

Special Issue

The City Award



Winter Edition

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Dining

The 60 best eateries
Spicy food guide

Drinking

The 30 best nights out
Icelandic beers rated

Shopping

Our 30 shop awards
Fashion Reykjavík

Activities

The 30 funnest outings
How to see the aurora

Your Winter Adventures

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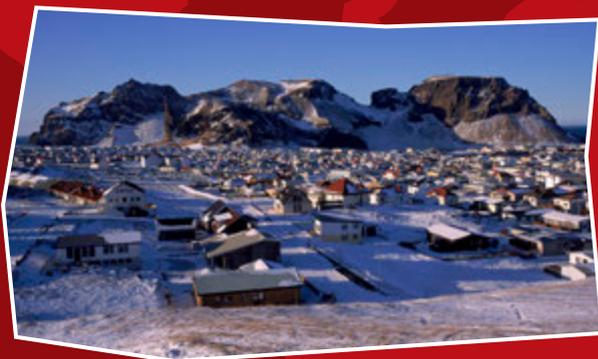
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Best of Reykjavík:



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AN INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Reykjavík Grapevine's Best Of Reykjavík 2016!

The Reykjavík Grapevine is proud to present: The Best Of Reykjavík 2016, Issue 2! Starting this year, we're publishing our Best Of magazines to help you, our beloved readers, find the very best places this little city has to offer. If you're visiting Reykjavík, you can use the tips found in these pages to plan your time here; if you're a local, perhaps you'll find something fresh or undiscovered.

Reykjavík is a small city, but that doesn't mean a walk down Laugavegur will immediately reveal all of its secrets. Increased foot traffic over recent years has encouraged many new places to eat and drink all over the city's downtown area and in nearby neighbourhoods. Areas like the formerly quite desolate street of Hverfisgata, the picturesque Old Harbour, and the Grandi area—once a

bleak fishing dock—are now thriving with new bars, cafés, galleries, shops and creative businesses. Reykjavík is changing, and this quarterly Best Of Reykjavík magazine aims to help you ride that wave with a regularly refreshed look at what's going on in the city.

The issue you're now holding is geared toward the autumn and winter months, and features guides to help you make the most of what the season has to offer, whether it's good places to spot the aurora, or where to get a hot and spicy meal on a cold evening.

So, enjoy it, and we hope you find it useful. If this is the first publication of ours you've seen, be sure to pick up a copy of our regular magazine, The Reykjavík Grapevine, around town, and check us out online at www.grapevine.is. **JR**

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

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by The Reykjavík Grapevine

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THE AWARDS:

How We Picked the Winners



The word "conclusion" is a little strong in this case. We have argued, fought and, in one case, slammed our head against the wall. We interviewed panels, tried blind taste-tests, and, in another case, consulted what we believe to be an oracle. This was not an easy or accurate endeavour.

The best comparison is Glima, or Icelandic wrestling. It's not flashy or well produced like WWE. It's not exactly graceful like Olympic wrestling, especially Greco-Roman. It's two people in weird leather underwear, staring into each other's eyes and trying to hip-check each other while simultaneously attempting an atomic wedge.

We'll be honest. Some of the winners are just outright winners, but some are a matter of debate and controversy. Like in any other country, there are cliques or special interest groups. The bar most liked by a 22-year-old noise music fanatic might seem a little off-putting to

a bespectacled jazz enthusiast. We're not saying those two groups can't overlap. Maybe they can. Jazz people are good at improvising and noise music definitely needs more fans.

The thing is this is a guide. It's a work in progress. It's an attempt at letting people know where we think they should go. We didn't all agree on everything, so the Runners Up could end up being more palatable to you and the Winners could be your third favourite. Yikes.

If this lack of certainty is too much for you: Imagine being the original tourist to Iceland. A wandering tax-evader from Norway who decides to settle on a rock almost uninhabitable to animal life. A land that occasionally explodes and geysers that burst scalding sulphur-scented water from the ground like a cannon ball at Satan's pool party. It's the kind of place where people would invent Glima. **YU**

THE GUIDE-GUIDE

How To Spot The Winners

Look out for these stickers of recommendation, which we've handed out to this year's winners. They indicate your best option, whether you're looking for shopping, dining, drinking or partying in Reykjavik. We at the Grapevine know what's best!

Also, these are the stickers from our previous "Best of" selections, given to winners from prior years.





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Dining

Delicious even if you can't pronounce it

One of the most asked questions by visitors to Iceland is: "Where should we eat?" It's a tough question to answer, with new restaurants always appearing, or rising and falling in popularity. However, we try to stay semi-aware of what's going on. We also enlisted the help of self-proclaimed experts to piece together something that gives you a pretty good idea of what's here and what to expect. I'm sure you know a cute little place in your home town that does it better, but we haven't been there. This is our attempt to help you. Don't be so snarky. You remember the line about biting the hand that feeds you, right?

Best Burger



Búllan

Geirsgata 1

Búllan wins this category for being the best burger at the best price. It's fast, reliable, and does exactly what it's supposed to. In the past year there have been a lot of burger places popping up, but Búllan has consistently proved itself to be Reykjavík's burger joint—it's perfect for lunch, on-the-go dinner, or a late evening pick-me-up. For a fancier gourmet burger, check out Kex Hostel or Grill Market, but if you want a classic burger and fries, Búllan always has you covered.

Runners-up:



Block Burger Skólavörðustígur 8

Block Burger is an office favourite. You can see their white paper to-go bags stacked on writers' desks, accompanied by empty Fizzy Lizzy soda bottles. Modelled heavily on the American chain Shake Shack in presentation, Block is reasonably priced (for Reykjavík) and has quick service.

Dirty Burger & Ribs Austurstræti 18

Dirty Burger & Ribs is the other office favourite. Actually, the division between Block Burger and Dirty Burger has resulted in feuds worthy of the sagas. Though none have led to mass fratricide, yet, you'll have to taste for yourself to see what side you are on.

Previous Winners:

2015: Búllan
2014: Kex Hostel
2013: Vitabar
2012: Grillmarket
2011: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar

Best Veggie Burger



Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

Melhagi 20

Kaffihús Vesturbæjar, also known as Kaffi Vest, is nestled in the 107 postcode, and has become a hip spot for Reykjavík's west-side movers and shakers. Choosing the best veggie burger was, surprisingly, one of the most heated debates this time around. Kaffi Vest wins by having not just one, but two great choices. Of these, our favourite is a bean-based burger in crunchy breadcrumbs, served with rosemary potato wedges and an avocado-based mayo-style dip. It's plain delicious, whether you're vegan or not.

Runner Up

Block Burger Skólavörðustígur 8

Block Burger makes the top three once again. Their soy-based vegetarian burger with cheese is the type of veggie burger even carnivores will love. It's full of earthy, meaty flavour, and feels like comfort food. Order this with delicious crispy fries and you'll devour it like you never gave up meat.

Newcomer



Bike Cave Einarsnes 36

Bike Cave is the hippest new place on the block. It's been described as the best place to get a "messy vegan burger." This means you get to feel all the comfort and tactile pleasure of a pulled pork sandwich without the shameful joy of murder.

Previous Winners:

2015: Brooklyn Bar
2014: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
2013: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
2012: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
2011: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar

Best Pizza



Hverfisgata 12

Hverfisgata 12

Hverfisgata 12 is not only the best pizza, but has topping combinations that'll leave you scratching your head at first, but rubbing your belly later. It's located, conveniently, at Hverfisgata 12, sharing a building with other fancy places like Dill and Mikkeller & Friends. Their comfort food-style potato-topped pizza, as well as the beetroot pizza with walnuts and arugula, are crowd-pleasers that manage to be rich, light, sweet and savoury.

Runners Up



Gamla Smiðjan Lækjargata 8

Gamla Smiðjan is an Icelandic anomaly: the pizza is pretty good here. Is it the numerous combinations? Is it the Icelandic cheese? Some argue it's the pure Icelandic water that makes the dough taste unique, alongside the brick oven baking technique. We're not sure, but we know we like it.



Ugly Smiðjuvegur 2

Ugly, where the pizzas are everything but ugly. This place is quite new, but has quickly made a name for itself. Their "Super Sundays" offer two large pizzas, garlic bread, ice cream and a bag of candy for a little over 4,000 ISK. That, my friend, is a bargain.

Previous Winners:

2015: Hverfisgata 12
2014: Hverfisgata 12
2013: Gamla Smiðjan
2012: La Luna trattoria-pizzeria
2011: Gamla Smiðjan



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Dining

It's not expensive for Norway

Best bakery



Sandholt

Laugavegur 36

Sandholt wins again, but not for lack of competition. This is simply a bakery that always delivers. The pastries are flaky and not overly sweet, and the sourdough bread is, quite right, famous. If you're staying in a hotel, or more likely an Airbnb, grab one of their delicious loaves and keep it for snacks. If the weather magically cooperates, have a picnic in the park.

Runner Up



Mossfellsbakarí

Háholt 13, Mossfellsbær

Mossfellsbakarí should be incorporated into any day trip outside of the capital area. It's the perfect pastry or sandwich stop—pick up your lunch before driving the Golden Circle or visiting the Halldór Laxness museum.

Newcomer

Brauð & Co. Frakkastígur 16

Brauð & Co. has burst onto the bakery scene in downtown Reykjavík, looking to give Sandholt a run for its money. It regularly sells out, and looks poised to become a mainstay in downtown Reykjavík food culture. This could be the beginning of an all-out gluten-powered war.

Previous Winners:

2015: Sandholt
2014: Sandholt
2013: Sandholt
2012: Mossfellsbakarí
2011: Sandholt

Best Indian



Austur-Indíafelagið

Hverfisgata 56

Austur-Indíafelagið is an institution. An authentic fine-dining Indian restaurant with all the high-quality spices, recipes and techniques you'd expect to find in a much larger European capital. The menu takes many of the classic recipes of Indian cuisine, and serves them with a creative twist and consistently sky-high quality. It's amongst the very best restaurants in Iceland—and priced as such. Make sure to call ahead and make a reservation, because it's very popular.

Runners Up



Hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64

Hraðlestin is a takeaway joint that offers a tasty spin on Indian street food, with naan rolls, Indian-style pizzas, samosas, pakoras, soups, and all kinds of great Indian comfort foods that'll really hit the spot if you wanna put your feet up and eat at home. They have four locations and lunch and dinner menus. Call ahead with your order for convenience.



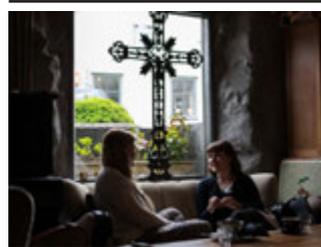
Gandhi Pósthússtræti 17

Gandhi is a comfy little basement restaurant by Austurvöllur. As our former food editor concluded in his review of the place: "It's partly Kerala cuisine. Think Indian meets Indonesian, with coconut, fish, coriander, and lamb. More piquant than simply spicy."

Previous Winners:

2015: Gandhi
2014: Gandhi
2013: Austurlandahraðlestin
2012: Ghandi
2011: Austurlandahraðlestin

Best coffeehouse



Stofan

Vesturgata 3

If you know anything about the latte-drinking 101 crowd, winning 'Best coffeehouse' is a major achievement. Stofan wins for being a great all-around coffeehouse, and for having what Icelanders call "stemning," which means atmosphere or vibe. With two floors, charming antique furniture, and seating that's a good distance from the noise of the espresso machine, the stemning is perfect, and you'll see locals and tourists alike reading books, playing chess, and discussing the social construction we all live in.

Runners Up



Kaffihús Vesturbæjar Melhagi 20

Kaffihús Vesturbæjar was the clear winner in the eyes of our panel's west-side Vesturbæjar-ites, but its top quality coffee, French-style macaroons and tasteful decor weren't quite enough to convince the 101 rats on our panel. But for those out west, the location, menu and feel of this place make it a perfect neighbourhood cafe.



Reykjavík Roasters Kárástígur 1

Roasters has made some changes that didn't sit well with the judges, such as the removal of wi-fi, free refills, and much of the more comfortable furniture. Nobody would deny that they have the best coffee, with the beans roasted in-house—but the café experience on offer has, sadly, gone downhill.

