



FREE

INNER CITY WARZONE?

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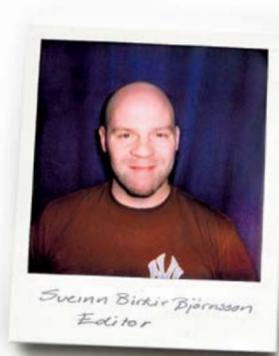
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From the Editor's Chair

If you have recently arrived in Reykjavík, you are probably thinking that this is a relatively safe city. And you would be right. If you have been here for some time, you might be thinking "what the hell is going on here?" If you are able to follow the Icelandic media discussion, you might get the impression that all hell has broken loose and your life is in danger every time you walk down Laugavegur on a given Friday night. It is not so. Despite feverish public outcry over violence in the city centre, studies reveal that violence has actually gone down in recent years. This is documented in some detail in this issue of the Grapevine. I could use this space to say a little more on the subject, but frankly, the naïve reaction from the city

government has left me so dumbfounded that I really don't know what more to say. On to the next subject then, all around the country, children and adults are returning to school after their summer vacation. In this issue, Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir has investigated how children of immigrants fare in the Icelandic school system. We also examine the cost of starting a university semester. The price is pretty steep for a country that prides itself of providing free university education. I am also extremely pleased to print a first half of a two article series from Professor Röbert Haraldsson from a bicycle trip through the Icelandic highlands, from Reykjavík to Akureyri. His newfound passion for cycling should serve

as an inspiration for us all to slow down the pace and take better care of ourselves. I want to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to two people who have made life easier around the office this summer. Well, most of the time they made it easier, although sometimes, quite the opposite was true. I am talking about Chandler Fredrick and Zoë Robert, the two summer interns who have roamed aimlessly around the office, picking up pointers on how to screw up a great idea for a magazine. Thanks kids, it was great fun having you around.



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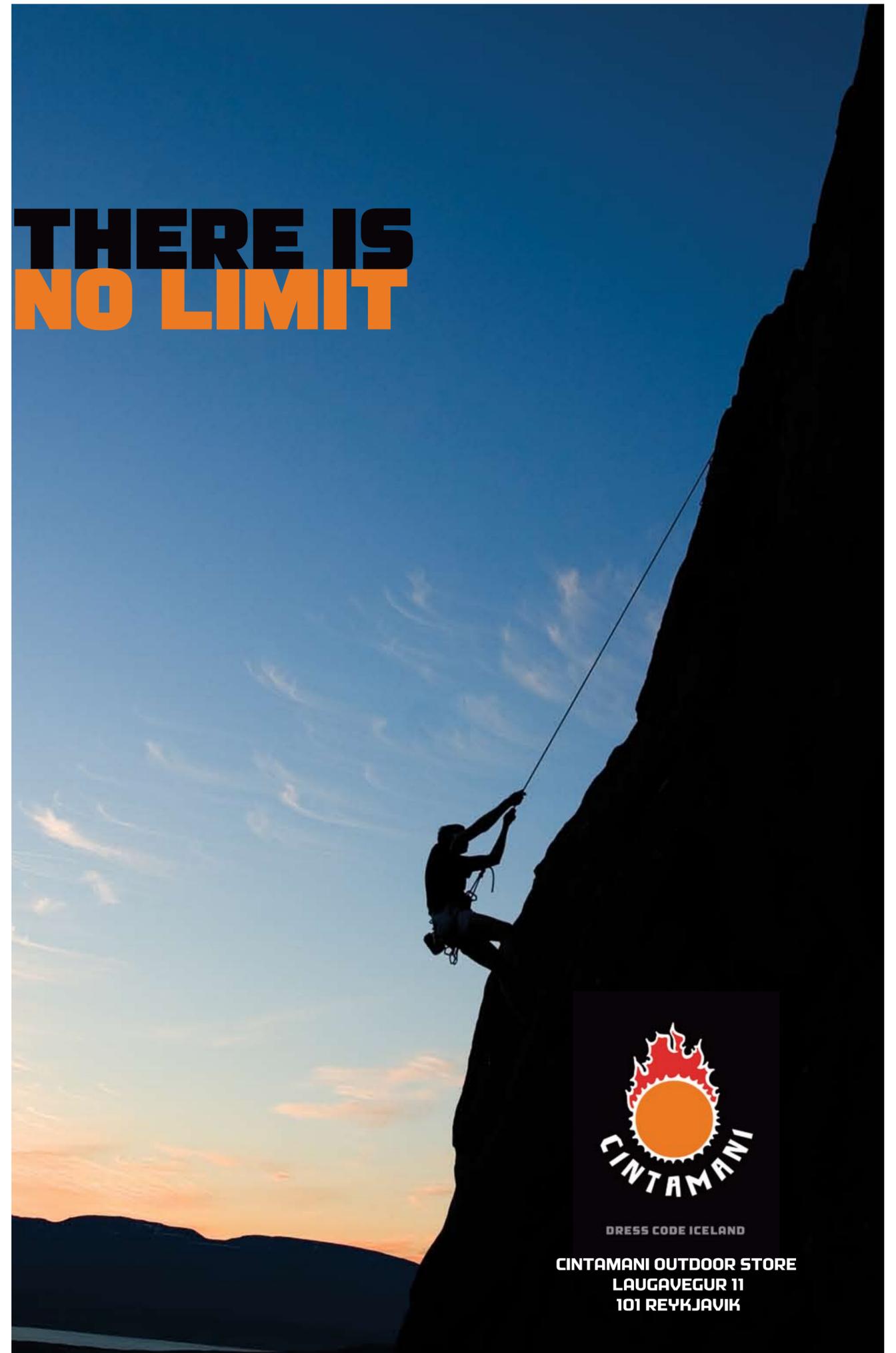
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Reynir, Kjartan, Konni, Goggi, Mummi, Gaui and Maggi engaged in a proper Reykjavík street fight.





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Sour Grapes

Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to letters@grapevine.is.

Re: Myspace vs. Facebook

I am an international student and an avid reader of the Grapevine, my only source to interesting icelandic news (or I should say news put in an interesting way) and quality English articles on paper, which I eagerly await every fortnight. Much to the same enthusiasm I pore over 'Myspace vs. Facebook' only to realise how censorious you (or the columnist?) are of Myspace, in the least not justifying the title, which could have been something like this - 'Junky Myspace vs. innovative Facebook'.

The other day websites (space is not enough to list) ran a series of article on the creativity you can chalk out using free tools at the Myspace - from creating funny looking tabs to sophisticated personal webpages, which until now is extravaganza for a very few, who have actually gone through rigorous java, c++ training. It brought a revolution in the internet-community space, which has given birth to a number of interesting pages; LinkedIn (dedicated to professionals), jobster (only for job seekers and employers), VisiblePath (focussed on relationship strengths) and Facebook (now you all know) to say the least.

On the other hand, the day is not far when all these web apps plunging (now hundreds of them every week) into Facebook will besmirch its' real face. Shouldn't it be the other way round: i.e. web apps should "run on the internet, out in the open, and people can tie their social network into it if they want." It would have been a great if you had put this in the right context while juxtaposing Facebook with 'Macy's gift cards', 'ringtone and sex ads' etc. on Myspace. Do you not see it is inevitable on Facebook now, when Zuckerberg has announced Facebook open in May this year?

Finally, I do agree the opinions of the columnist don't reflect the opinions of the Grapevine but I guess you too would agree that sometimes these 'not up-to-date' opinions are much prejudiced.

Regards
Naresh

Dear Naresh,

You touch on some interesting topics, and I should probably put an effort into giving you the well thought out answer it deserves, but to be frank, I just can't be bothered. You see, the opinions of the columnist are not my own (nor the Grapevine's, although it is often damn near impossible to distinguish between the opinions of the Grapevine and my own.) The problem is, I just can't get into this Myspace/Facebook/whatever debate. I simply find the whole social networking scene too preposterous. I don't use any of these sites - I prefer face-to-face interaction - and I have never been able to understand people's fascination with them. Now, maybe I am 'not up to date' or even prejudiced, but that's just how it is. But if you want to debate which guest had the best performance on the Muppet Show, I'll take your call.

PS. Besides, I was on vacation when that opinion ran. I don't know why I even bothered to answer this.
Editor

Hi,
I recently visited Iceland (which I like immensely) and picked up a copy of The Reykjavik Grapevine.
Just to say that, as a visitor, I liked it very much. It

manages to balance the fine line between something that is informative but readable at the same time.

Thanks for a good experience J.
Frank Tompson
Connect2Tunnels
www.tompson.demon.co.uk

Dear Frank,

Thank you for your kind words. If I might add, I have always felt so myself, and I am not even a visitor.
Editor

Dear Editor,

I recently read an article in a Swedish newspaper that said that in Iceland it is possible to meet with elves, or as you often call them in Iceland, 'the hidden people'. I have long been fascinated by elves, ever since I saw the Lord of the Rings trilogy. I am a big fan of Legolas.

I would like inquire if it is possible to book an appointment with an elf when I come to Iceland, preferably in its natural surroundings rather than in a display booth? Where should I turn? Do you pay by the hourly rate, and are discount rates available? Also, is there a bar in Reykjavik frequented by elves? I would love to meet one outside of their working environment.

Thank you so much for your time,

Göran Vesterås
Växjö, Sweden

Dear Göran,
Thank you for your letter. Several people will claim they can put you in touch with elves. I am not familiar with any specific website that makes this service available, but you might want to seek out *Sálarannsóknarfélagið*, (www.srfi.is) an association of Icelandic spiritists. I am not sure what elves charge for their services, but I would imagine that they follow similar rates as taxi drivers, with a starting-fee of 450 ISK. Elves would most likely attend the live music venue *Organ*, since their interest in music and dance is very well documented. I would say that is your best bet to meet an elf outside of work.

Hope this helps,
Editor.

"I would like inquire if it is possible to book an appointment with an elf when I come to Iceland, preferably in its natural surroundings rather than in a display booth? Where should I turn?"

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Peacekeeping and Ideas of Masculinity

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Gulli

Helga Björnsdóttir is working on her PhD thesis in Anthropology from the University of Iceland. Her research has been focused on ideas of masculinity and spaces where those ideas are exist. A large part of her study has been devoted on peacekeeping in relation to masculinity. She recently gave a lecture at the University of Iceland where she presented a somewhat different image of Icelandic peacekeeping from what is usually presented in Icelandic media. A Grapevine journalist sat down with Björnsdóttir at her home to ask a few questions about peacekeeping in general, ideas of masculinity and the role of Icelandic peacekeepers.

Maybe you could start by telling me a little about why you started to research Icelandic peacekeepers?

Well, at first it was not supposed to focus on the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit, I was going to research ideas of masculinity, not peacekeepers, except as a special space around these ideas. But gradually the focus was turned to peacekeeping per se and to the ICRU as a part of a bigger context. It is impossible to let it be to talk about that, so it has become a big part of my research. Of course, ideas of masculinities exist within certain context and space and this space in particular forms certain ideas.

In your lecture, you talked about how peacekeeping is always defined as a man's job. Is that the case?

Yes, it usually is. Peacekeeping is usually referred to as some kind of a military operation. When you are working in peacekeeping, you are always working around some sort of con-

flict or war; this is pretty obvious, war – peace. Therefore, peacekeeping is usually defined in relation to military and military development. Traditional peacekeeping is very male oriented. Six out of every seven peacekeepers are soldiers, and soldiers generally tend to be men. Although women have been forcing their way into militaries around the world, it is still a very small portion of the whole. In the British army for example, although it has made an effort to increase the number of women attending and working in the Army and advertising it as job for everyone, certain jobs are still reserved for men only.

You have talked to many members of the Icelandic Crisis Unit; do you have any idea what it is that attracts them to this job?

I think that the Icelanders volunteer for this job really want to go there to be a part of a reconstruction project. One peacekeeper told me that there are two kinds of people who go into peacekeeping. On one hand, there are people who want to carry arms and be gunhappy; on the other hand, there are people who want to be a part of some sort of a reconstruction. That is the majority of the Icelandic peacekeepers. When the ICRU was first formed, a register of 200 names was put together, a response list of available volunteers. But as it happens, that list is seldom used. In reality it is the demand from NATO that decides who goes. If NATO needs technicians or ambulance men to put together a team, they call and ask to see if the ICRU can put together a team. But, the Icelanders want to go there to help. But of course, it is also exciting. This is an exotic

environment and a great experience. And as they say themselves, this is a bank of experience that they can always go back to.

Are they generally positive about their experience?

Yes, most of them are, because they have experienced so much that they would never have an opportunity to do otherwise. For example travel, you usually cannot just travel around Afghanistan, but many of the Icelandic peacekeepers who have been there have travelled a lot. They have seen a lot and done a lot that most people don't have a chance to see or do. They are very positive towards that experience and to the idea of peacekeeping itself.

What has their job mainly be?

That varies. In Kosovo, a team of flight traffic controllers and firefighters built up the airport and the airport fire brigade. Then there are people working with the UNIFEM; then there is a media liaison officer in Iraq; there are people in Kabul airport, working on building the infrastructure of the airport there, there were air traffic controllers there, fire fighters, and engineers. Then they have been a part of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, and in Sri Lanka they partaking in the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and supplied doctors and medical staff with a Norwegian outfits. There is more info on this on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, [http://www.utanrikisraduneyti.is/utanrikismal/fridargaesla]

Judging from the media coverage of the Icelandic peacekeepers, you sometimes get the feeling that everyone is playing soldier.

“Peacekeeping is usually defined in relation to military and military development. Traditional peacekeeping is very male oriented. Six out of every seven peacekeepers are soldiers, and soldiers generally tend to be men.”

Well it is. That goes with out saying.

But the way you have described this, it sounds more like men who want to partake in reconstruction efforts.

I said they wanted to take part in a reconstruction. And they do. But that does not mean they are always completely content with what they are doing. Once you enter a space where there is a military infrastructure, you become a part of it. And peacekeeping is such an undefined area really. Peacekeeping is often discussed in relation to politics, how can we improve the situation. But when you reach the question how we can keep the peace through arms... what kind of message are we sending when the peace is kept through arms?

You mentioned that many peacekeepers are soldiers.

Yes, that is true.

Are they retired soldiers?

No, peacekeeping is just another form of using the military. Many nations use their military for peacekeeping. The United Nations has a peacekeeping force, The United Nations have a peacekeeping force and so does ISAF. When you have a large military, you need something for it to do. You can't just go off to war anytime you please, so you need operations to maintain and train the military. Some people claim that peacekeeping is just a training ground for foreign militaries, while others claim that this is a good use of a military force. Here we have all this equipment and all this know-how... you know, lets put it to use. Soldiers are always deployed to react against natural disasters for example. This is very similar in many ways.

So is peacekeeping a political decision in order to maintain a military?

No, that's not really how it is. But this can be good opportunity for a military to maintain itself, train people and to create a new identity. For example when the Dutch Army became an all-volunteer force in 1996, it has focused mainly on peacekeeping missions. Also, wars in the world have changed. There are no longer wars between countries, most wars are interstate conflicts. And peacekeeping is always moving more towards reconstruction efforts and humanitarian aid. This is mixed in with the military part. The ICRU is sort of rocking there in between. Of course, it is not a military outfit, and they are not allowed to do anything except for self-defence, so they are focused on reconstruction work. That's what they mostly do, and, they are pretty good at it. The Icelandic peacekeepers are a little special. For one thing, most of them are older than the average soldier who works as a peacekeeper, and they are not trained as soldiers, and they are very hard working, they work fast and they do it well. When something needs to be done, they simply do it, without necessarily going through the proper channels because they don't have this military background, but they know how to get the job done.

But do they fit in then?

Yes, I think they are well received and are considered to have done excellent work. Of course, they don't fit into the military structure. It is easy to put Icelandic peacekeepers in a military uniform, but that does not mean the uniform will fit, metaphorically speaking. I think that we need to decide what we want to do with the ICRU. There are so many jobs that Icelanders know and could do so well that would fit them a lot better than the military side of it.

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The dropout rate stands in stark contrast to that of native Icelandic Secondary School students, which, according to Iceland's Statistical Bureau, hovers just around 15%.

a combination of courses and recreation activities, intended to integrate children aged 6-12 years old into Icelandic culture and language before entering elementary school.

"We wanted to see people with a similar base," says Grétarsdóttir. "We got a list from ITR but we knew very little background, we didn't know for example whether one of the parents was Icelandic, but we had kids who had at least been deemed in need of this sort of preparation. We tried to choose a group with similar circumstances. They are all from the capital district, so we're not picking this up from all over the country."

Of the original surveyed group, 64.7% have dropped out of Menntaskóli, close to half of that percentage having dropped out within the first year, with most of the remaining never having entered secondary school at all. Of the small number of kids who have graduated or who have been determined likely to graduate, 64% were girls.

Making the Language Their Own

The dropout rate stands in stark contrast to that of native Icelandic Secondary School students, which, according to Iceland's Statistical Bureau, hovers just around 15%. Grétarsdóttir attributes the numbers to vulnerability in the grasp of the language.

"The experts say that if the language isn't all right, then you can't get much out of all the other subjects. Kids are often quick to pick up every-day language, they can go to the store or manage in their friends group, but when it comes to learning geography, then vocabulary is quite different."

Jóhannesdóttir says that she is well aware of the importance of educating teachers to deal with the special circumstances and diverse needs of foreign students.

"There are students of foreign descent in all of our classes, so it's an issue that concerns every teacher. We all take responsibility for that, and all participate in making sure the student makes the language his own and that's why we think it's very important that all the teachers in the school have a good understanding of how they should adapt the curriculum and work with foreign students in the classroom setting.

"We try to have a lot of variety and we have very specific methods to build up vocabulary and practice pronunciation, and we have them practice the language, and we work to improve their reading skills and then of course they work regularly on writing projects."

As the resources for proper Icelandic education for children is clearly available in at least a few of the city's elementary schools, in the end it may just come down to confidence.

"It's quite a big issue," says Jóhannesdóttir, "overcoming this shyness and working up their self-confidence, just to not be afraid to say the words."

Since the influx of immigrants is quite recent, general statistical and social information concerning immigrants and their children is still scarcely available. Grétarsdóttir says that when she began research on her thesis in April of last year, no information was available on the group from the Icelandic Statistical Bureau.

"Once I started talking to people and doing my research the Bureau started to collect information and statistics with a similar group.

I think both they and the ministry of education were beginning to realize that it doesn't make any sense to receive people into this country and not to know anything about them and how to react to them or to receive them. I felt it really pointed to the fact that some ball had begun rolling."

New Icelanders Build on Language

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Gúndi

In the past three or four years, the influx of immigrants in Iceland has increased steadily. According to a study conducted by the Icelandic Statistical Bureau, the country's immigrant population makes up close to 5% of the country's total population. With the influx, however, comes the introduction of a group of new young Icelanders, children of immigrants assimilating to a new country, language and culture; a group that this week will be heading back en masse into elementary and secondary schools around the country.

Around the capital district, many elementary schools say they have a clear-cut orientation process in place for students of foreign descent entering the Icelandic school system. Representatives of both Fellaskóli and Austurbæjarskóli say that the schools have been especially conscious in recent years to put forth effort to fully integrate international students into the system.

"We have a very clear reception process in our school when it comes to receiving students with foreign backgrounds," says Kristín Jóhannesdóttir, principal of Fellaskóli. You could say that the student's education has three parts: There is the reception process, then there is tutored instruction in Icelandic, and then Icelandic study in the class-system."

In Fellaskóli, according to Jóhannesdóttir, the reception process begins with a meeting with the child, his/her parents, a representative from the school's International Students Department, an academic advisor, a school nurse, the principal, and a translator if necessary. The student then begins a two-week orientation program on an abbreviated daily schedule.

"This time is used to build up trust between the student and the teacher as well as the student and other students," says Jóhan-

nesdóttir. "We try to overcome their shyness and emphasize a relaxed atmosphere in the relationship. The teaching is individual-based and that is to say aimed at the student's ability. The subjects covered in that time are first and foremost about the student him/herself and their most immediate environment."

Building on Diversity

Nína Magnúsdóttir is the department chair of the International Students Department at Austurbæjarskóli, the self-proclaimed "mother-school of diverse teaching." According to Magnúsdóttir, although foreign students take Icelandic courses in the International Department, the school is eager to integrate the kids socially, as well as academically.

"We want to emphasize that which is communal rather than that which isolates or divides," she says. "We emphasize the social aspect and foreign students, from the first day, spend as much time with a common class as is possible. The teaching strategy builds on collaboration and teamwork where the students work together and help each other out. Our emphasis is on multicultural teaching that builds on the idea that everyone has something to offer and that being a foreign student is just a facet of the school's diversity."

Jóhannesdóttir agrees, adding that integration process happens on several varying levels within the school.

"It's not just in the International Students Department that they learn Icelandic," Jóhannesdóttir says. "The Icelandic language classes are related and compatible to all the subjects. The kids learn both within the Department and in their other classes. It's very important that that is very clear, that they are not shut up in some department, they are also out in

classes, and that's where the other part of the Icelandic instruction takes place."

In both Fellaskóli and Austurbæjarskóli, the orientation process ends only when the student has been integrated fully into the regular curriculum with the rest of their class. Socially, however, the results of the school's efforts are slightly more vague.

"It is different with all the kids, and we are very conscious of this," says Jóhannesdóttir. "But there is strength in numbers, and there are many kids here who have immigrated from the same country for example, and they connect with each other first, and the kids who take courses in the International Department, they also tend to stick together a bit. We try to be conscious of the social aspect, but we're also aware that these kids are maybe not going out for sports as much. We try always to point it out if kids have an interest in it, but not everyone has that interest. People are different."

The Daunting Numbers

In March of this year, the Intercultural Center held a conference titled Immigrants and Secondary School. Among a panel of experts and elementary, and high school and university instructors, Solveig Brynja Grétarsdóttir presented the results of a research project she recently completed as part of her MPAed-degree at the University of Iceland.

The project was one of the first formal investigations into adolescents of foreign descent in the Icelandic school system. The results of the research were quite conclusive, as this was the first formal investigation ever conducted on this group. The research looked at 119 students who were enrolled in summer day camp at The Reykjavik Sports & Youth Council, ITR, in the second half of the last decade. The camps are

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The Price of Education

Text by Helga Pórey Jónsdóttir Photo by Leó Stefánsson

Every student starting a semester at school faces the fact that studying doesn't come for free. For many students computers are necessary, as well as books, computer programs, work tools and etc. Also a student almost always has to pay some kind of a tuition or fee for the semester or winter at hand. For that reason students are constantly faced with the question: How much is my education worth?

The Choice of Education

The cost is very different between students. An art student might need to spend more on equipment than an academic student, but then again an academic student who could be studying anthropology or psychology often has to consider printing expenses and buying large amounts of books – many of which the students will not sell when the courses are over and instead they use them throughout their studies as well as professionally when they start working. Tuition fees vary between schools. Universities driven by the state are the cheapest while universities in the private sector sometimes have extremely high fees. It's hard to put a price tag on education because every single person uses it differently. However, it's safe to say that education can seriously increase one's ability to start a self-chosen professional career. Regardless of good prospects, every semester does have a price and it's interesting to explore how much it really costs to get a degree.

Some students are young and still get help from their parents, others are independent, have their own families and serious financial responsibilities. Many seek education throughout their lives, often after starting a family or purchasing a home. An Icelandic university student has a few options when applying for school. The University of Iceland offers the broadest selection of courses while many of the private universities enable students to approach their education on a more practical

level. Some offer a better connection to the chosen profession of the student and hire teachers from the work market, not necessarily advanced academic scholars. Other schools offer a different collection of courses for their degree programs than The University of Iceland, as well as other locations than Reykjavik.

How Much to Start?

