

ISSUE 1 FRI13JUN-THU26JUN 2003

THE REYKJAVIK

GRAPEVINE

JACKBOOTS ON THE US ARMY IN ICELAND ICE

THE REYKJAVIK GRAPEVINE | ISSUE 1 FRI13JUN - THU26JUN 2003

17TH OF JUNE
ICELANDS NATIONAL DAY

THE BENEFITS OF
TAKING STEROIDS

THE SEA HORSE
A FOLK SAGA

GET SMASHED!
THE NATIONAL PASSTIME

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EVERY
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THE REYKJAVIK GRAPEVINE

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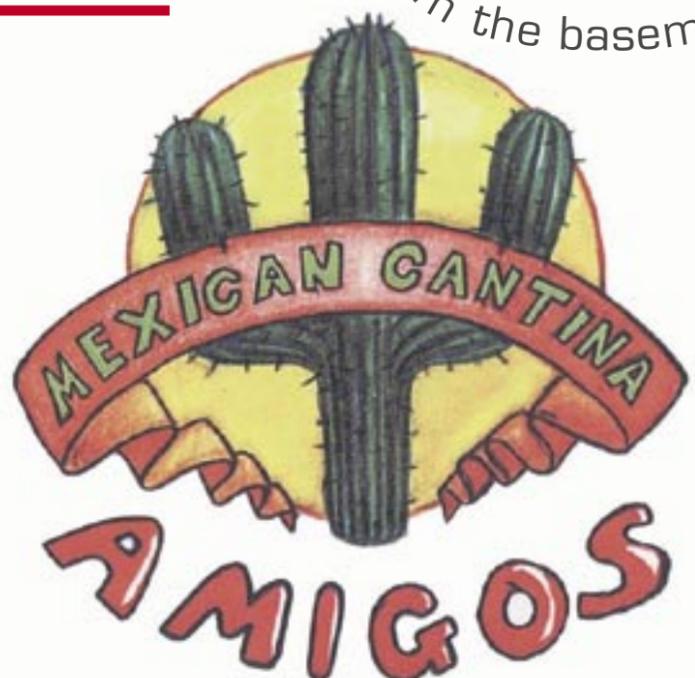



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LETTERS

Feel like bitching about the weather or the prices, need reassurance but your friends won't talk to you, want to open your heart but even the drunks at your local bar won't listen, just can't stop raving about Grapevine or if there's anything at all we can do for you, you've always got a sympathetic ear here in the letters column (especially for the latter). Please send your mail to grapevine@strik.is, or just stick it in the mailbox addressed to: Reykjavik Grapevine, Blómvallagata 2, 101 Reykjavik.

Hello Grapevine

I heard it on the grapevine that there is an English language newspaper about to start in Reykjavik. In Prague we have an English language newspaper called the Prague Pill.

I remember the day I picked up the first copy of The Prague Pill at my university in Prague some two years ago. I was quite surprised and thought, whoa, there must be another Prague out there, a parallel world to the one I knew! It was a Prague seen through the eyes of people who struggled with totally unintelligible street signs and announcements, battled bureaucratic rules I never heard of, and stumbled upon things that to me were everyday trivia but to them were problems and obstacles, like "Where do I get my boots fixed?" These people also seemed to move through a different town to the one I lived in, they went to pubs and bars I only vaguely knew of, and they noticed buildings and places I had been passing by without paying any special attention

to. But first of all, they were virtually taking a crash course on everything I had always taken for granted: the unwritten rules and customs, food peculiarities, traditions, references to national culture and history... things I had been soaking in all my life, and they had to absorb instantly. I suddenly felt as if there were two communities, expat and local, living alongside each other: like water and oil, they never mixed.

Well, having lived on the other side of the barricade now, I must say an expat's life in Reykjavik seems to be somehow different. If I had ever felt a dividing line, I also felt Icelanders and foreigners were equally willing

to break through it, and learn about each other. Which is exactly where a paper like this could make its contribution - to show what Reykjavik and Iceland look like through the eyes of a foreigner, and possibly discover

things that people who have lived here all their lives have not noticed.

So, good luck and lots of cosmopolitan-minded readers!
Beata Rödingova, Czech republic

Dear Grapevine,

On behalf of the Multicultural Council in Iceland, I send greetings and best wishes to the editors of The Grapevine. I think this new paper will be an important addition to the media flora in Iceland and that it will be appreciated by the foreign community living in the capital area.

Most newcomers in the foreign community in Iceland have little or no working knowledge of Icelandic and therefore little access to what is going on in Icelandic society. Therefore a

newspaper/magazine in English offers a much needed window on Icelandic culture. The fact that The Grapevine aims to be an "underground" or alternative publication which talks straight about places and things in Iceland, may give newcomers a better idea than what the average native tells them or the slicker tourist magazines say. I think there is a definite niche for this kind of paper and wish you great success.

Warmly,
Hope Knútsson, chairperson
Multicultural Council
(Fjölmenningarráð)



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WULFMORGENTHALER



Dyslexic dolphin working for the US Navy

"Wulfmorgenthaler" is a comic strip made by two Danish humans, named Mikael Wulff and Anders Morgenthaler. They've got feet, pelvises, the faces of stupid angels and move like floating, feather-like dancers. Morgenthaler directs movies, does animation and in 2003 made two music videos, which were both shown on MTV. Wulff is a comedian, writer and called by some people "the cheese surgeon". For the past year these two men have produced this strip. One strip every day. Until now it's been published exclusively on the net on www.k10k.net and on their own site: www.wulffmorgenthaler.com, where it's also possible to check out other stuff. There's the

hideously honest diary of a creature called The Toucan Kid; a miserable being, that's 28% bird and way too emotional and triumphantly fragile. In the strips the tone shifts between the slightly surreal, the witty, the topical and something which is outright disgusting and involves a whole new depiction of human orifices. Morgenthaler, who does the drawing, was fed up with the tiresome meticulousness of drawing clothes on people so he just stopped doing it. Who cares about clothes in comic strips anyway? Now every character in the strip, no matter how mundane the setting, is naked. And that's it. It's not a message. It's not a call for flower power hysteria. "Wulffmorgenthaler" does

not in any way condone any form of nudity, non-conformist behaviour or spontaneous orgies in any public areas. No way! ... In the fall "Wulffmorgenthaler" plans to publish a heavy book full of strips and jokes. And in the future they'll work towards getting their work published in more printed media like those international magazines full of glamour and prestige. That way they'll get more successful and more people will be able to enjoy their work, which is fun and original. The Reykjavik Grapevine will bring one Wulffmorgenthaler strip in every issue.

INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITORS

(SOME HELPFUL POINTERS ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION INCLUDED)

Life, science tells us, started somewhere around the equator. The climate was warm, and food was abundant. Humankind, however, are a species that's rarely content. The trees weren't good enough, so we moved onto the plains, then the plains weren't good enough, at least for some members of the species, so on we moved, farther and farther, over mountains and across seas. New continents were discovered, but still there were those that were not happy. And so it came to pass that certain people found themselves on a weather beaten rainy rock just below the North Pole. And now you, dear reader, have found your way here. Whether you will find what you are looking for we cannot guarantee. But we are here to make your stay as pain-free as possible, given the circumstances. This is, after all, an island named by a man who came here, spent the winter, watched his sheep die and his crops wither, left and decided never to come here again. But some persisted, and now we have woolly jumpers, whale watching and Björk.

God (or perhaps Odin) only knows why you came here, but you did, and now you're going to have to make the best of it. So if it's culture you came for, you'll find out what's going on in the listings. If it's architecture, we have a feature on interesting buildings in the centre. If it's stunning nature, well, we're Reykjavik based, but at least we've point out some of the things you should beware of in the countryside. If it is some serious drinking you're after, however, we can point you in the right direction in the pubs and clubs section. Be warned that alcohol here is very



expensive, especially at the restaurants. This in no way deters the local population from consuming it in large quantities, it merely means that people drink a lot at home before heading out. So if you don't want to feel awkward by showing up sober at a bar, it is advisable to take the precaution of going to the local liquor store. These are few and far between, but the one in the centre is located at Austurstræti 10a. They are open on weekdays to 18.00, on Fridays to 19.00, on Saturdays to 14.00, and closed on Sundays. For the aforementioned reasons, people usually go out late, so most places usually don't pick up until after midnight on weekends. Bars are open until 01.00 on weekdays, and until

whenever on weekends. The locals might seem a bit cold to begin with, but I'm sure you'll find them a lot more open and amicable after a few drinks. Now, if it's a warm Icelander of your own to hold on the endless summer nights, we can't help you there, except to say our classified section might be a place to start. We would like to point out, though, that Icelandic women are tiring somewhat of foreign men lured here because of a certain reputation being suggested in some quarters. This should be all you need to know about surviving in Reykjavik, if not, don't hesitate to call (see letters, p.) So, skál í botn (bottoms up), enjoy your stay and sorry about the weather.

REYKJAVIK CITY SHOT



The Reykjavik busses don't run very often, so it helps to have a hobby. Photo by Paldís

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ANALYSIS

VOTE P FOR PROMISE

article BY

FILIPPA
GUDMUNDSDÓTTIR

Last May 10th, the Icelandic national elections took place with an impressive turnout of almost 90%, considerably higher than in most countries (in the last American presidential elections only 40% voted) and probably some kind of record outside of dodgy dictatorships. I'm not sure if this huge difference is because we're all so interested in politics and want to have something to say about our future, or if its just the fun of putting an X on a piece of paper and cadging free coffee.

In the weeks before, the parties launched their campaigns in the traditional way, with huge pictures of smiling politicians on every billboard over phrases like "vote for freedom" or "vote for justice", and so on. Of course, nobody cared and when the pictures of our elected liars and thieves with fake smiles were starting to get on peoples nerves, the tone suddenly changed and the parties tried a different approach

After years of silence on the matter, taxes suddenly became the hottest campaign issue. The right wing incumbent Independence Party started the pissing contest by promising 22 billion krónur worth of tax cuts. Of course, the mildly left Alliance Party quickly pointed out that most of that money would go to the rich and instead proposed a modest 16 billion tax cut benefiting the poorest. The Progressive Party, the junior government partner, at the time facing political oblivion according to the polls, joined the game with their own 17 billion pledge

Feeling some resentment from the voters and with the growing gap between rich and poor being a sore spot, the Independence Party raised their promise to 37 billion, making sure that everybody would benefit more from their suggestion. Stunned by this,

none of the other parties dared to outbid them.

The list of other campaign promises ran long and included reducing tariffs on food, higher real estate loans and lower interest rates. In fact, the Independence Party was just an inch away from promising to send everyone bundles of cash in the mail though in the end all they could manage was coffee

The right wing incumbent Independence Party started the pissing contest by promising 22 billion krónur worth of tax cuts.

A lot of people found it funny that when elections were in the air, there was suddenly plenty of money to lower taxes by several percent while at the same time the police numbers were being reduced to remain within an ever tightening budget, and the healthcare system was groaning under the weight of severe government cut backs

When the votes were cast and counted, at first everybody seemed to have won. After the election night, the leaders of the minority parties each went on television to announce that their party was the real winner of this

election. The leader of the Liberal Party proudly announced that his party doubled its number of parliamentarians, jumping from 2 to 4, while The Alliance Party got over thirty percent of the votes and became the second largest party. Even the leader of the Left Green Party felt victorious because they had lost less than expected.

At the same time, the leaders of the incumbent coalition happily announced that they would govern this country for four more years. They shed no tears over losing the trust of the people and 7% of their vote in the past four years. Thanks to a surprisingly good performance from their junior coalition partners, the Progressives, they had the numbers needed for a third term and that, of course, is what matters at the end of the day.

Personalitywise, the election of 2003 saw the making and

breaking of two of Iceland's premier political figures. Late last year, Halldór Ásgrímsson, the leader of the Progressive Party, became a laughing stock when he admitted that he had the dream of becoming Prime Minister. Being one of the least popular politicians and frequently parodied for never changing his facial expression or tone of voice, he was simply dismissed as delusional. At this time the Alliance Party came forward with their candidate for Prime Minister, the Mayor of Reykjavik, Ingibjörg Sólrún. Very popular and successful in leading the



Halldór Ásgrímsson, Foreign Minister, leader of the Progressive party, and one of several people who claims to have won the elections.

city for 8 years, she now became the leader of the opposition. On the back of her heavyweight personality, the Alliance soared to undreamed of heights in the polls, surpassing their bitter rivals in the Independence Party for the first time in history. Poor Halldór, on the other hand, didn't even look like he would make it back into parliament. But, as they say in Westminster, even a week is a long time in politics, never mind a few months. The Alliance made that classic and unfortunate mistake of peaking too early and Halldór made the most impressive return from the dead since Lazarus. Now, no one is quite sure how it happened, but on Election Day, the Progressive Party got an impressive 17% of the votes after having gone as low as 8% in the polls. Since the Independence Party and the Alliance Party are sworn enemies and the other parties were too small, a new government would again have to include the Progressive Party, and Halldór would get to choose who went in with him.

The morning after the elections, The Alliance Party, desperate to form a new government, offered Halldór his dream job as

Prime Minister. With that offer in his pocket, he then went to the Independence Party and accepted their offer to continue their coalition, with Halldór taking over as Prime Minister from David Oddsen within two years, something no one would have believed a few weeks before. The man regarded by many as the doormat of the government, finally got his revenge. As for Ingibjörg Sólrún, well, political fall from grace does not come much harder. Having quit her top job as Mayor to run for Prime Minister, becoming briefly the most popular person in the country and the darling of the left, the cold political light of Sunday morning saw her miss even election to Parliament by a handful of votes.

Now, only a few weeks later with the high political drama already a fading memory, all the promises are forgotten, the fake smiles have been removed, and most people can't even remember who got elected. Here's to four more years of blissful ignorance before we all become experts on politics again.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Elections were held on the 10th of May. The government parties (the conservative Independence Party and the centre right Progressive Party) lost seven seats, but still maintains its majority. Prime Minister Davíð Oddson, who has held office since 1991, will keep his job for the time being. The "new" government's first action after taking office was to announce a payraise for members of Parliament.

The United States government wants to remove its remaining fighter jets from Keflavik Naval base, whereas the local government wants them to stay on. Negotiations are currently under way. The first meeting between US Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones and Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson

lasted only 30 minutes, as Davíð Oddson, upon being handed a letter from President Bush stating that the Defence Department no longer wishes to retain fighters in Iceland, claimed he had nothing further to discuss with Ms. Jones.

Eimskip shipping company is threatening to abandon its operations in Raufarhöfn. The town, current population 284, is threatened with desolation.

The recent good weather has brought large numbers of drinkers downtown. These, sadly, do not always get along with one another. On the night of 30th of May, scuffles between American soldiers on a night out and locals led to an Icelander getting stabbed. Witnessess report broken bottles and watches wrapped around fists were also

used as weapons. The weekend after, a man was slashed in the face in the centre, but this time the incident was a case of locals quarelling amongst themselves.

Somewhat more chilled out were the inhabitants of a house raided by the police. Police claim they found 79 cannabis plants hidden in a room in the clothes closet, along with lamps and other equipment used for the growing of plants. 3 men were arrested.

To the astonishment of the population, Iceland yet again failed to win the Eurovision song contest. This was no doubt due to politics, as the Icelandic song was by far the best one. Yet another blow to the nations prestige came when Iceland's contestant in the Miss Universe competition in Panama became ill

and had to cancel her participation. This led to the country missing out on certain victory, since Icelandic women are, as everyone knows, the most beautiful in the world. However, Iceland will no doubt regain its rightful place among the worlds' great nations at the Small States Olympics currently underway in Malta (whadya mean you never heard of the Small States Olympics?!) In any case, God is on our side, as is evidenced by the fact that the church choir of Langholtskirkja won three gold medals in a choir competition in Tampere, Finland.

Whether this has anything to do with Icelandic women being voted the best in

bed by City magazine in Finland is open to debate. The editorship is currently trying to substantiate this claim, so far without success due to difficulties in carrying out the necessary research.



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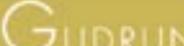
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FEATURE ARTICLE

JACKBOOTS ON ICE

THE UNITED STATES MILITARY BASE IN ICELAND

article BY

VALUR
GUNNARSSON

The US Army first came to Iceland in World War Two, and has maintained a presence here ever since. The War on Terror has put new pressures on the US Military, and there are plans to withdraw completely the fighter jets of the Iceland Defence Force. We decided to visit the base, and find out what the situation there is.



“Nato base, restricted access,” said the sign. As we had secured an invitation beforehand, we felt bold enough to drive on regardless. A soldier came running towards us, double time, M-16 at the ready but still, fortunately, pointing downwards. He informed us that we were at the wrong gate. We drove back, and without further ado managed to find the right one. We were met by another guard, and this time he pointed us in the direction of our host, passes were issued and the gate was lifted. Trailing behind the car of our host, public affairs officer Friðþór Eydal, one of about 1700 Icelanders working on the US Navy base, we crossed the border into the 13th biggest town in Reykjavik, but this one has little in common with the others apart from being located on the same island.

The US base in Reykjavik has long been a bone of contention in Icelandic society and in many cases the dividing line in Icelandic politics, and has been so ever since the end of World War Two. Iceland had always stood outside European wars due to its geographical remoteness, and when it became a free state within the Kingdom of Denmark in 1918, perpetual neutrality was declared. On the morning of the 10th of May 1940, everything changed. That morning (incidentally the same day

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of Great Britain, and Hitler started his western offensive) the people of Reykjavik woke up to find a foreign army marching in the streets. Iceland could no longer depend on its remoteness to keep it out of world events. Advances in aviation and naval technology had made it important geographically,

Of particular irritation to the local men was the attention the Americans received from the women. The women seen with soldiers were aged between 12 and 61.

linking North America and Northern Europe. As invasions go, this one was fairly benign. Some of the locals were at least relieved that it was the British and not the German Army that had landed, and the only casualty on that first day was the door of the telephone company, which the occupying forces broke down when taking control of the building.

