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Cover by: Sigurður Oddsson
www.siggjodds.com

WHAT'S BEST ABOUT REYKJAVÍK?

Anna's 11th Editorial



I've been thinking about this question for the last week, as we've been making our fourth annual Best of Reykjavík issue. This magazine is often critical, even negative, but every year we dedicate an entire issue to that superlative, "BEST." In fact, the word appears xx* times in this issue.

So what's best about Reykjavík? For starters, our city is run by The Best Party—at least that's what the party calls itself. And we elected them because they wanted the best for our city. They campaigned/sang to the tune of Tina Turner's "Simply The Best:" "We want a city that's cuddly and clean and cool...and topnotch stuff as a general rule...we want water fountains, trains, and all kinds of animals...we want free towels at the swimming pools, a polar bear for the Reykjavík zoo, all kinds for the unfortunates, Disneyland

in the Vatnsmýri area, a drug-free parliament by 2020...And, and we will not accept mediocre because we want the best..."

You may not agree with their ideas of what's best, and you may not agree with our idea of what's best, but who really knows what's best anyways. I won't say that this is the best "Best of Reykjavík" guide, but it's full of a lot of the things that we like.

Much like the group of people who wrote Iceland's new Constitution (which has yet to be approved), we "crowdsourced" it. We called up a group of people to sit around and discuss the best of this and that in Reykjavík, and we sent out a poll and asked our Facebook and Twitter fans for their input too.

Ultimately it was not a democratic process though, and perhaps it's a stretch to say that we crowd sourced it at all. Sometimes we even made up award categories for things that we like, just to be able say: "You're the best." And ultimately I think what's best about Reykjavík is the fact that there are so many things worth calling the best.

*Believe it or not, the xx wasn't a typo! If you can guess (or count) how many times the word "best" appears in this issue, I'll buy you a hot dog and a coke at Bæjarins Beztu.

TRÖLL by Gísli Darri



They take traffic signs much too literally

This is Anna having a slice of pizza at the best pizza place in Reykjavík, La Luna. You should too.



In the issue:
Special supplement from Visit North Iceland
www.northiceland.is

Music | Free



Cheek Mountain Thief

Cheek Mountain

Download the FREE track at www.grapevine.is

When Brit folktronica band Tunng visited Iceland for Airwaves in 2010, frontman Mike Lindsay became so enchanted by the landscape around the north that he decided to move there for a few months to record an album. He brought little equipment (planning instead to borrow from the local community) and put together a studio in a cabin near Húsavík facing Kinnarfjöll, which literally means "Cheek Mountain." And so, under the name Cheek Mountain Thief, Lindsay recorded his upcoming self-titled album both with local musicians and indie stars Sin Fang and Mugison. The result is a beautiful, sweet album – at times cheery, at times more contemplative.

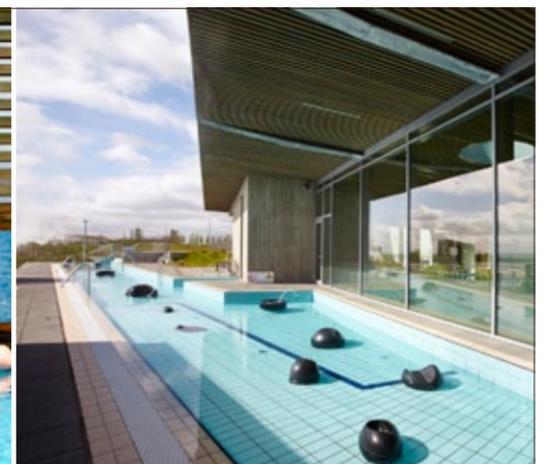
Our track of the issue, "Cheek Mountain," is a joyous anthem to the project. Trumpets blare, violins sing and percussion marches on behind Lindsay's cool, relaxed voice. The album comes out August 13, so if you like what you hear, there's plenty more where that came from!

The ideal stop between Thingvellir and Geysir
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THE LAMBURGER

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The Reykjavik Grapevine's Best of Reykjavik panel awarded the Hamburger Factory "Best specialty burger 2010" and "Best veggie burger 2011".

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The Factory offers Iceland's best selection of gourmet hamburgers with a nice selection of salads, meat courses and delicious desserts. And of course we only use 100% fresh high-quality ingredients, directly from the Icelandic nature.

Located on the ground floor of the highest tower of Reykjavik, with an amazing view of Höfði, the meeting place of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Hamburger Factory has been packed with burger-craving customers since its opening in april 2010; among the regulars is Iceland's best known fisherman, Eric Clapton.

Attention: Our hamburger buns are not round. They are square. Does it taste better? You tell us.



HOW TO GET HERE

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO GET TO US WHILE LOOKING COOL AND LOCAL

This is what you say to the taxi driver or when asking locals for directions:

"Íslenska Hamborgarafabrikkan, takk"
(„The Icelandic Hamburger Factory, please“)

When you arrive you tell the waiter:

"Sælar! Hvað er að fréttu"
(Hello! What's up)

"Ég er þokkalega svangur, get ég fengið hamborgara"
(I'm quite hungry, can I get a hamburger)

From that point on you are in good hands.
Be there or be square!

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2010

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Sour grapes & stuff

MOST AWESOME LETTER FREE GRAPEVINE TEE HEE HEE!



There's prize for all your **MOST AWESOME LETTERS**. And it's a scorcher! Whoever sends us THE MOST AWESOME LETTER each issue will receive a cool new **REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE T-SHIRT**, featuring the majestic G that adorns our cover. So you should make sure to keep writing us fun and/or interesting letters. This new Grapevine tee surely is the **SHIZNIT** (whatever that means)! It was designed by our very own art director man, **HÖRÐUR KRISTBJÖRNSSON**, and it's good for posing in front of a mirror, impressing folks with your impeccable taste or picking up men or women of all ages (no minors). **DON'T PANIC** if your letter wasn't picked AWESOME LETTER. You can still get a tee for a low, low price over our website, WWW.GRAPEVINE.IS. Now, if you're in the market for free goodies next month, write us some sort of letter. Give us your worst: LETTERS@GRAPEVINE.IS

MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Dear A. Woman.

I am honestly sorry that this has become a part of your life. It is not acceptable in any circumstance. The only thing that occurs to me is that from now forward - the biggest effort has to begin with the children. Real men do not rape. It has to begin with real fathers educating sons, and mothers educating girls to not accept this kind of behavior. And it takes a serious legal and medical system, dedicated to not tolerate any form of sexual assault. And, what do we do with a society that promotes the idea that sex is a casual part of a party society? What do we do with accepted situations that put women in this position and then ignore the results? Whatever is done, something has to be done.

Best wishes,

A. Man

Dear A. Man,

Thanks for taking the time to comment on A. Woman's article, "Have Some Rape With Your Coffee, Guys." It's nice to see that this important subject is not falling on deaf ears, that people aren't entirely apathetic when it comes to this. Here's what other people had to say about it:

"Yo, Please transmit to the wonderful anonymous writer A. Woman my sincere appreciation and respect for her words. That was an air-punchingly good opinion piece and it meant a lot to me to read it."

- R!

"I agree with most of what you have written, A. Woman, but one thing I must challenge you on. It's not a man's problem or a woman's problem, it's a human problem.

Both men and women are capable of sexual assault. On either gender.

Men rape men, men rape women, women rape women, women rape men.

Let's call a spade a spade and address the problem in its entirety.

Other than that, I wholeheartedly agree. It's a sad situation and I applaud the people brave enough to share their stories."

- Ingunn Margrét Blöndal

"Frábær grein - you took the words right out of my mouth. The fact is að way too many straight guys have the attitude að "I don't rape, so I'm innocent", en auðvitað eru þeir allir guilty to some extent. They control the government, banks and major industries, og á meðan þeir nota ekki that power til að stop their mothers, sisters and daughters being abused, þá eru þeir no less guilty than those actually committing the rape. WLT."

- Tony Peralta

"It's a good article but I disagree. Men not come together to stop rape. I've seen men try to take advantage of drunk girls in downtown Reykjavik countless times. I've done stuff about it, like letting the bouncers know and try to get the guy kicked out. Driven home girls or walked them to taxis. Many times they were drugged. It's getting super serious right now, much more than just a few years ago. There's a RAPE DRUG epidemic going on people! The men who are going out to rape (yes they plan their whole weekend out with that in mind, and they see nothing wrong with it) they are going to be there this weekend and the one after that, with countless potential victims to choose from. THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM is to educate the 18-22 year olds about DRUGS and EVIL MEN. Make them REALIZE THE THREAT, NOTICE THE SIGNS that someone might be drugged, take care of their friends and help others. Call the police, notify bouncers. CATCH THE GUYS IN THE ACT! /RANT"

- Bóas Kristjánsson

Thank you, all of you, for taking the time to care.

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Best regards

Ivy

Dear Ivy,

How many times do we have to tell you that WE DON'T WANT YOUR USED COOKING OIL. Please stop emailing us. And could you also tell that guy who is trying to sell us glass beads from China that WE DON'T WANT HIS GLASS BEADS either. Jeez. We are a magazine and we get enough emails as it is. So that guy, the one selling the glass beads... well, we replied just for fun. We told him:

"Dear Sir, Thanks, but we're good on glass beads from China. Best, Anna," and he actually replied. You know what he said? He said, "Dear Anna, Perhaps we have better quality, more favourable price. Best, Roc."

Come on! What on Earth would we do with a product called "BS6088 A & B JT-T446-2001/JIS AASHTO Type I & Type II EN1423/EN1424 AS2009" used "For sand blasting from 43 microns to 1180 microns" and "For abrasive from 710 microns to 5000 microns."

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The Grapevine

Hi there,

I wondered if anyone at the Grapevine knew from where I could book the house on El-liðaeý?

I'm hoping to visit in July!

Thanks,

Graham Robert.

Hi Graham,

I'm not sure! A site called Zamaan reported that it was given to Björk a while back: <http://www.zamaanonline.com/can-you-believe-there-is-a-house-in-this-picture-2776>

We think this is a lie.

Your best bet is to contact someone in the Westman Islands.

Maybe these people:

<http://visitwestmanislands.com/english/>

Good luck!



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 This tour includes snorkeling in the crystal clear waters of Silfra lava fissure and caving in Gjábkahellir cave, both located in Þingvellir National Park. Tour difficulty is rated as "easy", the scenery is unbeatable and the main things this trip leaves behind are great memories and thousands of satisfied customers. A simple MUST when in Iceland.



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Reykjavík, 07.07—Iceland's rising folk-pop megastars Of Monsters And Men celebrate their triumphant return from a victorious stint in the US by playing a free show at Hljómskálagarður park in downtown Reykjavík for 18,000 excited fans eager to celebrate their homecoming. Their recent stateside stay saw them—among other things—selling tens of thousands of albums and performing at performing several sold out shows, for celebrated music lover Jay Leno's television programme. Read our review of the show on page 32, and listen to their music on-line if that strikes your fancy. *Photo: DV / Eyþór Árnason*

News In Brief: **Early July Edition**

June ended on a somewhat predictable note as Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson was re-elected for his fifth term in office. If he serves it to completion, he will be head of state for twenty years. Ólafur said that he considered his re-election an "unambiguous message from the people" that they want to have a say in the largest issues facing the nation, in the form of national referendums.

However, professor of political science Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson pointed out that Ólafur's victory was not as sweeping as it seemed—after four terms in office, he was only able to win 51.5% of the ballots cast. Yet when Vigdís Finnbogadóttir ran for re-election in 1988—challenged by Sigrún Þorsteinsdóttir—she came away with the votes of 67% of all registered voters. Voter turnout was about the same in both elections. Ólafur's closest contender throughout the race, broadcast journalist Þóra Arnórsdóttir, said that she will likely not get involved in politics again, but will focus on her family.

A controversy erupted over foreign-made sweaters, when a group of hand knitters pointed out that some of the famed lopapeysur—the iconic Icelandic sweater—were being knitted in China and Taiwan. They contended that the hand knitters in Iceland were being denied work, and the labour union Framsýn requested a list of all shops

selling foreign-made sweaters. Many designers and sellers said the matter was actually a question of there not being enough Icelandic hand knitters to meet the demand for the sweaters.

For those who want a sweater knitted by an Icelander, you're advised to check the label to see specifically "Hand-knit in Iceland" or "Made in Ice-

"In a more bizarre turn of events, two stowaways managed to sneak onto an Icelandair plane bound for Copenhagen, hiding inside the bathroom"

land." But keep in mind these sweaters only date back to the '50s, and the design was likely borrowed from Sweden, Turkey or South America.

Speaking of foreigners, a polar bear was allegedly spotted in north Iceland. Originally reported by some Italian tourists who said they photographed and recorded the animal, the Coast Guard and the police went into action. They searched for the polar bear by foot and helicopter for days while advising residents in the area to be cautious when traveling outdoors, but turned up with nothing. What was reported as "obvious polar bear tracks" turned out to have been left by a kayaker, and the photographs of the polar bear—on

further examination—looked more like seals. Oh well—the year's not over yet, so there's still a chance we'll get to kill a polar bear.

A victory for journalism in Iceland was achieved when two journalists won a case they took to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) against the Icelandic state. The two journalists

in question—Björk Eidsdóttir and Erla Hlynisdóttir—wrote articles about the nightclubs Goldfinger and Strawberries, quoting employees who spoke of illegal activities going on at these clubs. However, the nightclubs—offended to have their fine reputations sullied—filed charges of libel against the two. Icelandic courts ruled that the articles be stricken from public record, and that the journalists be made to pay damages to the clubs. Appealing their case to the ECHR, the court ruled in the journalists' favour that their articles were part of the social dialogue of an important issue and should not be silenced. The Icelandic government now must pay the two journalists a combined total

of about 50,000 Euros. Strip clubs take note!

In a more bizarre turn of events, two stowaways managed to sneak onto an Icelandair plane bound for Copenhagen, hiding inside the bathroom. While the two were found before the plane took off and were summarily arrested, the incident reflected what appeared to be a serious breach in airline security.

Isavia, the company which runs Keflavík airport, examined their security procedures that day and found nothing unusual, concluding that the two stowaways must have been very well organized, that there was anything particularly lacking in their security. Glad we got that cleared up.

Not everyone has had the best luck with travel though, it seems. MP Birgitta Jónsdóttir was advised by the Foreign Ministry not to travel to the US due to an investigation that the US Department of Justice is currently conducting against Wikileaks. Birgitta was once a volunteer for the website, and did have the contents of her Twitter account subpoenaed by the DoJ.

The matter was fought in court, and is still far from over. The advice she received from Icelandic authorities, it should be noted, contradicts what of-

icials from the US embassy told her—that it was perfectly OK for her to travel to the US. The Americans might even be right, but hey, would you take any chances? 🍷

Trivia | What do you know?

Trivia Question!

What had the greatest influence on tourists' decision to visit Iceland?

- A. Icelandic nature
- B. Icelandic culture/history
- C. Attractive price offers/low airfares
- D. Stopover opportunity in Iceland
- E. Iceland's world-renowned hamburgers

Turn to page 33 for the answer. Hint: If you know your Tom Cruise, then this is obvious.



Keeping Iceland warm
since 1926

It's not really summer. It's just winter with less snow.

In the middle of the ocean, south of Iceland, there's an archipelago called the Westman Islands. It's the windiest place in Iceland and it gets lots of rain. In the old harbor we opened the valves on the water mains, unleashing an artificial downpour. When the ice-cold water came lashing down – it really made us think of the Icelandic summer.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONAS

So What's This Feminist Utopia I Keep Hearing About?

Many generations ago the population was struck by a plague that afflicted males solely, wiping them out and leaving only women. To avoid extinction, women developed parthenogenesis techniques, culminating in the ability to merge two eggs to form a foetus, ensuring the continuing existence of humanity.

WHAT, ICELAND IS A COUNTRY OF ONLY WOMEN?

Sorry, I thought you were asking about Whileaway, the feminist utopia created by science fiction writer Joanna Russ. Iceland may rank high on various measures of gender equality, but it is far from being a feminist Eden. For instance, the wage gap between men and women has proven very difficult to eradicate entirely. In a survey published last September by three major labour unions (VR, St.Rv. and SFR, if you must know), women made on average 24% less in wages than men. While some of that is explained by seniority, education and other factors, which lead to higher pay, that only lowers the gender gap percentage to 13%.

WHAT? BUT YOU HAVE A FEMALE PRIME MINISTER!

It is true that Iceland has made great progress towards equality in the last few decades. Current Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir is a perfect example. She was only the tenth woman ever to be elected to the Icelandic parliament. In 1978, when she gained her seat, there were only two others, a measly 5% of all MPs. But in the current parliament women make up about 40% of the total (the number has fluctuated depending on resignations and temporary absences).

SO WOMEN ARE TAKING OVER? ABOUT TIME TOO.

That is not really on the horizon. While the newly elected bishop of the state church of Iceland is indeed a woman, and a woman candidate came second in this summer's election for the office of the Presidency (which has once previously been held by a woman, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, from 1980 to 1996), this may be a high-point. The leaders of the three major political parties other than Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir's Social Democratic Alliance are all male and the current president has retained his office. The present level of female political power may end up being a historical anomaly.

HISTORICAL ANOMALY? BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL THE STRONG VIKING WOMEN OF THE PAST?

Even though the "Queen of Iceland" is a character in many works of medieval literature, notably the 'Niebelungenlied,' women have not historically had much power in Iceland. Men have governed single-handedly. By which I mean they ran the nation with one hand. The other being around their penis. To be fair, sometimes they took their non-governing hand off their penis to grope passing women. Which is to say that in Iceland women had it just as shitty as anywhere else throughout history.

SO EVERYTHING IS JUST AS AWFUL IN ICELAND AS ANYWHERE ELSE?

No, not really. The various gender equality rankings, such as the World Economic Forum and the United Nations Development Programme, which Iceland scores so well on, do measure something real. Women in Iceland do have a better quality of life than women in most other countries in the world. Here is one example: In most societies, single mothers tend to have the hardest lives, and that is true of Iceland as well.



"Iceland may rank high on various measures of gender equality, but it is far from being a feminist Eden."

However, being a single mother in Iceland brings very low social stigma, and there are sensible programmes in place to make single motherhood manageable. In fact, the first Icelandic female president was a single mother when elected. Good luck running for even a minor public office in the US as a single mother.

SHE WOULDN'T EVEN GET ELECTED TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD. GO ICELAND!

However, part of the relatively good quality of life for single mothers in Iceland is due to how close extended families tend to be, both in social and geographic terms. Most single mothers have parents, aunts, uncles and sib-

lings take care of their kids, be it after school or for a week so they can go on a work trip. Single mothers without family connections, usually immigrant women, have it much worse. Other examples tell a similar story, but the gender wage gap shows no signs of disappearing and Iceland is still a while away from being Whileaway.

MAN, WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SUCH A DOWNER. JUST TELL ME MORE ABOUT WHILEAWAY.

Sure! Whileaway has a number of similarities with Iceland, actually. For instance women are named for their mothers in a matronymic system, like people in Iceland are named for their fathers. Electricity is normally generated with steam turbines and hydroelectric dams and there is only one major urban centre. That is about it, however, for similarities. Whileaway women fight each other in duels for love, and have the technology to travel to other worlds. Oh, and Iceland is not a feminist utopia. ☹

✍ KÁRI TULINIUS
📧 LÓA HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR

Mirror Mirror On The Wall, Who's The Most Tanned Of Them All...



I walk to the swimming pool. It's cold and the wind blows colour into my cheeks. My blood vessels slowly dilate.

As I step into the collective shower room, all I can think of is how Snow White (the Disney version based on an Icelandic woman) never went to the tanning studio.

A lot of fair skinned people around me seem to spend their precious krónur on airbrush tanning booths. News flash: UV rays are... wait for it... BAD for you! They increase the risk of skin cancer, you know. So, is it a conscious decision to forego the sun and smear yourself orange instead? Do the Oompaloompa's of Charlie's Chocolate Factory have a cult following that I don't know about?

Okay, I get it... there's not much sun here, and you want to look nice. Well, you know what, you do! You really do. Freckles are beautiful. No freckles are beautiful too. And so is pale skin. Much nicer than when you can see the tanning line between your neck and your face. That makes you look like an old worn-out shoe. An ugly shoe, that is. And it adds about 25 years to your age. Speaking of age, around two years ago, Alþingi banned under 18-year-olds from frequenting tanning booths. That's nice. Still, word has it they're not that strict, and for such a small city Reykjavík has its fair share of tanning booths.

Naked communal showering at local swimming pools equals a positive body image, right? So I thought, until I realised how much people are spending to get tangoed. At Laugar Spa, for instance, an airbrush tanning with a scrub costs 5,900 ISK! What! Think of how obese you could be with all the lovely chocolate you could buy with that money! ☹

Things They Like About Reykjavík

SIF ARNARSDÓTTIR
MARATHON RUNNER



I think I'd have to say Sushi Samba since I'm planning to go there in few days. But Tapashúsið, Sjárvarkjallarinn, Fiskifélagið, Grillmarkaðurinn are obviously all good. What I quite like about Sushi Samba is that you can go for few bites of sushi if you don't want to spend much, but you can also go for a big meal.

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Iceland | Whales

Foreigners On The Frontlines Of Whaling Battle

Anti-whaling activists turn up the heat in tourist-on-tourist campaign to stop whale killings

“Quick! We’re missing them!” 22-year-old Jongmi Lim says.

A herd of six baby-faced volunteers hustle across the harbour toward the group of tourists leaving their whale watching boat. They manage to snag one family before the rest of the tourists shuffle away. “Would you like to help save the whales?” Jongmi, who is South Korean, asks a Swedish couple and their son. “All you have to do is write your name and country here.”

They oblige. It’s the volunteers’ third catch of the day.

The volunteers—donning grey raincoats with the turquoise International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) logo—are patrolling the Faxaflói Bay harbour, searching for foreign visitors who will pledge to not eat whale during their trip. One Italian girl dresses in a heavy whale tail costume, her face peaking through the front. These are IFAW’s foot soldiers in the organisation’s second year of the war on whaling—also known as the “Meet Us, Don’t Eat Us” campaign.

It’s their second day on the job, and it sometimes shows. They approach many people timidly, and they haven’t quite nailed down their sales pitch for why these tourists should not order a whale steak for lunch. “I’ve been trying out different sentences,” says 21-year-old Joanna Blasko, who is from Sweden. “Sometimes we ask ‘Have you made your whale promise?’ But that can confuse people so then we just ask if they want to save the whale.”

FIRING UP THE CAMPAIGN

Sigursteinn Mátsson, a journalist-turned-activist who manages the anti-whaling campaign for IFAW, says this year’s version of the “Meet Us, Don’t Eat Us” campaign is bigger, complete with more volunteers and a research vessel that will study whales this fall.

The group will push both for sweeping and incremental changes to whal-

ing practices. Most immediately, they hope to influence the ministry to end whaling in Faxaflói Bay and in some northern waters, he says.

While animal conservation laws ban whaling in most of the world’s waters, Icelandic ships have hunted whales commercially most recently since 2006, flying in the face of a 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Ásta Einarsdóttir, an alternate commissioner for Iceland to the IWC and a top administrator at the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, says the country supports “sustainable utilisation of all marine resources,” including whale. The ministry set the minke whale quota at 216 this year, a number she says is in line with advice from Hafró, Iceland’s Marine Research Institute.

The goal for this crop of volunteers is to gather 2,000 signatures in two weeks to bring to The Ministry, a lobbying tactic in the organisation’s efforts to curb whaling in Iceland. By the end

“It’s like if they [tourists] were in Congo and they would say it’s okay to taste a gorilla because they’re here only once.”

of the summer, Sigursteinn hopes the campaign will collect 10,000 total signatures.

The fifteen volunteers who live together crammed in a one-bathroom house in Reykjavík, are recruited by the Icelandic non-profit SEEDS, which ships them in and out of the country in two-week blocks. They say they want to end a practice they call cruel and inhumane. “I’ve always been interested in animal welfare so I wanted to come save whales,” Joanna says. “You have to fight this and do this kind of a project where there is whaling.”

ANY ATTENTION IS GOOD ATTENTION

But the campaign may be doing more harm than good to the anti-whaling cause. At least, that’s what IFAW’s main foe, Gunnar Jónsson, says.

Gunnar manages and owns Félag

hrefnuveiðimanna, Iceland’s Minke Whalers Association, and maintains that his profits are actually rising this year because of the advocacy against whaling. “We’ve only had more restaurants buying more whale meat because tourists now know that whale is sold in restaurants. We actually have had more demand for whale meat after they started this,” he says. “The nearby restaurants like the Sea Baron are selling more whale meat so I think they’re just shooting themselves in the foot.”

The minke whale, which has overtaken the fin whale as the primary whale now hunted in Iceland, is not endangered. The about 5-tonne mammal is the most abundant whale species in the world—a lonely survivor as humpback and fin whale populations have dwindled.

This year, the minke whale is the only whale in town for IFAW to rally around. Iceland’s sole fin whaling company Hvalur hf. announced in May that they would not hunt fin whales this year because of pay disputes with fishermen and a sagging demand for fin whales in Japan.

About 174,000 minke whales swim in the North Atlantic, according to the IWC’s most recent estimate in 2001. Gunnar says his team of ten whalers—which make up Iceland’s only minke whale company—want to kill 80 minke whales this season. “People don’t know much about whaling and when they talk about whaling it is just emotion,” Gunnar says.

Ásta says the government doesn’t care who is eating whale—whether it’s Icelanders or tourists—as long as the hunt is sustainable and based on scientific advice. “This is a free trade,” she adds. “We are happy if tourists want to consume whale because it is very good meat and very good quality.”

TUGGING ON TOURISTS’ HEARTSTRINGS

Sigursteinn is hesitant to cast Gunnar and his company as the enemy, or get caught up in too much of that emotion that often shrouds animal rights fights. He’s even invited whale hunters to the organisation’s receptions, he says. (They declined).

“Information is the most important thing when it comes to all this. Everyone can have their opinion, but at the end of the day, the facts will sink in,” he



says. And to Sigursteinn, the facts are clear. He says Iceland’s whaling practices are propped up by the country’s budding tourism sector. Foreigners are the ones ordering whale in restaurants—not Icelanders—he says.

When the volunteers approach tourists on the soggy morning in the harbour, they play up the cruelty of killing whales. The whale costume that one volunteer wears personifies the animal. “Don’t eat me,” the girl cries as tourists walk by.

Whale watching businesses are on their side of the anti-whaling activists, too. The morning that the volunteers head out to canvass the harbour, they huddle around Sigursteinn on a boat emblazoned with the logo of Iceland’s largest whale watching operator, Elding. As they walk up the steps to the boat’s bow, they face an Elding poster that outlines the reasons why Iceland’s tourists shouldn’t order whale at restaurants.

“They [tourists] very much enjoy seeing the whales alive in the Faxaflói Bay, but then they go to restaurants in Reykjavík and contribute to brutal whale killings by ordering a whale steak because they think it’s okay once in their life to taste a whale steak in Iceland,” Sigursteinn says. “It’s as if they [tourists] were in Congo and they would say it’s okay to taste a gorilla because they’re here only once.”

THE CRUX OF THE KILLINGS

Although the minke whales are not endangered, Sigursteinn and the volunteers adhere to one strict belief: Killing whales is inherently cruel. That mantra has been trumpeted by anti-whaling activists for years, who say research shows that whales don’t die until at least two minutes after they’re hit with an explosive harpoon. “The only way to kill it instantly is to hit the head. If you hit it in the side, the back, it can be a very long death struggle,” Sigursteinn says.

But Gunnar is steadfast, claiming that the kills are quick and painless “99% of the time.” “When the harpoon gets into the whale, the explosive part goes off and it stops the heart immediately so the whale doesn’t suffer,” Gunnar says.

