat of a dietary trend there, but that's a different story. Iceland is the home of skyr so while you're here why don't you try it?

by Dísá Bjarnadóttir

## SOME THROW IT BUT MOST EAT IT

Skyr is so old that it can be found in a common phrase: "Those who own the skyr can throw/ splash it" Of course this phrase doesn't translate well. Try saying it our way: "Þeir sletta skyrinu sem eiga það." It sounds a lot better. Basically the saying is used in banter to describe when someone is making accusations about someone. It's a little like saying "Who are you to talk?"

One story of old is about the most famous and popular heroes of the Icelanders' Sagas: Grettir the strong. He came up to the home of a man named Auðunn, with the intention of starting a fight. Auðunn wasn't home so Grettir waited.

When Auðunn arrived on his horse with satchels of skyr, Grettir announced he was there to fight. Auðunn answered that he'd have to put away the food he was carrying first but then threw a satchel of skyr at Grettir. It is said that Grettir looked so silly covered in skyr it was more embarrassing for him than if Auðunn had wounded him greatly in battle.

Whether skyr has been thrown on many people since Auðunn threw it on Grettir centuries ago is uncertain, but what is certain, plenty of it has been eaten since then, and it will be eaten for years to come. So get yourself some skyr while you're here and if you take some home you can try making a skyr-cake for your friends.

### Here's the recipe:

**80 gr. melted butter**  
**1 pack cinnamon crackers, crushed**  
**5 dl (2 cups) whipped cream**  
**500 gr. vanilla flavored skyr**  
**3 tbsp blueberry jam**  
**fresh blueberries and strawberries for decoration**

Mix the butter and the crushed crackers and layer the bottom of a cake tin. Gently mix the cream and the skyr and pour onto the crumb-bottom. Carefully place the blueberry jam on top and decorate with the fresh berries. Cool for three to four hours and then voila! Skyr-cake ready for serving!

## GETTING TECHNICAL

Skyr was recently added to The Slow Food "Arc of taste" where it is described as a fresh acid-curd cheese made from skim

milk which is produced by the coagulation of milk proteins by acidification with lactic acid bacteria. Traditional production is characterized by the use of skyr from an earlier batch as starter and the separation of curds and whey by cloth filtration. Skyr is a very soft cheese which traditionally was consumed as a full meal. In modern consumption it is normally flavored with sweeteners such as fruit or sugar, and enjoyed with cream or milk during breakfast or as a snack item. Nutritional qualities of pure skyr are quite exceptional, as it is very high in protein and contains no fat. It is very suitable for various culinary exercises and can be found in increasing numbers on the dessert menu of restaurants in Iceland.

Skyr is a traditional product, which has probably been a part of the Icelandic diet since the first settlers arrived more than one thousand years ago. It is mentioned in medieval Icelandic literature and remnants of products similar to skyr have been found in archaeological excavations of medieval farms in Iceland. Skyr, or similar dairy products, were probably produced across the whole Nordic region around the settlement time in Iceland, but soon disappeared in other countries, except in Iceland where it was one of the most important staples in the diet of most people for centuries.

Skyr was produced in every household and each one with time developed their own starter culture, which gave their skyr a unique flavor. Skyr was mainly produced in the summer, and the challenge was to maintain the starter throughout the winter in order to re-start the production in the new season. This indicates that the skyr we have today is actually related to the skyr of the settlers.



## Sakebarinn Sushi & Sticks

# THE ONE AND ONLY CHOICE FOR SUSHI & STICKS

... so you can check it off your bucket list

Located in a loft on Laugavegur, the main shopping street, in one of Iceland's old est buildings (1886) is a great new restaurant with a great view and an amazing atmosphere called Sakebarinn. In its beautiful location, surrounded by windows that look down on Austurstræti, (an extension of Laugavegur leading to the Old town) and up Skólavörðustígur (known for its cafés, local boutiques and art shops with native works), Sakebarinn lies in the very heart of downtown Reykjavík. In the winter you can see the northern Lights from the balcony and in the summer, the amazing summer sunsets over the harbor.

The owners of Sakebarinn have a keen interest for the arts and crafts and a wealth of creative assets to play with. Although Sakebarinn has a strong foundation in pure Japanese cuisine the current style of the restaurant proves that the owners are not afraid to break some of the rules. To them sushi is meant to be an art form.

Along with its handcrafted sushi, Sakebarinn also offers a selection of sticks and other meat courses, featuring whale and horse and anything that's fresh and interesting that day. Why live on an island in the middle of the Atlantic if you're not going to take advantage of the natural fauna? Along with the local seafood, Sakebarinn also carries some more exotic things like octopus, just to keep it interesting, and with a little something for everyone. There's love on every plate – You

will feel it with each taste. It's no accident that the place is named Sakebarinn. It does feature the country's largest selection of sake and a shot before a meal can truly enhance the feel of real Japanese dining. It comes in a surprising range of flavors too, everything from really girly fruit sake to the fire-spewing alcohol content of some of the more butch types; potato sake, warm and cold sake and Japanese plum wine. And then of course are the bottles that didn't make it on to the menu because no one could read the labels and therefore no one knows what they are. Mystery sake! Sakebarinn is a place born to showcase the talents the staff have collected over the years working at their first Sushi restaurant called Sushibarinn, which is located on the first floor in the same house. A year and a wild ride later, this sushi family

has incorporated a bunch of new and talented people with some great new recipes and skills they didn't know they had and didn't even know existed. The walls are hand-painted by them, the wine selected by them, the menu is designed by them and the place is loved by them. They also love to present food so their clients become part of their love for sushi. The look on your face is what they are aiming for, the look of enjoyment.

### SAKEBARINN

Laugavegur 2, 101 Reykjavík (entrance to the second floor from Skólavörðustígur)  
 Opening hours: Mon-sun 5:00 PM – 00:00  
 tel: +354 777 3311  
[facebook.com/sakebarinn](https://facebook.com/sakebarinn)

# HOW TO BAKE

## A TRADITIONAL ICELANDIC CAKE

Recipe by Sigríður Björk Bragadóttir Photo: Rakel Ósk Sigurðardóttir

Despite the name, this delicious cake used to be a household staple served all year round. Actually, it still is, although Icelandic housewives might not be as prone to baking them as they used to and also these days, they can be bought from a store. Still, homemade cakes are special and we got gestgjafinn, Iceland's leading culinary magazine, to give us their recipe so our readers could impress their friends with their real Icelandic baking skills.

This recipe has a bit of a fancy twist to it as freshly ground cardamoms give it a unique flavor. If you don't like raisins you could try switching to chocolate chips.

**175 g butter, soft**

**175 g sugar**

**2 large eggs**

**250 g flour**

**1 1/2 tsp. baking powder**

**1/2-1 tsp. cardamom seeds, freshly ground or pestled (from 10-20 pods) 1 dl raisins**

**1 1/4 dl milk**

**1 tsp. vanilla extract or**

**1/2 tsp. lemon extract**

Heat the oven to 175°C. Mix butter and sugar thoroughly in a bowl until the mixture is light and creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, and mix for 3-4 minutes. Sift flour and baking powder into another bowl and add ground cardamom seeds and raisins. Add the flour mixture, milk and vanilla or lemon extract to the butter and sugar; mix well. Grease a deep, rectangular cake tin and add the mixture evenly. Bake on lowest rim for 50-60 minutes.





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# FROM ALE TO BEER

when Icelanders decide to do something they more or less go to the utmost extreme. In the early '80s for instance, we discovered the VCr and it took us only four to five years to become the nation with the highest number per capita to have this wonderful technology installed in our living rooms.

by Jón Kristinn Snæhólm

**M**aybe this fact is not so surprising when you come to understand that during these times we did not have any television on Thursdays and the whole month of July was the official holiday month of the Icelandic state owned television.

But what has all this got to do with the brewing of beer? How do the Icelandic characteristics shine through the impressive revolution concerning how we came from being the hardest strong liqueur drinkers to a very sophisticated, forthcoming and innovative European nation concerning wine, food and drink? The answers to these questions are very surprising but also amusing at the same time.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF ICELANDIC BREWING

Since the settlement of Iceland, "öl" (ale) has been the favorite drink amongst Icelanders and it still was in the Middle Ages when the brewing developed for the better both concerning taste and shelf life. Instead of sweet gale (Myrica gale) the European method was adopted by using hops (*Humulus lupulus*) and then "öl" became "bjór" (beer). Imported beer became very popular in the 19th century especially from Denmark, Germany and

Britain and today Icelandic beer brewing tradition derives mainly from these countries.

## TO BEER OR NOT TO BEER

In 1915 a total alcohol consuming ban took place in Iceland following the strong and vigorous political campaign of the nonalcoholic league in Europe. This sent the brewing of alcoholic beverages underground, thereby preserving the Icelandic tradition of moonshining and beer brewing. Many households in Iceland, especially in the countryside, became experts in this banned industry and entrepreneurs brought home the bacon due to high prices on these forbidden but popular products.

Mainly two factors brought the alcohol ban to an end in Iceland. First and foremost, like always, it was the fish, which came to wine lovers' rescue. Spain wanted to import wine to Iceland in 1922 in exchange for Icelanders importing salted cod to Spain. Secondly the ban did not actually serve its purpose by forcing Icelanders to drink less so it was in effect useless.

On February 1st of 1935 the alcoholic ban was lifted in a national referendum. All alcoholic beverages were allowed ... gin, whiskey, black death (the Icelandic



Kaldi Bar just opened at Laugavegur 20b in Reykjavík.

brennivín), red wine and white wine etc. etc. everything – except beer!

## FREEDOM AT LAST

Until the year 1989, a considerable political debate about the beer ban accrued within Althingi, the Icelandic parliament, and several amendments were brought forward in its chambers to allow the public to choose its own consuming habits. But the politicians said no until finally liberal politicians came to power that trusted the common electorate to purchase beer and

drink it. What a concept!

Finally, on March 1st 1989 at 09:00 o'clock, the state owned liquor shops opened their doors for beer lovers. Icelanders went on a beer drinking feast and to this day on the 1st of March every year the B-day is celebrated as one of the milestones where the public got one of their principal freedoms from the politicians.

## SOMETHING IS BREWING

Today eleven breweries, mostly microbreweries, are operated in Iceland pouring out forty-five



Microbar at Austurstræti 6 in Reykjavík offers a wide selection of Icelandic beers.



different lagers, ales, stouts and dark malt ales.

Innovation is soaring and everything under the sun is acceptable when it comes to brewing of ales and beers in Iceland. Whether it is using 10,000 year old water from Europe's biggest glacier, Vatnajökull, or infusing this golden beverage with one of our high mountain herbs – everything goes.

The popularity of bars that cater to the eclectic tastes of beer lovers is also on the rise and recently two bars that focus solely on Icelandic beers and especially

the microbreweries have opened in Reykjavík; Microbar and Kaldi bar. even the relatively small town of Akureyri in Northern Iceland has its place for local beer at Brugghúsbarinn.

Without a doubt there will be no end to this wonderful new Icelandic industry.

You see, we have this secret weapon, namely an ingredient that has been a great part of the winning streak of Icelandic beers in international competitions. Our unspoiled nature and our crystal clean water.



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# KOLAPORTIÐ

– A corner of Icelandic culture

Most major metropolitan cities have some kind of outdoor market. In Reykjavík it would be practically impossible to have an outdoor market as we are blessed with fresh powerful gusts of wind quite frequently. But where there's a will there's a way, and in Iceland there's plenty of both. So – our flea market is inside an old warehouse building, in the center of downtown Reykjavík and it's called Kolaportið (roughly translated: The coal quadrangle).

by Dísá Bjarnadóttir Photos: Ernir Eyjólfsson

**K**olaportið is where you should go if you want to get a taste of Icelandic culture. There you'll find the best Icelandic candy: licorice in all forms; shiny and greasy in a plastic bag, covered with milk chocolate or inside a small candy bar with banana cream. If you're not much of a licorice lover try the kókosbolla (coconut bun), a thin chocolate shell covered with grated coconut in which you'll discover fluffy white, creamy filling once you bite into it.

Kolaportið is also where you'll find some of the freshest fish and potatoes. In contrast, often in the very same booths you'll discover the 'not so fresh,' fermented shark. The Vikings had to be resourceful back in the day, so this is one of the foods that

can be credited to "keeping this nation alive". If you want to return from your visit to Iceland and tell your friends you had "the full experience" or "did as the Vikings did" you'll take a deep breath, count to ten and try a piece.

Keep walking through Kolaportið and you'll see the collections, collectors and collectibles. Old vinyl records, DVDs, books, antiques, paintings, jewelry, china, tea pots... and much more stuff. It's not uncommon for a young Icelander to browse through the stalls and think "Oh, this is just like the one my grandmother had in her living room." Last but not least: garage, basement, attic and storage room stalls. Moms and dads, daughters and sons are out there trying to sell the things they don't use any

more. Perhaps stuff they never used but bought on a trip abroad because the price was so good. Beware: The real treasure hunters come early to grab the best deals. For some people Kolaportið is an essential part of their weekend 'out and about'.

And essential it is indeed. It's essential to visit at least once, whether or not you try the shark or at least the candy. When you're all done you can have a look in the art museum just down the block or enjoy one of the many cafés or restaurants in the area.

If you are a student of culture and you'd like a good deal, a trip to Kolaportið can be a special part of your visit to downtown Reykjavík. It's open every Saturday and Sunday all year round.

*"Kolaportið is also where you'll find some of the freshest fish and potatoes. In contrast, often in the very same booths you'll discover the 'not so fresh,' fermented shark."*



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# ICELANDERS ARE A CURIOUS CASE

The field of genetics has advanced a great deal in recent years. Agnar Helgason, a biological anthropologist at deCODE genetics has done his research on the origin of icelanders and he is the man to ask: Who were the real forefathers ... and foremothers?

Text by Málfríður Garðarsdóttir Translation: Júlíana Björnsdóttir Photographer: Ernir Eyjólfsson

**S**tories are told of brave and rather unruly Vikings who escaped from the kingdom of Norway, leaving the restraints of bondage and an overbearing king. They arrived to an island with a ruthless landscape and built a nation upon it. The heritage is a legacy of fearlessness which is imprinted into the national identity of the Icelandic nation. Unveiling our heritage, and in so doing our origin, helps to understand who we are and possibly what it portends for us in the future. For centuries, generations of Icelanders listened to and later told stories of the first settlers, stories written in scripts and old relics from the age that preceded Christianity in Iceland, confirming the settlement of a Nordic race. The relics found in the resting place of the first settlers were thought to verify the settlers' land of origin. Amongst the many relics found in age-old graves were jewellery, utensils and weapons that resembled relics found in the Nordic countries.

## MISLEADING RESULTS

However, Celtic features have also been identified. Thus, it was realized that the relics only gave researchers an idea as to which routes the first settlers travelled in their sea crossings and trade missions. In the 1960s and 70s, blood type researchers complicated the matter further. The first research had been performed on the basis of the ABO blood type system and the results indicated that the blood running in

the veins of purebred Icelanders is closer in resemblance to the Brits than their cousins in the neighboring Nordic countries. This led to heated debates over how high a percentage of settlers in Iceland originated in the British Isles and how it affected the Icelandic genome.

But with the advent of modern research techniques the original blood test results were found to be inaccurate, to say the least and misleading. One research projected that only 2 percent of settlers arrived from the Nordic countries, whereas later research showed the percentage to be a massive 86 percent. Since the first research was conducted, genetic sciences have progressed rapidly. Agnar Helgason's investigation into the origin of Icelandic settlers has resulted in answers that are both unambiguous and curious.

## NORDIC FOREFATHERS... BRITISH FOREMOTHERS

Agnar and his colleagues at deCODE genetics compared DNA in mitochondrion to the Y-chromosome in order to shed new light on the nation's true forefathers and foremothers. Mitochondrion that are passed directly through the female line of descent – from mother to daughter – contain a genetic strain that reveals the foremothers from whom Icelanders are descended.