A year later an agreement was reached between the governments of Iceland, Great Britain and the United States, that the US would take over the British presence, the United States being at this time still a non-combatant. The first American troops came in July 1941. Part of the agreement stipulated that US forces would leave the island as soon as

hostilities came to an end. Armies, however, once in place, have a habit of remaining so.

The influx of money and materials brought affluence on an unprecedented scale, and Iceland became an independent republic under American protection in 1944. On the other hand, the influx of 50,000 young men into a country

of about 140,000 caused various social problems. Of particular irritation, to the local men at least, was the difference in gender ratio this led to, and the attention the young, well dressed and well paid Americans received from the women. The ministry of Justice set up a committee to investigate the reported lapse in morals, and it concluded it had found about 500 instances of close encounters between local women and soldiers, and estimated this was about a fifth of the whole figure. The women were mostly between the ages of 14 and 23, although extremes ranging from 12 to 61 were recorded. The committee concluded that the state of affairs was “terrible,” but added that the uncivilized behaviour of Icelandic men contributed to women’s attraction to the foreigners. No solutions were proposed, but women seen in the company of Americans were often ostracized to a large extent. More seriously still, there were instances of overzealous guards killing Icelanders, the greatest outrage breaking out when a 12 year old boy was killed by a soldier who was later found to be mentally unstable.

After the end of the war, in 1946, an agreement was reached between the governments of Iceland and the United States that stipulated that American military forces be withdrawn and civilians brought in instead to run the airfield at Keflavik airport, which would still be open to military traffic between the US and occupied Germany. Some saw this as a betrayal of Icelandic independence, and around 200 people stormed the headquarters of the conservative Independence Party, interrupted a meeting and broke windows, and then proceeded to sing the International in

from of the house of Prime Minister Ólafur Thors.

Greater riots followed in 1949 when the government decided to

pointed at the base. Soviet planes frequently penetrated Icelandic airspace, often on flights between Russia and Cuba. F-15’s would be



join NATO. The crowd demanded a referendum and stones were thrown through the windows of the parliament building. Paving stones were pulled out to use as weapons against the police, and the crowd was eventually dispersed with the aid of teargas. As in 1946, it was promised that an army would not be kept in Iceland in peacetime. In 1951, however, and partly as a result of the Korean War, a new agreement was made whereby US troops returned to Iceland.

The Navy Base in Cold Wars and Cod Wars

During the Cold War the base in Keflavik was an important stopover for aeroplanes flying between North America and Europe, and for monitoring Soviet submarine activity. With the US Navy commanding the seas, the prospect of a Soviet invasion were slight, but subsequent declassification of files have shown that four Soviet nuclear missiles were

scrambled to escort them out again. The alliance came under strain during the Cod Wars with Great Britain in the early 70’s, some reports even have the Prime Minister of Iceland calling up the US commander while drunk and demanding that he bomb the Royal Navy! In any case, the American Commander must have declined, and the dispute was settled peacefully, with Britain grudgingly accepting the enlargement of Iceland’s territorial waters.

Reykjavik again became a focus of world events in 1986 with the summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev. By this time, advances in aviation and long range aircraft had reduced Iceland’s strategic importance as a stopover, and it disappeared almost overnight with the end of the Cold War. As the prospect of a major war in Europe and the North Atlantic disappeared, the United States reduced its presence, and even suggested moving all its 18

The Base in Icelandic Culture

The base has had its impact on Icelandic culture in a number of ways. Armed Forces radio was broadcast to surrounding areas, and it might be more than a coincidence that the first Icelandic rock bands sprang up in Keflavik. Halldór Laxness (who won the Nobel Prize in literature, as locals rarely tire of pointing out) wrote the book *Atómstöðin* (The Atom Station) about the debate over the base in 1945-46. The book has also been made into a stage play and a film. One of the first Icelandic films, *79 af stöðinni* (79 Off the Station), made in 1962, deals with an affair between a taxi driver and a widow. She is also seeing an American soldier on the side, he discovers this, and tragedy ensues. Two soldiers from the base played in the film, and one of them was expelled from the Army after the film was debated by the US Congress.

The punk band *Utangarðsmenn* (The Outsiders) made the album *Geislavirkir* (Radioactive) in 1980, which dealt with the consequences of a nuclear attack upon Keflavik, particularly in the opening track *Hiroshima*, with the rousing chorus “you will all die.” Interestingly, two of its members had an American father. One of the country’s foremost rock poets, Megas, wrote the song *Ég á mig sjálf* (I Own Myself) in 1975, about a girl who sleeps with an entire army, which includes the line “first came war/And then came soldiers/And then came peace/And even more soldiers.” This is another instance of the theme of soldiers and Icelandic women that has continued to preoccupy Icelanders to this day. Most of the works dealing with the base portray it rather darkly, reflecting the divisions this has caused in Icelandic society.



Is Iceland a part of America or Europe?

Geographically, the answer is that it's both. The dividing line between the North-American and European plates runs right through Iceland, which is the cause of its volcanic activity, frequent earthquakes and hot springs. Reykjavik is thus on the North American plate. Politically, the border between North America and Europe has usually been considered to be the sea between Iceland and Greenland. Around 1940 some questioned this and references were made to the "Leifline" between Iceland and North America (named after Leif Eriksson, the Viking who discovered America in the year 1000). The Icelandic-American Vilhjálmur Stefánsson wrote a book called Iceland: The First American Republic, and it was debated in some quarters whether the Monroe Doctrine (which stated that the United States would not intervene in European affairs, only American ones) was applicable to Iceland. In any case US troops came to Iceland in the summer of 1941 when the United States was still neutral, and this was not considered a violation of the doctrine. US senator Bernhard W. Gearhart even suggested in a speech in 1945 that Iceland be invited to become the 49th state of the USA. Today, Iceland is a member of NATO but not of the European Union. However, despite a fondness for cars, fast food and right wing governments, there is little doubt that culturally, linguistically and not least of all psychologically Iceland is a member of the Nordic family of nations and of Europe.

fighter jets home, but the Icelandic government insisted on at least four of these being retained. Agreement on this was reached in 1994.

With the War on Terror, American attention is increasingly being diverted to other areas, and there is yet again pressure to downsize the base in Keflavik. Negotiations are currently under way. Both governments have been unwilling to divulge details, but it seems the US wants to recall all its remaining fighters and helicopters. It does, however, want to retain its submarine surveillance equipment, even though they have stated, with Russia now being a friend, that there are no hostile submarines to be found in the oceans of the North Atlantic.

For 36 years from the return of the Army in 1951, the airfield functioned both as an international airport and a military base. It wasn't until 1987 that the two were separated. The US Navy still pays for the clearing of the runway, a considerable task in Icelandic winters, and for the rescue teams which are constantly on standby, although these are manned by Icelanders.

Our host took us for a drive along the military runway, and showed us the fleet of snowploughs used for keeping the strip in functioning condition. Our photographer went out to take a picture, and before we knew it two military police cars with flashing sirens drove up to us, armed guards stepping out to demand authorisation. Our host showed them his ID, and pointed out that he was driving a Navy vehicle, and that as a public relations officer he did this frequently. They did not seem altogether convinced, but let us off on condition that we speak to the office in charge of the airfield. This done and things sorted out, we continued our trip. Our next stop was a shopping centre which has among other things a supermarket, a Subway, and a barbershop. The currency is US dollars, and all prices are at, or often below, the US average.

Today, around 1900 military personnel, along with 2000 family members, live in Keflavik. They usually stay from a week and up to 18 months, but 2-3 years if they bring their families along. The base is more or less a self sufficient community, with its own church, film theatre and recreation centres. Inhabitants of the base are rarely seen outside it. Until 1990, leave for single soldiers was restricted, as this would no doubt lead to trouble with the locals, whereas

soldiers who had families could leave the base as they wished during time off. Today, no such restrictions apply, and soldiers can go where they please during their spare time. Despite this they seem to prefer to spend most of their time on base, and when they leave it, they mostly stick together as a group and frequent the same two bars in Keflavik, where locals rarely go. Occasionally, one hears of friction between locals and soldiers. A boxer from Keflavik, known as Skúli Tyson, famously said before a match with an American that where he came from, beating up Americans was a tradition, and that this match would be no exception. I spoke to a girl at a diner just outside the base, and she maintained that fights between locals and Americans were no more frequent than between the locals themselves. She did, however, mention that girls would either date a succession of Americans or Icelanders, and would rarely switch between the two groups. This seems like a curious throwback to wartime attitudes. She also said that one of the benefits of dating an American was that, in a small community (population of Keflavik

States stipulates that either party can be released from the agreement, in a process that would take 18 months. Left wing governments have twice started this process, once in 1956 when it was stopped after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, and again in 1973, but in that instance the government collapsed and the succeeding one cancelled the former's actions. During the Cold War Iceland held all the cards, since the base was considered essential to the defence of the continental United States, and the Americans largely had to agree to the terms set by the Icelandic government. Two Icelandic companies held a monopoly in construction for the base, but this was changed in 1996, so that now companies have to compete for military contracts. Ironically, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the situation has been reversed. Now the Americans want to diminish their presence, either keep it to a bare minimum or even leave entirely, whereas the Icelandic government wants them to stay on. It is interesting to note that Iceland was the only one of the Nordic countries

A boxer from Keflavik famously said before a match with an American that where he came from, beating up Americans was a tradition.

and surroundings: roughly 8.000), the guys from the base were the only ones who didn't know virtually everything about her beforehand.

Sometimes off duty soldiers have gotten into trouble. In the late 80's a group of drunken Americans went about Reykjavik stealing every flag they could get a hold of, some of them from embassies. American soldiers in Iceland fall under Icelandic jurisdiction, and a local court let them off with a warning. More seriously, on the 1st of June a fight broke out between Icelanders and Americans, which resulted in one Icelanders being stabbed. But perhaps the most surprising thing about these incidents is their rarity. Soldiers are rarely visible, and almost never wear uniforms off base.

Is the Base Necessary Today?

The presence of the US Army has caused great divisions within Icelandic politics. Parties farthest to the left and the right have not been able to work together in government since the Keflavik Agreement of 1946. The Defence agreement with the United

States stipulates that either party can be released from the agreement, in a process that would take 18 months.

Having spoken to public affairs officer Friðþór Eydal, it seems four main reasons can be found for wanting to keep the base as it is.

1: The defence aspect. Neutrality was seriously discredited in World War Two as the German Army rolled over one neutral country after another. Since then many have believed that countries that can not defend themselves militarily cannot be guaranteed continued independence, and so the best course of action is to seek protection from a greater power.

2: The employment aspect. The US military employs some 1700 people directly and the base is the 13th largest town in Reykjavik. Even more people in the southern tip of Iceland get their income from the base indirectly. A considerable number of people would probably become unemployed, at least initially, if the Americans were to leave.

3: The United States pays for most of the maintenance of Keflavik airport. These would have to be



taken over by Iceland at considerable cost.

4: The Navy base has 5 helicopters, supported by a refuelling plane for search and rescue missions. These have saved some 300 lives in the past 30 years. These operations would also have to be taken over by Iceland, which at present only has two helicopters of its own for such purposes.

Given that these are the arguments in favour of the base, what are the arguments, held by a large number of people, against? We asked Stefán Pálsson, chairman of the Campaign Against Military Bases, which has been active since 1972, and succeeded other peace movements.

Stefán claims firstly that the Icelandic government has completely failed to point out who these enemies that we are to be protected from are, and that even US authorities admit that there is no foreseeable danger. Hence he claims that the Icelandic authorities' insistence on the security aspect is mostly to camouflage the economic one, as wanting to have a foreign army here for the sole purpose of making money of it can not be admitted. He also claims that the presence of the base is more likely to make Iceland into a target for terrorism, and hence makes the situation less rather than more safe for the country.

Regarding the economic factors, he says that those who oppose the base maintain that it is immoral to profit from armies, so even if it leads to financial losses the base should be abandoned. He also says that as the

American presence is diminishing, efforts should be made to revive the economy of Keflavik rather than try to keep the army here as long as possible, and that Keflavik has often been left out of discussions on rural renewal, since it was assumed they could live off the army. He claims that without military restrictions, the international airport could be expanded and made more profitable. He concedes that the Americans have saved a number of lives, which has been a benefit of the base, but he also claims that their presence has kept Icelanders from developing such services of their own. He admits that if the Americans left it would lead to considerable financial expenditure, but because of this it is important to start preparing for this as soon as possible.

As for Iceland's future, he says that Iceland should follow Costa Rica's example, and become a neutral and demilitarised state.

We handed in our passes, the gate opened, and we returned to Icelandic territory. The US Naval base in Iceland was established 52 years ago. At that time war raged on the Korean peninsula, Stalin dominated the Soviet Union, Japan was still under American occupation, and NATO and Soviet forces faced each other across minefields across the heartland of Europe. Since then, the Soviet Union has collapsed, Germany has been reunified, America's predominant military interests have shifted to the Middle East, and War on Terror has been declared. Would the American base still be there in another 50 years, I wondered, as it disappeared in the back window.

MOVIES

ICELANDIC FILM CLASSICS

BY
OLAFUR H.
TORFASON

Icelandic film "classics" are not all that old, as regular feature film production only started around 1980. Since then Icelanders have churned out around 70 feature films. The film that brought international attention to Icelandic cinema was "Children of Nature" (1991) by Fridrik Thor Fridriksson, nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign picture in 1992.

joyed a wider international theatrical distribution than probably any Icelandic production before. Spaniard Victoria Abril has a leading role.

Regina (2001) a colourful and funny Reykjavik-musical by Maria Sigurdardottir enjoyed excellent reviews and box-office. Script and music are by former Sugarcube keyboardist Margret Ornlfsdottir, Björks collaborator for two years. The protagonist is a 10 year old girl from Reykjavik who can control other beings with her singing. Children love it.

Seagulls Laughter (Mávalátur, 2001) by Agust Gudmundsson. A dark but humorous drama with lots of women and strong feminist themes, set in a fifties fishing-village, adapted from a novel by Kristín Marja Baldursdóttir. It dominated the annual Edda Icelandic Film & TV awards 2001 and was Iceland's entry for the 2002 Oscars. The most successful movie at the local box-office in 2001.

WHERE TO BUY THEM: Several vendors offer an assortment of Icelandic films on VHS and DVD. In Reykjavik check these: Skifan (Laugavegur and Kringlan), M&M bookstore (Laugavegur), Penninn-Eymundsson bookstore (Austurstraeti). See also Keflavik Airport Duty Free Store.



The leading man from the film Icelandic Dream.

The Icelanders are crazy about films. Per capita, no other nation goes as much to movies, and the USA would have to produce 5.000 films each year (India 20.000) to keep up with Iceland and its 3-4 annual productions. Reykjavik has six modern cinemas with roughly 20 screens.

Icelandic Dream (Islenski draumurinn, 2000) a comedy by debuting director Robert I. Douglas. A fresh and funny story of a losers' redemption. In a parody of the Icelandic and American dreams, a passionate local soccer-fan promoting Bulgarian cigarettes is having his mid-life crisis 15 years too early. In a way the first Icelandic thoroughbred movie, free from the burden of literature, it became hugely popular locally and beat Gladiator at the local box-office.

Angels of the Universe (Englar alheimsins, 2000) by Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. A drama rich with comic-relief which brought one third of Iceland's population into theatres and collected prizes abroad. It was adapted from Einar Már Gudmundsson's novel (Nordic Literature Award 1995). This down-to-earth homage to his late schizophrenic brother and poet incorporates comedy and tragedy in an intense approach.

101 Reykjavik (2000) by Baltasar Kormákur. A comedy adapted from Hallgrímur Helgason's burlesque novel (Nordic Literature Award 1999) describes the lust and laziness of a young man living on social security in his beloved downtown Reykjavik, eloquently fathoming the whirlpools of sexuality and human existence. It has received a lot of awards and en-

SOME ICELANDIC GOODIES AVAILABLE ON VHS AND DVD

On Top (Med allt á hreinu, 1982). The extraordinary musical comedy by Agust Gudmundsson is still on the top as the nations most beloved movie. Two pop music groups, one all-male and the other all-female, challenge each other touring Iceland in the summer time, experiencing things that beggars description.

Children of Nature (Börn náttúrunnar, 1991) by Friðrik Thór Friðriksson. A picturesque and poetic road-movie wherein a old couple from the countryside, disliking Reykjavik and its inhabitants, escape from the home for senior citizens, steal a jeep and manage to cross mountains and waves to a beloved desolate spot. Nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign picture in 1992. Composer Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson was awarded the European Film Prize (Felix) for his music.

POPCORN AND CINEMATIC DEBATES DURING THE BREAK

You will hardly find an Icelander who is not a cinema buff. The reason for this is perhaps simple. In a country where it seems to be almost completely dark half the year, and the climate is not conducive to outdoor activities, there simply isn't much else to do. Hence films are often a good conversation starter, and debates are rife (is Godfather Part I better than Part II, what was in that suitcase in Pulp Fiction, what the hell was George Lucas thinking when he made The Phantom Menace, etc). Long winter nights can be spent settling questions such as "did Anthony Hopkins deserve the Oscar for best leading actor in Silence of the Lambs, even though he didn't get that much screen time?" with the aid of a stop watch (his performance comes in at just under half an hour in total).