Both claims are tough to back up. Reporters have consistently been denied access to whaling ships, and Gunnar declined to give The Grapevine a trip on board. Sigursteinn says his group tried to videotape whaling tactics in Faxaflói Bay two years ago, but the whalers quickly turned back to shore once they saw the activists filming. “If it’s all that perfect, you know, if it’s the best way to slaughter a big mammal, why not show it?” Sigursteinn says. 🍷

Words

Cory Weinberg

Photography

Juli Vol

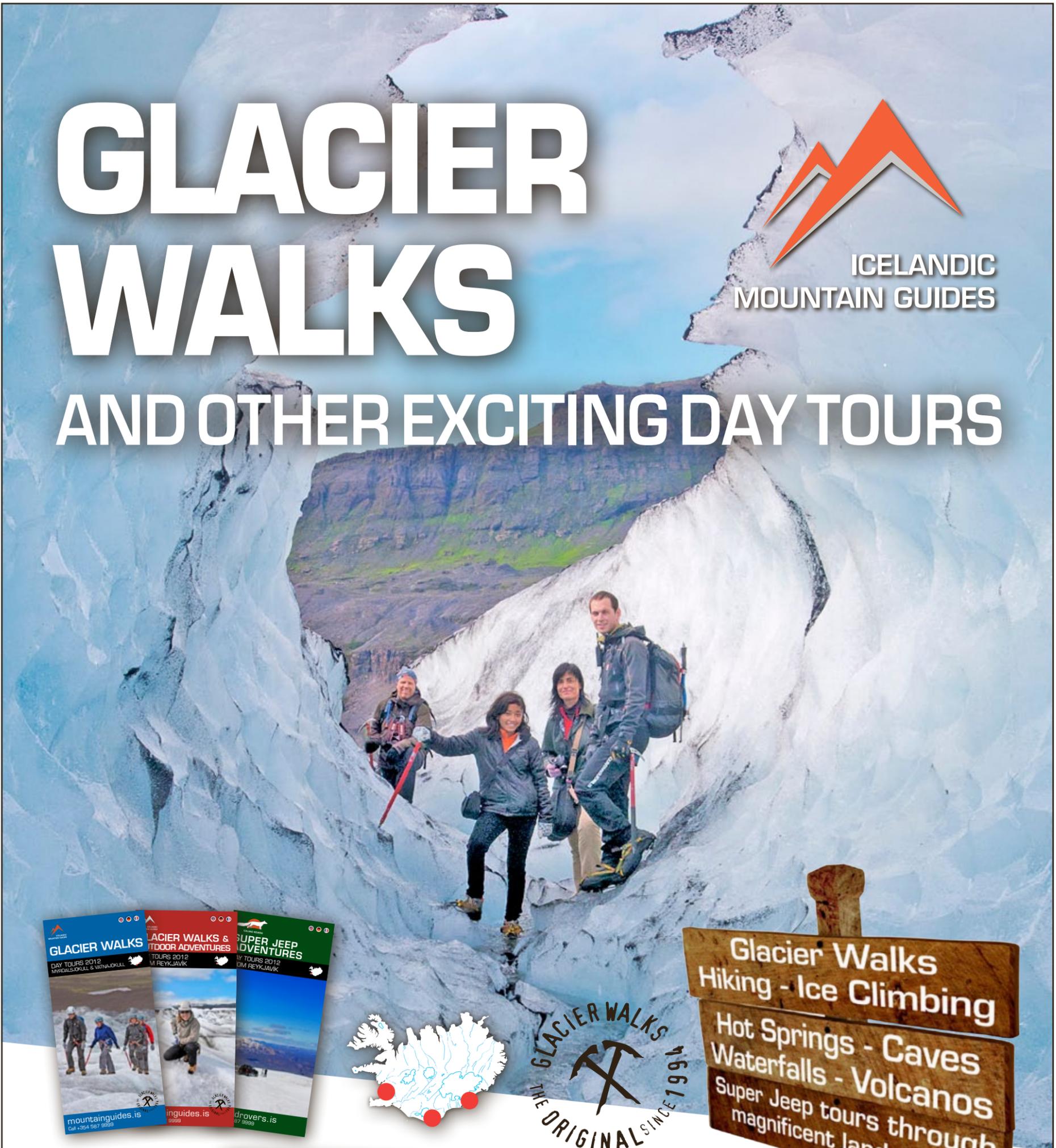
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Icesave: A British Perspective

Four years after Landsbanki's collapse...



In 2008 diplomatic relations between Iceland and Britain fell to a low not seen since the Cod Wars of the 1970s. Iceland's Landsbanki bank had offered British and Dutch depositors high interest rates under the brand name Icesave. When Landsbanki collapsed, the Icelandic government, under the premiership of Geir Haarde, refused to immediately reimburse Landsbanki's foreign depositors.

Invoking the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown froze as many of the banks' assets as legally possible to unilaterally reimburse British savers their guaranteed £0,000 pounds in the meantime. "They have failed not only people in Iceland; they have failed people in Britain," Gordon Brown told the BBC at the time. "What happened in Iceland is completely unacceptable. I've been in touch with the Icelandic prime minister. I said this is effectively illegal action that they have taken."

Such unprecedented action drew harsh condemnation from Icelanders. "Gordon Brown made the calculated decision that to raise his ratings in the polls, it would be ideal to attack Iceland," then-Iceland Minister of Health Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson told the BBC. "This has been made very clear."

While Iceland has begun paying back the British government, international courts continue to grapple with the legality of Iceland's decision. No matter what the legal outcome, however, the issue remains deeply personal and is likely to have people worked up for years to come.

"ICELAND ACTED ILLEGALLY"

Michael, a retired 62-year-old company director from Devon, a coastal county in southwest England (who refused

to provide his surname), had significant investments in Icesave before the crash. He said that he faced losing his life savings, savings he would have placed elsewhere had it not been for the interest schemes once advertised by Landsbanki.

"What many of us in the UK are concerned about is the unbelievable arrogance of the Icelandic government and its population for their initial failure to acknowledge that they were in any way responsible for compensating the

"While Iceland has begun paying back the British government, international courts continue to grapple with the legality of Iceland's decision"

UK government for a matter which is entirely their responsibility," he says.

"I understand Icelanders objected to [the seizure of assets through anti-terror legislation] without any thought of the people who had invested their life savings in their banks. I have no idea where matters currently lie, but if the Icelandic government has decided to face their responsibilities then all I can say is that would be a very good thing. An apology to UK savers and taxpayers would not go amiss."

David Hodgson, a carpenter from

Lancaster, echoes this sentiment. "We bailed out our banks, why couldn't they bail out theirs?"

"Under European law, to which Iceland is a voluntary signatory, there is no difference between a saver in Iceland and one in the UK. Both are guaranteed £0,000 in the event of a bank collapse. Yet only Icelanders got their money back from the Icelandic government. I'm no fan of Gordon Brown, but he was right here: Iceland acted illegally."

TOUGH LUCK FOR CHARITIES

While the British taxpayer has compensated retail investors like the aforementioned Michael through the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), many charities remain out of pocket for their investments in Kaupthing, Singer and Friedlander (KSF)—a subsidiary of the Icelandic Kaupthing bank—which offered interest schemes comparable to Icesave.

Organisations like Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) have spent several years campaigning for the FSCS to recognise small charities as eligible for compensation. In a report published in September 2009, 11 months after the collapse, the CAF claims that 30 UK charities involved in their campaign lost a total of £50 million in deposits with KSF. One charity—Naomi House Children's Hospice—claimed losses of £5.7 million equating to a third of its total assets.

"In 2008, Naomi House was forced to suspend services," the CAF report states. "Its hospice-at-home service, which provides carers for families with terminally ill children, will not be resumed until the lost funds have been

returned. The charities have received no guarantees and the administration process could take years."

Naomi House has since been compensated by local government and fully resumed its provision of care to patients. Sadly, not all charities have been as fortunate, and many continue to wait for funds reclaimed from KSF's assets through bankruptcy proceedings.

A common theme is clear: local and national government in Britain has stepped in to compensate the banks'

British depositors, which means British taxpayers have been forced to foot the bill.

AND WHAT OF ICELAND'S CHILDREN?

However, not all British taxpayers think Iceland should be forced to compensate savers. Peter Spooner, a charity worker from London, says: "Iceland was obliged under European law to provide compensation, but policy makers left it ill-prepared for the event and ultimately it was the British government that behaved atrociously."

Peter argues that €2.9 billion is a big deal for Icelanders, but is merely a drop in the pond for the UK. "To Iceland, that £2.4 billion [€2.9 billion] means 40% of GDP," he says. "Does bankrupting Iceland's children help Britain in any way?"

He adds: "I have nothing but respect for Iceland and to see our prime minister abusing anti-terrorism legislation against them was disgusting—I've yet to hear anyone who thought different. Britain and the Netherlands should have forgiven the debt for the Icelanders sake, not for their leaders—even if it created a problem for us by setting a precedent; because a small diplomatic problem like that is nothing when it is for a friend."

UNITED AGAINST IRRESPONSIBLE BANKING

There's no simple answer to a question shaded by both legal and moral issues. The EFTA Court will eventually resolve the legal dispute according to the letter of the law, but no matter what the result, people like Michael will likely continue to view Iceland's actions negatively while others like Peter will see Iceland in a more favourable light.

Ultimately, we may find that what brings us together is stronger than what drives us apart. Indeed, the question about the role banks play in society is one facing most countries. It has, for example, contributed to Occupy movements in both Britain and Iceland.

Nobody wants to see banks as highly leveraged and over extended as they were prior to 2008. Hopefully, if governments across the world address these issues, Naomi House will never again have to suspend its services, and Michael from Devon will be able to enjoy a long and happy retirement. 🍷

Words

Thomas Pankovas

Photography

Shiny Things / (flickr:shinythings)

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From Reykjavik Old Harbour to Viðey		12:00					
From Viðey to Reykjavik Old Harbour					15:30		
Winter (on Sat. and Sun. from 16 September to 14 May)							
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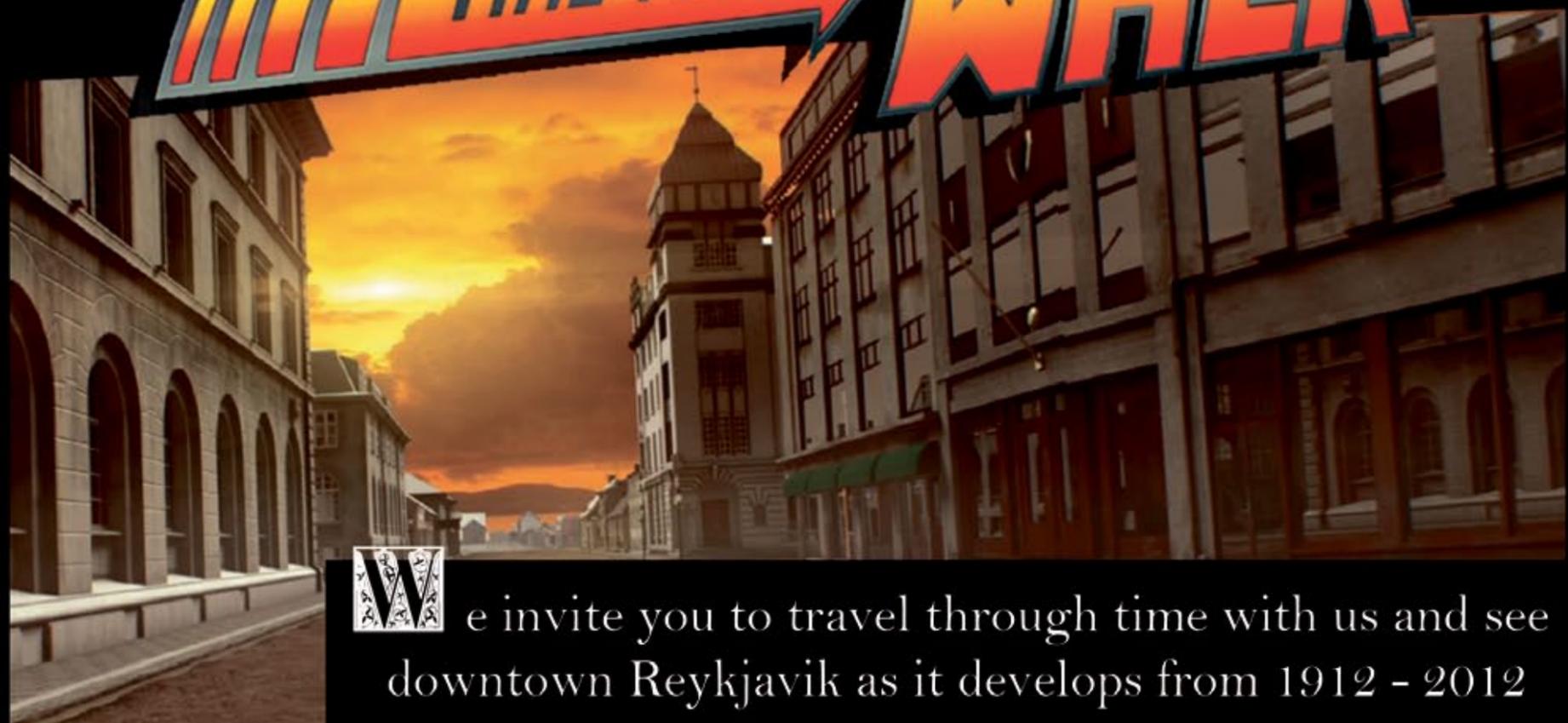
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a coke.

Originally, when the stand opened 75 years ago, hot dogs were served without buns and you could get a sip of milk instead of the soda, Magna Steiney Þórðardóttir tells me. The nineteen-year-old is fourth generation to work at the stand since her great grandpa opened it in 1937.

She's been working four years, but

her "training" began at a far earlier age. "Every Wednesday when my little sister and I were young, my grandma would pick us up from school and we would go straight away to get a hot dog. So when I was young I'd have a hot dog at least once a week," she tells me.

"Whenever we spent the night at grandma and grandpa's, my grandma would tuck us in and say the prayers

and then she would add, 'And remember, when you start working at the stand, always put the hot dogs in the water to keep them warm.' And that's when we were really, really young—maybe six years old."

After years of working there and being inundated with the smell of hot dogs, she can't stomach even just one more, but there must be something special about them because they fly out the window in incalculable numbers. "It's a nice location and I think the hot dogs must be good as people come again and again," she says. As far as what makes them better than other hot dogs, she's not ready to give me any hints. "It's a family secret," she's quick to say.

Now don't be misguided by the framed picture of Bill Clinton or the cartoon featuring him eating a hot dog, ordering "A Clinton" is not especially recommended for you will receive a boring hot dog with nothing on it except for sinnep.

The proper way to order is to ask for "Eina með öllu" or "one with everything," which will get you a toasty bun filled with steiktur laukur (crispy fried onion), freshly diced onion, ketchup, sinnep (Icelandic mustard), remúlaði (remoulade sauce), and naturally the Icelandic hot dog itself. 🍌

ANNA ANDERSEN
ALÍSA KALYANOVA

The Royal Swimming Hall



Sundhöll Reykjavíkur
Barónsstígur, 101 H6

The most popular public institutions in Iceland are probably the swimming pools. We have a lot of them in the greater Reykjavík area and if you venture to the countryside and reach a town of more than 50 inhabitants, chances are that it has a pool. But none of them quite feels like an established institution, or classic, as much as Sundhöllin (the "Hall of Swimming" in English). Not only is it Reykjavík's oldest pool, but also it's just really awesome.

For 75 years the pool has been located in the majestic white building standing on the corner of Barónsstígur and Bergþórugata. The building—a blend of modernist, Art Deco and Cubist styles—is designed by former state

architect Guðjón Samúelsson (who has designed a number of other landmark buildings in the city, such as Hallgrímskirkja, the University of Iceland and The National Hospital). Both the building's exterior and interior are protected, and one of the first things you'll notice inside is the cool labyrinth-like layout of the locker room, which is made up of small cubicles that you can close yourself in if public nudity is not your thing.

THE SPECS

The swimming pool is 25 metres long and ten metres wide. The deep end of the pool is almost four meters deep and is popular for diving exercises. There are two diving boards, the higher one about three meters above the water. On the other end, there is also a smaller pool for children with various playthings. And on the poolside there are weights for pumping iron, but none of

the shiny airbrushed equipment you find in World Class and the like, just a single bench and worn dumbbells.

Outside on the balconies are two hot tubs, one at 39°C for the people who are warm at heart and the other at 42°C. There is also a small steam bath and a lounge area with garden chairs where you can cool off out there. But what about the sun, you might ask. Well, there is another large upper terrace especially made for sunbathing with lots of benches to bake on while enjoying a great view of the city. And for those who embrace public nudity, it is partitioned by gender so that one can sunbathe in the nude and get rid of those pesky tan lines.

The regular clientele is a mix of old people, 101 bohemians and tourists during the summertime. It opens at 6:30 in the morning and if you go early enough you can witness old men doing

the classic Müller's exercise routines. The atmosphere is generally relaxed and friendly but conversations between strangers about politics or gossip in the hot tub can get heated. This is pretty much a national pastime; the Icelandic equivalent of "word on the street" is actually "heard in the hot tub."

POP CULTURE

The beautiful interior of the pool has been used on countless occasions for cultural events and as filming locations. One of the more notable ones is the dreamy video for "Believe," the first single from GusGus's debut LP. It has singer Daniel Ágúst floating through the locker room, jumping hoops from the diving board and performing mouth to mouth on co-vocalist Hafþís Huld. Another one is the final scene from 'Skyttarnar,' the first full-length fiction film from Oscar nominated director Friðrik Þór Friðriksson. In a magnificent scene, a whaler on a drinking binge breaks into the pool at night and is shot to a pulp by police special forces and crawls to the bottom of the empty pool, leaving a trail of blood behind him. And then a couple of years ago the pool was also the venue for a special screening of Jaws as a part of the Reykjavík Film Festival.

Sundhöllin has no fancy waterslide or modern equipment, but it is rich in history, atmosphere and aesthetic. It is the most beautiful and unique swimming pool in Reykjavík and anybody coming to the city who isn't allergic to water should take the time to pay it a visit. 🍌

DAVÍÐ ROACH GUNNARSSON
ALÍSA KALYANOVA

MY BEST ARTICLE



Try to repeat one particular word for a bit of time. Say it out loud again and again and again and again...

You know the game: in the end you won't be sure what it actually means or if it ever had meaning. Eventually, the word might even start to imply the opposite of its original meaning.

While this is an almost universal truth, there are a few exceptions. For instance, regardless of time and context, the word "best" never loses even a glimpse of its meaning in Iceland—no matter how often you repeat it. Just try it while you read: "Best, best, best, best, best, best, best, best..." See. It still means "best." Simple.

Iceland is the very best. Not only do we have the most beautiful nature, the purest water and the greenest energy, but we also know best how to fill our fishing nets by the West African shores. We surely know how to protect our cultural and racial heritage, and are amongst the very best when it comes border control. When a catastrophic earthquake shook Haiti in early 2010, our rescue team was the first team to show up. In 1989, Iceland's national handball team won the Men's B World Championship. And only a few weeks ago, we secured that no democratically elected president has ever been in power as long as our current one. Ha!

Our music is unquestionably the most unique (ask Icelandic filmmakers) and the same applies to just about all of the creative segment's tentacles. Of all the world's countries, Iceland is the best one for children and women—not to mention for women in power—as well as all those who are not heterosexual. And nowhere else are the people as happy as here. We were the best at banking and business until we took a quick turn to being best at protesting, and then the best at cleaning up the banksters' mess. Now we are best at getting the wheels of the economy to spin again. No doubt we will become best at banking before dawn.

Mahatma Gandhi said: "Be the change you want to see in the world." (Actually, he never said this but some damn clever advertising agency made it up and printed it on bumper stickers and refrigerator magnets with Gandhi's signature for us to prove to ourselves and the rest of world that our life has a meaning). And if there is one change that the Icelandic nation doesn't want to see in the world, it is that other nations become as best as—if not more best than—Iceland.

Luckily, there is a simple solution to this problem. We simply need to tell the rest of the world that we are "the worst" and encourage other nations to follow in our footsteps. Thus we prevent this nightmare from realising. And no worries about this strategy's possible impacts on the Icelandic nation's self-esteem—if you repeat it long enough its meaning becomes, to us, its absolute

Things They Like About Reykjavík

WALLY WALLYSON
CLOWN



I've been to Stofan recently. The atmosphere is nothing to talk about. It's a bunch of nerds running the bar. That's what it is. No music, no games, no nothing. Tourists, yuck. To be honest, it's quite disgusting. Its one claim to fame is that it's the closest possible place to my home.

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THE BLACK CONE

What this monument means about the Pots and Pans Protest



Spanish artist Santiago Sierra premiered a giant piece of rock called 'The Black Cone, Monument To Civil Disobedience' in front Iceland's parliament this January. Sierra cracked the rock with a black cone, which "alludes to black cone-shaped hats that condemned persons were forced to wear for humiliation during the Inquisition in the 12th century," according to a press release. The monument is marked with a plaque bearing a quote from the French Revolution's Declaration Of The Rights Of Man And Of The Citizen: "When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people and for each portion of the people the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties."

Words

Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

Having gone through Santiago's massive archive of provocative works, performed and exhibited all around the globe, it seems a bit strange to see him buying into 'the image of Iceland'—an

Few have openly voiced their opinion about the rock so far, but as Santiago Sierra has offered it to the City of Reykjavík on the condition that the rock stays permanently at Austurvöllur,

"Being a giant rock, Santiago's monument could however serve as a historical pick-me-up, encouraging us not to allow the ruling powers to dictate how the game is played."

image usually centred on the pseudo-link between Iceland's nature, art and nightlife, but also on the country's most recent history of protest, as if by taking to the streets and later voting against paying a tiny bit of the debt imposed on society by Icelandic capitalists, the Icelandic public somehow waged a war against global capitalism. "The performance commemorates this protest," the press release states, "and a wave of protests that have taken place around the world in the last few years, from the Arabic Spring to the Occupation of Wall Street."

there are bigger questions to tackle, such as what this monument means.

WHAT IS A MONUMENT?

While a monument honours its subject, it is also its tombstone. One looks back and remembers the subject, its great impact on society and its historical importance because it's not among us anymore. In other words: because of its death.

In the case of the 2008–9 protest, the act of honouring it and thereby acknowledging its death could be interpreted as a declaration from those who participated that they are happy

with what came out of it: the government they toppled being replaced by a centre-left pro-capitalism one that has brought Icelandic finance back into the game in a way acceptable to and honoured by the International Monetary Fund. And if that's the case—if the good majority of those who revolted simply wanted a new government—there's no point in arguing against that.

It does, however, not change the fact that a more radical, non-party-political element was evident in this revolt, manifested in individuals and groups who revolted against the all-encompassing hierarchical structures of the commodity-society we live in—for anarchy and individual autonomy. This element's impact on society can clearly be seen in a decreasing faith in party-politics, less fear about speaking up about and against corruption and state repression, and a larger spectrum of anarchist-oriented ideas.

Acknowledging this brings forth another way of understanding monuments: Not only as reminders of the past, but also in an encouraging way, as a reminder of potential and possibility.

WHAT ARE WE REMINDED OF?

Despite many people's emphasis on the alleged peacefulness of Iceland's uprising, it's clear that the often high level of force—violence and property damage at times—played a significant role in threatening the authorities. As is the nature of such revolts, it was easy for those in power to ignore written and spoken word whereas it was much more difficult for them to close their eyes to the bricks that broke parliament's windows.

Instead of dismissing these elements as apolitical and criminal in nature, one should view them in their historical context. There is a tendency to glorify certain protests—often those far removed in time or place—and to play down their force, the blood, the broken arms and wounded heads. Such manipulation of history—call it a notional monument—enables the pacification of dissent by claiming that only purely non-violent methods can succeed in victories. Take for instance the glorification of

Martin Luther King rather than

Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi as opposed to the Indian independence movement's more militant elements, and the Arab Spring and Occupy movements opposed to last August's London riots.

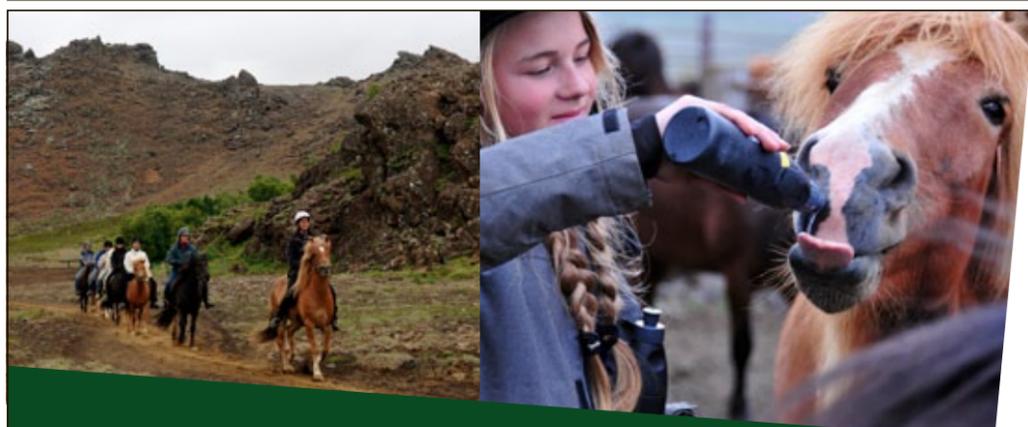
Being a giant rock, Santiago's monument could however serve as a historical pick-me-up, encouraging us not to allow the ruling powers to dictate how the game is played.

HOW DO WE WRITE HISTORY?

Some say that history is written by the conquerors. But things are not so simple; one can also become a conqueror by writing history.

So far, the history of Iceland's 2008–9 revolt has most visibly been written by the mainstream media, a handful of conservative writers, and the police force claiming that the protest was remote-controlled by a number of leftist parliamentarians. Obviously, these historians will neither acknowledge the victories felt by those who protested nor the necessary methods used to see them come true.

On its own, Santiago Sierra's Black Cone is far from strong enough to radically affect this manufacturing of history. But it certainly get can get those of us who protested with other aims than simply moving a few asses to and fro in the hall of parliament, to consider how we are writing this history. Not only with ink on paper but also as an event in a history of events to be remembered, understood, learned from and, most importantly, continued. ♣



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Special | Best Of Reykjavík - Best place to skate

The Best Places To Skateboard In Reykjavík

I came to Iceland for the first time in 2006 specifically to skateboard. At the time, I literally knew nothing else about the country, only that I was on a mission to track down the spots I'd seen in so many magazines and old skate videos; this decision would soon inspire me to learn all I could about Reykjavík's vibrant skate scene, to begin learning Icelandic, and to spend as much time in the country as my savings account would physically allow.

Skateboarding is blossoming in Reykjavík these days, and the host of cool street spots are every bit as diverse and eccentric as the tightly knit community of skaters who make it tick. So, if words like "kickflip tailslide" have ever exited your mouth, or if you refuse to do a Dolphin Flip out of principle, Reykjavík has everything you'll need. I'll begin with an old classic...

INGÓLFSTORG, 101 REYKJAVÍK

Located right in the middle of 101, Ingólfstorg has been a skate destination for several decades, and is generally the meet-up place/starting point for most sessions. If you're looking to hook up with some friends for a game

of S.K.A.T.E., the terrain offers plentiful opportunities to give your challengers a letter. Aside from the smooth tile under your wheels, Ingólfstorg features two oppositely placed inclines on each side of the square, as well as the famous, beastly 8-stair set at the end. Conveniently located directly beneath the greasy sandwich bonanza, Hlöllabátar, Ingólfstorg is the perfect spot to get warmed up. Note that it is inaccessible to skaters at the moment, but surely this won't last.

LOFTKASTALINN, REYKJAVÍK'S INDOOR PARK

This is Reykjavík's largest (and really, only) indoor park, located near the far end of the harbour. Loftkastalinn's terrain includes numerous roll-in's and ledges, two mini-ramps, a steep bank and stair set, and the best bowl in Iceland. This is the perfect place to spend a rainy day, and you really have no excuse not to shred.

HILL-BOMB, BASE OF HALLGRÍMSKIRKJA

Though this technically isn't a "spot," it's still one of the most fun things you

can do on a skateboard in 101. The run begins in the courtyard in front of Hallgrímskirkja, continues down Skólavörðustígur and merges into Laugavegur, and concludes in front of Ingólfstorg. The whole run lasts maybe three minutes, and will build you some serious speed on the way down. As you're passing by Prikid, time it just right, and you can blast through the intersection at the base of Laugavegur before the light changes (don't actually do this part). Reach Ingólfstorg, and reward yourself with a hotdog!

TÆKNISKÓLINN & SURROUNDING AREA

Since you're already up there at Hallgrímskirkja anyways, check out the surrounding area! There are several fun spots in the parking lot directly behind the church, including a well-worn pole jam, ledges, and two massive double-sets. Walk a little further down the path towards Leifsgata, and you'll find a sizeable grass gap with a good run-up.

HARPA, 101 REYKJAVÍK

The property surrounding Harpa, Iceland's concert hall, is some of the best



skateboarding Reykjavík has to offer. Multiple cement ledges and water gaps grace the portico, and a series of hardwood ledges and manual pads lie waiting just to the left of the building, conveniently concealed from the harbour winds. I'm not sure if The Man minds the frequently heavy skater presence, but I've never had any issues, and have even had someone from the café come outside to bring me a few bottles

of water. Good stuff!

These are but a fraction of the great skate spots found in Reykjavík. If you're new to the area, grab your board and make a day of it. With a little diligence and a set of fast bearings, the hidden gems you come across will pleasantly surprise you.

✍ BOWEN STAINES
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Special | Best Of Reykjavík - Best Bike Ride: Öskjuhlíð–Fossvogsdalur valley

BIKING IN REYKJAVÍK IS UNDERRATED



Bike ride

Öskjuhlíð - Fossvogur

Reykjavík may not be the most bike-friendly city, but it certainly has some beautiful routes where cars are not

welcome. For a particularly nice scenic ride that's fewer than 10 kilometres round trip, head to Öskjuhlíð and pick up a coastal path that takes you into Fossvogsdalur.

To find this mystical path, ride out of town through the south side of Þingholt. You could for instance take Laufás-

vegur, which gives you the opportunity to admire the charming houses, until you reach Gamla Hringbraut, where you turn left. Ride up the hill past Landspítali hospital until you reach the lights and then turn right on Bústaðavegur in the direction of the Pearl. Ride past the Valsheimili football stadium and turn off

at the lights. Follow Flugvallarvegur until you reach the intersection and then turn left along the cycle path and you are on your way!

Ideally the wind is a light breath at your back and you are surrounded on both sides by an abundance of lupines. To your right is the ocean, velvety and radiant. To your left, is the somewhat unusual presence of an Icelandic forest creeping down the hill, dark green and resplendent (okay, forest is a stretch, but there are trees and this is unusual). You pass the odd runner, people walking their dogs, other cyclists, but it is otherwise quiet and for a moment you own the path, the valley, the city, the ocean, the world.

Just follow this cycle path around the hill side and then up to the valley. You will know where you are going. Just relax and feel the fresh air on your skin and enjoy the wholly underrated activity of biking in Iceland.

Eventually you cross over the bridge into Fossvogsdalur. The neighbouring city of Kópavogur is on one side of you, while the Fossvogur neighbourhood is on the other, hushed with the low hum of domestic life. You follow a

stream until you reach the perfect spot: a mellow grove of trees, the long grass in an open stretch of field, or a shady spot on the bank of the stream. When you find it, you throw down your bike, throw yourself down and let the open sky swallow you whole.

