



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE



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For Reindeer

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Editorial | Anna Andersen

MERRY CHRISTMAS, GLEÐILEG JÓL, BUON NATALE

Anna's 34th Editorial



Love it or hate it, Christmas music is an inseparable part of the holiday season. It serenades listeners far and wide over the airwaves and, more cynically, spurs shoppers in the consumer-driven Christmas creep.

In Iceland, one man in particular is responsible for a great deal of the cheery holiday pop. That man is Iceland's most prolific pop star Björgvin Halldórsson. Gracing the cover of our annual Christmas issue this year, Björgvin sits at a restaurant in Reykjavík with a plate of pasta in front of him. Pasta, it turns out—or more generally, Italy—has played a role in shaping Iceland's Christmas.

As the story goes, Björgvin went to Italy on holiday in the '80s and fell in love with its culture, its food and... its music. "It was when I was listening to those Italian pop songs on our holidays and watching Sanremo [an Italian song competition] that I started to notice a certain dramatic character in them that reminded me of Christmas music," he says in our feature interview. "My daughter Svala and I talked about this and felt that all these songs needed were some Christmas bells and new lyrics and they'd suit perfectly as Christmas songs."

Inspired by his trips, Björgvin commenced

transforming a slew of Italian love songs into soon-to-be classic Icelandic Christmas songs. Marcella Bella's "Dopo La Tempesta" became "Ég hlakka svo til" ("I Can't Wait"). Ricchi E Poveri's "Volez Vous Danser" became "Fyrir Jól" ("Before Christmas"). "Gente di mare," "Komdu um jólin" ("Come For Christmas"), "Chi Voglio sei tu," "Þú komst með Jólin til mín" ("You Brought Me Christmas"). "Quanto Di Amo," "Svona eru Jólin" ("This Is Christmas"). "Ci sara," "Þú og ég (Jólagjöfin mín í ár)" ("You And Me (My Christmas Present This Year)"). "Gente come noi," "Þú og ég og jól" ("You And Me And Christmas"). The list goes on.

Now, if your love for Christmas music is being tested with too much "Silent Night" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," go enjoy these Icelandic varieties and their Italian counterparts on YouTube.

Then turn to page 16 to read "Tis The Season of Björgvin Halldórsson," Árni Hjörvar Árnason's feature interview with the man, who is actually responsible for giving us a lot more than a handful of popular Christmas songs. As Árni writes, "Björgvin is the perpetual patriarch of pop music. Björgvin is our Elvis. He's our Sinatra. He is our Legend."

TOURIST OF THE YEAR

As all of you surely know by now, we're running a pretty amazing contest to find the TOURIST OF THE YEAR where one lucky person will win a trip to Iceland courtesy of Icelandair. Inspired by Iceland and yours truly! Now that the year is almost out, we've gotten some really cool submissions in from readers who may be our contest winners.

Mike Millar from Toronto, Canada

"You sometimes hear people talk about how visiting a certain country can change your life forever, and now I finally understand what they were talking about all this time. So thank you, Iceland, for being you. For your views on gender and LGBT rights (I want to try to marry Jon Gnarr. Partially for citizenship, but mostly because he's awe inspiring, and is probably a great dancer. Don't let my girlfriend know I said that), for the fact that you have the world's only penis museum (a very humbling experience, I must say), for your Big Lebowski themed bar (One of my biggest regrets is not finding out they had a weekly trivia contest until three hours after it ended, due to seeing so many bands. So, hopefully you can help me remedy this horrible injustice) for the elves, the hotdogs and everything in between. But most of all, thank you, Iceland for getting it right."

It is the eleventh hour and if you think you should be our lucky winner, then head over to www.touristoftheyear.is and submit your travel tale! Good Luck!

TRACK OF THE ISSUE

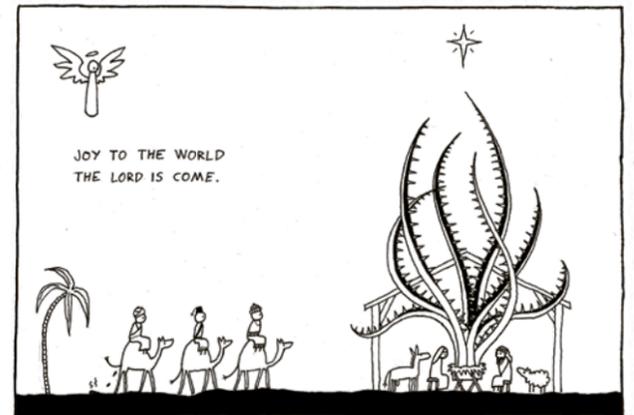


Adda: "My Brain Drain"

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The title track from Adda's soon-to-be released EP is anything but a real "Brain Drain," it's more like food for thought. The opening lyrics are a lobotomy in which Adda literally disassociates herself from her tired brain and personifies the organ. She sings beautifully and with a charm that channels Joanna Newsome and lyricism as freaky-folk as Devendra Banhart. Her one-woman-and-a-guitar shtick is simultaneously plucky and smooth; she's both playful and dead serious. Adda's brain would have reason to be tired right about now. After she raised funds for the production of the album via Karolina Fund this fall, she set out to hitchhike around Iceland playing shows and sharing the new music. Give this track a spin. You'll likely want more of Adda – and her brain.

POPULAR HITS



HVGLEIKUR DAGSSON



Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
grapevine@grapevine.is
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Editor In Chief:
 Haukur S Magnússon / haukur@grapevine.is

Editor:
 Anna Andersen / anna@grapevine.is

Editorial:
 +354 540 3600 / editor@grapevine.is

Advertising:
 +354 540 3605 / ads@grapevine.is
 +354 40 3610

Publisher:
 Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / hilmar@grapevine.is
 +354 540 3601 / publisher@grapevine.is

Contributing Writers

Kári Tulinius
 Árni Arnason
 Burke Jam
 Björn Teitsson
 Davíð Roach
 Helgi Hrafn Guðmundsson
 Nathan Hall
 Ólafur Margeirsson
 Óli Dóri
 Óskar Bragi Stefánsson
 Páll Hilmarsson
 Patricia Þormar
 Paul Fontaine
 Ragnar Egilsson
 Sveinn Birgir Björnsson
 Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir
 Vera Illugadóttir

Journalist
 Larissa Kyzzer / larissa@grapevine.is

Journalist & Listings editor
 Tómas Gabriel Benjamin / gabriel@grapevine.is

Editorial Interns
 Alex Baumhardt / alex@grapevine.is
 Jonas Kellermeyer / jonas@grapevine.is
 Kristján Leitma / kristjan@grapevine.is

Art Director

Hörður Kristbjörnsson / hordur@dodlur.is
Design:
 Hrefna Sigurðardóttir / hrefna@dodlur.is

Photographers:

Alisa Kalyanova / www.alisakalyanova.com
 Magnús Anderssen / www.magnusanderssen.com
 Nanna Dís / www.nannadis.com

Sales Director:

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
 Helgi Þór Harðarson / helgi@grapevine.is

Distribution manager:
distribution@grapevine.is

Proofreader:
 Jim Rice

Listings:
listings@grapevine.is

Submissions inquiries:
editor@grapevine.is

Subscription inquiries:
 +354 540 3605 / subscribe@grapevine.is

General inquiries:
grapevine@grapevine.is

Founders:

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson,
 Hörður Kristbjörnsson,
 Jón Trausti Sigurðarson,
 Oddur Óskar Kjartansson,
 Valur Gunnarsson

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



Photographer: Baldur Kristjánsson
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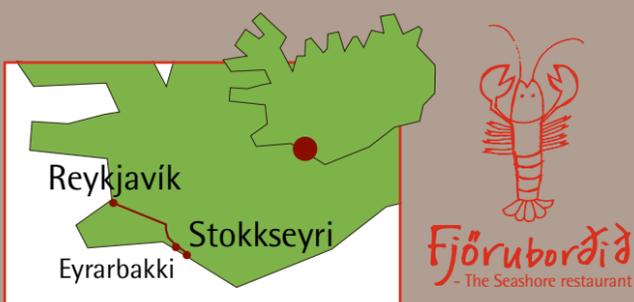


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Sour grapes & stuff

MOST AWESOME LETTER

If you return from a trip to Iceland with your emotions unscathed, then you are a stronger better man than I, Gunga Din. This is a land of majestic landscapes, waterfalls, which should make Niagra eat her heart out, and of a people of extraordinary resilience.

[...]

Everywhere we went there was friendliness and co-operation: the receptionist who seemed to multi-task in the hotel, the young man, of Viking build, who sat beside us in the cafe/restaurant and wanted us to see the sights and experience the countryside, the bus drivers who drove for kilometers on end and never a complaint was heard.

Iceland, please don't do a somersault and return to the sea. The six million tourists you expect in 5 years would be seriously disappointed. Your people are proud of their traditions language and environment, being quite wary of the last. My name, that is, my last name, in the Gælic, means From the North, so part of me is part of you. Please don't

disappear.

Tommy Norris
Ireland

Dear Mr. Norris:

We were very pleased to receive your four-page letter—hand-written correspondence is a dying art, and we are sad to see it go—and also very happy to hear that you had such a positive experience, with such competent guides, here in Iceland. Also, please rest assured that we have every intention of keeping our feet firmly planted well into the future: no somersaults. Or at least, not ones we can't bounce back from.

Come and see us again sometime,

The Grapevine

Blása! Blása!...Blása aftur! (Do not drive slowly in Miklabraut)

Hello everybody! I would like to tell you about something that happened to me recently.