When a student has chosen the right school many things have to be taken to consideration. Tuition fees are a big concern. The University of Iceland and The University of Akureyri offer their students a year's worth of studying for 45,000 ISK. When studying at Reykjavik University the price of one semester starts at 128,000 ISK. At Bifröst one can easily find that a full semester can cost close to 300,000 ISK, depending on the level of education and how the teaching is provided. Many students are poor, not only because of their low income while studying but also because of these high prices.

Add to this the cost of books and various study equipment. Some have to purchase a computer. It is not always necessary but owning one does increase the ability of the student to work flexibly. A student who owns a computer can, in many cases, work more effectively at home and is able to interact with teachers and fellow students easily – not to mention the vast selection of sources available on the internet. A reasonable computer that should survive the year costs around 100,000 – if you want a better computer the price can easily double. Some students are required to buy computer programs; the programs are licensed and therefore costly. Prices can range from 5,000 to 100,000, depending on their efficiency and nature.

Printing is necessary but the universities offer solutions for their students. A student can get a printing card for a very low price (sometimes they are free) and use the school

printers. The negative aspect is the fact that the student needs to be ready with their work, while at school, and there is less room for improvement. Scheduling becomes a much more important factor and fixing mistakes is not as easy. It can be very hard for a student to realise a crucial mistake when holding a printed copy of an important piece of work and not having the means to fix them the same way one could at home. Therefore most students buy their own printers. They are not very expensive but can cost from 5,000 ISK to 20,000, depending on their versatility. By buying a printer the student is really buying valuable time.

Spending Wisely

Books can be very expensive. Very few get away with less than 25,000 ISK and most spend around 40–50,000 in their undergraduate years. A post graduate student can easily spend close to a 100,000 ISK entirely on books. As mentioned before, trading books is not always an option. The curriculum often reflects the student's interest and is therefore necessary in the following courses. Furthermore, the student is likely to use the books when he or she starts working and continues to use them later in life. A lawyer is highly likely to own large law collections in the same way a computer scientist is likely to own books on programming or a mathematician is likely to own a good calculator. A student's education often consumes his or her life; therefore, much of the curriculum is something they hold on to throughout his or her professional career. For that reason buying books can be seen as an investment for the student, but a costly one at a very difficult time in her or his financial life.

The maximum monthly payment for a single Icelandic student who either rents or is a homeowner is 94,000 ISK. One can apply for additional loans to deal with some part of high tuition fees in private schools – but a stu-

dent at The University of Iceland will pay the mandatory 45,000. This still leaves the cost of books and other equipment unsolved. Many use their summer incomes to bridge the gap. They save their money and use it to pay the tuition fees, books and such. Many also have to deal with rent and other similar expenses. An apartment in the University's Skuggagarðar has a price tag of approximately 50,000 ISK, which drops to 38,000 with support from the city. However the waiting list is long and many have to rent on the free market which is expensive and not very secure.

For What It's Worth

The fact is that studying is expensive. It's a strenuous process, both academically and financially. The answer to the question of worth exists within every student who willingly puts him or herself through this process. The education itself becomes priceless – it infiltrates every aspect of a person's life; it changes the individual and provides freedom that can not be replaced. While the challenges of education are not only academic but also a financial, the students will find themselves faced with more lessons than the ones provided in class. Their necessity is debatable.

At Bifröst one can easily find that a full semester can cost close to 300,000 ISK, depending on the level of education and how the teaching is provided.



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ICELAND AIRWAVES '07

Fight for Your Right to Party: Fight Club

Text by Marvin Lee Dupree



Political discourse is the same universal language, full of silly fights and childish talk, just like an enormous kiddie sandbox. And while the former is mainly a cock fight of various ideals, the other one is just full of piss. However, both are often just full of crap. Of course, there are slight differences: take for example City Hall. From the outside everything seems fancy smancy – yet on the inside, amongst the quicksand and cesspool of two-faced political spin, you will find gremlins spouting their totalitarian political jargon. Sauron, I mean Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, the mayor of Reykjavík, has decided to launch a crusade against the location of ÁTVR (The State Alcohol and Tobacco Company of Iceland) in downtown Reykjavík. Vilhjálmur, along with his political cronies, seems to feel that its presence in the midtown area attracts all the pariahs and vagabonds. Sounds like a simple solution – that is, if you ignore the fact that ÁTVR, although run by the government, is nonetheless a company and its priorities lie in serving the demands and needs of its customers.

Perhaps our mayor is more a man of action than words, somewhat in the mould of the classical 80's action hero genre? He is more of a Terminator than a left leaning liberal hanging on to his soapbox, more Action Jackson than a cuddler, "more machine than man". Call me a commie or liberal or whatever you damn please, I just think it is strange and very uncouth that a city official can try to dictate what others wish to drink. His foray into our civil liberties is despicable. The man actually has the nerve to write a letter to ÁTVR and complain that they sell cold beer by the can, not only in six packs. Perhaps he might be earning points with fanatical religious suburbanites; I just don't know what kind of person condones that sort of behaviour. And strangely enough, I have not heard or read enough from the junior league camp of the Independent Party re monstratively rebuffing this conservative element of their party; yet the young ones always punctuate the loudest when somebody from left side of the political spectrum speaks out about anything.

Nevertheless, I might be young and way too idealistic – but I cannot see how a bum or a drunk would care about the temperature of their drink. A normal conversation for dipsomaniacs would not be "Not the Chateau!", "Please, pass the white wine, it just goes so well with this brie I bought" or even "Damn, that Heineken was so much better cold, my life doesn't seem so bleak now", especially seeing as how their drink of choice is usually to be found in the drugstore and when their purse is actually not full of lint you can see them drinking cheap ass vodka. If people are tired of seeing bums in the street then they should stop complaining, because those who complain the loudest are usually the ones who have their own private chant "See no evil, hear no evil, just speak some evil". This hidden problem has

been going on for a long time, because even last year the police were trying to ban these individuals from sitting on Austurvöllur. And just this summer some of the residents of Njálsgata were inebriated over their bitter indignation when they heard about the plan to build a residence, i.e. a home for people down on their luck, in their area.

Sadly enough this is not the only attempt by city officials to try to curb our liberties. Stefán Eiríksson, chief of police, is part of this vanguard of the older generation that just doesn't seem to get it. His patchy quilt work of a plan is that the clubs and bars of Reykjavík should be more scattered around the city and that there could be sufficient reason for earlier closing times – yet it was only a short time ago that licensing laws in England were changed, allowing for around the clock drinking. And I am pretty sure that if London can handle these opening hours along with the rest of Europe, I don't think that the berserker Viking gene should make that much of a difference. Eiríksson also made the very common error of trying to say that violence has increased – yet at the same time a professor of sociology denied that same charge. Although the thing is, even if violence has increased, I think you would have to categorize the statistics by where in the city they happen and the background of the people committing these offences – and maybe keeping in mind the fact that you may have one offender or many committing a majority of these offences. And for example, a person who goes clubbing at Sólun is perhaps more likely to start a fight than say perhaps someone at Kaffibarinn or Sírkus. Here is another shocker: try comparing Reykjavík with the nightlife in Keflavík. Almost every weekend you hear about violence and drugs there, despite the fact they have a population of 12,000 citizens. Strange, 101 Reykjavík doesn't seem so shady after reading mbl.is.

The fact is that there will always be other people willing to rain on the parade of others. Some people just like fighting. It's just like politics. Mine is bigger than yours and I am right. While some people on a night out on the town are more preoccupied by dancing and having fun with friends – or trying to cop a feel with their new nightlife partner – there will always be some who suffers from a heightened sense of emasculation, a rapacious feeling or need to beat some other male up – an act in my opinion that borders on homo-eroticism almost akin to the erastes of Ancient Greece. It seems to be a reverse pick up line – which by default you obviously cannot use on girls. Why just on Friday whilst returning home from a night out I was chastised by two tourists, actually one. One was admiring the sunrise, while the other one kept saying "We will fuck you up. Should we fuck him up?" while I just laughed which resulted in him saying "We will fuck you up". It was almost believable, except for the fact that I was sober, weighed more than them combined and had just been told how good looking I was. Cocky, I know. But he did use the word: fuck.

Just don't let politicians ruin your day. Drink, drink and be merry or as the great one said "Man, being reasonable, must get drunk; the best of life is but intoxication".

The fact is that there will always be other people willing to rain on the parade of others. Some people just like fighting. It's just like politics. Mine is bigger than yours and I am right.

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TUBORG
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All Things in Life – Not for All Though

Text by Alena Krasovskaya

The town of Akureyri, considered to be the northern capital of Iceland, is known for its charm and calm beauty. It has even been said that while Reykjavik looks like an excited teenage girl, Akureyri resembles a mature woman. The town has acquired the reputation of a family-friendly place; however, the presence of a college and a University brings certain energy into the town's nightlife. The motto of the town has been chosen Öll lífsins gæði – All good things in life, obviously emphasising the friendliness, peace and good spirit of a charming northern Icelandic town.

Still, once every year, Akureyri changes completely, and for one single weekend it makes even the capital burst with envy. This is the first weekend of August is known in Iceland as Verslunarmannahelgi, or Versló for short – the Merchants' Weekend. Its boisterous reputation brings to Akureyri thousands of people annually and fills it with wild fun for three days. The green light for endless entertainment seems to be turned on for representatives of all professions and ages; still, it is the matter of age that our today's saga is about.

The news that anyone aged 18–23 would not be allowed to place their tent on the designated camping sites, unless they are accompanied by families, came as a shock only three or four days before the celebrations. People must have made their plans and made certain arrangements by then; what was even worse was that the town has far less guesthouses at its disposal than the greater Reykjavik area, and it's natural to have them fully booked long before such a popular event starts. Besides, even if though there were any spots left, biting prices would leave no chance to young people of this very age group – camping places are intended for their first and foremost. Indeed, now it's hard to say whether the town authorities were concerned about young people's degree of soberness during the weekend, or did their best to guard the good night's sleep of those locals who they most frequently interact with for the rest of the year, but one thing is obvious: the holiday was disrupted for exactly those who are meant to enjoy it to the full. Destiny has successfully exercised its malicious powers over Versló 2007.

In an official statement available in Icelandic at the Town of Akureyri website, the Mayor Sigrún Björk Jakobsdóttir claimed that "in the recent decades... the family fun has gone over the limits and many people were concerned about it." She obviously tries to say that Akureyri has maintained its reputation of a family town, and that a holiday which, to put it mildly, is quite opposite to the goal the town authorities are trying to reach, can hardly be tolerated. She claims to have received a positive feedback from the town dwellers, and that 'for the first time in a long period of time the holiday could be called a family one'. Those banned away from the camping sites are referred to as 'unglingar' – this word is usually used to refer to adolescents in Icelandic. It's an indeed interesting reference to the people of full age, those who are officially allowed by Icelandic law to purchase alcohol and smoke.

It has to be noted though that the main festivities have always been held in the downtown area, around Glerátorg the shopping mall and KA and Þór sports

centres in the middle of town, so that peace of quiet family neighbourhoods placed further to the mountains has never really been affected. Be that as it may, the authorities seem to have decided not to trust their own citizens. A similar decision could possibly be justified in a state that embraces communism, but in Iceland, such an open and free society with a truly sky-high level of trust, it looks ridiculous and somewhat hasty, as if the authorities were afraid not to be able to provide due order in the run of celebrations.

Verslunarmannahelgi is also widely celebrated in the Westman Islands, but there all the camping sites are placed outside the urban area. Such a solution could perhaps do for Akureyri, if the City Council's wish to provide the locals with their deserved good night's sleep was so acute. But banning a particular group of people away from a camping site obviously lacks common sense. Later on, when the holiday was over, someone posted his comment to a blog entry dedicated to the ban issue that only one case of drug consumption was registered during the weekend and referred to a person in his forties. Clearly, peace and quiet require banning everyone and prohibiting the very holiday as the most radical means. By the way, the method of how the age limit was determined remains mysterious – no one has really explained why the upper limit was set to 23 years of age, but not 24 or 25 or else.

Akureyri is indeed a sweet and peaceful place for family, where people don't lock the doors at night or worry about their kids playing outside. But exceptions are always here, whether the authorities like it or not. They thought that banning some fun could be a useful means to secure peace and quiet, but what they got was a storm of criticism. They say they will see what's going to happen next year, and whether banning full-aged "adolescents" from their legal right to rest was effective. Until then, we have to admit that we live in a society where true democracy is somewhat out of reach. This case brightly illustrates why.

The news that anyone aged 18–23 would not be allowed to place their tent on the designated camping sites, unless they are accompanied by families, came as a shock only three or four days before the celebrations.

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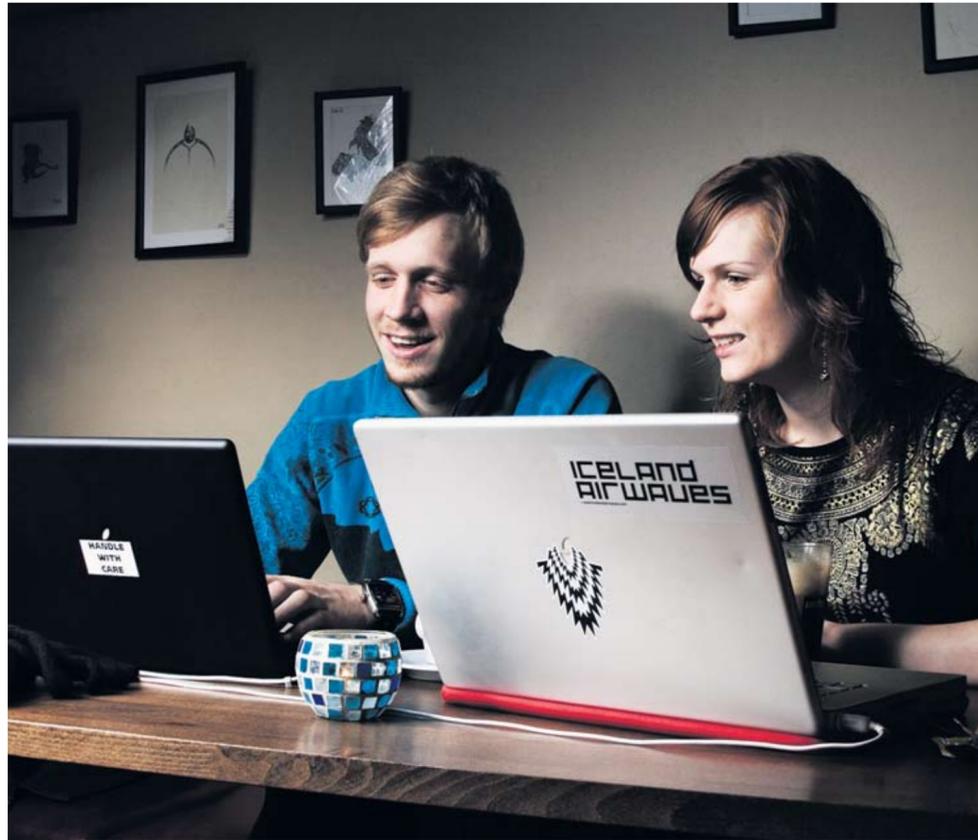
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The Telephone Consumer's Guerrilla Handbook

Text by Ian Watson Photo by Leó Stefánsson

Though a single telephone call costs just a few crowns, most people I know here in Iceland have monthly phone and Internet bills of five to ten thousand ISK. Even this may not seem like much, but multiplied by twelve, it becomes like buying a luxury washing machine or refrigerator every year. Indeed, a new report reveals that Icelandic households spend more on phone and Internet service than in any other OECD country.

With so much money at stake, take a few minutes to rethink whether you're getting the best deal. In this second of two articles about consumer phone costs in Iceland, I focus on high-speed Internet service and on landline calls abroad.

Internet Service

Four companies now offer broadband Internet access (called ADSL) in Iceland: Siminn, Vodafone, Hve and Sko.

Service plans vary depending on the speed of the connection (in Mbps), the amount of permitted foreign downloading per month (in GB), and the extras that are included, such as e-mail accounts and fixed IP addresses. The foreign download amount is probably the most crucial figure, particularly if you need to transfer large files.

Most companies' cheapest Internet plan is in the 4000-ISK-per-month range. At this level, Siminn offers 1 GB per month at 4 Mbps. Vodafone offers 2 GB per month at 6 Mbps. Hve offers 4 GB per month at 8 Mbps. Sko offers unlimited downloading at 4 Mbps.

The only company to offer a lower-priced package is Sko: unlimited data transfer at ½ Mbps for 2490 ISK/month. This is a very basic package, without various extras. But many people don't need those extras. (It's unwise to have an e-mail address through your Internet provider, as it locks you into that provider. A fixed IP address is of use to advanced web users only.)

Don't get overly focused on connection

speeds. They are only theoretical maximums, and you probably don't need all those megabytes per second. My Hve connection, advertised at 8 Mbps, tested out at roughly 860-1300 Kbps on download and 90-400 Kbps on upload to Icelandic and American servers (1 Mbps = 1000 Kbps). This is more than fast enough for me. Spend your money on extra foreign downloading instead – but not more than you need. I'm online a lot, but rarely go over 1 GB a month and never over two.

Make sure to ask if the advertised price includes all necessary services. For example, Hve adds a billing fee of 199-245 ISK per month. Sko has no billing fee if you pay by credit card, but charges 250 ISK if you want to pay through your bank. Also, you usually get a discount if you have more than one service (phone, Internet, or GSM) through the same company.

Cheaper Calls Abroad

One thing has not changed since I last reported on Icelandic phone service in 2005: Siminn and Vodafone are still charging ridiculously high, and disappointingly similar, rates for calls abroad from your landline. Through either company, a call to a British landline costs 19.9 ISK per minute, and to the Czech Republic 39 ISK per minute – plus a connection fee of either 4.75 or 4.9 ISK per call.

My parents, who live in the United States, pay roughly 3.5 ISK and 7 ISK per minute to call the same two countries. I see no justification for the degree to which Icelandic rates exceed the American ones. Both Siminn and Vodafone do offer a calling plan which discounts these rates a little, but you have to sign up for it specially, you must dial a special code before every call, and the discount is nothing to write home about.

More and more people have switched to making international calls over the Internet. Skype, a so-called voice-over-Internet-protocol

or VOIP program, is the simplest solution. You download Skype for free from www.skype.com, install it on your computer, and plug in a headset or USB phone. Calls to other Skype users are free (just get your friends and family to download the program too).

Calls to landlines worldwide are very cheap through Skype – currently about 1.5 ISK per minute to Britain or the Czech Republic, plus 3.5 ISK per call. You pay with "SkypeOut" credit that you purchase in advance. In effect, with Skype you are leveraging the money that you pay for your Internet connection to get phone calls either for free, or at a tiny extra cost if they have to be routed over a legacy phone network. Unlike movies, VOIP calls take up very little bandwidth, so there's little worry about going over your Internet traffic limit.

Amazingly, even domestic calls within Iceland, of 3 minutes or less, are cheaper through Skype (which charges 2.25 ISK per minute plus 3.5 ISK per call) than through Siminn (which charges 1.85 ISK per minute plus 4.95 ISK per call).

There's no doubt that the quality of Skype calls is worse than that of old-style land-line calls through operators like Siminn. But Siminn calls are not sufficiently clearer than Skype to justify Siminn's high rates. In my experience, Skype calls that are free – those to another Skype user – are those with the best quality. Faxes don't work well over VOIP, but that doesn't matter much now that people scan documents to PDF and e-mail them. There are also other VOIP options besides Skype.

Alternatives to Skype

Those who don't like the idea of talking through the computer can still save on international calls by transferring their home telephone service to Hve, particularly the flavour that Hve calls Heimasími Max. On this plan, a call to Britain costs 4.9 ISK per minute and to the Czech Republic 14.9 ISK per minute. These rates are acceptable, though they are

Icelandic households spend more on phone and Internet service than in any other OECD country.

still way higher than Skype. But the good thing about this plan is that it includes free calls to all Icelandic land lines. Heimasími Max costs 1390 ISK a month, or 990 ISK if you already have Hve internet service. This is less than Siminn's basic subscription, which costs 1445 ISK per month, comes with high international rates, and doesn't include any free calls.

Now for the down side to Heimasími Max. I was all ready to sign up. But Hve's computer system can't (yet) deal with the fact that we have two telephone numbers which both ring on the same line. Also, I suspect that Hve's sound quality is inferior to Siminn's, though superior to Skype's. Like Siminn and Vodafone, Hve's per-minute charges are an example of "vanity pricing" (all the numbers end in 4,9), which suggests that they could trim their margins and still make money.

For those without a fast Internet connection, the old strategy of "callback" calls – which route all your international phone calls through the USA at American prices – is still worth considering. Callbackworld.com is one callback company with low rates for Icelandic customers. Prepaid telephone cards, like Atlassími (now owned by Hve) and Heimsfrelsi, also come with lower rates than Siminn or Vodafone.

What Keeps Land-line Rates so High?

How do Siminn and Vodafone get customers to pay such inflated prices? Here's one theory. Although there is, technically speaking, competition in the Icelandic home telephone market, a stable group of users are unable to take advantage of it in practice. If you are elderly, or not technically savvy, it is really hard to compare complicated telephone service plans. Siminn and Vodafone know that these customers will probably never switch, and that many of them still think of calls abroad as a luxury. So they let them continue paying high "regular" rates.

Siminn and Vodafone do have an incentive to offer special "discounts" (which are not really special) to attract or keep slightly more sceptical customers. But as a recent European Commission press release put it, these lower-priced offers "tend to target certain groups only while general consumers remain unaware." And even if those "general consumers" only make one overpriced phone call a year – well, it's a little like if every one of China's billion residents would eat just one frozen Icelandic shrimp.

Another factor is the large number of corporate and institutional contracts that Siminn and Vodafone sign. Many Icelandic companies cover their employees' mobile phone charges, which means that the end-customers aren't paying, and thus lack an incentive to demand value for money. My sense is that many Icelandic firms and government offices would do well to re-evaluate their telephone purchasing.

I know of one Icelandic state institution where desk phones are blocked from calling overseas, including such exotic countries as Norway and Canada. Even the staff who regularly deal with international matters have to order calls through the "bella simamær" at the switchboard. How 1950s! Ironically, these same employees can make unlimited calls to Icelandic mobile numbers, whose termination cost is perhaps five times higher than that of a call to a Canadian land line. Institutions like this should look into opening a Skype business account.

But here's my advice for your home phone plan. Be sceptical. Read the small print. Choose providers with low, simple pricing. Look at your usage on-line. Don't buy what you don't need. And every year, spend at least as much time re-evaluating your phone and Internet service as you'd spend looking for your next refrigerator.

We're All Gonna Die

Text by Mustafa Mutubarak

Jack Kerouac was a fat drunk when he died. He lived with his mother and his wife, Stella. In his bank account was 91 dollars.

"All writers lose contact," explained William S. Burroughs, after his friend's death. "I wouldn't say he was particularly miserable. He had an alcohol problem. It killed him." A half-century later, Kerouac's estate is worth over 20 million dollars. And in our collective memory he is anything but fat. He is 35 and gorgeous.

September 5 is the fiftieth anniversary of Kerouac's *On The Road*. In honour, Penguin Books is releasing an uncensored version. All of the naughty bits – including gay sex and drug-use – have been restored. It's been years since I've read the book. To be honest, I don't remember a lot of it. It's an old story. I remember that.

"There are only two stories," my English teacher once said, quoting Tolstoy. "A man goes on a journey. Or, a stranger comes to town." Like Romeo & Juliet, though, or the Harry Potter franchise, one doesn't have to remember or even read *On The Road* to know what it's about. Or, for that matter, to be affected by it.

I recently returned from a trip across the U.S. I went with a friend. Over ten thousand miles in two months. From the southern plains of Alberta, Canada to the lush Salinas valley to the subways of New York City. And back again. We were drunk the entire time. "Here," a bartender, in Durant, Mississippi, demanded, "try this."