It's fair to say that each individual carries in part the same genomic strain as one's mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and all females dating back to

the first female settlers. The specific strain of DNA mitochondrion came from a total of 467 Icelanders, and was matched against strains from 645 Nordic natives and 1019 Scottish and Irish native residents.

Then, to discover the origin of the male settlers, a similar comparison was made on the Y-chromosome found in Icelandic men, and from 233 natives of the Nordic countries and 283 from Scotland and Ireland. The results from the study showed that more than 80 percent of Icelandic male lines of descent could be traced back to the Nordic countries – a living proof of the existence of the legendary Viking genes in Icelanders. However, only 38 percent of Icelandic female lines of descent trace back to the Nordic countries, while nearly two-thirds trace back to Scotland and Ireland.

Thus, it is fair to assume that a majority of male settlers came from Norway and the other Nordic countries, with most of the first women to settle in Iceland and rear children coming from the British Isles.

## A DIVERSIFIED GROUP

Agnar Helgason is not willing to make definitive assertions for the results, other than that it is clear various theories are afloat at this point. Who were these people that sailed all the way to Iceland in the 9th and 10th century?

Helgason and his colleagues also looked into the origin of the Faroese people – for whom,

likewise, the majority of male lines of descent can be traced back to the Nordic countries but the female lines of descent to the British Isles. In comparison, research done on local DNA from residents in the Orkney and Shetland Islands revealed only about 35 percent of males tracing back to the Nordic countries and about the same percentage of female lines.

The result of the Orkney and Shetland research result indicate the settlers were families because the ratio of men and women relatively similar. Assuming these were families, the numbers may be relatively low because the journey to the far west, that is, to the Faroe Islands and Iceland, with household goods and farm animals on board, was far less appealing for families already settled, so mainly single men ventured to take risky excursions to the unknown far west. It is a known fact that Icelandic settlers brought slaves with them on the long journey from the British Isles; even though this was the case, it is possible that not all of our British foremothers were slaves.

What we know is that some Nordic settlers stayed only for a while in the British Isles, northern Scotland and in Ireland, while others remained. It is possible that some of the first settlers in Iceland were the very descendants of such families. But it is worth noting that 38 percent of the Icelandic female lines of descent were traced back to the Nordic countries and one-fifth of the Icelandic male lines of descent



came from the British Isles. Therefore, it is clear that among the settlers were pure Nordic families, possibly arriving directly from the Nordic countries, as well as purebred families emigrating from the British Isles. Helgason is very right to assume that the Icelandic settlers truly were a mixed group.

### DNA IN OLD TEETH

An even more recent study by Helgason and his colleagues, done in cooperation with the National Museum of Iceland, enabled the scientists to utilize the latest technology to separate the DNA from settlers' teeth. Old DNA was examined, and compared to DNA from a segment of the population of different time periods. A total of 95 teeth from all corners of Iceland, found in the pagan graves of the early ages of settlement were used as samples. DNA preserves remarkably well in human remains throughout the ages. In particular, the DNA found in the pulp cavity of teeth is resistant to decay. Yet very few cells are found in it and very little DNA, nonetheless, the DNA that is there is remarkably well preserved, better than DNA from other body tissues. The hard and dense enamel prevents

environmental factors known to speed up its decay in other bodily remains, from decaying the DNA within the pulp cavity.

The procedure was a delicate and a sensitive process. Scientists had to break down the DNA and handle it with extreme precaution. The atmosphere in the laboratories at deCODE genetics was too polluted to analyze.

It with DNA from modern day people. Research facilities were set up in an old storage space at the National Museum of Iceland, where our forefathers DNA could be analyzed. The analysis of the archaic DNA sequence and the mitochondrion supported the previous findings from Helgason and his team's research: A majority of female settlers were of British descent. It also revealed that the settlers had more genetic similarities with the modern day residents of the Nordic countries and Britain, than with the modern day Icelander.

### SMALL NUMBERS – PROS AND CONS

Helgason makes a point to mention the pros and cons of small numbers. "You could say that the small number of people in the local Icelandic population has led to the significantly higher loss of genetic variation than

found in neighboring countries. Our DNA research indicates that that is the case and you might say it's unfortunate. However, Iceland's small population, both nowadays and in the past, is very fortunate for genetic research."

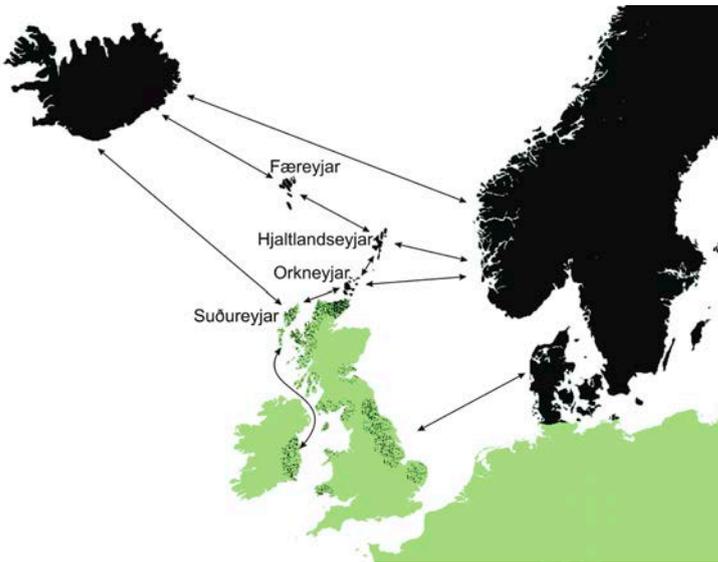
The general interest in genetics and genealogy in Iceland is not unique. The growing interest to investigate one's origin and heritage is widespread. Many Americans are eager to discover where their ancestors came from, and particularly the African American population as their history is poorly documented. Genetic research helps to narrow down the country of origin, or region from where one's ancestors derived.

Icelanders are very fortunate to be in possession of an enormous volume of information, due to the nation's isolated placement. "It is much easier to see the completed picture of the nation's origin and history because each individual is a source of information for the whole group. The small number of the local population and the isolation throughout the centuries is what makes Icelanders such a fascinating topic for geneticists," Helgason explains.

## THE CLOSER THE RELATION, THE MORE CHILDREN

One of the more recent researches done at deCODE genetics is based on data from Íslendingabók, or the Book of Icelanders' website. The website contains information about the number of births, the close relations of couples and results that are predictable. The general rule – no matter the time or the community – is that the more closely related a person is to his or her spouse, the more children the couple is likely to have.

Helgason hasn't ruled out a sociological effect that may have an impact. It is possible to say that a couple that is more closely related is more likely to meet at an early age and therefore, start having children sooner than other couples. The rule of thumb is applicable whether we look to the present day or the past; independent of whether an individual is based in a rural or urban community. Outside of the sociological factors Helgason believes it is likely to find a biological explanation showing that the mother's immune system is less likely to reject a foetus if the father's DNA closely resembles her own, thereby increasing the number of births.



Likely points of origins and sea routes

## LANDNÁMABÓK (THE BOOK OF SETTLEMENTS)

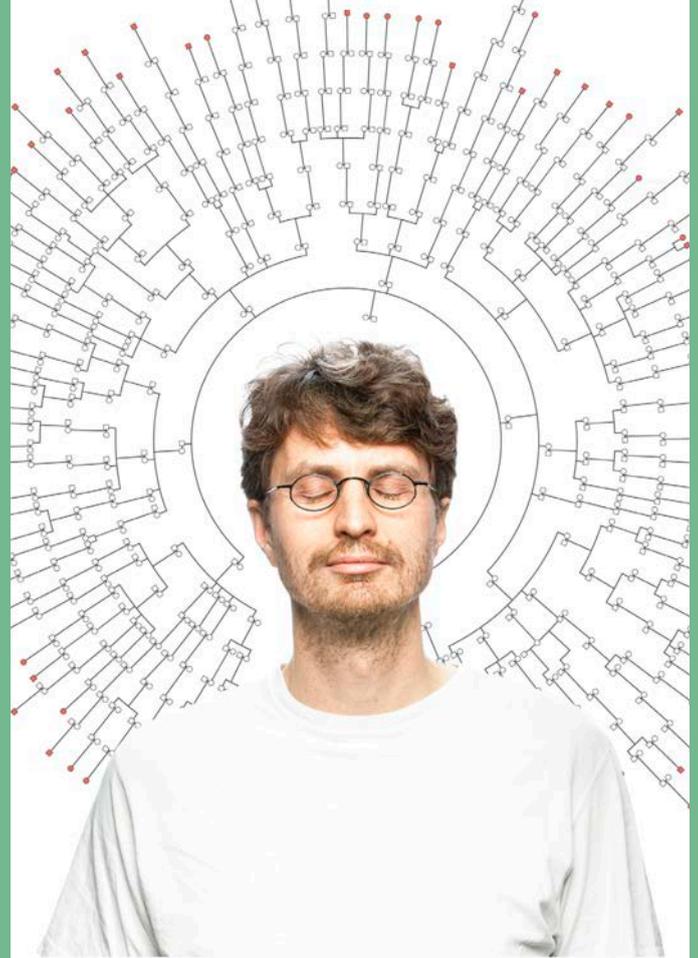
The Book of Settlements is historical data containing information of the very origin of Icelanders. It contains familial lineage information of a total of 268 settlers – out of the 430 mentioned in Landnámabók – according to calculations done by Jón Steffensen, Professor in Anatomy.

Most of those mentioned are male heads of the household. With the estimated 8000 to 16,000 individuals estimated to have settled in Iceland in the settlement age, the gap of missing information including women, slaves and other workers with links to the British Isles is wide. Prof. Steffensen is of the opinion that Landnámabók underestimated the ratio of people of British descent. Landnámabók or The Book of Settlement was presumably written by men about and for

men with large plots of land in their possession. Economical and political expediencies presumably dictated the authors' topics of choice, as well as the tendency to trace back family lines to Norway, rather than the British Isles. Is Landnámabók a work of pure fiction? Unlikely, if it were a work of fiction, it would be of little use to the authors in terms of them reaching their political goals. If we only take into account the genealogical information given in Landnámabók, it is fair to assume approximately 10 percent of settlers could trace their family lineage to the British Isles. Prof. Steffensen's hypothesis indicates the correct ratio is probably closer to 30.4 percent. It is particularly interesting to see in Landnámabók, that female settlers are more likely to be of British descent than men.

Origin of settlers according to Landnámabók (The Book of Settlements)  
The origin of settlers – both men and women

Gender	nordic	British	Total
Men	202 (91.8%)	18 (8.2%)	220
Women	39 (81.2%)	9 (18.8%)	48
Total	241 (89.9%)	27 (10.1%)	268



### AGNAR HELGASON PH.D.

Agnar Helgason studied anthropology at the University of Iceland. After completing his master's degree, he moved on to Cambridge University where he completed a second master's degree in biological anthropology. He then went on to complete a PhD in the same field at Oxford University.

He has been employed as a researcher at deCODE genetics since 2000, as well as being a research reader at the University of Iceland. He teaches a course in biological anthropology and instructs high school students.

### WHY GENETICS?

"Within the genome is an incredibly complicated recipe for a living being. In addition to the intricacy, the history and relationship of all species and individuals is written in the DNA sequence of their genomes. Every year brings scientists closer to and closer to reading and understanding the recipes written in the DNA, and to analyzing all aspects of a person's family tree. As a university student,

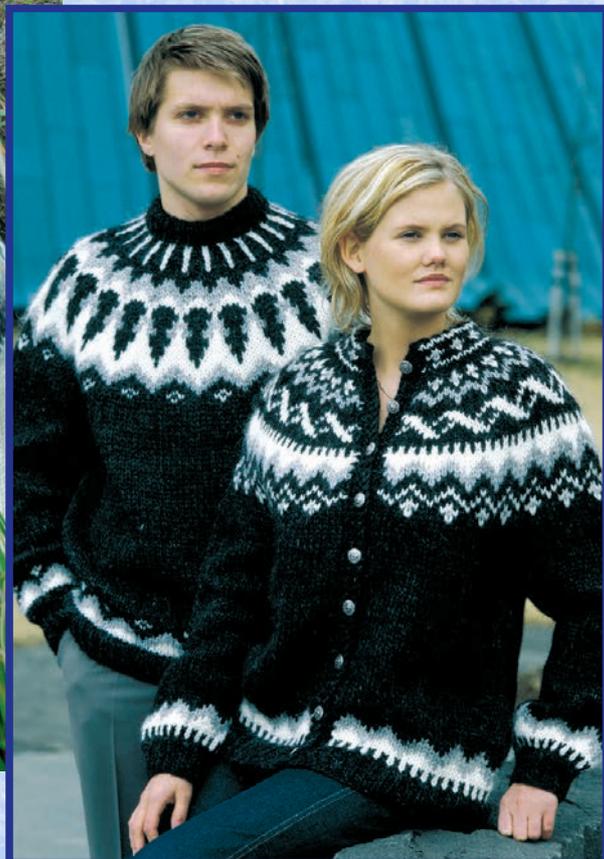
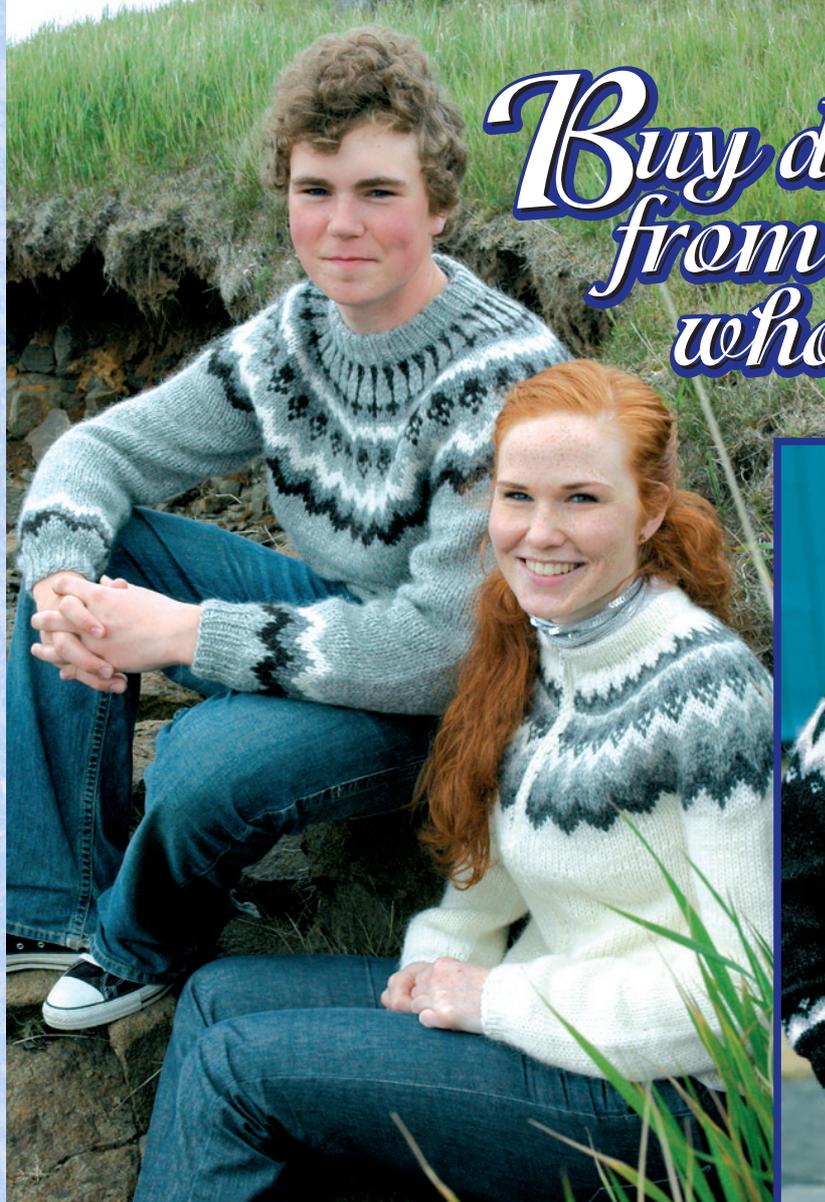
I couldn't think of anything as exciting as participating in human DNA research, and I am privileged to do exactly that at deCode genetics."

