

THE G

# REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Ukrainians  
who lost their  
homes, and an  
Icelander who  
found one

## Will We Say Yes?

News: Joining the EU is back on the table

## Necksplitter

Music: Making brutal death metal gay again

## Burgers Galore

Food: Iceland's favourite sandwich reviewed

## Hit the Slopes!

Travel: Slaloming up in Akureyri

**COVER PHOTO:****Photo:** Óskar Hallgrímsson

This photo of Luba, a Ukrainian activist, was taken in a Molotov cocktail factory that used to be a rave club in Kyiv. Óskar is a photojournalist from Iceland, currently living in the city and reporting from there. You can read an interview with him on page 8.



- 06: Iceland & The EU**  
**07: Valkyries > Vikings**  
**08: The War In Ukraine**

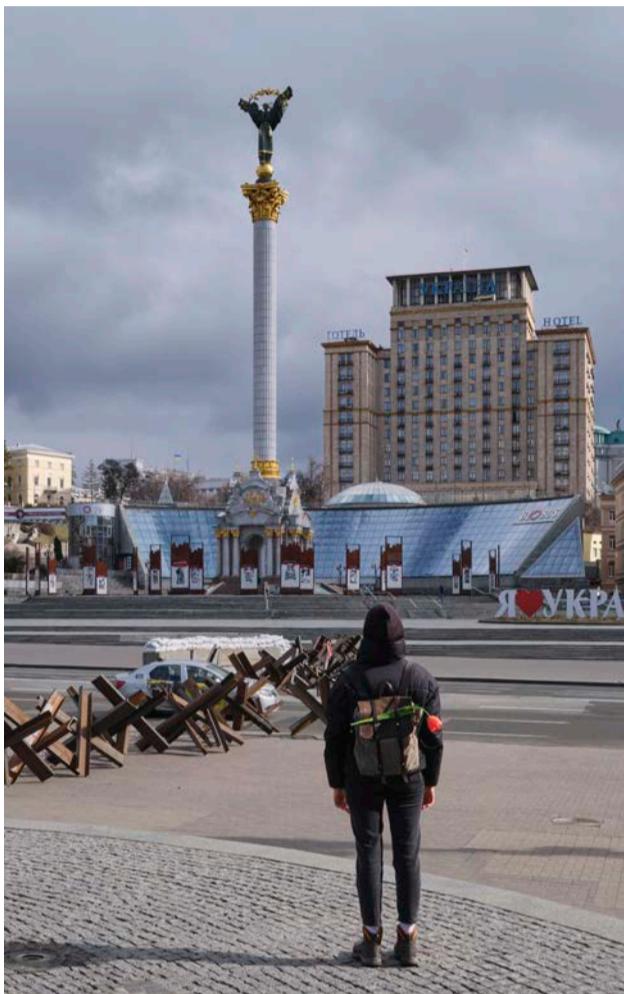


- 12: Polar Bear Art**  
**14: Music Stores**  
**15: The Most Perfect Day**



- 22: The Golden Ship**  
**23: Seaweed to Plastic**  
**28: Skiing For Snow Babies**

# First



## The Strong Leader Is Dead

**EDITORIAL** The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not only a shameful and illegal act, but obviously a huge political mistake for Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. This is clear to anyone that wants to see it. Not only has the dictator shown his true colours as a nostalgic totalitarian ruler — not there was any doubt before — but he has also displayed the weakness of Russia for the world to see.

The Russian army has showcased that Russia is far from being the strong empire they would like the world to believe. Ukrainians have shown once again that defending your home is the strongest drive when in conflict.

Although the Ukrainians are facing dark times, they have inspired the world with their courage. They have sent a clear message that they are no buffer state for the Russians, but an independent nation with a distinct national soul. Their bravery has even strengthened the West against Russia. Just a few years ago, the unity of the West appeared to be on shaky ground, with the discord within the UK and the alarming alt-right leadership of Donald Trump, heavily fueled by disinformation from Russia. Now, we see that the Russian public is the true victim of this new warfare of information, a situation with eerie parallels to Orwell's dystopian novel, 1984.

Ultimately, regardless of whatever the immediate outcome of this invasion may be, Ukrainians have a bright future within the democratic world. They will rebuild, and many refugees will return to help. Their political strength is unique and Volodymyr Zelensky will go down in history as one of the most inspiring leaders of his generation. As a truly strong leader.

Russia, on the other hand, is facing a bleak time ahead. . . The public will be as isolated as in the early days of the Cold War, stuck in the debris of an economy that is falling to rack and ruin around them. Putin, and his archaic, macho ideals of strength, will not be able to survive the disintegration of his nation that, at this juncture, feels to be inevitable.

The biggest cliché here is that "strong" leaders rule until they are overthrown. It might take a week, it might take a decade. But it will happen. And then, Russia will need to start all over again from the broken wreckage of a dictatorship. Perhaps they will look to their strong neighbour, Ukraine, and realise that the true strength was always democracy.

**Valur Grettisson**  
*Editor-in-chief*



**John Pearson**, the Grapevine's culture editor, is a Reykjavík resident with professional backgrounds in live music events, broadcasting, scuba diving, journalism, engineering and underwater photography. We suspect that he just likes to collect job titles. He is a big fan of puns, alliteration and lists that have three things in them.



**Alice Poggio**, quarter-life crisis is all too real, but Alice is making the most of it. Chasing down her numerous interests, which have shaped her into the poster child for the sometimes painful phrase: 'Master of none'. UAL graduate, volunteer, sculptor, freelance artist, wannabe MacGyver, is now eager to play her part within the landscape of Icelandic media.



**Polly** is a hard-working journalist by day and an enthusiastic ball-catcher by night. A five-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five-year-old human, Polly is Chief Morale Officer at the Grapevine, and a regular contributor to the Grapevine NewsCast on YouTube. Woof!



**Josie Anne Gaitens** is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using that title ever since. In addition to her Grapevine duties, she is currently on a mission to have a pint in every bar in 101.



**Iryna Zubenko** is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While she is still figuring out what to do in life, this time her love for travelling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought Iryna to Reykjavík. One day she'll write a non-fiction book.



**Catharine Fulton** is a writer who has been involved with the Grapevine for many years—possibly too many—serving as journalist, food editor and news editor before settling on copy editor. When not wielding her red pen she's often found opining on Canadian politics (professionally), and bitching about Icelandic politics (for fun).



**Shruthi Basappa** is one of Iceland's most knowledgeable foodies. She's covered local restaurants for years and has also been involved in various food competitions in Iceland, such as Food & Fun and more. By day, she works as an architect at Sei Studio.



**Andie Sophia Fontaine** has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been reporting since 2003. She was the first foreign-born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience she recommends for anyone who wants to enjoy a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.



**Valur Grettisson** is an award-winning journalist, author and playwright. He has been writing for Icelandic media since 2005. He was also a theatre critic and one of the hosts of the cultural program, 'Djöflaeyjan' on RÚV. Valur is not to be confused with the dreadful football club that bears the same name.

*hugge*

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RUSSIANS HATE HIM! Piss off the embassy with this one weird trick!

## What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Besides the Oscars

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine Photos: Art Bicnick

**NEWS** Barely five or seven years ago, any talk about overseas reporting of **Iceland hunting fin whales** was met with mild annoyance, if not fierce resistance. How dare the rest of the world tell us what we can and cannot do in our own waters, we've been whaling for decades, no one pushes us around, and so on. Quite a different tune is being sung now as **Hvalur hf., Iceland's last fin whaling company, announced they would resume whaling after a three-year hiatus**. Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Svandís Svavarsson has heavily implied that she will likely let Hvalur's hunting license expire come 2024, saying that it is unclear what benefit whaling gives Iceland. Furthermore, not just whale watching tour guides but the head of the Icelandic Tourist Board himself, Jóhannes Þór Skúlason, has said that they believe the hunt is bad for tourism and bad for Iceland. What a difference a few years makes.

**Iceland's Minister of Infrastructure**, chair of the Progressive Party, and quite likely the least offensive man in government **Sigurður Ingi Johannsson** has earned the distinction of **starting a beef with the Russian embassy**. The fracas began when Sigurður Ingi was

addressing members of his party at a weekend conference, referring to "the villains in the Kremlin" and saying that he hopes the Russian people will "rid themselves" of them. This did not go unnoticed by the Russian embassy in Iceland, who replied that Russia's government was democratically elected and that it was highly inappropriate for a foreign government official to publicly call for regime change in another country. In response, Sigurður Ingi quipped "I can apologise if the Russian army leaves Ukraine." Bear in mind this man has the same vibes as your granddad's friend who's really into coin collecting, ugly Christmas

sweaters, and watching golf on television. It's always the last ones you suspect.

Reykjavík will soon receive the mixed blessing of **Netflix coming to shoot in Iceland** again. No, this isn't a sequel of Eurovision Song Contest: The Story Of Fire Saga. Rather, the streaming giant will be coming to Iceland in early April to shoot an action thriller called Heart Of Stone. Details are scant, but there are two things we know: first of all, it will include stars such as Gal Gadot, Jamie Dornan and Sophie Okonedo. Second, it will mean that several downtown streets will be closed during filming for hours a day, every day of shooting. And a whole nation braces itself for the inevitable social media posts complaining about being stuck in traffic, and blurry photos of people who look like celebrities supposedly spotted getting a hot dog. 🍔



A whale, yesterday



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## Will We Or Won't We Join The EU?

Public opinion is shifting. Will policy?

Words:  
**Andie Sophia  
Fontaine**

Photo:  
**Creative  
Commons**

On the heels of a poll conducted in early March that indicated public support for Iceland joining the European Union has grown, with the largest portion of Icelanders now in favour of taking up membership, the matter is receiving somewhat contentious treatment in Parliament.

RÚV reports that leadership for the Social Democrats, the Pirate Party and the Reform Party, are calling for a national referendum on the subject of Iceland joining the EU.

### Our special position

Iceland, while not a part of the EU, is part of the EEA and EFTA, but has had

a rocky relationship with the block. Iceland first began accession talks in 2011, having applied in 2009, during a time when the country was led by a very pro-EU government.

The beginning of the end was in 2015, when under a new government, then Foreign Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson unilaterally decided to send a letter to EU authorities announcing that Iceland no longer wished to join the EU.

As RÚV points out, however, the application to join the EU was never formally withdrawn, which has made the matter an open question ever since.

### So where do we actually stand?

For her part, Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir told reporters that she is personally against Iceland joining the EU, saying that there are more advantages to being in the EEA and EFTA than would be afforded by formally joining the European Union. She added that it would require a parliamentary majority to re-activate the application to join the EU.

Independence Party Chair and Finance Minister Bjarni Benediktsson has said that a referendum on joining the EU would "complicate matters."

Given the Prime Minister's position, as well as the decidedly anti-EU stance of the other parties in the government—the Independence Party and the Progressive Party—such a majority is highly unlikely, at least during this parliamentary term. ☀

LOST IN GOOGLE TRANSLATION

## A Real Head Scratcher

A short, sad story: Bob, an eager American exchange student, is starting his Icelandic adventure. On his way to school, he scrolls through local news. A headline stands out: "The police are looking for a man with a headache."

He thinks: "That could easily be me." Could he be a test subject escaped from a drug study promising headache-free futures? Has the police force been afflicted by a department-wide bug, and is now forced to roam the streets with blinding headaches looking for this man?

Bob opens the article. The police are in fact looking for someone, and while the pictures don't show him notably migraineless, Bob's questions remain unanswered. He already missed his bus stop, but the obsession grows. He attempts to translate the original headline manually. Lögðreglan → police. Good. Lögðreglan lýsir eftir manni með kollvik → The police are looking for a man with... Great!

Kollvik... kollvik? Bob's eye twitches. Adding insult to injury, google interrupts: 'Uzbek language has been detected'.

At this point Bob isn't too convinced that he isn't this hunted man. Desperation drives him out of the bus, and onto the streets of Reykjavík. Wading through the crowds of tourists, searching for a local to make sense of this mess. Disheartened, he slumps down on a bench next to an old woman. In this case, the elderly's inability to mind their business serves him well, she sneaks a peek at Bob's screen and chuckles. "That's funny, I think they meant receding hairline"

There it is. Koll(ur) is another word for head. The translator bots certainly had fun with this one. A word of advice to all expats, find an Icelandic friend, and save yourself these headaches. AP ☀

DOMESTIC

### The police are looking for a man with a headache

Oddur Ævar Gunnarsson  
odduraevar@frettabladid.is

The police are looking for this man. Photos / The police

INNLENT

### Lögðreglan lýsir eftir manni með kollvik

The police are looking for this man. Photos / The police



Iceland is well-known internationally for being a state with no armed forces. "There's no appetite for an Icelandic army," says Baldur Pórhallsson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Iceland. "It's something that Icelanders tend to be very proud of. And we wouldn't even know how to run an army. It is much better and safer to rely on the forces of our allies."

So—other than the obvious financial methods—how could Iceland contribute to any NATO war effort? The security zone at Keflavík Airport is already used by member states conducting airborne and marine reconnaissance for the organisation, and could be used as a transport and logistics hub linking European operations to North America. "And you could locate a temporary hospital here, for soldiers or civilians, if you didn't want to have it on the European continent," Baldur observes.

Given the fact that the internet infrastructures of nations are now likely wartime targets, Icelandic digital security expertise could form part of NATO's defences, Baldur suggests. And medical, police and communications functions, traditionally the core of Icelandic international peacekeeping missions, could also come into play. "Iceland contributed to the policing of Kabul airport," says Baldur, "and is already sending people to work in communications for NATO in the Baltic states."

But what about the possibility of fighting forces using Iceland as a base? About this, Baldur is quite matter-of-fact.

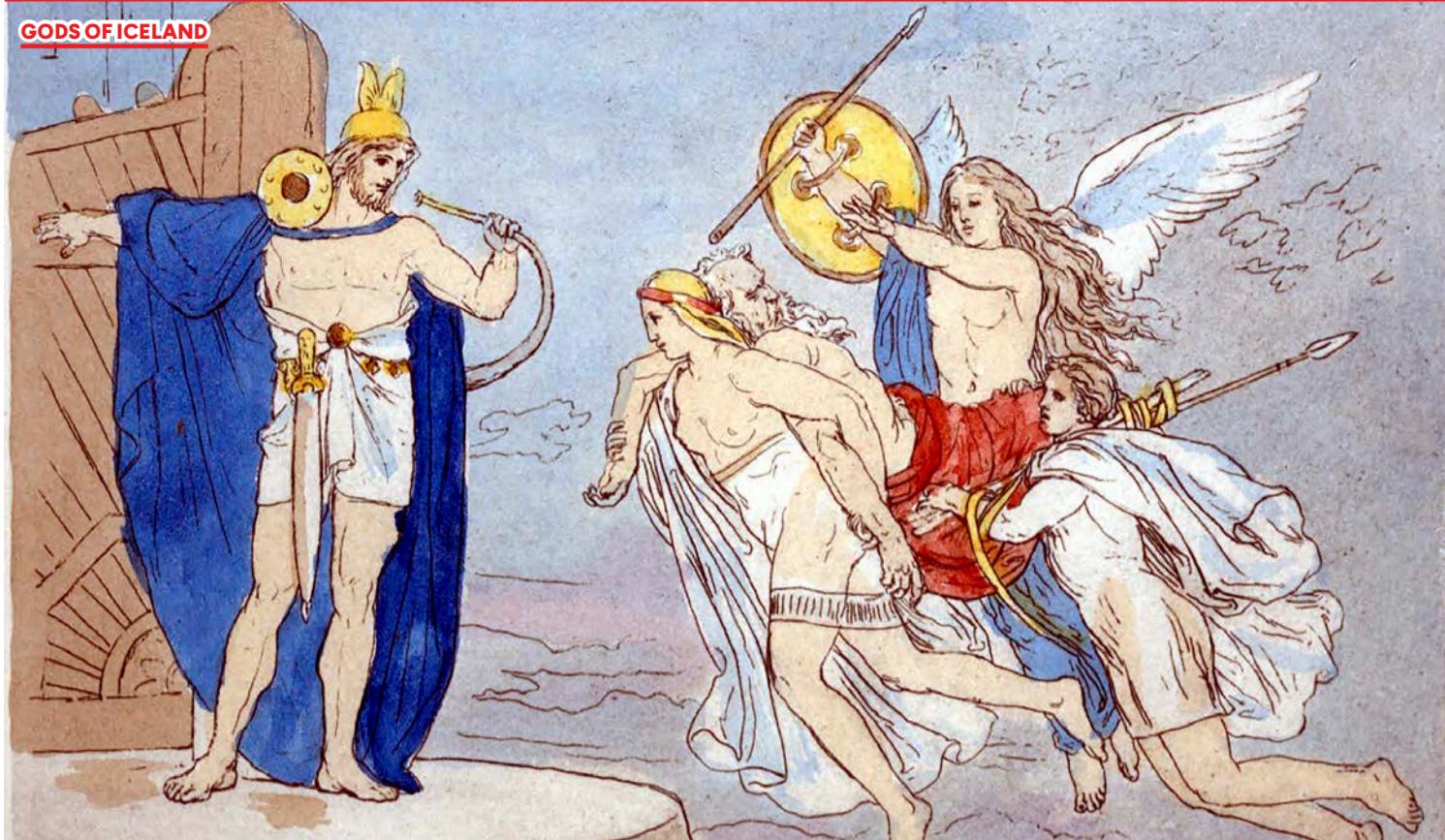
"You don't want to be seen as the weakest link. And if there is no permanent military base in Iceland, you might be seen by the enemy as the weakest link. That might lead to a request, during wartime—by the Icelandic government to NATO—for a permanent military base here." ☀

## SMASHED BURGERS AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK

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GODS OF ICELAND



## Valkyries

### Objectively better than Vikings

Words:  
**Andie Sophia  
Fontaine**

Take a walk anywhere in Iceland and you are likely to see the word “Viking” slapped in front of everything from jewelry, to souvenir shops and hot dogs. The male-dominated seafaring warrior class has become a supreme icon of all things Iceland, to the point of an ahistorical horned helmet being a stand-in for the country itself.