It was late night. We were in a juke house on the edge of town. Outside the opened door, in the shadows of the dirt parking lot, a few men huddled, talking. I looked at the maraschino cherry in the bartender's huge, dark hand, then at my friend, Garth.

"What's in it?" I asked, looking again at the man. "If I tell you," he replied, smiling, "I'll have to kill you."

He had a nice smile. I ate the cherry. Less enamoured by Kerouac's story than by its style, and legend, I found myself often thinking about his paeon to the road as I was – well, on the road. "Somewhere along the line I knew there'd be girls, visions, everything," he wrote. "Somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me."

Indeed. Kerouac, obviously, was not the first artist to create such a story. Nor will he be the last. Wandering, and wondering, is a common theme. From Satyricon to Huckleberry Finn to Thelma and Louise, popular culture has always adored the rebels, the rambblers. If only in theory, anyway.

"When are you finally going to settle down?" I've often been asked. "You're not getting any younger, you know?"

"Yes," I always reply. "I know." But no one is getting any younger. We are, each of us, getting older, old. I think.

"Travel while you can," my mother often says. Everyone travels nowadays. Or, at least, goes on vacation. In a culture defined by consumption, tourism has become the ultimate form of consumerism. Everyone can do it. Even if it means walking.

There's a problem, though. Everyone wants to go where no one has gone before. Everyone wants to be special. Too many tourists, we complain. But where is there left to go? We've all been there. Or, at least, seen the pictures. Perhaps that's it. The reason for *On The Road*'s enduring popularity, despite a general consensus that it's literary merits are tenuous, at best, is because it defines, celebrates, what no longer exists. The road is closed. Go home.

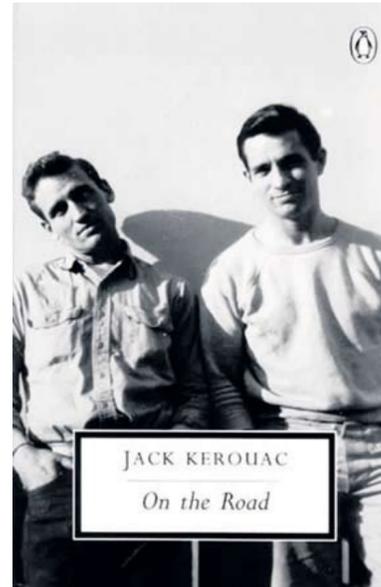
Unable, then, as most of us are, to live the life of its hero, Dean, or narrator, Sal, we settle instead for the vicarious thrill offered therein. Our imaginations soar and, once again, we are privy to something fresh, something new. Or, rather, something old.

"Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk again," Kerouac wrote. "We had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life."

Battered suitcases? How quaint. Often, too, we are given a warning. As with other such stock characters as the wanton woman, or errant child, there is a price to be paid for freedom. Bad boys get spanked.

In Jasper, Texas, on my trip, I interviewed a local judge. A big man, fat and white and friendly, a former police officer, and he was the stereotype of a Southern, small town judge. I asked him about James Byrd. Byrd is the black man who, in 1998, was dragged to death behind a pickup truck in Jasper by three white men.

"Well, you know," the judge replied, smiling, "the trial of those three boys brought this whole town, black



and white, closer together."

I didn't believe him. "It's good that you're travelling the back roads," he soon said, trying to lighten the moment. "There's nothing to see on the Interstate." Leaving town, Garth and I passed an old, black man walking along the tall, green grass at the side of the road. Like Byrd, he limped.

"I wrote the book," Kerouac remarked, in a 1959 interview with Steve Allen, "because we're all gonna die." Unlike many stories with a similar theme, Kerouac's narrator remains alive, unscathed, by book's end. He is not punished for opening one door and closing another. Not entirely. If weary, perhaps, from what he has learned, he nonetheless endures.

"...and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody" he writes, in the book's final lines, "besides the forlorn rags of growing old." Prophetically, perhaps, Kerouac's final years were just that. The forlorn rags of growing old. Made ugly, unhealthy, from years of drinking, and smoking, he became just another conservative, middle-aged drunk.

Conflicted also, apparently, by homosexual feelings and waning creativity, Kerouac turned, in the end, into a sort of sad, bloated Alice in Wonderland; the looking glass he had fashioned over a decade prior was, finally, broken.

"I don't have anyone to call," he said, in his final interview, when asked why he didn't have a phone, "and nobody ever calls me."

Dead at the age of 47, the result of complications from alcoholism, his death on October 21, 1969, it seems, disavowed not only his life but also the very spirit of what he wrote. Or did it?

"...the only people for me are the mad ones," he wrote, in one of the book's most celebrated passages, "the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

An old story, indeed. But we love it.

Wandering, and wondering, is a common theme. From Satyricon to Huckleberry Finn to Thelma and Louise, popular culture has always adored the rebels, the rambblers.

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| TUESDAYS: Gratinated fish Lamb cutlets Meatballs | THURSDAYS: Lamb meat & broth Lamb cutlets | SUNDAYS: Roast pork Lamb cutlets |
| | FRIDAYS: Lamb chops Lamb cutlets | |

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Nesjavellir: Experience Nature at Reykjavik's Doorstep

The area surrounding the geothermal power plant at Nesjavellir is a region of spectacular nature within easy reach of Reykjavik, accessible to hikers and other nature lovers. A visit to the power plant itself is also a revealing experience.

Reykjavik Energy has put much effort into making the area accessible to visitors by providing marked paths, information signs, cabins, and maps. The visitor centre is open this summer on Mondays through Saturdays from 9:00 to 17:00 and on Sundays from 13:00 to 18:00.



Further information on www.or.is

www.or.is

Reykjavík Culture Night

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photos by Gulli

Approximately 100 thousand people flocked downtown to partake in the annual celebration, Reykjavik Culture Night, on August 18 this year. Culture Night is the day when street performers, artists, musicians, dancers and actors almost outnumber the 101 population and suburban residents drive to the centre to witness. Swarms of locals, and a whole bunch of confused tourists, crowded the city centre to see and be seen, sample free drinks at gallery openings and check out what the young art generation is spending all that free time creating.

More than 400 happenings were scheduled during the day. With no time to waste, the Grapevine photographer and me, eager to breathe in as much culture as possible, hit the town at 14:00 sharp. Strolling down Laugavegur, the street slowly transformed into a vibrant cultural party-zone. A few hours later, the crowd would triple in number.

After witnessing a fairly dull street-dance session at Ingólfstorg, we got stuck in a terrifying and smelly "traffic-jam" on Lækjartorg square. Wally the clown can be funny and all, but when cramped between two tall and sweaty men and surrounded by hyperactive kids, we found little joy in the whole extravaganza and wanted nothing more than to get the move on, and finally breathe fresh air.

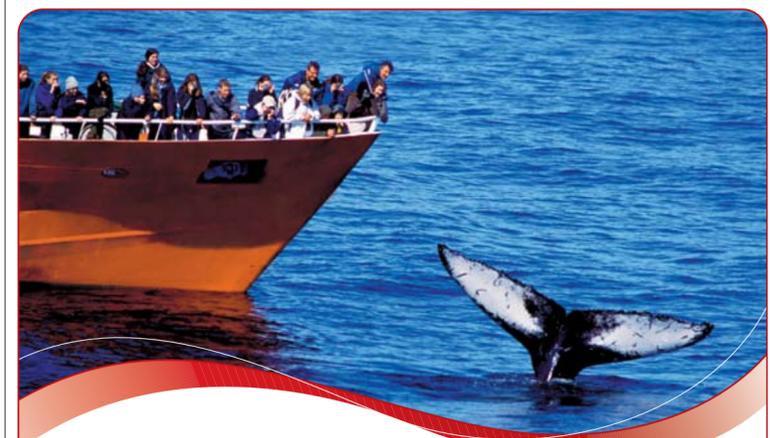
We passed families with dogs, kids sitting cross-legged on the streets feasting on grilled hot-dogs and candy, their parents ate waffles and teenagers ran around with beer-stuffed backpacks. DJs and bands played on every other street-corner. Miklatún park attracted a huge number of pedestrians for a family friendly outdoor show while bar Dillon hosted the first

Icelandic championship in hot-dog eating. The record now sits at 14 hot-dogs in 12 minutes so you can now prepare for next year's competition. Note that any vomiting will leave you disqualified.

Around dinner-time we headed to NASA where ultra-trendy teenagers jumped around to party-band GusGus while two three-year-olds played around with their balloons, somewhat unaware that they were probably among the youngest GusGus concertgoers ever.

It had passed 21:00 when rock-band Minus crowded the backyard of bar Dillon on Laugavegur. Soon after they finished their set, fireworks lit up the cloudless sky as the annual fireworks display marked the end of the official programme. At this time, the street was packed. Some groups were heading home, others just beginning to celebrate. To conclude our challenging day, funk-masters in Jagúar brought the crowd into a frenzy at bar Organ and much to my surprise, I actually had some energy left to get the groove on.

At 5 AM it was finally time to call it a night. The 15 hours of cultural overdose left us crawl up Laugavegur the last time that day. By now, family folks had fled the scene and intoxicated patrons had taken over the city centre. The cultural charm was lost. Police officers, dressed in neon-lit vests, stormed en masse around the centre, picked up drunken teenagers and passed-out adults and secured that everything would run around safely. And for the most part it did. But as Icelandic party-animals aren't exactly the tidiest breed of the animal kingdom, I can't say that I envied the city cleaning-team, now arriving for work.



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|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| April | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct |
| 9:00 | 9:00 | 9:00 | 9:00 | 9:00 | 9:00 | |
| 13:00 | 13:00 | 13:00 | 13:00 | 13:00 | 13:00 | 13:00 |
| | | 17:00 | 17:00 | 17:00 | | |

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**How did this get confused?
Why is it that at the same
time that violent crimes
are decreasing the public
feels less and less safe in
the city?**

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson
Photo by Gulli

Partying is a serious business. At least, in Reykjavik it is.

On an average Friday or Saturday night, police officials estimate that as many as 10,000–15,000 people congregate in the city centre to relax after a strenuous week at work. Reykjavik city is infamous for its robust nightlife, documented in countless newspaper articles, travel magazines and Internet blog-posts. There is an abundance of bars, cafés, nightclubs, bistros, or any other kind of watering hole you may care to name, in downtown Reykjavik. There is music, there is wine and there is dance, and most importantly, there are people. Lots of people.

It should be no surprise that when up to fifteen thousand people gather in the same spot and drink alcohol, violence is likely to follow. And in Reykjavik, it routinely does. Every weekend, police officers interfere with fights, assaults, domestic violence, disturbances of the peace, vandalism and drunken driving. Fifteen-thousand drunken individuals are also going to leave remnants of their stay, such as broken bottles, cigarette butts, and empty beer cans. There is no reason to condone this behaviour, but so far at least we will have to accept this as a fact. Pretty much the way it has always been, for better or worse.

However, in recent weeks, the "situation" in downtown Reykjavik has become increasingly dominant in certain Icelandic media outlets. Judging from the coverage, downtown Reykjavik resembles a war zone every weekend and ordinary citizens are wise to sit at home, or otherwise put them self in harms way.

An editorial in Iceland's biggest daily, the conservative paper Morgunblaðið, on August 1 stated that it was time to increase law enforcement in downtown Reykjavik, pointing out that the public feels decreasingly safe in the city centre: "People are simply afraid to walk around there when they get regular news of assaults and mayhem such as last weekend." And later, that "[t]he public has a right to demand that violence in the city centre will be dealt with, so it becomes a safe place for all."

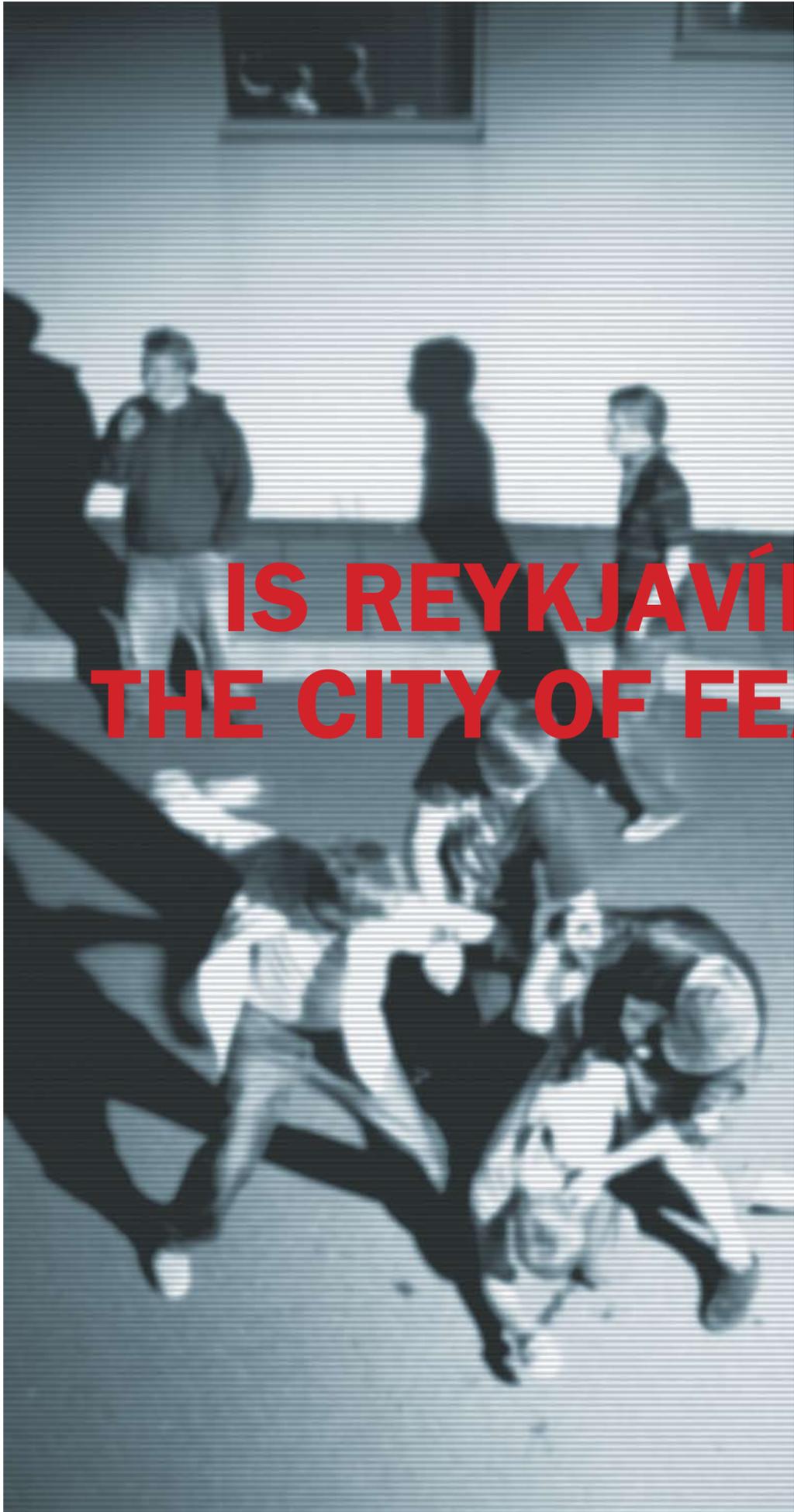
On August 2 another editorial in Morgunblaðið declared: "Rampant drinking [as] a major problem in Reykjavik's City Centre," citing public intoxication, disorderly conduct and general filthiness as symptoms of a city where respect for the law and human decency was utterly vacant.

Bloggers also directed their attention to violence in the city centre. Widely read blogger and social critic, Egill Helgason, host of a popular political debate show on television, echoed Morgunblaðið's view in blog posts on August 1, and again on August 2, 3, 9, 16, 18, 19, and twice on August 20 (it was a Monday) claiming that Reykjavik City centre was ravaged with dope fiends, drunks and violent maniacs. And he was not the only one in blogosphere to raise the issue, either.

Follow the Leader

On August 13, the Police Commissioner in Reykjavik, Stefán Eiríksson, wrote an op-ed in Morgunblaðið where he addressed the issue, and suggested ways to improve the conditions downtown in cooperation with city officials and bar owners in the area. Eiríksson's article opened a floodgate of articles on violent behaviour in Reykjavik, public drunkenness and the poor image of the city centre.

City Council member Svandís Svavarsdóttir wrote an article on August 16, stating that:



**IS REYKJAVÍK
THE CITY OF FE**

info.

▲ aiPotu's Travel Project Visual Art and Handcraft Norah Jones Concert
Bookship by the Harbour The Icelandic Love Corporation Afrobeat-influ-
enced Funk Sirkus Years in Photos Jens Lekman Concert Reykjavik Jazz
Festival Souvenirs Kling & Bang Food Reviews Shopping Music, Art,
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Gallery Dwarf – From August 25

aiPotu's Travel Project

A curious exhibition, displaying new works by Norwegian artist-duo aiPotu, opens at the Dwarf Gallery on August 25. aiPotu is no ordinary art collective. Created by two artists, Andreas Siqueland and Anders Kjellesvik, the duo has travelled Europe and Scandinavia together since 2004, searched for inspiration by visiting large cities and small villages, and realised a series of site-specific art pieces along the way.

"Through a series of sculptural interventions in the public space, we aim to make visual statements that can inspire to a new dialogue regarding art and its use in creating new forms of local awareness. Our interventions are never repeated and always made with materials

available in the place we visit. The journeys are inspired by the great explorers of the unknown" their website reads.

The projects mostly focus on the never-ending trip crossing the European continent and the Nordic countries. Their transportation, a mid-70s RV, has brought them to Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin, Copenhagen, Milan, Bratislava and Oslo, among others, and served as a home and studio in the meantime.

Their extensive CV includes various travel projects. During the International Art Festival in Bergen they, for example, turned the small van into a hotel to help the many travellers flocking to the city to find a roof over their head. They have put

on a performance in the Swiss Alps and built a dimensioned football goal in Italy. They have even published a travel book which contains documentation of aiPotu projects and articles written by people they have met during the journey.

Entitled 'Storytime', aiPotu's exhibition inside the Dwarf Gallery opens this Saturday at 19:00. Guests can savour light refreshments, on the house, at the opening. It's worth mentioning that the Dwarf Gallery isn't open on daily basis. Scheduled dates at this point are August 25, August 31 and September 1 from 18:00–20:00.

Gallery Dwarf, Grundarstigur 21

ASÍ Art Museum – Sept 1 - Sep 29

Visual Art and Handcraft

On September 1, an exhibition featuring the works of Hildur Bjarnadóttir will open at the ASÍ Art Museum. Bjarnadóttir graduated with a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the Pratt Institute in New York in 1997 and has since participated in numerous exhibitions in Iceland and abroad.

Entitled 'Inclusion,' her solo exhibition at the ASÍ Art Museum consists of selected works where she focuses on the fundamentals of visual art and

handcraft traditions. She re-presents the traditions of painting and drawing, at the same time she examines women's handcraft of previous ages. The outcome are works that seem to reflect minimalism but, upon a closer look, have a wider reference.

The Museum is open every day except Mondays from 13:00 to 17:00 and entrance is free.

ASÍ Art Museum, Freyjugata 41



Laugardalshöll – September 2

Norah Jones Concert

On September 2, American songbird Norah Jones, backed by her Handsome Band, will perform her first Icelandic concert ever, taking place at Laugardalshöll. Local fans of hers have waited with anticipation for the event ever since rumours about her planned visit started spreading. Only a limited number of seats were available and tickets sold out in a matter of minutes.

Norah Jones's stardom quickly rose sky-high when her debut, 'Come Away With Me' was released in 2002. The album won five Grammys, earned massive critical praise and a steadily growing fanbase.

TICKETS AT midi.is

Music Art Films Events

Old Harbour – Aug 15 - Aug 29

Bookshop by the Harbour

The international floating book fair 'Logos II', is currently docked down by the Reykjavik harbour, open for everyone until August 29. The ship has crossed oceans for the past 17 years and its crew, consisting of Christian volunteers from over 40 countries, has so far brought literature to over nine million visitors in 81 different countries. The selection of books on board covers 4,000 different titles.

From 14:00 to 20:00 on August



Reykjavik Art Museum – Aug 31 - Oct 10

The Icelandic Love Corporation

A Reykjavik based group of three female artists, The Icelandic Love Corporation (Gjörningaklúbburinn in the native tongue), was established in 1996. Currently based in Reykjavik, the collaborative crew has travelled the world and displayed their curious projects both locally and internationally. For more than a decade Sigrún Hrólfssdóttir, Jóni Jónsdóttir and Eirún Sigurðardóttir have grabbed attention by presenting intriguing videos, installations, photographs, sculptures and performances that often involve public interaction and influenced local performance artists in the meantime.

25, the International Day of Logos II will be celebrated with a programme featuring cultural displays, performances and a bouncing castle outside. The public can meet the crew, explore the ship and the library and afterwards, enjoy a cup at the café inside.

The Book Fair is open Tue–Sat from 10:00 to 22:00 and Sun–Mon from 14:00 to 22:00. Entrance is free.

From 14:00 to 20:00 on August

Reykjavik Art Museum (Hafnarhúsið), Tryggvagata 17.



NASA – September 1

Afrobeat-influenced Funk

The Reykjavik Jazz Festival will conclude its four-day programme on September 1. Musician and composer Samúel Jón Samúelsson (also known as Sammi from Jagúar) was brought in to take on the tough task of cooking something extra special for the grand finale. He brought together a mix of curious acts that will perform at club NASA on Saturday night. The event got the juicy title 'Club Sandwich' and features Finnish multi-talented musician Jimi Tenor, funk-master Samúel Jón Samúelsson along with his Big-Band, DJ Lucky and U.S. afro-beat travel ensemble Antibalas.

With a new album out, the night's headliners, New York based experimental afro-beat influenced funk

group Antibalas are stepping their feet on Icelandic ground for the first time. Founded in 1998, the band has grown in size and sound through the years and today counts between eleven and fourteen members, playing everything from guitar and drums to trumpets, percussions, and electric piano.

"Using the revolutionary blueprint of afrobeat as a launching pad, the members weave a rich tapestry of latin, jazz, classical, funk and soul into their horn-driven mix. The result is simultaneously polyrhythmic and political, independent and contagious, and the reason why many have credited the band for introducing afro-beat's framework to a new generation,"

reads their Myspace page.

Antibalas has released nine studio recordings and appeared internationally on over a dozen afro-beat and funk compilations. For the past few years the band has managed to play over 100 concerts a year, inside small jazz-clubs as well as at large venues, and have brought the rhythmic afro-beat music to a huge crowd of music-lovers at festivals such as Glastonbury and Coachella.

The concerts start at 22:00 and tickets cost 4,000 ISK

NASA, Thorvaldsenstræti 2

TICKETS AT midi.is

If you would like to be included in the Grapevine listings, free of charge, contact the Grapevine by email at listings@grapevine.is.

