

THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Special Issue

Spring 2023

Best Of Reykjavík

The Reykjavík Grapevine City Awards



Dining

Sate your appetite at these certified Best™ eateries

Drinking

Quench your thirst, party hearty and dance the night away

Activities

Do as we say and as we do — we know how to have fun

Shopping

Spend your krónur wisely at Reykjavík's top shops



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REYKJAVÍK  GRAPEVINE

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK



BEST SPA



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AN INTRODUCTION

Simply The Best

The past few years have been a trip and that trip has led Reykjavík and its dining, drinking and shopping venues and activities options down wild and wild winding roads. Old places closed, new places opened, volcanoes erupted, lava turned to rock, and the booze kept flowing.

As winter gives way to spring and the summer months that inevitably follow like a lifetime of promises and a world of dreams, there's a scent of fresh possibility in the air. And I'm not talking about the fumes of marine lacquer that waft up occasionally from the dry dock.

Reykjavík is discovering its love of wine (read about that on page 26) while establishing itself as an international dining destination — food halls be damned! Galleries are bringing more art from up-and-comers right to the people, while spas are bringing more people to their happy places (read about some of our favourite retreats on page

32). All the while, shoppers keep shopping and happy hours remain happy. If only we could do something about the inflation.

In the spirit of change and new beginnings, a whole slew of new panellists contributed their expert opinions to this edition of Best of Reykjavík, adding fresh perspectives on the dining, drinking and shopping experiences the city offers and new recommendations for the best things to experience in and around town. We've even given space to one Reykjavíkingur who dares question our authority to deem anything Best™ (see page 6) — we're nothing if not fair.

So even if you've read Best Of Reykjavík before, you should leaf through this one. You might be surprised and inspired.

Catharine Fulton
Editor In Chief

Best of Reykjavík:



DINING

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+ We break down the hits and misses of the Reykjavík dining scene **P:18**



DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

20

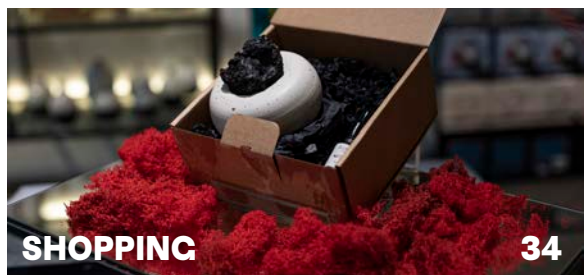
+ Swirl, smell, sip and skál: Reykjavík embraces wine **P:26**



ACTIVITIES

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+ We tell you where to achieve a zen state **P:32**



SHOPPING

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+ We went on a Best Of Reykjavík shopping spree **P:38**

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Farmers Market

ICELAND

VERZLANIR OKKAR Í REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS

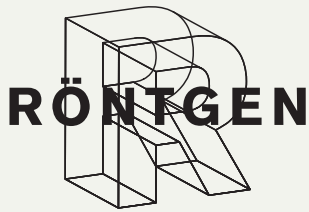


Laugavegur 37



Hólmastóð 2 / Grandi

WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS



Hverfisgata 12



Happy hour / 4–7pm
Beer / Wine / Cocktails



Foreword From A Hater

The annual Best Of Reykjavik magazine is once again upon us. We waited patiently while the Icelandic culture gods debated, argued and fought until they finally came to a consensus. Now, they are ready to bless us with their conclusions.

You might get lucky and see them throughout the streets of Reykjavik, plastering their iconic Best Of Reykjavik stickers on this year's crop of worthy establishments. As their power grew through the years, so did the stickers. What started as cute badges of encouragement have ballooned to multiple square metre crests that you shall never dare take down. Business owners have described a nirvana-like experience of achieving the ultimate goal of covering their windows entirely. They call it "The Blackout." Some were not able to handle it and barricaded themselves inside, refusing to let anybody in, such was the burden.

Let's go back in time. The humble beginnings of the Reykjavik Grapevine's nominations were treated lightly, even with amusement. It was fun. Locals flipped through the pages. "This is cute," they said, with a smirk on their face. "But who are they to tell me anything?"

Fast forward to Iceland becoming the must-visit travel destination. Move over Paris and London, you're old news. Screw off Pyramids. We have Geysir coming through — oh and who is that cool cat with the sunglasses in the backseat? Well it's just little old Blue Lagoon, of course.

The streets of Reykjavik flooded with travellers searching for something

to do. Lost souls looking for something to eat and drink. Maybe even buy a traditional Icelandic garment. But where should they go?

Thus began the rise of Grapevine's influence.

Not only were they the sole outlet recommending how to spend your time and money in Reykjavik, but they were telling you what the absolute "best" was. They took the power nobody else dared claim. They became the official judge of Icelandic culture. Why them and not some food blogger with the same sense of self confidence?

The answer is twofold. No one challenged the Grapevine. No one questioned their evaluation process. Has there been progress from the early days? While I imagine the staff and various local legends once sat down over a beer and had some fun making a list of things they like, I assume the process is much more sophisticated today. With the weight these awards carry, surely it is. Right?

But let us not forget the part that the people receiving the awards play in this saga. They could have refused to acknowledge the Grapevine as the new rulers of Icelandic taste making. But there is a sinister correlation between the success of a business and being mentioned in this magazine, thus creating a silent agreement between all parties.

But no more, my friends. The revolution has started. Yes, I will be spat on by people on the streets. Yes, I will have to isolate myself from my family to protect them. Am I a martyr, you ask? Your words, not mine.

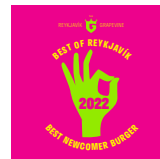
But if I can get you to open your eyes and read and enjoy this magazine for what it really is — a lovely and well executed recommendation pamphlet and nothing more — then I have achieved my goal.

Pavel Ermolinski
Basketballer, Martyr
@pavelino15

THE GUIDE-GUIDE

How To Spot The Winners

Establishments deemed "best" can be identified by the Grapevine's iconic (Pavel's words, not ours) Best Of Reykjavik stickers, which we distribute in a very tasteful standard size. 🍷



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1



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1

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2

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Dining

Remember when everyone became a home baker? Yeah, they didn't make the list

Reykjavík's dining scene has never been more vibrant. Breakfast might prove to be too early for Reykjavík, but get down to local bakeries like Deig or if you are feeling fancy to Tides, and see what a difference a spot of warm grub in the wee hours can do. Lunch offers abound and dinner is ripe for experimentation — be it sampling Pueblan tacos at La Poblana, rediscovering Mat Bar, experiencing Nordic fine-dining at Dill, or tucking into tapas inspired plates at weeks old Skreið or blistering pizzas at BakaBaka. Whatever you fancy, dear gourmants, whatever your proclivities or budgets, our esteemed panel has done the hard work to bring you the best of the best of Reykjavík. Skál!

Best Bakery



Sandholt

Laugavegur 36

Amidst the Scandi fever that has firmly gripped Reykjavík bakeries, Sandholt stands tall with its Parisian vibes. Beautiful marble counters piled high with freshly baked goods are a sight to behold, even for the gluten intolerant. Even the less-than-perfect service doesn't seem to dim its popularity, "what can I say? I'm a die-hard loyalist," one panellist confessed. There is hardly a place in town that could hold a candle to Sandholt's croissants, vinarbrauð or legendary sourdough. A current favourite are the new born baby sized, olive oil drunk, warm focaccia — if you're not careful, you could easily eat the whole in one sitting.

Runners-up



Brauð & Co. Multiple locations

"They source the best, ethical raw ingredients," notes one panellist privy to the supply chain of Brauð og Co, "and it shows in their bakes." That care and sensitivity shines through the city-wide Danish-style bakery chain and over the past two years they have noticeably addressed their once inconsistent QC concerns. Sure, the cinnamon snúður rules the roost, but make room for the granola version, their often warm jammy hjónabandssæla — there are few who make this better — and their weekend special croissants. Other must-do's include the bronzed pretzel croissants and the dense, seeded rye.



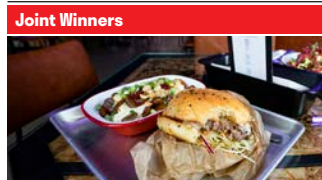
Hygge Coffee & Microbakery Seljavegur 2

Sandholt alumni Þórey Lóvís's palette skews sweet for some panellists, but it cannot be said enough that she is making some of the prettiest pastries and bakes in the city. Seasonal tarts constructed with house-made jams, frangipane and other fillings are a treat and the pistachio croissant and vegan blueberry danish are set to become classics in their own right.

Previous Winners

2022: Sandholt and Deig
 2021: Sandholt and Deig
 2020: Sandholt

Best Burger



Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

Le Kock's gourmet tuck-shop burgers aren't too sloppy, nor are they so fine 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. Here is an ode to the OG cheeseburger 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 with yellow mustard, a shockingly balanced truffle ketchup and perfectly smashed patties.



2 Guys

Hlemmur Square

2 Guys have got us between the bun and patty, and how! Last year's newbies and this year's one of two top dogs, this homage to hip-hop and sweaty burgers are a panel favourite. Each burger is assembled with such precision that it never slides or falls apart. What is particularly striking is that the chef lets the burger truly shine, without the weight of unnecessary frou-frou. A rule they break with aplomb with the candied jalapeno and crushed Dorito studded 2Pac that feels like a levelled up midnight munchie.

Newcomer



Beef & Buns Bildshöfði 9

"You guys should venture out to suburbia more," quipped one of our panellists cheekily, before making a case for newcomer Beef & Buns. American smashed burgers continue to reign supreme in popularity and this outpost too pays homage to the lace edged, singed fringed burger. It's a tough world out here for burgers and we fervently wish for this one's continued success.

Previous Winners

2022: Le Kock
 2021: Yuzu
 2020: Le Kock & Hamborgara Bullan

Best Coffeehouse



Reykjavík Roasters

Brautarholt 2

As you'd expect from the name, RR roasts their own beans and makes a mean cup of joe. Roasters have hit upon that perfect balance of Scandi cool vibe without being pretentious, even if their baristas refuse to engage in banter — an expectation oddly reserved for baristas and bartenders. Perhaps it's Scandinavian pain. Despite the absence of small chat, the coffee is third-wave loyal, the teas are brewed to temperature and time perfection, the hot chocolate isn't hot cocoa, the wi-fi is strong for some solitary work or small meetings, and the space large enough for parent-child outings — all of which make for excellent people-watching.

Runners-up:



Kaffi Ó-le Hverfisgata 98

Nostalgically named after a genX cool kids only spot, Kaffi Ó-le in its current avatar firmly looks forward. With its pastel chic interiors that connect to both the 101 Radisson hotel lobby and the streetfront, this urban cafe focuses on precisely roasted and brewed beans (from Kaffibrugghúsið), poured to exacting standards. Several on the panel shared their love for the "city's best matcha latte" as well.



Kaktus Espresso Bar Vitastigur 12

This cute-as-a-button cafe is the perfect spot to meet a friend for a chilled catch up, or settle in with your laptop for a productive work session. Adorned with cacti (but of course) and plants in the many nooks and crannies, Kaktus feels like a twee urban oasis. The cafe's goal seems to be to please everyone, thus making it one of the few places a coffee snob and a vegan sweet tooth can hang.

Previous Winners

2022: Reykjavík Roasters
 2021: Reykjavík Roasters
 2020: Reykjavík Roasters

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

Iceland's not cheap, so it had better be good

Best Goddamn Restaurant

Joint winners



Austur-Indíafélagið

Hverfisgata 56

It doesn't matter if you are new to Indian cuisine or a seasoned consumer of curries, this place welcomes you with its warm embrace of Indian teak coffered ceilings, antique bronze and vermilion hued artwork on the walls. While we've shared our love of their tandoori meats, old-timers know that it is the hariyali salmon that is the dark horse. And if you haven't yet experienced the joy of a biryani, render that to the past stat. This is a restaurant where there is more to discover with each visit, and the exemplary service ensures you keep going back.



La Primavera

Grandagarður 20

It's no surprise that the best goddamn restaurants in town would be the stalwarts of Reykjavík. With views overlooking the bustling old harbour and Harpa in the distance, La Primavera is a sly old creature that is always delightful. No matter what time of day or year you dine here, you're sure to have peak season ingredients, handled with the devotion of someone who deeply understands that good produce needs so little. So whether it's rare legumes like roveja from northern Italy, is-it-a-rose or salad conundrum of pink radicchio or the many pasta dishes, Primavera's food is only matched by its service.



