

**ADVENTUROUS**

*Iceland is the outdoor enthusiast's paradise. Come and experience the extreme adventures awaiting you around every corner and curve.*

**PURE**

*Iceland is a pure source of fresh materials from an unspoiled nature. Come and experience clean water, clean energy and a relaxing spa culture.*

**CREATIVE**

*Iceland is literally bursting with creative energy. Come and experience the fantastic music and arts of Iceland in their own natural setting.*

**CULTURAL**

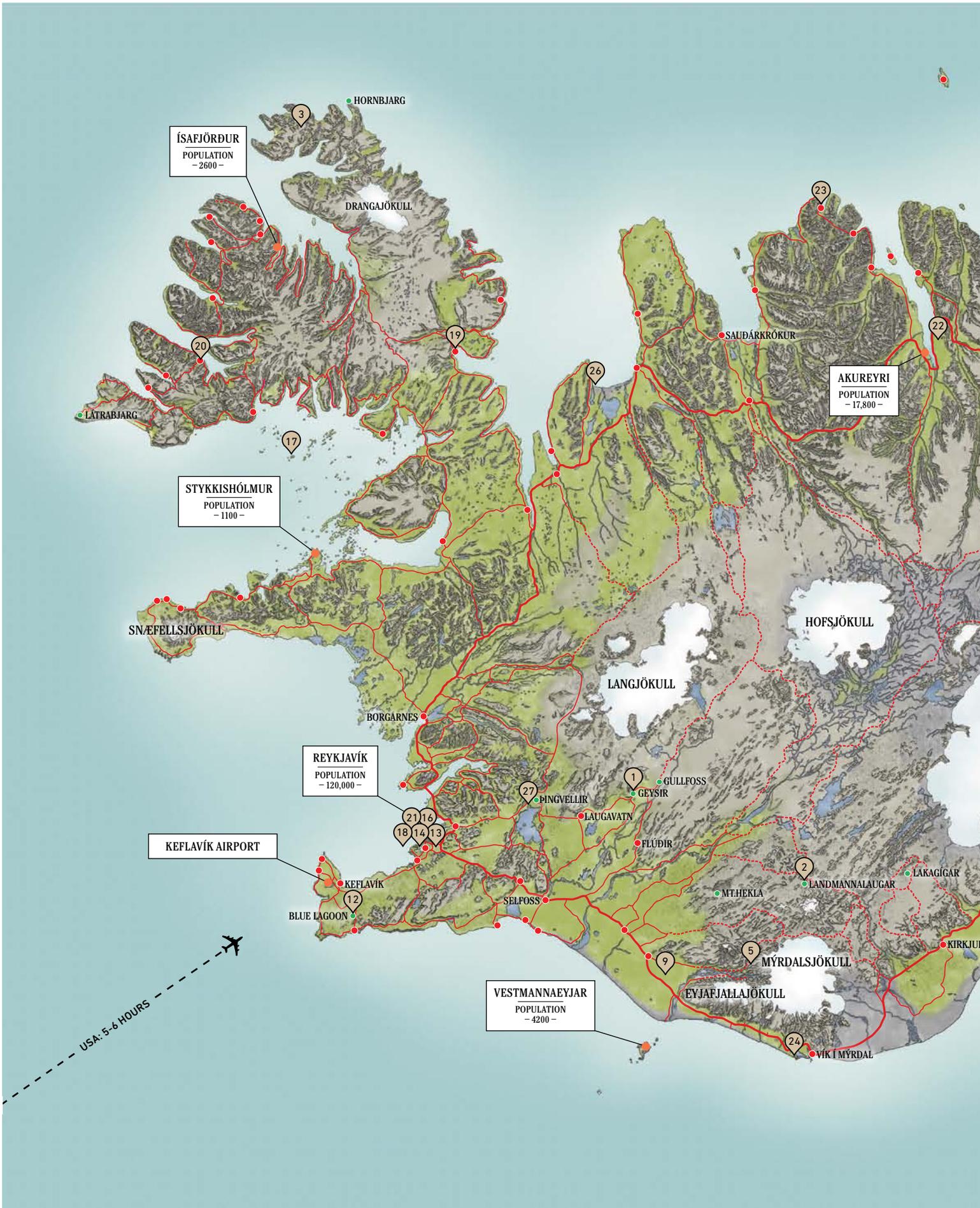
*Iceland is a progressive modern society, founded on old traditions and strong individuality. Come and experience the Icelandic heritage.*