There are a lot of cinemas in Reykjavik (per head, of course) and almost all of them have recently been renovated, so they usually have rather comfortable seats and good sound systems. However, as can be determined from a glance at the programs, the large majority of the films on offer are American mainstream fare, and a lot are shown in multiple cinemas, so you have a considerable choice of viewing locations, and somewhat less choice in the films you watch. Fortunately, there are reasonably frequent film festivals which give you the chance to see films from farther afield. One curiosity about cinemas here is the break. The reason for this is that it used to be necessary in order to change the reels. Long after longer reels made this irrelevant, the break is still retained in



Jar Jar Binks: What the hell was Lucas thinking?

this country. The reason for this is probably that it encourages popcorn sales, but it is also a nice opportunity to light up a fag and discuss the first half with the people you came with, although some people find that it ruins the flow of the film. Which of course is a cause for debate.

The beautiful island of Viðey, off Reykjavik's northern shore

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Viðey is rich in history and natural beauty. But its most remarkable feature is Viðeyjarstofa restaurant

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Snowmobiling on Iceland's principal glaciers Langjökull West (close to Húsafell), Mýrdalsjökull (close to Skógar) and Vatnajökull (close to Höfn). Daily departures throughout the summer.

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Holders of the Reykjavik Card receive **10% discount** of the following tours, when booked directly with Destination Iceland.

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Express tour from Reykjavik to wet white-water action on the Hvítá River. The river is graded 2+ and is a nice blend of rapids, admirable nature and fun. For more River Rafting tours and information, check out our website, www.dice.is

Landmannalaugar and Mt. Hekla
• DI-02 (IA 51)

A guided super jeep tour to the central highlands, cross lava fields of different ages, small lakes and scoria deserts. A bathe in a natural hot spring at the colourful Landmannalaugar, which tops the day. Drive along the foot of the famous volcano Mt. Hekla, past some recently formed craters and new lava.

Langjökull Glacier Tour Adventure
• R-05 (IA 50, S/d)

A guided super truck tour with the classical sights of West Iceland. Hvalfjörður bay, hot spring Deildartunguhver, Hraunfossar waterfalls, Kaldidalur and the National Park Þingvellir. On the glacier a dog sledging tour or snowmobile tour - otherwise the Super Trucks take you on a glacier adventure.

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CINEMA LISTINGS

The following cinema listing is for date of publication (June 13th).
Expect some changes in the next two weeks.

SMÁRABÍÓ



4, 6, 8 and 10 pm. 4, 6, 8 and 10 pm.

Identity 6, 8 and 10 pm.
X-Men 6, 8 and 10 pm.
Dumb and Dumberer premiers June 20th
Phone Booth premiers June 27th

Smáralind phone: 564 0000 www. smarabio.is

REGNBÖGINN



4, 6, 8 and 10 pm. 4, 6, 8 and 10 pm.

Identity 6, 8 and 10 pm.
View from the Top 6, 8 and 10 pm.
Dumb an Dumberer premiers June 20th
Phone Booth premiers June 27th

Hverfisgata 54 phone: 551 9000

LAUGARÁS 553 2075

BÍÓ



4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 pm. premiers June 20th

Agent Cody Banks 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 pm.
Anger management 6, 8, 10 and 12pm.
Dumb and Dumberer premiers June 20th

Laugarás phone: 553 2075

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Jack Nicholson now seems to have officially become the greatest actor of his generation, after De Niro decided to stop making good movies about ten years ago. With an all-star support cast, including two of the best bit part players in the business, John Turturro and Harry Dean Stanton, and co-starring Adam Sandler, who has never again really scaled the heights of his first two comic masterpieces, Billy Madison and Happy Gilmour, but one lives in hope, a good time seems to be in order. However, you get the feeling everyone is breezing through this on his day off. It can be fun in a



laid back sort of way, but no one is really trying too hard or doing their best. Some good jokes are served up along with a fair number of painfully bad ones. It starts off quite well with a satire of post 9/11 paranoia in the airplane rage scene, and keeps up the pace in portraying a society where common sense has been thrown out in favour of professional analysis. But sadly, by the second half it slips into your typical nice-but-shy-guy learns to intimidate and beat up people, which leads to him becoming a success in society and get the girl. Is smashing up your boss' office with a golf club

and punching out your girls' best friend really what it takes? The film is best left 15 minutes early, so you'll miss the grand finale where our hero learns to make out with his girlfriend in public at Yankee Stadium. Inevitably, it is Rudy Giuliani who saves the day by encouraging him to french kiss (liberty kiss?) her. And so satire has turned to tearjerking patriotism. The plot "twist" is particularly annoying, apart from being posted with a neon sign a mile off, we actually get a flashback to see how they "tricked" us. Jack can get away with this every now and then, he can still charm us just by

raising an eyebrow, but lets hope he doesn't do it too often. Now, if only Meet the Parents had been the worst De Niro film of the past decade, rather than the best...

VG

MATRIX RELOADED



Several outcomes could be expected from viewing the new Matrix film. An post-modern state of the world address, a thrill ride without equal in modern cinema, or a huge disappointment were all expected outcomes. The one outcome that was unexpected, though, is that you would sit there just plain bored. Which is exactly what hap-

pened. The first indication was the title. Who do they think they are? Metallica? Tom Jones? How about just plain Matrix II, roman numerals and all. A promising opening action scene soon turns into that lamest of plot twists: "it was all just a dream." An hour elapses until we get to see any more action. In the meantime, we find ourselves in Zion, which looks like the set of a Star Wars film before they add all the fancy effects. As it is announced that the inhabitants have but a few hours to live because the enemy is on its way, a spontaneous rave breaks out, as is wont to happen in such circumstances (strangely, instances of this behaviour among the inhabitants of Baghdad go unreported). Apparently, ugly people are barred from entering as if this were a Moscow nightclub, unless, of course, only beautiful people are rescued from the Matrix, due to some Strangelovian reproduction logic.

Every sentence uttered seems like a random quote from a beginners course in postmodernism. The only attempt at characterisation is to demonstrate that all these people are sex crazed, which hardly makes them more sympathetic. Finally, after an hour of this, the action cuts in, and you hope all will be forgiven. It is not. The reason for this is partly that the first Matrix film is one of the most influential films of recent years, so everyone has been copying the action sequences. In order to stay ahead, the Wachowskis would have to present us with something new. Instead, they do what most sequels do, and give us more of the same. A lot more, in fact, apparently opting for quantity over quality. Neo fights a hundred Agent Smiths before flying off, which makes you wonder why he didn't just fly away to begin with. What was the point

of this whole exercise, unless Neo in fact needed the exercise. It didn't really serve any plot purpose, nor does the river dance fight scene with the chinaman or any other action sequence for that matter. And they're not even any more impressive than most computer games these days. The action is a lot like the philosophy, they're constantly throwing things at you hoping something will stick. Very little does. Amazingly, they even manage to make an encounter with the Creator of the Universe dull. And would you really betray your friends for one kiss with Keanu Reeves? Particularly annoying was the love conquers all ending. Didn't they do this one before? If they didn't, someone did. In fact, when Neo comes flying to the rescue, you sort of expect his to start spinning the world on its axis to turn back time in order to save his beloved. Instead, he opts for the less dramatic method of picking the

bullet out of her body. Before the film was over I found myself rooting for the machines, not just for wanting to waste these smug cooler-than-thou know it alls, but, really, if reality is such a bitch, and the pretend world is considerably better, isn't it better to live in the illusion. The computers even tried to make the perfect world, in so far the Almighty's speech made any sense, but, as usual, ungrateful man wouldn't have it. Perhaps this will all make sense when the last film comes out. As for me, I no longer care.

VG

CITY GUIDE

GRAPEVINE IN YOUR POCKET

THIS PULLOUT HAS ALL THE INFORMATION ONE MIGHT NEED, SO FOR A SAFER JOURNEY, PULL IT OUT AND PUT IT IN YOUR POCKET

LEAVING THE CITY

If you're not going to hitchhike your way out of town and you haven't got a bike, there are three ways to do it.

Rent a car

A comfortable way to if you can afford it, renting a car for 24 hours can cost anywhere from 6.900kr (89\$/83EU) with insurance and unlimited mileage. You can rent anything from a four wheeled aluminum tin can (usually a VW Polo) to a huge Motor home/VR, jeeps are also available. Car rentals are situated in most of Iceland's larger towns, e.g. Reykjavik, Akureyri, Ísafjörður, Selfoss and Egilsstaðir. You must be at least 20 years old, and you must have been licensed to drive for at least one year at the time of the rental. The rental company usually require payment by credit card..

Taking the Bus

Reykjavik's main bus terminal is BSI (www.bsi.is). It opens at 7:30 (9:00 on weekends) and closes at 19:00. BSI's bus routes go all around Iceland, at a rather reasonable price. The buses are accurate and usually on time, a big advantage, but the time between trips from one place can sometimes vary from a few hours to a couple of days, a disadvantage for the less patient. You can also check out BSI's guided tours either at their website (www.dice.is), or simply contact the bus terminal.

Get airborne

There are two airlines that handle Iceland's domestic flights, Flugfélag Íslands (Air Iceland) and the smaller islandsflug. We recommend you visit their websites for more info on their fares and so on. Both airlines are situated on Reykjavik airport in the center of Reykjavik. Flying to Akureyri, usually costs around 7.500kr (100\$/90EU.) and flights to all destinations are frequent, often up to three times a day, but if you think you're going to be enjoying the view on your way, you will be disappointed.

www.flugfelag.is
www.islandsflug.is
and of course you can always walk.

SPOT THIS

Bæjarins Bestu
Hot dog stand
Hafnarstræti 18,
101 Reykjavik
Downtown



Situated across the street from Reykjavik's flea market and open late, and almost 24hrs at weekends, Bæjarins Bestu, is the best place to try out an Icelandic Hot Dog. Though the hot dog, may look like its going to spend the rest of your trip on your hotel's bathroom, it actually tastes delicious. Icelanders are more than proud of their "hot dog in a bread with everything" invention, though "everything" is just ketchup, mustard, some yellow goo and both fried and fresh onion. If these dodgy looking hot dogs float your boat, you will soon discover that you can buy them pretty much everywhere, and the price of a hot dog is usually surprisingly low compared to most other fast-food. As a "5 o'clock in the morning too drunk to walk and out of your mind" snack, it comes highly recommended by the editors. Bæjarins Bestu will also serve colva with their Hot Dogs, but nothing else! Hopefully, the most loved snack in Iceland will become your daily bread too.

café

1. To og Kaffi
Laugavegur 27
Because of its small entrance, it easy to miss while walking by. Being not only a café, but also a gift shop, it is well worth the visit. It's Reykjavik's answer to Starbucks, with a large selection of coffees, teas and everything you need to consume your coffee at home. The café itself may not be the best place to sit down in, but does great takeaway.

2. Ráðhúskaffi
City Hall
With view over the city pond, Ráðhúskaffi is situated inside Reykjavik's City Hall. Coffee and great cakes as you enjoy the view. Free internet access for costumers and around the corner inside the City Hall, you'll find a big 80m2 model of Iceland.

3. Grái Kötturrinn
Hverfisgata 16a
Grái Kötturrinn is across the street from Iceland's National Theater and very small and very popular in the early hours of the day. A good place to start a day the British way, with eggs and bacon and other traditional breakfasts on the menu. The lunch menu is also inviting.

4. Kaffitár
Bankastræti 8
The colors of the Rainbow meet you when you enter this café on Bankastræti, new color on every wall. It's small but has good coffee and tasty side dishes. It's one of these places that make you want to sit down and watch daily life go by on one of downtowns busiest streets, or simply just to read the newspaper.

5. Súfistinn
Laugavegur 18
The only no smoking café in the centre and always crowded. Being inside Mál & Menning bookstore on Laugavegurinn is it's biggest advantage. You are allowed to pick up books, magazines and newspapers from the bookstore, and read them there over a cup of coffee and/or a snack.

6. Mokka
Skólavörðustígur 3a
An Icelandic tradition since 1958, Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavik and the first one to make coffee with an espresso machine. Mokka celebrated its 45th birthday on May 24. The walls are covered with art for sale and seats usually filled by loyal customers.

7. Kaffivagninn
Grandagarður 10
By the harbor where fishermen and sailors along with bus drivers and old badasses gather for lunch and a cup of coffee. If you want to try out traditional Icelandic food, pancakes or bread covered with smoked lamb this is the right place although you might feel slightly apprehensive about the tough old guys, don't worry! They're not going to be the last thing you see in this life.

8. Café Paris
Austurstræti 14
Situated in the heart of the city with view over Austurvöllur, its spacious, popular and usually full. Offers you light meals and the opportunity to sit outside when the weather is nice. Middle aged Icelanders on every other table, and tourists in between, the usual crowd, Café Paris is international like the city it's named after.

9. Tíu Dropar
Laugavegur 27
With the exception of Mokka café, Tíu Dropar is the oldest café in downtown Reykjavik. The place has a very special feel to it, the decor, the tables and the chairs, along with the service makes you feel very much at home, it's almost like your sitting down for a cup of coffee in your grandma's kitchen. The menu is limited, but has the advantage of constant changes, with new items every day.

bar and bistro

(most are cafés too)

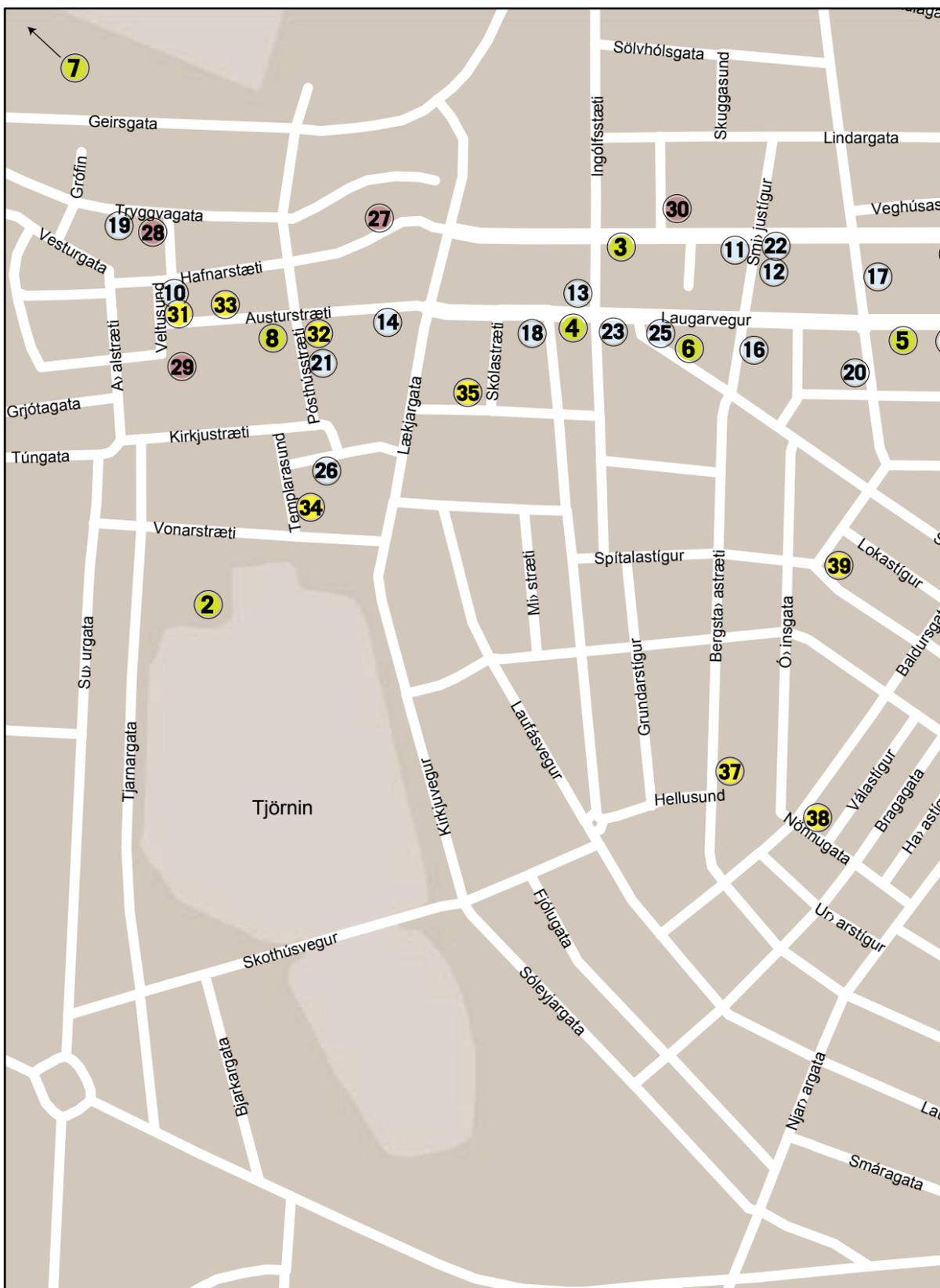
10. Dubliners
Hafnarstræti 4
The city's main Irish pub, which, as in many cities, means that it's a hangout for all sorts of foreigners. At the weekends there's also a large influx of locals, often of the slightly older variety. If you like the darker stuff on tap, this is probably the best place to go.

11. Hverfisbar
Hverfisgata 20
Very long queues to get in, and once there, you wonder what the fuss was about, or whether the queue was the best part. When it's four o'clock on a Sunday morning and you're still going strong, this might be the place you'll wind up, by which time you probably won't care that the same song seems to come on every half hour.