I have been living in Iceland for more than two years and I very seldom see any police around. In fact I thought there wasn't any. Last Saturday I found out that the police is always there when necessary! Perhaps!

My daughter was giving a party for her birthday, and my wife and me decided to spend the night out and let her and her friends use the flat where we live. After eating out at a restaurant, where I drank a beer and lots of glasses of pure and fresh Icelandic water, we were curious to see, from the outside, what our daughter and her friends were doing at the party. Typical parents' worries! We were satisfied to see they were having fun in a peaceful way and planned to spend the rest of the night in a pub. We were not in a hurry so I did not need to use a shortcut to go downtown: the longer the way the better. I turned into Miklabraut and drove slowly since I was also talking with my woman about our future in Iceland. However, all of a sudden something strange happened. A car behind us, very close and flashing.

What the hell! It was the police!...I decided to stop and turned on the direction lights. When I was getting off the car a policeman was already on me saying with a menacing voice: "Do not get off! Stay in the car...You're drunk!" I tried to keep calm and replied "I don't think I'm drunk. I was at the restaurant. I just had a beer! ("and a lot of water since the food was really spicy"), but it was more than two hours ago." He wasn't convinced at all...."You were driving too slowly! People who drive slowly are drunk!" "I beg your pardon? The speed limit is 60 km ph. Is there a minimum speed limit?" "No, but people usually drive very fast when they are in Miklabraut." ... He ordered: "Stay in the car! A colleague of mine is coming with the equipment soon."

At last his colleague came! "Now, please, þú þarft að blása hér!" He ordered me. I breathed in and blew as hard as I could

into a tiny tube connected to an electronic device with some digital numbers on it. I blew and blew, but the numbers did not show any signs of life. The two men were really disappointed by the test result, so they insisted I was not blowing hard enough. I breathed in again and strongly blew out all the air I had in my lungs. I did it three or four times. I was exhausted!... I didn't even have the time to tell them they made a terrible mistake, that in a few seconds, after staring at the breathalyzer which showed zero point zero zero-0,00, they ran away without even apologizing.

So come on! You could have understood I wasn't drunk without being so rude! The fact is that I was a bit scared by being stopped by the police for the first time in two years that perhaps I behaved in a strange way. Anyway, I learned the lesson! Now I know whenever I drive Miklabraut, I ought to remember not to drive too slowly, because policemen will stop me. They won't if you exceed the speed limit! If it happens to you to be drunk, just drive fast and the police won't stop you! Just kidding!

Michele Broccia

Dear Michele:

This is a truly strange story. Are you absolutely sure, sir, that you aren't drunk right now? Luckily, many of us at Grapevine do not have cars, so we can probably avoid detainment on Miklabraut, either for driving too fast *or* too slow. Unless there is a law against walking while drunk...in which case, maybe we better start running home.

Yours in sobriety and haste,

The Grapevine

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In Iceland's Fish Industry, The Women Are From Marz

One seafood company stands out among the men

— Alex Baumhardt



The very centre of the Marz Seafood headquarters in Stykkishólmur is pillared by a tall shelf, stacked with books by female writers, Annie Leibowitz's photography collection "Women" and a big tablet of female body paintings titled "The Nude."

It is a bright and totally open space save for one private office, and even that door is left open. It belongs to Erla Björg Guðrúnardóttir, who started Marz Seafood in 2003. Over the last ten years it has become the only entirely female-run seafood exporting company in Iceland and one of the most successful in an industry dominated four to one by men.

My girls

Forty-one-year-old Erla calls the five females she runs Marz with 'her girls' and she speaks of them with the same level of affection and adoration as she does of her three daughters, who are also 'her girls.' This could be because there is no distinction between the employees of Marz and her family—they are one-in-the-same. "I take care of my girls," Erla says. "I treat them with respect. I want them to marry me when they come to work."

They share a catered lunch everyday where they talk about everything from a daughter's singing career to business strengths to an upcoming trip to Burma. They take a break for fresh juice midday; they go out for drinks on weekends and take a group trip together once a year. They've run a marathon, climbed a mountain and completed a triathlon together. They are a dynamic group of women from different backgrounds and of ages that differ by up to twenty years.

"I think I have a mixture of very tough women; they are not typical women," Erla says.

Fast growth

Tough and atypical were part of Erla's upbringing in a fairly poor and unpeaceful family in Reykjavík's Breiðholt district, from which she was driven to be independent. When she was 15, she moved away from home with her boyfriend and had a daughter shortly after. They were together for five years and Erla lived an accelerated adolescence. "When I look at my daughter today, 15 going on 16, and I think of her leaving home and moving in with a boyfriend and cooking and pretending to be 40—I wouldn't want that for her, but I think it largely explains how I am today."

When she was 24-years-old, she met her husband Sigurður Ágústsson, who grew up in Stykkishólmur and ran a salted-fish-production factory there. They moved to his hometown and, in her disinterest in the handful of clerical and administrative positions at banks and shops in the town of 1,100 people, she enrolled in a business administration programme at Reykjavík University. She completed her education in two-and-a-half years, most of the time remotely from Stykkishólmur, with occasional stretches of up to three-weeks in Reykjavík studying and taking exams while her husband watched their then one-year-old daughter.

At university, a teacher asked the 120 people in one of her business classes which of them wanted to run their own company. The male-female divide in the room was about 40:60

and nearly all of the men raised their hands. Only Erla and a few other women raised theirs.

"I had always wanted my own company, that was nothing new. So I founded this and gave it a name that had an international ring to it—Marz Seafood," Erla explains.

No small fish

Fish, a passion and resource-driven way of life in Stykkishólmur, became her passion too. She got started with 1,000,000 ISK (\$8,238.86 USD) of her savings and began buying and selling cheaper seafood products that the big companies didn't want to deal with. She needed to gain the trust of producers, who started by selling her one pallet of fish at a time. It wasn't until several years had passed that Marz began buying fish from Sigurður's production factory.

In 2004, the company's second year, Erla hired the first 'girl' to help her manage all of the accounts. By this time she was selling to different traders, supermarkets and industrial companies in Europe—most places but the UK. "Icelanders sell most of their fish to the UK," Erla says. "So when we were starting, nobody wanted a new player in that market, and I had to find other markets that people didn't want to put so much effort into."

She began selling to Italy and France and ran the operation out of a 25-square-metre loft above Sigurður's factory. She took on more employees, all women, and expanded to a second office in Denmark, staffed by two girls year round. In 2010, she moved into the new space in central Stykkishólmur, a 400-square-metre converted post office. She hired a man once but it was a brief engagement. Beyond that, all of her employees were, and are, women.

It's business and it's personal

"I think when you reach a point of three or four [women], it's very hard for a man to come into the group. I mean, if we found a suitable man, with the right skills, we would hire him. But I think that would take a very confident and self-assured man. There is a dynamic here with these women," Erla says.

She's never been at the receiving end of off-the-cuff remarks about her all female staff and she even had one producer tell her he would stop working with her if she hired men. "I think gender is such an obsolete idea though," she says. "You can have very masculine women, very feminine men."

Erla identifies as a feminist because she fundamentally believes in equal rights. This is not a value that is held in all of the countries where she does business. Regardless, Marz has been able to break into markets where conservative gender roles are still valued. "What it comes down to," she explains, "is—do you have the product they want? Do you have the price they want? Then they get over it. I could probably grow faster in some of those countries if I had men, but we're still doing business with them."

Erla does acknowledge two qualities that stand out among an all-female workforce: empathy and intuition.

When she talks with her producers, it tends to be more personal. "We ask them about their kids and their families," she says, "I'm not talking with them about football; we connect on a different level."

She is also largely driven by a gut instinct she sees as inherently female. "I use my intuition a lot when I'm doing business and I think that is a pro for women, being able to use that gut feeling. I know that's not something you can measure or prove, but I've learned over the years to trust it," she says.

Alternatively, she sees less risk-taking among an all-female company.

"Girls in general are more risk averse than men and sometimes it can be limiting," Erla says. "I just don't

"If we found a suitable man, with the right skills, we would hire him. But I think that would take a very confident and self-assured man. There is a dynamic here with these women."

jump into things. I want to be certain, I want to be sure that what I'm doing is the correct, right thing to do."

Regardless of gender, "If you don't have the right people to back you up, then your company is not going to work," she says.

Sign of a great leader

The power structure at Marz is fairly linear. Beyond Erla's role as the head and face of the company, she works closely with the other employees and encourages them to think as independent innovators.

"We have very lax power here. The girls choose their own titles. If the logistics girl wants to be 'manager of logistics' or 'director of logistics' it doesn't matter, really."

Erla subscribes to the notion that great leaders should surround themselves with people different and even cleverer than themselves—in Erla's case, a variety of clever and diverse women. "I don't believe in a great hierarchy," she explains. "It doesn't matter if you've worked with me for nine years or six months. It's about whether or not you can deliver what you say you're going to deliver, about how hard you work."

After ten years, Erla has learned that the most steadfast way to get a foothold in this industry is with respect earned through knowledge above all else.

"I think that me and the girls," she says, "when we sit down at a meeting, as soon as we open our mouths, people listen. That's not about being male or female. We know what we're talking about and we know what we're doing."

NEWS IN BRIEF

by Larissa Kyzer



With the holiday season upon us, it's time for a little old fashioned Icelandic hospitality. It seems that visitors from the UK are the most susceptible to our charms, **with 53,000 British tourists visiting Iceland in October alone.** Iceland has welcomed an astounding 700,000 travellers from all over the world since the beginning of this year, so it stands to reason that we know how to show folks a good time.