But none of these great warriors would matter one bit were it not for the Valkyries, whose name literally means “choosers of the slain”. These feminine spirits descend upon battlefields, after

the fighting is over, and personally select which afterlife they will go to.

Half of the fallen are spirited away to Fólkvangur, a beautiful field under the auspices of the goddess Freyja, while the other half went to Valhalla, which belongs to Óðinn.

Valkyries played a super important role beyond the afterlife, too. Throughout the Middle Ages in Germanic Europe, the Valkyries were the subject of poetry, spells, charms, and some of the most beautiful art of the ages. Vikings arguably took a back seat once their age

was over, but Valkyries persisted in the imagination for centuries.

Despite this, it's the Vikings who dominate the popular image of the Norse people today, which is, frankly, pure misogyny. Valkyries are objectively better than Vikings. 🤪

**Superpowers:**  
Ferrying the fallen dead

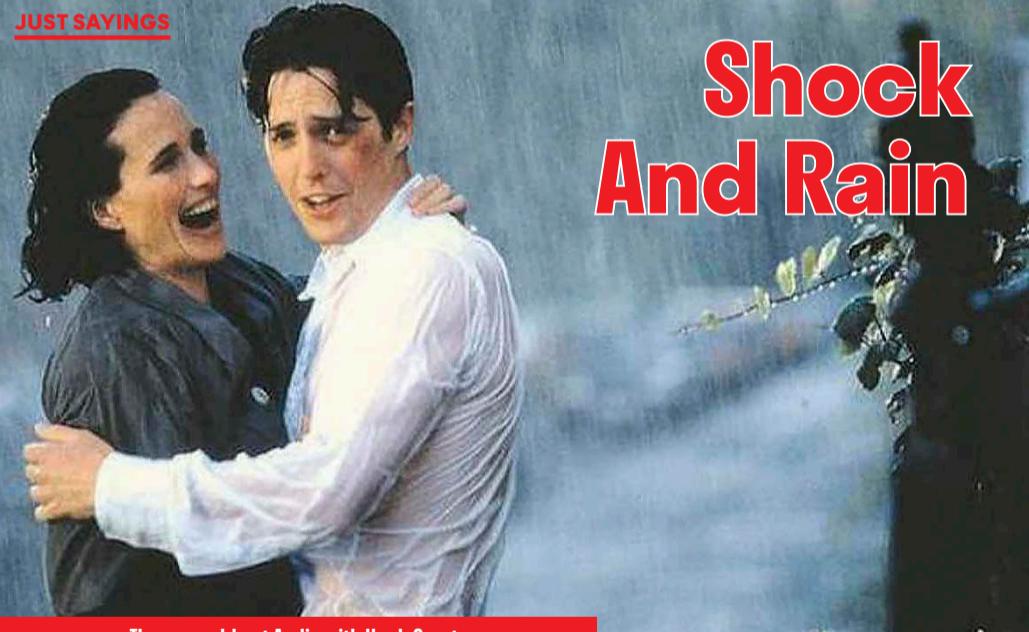
**Weaknesses:**  
Being overlooked

**Modern Analogy:**  
Talent scouts

Image:  
**Lorenz Fröhlich/  
Wikimedia  
Commons**

JUST SAYINGS

## Shock And Rain



The second-best Andie with Hugh Grant

Do you remember that scene in, well, every movie, when there is a funeral and it's pouring rain? Well, Icelanders have a saying for that. „Oft kemur regn eftir reiðarsalag“ translates literally to “there is often rain after a shock/tragedy.” It seems that Icelanders noticed that the sky got darker and there was rain after a tragedy hit, and instead of being dramatic about it, we honed a saying about it. So, when we look up into the dark sky at the funeral, we can turn to the next person with a slight know-it-all smile on our face, and say; it often rains after when tragedy hits. I mean, if you're that kind of person. Which you totally aren't. That's just how the saying goes! VG 🤪

## NEW MUSIC PICKS



**Supersport!**  
**“Taka Samtalið”**

Supersport!, (the exclamation point is theirs, not mine), are probably already familiar to many musically-inclined Reykvikingur, having been around for a while now and releasing an album last year. This is charmingly ramshackle indie that grows on you quickly with a couple of listens, and comes across a bit like Belle and Sebastian covering a Pavement song in Icelandic. JP



**Filous & Daði Freyr**  
**“Sabada”**

This relaxed upbeat track—created by Daði with Viennese producer Filous—is a great way for Iceland's favourite 8-bit avatar to return after a couple of years of Eurovision insanity. He's a little more grounded now, having recently fathered a baby, moved house and built a new studio. It's great to enjoy Daði again without the high-octane nonsense of Eurovision getting in the way. JP



**Una Torfa**  
**“Ekkert Að”**

This is the first release by Una Torfadóttir, a 21-year-old singer-songwriter who has created a wonderfully gentle ballad, sparsely arranged around acoustic guitar, piano and some understated drums. This track bodes well for Una's upcoming EP which has apparently been in the works since 2019. If taking her time creates work as good as this, then whenever you're ready, Una. No rush. JP

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# Those Who Left And Those Who Stayed

**Ukrainians in Iceland, and an Icelander in Ukraine, on the past, present and future of war**

On the morning of February 24th, the world woke to the news that after weeks of sabre rattling, Russia had invaded Ukraine. Since then, some four million people have fled the country, while others have opted to stay—to fight, to volunteer assistance, or to document the war. We spoke to three of the Ukrainian women who reluctantly fled their country for safety in Iceland, as well as an Icelandic photographer who chose to stay in Kyiv, about what this war has meant for them, and where it could lead.



Photo: Óskar Hallgrímsson

# Part 1: The Uncanny Proximity Of War

Three Ukrainian women, now in Iceland, tell their stories

Words: Iryna Zubenko Photos: Art Bicnick

**Olena Jadallah**, a former deputy mayor for the city of Irpin and associate professor of Economics, couldn't have imagined that a full-scale war was possible. "Everyone in my family believed in the strength of diplomacy, dialogue, and the wisdom of politicians and world leaders. We thought this could be negotiated."

As such, Olena didn't make any arrangements before the war broke out—but her parents had.

"My parents bought enough water, medicine, candles, matches, just in case," she says. "They have a heated basement, so we were planning to stay together should the situation get worse. When at five in the morning, we woke up to explosions in Irpin, we couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe that this is happening to us, in the 21st century."

Like many other families in Ukraine, Olena's family was confident that this was some kind of misunderstanding that would resolve in a day or two; a week at most. Her family stayed home for two days before deciding to stay with her parents in the town of Bucha.

"We felt a bit calmer with my parents, but on the third day we realized that the whole region—Hostomel, Bucha, Irpin—was becoming more and more occupied by Russian troops," she says. "There was active fighting all around. We realized that our kids can't be locked in the basement all the time, especially our 1-year-old. We decided to leave."

**Nataliia Baburina**, an account manager at a software development company from Kharkiv, left the city one day after the shelling began. Prior to the invasion, her company had prepared a business continuity plan which meant they would relocate to another office of the company, located in Chernivtsi.

On the morning of the invasion, it took Nataliia some time to gather her thoughts and wake up her husband and son to tell them that the war had started.

"I was in shock," she says. "They also didn't realize it right away. I knew that, should things get worse, they would fire artillery at military targets. We live not far from such a target, so my husband and I discussed the possibility of relocating even earlier. We decided not to panic and stay in the city. But seeing residential infrastructure being bombed was an absolute shock. There are no military targets there!"

Nataliia and her family didn't rush to flee. Instead, they sat and thought about what they should do. Then they talked to their neighbours and decided to clear out their basement, and make it a shelter.

**Olga Druyanova**, a freelancer from Kharkiv, found herself in the midst of war just three days after she returned home from a trip in Iceland.

"A month before the war, there were lots of rumours already," she says.

"My Icelandic friends would ask what's the situation like in Ukraine as they'd heard that troops were lining up at the border. I didn't believe the rumours at all. I think a normal person with common sense can't imagine that in the 21st century a war like that could begin."

Despite local friends suggesting she wait until the threat of invasion is over, Olga returned to Ukraine. On February 24, her son woke her up telling her that the war had begun.

"I didn't panic," she says. "I managed to keep peace of mind and concentrate on what I can do and what needs to be done. I didn't pack an anxiety suitcase, I didn't even plan it. I didn't rush straight to a bomb shelter. One of the main bomb shelters in Kharkiv is inside the subway, and I lived really far from the subway, my house also didn't have a basement that would be suitable to use as a bomb shelter."

Olga would just stay home, using elementary safety rules when she heard air raid sirens, like not staying close to the windows, choosing a room with load-bearing walls.

## TO LEAVE, OR NOT TO LEAVE

When asked whether there was a turning point that prompted Olga to decide to leave Kharkiv five days after the war began, she shares a personal story about her family:

"I have Jewish relatives on one

side of my family," Olga says. "In 1942, my great grandma's family was shot dead by fascists in Kharkiv. She was 40 years old. All of them were shot and buried in Drobytsky Yar. Before the war, their relatives encouraged them to leave and go to the USA or elsewhere, but the family didn't want to leave. Kharkiv was their home, they spent their whole lives

there. They stayed. And they died. I sat there and thought that maybe I should do something different than my ancestors. I've been to Iceland many times, I had some connections. I thought that maybe I could be of more help if I didn't stay in Kharkiv."

"I understood that if they already attacked us, they would try to create a 'Kharkiv People's Republic' here," shares Nataliia. "Eight years ago we managed to avoid this, but it seemed like the threat was there again. So my husband and I agreed that we have to leave the city. We sat in our car and left. It was terrible, the city was so empty, it looked like an apocalypse. There were burnt cars along the road. When we were driving we saw missile strikes. We drove non-stop. As we didn't find a place to stay overnight, the ride to Chernivtsi took us 22 hours. In Chernivtsi, we found an

apartment, and, initially, we planned to just stay there. The situation changed on the night when the Russian troops attacked Enerhodar and Zaporizhzhia nuclear stations. We saw a real nuclear threat and understood that Russia has zero rationality at this point. No one could predict what would happen next. My husband decided to contact his colleagues from Iceland who offered us temporary accommodation earlier."

## SANITY BITES THE DUST

The journey to Iceland went smooth for Nataliia and Olga, but it wasn't as carefree for Olena, who was traveling with a sick one-year-old.

"I spent around ten hours at the Ukraine-Poland border with my kids," she says. "It was cold. My kid developed a high fever and I had to call an ambu-

**"We saw a real nuclear threat and understood that Russia has zero rationality at this point. No one could predict what would happen next."**

lance to get him an injection. Maybe it was because of stress, but it was truly horrible. Lots of people, huge lines of mostly women and small kids, everyone's arguing." After passing border control, Olena and her kids received a warm welcome from the Polish volunteers. "They met us, offered us food, gave us a ride to Warsaw, and helped us find accommodation."

Olena's parents who had been evacuated from Bucha ten days later, however, received a different treatment.

"A group of Kadyrovites [a Chechen paramilitary group supporting the Russian army], who are known for their cruelty, broke into my parents' house," Olena says. "They broke into the house with machine guns and shot absolutely everything, including windows and furniture. Thank God, my parents weren't home at that time—they were



**"Ukrainians not only stand for their own country today. They stand for the sake of security everywhere in Europe and probably everywhere in the world."**



hiding in the basement. They tried to stay as silent as possible and prayed for their lives. The Kadyrovites discovered that there were four cars in the garage so just for fun they shot the cars too. Of course, they stole some things from the house, things like alcohol, some clothes... and gloves. My mom also told me they took some perfumes probably as trophies for their wives. When leaving, the group of soldiers saw our neighbour, badly beat him up, and said they will be back in an hour and won't spare anyone."

Olena's parents decided to flee as fast as possi-

## "How can I bring my child to school, when there's a threat of Russia starting a war?"

ble. They were shocked and scared. It turned out later that they only brought national IDs with them and forgot the passports.

"When they were in Poland, Wizz Air denied them boarding without passports," she recounts. "They went to the Ukrainian embassy the next day, got an extra identification document, but were denied boarding again. Wizz Air requires a biometric passport even from families with one-month-old children. On the third try, my parents got lucky as they met someone who called Polish authorities and influenced Wizz Air's decision, so they finally got on the plane. But I heard that 16 Ukrainians were denied boarding because of the same issue that day."

### NEW BEGINNINGS IN ICELAND

As of March 23rd, 377 Ukrainian refugees had arrived in Iceland. According to forecasts of the Ministry of Justice, up to 2,000 refugees could apply for international protection in Iceland, which would allow them to reside, work and access benefits in Iceland for up to one year.

None of the women I spoke with wanted to leave Ukraine. It was a last resort, a desire to take their kids as far from war as possible.

"We are really grateful to the Icelandic government and volunteers," Olena emphasises. "The immigration department has provided us with free accommodation at a hotel. We receive three meals a day, volunteers provide us with

medicine, and bring toys and clothes for our kids. There are so many volunteer organisations involved, people who aren't indifferent."

"My kids were absolutely shocked," Olena continues. "They were not ready for this war. We haven't discussed such things with them. We weren't ready either. It's easier for the younger kid as he doesn't really understand much. His mom is with him, so that's the most important thing. But my older one understands a lot, he watches the news and roots for our president and the Ukrainian army. Of course, we want to go home as soon as possible, we miss our city, our house, friends, relatives... but we are happy to be safe and together here."

After a few really hard weeks, Natalia jokes that her stay in Iceland feels like a vacation now.

"For the first few days, we stayed with a family of one of my husband's colleagues," she says. "They've treated us with sympathy and have been very helpful. We receive a lot of attention, people invite us over so that my son could also play with other kids. He has made some Icelandic friends already."

Unlike others, Olga didn't have relatives or colleagues in Iceland. She came here as a tourist a few times and felt good from the very beginning.

"Iceland is a place of unconditional happiness," Olga says. "I like Icelandic culture, Icelandic people, I've recently started to learn the language. I knew that if I were to leave Ukraine, that it would be for Iceland."

When Olga made the decision to flee from Kharkiv, taking an evacuation

train to Lviv and then a bus to Warsaw, she was preparing her son for a new, different life.

"I told my son that our lives would change," she says. "Now we're refugees. But so far, we have received a heartfelt welcome and unmatched support anywhere we would go."

Unable to find housing on the night they arrived, Olga and her son ended up spending the night at the Minister of Justice's house. "Iceland really does a lot for those arriving here," assures Olga.

### THINGS NEED TO CHANGE

The war in Ukraine began in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and invaded the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. During this period of time, Natalia lived in a city just 100 km from the occupied areas.

"It all started eight years ago," she shares. "We've welcomed so many refugees back then, helping them in every possible way. There had been many young mothers among them and it was especially traumatic for me as I was a new mom too. I felt really sorry for them. And now...everyone heard this news, and the kids, too. I saw my son playing 'war' with other kids. Once my son told me 'I'm scared to go to school, because it's just 20 km from Russia'. On days when we were told an attack is possible, I didn't drive him to school. How can I bring my child to school, when there's a threat of Russia starting a war?"

Natalia hopes that the world will realise that the problem is not only with Putin.

"The problem lies deep in Russia and its society," Natalia says. "What we see now, is, in fact, the fascism and Nazism that they accuse us of. My family has relatives in Russia and in Crimea, and every time we talk to them, they just repeat the propaganda broadcasted on their television. They tell us that we deserve all of this. They tell us that they couldn't force us in any other way. They tell us that no one needs us in Europe. They tell us that it is all the USA's fault. They tell us that the only reason why our children, our women are now being killed is the fact that we resist. If we didn't resist, and they managed to conquer Kyiv as they planned, everything would be different. It's victim-blaming coming from an entire country."

Olga has experienced a similar reaction from her family in Russia.

"I also have absolutely irrational relatives and friends in Russia, who are completely brainwashed by Putin's propaganda," Olga agrees. "They're trying to assure us that it's the Ukrainian army that bombs civilians, or that it's the mythical nationalists bombing us. This war is the cruellest lesson possible, but it will make us stronger."

Olga concludes the interview with a message for other European powers.

"I want to say that every world leader and every citizen of any European country, including Iceland, has to understand that Ukraine and Ukrainians not only stand for their own country today," she says. "They stand for the sake of security everywhere in Europe and probably everywhere in the world. Our lives will never be the same as they were before February 24th." 🇰

## Part 2: Choosing The Less Worst Thing

Óskar Hallgrímsson on life in Kyiv

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine Photos: Óskar Hallgrímsson



Óskar Hallgrímsson-known as Skari to his friends-is a photographer who has been living in Ukraine for over two years now, and lives in Kyiv with his wife.

"I just completely fell in love with this country and the people here," Skari says. "It's one of the most amazing places I've ever been," which is saying a lot for a person who has travelled all over the world.

He calls Ukrainians "a funny people. They're like the Scots of eastern Europe. If you go to any other old Soviet republic, you don't see a smile anywhere. But here, people are always smiling, laughing and joking."

Today, there isn't much smiling and laughter. Our conversation, taking place in the midst of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is briefly interrupted by an explosion heard outside. Skari is unshaken.

"I keep a pretty cool head in crisis situations, because of the nature of my job," he says. "I've been in dicey situations before, though I've never been in a war. I'm pretty good at doing these risk assessments; what's actually going to happen versus what your anxiety is telling you, and not being controlled by your emotions."

strong the Ukrainian army is versus the incredible shitshow that the Russian invasion is, that convinced me more to stay. And we're very glad we did."

## PUTIN'S GAMBLE

The war is naturally having an emotional impact on people, especially as Ukrainians witness what Russia is doing to the cities of Kherson and Mariupol. That said, Skari believes Putin has miscalculated how Ukrainians would react to the invasion.

