

Special Issue
The City Awards

THE  **REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE**

Spring Edition
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The Reykjavík Grapevine City Awards

2020 Best Of
Reykjavík

Dining

The 60 Best Eateries
Welcome To Keto-vík

Drinking

RVK's Best Bars
Drunk Activities

Shopping

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Superior Souvenirs

Activities

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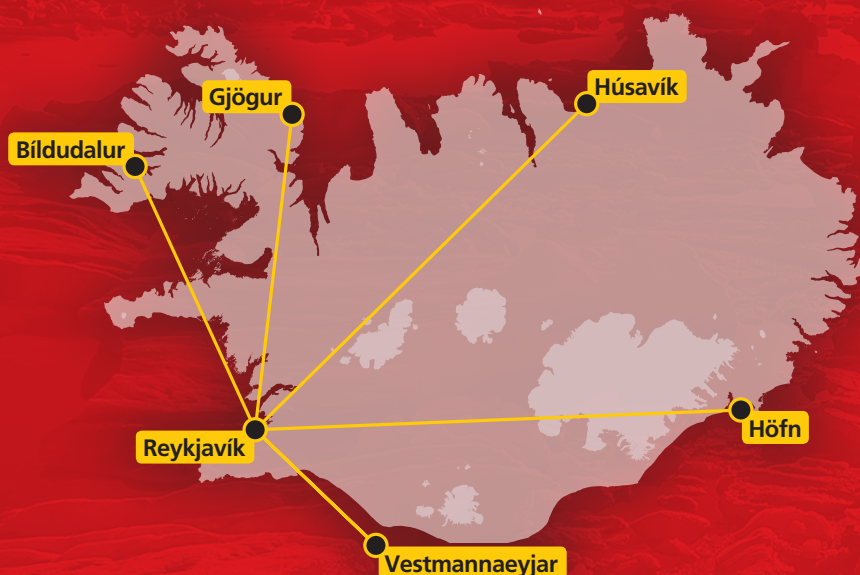
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FLUGFÉLAGIÐ ERNIR



AN INTRODUCTION

Reykjavík: Version 2.020

Making choices is hard—especially in a world as saturated with options as this one. And while Reykjavík might be a small city, it's no different here. From world-class New Nordic cuisine to a museum with life-size whale sculptures to a store fully devoted to Russian streetwear, the capital is full of lovely eccentricities just begging to be visited.

But what's a person to do if they've only got a few days for Icelandic fun? Relax, dear traveller, for the Reykjavík Grapevine is here with our annual Best Of Reykjavík Awards, where we give you the low-down on the top things this smoky bay has to offer. Looking to spot the Aurora? Get some soup? Stock up on local design? You've come to the right paper.

Along with the winners, you'll also find guides to our **top souvenirs (p.36)**, **activities you can do while getting shitfaced (p. 29)**, as well as perhaps the **most intricate guide to keto food in Reykjavik ever created (p. 22)**. Yes, we at the Grapevine also hate carbs.

Anyway, while you're here, be sure


to pick up a copy of our flagship publication, **The Reykjavík Grapevine**—it's packed with news, culture and info on the top events in town. If you're on a budget, download our **Appy Hour** and **Happening** apps for cheap booze and event listings. And, finally, look out for the **Best of Iceland** to learn what's worth checking out in the Icelandic countryside, as well as our **Best Of Iceland app**. We love to hear from you on Twitter, so hit us up at **@rvk-grapevine**. No nudes, please. We're not Hustler.

You would also do well to support our journalism by booking any tours you're interested in, whether in Reykjavik or anywhere else in the country, through our booking site, **gotravel.grapevine.is**. We're an independent publication, and we'd like to stay that way.

Thanks for reading, and remember to take your Vitamin D.

Hannah Jane Cohen
Editor, Best Of Reykjavík

The cover art is inspired by Shoplifter's 'Chromo Sapiens'—currently exhibiting in Hafnarhús.

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Best of Reykjavík:



DINING

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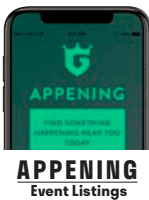
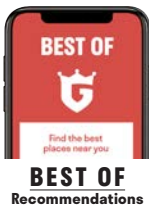
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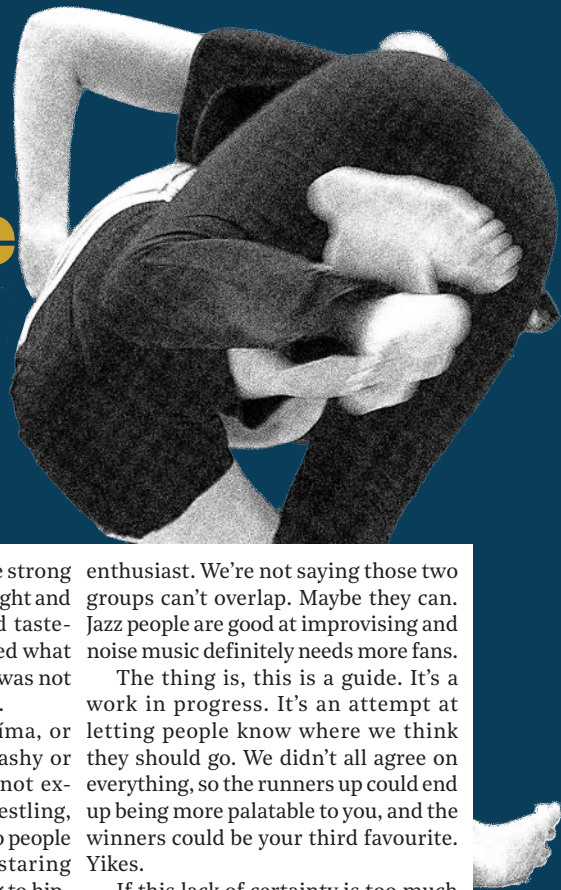
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THE AWARDS:

How We Picked the Winners



The word “conclusion” is a little strong in this case. We have argued, fought and 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 fun days out in Reykjavik. We at the Grapevine know what’s best!

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





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Dining

Delicious, even if you can't pronounce it

The year 2019 wasn't kind to many restaurateurs. Let's be honest, it's a tough business. Nevertheless, Iceland's culinary scene is seeing the emergence of new players and the old guard stepping up their A-game. Restaurants continue to diversify; we've got ourselves an izakaya inspired spot, while tasting menus are being questioned and reinterpreted. The scope of "Icelandic cuisine" is broadening to include not just produce and products but also their sourcing and seasonal integrity on this harsh island by players big and small. Whether it is globally recognised Nordic fine-dining or fragrant Thai curries, traditional Icelandic cuisine or family-friendly sushi, to everything in-between, this guide to the best of everything Reykjavík has to offer has been hand-picked by our exacting panel of passionate gourmands. From budget bites to fanciful fare, we've got you covered. Skál!

Best Burger



Le Kock & Búllan

Joint Winners

Le Kock, Tryggvagata 14

O burgers, glorious burgers! If there were a national dish, burgers would be it for Iceland. And at Le Kock, their irreverence is thankfully a social media strategy only. When it comes to the food, it is still the 'gourmet tuck shop' the founders envisioned. The potato roll game is strong and holds up despite their recent defeat at the hands of the sauce puddle muddle (a beast so savage, hardly a burger in town hasn't succumbed). Grab those extra napkins, you'll need them. Better yet, ask for just a smidgen of sauce. Singed with smoke and magic, a classic cheeseburger is still the top dog here.

Hamborgarabúllan, multiple locations

An oldie but a goodie, Búllan slings a solid burger that seals Iceland's reputation as a worthy burger destination. With multiple locations you are always close to one. A lil' birdie on our panel whispers that, "the Tommi-owned Höfði location is excellent with kids," and another swore by the Geirsgata location for the 'Steak Burger'. Also worth trying are the Tuesday 1,190 ISK deals.

Newcomer

Yuzu Hverfisgata 44

The citrus fruit extract might be a tad too pronounced in their mayo, but the steamed bread burgers at Yuzu have got everyone at the Grapevine offices converted. They arrive in a cane steamer and it's best to make quick work of the delicious treats, easy if you've got the Kimchi burger.



Previous Winners

- 2019: Le Kock & Búllan
- 2018: Le Kock
- 2017: Sæta Svinið

Best Vegan Burger

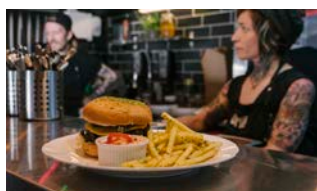


BioBorgari

Vesturgata 12

Veggie burgers can be many things, but too often they're reduced to a close-to-meat contest. Standing tall amidst a sea of pre-made patties and bean paste offenders are their scrumptious grain-bean-lentil patties, with the earthiness of assorted veggies and buckwheat and flax with the charcoal grill adding a lovely singed note. They've really listened to the dry burger complaint cause the 'Special Vegan' with its crown of baked apples is quite an unmissable treat, whether you are vegan or not. The tomato sauce & kale pesto are pretty great too. For clean, small-batch, slow living, BioBorgari is worth the love.

Runners-Up



Veganæs Tryggvagata 22

All hail Seitan! Veganæs' go-to filler's got some kick, so the Spicy Seitanic burger lives up to its name. The toothsome burger is only made better with its wasabi sesame speckled bun and herby fries. For vegans long deprived of greasy, crunchy, dishes, Veganæs is rid of grass grazing stereotypes and is pure guilty pleasure.



Jömm Kringlan 4-12

With soy-based Oumph products, Jömm have a wide selection of burgers to choose whatever your plant-based junk food craving may be—if the basic burger doesn't cut it, there are other variants and wraps and pitas as well. Psst... our panel says, "their sauces are a game changer."

Previous Winners

- 2019: Veganæs
- 2018: Prikíð
- 2017: Bike Cave
- 2016: Búllan

Best Pizza



Flatey

Grandagarður 11 & Hlemmur

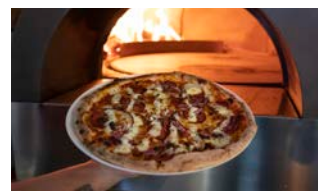
Newcomers rarely, if ever, win a category in the Best of Dining. But when Flatey blew onto the pizza scene in Reykjavík, they brought with them unknown-in-these parts Napoli pie-game. One bite of that foldover, blistered pie and we were floored. A few years in, and Flatey's pie-game is still as strong as ever. The menu spans classics—the Margheritas are a panel favourite with their puddle of milky mozzarella—and beloved faves, like the Tartufo, a truffled pizza bianco and the Vegan(o) with its rosemary speckled potatoes. Keep an eye out for the offspring of the 'Battle of the Bakers'.

Runners-Up



Black Box Pizzeria Borgartún 26 & Háholt 13-15

Black Box combines the Napoli-style sourdough craze with the familiarity of commercial pizzerias, all in a dark Goth arcade vibe. While originality might be a sore point for some panellists, we see the appeal of a well made pie, especially one with avocado and crushed pistachios.



Íslenska Flatbakan Mathöll Höfða, Bildshöfði 9

With a large wood fired oven (gas assisted), Flatbakan is an homage to homegrown pizza style. Think a thin crust, generously sauced pie topped with local favourites—regular suspects jostling for attention amidst dates, bananas and of course cream-cheese, and a melty vegan cheese.

Previous Winners

- 2018-9: Flatey
- 2017: Hornið
- 2015-6: Hverfisgata 12 (RIP)

Best Bakery



Sandholt

Laugavegur 36

In this hotly-debated category the competition is tough. Nothing gets passions boiling quite like talk of bread and butter. And still showing the young guns how it's done is the grand dame of all things baked, Sandholt. Their classic sourdough might be the most well known, but spare some love for their bulgur and Egyptian barley as well. Pastries and viennoiserie is something they excel at and the seasonal Danish, in-house chocolate and artisan sodas make for more than just a bakery experience.

Runners-Up



Deig Workshop Tryggvagata 18

Deig's strength is its consistency—be it the handmade doughnuts, bagels or airy brioche-like crullers. We are suckers for their potato loaves, which the panel exclaims are "especially good with egg salad." And for early risers, this is the perfect breakfast spot with their poorman's offer of a coffee, doughnut and bagel for just a 1000 ISK!



Brauð & Co. Multiple locations

The wicked curse of expansion woes has struck our favourite bakery, but fret not! While the kanill croissant snúður can be a hit or miss, their classic snúðurs continue to be as stellar as always. The granola is always a winner, but we are currently nursing a soft spot for their custardy veinebrauð.

Previous Winners

2019: Sandholt
2018: Sandholt and Brauð & Co.
2015-7: Sandholt

Best Indian



Austur-Indíafjélagið

Hverfisgata 56

Richly decorated with warm teak and antiques, this dinner-only establishment is ideal to perk up those taste buds after days of eating, ahem, milder fare in these parts. While the festive Diwali menu "is such good value for money," as one panellist quipped, others swore by the smoky Tandoori chicken. Serving some of the best lamb dishes in town, the classic Raan Manjarabad is a whole shank slow cooked to fall-off-the-bone tenderness. Vegans and vegetarians aren't a mere afterthought and the selection of breads exceeds that of standard naans.

Runners-Up



Himalayan Spice Laugavegur 60A

Other downtown restaurants might scream tourist trap, but this little slice of Nepal on Laugavegur is anything but. The thakali thali is "the only way to do justice" to the light, hearty fare of Himalayan cuisine—subtle, fresh and wholesome. The momos are worth trying too, a perfect foil for nippy days.



**Shalimar
Austurstræti 4**
Specialising in Lahori cuisine, Shalimar straddles the traditions of Lahore and Punjab. In layman terms, that translates to rich, slow-cooked, aromatic gravies. Reminiscent of British curry houses, this little paradise is perfect for a quick takeaway or leisurely dinners when only a curry will do.

Previous Winners

2016-9: Austur-Indíafjélagið
2015: Gandhi

Best Thai



Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Thai club rules say no chopsticks and no 'adjustment of spice levels' and Ban Thai isn't afraid to curtly remind you so. Pad Thai is passé, so you are better off doing as our panel suggests, and order the #107, the deep fried chili shrimp. The juicy crustaceans are rendered sweeter and juicier cooked within their shells. "You eat the crisp shells and gnaw off the little legs, you get more of that chilli crust that way," shares a die-hard loyalist on our panel. When a restaurant's been around for three decades like Ban Thai, it is indeed an accomplishment.

Runners-Up



Mai Thai Laugavegur 118

Dining here can be a reminder of Queen's style joints, part store-part restaurant. The band of ladies churn out quick Thai classics spanning spicy larbs dusted with toasted rice powder to easy going Thai curries, be it with tofu or plump shrimp. One panellist professed her love for them by admitting she "eats there more than she should."



**Krua Thai
Skólavörðustígur 21**
The panel lamented the dip in quality, but appreciated the "generous portions." The pad thai is a crowd pleaser, and the curries are full-bodied and fragrant. Service continues to be attentive, so if you need a little warmth from the inside out, Krua Thai's got you covered.

