



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Issue 18 - December 4 - January 7 - 2010

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Eat, Drink & Be Merry



Christmas is upon us. While a lot of things are pretty wrong in the world right now, we feel the only sensible thing to do is indulge in some good old-fashioned Holiday indulgence.

Editorial | Haukur S Magnússon

Haukur's 18th Editorial

No, I am not on your team



Do yourself a favour. Turn to page ten, right now, and read Haukur Már's feature, Our Murderous Fences. It details how the Greek government is (mis) treating the nation's asylum seekers and immigrants, and how the Icelandic government keeps sending our own asylum seekers over there. Take some time to think about this.

Ponder a government institution that would send a 19-year asylum seeker old to fend for himself on the streets of Athens. Without notice, without a phone-call, without the chance to pack his belongings or collect his unpaid salaries. With naught to his name but some worthless Icelandic Krónur.

Ponder one of the wealthiest nations in the world – regardless of any economic collapse – that in the last twenty years has granted asylum to four persons out of 500 applicants.

Ponder the fact Iceland's laws and policies on immigration have been made so muddled and convoluted that any decision made by the local Directorate of Immigration can be

argued for with a simple "BECAUSE WE SAY SO."

Now ponder this: Recent reports state that Greece might wind up as 'the next Iceland' – that it is a nation on the verge of total economic collapse, and that its infrastructure is rotted and corrupt.

Think: why Iceland? Why Greece? Could it be that the two nations' apparent fear of foreigners, outsiders – the attitude that they are a burden and a threat to prosperity, rather than welcome participants to our society – might correlate with a certain stagnation and corruption we know all too well?

Reflect on all the world's most prosperous regions throughout history. Try and think of one that was closed off, suspicious of outside influence, raised walls and borders, shut itself in a fit of paranoid xenophobia.

I trust you followed the above instructions, and that they provided you some food for thought. I am going to get all cheerful and seasonally spirited in a couple of paragraphs, wishing you a merry Xmas and all, but before I do, I've got some more complaining to do. Even though I am generally a pretty cheerful fellow, the below couple of things get me so riled up that I am going to write them in all caps, as if I were shouting:

IF THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT IMAGINES THEY CAN WITHOLD INFORMATION FROM THE REPORT OF THE BANK COLLAPSE'S INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE WITHOUT INCITING RIOTS AND THE BURNING OF XMAS TREES, THEY ARE SORELY MISTAKEN.

EVEN IF I THINK YOUR 'ENEMY' IS CORRUPT, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I AM ON YOUR 'TEAM' AND THINK YOU ARE ANY LESS CORRUPT THAN HE IS. I AM NOT INTERESTED IN JOINING YOUR TEAM OR FACTION – I AM ONLY INTERESTED IN LEARNING THE TRUTH. AND I AM STARTING TO THINK THAT IT ENTAILS ALL YOU POLITICAL AND CORPORATE SPORTSTEAMS OUT THERE BEING CORRUPT AS FUCK.

Ah. That felt good. And I didn't even shout about dumbass Alþingi's stupid, juvenile filibustering as of late (think I'll save that for next issue).

Now, Merry Christmas to everyone!

ARE YOU BEING DENIED RENEWAL OF YOUR VISA OR RESIDENCE PERMIT? THE GRAPEVINE WANTS TO KNOW

For some reason, we've started hearing a lot about new Icelanders and immigrants to the country being denied a renewal of their visas or residence permit – often with little or no explanation.

This has us wondering just how many folks that have made Iceland their new home are being sent back – and why this is happening all of the sudden.

Drop us a line at letters@grapevine.is and tell us about your experiences with the Directorate of Immigration and other bodies of government.



On Cover:

Tómas Tómasson of Hamborgarabúllan and Úlfar Eysteinnsson of Þrír Frakkar

Cover Photo by:

Baldur Kristjánsson
www.baldurkristjans.is

Stylist:

Ellen Loftsdóttir

Art Direction:

Jói Kjartans

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grapevine@grapevine.is

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Member of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association - www.saf.is

EDITORIAL:

+354 540 3600 / editor@grapevine.is

ADVERTISING:

+354 540 3605 / ads@grapevine.is

PUBLISHER:

+354 540 3601 / publisher@grapevine.is

PUBLISHER:

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson

hilmar@grapevine.is

EDITOR:

Haukur S Magnússon

haukur@grapevine.is

JOURNALIST:

Catharine Fulton / catharine@grapevine.is

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Sigurður K Kristinsson

Haukur Már Helgason

Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl

Valur Gunnarsson

Bob Cluness

Dr. Gunni

Paul F Nikolov

Satu Rämö

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson

Sindri Eldon

Eiríkur Kristjánsson

Þórdís Helgadóttir

Bogi Bjarnason

Brenda M Aasiimire

Lóa Hlín Hjálmtýsdóttir

Ian Watson

Hildur Knútsdóttir

Sruli Rech

Vigdís Þormóðsdóttir

Marc Vincenz
Ragnar Jón Hrólfsson
Hildur Knútsdóttir

EDITORIAL INTERNS:

Louise Petersson / louise@grapevine.is

Michael Vladimir Zelenko /

michael@grapevine.is

FOOD EDITOR:

Sari Peltonen

ON-LINE NEWS EDITOR

Paul Nikolov

paulnikolov@grapevine.is

ART DIRECTOR:

Hörður Kristbjörnsson

hoddi@grapevine.is

DESIGN:

Jóhannes Kjartansson

layout@grapevine.is

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Hörður Sveinsson / hordursveinsson.com

Julia Staples / juliastaples.com

SALES DIRECTOR:

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson

adalsteinn@grapevine.is

Guðmundur Rúnar Svansson

grs@grapevine.is

DISTRIBUTION:

distribution@grapevine.is

PROOFREADER:

Jim Rice

PRESS RELEASES:

lists@grapevine.is

SUBMISSIONS INQUIRIES:

editor@grapevine.is

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:

+354 540 3605 / subscribe@grapevine.is

GENERAL INQUIRIES: grapevine@grapevine.is

FOUNDERS:

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson,

Hörður Kristbjörnsson,

Jón Trausti Sigurðarson,

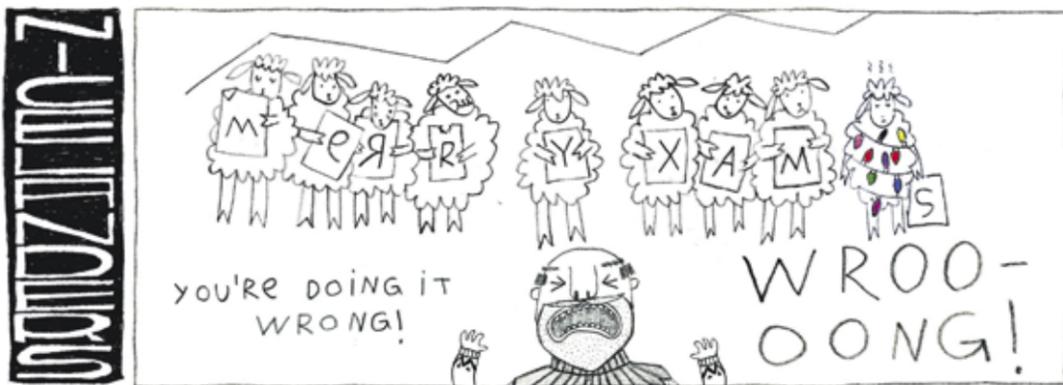
Oddur Óskar Kjartansson,

Valur Gunnarsson

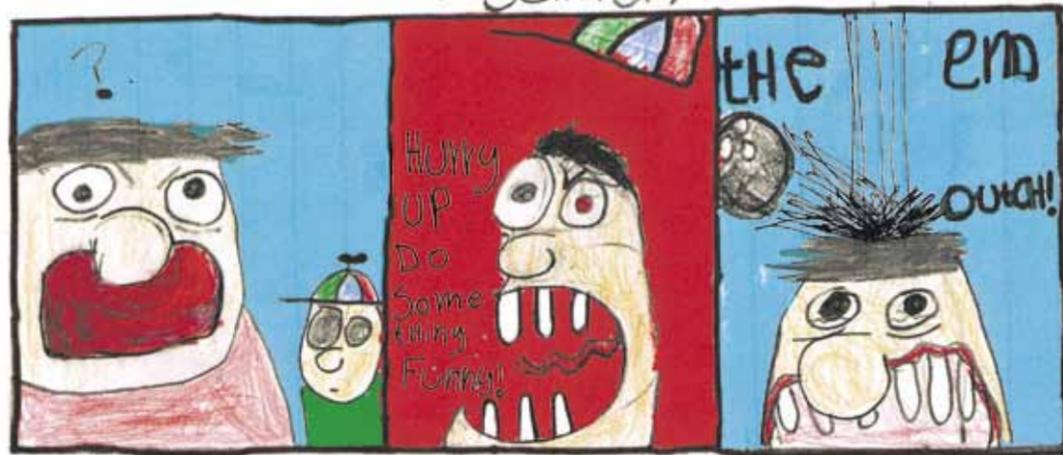
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You may not like it, but at least it's not sponsored. (No articles in the Reykjavík Grapevine are pay-for articles. The opinions expressed are the writers' own, not the advertisers').

Comic | Elo Vázquez & Óttar Norðfjörð



Comic | Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir presents:



Our resident comic artist, Lóa Hlín Hjálmtýsdóttir, is currently teaching a bunch of awesome teenagers a course on the great art of making comix. We decided it would be a great idea to run the best of her students' output, and hereby welcome pioneer Vilhjálmur Yngvi Hjálmarsson to the ranks of GV comic artists. Vilhjálmur is 12-years old, and his favourite comic is The Simpsons. He has been making his art for the last three years. Welcome aboard, Vilhjálmur!

Morðingjarnir

Sunnudagsmorgunn í Reykjavík

mordingjarnir

Download the track of the issue at www.grapevine.is

If Grapevine as an entity were ever to choose a favourite local band, chances are pretty high that it would be Morðingjarnir. These guys just somehow manage to collectively embody everything that's good, clean, wholesome and fun about being in a band and playing music. And what music! Their latest offering - Flóttinn mikli ("The Great Escape") is a ray of sunshine in an otherwise sorta dark musical year; tuneful, joyful, thoughtful and tight as fuck. And it's too bad you non-Icelandophones out there can't understand their lyrics, for they are awesome, too. Our free track of the month, Sunnudagsmorgunn í Reykjavík ("Sunday morning in Reykjavík"), is a mellow scorcher that will stick to your brain like cat hair on Velcro. Try it out for yourself!



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RE-15 - 09:00
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 All Year 09:19

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RE-44 - 09:00
Gullfoss - Geysir & Langjökull Snowmobiling
 Summer only 09:19

SUN THU FRI SAT

Our Gullfoss - Geysir & Langjökull Snowmobiling tour puts you in touch with some of Iceland's most famous and exciting natural phenomena. Piece de resistance an exhilarating 1 hour snowmobile ride across endless white snowfields.

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RE-34 - 12:30
Gullfoss - Geysir Direct
 All Year 12:30:19

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

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RE-62 - 21:00
Northern Lights Tour
 Winter 21:34

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

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RE-08 - 09:00
Saga Circle
 All Year 09:18

SAT

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RE-05 - 13:00
Reykjavik Grand Excursion
 All Year 13:15:20

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

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RE-80 - 09:00
Glacier Adventure
 All Year 09:19

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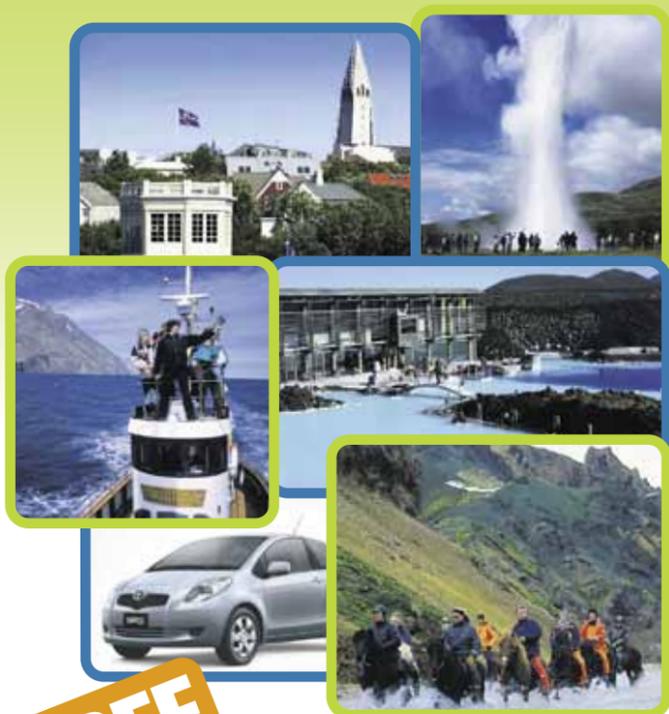


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Sour grapes and stuff

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

4 Letters

Dear Grapevine,

In Australia in recent months, and I suspect in several other western countries, we have been subjected to current affairs programs dealing with the demise of Iceland's economy. From the investigative Dateline and Foreign Correspondent to the local version of the tabloid 60 Minutes there has been no shortage of coverage of Iceland's financial collapse.

Is this a case of schadenfreude? I doubt it, for most Australians have never met an Icelander so would be unlikely to derive pleasure in their pain. Moreover, I cannot think of a single reason why anyone would have any ill-feeling towards your people. Having visited your shores this year, I found Icelanders to be a fun-loving, modest, civil and tolerant people.

I get the feeling however, that both our peoples have the same distaste for the greed and corruption that accompanied the rise and fall of Iceland's financial system. That those 'entrepreneurs' remain uncharged and living in havens such as Luxembourg, makes the scandal unresolved, unremedied and unavenged.

Iceland's inhabitants are clearly their victims. Most of the British and Dutch depositors found protection from their cashed-up governments. Whilst I really feel for Iceland's people, clearly the way out of this mess is for Iceland to embrace Europe (and to be embraced), continue to do the things your people do well, and cherish the things that make living in your country so special. [enclosed links to Aussie TV coverage redacted]

Regards
CT

PS: I've kept my 3 copies of the The Reykjavik Grapevine. They are cherished mementos of my time there.

Dear CT,

what? The Australians are schadenfreuding on us Icelanders now? That sucks. What did we ever do to them? It's not like we're oppressing an indigenous minority or anything.

Anyway, since you clearly oppose the offending reports, I trust that you'll defend our honour down under - hopefully you have a full-fledged letter writing and general image-mending campaign underway. Lord knows our elected officials ain't doing shit to defend our name.

Also, if you ever get bored of reading our three issues you have, rest assured that we post each new issue on-line, so you can keep on reading 'em. See you soon!

Dear Grapevine,

Just a quick note to let you know that your ongoing "History Of Icelandic Rock Music" series has become my favorite feature of your magazine now that "The Lonesome Traveler" series is no more. That is all. Carry on...

-John Evicci
Dracut, Massachusetts, USA

We're not gonna lie to you: we really love us some beers. Some folks would call it a problem, but beer never gave us any problems. In fact, over the years, it's solved most of 'em. A frosty glass of cold, frothy, bubblicious, golden-tinted beer has consistently failed to let us down. In the immortal words of Homer J. Simpson: "Mmm... Beer..."

Now, since we're real pleasant and giving folks here at the Grapevine, we thought we'd share some of that wonderful **FREYJA BEER** with you, our readers. Until the end of days (or our **FREYJA**-sponsorship program, whichever comes first), we will reward one **MOST EXCELLENT LETTER** with a case of the Freyja. You read right. A full case of Freyja. At your disposal. For drinking (and did we mention that Freyja is pretty much our favourite beer these days? Because it is. No lie!).



MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Dear Grapevine,

I am not much of a reader but I am in Borgarnes, iceland for the next six months on a basketball contract from Canada and since most of the stuff here is in Icelandic I didn't have to read that much but with so much free time on hand and surfing the web and using Google translate this past month I came across your news paper at the restaurant and thought to my self hmmm this is in English so as I read a page on night life in REYKJAVIK AND BEST PLACES TO HOOK UP AND WHERE THE GOOD LOOKING PEOPLE GO OR WHERE THE CHEAP DRINKS BARS OR FOREIGN BARS ARE I WAS LIKE THIS IS WHAT I NEEDED. and the way you write the paper and so simplified to our new way of speaking the language called English(esp the F word) i was excited. so now i pick your paper up every time its out and this one is my second one and then I cam across a story about this African Guy named momo dealing with immigration.

I mean i feel for the guy and hope that he renews his work permit and continues to work here in Iceland. I mean I am originally from Africa and now a Canadian citizen maybe like he said it would easier for me but I am pretty sure there are tons of immigrates from different places here in Iceland and i don't think one group would be isolated like that unless they are not following the rules. I don't know if some of the stuff he mentioned are true but it really made me feel for me. shit is tough out there and sometimes you have to try talking to different people in the same department to get your information right. and when you have tried different people that's when you can make a conclusion and say hey maybe because I am African that's why. I am not siding with the govt at all but i just think you just have to try a different person in there or find out more people who has gone through this and hope to find an answer and the main thing is that you get your work permit or resident papers and continue to do what you have to do to live up you life. shit is not good out there all around the world and we are all limited to do things and don't get me wrong I am here in Iceland because my situation wasn't the best in Canada but here I can actually slow down my mind and look around some of the incredible views from mountains, to the northern lights and enjoying the hot tubs after practice, and that gives me a better chance to envision where i want to be in the next few years. i mean the future holds the best for us.

now am running off topic or well I enjoy your paper and keep writing and now am all over your website this will fill my schedule here in this small city, BORGARNES.

keep writing.
SIL SMOO

Hey Sil,

we are happy to learn you find the Grapevine useful and enlightening, and it's cool you're enjoying your time in Borgarnes. It's a fine little town, for sure. Hopefully, you are also shooting some hoops, slamming some dunks and scoring points for your mighty team, Skallagrímur! As for your long-ass paragraph there in the middle, we'll be damned if we understand it. But you're cool - have some beer on us and the good folks of Ölvísholt.

Dear John,

(hah! A 'Dear John' letter!) thank you for voicing your appreciation of the rock history columns. They are among our favourite features, too. As for the Lonesome guy, Fabrizio, we're hoping he returns this summer. Those were some pretty great articles.

Hi,

just read almost half of the day the last couple of issues of your fine magazine and had to laugh out loud often. Your Kreppa analyses take my full attention. Having been living in Iceland for 2,5 years, now working again in Germany for funding my family and my house (both in Iceland) reading your magazine is refreshing and surprisingly most of your analysis reflects my own thinking. Since Oddson is in charge at Morgunbladid, a magazine like yours is utterly important. The only drawback I see is that you cannot pub-

lish daily. As Ferdinand Lasalle states: "Every political action begins with a statement about what is." Please continue and make statements about what is, but more often! You need subscribers? Here you are.

Daniel Schnell

Dear Daniel,

Thank you for your kind words. It's good to hear you're getting something out of the mag. Running daily would indeed be a lot of fun, and I am sure Iceland would do well with having a daily bearing our non-outlook (I often wonder if locals aged 20-35 don't need someone to speak on their behalf). But we've enough trouble doing it monthly (or every other week during the summer). Our ambitious prose and beautiful illustrations take FOREVER to produce. Hah.

As for subscription enquiries, you should e-mail subscribe@grapevine.is and we'll sort you out.

Hressingarskálinn

Hressingarskálinn (Hressö) is a Classical Bistro, located in the heart of the city at Austurstræti 20.

Food is served from 10 until 22 every day. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, after the kitchen closes Hressö heats up with live music. Weekends, DJs keep the party going until morning, with no cover charge.



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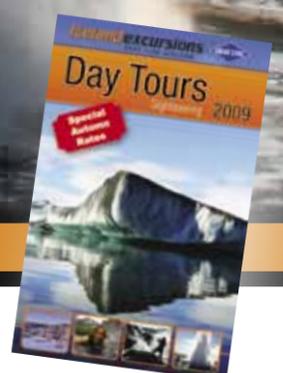
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A Window into Iceland's Soul

The National Assembly asks Iceland to lie down on the couch and share its feelings.

On November 14th, a total of 1,231 Icelanders gathered in the cavernous Laugardalshöll stadium, munched on snúðar and chatted over round tables, each one marked off by a white balloon. What felt like an immense family reunion was actually the first ever National Assembly, and instead of sharing grandma's recipes, attendees were burdened with a Herculean task: defining what type of society the whole of Iceland longs for.

Orchestrated by a group of organisers collectively known as the Anthill, the one day event was founded on the concept of 'the wisdom of the masses.' "No single ant has the same amount of wisdom as the entire anthill. This philosophy created the framework for the assembly," says Guðjón Már Guðjónsson, a business entrepreneur and one of the event's organisers. "Statistically, this is the voice of the country. This is Iceland."

STARTING A DEBATE

The organisers of the National Assembly claim to have no motive; their stated goal is to start a debate. "We do this because we love our society," says Haukur Ingi Jónasson, an organiser and lecturer at the University of Iceland's Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering. The Anthill's dream is make the National Assembly a cornerstone of the Parliament, or "to start every year with a National Assembly," as Guðjón put it.

Of the roughly 1,200 individuals who took part in this year's assembly (the target number was 1,500), most were chosen at random from the national registry, although roughly 300 were specially invited as representatives of municipal communities, the parliament, private enterprises and various political organisations. However, as soon as they entered the sta-

dium, organiser Marianna Friðjónsdóttir says, "they were all nothing but Icelanders." Participants were divided into nine person discussion teams, each headed by a hand-picked group leader whose role it was to maintain order and promote dialogue.

During the first part of the meeting, participants identified values and visions for the future of Iceland; during the second, members discussed the central pillars of Icelandic society, or 'themes.' Their goal was to find a way to apply the values defined in the first half of the day to the themes discussed in the second. During the numerous breaks between talks, attendees milled about leisurely, shuttled back and forth from the buffet table and did their best to avoid the substantial number of press people flown in to report on the event.

"No single ant has the same amount of wisdom as the entire anthill."

WHAT WE WANT

Conference results were posted online mere hours after the assembly closed thanks to a crack-team of data processors. The nine themes discussed during the conference—education, economy, equal rights, family, environment, public administration, welfare, sustainability and 'other'—yielded roughly one hundred recommendations for the nation's future.

Apart from a few notable requests ("Nature and resources to be owned by the Icelandic nation!"), the vast majority of suggestions skirted sensitive topics, opting for statements like "improve business ethics," "support for minorities," and "transparency." The four key values recognised by the conference—

integrity, equal rights, respect and justice—were equally diplomatic. Asked whether the discussion ever touched upon how to institute these changes, a young participant replied: "No, we mostly focused on what we want."

While the long-term effects of the conference remain to be seen—results are not scheduled for presentation before Parliament—the immediate payoffs were evident for anyone present during the assembly: teenagers, single mothers and elderly gentlemen huddled around tables discussing topics like education reform with grave seriousness; participants-turned-friends gathered for group photos; strangers discussed their nation's future over paper cups of meat soup. Smiles reigned as far as the eye could see. Despite the serious task at hand attendees were enjoying themselves and feeling empowered. "From the media you'd think that people are reluctant, don't want to participate, are negative and very angry. But you can't feel that today—everyone is positive and eager to take control," group leader Bjarney Harðardóttir commented over the crowd.

When asked whether any heated debates or major disagreements erupted, participants responded in the negative, pointing instead to the polite discussions sprinkled around the room. According to organiser Guðjón Guðjónsson, the only glitch of the whole conference came in the form of a paper jam in printer number four. An impressive feat of organisation, but not exactly what you'd expect to hear from 1,231 people struggling to define a nation in crisis. 🇮🇸

✍️ LOUISE PETERSSON, MICHAEL ZELENKO
📷 JULIA STAPLES

Nominal Values

Go to the ant, thou sluggard...



The recent National Assembly is a gift to the nation claim the organisers, who call themselves "The Anthill". The name refers to their guiding analogy: the theory that crowds—like ant colonies—possess wisdom, or "collective intelligence," that is inaccessible to individuals, unless it is extracted using the methodology of market research. The spokes-ants consistently reiterate this analogy, yet provide precious little concrete information. Nowhere do they explain the scientific basis of their guiding assumptions. They don't present a list of their foreign consultants (who, it seems, range from business consultants to pseudo-science (TM) mongers to theologians) or their credentials. And they don't demonstrate how exactly their ideology fits the current situation in Iceland. For a state-sponsored event meant to shape the country's future in the long term, this lack of information is worrying.

Do their assumptions hold up? Are crowds wise? There is some evidence for the affirmative in certain scenarios. Ask a diverse group of people to estimate, say, the weight of an ox. Chances are that the average will be much closer to the truth than most of the individual estimates. Threaten an anthill and it will shift to safety, with the average Joe Six-legs none the wiser.

Now give a nation the task of articulating its values and creating a future general policy for a whole country. Let's do it on Saturday, from 9 to 5. Done and done!

How does this scenario relate, even remotely, to the ant and ox analogies? In each case there is a problem to be solved. For us a national bankruptcy and the corruption that caused it. But was the Assembly supposed to define the problem or come up with practical solutions? No.

Though the organisers claim that one of their goals was to start a discussion, the Assembly itself was not set up to be a debate. Conflicts were actively avoided and general optimism celebrated.

Basically, like ants, we should not argue but express ourselves instinctively. Blink. Think without thinking. Let's generate a large jolt of positive energy and perhaps it will deliver us a perfect society, via the "Law of Attraction".

Neither are the individual aspects of the Assembly's implementation up for debate. Why, for instance, invite a handpicked group of "influential people" as participants instead of, say, as silent observers? Legitimate questions like this were not open for discussion but dismissed with clumsy excuses.

Anyway, assuming that there is such a thing as collective intelligence in the first place, why should this meeting reveal it any better than our democratic elections do? At the end of the day, the meticulously executed event boiled down to an elaborate, 20 million ISK opinion poll.

It's the economy a decline in the core value system in the cultural DNA, stupid!

Attitudes towards the meeting have been overwhelmingly positive. The government has now formally endorsed it. Participants described an uplifting atmosphere. Of course the nation most depressed (per capita) about the current Depression deserves eight hours worth of inspiration.

But the assembly organisers have been fairly criticized for producing nothing but slogans general enough to be useful only for political campaigns and marketing departments (even state church ministers immediately declared the results a clear call for Christian institutions).

Indeed, the real product of the assembly is a new narrative, a novel view of our navel. Icelanders like their answers chiselled down to a single

word. What happened to the economy? Simple: "Greed". What do we want instead? "Integrity". The answer, it turns out, was hiding in plain sight!

Value number 1: Optimism
In fact, this sort of simplicity is characteristic of the whole endeavour. The output, available online, amounts to 1) a list of abstract terms, our "values" and 2) "future visions", sentences of 20 words or less. The meeting didn't involve any attempt to establish a consensus on the meaning or implications of any of the terms.

Why do people like this? One suspects that many people just don't want to involve themselves in the messy analysis of what went wrong; they don't want to hear the complex and uncomfortable story, in particular when the discomfort has less to do with our spending habits than with our collective shortcomings as citizens of a democracy.

We want the problem to be something we don't like. That sort of stuff is easy to leave behind.

So we tell ourselves just what we want to hear. There is something called the Essential Nature of the Icelandic People. It is fundamentally benign, and if harnessed it will save us. We were momentarily seduced by alien forces like Greed. We forgot our true values. But now we've broken the spell and it is up to our "unique capabilities" to save us.

These are the views and terminology prevalent in testimonies and promotional material of the Assembly. What is jarring about this discourse is not only how nationalistic and naive it is but that it turns out to be identical to much of the dominant discourse before the "collapse". Then too the Icelandic Spirit, displayed in business practices, was evoked to explain our perceived prosperity. And then too criticism was resented and dismissed as sabotaging the good work of industrious optimists.

Making a mountain out of an anthill?

Now, supporters may feel this is too harsh. Even if no concrete proposals will come out of it, surely there is no direct harm in a little teambuilding over meat-soup.

But there is harm in an event that actively reinforces a mindset that contributed to our current situation, while pretending to eradicate it. In order to restore the preferred values we must first discover why they were absent before. If lack of integrity—corruption—is characteristic of a society this means that more than a few people were dishonest—by implication, more than a few Assembly attendees. And the only possible way to actually make integrity our society's guiding value is this: A lot of people must put themselves through the painful process of acknowledging and fixing the ways in which they lack integrity.

Could Iceland use a shift in values? Absolutely. But a rally like this isn't even a tiny step towards such a shift. Wanting society to prize a certain value simply has very little to do with practicing that value. Even the most dishonest among us want to live in a society that honours integrity.

So instead of the team-building maybe we would do good to practice whatever values we really have. Perhaps the spokes-ants themselves would like to go ahead and set a good example.

There is a bright side, however. A society that was truly desperate would presumably have better things to do than compiling a wish list—just in time for Christmas—without a thought for the cost at which their demands can be met. They would act first and discover their unique capabilities later. 🇮🇸

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Article | Gender Equality



Who's Got The Power?

Gender and power in the Nordic countries

While gender equality is progressing within Nordic politics, one problem that has not been solved is the lack of women in top positions within business and industry.

In order to identify the greatest challenges relating to gender equality within politics and business, the Nordic Gender Institute carried out a one year research project in the Nordic countries entitled Gender and Power. The results were recently presented at a conference in Reykjavík and the Grapevine was there to peruse the findings.

EQUALITY SUCCESS!

The study is based on the assumption that a balanced representation of gender runs on the 40%–60% scale. "One of the most important findings of the research is that it is almost always women that are close to 40% on the scale. Men, meanwhile, seem to more often dominate at 60% representation. So we have to discuss if this really is gender balance," says Kirsti Niskanen, head of research at the Nordic Gender Institute, in an interview after the conference.

Either way, the 40–60% target has been reached in the parliaments of Finland, Iceland and Sweden. In Denmark and Norway, women account for just under 40%. "Parliamentary politics can be described as an equality success for all the Nordic countries," says Niskanen.

In Iceland there has been a significant increase in Alþingi's representation of women since the mid-1990s—from 25% to 43%. "Iceland has made progress in this area. The country has almost always lagged behind, but is now catching up," Niskanen explains.

The Nordic governments are in general relatively gender-balanced. After the

2009 elections, there is a 50–50% representation in the Icelandic government. Finland alone has a government dominated by women with 60% representation. Like Iceland, it's 50–50 in Norway and in Sweden; in Denmark women account for just over 40% in government.

IT AIN'T ALL GOOD

The situation isn't as good in the municipal field. "It is much more unequal on the municipal level," says Niskanen. Only Sweden, with 42% women, can be said to have achieved gender balance at local level. On average, women amount to 36% of Icelandic municipal governments, while only one in four Danish local politicians is a woman.

Kirsti Niskanen explains that greater gender balance is found in areas that are highly visible. Equality is not monitored so closely at local authority level, therefore the representation of women is worse here. "One of our findings is that in areas where there is a constant discussion on gender equality issues, we have 40–60% women, as it is in parliamentary politics. But areas where there is no discussion or debate about gender equality are often strongly male dominated."

IT'S A MAN'S WORLD

The positive trends in politics are not reflected in the fields of business and industry—they remain extremely male dominated in all the Nordic countries. The proportion of women on the boards of private companies ranges from 7 to 36%, with Iceland at 7% and Norway topping the range at 36%. Public corporations are more gender-balanced, since they are generally directly influenced by equality laws and regulations.

"It looks rather dreary regarding gen-

der equality within the business sector in Iceland" said Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir, sociology professor at the University of Iceland, at the conference. "We need legislation to increase the amount of women in top positions."

The Icelandic gender equality legislation from 1985 states there should be a proportion of 40–60% from each gender in state-owned committees, councils and boards. According to Rafnsdóttir there is still a gender bias within private companies and organisations that are not subject to the legislation.

"If companies can't present equal boards of directors after the shareholders' meetings next spring, we will have to introduce a quota legislation resembling the one in Norway," Minister of Social Affairs Árni Páll Arnason said at the opening of the conference.