"Putin is making a bet that this is going to drag Ukrainians down and make them afraid, but I think it's doing the exact opposite," he says. "It's only fuelling their resistance. You can see it in the fighting. The death toll on the Russian side is ten times that of the Ukrainian side. Plus the amount of equipment that's been lost by the Russians is just bananas."

tary. But it's still a cell phone. So if you're in the middle of a field somewhere in Ukraine, you don't have any service. They effectively knocked out their own communications. As a result, they've brought their generals to the front to communicate with troops directly and try to boost morale, because morale is completely fucked."

## CLOSING THE SKIES?

Skari emphasises that as small as Iceland is, its vote counts just as much as any other NATO country in terms of what to do next.

"The Icelandic government has a vote in NATO, and it's as strong as any other country in NATO," he says. "We could pressure NATO to do something in a military sense, for example, to close the skies. That would be amazing. That's basically bringing in NATO, though, so it's very risky."

next step is what he used in Syria, the chemical weapons. He wouldn't be able to use them in Kyiv, but he could use them in Mariupol or Kharkiv."

## THE LESS FUCKED THING

Despite speculations of armchair generals across social media, Skari, from his position in the middle of the conflict, does not see any clean and abrupt ending to the conflict.

"When you're dealing with war, there aren't any good things," he says. "There are just less bad things. You can have one thing that's fucked, one thing that's way more fucked, so you choose the less fucked thing. There's no magic answer to any of this. It's always going to be a tragedy. Every decision here is going to cost something."

That said, Skari remains optimistic. His view from the ground, and his closeness to the Ukrainian people, affords him a keen look at the resolve

**"They're like the Scots of eastern Europe. If you go to any other old Soviet republic, you don't see a smile anywhere. But here, people are always smiling, laughing and joking."**



## WHEN THE WAR BEGAN

"I was in my bed, and woke up to explosions," Skari recounts. "It had been brewing for a few days at that point. We knew that Putin was going to attack somewhere, but most people thought he wouldn't be stupid enough to try and take the whole country. But then during the night, I woke up to these heavy explosions."

When it came to deciding whether to stay or leave, Skari and his wife tried to analyse the situation rationally. Skari felt it was necessary to document what was happening, and what was to come.

"I also saw this as an opportunity to document the conflict," he says. "And looking at Putin's army, I just didn't believe he had the might to do what he wanted to do. It's just not big enough or strong enough. Then we saw just how

## RUSSIA'S QUAGMIRE

By all accounts, Russian forces have not been able to make any significant advances into the country. Drawing from both official and semi-official sources, Skari believes there are numerous reasons for this.

In a lot of ways, Russia has been its own greatest enemy in the conflict. They have lost numerous generals to Ukrainian forces, in no small part because of another miscalculation by Russian authorities.

"The Russians are pushing the generals to the front because the communication lines have broken down," he says. "The Ukrainians have broken into Russian encrypted communications. Also, the Russians built this encrypted cell phone entirely of Russian parts. They distributed it widely in their mil-

## THE NUCLEAR THREAT

As dangerous as closing the sky might be, a nuclear retaliation is not something Skari sees Russia resorting to. Rather, Skari believes the next step in retaliation could be something Russia has used before.

"My worry is that a nuclear strike isn't the next step in the escalation," he says. "What people are missing, and what my worry is, is chemical weapons. He's already targetting civilians, he's already using cluster munitions, he's already using thermobaric bombs, the

of the Ukrainian people, whose determination to halt the Russian invasion grows with each passing day.

"I've seen people stop and clap for Ukrainian soldiers they've seen on the street," he says. "They're heroes to these people. The morale here is amazing. Right now, it seems very likely that Ukraine is going to kick Russia's ass out." 🇺🇦



**"People think we make work about animals, but we don't—we make work about weird human behaviour"**

# Strangers In The North

## 'Visitations' Wins The Visual Arts Prize

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens Photos: Margrét Seema Takyar & Daniel Starrason

Polar bear encounters in Iceland tend to take a predictable form: a bear, often weak and emaciated, is spotted by a local. Panic ensues; the police are called, the media incites a brief hysteria. The bear is shot.

This chaotic cycle, doomed to repeat itself every few years, is partially the subject of 'Visitations', an exhibition by Icelandic/British artistic partnership Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson—a show that earned them the prestigious Icelandic Visual Arts Award.

"I've been told by lots of people not to say it was a surprise," confides Mark Wilson. "I did actually think we might be shortlisted, but Bryndís didn't at all."

"I wasn't even thinking about it," confirms his partner, Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir. "I don't make art to get accolades. But at the same time, I don't deny how wonderful it was to receive it."

"I didn't think the art scene in Iceland had quite arrived at this point," she continues. "I felt so pleased that they could award the Art Prize to something that goes beyond this idea of the Romantic artist."

### Conflict and paradox

Mark and Bryndís's work is about as far removed from traditional notions of visual art as could be imagined. Shown at the Art Museum in Akureyri from September 2021 to January 2022, Visitations was the culmination of a 3-year multidisciplinary research project, funded by Rannís, the Icelandic Research Fund. Presented using a broad variety of media—with video, photographs, collage, drawings and zoological

remains making up just some of the different exhibits—the project exemplifies the artistic practice of Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, which they have been developing over the past 20 years.

"Sometimes people think we make work about animals, but we don't—we make work about weird human behaviour," explains Mark. "We use a particular animal and the interface that humans have with that animal to explore different interests, and often to reveal a lack of consensus; conflict and paradox."

### A personal connection

Mark and Bryndís have been creating work together since 1999, and polar bears—or rather, the weird human behaviours associated with them—have frequently been the focus of their artistic exploration.

"It started from a very personal perspective," says Bryndís. "It had to do with my name—Snæbjörnsdóttir [‘snow bear’s daughter’, in English]. I lived in Scotland for many years, and I was quite persistent that people would be able to say my surname. I don't know why, but it became hugely important for me."

A transformational moment came when Bryndís visited a museum store room in Scotland, and was confronted by the sight of hundreds of stuffed animals of every kind. The experience, she says, "activated this deep feeling of some kind of loss. You know—what have we done? What are we doing?"

The unsettling incident provided unexpected momentum and helped to crystallise the approach Bryndís wanted to take

with her practice. The couple soon completed their first project, 'nanoq: flat out and bluesome': an artists' survey of taxidermy polar bears in Scotland.

### Making connections

This first collaborative work confirmed not only the pair's enduring interest in polar bear experiences, but also their desire to involve partners from outside the artistic sphere, an element of their practice that has remained a consistent thread throughout their various projects. From historians, folklorists and zoologists, to farmers, pet owners and hunters, Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson see collaboration as an essential part of their work.

"This thing about ‘the artist, the genius’... I always felt like this was total nonsense—and I still do, basically," Bryndís says, waving her hands dismissively. "Art is about bringing people together."

"It's about making unlikely connections on every level," agrees Mark. "We work a lot with other disciplines, and we talk a lot about the importance of that."

### III-fated visitors

For Visitations, the artists focussed their work around two polar bear arrivals to Iceland in 2008. The two 'vagrants'—as non-native visitors are known—both came ashore on the North coast of Iceland, within weeks of each other. Both were shot and killed, although there was serious discussion of trying to tranquillise the second one.

In a macabre twist of fate, Bryndís had the strange experience of encountering this particular bear

twice: once living, and again after its death. She was able to accompany the press to see it, running hungry and scared, across the wild expanses of Skagafjördur. The second encounter came when she and Mark were conducting research at The Icelandic Institute of Natural History. It was here that they discovered that many of the skeletons of bears killed in Iceland are kept for scientific purposes.

"On one of our first visits there, they just lent us the bones of that particular bear," Bryndís says, almost incredulously, as if she still can't quite believe such a thing took place.

"Again, you have these kind of moments," she continues. "You're driving your car and in the back of the car are the bones of the bear that you saw living. It's difficult to let it go; it haunts you."

### The idea of the stranger

This complex idea of a haunting, of a relationship with a species that

is mediated by a heady combination of folklore and fear, forms the basis of Visitations. The bones that Bryndís and Mark drove home that day were also an exhibit in the show; not wired together and displayed as in museums, as if they still inhabited the ghostly form of an absent animal, but in a stacked heap in a box. An indisputable container of evidence of what happened when a bear met a man.

"More abstractly, we're looking at the idea of the stranger, and the idea of hospitality" says Mark. "How do you deal with a stranger, when the stranger constitutes a threat? Because obviously, historically, there's only been one answer to that question."

*'Visitations: Polar Bears out of Place'* took place at Akureyri Art Museum from 25.09.2021 - 09.01.2022, and was curated by Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir. Learn more at [visitations.lhi.is](http://visitations.lhi.is)



The exhibition in Akureyri

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— ICELAND —



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Layin' down some Level 42

## No Stairway To Heaven

Jamming with the city's best musical instrument shops

Words: John Pearson Photos: Christine Wehrmeier

The heart of Reykjavík has a musical beat. In a city teeming with venues and gigs, pretty much anyone you meet who is remotely interesting will be in a band or three. But if you want to be next in the long line of members of GusGus, you're going to need to know where to buy your kazoo. I dropped into four noteworthy music shops to sample their wares, and catch their vibe.

### Hljóðfærahúsið

Síðumúli 20, 108 Reykjavík

This spacious showroom is probably the biggest instrument shop in the city, and can trace its roots back over a hundred years. Hljóðfærahúsið, (a terrifying Icelandic word at first sight, but it translates simply as "The Musical Instrument House"), is a consolidation of various historic instrument, sound and stage lighting businesses. Consequently it boasts a huge diversity of equipment—from stage smoke machines to pianos—including audio gear for podcasts, a growth area during the pandemic. Manager Jón Kjartan Ingólfsson and his staff are happy to help you find what you need, or just to chat about music.

I tried out: a MusicMan Stingray—God's own bass guitar, and no debate. It growls like a horny tiger.

### HljóðX Rín

Grensásvegur 12, 108 Reykjavík

HljóðX Rín came about in 2011 when PA hire company HljóðX took over instrument shop Rín, and the current shop reflects that heritage by carrying a decent mix of rock 'n' roll instruments, amplifiers and general audio gear. Music shops often serve as social hubs for local musicians, a role recently made

music and—like Hljóðfærahúsið—has recognised and embraced the burgeoning market in podcast production gear. There is a fantastic percussion room with a huge selection of fun stuff, including a sea drum which hospitable shop owner Andrés Helgason can coax into sounding exactly like the Atlantic surf rolling up an Icelandic pebble beach.

I tried out: one of the double basses. Easy! It's like a fretless bass guitar, just hold the other way up. Erm... right?

### Sangitamiya

Grettisgata 7, 101 Reykjavík

This cosy little store, nestled in a corner house downtown, extends a truly global reach to gather its collection of instruments. The result is a multicultural mélange of acoustic musical objects, united by shop owner Eymundur Matthiasson's belief that music is a powerful way to bring peace and joy into lives. The Sangitamiya stocklist is dizzying; from the simple and familiar, such as castanets, to obscurities such as the Mongolian morin-khuur. But what they don't stock are the standard electrical instruments prevalent in the other three shops on this list, a policy which Sangitamiya uses to distinguish itself.

I tried out: a kalimba, or thumb piano. You've got to be pretty determined to make one of those sound unmusical. But I did try.



Saxy time in Tónastöðin

April 1st — May 5th

# In Your Pocket

Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

## Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: [Iryna Zubenko](#)  
Photo: [Provided by Silja](#)

### Silja Björk Björnsdóttir

*Silja Björk Björnsdóttir is a feminist, writer, podcaster, and lecturer. Her first book is an autobiographical story about mental health, depression, and recovery. Silja spends most of her time between Akureyri and Reykjavík, so here's her guide to the perfect day in the capital!*

#### Weight training and breakfast

I love early mornings in the city. I always wake up around 7:30 am and head to the gym. My preferred location is World Class Laugar because I can hit the gym, lift some weights and then chill in the hot tub to set the tone for the day. I'm a writer and a freelancer, so I love working from cafes and my favorite spot is Reykjavík Roasters in Brúarholt. I typically start my day with a double cappuccino with oat milk, sourdough bread, hummus and dates. I pop open my laptop, surf some social media and then start my workday.

#### Let's squeeze in some work?

My favorite lunch spot is Kröst in Hlemmur Mathöll, where I can enjoy people watching and the most delicious fish known to man. I love to enjoy time with friends so the next spot would be a cozy café like the Kattarkaffihús, where we could enjoy a sweet vegan treat and good coffee while petting cats. Maybe we could squeeze in some work too, since most of my friends are also freelancers or aspiring artists.

I always love a good walk through the city, even in rain. If I need some inspiration I'll walk along Laugavegur, down to Tjörnin and up to Hólavallagarður with some nice music or a podcast in my headphones.

#### Best dinner spots, undisputed

I am a total foodie and Reykjavík does not leave one wanting when it comes to amazing dinner spots! I love a good glass of wine or a cocktail so starting the evening at Tíu sopar or

Skál for natural wines would be perfect. From there I'd take a bus further downtown for dinner. My all time favorite restaurants that I visit over and over again would be Fiskfélagið, Matarkjallarinn or Le Kock if I'm feeling extra juicy. I would love having all my friends and my partner with me, enjoying a nice night out with plenty of good wine, food and laughing!

#### Wrapping up the day

Winding down for the night means walking home if the weather is nice enough or taking an e-scooter. I have to stop at Mandí before heading home though to grab a falafel wrap. Looking at the night sky, enjoying the sights and sounds of the city quieting down. I come home, wash my face and take a long hot shower before turning on some ASMR on my sleepphones and falling asleep, a little tipsy and very much happy after the perfect day in one of my favorite cities. ☺

## Vital Info

### USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergency: 112  
On-call doctors: 1770  
Dental emergency: 575 0505  
Taxi: Hreyfill: 588 5522 or BSR: 561 0000

### POST OFFICE

The downtown post office is located at Hagatorg 1, and is open Mon-Fri, 09:00-17:00

### PHARMACIES

Lyf og Heilsa, Fiskislóð 1, tel: 561 4600  
Lyfja, Hafnarstræti 19, tel: 552 4045



### OPENING HOURS - BARS & CLUBS

Under current pandemic restrictions bars can stay open until 21:00

### OPENING HOURS - SHOPS & BANKS

Most shops: Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00,  
Sat 10:00-16:00, Sun closed  
Banks: Mon-Fri 9:00-16:00

### SWIMMING POOLS

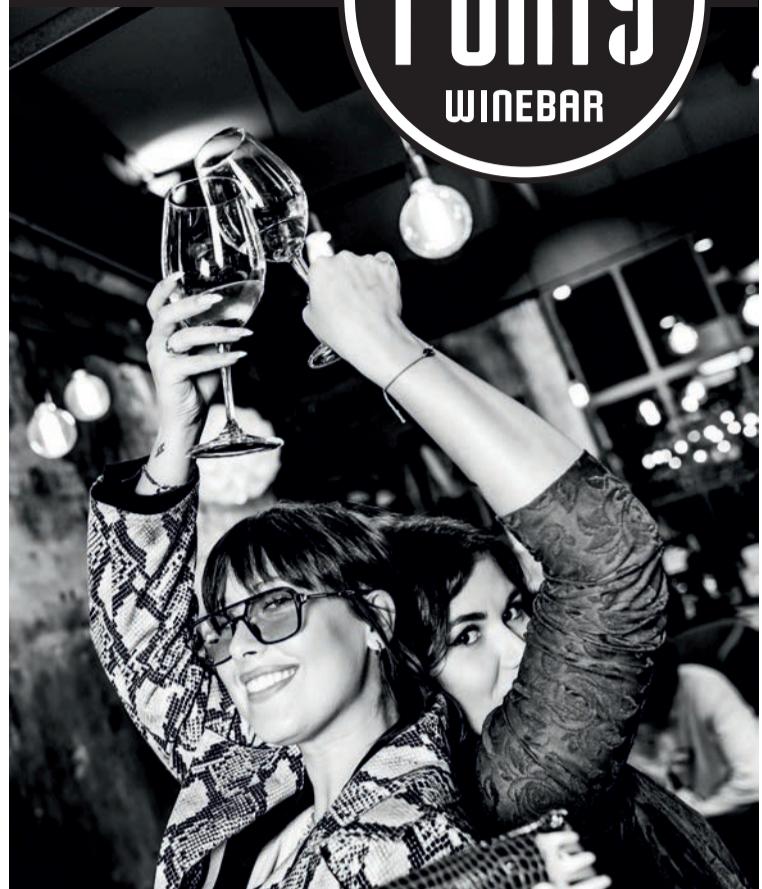
Sundhöllin on Barónsstigur is an outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs.  
For more pools visit [gpv.is/swim](#)  
Open: Mon-Thu 6:30-22:00, Sat 8:00-16:00  
Sun 10:00-18:00

### PUBLIC TOILETS

Public toilets can be found at Hlemmur and in the round kiosks on Ingólfstorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, on Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Most buses run every 20 to 30 minutes  
Fare: 490 ISK adults, 245 ISK children.  
Buses generally run 6:00-24:00 on weekdays and 7:00-04:30 on weekends. For more info visit [www.bus.is](#)



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# The Map

Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse, with selections from our Best-Of awards, vital info, downtown bus stops and a wider view of the city.

## Dining

### 1. Blackbox Pizza

Borgartún 26

Blackbox is a solid competitor for best pizza pie in the city. Thin crust, inventive toppings, delivery—what else could you ask for? We'd particularly recommend the Parma Rucola, which serves up all the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they've also got a location in Akureyri.

### 2. Chikin

Ingólfssstræti 2

This ain't your mama's KFC. No, Chikin—Reykjavík's first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated foodie cuisine and also food that'll definitely fill the hole in your soul you usually quench with a spicy Twister. So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shiitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies.