While some esteemed visitors get the royal treatment, certain locals have not been treated so well. Take, for instance, **the 39 employees of RÚV, Iceland's national broadcasting service, who were laid off without warning (21 others will soon be let go).** In a press release, Páll Magnússon, the director of RÚV, stated that these cuts were prompted by the new state budget proposal. However, these budget cuts will not be confirmed for sure until the end of December. The lay-offs sparked several well-attended protests organised by outraged citizens who—recalling comments by several MPs that RÚV is biased towards EU membership and that the station receives "an abnormal amount of money"—believe that they were "politically fueled."

Iceland also experienced a sad first in its history this month when police shot and killed a man who had opened fire from his apartment in the Árbær neighborhood in Reykjavík. Two policemen were shot and wounded by the man, who they tried to subdue with tear gas before shooting him. The man later died from his injuries. **This is the first time that a civilian has been shot and killed by Icelandic police.**

Customers of Vodafone, one of the country's primary telecommunications companies, experienced another dubious "first" in Iceland's history. Following a website break-in perpetrated by a group of Turkish hackers, the passwords, text messages, and personal information of over 70,000 Vodafone customers—including MPs and government ministers—were published online. The attack was possible because Vodafone had not encrypted passwords and, in contravention of Icelandic law, was also storing communications data that was more than six months old. **With 300 MB of data stolen, this attack is the largest cyber attack that Iceland has ever experienced.**

It seems that many people aren't interested in keeping the private, well, private (or should we say their "privates" private...). A recent survey conducted

Continues over

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			10:00	10:00	10:00					
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	
			14:00	14:00	14:00					
		17:00*	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00*			
			20:30**	20:30						

* From 15 May to 15 September

** From 15 June to 31 July



Elding
adventure at sea

Continued...

by Masters' students in journalism and reporting at the University of Iceland found that **nearly 15% of respondents admit to having sex on campus.** "School isn't just a place to study," one anonymous interviewee remarked, which is probably a sentiment shared by some students in the Faculty of Business Administration. It recently came to light that for years, **a student entertainment committee has been organising official student events to strip clubs.**

Such outings would probably be more difficult if Reykjavík's notorious "champagne clubs" were given the permanent kibosh, but even as **police shut down the VIP Club for suspected prostitution,** just around the corner, **Strawberries, which was raided in October, still has a valid liquor license and has reopened.**

Perhaps it was with these latest strip club scandals in mind that **'geirvarta,' or 'nipple,' was declared the ugliest word in Icelandic.** This finding followed the results of the University of Iceland's Most Beautiful Word contest, which declared the word 'ljósmóðir,' or 'midwife,' to be the language's most lovely.

Pretty words aren't enough to bolster the spirits of the many whose hearts broke as **Iceland's national team failed to qualify for the World Cup** during their away match against Croatia. Or perhaps Icelanders experiencing winter doldrums should blame Daylight Savings Time instead, or rather, the lack of it. The chairperson of an Icelandic health organisation issued a statement declaring that **the lack of Daylight Saving Time in Iceland contributes to depression in Icelanders.**

But even as the days are growing shorter and darker, Christmas is on the horizon, with all its attendant delights. Reykjavík's mayor did his bit to herald the arrival of the holidays: in early November, **Jón Gnarr travelled to Norway to chop down the city's 2013 tree himself.** At the time of its chopping the tree, which had been carefully cultivated for Reykjavík for ten years, was 42 years old.

So What's This Christmas Book Flood I Keep Hearing About?

— by Kári Tulinius | Illustration by Megan Herbert

If you have read any guidebooks about Iceland, you will have read about the Christmas book flood, or jólabókaflóðið, which refers to the fact that a majority of Icelandic books are published in the run-up to the holiday season. It is in the 'top five' on any travel writer's list of Factoids about Iceland, along with "Icelanders believe in Elves," "regular people can read medieval manuscripts," "the prime minister's home phone number is in the phonebook..."



And don't forget "Icelanders are inbred!" That one's my favourite.

Yes, that joke never gets old. As opposed to the rest of the Top Five, the Christmas book flood is a real thing. It is driven by the tradition of giving books as Christmas presents. During World War II, one of the few imported goods that were not strictly controlled was paper. It was therefore relatively cheap to print books and therefore they were a reasonably affordable gift item. World War II was also the high point of Icelandic nationalism, during which 97% of all those eligible voted for independence from Denmark.

And buying books was a big insult to Danes because... they don't like books? I don't get it.

It had little to do with Denmark directly. In some ways literally, as Denmark was occupied by Germany during almost all of World War II. But Icelandic cultural pride was built on the idea that Icelanders had a unique heritage because of the literature written on the island during the medieval period. Which as guidebook factoids go is pretty accurate, though literate Europeans did not sit with their ink-stained thumbs up their asses for the entirety of the Middle Ages and tons of great works were put to calfskin from Constantinople to Clonmacnoise in Ireland.

Clonmacnoise? Isn't that the name of the sound file that plays when an Apple computer is turned on?

It is a monastery in Ireland where the oldest manuscript of Irish medieval epic, The Táin, was written. But for more on that you need to read The Dublin Grapevine (Motto: "Fighting Irish stereotypes is a thirsty business"). But as a part of the self-image boosted by nationalists, Icelanders started to think of themselves as a uniquely literary nation. The idea of giving books for Christmas fit that idea snugly, and so this economically created tradition survived the end of import controls.

So this Christmas Book Flood is pretty unique?

Not really. For instance the French, who admittedly also have the self-image of a uniquely literary nation, have a pre-Christmas publishing season as well, known as the La rentrée littéraire, and if you wish to learn more about that I direct you to Le Paris Grapevine (Motto: "Shrug"). But nonetheless, hundreds of titles are published in Iceland in the months preceding Christmas, including dozens of novels, which is a lot for a nation of 320,000.

Only hundreds? The BBC told me that one in ten Icelanders will publish a book in their lifetime.

Employees of the BBC fact-checking department, if they have one, I am not going to bother to check, were

sitting around with their ink-stained thumbs up their asses on that one. It would be a more reasonable statistic to pull out of your ass that one in ten Icelanders will see something they have written in print, be it an obituary about their grandma or a poem sent to their school magazine. You would need at least four thousand titles a year by first time authors to reach that percentage. This year, about 700 new titles were published, most by established writers.

If I were I guidebook writer, I would probably put that one-in-ten Icelanders publish a book factoid in there anyway.

Maybe it will replace "Icelanders are inbred" in the top five. Though to be fair to travel writers, that inbreeding factoid rarely appears in respectable guidebooks. While the Christmas Book Flood is still massively important to Icelandic publishers, other markets have taken off in recent years, most notably the tourist book market, making the business less focused on this short period of the year.

Still, readers must be thrilled about all these books being published before Christmas.

The lucky few who can read them, yes. You have to be fairly quick to reserve a copy of the most popular and talked about titles from the library. Or you can arrive early enough at one of the bookstore cafés to get one of the copies which are not wrapped in plastic. Most people will not read any of the books until after receiving them as gifts. Being an Icelandic literature buff during the Christmas Book Flood has been likened to the experience of readers in the Soviet Union when otherwise censored so-called samizdat literature circulated in handfuls of copies among dissidents, and many more people talked about them than actually read them. For more on samizdat, I direct you to The Moscow Grapevine (Motto: "Mostly not censored").



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Shadow Boxing With The Banks

Iceland's Homes Association Fights For Mortgage Reform

— By Larissa Kyzer



During a single week in early October, 154 Icelandic families quietly defaulted on their mortgages and had their homes put up for forced state auctions, or foreclosure sales. They aren't the first families to be threatened with the loss of their homes this year, and based on current trends, they won't be the last. Rather, these families are part of a steadily increasing number of Icelanders whose bankruptcy is precipitated by compounding loan interest and skyrocketing principals, victims of what MIT graduate and researcher Dr. Jacky Mallet referred to in this paper as "the most unique instrument of financial self-destruction over the last 30 years."

Index-linked loans, or Verðtryggt lán, as they're called, make up at least 85% of the Icelandic mortgage market, according to The Homes Association of Iceland. This association, which represents about 10% of Iceland's homeowners, is currently suing bank lenders for providing misinformation about the benefits of these loans. It also contends that just as foreign currency loans were deemed illegal in 2010, index-linked loans are in violation of European Economic Area agreements, which ban "unfair terms in consumer contracts."

Given that Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð has been an outspoken critic of loan indexation—and organised much of his election campaign around promises of mortgage reform and debt relief—you might expect this lawsuit to have the government's full and vocal support. The reality, however, is very different.

Index-Linked Mortgages: A (not so) short explanation

While index-linked loans are all too common in Iceland, they are dramatically different from the loans most commonly available to homeowners in other countries. They therefore deserve some explanation, although it is difficult to do this without a detailed discussion of Iceland's longstanding problems with currency devaluation, hyperinflation, monetary expansion, and borrowing practices. However, the shortest and simplest explanation (still neither all that short nor that simple) is as follows:

Index-linked loans are negatively amortized, which means that they are

structured in order to have extremely low initial payments. This sounds—and looks—like good news for borrowers, but it actually means that monthly repayments are not enough to cover the interest that is accruing, let alone the loan principal. So, even as you are making monthly payments on your loan, the amount you owe is actually increasing—drastically.

To make matters worse, in Iceland, on top of a base fixed interest rate, the principal of an index-linked loan is directly connected to the Consumer Price Inflation Index, and the repayment schedule is most often set to 40 years, versus say 25 years in the US. In a country with a history of hyperinflation, this is disastrous.