12. Grand Rokk
Smiðustígur 6
A place true to Rock 'n Roll, leather, long hair and bands that don't do covers. Well known and less known Icelandic bands play for free (free drinks for band members, need I say more?) usually no less than three bands a night, four nights a week. Grab a beer and rock on! During the day this is a hangout for chess players, challenging each other and anyone that might wander in here for a game. Some of them seem to have finally decided to abandon participation in the outside world in favour of the afternoon drinking and chess.

13. Sólon
Bankastræti 7a
One size fits all is what this place is going for, and it's usually a very crowded pick up place. Somewhat expensive, and whether it's because of this, an attempt at masculinity or just general despair, people have been known to jump from the second floor balcony. This is not recommended, as a broken leg is most often the result, and the girls remain duly unimpressed.

14. Astro
Austurstræti 22
Our sources tell us that Ken and Barbie hooked up here few years ago and if you look closely you'll see them dancing and drinking here from time to time. Guys wearing ties, girls in skirts, dyed hair and solarium tans, all in perfect harmony with the Euro-disco music. Go get some!



15. Cafe 22
Laugavegur 22
The price of a beer (500 kr) to get in after midnight, so it's a gamble whether you get your money's worth. Originally a gay hang out now it's a place where you can pass through all the stages without leaving the building, from chatting on the first floor, dancing on the second, to passing out on the third, where the atmosphere is more of an intimate late night one.

16. Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðarstræti 1
Kaffibarinn is cool Reykjavik, or at least tries to be. Reykjavik prides itself on having more artists per capita than any other capital in the world, and the crowd here seem to be trying to prove the point, with musicians, actors and writers, and a whole lot of wannabes. You can't say you've partied in Reykjavik unless you've partied here, although civilians might have a hard time getting in. Blurs Damon Albarn owns apiece of this one wisely figuring it was cheaper than paying for drinks.

17. Sirkus
Klappargistur 30
Weird inside out and the tropical forest painted on the outside gives you a hint of what's to come. It's Reykjavik's underground wildlife in a small cage, it's kinda like someone threw a party

at home, and things got a bit out of hand... months ago. It's as tiny as an apartment for two and the bathroom looks just like someone's living room. Cramped, but the bathroom queue is a good place to meet people.

18. Nelly's
Þingholtsstræti 2
Not the most aesthetically pleasing bar in Reykjavik, dark and dirty, but the beer is cheap by Reykjavik standards, which makes it a worthwhile hangout. The crowd is a bit like the beer, and the beer is a bit like the interior.

19. Glaumbar
Tryggvagata 20
This American looking bar often feels like the Beverly Hillbillies have come to downtown Reykjavik got drunk and ended up here. A classic pick up joint for those who've tried everything else and are running out of options.

20. Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4
Wants to be the in-spot to be seen, and is just that. Dress up, flaunt it and enjoy the view as others do the same. It's a jungle in there, and the fittest, or at least the fittest looking, come out on top.

21. Kaffibrennslan
Pósthússtræti 9
On the sober side of town, but ironically with the largest selection of beers in Reykjavik, good coffee and even better service, (and imagine, we're not getting paid for saying this). One of these cafés/bars that should fit all, the editors admit they drink coffee here more often than they should.

22. Celtic Cross
Hverfisgata 26
Arguably the bar in town that comes closest to deserving the title of Irish, even though the Dubliner tries harder. Except for the coffin in the back, it's very alive. Live music almost every night and middle aged philosophers asking themselves questions about life during the day, over a pint of beer or a cup of coffee.

23. Prikíó
Bankastræti 12
Always a classic, no matter if it's early on a Monday morning or very late on a Saturday night, Prikíó makes your day (or night if that's your thing). Nice coffee, better music and remember to dance, if you can manage to take advantage of the very limited space

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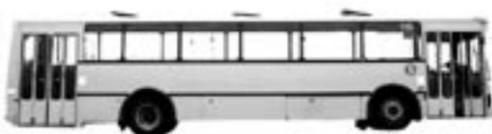
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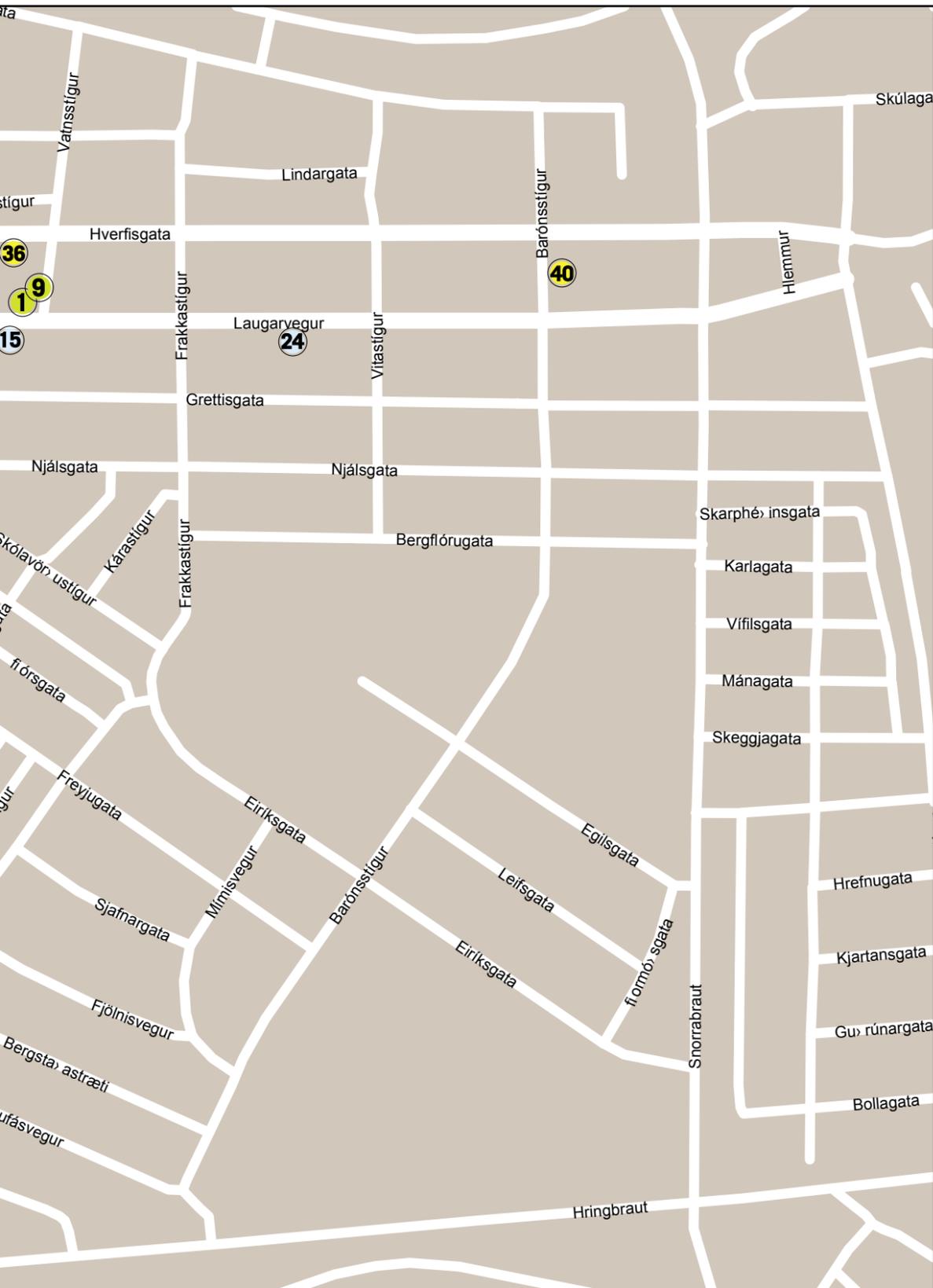
Reykjavik has no trams, trains or subways, only buses. These yellow things can take you pretty much anywhere in Reykjavik's suburb areas. It's a slow system and you might have to change buses a couple of times to get where you want to, though usually things run smoothly, and on time. The price of a single fare is 220kr, for an adult, (60kr for children under 12) if you are in town for more than a few days then 9 ticket package for 1500kr would be a better bet. Bus cards valid for two weeks a month or three months are also available. You have to pay as you step on board and it has to be the accurate amount, unless you want to pay

more for your ride. The driver can not change your money. For those of you used to the honesty system, this system is as honest, because if you don't pay, you don't ride. You can ask the driver for a free time limited exchange ticket, if you need two buses to complete your journey. The bus system is closed during the night, you can catch your first bus between 6:40 and 7:00 in the morning,

and last call is around 24:00. The main bus stops in Reykjavik are Lemur and Lækjartorg (see map), there you'll be able to get all the information you need.



HOW TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT



24. Svartakaffi
Laugavegur 54
Read the newspaper, have a cup of coffee, have a philosophical conversation with your cigarette and enjoy the specialty of the house, soup in a bread. Aim high, it's not on the ground floor.

25. Kofi Tomasar Frænda (Uncle Toms Cabin)
Laugavegur
Sit down and chat with your friends, or read newspapers and magazines. Its quiet even when things are getting out of hand everywhere else, so if you're not in the mood for action this is your place. Easy to miss but still well situated, now aim low, halfway below ground floor is where it's at.

26. Vinbarinn
Kirkjutorg 4
Attracting the older but not necessarily the snobbier element, Vinbarinn has a huge selection of fine wines at a very reasonable price, at least by local standards. Something for the less drunk and more civilized, mid sized and quiet, cosy and nice.

clubs

27. Spotlight
Háfnarstræti 17
With perhaps the exception of the Vatican, every self respecting city has at least one gay club, and this is Reykjavik's. Gay, bi or simply curious, are supported by a crowd that's there to dance rather than to make moves (if you know where I'm going). Cool happening club and likely to be entertaining unless you're particularly prudish. 500kr for entrance. Crowd: gay+

28. Gaukur á Stöng
Tryggvagata 22
Iceland's oldest club is turning 20 this fall. During the day it's a pool pub and on weekend evenings there are often live rock concerts. On weekends there is usually a lot of action with cover bands playing everything from Britney to the Beatles. Without exception you'll be charged at least 1000kr for entrance in the evenings. Crowd: 20+

29. Nasa
by Austurvöllur
Used to be a theater, but is now a club. New in Reykjavik's nightlife and it seems that there was need for it. Great sound system and occasional live bands. Most come to dance and space out. Because of little competition it is perhaps the only super-club downtown.

30. Leikhúskjallarinn
Hverfisgata 19
Recently opened again and is gaining respect, it's a Restaurant during the day but a dance place during night (weekends of course). The crowd here is usually little more mature than in the other clubs. Talented DJs play with the drunken crowd. Crowd: 25+

restaurant

31. Einar Ben
Veltusund 1
Full of 19th century charm the restaurant Einar Ben is named after one of Iceland's finest poets, Einar Benediktsson. It is situated in the older section of Reykjavik's mid-town, close to the harbor. A fine menu features a contemporary version of the Icelandic international kitchen. The Menu is composed by Chef Bardur Brandsson, whose magic is outstanding. The food and the old Einar Ben. Atmosphere is something you can't miss. A visiting journalist has likened it to a Hollywood photo from Gloria Swanson's personal family album. Seriously!!

32. Apotek
Austurstræti 16
Formerly the central drugstore of Reykjavik, established in the late 18 hundreds, the Apotek is now a modern restaurant with Art Deco interior. You can still see the names of the chief managing pharmacists/owners on the wall of the bar. Today, this "drugstore" serves a different type of milkshake. Now look for a sizzling visual kitchen (behind a glass wall) with a Super Menu! Apotek is an eating experience not to be missed.

33. La Primavera
Austurstræti 9
Everybody laughed when we discovered a contemporary restaurant that has its most notable influences from Northern Italian cooking using local Icelandic produce. The unique menu that results from this combination features homemade pastas, risotto, gnocchi, polenta and a wide variety of the freshest vegetables, fish, poultry, meat and game. The menu, the atmosphere and a comprehensive, exclusively Italian wine list has made La Primavera a favorite among the locals. They laugh no more!!

34. Við Tjörnina
Templarasund 3
The most novel fish restaurant in Iceland. The owner, Chef Runar Marvinnson, is known for innovative fish dishes made from a variety of rare fish and shellfish and related raw materials. Mr. Marvinnson is also a respected food and cooking personality, the author of several cookbooks. His respect for his raw materials is a tribute to fish and shellfish, showing off their natural goodness without artificiality. Chef Marvinnson is really a natural wonder and a particular favourite with Icelanders!

35. Humarhúsið
Amtmannsstíg 1
One of the most popular places in Reykjavik or should we say Iceland, - a gourmet restaurant in the heart of Reykjavik. The kitchen has a menu with various types of shellfish, lobster and the amazingly sweet and succulent langoustine (sometimes called Icelandic Lobster). The specialty of the house is a rich Cream of Lobster Soup has been hailed all over the world by international gourmet writer David Rosengarten, whose comments appear in the finest food magazines in Europe and in the States.

36. Sommelier
Hverfisgata 46
The Sommelier not only has an excellent menu - Icelandic cooking with delicate French Touch - but the Sommelier wine list is admired for its variety of specially selected wines. The service is impeccable and the waiters take time to discuss the qualities of each and every wine listed, if you wish. The wine list has two hundred entries! This is where you may just happen to meet stars of stage and television, if you're lucky!

37. Hótel Holt
Bergstaðarstræti 37
An exclusive hotel housing Iceland's Most Renowned Restaurant, the Gallery.
An evening at The Gallery Restaurant remains an unforgettable experience, if your passion is good wine and food. The superb cuisine is inspired by French culinary tradition and includes a variety of Icelandic seafoods and organic lamb. The impressive selection of vintage wines is unique for lovers of the grape. This is where you will see original Icelandic art, without having to go to a gallery. The Holt has the largest privately owned art collection in Iceland.

38. 3 Frakkar
Baldursgata 14
This is a restaurant that cannot be ignored. A very small place with an atmosphere. Here you may enjoy the house specialties of Icelandic traditional dishes prepared in the good, old-fashioned manner, including catfish, shark, and whale steaks. And of course much more.
If you're lucky, Chef Ulfar Eysteinnsson, the owner, may be present regaling the clientele with wild whaling tales. Don't forget to ask Chef Ulfar for dark Icelandic pumpnickel bread with pure Icelandic butter. Don't forget to make a reservation!

39. Siggí Hall at Öðinsvé
Þórsgrata 1
Ask Chef Dellea, the only Italian who is "Commandeur de la Commanderie de Cordons Bleu de France". Ask Chef Burmistrov at the Corithia Nevskij Palace in St. Petersburg. Ask Chef Jeff Tunks owner of the fabulous DC Coast in Washington DC. Ask anyone who is somebody in the culinary world, and they will tell you about Siggí Hall, Iceland's famous chef and television personality. Siggí Hall has presented Icelandic gourmet food all over the world. His television show is very popular and so are his cookbooks. The Siggí Hall restaurant at Hotel Odinsve is one of the 100 best new restaurants in the world according to Condé Nast Travel Magazine. Need we say more.

40. Argentina
Barnsstígur 11a
"A dark cavernous, off-beat restaurant called Argentina..." "A steak house where the lamb has killed the beef..." and "a gastronomic delight..." are just few of the impressive compliments paid to this restaurant.
David Rosengarten wrote in his American Newsletter not too long ago: "Lots of chefs in Reykjavik riff on local lamb, but if you want to see it in its most pristine form, you can dine at Argentina."
There are few places in Reykjavik where you can simply sense the deep passion for simply prepared seasonal foods.

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Reykjavík Art Museum, Lobster or Fame: Two Decades of Bad Taste Ltd.

June 13th - August 31st.



Smekkleysa SM, widely known as Bad Taste SM Ltd is the record label that launched The Sugarcubes, Reptile, Ham, Maus, Björk, Sigur Rós and Minus. This summer it celebrates Icelandic music, culture and its 16th birthday at Reykjavik Art Museum with a blend of photography and music. Lobster or Fame is an overview of the labels' history, displaying posters, record sleeve designs and photos that capture an apparent naive joy and vibrancy. Historically significant, the rarely seen photographic images weave into the creative core of a label whose anarchic and quirky spirit has produced extraordinary artists and made a lasting mark on both the Icelandic music and art scenes as well as having had considerable impact further afield. An informative and appropriately tasteless catalogue is published in connection with the exhibition. In it you will find rare photographs from the infamous Bad Taste Evenings of the '90s, sleazy details about its famous members and inside information on people you have never heard of – and in the spirit of tastelessness there is even a never before seen picture of a poet with a dried cod sticking out of his fly. Splendid!

The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney.

May 24th - June 29th.



The Living Art Museum is celebrating its 25th year of promoting contemporary art in Iceland with a splash, the Matthew Barney exhibiton. The exhibition constitutes a part of Matthews Cremaster project, completed this year with shows in Europe and the United States.

The exhibition takes place on the 3rd floor of the museum, and features, among other things photographic works from the Cremaster project and sculptures made especially for the show. The exhibition is complemented by screenings of the five CREMASTER films in the Regnboginn Cinema, next door to the museum.

This is one of the biggest events ever produced by the museum and a great honour for a small non-profit, artist-run gallery.