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NEXT?

"There is a number of exciting research works in the pipeline but it rarely pays off to discuss individual results until the research period is completed. Otherwise, one might find oneself making empty assumptions!"

"The data points to the conclusion that Nordic settlements in the British Isles varied in terms of success and longevity. Settlements in the British Isles, Ireland and Scotland were rather unstable, local armies tried to drive the Nordic settlers away. Interesting reading material in relation to this assumption is the tale relating the story of King Olaf the White in The Book of Settlement, or Landnámabók, and the Eyrbyggja saga. His widow, Aud the DeepMinded (Auðr or Auður "djúpauðga" Ketilsdóttir) escaped to the South Islands and from there to Iceland with her escort. It goes without saying that stories of a new untouched land in the north, was a tempting destination for families of settlers who'd been driven from their settlement."

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# MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Home is reykjavík, Iceland and always has been. I was raised in the 80s, in a society ripe with national pride in the wake of independence and constantly chanting the sound bite “world Champions per capita!”

By Guðrún Baldvina Sævarsdóttir Photos: Birtíngur photo collection.

It took an embarrassing economic crisis to shake my fundamental belief that we Icelanders are really rockin’ in the free world. For most of my life I was raised in a society that honestly believed it possessed the world’s cleanest air, the world’s best water, the most beautiful women, strongest men, most exciting nightlife, best music, best food, best pilots and I could go on for much, much longer. It seemed like the only area we weren’t superior to the rest of the world in, was basic humility.

I still hear myself telling foreigners, that because Icelandic vegetables are forced to grow slowly in the harsh climate they retain all of their juices and nutrients making them more nutritious and better than vegetables anywhere else in the world. I have no idea where I got this information from but I know it comes from that place deep inside me that automatically has alternative versions of explaining how unique and special we are.

I am therefore slightly torn in writing an article boasting all the great things about my home country that I miss. The fact of the matter is that Iceland isn’t the best or the greatest or the most special of all the countries in the world, nor does it need to be. It is however unique, just like every other country in the world and like the Icelandic saying goes “Distance makes the mountains blue”. So, from a place of the utmost humility and respect for other nations and cultures, here’s a list of things that I deeply miss and can’t wait to experience again once I get back home.

## BEING WARM

This may come as a shock but I can’t wait to get back to the warmth of Iceland. The most common question I get from people when they hear where I’m from is “Isn’t it really, really cold there?” No, not really. Sure, the weather is extreme and unpredictable and you never leave the house without some backup clothing but unlike the more humid climates of central Europe, you can easily dress off the cold and every house you go into is always warm. I can’t wait to mindlessly turn up the heat in my apartment and hang out under



the steamy, hot shower until my skin wrinkles without worrying about what that will cost me next month. Most of all, I can’t wait to get to the pool with its variety of hot tubs, dip my toes into the hottest one (usually 42-44° C), feel the tingling sensation of my skin as it tries to tell my brain that this is WAY TOO HOT and ease in there until my heart slows down to a beat a minute and my skin turns lobster-red. To be fair, I’m not

really looking forward to applying lip balm (or god help me lip gloss) and stepping out into a typical March storm in Iceland. For some reason the wind in Iceland is very unclear about direction. It just seems determined to bring all of the hair on your head into your face.



## NORTHERN LIGHTS

This will sound like a cliché but I really miss them. I didn’t realize that I would miss out on a whole season of Northern lights and I still accidentally peer into the Berlin night sky on clear, frosty nights and much to the amusement of whoever is standing next to me, say “looks like we might get some Northern lights tonight”. They are magnificent enough to make you look out for them and get that sensation of awe every time you see them, no matter how often they occur. Come to think of it, I still hold for an earthquake when the floor underneath me vibrates, which in this city usually means a train is passing by.

## MEETING SOMEONE I KNOW BY COINCIDENCE

Reykjavík is a small city in a small country so you don’t really leave the house without bumping into at least a few people you know. For the past 6 months I haven’t been able to shake the habit of peering at the backs of strangers at busy intersections or at the mall in Berlin thinking “Is that my cousin Agnes?” or even “Is that my dad?” After I first moved to Berlin and realized that the odds of running into somebody I know were slim to none I experienced a sense of freedom that evolved into a complete lack of ambition concerning my appearance. Tracksuits and a McDonalds-arched hairdo took over and maybe I just miss that need to look smart in case I run into someone I know.



## HAFBERG, MY LOCAL FISH STORE

It’s not just that they have fresh amazing fish every day, it’s also that friendly service of picking out that particular piece of fish that suits your character (“How about some cod today?”), advising you on how best to cook it and rounding up the price in your favor making you feel special and welcome.



## THE TOURISTS

Tourists in Iceland are incredibly nice and charming and usually have the utmost respect for the country. Talking to tourists gives me a new feeling for the amazing nature I’m blessed to live in and they usually see and notice things that I don’t appreciate or notice anymore. They always introduce me to some amazing new Icelandic band or artist that I haven’t heard of. My theory is that Icelanders are the best version of themselves around tourists, not because we’re showing off but because we’re reminded of all the things we usually take for granted.

## THE NATURE OF COURSE

Specifically the mountains, the sea and the weather. peering into Mount esja to see if it’s grey, white, blue or even turning green or looking up into the Bláfjöll mountain range to see if they might open the ski slopes that weekend. Watching the sea turn grey, blue, white or green, cleaning sea salt off your car after a storm or even swimming in the freezing sea which is becoming something of a national sport. And the weather. The crazy, unpredictable weather with its

circular rain and wind. There's a reason Icelanders don't use umbrellas and view them more as theater props than actual instruments. Maybe it's not the weather itself that I miss, but rather all the fuss around it. Clearing your backyard and drains, securing your grill or bicycle before a storm, lighting candles and closing all the windows while listening to the wind beat your house from the outside and the endless talk about it... That might be the world's record Icelanders do actually hold, lengthy talks about the weather.

### THE WATER

Despite my newfound humility and realization that we're not the best at everything, this myth is probably true: Iceland really has the world's tastiest tap water. My plan is to drink every sip with an abundance of gratitude from here on.

### THE CATS

I'll admit it; I'm nothing if not a cat lover. During my 6 months in Berlin I have seen a total of 1 cat and an estimate of 3000 dogs. I spotted the cat during a stroll through a cemetery. It spotted me and instantly ran off behind the gravestones. In hindsight, it was like seeing a ghost. The ghost of Berlin's cats. Reykjavik has to be the cat lover's capital of the world, with an overwhelming number of households having a cat and all claiming their cat is special. They're generally really friendly and cute, purring at you to pet them in the street.

### THE SECURITY

You can forget to lock your car with your iphone lying on the dashboard and your wallet sticking out of your window and odds are it will all be there when you get back. Actually if it's an iphone 5, someone might steal it, but don't worry about older models seeing as almost everybody already has one. You can also look people in the eye and say hello during evening walks without it being considered aggressive or odd. The houses are sturdy and strong and whatever bad weather conditions you find

yourself in, you can be sure that the house has seen worse. The mountains make sure you always know which direction you're facing so getting lost in the city is impossible. With 330 thousand people, all related in one way or another, they can't get away with much class division, which adds a sense of equality and familiarity. I sometimes see people in Berlin that I just instinctively know are Icelanders, probably because I've seen them before without ever noticing them.

### DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK

It's a happening and lively place in a very dense area. everything you need is right there and it's brimming over with art, shops and people. eymundsson bookstore in Austurstræti, Café Babalú in Skólavörðustígur, designer shops Aftur and Kron, concert house Harpa, Rósenberg bar, the galleries, the book readings and the high quality of the classical music scene (The Iceland Symphony Orchestra is ridiculously good).



I've often wondered how foreigners settle down in such a remote place and feel at home. It's not that I don't love it there. I just thought that it would be a difficult place to adjust to in the long-term. My foreign friends who live in Iceland usually all say the same thing, "The nature is so special and awe-inspiring and the small community makes you feel safe and at home". I couldn't agree more. There's no place like home.

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# BIG TIME FISHING

## IN THE WEST FJORDS



Suðureyri by Súgandafjörður

*"The fishing adventure begins in Europe's airports from where hunting groups depart for Iceland's Keflavík International Airport (KEF). The groups are picked up at the airport and taken to a hotel for the night."*

Icelandic waters have been kind to man. Iceland, embraced by the vast Atlantic ocean, is home to curiously colossal species in popular demand among deepsea fishermen. The small seaside villages of the west fjords are held in awesome silence at the base of tall mountains along the shores. They are centers for local deep sea fishing tour operators that cater almost exclusively to foreign clientele who dream of venturing into one of the best fishing waters in the world. The two largest deep sea fishing operators in Iceland are Sumarbyggð and Hvíldarklettur, and in total, they manage and own a fleet of approximately four dozen boats distributed in harbors of five seaside villages.

Text and photos by Róbert Schmidt

**T**he story began in 2006 when the very first deep sea fishing company was founded in Súðavík. A year later, Hvíldarklettur joined the competition, primarily shipping out from Suðureyri and Flateyri. The trips were in high demand for the first couple of years, that is, until 2008 when the economic crisis struck. Both tour operators survived the recession, and continue to receive visitors from all parts of Europe with their offshore fishing rods and dreams of catching gigantic halibuts and other large species. Unexplored waters became grounds for excavations using only surf rods. The results were phenomenal. gigantic halibuts took the bait and in the very first year a crew member from Hvíldarklettur caught a halibut weighing 175 kg

and measuring 240 cm in length. For a while, the enormous halibut caught in these waters off the shores of West Fjords was the largest ever caught with a surf rod. A while later, the record was broken in Norway, but since then, the world's largest halibut caught with a surf rod was caught on a boat outside the West Fjords town of Bolungarvík. It weighed 220 kg and measured 250 cm in length. The companies have since expanded and spread their fleets into the local villages of Tálknafjörður, Bildudalur and Bolungarvík.

### DREAMS OF BIG FISH KEEP THEM COMING BACK FOR MORE

Fishing stories from the seaside villages in this remote corner of the world spread quickly. All of

a sudden, busloads of tourists booked on trips with the local tour operators came from all over the world, creating a lot of excitement in the small communities. Local guides were recruited to sail out to the best fishing grounds with deep sea fishermen and enormous cods piled up in the boats. The harbors were crowded with fish every day. New jobs were created to meet the demands of this sudden rise in tourism, and hotels, guesthouses and new restaurants were established in the villages. Each day would see the fishermen exhilarated in the morning, tired in the evening and rejuvenated the following day. Many have become regulars on these expeditions, dreaming intensely about catching an even bigger fish or even rare fish species such as the northern wolffish, spotted catfish, coalfish and ling.

### PLENTY TO DO

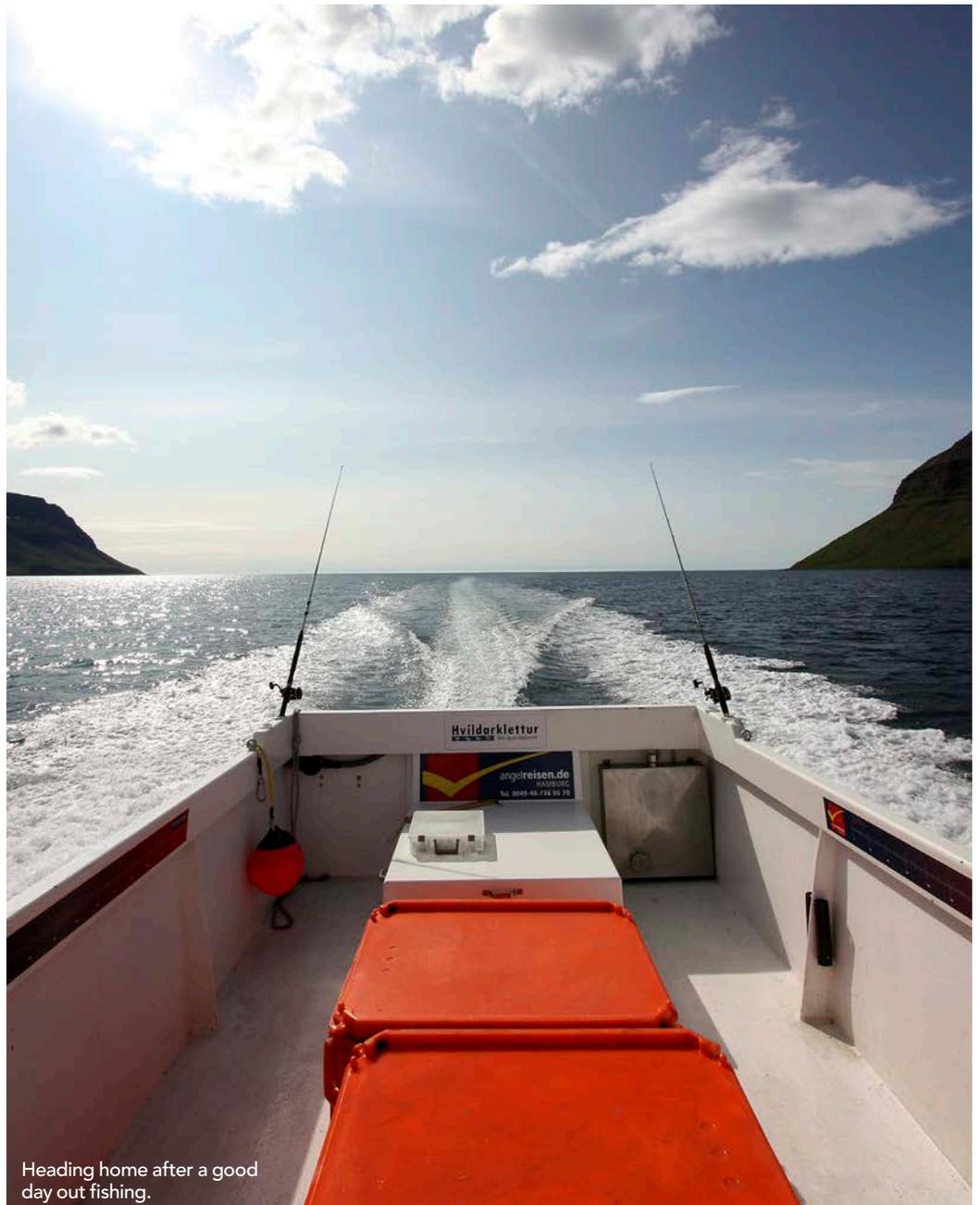
The fishing adventure begins in Europe's airports from where hunting groups depart for Iceland's Keflavík International Airport (KEF). The groups are picked up at the airport and taken to a hotel for the night. The next day, travelers catch a half hour domestic flight to Ísafjörður in the West Fjords. They are then taken to their destinations where they spend a week in a



Odd creatures live in these waters like this ribbon fish that measured at approximately 190 cm in length.



A happy fisherman with an enormous halibut weighing in at 100 kg.



Heading home after a good day out fishing.