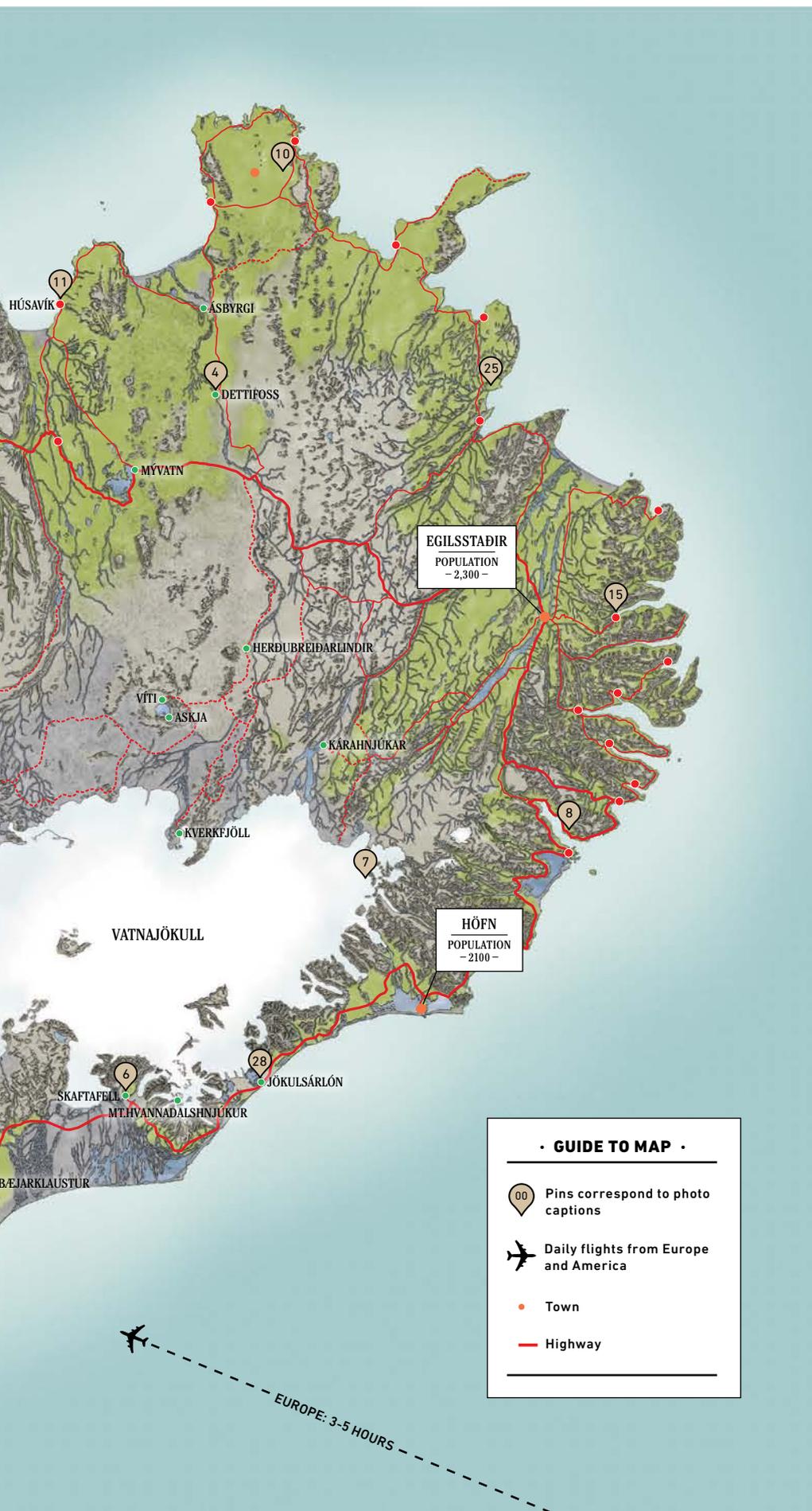
**MYSTERIOUS**

*Iceland is the photographer's paradise, rich in awe-inspiring vistas and contrasting nature. Come and experience the sublime Iceland.*

# ICELAND







## ICELAND IN BRIEF

**Official name:** Iceland

**Flag:** Blue with a red cross outlined in white. The colours are symbolic for Iceland: red is for the volcanic fires, white recalls the snow and glaciers, and blue is for the skies above.

**Population:** 319,000 (Jan 2012). Median age is 35.6 years.

**Capital city:** Reykjavík. The largest municipalities are Reykjavík\* (118,000); Kópavogur\* (30,000); Hafnarfjörður\* (25,000); Akureyri (17,000); Reykjanesbær (14,000). \*cities in the capital region.

**Government:** Parliamentary constitutional republic.

**Language:** Icelandic, a North Germanic language derived from Old Norse. English is widely spoken and understood.

**Religion:** Predominantly Christian.

**Currency:** The Icelandic króna (plural krónur) – ISK.

**Time:** Iceland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) throughout the year.

**Size:** 103,000 sq. km (40,000 sq. miles), slightly bigger than Hungary and Portugal, and slightly smaller than Cuba.

**Glaciers:** Glaciers cover 11,922 sq. km (4,600 sq. miles) of the island's surface. Iceland is home to Vatnajökull National Park, the largest national park in Europe.

**Highest point:** Hvannadalshnjúkur peak 2,110 m

**Emergency number:** 112

### Helpful websites

- [www.iceland.is](http://www.iceland.is)
- [www.visiticeland.com](http://www.visiticeland.com)
- [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)
- [www.visitreykjanes.is](http://www.visitreykjanes.is)
- [www.west.is](http://www.west.is)
- [www.westfjords.is](http://www.westfjords.is)
- [www.northiceland.is](http://www.northiceland.is)
- [www.east.is](http://www.east.is)
- [www.south.is](http://www.south.is)
- [www.safetravel.is](http://www.safetravel.is)
- [www.en.vedur.is](http://www.en.vedur.is)
- [www.road.is](http://www.road.is)

© Promote Iceland 2012

Published by Promote Iceland  
 Printed by Ísafoldarprentsmiðja  
 Eco-certified printing  
 Design by Gunnir Thorvalds  
 Silfra photo courtesy of Dive.is  
 Fashion photo courtesy of Marínó Thortlacius



# ADVENTUROUS ICELAND

---





Iceland. It is not a destination. It is an adventure.

With more than half of its 320,000 inhabitants living in the capital city, the country remains largely uninhabited. In fact, a mere twenty-minute drive from Reykjavík centre takes you out of the hubbub of city life and into the seclusion of Iceland's spectacular landscapes, which will inspire your adventure from the edge of a fjord to the foot of a glacier.

But the landscape is not just for gaping at; Iceland's rivers are perfect for rafting, fishing, diving and snorkeling; its mountains, volcanoes and glaciers are good for hiking, climbing, dog-sledding, and snowmobiling; its snowy hills for skiing and snowboarding; its waves for surfing; its caves for exploring; and its barren highlands for jeep safaris. Iceland was created for the extreme experience.

Sharing Icelandic nature with its natural inhabitants is just as rewarding. Whether you are on board one of the many whale-watching boats around the country, taking in the bird life, or trekking around the country on an Icelandic horse, the riveting beauty of the rugged landscape will never cease to amaze you.

Whatever you do, don't forget to pack a swimsuit and a towel. The geothermal energy under your feet is used to heat more than 170 public swimming baths around the country, and nothing says awesome like pulling over on the side of a gravel road to find one of Iceland's natural hot springs tucked away just out of sight.