Iceland could therefore become the second Nordic country to introduce gender quotas in companies' board of directors. The Norwegian parliament instated such a law in 2003. It requires boards to be at least 40% female. This has led to the proportion of women on the boards of private companies in Norway rising from 9% in 2004 to 36% in 2009.

WHAT TO DO?

So why is there greater equality in politics than business? Pressure from the women's movement and the fact that gender equality issues have always been lively debated in politics has been crucial, according to Niskanen. Political parties also play a key role in the development of political representation, since they nominate the candidates the voters can vote to office. Lastly, legislation that has prescribed gender balanced representation in state-owned sectors has also had effect.

"There must be a greater demand for women leaders in the business sector to improve gender equality. In politics there is a demand, we want female politicians on high levels. We are just not there in the world of business yet," says Niskanen.

Some say quotas are the solution to equality problems, some say they are not. Within the realm of public discourse, quotas are often controversial and create a very lively debate. "Our results indicate that quotas are not the universal solution, but we do see that quotas are an effective door opener. Quotas must, like any other equality measure, be understood, analyzed and discussed in a social, political and cultural context. Our wish is simply that the findings of this project will be a platform for discussion and an inspiration for policy makers." ❧

✍ LOUISE PETERSSON
📧 JULIA STAPLES

Article | Foreign Relations

The Case of the Missing Ambassador

Are Iceland and the US bickering like a couple of schoolgirls?



Without a sitting ambassador the halls of the US Embassy in Reykjavík aren't as glamorous as they once were; the light doesn't reflect as brilliantly off the windows and even the guard's smile seems a bit wan. It's been six months since Carol von Voorst quit her post and the extended ambassadorial absence hasn't gone unnoticed—instead, it has fuelled an intricate rumour in which Iceland and the US have been squabbling since January; a rumour centred around a diplomatic misstep known as the Order of the Falcon incident.

The Order of the Falcon incident started out innocently enough: On April 8, 2009 the office of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson announced to the then US Ambassador van Voorst that she was being awarded the Order of the Falcon, the highest recognition of the Icelandic state. During her drive to the ceremony, however, van Voorst received a surprising phone call. There had been a clerical mistake—a mix-up of sorts: van Voorst wasn't being awarded anything at all. She was, however, invited to proceed to the ceremony regardless. Van Voorst drove on. President Grímsson later added insult to injury while trying to explain the confusion when he clarified to van Voorst that the Order was only awarded to those who were deemed worthy.

While this much of the story is verifiably true—Kastljós and The Iceland Review were among those to report on it—online and word of mouth gossip allege that the mishap was a calculated snub; a diplomatic slap in the face by the Icelandic government in return for not receiving a presidential invitation to Obama's inauguration ceremony earlier that year. After the Order of the Falcon fiasco, the theory goes, the US government decided to return the insult by withdrawing its ambassador indefinitely.

Kathy Eagan, the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission and the Public Affairs Officer of the US embassy, refutes the rumour entirely. Ambassadors are appointed by the President of the United States, which means that during election years all ambassadors are obligated to offer a letter of resignation. As soon as an ambassador resigns, the process of finding their replacement begins. Nominees work their way up through the State Department before being handpicked by the White House. The White House then sends the candidate's resume to the receiving government for a separate approval process. Once the

foreign government agrees, the White House declares its nominee and sends them through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where they face a Senate vote. It's only after the Senate consents that a nominee can properly call him or herself an ambassador.

Connan, the ambassadorial barbarian

Carol van Voorst was assigned a standard three-year appointment as the US ambassador to Iceland in January of 2006. Although her time was up in January 2009, van Voorst extended her stay until April 30, long enough to endure the Order of the Falcon affair. Sometime in May, Eagan says, the US embassy in Iceland was informed that the Department of State had launched a selection process for a new ambassador. News soon surfaced that President Obama had chosen a nominee: a certain Robert S. Connan. Reykjavík vetted the candidate and signalled their approval. Then, shortly before his approval before the US Senate, Connan declined the ambassadorship for personal reasons.

The selection process was re-launched. Hustling an ambassador through the process can take months; in an election year with so many new appointees, the process takes longer still.

"We don't just want a body, we want the right person," Eagan says. The internal and post-White House processes can take 3–5 months each, she says. In the meantime Eagan assures that the embassy continues to function smoothly.

"There is nothing unusual in this situation. Twenty-two posts around the world are currently without an ambassador. We once went for a year without an ambassador in Australia."

The US relationship, Eagan insists, is as strong as ever. And as for the missing invitation?

"All sitting ambassadors and their spouses in Washington DC were invited to the inauguration. That's the way it's usually done and that's the way it was done this time." ❧

✍ MICHAEL ZELENKO



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OUR MURDEROUS FENCES

In twenty years, Iceland has granted four persons asylum—out of 500 applicants. Under ten percent of asylum claims are solved with a residence permit for humanitarian reasons. The rest are declined. In comparison, Denmark solves 45% of its claims by providing asylum or residence permit.

Authorities refer to the European Dublin II regulation as the basis for their deadly deportation policy. The fact is no country rejects asylum claims as brutally as Iceland—except Greece.

BY HAUKUR MÁR HELGASON



Athens, city center, October 2009. In the church square *Aghios Pantaleimonas* some 300 people have gathered for an anti-racist concert, reclaiming the square occupied by fascists earlier in the year. The fascist gangs stabbed and injured immigrants who dared show up. They also beat up a priest for showing sympathy to the foreigners. In June 2009, “anarchists and people in solidarity unlocked the playground at *Aghios Pantaleimonas*, which had been sealed so as not to be used by the children of immigrant residents” and were eventually gassed by the police.¹ One man who brought his child to the playground was arrested for refusing to leave, allegedly “to protect him from the fascists” who menaced the protestors from behind the police squads.

The anti-racist concert at the end of October felt as peaceful as life inside a condensed gas container—riot-police squads stayed ready on every street corner in a kilometre’s radius from the square. It was not far from here where a 15 year old activist was shot dead by police during demonstrations in December of 2008, sparking riots all around Greece. The police remained neutral this time, however, arresting young men ready with clubs and racist intentions already at noon. Activists were bewildered, hopeful that it might signal a change in policy after a left-wing government took office in early October. But only moderately hopeful. “With their tanks and their bombs, and their bombs and their guns, in your head, in your head, they are crying...” —the Cranberries’ *Zombie* was blasted in between acts, a song that never before had sent shivers down my spine.

POLITICS IN THE STREET

Greek politics take place on the street: the fascists are actual fascists, they go around in herds and beat up immigrants. Many of them vote for the Popular Orthodox Rally, which gathered more than 7% support and two seats in the 2009 election for the European Parliament. More are openly supportive of violence; however, it is the minor 0.5% ‘Golden Dawn’ party, which describes itself as

“uncompromisingly nationalist.” Links between active members and the police are not only witnessed by activists, but acknowledged by ministers as a problem.² The current left-wing government consists of a large social-democrat party, the Communist Party, Coalition of the Radical Left and the Ecologist Green party.³ The matter of division which unites various left-wing forces and anarchists against fascists, right-wing and central-right parties, and frequently against the police, is immigration.

In the first half of 2009, 140 thousand people applied for asylum in European countries.⁴ Nearly half first arrive in Greece.⁵ The *Dublin II* regulation, fully implemented in 2006, allows member-states of the Schengen-zone to transfer asylum seekers to the country they first arrived in within the zone. Some states, such as Iceland, apply this clause to transfer people back whenever possible, making it hard for any asylum seeker who sets foot in Greece to get any further. Since the pressure this creates on border states was fully foreseeable, Greece is subsidized by the EU to process these cases and provide people with shelter. The money, however, seems to go towards something else.

Local activists and the immigrants on whose behalf they fight are to a large extent separate communities. The situation of many immigrants is too precarious for most of them to take an active part in the struggle. Yet ties between the groups are created through language courses and other initiatives within the city’s social centres, hangouts created by activists, most dense in *Exarkheia*, a neighbourhood populated by immigrants and activist movements. Next to *Exarkheia* lies *Omonia*, home to many irregular, paperless immigrants who sleep on the street or share accommodation for as cheap as possible. “I know of a house where fifty people sleep in one room, on three eight hour shifts through every 24 hours,” one source tells me. “It’s not that unusual.”

The police presence in these two neighbourhoods is overwhelming—the days I was there, police hardly ever left my field of vision. Literally. “They say they’re fighting crime, but they’re mainly suppressing the activism.”



IRAQ—ICELAND

I am here to meet Nour Aldin Alazzawi, a 19 year old Iraqi who first arrived in Greece by boat in 2006, with his mother and sister. Just like his father, a translator, Nour worked for the US forces in Iraq.

In 2006 members of the *Sahwa* movement⁶ killed Nour’s father for supporting the US. Shortly afterwards Nour was kidnapped by another group, but was spared as they collected a \$12,000 ransom from his mother. After these incidents, Nour’s mother decided the family would emigrate. Nour was 16 when they went to Syria, where a total of 1.2 million displaced Iraqis currently reside.⁷ His mother remains there, but in 2007 Nour travelled, with his brother and younger sister through Turkey to Greece. “I always wanted to go to Europe, since I was a child,” Nour tells me. “To live a simple and peaceful life. But when we arrived the Greek police caught us and took our fingerprints.” Part of the *Dublin II* system is a fingerprint database common to the member-states of Schengen, monitoring the travels of paperless immigrants.

The siblings intended to reunite with their oldest brother, who lives in Belgium. They travelled to Belgium and filed an application for asylum. The fingerprints database, however, did its job and the three were ‘Dublinned’ back to Greece. Back on the street in Athens, Nour’s sister went back to their mother in Syria, while the young men went on looking for more permanent shelter.

“I decided to go to Canada,” says Nour, “because they lie outside

Schengen and don’t have my fingerprints.” Nour travelled by train, on the required false passport, to Norway. From Norway he booked a flight to Canada, with transit in Iceland. In August of 2008, Icelandic border patrol caught him. “The police discovered I had a false passport. They put me in a camp,”—Fit Hostel, in *Njarðvík*—where Icelandic authorities offer asylum seekers accommodation, close to the airport, far away from city life.

“The camp was not good. I had nothing to do but sleep. But my mother told me: if you want something you must wait and you must fight. So I waited. In March of 2009, the police picked me up and said they would ship me back to Greece. In the middle of the night, they changed their mind again. I don’t know why.” In fact, on many fronts people were putting pressure on the recently elected socialist government to change Iceland’s deportation policy. The Red Cross urged that asylum seekers would not be transferred to Greece in the name of the *Dublin II* regulation.⁸ “So we remained in Iceland and this time I expected to stay there still. I started learning the language.”

“Then I found a job and applied for a work permit. And they gave me a six month work permit”— valid till the end of 2009. As Nour got work in two different cafés, he moved to the Reykjavík city centre. In the collectivist enterprise *Café Hljómalið*, Nour established close relations to many people. “Then in October, I got a negative answer from the Minister of Justice. I asked my lawyer why. She

said: the reason is you don’t have any relation to Iceland, no friends, no work and you don’t speak Icelandic. But it’s not true! The only thing that makes me stay in Iceland is the good people there, the friends that I have now. There are many people who love me and I love them.

Two or three weeks later, the police called me where I was in my apartment and they told me: We are down by the door and want to speak with you. Please come and open up for us. I opened the door, and one of them told me: “Time to go.” I said: ‘Are you joking? Go where?’ — ‘Time to go back to Greece.’ ‘No way!’ I said. After all this time, one year and two months in Iceland, they will send me back to Greece! Why? They replied: ‘Because Greece accepts you and will open your case. They will do everything for you.’ And I said: ‘No. It’s not true. They’ll say anything but they do nothing.’”

DEPORTATION

The officers told Nour to go upstairs and pack his stuff. “I said ‘OK, but I want to call my lawyer, my girlfriend, or my friends, to tell them I would be deported, and say goodbye.’ And they told me: ‘No no, just pack your stuff and later you can call whoever you want.’ I said OK. They did not let me take my things. I had a television, table, computer and a bed. I could not even take all my clothes. They would not let me take my salary from my workplace. They told me that I would take my salary later.”





"I put my clothes in the bag, then they took me directly to the police station. I protested and asked to make phone calls again, and take my salary—I didn't have any money! They kept saying: 'later, later.' After five minutes in the police station, they took me to the airport where I stayed the whole night. They deported me at six AM the next day. I had some Icelandic money on me and they did not let me change it in the airport. And still no phone calls."

Four police officers escorted Nour and the two others being deported through their flight. "In Greece I was put in prison for one night." Then Nour was interviewed, a required formality. "They gave me a piece of paper with a small empty space to fill, and told me: 'You have to describe your situation and why you want to seek asylum here.' The space was too small to write my full family name in it. I laughed: 'Write my problems here? How?' They said: 'Just write whatever you want, just write something, in your language.' So I wrote, in Arabic: 'I do not seek asylum in Greece.' I signed it and gave them the paper. OK, you are free, they then said. With no papers to prove my identity, nothing. I asked: 'How am I free? I have no place to go.' 'It's like that,' they said. 'You want to go free or you want to stay in jail?'"

Nour was left in the streets of Athens with Icelandic currency in his pocket. "I tried to change it at the airport but they were not allowed to accept Icelandic money because of the crisis. So I'm at the airport and can't even go to the city centre. What should I do there anyway? Then I remembered

a Greek I met in Iceland. I called him, he came to the airport and took me to his house." Nour stayed there for one night. "Then he left Greece so I couldn't stay there longer. So I was in the street again. I don't know, it's really hard to speak about; I don't want to think about it. I'm still thinking positive. I will never give up."

IGNORED TO DEATH

Nour brings me to a tent outside Parliament, home to five men collectively on hunger strike. They represent a group of fifteen people: Iraqi, Iranian, and Afghan. They all carry UN refugee cards as former members of PMOI, M for Mujahedin. Western media sometimes called them freedom fighters, but they are now considered a terrorist organisation by the US. Since 2001, their struggle for free elections and gender equality in Iran is supposedly non-violent. It is strange to weigh these fragile figures, exhausted and skinny, against the idea of Mujahedin fighters. As ex-members their situation is extremely precarious, they explain to me, because not only would the Iranian government and Kurdish forces like to see them dead, but the PMOI as well. In Greece you may add fascists and police to their threats.

One of them shows me pictures of serious head injuries he suffered from police when caught on an Athens bus with no ticket. "Three of us are gone. We don't know what happened to them, if they left or were kidnapped or

killed—disappeared, that's all." Greek bureaucracy seems unaffected by UN acknowledgement of their refugee status, which they all have certificates for. One of them shows me a picture of himself 40 kg. heavier—a full-blown carpenter. He's all skin and bones now. Another, a professional mechanic, suffers an eye infection that gets worse the longer he sleeps in gardens, and is nearly blind. "You are a refugee, go away asshole," a Greek doctor told him the last time he sought help. "Some of us did not see our family for twenty years," they tell me. One managed to get to Bulgaria but was transferred back. "Give me a white card," he asks Greek authorities, "so I can save my life, get away, when someone tries to kill me."

In an industrial suburb a few kilometres away from the centre we find the Directorate of Immigration. Cars are parked by the wall around the office building, and the hundred men who spent the night in the parking spaces now stand by the gate, waiting. The guard by the gate holds an automatic rifle in his hand, finger by the trigger, and hurls obscenities at those who approach him. The men are here to get stamps on papers. During the hour we spend there, no one is let through. They have to show up again and again. Since they have no money, and no legal access to transportation, and being caught on a bus with poses a real danger to immigrants, they sleep by the gate, in relative safety.

"NOTHING WRONG"

Icelandic authorities repeatedly claim that there is "nothing wrong" with Dublin transfers to Greece. The following disagree: UNHCR 'advises Governments to refrain from returning asylum-seekers to Greece under the Dublin Regulation until further notice'¹⁰. The Red Cross highlights that recent regulation changes mean 'the vast majority of asylum seekers might not have the substance of their claims examined'¹¹. Human Rights Watch express worries about 'the harsh and demeaning conditions in which detained migrants are often held'¹². Amnesty International gathers that 'ill-treatment by police of detainees, particularly migrants and members of marginalized groups, was reported throughout the year' in 2009¹³. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 'reiterate that the conditions of detention of the vast majority of irregular migrants deprived of their liberty in Greece remain unacceptable' and that they 'run a considerable risk of being ill-treated by law enforcement officials'¹⁴. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reports¹⁵ that as at June 2008, the 11,273 cases examined both at first instance and on appeal resulted in 61 persons being recognized as refugees and 10 receiving humanitarian status'. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles called for the suspension of Dublin Transfers to Greece, in April 2008. Norway had then already decided not to transfer asylum seekers there, and Germany not to do so in cases of children or vulnerable people. On July 20, 2009 a court in Frankfurt, Germany, cancelled a deportation to Greece due to unfair processes there.¹⁶ A Dutch court reached the same conclusion in 2008¹⁷. And in autumn 2009, the German Constitutional Court ruled against deportation to Greece in two separate, exemplary cases.¹⁸

When the supposedly left-wing government in Iceland committed their first Dublin transfer, in October 2009, one of four deportees, Wali Safi, managed to escape from police. He went into hiding long enough for the European Court to intervene and request that Icelandic authorities cancel the deportation and take his application into consideration. Still, Iceland maintains that there is nothing wrong with these transfers.

Mohammad Askarpour, from Iran, stayed in prison for a month after the October deportations, and is now on the street in Athens while appealing in Iceland. Henry Turay, from Sierra Leone, is currently hiding from Icelandic police for the same reason as Wali Safi did, fearing for his life. Mohammad Jabar, deported in October, is back in Iraq, finding war-ridden Iraq preferable to bare life in foreign streets.

AS TRASH

The Dublin II regulation is part of Europe's collective effort to make itself a gated community, and outrageous on its own. Statistically, however, no country implements it as ruthlessly as Iceland. In 2006-2008 10% of asylum claims in Iceland receive a positive outcome, 15 of 154 applicants.¹⁹

In 2008 the ratio was 45% in Denmark, 40% in Finland, in France 30%, Germany 38% – in Sweden 21% of a total 42 thousand applicants.²⁰

Iceland's asylum policy has never been stated in the political arena, but silently left to bureaucratic implementation. Accordingly, during the latest deportations, no minister defended them publicly, but merely apologized for them as being 'not illegal'. The policy amounts to treating humans as trash. Mass-murder would be misleading, for death is never

a certain outcome of deportations. People are systematically removed, like you take out the trash, and left in a place outside civil rights. 'Disappeared'. Whether they will then be burned, buried or recycled is supposedly nobody's business.

Nour Aldin has been given a temporary residency and work permit in Iceland. Many people fight on his behalf, and still as this is written, Nour has been stuck in Athens for six weeks, waiting for a signed letter, waiting for his passport, waiting for a visa, waiting, waiting ...

Hopefully his wait will soon be over. A temporary permit, however, is not the end of this brave young man's Odyssey, and certainly not the end of the scandal: Iceland quietly sustains an outright murderous policy towards asylum seekers that must be brought to an end. ✂

Many thanks to Olga Laf, Giorgas Pittas and Nour Aldin Alazzawi for their help in writing this article.



FOOTNOTES

- ¹ 'Clashes and arrests ...' <http://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2009/06/10/clashes-and-arrests-around-the-aghios-panteleimonas-neighborhood-in-athens/>
- ² 'Chrysi Avyi' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hrisi_Avyi
- ³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Greece for a detailed list of Greek political parties
- ⁴ For detailed information, see: Asylum Levels and Trends ... UNHCR 2009. <http://www.unhcr.org/4adebca49.html>
- ⁵ Nick Squires and Paul Anast. 'Greek immigration crisis ...' in The Daily Telegraph. Sept 7 2009. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/greece/6147072/Greek-immigration-crisis-spawns-shanty-towns-and-squats.html>
- ⁶ Established in 2005 on U.S. payroll to establish security in certain areas, but then turned against the coalition forces and the government.
- ⁷ Iraqi refugees fear expulsion from Syria' in The National. September 3, 2009. <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090904/FOREIGN/709039884/1011/NEWS>. See also: 'Iraqi Refugees International. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work/middle-east/iraq>
- ⁸ 'Rauði krossinn ítrekar ...' April 8, 2009. <http://redcross.is/Apps/WebObjects/RedCross.woa/wa/dp?id=1000727&detail=1014239>
- ⁹ The hunger strike started on October 19th and was still ongoing November 26th. See <http://iranianrefugeesfromfrontip.blogspot.com/> (Greek).
- ¹⁰ UNHCR Position on the Return of Asylum-Seekers to Greece ... April 15 2008. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/nmain?docid=4805bde42>
- ¹¹ 'The situation of persons returned by Austria to Greece ...' http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country_AUT_RC_AFG4562d8cf2_4a93fbbf2_0.html
- ¹² No Refugee – Migrants in Greece. Human Rights Watch, 2009.
- ¹³ Amnesty International Report 2009 - Greece' http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country_GRC_4a1fade846_0.html
- ¹⁴ Report to the Government of Greece ... September 2008: <http://www.cpt.ce.int/documents/grc/2009-20-inf-eng.htm>
- ¹⁵ 'ECRI Report on Greece'. Published on 15 September 2009. <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/GRC-CbC-IV-2009-031-ENG.pdf>
- ¹⁶ See for example: Kaveh P. 'A ray of hope' in The Atlantic Times. http://www.atlantic-times.com/archive_detail.php?recordID=1895.
- ¹⁷ See for example: 'Don't send asylum seekers back to Greece: Dutch court' <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1215445622.82>
- ¹⁸ For example: 'German court ruling a severe blow for Greece' Sept. 11 2009. http://www.eurotopics.net/en/dienste/medienindex/media_articles/archiv_article/ARTICLE57497-German-court-ruling-a-severe-blow-for-Greece
- ¹⁹ See the 2009 Governmental Report: http://www.domsmalaraduneyti.is/media/Skyrslur/Skyrsla_nefndar_um_medferd_haelisumsokna.pdf - chapter 6.
- ²⁰ And that's not being really fair to Cyprus, which in cases of Iraq refugees had a 90% acceptance rate in 2008, a figure certainly far away from Iceland's, but, must be noted, probably ignores Dublin transfers – that is measures only the outcome of cases taken for substantial consideration. See ECRE's report on Iraqi refugees here http://www.cir-onlus.org/ECRE-RI-CERCA_IRAQ.pdf. Globally the positive recognition rate of asylum claims was 45% in 2007, rising from 38% in 2006. See the UNHCR 2007 Yearbook: <http://www.unhcr.org/4981c37c2.html>.



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MUSIC

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How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed
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4 FRI

- Bakkus**
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri.
- B5**
22:00 Live DJs.
- Bar 11**
22:00 DJ Biggi Maus.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Sigríður Thorlacius and band.
- Celtic Cross**
01:00 Live Music.
- Cultura**
22:00 House DJs.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
23:00 Live Music with Raggi Troubadour.
- Hemmi & Valdi**
22:00 Local DJs.
- Hressó**
22:00 Penta, DJ Elli.
- Kaffibarinn**
23:45 Rasulala (live) and Alfons X.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
- Prikið**
21:00 Happy hour with DJ Árni Kocoon.
- Sódóma**
22:00 Dikta, XIII, Cliff Clavin, The 59'ers.
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 Live DJs.

5 SAT

- Bakkus**
23:59 DJ Maggi Lego.
- B5**
22:00 Live DJs.
- Bar 11**
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Joanne Kearney and band.
- Celtic Cross**
01:00 Live Music.
- Cultura**
22:00 House DJs.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
23:00 Troubadours Magnús and Hlynur.
- Hafnarborg (Hafnarfjörður)**
10:00 Christmas songs. Choirs will perform all day long.
- Hemmi & Valdi**
22:00 Local DJs.
- Hressó**
22:00 DJ Bjarni, live music.
- Kaffibarinn**
23:45 DJ Margeir rings in Kaffibarinn's 16th birthday party.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe.
- Sódóma**
22:00 Duplex #2: Bloodgroup, Agent Fresco, Morðingjarnir, Útidúr, Mikado, Lára, Koi, Me The Slumbering Napoleon, Pascal Pinon.
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 Live DJs.

6 SUN

- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Forlagið book readings and concert.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
22:00 Live Music.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 Movie Night.
- Prikið**
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents Gremlins, with free pop corn.
- Salurinn (Kópavogur)**
15:00 Ljótu Hálfvitarnir performs.

7 MON

- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Blúsfélag Reykjavíkur.

- English Pub**
22:00 Garðar Troubadour.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
- Prikið**
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2 glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

8 TUE

- Bakkus**
23:59 DJ Flugvél og geimskip.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Christmas concert: Helgi Möller and band.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
22:00 Garðar Troubadour.
- Hitt Húsið**
19:00 Unrestrained.
- Prikið**
21:00 Jólaglögg (Christmas wine) and ginger cookies with DJ Gauti

9 WED

- Bakkus**
21:00 Film Night: Sigtryggur presents: "Ulrich Seidi" short documentaries.
- 23:59 DJ Arnljótur.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 South River Band.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
22:00 Human Jukebox with Raggi Troubadour.
- Prikið**
21:00 DJ Hússins.

10 THU

- B5**
21:00 Live Music.
- Bakkus**
23:59 DJ Einar Sonic.
- Bar 11**
22:00 Kreppa Nights with live music. Beer and shots for 400ISK.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Tómas R. Einarsson and Cuban band.
- Cultura**
22:00 House DJs.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
20:00 Football Pub Quiz.
22:00 Live music.
- Hafnarhúsið**
20:00 47th Ann Arbor Film Festival Touring Program: Experimental films in cooperation with Kíno Klúbbur.
- Hressó**
22:00 Gummi úr Sálinni, Richard Scobie.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490 ISK.
- Prikið**
22:00 Large beers for 1,000 ISK and DJ Moonshine.
- Sódóma**
22:00 Eldhúspartý FM957.
- Thorvaldsen**
20:30 Salsa & Mojito night. Free salsa lessons and mojitos for 1000ISK.

11 FRI

- Bakkus**
23:59 DJ Öfull.
- B5**
22:00 Live DJs.
- Bar 11**
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Fancy Toy's.
- Celtic Cross**
01:00 Live Music.
- Cultura**
22:00 House DJs.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
23:00 Raggi Troubadour.
- Hemmi & Valdi**
22:00 Local DJs.
- Hressó**
22:00 Silfur, DJ Bjarni.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
- Prikið**
22:00 Lára and the Cocktail Band, Addi Intro.
- Sódóma**
22:00 Hjaltalín and Snorri Helgason.
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 Live DJs.

12 SAT

- Bakkus**
23:59 DJ Benson is FANTASTIC!
- B5**
22:00 Live DJs.
- Bar 11**
22:00 DJ Biggi Maus.
- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Fancy Toy's.
- Celtic Cross**
01:00 Live Music.
- Cultura**
22:00 House DJs.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
23:00 Raggi Troubadour.
- Hemmi & Valdi**
22:00 Local DJs.
- Hressó**
22:00 DJ Bjarni, live music.
- Kaffibarinn**
23:45 Alfons X DJs.
- NASA**
00:00 Sálín hans Jóns míns.
- Prikið**
22:00 Danni Visa.
- Sódóma**
22:00 Kimi Records: Kimono, Morðingjarnir, Retrön, Sudden Weather Change, Me The Slumbering Napoleon.
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 Live DJs.

13 SUN

- Café Rósenberg**
22:00 Jagúar.
- Dubliner**
22:30 Live Music.
- English Pub**
22:00 Live Music.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 Movie Night.

Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5 D3	Dubliner Hafnarstræti 4 D3	Nýlenduvörurverzlun Hemma & Valda Laugavegur 21 F5
Apótek Austurstræti 16 E3	English Pub Austurstræti 12 E3	Næsti Bar Ingólfstræti 1A E5
B5 Bankastræti 5 E4	Glaumar Tryggvagata 20 D3	Óliver Laugavegur 20A F5
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22 F5	Grand Rökk Smiðjustígur E5	Ölstofan Vegamótastígur F5
Batteri Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3	Highlander Lækjargata 10 F3	Prikið Bankastræti F5
Bar 11 Laugavegur 11 E5	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E4	Rósenberg Klapparstígur 25 F6
Barbara Laugavegur 22 F6	Hverfisbarinn Hverfisgata 20 E5	Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3
Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20 E4	Jacobsen Austurstræti 9 E3	Sólón Bankastræti 7A E4
Boston Laugavegur 28b F6	Kaffi Hljómáland Laugavegur 23 F6	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 E3
Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E5	Kaffi Zimsen Hafnarstræti 18 E4	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 F5
Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Kaffibarinn Bergstradastræti 1 F5	
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3	Karamba Laugavegur 22 F6	
Celtic Cross Hverfisgata 26 E5	London/Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3	
Dillon Laugavegur 30 F6	NASA Þorvaldsenstræti 2 E3	

Prikið
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents Home Alone.

14 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Þrjá Raddin and Bítur.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Garðar Troubadour.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2 glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

15 TUE

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
English Pub
22:00 Garðar Troubadour.
Prikið
21:00 Jólaglögg (Christmas wine) and ginger cookies with DJ Gauti

16 WED

Bakkus
21:00 Film Night: "Einnimánaskin."
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Human Jukebox with Raggi Troubadour.
Hafnarborg (Hafnarfjörður)
20:00 The soprano trio Hörn Hrafnadóttir of Margrét Guðmundsdóttir and Svana Berglind Karlsdóttir perform Christmas songs.
Prikið
22:00 Dóri DNA.
Sódóma
22:00 Record Records Christmas Concert.

17 THU

B5
21:00 Live Music.
Bakkus
23:59 DJ Laufey, Kántry Kvöld.
Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Nights with live music. Beer and shots for 400ISK.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Raggi Troubadour.
Hrésso
22:00 Troubadour Böldi and Davið.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 DJ Alfons X.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490ISK.
Prikið
22:00 Árni úr Járn.
Sódóma
22:00 Lights On The Highway, Our Lives, The Viking Giant Show.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Mojito Night. Mojitos for 1000ISK and beer for 500ISK.

18 FRI

B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 DJ Matti.
Bakkus
23:59 DJ Ívar Pétur
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hrésso
22:00 Ímýnd, DJ Elli.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Gísli Galdur & B Ruff.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
NASA
00:00 University exam party.
Prikið
22:00 Búðarbandið, Danni De-luxxee.
Sódóma
22:00 X-MAS Concert X-id 97.7.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

19 SAT

B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 DJ Biggi Maus.
Bakkus
23:59 DJ Unnur Andrea.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hitt Húsið
14:00 Christmas Market until 18:00.
Hrésso
22:00 Menn Ársins, DJ Bjarni.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Már & Nielsen: Dansa Meira
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00
NASA
00:00 Yearly NASA Christmas porridge party.
Prikið
22:00 Introbeats and Kocoon.
Sódóma
22:00 "Stones" - Rolling Stones Tribute.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

20 SUN

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Raggi.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live Music.
Prikið
23:00 Christmas Hangover Cinema presents Die Hard. Bruce Willis shakes on sale for 500 ISK.

21 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Christmas Concert.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Raggi Troubadour.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.

22 TUE

Café Rósenberg
22:00 DIENA concert.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live Music.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2 glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

23 WED

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Women's Gospel Choir.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Gummi Jóns from Sálín.
Hrésso
22:00 X-mas Böddi and Davið live.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 DJ Höfðingj.
NASA
00:00 Stebbi and Eyfi.
Prikið
21:00. Danni.
Sódóma
22:00 KK, Maggi Eiríks, Buff and Jólagestir.

24 THU

B5
21:00 Live Music.
Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Nights with live music. Beer and shots for 400ISK.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
Open all day!
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490 ISK.

25 FRI

B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
20:00 Open all day with live music with Raggi Troubadour.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

26 SAT

B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 DJ Biggi Maus.
Bakkus
23:59 DJ Kári.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
20:00 Open all day with live music with Raggi Troubadour.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hrésso
22:00 Dalton, DJ Fannar.
Kaffibarinn
15:00 Open until 05:00.
NASA
00:00 Pál Óskar Disco Night.
Prikið
22:00. B-Ruff, Gísli Galdur and 4decki.
Sódóma
22:00 Kölski: Dikta, Our Lives + more.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

27 SUN

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Bóka Upplestur and Ljóa.
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Raggi.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Prikið
23:00 Christmas Hangover Cinema presents National Lampoons: Christmas Vacation.