Music

■ **12 Tónar record shop**
Skólavörðustigur 15
Fri 24.08 Ólöf Arnalds in concert, starts at 17:00
■ **Austurbær**
Snorrabraut 37
Thu 30.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Eivör Pálsdóttir and Reykjavik Bigband. Starts at 20:00.
■ **Bar 11**
Laugavegur 11
Fri 24.08 DJ Gulli Ósóma
Sat 25.08 DJ Aron
Fri 31.08 DJ Óli Dóri
Sat 01.09 DJ Gulli Ósóma
Fri 07.09 DJ Óli Dóri
Sat 08.09 DJ Gulli Ósóma
■ **Barinn**
Laugavegur 22
Fri 24.08 DJ Yamaho (1 floor) / DJ Mió (2 floor)
Sat 25.08 Dansa Meira (1 floor) / DJ Óli Hjörtur & DJ Nick (2 floor)
Fri 31.08 DJ Maggi Legó 8 1 floor) / DJ Kvikindi (2 floor)
Sat 01.09 DJ Skeletor and DJ Baktus (1 floor) / DJ Ísar Logi (2 floor)
Thu 06.09 Breakbeat night
Fri 07.09 DJ Simon (1 floor) / DJ Don Disco (2 floor)
Sat 08.09 DJ Margeir (1 floor) / DJ Ben Jasmin (2 floor)
■ **Café Paris**

Austurstræti 14
Fri 24.08 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
Sat 25.08 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
Fri 31.08 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
Sat 01.09 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
Fri 07.09 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
Sat 08.09 DJ Börkur / DJ Lucky
■ **Domo**
Þingholtsstræti 5
Wed 29.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Jerry Bergonzi Eyþór Gunnarssonarson's band. Starts at 22:00.
Thu 30.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Jerry Bergonzi Eyþór Gunnarssonarson's band. Starts at 22:00.
■ **Gaukurinn**
Tryggvagata 22
Fri 24.08 Dalton in concert. Starts at 23:00
Fri 31.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Björn Thoroddsen's Jazz & Blues Extravaganza. Starts at 22:00.
■ **Grand Rokk**
Smíðjustigur 6
Thu 06.09 Iethro Tull Night
■ **Hellirinn**
Hólmaslóð 2
Fri 07.09 Spanish Thrash-rock band MoHo in concert. Opening acts are Dust Cap, Drep and Severed Crotch. Starts at 22:00.
■ **Hressó**
Austurstræti 20
Fri 24.08 Dalton, 23:00 / DJ Bjarni
Sat 25.08 Gotti & Eisi, 23:00 / DJ Bjarni
Thu 30.08 Troubadours Böddi and Danni
Fri 31.08 Tepokarnir jazz band / DJ Maggi

Sat 01.09 Pub-lic in concert / DJ Maggi
Thu 06.08 Troubadours Böddi and Danni
Fri 07.09 Tepokarnir jazz band / DJ Maggi
Sat 08.09 Pub-lic / DJ Bjarni
■ **lðnó**
Vónarstræti 3
Thu 30.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Land & Sea – Pianist Agnar Már Magnússon and band.
Fri 31.08 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Blue Songs/Blue Shadows – Sigurður Flosason and guests
■ **Jómfrúin**
Lækjargata 4
Sat 01.09 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Egill Benedikt Hreinsson with band. Starts at 15:00
■ **Kaffibarinn**
Bergstaðastræti 1
Fri 24.08 DJ Magic
Sat 25.08 DJ Lazer
Thu 30.08 DJ Thor
Fri 31.08 DJ Thor
Sat 01.09 DJ Thor
Thu 06.09 DJ Maggi Legó
Fri 07.09 Singapore Sling concert DJ set / Jack Schiødt DJ set
■ **Laugardalshöll**
Engjavegur 8
Sun 02.09 Norah Jones concert (Sold out)
Sun 08.09 Chris Cornell in concert
■ **NASA**
Thorvaldsenstræti 2
Sat 25.08 Flex Music presents: DJ Celebration featuring Groovebox, Big-room, Plugg'd Barcode and Party Zone,

Techno.is and Flex Music DJ's. Starts at 23:00 and costs 1500 ISK.
Sat 01.09 Reykjavik Jazz Festival: Festival's Grand Finale directed by Samúel Jón Samúelsson. Guests of the night are Jimi Tenor and the Afrobeat-band Antibalas from New York.
Sun 08.09 90s Party with Curver and Kiki Ow
■ **Nordic House**
– Culture Festival Reyfi
Sturlugata 5
Fri 24.08 Budam / Ólöf Arnalds / Jens Lekman
Sat 25.08 Megas / Kati Matti / Elin Eyþórsdóttir / Miná Rakastan Sinua Elvis
Sun 26.08 KK / Vox Borealis / Narodna Musika
■ **Organ**
Hafnarstræti 1-3
Fri 24.08 DJ Andrea Jóns
Sat 25.08 The Musik Zoo in concert.
Thu 30.08 Jan Mayen release concert
Fri 31.08 Vonbrigði and Drep in concert
Sat 01.09 Sprengjuhöllin concert
Wed 05.09 VilHelm release concert
Thu 06.09 MoHo from Spain in concert
Fri 07.09 Singapore Sling concert
Sat 08.09 Hiphop.is event
■ **Prikið**
Bankastræti 12
Fri 24.08 Troubadour Jude / DJ Óli Hjörtur
Sat 25.08 DJ Danni Deluxe
Wed 29.08 DJ Playmobile
Thu 30.08 DJ Andri
Fri 31.08 Troubadour Jude / DJ Rósa
Sat 01.09 DJ Benni B-Ruff
■ **Q-bar**

Ingólfsstræti 3
Fri 24.08 DJ Kvikindi
Sat 25.08 DJ Peter Parker
Wed 29.08 DJ Amma
Thu 30.08 Dive De La Rósa
Fri 31.08 Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous Champagne Party with DJ Nicholas Brittain (USA)
Sat 01.09 DJ Óli / DJ Gisli Galdur
Thu 06.09 Egner & Impulse
Fri 07.09 Fairboy & Manny. White Party Theme Night
■ **Sirkus**
Klapparstigur 30
Fri 24.08 DJ Tóti trans
Sat 25.08 DJ Casanova
Wed 29.08 DJ Jonni
Thu 30.08 DJ Jason
Fri 31.08 DJ Margeir featuring MC Josefína
Sat 01.09 DJ Árni Sveins
Wed 05.08 Stereo Hypnosis release concert. Opening act is Product 8 featuring Snorri Ásmundsson / DJ Einar Sonic
Thu 06.09 DJ Kap10 Kurt
Fri 07.09 DJ Maggi Legó
Sat 08.09 DJ Lazer

Museums & Galleries

■ **101 Gallery**
Hverfisgata 18
Thu.–Sat. 14–17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotell101gallery/
Jul 28–Sep 1
Bermuda Love Triangle – The Story of Dr. Son and Mr. Bates
Helgi Þórsson and Morgan Betz exhibition
■ **12 Tónar**

Skólavörðustigur 15
Mon.–Fri. 10–18, Sat. 11–16
Jul 6–Sep 1
Collage by artist and musician Sigríður Nielsdóttir
■ **Artotek**
Tryggvagata 15
Mon. 10–21, Tue.–Thu. 10–19, Fri. 11–19, Sat. and Sun. 13–17
www.sim.is/Index/IsenskalArtotek
■ **ASÍ Art Museum**
Freyjugata 41
Tue.–Sun. 13–17
Free Entrance
Jun 30–Aug 26
Summer exhibition from the museum collection
Sep 1–Sep 23
Inclusion
Hildur Bjarnadóttir exhibition
■ **Auga fyrir Auga**
Hverfisgata 35
Open Thu.–Fri. 15–19, Sat.–Sun. 14–17
Current exhibition:
One Year at Sirkus
Jóhann Kjartansson photo exhibition
■ **The Einar Jónsson Museum**
Eiríksgata
Tue.–Sun. 14–17
www.skulptur.is
Permanent exhibition:
The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson
■ **The Culture House**
Hverfisgata 15
Open daily 11–17
www.thjodmenning.is
Permanent exhibitions:
Medieval Manuscripts; The National Museum – as it was; The Library Room;

The Road to Zion; Berlin Excursion
Current exhibition:
Surtsey – Genesis
The exhibition traces the emergence and evolution of the island Surtsey until the present day and predicts its geographical and ecological development over the next 120 years.
■ **Dwarf Gallery**
Grundarstigur 21
Opening Hours: Fri. and Sat. 18–20
www.this.is/birta
Current exhibition:
Storytime
Exhibition by Norwegian artist-duo aiPotu
■ **Gallery Ágúst**
Baldursgata 12
Wed.–Sat. 12–17
www.galleriagust.is
Aug 11–Sep 22
Fenóména
Opening exhibition: Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir and Rakel Bernie. Drawings, photographs, video-art and 3D.
■ **Gallery Fold**
Rauðarárstigur 14–16
Mon.–Fri. 10–18
Sat. 11–16
Sun. 14–16
www.myndlist.is
Aug 18–Sep 2
Paintings by Haraldur Bilson
Aug 18–Aug 26
Drawings by Halldór Pétursson
Aug 18–Aug 26
Kristján Davíðsson exhibition
■ **Gallery Tukt**

Pósthússtræti 3–5
www.hitthusid.is
Aug 18–Aug 30
Viktoría Tsvetaeva exhibition
■ **Gallery Turpentine**
Ingólfsstræti 5
Tue.–Fri. 12–18
Sat. 11–16
www.turpentine.is
Current exhibition:
Oil paintings by Karólína Lárusdóttir
■ **Gerðuberg Cultural Centre**
Gerðuberg 3–5
Mon.–Thu. 11–17
Wed. 11–21
Thu.–Fri. 11–17
Sat.–Sun. 13–16
www.gerudberg.is
May 5–Sep 9
Paintings by Ágúst Jónsson
May 12–Sep 9
Kvenfólk / Women
Erró exhibition
■ **18 Gallery**
Klapparstigur 33
Tue.–Fri. 11–17
Sat. 13–17 and by appointment
www.18.is
Jul 12–Aug 25
Magnús Pálsson exhibition
Jul 12–Aug 25
Unnur Mjöll S. Leifsdóttir exhibition
■ **Kling & Bang Gallery**
Laugavegur 23
Thu.–Sun. 12–18
Free Entrance
www.this.is/klingandbang
Aug 11–Sep 2
Prayer on the Threshold

Páll Banine exhibition
■ **Living Art Museum**
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.–Sun. 13–17
Thu. 13–22
www.nylo.is/
Sep 1–Sep 19
No Way Out
Group exhibition featuring artists Benjamin Merris, Davíð Örn Halldórsson, Guðmundur Thoroddsen, Jolín Avelluto, Karri Kuoppala, Muriel Laesser, Ragnar Jónsson and Timo Vaittinen.
■ **The Lost Horse Gallery**
Skólastræti 1
From Aug 31
Gallery Opening Exhibition
Paintings, sculptures and videos by Gabriella Friðrikssdóttir, Jón Sæmundur, Davíð Örn, Hafstein and Alexander Zaklynsky
■ **The National Gallery of Iceland**
Frikirkjuvegur
Tue.–Sun. 11–17
Free Entrance
www.listasafn.is
Jul 21–Oct 10
Alas-Nature!
The National Gallery of Iceland's summer exhibition featuring works by more than 50 artists, including High Plane by Katrín Sigurðardóttir. Her work is a widely acclaimed installation for its revolutionary viewpoint in which the landscape is laid out horizontally on a table.
■ **The National Museum**
Suðurgata 41

Open daily 10–17
natmus.is/
Permanent exhibition:
The Making of a Nation
May 5–Aug 24
As seen by the visitor
Hans Viingard Friis photo exhibition
May 5–Aug 24
Sent to the countryside
Photo exhibition
May 19–Sep 30
Ways in Between
André exhibition: Installations by Guðbjörg Lind Jónsdóttir, Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir and Kristín Jónsdóttir.
■ **The Nordic House**
Sturlugata 5
Tue.–Sun. 12–17
www.nordice.is/
Aug 18–Aug 26
Art from kindergartens
Reyfi festival: Artworks from kindergartens in 101 Reykjavik.
Aug 18–Aug 26
Nordic Modern Architecture
Reyfi festival: An exhibition presenting modern architecture by gathering four well known Scandinavian photographers who specialize in taking photographs of architecture.
Aug 18–Aug 26
Form.ax
Reyfi festival: Álandic design featuring the works of over 30 designers
■ **The Numismatic Museum**
Kalkofnsvegur 1
Open Mon.–Fri. 13:30–15:30.
Free admittance.
Permanent exhibition:

The Central Bank of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection consisting of Icelandic notes and coins.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2
Aðalstræti 16
Open daily 10–17
Permanent exhibition:
The Settlement Exhibition
Reykjavík Art Museum
– Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum
Sigtún
Open daily 10–16
Admission ticket is valid for three days in all three museums.
Free entrance every Thursday.
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is

Mar 31-Dec 31
Folk Tales
An exhibition of works by Icelandic draughtsmen who took on the task of illustrating folk tales from the oral tradition.

Apr 2-Dec 31
The Shape of Life
A new retrospective of the works by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition focuses on abstract works from 1945 onwards.

Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
Open daily 10–17
Aug 31-Oct 21
The Icelandic Love Corporation
Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata
Open Daily 10–17
Feb 10-Sep 2
K-pátturinn / The K-Factor
Jóhannes S. Kjarval retrospective.
May 19-Aug 26
Kvíka / Magma
Icelandic contemporary design
May 19-Aug 26
The Spark – Design for Everyone
Design exhibition, with special educational programming
Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8
Open Tue.–Sun. 11–17
www.sjominjasafn.is
Current exhibition:
Trawlers in Iceland
Reykjavík Museum
Kistuhylur 4
Open daily from 10–17
www.arbaejarsafn.is
Permanent exhibition:
Objects from Reykjavík cultural history.
The Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12–19
Sat.–Sun. 13–17
Free Entrance
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
Jun 1-Sep 9
Automatos
Photographs by Olaf Otto Becker, Páll

Stefánsson and RAX
Jul 19-Aug 29
Destination
Photographs by Erla Stefánsdóttir

Safn
Laugavegur 37
Wed.–Fri. 14–18
Sat.–Sun. 14–17
Free Entrance
www.safn.is

May 19-Oct 20
Museum of the Surface / Desire Archive / Decay Complex
Unnar Örn J. Auðarson exhibition
Jul 14-Aug 26
Tumi Magnússon exhibition
Jul 14-Aug 26
Down the Chimney
Jennifer Tee exhibition
Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70
Open Tue.–Sun. 14–17
Permanent exhibition:
Works of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson
Start Art / Art Shop
Laugavegur 12b
www.startart.is

Aug 2-Aug 30
Ása Ólafsdóttir exhibition
Aug 2-Aug 30
Dagny Guðmundsdóttir exhibition
Aug 2-Aug 30
Anna María Sigurjónsdóttir and Ástríður Ólafsdóttir exhibition
Thorvaldsen Bar
Austurstræti 8-10
www.thorvaldsen.is

Jul 16-Aug 27
Oil paintings by Helga Sigurðardóttir

Outside Reykjavík

Skafftefl
Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður
www.skafftefl.is

Aug 11–Nov 11
A group exhibition featuring works by Erla Þórarinsdóttir, Hulda Hákon, Jón Óskar and Steingrímur Eyfjörð

Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Mon.–Sun. 11–17
www.hafnarborg.is

Aug 9–Sep 9
Paintings by American artist Joan Perlman

LÁ Art Museum
Austurmörk 21, 810 Hveragerði
Open daily from 12–18
Current exhibition:
Moving Mountains
Summer exhibition

Gljúfrasteinn
– Halldór Laxness museum
270 Mosfellsbær
Open daily except Mondays from 10–17.

Kópavogur Art Museum – Gerðarsafn
Hamraborg, Kópavogur
Open daily 11–17 except Mondays
www.gerdarsafn.is

The Icelandic Museum of Design

and Applied Art
Lyngás 7–9, 121 Garðabær
Opening hours: Tues.–Fri. 14–18; Sat. and Sun. 16–18.
www.mudesa.org
Exhibitions devoted to Icelandic design.

The Icelandic Settlement Centre
Brákarbraut 1–15, Borgarnes
Opening hours: May to Sep 10–20; Sep to May 11–17.
www.landnam.is

Permanent exhibitions:
The Settlement of Iceland: The Saga of Egill Skalla-Grímsson

Suðsuðvestur
Hafnargata 22, Keflavík
Thu.–Fri. 16–18
Sat.–Sun. 14–17
www.sudsudvestur.is

Aug 1–Oct 7
Unnar Örn Auðarson Jónasson exhibition

Gallery Klaustur
At Skriðuklaustur
800 Egilsstaðir
www.skriðuklaustur.is

Jul 28–Aug 31
While She Sleeps
Svala Ólafsdóttir exhibition

Vatnasafn / Library of Water
Bökhöfustígur 17, 340 Stykkishólmur
www.libraryofwater.is
Open daily from 11–17.

Permanent exhibition:
Roni Horn installation. She has replaced stacks of books with glass columns containing water gathered from Iceland's glaciers and glacial rivers.

Sandgerði Museum
Gæðavegur 1, Sandgerði.
Until Feb 7, 2008
Polar Adventures
Exhibition on the life and work of the French polar explorer, scientist and doctor Jean-Baptiste Charcot.

Jónas Viðar Gallery
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Fri.–Sat. 13–18
www.jvs.is/jvgallery.htm

Sep 1 – Sep 16
Graphics by Guðbjörg Ringsteð

Akureyri Art Museum
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Tue.–Sun. 12–17
www.listasafn.akureyri.is

DaLi Gallery
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
Mon.–Sat. 14–18
www.daligallery.blogspot.com

GalleriBOX
Kaupvangstræti 10, Akureyri
www.galleribox.blogspot.com
Current exhibition:
Birta Guðjónsdóttir exhibition



Gljúfrasteinn LAXNESS MUSEUM

Films

The Bourne Ultimatum
Smárabíó, Háskólabíó, Smárabíó Kringlunni, Laugarásbíó, Regnboginn, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Sambíóin Keflavík

Rush Hour 3
Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó Akureyri

The Simpsons Movie
Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó Akureyri

Death Proof
Smárabíó

Shrek the Third
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Akureyri

Transformers
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Selfossi

Ratatouille
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Keflavík, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Selfossi

Harry Potter 5
Sambíóin Álfabakka

Nancy Drew
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík

Georgia Rule
Sambíóin Álfabakka

Ocean's Thirteen
Sambíóin Álfabakka

Disturbia (August 31)

Everyones Hero (August 31)

License to Wed (August 31)

Sharf's Up (August 31)

In the Land of Women (August 31)

Green Light Film Festival
Until Feb 7, 2008
Regnboginn (for a full schedule see www.graenljosisid.is)

Sicko

Hallam Foe

Die Falcher, Fuck

Deliver Us from Evil

Away from Her

Cocaine Cowboys

Zoo

Goodbye Bafana

Shortbus

Going to Pieces

Movie Theatres

Regnboginn, Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000

Háskólabíó, Hagatorg
107 Reykjavík, Tel. 525-5400

Laugarásbíó, Laugarás
104 Reykjavík, Tel. 565-0118

Smárabíó, Smáralind
201 Kópavogur, Tel. 564-0000

Sambíóin, Álfabakki 8
109 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

Sambíóin, Kringlan 4-12
103 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

Sambíóin Akureyri, Ráðhústorg
600 Akureyri, Tel. 461-4666

Nýja-Bíó, Hafnargata 33
230 Reykjanessbær, Tel. 421-1170

Selfossbíó, Eyrvogur 2
800 Selfoss, Tel. 482-3007

Events

Open House at the Intercultural Centre
24.08 Every Friday night, the Intercultural Centre plays host to an intercultural meeting. The concept is to bring foreigners and Icelanders together, give them the opportunity to get to know other people and to share experiences. The meetings feature plenty of activities so attendees can get to know each other's cultures. Entrance is free.
The Intercultural Centre, Hverfisgata 18

Reyfi Festival
24.08 – 26.08 The Art Festival Reyfi, taking place at the Nordic House, is in its final days. Plenty of happenings are scheduled this weekend, including concerts with Jens Lekman, Megas and KK, flamenco dancing with Spanish dancer Minerva Iglesias, performance by the Finnish circus company 'Med Andra Ord' and various art exhibitions.
For a full schedule visit: www.reyfi.is

Skateboarding Contest
25.08 On August 25, a skating contest, organized by the Underground skate-store, will take place at Ingólfstorg square and inside the skate-park at Loftkastalinn. The contest is open to all skaters free of charge. For more info or to register call Underground (551-5556) or visit myspace.com/icelandskate.

Looking for tickets to events, cinemas, theatres, or concerts?

Check www.midi.is for availability.



Auga fyrir Auga

Sirkus Years in Photos

Photographer Jóhann Kjartansson (better known as Jói Kjartans) documented years of hard-core party-fun at downtown bar Sirkus by taking snap-shot photos of regular bar-hoppers when they least expected it. His photos can now be viewed at Gallery Auga fyrir Auga on Hverfisgata.

Entitled 'Sirkusár' or 'Sirkus Years' the exhibition features 20 black-and-white portraits shot over the past three years. "The exhibition is my memory of the past, like when people were still allowed to smoke inside bars," Kjartansson explains. The exhibition opened on August 18, Culture Night, and downtown pedestrians flocked to the gallery, and drank approximately 144

beers while viewing the photos. The empty beer bottles didn't end up in the trash though, but instead now create a huge beer-mountain inside the small gallery, a fitting sculpture to say the least. The exhibition will be open for weeks to come.

Auga fyrir Auga, Hverfisgata 35



The Nordic House – August 24

Jens Lekman Concert

As part of the Reyfi Art Festival taking place at the Nordic House, Swedish musician Jens Lekman is coming back to town. Some Airwaves attendees might remember his last-minute gig at last year's festival, one of the festival's most talked-about shows. With an unassuming stage presence and sweet and tender pop songs, Jens will surely make this weekend just as memorable.

The Friday night concerts start at 22:30, but earlier that same evening, local singer/songwriter Ólöf Arnalds and Faroese pop-artist Budam will play separate sets at the Nordic House. Admission fee is 1,700 ISK.

The Nordic House, Sturlugata 5.
For a full programme visit: www.nordice.is

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• Opening hours see www.handknit.is

How to drive in Iceland

A relatively large percentage of foreign tourists in Iceland travel around the country by car. Conditions in Iceland are in many ways unusual, and often quite unlike that which foreign drivers are accustomed. It is therefore very important to find out how to drive in this country. We know that the landscapes are beautiful, which naturally draws the attention of driver away from the road. But in order to reach your destination safely, you must keep your full attention on driving.

Seatbelts are required by law

In Iceland, drivers and passengers are required by law to wear seatbelts, regardless of the type of vehicle or where they are seated. Investigations of fatal accidents in recent years have shown that a large majority of those who died did not have their seatbelts fastened. Wearing seatbelts is especially important because of the nature of accidents in Iceland: many of them involve vehicles driving off the road and rolling over.

In such accidents, seatbelts often mean the difference between life and death. It should be noted that children must either wear seatbelts, or be in car safety seats, depending on their age and maturity.

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Etching Bold Patterns

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Leó Stefánsson

Twenty-seven-year-old Ingibjörg Finnbogadóttir, or Imba as she is known in the design world, has been working on a host of independent projects as a patternmaker and stylist in New York City for just over a year. Yet with a range of work styling music videos, short-films, and fashion spreads, she is already making a name for herself as an independent designer in the Big Apple. Imba, just having returned from a styling gig at Women's Wear Daily in New York the day before, sat flipping through the latest issue of Elle at Barinn early one Monday morning.

"I've only done small collections under the name 'unknown,' and 'pretty shitty.' I don't have a line per se, you know like a 'Spring', 'Fall' kind of thing. I'm really just playing around still. I've done some music videos, sold some things to my friends and then just whoever asks me for stuff. I've just been jumping around like crazy."

Imba's designs have been featured prominently in stores around Reykjavik such as The Naked Ape on Skólavörðustígur and now in Gallery Crush. Her designs could easily be described as belonging to a distinct class of fashion quite prominent in Reykjavik recently, one that relies heavily on bold contrast and bright colours. Yet Imba says that she sees

inspiration for her work, from Iceland or otherwise, to be an elusive topic.

"It's something that I don't really think about all that much. I really just do whatever occurs to me. I do mainly what I want to wear. I'd say it's really everything and nothing that gives me inspiration. If there is some connection to Iceland, then I'd say it's maybe something very colourful or sort of 'happy' about my work, but mostly I'd just say that I'm my own inspiration."