Previous Winners

2015-9: Ban Thai

Best Chinese



Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

Did you know that the Chinese kanji for fine recalls that of rice/meal? This proper Sichuanese restaurant packs a wallop of flavour, heat and textural delight in each of their selections. The simply stir-fried hot and sour potato matchsticks and vegetables are exactly the kind of subtlety that has been absent from Chinese cuisines in these parts and puts to rest doubts that this is only a fiery spicy cuisine. Other must-tries are the beef in hot oil, yu-shiang chicken. The panel loves "the chewy wood ear mushrooms" and the hand pulled noodles. Most dishes are vegan and lactose free, making this little gem accessible to everyone.

Runners-Up



Fönix Bildshöfði 12

Family-run Fönix has something for everyone. The dedicated vegan menu is a joy-ride of tastes and textures—the mapo-tofu has pleasingly jiggly cubes of tofu and the fish fragrant eggplants are silky. The lunch buffet is also a notch above similar fare.



**Tian
Grensásvegur 21**
Designed like a time capsule of dated restaurant interiors (think red fans and gold lamps), Tian seems intent on being a Western Chinese joint. Except, amongst populars like a worthy Kung Pao chicken, there's also pillow steamed buns and dumplings. There's a mythic secret menu, unconfirmed though.

Previous Winners

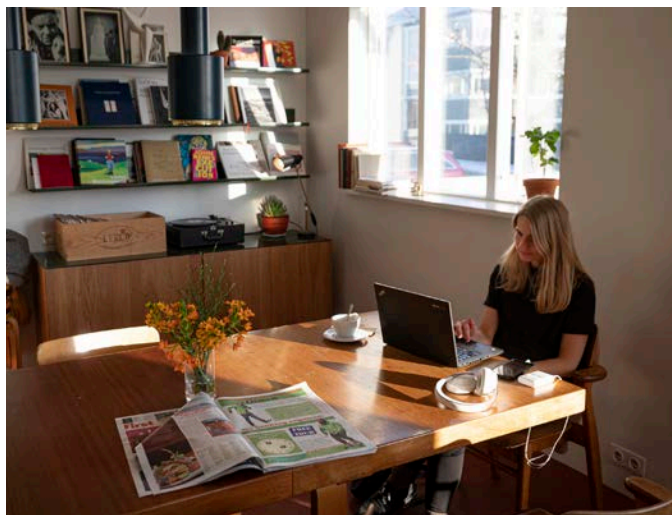
2018-9: Fönix

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Dining

Iceland's not cheap so it better be good

Best Coffeehouse



Reykjavík Roasters

Ásmundarsalur, Freyjugata 41

While Reykjavík Roasters' mothership is undeniably at Brautarholt 2, it's hard to beat the serene elegance of their Ásmundarsalur setting. Built in 1933 by one of Iceland's most beloved sculptors, predictably, the building is a sculptor's dream and filled with natural light. According to our panel: "It's that proper third wave coffee millennial cup plus a privately-owned art space."

Runner-Up



Emilie's Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 98

A cafe and lunch spot, this cute little French import is endearing. More substantial than being just a caffeine fix, the freshly baked scones are what you should be after here. We are particularly partial to the goat cheese with spinach. Washed down with some excellent brews and a neat little selection of coffee, it makes for pleasant people-watching and tummy pleasing.

Previous Winners

- 2019: Bismút
- 2018: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar
- 2017: Reykjavík Roasters

Newcomer



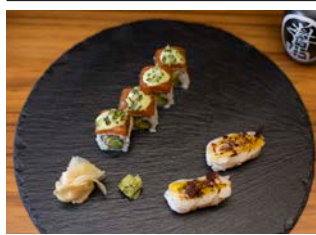
Kaktus Espresso
Vitastígur 12

One of those "blink and you miss it" neighbourhood cafés that make the humans huddled in Reykjavík's snowy embrace feel they're living in a vibrant metropolis. "It's cute, and with a nice lunch deal. I especially love the soup," one of our panellists offered. Part café, part cactus sanctuary, this is one for all you wallflowers out there.

Previous Winners

- 2016: Stofan
- 2015: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

Best Sushi



Sushi Social / Osushi

Joint Winners

Sushi Social
Pinghóltsstræti 5

By regularly showcasing Wagyu beef and tuna at one of their many festive plates, Sushi Social keeps things interesting throughout the year. An homage to Icelandic sushi, this is where classic sushi meets our love for sauces. And it is still a happy union. The rainbow hued tropical drinks and the peppy music only add to that happy island vibe.



Osushi
Tryggvagata 13

Before you turn your nose up at conveyor belt sushi, hear us out. This is a fantastic way to try several different plates, stumble upon a new love—like their crispy AF Japanese wings—or determine your least favourites. The quick turnover means the sushi was made minutes ago, a win-win in a land of cold rolls. Pst... this is bound to be a hit with kids and we spotted several happy young diners practicing their chopstick skills.

Runner-Up



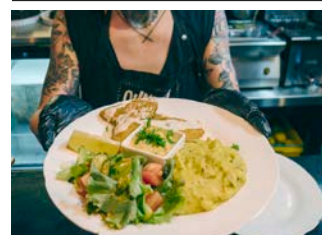
Fiskfélagið
Vesturgata 2a

Fish Company has recently expanded their sushi selection, particularly during lunch service as a small and a large portion. The usual suspects of classic salmon nigiri, maki rolls and sashimi are so beautifully presented, it surely counts as a cure for workday blues.

Previous Winners

- 2016-9: Fish Market
- 2015: SuZushii
- 2014: Sushisamba

Best Vegan Meal



Veganæ

Tryggvagata 22

Veganæ filled the junk-food hole in the hearts of local vegans, proving that cruelty-free dive bar fare can be just as down-and-dirty as a burger joint. The 'Fish and Chips' are all crunch and satisfaction and the cheeseballs are as comforting as only deep-fried cheese can be. Service can be hit and miss, but you wouldn't notice that as either a burlesque or goth drag show plays on alongside.

Runner-Up



Jömm
Kringlan 4-12

Jömm plays with the entire range of Oumph! variants, making soy sexy. What elevates a store shelf buy, though, are the clever iterations of Oumph! burgers, bowls and wraps satisfying every kind of craving. The icing on that (vegan) cake however are the accoutrements and vegan versions of a whole host of sauces, with the aioli deserving special mention.

Newcomer



SPES
Grandi Mathöll, Grandagarður 16

For too long now, vegans have had to contend with stereotypes translating to insipid restaurant offerings. Not so at SPES. Chickpeas are pulverised, dressed intensely and served atop crusty bread. Their tacos would fool meat eaters and the scrambled tofu on toast mimics eggs. Plus with most everything priced well under 2000 ISK it makes SPES quite a draw, vegan or not.

Previous Winners

- 2019: Sumac
- 2018: Skál & Mat Bar
- 2016-7: Kaffi Vínlyl
- 2015: Teni

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Joint Winners

Sumac Grill + Drinks, Laugavegur 28

Sumac's vibrancy seeps into everything—the food, ambience, service and its mix of diners across age groups. Chef Þráinn's love for Lebanese-Levant flavours is reflected in the menu. By focusing on flavour profiles unique to the cuisines, it is a successful transplant from Beirut to Reykjavík. For an indulgent spread, we recommend getting all the dips and a few flatbreads. Mop it up with the excellent grilled lamb chops (commendable for the absence of sous vide) and the now cult whole roasted cauliflower. Our only pet peeve is the kitchen's mysterious affinity for smooth purees. Sumac, we love you but give us a gritty muhammara and the silky strands of eggplants.

Skál, Hlemmur Mathöll, Laugavegur 107

What do we say about this Bib Gourmand awarded restaurant that defies labels? Is it a gastropub or an experimental kitchen? Chef Gísli's passion for cooking from the island permeates both the food and drink. The cod wings will have you weep with joy, the charr is a buttery cocoon of comfort, and the lamb ribs unctuous. Pair with guest brews, or natural wines... or maybe a pineapple weed cocktail-on-tap is your thing. Whatever your preference, you're in for a world class experience. Peppy service and fine dining flourishes will make you forget you are in a bustling food hall. All we can say is Skál!

Runner-Up



Mat Bar Hverfisgata 26

The warm elegance of Mat Bar's gleaming brass bar is further enhanced by its striking green and black interior. The attentive details translate to the

food as well. The rotational menu has gone from strength to strength with seasonal flourishes. It's affordability and sharing plates create that enviable air of conviviality.

Previous Winners

2019: Snaps
2018: Mat Bar
2017: Snaps & Matur og Drykkur
2014-6: Snaps

Best Place For A Fancy Meal



Grillið

Hótel Saga, Hagatorg 107 8F

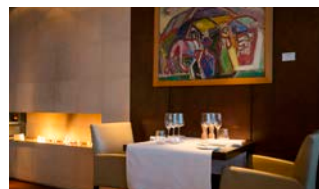
A shatteringly thin tuile arrives, the teeny purple wood sorrel recalls butterflies. Inside, is a treasure of milky chicken liver mousse and bilberries. You may then flit to the puffy, cloud-like orb of potato bread so good, you might just forget that silky garlic veloute. Too often fine dining can feel like a straitjacket experience. At Grillið, you are put at ease with the playfulness of the food, especially the small bites. The wine and juice pairing is a missed opportunity. However, the expansive views are singular and the service attentive. Desserts leave you with that same aha moment as when you first walk in and for that, Grillið retains its top dog spot.

Runners-Up



Dill Laugavegur 59

Dill 3.0 as it's popularly known is back after a brief hiatus. Chef Gunnar Karl is clearly keen on bringing that star back to Iceland. The new space is all warmth and cool-cat dinner party vibes. Hand-picked details abound and the tasting menu bucks the established norm. For understated luxury and a memorable dining experience, bet on Dill.



Vox Hilton Nordica, Suðurlandsbraut 2

Many hotel restaurants' bad rep isn't helped by their all-day menus leaving those looking for a culinary experience wanting. Vox, however, puts those clichés to rest dramatically. The smoked potato purée with poached egg and caviar is as decadent as it sounds, topped only by a 1953 Baron de Sigognac Armagnac—an elegant nightcap.

Previous Winners

2019: Grillið
2015-8: Dill

Best Family Restaurant



Hamborgarafabrikkan

Höfðatorg & Kringlan

Parents' Choice

The Hamborgarafabrikkan 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. 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. There's a wide range of juicy square burgers, veggie options and house sauces to choose from, with comfortable seating and friendly service in both central Reykjavík locations.

Kids' Choice



Osushi Tryggvagata 13

It isn't always sunshine and rainbows when dining with young wards. At Osushi, the entertainment is taken care of by its engaging conveyor belt format. The selection manages to please safe and adventurous palates alike, so whether its toddler friendly hosomaki or play-with-your-food edamame or spicy tuna rolls or more than acceptable sashimi, there's something for everyone. Chopstick skills are an enviable bonus, what's not to like?

Newcomer

Laundromat Austurstræti 9

With the same branding, focus and vibe as its original predecessor, Laundromat is bringing families back out from their hidey holes. The basement play area is brand spanking new, clean and ready to satiate any play time demands of its young customers, while their parents can enjoy some respite. The tasty burgers are just a bonus really.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Hamborgarafabrikkan
2017: Jamie's Italian

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Dining

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

Best Cheap Meal



Icelandic Street Food

Lækjargata 8 & Laugavegur 85

Plokkfiskur, a fish stew cooked with boiled potatoes and bechamel, is traditionally eaten with heavily buttered rugbrauð (dark, dense rye bread) and is on everyone's must-try list when they visit Iceland. At Icelandic Street Food you can have all this and more—shellfish soup, traditional kjötsúpa (lamb soup), the aforementioned 'Fisherman's Special', hjónabandssæla (rhubarb-oatmeal crumble pie) and pancakes for about 2000 ISK. The clincher, however, is that buying one shellfish soup allows you to have a refill of the lamb soup, and then the fish and then the desserts and it goes on! Simply put, an impossible offer to beat. The barnyard funk is especially ambient as you sit and sip on your lamb soup like a farmer of yore.

Runners-Up



108 Matur
Fákafen 9

A dark horse amongst Skeifan's many food joints is 108 Matur with a refreshing spin on Icelandic lunch buffets. Embracing the Soviet canteen like disciplined, sustenance only vibe, it is "honest old school construction but with extra flair" like the fresh green peas in lieu of canned ðra, with a flurry of fresh dill. Pick your main course (vegan available too!) from the rotational menu, and the salads, sauces and all other accompaniments are unlimited. Coffee and cake seal the deal.



Chinese Flavour
Hverfisgata 119

You'd be hard pressed to find a cuter food truck with prices as little as 350 ISK. Chinese Flavour lives up to its name, offering us a taste of Beijing-style street fare. There is a hearty scallion pancake, dumplings and baos. What you shouldn't leave without however are the cumin salt rubbed lamb skewers, cooked to order, and a chat with the friendly proprietors.

Previous Winners

2019: Lamb Street Food
2018: Icelandic Street Food
2017: Bike Cave

2016: Noodle Station
2015: K-Bar

Best Brunch



The Cocoo's Nest

Grandagarður 23

It's with good reason that this family-run restaurant has made such a strong impact on the local brunch scene. Such is the popularity of their sumptuous fare that they now offer brunch starting Fridays. The pancakes are American perfection. That award-winning sourdough is put to good use under poached eggs bathed in a silky hollandaise tickled with blue cheese, the wreck-your-bank-account avocado toast, or just simply grilled and served alongside an omelette that feeds six. We kid, but only partially. Iris, one of the owners, insists people leave well fed and stuffed. And even though Luna Florens extends the seating availability, it's best to make a reservation.

Runners-Up



Snaps
Pörsgrata 1

To Sunday like the locals do, head to Snaps. Serving up the perfect laid-back brunch, choose from various egg preparations, sandwiches or salads. The croque monsieurs are especially good if you are nursing a hangover and nothing but a rich sando will do. Couple with the bloody good Bloody Mary and you'll be ready for another night of debauchery.



Café Paris
Austurstræti 14

Paris' Austurvöllur location is postcard perfection for sun-bathing, people watching and yes, everyday brunching. Despite recent upheavals, Paris is back on track with their stack of pancakes, eggs florentine and, wait for it, table service! Make it a 'Boozy Brunch' and sightseeing in Reykjavík will already be off to a great start.

Previous Winners

2019: The Cocoo's Nest
2018: Cafe Paris
2017: VÓX
2016: Cocoo's Nest

Best Seafood



Fish Company / Messinn Grandi

Joint Winners

Fish Company
Vesturgata 2a

Fish Company is the definitive seafood restaurant in Iceland. Their around the world inspired tasting menus are a great way to try the best the waters around Iceland have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style to harissa stocked tooth-fish. Many chefs have cut their teeth in this very kitchens. The restaurant also has fantastic lunch deals. With an eye on sustainability, they are also limiting their serving of the now overfished Icelandic langoustine, a laudable effort.



Messinn Grandi
Grandagarður 8

Inspired by Tjörhúsid's fish-in-a-pan buffet-style dining in Ísafjörður, Messinn has always aspired to the same level of enthusiastic pescatarian feast—something they really nail in their Grandi outpost. With tables looking out to the harbour, it is a picturesque setting to slowly savour the honey butter glazed trout, the plokkfiskur or for the more adventurous, pan-fried gellur or cod throats. Lunch is especially popular with large groups and office goers. Dinner is ideal if the lunch frenzy isn't your thing.