*“Each day of fishing starts in the wee hours of the morning, continuing throughout the day and sometimes into the evening. Part of the catch is prepared, cooked and served back in the cottages and enjoyed with fine wines.”*

cottage with a boat and rental car on site. On stormy days when it's too hard at sea, excursions around the area give visitors an opportunity to explore nature and the extraordinary features of the West Fjords, including waterfalls, mountains and glaciers and experience daily life in the region. Each day of fishing starts in the wee hours of the morning, continuing throughout the day and sometimes into the evening. part of the catch is prepared, cooked and served back in the cottages and enjoyed with fine wines. In the village of Suðureyri there's a bank, post office, outdoor swimming pool and hot tubs, an arts and crafts center, diner, café, a three star hotel and a restaurant. An organized dining excursion in the village, trout and

salmon fishing opportunities, hikes to the slopes and mountains, and visits to the local fish-processing freezing plant are all available. Bus tours from the villages run daily to Ísafjörður, the largest town in the area, and from there travelers can choose from a variety of excursions such as island hopping to the island of Vigur, sailing in Jökulfirðir glacier fjords, hikes around Hornstrandir and the peninsula, whale and seal excursions, not to mention trips to museums and kayaking, to name a few.

### **SIMPLICITY IS THE BEST WAY**

The magic of this remote corner of Iceland is in the intimate quietness of village life and the simple lifestyle, spectacular

nature, and last but not least, the incredible experiences of life at sea where travelers can enjoy freedom in all its authenticity, fishing: with good companions. The villagers are graceful and inviting, and long-term friendships have formed between locals and annual visitors to the West Fjords. They learn about the local history and its people, as well as taking advantage of the good service and leisurely activities. At night, when the groups finish the dish of the day, it's time for a nightcap and then some rest. The travelers, content with their catch of the day, dream of gigantic halibuts. The forecast for tomorrow: Favorable weather for tomorrow's adventures.



## FEW BUT **INTERESTING**

by Steingerður Steinarsdóttir

Icelandic fauna is not very diverse. The island's isolation is probably the main reason. The Arctic fox is, however, indigenous to this country and greeted the first settlers when they landed. The rest of the wild fauna has been transported here by men and interestingly enough have managed to outwit those that brought them here.

### **SEA MAMMALS**

Along our shores there are many seals although only two species are considered indigenous to Iceland. Many visit from Greenland and these are often seen among the other. The sea around the country is full of diversity and positively crawling with life. The many guests who go on tours looking for whales are rarely disappointed. The luckiest ones will catch a glimpse of a humpback or a blue whale, the biggest mammal in the world. A large number of small whales such as killer whales, harbor porpoises and minke whales are just offshore.



### **MINKS AND FOXES**

Minks and foxes were imported in as farm animals but later escaped and now run wild. The foxes quickly blended with the Arctic fox that had been carried over here from Greenland on ice blocks long before man set foot on this island. Today the population of foxes and minks is growing much to the dismay of farmers and others that fear that this will cause havoc to bird life. The mink has on the other hand proven useful in keeping the black rat from becoming prevalent.





## REINDEER ON THE EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Reindeer or caribou were brought here in the nineteenth century in an effort to increase the diversity of the wildlife. They only successfully managed to settle in the east and it is necessary to keep their numbers down since the vegetation in the highlands will only feed a certain number. Hunting caribou in the autumn is a popular sport and a few thousand hunters apply every year for a permission to catch one of the approximately 1200 animals allotted.



## ICELANDIC FIELD MOUSE

Mice were stowaways on board Viking ships that first sailed to Iceland. They decided to stay even before their unaware transporters did. Mice have done well in Iceland and the Icelandic field mouse is larger and more resourceful than her cousin in Europe. The house mouse, however, has remained the same.



## BUGS IN ABUNDANCE

All around the country there are a number of molluscs to be found and all kinds of bug like creatures that live either in the sea or on the beach. Some of these are colorful and truly beautiful. Those interested in entomology will get plenty of opportunities to study insects if they take the time to walk along any Icelandic beach.

## BIRDS LARGE AND SMALL

Bird life in Iceland is, however, rich and varied. All kinds of birds come here from Europe and America to nest in the summer. Many of them travel far and wide, some even from Africa and the South Pole. The Arctic Tern is the greatest traveller of all, with some individuals covering more than 80,000 km annually. A great number of ducks, geese,

songbirds and sea birds can easily be spotted here to the delight of bird watchers from all over the world. Visitors in Iceland will almost certainly catch a glimpse of interesting birds without putting in any particular effort. The Icelandic raven is both common and unique and by now a city dweller all year round.

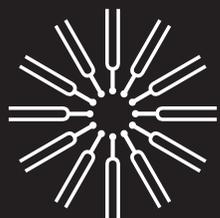


## RATS, BROWN AND BLACK

The brown rat migrated to Iceland in the early nineteenth century but the black rat was first spotted when a ship ran ashore at the coast of Snæfellsnes in the mideighteenth century. Nowadays the brown rat is a firmly established inhabitant here but the black rat is firmly exterminated whenever spotted amongst goods imported into the country, so there are not too many of them turning up.

For a long time, history had it that the black rat had brought the Black Death to Iceland in 1424. On the other hand, recent archaeological excavations seem to prove that this was indeed, just a myth. People believed that Black Death had been carried from one individual to another via rat fleas but this is only true of one derivation of the disease.





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## "A WALK THROUGH THE MALL IS MORE EXHAUSTING THAN CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN"

Guðmundur Freyr Jónsson became interested in mountaineering in 2005. That was the year he climbed Mont blanc in spite of his inexperience in hiking and climbing. The spark was ignited there and since then, life has revolved around the sport. In the process of discovering the world of hiking and climbing, he began to photograph his journeys.

by Kristín Ýr Gunnarsdóttir

"I enjoy most outdoor activities. But my favorite sport at the moment is ice climbing. So far, I've been to the Alps four times and abseiled into several caves," guðmundur says when asked about his passion.

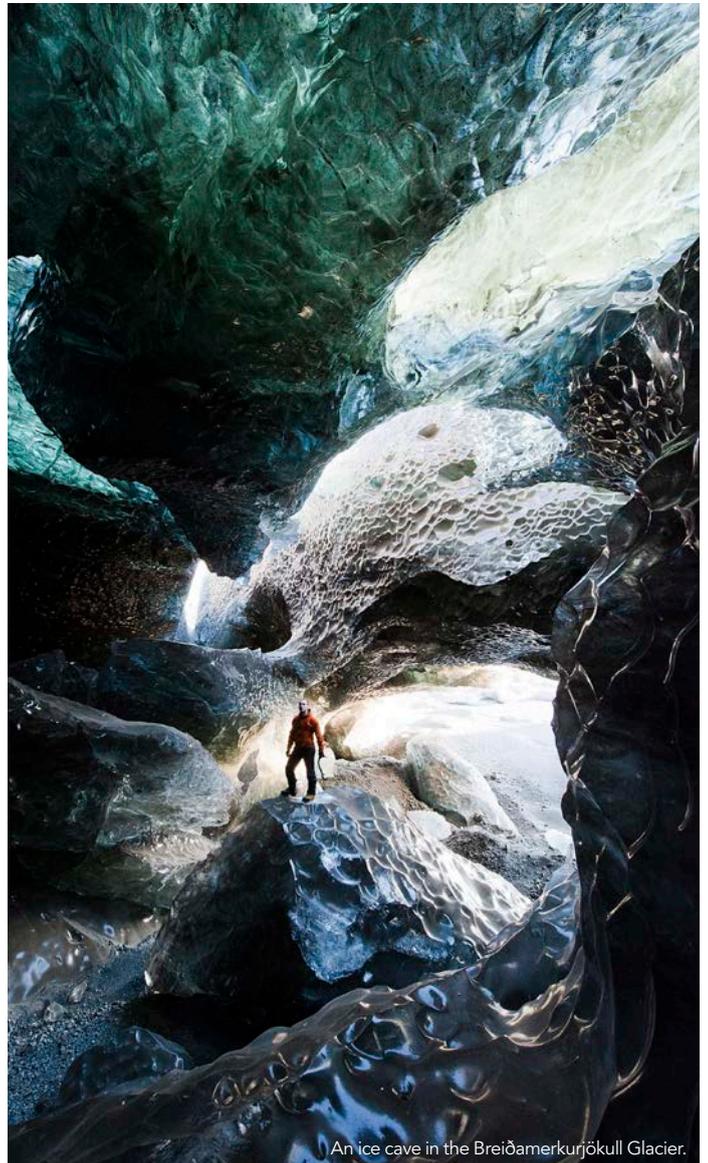
Guðmundur's father is a fire fighter. He invited his son and several members of the fire department to join him on a climb up Mont Blanc in 2005.

"I didn't have much experience mountaineering but when I saw the opportunity I went for it. Once the spark was ignited in me there was no turning back.

Climbing the hills in Iceland is no fun after you climb real mountains," he laughs. The same trip fuelled his interest in photography when he desperately wanted to capture the beauty before him. He started out with a small pocket-size camera but since then evolved into bigger equipment and better photos.

"I get so inspired with my capturing of the exquisite beauty during my mountaineering adventures that in spite of the rigors I feel more tired from walking back and forth at the mall than I do when I climb," he says with a mischievous grin.

Guðmundur has captured a number of interesting angles in nature but he is best known for his exquisite photo of the volcanic eruption in Fimmvörðuháls. He went there with his friends on snowmobiles. As they watched the eruption from a distance, a large explosion occurred right as Guðmundur was filming. He captured the explosion moments before he realized he had to get out of the way. "We were just taking in the beauty before us when one of my mates noticed the explosion and ran to safety behind the snowmobile. A number of people were present at the time and it was very fortunate no one was injured.



An ice cave in the Breiðamerkurjökull Glacier.

Abseiling in the cave Búri.





Climbing/hiking Pverártinsegg Mountain

*"I didn't have much experience mountaineering but when I saw the opportunity I went for it. Once the spark was ignited in me there was no turning back."*

Rocks rained down on us and I am not talking about pebbles. Thankfully, it turned out okay," he says. Climbing mountains is not enough for Guðmundur. He also indulges in ice climbing and abseiling into caves. "The sights are extraordinary as I abseil down narrow holes into caves lit up by ravishing colors. pushing down a hole sometimes as narrow as a toilet bowl is an incredible feeling. As you descend you can see the altitude and all the colors the cave has to offer. I love everything about the sport – even just standing on the peak of a mountain and taking in the view," he says in conclusion.



An ice cave in Búahamrar Cliff.



Ascending Þrihnjúkagígur Crater.

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# A WINTER PARADISE

In the Vatnajökull Region you'll find the real reason why Iceland got its name. The area is dominated by Vatnajökull Glacier which is the largest glacier in the world outside the Arctic Region. You will also find some of Iceland's most popular tourist attractions such as the spectacular Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon, Skaftafell, the jewel of Vatnajökull National Park (largest national park in Europe) and Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnúkur. The Vatnajökull Region is filled with contrasts in the nature, marked by black beaches and white glaciers. Serenity, energy and forces of nature combine to make a visit to the Vatnajökull Region a never-to-be-forgotten experience and a photographers dream.

Photos: Óskar Arason and Pröstur Ágústsson

**T**here is rich wildlife in the Vatnajökull Region with thousands of migrating birds passing through and herds of reindeers, a common sight. If you're lucky you might spot a seal at Jökulsárlón or an arctic fox running through the terrain. You will also find dozens of companies that offer all sorts of activities year round, diverse accommodation and great restaurants with local food.

The Vatnajökull Region is in the southeast of Iceland and covers over 200 km of the Ring Road from Lómagnúpur in the west to Hvalnes in the east. Stretching

across the south it serves as a gateway to the Vatnajökull glacier. There is one town in the area, Höfn, with a population of 1700.

## ACTIVITY, ACCOMMODATION AND RESTAURANTS

In the Vatnajökull Region you can experience magnificent tours on the glacier with qualified local guides who know the area well. You can choose between glacier walks, ice cave tours and ice climbing at Vatnajökull Glacier. The area also offers geothermal baths at Hoffell, northern lights tours, reindeer excursions, the

Pórbergssetur Cultural Museum and much more.

There are various possibilities in accommodation; whether you want to sleep in a sleeping bag accommodation, hotel or anything in between, you will find a warm welcome by knowledgeable hosts.

There are several restaurants in the area and most of them offer local cuisine made in the Vatnajökull Region. Be sure to ask for the local beer Vatnajökull, made from icebergs from Jökulsárlón and arctic thyme. A lobster meal is recommended since Höfn is the lobster capital of Iceland.

## ACCESSIBLE THE WHOLE YEAR

The Vatnajökull Region is well accessible the whole year due to good weather conditions and frequent transportation. There is a daily flight from Reykjavík to the Höfn airport during the summer and five days a week during other seasons. Buses between Reykjavík and Höfn are scheduled daily during the summer and three days a week in other seasons. Three car rental companies are operating in Höfn.

**For more information check out: [visitvatnajokull.is](http://visitvatnajokull.is).**





# A LITTLE PIECE OF HORSE HISTORY

By Guðrún Baldvina Sævarsdóttir Photos: Kristinn Magnússon and Birtíngur photo collectiонт

**O**n a beautiful winter day in February 2009, a group of renowned riders brought their thoroughbred Icelandic horses to the frozen Reykjavík pond for a scenic photo shoot on ice. When the ice suddenly broke and the horses fell into the freezing water, chaos ensued as riders and owners tried to save their beloved animals. The first few minutes were terrifying as everyone tried pulling their horses out of the water at the same time to no avail, as the horses found no resistance in the muddy floor of the pond and grew tired in the freezing water, giving up after a couple of minutes. Fjöl­nir Þorgeirsson, journalist, horse rider and athlete, who was at the scene to cover the event for an Icelandic magazine, put away his camera and jumped in the freezing water. He then made the horses step onto his thigh to get the resistance they needed while others pushed and pulled them up. One by one, a group of soaking wet and freezing horse­men managed to save all of them. The horses were then rushed indoors for a hot bath after which they were blow-dried and pampered by their frightened owners. Fjöl­nir became an instant hero and has since been known as Fjöl­nir the Horse-Savior. The pictures give a pretty good idea of this rather scary day in Reykjavík.

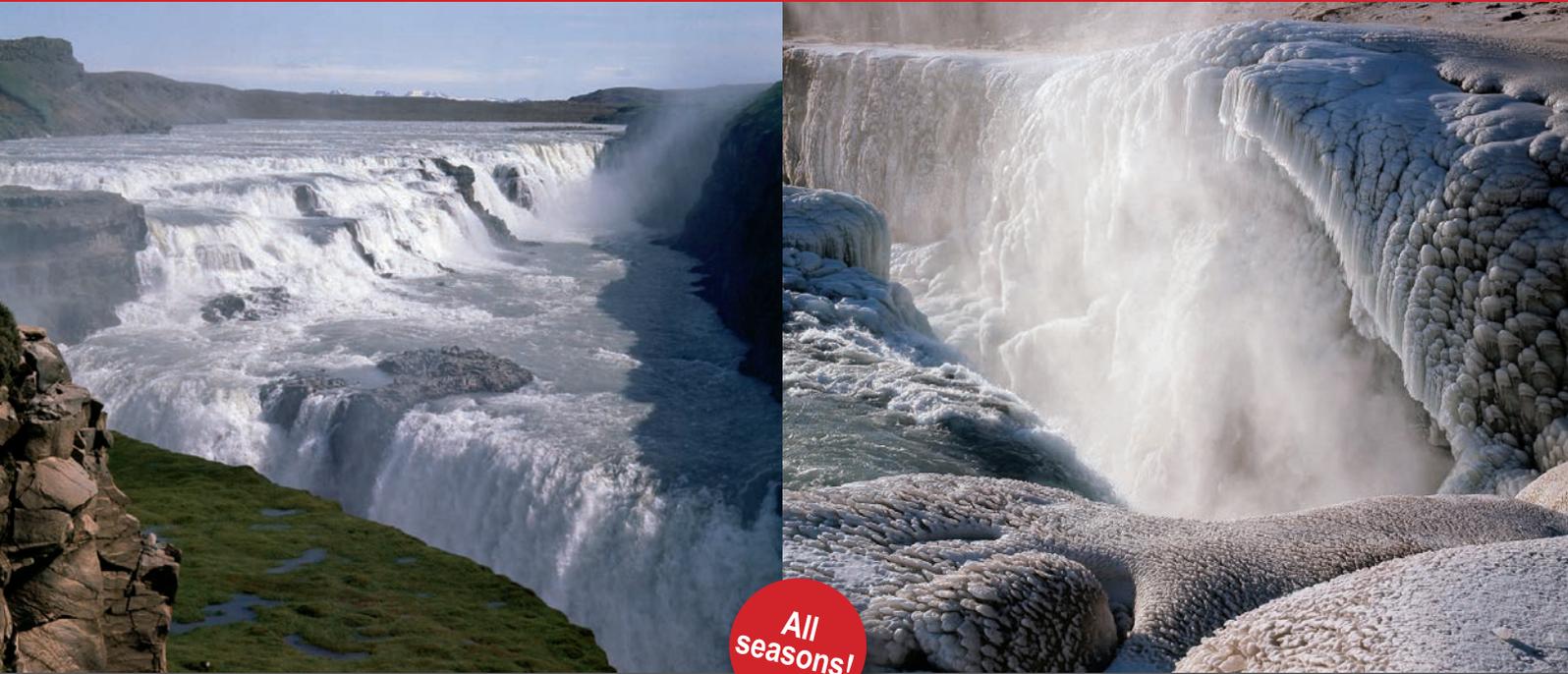




*"Fjölur became an instant hero and has since been known as Fjölur the Horse-Savior."*



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\* Via Keflavik Airport  
\*\* From 15. June – 15. Sept.