28 MON

Bakkus
22:00 AMJF listening party.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Trúbatrixur.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2 glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

29 TUE

Café Rósenberg
22:00. Christmas concert.
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live Music.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Duncan McKnight (The Virgin Tongues) DJ set.
Prikið
21:00 Fight Night: watch the MMA, UFC, and BJJ on the big screen.
Sódóma
22:00 The Carrier (USA), Gavin Portland.

30 WED

Bakkus
21:00 Film Night: "Thief in the Night."
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Árstíðir.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Hafnarhúsið
20:00 Karvalsstaðir: Electra Ensemble plays French music.
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X.
NASA
00:00 FM Belfast.

31 THU

B5
22:00 Live Music.

Sódóma
REYKJAVÍK

- 4.12 Dikta - XIII - Cliff Clavin - The 59'ers
5.12 Duplex #2: Bloodgroup, Agent Fresco, Morðingjarnir, Útidúr, Mikado, Lára, Koi, Me The Slumbering Napoleon, Pascal Pinon.
10.12 Eldhúspartý FM957
11.12 Hjaltalín og Snorri Helgason
12.12 Kimi Records: kimono, Morðingjarnir, Retrön, Sudden Weather Change, Me The Slumbering Napoleon
16.12 Record Records X-mas Party: Mammút, Bloodgroup, Sykur, Lára, Foreign Monkeys
17.12 Lights On The Highway, Our Lives, The Viking Giant Show
18.12 X-MAS Concert X 97.7
19.12 "Stones" - Rolling Stones Tribute
23.12 KK, Maggi Eiríks, Buff og Jólagestir
26.12 Kölski Records: Dikta, Our Lives + more
29.12 The Carrier (USA), Gavin Portland
1.1 ENSÍMI
2.1 Duplex #3, Sin Fang Bous, kimono, Hudson Wayne, Dikta, Rökkurró, Foreign Monkeys +more

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MUSIC DECEMBER / JANUARY

- continued -

Bar 11

22:00 DJ Mattí

Bakkus

01:00 New Year's Eve with DJ Arni Sveins.

Dubliner

22:30 Live Music.

English Pub

22:00 Open all day and all night with live music.

Hressó

22:00 Party with DJs Elli and Fannar.

Kaffibarinn

22:00 New Year's Party!

Kaffi Zimsen

22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490 ISK.

NASA

22:00 New Year's Eve '90s party.

Prikið

21:00 New Year's Eve party!

1 FRI

Bar 11

22:00 Biggi Maus.

English Pub

22:00 Open all day and all night with live music.

Hressó

22:00 Dalton.

Prikið

21:00 Gala night with Danni De luxe.

Sóðóma

22:00 ENSÍMI.

2 SAT

Bakkus

23:59 DJ Maggi Lego.

English Pub

23:00 Live music.

Hressó

22:00 Penta, DJ Elli.

Kaffibarinn

23:45 FKNDMS DJs.

Prikið

22:00 Mr. Moonshine.

Sóðóma

22:00 Duplex #3: Sin Fang Bous, kimono, Hudson Wayne, Dikta, Rökkurró, Foreign Monkeys + more.

3 SUN

English Pub

23:00 Live music.

Prikið

23:00 Hangover Cinema to be announced.

4 MON

English Pub

23:00 Live music.

7 THU

Café Rósenberg

22:00 Anna María Christmas concert.



Live Xmas Calendar

Nordic House ☺ 12:34

Dec 1 - Dec 23

The Nordic House presents a live Xmas calendar for the third year in a row. The special Christmas calendar is opened every day leading up to Xmas; sweet treats and surprises will be revealed.

The program is varied - from dance to music to authors to artists. The Calendar is conveniently opened at 12:34 each day, so folks can stop by during their lunch hour. Last but not least: mulled wine and Xmas cookies will be on offer at the concerts, so you can fill up nicely. Note that the performers are secret. But last year had some really awesome ones! LP

12
Dec.



Vicarious Bliss, Quiet The Cat, DJ Sher

Austur ☺ 23:00 December 12

1.500 ISK (Incl. free drink)

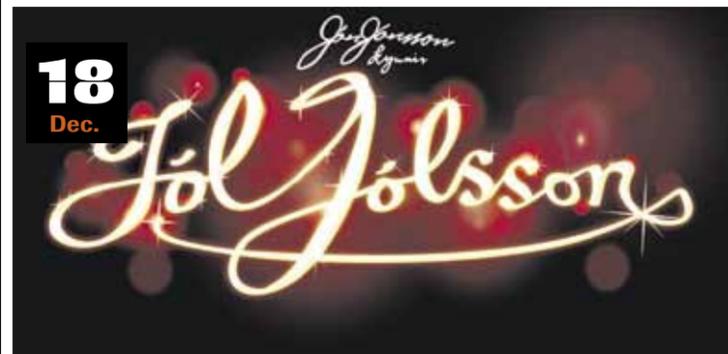
In 2004, Justice, the radical fundamentalist wing of French electronic label Ed Banger stormed the barricades with cringe-worthy imagery and undeniably dance-worthy beats they both paved the way for the rest of their label mates and overshadowed some of its original founders.

Vicarious Bliss is one of those originals, with the foppish French arrogance under a veneer of stadium rock and psychedelic trappings. Bliss were the ones to carve a path from the polished sound of Daft Punk and Air into a new millennium.

Vicarious Bliss have remained relatively quiet for the past 3 years but never ones to dismiss as mere also-rans. The French electronic wave has also receded somewhat in the past 2 years but if history has taught us something, it's that they always come rolling back. In the meantime the Banger sound enjoys a steady following in Iceland and any label-mate of Justice is certain to be welcomed with hungry feet.

Vicarious will be joined by Quiet The Cat and DJ Sher from ZeroZero. The show is brought to you by exciting new collective Rökkur Reykjavík.

18
Dec.



An Elephant Of A Concert

Hótel Ísland ☺ 22:00

2.900 ISK

Some people say that the best gifts come in small packages. Those people are called liars. Everyone knows the best surprises are the ones you have to go outside to claim because there's no way they'd fit in your living room (i.e. monster trucks, nuclear-powered yachts, fighter jets, and wild herds of ponies).

With that in mind, we're pretty excited for the Jól Jólsson concert at Hótel Ísland. With over 20 artists scheduled to perform, including notables Berndsen, FM Belfast Gus Gus, the night promises to be the greatest concert in the world.

Tickets through midi.is. MZ

18
Dec.



Gjöll album release concert

Jacobsen ☺ 21:00

1.000 ISK admission

Sum Of Transformation, Gjöll's latest release, will be celebrated at Jacobsen right before Xmas. Joining them are legendary noise veterans Reptilicus and Stílluppsteypa, along with noisy supergroup project Evil Madness. And it doesn't end there! Stereo Hypnosis and Biogen are playing too. Along with all of those electronic giants, newcomer AMFJ will bring the noise, keeping it all fresh and young and such. Doors at 21:00, admission fee is 1.000 ISK, but it comes with a refreshment. This could be the sexiest live electronic concert of the year. Don't miss it. AJ

1
Jan.



New Years Eve Party!

Austur ☺ 00:30

Admission Fee TBA

This is the big one, baby! The New Year's Eve party at Austur is THE place to be, we're told. Apparently, the same organizers threw an unforgettable party last year at a different venue and they couldn't help but repeat the event - this time at the new, shiny bar on Austurstæti. There will different moods on each floor: the upper level is destined for chilled hanging out, while the crazy partying will take place downstairs. The organizers promise surprises all throughout the night, so don't be shocked if there's a DJ in the bathroom or a sudden pillow fight. Anything can happen on New Year's at Austur, we're told! Pre-sale available at Austur - tickets will also be sold at the door. LP



17 Dec.

A Christmas Birdcage
Gunnar Þórðarson and Svavar Knútur at Fríkirkjan
2.000 ISK

On the December 17, the next show in the Birdcage series will take place at Fríkirkjan (The free Lutheran church, located at Lækjargata). The series is organised by Grapevine and the musician's association FTT, and is meant to bring together musicians from different genres and ages with fun results.

In this fourth concert of the series performers Gunnar Þórðarson – who is one of the most recognised pop music composers in Iceland – and charismatic troubador Svavar Knútur join forces to entertain you. All the shows have featured a full set by both performers, ending in some collaborative fusion FUN!

Tickets will be 2.000 ISK and may be purchased at www.midi.is. First one to e-mail haukur@grapevine.is with the subject line "CAGE ME" will score a couple of free tickets to the event. Yay!



The Mind's Eye
Kling&Bang Gallery
Through 10.01.2010 - Free

Counts are reputed to be a wealthy and sleepless bunch (Count Dracula, anyone?). So it comes as no surprise that one French 18th century count employed Johann Goldberg to entertain him through his long evenings by piano. At one point, the Count even commissioned JS Bach to write him a lively piece that might cheer him through those rugged nights—a piece today known as the Goldberg Variations. Which brings us to Bryndis Hronn Ragnarsdóttir's recently opened exhibit at Kling&Bang gallery. One of Bryndis pieces is a recording of her trying to learn the Goldberg Variation by ear. It should be noted the artist does not read music and has no experience playing an instrument. The result is almost 70 hours of uncut video/audio chronicling the artist's progress. Inspired by the concept of creating visual art for the blind, Bryndis attempts to foster a sort of sonic meditation. **MZ**

Finns take over the Nordic House
December 5th

Finland is covered in lakes and forests. First the Finns harvest the trees to make paper. Then they use the paper to write sad songs about the life they left behind in the forest. Finally they all buy a summerhouse next to a nice little lake and have two mobile phones in their pockets so they don't have to feel lonely in their cosy little summerhouses.

Even though Iceland can't really boast about its woodland and waterways, or Finland about its mountains and glaciers, there is something very similar in the Finnish and Icelandic mentalities. In all the Nordic events and seminars I have taken part so far, the Icelanders and the Finns end up mingling and are usually the last ones to leave. Reasons for this are rather simple. The Icelanders and the Finns both have a language that nobody else can understand a word of; both of our countries were the last ones in the Nordic area to declare independence and we both live on the outskirts of the Nordic community. And just like the Icelanders, us Finns get very thrilled when someone somewhere mentions something about our country.

To gain a better insight into Finland, it's worth paying a visit to the Nordic House on Saturday December 5th. The Finnish Cultural Festival provides a chance to take a deeper look at the country's culture and tradition. Short lectures will unveil aspects of Finnish design, the national epic Kalevala, modern Finnish literature, Tove Jansson's The Moomins, and movie director Aki Kaurismäki's life and production. The Christmas market offers an abundance of Finnish food, the Moomin films playing in the background will keep the children happy, and all the visitors will get to know one of the funniest dances in the world: the Finnish LetjaJenka. *Finnish Cultural Festival, 5th December, 12-16. Free entrance. Free entrance. **SR***



Xmas Village
Heart Square located behind Hemmi and Valdi between Laugarvegur and Hverfisgata.
The 10th of December at 15:00 – until Dec 24th (at least)

Christmas will come to town on Thursday, December 10. Or at least it will show up at small square behind Hemmi and Valdi. In celebration of the colliding spirits of commerce and Christmas, a small village is being built there. In the "village", Xmas shoppers are encouraged to take a break from their material ways and partake in some Holiday entertainment.

The village will be full of small cabins and festivity tents that will house concerts and other pleasantries. Icelandic folklore figures Grýla and Leppalúði will also make an appearance, with other Icelandic mythical Xmas figures, such as our thirteen Yule Lads. So its sure to say that your should definitely do your Christmas shopping on the sprawling Laugarvegur instead of your usual mall. The village will be opened with a grand ceremony starting at 15:00 on the 10th and of course, all are invited.



See Some Awesome Art
ASÍ Art Museum

Halldór Ragnarsson does it all. The 28 year old artist has had four solo exhibits both in Iceland and abroad, participated in numerous collaborations, published two poetry collections all while playing bass with the amazing Seabear. He's gone and done it again.

The ASÍ Art Museum presents Halldór Ragnarsson's exhibit "Saxófón eða Kontór" displayed in Gryfjan. The installation is based on drawings he's worked on in southern Italy this fall, along with cigarette packages he's collected and smoked in the last year. Curious about the results? Check it out! **LP**

Grapevine Events December

11 GRAND ROCK
☺ 10 pm
gogoyoko Presents:
Grapevine Grand Rock
Klink + guests!
December 11, 22:00.
1.000 ISK Admission

17 Fríkirkjan
Grapevine & FTT
present: The Birdcage
Gunnar Þórðarson vs.
Svavar Knútur
December 17, 20:00.
2.000 ISK admission -
tickets on www.midi.is

18 Hemmi & Valdi
gogoyoko Presents:
Grapevine Grassroots
Nolo + guests!
Hemmi & Valdi,
December 18, 21:00.
Free admittance!

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MAP

Places We Like

1 Deli

Bankastræti 14

Getting a good slice of pizza on the go can be an utter ordeal. If you're not careful, you'll frequently wind up paying good money for a cardboard wafer that has been sitting in a heater box for a week. Not at Deli, however. Their slices are consistently awesome and fresh, the topping selection is intriguing and tasteful and, best of all, they're really cheap.

2 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegur 21

The "colonial store" Hemmi and Valdi was probably 2008's most surprising crowd pleaser. The cosy hangout advanced from being a toasty retreat, where you could get cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. And believe me, the new atmosphere is brilliant. SKK

3 Havarí

Austurstræti 6

Even before it opened, Havarí was everybody's favourite new music and design store. Headed by Svavar Pétur and Berglind of Skakkamanage, the shop sells the musical goods of Kimi Records, Borgin Hljómplötur, gogoyoko and Skakkapopp as well as posters, art, design products and clothing. The shop is only open until January 12 so check it out while you can! CF

4 Krua Thai

Tryggvagötu 14

This is the best affordable Thai food on offer in Reykjavík. Rice is always fluffy, the spicy kick is just right and the spring rolls are always crispy cylinders of deliciousness. The servings are hearty too, so you're bound to leave satisfied. CF

5 Grái Kötturinn

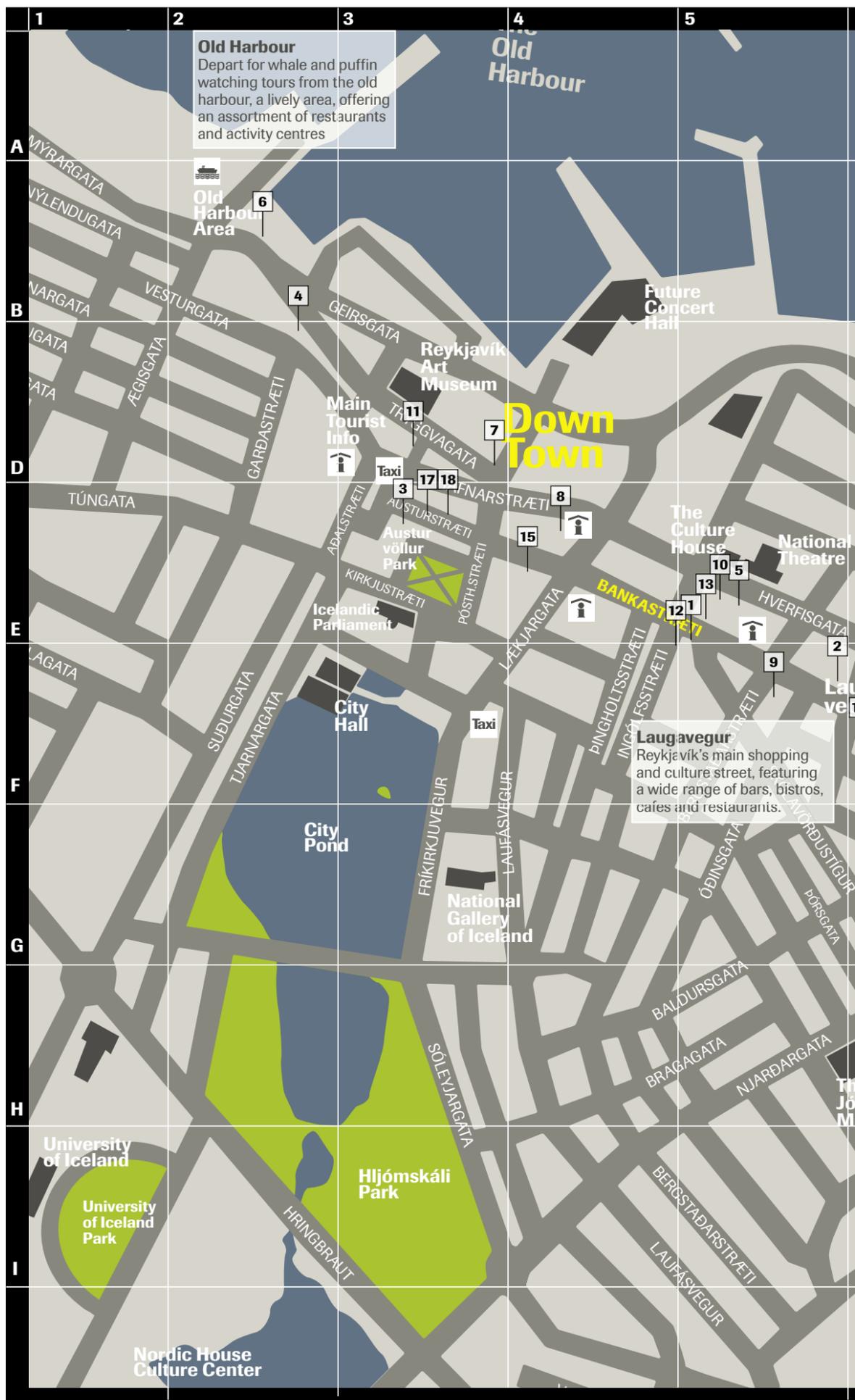
Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cozy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material. CF

6 Sægreifinn

Verbúð 8, Geirsgata

Down by the Reykjavík harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is truly a unique establishment. The menu features various fish dishes (including most of the "crazy Icelandic food" you'll want to tell your friends you had) and a rich portion of the best lobster soup we've ever tasted. Good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.



7 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavík's massive flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods. Check out the vintage post cards and prints at the table near the army surplus. CF

8 Pizza King

Hafnarstræti 18

To be honest, this isn't the best pizza up for grabs, but it's cheap, not pre-heated (like at various other pizza places downtown), and the guys are rather cool. Their pizzas are always bulletproof, and they offer various great offers on top of it, which you should definitely check out. SKK

9 Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Weekends are somewhat overrated at Kaffibarinn if you ask me. Don't get me wrong, they can be brilliant if you're completely pissed, the DJ is fresh and the crowd is full-blooded, still the weekdays are better. It doesn't matter when you pop in, you're always treated like a pal rather than a customer, and you should always expect get caught in some shenanigan, whether it's a crazy Monday bender or a wacko Tuesday... well... bender. SKK

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Every Night
and
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at The English Pub!
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Don't Forget
Open all Christmas



THE ENGLISH PUB

The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Christmas

SPECIAL SPECTACULAR



09

www.grapevine.is



The merry Christmas men that are plastered all over the Grapevine this issue just happen to be some of the city's top restaurateurs. Chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson runs Þrír Frakkar, Reykjavík's best loved fish restaurant (Baldursgata 14) and Tómas Tómasson operates the Iceland's all-time favourite hamburger dive, Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar (various locations).

Why do we love having them pose for photos and then putting those photos on our covers? Because they are very awesome people, and their food has given us a lot of pleasure, for instance. But also because they sport these cool, long beards. Why did they grow these beards?

Úlfar: I was being interviewed on the radio last May, and I happened to sport a beard. The journalist asked me why I was so hairy, and I replied that I was protesting the Central Bank's way-too-high interest rates, that I would not shave until it was down to a one-figure number...

Tómas: I heard Úlfar on the radio, talking about whale meat as usual, and he started talking about his protest. I decided this was something I wanted to get behind, so I called him up immediately afterwards – my friend of 40 years – and told him I would join him in his protest. I've been growing a beard since the end of May now, and Úlfar since the beginning of May. They're pretty hefty beards by now.

Did you envision having to grow your beards this long? Do you expect to cut them anytime soon?

Úlfar: I didn't suspect it would take this time, but we've still had some progress. A year ago, the interest rates were at 18%, they're down to 11% now. Once they go down by 1.5%, the beards are gone!

Tómas: They'll announce the new interest rates on December 10th. I am not convinced they will go below 10% then, but I imagine it will happen next year. I hope they do.

We hear you're planning to do some fun Christmas stuff with those beards...

Úlfar: Yes, we acquired 1.000 decks of playing cards from Icelandair, and a mysterious benefactor sponsored 1.000 candles from Sólheimar. We are in the clouds about this. We're in the process of gift-wrapping the mall and are planning to dress up in Santa gear and deliver those goods to children at the local children's hospital and kindergartens around town, spreading some Christmas spirit.

Photo by Baldur Kristján

Úlfar's Halibut w/Langoustine (serves two)

You'll need: flour, spices, two halibut fillets (around 200 grams each), two large langoustine (split at the middle), cream, white wine and some Icelandic butter.

"Coat the halibut in flour and then fry it in hot butter on one side for around two and a half minutes. Then you flip the fish and place the langoustine split-down in the butter. Spice with BBQ seasoning and add garlic and salt according to taste.

Splash some white wine over the pan before adding the cream (250+ mls.). The cream will come to a boil, making the gravy nice and thick. If it's too thick, add some more white wine. Serve with boiled potatoes and salad, if you will, squeeze a slice of lemon over your plate according to taste."

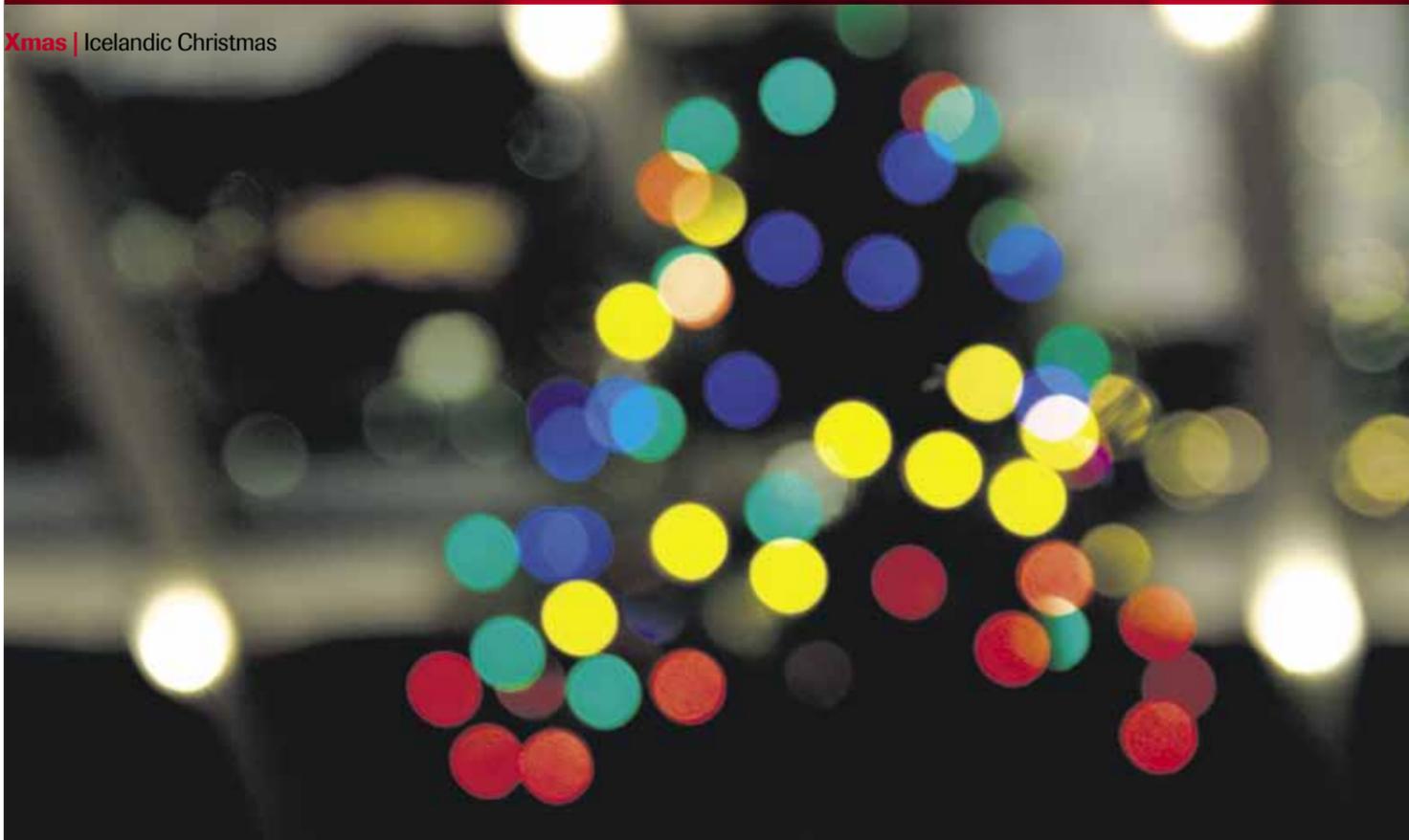
Tómas' grill-charred leg of lamb (serves many)

You'll need: a filleted leg of lamb (femur intact), BBQ sauce of choice ("Any brand, almost all BBQ sauce is good"), spices.

"Marinate the leg of lamb in the BBQ sauce for 24 hours, preferably at room temperature. Salt and pepper according to taste, then throw it on your barbecue for 45 minutes to an hour – the more burnt, the better. You'll have to keep turning it from the start – eventually it will start to burn, as I said, but that's good. Let it burn! The charred flesh is really good. Keep your BBQ sauce of choice on hand throughout the process, so you can douse the leg in it each time you turn.

Serve with mushroom cream sauce and potatoes. For the potatoes, you should boil them first and cool them down, then cut them into 4-5 pieces each (without peeling them!) and fry them in olive oil, salt, pepper and parsley."

Xmas | Icelandic Christmas



How to Conduct Your Icelandic Christmas

Even though most Western nations are by all accounts becoming more mind-numbingly culturally uniform by the minute, there are still some vast regional differences as to how we go about living our lives and the various customs and traditions that entails. Take Christmas. Most Christian countries (and some non-Christian ones as well) have their own special version of the festivities that December brings, even though themes of celebration, charity, love towards mankind and consumerism are widespread. Iceland is no different in this respect and has many unique Christmas customs and ceremonies. The following is an attempt to give outsiders some insight into how the average Icelander will experience and celebrate the holidays in light of traditional folklore and long standing customs, as well as some new ones.

The presents themselves and the various traditions surrounding them vary between households, although there are some constants. Books have for long ranked as the most popular gift-items; the publishing industry and book stores virtually revolve around the holiday season—the months leading up to it see the majority of the year's releases being published and bought.

The gift of music is also a popular one, especially in post-Kreppa times. Beside cultural products, other popular gift items include decorative objects, board games, electronic equipment and the like.

CALLING ALL SHOPPERS!

It should come as no surprise that each year the first signs of the impending holidays stem from Iceland's advertising agencies; as early as October one may witness Santa or one of his minions running amok in the media, reminding shoppers that the Christmas season has indeed arrived and it is time to stock up on gifts and pleasantries. Soon after, the larger stores will start decorating, giving nods to the festivities with the use of Christmas trees, blinking light sets and inflatable Santas.

However, most of the shopping occurs in the month of December itself, culminating on December 23—known here as Þorláksmessa—when the stores stay open 'til late and midtown Reykjavík along with the shopping malls experience their most crowded day of the year. The large mass of people that congregate downtown to do some last minute shopping and drink cups of cocoa is truly a sight to behold and is for some one of the season's high points.

DECK THE HALLS

Icelanders usually give their homes the holiday treatment in late November/

early December, with the start of Advent (which occurs the fourth Sunday before Christmas) usually marking the official 'OK time' for decorating. Decorations are similar to what may be found in the rest of the Christmas-celebrating world: pine branches, light sets, Santa-related effigies and various knick-knacks and doodads. A four-candle Advent wreath, with one candle to be lit on each Advent Sunday to mark its passing, may be found in most homes, as may so-called Christmas-calendars, boxes of chocolates to be dispensed every day leading up to December 24.

"In folk tales, Christmas Eve is a dangerous night that should be approached with extreme caution. It is the time when every supernatural creature in Iceland's collective consciousness comes out to play, often luring innocent peasants to their dens, killing them or trapping them eternally.."

A decorative object somewhat unique to Iceland, although the phenomenon may be found in some Nordic countries, is the Advent light, a seven-armed electric candlestick found in at least one window of almost every Icelandic house throughout the holiday season. It is reportedly quite common for those who visit Reykjavík in December to get in touch with the National Museum and inquire about the object, and whether Judaism is widespread in the country.

The story behind the Advent lights' popularity in Iceland is surprisingly mundane. It is generally thought of as any other decoration, even though the seven-armed candlestick is laden with symbolism elsewhere. The story goes that a certain Reykjavík businessman encountered the object on a standard shopping trip to Sweden sometime in the mid-sixties. He thought they'd make excellent gifts to his aunts back home and bought several for that purpose. Word of mouth popularity ensued, and soon the businessman was importing boatloads

of the decorative lights, as no respectable Icelandic home could bear to be without them.

A PRETTY HORRIBLE FAMILY

Iceland has some strange and violent folklore connected to the month of Advent, and Christmas in particular, although later years have seen some of its harsher tales considerably revised into being more "child-friendly". As with most Western nations, Christmas in Iceland involves several mythical creatures dating back to the middle ages, but what may set ours apart is their bleak nature and often-scary undertones.

In folk tales, Christmas Eve is a dangerous night that should be approached with extreme caution. It is the time when every supernatural creature in Iceland's collective consciousness comes out to play, often luring innocent peasants to their dens, killing them or trapping them eternally. For instance, elves will tempt with their riches and beauty, trapping whoever falls for their shtick into an eternity of living inside rocks, or worse. And those who dare play cards or games of any nature on Christmas Eve may expect horrible things—a famous folk tale speaks of a Church that was engulfed into the earth by Satan himself after its patrons partook in a midnight game of cards.

And then there are the gift-bringers: the Jólásveinar (or Yuletide Lads), a motley group of bogeymen descended from trolls. Originally used to scare children into submission, it is only in later years that they have warmed to the task of bringing them presents instead of harassing their families with pranks. Little is known of the Jólásveinars' origins, but they do get mentioned in writing as early as the 17th century. Their number and habits varied from region to region (the East Fjords even had some that lived at sea as opposed to on mountains), and there are as many as 80 recorded names for them. Jón Árnason, Iceland's answer to the Brothers Grimm, published their names in his widely read folklore collection in 1862 and thus contributed to a still remaining consensus that there are exactly thirteen active Jólásveinar.

The Jólásveinar have come a long way since their salad days of terrifying young kids. As the centuries passed, they have taken a shine to the little ones and sometime around 1960 they found a purpose in leaving small gifts in kids' shoes left on window sills (although there are reports of this behaviour as early as 1930). The first one, Stekkjarstaur (Gully Oaf) comes to town on the eve of December 12. They keep on coming leading up to December 24, when the infamous Kertaník (Candle Beggar – he usually

leaves the greatest presents) makes his arrival. Some interesting ones that show up in the interim include Þvörusleikir (Spoon-licker), Hurðaskellir (Door-slammer) and Gluggagægir (Peeping Tom). Their gifts range from small toys and Christmas decorations to books and CDs (that would be Kertaník), but if a child has behaved foully, it will most likely get a potato.

As mentioned earlier, the Jólásveinar are descended from common trolls. In fact, they come from a pretty horrid family. Their mother is the most infamous Icelandic troll of all—the deadly Gryla. She is mainly known for taking great pleasure in devouring naughty children, sometimes cooked, often raw, and it is believed that her sons' original purpose was to bring her fresh meat when the hunger struck. Not as devious but still pretty mean is Gryla's husband, Lepplúði, who partakes in all the nastiness but is a more passive figure.