On the Nature of Fashion in Reykjavik

"I wouldn't say that anyone is doing anything particularly 'Icelandic'. I would rather say that there are some particular characters that are putting themselves out there, in a way. And us designers are as different as there are many of us.

"I think it's like, you're Icelandic, but you can be in Europe or you can be in the U.S. or you can be in Iceland and have these ideas, but you can just as well have the same ideas whichever country you're in. And now I think it's become sort of diverse and I can't look at the scene and say just 'yeah! this is Icelandic.' I think it's just that each individual designer is expressing himself and how he wants to see things."

Humble Beginnings

When asked about her interest in other designers, in Iceland or elsewhere, Imba says that there aren't any that she follows religiously, as – never having been formally trained – she is less traditional about fashion. "My mom taught me to sew when I was little; I just needed to take part in the house chores. Well it wasn't exactly like that, but almost. I learned with a tailor when I was fourteen or fifteen, and started making clothes and selling my own stuff around that age. Then I've just always been really hand-crazy, and just feel really good if I'm working a lot with my hands."

Making Ends Meet

"I'm getting a work permit for the U.S., that's why I'm here in Iceland now. And when I get back I'm considering going to an agency so I don't have to worry about always getting myself stylist jobs. But with design production and patternmaking jobs, there I get big projects that maybe take up some three weeks, but the pay is worth three months of work. I'll take maybe three big projects like that per year, but I definitely have to watch myself and play my cards right. I need to be sure to juggle projects to make sure I don't end up in huge trouble at the end of the month because it's

"I think it's like, you're Icelandic, but you can be in Europe or you can be in the U.S. or you can be in Iceland and have these ideas, but you can just as well have the same ideas whichever country you're in."

expensive to live in New York. So at least for now things have been coming together nicely, and hopefully it will continue to do so... Just forever."

Hip-hopping Around

For the near future, most of Imba's projects are stylist-gigs. In September, she says, she is styling two fashions stories, making costumes for a short film, as well as working on several music videos. "Before I came here I was designing for this hip-hop artist Fat Joe, basically making clothes for the dancers in his new video. I'm very interested in and want to be around hip-hop and R&B music. I'm pretty good in that area. I've been working a lot with spandex, making suits and pants and stuff, and that fits really well into that genre. Where everything has to be really tight and sort of whoo hoo!

"If I don't have some stylist project or some production job then I just sit down and start designing something or sewing something or playing around. Maybe I'll do a line for next summer, maybe not. Maybe just something for Christmas or just for next month."

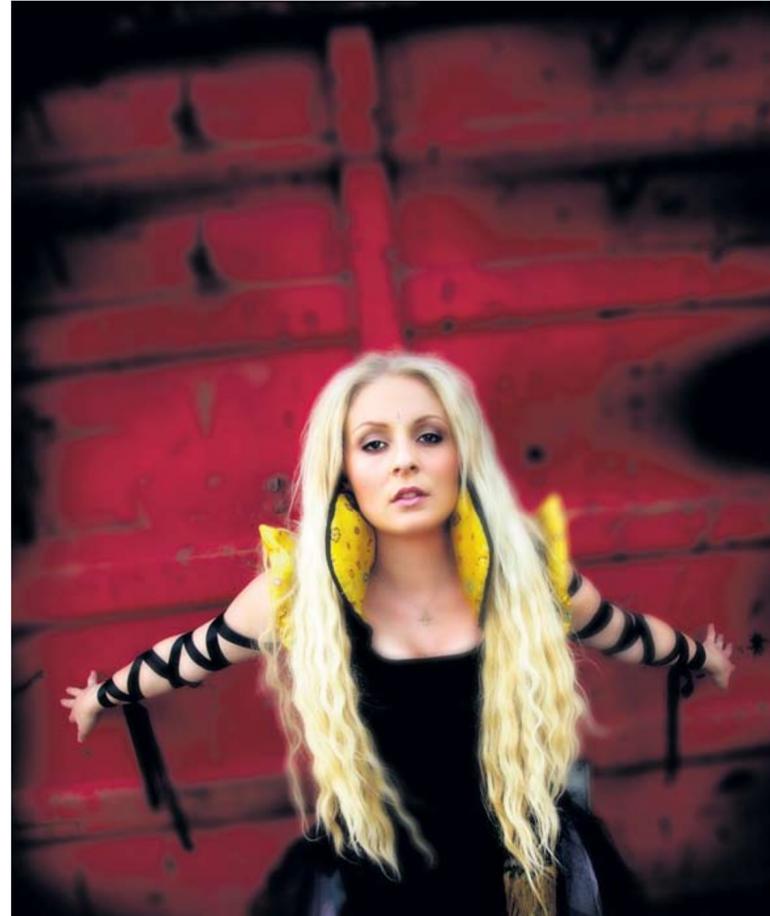
More Cutthroat Than New York

As for returning to Iceland, Imba says she doesn't see herself coming back to work in the capital anytime soon.

"I think it's much more fun out in the States than here in Iceland. I just love New York. I have a lot of friends and good and creative people and everyone is just doing fun things. I think the environment there is much more relaxed, even though there is a mega lot happening in a small area. Here there is sort of a harder or more negative morale. And even though I haven't really been paying attention to it here, I still feel it.

"In a few years I see myself in downtown New York and maybe, who knows, with a regular collection. It has occurred to me that perhaps I should just make a line. Stop playing around. Even though it would be still be playing, you know.

"I just see myself like crazy in New York. Hopefully just surviving, feeling good and having fun. As long as you're having fun then you want to be doing what you're doing, and if it's not fun then I'll just jump on an airplane and go somewhere else."



Reykjavík Jazz Festival

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir

Presenting a packed four-day programme, the annual Reykjavik Jazz Festival is just around the corner. From Wednesday August 29 to Saturday September 1, various downtown concert venues will play host to diverse music events where local and international musicians will perform a vibrant mix of jazz, blues, soul and funk.

Held for the 18th time, the Reykjavik Jazz Festival has become known for its ambition of bringing together renowned foreign acts and household names in the Icelandic jazz scene, and in the meantime, grown into a much-awaited celebration among musicians and music-lovers alike.

This year, international artists include Jazz-pionist Uri Caine, who will open the festival with a show at Austurbær on Wednesday evening, backed by Drew Gress on bass and Ben Perowsky on drums. Faroese

singer/songwriter Eivör Pálsdóttir and the Reykjavik Big band will play Austurbær the following night while saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi takes the stage at club Domo. Friday night will see Sigurður Flosason and his guest vocalist Ragnheiður Gröndal and Egill Ólafsson play ljónó theatre.

Among special hosts at many varied concerts, in some cases with multi-national jazz artists, will be some of Iceland's finest jazz players such as guitarist Björn Thoroddsen, pianist Eyþór Gunnarsson trombone player Samúel Jón Samúelsson and saxophone player Sigurður Flosason. The festival's final event will be a grand-scale music extravaganza at club NASA on September 1.

A festival-pass and tickets can be bought at www.midi.is. For a full programme visit: www.jazz.is.



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1 EATING

Vor
Laugavegur 24

Vor's refreshing take on café-style eating is marked by its use of fresh ingredients and a health-conscious menu that emphasizes French and Mediterranean cuisine. The fresh spring salad and the excellent carrot-ginger soup are excellent pick-me-ups on rainy days, and the coffee served is of the highest quality.

2 Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

The casual family-friendly Italian-style corner restaurant has operated at the same spot since 1979 when it became a loyal member of the Icelandic dining-out tradition. Most famous for its pizzas and the generously stuffed calzone, the wholesome menu prides itself on all sorts of high-standard pasta dishes, vegetarian and meat courses, all very affordable.

3 Deco
Austurstræti 12

Deco, a café and wine bar that has everything you need for a quality lunch café, right in the city center. Its modern and stylish interiors, varied menu and impressive selection of whiskey, draw me back again soon. Deco usually gets quite crowded during the evening, when it turns into more of a wine bar than a coffeehouse.

4 Icelandic Fish Chips
Tryggvagata 8

Not the regular fish'n'chips diner but a healthy restaurant using only organic vegetables, quality fish products and no wheat or white sugar in its kitchen. Deep-fried catch of the day served with oven baked potatoes and Skyronnes, a sauce made out of the fat-free milk product Skyr and flavoured with all sorts of spices, on the side for 1350 ISK. They also offer take-away at all times.

5 Sjávarkallarinn
Aðalstræti 2

In an elegant setting, Seafood Cellar chefs serve gourmet fusion style dishes, where the emphasis is not only on ocean delights, but also on all sorts of tempting Asia-inspired dishes. The most fun is to order the exotic menu, a range of courses carefully selected by the chef, and share it with your dining partners.

6 Shalimar
Austurstræti 4

Few places in Reykjavík match the great combination of good price, excellent food, and fast service available at Shalimar. On the menu are assorted Indian-Pakistan dishes and the lunch special is always a great bet for a good meal during a busy day. Grapevine staffers are frequently spotted in the locale, which should be recommendation enough.

7 Sægreifinn
Verubúð 8, Geirsgata

Located right next to the Reykjavík harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is truly like no other you'll witness in the country. The menu features various fish dishes and a rich portion of the best lobster soup we've ever tasted. It also caters to groups upstairs where the room looks more like a cabin than a diner. The good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

8 Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18

This small pizza place is not only cheap but offers the largest slices of pizza you'll get downtown. Charging only 350 ISK per slice, not to mention the special lunch offer where a 10" pizza with three toppings of your choice and a can of Coke costs only 800 ISK, Pizza King is a local favourite. The fact it's open until 6 on Friday and Saturday nights doesn't hurt either.

9 Bernhöftsbakari
Bergstaðastræti 13

It's a bakery, the oldest one in the city in fact, selling all sorts of bakery goods, snacks and an extensive selection of the sweet stuff from early dawn. We particularly love the spelt bread in the morning, and some snúður, kleina and vínarbrauð to go with the afternoon coffee.

10 Bæjarins bestu
Tryggvagata

There's a good reason why there's always a line in front of Bæjarins Bestu, regardless of the weather or time of day. Selected the best hot-dog stand in Europe by The Guardian, a fact locals realized decades ago, it has been serving "ein með öllu" ("one with the lot") to downtown pedestrians since 1935, making it the oldest fast food restaurant in the country. Grabbing a bite couldn't be easier.

11 Quiznos
Lækjargata 8

A chain of sandwich outlets specializing in toasty baguette-style subs, but also serving soups and salads. Choose your toppings and variety of sauces and you'll get a fresh sandwich to suit your taste. Ask for the lamb sub, an Icelandic speciality. Then put a double chocolate chunk brownie in your take-away box and you're good to go.

12 Á næstu grösum (First Vegetarian)
Laugavegur 20B

Many locals claim this to be the best vegetarian restaurant in town offering a menu with plenty of vegan and vegetarian options, both healthy and tasty. Ask for the daily special or try the selection of three different courses. The Indian theme on Fridays is usually a hit and the sugar free banana cake just one of the highly tempting desserts.

13 Nonnabiti
Hafnarstræti 9

Renowned for its greasy sandwiches, Nonnabiti, or Nonni as the locals call it, is one of the more popular junk food places around, offering a large selection of take-away or dine in subs, sandwiches and burgers with a nice dash of the unique Nonni-sauce. If you have a late night craving there's no need to worry, Nonni is open longer than most other places.

14 Austurlanda-hraðlestin
Hverfisgata 64A

Although a little pricey for a take-away, charging around 1600 ISK for a main course, the food is well worth that extra spending once in a while. Serving typical Indian dishes, the menu is a treasure chest for those with a penchant for a spicy bite. There are also a few tables inside for those who choose to dine in.



SPOT THIS: Mál og menning
Laugavegur 18, 101 Reykjavík

Mál og Menning book store occupies three levels at Laugavegur. This store sells stationary, children's games, foreign newspapers, Icelandic books, CDs, postcards and souvenirs. You'll find the always-buzzing café and the foreign book section on the top floor.



15 DRINKING

Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16a

A small antique-style non-smoking coffee house in a Hverfisgata basement, legendary for its early opening hours, amazing breakfast and strong coffee that will easily wake you up in the morning. We especially recommend The Truck, American style breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, pancakes, fried potatoes, tomatoes, syrup and toast. The bagels are also excellent.

16 Kaffi Hjómalið
Laugavegur 21

This organic, free-trade café prides itself on being a non-profit company and a dedicated venue for the hardcore and cultural scene by hosting concerts, lectures and poetry nights. Serving delicious soups and vegetarian dishes as well as organic tea, coffee and cake, this is the place to visit for a reasonably priced healthy lunch.

17 Segafredo
By Lækjartorg

The Italian coffee-chain found its spot in the heart of Reykjavík, with its windows facing the Lækjartorg Square. Serving lunch snacks like paninis and strong espressos for coffee lovers whether you need to grab a cup and sandwich on the way to work or want to enjoy your drink on the spot.

18 Glaumur
Tryggvagata 20

Here is a bit of trivial information: In Icelandic, "glaumur" means the sound of a party. I don't know what more you need to know about Glaumur, except perhaps that it is the premier sports bar in town. After the final whistle, the action on the dance floor becomes feverish as local DJs take central role.

19 Hressó
Austurstræti 20

The celebrated site of one of the more famous coffeehouses in Iceland, this bar/café/bistro brings a European flair to the city. That is until about 11, when things get to rockin', and you can see the true character of Reykjavík.

20 Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

A popular coffee place on weekdays, especially among students and downtown workers who like to enjoy a bottle of beer after a busy day. At weekends, Kaffibarinn becomes the opposite of a quiet destination, as its two floors fill up with the late-night soups. With DJs playing live sets from Wednesday to Saturday, the party doesn't start winding down until early morning.

21 Sirkus
Klappargatur 30

Attracting a mixed crowd of party-people, the small bar Sirkus has always been popular among musicians and the creative crowd who get along well although the breathing space can be limited on weekends. While Sirkus's DJs provide for the greatest party possible every weekend, the bar occasionally hosts concerts on weeknights.

22 Organ
Hafnarstræti 1-3

The stylish two-floored bar and concert venue Organ presents a diverse range of concerts by local and international acts at least four times a week. Features established bands and young emerging musicians; the newly opened venue can accommodate 300 people and has enough seats for weary concertgoers to rest between sets. Open 'til way past late on weekends.

23 Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22

Reykjavík's version of CBGB's, Gaukurinn has been a mainstay in the Icelandic music scene since the days of Ingólfur Arnarson. A popular live venue, this is the place to find young and upcoming band, as well as older and more established bands. Anyone who is anything in Icelandic music has passed through Gaukurinn at one point or another.

24 Boston
Laugavegur 28b

Located above the second-hand fashion store Spútnik, with its rooey bar floor and nice sofas in the lounge room upstairs, Boston is a fresh addition to the Reykjavík bar scene. Old-school yet stylish interiors, and enough tables to create a good vibe, make the place a comfy café as well as a laid-back tavern where the music is good but never intrusive.

25 Café Cultura
Hverfisgata 18

Located inside the Intercultural Centre, Cultura is a restaurant/bar with a cosmopolitan feel, hosting an array of events and various theme nights like Salsa teaching, tango nights and fusion parties. The menu features all sorts of international dishes like Thai soup, Spanish tapas, fajitas and falafel mixed with bistro regulars such as sandwiches and salads.

26 Prikíð
Bankastræti 12

This two-floor café/pub has been a part of Reykjavík's bar scene for decades. With a large and fairly cheap bistro menu, Prikíð attracts a mix of university students with their laptops and elderly devoted regulars during the day while the younger clientele fills up the space during the evening and especially at weekends when the music is mostly dedicated to hip-hop and R&B.

27 Barinn
Laugavegur 22

Up-and-coming Barinn is becoming quite popular among Reykjavík party scenesters. Its three floors and equally numerous bars get quite crowded during weekends where a mix of dancing downstairs and chatting upstairs make for a good night out. Though mostly a DJ bar, Barinn occasionally hosts live gigs and is always a fun party venue.

28 Q-Bar
Ingólfsstræti 3

A spacious gay/straight friendly bar, the newly renovated Q-Bar is a welcome addition to the nightlife downtown. In stylish and comfortable surroundings, with a lounge-like atmosphere, a good vibe and plenty of seats, the place never gets uncomfortably crowded nor too noisy for conversation.

29 Dillon
Laugavegur 30

The quintessential rock-pub, Dillon features moderately priced drinks, a dark and cosy mood and some pretty good music (especially when local favourite DJ Andrea Jóns mans the decks). The tattooed, beer-lovin' types who hang out there on school nights are joined by legions of parka-clad students during weekends, creating a party atmosphere that's always fun to partake in.

30 SHOPPING

G-Star Raw
Laugavegur 86

Buying jeans used to be a simple task. With the ever-growing selection, successful jeans hunting can take days. The task did not get any easier with the recent addition of a store from the industry powerhouse G-Star Raw. This Dutch brand features an edgy collection, authentic details and innovative washings.

31 Underground
Veltusund 1

Located in a basement by Ingólfstorg, former pro skater, Mike Carroll's skateboard shop Underground is aptly named. The shop offers all the relevant skating gear, be it clothing or boards, from industry leading brand names such as DC, Circa and others. A wide array of T-shirts, shoes, and other skating necessities available.

32 Kirsuberjatréð
Vesturgata 4

Kirsuberjatréð is the perfect little gift shop. A co-op gallery/gift shop owned and operated by ten women artists and designers. Kirsuberjatréð is the commercial outlet where they sell their products. The selections range from clothes, baskets, ceramics, copper sculptures, fish skin items, paper crafts, contemporary jewelry, felt items, and various other designs.

33 Vinberíð
Laugavegur 43

This small boutique sells all kinds of sweets. From chocolate fondue mix, to handmade chocolates, to lollypops and Belgian chocolate with such flavours as lavender and ginger. Vinberíð also sells Icelandic sweets, including the popular licorice products. A must stop for the sweet toothed.

34 Laugavegur 28
Laugavegur 28

A fresh addition to the Laugavegur fashion scene, four separate stores under one roof, second-hand clothing and accessories stores Elvis and Rökk og rósi, and CD experts Smekkleysa, all staples of the Laugavegur shopping experience. In addition, the new store, Pop, supplying neat stuff for the home. The collective will offer unique clothing and ornaments and supply the score to your life.

35 Gullkúnnst Helgu
Laugavegur 13

This spacious and classy store sells jewellery made from lava and other stone. Gullkúnnst Helgu, which is housed in the 1924 built shop on Laugavegur 13, has been selling unique jewellery such as necklaces, bracelets and watches for 15 years.

36 Börn Náttúrunnar
Skólavörðustigur 17a

The children's toy store Börn Náttúrunnar, located in a Skólavörðustigur basement, sells clothes and toys made only of organic products as well as books about childcare and parenthood. Here you can buy creative wooden playthings and woolen products for the young ones carefully selected by the parents who own the shop.

37 Cintamani
Laugavegur 11

If there is one thing you need in Iceland it is warm clothing. In a country known for rapid weather changes, you either come prepared, or buy the appropriate gear. Designed and developed in Iceland to meet rugged weather conditions, Cintamani clothing has been worn on both the North and the South Poles, as well as on the top of Mount Everest.

38 Trilogía
Laugavegur 7

A collection of trendy designer wear fills the space at fashion shop Trilogía, including amazing designs by Alexander McQueen and Chloe alongside Robert Cary Williams, Erotrotitos and many, many more. Summer dresses, sweaters and skirts for all the fashion conscious girls out there as well as cool accessories to complete the look.

39 Kolaportíð
Tryggvagata 19

A trip to the downtown indoor flea market Kolaportíð down by the harbour is always a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Endless stalls offering all kinds of second-hand goods, candy and even fermented shark and Icelandic liquorice. If ready to spend some time thoroughly examining the selection you can find some great bargains. Only open on weekends.

40 Nakti Apinn
Bankastræti 14

Nakti Apinn, located on the second floor at Bankastræti 14, offers an amazing variety of colourful street-clothing, including hooded sweatshirts, T-shirts and leggings designed by the owners and hand-printed with different patterns, graphics and figures. Inside you'll also find a good selection of Icelandic music, books on art and design, accessories, baby clothes and international designer wear.

41 Thorvaldsens Bazar
Austurstræti 4

Located inside a dignified wooden building, Thorvaldsens Bazar is among the oldest shops in Reykjavík, opening in 1901 and run by the women's charity organization the Thorvaldsen Society. Selling souvenirs, handicrafts, woolen underclothes and sweaters as well as Icelandic jewellery, the friendly saleswomen work as volunteers and all profits are donated to charity work.

42 Friða Frænka
Vesturgata 3

This small boutique is a jam-packed treasure chest overflowing with antique furniture and items to perk up your apartment. In every corner of the shop, you'll find some unique items, including candle holders, lamps, pillows, gorgeous 60's sofas, tables, vases and a selection of clothes and vintage jewellery.

43 Iða
Lækjargata 2a

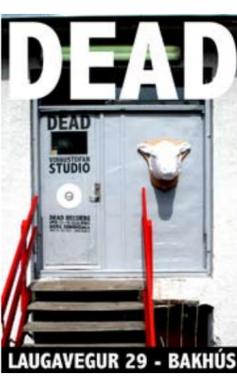
The spacious Iða bookstore is a great source for all kinds of reading material offering an excellent range of books, travel guides, magazines, post-cards and great gift items. The first-class service will help you search for what you need. On the second floor you'll find restaurants serving sushi, soups and sandwiches.



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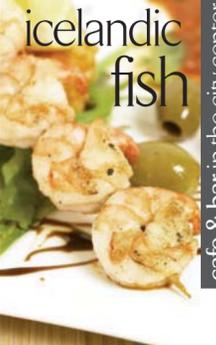


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Ambrosia

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"Who decided that we should take these natural things that come out of the ground and put them in a big pot and heat them up?" said one of the owners of Ambrosia, Iceland's first raw-food restaurant, on a recent visit from the Grapevine.

I had just taken a bite of my raw vegan burger and proceeded to raise my eyebrows and shake my head as if to say, "I don't know." The raw burger, my host proceeded to tell me, is a fascinating concoction, made from a variety of nuts and dried chopped vegetables, not cooked, but dried in an herb drier so as not to exceed the 45 degree Celsius "raw limit." Heat above 45°C, according to those who subscribe to the raw philosophy, destroys enzymes and other important nutrients in food.

The whole production was rather mushy, which is not surprising considering that it was, well, raw, and the bread had a wet-paper quality. The burger was quite good, yet it stood as little competition to even a standard veggie burger. When it comes to eating raw, I think the mindset is half the enjoyment.

The second part of our meal, the dish of the day, was an avocado filled with a sort of vegetable teriyaki, consisting of green bell pepper, onion, pine nuts and a sweet peanut sauce, and was entirely delicious. For dessert we enjoyed a toffee-like chocolate cake made from dates and cocoa powder, and a Blue Sunset fruit smoothie, with pineapple, mango and blueberries. The cake was the best vegan dessert I have ever tasted, while the smoothie, devoid of any milk or soy products, had a concentrated and intense flavour, something that might take some time getting used to.

Although there are inconsistencies between the sensationalist claims of many raw-enthusiasts and the assertions of western scientists and health officials, studies have conclusively shown that eating raw fruits and vegetables, although perhaps not exclusively, does have health and cancer-preventing benefits. Certainly it leaves you feeling good, if hungry within a few hours. Obviously enough, on an exclusively raw diet, protein and calorie intake can become an issue. Cows, for example, are always eating.

The meal left us adequately filled yet feeling quite light. Everything is good in moderation, and as good food is good food, fresh fruits and vegetables speak pretty much for themselves. VP



Lobster Ship

Suðurbugt, by the Old Harbour, tel.: 562 2300

Having never heard of the Lobster Ship before, I didn't quite know what to expect, but with a name like that, I assumed it was a seafood restaurant. I soon found out the cabdriver had never heard of it either, but armed with the knowledge it was located by the old harbour, the boat was easy enough to find. As my girlfriend and I walked up the ramp we couldn't help feeling we were about to embark on a journey.