### 3. Hosiló

Hverfisgata 12

A newcomer on the block who has certainly made a big stir! Hosiló is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

### 4. Kaffi Laugalækur

Laugarnesvegur 74a

For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Lækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids' corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto 'littla gula hænan' and the 'shawaramabake' are our top lunch picks. Also, if you're keto, don't miss 'em,

### 5. Brauð & Co

Frakkastígur 16

First off—don't miss Brauð & Co's pretzel croissants unless you really don't want to have a spiritual experience. We also swear by their "snuður"—cinnamon bread rolls smothered with a sugary glaze. They take it a step further and stuff the classics with blueberries and whatnot, eliciting inappropriate satisfied moans. Get there early to snatch a warm one.

### 6. Snaps

Pórsgata 1

Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boatload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and a textbook crème brûlée topped with an envious snap.

### 7. Hlemmur Mathöll

Hlemmur

Once a bus station and now a bustling food hall—we love a repurposed space. Hlemmur Mathöll is a classic in the Reykjavík dining scene, with everything from Vietnamese street food to delicious gelato to old school Italian pizza present. Yum.

### 8. Dragon Dim Sum

Bergstaðastræti 4

For those of us longing for dim sum in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fare, which is the perfect marriage between Icelandic ingredients and labouring of Asian dim sum passion. Don't miss their bao or shao mai, and don't worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

### 9. Lamb Street Food

Grandagarður 7

Pure Icelandic lamb with a middle eastern twist—that's what you'll get at this juicy local eatery where pure kebab is served up with no processed meat. For all you vegans though, never fear, the fresh made salads and hummus are equally wowing. This ain't your regular kebab spot.

### 10. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You're in luck. The Laundromat Cafe on Austurstræti is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain't nothing to scoff at either,

### 11. Nauthóll

Nauthólsvegur 106

Just behind the University of Reykjavík overlooking the Nauthólsvík geothermal beach is Nauthóll, the definition of a hidden summertime gem. The restaurant is one of those places that downtown Reykjavík rats might call "too far away," but with the advent of public scooters, you can arrive there in style in but 15 minutes. Without hyperbole, there probably isn't a better outdoor view in the city than this place—and their Scandinavian fare is good too.

## Drinking

### 12. Prikið

Bankastræti 12

Prikið 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. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you'll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

### 13. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

If the cancellation of literally everything is damping your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hverfisgata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart in the bar scene, 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 tipple.

### 14. Húrra

Tryggvagata 22

Húrra is BACK! ARE YOU SERIOUS? YES, WE ARE! After a despairing absence from the local scene, the beloved favourite has returned with a vengeance. Seriously—in the few weeks they've been open, the bar/venue has already had shows from heavyweights like Skrattar, Skóffin and Manneira. Stop by for vibes, alcohol and other fun things like that you know. Also, their bathroom renovation is pretty crazy.

### 15. Veður

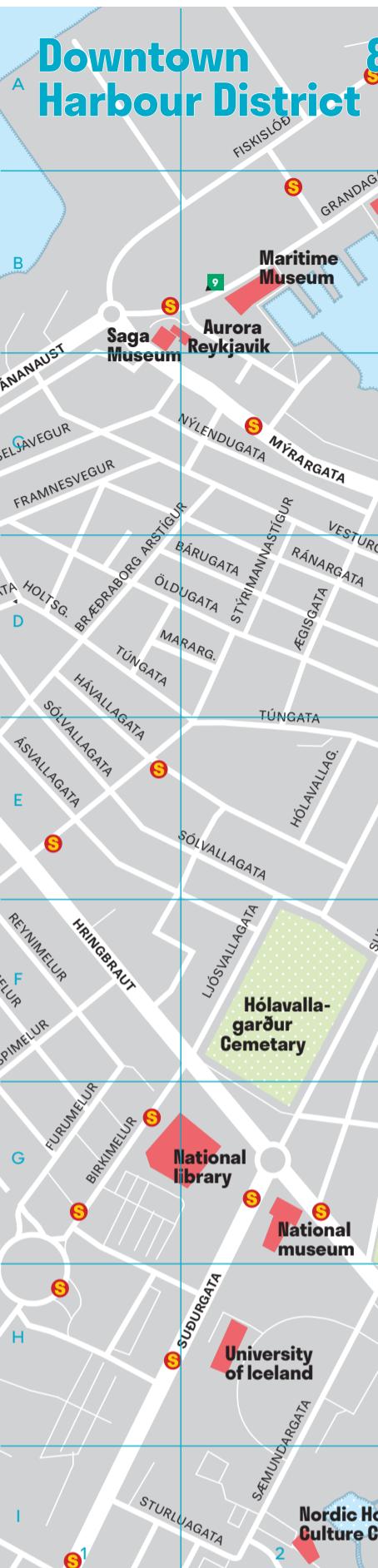
Klapparstígur 33

This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not humans. If you feel fine relaxing and chatting, it's still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they've also got an edge. Sometimes they play punk music. \m/

### 16. Íslenski Barinn

Ingólfssstræti 1a

Of the many nation-themed drinking

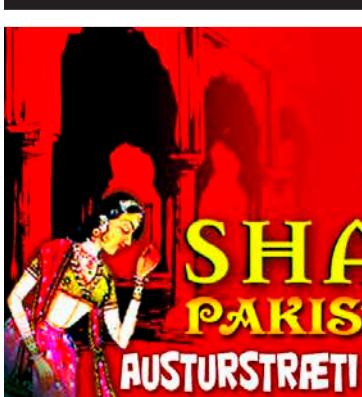


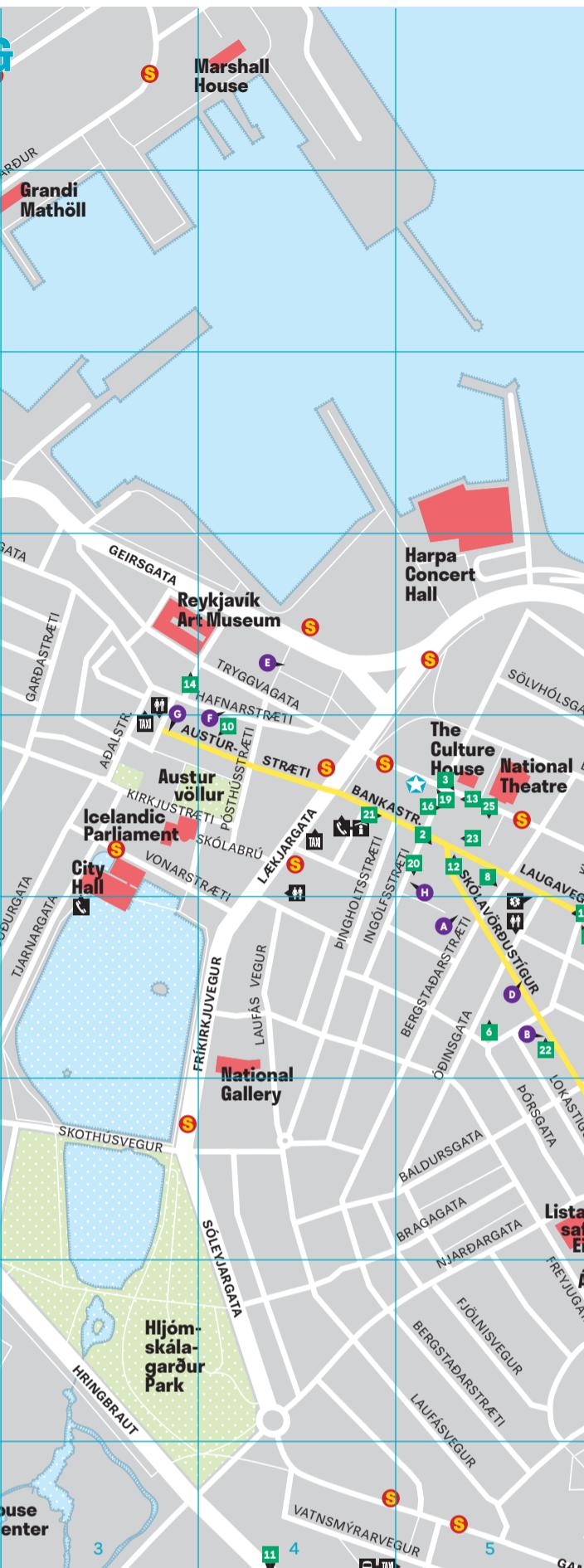
establishments in Reykjavík, The Icelandic Bar is the only one that is also a restaurant. Go there at night and maybe you'll meet an elf or Björk or something—that's all people know about Iceland anyway.

### 17. Mál og Menning

Laugavegur 18b

Wait, a new bar/music venue? Yup! And you thought the pandemic had destroyed all culture in this town. But never fear—Bókabúðir Máls og Menningar is here. There's live music most nights, from DJs to jazz, and during the day, the legendary Bókin is operating from the basement. Seriously—we anticipate this place will be a game-changer in the local cultural scene. Takk fyrir.





**New In Town ★**

**Kastrup RVK**  
Hverfisgata 6, 101 Reykjavík

After testing two pop-up restaurants, Kastrup RVK has opened a permanent location at Hverfisgata 6, described as "Smurbrauð & Bistro" on Instagram. The place offers a variety of authentic open-faced sandwiches with a twist: a lobster & caviar and Bloody Mary sandwich, to name a few. Main courses and drinks are also available. [IZ](#)

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**SMASHED BURGERS AND HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK**  
HAFNARSTRÆTI 101 REYKJAVÍK

## 18. Dillon

Laugavegur 30

A mix between grunge and classy, Dillon Whiskey Bar dominates their little stretch of Laugavegur. Crammed most nights with rockers, metalheads, and tourists looking for a place to mumble AC/DC songs into their beer, Dillon boasts a wide selection of over 100 whiskies and hosts some of Iceland's best hard rock bands on the weekends.

## 19. Petersen svítan

Austurstræti 12

The sun is finally out, which means it's time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen svítan. Never been? Well, make sure to bring your sunglasses

because this place has one of the best views in Reykjavík and also very fashionable clientele. Look over the city and have a beer in almost entirely direct sunlight (!!!!!!!).

## Shopping

### 20. Íslenzka Húðflúrstofan

Ingólfssstræti 3

This classic shop caters to all styles, with a roster of artists that serve up everything from realism to new-school and more. We'd particularly recommend the hand-poked pieces by Habba (@habbanerotattoo). Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-800-AD-way, but they might save you from spirits.

## 21. Nielsen Sérverzlin

Bankastræti 4

Way more than your average design store, Nielsen is filled to the brim with knick-knacks from all over, from gorgeous diaries to cosy towels and all the candles you could desire. Stop by, grab something for a gift and don't forget a little something for yourself.

## 22. Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 22

Fótógrafi claims to have been one of the first photo galleries in town. While its interior is tiny, there's a surprising number of photos to be found inside. The pictures on display are mainly shot in Reykjavík or

elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy subjects.

## 23. 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. Fun and zany, you don't know what you're going to find but you know it'll be exciting.

## 24. Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

Lucky Records is probably the biggest record shop in Iceland, with

shelves upon shelves of new and used vinyl and CDs on offer. If that's not enough, they're notorious for their expert staff whose knowledge goes far beyond the latest Björk or Sigur Rós offerings. In fact, it's best if you just let them take the lead.

## 25. Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 18A

This minimalist streetwear/athleisure store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.

**WASTELAND**  
SECOND HAND CLOTHING  
Ingólfssstræti 5  
101 Reykjavík

**WASTELAND**  
SECOND HAND CLOTHING  
Ingólfssstræti 5  
101 Reykjavík



## Necksplitter: Making Brutal Death Metal Gay Again

Stickin' it to the Nazis just by existing

Words:  
**Andie Sophia  
Fontaine**

Photo:  
**Einar Jarl  
Björgvinsson**

The first thing you notice when visiting the Instagram page of Necksplitter, a brutal death metal band based in Iceland, is the dominance of the colour pink. Surprising perhaps for a band in this genre, but not surprising for a band with trans members, who also chose the tagline "making brutal death metal gay again".

"The tagline got a lot of positive attention, but then the Nazis also found it," primary songwriter and guitarist Elía Karma tells us. "We don't engage with the comments; we just leave them there, and they get more pissed off by that."

"But that's also the beauty of it," vocalist and lyricist Árni Hoffritz interjects. "The more they comment, the more we stick in the algorithm."

This gave me pause. As someone not entirely familiar with the metal scene, I simply had to know why Nazis would be on the Instagram account of an Icelandic metal band.

"The death metal scene is very misogynistic, so we started advertising ourselves as a very gay feminist band," Elía explains. "People got very mad, and it was really fun. We got Nazis commenting on our Instagram posts."

"When you check out these guys' profiles, they're all into NSBM," which

stands for 'national socialist black metal', drummer Stefán Friðriksson says, revealing to me a genre I wish I never knew existed.

Elía isn't particularly worried about the attention, saying, "They act tough online but if they met us in person they'd be really scared because they've never seen a woman in their lives."

### Remote recordings

The beginnings of Necksplitter—who chose their name because, Árni says, "it wasn't taken"—reflect the diversity of the band itself. None of them are from the same place. Bassist Tori Lewis is from France, and moved to Iceland in 2016; Stefán is from Varmahlíð, Elía is from Húsavík and Árni is from Hveragerði.

Their latest album, *Exponential Trauma*, was recorded entirely remotely.

"I wrote the album, then I messaged Árni, asking if he wanted to do vocals, and he recommended Stebbi for drums," Elía says. "Tori and I became friends and she played bass."

"It started as a concept album, but about three songs in I was like 'This is too hard', so instead I just wrote songs about being sad," Árni deadpans. "And

impaling paedophiles. I'm really into impaling paedophiles."

"We actually all met together for the first time at a photoshoot, last December," Tori adds. "We all just clicked together and it was super fun."

### What's the difference?

One question that's always fun to ask metal fans is what the difference is between black metal and death metal. The question prompts an uncharacteristic long pause from the group, who throughout this interview are continuously joking, laughing, and riffing off one another.

"I think the first thing you'd notice if we made you listen to black metal and death metal side by side is that the production on the death metal side is more polished, more clean," Árni says. "Black metal is more rough around the edges. There's also the lyrical content. Black metal is more about Satan and all that bullshit. With death metal, the sky's the limit. You can write about whatever the fuck you want. There's no limits with death metal in terms of how fast you wanna go or how weird you wanna get. If we were to put a dubstep bar in our song I don't think anyone would bat an eye. Black metal

also might be the only genre that has a dedicated subgenre for being a racist."

"Black metal is also way more closed off musically," Tori adds. "If you do something a little bit different you'll get people going 'that is not black metal'."

### Keep it fun

*Exponential Trauma* is indeed a fun album. Having listened to it a few times by the time of this writing, I can personally attest that it's very accessible, fast-paced, imaginative, inventive, and most of all fun. This was apparently the point.

"The idea behind the album is, like I told Árni when I sent it to him, I just wanna do something dumb, simple and heavy that's fun to play live," Elía says. "I gave him complete freedom. All I said was I don't want any misogyny, and it worked."

"Musically, it's not as dark as it might seem," Tori says. "It is dark, but at the same time, it's a bit upbeat."

Talking to Necksplitter is a bit like herding cats. They love to argue, playfully, and veer from topic to topic almost too quickly to catch up with them. Their talks shift between a lot of riffing on powerlifting and what's proper to put in oatmeal.

### The show will go on

Steering us back on track, it seems apparent that this is more than a band; they're a group of very close friends who care a lot for one another and have magical chemistry. Given this, I ask if they're going to try and compose their next album in person.

"I think if we got together it would just be like this," Elía says, referring to the chaos of the past 20 minutes or so.

"If we got together in person to write music, I think we would write a song, but then we'd forget it," Árni agrees.

"We usually work faster if we just keep it in Messenger," Elía concludes.



## Event Picks



### ★ Hetja

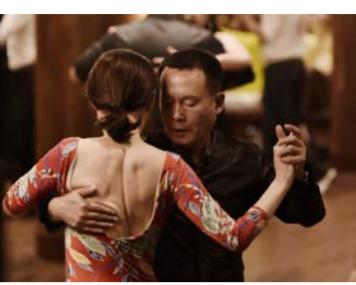
April 2nd, 7th, 9th, 24th & 28th - 20:00 - Tjarnarbió - 5,800 ISK

Skyjasmiðjan is a theatre group specialising in productions which involve all the actors wearing face masks. No, not the life-saving

minor inconveniences that we've all had to put up with during the pandemic. We're talking full-on, outsized constructions which

entirely cover the actors' head, making them look like a cross between a Thunderbirds puppet and something from British TV satire 'Spitting Image'.

Actors wearing massive false noggins inevitably means that communication with the audience becomes non-verbal, which is great news for theatre lovers who might not be too fluent in Icelandic. 'Hetja' (or 'Hero') is about a junior doctor starting work at a new hospital and, based on Skyjasmiðjan's track record, is likely to engage and enthrall. JP



### ★ Open Tango Night

Every Tuesday - 20:00 - Iðnó

Iðnó brings the flavour of Argentina to 101 with this regular event. It's an open dance floor with sessions led by a tango teacher, enabling beginners and professionals to meet, dance and work on their media luna together, while also learning some new moves. And you don't need a rose clenched between your teeth, just a desire to dance. JP



### ★ MIMRA

April 1st - 20:30 - Salurinn - 3,900 to 4,400 ISK

MIMRA is the solo project of composer and vocalist María Magnúsdóttir. Her music occupies a space somewhere in the intersection of jazz, electronica and folk, and this gig marks the release of her second album 'Finding Place'. Read more in our interview with María on page 11. JP



**MUSIC NEWS** Anticipation is growing for the upcoming release of Una Torfadóttir's EP 'Flækt Og Týnd Og Einmana', ('Tangled And Lost And Lonely'), especially following the release of her single, "Ekkert Að". Everyone can remember the horrors of being a teenager; a whirlwind of change and irritability. But add to that being the daughter of the country's health minister during a global pandemic, and being diagnosed with cancer, both of which marked Una's latter teen years. "Ekkert Að", which translates as "Nothing Wrong", is a charmingly vulnerable piece. It echoes these themes, and allows listeners to witness Una's acceptance and clarity having navigated the storm. She told Alumm.is that she thinks it appropriate that this is the first song that many people get to hear from her, and we couldn't agree more. AP



Yet another illustrious award has found its way to Vikingur Heiðar Ólafsson, and most certainly not by chance. The Rolf Schock Prize has recognised him as "one of the most creative and innovative artists of our time", showing a "great depth and genius, which arouses unique impressions in the listeners". Nabbing the prize is an impressive achievement, especially given the extremely competitive world of classical music. The award will be presented to Vikingur on October 24 at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. AP



AIRWAVES IS BACK! Although, we've been trying to keep our enthusiasm in check so as to not jinx anything. After getting nixed in 2020 (COVID-19) and 2021 (COVID-19), we're now a few months into 2022 and the first 14 acts have been announced. We cannot help but start to believe, and what a great way to get the ball rolling again. With names such as Metronomy, Amyl And The Sniffers, as well as the exciting incoming talent of Arlo Parks, FLOTT, and Daughters of Reykjavík, the third time has to be the charm. A reminder to those who bought a four-day ticket, the festival has been streamlined to three days, but you are eligible for a refund. AP

## April 1st — May 5th

## Upcoming Events

Send details of your event to: events@grapevine.is

Yay! No more pandemic restrictions! Don't hold your breath, though; we've been here before. So get out and enjoy the nightlife while you can. Here's how...