The most vicious and weird family member is in all likelihood the deceptively named Jólaköttur (Christmas Cat). This feline is said to be of gargantuan proportions, and he has the sole purpose of eating disadvantaged children. Not necessarily naughty ones, which would, in a way, be understandable; rather, the Christmas Cat chooses to feast on kids who fail to score new articles of clothing for Christmas. Luckily, Iceland's trusty welfare system has ensured that he rarely finds motive to visit these days.

DEVOURING CHRISTMAS

Food plays a large part in Icelandic Christmas festivities and there are several local culinary traditions to be honoured. The fun starts in early December, when families congregate to bake several types of Christmas-cookies to be eaten over the course of the coming month. An average household will usually produce around three to ten different sorts of cookies, although later years have seen an increase in the circulation of store-bought ones. More productive households will also bake and freeze layer cakes and raisin-laced Christmas cakes.

From the northern parts of Iceland comes the December tradition of baking Laufabrauð (Leaf-bread), a very thin, deep-fried sort of bread that has decorations carved in it and goes well with butter. Another regional tradition that has in later years spread throughout Iceland is the annual devouring of kæst skata (rotted skate) on Þorláksmessa (December 23). Originating in the Westfjords, the skate-feast generally takes place at noon. The skate has at this point been rotting by itself at room temperature for about three weeks, giving it a harsh and cleansing taste. By most accounts, cook-

ing skate will really stink up a house, although many profess a great love for the dish and its accompanying tallow, cooked rye bread and whole milk. Certainly an acquired taste, but one that's worth exploring.

There aren't many specifically Icelandic Christmas-style drinks to speak of. The Scandinavian custom of gathering to drink Jólaglögg (Christmas-drops) in the weekends leading up to Christmas is often practiced, although its popularity has waned somewhat in recent years. Jólaglögg is a sickly sweet sort of drink that's usually made by heating red wine spiced with cinnamon, ginger, raisins and lemon peel—some will add spirits for added bite.

Alcohol consumption around Christmas itself is less popular than one would assume from Icelanders' usual drinking habits—folks would rather stay warm with a cup of hot chocolate or a combination of alcohol-free Malt ale (Maltöl) and Icelandic orange soda (Appelsín). Combined, the two drinks form what's commonly referred to as Jólaöl (Christmas ale). The blending of the two has been common practice in Iceland since around 1960 and most families have their own special ways of determining the correct proportions between them (some even add cola to the mix).

(NOTHING TO FEAR BUT) CHRISTMAS ITSELF

The first thing you should know about the actual celebrating of Christmas in Iceland is that it culminates on December 24 rather than the 25th, which is the common Western date to celebrate the birth of Christ. This is in keeping with the original Christian chronology, taken up from Judaism, which deems that a new day starts at sunset, or six PM outside of the original Jewish areas. Thus it is deemed that Christmas day starts at six PM in Iceland, signalled in by National Radio's broadcasting of church bells. This is followed by a traditionally extravagant Christmas meal, often comprised of smoked pork or wild game such as ptarmigan or reindeer. Large families like to gather for this occasion and there will often be as many as twenty people dining at the same table. Many families conclude the meal by eating a Christmas porridge in which an almond has been hidden—whoever gets the almond wins a fun prize.

Leading up to this is an always-unbearable wait (if you're a kid, anyway). While parents spend the day putting last-minute touches on decorations, preparing meals and wrapping up presents, children will watch some of the local TV stations' all-day broadcasts of Christmas-themed cartoons. Many will suffer uncontrollable sugar-induced temper tantrums throughout the day.

What they are looking forward to is of course the much-coveted opening of presents, an activity that reigns supreme over the rest of the evening. A family member will often take the task upon himself of fetching the presents from under the Christmas tree and distributing them according to their tags. This can go on for hours in large families, and it's usually not until well after midnight that people make their way to bed, often reading newly acquired books well into the small hours of Christmas Day. 🍷

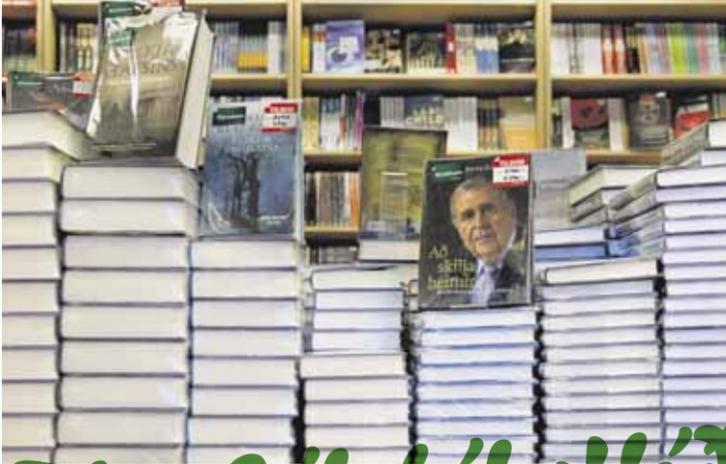
Sirius

Icelandic Family Tradition

Baking and confectionery before Christmas is an old tradition in Iceland. Certain assortments are ever so popular in Icelandic homes while others come and go. Families with baking and confectionary traditions know very well that Sirius chocolate is a top quality ingredient — and has been so since 1933.




NÓI SÍRÍUS
www.noi.is



The Jólábókaflóð

Iceland's yearly flood of books

You might not have heard of it, but Iceland has a yearly flood. It's not like the monsoon where the streets are overrun with water and mud. No, this is a different kind of flood, namely the so-called Christmas-Book Flood. Well. It doesn't necessarily translate well, but in Icelandic the term is "Jólábókaflóð," and it is a yearly sign that Christmas is coming in Iceland. Unlike in most countries, the bulk of the nation's literary output is published in the two or three months leading up to Christmas.

Iceland has just over 300,000 inhabitants. And in this year, there are around 700 titles published in Icelandic, which is among the most we have ever seen. The titles include poetry, children's books, novels, translations, non-fiction etc. I know this because of a nifty little catalogue called Bókatiðindi. It would roughly translate as The Journal of Books. It comes out every November and lists damn near every book "officially" published in Icelandic. It is delivered to each and every home in the country, and for many it is a sign that Christmas is officially upon us. And for Icelanders, Christmas is the time where you snuggle up and read your presents.

IT ALL DATES BACK TO WORLD WAR II

But why does every Icelandic publishing house deem it sensible to release its yearly output in the two or three months that every other publishing house releases theirs? The tradition dates back to World War II, where strict currency restrictions were imposed, so there wasn't a lot of imported giftware. And Icelanders had quite a lot of money to spend in those days due to the economic upheaval during the war. The restrictions on imported paper were more lenient than on other products, so the book emerged as the Christmas present of choice. And Icelanders have honoured the tradition ever since.

The Icelandic Christmas-book market is mainly a gift market. People tend to buy hardcover books for their friends and relatives, but purchase cheaper paperbacks for themselves. As a result most

books are published in hardcover before Christmas, and then the most popular ones come out in paperback, even as soon as January or February.

NEW POSSIBILITIES IN PUBLISHING ARE EMERGING

According to Guðrún Vilmundardóttir, publisher at Bjartur, the second largest publishing house in Iceland, the sales in December figure a staggering sixty percent of their yearly turnover. And most are sold in the few days before Christmas. But during the last few years there have been some signs of a change in the Icelandic publishing landscape. There have been experiments with publishing novels at other times of the year. And according to Guðrún, the market has been becoming more flexible lately. Bjartur has begun publishing paperbacks in the spring for summertime reading. "They are books to take on holiday, thrillers and lighter reads, and people have definitely started buying more paperbacks for themselves. And last spring we published a new Icelandic novel in paperback (Handbók um hugarfar kúa, by Bergsveinn Birgisson) and that sold well. So new possibilities in publishing are emerging."

Egill Örn Jóhannsson, manager at Forlagið, Iceland's single largest publishing house after JPV and Edda merged in 2007, tells a similar tale. "From the start, we have consciously tried to increase publication in what may be called 'other seasons', i.e. not the Christmas season. It has gone very well and now we probably publish more than half of our titles before the so-called Christmas season begins." And for them, sales in the spring have also been picking up. "Our bestselling summer paperbacks are sold in thousands of copies, which is very good considering market's smallness," says Egill.

And indeed, with so few people reading and speaking Icelandic, it is a very small market. So small, in fact, that according to Egill, many foreign publishing houses think it nothing short of miraculous that such a diverse literary scene can be found in such a small country.

Xmas | Books

THE INEVITABLE QUESTION OF THE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

But what of the meltdown? The Kreppa? The economic collapse or whatever you want to call it? Well, it has certainly had an impact on the publishing industry. As the Króna plummeted, prices on imported goods have risen again, and sadly, this time around it goes for paper as well. Says Guðrún: "Last year we didn't raise our prices, although everything had become more expensive—but this year we are forced to raise prices a little. But prices on books haven't been raised much those last few years compared to everything else. A book is a classic gift and very reasonably priced. And I think we have even sensed a kind of goodwill since last fall. People don't go abroad as much to buy presents. They would rather buy Icelandic products."

Egill answers along the same notes. "For a very long time we have heard of the cliché that books are an especially strong product during recession. Now it's been a year since the economic collapse and it's clear that the book can well stand its ground on the market. What's important is that publishers keep at it with confidence and believe in the literary market. If they do, I'm not worried at all. But consumer behaviour seems to have changed a bit, with fewer people buying the more expensive books. But we publishers have done a pretty good job at keeping prices down during the last few years."

THE CREEPING KREPPA

But the Kreppa has been creeping into the literary scene by other means as well, as a large amount of Icelandic novels and non-fiction books are in one way or another a spin on the situation Icelanders find themselves in. There are several non-fiction books that try to explain what exactly led to the economic collapse in Iceland, as well as books regarding the pros and cons of joining the E.U. in the wake of the meltdown, and even a book on corruption by our saviour Eva Joly. There are a number of poetry books struggling to grasp the reasons for and consequences of the Kreppa, and the Kreppa even figures strongly in more than a few children's books, albeit mostly in a metaphorical way. And the novels? Many of them seem to be on issues such as greed and vanity, though quite a few of them also read like nothing drastic has happened in the country. This may be due to the fact that it is now almost exactly a year since the collapse, and novels do take time to write. We likely have nowhere near exhausted the impact that the Kreppa will have on Icelandic society, including its literary scene. ♡

✍ HILDUR KNÚTSDÓTTIR
📖 JULIA STAPLES

Xmas | Party



Dirty Holidayz

Grapevine's guide to yr Ultimate Holiday Bender

It's no secret that December is the darkest and spookiest month. It is by far also the booziest. The overwhelming joy one often associates with the Christmas frenzy increases the longing for a nightcap, the fright that correlates with mass expenditures in gifts and other holiday nonsense calls for some alcohol, and when you intend to bid farewell to the passing year you'll want a bottle of liquor by your side. It seems there's no avoiding dipping your toes (or your entire foot) into the tantalizing Jacuzzi of holiday vice. You strangers: witness Grapevine's guide to your Icelandic holiday drinking!

BUY EARLY!

The Icelandic liquor infrastructure, those state-run liquor stores, have short opening hours. It gets worse over the holidays. So make a visit to Vínbúð early. And purchase in bulk. You'll thank us later.

AND SO IT BEGINS...

The first day of hardcore debauchery is Þorláksmessa. The rambling begins at noon, when families and friends gather to fulfil their appetite with brennivín and rotted skate, which smells so foul, you'll have to drown the maggoty taste with a whole lot of Brennivín to survive. The fun continues through the day, usually ending in an uncontrollable frenzy at the local bars. The funny part of all this is that Þorláksmessa is also the day when you finalize your Xmas shopping. This is no match made in heaven. The only reason bars are open on the 24th from noon 'til two is so unfortunates can pick up their left-behind presents. So my advice is: find a local and convince him to invite you in for rotted skate. If that doesn't work out, find a restaurant that serves the horrendous dish and report for duty at the bars in the evening.

DAY II OF DEPRAVITY

If you don't recognize the holiday "Second in Christmas," it's because we made it up. To get shitfaced. Christmas day is usually spent on family gatherings. This lasts 'til midnight on December 26th, when the bars remove the chains from their doors. Be aware that the bars are only open between midnight and 3 AM, so you'll have to try and imbibe as much alcohol as possible in those three hours. In light of this, it might not come as a surprise that the average bar sales are usually greater in these three hours than on a regular 8 PM-6 AM night. After a bunch of after partying, you'll probably end up with your holiday booze stash empty. But don't worry, Vínbúð opens up again, so you can re-stock.

THE MESSY FINALE

Now we're finally there, New Year's Eve. The craziest night of the year. Supposedly. The first thing you have to do is clear out all your expectation, 'cause grand ones might disappoint you. A lot of the locals tend to give the clubs the finger on this particular night, but they tend to be wrong. If you're visiting I'd recommend you'd score a ticket to one of those New Year's celebrations, but if you get invited to a local party – definitely go for it. It's a wise move to go up to Perlan or by Hallgrímskirkja to watch the ludicrous fireworks and fire up a few, you'll be able to mingle with crazy Icelanders that are probably planning a 24-hour party. Whatever you do though, don't go to sleep. Things won't heat up until around 8 AM, and if you play it right you won't remember anything the morning after, won't recognize where you are and don't recall what you did. And that's the reason why it will be, in your memory, the craziest night of the year. ♡

✍ SIGURÐUR KJARTAN KRISTINSSON
📖 JÓI KJARTANS

Save money, Shop Tax Free

All tourists with a permanent address outside Iceland are eligible for Tax Free shopping during their stay in Iceland. Remember to ask for a Tax Free form when shopping and receive up to 15% refund of your purchases.



10 ZASAD GŁÓWNYCH

1. Myśl pozytywnie, będzie ci lżej
2. Dbaj o to, co jest ci drogie
3. Ucz się jak najdłużej, nawet do końca swojego życia
4. Ucz się na własnych błędach
5. Ruszaj się jak najczęściej, to podnosi na duchu
6. Nie zaprzataj sobie głowy niepotrzebnymi sprawami
7. Staraj się rozumieć i wspierać innych
8. Nie poddawaj się, droga do sukcesu jest długa
9. Znajdź i rozwijaj swoje zdolności
10. Stawiaj sobie zadania i pozwól swoim marzeniom się spełnić



Gedraakt

10 KËSHILLA SHPIRTËRORE

1. Mendo pozitiv, është më e lehtë të mendosh pozitiv për gjithcka.
2. Ruaje atë që është më e shtrejtë për ju.
3. Vazhdo të mësosh për sa kohë që jeton.
4. Mëso nga gabimet e tua.
5. Lëvizja e përditshme, lehtëson gjendjen shpirtërore.
6. Mos e vështirso jetën tënde pa arsye.
7. Mundohu t' i kuptosh dhe t' i nxisësh të tjerët përreth teje.
8. Mos u dorëzo, mirëqenia në jetë është maraton.
9. Kërkoj dhe kultivoi aftësit e tua.
10. Vendosi një kufi dhe lëre ëndrrën tënde të realizohet.



Gedraakt

10 SAVETA ZA DOBRO DUŠEVNO ZDRAVLJE

1. Razmišljajmo pozitivno, lakše je
2. Vodimo računa o onome što nam je drago
3. Učimo dok god živimo
4. Učimo na vlastitim greškama
5. Krećimo se svakodnevno, to popravlja raspoloženje
6. Ne komplikujmo život bez razloga
7. Trudimo se da razumemo i podržavamo ljude oko nas
8. Ne odustajmo, uspeh u životu je trka na duge daljine
9. Pronađimo i negujmo vlastite talente
10. Postavimo si cilj i ispunimo svoje snove



Gedraakt

10 COMMANDMENTS OF MENTAL HEALTH

1. Think positively; it's easier
2. Cherish the ones you love
3. Continue learning as long as you live
4. Learn from your mistakes
5. Exercise daily; it enhances your well-being
6. Do not complicate your life unnecessarily
7. Try to understand and encourage those around you
8. Do not give up; success in life is a marathon
9. Discover and nurture your talents
10. Set goals for yourself and pursue your dreams



Gedraakt

ДЕСЯТЬ ПОЛЕЗНЫХ ЖИЗНЕННЫХ СОВЕТОВ

1. Настраивайся всегда на положительные эмоции – это облегчает жизнь
2. Береги то, что тебе дорого
3. Век живи – век учишься
4. Извлекай уроки из своих ошибок
5. Ежедневно занимайся физическими упражнениями: это повышает настроение
6. Не усложняй свою жизнь без надобности
7. Старайся понять и поддержать тех, кто тебя окружает
8. Не сдавайся: успех в жизни – это бег на длинную дистанцию
9. Раскрой и развивай свои способности
10. Поставь себе цель и добивайся ее осуществления



Gedraakt

Mười điều tâm niệm

1. Hãy lạc quan, sẽ yêu đời hơn
2. Hãy góp phần vào việc bạn thích
3. Hãy tiếp tục học mãi
4. Hãy rút kinh nghiệm qua lỗi lầm của mình
5. Hãy vận động thường xuyên hằng ngày sẽ làm tinh thần thoải mái.
6. Đừng tham gia vào những việc vô ích
7. Hãy cố gắng hiểu và khuyến khích người khác
8. Đừng đầu hàng, chịu thua vì thành công trong cuộc đời là sự đúc kết của một chuỗi dài phấn đấu
9. Hãy nhận biết và trau dồi khả năng của mình
10. Hãy đặt cho mình mục đích và cố gắng thực hiện giấc mơ của mình



Gedraakt

GEÐORÐIN 10

1. Hugsaðu jákvætt, það er léttara
2. Hlúðu að því sem þér þykir vænt um
3. Haltu áfram að læra svo lengi sem þú lifir
4. Lærðu af mistökum þínum
5. Hreyfðu þig daglega, það léttir lundina
6. Flæktu ekki líf þitt að óþörfu
7. Reyndu að skilja og hvetja aðra í kringum þig
8. Gefstu ekki upp, velgengni í lífinu er langhlaup
9. Finndu og ræktaðu hæfileika þína
10. Settu þér markmið og láttu drauma þína rætast



Gedraakt

ข้อคิด 10 ประการ

1. คิดในแง่ดี จะทำการอันใดก็จะง่ายขึ้น
2. ถนอมหัวใจแก่บุคคลที่ท่านรัก
3. ไม่แก่เกินไปที่จะฝึกหาเรียนรู้
4. ผิดเป็นครู
5. เคลื่อนไหวร่างกายเป็นประจำ ทำให้อายุยืนยาวขึ้น
6. ไม่ควรทำชีวิตของท่านใหญ่โตจนเกินไป
7. พยายามเข้าใจและให้การสนับสนุนแก่บุคคลรอบข้าง
8. ไม่คิดย่อท้อ, วิ่งเข้าสู่อุบัติความสำเร็จของชีวิต
9. ฝึกฝนและค้นหาทักษะให้กับตนเอง
10. ตั้งจุดมุ่งหมาย และสร้างฝันให้เป็นจริง



Gedraakt

Xmas | Christmas Buffets



Stuffing the Stuffing

The Icelandic Christmas Buffet tradition for beginners

Grapevine's Sari Peltonen tucks into the Icelandic Christmas tradition of Christmas Buffet.

Rule one: STUFF YOURSELF SILLY.

Around us, there are families, young couples and a table full of businessmen. The tradition—possibly derived from their Scandinavian ancestors and feasting in Valhalla—is so popular that I hear it is not uncommon for a person to attend three buffets—one with work, one with friends and yet another with the family. The few tourists are easy to pick out in their sweaters—the local dress code is all shirts, ties and small black dresses.

Rule two: DRESS UP.

Apart from the Christmas carols, the evening's background is provided by the city lights of Reykjavík. The UFO like pearl of Icelandic architecture, Perlan, was completed in 1991, overlooking the town from the Öskjuhlíð hill. It features six water tanks, which supply the town with geothermal water, a Viking museum, view deck, café and a man made geyser—the last blowing at regular intervals throughout our meal.

The top of the Pearl is the revolving restaurant. The outside ring turns slowly while the centre with the buffet provides the anchor. The movement has confused one older gentleman in a gray suit, who is stood by our table looking lost.

After a delicious bowl of wild goose soup, we hit the buffet. The starters feature various types of salmon, caviar and blinis, roast beef, duck liver pate, ox tongue, seafood salads and herring, apple salad, ham salad in mayonnaise... We fill our plates and notice that we are alone. Indeed, most of our co-diners have arrived a lot earlier than 8.

Rule three: COME EARLY, SO YOU HAVE TIME TO EAT MORE.

After emptying our plates with enviable speed, we hit the buffet again, this time for the main courses. On offer are the classic Icelandic dishes of sugared potatoes and manure-smoked lamb hangikjöt, stuffing, meatballs, red cabbage—a combination of local specialties alongside this and that adopted from other countries. Finally there is a mini-carvery of salted pork, venison and pork belly.

"Some people come to Iceland just for our buffet," says the chef proudly whilst cutting us thick slices of venison.

By the time of dessert, the restaurant has spun around enough to bring the cake tables right to us. And what a selection: English fruitcake, pineapple cheesecake, skyr cake, chocolate cake and mousse, meringue, crème Brule and

the dubiously named Pearl Bomber.

Around us, people are getting drowsier, the group of business men louder. The gray suited gentleman is escorted to his table by the waitress. He sits down and toasts with his companion, patting the waitress' back.

Skál for Christmas buffets!

Christmas buffet at Perlan 7.890 ISK per person. Thank you to the restaurant for kindly providing a buffet meal for two for research purposes. ♡

SELECTED CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS IN REYKJAVÍK

BRAUÐBÆR

A Danish inspired buffet. Mon to Wed, lunch and dinner. 3300 ISK/3900 ISK.

ENAR BEN

Traditional buffet dishes served separately to each table. Dinner 6490 ISK per person.

FISH COMPANY

A Christmas edition of their famed Around the world in 8400 ISK menu, served for the whole table.

FISHMARKET

Fusion Christmas menu, served for the whole table. Christmas Sushi and more. 8900 ISK per person.

TAPASBARINN

Tapas with a Christmas flavour. 4990 ISK.

FJÖRUKRÁIN

The Viking theme restaurant puts out their Christmas Buffet on Fri and Sat. For 6800 ISK, one gets the traditional food, mulled wine and live music.

GRAND HÓTEL

Traditional buffet and traditional live folk music. Lunch buffet 5100 ISK, dinner 7500 ISK for adults, cheaper for children. Available on weekends.

GRILLIÐ

Fine dining Christmas menu with 3/4 courses (7900 ISK/9900 ISK), 16 500 ISK with an accompanying wine menu.

HÓTEL HOLT'S GALLERY

3900 ISK for a 3-course Christmas lunch; the classy Jólabbal dinner menu for 7900 ISK; On Sun-Wed it comes for the bargain price of 5450 ISK.

HÓTEL LOFTLEIÐIR

The Loftleiðir buffet is overseen by Dane Ida Davidssen to ensure the ultimate in Scandinavian quality—including one of the widest selections of herring around. On Sun-Thu the dinner buffet costs 5950

ISK; On Fri-Sat 6500 ISK with live music. Lunch buffet 3950 ISK.

SILFUR

Dinner time Christmas buffet, 6900 ISK per person, 5900 ISK from Sun to Wed. The foods feature the traditional line up with a modern touch.

VOX

Vox does Christmas all the way: Brunch, menu and High tea all dress up in Santa's clothes. In addition there is a lunch buffet for 2850 ISK—reduced from last year to help out in hard times—and a weekend dinner buffet with live music.

RESTAURANT DILL

New Nordic food goes Christmas, with herring ice cream, langoustine wrapped in Christmas tree and "Kjartan's volcanic Christmas pudding with lava". An evening at Dill with coffee, champagne, full menu and wines comes with a price tag of 18.000 ISK, Standalone menu for 8400 ISK and wine menu for 7900 ISK.

BROADWAY

Broadway offers the unexpected collaboration of Christmas Buffet and Michael Jackson tribute concert until mid-December. For more information and bookings, call 533 1100.

HÓTEL SAGA

Hótel Saga's traditional buffet comes with first class entertainment by the Icelandic comedians Laddi, Steinn Ármann and Hjörtur Howser. 8900 ISK/10900 ISK with wine.

FJALAKÖTTURINN

Fjalakötturinn offers a traditional 3-course Christmas menu for 6900 ISK.

VEISLUTURNINN

Kópavogur's gift to the world of Christmas buffets has a New York theme. There's also Christmas Brunch every weekend for 3500 ISK, with Christmas dwarfs to entertain the children.

RESTAURANT REYKJAVÍK

Restaurant Reykjavík offers a traditional buffet for 4900 ISK per person every day up until Christmas.

LÆKJARBREKKA

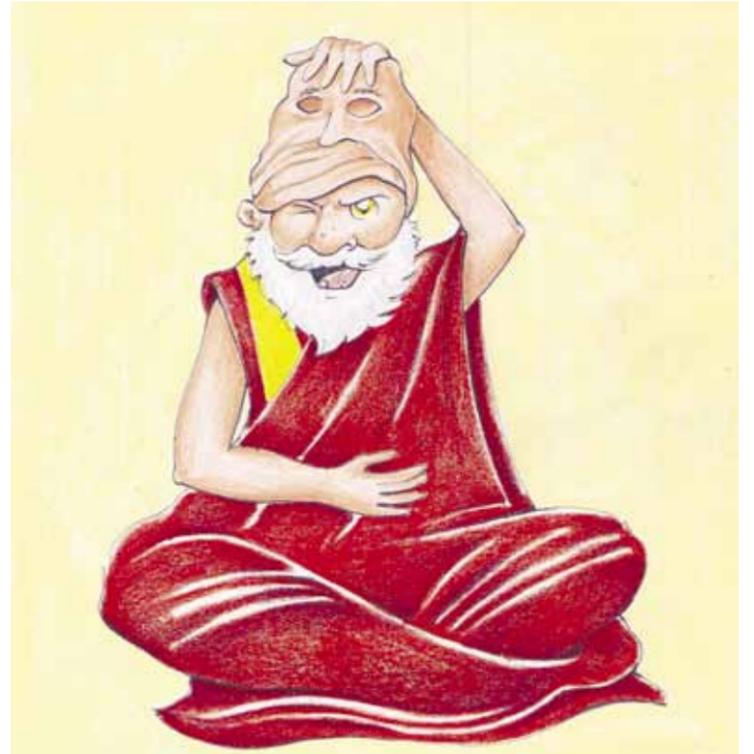
A traditional buffet is served in the evenings, Sun-Wed for 5900 ISK, and Thu-Sat for 6900 ISK. Lunch buffet is served in each table (3900 ISK).

PERLAN

A classy buffet on a revolving floor, breathtaking Reykjavík view. 7.890 ISK.

✍ SARI PELTONEN
📷 JULIA STAPLES

Xmas | Merry Transcendentalism



The Bewitching Hours Before Christmas

Are the Yule Lads, Santa, and the Dalai Lama all reincarnated?

Just the other day, Ingimundur the electrician told me he has regular contact with a vegetable vendor who lived in 1732 during the bubonic plague in London. Þorvaldur the mechanic explained that he has lived over two hundred lives, including: a Dutchman for the East India Company and an Italian monk-scribe during the fourteenth century. For those of you who have been reading this column, you will note that there is no shortage of Icelanders who believe in reincarnation, afterlife, a universal collective consciousness, communicate with ghosts, fairies, elves, flora—even the enigmatic huldufólk (hidden people); and yet, few will stare you straight in the eye and admit it. Those that do, quite often ask you for complete anonymity. "Yes," they say, "I've seen elves, but for heaven's sake don't tell a soul. People are very judgemental, and I still have to lead a regular life."

Sigrún is four years old. And I can tell you (she's the daughter of Guðmundur, a friend), she believes in elves and fairies, she has an invisible pal who she plays with all the time; she also believes in the thirteen Yule Lads. She would have no problem accepting that I was formerly a Mongolian warrior, a knight of the Great Ghengis Khan. I'm sure she would ask me if I could show her my yurt.

Although we 'sensible' adults no longer believe in Santa Claus nor the Easter Bunny, we do everything in our power to maintain the myth for the sake of our children. Is it that we consider this important for nourishing their creative impulses, their imagination; or perhaps for honouring age old traditions? I propose that we actually want to believe ourselves. There's nothing like winking at your wife while watching your five-year old unwrap his presents with utter abandon, is there?

In Iceland, the Yule Lads (thirteen of them in place of the one Coca Cola Santa Claus), who range from the rambunctious sheep-harassing Stekkjastaur, to the candle gobbling Kertasníkir (in the old days candles were made from pork dripping and thus edible) arrive in succession from the 12th of December all the way up to Christmas eve. Rather than rumbling down the chimney to place gifts under the Christmas tree, they scarper in and out of hedgerows, bound over hillocks, scramble up walls, all for a peek inside your child's old boot. Of course, it's a great way to get the kids to get to bed early, finish their

dinner, have their homework all in order: if you're good you'll get a gift every night; if, on the other hand, you're misbehaving, you'll end up with a potato in your shoe.

Recently, Guðmundur had a dilemma with Sigrún. Sigrún, like many Icelandic children, has been doing a good job of upping Icelandic milk sales: The milk company, MS, plasters the Yule Lads in all manner of hoologanism on the sides of their milk cartons in the weeks leading up to Christmas. One fine morning, Sigrún looks up from her Cheerios, and says: "Dad, in Iceland we have 13 Santas. But on TV there's only one. He drives a flying carriage led by a bunch of reindeer, and the elves help him make all the presents for Christmas. Who are the real Christmas men?"

Trying to get his folklore straight (and you gotta take your hat off to him), Guðmundur said: "Well, you know, 'cause we live in Iceland, we're much closer to the North Pole than American children. So here in Iceland, the thirteen Yule Lads do the gift-giving on Santa's behalf instead." And then, Guðmundur considered carefully what he was going to say next. He realised he'd opened a whole can of worms. How was he going to explain Grýla, the troll-mother of the Yule Lads and, heaven forbid, the Yule Cat (who is said to eat children if they don't don a new piece of clothing at Christmas)? Thankfully for him, Sigrún bought the whole caboodle and had to dash off for kindergarten shortly thereafter. Apparently she hasn't yet dug any further, but Guðmundur is inventing a complete new Saga in his head just in case.

In the words of the author Jonathan Black: "Time is nothing but a measure of the changing positions of objects in space, and, as many a scientist, mystic or mad man knows, in the beginning there were no objects in space." All we have to do is just fill in the blanks, and everything comes clearly into place.

As to whether Santa and the thirteen Yule Lads are really related, you'd have to ask Þorvaldur. He's lead so many lives, he's sure to have been one of them once. That is, right after he was reincarnated as the Dalai Lama. ♡

✍ MARK VINCENZ
ILLUSTRATION BY INGA MARÍA

*Pure Beef!
If U Dont Like It
U Dont Pay 4 It*

*"It's hard 2 beat
a good meal
at good price"
Washington Post*

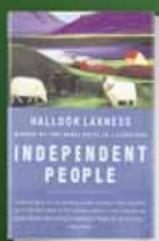


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The Encyclopaedia of Icelandic Holidays

The A-Ö of the Icelandic holiday season

By Haukur S Magnússon

With additional reporting from Paul F Nikolov, Sveinn Birgir Björnsson, Páll Hilmarsson and Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir

Illustrations by Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

AÐFANGADAGUR

(Ath-founga-dager)

December 24th, Aðfangadagur, is the day Icelanders celebrate Christmas (as opposed to December 25th in most countries). The first half of the day usually goes towards finishing off all of the last minute preparations, making food, wrapping presents, bathing and putting on nice clothes. Children are often occupied by the television set, as most stations broadcast a non-stop programme of cartoons through the day.

Six o' clock marks the official start of Christmas in Iceland (see our guide to conducting Icelandic Christmas on page 2 for more info on why that is), and this is when most households sit down to enjoy a pleasant holiday meal. After dinner, most people commence opening their presents. They then hang out and indulge until bedtime.