Runner-Up



Sægreifinn
Geirsgata 8

"They always seem to have something I wouldn't have otherwise tried," said one panellist of Sægreifinn's food. Case in point being the skewers of the day's catch, grilled to order. Our astute panel points out that the originally curry-laced seafood soup is now more a tomato based broth. Nevertheless, the entire experience of huddling up in front of the porch, sipping on soup and listening to tales of its late founder, the Sea Baron, is unmatched.

Previous Winners

2019: Fiskfélagið
2018: Fiskfélagið & Fish Market
2015-7: Fiskfélagið



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Best Lunch Place



Mimir

Hótel Saga

Following a sprightly makeover, Mimir is garnering accolades for its extremely affordable lunch offers. Where else would you dine on a two-course meal; from lamb saddle to roast cauliflower to the best roasted potatoes, cooked by some of the most promising chefs, for just 2500 ISK? Sure the prices have risen slightly since they opened, but the fast paced, suitable for lunch service, and all the flourishes of fine-dining makes you forget impending deadlines. That alone makes them a clear winner.

Runners-Up



Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4

This outpost of Denmark in Iceland upholds its Danish tradition of smørrebrød uncompromisingly. You might want to skip the akvavit for lunch, but it pairs so well with Jacob's Plaice (who're we kidding, you deserve the schnapps!). Perhaps the shrimp pyramid is more to your liking. Or the velvety Danish paté. Once you've been seated and treated like the royalty that you are, you'll see why this was a panel favourite.



Hipstur Mathöll Höfða, Bildshöfði 9

This charming little restaurant is all heart and Nordic deliciousness. Did you know the popular 'mushrooms on toast' is vegan? The fish of the day is a carefully curated flaky fish bowl with fresh sprigs of herbs, veggies, grains and a lovely golden focaccia. Dish of the day and weekly specials also mean you can dine here without lunch-room dread. Score!

Previous Winners

2019: Hlemmur and Grandi Mathöll
2017-8: Snaps
2015-6: Ostabúðin (RIP)

Best Late-Night Bite



Mandi

Veltusund 3b

We might as well just call this "The Mandi category." Whether it's their full-flavoured meats, their extensive vegan options or their idiosyncratic social media messages, this Syrian kebab place stole Reykjavík's heart. Crispy falafels, lamb shawarmas, teeny desserts, or a pack of ciggies; Mandi's got you. If there's any doubt that these gentlemen were destined for true kebab greatness, consider that one of them is called Hlal!

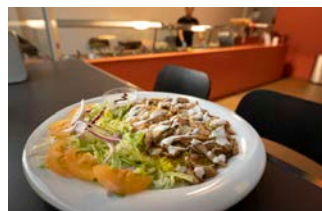
Runners-Up



Devitos Laugavegur 126

Even bad pizza is good pizza and Devitos is better than bad, it's good. Another staple of the Icelandic late nite bites for over 25 years, this place is sure to sort you out at the end of a long shift at the hotel or a long line at the bar bathroom. Now stop your yapping and grab a slice with pepperoni, pineapple, and cream cheese like a real native.

Newcomer



Griska húsið - Greek House Laugavegur 107

It's a well-known fact that a rib-sticking combo of fat and carbs will help slow the absorption of alcohol in the body. As if that wasn't enough, a 2010 report stated that "l-cysteine can be used to decrease acetaldehyde concentration in the achlorhydric stomach during alcohol exposure." In layman's terms: 1,200 ISK chicken döner kebab is anti-booze medicine.

Previous Winners

2017-9: Mandi
2016: Ali Baba
2015: Fish and Chips

Best Place To Go With A Group Of Friends



Fjallkonan

Hafnarstræti 1-3

What is it about playful drinks housed in popcorn bags, puffy sugar clouds of cotton candy, ferris wheels of doll-house desserts and tiers of colourful hummus that makes hanging out at places that much more fun? Fjallkonan is the hottest new spot for large groups or anyone hankering for a hands-on engaging experience. That the food tastes delicious, the cocktails inspired, cosy seating and the service knows how to keep the good times rollin' makes this our favourite place to head out with your besties and frenemies alike.

Runners-Up



Bastard Brew Vegamótastigur 4

It's a pity that after-work drinks aren't really a thing here. Even so, Bastard Brew's multi-level space with deep booths, cosy corners and open dart area makes it a perfect haunt to let your hair down after a long, tiring day. The GNt selection is expansive enough to warrant revisits and the brews on tap are perfect foils to the there's-something-for-everyone selection of foods.



Tapas Barinn Vesturgata 3b

Peppy music, check. Tropical drinks, check. Platters upon extensive platters of copious amounts of Spanish-inspired tapas, check. Service that never falters through the night (even if you do), check. Tapas Barinn continues to be a favourite haunt for returning Icelanders, bachelorettes, and send offs. No matter the occasion, Tapas Barinn keeps it lively.

Previous Winners

2019: Apotek
2015-8: Tapas barinn

Best Newcomer



Makake

Grandagarður 101

Makake, the newest Asian izakaya is a colourful outpost of a typical Japanese street. Named after the hot tub loving meditative monkeys, Makake is throwing down the gauntlet for casual Asian dining. Since their opening, they have introduced dimsum brunches, pop-ups with guest chefs, and vegan tasting menus in addition to their staple fare of a selection of dumplings, small plates like the braised pork belly, an interesting assortment of vegetable-forward plates and desserts like mochi and anko. With an emphasis on handmade slow food, Makake is well on its way to redefining Asian cuisine in Iceland.

Runners-Up



Vinstúkan Tíu Sopar Laugavegur 27

When a chef and restaurateur's mutual passion for natural wines and quality bar snacks collide, a little gem like Tíu Sopar is born. The wineria (like vermuteria, get it?) is perfect for chat-up-the-barmen banter and noisy weeknight street parties, all while noshing aged Tindur with beurre noisette, crackling Padron peppers, charcuterie and the occasional 'Fried Chicken' pop-up, which should just be a staple dammit!



Kastrup Hverfisgata 12

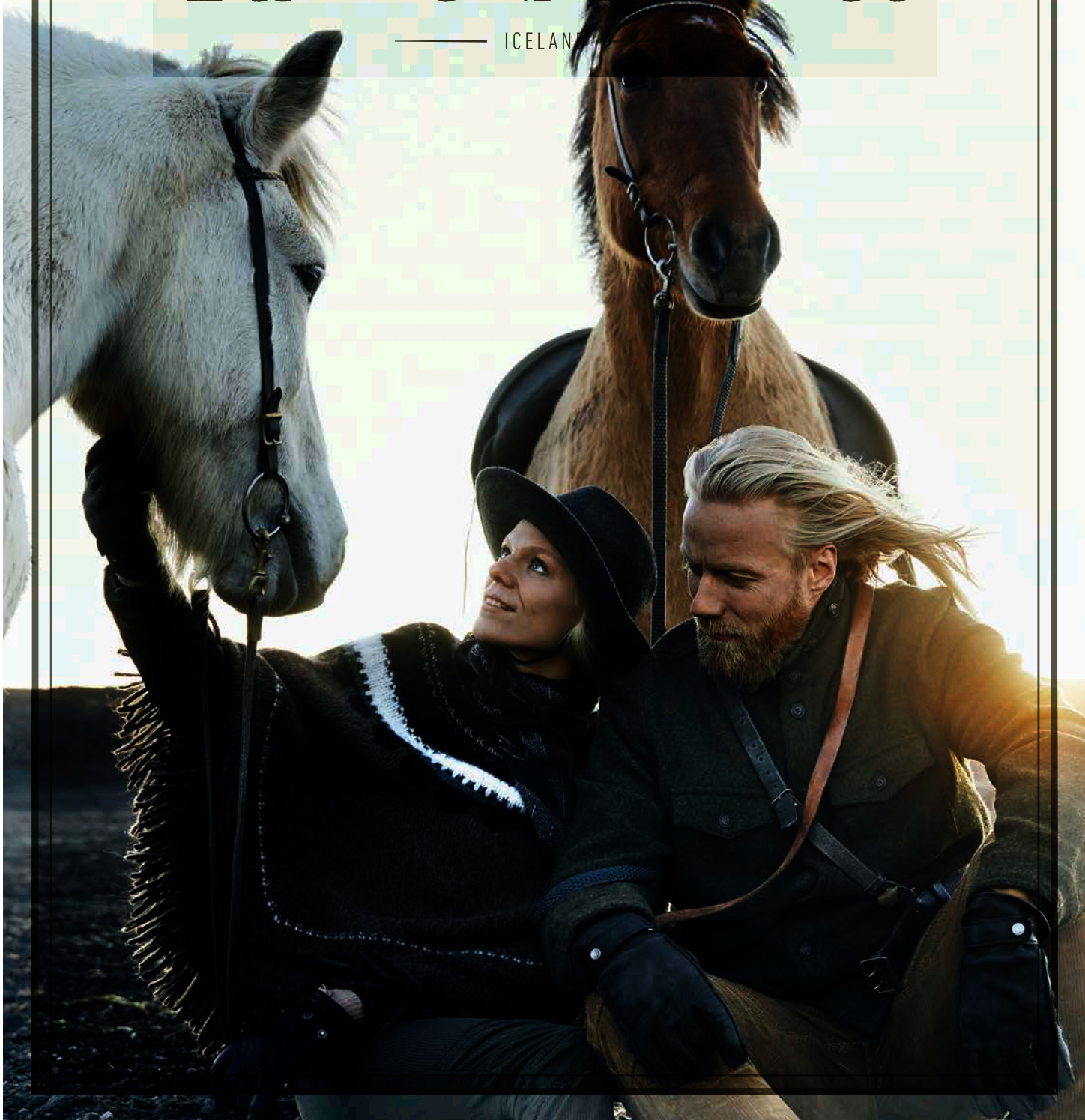
From the same people at the helm of Brauð og Co. and Snaps, comes Kastrup, a promising little Danish station. Clever in its repurposing of Hverfisgata 12 where Dill once was, this currently smørrebrød only place is plating picturesque platters of open-sandwich classics like roast beef and fried plaice. Definitely one to watch out for.

Previous Winners

2019: Skelfiskmarkaðurinn (RIP)/
Eiríksson Brasserie
2018: Nostra(RIP)

Farmers Market

— ICELAND —



OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS



Laugavegur 37



Hólmastóð 2 / Grandi

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Dining

Greasy burger, or glazed, torched cod head?

Best Ice Cream



Skúbb

Laugarásvegur 1

Nothing quite says 'live in the moment' like a melty cone of luscious ice-cream. Did you know that Skúbb only uses milk from Bióbú, a local organic farm? Did you know they are the most non-distinguishable between vegan and dairy ice-cream scoops? That is how vibrant and intense each scoop is at Skúbb. Lately, the panel's been gushing about the passion fruit with coconut milk, although the dark chocolate and berry sorbets are also not to be missed. The waffle cone itself has improved dramatically, with a shattering crispness. With a small curated selection that reflects the seasons, this imaginarium of joy churns everything from tomatoes to licorice roots into ice-cream. We heart you Skúbb.

Runners-Up



Ísbúð Vesturbæjar Hagamel 67

A cultural centre, blitzer of ice-cream shakes, dipper of chocolate dips in assorted toppings and maker of the best gamli-is (old school water-based ice cream) beloved Ísbúð Vesturbæjar is basically an institution. Nothing quite says you are a local like going here during a mild storm, getting your dairy fix for the slow biltúr ahead.



Arna Ís og Kaffi Eiðistorg 15

With expansive views out to the ocean, this lactose-free cafe and ice cream spot is particularly welcoming for those with kids. The scoopers oblige whims young and old and the extensive nammi (candy, a local favourite with ice creams) selection should keep any pre-sugar grumpiness at bay.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Skúbb
2017: Valdís

Best Tasting Menu



Óx Reykjavík

Inside Sumac, Laugavegur 28

An intimate dining experience unlike any other, Óx seats only 12 diners each night in an intimate chef's table setting. There is little room for error in this gastronomic drama where everything unfolds in full view. Whole roasted duck carved exquisitely, whole grilled monkfish passed family style, delicate morsels of langoustine paired with beers and wines, all while you chat away with the chefs and fellow diners. The intimacy heightens the experience, and as the wine pours it starts to feel like you know each other well. Once the dust settles, it's time to leave and you do so a tad bit shaken as you walk out from the tiny timber cabin into the bustling Sumac.

Runners-Up



Dill Laugavegur 59

Turning the tasting menu concept on its head, Dill features a singular seafood and/or meat across multiple courses in order to really honour the produce in its entirety. Expect to be dazzled by the foreplay—the onion cake is gaining rightful notoriety as is the wine pairing, in that there is no pairing at all, but 'a' wine to accompany a selection of dishes, allowing you to discern for yourself what pairing you enjoy best.

Matur og Drykkur Grandagarður 2

Whether it is land-, sea- or a vegetable-forward tasting you want to experience, you're in safe hands at Matur og Drykkur. Each menu is a considered study and showcases Iceland's best produce—foal, reindeer, cod and lamb all make an appearance. The progression between courses is well portioned and well timed, and you'll leave with a sense of having explored the island's culinary landscape.

Previous Winners

2019: Grillið
2017-8: Dill

Best Italian



La Primavera

Marshall House, Grandagarður 20

With the re-opening of La Primavera, the restaurant has earned loyalists both old and new. Sitting pretty by the Grandi harbour in Marshall House, it is particularly popular with the lunch crowd. Fair warning however, this is lunch at an Italian Nonna's house, meaning you'll be dawdling out of there stuffed to the gills. Dinner however is an elegant affair. The focus is on coaxing maximum flavour from seasonal ingredients at their prime by doing as little as possible. You might start the year with pan-fried fresh cod, and then move onto light summer salads, perhaps grilled broccolini, and in the fall, pasta woven with wild mushrooms. A right royal treat however is the truffle (from San Miniato) festival the restaurant intends to continue hosting.

Runners-Up



The Coooco's Nest Grandagarður 23

Between their brunches and breads, it's easy to forget that Coooco's is really a Cali-Italian place at heart. The sourdough pizzas deserve particular mention, as do the appetisers that could easily serve as a meal by itself. The vegetarian byggoto (barley risotto) is deeply satisfying, while the olive oil cake is a true slice of simple joy.



Eiriksson Brasserie Laugavegur 77

It's hard to categorise Eiriksson with its Italian-French leaning menu. The interiors and menu whisper nouveau riche indulgence, the 'fancy' ingredients are a giveaway. But all these reservations aside, they dish out a mean veal, good steaks and a smattering of pasta and pizzas.

Previous Winners

2019: La Primavera
2018: Marshall House

Best Lamb



Apótek

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. Such is their love for lamb, that every Sunday they host a traditional Sunday roast with all the fixin's—sugared potatoes, green peas, mushrooms and a slow cooked leg of lamb plus a little family-style dessert for just 2990 ISK. And if that isn't your cup of tea, then both their lunch and dinner menus showcase three different cuts of lamb.

Runners-Up



Lamb Street Food

Grandagarður 7
You don't need to sell a kidney to taste good Icelandic lamb. This little restaurant is built around the animal; even the walls are adorned with graphic illustrations of the clipped ear tag patterns of sheep. The flatbreads and selection of sauces like the herby zhoug are designed to highlight the grilled meat.



Matarkjallarinn

Aðalstræti 2
By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself. Whether you order the grilled lamb chops or the popular shoulder it will be cooked to tender succulence. Icelandic lamb is prized for its clean, grassy flavour and here it is showcased in a fittingly unpretentious fashion.

