

**Special Issue**  
The City Awards

 *The*  
**REYKJAVÍK**  
**GRAPEVINE**

**Spring Edition**  
[grapevine.is/bestof](http://grapevine.is/bestof)



# Best Of Reykjavík 2019

## **Dining**

The 60 Best Eateries  
Meet Your New Systir

## **Drinking**

The 30 Best Bars  
Essential Cocktails

## **Shopping**

Our 30 Shop Awards  
Must-Read New Books

## **Activities**

The 30 Funnest Outings  
Six Luxury Getaways

# Your Winter Adventures

**Scheduled Flights** / Six destinations

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These tours takes you from Reykjavík to the volcano island of Heimaey in the Westman Islands archipelago.



### Ice Caves and the Diamond Beach

Explore the thrilling ice caves of Vatnajökull and Jökulsárlón's glittering diamond beach.



**EAGLE AIR**  
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# Best of Reykjavík:



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## AN INTRODUCTION

# Asking The Real Big Questions

As the dense firework fog of the 2019 New Year blowout cleared, we at The Reykjavik Grapevine turned our minds to some of the big questions of the year ahead. No, not “Will Trump be impeached?”—we’re talking about the REAL big questions, like “Where in Reykjavik serves the best burger?” and “Which bar has the best cocktail in town?”

And so, we summoned a fine new vintage of expert panellists from the far reaches of the city. They travelled through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered to convene in the heart of 101 and share their sacred knowledge of vegan food, craft beers, obscure galleries and hidden emporia.

The result is the magazine you’re holding. Our Best of Reykjavik 2019 is an in-depth guide to best eateries, drinking holes, weird shops and won-

derful activities that this little subarctic city has to offer. We hope you’ll find it interesting and useful. We’d love to hear what you think—feel free to let us know if you tried out our choices via Twitter (@rvkgrapevine) or grapevine@grapevine.is.

While you’re meandering around town, be sure to pick up a copy of our flagship publication, **The Reykjavik Grapevine**—it’s packed with news, culture and the town’s top events. If you see a copy of the **Best of Iceland** sister magazine lying around, that’ll help you plan a trip into the countryside. And if you skipped the duty free, our **Appy Hour** app is available for Android and iPhone to help you drink on the cheap.

Stay frosty.  
*John Rogers, Editor*

 <p><b>BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019</b> Spring 2019 Edition by <b>The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE</b> Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík www.grapevine.is grapevine@grapevine.is Published by Fróken ehf. Printed by Isafold in 25,000 copies. Member of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association www.saf.is</p>	<p><b>PUBLISHER</b> Hilmar Steinn Crétarsson hilmar@grapevine.is +354 540 3601 publisher@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>BEST OF EDITOR</b> John Rogers john@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>GRAPEVINE EDITOR IN CHIEF</b> Valur Grettisson valur@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>ART DIRECTOR</b> Sveinbjörn Pálsson sveinbjorn@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>PHOTO EDITOR</b> Art Bicnick art@grapevine.is</p>	<p><b>BEST OF DINING COMPILED BY</b> Shruthi Basappa</p> <p><b>BEST OF DRINKING &amp; NIGHTLIFE COMPILED BY</b> John Rogers</p> <p><b>BEST OF SHOPPING COMPILED BY</b> Hannah Jane Cohen</p> <p><b>BEST OF ACTIVITIES COMPILED BY</b> Phil Uwe Widiger</p> <p><b>PROOFREADING</b> Catharine Fulton</p> <p><b>COVER ART</b> Siggi Odds - siggi@odds.com Gabriel B. Bachmann - gabrielbachmann.com</p>	<p><b>FACT CHECKING</b> Valur Grettisson Helgi Harðarson Catharine Fulton</p> <p><b>EDITORIAL</b> +354 540 3600 editor@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>ADVERTISING</b> +354 540 3604 +354 540 3610 ads@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>CONTRIBUTING WRITERS</b> Rex Beckett Hannah Jane Cohen Anisha Chandar</p> <p><b>CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS</b> Art Bicnick Timothée Lambrecq</p>	<p><b>SALES DIRECTORS</b> Aðalsteinn Jörundsson adalsteinn@grapevine.is</p> <p>Helgi Þór Harðarson helgi@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>DISTRIBUTION</b> distribution@grapevine.is</p> <p><b>PANELS</b></p> <p><b>DINING</b> Ragnar Egilsson Ragnheidur Axel Elizabeth Lay Dröfn Ösp Snorraddóttir-Rozas</p> <p><b>DRINKING &amp; NIGHTLIFE</b> Alexander Jean De Fontenay Jessica Bowe Colm O’Herlihy</p>	<p>Pórhildur Tinna Sigurðardóttir Björk Hrafnadóttir</p> <p><b>SHOPPING</b> Álfrún Pálsdóttir Kristbjörg Lára Gunnarsdóttir Freyja Eilíf Magnús Hreggviðsson</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES</b> Ólafur Sverrir Traustason María-Carmela Raso James Cox Jasa Baka</p>	<p>Best of Reykjavik by The Reykjavik Grapevine is published by Fróken Ltd. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publishers. The Best of Reykjavik is distributed around Reykjavik.</p> <p>No articles in the Reykjavik Grapevine are paid-for articles. The opinions expressed are the writers’ own, not the advertisers’.</p>
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# ARTSON

## BEST NEWCOMER BAR 2018

— *The Reykjavik Grapevine*

## HAPPY HOUR

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from 17:00 to 19:00*

# NOSTRA

## BEST NEWCOMER RESTAURANT 2018

— *The Reykjavik Grapevine*

### THE AWARDS:

# How We Picked the Winners



The word “conclusion” is a little strong in this case. We have argued, fought and interviewed panels, tried blind taste-tests, and, in one case, consulted what we believe to be an oracle. This was not an easy or scientific endeavour.

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

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

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

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

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

### THE GUIDE-GUIDE

# How To Spot The Winners

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

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



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# Farmers Market

ICELAND



OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS



Laugavegur 37



Hólmastlóð 2 / Grandi

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

# Dining

Delicious even if you can't pronounce it

Watching Iceland come into its own as a dining destination over the past five years has been a joy. The Icelandic restaurant scene is diversifying, and the definition of what may be deemed “Icelandic cuisine” is broadening and taking on new shapes. Thanks to this new-found culinary confidence—and the added footfall of tourism—this tiny scene is experiencing an unprecedented moment of opportunity. Whether it’s carefully-pleated Sichuanese vegan dumplings or exploratory tasting menus at Nordic fine dining houses, the bandwagon has room for demanding diners. Our hand-picked panel of picky gourmands have sought out the very best of Reykjavík dining to help you navigate the gastronomic waters of the capital area. From budget bites to fanciful fare, we’ve got you covered.

## Best burger



# Le Kock & Búllan

Joint Winners

### Le Kock, Tryggvagata 14

Despite their fast-expansion and subsequent opening of the one main outpost at their current location, Le Kock’s burgers have, thankfully, remained consistent. The house-made potato rolls hold their own until the very last bite. No soggy bottoms here. You may want to ask them to be light handed with the sauce, though. Insider tip: their veggie burger (vegan optional) gives meat patties a serious run for their money.

### Hamborgarabúllan, Geirsgata 1 & Bankastræti 3

Búllan’s meteoric rise to fame with multiple locations across Europe isn’t really surprising when you bite into one of their luxuriously decadent ‘Steak Burgers’—a glorious, juicy mix of tenderloin, rump and rib-eye, with the perfect meat-to-fat ratio. Búllan is a solid burger that seals Iceland’s reputation as a worthy burger destination.

### Runner Up

#### Bastard Brew and Food Vegamótastigur

Bastard Brew & Food occupies the space formerly known as Vegamót, serving entendre-laden beers and snacks, from the “Hazy Bastard” ale to the juicy “Fat Bastard” burger served with a mound of brisket on top. The relish is a winner, and the pickles pucker. If your heart desires something classic, the Double Bastard is a smokey treat.



### Previous Winners

- 2018: Le Kock
- 2017: Sæta Svinið
- 2015-6: Búllan

## Best Vegan Burger



### Veganæs

Tryggvagata 22

Veganæs has answered the prayers of those yearning for diner fare that also happens to be cruelty free. Despite towing the seitan line, the Spicy Seitanic Burger is crunchy, spicy, greasy and oh so satisfying. Vegan cheese meltiness issues aside, this is a toothsome burger and the accompanying fries are fancy with their herby frills. The cocktail sauce is also on the money, so mayo-deprived vegans can shed tears of joy. Who knew a vegan dive-bar could be this much fun?

### Runners Up



#### Roadhouse Reykjavík Snorrabraut 56

When the panel praises a vegan burger as a “divine guilty pleasure,” you better believe it. Roadhouse’s celery root burger is a beacon of vegan-friendly hope in a mock-meat world. Relying on the inherent blandness of celery root, the grill lends it an unexpected smoky complexity. Simply delicious.



#### Hagavagninn Hofsvallagata 52

**NEWCOMER** With one of Iceland’s most popular rappers behind the team, Hagavagninn opened shop in place of the old west side hotdog stand. Their vegan burger has a fan following thanks to the fat, juicy patty. The pickled red onions add pizzazz. As our vegan panellist confirmed: “it tastes even better after a dip in Vesturbærjarlaug.”

### Previous Winners

- 2018: Prikið
- 2017: Bike Cave
- 2016: Búllan

## Best Pizza



### Flatey

Grandagarður 11

A year after opening, Grandi’s Flatey easily stole the winner slot here. Along with their beloved leopard spotted Napoli-style pizzas, what has caught much fancy is the aptly named ‘Monday Margherita’ special, coming in at 1490 ISK; we are suckers for alliteration and good pies. Some things have changed lately—the house-made sourdough base seems to have been replaced by “generic pizza bottom” as our astute panel observed. Still, Flatey is uber popular with families big and small—the pizzas come quick, there’s a pizza to please everyone, and “customisations for picky palates” are done with a smile.

### Runners Up



#### Eldofninn Efstaland 26

This out-of-the-way family-run pizzeria has a wood-fired oven, creating generously topped pies with a good crust. The panel pick is the egg pizza—jammy yolks on pizza is an underrated thing of beauty. While they seem to service half of Reykjavík with their deliveries, it’s also a cosy spot for a family dinner.



#### Hornið Hafnarstræti 15

With thin crust pizzas and a no-frills cosy flair in the decor, this is a local treasure. We swear by their Quattro Stagioni, but recently more Icelandic faves have joined the toppings list—smoked lamb or hangikjot, cream cheese, and—wait for it—bananas. Banana pizza meet pylsu sushi. Your culinary tour of Iceland is now complete. You’re welcome.

### Previous Winners

- 2018: Flatey
- 2017: Hornið
- 2014-6: Hverfisgata 12

## Best Soup



### Ramen Momo

Tryggvagata 16

Likely the Northernmost Ramen joint, this family-run business is small in size, but delivers big on flavour. Reykjavik's first Ramen bar has springy house-made organic noodles, and they've recently levelled up the broth. We're suckers for their creamy Tantanmen—a deeply flavoured soup with Tonkotsu adding heft to the mellow sesame paste and hoisin-cooked pork. Add a drizzle of spicy chilli oil and you've got yourself the best bowl in town. There are six soups on the menu, including vegetarian options, and don't miss out on their zingy dumplings or 'Korean' house-made tea with fermented lemons and ginger.

## Runners Up



### Hi Noodle Frakkastigur 9

**NEWCOMER** Reykjavik's newest ramen bar became an instant favourite for many. With a slow-cooked, temperature controlled broth, the chef—Chen—is aiming to consistently deliver his carefully designed recipes. The portions are a little modest: best order some dumplings on the side of your Dan Dan if you've a big appetite. Vegan option available.



### Noodle Station Laugavegur 103

Before the ramen revolution of the two soup joints above, there was Noodle Station, serving vegetable, beef and chicken noodle soups with a pungent chilli-garlic aroma that floods the street outside. It's a thoroughly Western take on noodle soup... but damn, it's satisfying on a cold day or, especially, if you have a cold.

## Previous Winners

2018: Ramen Momo

## Best Sushi



### Fish Market

Aðalstræti 12

One of a handful of places serving fresh Icelandic wasabi—the others being ÓX and Grillmarket—Fish Market was also one of the first Icelandic restaurants to serve sushi. While the maki rolls are popular, we recommend the roe gunkan rolls—seaweed collared beauties generously topped with lightly cured fish eggs. The sashimi platter is an assortment of fresh seafood with a mound of crunchy wakame. Get a seat at the sushi bar, pair your food with the wasabi cocktail, and let Keto be damned.

## Runners Up



### Fiskfélagið Vesturgata 2a

Fish Company's lunchtime-only sushi is perfect for crummy days when only an elegant meal will cure workday blues. FC cleverly packages our pet peeve—pylsu sushi (read below)—as a Lobster Maki Roll, with deep-fried langoustine insides, cuddling dates and peppers for a true Icelandic style sushi.



### Sushi Social Pingholsstræti 5

Sushi Social is a no-holds barred ode to the evolution of sushi on this island—aka 'pylsu sushi.' Embrace the joys of island sushi, and assuage any guilt via the cocktail menu. Check out the surf and turf rolls, and keep an eye out for their Tuna festival.

## Previous Winners

2016-8: Fish Market  
2015: SuZushii  
2014: Sushisamba

## Best Bakery



### Sandholt

Laugavegur 36

No other country comes close to Iceland's preferred ratio of bread surface to butter thickness. And marrying the two loves in loaves is local institution Sandholt. With their new expansion, the lines are bearable, drawing 101 rats back to this beloved bakery. Their signature sourdough continues to be the envy of open-crumb bakers while their mastery of buttery viennoiserie is unparalleled. Try their Danish topped with rhubarb, or the Escargot—a rolled pastry studded with raisins. Gourmet sandwiches to go will make any journey that much better and their house-made sodas are a treat.

## Runners Up



### Brauð & Co. Frakkastigur 16

This Danish style reluctant bakers bakery has been the talk of the town ever since they first opened their doors. An express speed expansion hasn't been kind to their consistency, but thankfully, the dense rugbrauð—Danish-style bread—is stellar as always. Keep your eyes peeled for their 'bolla.'



### Deig Workshop Tryggvagata 14

**NEWCOMER** Barring kleina and the odd US chain, we've been a doughnut starved nation. But thanks to Deig, fresh fried doughnuts are a reality. Should we gush about the custard filled creme brulee doughnut or cry for the now discontinued surmjölk and Cheerios doughnut? (Bring it back!) They make pretty good bagels too. Psst... they open at 7am.