Skál

Hlemmur Mathöll, Laugavegur 107

With a revamped menu and a drinks programme to match, Skál continues to be the small place with a big heart; its food hall location is no deterrence for their die-hard patrons. This year we've enjoyed their ice-cold scallops, served sliced, in their shell. Sometimes, thin slices of rutabaga are tucked between them, others there is crimson granita of tart berries. Always refreshing. Then there are the fried shrimp heads with a punchy aioli. The steadfast beets, and butter bathed trout. A crisp glass of mineral natural wine alongside and you've got yourself a banger of a meal each and every time.

Best Place for a Fancy Meal



Dill

Laugavegur 59

Now with a green star in addition to their Michelin star, Dill has steadfastly steered the country's culinary ship towards a future firmly rooted in its traditions. Chef Gunnar Karl's dedication to sustainable kitchen practices is more than laudable generally, but even more so in the context of fine dining. Utilising vegetables and protein in their entirety, the menu is a celebration of the whole, eschewing dining diktats that no two proteins are repeated in one meal. For a true taste of Icelandic hospitality, Dill is where you need to be, special occasion or not.

Runners-up



Tides

The Reykjavik Edition, Austurbakki 2
The Edition has managed to lure the reclusive Reykjaviking into its fold, proving to be the 'it' spot. The gorgeously designed restaurant is more than mere luxury. "The fat was rendered so skilfully in the Iberian ham, and so well cooked, I could taste it long after the meal," cooed a very satisfied panellist. The mocktails are as good as their cocktails and while the wine menu is priced fairly steep, you're bound to find a number you wouldn't elsewhere.



Sumac Grill + Drinks

Laugavegur 28

Walking into Sumac recalls being on food streets in warmer places elsewhere around the world. The open grill lends its smokiness to more than just the food and the buzz of happy guests make for a vibrant evening out that is both fancy yet curiously laid-back. Especially popular with big groups, it's best to approach the food here as a meze and order a little bit of everything. The flatbreads are the one sore spot in their otherwise flavour-some menu.

Previous Winners

2022: Dill
2021: Dill
2020: Grillið

Best Value for Money



Deig

Tryggvagata 18

Deig's "poor man's offer" has been the offer to beat for some time. They recently upped their price to 1500 ISK for a toasted and filled bagel of your choice, plus a doughnut and drink. Available only on weekdays from 10am onwards, the price rise hasn't affected the quality on offer. While the offer alone is tempting, the panel urges you to try one of their special bagels for the princely sum of 1700 ISK. It's a steal on this rocky, windy, expensive as heck island.

Runners-up



Icelandic Street Food

Lækjargata 8

A family-run business built on their amma's recipes, this establishment has been meeting that "taste of Iceland" craving that many travellers have. Unlimited refills of soups — both of the fish and lamb variety are on offer — and that sweet deal is best topped off with a slice of their "happy marriage cake." Our astute panel does note that seasoning is not always their forte, but a quick sprinkling of salt usually does the trick.



Flatus

Skúlagata 28

It's undeniable that Reykjavik is expensive. But if you dig a little deeper you'll find attractive deals like the beer and pizza lunch at Flatus for 2000 ISK. A 10" pizza, frosty beer, views over Esja. What's not to like?

Previous Winners

2022: Deig
2021: Sægreifinn
2020: Icelandic Street Food



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Icelandic lamb is a dining experience beyond compare.

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

It's not all shark and sheephead

Best Family Restaurant



Osushi

Tryggvagata 13

Like many curious things about Iceland, sushi has managed to become a common culinary love easily shared between generations. A firm panel favourite, what makes Osushi tick is that it is “perfect for the younger kids who love sushi, to the teen who still likes going out with the parents.” The sushi is freshly rolled before being sent out on the conveyor belt, which means there is zero waiting time before everyone can tuck into their favourite bite. The staff is attentive and is happy to entertain their young guests’ many requests, be it wanting mochi ice cream before dinner, or sending out those mango hosomaki stat.

Runners-up



Hornið Hafnarstræti 15

Hornið has been around so long now that chances are you went there as a child and you’re taking your own kids there now. One of the first to introduce Italian food to Icelanders, this restaurant knows that pasta is a secret comfort food and they cater to this nostalgia with unabashed pleasure. Think Italy by way of Iceland. And the pizzas are an ode to simplicity. Sure, rings of raw onion may sometimes mysteriously appear on a pie, and the service can sometimes seem harried, but Hornið remains ideal for when nothing but the comfort of familiarity will do.



Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4

“You wouldn’t think that a Danish smorrebrauð place would be super child friendly, but Jómfrúin not only is, but is also accommodating of picky eaters,” mused a panellist. “I’ve been a regular for over six years now,” added another, “and from my 70-something grandmother, to my teenagers, there is something for everyone. But the attentive service and genuine consideration for kids is what makes this a hidden gem for families.” How can we argue with testimonies like that?

Previous Winners

2022: Kaffi Lækur
2021: Osushi
2020: Hamborgarafabrikkan

Best Vegan Meal

Joint winners



Hnoss

Harpa, Austurbakki 2

While chef Fanney Dora’s legendary smoked carrot dish inspired copycats everywhere, she herself has moved onto focussing her attention to showcasing vegetables and legumes front and centre at her Harpa restaurant, Hnoss. This is one of a handful of restaurants that borrow from non-European cuisines, successfully marrying them with Icelandic produce. Take the grilled miso rutabaga, for instance. Hefty chunks of this often overlooked vegetable is marinated with savoury Japanese miso, then branded on the grill; the smokiness a lovely foil to the spicy peanut-sesame-chilli based sauce at once recalling both West African stews and South Indian chutneys. The Omnom praline cake is perhaps “the most sumptuous dessert in town right now,” gushed our panellist dreamily. This is food both vegans and non-vegans can enjoy heartily.



Fönix

Bildshöfði 12

Long before the city caught up to vegan dishes, let alone full-fledged menus, Fönix was the first to have a menu dedicated entirely to vegan classics at their industrious industrial outpost, a secret many kept to themselves and with good reason. The vegan mapo tofu overshadows the original, the darkly sweet braised eggplant arrives blistering hot, their velvety slinkiness perfect to scoop over rice. The dumplings are hand-pleated parcels of love, stuffed with glass noodles and chewy wood ears and shiitake, a wonderful juxtaposition of texture and flavour. Don’t sleep on Fönix. Here you’ll find no battered cauliflowers pretending to be chicken in sight.

Previous Winners

2022: Sono Matseljur
2021: Sono Matseljur
2020: Veganæs (RIP)

Best Brunch



Brút

Pósthússtræti 2

The brunch at Brút is so of-the-moment chic that makes it worth waking up early-ish on a weekend. Brút shakes things up by leaning into that fresh, good for you energy without any of the crystal healing vibe. There is a salad for every preference, a couple of warm dishes, often an excellently prepared fish, plenty of fruit juices, mimosas and cocktails, and always something thoughtful for the vegan too. It’s at the dessert table that Brút loses their mind and there are whole cakes running the gamut from cheesecakes and pies to tarts and macarons.

Runner-up



Hnoss Harpa, Austurbakki 2

Hnoss channels generosity of spirit, transforming into a laid-back yet elegant family-friendly brunch over the weekend with long rows of fresh salads, steamy soup, fried to order eggs and a house-made dessert table often surrounded by eager kids and adults alike. What sets Hnoss apart from the other brunches besides the usual suspects is their love for Icelandic classics.

Newcomer



The Roof Bryggjugata 6

If a decadent location is non-negotiable for your brunch pals, then The Roof is certain to please. With a large wrap-around terrace, floor to ceiling windows and breathtaking views, this is a place that impresses even before the food arrives. “Perfect for a hangover,” the menu is very American — there are crispy waffles, stacked with fried chicken and eggs, avocado toast and mac and cheese. The boozy milkshakes are “slightly strange at first, but mad delicious once you try them.” This isn’t a hurried affair but a fashionable brunch lightened with the playful menu.

Previous Winners

2022: Cooocoo’s Nest (RIP)
2021: Cooocoo’s Nest (RIP)
2020: The Cooocoo’s Nest (RIP)



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Skál!

EAT &
DRINK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

Fun fact: Iceland derives its name from our love of ice cream

Best ice cream



Skúbb

Laugarásvegur 1

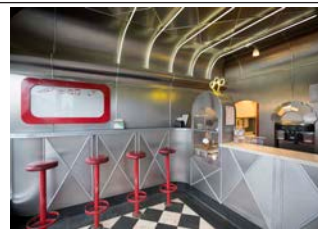
When asked for their top choice for best ice cream, panels old and current have been unanimous in their love for Skúbb's creamy treats. "I'm in love with their espresso — nice, clean flavours," said one. Is it simply the deliciousness of their ice creams, or the straightforward simplicity of flavours, or their commitment to values that shines through that have made them a consistent winner? It's all of the above and consistency. Skúbb's scoops haven't succumbed to cutting corners in the run up to popularity. They use BioBu's milk for all their dairy-based scoops, and whatever on offer is bound to knock your socks off. The sorbets are bursts of pure fruit and the vegan flavours give stiff competition to their dairy-based brethren. Skúbb, we love you.

Runners-up



Gæta Gelato Aðalstræti 6

From the moment they opened their doors, Gæta quickly became the name on everyone's lips for authentic Italian gelato. Our astute panel did note that their gelato has in recent times become sweeter than it used to be. But that shouldn't deter one from the excellent gelato here. Nut forward flavours rule the roost, although store attendants do confess that the local palate skews sweet (perhaps that is what they are addressing?) with their soft spot for salted caramel and Oreo cookie flavours. Seasonal flavours are aplenty at Gæta, so when mango season strikes, that is the one to try. Recently they've taken to offering cannoli and twee krikri gelato cones as well.



Ísbúð Vesturbæjar Hagamel 67

Chocolate dipper, blitzer of candy streaked bragðarefur and the one-stop shop for all the essentials needed for a good ol' ísbíltur is local haunt, and neighbourhood jaunt Ísbúð Vesturbæjar. If you really want a sneak peek into the Icelandic psyche, the ice cream shop is where it's at — a childhood treat of simple vanilla soft serve, swirled into that papery cone becomes the vehicle for a veritable spread of dippings and toppings. For a true taste of the local, hit up this institution.

Previous Winners

2022: Skúbb
2021: Skúbb
2020: Skúbb

Best Seafood

Joint winners



Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For over a decade now, Fiskfélagið has been delighting diners with their fresh-off-the-boat, bonkers good seafood. Whether it is the shrimp-langoustine salad that has gained cult status amongst lunch goers, or their elegant sushi, or the achingly good cod and ling prepared in a multitude of ways, Fiskfélagið always delivers. "I can't remember ever having a bad meal there," echoed many of our panellists. And with good reason, too. This restaurant seems to attract the very best talent and it has managed to stand tall in a sea of restaurants all peddling similar fare.



Brút

Pósthússtræti 2

In their small yet mighty menu, Brút showcases the best seafood that Iceland has to offer. Just the sheer variety — from char to cod, monkfish to haddock, scallops to sea snails — is a celebration of the bounty of the sea. No matter what you choose, each dish is carefully prepared in a thoughtful fashion that effortlessly converts even the stoic seafood reluctant. Even skate haters turn into skate lovers — and if that isn't high praise, then it's time you go see what the fuss is about for yourself. The award-winning wine list spans the globe.

Runner-up



Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12

Fiskmarkaðurinn may have undergone several changes to their menu over the years, but what remains steadfast is the presence of the lightly salted cod with apples and their robata grilled salmon. The portions here aren't dainty like their sushi. Instead, these are hearty cuts of high quality fish that truly reflect local seafaring traditions.

Previous Winners

2022: Fiskfélagið
2021: Fiskfélagið
2020: Fiskfélagið



Plates to share
Natural Wines
Craft Cocktails



OPEN 7 DAYS
11:30–23:00

Hlemmur Mathöll

KRÖST

BAR & GRILL
AT HLEMMUR
FOODHALL



NOT TO BRAG BUT :)



BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

At this point we're just waiting for a viking-themed foodhall. Working title: Foodhalla

Best Food Hall



Hlemmur Mathöll

Laugavegur 107

What Hlemmur Mathöll lacks in size, it makes up for in the quality of its establishments. The OG, it is precisely its size and careful curation of cuisines on offer that underlines its cool-beyond-trends vibe. While other mathölls are dealing with deafening decibels and toe-tripping crowding, Hlemmur is still a comfortable haunt. From uber cool Skál to truly Danish smorrebrauð at Tivoli, to the champagne selection at Kröst, hearty Vietnamese pho or some Napoli pizza by Flatey, this is the best place to sample a cross-section of Icelandic restaurant fare without having to worry about reservations and wait lists. We still miss the fresh produce stand, if that could be brought back, it'd be golden, baby.