Previous Winners

2019: Matarkjallarinn

Best Sourdough



The Coooco's Nest

Grandagarður 23

Which bakery has the best bread is a hugely contested topic in people's homes, on social media food groups and on the Grapevine's panel too. The giant wheaty boules at Coooco's are a balance of flavour, with a tang that dissolves into sweetness and an airy crumb structure. A nice crunchy crust yields to a billowy soft interior. It is fantastic on its own with nothing more than a schmear of butter and is a great vehicle for toppings. Such is the demand and affection for Lucas's bread that last Christmas saw advance orders being taken.

Runners-Up



Sandholt

Laugavegur
Legend has it that the sourdough culture has been kept alive and clearly well-fed over decades at Sandholt. The alchemy of flour, water and time left to do its thing is transformed into one of the most beautiful rustic loaves with an enviable open crumb, the holy grail for many an enthusiastic baker.



Brikk

Mýrargata 31
For yeasted delights both sweet and salty, Brikk is a one-stop shop. From Nutella swirled snúðurs to a spicy chili-flecked loaf, this bakery/cafe churns out some pretty solid sourdough as well. Light and airy, not too 'holey' and often warm if you pick them up in the morning, these loaves will find favour with those prefer a 'softer' crust.

Previous Winners

New Category!

Best Traditional Icelandic Food



Café Loki

Lokastígur 28

Long before Icelandic food was considered 'cool', this unassuming cafe has been unabashedly celebrating tradition. From the classic farm style kjötsúpa (lamb soup) to herring and plökkfiskur, everything is a throw-back to how the island once ate. We recommend trying the rye bread soup as well—it's part what the heck, part dessert, but all delicious. The carrot-cake doppelganger Freyja is a trout brauðterta (savory sandwich cake) that is retro tasty as well. And for those writing their own tales of bravado, there is fermented shark to be washed down by Brennivín.

Runners-Up



Þrír Frakkar

Baldursgata 14
To get a sense of Icelandic food culture from a time before it was fashionably New Nordic, pay a visit to Þrír Frakkar. This restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you'll spot everything from foal, to black bird, to cod throats and plökkfiskur that are sure to remain long in your memory. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.



Salka Valka

Skólavörðustígur 23
Named after Halldór Laxness' two-part novel, this charming little eatery dishes up affordable, plentiful food, offering visitors a taste of Iceland on a budget. The plökkfiskur and the steamed fish are cooked in home-style modesty and they accommodate vegans and vegetarians as well.

Previous Winners

New Category!

Best Soup



Ramen Momo

Tryggvagata 16

An elbow room only ramen bar, this local favourite has been going strong for five years now. Their passion for a big old bowl of noodle soup shows in their constant reinvention. The sesame forward creamy Tantanmen is deeply flavoured, the hoisin cooked pork adding a touch of sweetness and providing momentary relief against the heat of the chilli oil. The Icelandic ramen with lobster broth is a local nod that really works. Their range of vegan ramen is unparalleled, although their tonkotsu continues to be the weak link. The Korean teas, both hot and cold, are delightfully original. But Ramen Momo's biggest strength are their house-made noodles—springy and elastic, the consistency of these organic strands make them a clear winner.

Runners-Up



Hi Noodle

Frakkastígur 9
This adorable little place with a small selection is known for its all day cooked tonkotsu, but stay for the spicy Dan Dan. Crispy chilli oil, minced pork speckled Chinese original, this is a fantastically delicious bowl (hint, you can also ask for the 'dry' version). The vegan options are also quite satisfying. It is a pity however that their broth:noodle ratio is off. We want more of your tasty broth, Hi Noodle!



Noodle Station

Multiple locations
Showing Reykjavik how to soup for sup long before we had soup alone restaurants was Noodle Station. With a choice of three different broths, rest assured whatever you order will arrive piping hot, in a portion too large to finish. If you have trouble finding one, just follow the sweet scent of cinnamon and star anise.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Ramen Momo



DINING

A Sublime Symphony

Dill 3.0 rattles fine dining norms

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

I walk into the womb-like vestibule of Dill, still smelling faintly of tar and paint, with just enough lighting to help my eyes adjust to the dark interiors. The light grows as I walk up the stairs and so does my anticipation.

Dill 3.0 has only been open a few weeks at the time of the visit. We normally do not review restaurants this early, but this is chef Gunnar Karl, and when he tells you that he is planning to turn the tasting menu-wine

pairing concept on its head, you grab front row tickets post haste.

Laissez-'fare'

The space that once housed Nostra has been transformed into a rusty terracotta cocoon of warmth. Foraged greens in clear glass frames and burnished wood ledges with wine glasses strike a homely vibe. With the service abandoning the long-winded spiel about the restaurant-ingre-

dients-techniques for easy conversation, I can't help but feel I am at a friendly dinner party.

Echoing that same vibe, the wine courses—all natural—are offered for a group of dishes, rather than the traditional course by course pairing. In a fine dining setting such as this, the democratisation of pairings allows for refreshing dialogue between diners and the chefs.

Signature snacks arrive in rapid succession—a teeny disc of cod chip dotted with prunes, a thimble of 'kitchen scrap' consommé is a mouthful of deep dashi-like intensity, and the goose offal pate is like swallowing a Christmas bauble in the best possible way. Ruby red beets and equally bloody blueberries are raw and pickled with a light snow of horseradish, the stinging sharpness of which nicely augments the Blanc de Blancs de Bouzy 'B3' champagne from Jean Vessele.

The 'onion cake' however is already gaining notoriety. A rich, almost malty financier, the rendered onions interestingly recall foie gras-like butteriness. Cut with the sparkly wine, this remains a bite you remember long after the meal. Each of these heralders are perfectly one-bite sized designed to leave one longing for more.

Beyond tasting menus

A stream of demure and verdant local veggies arrive next. Matchstick like raw rutabaga becomes more than the sum of its parts with its coriander and chilli flecked rutabaga mash. The 2015 Chardonnay from Alexandre Coulangue highlights the citrus notes of the coriander, making it one of my favourite pairings of the evening. Solfinn Danielsen's curation is unmistakable.

Designed to reduce kitchen waste and to use ingredients in their entirety, the main courses each honour one star ingredient—on this occasion, cod and goose.

Fish bones are simmered for a soup, and when poured over tiny orbs of al dente potatoes it is a more successful reference to plokkiškur than the quenelle of cod that preceded it. The dry 2017 Chenin Blanc from Garo' Vin is an arresting accompaniment, but the cod centres are so textbook I find myself longing for some guts and glory.

The goose breast with pickled crowberries reminds me that this is what the goose likely ate sans the copious puddle of seaweed butter of course. The punch is delivered with the intensely savoury goose leg broth, every sip studded with a brunoise of pickled root vegetables.

As I look back, however, it is the humble griddle-cooked potato flatbread I am thinking about. Nostalgia is a powerful ingredient in cooking and one that Dill has long teased. Here the bread with smoked cream cheese and hand harvested salt is a reminder of flatkaka and smoked meats traditionally eaten in Iceland, with neither of the two components actually being served.

Dill 3.0 cleverly curates an entire experience, be it the absence of branding except for subtle flourishes in the letterpress menu cards, the cutlery jar instead of place settings and the eclectic playlist. Even as the winning wine and dinner service are book-ended by precision food, it is all designed to put you at ease, and really rattle fine dining norms. And that it does, with aplomb. 🍷

Update: *At the time of publishing, Dill has reclaimed their Michelin Star.*



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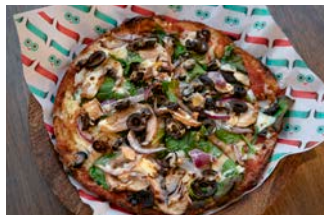
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FlyOver
ICELAND

Over the past year, Keto has become a full-blown fad in Iceland. Well over 3% of the population has joined the Keto Iceland group on Facebook, and restaurants and grocery stores are clambering aboard the bandwagon.

The diet is quite complicated, as it revolves around eating less than 20 grams of net carbohydrates per day, which is supposed to bump the body into a state of ketosis, causing it to start burning fat for energy instead of carbs and protein. Google it before you go nuts. Please.



Pizza pizzazz (hold the crust)

The Grandi Mathöll pizza joint **Skjaldbakin** offered the first keto pizza in Iceland and it is still considered by many to be the best. They offer quite a few toppings combinations, so you're not likely to get bored anytime soon. **Pizzan** also changed the game last year when they started offering keto pies, in two versions, and keto breadsticks, which is a real lifesaver for those that are starting out and haven't quite figured out the grocery shopping. Not to mention, they deliver. Pizzan also offers a keto ice cream, although we're not sure if eating the whole tub by yourself will benefit your health. You decide.

Café life (pastries forbidden)

The keto chicken salad at **Kaffi Laugalækur** is kind of perfect, in a keto way. It's a green salad con-



GUIDE

Become A Keto Kardashian

We would never eat bread, are you serious?

Words: **The Grapevine's Carb-Hating Department**
Photo: **Art Bicnick**



coction with chicken, eggs, and bacon shreds, topped with garlic sauce. Simple, but the raw materials are top-notch. The place is great too. They serve great coffee from a small roaster (if you don't like black coffee or espresso go for the cortado with coconut milk), and they have a lovely kids corner. An all-rounder. For a downtown newly reopened classic, there's also the **Laundromat Café**. They offer keto versions of all the burgers, their baked salmon and their bearnaise steak.



A fancy night (no bread, only butter)

A pioneer, **Kröst** were among the first to offer a keto burger, which still holds its own, and most of their menu has keto options, although you do have to ask the staff. Other than that, the simplest options for keto fine dining are the steakhouses such as **MEAT** and **Hereford**. **Matarkjallarinn** and **Sjávargrillio** also offer keto modifications to their menu.



Fast fast fast food

Culiacan, the tex-mex fast food joint, offers three keto-friendly options, and noodle joint **Wok On** offers a zucchini noodle base to keep your carbs in check. Salad spot **Local** offers three ready keto bowls, and **Black Box Pizza** does a couple of pizza options and a keto bowl, which we quite liked. **Bike Cave's** keto burger gets a mention too. If you venture far out in the suburbs, **Gullnesti** in Grafarvogur offers a keto burger. Hyper-cheerful family-oriented burger joint **Fabrikkann** offer a keto bowl, no word on the burgers though. **Subway** offers some salad options that are keto, ask the staff. Health food joint **Saffran's** keto chicken also deserves a mention.

For the vegetarians

This category is unfortunately very slim, especially since the carbon footprint on mostly meat-based dishes is not great. **Gló** is the only party we know of, although their veggie keto bowl is more low-carb than keto, clocking in at around 25 g. of carbs. They also offer a keto chicken salad and a keto burger, which is quite popular. **Kröst** can custom-make a vegetarian keto burger, with their Beyond Meat patty. It works without bacon, but if you skip the egg, it's quite sparse. Here's hoping that in the future more of the vegan restaurant biz will try to get the low-carb crowd in. One can only dream. 🍴

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Drinking

Tipsy or wasted, the choice is yours

Let's not beat around the bush: Icelanders love to drink. In fact, there is probably nothing Icelanders like to do more than drink, which could very well be why this country doesn't have a space program. 2019 was a big year in the downtown drinking scene, with some old favourites closing and some strong newcomers opening. Some facts of life, however, remained the same: alcohol is still expensive, but that doesn't stop us from partying. How else would we have sex?

Best Goddamn Bar



Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Three times the charm! Yes, for the third year, the Reykjavík institution of Kaffibarinn is Grapevine's Best Goddamn Bar. Are you surprised? How could you be? While many Reykjavík bars come and go and redecorate and rename and put on bells and whistles, Kaffibarinn has stayed the course for almost three decades—because it's just a really good, reliable place. It plays host to Reykjavík's artistic intellectuals, creative talents, and, well, downtown characters and consistently puts on a show. Basically, you'll never have a boring night at KB. It's no ordinary watering hole.

Newcomer



Röntgen Hverfisgata 12

A bar that's been open but a few months winning the runner-up spot in the Best Goddamn Bar category? Quelle surprise! Well, go to Röntgen on a weekend night and you'll understand why. It's a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a fanbase that's just growing and growing. We stan.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Kaffibarinn
2017: Húrra (RIP)

Runner-Up



Gaukurinn Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, and gender-neutral bathrooms, Gaukurinn is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykvikingar, so if you're looking for like-minded peeps, here you go. The venue hosts everything from metal to underground rap to drag extravaganzas to stand-up comedy, so you never really know what you're gonna get on any given night.

2016: Prikid
2015: KEX Hostel

Best Place To Start The Night



Veður

Klapparstigur 33

For the second time in a row, Veður has snatched up the Best Place To Start The Night gold medal. And for good reason. This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that grabbed each member of the panel's heart. "There's something casual about Veður in that you feel fine relaxing and chatting but it's still a nice and sophisticated bar," one panellist explained. "But that said, the first time I went they were playing a new wave punk playlist, so it's not your average quiet cocktail bar."

Runners-Up



Loft Bankastræti 7

"Loft is perfectly situated between the two areas of downtown and their Happy Hour lasts until 21:00," one panel member raved. "Their service is also great, and their balcony is fantastic in the summer." It's no wonder the hostel's cosy bar has a cult following. Go there on weeknights for a plethora of events including karaoke, watercolouring, and speed dating.



Miami Hverfisgata 33

Miami has a lot going for it—an amazing interior, delicious cocktails, and a relaxed atmosphere early in the night that's very conducive for chill convos and bonding. "It's a good vibe in the early evening," one panellist raved. "Also, it's a well-done novelty bar. I love that."

Previous Winners

2019: Veður
2018: Mat Bar
2016-7: KEX Hostel
2015: Loft Hostel

Best Place To End The Night



Prikid

Bankastræti 12

Prikid is the bar version of the "I'm going to bed early tonight vs. me at 3 a.m." meme. At 22:00 you'll have a bunch of regulars relaxing at the bar sipping brews, but arrive at 3:00 and it's Project X. "It's a younger crowd, but it's always a party on weekends and if there's a concert going on, well, you won't find a more intimate venue than the Prikid floor," one panel member said. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you'll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

Runners-Up



Kiki Queer Bar Laugavegur 22

Kiki is a love-it-or-hate-it situation, but if you're looking to dance to the greatest hits of the past 30 years, it won't disappoint. "Look, if you want to dance to 'Euphoria' by Loreen, there's only one bar that will play it three times a night," one panel member laughed. "You always know what you're going to get, and it's fun."



Kaffibarinn Bergstaðastræti 1

"No matter where I go during the night, I always return home to Kaffibarinn," one panel member explained. "You'll eventually find me crying on the steps of the smoking area." All jokes aside—there's a reason this is the Best Goddamn Bar. Late at night, the crowd gets rowdy, the convos interesting, and the dance floor sweaty in the most addicting way.

Previous Winners

2019: Kaffibarinn
2018: Prikid
2017: Kaffibarinn
2016: Húrra (RIP)
2015: Paloma Basement (RIP)

Best Sports Bar



American Bar

Austurstræti 8

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.

Runners-Up



Lebowski Bar

Laugavegur 20a
Honour “The Dude” at this laid-back and unpretentious locale that is the best of both worlds during sports games. Some people will get rowdy; others will stay chill, so you’re certain to find your crowd as you munch on some of the best burgers in Reykjavik. PS: If you’re feeling fancy, pick up a White Russian.