To illustrate this more concretely, take an example offered by Vilhjálmur Bjarnason, the chair of the Homes Association. When researching home loans available to him in 2005, Vilhjálmur looked at an index-linked mortgage. The loan he wanted was for 26 million ISK with a 4.15% fixed interest rate. Estimating for 3.5% inflation in the coming years, he found that under the terms of the index-linked loan, he would eventually be paying 120 million ISK back to the bank. In reality, however, Iceland has had 8–9% inflation over the last eight years. So had he taken a loan of 26 million ISK in 2005, Vilhjálmur's loan principal would have mushroomed to a total of 560 million ISK.

"For people from other countries, it's very difficult to understand these loans," he says. "They say, why did you let the government and the bank rob you every day for 30 years?"

Tilting at foreclosures

For three years, Vilhjálmur has dedicated himself to fighting for loan and mortgage reform in Iceland. He gets no salary for his work, although he works full time and has four children at home. He works out of what used to be his office when he was a real estate agent, a profession he worked in for 20 years.

"The main reason I got into this," Vilhjálmur explains, "is because I had been advising so many people to take foreign currency loans."

Vilhjálmur himself opted for one of the now-illegal foreign currency loans for his home in 2005, and lost his home in a foreclosure sale after the crash. Under current Icelandic law, even if the courts determine that the conditions of a loan agreement were illegal, individuals who have already gone bankrupt and lost their homes cannot recover any of their assets. So despite the fact that the loan, which drove his family into bankruptcy has now been determined to be illegal, there is no way for Vilhjálmur and his wife to recover their property.

After the crash, it was deemed advisable to transfer these loans into Icelandic index-linked loans, but despite the fact that their legality is also being challenged, the banks continue to foreclose on families who are defaulting on their loan payments.

"One of the things I have been working on," he says, "is that you should be able to get your house and your collateral back. If you go bankrupt, there should be a special loan officer who then takes over your property, but does not immediately sell it. This is an issue that the govern-

ment never talks about. They just talk about what will happen to people after foreclosure. But then you are accepting the foreclosures, not stopping them."

Vilhjálmur is frequently in contact with members of parliament, presenting the Homes Association's case, and requesting rectification of current mortgage and borrowing laws. One of the individuals he regularly approaches about this matter is Minister of the Interior Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir. He happened to have a meeting already scheduled with her the week that the 154 families had their homes put up for sale. Following this meeting, Vilhjálmur says, Hanna Birna made a statement to the press, saying that loan providers' constitutional rights could not be overturned, and moreover, that in consideration for the individuals who have already lost their homes, it would be immoral to change the foreclosure process now.

"So even as you are making monthly payments on your loan, the amount you owe is actually increasing—drastically."

"It's as if you have an open mine shaft," Vilhjálmur says, "but you decide to leave it open out of respect for the people who have already fallen down there."

He wonders about Hanna Birna's position. "Why is she so aggressive in defending the banks? Why is she not defending our homes? She is our minister and the constitution is for the people, not for companies. If I could understand her reasoning, I could fight against it. Right now, I'm like Don Quixote."

For the greater good

According to Vilhjálmur, it has actually been extremely difficult to get any public comment whatsoever from a government official on these matters. Most often, his presentations and petitions are met with nearly unilateral stonewalling. "It is like fighting an invisible foe," he says. "No one is really opposing me—they just aren't do-

ing anything about it."

But then this also begs the question of where the public stands on the matter—and just where are the individuals who have lost their homes?

According to the Homes Association, 15% of registered voters signed a petition for the abolishment of index-linked loans, and they say that polls have indicated that as much as 80% of the Icelandic public supports such reform. And there have been sporadic news reports and testimonials from Icelanders who are facing foreclosures. But there is also indication of a growing despondency among those at risk of mortgage default.

Vilhjálmur and the Homes Association offer their advice and support to homeowners facing foreclosure, and will accompany them to the hearings where their situations are reviewed. In the case of the 154 families who had their homes put up for auction in October, however, only one individual came to the Homes Association and requested assistance. He says that none of the other families even attended the hearings in which their assets were seized.

"We are trying to tell people: 'you have to defend yourselves, you have to do something,'" he says. "It has been five years [since the crash], and people are just...seriously, they are sleeping. But we shouldn't have to do this—the government should have done it."

Should the court rule in favour of the Homes Association, and deem index-linked loans—like the foreign currency loans before them—illegal, the hope is that there would be a substantial basis for reforming mortgage and foreclosure practices in Iceland. If, on the other hand, the Homes Association does not win their case in Iceland, Vilhjálmur says that they have no intention of dropping the matter. Rather, they will take the issue to the European Free Trade Association court, as Iceland is an EFTA member. "What is illegal, is illegal," he says. "We will never stop."

Turn the page to read a related piece about the government's recently announced debt relief measure for households.



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Ólafur is a Ph.D. student in economics at the University of Exeter, emphasizing FDI and financial stability.

The Great Icelandic Jubilee

Making sense of the debt relief

— Ólafur Margeirsson



■ Sigtryggur Ari

The hottest story coming from Iceland now is the one about the government-initiated debt relief to households. Here is my take on it, focused only on a handful of the issues related to the act itself and, perhaps more importantly, its potential economic impact.

The basics

Framsóknarflokkurinn ("The Progressive Party," PP) promised to carry out a debt jubilee if elected in the latest general elections. They were. And they formed a coalition government with Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn ("The Independence Party," IP).

As the IP did not agree with the PP's idea of simply cancelling the debt, the outcome is a mix of both parties' ideas: 80 billion ISK (roughly 400 million GBP) of household debt will be outright cancelled, and an additional 70 billion ISK will become available to people who use their third pillar pension savings in the next three years to pay down their household debts.

So what's the crack?

Icelandic households will get 150 billion ISK (750 million GBP) of their household debt "cancelled" over a four-year period. I say "cancelled" because they are in fact paying down 70 billion ISK of it themselves with the tax-free pension savings.

The rest, 80 billion ISK, will be outright cancelled in four annual instalments, although the borrower will immediately feel the positive impact on his or her monthly payment burden. Each household that has an indexed mortgage specifically declared to buy property for its own use (buy-to-let mortgages are excluded!) will get a maximum 4 million ISK of the debt written off. Non-indexed loans get no write-off, but the tax-free

pension savings can be used to pay additionally onto the principal in the future. The tax-free pension savings can also be saved and later used to buy a flat. This is why they say that even current tenants will benefit from the measures.

But how are they paying for all this?

Right, that's a bit hazy. The short answer on the list of FAQs on the Prime Minister's Office website is classic nonsense: Q: How is the debt relief financed?

A: "The Treasury will collect increased revenues in the next four years to cover the cost of additional state expenditure resulting from these actions. The actions will therefore neither be financed by additional Treasury borrowing nor with the granting of state guarantees."

Right, so the no-bullshit answer of is they're going to increase taxes!

Where are they going to "collect increased revenues"? Specifically, they are going to tax the estates of the old banks, i.e. the banks that went bankrupt in 2008. Their liquidation process is going veeeeeery slowly, to a large extent due to capital controls, which are holding back the process. Yet the estates have to be liquidated before we can abolish the capital controls. It's like being a driver with two back seat drivers, one demanding you drive faster and the other demanding that you slow down. Which one are you going to make unhappy?

The government is going to make the old banks unhappy. Besides outright taxing them to pay for a debt jubilee for households, they are considering changing laws that would force them to speed up the liquidation process.

I have two immediate concerns about this.

First, those are two birds in the bush, but not one in the hand. Are we definitely sure that they can tax the old banks? This sentence alone from the Prime Minister's slides says it all: "The committee [behind the debt jubilee] assumes that the measures will be fully funded over a period of four years."

Great going, guys. I do this all the time, too. I just book my vacation to French Polynesia and assume that I can finance it! 80 billion ISK!? Pennies mate, I'll pick them up off the floor one day!

And even if they can tax the old banks specifically (there are some concerns about whether it would be constitutionally possible or not), won't the old banks, which are the main owners of Arion and Íslandsbanki banks, not just pass at least part of the cost onto their customers? Competition in the banking industry in

Iceland isn't great you know.

Second: OK, if we can tax the old banks to get cash for a debt jubilee, couldn't we have used the money for something else? Like the Icelandic public radio, which we're practically shutting down? Or using it to pay decent wages to doctors and nurses? I'm not putting myself up against the debt relief as a principle, just pointing out that we didn't have to spend all the cash on it.

Or maybe we can tax them even more and spend that tax income on something nice!?

In sum

Now, there are some good things about this measure.

First of all, they did it! Jubilee is here, well done guys! You proved that this is politically possible and economically that it doesn't have to be absolute nonsense. Some very indebted households will feel quite relieved and this will have a positive impact on the economy although the impact may be short lived. The tax-free pension part of it also makes perfect sense and simply boils down to the fact that it is not a smart to save with a 2–3% interest when you owe debt bearing 4–5% interest.

But I do have to admit that I have concerns, besides the obvious ones like the taxation issue.

First, the primary loan, or the new loan, which the borrower has to pay off, will still be indexed, just like the original loan that is now being partially written off. We will therefore still have all the negative effects of indexing mortgages in Iceland, including more volatile and higher inflation, higher interest rates, a less effective monetary policy and the risk of having to have another debt jubilee in 10 years time or so.

Second, and closely related to my first concern, although there is no direct increment in money supply because of the measures, I believe we can safely assume that not only will we have some potential demand-pulled inflation immediately in the wake of the jubilee, but also increased credit demand as well (especially if we have an increase in moral hazard due to all this: will people take on more debt because they anticipate another debt jubilee in the future?).