# ADVENTUROUS ICELAND



📷 NATURAL HOT SPRING IN LANDMANNALAUGAR

2

## ICELAND - CREATED FOR THE EXTREME EXPERIENCE

Iceland is the outdoor enthusiast's paradise. The scenic landscape is the perfect setting to enjoy some of your favorite outdoor activities, be it winter sports, cross-country running, hiking, mountain-biking or kayaking. Icelandic hillsides are perfect for extreme skiing and snowboarding and beautiful hiking trails are found in all parts of the country, from the 53 km long, world famous Laugavegur trail, between Þórsmörk and Landmannalaugar, which will take you past Eyjafallajökull vol-

cano and into the interior of Iceland. This is considered one of the most spectacular walking trails in the world.

Iceland is also a great place to enjoy water activities. The long summer days are perfect for relaxed ocean kayaking, while the Icelandic glacial rivers offer challenging conditions for stream kayakers of all levels. In recent years, Iceland has even garnered a reputation as a surf spot. The waves are first class, although the sea temperature may require a specialised wet suit.

If you want to go beneath the surface, Iceland offers some incredible diving spots, including Silfra in Thingvellir National Park. Renowned for its clear water and visibility, Silfra will take you between the continental plates separating Europe and America.

If you would rather enjoy motorised adventures, you can choose between guided snow mobile trips around Icelandic glaciers, or jeep safaris across the Icelandic highlands.

## 4 GREAT HIKES IN THE HIGHLANDS

### Hornstrandir Nature Reserve

3

*This uninhabited peninsula in the Northwestern corner of Iceland was established as a Nature Reserve in 1975, and provides an unmatched peek into the natural beauty of Iceland. The area can be difficult to pass through and access to services is limited. Plan accordingly.*

### Jökulsárgljúfur National Park

4

*Located in the Northern part of Vatnajökull National Park, the largest national park in Europe. Jökulsárgljúfur canyon was formed by Iceland's second longest river. The hike provides opportunities to pass Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in Europe, and the beautiful Ásbyrgi canyon.*

### Landmannalaugar - Thórsmörk

5

*The incredible Laugavegur trail is a 4-day trek, but the surrounding area is great for shorter excursions. The area is full of unusual geological elements, multicolored mountains and expansive lava fields. Another popular trail close by is Fimmvörðuháls, snaking between two glaciers, Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull.*

### Skaftafell National Park

6

*In the Southern part of Vatnajökull National Park, Skaftafell offers startling vistas of serrated peaks, shimmering icecaps, and barren flood plains stretching toward the sea. There are many marked routes in the area that you can follow up the glacier, or up to Svartifoss, one of Iceland's more impressive waterfalls.*



### TRAVELERS' CHECKLIST

The Icelandic interior is a magical place, but keep in mind that conditions can change quickly, and if you find yourself in a difficult situation, it can take time for help to arrive. Especially if no one knows where you are.

Make sure you check road conditions and weather forecast ahead of time. Make a detailed travel plan and always stick to it. Bring the proper equipment and clothing, and use waterproof bags to keep items dry. Always leave your travel plan with someone, for example, your tour operator, the hotel or the Icelandic Rescue Team by filling out a form on their website [www.safetravel.is](http://www.safetravel.is).

📷 ICE-CAVE EXPLORATION IN VATNAJÖKULL

7

### INSPIRED BY ICELAND

I love the clean and crisp air. I love the wind as it whips around me. Every breath feels like a blessing, every gust of wind feels like it is blowing away all the things I don't want.

I love the food. It is invigorating, filling, and just about right. I love the night life. The beer, the music, the people, all of it. I love how it reminds me that I am still alive.

I love the horses. Even the affectionate way they nuzzle right before I am about to make a wonderful camera shot.

I will be back to Iceland.

James Jones, USA

→ [www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com)



📷 SEA KAYAKERS IN THE RENOWNED EASTFJORDS FOG

8

# PURE ICELAND

---





Icelanders have long enjoyed one of the highest life expectancies in the world. There's no definitive explanation for this, but a clean environment and a healthy diet and lifestyle probably have something to do with it. The Icelandic diet is rich in quality raw materials, farmed, bred and caught in an unpolluted environment, and produced with the utmost care.

The air quality in Iceland is good due to the island's North Atlantic oceanic climate and steady winds. Furthermore, most of the country's electricity needs are met with renewable energy sources. Geothermal energy, a much cleaner alternative to fossil fuels, is used to heat more than ninety percent of the country's buildings and most of the country's swimming baths.

In addition to recreational baths, Icelanders enjoy natural hot springs and geothermal lagoons, such as the famous Blue Lagoon and Mývatn Nature Baths, whose high levels of silicates and other minerals have an especially rejuvenating effect on the skin.

The quality of the drinking water in Iceland is also exceptionally good due to a wealth of fresh water rivers that stream down from the mountains and glaciers. In fact, it's perfectly safe and highly recommended to drink this water straight from the source. Otherwise, it's still just a pipe away to your tap.