AÐVENTA

(Ath-venta)

Adventan, or the Advent, is the month leading up to Christmas. Icelanders celebrate each Sunday of the Advent (starting on the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas) by lighting candles on an Advent Wreath ("Aðventukrans"), which is usually a four-candle (one for each Sunday of the Advent) evergreen wreath. The first Sunday of Advent marks the time most Icelanders start decorating for the holidays and preparing in general.

AÐVENTUKRANS

(Ath-ventou-kraans)

See: Adventa.

AÐVENTULJÓS

(Ath-ventou-lyows)

Adventljós, or Advent light, is a decorative object somewhat unique to Iceland. This seven-armed electric candlestick is found in at least one window of almost every Icelandic home throughout the holiday season. See our Xmas guide for more info.

ANNAR Í JÓLUM

(Aann-arr ee yo!-luwm)

December 26th, the second day of Christmas, is the designated party day of the holiday season (New Year's notwithstanding). The day itself usually entails heavy lounging and attending a family Christmas party or two, but the evening has most of the action, with bars and clubs opening for business around midnight. Revellers like to go out at that time, decked in their fancy holiday attire and reconnecting with friends and acquaintances that they haven't seen for all of three days.

ÁRAMÓT

(our-a-mowt)

See: Gamlársdagur/Gamlárskvöld.

ÁRAMÓTAANNÁLL

(our-a-mowt-a-annoull)

Icelanders are fond of watching television on New Year's Eve, with most of the day's programming dedicated to detailing the fast fading year's events. Second to the Áramótaskaup in popularity is the Áramótaannáll on RÚV, a collage of the year's TV news stories with commentary from the news team. An international version and a local one run back to back. Check newspapers' TV listings for more info.



ÁRAMÓTASKAUPIÐ

(our-a-mowt-a-skoj-pith)

Gathering around the TV on New Year's Eve to watch the Áramótaskaup comedy special

on RÚV is an old and honoured Icelandic tradition—in fact the streets fall completely silent during its broadcast time of 22:30-23:30. The show itself is a comedy revue featuring many of Iceland's best-loved actors that parodies the year's events in sketches and song. The quality differs from year to year, but Icelanders love even the especially bad ones (because then they can complain to each other about how much it sucked). It is not subtitled, so the fun is likely lost on non-Icelandic speakers. It's worth checking out, though, you can always make fun of Icelandic TV's low production standards.



ATTIRE

Icelanders like to dress smart and snazzy over the holidays. Formal attire is usually expected in the parties of the 24th and 25th, on other days go for neat casual outfits.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Iceland doesn't have a lot of original Xmas songs, although there are a few to be found. Mostly the tunes meant to get you into the holiday spirit are translations of international Xmas ones (some of them don't have anything whatsoever to do with Xmas), so the stuff blaring from the radio in the knick-knack shop should sound familiar. There are some popular local songs, however, the most infamous one being Sniglabandið's Jólaljól ("Christmas bike"). For more on Icelandic Xmas music, read Dr. Gunni's column elsewhere in this pullout.

CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

See also: Jólásveinar, Santa Claus

The Christmas stockings tradition is celebrated in Iceland, although it differs greatly from what you might be used to. As explained elsewhere, there are thirteen Yuletide lads in Iceland, and each one comes down from the mountains on a designated day before Christmas bearing gifts for children to be placed in their shoe or stocking left by an open window. It should be noted that well-behaved children receive something of value, whereas ill behaved children usually receive a rotten potato.

COMMERCE

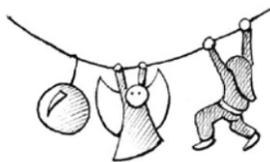
See also: Þorláksmessa

Like elsewhere, Christmas and commerce have very close ties in Iceland. Stores stay open until 11 PM on Þorláksmessa, the 23rd of December, and until noon on the day of Christmas Eve. This is done in a mutual agreement between late shoppers and greedy shop owners who want to make sure that no Króna is left behind.

DANCING

See also: Jólaboð, jólaball, jólatré

Dancing around the Christmas tree is still a widespread fad at Christmas dances in children's schools around the country, but the tradition is slowly dying out as a practice in homes. It involves holding hands around the tree and walking repeatedly in circles whilst singing Christmas carols. Hours of fun.



DECORATING

See also: Adventa, Adventljós

Icelanders like to decorate their houses a lot in time for Christmas, with the start of Advent usually marking the official 'OK time' for decking the halls. Decorations are similar to what may be found in the rest of the Christmas-celebrating world: pine branches, light sets, Santa-related effigies and various knick-knacks and doodads. American style lighting monstrosities are uncommon, but not unheard of.



DRINKING

See also: Annar í jólum, Gamlársdagur/Gamlárskvöld

Heavy drinking is generally not condoned on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day—although indulging in a glass of wine or two isn't frowned upon—as the days' festivities are generally reserved for family activities. The 26th, 31st and New Year's Day are popular for binge drinking and partying, however, as are any weekend days that fall between the two days.

EATING OUT

See also: Christmas buffets, commerce

Icelanders generally don't like to eat out during the holiday season. If you are visiting, and you plan on dining at a restaurant during the holidays (see our special Xmas listings for details), chances are you'll be dining with some fellow tourists. However, attending special Xmas buffets is a popular activity over the advent.



FAMILY

Icelandic Christmas is all about one's family, extended and otherwise. Generally speaking, most Icelanders will be busy spending time with their families from December 24th until the eve of the 26th, so don't expect that hot boy (or girl) you hook up with on the 23rd to be available for any immediate follow-up sessions (you should still try, though).



FLUGELDAR

(flug-oeld-arrrrr)

See also: Gamlársdagur/Gamlárskvöld

Flugeldar ("fireworks") are an essential part of the Icelandic New Year's Eve experience, in fact, the sale and deployment of fireworks is only legal in Iceland between December 28—January 6. Like everything else Icelanders are fond of, they take their fireworks seriously—most of those who have witnessed the mass employment of fireworks at New Year's will agree that the act is far beyond over-the-top. But most will also attest that the display is striking and beautiful. An added bonus is that most of the places selling them are doing so for charity, or to fund rescue teams.

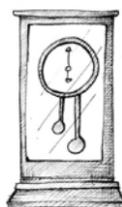
Expect small blasts here and there as of December 27th, culminating in an all-out orgy of explosions around midnight of New Year's Eve.

GAMLÁRSDAGUR/GAMLÁRSKVÖLD

(gaaml-ouwrs-daager / kvöeld)

See also: Fireworks, drinking, Áramótaskaup, Áramótaannáll, Áramótabrenna [Note: Gamlársdagur refers to New Year's Eve's Day, and Gamlárskvöld refers to New Year's Eve itself]

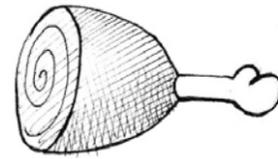
The coming of the New Year is celebrated pretty heavily in Iceland. Drinks are drunk, fireworks are lit and vomit is, eventually, spewed. Although there is no rule, most folks like to gather for a nice dinner feast with family and/or friends at the start of the evening (or



late in the afternoon). They hang out, drink drinks, play board games and watch the TV recap of the preceding year. Many head out to their local New Year's bonfire, a complete list of which is published in local newspapers on the days leading up to the 31st.

After watching the Áramótaskaup comedy revue and lighting some fireworks, most will head to a rowdier, less family oriented gathering and stay there 'til dawn.

A note about the word "áramót": like many Icelandic words, it is impressively and descriptively sensible, and it does not have a counterpart in the English language. Quite literally, "áramót" translates as "the meeting of years". Makes sense, doesn't it?



HANGIKJÖT

(Howng-e-kjoet)

See also: Jólamatúr

Hangikjöt—literally meaning "hung meat"—is smoked Icelandic lamb which takes its name from the old tradition of smoking food in order to preserve it by hanging it from the rafters of a smoking shed. Hangikjöt is traditional Christmas meat, often served with potatoes in a sweet white sauce and pickled red cabbage. It's pretty awesome.



HAMBORGARHRYGGUR

(Haam-bouwrger-hreggurrrr)

See also: Dining

A traditional Christmas food eaten on the 24th at six o'clock. It is pork, usually with a honey glazing and pineapple, cooked in an oven for a few hours. This is a pretty heavy meal, resulting in the number of heart attacks increasing around Xmas when people who really shouldn't eat fatty meat gorge themselves almost to death.

HEITT SÚKKULAÐI

(hate sooqou-laethi)

Indulging in a cup of freshly made heitt súkkulaði ("hot chocolate") is an essential part of the Icelandic holiday experience. The classic recipe is thus: melt one plate of 'Suðusúkkulaði' (available everywhere one might buy chocolate) in a double boiler with 1-2 cups of water. In a separate container, heat one litre of milk to the boiling point. Slowly stir melted chocolate into boiling milk. Enjoy.

JÓLABALL

(yo!-la-boll)

See also: Jólaboð

The jólaball, or Christmas dance, is a longstanding tradition where children are herded by their parents or schools to hang out, eat cake and candy and dance around a decorated tree while singing some classic Christmas tunes. More often than not, one or more of the Yule lads will make an appearance and disburse small gifts of candies.

JÓLABOÐ

(yo!-la-boeth)

The Icelandic Xmas party—jólaboð—is traditionally a family gathering that involves copious amounts of eating Christmas fare such as hangikjöt and cookies, drinking coffee and chocolate, talking about the weather and engaging in the latest board games (although Trivial Pursuit is always a classic).

JÓLADAGATAL

(yo!-la-dae-ga-tael)

The jóladagatal ("Christmas calendar") is used to count down the days from December 1st until the 24th and is a must for children of all ages—some adults like to indulge as well. The most common variety has a differently shaped piece of chocolate for each day, although some of the crappier ones just have dumb, holiday related pictures. Some families like to craft their own, wrapping small gifts for each day.

JÓLADAGUR

(yo!-la-daguer)

See also: Jólaboð

Jóladaur—Christmas Day—is the big day for family gatherings and Christmas parties. Many like to sleep in and relax before putting on formal attire and heading out to a friend's house to indulge in some hangikjöt or hot chocolate. Everything is closed. A very relaxed day, for most.

JÓLAGLÖGG

(yo!-la-gludge)

See also: Jólahlæðborð, drinking

A hot beverage consisting of red wine, vodka, and spices. Often served with raisins. The word can also just mean a party of friends around Christmas time who get together under the pretext that they will drink jólaglökk, when all they really want to do is drink anything with alcohol in it. You know, because of the dark.

JÓLAHLÆÐBORÐ

(yo!-la-hlaeth-boerth)

See also: Christmas dining, eating out, Hamborgarhryggur

A fairly new tradition in Iceland, connected to the number of restaurants increasing in later years. A Jólahlæðborð is a Christmas buffet that people attend in groups, usually co-workers go together for a night of eating, but mostly drinking. Many a marriage has been put to a serious strain after a drunken night at a Jólahlæðborð. Something about Christmas brings out the adulterers in some people.



JÓLAKORT

(yo!-la-kowrt)

Many Icelanders choose to parlay greetings to their friends and loved ones over the holidays via the mailing of Christmas cards, or jólakort. They will most often feature a generic Christmassy motif and some standard well wishes, although some use the opportunities to send along pictures of the family.



JÓLAKÖTTURINN

(yo!-la-koett-ur-enn)

To avoid, as the saying goes, "going to the Christmas cat," children are required to receive at least one piece of new clothing in time for Christmas each year. Otherwise, the cat will eat them.

JÓLAMATUR

(yo!-la-maw-tuer)

See also: Christmas buffets, rjúpur, kæst skata, hangikjöt, jólaöl, jólasnákökur Like in most other places, nourishing oneself over the holidays is all about indulgence. When it comes to jólamatur ("Christmas food"): the richer, sweeter, fattier and saltier, the better.



JÓLAÖL

(yo!-la-oe)

See also: Christmas dining

The ultimate Christmas drink, Jólalög (or: "Christmas ale") is created by mixing an elusive ratio of Malt and Appelsin orange soda. Although you can now buy this drink premixed, but it's just as fun to mix it yourself, according to taste. Note that it contains no alcohol. Which is nice for a change.

JÓLASMÁKÖKUR

(yo!-la-smouw-koek-er)

See also: *Dining*

Jólasmákökur ("Christmas cookies") are an essential part of the Icelandic holiday experience. Most households bake their own cookies in the weeks leading up to Christmas, making an average of 3-5 different types. They are then consumed at Christmas gatherings or while lounging about with ones new presents. Some classic types include: Piparkökur (ginger snaps"), Mömmukökur (ginger snap-type cookies sandwiched around white frosting), súkkulaðibitakökur (chocolate chip cookies) and hálfmánar (rhubarb preserves wrapped in dough), although the varieties are endless.

JÓLATRÉ

(yo!-la-tr-yeah!)

See also: *Þorláksmessa, Christmas presents*

Icelanders' Christmas trees are usually installed on December 23rd, with the actual decorating taking place on the 24th (although this does differ between households). Various organisations, such as the local rescue squads, sell live trees to fund their operations, although private companies also partake. Fake plastic trees aren't very popular, although some folks prefer them.



KÆST SKATA

(kjae-st skaaa-taaaa)

See also: *Þorláksmessa*

The consumption of kæst skata, or rotted skate, on the 23rd of December is a holiday tradition derived from the West Fjords of Iceland. The dish—which many swear by, and others find especially foul—is most often imbibed at special skate gatherings around noon on the 23rd, and is often served along with potatoes, butter, rye bread and shots of brennivín (most West Fjords experts recommend drinking milk with the skate, as the fish is "intoxicating in and of itself").

The skate is a chondrichyte, and therefore ferments when allowed to rot, as its urine is distributed through its flesh and goes through a chemical change over time. They are in fact poisonous if eaten before the fermentation process is complete. It is fermented by throwing it in a box and letting it lie for three weeks.



LAUFABRAUÐ

(loi-fa-brau-eth)

See also: *Adventan*

The making of laufabrauð, or "leaf-bread," is usually a family-affair taking place early in December. People gather together to cut intricate patterns into this deep-fried, thin flatbread, which is then enjoyed as a tasty snack to accompany any Christmas event or meal. It goes exceedingly well with butter.

NÝARSDAGUR

(knee-ouwrs-da-guer)

See also: *Drinking*

Icelanders like to spend most of New Year's Day feeling hung-over and sorry for themselves. As the evening approaches, many will start pulling themselves together and dressing up for New Year's Day banquets or parties that have grown popular lately. Others will stay in watching DVDs and complaining.

OPENING HOURS

See also: *Commerce, eating out*

If you are touring in Iceland for the holiday season, we can only hope someone told you of Iceland's antiquated opening hours for that time. You will not have much luck locating open restaurants—or open anything-else—during Christmas or on New Year's. Check out our holiday listings guide for info on places that are actually open and happy to serve you.



PRESENTS

See also: *Commerce, Aðfangadagur, jólatré*

Of course Xmas is all about the presents, and a lot of debt is incurred during the season, even though we've yet to discern completely how the act of spreading goodwill through gifts is affected by the full impact of the Kreppa. There are no specific guidelines for Xmas gift

giving in Iceland, but a good rule of thumb is to avoid being extravagant in your gift choices, unless maybe something extravagant is called for or expected on the other end.

Generally most folks tend to stick with bestowing presents upon their immediate family and loved ones, although some like to spread the joy to their entire group of friends. In any case, there's nothing wrong with asking. Xmas presents are stored under the Xmas tree until they're due to be opened.

RELIGION AND CHURCH

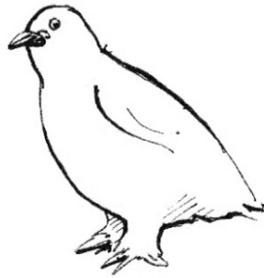
Even though around 80% of them are enrolled in the State Church, Icelanders have never been known to be particularly enthusiastic churchgoers or observers of religious customs. Indeed, Christmas isn't a particularly religious holiday in Iceland. However, many folks like to attend Church services and concerts during the holidays, particularly on the 24th and the 31st. Check with your tourist information centre for complete church listings.

The ringing of the church bells of Reykjavík's Lutheran Cathedral is broadcast on all major television and radio stations throughout the country promptly at 18:00 on Christmas Eve, at which point everyone wishes each other a Merry Christmas and sits down to eat.

RETURNING GIFTS

See also: *Commerce*

Exchanging one's Xmas gifts in lieu of something more desirable is a common practice in Iceland. Most stores will accept returns until the second week of January, although policies differ.



RJÚPUR

(ryooe-purr)

See also: *Jólamatur*

Wild fowl rjúpur, or ptarmigan, are a popular main course for many families Christmas meals. The small birds can be delicious if handled properly, and have a rich, gamey sort of taste. The Grapevine recommends trying some if you have the chance.

SANTA CLAUS

See also: *Jólasveinar*

We have no need for your international big, fat, jolly, capitalist greed-mongering Coca Cola Santa Claus in Iceland, as we have thirteen of our own that are much cooler. He still makes an appearance from time to time. Oh we like him fine enough, he's a jolly good fellow and all.

VACATIONS

Icelanders usually take pretty hefty Xmas vacations, with December 24, 25 and 26 all being legal holidays, as well as December 31st and January 1st. A lot of folks actually take Dec 23-Jan 2 off entirely—so don't expect a lot to get done during the Xmas season.

ÞORLÁKSMESSA

(thoe-r-louwks-mess-a)

See also: *Kæst skata, commerce*

In celebration of one of only two Icelandic saints, St. Þorlákur, Icelanders eat fermented skate, which preferably is swallowed with copious amounts of Icelandic Brennivín schnapps. Then, they will traditionally gather on the shopping street Laugavegur to do some last minute shopping (although some do the bulk of their shopping on that day), drink Christmas beer or hot chocolate and have a merry ol' time. Also, this is traditionally the day that children are allowed to decorate the Christmas tree.

ÞRETTÁNDINN

(thu-rhett-ouwn-din-n)

January 6 is Þrettándinn ("the thirteenth"), the thirteenth and final day of Christmas according to Icelandic tradition. The event is celebrated with torch processions, bonfires, fireworks, and the king and queen of the hidden people traditionally join the festivities. Back in olden times, it was a scary time to be out and about, as the hidden people can be surprisingly sinister. ☹

JÓLASVEINAR

(yo!-la-svain-er)

See also: *Christmas stockings, Santa Claus*

The Icelandic Jólásveinar (Yule Lads) have little to do with the international Santa Claus. They are descended from trolls, and were originally bogeymen used to scare children. During this century they have mellowed, and sometimes don red suits. Their number varied in old times from one region of Iceland to another. The number thirteen is first seen in a poem about Grýla (the Lads' mother) in the 18th century, and their names were published by Jón Árnason in his folklore collection in 1862. About 60 different names of Yuletide Lads are known. They visit the National Museum on each of the 13 days before Christmas.

On December 12 the Yuletide Lads begin to come to town. The first is **Stekkjastaur** (Sheepfold Stick), who would try to drink the milk from the farmers' ewes.

On December 13 **Giljagaur** (Gully Oaf) arrives. Before the days of milking machines, he would sneak into the cowshed and skim the froth off the pails of milk.

The Lad who arrives on December 14 is **Stúfur** (Shorty) who, as his name implies, is on the small side. He was also known as **Pönnuskefill** (pan-scraper), as he scraped scraps of food off the pans.



On December 15, **Pvörusleikir** (Spoon-licker) comes down from the mountains. He would steal the wooden spoon that had been used for stirring. When he visits the National Museum, he goes looking for wooden spoons.

On December 16, **Pottasleikir** (Pot-licker) comes visiting. He tried to snatch pots that had not been washed, and lick the scraps from them.

Askasleikir (Bowl-licker) arrives on December 17. He hid under beds and if someone put his wooden food-bowl in the floor, he grabbed it and licked it clean.

Hurðaskellir (Door-slammer) comes on December 18. He is an awfully noisy fellow, who is always slamming doors and keeping people awake.

The Lad who is expected on December 19 is called **Skyrgámur** (Curd Glutton), because he loves skyr (milk curd) so much that he sneaks into the pantry and gobbles up all the skyr from the tub there.



Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage Pilferer) comes on December 20. He loves sausages of all kinds, and steals them whenever he can.

On December 21, **Gluggagegir** (Peepster) arrives. He is not as greedy as some of his brothers, but awfully nosy, peeping through windows and even stealing toys he likes the look of.

On December 22 **Gáttaþefur** (Sniffer) comes calling. He has a big nose, and he loves the smell of cakes being baked for Christmas. He often tries to snatch a cake or two for himself. December 22 was sometimes called **hlakkandi** (looking forward), because the children had started looking forward to Christmas.

On 23 December, St. Þorlákur's Day, **Ketkrókur** (Meat Hook) arrives. He adores all meat. In olden days he would lower a hook down the kitchen chimney and pull up a leg of lamb hanging from a rafter, or a bit of smoked lamb from a pan, as smoked lamb was traditionally cooked on St. Þorlákur's Day.

Kertasnikir (Candle Beggar) comes on Christmas Eve, December 24. In olden times, candlelight was the brightest light available. Candles were so rare and precious that it was a treat for children to be given a candle at Christmas. And poor Candle Beggar wanted one too.

During the thirteen days before Christmas, the National Museum presents actors dressed as the old-school Jólásveinar. They show up around 11 AM each day. National Museum, Suðurgata 41, 101 Reykjavík. Tel. 530 2200. ☹ (By Paul F Nikolov. Originally appeared in issue 16/2005. Santa Claus drawings are also from the same issue)

Xmas | Opening Hours

Holiday Opening Hours

Your Grapevine Guide

Compiled by Michael Zelenko and Louise Petersson

Since there is a small chance that some of you reading this are tourists stranded in Iceland over the Holidays, and since pretty much all of Iceland shuts down during said Holidays, we decided to compile a little list for you, detailing what's actually open during the season, and when. We tried to make it as comprehensive as we could, but of course we might have missed something. We are not perfect robots after all.

A good rule of thumb to go by when planning any of your Holiday activities is you're your research. Go by the assumption that any place of service or commerce is closed, then call up the ones you're interested in checking out to make sure – this will help you avoid disappointment.

The Official Tourist Information Centre should have the most up-to-date information out there, so be sure to pay them a visit.

Buses

Call 354.540.2700

Reykjavík Excursions:

24: Tours operating:
Golden Circle Tour and Blue Lagoon Tour
Other days are operated according to program and schedule.

Iceland Excursions:

24: Tours operating:
Golden Circle Classic, Greater Area Reykjavík Sightseeing, The Blue Lagoon and Keflavík airport and The Blue Lagoon.
25: Tours operating:
Gullfoss & Geysir Express, The Blue Lagoon and Northern Lights Mystery.
31: All tours operating except: Blue Lagoon/Viking Horse at 14:00, Blue Lagoon at 16:15 and 16:30 and Northern Lights at 20:00. There is a special New Years Eve tour entitled Bonfire and Fireworks at 20:00. Other days are operated according to program and schedule.

The Official Tourist Information Centre (The Centre)

23: 9-18
24: 9-12
25: Closed
26: 10-14
31: 10-14
1: 9-18

The Blue Lagoon

23: 10-17
24: 10-13 (restaurant closed)
25: 10-15 (restaurant closed)
26: 10-20
31: 10-16
1: 10-20

Pools

Árbæjarlaug:

24: 8-12:30
25: Closed
26: 12-18
31: 8-12
1: Closed

Breiðholtslaug:

24: 6:30-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: 06:30-12:30
1: Closed

Grafarvogslaug:

24: 06:30-13
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: 06:30-13
1: Closed

Laugardalslaug:

TBA in December

Sundhöll Reykjavíkur:

24: 06:30-12:30
25: Closed
26: 10-18

31: 06:30-12:30
1: Closed

Vesturbæjarlaug:

23: 06:30-18:00
24: 8-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: 8-12:30
1: Closed

Museums /Galleries

The Culture House

24: Exhibitions and shop are open from 11 to 15. The café is closed.
25: Closed.
26 to 30: Exhibitions and shop are open from 11 to 17. The café is closed.
31: Exhibitions and shop are open from 11 to 15. The café is closed.
1: Exhibitions and shop are open from 11 to 15. The café is closed.

The Reykjavík Art Museum: Hafnarhúsið, Kjarvalsstaðir and Ásmundarsafn

24, 25, 31, 1: Closed
Gerðuberg Cultural Center
23: 13-16
24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 1: Closed

Kling & Bang

24, 25, 26, 31, 1: Closed

Gallery Ágúst

24, 31: Closed

Stores:

Lyf & Heilsa Drugstore, Egilsgata 3, 101 Reykjavík

24: 9-12
25, 26, 27: Closed
31: 9-12
1, 2, 3: Closed

Lyf & Heilsa Drugstore, Hringbraut 121, 107 Reykjavík

24: 10-12
25, 26: Closed
31: 10-12
1: Closed

Kringlan Shopping Mall:

23: 10-23
24: 10-13
25, 26: Closed
31: 10-13
1: Closed

10-11 grocery stores: ALWAYS OPEN! - select locations.

Bars that got back to us

Prikið:
24: Closed
25: Open until midnight.

The English Pub:

24: 12-02:00
25: 12-06:00
26: 12-06:00

31: 12-06:00
1: 12-05:00

Cafe Paris:

24: 9-14.00
25: Closed
26-30: 9-01:00
31: 9-18:00
1: 12-01:00

Restaurants Frequently Open During the Holidays

Babalú

Open until 21:00
Christmas Day and Eve. Closed after 18:00 New Year's Eve.

Bistró Vox-Hotel Nordica

Open every day.

Café Paris

Open until 20:00, New Year's Eve.

Fiskfélagið/The Fish Company

31, 1: Open as usual

Geysir Bistro Bar

24, 25: Closed
26: 12-22:30
31: Closed
1: 17-22:30

Grillhúsið

24, 25: Closed
26: Opens at 14
31: Closed
1: Opens at 16

Fjalakötturinn-Hotel Reykjavík Centrum

Open for Dinner
Christmas day and eve with reservations.

Icelandic Fish & Chips:

Open New Year's Eve and Day.

Íslenski Barinn

24: 11:30-16:00
25: Closed
26: 15:00-03:00
31: New Years Eve Menu from 18:00
1: 15:00-03:00

Kaffi Sólon

Open New Year's eve and day.

Tabasco's

Open 24th, 25th and 26th.

Lounge 1919

Open 24th, 25th and 26th of December. Open New Year's eve until 21:00 and New Year's day.

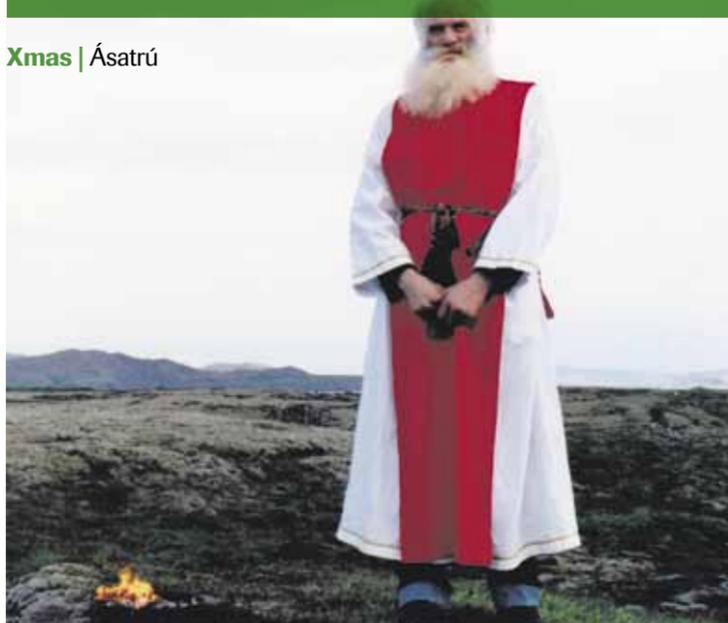
Restaurant & Bar Hotel 101

Open New Year's Eve and Day.

Tapas Bar

Closed 24-26 December
Closed 1 January
Open all other days (Including December 31)

Xmas | Ásatrú



The Original Christmas

The heathens were first!

Most of the Western world is about to celebrate a festival that's usually referred to as Christmas (or "jól" in Icelandic). "Christmas" was originally known as the winter solstice festival. It always been an important heathen celebration and is indeed much older than Christianity. In Iceland, heathendom is still very much alive. Case in point: the Ásatrú Association was granted recognition as a registered religious organization in 1973 and currently has 1.382 members (and counting).

Ásatrú is a heathen religion that has been practiced in Iceland since its settlement and throughout its periods of Christianisation and Christendom. The purpose of the Ásatrú Association today is to keep alive the old traditions and beliefs of the Nordic folklore. The priests, or goðar, conduct name-giving ceremonies, weddings and funerals and the most important ritual, the communal blót. "During a blót we gather around a fire and call for the gods and wights ["vættir" – supernatural beings] to join us. We call to the north, south, east and west. A horn filled with any kind of drink goes around the circle and you lift the horn and hail to what ever is in your heart." Alda Vala Ásdísardóttir from the Ásatrú Association tells me as I pay her a visit.

Followers of Ásatrú believe in spirits, gods and other beings from the Nordic pantheism. "Believing in your own might and power is also accepted," she says. The Eddas, the poems and tales of Norse Mythology written down in Iceland during the 13th century, are used as a source of wisdom. The poem Hávamál is used as a moral guide and the poem Völuspá tells of the creation of the Earth. An important part of ásatrú is being in contact with earth and nature according to Alda Vala. "We are a part of nature and nature is a part of us. We interact. Many religions don't have that point of view; in other religions the higher power only comes from above. In heathendom, we work together with nature."

THE HEATHENS WERE FIRST!

"The winter solstice festival is the original Christmas," says Alda Vala. The heathen festival was celebrated because the days were getting brighter. It was later absorbed into and equated with the Christian festival of Christmas. During Christianisation, church leaders hoped to replace the heathen customs with Christian traditions by making the winter solstice festival coincide with the Christian celebrations held at the time. The effort was never completely successful, however, and eventually many winter solstice customs were simply incorporated into Christmas observances.

In ásatrú, jól is recognized as lasting for 12 days. It begins on the date of the winter solstice, which usually takes place around December 21 to 22. At the time of the solstice the members of the Ásatrú Association get together and have a blót. Afterwards they share a meal that is preceded by welcoming the sun back. "The children have a vital part of the ceremony. They are given candles to spiral more light."

Alda Vala explains that even the modern Christmas tree is derived from heathendom. "During jól you decorated the tree of life. Decorating, or making offerings to a tree during this time was a prayer for fruitful times ahead."

The ásatrú flock celebrate Christmas just like anyone else after the winter solstice ceremony has taken place. They gather with friends and family and exchange gifts. "All the days around jól have always been a big festival for heathens. It is the darkest time of year, so why not fest when you need it the most? ☘"

LOUISE PETERSSON

The History of Icelandic Rock music | Part 13



The least obnoxious Xmas music – ever

Christmas music is painful at best. Except it is actually Christmas—plus/minus a week. Hearing absolutely horrible songs like the Icelandic version of Wizard's I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday sung by heavy metal Eurovision contest dude Eiríkur Hauksson—say, in a crowded mall with red eyed people looking for gifts, gifts, gifts all around you—is pure hell. It makes you want to take out all the fuckers in the mall with a machine gun.

OK, I'm slightly exaggerating, but you get my drift. That said, this is the least obnoxious Xmas music—ever: Alli Rúts – Kátir voru krakkar – 4 barnalög (Kids were merry - 4 children's songs), a 7" EP from 1972. For starters this masterpiece only has four songs.

The record cover sets the tone. It shows Alli in crude Santa costume with two girls in early seventies surroundings. Alli's vocal stylings are weird and sound similar, I think, to the Finnish legend M.A. Numminen: shrill and rough, like the sounds you might expect coming from a strange recluse at a remote farm. Or an old insane witch. The backing music was recorded by few steady musicians in a session at the old radio building. The session took one day and Alli later said of it: "We were all going nearly insane!"

The four tracks are the jolly Grýlugæla, Ég er jólasveinn ("I'm a Santa Claus"), and a sung version of the Hot Butter's 1972 instrumental hit Popcorn—"Grýlupopp". Alli's lyrics revolve around the mystical figure of Grýla, the Icelandic Yuletide lads' mom who, according to Icelandic legend, eats naughty kids after

boiling them in her cauldron. In Alli's version she eats popcorn though.