English Pub

Austurstræti 12
If it’s football you’re hankering for, go to those that know it best: the English. This pub serves up a dark wooden Anglo-kitsch interior, a long bar with plenty of staff, and loads of comfortable seating, and, best of all, a plethora of screens. Make sure to yell loudly and berate Gylfi Sigurðsson when he misses his penalty—you wanted an authentic pub experience, right?

Previous Winners

2019: American Bar / English Pub
2018: American Bar
2017: Lebowski Bar
2016: American Bar
2013-5: Bjarni Fel

Best Craft Bar



BrewDog

Frakkastígur 8

To call the panel passionate about BrewDog would be an understatement. “To be honest, I was prepared to hate BrewDog because it’s a chain,” one panelist admits, smiling. “But I was wrong. I absolutely, absolutely love it.” The Scottish outpost offers low-lit booths, sofa seating and a thriving list of beers. At any given time, there’s a choice of ten or more of the BrewDog brand and a rotating selection of Icelandic craft brews. Note: They’ve also got fantastic wings and cauliflower wings too!

Runners-Up



Skúli Craft Bar

Aðalstræti 9
For a quiet drink, the real beer nerds hole up in Skúli. The cosy drinking hole offers a great selection of local and guest craft brews, with the option of a flight of beers for the indecisive or curious. Make sure to stop by in the summer, they’ve also got some great outdoor tables.



Session Bar

First Floor, Bankastræti 14
Session Bar is a minimalist craft-beer-focused drinking den housed in a former hair salon in the heart of downtown. There are sixteen beers on tap, both Icelandic and international, and they have a focus on keeping the prices affordable, in contrast to Reykjavik’s generally pricey craft bars.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Skúli
2018: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)
2017: Microbar
2016: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)

Best Wine Bar



Port 9

Veghúsastígur 9

Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a true hidden gem, hosting a delicious wine list as well as potentially the most intimate atmosphere in Reykjavik. “It’s a place not a lot of people know about,” one panel member raved. “You feel like you’re going abroad—walking into a bar in San Francisco or Barcelona.” The panel also praised its balcony, calling it the ideal locale for sipping some Pino in the summer sun. “It’s also a great place to bring a Tinder date.”

Runners-Up



Geiri Smart

Hverfisgata 30
Geiri Smart’s wine menu focuses entirely on cold climate wines. Organised by latitude, it’s a list that’s unlike anything else you’ll find in the city. For reference, cool climate wines are subtler in taste, with lower alcohol and higher acidity, which showcases spicy, floral and herbaceous tones. Since Geiri Smart has a sommelier in residence, the wine pairings also perfectly compliment what’s coming out of the kitchen.



Vinstúkan Tíu Sopar

Laugavegur 27
“When Vinstúkan Tíu Sopar opened, I went in there and my immediate thought was, ‘Wow, this place is great,’” one panel member exclaimed. The charming basement bar focuses on natural wines as well as wines from smaller producers and lesser-known regions. They have twelve bottles open at any one time, and the selection changes daily, so you truly never know what you’re going to get.

Previous Winners

2018-9: Port 9
2017: Microbar
2016: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)

Best Place For Cocktails



Miami Bar

Hverfisgata 33

With a sharp aesthetic that’s miles ahead of any other joint in town, Miami serves up pure vice with a splash of cosmopolitanism and a dedicated basement ping-pong room. Their cocktail menu—designed by master mixologist Martin Cabejšek—takes your favourite classics and mixes them up into complex 21st century drinks. If that’s not enough, they also offer Cuba Libre on draft. So sit back, drink, and you’ll feel just like you’re in ‘Scarface’—minus the mountains of cocaine.

Runner-Up



Apótek

Austurstræti 16
Apótek is a spacious, upscale restaurant whose cocktail creations have picked up a bundle of local awards. The building’s pharmacological past lives on in its name—Apótek means pharmacy—and the cocktail list, which is divided up into categories like “painkillers” or “stimulants,” exemplifies this. We’d recommend the Black Death Negroni and the Stranger Tides.

Newcomer



Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9
“They’ve got a cocktail titled, ‘To Kale A Mockingbird,’” one panel member laughs. “It’s a tequila and kale cocktail. How can you beat that?” Jungle, though very new to the scene, has already made a large impact—with more than their punny names. Helmed by vets of the Reykjavik mixology scene, it’s truly one to watch in 2020.

Previous Winners

2019: Slippbarinn
2018: Hverfisgata 12 (RIP)
2015-6: Apótek
2014: Slippbarinn

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Drinking

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

Best Place For Live Music



Gaukurinn

Tryggvagata 22

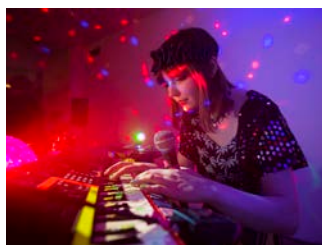
The queen of Reykjavík's grungy bar scene, Gaukurinn is currently the dank home of the city's queer and alt-culture. With the best sound system in the city, the bar puts on events almost every night—from heavy metal fests to goth nights to drag shows to all manner of eccentricities. It also operates a proactive safe space policy for LGBTQ+ gig goers and features gender neutral bathrooms (and free tampons)! Gaukurinn has consistently been on the forefront of Icelandic music, and many of the biggest and edgiest Icelandic acts—from Hatari to Une Misère—played their first shows there.

Runners-Up



IDNÓ Vonarstræti 3

IDNÓ doesn't host a ton of events, but they have a great stage and know how to throw a party. Over the past year, they've put on bumping release concerts, collaborative gigs, and all-out dance parties—without a doubt, IDNÓ is one of the most thrilling venues in the city.



MENGI Óðinsgata 2

You never know what you're going to get at Mengi. The venue is known for their brilliant and eclectic programming. On any given night you might catch an intimate low-fi electronica release or an experimental cowbell symphony. For those looking for the avant-garde in the city, you've found it.

Previous Winners

2019: IDNÓ
2017-8: Húrra (RIP)

2015: Café Rosenberg (RIP)

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 a pop 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?"

Runners-Up



Slippbarinn Myrargata 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

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 yuppies get there. The interior is just crazy, and a must-see in itself."

Previous Winners

2018-9: Kaffibrennslan
2015-6: Húrra (RIP)
2014: Café Rosenberg (RIP)

Best Newcomer Bar



Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

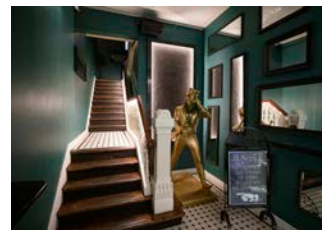
Here we are—another unanimous winner! Since it opened but months ago, Röntgen has charmed the party-goers of Reykjavík. "They are doing something ambitious and fun. It looks great. It has good energy, good cocktails, and a great dance floor," one panel member announced. This prompted a giggle out of another panellist. "Yes, I have done some stupid dancing there and it was always accepted." It's safe to say that there hasn't been a bar that has so quickly found its audience, and we can't wait to see what Röntgen gets up to.

Runners-Up



Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar Laugavegur 27

Every oenophile—wine connoisseur, for the uninitiated—knows that to truly appreciate wine, it's imperative to find a quiet and undistracting environment. Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar is a cosy basement bar perfectly made for this. The menu is varied, the bartenders knowledgeable, and the location ideal for starting out a night, which made it an easy pick for runner-up.



Jungle Cocktail Bar Austurstræti 9

Jungle is a back-to-basics mixology haven. Filled with cosy leather couches, the bar has already—in its short time—elevated the downtown cocktail scene with its unusual, innovative, and frankly delicious drinks. Stop by, take a seat, and prepare for some of the wildest mixes you'll find in Reykjavík.

Previous Winners

2019: Luna Flórens & BrewDog
2018: Veður
2017: Pablo Discobar



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Drinking

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

Best Kept Secret

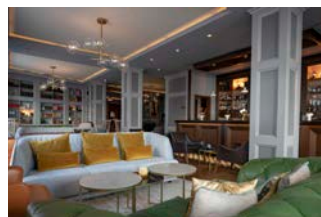


RVK Brewing Company

Skipholt 31

Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid under the radar since it opened, but now, we're here to bring it out of the shadows. The brewery and beer hall offers a varied list of brews, most of which they make themselves locally. "It's one of those places that you have to know that it's there because it's so out of the way," one panelist explains. "But it's excellent."

Runner Up



Konsúlat Bar

Hafnarstræti 17-19
For after work drinks, the upscale Konsúlat Bar is an unparalleled experience. "They have a great Happy Hour between 16:00 and 18:00 with free sushi," one panel member raves. They also praised the decor—a cosy and fancy mix perfect for sipping cocktails on.

Previous Winners

New Category!

Newcomer



12 Tónar Bar

Skólavörðustígur 15
Wait, we hear you ask, 12 Tónar—one of Reykjavik's most beloved record stores—has a bar? Yes, it does, and it's a true hidden gem. C'mon, in what other place can you dig through records while sipping a beer?

Best Date Place



Hlemmur Mathöll

Laugavegur 107

Iceland's first food hall is great for a casual night out with your significant other. There are plenty of people buzzing around, giving it a relaxed, social feeling, and there are plenty of options—grab some wine at Kröst, pizza at Flatey, or a cocktail at SKÁL. Yes you're in public, but the buzz of the hall gives you a certain privacy. Plus, if things get steamy, you're right next to the bus for an easy ride home. Halló.

Runners-Up



Spánski Bar

Ingólfsstræti 8
So you've got a Tinder date and you're looking for a quiet locale where you won't run into your ex, best friend, or baby daddy. Check out basement wine bar Spánski—it's dark, cosy and full of delicious Spanish vino and tapas. Just remember: No politics. No religion. No weird childhood trauma stories.



Luna Flórens

Grandagarður 25
Part flower-child, part spiritual and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cosy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you wanna spend the day musing about geodes and tarot card readings. If you're looking to properly get to know a flame—one you're astrologically compatible with, of course—grab a house cocktail, a slice of vegan cake, and explore your lunar cycle.

Previous Winners

New Category!

**Party Bingo
@ Sæta Svinið**
Hafnarstræti 1-3

Sæta Svinið is not only a fine gastropub, but it's also home to some surprisingly rowdy weekly events. Our favourite is Sigga Kling's weekly Sunday Party Bingo. There, the only open sorceress of Iceland—don't worry, we only burn warlocks—draws balls for some prizes that include everything from gift cards to various restaurants around Reykjavík to... insole consultations. If numbers aren't your thing, she also determines winners for things like moaning competitions and random talent battles. So practice your yodeling and, uh, moaning.

**Quizzes & Wine
@ Röntgen**
Hverfisgata 12

So, you're one of those "intellectual" hipsters that likes Seinfeld more than Friends. Whatever. Nobody cares. That said, Röntgen recently hosted Reykjavík's annual Seinfeld pub quiz, and it got pretty competitive, so we'll stop being a Soup Nazi and admit that drinking a lot while arguing about



DRINKING GUIDE

A Productive Drinking Session

Things to do in Reykjavík when you're drunk

Words: Valur Grettilsson Photo: Íris Dögg Einarsdóttir

Feel like getting drunk "just because" is not a good enough reason any more? My, my, someone's a fancy drinker. But we understand. We get you. You are not alone. To help you out, our drinking department spent an entire month drunk to determine what activities you can do to avoid looking like an alcoholic, just a cool guy.

semantics with your friends for more beer is fun. Check Röntgen's Facebook for upcoming quizzes. On another note, the bar also hosts natural wine presentations

every Tuesday, where you can taste and learn about the hottest vino on the market. The last one is not a quote from Seinfeld, by the way.

Karaoke @ Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22

Some people like to hijack airplanes. Others like to hijack clubs with their mediocre vocal skills. Gaukurinn is basically the hijacked airplane of karaoke, where every Tuesday, you can jump piss drunk onto the stage and scream out your favourite Taylor Swift song ("You Belong With Me," obviously) in front of a massive crowd of people pretending to like it. So just go for it. No one will laugh at you. We promise.

**Drag Game Night
@ Fjallkonan**
Hafnarstræti 1-3

Drag Queen Gógó Starr is a sassy, classy, and a bit gassy performer who just started holding Tuesday Drag Game Nights upstairs at Fjallkonan. Show up, sit down, and enjoy a few cocktails while you wow your friends with your dildo golf skills, decimate a lip sync battle, or just answer inane questions about drag for klout. Prizes include gift cards, makeup, skincare products, butt plugs, and vibrators. We're not joking. Expand your mind. 🍷

JUNGLE

COCKTAIL BAR

Austurstræti 9, 2. Floor

📍 [jungle.rvk](https://www.instagram.com/jungle.rvk) 📌



BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Shopping

Consumerism might be destroying the planet, but hey, you can't walk around naked. While Iceland may not be a worldwide shopping destination due to high prices and its relative extra space isolation, there's still a plethora of unique products that are worth spending your hard-earned dough on. From handmade lopapeysur created by dotings Grandmas to obscure Björk b-b-b-sides, here's your essential guide to shopping in Reykjavík.

Best Goddamn Store



Fischer

Fischersund 3

Fischer wowed the 2019 Grapevine Best Of Shopping panel, with the newcomer unanimously winning the Best Goddamn Store for its out-of-the-box take on the shopping experience. This year was no different. From packaging-free shampoo to a special perfume section, the store treads the line between a shop and a design space, serving up a sensory, highly aesthetic environment that makes every purchase feel special. "Fischer changed just what a store could be in Reykjavík," praised one panellist. "They showed that you could push the limits and do something personalised and different. It's inspirational."

Runners-Up



Farmers Market
Laugavegur 37 & Hólmaslóð 2
Many brands have claimed the throne of traditional Icelandic style, but perhaps no brand has done it so luxuriously as Farmers Market. With references to the past wrapped up in modern silhouettes and opulent fabrics, Farmers Market serves up traditional Scandinavian fashion for the modern age. For this, they deserve applause.

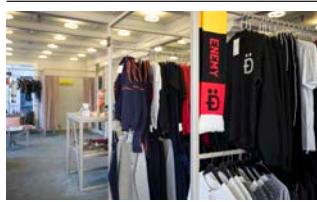


Nexus
Álfheimar 74
Nexus helped geekdom flourish in Iceland, creating a warm meeting place for those interested in comics, sci-fi, role-playing games, table-top games, and other fandoms. "They created a culture and a house for it," exclaimed one panellist.

Previous Winners

2019: Fischer
2018: Húrra Reykjavík

Best Design Store



Akkúrat

Aðalstræti 2 & Laugavegur 80

This local design Mecca has been a stalwart of the Icelandic scene from day one, endeavouring to offer a careful collection of highly curated products showcasing the best of local and Nordic design. Their ever-evolving shelves are filled with fascinating materials, and as soon as the shop's name was mentioned, panellists instantly and eagerly began sharing some of their favourite finds. "You'll always find something unique at Akkúrat," one panellist cheered. "They also present new and off-the-beaten-path designers, so things feel one-of-a-kind." In December, the store opened a second location up on Laugavegur. We can, therefore, only imagine how they will thrive in 2020.