Of course things aren't always this ideal. If it's winter, well, this romantic little jaunt is far less likely to be so blissful. If easterly winds are blowing you have to battle with headwinds most of way, probably getting dust in your eyes and expending twice as much effort to go half the distance.

But... the big BUT, it's worth taking this ride because you may hit the jackpot and roll straight along in a westerly breeze, meet no one along the way and get to have this glorious feeling of momentarily owning the world. Who isn't willing to take that chance? Even if things aren't 100% perfect, they are still pretty damn nice and it will be worth it. We promise.

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What Became Of The Far Right in Iceland?

The far right has been in the news a lot lately in Europe. But not in Iceland. Why is that?

Racism has come back to life as a political force in Northern Europe over the last few decades. On April 22, Marine Le Pen received 18% of the vote in France's presidential elections. As The Economist noted last year: "In an arc of countries spreading north-east from the Netherlands, populist parties are cutting a swathe through politics, appealing to electorates with various blends of nationalism, Euroscepticism and outright xenophobia." The strain of racism now rampant is known as "cultural racism," which is not a belief in biological superiority, but a belief that Europeans are culturally superior to the other peoples of the world. As the Breivik trial has made clear, contemporary racist discourse focuses on "multiculturalism" and "integration," and is decidedly anti-immigration.

THE SPECTRE OF THE FAR RIGHT

In the late '90s and early 2000s, there was concern that an Icelandic far right would emerge. Rock star Bubbi Morthens released a song in 2001 called "Nýbúinn" ("The Immigrant"), criticising the racism he perceived in Icelandic society. A translation of the chorus goes: "I hear whispered: Iceland for Icelanders." Bubbi Morthens was not the only one concerned. It was considered highly probable that a far-right, xenophobic party would emerge in Iceland.

The reasoning was simple: in other European countries the far right had risen to prominence and there was no particular reason to think that Iceland would be any different. The two countries that Iceland has the closest cultural links to, Denmark and Norway, have both had far-right parties in parliament since the 1970s and '80s, respectively. Similar developments in Iceland were closely watched: When two young men founded the anti-immigrant Flokkur framfarasinna ("Party of Progressives") in 2001, its leader, Hjörtur J. Guðmundsson, was interviewed on Silfur Egils, Iceland's foremost political talk show. The party never got so far as to run for office and never existed beyond the hopes of its two young founders.

XENOPHOBIC ORGANISATIONS

In 2004, the US State Department released a report that expressed concerns over increasing racist sentiments in Iceland. In response, the newspaper Fréttablaðið surveyed xenophobic organisations in Iceland and found four. Three of them were too far out on the fringes to have any kind of political legitimacy: the existence of one could not be fully confirmed by the newspaper, the operations of another were limited to publishing a newsletter sporadically, and the third's single noteworthy accomplishment was that its vice chair had been convicted of using racist language beyond the bounds of decency in a newspaper interview. The fourth organisation, Framfarafélagið ("The Progress Association"), presented itself as more legitimate and Fréttablaðið interviewed its founder and leader at length.

If the organisation's name sounds familiar, it is because it was led by the same man who tried to get Flokkur framfarasinna off the ground: Hjörtur

J. Guðmundsson. In that interview he used the familiar language of cultural racism, railing against multiculturalism and integration and defending his promotion of news reports that cast immigrants in a negative light by saying: "If it is racism to collect news reports then

style far right party. It was founded in 1998 and its principal cause was reform of the Icelandic fishing quota system. It gained enough support on the back of that to have, by 2003, four seats in parliament. In the mid-2000s, however, some of its MPs began to agitate for

"That is not to say that xenophobia and racism are not problems in Iceland, but it does suggest that the particulars of the Icelandic political landscape have made it harder for far right political parties to take root here than in other European countries."

surely the media is guilty of racism." After a short stint in Frjálslyndi flokkurinn ("The Liberal Party"), he joined Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn ("The Independence Party"), the large right-wing party that led the government from 1991–2009.

THE FAR RIGHT VANISHING ACT

Frjálslyndi flokkurinn is the closest thing Iceland has had to a European

limits on immigration. In their political platform for the 2007 parliamentary elections, Frjálslyndi flokkurinn had a section on "immigrant issues" and argued that immigration should be limited and that "the authorities should at all times control who and how many immigrants enter the country." In their platform they also claimed that "nothing had happened on this issue before

Frjálslyndi flokkurinn started a discussion about immigration issues."

If Frjálslyndi flokkurinn hoped that being anti-immigration would bring them more support, those hopes proved unfounded. The party got slightly fewer votes in the 2007 election than they did in 2003, though they kept their four seats in parliament. However, the latter half of the 2000s was a turbulent time for the party. Two MPs left to join Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn and the daughter of the party's founder resigned from it after losing an election for the vice chairmanship. In the 2009 election, the party was wiped out. Today no party in parliament is expressly anti-immigration, and though there are xenophobic microparties such as Bjartýnisflokkurinn ("The Optimism Party") and Hægri-grænir ("Right-Green"), they seem about as likely to receive enough votes to get MPs as Flokkur framfarasinna did.

THE BLACK HOLE ON THE ICELANDIC RIGHT WING

The story of Hjörtur J. Guðmundsson, founder of Flokkur framfarasinna, helps explain why it is that Iceland is a Northern European exception when it comes to far right representation in parliament. He ended up in Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn and his opinions, while still right-wing, have become more mainstream and he has never held political office. In Iceland, people with far right views have ended up in Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn. For instance, Jón Magnússon, one of the two MPs who left Frjálslyndi flokkurinn to join Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, lost his seat in parliament after the 2009 election and has little influence. He has continued to advocate anti-immigration policies, but now as a blogger rather than as an MP.

In Icelandic right-wing politics, Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn is like a black hole that draws in people with far-right beliefs. Its size and long history of political power have been too tempting for the ideologues of the far right to ignore. Within this larger party they have been marginalised and have never achieved much sway or power. That is not to say that xenophobia and racism are not problems in Iceland, but it does suggest that the particulars of the Icelandic political landscape have made it harder for far right political parties to take root here than in other European countries.



Words

Kári Túlinius

Illustration

Lóa Hjalmtýsdóttir



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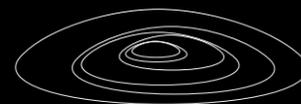
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LungA Has Arrived!

Björt Sigfinnsdóttir is a busy woman. Between releasing her first solo album, creating an adult colouring book and managing a unique festival in Iceland, the girl 'ain't no slouch' as my father would say. We met up with her to discuss the upcoming arts festival LungA—a weeklong artistic invasion of the tiny town of Seyðisfjörður.

WHY LUNGA?

As one of the four founders of LungA, what inspired you to create the festival?

We started the festival because we felt that there was not enough creative output from young people on the east side of the country, and we wanted to broaden the cultural horizon for them. The young people growing up there didn't have as many opportunities to learn and express themselves artistically as the youngsters in Reykjavík, and we wanted to change that.

Why Seyðisfjörður?

Well, my mother, 'Mama LungA,' and I are from Seyðisfjörður so it just kind of happened here.

It has definitely put the city on the map for something new and unique. The town's culture has been growing for the last decade and we have been a vital part of establishing that. It has also encouraged people originally from Seyðisfjörður to come back again for the week. I really don't think there is anyone who wouldn't want LungA to be held in Seyðisfjörður.

WHAT LUNGA?

So what happens exactly?

Prior to the event anyone between the ages of 16 and 30 can sign up for one of the workshops on offer. The entire festival is a weeklong process and the workshops vary in terms of what is explored. Usually each workshop focuses on a topic or technique to explore through a specific medium, and then

on Saturday they end with a big final show. There is no set agenda for how each workshop should function, and therefore whatever is brought to the table can emerge.

What are the festival's main objectives?

The main objective, I would say, is to collect creative people and provide them with a platform to unfold their creative sides both individually and collectively. My job is to make sure that those platforms are strong enough, but still open enough, for participants to explore themselves and their surroundings freely and comfortably. LungA is a place to express yourself, to meet other like-minded people, and to learn and develop from those interactions.

HOW LUNGA?

How many participants are involved?

It varies from year to year depending on how many workshop leaders there are and how many people they are ready to take in. This year is quite big; there

CREATE LUNGA

During my experience at LungA last summer, I noticed an immediate familial 'stemning' or 'vibe'...

That's the intimacy that I was referring to earlier, which I don't want to lose. It has a lot to do with the location of the festival; for the last decade the town has been raised in this weird artistic atmosphere and has been, well I wouldn't say forced, but gently asked to open their arms. You just go there and feel this acceptance from the local people and you kind of get forced to adapt to it, which creates this warm open feeling that we don't want to trample on by bringing too many people.

What sets this festival apart from the others?

Most of the festivals in Iceland are music festivals and we are not just that. We are a festival that celebrates all art forms. Our main focus is on creating together—on collaboration. Most of the festivals that I have heard of are about attending and enjoying what is served to you, while LungA is about attending

"Most of the festivals in Iceland are music festivals and we are not just that, we are a festival that celebrates all art forms"

will be approximately 120 to 150 participants, which is almost too big. It's hard to find a place for all those people to sleep—that's the main challenge we are facing now. On the other hand, it also provides me with energy to do it—that so many people are interested and we also have quite a lot of people on the waiting list.

LungA grew a lot the first seven years, starting with only 20 participants and now having grown to 120. In 2007, we had the most participants, totalling 130 people from seven different countries. But since then we have been trying to hold it down because it was a little bit too much, and we don't actually want to become bigger. We are afraid it would take away the uniqueness and intimacy of the experience, and we don't want to lose that.

and participating in what is being created. You are here to get input, but also to contribute output, which is exhausting but also inspiring. We ultimately want everyone to go home and continue being creative.

How do you define a successful LungA?

Success is solely defined by the individual, but for me it's successful if everyone leaves with a smile on their face. It's really hard to explain in words what LungA is, because it's so amazing to experience in person. ♥

Words

Melkorka Lincea

Photo

Alisa Kalyanova

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Our BEST OF REYKJAVÍK LIST is here! Again we've spent countless hours compiling the thing [via your suggestions, e-mails, Facebook comments and bar-talk], and as always we are sure you are more than ready to contest and challenge every single entry.

And this is the point. We should strive to spend our time having conversations about stuff in our environment that contributes to our quality of life. We need to care about our surroundings and show love for the things we are thankful for.

As we like to lazily copy/paste on this occasion: "We love the great city of Reykjavík. We really do. In fact, we love it so much, we named our magazine after it—and most of us choose to live here for extended periods at a time. It really is an excellent little city, all things considered. Of course it's lacking in many things a city will need. Decent public transport, actual neighbourhoods, a variety of ethnic eateries, clubs for late night partying on weekdays and about a million people, to name but a few. But we still swear by it, and if you're reading this, chances are you do too."

What follows are some nice tips on some of what makes Reykjavík-life worthwhile, some good entries into a hopefully never-ending discussion. The primary purpose of this BEST OF REYKJAVÍK thing is celebration! It's about big-upping stuff, giving mad props to it and patting it on the shoulder.

Our list is of course by no means a scientific one, and it is certainly contestable. It should be used as a starting point for a conversation; something for you to read, verify, distrust, totally disagree with, argue over, send us angry rants about and enjoy.

Here's how we do it: Ever since spring 2009 we've been accepting readers thoughts on what's BEST at bestof@grapevine.is, as well as conducting random polls on our Facebook, on the street and at the bar. Using your suggestions and arguments for guidance, we then assembled a couple of panels of tasteful folks that represent most genders, income brackets and political affiliations. Below are the results. Enjoy, and remember to send your suggestions to bestof@grapevine.is for consideration in our 2013 edition.



Grapevine readers, friends, enemies and staff do the choosin'!
By: the usual gang of idiots



BEST BURGER: GRILLMARKET

Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar has won this category ever since we started compiling our BEST OF list back in aught nine, and for good reason: they make delicious burgers. While Búllan is still a popular choice among Reykjavík's burger lovers, there's a new burger in town that simply can't be ignored—its sheer tasty, meaty, juicy, burgery, bacony deliciousness ensures its status as Reykjavík's best burger bar none. We are of course talking about Grillmarket's hamburger, what with all its glorious 220 grams of high quality, fire-grilled ground beef topped with crispy bacon sandwiched between freshly baked, mustard-smearred buns (served with a side of curly fries, pickles and a cherry tomato!). Anyone who has tried

it will attest that the Grillmarket-burger is leagues beyond any other burger in town, and at 1,890 ISK it comes at a fair price. The only downside is that it's only available as part of the restaurant's lunch menu, served 'til 14:00 daily. Runners-up: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("They reintroduced proper burger culture to Iceland, and they still kick ass"), Vitabar ("A no-fuss, quality burger served in a neighbourhood bar"), American Style ("The classic Icelandic burger, whether you like it or not")

(2011: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
2010: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
2009: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar)

BEST VEGGIE BURGER: HAMBORGARABÚLLA TÓMASAR

As our food critic says: "Veggie burgers are a science and the journey to the perfect veggie burger will teach you every major food principle worth knowing...along with some chemistry and basic nuclear physics." It was certainly not an easy choice, but we think Hamborgarabúllan is doing something right these days. Sindri Már Sigfússon of Sin Fang tells us that it's especially good when you top the patty with Búllan's fries, pickles and Béarnaise sauce.

Previous winners, Hamborgarabúllan (which gives you the option of replacing the meat with any of their burgers with Portobello mushrooms) and Saffran (which goes the extra mile to make their veggie burger vegan) are still pretty good, though.

(2011: Hamborgarabúllan
2010: Saffran
2009: Drekkinn)

BEST 'SPECIALTY BURGER': VITABAR'S 'FORGET-ME-NOT'

Slathered in delicious blue cheese and garlic, Vitabar's 'Forget-me-not' burger is the gold standard that other non-standard burgers will eternally be judged by, and it takes the cake yet again. With its divey, authentic charm, Vitabar remains a reassuring place to feast on a burger and a beer—if that feast happens to contain massive amounts of rich blue cheese, then that's all the better. Their regular burgers are pretty great too.

Runners-up: Roadhouse ("The donut burger and the Empire State are luscious, tempting and kind of evil") Fabrikkan ("The Rudolf burger, made out of reindeer, is only available around

Christmas, and it is SO YUMMY"), Búllan ("Búllan is overrated, but their steak burger is a wondrous concoction.")

(2011: Vitabar
2010: Hamborgarabúllan
2009: Vitabar)

BEST SLICE: DEVITOS

Deli's sporadic opening hours seem to be working against them in the 'best slice' category this year (along with our eradication of the category 'best drunken slice'), keeping them from winning for the fourth consecutive year. After much debate, our panel of experts declared Devitos Pizza by Hlemmur as the king of the Reykjavík slice, noting that "their slices are always consistent in quality," and "they were the pioneers of pizza by the slice in this country, and they are still the best at it." As always, Devitos get bonus points for the delicious oils and spices on offer.

Runners-up: Deli ("Varied toppings, never stale, always delicious.")

(2011: Deli
2010: Deli
2009: Deli)



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"I enjoyed this tour a lot! Taking in not only beautiful waterfalls and Jökulsárlón, but also the landscapes of southern Iceland."

AH12 The Golden Circle Classic - VanEaton wrote: Tuesday, April 24, 2012:



"If you only have two days in Iceland this is the tour to take. Don't miss your chance to see it."

AH101 Reykjavik to Keflavik Airport - One Way - Begg wrote: Wednesday, June 06, 2012



"We booked this company for ride from our hotel to the airport. It was perfect - they showed up exactly when they said they would. We made a few pick up stops & went straight to the airport. I would not hesitate to recommend them. Everything went smooth as ICE."



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BEST PIZZA: LA LUNA TRATTORIA-PIZZERIA

Family-run La Luna trattoria opened up for business on Rauðarárstígur last year and has been steadily winning fans since with its delicious wood fired pizzas that have folks gushing on the streets and on the net. “The pizzas at La Luna are the best on offer in Reykjavík these days, whether you’re eating in or taking out. It’s a shame they don’t deliver,” remarked one reader, while another noted: “Their toppings are always fresh and plentiful, they never skimp, and if you like cheese... OMG!” We gave it several tries and are happy to confirm the verdict: La Luna is the best thing going in Reykjavík pizza today, even though their pasta might be hit or miss (see: our restaurant review in the listings pages).

Runners-up: Gamla smiðjan (“Wood fired pizza is superior, and they seem to be doing the best job of it these days”), Eldsmiðjan (“They’ve been making a comeback lately!”)

(2011: Gamla smiðjan
2010: Gamla smiðjan
2009: Devitos Pizza)

BEST ICE CREAM: YOYO

First things first, we decided that we weren’t going to exclude frozen yogurt from the ice cream running, so anything ice cream-like counts. The last two years in a row, Ísbúðin Ísland has taken this award (keep in mind that Ísbúð Vesturbæjar is an INSTITUTION, which means that it’s not in the running). This year, however, there was a hot debate between Ísgerðin and YoYo. While one of our correspondents pointed out that Ísgerðin has “really crazy flavours like Kahlúa and shit,” others pointed out that YoYo has more. Thus we award YoYo best ice cream for its great selection of flavours and toppings. Not only that, but it’s also FUN to make your own, mixing in whatever fresh fruit and candy your heart desires, paying by weight.

(2011: Ísbúðin Ísland
2010: Ísbúðin Ísland
2009: Ísbúð Vesturbæjar)

BEST BAKERY: MOSFELLS-BAKARÍ IN REYKJAVÍK

We were pretty divided on this one. It came down to Sandholt, Bernhöfssbakarí and Mosfellsbakarí. Sandholt won it the two years in a row now, and the year before that it was Mosfellsbakarí. After some deliberation we decided that this bakery should once again take the cake. In fact, one of their cakes was voted best cake in a national competition this year. In operation since 1982, this bakery sure knows what it’s doing when it comes to fresh bread, and they are delectable pastries on par with what you’d find in Paris.

(2011: Sandholt
2010: Sandholt
2009: Mosfellsbakarí)

BEST THAI FOOD: BAN THAI

Ban Thai keeps serving up Reykjavík’s best Thai food by far. It is so beloved that every single course off the restaurant’s huge and varied menu seems to have a fan or two lurking around; indeed, Ban Thai’s many advocates have grown a love for every single aspect of the place (even its weaknesses, with one reader proclaiming: “The bad service is entertaining—the food is fantastic”). Years of dining there allow us to damn near guarantee that everything you order at Ban Thai will be fresh made, authentic and delicious—even though it might sometimes take a few minutes to make it to your table.

(2011: Ban Thai
2010: Ban Thai
2009: Ban Thai)



BEST PIZZA: LA LUNA TRATTORIA-PIZZERIA

BEST KEBAB: KEBAB GRILL

This was a new category last year and it went to Habibi, which we still think is pretty good in terms of Reykjavík’s kebab places. This year, however, we’ve been graced by a new place called Kebab Grill, and while the service could be quicker, this is without doubt the best kebab place in Reykjavík. We’re especially pleased that you can actually get your kebab in pita bread here. The falafels aren’t bad either.

(2011: Habibi)

BEST COFFEEHOUSE: KAFFISMIÐJAN

Kaffismiðjan wins best coffeehouse for the fourth year in a row now. If Mokka Kaffi weren’t already a coffeehouse institution, it might be entering this sacred territory. Much like last year, however, Kaffismiðjan had some competition, in particular from Café Haiti and C Is For Cookie, so it is certainly not invincible. Why is it winning again? As one of our trusted coffee drinkers explained in simple terms: “Brilliant coffee and atmosphere.” Their lovely pink roaster, which they put to work weekly, certainly doesn’t hurt either of these things and if they keep it up they might just be edging onto institution territory. Runners-up: Café Haiti, C Is For Cookie

(2011: Kaffismiðjan,
2010: Kaffismiðjan
2009: Kaffismiðjan)

BEST COFFEE-TO-GO: KAFFIFÉLAGIÐ

We would probably enjoy lingering at Kaffifélagið if their facilities allowed for it, as the atmosphere surrounding this café on Skólavörðustígur is always cheerful and attractive. Likewise their lattes, americanos and cappuccinos are made with love and pride, guaranteeing a consistently great cup every time. A dependable and high standard of quality place Kaffifélagið at the top of Reykjavík’s coffee-to-go hierarchy for yet another year.

(2011: Kaffifélagið
2010: Café Haiti
2009: Kaffifélagið)

BEST VEGETARIAN: GLÓ

Being a vegetarian in Iceland is kind of like being a tea drinker in Iceland. People typically eat meat and drink coffee here. That said, there are some vegetarian restaurants around, and one of those, Gló (though not strictly vegetarian), is pretty hot these days. The chef at this raw food joint Solla Eiríksdóttir received some international recognition in the raw food world this past winter, and she’s opened a second restaurant in Kópavogur. People were pretty much in agreement that Gló takes best vegetarian again. “They know what they’re doing” and the restaurant is “in a league of its own,” as a couple of people noted. Note that Á Næstu Grösum, the winner in 2010 and 2009, no longer exists. Runners-up: Grænn Kostur and Kryddlegin Hjörtu. The latter is not strictly vegetarian, but you can get good vegetarian food there.

(2011: Gló
2010: Á Næstu Grösum
2009: Á Næstu Grösum)

BEST HANGOVER MEAL: VITABAR

As one mail-in noted: “Getting past the smell of stale beer at Vitabar is an essential first step in parting with any well-earned hangover. Stuffing your face with their greasy burgers and fries is the second. If you’re still hung over after that ritual, you can always get started on a new hangover and wash everything down with a cold beer.” Runners-up: Past years’ winners, the trucks at Grái kötturinn and Prikið, still possess a great allure for those nursing hangovers in downtown Reykjavík, while Noodle Station, Vegamót and even KFC have their fans.

(2011: The Truck at Grái Kötturinn
2010: The Truck at Prikið
2009: The Truck at Grái Kötturinn)

BEST SOUP: HÖFNIN

This year the most heart-felt appeal was for the seafood soup at Höfnin down by the harbour. “They serve the lobster, shrimp and the fish in a huge bowl and they pour the soup over it. It’s

reasonably priced for a huge dish. You’ll leave really full. Not to mention, Höfnin has a beautiful view over the marina,” one of our correspondents said, adding (pleading) “PLEASE consider this.” Runners-up: Noodle Station (“It’s cheap and delicious and smells so good whenever you walk by”), Kryddlegin Hjörtu (“Namm”).

(2011: Kryddlegin Hjörtu
2010: Most soups at Súpubarinn
2009: Lobster soup at Sægreiðinn)

BEST PLACE FOR A FANCY MEAL: GRILLMARKET

For a city its size, Reykjavík hosts a remarkable number of above average fine-dining establishments where one can splurge and spend ones way to glorious, decadent oblivion. Farm-to-table themed luxury steakhouse Grillmarket is one such place, and according to many of our correspondents it is the current best bet for fancy dining in a nice (if slightly overwrought environment). “Having already won the hearts of Reykjavík foodies through her work at Fish Market, master chef Hrefna Rósa Sætran has outdone herself with Grillmarket—they do an amazing job every time I go there, whether I’m dining deep-fried harðfiskur, calamari, lamb or one of the BIG STEAKS from Háls in Hvalfjörður. I’ve recommend it to all my friends, and once they visit they, in turn, recommend it to theirs” Runners-up: Constant favourite Dill still have their die-hard fans, even though they seem to be losing their appeal a little (“it’s too pricey”), while Gallery Restaurant at Hótel Holt (“classy, tasty and relatively affordable”), Fish Company (“dependably delicious”) and newcomer Rub23 (“lavish”) were all mentioned quite often.

(2011: Dill
2010: Dill
2009: Gallery Restaurant at Hótel Holt)

BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A DATE: SUSHI SAMBA

Departing from our theme of recommending cosy Italian restaurants as suitable destinations for a romantic



BEST ‘SPECIALTY BURGER’: VITABAR’S ‘FORGET-ME-NOT’

evening, we deem recently opened South American/Japanese themed Sushi Samba the best place to go for a date in 2012. The menu is novel (for Iceland) and nicely executed, and the cosy, vibrant interiors provide the perfect setting for getting "private and intimate in the midst of a bustling crowd." You can also impress your date by illustrating your intimate knowledge of 'crazy' courses such as 'ceviche.'

(2011: Italia
2010: Pisa
2009: Italia)

BEST NEWCOMER RESTAURANT: FORRÉTTABARINN

It's been a great year for restaurants in Reykjavík, with new and ambitious places popping up all over town. Picking the best newcomer restaurant for 2012 thus turned out to be quite the daunting task, with a variety of nominations for worthy contenders coming through. We reached the conclusion that out of all of them, Forréttabarin by the harbour was the most welcome new addition. Their Icelandic take on tapas is "adventurous and affordable," the portions suitable for accompanying a relaxed glass of wine after work as well as making up a full and delicious meal. Their open, bustling dining hall adds an air of celebration to any occasion as well. Time will tell if they keep it up, but for now Forréttabarin offers great concept executed perfectly. Runners-up: Rub23 ("This Akureyri transplant is most welcome here in Reykjavík—you have to try their sushi pizza"), SNAPS ("The best lunch in town"), Pho ("filling a gap in the Icelandic food scene and doing a great job of it!")

(2011: Sjóvargrillíð
2010: Noodle Station
2009: Saffran)

BEST GODDAMN RESTAURANT: SNAPS

According to our definition, a 'best goddamn restaurant' needs to be 'on the cheaper side,' 'consistent,' 'tasty' and 'available'. Bistro bar SNAPS is all of these things—and it doesn't hurt that it sits in a great location by Óðinsgata in the heart of 101 Reykjavík and that the dining area is "so bright and comfortable that you'll gladly spend an entire day there" (indeed, some customers have been known to take dinner there after an extended 'wet lunch' session). Whether you opt for the entrées—often inspired by the French or Spanish traditions—or the tasty smørrebrød, you can count on the fare being tasty, afford-



BEST INDIAN FOOD: GHANDI

able and done with care. As our restaurant critic remarked in our last issue, SNAPS is an excellent place to hang out, offers the best bistro experience in Reykjavík, and will hopefully stick around for good. Thank you, SNAPS!

(2011: Ban Thai
2010: Saffran
2009: Segurmo at Boston)

BEST FAMILY RESTAURANT: LAUNDROMAT CAFÉ

If you're thinking, I can dress them up, but I can't take them out, you may want to head down to Laundromat Café. It's super casual and you can even drop your kid or husband off in the play area downstairs. "It's not without its faults," one of our writers said, "but nobody else is trying as hard as they are to be a family friendly restaurant." Runner-up: Ikea. It's not quite a restaurant, and it's not quite in Reykjavík, but they have good Swedish meatballs and you can leave your kids in the play area.

(2011: Laundromat
2010: Piri-Piri
2009: Hornið)

BEST CHEAP MEAL: ÍSLENSKI BARINN

Íslenski barinn is not THE cheapest meal in town. You can for instance get a hot dog and a Coke from Bæjarins Beztu for 500 ISK, but that let's be honest, that won't hold you over for long. Last year's winner, Noodle Station, is still a pretty good option, but we are pretty into Íslenski barinn this year.

(2011: Noodle Station
2010: 'Sub of the month' at Subway)

It offers hearty Icelandic dishes for a pretty reasonable 12-1300 ISK during lunchtime, and it's decidedly more upscale than Mamma Steina, which offers traditional Icelandic home cooking for a similar price.

Runner-up: Noodle Station

(2011: Noodle Station
2010: 'Sub of the month' at Subway)

BEST INDIAN FOOD: GHANDI

Judging by reader response, Austur-Índíafjlagið still has it, still retaining status as an INSTITUTION. Beyond that, Reykjavík's fledgling Indian food scene seems lacking a major force to challenge AI's dominance of the field. Last year's winner Austurlandahraðlestin is still popular "basically serving food from Austur-Índíafjlagið's kitchen at a slightly reduced price," and Shalimar still serve "a proper curry" to many readers' delight. Relative newcomer Ghandi with its emphasis on cuisine from India's Kerala region takes the cake this year, with the restaurant's fish dishes coming especially recommended. As our food critic noted in his review of the place earlier this year, Ghandi adds a "delicious and welcome variety to the Icelandic restaurant flora," and for that we are thankful.

(2011: Austurlandahraðlestin
2010: Shalimar
2009: Austur-Índíafjlagið)

BEST BRUNCH: VOX

VOX simply put makes the best brunch.

It's expensive, yes, but for 3,450 ISK, it's all you can eat so you'll probably consume more than enough for breakfast, lunch and dinner. "They do everything," one of our brunch enthusiasts explained. "You can enjoy a wide variety of delicious food in a modern atmosphere and it's just a stone's throw away from Laugavegur." Note that it's only served on Saturdays and Sundays.

(2011: Vox,
2010: Nítjándi
2009: Vox)

BEST SEAFOOD: FISKIFÉLAGIÐ

We think Fiskifélagið, or The Fish Company, is serving the best seafood these days. "They are consistently good," our food critic argued. "The food is exceptionally good, the dimly lit basement is cosy and romantic, and the service is excellent." We recommend the prix fixe menu, though be aware that you will probably have trouble walking out of the restaurant. It's a lot of food. And really good food. Really, this could have easily made "Best fancy meal" or "Best goddamn restaurant."

(2011: Við Tjörnina
2010: Fiskifélagið)

BEST PLACE TO GO WITH A GROUP OF FRIENDS: TAPAS BAR

After all these years, Tapas Bar is still the best place to go out with a group of friends in downtown Reykjavík. Their varied menu of authentic, sometimes-experimental, tapas offers something for even the most picky eater, and their style of serving ensures that even those friends that are always late for everything will get to feast with the group (there are also plenty of moderately priced courses on offer for those on a budget). Furthermore, the ambiance is cheerful and inviting and will ensure you stay for extra rounds long after your meal is finished.