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**Pick up time:** Daily at 08:00  
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Iceland



*„The Icelandic horse is descended from horses that the first settlers brought with them over the ocean to this country in 874.“*



# THE ICELANDIC HORSE

– of course

The Icelandic horse is descended from horses that the first settlers brought with them over the ocean to this country in 874. This horse is small but surefooted, spirited and beautiful. riding is a popular sport in Iceland and a growing number of families raise their own horses. This lovely horse is, however, even more popular abroad than in its homeland.

By Steingerður Steinarsdóttir Photo: Einar Guðmann

**I**n a harsh country this breed has had to develop attributes necessary to survive and among them are the great versatility in riding performance, lively temperament, resourcefulness and docility. Although traditionally, the Icelandic horse was used extensively for transportation and work, each Icelander prized his riding horse above rubies. One even took his best horse to Copenhagen and gave it to the Danish king, who was at the time, his king. This poor farmer had received many offers for the horse from his more well-to-do peers but

considered the horse too good for them. The only man worthy of such a gem was the king.

## NOT A WORKING HORSE ANYMORE

In the 1940's and 50's the role of the Icelandic horse changed mainly because it was no longer needed to work on the farm and it became a unique sport and family horse. In addition to the standard gaits; walk, trot and canter, the Icelandic horse has tolt, a "running walk". Some are also bred for a special "flying pace" or skeid, which is a very fast lateral gait

used for racing short distances and some can reach almost 30 miles an hour at this pace. Iceland's livestock is relatively disease free, mostly due to the isolation of the island but also through the diligence of the authorities that prohibit the import of raw meat and of live animals unless they are quarantined for a number of months. Even used riding gear cannot be brought to Iceland. Such stringent rules mean that riders have to say goodbye to their horses having taken them to compete in international equestrian competitions. These partings can be quite emotional since





the Icelandic horse is quite affectionate and develops strong attachments to people.

### **FEARLESS LITTLE BEAST**

There are no real predators in Iceland but the country is wrought with environmental dangers, such as quicksand, rock slides, rivers with changing currents, fissures, tussocks and rough lava fields. The ability to assess a situation rather than the instinct to flee has therefore become central to the survival of this breed of horse. They are not easily spooked and do not fear other living creatures. It is no

wonder that this small but resilient creature is so popular. In Iceland there are about 80,000 horses but in Europe their number is reaching the 400,000 mark, more than the entire population of Iceland. German, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian riders have discovered this lovely horse and Americans and Brits are following their lead.

In the old days the Icelandic horse was allowed to roam free most of the year. Today these precious horses are kept in stables through the harsh winters and only allowed pastoral roving during the summer. The

average height of this horse is between 13 and 14 hands with an average weight of between 330-380 kg. All colors are found but the most common is chestnut. They have long, thick manes and tails and a double winter coat. It is easy to get to know them first hand as many riding centers and horse renting agencies offer day and half day tours. Longer tours that even involve riding across the Icelandic highlands are a growing genre of tourism.

# REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Frequently described as “Iceland’s protester”, Helgi Hóseasson is undoubtedly the most established and dedicated protester Iceland has ever seen. Helgi was born on November 21st (the same day as Björk) in 1919. As an infant, Helgi was christened according to custom. This seemingly insignificant event would end up defining his life and Helgi quickly became a legend because of his persistent activism spanning decades.

by Hjördís Erna Þorgeirsdóttir Photos: Gunnar Gunnarsson, Ásgeir M. Einarsson, Eyþór Árnason

## THE LIFELONG BATTLE OF HELGI HÓSEASSON



### SOBER ADOLESCENCE

From a young age Helgi took a righteous stand. The story goes that his first one, at 13, was against tobacco smoking inside his school’s facilities. Helgi did not succeed in that particular battle (rather unfortunate) so he had to continue to endure the second hand smoke of his teachers and fellow students. Today, smoking is illegal inside all public buildings so it seems as though Helgi was definitely ahead of his contemporaries in that matter. In fact, throughout his life, Helgi abstained from not only tobacco and alcohol but also products such as coffee.

When Helgi grew older he began to deeply resent the fact that he had been christened as a non-consensual infant. As a result he repeatedly (an understatement perhaps) attempted to have the covenant between him and the church made invalid. He also criticized the government and tried to gain their support but his demands were repeatedly dismissed. This blatant lack of response further fueled Helgi’s frustration and disbelief in government.

### THE INCIDENT

In 1972 the newly voted members of the parliament attended a church service along with the bishop and the president of Iceland. Police officers stood by saluting next to the group when, out of nowhere, Helgi appeared armed with the dairy product “skyr” and a giant scoop. Helgi was so swift and subtle that the policemen did not take proper notice until he had managed to spread skyr all over the majority of the group, including the president. This incident instantly and officially made him a legend in Icelandic society. When asked about the incident decades later he explained that he chose skyr because it would not cause any real harm.



### DEVOTED ACTIVIST

In the decades that followed Helgi remained a devoted activist. On the same exact spot on Langholtsvegur, each and every day, he stood there, clutching one of his handmade signs. Helgi immediately began to protest against Iceland's support of the US invasion in Iraq in 2003. One of Helgi's customary signs stated "BLÓÐ, BUSI, DÓRI, DAVI". These words referred to blood, George W. Bush, Halldór Ásgrímsson and Davíð Oddsson. Oddsson is an established rightwing politician and the former prime minister of Iceland who was among those who supported the invasion on behalf of the Icelandic nation. Helgi also repeatedly condemned NATO and the Icelandic government's membership in the organization.

### HELGI'S VOCABULARY AND THEMES

Helgi, ironically, means "holy" in Icelandic (and also "weekend" but that's irrelevant). He was often poetic in his work, making up his own words to describe Christ, figures of authority and even races. One of his phrases was the word "RÍÓ", short for "The Government of Icelandic douche bags" (Ríkisvald íslenskra óþokka). He also claimed that due to Christ's alleged resurrection he was in fact a ghost, an "Arabic ghost" to be exact, and Helgi flat out refused to worship a ghost. He described white people as "pink" explaining that the

term "white" was not accurate enough. This pink race, Helgi said, was responsible for two world wars in his lifetime. Not only that, but he also focused on the various other atrocities that took place before and during his lifetime. Almost every war fought during Helgi's lifetime automatically became his burden. He was appalled by the notion of war and delivered that message assiduously to passersby during his lifetime.

### ANARCHISTIC TENDENCIES?

Helgi was against authority and any sort of brutality. In some aspects he could even be described as an anarchist, with, at least a touch of, feminist concerns. When asked about his political disposition in a 1997 interview with Mannlíf, Helgi replied that he had voted for the Women's Party (Kvennalistinn) because "women are an oppressed group in society and because of that I vote for them." Helgi did emphasize though that voting generally resulted in simply choosing the slightly less deficient option in a vast ocean of non-options and that he did not like women's tendencies to vote for their "tormentors".

### A TENDER ELEMENT

But Helgi had a heartwarming side. He was just as devoted to his long time partner and wife, Jóhanna, as he was to his activism. In 2003 a documentary about Helgi called "Iceland's protester" won the Edda (national film award) for the best documentary of the year. In the documentary Helgi and Jóhanna's intimate relationship is revealed and Helgi's allegiance to his sick partner is truly touching. Jóhanna, who was a smoker when they met, gave up smoking and drinking when they got together, as that was Helgi's sole demand. Interestingly, Helgi's brother was a priest but the brothers lost contact due to the enormous ideological gap. At one point Helgi was almost



suspected of setting fire to a church he was watching for his brother but it was promptly dismissed.

In some absurd way Helgi was almost a Christlike figure. He rejected traditional vices and lectured people on humanity through his activism. His rebellious nature originated from a deep sense of justice and he absolutely refused to back down, a rare quality worthy of recognition. But after decades of fruitless struggle, pessimism settled in and it is reflected in the 1997 interview. When Helgi was asked if he was a bitter old man, he replied: "Yes, I am. Who can be happy on this fucking earth?"

But whatever his failings, whatever his shortcomings, his determination as well as his single-minded pursuit of justice makes him in the minds of many Icelanders a kind of hero and a man worthy of respect none the less.

# TINY OBJECTS

## – huge treasures

Just outside Akureyri is Sverrir's sundry collection (smámunasafnið), one of the quirkiest and most wonderful museums in Iceland. Sverrir Hermannsson, who passed away in 2008, was a carpenter, renowned for his work on the restoration of old buildings of historical value. Many of the structures that tourists visit during their travels across the country have been touched up by Sverrir and during his many projects, he collected small items of interest.



By Guðrún Baldvina Sævarsdóttir Photos: Ernir Eyjólfsson

**M**ake no mistake, most of them are tiny and very few people would see them as interesting when found in ruins somewhere. These include nails, screws, tools, doorknobs, paper clips, used up pencils and many, many, many more. Sverrir however had an eye for detail and a knack for presenting his found objects in the most aesthetically pleasing way. He would place two exhibition boards in front of him, lining everything up on one board to assure that it was visually pleasing, before moving them to another board to be permanently attached according to his plan. He did this throughout his career which eventually filled up every square centimeter of his small work shed in his home in Akureyri.

The result is a stunning exhibition of 'millions' of things, lined up in a welcoming space that makes you rethink the way you value objects around you as well as rethink your values. It is an exhibition of objects but at the same time it reveals the lifelong passion of a single man and what can be accomplished through persistence and passion.

### A CONSTANT ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

When entering the museum you might feel a little shaken or put

off by the odd collections of toe-nail clippings or dust balls you might see but fear not, Sverrir's obsessive collections are all on the safe side and reflect a lifetime of experience, craftsmanship and foresight. Perhaps the museum's strongest asset is the constant element of surprise. You don't really see the place coming when you drive up to it, deep in the Eyjafjörður fjord, or when you walk up to the building that looks like somebody's home. We recommend visiting this museum in good company since it offers endless stunning moments where you have an irresistible urge to pull your partner towards whatever it was you just discovered and go "There's 2,500 of them!" or "It's made out of toothpicks!" and look at their face to wait for a facial expression that reveals the same impression you just experienced.

The atmosphere is homey and relaxed but at the same time the exhibition is professional and well made. It's really the best of both worlds and should you be on the road anywhere near Akureyri, this tiny detour is definitely worth your while. House keys, electrical outlets and safety pins will never look the same because what looks like dispensable junk today, might someday become a rare and precious treasure.





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# HAPPY HOURS IN REYKJAVÍK

by Dísá Bjarnadóttir

“For some of us, the early evening has become the best time to get a drink down town.”

Once upon a time drinking in Icelandic bars cost a small fortune. There were no deals on beers, cocktails and drinks. In those days people “started” or “warmed up” at private parties, with beer and liquor purchased at a more reasonable price from the country’s official liquor stores. So, a typical Friday or Saturday evening would start at a house party and then, when the people had discussed world events, politics and personal gossip enough and wanted to see other faces, they would head downtown. In those days, foreign visitors were often puzzled to see how quiet the streets of Reykjavík were until about midnight when all of a sudden every bar filled up with some slightly drunk Icelanders.

In recent years there has been a change. We discovered happy hour! Now the party still goes on late into the night, but it starts earlier. And it doesn’t have to start at a private party. For some of us, the early evening has become the best time to get a drink down town. At this time of day there is still a tolerable amount of people, even in the most popular places. The line to the bathroom (for the ladies) is much shorter and because the average person in town still has less alcohol running through their system, it’s likelier to strike up some interesting conversations. Some of the best bars in town change one hundred percent after midnight.

## BEFORE AND AFTER MIDNIGHT

Take my favorite bar for instance, in the early evening, during happy hour, it’s a very civilized place where people sit inside or outside,

often gathered at a round table to discuss worldly events, politics, religion, literature and philosophy; all at a moderate level. Take that same bar at around midnight on a Saturday night and it’s a crowded nuthouse!

It’s so crowded that you’d think Björk was giving a free performance and you’re standing at the very front of the stage. It’s almost impossible to walk through the place as it’s filled to its maximum capacity and if you try to walk through it with a glass full of beer in your hands, well, let’s hope you’re not wearing anything white. And the bathrooms ... I don’t know why it is that guys are always so very, very fast in there compared to us ladies. Maybe it’s because they don’t have their lipstick in their purse. Maybe it’s because when they look in the mirror, if they don’t like what they see there really isn’t much they can do about it. But for us of the fairer sex it can be a nightmare. However, sometimes when one stands for a very long time waiting in line for the WC one can have interesting conversations and make new friends so it’s not all that bad.

## APPY HOUR

Now, back to my previous point... the early evening: now that’s a time to see a good side of the city! In the Apple App Store one can find an App called Reykjavík Appy Hour, a cool gadget that will tell you what bars are having happy hour at what time and what their specialty is for the best price. So head downtown, grab a reasonably affordable drink and strike up a conversation with a native. We’re a friendly bunch. Especially before midnight!



## The Danish Pub

# WHEN IN ICELAND, GO DANISH!

You know that Iceland used to be a Danish colony, right? Even though independence from the Danish Crown was necessary, Icelanders still celebrate every thing Danish, so don't expect to meet a big Danish crowd at The Danish Pub, they are all Icelanders just acting like they're Danish. Really!

This bar has made a name for itself in the Reykjavik social scene and is known locally as Den Danske Kro (we all just want a reason to speak Danish in public). This popular downtown venue serves a remarkable selection of beers including the famous Danish white beers, the darker more malt brews and of course the traditional and almost obligatory Tuborg and Carlsberg. If you come during the Christmas season you can taste some of the renowned Christmas brews, very popular in demand. Just ask for Julebryg ("you-le-bree").

### DO AS THE DANES DO

The owners of the Danish Pub strive to create the true Danish atmosphere known among the Danes (and Danish-prone Icelanders) as "hyggelig". If you truly are Danish this can be your "home away from home". And in this spirit, check out the "house" within the pub – an off-the-wall design in its most literal sense!

Get carefree or "ligegladd" (leeglaath), shoot some darts, try the customary Gammel Dansk bitters or catch some live football. Watch the world go by on the outside terrace and have a taste of the traditional smørrebrød (fantastic open sandwiches). You can pre-order these delicious snacks for larger groups.