# PURE ICELAND

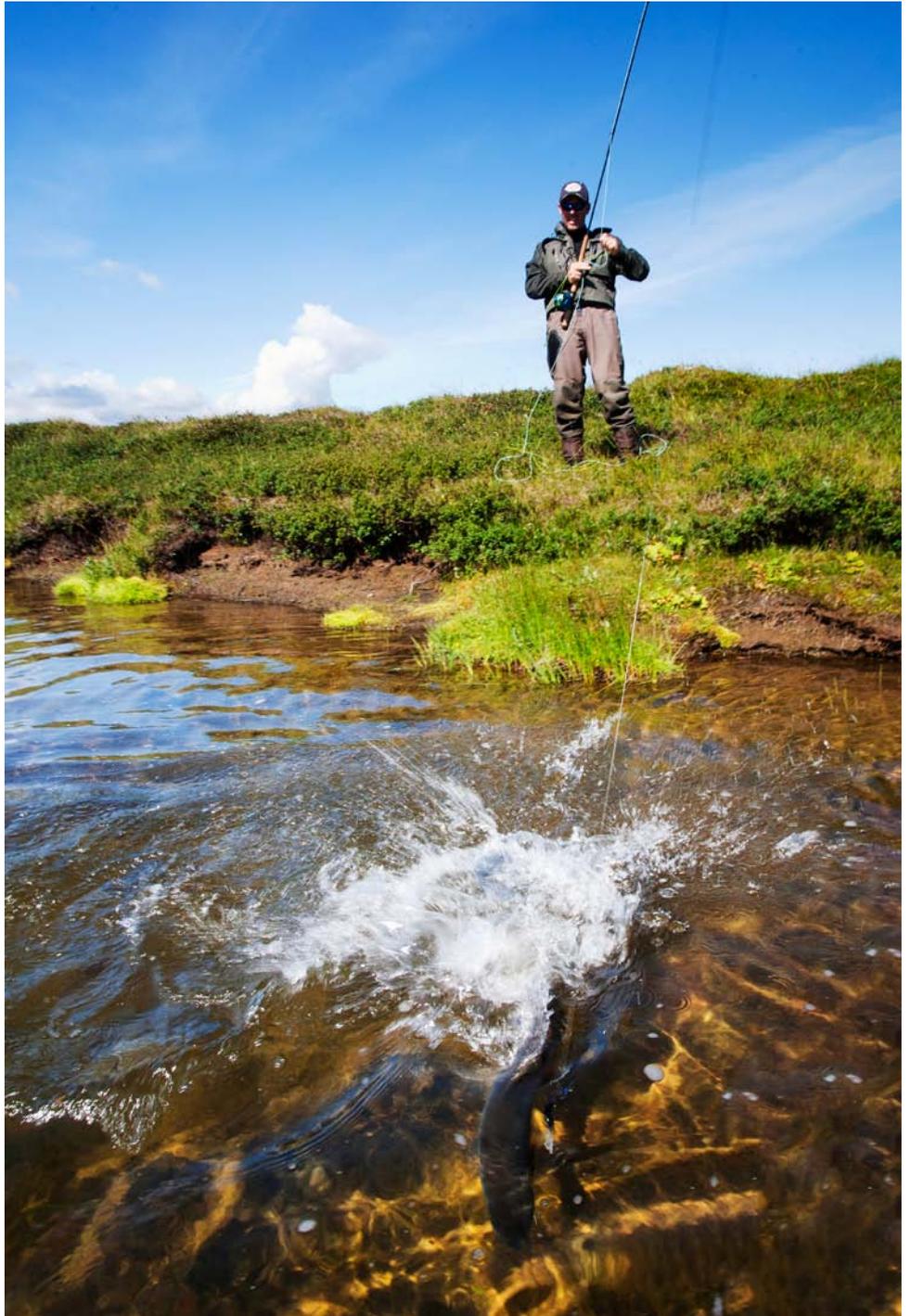
## FOOD

Icelandic restaurants enjoy some of the purest materials available, grown and caught in pure and unpolluted natural environment. The Icelandic fish is renowned for its quality, harvested in a responsible manner, and produced to the highest industry standards. Icelandic lamb is also a source of national pride, known for its tender meat. Icelandic sheep spend the summers grazing in the Icelandic highlands, and mountain herbs add richness to its delicate flavor.

Organic vegetables are grown in geothermal greenhouses around Iceland, and supply much of the country's demand. *Skyr* – a tasty, low-fat, high-protein dairy product similar to yogurt – is another unique delicacy special to Iceland. These, and other, fresh ingredients serve as the basis for a rich Icelandic food culture.

In Iceland, food, culture and tradition are closely intertwined. In order to survive under harsh conditions, Icelanders preserved food by means of either fermentation, typically in whey or brine, or in some cases drying or smoking. These traditional ways of preserving and preparing food are celebrated at midwinter festivals during the ancient month of *Þorri* in January/February each year.

As the country absorbed foreign influences in the 20th century, so did Icelandic cuisine and dietary culture, adding international flavours. The rise of the New Nordic Cuisine culinary movement has promoted the diversity of Nordic regional ingredients, and stressed the quality of the region; purity, simplicity and ethical production. This helps ensure that Iceland will meet your expectations for quality taste and a healthy dining experience.





## SUSTAINABLE ICELAND

Environmental protection is a top priority for Iceland, a country that greatly depends on the sustainable management of its natural resources. Iceland is committed to the use of green energy and given the economy's reliance on fisheries and seafood export, the sustainable harvesting of living marine resources is an economic as well as an environmental priority.

📷 WHALE WATCHING IN NORTH ICELAND

11



📷 BLUE LAGOON SPA, REYKJANES PENINSULA

12

## SPA TRADITION

The spa is a modern day invention, but enjoying the various health benefits of bathing in thermal baths is an Icelandic tradition dating back to the settlement. Snorri Sturluson, the famous 12th-century historian and author, was a prolific spa enthusiast by modern standards, having had his own thermal pool built for the sole purpose of soaking in hot water. Of the 13 baths that are known to have been used in the early days of the Icelandic society, four are still standing.

Today, enjoying a good soak is part of the social fabric in Iceland. Many Icelanders visit swimming baths on a daily basis to meet fellow citizens to discuss the hot topics of the day. And as unlikely as it may sound, Reykjavik sports its own geothermal beach, with white sands and warm ocean water. Still, there are those who swear by the health benefits of swimming in the cold ocean, so every day, you will find Icelanders enjoying a swim in the cold Atlantic.

## INSPIRED BY ICELAND

My wife lets me choose our vacation destinations. When I told her we were going to Iceland, she was very wary. Now, she'll tell anyone who will listen that our trip to Iceland in early September was the best trip she's taken so far. What a wholly unique and wonderful place, and we couldn't recommend it more highly for the fantastic food (never had a bad meal), the amazing landscape, and the great people.