Previous Winners:

2015: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar
2014: Reykjavík Roasters
2013: Kaffismiðjan
2012: Kaffismiðjan
2011: Kaffismiðjan

Best sushi



Fiskmarkaðurinn

Aðalstræti 12

Fiskmarkaðurinn (“The Fish Market”) is an upscale restaurant with a small bar specifically for sushi. The mixed sashimi plates and maki rolls with Arctic char or soft-shell crab are second to none. With bar seating, Fish Market has the best dining experience for people who enjoy chatting with the sushi chefs as they work and getting tips for the best fish to order on any given day. They also have an amazing wasabi cocktail to complement your meal.

Runners Up



SuZushii Kringlan, Stjornutorgi

SuZushii is rumoured to be the place the Japanese Embassy orders sushi from. It's done exceptionally well and never disappoints. The downside? It's in the food court of a mall. Not the best atmosphere to eat raw fish.



Sushi Samba Þingholtsstræti 5

Sushi Samba serves the South American spin on sushi, adding lots of lime flavours, chilli and sauces. The lighting is low and the seating is intimate, so we recommend it for a date night. Not that anyone in Iceland actually goes on dates.

Previous Winners:

2015: SuZushii
2014: Sushisamba
2013: Sakebarinn
2012: SuZushii
2011: SuZushii

Best vegetarian



Kaffi Vínyl

Hverfisgata 76

Kaffi Vínyl has wedged itself into the growing vegetarian scene in 101, becoming not only the best vegetarian place, but also the best vegan place, with a completely vegan menu. Kaffi Vínyl sticks to its guns when it comes to coffee, too—try their oat milk latte and cappuccino. We didn't know oats could be milked, but wherever that elusive oat-teat was hidden, we're glad they found it.

Runner Up



Gló - Laugavegur 20

Gló is so popular they serve it on Icelandic flights. The menu varies from night to night between vegetarian dishes, raw foods, and the occasional chicken dish. It's the place you go on Monday at lunch, when you still have the energy to believe you are going to turn over a new leaf and eat healthy.

Newcomer



Bike Cave Einarsnes 36

Bike Cave is on the list again. It's definitely gaining traction in the dining scene. Try it out. If it lasts, you'll be one of the first. If it doesn't, you can say to everyone, “You should have been there, man.”

Previous Winners:

2015: Teni
2014: Gló
2013: Gló
2012: Gló
2011: Gló

Best gastropub



Public House

Laugavegur 24

Public House has a wide variety of small, interesting dishes and finger foods, and a good variety of beer. It keeps the right conversation-friendly tone by not having TV screens or other distractions. It's the perfect place to fill up on tasty small plates before a night on the town. The menu features lots of traditional Icelandic ingredients, including the cute and oh-so-delicious puffin. Also—try the langoustine dumplings. You're welcome.

Runner Up



Frederiksen Ale House Hafnarstræti 5

Fredriksen has a wall of doors when you first enter that would give Hellen Keller nightmares. They serve perfect pub-food combinations such as sliders and meaty finger-food platters on planks, and the happy hour is two-for-one. You can also drink out of a boot. So that's fun.

Newcomer



Sæti Svínið Hafnarstræti 1

Sæta Svínið has taken over a corner house by Ingólfstorg, and delivers three floors of gastropub dining. You can snack on smoked pig ears or adventure into horse carpaccio. They even have foie gras as a topping choice for your burger. Go nuts.

Best place for a fancy meal



Dill

Hverfisgata 12

Dill is a very special restaurant. It's the must-try place for the foodie. You'll need a reservation, and come prepared for a culinary journey that gives you a taste of Icelandic staples vaulted to the finest dining in Reykjavik. You can attempt to order the five course set menu, but everyone ends up upgrading to the seven course version after the first bite. On top of their stellar menu, the wine and beer pairing has been crafted by their in-house sommelier. If you are planning one fancy dinner in Reykjavik, this should be it.

Runners Up



Matur Og Drykkur Grandagarður 2

Matur Og Drykkur has become the talk of the town lately. It has tasting menus of new spins on traditional Icelandic food, as well as seafood and vegetarian options. Cod head might sound like an odd choice, but trust us, it's a must-try—you won't regret it.



Gallery Restaurant Bergstaðastræti 37

Gallery Restaurant at Hotel Holt has a classic fine dining feel to it: dark wood, red upholstery and walls adorned with great paintings. You can smell truffles the moment you walk in. You'll feel like you should have a jacket and tie on.

Previous Winners:

2015: Dill
2014: Dill
2013: Gallery at Hótel Holt
2012: Grill Market
2011: Dill

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Dining

Not everything is shark and sheep head

Best Thai



Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Ban Thai has won this section for over half a decade. It's another rare thing in Iceland: a specialty food place that manages to keep quality despite the difficulty in obtaining high quality ingredients. Their spicy dishes manage to give the fresh, piquant flavour of Southeast Asia. It's also the only restaurant Russell Crowe visited while in Iceland. What does that mean? Try it and find out.

Runners Up

NaNa Thai Skeifunni 4

Nana Thai is a workers' lunch spot in Skeifan. Do not be fooled by this location. Yes, it's lost in a sea of stores and parking lots. The decoration style might be called, generously, "minimal." If you find yourself in the area, it's a tasty meal.



Pad Thai Álfheimar 2

Pad Thai is a four-seater restaurant that only makes pad thai in three variations: vegetables, chicken and shrimp. It's greasy. It's comforting. It's the best sit-by-yourself-and-think-about-your-future-restaurant, and one of our guilty pleasures.

Previous Winners:

2015: Ban Thai
2014: Ban Thai
2013: Yummi Yummi
2012: Ban Thai
2011: Ban Thai

Best family meal



Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Laundromat is probably the most visited restaurant on this list. The reason is simple: it caters to families, with a kids area in the basement. It also has a laundromat in the basement, with tokens available at the bar. It has a great selection of bottled beers, and a simple, appealing menu of soups, sandwiches, burgers and steaks.

Runners Up



Hornið Hafnarstræti 15

Hornið is an institution in Reykjavík. It's a family restaurant offering classic, simple comfort food. Whether you're ordering a pizza to share with grandma and grandpa or devouring a bowl of pasta to carb-load before your 5k Colour Run, Hornið makes going out simple and tasty. If you took your family out to the big indoor market, Kolaportið, it's just across the street. Walk over and chat about your new sunglasses or camouflage t-shirt.

KEX Hostel Skúlagata 28

KEX won best family restaurant last year. It has a kids' area and it closes early. It's the type of place parents like to go because it doesn't scream "family restaurant." You can have your Pale Ale served to you by some bearded bohemian while taking turns sneaking out for a cigarette or checking on your toddler.

Previous Winners:

2015: KEX
2014: Laundromat
2013: Laundromat
2012: Laundromat
2011: Laundromat

Best goddamn restaurant



Snaps

Þórsgrata 1

Snaps is an atmospheric bistro beloved by Icelanders. It's where locals have birthdays, anniversaries, ninth dates and family dinners. The food is constantly getting better, with arguably the best gin & tonic menu on this whole island, and a stellar espresso martini. The bacalao is the consistent champion of the menu, but the French onion soup can make you forget about the wind and the rain, and their lamb steak with crispy fries and homemade bearnaise is maybe the best in town. Pro tip: the English-language menu is on the back, so just flip it over when you sit down.

Runners Up

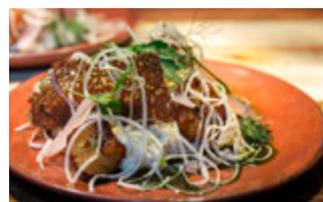


Apotek Austurstræti 16

Apotek makes beautifully prepared meals in a great setting. You won't be disappointed. On Thursdays, they fly in fresh oysters and put them on special. This is a place worthy of visiting parents or dignitaries. The macaroons are a delicious to-go treat.

Previous Winners:

2015: Snaps
2014: Snaps
2013: Snaps
2012: Snaps
2011: Ban Thai



Matur Og Drykkur Grandagarður 2

Matur Og Drykkur? Again? Yes, it's just that good. You need to try this place. Did we mention the cocktail menu? It manages to be adventurous but palatable to even the pickiest drinkers. We love it!



**Hverfisgata 12
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437 0203

www.hverfisgata12.is

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Dining

It's the water here that makes it special

Best cheap meal



Noodle Station

Laugavegur 86

If you, like the Martians in 'Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey', have only the word "station" in your vocabulary, you are halfway to naming the best cheap meal in Reykjavík: Noodle Station. Yes, there is still a noodle war going on here in Reykjavík, with ardent supporters behind various places, but there can be only one... And Noodle Station is it. You can smell the coriander for metres around this place, and whenever the temperature drops you can see the condens-soup-sation on the windows. The veggie option comes in under 1000 ISK. Enter hungry, and leave with change in your pocket.

Runners Up

Bærjarins Beztu

Bærjarins Beztu is a hot dog stand. It might just be the greatest hot dog stand on earth. Yes, it has been visited by presidents (you can order a "Clinton") and celebrities. Yes, it will be the thing you miss most about Iceland. Sometimes the lines are long, and one hot dog isn't enough and two is too many. Life is so hard.

10/11 Various locations

10/11 is a more expensive grocery store than Bónus or Krónan, but it's open 24 hours, so you'll end up going there anyway. We could suggest cheaper places, but that won't matter. You will go here. They sell sandwiches, and a super-cheap soup and bread option.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: K-Bar
- 2014: 10-11 after 14:00
- 2013: "Sub of the month" at Subway
- 2012: Íslenski barinn
- 2011: Noodle Station

Best brunch



Coocoo's Nest

Grandagarður 23

Do not fly by or over this great spot located in the Grandi harbour area. It has a selection of vegetarian and vegan options and the brunch is one of the must-try meals in Reykjavík. Brunch is served Friday to Sunday from 11:00 until 16:00. We recommend getting there early and making a day out of the up and coming Grandi area. It has a picturesque old harbour, and the walk will help with your hangover.

Runners Up

Hverfisgata 12 Hverfisgata 12

Hverfisgata 12 is a nice-looking place. Half of any good brunch is in the location, and this place delivers. The other half is eggs, bread and fruit. Hverfisgata 12 does it all, and very well. The plating is Instagram gold. You'll be happy you went here, and so will your followers.

Snaps Þórsgrata 1

Snaps has Eggs Benedict, Bloody Marys and a gin and tonic menu. It also has cava for under 1000 ISK. When someone from Chicago or Toronto says, "Let's go for brunch," this is the kind of place they mean—a comfortable Sunday recovery spot.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Slippbarinn
- 2014: Coocoo's Nest
- 2013: Vox
- 2012: Vox
- 2011: Vox

Best seafood



Fiskfélagið

Vesturgata 2a

Fiskfélagið ("The Fish Company") answers the most common question asked when people arrive here: "Where can I get some fresh Icelandic fish?" You've undoubtedly heard of the lengths to which Iceland went to have the best fresh fish in world—the years of fighting and lives lost in the Cod Wars. Yet, even against the former imperial powerhouse of Great Britain, Icelandic lawyers and fishing companies prevailed. That victory is yours to savour, and there's no better place to celebrate.

Runner Up



Ostabúðin Skólavörðustígur 8

Ostabúðin ("The Cheese Shop") has a great fish menu. It's a runner up, because it's a lunch spot only, but you won't be disappointed here. It's not complicated. It's just delicious, full stop.

Newcomer



Messinn Lækjargata 6b

Messin is only a few months old, but it makes simple fish into a theatrical culinary adventure. You get your dinner served hot in the pan. What do you get? Fish, potatoes and vegetables. Try the Steinbítur.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Fiskfélagið
- 2014: Fiskfélagið
- 2013: Fiskfélagið
- 2012: Fiskfélagið
- 2011: Við Tjörnina

Best must-try dining experience



Matur og Drykkur

Grandagarður 2

Matur og Drykkur has become the place we tell friends to try when they're visiting. They take classic Icelandic ingredients and bring them up to date. The most dramatic, and dare-we-say, must-try item on their menu is the cod head. It's cooked in chicken stock and then glazed. For some, the idea of a cod head seems a little too experimental, but trust us, it's delicious. Start with the cheeks and then just keep eating until it's no longer looking at you.

Runners Up



Sægreifinn Geirsgata 8

Sægreifinn ("The Sea Baron") became famous for its "Moby Dick on a stick" grilled whale kebab, and its incredibly hearty lobster soup, from a secret recipe. If you're looking to taste the ethically questionable minke whale, this is the place to do it. Right on the harbour, with a view of the whale-watching boats.