The EP starts with Alli's version of the Pippi Longstockings theme song. This caused some controversy, as the main record mogul in 1972, Svavar Gestas with his SG label, had gotten children's star Hanna Valdís to sing the same song for an imminent EP (with different lyrics). With help from the Swedish rights company SG got Alli's version banned from the radio.

Alli Rúts (Albert Rútsson) had a long history in the entertainment biz when he did this EP, his sole vinyl output. Son of a famous accordion player, Alli was young when he started to entertain with comedy, mimicry and singing. His idol was Ómar Ragnarsson and Alli took his admiration way too far on few occasions by simply copying routines from Ómar's program. Like Ómar (spoiler alert), Alli worked as Santa during Christmas, often doing up to 12 gigs a day. It's been a long time since Alli entertained but he kept his name afloat by opening up a car dealership: Alli Rúts' Car Dealership.

I don't know about you: But nothing rings in Christmas for me like hearing Alli's EP. ☘ - DR. GUNNI

By Dr. Gunni, based on his 2000 book Eru ekki allir í stuði? (Rock in Iceland). A revised update of the book is forthcoming in 2010.

Four other non-obnoxious Xmas records:



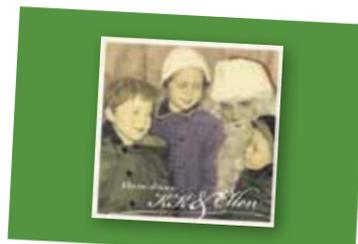
HAUKUR MORTHENS – HÁTÍÐ Í BÆ
A solid Xmas and children's songs LP from 1964 by Haukur Morthens, the gentle crooner all rightful Icelanders admire.



ÓMAR RAGNARSSON – THE GÁTTAÐEFUR TRILOGY
Three LPs done in 1966, 1968 and 1971. Genius Ómar Ragnarsson stars as one of the Icelandic Santas, Gáttaþefur ("Doorway Smelly"), having jolly Xmas fun with a group of singing kids.



SVANHILDUR JAKOBSDÓTTIR – JÓLIN JÓLIN
A very well made Xmas LP from 1972. Nothing brings in Xmas like Svanhildur's clear and merry voice. She sings Xmas standards as well as songs specially whittled into the Xmas song tradition for this occasion.



KK & ELLEN – JÓLIN ERU AÐ KOMA
Lovely siblings KK and Ellen Kristjánsdóttir sing Xmas standards like they really mean it. Came out in 2005 but sounds about thirty years older. Which is good when it comes to Christmas songs. Nothing ruins the Xmas spirit faster than modern technology.

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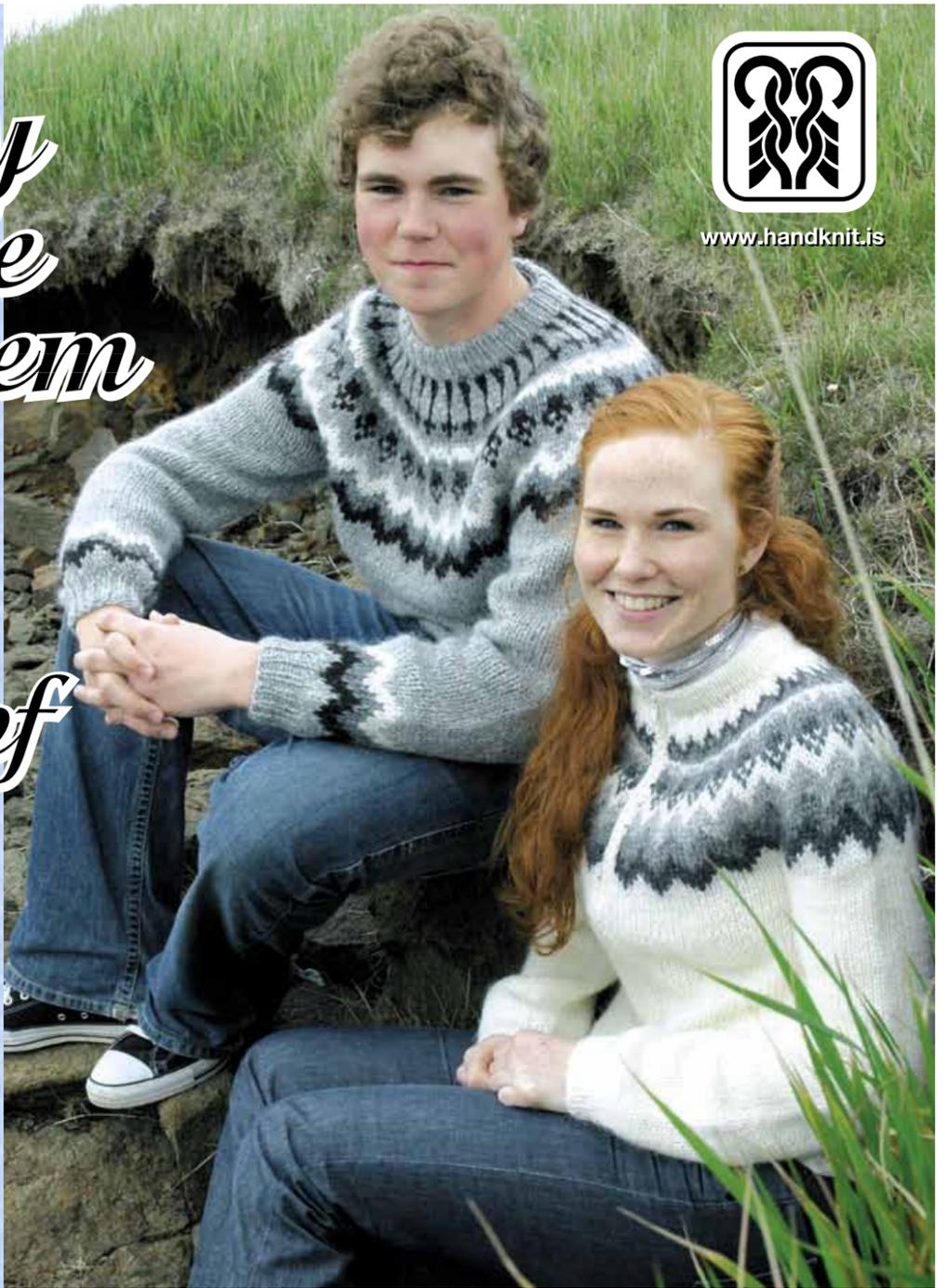
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Xmas | Shopping

Merry Taxmas

Protecting The Monopolies



The lights went up this week in Reykjavík. This holiday season is nigh... and the darkness is here. For the next three months green energy will illuminate tired trees, sea-bitten windows and what is left of our optimism. Being my fourth Christmas here, these lights now symbolise something else entirely. They are the silent warning that the biggest annual greed swindle is about to kick off. It's taxing time.

These lights cast an acidic glow onto a group of counteractive regulations at the offices of Tollstjóri, the Directorate of Customs. Among other things, they collect your VAT, taxes on property, national and municipal income, and automobiles and roads.

In the "among other things" bracket is the perplexing tax on posted gifts and personal items, product samples, and the tax on shipping costs. And let's not forget the charge for customs to open our parcels to see what's inside. Or the extra 10% VAT that is charged on top of those charges.

Example: Let's say you order an umbrella online from France because you can't get the one you want here. The umbrella costs 20€, and shipping is 8€. So that's a cost of 28€.

Now add import tax. Today 28€ is 5,153.43 ISK. Multiply this by 24.5% and you get 6416.02 ISK. Add another 10% VAT and you have 7057.62. Grand total so far: 38.35 €. That's right. Almost double the cost of the umbrella. And finally, for the privilege of receiving this parcel and bill, you will be charged by Iceland Post an additional 450 ISK. If you are importing things you intend to sell, no matter how small the quantities, there are further mind-boggling regulations and charges that I won't go into here.

Now let's suppose the doe-eyed customs agent handling your package fails to locate the invoice clearly displayed on the outside of the box. Your parcel will arrive a minimum three days later, complete with a request for proof of purchase or ironclad evidence that it is a gift (because even gifts are taxed if they are valued at over 2000 ISK... 10€).

Let me be clear. I have no gripe with protectionism. Local industry in a country as small as this should be protected. But here where not much is being produced, and you can't really get anything you need... why tax me on a replacement piece for my phone? Why is there high tax on items you cannot buy here? When individuals and small business owners are charged disproportionate fees to import something that is otherwise unavailable here, the only logical outcome is circumvention of the law. Which makes outlaws of the wrong people. Make no mistake about it. The import duties here are unfair and outrageous. All you are

protecting is the monopolies.

"Any information, how little as it might seem, can be valuable to the customs office in the fight against illegal import. If you have any information about smuggling please call us at (354) 552 8030 or send us an email at smygl@tollur.is"

How does "no" sound?

When I was a kid my family was involved with a charity that would hide religious articles in the lining of coats before sending them to Jews in communist Russia. Living here puts me, and you, on the other side of that curtain. The incompetent Stasi vultures that sift and pick through each and every package, delaying and damaging goods and invading people's personal and business life, and who then having the gall to charge us for it... it's a blatant infringement of human rights.

I complain every time I am charged. Frustrated and furious, I asked the Tollstjóri agents how often they received complaint calls like mine. "All the time actually. But we can't do anything about it."

Finally, I lodged a formal complaint and was put through to one Svanhvít Reith, Tollstjóri's lawyer. While sympathetic, she claimed she was powerless to act.

"It is like this in every country," she explained. Vínir, Íslendingar, landsmenn, ... it is not. No other country in the world will do this to you. Australia, for example, has 10% import duty tax, but in twenty years of living there I paid tax only once on the import of a personal item. For years I have been exporting products on a weekly basis and again, no complaints or charges in any country but Iceland.

Icelanders are being heavily taxed for something that is necessary for survival. The powers that be are kicking you when you're struggling to get back on your feet. It's unclear who is being protected with this tax on umbrellas and birthday presents. Over the course of the many arguments I have had with Tollstjóri, the majority of customs agents admit outright how destructive and absurd these "laws" are. But they still charge me anyway. Post office attendants apologise to me in embarrassment of this setup, advising me to boycott the tax by refusing to buy things from overseas, drink alcohol or buy petrol. Perhaps they are right.

So this month, when the gifts start trickling in from abroad, and you meander down to the post office to pay tax on them... go and do something else too. Go call Svanhvít. Stand in front of parliament. And bring your pots and pans. ♡

✍ SRULI RECHT

Xmas | Shopping



Santa's Best Helper

Going home from Iceland for Christmas? Visiting Iceland over the holidays and looking for presents to bring home? Worry no longer, Grapevine is here to help.

1. FOR THE MUSIC FAN

The Icelandic music scene is bubbling, and a record is always a good gift. If you are looking for something special—not to mention cheap and environmentally friendly—the recycling centre shop Góði Hirðirinn (Fellsmúli 28) sells second hand vinyl for 200–400 ISK (also try Kolaportið and Lucky Vinyl on Hverfisgata for more "select" LPs). How about Icelandic Christmas carols or nostalgic folk songs? Perhaps a bit of Vilhjámur Vilhjámsson for that special someone?

2. FOR A FRIEND—WHEN YOUR LUGGAGE IS FULL AND YOUR BANK ACCOUNT EMPTY

The Icelandic Opal candy boxes are small, cheap (209 ISK in Bonus, even cheaper at the airport) and come in Christmas colours of green and red. They are stylish enough for the fyncypants young and creative, and you can pump up their street cred with stories of your adventures in the 101 bars pouring the alcoholic shot variety with hot blondes of all genders.

3. FOR THE FURRY PAL

Perhaps an insult towards Icelanders' taste buds, but the family cat back home will be in ecstasy munching down on the locals' favourite snack, harðfiskur. Several sizes, shapes and prices, available at grocery stores, flea market and on the airport on your way outta here.

4. FOR THE SINGLE FRIEND

Iceland is currently a budget destination, but there is one item that is a bargain beyond the rest: The pregnancy test. In my native Finland, doubts regarding your menstrual cycle can cost you dearly—at least 5 euro, easily up to 20. Here, the budget test is yours for 500 ISK or so (2,5 euro). You share a bit of local social-culture with this present too—accidental pregnancies are a popular pastime in the country, and the number of young mothers is particularly high. Probably works best for female friends.

5. FOR MOTHER OR GRANDMOTHER

Icelandic wool is great—and, at 300 ISK or so per ball—a bargain buy. With luck, the present may end up coming back to you in the shape of a pair of socks, mittens, hat or a scarf.

6. FOR THE ONE IN TRUE CHRISTMAS SPIRITS

Are you or one of your friends ready to turn the other cheek? Why not open an account at the brand new Arion Bank,

previously New Kaupthing, previously Kaupthing. Arion "offers you the key to business on the Iceland Stock Exchange (ICEX), as well as all major international markets." And the custody account is available to those without the Icelandic kennitala. As a bonus, the new visual identity even has a nice Christmassy star-what better to lift the holiday spirits? This present, though, may not be the kind that keeps on giving.

7. FOR THE HEALTH FREAK FAMILY MEMBER WHEN YOU WANT REVENGE

Now is your chance to have your revenge for all those mornings as a child when you had to swallow the disgusting cod liver oil. Lýsi is an Icelandic product that will have the receiver think of you every morning. It comes in various shapes and forms, and is available in most grocery stores and pharmacies. It's also pretty healthy, we hear.

8. FOR A CHILD OR SOMEONE LEARNING ICELANDIC

The Skrímli-series by Áslaug Jónsdóttir, Kalle Güettler and Rake! Heimsdal features five excellent books about the adventures and daily quarrels of the big monster and the little monster. Cool visuals, good lessons and plenty of humour—suits both children and those that wish to but don't yet speak the glorious language of Iceland. ♡

✍ SARI PELTONEN

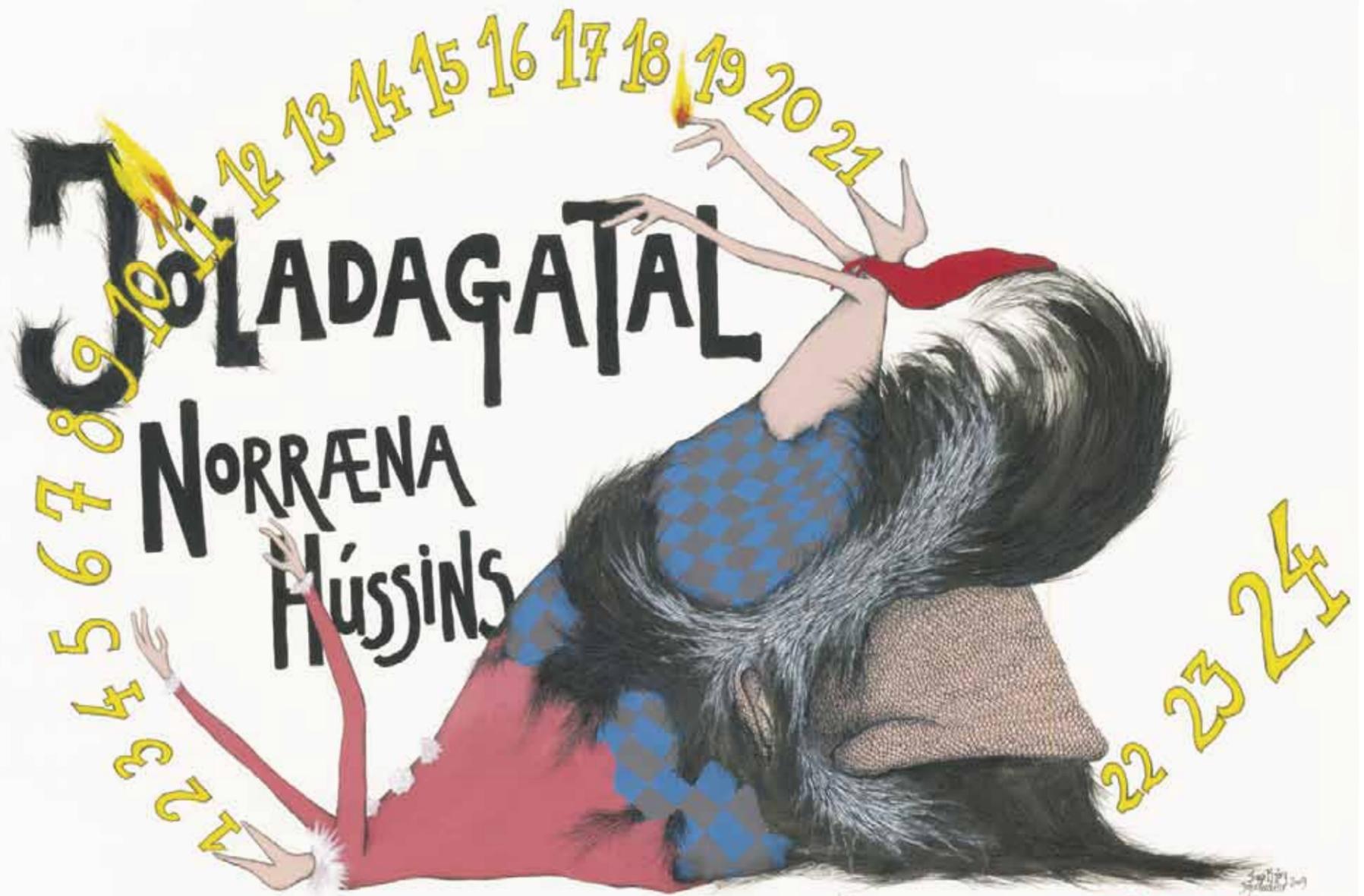
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Xmas | Knitting



Knitting for Christmas

The Horror! The Horror!

December is pretty much universally recognised as the most difficult month of the year, what with the cold, the dark and the inescapable, mind-numbing ever-present Christmas music. However, what few realise is that this bleak month is especially harrowing for those who knit.

The process of knitterly Christmastime misery usually begins in early November, when the knitter realises that friends and family members have begun their annual mumbling about how cold their various body parts are. The knitter feels uniquely equipped to remedy this sorry state of affairs and so self-imposes a mission to whip up a hand-knit extravaganza of warmth-producing garments by Christmas.

However, instead of at this point getting to work on the present-making, thereby taking the only course of action that will allow them to avoid a massive boulder of failure and general bad feeling being deposited upon their souls on December 24, most knitters choose to take a look at the calendar and exclaim: "Christmas is seven weeks away! That's a long time, and then some. Have you seen how fast I knit? I'll have twelve presents knit up in one weekend easy! Now, back to those seven intricate projects all intended for myself."

The fallacy of this mindset tends to become clear to the knitter in the first week of December, when the cold-related mumbling of loved ones has reached a certain momentum and the seven intricate projects intended for the knitter's own personal consumption have each progressed by about a centimetre. Suddenly the pressure

to knit gifts becomes almost tangible, as if the atmosphere has turned into an all-enveloping knit-slowing jelly.

The knitter quickly and desperately abandons grandiose plans of sweaters for all and moves on to the more manageable field of knitted accessories. This is an especially painful transition for Icelandic knitters, since nowhere in the world is the sweater as prized an object, to the detriment of all other knitwear, as on this cold rock. But all knitters, even Icelandic ones, must bow to the following logic that resounds in the brains of knitters everywhere when Christmas is a mere three weeks away: "A hat knits up in no time at all, especially if I use bulky yarn. And I am a speedy knitter; I've just been kind of lazy lately. If I sit down and put my mind to it I'll churn out twelve bulky hats in one weekend, no problem. Now, back to that sweater I want to wear to all the Christmas parties. Wooo!" Clearly, this poor procrastinating soul is doomed.

Fittingly, the next step in the Christmas-knitting process is nearly apocalyptic: darkness of the soul descends as the knitter unravels and loses it completely, sweatily tossing and turning during sleepless nights spent worrying about the disappointment about to be inflicted on loved ones. This stage is reached about a week before that sacred holiday itself, as the knitter gazes upon the sad pile of four bulky hats completed (or just about, if we disregard the need for the weaving in of ends and blocking) and realises with horror that not only will most friends and family get

store-bought hats for Christmas, they will also have to endure the humiliation of witnessing a chosen few receiving handknit treasures. The mere thought of this unfair scenario causes the knitter to experience vivid hallucinations of crying relatives, angry friends and, worst of all, bragging knitters claiming to have finished all of their gifts on time.

Witnessing the knitter's dissolution of resolve and sanity can in many cases be great fun for his or her loved ones. In fact, deranged knitterly antics and their intrinsic entertainment value may very well be a better Christmas present than any hat could ever be. However, be aware that most knitters would disagree with this statement.

When Christmas itself rolls around, some knitters will still be keeping to a punishing schedule, pushing themselves to finish as many handknits as humanly possible. Other knitters will have taken the less crazy route of resigning themselves to their fate as failed craftsmen and have taken their humiliation to its logical extreme by purchasing presents made of fleece at the mall. But it matters not one jot which of these paths the knitter chooses, for both types will encounter the same inevitable truth once the presents have been opened: most handknit gifts are received with only lukewarm admiration and, following the obligatory wearing of the item at one social event, are forever relegated to the murkiest depths of the deepest closet. For this very reason the smartest and most seasoned knitters choose to knit items mostly intended for their own enjoyment and disregard

gift knitting almost completely.

When Christmas is over and done with, knitters, as well as others, can relax a little. The thought that keeps them going is that no matter how little the gifted handknits may have been appreciated, at least it is a full twelve months until the next full-on session of dread and disillusionment. The more neurotic knitters may well expend energy in January and February seething over the infrequent appearances of handknits on the limbs of loved ones, but as spring and summer bring new and fascinating patterns and yarns, the pain of misunderstood artistry is slowly but surely minimised and forgotten.

The following November, the world again seems new and full of promise, and that beautiful, fully-patterned sweater would look so good on Mom.

Such is the natural cycle of life among knitters, and while it is easy enough to recognise, it is harder to avoid. It is unavoidable, much like the process of ageing, and is therefore best accepted and embraced to avoid unnecessary anguish. For those knitters currently in the grips of Christmas-knitting madness, mired in the cautious optimism of the second stage, believing that they can still pull off accessories for all: considers yourselves fairly warned! But since reason cannot reach you now, here is a pattern for quickly-executed ladies mittens that look more time-consuming than they are. Merry Christmas! ☺

VIGDÍS ÞORMÓÐSDÓTTIR

FRASIER MITTENS

NEEDLES:

Set of 5 5mm double pointed needles

MATERIALS:

Two contrasting colours of unspun Icelandic wool (Plötulopi), held double, approximately 50 g. of each. Colours are referred to as MC (main colour) and CC (contrast colour).

NOTE:

If you do not understand knitting instructions such as k 2tog or ssk, please look them up on the internet. Or ask someone what they mean. Work it out.

Instructions (same for both mittens): Cast on 32 sts with MC. Divide stitches evenly between four needles, taking care not to twist the work. Knit in the round four rounds in garters stitch, creating two ridges. Now begin 1x1 ribbing, adding CC: knit one with CC, purl one with MC, repeat around. Work rib for approx. 4.5 cm, then knit one round with CC only, increasing 8 stitches evenly around. 40 stitches. Now begin colour pattern: First round: knit 3 with CC, knit 1 with MC, repeat around. Second round: knit 1 with MC, *knit1 with CC, knit 3 with MC, repeat from * around, end knit 2 with MC. Third round: knit around with MC. Fourth round: same as second round. Fifth round: same as first round. Sixth round: knit around with CC. Repeat these six rounds to make pattern. Place thumb when hand is approx. 6 cm long. Note: It is easiest to place thumb in either rounds three or six, as these are solid coloured rounds. Place thumb so: Right mitten: knit first 8 stitches of round on to scrap yarn, slide the stitches back on to left needle and knit again, following pattern. Left mitten: as for right mitten, only knit stitches 9-16 of round on to scrap yarn. Knit colour pattern until hand of mitten is approx. 14.5 cm long, or as needed. Begin decreasing for top of mitten (still following six round colour pattern): Round 1: Needle 1: knit 2tog, knit to end of needle. Needle 2: knit to last 2 stitches, ssk. Needle 3: knit 2tog, knit to end of needle. Needle 4: knit to last 2 stitches, ssk. Round 2: knit all stitches. Repeat these 2 rounds until 8 stitches remain. Break yarn, thread through stitches and pull tight. Note: To create a solid-coloured border for the top of the mitten, use the same colour every time for the decrease stitches, on both the decrease rounds and the knit rounds. Thumb: Same for both mittens. Unravel scrap yarn, pick up 18 stitches (scrap yarn stitches + 2 sts to avoid holes at the sides of thumb) around the hole with either MC or CC as your taste dictates, divide stitches between 4 needles, knit 1 round decreasing 2 stitches evenly. 16 stitches. Knit until thumb is approx. 5.5 cm long, or as needed. Decrease for top of thumb: Needle 1: knit 2tog, knit to end. Needle 2: knit to last 2 stitches, ssk. Needle 3: knit 2 tog, knit to end. Needle 4: knit to last 2 stitches, ssk. Repeat decrease round, with no plain knit round in between, until 8 stitches remain. Break yarn and pull through remaining loops. Finishing: Weave in ends and block mittens. ☺

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For a map of outside downtown Reykjavik check out links on www.grapevine.is or the Icelandic phonebook website www.ja.is

10 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cozy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material. CF

11 Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 - Naustarmegin

A new and welcome addition to Reykjavik's bar scene. Bakkus serves up reasonably priced beer, a really impressive selection of international vodkas and an atmosphere unlike any other in town. An eclectic mix of patrons, regular live music and movie nights keep this place interesting and always inviting. Expect dancing on tables and to-the-death foosball battles. CF

12 Prikið

Bankastræti 12

Prikið is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café with photographs of their senior frequenters on weekday mornings, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled to the brim with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike. SKK

13 Kisan

Laugavegur 7

This store is incredibly cool. It's stocked with really unique and quirky clothes, outerwear, accessories and handbags, plus they have an adorable section of kids clothes, kitschy vintage toys and books and even interior design items. Wicked place; definitely worth a visit. CF

14 Barbara

Laugavegur 22

At Laugavegur 22, above Karamba, Barbara serves up a lively atmosphere for Reykjavik's gay community and anybody else who just wants to dance and have a good time. The first level is made for dancing and is often packed with sweaty bodies, while the second level of the bar offers a place to sit, drink and chat and another in which to smoke. CF

15 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, but I'd reconsider the playlists to tell you the truth, too much of Nickelback really hurts. SKK

16 Boston

Laugavegur 28

Like an older sibling to the fabled (now deceased) Sirkús, Boston is a warm and mellow second-floor bar on Laugavegur that plays host to the arty party crowd. The baroque wall dressings and deep, rich coloured décor make this bar feel pretty swank, but Boston also serves up some reasonably priced food earlier in the evening, so it's not too swank. CF

17 Austur

Austurstræti 7

Sleek and shiny, this new restaurant and bar is a straight-up boutique hot spot for stylish kids and trendy professionals alike. Appropriate for formal business meetings but casual enough for the roll-out-bed-at-5pm crowd, they serve up ample, satisfying, modern dishes at reasonable prices. This is also one of the rare places to get a full breakfast all day long! It's really fucking good too. RL

18 Jacobsen

Laugavegur 22

Jacobsen is owned by some nouveau riche Swedes, and has been providing a non-stop party over the last few months. Besides its importing foreign big-shot DJs and other niceties, it is probably most appreciated for its loooong hours; it doesn't matter if you stop partying at 2AM or way-too-much AM, Jacobsen is always forking out shots and cocktails. SKK

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ART GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit
www.grapevine.is

OPENING

DECEMBER

12 ☺ 3pm

Hitt Húsið

Emma Guðrún Heiðarsdóttir
Emma Guðrún Heiðarsdóttir opens her first solo exhibition at Gallery Tukt. Ongoing until December 28.

5 ☺ 3pm

Café Karólína

While I slept
Sveinbjörg Ásgeirsdóttir opens her exhibition at Café Karólína. Ongoing until January 8.

ONGOING

ASÍ Art Museum

November 21-December 13

Luminous Flux

Exhibit featuring the works of Jóhanna H. Þorkelsdóttir. The artist studies light in various forms and how it affects us. In the darkness of the arctic winter she invites guests to a photosynthesis at the museum.

November 21-December 13

Halldór Ragnarsson

Installation by Halldór Ragnarsson in Gryfjan.

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculptur Museum

Permanent Exhibition:

The Shape of Line.

A new retrospective of works by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition focuses on abstract works from 1945 onwards.

May 01-April 30

RHYTHM- Ásmundur and Our Age

This exhibition showcases contemporary artists that tackle similar issues as Ásmundur did in his time, but in a context of a new age.

The Culture House

Permanent Exhibition:
Medieval Manuscripts
March 28-January 10
Flora Islandica

The Culture House exhibits the book Flora Islandica, containing 271 drawings by Eggert Pétursson.

The Library Room

Current exhibitions:
August 12-ongoing

National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building.

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Culture House.

Sheepskin, Saffian and Shirting

Exhibiting the tools and equipment used in book binding.

Exhibition Series:

Paintings by Hulda Vilhjálmstöðtír.

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Permanent exhibition:

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.

Gallery Ágúst

October 24-December 12

Photos from Iceland 1930-1945

In this exhibition Annar Örn has worked with a collection of photographs taken by the late Sigurður Guttormsson between 1930-1945. The photographs are a rare insight into living conditions and architectural history of Iceland in the years around 1940.

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

October 17-January 3

Where Pleasure Lives

Exhibition on Halla Einarsdóttir's life and poetry.

October 31-January 3

Art Exhibition

Art in the life and fiction of Kristín Marja Baldursdóttir.

October 31 - January 3

The world of Karitas

Exhibition based on the books by Kristín Marja Baldursdóttir about the artist Karitas.

November 14-January 3

Through the years

Folk artist Sigurbjörg Sigurjónsdóttir exhibits pastel, watercolors and painted china in Boginn.

November 22nd - March 28th

Kitchen items in the collectors corner

Þórarinn Eldjárn and Sigurður Árnason exhibit all sorts of kitchen appliances they have collected over the years.

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955) and his family for more than half a century. It has now been opened to the public as a museum, unchanged from when Laxness lived there.

Hafnarborg (Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art)

November 7-January 3

The Selection

Exhibit featuring Icelandic photographs 1866-2009 by 13 Icelandic photographers.

Art | Venue finder

101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18A | **F6**
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

Artótek

Tryggvagata 15 | **D5**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum

Freygata 41 | **G10**
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn

Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15 | **F6**
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstígur 21 | **H8**
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20
www.this.is/birta

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiriksgata | **G9**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 4a | **F7**
www.fotografi.is

Gallery 100°

Bæjarháls 1
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100/
Open weekdays from 08:30-16:00

Gallery Auga fyrir Auga

Hverfisgata 35 | **G7**

Gallery StartArt

Laugavegur 12B | **G7**
Tue-Sat 1-17
www.startart.is

Gallery Ágúst

Baldursgata 12 | **F9**
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallery Fold

Rauðarástígur 14-16 | **J9**
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is

Gallery Kling & Bang

Hverfisgata 42 | **G7**
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gallery Turpentine

Ingólfstræti 5 | **F7**
Tue-Fri 12-18 / Sat 11-16
www.turpentine.is

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

Gerðuberg 3-5
Mon-Thu 11-17 / Wed 11-21 / Thu-Fri 11-17 / Sat-Sun 13-16
www.gerduberg.is

Hitt Húsið

- Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E6**
www.hithusid.is

i8 Gallery

Klapparástígur 33 | **G7**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum

Vatnsstígur 3 - **G7**
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

Lost Horse Gallery

Skólástræti 1 | **F6**
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.

Hafnarborg

Strandgötu 34, Hafnarfjörður

The National Gallery of Iceland

Frikkirkjuvegur 7 | **E8**

Tue-Sun 11-17

www listasafn.is

The National Museum

Suðurgata 41 | **C9**
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is/

The Nordic House

Sturlugata 5 | **C11**
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is/

The Numismatic Museum

Einholt 4 | **K9**
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.