(2011: Tapas Bar
2010: Tapas Bar)

BEST MUST-TRY DINING EXPERIENCE: ICELANDIC HOME-STYLE FOOD AT MAMMA STEINA

You've tried the rotten shark, the minke carpaccio and the pickled ram's balls—now it's time to get acquainted with the Icelandic grandmother kitchen that has kept Icelanders nice and lumpy through

the centuries. Mamma Steina offers genuine Icelandic home-style fare that most locals know from growing up, including svið (seared sheep heads), fish balls (yummy fried balls of haddock) and salty mutton. While the food doesn't make for as good a story as the ram's balls, it's certainly a lot tastier and equally authentic.

(2011 The svið at Fljótt og Gott, BSÍ
2010: Moby Dick on a Stick at Sægreifinn
2009: Bæjarins Beztu)

BEST NOODLE PLACE ON SKÓLAVÖRÐUSTÍGUR: NOODLE STATION

THE NOODLE WARS have been raging for over two years now, with Skólavörðustígur serving as battle ground for two noodle bars that are take turns topping one another in noodly deliciousness. Both Núðluskálin and Noodle Station are wonderful in their own right, but we decided to stage an election through our social media platforms to determine which held the greater appeal to whoever was on-line at the moment. In the end, Noodle Station won the vote with 29 votes against Núðluskálin's 21. Many heated remarks were made, but our Facebook friend Jenni Clemenson summed up Noodle Station's appeal, saying: "Keep it good and simple, the way food should be."

Runners-up: Núðluskálin ("more menu options and more veg friendly if that's your thing")
(new category)

BEST KEPT SECRET: CAFÉ FLÓRA

Laugardalur is home to a pretty cool botanical garden, and sort of hidden in that botanical garden is a pretty cool café called Café Flóra. It is hands down the best café in a botanical garden. Okay, it's the only one to the best of our knowledge, but it's just so worth going there that we thought we'd award them for being one of a kind. The food is great, they sometimes have live music, and you can take a nice walk around the garden after you've eaten or had coffee. Because it's a bit off the beaten path otherwise known as Laugavegur, it remains somewhat of a secret in Reykjavík.

(New category)

REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTIONS aka 'THE UNTOUCHABLES'

Through compiling our second annual best of list back when, we reached the conclusion that some of these places are so firmly established as local favourites that naming them "best of" anything is sort of redundant.

Furthermore, we thought having to compete with local favourites was almost unfair to all the new places trying to make their name. There will only ever be one Ísbúð Vesturbæjar, and it will probably remain Reykjavík's favourite ice cream joint for as long as they don't mess up horribly. That shouldn't mean we can't get excited and dish out props to other ice cream vendors.

We came up with a solution that would give us a chance to honour some of the perennial local favourites while still giving props to new and exciting places. We simply made a category that we call REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTIONS.

What makes a 'REYKJAVÍK INSTI-

TUTION'? By our definition, a 'REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTION' is a place or entity that's time and time again proven itself as one of the best of its kind, and has remained a must-visit through the years. When achieving INSTITUTION status, an establishment is automatically disqualified from winning any 'best of' categories, because you're beyond being 'best,' having been all consistently awesome for a long, long time.

A REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTION is a must-visit for tourists to Reykjavík.

A REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTION will retain its status as such until it starts sucking, in which case we will ceremoniously remove them from our list next year.

Without further ado, here are our REYKJAVÍK INSTITUTIONS, along with some choice reader and specialist quotes that argue their status:

KAFFIBARINN

"Despite some ups and downs, Kaf-

fiðbarinn has remained the undisputed reigning champion of Reykjavík nightlife and drinking for well over a decade. They are a true nightlife institution."

BÆJARINS BEZTU

"Everyone goes there. All the time. For over 70 years now. Not exactly gourmet dining, but a really freaking great snack nonetheless."

ÍSBÚÐ VESTURBÆJAR

"It's hard to explain the charm to outsiders, just tell them to go there. The ever-present queue speaks for itself."

HORNIÐ

"For a restaurant to remain so consistently on top of its game for over thirty years is one huge achievement. They are cosy, dependable and ever-tasty."

MOKKA

"They brought 'coffee' to Iceland, pretty much."

TÍU DROPAR

"Quintessentially Icelandic in every way. The coffee, the cake, the vibe. If I were to point a visiting friend to 'the es-

sence of Iceland,' this is where I would send him."

KOLAPORTIÐ

"If Kolaportið weren't around, we'd need to establish it immediately, lest we vanish back to the dark ages of commerce."

BÓKIN – BÓKABÚÐ BRAGA

"It's hard to imagine Reykjavík without it. So let's not."

BRYNJA

"This neighbourhood hardware store almost predated Laugavegur, and they always serve you with a smile (and don't mind throwing in some good advice when needed)."

AUSTUR-ÍNDÍA FÉLAGIÐ

"Probably your safest bet for fine dining in Iceland, period."

JÓMFRÚIN

"This Danish 'smørrebrød' house provides a unique atmosphere and taste you won't find elsewhere in town... or in the world for that matter."

PRIKIÐ

"Serving old men their morning coffee since way back, and somehow combining that with serving beer and hip hop to young folks since the late '90s. And burgers. And milkshakes. A one of a kind place with spirit and soul."

2012 ADDITION

SUNDHÖLL REYKJAVÍKUR

"The Guðjón Samúelsson designed Sundhöll Reykjavíkur with its maze of locker rooms is a beautiful building, and the nude sunbathing facilities, soothing hot pots and an atmosphere that has remained relatively unchanged since the 1930s all add to its appeal. While some of Reykjavík's other pools might offer more diversity, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur remains a unique and enduring local favourite."



currently being envisioned and crafted by locals. The wide variety of items on offer (“their collection is GARGANTUAN”) can be hard to navigate, but the expert staff ensures no one leaves without finding what they need.

(2010: Kraum
2011: Kraum)

BEST PLACE TO STOCK UP ON LOCAL FASHION DESIGN: KIOSK

Last year we said: “Run by a collective of young Icelandic fashion designers, Kiosk is such a welcoming addition we felt the shop deserves its own category. Kiosk is a co-op shop and serves as a first step for young local designers to sell their creations. It’s not only the cool designer wear and accessories that make the shop a great pick, but since the designers take shifts behind the counter you can always guarantee to meet a young new talent.” We couldn’t agree more for this year, and Kiosk has expanded since last year so there’s even more fresh talent to check out.

(2011: Kiosk)

BEST BOOKSTORE: MÁL OG MENNING

After several years of humiliation, Mál og menning—once Reykjavík’s favourite bookstore—seems to have finally gotten its shit together in a big way. Aside from building up a respectable (for Iceland) stock of literature and magazines and hosting various fine literary events (readings, discussions, etc), they have opened an art gallery on their top floor in conjunction with the crew from Havarí and generally seem in good spirits. This is great news for downtown Reykjavík!

Runner-up: Útúrdúr remains awesome with its selection of 'zines, art books and other curiosities.

BEST PLACE TO SHOP FOR TOURISTY STUFF: GEYSIR

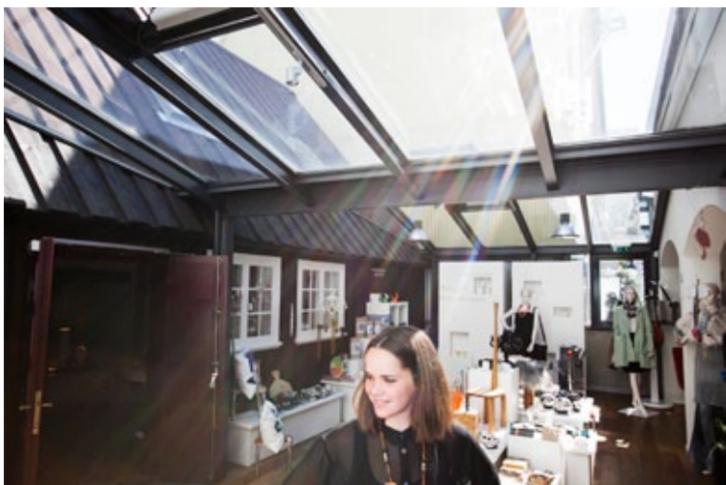
Downtown Reykjavík is starting to feel like some sort of Disneyland puffin mall, what with all the numerous new stores that cater exclusively to tourists in dire need of puffin or volcano related souvenirs. It’s understandable, though, because all you wonderful travellers need to bring back items for your loved ones and—who are we kidding—puffins and volcanoes are the most interesting things Iceland has going for it. Tourist shops are necessary, and it is thus important to commend those that go an ambitious route in serving up the coveted trinkets and stuffed dolls.

All decked out in salvaged wood and decorated with found photographs from Iceland’s past, Geysir on Skólavörðustígur does a commendable job of catering to tourists in a tasteful, yet quirky manner. Locally crafted goods, lopi sweaters and everything you’ll need to hike across the island can all be found there—seek out Vík Þrjónsdóttir’s playful line of woollen goods for an example of current local design.

(2011: Geysir
2010: Handprjónasambandið
2009: Handprjónasambandið)

BEST PLACE TO STOCK UP ON LOCAL DESIGN: KRAUM

Representing over 200 local designers and artists, Kraum offers an expertly curated, collection of the best things



BEST PLACE TO STOCK UP ON LOCAL DESIGN: KRAUM



BEST HABERDASHERY: HERRAFATAVERZLUN KORMÁKS & SKJALDAR

(2011: Eymundsson, Austurstræti
2010: Eymundsson, Skólavörðustígur)

BEST PLACE TO GET A TRENDY HAIRCUT: RAUÐHETTA OG ÚLFURINN

Rauðhetta og úlfurinn are an enduring favourite when it comes to supplying the good people of Reykjavík with their trendy haircuts—which is odd because trends keep changing and fashion is notoriously fickle. “I can always count on excellent service at Rauðhetta og úlfurinn, they make me look good every time,” one reader noted.

(2011: Barber Theater
2010: Rauðhetta og úlfurinn)

BEST SECOND HAND SHOP:

Fatamarkaðurinn by Hlemmur seems to be pretty popular these days. “Clothes at Nostalgia and Spúútnik have been pre-selected so they tend to be cooler, but they are more expensive. If you’re willing to put in the work, Fatamarkaðurinn is can be pretty great,” one of our second hand shoppers explained.

Runners-up: Nostalgia and Spúútnik

BEST SHOP FOR ‘HIGH FASHION’: KRONKRON

Those with a fashion fetish will tell you that KronKron offers “the only proper selection of current international designers in Reykjavík,” with one even remarking: “I would have no idea what I’d do without them! They are the only

ones actively importing new clothes!” Go there for clothes by labels such as Marc Jacobs, Wood Wood and Vivienne Westwood, shoes by Eley Kishimoto and Sonia Rykiel and of course the storeowners’ newly launched label KRONbyKRONKRON. Of course it all comes with a price, but we are told tourists can get tax-free rebates of the stuff, which ultimately renders it pretty cheap.

(2011: KronKron)

BEST HABERDASHERY: HERRAFATAVERZLUN KORMÁKS & SKJALDAR

Located directly under Laugavegur’s Bónus outlet, Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar is an enduring hipster mall of a store, where discerning Reykjavík gentlemen go to get decked out in proper Don Draper gear or disguised as English lords out for a fox hunt. Selling everything from shoes and undergarments to suits and overcoats, HK&S even host a proper barber in the corner who gives a mean shave and/or a haircut.

(2011: Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar
2010: Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar)

BEST PLACE TO SHOP ORGANIC: FRÚ LAUGA

The couple that runs Frú Lauga shop from farmers from all over the country and everything in the store is labelled so customers knows exactly what they

are eating and where it comes from. Need we say more?

(2011: Frú Lauga)

BEST RECORD STORE: LUCKY RECORDS

Lucky Records offers scores of hard-to-find vinyl and first editions of rare Icelandic and international LPs. “This is where I send my visiting music geek friends,” remarked one reader while another noted that the store is “world class! I found a battered 7” of ‘Kind Midas Touch’ by The Hollies for 1 EUR and a pile of old electro boogie stuff.”

(New category)

MOST WELCOME ADDITION: 20BÉ

Starting its life as a travelling pop-up shop, 20bé has found a permanent home on Laugavegur, where its three designer/artist owners sell their wares, host parties for friends and passers-by and promote local art through regular shows. “Helicopter’s dresses alone make 20bé a great stop on a stroll down Laugavegur, but I always find something fun or interesting when I go there.”

(2011: Jet Korine
2010: Fiskmarkaðurinn við gömlu höfnina)

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BEST POOL: LAUGARDALSLAUG

Swimming is a favourite pastime in Iceland. Most towns around the country have a swimming pool and Reykjavík has seven of them. They do in fact all have their charm, but we think it's safe to call Laugardalslaug the best pool. Why? Because it's huge, it has a bunch of hot tubs at varying temperatures, it has a killer waterslide and the stadium seating blocks out the cold northerly winds, which are usually accompanied by sunny rays. Not to mention, it was just remodelled this past winter.

Note: we used to have two pool categories, "Best all around pool" and "Best pool for hot tubbing and lounging." We're now simply going with Best Pool. Why? Because we made Sundhöllin, the oldest pool in Reykjavík, a NEW institution.

- (2011: Neslaug
- 2010: Laugardalslaug
- 2009: Laugardalslaug)

BEST ART MUSEUM: REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

The Reykjavík Art Museum at Hafnarhús has had a great year, hosting some intriguing and thought-provoking displays from premier league artists as well as up-and-comers from the art-world's underbelly. The permanent exhibit of Erró's works is "mind-blowing," and by making themselves open and available to the public by hosting various parties and events, they ensure a steady dialogue with the local community. Add to that the constant lectures and workshops on offer and you've got yourself a pretty vibrant art museum. Good work, Reykjavík Art Museum, keep it up!

- (2011: Einar Jónsson museum and sculpture garden
- 2010: Reykjavík Art Museum
- 2009: Einar Jónsson museum and sculpture garden)

BEST GALLERY: I8 GALLERY

While we would love being all innovative and awarding 'best gallery' to a fresh, whippersnapping up-and-comer art gallery that's ready to take on the art world with its edgy art and happening happenings, it just so happens that i8 is still way ahead of the rest of Reykjavík's pack. Where are all the galleries from

four years ago? Someone challenge i8, please!

Runner-up: Gallery Kling og Bang often hosts great shows and remains a must-visit for the curious art lover perusing downtown Reykjavík.

- (2011: i8 Gallery
- 2010: i8 Gallery
- 2009: Gallery Kling og Bang)

BEST MUSEUM: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

We think The National Museum is kicking ass. It's Iceland's largest museum and it covers everything from the Sagas to a Gameboy from the '90s. Well, not really, but you get the point. "A few years ago they changed everything up and there is a beautiful opaque cube in the middle and the exhibits are beautifully displayed along the walls," one of our writers reasoned. "I really appreciate the curating over the last three years, like the fashion exhibit Tízka, that was pretty awesome."

Runners-up: Penis Museum (It moved to Reykjavík from Húsavík this winter and it apparently has a lot of people excited), Icelandic Natural History Museum (That one is sitting in cardboard boxes in a basement somewhere, but we wish someone would unpack it!).

- (2011: National Museum
- 2010: Þjóðmenningarhúsið)

BEST PLACE TO SPEND A RAINY DAY: BIÓ PARADÍS

It was a close race between the swimming pool/hot tub and Bíó Paradís, but after much back and forth we decided that the movie theatre is once again the place to be on a rainy day. Why? There are lots of movies. They have a huge area with tables and couches to hang out. They have games. They have beer. They have popcorn. And they don't just have movies. They tend to have a unique selection of films that you can't see at the chain theatres around town. We're also pretty happy that the art house theatre is still in business. Read more on page 44.

- (2011: Bíó Paradís
- 2010: A hot tub
- 2009: Borgarbókasafnið)

BEST PLACE TO SPEND A SUNNY DAY: HJARTAGARÐURINN

Icelanders like to soak up the sun as much as possible. Coffeehouses spill out onto the streets where people hang out drinking coffee or beer. One such place is Austurvöllur. You'll see a lot of people hanging out on the grass, but perhaps it's become overrun? "There are too many people at Austurvöllur, too many people playing guitar and singing Bubbi songs," someone noted. "Hjartagarðurinn with its shabby, Christiania-like vibe is nice. They also



BEST ART MUSEUM: REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

have DJs there and you can bring beer from a nearby establishment." Read more about it on page 44.

Runner-up: Austurvöllur

(New Category: Perhaps we never thought it was sunny enough to do this one)

BEST BIKING TOUR: NAUTHÓLSVÍK – FOSSVOGSDALUR

Reykjavík is not a particularly bike-friendly city. It's most definitely a car city. Still, there are some nice places to bike and one of these is a ride that starts at Nauthólsvík and takes you into Fossvogsdalur. There's a bike path along the coast most of the way so you don't have to compete with the cars or pedestrians. It's scenic and it's a good work out. The weather also tends to be a bit nicer in Fossvogur, perhaps because it is a valley (for better directions and more information see page 18).

(New category)

BEST ROMANTIC WALK: GRÓTTA

Gróttta is a tiny island on the outskirts of Seltjarnarnes that's only properly accessible during low tide and is the perfect place to watch sunsets during summer and aurora in winter. The island with its lighthouse positively oozes romance, and a walk there from downtown Reykjavík (around five kilometres each way) is very possibly the most romantic thing you can get up to in the city. This is doubly so if you use the opportunity to take a cosy foot bath in Ólöf Nordal's sculpture 'Kvika,'

which is located on your right side as you near the island on the path parallel to Norðurströnd. Pack a lunch and immerse yourself in the salty sea air.

- (2011: Grasagarðurinn
- 2010: Sæbraut
- 2009: Öskjuhlíð)

BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A JOG: ÆGISSÍÐA

Last year Laugardalur was the best place to go for a jog and it's without a doubt still a nice place with its various paths sheltered from the wind. This year one of us remarked: "I'm just amazed that you people jog." The rest of us joggers or pretend-joggers are most into Ægissíða, which runs along the coast in 107 Reykjavík. It's hard to beat running by the ocean with the nice salty sea breeze. While it can get windy by the ocean, we decided that wind resistance is good training. It's a beautiful, windy path that takes you past a famous person's house, an old fishing station and football fields. And if you're feeling really good, you can run all the way to Nauthólsvík and take a dip in the hot tub.

Runner-up: Elliðaárdalur for the bunnies.

- (2011: Laugardalur
- 2010: Laugardalur
- 2009: Elliðaárdalur)

BEST PLACE TO GO FISHING: ELLIÐAÁRDALUR

Elliðaárdalur valley is a beautiful haven within Reykjavík's city limits, perfect for long walks on bright summer nights. It

is also home to Elliðaá river, where you can catch trout (from May 1 – June 15) or salmon (June 20 – August 31) in a beautiful, peaceful location accessible by bus or bike. Just remember to acquaint yourself with the river's rules and acquire a permit before you start reeling 'em in.

- (2011: Reykjavík harbour
- 2010: Reykjavík harbour
- 2009: Elliðaárdalur)

BEST PLACE TO ENJOY A ZEN MOMENT: DEEP INSIDE ÖSKJUHLÍÐ

We have long found that taking long, aimless strolls through the hills and forests (!) of Öskjuhlíð is the perfect method to clear the mind and spirit.

- (2011: Húsdýragarðurinn
- 2010: Alþingi
- 2009: Reykjavík Botanical Gardens)

BEST PLACE TO CHEER UP: THE POND

While it was a refreshing swim at Nauthólsvík last year, we decided on Reykjavík's pond "Tjörnin" this time. We thought: "What's a good all-year-round place to cheer up? People need to be able to cheer up in the winter too." And that ruled out swimming in Nauthólsvík. "But the pond!" someone exclaimed. "You can go ice skating there in the winter when it's a real winter wonderland, and then you can always feed the ducks." Seconding that, someone wrote us: "Feed the ducks at the pond because they're funny and there's

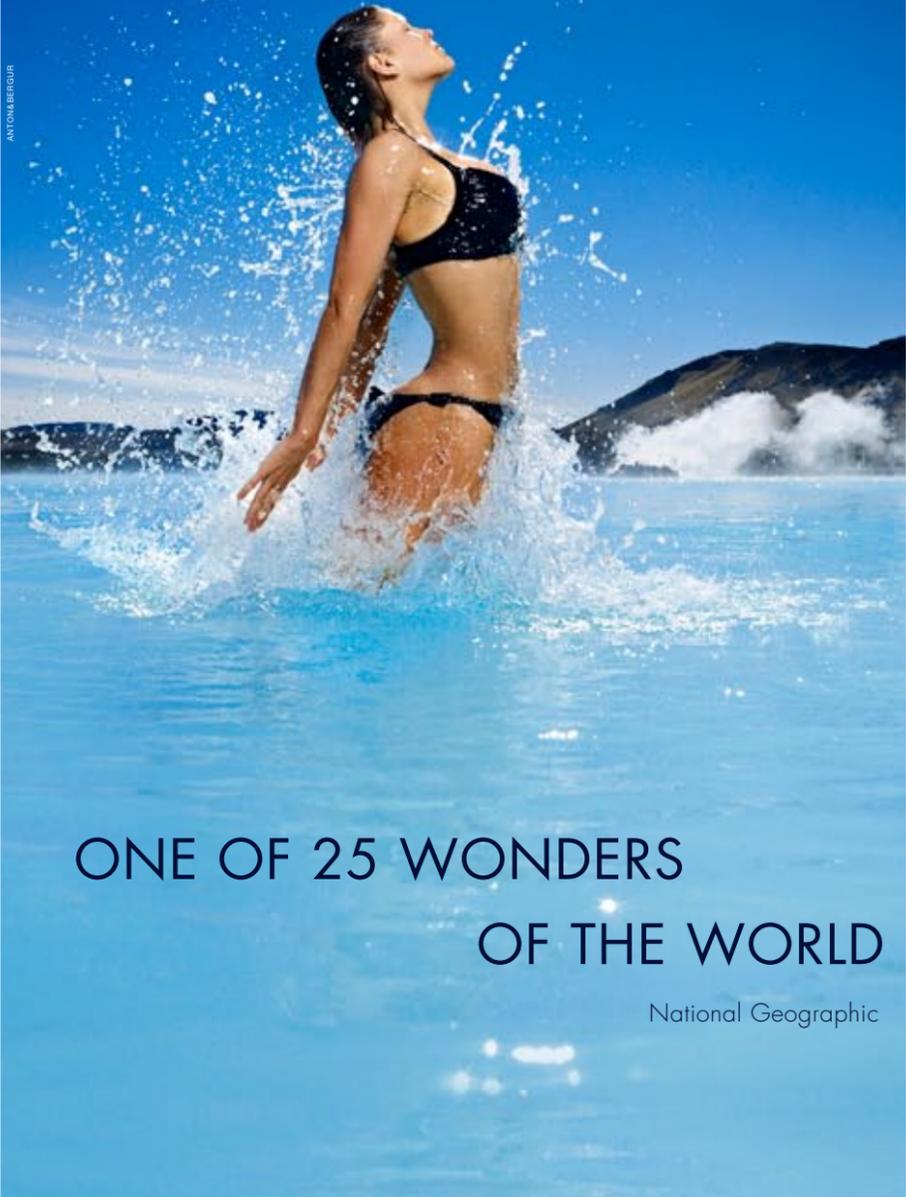
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ONE OF 25 WONDERS
OF THE WORLD

National Geographic

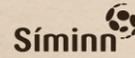
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Lambakjöt
NATURALLY

always some over excited chubby cheeked kid to cheer you up.”

(2011: Nauthólsvík
2010: Húsdýragarðurinn
2009: Húsdýragarðurinn)

BEST PLACE TO READ A BOOK: STOFAN

There are a bunch of nice places to read a book, but many of them are weather-dependent and relying on the weather is risky at best. If it's sunny we agree that the botanical garden is a pretty nice, quiet place to read. You can find a spot there sheltered from the wind, but if it's cold and rainy, you probably don't want to be outside. That's why we decided to go with Stofan, a cosy café with comfortable couches. It feels super homey, like grandma's house homey, and it's typically pretty quiet.

(New category)

BEST PLACE TO SPEND OUTDOOR TIME WITH KIDS: THE LYNGHAGARÓLÓ PLAYGROUND

There are many public playgrounds (“róló”) in Reykjavík—especially in the older, more established neighbourhoods—and all of them bear a distinct charm that reflects their surrounding areas and inhabitants (save for a couple of really run down ones). They usually feature any number of swing sets, seesaws, slides and sandboxes along with anything else the caretakers can think of that will entertain the local children. One such playground is Lynghagaróló by Lynghagi in vesturbær. More than one of our advisors insisted we mention



BEST POOL: LAUGARDALSLAUG

them in this newfangled category, as it is “impeccably maintained by a group of passionate neighbours,” and is “the perfect place to spend a sunny day with your kids and other parents.”

(new category)

BEST DAYTRIP VIA PUBLIC TRANSPORT: MOSFELLSBÆR AND ESJA

Reykjavík's bus system sometimes gets a bad rap, but it can still take you to some pretty great places at a minimal cost. You can for instance ride a bus straight to the roots of majestic Mt. Esja and hike a number of paths to the top for a stunning view of Reykjavík. If you've time to spare after the hike, why not take the bus back and exit in Mos-

fellsbær, where you can wander around the quaint Álafosskvos (where Sigur Rós keep their studio) and from there take in the rest of the town's various attractions by foot. Mosfellsbær's bakery and swimming pool both come highly recommended. When you're all done, simply take the bus back to civilization. More info on www.bus.is

(new category)



BEST PLACE TO READ A BOOK AND BEST NEW COFFEHOUSE: STOFAN



BEST PLACE TO DRINK LIKE A PRO: ANYWHERE ON FRAKKASTÍGUR

If your plan is getting shitfaced by yourself and forgetting all about the outside world and its various pressures by drowning yourself in watery beer, you need look no further than Frakkastígur. The street has slowly but surely estab-

lished itself as a haven for the modern drunkard, with Live Pub (Karaoke Sports Bar), Bar 7 and Obla Di forming a glorious trifecta of misfortune and broken dreams. The drinks are cheap, the opening hours are sporadic and the clientele is non-judgmental, so head on down to Frakkastígur for that 'lost weekend' you've been dreaming of...

(2011: Kaffi Grand
2010: Live Pub
2009: Grand Rokk)

BEST MAINSTREAMER BAR: THE ENGLISH PUB

The Grapevine is not exactly super mainstream, but we think a mainstreamer bar is one that appeals to a wide range of people and plays music

that appeals to the masses, featuring for instance cover bands and troubadours playing lots of Bubbi songs. English Pub fits the bill pretty well. However, the Lebowski Bar—formerly Oliver—was a really, really close second. Runner-up: The Lebowski Bar

(2011: The English Pub
2010: Austur)

BEST PLACE TO START THE NIGHT: KEX HOSTEL

A lot of people like KEX Hostel's bar for starting their nights these days. One correspondent remarked that “KEX have very decent beer on tap, their back porch is nice for soaking up the sun on bright days and the bar food is affordable and tasty. I also always meet

someone fun when I'm there, whether it's an old friend or a tourist passing through town.” Others commend KEX for their regularly scheduled events and pleasant, low-key atmosphere. In any case, it's a winner.

(2011: Nýlenduvörverzlun Hemma & Valda
2010: Nýlenduvörverzlun Hemma & Valda)
Runners-up: Snaps, Laundromat, Nýlenduvörverzlun Hemma & Valda

BEST CHEAP BAR: ÖLSMIÐJAN

A sort of miniature version of Berlin seems to be forming at Lækjargata 10, 101 Reykjavík, with a somewhat authentic kebab joint in the basement

Special | The Locals Speak

Things They Like About Reykjavík

ANNIE MIST
CROSSFIT CHAMPION



Ingólfstorg, because it's a nice place to hang out, especially in the summer time. You can sit down and chill with your friends. You can take your lunch. I was in school at Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík, one of downtown's oldest buildings, and you were able to walk from school to there and have lunch if you wanted to. We were there for my cousin's bachelorette party. It was really nice. It was a sunny day. It had a picnic feeling.

GERÐUR KRISTNY
WRITER/POET



The old cemetery, Hólavallagarður: It is a peaceful and beautiful old cemetery with a long history, especially the part where the victims of the Spanish flu are buried. There are even unmarked mass graves that few people know about. People believed that the first one to be buried there would be the watcher because he would find no rest because he had to guard the place. Check it out!

CURVER THORODDSEN
MUSICIAN/ARTIST



The best thing about Reykjavík is the rise of neighbourhood markets and festivals over the summer. It's been very uplifting to see an explosion of this positive community building after the depressing and negative vibe of the economic crash in 2008. This summer we've been seeing a whole lot of these summer markets, like Borgarstígur, Norðurmýri, Marargata and the Vesturbæjar flea market. These markets have been a very positive thing, and I think an indicator of people turning away from materialistic thinking that happened in 2007. This has been kind of a way for building from within.

DOROTHEE KIRCH
DIRECTOR



There's a small restaurant on Austurstræti called Aldin I like because it has fantastic food. They always have a one-meat-and-one-fish meal, and about six or seven salads or vegetable meals that you can choose from. It's just exquisite, all kind of great spices. And it's affordable. They have great sweet potatoes with some really nice spices; they have roasted aubergines. I hope it stays there for a long time.

MALCOLM KENNETH FRASER
FACEBOOK USER



The best thing about Reykjavík has to be the geothermal pools. Whenever I feel I might be catching a cold, I alternate between the hot pots and the steam bath of Vesturbæjarlaug, and that's it, CURED! It's barely more expensive than a box of paracetamol tablets.