Runners-Up



nomad. Frakkastigur 8f

A relative newbie to the Laugavegur scene, nomad. was a surprise favourite of the panel. "I love nomad. They have amazing books, lamps, candles and more," one panellist raved. "And it's so important that Laugavegur has these kind of stores." Pro-tip: The owner is a photographer and often has exhibitions on the lower floor. Check it out.



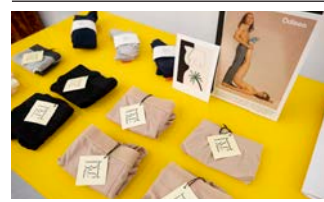
Hönnunarsafnið Garðatorg 1, Garðabær

The Museum Of Design And Applied Art offers a quirky array of design objects and books, some related to the exhibits within, some completely random. For extra oomph, they also have a workshop inside where you can watch designers create right in front of your eyes.

Previous Winners

2017-2019: Akkúrat
2016: Kraum (RIP)

Best Fashion Boutique



Kvartýra N°49

Laugavegur 49

It's no understatement to say that Kvartýra N°49 changed the face of Reykjavík fashion when the minimalist, Bauhaus-esque spot opened in 2018. Before then, yes, athleisure was popular, but nowadays, you can't throw a stone in Reykjavík without hitting some cool tracksuit-clad kid covered in Cyrillic typography. Specialising in Russian streetwear, the store brought post-Soviet street style to the city with an eclectic selection of brands like Sputnik 1985, Volchok, and Fusion. The store also showcases innovative Icelandic brands like Eygló and Sushchenko, as well as high-end American designs from Opening Ceremony.

Runners-Up



Stefánsbúð/p3 Laugavegur 7

Stefánsbúð showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1990's Gucci!) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. "It's truly a boutique," one panellist exclaimed. "It's quirky and zany. You don't know what you're going to find but you know it'll be exciting."



GK Reykjavík Tryggvagata 21

GK Reykjavík has long been a favourite of the trendy Reykjavík fashionista sect for special occasions, though it's never won a Grapevine award until today. "It's pricey, but it's full of proper, beautiful pieces. When you buy something, you think, 'I've worked really hard for this,'" a panel member declared. The panel also praised the shops' new location in Hafnartorg.

Previous Winners

2019: Yeoman
2011-2018: KIOSK (RIP)

Best Clothing Store



Hildur Yeoman

Skólavörðustigur 22

Hildur Yeoman has dressed everyone from R'n'B goddess GDRN to the swan lady herself Björk to recent Grammy/BAFTA/Emmy/Oscar award winner Hildur Guðnadóttir. She's a patron saint of Icelandic fashion, known for her dreamy patterns, lush textures, spacey body-cons, and beautiful tailoring. Her hole-in-the-wall Skólavörðustigur store is no exception, hosting not only her eponymous brand but Vanessa Mooney jewellery, bright candles, and more. "Her stuff is expensive but it's timeless. Moreover, Hildur is often in the store, so you can chat with her about the items and she will help you style it," one panel member said. "Where else can you find that?"

Runners-Up



Geysir

Skólavörðustigur 7 & 16

You can't talk about shopping in Reykjavik without mentioning Geysir. The store defines elegance with their beautiful staple pieces, which manage to both harken back to the old-world, Arcadian vision of Iceland while also being distinctly contemporary and innovative.



Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 50 & 78

"Húrra Reykjavík was massively hyped when it opened and it's stayed hyped, but that's because they know what they are doing and are good at it. They've stayed fashionable and relevant," the panel determined. The minimalist streetwear/athleisure store offers two locations—one for men and one for women—and serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts.

Previous Winners

2019: Húrra Reykjavík
2018: Kvenfataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar

Best Second-Hand Store



Extraloppan

Smáralind

"Extraloppan revolutionised the second-hand market in Iceland," declared one panellist. "Everyone has too many clothes and this is the best way to get rid of them." The Smáralind favourite works like a big flea market. Each booth has a different vendor, so you'll never know exactly what you'll find at this cornucopia of used clothing. "It's an eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh," another panellist praised. "You're not importing clothes. You're not buying new. You're taking what someone else didn't want directly from them." The selection is notoriously varied, so expect to find everything from Geysir sweaters to Adidas tracksuits.

Runners-Up



Wasteland Reykjavik

Ingólfsstræti 5

The Reykjavik take on the Danish franchise, Wasteland came onto the secondhand market and quickly dominated. For super á la mode downtown looks—i.e. cheerleader uniforms, Guy Fieri t-shirts, and astronaut-esque jumpsuits—this is the go-to. Though it's only been in the city for a year, Wasteland has already proved it doesn't just sell trends, it makes them.



Red Cross

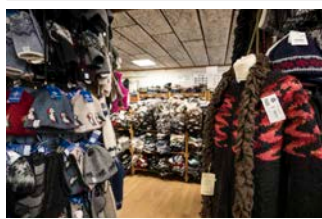
Laugavegur 12b & 116, Skólavörðustigur 12

Chock full of clothes that'll either make you say, "Who on Earth would wear that?" or "I will die without that," the Red Cross stores are great whether you end up buying something or not. Profits go to helping the local community and the shops also accept donations, so drop off some bags after you Marie Kondo your closet.

Previous Winners

2019: Hertz
2018: Fatamarkaðurinn

Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater



Handprjónasamband Islands

Skólavörðustigur 19

"This is a no-brainer," one panellist said, the moment this category came up. "Handprjónasamband Islands is the real-deal. Many places mass-produce and import their lópapeysa nowadays, but there, you're buying a freshly-knitted sweater directly from the maker who is probably a Grandma that poured a lot of love into it." Stacked from floor to ceiling with cosy woolly goodness, the store offers sweaters, gloves and more. If that's not enough, it often plays host to the aforementioned delightful Icelandic ladies who will knit and gossip right before your very eyes.

Runners-Up



Farmers Market

Laugavegi 37 & Hólmahlóð 2

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 you'll blend in at any Scandinavian fashion event.



Álafoss

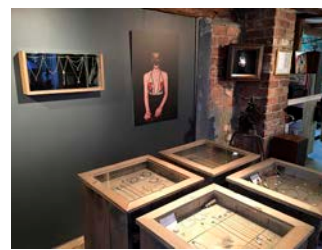
Laugavegur 8

The Álafoss wool brand has been around since 1896, and is named after the protected waterfall that used to power the factory's mill. While it's worth a trip to Mosfellsbær to check out this historical spot, you can now also buy Álafoss products on Laugavegur. Just like Handprjónasamband Islands, every Álafoss lópapeysa is knitted right here in Iceland.

Previous Winners

2016-9: Handprjónasambandið

Best Jewellery Shop

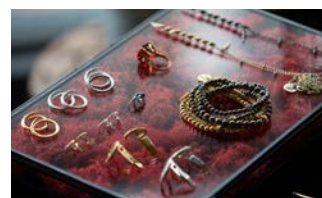


Orrifinn

Skólavörðustigur 17b

Orrifinn is known for their sensual, raw, detailed and carefully crafted pieces that manage to be at once timeless and distinctly modern. Often inspired by mythology, the beloved store was a unanimous and instantaneous pick for this award. "To be frank, it's difficult to beat them. Orrifinn has an aesthetic, a style. The interior and the jewellery work together. Not to mention, you can watch them working in front of you," one panellist raved. "They truly honour the craft of jewelry-making."

Runners-Up



Hildur Hafstein

Klapparstigur 40

Hildur Hafstein is known for her slightly hippy, slightly witchy vibe—a lone jewellery shaman within the Icelandic scene. "She's doing her own thing. She doesn't follow trends. She's got a niche all her own," the panel claimed, praising her mix of delicate jewellery with unusual shapes. Stop by her tucked away Klapparstigur studio to experience the magic in person.



Aurum

Bankastræti 4

"I'm obsessed. I'd buy absolutely anything in that store," one panellist exclaimed upon mention of the word Aurum. The store, which occupies one of the best spots on Laugavegur, serves up finely-crafted pieces firmly based in Icelandic nature. "It's a wild and woodsy brand that still seems chic and modern. Again, I'm obsessed."

Previous Winners

2018-9: Orrifinn

Best Homeware Shop



Kokka

Laugavegur 47

Kokka is a fancy fantasy-land for food and homeware lovers, filled with all sorts of utensils you didn't even know you needed (but, obviously, you do). For those looking for new toys to furnish a modern and really, really stylish kitchen, Kokka should be your first stop. "They recently expanded and it's really nice," one panel member raved. "It's proper quality, humble, and cool. It's also very accessible and easy to navigate, which I appreciate. The owners are also very pro-Laugavegur, which is also important for me."

Runners-Up



Geysir Heima Skólavörðustígur 16

"What else can you say about Geysir Heima?" one panellist asks. "It's well-curated. The interior is beautiful. Geysir has cultivated an empire and it's for good reason." The upscale home shop, which offers everything from their iconic wool blankets to minimalist glassware to a fantastic selection of art books, will make you fall in love with Scandinavian style. Pro-tip: Check out their basement. There's often exhibitions down there.



Epal Skeifan 6

Epal has been a mainstay of the Reykjavík design scene for more than 30 years, supporting it and constantly pushing it forward. "You can't talk about Icelandic design without mentioning Epal," one panel member explains. "They are devoted to Scandinavian style."

Previous Winners

2018-9: Geysir Heima

Best Bookstore



Eymundsson

Austurstræti 18 &
Skólavörðustígur 11

Eymundsson is a classic bookstore, offering up the newest in Icelandic writing and international titles. It has the rare characteristic of being perfectly curated for both locals and tourists, so if you're a traveller looking to get an illustrated edition of the Sagas, or a Reykjavík kid hoping to pick up the definitely-going-to-be-released upcoming Game Of Thrones book, this would be the place to find it. Bonus: The cafes also make for great people-watching spots.

Runners-Up



Bókin Klapparstígur 25-27

If you're looking to buy the newest Dan Brown, Bókin may not be your thing. But if you're looking for a collectors-edition copy of an Icelandic book long out of print, there's only one option, and that's Bókin. "It has charisma, which makes it a winner," one panel member said. "If there's a store in Reykjavík with charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent, it's Bókin."



Bóksala Stúdenta Sæmundargata 4

Located within the main building of Háskóli Íslands, the university bookstore runs the gamut from speciality academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. 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.

Previous Winners

2019: Bóksala Stúdenta
2018: Bókin
2017: Mál og Menning

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Shopping

Stuff is better than money anyway

Best Record Store



Lucky Records

Rauðarástigur 10

Lucky Records is the punky, underground horse of the Reykjavík scene. It's one of those shops that is easy to get lost in—expect to easily spend an entire afternoon perusing their selection. "Lucky Records is very in-tune with the local music scene," one panellist explains. "If anyone in the city has released anything, no matter how small, it'll be in this store. Moreover, the shopkeepers will have listened to it. They are really knowledgeable and opinionated in that old-school record shop way." Pro-tip: Make sure you check out the back room.

Runners-Up



Reykjavík Record Shop Klapparstígur 35

Reykjavík Record Shop 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.



Geisladiskabúð Valda Laugavegur 64

Valda is by far the most obscure shop in the city. "You'll find things in this store that you won't find anywhere else in the world. I once found a Japanese bootleg copy of a Finnish band's first record. How on Earth did they get that?" one panel member reminisced. "It's a gem."

Previous Winners

2018-9: Reykjavík Record Shop
2017: Lucky Records

2015-6: Reykjavík Record Shop
2013-4: Lucky Records



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Shopping

Stuff is better than money anyway

Best Grocery Store



Krónan Grandi

Fiskislóð 15-21

For the fourth year in a row, Krónan has proven that it is the best grocery store in town. “Krónan at Grandi is no doubt the freshest market in the city. It’s beautifully organised and has a great selection. You really couldn’t ask for more,” one panel member raved. They also praised its wide selection, which has everything from speciality vegan products to obscure meat cuts. 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 Hagamel 39, 107

For foodies looking for artisanal deli meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses and all sorts of unexpected, hard-to-find treats, Vesturbær’s beloved Melabúðin should satiate your desires. “People find Melabúðin inspirational,” one panelist said. “It’s also a part of the Vesturbær culture. If it ever left, people would riot!”



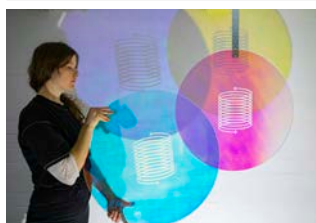
SUPER1 Hallveigarstígur 1

Taking over Bónus’s old locale on Hallveigarstígur, Super1 has been a surprise success in the 101 community. It has an infinitely better selection than the Laugavegur Bónus location—as well as a significantly less depressing interior—and it’s also open until 22:00. Win-win.

Previous Winners

2017-9: Krónan Grandi
2016: Bónus

Hidden Gem



Núllið Galleryý

Bankastræti 0

“Núllið Galleryý has a purpose and an attitude that is desperately needed in this city,” the panel determined. “It’s fresh, curated, and has its finger on the underground pulse of Reykjavík. To be fair, it literally is underground.” The pop-up gallery project space—located in the old Freddie arcade—hosts exhibitions, events, performances and more, focusing on the newest, brightest, and strangest of Icelandic talent. It’s an edgy, eclectic space that has consistently wowed with everything it’s done. Check online for upcoming events, and no matter what, show up to see them.

Runners-Up



Pastel Flower Studio Baldursgata 36

Pastel Flower studio is only open on Fridays from 13:00 to 18:00—so plan accordingly. The studio uses cut, dried, and fresh flowers to create unique arrangements that reference classic Icelandic nature in an unexpected and innovative way. Trust us: You won’t find a florist in the city that’s in anyway comparable.



Street Rats Tattoo Hverfisgata 37

Kristófer, a.k.a. Sleeper Tattoo, changed the game of Icelandic tattooing. He’s proved himself to be a fresh, experimental artist whose works have become a somewhat coveted symbol in the city. An in-demand, somewhat elusive figure, he recently opened up his own studio, Street Rats Tattoo, on Hverfisgata. So if you’re looking to get your travel tattoo, go there. It’s way more interesting than a Vegvír.

Previous Winners

2019: Nexus
2018: Hyalin Reykjavík

Best Men’s Clothing



Geysir

Skólavörðustígur 16

Geysir’s signature touch is that of clean designs with quality materials; works that are luxurious but wearable, casual yet conceptual, and modern yet timeless. “Their men’s collection is a standout,” one panelist said. “If I could, I’d get everything from that store.” The dedicated men’s clothing store lies on Skólavörðustígur, just a stone’s throw away from their women’s branch and homeware shop. Inside is a cornucopia of woody tones, cosy materials, and cuts that could go from the international runways to a relaxed night at home. Stop by for pure Scandinavian goodness.

Runners-Up



Farmers Market Laugavegur 37 & Hólmaslóð 2

No one puts classical Icelandic style into the 21st century quite like Farmers Market. Their clothing somehow manages to walk the line between debonair and utilitarian. They are warm enough to get you through the darkest Icelandic winters while still stylish enough to make you look suave while doing it.



66° North Bankastræti 5 & Laugavegur 17-19

Everyone from countryside farmers to downtown cool-kids don this iconic Icelandic brand. Peruse their wares and it’s obvious why—their quality and aesthetic is impeccable. These are pieces that will last not only your lifetime, but probably your grandchildren’s.

Previous Winners

New Category!