### Friday April 1st

**Party Show - The Big Lebowski**  
21:00 Bíó Paradís  
**Múlinn Jazzclub - Silva Pórðardóttir, Steingrímur Teague and Daniel Friðrik Böðvarsson**  
20:00 Harpa  
**The Golden Age Of Swing - Reykjavík Big Band**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Sykur and Inspector Spacetime**  
19:00 Húrra  
**★ MIMRA - Album Release Concert**  
20:30 Salurinn

### Saturday April 2nd

**Power Paladin**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Organ Recital - Kári Þormar**  
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja  
**ABBA 50 - Tribute Show**  
17:00 Harpa  
**How to become Icelandic in 60 minutes**  
19:00 Harpa  
**GDRN At Home In Hlígarður**  
20:00 Hlígarður  
**Hyd and Countess Malaise**  
19:00 Húrra  
**Toy Machine**  
20:00 Iðnó  
**Scheving/Moreaux/Flosason Trio**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur  
**★ Hetja - Premiere**  
20:00 Tjarnarbíó

### Sunday April 3rd

**Rendezvous - Sunday Classics**  
16:00 Harpa  
**Reynir Del Norte**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Monday April 4th

**Mánudjass - Monday Night Jazz Jam**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Tuesday April 5th

**★ Open Tango Night**  
20:00 Iðnó

### Wednesday April 6th

**Heimssviðið**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Sigmar Pór Tríó**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Thursday April 7th

**Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Easter Concert**  
19:30 Harpa  
**Sunna Gunnlaugs Kvartett**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Friday April 8th

**Party Show - Moulin Rouge**  
21:00 Bíó Paradís  
**Sólstafir**  
20:00 Mál og Menning  
**Guðmundur Pétursson Tríó**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Saturday April 9th

**Carbon - DJ set**  
21:00 Iðnó  
**Mikael Lind**  
20:00 Mengi  
**Bakland**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Sunday April 10th

**Coney Iceland - Circus Sideshow**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Bach, Schubert and Spohr - Sunday Classics**  
16:00 Harpa  
**Katrín Halldóra**  
20:00 Harpa

### Tuesday April 12th

**Belinda Davids**  
20:00 Harpa

### Wednesday April 13th

**Múlinn Jazzclub - María Magnúsdóttir**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Travis Johns & Guðmundur Steinn**

20:00 Mengi  
**Hilmar Jenson Tríó & guests**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Thursday April 14th

**Burlesque - Earthly Delights**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Jesus Christ Superstar in Concert**  
19:30 Harpa  
**Nico Moreaux & Hulda Kristín Tríó**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Friday April 15th

**Party Show - Pink Floyd: The Wall**  
21:00 Bíó Paradís  
**Bergljót Arnalds**  
20:00 Iðnó  
**Jóel Pálsson Quartet**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

**Saturday April 16th**

**Tattoo Festival**  
12:00 Iðnó  
**Pellegrina Release Concert**  
20:00 Mengi

### Sunday April 17th

**Steingrímur Teague & Silva Pórðardóttir**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Monday April 18th

**Mánudjass - Monday Night Jazz Jam**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Tuesday April 19th

**Ingi Bjarni Kvartett**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Wednesday April 20th

**Múlinn Jazzclub - Cathrine Legardh and Sigrður Flosason**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Aron Can**  
22:00 Harpa  
**Pétur Ben**  
20:00 Iðnó  
**Ife Tolentino, Eypór Gunnarsson & Óskar Guðjónsson**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Thursday April 21st

**Dalalæða**  
21:00 Mengi  
**Ólafur Jónsson Kvartett**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Saturday April 23rd

**Aldís Fjóla**  
20:00 Iðnó

**Mengi Lifi Reykjavík: Kristín Svava**  
20:00 Mengi  
**Jazzbadass - Fjölskyldustundir A Laugardögum**  
13:00 Salurinn

**Cathrine Legardh & Friends**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Sunday April 24th

**Stefania Svarars Tríó**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Monday April 25th

**Mánudjass - Monday Night Jazz Jam**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Tuesday April 26th

**Kunstþása - Mín Fagra Sól-Barokkar Óg Söngvar - The Icelandic Opera**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Bölváð Braz**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Wednesday April 27th

**Múlinn Jazzclub - Þorgrímur Jónsson Quartet**  
20:00 Harpa  
**FÍH & MÍT Jam Session**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Thursday April 28th

**Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Schumann and Schubert**  
19:30 Harpa  
**Óskar Guðjónsson MOVE Quartet**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur

### Friday April 29th

**Piparkorn and Dopamine Machine**  
20:00 Skuggabaldur  
**Skunk Anansie**  
20:00 Laugardalshöll

### Saturday April 30th

**Family Workshop: How Does Space Sound?**  
13:00 Nordic House  
**Steingrímur Teague + Silva Love Release Concert**  
20:00 Mengi

### Wednesday May 4th

**Khalid**  
20:00 Laugardalshöll

### Thursday May 5th

**Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Vikingur and John Adams**  
20:00 Harpa

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Peace  
**Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir**  
17.02.22–09.04.22



29.01.–15.05.2022  
**Birgir Andrésson**  
As Far as the Eye Can See



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Arion banki

“The meaning  
is to be  
constantly  
moving.”



## Finding A Place In Nomadland

MIMRA explores dimensions

Words: Valur Grettisson Photos: Art Bicnick & Anna Maggy

It's no easy feat to define MIMRA's music. Bordering on electronic and folk music, it's tempting to just boil it down to some kind of dream-pop. But nothing is that simple when it comes to María Magnúsdóttir, the person behind the project. On her new album, the artist plays with more traditional structures when it comes to her compositions while staying true to her original sound.

### Exploring dimensions

“I allow myself to explore a lot of dimensions in music and often find myself on borders of dreamy experience and something more straightforward,” María explains, and this is understandable, since she’s educated in jazz music, composition and production and is teaching music at FÍH Musicians’ Union school of music and MÍT Highschool of music alongside her work as MIMRA.

Perhaps the reason for this odd travelling in the music scene might be because she has found herself between worlds.

“I was kind of homeless after I experienced a heartbreak a few years ago,” she says. This changed her life in a drastic way. She decided to move back to Iceland from London where she was living at the time. “I hadn’t lived in Iceland for 10 years, but now, suddenly, I found myself at a crossroads. Suddenly, I needed to find a new purpose,” she adds.

### Make up your mind, weather

María said it was hard to return to Iceland and try to fit into a society she barely knew anymore.

“But then I came across this article about the weather and Iceland,” she explains. “The core of the article was that the weather, perhaps like Icelanders, just couldn’t make up its mind.”

Sister, was inspired by the #MeToo movement. “And perhaps to top everything, I got into Handmaid’s Tale,” she adds and chuckles.

MIMRA is once again standing at a crossroads. Her album release and album release concert is today April 1st — and it’s not an April fool’s thing.

### Always moving

“I just want to tap into the audience that wants to hear something alternative, music that treads the line of the conventional and not so conventional,” María says. Of course, her album will be available on all of the main streaming services, but she will also release a handful of vinyl records.

Before the conversation dwindles, I have to ask “where does the name MIMRA come from?”

“I came across it at Fimbulfamb [the Icelandic version of Scrabble],” she says. “The meaning is to be constantly moving,” she explains. It’s fitting. ☺



## Art Picks



### ★ Volcanoroids

Until April 13th - Mosfellsbær Art Gallery, Þverholt 2, 270 Mosfellsbær

One year on from lava first breaching the earth's crust to create Iceland's pet volcano on the Reykjanes peninsula, photographer Guðmundur Óli Pálsson opened this exhibit of his images of the eruptions. Of course the vol-

cano was a much-photographed phenomenon, with the imagery often pristine, hi-res and generated by drone. But Guðmundur's approach was different.

In line with his long-standing love of obsolete photographic film techniques, (as displayed in his recent exhibition 'Yfirgefín List' at The Reykjavík Museum Of Photography),

Guðmundur has utilised and twisted the medium of Polaroid peel-apart pics to create unique expressions of the eruptions. The film was often long past its sell-by date, and the resulting visual effects—along with the artist's image manipulation via the use of hazardous materials—have created liquid colours and vibrant textures that invite parallels with the lava flow itself. JP



### ★ Viðarverk

Until April 23rd - Hverfisgalleri

Björn Loki and Elsa Jónsdóttir, (a.k.a. Krot & Krass), have been creating together for over a decade now. In their first exhibition at Hverfisgalleri as a duo, their driftwood and concrete



### ★ Careless Whispers

Until June 19th - National Gallery of Iceland

Careless Whispers features paintings by Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson made between 2015 and 2022. The images in this collection appear to be fading and vanishing, ephemeral and



### ★ Spatial Infractions

Until August 7th - Reykjavík Art Museum at Ásmundarsafn

Rósá Gísladóttir exhibits her work in conversation with that of Icelandic sculpture pioneer Ásmundur Sveinsson. Rósá is best known for her creations in plaster, but she often references architecture in her work and here will use Ásmundarsafn, the museum building itself, as a sculpture. JP

**April 1st — May 5th**

## Art Exhibitions

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region.

Send details of yours to: [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is)

### Opening

#### KLING OG BANG

##### Three Rearrangements - A Commonality Of Escape

This exhibition features brand new, site-specific works by Daniel Águst Ágústsson, Pétur Magnússon, Pier Yves Larouche & Richard Müller. The enigmatic press release says little more, and there's not much on the gallery website either. But we trust the peeps at Kling og Bang to always be on point when it comes to curation. You know it's gonna be a goody, so just go.

- Opens on April 2nd
- Runs until May 15th

#### REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

##### Erró: The Power of Images

Erró is undoubtedly Iceland's best-known visual artist internationally. The Reykjavík Art Museum is custodian of nearly 4000 pieces of the artist's work after he began donating them in the 1980s, and this exhibition of more than 300 of them is the most extensive showing of the artist's works ever seen in Iceland. Videos, graphics, multiples and collages—with larger works in public spaces, and paintings of all scales—showcase Erró's eclectic appropriation of imagery from every possible domain.

- Opens on April 9th
- Runs until September 29th

more than 6.5 million film-originated images over the last four decades. In more recent years, digital techniques have allowed the creation of an image database to include text relevant to the image from publications. This exhibition uses the collection's search facility to conjure up combinations of images through text, allowing photographic moments to become related through particular words.

#### GALLERÍ GRÓTTA

##### This Is Not Nature

Nature appears in various ways in the works of the three artists staging this exhibition, Ásdís Arnardóttir, Kristbjörg Olsen and Þorgerður Jörundsdóttir. However, as the title suggests the works are not nature itself, but the experience and feeling of each different artist regarding the relationship between man and nature.

- Runs until April 30th

#### HAFNARBORG CENTRE OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

##### A Few Thoughts on Photography - Vol. III

Photographer Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir explores how taking a photograph can seem so simple—"just the push of a button"—making the resulting image almost an objet trouvé rather than a creation. But creative it is; mysterious and emotional, with aesthetics and instincts coming into play. And yet, at the same time, the process of photography is decidedly rooted in the scientific.

- Runs until April 18th

#### MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

##### Bathing Culture

The outdoor geothermal pool is the most interesting public sphere in Iceland. A place where strangers cross paths and acquaintances meet, it is a source of wellbeing and a major part of everyday life for many. This exhibition traces the development of Icelandic bathing culture, showing how architects and designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.

- Runs until September 25th

#### I8 GRANDI

##### In Relation To The Sun

i8 Grandi is a new exhibition space, the unique concept of which is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their creators to reflect how the passage of time alters their work and encourage repeat viewings to observe those changes. This inaugural exhibition by Alicja Kwade encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially "In Relation To The Sun"—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves.

- Runs until December 22nd

#### EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

##### Permanent Exhibition

In 1909 Einar Jónsson—described on the museum's website as "Iceland's first sculptor"—offered all of his works as a gift to the Icelandic people, on the condition that a museum be built to house them.

The resulting edifice, constructed just over the road from Hallgrímskirkja, now contains close to 300 artworks. There is also a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures to enjoy.

##### Tread Carefully

This exhibition presents the work of art students from the University of Iceland and from the University of the Arts in dialogue with that of sculptor Einar Jónsson. The artists hope to make links between the past and the present, using the spaces in and around the historic building that houses the permanent exhibit of Jónsson's works.

- Runs until April 10th

#### NORDIC HOUSE

##### Even A Worm Will Turn

The relationship between man and other creatures is probed by this exhibition, featuring work by Jaakko Pallasvuo, Viktor Timofeev, Josefin Arnell and Kolbeinn Hugi. Man names the other animals, imposes ideological and moralistic ideas on them, anthropomorphises them, assumes dominion and tries to influence their behaviour. How does all this affect interspecies relations?

- Runs until April 17th

#### CULTURE HOUSE

##### Treasures Of A Nation

The Culture House was built in 1909, and was the first purpose-built gallery in Iceland. Towering above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural vistas which have inspired local artists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the National Gallery, all inspired by Iceland and created from the 19th century onwards.

- Runs until May 31st

#### REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KJARVALSSTADIR

##### As Far As The Eye Can See

Birgir Andrésson was a leading light in Icelandic art until his untimely death in 2007. Taking influence from all aspects of Icelandic life, legend and culture, he presented them in a unique and informed way, drawing admiration from both local and international art communities. This retrospective brings together more than a hundred of his works, including some from international and private collections.

- Runs until May 15th

#### GALLERY PORT

##### Hotel Saga: A Place In Time

Photographer Hákon Pálsson captured the images that make up this exhibition on one day in July 2021, some eight months after his subject—the Hotel Saga in Reykjavík—had been abandoned. The Saga had been a shining example of international modernism, and Hákon's work examines the idea of a building which openly sought to eliminate all connection to its location and its history.

- Runs until April 14th

#### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

##### Staged Moments

This expansive exhibition features some 41 photographic artists. The work on show spans the time between the 1970s and the present day, and focuses on demonstrating the diverse use of photography as a creative medium. The exhibition also reflects less positive attitudes to photography as a creative medium, based on the inherent nature of the process as one of mechanical reproduction.

- Runs until May 8th

#### MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

##### EXHIBITIONS

## BATHING CULTURE UNTIL 25.09.

## BEHIND THE SCENES ARCHIVING ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS OF HÖGNA SIGURÐARDÓTTIR UNTIL 13.03.

## RESIDENCY STUDIO ALLSBER PRODUCT DESIGNERS UNTIL 08.05.

OPEN TUE-SUN 12–17  
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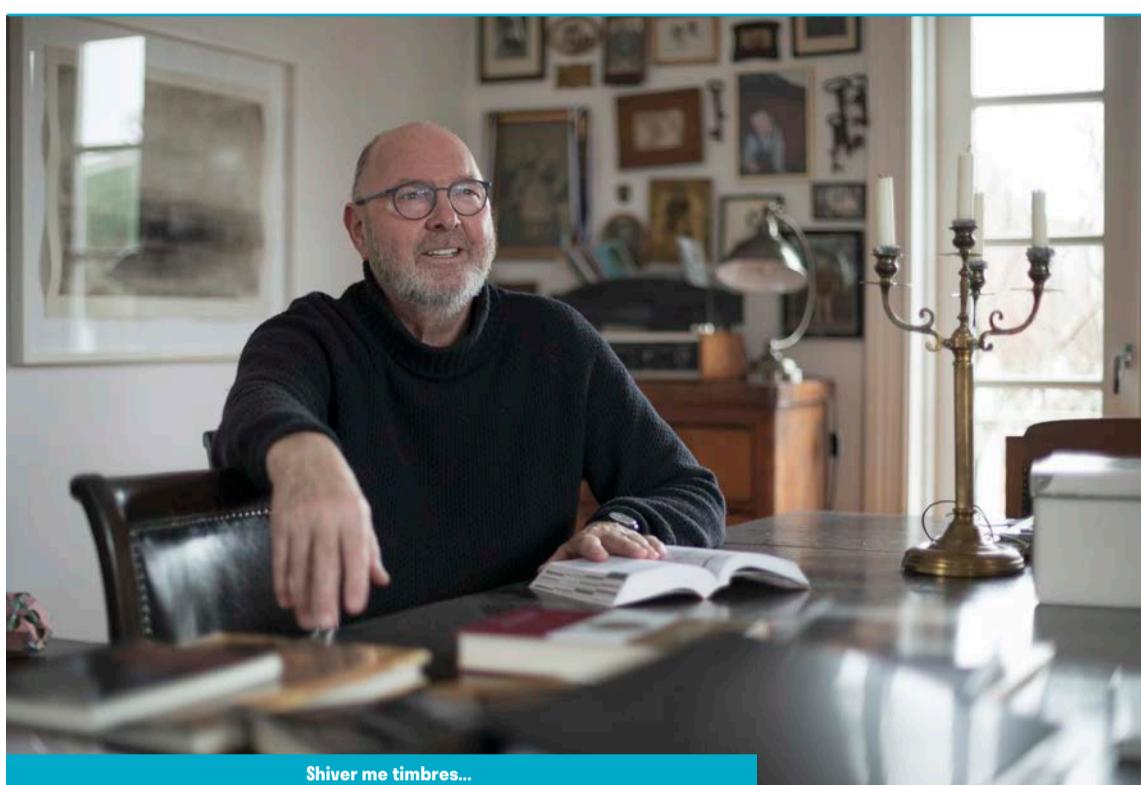
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VIBES

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# Film



Shiver me timbres...