PORBJÖRN BRODDASON
PROFESSOR



Laugarnes, because it's so calm and you can watch Snæfellingness and the islands. You can even see Akranes. It's a small island of the Reykjavík harbour to the west. I'm a romantic person, and it puts me in a very nice frame of mind. It calms you down. How much more sentimental can you get? It makes you feel one with nature. It's an emotional thing. It's your feelings.

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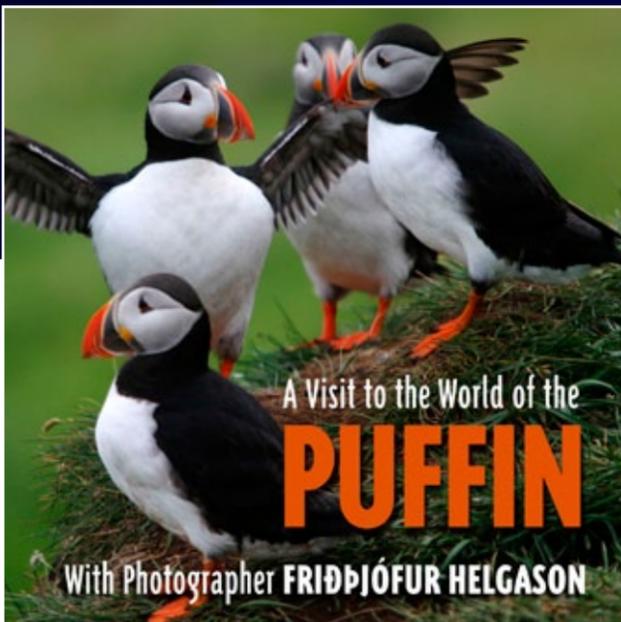
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ON ICELANDIC VOLCANOES AND THE ATLANTIC PUFFIN



A VISIT TO THE WORLD OF THE PUFFIN

This small but exceptionally beautiful book of **Friðbjófur Helgason's** photographs of the **Atlantic Puffin**, gives the reader a close insight into the world of this amazing bird. Through Helgason's lens, together with informative text, we get to know where and how these colourful creatures fight for their survival along the harsh coastline of Iceland. You will discover that this really is a visit worth making.



EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL ON FIRE – THE SPECTACULAR ERUPTION IN 2010

Few volcanic eruptions in Iceland have made as many headlines as the one that started in the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in March 2010. The volcano's stark beauty contrasts strikingly with the sheer havoc it has wreaked all around the world. **Ragnar Th. Sigurðsson's** stunning photos and the accompanying text by **Ari Trausti Guðmundsson** give an insightful and imposing view of the eruption as it unfolds. Ragnar has won international acclaim for his work, including three CLIO awards, while Ari Trausti is held in high regard for his many books and TV programs on geology and volcanism.



BEST PLACE TO GET COCKTAILS: KOLABRAUTIN AT HARPA

(Kebab Grill, see: "Best kebab") and a cheap dive bar on the second floor. Hip young locals have been spotted flocking to Ólsmiðjan lately, likely drawn to the watery 590 ISK beers and one another's authentic company. "Not that I'd go there sober or anything," one reader remarked, "but Ólsmiðjan can be really fun with the right crowd, despite the horrible beer." Runners-up: Esja ("every drink is half-off until 22:00"), Nýlenduvöruverzlun Hemma & Valda ("great happy hour, good music").

(2011: Den Danske Kro
2010: Kaffi Zimsen
2009: Nýlenduvöruverzlun Hemma & Valda)

BEST ALL-AROUND BAR: FAKTORÝ

This was a close race between Bakkus and Faktory (Kaffibarinn is not in the running, as it's a nightlife institution). Bakkus won it last year, but the bar has since moved to a new location and it seems that people aren't as into it. Faktory, on the other hand, is gaining popularity. "This is one of my favourite places because you never know what kind of night you'll have," one of our nightlife enthusiasts noted. "They have samba, hip hop, and nineties nights, for instance." Some say it's the closest to a substitute for our newly departed club, NASA. "And they have that GIANT pool table outside," someone added. Word

of caution: If you go out for a smoke, you'll have to the back of the queue, which can be terribly long after 2 AM.

BEST BAR TO GO DANCING: BAKKUS

Even though not everyone loves their new location, Bakkus still runs an ambitious booking policy, serving up great DJs and fresh music on weekends and weeknights alike. "Once I get past a certain level of drunkenness, I always find myself grinding against Bakkus' walls for some reason. That must mean something," remarked one commenter. Runner-up: Faktory, no-one ("there is a real shortage of good clubs in Reykjavik")

(new category)

BEST NEWCOMER BAR: SLIPBARINN, HÓTEL MARÍNA

This is a hotel bar located by harbour. It's in a cool and underrated part of Reykjavik, namely the Grandi area, and they have a nice selection of drinks and appetisers. Those of us who live in the west side of town find it an especially convenient place to start the night. Read more on page 50.

(2011: Faktory,
2010: Sódóma)

closed, but Úrilla Górrillan has opened in its place and in many ways it's just like Hvíta Perlan so it's not surprising that it takes best place to watch sports over a beer this year. It's a restaurant and sports bar with constant streaming of live sports. People who like to watch sports over a beer tell us that it's simply the best. "They have a huge screen, and they have lots of them, and it's really comfortable, and you get a seat with your very own personal tap at your table, so you don't have to get up to order!" someone who doesn't even watch sports excitedly told us.

(2011: Hvíta Perlan,
2010: Hvíta Perlan,
2009: Bjarni Fel)

BEST BEER SELECTION: MICRO BAR

While most bars in Reykjavik are content to sell run of the mill "bjór," Micro Bar prides itself in having an excellent selection of excellent beers on draft and by the bottle. The place just opened inside Center Hotel a few months ago and we're pretty into it. They carry all of Iceland's wonderful microbrews and import fine beer and liquor that you're not going to see anywhere else in town. Read more about it on page 42.

(New category)

BEST PLACE TO WATCH SPORTS OVER BEER: ÚRILLA GÓRRILLAN

Hvíta Perlan won this category the last two years in a row. Hvíta Perlan is now

BEST PLACE TO GET COCKTAILS: KOLABRAUTIN

Lebowski Bar might make 150 types of White Russians, but like most bars in Iceland, it is lacking a diverse cocktail menu. People overwhelmingly go to bars to drink beer after all. Hótel Marína, Hótel 101 and Harpa's Kolabrautin seem to be the best places to get cocktails. After some back and forth about this, we decided that Kolabrautin should get the award. Their lipstick pink cocktail, the house cocktail, is to DIE FOR and Harpa is just a really awesome building to be inside. The bar doesn't stay open super late, but it's a swanky place to get a before dinner drink. Runner-up: Hotel 101 ("It's loaded with people at happy hour. They know how to make them.")

(New category)



BEST MAINSTREAMER BAR: THE ENGLISH PUB

SCHEDULE

Whale-Watching Tour Duration: 3 hours

The tour includes a stop by Puffin Island 15th May - 20th August

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	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55
		16:55	16:55	16:55			

ADULTS: 47€ / 7.500 ISK
CHILDREN: 7-15 22€ / 3.500 ISK
CHILDREN: 0-6 FREE

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Puffin Island Tours Duration: 1-1,5 hours

15th May - 20th August Every day
10:00 | 12:00 | 14:00

ADULTS: 3.800 ISK • CHILDREN: 1.900 ISK • CHILDREN: 0-6 FREE

Sea Angling and Grill Duration: 3 hours

May - September Every day
17:00

ADULTS: 10.500 ISK • CHILDREN: 5.000 ISK • CHILDREN: 0-6 FREE

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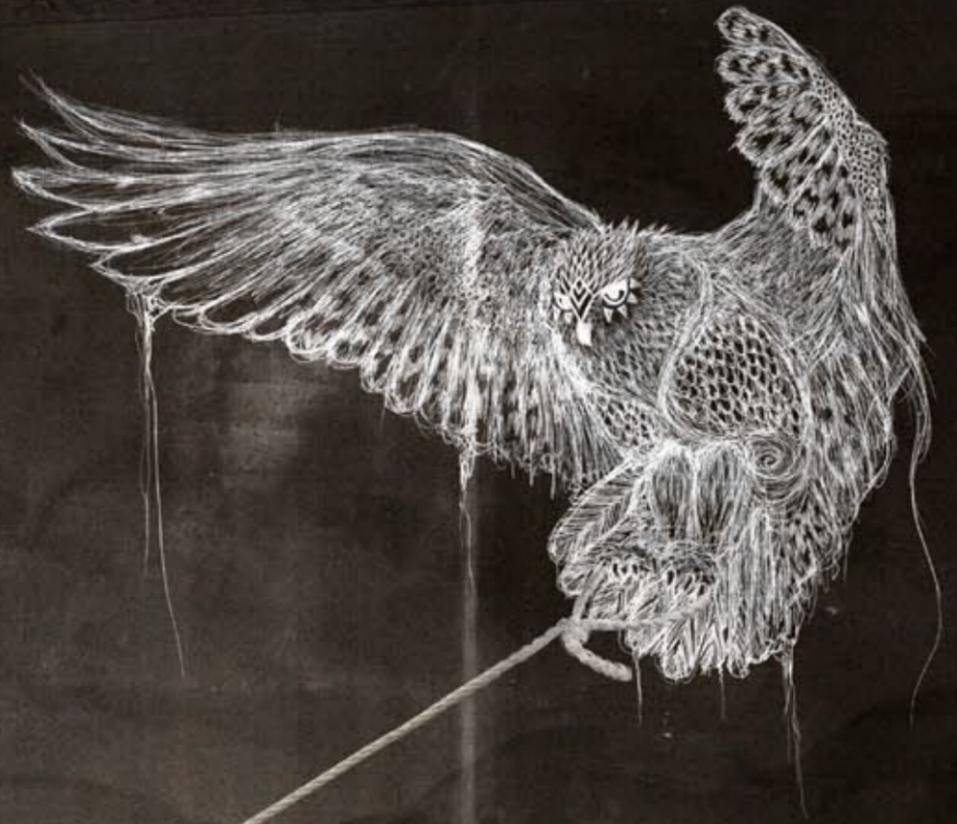
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Monsters Spread The Clap



Consistent droves of Icelandic families flushed through Fríkirkjuvegur in anticipation of the free outdoor concert at Hljómskálagarðurinn. This Saturday night included more than just tipsy-trendy-twenty-somethings—finally an opportunity presented itself for tweens and young adults alike to claim temporary residence in 101 Reykjavík, and use the chance to see one of Iceland's fastest claims to fame: Of Monsters and Men.

Their look was foolproof, with co-vocalist Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir rocking her floppy fedora signature piece, and her male counterparts—five in total—sporting an array of tightly tailored suit jackets paired with dark-toned flannels. If hipsterdom and indie chic were to be found sipping on soy lattes at Hemmi og Valdi—a coffee shop where most artists convene simply to convene—it may be comparable to 'the monsters' in their element: perfectly composed and inarguably appealing to the times.

The garden was exceptionally full, but bodies were comfortably dispersed, allowing just enough room for a mass of bobbing to coalesce. A noticeable lack of smoke was probably a nod towards the age average—hovering at about sixteen—as wide eyed innocents preferred activities such as taking artsy photos of one another at obscure angles and jumping up and down in synchronicity.

Maintaining a steady 4/4 melody, they worked methodically through their single album 'My Head Is An Animal' with little lag between tunes. Like a layer cake, every song fit proportionally on to the next, as the audience waited eagerly for what they knew would be

the topper, 'Little Talks.'

With a few uplifting words from the keyboardists' lake house before performing "Lakehouse," and a comment on how "all we really need is family and friends," the typically cold-tempered Icelandic audience began picking up enthusiasm with no shortage of overly exuberant beat clapping. By the time they reached the finale, clapping had actually imbued their performance with a deep collaborative sense, featuring 'ayo!' as its accompaniment. Yes, the hopefulness of youth hung blissfully in the air as any false sense of self-worth was pushed aside for the glory of naïveté.

The whole package was precisely that: a package. From the miscellaneous string lights and multicolored lanterns that decorated the aerial sphere of the stage, down to the finely polished and obviously wisely produced performance, it is no shock that these youngsters (all between the ages 21 and 25) were headed for stardom. Having only formed in 2010 and already hitting top charts in Iceland and the U.S., they have undeniably found a sweet spot in the alt rock scene. Not unlike Edward Sharpe And The Magnetic Zeros, they have nailed that co-vocalist bantering, "free-spirited" aesthetic that caters perfectly to the increasingly nostalgic era we are now entertaining. 🍷

MELKORKA LICEA
ANDRI MARINÓ



Black Valentine

Polygamy Is Alright With Me

www.blackvalentine.bandcamp.com

As an album, Polygamy... is a decent EP

Whoa, someone likes the Velvet Underground don't they? "Get It Together," which opens this tawdry album, is—probably by design—exactly like an outtake from that band's Doug Yule era. You know, where he tries to sound like Lou Reed and almost does, to generally dumb effect because he isn't him.

And neither is Black Valentine, though they would doubtless love to be. Elsewhere you've got B-side stuff like "I Don't Wanna Go Out With Him," which is kind of like "Summertime Rolls" by

Jane's Addiction, except played on a Wurlitzer organ. Turns out that's a high point; sludgy sub-acidic demos like "Until I Saw the Fire" and "Oh My God" recall that absolute twat bunch of self-obsessed dicks, the Brian Jonestown Massacre. Worst of all, "Icing on the Cake" sounds horribly like U2 covering "Every Breath You Take," with a Bon-tempi organ burbling away on preset rhythms in the foreground.

🍷 - JOE SHOOMAN

Guardian Of The Red Sands

A folk music festival comes to the backyard of a Westfjords sheep farmer



Every day, Ástþór Skúlason hears the buzz of the electric lift that helps him climb into his tractor. That momentary whirring—a noise that means the paralyzed sheep farmer can get to work—is usually one of the only sounds in Rauðasandur, a blip in the corner of northwest Iceland.

But new sounds echo on the small Westfjords farm on July 6. Musicians strum their guitars and a crowd of 300 people dance into the early morning in Ástþór's barn, strewn with hanging lights—the site of the Rauðasandur Festival.

"It's definitely fun to see change, even if it's just for one weekend," Ástþór says. The 38-year-old, who is paralyzed from the waist down and uses a wheelchair, is lending the land to his younger brother Hjörtur to host this folk music festival, which puts artists like Snorri Helgason and Lay Low on stage.

From his window, Ástþór usually only sees his farm and the 10-kilometre reddish beach that stretches endlessly under the fog—an anomaly in a country known for its black sand. This weekend, grey, blue and purple tents, along with grills and portable toilets, also dot his view.

The festival brings a diverse group to his backyard, from 20-something year olds who sip cans of Tuborg to mothers who hold their babies while waiting for the next band to play. "These are very good people," Ástþór says.

PEOPLE THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY COMING BACK HERE

This weekend, the festival is good company for Ástþór. He enjoys the folk music and the hums of the crowd—a change on a farm that's typically just him, a farmhand and whatever group of tourists rents out the cabins next door.

Ástþór still runs the farm himself despite the car crash that paralyzed him in February 2003 when he was driving on the narrow road to Patreksfjörður, his birthplace and the largest nearby town, 40 kilometres away. "The road was very icy. I slid on the ice and fell from almost the top of the mountain, all the way down, and got stuck under the car," he says.

Ástþór was back on the farm in six months—just in time for the summer season. "People thought I was crazy coming back here after the accident but somehow I couldn't think of quitting," he says. "It works, so I'm going to keep doing it."

He's had to make some adjustments—like making the sheep barn

more accessible for him and installing the electric lift on his tractor—but he says the daily tasks are still the same. In the winter, he feeds the sheep and takes care of them. In the summer, he collects grass to stockpile for their food. In his free time, he fishes and hunts foxes. "It's the freedom. I can control everything by myself and most of the year it's really quiet and peaceful," he says.

IT WILL ALWAYS DRAG YOU BACK

Ástþór's 33-year-old brother Hjörtur Skúlason used to resent the quiet. He grew up on the Rauðasandur farm with his three siblings—some of the only children in a 40-kilometre radius. From when he was seven to 18 years old, he stayed at a school near Patreksfjörður during the week and came home to the isolated farm on the weekends. "I didn't appreciate it at that time. It was kind of a prison in my mind," Hjörtur says.

Now, the farm is a haven for him. After moving to Reykjavík and studying at Goldsmiths' College in London, Hjörtur started managing a nearby coffee shop last year and spends his summers close to his brother. "I think the landscape is so powerful. It will always drag you back, that's the thing," Hjörtur says.

Hjörtur also wanted to drag his friends, who were moving away and inching into their 30s, to Rauðasandur. He and three others—Kristín Andrea Þórðardóttir, Jónína de la Rosa and Björn Þór Björnsson—organised the festival's first instalment last summer for friends and friends of friends. "It was just a Facebook event," he says.

This year's version, with 6,500 ISK tickets and sponsorships from Tuborg and Vodafone, is a step up. The festival, which features a bonfire, a beach yoga session and a sandcastle competition, sold out. "I didn't expect there to be anyone up there when we played but it was a nice turnout," says Ryan Karazija of Low Roar, who tapped his feet onto loop pedals as his voice reverberated in the barn during a Sufjan Stevens cover song.

The organisers won't take a cut of the profits and lured touring acts like Low Roar and Prins Póló to play for free. Any money left over after costs will go to help refurbish Ástþór's farm. "We really want to help him do something more and we want to do something for the area," Hjörtur says. "This is just so beautiful." 🍷

✍️ CORY WEINBERG
📷 CORY WEINBERG

Trivia question answer from page 6:

A. In a 2011 survey, 79.7% of tourists (1,875 of 2,352 asked) replied Icelandic nature had a major impact in their decision to visit Iceland, 38.6% said Iceland's culture and history, 17.5% said the attractive price offers/low airfares and 10.3% said the stopover opportunity convinced them. Sadly, Iceland's hamburgers did not make the list.



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The Faroe Islands: Neither Iceland, Nor Scotland, Nor Even Denmark



“It’s not Scotland, it’s not Iceland. The Faroe Islands have embraced me. It’s kind of in the middle. Like Sc-iceland. The scenery is incredibly striking, but less Scots and less ice.” This is how comedian Danny Robins describes Iceland’s neighbours in his Faroe Islands Rap.

The eighteen islands that make up the Faroes have around 50,000 inhabitants and, as everyone likes to point out, almost twice as many sheep. Indeed, the local name ‘Föröyar’ probably comes from ‘fjár,’ or sheep, although it may also mean Far Away Islands, if you like.

THE PUFFIN, SKUA AND THE SHAG

Most visitors don’t come for the sheep, though. They come for the birds. With about 80 species nesting on the islands and 200 more dropping in for a visit, it’s estimated that the bird population is nowhere denser.

My travelling companion is a short girl with a big camera who has come all the way from Hong Kong to admire the avian life. On board the ship from the capital Tórshavn to the island of Sandöy, the captain invites us up to the bridge and we are treated almost like royalty. Icelanders are almost as common as the birds here, but no one has ever met anyone from Hong Kong. My companion is frustrated as she tries to photograph a puffin, the tourist bird of the Faroe Islands. The oystercatcher,

the national bird that once graced the Faroe Islands flag, is easier to find, as it prefers to lay its eggs by the side of the road.

In addition to cute puffins and the oystercatcher, you can also find the shag and the great skua in the Faroe

bles up. Perhaps it’s a better idea to go looking for a shag.

SCANDINAVIAN TOURISTS

The tourists here are mostly Scandinavian, and come for different reasons. The Danes usually want to go to distant Mykines, not because of the vibrant bird life but because the movie and book ‘Barbara’ take place there. In the story, a pastor is unable to return to Tórshavn due to bad weather and while he is stranded there, his wife leaves him. Give or take straying spouses, this story is still known to repeat itself, as the same winds that cost the pastor his wife frequently inhibit both ship and helicopter transport to the island. If you’re not a Dane interested in ‘Barbara,’ it’s still a great place to see puffins, but don’t plan your trip on the day before your departure.

For Norwegians, the hamlet of Gjógv is the destination of choice on the archipelago. It is the setting of the novel and TV series ‘Buzz Aldrin’ (not about the second man on the moon, but rather about the feeling of being second best). Gjógv is located on the island of Eysturöy and is an easy daytrip from Tórshavn. For those who haven’t seen the series, Gjógv has other delights to offer. It is set on a slope running down to the impressive cleft from which the town draws its name (in Faroese), and it also has that local

memorials to World War I, all Faroese villages seem to have monuments for those lost at sea. It often happened in years gone by that the entire male population of a village would drown on a fishing trip if the winds changed quickly. Most dramatically, this happened on the village of Skarð on Christmas Eve in 1913, when all the men save a 70-year-old and two small boys drowned. The village was abandoned six years later.

Back in the capital there is a lot that reminds you of Iceland, but perhaps more Iceland as you imagined it or Iceland as it used to be, rather than Iceland as is. In any case, the Faroese have done a better job of preserving old buildings. Turf lined roofs are everywhere and the narrow lanes of Tinganes are like a walk back to the 18th century. The Icelandic Embassy aside, Danish influence is prominent in town, with a slight hint of Norwegian thrown in. Another one of the Faroe Island’s neighbours, Britain, left behind an airfield that remains in use and an enduring love of fish and chips after the (largely benign) occupation in World War II.

The Faroese people likely are among the friendliest you will find. Indeed, the islands live up to their name of Far Away Islands, not because they are really so distant geographically, but because they seem somehow undiscovered. You should go see them now, before everyone does. 🇫🇷

“Most visitors don’t come for the sheep, though. They come for the birds. With about 80 species nesting on the islands and 200 more dropping in for a visit, it’s estimated that the bird population is nowhere denser.”

Islands. The great skuas, a large seabird with a wingspan of 140 centimetres, are a pain to man and fowl alike. The bird will peck at your head if you come too close, so your best bet is to put your hands in the air; though they won’t accept your surrender, they might attack those instead. They are also known to intimidate smaller birds until the little ones have vomited up their lunch, which the skua then gob-

rarity, a hostel. Furthermore, there’s a garden decorated with what seems like a world-class collection of kitsch statues of dwarfs, giant spiders and various other creatures. Visitors are free to roam about.

DANISH HOUSES, BRITISH CHIPS

Just above the town there is a graveyard with a statue of a mother and children looking out towards the ocean. Like all French towns seem to have

Words
Valur Gunnarsson

Photography
Skari



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So Cool It Must Be Faroese



They say that going to the Faroe Islands is like going back to Iceland the way it was a decade or two ago. When it comes to music, this is true. In a sense. The music scene is surprisingly vibrant, varied, and largely undiscovered, as one could say about Iceland before Björk. In other ways, the Faroes have gone their own sweet way.

The capital of Tórshavn is in many ways a picture of a smaller, younger Reykjavík. Many bar names appear familiar to the seasoned reveller; within a short distance of one another (well, this is Tórshavn), one can find Bar 11 (here a bar, there a bar), Glitnir (here a defunct bank, there an Irish Bar) and Rex (there still a nightclub, here turned into a Laundromat).

SIRKÚS WILL RISE AGAIN

Most eerily, the legendary Sirkús bar rises a brief distance from the harbour. As everyone knows, Reykjavík's Sirkús is where a whole generation of Icelandic artists and wannabes grew up. Home to the Tom Selleck mous-

tache competition and members of the Sugarcubes (some of whom got their mail delivered there), it was featured in a Björk video, spawned a copycat TV station and magazine (who borrowed the name but had nothing to do with the bar), and was, tragically, closed in February 2008 due to scheming real estate developers. The house where court was held now stands empty on Klapparástígur, but seems to have found an afterlife in Tórshavn. Yes, Sirkús is alive and well and living in the Faroe Islands.

This is no coincidence. Sunneva, one of the owners, used to be a bartender at the Reykjavík branch before setting up shop here. Everything is faithfully reproduced, from the painted palm trees to the bright yellow sign and the loyal clientele. There seems to be a concert on every night, the acoustics are predictably crappy, but the vibe is great. On this particular evening, we are treated to no less a figure than Teitur, and the tiny locale is packed all the way up the bathroom stairs.

THE KING OF FAROESE ROCK AND ROLL

Teitur, as any young person in the Faroe Islands will tell you, was once signed to Universal Records but then bought his way out of the contract due to creative differences. "A man with integrity," a Norwegian woman coos upon hearing the story. Ironically, Teitur was named

"Businessman of the Year" in his home country upon signing the contract. I don't know if the title has been revoked, but whatever his business acumen, his song writing talents are considerable. After self-releasing his acclaimed second album 'Stay Under The Stars,' he returned home to make the Faroese language 'Káta hornið' and has since released two more albums in English.

On another night, I see the Dead Beat Punx perform here. They have great energy but are hampered by the blandness of their English lyrics. Teitur plays selections in both languages and sounds great in either. A highlight is "All My Mistakes Have Become Masterpieces" from 'Stay Under The Stars,' and whatever the nature of his mistakes, he seems to live up the claim. He also does a great job of overcoming the acoustics and making his guitar effects sound like a full backing band.

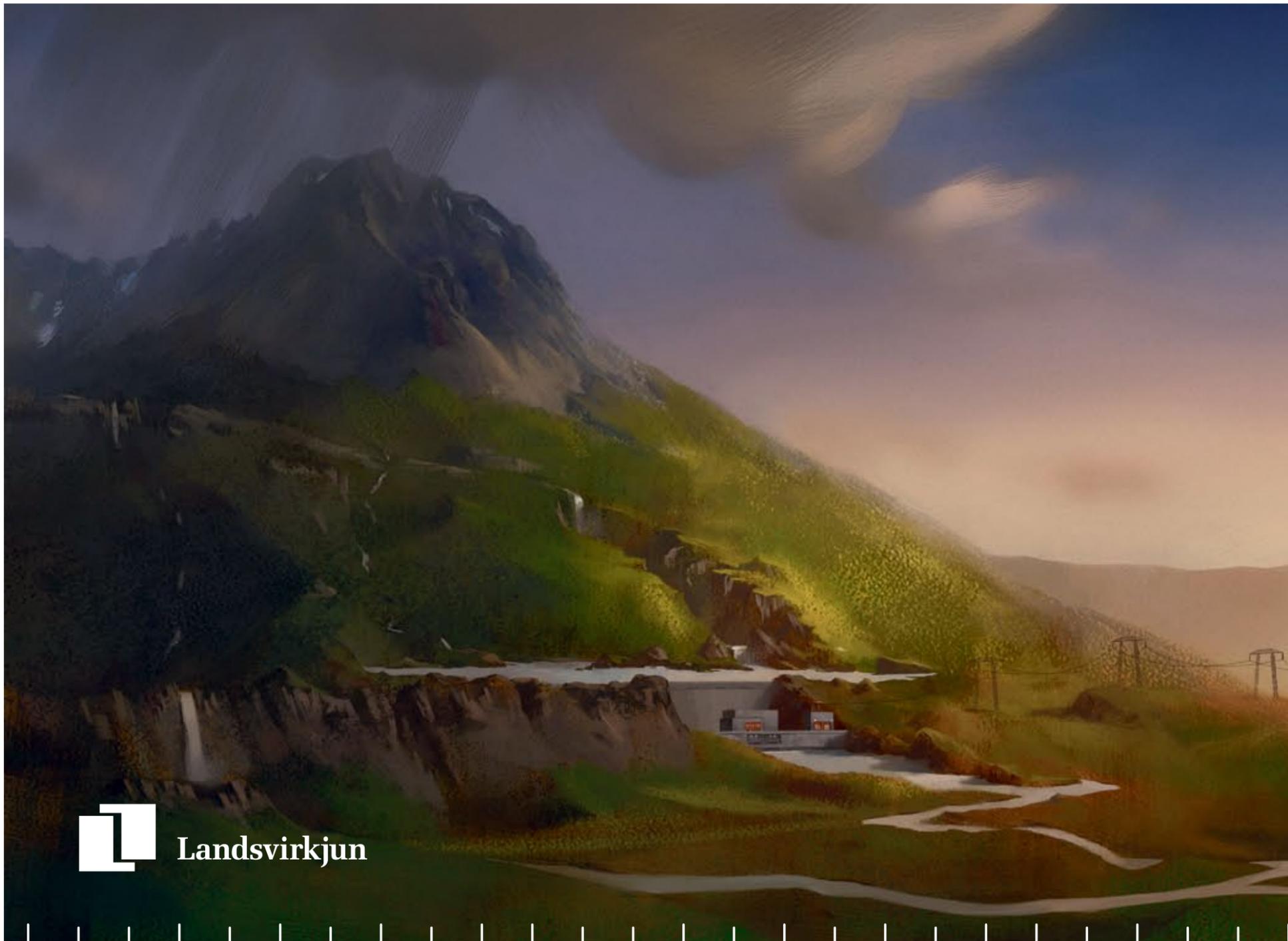
The crowd quickly departs after Teitur's performance. I ask him about his influences, suggesting Bright Eyes or even Iceland's Mugison, but instead he laments journalist's annoying habit of comparing artists, sounding not a little like Elvis as he does so ("I don't sound like nobody"). Indeed, the cover of 'Káta hornið' references Elvis' first record and 'Stars' includes a scaled back cover of that other King of Rock and Roll, Jerry Lee Lewis' 'Great Balls Of Fire,' finding surprising pain in the

Words

Valur Gunnarsson

Photography

Valur Gunnarsson





lyrics in so doing. You might call him the king of Faroese rock and roll.

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE SUNG IN FAROESE

The following Friday, Teitur is playing Sirkús again. The place is packed and the performance is superior, but the whole thing is starting to feel a tad like Groundhog Day. The next night I opt for Sjónleikahúsið instead (the city theatre), where everyone seems getting ready to celebrate Independence Day, Iceland's, not their own.