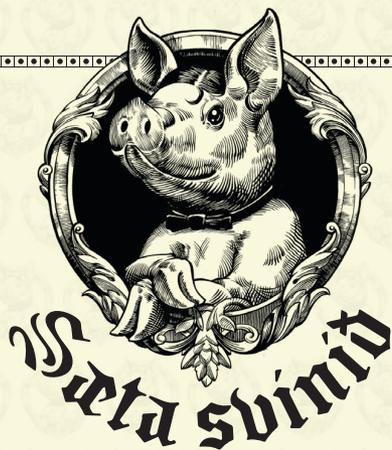


Bærjarins Beztu By Tryggvagata

Bærjarins Beztu is a hot dog stand. It's amazing. Kim Kardashian made sure to stop here, but only had ketchup on her hot dog—like a complete amateur. Order the "one with everything"—and no, this isn't the beginning of a Buddhist hot dog vendor joke.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Shrimp pyramid at Jómfrúin
- 2014: Food section at Kolaportið
- 2013: Icelandic food at Kaffi Loki
- 2012: Ícel. Home-food, Mamma Steina
- 2011: The svið at Fljótt og Gott, BSÍ



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Best lunch place



Ostabúðin

Skólavörðustígur 8

Ostabúðin was previously named as a contender for the best seafood joint in Reykjavík. However, where it really shines is at lunchtime. It makes great fish of the day and a delicious fish soup. It's the place where downtown professionals grab a no-bullshit lunch with a side of still-warm bread. It's been open for over a decade, which, in Reykjavík, is about as consistent as anything has ever been. There is also a gourmet grocery shop on the main floor, so grab something to take home as well.

Runners Up



Bergsson Mathús Templarásund 3

Bergsson Mathús makes a great lunch with wonderful accompanying salads. Jamie Oliver stopped by there when he visited Reykjavík with his family. With two locations—one downtown and the other in the Grandi harbour area—it's never too far away.



Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4

Jómfrúin makes classic Danish and Scandinavian dishes. You eat your open faced sandwiches while taking sips of aquavit. The shrimp pyramid has become a popular dish, but, recently after the Euro Cup, so has the salty "Portuguese" dish.

Previous Winners:

2015: Ostabúðin
2014: Bergsson Mathús
2013: Ostabúðin

Best late night bite



Fish And Chips Truck

By Geirsgata

Fish And Chips Truck brings comfort and quality to the quagmire that is Lækjargata late at night. Whether you need something to do while waiting for the taxi, or you just remembered you forgot to eat before heading out on the town, this food truck offers the best of British cuisine, enhanced by the use of Icelandic fish. Ignore the fighting couples and dead-eyed public urinators. Grab your food and dig in. You'll thank us in the morning.

Runners Up



The Deli Bankastræti 14

Deli is not just a place to grab a slice of pizza. It is one of the main relationship-causing venues in Reykjavík. People have met their future partner there. It usually doesn't last, but they might get a couple of kids out of the deal.



Lobster Soup Truck By Ægisgarður

Sometimes you need piping hot soup in the middle of the night. Downing a half pint of cream at three in the morning is always a good idea—especially salty, fishy cream. It can also keep your hands warm while you wait for a cab.

Previous Winners:

2015: Chicken wings at Dirty Burger & Ribs
2014: Nonnabiti
2013: Nonnabiti

Best place to go with a group of friends



Tapas barinn

Vesturgata 3b

Tapas barinn makes group dining fun, easy and intimate. You can choose from a wide selection of small dishes, including some Icelandic standard fare, served tapas style. It's the perfect place for mixing locals and tourists in one big group. Locals have tried all the usual stuff and want something exciting; tourists want to try Icelandic classic dishes like puffin, whale and langoustine. Call ahead to make sure they have a table for you and your crew.

Runner Up

Stofan Vesturgata 3

Stofan won best coffeehouse, and is a pretty common place to meet with friends. If you can grab a seat on the couches right under the stairs on the bottom floor, you'll be the coolest cats in the place. There's also a rumour going around town that they make a pretty spectacular bowl of soup.

Newcomer



Oddsson Hringbraut 121

Oddsson is the new kid in Vesturbær. It's large, retro and has a private karaoke booth that fits over 20 people. You can grab a burger and a beer and, surrounded by their signature decor of blue furniture, enjoy the view of the ocean. You'll feel like you're in a time machine, while your parents will think they're having flashbacks.

Previous Winners:

2015: Tapasbarinn
2014: KEX
2013: KEX
2012: Tapas Bar
2011: Tapas Bar

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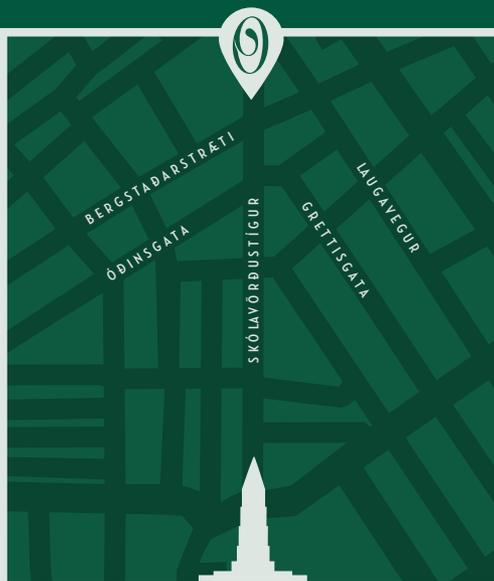
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SKÓLAVÖRÐUSTÍGUR 8
OSTABÚÐIN – FACEBOOK – INSTAGRAM – TRIPADVISOR

Colours Of The World: Spice Up Your Life



Words **YORK UNDERWOOD**

Photo **ART BICNICK**

Icelanders have a bland palate. They share their Celtic neighbours in Ireland's culinary tradition of boiling everything. The traditional flavour notes in Iceland consist of bitter, sour, salted and smoked. The reason for this was isolation, lack of trade, and an abundance of sheep shit and rotten milk—or maybe flavour became redundant with everyone insuflating large amounts of dry, old tobacco (if you get offered some here, don't do it. The black ooze draining from your sinuses in the shower will terrify you the next morning).

With the increase of trade, the first real addition to the Icelandic palate was sweet things. To this day, the dominant characteristic of anything from mustard to pickles tends to be sweetness. Eventually, with more Icelanders travelling and returning with tales of this magical sensation called "flavour," the demand for a larger culinary spectrum grew.

Which brings us to today. Where can you, traveller or local, get a restorative and spicy meal in this one-street town?

Complex and spicy

By far the most impressive and

flavourful restaurant in Reykjavík is **Austur-India Felagið** (or "The East India Company"). The owners have been showing and guiding Icelanders, and now tourists, through the complex and spicy world of authentic Indian cuisine since 1994. Many places in Iceland start responding to complaints and criticism by bending to the Icelandic palate and "Icelandifying" their menu. Austur-India Felagið stood their ground and educated rather than placated. By doing so, they won the admiration and love of an entire population. It's a great sit-down dinner after a particularly cold or windy day.

Affordable options

Another Reykjavík staple is **Noodle Station**. Its steamed windows and billowing clouds of coriander scent are one of the perks of a dark and blustery winter here. It's not inherently spicy, but you can ask for extra spice or add your own flaky chili sauce until your nose runs, your tongue throbs and your gums howl. Its bar-style stool seating and cheaper prices (for Reykjavík) attract prudent solo travellers.

If you're looking for something quick and portable, the

spiciest option is **Ali Baba**. Now before some of you locals or frequent visitors send me an angry email—feel free, by the way—you could also go next door to **Mandi**. The premise of this little piece, though, is "Best Places For A Spicy Meal," and Ali Baba has hotter, more intense chili sauce on their shawarma (when you request it). I will concede, happily, that Mandi has better falafel, which can be made spicy, and placate (yes, twice in one article!) your hunger and murder-aversion simultaneously.

Heat junkies

Maybe you want to enjoy the sun and have a little spicy kick on the side. **Tacobarinn** is a beautiful venue, a glass atrium split into two levels with plants and large table seating. They have a non-traditional Mexican menu that is constantly changing, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse, but there is always something for everyone, both vegan and carnivore. Their black bean soup and chili sin (without) carne is always good.

Now, for you heat junkies, the hottest place in town is

Ban Thai. This place has been a consistent favourite of locals and the Grapevine for years. It's open for dinner, starting at 18:00, but also has an affiliated take-away place called **Yummi Yummi**. Thailand may be thousands of kilometres away, but these places can, if you close your eyes, whisk you from the North Atlantic to Southeast Asia in a couple of mouthfuls.

You'll notice, like my preamble suggested, "spicy" food is often a cuisine from other places. Well, I might have been a little too harsh about the Icelandic palate earlier.

There's nothing in Icelandic cuisine that's spicy in the traditional sense, there are a few dishes that are very strong. Putrified shark is served in small chunks, and is quite something for the senses. The taste is best described as ammonia-like. If you can't quite place ammonia, think "pee smell". Best consumed while drunk. Skata is the lighter version of this, a white fish that's also putrified. Best described as an aquired taste, skata is served with a dish of potatoes and liquified sheep fat. Ask for availability at **Sægreifinn**.

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Drinking

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Best place to start the night



KEX Hostel

Skúlagata 28

KEX is a hostel bar and gastropub with a beautifully designed interior and a large patio that catches the sun on a clear day. There's always something going on, whether it's a free concert, a beer festival, or KEXmas. The bar hosts weekly jazz nights, and you can also book a trip into the countryside via the KEXLAND tour company. It's quiet by day but bustling at night, serves great food, and has a wide selection of Icelandic beer on the taps. "You always bump into someone you haven't seen in a while at KEX," noted the panel.

Runners Up:



Bar Ananas
Klapparstígur 38

Melting the country's often frosty surface, Bar Ananas is a tropically themed bar filled with delicious cocktails, friendly bartenders and sultry tunes. It's divided into separate spaces so it's easy to find the perfect spot. "You constantly have to wait in line for the toilet though," the panel pointed out.

Bravó
Laugavegur 22

Bravó is run by the same owner as Húrra, another one of our favourite bars, but feels more like a pub than a party place. Even though there's a weekly roster of DJs, it's almost always a sit-down crowd and a mellow atmosphere. Anyone can walk in into Bravó and feel perfectly at home, and it's right in the heart of downtown.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Loft Hostel**
- 2014: Kaldi**
- 2013: Slippbarinn**
- 2012: Kex**
- 2011: Hemmi & Valdi (RIP)**

Best place to end the night



Húrra

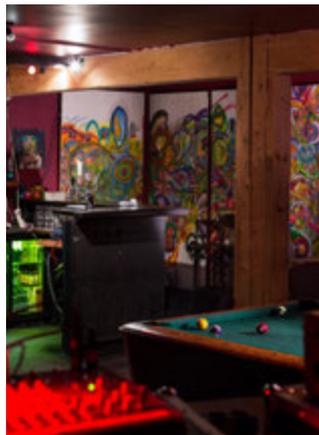
Tryggvagata 22

The one and only Húrra (translation: "Hooray") is a spacious two-story bar. It hosts many of Reykjavík's most interesting concerts and is famous for its dance-till-dawn vibe. "It's the likeliest place to find a good after-party," said the panel. The walls are painted dark and filled with interesting artwork. They have a nice happy hour, plenty of seating, and many restroom stalls. Make sure not to miss their Monday night jazz, or as they call it, "Monjazz."

Runners Up:

Kiki
Laugavegur 22

Kiki is a queer-friendly bar noticeable by its gay pride-themed rainbow exterior. The DJs play straight-up pop hits, and there's a kind of unrestrained happiness on the busy dance floor.



Paloma basement
Naustin 1-3

The basement of Paloma is a good place to end your night. It's dark, the music is loud and you can easily lose yourself in dancing. Paloma was controversial within the panel, but after careful consideration, the group agreed that it was good for those last minutes of happy dancing.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Paloma Basement**
- 2014: Paloma**
- 2013: Harlem (RIP)**

Best all-around bar



Prikioð

Bankastræti 12

This was a tight contest between Húrra and Prikioð. "Húrra has it all, including more female toilets, but Prikioð has more soul and a food menu," one panellist said, continuing: "Prikioð is like a family, and Geoff [the owner] is the dad." It has hearty breakfasts in the morning, burgers at night, an outdoor smoking area and a small dance floor. After careful consideration, we've decided it's the winner. The panel agrees, sort of.

Runners Up:



Húrra
Tryggvagata 22

This place will quickly win you over, as you can tell from our glowing recommendation in the "best bar for live music" category. Subdued by day, Húrra has a great vibe by night, and always has something going on. "Húrra has everything," said the panel, "pub quizzes, concerts, cheap beer and parties on weekends."



Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

Kaffibarinn is a downtown institution that has become more popular over the years. Once it was the go-to place for Reykjavík's in-the-know party people, but these days the secret is out. Now you'll find yourself rubbing shoulders with a wide range of international visitors and every kind of Reykjavík local, chilling by day or dancing to the pulse of house music by night.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: KEX**
- 2014: Boston**
- 2013: Dolly**
- 2012: Faktorý (RIP)**

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Drinking

“Bars that sell their beer for 800 ISK aren’t offering a happy hour, they’re offering a sad hour”

Best bar to go dancing



Kiki

Laugavegur 22

Kiki Queer Bar takes this award for the third year running, and for good reason. Their pop ‘n’ classics policy is perfect for those who like to sing along to every track they hear. Being the city’s only queer club, Kiki is also the place where people really let loose. “Everyone at Kiki dances like someone just released a confetti bomb,” one of our panelists noted. The atmosphere at Kiki is inclusive, so whether you’re in the mood or not, you’ll probably end up joining the party.

Runners-up:



B5 Bankastræti 5

B5 is the closest thing to a Miami nightclub you’ll find in Reykjavík (okay, it’s not that close). This place is made for grinding. You’ll find all the hits here, from today’s top 40 to occasional tracks from the last millennium.

Prikið Bankastræti 12

Classic café by day, Reykjavík’s go-to hip-hop bar by night, Prikið will throw a little sexual bravado into your evening (‘cause everyone knows the best way to make people feel sexy is some hip-hop and R’n’B). Come in and start bouncing!

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Kiki Queer Bar
- 2014: Kiki Queer Bar
- 2013: Harlem
- 2012: Bakkus

Best newcomer bar

Bryggjan Brugghús

Grandagarður 8

In the up-and-coming Grandi neighbourhood just west of downtown, Bryggjan Brugghús is quickly becoming everyone’s favourite brewpub. This place is huge, so it’s great for big groups of people and parties. “Bryggjan isn’t really a bar, but it’s a good place with delicious food, good beer and a solid view,” according to one of our panelists. Bonus points for being able to watch the beer being brewed on site.

Runners-up:

Tívolí Hafnarstræti 4

This new downtown bar fills the hole left by Dolly, one of Reykjavík’s grittier establishments. It’s quickly becoming a favourite among some Reykjavíkingar for its nice decor, and there are rumours of reasonably priced (and reasonably good!) cocktails.

Kaffi Vínyl Hverfisgata 76

This recent arrival fills a welcome spot in the Reykjavík bar scene, offering a selection of good vegan food, a chilled-out atmosphere, and the crackle of vinyl records playing on the speakers.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Mikkeller & Friends
- 2014: Húrra
- 2013: Kaldi
- 2012: Slippbarinn, Hótel Marína
- 2011: Faktory (RIP)

Best place to watch sports over a beer



American Bar

Austurstræti 8

This is a great bar for watching sports due to its many seats and large screens. It offers good ol’ American food from Dirty Burger and Ribs, which is located in the bar, as well as a wide selection of beers and cocktails, and an outside smoking area. It has regular troubadours and DJs, and hosts a happy hour from 16:00-19:00. The bar runs all major sports games, and it’s perfect for enjoying a burger and a beer while rooting for your team.

Runners-up:

Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20

This place must have almost as many TVs as seats, which makes it ideal for that surround-sound, on-the-field experience, or if you want to keep an eye on multiple games (or sports) at once. It’s a little small, but what it lacks in size, it makes up for with its engrossing feel. There are no distractions—everyone here is glued to the onscreen action.

Ölver Sportbar Álfheimar 74

Ölver’s been running since 1984 so it’s been around for quite some time. It’s one of those classic bars that’s never going out of business. Not only does it show sports games, it also offers great food and has the largest selection of karaoke songs in the country.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Bjarni Fel
- 2014: Bjarni Fel
- 2013: Bjarni Fel
- 2012: Úrilla Górrillan (RIP)
- 2011: Hvíta Perlan (RIP)



Best beer selection



Mikkeller & Friends

Hverfisgata 12

Despite the high blood pressure-inducing Icelandic prices, Mikkeller wins easily this category for its mouth-watering beer list. Twenty taps feature a rotating menu of beers brewed by Mikkeller and their favourite fellow micro-breweries (the “Friends” in the bar’s name). They vary from super-sour lambic ales to intense IPAs and deep, chocolatey stouts. “It’s a cool brand, and a beautifully decorated bar room,” said the panel. Bonus points for being located above a great pizza place.

Runners-up:

Skúli Craft Bar Aðalstræti 9

This place is set up to be both friendly to beer nuts and accessible to the rest of us. Skúli has a crazy beer list, and you’ll be able to read about all 130 of their bottled beer offerings on their extensive menu. The ambience is also pretty hip, with brick walls, wooden furniture and dim lighting.

Björgarðurinn Þórunnartún 1

Björgarðurinn may have a pretty great beer selection and a nice atmosphere to enjoy a pint or two, but it lost points for its location (you have to cross Snorrabraut to get there). “Björgarðurinn is for business people,” one of our panellists said. “It’s called ‘beer garden,’ but it’s placed on cement.”

Previous Winners:

2015: Skúli Craft Bar
2014: Micro Bar
2013: Micro Bar
2012: Micro Bar

Best place for cocktails



Apotek

Austurstræti 16

Apotek is a beautifully decorated restaurant in the heart of downtown. It’s actually styled as a pharmacy, hence the name. They refer to their bartenders as pharmacists and offer a great selection of cocktails, or as they call them painkillers, stimulants and tranquilizers. The restaurant is famous for its exquisite menu, wide selection of wine and beautifully crafted desserts. However, their cocktails are also otherworldly.

Runners-up:

Slippbarinn Mýrargata 2

Slippbarinn has for quite a while been the go-to-place for drinking cocktails. The panel said, “Slippbarinn has crazy good cocktails. They’re not cheap but they are talked-about good.” The restaurant is stylish and offers a weekly jazz concert as well as regular DJs. The panel continued, “They have the classics, something new and something with a twist.”

Hverfisgata 12 Hverfisgata 12

Hverfisgata 12 is known for its amazing selection of unique and delicious pizzas. However, their cocktails are also quite something. With their signature blumosa (blueberry syrup and bubbles) they were quick to snag a place as runners-up in this category.

Previous Winners:

2015: Apótek
2014: Slippbarinn
2013: Borg, Hotel Borg
2012: Kolabrautinn

Best bar for live music



Húrra

Tryggvagata 22

Everyone we consulted showered Húrra in praise. Factors for this win include the sound system, which can handle anything from acoustic to ambient to techno to noise; the lighting, which is dynamic and atmospheric; and a great programme of touring bands, album parties, DJ nights and the best local acts. Húrra attracts a young, fashionable (if mostly drunk) crowd. It also has a great bar selection. Maybe the only place in Reykjavík that stocks Club Maté.

Runners-up:

MENGI Óðinsgata 2

More of an arts space than a bar, it has a formal, attentive atmosphere, not somewhere you’d go for a casual drink. MENGI offers a programme gleaned from the more creative end of the musical spectrum, encouraging performers to play collaborative and experimental sets for the rapt, seated audience.

Gaukurinn Tryggvagata 22

This music venue and watering hole is in the “bermuda triangle” of bars with Húrra and Frederiksen. Reinvented many times over the years, it still bears the hallmarks of its rock scene roots. It has a big sound system, good stage lighting, and just the right kind of dinginess for live guitar music of all flavours.

Previous Winners:

2015: Húrra
2014: Cafe Rosenberg
2013: Volta (RIP)

Best happy hour



Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Ah, Kaffibarinn, the perennial favourite. It’s perhaps one of the best places to go for a drink at any hour, but the best time to drop by is hands down for happy hour. “Kaffibarinn has the longest happy hour and offers good beers like Kaldi and Einstök,” one of our panellists noted. You’ll be able to find these discounted offerings from 15:00 to 20:00 every day, with beers priced at 650 ISK—a steal of a deal, and five hours of happiness!

Runners-up:

Loft Hostel Bankastræti 7a

Our panellists judged that the happy hour at Loft Hostel is perfect for day drinking, especially in the summer. Their stellar patio is perfect for sipping a beer in the sun. Drop by Loft from 16:00 to 19:00 every day for beers priced at 600 ISK.

Frederiksen Ale House Hafnarstræti 5

Frederiksen has nine different types of beer on draft. Their happy hour is from 16:00 to 19:00 and they offer a two for one deal so you can actually get a beer for only 450 ISK. They also have great food so it’s the perfect place to catch a drink and a good meal after work.

Previous Winners:

2015: Foréttbarinn



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SKÓLAVÖRDUSTÍGUR 23 • 101 REYKJAVÍK

DRINKING WELL

A Beer Connoisseur

Words **SVEINN BIRKIR
BJÖRNSSON**
Photo **ART BICNICK**

Some good advice for people who like beer

- *Icelandic brewers love seasonal beers: watch out for the flavour of the month during your stay.*
- *The only shop that sells beer is the state-run Vínbúð, and you can look up the closest one at www.vinbudin.is. It is both cheaper and offers more selection than most bars.*
- *Two beers mentioned here are named from Icelandic ghost stories, and one is named after a troll. This bears no significance for either this article or your enjoyment of Icelandic beer, but we thought you might like to know.*

You have probably read somewhere that the Icelandic authorities banned beer for very, very many years, until 1989. But true freedom of beer did not really begin until 2005, when Iceland's first craft brewery was established on a remote farm in North Iceland. Up until then, the Icelandic beer assortment totalled a few different variations of the two house lagers by the two biggest (and at the time, only) breweries in the country. To everyone's pleasure (not least mine) this is quickly changing.

EINSTÖK WHITE ALE

Although Einstök is strictly speaking an American brewery, it happens to brew in Iceland, using Icelandic water as the main ingredient, so we'll let it slide. Their white ale is widely available on tap around Iceland—it's often the only thing on tap besides regular lager. Which, more often than

not, makes this my go-to beer. It's a Belgian witbier, infused with orange peel and coriander. It pours a nice yellow with a white haze and tastes refreshing, with a citrus tang.

Good for: bar hopping

KALDI LAGER

I will include this for historical reasons, mostly. This was the first beer to break the monopoly of the two big breweries here in Iceland, and is widely loved for that very reason. It is a well done Czech pilsner. It tastes a little grainy out of the bottle, but it's great from the tap. It is not a challenging beer, but it stands for something in the minds of Icelandic beer lovers.

Good for: historic occasions

SKADI FARMHOUSE ALE

Brewed in the tradition of Belgian saison beers, this is a nicely balanced, fruity beer. It is slightly herbal, and not very sour—an all-around pleasant

beer. It pours with a big ol' head of foam. It's orange, cloudy, and very carbonated.

Good for: sunny days (we can hope)

GÆÐINGUR STOUT

This is a great little stout. It is only about 6% ABV, but feels bigger. It is nicely balanced, dark chocolate, roasted malt, and tastes of all the things you'd want from a stout—sweet, bready and somewhat Irish in character.

Good for: a school-night

GARÚN IMPERIAL STOUT

This is a personal favorite, although the thick dark imperial stout may feel a little heavy to the uninitiated. This is a big beer that pours almost pitch black, with a slight yellow head. It exceeds 10% ABV, but doesn't taste like it, if consumed at the right temperature. Instead, expect a rich malted taste, infused with coffee, licorice and chocolate.

Good for: enjoying chocolate and blue cheese

LEIFUR NORDIC SAISON

Brewed in the spirit of the Belgian Saison beers, this one is infused with wild arctic thyme and heather. It's unfiltered, fruity and carbonated, pours a reddish-yellow, and gives you the distinct sour aftertones that you would associate with saisons. I am not great fan of saisons, but this is a beer to taste if you're visiting Iceland.

Good for: nature lovers and long walks

MÓRI

This sweet amber ale pours a beautiful red with normal white head. It is very nicely balanced, malty tones with a little fruit and hops on the side. Easily enjoyable, but not widely available. Pick up a bottle at the place that sells beers.