### DOES THIS SOUND TOO TRANQUIL?

The Danish Pub is nothing if not a place to party. The atmosphere is easy going and you can choose from a variety of shots and even cocktails if you're not in the beer mood (Does that ever happen?). Reminder: If you thought you were in for a quiet night guess again, The Danish Pub features live music every night with special appearances and unadvertised happenings on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Put your musical knowledge to the test at the Wednesday night pop-quiz; the prizes will surprise you.

### BEST LOCAL PUB IN REYKJAVÍK

Wherever you're from you'll want to have a great time while visiting Reykjavik. The people of Reykjavik do anyway, so they flock to The Danish Pub for a beer "en øl" during the Happy Hour every day from 16-19. The place is crowded and you're guaranteed to meet some fun, "lee glaath" people.

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dendanske.is



# PLOVER **PLOVER** PLOVER

The title of this article may look like an embarrassing typo but it's actually a translated quote from a famous Icelandic song by singer/song writer legend, Megas. The song "Lóa Lóa" from the album "Paradise Bird" is actually about a woman named after the golden plover but the album title says it all. Let's be honest, I am no bird expert, nor am I even a bird enthusiast. But the plover is no ordinary bird.

by Guðrún Baldvina Sævarsdóttir Photo: Einar Guðmann

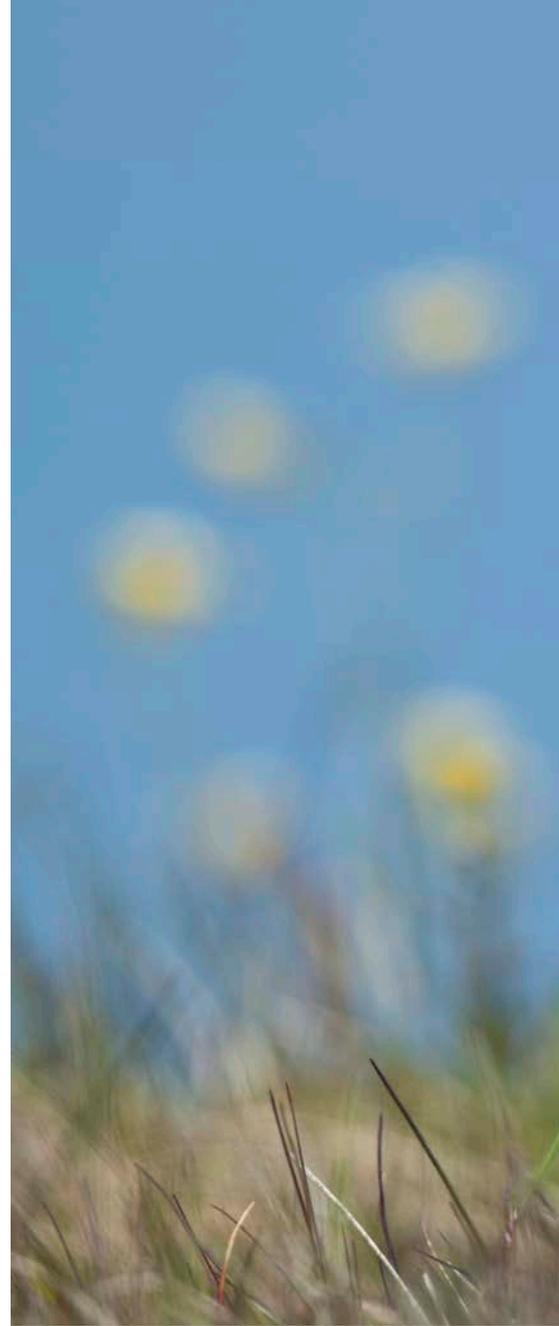
**W**ith the rising sun in this remote North Atlantic island, a certain sense of hope fills the Icelandic sub consciousness, that old feeling that just maybe, despite the odds, spring is upon us again, and that it might actually bring another summer. It's what we live for and after a winter of darkness and cold you start to realize why. More enthusiastic sun-worshippers than Icelanders are hard to come by as we go to incredible lengths to suck up all the sun we can get. A friend of mine, who moved to California a few years ago, told me that after 3 years of living in a completely stable and sunny climate, he still can't shake that urgent feeling of getting outside to bask in the sun, even though it's there for him 360 days of the year. So what does the sun have to do with a relatively large migratory water bird?

## THE HARBINGER OF SPRING

In Iceland, the plover or "lóa" as we call it is considered the harbinger of spring. Sounds simple enough and it's actually quite logical, or it would be if we didn't have calendars. This

migratory bird breeds in Iceland during the summer months but flies as far south as North Africa for winter. When first spotted in spring, it makes headlines in all the newspapers, it is the first story on televised news and it replaces the weather as the most exciting topic of discussion for at least a week. Granted the two are often intertwined, the plover and the weather, and together they can make for lengthy chats and interesting predictions into the future: "Looks like we'll have a good spring, the plover is so early this year".

The plovers' behavior can be read as a sign of changing weather. Apparently it goes silent before a storm and sings in two voices before sunshine. I may be smirking as I write this but I'm fairly certain that I'll look up a longterm weather forecast the next time I notice the plover suddenly silent. That's the thing about Icelandic folklore, you think your years of hard earned academic achievement has made you rise above it, but then you find yourself lowering your voice next to an elf rock in order not to disturb anybody. It's embarrassing but true.





## SINGING "GLORY TO THE LORD"

I personally believe that the popularity of the plover might also be helped by the fact that its singing is so recognizable and sweet, sounding some thing like dirrindee. One of my favorite stories about this bird is a folk story that depicts pretty much exactly how intimate our relationship is. According to Icelandic folklore, plovers were not created by God along with the rest of the world's creatures but rather were formed out of clay by children accompanying Jesus Christ. Jesus swept his hands over them, gave them life and as they flew away they sang "dirrin dee" which is ploverspeak for "dýrðin drottins" (God's glory) or, as my normally quite rational mother put it "dirrindee means glory to the lord", and she wasn't kidding.

Quoting a poem by Jónas Hallgrímsson, one of Iceland's most beloved poets, "spring's tender messenger" is what we call the plover, though we all know he was writing about the sparrow. In order to explain this discrepancy, Icelanders have written theoretical articles on how he must have just needed a masculine

gendered noun to fit the material of his poem instead of the feminine gendered lóa. It's funny 'cause it's true.

## THE PLOVER'S WORK ETHICS

The plover graces our stamps, is protected by Icelandic laws and is the star of every other Icelandic folk song. It's probably because of one particular song that I associate the plover with the Icelandic national work ethic. This song heralds that the plover has arrived and will eliminate the snow, which is all good and predictable but it manages to drive home that crumbling ethical dogma that you should always be working more and preferably suffering from exhaustion as a result. It goes something like this:

*"she [the plover] has told me of my sins, I sleep too much and do not work at all. she has told me to stay awake and work and embrace the spring, filled with hope."*

In the middle of March, shortly before this was written, some one spotted a plover which of course became headline news. The next

*In Iceland, the plover or "lóa" as we call it is considered the harbinger of spring. Sounds simple enough and it's actually quite logical, or it would be if we didn't have calendars.*

day there were interviews and reports on how this one plover might just have been left behind here for winter after having missed the migratory bird train last fall. False alarm or not, my mind immediately wandered a couple of months into the future and I could see myself sitting in the green moss, watching the sun set in the middle of the night in complete silence except for the dirrindee of the plover. I take it back, I am a bird enthusiast.

Icelanders love going to movie theaters. perhaps it's because our winters can be long, dark and cold. It means that sometimes we just need a little escape from our own reality and to get lost in the stories told on the silver screen. or maybe it's just that we love movies.

by Díska Bjarnadóttir Photo: Kristinn Magnússon



## A TRUE PARADISE FOR FILM ENTHUSIASTS

*„everybody is welcome to come here and just hang out. That's why the tables and chairs and the chessboard is there.”*

For some reason the majority of Icelandic movie theaters show mostly big budget Hollywood films. But there is one notable exception: Bíó paradís on Hverfisgata, which was founded by The Icelandic Filmmakers' Association with the goal to enrich the selection for Icelandic movie goers and promote Icelandic film-making. And it's off to a great start. In the two years Bíó paradís has been operating, visitors have increased by 33 percent, even though general visits to Icelandic cinemas has decreased by eight percent. One reason for this could be that Bíó paradís is now the only movie theater in downtown Reykjavík. It also has quite a cozy little café. There are tables and chairs, couches and a bar. Hrönn Sveinsdóttir, the managing director, describes it this way: “everybody is welcome to come here and just hang out. That's why the tables and chairs and the chessboard is there. We see it as a venue where you can sit down and have a beer with your friends, watch a film and then return to discuss what you've seen. We have a good selection of music and all of the employees are great DJs so we always have good music playing.”

### **A GREAT WAY TO LEARN ABOUT FOREIGN PLACES**

Bíó paradís has also been gaining a growing reputation as a host to various events, such

as Wednesday night game nights and Black Sundays. On Black Sundays a small group of horror movie fans have been showing other fans, movie buffs or just curious people a very eclectic collection of horror movies, most of them quite out of the mainstream.

Hrönn says: “The best way to introduce a country's culture is through their films.” So the movie theater often hosts various events such as polish, Chinese, and european film days to name a few. each year it shows over 400 films from over 40 different countries. It has also become an annual tradition to show selected old and new Icelandic films throughout the summer, catering especially to foreign visitors.

### **MUSIC FESTIVALS WITHOUT THE CAMPING**

Hrönn says that in the summertime people who've been “going crazy all winter from light deprivation” aren't as eager to go to the movies. That's driven her and her colleagues to come up with fun, new innovative events. last summer Bíó paradís hosted concerts which were very popular. The cinema just improved their sound system so there's a possibility they might broadcast from foreign music festivals in the summer. The ones of us that don't get to go to Roskilde or Glastonbury could then go downtown to Bíó paradís, have a beer and experience the concerts on the big screen.

# FELDUR VERKSTÆÐI

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND



Þoka



Eva



Blær



Mjöll



Blástur



# MOUNT HEKLA

Hekla is Iceland's most famous and historically most active volcano. Situated in the south of Iceland with a height of 1,491 meters (4,892 ft) it is a rather young volcano, considered to be about 6000-7000 years old.

by Jón Kristinn Snæhólm  
Photos: Sigtryggur Ari Jóhannsson

Over 20 eruptions have occurred in and around the volcano since the settlement of Iceland in 874 and since the Middle Ages, Hekla has been one of the most active volcanoes in the world with recorded major eruptions in 1104, 1158, 1206, 1222, 1300, 1341, 1389, 1510, 1597, 1636, 1693, 1776, 1845, 1947, 1970, 1980, 1991, and 2000. The duration of eruptions in Hekla are extremely varied and difficult to predict. Some are very short (a week to ten days) whereas others can stretch into months and even years. But there is a general correlation; the longer Hekla goes dormant, the larger and more catastrophic its next eruption will be. Hekla can best be described as an intermediate volcanic form between a crater row and a strato volcano (built from mixed lava and tephra eruptions). Hekla is situated on a long volcanic ridge, 40 km (25 miles) long. The most active part of this ridge, a fissure about 5.5 km (3.5 miles) long named Heklugjá, is considered to be the volcano Hekla proper. The mountain looks rather

like an overturned boat, with its keel being a series of craters, two of which are generally the most active ones. The Icelandic word Hekla means "a short hooded cloak" that may relate to the frequent cloud hovering over the volcano's summit.

## TALES, FOLKLORE AND LEGENDS

Hekla is often called the queen of Icelandic volcanoes but during the Middle Ages Europeans referred to it as the "Gateway to Hell" (often considered to be spread deliberately through Europe by Cistercian monks). This belief persisted until the 1800s. Also old tales tell of the belief that the condemned travelled to Hekla's crater on their way to the inferno, i.e. to Hell. There is still a folklore legend that Mount Hekla is a gathering place for witches on Easter. So watch out for broomstick travelers if you happen to be in the vicinity during the Easter weekend – as they may well appear! The Flatey Book Annual wrote of the 1341 eruption that people saw large

## HEKLA IN POPULAR CULTURE

During eruptions and because of its history Hekla has understandably been a major attraction for spectators, geologists, biologists, the media, photographers, writers, poets and painters from all over the world and has continued to be such since the time of its medieval infamy.

- William Blake (1757-1827) an English poet, painter and a printmaker showed Winter being banished to Hekla in To Winter, one of the works from his Poetical Sketches.
- A poem by the monk Benedikt from ca. 1120 about the voyages of Saint Brendan, often called the Voyager (c. 484-577), mentions Hekla as the prison of Judas. Also Hekla has been the inspiration of numerous great and famous Icelandic poets and painters during many centuries.
- Travels in Iceland by Eggert Ólafsson (1726-1768), an Icelandic explorer and writer, and Bjarni Pálsson (1719-1779) an Icelandic doctor and biologist, describe their research trip around Iceland between 1752 and 1757 during which they visited a great number of Icelandic natural sites, including the world famous Hekla. In 1750, they were documented to be the first people to have climbed the volcano.
- Mount Hekla was referenced in the third chapter of Herman Melville's Moby Dick (1851), in EE Ryan's The Odd Saga of the American and a Curious Icelandic Flock (2011), and in the final chapters of Joan Aiken's Is Underground (1995).
- The piece Hekla, Op 52 (1964) by the Icelandic composer Jón Leifs (1899-1968) has been called the "loudest classical music of all time." The requirements for a performance of Hekla include four sets of rocks hit with hammers, steel plates, anvils, sirens, cannons, metal chains, a choir, a large orchestra and an organ.

The piece represents Hekla performing at her best.

- In Boston, USA, Hekla pastries can be found – large, upsidedown cinnamon rolls with white sugar icing spooned over the top to look like the snowcapped volcano.
- A small Danish cruiser launched in 1890 was named Hekla, as well as a Danish steamer which saw combat in the first Schleswig War (1848-1851).
- Copenhagen, Denmark, houses Hekla, Copenhagen football club and they play at Hekla Park!
- One of the first passenger airplanes in Iceland during the 1940s, a Douglas DC4, was named Hekla, and the name Hekla is a very popular name for a baby girl in Iceland.

and small birds flying in the mountain's fire which were taken to be souls and in the 16th century Caspar Peucer (1525-1602), a German reformer, physician, and scholar of Sorbian origin, wrote that the Gates of Hell could be found in "the bottomless abyss of Hekla Fell." Old tales told of visitors and hikers that went up the mountain but came back stark raving mad without hope of future rehabilitation. And rumor has it that Hekla is the homestead of Judas Iscariot himself!

## SPORT AND RECREATION

Hekla has not had a very glamorous past. Nearly every myth or legend about the volcano is in some way connected to purgatory, evil and the demonic. These days, however, Hekla has become a major tourist attraction. It is surrounded by beautiful green meadows and is sometimes draped with snow. This majestic elegance has put to rest the horrifying stories of evil, trolls and witches. Today Hekla is a popular destination for hiking. After the most recent eruption, in 2000, the path

goes near the summit with the walk taking 34 hours. In spring, skiing is possible on short routes around the rim of the crater (with the utmost care, of course). In summer there are easy mountaineering routes around the crater rim (also with caution) and it is possible to ride a snow cat to the top in winter.

## THIS JUST IN

Volcano experts predict that Queen Hekla will erupt soon... so be careful.

Book your tour online or with your tour desk.

- GEOTHERMAL STEAM ROOMS
- THERMAL BATHS
- SAUNA

Reykjavik Excursions offers two daily tours to Laugarvatn Fontana: The Golden Circle and Fontana Wellness SRE74 Warm Baths and Cool Lights SRE64

Open daily from 11:00 to 21:00  
Geothermal Rye Bread Tour available every day at 14:30  
Country style dinner buffet available from 18:00 to 21:00

LAUGARVATN  
**fontana**  
Geothermal Baths

# A GOURMET'S LARDER

In the middle of the atlantic ocean, where the warm Gulfstream returns from the arctic ocean, there is a small group of islands called the faroes. some of the world's finest raw produce has recently been discovered here and has been highly praised by leading gourmet chefs.