## Treasure Ísland

Jón Ársæll's latest work documents a 60-year search for gold

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens Photo: Art Bicnick

"This is not the film I set out to make," says Jón Ársæll Þórðarson in his distinct, gentle timbre, peering intently from behind round, thick-rimmed glasses. "I had some ideas at the beginning, but the story took a different path and I followed it."

The film Jón is referring to is 'Leitin að Gullskipinu' — 'The Search For The Goldship' in English. It tells the story of a famous wreck, the stranding of the Dutch vessel Het Wapen Van Amsterdam off the south coast of Iceland in 1667. The ship was lost as it tried to return to Holland from the Dutch colonies in what is Java today, supposedly heavily laden with riches galore: copper, silk and fine linens, raw diamonds, and spices.

**"People were always talking about it"**

Specifically, Jón's documentary looks at the life that this boat has led in the Icelandic consciousness ever since. Extensive searches for the ship have been conducted over the years, and a new endeavour, using the latest drone technology, commenced in 2016.

"Ever since I was a little boy, I was fascinated by the story of the Goldship. My friends and I would 'make' gold by taking stones and painting them. We would put the

gold and the silver into small chests and bury them in the sand, and then dig it up every now and then. This was surely related to the story of the Goldship — people around us were always talking about it."

Later in Jón's life, the story of the Goldship reemerged, as a team lead by Bergur Lárusson and Kristinn Guðbrandsson hunted for the boat in the 1970s and 80s — extensive archive footage of which is included in the documentary. The story dominated newspaper headlines for years, infecting the nation with excitement about recovering this famed ship full of riches.

### Getting involved

The mission was ultimately a failure, recovering instead the wreck of a German trawler. Then, in 2016, Jón heard that Gísli Gíslason, an Icelandic entrepreneur, was planning to take up the project. He immediately got in touch with Gísli and asked to document the attempt.

"It got to be a little bit of a problem, me involving myself," Jón explains. "I wanted to be an independent filmmaker. But I am enthusiastic, and again and again, I kind of became involved."

"I am not part of the team." Jón says, firmly — seemingly as much to himself as to anyone else. "But

I'm terribly interested in the story. And if — when — they find the ship, it will be world news"

This is perhaps partially what Jón means when he says the film took a different direction from his original plan. While progress has been made with the new technology employed by Gísli and his team, ultimately, no boat has been found as of yet. Jón's movie does not provide the proverbial 'money shot', so to speak. For now, the great Goldship remains lost to the sands of Skeiðarársandur, and of time.

### "The story goes on"

But the story of Het Wapen Van Amsterdam does not end here. Just as Gísli intends to return with his team and finally resurrect the long-lost vessel, Jón too is not finished with The Goldship. During his extensive research on the tragic wreck, and on the 17th century more generally, Jón uncovered myriad twists, turns and unexpected connections, many of which there was only time to briefly touch upon during this documentary. From tales of farmers sleeping on silken sheets, to the child fathered by a Dutch sailor whose ancestors still live in Iceland to this day, the winding narratives that stream out from this key moment in history seem never-ending. Jón intends to stick with them for now, and not least with the search itself.

"The story goes on," Jón says, emphatically. "I know that the ship is there. Finding it is a question of minutes. How many minutes? I don't know. But it's a question of minutes." 🤪



Black sands lead to a golden ship

**"We aim at being the best at sustainable thin film packaging."**



Julie Encausse: fighting for the anti-plastic cause

# From Seaweed To Plastic Film

How Icelandic entrepreneurs are revolutionizing the future of packaging

Words:  
**Iryna Zubenko**

Photos:  
**Art Bicnick**

When I first came across Marea, an Icelandic startup developing a biodegradable packaging film from seaweed, I couldn't get over the incredibly diverse background of its founder—Julie Encausse.

Julie has lived, worked and studied in four countries, pivoting from marketing, brand management and film production to sustainability. The idea to start Marea came about when Julie and two friends, Edda and Jóðis, were working on a project for their university course.

"Marea was born over a cup of hot tea in one of the coffee shops at Reykjavík University back in June 2019," says Julie. The group had just wrapped up a practical entrepreneurial course taught by Iceland's seasoned investor and entrepreneur Bala Kamallakharan. For the course, students had to design and pitch a startup idea. What Bala said at the course struck a chord with Julie: "The usual ideas are usually bad ideas to start a startup. You really need to feel that you are solving a real global problem." That is exactly what Julie and her team ended up doing after the course.

## Promising future of seaweed biopolymers

Marea has not started production yet, but its team of experts in business, innovation, marketing, engineering, biochemistry and biotechnology is working night and day towards 100%

biodegradable packaging.

"We feel privileged to be working on developing seaweed biopolymers at this point in time," Julie told The Grapevine. "Seaweed cultivation is on the fast track to becoming the rule and not the exception, and we are just starting to unlock its potential and applications, from a food source to clothing and biomedical usages."

"I think never before have we had such engaged consumers, who demand better cost-effective solutions," she continues. "Consumer behavior is changing in that we are skipping the unnecessary polybags and packaging, (nudged by new legislations that continue to evolve), and moving towards smart packaging. I think that soon enough a QR code will be a necessity in packaging so that we know how, when and where to dispose it."

## The technology behind it all

Julie is sure that there's no one size fits all solution when it comes to the challenges of packaging. "Our team is focusing on developing thin films that are biodegradable, food-grade and ocean-safe," she says. "We are at the solution-design end of things: developing a seaweed-based biopolymer, which basically translates into a material from which, through traditional manufacturing equipment with a twist, you can create biodegradable packaging."

We don't aim at having a large product range but we do aim at being the best at sustainable thin-film packaging."

Julie is confident that the market is screaming for an alternative. "Businesses are in dire need of other packaging materials that do not lead to their products becoming more expensive for their clients. Believe me, we get it, and we are working on it with tharoplast [the thin film packaging]. We are leveraging all the great things about seaweed, such as the fact that it is regenerative and captures CO<sub>2</sub> and turning that into a biodegradable packaging that is ocean-safe and won't be stuck in landfills."

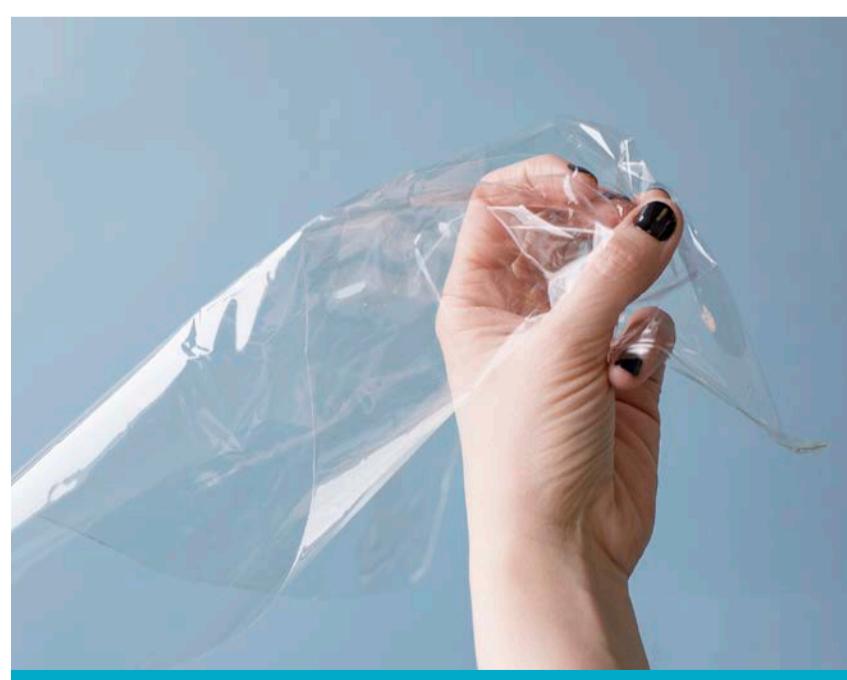
Marea has already run a few experiments to measure how long it takes for tharoplast to biodegrade. Samples of tharoplast were added to composting containers at the Hafnarfjörður facilities of waste management company Terra, and after fifteen days there were little to no traces left. The team is about to start the formal research and lab work on analyzing and understanding how tharoplast can be put to better use when disposed: "Seaweed-derived biopolymers have the potential to act as biofertilizers since its components can

enhance microbial activity and improve plant yield."

## Local action for replicable global impact

Marea wants to bring solutions to businesses in the food sector where most often unnecessary packaging options are found. "The endgame is a global and scalable solution that we are designing. I cannot think of a better place than Iceland to kick start this. Where else will you find the undaunting spirit, resilience and fearless determination that Icelanders have to move forward through challenges and nasty winters, paired with the supportive startup ecosystem?"

Marea plans to create a pilot-scale station in Iceland by 2025, with the aim that it completely meets the needs of the Icelandic market in biodegradable thin films used for packaging. After use the products can be converted to biofertilizers and feed for livestock, and the company plans to have their technical solution patented and in use across at least five other countries. 



Tharoplast—thin film alternative made from seaweed

## Icelandic Delicacies



## Must try dishes

### Lamb & Flatbread

Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot purée, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce

### Arctic Charr & Blini

Lightly cured arctic charr, chickpea blini, horseradish sauce, roe, crispy lentils, yuzu-elderflower dressing

### Icelandic Platter

- > Puffin, crowberry gel
- > Minke whale, malt glaze
- > Lamb tartar, chive mayo

### The Lamb Burger

Bacon, mushroom & date duxelle, pickled red onions, pickled cucumber, rucola, smoked cheese, fries

### Skyr Eton Mess Cheesecake

White chocolate "Skyr" mousse, meringue, raspberries, raspberry sauce



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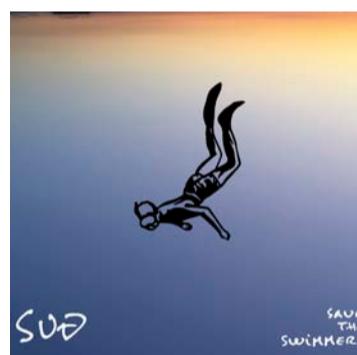


Relax, Suð aren't after your wallet...

## Suð's Indie Noise

Get excited... but don't forget to breathe

Words: Suð/Valur Grettisson Photo: Finnbogi Óskar Magnússon



### Info

Suð is an established Icelandic indie band seemingly on a mission to bring the guitar party back. They released their first album in 1999, and have been active since then. The Grapevine caught up with Suð to discuss their latest album, 'Save the Swimmers.' Here's what they had to say about it, track by track.

### Swim or sink, that is the question

Breathing is like swimming but unlike swimming, breathing is something you tend to do automatically. This song deals with the fact that swimmers are in a very precarious position, and we should be concerned for their wellbeing.

The song is a very caring 'quiet/loud' indie guitar song, that is until the protagonist gets up on his high horse and claims that he 'does not need the questions to your answers since he has made them all up on his own'. What a prick!

### Made

Made is an upbeat punky affair. Very straightforward, groovy and loud.

### Dressed up in cold

Dressed up in cold. Does that sentence even make sense to a native English speaker? From the tongue of a native Icelandic speaker, it sounded cool and you know... most people that speak English today are not native speakers. Yes, we non-native speakers have taken English over, speaking and writing it as blatantly badly as we like!

### Freak out

Every so often you should freak out. It is healthy and cleansing. Moderation is best used in moderation.

That is the band's motto and written on its insignia and blazer jacket crest, which you will soon be able to order from our merch store. The Latin translation on the crest reads: moderatio est optimum moderatus. So, freak out to this indie banger!

### Clothes

Clothes. Do we really need them? Most people would reluctantly say... yes. But are they any good for us, for our fragile human soul, mind and spirit? And are we perhaps altogether better off without them?

### Whoo

Whoо: an expression of sudden excitement, astonishment, or relief.

Picture yourself in a car driving on an endless highway somewhere in a desert in the US of A.

Then picture yourself dealing with the theory of parallel universes.

Everything that does not happen here on earth will happen or has happened in another universe—somewhere in the multiverse, (no, not in Zuck's metaverse).

### Hey you

Industry trick #232 for making it on Spotify and becoming Daniel Ek(!) rich.

Action: Name your song the exact name of another popular song on Spotify and upload it.

Result: People searching for said song on Spotify will only read the name of the song, not the band, listen to your song, thus increasing plays exponentially. A 0.00001 cent of many euros can still make you rich right? - right?

This is exactly what we tried to do with "Hey You", which has the same name as Pink Floyd's well-known melodramatic song. The plan has not worked yet, but we are playing the long game here.

### Seasons

This song is the fruition of our lifelong dream to write a shoegaze song. It has big guitars and dreamy vocals.

It is also the longest song on the album, but also one of the best. Happy days. ☺

*Read the longer version of this article online at grapevine.is.*

*You can find the album on the most popular streaming platforms. For more information check Suð's Facebook page, [facebook.com/sudband](https://facebook.com/sudband).*

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on events@grapevine.is with the details

A selection from

# Every Happy Hour

in 101 Reykjavík

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BASTARD BREW Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.	JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR Daily except Tue 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.	RÖNTGEN Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.	SPIŁAKAFFI Every day from 17:00 to 20:00. Beer 750 ISK.
BÍÓ PARADÍS Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.	KAFFI LÆKUR Every day from 16:00 to 19:00 & 22:00 to 23:00. Beer 890 ISK.	SÆTA SVÍNIÐ Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 790 ISK, Wine 890 ISK.	STÚDENT-AKJALLARINN Everyday from 16:00. Beer 650 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.
BREWDIG Wed-Sun 14:00 to 17:00. Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.	KOFINN BAR Every day from 12:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.	SKÚLI CRAFT Every day from 12:00 to 19:00. Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK. Happy hour includes four selected tap beers	SUSHI SOCIAL Sun-Thu from 17:00 to 18:00. Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK.
BRUT BAR Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.	LAUNDROMAT Every day from 20:00 to 22:00. Beer 650 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.	SLIPPBARINN Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 900 ISK, Wine 745 ISK.	TAPAS BARINN Every day from 17:00 to 18:00. Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK.
COOCOO'S NEST Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Discount or a free appetiser.	LOFT Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.	VEDUR Every day from 12:00 to 19:35. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.	ÖLSTOFAN Every day from 15:00 to 20:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.
DILLON Every day from 14:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.	LÓLA FLORENS Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.	SÓLON Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.	
FJALLKONAN Every day from 15:00 to 17:00. Beer 790 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.	LUNA FLORENS Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Discount or a free appetiser.		
FORRÉTTABARINN Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.	MIAMI Tue 15:00 to 01:00. Wed to Sat 15:00 to 19:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.	outdoors balcony. Loft's terrace is head and shoulders above most of the al fresco drinking spots in Reykjavík, not least because it's high up on the roof. It's a popular after-work choice in good weather and it might get crowded, so arrive early. Happy hour takes place every day from 4pm to 8pm, and every Wednesday is Winesday when Loft offers 20% off wine all day long. JP	
GAUKURINN Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.	PRIKID Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.	Loft Hostel is a big bright place that often presents live music, film screenings and the like to a mixed crowd of young, apparently hip Icelanders and tourists. But now that the pesky cold white stuff has stopped falling from the sky, you must check out their legendary	
IDNÓ Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.	PUBLIC HOUSE Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 then 23:00 to 01:00 Beer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK		
JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR Weekdays 16:00 onwards. Weekends 12:00 to 16:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.	PUNK Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.		