## Previous Winners

2018: Joint: Sandholt / Brauð & Co  
2013-7: Sandholt

## Best Coffeehouse



### Bismút

Hverfisgata 82

From new kid on the block to heading the pack, a caveat is needed for Bismút. This is not the place to curl up in a cosy nook with a book, or—more likely—your laptop. If you find Bismút cosy, then odds are you can name more than ten Herzog movies. This one is strictly for people-watching, coffee-guzzling, art-viewing, and conversations on tall stools. But what glorious coffee they brew. "It's a proper third-wave coffee house set in a small art gallery," said the panel. So go get your caffeine fix, and check out some local art in the process.

## Runners Up



### Reykjavik Roasters Brutarholt 2, Kárástigur 1, Ásmundursalur

With their boffin-like obsession with the perfect roast, one of our panellists said: "this is your typical curated roast." Roasters offer the millennial experience without the Berlin sangfroid—it's the quintessential Scandi coffee house experience. Visit Kárástigur for take-outs and Brutarholt to work away from your desk.



### Kaffihús Vesturbæjar Melhagi 20-22

"It's the perfect coffee house for different age groups and vibes," said our panel of this all-purpose neighbourhood coffeehouse and café. If you've had your first kid and you know your Muuto from your Ferm Living, this is the spot to grab a slice of carrot cake after a splash in the Vesturbæjarlaug pool.

## Previous Winners

2018: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar  
2017: Reykjavik Roasters  
2016: Stofan  
2015: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Dining

Iceland's not cheap so it better be good

## Best Indian



### Austur-Indíafjélagið

Hverfisgata 56

A tried and tested local favourite, Austur-Indíafjélagið has single-handedly steered an entire generation to embrace spices and curries. Their small curated menu reflects regional Indian cuisine and their no-nonsense attitude toward “uncompromising authenticity” brings a freshness most on display with dishes like the Adraki Chaamp—bone-in lamb grilled to smoky perfection, transporting one to the streets of India. Instead of ordering an entire curry, do like the Indians do and dine-in family style. The tandoori kulchas are perfect to mop up both curries and kebabs. Finish the meal off with some steamed rice and garlic-laced dal that alone warrants repeat visits.

Runners Up



#### Shalimar Austurstræti 4

Shalimar's daily rotation of weedy thalis still have our hearts skipping a beat. A grilled-to-perfection tandoori chicken, alongside an assortment of vegetables and meat, naan and rice is a meal fit for a queen, and all her minions. Our panellist shares that “what most don't know, is that their kheer—a slow cooked rice pudding like dessert—is an undiscovered gem.”



#### Hraðlestin Lækjargata 8

This small local chain has a few branches, but the mothership is the Lækjargata location, where you can sit in a calm environment and blast your face off with a rich, decadent, tasty vindaloo or a spot-on madras. Follow them on Instagram for Tuesday specials.

Previous Winners

- 2016-8: Austur-Indíafjélagið
- 2014-5: Gandhi
- 2013: Austurlandahraðlestin

## Best Chinese



### Fönix

Bildshöfði 12

Don't be fooled by the industrial location—Fönix is a no-nonsense family joint that caters to blue collar workers, as well as homesick Chinese expats. The owners are a couple from the Sichuan province, and rightfully play to their strengths—the Mapo Tofu, available as a vegan dish or with pork, is a study in extracting big flavours from few ingredients. Ignore the deep-fried shrimp and discover the joys of the steamed dumpling—each one is a treasure chest of flavour and texture. Vegans aren't ignored here and the place is fantastic for groups big and small.

Runners Up



#### Tian Grensásvegur 21

While we hear whispers of a secret menu at Tian—the Chinese diners being treated to the real thing, while non-Chinese diners get chop suey—Tian's toned-down renditions of Western favourites fare well above the average. The Kung Pao chicken is deservedly popular—but try and get something from that enticing hidden menu.



#### Jia Yao Ármúli 5

Jia Yao rounds off our Chinese restaurant trio. Ármúli has been a tough neighbourhood to crack, but this Pan-Asian lunch buffet is hearty and well-priced, and there's an à la carte menu. The raw ambience can be a turn-off, but don't let that stop you from trying some authentic Chinese fare.

Previous Winners

- 2018: Fönix

## Best Thai



### Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Pad Thai may have been what imprinted Thai cuisine in the minds of most in the Western world, but Ban Thai continues to surprise, delight and coax even the most reluctant palate to embrace the breadth of Thai cuisine. Northern fiery curries or creamier Southern offerings, with a smattering of street-fare, Ban Thai is the quintessential Thai restaurant in town. A die-hard loyalist recommends getting the “green Thai curry with roti, which is a meal in itself, even though it is listed under appetisers.”

Runners Up



#### Krua Thai Skólavörðustígur 21

The little Thai restaurant recently moved to Skólavörðustígur and they've never been better. Their deeply flavoured curries are “redolent with fresh galangal, chillies and spices to warm cold days,” said the panel. If you're in a rush, stop for a nourishing bowl of soup at the bar.



#### Mai Thai Laugavegur 118

With quick service and a part-store-part-restaurant vibe, Mai Thai is popular for both lunch or takeaway. The menu changes every day, but ask for the fiery Laab—stir-fried minced chicken salad chock full of sliced shallots, mint, coriander and obsession-worthy toasted rice powder. Spicy, crunchy and fresh.

Previous Winners

- 2014-8: Ban Thai
- 2013: Yummi Yummi

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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Dining

From fancy meals to free refill Plokkfiskur

**Best Goddamn Restaurant**



## Snaps

Pórsgrata 1

Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boatload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own, we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that beg to be a meal on their own, and a textbook crème brûlée topped with an envious snap. As one panellist concluded, “they are also that rare joint with a 3,000 ISK bottle of wine.” It isn’t only the food that makes Snaps such a beloved institution; it’s that hard to pin down the je ne sais quoi that simply works.

Runners Up



**Nostra  
Laugavegur 59**

Even though this slot is usually reserved for restaurants of the more affordable nature, the sheer delight of dining at Nostra made it a unanimous shoo-in. If the eight-course meal sounds daunting, the four-course variation is just as impressive and, may we add, far more value for money than the uninspired set menu offerings around town.



**Mat Bar  
Hverfisgata 26**

Mat Bar’s rapid menu changes make it hard to pin down a favourite dish to return for, but hey, change is fun, too. Consistently experimental, the kitchen’s focus on the open fire grill has translated to successful winners like the scallops, grilled carrots and cabbage and recently, the dumpling variations.

Previous Winners

- 2018: Mat Bar
- 2017: Snaps / Matur og Drykkur
- 2014-6: Snaps

**Best Place For A Fancy Meal**



## Nostra

Laugavegur 59

Nestled above Bónus on Laugavegur, one might be forgiven for underestimating one of Iceland’s most ambitious fine dining restaurants. From the cool interior to the dedicated vegetarian, vegan, pescatarian and omnivorous tasting menus, Nostra’s ambitious work makes them a top pick. Not shy of bucking trends with their vinegar-edged gastriques, each dish is a study in flavour, precision and mind-fuckery.

Runners Up



**Grillið  
Hotel Saga, Hagatorg**

Grillið’s service and level of craft is the best in town. Think caviar served on a film of seabuckthorn, or a salt-baked, glazed beetroot with the consistency of Turkish delight. Not content with sweet and unctuous desserts, they layer in salt and bitterness with effortless staging; the meringue with Sichuan pepper is brûléed at the table, sending mauve streaks of bilberry running through the ice cream. This is what raising the bar looks like.



**Grillmarket  
Lækjargata 2a**

The locally-sourced menu of Grillmarket have been a hit with diners since this place opened its doors. A favourite ‘fancy place’ for locals, the restaurant also upped its game by offering fresh, locally grown Icelandic wasabi. Our panel suggested pairing the wasabi with a steak, and something decadent from the exhaustive wine list.

Previous Winners

2014-8: Dill

**Best Tasting Menu**



## Grillið

Hotel Saga, Hagatorg

Winner winner, five digit chicken dinner. We are delighted to pay our long-overdue respects to the grand mama of Reykjavík fine dining. “Their tasting menu takes you on this whole journey that makes you lose all track of time,” said one of our dreamy-eyed panellists. When it comes to swank, there is nothing like a 300° view of the cityscape whilst having your senses assailed by a menu that celebrates seasonality, complexity and depth without ever giving in to fussiness. This is old school glamour meets a truly innovative kitchen that blazes a path for ambitious dining.

Runners Up



**Nostra  
Laugavegur 59**

Nostra arrived on the Icelandic dining scene like a movie star strolling up the red carpet. In a beautifully renovated, lush and luxurious interior, they serve tasting menus the way they should be done: with flair, theatre and sensitivity. Every plate looks lavish, and tastes even better. Treat yourself.



**Dill  
Hverfisgata 12**

Michelin-starred Dill is one the Iceland’s tasting menu pioneers. Built on the New Nordic philosophy, the menu traverses the island’s culinary traditions. Each meal is a tight narration of seasons, flavours, ingredients and traditions. Wine pairings recommended. Book well in advance, and go all-in on the seven course menu.

Previous Winners

2017-8: Dill

FLATEY

# PIZZA NAPOLETANA



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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Dining

If they're over 7mm wide they're chips, not fries

## Best Cheap Meal



# Icelandic Street Food

Lækjargata 8 & Laugavegur 85

You can't beat the prices at this tiny spot with a big heart. All the soups are available in a bread bowl with—wait for it—unlimited refills! You can choose from a lamb soup, a buttery traditional plokksúpa and a veggie soup, and your refill can even be a taste of another dish. Iceland prides itself on the quality of its lamb and fish, so kjötsúpa and fiskisúpa are safe bets. If you'd like to try affordable local food, and you're very, very hungry, this is the spot.

### Runners Up



#### Fish and Co. Aðalstræti 16

This stark black wagon parked in Fógetagarðurinn sells succulent cod for a hard-to-beat 1,000 ISK. The fish is pan-cooked in butter with wilted spinach and a few blistered tomatoes for acidity. "Just don't forget your gloves on a cold day," warns one panellist.



#### Lamb Street Food Grandagarður 7

Food wrapped in a flatbread is a universally-loved thing of beauty. At Lamb, they take things a few steps further and make everything from scratch. Anything you order sits under the 2,000 ISK tag. What's lesser known however, is that their wraps are perfect for sharing, making it the cheapest meal in town by far.

### Previous Winners

- 2018: Icelandic Street Food
- 2017: Bike Cave
- 2016: Noodle Station

- 2015: K-Bar (RIP)
- 2014: 10-11 after 14:00

## Best Family Restaurant



### Hamborgara-fabrikkan

Höfðatorg, Kringlan

**KIDS' CHOICE** The Hamborgara-fabrikkan burger chain is ideal for a lunch outing with the family. There are plenty of distractions for young diners, including borrowed iPads and headphones to keep the kids entertained and distracted. The child-friendly vibe explains why it continues to be a popular haunt for birthday parties, so don't be surprised by the chorus of "hún á afmæli í dag" wafting around the room every now and then.

### Runners Up



#### Kaffi Laugalækur Laugarnesvegur 74a

**PARENTS CHOICE** For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Lækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids' corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto 'litla gula hænna' and the 'shawarmabaka' are our top lunch picks.



#### Hard Rock Café Lækjargata 2A

A good family place needs to be appealing to parents and kids alike. The Hard Rock Café caters perfectly to the needs of a family group, with a diverse menu, special kids plates, colouring menus, free drink refills, and lids on drinks to help contain spills.

### Previous Winners

- 2018: Jamie's Italian
- 2017: Hamborgarafabrikkan
- 2016: Laundromat
- 2015: KEX Hostel

## Best Vegan Meal



### Sumac

Laugavegur 28

One of the persistent faves with the local vegan community, despite not catering solely to vegans, Sumac's Middle Eastern-inspired fare makes it the vegan destination to beat. No insipid 'nut steaks' in sight here: instead, the kitchen treats vegetables as the star of the show, eggplants are grilled to silkiness, the cauliflower roasted whole; often draped with bright pomegranate arils, it's a treat for anyone. Ask for the Lebanese wine; the interesting backstory of its harried continuance seals the outing.

### Runner Up



#### Nostra Laugavegur 59

While neither exclusively vegan nor vegetarian, Nostra is inclusive in a way that illustrates the future of fine dining. "Vegetables are built into the place, not simply an afterthought," said the panel. It's worth pointing out that Nostra is one of a handful of restaurants that have a dedicated vegan-vegetarian menu, so "the entire table can enjoy a tasting menu together, with none of that mixed diet awkwardness."



#### Veganæs Tryggvagata 22

**NEWCOMER** One of our few exclusively vegan places, Veganæs shows how vegan food can be just as down-and-dirty as a burger joint. "You don't need to have a yoga mat under your arm when you go there," said the panel. See vegan food in a new light, and catch a goth drag show while you're at it.

### Previous Winners

- 2018: Skál and Mat Bar
- 2016-7: Kaffi Vinyl
- 2015: Teni

# *Icelandic Lamb*

*Free roaming since 874, Icelandic Lamb continues to be a rare specialty that's humanely raised on family owned and operated farms.*

*Flavored by the wild pastures and raised without any hormones or antibiotics in one of the purest environments in the world, Icelandic lamb meat is wonderfully lean, flavorful and tender.*

*The distinctive taste is a result of the wild pastures; the grass and the aromatic and spicy herbs on which the lambs graze.*



## **LOOK FOR THE SHIELD**

*When dining in Iceland always look for the Icelandic Lamb Shield.*

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## Best Brunch



### Coccoo's Nest

Grandagarður 23

Family-run restaurant Coccoo's Nest offers a memorable brunch, with options ranging from a filling, spicy breakfast burrito to green eggs on sourdough bread. Located out on Grandi (they've been out there since before it was cool), the walk along the harbour will clear your head on the way; in summer, you can sit outside and catch the sun, and in winter, the cosy interior feels almost like a secluded fairy-light-strung yard. The service is right, the food spot on, and the healthy beetroot mimosa is a fresh and tasty hair of the dog.

#### Runners Up



#### Snaps Þórsgrata 1

Snaps serves up the perfect laid-back brunch for your Sunday morning recovery session. Choose from various omelettes, classic eggs benedict, and croque monsieur, and add a mimosa if the mood strikes you. If that isn't your tippie of choice, they have a great bloody mary and a g'n't menu.



#### Cafe Paris Austurstræti 14

Cafe Paris is a bright bistro with casual panache with food to match. The panel praised the fried chicken and waffles, and the stacks of pancakes with bananas and almonds. They lamented, however, the cancellation of table service, which diminishes the Parisienne vibe and kept this otherwise excellent joint off the top spot.