Good for: introspection



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			10:00	10:00	10:00				
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			14:00	14:00	14:00				
		17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00			
			20:30*	20:30	19:00				

* From 15 June
** Feb, March, November

Northern Light Cruise EL-09
 - 1 Sept - 30 Sept & 15 Mars - 15 Apr at 22:00
 - 1 Oct - 14 Mars at 21:00

Express Whale Watching (RIB-boat) EL-06
 - 15 April - 31 May at 10:00 and 14:00
 - 1 June - 30 June at 10:00, 12:00, 14:00 and 16:00
 - 1. July - 31. August at 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 13:00 14:00 15:00 and 16:00.
 - 1-30 September, two times a day at 10:00 and 14:00.
 - 1-16 October at 10:00



www.elding.is





Words **PARKER YAMASAKI**

Okay, full disclosure: the idea of a “Tea House” guide in Reykjavík is a little bit misleading. Reykjavík runs on coffee, so it quickly becomes apparent that a tea guide will be more of a guide to coffee shops that just happen to serve tea, sometimes. But we needed to weed out which readers are really looking for a well-brewed cup of leaves, and which are just trying to get their caffeine fix.

There are plenty of places for the latter—type “coffee” into your Google Maps search engine and Reykjavík’s centre will explode into a caffeine emporium. And while there is no proper tea scene in Reykjavík yet, the waters are warming. We’ll just give you this cup here and let it brew...



There are three main suppliers of loose leaf tea in Reykjavík: **Te og Kaffi**, **Kaffitár**, and **Krydd og Tehúsið**. Te og Kaffi is a bit Starbucks-y in that there are so many of them packed into 101 you can hear what someone is ordering from the branch across the street. But we’re not here to talk about ambience. We’re here to talk about tea. And if it is tea you seek, then there is only one branch of Te og Kaffi for you: Laugavegur 27. This

shop is the only one in town that carries all of their 50 different teas—from their least expensive herbal blends like chamomile and lemongrass to more high-end greens, blacks, and whites. You can order a pot on the spot or buy a 100g bag to take with you.



If you want to try a tea from this Reykjavík staple but aren’t into the whole corporate monopoly thing (or you just forgot your computer charger) you can head to **Kex Hostel**, which serves some of the main names from the collection. Here you’ll find a few fewer laptops, and a lot more view—the back wall of Kex’s café-bar-restaurant looks out toward Esja, and the sea. You can practically feel the wind whipping your hair, which makes grabbing onto that warm mug all the more satisfying.



The second main distributor of teas is **Kaffitár**. Kaffitár has an

outlet café at Bankastræti 8—as central as it gets. Because of its high-traffic location, the café itself stays pretty full most of the day. That may sound like a turn-off at first, but in the depths of winter a little bit of colour and sound actually pair quite well with a hot pot of their personally blended teas.



For a different scene, **Grái Köturinn** on Hverfisgata serves a selection of Kaffitár’s loose leaves. This just-off-the-main-drag and just-below-street-level café is tighter, dimmer, and packed in all sorts of ways with books.



Kaffibrennslan on the corner of Klapparstígur and Laugavegur also carries Kaffitár’s teas. Brennslan stays open until 23:00 on weekdays, which makes it a great place to do some after-hours work, in that interim when it’s too late for coffee, but just right for tea.



One tea treasure that we dug up isn’t actually a café at all—it’s an herbs and spice (and everything nice) shop called **Krydd og Tehúsið**. The shop is teeming with scents that are at the same time comforting and exotic. The owner, Omry, hand-selects all of the teas that make their way into the well-organized display. They import from all over the Far East and carry a little bit of everything, from the “charismatic” ginger-and-lemon-infused green teas, to more specialty teas like dark Pu-erhs from China.



Just up the street from Krydd og Tehúsið is **Reykjavík Roasters** on Brautarholt. Reykjavík Roasters opened its first location at the small triangle lot on Kárastígur, and built a strong reputation on local sourcing and hand-crafting. Keeping in tune with their emphasis on what’s local, Reykjavík Roasters is one of the only places in town that you can order a cup of Krydd og Tehúsið’s finest.



Sufistinn is the always buzzing book café on the top floor of Mal og Menning (bookshop), and the only other place you can get served a selection from Krydd og Tehúsið. Besides the two main distributor cafés, Sufistinn had one of the best selections of loose-leaf teas that I came across. On a small end-table was a display of about ten different beautifully paper-wrapped canisters, each one holding a different white, black, red, green, or berry blend.

THE LOCAL BEER



2.25% ALC./VOL.

Words **HREFNA BJÖRG
SIGURDARDÓTTIR**
Photo **NANNA DÍS**



A GUIDE TO
**Fashionable
Reykjavík**



**Kaffifélagið -
Skólavörðustígur 10**

A real fashion guru can't function without a double Cap'. Grab yours to go at Kaffifélagið.



Jör - Laugavegur 89

Kourtney Kardashian recently purchased a silk dress at this shop, named for founder Guðmundur Jörundsson. Cutting-edge designs by Jör and select international labels, for both men and women.



Kiosk - Laugavegur 65

This one's filled with goods by Icelandic designers like Hildur Yeoman and Milla Snorrason. Shopping here is always a pleasure; often the designers themselves can help you find your dream garment.



Snaps - Þórgata 1

Give your legs a rest and make a reservation at Snaps. Here you can order a fresh mimosa and a tasty brunch. This lively restaurant is filled with plants and the cool cats of Reykjavík.



Aurum - Bankastræti 4

Aurum is a colourful concept store on one side and a gorgeous jewellery shop on the other. You'll find gift merchandise, clothing and nature-inspired jewelry by Guðbjörg Kristín Ingvarsdóttir.



Gallery Gallera - Laugavegur 33

A must for any art or fashion lover. It's filled with interesting artwork, books and clothing by designers and artists such as Lóa and Hugleikur Dagsson.



Hafnarhúsið - Tryggvagata 17

Make sure to get your daily dose of art and culture at the Reykjavík Art Museum's Hafnarhúsið branch. You can check out exhibitions by Erró and others, and there's a wonderful gift shop in the lobby.



Farmer's Market - Hólmaslóð 2

If there's still time for shopping, make sure to visit Farmer's Market, known for wonderful woolen sweaters, shawls and more Iceland-inspired clothing. Farmer's Market makes it much easier to dress to impress in the cold Icelandic weather.



Kolabrutin at Harpa

The perfect way to end a fashionable day is with dinner and a cocktail at the stylish restaurant on the fourth floor of Harpa. Put on your fresh new outfit because this building was made for selfies.

Welcome

We look forward
to seeing you



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BLUE LAGOON
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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Shopping

It's all about product.

By the time you've started reading this you've passed your eighth Puffin store, right? You've purchased your Viking helmet, your polar bear t-shirt and your whalebone necklace? First off, we can't make fun of the Viking helmet—we wear them at football matches—and, secondly, it's illegal to carry whale bones to most countries. Here we give you a guide of where to go shopping for things you won't throw out as soon as you get home. These are some of the best places Iceland has to offer. Also, we tell you where to get groceries.

Best grocery store



Bónus

Hallveigarstígur 1 and other locations

Bónus wins for a number of reasons: location, price and logo. If it were up to some of our writers, it would also win for “best lunch” and “cheapest meal.” You can grab enough food to fill your Airbnb fridge, which you'll be living out of eventually, when you finally comprehend the exchange rate on day three of your visit. Bónus also gets a few bonus points for managing to have the least rotten avocados and a healthy supply of celery root. What can you do with celery root? There must be something.

Runners Up:



Krónan Skarfagarðar 2 and other locations

Krónan might be indistinguishable from Bónus to the untrained eye, but after careful inspection you will realize they have different logos. With a name like Krónan, you would also assume it would be like a “dollar store” in North America. It's not.



Víðir Sólvallagata 79

Víðir has a green logo. This might have meant it had more healthy food inside, but that's not necessarily true. It sometimes has more luxurious vegetables like daikon or still-firm cucumber. But sometimes it doesn't have either.

Best shop to pick up local design



Kraum

Bankastræti 7a

Kraum is a perennial favourite of tourists and locals alike. Opened in 2007 as a collaboration between two dozen local designers, Kraum has always defined the cutting edge of trends in Icelandic design. Now, the shop sells work by over 100 local artists and designers. You'll find everything here from unique souvenirs to an Icelandic take on everyday items like stationery, handbags, raincoats and jewellery.

Runners Up



Aurum Bankastræti 4

Aurum has two faces: it's a colourful concept store on one side, and sells gorgeous jewellery on the other. Join the class of fashionable Reykvikingar after picking up some clothing and nature-inspired jewellery by Guðbjörg Kristín Ingvarsdóttir, and some gifts and souvenirs for back home.



Hrímm Laugavegur 25

It's amazing what a difference a little piece of design can make for your apartment. Starting from blank walls and a tatty sofa, you can add one soft, striped throw rug, an Anglepoise lamp, a strange poster, a fancy little cushion, suddenly you have “tasteful minimalism.” You feel great about your place, and, by extension, your life. Wow! It's like magic!

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Spark Design Space
- 2014: Kraum
- 2013: Kraum
- 2012: Kraum
- 2011: Kraum

Best shop to pick up local fashion



Kiosk

Laugavegur 65

Kiosk has a filtered selection of clothing by the best local designers. The cash register is manned by a rotation of the designers themselves. They'll not only know where the inspiration for the clothing originated—chances are, they designed some of it. Kiosk is the rite-of-passage boutique for 101 fashionistas. If you're a person who likes to take home something unique when you travel, this is the place. You'll get a garment, a story and probably a Facebook friend.

Runners Up



Jör Laugavegur 89

Jör is one of the most popular design stores in Iceland. Their clothing can be seen on the streets of Reykjavík or the red carpets of Hollywood. It's a must-visit for fashionistas and fans of fine clothing. You'll get compliments on anything you buy.



Steinunn Grandagarður 17

STEINUNN boutique is tucked away on Grandi, next door to Valdís ice cream store. It's owner, Steinunn Sigurðardóttir, is a renowned designer who takes inspiration for her line of unique and stylish womenswear from nature. Here you're sure to find a one-of-a-kind piece of distinctively Icelandic fashion.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Kiosk
- 2014: Kiosk
- 2013: Kiosk
- 2012: Kiosk
- 2011: Kiosk

**May the
best
woman
win!**

Best bookshop



Eymundsson

Austurstræti Branch - Austurstræti 18

Eymundsson Austurstræti has the best selection of Icelandic and world literature in not only English, but also German, French and Danish. You can pick up a copy of the Icelandic Sagas or the newest novel from Icelandic author Sjórn. With a comfortable coffee shop on the third floor and free gift wrapping, this bookstore has everything for the local, the tourist or the last-minute gift buyer. It's also interesting for North American travellers who want to get a copy of their favourite book, but with the European cover. Make sure to check out the back window sill for what's on sale.

Runners Up



Bókin Klapparstígur 25-27

Bókin is the kind of place you'd imagine an eccentric genius spends his afternoons, which is why it was frequented by the famous chess player Bobby Fischer. They have a great selection of used books and rare Icelandic publications.



Sjónarlind Bergstaðastræti 7

Sjónarlind offers a lovely and well-curated selection of primarily non-fiction books, almost exclusively in English. You'll find a range of subject matters, from biography to gastronomy to fashion to photography. Sjónarlind is the only independent bookstore in town that curates new and unusual titles.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Sjónarlind
- 2014: Nexus
- 2013: Eymundsson, Bankastræti
- 2012: Mál og Menning
- 2011: Eymundsson, Austurstræti

Best secondhand shop



Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Kolaportið is a huge indoor flea market that takes place on weekends. It's filled with stalls selling bric-a-brac, secondhand clothes, unusual foods, antique postcards, lópapeysur, smoking accessories, and the occasional religious booth filled with literature and pamphlets. You could end up leaving this place with some sour whale blubber under one arm of your newly purchased fur coat, while limping in your slightly-too-big knock-off Timberlands. It's a deal-scavenger's heaven, and a germophobe's worst nightmare.

Runners Up



Spúútník Laugavegur 28

Spúútník is a vintage clothing store, so don't expect normal used clothing prices. It's the equivalent of raiding your grandparents' closet or attempting to make awkward photos of yourself as a 1990s teenager. It's a dream come true for downtown's waiflike normcore kids.



Nytjamarkaðurinn ABC Víkurhvarf 2

Nytjamarkaðurinn ABC is a large secondhand market in the suburb of Kópavogur. The store has a wide selection of used clothes, shoes, household equipment and furniture, all for a very cheap price. All sales profit goes to the ABC children's aid charity, which makes shopping there a great alternative to buying new.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Hertex
- 2014: Spúútník
- 2013: Spúútník
- 2012: Fatamarkaðurinn

Best record store



Reykjavík Record Shop

Klapparstígur 35

Reykjavík Record Shop is capitalising on the current boom in vinyl sales. With a focus on new releases, indie-rock and alternative music, it's frequented by hipsters and old-timers with an eye on up-and-coming acts. You can spend an hour thumbing through the catalogue or just pop in to grab something for an upcoming party. It's amazing, given the state of the music industry, that these places are still making a go of it. So if you love vinyl, get out there and support your local indie store!