As the increased credit demand will be met with new loans that increase the money supply, we will end up with further inflation pressures. And because the principal of indexed debts will grow with more inflation, we will get some, or even all, of the "jubilee" debt back.

The Central Bank will also respond

with an interest hike to try to hold credit demand back. That will hit the borrowers with non-indexed loans, as their interest rates are potentially readjusted upwards. (A more effective and sensible way of limiting credit growth and inflation would be to impose direct credit controls and connect them to the banks' own net holdings of liquidity in foreign currencies. But I doubt the Central Bank will go down that road: you can't teach old dogs new tricks.)

Third, although the net assets of the old bankrupt banks will contract (assuming everything goes according to plan), we will still have "considerable" pressure on the balance of payments because of increased consumption and demand. Now, of course, part of the reason for those measures is to revive household consumption, but if it takes us into even riskier waters with the balance of payments than we are in, doesn't that just signal that the exchange rate is too strong? And imagine what will happen if and when the exchange rate goes down: inflation goes up, principal of debt grows back and we're back to square one.

So again: why, oh why did they not abolish indexation parallel to those measures?!

Fourth, and this is perhaps my most serious concern. We haven't fixed the institutional drawbacks of the Icelandic economy. Besides still having the indexation on mortgages, we still have a high self-imposed rate of interest stemming from the pension system (which is required to get a real rate of return of 3.5% and it controls assets equal to about 120–130% of GDP). What do you think will happen to the long-term rate of interest with such a gigantic buyer of financial liabilities that demands a high minimum rate of interest? Has anybody heard of monopsony?

Although politically this may fuel some fires, even in other countries where over-indebted populations may be nudged to demand jubilee, I fear that the net effects of this particular debt jubilee will not be significant in the long run, at least from an economic point of view. When it comes to the Icelandic economy, I fear we will only have short spurts of economic bounce back. It is not enough to cut the leaves of the weeds, we need to dig out the roots as well.

An extended version of this piece originally appeared on Ólafur's blog: <http://icelandi-cecon.blogspot.com>



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And If You Don't, We'll Leak Incriminating Information About You

— By Tómas Gabríel Benjamin



■ Sigtryggur Ari

While families in Iceland gather together over the holidays, at least one couple will not have that privilege. After the Ministry of the Interior decided to uphold the Directorate of Immigration's ruling to deport Nigerian asylum seeker Tony Omos on November 19, he went into hiding and left behind his seven months pregnant girlfriend Evelyn Glory Joseph.

The day after his planned deportation, Fréttablaðið newspaper published a front-page story claiming Tony was a suspect in a large human trafficking case in Iceland and Evelyn, one of his supposed victims, was pressured into falsely claiming he was the father of her unborn child. This information was reportedly leaked from the Ministry of the Interior.

Tony's lawyer, Stefán Karl Kristjánsson, told the Grapevine that his client denied the trafficking allegations, which were brought against him fourteen months ago. The police have not pursued the matter since, and would not comment on whether the case was still open.

"When Tony came to Iceland he declared he was seeking asylum as a refugee," Stefán said, "but the Directorate's

answer was to send him back to Switzerland [the country he came to Iceland from] to process his asylum application." Stefán has sought a dismissal of this deportation ruling, claiming that Tony's application had not been processed by Icelandic authorities, and asked that the matter be handled with expedience, allowing Tony to remain in Iceland until a verdict had been reached.

Evelyn, who has a pending asylum application herself, has denied being coerced by Tony to claim anything, and sources close to her say she had never mentioned him with regard to her past in Nigeria. "He is the father of my child, he is not trafficking people," she said in a radio interview. She claims they met in Iceland and she is willing to have

a paternity test to prove her expected child is his. If that is the case, deporting him would violate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Iceland ratified in February.

A troubled leak

Following the leak, one of the minister's assistants, Gísli Freyr Valdórs-son, sent out a couple of contradictory press releases. First, he suggested that a ministerial member of staff could have privately collected and disseminated the information. Then he retracted his statement, saying that nothing suggested inappropriate information had come from the ministry, despite having just confessed to newspaper DV that all signs pointed to the leak originating from the ministry.

Minister of the Interior Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir has not made any statements regarding the matter, but MP for the Pirate Party Birgitta Jónsdóttir and MP for the Social Democratic Alliance Sigríður Ingibjörg Ingadóttir have requested that she appear before the Constitutional and Supervisory Committee to shed light on the leak.

Meanwhile, Evelyn's lawyer Katrín Oddsdóttir has not requested that Persónuvernd ("the Data Protection Authority") investigate the leak, but she said she hasn't ruled it out. "I am baffled as to how very personal information about my client stumbled into the media without her knowledge or consent," Katrín said.

Troubled asylum seekers

Áshildur Linnet, an Icelandic Red Cross project manager dealing with asylum seekers and refugees, was unable to comment on whether the Red Cross was aiding Evelyn and Tony, but she informed us that the organisation provides support to all refugees and asylum seekers who seek it. Although she said that the process had improved for all involved in recent years, the system was simply overloaded.

"Everyone involved agrees that cases take too long, and wants to help process

applications faster," Áshildur said. "People live under a variety of conditions, and we've worked to improve the standard of life in collaboration with the authorities. Although children and families are given support, more could be done in the way of social measures for asylum seekers in general."

Iceland does not have a good track record when it comes to handling refugees and asylum seekers. Pia Prytz Phiri, the UN Refugee Agency's regional representative, deemed the protocol of jailing asylum seekers upon entry unjustifiable. "It is plainly stated that you cannot punish refugees for illegally entering a country," she said, referencing the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Áshildur echoed Pia's concern.

"I am baffled as to how very personal information about my client stumbled into the media without her knowledge or consent."

Earlier this year Ghanaian asylum seeker Kwaku Bapi was jailed for 30 days for travelling on falsified documents. Whilst at the Litla Hraun maximum security prison, other prisoners reportedly turned him into their slave, making him wash their dishes and clean their rooms before beating him savagely.

Even those who are not jailed upon arrival will in all likelihood be denied asylum. According to statistics from the Directorate of Immigration, 93.5% of all applications for asylum were turned down from January 1 to September 30, with 128 of 137 applications rejected.

Whether or not the Directorate decides to fully process Tony's case, his lawyer Stefán believes that Hanna Birna needs to take a stance on the leak. "If she believes her ministry's actions have caused my client or Evelyn any damage," he said, "then of course she should apologise, but if not, then that's that."

It seems certain at this point that the couple will not spend the holidays together.

This All Sounds Strangely Familiar

Tony Omos's story is reminiscent of the story of another African asylum seeker who was deported in July 2009. Despite the fact that Paul Ramses was married with a child born in Iceland and threats had been made to his life for his political activity in Kenya, the Directorate of Immigration denied him asylum and escorted him out of the country. Activists ran onto the runway as Paul's plane was taking off, but to no avail and he was sent to Italy. However, after public outcry, then Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason reversed the Directorate's decision and brought Paul back to Iceland. Paul was eventually given a residency permit in 2010 on humanitarian grounds.

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Húsbandið

Ólafur
Stefánsson

Kvartettinn
Kvika

Spilmenn
Ríkinis

Kristín
Eiríksdóttir

Selló-Stína

Area Of Stylez

Kitty

Von Sometime

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Kór
Heyrnarlausra

Spectrum

Alla daga



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'Tis The Season Of Björgvin Halldórsson

The voice of generations

— Árni Hjörvar Árnason



■ Baldur Kristjánsson

Whether or not you're aware of it, you've probably heard Björgvin Halldórsson's voice a couple of times today if you're in Iceland. You might even be listening to him as you read this. In the decades' worth of music that he's released to critical acclaim, he is still most prevalent on the radio this time of year. So much so that he must be considered the father of Christmas pop music in Iceland.

But he is so much more than just the father of Christmas pop music. He's a phenomenon. His contemporaries know the 62-year-old singer from Hafnarfjörður as Iceland's first pop star. Never before had the nation idolized somebody like it did Björgvin in the late '60s and early '70s. There were even persistent rumours that Björgvin-crazed teenagers attempted to knock out one of their front teeth to look like their idol, who had chipped his tooth in a swimming pool accident in his teens.

"I couldn't get it fixed straight away. The knock was so severe that it cracked the bone that holds the tooth," Björgvin says when I enquire

about the validity of this story. "I obviously hated having a broken tooth, but learnt to live with it when I saw Paul McCartney sporting a chipped tooth in the music video to "Hello Goodbye." Stories about those kids trying to knock their teeth out circulated fairly early on, but I never really got any conclusive proof. Maybe it's just an urban myth, but isn't there always a touch of truth in those?"

For those born to the generation who were allegedly going for the chipped-tooth look in their youth, Björgvin's voice has been an inherent part of growing up. He sent us to sleep with his children's records, he was the voice of Stöð 2—Iceland's "other" TV

station in the '90s—and the rest of his music was everywhere.

Björgvin is the perpetual patriarch of pop music. Björgvin is our Elvis. He's our Sinatra. He is our Legend.

Chipped Teeth And Pophátíð

To wit, Björgvin's Facebook page is actually called "Björgvin Halldórsson (Bo Hall) Icelandic Music Legend." As I hesitantly enter his studio, which is above a shipping company in an industrial part of his hometown, I can't help but feel the title is fitting. His beautiful high-end recording studio is stacked with racks of vintage guitars in their dozens and microphones that would make any audio geek weak in the knees. It also functions as a small museum, homage to his career and accomplishment. The walls are covered floor to ceiling in gold records and various awards, countless memorabilia and pictures from his illustrious and colourful career, intermixed with massive posters featuring Dylan, The Beatles, The Stones and other greats. These are clearly the stomping grounds of a legendary pop star.