#### Previous Winners

2018: **Cafe Paris**  
2017: **Vox**  
2016: **Coccoo's Nest**

## Best Lunch Place



### Hlemmur & Grandi Mathöll

Hlemmur & Grandagarður 16

When it comes to lunch, Reykjavik's two food halls are top of the pile. It is, after all, a major increase over the zero food halls we had in 2016. As you might expect, the main attraction is the variety on offer. Members of a group can mix-and-match their dishes and drinks from the different concessions to fit anyone and everyone's hunger level, budget, vegetarianism, allergies, etcetera. Chase your heart's desire, be it Nordic, Thai, Mexican, Korean, a pastry, a panini, or just a plain ol' pile of lamb meat.

#### Runners Up



#### Hannesarholt Grundarstigur 10

The historic Hannesarholt culture building has gotten a new lease of life. Formerly a quiet coffee spot, it reopened as a restaurant focusing on locally sourced produce. It's a concise selection: we tried the juicy, crisp salmon with wholesome beets and quinoa. Vegans can rejoice too: there's always one option on the menu.



#### Mimisbar Hagatog

**NEWCOMER** Rather than a limp slice of pizza or reheated soup, Mimir has a Michelin-level kitchen and two handsome portions of colourful, Nordic deliciousness for under 2,000 ISK (at the time of writing) in a swanky but unpretentious dining hall. "Mimir," FYI, is the disembodied brother of the Norse god Odin. Pretty metal.

#### Previous Winners

2017-8: **Snaps**  
2015-6: **Ostabúðin**

## Best Ice Cream



### Skúbb

Laugarásvegur 1

Ice cream is one of those ethereal pleasures that encapsulates the mantra of living—be present. Unlike the sugar crazed concoctions in every supermarket aisle, Skúbb elevates the ice-cream games with their flavour-forward, dense, creamy scoops. Seasonal favourite mango is an absolute treat, while the dark chocolate brownie is lusciously bitter. The non-dairy sorbets are intensely fruity, indicating the absence of imitation flavours. Every scoop is a downright treat, especially with the promise of summer looming large.

#### Runners Up



#### Ísbúð Huppu Álfheimar 2-6

Selfoss based ice-cream joint Huppu, with their happy cow logo, may not be a vegan haunt, but this thoroughly Icelandic incarnation serves up all the time honoured local classics—creamy soft serves, assortment of dips and toppings with fruit to candy ratio being 1:100 and the hyper-local bragðarefur ice cream & candy smoothie.



#### Valdis Grandagarður 21 & Frakkastigur 10

Despite stiff competition, Valdis continues to draw the crowds. If you cannot bear the thought of queuing behind an impatient Icelander—ticket system long forgotten—they now sell their wares in supermarkets. The store scoops are a notch above though, so drop in at Grandi or Frakkastigur.

#### Previous Winners

2018: **Skúbb**  
2013-7: **Valdis**

## Best Lamb



### Matarkjallarinn

Aðalstræti 2

Icelandic lamb is raised simply—all summer long, the sheep are left outside to graze, and come fall, the lamb makes a bee-line to the plate. It's only fitting that Matarkjallarinn honours Icelandic lamb in the most unpretentious fashion. Grassy and intense, Icelandic lamb needs to be handled delicately for its unique flavour to shine through—do too much and you'll overshadow this tender meat. By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself.

#### Runners Up



#### Grillmarket Lækjargata 2a

Grillmarket is still the go-to place for many locals looking for a fancy evening out. For most, it means ordering the lamb and a bottle of wine. And rightfully so. The lamb chops or charcoal grilled steaks are always a winner—the smoky char is but a natural foil to the grassy meat.



#### Apotek Austurstræti 16

Whatever lamb is being served here, rest assured it'll be a meal to remember. With experienced chefs who share an unbridled passion for meat and fire, all the plates come out perfectly executed. Currently, they have a rack of lamb that's a visual treat—get it while it lasts.

#### Previous Winners

**New category!**

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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Dining

Greasy burger, or glazed, torched cod head?

**Must-Try Dining Experience**



## Skál

Hlemmur Mathöll

Helmed by one of Iceland's finest chefs—Gísli Matthías Auðunsson—anything you order here will be your definitive culinary memory of Iceland. “Seasonal” and “local” aren’t just clickbait terms at Skál. Be it smoked carrots on sourdough or crispy seaweed with cured roe, nothing is as simple as it seems. From Icelandic lamb to Arctic char or a scrumptious vegan meal, Skál has you covered. They boast a natural wine selection, cocktails on tap, and they debut new drinks regularly, like the Sultuslaukur rhubarb cider. A culinary adventure like no other, Skál also won't break the bank.

Runners Up



**Cod Head at Matur og Drykkur Grandagarður 2**

Shock value aside, Matur og Drykkur elevated Icelandic cooking with this singular dish—a whole, butterflied cod head, simmered in chicken stock and glazed. “The deep fried cod tongues are the best part,” said the panel. “And the fish head is basically prime cod cheeks.” An unmissable treat.



**ÓX Laugavegur 28**

ÓX is Iceland's first chef's table dining experience for only 11 diners each night. Determined to be discreet, the restaurant is housed in the far end of Sumac; it is an intimate dining experience where the walls between the chef and diner are dissolved over an intimate and leisurely tasting menu.

Previous Winners

2017: Snaps

2015-6: Ostabúðin

2014: Bergsson Mathús

**Best Italian**



**La Primavera**

at Marshall House Bar + Restaurant - Grandagarður 20

25-years ago, Leifur Kolbeinsson introduced Icelanders to fresh pasta at his iconic eatery La Primavera. It closed a few years later, but Icelanders still reminisce about it. Now, Leifur is back in the kitchen at the Marshall House restaurant, with the same focus on simplicity. “I didn’t even know cod roe could be so... sophisticated,” mused the panel as we dined at the anniversary pop-up. Thanks to diner pressure, La Primavera made a comeback as a permanent fixture at Marshall House. A delicious full circle, if ever there was one.

Runners Up



**Essensia Hverfisgata 4-6**

The only restaurant in the country to now host a dedicated ‘truffle menu’ at prices that won't break the bank, Essensia has come into its own recently. The under-seasoned nightmares have been laid to rest; the kitchen has a new spring in its step, dishing out silky handmade pasta and great calzone.



**Hornið Hafnarstræti 15**

It might not be fancy, but O.G. Italian joint Hornið is still going strong. The thin-crust pizzas are 100% satisfying—we recommend the prawn-covered seafood option—and you can get all kinds of hearty comfort-food pasta dishes, should your heart so desire. Support a true classic and drop by.

Previous Winners

2018: Marshall House

**Best Seafood**



**Fiskfélagið**

Vesturgata 2a

With a band of talented chefs in the kitchen, Fish Company is the definitive seafood restaurant in Iceland. Banging out consistently great dishes ever since they opened, the restaurant has grown beyond their reputation for fusion kitschiness. Today, their Japanese-inspired cod, swimming in a charred onion dashi, or the North African style wolf-fish with perfectly cooked black chickpeas, all enunciate a finesse and understanding of ingredient, region and technique that other restaurants can only aspire to.

Runners Up



**Fish Market Aðalstræti 12**

“They seem to take the extra step for freshness,” said one panellist of Fish Market’s seafood. This upscale eatery serves everything from lightly salted cod to controversial minke whale—details like ponzu dipping sauce, and fresh Icelandic wasabi takes the experience up a notch. Booking recommended, but impromptu sushi bar stools are sometimes available.



**Messinn Lækjargata 6 & Grandagarður 8**

Messinn has been so popular since opening that they now boast a large buffet style branch in Grandi. Continuing to serve ‘fish-in-pans’, Messinn’s once-generous portions have dwindled, our panel noted. Thankfully, the taste and consistency have remained largely unchanged. We also adore their plökkfiskur (although the panel suspects the recipe has changed recently).

Previous Winners

2018: Fish Company and Fish Market  
2014-7: Fish Company

## Best Place For A Group



### Apotek

Austurstræti 16a

Housed in a stunning downtown space, Apotek, meaning “drug store” in Icelandic, was once an actual drug store. A wall plaque with the names of its long gone patrons remains. New patrons, however, are likely to drop by for their regular dose of cocktails, finger foods, small plates, cakes... and eye candy. Who doesn't love a “hottie bartender”? The service is amicable and the staff usually go out of their way to ensure everyone is having a good time in this lovely, spacious dining room.

#### Runners Up



### Tapas Barinn

Vesturgata 3b

It's a non-traditional take on tapas, but the atmosphere is on point. With food served for the whole table, the selection is huge, with langoustine, puffin, lamb, and more global fare. If you're looking for a place where the food and drinks keep coming and the service never falters, you've found it.



### Skelfiskmarkaðurinn

Klappartígur 28-30

**NEWCOMER** Tailor made for brasserie-style debauchery, “Shellfish Market” has custom interiors and a cleverly designed layout with space for groups of all sizes. When Sirkús closed, an entire generation of party goers were in disbelief; at least now they can get a shellfish buffet on the same spot to soothe their woes.

#### Previous Winners

2015-8: Tapas barinn  
2014: KEX

## Best Gastropub



### Public House

Laugavegur 24

The gastropub trend may be fatigued in the UK, but in Iceland we are only getting started, it seems. One of the first gastropubs is still one of the most popular. The menu is about as large as they come for the category but they manage to strike a balance between scrumptious shared plates, solid beer selection, and cozy nooks to spark a romance or catch up with a friend.

#### Runners Up



### Brewdog

Frakkastígur 8

**NEWCOMER** A pair of newcomers changed the gastropub game in 2018. The first is Brewdog, whose menu transcends bar food. Using Icelandic ingredients with touches from the Brewdog chain, you can get a range of delicious burgers, seafood, sides and a mouth-watering battered Mars bar for dessert. Guilty pleasure heaven.



### Bastard Brew & Food

Vegamótastígur

**NEWCOMER** Just around the corner, the homegrown Bastard Brew & Food brew pub is giving Brewdog a run for its money. You can grab a medley of burgers, sharing plates and comfort food from around the globe. As one of our panellists slurred: “I've somehow never been there without hitting a happy hour.”

#### Previous Winners

2018: Skál

## Best Late Night Bite



### Mandi

Veltusund 3b

Mandi can't possibly be a controversial choice. A Syrian kebab spot that's universally loved in Reykjavik, check out the crispy falafel, lamb wraps and fries covered with a mystery white sauce. Newly renovated with increased seating, and reliably open into the early hours, you won't find a better place to pass out face-first into a plate of lamb shawarma at five in the morning, or stumble home with that hangover-battling late night bite.

#### Runners Up



### Nonnabiti

Hafnarstræti 9

“This is the guiltiest of guilty comfort food,” declared one aging and expanding panellist. Their sandwiches are piled with shredded meat with onions and dripping with sauce and meat juices. This will make you forget about striking out on the dancefloor faster than you can say “HvarertuSiggil!”



### Devitos

Laugavegur 126

Anyway you slice it, Devitos will set your late night belly rumbles right. If you were born in the 80s, then chances are you've binged on a late-night bite at Devitos. Available by the slice or as whole pies, if you're in town on a weekend, Devitos will be your last stop before Neverland.

#### Previous Winners

2017-8: Mandi  
2016: Ali Baba  
2016: Fish and Chips

## Best Newcomer



### Skelfiskmarkaðurinn

Klappartígur 28-30

When the owners of flagship upscale eateries Grill Market and Fish Market started a new venture in '18, we sat up and took notice. With a lush interior (check out those 70s style mirrors by Siggí Odds!), expect great service and a comfortable, convivial atmosphere for a coffee, cocktail, brunch, or romantic dinner. Skelfiskmarkaðurinn means “Shellfish Market,” and it lives up to name—the traditional French fruits du mer platter teeming with fresh, colourful prawns, langoustines, sea snails and more. A fancy treat.

#### Runners Up



### ÖX

Laugavegur 28

Not for the socially averse, the intriguing and intimate ÖX seats you at a communal table for eleven in a “secret” space at the back of Sumac. Expect to strike up conversations with the servers and your fellow diners while the chef keeps the delicious courses coming. A one-off. Book in advance.



### Veganæs

Tryggvagata 22

Vegans need junk food, too, and Veganæs delivers in spades. Their cruelty-free comfort food ranges from a spectacularly convincing grilled cheese, fake fish and chips, burgers and cheese poppers. It's a sticky-feeling, well-worn rock bar environment, sure, but with food like this? Count us in.

#### Previous Winners

2018: Nostra  
2017: Hlemmur Mathöll / Mat Bar



**“Our broth takes at least a day and a half, using temperature controlled cooking.”**

**DINING**

# There's A New Ramen In Town

Hi Noodle prioritises authenticity and consistency

Words: **John Rogers** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Reykjavik foodies have long lamented the relative lack of Asian cuisines in this city that are readily available in most European hubs. Hi Noodle is a brand new 13-seat eatery located in a recently renovated house on Frakkastígur that's seeking to change the game.

The restaurant is run by Chen, the calm, amiable presence who's smiling face you'll see behind the high counter upon entering the pristine white dining room. “I had the idea for this restaurant two years ago,” he says. “Before that I was in the tourist business. I was always taking people to Noodle Station or other restaurants, and I thought it would be nice for them to

have some more authentic noodles.”

## Years in the making

The noodles in question are freshly made at a workshop in London, and delivered every week for use in Hi Noodle's four recipes. “The noodles are Tonkotsu noodles, which is a very thin wheat noodle,” says Chen. “Then we have four recipes: Tonkotsu, Miso Tonkotsu, Dan Dan, and the vegan option.”

Chen spent a year perfecting the recipes before the renovations began. “There's no secret in ramen,” he smiles. “There are five basic elements. First is the broth, then the

noodles; then there's the tare, which means flavours like soy sauce. Then there's the topping, or chashu; and finally the seasoning. That's everything that's in the bowl.”

## Daylong broth

However, Chen's versions of these classic dishes were long in preparation. “I use fresh ingredients from here in Iceland,” he says. “Our broth

is consistent, and that's important. Every time you come here you'll get the same taste.”

Chen lived in China until he was 20 years old, absorbing influences from Chinese and Korean food into his cooking. “The Dan Dan recipe mixes Japanese Dan Dan and Chinese Dan Dan,” he says. “In the Chinese version there's no broth, but in Japanese version there's a lot of broth. And in the Icelandic cold weather, I think people need the broth. Then the Tonkotsu is very classic—it's the same flavour you would find in Japan. Each bowl has 100 grammes of noodles. The different is only the toppings and the broth.”

## Soup confidence

Many had told Chen that December was a bad time to open a restaurant, but the response has been good so far. “People have been very supportive,” he says. “I have Icelandic friends who are coming in often.”