Runners Up



Lucky Records Rauðarárstígur 10

Lucky Records is a previous winner in this category, and for good reason. With a wide selection that includes a lot of funk and soul, it's one of those stores that regulars will defend to the hilt. It also hosts the occasional live show, making it kind of like a Rough Trade Reykjavík.



12 Tónar Skólavörðustígur 15

12 Tónar is an iconic Reykjavík record store, specialising in Icelandic music, old and new. It's also a record label that releases some of the best bands on the Icelandic scene. If you swing by, the staff will sound out your taste, then sit you down with a coffee, some headphones, and a listening pile. You won't leave empty handed.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Reykjavík Record Shop
- 2014: Lucky Records
- 2013: Lucky Records

Best place to shop organic

Frú Lauga

Laugalækur 6

Frú Lauga is one of the only places in Reykjavík where you can shop local and organic. It is located in Laugardalur, a little bit outside of downtown, with a greenhouse for growing fresh produce right on the spot. You can find a wide variety of enticing and delicious organic products, such as tomatoes, salad greens, garlic, milk, cream, meat, and olives. It doesn't get more greenhouse-to-table than this.

Heilsuhúsið - Lágmúli 9 and more

Heilsuhúsið sells a variety of health products, cosmetics, toiletries, natural foods and vitamins. The store's goal is to nurture the body and soul by helping you maintain a healthy, eco-friendly lifestyle. The store has grown and is now located in five different locations, all of which have a juice bar. We recommend trying a shot of ginger or wheatgrass while you shop.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Frú Lauga
- 2014: Frú Lauga
- 2013: Frú Lauga
- 2012: Frú Lauga
- 2011: Frú Lauga

Best barber

Barber

Laugavegur 66

Barber is the best barber. This isn't a tautology, for all you philosophy buffs out there. It's a great shop nestled inside the Alda hotel. You can grab a cocktail or a coffee and laugh through your entire appointment with the hilarious antics of the barbers. It's THE spot for getting your haircut, and there are walk-ins available after 15:00. Just don't have too much fun, or you might come stumbling out with the impromptu tramlines that seemed like such a great idea.

Runners Up

Stjúri - Laugavegur 59

Stjúri is a one man hair-cutting machine. Wherever he is, great haircuts follow. He's a local hero, saving relationships, and self-confidence, one snip at a time. If you get the chance, get your hair cut and be a part of Reykjavík history.

Barbarella - Suðurgata 7

This is a fun hair salon with awesome products and great service. It's located next to a cemetery, so depending on your mood you can get your hair done and then take an existential stroll. It's not true that your hair keeps growing after you die.

Previous Winners:

- 2015: Barber

Best goddamn store



Geysir

Skólavörðustígur 7 & 16

Geysir is a store where regular Icelanders window shop, and rich tourists go crazy buying stuff. You can find fashionable clothes from great brands, with a focus on Icelandic style, and you can rely on the quality of the clothes. Geysir is so popular that they opened another location recently, just across the street from their flagship store. When you shop there, you can be sure you're going to come out dressed in some contemporary neo-Scandi chic (we're not sure that's an actually thing, but it's obscure enough to sound like we're fashionistas).

Runners Up

Fjallakofinn

Laugavegur 11

Fjallakofinn has to be on the list. It's been a godsend for many travellers who are adventuring out into the wilderness and need to grab some extra gear, gloves or a carabiner or two. It's also a place for Icelanders to get slap on some Gore-Tex and dress up in what they call "tourist-core."

Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar

Laugavegur 59

Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar is a gentlemen's clothing store packed with high-end brands. You could walk in dressed in jeans and a t-shirt and walk out looking like someone about to attend a party at Jay Gatsby's residence—that is, like you just won the lottery.

Previous Winners:

2015: Geysir

Best place to buy a wool sweater

Handprjónasambandið

Skólavörðustígur 19

Handprjónasambandið is the Hand Knitting Society of Iceland. Its stock

comes from dozens of contributors from around the country, who make traditional knitted clothing for locals and tourists alike. It's hard to walk into this place and not stay for a long time. There are so many choices. It's stocked wall to wall with knitted sweaters and garments in all the colours and patterns you could imagine. The best tactic is to treat it like the wand shop in Harry Potter and let the sweater choose you.

Runners Up

Kolaportið

Trayggvagata 19

Kolaportið has a wide selection of used wool sweaters at a price you'll appreciate. You need to really search, and talk to the sellers. It may take a few tries but they'll find you something you're happy with.

Rauða Krossinn

Laugavegur 12 & Skólavörðustígur 12

The Icelandic branch of the Red Cross always holds a surprise. You could walk in one day and find everything you're looking for. However, sometimes you won't find anything. It's as much about the journey as the destination.

Previous Winners:

2015: Red Cross

2014: Handprjónasambandið

2013: Handprjónasambandið

CHECK OUT THE NEW REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM COMPRISING 5 TOP MUSEUMS

Experience the history of Reykjavík in a lively and engaging way at the Reykjavík City Museum. Comprising five individual sites, the City Museum was founded to uphold and preserve Reykjavík's cultural heritage, which dates back to the arrival of the first settlers in the late 9th century.

Four of the museums are within walking distance of downtown Reykjavík, while the Árbær Open Air Museum is only a fifteen-minute drive from the city center. The ferry to Viðey Island leaves from the Old Harbor in downtown Reykjavík.



Árbær Open Air Museum



The Settlement Exhibition



Reykjavík Maritime Museum



Viðey Island



Reykjavík Museum of Photography

SHOPPING

An Antiquarian Book Lover's Guide To Reykjavík

Words **ELI PETZOLD**Photo **ART BICNICK**

The tale of Reykjavík's antiquarian book trade is one of decline. In 1967, Reykjavík boasted eleven secondhand book stores—roughly one shop for every 7,000 residents of the burgeoning city. After half a century, even as the city's population has doubled, only two proper used book shops remain, leaving one store for every 60,000 Reykjavíkingar. Old books, nevertheless, remain, indifferent to the fluctuations of time; here are a handful of spots where you can hunt them down.

Bókin (“**The Book**”), founded in 1964, is indubitably the bibliophilic mecca of Reykjavík. With



just the right balance of clutter and order, it's easy to lose hours rifling through dusty shelves and precarious towers of books stacked on the floor. Although a few shelves by the entrance contain a hodgepodge of literature in English, most of the stock is in Icelandic—a point of pride for the booksellers who run the shop: ask for translations of Icelandic authors and you'll be directed elsewhere. If you're eager to learn Icelandic, however,

there's no shortage of old grammars and dictionaries scattered throughout, and the staff, curmudgeonly though they seem, will gladly entertain your broken Icelandic and help get you started on the Icelandic canon. The shop devotes considerable space to medieval Icelandic literature: critical editions of Sagas in their original, archaic orthography sit beside versions updated into familiar modern spellings in the placid back corner of the shop.

Bókakjallarinn (“**The Book Cellar**”), tucked away in an alleyway off Laugavegur, occupies the former workshop of Bókamiðstöðin, a defunct publisher and press that printed



comics, children's books, crosswords, and porn. Bókamiðstöðin stopped printing books in 1990, but the space reopened as a secondhand book shop in 2010. The old printing machinery now slumbers in the back of the shop, but the old materials—vintage smut included—remain for sale in the cozy basement, alongside a neat, tightly shelved collection of Icelandic literature.

At **Kolaportið**, Reykjavík's weekend flea market, a handful of regular vendors peddle secondhand books from stalls encircled by bookshelves which simulta-



neously maximize shelf space and barricade against the fish-pungent chaos of the market. The combined stock of the market's booksellers, and the breadth of subject matter, could constitute a cohesive, comprehensive bookshop in its own right: oversaturated, illustrated kids' classics; new mystery in well-worn paperback; Sagas bound in stately sets. In addition to these reliable staples, the vendors at Kolaportið often have unique or rare treasures—a Greenlandic phrasebook, a compilation of Faroese folk songs, an early nineteenth century edition of Halgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmur*—silently bearing witness to the lives and adventures of strangers.

Thrift stores, such as **Góði hirðirinn** in Skeifan or Salvation Army's **Hertex** in Vesturbær, devote several shelves to used books. Entirely dependent on donations, the stock at these

shops can be unpredictable, unorganized, and underwhelming; patience and a good eye, howev-



er, are rewarded with the occasional gem. **Góði hirðirinn** generally has a small selection of foreign titles, priced at 100 ISK apiece—a negligible sum next to the cost of shipping to Iceland.

Throughout the **University of Iceland** campus and in the **National Library**, professors and students leave unwanted books



on semi-official free book tables. Often, the books are more interesting for their peculiarity or specificity than for any intrinsic aspect: a university-published pamphlet on an otherwise unstudied seventeenth century poet; municipal records from mid-century Borgarnes; an Italian study of Old English metrics. Utility is dubious; novelty abounds.



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AUSTURSTRÆTI 8-10 101 REYKJAVÍK

REYKJAVÍK NIGHTLIFE

From Meek Mill To The Macarena

Where to go if...

You're a tourist aged between 20-40 and you want a normal good time: **Leowski**
... and are quiet: **Bravó**
... and are wearing a new suit: **Íslenski Barinn**

You really like singing, and it's close to closing time: **English Pub**
... and are gay: **Kiki**
... and it's 8pm: **Kaldi**

... and you're a local journalist or politician and it's too early for singing but just time for a nice argument: **Ölstofan**
... and it's the middle of the day and you are at odds with society: **Bar 7**

You want a cocktail: **Marbar**
... and a pizza: **Hverfisgata 12**
... and a burger: **Sæta Svínid**
... and sushi: **Sushi Samba**
... with some birch and moss in it: **Slipparinn**
... in the company of your fellow One-percenters: **Apotek**

You are "alternative": **Gaukurinn**
... ok, only actually slightly "alternative": **Bar 11**
... and like to argue with fellow Tom Waits fans: **Dillon**

You are "hipster": **Húrra**
... and want an early drink or coffee: **Stofan**
... ok actually post-hipster and you like tiki things: **Bar Ananas**
... and are over 30 and want to bump into Airwaves legends: **Boston**
... and like house music and slightly cultured tourists: **Kaffibarinn**
... I'M NOT A FUCKING HIPSTER, MAN: **Hressó**

If you have an opinion on Designer vs. Future: **Prikið**
... but Prikið is full: **D10**
... and are really drunk: **American Bar**
... and you want to talk to your fellow pandas: **Tivolí**
... and don't understand this reference: **B5**

You want hot girls, top 40, and have money: **Austur**
... and are old: **Loftið**
... and want to join a "Gentlemans Club": **Shooters**

If you want to pretend you are in Berlin: **Paloma**
... and it's after 4:30: **The sidewalk in front of Paloma**

Words **HANNAH JANE COHEN**

Photo **ART BICNICK**

After a good glacier walk or soak in some geothermal backwater, it's nice to settle down with a cold beer or ten, and what better place to do so than the small walkable town of Reykjavík.

In terms of "Icelandic partying customs," it's normal in Reykjavík to get absolutely smashed and stay out until closing (04:30 on weekends, 01:00 on weekdays). This is true regardless of age, so to best blend in we'd recommend drinking as much as possible—but only beer, mixed

drinks, or shots. Asking for a mojito at Kaffibarinn might make you a laughing stock.

"But Kaffibarinn," I hear you say. "What's that? Where's that? And on that note, why is there both an English Pub and an American Bar? Aren't we in Iceland?" Well, yes, we are. And while some questions will never be answered, here's a little multiple-choice guide to help you figure out where you best fit in, so you too can djamm í kvöld.



Skyr.is

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Activities

All kinds of fun. Fun, natural fun.

Reykjavík is a relatively small city, but even so, sometimes you need a bit of local advice to find what you're looking for, whether it's a good people-watching spot, somewhere to see some contemporary art, or the best place to catch an Icelandic movie. Don't worry, friend—we've got you covered. Here are some of our favourite spots in Reykjavík, for all kinds of super-fun days and nights out.