Friday, June 13

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, A course in kitemaking for the whole family.
Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Broadway Entertainment Hall, Country singer Scooter Lee.
Hverfisbar, DJ Atli skemmtanalögga
Café Victor, Dj Gunn.
Leikhúskjallarinn, DJ Johnny D, disco
Vegamót, DJ Sóley
Glaumbar, DJ Steini
Thorvaldsen bar, DJ's every weekend.
Café 22, DJ's Rally-cross, Diabolicals and Bjössí
Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Prikió, Gisli Galdur.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavik Art Museum, Lobster or Fame. Multimedia exhibition about Bad Taste records, who spurned Björk and Sigurros, among others.
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Grand Rokk, New, young local rock bands.
Sólón, Photo exhibition
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Retrospective of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir's work, in honour of her 75th birthday.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Russian Photography from 1900 to today.
Gaukur á Stöng, Sniglabandið. Good time band.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Nasa, Stuðmenn
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavik Art Museum, The earlier works of popart painter Erró.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Coffee shop 11, The resident DJ provides the rock

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -18:00- The Saga of Guðrídur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, The works of Örn Þorsteinsson, who creates sculptures from stones found in nature.

Saturday, June 14

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Gaukur á Stöng, Á móti sól. Cover band.
Borgarleikhúsið, City Theatre, -15:15- Concerts every Saturday at 15.15. 14th of June: Echoes of Finland by the Poulsen group.
Hverfisbar, DJ Atli skemmtanalögga
Kaffibarinn, DJ Árni Einar.
Leikhúskjallarinn, DJ Gullfoss og Geysir
Café Victor, Dj Gunn.
Prikió, DJ KGB.
Glaumbar, DJ Þór Bæring
Café 22, DJ's Rally-cross, Diabolicals and Bjössí
Vegamót, DJ's Tommi and Sammi
Coffee shop 11, Duke Box, guests provide the music

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Grand Rokk, MAUS. Underground rock.
Sólón, Photo exhibition
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Retrospective of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir's work, in honour of her 75th birthday.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Russian Photography from 1900 to today.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works

FÖSTUDAGURINN 13. JÚNÍ
fritt inn
Johnny Dee

LAUGARDAGURINN 14. JÚNÍ
fritt inn
Gullfoss og Geysir

LEIKHÚSKJALLARINN
komdu að dansa

INTERVIEW

LISTINGS

of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavik Art Museum, The earlier works of popart painter Erro.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, The works of Örn Þorsteinsson, who creates sculptures from stones found in nature.

Sunday, June 15

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, Artisans show their skills and folk dances shown at 15.00.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Láraus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Sólun, Photo exhibition

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Retrospective of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir's work, in honour of her 75th birthday.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Russian Photography from 1900 to today.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavik Art Museum, The earlier works of popart painter Erro.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -18:00- The Saga of Guðrúður. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -20.30- The Saga of Guðrúður. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, The works of Örn Þorsteinsson, who creates sculptures from stones found in nature.

Grand Rokk, Tonic. Live band

Monday, June 16

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Salurinn, -20:00- Classical piano recital by Tómas Guðni Eggertsson.

Café Victor, DJ Gunn.

Prikið, DJ Kári.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Láraus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gaukur á Stöng, Hip hop, DJ Sasha..

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Gaukur á Stöng, NOFX, Brain Police and Innvortis.

Sólun, Photo exhibition

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Retrospective of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir's work, in honour of her 75th birthday.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.

Leikhúskjallarinn, The acid jazz band Jagúar

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-

Austurvöllur outdoor exhibition, The Earth from Above.

May 31st. - September 21st.



On a warm summer's day (these may be rare, but they do occur) you can sit outside at Austurvöllur, strategically placed between the Althingi building and the liquor store, and sip beer. The beer might be warm, since the store sadly does not have a fridge, but the spot is interesting. It was once used for grazing cows, and travellers would pitch their tents here, giving it a reputation as a place of serious drinking. A hundred years ago it was used for ice skating, and it is also where Iceland's last public flogging took place in 1829. Jerome Napoleon's (the Emperor's nephew) band played there in 1856, and every 17th of June a wreath of flowers is placed at the feet of the statue of Jón Sigurðsson, the national hero. This summer, the area is host to an exhibition of some 120 aerial photographs, taken by French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand. The exhibition shows us some of the more noteworthy sights of Planet Earth, as seen from above, some of them man made, (a Shinto temple in Japan, a nudist colony in France) and some of them not (a glacier in Argentina, a reef in Australia). What the exhibition aims to achieve, and does quite well, is to question man's imprint upon nature, whether creation (the Guggenheim museum in Barcelona, the palace in Versailles), or destruction (An abandoned town near Chernobyl, a tank graveyard in Iraq). They emphasise the variety and stunning scenery of our planet, and our duty to maintain this. The pictures are impressive, and achieve their goal by criticising man's destructive impulses with visions of beauty. Some of them are sad, such as the picture of the slums in Sao Paulo, and others joyful, such as the Love Parade in Berlin, but all make some sort of point about man's responsibility towards, and impact upon, his environment. The exhibition is large and it is free, and will be there all summer, so it is ideal to look at the various parts of it on different trips to the city, if the weather remains good enough for enjoying outdoor exhibitions. A giant map of the world is also part of the exhibition, so you can see where each of the pictures were taken. Some 5 pictures come from Iceland, the greatest amount for any one country (per head, of course). The text is in Icelandic, English and French. The pictures, like their photographer, have been touring the world, and the exhibition has been seen by some 30 million people worldwide.

An old fish factory in Reykjavik gets a second chance as a music development centre

Icelandic music and Icelandic musicians have made quite an impression in the rest of the world over the past few years. Björk or "our Björk" is a star, bands like Sigurros have done some interesting things, getting good reviews, selling quite a few records, and both are filling concert halls across Europe and America. Not bad for a small country they say! Still, Iceland's government has shown little interest in supporting musicians and spend most of their art related budget on building more museums, which few attend anyway. This policy of neglect means that really interesting artists, at least to the rest of the world, are literally left out in the cold. Many do not even have a place to rehearse, moving between garages and sometimes barns, losing their expensive equipment to enemies like damp, and I am sorry to say, burglaries.

It's a sad picture I'm drawing here, but an accurate one according to many musicians, including Daniel Pollock, a 45-year-old American, who has been involved in the Icelandic music business for over 20 years. Danny, along with his older brother Mike, is responsible for bringing punk rock to Iceland in the late 70's.

"I came here with my brother in 78 from Chicago to work, and to form a band, I especially had become influenced by punk, and at the time punk hardly existed in Iceland"

The brothers formed a band with three other Icelanders and took stands as lead and rhythm guitar players. This new band, Utangardsmenn (the Outsiders) became the most popular band in Iceland in the early eighties. Their debut LP became the record of the year in Iceland in 1980. Although a popular band, they had the same problem as everyone else, trying to find a place to rehearse.



"In those days we had a lot of trouble finding ourselves a place to rehearse, and most the time we had no place at all" Even as their success grew, this remained a problem.

The Pollock brothers along with the rest of the band were responsible for bringing the Icelandic punk wave



out of the garage and into the public domain. Their efforts influenced the likes of Björk among many others.

"We'd play in one of the big hotels in Reykjavik, every Tuesday, bringing sometimes up to 4 other bands to play with us." "At that time, bands went through hell to be able to play together, and hardly ever had a chance to play life in front of an audience." Danny says.

Danny Pollock left Iceland for the States in the mid eighties, and continued his own music career there. He returned in 98, "When I came back there had been no progress, things were the same for musicians as they were when I

"Finding a big place, way too big for just me, gave me an idea. In the states, there are so-called music centers, big buildings with one purpose, to house bands. Bands share rooms for rehearsal, often equipment too, and the music center offers the bands some free studio time also, not to mention safety for their amps, instruments and stuff. What these music centers are also known for is very cheap rent and a lot of time to practice. No angry neighbors either so you're not going to get kicked out for playing too loud".

This is an innovative project and new to Iceland as no one has had the balls to try anything of this caliber before, and surprise surprise, the government with its usual blinkered attitude will not lift a finger to help. "Music centers, like the one I'm opening, should be supported by the government like any other form of leisure or sports, I hope they open their eyes soon", says Danny.

The Center has already opened, but some parts of it are not yet ready, e.g. a second studio and a concert hall. It will house 30 bands, already an inadequate number, as there are many bands waiting to get in. The good news is that concerts will be held and bands that have never before gotten a chance to play in public will now get their fifteen minutes of fame. Danny hopes the Music center will be a boost for music in Iceland. "Once again I am bringing very creative Icelandic bands out of their garages and shit holes and into the light of day".

Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

left." "Personally, I needed a place of my own to rehearse, and I didn't want it to be a filthy garage, but like I said, finding a place wasn't easy, it was closer to being impossible".

I'm glad to report a semi successful conclusion to this sorry tale. Danny did end up finding a place, an abandoned fish factory by Reykjavik's harbor.

EVENTS

17. JÚNÍ

On the 17th of June 1944 at Þingvellir, amid pouring rain and beating wind, Iceland was declared a Republic. The decision had been a hurried one. A symbol for the events was ordered, and designed, fittingly enough, in the USA. Flagpoles were shipped in and arrived just in time, but only about a third of the flags were ready, leading to quite a few flagpoles remaining unadorned. To maintain the respectability of the proceedings, liquor stores were closed without warning a few days before the event. A president was elected, and Sveinn Björnsson won, although the vote counters had problems counting the soaked votes as their desks were awash with rain. A very wet president signed the oath on a document that still bears evidence of the weather, and Iceland became an independent country for the first time since 1262.

At that time, it had come under the King of Norway, which in turn had become a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. When Norway was handed over to Sweden as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Iceland remained a part of Denmark. In the 19th Century, some people started clamouring for independence. The Danes resisted such efforts, not least because of the large German minority within the Kingdom, which might grow restless if they were given the precedent of greater rights for another minority groups. Icelanders, undeterred, did not resort to violence, but instead those most passionate about independence went to Copenhagen to study law, and tried to wear the Danes down with legalism and general annoyance. The National Hero, Jón Sigurðsson, was one of these and his statue still overlooks Austurvöllur, facing the parliament building. What influence his stern gaze has upon modern day politicians as they exit the building is open to conjecture, perhaps they are more impressed by his portrait on the 500 krónur bill.

On the Denmark's southern border, events were less peaceful in the 19th Century, and in 1866 war broke out with Germany. Denmark's southern provinces were incorporated into the Reich, including a large number of Danes. Denmark's position had now reversed, from being a state trying to keep its own minorities compliant, to one trying to regain its nationals currently living as a minority in another country. Hence, it had to appear more benevolent towards different nationalities, to prove they were a better government to be living under than the German one. The effects were soon felt in Iceland, and in 1874 the Danish king Christian IX presented Iceland with its first constitution. 30 years later, Iceland achieved home rule and its



A flag on a pole.

first minister (statues of both of these can be seen outside Stjórnarráðið, the seat of government.) After World War I, according to the principle of the right of nations to self-determination, Iceland became an independent state within the Danish Kingdom, with the added stipulation that it could opt out of the Kingdom 25 years later. This event may once again have been connected with Denmark's desire to get its southern provinces back and in 1920 it duly did, after a referendum was held. However, it had problems with the Germans again in 1940 when they invaded the country on the 9th of April. The Icelandic government now declared that it would conduct its own foreign affairs while the occupation lasted. The political situation changed again a month later when the British invaded Iceland. Nevertheless, Iceland opened embassies in those surrounding countries that were still independent, and in 1944, after the agreement with Denmark had lapsed, a referendum was held and 97.4% of the population voted for independence. The day picked for the declaration was the 17th of June, Jón Sigurðsson's birthday, and celebrations were held on that particularly rain soaked day.

Tradition since dictates that it always rains on that day. Iceland became a republic in the unusual circumstances that Denmark was still under German occupation, and with Iceland now under American protection. In 1994, 50 years of independence were celebrated and this reporter remembers one of the highlights being Björk dropping down in a parachute to sing, upon landing, The Anchor Song in Icelandic. This year, on the 59th Anniversary, we will probably have to make do with speechmaking and flag-waving. And if it rains, we'll remember the sacrifices our forefathers made, so that we might be rained upon as a free and independent people.

ABSENT IN THE LAND OF ICE AND SNOW

While clean air and unpolluted water can sometimes be hard to find in rest of the world, mass transit is quite absent in Iceland. Icelanders have domestic flights and international flights, but no trains, trams or subways and only a handful of ferries. This total absence of these rather common ways of transportation is due to quite a few reasons, very few potential passengers (there are just so many Icelanders) very many privately owned cars, and last but not least, the landscape is not conducive to

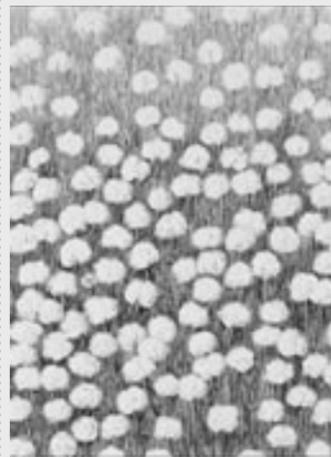
such constructions. From in the south Reykjavik to Akureyri in the north would cost so much it would simply never come close to being profitable. For those of you into history, there has only ever been one train in Iceland and not for human cargo. The train served the purpose of moving rocks from one part of Reykjavik (where Restaurant Perlan is now) to the harbor, which was then being built. Strangely in Icelandic, there is a word for trams, "sporvagnar" absurd considering they've never had any.



LISTINGS

Gallery i8, Eggert Pétursson, paintings.

May 5th- June 28th.



Opened in 1995 and headed by Edda Jónsdóttir, the i8 gallery is the only private gallery in Iceland that adheres to international standards of professionalism and dedication to the artist it represents. The gallery's biggest flaw is limited opening hours, but it can be opened by request, especially if you are a potential buyer.

The gallery has brought numerous international artists to Reykjavik for exhibitions, including American Roni Horn, Swedish team of Elmgreen and Dragset, and Berlin-based expatriate: Iclander Olafur Eliásson.

The exhibition showing now is the works of painter Eggert Pétursson, and his theme for the exhibition are flowers, painted in extreme details, so extreme that it is almost hard to believe the paintings are real. Brushstrokes of paint are piled on top of each other. The result is a contrived natural environment. Flowers and foliage shaped from color, constantly changing shapes by the light shined upon them.

Admission is free
Open 11-18, Thursdays and Fridays
And whenever for those with Swiss bank accounts.

The Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show.

24th May - 18th August



The Nordic house aims to introduce the culture of the other Nordic countries to Iceland, and Icelandic culture to the other Nordic countries. This summer the theme is that Scandinavian favorite, the elephant. Although rarely sighted in these parts, except for the pink variety, they still occupy a special place in this reporter's heart. Who, growing up, doesn't remember wishing that they could have their own elephant, or even that they could be an elephant? Now you can. For as the poet said: "some people are born elephants, some achieve elephantness, and others have elephantness thrust upon them." This summer you can relive your childhood fantasies at an elephant themed exhibition by three Danish artists. People in elephant costumes especially welcome. 200 kr to get in, free for children under six. Open Tuesdays to Fridays 10-16, Saturdays to Sundays 12-17. The premises also houses a Nordic library, cafeteria and an exhibition of photos from Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Tuesday, June 17

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Downtown Reykjavik, June 17th-National Holiday. Celebrations start at Austurvöllur in the morning.

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, National costumes and folkdances. Guests are encouraged to wear their national costumes.

Sólun, Photo exhibition

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Retrospective of sculptor Gerdur Helgadóttir's work, in honour of her 75th birthday.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.

Grand Rokk, The band Rass and guests

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Wednesday, June 18

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Sólun, Photo exhibition

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Coffee shop 11, The girls provide the rock.

Thursdays. Various events. Fridays. House DJ. Saturdays. Jukebox night.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Thursday, June 19

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, Chiselling I. A 3 hour beginners course in wood chiselling for the whole family.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works,

MUSIC

LISTINGS

sculptures and films.
Coffee shop 11, Mixed events
Grand Rokk, OBLIVIOUS.
Sólon, Photo exhibition
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Prikið, Surprise event.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -20:30- The Saga of Guðrídur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Friday, June 20

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Gaukur á Stöng, Buff. Live trio.
Hverfisbar, DJ Atli skemmtanalögga
Glaubar, DJ Steini
Prikið, DJ's Hannes and Dóri.
Café 22, DJ's Rally-cross, Diabolicals and Bjössi
Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Grand Rokk, FRÆBBBLARNIR. Iceland's premier punkband of the last 25 years.
Café Victor, Gunni DJ.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Sólon, Photo exhibition
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Coffee shop 11, The resident DJ provides the rock
Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -18:00- The Saga of Guðrídur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Saturday, June 21

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Hverfisbar, DJ Atli skemmtanalögga
Leikhúskjallarinn, DJ Gullfoss og Geysir
Café Victor, DJ Heiðar Austmann
Glaubar, DJ Þór Bæring
Café 22, DJ's Rally-cross, Diabolicals and Bjössi
Coffee shop 11, Duke Box, guests provide the music
Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Prikið, Gísli Galdur.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Gaukur á Stöng, Jet Black Joe. Retro-rock.
Kaffibarinn, KGB.
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Sólon, Photo exhibition
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Grand Rokk, SINGAPORE SLING. Live rock band.
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum.

all year exhibition



For those who harbour elephantine fantasies of another kind, the phallogical museum is well worth a visit. They do in fact have an elephant specimen in the foreign section, but mostly they concentrate on local variants of all shapes and sizes to accommodate all tastes (we hope). In fact, it houses over 150 penises of all known Icelandic mammals except, sadly, Homo Sapiens. This, however, awaits remedy as a gift token has been received by the museum by an honorary member promising his honorary member upon his demise. The country eagerly awaits this newest addition, as the items in question are usually only displayed privately, unless the owner is severely inebricated, and hence the exhibit might in somewhat less than pristine condition. The exhibit ranges from the impressive blue whale, to the somewhat less impressive hamster, and a special section even deals with rarely seen creatures such as elves and trolls, which is quite a coup as these species are usually unwilling to part with the parts on display. You can also see other theme related memorabilia. You can also, in fact, get married there, and the first wedding was conducted there on the first of April 2003. Whether this improved the confidence of the groom or gave the wife cause to doubt her decision goes unreported. The curator is usually up for a chat, and his dayjob consists of teaching in a secondary school. Rumour has it he uses a dried whale's penis to point at the blackboard, but whether this is an urban legend or not is unsubstantiated by this publication. In any case, it is his feeling that phallogology has been neglected except as a borderline field in other disciplines. This reporter can corroborate that not a single University teaches the subject as a major, or else his career might conceivably have taken a different turn. In any case, the museum is an important contribution in the direction of bringing the study out into the open.
 Open Tuesday-Friday, 14.00-17.00.
 Entrance is 400kr.