Reykjavík 871+/-2

Aðalstræti 17 | **D6**
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery

Skúlagata 28 | **H6**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum

Open daily 10-16
www listasafnreykjavikur.is

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

Sigtún

Hafnarhús

Tryggvagata 17 | **E5**

Kjarvalsstaðir

Flókagata | **K11**

Reykjavík City Theatre

Listabraut 3

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Grandagarður 8 | **C3**

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Tryggvagata 16 | **D5**
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www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

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November 7-January 3

Where is the clock?

Paintings and installations by Davíð Þór Halldórsson.

Icelandic Printmakers' Association Gallery

November 12-January 31

Historical Exhibition

A historical exhibition about printmaking as an art form in Iceland.

Kling & Bang

November 28-January 10

Snjór á Himnum

Exhibit featuring the works of Bryndís Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir.

Listaháskóli Íslands Gallery

Kubburinn

November 28-December 18

Still Life

Exhibit at the Art Faculty of the University of Iceland.

Living Art Museum

The museum is closed for restoration and will open on a new location in January 2010.

The Lost Horse Gallery

November 14-ongoing

Sigurður Þórir Ámundason

Exhibit featuring new drawings and paintings by Sigurður Þórir Ámundason, an artist who has also produced various large murals in downtown Reykjavík.

Mokka

November 20-December 10

Kristbergur Ó. Pétursson

Exhibit featuring the paintings of Kristbergur Ó. Pétursson.

National Gallery of Iceland

October 30-January 3

Svavar Guðnason

The exhibition is a retrospective of the works of Svavar Guðnason, one of Iceland's most prominent painters through his close connection with Danish abstract art between 1936 and 1946.

The National Museum

Permanent exhibition:

Encounters

Archaeological excavations at many locations around Iceland have been funded by Kristnihátíðarsjóður (the Millennium Fund). Finds from some of these excavations are on display in an exhibition suitable for the whole family.

Nordic House

December 1-December 23

The Christmas Calendar

At 12.34 every day, the Nordic House Christmas Calendar is opened to find out what the day's treat is: A concert, a musical performance, perhaps a surprise?

The Numismatic Museum

Permanent exhibition:

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

Ráðhús Reykjavíkur

Dúlin Himintungl

Kim Linnet exhibits her 360° panorama photos of Iceland.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

Permanent exhibition:

The Settlement Exhibition

Reykjavík Art Museum

Hafnarhús

September 17-January 3

The Crated Rooms in Iceland

A new installation by world-renowned artist Yoshitomo Nara in collaboration with Hideki Toyoshima. The room-sized installation, which consists of shipping crates and billboards, places Nara's iconic images in a new and unexpected context.

29 October 2009-3 January

Egill Sæbjörnsson - Spirit of Place and Narrative

The narrative side of Egill Sæbjörnsson's work comes to the fore in this exhibition which displays works featuring dialogue between characters or objects that convey unfolding events or time.

29 October 2009-3 January

D14 Ryan Parteka

In D14, Ryan Parteka intends to capture the metaphysical dimension characteristic of the German landscape painter Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840).

Reykjavík Art Museum

Kjarvalsstaðir

November 7-January 31

Högn Sigurðardóttir - Matter and Spirit in Architecture

The first retrospective of the works of architect Högn Sigurðardóttir, the first woman to practice architecture in Iceland.

November 21-January 31

Steinunn

Exhibit offering a look at designer editions of unique garments not previously displayed in Iceland.

November 21-January 31

Stoneworks

At this workshop, guests are invited to try their hands at projects related to design, weaving methods, and clothing.

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Current Exhibitions:

Living Museum by the Sea; Arterial for Country and City; From Poverty to Abundance; The Shark - Light and Life Energy; Hidden Craftsman.

The Reykjavík Museum of Photography

September 26-January 17

André Kertész - Ma France

Exhibit of André Kertész's photographs of France.

October 22-December 15

MYCELAND

Exhibit featuring the results of French photographer Grégory Gerault's many visits to Iceland.



Beauty Swift: Generation Revolution

"This book is meant for enlightened individuals in any age group and in various stages of maturity. You can read explanations of the ways of life and how they have manifested themselves to the author, all instructed by the Universal Awareness". Thus begins the back cover sum-up of Beauty Swift: Generation Revolution by the Trio Spiritus Sanctus, about the revolutionary "Beauty Swift" scheme, so y'all should be in for a treat. Snorri Ásmundsson, visual artist and the kingpin of this instalment of a book, has always had a good relationship with the universal awareness. This time around, it has asked of him to convey the message of beauty.

In the book several makeovers are documented and you can read small interviews with a few of the subjects whose lives were turned to the better by their involvement. In the epilogue, Snorri hopes he has given his readers a taste of where we are going in our existence and a better understanding of life. If this is something you long for, I'd recommend you'd give it a try, for Snorri is known both to conjoin people of different cultures and help people experience previously-unknown epiphanies.

Further info:
<http://www.snorriasmundsson.com/portfolio/beauty-swift/>

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FOOD

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REVIEWS



Absolutely Fabulous

Regarded as one of the best restaurants in town, VOX serves New Nordic Food, a modern take on Nordic ingredients and traditions, and an extensive wine list herded by three-time sommelier of the year Elisabet Alba Valdimarsdóttir. New Nordic Food was originally introduced by previous chef Gunnar Karl Gíslason who left earlier this year along with restaurant manager Ólafur Örn Ólafsson to start his own kitchen, Dill, at the Nordic house. The pair has done well for themselves, but how is VOX doing without them? Lead by Jóhannes Jóhannesson, it turns out VOX is in good hands.

Following the super-star sommelier's recommendation, we chose the seasonal menu (9900 ISK) and, to my date's jealousy, I had the accompanying wine menu (seasonal menu with wines 16900 ISK). What seemed like an innocent 5-course meal turned out to be a smorgasbord of almost twice as many flavours: First, some cumin flavoured laufabrauð Christmas crackers. Then, delicious radish; after that, an espresso shot of creamy reindeer soup with heart and kidneys, followed by Christmas herring from the West Fjords with horseradish ice cream. And we hadn't even gotten to the actual menu.

The proper first course, shellfish served with jellified pasta consommé and Christmas brew, was light and sweet, with sea buckthorns adding a sour kick. With it, an equally light Château de la Ragotiere Muscadet Sèvre et Maine 2007 from the Loire in France, followed by an award winning Australian Semillon and delicate salt fish wrapped in gel, with apples, walnuts and a quail egg.

The next course, lamb with pickled carrots accompanied by an Austrian red—and a good long glass of water for me (I was quickly learning the perils of the wine menu).

Once I had regained my wits, it was time for the high point of the menu: wild goose breast, full of flavour, perfectly cooked to melt in the mouth, accompanied by goose leg confit in beer, mushrooms, potatoes and cloudberryes – again a brilliant berry pick from the VOX team. As for the grape, it was a marvellous dark Argentinean Las Moras Black Label Malbec 2006.

And then, predessert: buttermilk with rye bread, dill and beetroots, and for proper pudding ice cream, berry sorbet and an almond thing, which was a bit on the dry side. The white dessert wine Muscat de Beaumes de Venise La Pastourelle Delas 2007 on the other hand was positive surprise for this dessert wine atheist.

It took us a mere 3 hours, but we managed to eat 5 courses and another handful of tasters, and in my case downed with 5 glasses of wine—an accomplishment in itself. But the true accomplishment was the dinner. Without a fuss, downstairs of the hotel Hilton Nordica, in a space that has something of the air of hotel breakfast room, the dinner served to us was consistently superb: perfectly cooked, with wines equally well selected, not to mention service that was skilled and timed like clockwork. Dinner at VOX was well worth the only five stars of 2009. **✪ - SARI PELTONEN**

Vox

Hilton Reykjavik Nordica, Suðurlandsbraut 2

What we think: Fabulous

Flavour: New Nordic seasonal

Ambiance: Hotel breakfast room meets fine dining

Service: Pro



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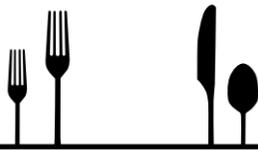
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Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 F9	D6/E6 Bæjarins Beztu Tryggvagata E6	Grái Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16A G7	Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 E6	Pisa Lækjargötu 6b E6	Sushibarinn Laugavegur 2 F7
Aktu Taktu Skúlagata 15 K8	Brons Pósthússtræti 9 E6	Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20 E5/ E6	Kaffi Hjómáland Laugavegur 21 G7	Pizza King Hafnarstræti 18 E6	Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54 H8
Alibaba Veltusund 3b E3	Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 G6	Habibi Hafnarstræti 20 D5	Kaffitár Bankastræti 8 F6	Pizza Pronto Vallarstræti 4 D6	Sægreifinn Verbuð 8, Geirsgata D5
American Style Tryggvagata 26 E5	Café Loki Lokastígur 28 G9	Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("Bullan") Geirsgata 1 D5	Kaffivagninn Grandagarður 10 D1	Pizzaverksmiðjan Lækjargötu 8 E6	Tapas Vesturgata 3B D5
Argentína Steak-house Barónstígur I8	Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E6	Híolla Bátar Ingólfstorg D6	Kebabhúsið Austurstræti 2 E6	Prikið Bankastræti 12 F6	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 E6
Austurlanda-hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64A H7	Café Roma Rauðarárstígur 8 J9	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 E6	Kofi Tómasar Frænda Laugavegur 2 F7	Ráðhúskaffi D7 Tjarmargata 11	Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27 G7
Á Næstu Grösom Laugavegur 20B G7	Domo Þingholtsstræti 5 F7	Hótel Holt Bergstaðarstræti 37 F7	Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14 D5	Santa Maria Laugavegur 22A, F7	Tívoli Laugavegur 3 F7
B5 Bankastræti 5 F6	Einar Ben Veltusundi E6	Humarshúsið Ammatmanstígur 1 E7	La Primavera Austurstræti 9 E6	Segafredo Lækjatorg E6	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 G7
Bakkus Tryggvagata 22 D3	Eldsmiðjan Bragagata 38A G9	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E6	Lystin Laugavegur 73 H7	Serrano Hringbraut 12 I3	Við Tjörmina Templarasund 3 E7
Basil & Lime Klapparstíg 38 G7	Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12 D6	Icelandic Fish & Chips Tryggvagata 8 E5	Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3A F7	Shalimar Austurstræti 4 E3	Vitabar Bergþórugata 21 H9
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22A G8	Geysir Bar/Bistro Aðalstræti 2 D6	Indian Mango Frakkastígur 12 G6	Nonnabiti Hafnarstræti 9 E6	Sjávarkjallarinn Aðalstræti 2 D6	
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3	Garðurinn Klappastígur 37 G7		O Sushi Lækjargata 2A E6	Sólón Bankastræti 7a F6	
	Glætan book café Laugavegur 19 F5				



REVIEWS



The Post-Mac Burger

Metro Burger

Skeifan

What we think: Like McDonalds but even worse

Flavour: Almost non-existent

Ambiance: Families, teenage boys and the newsreader-turned-TV-chef Jóhanna Vigdís cooking pork on the numerous TV screens.

Service: Efficient



The whole world watched and the whole of Iceland cheered when McDonalds left the country—a lovely showcase of the nation's nature: "Our country is so screwed that even the biggest fast food chain in the world leaves, let's friggin' celebrate!"

McDonalds left since it was not viable to keep importing everything to the country, while the competitors were using local ingredients. The ex-franchise holders, though, decided to open shop anew, this time under a new local brand, "Metro" (it should be noted that the word is not Icelandic and has no meaning in the language, lending it an air of international sophistication). This is surely clever for business and the environment—local ingredients, less shipping, boosting the troubled economy. With some saying that the true reason for the Mac fleeing the rock was not kreppa but the brilliance of the local burgers—see Búllan—surely tastebuds benefit too?



GRAPEVINE FOOD REVIEW KEY

- 0 God-awful
- ☹ Awful
- ☹☹ Passable. Much room for improvement
- ☹☹☹ Good, but not great.
- ☹☹☹☹ Really rather good
- ☹☹☹☹☹ Extraordinary

The food is rated in three categories:
Fast food: Pizza, pylsa and kebab, food on the go (0-2000 ISK)
Mid-range: Everyday eateries, sit-in. (mains 2000-4000 ISK)
Fine dining: Fancy, expensive-type food. (3-course dinners 6000 and up)

To best judge the restaurant experience, the Grapevine conducts its reviews anonymously. The sole exception is the payment

method: When the bill arrives, the reviewer presents a written statement, previously signed by the restaurant management, allowing the reviewer and one companion a meal on the house for review purposes.

Using this approach, we aim to best preserve the reviewer's objectivity (and the restaurants' consistency), within the humble means of a free newspaper.

The Grapevine does not favour foie gras over fast food. Restaurants are reviewed for what they are; both burger and beluga can be extraordinary in their own right. In all evaluations, the food is key: Does it taste good? Is it properly prepared? Are the ingredients fresh and of high quality? Secondary considerations include setting, service and value for money.

All opinions expressed are the critic's own. **SP**

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY:

3 X PRE-CHRISTMAS

1 LAUFABRAUÐ PARTIES

Gather your friends to decorate and fry laufabrauð, thin crackers eaten during Christmas time. There is a specific tool for the patterns (8.000 ISK or so, see Kokka on Laugavegur), but a plain old knife works just as well.

2 GINGERBREAD HOUSES

Build your own Christmas house, or if you feel lazy, go see the dozens of creations at Smáralind shopping mall for the annual cookie house competition.

www.smaralind.is

3 MAKE CHOCOLATE TREATS

This is a newfangled Icelandic tradition – making ones own chocolate treats for Christmastime consumption. There are recipes available, but most folks just choose to roll up some store-bought marzipan and dip it in melted suðusúkkulaði. It tastes pretty awesome, too, especially if you add some nuts on top.

3 X 23.12

1 EAT SKATE

The old West Fjord tradition of eating rotted skate on Þorláksmessa is alive and well. Smelly but refreshing, they claim. Some even say it will invigorate your sex drive. Others claim it might invigorate your vomit drive. Try it for yourself at the Restaurant Reykjavík Skate party or at Þrír Frakkar, which serves Skate throughout the month of December.

2 DRINK HOT CHOCOLATE

Preferably from a street-vendor. Drinking hot chocolate from a plastic cup on the 23rd is not only a tried and tested Icelandic tradition – it is also universally acknowledged as being a super-Christmassy activity.

3 MEET FRIENDS AT KAFFIBARINN

Sit down, have a Christmas beer and meet friends at Kaffibarinn once the present shopping is over and done with. The atmosphere is particularly cosy on the 23rd. But try not to fall in the classic Icelandic trap of getting too drunk, losing all your freshly bought presents and showing up all ragged and hung-over for your Christmas-meal as your children cry bitter tears of discontent. That is pretty uncool.

3 X 24.12

1 HAVE SOME HANGIKJÖT

The beloved Christmas food hangikjöt ("hung meat"), smoked lamb meat (often via sheep droppings or birch), is found on almost every Icelandic Christmas table – more than 90% of the population eat it at least once over the holidays.

2 PECK AT THE PTARMIGAN

On the rarer end of game, ptarmigan is the second most popular Christmas delicacy after hangikjöt.

3 SAMPLE SUGARED POTATOES

The potatoes at the Christmas table are often roasted with sugar – a longstanding Icelandic tradition. Some love it, others less so, but it is good to come prepared.

3 X HOLIDAY SEASON

1 JÓLAÖL

A true Icelandic original, this holiday soda is a 50-50 mix of orange soda and brown ale. The authentic version, sold in the shops over the holidays includes Egils Appelsín and Maltöl. Some folks like to add a tenth of cola to their mix.

2 JÓLAGLÖGG

The consumption of this hot and spiced red wine glögg is a long standing Icelandic tradition. It generally contributes a lot to making office parties more embarrassing than they need be, as few realise the potency of the drink.

3 JÓLABJÓR

Most Icelandic breweries – try Jökull, Kaldi, Egils or Ölvisholt, for instance – give out special Christmas editions of their beers. They are generally darker and fuller than their usual output – the Ölvisholt one even tastes kinda like Hangikjöt!

For full restaurant and food listings and venue finder visit www.grapevine.is for detailed information.



sushimi jan

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Pulling Teeth ...

...Can Have My Molars,
If They Promise To Stop Playing



Sóðoma Reykjavík 13.11.2009

Pulling Teeth

Celastine

Gone Postal

Plastic Gods

Bömmær

So, by some bizarre paradox it's Friday the 13th and it's as I'm riding a weird and monstrous cloud of joy. Then, amassed aural forces conspire to destroy me. In a bad sense.

They say never judge a book by its cover. "They" usually peddle books with horrid covers. As do Bömmær. The less said of them the better. Still, few suffered through their set, as few were yet in attendance.

Plastic Gods are next, and they roar through an astonishing three numbers in around thirty minutes. What a glacial force to be reckoned with. Pushing a deep sediment of sludge through a filter of misery and bong water, these lads are way too young, yet adequately stoned, to be the true originators of the crushing torrent of emotion oozing from the super charged amps.

Out of Khanate-length drone furious mid-tempo stoner fare will sometimes emerge, drowned in an evil vein of death metal growls à la Johnny Morrow of Iron Monkey. Slow nods of audience heads ensue and generous dozes of THC in the blood stream are a clear advantage to the experience.

Gone Postal are the bane of presence. Their shit, particularly with the opening melodious dirge, is best consumed mid-tempo and heavier than a stack of anvils to the chest. Their take on death metal is surely as indefinable as it is middle of the road: while trudging forward the band is pretty epic, but when speeding up they become forgettably generic. By the time GP take stage the venue finally sports a few souls north of embarrassing and as they slowly decimate the crowd these young upstarts sprout a fountain of irreverent enthusiasm. During the catchy slow parts, as with the blastbeating and grinding intervals, their pretty boy singer/guitarist mines vocal veins deeper than Dying Fetus while repeatedly soaring to Jon Chang-like heights of register at the drop of a fucking hat.

Thus Gone Postal prove to be a veritable high point to a otherwise "meh" kinda night, and accordingly reap some deserved audience reward, somewhat redeeming the show for the slack performances to follow

Celastine were one of three bands I had looked forward to seeing that night.

The initial wave of Cult of Neurlsis post-metal the band used to revel in has washed away somewhat, leaving room for odd time signature crawl-cum-trots of musical escapades steeped in pure lead and avant-garde forays into the fields of mind-fuck. But disaster strikes early in the form of a snapped bass string and a failing hi-hat clamp, during the mending of which their singer begs beer from various audience-members and cultivates an inept repertoire of stage patter that rhymes well with his total lack of stage presence and his decidedly sub-par vocal performance. The usual hefty weight of a Celastine show proves absent throughout the set due to their tech problems. So does the customary cathartic element as well as most of their feral rage.

Pulling Teeth are aptly named. The enthusiasm on the local metal chat board went through the roof as soon as the gig was announced, as it usually does for mediocre acts that conform to the outdated m.o. of "trueness" to the adolescent scene kid's expectation of a band's belonging to some inalienable brotherhood of hardcore.

As with every other artist so far, Pulling Teeth are unable to pull anything resembling a tight performance out of a ringer of slow-tempo annihilation-cum-up-tempo irrelevance. Their anorexic vocalist jumps up and down like a just sprung jack-in-the-box, but he—like to the limp tune of his unremarkable ensemble of string benders—agonizes his larynx merely to the waves of untidy, sophomoric riffage that bear little relation to songs, much less any notion of melody.

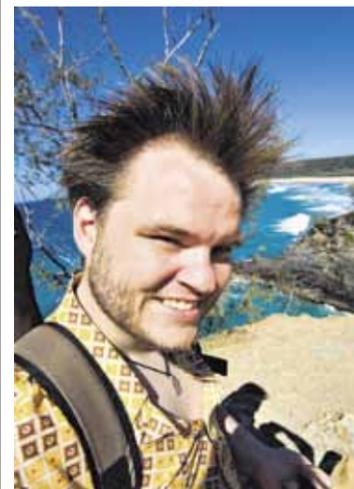
Meanwhile, a miniscule vortex of scene kids revolve in a whirlpool of ecstatic circle pit exuberance and forced stage dives explode from non-existing platforms onto a crowd way too sparse for actual surfing.

Near the end, some pit-loving aficionados of the hardcore ethic grab hold of the singer's wiry neck and his lithe stature while screaming along into his mic, chord twisted around his neck like a makeshift Jacob Bannon, in response to which the man signals the universal throat cutting sign of halt to his band mates and they un-ceremoniously wrap up a forgettable performance on that note. Good riddance I say, the entrance fee would have been better spent on either the latest Coalesce or Converge albums. ♪

✍ BOGI BJARNASON
📧 GUÐNÝ THORARENSEN

Why It Pays To Quit Your Day Job

Svavar Knútur goes Deutsch!



Svavar Knútur, singer of Icelandic folk-outfit Hraun, toured Germany a few weeks ago. It was his second visit this year after touring under the Norðrið moniker this spring with Sprengjuhöllin and Dísa. This second sting was a solo tour, so he stuck mostly to playing smaller bars and clubs. This did him very well, as the concerts were generally attended by about 50 people. The rooms were thus packed, though the atmosphere was still intimate.

The concerts were intimate sessions where folks gathered around the singer-slash-storyteller, who for most of the tour wound up amongst his audience talking, listening or even playing guitar and singing with them after the show.

Svavar certainly managed to create a friendly and familiar atmosphere. He is the funniest guy I've seen play in years! If it is his amazing solo-dialogue-play about a singer-songwriter's seminar on a castle in Denmark ("I even found a secret door"), the colourful interpretation of an Icelandic troll story or the final climax of the show a medley of semi-classic rock tunes (to name a few: The Prodigy's Firestarter, Bon Jovi's Living on a Prayer and Survivor's Eye of the Tiger - all performed on ukulele). Svavar has a sympathetic appearance and an engaging sense of humour that makes him an amazing entertainer. And he knows it: "Oh, you're just clapping, because I am amazing," he says with played indignation. And nobody manages not to giggle.

Then suddenly—the laughter hasn't even died down—Svavar gets all serious. What follows is impressive: He tells a story about a love long shipwrecked by geographical distance and mistakes. The room is completely silent and the first chords of Emotional Anorexic fall deeply into the ears of a stunned audience that had freaked out laughing just moments ago. He got us again. The following verses were at least as authentic as his hilarious songs, but he kept getting even more honest and emotional. His honest lyrics grow large as life as the audience listens carefully. Everyone here has dealt with this: love, loss, hurt. We're not in this alone.

It would have been easy to stick to the clown-show, to exploit people's good humour and snatch some cheap gags throughout. But Svavar chooses the really hard way, leading his audience through a wide palate of different moods this evening. This led him to talk about politics in the end, about Icelandic troll-myths, love and about quitting his 9-to-5 day job to become a troubadour. This man is living his dream, and I am glad he is. ♪

✍ FLORIAN ZÜHLKE
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Music | Album Reviews



Kimono

Easy Music for difficult People (2009)

kimono

Moody Icelandic indie rock comes of age

Like one of those moody hipsters that hangs in the background and mumbles a lot, Kimono are back with a new album! And the title is bloody awful! Easy Music For Difficult People is the sort of title that Nickleback would use when they're trying to be edgy. However that's the only bad thing I have to say about this album.

I've heard the term "Progressive indie rock" coined for Kimono and it's a pretty apt description. Think Shellac after they listened to too many mid-70's Rush albums. This is most evident in "Black" and "Animal" where the vocal stylings are pure Jethro Tull. Compared to their last album, Easy is a lot more immediate and urgent. The drums sound more thunderous, the guitars are more guttural and growling, while the vocals are frantic and yelping (perhaps the producer got out his cattle prod "motivational tool"). And clocking in at under 30 minutes, it just socks you with baritone power and then finishes, saying "Call me" without leaving it's number. But like the guitar rock slut that I am, it just makes me want to go back the beginning and play it again (and again)...

- BOB CLUNESS



Morðingjarnir

Flóttinn Mikli (2009)

mordingjarnir

Still plenty of energy, but they're starting to get soft & mellow in their old age....

Morðingjarnir have been together for nearly five years, which in punk/hardcore terms means that they're becoming grizzled old warhorses of the scene. And their third album sees them slowly moving away from the core sound of their first two albums.

The songs are now on average 1.5 minutes longer, there's a lot less screaming, and their sound is much more buffed and polished with a big powerpop cherry on top. Is this a bad thing? I guess it depends on what your punk/hardcore references are. If you think the crowning zenith of punk is Green Day, then you'll go apeshit for it, otherwise you may just go "meh."

As for me, I found this album really frustrating to listen to. For each track such as the full on Mötörhead thrash of Förum í stríð and the scuzzy romp of Manvísa, there is the derivative Hlakka til að hitta þig and the asine Sunnudagsmorgunn í Reykjavík which has a chorus that I would have expected from Sprengjuhöllin (no no NOOOO!). Perhaps I'm just an old stick in the mud in wanting my punk to be angry and misanthropic instead of being wrapped in Prozac goo...

- BOB CLUNESS



Hjaltalín

Terminal (2009)

hjaltalinband

Like being put on hold by your bank, but interesting.

A bit like visiting a museum with a class full of art students, Terminal is irritating, pretentious and occasionally grating, but mostly just a soothing and smoothly flowing waste of time. Its massive, almost hyperbolic grandeur is a bit hard to take seriously up close, with the orchestral arrangements failing to ascend beyond the role of redundant accompaniment and never quite justifying their presence on the album. Terminal's cool detachment and civility all too often feels false and postured, like Hjaltalín would much rather be making some other kind of music, but there are moments, like Song From Incidental Music and Sonnet For Matt (what terrible titles), where the mood feels real and appropriate and the band seems truly comfortable. It is those moments I'll be listening for during the endless tirade of Christmas parties I'll be forced to hear this album in. - SINDRI ELDON



Bloodgroup

Dry Land (2009)

bloodgroup

It struts! It stomps! It shits all over the competition! Get this album and your life will be complete for the next six months

While Bloodgroups' first album was brash, in your face and full of day-glo E numbers, Dry Land sees them relax and breath in a bit more. The chickenfart gurgling synths and minimal beats are still there, but now they're seriously working their songwriting chops to great effect. Listening to this, you sense whispers and echoes of 80's synth pop (Wars) with layers of disco dub (How Do We Know). But it's the lead tracks that blow you away. My Arms is simply an excellent song, end of discussion (it does seem to remind me of XTC's Making Plans for Nigel for some reason). And First To go starts off with a full on EBM beat that dissolves into a chorus that interlocks vocals and synthesizer beats so perfectly, it makes your ears throb with pleasure.

You know after listening to this I saw the video to Thin Ice by Gus Gus and, compared to Dry land, it looked so.... tired! A case of the Kings are dead, long live the Queen?

- BOB CLUNESS

"The chickenfart gurgling synths and minimal beats are still there, but now they're seriously working their songwriting chops to great effect. "



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Article | Forests



It's Not What You Can Do about the Crisis, but What the Crisis Can Do for You

Are a melting economy and a warming planet helping resuscitate Icelandic forests?

Utter the words "Icelandic Forest" in a crowd of Icelanders and you're sure to hear a chuckle, a resigned, self-deprecating remark, or even one of the country's oldest jokes: "What do you do if you get lost in an Icelandic forest?" - "Stand up." For hundreds of years that joke has rung true. It's reflected a barren and largely treeless landscape; deeper still it's reflected an enormous resource management mistake and hundreds of years of imported lumber dependence. But all that might be in the past: thanks to thousands of supporters and a couple of global crises, many foresee the imminent and glorious return of the Icelandic forest.

HISTORY: BLAME IT ON THE VIKINGS

The hearty Norwegian Vikings that first laid their eyes and hands on Iceland were privy to a landscape altogether separate from the one we know today. Back then, an estimated 30% of the country was covered in a verdant forest largely composed of downy birch—or *Betula pubescens*.

Icelandic settlers quickly got about to doing what settlers all over the world do best: plundering natural resources. Forests were cleared and burned to provide grazing space for recently imported gangs of sheep, while the gathered wood was used for fuel, building materials and coal. Unfortunately, the country's loose volcanic soil minimized the chances for any forest recovery and once gone, the trees stayed gone. By the middle of the last millennia many Icelanders were forced to shift to peat—a thick sludge of decomposed vegetative matter—as a primary fuel source.

With reforestation as far from their minds as cocktail drinks and bikinis, Icelanders soon found themselves largely dependent on imported timber. By the 1940s, when birch wood was finally abandoned as a fuel source, the country had lost 95% of its forest cover; which is to say less than 1% of the island was still covered in trees.

FOUNDING FORESTRY

Meanwhile, a number of proto-environmentalists were beginning to question the country's clear-cut policy. At the turn of the 20th century, three Danes lobbied the parliament to adopt a forestry and soil conservation policy, which it did in 1907. The government run Iceland

Forest Services (IFS) was established the subsequent year.

In 1930, the Icelandic Forestry Association (IFA), an umbrella organisation for 57 local forestry societies, was founded. Today it counts over 7,000 members and is considered Iceland's most popular environmental rights group.

"With reforestation as far from their minds as cocktail drinks and bikinis, Icelanders soon found themselves largely dependent on imported timber."

By the 50s, focus had shifted from simple preservation to afforestation [planting in previously tree-free places] between 1963 and 1989, the IFS and local forestry authorities planted anywhere from 500,000 to 1 million trees per year. Since the 90s that number has soared to nearly 6 million per year. While all those trees only translate to an increase of 0.3% in vegetative cover, the growth spawned a most unlikely industry: Icelandic timber.

PIZZA, CHRISTMAS AND KREPPA: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS!

As afforestation expanded, so did the possibility for domestic lumber production. Icelandic timber is currently used for everything from fence posts, to livestock bedding, to fireplace logs. In the 11 years between 1997 and 2008, Icelandic fuel wood sales more than tripled, from under 100 tons to over 350, with much of that fuel, curiously enough, headed to the ovens of wood-fire pizzerias.

Christmas tree production is another unlikely industry to emerge. For the last 20 years the Icelandic Forestry Association has been inviting families to spend a few hours in the forest picking out their trees, cutting them down and dragging them home.

Of the roughly 40,000 Christmas trees used this year in Iceland, Brynjólfur Jónsson, the director of the Icelandic Forestry Association, estimates 10,000 will be Icelandic. Brynjólfur assures that the practice is entirely sustainable and points to Hvalfjörður, where two

thousand harvested trees are replaced by 10-15,000 new ones every year. "We never take out more than we plant."

Both of these developments indicate a changing marketplace. Before the *kreppa* struck, Icelanders bought imported wood products freely. But as the economy collapsed and the *króna* along with it, importing wood products became significantly more expensive and a domestic business niche emerged. "This is something that we thought would be impossible for another 40-50 years," Brynjólfur says, speaking of Icelandic timber production. "But now it's real."

OUR GOOD FRIEND GLOBAL WARMING

The IFA and the IFS may also be getting a helping hand from another unlikely ally: global warming. With extended growing periods in the spring and fall, many of the planted trees are growing faster and larger than ever before. Although global warming poses some as of yet unknown dangers—among them insects, fungus and disease—the warmer climate coupled with the surge in plantings have Brynjólfur believing that the organisation's stated goal of reforesting 30% of the country over 1,000 years may be achieved significantly ahead of schedule.

"It might instead take 200-300 years. By the end of this century we might cover 3% of Iceland's land area. But if the natural vegetation responds to the higher temperature, the process will be much quicker. Large areas on the main plateaus will be recovered with natural birch and willows without the work of man."

It's difficult to imagine the green Iceland Brynjólfur envisions, but it's tempting too. If the director's right, Icelanders might have a chance to bury their lamest joke once and for all. 🍷

✍️ MICHAEL ZELENKO

Opinion | Brenda M Asimire (Momo)

Where Is Iceland Heading?

 When I told my friends I was moving to Iceland, none of them could think of a good reason for me to choose it over other Europe nations. The name Iceland sounded so far away and so cold. I was leaving my family for a place where I knew no one, and yet I was still excited. It did not take me months to make up my mind about moving to Iceland, not after undertaking some research.