Tom Newman, USA

→ [www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com)

## 6 IDEAS FOR ICELANDIC DISHES TO TRY

### Skyr

A cultured dairy product, similar to yogurt in texture, but technically a soft cheese. Skyr is popular for its low level of fat and high level of protein, delicious with blueberries and a dash of cream. Known as the Icelandic superfood.

### Lamb

Icelandic sheep traditionally spend summers grazing wild in the Icelandic highlands, mostly subsisting on mountain herbs, especially thyme, which gives this lean gourmet meat its delicate flavor.

### Plokkfiskur

Fish stew, made from boiled fish, potatoes and onions, served in white sauce and *Rúgbrauð* with Icelandic butter. Traditionally a way to treat leftovers, this now considered an original Icelandic delicacy.

### Rúgbrauð

Icelandic straight rye bread, dark and dense, usually rather sweet, traditionally baked in a pot or steamed in special wooden casks buried in the ground near a hot spring. Often served with fish. Very healthy.

### Harðfiskur

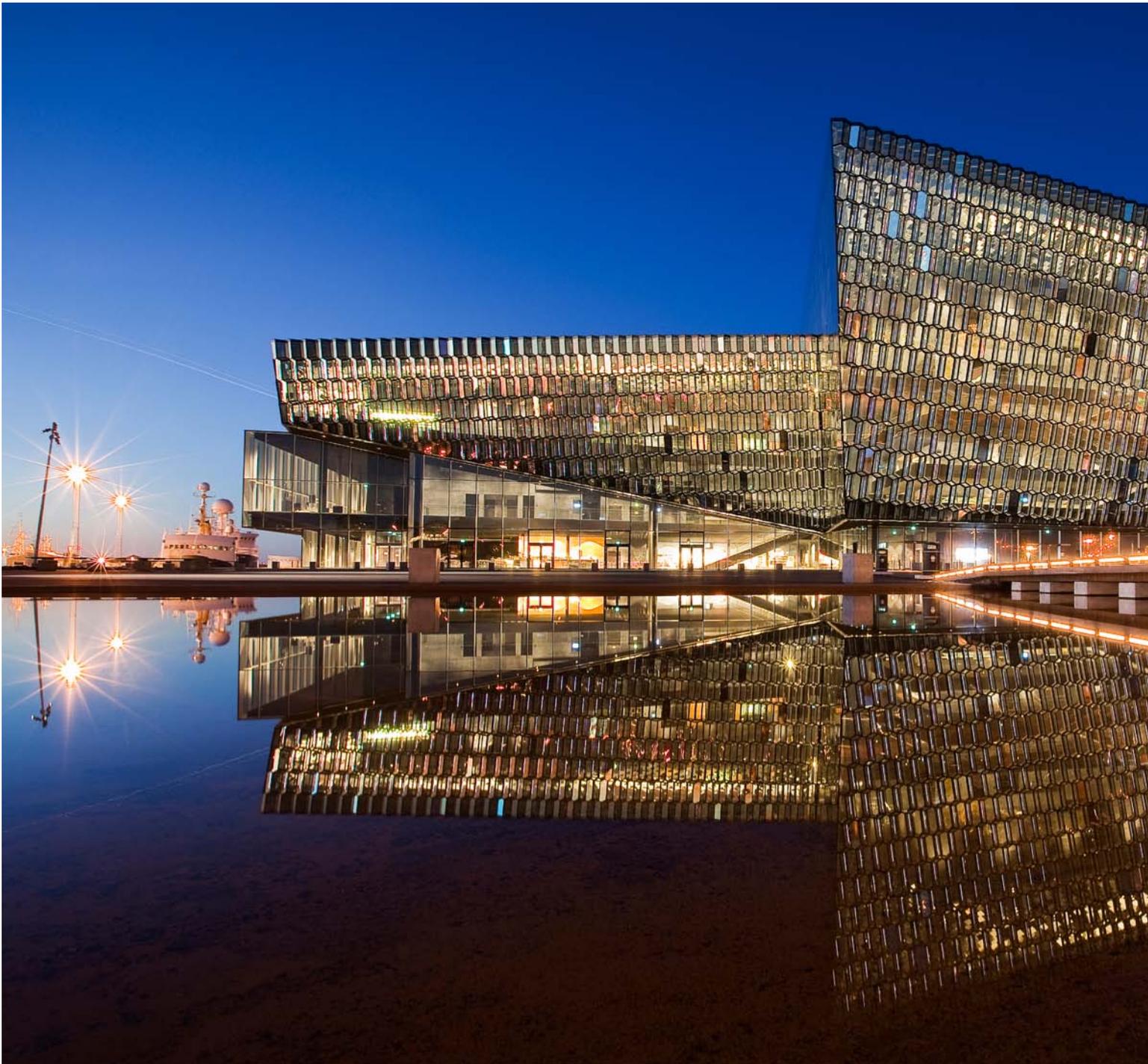
Dried fish, usually made from haddock or cod. Another Icelandic superfood, since this is almost a pure source of protein. A popular snack for children and adults alike, delicious with a small layer of butter on top.

### Íslenskt Brennivín

While strictly not a "dish", Icelandic schnapps, commonly known as *The Black Death*, is very much a part of Icelandic food culture. It is made from fermented potatoes and flavored with caraway seeds. Usually served chilled. Exercise caution.

# CREATIVE ICELAND

---





For an isolated culture in the North Atlantic, creativity is important. Since Iceland was settled in the 9th century, writing and music have been an integral part of life in the country; and have in recent years reached a large audience on the global stage thanks to the efforts of international pop stars such as Björk and Sigur Ros, as well as the wide readership of authors like Halldór Laxness and Arnaldur Indriðason.

The performing arts have long been a staple of Icelandic culture, with many of the country's most respected writers creating works exclusively for theatre, or adopting their previous works for the stage. Icelandic theatres enjoy great local interest, and the relatively young Icelandic dance company is quickly gaining respect, both domestically and abroad.