## FEATURED DRINKING HOLE

**LOFT**  
16:00 - 20:00 EVERY DAY  
BEER 750  
WINE 900  
BANKASTRÆTI 7

Loft Hostel is a big bright place that often presents live music, film screenings and the like to a mixed crowd of young, apparently hip Icelanders and tourists. But now that the pesky cold white stuff has stopped falling from the sky, you must check out their legendary

**Sólon**  
Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30  
Caesar salad - 1,490 ISK

**Glo**  
All day, every day  
Bowl of the month - 1,290 ISK  
Vegan option

**Deig / Le Kock**  
Every day-All day  
Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1,000 ISK

**Shalimar**  
Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30  
Curry - 1,290 ISK  
Vegan option

**Hamborgara-búlla Tómasar**  
All day Tuesday  
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK

**Sæta Svinið**  
Every day 15:00 - 18:00  
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK

**2,000 ISK And Under**

**Cheap Food**

Here are some deals that'll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

### 1,000 ISK And Under

**Hard Rock Café**  
Every day 15:00 -18:00  
Nachos, wings & onion rings - 990 ISK

**Domino's**  
All day Tuesday Medium sized pizza with three toppings - 990 ISK

**Tapas Barinn**  
Every day 17:00 - 18:00

Selected tapas half price

**Deig / Le Kock**  
Every day-All day  
Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1,000 ISK

**1,500 ISK And Under**

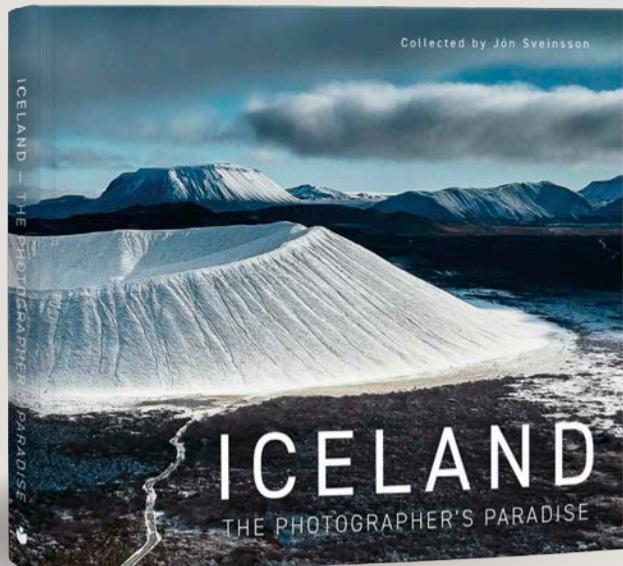
**Hamborgara-búlla Tómasar**  
All day Tuesday  
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK

**Glo**  
All day, every day  
Bowl of the month - 1,290 ISK  
Vegan option

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Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30  
Curry - 1,290 ISK  
Vegan option

**Sæta Svinið**  
Every day 15:00 - 18:00  
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK

# PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE



Iceland is one of the most photogenic countries in the world – this book shares 121 pictures by various photographers from around the world



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## Books



## Creating New Pockets

Ewa Marcinek's debut book confronts trauma and immigration in Iceland

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photos: **Patrik Ontkovic**

*Ewa Marcinek is a Polish-born Icelander and a writer. Her new book has been receiving a lot of attention in Icelandic cultural circles, and for a good reason.*

The first thing that struck me when reading 'Ísland Pólarað', (which could be translated as 'Polishing Iceland'), is not that the author is a Polish-born Icelander, but how different the book is to traditional Icelandic voices, while still approaching a very Icelandic reality. This, of course, is no coincidence. The writer, Ewa Marcinek was born in Poland but moved to Iceland in the summer of 2013—five years after the complete failure of the Icelandic banking system. That same year she was attacked brutally in her hometown, an experience she goes through in her debut novel.

### Broken heart lead to Iceland

"I lived in Wrocław and was in a relationship for nine years," she says. Life took a U-turn one day when she and her boyfriend broke up. It also broke up the comfortable pattern of her life, and it was time to seek out something new. At least something different.

"I came to Iceland in the summer of 2013 for work. I was running a cultural project in collaboration with Bíó Pardís. And I loved being here. I spent three months in Iceland and although I wanted to stay, I also needed to return back home," Ewa explains.

### Unexpected revelation

When she went back home to Poland she experienced horrific trauma.

"I was attacked close to my home and, after that, I decided to move to Iceland," Ewa said,

confirming the autobiographical nature of her book.

There is not much in the description of the novel that indicates that it's autobiographical, although it's very clear that Ewa had based it on her own experiences. That alone is, of course, not unusual. The story itself is poetic yet, in some respects, quite a ruthless journey into the life of a Polish immigrant in Iceland, with a terrible trauma in her not too distant past.

That changes this reader's view of the story. Ewa doesn't shy away from her horrible experience in the book, which is described in a shockingly beautiful way. It's a piercing experience for the reader.

Ewa says that she was one survivor of four women that the man attacked, and she managed to fight and escape, unlike other women who crossed paths with him.

### The guilt

"He was arrested while I was still in Poland and I had to identify him from a lineup," she recalls. The trials were held after she left the country to move to Iceland. She didn't want to go back for the trial. The reason was guilt.

"I felt guilty. I didn't report the attack straight away to the police, so he escaped," she says. "I couldn't bear to return and face the victims that he attacked afterwards."

Asked if it was hard to revisit these moments for her book, Ewa answers: "At first I was disconnected, but when I used this experience in my play, Polishing Iceland, it hit me hard. Seeing it on stage was very hard."

Ewa says that the attack convinced her to move to Iceland. "Iceland felt very safe for women, and I feel very safe here," she says.

### Casual xenophobia... and not so casual xenophobia

But the novel tackles another obstacle every immigrant in Iceland knows all too well — and one Icelanders would be wiser to recognise by reading Ewa's book: xenophobia. Ewa approaches this subject with a masterful and warm mind, showing the reader that xenophobia is complicated, but always idiotic. She would probably not describe it using such a harsh word, given her delicate writing style.

"I was a bit surprised how Icelanders categorise Polish people. They had this concept about the Polish people living in Breiðholt [perhaps not the fanciest neighbourhood in Reykjavík]. The idea is about the lonely Polish worker that works every day and drinks a lot in the evening," she explains.

It was pretty obvious that Ewa did not fit into these xenopho-



bic assumptions. But she was an immigrant, she worked at a restaurant, and sometimes people didn't want her to serve them, not because she was Polish, but because she couldn't speak Icelandic.

"It was very empowering to write this experience out in the book," she says. Asked if all of these conversations she describes, for example with Icelandic bigots, were truthful as well, she answers yes. These conversations were as accurate as her memory allowed them to be.

Ewa says that the focus was also to be truthful as well as reflect the poetic reality of her life.

### Finding her place

Ewa is as far from the stereotype that many Icelanders have in mind when they describe the lonely working Polish man. She finally found her voice through an incredibly productive, and I might add, important cultural space in Iceland, where writers, poets and novelists meet and hone their skills as writers.

This assembly is called Ós Pressan, and they have been impressively active in producing poetry—and now a novel—from writers that are not native speakers in Iceland. One of the books that is a very good showcase for these writers is 'Pólifónía Af Erlendum Uppruna', an excellent assembly of poetry edited by the poet Natasha Stolyarova, (although the book is not connected to Ós Pressan directly). To top everything, Sjón—one of Iceland's greatest poets, and an established international writer—has been helping the group out.

### Delicate style

But before we go into that, I ask Ewa about the style of the book. Although it's very focused on the story of this young Polish immigrant, it's pretty unorthodox when it comes to its structure. Some pages are poems, with often brilliant takes on the language—Polish as well as Icelandic—but we leave that for readers to enjoy. In other moments the book reads like short stories, although the threads are carefully woven throughout everything. It's an impressive style, and a very delicate one.

"Yes this book would not be classified as a novel, but poems and short stories," Ewa explains. She says she feels more comfortable in that writing style, instead of sitting down and writing a big novel.



Ewa reads from her work

"I have a background in poetry and I tried writing a novel, even a short story, but Angela Rawlings helped me a lot in finding the style. She was there from the first to the last sentence," Ewa says. If you are a devoted reader of The Reykjavík Grapevine, you might have seen Rawlings' name in the paper, since she was writing for us before COVID-19 hit. She has also written and published experimental poetry; one more incredibly impressive talent among the skilled writers at Ós Pressan.

### No conflict, just a new dimension

When asked if Ewa has a conflict with the Icelandic language, and perhaps experiences it as a serious cultural hindrance, She answers: "We are not fighting the language, rather creating new pockets. It took me time to figure out why the language is so precious to Icelanders, and I didn't really know much about the Icelandic culture. But I grew to love it."

She says that it's pretty obvious that if everyone would pick up English, instead of protecting the language, the Icelandic culture would disintegrate.

"There is strength in this puritanism when it comes to the Icelandic language," Ewa adds.

That said, the life of a Polish writer—who has found comfort in writing in English—is not an easy life.

"It is challenging," Ewa says. But thankfully, Icelanders have spotted her brilliance, and she is now on the Icelandic artist stipend and working on her next book, whatever it will be. Ewa says that just getting published by Forlagið [the biggest publisher in Iceland] was a victory in itself.

"Just knocking on the door of Forlagið and getting a "yes" from them was incredible," says Ewa.

Her book 'Ísland Pólerað' will hopefully be published in English at the beginning of the summer. Keep in mind that, if you're learning Icelandic, this book might well be highly approachable for you. It's certainly quite brilliant. For Icelanders this, of course, is a must-read and gives a unique viewpoint when it comes to Icelandic literature. ☺



## ICELANDIC GOURMET FEAST

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# The Reykjavík Burger Crawl - Part 1

In the search for Reykjavík's best burgers, we discover that there is a burger for everyone

Words: Shruthi Basappa & Valur Grettisson Photos: Art Bicnick

Burgers: they're everywhere. The deceptively simple shtick of meat and bread might have only recently made the jump from plate to bun, but it's a change that Icelanders have embraced wholesale. Whether gracing the table of a sophisticated establishment, or nourishing the hungry traveller in a backwater gas station, burgers are a ubiquitous feature of Icelandic menus.

It is little wonder then that our annual Best of Reykjavík burger category gets everyone riled up and on edge. This year, we're taking you along with us for the infamous Grapevine Burger Crawl. Buckle in, it's going to be a doozy.

### Bio Borgari



If you want to feel like you're saving the world, sticking it to the man, and having a delicious meal while you're at it, here is the answer — a burger joint promoting food sustainability and well-being for customers and the planet.

This might be the cutest burger joint in town. Two passionate brothers run this tight ship, sourcing ingredients ethically and sustainably. This is a burger that walks the talk, so much so that the owners have now invested in their own farm that supplies produce when in season. Talk about commitment!

**SB:** I'll admit I wasn't their biggest fan when they first opened — I felt the burgers were a bit too panini-like with their penchant for pesto. But boy have I come around. The photogenic presentation reveals a beautifully constructed burger with a wonderful ratio of fillings to bun. And the colours! The spelt sourdough buns are sturdy, the meat smoky from its turn on the grill, and the homemade condiments are topnotch. Shout out to their tangy, fresh tomato sauce! The vegan patty is hearty, toothsome and chock full of earthy goodness from the beans and grains. The burgers are light, fresh, and despite the absence of mayo-like sauces, they are far from dry. These virtuous burgers are hella tasty and they make a mean lamb burger as well.

**VG:** The basic burger is such a well-constructed affair that it feels like an architect drew it up and approached it as if it was a cathedral. The burger offers tasty organic beef, pickled cucumber, green kale pesto, tomato sauce and salad. The sourdough spelt bun was surprisingly fluffy and soft while still being firm. The pesto lifted the taste and gave it a fresh spirit, but it could be off-putting for some.

The special burger this time around had refried black beans and a mango and pineapple chutney. The sauce was surprisingly mild and tender while the crunchy garlic gave it an unexpected edge. This burger, like the basic one, was incredibly well constructed and as a whole, almost flawless.

### Le Kock



There have been two distinctive shifts in the burger scene in Iceland. The first was in 1981 when Tómas Tómasson, opened his chain of 'Tommi's' restaurants, offering Icelanders a taste of American style burgers for the first time. The second came in 2017, when a trio of chefs opened Le Kock, signalling the arrival of the gourmet burger.

Until Le Kock, most burger buns were a middling Myllan, or the much too rich, pastry-like brioche bun affair. Not at Le Kock though. Their buns, made with Knútur Hreiðarsson's family-farmed potatoes, are the perfect example of the benefit of utilising local produce.

**SB:** These burgers have ruled the roost since they opened, and with good reason. They arrive looking like a textbook shot. Cutting in is a joy, and the bun holds its own right down to the last bite. The cheeseburger here is an ode to the OG with crisp toasted buns, perfectly melty cheddar, a juicy patty cooked just right, and pickles and slaw adding fresh crunch. The Trump tower, on the other hand, is an unapologetic double-patty American smash burger with yellow mustard, a shockingly balanced truffle ketchup and perfectly smashed patties.



Le Kock's burgers aren't your standard sloppy fare, nor are they gourmet to the point where they're try-hard. No ma'am, these are obscenely tasty burgers that elicit sighs of pleasure and guilt in equal measure.

**VG:** It's clear that Le Kock focuses on the details when you taste their cheeseburger. This is a straight-up triumph of simplicity. There are no compromises to be found here, and they tend to the cheeseburger with love and precision.

The Vegan Fox 2.0 is a smartly crafted vegan burger compiled with smoked barley, bean and mushrooms. There is barbecue sauce, vegan mayo and grilled oyster mushroom sprinkled with harissa. The burger offers a strong kick and the balance between the smokey taste and the freshness from the ginger is just amazing. The whole thing feels like the passionate conclusion of a scientist mastering the ideal recipe for a flawless burger. Which is the case, of course. Overall, a perfect vegan burger.

#### Smasss



Smash burgers might seem very 2007, with their vogue confirmed by the soaring popularity of Shake Shack. However, as with most trends, Iceland tends to arrive late in the game. While Hagavagninn might have been first to introduce the smash style, the boys at Smasss ran with the name and appropriately lusty Instagram posts to accompany their arrival.

**VG:** I am a huge fan of this small enterprise. These are young entrepreneurs trying to make a space for themselves in the burger market and have done so in a surprisingly short amount of time. The first burger I tried was the cheeseburger, the

foundation of it all. But the burger's appearance was so shockingly different from the poster at the counter it already put me off. The bun felt greasy at the first bite, and there was an overwhelming taste of black pepper. They sure went to town with it, and the taste lingered on the whole day. The burger was far from good. It also felt quite boyish, which might reflect the aesthetic of Smasss; perhaps not entirely a bad element and shows spirit. The lack of elegance is a problem here though. It needs some serious rethinking.

The vegan burger, although much better than the cheeseburger, had similar problems. This is the youthful bachelor version of a vegan burger. The presentation was, to say the least, sloppy. Although it had tasty, crunchy pickled cucumbers, onion and tomatoes, the signature Smasss sauce was a bit much, and it was impossible to eat without everything escaping out of the bun. Overall, while the burger was tasty, it needs a lot of finessing.

This place has potential but it's obvious that it lacks discipline. Thankfully, this doesn't need to be a huge issue and is easy to change.

**SB:** The food and decor have the curious feel of belonging in a bachelor pad, albeit tidier. The burgers promise decadent, smutty goodness but sadly arrive looking limp and beat. I wanted to love this so bad, but every bite feels like being smacked in the face by pepper, drowning out all other flavours. The meat is crushed to the point it resembles lace, and the cooking style obviously lacks all discipline.

However, I really enjoyed their vegan burger! It is a lovely alternative to a fried chicken sandwich, with battered and fried oyster mushrooms piled high. Sure, it's a cumbersome eating affair — no really, it towers so alarmingly I could barely take a bite. But once I managed to rearrange the nest of fried mushrooms, it made for a pleasant meal. If you make your peace with the fact that it isn't really a burger, it's quite enjoyable.

#### Yuzu



Yuzu is another gourmet burger chain that arrived on the scene in 2019 that leans on the tired but tested trope of 'Asian' influences in an effort to add a twist or discern themselves from otherwise standard fare. The elegant interiors thankfully don't fall prey to overt tokenization and exudes a stripped down Scandi vibe.

When they first opened, Yuzu offered steamed bun burgers in Chinese steam baskets. They quickly abandoned these in favour of custom made buns from a local bakery. That hasn't appeared to diminish their popularity however, [was I the only steamed bun fan? —SB] and the chain has grown to multiple locations.

**SB:** For all its Asian influence claims, Yuzu isn't a bastardised burger at all. In fact, I'd say it's pretty straightforward; well made, with Asian flourishes. It is worth pointing out that all the sauces at Yuzu are vegan and are appropriately laced with either kimchi, yuzu or chilli. I was particularly thrilled with their vegan and vegetarian burgers. The former is a portobello mushroom, whole, in lieu of a patty, while the vegetarian Beyond Meat burger basks in the warm glow of sesame oil muskiness and citrusy coriander. Perfect for newly minted vegetarian and meat lovers alike, it's a nice departure from the standard burger, but still faithful to its roots.

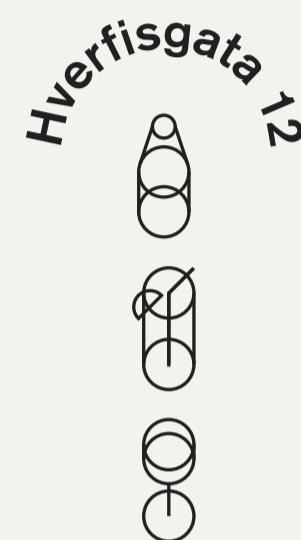
We were surprised to find that we preferred their Beyond Meat cheeseburger to their meat based version. When the cheeseburger failed to impress us (we suspect an under-seasoned patty was the culprit), we tried the Yuzu Chilli. The bun was a little dry and cracked easily and we quickly had a sordid mess on our hands as it disintegrated, leaving us drenched in sauce. A surprising turnaround from when we last tested them, when they snagged the 2021 Best Burger title.

**VG:** The Yuzu portobello burger is a fantastic substitute for meat, with the complex taste hitting in waves. The bread for this one was perfect and the unexpected diversity of the burger was refreshing. The Beyond Meat version, on the other hand, offers a more traditional approach to the burger, but both provide a fun and playful take on the vegan/vegetarian option.