It doesn't actually require any subjective observation to maintain that he was Iceland's first pop star, as he was actually crowned "Pop Star" at Pophátíð, a battle of the bands contest, in 1969. To a packed audience of 4,000 people in Laugardalshöll, his band Ævintýri beat stiff competition from the likes of Trúbrot and walked away with the prize.

"Bjössi á Mjólkurbílnum? 'Poppa Piccolino'! It's a sound we've grown up with. Besides, the Italian language lends itself so neatly to being copied in Icelandic. They've got the long rhythmic syllables that Icelandic has."

"We became famous overnight and for the next couple of years and we experienced something like Beatlemania. We were once chased out of the youth centre Tónabær and had a crowd run after us down to Miklatún,

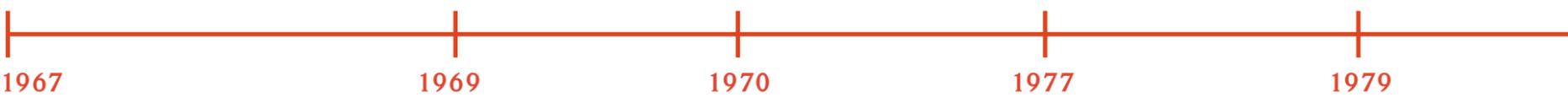
where we climbed the statue of Einar Ben and performed a few songs," Björgvin recalls.

"I never really intended to become a musician but after the whole Ævintýri era I've never really looked back. I had sort of reached a point of no return."

A point of no return indeed. In addition to fronting Ævintýri, Björgvin released his first solo record in 1969, singing a version of "Walk Away Renee," which had previously been recorded by Left Banke and Four Tops respectively. Legendary filmmaker Hrafn Gunnlaugsson wrote the Icelandic lyrics to the song, called "Þó líði ár og öld," and to this day remains one of the most beloved songs in Icelandic history.

From there he went on to play in a series of bands: Brimkló, Change, HLH Flokkurinn, Þe Lónlí Blú Blú Boys, Hljómar and more.

"Being in a band was always the most fun," he says, "but I realised pretty early on that bands are too volatile. There's always somebody just about to walk out. So I couldn't just rely on always being in a band. I needed to do something on my own. I guess I'm just built that way, I need to



Björgvin joins his first band, Bendix.



Voted Iceland's 'popstar' at the Pophátíð competition.



Joins the Icelandic band Changes, which signs with EMI in London.



Rejoins Brimkló, which goes on to release five best-selling albums over the next few years.



Joins comedy duo Halli and Laddi to form American Graffiti-inspired '50s rock band HLH Flokkurinn.

be in control of my own destiny.”

That need to control his destiny would lead to a steady stream of top selling solo records and various other projects. Björgvin's solo career coupled with his production duties on records for fellow pop stars, opera singers and symphony orchestras, makes him verifiably one of Iceland's most productive musicians to date.

The Modern Archivist

As he's showing me around the studio, we stop by a wall in the far corner that is plastered with photos from various points in his career. Talking me through pictures of him performing with everyone from Tommy Dorsey Orchestra to Rod Stewart makes him infectiously nostalgic.

“I was singing some Rod Stewart songs at Broadway [a nightclub Björgvin used to manage events for] and what do you know, the man himself just showed up and started singing along. After one song, he turned to me and said the tunes were too high pitched for him. He needed them in a lower key. But I just told him they were all in their original keys. If I can sing it, you can too.”

“If I didn't listen to this stuff I'd be lost in the woods.”

With so many equally compelling stories to tell, he was hard-pressed to name a favourite gig or proudest moment.

“You're only ever as good as your last gig,” he says. “I have all this stuff because I see myself as a bit of an archivist. Throughout the years I've amassed newspaper clippings and pictures of my peers and me. I've got folders of stuff relating to various years, you know, the folder called ‘Pop in Iceland 1970’ will have pictures and articles relating to everything between Ævintýri and Led Zeppelin. Somebody needs to collect all this.”

Considering that Björgvin's career has spanned four decades, we're undoubtedly talking about enough material to fill an entire museum and Björgvin is far from done. On his new album, ‘Duet 3’—the third in a series of record of duets—he's joined by representatives of the younger generation of Icelandic musicians, such as Lay Low and Arnór Dan Arnarson from Agent Fresco, and even though he's 33 years my senior his bright orange trousers and his thick-rim hipster glasses make him look considerably more “current” than I do.

“I feel like I am obliged to stay in touch with what's going on at any given point. To this end I listen to almost everything that is released in this country.”

To stress his point he picks up a few CDs from the piles scattered around his desk and shows me Jón

Jónsson, Kaffibrúsakallarnir, Mammut and more.

“If I didn't listen to this stuff I'd be lost in the woods,” he says. “But sometimes I feel like I've travelled back in time. Everybody is letting their hair grow out, has a guitar around their neck and is rocking out again. It's ‘back to the future stuff,’ which just goes to show that music is cyclical. Musical styles come back in a slightly different guise, but the foundations are always the same.”

His interest in staying in touch with the musical landscape is undoubtedly to some extent fuelled by his children's successes. His daughter Svala fronts electro outfit Steed Lord and his son Krummi is the singer in legendary noisecore band Mínus as well industrial electro band Legend. Still, his need to be current actually predates his children's emergence on the local scene. This is most notable on his Duet records and a series of Christmas records he's called ‘Jólagestir’ (“Christmas guests”), featuring a who's who in Icelandic music at the time of their recording.

“I love getting an idea and orchestrating it much like a film director casts the right people for the right role” he says. “That's just what I did on my recent record ‘Duet 3.’”

“I'm lucky enough to have all this amazing and varied talent wanting to join me. Having such a wide variety of musicians to collaborate with leaves me with the fun job of finding the suitable jackets and so on. I'm standing on the shoulders of giants.”

He's perhaps never been as in tune with the times as when he recorded a duet with Mugison in 2005. It was Bob Dylan's song “Make You Feel My Love,” which with Icelandic lyrics was called “Minning.”

“And then Adele sang it a couple of years later and became an international superstar. It just goes to show that we seem to have a pretty good nose for these things,” he says, gesturing to a massive print of early '70s era Bob Dylan. “And we've obviously got a picture of the master here.”

The Master Of Imitation

There is a very rich tradition of foreign songs being reinterpreted into Icelandic, a tradition that dates back to the birth of Icelandic pop music. And despite having written a plethora of songs, Björgvin's most famous ones tend to be these types of pop music imports, such as aforementioned “Walk Away Renee” and “Make You Feel My Love.”

“I think this tradition of ‘Icelandifying’ international pop songs has left a big mark on the Icelandic music landscape,” he says in a contemplative tone. “No artist ever appears fully formed. Their inspiration always comes from what precedes them and seeing as we've had all these songs so deeply rooted in our culture, they're

inevitably going to affect the music that follows.”

Björgvin is most well-known as a singer and interpreter of both international and Icelandic ballads and classic pop songs, but throughout his career, he's dabbled in every conceivable genre from country, heavy rock and gospel to '50s rockabilly, opera, and Christmas songs.

“It was when I was listening to those Italian pop songs on our holidays and watching Sanremo [an Italian song competition] that I started to notice a certain dramatic character in them that reminded me of Christmas music.”

“I'm always trying to reinvent myself,” he explains. “You see, Iceland is a small market, and you can't keep selling the same cookies. Besides, I am a complete omnivore when it comes to music and I like trying out different things.”

This chameleon-like quality of his reached its full potential when Björgvin took the job of music supervisor for Friðrik Þór's film ‘Djöflaeyjan’ (“Devil's Island”), a period film set after the Second World War when rock ‘n’ roll swept through the country like a storm.

“Friðrik asked me to be the music supervisor because this was the sort of music I had grown up on,” he says. “Growing up in Hafnarfjörður in the '50s and '60s meant that we could receive the radio broadcast from the nearby army base, so it was all American rock ‘n’ roll in my youth: Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis and the lot. I'd told Friðrik that we needed all the original rock ‘n’ roll hits to make this work, but I quickly realised that was never going to work as the licenses were extortionate.”

He therefore set out to painstakingly re-recording “Hound Dog,” “Great Balls of Fire” and more '50s rock ‘n’ roll classics with such precision that it took people a while to realise these weren't the original recordings.

“Know how we did this?” Björgvin interjects when he grows tired of my gushing about the quality of those recordings. “I got guitarist Villi Guðjóns, who's an absolute parrot and a genius, and other musicians of same calibre and we dug out all the old amps, the guitars, the mics and so on, and just meticulously copied every sound on those records to as much detail as we could.”

The King Of Christmas Pop

It's around this time of year when Björgvin's skill for mimicry and his way with production is easiest to observe. If he wasn't singing the Christmas songs you've heard, he probably produced them.

“It started when I sang on a Christmas record with Hljómar in 1975. We all felt like Iceland needed some pop Christmas songs because all we had at the time were the classic children's rhymes and folk songs,” he says.

Twelve years later, he released his first ‘Jólagestir’ record and since then the series, which counts four albums, has become the staple of Icelandic Christmas music. But what many don't know is that some of our favourite songs on those records actually started their lives as Italian love songs.