**H**owever, the quantity of produce available is limited and most certainly the reason why use of this nature's treasure trove has so far been reserved for the exclusive club of resident islanders and tourists who manage to find their way to this remote corner of the world.

The high quality can be attributed in part to the slow growing conditions created by the cold climate, where the vegetation is able to draw all the nutrients from the earth on the steep mountain slopes before being eaten by the sheep. This gives a particularly delicious organic meat, some of which is dried to become 'skerpikjøt, a Faroese delicacy, perhaps best enjoyed by the islanders themselves. The high quality can also be attributed to species. Cod, on one occasion mistaken for shellfish by a Spanish chef due to its succulent taste, angler fish and cultivated salmon are luxury items exported all over the world. The shellfish and Norway lobster are amongst the best to be found and much sought after by the world's Michelin elite.

The Faroese, resident in this gourmet larder, can survey the many links in the food chain from the comfort of their homes and have always sustained themselves with this modern cuisine. Happily oblivious to the high quality of its produce, the traditional Faroese cuisine has wind dried, salted and hung its meat, fish and birds, eating them with boiled potatoes and turnips. This rather monotonous and meagre vegetable diet was supplemented with wild herbs and grasses to avoid deficiency diseases.

With the sea roaring in over the islands, wind whistling through the ravines and sheep grazing in the most impassable places, you will find the most luscious and diverse vegetation

growing in rock crevices, ditches and between houses. There is Angelica, rich in vitamin C and effective against scurvy, the Common Nettle with its high iron and mineral content and Scurvy grass, whose sour leaves can compensate for the lack of fresh vegetables. Potatoes and turnips, juicy as pears, are grown in the meadows.

The Faroese restaurants are active participants in the successful initiative called New Nordic Food and are acutely aware of the high quality Faroese produce and the expectations in its preparation. Here, in the world's smallest capital, you will find world class Sushi, famous far beyond the Nordic borders. There is rustic food interpreted and prepared à la 21st century, alongside avant-garde gourmet cuisine of an international standard that delights the eye and palate. Unseen combinations conjured up to seduce the discerning senses with a symphony of tastes, sounds, smells and colours; all of course, inspired by the nature, country and tradition.

The restaurants focus on the islands unique culinary competence and exceptional terroir. This has led to an escalation in interest for developing and processing the quality and flavour of local specialities using the basics of the traditional preserving and preparation methods to develop new products.

The large selection of quality Faroese beers has also caught the attention of the outside world. The prize winning 125 year old Føroya Bjór, one of Scandinavia's oldest breweries, together with Okkara, are at the forefront of developing a small niche market of beers containing rhubarb, angelica and other herbs. The high quality and modern twist of these beers is celebrated by top chefs, beer

enthusiasts and collectors the world over.

In contrast, away from the civilisation of culinary experiences, there is the opportunity to sit on a late spring day between the giant rocks strewn across the puffin's breeding ground, eating a homemade lambs liver pâté sandwich with freshly picked Cuckoo flower and a Faroese beer as an accompaniment. You can enjoy the sight and sound of puffins gliding in circles on their way out to sea, returning with a beak full of freshly caught sand eel for their hungry chicks in their nest holes. Here, in the centre of nature's unspoilt larder, you can experience the sensually satisfying taste of the Faroe Islands.





# FAROE ISLANDS CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2014



## THE NORDIC HOUSE

The Nordic House is a multicultural venue offering a wide range of exciting events all year round, including concerts, exhibitions, theatre performances and much more. **See the programme of events for the Nordic House at:**

[NLH.FO](http://NLH.FO)

## FAROESE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The Faroese National Gallery of Art in Tórshavn offers many exciting exhibitions of artists from all over the world, in addition to the permanent exhibition of older and more modern Faroese art. Here you can see several works of one of the most famous Faroese artists, Sámal JoensenMykines (1906-1979).

**See the programme of exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art at:**

[ART.FO](http://ART.FO)

## MUSIC FESTIVALS AND OUTDOOR CONCERTS

During the summer months you will have more opportunities than you could possibly have imagined to enjoy the musical life of the Faroes. The local music scene has virtually exploded over recent years and you will be able to experience this fantastic variety of local music in all genres, plus top foreign groups and musicians at the various festivals and concerts.

### 13-14 JUNE:

Country and Blues Festival in Sørvágur

[COUNTRY.FO](http://COUNTRY.FO)

### 17-19 JULY:

G! Festival. Music festival in Gøta

[GFESTIVAL.COM](http://GFESTIVAL.COM)

### 28. JUNE:

Oneday festival Voxbotn in Tórshavn

[FACEBOOK.COM/VOXBOTN](https://FACEBOOK.COM/VOXBOTN)

### 27 JULY:

Ólavsøkukonsert. Outdoor concert in Tórshavn in connection with festivities

### 7-9 AUGUST:

Summarfestivalurin. Music festival in Klaksvík

[SUMMARFESTIVALUR.FO](http://SUMMARFESTIVALUR.FO)

### BEGINNING OF JUNE - END OF AUGUST:

Grotto concerts with various musicians, sailing with the schooner Norðlýsið

[WWW.NORDLYSID.COM](http://WWW.NORDLYSID.COM)

### MID JUNE:

### MID AUGUST:

Free live concerts with a cup of coffee exciting Faroese names in the music store "Tutl" in the main street of Tórshavn, everyday

[TUTL.COM](http://TUTL.COM)

### JUNE - AUGUST

Summartónar

[COMPOSERS.FO](http://COMPOSERS.FO)

### RUN FOR FUN AND MARATHONS

There are various runs arranged throughout the year, both for the experienced runner and also for those who run for fun and to exercise.

### 25 APRIL:

Flag Day Run in Tórshavn, 7km and 2km

[ATHLETICS.FO](http://ATHLETICS.FO)

### MAY:

Klaksvík (during the "Norðoyastevna" festival)

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### JUNE:

Hósvík (during the "Sundalagsstevna" festival)

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### JUNE:

Vestmanna (during the "Fjarðastevna" festival)

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### JUNE:

Vágur (during the "Jóansøka" festival)

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### JULY:

Runavík (during the "Eystanstevna" festival)

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### JULY:

Miðvágur (during the "Vestanstevna" festival): 7.5 km

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)



### **JULY:**

Tórshavn: Race (during "Ólavsøka")

[RENN.FO](http://RENN.FO)

### **AUGUST:**

Kvinnurenningin: Women's race in Tórshavn:  
5 km/2.5 km

[KVINNA.FO](http://KVINNA.FO)

### **5 SEPTEMBER:**

Tórshavn Marathon: Full and half marathon or  
5 km

[TORSHAVNMARATHON.COM](http://TORSHAVNMARATHON.COM)

### **OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS**

#### **18-22 FEBRUARY:**

Torradagar in Klaksvík. A whole week of  
exciting exhibitions, lectures, excursions etc

[KLAKSVIK.FO](http://KLAKSVIK.FO)

#### **6 JUNE:**

Culture Night in Tórshavn

[VISITTORSHAVN.FO](http://VISITTORSHAVN.FO)

#### **15-17. MAY:**

Boat Festival in Vestmanna

### **3-6 JULY:**

Faroe Islands Regatta sailing with traditional  
wooden boats 3. July kl. 19 4. July kl. 11:  
Tvøroyri, 4. July kl. 19 5. July kl. 10: Hvalvík, 5.  
July kl. 12:14: Tórshavn, 5. July kl. 19 6. July kl.  
12: Runavík

### **MID JULY:**

Market day in Runavík. Salmon for sale

[VISITEYSTUROY.FO](http://VISITEYSTUROY.FO)

### **JULY:**

Quayside dance on the western harbour  
in Tórshavn

[KUNNING.FO](http://KUNNING.FO)

### **16 AUGUST:**

Sjómanna dagur (Seaman's Day) in Klaksvík.  
Plenty of exciting activities for all ages

[KLAKSVIK.FO](http://KLAKSVIK.FO)

### **REGIONAL FESTIVALS**

A highlight of the Faroese summer is the range  
of local festivals that give rise to a frenzy of  
activity in all regions. Main attractions of all  
festivals are the fun fair, sporting events and  
dancing. Boat races in traditional Faroese  
boats take place at the festivals competing in

the FM challenge, and these are considered  
by many to be the absolute highpoint of the  
festivals. These festivals participate in the FM  
challenge for boat races:

31 May 2014	Norðoyarstevna in Klaksvík
07 June 2014	Eystanstevna in Runavík
14 Juni 2014	Sundalagsstevna in Hósvík
28 Juni 2014	Jóansøka in Vágur
05 July 2014	Fjarðastevna in Vestmanna
12 July 2014	Vestanstevna in Miðvágur
28 July 2014	Ólavsøka in Tórshavn

### **OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES**

Keep up to date with events for 2014:

[VISITFAROEISLANDS.COM](http://VISITFAROEISLANDS.COM)

[KUNNING.FO](http://KUNNING.FO)

[VISITTORSHAVN.FO](http://VISITTORSHAVN.FO)

[VISITNORDOY.FO](http://VISITNORDOY.FO)

[VISITEYSTUROY.FO](http://VISITEYSTUROY.FO)

[VISITSANDOY.FO](http://VISITSANDOY.FO)

[VISITNOLSOY.FO](http://VISITNOLSOY.FO)

[VISITVESTMANNA.COM](http://VISITVESTMANNA.COM)

[VISITSUDUROY.FO](http://VISITSUDUROY.FO)

[VISITVAGAR.FO](http://VISITVAGAR.FO)

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

# TRY THIS!



## SOAK

Make sure you visit at least one public swimming pool!

## TRY ALL THE CANDY!

Pristur (thristuhr), Tromp and filled liquorice strings (Fylltar reimar from Appolo) are the top three of the many that are locally made and delicious.

## DRINK AS MUCH TAP WATER AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN!

It's the best in the world!

## VISIT THE BEACH

Most Icelandic beaches are grayish black because of the volcanic soil.

## VISIT HARPA CONCERT HALL

It's the multicolored music house right downtown. Admission to the building is free and it's as much fun to see it from the inside as it is to view its many colors from the outside.

## GET IT AT HOME

If there is something you saw while you were here and would like to buy later, we just recently discovered nammi.is, which sends Icelandic goodies and much more (CDs, DVDs and clothing) all over the world.

## VISIT PERLAN

At the top of Öskjuhlíð, our little patch of forest right in the city, Perlan, The Pearl, sits on top of what used to be hot water tanks. With wrap around decks from which you can see every angle of the city, The Pearl is a must see place, and at the very top there is a four star restaurant which actually rotates. The meals are delicious, and with the breathtaking view, you've got it all. There is no admission fee and you can stay out on the observation deck as long as you like. Just remember to wear warm and wind resistant clothing.





**TRY TO SEE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS.**

If it's a clear night during fall, winter or spring you'll have a good chance of seeing the Northern Lights, especially the further you get away from the lights of the city. Some say that the town of Seltjarnarnes (on the west side of Reykjavík) offers rather clear views at the very end of the peninsula.



### TRY A PULSA!

Pulsa (puhlsah) is the Icelandic hot dog and sold in most gas stations as well as smaller shops, drive throughs and special hot dog stands. The toppings offered are mustard, ketchup, remoulade, raw onions and fried onions. The fried onions are a must! Most popular are one with everything or one with everything except raw onions. The best place in town to get it is the country's "most popular restaurant" called Bæjarins Bestu, located on Hafnarstræti in Reykjavík Center. The "restaurant" even offers a great view of the Harpa Concert Hall.



### GOTOABAR

Strike up a conversation with a friendly local during happy hour (see also on page 60).



### CHECK OUT THE MUSIC.

Some of our favorites include Ásgeir Trausti, Retro Stefsson, Of Monsters and Men and Moses Hightower. Most CD shops will let you listen for free before you buy and if you wish to buy digital, [www.tonlist.is](http://www.tonlist.is) offers a great selection.

### TRY OUR BEER!

We're so proud of it, because it's made from the best water in the world! Some good ones to try are Einstök, Kaldi and Brío from Borg (an award winning brew). During special seasons like Thorri, Easter and Christmas you should try the specialty beers made in limited editions. They are usually sold out very fast.



### TASTE SOME DAIRY

Skyr is an exclusively Icelandic dairy product, which originated here and you can almost only get here. It's low fat, high-protein, calcium rich and an inexpensive item to buy and eat on the go. Our súrmjólk (similar to yogurt) and our yogurt are also very good, inexpensive and easy to eat (or drink) on the go.



### BUY A SOUVENIR

Kraum in Aðalstræti sells only items made and designed in Iceland by Icelanders and in all price ranges. If you see something that's a bit too much for your budget, remember you can get a VAT form to fill out and then you get some of the money back!





# SAINT CLAIR

## FAMILY ESTATE

Saint Clair has become one of New Zealand's leading winemakers, known for its exemplary whites and its fruit-forward reds, which have won a constant stream of awards and trophies.



# SOME POINTERS

## – for your driving excursions

I was driving from akureyri to reykjavík recently, along road 1, the same route i've driven a hundred times before. i've driven it in the middle of winter when the road is icy, in a snow storm, in sharp winds, hailstorms and in the midnight summer sun that can be as blinding as the london paparazzi.

By: Guðrún Baldvina Sævarsdóttir Photos: Photos.com and Birtingur photo collection

**T**his particular drive was on a sunny Sunday afternoon when I was heading back to the capital after a weekend in the North. Road 1 is the highway that circles the country and is always busy on Fridays and Sundays the whole summer long. After a weekend in 18°C weather, zero wind and lots of sun (abnormally good for Iceland) the drive seemed like a breeze. But as I drove out of Blönduós and made my way to Hrótafjörður, I entered a thick fog that lasted for the next couple of hours



and made me wish I had taken an airplane. I had to take myself down from my normal speed, recalculate my ability according to the conditions and ignore my instinct to just speed on "cause the faster you go, the faster you'll be out of it!" the world's stupidest logic. The next two hours were spent trying not to get hypnotized by the endless uncomfortable white surrounding me and the roughly 5 meter snippet of road I had to navigate while trying not to have a heart-attack when cars would appear out of nowhere heading north.

That's the thing about Iceland, the weather is ridiculously unpredictable and as a rule of thumb, you need to distrust everything, especially your unbeatable expertise when it comes to driving, because let's face it, we all think we're the world's best driver.

### THE ROADS

Icelandic roads aren't as bad as you might think, as long as you respect them for what they are. Paved roads have a speed limit of 90 km/ph, gravel roads 80 km/ph. Single-spaced bridges, sharp turns and of course, the unpredictable weather can be hazardous and remember to adjust your speed and your attention to your current conditions. Road signs have come a long way in the past 20 years so you will be duly warned before a sharp turn or single-spaced bridge and shown the appropriate maximum speed to suit them. Make no mistake though, you need to slow down, aim for that bridge and make

sure nobody else is coming from the other direction. Should you be travelling in thick fog like I was or during winter in a blinding snow storm, the yellow sticks along the road are there to help you. They mark the road, reflect your headlights in darkness and stand out of snowdrift and thick buildups to keep you on the road. In some places you'll notice that the sticks are very long, much longer than normal, which tells you just how bad the snow buildup can get along that road.

### THE SHEEP

And then there's the sheep. Iceland has a sheep count of about 500,000 which is considerably more than the human population of 330,000. During the summer, most of them roam free and tend to hang out very close to the country roads that often have a residue of salt (sheep-narcotic) after a winter-long combat with icy roads. For some unexplainable reason, the mother and her lambs are never on the same side of the road and so, when a car approaches, they tend to panic and run over for a family reunion. It's better to know all these little details to enhance the chances that you'll slow down when you spot sheep on the side of the road.