After a tour of the boat, which was surprisingly large, consisting of three decks, two for dining and one lounge, we headed up to the top deck again. We took our seats at a cosy, candlelit table and were joined by our Danish tour-guide, manager and head-chef, Stig. Looking through the menu we noticed something was missing, there were no descriptions to be found next to any of the courses. This, Stig explained, served the purpose of flexibility. Instead of being imprisoned by the fixed menu description, it gives him the freedom to explore new and exciting things with every course he makes. From the way he talked about food and its preparation, it was easy to detect his genuine passion for preparing a good meal. Sensing our hunger and desire for a tasty dinner, Stig took away our menus and, with our consent, took it upon himself to decide what we should have.

As a starter our tentative waiter brought out traditional lobster soup (ISK 1350). The soup came with two large Icelandic lobster tails, garnished with garlic. The soup was without hesitation one of the best lobster soups either of us had tasted. Not too salty nor too creamy, but just right.

As a main course we were served a wonderful mixture of three courses, which consisted of grilled salmon, fried catfish and grilled halibut, served with vegetables and shellfish risotto and a truly savoury wine sauce (ISK 2850-3400). Along with a glass of white wine this made for a most pleasurable dinner, the catfish being my favourite.

After a short walk outside on the aft deck, catching some salty sea air, we returned to our tables to find a beautiful dessert waiting for us. The combination of melon, passion fruit and ice cream, was just the cherry on the top this journey of delight deserved. SH



Einar Ben

Veltusund 1, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 511 5090

Located in an old wooden house in the centre of town, Einar Ben is easily one of the most conveniently situated restaurants in Reykjavík. The house itself is a historical building from the turn of the 20th century where Einar Benediktsson, one of Iceland's national heroes and poets once operated a law firm and later established Iceland's first newspaper. The respectable décor, influenced by Iceland's national colours, reflects the historical significance of the house and installs a sense of occasion upon entry. The interior is spacious and despite always being busy, the place rarely feels crowded.

While Einar Ben takes great pride in using only Icelandic ingredients in all its dishes to ensure freshness and quality, the decision is obviously in line with the national theme of the place. A new menu offers adventurous combinations, with Icelandic herbs often taking a prominent place in the creation. The house wine list is extensive and a wide variety of monthly selections are available as well. It was also pleasant to see that the ecological wines are becoming a permanent selection at the city's restaurants.

We opted for the chef's pride, a four-dish menu selected and prepared by the chef, and the sommelier's choice of accompanying wines. For a starter we were served a rich creamy lobster soup, with an Australian Chardonnay white wine. The wine was solid if not spectacular, while the soup was a little too creamy for my taste. For the first entrée, our waiter brought out a plate of transparent-thin carpaccio, layered with Parmesan cheese and pepper. A classic and refined dish that was highlighted by the excellent selection of an Italian Tuscany red wine, rich in flavour with a hint of chocolate. Score one for the sommelier.

Our second entrée was Dijon-glazed lamb with basil and pepper sauce. The loin was perfectly cooked, soft and tender, but the trimmings left a little to be desired. Once again, the highpoint was the wine selection, a fabulous spicy South-African red wine with rich fruity taste. Score two for the sommelier. For desert, we were presented with a delicious chocolate cake, accompanied by a nice glass of port wine.

A word must be reserved for the excellent service we were afforded at Einar Ben, especially the wine selections, which brought out the best in every dish. SBB



Special Souvenirs

Text by Alena Krasovskaya Photo by Skari

I have always maintained that being a black sheep is not at all as unbearable as people claim. It even appears to be coming into fashion these days, you know, this sense of being special and unlike others... I wouldn't envy salespeople involved in the hospitality industry when such an individual arrives in their country. His determination to bring home an unusual, unconventional piece of that land knows no borders so he is unlikely to stroll the main shopping destinations with a tourist booklet stuck with advertisement as an ultimate guide. Her rush for something special will bring her anywhere from antique stores to flea markets, from boutiques to kiosks... You know, this seeking mind always on the run...

You can be such one in Reykjavík and no one will call you a freak: the city is known and appreciated for its air of liberalism. If you are the one, your place is then Skólavörðurstígur running up to Hallgrímskirkja with all its cute art galleries and little boutiques. Those in search of some hot speciality will definitely appreciate the Reykjavík prison, likely to be mixed with a medieval castle, or the oldest bakery in Reykjavík situated just moments away from the street. As for those little memories known as souvenirs in the English language, it's only your imagination and/or the bank account balance that may limit your choice. A cute suggestion for those in love with art and painting may be rubber stamps with jólasveinar – Icelandic Santa Clauses – on them. Christmas is much closer than

many think, and such a gift would suit all those who still remain children both in terms of age and soul.

Or why wouldn't you try bringing home a piece of Icelandic photography? Sometimes it seems that Icelanders are born with a camera in hands, and I have personally observed countless photographers wandering around 101 in search for curious shots during the summer. It's easy to be a photo artist in this country even with compact camera and limited photography skills, since the Mother Nature itself frequently offers you perfect angles. Those photo books that you find in bookstores, or independent photos available on display in Skólavörðurstígur galleries, capture imagination instantly and can be yet another idea for a cute souvenir or even a wedding present.

Others with relatively unlimited budget and an eye for expensive trinkets can be inspired by jewellery with engraved runic letters on them. People still believe in the magic power of Icelandic runes, and it can be easy to convince everyone that this little engraved ring you never part with has brought your business success to you. Why do it? Just for fun, huh?

Being a black sheep is not the worst thing one can undergo in his or her life, indeed. Pretending to be the one is fun and can do your creativity skills a good service. Just keep your eyes wide open, and remember that Reykjavík is the city where you can be special – and be appreciated.

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Reviews by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson, Sverrir Hjálmarsson and Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photos by Leó Stefánsson and Skari



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SALT

LOUNGE BAR & RESTAURANT

Happy Hour
7 days a week from 17:00 – 20:00

Mouth watering surprises at SALT every month

Pósthússtræti 2, 101 Reykjavík – ICELAND / +354 599 1000 www.saltrestaurant.is



Pay Attention!

Thorvaldsens Bazar

Austurstræti 4, 101 Reykjavík

Located inside a dignified wooden building on the corner of Austurstræti and Veltusund, Thorvaldsen's Bazar is among the oldest shops in Reykjavík. Opening its doors in 1901, the Bazar has from day one specialised in selling souvenirs, handicrafts and wooden products, mostly hand-knitted by Icelandic women who needed a place to sell their products. Still run by the same organisation that opened the store in the beginning of the last century, the Thorvaldsen Society, a women's charity organisation established on 19 November 1875, counts approximately 80 members today.

The women working in the store each day serve voluntarily, and all profits are donated to charity work, particularly supporting children

in need. The Thorvaldsen Society has bought equipment and sponsored facilities at the children's hospital, supported the psychiatric ward BUGL for adolescents, the organisation Save the Children Iceland and the movement Young and Sober for example. Recently, the society started a 10 million ISK fund for diabetic children.

In addition to the good selection of the traditional Icelandic woollen sweaters (lopapeysa), socks, gloves, hats and other hand-knitted warm clothing for the winter can be bought for a reasonable price.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9-18, Saturday and Sunday 10-14.



**REYKJUNIK
DESIGN
DISTRICT**



WWW.DESIGNDISTRICT.IS

**Selection
of Works**

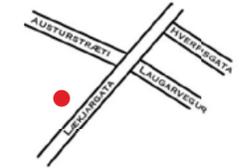


Selection of works from the private collection of Þorvaldur Guðmundsson and Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir at Gerðarsafn. Until September 16th. Open 11-17 (except Mondays). Only 10 min by bus S1, S2 or S4 from Lækjargata or Hlemmur, every 20 minutes. Disembark at the first stop in Kópavogur (Hamraborg).



LISTASAFN KÓPAVOGS
GERÐARSAFN

IDA Bookstore
souvenirs T-shirts and gifts.
magnets, jewelry, Icelandic handcraft, music, calendars, mugs & more.



Open every day from 9.00 to 22.00



Rent a laptop

These coffeeshops have laptops

**Café Victor
Sólon**

30 min. 450 kr.-
60 min. 900 kr.-



Services

■ **Useful Numbers**
Emergency number: 112
Police: 569 9000
Medical help: 1770
Dental emergency: 575 0505
AA: 551 2010
Information: 118
Telegrams: 146
 ■ **Tax Free Refund Iceland Refund,** Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 564 6400 www.icelandrefund.com
 ■ **Laundry Service**
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Úlafoss, Vitastígur 13, Tel: 551 2301, www.ulfafoss.is
 ■ **Post Office**

Post offices are located around the city as well as in the countryside. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5. For a full list and info on opening hours visit www.posturinn.is.
 Stamps are also sold in bookstores, gas stations, some grocery stores and tourist shops.

■ **Embassies and Consulates in Iceland**
United States, Laufásvegur 21, Tel: 562 9100
United Kingdom, Laufásvegur 31, Tel: 550 5100
Russia, Garðastræti 33, Tel: 551 5156
China, Víðimelur 29, Tel: 552 6751

For a full list visit Ministry for Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.is/diplomatic-missions/icelandic-missions/
 ■ **Internet Access**
 Most coffeehouses have wireless Internet access.

Computers with Internet connections are available at:
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
BSÍ Bus Terminal, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
Ground Zero, Vallarstræti 10
The Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15

■ **The National and University Library,** Armgrimgsgata 3
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
 Icelandic Travel Market: Bankastræti 2

■ **Opening hours**
Bars and clubs: According to regulations bars may be open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.
Shops: Mon-Fri 10-18, Sat 10-16, Sun closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

■ **Swimming pools:** weekdays 06:30-22:30, weekends 08:00-20:30 although some may be open an hour longer.

■ **The State owned ÁTVR liquor stores:** Mon-Thu 11-18, Fri 11-19, Sat

11-18. Banks in the centre are open Mon-Fri 09-16.

Getting Around

■ **Public transport**
 The only public transport system in Reykjavik is the bus. Most busses run every 20 minutes and price per fare is 250 ISK for adults and 75 ISK for children. Complete route map at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700
 ■ **Rent a bike**
Borgarhjól, Hverfisgata 50, Tel: 551 5653, www.borgarhjol.net
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 590 1550, www.visitreykjavik.is
 ■ **Taxi**
Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir, Tel: 553 3500 or 588 5522
BSR, Tel: 561 0000
 ■ **For disabled travellers**
Reykjavik Group Travel Service, Brunastaðir 3, Tel: 587 8030, www.randburg.com/is/reykjavik_group_travel_service/

A useful brochure, Accessible Reykjavik, can be found at tourist offices.

■ **Car rentals**
Átak Car Rental, Smiðjuvegur 1, Tel: 554 6040
ALP, Dugguvogur 10, Tel: 562 6060
Avis, Knarrarvogi 2, Tel: 591 4000
Eurocar, Hjallahraun 9, Tel: 565 3800
A.G Car Rental, Tangarhófi 8-12, Tel: 587 5544
Atlas Car Rental, Dalshraun 9, Tel: 565 3800
Berg Car Rental, Tangarhófi 8, Tel: 577 6050
Hertz, Flugvallavegur, Tel: 522 4400
 ■ **Airlines**
Air Iceland, Reykjavikflugvöllur, Tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is
Air Vestmannaeyjar, Tel: 481 3255, www.eyjaflug.is
 ■ **Bus Terminal**
BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10, Tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is
 ■ **Samferda.net**
 A reasonable choice for the budget traveller. You log on to the website www.samferda.net, choose your destination and hopefully find a travel buddy to share the cost.

■ **Useful Websites**
www.visitreykjavik.is (The official tourist website of Reykjavik)
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www.fjolmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)
www.gulalanan.is (The yellow pages)
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 ■ **Where to get ...**
Work and residence permit: The Directorate of Immigration, Skógarhlíð 6, Tel: 510 5400, www.utli.is
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Unemployment benefits: Directorate of Labour, Public Employment Service, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 515 4800, www.vinnumalastofnun.is
Icelandic social security number (kennitala): National Register, Borgartún 30, Tel: 560 9800, www.hagstofa.is
Driver's license: Those who have a foreign license don't need an Icelandic one for the first six months. After that time you have one month to apply for an Icelandic driver's license. Applications are at police stations.
Tax card: Tax office, Laugavegur 166, Tel: 563 1100, www.rsk.is
Rent subsidies: Social Service Office, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 411 9000 www.felagstjonustan.is

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Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church, Frikkirkjuvegur 5
Pentecostal Assembly, Hátún 2
Roman Catholic Church, Hávallagata 14
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ásabraut 2
Jehovah's Witnesses, Sogavegur 71
Seventh-Day Adventists, Suðurhlíð 36
Zen Buddhism in Iceland, Reykjavíkurborg 31
Independent Church, Háteigsvegur 101
The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland, Sólvallagata 10
The Cross, Hlíðasmári 5-7
 ■ **Trade Unions**
The Icelandic Federation of Labour, Sættún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is
The Federation of State and Municipal employees, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is
The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is
Efling, Sættún 1, Tel: 510 7500, www.efling.is
The Commercial Workers' Union, Kringlan 7, Tel: 510 1700, www.vr.is
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Zen Buddhism in Iceland, Reykjavíkurborg 31
Independent Church, Háteigsvegur 101
The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland, Sólvallagata 10
The Cross, Hlíðasmári 5-7
 ■ **Trade Unions**
The Icelandic Federation of Labour, Sættún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is
The Federation of State and Municipal employees, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is
The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is
Efling, Sættún 1, Tel: 510 7500, www.efling.is
The Commercial Workers' Union, Kringlan 7, Tel: 510 1700, www.vr.is
Union of Public Servants, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8340, www.sfr.is
 ■ **Useful Websites**
www.visitreykjavik.is (The official tourist website of Reykjavik)
www.gayice.is (Information about the gay scene in Iceland)
www.fjolmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)
www.gulalanan.is (The yellow pages)
www.leigulistinn.is (Rent a flat)
www.simaskra.is (Icelandic telephone directory)
 ■ **Where to get ...**
Work and residence permit: The Directorate of Immigration, Skógarhlíð 6, Tel: 510 5400, www.utli.is
Insurance and benefits: The State Social Security Institute, Laugavegur 114-116, Tel: 560 4400, www.tr.is
Icelandic citizenship: Unless you

come from a Nordic country, foreign citizens have to have had an unrestricted residence permit in Iceland for at least seven years in order to get an Icelandic citizenship although some exceptions exist to that general rule. Applications are at the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Skuggasund, Tel: 545 9000, www.domsmlaraduneyti.is
Unemployment benefits: Directorate of Labour, Public Employment Service, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 515 4800, www.vinnumalastofnun.is
Icelandic social security number (kennitala): National Register, Borgartún 30, Tel: 560 9800, www.hagstofa.is
Driver's license: Those who have a foreign license don't need an Icelandic one for the first six months. After that time you have one month to apply for an Icelandic driver's license. Applications are at police stations.
Tax card: Tax office, Laugavegur 166, Tel: 563 1100, www.rsk.is
Rent subsidies: Social Service Office, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 411 9000 www.felagstjonustan.is

■ **Facts on Iceland**
 ■ Iceland is a constitutional republic with slightly more than 300,000 inhabitants. Reykjavik has been the country's capital since 1786 and today almost two-thirds of the population live in the greater capital area.
 ■ The 17th of June 1944 Iceland became an independent republic. That day is the national holiday and is celebrated all around the country.
 ■ Alþingi, the national parliament, is the oldest assembly in the world, established at Þingvellir in 930 but restored in Reykjavik in 1844. The parliament is comprised of 63 members, who are elected by popular vote every four years. Icelandic citizens over 18 years of age have the legal right to vote.
 ■ Parliamentary elections were last held in 2003 with 33.7 percent of votes going to the Independence Party. The Social Democratic Alliance got 31 percent, the Progressive Party 17.7 percent, the Leftist-Greens 8.8 percent and the Liberal Party 7.4 percent. The Independence Party and the Progressive Party formed a coalition and together lead the government.
 ■ Iceland has 12 ministers with the prime minister and head of government being Geir H. Haarde, who is also chairman of the Independence Party. The President of Iceland is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who has been in office since 1996. He is the Chief of State although his duties are mostly ceremonial.
 ■ Time Zone: GMT 0
 ■ Currency: Íslensk króna (ISK).
 ■ International Dialling Code: +354

Evangelical Lutheran Church. Masses are generally held on Sundays at 11:00 in churches all around the capital. Service in English is at Hallgrímskirkja every last Saturday each month, starting at 14:00. The Roman Catholic Church also has masses in English and Polish. Other religious movements in Reykjavik are for example:
The Muslim Association of Iceland, Ármúli 38
Ásatrú Association, Grandagarði 8
Bahá'í, Álfabakka 12
The Church of Evangelism, Hlíðasmári 9
The Icelandic Buddhist Movement, Víghólastigur 21
Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church, Frikkirkjuvegur 5
Pentecostal Assembly, Hátún 2
Roman Catholic Church, Hávallagata 14
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ásabraut 2
Jehovah's Witnesses, Sogavegur 71
Seventh-Day Adventists, Suðurhlíð 36
Zen Buddhism in Iceland, Reykjavíkurborg 31
Independent Church, Háteigsvegur 101
The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland, Sólvallagata 10
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The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is
Efling, Sættún 1, Tel: 510 7500, www.efling.is
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www.fjolmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)
www.gulalanan.is (The yellow pages)
www.leigulistinn.is (Rent a

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"[T]he situation in the city centre is such that people are hesitant to attend bars and enjoy the summer nights with other people. Violent crimes are a daily phenomenon and the behaviour is very bad – cans and shattered glass everywhere. People wander around in a drunken stupor and all constraint is relinquished. Drug use is general and has increased say those who know best. People are scared. Parents are worried. The Police demand action and the city government must react."

Another city council member, Björn Ingi Hrafnsson, praised Morgunblaðið in a blog post for fighting the good fight, while scolding the other big daily newspaper, Fréttablaðið, for not treating the issue with proper seriousness, while appearing in every available print and broadcast media with the Mayor of Reykjavík, Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, to pledge that the situation would be reigned under control.

Seriously, What the Hell Happened?

As a frequent visitor to downtown Reykjavík, the discussion of the situation in the city centre surprised me. It has not been my experience at all that the situation is any worse than it was five years ago. Did I miss something?

According to the statistics, I didn't. On the contrary, the statistics indicate that violence is on its way down. The crime rate has decreased in recent years, and assaults and severe violence is on the retreat.

In his article, Police Commissioner Stefán Eiríksson pointed this out in plain Icelandic, stating that the correct information and a realistic analysis of the situation was lacking from the discourse, providing statistics and using refined graphs that should have erased any doubts. City Council member Gisli Marteinn Baldursson said the same thing in the news magazine TV show Kastljós the same day Eiríksson's article was printed. The message was clear. Crime is down.

How did this get confused? Why is it that at the same time that violent crimes are decreasing the public feels less and less safe in the city? Why is it that the discussion is always focused on the dangers of walking the streets at night while the likelihood of you being a victim of a violent crime in the city centre is considerably less than it was five years ago?

And somebody has yet to explain to me the contradiction why, if the average citizen is scared to go downtown, the city centre is flooded every weekend? Am I to believe that among 15,000 people – 10% of the population in the greater-Reykjavík area – there are no average citizens?

A Cyclical Discussion

According to Helgi Gunnlaugsson, professor of sociology at the University of Iceland and an expert on criminology, this is a cyclical discussion that comes up every two years or so. "Sometimes, you could think you were reading about Baghdad when you read about the city centre in the Icelandic media," Gunnlaugsson said when the Grapevine reached him. "There has always been a negative discussion of the city centre. I remember when I came home to Iceland in 1987 after studying abroad, there was the exact same discourse on the downtown area in the media. The Mayor then (Davíð Oddson) demanded that the police should deploy dogs to be better fit to handle the violence. This comes up very regularly, and every time it comes up, the atmosphere is that this is the worst it has ever been. It was always better, five, ten years ago, let alone 20 or 30 years ago."

Gunnlaugsson states that after carefully reviewing police statistics, hospital records and victimisation reports, this is not the case. "The situation now is no worse than it has been. It was decidedly worse around the turn of the century, in 1999–2000, when the police dealt with many more cases for example. When the opening hours changed in 2000 we saw marked improvement." Gunnlaugsson is referring to changes in regulations in 2000, which allowed bar owners to keep their bars open longer. Before that, all bars closed at 03:00 AM, and thousands of guests poured into the streets at the same time. "That change was for the good, since violent crimes decreased drastically. We are nowhere near the mark where we were in 2000, and there is nothing that indicates that the situation is getting worse."

Gunnlaugsson adds that statistics indicate

that extremely violent attacks have decreased, although there is always room for improvement. "Every now and then, there is a case reported that you'll find unusually ugly. But that is nothing new. That has always happened. I don't want to give the impression that this is OK. Of course violence in the city centre is intolerable, but from a physical standpoint, in the city centre, it is so crowded, it is such a small space and so many people, that I can hardly see how violence could be avoided entirely."

According to Gunnlaugsson, studies conducted in Iceland and abroad indicate that violence is mostly confined to certain small groups of people. "When you look at the data on violence, you'll see that it is mostly young males beating up other young males, and it often seems to be arbitrary who is the victim and who is the antagonist. That is, the same person can be a victim one weekend and an antagonist the next weekend. This is related to a certain lifestyle among young males, where violence is considered acceptable. This is not necessarily a large group, but if you look at the big picture, this is the group that is most likely to use violence, and the group that is most likely to suffer from violence. That is, this group is fighting amongst themselves."

Guðjohnsen Attacked – Violence Soars in the City Centre

Naturally, there are exceptions, and Gunnlaugsson points out that random attacks still occur and that this kind of discussion is likely to soar whenever a particularly heinous crime is reported in the city centre. "It does happen that unsuspecting citizens are attacked. And that always gives rise to this sort of discussion. In particular if a woman is involved."

The first weekend in August, two attacks made the headlines. In one case three women attacked another woman standing in a line outside the bar Sólun, biting off a sizeable chunk of her ear – unpleasant, but hardly remarkable, other than the fact that those involved were all women.

In another instance, Eiður Guðjohnsen, Barcelona's ace forward and captain of the national football team, was attacked in downtown Reykjavík. He was pushed to the ground and punched in the face. Again, unpleasant, but hardly remarkable, other than the fact that Eiður Guðjónsson was involved. The Barcelona striker escaped unharmed from what otherwise could only be described as a scuffle.

Gunnlaugsson believes that these attacks did a lot to get the current discussion off the ground, and although it is natural for people to be anxious over such news, these incidents are out of the ordinary. "If you look at the big picture, the reality is much closer to what I have described before. Out of between 1000–1500 reports of violence in downtown Reykjavík every year, a great majority is young males fighting with other young males. The violence is not totally random, although that is the message we keep receiving, that each and every one of us could be the victim of a violent attack in the city centre. That is not exactly the case. Although random attacks occasionally happen. But these are the attacks that find their way into the news, and make us scared."

Gunnlaugsson also points out that the number of incidents often has little to do with the discourse. "When this sort of discussion comes up, it is not necessary because the number of cases is spinning out of control. If you look at the data, twenty years back, you will see that there is no necessary correlation between the number of cases and when this discussion comes up. There is something else behind this, and sometimes it can even be political, especially around election time."

Who Gains From Your Fear?

Gunnlaugsson raises an important point. If we are to understand the contradiction that citizens feel less secure while violence decreases, we need to look beyond criminal statistics and look at different statistics entirely.

According to the independent media monitoring company Fjölmiðlavaktin (The Media Watch), coverage of violence and drug use increased by 41% in 2006 compared to the same period a year earlier. Coverage of "police matters" increased by 16% in the same period and has increased by 10% between 2006 and 2007 so far.