The Faroese Islanders voted for independence in 1946, two years after Icelanders declared theirs. But the government in Copenhagen, no longer occupied by the Germans and not thrilled at the prospect of losing yet another North Atlantic colony, annulled the referendum. The Faroese had to settle for Home Rule instead, and this has been the case ever since.

Malan Marnersdóttir at Fróðskaparsetrið, the Faroese University, claims that within Faroese letters, the issue has been largely resolved. Everyone who writes is in favour of independence so there is little need to debate the issue further, even if the end result has not been achieved. If this is the case with Faroese literature, then Faroese punk is decidedly more vocal.

MIDDLE FINGERS IN THE WIND

After midnight on June 17, Iceland's

Independence Day, Tveyhundrað (or 200, if you prefer) take the stage. They are members of the left-wing, pro-Independence Tjóðveldi party, and it's almost hard to tell if this is the musical wing of the independence movement or if the party is the political wing of the band. The walls are filled with slogans, from the practical ("Did you know that Faroese fisheries are worth more per head than oil in Norway") to the more militant ("Enough is spoken, now we

lies their punk roots. These are more in evidence on 2001's '200%', whose cover shows a young Niels giving a finger to the crowd. The finger is still in the air in their latest work, with the track "Miðfingurinn til Miðflokkinn" ("Middle-Finger to the Middle-Party"). The middle party in question is a far-right Christian party that is currently causing a great deal of mischief on the islands.

BRINGING OUT THE GIMP

"Guðrið Hansdóttir has just moved to big city Reykjavík and performs here frequently. She might very well become the next Eivör, while Eivör tours the States to become the next Björk"

march!").

With Telecaster slung so low it almost reaches his knees, singer-guitarist Niels moves up to the microphone, a huge Faroese flag draped in the background and the crowd punches their fists in the air. One almost expects him to start belting out "Born In The Faroe Islands," or some such thing. The opener "Við love skuldu vit land byggja" actually sounds like first rate stadium rock, if only all 50,000 inhabitants of the islands would get together and fill one.

The song is from their new album 'Vendetta,' which sounds great but be-

The album '200%' also marked the debut of "Sambandsgimpurinn," (The Union Gimp), who appears on the track of the same name as well as on the tender love song "Gimpurinn og Eg," sung in faux falsetto. The Gimp has been known to make concert appearances chained to the drum set and clad in naught but leather mask and underwear, scratching the floor and no doubt thinking about anal sex and the Kingdom of Denmark.

As the evening progresses the side doors of the city theatre are flung open, the intention seemingly to wake

up all of Tórshavn and beyond, a task 200 seem hell-bent on achieving. The band describes themselves as "In the Ghetto meets Motorhead as performed by the Sex Pistols" and who am I to disagree (sorry, Teitur, their words, not mine). Teitur himself can be spotted here shaking hands, and unlike the now dormant Québec independence movement, anything seems possible. 200 may have a knack for a great chorus as well as a great cause, but are rarely heard outside the Faroe Islands, although they have been known to play in the free town of Christiania in Copenhagen. Sadly, the Gimp has been retired, but we shall all act as if he were still here.

As I depart Tórshavn, Icelandic flags are swaying in the wind. There, people seem to take our independence more seriously than we do. That's the thing about the Faroe Islands, they frequently feel more like Iceland than Iceland does.

AN EIVÖR OF OUR OWN

Back home and not yet having gotten my fill of the Faeroes, I head for Harpa where our very own Faroese superstar, the sublime Eivör, is performing along with the band Yggdrasill. The latter play an eclectic mix of Faroe and Greenlandic folk, along with music set to verse by national poet William Heinesen and, indeed, William Shakespeare. They are

fun to listen to and the acoustics here are better, but it is still interesting to note the difference between the Faroe Islands as presented abroad and what people there listen to at home.

Yggdrasill and Eivör are both on their way to tour North America, and this gig is something of a warm up. Eivör has the looks, the charm, the voice and the sound to belong on the world stage, but seems content to have made it in Iceland.

All this, and still no mention has been made of Metalfolksters Týr, the great singer-songwriter tradition exemplified by Kári P. or the burgeoning rap scene ably represented by Swangah Dangah. The latter once taped a church speech where the preacher threatened his congregation with hell and then set it to music, leading the hapless minister to tone down his act a bit. It's good that at least somewhere, rappers are minding the language of churchgoers.

So, where shall we look next? Guðrið Hansdóttir has just moved to big city Reykjavík and performs here frequently. She might very well become the next Eivör, while Eivör tours the States to become the next Björk. Teitur, of course, sounds like no one else, and it's hard to see anyone matching the energy or purpose of 200. Then again, perhaps Scotland will have something like them one day. One can only hope. ☘

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REAL LIVE BEER CULTURE IN ICELAND

Iceland is often heralded for its wild nightlife on weekends. Late-night debauchery has even gained the attention of the US government, which now warns tourists about the carousing that takes place in downtown Reykjavik.

Belying this alluring degeneracy, though, is the bad rap Iceland gets for its big-name beer brands, beers at which connoisseurs would no doubt turn their nose up and turn to sobriety instead.

But one bar is doing its part here in Reykjavik. The hero's name is Micro Bar. Micro Bar currently carries between 80-90 beers, even carrying upwards of 100 at times. The beers come from Belgium, Denmark, America (no Natural Light or Pabst Blue Ribbon here, though) and yes, Iceland. From pale ales, IPAs, stouts, imperial stouts, barley wines and even a few lagers, Micro Bar has something for those who enjoy flavour with their beer.

Bartender Steinn Stefánsson says the bar is always branching out for rarer beers, and at least 25 of the beers it sells cannot be found elsewhere in Iceland. "The more rare, and special the beer is, the bigger seller it is," Steinn

says. "People ask us, 'Can I get a Sol? Can I get a Corona?' But we don't have them because we only want to have brands that you cannot get any place else in town."

Beers typically cost around 1,000 ISK, but one beer (the Trappist Westvleteren 12 of Belgium) sells for as much as 4,750 ISK. And for good reason: this

Best beer selection

Micro Bar, Austurstræti 6, 101 E4

bar smack dab in the middle of Reykjavik that would feature strictly micro-brews.

Steinn says credit also goes to Ingi

"Micro Bar has some hard liquor and wine, but the real reason to go is to sample some of finest beer you can find in Iceland"

beer ranks No. 1 on many beer rating websites, though sadly, Steinn says of the twelve bottles recently purchased, only one remains. The bar's draft selection of Icelandic microbrews hits closer to home (and are lighter on the wallet). During Happy Hour, which is between 17:00-19:00, one of their draft beers (this changes daily) can be had for 500 ISK.

On that note, Micro Bar does its part in promoting Icelandic microbreweries, with a bunch of Gæðingur on tap and other microbrews from Bruggsmiðjan and Ölvisholt by the bottle. The beers on draft, though, change too. Perhaps no surprise, the founder of Gæðingur helped make Micro Bar a reality. As the story goes, a particular Reykjavik bar stopped offering some of the country's micro brews, so Gæðingur's owner teamed up with some people to put a

and Andri Kjartansson, owners of distributor/importer company Járn og Gler. Steinn claims these part-time beer aficionados are largely responsible for choosing the bar's wares, constantly keeping an eye out for the finer tastes in beer.

Micro Bar has some hard liquor and wine, but the real reason to go is to sample some of finest beer you can find in Iceland. "We don't have any live music," Steinn says. "This is a place where you can come, enjoy good beer and sit down and actually talk to each other."

A refreshing quaff apart from traditional Icelandic nightlife, indeed. 🍷

Words

Byron Wilkes

Photo

Alisa Kalyanova

SEVEN GREAT DISHES TO TRY IN ICELAND

By Ragnar Egilsson

- The oxtail meatballs with blue cheese at Forréttabaránn. Thank God for small portions because those pack a fatty punch. Cranberries save the dish from going off the deep end.
- Empire State at Roadhouse. Went off the deep end, swam to the moon and came back with a grilled cheese sandwich between its teeth (along with jalapeno, bacon, eggs, onion rings and two large burgers). Comfort food bordering on discomfort.

- Mussels at Höfnin. They were huge when we went there (no guarantees—mussels are fickle bastards) and come with three tasty dipping sauces.

- Bacalao at Snaps. Fresher than salted cod has any right to be. Perfectly balanced dish and my favourite bacalao in Iceland.

- Æsufellingur at Íslenski Barinn. Slow-cooked, beer braised shoulder of lamb with a beer-mayonnaise. You can barely go wrong with lamb in Iceland and it's hard to point at any one place as having the best lamb. But this dish at Íslenski barinn is tasty, original and affordable
- Rye bread ice-cream at Café Loki.

Rye bread wins the prize for the least versatile and most over-used ingredient in 2012, but Café Loki has tamed the wild Icelandic basics. Fun, authentic, rustic, all the right buzzwords. The skyr cake is also good there.

- The scallops with sea buckthorn and pine at Dill Restaurant. Strictly for the food geeks. Dill is Iceland's answer to Noma and a must try for the adventurous, fans of Scandinavian cuisine and localvores of all stripes.

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Skúlaskeið or "Old Skuli" is an old charming wooden boat we use for our Puffin Watching Tours. Old Skuli is the perfect Puffin Watching boat as it is especially designed to get close to the islands due to its shallow draught, providing a better view of the Puffin Islands.

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APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT
10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00
	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00
		18:00	18:00	18:00		

PRICES Adults: 8.000 ISK / 48 €
Children 7 to 15: 4.000 ISK / 24 €
Free for children under 7 years

PUFFIN TOURS*

MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
8:30	8:30	8:30	8:30
10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30
12:30	12:30	12:30	12:30
14:30	14:30	14:30	14:30
16:30	16:30	16:30	16:30

* Until 15 August

PRICES Adults: ISK 4.000 / 24 €
Children 7 to 15: ISK 2.000 / 12 €
Free for children under 7 years

SEA ANGLING

MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
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18:00	18:00	18:00	18:00

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Best newcomer bar
Slippbarinn, Mýrargata 2, 101 C2

the Icelandic schnapps Birkir, tea and honey.

The bar also has some fine food on offer, and Ólafur told us that if you're coming with a group of people, one of your best bets is to get the Whale Tail—a platter of lamb, hangikjöt, Italian sausage, home-pickled vegetables, squid and fish that's meant to be shared.

Despite having firmly established themselves as an exceptional pub, Slippbarinn has no intentions of resting on its laurels. The cocktail menu changes every two to three weeks, and the menu doesn't stay the same for long, either. But you can visit the Icelandair Hótel Reykjavík Marína homepage (www.icelandairhotels.is/hotels/reykjavikmarina) to see the current menu. "We are constantly reinventing ourselves," Ólafur told us. "We can't settle down. It's a process of changing and growing."

Slippbarinn is located inside the Icelandair Hótel Reykjavík Marína, Mýrargata 2. It's open Sunday to Thursday from 11:30 to midnight, and Friday and Saturday from 11:30 to 1:00. During Happy hour, from 17:00-19:00, there is two for one on all beers on tap and house wines, in addition to specified cocktails. ☺

✍ PAUL FONTAINE
📷 JULI VOL

Slippbarinn: A Bar For Nerds

Slippbarinn isn't one of the pubs you might stumble into downtown in the midst of a weekend drunken reverie. Rather, it's a classy little place found by the harbour, in Icelandair Hótel Reykjavík Marína. Although it might not be in the epicentre of Reykjavík's nightlife, it's a two-minute jaunt down to the harbour, and the extra foot-

steps are well worth the effort. We got in touch with the bar's owner and creator, Ólafur Örn Ólafsson, to get an idea of the motivations behind this newcomer bar.

"It might sound strange to say," he told us, "but this is a bar for nerds. We want to cater to nerds of all kinds. If you're a beer

nerd, we have six kinds of beer on tap. If you're a wine nerd, we have ten types of wine. And if you're a cocktail nerd, well, you'll be able to get any kind of cocktail you want, and they'll be the best you've had in town. We make all our own syrups and squeeze all our own juices for them. Not to mention, we have six types of gin and ten types of rum."

We weren't even aware that there were ten types of rum, so we were duly impressed. Apparently plenty of other people were, too, because after a "difficult birth," as he put it, Ólafur says they got so busy that they became busier than they could handle. "It's our Achilles heel," he says.

In terms of personal recommendations, Ólafur was hesitant to name a favourite. But he did say that he was especially proud of their T9 cocktail—a drink using

Music | Interview

All Hail To The Technobaron

The original dance music legend Dave Clark is coming back to Iceland, prepare to be assimilated!



The word "legend" is thrown around a lot these days, especially to hype up various over-the-hill groups riding the retro gravy train to Iceland, all with the purpose of parting large sums of cash from locals with more money than taste.

But once in a while the description is entirely apt. While some may not know Dave Clarke, he's considered one of the electronic music scene's true greats. His seminal 'Red' EP series and 'Archive One' album helped to define the techno sound of the '90s, while the last decade has seen him move beyond techno to explore other styles from electro and hip hop to post punk, with albums such as 'World Service,' 'Devil's Advocate,' and 'Fabric 60.'

In anticipation of his arrival to Iceland, where he will perform a set with some of Iceland's best electronic artists, we caught up with Dave to pump him for information about his music, technology and why Iceland helps his hay fever.

Right now you're on your way to Japan to play a DJ set. What's the reality of being an international DJ? It must be tiring spending hours travelling all over the world, being dropped into a festival or club with barely a moment's rest.

I've just landed in Tokyo and the driver is an hour late, that always seems to happen here, but this interview should give me some distraction in the swel-

tering heat and humidity. But yes it is tiring, travelling hasn't been fun for at least fifteen years. The job is still good, though, and I'm very lucky to earn a living by being creative, so I shouldn't complain.

MINIMAL, UNINSPIRED KETAMINE-HOUSE

You became synonymous in techno for the series of releases that you created in the '90s, such as your 'Red' EPs and 'Archive One' album. What is it about techno itself that drew you to it in the first place?

The music was funky, space-age prophetic computer music; it took from electro and made it edgy and industrial.

Despite being known for techno, you've talked about your love of other types of music, from post-punk to hip hop and electro. With people today ransacking the internet for different sounds to make music, are we moving away from the puritanical idea of what electronic music is?

Well if that's the case, it's a shame that many internet portals are plying minimal, uninspired, ketamine-house music then. Most of the music I get is from the artists themselves. I'm not even sure if their stuff makes it to Beatport. But there are some incredible artists out there on the edge of the genre, like Mazzula for example.

You recently started up Unsubscribe, a production unit with Dutch musician Mr Jones. How did you two meet up? And what's the state of play right now?

I was impressed by his music and tenacity. At one point I was playing a new track every week from him on my radio show, and then I met him in Utrecht and we slowly got to know each other. At the moment I am having fun working with someone in the studio; before that I was 95% on my own in the studio, so as long as the vibe stays good for both of us I'm sure Unsubscribe will continue.

AMOUNT OF SHIT

You've often talked about "the amount of shit you received" for being an early adopter of digital technology in techno music. Looking back, do you feel slightly vindicated that the same technology

is so prevalent in much of today's electronic music, as well as the fact that people are still having arguments over its use in live sets?

Yes and no. We have to march forward, as the whole point of techno was to embrace both music and technology. To just stay with vinyl made no sense, but... but we lost the record shop scene, which inevitably meant more commercial music would take over. A lot of DJs have also really watered down their sets, which is very sad, but it seems money is more important than integrity to these characters. With every change there is good and bad; I don't necessarily feel vindicated, but I am happy I made the switch when I did.

As an adopter of digital technology and the internet, what are the biggest opportunities/challenges facing musicians on the internet today?

Doing this interview whilst waiting for my driver at Narita airport via free wireless! Social media is good, but it often distracts and detracts from the artistry.

As I understand it, you've been to Iceland before. What are your hopes/expectations of how your visit is going to go down this time?

I've been many, many times and I love the place. It gives me respite from my hay fever! ☺

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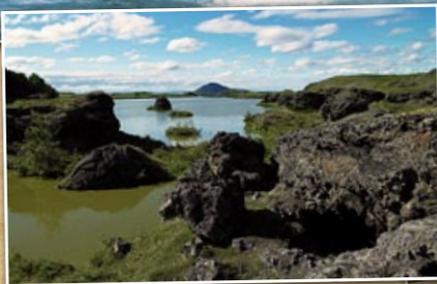
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Travel | West

ÍSAFJÖRÐUR, CITY OF MYSTERY

LONG-TIME COMMIES, BAND FIGHTERS, AND INSANE BIRD ISLAND



On the descent into Ísafjörður, decades' worth of glacial labour is plainly visible. The small burg, named after the fjord it lies in, is surrounded by tall mountains and looks quaint and peaceful below. As the plane from Reykjavík lands, I haven't the faintest idea of what secrets this village keeps.

ÍSAFJÖRÐUR: THE FACTS

Our guide, Páll Erni (Palli) is an affable and well-informed chap about all things Ísafjörður. As we begin walking the backstreets of the city, Palli brings us up to date. When Ísafjörður officially became a town in 1786, it had around 26 settlers, half of whom were shopkeepers of Danish, German and Norwegian origin. Before then the area was sparsely populated as far back as the late 17th century.

"At first there were three towns here, very close to one another," Palli says, pointing to where each nationality was centered. "The houses are all still here. These are the German," he says, pointing at the dark, wooden facades of two buildings. The Danish section of town has a few houses with

taller, leaner roofs. The more modern houses are equally diverse, some made of sheet metal or wood, some pastel-colour or unpainted. The international influence is undeniable (and certainly engrossing), but the town is still wholly Icelandic.

We walk through quiet streets and alleys with the occasional child running around, all the while basking in the mountainous glory of the fjord. While small in population (2,619 as of 2011, according to static.is.) Ísafjörður has a rich history rife with unusual stories that which Palli calmly keeps at his side until the moment beseeches him.

THE PROLETARIAT AND THAT TIME WHEN A BAND (TRIED TO) FIGHT ALL OF ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

We near the old town hall, a somewhat plain, concrete building built in 1924 with small windows and tall, narrow columns. Palli tells us that for a long time Ísafjörður had been a bastion of Icelandic communism. "There were ultra conservatives and ultra communists; it was either bright blue or deep red," he says.

Palli waves at a woman walking by with a stroller. "Halló!" he says and she smiles and waves back. "My mom," he tells us, and gets back to the story.

Members of the conservative Independence Party raised a building adjacent to it, one just a bit larger. "The Independence Party pumped money in here, like, 'we're going to get that town,'" Palli says.

Describing the asphalt between the two build-

ings, Palli says: "This was actually paved with blood." But he's not referring to some riot between communists and conservatives. Palli tells us a more lurid chapter in Ísafjörður's past. In the 1990s, Icelandic band Jet Black Joe, upon finishing a concert, decided to fight the entire town of Ísafjörður.

"It kind of pissed off the people who [Jet Black Joe] were keeping awake," Palli says. "So the band decided to break up chairs and come out and beat up everybody, probably 50 people still outside. They had to be escorted in a police car."

Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, Palli adds, and locals affectionately call the cement area in front of town hall: "The Gas-a Strip."

After a generous lunch at Tjörhúsið, we amble along Ísafjörður's piers to the second part of the day's tour, a sea journey to the island of Vigur, an island with a permanent population of no more than four at any point in the year.

As we approach the small island (now with several more tourists) via boat, I notice there are lots of birds flying around it. "Birds... generally cool animals. Nothing to fear here," I think to myself. Thoughts like these that can get a man hurt.

WE CAN'T STOP HERE. THIS IS TERN COUNTRY

We get off the ship, and as we're walking toward what looks like a miniature golf course windmill, a squawking flash of white swings like a boomerang within inches of our new tour guide's head. She's

unfazed, continues walking.

After she tells us about how proud Icelanders are of their only windmill, she brings us an armful of yardsticks with small blue flags.

"Here are your weapons," she says smiling. Weapon-mandatory hiking: Hell yeah.

The sticks are more distractions than weapons though. The assailants are Arctic terns, aggressive little bastards of birds that dive-bomb would-be predators, or in this case nervous tourists. Instead of us, though, they swoop near the sticks we're holding high. They are worthy adversaries to mundane tourism, and we prevail. No casualties to report.

While the island boasts Europe's smallest post office and a notable population of Eider-birds (see: ducks), its most impressive feature is the puffin population. We walk to the far end of the island over a fine green grass. Looking into the ocean, there are thousands of puffins. Yes, thousands. Some of them fly around, most of them are in the water. Our guide tells us: "You are very lucky," then pauses before saying, "And no, I don't say that to every tour."

We board our ship and begin back to Ísafjörður. Coming back into the massive fjord reminds me that I've experienced but a portion of this place. One can see a lot in Ísafjörður in a single day, but it simply isn't enough. ♡

Words

Byron Wilkes

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

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WHALES ARE COOL, SEAGULLS ARE NOT



As the Life of Whales ship passes by the illustrious facade of the immaculate Harpa, its glass panes shimmer a multitude of colours. The intensive labour (not to mention the 27 billion ISK) expended in its construction is nothing short of breath-taking, but the ship we're aboard isn't moving toward manmade glory. It's sailing to the wonders of the natural world.

The informational placards inside the ship's main cabin aren't faded, but seem to have been perused many times. The simple images on them offer only a hint of the beauty of the animals that they depict. I'm sitting aboard the Life of Whales ship, mulling over a healthy dose of scepticism I have about this "adventure." That will change later in the trip, but for now I can't get over the old menu behind the snack bar and its circa 1983 design for various beers and other drinks.

About a dozen or so people are on the trip today, and as each one files in, their presence hardly puts a dent in the vacuous but lounge-like space

Words
Byron Wilkes

Photography
Juli Vol

of the ship, designed for 200 guests.

Behind the snack bar is Hilmar Stefánsson, part owner of the company. He assures me today's crowd isn't representative of the year-round business. Our ship leaves the harbour quickly and our voyage is underway.

PRIMED TO SEE MINKE

Hilmar says at its peak the ship will have 60–80 guests, often more in July and August. Because the business stays open around the year, guests will see different aquatic fauna in the waters north of Reykjavík. Orcas come in January and February; humpback whales in the spring, and we're primed to see minke whale this late May day, he says.

I've put the stale but somehow endearing design of the menu and placards aside. The wind is high and the waves are strong today, but Iceland's infamous summer sun is hiding behind a thick blanket of clouds. The 914-metre-tall Mt. Esja watches the ship from a distance—not ominously, but more like a sentinel of Iceland's natural beauty.

As the ship approaches Viðey, everyone inside shuffles on deck to look at the hundreds of white birds around the isle. Something that looks like a pigeon flies by and somebody exclaims, "There's one!" It's definitely not a puffin. Fortunately our tour guide effortlessly spots the puffins among the swarms of kittiwakes and seagulls, pointing his arm to help our wandering eyes find a flock of no more than ten puffins.

For a Scandinavian literature major two months on the job, he's incredibly sharp. I don't get to test him about Icelandic Sagas, but his puffin trivia checks out: the birds live mostly at sea but come to land to breed, living in colonies. The ship comes close enough to the small, rocky island so that our guide, Björn, can tell us what is or isn't a puffin.

GEYSERS, A SURE SIGN?

The ship turns around and we head northwest. Björn informs us we're heading to whale territory. Forty-five minutes to an hour later, we're much farther out. The waves are higher and the wind is stronger. Björn tells us to look for tiny geysers shooting out of the water, a sure sign of a whale he assures us.

Well, not that sure. I begin seeing several of these waterspouts at a time under hovering flocks of birds. Not whales yet, but rather gannets, exquisite seabirds that fly 10–15 metres over the water before gracefully and powerfully diving into the ocean to snag a few fish. With a wingspan that can reach two metres, they're the super-model, super-athlete of the sea. By and large the flocks don't comprise gannets, though.

Like American hipster-tourists hunting for a totally rad underground bar in Reykjavík to post on Instagram, flocks of other lazy-ass birds wait for gannets to surface before trying to steal their piscine loot. I realise what's going on and think to myself, "Not cool, man. Seagulls are kind of

pricks." I haven't seen a whale yet but I'm still engrossed in the gannets' process of flying up, diving down, and trying to scarf down some fish before some uninvited scene-stealer bird brings 20 of his friends to the after-party.

Minutes after seeing the first gannet, the first minke whale appears, then another, then another. Their beauty is fleeting, but mesmerizing, and one wonders if having seen a single minke whale will become a rarity for future generations. The whales surface for a second or two, blowing out water and sinking below the water again. Even if you don't have quick eyes you'll likely find one within 10–60 metres of the ship.

As we head back, the sun comes out for a second here and there. To see the land and water of Iceland from the mainland is one thing, but to see the ocean's occupants so close and so intimately is quite another. 🐋

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HOLSTER: THE SWISS ARMY KNIFE OF CLOTHING

In a swanky office at ad agency Jónsson & Le'macks, we sit down with Sigurður Oddsson. We're there to talk to him about Holster, a joint venture between three young men from various creative fields who came together to form a fashion company called Fur Trade, which is actually not a fashion company at all.

What led the three of you to collaborate on Holster?

Well, we all are good friends. I had been working with Bóas Kristjánsson, a fashion designer who has his own label called 8045. The idea was that I would work on some accessories, not fashion per se, but more product-orientated stuff.

Then when Jökull Sólberg, the third member of the group, came into work wearing an actual shoulder gunholster, though he wasn't armed or anything, I came up with the idea for a more practical application, and that got me sketching. So that's where the idea comes from. My reasoning being that in the summertime men like to wear shorts and a T-shirt but where do you put your keys, change and wallet? The Holster is a solution. That was what I

presented to Bóas and funnily enough he had been working on something similar, but it was more a classical vest so we merged these two ideas into what is now the Holster.

It's a bit like the Swiss army knife of clothing?

That's true. We tried to integrate as much function as we could into the design. Take your phone for instance, often you'll have earphones plugged in and they just get tangled up in every-

good on its own as well as under a jacket, and it takes from the shoulder holster the idea of using dead space under the arms so that you don't really notice it if concealed, and doesn't get in the way. I mean if you can have a gun there and no one notices it, then a phone is a piece of cake.

You launched the company in March?

Yes, that's when we launched the website and the product. Two weeks ago

"Two weeks ago Sævar Karl started selling the product so we are really excited about that"

thing. That's why we put a handy cord slit high on the shoulder where you can fasten it and it won't get in the way. All the pockets are designed for their individual tasks, for your phone, sunglasses and wallet so that it doesn't bulge but blends seamlessly into the design. All the material used—black caribou, lamb, salmon and rosefish leather—comes from a leather factory here in Iceland, from the north to be specific, but everything is sewed in Reykjavík.

Do you think there is a growing need for men to accessorise?

Men just have more stuff now, and when you've grown accustomed to trudging everything around with you, it's pretty hard to do without it. When kept in the Holster, your stuff blends seamlessly into your attire. It looks

Sævar Karl started selling the product so we are really excited about that. It's always good to have a place where people can drop into when they're unsure about the size or the material. At first the sales were to friends and through the site—when it went live at around five in the morning, the night before DesignMarch, we got an order from Sweden within the first hour. We had posted a link on Facebook and a friend of a friend of a friend ordered the first one; it really is a small world! ♥

Words

Guðni Rúnar Jónasson

Photo

Nanna Dís

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Home Is Where The Heart Is

Hope and change at the heart garden

The sun is shining, music is playing, toddlers are playing on the seesaw, teenagers are picnicking and tourists are taking pictures of the colourful graffiti on the walls. Hjartagarðurinn ("The Heart Garden") is one of the most appealing spots in 101 Reykjavík, especially on a sunny day. In one respect, then, the park's caretakers have succeeded in making it a free communal space, but there's still a lot that needs to be addressed and understood about this once abandoned lot.

We met up with Tómas Magnússon, Tanya Pollock and Örn Tönsberg, three of the people instrumental in cleaning up and reviving the park, which rests between Laugavegur and Hverfisgata. Sitting at a table by the heart-pattern of bricks that gives the park its name, they catch me up about the spot's past, present and future. The land is privately owned by Reginn, a property management firm that owns many plots and buildings in downtown Reykjavík. Before 2008, it had plans to build a mall on the lot—seven storeys tall and four storeys underground—but those plans were scrapped after the financial crash. The empty lot in the middle of downtown area was mostly abandoned, only frequented by local graffiti artists who sprayed their works ranging from playful doodles to poignant social commentaries on the huge, barren walls.

Soon enough though, other people started to notice the abandoned lot. "We saw the potential and we wanted to be here with our kids, but it was totally trashed," Tanya tells me. And that's where their project began. Last summer, Tanya, Tómas, Örn and others began their efforts to transform the space into a community park. Because Hjartagarðurinn is on private property, the city is not responsible for its upkeep. So the team organised group clean-ups, removing the trash and broken glass that lay strewn about the area. Slowly, walls were torn down, a stage was built, benches and tables were brought in, a little playground was set up—and their dream of creating a communal park where people of all ages and cultures comes together was slowly realised. "This is a sanctuary from the capitalist environment we live in," Örn says.

Tanya sees Hjartagarðurinn as a sort of reverse story from that of Austurvöllur, the public square outside Parliament, which has become associated with protests and negative energy. This is a positive space, which really reveals some of the good things that have come out of the financial collapse. It's a story of hope and change. Indeed, Jakob Frímann, an advocate for downtown Reykjavík, who once led a no-tolerance campaign against graffiti in the city, has now become a big proponent for the art form and the park.

As for the future, it's a bit unclear. Though Reginn has been supportive of

Best place on a sunny day

Hjartagarðurinn, Hverfisgata, 101 E5

the entire project, it still owns the property. For now, however, the team is more concerned with the immediate future. With little help from the city, they're still organising volunteer clean-ups to clear the cigarette butts and broken glass that accumulate in the park after every weekend. But they want to remedy the cause, not just fix the symptoms. They hope that the Hjartagarðurinn will instil a sense of community and encourage people to take more responsibility for how they treat it.