Nr. 1 Attraction in Reykjavik

Perlan is a Must-Visit Landmark and Nature Exploratorium

Perlan – Wonders of Iceland is an exploratorium in Reykjavík. Experience a real Ice Cave, Icelandic Glaciers Exhibition, Guaranteed Northern Lights Planetarium Show and more.



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Perlan – Wonders of Iceland is an enchanting interactive journey through Iceland's nature, on five floors.



Perlan
Café



Perlan
Restaurant



Rammagerðin
Gift Store

perlan.is



RAX's 'JÖKULL'

Bookstores in Reykjavik & Geysir

Yeah, trekking onto Sólheimajökull is great and all, but that memory will only last until your dementia kicks in. To get a true glacial experience that'll last a lifetime, pick up Ragnar Axelsson's stunning photo book 'JÖKULL' ('Glacier'). The 200-page book features ethereal, eerie, and intimate portraits of the glacial landscape taken over a 5-year timespan. Some are aerial views, others textural close-ups, all providing a timeless look at the structures which, to be blunt, will be gone within the next two centuries. Thanks, conservatives.



Hildur Yeoman Dress

Yeoman, Skólavörðustigur 22

If you genuinely want to fit in with the stylish Icelandic crowd, start donning Hildur Yeoman. Yes, her works are a bit pricey—expect to pay something in the 40,000-60,000 ISK range for a dress—but they're timeless works of art that'll fit any occasion. Yeoman is known for mixing loud, elaborate prints with

SHOPPING

Hey Tourists, This Is How To Support Iceland

Throw away your stuffed puffin, loser

Words: **The Grapevine Tourist Dep.** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Everyone and their mother leaves Iceland with some Brennivín, lakkrís, a stuffed puffin, lopapeysa and a 66°NORTH hat. And don't get us wrong, those are great, but for those looking for some deep cuts on the souvenir/gift scale, here are the Grapevine's picks.

classic, elegant cuts, so you're guaranteed to find a fit that's comfortable for you.



Lady Brewery, First Lady IPA

Vínbúðin (and on tap at many bars around Reykjavik)

Icelanders love to drink—it's the #1 way they reproduce—so it's no wonder a host of lovely micro-breweries have sprung up in the city over the last few years. Our favourite is Lady Brewery, created and run by designer Dórey Björk Halldórsdóttir. Their signature IPA is a delicious blend of fresh citrus and mellow floral notes all in a heady, hoppy brew. Inspired by "beer witches"—medieval female brewers who eventually became the archetypal

witches (a very interesting thing to research on a rainy day)—it's the perfect thing to binge drink as you sit in your house alone crying over a Netflix Christmas movie.



Yrsa Sigurðardóttir's 'Someone To Watch Over Me'

Bookstores in Reykjavik

The best way to enjoy the Icelandic psyche is to slip into the head of the country's crime queen. Yrsa Sigurðardóttir is one of the most successful crime writers in Iceland and has sold over five million copies of her books around the world. But here is a

little pro-tip when it comes to Yrsa: She's most in her element when she combines ghost horror with crimes, so if you need something to read in the dark, 'Someone To Watch Over Me' is both horrifying as well as a slick mystery. The first pages of the book will freak you out, but, trust us, keep reading. You won't regret it.



Literally Any Not-Internationally-Famous Icelandic Record

Ask any pretentious guy at Reykjavik record stores

So you've got every Björk b-side, a ton of illegal Sigur Rós merch, and three Klemens from Hatari fan Instagram accounts. We get it, you love Icelandic music. Deepen your clout with the best souvenir—a record you can show off to your annoying I'm-indie-but-really-only-listen-to-múm friends. If you like classical, Gabriel Ólafs' calming piano works come highly recommended. The wistful, yacht-rocky stylings of Bagdad Brothers are great for indie folk, as is literally everything produced by the Post-dreifing collective. For metal, Andavald's recent 'Undir skyggðarhaldi' is a quick [kvlt] classic. And of course, you can never go wrong with any of our Grapevine 2020 Music Award Winners... you know, the cover story of this very magazine? Yeah, give them money 🍷

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BEST ICE CREAM*

2020



THREE

2019



CONSECUTIVE

2018



YEARS



*Best Ice Cream according to Reykjavik Grapevine

LAUGARÁSVEGI 1

Mid-morning



Logi Leó Gunnarsson, artist

I walk over to the Reykjavik art museum, **Hafnarhús**, check out the cool exhibitions they have on and grab a free cup of coffee. I continue my walk and head for the city pond. I pass through the **'Perlufesti'** sculpture garden on my way to the **National Gallery of Iceland**. After experiencing the architecture and interesting exhibitions I enjoy another free cup of coffee. Afterwards, I drop by the **Ásgrimur Jónsson Collection** on Bergstaðarstræti for a quick down to earth moment.

Perfect Day

Words: **The Reykjavik Grapevine Perfect Day Dept.**
Photos: **Art Bicnick & Hörður Sveinsson**

If you want to know the best things to do in any city, forgo those Insta-perfect travel blogs and angry TripAdvisor reviews and listen to the locals. To help you out, we reached out to some of our favourite people to see how they'd spend a perfect day in Reykjavik.

In the heat of the night



Ásta Kristín Pjetursdóttir, musician

In the evening, my friends and I are looking fabulous and ready to go dancing. It's like 'Sex and the City: Reykjavik Edition,' as we stroll down Laugavegur. We head to **Kiki** and become best friends with the DJ. He plays all the songs we ask for and we dance our asses off all night to Rihanna, Sandstorm, Scooter, Justin Timberlake, and all the other maestros. 🍷

Lunch

Bára Halldórsdóttir, activist



I meet my oldest and closest friend, Sunna, at **Kaktus Espresso** on Vitastigur. Sunna orders a yummy sweet potato soup with bread, and I have the delicious scones and a latte. We talk about nothing and everything for about an hour.

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Tanja Huld Levý Guðmundsdóttir, Artist

Describe your style in 5 words: Playful. Quirky. Comfortable. Layered. Maximalist.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: I really like vintage stores like Wasteland, Spúútnik, the Red Cross, and Fatamarkaðurinn. I just love browsing and trying to look for some gems. For jewellery, I really like Orrifinn. I am really picky about jewellery because I don't like it when it's too cute—Orrifinn is perfect for my style.

Favourite piece: Difficult question! My favourite designer is Jeremy Scott so I would have to say that my keyboard dress that he made in collaboration with Adidas is a favourite.

FANCIES

Three Style Icons

...teach us how to be stylish

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Fancies is a Grapevine segment in which we feature the best of Reykjavík style, telling you where those with amazing aesthetics shop and what they're currently loving. In this Best Of compilation, learn the style secrets of an eclectic artist, glitter-covered cosplayer, and the one and only JFDR.

Sand Shark, Fashion Student & Cosplayer

Describe your style in 5 words: Colourful, glittery, thot. That's it.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: It depends on the time of year. For example, I really enjoy that glitter-clothes become more popular around Christmas. I have really been liking the stuff at Zara and Júník right now because it's all so sparkly. But there's not a lot of stores here that sell the type of clothing that I really love. But I do love—when I go dark—Rokk & Rómantik.

Lusting after: Right now, what I'm focusing all my energy on is getting my degree because I really want to go to school in the U.K. to become a costume technician. Making costumes and making dresses is where my passion lies. But I'm also lusting after biodegradable glitter to be easily accessible in Reykjavík.



Jófríður Ákadóttir, Musician

Describe your style in 5 words: Star Wars. Japanese. 70s. Subtle. Annie Hall.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: I like second-hand shops like Hertex, Spúútnik, Wasteland, and the Red Cross shops—all of them. I try to buy only second-hand. I also love Hildur Yeoman. She always has amazing things.

Favourite piece: I own a dress from Ellery that I wore on my album cover, but you can't see it because the cover is just my face. That's one of my favourites. I also own a lot of stuff from Hildur Yeoman that I love. I'm a bit of a minimalist when it comes to fashion, so I don't wear a lot of patterns. But when I wear the Hildur stuff, I'm in a different mood. When I wear a pattern, I really wear a pattern, so I usually do pattern-on-pattern-on-pattern.

WASTELAND

SECOND HAND CLOTHING

Ingólfsstræti 5
101 Reykjavík

Grand Golden Circle





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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

Vesturbær is one of Reykjavík's most bustling areas, and probably the only locale where you could bump into Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir, renowned artist Ragnar Kjartansson, and a member of Sigur rós in the same day. Vesturbæjarlaug is smack in the middle of the hubbub and serves up a wonderful selection of hot tubs chock full of chattering artists, students, and other 107 locals. The pool is unique in the sense that it offers up pretty much anything you'd need—a shiny outdoor pool, big hotpots, a large steam room, and a particularly lovely outdoor changing area, which you should take advantage of in the summer. And remember, don't hesitate to converse about the state of things in the hot water—Icelanders love to debate politics, philosophise about art, and make fun of, well, everything.

Runners-Up



Árbæjarlaug Fylkisvegur 9

The main reason the panel chose Árbæjarlaug was for its stunning view of the city. It's an impressive view of the east of Reykjavík, showcasing a huge forest, Elliðarárdalur, and below that you have an extraordinary view of the city's skyline. Also—you have to give it up for the pool's fun 90s architecture.



Laugardalslaug Sundlaugavegur 105

Although Laugardalslaug is the largest pool in Reykjavík, 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 Reykjavík." 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

2019: Vesturbæjarlaug
2018: Sundhöllin
2017: Lágafellslaug

2016: Neslaug

Best Gallery



i8

Tryggvagata 16

i8 is once again the best gallery in Iceland. Over the years, it's given us works from internationally lauded art superstars like Ragnar Kjartansson, Elín Hansdóttir and Ólafur Eliasson, putting Icelandic art on the worldwide map and helping it stay there. Although it's a commercial gallery, it's not a hoity-toity stuffy spot—expect to see conceptual cutting-edge museum-sized displays, rather than conservative and conventionally appealing wall-based work. 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



BERG Contemporary Klapparstígur 16

For the past few years, Berg Contemporary has concretely established itself as the go-to spot for contemporary art in Reykjavík. Their large, beautifully renovated space is known for blurring the lines between the conceptual, the abstract, the art, and the functional with their installations and exhibitions. That may sound complicated, but what we're trying to say is simple: Stop by.



Hverfisgalleri Hverfisgata 4

Hverfisgalleri consistently impressed our panel in 2019 with a roster of brilliant exhibitions by young artists like Loji Höskuldsson and the incredible talented Davíð Örn Halldórsson, among others. This gallery is (and we cannot emphasise this enough) ambitious. Stop by for the best and brightest of the scene.

Previous winners

2015-19: i8
2014: Kling og Bang
2011-13: National Gallery

Best Art Museum



Kjarvalsstaðir

Flókagata 24

Kjarvalsstaðir was the first art museum in Iceland built specifically as a visual art showroom. The house is an homage to the iconic Icelandic artist, Jóhannes S. Kjarval—hence the name—and in fact, one can still find his art adorning the walls. This year, the museum showcased itself in standout fashion, with a hot streak of historical explorations of creative stalwarts like Ólöf Nordal and William Morris. One must also applaud their iconic architecture. On top of that, it's also home to one of Reykjavík's finest and most underrated coffeehouses.

Runners-Up



Nýló / Living Art Museum Grandagarður 20, 101 Reykjavík

Since 1978, over 2,000 artists have been connected to Nýló in one way or the other. Founded by the legendary Icelandic 70s art group SÚM, the sole purpose of the museums is to open up discussions on experimental and progressive art. Basically, if you want to experience the radical art scene in Iceland, whet your palette at NÝLÓ.



Gerðarsafn - Kópavogur Art Museum Hamraborg 4

Gerðarsafn is one of those hidden gems outside of Reykjavík. Located in Kópavogur, the museum offers a fresh take on Icelandic art, and also gives people an opportunity to meet and listen to their artists in their fantastic artist talks. It also has a coffee shop and a delightful garden.

Previous winners

2019: Reykjavík Art Museum
2018: The Marshall House
2016-7: Hafnarhúsið

Best Art Space



Kling & Bang

Grandagarður 20

The Marshall House serves up a number of top galleries, but the artist-run Kling & Bang is a true standout. No matter what they have on the roster, expect something ambitious and unique—from makeshift karaoke rooms to gardens covered in bees. Another amazing thing about Kling & Bang is that they play host to not only well-known internationals, but also to up-and-coming talents. The space never ceases to amaze with its provocative, vibrant style.

Runners-Up



Ásmundarsalur Freyjugata 41, 101 Reykjavík

Ásmundarsalur is hard to pinpoint—their events and exhibitions are so varied that it's hard to distill into a few words. Stop by to see young artists creating in their workshops, grab a macchiato at Reykjavik Roasters, and don't forget to stop by at Christmas for their art market. It's an exhilarating venue, and we can't wait to see what they pull out of their hat in 2020.



Gallery Port Laugavegur 23k

You could perhaps call Gallery Port the dive bar of the Icelandic art scene—and we mean that in the coolest, most in-the-know and loving way. This artist-run space, which is located smack dab downtown on Laugavegur, serves up gritty, unusual, and eclectic art by people who will probably be famous one day. Note: It's also one of the few venues where you can buy the brilliant art you see on the walls.

Previous winners

2019: Gallery Port
2018: Listastofan (RIP)

Best Museum



The National Museum

Suðurgata 41

A treasure trove of the country's history, covering everything from early culture to clothing, metalsmithing, religion, and more, it's well-curated and well designed, even showcasing contemporary displays that connect to modern cultural waves like football and feminism. Trust us, it's an amazing feat of a museum—somehow making silverware interesting while also displaying a baby skeleton. Creepy? Kind of, but we love it. On another note, they also play host to Kaffitár, one of the best cafés in town.

Runners-Up



The Culture House Hverfisgata 15

The 'Sjónarhorn' ('Perceptive') exhibit in Safnahúsið presents a notable and original approach on the visual heritage of Iceland by categorizing it in simple terms like 'up,' 'down,' and 'again and again.' 'Up' for example describes everything connected to power, such as God and royalty. 'Down' is not about the devil, but rather the earth itself, showcasing volcanoes and plate tectonics.



The Settlement Exhibition Aðalstræti 16

Yearning to learn more about the first 101 hipsters of Reykjavik? Well, the Settlement Exhibition has got you covered. Based around the carefully excavated remnants of a Viking farm, it's a great way to learn about how the early inhabitants of Iceland lived, how they made their first latté and what they called Kaffibarinn in the year 900.

Previous winners

2019: Wonders Of Iceland
2018: National Museum of Iceland
2015-17: Árbæjarsafn

Best Tech Exhibition

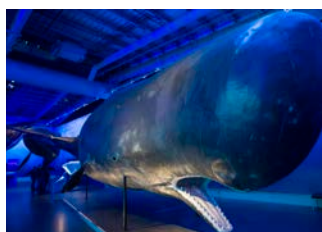


Wonders of Iceland

Perlan

If stormy weather blows your glacier trip off course, visit the Wonders of Iceland museum in the iconic Perlan. The impressive displays includes a man-made ice tunnel, complete with frigid air temperatures and a selfie spot so realistic it'll fool your Instagram followers. In the main hall, projected glacial vistas let you see the glaciers' different shapes and sizes, while stop-motion videos of glacial retreat reveal how fragile these majestic phenomena are. There's also an 8k aurora planetarium in case the Northern Lights prove elusive.