There are plans to use the first floor when summer comes, and to expand the menu, but for now the intimacy of Hi Noodle is one of its charms. The dishes of steaming hot soup are handed straight over the counter from the smiling chef, giving



takes at least a day and a half to make, using temperature controlled cooking. We simmer the broth for six to eight hours, then high-heat it to reduce it by 50% until it's creamy and white, then we test the concentration. The ramen in this restaurant will always taste the same. It's con-

the place a cosy and casual feel. It helps, of course, that all of the soups are delicious, flavourful, warming and filling. “I have confidence in my food,” finishes Chen, before getting back to work. “I really believe it's one of the best ramen in Iceland.” 🍜

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 Truggvagata 14



**“It feels like an old Art Deco gangsters paradise.”**

**DRINKING GUIDE**

# Save The Date

Where to take your significant other, or latest Tinder match

Words: **The Grapevine dating dpt.** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Dating in Reykjavik is straight-up weird. People here bump into each other around town so often that it's barely necessary to arrange anything, leading to a laissez-faire “see you around the block!” vibe that can seem bewildering to outsiders and incomers. Dates do still happen, though. So whether you want an easygoing spot for a chill chat, a bustling environment to meet a Tinder maybe, or a secluded booth for a third date, here are our Best Of panels' date place suggestions.

and lush red velvet curtains. If you like the film, you'll have lots to talk about afterwards. Or, if your blind date complains about the lack of superheroes in said picture, you can always peace out to one of the bars nearby.



**Spánski Ingólfsstræti 8**

“I like to go somewhere I don't go usually,” was a common refrain among our panellists. “You don't wanna run into everyone you know when you're trying to have a date.” With this as a date place key criteria, basement wine bar Spánski is perfect. “There's no chance you'll see anyone you know there, you can always get a seat, and they have tapas and nice Spanish wine.”



**Hlemmur Mathöll Laugavegur 107**

Iceland's first food hall is great for dates. There are plenty of people buzzing around, giving it a relaxed, social feeling, and there are plenty of options — you can get some wine at Kröst, pick up some spicy tacos if you're unafraid of salsa mishaps, or have a cocktail or a natural wine from SKÁL. “You're in public without feeling like you're being watched by everyone,” said the panel. “And if you do see people you know, it's informal enough that they won't start texting everyone gossip in five minutes flat.”

**Port 9 Veghúsastígur 9**

Our drinking panel sang the praises of tucked away wine bar Port 9, which also wins the Best Wine Bar award. It can be a bit loud and crowded at peak hours, but if you're there on a weeknight it's “a cosy, intimate, secret-feeling place to have a glass of wine and a conversation, hidden away from everyone.”



**Skelfiskmarkaðurinn Klapparstígur 28-30**

If you want to push the boat out and have a romantic dinner or a late dessert, Skelfiskmarkaðurinn is a great choice. “There are loads of nice touches like the cool mirrors and sexy burgundy leather,” said the panel. “It feels like an old Art Deco gangsters paradise. There's delicious food, the bar has great cocktails and wine, and there are plenty of nooks to shy away from prying eyes.”



**Bíó Paradís Hverfisgata 52**

A movie might sound a bit cliché for a lovey-dovey outing, but Bíó Paradís is no ordinary theatre. Forgoing blockbusters and other mainstream releases, the beloved cinema offers the best of the international scene along with cult screenings, weekly horror nights, and Friday parties. Choose between an obscure Polish flick or a sing-along Rocky Horror screening and cuddle up with your hubby surrounded by soft lighting



## ICELANDIC RAMEN

**FIRST RAMEN HOUSE IN ICELAND**

Tryggvagata 16



**ramen**  
momo



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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Drinking

Tipsy or wasted, the choice is yours

There is one thing abundantly clear from our very scientific drinking research: craft beers and gastropubs have arrived in force. You can't throw a stone without hitting someone washing down a dry-aged chilli burger with a local IPA. After a few stable years, Reykjavik's bar scene seems to be shifting in general, with more wine, cocktails and fancy beers available than ever before. Some facts of life, however, remain the same: alcohol is expensive, but that doesn't stop us from partying. Bottoms up, babe.

## Best Goddamn Bar



# Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

"Kaffibarinn!" said the panel, in unison, when the category was announced. The mothership of Iceland's nightlife has stood firm while the competition rises and falls. A reliably great drinking hole, it has happy hour prices by day, a diverse DJ lineup by night, and charming staff to welcome you at all times. "Kaffibarinn has always been my favourite bar," said one panellist. "I've been going there forever. The staff are amazing—they put up with your shit. Maybe the most fun part is the randoms you meet. It's the place where everybody knows your name."

Runners Up



### Bravó Laugavegur 22

An unassuming pub-style hangout, Bravó has been quietly carving out a new identity in recent times, partially due to some new owners at the helm. "It caters to a lot of groups, and has more going on than you'd think," said the panel, "It's becoming like a Kaffibarinn for the young crowd, and their concerts have been packing the place out."



### Húrra Tryggvagata 22

Húrra is still "a very important space," said the panel. "Parties can get crazy there, with wild dancing and great shows. You might get beer spilt on you, but it's so much fun you wear a nice outfit anyway." The panel noted a recent change of ownership, finishing: "We hope it doesn't change too much."

Previous Winners

2018: Kaffibarinn  
2017: Húrra  
2016: Prikíð

2015: KEX Hostel  
2014: Boston

## Best Place To Start The Night



# VEÐUR

Klapparstígur 3

This charming, low key hole-in-the-wall bar is a firm favourite: with comfy seating or bar stools where you can watch the friendly bartenders get to work mixing your cocktail of choice. "You can watch the street life going by through the big windows," said the panel. "It's in a vibrant spot." The great location and happy hour mean it's the perfect place to begin a night out on the town. "You can be dressed up or down there," said the panel, "and it's right downtown, so you can head anywhere afterwards."

Runners Up



### Mikkeller & Friends Hverfisgata 12

If you like to start the night classy, there's nowhere better than Reykjavik's top craft bar. "It's nice to start with a fancy beer," said the panel, "somewhere a bit cosy and kind of like a living room. Then you can down some Viking somewhere else and faceplant in a ditch later."



### Bió Paradís Hverfisgata 52

A cinema bar might seem like an odd choice here, but Bió Paradís is a cinema like no other. "There's plenty of space, nooks to hide in, and good prices," said the panel. "And the smell of popcorn hanging in the air is intoxicating. If you decide against partying, you can just go and watch a movie."

Previous Winners

2018: Mat Bar  
2016-7: KEX Hostel  
2015: Loft Hostel  
2014: Kaldi Bar

## Best Place To End The Night



# Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

This classic party place is still the late-night hangout of choice in 101 Reykjavik. The raucous local crowd is a mixture of Iceland's fashion folks, artists, hipsters and intelligentsia—as seen in the KB "Barflies" photo book. "It's a perfect meeting point where you can go for the dancefloor, space out in the back, or chat all night in the smoking area," said the panel. "The staff are always genuinely nice to you, even if you're pretty drunk. Everyone goes there. It's the only place I'd go after putting a friend in drag and end up having my numerology done by a stranger."

Runners Up



### Kiki Queer Bar Laugavegur 22

If you're going out dancing, Kiki can't be beat. With DJs playing pop classics and an energetic, disinhibited crowd, the panel enthused: "It's so much fun! You can dance, hug your friends, kiss your spouse... you can let everything out and dance your ass off in a safe, welcoming environment."



### Ólstofan Vegamótastígur

On the other end of the spectrum is the no-frills drinking room of Ólstofan. With low music, dim lighting, lots nooks to converse in and a big central bar, "It's a no-bullshit place," said the panel. "There's an interesting older crowd, it's always open late, and you can have a pint and chat without anyone bothering you."

Previous Winners

2018: Prikíð  
2017: Kaffibarinn  
2016: Húrra  
2014-5: Paloma Basement

## Best Sports Bar



## American Bar & English Pub

Joint Winners

### American Bar, Austurstræti 8-10

With screens as far as the eye can see, a long bar that goes on for days, all the burgers and snacks of your junk food dreams, a dedicated big-screen viewing room in the back, and a “sun” terrace to smoke on at half time, American Bar is the perfect place to watch the big game. Whether it’s boxing, NFL or Premier League, they always have a wide range of screenings. Grab yourself a brewski and prepare to shout at the screen in some kind of vicarious catharsis of random victory or loss.



### English Pub, Austurstræti 18

Iceland’s main spectator sport of choice is the English Premier League, and there’s nowhere better to settle down for a day of matches than the English Pub. With a dark wooden Anglo-kitsch interior, a long bar with plenty of staff, and loads of comfortable seating, it’s hard to glance anywhere without your eye alighting on a screen. Football-loving tourists gather here to shout at the screen and berate Gylfi Sigurðsson’s latest penalty miss, so it’s the closest you’ll get a true football pub atmosphere, too.

Runner Up



### Lebowski Bar Laugavegur 20a

Another big huge place with lots of screens showing lots of games, this fully carpeted bar honouring The Dude is another nice laid-back place to just zone out with some good sports. Unpretentious and even graced with its own mascot, Púki the cat, who drinks virgin White Russians in the window.

Previous Winners

2018: American Bar  
2017: Lebowski Bar  
2016: American Bar  
2013-5: Bjarni Fel

## Best Craft Bar



## Mikkeller & Friends

Hverfisgata 12

The craft beer explosion finally reached Iceland in recent years, and Mikkel & Friends has done a stellar job of bringing the cream of crop to thirsty locals. From lip-curling sour ales to black-as-midnight stouts, solid house lagers and oddball passion fruit quintuple IPAs, Mikkel is a haven for drinkers with a sense of adventure. “The selection is always changing,” said the panel. “You can sample what you want—the bartenders don’t judge you and give interesting tips. It’s a good place to learn about beer, and you can go there with friends, on a date, or for a solo drink.”

Runners Up



### Skúli Craft Bar Fögetagarður

This cosy drinking hole has a great selection of local and guest craft brews, with the option of a flight of beers for the indecisive or curious. “The staff are real beer nerds,” said the panel. “There are board games, good snacks and food vans out back. It has that dude energy, but it’s perfect for a quiet drink.”



### Brewdog Frakkastigur 8

**NEWCOMER** The Brewdog empire’s Iceland outpost is an instant hit. “Sure, it’s a chain, but they have a really good beer selection,” said the panel. “The menu is great, and the staff are friendly and accommodating. They have both Brewdog and Icelandic beers, and Wings Wednesday.”

Previous Winners

2018: Mikkel & Friends  
2017: Microbar  
2016: Mikkel & Friends

## Best Wine Bar



## Port 9

Veghúsastigur 9

Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a hidden gem with an extensive wine list. From the house selections, to the by-the-bottle list, to the endless handwritten book of rare and fine wines, there can be only one winner here. “You can barely find it,” said the panel. “It’s intimate, and the customers have gone out of their way to end up there.” It’s not too stuffy or formal though: “I’ve been there in my pyjamas and nobody said anything,” said one panellist. “It’s also the only place in Reykjavik for that special Tinder date.”

Runners Up



### Klaustur Kirkjutorg

Since the “KlausturFökk” scandal, when drunk MPs were recorded having a horribly sexist conversation, this cosy establishment has seen an unexpected bounce in popularity. “For wine and secrets go to Klaustur,” laughed the panel. “Drink your Pinot Noir in silence at Iceland’s current most infamous bar.”



### Kröst Hlemmur Mathöll

Located in the pleasant bustle of Iceland’s first foodhall, Kröst has a carefully curated and ever-evolving selection of wines, selected by expert bartenders and available by the glass. Whether you’re on a date, with friends, or perched at the bar waiting for a bus, Kröst is a keeper.

Previous Winners

2018: Port 9  
2017: Microbar  
2016: Mikkel & Friends  
2015: Skúli Craft Bar

## Best Place For Cocktails



## Systir

Hverfisgata 12

Despite a recent change of name from Hverfisgata 12 to Systir, the bar staff at this homely and hip drinking den has remained stable, and at the absolute top of their game. From classics with a twist to genuinely brilliant new concoctions, this bar is our cocktail heaven. “I don’t think I’ve tasted a better cocktail,” said the panel. “They’re always experimenting, and often change the menu. You don’t go there for traditional cocktails: it’s signature and detailed, with special novelty cocktails. Take a chance and try something you haven’t had before.”

Runners Up



### Artson Laugavegur 59

Taking craft cocktails to a new level is the Nostra restaurant bar, Artson, which goes to great lengths to prepare every ingredient. “It’s crazy intricate,” said the panel. “They have so many herbs, preparations and potions: it’s alchemy. They’re a real star in this category. Just make sure to bring your sugar daddy.”



### VEDUR Klapparstigur 33

If you don’t want bitters made out of Californian dandelions or rose-petal sprayed ice in your espresso martini, this much-loved relative newcomer does the classics just how you like them. “The barmen here are great,” said the panel. “It’s the classics done to perfection.”

Previous Winners

2018: Hverfisgata 12  
2015-6: Apotek  
2014: Slippbarinn  
2013: Borg, Hotel Borg

**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Drinking

Why have just one happy hour when you can have nine?

## Best Place For Live Music



### ÍÐNÓ

Vonarstræti 3

This beautiful, classic concert hall has been rejuvenated into the new heart of the 101 music scene. From release concerts to collaborative gigs to one-day festivals and all-out parties, the cool kids of Reykjavík are putting their concerts on here; the creative, buzzing atmosphere and varied events have made it into a thrilling creative hub for the city. “People who chase music are going to ÍÐNÓ,” said the panel. “There’s room to move, and it’s labyrinthine inside. It’s having a real moment. It’s been a slow transition, but ÍÐNÓ is just where the music scene is right now.”

Runners Up



### Gaukurinn Tryggvagata 22

Gaukurinn has become the thriving centre of the city’s alt-music scene, including heavy music, goth shit, noise and drag. “It’s a huge place for the punk, goth and metal scenes,” said the panel. “The geeks you knew in high school are now handsome bad boys in leather jackets.”



### MENGI Óðinsgata 2

Although you can get a drink, MENGI isn’t exactly a bar—it’s a white cube venue that’s like Gaukurinn’s cool grown-up auntie. “You get an ASMR feeling,” said the panel. “You go just for music. They have something going on most days, and it’s always on time. For their consistently brilliant programming, MENGI deserves recognition.”

Previous Winners:

2017-8: Húrra

2015: Café Rosenberg (RIP)

## Best Smoking Area



### Boston

Laugavegur 28b

In the winter season, a good smoking area is all about being sheltered from the elements. Here, Boston excels—the vast balcony smoking area is totally covered, with heaters and sofas, like a smokers’ paradise. “It’s super well heated,” smiled the smokers on the panel. “It’s like a summer house.” One aesthete remarked: “I really like the interior—if they would paint the smoking area black to match, I’d be even happier.” Due to the tented design, the ventilation perhaps isn’t the best, but hey, at least you won’t freeze your lips off when you’re trying to have a fag.