It's a free space, a shared space and (we think) the best place to spend a sunny day in 101. But it's far more than a pleasant park—it's a community. For it to survive and thrive, everyone needs to cooperate and take responsibility to keep it up.

✍ ELI PETZOLD
📷 ELI PETZOLD

Special | Best Of Reykjavík - Best Place on a Rainy Day: Bíó Paradís



The Feast After The Famine

Two years ago Reykjavík filmgoers were famished. 'Inception' was just about the only half-decent Hollywood blockbuster around and the cinema owners of Reykjavík were becoming less ambitious with each passing week. Regnboginn, the only downtown cinema still standing, was about to close. Of course they blamed their shortcomings on the public—a public they had raised on increasingly bad films. But that summer a change finally occurred and out of a random Facebook movement the long-discussed idea of a Reykjavík art cinema was finally realised: Regnboginn stayed in business, albeit with a different name and as a non-profit art cinema.

Many of us had doubts about the name: Cinema Paradise promised too much. But while it's far from perfect, it's still a sanctuary for those of us who believe that watching movies should be about more than just buying popcorn. And now, in the middle of summer we can choose between three French films and there's not even a festival going on. But the French have always had some presence, with a French film fest every January for more than a decade. And while I always dreamed of festivals focusing on more countries, I never imagined that dream would come true so often the same winter, with a German, Polish and Bollywood festival. For the second summer running, you can also see a selection of Icelandic classics with English subtitles. Bíó Paradís manager Hrónn Sveinsdóttir tells me they showed some 400 films from

Best place on a rainy day

Bíó Paradís, Hverfisgata 54, 101 F6

40 countries last year and she stresses they're not only interested in art films, as demonstrated by festivals for reggae films, biker films and mountain films. "We want everybody to come, older and younger crowds too. There's room for everything and everyone," she says. "The only rule is the films shouldn't be boring."

When it first opened you might find yourself in a lonely, scarcely populated cinema hall, but that has gradually changed, the attendances rising by some 30 % between years, showing that given time we'll learn to appreciate the variety that world cinema has to offer. While most cinemas are located in shopping malls, this one is in a cosy place of its own where you can also get beer or coffee and hang out and play games with friends. Note that the eclectic couches, tables and chairs have been graciously donated from households from all over town, adding a quirky touch to the place.

We could write another 500 words about the things we like about Bíó Paradís and yet another 500 about the things that could be improved, but it's here and we are damn grateful for it, even when it's sunny outside.

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PAGE 10

“We’ve only had more restaurants buying more whale meat because tourists now know that whale is sold in restaurants.”

Is the Meet Us Don’t Eat Us campaign working? Whaler Gunnar Jónsson of Iceland’s Minke Whalers Association thinks not!

PAGE 44

“Tanya sees Hjartagarðurinn as a sort of reverse story from that of Austurvöllur, the public square outside Parliament, which has become associated with protests and negative energy. This is a positive space, which really reveals some of the good things that have come out of the financial collapse. It’s a story of hope and change.”

Go to Hjartagarðurinn, go there on a sunny day!

PAGE 14

“Originally, when the stand opened 75 years ago, hot dogs were served without buns and you could get a sip of milk instead of the soda.”

We speak to Magnea Steiney Þórðardóttir, fourth generation to work at her family’s hot dog stand Bæjarins Beztu since it opened in 1937.

PAGE 22

“That is not to say that xenophobia and racism are not problems in Iceland, but it does suggest that the particulars of the Icelandic political landscape have made it harder for far right political parties to take root here than in other European countries.”

No Far Right in Iceland? Nope, no Far Right in Iceland.

PAGE 30

“Doing this interview whilst waiting for my driver at Narita airport via free wireless! Social media is good, but it often distracts and detracts from the artistry.”

Dave Clark on the biggest opportunities/challenges facing musicians on the internet today... He’ll be at Þýski barinn on July 21, catch him there!

PAGE 38

“It’s hard to find a place for all those people to sleep—that’s the main challenge we are facing now.”

The annual LungA arts festival takes over the tiny town of Seyðisfjörður once again...

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LISTINGS



G Music, Art, Films and Events Listings + Eating, Drinking and Shopping + Map

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Issue 10 - 2012

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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JULY

PRESCRIBING MUSIC WITH LOVE FOR YOUR LIVE EXPERIENCE

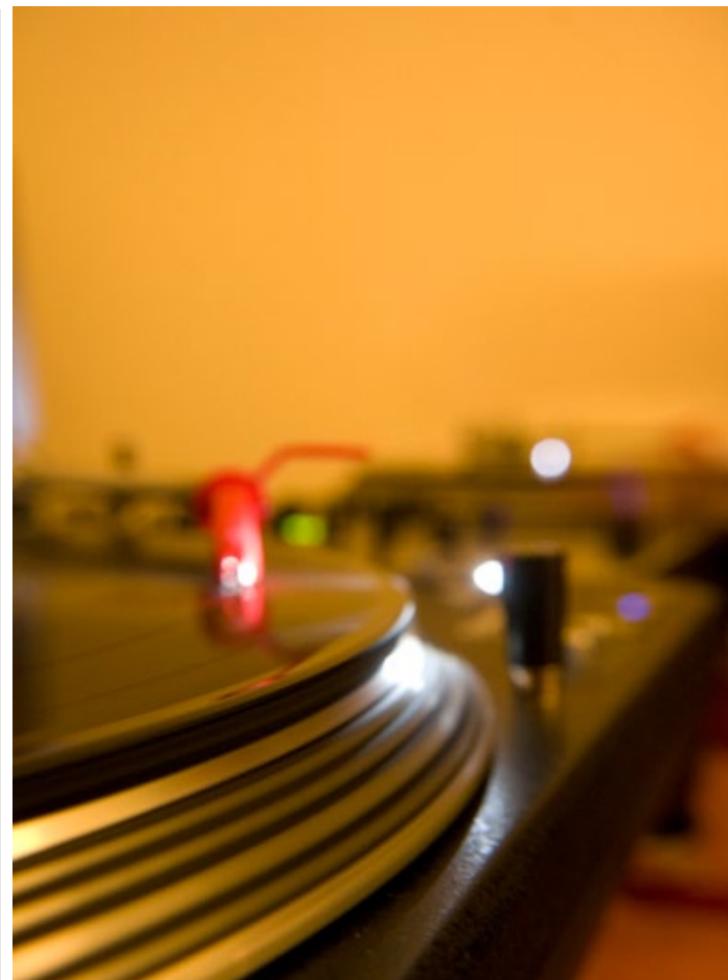
How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed information on venues or to add your own listing, visit www.listings.grapevine.is

13 FRI

- Amsterdam**
22:00 DJ Tommy
- Austur**
22:00 DJ Maggi
- B5**
22:00 DJ Jay-O
- Bakkus**
23:00 DJ KGB
- Bar 11**
22:00 Retro Stefson
- Boston**
22:00 Gísli Galdur
- Café Rósenberg**
20:00 Bíóbandið and Andrea Gylfa
- Celtic Cross**
0:30 Live music
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
22:00 Live music
- Faktorý**
21:30 Hjálmar and DJ Logi Pedro
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
22:00 Live music
- Gay 46**
0:00 DJ Kidda Rökk
- Glaumbar**
22:00 DJ Seth
- Hressó**
22:00 Klaufar with VJ Fúsi
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 Live DJ
- Lebowski Bar**
23:00 DJ Anna Brá
- Prikið**
0:00 DJ Addi Intro
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 DJ Jon Gestur
- Vegamót**
22:00 DJ Gunni Stef

14 SAT

- Amsterdam**
22:00 DJ Skuli
- Austur**
22:00 DJ Maggi
- B5**
22:00 DJ Einar
- Bakkus**
22:00 DJ Pilsner
- Bar 11**
21:00 Snorri Helgason + live DJ
- Boston**
22:00 DJ KGB
- Café Rósenberg**
20:00 KK og Maggi
- Celtic Cross**
0:30 Live music
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
22:00 Live music
- Esja**
22:00 Casa night
- Faktorý**
21:30 Human Woman + DJ Housekell
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
22:00 Live music
- Gay 46**
0:00 DJ Kollster
- Glaumbar**
22:00 DJ Atli
- Hallgrímskirkja**
12:00 Kári Þormar organ concert
- Harpa**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Hemmi og Valdi**
22:00 Rvk Soundsystem's Reggae Nights



Don't miss the Baron of Techno

Dave Clarke
Þýski Barinn
July 21, 22:00
1,990 ISK

Techno vikings, get ready to sweat. The Baron of Techno, Dave Clarke, is coming to Reykjavik to make you dance your asses off.
Dave, originally from Brighton, England, has been a DJ for several years and currently produces. His tracks have been seen on the UK Singles Chart more than a few times (seven to be precise).
Techno music stems from a melding of many variations of music, and while the US of A at one time ruled the techno airwaves, Europe now stands to most as a far more prolific provider of techno artists. Among these musicians, Dave is often seen as an innovator and key player on the scene; why else would he catch a mention in Daft Punk's "Teachers" of their 1997 album 'Homework?'
The Englishman's cutting precision in drafting super serious jams from techno's Detroit and Chicago days to fresher beats still riding the charts promises a night of dancing and debauchery that sagas are written about. Critics from the upper echelons as well as the dregs of the techno blogosphere agree: Dave's is a show not to miss. Consider yourself lucky, Iceland, and buy your tickets while they're still available. **BW**

- Hressó**
22:00 Mars with VJ Fúsi
- Kaffibarinn**
22:00 DJ Alfons X
- Kaffi Zimsen**
22:00 Live DJ
- Lebowski Bar**
23:00 DJ Anna Brá
- KEX Hostel**
12:00 KEX-tort Block Party with Hjálmar, Sóley, Sudden Weather Change, Tilbury, Snorri Helgason
- Prikið**
0:00 DJ Pedro and Benni
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 DJ Christian
- Vegamót**
22:00 DJ Jay-O

15 SUN

- Culture House**
16:00 Trio Scandia
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
22:00 Live music
- Faktorý**
21:30 Live jazz session
- Hallgrímskirkja**
17:00 Kári Þormar organ concert
- Harpa**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song

16 MON

- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
22:00 Live music
- Harpa**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Kaffibarinn**
22:00 Jón the Choirmaster
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Bob

17 TUE

- Bakkus**
22:00 DJ Katle - "Factory night"
- Café Rósenberg**
20:00 Una
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
22:00 Live music
- Harpa**
20:00 Buika
- Kaffibarinn**
22:00 DJ Pilsner
- KEX Hostel**
20:30 Live jazz
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Anna Brá
- Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
20:30 Classical concert - Ari Þór Vilhjálmsson (violin) and Hrönn Þráinsdóttir (piano)

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JULY



An American singer-songwriter returns to Reykjavík

John Grant

Háskólabíó

July 19, 23:00

5,500 ISK

John Grant last brought his moody melodies to Reykjavík for a performance at Harpa during Iceland Airwaves last fall. Now he's back for a solo show—still riding high off the rave reviews from his 2010 album 'Queen of Denmark.'

John, a gay 43-year-old American, has reached audiences with lyrics of a troubled past. Some songs, like 'JC Hates Faggots,' are fueled by memories of growing up in a small, homophobic town in Colorado. "I've felt uncomfortable since the day I was born," he sings. Life didn't get much easier for John. He struck out at his attempt to become a German translator. After fronting the '90s indie band The Czars, he coped with a midlife fallout stained by drug and alcohol abuse.

But out of the drugs, band breakup and homophobia, John resurrected himself. 'Queen of Denmark' earned a nod as 2010's best album by the British magazine Mojo. His songs were also part of the soundtrack for the movie "The Weekend." Bearded and sardonic, John seems at ease during live shows, using soft rock sounds to pull music lovers into his life. **CW**

18 WED

Bakkus

22:00 DJ Sindri Eldon

Café Rósenberg

20:00 Anna Lísá

Celtic Cross

22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Hallgrímskirkja

12:00 Schola cantorum chamber choir concert

Harpa

17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song

Hressó

22:00 Djazz

Kaffibarinn

22:00 Extreme Chill

Kaffitár Cafe

20:30 Tango Milonga

Prikið

22:00 Dungeon Massive - live electronica

19 THU

B5

22:00 Troubadors

Bakkus

22:00 Einar Sonic

Café Rósenberg

20:00 Kristín Hrönn

Celtic Cross

22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Faktorý

21:00 Vigur, Nóra and Samaris,

DJ Atli Kanill

Glaumbar

22:00 DJ Egill

Hallgrímskirkja

12:00 Jón Bjarnason organ concert

Háskólabíó

20:30 John Grant

Hressó

22:00 Flass & Miller

Kaffibarinn

22:00 DJ Sigrún Skaftadóttir

and Rix

Kaffi Zimsen

21:00 Live music

KEX Hostel

12:00 Kentucky KEX Festival

Prikið

22:00 DJ Andri Latino

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

20:30 Classical concert

Vegamót

22:00 DJ Jónas

20 FRI

Amsterdam

22:00 DJ Tommy

Austur

22:00 DJ Milla

B5

22:00 DJ Johann

Bakkus

22:00 DJ Dauði

Bar 11

21:00 Múgsefjun + live DJ

Boston

22:00 CasaNova

Café Rósenberg

20:00 Skúli mennski

Celtic Cross

0:30 Live music

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

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	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	
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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JULY



Dad Rocks! (and not only on Father's Day)

Dad Rocks!

Hemmi og Valdi - July 18, 20:00

KEX Hostel - July 19, 20:00

After playing shows in England (including No Direction Home Festival), Scotland, Spain and the U.S. (including SXSW in Austin, Texas), Iceland's native son Dad Rocks! (a.k.a. Snævar Njáll Albertsson) is coming back to his homeland to drum up some interest in his latest album, 'Mount Modern.' The band appears in Reykjavík at Hemmi og Valdi July 18, and KEX Hostel July 19.

Dad Rocks! is an Icelander by birth, but is currently based out of Denmark where somehow he finds time to write ditties between raising two children. Dad rocks, indeed. The 27-year-old's music is alluring in its simplicity, with attention paid to winsome lyrics and a singular acoustic sound often accompanied by a trumpet and background vocals. The result is music harkening to a less pretentious time in the indie music world, which serves doubly refreshing in Reykjavík, a scene at times rife with half-hearted DJs and likewise troubadours. If you're still unsure, check out Battle Hymn of the Fox Father on Vimeo or Lifestock on dadrocks.bandcamp.com for a taste of his acoustic, layered sound.

Formed in early 2010, origins of the name Dad Rocks! are uncertain at time of print, but the artist's Tumblr account leans on the dad theme. Posts include pictures of the artist's own father, pictures of himself on his father's wall, and for father's day, Snævar put Mount Modern up for free download. Catch his shows while he's back home for a few days, and you can even bring your dad. **BW**

- Faktorý**
 20:00 For a Minor Reflection
 22:00 DJ Atli
- KEX Hostel**
 20:00 Kentucky KEX Festival
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
 22:00 Blood Feud and Angist: release concert
- Gay 46**
 0:00 DJ Veloci
- Glaumbar**
 22:00 DJ Krusí
- Harpa**
 17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Hressó**
 22:00 Silfur with DJ Yngvi Eysteins
- Kaffibarinn**
 22:00 Live DJ
- Kaffi Zimsen**
 22:00 Live DJ
- Prikið**
 0:00 DJ Margeir
- Thorvaldsen**
 22:00 DJ Jon Gestur
- Vegamót**
 22:00 DJ Jónas

21 SAT

- Amsterdam**
 22:00 DJ Skuli
- Austur**
 22:00 DJ Milla
- B5**
 22:00 DJ Jay-O
- Bakkus**
 22:00 DJ Narko Nilkovsky
- Bar 11**
 21:00 Kiriya Family
- Boston**
 22:00 James Gerard
- Café Rósenberg**
 20:00 Bíóbandið and Andrea
- Celtic Cross**
 0:30 Live music
- Den Danske Kro**
 21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
 22:00 Live music
- Faktorý**
 21:30 Live jazz session
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
 22:00 Gone Postal and guests
- Gay 46**
 0:00 DJ Manny

- Glaumbar**
 22:00 DJ Atli
- Hallgrímskirkja**
 12:00 Roger Sayer organ concert
- Hressó**
 22:00 Dalton band and DJ Yngvi Eysteins
- Kaffibarinn**
 22:00 DJ Maggi Lego
- Kaffi Zimsen**
 22:00 Live DJ
- KEX Hostel**
 20:00 Kentucky KEX Festival
- Prikið**
 0:00 Benni B Ruff
- Salurinn**
 13:00 Khon - Dancing from Thailand
- Thorvaldsen**
 22:00 DJ Christian
- Vegamót**
 22:00 DJ Gunni
- Pýski Barinn**
 22:00 Dave Clarke

22 SUN

- Den Danske Kro**
 21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
 22:00 Live music
- Faktorý**
 21:30 Live jazz session
- Hallgrímskirkja**
 17:00 Roger Sayer organ concert
- Harpa**
 17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song

23 MON

- Den Danske Kro**
 21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
 22:00 Live music
- Harpa**
 17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Prikið**
 22:00 DJ Our Man The Third

24 TUE

- Bakkus**
 22:00 DJ Katla - Madchester night

- Café Rósenberg**
 20:00 Múgsefjun
- Den Danske Kro**
 21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
 22:00 Live music
- Kaffitár Cafe**
 20:30 Tango Milonga
- KEX Hostel**
 22:00 Live jazz
- Prikið**
 22:00 DJ Óli
- Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
 20:30 Classical concert - Elín Ósk Óskarsdóttir (soprano) and Peter Maté (piano)

25 WED

- Bakkus**
 22:00 DJ Karl Thorsten
- Café Rósenberg**
 20:00 María Magnúsdóttir
- Celtic Cross**
 22:00 Live music
- Den Danske Kro**
 21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
 22:00 Live music
- Hallgrímskirkja**
 12:00 Schola cantorum chamber choir concert
- Harpa**
 17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Hressó**
 22:00 Flass & Miller
- Prikið**
 22:00 DJ Maggi Legó
- Thorvaldsen**
 22:00 R&B night

26 THU

- B5**
 22:00 Live music
- Bakkus**
 22:00 Live DJ
- Boston**
 22:00 Raven
- Café Rósenberg**
 20:00 1860
- Celtic Cross**
 22:00 Live music
- Faktorý**
 21:30 Live music
- Glaumbar**
 22:00 Bingo & DJ Atli
- Hallgrímskirkja**
 12:00 Friðrik Stefánsson organ concert
- Háskólabíó**
 20:00 Sigga Beinteins
- Kaffi Zimsen**
 21:00 Live music
- Lebowski Bar**
 22:00 Lebowski House Band
- Thorvaldsen**
 22:00 Salsa night
- Vegamót**
 22:00 DJ Benni

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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JULY



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Bar 11

July 21, 21:00

Free

Like a lot of bands these days, the electro pop outfit Kiriya Family has caught the festival bug. They played the Reykjavik Live Festival in May, rocked the Keflavik Music Festival in June and landed a spot in this fall's Iceland Airwaves. But here's your chance to see them without shelling out cash for expensive festival passes. The five-piece indie band will play a free show at Bar 11 on July 21.

The Reykjavik-based group makes easy beats that evoke a sense of summer. Even their wintery-titled song "Snow Beneath My Feet" will have you dancing under the midnight sun. They released their self-titled debut album in May, which earned a four-star review in Fréttatíminn. **CW**

A LIST OF EVERY HAPPY HOUR IN 101

101 Hótel

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 50 percent off all drinks.

B5

Every day from 11:00 to 22:00, beer and wine for 450 ISK.

Bar 11

Every day from 15:00 to 22:00, 2 for 1 beer for 700 ISK and shots.

Barónspöbb

Every day from 14:00 to 19:00, beer for 500 ISK.

Bjarni Fel

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 890 ISK.

Boston

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK.

Celtic Cross

Weekdays from 17:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.

Den Danske Kro

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 950 ISK.

Dillon

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK.

Dubliner

Weekdays from 11:30 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.

Esja

Weekdays from 19:00 to 22:00, from 17:00 to 19:00 on Fridays and Saturdays, all drinks half price: beer for 425 ISK, wine for 495 ISK.

Hilton Hotel Bar

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 950 ISK and wine for 150 ISK.

Hótel 1919

Every day from 17:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 1290 ISK.

Hótel Holt Gallery Bar

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, beer for 475 ISK, wine for 575 ISK, champagne and cocktails half off.

Hótel Plaza Bar

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, beer for 500 ISK.

Kaffi Zimsen

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, large beer and shot for 500 ISK.

Kolabrautin

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, Beer for 450 ISK, wine for 525 ISK.

Lebowski Bar

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 900 ISK.

Micro Bar

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 500 ISK for a draft beer.

Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da

Every day from 12:00 to 20:00, 500 ISK beers, 600 ISK shots and 800 ISK single + mixer.

Prikió

Weekdays from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 690 ISK.

Slippbarinn

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 50% off beer and wine.

Stofan

Every day from 17:00 to 20:00, beer for 500 ISK and wine for 600 ISK.

Pingholtsbar

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks are half off, all drinks half off: beer for 400 ISK, wine for 550 ISK.

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* Mondays *

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* Tuesdays *

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* Wednesdays *

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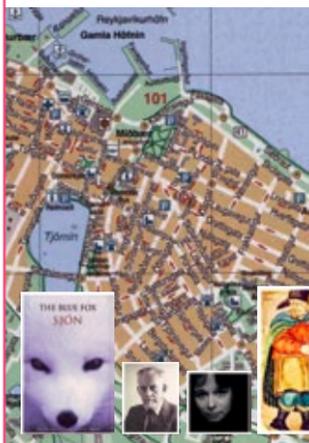




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Free of charge.

Reykjavik City Library
www.literature.is
Tel. 411 6100

ART

IN JULY

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
Send us your listings: listings@grapevine.is

OPENINGS

Skörin

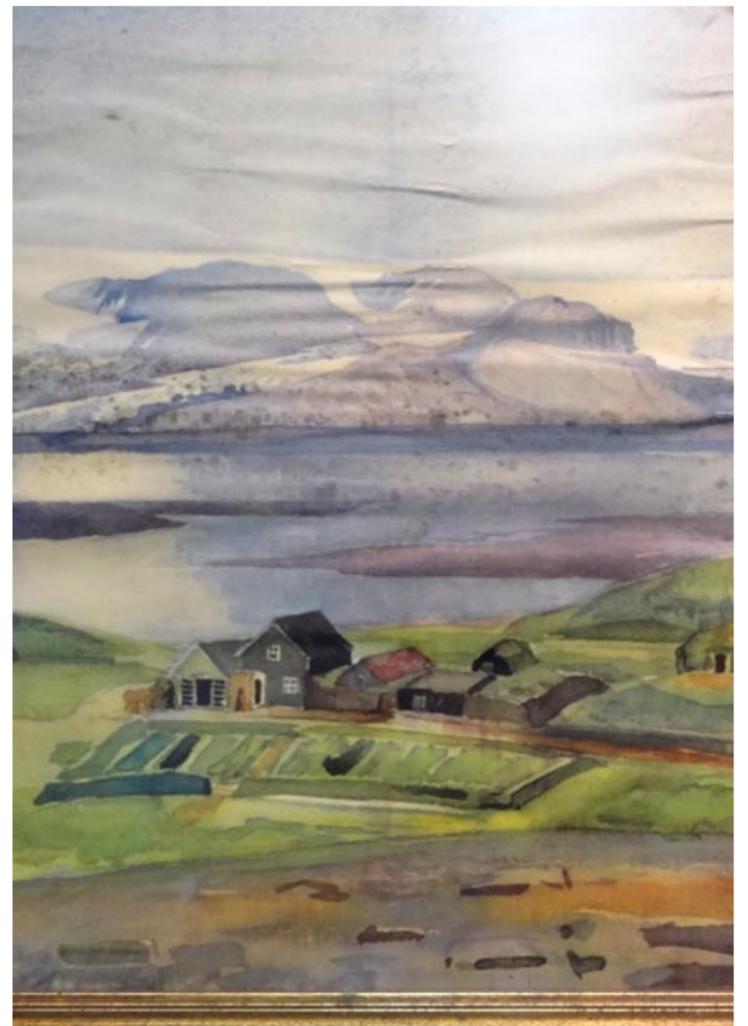
July 14, 16:00 Moved by Iceland
Unnur Óttarsdóttir makes jewelry with two of Iceland's most iconic materials - lava rocks and wool. In this exhibit, she invites the audience to participate in the living energy evoked by Iceland's volcanic history. There will be a special opening event at the gallery.
Runs until August 14

Nordic House

July 16, 17:00 Völvan
A play dealing with ideas of Danish culture and heritage. The play is 50 minutes long and in Danish.

Reykjavik Art Museum, Hafnarhús

July 19, 17:00 The Demented Diamond of Kling & Bang's Confectured Video Archive
The Confectured Video Archive comprises video works, performance documentations and films by more than 60 artists. These are woven into a "mild delirium with lucid intervals" - the Demented Diamond put on display. Artist Þórgunnur Oddsdóttir takes over the Demented Diamond, adding her own solo project to the madness.



First impressions

The Gallery of Ásgrímur Jónsson
Runs through September 1

ONGOING

The Culture House Medieval Manuscripts Eddas and Sagas

It includes principal medieval manuscripts, such as Codices Regii of the Poetic Edda, Prosaic Edda, law codes and Christian works, not forgetting the Icelandic Sagas.

On permanent view

Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurósson

Exploring the life of Icelandic national hero Jón Sigurjónsson, made especially accessible to children, families and school groups.

On permanent view

Millennium - phase one

A selection of pieces from the collection of the National Gallery displaying a variety of works by Icelandic artists in the last two centuries.

On permanent view

The Library Room

The old reading room of the National Library displays books of Icelandic cultural history dating from the 16th century to the present day. Works include the oldest published versions of the Sagas, Edda Poems and more.

On permanent view

Watercolours by Olivier Manoury

Olivier Manoury's watercolours are on display in the Culture House's shop and café. The painter traveled Iceland and captured his impressions in aquarelle paintings. The works are for sale.

Runs until September 1

The Einar Jónsson Museum

The museum contains close to 300 art works spanning a 60-year career: carvings from the artist's youth, sculptures, paintings and drawings. A beautiful tree-clad garden adorned with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works is located behind the museum.

On permanent view

Galleri List

Hestar (Horses)

An exhibit of Bjarni Þór's watercolour paintings of horses.
Runs until July 5.

The gallery and former home of Ásgrímur Jónsson, one of Iceland's earliest and most beloved fine artists, has just reopened to the public! Ásgrímur Jónsson, who lived from 1876 to 1958, is known primarily for his landscapes of Iceland, painted in the style of the French Impressionists. Upon his death, he bequeathed all his works and his home-studio to Iceland. In 1960, his home opened up as a museum for his paintings, but it closed when the collection moved to the National Gallery of Iceland. Now, the house will reopen with two exhibits. The first, 'Formenn' ("Ancient Men") contains the artist's renderings of scenes from Icelandic legends and lore. The second exhibition 'Umhverfis landið á fáeinum áratugum' ("Around the Country in a Few Decades") features the vivid landscapes which he is so well known for. In addition to these, a self-portrait of the artist is on display. **EJP**

Hafnarborg

House Project, Second House and Third House

This exhibition by Icelandic artist Hreinn Friðfinnsson compiles his older and his newer work. The focus is on the history of an old house in the lava fields south of Hafnarfjörður.

Runs until August 19

The Last Abstraction

The exhibition of abstract paintings celebrates the wide-ranging work of one of Iceland's earliest modernists, Eiríkur Smith.

Runs until August 19

Harpa

How to Become Icelandic in 60 Minutes

Join for a comical theatre performance about all kinds of aspects of Icelandic culture. If you're sick of feeling like a tourist everywhere you go, this show is for you. Tickets are 2,000 ISK and Harpa hosts two to three shows per week in the Kaldalón or Norðurljós halls.

Ongoing

Iceland Expo Pavilion

One component of the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, a cube lined with canvas, projecting a video of Icelandic nature on each side and above the viewer, is now available for the first time to the Icelandic public. The fifteen-minute film was recorded at five angles, four of the RED cameras recording simultaneously, hooked onto planes and helicopters flying over the Icelandic wilderness.
Runs through August 6

Hlandvættir

Guðmundur Thoroddsen

This exhibition of wooden sculptures and drawings portrays men of different ages in everyday activities.
Runs until August 9.

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ART

IN JULY



Egill Sæbjörnsson: Between a rock and art

i8 Gallery

Runs until Aug. 25, 11:00-17:00 Tuesday-Friday, 13:00-17:00 Saturday

Free

The world around us is made up many elements. Wind. Water. Earth. What, then, should we consider art among the forms of the natural world we live in?

Artist Egill Sæbjörnsson proposes that works of art exist with their own power, that perhaps just as we attach reality to the words and symbols with which we communicate, so, too, can tokens from the natural world perpetuate meaning. Egill's latest work will be at i8 Gallery until Aug. 25; this will be his second solo exhibition there. The exhibition is an annexation to his former experimentations involving sculpture alongside sound and visual animations. As a whole, it comprises three installations presenting a discussion between physical, sculptural objects and computer-generated image projections.