While the crime rate goes down, the media devotes more and more time and space in news to cover violence, drug use and crimes. The same marketing principles apply to the Icelandic media and the Hollywood film industry. Violence sells.

Is it safe to assume that politicians might also use this issue for political grandstanding, making heroic gestures, declaring to stomp down on the violence and make the city safer, in pursuit of public acceptance? Is it a coincidence that City Council member Björn Ingi Hrafnsson scolds Fréttablaðið for not drumming up the discussion of city violence? Lesser people have reached bigger political offices under the 'tough on crimes' mantra. That much is sure.

The Minister for Justice, Björn Bjarnason, has often made downtown violence the subject of speeches and blogposts. His interest in police matters is well documented. Since 1997, the government has doubled funding to the police. Obviously, this increase needs to be justified, but I would have thought that the decreasing crime rate should be justification enough.

Whose Problem is This Anyway?

In preparation for this article, The Grapevine contacted several people with knowledge of the situation and all of them expressed surprise over the public discourse regarding violence in the city centre. Sigurður Harðarson, a nurse at the emergency room at the city hospital, claims that the situation is no worse during the weekends than it was when he first started working there five years ago.

Trausti Valsson, professor of planning at the University of Iceland, expressed more concern over traffic congestion and available routes for fire trucks, ambulances and police wagons in the city centre than violence.

Professor Gunnlaugsson also pointed out that comparative to its size, downtown Reykjavík is even far from being the most violent town in Iceland. Statistically speaking, you are much more likely to be the victim of violence in some small fishing village in the West Fjords, than you are walking the streets of Reykjavík.

Police commissioner Stefán Eiríksson told me that his article was mostly intended to analyse the problem and point out that the police is not the only responsible party when it comes to the "situation" downtown. "I think there is a reason to improve the image of the city centre that has suffered for public drunkenness and bad conduct recently," Eiríksson told the Grapevine, but added that bad conduct and littering are not directly the concern of the police.

"There were 30 serious violent attacks last year, there have been ten the first six months this year. It is impossible to draw wide-ranging conclusions from such low numbers, but they do not indicate that the situation in the city centre is becoming worse. One of the reasons I wrote that article was to get that message across loud and clear," Eiríksson said.

Nevertheless, the discourse has gone thoroughly off the tracks.

Violence in Reykjavík is a sad fact. It should not be tolerated, but the situation is still no more of a problem now than it was five years ago. Even if we commend all efforts to eradicate violence, it does not justify certain media people, politicians and bloggers in portraying downtown Reykjavík as a public war zone and manipulating people's fear of violence to their own ends.

PS. The photo on the cover was staged in an effort to boost our pick-up rate.

"The violence is not totally random, although that is the message we keep receiving, that each and every one of us could be the victim of a violent attack in the city centre."



The Accidental Musician

Text by Nick Candy Photo by Leó Stefánsson

The Icelandic musician Einar Tönsberg, better known as Eberg, has released 'musical accidents' for 5 years. His smooth electronic beats, delightful melodies and strangely eloquent lyrics can be heard on two album releases and various TV shows around the world. He has been described as one of the most original laptop troubadours around. Recent play on American television has definitely boosted Eberg's fan-base and with his current work ethic and endless imagination, we can expect a lot more wonderful quirks to come. A Grapevine journalist sat down with the producer/musician recently to chat about what's been happening, and what's to come.

A lot of your music tends to be a little quirky. What inspires you to make music?

I guess I try to make music that I like listening to myself. For my attention to be held, I need to be surprised or for something stupid to happen. I mean I love that, when something you don't expect happens, but still within a kind of normal structure.

Does that make it difficult? To surprise yourself?

It's impossible to surprise yourself as a musician. It's just not possible. If you study the

piano then you put down a chord you know exactly what possibilities you have to do next because you've done it before. And the guitar is the same, you know so many songs on the guitar, you almost know what kind of song you are writing before you do it. So the way I've been writing things is without listening. I get something into the computer and just press loads of buttons and hope that something good will happen and if nothing good happens then I throw it away and press loads of other buttons until something surprises me, something I couldn't think of. Then I get them together and when I'm happy I try to sort of 'tame' them... What do you call it?

Order?

Yeah, make order out of the disorder. So in that way, you kind of start at the wrong end. Because if you have a song on guitar and you like it, then you're scared of, you know... All the arrangements are just going around it, to make it as strong as possible and that's what almost everyone in the world is doing. So it's much more fun to do it impulsively, I really enjoy that. When I was doing the first album I was in a band and we were signed and we had a massive budget and it was driving me mad. I remember I just wanted to do something that was totally different to what I was doing

at the time and so I started doing this Eberg thing and I just made some stupid rules and followed them, like the one I was telling you about [pressing loads of buttons].

You are working on your third album now. Is that going to be similar to your previous work? Starting with the chaos?

I've started writing songs the normal way again and spending lots of time making the same mistakes that I made in the old days, therefore I'm kind of trying to... I'm just going to start over again and do it the opposite way. I've got a few tracks that are ready and all the good ones have been a mistake or happened by chance or what do you call it... ?

Accidental.

Accidental yeah exactly. They happened to be the good ones.

Could you call yourself the 'Accidental Musician'?

Yeah absolutely.

You've had some success in the states, a track on the O.C. and Veronica Mars and the theme song for the new iPhone. How did you feel when you were getting the calls to put your songs on American television?

It was one of those 'nice telephone calls'. But I'm always a bit pissed when I get calls from

"But I'm always a bit pissed when I get calls from America because they tend to call on Friday morning then its Friday night in Reykjavik so I'm always very 'extra happy' when I hear from them."

America because they tend to call on Friday morning then its Friday night in Reykjavik so I'm always very 'extra happy' when I hear from them. But it's good, it's been really pleasant and I'll hopefully get more of them.

Are there any particular lyrics stuck inside your head at the moment?

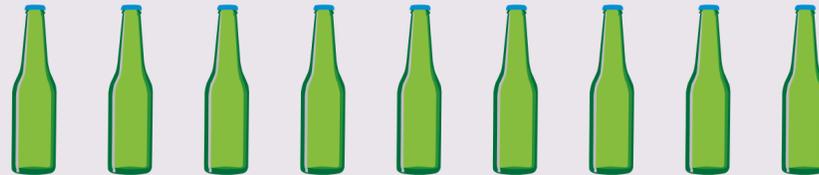
Yeah. I went on this trip to the West Fjords with a bunch of people, no electricity, no nothing, I feel a bit proud about it. It was really good and I promised myself to write a lyric there. So I made everyone tell me what they do online what sites they visit and what they do you know whatever. The more people got drunk the more detail came out. So this one is called 'Caught in the Net' and it's about how people seem to have a different life within in this stupid world.

Do you find producing other people's music as rewarding as making your own?

It's great. You're making an album, and it's a funny thing to do, it's difficult and rewarding, anyway you finish it. When you're an artist and you finish an album it's just a beginning. But when you're a producer it's finished. You don't have to do anything more with it. It's done, you put your name on it and you remember it in a fun way, there's no hassle, you don't have to go out and sell it or worry if it gets any radio play or if you lose any money or make money. It's kind of a dream job for me to do that. It's good. And you learn a lot from working with other people. You get ideas. Everyone is teaching you something and no one is doing something in exactly the same way. Which is good.

And when you're on your own?

I dunno, I'm never really happy when I record my own stuff. I'm happy afterwards but I'm never happy while I'm doing it. You're pressing record and you're running around the room and you trip on a cable and you did a great take and you realise you didn't record it and there's loads of frustration really. I sometimes wish I just had an engineer. I guess I'm just enjoying working with people for a little while before I tackle my own album. It's definitely not my own album that is the most enjoyable thing in the world. I don't know why. They are afterwards, but not during.



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Eliza
Empire Fall

Empire fall is the first solo release of Eliza M. Geirsdóttir, a veteran of the Icelandic music scene. At 16, she established the all-female critical favorites, Kolrassa Krókríðandi, later known as Bellatrix, a band that went on to win Músíktilraunir, a competition for young Icelandic bands that has launched many Icelandic artists. This production is distinguished by simple, low-key song writing, but there is still a hint of the quirky old and comforting Bellatrix sound in the background. Eliza is a wonderful singer, as she has established before with the opera metal band Skandinavia, and her vocals work beautifully with the interesting arrangements where percussion instruments often play a large role, while Eliza plays violin, piano and glockenspiel. The title song is a strong opener that grabs the listener's attention, but a personal favorite is the little gem Diamond. This is definitely worth checking out. **SBB**



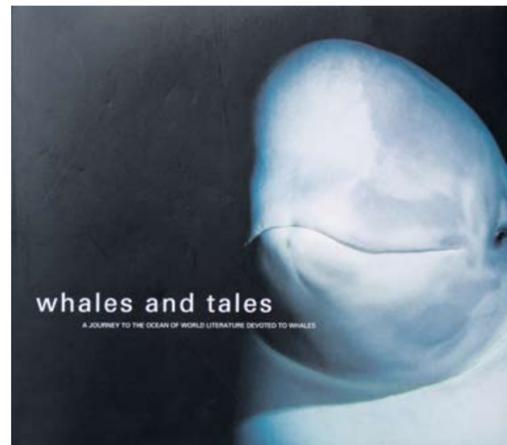
Minä Rakastan Sinua
Elvis

Minä rakastan sinua is Finnish for I love you. Somehow, that seems important. This collection of respected musicians has convened to play covers by famous musicians on special occasions since 2002, but Elvis is their first release, released on the 30-year anniversary of the King's death, August 16. This is a collection of 14 Elvis songs, featuring hits like Love Me Tender and Viva Las Vegas, as well as lesser-known songs such as Old Shep. Arranged in a typical 4/4 dance-rockabilly fashion, the kicker is the raspy voice of singer/poet/actress Didda, who sounds as if she has gulped down precisely the right amount of whisky to offer something fresh with songs that have in most cases been reproduced so often that it is difficult to do. Like the band, this CD will probably be saved for special occasions only. **SBB**



Jagúar
Shake It Good

Seeing as Iceland's funk scene isn't exactly prolific at the moment, Jagúar and its fourth effort, Shake It Good, have definite creative appeal. A few overt but clean sexual references, some repetitive chord vamps on an electric bass, and a team of enthusiastic trumpets; the "funk" recipe is delivered nicely here. Yet for me the record comes down to two songs: Disco Diva takes the prize for the refreshingly, if comically, un-congested line, "Before we knew it we were kissing, talking dirty with our tongues," and Youth Faded for having the nerve to swerve funk into indie-rock territory. It is definitely Jagúar's improvisation on the aforementioned recipe that is this record's freshest and tastiest bite. **VP**



The Whale in All its Glory

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson

The primary danger to the whales is a newcomer, an upstart animal, which only recently, through technology, became competent in the oceans, a creature that calls itself human. For 99.99 percent of the history of the whales there were no humans in or on the deep oceans.

Carl Sagan – Cosmos

Whales and Tales is a selection of texts and photos by various authors, compiled by Hörður Sigurðarson and his son Reynir Harðarson. 120 pages in all, the project is geared to attract buyers from the increasing stream of tourist that visit the island each summer.

As coffeetable books tend to be, this one is full of pretty pictures and witty quotations. The collection of photos is good, showing whales in all their girth, and in their natural habitat. It does strike me as a little odd for a book that is made to sold to tourists in Iceland, that only a small portion of the photos are taken in, or more accurately, around, Iceland. In fact, a majority of the photos are taken in distant locations such as New Zealand, Newfoundland, or the Antarctica.

From Douglas Adams to Edmund Burke to John F. Kennedy, he collection of quotes is wide ranging and well selected, displaying how the whale has been a fixture in world literature through the ages. As the introduction states: "With brains many times the size of our own and hearts up to the size of a small car, it is no wonder that whales still captivate us. Stories, poems and fairy tales about whales exist in all languages, from all times." Again, the shortage of quotes from Icelandic literature strikes me as a little odd. Surely, there have been Icelandic writers, other than Björk and Snorri Sturluson who have written about this animal.

There is a great quote from Gabriel Garcia Marquez quote that is a personal favorite: "Fiction was invented the day Jonas arrived home and told his wife that he was three days late because he had been swallowed by a whale."

Whales and Tales is published by Father/Son Books



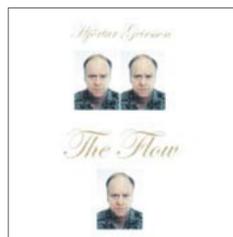
Myst
Take Me With You

How do you make it through a recording session singing something like, "Wherever you lead me/ My heart will follow/ You own a piece of my soul," without wanting to shoot yourself in the face? I can't even begin to recount all the questions I have about this record. The song "Why", for example, is just a big gaping question mark for me at the moment, as are the lyrics: "Why has it been ("bin," as it is written in the insert) so hard to forget you/ It hasn't been ("bin") the easiest thing./ But I'll get over you!" This is the kind of soppy pop shit I mistakenly found tragically romantic when I was twelve. Actually this is worse. This is the kind of thing that ruins people's lives. Keep this far away from your pre-teen unless you want her to end up like that sobbing prom queen on the front cover. **VP**



Líkn
Líkn

Líkn is the brainchild of Hallvarður Ásgeirsson, known to many as Varði from films such as Varði Goes Europe and Varði Goes on Tour and as a guitar player for the acclaimed Stórsveit Nix Noltes. This is a very serious attempt at emotional experimental post rock, with an industrial feel, but mostly this just sounds dragged out and uninspired. Most of the songs sound like they are intended for live performances rather than an album, and perhaps this becomes more interesting in a setting where you can watch the guitar player drag out his notes and the singer make emotional faces to match his emotional delivery. But in the plainest terms, this CD completely failed to make an impression on me. **SBB**



Hjörtur Geirsson
The Flow

I can't say that I'm not a little bit creeped out by this album. A lot creeped out, actually. Maybe it's the intense stare on the mug-shot passport photos on the front cover, or maybe it's the scratchy vocals awkwardly breathed over even stranger almost surf-pop guitar arrangements, but I can't help but picture myself being followed down a dark alley by a creepy old man when I listen to this. Maybe I'm being too rough here, but I just feel awkward listening to this. I can't say any more. **VP**

Reviewed by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson and Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir

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Numismatic Museum

The Central Bank and National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection that consists of Icelandic notes and coins, foreign money from earlier times, especially if mentioned in Icelandic sources, and more recent currency from Iceland's main trading partner countries. A selection from the numismatic collection is on display in showcases on the ground floor of the Central Bank's main building.

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Right Vibe, Wrong Headliner

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Gulli

Who: **Foreign Monkeys, Dýrðin, Jan Mayen, The Besties.**
Where: **Organ**
When: **August 15, 2007**

A diverse mix of concertgoers flocked to bar Organ on a Wednesday evening. Four bands were about to perform but only one would actually hit the spot. The night's concerts peaked with Jan Mayen's performance some two hours into the programme. Too bad they weren't the headliners.

First act of the night was noisy rock band The Foreign Monkeys, a young and confident four-piece from the Westman Islands. The winners of last year's Battle of the Bands were not in the best shape that night, but still got the crowd worked up with intense and pure rock tunes, "Black Cave" in particular.

Next in line was the established indie-pop band Dýrðin, who tried to move the show to a more danceable direction. Their first song made for a promising start but the lack of diversity and strong vocals soon became utterly wearing. The small crowd that had moved closer to the stage seemed to like their cheering summery pop songs and bizarre lyrics ("I'm a bubble girl / in a bubble world") but I honestly can't say that I understand Dýrðin's cuteness that reviewers have been raving about. The only thing that made their set enjoyable to watch was singer Hafdis, not because of singing skills but an energetic stage performance, which was something to admire.

Luckily, Jan Mayen immediately kicked-off with their no-bullshit guitar-driven indie-rock

and brought back my hope for a good evening. Their set was almost entirely focused on the recently released album, "So Much Better than Your Normal Life", with two exceptions. At the point they played "Nick Cave," the hit song from their first full-length album, "Home of the Free Indeed," the crowd went wild, head banging and screaming "Nick Cave is a real motherfucker" while throwing each other around the floor. This moment was definitely the night's highlight.

With a rock-star voice and unpretentious attitude, singer and guitarist Valli owned the stage. His joy of performing shined through every expression on his face and backed by guitarist Agúst, strong drums and smooth bass-lines, the band reached familiar heights when presenting the new material, especially when playing "Joyride" and "We just want to get everybody high", proving once again that they are fully capable of rocking the roof off of any venue in town. Watch out, their release concerts are only days ahead.

This should have been a great opportunity for the following act to work their magic. The crowd was ready to party and in the right frame of mind for some more quality live stuff. Sadly, the US melodic pop group The Besties didn't deliver the task. Fronted by two female singers/keyboardists, the band never seemed to find their way, although they looked happy and seemed to be enjoying themselves. The sad thing is that the same didn't apply to the many concertgoers who, one by one, fled the scene, leaving the place empty by the minute.



Idiot Culture for the Masses

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Gulli

Who: **Ampop, Minus, Pétur Ben, Vonbrigði, Ljótu Hálfvitarnir**
Where: **Miklatún Park**
When: **August 18, 2007**

The rambunctious howls of Ljótu Hálfvitarnir, or Ugly Idiots, greeted me mid-brisk-walk towards the big stage at Miklatún Park early during Culture Night day. Upon the sound I happily slowed my pace a bit and checked my watch to see I was only four minutes late. Although the show had clearly started preposterously punctually, I found myself trailing behind a steady stream of family folk racing towards the giant block of a stage.

The self-described "cross-eyed entertainers from the north" were a huge hit among what I could see of the hundreds of people sprawled across the park's vast grassy knoll. The crowd consisted, and continued for the rest of the day to consist of, what I can't help but call "older people," their sugar-high children, and their dogs. I sat down on the warm grass and tried to think good thoughts. Much to my delight a dog sitting next to me, watching the stage, started squealing.

A band called Vonbrigði, or Disappointment, took the stage and proved once and for all that irony is in fact dead. Sitting in front of me an old lady whispered to her friend, "probably just horrible noise," before promptly standing up and leaving once the horrible noise began. The crowd, enthused by the sunshine and a chance to get out of the house and drink beer for an evening, were lapping up this most recent disappointment, a hard-rock

band with the same line-up and wardrobe as from their founding in 1981. Their drummer ripped off his shirt, flaunting his grey chest hair. The crowd nodded with pleasure.

Pétur Ben was the show's clear highlight, and I mean this from a personal standpoint, not the crowd's. Until Pétur demanded from it some acoustic sensitivity, I had hardly noticed the horrible sound quality emitting from the monstrous speakers. Through feedback and mixing that alternately drowned out and completely cut off his vocals, Pétur's enchanting sound wedged its way out, managing the day's best set.

My first Minus experience was similarly rendered obsolete thanks to the shitty sound system, which was spitting out a clutter of noise that was far beyond what the band could possibly have been responsible for. AMPPOP were the show's headliners, and were granted a longer set, as they had clearly been deemed the most generically pleasing of the acts. They did their shallow pop thing and it finally dawned on me that this was not in fact a concert I had been witnessing for the past two hours, but a ceremony of mass gratification. Quantity of sound was clearly being emphasized over quality, as its highest aspiration was not to do the bands any justice, but rather to reach the furthest ear in the park.

The concert ended as ludicrously punctual as it had begun, and although now it had cooled, and the crowd consequently decreased by half, it was clear that the day's objective had been reached. What horrible, horrible family fun.



"Elvis Was a Hero to Most..."

Text by Páll Hilmarrson

...but he never meant shit to me" – to borrow the words of Public Enemy's Chuck D. I was busy babbling incoherently at the tender age of one when the King passed away in an undignified manner, thirty years ago. Now everybody is busy remembering Elvis. We have bloggers posting Youtube clips of Elvis in various stages of sweat, ranging from a mild dew, to perspiring like a medium size waterfall. The print media shows us still clips from these videos and the recording industry tries to sell us yet another compilation of greatest hits and the Youtube videos on DVD. Elvis's daughter, Lisa Marie, is planning a duet with her father – or a hologram image of her father – probably to be shown live during Superbowl – sandwiched between commercials.

I am a little sad that I never got the chance to experience Elvis first hand, but also a bit relieved. Sad because Elvis was one hell of a performer and relieved because me and my generation got something much better than Elvis.

I am referring to the greatest rock 'n' roll album made, of course; Guns 'n' Roses debut album, Appetite For Destruction, which is celebrating its twentieth year. Appetite made me who I am today. Without it I might have regarded Lisa Marie's stunt a little cute and might even be a little excited. Thanks to Axl Rose I know what complete shit that performance will be. Appetite For Destruction was a dangerous album. It frightened people. Kicked them in the nuts. It was not an album your parents liked. It was not politically correct – whichever way you looked at it. It was rock 'n' roll. And it was dangerous.

It is the album in my collection that I listen to the most. I will defend it anywhere and against anyone. People who listen to Appetite For Destruction are, in my mind, better people than others. It is a timeless masterpiece. Even the sub standard tracks, like Anything Goes, are fucking awesome and way better than anything else.

And here's the deal: Elvis used to matter to people like this. Elvis used to be dangerous. Parents used to hate Elvis. They could not understand this crazy gyrating of the hips. He made women faint. That is rock 'n' roll.

And without Elvis there would be no Axl Rose or Appetite For Destruction. So in a way Elvis is a hero to me. I'm just hoping that Axl will quit before he starts sweating like the bloated king – but it's probably a little to late for that.

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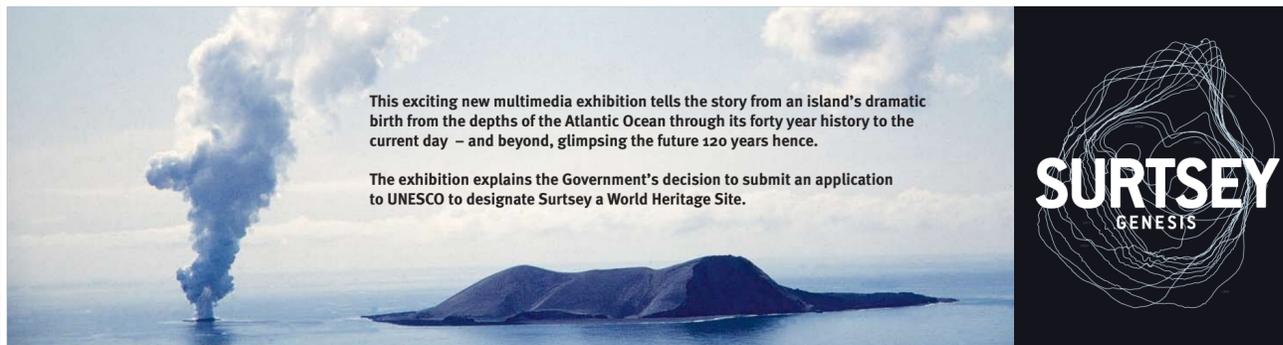
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Flightseeing

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir
Photo by Gulli



There are numerous ways to explore Iceland's natural wonders, but to view the wilderness from the air is probably the most comfortable and panoramic journey of them all. No sore feet or traffic-jammed highways will ruin the fun of admiring the rugged outdoors, not to mention the chance you'll get to capture unique photographs of the natural beauty some 4000 feet above the ground.

On a sunny afternoon, together with two other passengers, one pilot and a tour guide, the Grapevine photographer and I climbed on board a tiny single engine aircraft located at Reykjavik Airport. With our seatbelts fastened and our headsets in place, the guide explained that the one-and-a-half hour tour of the day would lead us around the southwest part of Iceland and offer a stunning view of the country's glaciers and volcanoes as well as various touristy spots. That proved to be no overstatement.

The aircraft had room for only seven passengers so claustrophobics (me included) might see it as the transportation of hell. As the plane climbed higher up in the sky and the view over Reykjavik became more picturesque, I tried to calm my nerves by searching for the roof of my home. Thankfully, the small space soon became the last thing on my mind.