Runners Up



### Hressó Austurstræti 20

With a massive, well-ventilated tent area featuring picnic tables, ashtrays and countless heaters, you might well forget you’re outside at all when you go for a cigarette at Hressó. Smoke your face off and get lost in your conversation without feeling like you’re in the arctic—and rejoice!



### Kaffibarinn Bergstaðastræti 1

Kaffibarinn’s tiny, unassuming smoking area is one of the best you’ll find for conversation. “It only seats seven asses, and it’s a total bottleneck,” said the panel. “People huddle like penguins in the arctic—that’s how we Icelanders get through the winter. But that’s where some of my most fascinating 3 a.m. situations have happened.”

Previous Winners

2018: Boston  
2017: Hressó

## Best Happy Hour



### Kaffibrennslan

Laugavegur 21

The former Hemmi og Valdi is still a firm favourite for those who like a bargain beer. At 550 ISK for beers and 750 ISK for wines from 16:00-20:00, in a beautiful, comfortable wooden house, you can’t really argue. “It’s such a nice house,” said one panellist. “I had my first snog there. It’s cheap and easy, with a really good vibe.” The panel also praised the “location, location, location. It has a perfect outdoor area for summer, and you can sit upstairs in the rafters in winter. Cheap beer and a nice place to sit, what more could you want?”

Runner Up



### Slippbarinn Mýrargata 2

A hotel bar famous for making cocktails in Reykjavík before they were cool, today’s Slippbarinn has a kick-ass happy hour. “You can get a beer for 500 ISK, and 1200 ISK cocktails,” said the panel. “It’s a huge hallway with weird nooks, crannies and lounges to hide in. And there’s a fireplace!”



### MIAMI Hverfisgata 33

**NEWCOMER** Although nonplussed by the late night crowd, our panel love the good prices and plush interior of the MIAMI design bar. “They have all the fancy beers on happy hour, with table service,” they said. “It’s great before all the assholes get there and ruin it. The interior is just crazy, and a must-see in itself.”

Previous Winners

2018: Kaffibrennslan  
2015-6: Húrra  
2014: Café Rosenberg (RIP)



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Aðalstræti 12

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## Best Newcomer Bar



# Brewdog

Frakkastigur 8

With a glut of new bars to choose from, the attention to detail of Brewdog pushes them to the top of the pile. Turns out, being part of chain played out positively in this instance, with a professionally put together bar that maintains a laudable consistency. “They have such strict standards,” said the panel. “They had protocols about who they hired, the training, and making sure the staff are all educated about the beers. They delayed opening to make everything perfect—they really took the time and did the work.” Scottish and Icelandic beers, great food, and good vibes... well done, Brewdog!

## Runners Up

### Session Bankastræti 14

A bar everyone wants to love, our panel is willing the Session craft bar on to make the atmosphere of the bar room match the ambition and quality on the taps. “They have a beer school for small or large groups,” they said. “We hope they’re gonna iron out the kinks with the lighting and interior. They’re trying.”



### MIAMI

#### Hverfisgata 33

**NEWCOMER** This stunningly decadent cocktail bar is an instant design classic with cocktails, ping pong, and a bizarre Wes Anderson airport lounge vibe. “The designers lost Oddson, unfortunately, so Miami is the pinnacle of the city’s beautifully designed spaces,” said the panel.

#### Previous Winners

2018: **Veður**

2017: **Pablo Discobar**

2016: **Bryggjan Bruggús**

2015: **Mikkeller & Friends**



“It’s finished with a ‘magic spray’ so aromatic that customers have been known to ask for a spritz on the way out.”

### DRINKING GUIDE

# Holy Spirits

Our top tips of the moment in the ever-changing Reykjavik cocktail scene

Words: **John Rogers** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Dusty old bottles on obscure top shelves, pungent bitters from god knows where, crushed, dried, colourful flower petal garnishes, and rosewater patterns splattered over frothy white foam: these are a few of our favourite things. If you’re partial to an interesting cocktail or two, so our panel: here are their pro tips for a memorable mixed drink to start that big night out, or to end it.

### Mat Bar: Barrel Aged Negroni

Everyone loves a negroni. It’s a strong, no-nonsense cocktail without any fussy mixers or ice chips diluting the delectable, pungent, powerful mixture of spirits. At Mat Bar, they’ve taken this classic up to the next level by aging it in a barrel for a deeper flavour. It takes a while to make, so it’s not always available—ask your waiter and see if you got lucky.

### SKÁL!: Cocktail of the week

One of the tricks of great cocktails is consistency. SKÁL! cycles through seasonal ingredients, so favourites will come and go, but their “cocktails of the week” are always on point. It could be a mouth-watering, herbaceous pisco basil gimlet, or rum and lime with “house-made mandarin cello” and “dehydrated lovage from last summer.” Thoughtful, and creatively impressive. Top marks.

### Mikkeller & Friends: “Rhubarb Crush” Kegtail

A tangy eye-opener, the Rhubarb Crush is a fresh drop made from vodka and rhubarb juice, with a zingy citrus note from the lemon and orange zest, and a toasty note from the steeped cocoa nibs. It’s refreshing and flavourful, so you’ll sip it slowly, rather than knocking it back like a basic gin ‘n’ juice.

### Systir: “Life Without Kids”

Perhaps the bartenders only had time to invent this delicious drink because they aren’t parents, or perhaps it’s so moreish it’s best left to the footloose and childless. Naming reasons aside, this comforting Systir special is made with butter-washed bourbon, cold brew coffee, maple syrup and a “magic spray” that’s so aromatic that customers have been known to ask for a spritz on the way out.

### Snaps: Espresso Martini

If you’re coming out of a long work day and preparing to hit downtown, an espresso martini is the perfect pick-me-up. Nowhere makes it better than Snaps, who do a neat and tidy version of this caffeine-laced classic. Ask the bartender how they like it, and you might get a personal flourish or two. The gin menu and Reyka vodka martini are also solid—drink them in the basement speakeasy.

### MIAMI: “Cabriolet”

The house cocktail at the colourful design bar MIAMI is the “Cabriolet.” Made with a house rum blend and allspice mix, infused with cinnamon, honey and lime, it’s finished off with juiced ginger and a hibiscus flower syrup, and smoked with cedar root. Sure, rum and ginger is a classic combination, but this elevated version will make your day. 🍸

# Welcome



Pre-booking is required. Book online at [bluelagoon.com](https://www.bluelagoon.com)

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**Dillon Whisky Bar**  
Laugavegur 30

When the people of Reykjavik think of whisky, the first word that comes to mind is indubitably Dillon. The downtown institution has stood strong over the decades, serving up a delicious selection of whiskies to a devoted, thirsty clientele. Dillon's menu plays host to more than one hundred bottles from Scotland, Ireland, Japan and the United States, and their staff is perfectly prepared to recommend whether you should take each neat, with water, or with ice. Complete with their astounding selection is a dark, cosy, wooden interior that seems like it hasn't changed at all over the years — the perfect mood to contemplate some succulent undertones. For the whisky-intimidated, though, never fear. The bar occasionally hosts Whisky School, where you can learn the difference between scotch, rye, bourbon, malt, and everything in between.

**DRINKING GUIDE**

**Keeping It Smooth**

Where to get your whisky on in Reykjavik

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen

Iceland might be best known as a country where people chug beers in between shots of liquorice flavoured schnapps, but that doesn't mean you can't relax with two fingers in a tumbler within the city limits. First called aqua vitae — "the water of life" — whisky isn't so much a drink as an obsession, and for lovers of the spirit, it's essential to indulge in some local flavours while travelling. So, sit down, and grab some neat, with water, on the rocks, in juice, in soda, or in a cocktail, and enter the Reykjavik whisky scene.



**Quest Hair, Beer & Whisky Saloon**  
Laugavegur 178

There are not many places where you can get your moustache trimmed while learning about the intricacies of fermentation. One of those places, though, is the Quest Hair, Beer & Whisky

Saloon. The 'bar-ber-shop'—located just a stone's throw from downtown Reykjavik—offers an extensive selection of local and international whiskies and beers, as well as a knowledge of the Icelandic brewing scene that is unparalleled. This is one of those places where you can sit down, have a chat with the owner, and hear stories you can't get anywhere else. It's also a cosy locale with tasting courses and occasional late-night concerts. For non-drinkers, they also have an amazing selection of hair pomade. But seriously, if you're a

non-drinker, why are you even reading this?



**Eimverk Distillery**  
Lyngás 13, 210 Garðabær

Eimverk Distillery is the only whisky and spirit distillery in the country that uses solely Icelandic ingredients. While they have homemade gin and brennivín on offer, it's their Flóki whiskies that take centre stage. Currently they stock three iterations of the Flóki brand. First up is a smooth and spicy Young Malt. Next, their acclaimed Single Malt—still young with an age of three years—serves up a fruity, floral punch. If you're looking for something stranger, though, they also, in true Icelandic fashion, have a reserve smoked in sheep dung. The distillery offers daily tours where you can learn about Flóki, as well as the processes involved in making Icelandic whisky, gin, and brennivín. So if you're looking to nurse a tumbler while you nurse your intellect, look no further. 🍷

# Haga— vagninn

If you want great quality hangover hamburgers you should stop by Hagavagninn. We are located next to one of Reykjavíks greatest swimming pools, Vesturbæjarlaug.

## A little trip to Álftanes Kaffi



Serene surroundings by the sea.

**A nice surprise. The carrot soup is simply delicious.**

After a long flight we got to Alftanes, a neighbourhood 15-20 min.(car) far from Reykjavik. It was late and by our Guesthouse host recommendation we ended in this small place. I was skeptical, the first impression I got was: "I've just entered someone's house by mistake". Simple yet well decorated but oddly intimistic and family-run. We waited to be seated (that's a good advice in most places in Iceland). We asked for the soup of the day (carrot) and pizza. Until then I was sure that was a trap. Then some locals appeared to take their orders (mainly soup and pizza as well). And my soup arrived...wonderful! Simple, yet wonderful! I felt immediately humbled by how a simple carrot soup could taste THAT good. Btw: **their pizzas are very good indeed**, it's different...the dough is lighter and tender, doesn't taste like average pizza dough. I guess they use the same sourdough they use for the bread. anyway, worth it! (Visit Des. 2018)



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**Gaukurinn**  
Tryggvagata 22

Known as one of the most steadfast bars in downtown, Gaukurinn has gone through a few transformations and reinventions – much like Madonna or Cher – and is currently the place for edgy, cruelty-free queers and allies. They host the majority of the drag shows in town, book a wide array of underground artists of all genders, and hold a staunch “No Xenophobia” warning on entry. It’s a place where one can truly be anyone they are or want to be.



**“It’s a place where one can truly be anyone they want, or are.”**

**CITY GUIDE**

# Stay Queer

Supportive spaces and rainbow-splashed party spots

Words: **Rex Beckett** Photos: **Art Bicnick & Hörður Sveinsson**

In a country where the Pride festival is more widely attended than the Independence Day parade, it’s no surprise that there would be some pretty great LGBTQ+ spaces in the capital city. Reykjavík queers are vast and diverse, as is the case worldwide, and while there are still many hurdles to knock over towards full inclusivity, here are some of the most inclusive places where love is love is love.

ber, vegan, queer-inclusive safe space that contains work spaces, a community kitchen and meeting room for folks from all walks of life. They are a particularly important space for the trans community, hosting monthly support groups in English as well as drop-in social hours for trans and non-binary folk to meet and mingle. They also hold vegan cooking classes, sex positive workshops, political discussions, language classes and family hours. They have a small membership fee or ask for donations at each event, and they are well worth it.



**Vintage Box**  
Hafnarstræti 4

The newest member of Iceland’s queer scene is this very cool, very dark, very fabulous little bar right downtown. Fittingly, it’s tucked away upstairs behind another bar and one enters the premises

through the smoking patio and bathrooms, only to then enter a small den with black and grey ro-coco brocade wallpaper, a small selection of top shelf drinks, and very cute staff. Run as a community organisation, the bar opened at the end of January and runs men-only, women-only, and non-binary queer mixers. The music is loud and fun and people are dancing and flirting all over.



**Samtökin '78**  
Suðurgata 3

The queer association of Iceland is an all-inclusive supportive space in the heart of downtown where people can go for information on practical matters as well as attend cosy social functions, educational talks in Icelandic and English, support groups, and dating introduction meetings. It is a great place for so-ber people, it hosts family hours for parents and kids to meet and play, plus bingo and board game nights and karate classes. Samtökin '78 is also the official headquarters of the annual Pride parade and there is an amazing unicorn mural on the side of their building!



**Loft Hostel**  
Bankastræti 7

While not exactly a dedicated queer space of its own, this cool downtown hostel and bar is definitely a fun LGBTQ+ friendly place with all kinds of great events. Located right on the main drag, it’s an ideal accommodation for the party-minded traveller. One can often start their day with a clothing swap, a speed dating or friending session, or watercolour workshop, then heat up their evening with one of the funnest karaoke parties in town or screenings of RuPaul’s Drag Race hosted by Iceland’s reigning mother queen, Gógó Starr. Go have a ball! 🍷



**Kiki Queer Bar**  
Laugavegur 22

This go-to gay dance club is the rainbow splashed spot to slam shots, scream for fun and go wild to Katy Perry remixes. Weekends here are crazy and fun parties for the pop minded dancing queens, and the crowd is quite diverse. It is rather tame by most gay club standards and you won’t find glory holes or a den of iniquity, but you might just find your new crush and make out on the dance-floor.



**Andrými**  
Bergþórugata 20

This non-profit radical community centre in Reykjavík is a so-



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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Shopping

Icelandic style and design has escalated in scope over recent years, with an ensuing explosion of local stores. While high prices mean that you probably aren't going to be going on a shopping spree in Reykjavik, there are plenty of unique products to be found that are worth your hard-earned cash. From obscure rarities by long-broken-up Icelandic bands to the perfect vintage hand-knitted lópapeysa, here's your essential guide to shopping in Reykjavik. Remember to make responsible financial decisions. Good luck out there.

## Best Goddamn Store



## Fischer

Fischersund 3

For most categories, one of the first questions out of the mouths of panel members was “does Fischer qualify?” From packaging-free shampoo, to frequent art openings, to a special perfume section, the store—which has only been around for around one year—serves up a sensory, highly aesthetic shopping adventure. “They are paving the way for a new type of store in Reykjavik,” the panel determined, praising the stores out-of-the-box thinking, and their careful focus on customer experience. “This is a place I barely want to mention,” one panellist continued. “It’s so good I don’t want it to win and get crowded!”