Newcomers



Pósthús Mathöll Pósthússtræti 5

The cross stitch art on the wall says "Sorry, this is yet another food hall" — but that brash declaration belies the selection on offer at Pósthús. "Cannot get enough of the heritage details of this place," cooed our panellist. Reykjavík's youngest mathöll is perhaps the prettiest, too. Once a post office, now a refurbished food hall, the room by room layout allows guests to meander and discover for themselves the broad selection on offer. Moving beyond the now tired formula of the usual suspects offering the trifecta of sameness — burger, pizza and some insipid "Asian," Pósthús gives one hope that perhaps ambition in the F&B industry isn't dead yet. There is fresh pasta at Enoteca, fun drinks at Drykk, fresh sushi and poke bowls at Djúsi Sushi and Indian food via Scandinavia at Funky Bhangra.



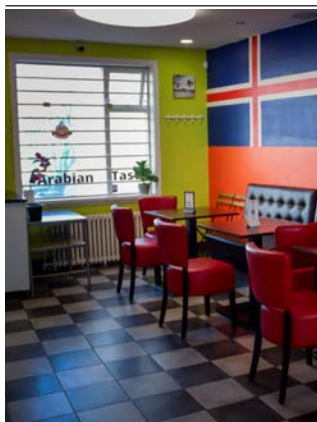
Hafnartorg Gallery Geirsgata 17

The design of this mathöll left our panel split between "cushy comfy" to "sport bar vibe" to "airport lounge" — it's a good thing we are the food panel and not the design panel. The aesthetics aside, what seemed to win the panel over was the selection of food on offer, proximity to ample parking and the comfortable seating. Hrefna Sætran's behind La Trattoria, an Italian restaurant, there is Brand, by the same team as Bál, Mexican tacos at Fuego, NY style slices, and a poke bar.

Previous Winners

2022: Borg 29
2021: Hlemmur Mathöll

Best Late Night Bite



Arabian Taste

Laugavegur 87

"The service is so friendly!" seems to be the common refrain one hears about Arabian Taste. The Syrian family-run restaurant has been channelling their pain into joy for us on their plates of torpedo lookalike kibbeh — pounded bulghur wheat stuffed with spiced minced meat, deep fried to crusty goodness — smokey lamb kebabs, creamy baba ghanoush and fresh tabbouleh. We strongly recommend getting a side of pickles, and some extra spicy sauce alongside your falafel wrap. Late nights don't translate to a gift here; the family is all smiles no matter the time of day.

Runner-up



Devitos Laugavegur 126

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

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Newcomer



Óx

Laugavegur 55

After a few years as a speakeasy restaurant tucked away inside another restaurant, Óx has grown wings and leaves its old nest behind, with a newly minted Michelin star in tow, and has moved to a new location further up the high street. The sense of arrival is intact as a non-descript graffitied wall spares no hints as to the gastronomic delights awaiting diners inside. A speakeasy bar, named in honour of chef Þráinn Freyr's grandmother, Ammadon, is the sort of welcome that is a sign of all good things that are yet to come. Now seating 16, the new space is ambitious and the food just as memorable. Reykjavík fine dining has arrived, and how.

Runners-up



Fröken Reykjavík Kitchen & Bar Lækjargata 12

"Didn't expect anything and was pleasantly surprised," has been the consistent feedback about Fröken, Reykjavík's newest restaurant. Housed in the new Íslandshotel, the art deco flourishes carry on from the lobby to the restaurant. Perhaps it is a sign of a booming economy, or the post-pandemic longing for beauty, but restaurant decor has firmly moved away from industrial grunge-chic to plush velours and gilded accents. The menu may sound like usual suspects, but the delivery is near-perfect.



Funky Bhangra Pósthússtræti 5

Indian-ish burgers? That's exactly what Yesmine Olsson's Funky Bhangra does. Inspired by India by way of Sweden, this mathöll restaurant sets its sights firmly on Northern Indian cuisine and is loosely based on chaat flavours. The popular burgers are lamb or vegetarian, served with a mint chutney, fried papads and raita. The grilled skewers of meat are rather delicious too.

Previous Winners

2022: Brut
2021: Dragon Dimsum
2020: Makake (RIP)

Dining

The Grapevine Recommends

Hungry for some more best of the best? We got you.

We've done something a little different in this edition of Best Of Reykjavik, morphing some of our dining categories into these quick and snappy Grapevine Recommends lists. It's a quick and easy way to see what's Best™.

The Reykjavik Grapevine heartily recommends these hot spots, as determined by our expert dining panel. Go try them all back-to-back-to-back (to back-to-back-to-back) for the most delicious day of your life.

Best Vegan Burger



Kröst

Hlemmur Mathöll

Runners-up

Yuzu, Multiple locations
Le Kock, Tryggvagata 14

Previous Winners

2022: Yuzu
2021: Junkyard
2020: Bio Borgari (RIP)

Best Pizza



BakaBaka

Bankastræti 2

Runner-up

Flatey, Multiple locations

Newcomer

Pizza Popolare, Pósthússtræti 5

Previous Winners

2022: Flatey
2021: Flatey
2020: Flatey

Best Indian



Austur-Indiafélagið

Hverfisgata 56

Runners-up

Gandhi, Bergstaðastræti 13
Hraðlestin, Multiple locations

Previous Winners

2022: Austurindiafélagið
2021: Austurindiafélagið
2020: Austurindiafélagið

Best Thai



Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Runners -up

Krua Thai, Skólavörðustígur 21
Mai Thai, Laugavegur 118

Previous Winners

2020: Ban Thai
2019: Ban Thai
2018: Ban Thai

Best Chinese



Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

Runners-up

Fönix, Bildshöfði 12
Fine Take-Away, Helluhraun 22,
Hafnarfjörður

Previous Winners

2022: Fine
2021: Fine
2020: Fine

Best Sushi



Umami Sushi + Bar

Borgartún 29

Runners-up

Sushi Social, Þingholtsstræti 5
Fiskmarkaðurinn, Aðalstræti 12

Previous Winners

2022: Fishmarket
2021: Sushi Social
2020: Sushi Social & Osushi



*We open new,
Low intervention,
fantastic, juicy,
bubbly bottles
every night!*

Tapas until closing

Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavík



GUIDE

The Highs and Lows of Reykjavík Dining

Observations of a year in dining

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photo: **Art Bienick**

It's not all best all the time. The Grapevine's resident food writer lists some highs and lows from the local culinary scene.

HIGH: Michelin comes to Iceland again

To absolutely no one's surprise, Óx earned its first Michelin star, bringing Iceland's count of recognised establishments to two. The once 11-seater only dining experience has found new digs just down the main street and accommodates a handful more, just in time for star-hungry diners. Dill not only held onto its star, but also received a 'green star'

for Chef Gunnar Karl's circular practices in the kitchen that take centre stage on the menu.

LOW: Alcohol taxes

In somewhat of a small win earlier in the year, ATVR had to concede to Santé and Björland in their tussle for the legitimacy of online alcohol sales. But hopes for alcohol sales reform were short lived as the State yet again raised alcohol taxes by 7,7%.

This time around, even the duty free hasn't been spared and those taxes are now raised from 10% last year to an astronomical 25% hike. Despite repeated calls

for revision by the industry, the State holds to its steadfast belligerent belief that we simply cannot be trusted with liquor.

HIGH: International acclaim for homegrown products

Local producers have been seeing great success of late. Himbrimi Gin launched in the United States, Westfjörd based salt producers Saltverk created waves for their flaky seasoning, and family run businesses like Islenskt Holusta and Og Nattura regularly showcased their wares in forums abroad. Nordic Wasabi continues to wow customers here and overseas, frequently appearing on plates at Scandi hotspots. Their downtown store now offers fun group sessions centred around wasabi and you can buy a fresh stem for a delicious souvenir.

LOW: So many food halls

Mathölls are the new video rental. At the onset of the VHS revolution, video rentals mushroomed on practically every street corner. This get-rich-quick, short-term thinking coupled with "þetta redast" is how you end up with no less than nine food halls (soon to be 10) in a country of 370,000 people!

Video stores met their demise pretty swiftly and the trajectory of mathölls doesn't look too different. Barring the novelty of the initial days of opening, every mathöll is a jigsaw puzzle of the usual suspects — both in ownership and restaurant choices. A smashed burger-pizza-some token Asian joint with an emphasis on deep fried food seems to be the magic mantra. And if you are worried that the cracks are showing, there is always mayo — so much mayo — to the rescue.

Diners are repeatedly subjected to cut from the same cloth monotonicity — if they haven't fled already thanks to beepers vibrating on every tabletop. It's a free for all buffet of mediocrity marketed as a unique dining experience, when in fact it is a cost cutting business model at the expense of quality. One that poor planning by local authorities exacerbates (there are three food halls in a 600m radius).

HIGH: Winning Wines

Not just restaurants, but their respective wine menus are garnering international acclaim. At the Star Wine List Nordic awards, Brút snagged silver in three categories: sparkling wine, Austrian wine and the medium-sized list of the year. Dill took home silver for both sustainable wine list of the year and best short list of the year. The wine bar revolution is firmly afoot and just when one was starting to lament the lack of one that didn't push just natural wines, Apéro opened its doors, with a scrumptious menu to boot.

LOW: MS and its reign of mediocrity

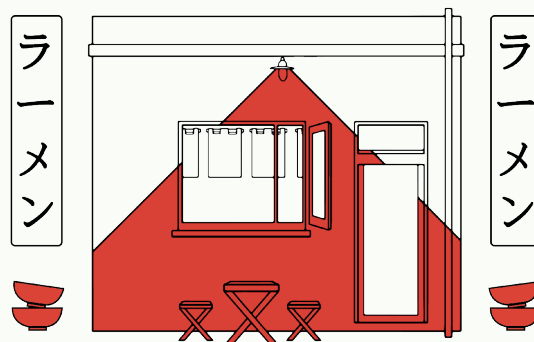
MS (Iceland's dairy organisation) continues to contribute to the collective dumbing down of culinary appreciation in the country by introducing brand new flavour fails practically every month. Cream cheese spread, that beloved lazy sauce shortcut is now available in a 'camembert' flavour, you know, for those I-don't-want-camembert-just-its-flavour moments that so often confronts us. There is also a brand new 'Italian' flavour. To go with your 'Mexican' cheese. When they drop an Indian flavour, we riot. MS, you've literally got the country by its udders, don't we deserve better? 🍷

FIRST RAMEN HOUSE IN ICELAND

FYRSTA RAMEN-GERÐIN Á ÍSLANDI

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BEST ICE CREAM*

FIVE CONSECUTIVE YEARS



2022



2021



2020



2019



2018



LAUGARÁSVEGI 1

*Best Ice Cream according to Reykjavík Grapevine

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

Some people drink to forget, we drink to remember. Remember what? We forget

The crème de la crème. The cherry on top. It's the best of drinking and nightlife. Carefully imbibe every word you read on these pages as the gospel itself. Bask in its glory. Please do not send unsolicited criticism to grapevine@grapevine.is. We beg you.

Having sat down with a panel of expert beer drinkers, wine connoisseurs and all-around people in the know, we've compiled the absolute greats of contemporary Reykjavík watering holes. Do the Grapevine special and try them all in one night, only to wake up with a hangover that'll last you until next season's Best Of.

Best Goddamn Bar



Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

For the third year in a row, Röntgen claims the prize of the Grapevine's Best Goddamn Bar. A unanimous choice by the panel, there's simply nothing else that competes with Röntgen's comprehensive atmosphere. Whether you're looking for a relaxing weekday drink or a full-on weekend party, Röntgen has it all. "There's some kind of a magnet that draws me to it," one panellist said. "They also attract a good mixture of locals and tourists, which makes for an interesting atmosphere," said another panellist. Röntgen's all-encompassing glory continues to dominate the Reykjavík bar scene.

Runners-Up



Lemmy Austurstræti 20

Ian Kilmister, in memoriam. This irreverent theme bar, known for its DJ/drummer combo nights earned a special nod from the panel. "I love this bar because they are so accommodating and ambitious," said a panellist. "In the summertime, there's a backyard stage, Freddi Arcade has moved in there and they even have an aquarium. It's a no-pressure environment," said another. "They always have something going on. There's a real consistency."