Increasing international success for Icelandic designers driven by their innovation and commitment to sustainability, Icelandic nature and materials; coupled with the ever growing respect for Icelandic artists in international circles, has further bolstered the reputation of the country's creativity.

The recent emergence of Icelandic filmmakers and video game developers on the global stage further attests to the importance of innovation and creativity for the Icelandic society. It is no coincidence that culture and the creative industries in Iceland employ more than five percent of the work force — a larger share than the fishing industry and agriculture combined — and generates a larger share of the GDP than agriculture.

# CREATIVE ICELAND



THE VIBRANT ICELANDIC MUSIC SCENE IS ALWAYS GEARING UP FOR THE NEXT FESTIVAL

14

## THE ISLAND OF ARTS

Every autumn, thousands of people fly to Reykjavík to attend Iceland Airwaves, a five-day festival during which hundreds of musicians perform at bars and cafés around town as well as in Harpa, Iceland's new concert hall and conference centre. Outside Reykjavík, the music scene is just as vibrant, with local music festivals like *Aldrei fór ég suður* in Ísafjörður, and *Bræðslan* in Borgarfjörður Eystri attracting both international attention and talent. In addition, Iceland plays host to numerous music

festivals featuring the best in jazz, chamber music, and classical as well as modern composition, and maintains a lively tradition of choirs around the country.

If music dominates the autumn, design takes the spring with Design March, an up-and-coming festival showcasing some of the most talented local and international designers working on everything from textiles to prosthetics, while local fashion designers are well featured during the Reykjavík Fashion

Festival; a recent addition to the Reykjavík festival scene.

A burgeoning fine arts scene is also adding to Reykjavík's buzz as the "capitol of cool." The annual Reykjavík Arts Festival has long ago established a reputation as a respected event that attracts famous artists from around the world, and the young Reykjavík Film Festival is firmly establishing itself in the film festival circuit.



## FESTIVAL COUNTRY

Summer is a time of celebration in Iceland. Around the country, small town festivals celebrating local art, music and food are scheduled throughout the summer. Going from West to East, from the Skjaldborg film festival in Patreksfjörður, to LUNGA, an art festival for young people in Seyðisfjörður, small town festivals provide plenty of release for Iceland's creative spirit.

📷 LUNGA, ART FESTIVAL IN SEYÐISFJÖRÐUR

15



📷 ICELANDIC FASHION DESIGN IS PROGRESSIVE AND ADVENTUROUS

16

## ICELANDIC DESIGN - THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

If you are looking for a great gift idea, don't overlook the many local stores selling Icelandic art and design. There are plenty of design stores in the Reykjavík shopping district, but the number of small shops selling local design and crafts around the country is equally astounding.

Icelandic fashion designers are known for their innovative clothing and keen eye for quality. And while Icelandic high fashion has only recently found its footing on the in-

ternational stage, Icelandic outdoor clothing has long been known for its durability under the duress of nature. The traditional Icelandic wool sweater or *lopapeysa*, has kept Icelanders warm for centuries.

Icelandic prices are competitive, but the most lucrative bargain is the 15% tax-refund that is offered to foreign visitors on all purchases above 4,000 ISK. Look out for the tax-free sign in participating stores.

## INSPIRED BY ICELAND

I'm a musician and artist. And I've never been one for the 'usual' things. I'm not particularly fond of those warm sunny beaches, I'm not much for the great outdoors, and I find myself drawn to left field creative cultures that thrive despite their isolation from resources, or even people. There's a spirit in Iceland that's compelling and inspiring. A sense of pride in their community that's spoken in humble terms. An appreciation of the great things they do have rather than bitterness about the things they don't.

I had a hard time leaving.

Mark Schlipper, UK

→ [www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com)

## 5 ICELANDIC FILMS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

### Jar City

Dir. Baltasar Kormákur, 2006

Based on author Arnaldur Indriðason's best selling detective story about police officer Erlendur Sveinsson from the Reykjavík Murder Mystery series. An exciting Icelandic whodunit.

### Heima

Dir. Dean DeBlois, 2007

Summer of 2006, Sigur Ros returned to Iceland to play a series of free unannounced shows around the country. This movie documents the tour which spanned some of the most beautiful locations in the country.

### Children of Nature

Dir. Friðrik Thór Friðriksson, 1991

An older couple escapes from a retirement home to return to the small village where they first found love. Nominated for an Academy Award in 1992.

### Mr. Bjarnfreðarson

Dir. Ragnar Bragason, 2009

Comedian Jón Gnarr – who later became Reykjavík's mayor – stars as Georg Bjarnfreðarson, a man who has trouble finding his place in society.

### Noi, the Albino

Dir. Dagur Kári, 2003

Rebellious youth, Noi, takes on the small society in his remote home town and dreams of escaping with his sweetheart.

→ [www.icelandicfilms.info](http://www.icelandicfilms.info)

# CULTURAL ICELAND

---





Iceland was the last country in Europe to be settled, and to this day, remains the continent's most sparsely populated state. An island located in the middle of the North-Atlantic, the country was settled by emigrants from Scandinavia and the British Isles in the tenth century, and due its location, remained an isolated nation of mostly farmers and fishermen until the early twentieth century.

Icelandic culture has been shaped by isolation and the extreme forces of nature. These conditions have created a resilient nation, where family ties are tight, the sense of tradition is strong, and the bond with nature is powerful. While strongly rooted in customs and traditions, today's Icelandic society is both modern and progressive. A small country by most measures, Iceland boasts a high standard of living, extensive political freedom, and has taken an active role in sustainable development and commitment to the environment.

Through the centuries, Iceland has developed a unique tradition for storytelling and literature, beginning with the esteemed Icelandic Sagas of the tenth and eleventh century. In this fertile environment, Iceland has produced a number of talented writers including Nobel Prize laureate, Halldór Laxness (1955). It's no accident that Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, was the first non-English speaking city in the world to be named a UNESCO City of Literature in 2011.