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, the Saga of Guðrídur,

from 13th of June

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, the Saga of Guðrídur, from 13th of June
 Skemmtihúsið Theatre performs in English the Saga of Guðrídur. A woman's tremendously courageous voyage to Vinland (America) during the Viking era.
 Information and tickets available at the Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstæti 2, 101 Reykjavik.
 Performances in English:
 Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at 20:30 and Fridays at 18:00
 Performances in German:
 Sundays and Tuesdays at 18:00

Emiliana Torrini is sneaking up on you. Did you know that?

It is sheer coincidence that an Icelander sang on the soundtrack to "The Two Towers" when that nation came closest to saturated viewing of The Lord Of The Rings celluloid sequel. The Icelander in question is Emiliana Torrini who sang 'Gollum's Song' which plays during the closing credits.

Not that Icelanders are unfavourable to Miss Torrini, by no means. Her musical apprenticeship in her homeland may have seen her punting unchallenging cover versions for easy listening radio but she went on to perform on some of the most popular tracks from both the Gus Gus and Slowblow (lo-fi in-secret in Iceland) back catalogues and to collaborate with the likes of street-credible UK dance label Fat Cat.

She was uncharacteristically cool during the Gus Gus dalliance, opting not to sign up to 4AD, the band's original label - a boat many aspiring singers would be too scared to miss. It was, we see now, not her boat.

However, her vocal performance could not account for the mass box office turn-out. If that were the case, Torrini would be top of the Pops in her homeland Britney style, which she isn't.

Indeed, she isn't a chart buster anywhere and is perfectly happy to admit it. On the big film debut Torrini commented humbly: "They contacted many singers concerning this song. There was a lot of uncertainty whether I would be given the opportunity since I am completely unknown. This happened very quickly. I had barely finished learning the song when I had to go into the studio".

But it was not just the exposure that excited the singer. "I'm really a big fan of the books," she added. "I've read them four times".

GOLLUM'S SINGER



Yes, the picture is supposed to look like that.

The gossip circuit in the past has suggested that there's some friction between Miss Torrini and her fellow Icelandic chanteuse, Björk. This is

Torrini was raised in Iceland by her Icelandic mother and Italian father and on a balanced aural diet classical, Italian pop and Icelandic folk

The gossip circuit in the past has suggested that there's some friction between Miss Torrini and her fellow Icelandic chanteuse, Björk

understandable when one considers that there is a similarity in the flow of their voices, being sometimes very powerful and at other times little-girl-lost. But really, apart from the inevitable similarities in accent, the musical and live performance comparisons end there.

One could not, however, help but feel that her famous predecessor was raining on her parade somewhat when she announced that The Lord Of The Rings buck was passed to Torrini after she had knocked it back on account of her mother-to-be status. Second in line, remember, is a different thing from second best.

Still, if that thought passed through her mind she could easily write it off as paranoia, having said of herself: "I'm a drama queen. I'm always imagining things."

songs. Her solo album 'Love In The Time Of Science' was well received and she has supported both Moby and Sting, but she is not going to take us by storm. No indeed, Torrini is sneaking up on us. Hers is the voice that plays over the enigmatic car add. She's been a fave with the women's mags, most obviously because of the emotion invested in her performances.

Right enough, it would be improper for Torrini to make a Britney-esque impact on music as she looks likely, in the long run, to have a far more prolific and earnest career.

Listen out, say we, because you are going to notice her when you least expect. She's no longer in the audio-wallpaper business.

BOTNLEÐJA FROM BLUR TO EUROVISION

Iceland used to be known, if at all, as a land of elves and glaciers. After Björk, however, it has also become known as a place of out-there music. Locals might be surprised at this, as all we seem to hear is the usual Top 40 stuff. But somewhere underneath, considerable creativity bubbles, although it usually takes representatives of the British music press to notice this. Sometimes this manages to explode onto the surface. Every spring a battle of the bands contest is held between unknown bands, and the winners often go on to become pillars of the underground music scene. One of these bands is Botnleðja, who won in 1995. Botnleðja are a trio of musicians from Hafnarfjörður, who have gone on to make 5 albums, and even attracted the attention of Blur, whom they toured with under the name Silt. They started out by playing grungy garage rock, and have remained rather true to their

roots with a few exceptions. This year they participated in Iceland's preliminary Eurovision Song Contest, held to determine who would represent Iceland in Riga. Sadly, they only wound up second but their contribution to the preliminary contest with lyrics altered into English ended up on their latest album, Iceland National Park as the Human Clicktrack. Hopefully, in the future, all Eurovision songs will sound like this. Botnleðja might seem to fit in nicely among the current wave of guitar driven rock bands, most of whom have "The" in the title, but they've actually been around for a good while longer. This is their first album to be recorded solely in English. They have, however, dropped their English moniker, Silt, and prefer to just be called Botnleðja wher-



ever they may find themselves. Their new album shouldn't disappoint their old fans, and might even make them some new ones.

NIGHTLIFE

GET SMASHED!



The Many Faces of Reykjavik. Photo Friðrik Örn

There is a theory that says that the landscape and the nature of a country shape the inner landscape and nature of its inhabitants. This theory proves itself to be quite true here in Iceland, for as you might have noticed, Icelandic nature can be raw and primitive as well as friendly, and so can the people. If you need proof for this raw and primitive inner nature, just get your booty into postal area 101 at around 4 AM on a Saturday night. There before your culture shocked eyes you will behold the shiny well dressed children of the "hippest" and "coolest" nation in the north...

...Get smashed!

The inhabitants, of what used to be a very isolated island until 50 years ago, always drank in order to get drunk. This is what the Norse gods did, this is what our forefathers did, this is what our grandparents did when they were young and this is how we still like to do it. Surveys are proof that of all the Nordic nations, Icelanders have the top score in getting extremely drunk, driving while intoxicated, doing something weird while drunk, having sex with a stranger, spending too much money while drinking and getting the worst hangovers the next day.

You might ask yourself...why? What explains this primitive and raw behavior during the weekends? Why only in Iceland and not everywhere? Why does everyone become so wild? Quite possibly the reasons are many and come from different angles, but let's pick a few...

Relax -don't do it...

1. Working hard is considered to be the greatest of all good deeds in our culture. Therefore it seems crazy to drink in the middle of the week because you have to work the day after, (remember, we drink to get DRUNK) for who wants to go to work with a hangover? (We are Japanese in the mid-week and get Zulu on Saturdays)

2. No adult Icelander has grown up with a vine and dine culture. There has never been a point in drinking one glass of wine because we didn't drink it for the taste until very recently (most of us know the difference between red and white, but that's about it). Back in the early 90's we all rather preferred a coke with our steak and still today in 2003, there are a lot of people who don't see the point in drinking alcohol if you don't intend to get drunk on it.

3. Beer was illegal from early 20th century until 1988. Because there was no beer, there were no pubs or cafés until the anti beer law was changed fifteen years ago.

4. There is hardly any point in going out to a bar since drinking in the middle of the week was, and still is a taboo in our culture. Getting drunk in the middle of the week is for artists, actors, free-lance workers and the occasional accidental tourists.

5. If you get drunk in the middle of the week. People are going to think you are an alcoholic.

...when you wanna go to it
All this holding back, five days of the week, results in a lot of stored drinking energy. This energy explodes every weekend, all over the country in all kinds of people age 15-35. So every cell, in every other hard work-

ing young Icelandic brain, finds the ultimate release on Friday and Saturday night when the laws of our small universe will turn around and all the rules change. We screw the top off the bottle and spill that Vodka down our thirsty throats, our vocabulary increases, we become sex machines, and we can shake our asses in a night eternally young like there will never be a tomorrow and at the same time -shock and amaze tourists from all over the world. And our advise to you is -Don't fight it -Feel it.

...when you wanna come!

LISTINGS

**Grandrokk,
Fræbbblarnir**
Friday, June 20th.



Fræbbblarnir were formed in Iceland 1978 and released a number of records until they officially split in early 1983. A punk / pop band in the happy-go-lucky "sector" of the punk movement playing short, melodic songs fast and raw. They were inspired by bands like The Clash, The Kinks and The Sex Pistols among others. Since 1983 Fræbbblarnir have played under various names with different lineups, but in 1996 the band issued an album under their original name. They don't hit the stage that often so don't miss the grandfathers of Icelandic punk as they perform some of their classics, songs with beautiful, romantic lyrics like "tonight, tonight, I'm gonna fuck you tonight," roughly translated.

**Grandrokk, Singapore
Sling,**
Saturday, June 21st.



Formed in the last year of the millennium, Singapore Sling is a reminder of what rock n' roll is and should be, attitude and overdrive mixed with good old Jack Daniels, no complications, just the raw basics; drums, guitars, bass and vocals. The band just came back from the States where they played at the "South by Southwest" music festival in Austin, Texas. Their new album, "The Curse of Singapore Sling" (a lot of bad luck during recording explains the name) is to be released in the States by Stinky Records on the 17th of June, Iceland's National Day. This means more touring and the band will go back to the States by the end of this month. Singapore Sling has got good reviews and their cover of "Dirty Water" by The Standells is said to be something one should hear them perform. Expect a good show from this dirty Icelandic Rock 'n Roll band.

Leikhúskjallarinn,
Saturday, June 21st

DJs Gullfoss and Geysir name themselves after Iceland's most popular tourist sights. Travellers on a journey through Reykjavik's nightlife often find themselves dancing wherever the DJ twins are playing, since these two are probably the city's most popular disc jockeys. They have a way of playing with the crowd like no others and you'll seldom find them playing anything you don't want to hear. Whatever they decide to play, and they'll play whatever, it quite simply seems to fit the mood of the moment.
Admission 500 kr,-

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Sunday, June 22

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Lára Sigurbjörnsdóttir, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, Kite day. Bring your own kite. Prizes for the best one.

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarrval.

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -18:00- The Saga of Gudridur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.

Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -20:00- The Saga of Gudridur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Monday, June 23

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

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National and University Library, Exhibition of Lára Sigurbjörnsdóttir, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarrval.

Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Tuesday, June 24

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.

Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.

Sigurjón Ólafsson Sculpture Museum, -20:00- Concert by two guitarists.

Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

National and University Library, Exhibition of Lára Sigurbjörnsdóttir, the founder of the city's documentation.

Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, Námskeið í tálgun I
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.

LISTINGS

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum. Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -18:00- The Saga of Gudridur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -20:30- The Saga of Gudridur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum. The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Wednesday, June 25

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Nasa, Concert by the Rumanian band that did the music to Kusturica's film Black Cat/White Cat.
Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Gaukur á Stöng, Sick of it All, Botnleðja. I Adapt
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Coffee shop 11, The girls provide the rock.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Thursday, June 26

Reðursafnið, Phallogical Museum, A fine penis and penis related selection from various mammals. First human specimen still awaited.
Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Anniversary exhibition from the museum collection.
Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum, Chiselling II. The sequel to chiselling I.
Prikið, DJ Ýr
Austurvöllur out door exhibition, Earth from Above. Aerial Photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand.
National and University Library, Exhibition of Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, the founder of the city's documentation.
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Images of Iceland - milestones in cartography
Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum, Matthew Barney's Cremaster project. Photographic works, sculptures and films.
Coffee shop 11, Mixed events
Gerðuberg, Cultural Center, Photographs of the bridges of Highway 1, which encircles the whole island.
Gaukur á Stöng, Sick of it All, Botnleðja. I Adapt
Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Some of the works of painter Jóhannes Kjarval.
Norræna húsið, Nordic House, The Big Nordic Elephant Show. Children dressed up as elephants especially welcome.
Reykjavik Museum of Photography, The Five Elements. Photographs and etchings from french-vietnamese artist Claire Xuan.
Skemmtihúsið Theatre, -20:30- The Saga of Gudridur. A play about a Viking woman in America performed in English.
Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum, The works of Iceland's first modern sculptor, whose works are partly based on Icelandic folklore.
Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, The works of popular sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, who believed sculpture should be part of the urban environment.

Nasa Nighthclub, Fanfare Ciocarlia, Wednesday, June 25th



This eleven-man brass and woodwind band comes from the very small village of Zece Prajini (literally meaning ten fields), which lies near the Romanian-Moldavian border. Yet it belongs to the larger tradition of Romany brass bands found throughout the Balkan region (popularized by the soundtrack to Emir Kusturica's film Underground). The music of Fanfare Ciocarlia combines Romanian, Gypsy and Turkish influences, and even elements of klezmer. The group, whose CD releases have enjoyed a huge success, has already appeared on festival stages all over the world. If Macedonia's Kocani Orkestar is known as the loudest and tightest of the Romany brass bands, then Fanfare Ciocarlia deserves the title of the fastest and craziest. Its leader, Ioan Ivancea, says the same himself: "We're one of the last, and we're the fastest of them all!" Doubtlessly something very much different from other music events this summer as the band plays both well known radio hits and their own traditional material, their way.

Kjarvalsstaðir Museum, Russian Photography Retrospective, 17th May-15th June.



The second part of a two-part exhibition. In the first part, on show in Moscow last autumn, Icelandic photographs were exhibited. This part features photographs from two different periods in the history of Russia, on one hand from the first decades of the 20th century, and on the other hand, contemporary photography. Guests therefore get a good general view of Russian photography as well as getting a good feel of Russian life over different periods in the nation's history. The exhibition comes from Moscow House of Photography. Open every day 10-17. Adults: 500 krónur, groups of 10 or more 250 krónur, free for anyone under 18, free for everyone on Mondays. There's a guided tour included every Sunday at 15.00. A ticket gets you into all Reykjavik Art Museums. Also on now at Kjarvalsstaðir: Orn Thorsteinnson: chisels works of art from the stones of nature.

SIGGI HALL, AT ODINSVÉ



When I visit a restaurant that has been selected as one of the best 100 New Restaurants in the World and one of five best Scandinavian Restaurants in Europe, I always prepare myself for a "glitzy" interior decor, an overloaded wine list and a menu with everything but Sour Cabbage and a deep fried Succini. At Soggi Hall's you will find both Succini and Sour Cabbage.

Soggi Hall's Restaurant is the headquarters of (you guessed it) Soggi Hall, Iceland's most famous

rated in offwhite and mild colors that make you relax as soon as you have settled down at a table. The reception of arriving guests leaves

Soggi Hall's Restaurant is the headquarters of (you guessed it) Soggi Hall, Iceland's most famous Chef and Television personality.

much to be desired if Soggi Hall is not there in person. but the overall service is good.

In one end of the dining room



Chef and Television personality. Soggi, whose winning personality has charmed Royal families and Heads of State into tasting many Icelandic delicacies - from salmon to pickled shark - is one of those Chefs who thrive on simple yet tasty dishes.

The Soggi Hall restaurant, at Hotel Odinsve, is tastefully deco-

there is an elevated service bar with comfortable seats and a single sofa, where you can have a pre-dinner drink, if you are lucky. The space is rather small and seats only a few people.

The Menu usually consists of Cured Salmon, Bacalao Croquettes or Scallops as featured Starters,

sometimes you'll also find a Marinated Fillet of Beef with sesame-balsamico vinaigrette and mixed salad with which to begin your meal.

The Main Courses usually consists of fish delicacies, from Wolffish in Herbal Crust to North Atlantic Halibut in dill sauce with carrots, and/or Fried Cod with cumin and coriander. Soggi Hall's internationally famous Grilled Medallions of Lamb with shallots, asparagus and Italian Herbs are, of course, available as is Grilled Filet Mignon with Beef-Champignon ragout and tarragon. This is usually served with baked Succini, fried Foie Gras and a potato terrine.

For Starters we selected a creamy Soup with Smoked Haddock, Sour Cabbage and Potato Chips. Normally, I don't go to fine restaurants and order such dishes, but the soup was amazing. The smoky taste of the haddock was toned down with cream and cabbage creating a delicate balance that was a pure delight. The Second starter we tried was the Croquettes of Bacalao served with spanish tomato sauce and a salad with olives all of which I highly recommend.

Our Main Dishes were the grilled Lamb Medallions (of course) and the Fried Cod on Puy Lentils, specially prepared for my guest. The grilled Medallions were, unfortunately, not served at the best temperature (something the staff fixed immediately) but the lamb was excellent. Tasty, not too lamby and served with a fine combination of shallots, asparagus and italian herbs in what Soggi Hall calls "Fricasse"!

BOOKS

PLATFORM

BY MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ



Anyone reading Michel Houellebecq's Platform prior to September 11, 2001, might be forgiven for thinking the author is a little too hard on the world.