12 Tónar Skólavörðustígur 15

Record store-gone-café, 12 Tónar's owners Einar and Lárus will make you feel like a regular, even if it's only your first time. "It's absolutely my favourite place in town," chimed one panellist. With a good selection of beer on tap, they also host regular DJ nights and a summer concert series. "The outdoor patio is fantastic when the sun's up," chimed one panellist.

Previous Winners

2022: Röntgen
2021: Kaffibarinn
2020: Kaffibarinn

Best Wine Bar



Vínstúkan Tíu sopar

Laugavegur 27

Tucked away in the cellar of Laugavegur 27 is Vínstúkan 10 Sopar. Vínstúkan has a wide selection of natural wines, as well as lavish French vintages. Offering not only great wine but greater customer service, Vínstúkan 10 Sopar claims the prize again as the best wine bar. If you're not sure what you like, go ahead and ask the owner and head bartender Steinar for a recommendation. "I feel like I'm in safe hands whenever I'm there," confessed a panellist. You can even snag a great deal on a full bottle, as Vínstúkan imports their own.

Runners-up:



Aperó Vínbar Laugavegur 20b

A Grapevine favourite, Aperó is a French-inspired wine bar, utilising the latest in wine technology to offer its patrons an exquisite experience. "It's so cool what they do there. Each wine is stored in a specific closet, with a specific temperature," one panellist reports. If you're hungry, they also offer food that pairs well with your drink of choice. If you're missing that continental European feel, go to Aperó.



Bódega Týsgata 9

Claiming the spot as the best bar for outdoor drinking, Bodega is tucked away from the hustle and bustle of Laugavegur partying. "It's a serious wine place," a panellist said. And serious it is. Serving wine from all over the globe, Bodega is also a fantastic place for outdoor drinking, as per the panel's deliberation. Don't forget to have a little snack with your drink while you're there.

Previous Winners

2022: Vínstúkan Tíu sopar
2021: Vínstúkan Tíu sopar
2020: Port 9

Best Craft Bar



Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

Catering to seasoned craft beer veterans as well as lightweights who only want a Coors Light, Session is the place to be. "Session is an accessible place to visit as a group. If I'm in the mood, I can treat myself to a nice craft beer. But they also have good lagers," said one panellist. Its colourful selection of beers offers a good overview of the breweries around Reykjavík, as well as the Danish brewery Mikkeller. "It's good for beer nerds, but also people who just want to take it easy and play board games," said another panellist.

Runners-up



Microbar Nýbýlavegur 8 (Kópavogur)

The panel didn't confine itself to the drinking scene in downtown Reykjavík — Microbar is also located in Kópavogur. "Microbar has very nice vibes. Comfortable lighting and a great range of beers," a panellist said. The first craft bar in Reykjavík, Microbar offers beers from all over the world, with a special focus on the owner's brewery, Gæðingur. If you want a mix of both international and local craft beers, Microbar's got you covered.



Skúli Craft Bar Aðalstræti 9

Near Alþingi, on Fógetatorg — sheriff's square — is Skúli, with its entrance tucked quietly away in a small alley. Named after the OG Icelandic entrepreneur, Skúli fógæti, whose centre of operations was on Aðalstræti, it's a fantastic spot for craft beers. Having been one of the vanguards of the Icelandic craft beer culture, Skúli serves both local and international brews. It's certainly a spot you mustn't miss on your craft beer quest.

Previous Winners

2022: Session Craft Bar
2021: Session Craft Bar
2020: BrewDog



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LAUGAVEGI 36 - 101 REYKJAVIK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

Pro-tip: Try the drinks!

Best Sports Bar

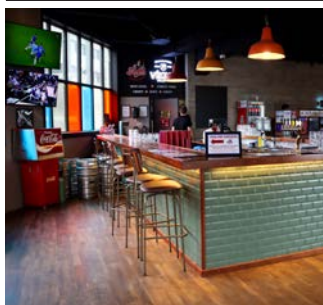


Reykjavík Sportbar

Hverfisgata 40

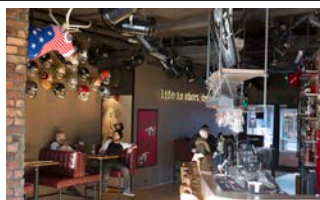
As far as sports bars go, the panel all agreed that this bar was the perfect spot. You can watch the game with the lads, have a drink with the lads, and even brush up on your pool skills with the lads. "When I visit a sports bar, I want screens, I want a pool table. I want a sports bar to have a specific atmosphere, and this place delivers," a panellist said. With their selection of various activities — think pool, foosball, darts and the like — Reykjavík Sportbar caters to sports enthusiasts and non-fans alike.

Runners-up



Just Wingin' It Snorrabraut 56

Starting out in Garðabær, Just Wingin' It has branched out to Snorrabraut. Although technically a restaurant, the place is great for a main dish of beer with a side of wings. And sports? Well, they got that. "There are screens everywhere. At one point I was watching the NBA, NFL and the Premier League all at the same time," said one panellist. "There was a crazy amount of energy."



American Bar Austurstræti 8

The bar of the free, and the bar of the brave. Don't let the giant statue of Uncle Sam scare you away — he's just there to recruit you into day drinking. American Bar screens all manner of sports, offers a good selection of draft and bottled beer, and features Reykjavík partygoers' favourite pastime, the Wheel of Fortune. With its overall atmosphere and focus on sports, American Bar deserves a mention.

Previous Winners

2022: American Bar
2021: American Bar
2020: American Bar

Best Bar to Start the Night



12 Tónar

Skólavörðustigur 15

12 Tónar brings the concept of the duality of man to the Reykjavík nightlife scene. One part of you wants to chill out and drink beer with some good friends. The other needs a place to pregame before going all out. "You can sort of choose whether you go partying or take it easier," said one panellist. "You're sent straight to the middle of the atmosphere and get all riled up," contrasted another. As mentioned previously, this record store-cum-bar hosts all manner of music events, ramping up its claim for the best bar to start the night.

Runners-up



Bió Paradis Hverfisgata 54

Is it strange to call a cinema a bar? It doesn't need to be, as Bió Paradis was one of the first cinemas in Iceland to start serving alcohol in its concession. You don't even need to see a movie. "Going there for drinks is a very romantic idea," said a panellist. "It's an extremely vibey place. What's better than popcorn and beer?" asked another. We can't think of anything.



Veður Klapparstigur 33

Veður is a nice middle-ground for all sorts of people to come together at the start of the night. There always seems to be enough space, as Veður also has downstairs seating, accessible by a wheelchair lift. They offer exquisite cocktails and if you're there during happy hour (19:00-21:00), be prepared to down a few before you start your partying, or just enjoy your company, chatting the night away.

Previous Winners

2022: Jungle Cocktail Bar
2021: Kaldi
2020: Veður

Best Bar to End the Night



Kiki Queer Bar

Laugavegur 22

No need to debate this one. Kiki received a unanimous vote on the best bar to end the night. Being the go-to queer club in Reykjavík, everyone is welcome for a drink and a dance. The only ask is that you're respectful of the space. Kiki has multiple levels for when you need to dance the night away or sit down for a soul bearing chat with someone. "There's nothing but happiness at Kiki," a panellist chimes in, reminiscing about last Saturday night. As another panellist added: "It's hands down the best place to end the night. You dance the alcohol away!"

Runners-up



Ölstofan Vegamótastigur

Ah, Ölstofan, the introvert's drinking hole. If you're ever in town late at night and aren't in the mood for a full-on dance extravaganza, Ölstofan is the place to be. It's the perfect place if you want some time away from all the ruckus and need a nice, long chat with a good friend. "It's the only place where you can sit and talk until 5:00," said a panellist.



Paloma Nlaustin

Known for its rave-style night outs, Paloma has seen a resurgence of a new generation of partygoers. A popular place amongst the old-school rave heads and people in general looking for a good time — isn't that what life's really about? — Paloma is sure to show you what you're looking for. There are even strategically placed joists in the rafters to place your drink there while you dance your heart out.

Previous Winners

2022: Kaffibarinn
2021: Kiki Queer Bar
2020: Prikið

Drinking

What's better than an honest pint with the lads?

Best Place for Cocktails



Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

Although they don't have the smash hit "Welcome to the Jungle" by Guns 'n' Roses on repeat, Jungle makes up for it with their complex, innovative and all-around great-tasting cocktails — the best in town, according to the panel. "There's nothing that competes with Jungle. They're constantly innovating, and they employ award-winning bartenders. What they're doing, no one else is doing in Iceland," said one panellist. Along with the work they put into their drinks, they also put a lot of effort into their names. Menu monikers like "Michael Scotch" and "Chamomile High Club" are sure to please your taste buds as well as your humour.

Runners-up



Kokteílbarinn Klapparstígur 28

When walking into Monkeys on Klapparstígur, you are given two choices. Either continue in to the restaurant, business as usual, or turn into Kokteílbarinn and have a seat in their train — destination: cocktail town. "At Monkeys, there's a side bar. When you walk into it, suddenly you're sitting in a train, drinking tasty cocktails," reported one panellist. Serving award-winning cocktails by award-winning bartenders, Kokteílbarinn offers a serious experience for the initiated and the newbies alike.



Uppi Aðalstræti 12

This grandiose restaurant/bar on Aðalstræti has shown it's a force to be reckoned with. Focusing on wine and lavish dining within its carefully curated interior, Uppi has also demonstrated its quality cocktails. Uppi also hosts all manner of events, from wine presentations to bingo nights. When you're looking for that feeling of luxury, it's a bar you must check out.

Previous Winners

2022: Jungle Cocktail Bar & Veður
2021: Jungle Cocktail Bar
2020: Miami (RIP)

Best Bar for Live Music



Húrra

Tryggvagata 22

Without going into the details, Húrra closed a few years ago, was replaced by a different bar, and then opened again under the same brand. It was the go-to for exciting shows, weekday night outs, and dancing until the break of dawn. Now, it has regained its spot as the best bar for live music. "It's truly the spot where most good things happen in music," one panellist said. Húrra makes room for chart-topping artists and new voices, guaranteeing an unforgettable experience. Not to mention being musician-friendly, as Húrra boasts one of the best backlines in town.

Runners-up



Gaukurinn Tryggvagata 22

A true legend of a place that has stood the test of time, Gaukurinn has a jam-packed schedule every month. Concerts, stand-ups, drag shows and karaoke nights all have their place at Gaukurinn. It's shown they're open to almost anything and their policy of inclusivity deserves a mention. The bar has long since implemented gender-neutral bathrooms, delivering a "No Bullshit" policy towards bigots, and is known for its willingness to accommodate everyone.



12 Tónar Skólavörðustígur 15

Having claimed their spot as the best bar to start the night, the panel couldn't get away without giving 12 Tónar a nod towards their efforts to support the live music scene. Owners Lárus and Einar have a knack for booking exciting bands and DJs at their store. Although the space isn't built for live music, the collaborations 12 Tónar undertakes with musicians makes it feel like an extraordinary venue.

Previous Winners

2022: Gaukurinn
2021: Gaukurinn
2020: Gaukurinn

2 GUYS #1

"BEST BURGER IN REYKJAVÍK 2023"



Burger Beer Darts 90's Hip-hop



Laugavegur 105
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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

All hail Bakkus!

Best Happy Hour



Prikid

Bankastræti 12

What have we done to deserve this? Prikid's too-good-to-be-true happy hour serves thirsty and thrifty patrons beer for no more than 700 ISK. "You can't fight with a 700 ISK beer. When does happy hour start? I'm thinking of going now," joked a panellist. (It's 16:00-20:00 every day — sometimes even longer.) Prikid works in mysterious ways. Who are we to speculate how they do it? We are but lowly slaves to the golden gods. Prikid's patio is a gift on nice days, for when you want the cheapest beer in town and a good selfie for the socials.

Runners-up



Veður Klapparstigur 33

When Prikid's happy hour is past and you've drunk more than enough beer, you might crave something slightly richer than fermented yeast. That's when you head over to Veður. Why, might you ask? Because Veður offers a late cocktail happy hour. That's right, from 19:00-21:00, a wide array of cocktails can be purchased for a measly 1800 ISK. "That late happy hour is the GOAT," quipped one panellist.



Loft Hostel Bankastræti 7

On the topic of day drinking on a good day, Loft's patio will make you never want to leave. Offering a picturesque view over the city centre, Loft does its absolute best to keep you inebriated. From 16:00-20:00, the beer runs for just 750 ISK, leaving the rest of your hard-earned money free for tipping the bartender. Wait, that isn't a thing here. Unless you want to, of course.