As soon as I finished my research, I knew I had to be here. One thing was clear to me; this place could not be compared to other places. I would start my own family without worrying about my children's welfare. I would get a job and have enough to send to my people back home, I would take midnight walks without worrying about getting raped or killed and, above all, I could trust all institutions since the country was corruption free, which was not the case in Uganda.

If I were to have an opinion, I would say that Ugandans today find it easier to accept corruption since they cannot fight it. The injustice is in their faces but the responsible parties are untouchable, maybe because they have a lot of money to quiet everyone or it is something one sees but has no solid proof. Boy was I glad to leave.

Just like I thought, Iceland was promising, I could now make plans knowing I had a job that I wasn't going to lose because my employer's relatives needed one, or worrying about getting paid.

I now had enough for me, and even my family back home.

For a while everything seemed to be going as planned. My husband and I even bought a little apartment in Reykjavik, we had the cars we needed and still covered every bill. Life was exciting, and we could not wait to see what the future had in store for us.

Today it feels like everything I run from has caught up with me. I have watched us, along with others, lose our money because of some so-called "rich people" and it seems like no one has been able to get them to pay for what they have done. Not only are the majority of the people in this nation, including me, paying our own debts that have risen beyond what we planned but we also have to pay for the debts caused by these selfish people.

People are so angry that the crime rate is increasing, meaning I cannot take the midnight walks I used to enjoy. As it turns out, my 10-month-old son might also have to pay these debts at an older age. Ever day I pray I don't lose my job, but my husband already lost his.

I can't help wondering where this nation is headed, hopefully not down the same road my country took, making it close to impossible to serve it. 🍷

Opinion | Travis Bickle

Taxi Driver: Xmas Edition!

Like a child of poor, alcoholic and abusive parents, Taxi driver man fears the coming holidays.

Ikea is rolling out the consum....ehhh, Christmas Spirit early. Always first on the scene they are. Bah, humbug! Their decorations sting my weary eyes as I drive past with my empty cab, as is the custom these days. Good thing I hoarded my cash when the giving was good. Everyone else seems to have sold themselves down the river... no I kid. I'm as destitute as the lot of ya!

Still a few guilty profiteering swine meted themselves unwarranted bonuses this year. They climb aboard package laden and fat like vanilla ice-cream. They dress up all high and mighty for the Christmas party soiree with their ginormous paychecks still intact. Downsizing is so November. Worries are so for the start of January. Desperation is not part of the fat cat game. Not until your own sector is swallowed whole.

Yet the Christmas buffet scene still throbs, festive as ever, albeit with bitter wastrels drowning aggregate sorrow in drink, not the cash heavy merrymakers of yore gearing up for a gleeful holiday season topped to the brim with culinary delight and Christmas gifts the size of 42" flat screen TVs. No, this year the gifts come in the form of a pat on the back, and if not a pink slip, merely a wish for you to man up and take it.

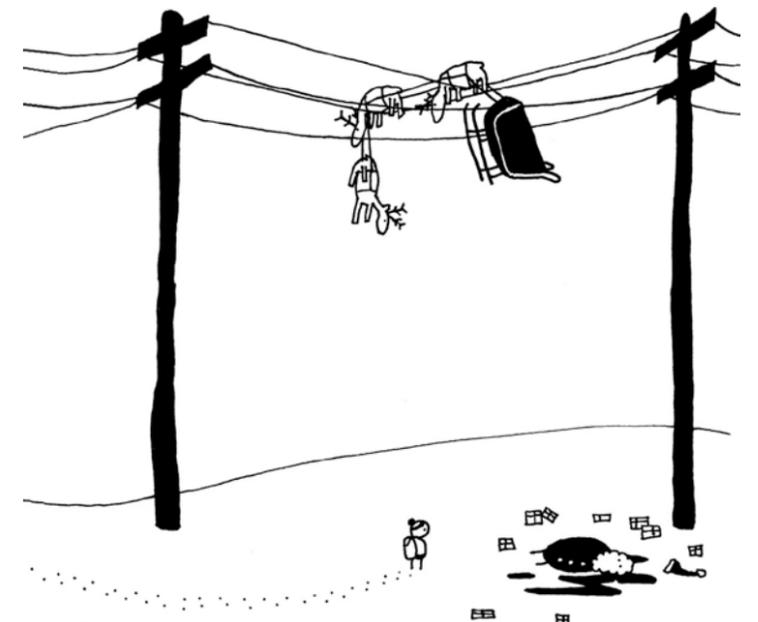
In my backseat, parties turn into sob fests. People take their Atlas-like burdens along home to stew in like some rancid marinade of malcontent.

"Somliga går med trasiga skor," the poet swore, before inquiring "Säg vad beror det på?" A rhetorical question it would seem, as in the following line he indicates that it might simply be god's will for people to trudge towards their end in the aforementioned "threadbare shoes." Perhaps he speaks the truth. Maybe Mammon wills it so.

Bah! Humbug! 🍷

"In my backseat, parties turn into sob fests. People take their Atlas-like burdens along home to stew in like some rancid marinade of malcontent."

Xmas Comic | Hugleikur Dagsson





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Travel | Photo Essay: Akureyri



Browsing Backyards On The Verge Of Winter

Walking around Akureyri on a beautiful November afternoon got me thinking. Coming from Reykjavík, I'm pretty used to see trash lying around. Compared to Tokyo our capital is like a dumpster filled with candy-wrappers, empty beer-cans and cigarette butts. It's like a big reminder of a party long gone. Sort of like how Borgartún, our very own Wall Street, appears now, with its broken neon-signs, empty offices and vacant parking lots.

City officials don't seem to bother much with cleaning the streets, except maybe during high summer, when they have access to cheap labour in the form of drowsy students. 'Luckily' we have lots of snow to cover it all up in-between.

This means that from September until May not much is done about cleaning up the streets. And Akureyri doesn't seem to be that much different. However, what I really love about Iceland's capital of the North is its connection with the past. They don't seem to be too eager to tear down old places of value to replace them with some monstrous new ones. Their 10-11 supermarket is located in a 100-year old building. They keep snowmobiles

in their gardens. They eat pizza with beef, béarnaise and French fries (it's called Búkolla and is a must-eat for every visitor).

While us in the city of Reykjavík have erased much of its past with great success, using either bad business ideas or even worse fire prevention constructions, the people of Akureyri seem comfortably rooted in their cosy little town. Maybe Akureyri's closeness to nature and harsh winters has helped shape their mentality. We, on the other hand, may have been too busy booking flights to sunnier destinations and signalling the doorman at Kaffibarinn to notice our very own Esja.

It's about time to look around and start noticing all the little details that have gone unnoticed. If it's snowing, you can always dig in. ❄️

✍️ JÓHANNES KJARTANSSON
📷 JÓI KJARTANS



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Note that the Seljavallalaug swimming pool is not regularly maintained, it has no showering facilities (and very modest changing booths) and it'll often have a bunch of algae in it. You venture there of your own accord, and on your own responsibility.



Travel | Jökulsárlón



Welcome To Fairytale Land!

Visiting Jökulsárlón in winter

Visiting the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon is like stepping into a fairytale. The dreamlike world is one of the greatest natural wonders in Iceland, by far. And it's very easy to access, even in winter, since it's situated right along the ring road.

Jökulsárlón is the largest of the glacial lakes in Iceland. The clear water is filled with huge odd shaped icebergs that break off Breiðamerkurjökull, a glacier tongue of Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull. The white, green, blue and even black coloured blocks of ice drift around in the lake all while the huge mass of white that is Vatnajökull towers in the distance. Eventually, the icebergs are carried out to sea by a short river.

Jökulsárlón was formed when the glacier starting retreating sixty or so years ago, leaving behind a deep lake filled with melt water. It is constantly growing in size, as the glacier keeps melting. At 284 metres deep, it is currently the deepest lake on the island.

One perk of visiting Jökulsárlón in winter is that chances are pretty high that you'll find yourself all alone with nature. There is complete silence, apart from the occasional cracking and sudden breaking of ice with the following splash. It is apparent that the glacier is very much alive. The fact



that there are no boat rides or organised tours on the lake during winter doesn't matter at all. Walking along the black shores is quite enough, and an amazing experience in itself.

Just on the other side of the bridge the icebergs float under is a sight not to be missed. Follow the river to the black beach by the ocean, where endless amounts of icebergs get stranded on the shore. The glittering ice sculptures on the black sand are an incredible sight.

Not to be missed. ☺

LOUISE PETERSSON
LOUISE PETERSSON

SIGHTS TO SEE ON THE WAY



SELJALANDSFOSS: The mother of all waterfalls! Sure, it may not be the highest, it may not be the mightiest... but you can walk behind it. And that's pretty cool. Just follow the foot path at the bottom of the cliff and get up close and personal with this pretty waterfall. Seljalandsfoss is visible from the ring road, so you can't miss it.



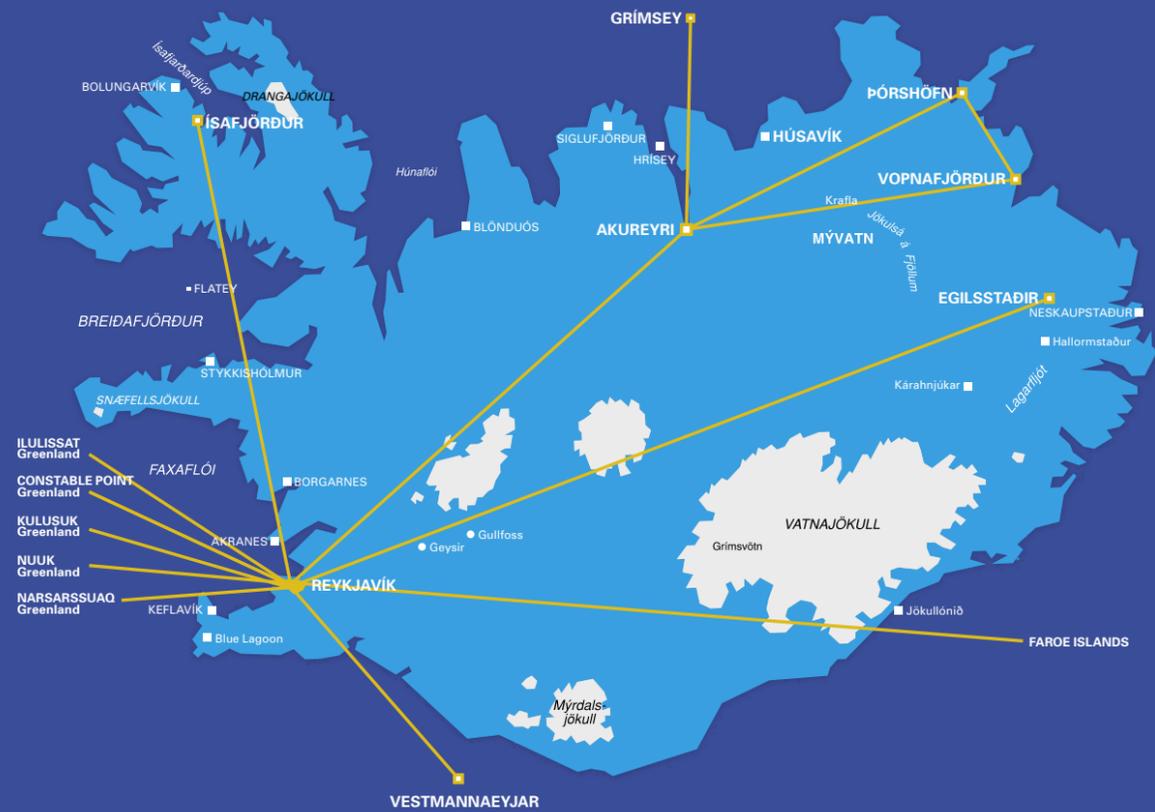
SELJAVALLALAUUG: An outdoor swimming pool built in the 1920s. The pool is situated in a deep valley between high mountains with little waterfalls and a stream flowing right next to it. The location is breathtaking and the experience amazing. From the ring road turn off towards Raufarfell and follow the signs to Seljavellir. From there you'll have to hike straight ahead on a narrow path into the valley for around one kilometre. Bring a swimsuit—you'll never know whether someone will show up...



FJALLSÁRLÓN: A small glacier lake near Jökulsárlón. The cool thing about Fjallsárlón is that the glacier itself is really close. It rolls over the mountain and seems to be crawling down the green landscape straight ahead. Suddenly, it stops and there is a wall of ice and a lake with icebergs below it. From the ring road, turn off at the sign that reads Fjallsárlón and follow the gravel road until you reach the huge mass of ice.

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IT HAS TO BE FUN HOT Artist on Artist action!

Artist Lóa Hlín Hjálmtýsdóttir interviews Artist Yoshimoto Nara. With some questions by Haukur SM thrown in for good measure. Prepared for print by Haukur SM and Michael Zelenko. Thanks to all our mothers – we couldn't have done this without being born and stuff.

In September, Japanese pop art legend Yoshimoto Nara visited Iceland to open his exhibit "Crated Rooms." Heavily influenced by the anime and manga movements of the 60s, Nara made a definitive name for himself during the J-pop movement of the 90s. Nara's work is deceptive—it draws viewers in with adorably wide-eyed children before stabbing them in the back with devilish surprises like knives, skulls and disturbing texts.

This interview was conducted by Grapevine's resident comic artist Lóa Hlín Hjálmtýsdóttir. We cleaned it up a little, because the interviewer sometimes lost her ability to speak properly due to the stress of interviewing her long-time hero..

LÓA HLÍN HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR: I've been reading intellectual interviews with you, but I wanted to do a more "how you feel" kind of one, because your work has much to do with

one feelings. When you see it, it connects with you emotionally. Does a big and complicated professional life like yours affect your work?

YOSHIMOTO NARA: No.

LHH: It changes nothing?

YN: No, nothing. But sometimes I'll feel pressure from the audience.

LHH: I see... but if you do create something really good, are you worried that your next piece will be awful?

YN: Ah...yes. But even if I make a good one, the next day when I wake up and see my painting I'm like 'hmm...' [makes a doubtful face] and that's why it's no problem. And anyway, I like making paintings—it's not that I want satisfy anyone in particular by doing them.

HAUKUR SM: Does your success make it harder for you to accomplish your goals? And if so, how so?

YN: Definitely harder. When I was totally unknown, I could use all of my time to paint. Now, for example, I have to do this interview. I sometimes feel a kind of a pressure from the audience, they who love my artwork. I never felt pressure when I was starting. And the pressure I feel now is not from gallerist or the critics, just from the audience. Because they love my works.

LHH: Where did you two find each other [Nara's main collaborator, designer Hideki Toyoshima, was present during the interview. He often oversees the installation of Nara's work and collaborates with him on setting up the plateau (i.e. the containers and huts that house the work)]?

YN: It was six years ago, in Osaka, his hometown. He is one of the founders of Graf, which is a kind of a company that...

HIDEKI TOYOSHIMA: It's of group of people I used to work with. My friends, basically. We did different things: furniture and interior design... we even had a chef in our group. We operated an art gallery and furniture shop, a café, a restaurant in Osaka... and then we had a studio space in the gallery too.

One day, he came to the space with a mutual friend who introduced us and we wound up making an exhibition in our gallery space. He had the idea of constructing rooms and houses in the gallery... That's the beginning of our collaboration. We called the exhibition S/M/L, so we made a small room and a medium sized one and a large one.

It was supposed to be one project, we had no contract or plan for the future or anything. But when we were finished making it, we had a lot of beer to celebrate and we started wondering if we not only needed S/M/L, but also C and B and Q... or something, from A to Z... a lot of houses. You know, 'let's create, like, a whole town or something!' and it was just completely like a drunken talk. So after a while we collaborated on more projects and made more houses. And after three years we had a chance to do a quite huge exhibition in a town called Hirosaki, Nara's hometown.

YN: I was born there.

HT: It's a northern town in Japan. And it has this huge warehouse. We filled up more than A to Z; we had 44 houses and space, and some big installations. We literally created a village in the exhibition. So that's how it evolved. Then we started

making more projects together, mostly in Europe.

HSM: You two create big spectacles with your collaborations, a combination of design and sculpture and drawing and architecture – it's a great way to view art. By bringing your talents together, do you have a clear object in mind? Is there something you want to accomplish by it, or is it merely a way to make the show more fun?

YN: I like to make paintings by myself, and I like to work by myself. However, showing with other people makes things much more fun. That's another thing: I've never thought that an exhibition must be serious or the installation must be serious... and after the collaboration, I thought that the exhibition should be fun for me, not just for the people. Maybe for the people too, but first for me.

HT: We have to enjoy it.

YN: Yeah, we have to enjoy it. Otherwise the audience can't feel the fun.

LHH: What brings you to Iceland?

YN: What... I don't know (laughs). My gallerist from Berlin introduced me to this museum. Yeah, that's why... yeah. Why not? Anyway, I love Björk and Sigur rós.

LHH: Have you been a long time here?

HT: Just for three or four days. Since Friday night.

YN: And tomorrow, we'll tour the country. In a minibus.

LHH: What was is the first thing you guys noticed about Iceland?

YN: I was born in the North of Japan, in a pretty small town. Smaller than Reykjavik. The landscape here is very similar. It wasn't a typical Japanese town. You didn't see so many billboards, especially when I was young. Like here. Nothing, just the houses. I remember so many childhood experiences I'm reminded of here. The sky is same as above my hometown. ☺

Yoshimoto Nara's exhibit, The Crated Rooms, is ongoing at Listasafn Reykjavíkur: Hafnarhús. It will be open until January 3rd. Lóa Hlín recently published the book Alhæft um Þjóðir ("Generalizing About Nations") on the OKBÆ(!)KUR imprint. Find it at quality bookstores in Reykjavík.

LÓA HLÍN HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR
HÖRÐUR SVEINSSON

I'm No Expert #2 The Gerðuberg Matinée Series

Heyrðu mig nú ("Hear me now") is a concert series that the **Icelandic Symphony Orchestra** organizes as an outreach to younger music lovers. Thankfully, I'm not a teenager anymore, but... you know... I scored free tickets. This time, on **November 6**, they were going to play a piece by **Igor Stravinsky** called **The Firebird**. I had never heard the piece, but Stravinsky has always interested me since I heard about how another piece of his, **The Rite of Spring**, caused his audience to riot when it premiered.

"Tonight we are going to play a masterpiece for you," espoused conductor **Rumon Gamba** and instantly connected with his teenage audience. Step by step, we learned about the story the piece tells, the concept of the piece, how Stravinsky liked to paint a picture using different sections of the band as colours. Then he made the band play examples to support his teachings. All in all, this was well taught and a well received lesson in classical composition. As we, the audience, were so informed about the music, we had to agree upon hearing it in its entirety that a masterpiece was indeed being performed

On **November 22nd**, I took my newly acquired compositional knowledge to **Hallgrímskirkja church** to witness a world premiere of **Cecília** by Áskell Másson and Thor Vilhjálmsson. This oratory is written in honour of **Saint Cecilia**, who died a martyr's death in the 2nd century. She sang her praise to God while dying, and is therefore the saint of music and musicians. I was excited to witness instruments like the Stone Harp and the Water Drums. In plain English: the lyrics were wonderfully written and the music was fantastic. What stood out the most, however, was how well the church's natural acoustics came out. This was especially evident when the choir sang a Capella. I was also impressed with compositional decisions, such as chain vocals that brought out natural delay or instrumental ideas such as Stone Harp or glasses of water. The water drum, though, wasn't as impressive as I had hoped. I feel they could have amped it up a bit, maybe put a little echo on them, just to let them shine more. It was a nice idea that could have been better executed. This didn't cast a shadow on the great composition and fantastic performance. ☺

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Poetry and Prose

The difference between poetry and prose? Poetry sings, prose talks. Poetry dances, prose walks. Poetry's fewer words with more ("deeper") meaning. Poetry's about form while prose is about content. Poetry's the memory and prose the remembrance. Poetry's constructed in lines, whereas prose is constructed in paragraphs.

Don't know, but I know it when I see it!

The amount of clichés about the difference between poetry and prose is quite sufficient. Abundant, even. In all honesty, there's boatloads and shitloads of opinions on the matter. There's so much of it that when you start acquainting yourself with the ideas you'd wish you'd never heard of either one.

The clichés are mostly as true as they're untrue. Poetry sings, but it also talks—the Persian word for "poetic body of work" is "kalam", which literally means "talk" in Arabic. Poetry dances, but it also walks. There's a million walking poems, from Wordsworth to T.S. Eliot to John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara. Sarah Cullen's Maps is a series of visual poems created by a pendulum device—a box with a swinging pen inside that wrote the poems while the poet took walks in Florence.

A lot of conceptual poetry is more words with less apparent meaning—some conceptual poems are computer engines that produce infinite amounts of texts with no apparent meaning. Most war poetry or love poetry is more about content than form and many so-called proseworks, such as Joyce's Ulysses or Stein's The Making of Americans, have a lot more to do with form than content.

Hal Sirowitz' poetry books Mother Said and Father Said are the remembrance, whereas Proust's prose masterpiece, À la recherche du temps perdu, is memory. The most instantly recognisable feature of poetry, for any layman at least, is the line-breaking. Poetry tends to be cut into short lines. The French poet Jacques Roubaud has called it le vers libre international—international free verse, a plague on all your houses—in effect nothing more than lineated prose and not poetry at all. Of course you don't have to read a lot of poetry, or be acquainted with any radical avant-garde, to realise that much poetry is not divided into short lines. Take Ginsberg or Whitman, Rimbaud or Octavio Paz. Sometimes they get classified as "prose poems", but a lot of the time such a definition proves seriously lacking.

The American poet James Sherry once pointed out that a piece of paper has a definite economic value. Paper is a commodity that can be sold for profit in the marketplace. The production cost is lower than the selling price. Sherry also noted that when you print a poem

on it, this value is lost. Sherry's colleague and friend, Charles Bernstein, calculated that a print-run of 2000 copies of a poetry book from Sun & Moon Press, that sells out in two years, actually loses money.

This does not go for prose. When you print prose on a piece of paper, it actually increases in economic value. Isn't that amazing?

Which leads me to the only usable explanation of the difference between poetry and prose that I've come across so far (after about a decade of looking): If the text that you've written sells for less than it cost you to produce it, chances are you're not a novelist but a poet. ☘

Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl's third novel, *Gæska* (Kindness), has just been published by *Mál & menning*.

Chaos, and the Future of Art in the 21st Century



So, post-modernism is dead. Its terminal illness began near the start of a new century, on September 11th, 2001. Postmodernism is hard to define but one knows it when one sees it. The Oxford defines it as a "distrust of theories and ideologies," whereas Webster says that when it comes to literature it is "ironic self-reference and absurdity." Now, a healthy distrust in ideologies might seem like sensible option after having seen both communism and capitalism followed through to their ironic and absurd extremes. The problem, however, is that when it comes down to it, we all need something to believe in, some sort of world view to give this whole mess meaning. The need for a world view is almost as fundamental as the need to eat or fuck, and is what defines us a species. Without it, disaster follows.

In the 1920s and 30s, distrust of ideologies was rife in Weimar Germany. After the country's collapse in World War I, no one

believed in anything anymore. Apart from a certain ex-soldier, who blamed it all on the Jews. When no thoughtful alternatives are offered, angry nonsense takes over. In the past decades, we have seen a bit of history repeating. Ever since Vietnam or thereabouts, a defeat for Western military and ideological supremacy as thorough in the long run as Germany's collapse in World War I, people started turning to religion again in a big way. It was the easy solution. The educated classes turned to a more complex, but equally nonsensical, solution.

The War on Thought

In Post-Modernism, everything was open to doubt, and to interpretation. There was no way to be sure of anything anymore, even language itself was distrusted. Into this intellectual power vacuum, a new ideology moved in. This was the free market, and its ideologues seemed so sure of what they were saying that people couldn't help but go along. Small wonder then that in the age of Post-modernism,

a character such as George W. Bush, free of intellectual doubt, ruled the world.

Not everyone fell for it. Feminists never really cared much for post-modernism. They were dealing with real problems and real solutions. The same was true of other "minorities" the world over who did not have the luxury of believing that nothing really mattered. But in the big picture, free market missionaries easily rode roughshod over self-doubting intellectuals, who offered little resistance.

Much like Hitler did with Germany, Bush tried to revive American (and by association Western) military might. He failed just as miserably, but the question future generations will ask themselves is this: Why was he allowed to try?

Whatever vestiges there remained of Post-modernism surely disappeared with last year's economic collapse. 9/11 might have reminded us that there was an outside world, but on October 6th, we really felt it. The economic collapse was noticed by everyone. Art could no longer afford to lose itself in itself when the outside world intruded so violently.

During the boom, art had its own niche. Artists were given grants by the banks. The consensus was that the grants would not influence the artists' works. Nor did anyone assume that artists, working on behalf of the banks, would influence how the banks were perceived.

The artists' job was simply to deal with art itself, and leave the rest of society be. Others protested, but why worry about what artists have to say when their job is simply to be decorative, or, as the phrase had it, "cute."

Artists, like most Icelanders, like nothing more than to be left alone to plough their own garden. Of course, according to the tenants of Post-modernism, everything was self-referential and there was no way to explain the outside world anyway, so what did it all matter?

I'm Not Here

But there is nowhere to run to. The film I'm Not Here, based on the life of Bob Dylan, illustrates this point beautifully. The character, tired of conflict, abandons political anthems and leaves the world to become a country singer up in the mountains. But his rural bliss is intruded upon when the big corporations start building dams in the highlands, and he must battle with them again. If you don't fight them now, you will only have to fight them later, and on worse terms.

My own such moment came when, trying to leave the rampant marketplace of the city, I went to visit Halldór Laxness' museum at Gjúfrasteinn in the summer of 2008. They handed me an iPod with the logo of a bank on it and I realised that either the banks would collapse, or Icelandic culture would.

The banks, and the whole manic boom, took control of many artists, who sold their image and credibility to advertisers, and thus enabled companies to reach people who might never have fallen for pure salesmanship, but who believed in the arts. With the help of constant advertising and success stories from abroad, Iceland became a nation of cheerleaders who spurned the banks on to ever greater excess.

To understand anything, you must understand everything. This, of course, is very hard to achieve. Nevertheless, it is the only intellectual goal really worth achieving.

(to be continued...) ☘

- VALUR GUNNARSSON

Books | Review

Two New Guidebooks To Iceland

The Real Iceland

Páll Ásgeir Ásgeirsson
Forlagið (2009) – 2.490 ISK

Top 10 Reykjavík and Iceland

Dr. Gunní
Sögur (2009) – 2.490 ISK



Need to buy a guidebook to Iceland? You can choose from Lonely Planet, the Rough Guides, Frommer's, Insight Guides, and the Bradt Guides. Don't want to pay? The annually updated Around Iceland is available as a free PDF download from heimur.is/world, and there are tons of free travel advice about Iceland at tripadvisor.com.

But there are still people who think they can write and sell a better guidebook, even while lacking the brand recognition and distribution channels of the mainstream guides. Two new books, both by Icelandic authors, have just come out. Both cost 2.490 ISK (2.241 ISK at Bóksala stúdentta).

Páll Ásgeir Ásgeirsson is a guidebook veteran and has written many books on the Icelandic outdoors. His 95-page, nicely laid-out *The Real Iceland* claims to tell "the truth about Iceland" and to expose "things not always revealed or obvious to strangers." It's in essay format, with no listings or opening hours. It's written for reading enjoyment rather than reference, and includes a pleasing though fairly conventional selection of photographs. Despite the title, the book focuses on Reykjavík.

The English in the book has a translated feel to it. It's hard to tell what happened, but I think that the translation was competently done, just not sent for revision and polishing afterwards.

The *Real Iceland* does try hard to give the inside scoop. It tells us, for example, that "laws in Iceland are meaningless"

and that those who own a summer house are just "fleeing from one town to another." There is much truth in these and other observations, but sometimes they land with a bit of a thud. I wished the book had lingered a bit on them, and tried to unpeel another layer or two of nuance.

Overall, *The Real Iceland* is a good try and makes for a quick, innocuous read, but I have a hard time justifying spending 2490 ISK on it. If you want hard-hitting essays on modern Iceland, I still recommend Bart Cameron's *Grapevine Guide to Iceland*, which came out in 2006 and which I've seen remaindered for about 500 ISK.

The cover of Dr. Gunní's *Top 10 Reykjavík and Iceland* made me think it was a slapdash product and the title told me little. Inside, I saw that the book is all listings, a paragraph for each one. Then I realised that the whole 180-page book is a series of top-ten lists: top ten museums in Reykjavík, top ten swimming pools, top ten sights in the West Fjords, top ten dates in Icelandic history.

The layout is rather busy and distracting. But when I started reading my opinions brightened. There is one great mystery to this book: not only is the writing good, the English is very good. Nowhere do we learn who is responsible for this—a translator, a proofreader, or perhaps Dr. Gunní himself? Dr. Gunní, by the way, is not a doctor. He's an Icelandic media personality, among other things a music journalist, and frequent contributor to this very magazine.

The top-ten lists turn out to be fun to read, partly because you can disagree with them. I very much disagree with Dr. Gunní's choice of the top ten Icelandic DVDs (*Cold Fever? Come on!*) and I found his choice of books doubtful too. But mostly I liked his opinions. There are a few ads, but just a few. The book tries to be a real guidebook, with accommodations and restaurant advice, and maps of Reykjavík and Iceland on the inside covers. It covers the countryside pretty well. It gives websites, addresses, prices and opening hours. There's a helpful index.

Not just tourists, but also people who live here will enjoy browsing this book. I came away convinced that the top-ten format can actually work if handled well. ☘ - IAN WATSON

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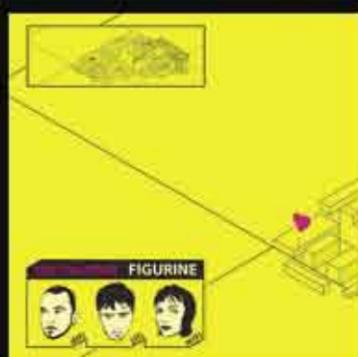
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by The Tremolo Beer Gut



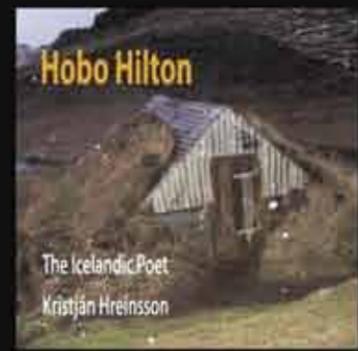
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Through a Century

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by Lights On The Highway

PAGE 10:

In October, I got a negative answer from the Minister of Justice. I asked my lawyer why. She said: the reason is you don't have any relation to Iceland, no friends, no work and you don't speak Icelandic. But it's not true!

The Icelandic government disposed of human being-slash-asylum seeker Nour Aldin Alazawi like so much street trash.

PAGE 6:

Give a nation the task of articulating its values and creating a future general policy for a whole country. Let's do it on Saturday, from 9 to 5. Done and done!

Pórdís Helgadóttir and Eiríkur Kristjánsson aren't too sure about the findings of the National Assembly.

SPECIAL XMAS PULLOUT:

Jólakort

(yo!-la-kowrt)

Many Icelanders choose to parlay greetings to their friends and loved ones over the holidays via the mailing of Christmas cards, or jólakort. They will most often feature a generic Christmassy motif and some standard well wishes, although some use the opportunities to send along pictures of the family.

Read our Xmas Encyclopaedia for full disclosure on all things Icelandic Xmas.

PAGE 8:

The Order of the Falcon incident started out innocently enough: On April 8, 2009 the office of president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson announced to the then US Ambassador van Voorst that she was being awarded the Order of the Falcon, the highest recognition of the Icelandic state.

Michael Zelenko investigates "THE ORDER OF THE FALCON" incident

SPECIAL XMAS PULLOUT:

It's unclear who is being protected with this tax on umbrellas and birthday presents. Over the course of the many arguments I have had with Tollstjóri, the majority of customs agents admit outright how destructive and absurd these "laws" are.

Sruli Recht is not happy with Tollstjóri.



Jón Jónsson

18. DEC.

HÓTEL ÍSLAND

Jón Jónsson

Chris Christmasson!

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