In a matter of minutes we flew over Þingvellir national park, where Alþingi, the oldest parliament in the world, was established in 930. After we passed lake Laugavatn we circled above the geothermal hot-spring area in Haukadalur valley waiting for the geyser Strokkur to erupt. It finally did, somewhat unimpressively though. More admirable was the spectacular Gullfoss waterfall, and with Langjökull glacier on the left side and the majestic volcano Hekla ahead, it reminded me how powerful nature truly is. We passed Háifoss waterfall before flying over the yellow mountains of Landmannalaugar highland area and muddy Mýrdalsjökull glacier.

The beautiful Þórsmörk valley, nesting between two glaciers, was our final destination before turning back to Reykjavik. The pilot flew the plane safely over the south coast, giving us an incredible view of the grassy lowlands and the numerous farms on the way, which from my seat looked like tiny Monopoly houses.

Much too soon, the capital appeared in the distance and we landed smoothly at the airport again. With barely a cloud in the sky and a scenic bird's-eye view of the incredible contrasts in the country's landscape, featuring small craters, glacial rivers, volcanoes, hot springs, steep mountains, lava fields and grassy valleys, the flightseeing tour was worth every claustrophobic minute.

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Kjölur by Bike – Part One

Text and photos by Róbert H. Haraldsson

When the opportunity to cycle across Iceland came my way, I only had a day and a half to get ready. I guess I had been preparing for a trip like this for over a year but now I was suddenly confronted with the challenge. I had little time to waste, indeed, as I had things to do at my place of work, the University of Iceland, before I could take off and I didn't have a car to scurry between shops in Reykjavík.

My wife and I had been planning a trip to Akureyri but when she picked me up at work on Monday she said she'd take the kids in the car but I could cycle and meet them there, if I liked to and was feeling up to it. Was I?

I had always assumed that were I to get the chance to cycle from Reykjavík to Akureyri I'd simply take Highway One and overnight at farms along the road. Fast but romantic. I'd ride my prized possession, a Trek X01, cyclocross bike which I have come to love for roughly the same reason Icelanders say they love horses. I refer to the cooperation between rider and bike, although in the case of a bike the rider does the work, as is only appropriate.

"I think you should go Kjölur," my wife says before I could respond to her surprisingly generous offer. And she is right. Kjölur is a highland route which takes you between Iceland's second and third largest glaciers and past the colourful mudsprings at Hveravellir. The shortest route between the south and the north region of Iceland, but on account of its poor conditions, it is the road less travelled. But Kjölur means it is unwise and even impossible to ride the cyclocross bike and that, in turn, means I need to get my mountain bike, a Giant XTC, ready in a jiffy. It takes the rest of Monday for this fact to sink in.

Getting a Late Start

When I leave Reykjavík at 4:30 pm on Wednesday I have already cycled 35 kilometres in and around Reykjavík. First to a bike shop for a rack and mudguards. The guy at the shop says he can

have the bike ready on Tuesday, roughly three days after I'm supposed to arrive in Akureyri. We negotiate and I give up when I have it down to two days. Instead I borrow the necessary tools from the janitor at the University when I find a free hour between meetings and set up my own little bike shop next to the trash cans, the wheelie bin variety, behind the University's Main Building. Having five thumbs on each hand, I tend to forget how elevating and enjoyable it is to fix things yourself. After the last meeting, I peddle to an outdoor shop to buy a tent but leave the store with a sleeping bag, a mattress, a stove, a super light titanium pot along with an expensive solo tent. My philosophy is to buy few but good things. I hate it when I stray far from this philosophy which is often enough. The highland interior of Iceland looms large with its desert, glaciers and uncertain weather conditions, and I stick resolutely to my philosophy today.

Eight hundred meters from my home, northbound, I have a flat tire next to the shopping mall in my neighbourhood. After unloading the bike and replacing the tube, I reward myself with greasy junk food from Domino's across the parking lot. A friend walks by. I eat, we talk. How far I think I'll make it tonight? "Þingvellir," I tell him, "Possibly, Laugarvatn." He is impressed. I scoop up the creamy sauce with a chip. My friend is divorced but he has a lady friend and he thinks their relationship is doomed. He says he'll treat her to a dinner tonight and tell her it's all over, he will break off the relationship. As we talk I sense that he is afraid she might be about to leave him for another man and that he is only trying to soften the blow with this pre-emptive strike. I tell him of my suspicion. He nods and says: "You are probably right but I'll end it anyway." I ride my bike to Nesjavellir, the hydrothermal plant at lake Þingvellir, and have road 36 pretty much all to myself. I play with the thought that my friend will surprise his lady friend not by dumping her but by asking

her to marry him. After all, that is another way of getting the uncertainty out of it.

At Nesjavellir, a sign bluntly announces a 21 kilometre distance to the camping ground in the national park at Þingvellir. Receiving these tidings, my legs become slightly subdued. But the route is scenic and the scent of birch trees, which for me has always indicated the beginning of nature and end of town, is refreshing. The road here is surprisingly easy on the legs. Staying off highway one is paying off. At Þingvellir it rains all night. The tent holds up perfectly but its smallness borders on the ridiculous.

First Glimpse of the Highland

The next leg of my trip takes me to dear old Gullfoss where I'll get my first view of the highland. The sun is out to warm me and the gravel road through Lyngdalsheiði, a moor between Þingvellir and Laugarvatn, is in poor condition and I'm pleased to discover how the mountain bike soaks up shock-waves from the ungraded road. Arriving at Gullfoss, I'm too tired to continue but too obstinate to give up the idea of seeing some of that highland today.

I weigh my options. A cloud of dust is blowing from West to East, across road F35, called Kjalvegur. I decide to rest over a small bowl of Icelandic meat soup at Café Gullfoss. It is surprisingly authentic although the ingredients are diced too neatly into small equal cubes for my taste. I like my jaw to have something more rugged to work on. When I come out again I see that the cloud isn't really blowing anywhere, it just hangs there. I strike up a conversation with a man in the parking lot who looks like he knows Kjölur. He thinks I needn't worry too much about the dust. We talk about the huts I could stay at tonight. The one I'm interested in is at Hvitárvatn, a 30 km² glacier lake some 420 meters above sea level with "the most beautiful mountain-view in Iceland", as I read in one brochure. My problem tonight will

be Bláfellsháls, he says, a long mountain ridge with a considerable elevation (600 meters). I buy more chocolate. As the meat-soup begins to kick in, I decide to cycle into the night and aim for Hvitárvatn.

An hour later, some 9 kilometres from Gullfoss, I run out of energy. I pull out my sleeping bag, make few phone calls - my last in forty eight hours - and fall asleep. The nap gives me enough energy to open my food bag. No dried fruits, noodles, soups and such like stuff here. Apparently, I've packed nothing but traditional Icelandic food, mostly lifrarpýlsa (liver sausage), sviðasulta (a confit of singed sheep-head), along with some Icelandic and Danish cheeses, whole grain bread and chocolate. What true and tried cyclists would say about this stuff I can only guess but it tastes delicious to me, and amazingly refreshing. Plus, this is the grazing land of the sheep that will supply the ingredients for next year's sviðasulta and lifrarpýlsa.

A second time in one afternoon I resolve

When your spirits begin to sink up here and you are alone there is nothing to stop it. You just continue to sink... Should I ever be inclined to believe in a death instinct it will probably be in this kind of setting.



to cycle to Hvitárvatn. It begins to rain for real and the wind picks up. After an hour in the rain the worries about the dust cloud are as good as gone. My spirits are soaring. Two more hours in the rain, fighting a strong headwind, and my mood has changed. A car hasn't come this way in half an hour. When your spirits begin to sink up here and you are alone there is nothing to stop it. You just continue to sink. The rocks, the grey sand, the gravel and the grey sky massed with sombre clouds, are of little help. Should I ever be inclined to believe in a death instinct it will probably be in this kind of setting. Finally, a van with foreign plates passes by and as it has two mountain bikes on its bike stand I pause for a moment and turn my head. This proves to be enough to stop the car some 30 meters down the road.

The passenger door opens and I can see the face of a young woman holding a map in the soft yellow light. I turn my bike and discover I don't have to peddle to the car in the strong wind. "Could you tell me how far I'm from Hvitárvatn?", I ask. The woman looks at the map and points to a spot she has circled with a blue pen. "Yes," I say. "It's too far," she says, "you'll never make it that far tonight." "Never," her boyfriend chimes in. "And the

weather isn't any better over there. It's the same rain as here," he adds. I tell them it's good to know. In that case I shall probably pitch my tent somewhere around here. "Good luck," they say and drive on. But I have no intention of pitching a tent out here. These friendly and warm voices have somehow given me enough energy to cycle to Akureyri tonight. I peddle on and on, but eventually my spirits begin to sink again.

Hvitárvatn

At midnight I come to the cross road to Hvitárvatn and discover it is still 8 kilometres to the hut. My memory had said 5 kilometres - a difference of twenty minutes in this terrain. Shadows are forming in the landscape now and every other rock looks like a hut. I've calculated my average speed over the last four hours and know full well that I am only managing 8 kilometres an hour. Still, I fool myself and begin to look for the hut after only fifteen minutes. The sand seems littered with huts and I have to make an effort to see things for what they are. I have been following fresh footprints in the dirt road but I can't see them anymore.

When I've pretty much convinced myself

I've cycled past the hut - an awful prospect - I come to a sloping sign pointing straight to the ground. It looks like a scythe someone has carelessly stuck to the ground before deserting the place but it reads "Hvitárnes (hut)" and that's all that matters now. Hvitárnes is a sublime spot on earth but for some reason the 8 kilometres have always seemed too much of a detour when I have travelled Kjölur by car. The sweat, the aching muscles, wet feet, overworked lungs, stiff limbs and strained joints add to the immense pleasure of arriving unaided in this woodless area late at night.

I'm alone in the Touring Club hut at Hvitárnes - built in 1930 it is the oldest of its kind in Iceland - and vaguely remember stories about the place. There is supposed to be at least one ghost up here. But I'm too tired to entertain notions or look for supernatural meaning behind the serene sounds here. Besides, nothing can break the stillness of this mighty glacier world. Not even a ghost. Should I ever become a ghost myself I wouldn't mind spending some days here, especially in early July.

The still lake, the glacier that seems to slope right into the lake in one place, the black hills, the green pastures around the white hut, the geese and the ducks and birds I have never

heard from before - not to mention again the sand and the rocks and that clear blue river north east of here. Can you ask for a cooler resting place, dead or alive?

Róbert H. Haraldsson is a 47 year old University teacher who has recently taken up cycling. The second half of Haraldsson's story will be printed in the next issue of the Reykjavík Grapevine and available at www.grapevine.is.

Hvitárnes is a sublime spot on earth but for some reason the 8 kilometres have always seemed too much of a detour when I have travelled Kjölur by car.

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Icelandic Art in Iran

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photos by Sara Riel

Last June, a group of 16 artists from nine different nationalities flew to the Iranian capital Teheran to work on an extensive art project in the city. Working with the concept 'I'm longing for and I don't know what,' the participating artists, who had all lived and studied in Berlin, arrived empty-handed to the capital and for two weeks travelled around the city, visited peaceful mosques, workshops and galleries and got influenced by the changed environment and the locals. Despite some obstacles and difficulties with the authorities, the project was a success and their visit concluded with a large exhibition at the House of Iranian Artists where they presented installations, video art, sculptures and photographs. Among the participants was Icelandic artist Sara Riel, who grabbed the attention by creating a mini "glacial lake" in an outside pool while the air temperature reached more than 40 degrees in the city.

Respecting Social Values

The project was organised by Iranian artist Leila Pazooki, who currently lives in Berlin, and will later be presented in a form of a video. "This

project was part of Leila's Master's degree and she invited us to be part of it. She organised the trip and the exhibition and documented the whole process, how locals responded to our visit and our artworks and how we reacted to this new situation and the cultural differences," Sara explains. And the process was challenging, sometimes overwhelming, but for the most part an incredibly rich experience for them all she says.

"Before I left, my friends had warned me and told me to be careful. I guess some people think of Teheran as a dangerous place, but that is a misunderstanding. Many people are prejudiced against Iranians and their beliefs and even confuse Iran with Iraq, which is very ironic as these two countries are old enemies. My experience is that Teheran locals are incredibly friendly and hospitable people. They are polite and easy going and most of all very curious about foreigners. They ask questions and are eager to exchange stories with travellers. I never experienced any fear or insecurity when I strolled around the city. I just minded my own business," she explains and continues: "What I found most difficult was the un-



bearable heat outside. Every day the temperature reached about 40 to 45 degrees and air pollution is a huge problem in the city as well, which only made matters worse. About 29 people die each day because of the air pollution. At the same time, I had to respect the dress code and wear a long-sleeved dress, pants and cover my hair with a scarf when I was in public places. It took me some time to get used to that." The clothing rules have become even stricter than they used to and Sara tells me that repression has increased when it comes to expressions of individuality.

"There are countless laws that control the people and everything is split between the genders, publicly. When we for example wanted to go for a swim to cool down, we had to go in separate groups. The girls before noon and the guys after noon. It also took me some time to remember that I wasn't allowed to shake hands with men in public," she says.

There are also laws against alcohol in Iran, but locals find their ways to get their goods. Although alcohol is illegal, bottles can be bought from special dealers on the black market and can be enjoyed in the privacy of one's home.

"Leila is involved in the art scene in Teheran so we got to know Iranian artists who invited us to parties. They are very open people and when they have a reason to celebrate, they do it properly. They drink, dance and sing and feel free to wear the clothes they like. The girls dress in mini-skirts and don't need to cover their hair. As individuals, partying behind closed doors, men and women in Teheran are equals," she adds.

Glacial Lake in the City Centre

There is a big difference between private and public spaces and all sincere interactions happen inside people's homes but not out on the streets, Sara says, and strict rules apply to the way people are allowed to behave in public. It is, for example, illegal to photograph public buildings and some of the artists got into trouble by breaking the rules. One girl lost her video camera and another one got busted for photographing a TV tower.

"The police watched carefully what we were working on just to see if everything was morally acceptable. They also wanted to show their power" Sara explains adding:



"The gallery is run by the government so we had to explain every aspect of our projects and give a full report on what we planned to do, which is nothing but censorship. Many ideas never became a reality and one guy actually had to change his project, which was quite funny though. He had built a giant satellite out of metal, recorded sounds on the streets of Teheran and wanted to make a sound installation. As satellites are forbidden in Iran he got a firm no. But he found a way to bend the rules. He decided to make a large spoon out of the same metal and put it a few metres away from the satellite so it would look like a bowl of soup. He then named the piece 'Guten appetit, das ist kein Satellit.'"

Asked if many of the artists attempted to provoke the authorities with their projects, Sara says the majority of them tried not to stir things up.

"I had no urge to challenge their politics or social values and I think most of the artists shared the same view."

One part of the project was to start from scratch so the artists had no ideas or materials to work with when they arrived in Teheran and had to walk around the city and search for inspiration. One of those walks led Sara into a small store which sold jelly wax, (the same kind of wax sometimes used to make candles). She bought a large bucket and started to experiment.

"Jelly wax is a peculiar material. It looks exactly like frozen water and you can shape it in various forms. In the heat, it melts fast but when put in water it stays exactly the same, just like real ice chunks. From the beginning, I wanted to do something outdoors and outside the gallery was a small pool. After I bought the jelly wax I got the idea to put the chunks of wax in the pool and make them resemble ice cubes floating in a

lake and create an illusion. When you look at the pool from some distance you think that the water is cold and the wax is actually ice floating on the surface, but when viewed more carefully you realise differently" she explains. The 40 degrees temperature and the physically unpleasant feeling of the unbearable heat mixed with the thought of floating ice cubes in cold water made the contrast even stronger.

"The idea worked and fitted well with the concept, 'I'm longing for and I don't know what'. People at the opening understood my idea and the Teheran kids played around with the chunks in the pool, just like I wanted. After the opening night, we were off again, and had to leave all the artworks in the gallery and say our goodbyes. That is a good feeling though, to know you have left something behind."

You can view some of Sara Riel's artworks on: www.sarariel.com.

"I had no urge to challenge their politics or social values and I think most of the artists shared the same view."



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Photos by Thorsten Henn

*distance from Reykjavik in kilometres.

two ca. 170 km



Stykkishólmur
The small village of Stykkishólmur is considered one of the more magical municipalities in the country. Surrounded by historical sites and natural beauty, the town is located on the north shore of the Snæfellsnes peninsula. The small and colourful houses are built around the harbour where fishing boats are docked alongside cruise ships and ferries. The town is the gateway to the Breiðarfjörður islands and several companies organise daily sight-seeing trips among the thousands of small islands where one can spot wild birds flying around the boat while tasting freshly caught scallops.

three ca. 200 km



Hveravellir
In the centre of the Icelandic highlands, at the northern part of the road Kjölur, you will find the area Hveravellir, a large high-temperature geothermal spot located between two large glaciers Langjökull and Hofsjökull. Rich in colour, unspoiled nature, steep mountains and a variety of steam and water hot springs with the glaciers towering in the background, the area offers many diverse and scenic hiking trails and provides good accommodations for travellers. After exploring the area, bathing in the natural hot pool positioned right next to one of the sleeping huts guarantees an amazing relaxation.

four ca. 120 km



Gullfoss
When the gushing white Hvítá river runs into a canyon in the southwest, it creates Gullfoss (or Golden Falls), one of the most popular tourist attractions in Iceland. The waterfall has a series of three steps, with each drop greater than the next. Where the trail meets the falls, the volumes of the wide Hvítá can be witnessed plunging about 32 meters into a relatively obscure canyon. Fortunately, plans to utilise the fall for energy were dropped a long time ago. A trip to the spectacular Gullfoss is generally included with any "Golden Circle" package.

five ca. 450 km



Ísafjörður
A trip to the capital of the Westfjords, Ísafjörður, is a worthwhile journey as the town and its surroundings offer plenty of activities for travellers. The town is renowned for being a mix of a thriving fishing and music community and is for example home to the annual music festival Aldrei fór ég suður, growing in size and popularity every year. The nearby mountains and valleys boast many scenic hiking trips, after which you can relax at a downtown café with a drink in hand and chat with friendly locals.

six ca. 150 km



Langjökull
Located in the western highlands, Langjökull is the second largest glacier in Iceland at 1,021 square kilometres. The glacier is a hotbed of geophysical and hydro-physical activity: not only does Langjökull act as the supply source for Þingvallavatn, which is the largest lake in Iceland, but the northern section of the glacier is one of the most volcanically active areas in the world. The Langjökull volcano and its southern basin (Haukadalur basin) boast a strong lavaflow, which is probably responsible for the number of prominent geysers in the area.

seven ca. 450 km



Lónsöræfi
Set right on the eastern border with the huge and unquestionably magical Vatnajökull glacier (the largest glacier in Europe), the obscure Lónsöræfi is a vast volcanic preservation area of colourful hills, broad rivers, gushing waterfalls, and lush vegetation that is unique for Iceland. The area is surrounded by sharp and snowy peaks on all sides, and is often trekked by herds of reindeer. For visitors who dare the unpopular and rugged terrain, Lónsöræfi offers several cottages for accommodation. Also nearby is Skaftafell, a cool abandoned farm-campsite right on the edge of Lónsöræfi.

eight ca. 330 km



Skaftafell
Skaftafell is Iceland's second largest National Park, covering about 4,800 square kilometres of a highly diverse area in the south of Iceland. Comprising some of Iceland's most renowned natural pearls, including two-thirds of the Vatnajökull glacier, the Lakagigar craters, the sandy wasteland Skeiðarársandur and the impressive Svartifoss waterfall, the park is truly an outstanding treasure. Travellers can easily spend days exploring the area and all the panoramic views of the unique rugged landscape and majestic glaciers it has to offer. A nice campsite with good facilities is located in close proximity to the Skaftafellsjökull glacier.

nine ca. 480 km



Húsavík
The fishing town Húsavík, which sits at the shore of Skjálfandi bay, has been experiencing a great increase in tourism in recent years. The biggest draw for travellers is the fact that the Skjálfandi bay is known for being an excellent whale-watching spot and many companies offer daily whale-watching excursions from the harbour. Visitors should also check out the Whale Museum, located by the harbour. The museum was founded in 1997 and provides information on cetaceans and Iceland's whaling history. The Húsavík church, which is one of the oldest wooden churches in Iceland, is also worth a look.

one *ca. 50 km



Þingvellir
If this is not your first-time in Iceland you've probably made a trip to the Þingvellir National Park already. If not, you should definitely take a day tour to this oldest national park in the country, founded in 1928. A place of great significance to Icelanders due to its role in the country's history, the park is a protected national heritage and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In 930, Alþingi, the oldest parliament in the world, was established at Þingvellir. Other historically important events took place here as well, for example the adoption of Christianity in 1000 and the celebration of Iceland's independence in 1944. Understandably, there are numerous historical sites and buildings to explore and marked paths will lead the way. You will be able to explore old ruins, an ancient drowning pool (Drekkingarhylur) where women who had children out of wedlock were drowned for their crime, and the Þingvellir church. The park, with the country's largest lake, Þingvallavatn, as its centrepiece, is renowned for its natural attractions such as Almannagjá fissure and Öxarárfoss waterfall.

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National Museum of Iceland

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir
Photo by Gulli

Established in 1863, the National Museum of Iceland has been located in a spacious building on Suðurgata since the 1950s. The museum's collection counts more than two million photographs and 60 thousand objects from different periods of Icelandic history, used to document the development through the centuries and preserve the country's heritage.

The museum was closed for renovation in 1998 and reopened in 2004, completely restructured. Today, it offers a permanent exhibition as well as temporary educational exhibitions. The permanent exhibition, "Making of a Nation – Heritage and History in Iceland" is focused on Iceland's history. Divided into different periods, the exhibition's theme is a journey through time and gives a good insight into the country's culture by displaying a large collection of unique artefacts from the 9th century and onwards. To make the exhibition more appealing and informative, various forms of multimedia are used to explain important matters and enrich the overall experience. By emphasising how the past meets the present, the exhibition puts the Icelandic society in a historical context and examines how the nation has developed and how the local lifestyle has changed immensely since the early settlers sailed to the country in the 800s.

In addition to the permanent exhibition, the museum also plays host to numerous temporary photography and detailed research exhibitions featuring items from its large collection. After an instructive walk through history, you can relax with a cup of coffee at café Kaffitár on the ground floor or visit the museum shop, which stocks souvenirs, books, toy replicas and unique designs by art students, inspired by the items on display at the museum.

Sudurgata 41, 101 Reykjavik
Open daily from 10:00–17:00
Admission on Wednesdays is free



I've always been crazy about the sea and the downtown harbour and if I need to take a stroll, I usually just cruise around the dock. I guess it's because my grandpa owned a freezing plant and my dad used to take me down to the harbour when I was a kid.

Fashion designer and Naked Ape storeowner Sara Maria Eypórsdóttir recently opened the brand-new store/workshop Forynja at Tryggvagata 16.

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Marvin Lee Dupree likes to drink on his own terms.

Page 12

Amazingly, even domestic calls within Iceland, of 3 minutes or less, are cheaper through Skype

Ian Watson examines pricing for international calls.

Page 16

The Barcelona striker escaped unharmed from what otherwise could only be described as a scuffle.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson examines violence in Reykjavik City.

Page 20

The whole production was rather mushy, which is not surprising considering that it was, well, raw, and the bread had a wet-paper quality.

Vala Þóroddsdóttir learns about raw food.

Page B10

The crowd was ready to party and in the right frame of mind for some more quality live stuff. Sadly, the US melodic pop group The Besties didn't deliver the task

Steinunn Jakobsdóttir attended a show at Organ.

Page 26

...for all conditions



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