Previous Winners

2022: Bravó
2021: Bravó
2020: Kaffibrennslan

Best Newcomer



Bingó Drinkery

Skólavörðustigur 8

From the same folks who brought us the best cocktail bar, Jungle, is best newcomer Bingó. The bar scored a full bingo by the panel, as it demonstrates good potential for an established drinking hole. "It has great potential. They make their own drinks as well as host events. It'll be interesting to see how it develops," said a panellist. Located behind Skólavörðustigur, on Bergstaðastræti, its inconspicuous location makes it a good place for when you need to impress the most knowledgeable of pub crawlers.

Runners-up



Uppi Aðalstræti 12

Relatively new in the Reykjavik bar game, Uppi has eluded many a seasoned connoisseur. Offering a brand-new, high-end experience just above Fish Market on Aðalstræti ("uppi" translates to "upstairs"), Uppi is the place to visit when you seriously want to impress someone. It's an intriguing bar, landing itself a spot as the runner-up for best newcomer — one we'll keep our eyes peeled on in the future.

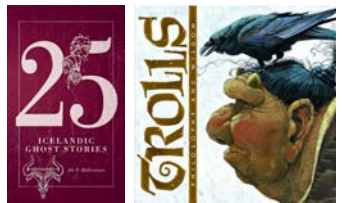
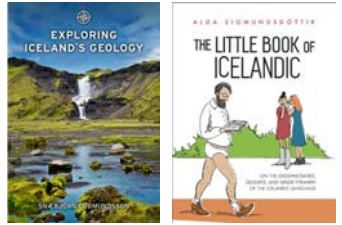
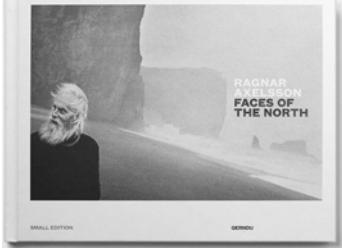


Aperó Vinbar Laugavegur 20b

This French-inspired wine bar has earned its claim to fame by bringing a mixture of new and old-world oenology — that's fancy-speak for the study of wine — to the world's northernmost capital. Located on the second floor overlooking Laugavegur and Klapparstigur, it's nary a stone's throw from the bustle of the rest of Reykjavik nightlife. Aperó prides itself in offering quality wine from smaller producers, adding more diversity to Reykjavik's wine scene.

Previous Winners

2022: Húrra
2021: Skuggabaldur (RIP)
2020: Röntgen



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Drinking

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

Best Outdoor Drinking (Summer)



Bodega

Týsgata 9

When thinking of a good place to drink outside in Iceland, the first thing that comes to mind is the question: "Is that possible?" Move over rooftop bars and sheltered yards that keep the North-Atlantic breeze away, Bodega on Óðinstorg is the place to be. In the summer, Óðinstorg square is decked out with tables and chairs, perfect for a sunny day of al fresco drinking. "If you're going outdoor drinking, Bodega takes it," said a panellist. "The sun lasts very long at Óðinstorg and, if you want, you can move over to the steps. It's a nice spot for an international feel!"

Runners-up



Petersen Svítan

Ingólfsstræti 2a, 3rd floor, 101 Reykjavík

You can't go drinking outdoors in Reykjavík without mentioning Petersen Svítan. Be prepared that like-minded people will probably have the same idea as you. Fortunately, there's lots of space, as Petersen has not one, but two outdoor patios. The second one, albeit a bit smaller, is located above the main balcony. "You can even order your drinks at the table and have them served," said a panellist.



Loft Hostel

Bankastræti 7, 101 Reykjavík

The second runner-up, Loft, has been a wildly popular place for good reason. Its outdoor area is one of the best in town. "They've also installed outdoor heaters," raved one panellist. "Game-changing." The view up there is also worth acknowledging, as you have a good vantage point over downtown. Use that powerful perch to spy on your neighbours, or just enjoy the beautiful cityscape while you drink a cold one.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Date Place



Kaffibrennslan

Laugavegur 21, 101 Reykjavík

The panel decided that Kaffibrennslan is the best place for a date. Being both familiar to locals, and inviting enough for newcomers, Kaffibrennslan makes for a perfect neutral ground for a first date. If you're worried about running into someone you know and want to avoid potential awkwardness, the second floor is a foolproof spot. "You can start with coffee, and if you find things going well, you can move over to beer or wine and take it from there," said a panellist. "It's an accessible date place, especially if you don't want to assume your date is drinking," said another.

Runners-up



Vinstúkan Tíu sopar

Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavík

Alternatively, as a date night with your significant other, Vinstúkan hits the sweet spot between intimate and fancy. "It's a slightly higher investment, but a great spot if you want to treat yourself and try something new," said one panellist who is clearly knowledgeable on the dating scene. "It's a solid backup if you want to someplace slightly more romantic," said another.



Skor

Kolagata 1, 101 Reykjavík

For those who want to be doing something productive, instead of yammering on about the past, present and future, Skor has demonstrated its potential as a date bar. While perfecting your darts high score, you can impress your date with your tireless practice. "If you want an activity date, you can book a table at Skor. You don't have to just sit and chat," said a panellist.

Previous Winners

2022: Port 9

2021: Port 9

2020: Hlemmur Mathöll

Treasures of European Film Culture

Places of a symbolic nature for European cinema, places of historical value that need to be maintained and protected not just now but also for generations to come.



"Kaffibarinn has been "Serving thirsty people since 1993". A cozy café during the day, it turns into a cool party place with an impressive DJ line-up and the crowds spilling out into the courtyard until early morning."





GUIDE

Smell, swirl, sip and skál!

The Reykjavík wine scene has never been livelier

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photo: **Art Bienick**

The world's most expensive country for alcohol has seen a quiet transformation and, despite the challenges of taxation, it looks like Reykjavík is poised to be a bustling hub for oenophiles.

How far we've come

Serial restaurateur and one of the owners behind restaurant Brút and wine bar Vinstúkan Ólafur Örn Steinunnar Ólafsson explains that, with the growing number of restaurants and the introduction of affordable new

world wines, the perception of both wine and drinking has slowly changed — he recalls a time when Icelanders would order a vodka-Coke with dinner.

That change has been particularly accelerated in the past 20 years. “New world wines are hundreds of years old, old World wines are thousands of years old. 20 years in the scope of wine,” Alba Hough clarifies sagely, “is a blip on the radar.” Alba is a lauded sommelier, the Star Wine List ambassador for Iceland and over-

sees production at Himbrimi Gin.

Both Alba and Ólafur agree that travel has been a great driver for advancement in how palates and preferences have grown, particularly Icelanders’ growing interest in “destinations beyond Spain, formal education, an exposure to different cultures and globalisation.”

Shifting preferences

“In the 80s and 90s there was a preference for Spanish wines, Bordeaux in particular with French wines, Italian yes, a little bit of new world from Australia started to show,” Alba says, adding that “anything else was seen like a fringe to the idea of wine ... a bit of a gamble.” She notes that the New Nordic manifesto in the early 2000's marked a shift in consumption, with a focus towards sustainability and conversations around what's local became more prevalent.

“The Icelander is not afraid to try new things, but we are also not afraid to tell you if it is shit,” Alba is candid, “This pragmatism — of knowing what we like and what we don't like, is of equal importance,” she stresses. It's helped the wine scene grow substantially in her view and the evolution has been fairly fast.

On the other hand, the country's fraught history with alcohol does seem to influence inclinations still. When Spain threatened to stop importing salted cod if Iceland didn't buy Spanish wine in return, it prompted politicians to bow to pressure and legalise importing reds and rosés from Portugal and Spain in 1921.

César Garduño, head sommelier at Credo, Norway, and formerly of Dill, observes a similarity between Icelandic and Mexican diners. “Back in the day, most wine drunk in Mexico and Ice-

land was Spanish; in Mexico because of colonisation, in Iceland because of the fish. So in terms of wine palate, they like a medium to full body profile,” he explains.

Wine bars and more

Where one long had to suffer a house wine in a bar, today's wine bars centre wines from worlds old, new and in-between. Most of them, unsurprisingly, are concentrated in the heart of downtown Reykjavík, but menus across the country are starting to see a smattering of natural wines, jostling for space with conventional wines.

This sea change is being driven by individuals and establishments satisfying a craving for choice that has been lacking until now. Ólafur is one such driver, with his desire for a nice, informal and no nonsense space in which to drink. Which is what he created in Vinstúkan, which he runs with Bragi Skaftasson and chef Ragnar Eiriksson. As he bluntly puts it, “we sell what we like, and we don't drink crap. We focus on interesting wines, mostly natural, but don't discriminate against more conventional wines, as long as they are not from corporate wineries and only European. Quality for price is what we focus on.”

What next

Will we continue to see more wine bars and more restaurants offering interesting wine lists? Those I spoke to are optimistic. “Wine should be fun and delicious,” Gunnar says and Gisli agrees, “natural wines today are always getting better with every year and Iceland is catching on that wines don't have to be super serious to be super fun to drink.”



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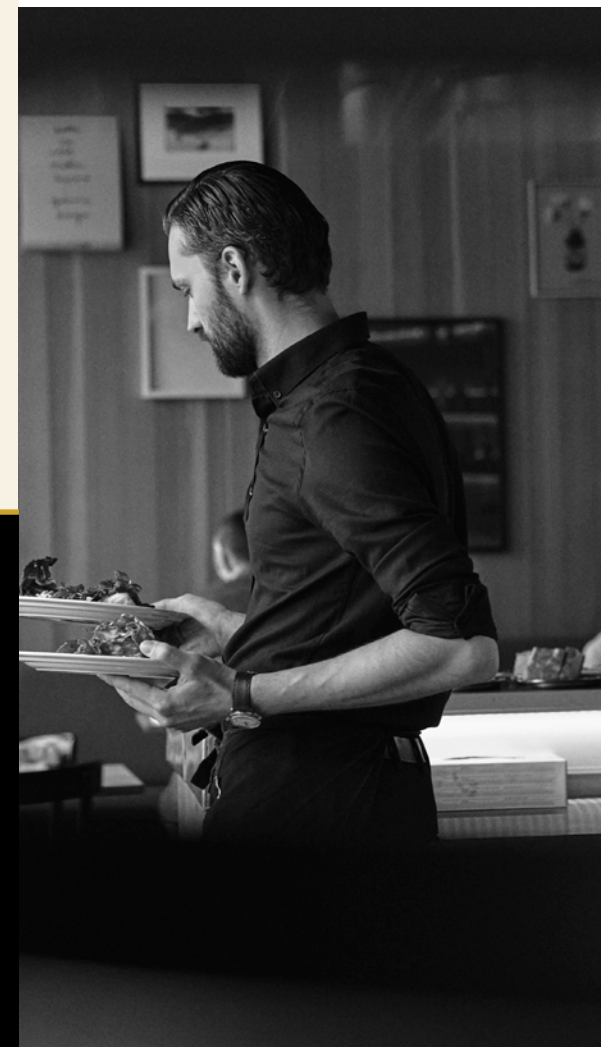


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Activities

Stop doom-scrolling and go hill-strolling!

Get out of the city and into the sunshine! Or stay inside, we're not the boss of you. Whatever you're in the mood for, here are some of our suggested favourite places to catch the latest movies, have a soak or break an ankle hiking up a hill in a level 5 storm. It's really up to you! (But seriously, don't go hiking in a storm.)

Best Pool



Lágafellslaug

Lækjarhlíð 1a (Mosfellsbær)

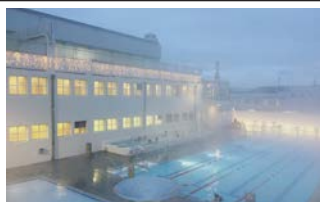
The panel this year skewed towards the over-30 bracket, so the criteria for selecting the best municipal swimming pools had to take into account the needs of kids and their world-weary handlers. Lágafellslaug might not be the best spot for actual swimming but instead you get a triple-whammy water slide (one that ends in warm water, not the usual polar bear challenge) and a sauna with a glass window, which means you can watch the kids while you try to unclench that sciatica and buy yourself 10 minutes of uninterrupted adult-time.

Runners-up



Árbæjarlaug Fylkisvegur 9

Here's another one that's a fair bit outside of downtown Reykjavík but well worth a visit. Árbæjarlaug combines a lived-in 90s charm with facilities that seem better suited to Icelandic weather than most pools. First of all, you have a sauna in the changing room, which means you could forego pee-walking on frozen cement in your tankini and just hang out there. If you choose to brave the cold, then the first hot tub is strategically located right by the changing room exit. This is very much a family-friendly pool, though, so beware if you are looking for a quiet place to sweat out a hangover.