He takes aim, in one way or another, at fathers, work, sex, Toyota Land Cruisers, financial advisers and Islam – and that's just by page 25. But today his disconcertingly simple prose reads like an assessment of the age made from deep inside the fluttering zeitgeist itself. As with most examinations up close and anatomical, the pictures that result are a long, long way from pretty.

For all their charms the French can be brooding and bitter like no other people on earth, and capable of finding reasons to complain about even the finest April day in Paris. That might not make them the cuddliest of creatures, but it has done wonders for their literature. It has enabled Michel Houellebecq, for example, to confront head on issues from which even post-Taliban, post-Saddam America tends to shy away. The author, also a poet, already established himself as the enfant terrible of the contemporary French literary scene by the time Platform took France by storm in 2000, especially with the success of The Elementary Particles, which described in unsparing detail the phenomenon of exchange sex clubs. But it is the baleful Platform

that proves the author a worthy heir to Flaubert, whose Madame Bovary showed the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie with such precision it prompted many to seek to ban it. In the same vein, Platform serves as an eloquent and spectacularly bilious soapbox that would only be truly shocking if it did not cause popular outrage.

If Houellebecq's fictional account of a middle-aged government bureaucrat who quits his job to spearhead a corporate-financed international sex tourism venture is indeed literature as ammunition, it must be said that he targets everything and everyone, including himself. The artistry of his endeavor is that the attacks are executed as casually as they are unsparingly, and undertaken less deliberately than by default. Why hardly needs explaining in the post-September 11 world: virtually any accurate, objective description of the state of fin-de-millennium society would have to include accounts of widespread disaffection with consumer society, the social disaster of mass tourism, the excesses of marketing and the growth and glamorization of terrorism, and the scarcity of romance, or even emotion, in modern daily life. As our erstwhile allies would say, c'est la vie.

And the life of blasé civil servant Michel that we see is twice bookmarked by death, beginning with the brutal murder of his father and ending with a massive terrorist attack mounted by Islamist extremists at a resort in Thailand – an episode eerily prescient of the Bali nightclub bombing. He is wounded and his girlfriend, Valerie, is killed while they're having lunch. In between these incidents we are treated to scenes from the life of a modern Frenchman who is "perfectly adapted to the information age, that is to say good for nothing" and of a modern France that the French tourist office must go to terrific lengths to conceal: a country of rapes on Paris commuter trains that go unpunished, thoroughly dead end jobs (when there are jobs) and consumerism with pre-packaged

experiences standing in for that famous joie de vivre at every turn. This is the same France where synagogues are routinely torched and vandalized, drawing vague condemnation from government officials but little in the way of preventive or punitive action, and where no major recent anti-war demonstration was without its contingent of flagrantly anti-Semitic hoodlums.

Houellebecq doesn't condemn religion outright, though he does come quite close. Although his castigation of Islam takes place through the lens of someone contemplating the difficulties of

bodyguard when he comes to Paris and now calls Ireland home.

But particular venom is reserved for the West. He never makes the fatal misstep of suggesting Western society is to blame for terrorism, but the faultlines he detects in Occidental confidence run uncomfortably deep. Michel says he doesn't hate the West, but rather has a "great contempt" for it, because he "knows that every single one of us reeks of selfishness, masochism and death. We have created a system in which it has simply become impossible to live; and what's more, we continue to export it." In his view, sexual tourism is a valid means of redressing the

the biggest media controversy centered on the frank descriptions, if not to say spirited defense, of sex tourism.

It almost goes without saying, this being a modern French book, that sex crops up almost everywhere. It is generally heterosexual sex (between consenting adults; the author doesn't delve into child prostitution), and described so matter-of-factly that it feels like forced titillation. Far more amusing are the endless and easeful skewerings of everyone and everything from contemporary art to corporate honchos, self-loathing travel guides to John Grisham novels and, of course, the media.

But those are the easy targets. It is the scene of the Thailand terrorist attack, described with brutal and chilling simplicity, that underpins the book, which beneath all the controversies is a lamentation for the times. For all the religion and education in the world, indeed for all the evolution of the human species, is bullets over a club sandwich what it has come down to? Michel never asks that question, but then he already knows the answer. Unfortunately, he is not alone.

Anthony Grant

An Egyptian acquaintance said Islam could only have been born in a stupid desert, among filthy Bedouins who had nothing better to do than bugger their camels.

making sexual tourism work in the Muslim world, he primarily has Muslims themselves lambast their religion. An Egyptian acquaintance of the narrator renounces his Islamic heritage with the following:

"Do you know what I call Muslims? The losers of the Sahara...Islam could only have been born in a stupid desert, among filthy Bedouins who had nothing better to do – pardon me – than bugger their camels. The closer a religion comes to monotheism – consider this carefully, cher monsieur – the more cruel and inhuman it becomes; and of all religions, Islam imposes the most radical monotheism. From its beginnings, it has been characterized by an uninterrupted series of wars of invasion and massacres; never, for as long as it exists, will peace reign in the world."

Even if France were not a country with five million Muslims, those could easily be construed as fighting words. Naturally, passages like this led to incriminations, lawsuits and death threats – Houellebecq has a

imbalance between rich and poor countries. As he explains:

"...you have several hundred million Westerners who have everything they could want but no longer manage to obtain sexual satisfaction: they spend their lives looking, but they don't find it and are completely miserable. On the other hand, you have several billion people who have nothing, who are starving, who die young, who live in conditions unfit for human habitation and who have nothing left to sell except their bodies and their unspoiled sexuality. It's simple, really simple to understand: it's an ideal trading opportunity. The money you could make is almost unimaginable..."

This cynical assessment, formulated in the Thai massage parlors Michel frequents, leads to the launch of a sort of Club Med-for-sex initiative that ultimately takes Michel and Valerie back to Thailand as a couple (they meet their for the first time on a package tour). Perhaps because Platform was published before the September 11 terrorist attacks,

FUNNY MONEY

Icelanders are stubborn, independent and extremely proud of their history, witch is fine. Iceland's currency reflects these things being both colorful, and full of history. The bills have pictures of historically famous or important people, while the coins have cravings of various types of fish (reflecting Iceland's biggest industry). Still, you probably haven't got a clue who these people are, or what type of fish it is on your króna coins, and if you simply don't care, don't read any further than this.

On the front, and the back is: Jón Sigurðsson Forseti (president) (1811-1879) Iceland's pride, it's sword and it's shield.

An independence hero Jón Sigurðsson is Iceland's answer to

independent. the part he played in securing Iceland's independence was so big that his birthday, 17th June, became Iceland's National day when it gained it's independence in 1944. He was the guy who started

500 kr can't really buy you much, unless you got more than one. A pack of cigarettes is 500kr, at a cheap pub you could even buy a beer. A little snack, a packet of cigarettes a cheapish beer or a hamburger will all leave you little change from a 500kr note

1króna is Iceland's tiniest bit of money. Now that's a cod isn't it? It's there because it's probably the most

important for Iceland's economy.

On the other side you will find troll, a big guy that tends to change into a rock if hit by sunlight, some icelander's look like that, but sunlight won't stop them if you mess with them. A troll, alongside with a dragon, a bull and an eagle are believed to protect Iceland from hostile foreigners and together they form Iceland's coat of arms.



The 500kr bill is the smallest of the bills, and therefore worth the least. It equals c.a. 7\$ or 6euros.

George Washington. Though he never became president, although nicknamed one, and did not live to see his country become

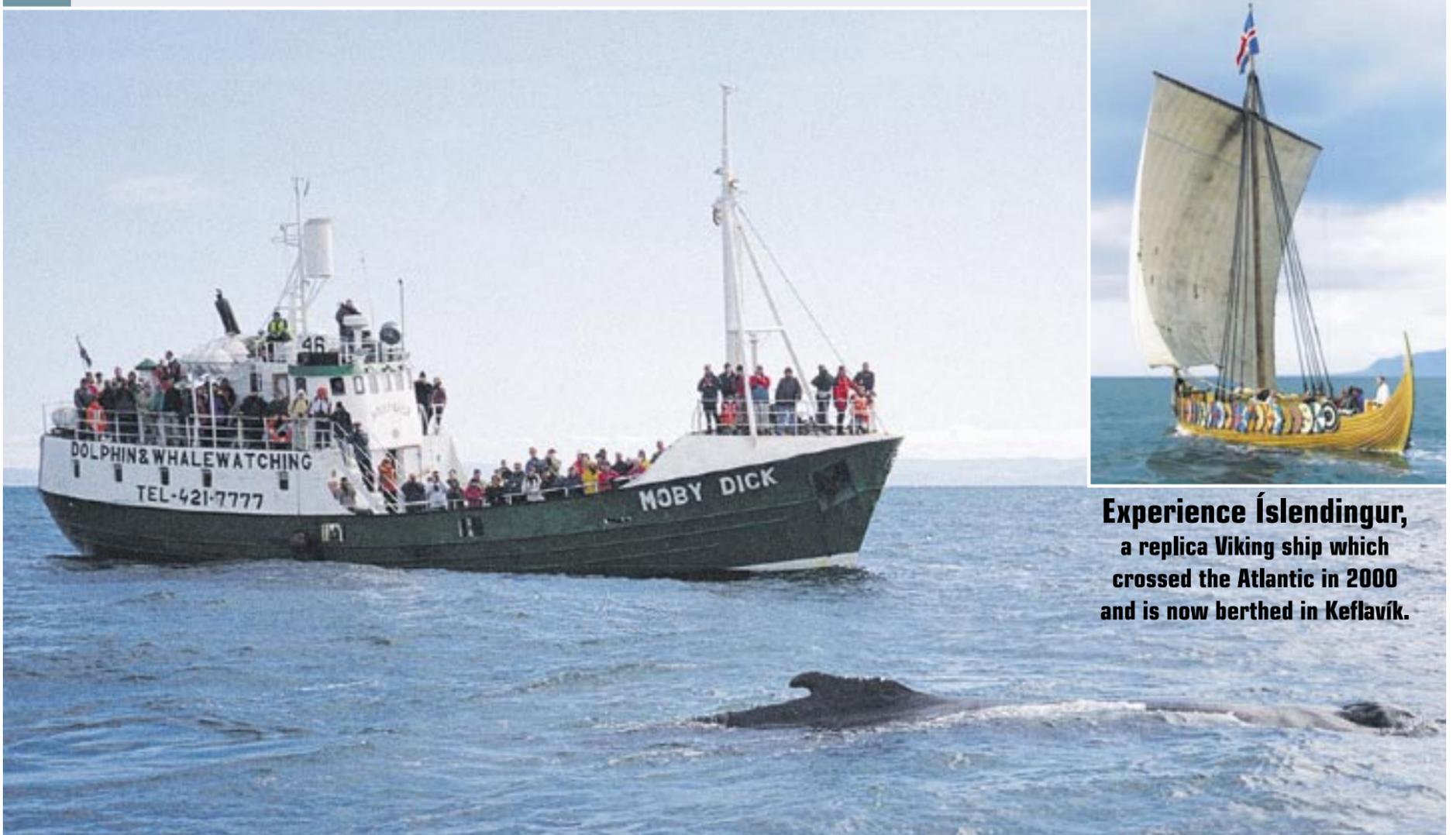
asking politely for independence, and guess what, it worked!

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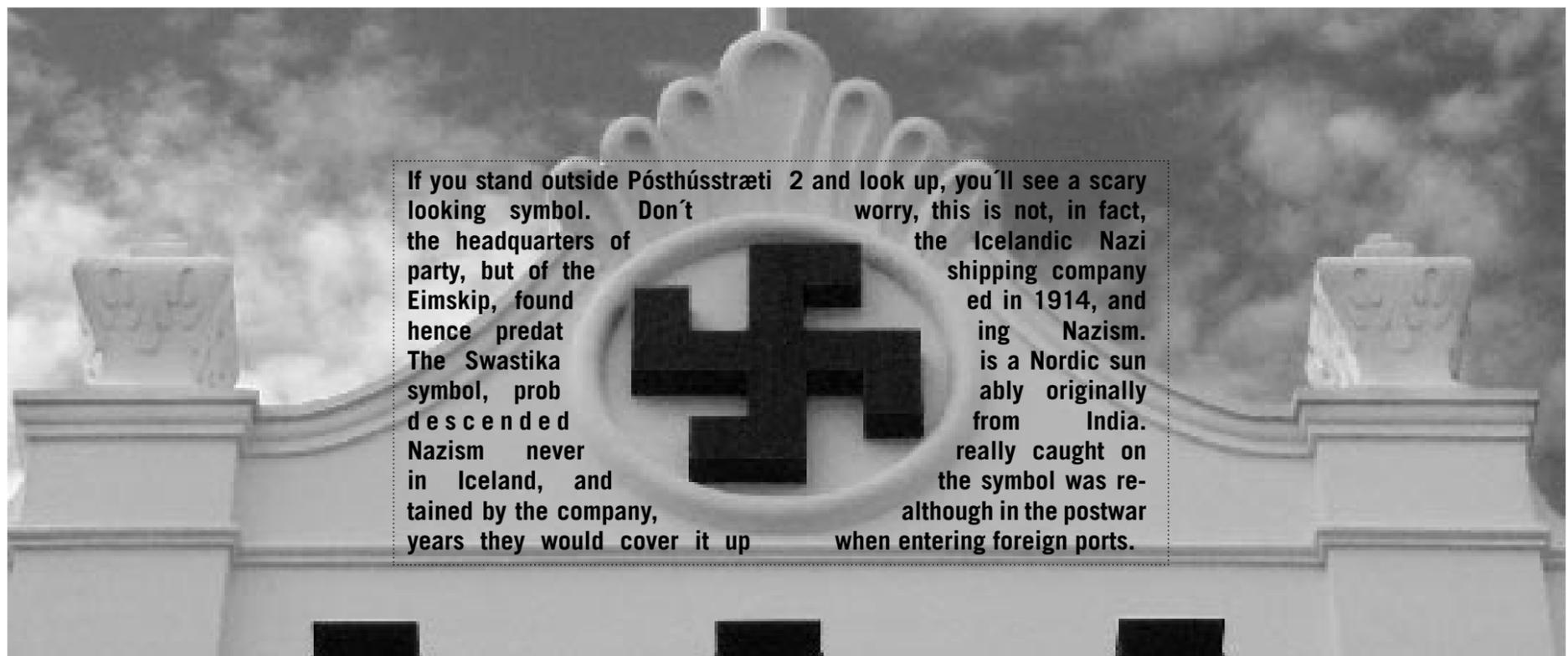
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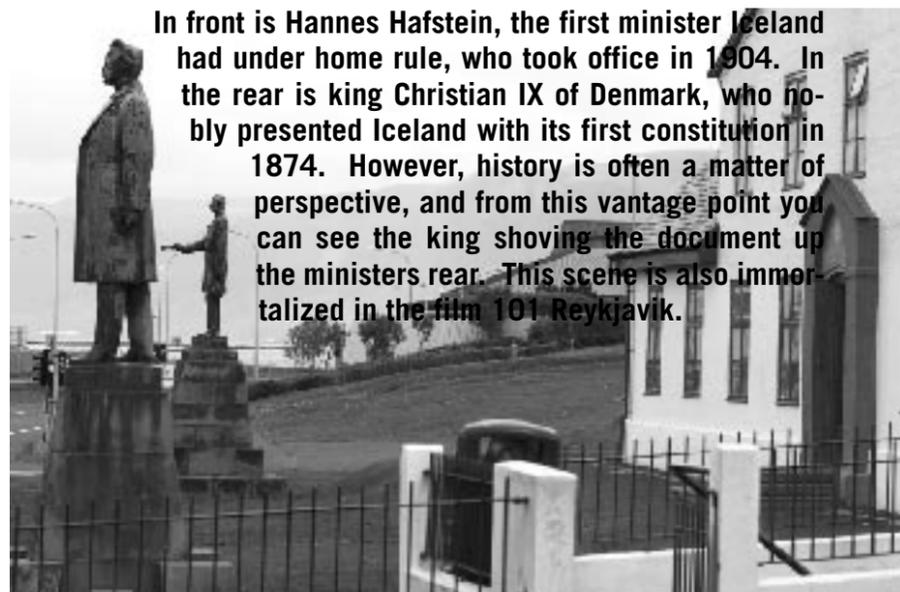
WONDERINGS

CONSTITUTIONAL ANAL PROBES, NAZIS AND BARBED WIRE BARS.

SOME THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SIGHTS OF REYKJAVÍK



If you stand outside Pósthússtræti 2 and look up, you'll see a scary looking symbol. Don't worry, this is not, in fact, the headquarters of the Icelandic Nazi party, but of the shipping company Eimskip, founded in 1914, and hence predating Nazism. The Swastika symbol, probably originally descended from India. Nazism never really caught on in Iceland, and the symbol was retained by the company, although in the postwar years they would cover it up when entering foreign ports.



In front is Hannes Hafstein, the first minister Iceland had under home rule, who took office in 1904. In the rear is king Christian IX of Denmark, who nobly presented Iceland with its first constitution in 1874. However, history is often a matter of perspective, and from this vantage point you can see the king shoving the document up the ministers rear. This scene is also immortalized in the film 101 Reykjavik.