Best pool



Neslaug

Suðurströnd 9, Seltjarnarnes

The Reykjavík municipality's "big three" pools of Vesturbæjarlaug, Laugardalslaug, and Sundhöllin, great as they are, lost a little shine this year due to overcrowding, and Sundhöllin being closed for renovation. So our panel decided the award for 2016 should go to Neslaug, a tucked-away pool on the Seltjarnarnes peninsula, that last won in 2011. They agreed that at Neslaug: "It feels like people are moving in slow motion—time slows down. There's always space in the big jacuzzi, and the pool is filled with salt water so you feel buoyant when you do laps." Perhaps the best thing is that there's some space, so you're not always avoiding other swimmers.

Runners Up:



Vesturbæjarlaug Hofsvallagata

"It might be very busy, but there's a reason for that," said the panel. Vesturbæjarlaug is just a great all-round pool, with traditional hot pots, a nice steam bath, and a big, recently installed communal hot pot. It's a lovely spot for a sunny day, and a classic Reykjavík pool.

Lágafellslaug Lækjarhlíð 1a

This pool is on the very outskirts of greater Reykjavík. "It's perfect for the start or the end of a road trip, or for a little outing in itself," said the panel. It has a coal-fired sauna, a steam room with a view over the mountain of Úlfarsfell, and spacious, modern ceramic-tiled hotpots.

Previous winners

- 2015: Vesturbæjarlaug
- 2014: Vesturbæjarlaug
- 2013: Laugardalslaug
- 2012: Laugardalslaug
- 2011: Neslaug

Best gallery



i8

Tryggvagata 16

The i8 gallery goes from strength to strength with their stable of top-notch Icelandic artists, as well as some renowned international players. i8 was the first Icelandic art gallery to start becoming involved in art fairs, so they've had a hand in bringing the cream of Iceland's art scene to the international market. It is also the gallery that represents Ragnar Kjartansson, the playful multi-media artist who's basically the spirit animal of the Icelandic arts scene.

Runners Up



The Nordic House Sturlugata 5

The Nordic House is an art and culture building located just across Tjörnin, near the University. It recently hosted a Nordic culture and fashion design themed show called "The Weather Diaries," which won the hearts and minds of pretty much everyone who got a chance to see it. After the spectacular success of that show, we can't wait to see what's coming up next.



Ekkisens Bergstaðastræti 25b

This DIY art space is housed in a former basement apartment, and still bears the marks of its former use. It's a lively gallery with a programme that gives a platform to recently graduating and emerging Icelandic artists. This is where you can see what's happening at the grassroots of Iceland's art community.

Previous winners

- 2015: i8
- 2014: Kling og Bang
- 2013: National Museum
- 2012: National Museum
- 2011: National Museum

Best art museum



Hafnarhúsið

Tryggvagata 17

The Reykjavík Art Museum has three locations: the beautifully designed Ásmundarsafn sculpture garden and museum, the rotating collection of paintings and contemporary shows at Kjarvalstaðir, and Hafnarhúsið, which is Iceland's largest contemporary art institution—think Tate Reykjavík. Each has its own character, but if you only have time for one, Hafnarhúsið is right in the heart of downtown, and often has three or more exhibitions running concurrently, so you're bound to find something you like. There's a great café and book shop, too.

Runners Up



Einar Jónsson Museum Eiríksgata

This sculpture museum is right by Hallgrímskirkja, enclosed in a beautiful walled garden. You can take in the dramatic figurative works of Einar Jónsson at your own pace. The main building houses more of his oeuvre. "He also lived there," said the panel, "and you can visit his apartment, preserved just as it was back then."



National Gallery of Iceland Fríkirkjuvegur 7

This warren-like space holds a large collection of Icelandic paintings in its lofty halls, also offering a regular programme of contemporary exhibitions on the ground floor and basement. For those on foot, it's conveniently located right downtown, on the street by Tjörnin.

Previous winners

- 2015: Reykjavík Art Museum
- 2014: Reykjavík Art Museum
- 2013: Reykjavík Art Museum
- 2012: Reykjavík Art Museum
- 2011: Einar Jónsson

Best museum



Árþæjarsafn

Kistuhylur 4

This living history museum invites visitors to stroll through the past of Iceland, experiencing turf houses and living conditions from previous centuries. The tour guides dress up in period costumes, creating a vivid vision of how Icelanders used to live. It's a drive out of the city centre, or quite a long bus ride, but it's worth it. "It goes over very well with first-time visitors to Iceland," said the panel. "There are all sorts of fun facts about how people lived here in the past."

Runners Up



The National Museum of Iceland

Suðurgata 41
This sprawling collection of Iceland's history covers all manner of artefacts, from jewellery to weapons, tools, costumes, textiles and more. You could easily spend an entire afternoon here, learning about the history of the country.



The Settlement Exhibition

Aðalstræti 16
This underground museum, located right downtown on Aðalstræti, offers a look into the beginning of Iceland's history as an inhabited country. "It has the remains of a turf house from the 870s," said the panel, "from the original Reykjavík settlement era."

Previous winners

2015: Árþæjarsafnið
2014: National Museum of Iceland
2013: National Museum of Iceland
2012: National Museum of Iceland
2011: National Museum of Iceland

Best place for a romantic sunset



Gróttu

Seltjarnarnes peninsula

The area of Gróttu is something of a hidden gem. At the end of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula, not far from the centre of Reykjavík, there's a lonely, windblown, red-topped lighthouse, with a walkable causeway that's only accessible at certain times, depending on the tide. There's a black beach, a miniature hot pot, and a nature reserve. On a clear evening, you can see the silhouette of the Snæfellsjökull glacier against the pink sky. What could be more romantic?

Runners Up



Old Harbour

Ægisgarður
Reykjavík's old harbour area is perfect for a seaside sunset stroll. You can watch the boats coming in and out, visit the little lighthouses behind Harpa, or follow the painted lines to a bustling district of cafes and restaurants, perhaps finishing with a cocktail at Slippbarinn.



Laugarnes

For something a bit more secluded, take a walk along Sæbraut, past the Sun Voyager sculpture, and keep going to an outcropping of land known as Laugarnes. There's a sculpture garden there, and some tucked-away benches with views across the sea to Viðey Island and Mount Esja.

Previous winners

2015: Öskjuhlíð
2014: Gróttu
2013: Gróttu
2012: Gróttu
2011: Grasagarðurinn

Best place to take the kids



Hljómskálagarðurinn

Fríkirkjuvegur

For something fun and active, there's nowhere better to take the kids than Hljómskálagarðurinn. There are some rope pyramids for climbing, outdoor barbecues to grill food, and things to do for all different age groups—a sandbox for toddlers, a big playing field for sports and games, and a trampoline. As well as being wholesome fun, it's free, and there are no queues to worry about.

Runners Up



Húsdýragarðurinn

Múlavegur 2
Another firm favourite is Húsdýragarðurinn, the farm animal zoo. It's a petting zoo with sheep, horses, goats, pigs, and some wild animals like foxes and reindeer. There's a walking bridge that takes you to Fjölskyldugarðurinn (The Family Garden), which has fair-ground rides and a boating lake.



Nauthólsvík

The fact that Reykjavík has a beach is amusing to some—the sand was brought there specifically to make the beach, and the cold seawater is mixed with geothermally heated groundwater to make it bearable for swimming. There's a hot pot and a snack stand, and on a sunny day, it can be a blissful place to go.

Previous winners

2015: Húsdýragarðurinn
2014: Húsdýragarðurinn
2013: Fjölskyldugarðurinn
2012: Lynghagarólf Playground

Best hike



Móskarðshnjúkar

This beautiful hike lies a little way off the beaten track of the Esja hike. You need a good car to get there, but it's worth it. "It's a slightly more exotic route, walking over rhyolite—the same material found in the Andes," said the panel. "The path isn't always clear, and it's a little wild, so you'll see way fewer people here than on any of the other trails. It's a good choice for getting away from the crowds."

Runners Up



Helgafell

Driving to Helgafell, just outside Hafnarfjörður, really feels like getting into the wilds despite its proximity to the city. It's a nice light walk across a lava field and then up a gentle slope to a 300 metre peak that offers a nice view over the Reykjanes peninsula.



Esja

This is a classic hike up the distinctive mountain that towers over the Faxaflói bay across from Reykjavík. You can get to the start of the track by taking the bus, which makes this hike super convenient. You can either hike up to the base camp level, or continue all the way up the rough path to the top.

Previous winners

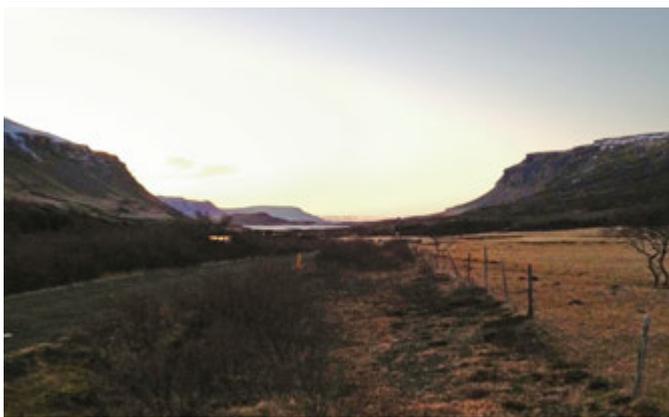
New award: no previous winners.

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2016

Activities

Get outta town...

Best day trip from Reykjavík



Hvalfjörður

This used to be part of the ring road, but is now off the beaten track because of the Hvalfjarðargöng tunnel. There's a great hike to Glymur, the highest waterfall in Iceland. There's also a cafe at the Kjós campground. There are some old roadside gas stations, which are all but abandoned and weird and exciting to visit. There's an old whaling station, and a sign marking where Winston Churchill came to see submarines. And as if that wasn't enough, you can learn also about a wizard who turned into a whale at the Borgarnes settlement centre. The nearby area of Reykhólt is home to one of the most famous authors of the Icelandic Sagas, who had one of very first hot tubs. And finally, the town of Akranes has a great beach, some good hikes, and a beautiful lighthouse.

Runners Up



Reykjanes

Although it is the location of the famous Blue Lagoon, the Reykjanes peninsula is often overlooked as people head for the more well known South Coast or the Golden Circle. But it's a treasure trove of nature: visit the Krýsuvík geothermal park, the eerie lake of Kleifarvatn, and the scenic coastal spot of Reykjanesviti, and be back in time for dinner, since it's all not that far away.



Snæfellsnes

Last year's winner, Snæfellsnes, makes for an amazing road trip. On the way, you can see lava fields, huge green and yellow hills, lighthouses, black beaches, and the Snæfellsjökull glacier. But be prepared for a lot of driving—it's approximately an eight-hour round trip.

Previous winners

2015: Snæfellsnes
2014: Snæfellsnes
2013: Reykjadalur
2012: Mosfellsbær and Esja

Best people-watching spot



Grandi

This concrete-heavy fishing harbour area has been up-and-coming of late, evolving into a bustling neighbourhood of musicians' practice rooms, startup offices, cafés, shops and galleries. You can mill around, taking in the scenery of the harbour, get an ice-cream at Valdís, have a delicious meal at Matur og Drykkur or Cooco's Nest, visit the Steinunn boutique, or walk out to the manmade land artwork at the end of the docks. And you'll see a lot of street life while you're at it.

Runners Up

Prikíð
Bankastræti 12

The oldest diner in Reykjavík is a perfect place to enjoy a beer or coffee, order one of their trademark burgers, and engage in an entertaining bout of people-watching. Whether you're lucky and get a downstairs booth, or you get a window seat upstairs, pretty much everyone passes by here sooner or later.



Austurvöllur

The scene of the famous Panama Papers protests earlier this year, Austurvöllur is Reykjavík's parliament square. Whether you decide to perch on a bench, sit outside at one of the many café-bars lining the square, or have a picnic, you'll see pretty much all of Icelandic society passing by.

Previous winners

2015: Austurvöllur
2014: Second Floor Window Seats, Eymundsson on Austurstræti
2013: Booths at Hressó

Best place to see a movie



Bíó Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

This independent cinema on Hverfisgata is a palace for indie film fans. They run a great programme of arthouse cinema from all around the world, as well as showing Icelandic films on rotation with English subtitles. They sometimes show retro sci-fi and horror movies, whether cult B-movies or well-known classics. There's an art gallery, a café, and some comfy sofas to hang out and drink coffee. Bíó Paradís, you're doin' it right: we salute you.

Runners Up

VIP Theaters
Sambíó, Álfabakki 8
Smárabíó, Smáralind

If you wanna see a blockbuster popcorn movie (and let's face it, who doesn't from time to time) then the VIP screens have got you covered. You can sit in a La-Z-Boy, and there's a bottomless vat of popcorn to dip into. Perf.