Sundhöll Reykjavíkur Barónsstígur 45a

Finally, one for the childfree people! The original hot tubs (on the 2nd floor) are a classic of the genre: large, aquamarine, hot, outside and without sharp angles. It's not one of the biggest pools, however, and the sauna is best described as 'good for two people who don't mind touching knees or for three people who don't mind human Tetris in the buff. Bonus points go to Sundhöll for regularly hosting cultural activities, like swim-in movie screenings.

Previous Winners

2022: Sky Lagoon
2021: Vesturbæjarlaug
2020: Vesturbæjarlaug

Best Spa



Hvammsvík

Kjósarhreppur (Mosfellsbær)

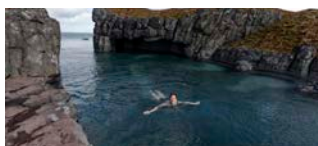
As many of the best spas are located outside of Reykjavík, we decided to include some that fell within a one-hour radius of Reykjavík City proper. A quick 45 minute drive delivers you to this picturesque spa in Hvalfjörður. The area served as a thoroughfare between the capital and Akureyri but after the opening of the Hvalfjörður tunnel, you can drive along this scenic route without seeing a soul (except for the occasional seal). The spa itself has an open design, which beautifully integrates into the surroundings. The hot tubs on the beach will even "disappear" to water level during high tide. It's the selection of hot tubs and saunas to fit every taste that makes Hvammsvík a great all-rounder!

Runners-up



Blue Lagoon Norðurljósavegur 9 (Grindavík)

What can you say about the Blue Lagoon that hasn't already been said. It's blue, it's a lagoon, it's technically run-off from a geothermal power plant, and it's a pioneer in the modern Icelandic spa culture. If you don't want to rub noses (and other body parts) with the hoi polloi in the main pool, then the recently added ultra-fancy (and pricy) Retreat at Blue Lagoon offers a more exclusive lagooning experience, with tiered wellness rituals and celebrity-sightings.



Sky Lagoon Vesturvör 44-48 (Kópavogur)

The verdict here was pretty unanimous for a panel of infrequent spa-goers: "I thought I would hate it, but was surprised at how much I loved it". A beautiful spa, nestled in an industrial part of Kópavogur, which offers killer views of the Reykjanes peninsula and any volcanoes that might be erupting there.

Previous Winners

New category

Best Gallery



Gallery Port

Laugavegur 32,

This year we considered how the art scene has sought out new ways of promoting and introducing art to potential buyers. Gone are the days of clear divides between the "sell-outs" and the heroically broke "real artists". As recently as 10 years ago, this wouldn't have been the case, but most of today's artists and gallerists are able to deftly maneuver the balance of creative focus and making a livelihood. There were many worthy contenders but the artist-run downtown gallery Gallery Port, captained by local dynamo Árni Már Erlingsson, has constantly made brave choices that represent the local scene and have helped shape the refreshingly straight-forward approach to communicating the artist's vision and finding that art a new home.

Runners-up



Listval Austurbakki 2

Selling art in Harpan and in Grandi, as well as through their online shop, they have been, as one of our panelists phrased it "Unafraid to try new things and run a gallery more like an art shop." But it's not just their approachability that sets them apart but a keen eye for highlighting up-and-coming local artists.



Pula Gallery Hjartatorg

Pula is a tiny gallery that has brightened the much-maligned Hjartatorg (a hotel courtyard, built on the remains of a local, grassroots art and activity space). 2022 saw them presenting a string of fascinating exhibits, including Auður Lóa, Rakel McMahon, Melanie Ubaldo and Lilja Birgisdóttir. Watch this space.

Previous Winners

2022: Gallery Port
2021: Gallery Port
2020: Kling og Bang

Best Theater



Tjarnarbió

Tjarnargata 12

This one really is a no-brainer. It's smack in the middle of downtown Reykjavik, it has regular performances in English, and it caters to an incredibly diverse range of performers and performances. Despite the recent attempts of the grand dames of theater, Reykjavik City Theater and the National Theater, to branch out into new avenues, Tjarnarbió manages to highlight how staid they are in comparison. Tjarnarbió is an incredibly busy theater with seemingly 1-2 premieres a week, everything from dramas dealing with burning social issues to interactive shows for babies. All while retaining a doggedly independent spirit.

Runner-up



Gaflaraleikhúsið

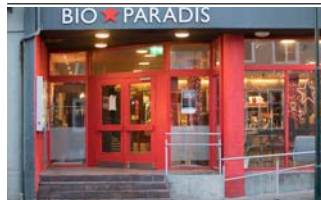
Vikingastræti 2 (Hafnarfjörður)

A truly local theater, tucked away in an alley by the Hafnarfjörður viking village. This 220-seater has, since 2011, managed to put on a series of successful productions, appealing to a wide age range, and providing an avenue for new talent and seasoned pros alike. While it may be more geared towards lighter fare and less concerned with nude thespians flagellating themselves through Beckett, it's a rare and refreshing treat to see a true independent flourishing outside the system.

Previous Winners

New category

Best Cinema



Bió Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

What? The street magazine chose the only cinemathèque in Reykjavik? Well, that took everyone by surprise. As much as we love many of our other theaters for a no-holds-barred blockbuster experience, there is simply no contender for the top spot. This is a theater that incorporates their customers' needs through a lively dialogue with its community on what to show and what kind of events to stage. They are also the only theater consistently serving the international community in Iceland and a center for many of the film festivals, openings and awards in Iceland.

Runners-up



Laugarásbió Laugarás

In the 80s and 90s, Laugarásbió was a haven for cult action movies and B-horror (think Bloodsport and Critters). Today it's more respectable but it retains that renegade vibe somehow. Sure it could use some freshening up but they've kept up with the latest in sound systems and screening technology and you'll get much the same blast of Hollywood mayhem as you would with the bigger chains.



Kringlubió (Lúxus) Kringlan 4-12

The Lúxus screen in Kringlubió recently introduced their "date seats" which are two-person leather recliners, where you can snuggle up to your partner with a blanket and a bucket of popcorn. It's like 90% of the way towards replicating what it was like bingeing romcoms in Covid except outfitted with a Dolby Atmos sound system, brand-new movies and a big ol' screen.

Previous Winners

2022: **Bió Paradís**
2021: **Bió Paradís**
2020: **Smárabió**

Best Art Museum



Gerðarsafn

Hamraborg 4 (Kópavogur)

Gerðarsafn is often unfairly neglected when discussing the best that the Greater Reykjavik Area has to offer, despite being only a quick 10 minute drive from downtown. The museum has shown incredible ambition in recent years, putting on a staggering number of events and exhibitions which often serves to transport the conversations taking place outside the museum walls into the exhibition space — such as immigration and gender issues.

Runners-up



The Living Art Museum Grandagarður 20

The Living Art Museum (Nýlistasafnið) is a modern art museum located at a nexus of an artist-owned gallery, non-profit artist run space and an artist's studio (oh, and there's an Italian restaurant on the first floor). Similar to Gerðarsafn, Nýló is willing to engage with social issues, while skewing slightly more avant-garde in their displays. The Marshall House building and the surrounding area is also an excellent example of the renewal that has happened in Grandi and the result makes for a charming date spot.



The Reykjavik Art Museum Tryggvagata 17

The list wouldn't be complete without a mention of the Reykjavik Art Museum. While the past year has not been a particular stand-out for the museum, its Hafnarhús location is still one of the main conduits bringing big name international, contemporary artists into the country. Besides, it's the perfect place to dip in on a windy day for a coffee and some merch to give your friend who has everything.

Previous Winners

2022: **Reykjavik Art Museum**
2021: **Reykjavik Art Museum**
2020: **Kjarvalsstaðir**



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Activities

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Best Museum



The National Museum

Suðurgata

The National Museum (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands) picks up the first place yet again, but not simply due to its institutional status. What our panel felt made it such a successful museum in its category was how the curation offers the exact right scope to view Icelandic history — it's condensed, but not too condensed. The past year saw them explore new angles from which to view the Icelandic national identity, including an exhibit on inheritance that highlighted the stark poverty of Icelanders prior to the 20th century, as they left their children the trifles of daily life upon their passing (down to a pair of underwear with a hole in it). The National Museum has also entered into successful partnerships with contemporary artists and designers to find new ways to explore Icelandic history in the making.

Runners-up



Einar Jónsson Museum Hallgrímstorg 3

Once an imposing castle structure perched alone atop a barren hill, this building inspired by basalt hexagons is unmissable to anyone passing by Hallgrímskirkja church. A former home to one of Iceland's foremost sculptors, Einar Jónsson, it now houses his works and the charming sculpture garden, which plays home to Einar's unmissable fascination with Norse mythology.



The Settlement Exhibition Reykjavík 871±2

Aðalstræti 16

Most of the time, you won't find anything more interesting in the basement of a hotel than a laundry room or the occasional haunting. But underneath the Hotel Reykjavík Centrum you will find the 871±2 settlement exhibition. This exhibition explores the remains of a viking longhouse from the settlement age, which was excavated right on that spot in 2001 and remains one of the oldest man-made structures found in Iceland (from circa 871, hence the name). What better place to build an archeological museum but right in the spot where you found the damn thing, amirite?

Previous Winners

2022: The National Museum
2021: The National Museum
2020: The National Museum

Best Place to Take the Kids



Fjölskylduland

Dugguvogur 4, 104 Reykjavík

Described as Iceland's "first holistic Indoor Playground and Family Center in Iceland," this one is sort of like a private members club for toddlers. Fjölskylduland is somewhat like a large indoor playground, full of stimulating activities for children 0-6 years old. If the playhouse isn't enough to keep their attention, you can enroll them in gymnastics, or baby yoga. Because you're never too young to align your chakras!

Runner-up



The Salvation Army Suðurlandsbraut 72, 108 Reykjavík

This one took us by surprise, as it's not openly geared towards children, but several panelists mentioned how well this space served the family folk of the 108 area. The distinctive red building was designed by Teiknistofan Tröð and opened in 2021 as the new HQ for the Salvation Army. While the overt Christian themes may be off putting to some, there is no denying the appeal of the affordable and spacious café, generous play area and arts and crafts workshops.

Newcomer



Hófuðstöðin

Rafstöðvarvegur

Set in the beautiful Elliðaárdalur public park, this permanent installation by artist Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir (aka Shoplifter) is not, strictly-speaking, geared towards children but our panelists said their kids find so much to love in the vibrant colours and soft textures. Plus, you can chalk that up to a culturally edifying activity, as it's technically an art installation.

Previous Winners

2022: Húsdýragarðurinn
2021: The Maritime Museum
2020: Húsdýragarðurinn

Best Day Trip



The Reykjanes Route

Reykjanes Peninsula

This sample platter of Iceland's offerings got kicked up a notch with recent volcanic activity (you may have heard about the eruptions at Geldingadalir and Meradalir in 2021 and 2022, respectively). This quick drive takes you on a route along the sweeping blue lake of Kleifarvatn. It takes you past charming ruins, geothermal hot springs, beautiful rock formations, snowy peaks and, yes, the occasional jets of spurting magma (N.B. no volcanoes are erupting at the moment).

Runners-up



Sólheimajökull

At only 100 miles (160 km) from Reykjavík, this is one of the two glaciers closest to our bustling metropolis and a favorite among the locals. An imposing sight, Sólheimajökull's popularity is helped by it being one of the most accessible glaciers, as it's both fairly easy to find and to scale the side. That being said, we recommend that you go with experienced guides to avoid being put in cold storage in a glacial crevice until Katla finally erupts through the ice cover, sending you flying back to Reykjavík.



Helliggerði

Helligsgata 3 (Hafnarfjörður)

This tiny enchanted rock garden 20 minutes from downtown Reykjavík is the perfect place to zen out on a sunny day. With a café, small pond and moss-covered lava rocks, they have taken care not to curtail the savage charm of Hafnarfjörður's lava fields. And it's probably for the best, since the rocks there are said to be home to the hidden people (known as elves to the normos).

Previous Winners

2022: Geldingadalir Volcano (RIP)
2021: Geldingadalir Volcano (RIP)
2020: Reykjanes

Best Summer Hike



Glymur Waterfall

Hvalfjörður

After a scenic drive to the end of Hvalfjörður, you arrive at the foot of Iceland's second-highest waterfall, with its nearly 200 meter drop.