Runners Up



### Góði Hirðirinn Fellsmúli 28

Góði Hirðirinn, or “The Good Shepherd,” looks like a cross between a stylish hoarders house and an eclectic garage sale. Take an afternoon to rummage around this Aladdin’s cave in search of hidden gems, which could be anything from old Icelandic books to blue leather armchairs to a bag of old toys.

### Drekinn Njálsgata 23

“Drekinn is the last ‘sjoppa’ in 101 Reykjavik,” one panellist declared. “It hasn’t changed over the years, but it has remained relevant.” This grungy convenience store/vape palace/bodega/hamburger joint is a remnant of pre-tourism Reykjavik. “That hamburger smell really takes you back,” they concluded. “I hope it always stays the same.”

Previous Winners

- 2018: Húrra Reykjavík
- 2017: Krónan
- 2016: Bónus

## Best Design Store



## Akkúrat

Aðalstræti 2

This local design mecca has a fascinating and ever-evolving range of products on sale from local designers, but also brings cherry-picked Nordic and international pieces to Iceland. “They have Icelandic design you can’t find anywhere else,” said the panel, “but also so much Scandinavian design.” From day one, Akkúrat was known for carefully curated shelves filled with works from promising and emerging designers, many of whom are still in the early stages of their career. So, who knows—take a punt on a striking hoodie or handmade cup, and you could have a future classic on your hands.

Runners Up



### HAF Store Geirsgata 7

**NEWCOMER** The HAF Studio store is a pristine renovation filled with highly desirable homewares, from stylish lamps to light fittings worth renovating for. “HAF is a place to watch right now,” said the panel. “They have an amazing space and everything is well picked.” Watch your wallet: you’ll want it all.



### Hönnunarsafnið Garðatorg 1, Garðabær

This store, located within the Museum Of Design and Applied Art, serves up a quirky array of design objects and books, some related to the exhibits within, some completely random. “They have a workplace in the store when you can watch artists create right in front of you” one panellist praised.

Previous Winners

- 2017-2018: Akkúrat
- 2016: Kraum
- 2015: Spark Design Space (RIP)
- 2013-4: Kraum

## Best Fashion Boutique



## Yeoman

Skólavörðustígur 22

Having dressed everyone from up and coming artist JFDR to grand dame Björk, Hildur Yeoman is a star of the local fashion scene. Her trademarks are busy prints on fine fabrics, cut into flowing shapes; she also dabbles in extravagant evening wear such as her striking mirror-ball effect gown. The store also spotlights interesting stuff Hildur has encountered on her travels, from jewellery to exotic tea. “You can’t see an awards show without someone wearing Yeoman,” said the panel. “Her pieces are uplifting.” Influenced equally by nature and the occult, inside her patterns you’ll find icons and imagery that in endlessly fascinating combinations.

Runners Up



### Akkúrat Aðalstræti 2

Alongside all the intriguing magazines, ornaments and homewares, Akkúrat also has a strong line of streetwear, including their signature Döðlur sweatshirt range. Cozy, oversized, and bearing a unique spin on the Icelandic “D,” nobody else back home will have one of these.



### Aftur Laugavegur 39

Aftur created that distinctive 101 Reykjavik look of flowing black dresses and oversized sweaters. While it has, in recent years, kept that aesthetic up, it has since added to it a focus on eco-friendliness and sustainability. “It would be wrong to talk about Icelandic fashion without talking about Aftur,” one panellist said.

Previous Winners

- 2011-2018: KIOSK

## Best Clothing Store



### Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 50 & 78

"They single-handedly changed the scene and changed 101 Reykjavík," the panel said of Húrra Reykjavík. From their inception only two years ago, the store has cemented itself as the go-to locale for the trendiest foreign streetwear brands. Each of their locations—one for men and one for women—have stayed relevant, always on brand with the latest trends and always selling lines you never thought you'd see in the city. They are also credited for spurring a sneakerhead scene in the city—one that got so crazy that teenage boys actually slept outside during the last Yeezy release. Yes, that actually happened.

#### Runners Up



### Geysir

You can't talk about shopping in Reykjavík without mentioning Geysir. Chock-full of elegant woollen staple pieces, the store has striking billboards dotted around the town depicting an old world, arcadian vision of Iceland—pick something up and feel that halcyon fantasy in your day to day urban existence.



### Kvatýra №49

**NEWCOMER** This minimalistic, Bauhaus-esque spot took the Icelandic fashion scene by storm upon opening in 2018, with its eclectic streetwear selection. "They have designers that no one else has, designers that you wouldn't know before going there," said the panel. "I love them—I really hope they last."

#### Previous Winners

2018: Kvenfataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar  
2017: Húrra Reykjavík

## Best Secondhand Shop



### Hertex

Garðastræti 6

A true-blue second-hand shop, you never know what you're going to find at this Salvation Army outlet. "Their selection is bizarre, the prices are fair, and the service is amazing," raved the panel. "The ladies there will help you so much." The stark store, covered with clothes of all shapes and colours, is a delight for all senses that'll have you alternating between, "Who would throw that away?" to "Who would buy that?" Each of the panellists had found something spectacular there, or at least something with a good story. Get ready to start digging.

#### Runners Up



### Spúútnik

More of a downtown boutique than a second-hand store, Spúútnik's well-curated selection has defined 101 Reykjavík style for almost a generation. With most pieces being imported from abroad, expect top quality streetwear brands, fur jackets, and everything you see your favourite Instagram influencer wearing...before they're wearing it.



### Stefánsbúð/P3

Stefánsbúð/P3's selection of second-hand is radically different than those at other Reykjavík vintage locales. Their rack of old high-end designer clothing is unlike what you'll find anywhere else in the city. "For me, I don't want old clothes, I want vintage pieces," one panellist explains. "They're doing something different and it's beautiful."

#### Previous Winners

2018: Fatamarkaðurinn  
2017: Spúútnik  
2016: Kolaportið  
2015: Hertex

## Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater



### Handprjónasambandið

Skólavörðustígur 19

Many Icelandic wool sweaters, or lópapeysa, are mass-produced outside of Iceland and shipped back in for sale. So where to find the real-deal? The answer is Handprjónasambandið, Iceland's hand-knitting association. Stacked from floor to ceiling with cosy woolly goodness, the store offers sweaters, gloves and more, in every colour of the rainbow. If that's not enough, it often plays host to delightful Icelandic ladies who will knit and gossip right before your very eyes. How's that for an authentic experience?

#### Runners Up



### Rauði Krossinn

The Red Cross is not only the cheapest option for a lópapeysa, but it's also one of the more unusual. "It's very old Iceland. You search around and you feel like you're getting someone's Grandpa's sweater," one panel member says, before smiling. "And you are. It's lovely"



### Farmers Market

For a more stylish take on the Icelandic sweater, look no further than Farmers & Friends. Their designs update the traditional lópapeysa into a fitted and distinctly high-street getup. Pair it with fitted trousers and heels and you'll blend in at any Scandinavian fashion event.

#### Previous Winners

2016-2018: Handprjónasambandið  
2015: Red Cross  
2014: Handprjónasambandið

## Best Jewellery Shop



### Orrifinn

Skólavörðustígur 17b

Orrifinn was decided, unanimously and almost instantaneously, by the panel as the best jewellery shop in Reykjavík. There was no debate. The beloved storeroom presents sensual, raw, detailed and carefully crafted pieces that manage at once to be timeless while still distinctly modern. "Were I to get engaged or married, this is where I would buy the ring, no question," one panellist exclaimed. "There's no other place doing what they do, and it's very trendy and well-made."

#### Runners Up



### Hildur Hafstein

Slightly hippy, full of mystical symbols and teaming with craftsmanship, Hildur Hafstein has created a niche all her own in the Icelandic jewellery community. "Her works are very Egyptian and spiritual," one panellist explained. Her shop, tucked away just off Skólavörðustígur, is chock full of long, delicate necklaces, textured horns and gorgeous stones.



### Aurum

Aurum has been a mainstay of Icelandic jewellery for years. "You can always go in and find something," one panel member said. "It's very Icelandic and very much based in Icelandic culture and nature," they continued. New collections pop up often, so make sure to stop by for a new look if you haven't been by recently.

#### Previous Winners

2018: Orrifinn  
2017: Mál og Menning  
2016: Eymundsson Austurstræti  
2015: Sjónarland

## Best Homeware Shop



## Geysir Heima

Skólavörðustígur 16

If you're into Scandinavian style, you should probably grab an inhaler before entering Geysir's Skólavörðustígur homeware shop. From its iconic wool blankets to woody scented candles to minimalist glassware, the store contains a diverse and tasteful selection of Nordic style that's bound to energise you. For a break from the stimulation, head down to their basement exhibition space. As one panel member put it: "Geysir is a part of Reykjavík, and everything they do, they get it right."

Runners Up



## Epal

Harpa & Skeifan 6

Epal has been a mainstay of the Reykjavík design scene for more than 30 years. "They are the only one that sells Scandinavian style like this, and I am at the age where I want to collect pieces for my home," one panel member explains. "For selection and price, Epal is the best place for that."



## NORR11

Hverfisgata 18A

NORR11 is expensive, but even if you can't afford it, the shop is worth a trip for the inspiration. The showroom presents works from a multitude of Nordic designers. "It's like an art gallery at times," one panellist says. "I go in there and leave with so many ideas for projects."

Previous Winners

2018: Geysir Heima

## Best Bookstore



## Bóksala Stúdenta

Sæmundargata 4

Located within the main building of Háskóli Íslands, this university bookstore runs the gamut from speciality academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. "They have everything you need there and you often end up picking up new books as you're walking around," one panel member explained. Another plus? The on-site coffee shop serves up what are potentially the fairest priced coffees in town, as does the Háskóli Íslands cafeteria next door.

Runners Up



## Bókin

Klapparstígur 25-27

Bókin is not a shop one goes to for the newest, best-seller releases. No, it's a collectors-only locale made to wander around and dig through. "It's an adventure. It's chaotic. There are definitely ghosts in there," one panel member said. "You walk around and wait for something to call out to you."



## Books In The Back

Freyjugata 1

Reykjavík's only dedicated art book shop is located in the back of the Harbingar gallery. Stocked with a well-curated selection of independent and self-published pieces, it fills a much needed gap in the Reykjavík scene. Stop by for everything from the newest Icelandic poetry to local children's books.

Previous Winners

2018: Bókin  
2017: Mál og Menning  
2016: Eymundsson Austurstræti  
2015: Sjónarlind

## BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019

# Shopping

Stuff is better than money anyway

## Best Record Store



## Reykjavík Records

Klapparstígur 35

Reykjavík Records is a haven created by music nerds, for music nerds. Presenting the best of the Icelandic and international scenes, every piece has been meticulously curated to ensure that you're getting the crème de la crème of music, be it contemporary or classic. The real beauty of the shop, though, comes from its workers—local musicians, DJs, and tastemakers who'll give you a customised experience. While the panel contained everyone from LP collectors to casual listeners, they all had positive tales about the store. As one panel member put it: "There's no place like Reykjavík Records."

Runners Up



## 12 Tónar

Skólavörðustígur 15

12 Tónar is known for its choice selection of local music and old rarities. Run by an Icelandic label, those working there are so knowledgeable about the scene they'll hand select records based on your taste. In the basement, couches with CD players and headphones provide a cosy listening location.

Previous Winners

2018: Reykjavík Record Shop  
2017: Lucky Records



## Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

You can pretty much guarantee Lucky Records will have at least one record in any genre. Packed to the brim with everything from techno to reggae, you could easily spend a whole afternoon crate digging in this grungy, punky shop. "Make sure to look under the tables for the old selections," one panel member urged.

2015-2016: Reykjavík Record Shop  
2013-2014: Lucky Records

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## Best Grocery Store



### Krónan Grandi

Fiskislóð 15-21

For the third year in a row, Krónan has proven that it is the best grocery store in town. "If you're looking for fruits, vegetables, or fish, Krónan at Grandi is unequivocally the best," the panel determined. They also praised its selection of vegan and international products, which, all emphasised, you just can't find anywhere else. "Other places might have vegan and vegetarian products, but nowhere is it as cheap as at Krónan," one panel member—a vegetarian—emphasised. For downtown rats without cars, Krónan might seem like a bit of a trek, but the panel urged that the prices and selection are so far beyond that of downtown grocery spots, it is absolutely worth it.

## Runners Up



### Melabúðin

Foodies need look no further than Vesturbær's Melabúðin, where the shelves are packed with artisanal deli meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses and all sorts of unexpected, hard-to-find treats (bloody mary fans: get your celery salt here). "When I have an event, I go to Melabúðin," one panellist said. "Everything there feels special."



### Frú Lauga

Just outside of the 101 bubble in nearby Laugardalur, Frú Lauga is the only exclusively local and organic shop in Reykjavik. With a greenhouse on the premises, it's also the only place you can buy fruits and herbs that might have been picked earlier that day from a plant right beside you.

## Previous Winners

2017-2018: Krónan  
2016: Bónus

## Hidden Gem



### Nexus

Nóatún 17

Size-wise, Nexus is more flagship than hidden gem, but it's still off the beaten path for downtown rats and those visiting Iceland. A local hub for the culture surrounding comics, sci-fi, role-playing games, table-top games, and everything related, the panel credits Nexus with encouraging geekdom to flourish in Iceland. "Nexus has built an empire and created a culture," said the panel. "And it all started with a small, nerdy specialist shop." Nowadays, they have Warhammer, Manga, D&D, movie screenings, and much more. "To be honest," one panellist said. "I've read many Grapevine Best of Reykjavik awards, and always wondered: where is Nexus?"

## Runners Up



### S/K/E/K/K

Hofsvallagata 16  
S/K/E/K/K's offbeat selection features a mixture of unusual, eclectic home decor and collectible high end design products. Tucked away in an unassuming spot in downtown Reykjavik, you could walk past and never know it was there. "Everything they have is so well-chosen," said the panel.



### Geisladiskabúð Valda

Valda is by far the most obscure shop in the city. "They've been around forever and have never changed," one panel member said. From old gameboy games to bootleg metal cassettes to DVD seasons of shows long cancelled, this packed-to-the-brim gem is full of curiosities.

## Previous Winners

2018: Hyalin Reykjavik

# Buy Shit:

Love the sweet smell of Iceland? Well now you can take it home. Fish skin accessory company RE101 have released a perfume that captures Iceland in a bottle. You'll be pleased to hear that it doesn't smell like fish. 'ICELAND' – the Eau de Parfum – is made from signature botanicals found in nature, like arctic thyme and moss, blended together with native berries. If you forget to pick up a bottle in the city, you can get it duty free at the airport. **AC**



Iceland might look pretty bleak and barren from the window of the Flybus, but when you take a walk you'll quickly notice all kinds of flowers and berries nestled amongst the lava rubble and moss. Urta Islandica is a Hafnarfjörður-based company that decided to make Iceland's humble, wild ingredients into all sorts of products, be it teas made from birch or anise, or jams made from plants most consider weeds. Medicinal benefits might be spurious, but the clean, natural tastes are undisputed. **JR**



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2018 was a year of travel for Icelandic fiction, with the number of titles published in translation tripling from a mere decade ago. Here are some favourites that we have been passing around the Grapevine offices this year.