“I love travelling and when I do I try to leave the sheep's head and the mashed turnips at home. I eat where the locals eat, I do what the locals do. ‘When in Rome,’ as it were. So, when I went to Italy for the first time in the '80s, I fell completely in love with the place and savoured the opportunity to take in all their culture. This love of mine for everything Italian eventually came to include Italian music,” he says.

“It was when I was listening to those Italian pop songs on our holidays and watching Sanremo [an Italian song competition] that I started to notice a certain dramatic character in them that reminded me of Christmas music. My daughter Svala and I talked about this and felt that all these songs needed were some Christmas bells and new lyrics and they'd suit perfectly as Christmas songs.”

“It wasn't until sometime later that I started thinking, ‘Why Italian?’ And then it dawned on me: My predecessors, such as Svavar Gest, Óli Gaukur and Ellý Vilhjálms, all sang Italian songs. “Bjössi á Jólkurbílum”? “Poppa Piccolino”! It's a sound we've grown up with. Besides, the Italian language lends itself so neatly to being copied in Icelandic. They've got the long rhythmic syllables that Icelandic has.”

It certainly worked, as most of the Italian songs have outlived the Icelandic songs that featured on the same albums.

“Their influence on the culture is most obvious when various ad agencies start calling me and asking me for the rights to use some of them and I obviously have no idea. No point asking me, you'll need to chase down the original rights holders to find out. All these songs are now deeply engrained into Icelandic Christmas culture but ad agencies wouldn't be interested in them if it wasn't for their lyrics and the completely new meaning we've given them,” Björgvin says.

What's even more striking about these songs is the way they're pro-

duced. When I started comparing the originals to their Icelandic siblings, I found most of them to be pretty much identical to the originals. The arrangements and instrumentation are almost exactly the same across the board.

“If it ain't broken don't fix it,” he says. “We set out to stick to what had caught our attention about the songs in the first place. We'd try to put a little bit of ourselves into them by using updated synth sounds and so on, but didn't want to mess too much with their form. You wouldn't just decide to play “Brown Sugar” in minor would you?”

The Legendary Pop Star

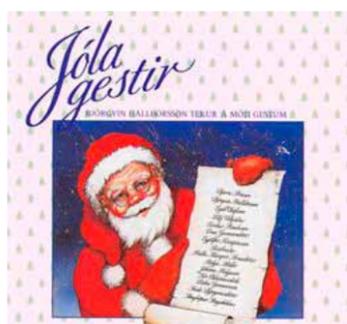
Before leaving the studio after an inspiring hour-and-a-half with Iceland's legendary first pop star, Björgvin decides to show me a portion of his massive guitar collection. Countless Telecasters, Gibsons and lap-steels remind me that when he showed me around earlier I had inquired about career highlights, but had forgotten to ask about any low points. So I squeeze the question in after a long conversation about hollow body guitars and sustain.

“Well, I'm not sure it could be called a personal problem really,” he says in a slightly sombre tone, “but I've sometimes felt that there is a complete lack of respect towards those of us who have been doing this for such a long time. I'm old school, and I have so much respect for all my elders. They've been around for longer and they know things better than I do. When I was starting out in music, I had so much respect for the guys who were there before us.”

The fact that bands such as Utan-garðsmenn (fronted by another musical legend Bubbi) laid into him in their single “Ha Ha Ha” (Rækjuregæ) in 1980, just solidifies his status as a musical legend. After all, they considered him a relevant pop culture reference 33 years ago. Either way, I pointed out that I'm not sure this applies anymore as is evident by the stellar cast of youthful talent he's had working with him on recent records. “Well, yeah, this might be changing,” he says. “I'm certainly flattered that a magazine like The Reykjavík Grapevine wants to talk to me.”

Well, it's about time we did.

1987



Releases first ‘Jólagestir’ (“Christmas guests”) album. There are now four.

1993



Releases gospel album called ‘Kom Heim,’ featuring the song “Gullvagninn,” which is one of his most popular songs to date.

1995



Represents Iceland at the Eurovision Song Contest and places 15th.

2008



His Jólagestir (“Christmas guests”) concept becomes an annual live gig.

2013



Releases his third album in the Duet series.



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Skálmöld & The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra

November 24 - 30 Harpa Eldborg

Words
Tómas Gabríel Benjamin

Arriving to Harpa's Eldborg Hall on Saturday night, I find my seat just before Skálmöld and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra begin their third and final sold-out show.

Around me, middle-aged dames with expensive pelts draped over their shoulder sit next to bearded metal-heads with their five-year-old kids, kitted out in Skálmöld t-shirts and ear protection. I had heard that on a previous night even the country's former president Vigdís Finnbogadóttir had been spotted throwing devil signs at the band, which formed four years ago and has since released two critically acclaimed albums.

Accompanying the six-piece band are 160 plus people making up the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the Hymnodia choir, Reykjavík Men's choir and Káranesskóli children's choir. The show starts with these three choirs performing an extended, goose bump-inducing version of "Heima."

What follows is a careful selection of meticulously rearranged songs from both 'Baldur' and 'Börn Loka' albums. The songs are slowed down, and their intensity paced so as to ward away metal-fatigue, which makes the show accessible to both Harpa season ticket-

holders and diehard metal-heads alike.

Guitar riffs and solos are alternatively supplemented or replaced by 22 violins and a booming brass team. Drum segments are lent further weight by massive percussion instruments, and the instrumental bridges are made larger-than-life with the full force of the 71-member symphony orchestra.

It takes a few moments to get used to the disparity between the electric and

"It was as if the heavens had opened up with Valkyries and the Gods welcoming the protagonist to the afterlife."

acoustic instruments, and the one segment featuring Addi from the band Sólstafir is noticeably lacklustre, but those are my only niggles about the otherwise awe-inspiring performance.

When the three choirs join in, it is as if the heavens have opened up with Valkyries and the Gods welcoming the protagonist to the afterlife in "Valhöll,"

and like lost souls are echoing the queen of the underworld's message in "Hel."

Skálmöld closes the show with "Baldur," a b-side from their first album, and the crowd rises out of their seats, clapping along to the 13-minute-long song. The concert proves an amazing experience for both fans who know the songs inside out and newbies to Skálmöld's Viking folk metal. My guest confesses that she didn't really like Skálmöld before arriving at Harpa, but she, like a number of others I speak to after the show, were blown away by the execution.

Of the hundred or so live performances I've seen in 2013, this was by far the most magnificent. If the Grapevine were to give stars for live reviews, I'm certain my editor would argue my rating broke the scale. For now, I'll simply suggest that those who missed the concert buy the live DVD, which will be released on December 19.



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Album Reviews

Daníel Bjarnason

Over Light Earth
2013

Fascinating, vast, yet remarkably intimate.



Words

Burke Jam

+ Don't call this experimental. A common misnomer in contemporary classical music is the term "experimental."

If there is anything experimental about composer Daníel Bjarnason's newest record 'Over Light Earth' it is the listener's ability to experiment with preconceived expectations of classical music. This record is intentional, poignant, and brimming with profound vision. It is unflinching, and simultaneously unpretentious.

'Over Light Earth' marks Daníel's third release and second solo album on the Reykjavík-based Bedroom Community label. While Bedroom Community is certainly host to a tour de force roster of artists, with a reputation for a vibrant collaborative work philosophy, this record truly maintains its own voice. Moving from flurried rushing intensity, to drifting breath—like passages, notes hang in air as if thrown up—not to be placed, but rather to hear their structural fall. See "Solitudes IV. Selge Ruh."

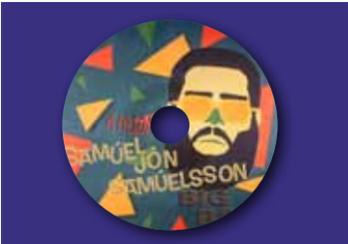
The record is comprised of three distinct pieces or movements: Over Light Earth, Emergence, and Solitudes. The title movement was commissioned by the LA Philharmonic for their 2013 season. The arc connecting the music is as ethereal as light itself—a sonic nebula harbouring each individual piece without necessarily defining it. Similarly there is a microscopic/macrosopic relationship existing between each instrument and its overall composition. While this seems like an obvious desired outcome for any recording, it is accomplished here by close-miking each individual instrument: a fairly unconventional technique in orchestral music. The outcome is a fascinatingly intimate listening experience with stunning result.

This work sees Daníel at a new high in his already remarkable career. The more the listener engages with this work the more they will ultimately get out of it. While this record may not be for the faint of heart or casual listener, the time invested is immensely rewarding.

Samúel Jón Samúelsson Big Band

4 Hliðar
2012

Unexpected Big Band Jams



Words

Nathan Hall

+ On Samúel Jón Samúelsson's retro-styled album '4 Hliðar' ("Four Sides", as in vinyl), the composer uses an extended album format to give listeners over an hour and a half of funk-laden tunes. The album shows Samúel's expert orchestrations for his jazz-based ensemble, letting harmonies blend deliciously between trumpets, saxophones, trombones, guitar, bass, and drums.

The main choruses on the album are excellently hum-able, and the improvisations are carefully thought out—there are no players here who'd try to impress you by playing a whole lotta notes, claiming they're "free jazz." There are some major funk influences here, for sure, from the Hammond organ in "Ordeo ad Chao" and the Iceland-ified "Afróbit," to the hypnotic dub aptly titled "Dubnotica." While "Ethiopian" veers a

little too jam-band, and the 1970s soul sounds can almost seem like game-show music, most of the time you find yourself swaying with the groove that you can't help but enjoy.