Not only is the hiking route easily accessible, but it takes you up a varied landscape, darting through shrubbery, along cliff sides, through a small cave, and you can even cross the river right above the drop on the return (if you are not afraid of meeting Óðinn a little early). Overall, it's a relatively easy hike but with a couple of spots that hoist it up to moderate difficulty.

Runners-up



Reykjadalur Hveragerði

This is the one you've no doubt caught on Instagram. People bathing in a geothermal river in the Icelandic wilderness. Of course, what's missing is all the other people snapping up pictures, but the 2-3 hour round trip and 347 metre elevation does deter some tourists, so the crowding doesn't get too bad outside of peak tourist season. Even if you forgot to pack a bathing suit (or feel some kind of way about changing behind a simple wooden divider), the views and fresh air are still well worth the hike.



Esjan Kjalarnes

This is Reykjavik's mountain, more or less. It's the one we see when we cycle to work, when we ditch school, when we drive to that out-of-town wedding, when we hit rock bottom arguing with a cormorant at the marina. It's always there in the distance like...well...a rock. It's also one of the most popular hiking routes in the country for good reason and barely needs mentioning.

Previous Winners

2022: Volcano lava field
2021: Akrafjall
2020: Esjan

Best Place to Watch the Sunset

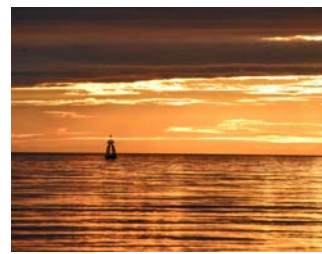


Gróttu Lighthouse

Seltjarnarnes

Seeking sunlight in Iceland is a bit like being married to a fisherman — you either get none at all or you get all of it at once. But we have earned it, damnit, so we're going to sit here at Gróttuviti and watch it go down. And it's going to be romantic, Pétur, and then you're heading back out because all you do is shout at the handball and eat kótilettur. When the conditions are just right, there really is no better place to catch Iceland's magical summer skies.

Runner-up



Viðey Ferry Terminal

By the big rock there's a tiny yellow beach, which (until now) has been a well-kept secret spot for sunset watching. In fact the whole Laugarnestangi area and the area around the Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum is one of the best spots you'll find in Reykjavik. And since the view is not blocked in any direction, you can walk along the path and get a full widescreen vista of the summer solstice fireworks for the whole duration.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Place to Spend a Rainy Day



Spilavinir

Suðurlandsbraut 48, 108 Reykjavík

The panellists were responsive with this one, as most residents of Iceland will have a few of these havens at the ready. Board game café Spilavinir got a couple of mentions and for good reason. Along with the Nexus comic book store, it's one of the best places to get to know the latest in board gaming — everything from 10 kilo box sets of baroque Euro-style games to something you can pick up in five minutes and probably involves some variation on the Werewolf game. Be aware that Spilavinir is more accurately described as being in the Skeifan shopping area, even though its address is Suðurlandsbraut.

Runner-up



FlyOver Iceland Fiskislóð 43, 101 Reykjavík

An interactive special-effects "ride" with a 20 metre spherical screen, accented by water mist and scents to engage all the senses. A bit like the Sky Lagoon, several panellists had judged it beforehand as a bit corny, but it's surprisingly good fun. If it's too crappy outside to see Icelandic nature with your own two eyes, then this is the perfect substitute. As a bonus for Icelanders that spent all their travel savings on that all-inclusive in Tenerife, FlyOver Iceland also runs tours over Canada and the U.S. on the regular. Yeehaw, eh.

Previous Winners

New category

SNAPS

BISTRO - BAR

ÞÓRSGATA 1,
101 REYKJAVÍK



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GUIDE

Let's All Go To The Spa-aaaaahhh

The best places to steam, soak and silence

Words: **Ragnar Egilsson** Photo: **GeoSea**

In the past few years, a particularly entrepreneurial spirit has swept the country, inspiring millionaires of all stripes in the throes of religious epiphanies to begin monetizing Iceland's geothermal springs into dark castles devoted to the worship of cosiness. Where locals and tourists alike can slip out of their peasant garments and into robes to laze around in carefully-constructed recreations of Icelandic nature.

Here's the Grapevine's guide to a wet and wild ride through the best hot water money can buy.

THE BEST KEPT SECRET

360° Boutique Hotel & Spa
This charming luxury lodge is at the end of a dirt road and not visible from any major tourist route. If that isn't exclusive enough, the

spa does not take walk-ins and visitors will need to book a stay at their luxury lodge. Thankfully, it's a welcoming romantic getaway, with each room offering a clear view of the bright-orange skies on a freezing afternoon in southern Iceland. Add to that a skilled chef and a pair of adorable Icelandic sheepdogs, and it feels like a warm hug on a winter morning. Spa-wise, you have a choice between an indoor pool shrouded in steam, a provincial infinity pool extending into a koi pond, or a pair of hot tubs sitting atop a hill with a 360 degree view of the rolling countryside. The geothermal spring is naturally high in mineral salts, which excludes the need for chlorine, and run-off water is channelled back into the surrounding nature.

While it may be slightly less polished than some of the others, it more than makes up for it in good food, stunning views and that aforementioned doggy duo.

HOTTIPS: Don't miss the hot tub on the hill, as you can lose sight of it on a winter night. Do take advantage of the little floaty mats, you deserve weightlessness.

THE PLACE TO TAKE IN NATURE

Hvammsvík

In a highly-contested category, the newly-opened Hvammsvík Hot Springs inched ahead as the front-runner. Hvammsvík offers gorgeous views that blend seamlessly into the waters of Hvalfjörður and the jagged peaks encircling it. Key features include a hot tub on the pebbled beach, which is nearly swallowed by the sea at high-tide, along with a range of other hot tubs at varying temperatures and depths, which are littered across the beach. If you get tired of the great outdoors, you can head inside for a bowl of seafood soup or tuck yourself away in the loaf-shaped steam bath to hum to yourself and feel the acoustics vibrate your skull to samadhi. This is the place to go after munching those edibles you forgot were in your beige weekend.

HOT TIPS: Don't be nervous about the jellyfish if you decide to take a dip in the sea — they don't sting. Do be careful on the wooden steps connecting the pools — they get moderately-to-insanely slippery.

THE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

GeoSea

There is no such thing as a cheap spa and, if you're just looking for a cosy hot tub, you're better off with any of the pools. But if you're looking to kick it up a

smidge without breaking the bank, then GeoSea leads the pack. While it may not offer an exhaustive range of spa activities, the Húsavík staple does offer an infinity pool filled with heated seawater, which guides your eye to ludicrously gorgeous views over Skjálfandafjörður. So sit back and take it all in with a long sigh and a glass of bubbly.

HOTTIPS: Remember to pay the bar tab on your plastic bracelet. You may find that the wine has eaten into the Blue Lagoon savings.

THE ULTRA FANCY SPA

The Retreat at Blue Lagoon

Oh, shit is that Beyoncé!? No? Oh, well, it's still pretty nice. The Blue Lagoon Retreat seems to have been built to meet the affluent and famous contingent's need for uninterrupted selfies and boy does it deliver. Far from the madding crowds of the regular lagoon, here you will get your very own changing suite with private facilities. After threading your way through a maze of saunas and relaxation rooms, you can choose between lounging in the whisper-quiet café, grabbing a bubbly in the private lagoon area, or descending to the lower level for an upscale version of the silica skincare regime found in the commoners' lagoon. While the price tag is dizzying, there is a lot to be said for avoiding the foot traffic and embracing serenity to its fullest.

HOT TIPS: You will get lost making your way to the changing room, be careful not to stub your toes on the steps in the opaque lagoon water, and take advantage of the surprisingly generous portions at the café. 🍷

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BEST PLACE TO SPEND A RAINY DAY
Grapevine: Best of Reykjavik 2023



The board game café in the board game store

Suðurlandsbraut 48 · 108 Reykjavík · spilavinir.is/spilakaffi

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Shopping

Money can be a burden — give it to us

Is there anything better than accumulating a whole bunch of stuff? Yes, and it's accumulating a few amazing items from the best of the best shops that Reykjavík has to offer. Whether you're on the hunt for a new book to lose yourself in, a cosy wool sweater to wrap yourself in, or some jewellery with which to adorn yourself, our shopping picks won't steer you wrong.

Best Goddamn Store



KIOSK

Grandagarður 35, 101 Reykjavík

Owned by a quintet of designers, Kiosk has been putting the work of Icelandic fashion brands front and centre for years — even before establishing their storefront in Grandi. It is the place to go, whether you're shopping for some seriously stylish everyday looks or that perfect outfit for a special event. "What's best is that it's an all female designer run space focusing on small batch, sustainably made pieces," one panellist said. "It's a store where one walks in and feels seen, realising that at long last they found their designer."

Runners-up



Fischersund
Fischersund 3, 101 Reykjavík

What can be said about Fischer that the Grapevine hasn't already raved about. It's more of an extrasensory experience than a standard shop. Walking in to the historic house on the laneway from which the shop borrows its name requires your eyes to first adjust to the low light, then your ears will pick up the soundscape curated specifically for the space, your olfactory senses will be brought to life by the herbaceous and earthy scents wafting through the air. Luckily, Fischer is a shop, so you can select perfumes, candles, beauty products, art and even an album to try and recreate that experience in your own home.



Góði hirðirinn
We'll soon see...

"Inexpensive, sustainable, humanitarian aid and a treasure hunt all in one," is how one panellist summed up beloved second-hand store Góði hirðirinn. It's a place where you can find anything you could imagine and a whole bunch of other things you didn't even know you needed. It's an adrenaline rush in a shopping trip and it's all fuelled by Sorpa. We're standing by (and saving up) while they relocate to their new and bigger location.

Previous Winners

2022: Yeoman
2021: Kiosk
2020: Fischer

Best Design Store



Rammagerðin

Skólavörðustígur 12, Harpa, Kringlan

Rammagerðin truly celebrates Icelandic design. Whether you're in the market for a vibrantly-coloured wool blanket, striking ceramics, one-of-a-kind candle holders or artisanal beauty products infused with plants foraged in Icelandic nature, you'll find it at Rammagerðin. What's more, Rammagerðin doesn't simply stock Icelandic design, they support and work with designers on collaborative products and special releases.

Runners-up



Epal
Laugavegur 7, Skeifan 6, Kringlan

If you're looking to capture that Scandi aesthetic in your home, look no further than Epal. This design mecca, with locations on Laugavegur and in Skeifan and Kringlan, has all the timeless classics from Nordic masters and the hottest pieces from Icelandic designers. "The range of what Epal carries is really what sets it apart," one panellist said. "I can buy a kid's water bottle (a very nice one) and a 200.000 kr. dining chair in the same trip." As for those prices, another panellist recommends keeping an eye out for Epal's very worthwhile sales events.



Mikado Online

Bear with us here, because Mikado isn't currently a brick and mortar shop for you to visit. They're between digs, but their webshop is wide open for local and international shoppers to benefit from Mikado's impeccable curation. Whereas the other shops on the list are Scandi, Mikado is Japandi, stocking wares of Japanese and Scandinavian aesthetics that highlight just how beautifully the two sensibilities complement each other. Plus, they have some truly whimsical items for sale. Do we need a knife shaped like a whale? No. Are we getting one? Yes.

Previous Winners

2022: Rammagerðin
2021: Rammagerðin
2020: Akkurat (RIP)

Best Fashion Boutique



KIOSK

Grandagarður 35, 101 Reykjavík

Our Best Goddamn Store also takes the cake as Best Fashion Boutique. We'd wear nothing but the designs they stock if we had it our way, but on our Grapevine salary we'll settle for working a few pieces into our wardrobe here and there. The Icelandic designs at KIOSK are all so unique and special, you'll be making a statement in them no matter the occasion. Plus, it's not unlikely that the person in the store looking after you is the same person who designed the silk pant set you've been ogling for months and are finally buying.

Runners-up



Andrá
Laugavegur 16

Andrá was a breath of fresh air when it landed on Laugavegur a few years ago. "All the pieces are so beautifully curated, it feels like having a personal shopper," said one panellist. Whether you're shopping for an every day (though elevated) t-shirt and jeans look or something to make a splash on a night out, you'll find that special something at Andrá.



Yeoman
Laugavegur 7

The patron saint of Icelandic fashion, Hildur Yeoman is known for her dreamy patterns, lush textures, spacey body-cons, and beautiful tailoring. Walking into her Laugavegur storefront feels like walking into an art gallery, with every suspended dress the masterpiece of a great artist. Buying a Yeoman creation is an investment in your closet's longevity — it just never goes out of style.