### Hotel Silence Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir

Winner of the 2018 Nordic Council Literature Prize, 'Hotel Silence' is characterised by the bleak humour it applies to the tragedy of human existence. In the novel, Auður Ava interrogates the more benevolent aspects of traditional masculine values through her protagonist: a solemn middle-aged handyman whose only means of communicating love is by installing kitchens, tiling bathrooms and being useful to his relations and compatriots. When those meagre tools prove insufficient after an emotional blow, he sets off on a journey to an unspecified location with the aim of committing suicide in as quiet and polite a manner as possible.

### Woman at 1000 Degrees Hallgrímur Helgason

Hallgrímur Helgason's subject matters are so varied that if it wasn't for his florid and exuberant prose style it might be difficult to see his books as belonging within the same oeuvre. In this biographical work of fiction, a vivacious and foul-mouthed octogenarian narrates her life from the islands of Breiðafjörður, through Nazi-era Germany and all the way to her current situation as a bedridden invalid living in a garage in the Icelandic suburbs. As she spends her time catfishing gullible men in distant lands with pictures of Icelandic



## SHOPPING GUIDE

# Best In Translation

Top tomes from Iceland, now in that new-fangled English language

Words: Björn Halldórsson

beauty queens, her only companion is a live hand grenade; her final measure of maintaining control over her fate.

### Waitress in Fall Kristín Ómarsdóttir

Although Kristín Ómarsdóttir is still actively publishing new work, this collection, gleaned from her seven books of poetry published between 1987 and 2017, feels timely. It reveals the sleeping giant of Icelandic literature; a poetess with a voice that has remained consistent and relevant throughout her career. The collection is selected and translated by Vala Thorodds and is the first appearance of Kristín's poetry in English. Gathered together, the work herein presents overarching themes of grotesque femininity,

surreal domesticity and voices driven to repetition; forced to be loud to be heard.

### Stormwarning Kristín Svava Tómasdóttir

This collection of poetry offers a very different view of the Icelandic winter than that of the magical north—a feeling of being confined to your home and forced to keep your own company while waiting out the storm. The speakers of the poems revel in their melancholy and loneliness with acute self-awareness, addressing the humdrum of the everyday and the pettiness of lives lead online. Yet, the tone is light, ironic and funny, as if the speakers can't keep from smirking at their own theatrical miseries. The translation was recently nominated

for the PEN America Translation Prize and is presented in a dual language format.

### CoDex 1962 Sjón

Each instalment of this magnum-opus-trilogy was written near a decade apart, in between the vast output of poetry and novels that have made Sjón one of the most widely recognised contemporary Icelandic authors. Leading back to his early inspirations in the postmodern complexities of Burroughs and Bulgakov, this is the book where Sjón pulls out all the stops and shows the reader no mercy, producing a work that is as challenging as it is rewarding. Gathered into one volume, these three books present a disorienting cocktail that is equal amounts the wildness and exuberance of a young writer making his name with a clang, mixed in with the quiet authority and confidence of an award winning author with nothing to prove.

### Öræfi: The Wasteland Ófeigur Sigurðsson

Öræfi's success is carried on the backs of the complexity and layering of its prose as well as its deliciously selfish narrative structure. In between delighting its readers with humour and absurdity, the writing does its utmost to buck and kick and throw them off track. In fact, letting go of expectations and giving in to the dizzying rhythm of the prose is a key factor for enjoying the book. To avoid frustration and disappointment, readers must allow their concentration to drift along with the prose as it pulls in subtexts from far and wide and forges connections in the manner of the subconscious. 🍷



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Hverfisgata 12, originally dubbed 'the no-name pizza place,' became popular in recent years for slingin' pizzas that ranged from the unpredictable to the staid. The news of its recent closure was met with utter dismay from regulars.

But true to their edgy nature and gritty flair, the same brains behind Dill, Kex Hostel, and Mikkel & Friends now bring us Systir ("Sister," in English). This sibling restaurant for the Michelin-starred Dill is housed in the unchanged Hverfisgata 12 premises, and there were just days between the closure of one and the opening of the other.

Words: Shruithi Basappa  
Photos: Timothee Lambrecq

Systir flips the tables on Dill

# Upside Down In The

NEW IN TOWN

## The upside down

We arrived at Systir full of anticipation and, admittedly, a little anxiety. What will this new place be like? Can H12's delicious cheesy fries ever be replaced? Oh, the uncried tears for the Korean fried chicken!

But lo and behold—with the paint barely dry on the new sign, it turns out that Systir gives a not-so-subtle wink to its grown-up relative downstairs. The options are even presented on an upside down Dill menu card, overlaid with the sweep-picked font of the Systir logo—a nod to all things unruly and chaotic, as younger siblings are wont to be.

## All is not lost

Beloved favourites like the torched cheese fries with kimchi (1,200 ISK) are still on the menu (hallelujah!), while new numbers like the barley beet risotto with cured goose (1,900 ISK)—reminiscent of beef tartare in its appearance—underscore the new establishment's Dill-like sensibility, which includes a five-course tasting menu.

The head chef helming the project is Ólafur Ágústsson. "We felt that we needed a new challenge for our business at Hverfisgata 12, with this ever-changing restaurant environment we have in Reykjavik now," he says. "We also feel that the Dill concept should be presented to more people in different environment. We're really focused on our journey here, and we want our guests to experience that with us."

## Systir suspense

Engulfed by the comfort of specially curated natural wines to accompany the many small plates, we couldn't help but wonder if

**"I can't help but wonder if Systir will prove to be the rebel in the family."**

Systir will be a disruptive sibling. As if the kitchen were reading our minds, we were treated to a fatty hunk of rib-eye (3,200 ISK) under a mound of refreshing mint and coriander tossed in an intensely tart dressing and dusted with ground toasted rice. The clear Thai influences are such a bold departure from the often sanctimonious New Nordic bible that it seems Systir is determined to be the rebel in the family.

Ólafur appears to revel in the suspense. "Systir will try to play both sides a bit," he says. "It will definitely have some experiments going on, but it will also be there to please and comfort. It will also serve Dill classics—something we know people will love."

Systir retains the easy going vibe of Hverfisgata 12, which is a big part of the draw for its many loyal fans. The new place promises to be a well-priced casual haunt—five courses for 5,900 ISK is a steal—that just so happens to also be an experimental culinary playground for Dill. My hope is for Systir to be an approachable adventure—a true rebel in the culinary upside down. The seriously curated wine list and focus on speciality cocktails doesn't hurt either.

And for those still nursing H12 nostalgia, Ólafur hints that it isn't unlikely that the no-name pizza place will make another appearance, somewhere, somehow. 🍕



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Nobody knows Reykjavik quite like the locals. We asked four faces about town—a RÚV journalist, a beloved DJ, the manager of IDNÓ, and the vocalist of SYKUR—to share their tips for how to spend a perfect day in 101.

## TRUST THE LOCALS

# The Perfect Day

How to Reykjavik, from those who know the city best

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen** & **John Rogers**

Photos: **Art Bicnick** & **Timothée Lambrecq**

### Anna Gyða Sigurgisladóttir



I would start the day off by meeting my best friends at **Reykjavik Roasters**—the old one on Kárástígur. We do this thing on Tuesdays where we meet at 8:00 sharp—which is extremely early for us—but we've found it's the best way to start the day. We laugh so much and it changes the whole day. Those days are my favourite.

### DJ Katla



Around midday big spoon wakes me up with coffee and cunnilingus. We play **Bubble Bobble** until our eyes get all weird, then nap to restore our eyesight. We wake up again around lunchtime, put on sweatpants, and eat a shawarma sandwich in bed while watching **Sherlock Holmes**.

### René Boonekamp



After lunch we'll stop at the **Marshall House** to sniff up some art. It's always a surprise what Nýlo and Kling og Bang have put up. Ólafur Elíasson's stuff is also very, very nice. Then it's about time for an aperitivo. **Cococo's Nest** is great for that; a cosy and friendly place. A natural wine and a little bite later and your mind

wanders off to southern Europe.

### Agnes Björt Andradóttir



I go home and get ready but I have an extra six hours to get dressed, so there's no rush. I wear some crazy costume I made myself and look stellar. Then, I head down to **Húrra** as it turns to summer. Innipúkinn is going on, and we dance and have a drink outside on the grass area in Naustin. It's the best of both worlds. There are so many friends I only meet when I am partying—the Icelandic party people who never leave 101. They inspire me.. 

Read the full *Perfect Day* articles at [gpv.is/perfd](http://gpv.is/perfd).

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**ION Adventure Hotel**  
Distance from Reykjavik: 44km

The most decadent hotel on this list is also the closest to Reykjavik. ION Adventure Hotel is a tucked away bolt hole near the Þingvellir National Park. A thoroughly design hotel, the highly Instagrammable pool is nested beneath the struts of the main building and the bar is like a glass box hovering over the landscape. Order a cocktail, kick your feet up, and be warned: you'll want to take the robes and bedding home with you.

**IcelandAir Hotel Flúðir**  
Distance from Reykjavik: 103km

The sleepy town of Flúðir has a surprising amount going on. As well as the popular "Secret" Lagoon, where you can bathe in an outdoor geothermal pool with plumes of steam pouring from the hot river below, there's an Ethiopian restaurant, and this pleasant hotel. The rooms have hot pots out back — if you're lucky, you can spot the aurora in peace after the tourist gaggle has gone to bed.

**"If you're lucky, you can spot the aurora in peace after the tourists have gone to bed."**

**TRAVEL GUIDE**

# Great Escapes

**Our favourite hotels for a quick and cosy getaway**

Words: **John Rogers**  
Photos: **Timothée Lambrecq & Art Bicnick**

For all of the wild frontiers and glorious nature Iceland has to offer, not every trip has to involve a waterfall freezing your face off. Sometimes, you just want to rock up to a nice hotel, check into a cosy room, take a dip in a hot pot, sip a cocktail, eat something nice, and sleep in a comfortable bed. Don't worry, luxury-seeking princesses, we're totally with you. Here are six of our favourite countryside hotels to put your feet up for a while.



**Hotel Húsafell**  
Distance from Reykjavik: 131km

There's a lot to love about this tucked away countryside getaway. For a start, the on site eatery is a treat that wouldn't be out of place in Reykjavik, with

excellent cocktails and a very decent tasting menu served by an open fire. Guests have access to a swimming pool—we had the place to ourselves before taking a drive around the Hallmundarhraun lava field.

**Umi Hotel**

Distance from Reykjavik: 149km

A relative newcomer, Umi Hotel is a top stop in South Iceland. In a peaceful tract of farmland just off Route One, it stands between Eyjafjallajökull and the southern coast. We were welcomed with a glass of bubbly and some chocolates, and had a tasty dinner in



the airy restaurant before falling into a king-sized bed. There's no hot pot, so stop off at Hvergerði's Wes Anderson-esque pool on the way.



**Hótel Búðir**

Distance from Reykjavik: 177km

This charming hotel is a famously luxurious and atmospheric spot for a romantic getaway. There's a great restaurant on site, an open fire, a bar with views out over the coastline, and you can see the dizzy peak of the Snæfellsjökull glacier from many of the rooms. It's right on the tip of the peninsula, so it isn't a short drive, but if you have the time for a drive around the glacier on the way home, it's absolutely worth it.



**Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon**

Distance from Reykjavik: 349km

If you've plenty of time on your hands for a serious road trip across the whole south coast, this luxurious new Fosshotel is the place for you. With a classy design vibe throughout, the rooms have a cabin feel, with one large panoramic window, and a small porthole looking out to the horizon. There's a bar, various lounges, an airy restaurant serving local lamb and fish, and saunas to relax in. It's a long drive, but it'll put you near the famously beautiful and always-worth-a-visit Jökulsárlón. 🍷



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**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2019**

# Activities

**Get off the internet already!**

So, you've shopped in the shops, drank the drinks, and eaten all the foods. And whilst those things are all super fun, culture and the outdoors are the missing pieces of the puzzle for a perfect trip. Whether it's a gleaming museum or a grimy artist-run gallery, a springtime hike or a trip to try and glimpse the aurora, here's where to do it.

## Best Pool



## Vesturbæjarlaug

Hofsvallagata 107

West-side bathing haven Vesturbæjarlaug has it all. There's a diverse variety of hot tubs from the social to the secluded, a steam bath, a sauna, optional outdoor changing rooms for summer, a sunlamp with chairs for wintertime sunbathing, friendly staff, and—last but not least—it has an unbeatable retro charm. You'll find tourists mingling with Icelandic VIPs as they relax and talk about their day in the best goddamn pool in Reykjavik. To top it off, Kaffi Vest is just across the street, so grab a coffee and snack in a cosy atmosphere afterwards.

Runners Up



### Sundhöllin Barónsstígur 45a

The classic-yet-contemporary Sundhöllin is Reykjavik's oldest swimming pool. It was thoroughly renovated in 2017, and while it kept its beautiful old-school men's changing rooms, it emerged with refreshed female changing facilities, a new outdoor pool, a new reception area, and a big communal hot pot for chilling and chatting.



### Laugardalslaug Sundlaugavegur 105

Although Laugardalslaug is the largest pool in Reykjavik, it's often crowded by tourists. "It has become the tourist pool," said the panel. "They all get sent there while the locals enjoy the other pools of Reykjavik." It does, however, have a huge range of hot pots and facilities, also used by the post-workout crowd from the World Class gym.

Previous winners

**2018:** Sundhöllin  
**2017:** Lágafellslaug

**2016:** Neslaug  
**2014-15:** Vesturbæjarlaug

## Best Gallery



### i8

Tryggvagata 16

The internationally lauded i8 gallery was instrumental in putting Icelandic art on the map, and remains a mainstay in keeping it there. Although it's a commercial gallery, the works on show are rarely conservative—expect to see conceptual cutting-edge museum-sized displays, rather than conservative and conventionally appealing wall-based work. The gallery is home to many of Iceland's finest contemporary artists and also brings international names to Reykjavik. Best of all, there's a sharp wit and a sense of fun running through the gallery's roster, in sharp contrast to the often academic or po-faced offerings of the contemporary art scene.