Háskólabíó

As lot of visitors to Reykjavík are probably on foot, or using public transport, a handy option to see the latest Hollywood product is Háskólabíó. It's located in the university complex just across Tjörninn, and so walkable from downtown, and it's always showing whatever has just come out.

Previous winners

2015: VIP Theater
2014: Bíó Paradís

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AURORA SPOTTING

Keep Watching The Skies

Words **JOHN ROGERS**Photo **ART BICNICK**

2016, by Icelandic standards, had a beautiful summer. As winter approaches there's a sense of satisfaction amongst Icelanders, who are happily embracing the change of season having gorged on more vitamin D than they've grown accustomed to in recent years.

The darkening skies also herald the return of the northern lights. And although received wisdom says they're best seen during midwinter when the nights are at their longest, the fairer autumn months are perhaps even better for aurora-spotting.

So, here are our tips on how to maximise your chances of spotting those elusive northern lights.

CHECK THE AURORA FORECAST

One big advantage of autumn for aurora-spotting is that the winter weather hasn't yet set in, so there's more chance of clear skies. *Vedur.is* is the Icelandic Meteorological Office, and they offer forecast maps that look at projected aurora activity, with added cloud cover information.

The scale they use for aurora activity goes from one to nine, and even a two or three on the scale can mean an impressive green glow across the sky; a four or a five can be very bright indeed, with blue, white and pink hues.

LOOK OUT FOR ALERTS

Sometimes the aurora can give a dazzling ten-minute display that fills your Facebook feed with photos, but by the time you've finished what you were doing and gone outdoors, it's over. If you live here, it's no

big deal—but if you're visiting, it could be your only chance. So if you receive an alert (try the "Northern Lights Alert" group on Facebook, for example), our advice is to drop what you're doing and get outdoors quick. And remember to dress warm—you could be out for a while.

DODGE THE CITY LIGHTS

To see the lights at their brightest, you're going to need to get away from light pollution. People staying in downtown Reykjavík often gather at Hallgrim-

skirkja, Sæbraut or Arnarhóll, but there are better spots you can try, such as the pier behind Harpa with a yellow lighthouse at the end. But if you want to see the aurora at their best, you need to step out of the city centre. You could go to Perlan, the nearby hilltop visitor's centre, and find a dark clearing in the surrounding woods; or you could go out to Gróttá, the lighthouse in Seltjarnarnes at the extreme west of the Reykjavík peninsula.

GET OUT OF TOWN

An even better plan is get out of town completely. There's a huge variety of tour providers offering to take people out into the wilderness, keeping an eye on the cloud cover map to find out where the clear skies are, via bus or boat. You could also get some extra use out of your rental car, and go exploring independently. A few recommended spots that aren't too far away are the Heiðmörk nature reserve, the Þingvellir national park, and the Hvalfjörður area. Look out for a secluded spot, with unimpeded views in as many directions as possible. **Good luck!**



CRAVING

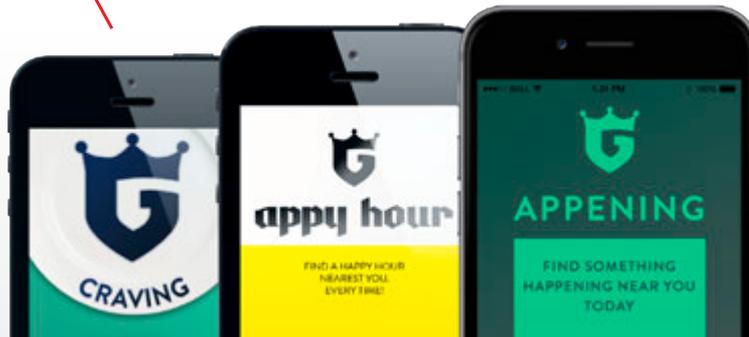
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VESTURGATA 3





TATTOOS

Go Forth And Get Inked

Words **HANNAH JANE COHEN**
Photo **ART BICNICK**

Thinking of getting a tattoo? Then you better also get used to answering the same questions over and over again. “Yes, it hurts. Yes, it does last forever. No, it doesn’t mean anything. Yes, it will be there when I’m 70.” Trust us, it’ll be never-ending. But whether you’re ready for some dandelions-turning-into-birds on your wrist or a full-color portrait of Páll Óskar on your back, we at Grapevine have some advice for you. Get creative, for one. And have fun. And go to one of these places...

YOUR “REMEMBER REYKJAVÍK” TOURIST TATTOO

Reykjavík Ink. In Reykjavík for your buddy’s bachelor party, and want to get some ink to commemorate it? Reykjavík Ink is a solid bet. It has good artists, a good location, and can do most any style you want.

BLACK AND GREY REALISM

Sindri @ Íslenzka Húðflúrstofan. Black and grey realism is one of the trickiest styles, but Sindri’s work is remarkable. This is a guy who knows shading—you definitely won’t end up on “Tattoo Nightmares” if you get a piece from him.

JAPANESE STYLE

Svanur @ Tattoo & Skart. Svanur’s been tattooing for ages, and it shows—he’s a master of large Japanese pieces. If you’re looking to get that koi half sleeve or dragon back piece, he’s your guy.

TRADITIONAL

Dagur @ Bleksmiðjan Húðflúr. Dagur’s traditional work is spot on. Go to him for ships, sparrows, and all your other old-school imagery.

ICELANDIC-STYLE

Jason @ Reykjavík Ink. Jason has mastered the “Icelandic” tattoo—I’m talking about vegvísirs (that compass thing), runes, mjólnirs (Thor’s hammer) and other Viking tropes. While those tattoos often feel a bit tired, Jason’s work makes them feel fresh—and if someone can do that with something ten centuries old, they are definitely impressive.

COLOUR REALISM

Sindri @ Íslenzka Húðflúr-

stofan. Wait didn’t he just win black and grey? Yeah, but this guy is seriously a master of realism. It’ll look like you printed out a picture and taped it to your arm—it might be a little bit more painful than that though.

NEW SCHOOL/ ILLUSTRATIVE

Marlena @ Sweet Hell & Sig-rún @ Bleksmiðjan Húðflúr. Here’s a tie: both Marlena and Sig-rún are new-school queens. With bright hues and crazy drawings, they know how to ink a statement piece. If you’re looking for big colour, go here.

NEO-TRADITIONAL

Búri @ Íslenzka Húðflúrstofan. Búri is a great all-around tattooer (check out his black and grey and watercolour work as well), but neo-traditional is where he shines the brightest.

GEOMETRIC/DOTWORK

Wojciech @ Sweet Hell. Dotwork is an art in itself and Wojciech clearly knows what he’s doing. His work is just so incredibly detailed that one must assume the man has some amazing eyesight (and motor skills).

WATERCOLOUR

Marlena @ Sweet Hell. Marlena not only knows colour, but she’s also a painter, so her watercolour works look natural and flowing. Light and beautiful, she has a real eye for this trendy style.

WALK-INS

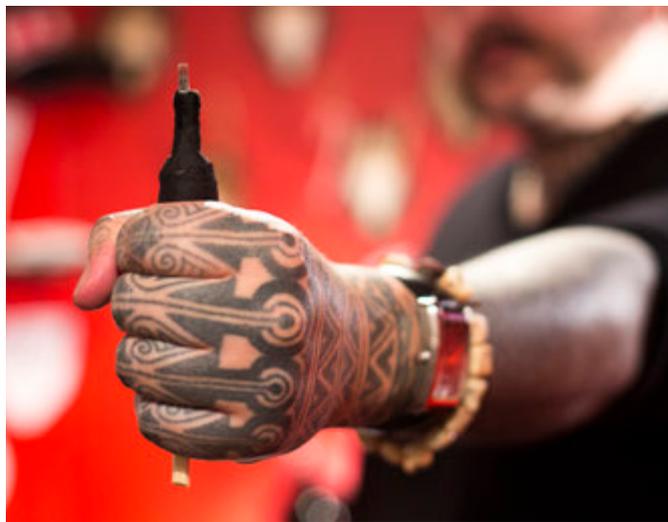
Irezumi Ink. Irezumi Ink takes walk-ins any day of the week so if you’re dying to get that script on your arm right now, it’s the place to go.

PIERCINGS

Tattoo & Skart. Tattoo & Skart has a crazy amount of body jewellery—everything from Christmas-themed navel rings to plugs in any size that you could want. Sesse the piercer is also super nice and will make you feel comfortable (even if she’s about to put a needle through your tongue!)

DERMALS

Bleksmiðjan Húðflúr. Dermal, otherwise known as surface piercings, are notoriously tricky, so you want a piercer that knows what they are doing. You don’t want to get nasty scars from those hip piercings, right?





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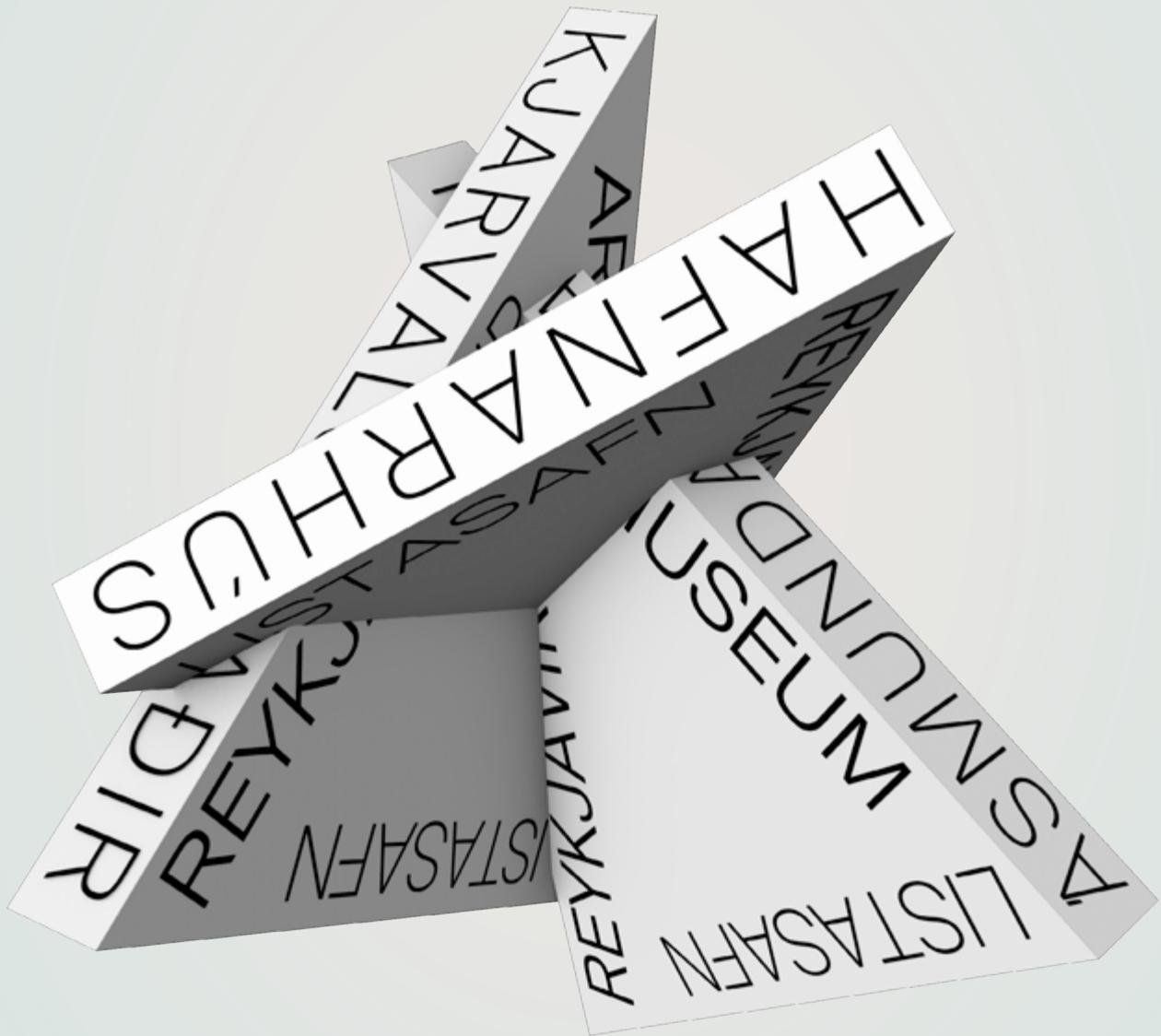


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