Previous Winners

2022: Andrá
2021: Yeoman
2020: Kvartýra No49 (RIP)

Shopping

Stop spending money on crypto and buy some real shit

Best Men's Clothing



Kormákur & Skjöldur

Laugavegur 59

This men's clothing mecca is the place for the discerning gentleman to outfit himself. The tailor and haberdashery in the basement below Bonus has a wide selection of button downs, blazers, suits, slacks, accessories and more — basically everything you need to be the best dressed in any room. It's all impeccably high-quality, so you'll have these pieces in your closet and in rotation for years to come.

Runners-up



ORG
Laugavegur 46
Once upon a time, Org was downtown. Then it was in the Kringlan shopping mall. But now, in addition to Kringlan, it's back downtown in a beautiful space and serving looks for men and women. "It's the go to for my husband's clothing needs," said one panellist. "When in doubt for a gift for him I always end up there, be it for pants, men's under garments, cozy socks, fragrances. All sustainably made, and a wonderful staff to boot."



Húrra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 18a
If Reykjavík street-style is catching your eye, it's very likely pieces picked up at Húrra Reykjavík. It has all the trendy and minimalist casual and athlesure wear you need to fit right in with the cool kids, plus Crocs. Because Crocs are a thing.

Previous Winners

2022: N/A
2021: Húrra Reykjavík
2020: Geysir (RIP)

Best Second Hand Store

Joint Winners



Verzlanahöllin

Laugavegur 26, 101 Reykjavík

Verzlanahöllin is such a treat for second-hand shoppers, browsing addicts and Marie Kondo late adopters. If you're looking to sell some of your lightly-loved clothes and small items, the premise is simple: book a booth for the timespan of your choosing, set up said booth and then walk away while your items find new bodies to adorn or homes to occupy. The premise is even simpler if you're a shopper — just go and find something amazing. It's the eco-friendly way to shop.



Hringekjan

Pórunnartún 2, 105 Reykjavík

Just like Verzlanahöllin, Hringekjan functions on a model of individuals booking space in the storefront (for up to four weeks at a time), and then standing back and waiting for the money to flow in. What the panel loves about Hringekjan specifically is the likeliness of finding something truly chic. Plus, their catalogue of merch online makes it easy to browse before making the trip to Pórunnartún.

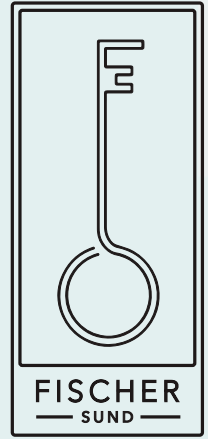
Runner-up



Lóla Flórens
Garðastræti 6, 101 Reykjavík
Why make second-hand shopping a hurried, singular affair, when you can combine it with a luxe lounge moment? You don't have to choose between the two at Lóla Flórens. "After you've sipped a glass of pink champagne you can wander downstairs and find some amazingly curated nuggets," one panellist shares. "Best of all though is the selection of vintage children's clothing."

Previous Winners

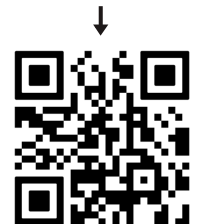
2022: Hringekjan
2021: Wasteland
2020: Extraloppán



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FISCHERSUND 3, 101 REYKJAVÍK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Shopping

Fill that void in your soul and that space on your shelves

Best Jewellery Store



Aurum

Bankastræti 4

Aurum has consistently been crafting unique and inventive jewellery collections for decades and we are fans. Inspired by Icelandic nature, Aurum's creations have such range that you can find pieces to suit the exact mood you're trying to evoke. "The blend of subtle goth and raw nature is all one needs to get that boost of edginess for a night out," one panellist said. The breadth of each collection manages to capture the very essence of the animal or natural setting after which it's named. The cherry on top is that Aurum uses only recycled metals and ethical lab-grown diamonds, and their truly stunning packaging is crafted from sustainable mulberry paper.

Runners-up



Orrifinn

Skólavörðustígur 43

Orrifinn has earned a loyal following for its raw and delicate jewellery. From their classic anchor design to their braided metal creations, Orrifinn sets its wearer apart as someone with on point accessories that transcend occasion. We also love that all Orrifinn jewellery is marketed as unisex, so everyone can mix and match and swap and look fabulous.



Hildur Hafstein Klapparstígur 40

Hildur's Klapparstígur storefront is a vibe we want to envelop ourselves in. Luckily it's very much the same bohemian and eclectic feeling of her jewellery, so we can adorn ourselves with her earrings, necklaces and bracelets instead. Working with natural semi-precious stones and bronze, silver and gold, Hildur makes pieces that are eye-catching and fun. They're also great for layering to create a unique statement look.

Previous Winners

2022: Orrifinn
2021: Orrifinn
2020: Orrifinn

Best Bookstore

Joint Winners



Bóksala Stúdenta

Sæmundargata 4

After years of little movement in the bookstore category, we were surprised by the vim with which the panel backed this shop at the University of Iceland. "Bóksala Stúdenta is of course the best one," one panellist exclaimed. "It has good coffee and the best variety. Ottarr Proppé from the band HAM is in charge of the buying and he's pretty on point." Even if your student days are behind you, Bóksala Stúdenta is the best place to peruse Icelandic and international titles and buy a few more to add to that "to read" stack.



Eymundsson Austurstræti

Austurstræti 18

There's something special about visiting the Austurstræti location of Eymundsson. Tourists will find a wide selection of photo books and illustrated guides to the sagas, while readers of all ages and interests will find the latest Icelandic and international releases, and a wall of magazines for taking home and flipping through. One panellist drew particular attention to Eymundsson's third floor cafe. "Just get there before 16:00 on a summer day if you want to catch the sun on the terrace."



Hús máls og menningar

Laugavegur 18

The smell of this place will really win you over. That classic aroma of used bookstore that just feels cosy and inviting. Elevating Mál of Menning from run of the mill used bookstore to "best" status is its efforts to position itself at an intersection of bookstore and bar, with regular live readings and musical performances to boot. So order a Pastis, pick a book of the shelf and settle in for a magical time.

Best Record Store



Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

You don't have to have particularly good fortune to make a great find at Lucky Records. This Reykjavík staple is huge and packed with records new and old. Whether you're looking for the latest release from an Icelandic musician or international superstar, the soundtrack to Jesus Christ Superstar, or the release of some one hit wonders who you firmly believe should have been superstars, you'll find it among the crates at Lucky. Can't find what you're looking for or not entirely sure what you're looking for? Just ask the incredibly knowledgeable staff on hand. They'll steer you right.

Runners-up



Space Odyssey Skólavörðustígur 22b

We're way past 2001, but we can still experience a Space Odyssey on Skólavörðustígur. Run by the creative minds behind the long-running Extreme Chill festival, Space Odyssey is where you can expect to find some rare gems from the electronic and ambient scene. You might even catch a live performance, we they have a running lineup of soundsmiths appearing in house.



Smekkleysa Hverfisgata 32

Icelandophiles and audiophiles will both find their happy place at the Smekkleysa record store on Hjartatorg. The shop iteration of the record label and art collective founded by Icelandic icons, including Einar Örn Benediktsson, Sigtryggur Baldursson and Björk Guðmundsdóttir. It's a great place to browse a carefully-curated collection of Icelandic and international indie albums

Previous Winners

2022: Lucky Records
2021: Lucky Records
2020: Lucky Records

Shopping

Inflation can't get you if you've spent all your dough

Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater



Handprjónasamband Íslands

Skólavörðustigur 19

Let's be honest, the only real competition in this category is between the runners up. There's simply no better place in Reykjavik to buy a wool sweater than Handprjónasamband Íslands, or the Handknitting Association. Walking into their store on Skólavörðustigur is like walking into a warm hug. The shelves are piled high with plush Icelandic lopapeysa in a seemingly infinite number of colour and pattern combinations, and the walls are adorned with displays of woollen mittens and hats to keep you cosy and warm. Plus, as the association's name implies, it's all knitted by hand right here in Iceland.

Runners-up



KIOSK

Grandagarður 35

Among the Icelandic designers that KIOSK stocks, you just know at least one of them works in wool — it is Iceland, after all. Our go-to choices for a wool sweater that is warm, cosy and stylistically on point has to be BAHNS. By now, the coded raised pattern on BAHNS' signature knitwear — interpretations of the symbols flashed by bouys for north, east, west and south — are as iconic among Reykjavik's fashionable residents as the yoke of a lopapeysa.



Farmer's Market

Laugavegi 37 and Hólmaslóð 2

If you want the look of a lopapeysa, but with a more modern cut and less bulk, then the wool sweaters at Farmer's Market will tick all your boxes. They Farmers & Friends storefronts stock sweaters with updated interpretations of classic lopapeysa yokes, as well as chunky cable knits to keep you in style all winter (and autumn and spring ... and sometimes summer) long.

Previous Winners

- 2022: Handprjónasambandið
- 2021: Handprjónasambandið
- 2020: Handprjónasambandið

Best Grocery Store



Krónan

Skeifan 19, Fiskislóð 15-21 and Hallveigarstigur 1

So here's the thing. The panel could not decide between three locations of the same store to crown "Best", so we're just going to go ahead and give it to the Skeifan, Grandi and downtown outposts of beloved grocery chain Krónan. That yellow winking coin makes us happy. What also makes us happy is Krónan's app that allows us to scan and bag our items as we walk around the store, pay right on our phone and then book it without waiting in line or wrestling with the self check-out machines.

Grandi's the biggest of the three and therefore has its wealth of options tipping the scales in its favour. The downtown location is, well, downtown, so it's perfect for popping in on the walk home for those last bits and pieces to make your dinner sing. As for the perks of the Skeifan location, one panellist explained: "Do your usual shopping, grab lunch at Tokyo Sushi in the back of the store and then realise that you're in Skeifan, so you can go get all the other shit done you've been meaning to do."

Runner-up



Vegan Búðin

Faxafen 14

For those who have adopted a cruelty-free, plant-based diet there's a real sense of comfort in knowing that you can shop without poring over the fine print on every package in the store. That's Vegan Búðin, which markets itself as the world's largest all vegan supermarket (and there's nothing per capita about that boast) has all the components of your standard grocery store — dry goods, cans, freezer section, etc. — but it's all vegan. They also have cosmetics and an aisle of bulk soaps and cleaners so you can refill your own bottles. Love it!

Previous Winners

- 2022: Krónan Hallveigarstigur
- 2021: Krónan Hallveigarstigur
- 2020: Krónan Grandi

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GUIDE

The Grapevine's Best of the Best Shopping Bag

Sometimes you've got to treat yourself

Words: **Catharine Fulton** Photos: **Art Bicnick & online**

So you've read the shopping section of this here magazine and you're thinking it's time for a spree. We agree wholeheartedly! Here are all the certified Best™ items we've added to our shopping cart.



Nangijala Blouse & Smiley Pants from Helicopter
available from Kiosk
Grandi, Grandagarður 35
53.900 ISK & 51.900 ISK



Védís Pullover Lopapeysa from Handprjónasamband Islands
available from Shop.Grapevine.is
229 €



Eagle Necklace
available at Aurum
20.500 ISK



Scent diffuser lava stone from Fischersund x Aldís and Davíð Georg x Rammagerðin
available at Rammagerðin,
Skólavörðustigur 12
15.500 ISK



Ben & Jerry's Netflixd & Chill'd non-dairy ice cream
available from Vegan
Búðin, Faxafen 1
999 ISK



Sveitapeysa, salvia
available at Kormakur og Skjöldur, Laugavegur 59
22.900 ISK



"Magma" by Þóra Hjörleifsdóttir
available from
Bóksala Stúdenta
2.820 ISK



The Ghost Choir, Cosmic Cedar 2xLP
available from Lucky Records
5.999 ISK



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Klappið is the official app for public buses in the Reykjavik capital area.

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KRÓNAN



Proud to be crowned!

We are thrilled to receive Grapevine's 2023 Best of Reykjavík Shopping awards for our discount grocery stores.

First place: Krónan, Skeifan

Second place: Krónan, Hallveigarstígur

Stop by our stores for low priced groceries! You'll find them in various locations in Reykjavík and the capital area, and also on your journey around Iceland.

Krónan offers a great selection of top-quality, fresh products, including a wide selection of vegetarian and vegan options.

REYKJAVÍK  GRAPEVINE

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK



BEST GROCERY STORE

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