# CULTURAL ICELAND



## COOL REYKJAVÍK

With just 120 thousand inhabitants, Reykjavík is a small city by most measures. It is, however, known for an energetic atmosphere that rivals any urban area in the world, combining the advantages of a small town and a metropolitan city. You will find luxury dining, great accommodations, vibrant culture and a range of adventurous activities, practically within walking distance.

Reykjavík is known for its bustling nightlife and energetic club scene. There are countless bars, cafés, pubs and clubs in the city centre, and many stay open until five in the morning. The fun usually picks up around midnight, and the locals often spend the night going between places to meet friends. Reykjavík's ever-industrious music scene also provides plenty of reasons go out on the town, especially during summer, when the midnight sun may test your tolerance for sleep deprivation. There are also some great spots that cater especially to the GLBT community.

Whether you are traveling on a budget, or opting for luxury, you will find accommodation to fit your needs. You can find beautiful guesthouses, or score a luxury suite in downtown Reykjavík. If you enjoy camping, bring your tent and a sleeping bag. The Reykjavík dining scene is equally varied, sporting both world class restaurants where renowned chefs execute their expertise with some of the freshest materials nature has to offer; to smaller cafés and bistros where the prices are modest, but the quality is not.

When it comes to culture, Reykjavík has exciting museums, celebrating both the country's rich history from the Viking period to its independence in 1944, as well as its various traditions and artists, old and new.

## 4 CURIOUS COLLECTIONS

### The Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft 19

*The Westfjords are the backdrop to some of Iceland's most potent stories of witchcraft and sorcery. The Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft is the home to the world's only Necropants, which are even more ghastly than the name would suggest.*

→ [www.galdrasyning.is](http://www.galdrasyning.is)

### The Sea Monster Museum 20

*Located in one of the most prolific centres of monster activity in the world, Iceland is home to some the scariest sea and water monsters known to man.*

→ [www.skrimsli.is](http://www.skrimsli.is)

### The Icelandic Phallological Museum 21

*The world's largest collection of penises and penile parts on display. Every mammal inhabiting Iceland is included, from humans to the great whales.*

→ [www.phallus.is](http://www.phallus.is)

### The Icelandic Folk and Outsider Art Museum 22

*Dedicated to naive, folk and outsider art without discrimination. The museum houses a collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings, watercolours, embroideries, books, dolls, toys and tools, all springing from folk art.*

→ [www.safnasafnid.is](http://www.safnasafnid.is)

## ICELANDIC HERITAGE

The Icelandic language is the cornerstone of Icelandic culture, in large part due to a strong literary heritage. Icelanders still read the tenth-century Sagas in the original Old Norse, once spoken by all of the Nordic countries, but now only understood in Iceland, as the language has changed relatively little through the centuries.

A movement for language purism began in the 18th century when Icelandic came under threat from Danish influence and it has since been the dominant linguistic policy in the country. Rather than adopting foreign words for new concepts, new words are invented or old ones are given new meaning, to keep the language free of outside corruption.

Iceland also resisted the European convention of using family names and maintains a patronymic and matronymic naming system. Everyone – the President and Prime Minister included – is addressed by their first given name, as their last name simply states that they are the son or daughter of their father or mother, with the latter growing in popularity.

But despite an old language, Icelandic mentality is progressive. According to scientific studies, Iceland has the happiest population in the world, living in what has been frequently measured as the most peaceful country on earth, which has repeatedly been ranked highest in studies measuring gender equality and political freedoms.

Iceland elected the first female president in world in 1980 and the first openly gay prime minister. It is a liberal country where gay marriage is allowed and it's not considered strange for the mayor of Reykjavík to show up in drag at the annual gay pride festival, attended by tens of thousands of people.



# MYSTERIOUS ICELAND

---





A land of many contrasts, Iceland is not easily defined. Home to the largest glaciers in Europe, as well as some of the world's most active volcanoes; Iceland is widely known as "The Land of Fire and Ice".

But Iceland is also the land of darkness and light. Its location, just below the Arctic circle, makes for long summer days with near 24-hours of sunlight; offset by short winter days with very little sunlight at all. Fortunately, while winters in Iceland are dark, they are relatively mild and play host to one of nature's most spectacular exhibitions of beauty; the Aurora Borealis.

Iceland is a young country with old traditions. In fact, it is the youngest landmass in Europe, and home to the continent's oldest parliament, formed in 930 AD. The parliament's original location, Thingvellir, is a designated UNESCO world heritage site, located at the juncture between the North American and Eurasian continental plates. There it's possible to walk or even dive and snorkel between two continents, which are being pushed apart by a few centimetres every year.

From the moss covered lava fields in the southwest, through the barren highlands in the centre, to the soaring fjords in the northwest, Iceland will attest to the great diversity of landscape and lighting, which changes with every turn in the road and with every changing season.

# MYSTERIOUS ICELAND

## A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE



Páll Stefánsson,  
Photographer at  
Iceland Review

**As a professional photographer for the last 29 years, you've taken innumerable landscape photos. What is it about the landscape that most intrigues you?**

Icelandic landscape is quite interesting due to the unique northern light – not the Northern Lights, but the light we get due to our northerly latitude, which creates a light and a dark season.

**Does the nature ever bore you?**

I've been to every community and driven every stretch of road in Iceland, and it surprises me every time. The light and the wind are always different, so you can visit the same place during a different season and it's never the same.

**Do you have a favorite place to photograph?**

My favorite place to photograph is wherever I have to fight to get a decent image. Photographers have captured every angle of Gullfoss, and you can basically get a decent photo with your eyes closed. I like a challenge.

**What is most difficult to capture?**

The wind. It's almost impossible to capture the wind. Iceland is very much characterised by constant wind, and I've tried to capture it many times, but it's difficult.

**How about the Northern Lights? Do you have any advice for capturing them?**

It's best to go out of the city, away from the light pollution, and it's important to have a tripod. Then the trick is to turn off the flash and set the camera to a long exposure. Lastly the most important part is to make sure the Northern Lights are in the viewfinder.