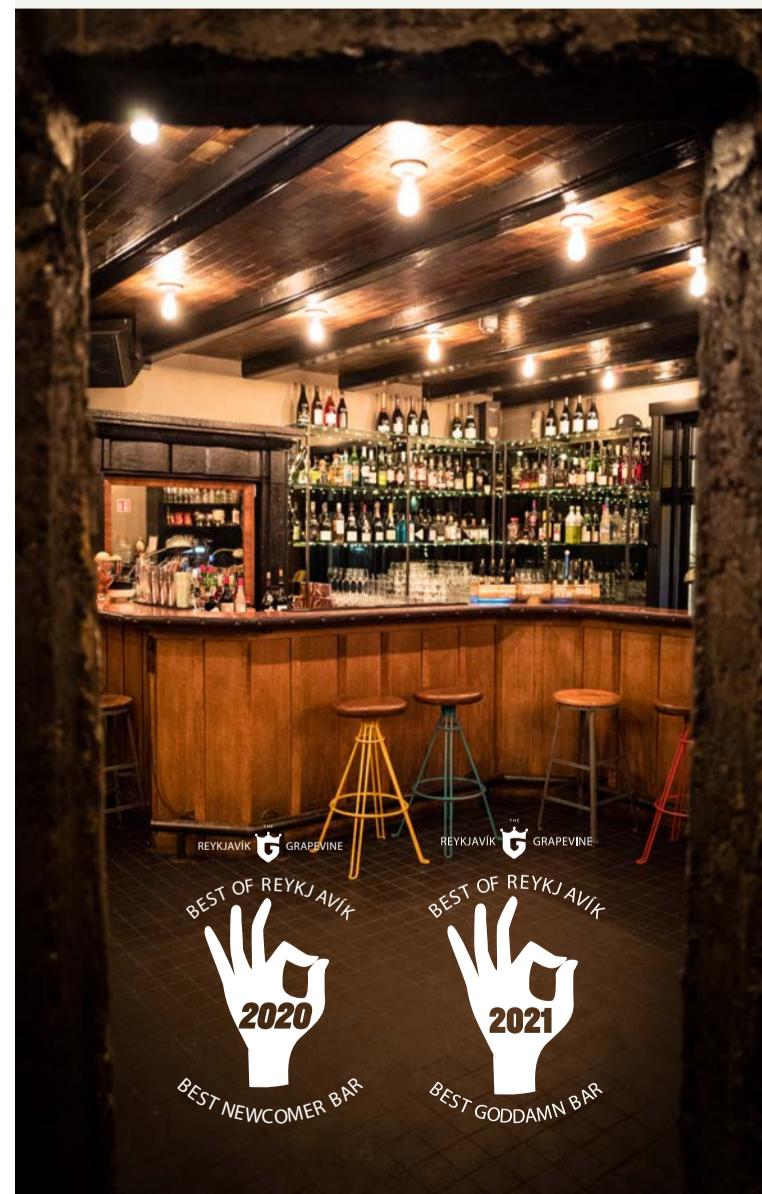
The cheeseburger was a bit of a letdown. Although there were no obvious, significant flaws, it felt too bland for the standard of the place, as well as the price. Smartly enough, Yuzu also offers Yuzu chilli, which is very similar to the vegan option and is only around 200 ISK more expensive.

Overall, Yuzu is as serious about their burgers as they are in their interior design. The foundation is strong and can only grow from here. 🍔

# RÖNTGEN



**Happy hour / 4–7pm**  
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# Travel

## Beginners' Guide to Skiing In Iceland

Ever wanted to go very fast down a hill with two sticks attached to your feet? Here's how!

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens Photos: Morris Niman



Distance from  
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392 kilometres

Experience  
provided by:  
hlidarfjall.is  
[iclandsnowsports.com](http://iclandsnowsports.com)  
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Say what you like about the Icelandic winter—and you can, because it won't make the slightest bit of difference—it sure does have staying power. Pausing from pushing your snow-bound car for the umpteenth time to shake your fist at the sky might give you momentary relief, but the true secret to surviving the seemingly endless brumal months is actually to embrace them.

With record-breaking snowfall this winter, skiing seems the obvious way to get out there and at least attempt to enjoy the colder days. If you've already sampled some other favoured Icelandic winter pastimes, (drinking, going to a cabin, drinking in a cabin), and are looking for an expensive new hobby then you're in luck! Turns out, skiing in Iceland is totally approachable, even for adult learners.

### Step one: where the heck are we going?

There are 11 ski resorts in Iceland, two of which, Bláfjoll and Skálfell are conveniently located near the capital. However, skiing conditions in the south of the country are notoriously unreliable, as the weather tends to lean wetter and milder. It's unsurprising then that the majority of commercial ski slopes are found in the north. One of the most popular locations is Hlíðarfjall, which is near Akureyri. And really, we mean it's very nearby: you can basically ski right into town if you want. Hlíðarfjall boasts a total of 24 marked ski slopes, most of which are suitable for beginners.

### Step two: acquiring gear

If there's one thing you probably already know about ski equipment, it's

that it's not cheap. As a newbie, there is absolutely no need to invest in gear until you're sure this is something you want to commit to doing regularly. In the meantime, Fjallakofinn offers a full rental service from their base at Hlíðarfjall, including skis (duh), boots, poles, and helmets. The latter is important. You're going to fall down a lot, my friend, and it'll be a more enjoyable experience for both you and your fellow mountain dwellers if you don't mash your noggin into the ice as part of that process.

Besides actual ski paraphernalia, the other element you will require is something to wear. The challenge is picking something light enough that you won't overheat—skiing is surprisingly energetic, who knew—but still protective against the rushing winds as you gracefully speed down the slopes. As always, check vedur.is for an idea of what the weather will be doing during your trip and dress accordingly. Hiking trousers and a lightweight puffer jacket paired with thermals is a good option, or alternatively, trawl vintage and secondhand stores for a rad 80s one-piece. Bonus points if you can get all your friends to dress up with you.

### Step three: BUT HOW?

So you're suited and booted, and have somehow already taken enough selfies to fill your grandma's scrapbook twice over. One slight issue though: you have no idea what you're doing.

Our advice: do yourself a favour and get an expert involved. Even if your kindly pal offers to show you the ropes, you'll learn more, and faster, from a trained teacher. Plus, it's never fun to babysit the new kid as they skitter down the nursery slopes like

a new-born deer, when everyone else you know is carving it up elsewhere. So tell your friends you'll catch them later, and book in with Iceland Snowsports. A one-hour one-to-one lesson is enough to cover the basics, and you'll be flying with the rest of them in no time. Our instructor, Ásdís, was patient, informative, and graciously put up with the fact that we skied into her. Several times.

Once you're ready to be let loose on the grown-up trails, don't let your enthusiasm over your new-found skills carry you away—literally. Most collisions are caused by carelessness and a lack of control. Be aware of the people around you, and stay out of the way as best you can. You'll discover very quickly that with skiing, the line between 'looking cool' and 'looking like

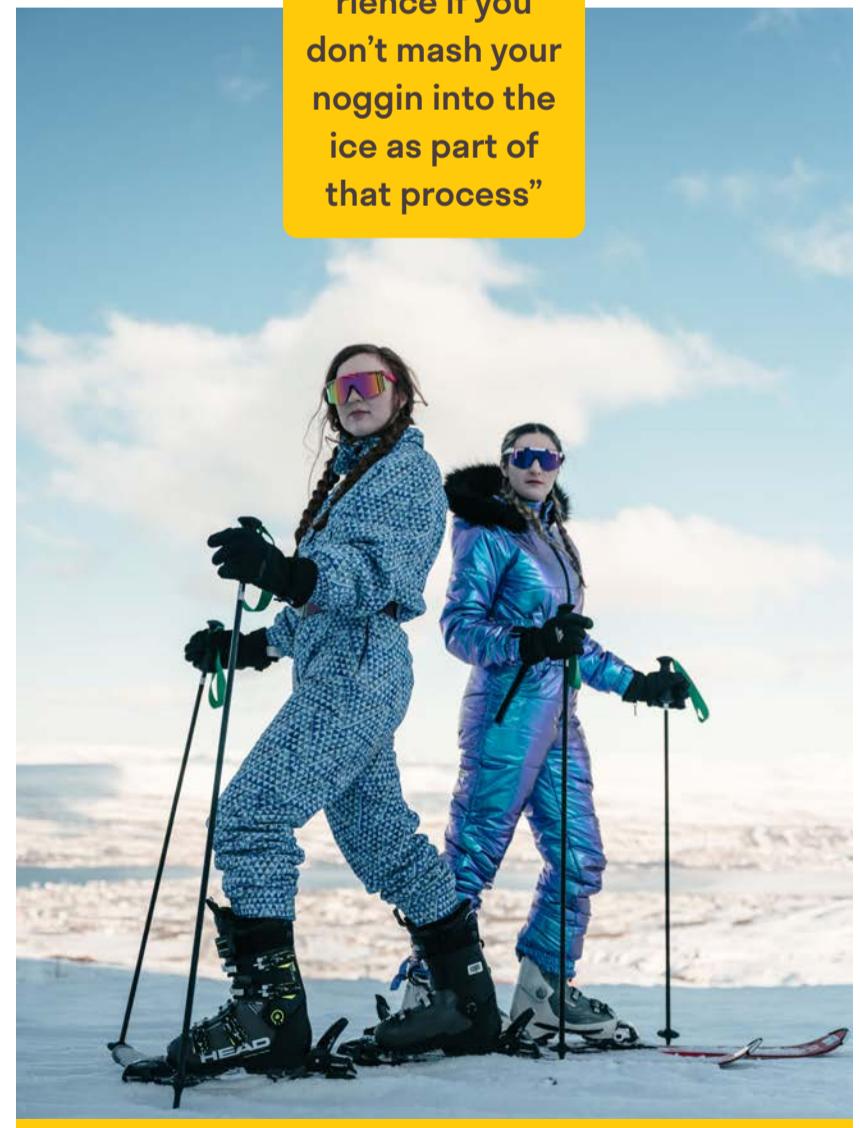
a dickhead' is wincingly thin.

### Step four: ready for more?

Congratulations! You've done it! You're officially enjoying winter. Your Instagram stories are full of #apresski and you're already saying insufferable things like, "Gnarly!" for no discernable reason.

If you do decide that you want to stick with skiing and buy your own gear, Fjallakofinn also offers a handy 'try and buy' service where you can test run a variety of skis before committing. Secondhand groups on Facebook are also worth keeping an eye on if you're looking for cheaper options. In the meantime, we'll see you on the hill. ☃

"You're going to fall down a lot, my friend, and it'll be a more enjoyable experience if you don't mash your noggin into the ice as part of that process"



A Bacofoil onesie will keep you as warm as a turkey

# Easter Edition

Don't blame us—the stars don't lie

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens & Andie Sophia Fontaine

This month's horoscope has an Easter theme. If you're not familiar with this holiday, it's when the Easter Bunny was crucified and sealed in a giant egg for three days before emerging again to ascend to the North Pole. It's true. Look it up if you don't believe us.

**Aries** 

For a festive twist, consider changing out the enormous 'JET FUEL CAN'T MELT STEEL BEAMS' flag that hangs from your window for one that reads 'RABBITS DON'T LAY CHOCOLATE EGGS'.

**Taurus** 

(Youth pastor voice): Let me tell you about another "weird guy" with long hair and a lot of "crazy ideas" about peace and love. His name is Alan Moore. You should follow his example and spend more time on your writing.

**Gemini** 

Oh my GOD for the last freakin time, we KNOW Easter used to be a pagan holiday shut up already jeez.

**Cancer** 

In April you read that the Pareto principle states that roughly 80% of outcomes come from 20% of causes. "Interesting," you murmur indistinctly, as you stare bleakly at the 6,400 marshmallow chicks strewn around your room after only being able to eat 1,600 from your original purchase.

**Leo** 

Scholars of early Christianity point out that there were more denominations of Christianity in the first century than there are now. This included the writing of numerous gospels that never made the final cut into the Holy Bible, as they were declared heretical by the Council of Nicea. One of those was the Gospel of Mary, a Sethian

Gnostic text which contended that Jesus actually taught the true Word of God to Mary Magdalene, who in turn was supposed to be the real leader of the One True Church. There's no lesson to be learned from this; we just think it's a cool fact.

**Virgo** 

Yeah, sure, you know it's great that we don't have crucifixions anymore. But what about the poor cross-builders? Who's thinking about them in all this? Have they unionised? You sincerely hope so.

**Libra** 

Another important story from the Bible can teach us a lot about how you should continue to take the pandemic seriously. The mask mandate may be lifted, and social gathering restrictions no longer apply, but you would do well to keep washing your hands.

**Scorpio** 

Judas Iscariot gets a bad rep for betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, but do you know how much that would be in today's money? Let's look it up.. Just over \$440?? Wow, yeah, fuck that guy.

**Sagittarius** 

This time last year you and your ex were eggs-tremely in love. Now, you could say, she's just some-bunny that you used to know.

**Capricorn** 

Congratulations Capricorn! You're blessed to share your star sign with the one and only Jesus Christ—and we all know things turned out great for him. Just stay away from nails this month, maybe.

**Aquarius** 

Speaking of Jesus, you should spend this holiday weekend sealed in your tomb-like room, only to emerge late on Sunday.

**Pisces** 

Take a lesson from the Good Book and refrain from dropping hot takes that are going to get you crucified (on Twitter). ☠



## Environmental Disaster Edition

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens

Why aren't there more wind farms in Iceland?

Wow, are you sick? At The Reykjavík Grapevine we are deeply against intensive farming practices. Are you really saying you want to capture, enclose, and force different winds to breed with each other, just for human consumption? Truly, we are appalled.

That is definitely the main and real reason, but as a side note Iceland has historically produced enough of its energy through hydro and geothermal sources, and so hasn't invested in wind turbines.

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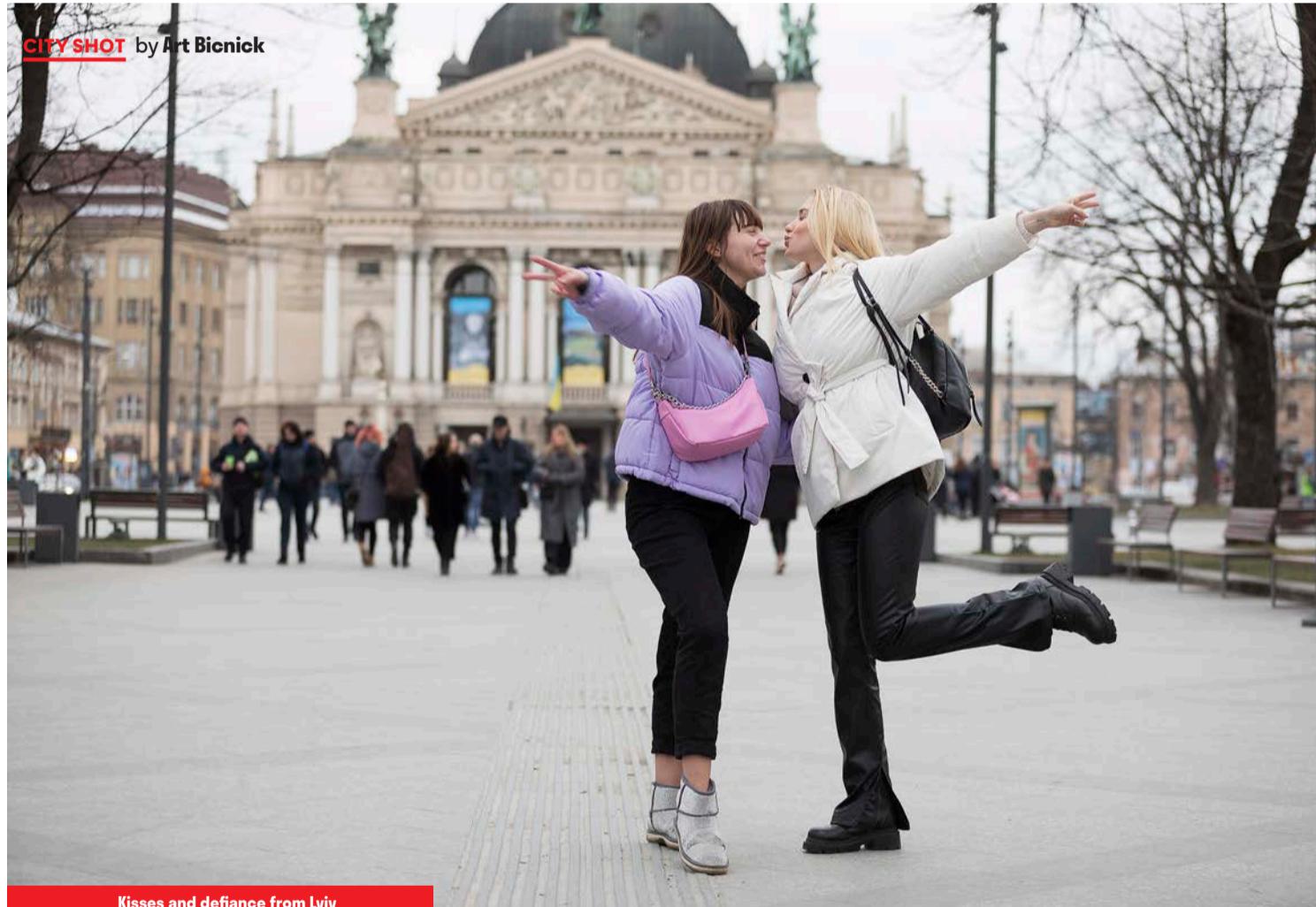
Why doesn't the Icelandic government introduce species like deer and its predator, the grey wolf? That would accelerate the growth of plants and the forest.

We actually already have some introduced species in Iceland. Some of them, like the reindeer population in the east of the country, have been mostly harmless, and have not built up in enough numbers to cause significant ecological damage. American mink, on the other hand, have bred like wildfire, decimated populations of wild, ground nesting birds, and seem impossible to eradicate.

The moral of the story is this: if it's fine, don't mess with it. We don't actually have the god-given right to try and "fix" every environmental "problem" that we see. Nobody gave us a badge and declared us "captains of making everything the way we want it forever," despite how much our actions might seem to suggest otherwise. God, humans are the worst.

\*\*\*

It looks like 90% of your buildings will be underwater when the ice caps melt, have you thought about this? As if I don't think about this EVERY DAY, pal. Why do you think I'm like this? ☠



Kisses and defiance from Lviv



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DON'T QUOTE ME ON THAT



**"There's no appetite for an Icelandic army, something that Icelanders tend to be very proud of."**

Baldur Pórhallsson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Iceland. **P6**



**"We saw a real nuclear threat, and understood that Russia has zero rationality at this point."**

Natalia Baburina, resident of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, relates her experience of war. **P24**



**"I was attacked close to my home. After that, I decided to move to Iceland."**

Polish writer Ewa Marcinik opens up about her experiences as an immigrant in Icelandic society, and her book on the subject. **P26**

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