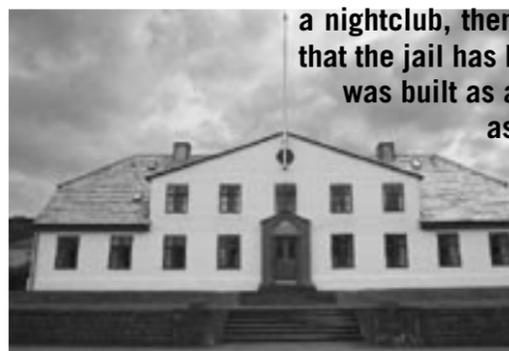
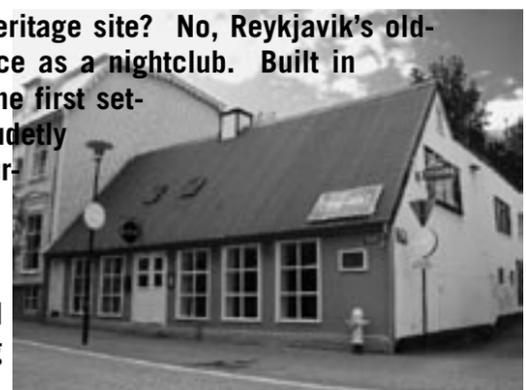


If you walk down Austurstræti and Bistro. Unless you look up, however, you might not notice that right above the bar, at the top of the house is what looks like a Star of David. This house was built in 1920 by a merchant of Danish descent who was also a freemason, so the symbol is probably a sign of the order. This symbol contrasts with the one you will find on the next building.

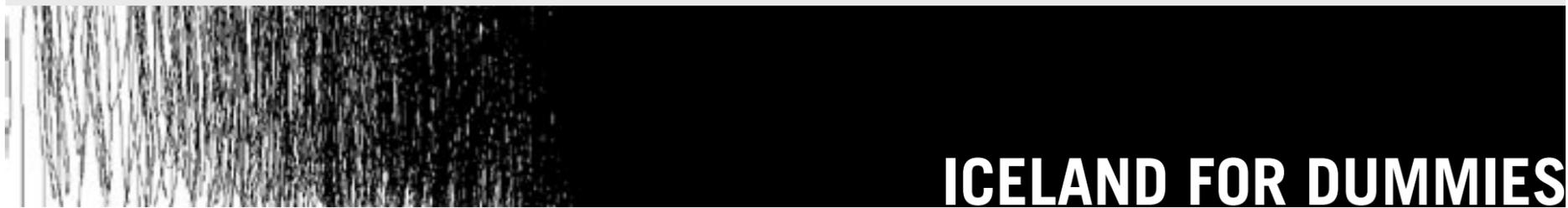
In most countries barbed wire is mostly used for military purposes. Iceland has no army, but barbed wire can still be put to good use. In the countryside it is used to keep sheep from straying from the fields, and in the city it is used to keep punters from cutting the line by climbing over the wall to get to the bar. It is not, however, always enough to dissuade them.



Is it a museum? Is it a heritage site? No, Reykjavik's oldest house is now in service as a nightclub. Built in 1750 on the spot where the first settler, Ingólfur Árnason reputedly lived, the club Vídalín currently has the same name as various 17th and 18th century bishops, some of whom were renowned ghostbusters. The building used to be a sheriffs office, but now houses late night drinkers and prowlers who are at liberty to leave when they want.



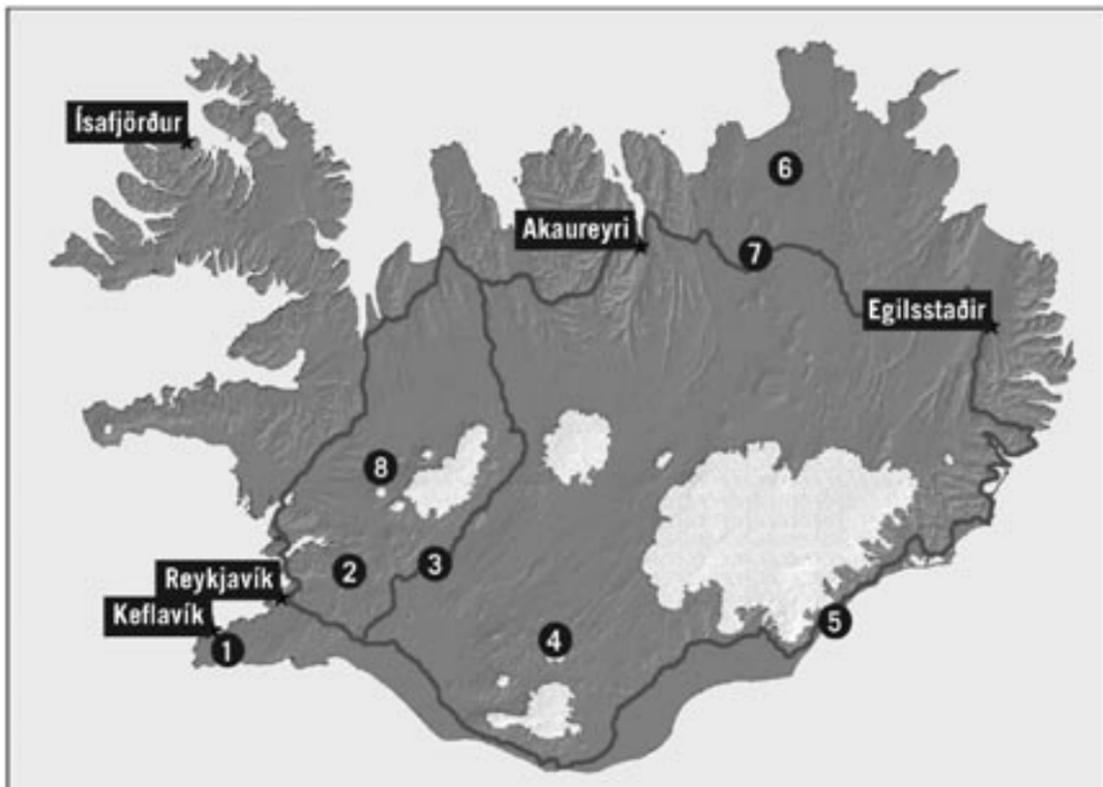
And if the sheriffs office has been converted into a nightclub, then it should not come as a surprise that the jail has become the seat of government. It was built as a penitentiary in 1770, and served as such for 50 years. Those who follow Icelandic politics might be forgiven for suggesting that the best course of action would be to reinstall the bars and lock the doors, with the current occupants still on the inside.



ICELAND FOR DUMMIES

An essential part of travelling these days are the photo ops. Taking tigerhides back, or in this case, the fur of baby seals, is not exactly PC, so the pictures will be the trophies you'll be bringing home, that is, unless you can afford those pricey woolly jumpers and minature vikings. Your mom, grandma or kids will probably want to see (or, if they really care about you, at least will pretend that they do) what wonders of nature you discovered on your extremely difficult and dangerous trip to the uncivilized Eskimo island, full of igloos, volcanoes, trolls and elves. Well, first of all, you probably aren't going to see any igloos or elves, and if you do, you probably picked the wrong mushrooms. What you are going to see are hot springs, waterfalls, glaciers and a lot of landscape. Some people assume that Greenland's green and Iceland icy, others have heard it's actually the other way around. As far as Iceland is concerned, it's actually neither particularly green or icy, despite a few large glaciers. Most of it is, in fact, barren desert. The US astronauts came here to practice before going to the moon, as Iceland was country that was considered to reproduce lunar conditions most accurately.

Here is a brief guide to what will probably be some of the most scenic photo ops. To make sure you won't miss the most important places, the Grapevine's research team has made this simple list of beautiful wonders of nature to check out, in order of their importance. Now pray to god that the weather will be your friend and enjoy your trip.



1. THE BLUE LAGOON

One of the first stops for any visitor, and situated very close to Keflavik's international airport. The lagoons' mud is believed to have healing powers, especially for people suffering from psoriasis or other skin diseases. The distinctive blue colour is due to the warmth and the high level of silicone in the water. Sadly, there's no evidence that this increases cleavage size.

2. ÞINGVELLIR

In 930a.d. the Vikings decided they needed to find a way to settle their disagreements, so they founded a parliament, and called it Alþingi. Today, although relocated, it is the oldest (sometimes) functioning parliament in the world. The Vikings, when not busy hacking limbs of one another, were quite aware of the beauty of nature and picked this breathtaking spot to meet. The American and European continental plates meet precisely here.

3. GULLFOSS & GEYSIR

Usually these two are mentioned together, partly because of geographic proximity, partly because they both start with the letter G. Geysir is the geysir from which all geysirs derive their name. Sadly, it rarely erupts these days, the family business having been taken over by heir Strokkur. Gullfoss is generally thought to be Iceland's most beautiful waterfall, hence the name, meaning "Golden Waterfall."

4. LANDMANNALAUGAR

Probably one of the most popular jeep excursions tours is a round trip from Reykjavik to Landmannalaugar. Not surprising since Landmannalaugar is actually a natural swimming pool in the middle of Iceland's highland desert. Don't bring shampoo or soap because this pool is so natural that we wouldn't want to spoil it would we? If you're up to a 12 hour journey, most the time inside a huge jeep, it is usually worth it.

Other places worth looking at:

Snæfellsjökull
The glacier which was the entrance point to the centre of the earth in Jules Verne's story, and thought by some to be an alien tourist attraction (although the aliens are reputedly invisible), which should be good enough for us humans.

Hallormsstaður
The only forest in Iceland with trees taller than two feet. Man made, of course.

Vestmannaeyjar
A volcano erupted in 1973, destroying most of the town and forcing the occupants to flee. Most of them resettled on the islands as soon as the lava cooled down.

Dettifoss
Europe's most powerful waterfall, which makes you feel insignificant next to the forces of nature ect.

Kjölur
Simply a gravel road across the highlands.

Dyrhólaey
A big hole in a huge rock. Lives up to its name of "doorhillisland."

Laugarvatn
On your way to Geysir, check out the food 'n fun duet here, the natural sauna and next to it, restaurant Lindin for good grub.

Ask in your nearest tourist for more info on tours and traveling tips.

5. JÖKULSÁRLÓN

If it's good enough for 007, it's good enough for you. Ian Flemming's master spy has a tendency to pop up here every now and then, first as Roger Moore, and later as Pierce Brosnan. Even without Bond skating across it being chased by helicopters, it's still quite a view (to a kill, even), with a glacier, and a lake full of icebergs and lost camera equipment. Truly beautiful, especially during the summer months (though that's not cool enough for Mr Bond)

6. ÁSBYRGI

If you had a 8 legged horse called Sleipnir were a god of all gods called Odinn, went out for a spin and by accident stepped onto the face of the earth, Asbergi might be the result. A 3.5 km long hoof shaped canyon with up 100m tall walls. Naturally unique and if you've got the time, stop there on your way to Mývatn. Ásbyrgi is only 65km away from Húsavik.

7. MÝVATN

Mývatn is an oasis with nothing but strangely color desert surrounding it. Get lost in the lava labyrinth of Dimmuborgir (who have given name to a Norwegian black metal band) and fall in love with the unique landscape. Geothermal and geologically very active, there are a lot of warm springs and bubbling cauldrons in the area. After a busy day rent a room in a decent hotel and relax in the natural bath of Bjarnarlaug.

8. HÚSAFELL

Only about two hours drive from Reykjavik city, Húsafell is a place which has a lot to offer but is still mostly visited by Icelandic tourists. The area is basically a large camping site surrounded by summer cottages and beautiful landscape. Service offers anything a normal person needs for a shorter or a longer period of time, including a swimming pool, gas station and a golf course.

OUTSIDE THE CITY

Beware, the countryside might look harmless, but there are things out there out to get you!

Sheep

Cute and suitable for cooking if you're hungry and haven't got a clue where you are, look both funny and kind of innocent and are usually both, until they get in your way on the highway. Making a whole lot of sheep ketchup on you bumper and windshield can quickly wipe the innocence and beauty away. Blowing the horn does not disturb



sheep at all. They don't care so slow down if you don't want to make more lamb chops. Sheep are suicidal, and they're eager to take some humans with them to the afterlife.

Single-lane bridges

Most of these are in the east part of Iceland, and you will see countless numbers of them if you're on your way to e.g. Egilsstaðir. Suddenly they'll jump at you just on the other side of the next hill, and its strictly one car at a time don't try to cross one if there's a slightest change of you not being the only vehicle on it. If that does happen, you'll probably be enjoying the view from your hospital window.

Gravel roads

Gravel roads and single-lane bridges are long time mates, and unfortunately for you they do like to hang out together. Some parts of Iceland's circular highway (a.k.a. nr 1) is gravel, and you'll find gravel roads on your trips more often than you'll like. Vestfirðir, (north west Iceland), is an extremely good example of bad roads, so stay away or at least drive very slowly if you'd like to keep the paint on your car.

Weather

If you're waiting for the right weather to go on a trip, you might have to wait forever. Most of the pictures

you've seen in magazines and brochures about Iceland, were all taken the same day four years ago, the last time there was a clear sky. The weather can and will change without a warning and sometimes give you all kinds at the same time. Getting a tan in the Icelandic rain while struggling to stay on your feet in all the wind not an uncommon occurrence. That said, the weather last winter has been uncommonly mild, and one can only hope that it will remain so this summer. But don't count on it.

FOLK SAGAS

THE SEA HORSE

by Björk Bjarnadóttir

Iceland is said to be the land of fire and ice, pure nature and magnificent landscape. But what many people don't know is that Iceland is also the land of monsters, elves, trolls, ghosts and little people. When the first settlers came to Iceland about 1000 years ago, every hill and rock was said to have been alive with all kinds of creatures. Folklorists have traced the roots of these Icelandic creatures to Scandinavian and European folk beliefs. However, in Iceland these creatures have taken their own distinctive shape, a shape that is not to be found anywhere else in the world. This uniqueness comes from the inner mind of Icelandic people and is heavily influenced by the nature that surrounds the people and the creatures. Folktales and legends are not always built on reality, however, through the tales one can read the attitude to morality and the faith people had back then. Icelandic nature plays a big role in the Icelandic folktales. The harsh environment and the unpredictability of nature shaped many of the stories along with the fear people have of the unknown. As time passed the stories were collected and moved from oral tradition to large written collections of Icelandic folktales. First published around the mid 19th century these books continue to be in great demand and I dare say that there is not a person in Iceland that has not read some of them at one time or another.

The creatures of the tales differ greatly some of them have been known to be very helpful to the Icelandic people, but beware, they can also be vengeful and dangerous if proper care and respect is not shown in their presence or in their habitat. When you travel around Iceland, keep in mind that trolls inhabit the mountains and most small hills are the homes of the hidden people or elves. The lakes and the sea are



Cover image of the book *Myths and Monsters in Iceland*.
Illustration by Guðrún Tryggvadóttir.

If you were to ask an Icelander today if he believes that hidden people, trolls or ghosts really do exist, you are unlikely to receive a straight answer.

home to various mythical beasts like mermen, sea horses, sea monsters and giant worms.

If you were to ask an Icelander today if he believes that hidden people, trolls or ghost really do exist, you are unlikely to receive a straight answer. An Icelander will very likely say something like "I believe that there is something, I can't say for sure because I have never seen one but people talk about these creatures so who am I to say that they don't exist?" People in Iceland do not necessarily believe that these creatures exist but they are very unlikely to deny their existence either as such a denial might anger the ones that cannot be seen. There are many people in

Iceland that do believe that, some if not all, of these creatures still live in Iceland.

The modern era it has not been an easy one for some of these creatures, for like other things that belong to nature, Man is constantly demanding more space for his houses, factories and infrastructure, which drive the beings of nature to seek peace and quiet somewhere else.

So please, when on your travels around Iceland, take care not to drive off the road and show respect to the country, because you never know if you might be in the presence of trolls, ghosts or hidden people. Angering these creatures of old might well incur their wrath and then nothing can

save you aside from some very old magic formulas that are known to precious few living Icelandic people.

The Sea horse

The sea horse or water horse lives in rivers, lakes and occasionally in the sea. In Icelandic it is called Nykur or Nennir. It looks very much like a horse and is usually grey in colour, although occasionally known to be brown. Its hooves and fetlocks are special in that they are the opposite of normal horses. In winter, when cracks appear in the ice-covered lakes, a loud roaring sound may be heard; this is said to be sea horse neighing. The sea horse bears foals like other horses, but does so in water. Sea horses

will disappear into the ground.

Once upon a time four children were playing in a hayfield near a farm by a large lake. Suddenly they saw a grey horse and ran over to it. One of the children mounted it, then another and another until only the oldest child was left on the ground. The three urged the remaining one to join them as there was still plenty of space, the horse's back being so long. The oldest child refused, claiming not to be bothered. The horse immediately ran off and disappeared into the lake with the three children on its back. The oldest child ran home and told the tale of what had happened. It was clear to everyone that this had been a sea horse. (Taken from



The sea horse in action.
Illustration by Guðrún Tryggvadóttir.

have been known to impregnate mares belonging to humans. If the resultant crossbreed is ridden over a river or lake and the water touches its underbelly, it will lie down, a habit said to be inherited from the sea horse. The sea horse tends to lurk near lakes and rivers that are difficult to cross, where its tameness lures men into mounting it. When this happens it will plunge straight into the water and lie down, submerging the rider. The sea horse is highly sensitive to certain sounds and at the mention of his own name, or indeed any word that sounds vaguely similar to it, it runs off into the water. If on the other hand, it hears the sound of church bells, it

the book *Myths and Monsters in Icelandic Folktales*)

The book *Myths and Monsters in Icelandic Folktales* shows you the other side of Iceland: that aspect of the Folk-tales that acquaints you with the mythical beasts that inhabit and protect Iceland. These stories have been specially retold by Björk Bjarnadóttir and illustrated by Guðrún Tryggvadóttir. This book is for the whole family and gives a perfect insight into the mythical hidden world that exists in Iceland.

Classified advertisements in the Reykjavik Grapevine

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