In his own words, "the pieces are independent creatures with their own agency," appropriate because Egill's exhibition coincides with the publication of a book: "Stones According to Egill Sæbjörnsson." In it, he poses questions that include: Are worms artists? Are minerals artists? If one stone falls from a mountain top and hits another one on the head, is that communication? Entry is free at i8 Gallery for this exhibit, so if you're interested in seeing Egill's experimentations, do so before late August. **BW**

Art | Venue finder

ART67
Laugavegur 67 | F7
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat
12 - 16

ASÍ Art Museum
Freygata 41 | H6
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15 | E5
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgata | G6
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Gallerí Ágúst
Baldursgata 12 | G5
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallerí Fold
Rauðarástígur 14-16 | G8
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun
14-16
www.myndlist.is

Kaolin
Ingólfsstræti 8 | F4

Gallerí Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 | E6
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gallery of Ásgrímur Jónsson
Bergstaðastræti 74
Mon-Fri through Sept. 1

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 | E4
www.hittusid.is

i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 | D3
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by
appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum
Skúlagata 28 | E7
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22.
www.nylo.is

Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34,
Hafnarfjörður

Mokka Kaffi
Skólavörðustígur 3A | E5

The National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7 | F4
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listasafn.is

The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 | G2
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is

The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5
Tue-Sun 12-17

Restaurant Reykjavík
Vesturgata 2 | D3

Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 | E3
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 30 | F9
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum
composed of

Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | D3
Open 10-17
Thursday 10 - 20

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókgata 24
Open 10 - 17

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
Open 10 - 17
More info on
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is

Reykjavík City Library
Tryggvagata 15 | D3
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri
11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 | B2

**Reykjavík Museum of Photog-
raphy**
Tryggvagata 16 | D3
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17 -
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70

Sím
Hafnarstræti 16 | E4
Mon-Fri 10-16

Skörin
Aðalstræti 10

Spark, Design Space
Klapparstígur 33 | F5
www.sparkdesignspace.com



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A

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B

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C

MAP

Places We Like

1 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.

2 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.

3 Hamborgarabúllan

Geirsgata 1

Considered by some to be the best real hamburger in Reykjavík, "Bullán" does serve some mysteriously delicious burgers, guaranteed to take the edge off any hangover.

4 Við Tjörnina

Templarasundi 3

Winner of The Grapevine's Best Seafood Restaurant in 2011, Við Tjörnina is the quintessential classic Icelandic dining experience for newcomers to the country. Serving hákarl (putrefied shark) and brennivín as staples on the menu, the restaurant also offers delicacies such as scallops, halibut and other fish for the not-so-fearless diner.

5 Café Babalú

Skólavörðustígur 22a

It's tough to miss the brightly colored Café Babalú walking up Skólavörðustígur. A cosy place for coffee and cake, the well-worn, homey ambience makes it difficult to leave. Check out their rooftop patio on sunny days as well.

6 Þingholt Bar

Þingholtsstræti 5

Located in CenterHotel Þingholt, Þingholt bar is tucked away just outside of the mayhem that is Laugavegur on a weekend night. For a quieter evening, Þingholtsbar is definitely worth a closer look. Show up between 17-19 for the daily happy hour.

Useful numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **118**

Taxi: Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir: **588 5522**

BSR: **561 0000**

Tax Free Refund

Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

Tourist information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

City Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland,



7 Reykjavík Backpackers

Laugavegur 28

Mingle with internationals and enjoy free Wi-Fi at this convenient hangout right in the middle of the action. Reykjavík Backpackers is an inexpensive hostel with a cool downtown vibe. They serve up sandwiches, cakes and coffee during the day, and offer live entertainment, beer and drink specials at night.

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

The Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2, tel: 522 4979

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020

Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and Lágmúla 5, tel: 533-2300

Coach terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

Domestic airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavíkflugvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

8 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.

Public transport

The only public transport available in Reykjavík is the bus. Most buses run every 20-30 minutes (the wait may be longer on weekends) and the price per fare is 350 ISK for adults and children. Multiple day passes are available for purchase at select locations. Complete route map available at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700. Buses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends. Main terminals are: Hlemmur and Lækjartorg

Opening Hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations, bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.

Shops: Mon.-Fri. 10:00-18:00, Sat.

9 Spúútnik

Laugavegur 28b

This super hip vintage shop in the heart of downtown is quintessential to Icelandic fashion trends. Ranging from classic, national pattern sweaters to some of the craziest throwback fashions from eras we thought we were glad to see gone, Spúútnik can make a pair of flowered, day-glow parachute pants seem like a smart buy.

10:00-16:00, Sun. closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

Swimming pools: Weekdays 06:30-22:00 and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each pool varies plus or minus a few hours. **Banks** in the centre are open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-16:00.

Post Offices

Post offices are located around the city. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5, open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-18:00. Stamps are also sold at bookstores, gas stations, tourist shops and some grocery stores.

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LEGEND

EATING # DRINKING # SHOPPING # ADS

For a map of outside downtown Reykjavík visit www.grapevine.is or the Icelandic phonebook website www.ja.is

13 NEW IN TOWN



LÍFgRÆNT
Lækjartorg

Well it's not new, but it's back! LÍFgRÆNT, a small organic food stand, has returned to Lækjartorg for the rest of the summer. They're committed to selling only organic and wild-grown products: fruits, vegetables, jams, breads and more. Most of the food has been grown locally in farms near Reykjavík – the kale from Mosfellsbær is crunchy and delicious – but LÍFgRÆNT also imports organic fruits from warmer climes. They're open everyday except Sunday from 11:00 to 17:00



10 Eymundsson Bookstore
Skólavörðustígur 11

Eymundsson is a chain with several outlets but the one on Skólavörðustígur is the best in town. The premises are equipped with a coffee shop, tables and sofas to lounge in and the all-glass exterior lets in a lot of light, which is good for reading real books, not Facebooks.

11 Smekkleysa
Laugavegur 35

The legendary Smekkleysa (or: Bad Taste) label has been a key player in the Icelandic music scene since the eighties, releasing milestone records by the Sugarcubes, Sigur Rós and countless others. Their Laugavegur record store is an excellent resource for stocking up on hard-to-find Icelandic music items, as well as cutting-edge international releases.

12 Kolaportið
Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavík's massive indoor 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.

Public phones
There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportið, entrance at Landsbankinn and in Lækjargata. Prepaid international phone cards are recommended for int'l callers.

Internet Access
Most cafés offer free wireless internet access. Computers with internet connections are available to use at:
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
Ground Zero, Frakkastígur 8, near Laugavegur 45
The Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15

Swimming Pools
There are several swimming pools in Reykjavík. The one in 101 Reykjavík, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur, is an indoor one, located at Barónsstígur. That pool features a nice sunbathing area and some outdoor hot tubs. Opening hours: Monday to Thursday from 06:30–22:00, Friday from 06:30–20:00, Saturday from 08:00–16:00, and Sunday from 10:00–18:00.

Public Toilets
Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green poster covered towers located, for example, at Hlemmur, Ingólfs-tortorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library.



A Day In The Life
Ryan Karazija, a.k.a. Low Roar

What's up, Ryan?
Hi there! Well, I am just enjoying the summer. I just got back from playing a beautiful festival in the Westfjords, as well as two other trips to Poland and Lithuania. So everything is really, really good.

The album I released came out in November of 2011 in the U.S., and was released here in Iceland around the New Year. I am really happy with how everything is going with it, and am also happy with the development of the project. It has taken all kinds of shapes and forms over the past few months.

EARLY MORNING >
My days tend to differ, so I guess I can just tell you what I did this morning. I woke up early, around 8 a.m. and had a coffee and Cheerios. I cleaned my place up a bit and did some laundry.

LUNCH >
The weather was beautiful out today, so I decided to ride my bike downtown and run a few errands. It was so nice that I decided to stop by KEX and have a summer beer out on the back patio.

MID-DAY >
Next I headed to the forest on the other side of Miklabraut to go for a bit of a walk and enjoy the sun. The forest is really nice and relaxing. There are usually rabbits running around and it is fun just to take random small paths and see where you end up. I am still very much like a little kid, even though I am 30. I still can't resist jumping off of stuff and over things.

AFTERNOON >
Then I returned to my place and decided to run close by and have a bite to eat at Vitabar.

As of right now, Low Roar has nothing booked in Reykjavík, but I do plan on putting on a proper Low Roar show at some point in late July or early August. Those days are usually spent running around and thinking a lot about how the show is going to go and what I need to do. Low Roar will be leaving to play a festival in Lithuania at the end of August. That should be fun.

HEAT OF THE NIGHT >
Since it is a Tuesday, I will most likely relax inside in the evening and watch a movie or something cosy before heading off to bed. But if it was a little later in the week, I would most likely be interested in heading to the happy hour at the Danish Pub and then seeing where the night takes me from there...Bakkus, Kaffibarinn or Boston are great spots.

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ART IN JULY

i8 Gallery

Egill Sæbjörnsson

An exhibition of new works will continue the Icelandic artist's experimentation with elements of sculpture, animation and sound. The exhibition consists of three installations where the communication between sculptural objects and computer-animated image projections create self-generative works.
Runs through August 30

Knitting Iceland

Come and knit at Laugavegur 25, 3rd floor, every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00.
On permanent view

Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12 Guided Practica

Argentine tango, Sundays from 17:30-19:30. Register by phone 821 6929 or email tangoadventure@gmail.com, 500 ISK for students, 800 ISK for others. Six-week courses are also available.

On permanent view

Mokka-Kaffi

Democratic Moment by Katrín Agnes Klar

"Democratic Moment" is an expanding series of hundreds of mobile phone photographs taken by Katrín Agnes Klar, the prints of which show the mirrored sun in various house windows in cities such as Reykjavík, Berlin and St. Petersburg.
Runs until August 9

Museum of Design –

Hönnunarsafn Íslands

Something To Write Home About

The emerging changes in Icelandic design are on display to highlight how product designers are embracing more collaboration.
Runs until October 14

National Gallery of Iceland

Hypnotized by Iceland

Works by artists inspired by Iceland's powerful, dangerous and endangered waterfalls.

Runs until November 4

Inspired by Iceland

This exhibit explores visually the non-verbal, non-narrative beauty of Iceland's natural landscapes.

Runs until November 4

Archive – Endangered Waters

An interactive installation by Icelandic artist Rúrí, which features 52 photographs of waterfalls around the country, developed on transparent film, mounted on sliding plates in a large archive. When pulled out from the archive, the particular sound of each waterfall plays, as recorded by Rúrí at the location.
Runs until December 31

The National Museum

Advent in the Highlands

Photographer Sigurjón Pétursson took his inspiration for this collection of work from the novella 'Adventa' by Gunnar Gunnarsson. Sigurjón's pictures are drawn from passages from the book. The result is a series of photographs capturing the still beauty of the highlands near Mývatn.
Runs until September



Through the looking glass

Bió Paradís

July 19, 20:00

1,300 ISK

In this digital age, we sometimes forget the tactile, physicality of images; we forget that motion pictures are light passing through very real pieces of film. Private Territory, a festival of North American experimental films seeks to remind us of this tangibility.

The majority of works featured in this traveling festival were filmed on 16mm film, a format largely extinct in the wake of digital filmmaking. Not only can it provide richer colours and greater senses of depth and contrast, but also 16mm film allows for hands-on manipulation. Private Territory reveals the intimacy of this technique. Moreover, it focuses on the intimacy inherent in the experience of watching a movie: light is cast through film and projected on the wall of a dark room, creating a small, private chamber for the artist to communicate with the audience. The films center on this idea of personal space and interior reflection. The festival shares these private spaces, crossing language and cultural boundaries to communicate something deeper.

Some of the films come from established artists such as Laida Lertxundi, who exhibited at the Whitney Biennial; Jodie Mack; Saul Levine and Robert Todd. Other works come from emerging artists who are just beginning to leave their imprints on the experimental film scene. The festival's curator, Mariya Nikiforova, will take these films on a circular journey from her current home in Boston to her native home of St. Petersburg, Russia and back again. If experimental film is your jam, be sure to catch the festival's stop at **Bió Paradís! EJP**

The Making of a Nation - Heritage and History in Iceland

This exhibition is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

On permanent view

The Nordic House

The Library

The collection centers around new Nordic literature, both fiction and nonfiction. The library lends out novels, academic publications, audio books and more.
On permanent view

Watercolours by Lars Lerin

Swedish artist Lars Lerin contrasts the sheer grandeur of the natural world against the bleakness of human life on the Norwegian Lofoten Islands in a series of watercolor paintings.

Runs until August 12

Reykjavík Art Museum - Ásmundarsafn

The Fire Within

A collection of sculptures by Ásmundur Sveinsson housed in his former home. The pieces explore three major themes: the woman as lover, the brutality of war and the unknown frontier of outer space.
Runs until April 14, 2013

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ART

IN JULY

Reykjavík Art Museum- Hafnarhús

Erró- Drawings from 1944-2012
The exhibition consists of more than 200 drawings Erró has done since 1944 until the present day.

Runs until August 19

(I)ndependent People - Collaborations and Artists Initiatives

(I)ndependent People asks if and how collaboration can operate in negotiation with contesting ideas and desires, and yet allow for unplanned action. This large-scale collaboration takes place at a cluster of museums, galleries, artist-run spaces and institutions in the capital area. Focusing on visual art from the Nordic region, the exhibitions are conceived as an opportunity to establish and instigate a discussion around the relationships between international and Nordic networks from the perspective of collaborative and artist-initiated processes.

Runs until Sept. 2

Reykjavík Art Museum- Kjavalsstaðir

Kjarval - Key Works

Reykjavík Art Museum draws on its extensive collection of works by Jóhannes S. Kjarval for ongoing exhibitions at Kjarvalsstaðir. The current exhibition in the Kjarval Gallery features key works of Kjarval's oeuvre and offers a unique and powerful retrospective from Iceland's most beloved painter.

Permanent exhibition

Hangman's Rock - The Delirium of a Vision

Work by painter Jóhannes Kjarval and other artists like Finnur Jónsson look to dissolve borders between external and internal reality, with works that depict lava fields and the paradoxes of visual perception.

Runs through Aug. 26

Reykjavík City Museum

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

The Settlement Exhibition

Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre, open daily 10:00-17:00, 600 ISK per adult, 300 ISK for children (children under 12, free) and 450 ISK per person in groups (10+).

On permanent view

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

From Poverty to Abundance

Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen at the turn of the 20th century.

On permanent view

The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history and the growth of the Reykjavík Harbour.

On permanent view

The Call of Sagas

An exhibition from Finland about an adventurous voyage in an open boat from Finland to Iceland, honoring the old viking shipping routes.

On permanent view

The Watercolours of Ólafur Thorlacius

Ólafur Þór worked with the Icelandic Coast Guard for many years as a map-maker. He is now retired and paints beautiful watercolors in his free time.

On permanent view



Khon dances of Thailand

Salurinn

July 21, 2012, 13:00 & 19:00

5,000 ISK

From the far reaches of the globe, one of Thailand's most honoured dances, the Kho, comes to Iceland.

Khon is considered one of the more fantastic of dance forms from the Kingdom of Thailand. Dancers remain silent throughout the performance, while a traditional chorus on one side of the stage weaves the narrative of a story (typically featuring episodes from the Ramakien, Thailand's own national saga of sorts). Choreography and song come together to tell the story of one of Asia's most unique countries, which is interestingly enough the only country in the Southeast Asia not to be taken over by a colonial power.

The performers come from Kasetsart University of Thailand, and will feature traditional Thai instruments to accompany the performance. They will perform in the Hanumal and Manora dances, as well as conventional Thai dance.

This may be one of your few chances to see Khon in Iceland, so unless you're planning on a vacation in the Southeast Asia some time soon, you may want to head over to Salurinn on July 21. **BW**

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Milestones: Sigurjón Ólafsson's Key Sculptures

An exhibition with some of Sigurjón Ólafsson's key works from different periods of his prolific career as a sculptor. The earliest work on the exhibition is a newly acquired relief of two sisters, which he made at his first year at the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen. This relief has not been exhibited in Iceland before.

Runs until October 1

SÍM

Sambandið - Togetherness

Fifteen works by Icelandic artist Rakei Steinarsdóttir exploring links, relationships and togetherness.

Runs until July 25.

Spark Design Space

A Salon show is being prepared at Spark containing selected projects from the past as well as a few new things we cannot resist.

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OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

North Iceland

Akureyri

Akureyri Center for Visual Arts (Sjónlistamiðstöðin)

María Ósk

A collection of playful, colourful works by Akureyri-born artist María Ósk.

Runs until July 27

Textílbomban

An exhibit of all textile art, including the largest national flag in Iceland!

Runs until September 3

Akureyri Church

Summer concerts every Sunday

July 1-July 29, 17:00

Talented classical musicians every Sunday for a month.

Græni Hatturinn

July 13, 22:00

Hundur í Óskilum

July 20 and 21, 22:00

Ljótu Hálfvitarnir

July 26, 21:00

Retro Stefson

Everything Everywhere in Akureyri

Here + There + Everywhere = Everything

June 23 - September 3

Art explodes into the community, celebrating Akureyri's 150th birthday. Seventy-one artists take part in a radical exploration of public art, weaving an intricate story into new spaces. The only place that this exhibition will not take place is at the local art museum.

Reykjahlíð

Reikjahlíðarkirkja

Classical concerts at Myvatn

July 13, 21:00

July 14, 21:00

July 21, 21:00

July 25, 21:00

East Iceland

Egilsstaðir

Sláturhúsið:

July 21, 20:00

Hallvarður Ásgeirsson

Seyðisfjörður

Bláa Kirkjan

July 18, 21:00

Elín Ey

July 25, 20:30

"Melancholy melodies and playful dances"

LungA Festival

July 15 to 22

This little town transforms into a multimedia hotspot, featuring workshops, art exhibitions and concerts from bands like Retro Stefson, Hermigervill, Legend, Samaris and Sudden Weather Change.

Skaftfell - Center for Visual Art

In collaboration with the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore, Skaftfell is showing a collection of short videos. This was to collect narratives from all the inhabitants of Seyðisfjörður in 2011 and 2012 to give a bigger picture of the community.

Ongoing

A Day of Half-Hour Exhibitions

July 22, 14:00

A handful of artists will participate in this project - they will put up exhibitions to last for only half an hour. They are required to put them together and take them down in 15 minutes.

Alkemisti: Skíttagull

July 23

Part of Skaftfell's Reaction Intermediate series.



Retro Stefson keeps cool in Akureyri

Retro Stefson

Græni Hatturinn - Akureyri

July 26

Retro Stefson may have signed a fancy European record deal last year, but they're still booking gigs across Iceland like there's no tomorrow. That's good news for Icelanders who like danceable indie pop that features infectious, anthemic choruses like the band's last single "Queen." And it's even better news for citizens of Akureyri! That's where the seven-person group will play on July 26, hitting the most renowned venue in the country's "second city."

The group, which was founded in 2006, doesn't seem like your typical Icelandic band. They don't evoke any kind of vivid landscape. They sing in English, French and Portuguese to go along with the Icelandic lyrics that sometimes dot their songs. It's pure European disco, the kind that makes you want to shut the fuck up and dance.

Retro Stefson will also hit Iceland's capital on July 13, playing Reykjavík's Bar 11. They'll also be playing some festivals, including LungA Festival in Seyðisfjörður and G! Festival in the Faroe Islands. And, of course, they'll take the stage at Iceland Airwaves in the fall. **CW**

South Iceland

Mosfellsbær

Laxness Museum Concert Lounge

July 15

Violinist Ari Þór Vilhjálmsson is joined by singer Hrönn Þráinsdóttir.

All concerts are 1,000 ISK

Vestmannaeyjar

Pompeii of the North, Westman Islands

Excavations project at the site of a 1973 volcanic eruption on the island of Heimaey.

Ongoing

West Iceland

Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre Settlement & Egils Saga Exhibition

Daily, 10:00-21:00

The two exhibitions tell the saga of Icelandic's settlement and most famous viking and first poet: Egill Skallagrímsson. Cost is 2400 ISK for adults, 1800 ISK for children, seniors and students.

Reykholtt

Reykholttar and Dalabyggð Commune

Project Valleys and Hills Exhibition Project

June 30 - July 29

Ferð (A Journey) is an exhibition project that uses abandoned houses and open spaces at eclectic sites in western Iceland.

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OUTSIDE

REYKJAVÍK IN JULY

Snorrastofa

Snorri Sturluson and his time

Daily, 10:00-21:00

An exhibit at Snorrastofa explores the life and times of famed Icelandic poet, historian and politician Snorri Sturluson. Cost is 1,000 ISK for adults, 800 ISK for seniors and students, and children under 16 get in free.

West Fjords

Djúpavík

Hotel Djúpavík

Opens July 15, 10:00

Fjaran/ Littoral Zone

An exhibition of new work by Scottish artists Ishbel Macdonald and Rhiannon Van Muysen. Paintings, prints and installations explore the biology and geology of land and sea.

Runs through August 31

July 22, 21:00

Svavar Knútur and Kristjána

Stefánsdóttir concert

Suðureyri

All over town

July 12-14

Sæluhelgin

A family festival with a whole host of activities, including fishing competitions, sea jumping and singing late into the night.



Bræðlan Music Festival to rock East Fjords

Bræðlan Music Festival

Borgarfjörður-Eystrí

July 26-28

5,900 ISK

Icelandic musicians now play where fishermen once thrived. Bræðlan, held in Borgarfjörður-Eystrí, a town of about 100 people in the country's northeastern fjords, will set up a stage in an old fish processing plant to showcase musicians like Mugison and Valgeir Guðjónsson. The festival starts July 28, but off-site shows for bands like Tilbury, Kiriya Family and Hoffa og Eyrún begin July 26 at venues near Borgarfjörður-Eystrí.

The festival, which has taken over the tiny town once a year since 2005, will feature camping and a jam-packed crowd looking to get away from a typical concert experience. Some people also choose to camp in the backyards of the town's residents, and the festival's grub is usually homemade pancakes and stew.

Other bands include The Lovely Lion, Contalgen Funeral and Fjallabráður—a men's choir that usually rocks the house. **CW**



Art explodes in Seyðisfjörður

All around Seyðisfjörður

July 15 to 22

Concerts are 3,900 ISK; workshops cost 15,000 ISK

Something really big is about to happen in Seyðisfjörður. Iceland's most creative minds will transform this little town in the east fjords into a bastion of multimedia art for a week during the LungA Art Festival.

This annual festival brings together artists and amateurs alike in a variety of activities from hands-on workshops to live concerts. Although the workshops for this year's festival are all sold-out, there's still plenty of events and exhibitions going on, making Seyðisfjörður a worthwhile destination for a few days. Among the exhibitions is the newest instalment of Kitty Von-Sometime's Weir Girls Project, featuring three video works from her visit to China and Harpa Einarsson's exhibition, "Instant Reflections," which ponders the artistic and existential implications of Instagram photography.

In addition to the exhibitions, there will also be a series of one-off events: plays, films, performance art and even a fashion show. If it's music you want, you can catch the indie pop group Retro Stefson, electronic musician Hermigervill, trance trio Samaris, art rockers Sudden Weather Change, industrial group Legend and reggae (yes, reggae) band Ojba Rasta.

There's so much going on in this little town that you just may have to trek over for a few days. More information can be found at the festival website: www.lunga.is **EJP**

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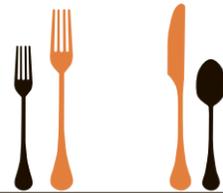
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WHEN THE MOON HITS YOUR FACE...

La Luna

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What We Think: Beautiful location, over-the-top copy, good pizzas, dull pasta

Flavour: Italian (but need to get their terminology right)

Ambiance: Chill, romantic

Service: They will swaddle you like a newborn

Price for 2 (with drinks): 12-15,000

...means that the moon has collided with earth killing all of mankind and similes about pizza pies are the least of your worries!

The status of Italian food in Iceland has long been dire and I find it unlikely to change as Italian food is not particularly fashionable at the moment. Your average young person (AYP) is more likely to seek out sushi or ceviche than splurge on the pasta they've been making at home the whole week. Personally, I haven't been that interested in Italian food lately unless we're talking about Ancient Roman cuisine (fattened dormice, boiled lupin, snails with fish sauce and spiced date wine are all overdue for a comeback!). La Luna goes some way towards addressing the situation but not far enough to find new converts.

So I decided to take my thirteen-year-old nephew along for the ride. Both of us had a bit of a laugh at the menu which, despite La Luna labelling itself as a simple family-run trattoria, had the most ridiculously over-wrought meal descriptions that wouldn't look out of place in a Mad Men print ad.

And the TV ads La Luna have been running aren't exactly helping (same copy delivered in a ludicrous Italian accent). But the crazy thing is that the location could actually live up to those descriptions. La Luna is situated in a beautiful old brewery on the east side of town and sports an iron fireplace, a hundred year old safe, thick stone walls and beautiful spiral staircase leading up to a bronze dome. Again the details work against them as the faux-antiques and pulp novels that litter the place are letting the gorgeous interiors down.

After watching my nephew down six whiskey sours in the first half hour I decided we better order the first course before he'd pass out (I'm kidding, but we did go through four bottles of water, which is nuts).

We started with the antipasto for two (1,990 ISK), which consisted of a so-so prosciutto, some type of salamio piccante, parmigiano shavings, a tapenade and a cold creamy mushroom sauce and a few thin slices of dry bread. The creamy sauce was the tastiest thing in there—otherwise I'd recommend the charcuterie at Hótel Marína instead.

La Luna do serve "paddella pasta" (padella pasta), which is a pan of pasta to be shared by the table but my nephew and I had different ideas and he decided to have the tagliatelle al mare (frutti di mare) and I had the "pizza marinera" (pizza ai frutti di mare—"pizza marinera" has nothing to do with seafood last I checked) but seeing as the restaurant hadn't had seafood on offer for over a week (according to the waiter), I settled on a lobster pizza (2,490 ISK) and the nephew switched grudgingly to the spaghetti con polpetta (1,990 ISK).

The spaghetti con polpetta was all right, the meatballs were tiny and flavourful but the pasta did not taste particularly fresh and the sauce could have

used another hour on the stove.

The pizza was actually quite good—made in a proper wood burning pizza oven. It was a nice, thin Lazio pizza with plenty of artichoke and not too much oil. It definitely seems the pizza is the way to go at La Luna.

For dessert we had the "Apple adventure" (1,790 ISK), which was a two-layer pie with a thin layer of applesauce and too much cinnamon topped with scoops of ice cream. The kid had his heart set on vanilla ice cream, but again they were in short supply so he decided on a tasty and toffee-like lemon ice cream, which regrettably did not go well with the apple pizza. Chunks of freshly baked apples, less cinnamon and a sweeter crust might have saved the apple pizza.

I had the "Chocolate chocolate," which was the long plate with three types of chocolate we see in so many restaurants in Iceland these days: lava cake, chocolate ice cream and a tough peanut brownie served with a frosted glass of whole milk (1,390 ISK). We both agreed that the inclusion of the milk was a stroke of genius and something every restaurant in Iceland should take up. Overall it was a pretty good dessert and moderately priced.

The service left something to be desired. We took a table in a nook by a cast iron stove, which seemed to cause frequent bouts of amnesia in the kitchen. Almost an hour went by between finishing the main course and the dessert, and the waiter seemed disinterested and shot us suspicious glances (we did build a little castle out of cutlery while we were waiting but we put it all back—promise!).

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REVIEWS



WINGS OF LOVE

Úrilla Górrillan

Austurstræti 12, 101 Reykjavík



What We Think: Good burgers, great hot “wings”

Flavour: American sports bar by the numbers

Ambiance: Gets louder as the night goes on but not as fratty as the other sports bars

Service: Fast and friendly

Úrilla Górrillan (“The Grumpy Gorilla”) is a bar with two locations, specialising in small groups, American grub, too much beer and finding an outlet for our inner cannibal necrophiliacs through the ritualised watching of organised sports.

After proving reasonably successful with their American sports bar at their Stórhöfði 17 location, The Gorilla decided to swing over to 101 Reykjavík a couple of months back. The Gorilla planted itself right next to The English Pub, sure to provide a stream of lively conversations through a cloud of halftime cigarettes in the outside common area about what exactly constitutes “football.”

Downstairs there are more monitors than you can throw a disapproving banana at. There are monitors inside monitors and those monitors have tiny iPhones of their own broadcasting a live stream of a stack of monitors in a post-

apocalyptic future where monitors have conquered the human race (next Thursday?). The upstairs area is mostly rented out to college kids or small business groups and I have been told it will eventually be fitted with retro arcade games and a 3D projector.

So what’s the food like? The Gorilla has the standard burgers, fries and wings fare. Having said that, this is probably the best sports bar food I’ve had in Iceland. My male escort for the evening had the burrito with large oat flakes (1,990 ISK dinner / 990 ISK lunch) and I had the peppercorn cheeseburger (1,990 ISK dinner / 990 ISK lunch) and we split a large side order of hot wings (1,790 ISK).

The burger was surprisingly good: juicy without dripping with grease, fresh bun, medium rare and tasted of green peppercorns. The burrito was less exciting; they should focus on the grease and leave out the “healthy” additions. To liven it up, my male escort made the mistake of adding a pint of habanero Tabasco and I had to listen to his whimpering for the rest of the meal.

The star of the show were the wings, although wings in name only, seeing as what you get are thin deep-fried chicken fillets with a breadcrumb coating served with a lacing of hot sauce and a side of mild blue cheese sauce. But those faux wings still managed to soar above any wings I’ve had in Iceland up to now—custom-made breadcrumbs and tender, juicy fillets.

Top marks for the service as well. A small mistake was made with the burger order but they whipped up the right order in what seemed like five minutes and they split the order of wings without us asking.

My main complaint is that Úrilla Górrillan needs to get a proper website. They might think it’s rad to rely on social media for the heavy lifting (how Web two-point-whoah! of them), but a barebones Facebook page with no menu is like handing out business cards while not wearing any pants (which might actually work if you’re a bar-hopping gorilla). Get some college kid to do it for you in exchange for some free beers.

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