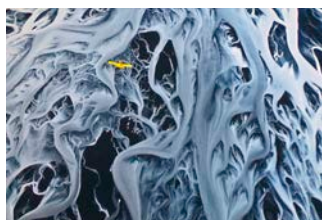
Runner-Up



Whales Of Iceland Fiskislóð 23-25

Whales Of Iceland consists of 23 life-size models of the gentle giants, from gargantuan blue whales to a 25-meter long sperm whale. Meandering around the hall will probably give you a new appreciation for underwater life. To be frank, it's a whale of a time (sorry about that).

Newcomer



Flyover Iceland Fiskislóð 43, 101 Reykjavík

This VR experience took the city by storm in 2019, with as many Icelanders lining up for a bird's eye view of the country as tourists. On this virtual ride, soar over glaciers, mountains, lava fields and more—complete with fresh mountain air and Iceland's varied scents—all from the comfort of an amusement ride seat.

Previous winners

New category!

Best Cinema



Bíó Paradís

Hverfisgata 52

The heart of Icelandic cinema lies at Bíó Paradís. It's the only arthouse cinema in the country as well as the premiere destination for those that want to see Icelandic films with English subtitles. This one-of-a-kind venue also plays host to brilliant cult nights, with horror films on Sundays, party screenings on Fridays and a ton of other unique events for film weirdos and intellectuals alike. But be aware, the future of this cultural gem is currently up in the air (thanks, greedy real estate investors!). So, here's your chance to help out with Icelandic culture. Please give them your money.

Runners-Up



Háskólabíó Hagatorg

Háskólabíó, located in the west of Reykjavik, showcases worldwide blockbusters as well as local Icelandic films (check online to confirm the availability of English subtitles). It's a cosy location within walking distance from downtown that'll satiate your desire for the whole popcorn-Avengers experience.



Kringlubió Kringlan

Kringlubió has the lucky location of being inside Iceland's first shopping mall, Kringlan. It showcases the newest Hollywood flicks and has the notable location of being close to Stjórnutorg, the mall's food court, where you can find everything from greasy Dominos to vegan maverick Jömm to the Icelandic hot dog institution Bæjarins Bestu.

Previous winners

2016-9: Bíó Paradís
2015: VIP Theater
2014: Bíó Paradís

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020

Activities

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

Best Day Trip



Reykjanes Bound!

...Reykjanes

Brimketill Lava Rock Pool / Grindavík Local Pool / Reykjanesviti
Reykjanes is, unfortunately, often overlooked by tourists. We honestly can't fathom why, as the area is chock full of beautiful lava fields, steamy hot springs, and some great local pools. Not to mention, it's only a short drive from Reykjavík. Our recs? Stop by the Reykjanes Lighthouse, Brimketill rock pool, and end the day with a swim at the Grindavík swimming pool and a bowl of lobster soup at Bryggjan. If you have time, take a stop at Kleifarvatn, where you can mosey amidst hot springs and the bright grassy landscape.

Runners-Up



Pingvellir / Geysir / Friðheimar / Fontana

South of Iceland

If you're going to do the Golden Circle, make sure you add this little twist. On the drive to Pingvellir, turn onto the route to Laugarvatn and pull over at the lovely Fontana spa for a soak. Afterwards, head to Geysir and grab some greenhouse-fresh grub at Friðheimar near Flúðir.

Krauma / Settleman Center Deildartunguhver, Reykholt

You can't miss Krauma—the steam from the bubbling geothermal vent pours skywards into a column that's visible for kilometres around. The complex contains five outdoor hot pots of various sizes and temperatures, a cold plunge pool, a scented sauna, a steam room, and a lounge area with an open fire. Afterwards stop by Borgarnes's Settlement Center for some culture.

Previous winners

2019: Snowmobile/ATV Tour

Best Place To See The Aurora



Gróttta

Seltjarnarnes, 170 Seltjarnarnes

Gróttta is something of a hidden gem. At the end of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula, not far from the centre of Reykjavík, there's a lonely, windblown, red-topped lighthouse, with a walkable causeway that's only accessible at certain times, depending on the tide. There's a black beach, a miniature hot pot, and a nature reserve. Now, to find the Northern Lights, it's rather complicated. Basically, you stand on this picturesque beach, open your eyes, and look up. There you go. Pure happiness. Note: Be aware of the tides if you're gonna cross over and check out the lighthouse. You could get stuck overnight.

Runners-Up



Landakotstún Hávallagata 14-16, 101 Reykjavík

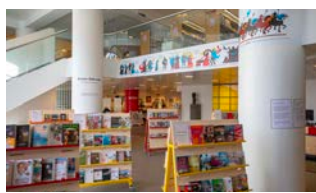
This spot is a sneaky one. It's smack downtown, but yet there's magically enough darkness there to spot the aurora if it's burning up above the city. Where is it, you ask? Find the Catholic Church—there's only one—and walk to the bench behind it. That's it. Now, pull out your flask and enjoy the green fire in the sky.

Sæbraut Sólfríð, Sæbraut, 101 Reykjavík
Reykjavík's coastline path features a gorgeous sculpture called Sólfríð (The Sun Voyager). There, take a seat and soak up the dark ocean as you enjoy the dancing lights above you. It's a simple spot that can be surprisingly secluded.

Previous winners

2019: Ægissíða to Gróttta
2017-8: Whales Of Iceland
2014-6: Húsdýragarðurinn

Best Place To Spend Time With The Kids



Reykjavík City Library

Tryggvagata 15

For some free and wholesome family time, the parents on our panel enjoy the Reykjavík City Library. There's an excellent play area for younger children between one and three and—you guessed it—there are books for kids of all ages to look at. On the second floor, take a gander at everything from a small aquarium to a closet of pirate and princess costumes. Afterwards, show your kid your favourite comics or just chill while they run around like crazies. Don't miss their photography museum on the top floor either.

Runner-Up



Whales of Iceland Fiskislóð 23-25

Whales Of Iceland is a cavernous, hangar-sized space populated by life-sized models of whales, with information plaques and flat-screen devices containing information about the different species. It also has a fun indoor climbing structure shaped like (you guessed it) a whale. It's one of those places your kids will repeatedly demand to return to.

Newcomer



Flyover Iceland Fiskislóð 43

Kid playing too many video games? How about just stepping into one? Flyover Iceland is a brilliant amusement park ride for the whole family—a VR flight over the majestic and frightening nature of Iceland. It'll definitely make your kid forget about Minecraft. We promise.

Previous winners

2019: Loft Hostel
2018: Hlemmur Mathöll
2017: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

For A Fancy Night Out



Sinfóníuhljóm sveit Íslands

Harpa, Austurbakki 2, 101 Reykjavík

In recent years, the Icelandic classical music scene has been booming, producing superstars like Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson, Anna Þorvaldsdóttir, and, yes you guessed it, the Oscar-winning composer, Hildur Guðnadóttir. What do these three all have in common? Well, all three have played or have had their compositions played by the wonderful Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. With shows every month at Harpa featuring a mix of old-school favourites and contemporary premieres, they are one of Iceland's most valuable cultural assets. Pro-tip: Don't miss their morning open rehearsals on show dates either. For only 2,000 ISK, you might even see their whole programme.

Runners-Up



Íslenski Dansflokkurinn id.is

The Icelandic Dance Company has established itself over and over again as a provocative and progressive art group that consistently pushes themselves and their medium into new territory. Having collaborated with artists like GusGus and Matthew Barney, they are guaranteed to put on a unique night that you will never forget. Bring a date to impress them.



Tjarnarbió Tjarnargata 12, 101 Reykjavík

Tjarnarbió houses the independent professional theatre scene in Reykjavík. The works shown here are experimental and often in English, which is refreshing, especially as Iceland gets more and more multicultural. This year, they played host to everything from a Saga-inspired Drag Show to techno rave performances to contemporary plays and more. We stan.

Previous winners

New Category!

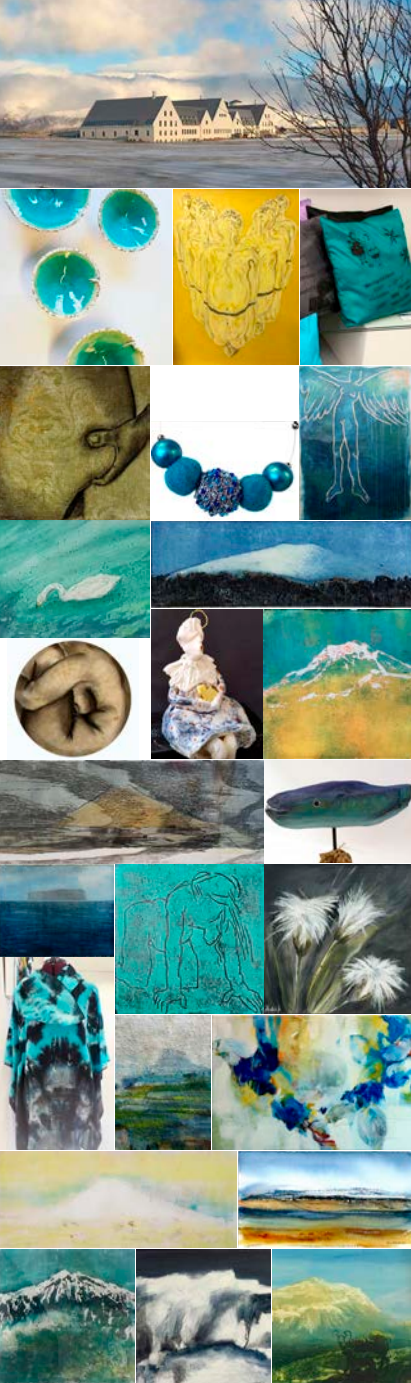
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Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen, Samuel O'Donnell, Valur Grettisson, Ragnar Egilsson**
Main photo: **Art Bicnick**



Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12

It's that time of the year: the hipster vibe is low and the darkness is damping your glamorous rock and roll style. But do not fret, for Röntgen Bar at Hverfisgata 12 will diagnose your winter woes and cure what ails you. Run by those behind the late and legendary live venue Húrra, Röntgen knows how to give folks a good time, with a stellar atmosphere, great drinks and a lineup of the best DJs in Iceland. Just remember to raise a glass to the good doctor Wilhelm Röntgen (who discovered x-rays) while sipping your tippie. **VC**



Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurstræti 9

The verdant Jungle Cocktail Bar came in like a tropical storm this winter. Devoted to the elevation of all things cocktail culture, some of Jungle's stranger offerings over the past months have included a kale cocktail, but there's no shortage of level-headed concoctions like the signature "The Bombshell" (tequila, rhubarb, vermouth) along with any classic you can name. Sink into their leathery lounge chairs during an unbeatable happy hour and you won't be able to leave even if you wanted to. **RE**



Mandi Pizza
Hafnarstræti 9

Feeling down and desolate about the closure of Nonnabiti in September? Good news! There is a new place to get your late-night spice fix. Mandi Pizza is the answer to the question: What can I eat if I've had Mandi shawarma six days in a row, and I want something different? Try the kebab pizza, and make sure to cover it in that good ol' Mandi white sauce. **SPO**



Pünk
Hverfisgata 20

Don't be fooled. Nothing about the interior of this place is punk. The pink plush bar stools, the multicoloured lights in the hanging foliage, the menu with artisan tacos and fruity drinks, the playlist with house pop remixes, all give more of a lounge in Miami vibe than anything punk. Nevertheless, the seating is comfortable, the atmosphere is cool, the food and drinks are delicious, and the music fits the interior atmosphere nicely. Try the sangria. **SPO**

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LAUGAVEGUR 120, 105 REYKJAVÍK

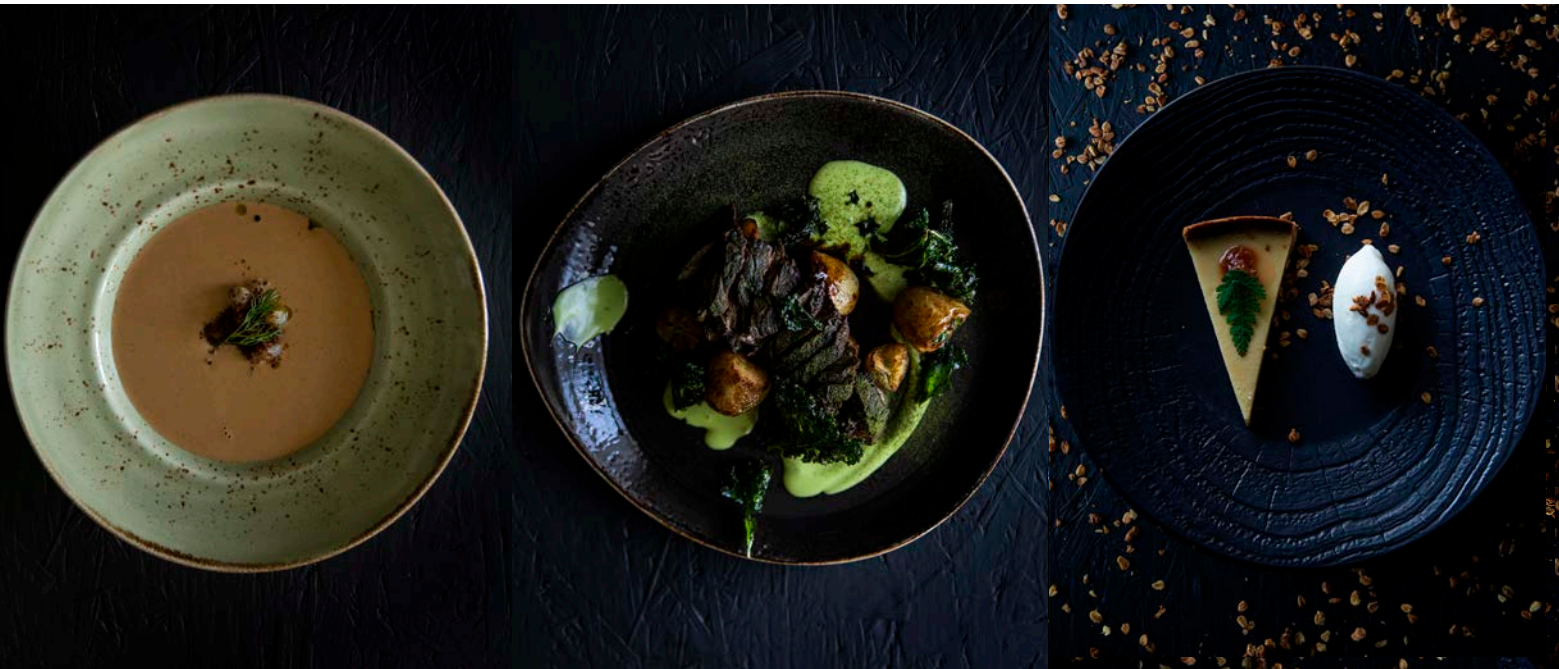
FRIDAYS | 19:00-21:00
LIVE JAZZ @ LÓA BAR - BISTRO
LAUGAVEGUR 95-99, 101 REYKJAVÍK

SATURDAYS | 19:00-22:00
DJ @ LÓA BAR - BISTRO
LAUGAVEGUR 95-99, 101 REYKJAVÍK

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