### THE HIGHLAND

So, you're well schooled in Road 1 and promise to take notice of all the signs and the conditions and whatnot. If you're planning on leaving the route and its



*“Icelandic roads aren’t as bad as you might think, as long as you respect them for what they are.”*

adjacent lowland roads, it’s a whole different ballgame. The Icelandic highland is one of the largest unbuilt/untouched interiors in Europe and it is treacherous, dangerous and incredibly beautiful. Be sure to be driving the appropriate vehicle for where you’re going (a 4x4 jeep) and collect all the information you can from visitor’s centers or park rangers. Don’t over-estimate your abilities when crossing a river and never, ever drive on a glacier without a proper expert and an up to date map of crevasses. When dealing with the highland, make your first rule “don’t take any chances”. Every year, the Icelandic volunteer rescue units search for tourists (Icelanders and foreigners) that started hiking in clear skies but got hit with a sudden, dark fog or that tried to cross a huge river in their little Skoda and yes, sometimes people just fall into crevasses. We hate it when people get lost, so don’t do that.

And then there’s off-road driving. Off-road driving in Iceland is both illegal and considered something of a major insult, like keying someone’s Mercedes in Stuttgart. The ground in the highland is mostly barren, untouched and subsequently awe-inspiring. Off-road driving however is a form of pointless vandalism on something we value very, very much.



### SAFE TRAVEL

If you’re planning on visiting the highland, for hiking or camping or just driving, be sure to leave your travel plan on [www.safetravel.is](http://www.safetravel.is). It can make all the difference in the world in case something happens and accidents sometimes just happen.

That said we’re certain you’ll have the time of your life and an unforgettable experience with nature, like you’ve never seen her before. Be safe and enjoy!

# SEE REYKJAVÍK FROM THE SEA

Many Icelanders grow up so close to the sea that they say that they grew up on the sea. That's because the sea provides a living for many Icelanders, especially in the smaller villages around the coast. Then there are the city slickers, such as myself, who hardly ever leave the city and just wander around the streets of Reykjavík. The closest we come to living on the sea is a stroll along the beach every once in a while. That's why it was a really unique experience for me when I was offered a tour on the Harpa yacht.

by Dísá Bjarnadóttir

**D**iving my car to the very end of the pier behind Harpa Concert Hall, on a dark rainy night felt like the beginning of an adventure. As I approached, I thanked God that two handsome gentlemen were there to give me a hand climbing up the ladder. I really didn't know what I was in for.

When I got onboard it was like walking into a world more luxurious than I have ever experienced. This was the real deal! Movie star quality! The yacht had a spacious living room, which on this particular night featured a table laid out with white wine and finger food, and from there one could either walk up to greet the captain or walk down to visit one of the three suites, each more luxurious than the next.

## PICK YOUR TOUR

The captain Einar, is a man of many talents. Besides having a captain's license he has been involved in many aspects of the Icelandic tourist industry for many years. He named the boat Harpa, inspired by the name of the concert hall, the first month of summer according to the old Icelandic calendar, and the name of his granddaughter. By adding this luxurious yacht into the growing fleet of tourism vessels in Iceland he is now offering some different and exciting options for the explorers of the country.

Some of the tours that Harpa Yacht offers are whale watching in Faxaflói Bay, sea fishing tours, and a tour called Reykjavík from the sea; giving you a chance to see this seaside city from a new angle. The tour cruises around the islands Viðey, Engey, Akurey, Lundey and Þerney (some of these can be seen from the city) in Faxaflói. Additionally, a night tour on the Harpa yacht is a golden opportunity to see the astonishing beauty of the Northern Lights, while enjoying the salty air of the North Atlantic Ocean. Icelandic summer nights are just as magical as the sun never sets but rather lights up the sky in all different shades of pink, purple and orange. To witness the "almost sunset" is a unique experience and one worth staying up all night for.

Harpa Yacht is also available for private rentals; whether it is a birthday, group visit, anniversary or just a really classy cocktail party with a twist. I know that after my little peak into luxurious yacht sailing I'll be trying to find ways to get myself onto the guest list for another yacht party.

**For more information about the Harpa Yacht and opportunities to rent it or take tours visit: [harpayachts.is](http://harpayachts.is)**



*Sterna*



## GUIDED DAY TOURS

- NORTHERN LIGHTS
- GOLDEN CIRCLE
- SOUTH COAST
- GLACIER WALK

PHOTO: SKÓGAFOSS ON THE SOUTH COAST

ONLINE BOOKING AT: [WWW.STERNATRAVEL.COM](http://WWW.STERNATRAVEL.COM)

CALL US AT (+354) 551 1166 BETWEEN 8:00-22:00

STERNA IS LOCATED AT THE HARPA MUSIC AND CONFERENCE HALL BY THE WATERFRONT

EMAIL: [INFO@STERNATRAVEL.COM](mailto:INFO@STERNATRAVEL.COM)

Oh, look! Stars

# CELEBRITIES FLOCK TO ICELAND!

It wouldn't come as a surprise if Iceland has become quite the topic amongst the Hollywood circle. Whether on their web pages or in open interviews, most of the celebrities who stopped by has left with a rich experience and a glowing recommendation. Lets take a look at some of these recent happy customers.

by Tómas Valgeirsson



## STEP IT UP, EMMA:

Emma Watson fell in love with the Icelandic lamb (albeit, on a plate), she bought some paintings, went to the movies and apparently became very impressed with the way Icelanders behave during the night life. According to her, the clubs here are like "mosh pits", sweaty, crowded but im-mensely enjoyable. Watson claimed that next time she would visit she would bring an entire dance army with her. Dumbledore's army, maybe?



## ADDICTED TO SKYR:

"My opinions about Iceland : Incredibly challenging , sweet , beautiful and above all, unique. "Former gladiator Russell Crowe has spoken extensively about his trip to Iceland during his four-week stay while filming the upcoming bible epic Noah. Most of his followers on Twitter were able to get most of the news live from his adventures, from his bike-riding to public singing and raw shark tast-ing. Apparently, according to his page, Crowe was not to fond the shark, but he did however develop an addiction to Skyr. "Don't they have it anywhere else in the world?"



## FOREVER IN MEMORY:

When Tom Cruise landed in Iceland to shoot better portions of the sci-fi film Oblivion, he probably did not expect to part with it as a single man. Cruise spent a few weeks and went on all sorts of private adventures but kept mostly from the public eye due to an extreme work schedule. He brought his wife and daughter along, but when filming wrapped, she had gone back home and reportedly they got seperated during their stay here. Ouch. But, don't worry though, he'll be back.



## THE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN:

"Iceland on a bad day: Not so bad!" Actor and filmmaker Ben Stiller praised the country repeatedly through Tweets while location scouting for his latest film, The Secret Life of Walter Mitty. On the Jimmy Kimmell show he said how he became so fond of the summer and how the sun never sets during. "And is that a good thing?" Jimmy replied. Stiller answered: "It is when all the women are that beautiful".



## CELTIC PRIDE:

A classy man of great taste, Gerard Butler has a very strong bond with the country and a ear for the music of Sigurros, he says. "I'm Celtic," he told an interviewer back in 2010, "so my favourite places in the world are Scotland and (guess what?) Iceland! There is something so rough yet so beautiful about this country, whether a person is standing on a glacier or on the black beaches. You won't find any place in the world like it." Butler first came here back in 2005 to film the little-known film *Beowulf & Grendel*, where a bunch of Icelandic actors got to meet the good man, and rumors of his well-mannered kindness went a long way.



## MID-SHOOTING SOLACE:

Jennifer Connelly plays the lead female part in Darren Aronofsky's bible pic *Noah* and when shooting began she brought the whole family to look at the mountains and enjoy the summer breeze. Actor-hubby Paul Bettany took many walks with his lovely wife whilst looking at the scenery, but both kept a quiet profile inbetween her working days, seeing very few sights or going somewhere public. Sometimes, a relaxation of that sorts is just what the doctor ordered. At least they had plenty of that fresh air everyone's talking about.



## FROSTY WEATHER, WARM HEART:

Professional geek Kevin Smith brought his unique Q&A stand-up to Iceland on the remarkable day of 11.11.11. The show was packed, laughs were throughout as well as applause and the evening came to a memorable end when a guest proposed to his girlfriend in the audience. Smith had a hard time pronouncing Icelandic names but he left the country saying that his heart was stolen by this Nordic paradise, and he promises to revisit. He was however convinced that his daughter would be terrific of the seafood.



## HITCHED:

Well-known Jackass Bam Margera has always had an affinity for Iceland, probably having something to do with his fond memories here with his friend, the late Ryan Dunn. The two of them must have made so many of them, seeing as Bam came here for a visit shortly after his untimely death. Last summer, Bam even returned once again and tied the knot here.



## Ólafur Örn Ólafsson: AN ICELANDIC FOODIE HIPSTER

Amongst the many people in Reykjavík who like to enjoy good food and drink Ólafur Örn Ólafsson (Óli Óla) is a rather well known name. He is one of those people who seem to know just about everybody who's anybody. These days he's even more well known around Reykjavík because for the past few weeks he's been on television once a week as one of the judges on the Icelandic version of MasterChef.

by Dísá Bjarnadóttir Photo: Rakeļ Ósk Sigurðardóttir

Óli can also be credited for introducing some novelties into the eclectic mix of Icelandic liqueurs. He's one of the thinkers behind Björk and Birkir, unique Icelandic liqueurs made from Icelandic herbs. Óli's interests are good food and good drink, so we thought he'd be a perfect candidate to share some of his wisdom about eating well in Iceland and abroad.

**So Óli, what's your story, how did you get to be the "culinary megastar" that you are today?"** *Megastar?* That sounds a bit extreme. If someone knows my face it's probably because I've been fortunate enough to work in some of the best restaurants in Reykjavík for the past few years. I also have to admit that I have a tendency to forget people's names or faces. So to play it safe, I often greet people that I don't know at all as if we're old friends. This has often led to me getting to know new people."

**What is the story behind Björk and Birkir?** "I used to work with my friend Gunnar Karl at Dill restaurant. We were constantly looking for tasty ingredients from Iceland's nature. We climbed mountains and tasted most of what we found, most of it was good and some of it made it into the Dill menu.

"We really liked birch with its unique flavor. We used it quite a bit for desserts and to season meat and fish. And we kept experimenting with what would be a good venue for this excellent taste. Since we're both natural drinkers we thought it would be interesting to make a liqueur to match with a fish dish we were offering at the time. Our guests really liked it so the next step was to bottle and sell it."

**What is the latest and greatest in the Icelandic cuisine scene?**

"It's a rapidly growing field. Farmers have started making all kinds of good stuff right at their farms, such as ice cream and cheese, not to mention all the great crafts and clothing made from the sheep's wool.

"Micro-breweries have been popping up all over the country, some of them offer excellent beer, some of them not as excellent, but I welcome it all, even the not-so-good first attempts. All Icelanders who try and add to our rich food culture with new ideas deserve applause, in my book."

**What do you recommend most in food and drink to foreign visitors?**

"Try the local stuff. Find a restaurant that prepares and uses local produce. In Iceland you can have some of the freshest fish in the world. When you order fish in a good restaurant it's often something that was swimming in the ocean the day before. I also recommend skyr to all foreign visitors. In the summertime I suggest visits to the farmers who produce their own dairy products, and Frú lauga, the farmers market in Reykjavík, is a place that all real "foodies" should visit."

**Since you've been in the restaurant business for so long, do you credit yourself for any of the recent restaurant-trends?**

"I'm very proud of having been a part of starting the New Nordic restaurant at Dill. New Nordic cuisine is closely related to the "slow food" concept, which in short is the idea that ingredients should travel as little as possible, meaning the distance from the farm to the plate ("from farm to fork"). When the New Nordic wave started here, Icelandic chefs

and restaurant owners started thinking more about this. If I can be credited for playing even a small role in this, it makes me very happy."

**You've travelled quite a bit and tried a few different things in other countries' restaurants, what are some of your more memorable experiences?**

"I'll always remember the first time I ate at Noma, Copenhagen. You could say it was an influential event in my life as a "foodie". I had a twelve course meal where every course was a pleasant surprise.

"I'll also never forget eating in a small family restaurant in Thailand. We were greeted by a limping grandmother with one single tooth in her mouth. We were rather skeptical but it ended up being one of the very best meals I've ever been served. Fresh fish, lots of hot spices and everything cooked with love. Fabulous!

**If you were young and broke, but wanted to travel, where would you go?**

"Berlin! Berlin is so full of life and there are plenty of "ethnic restaurants" with affordable prices. They also have a super fun bar-scene and the people in Berlin are exceptionally cool and hip."





Let's go to the...

# LEBOWSKI BAR

The Reykjavik venue that rocks!

From the entrepreneurs that brought you Café Oliver and Vegamot, comes Lebowski Bar. You can take a quick guess where the name and inspiration comes from and even if you didn't like the infamous 1998 movie we are certain you will love this bar.

Just walking in to this retro American bar puts a smile on your face and the mood is very 1960's. You can hang out at the old fashioned porch and imagine you are in a real action movie. They don't make bars like these anymore ... oh wait they do, this one! Four big screens adorn the walls, so it's also a great place to hang out when there are big events and sporting highlights to be seen. And there's also an "outside" area decorated in a zappy Miami-sunshine yellow that will cheer even the dullest of days.

## DINE AND JIVE

Lebowski Bar really captures the diner style with cosy booths and a fabulous jukebox containing over 1,600 songs guaranteed to get those hips swaying. If that's not enough there's a DJ on every night of the week so you won't feel the pressure of selecting all the music by yourself.

The menus are the biggest in Iceland ... no literally! Their physical dimensions are huge! Doesn't everyone say that size really does matter? Try their amazing burgers, there's cheese, bacon, a béarnaise sauce option and succulent beef tenderloin. If that's not enough, choose from one of the 12 kinds of milkshakes to go with it. "Careful man, there's a beverage

here!" Jeffrey 'the Dude' Lebowski, the protagonist of the Coen brother's comedy, is renowned for his penchant for 'White Russians' – vodka based cocktails featuring coffee liqueurs and cream or milk. Lebowski Bar has taken this now-iconic drink to a new level, offering an astounding 18 varieties of White Russian, along with an extensive bar list.

## BOWLING AT THE BAR

The real icing on the Lebowski cake, however, is the bar's genuine bowling lane – it's a classic. How many bars have a bowling lane? In Iceland, not many, unless you count the bars at actual bowling alleys that certainly don't have the cool vibe of Lebowski Bar. DJs and a bass player add to the music mix at weekends and there's room to dance. Check it out dudes, you're guaranteed a good time.

### THE LEBOWSKI BAR

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info@lebowskibar.is

FIND US ON FACEBOOK and Twitter

Twitter: @LebowskiBar Instagram:

#LebowskiBar

Open 11:00 – 01:00 Sun-Thurs

and 11:00 – 04:00 Fri/Sat

lebowskibar.is



Lebowski Bar is my favorite place to hang out at. I love grabbing a good beer, a burger & topping it with a delicious milkshake.

Lebowski Bar plays oldies music which makes the vibe like none other in Reykjavik.

They also have happy hour from 4-7pm and who doesn't love that! Bottom line, Lebowski Bar is a great mainstream bar where you can meet fellow travelers and have a drink with locals. Practice the word 'SKÁL' (Cheers) ~ Inga,@TinyIceland

tinyiceland.com

# BE IN YOUR ELEMENT

Visit the Laugarvatn Fontana geothermal baths. Nowhere else can you enjoy a steam bath on top of a hot spring and afterwards relax in the open air thermal baths. Our café serves locally grown delicacies.



Book your tour online or with your tour desk.  
Reykjavík Excursions offers two daily tours to  
Laugarvatn Fontana:  
The Golden Circle and Fontana Wellness SRE74  
Warm Baths and Cool Lights SRE64

Open daily from 11:00 to 21:00  
Geothermal Rye Bread Tour available  
every day at 14:30  
Country style dinner buffet available  
from 18:00 to 21:00

LAUGARVATN  
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Geothermal Baths