## ICELANDIC FOLKLORE

Icelandic folktales are rich with sorcerers, ghosts, elves, trolls, hidden people, and other mystical beings. Many stories are influenced by the long dark nights of winter, while others are related to the long summer nights. It was no coincidence that author Jules Verne's chose Snæfellsjökull glacier as the entry point for his heroes in his famous adventure, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

📷 HVÍTSEKUR - NORTH ICELAND

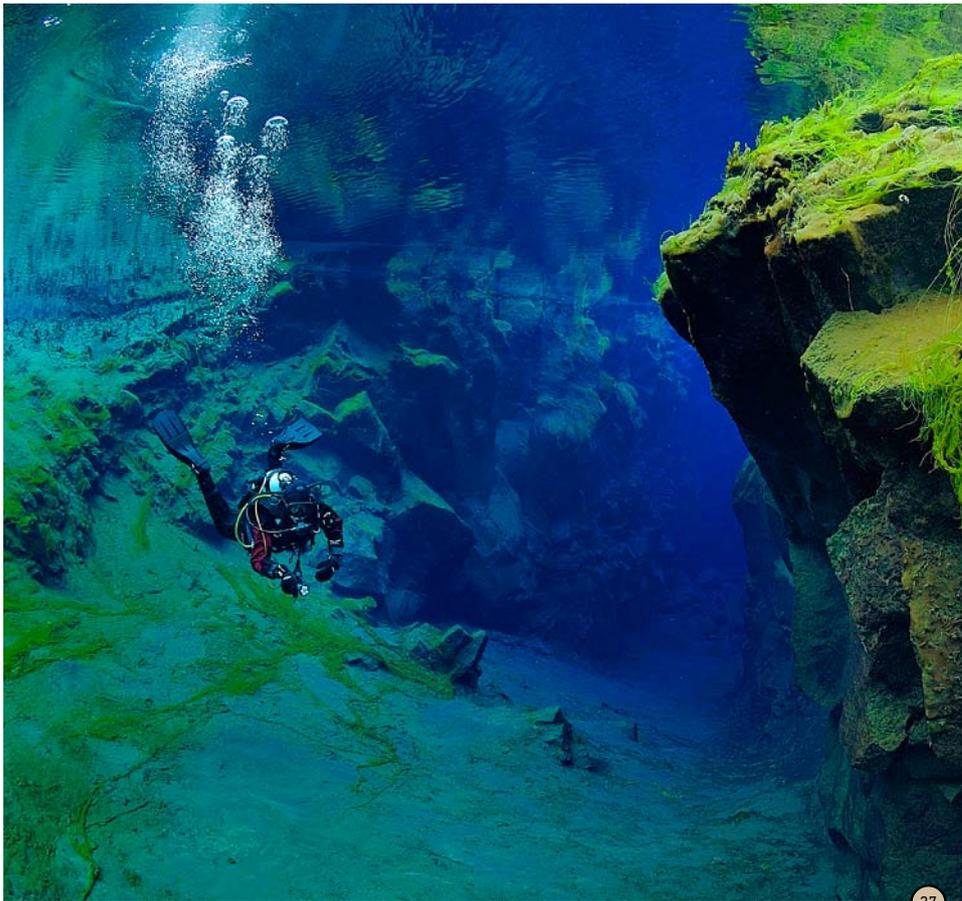
26

## INSPIRED BY ICELAND

I love nature. In my country most people want to travel to the west to do odd jobs, shop for designer clothing or obtain a western education. I, on the other hand, want to travel to see the vastness of nature, to view what is left of nature's beauty, to be with people who live and dine with nature and have a natural story to tell. To listen to people with a pure culture of joy and happiness. I know I can find all this in Iceland. I want to be inspired to start my photography dream and share my experience around the world with my mother, through photography... starting with Iceland!

**Kwabena Arko Asiedu, Ghana**

→ [www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.stories.inspiredbyiceland.com)



📷 SILFRA IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BEST DIVING SPOTS IN THE WORLD DUE TO ITS CLEAR WATERS

27

## 5 SUBLIME ICELANDIC EXPERIENCES

### Aurora Borealis

*There is nothing quite like lying on your back, looking up at clear skies on a dark winter's night, and watching the riveting Northern Lights dance across the sphere.*

### Midnight Sun

*Summer in Iceland is a magical time. The whole island comes alive under the constant sunlight. Taking a stroll in the midnight sun will let you see Iceland in a different light.*

### Peace

*There is no place like Iceland to enjoy a peaceful time. The least densely populated country in Europe, Iceland will allow you to connect with nature and make you feel like the last person in the universe.*

### Living Earth

*In Iceland, the earth beneath your feet seems like a living, breathing entity. With bubbling mud pots, bursting geysers, steaming lava and the occasional erupting volcano, in Iceland you can sense the land taking shape.*

### Outdoor Bathing

*When the frost sets in and the snow is coming down and the wind is blowing hard, it is time to head for the nearest pool and soak in a geothermal hot tub. The best way to experience the extremes of Icelandic nature is through its stark contrasts.*

## ACTIVE ICELAND

Iceland sits atop the Mid-Atlantic ridge, a 10,000-mile crack in the ocean floor caused by the separation of the North American and Eurasian continental plates. This constant movement of the landmass can cause both earthquakes and eruptions.

Icelanders have learned to live with the drawbacks, and enjoy the advantages, of the country's location, such as geothermal energy.

Iceland is at the forefront of the application

of renewable energy, which helps make Iceland one of the greenest countries in the world.

All Icelandic infrastructure is planned, executed, and stress tested for the most extreme conditions possible, and the level of preparedness for a natural disaster is one of the best in the world. The country maintains a highly trained search and rescue team, and casualties due to natural disasters are extremely rare.



**ICELAND.IS**  
VISITICELAND.COM

COME AND BE  
**INSPIRED BY ICELAND**  
[www.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.inspiredbyiceland.com)