Runners Up



### Kling & Bang Grandagarður 20

After finding its new home in the well-received Marshall House art museum complex, the Kling & Bang collective have done their very best to continually make people smile with wonder at their creative, ambitious, vibrant and varied solo exhibitions and groups shows. Keep it up!



### Ásmundarsalur Freyjugata 41

**NEWCOMER** After two years of extensive renovations, Ásmundarsalur has finally reopened and charms the panel with its "super bright and open space with huge windows" and its well-executed new exhibition, "LÍFFærin," where the spectator can admire organs made of glass. Ásmundarsalur will soon commence its event schedule, and the panel cannot wait!

Previous winners

**2015-18:** i8  
**2014:** Kling og Bang  
**2011-13:** National Gallery

## Best Art Museum



### Reykjavik Art Museum

Various Locations

Boasting with three different locations scattered through Reykjavik, you will be able to discover anything you could be looking for there, whether you fancy Icelandic sculpture at Ásmundarsafn, Kjarval paintings at Kjarvalsstaðir or various contemporary exhibitions at Hafnarhúsið. "With one ticket, you get it all," says the panel. We'd like to give a particular shoutout to Kjarvalsstaðir, which has been on a laudable hot streak of mounting exciting contemporary exhibitions alongside the Kjarval collection; Ásmundarsafn also sets contemporary work in conversation with Ásmundur Sveinsson's classic oeuvre.

Runners Up



### The Marshall House Grandagarður 20

This fairly recent addition to Reykjavik's art museum scene has captured locals' hearts. Hosting three galleries—NYLÓ, Kling og Bang, and an Ólafur Elíasson workshop—it can be found in Reykjavik's constantly developing and hip Grandi district. The mixture of its location, the variety of its offerings and the beautiful interior design make it worth every visit.



### Einar Jónsson Museum Eiríksgata 3

Despite the stunning beauty of its sculpture garden, The Einar Jónsson Museum still feels like a secret gem in the very heart of Reykjavik. There are epic sculptures on subjects such as life, death, birth, society and religion, and Einar's apartment is lovingly preserved inside. It's guaranteed to bring a little magic into your life.

Previous winners

**2018:** The Marshall House  
**2016-7:** Hafnarhúsið  
**2012-15:** Reykjavik Art Museum

**Best Artist-Run Space**



**Gallery Port**

Laugavegur 23

This humble gallery and workshop is hidden in plain sight on Reykjavik's largest shopping street, Laugavegur. Along with Harbinger, Gallery Port has done a lot for the emerging art scene, with a fast-moving and diverse exhibition program. "It has this 'happening vibe,'" says one of the panellists. "It is very international and based on more than money-making." This is your perfect anti-art-snob gallery and promises to surprise you again and again with every visit.

**Best Museum**



**Wonders Of Iceland**

Perlan, Öskjuhlíð

Have you ever wanted to walk safely through a 100m long ice cave? With the new "Wonders Of Iceland" exhibition in Perlan, an immense glass dome that sits on top of six hot water tanks, it is finally possible. This highly interactive exhibition will let you experience (and feel) the power of volcanoes and earthquakes, while also offering a realistically built bird cliff and the aforementioned ice cave. "It is kid-friendly and highly educational," says the panel. "Plus it is situated in a really interesting building." It truly is a great adventure for people of all ages.

**Best Cinema**



**Bió Paradís**

Hverfisgata 52

Bió Paradís is THE local cinema. They shows alternative films in many different languages whilst also screening blockbusters. They have many special screenings (party screenings, cult classics, or worst film series,) there's always the smell of popcorn when you enter (their popcorn machine, Kamilla, just turned twenty), and they have always have great music playing, which makes it a great place to just hang out in general. The great staff serve beer, pizza and sweets, the posters are made by local artists... the list is endless.

**Best Place To Take The Kids**



**Tjörnin**

City Centre

What could be cooler than paying football on a frozen pond while trying your best not to slip and break your bones? Absolutely nothing. Tjörnin, Reykjavik's handsome pond situated right next to the city hall, offers everything that kids love. "You can feed the ducks and swans, walk right across to the other side when it's frozen, or play ice hockey," said the panel. There are also benches for hardworking parents to get their well-deserved rest while the kids are playing, or the nearby IDNÓ for a warm coffee and cake break.

**Runners Up**



**Wind and Weather Window Gallery**

Hverfisgata 37

Being both unique and impressively casual, this gallery is accessible for everyone. "I've walked by a million times before I noticed it was a gallery," said one of the panellist. It is truly a hidden gem of the city, while being mockingly obvious. It's like window shopping but with art.

**Runners Up**



**Whales Of Iceland**

Fiskislóð 23-25

This is another museum which uses modern technology in the right way—life-sized whales that you can touch, audio guides, touchscreens with all the information and even virtual reality glasses are available. "It's really different from everything else," said one of the panellists. It's an educational playground for kids and adults alike.

**Runners Up**



**Smárabíó**

Hagasmári 1, Kópavogur

Situated in one of Reykjavik's shopping malls (the one that looks like a phallus from above), Smárabíó deserves appreciation because of their high-end equipment. "Smáralind has the best projectors and amps," said the panel. "It is the place to go to see films in the best blockbuster quality."

**Runners Up**



**Nauthólsvík**

Öskjuhlíð

"Nauthólsvík has it all," said one panellist. "The cold ocean, a hot tub, sand, trees and lots of space." Need we say more? Reykjavik's one and only beach is a great place to take the kids, and whoever else wants to join in the fun—and the nearby café is perfect to warm up with lunch or a hot drink.



**Iðnó**

Vonarstræti 3

This old and absolutely beautiful building has become a space for all kinds of performances and events. The sheer diversity and passion behind the schedule is an ode to Reykjavik's art and culture life. Whether it is concerts, workshops, ambient nights, or film screenings, Iðnó has it all.



**The National Museum Of Iceland**

Suðurgata 41

This museum makes history fun and adventurous, covering everything from early culture to clothing, metalsmithing, religion and more. It's expansive, interactive and well curated. "It also has a great bookshop," says one of the panellists, adding one more reason to go and visit this gem.



**Egilshöll**

Fossaleyfir 1

Boasting with the biggest screens of Reykjavik, Egilshöll is worth the trip, even though it is situated in the outskirts of town. It is the best place to get junk food before seeing a trashy blockbuster with high production values, and you can go bowling afterwards in the same building.



**Lasertag Kópavogi**

Salavegur 2, Kópavogur

Kids acting up? Teen tantrums? Vent your frustration as a parent by blasting them with a harmless laser beam. Located in one of Reykjavik's surrounding suburbs, Lasertag Kópavogi can be reached via a short drive or a 30-minute bus ride, and the panel unanimously agreed: it's worth it.

**Previous winners**

2018: Listastofan

**Previous winners**

2018: National Museum of Iceland  
2015-17: Árbæjarsafn  
2011-14: National Museum of Iceland

**Previous winners**

2016-8: Bió Paradís  
2015: VIP Theater  
2014: Bió Paradí

**Previous winners**

2017-8: Whales Of Iceland  
2014-6: Húsdýragarðurinn  
2013: Fjölskyldugarðurinn

# Activities

Seriously, try the pools, it's not like back home.

## Best Day Trip



## Snowmobiling

Various tour operators

Snowmobiling over the surface of a glacier is an excursion to remember. Just ten minutes into your tour you'll lose sight of day-to-day life, finding yourself surrounded by pure unending white as far as the eye can see, save for the specks of other snowmobiles in the distance. Numerous tour operators provide exhilarating snowmobile tours all over Iceland. Langjökull and Mýrdalsjökull are both easily reachable in a three hour drive or so, and some operators will pick you up from your hotel. It's breathtaking by day, and you can even chase the northern lights at night.

## Runners Up

### Hvalfjörður

Cut off from Route One by a road tunnel, Hvalfjörður is a beautiful rural fjord an hour from Reykjavík. Perfect for a road trip, it's home to Glymur—Iceland's second-highest waterfall—as well as various scenic and historical stops dotted around the fjord. "The church is a great place to get married, too—just ask my sister."



### Viðey

**BUDGET PICK** This little island can be reached by a three-minute ferry ride from Reykjavík. "Despite its small size, it has a lot to offer!" said the panel. It has nesting birds, panoramic views of Snæfellsness peninsula and the Imagine Peace Tower (a Yoko Ono curated Lennon memorial), just to name a few attractions.

## Previous winners

**New Category!**

## Best Hike



## Esjan

Esjan

Esjan is hard to beat. Situated only 10 km north of Reykjavík, it offers hikes of various lengths for both beginners and advanced hikers and absolutely gorgeous views on the landscape below. "You also get a stunning glimpse of the city," says the panel. When you go there in winter, make sure to bring hiking poles and crampons, if the conditions demand it, and be ready for ice and deep snow. You can get to the trailhead by public transport, making it the only proper hike you can do in Reykjavík without a car.

## Runners Up

### Heiðmörk

After only a 20 minute drive you will be able to hike through this huge nature reserve with forests and lakes. One of its highlights are the red rocks of Rauðhólar. In addition, there are a lot of trees (something really rare in Iceland), barbecues and you can even go horse-riding and fishing.



### Öskjuhlíð

Öskjuhlíð is a hill in the centre of Reykjavík, covered by trees and barbecues, making it a popular site for bonfires and ceremonies. It is very peaceful and absolutely magical in the winter. To top it off, you might end up at Perlan (a futuristic glass dome with restaurants and museums) if you get lost.

## Previous winners

**2018:** Esja  
**2017:** Reykjadalur  
**2016:** Móskarðshnjúkar

## Best People-Watching Spot



## Loft Hostel

Bankastræti

There are so many great things to be said about Loft Hostel. It has a balcony from which you can watch people/tourists on Laugavegur. It has regular events such as concerts and yoga classes, and water colouring nights where all kinds of people get together (to watch other people.) Last but not least, it is also a hostel (surprise) and brings together locals and people from all over the world. Really, could there be any better spot to watch people? The panel does not think so at least.

## Runners Up



### Breiðholt

The infamous 111 district of Reykjavík is a melting pot of many different cultures and very different people. "You can sit on a bench anywhere and just watch people for hours," said the panel. Mjódd, one of Reykjavík's biggest bus stations, is also situated there and is another great people watching spot.



### ÍBNO

#### Vonarstræti 3

Situated right next to the city pond, ÍBNO offers the ultimate coziness for people watching. You can sip on your coffee and devour your dumplings while gazing at passers-by through the generous windows. "You will also see funny tourists screaming because of the geese at the pond," says the panel.

## Previous winner

**2018:** Hlemmur Mathóll  
**2017:** Kaffihús Vesturbæjar  
**2016:** Grandi

## Best Place To See The Aurora



## Ægissíða > Gróttta

Vesturbær > Seltjarnarnes

Ægissíða is literally the west coast of Reykjavík. Running along the sea, this walk is sheltered from traffic and light pollution and thus perfect for a peaceful and romantic walk of any duration. In winter, it becomes even more magical with some of the best chances to see northern lights in Reykjavík. If you walk long enough, you'll end up at Gróttta at the tip of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula with its iconic lighthouse. "It's one of my favourite places to be in general," said one of the panellists. "Plus it has the best bonfires in town."

## Runners Up



### Fossvogur and Öskjuhlíð City Centre Area

This walk leads you along the creek that divides Reykjavík and Kópavogur. "Its right by the ocean," says the panel. "Nobody ever goes there, it's so peaceful." Additional perks include a mystical graveyard and, if you walk a little further, Reykjavík's only "city forest" up on the Perlan-topped hill of Öskjuhlíð.



### Sculpture & Shore Walk Laugardalur-Reykjavík 101

With its view on the ocean and mountains, it's recommended for a long, contemplative walk. Leading from Laugardalur to Reykjavík's famous concert hall "Harpa," it is a nice and long walk right next to the ocean — and you will get to experience some of the diverse city landscape that Reykjavík has to offer.

## Previous winners

**2016-18:** Gróttta  
**2015:** Öskjuhlíð  
**2012-14:** Gróttta



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**Kaktus Espresso**  
Vitastigur 12

If it's getting too difficult to lap-top in peace at your favourite coffee spot without a bunch of tourists honking down your neck, rejoice. The Kaktus Espresso is a smart new café in Reykjavik, with espresso made from imported Italian beans, soup of the day for under 1000 ISK, tasty sandwiches, and ample table space. There's plenty of seating and power sockets for 101's wandering freelance desk jockeys, and you can even buy a cactus or house plant to go.



**Brewdog**  
Frakkastigur 8

The world-conquering Scottish craft beer chain arrives in 101. Iceland's branch of Brewdog is an interesting presence on the scene—the fancy-dive-bar décor feels like it could be in East London or Manhattan as easily as downtown 101. The prices, however, are very much located in Iceland. The tasty, speedy bar food

“Whether this café is a post-internet New Aesthetic installation or not, they have well-priced burgers and snacks.”

**NEW IN TOWN**

**Flavour Of The Month**

The places everyone's talking about in 101 Reykjavik

Words: **John Rogers**  
Photo: **Timothée Lambrecq & Art Bicnick**

Reykjavik moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and smell the Italian espresso beans, ramen soup and deluxe streetwear once in a while, you could miss it.

menu is reasonable enough, but there are few options under 1,000 ISK for your teeny wee measure of amber nectar.



**CNTMP**  
Laugavegur 12b

Suddenly appearing at the close of 2018, this sleek and minimal streetwear boutique occupies an enviable spot on the main

Laugavegur strip. An acronym for “contemporary,” the shop's name describes its concept—the store sells limited amounts of garments by local and overseas streetwear brands. At the time of writing, there's clothing from Reykjavik Roses and PLEASURE, with new stock promised soon. Also on sale are related artefacts like Emmsjé Gauti vinyl and the xDeathrow photo book.

**Benedorm**  
Pósthússtræti 9

I know what you're thinking: the name of new “fancy fast food” joint Benedorm is a typo of Benidorm, the Spanish resort. Such suspicions are enhanced by its tropical pixelated clip-art sign and brightly coloured decor. But Google reveals that “Benedorm” is actually a U.S. drug containing melatonin. Hmm. Whether this café-bar is a covert post-internet



New Aesthetic installation or not, they have well-priced burgers and snacks, and 690 ISK beers all day long, so we're on board.

**Hi Noodle**  
Frakkastigur 9

Reykjavik has traditionally been a bit of a ramen desert. There are a few noodle soups around, but none have that comforting,



earthy, simple-but-perfect miso ramen taste. Hi Noodle aims to change that with slow-cooked broth, meticulously conceived recipes, attention to consistency, and four solid options from tonkotsu to a vegan soup. We recommend saying “hi!” to the spicy Dan Dan, with some fried dumplings on the side. 🍜



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2. Reykjavík Kringlan shopping mall.
3. Akureyri Hotel Kea ground floor.

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