Some of the coolest moments on the album are when the ensemble steps out of its big-band role into something altogether new; you wouldn't expect a bunch of guys singing dreamy wordless lullabies, but exactly that happens on two tracks. "Falafel" is by far the most unusual track on the album. It begins with an almost electronic riff, and the middle of the track is more like a 1970s rock anthem. The track ends with several minutes of blaring horn tones—not blaring like a Dizzy Gillespie solo, but blaring like the horns of the ships in Reykjavík bay as they pull into the harbour. The effect, like much of this album, is mesmerizing.



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Nowhere Men

David Gordon Green remakes Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurðsson's 'Either Way'



Prince Avalanche, film still



Either Way, film still

Words

Óskar Bragi Stefánsson

'Prince Avalanche' is the story of two highway road workers—Alvin (starring Paul Rudd) and Lance (Emile Hirsch)—who spend the summer of 1988 working together in rural Texas. The film, which comes out this month, is a remake of the Hafsteinn Gunnar's 2011 film 'Á annan veg' ("Either Way"), which stars similar protagonists working on Icelandic mountain roads.

A remake wasn't immediately on writer/director David Gordon Green's mind. In fact, he worked his way backwards: Before anything else, he came up with the title 'Prince Avalanche.' Then, after shooting a Chrysler commercial with a small crew—featuring Clint Eastwood—he began searching for a project he could shoot run-and-gun. The drummer from Explosions in the Sky—who would eventually write the film score—suggested a location, the burnt-down state park of Bastrop, in Texas. Finally, in conversation with another friend, an art director, David explained he had all these things in place—title, small crew, location—but that he needed an idea. And that's when it all fell into place with the art director's suggestion that he simply remake a recently released Icelandic film called 'Either Way.'

In anticipation of the film's release, we met up with Hafsteinn and made a Skype call to David in Austin to talk about adapting and directing the film, remakes and growing up.

Óskar: David, could you tell us how the project came about?

David: Well, Hafsteinn and I didn't know each other until the movie was done, which is weird. What I was looking to do was a character piece about

a place, and the place is kind of a third character in the movie. I thought it would be a fun experiment, something I'd never done before.

Óskar: So, Hafsteinn, could you tell us about 'Either Way' and how it translated into a remake.

Hafsteinn: Well, I think it translated really well. The story is really universal. It could take place anywhere in the world. When I first learned of the idea to remake it, I thought it was a joke. But then I was just really excited to see what David would do with it. I was familiar with his work and I'm actually really happy with the outcome.

David: I was scared of meeting you.

Hafsteinn: Yeah? [laughs]

David: Because I was afraid you would just hate it.

David: I do remember one of our executive producers who was communicating between the two parties saying, "They want to know if you want to make it uh, a commercial movie or a little strange art house film," and I said, "Neither. I just want to start making something that feels like its own distinctive

universe and not have the expectations of what it would be."

And I thought that that was an interesting question because I think in my career there's two extremes. There's either the broad, commercial comedies or uh, or ... you know, very small intimate dramatic works, and I think one of the beauties of this project is it landed in a place that had an appreciation for both of the worlds that I've worked in, but didn't feel necessarily aligned with any of them.

Hafsteinn: When I did 'Either Way,' I showed it to one of my friends, and he said, "Yeah, that's great. It's like, you know, 'Dumb and Dumber' meets Abbas Kiarostami [director]."

David: [laughs]

Hafsteinn: And I thought that was a big compliment.

David: That's a great compliment. Perfect. Do you consider your film a comedy?

Hafsteinn: Um, not really, you know, I just consider the story, which is funny and sad, at the same time.

David: People get confused, I think, with 'Prince Avalanche,' and they ask me like what it's supposed to be. I was

really inspired by your movie, because movies are all too frequently defined by a genre and it's nice when you can kind of exist in your own weird little world.

Óskar: These two guys are working in a road crew and they're painting lines on the streets, and they're sort of constantly stepping over social lines with each other. Was that anything that you thought about when you wrote the film originally, Hafsteinn?

Hafsteinn: Not really, no. [laughs] Did you?

David: No, but you know, one of the beauties of both films, I think, is people read into them, and the mere simplicity of the fabric gives people's minds a chance to look into symbolism and metaphor and interpret it in different ways as opposed to if you're watching the sequel to 'Thor,' which I'm sure is great, but probably doesn't give you a lot of room to breathe intellectually. Not that it's not intelligent, but you know what I mean?

A lot of movies are so aggressive, with plot and story and cutting, and effects and music and noise. You can sometimes be overburdened with that and have a great experience, but not really let your interpretations thrive. So I love people talking about the movie. Two guys that are in the middle of the road and don't know which side to get on, and you know, people are reading into them constantly.

Hafsteinn: Exactly.

Óskar: Have you guys learned anything new about male-relationships while making these films?

Hafsteinn: I don't know if I learned anything new, but it's a big homage to masculinity and vulnerability, and allowing yourself to be emotional, as a man.

David: I had the experience writing it, which was very... I was sitting exactly

where I'm sitting right now, and I had two computers up. One was playing your movie [Either Way], and I would start it and stop. And on the other, I was transcribing it.

Hafsteinn: Uh-huh.

David: I found myself writing about both of these characters from my own perspective. I found that they both resonated with me. It was a time when I was a new father. I'd had twin boys that are now, you know, running around being crazy, but they were new on the scene then. And I started to relate to the life that I've had. I love to rage and stay out all night, there's that side of me, and then there's the other side of me that wants to disappear into the woods, and I really found myself personalising them both.

Óskar: Hafsteinn, was it an out-of-body experience seeing the remake to your film?

Hafsteinn: Was it an out-of-body experience? No, I had read the script, and then I went to see the film. I didn't really know what to expect, so it was definitely a weird experience, but a good experience, you know? It was kind of like seeing an ex-girlfriend with a new boyfriend or something like that, you know?

David: [laughs]

Hafsteinn: [laughs] But then when I saw it again in Berlin, at the International Film Festival, I knew what I was coming to, and then I really, really enjoyed it a lot, you know? But it was definitely a good experience. It was just, yeah, I guess it was weird a little bit, yeah.

David: [laughs] I think we should write movies for each other. Like you should write one, and I'll do it in Iceland. I'll write for you, and you can do it down here.

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□ Nanna Dís

Words
Alex Baumhardt

Twelve years ago, Reykjavík's "Little Christmas Shop" (Litla Jólábúðin) opened up in Anne Helen Lindsay's garage. Hers was the house with the Christmas lights up year round and the painted Santa Claus footsteps marking a path through her garden. She had been importing token goods like puffin dolls and magnets for tourist shops in the city, but business was slow in the wintertime when those stores were just trying to sell back stock that hadn't been picked up by summer visitors. Anne started importing Christmas items to entice the stores to set up Christmas sections and keep things fresh in the wintertime. Due to large demand, her Christmas imports spilled into her garage and suddenly, Christmas became a year-round celebration there.

Christmas crazed

Anne was born in Scotland but was adopted to, and raised, in Iceland. Growing up, the holidays kind of smelled like burning ammonia. Her mother was a hairdresser who worked out of their home and was busiest around Christmas, particularly with perms. Even so, Christmas day was the time she got her mother all to herself.

"I've always been crazy about Christmas," she says. "And to have a shop based entirely around Christmas, you have to be a little crazy."

The year-round decorations and Christmas kitsch she sold out of her garage attracted tourists to her home at all hours. Her garden was often teeming with guests to whom she served coffee and encouraged long visits. The scheme lasted for about four years until it became too much to live at work. One Sunday morning, a woman came knocking on her door very early, asking if she could see the Christmas shop. She was visiting from East Iceland and had to return that day. Anne threw a raincoat on over her pajamas and watched the woman walk around for twenty minutes, choose not to purchase anything and leave.

"I couldn't get any peace and quiet," she says. "So I said to my husband, that's it, we have to move to a new spot."

Icelandic santa

She moved it all into a space on Laugavegur, just three streets away from her garage, and kept the name Litla Jólábúðin. The shop has been open year-round for about eight years now and Anne is there every day of the week. Litla Jólábúðin survives the summertime due to the droves of tourists and its choice location. During the summer months of July and August, about 70 percent of her business is selling specifically Icelandic hand-made Christmas products to foreigners.

In addition to her adult customers,

Anne sees a lot of wide-eyed kids from all over the world come in to her store. Many of them buy Christmas letters that they can send to "Icelandic Santa" with the guarantee that, come Christmas, they'll receive a letter and a treat from him in the mail.

Typically Icelandic Santa will visit the shop around December 12, Anne explains with a playful smile, but he's been anxious to come sooner and has already made one appearance this winter. Still, he's very preoccupied with responding to and sending out those letters. In all of his Christmas preparations, Anne hopes he will not forget the large red boots that he's left outside of the shop for some time now.

In addition to Icelandic Santa, Anne shares many stories of the Christmas traditions of Iceland and the thirteen Yuletide Lads with her customers. This has put a good scare into some foreign children, who have never encountered the fear that colors the Christmas experience of their Icelandic counterparts.

Kind of a Christmas break

Anne's own home takes on the aesthetic of Litla Jólábúðin over the holidays, though none of her own decorations come from the shop. She once placed a Santa statue from Litla Jólábúðin in her living room and couldn't shake herself from thinking about work. Since then, she uses only items she's found at other Christmas shops on her travels.

The many Icelanders who depend on Litla Jólábúðin to prepare their homes for the holidays will sometimes tell her they miss when the store was in the garage and they had to follow Santa's footsteps through the garden.

Anne takes an appreciative look around the cheer and warm sparkle of her shop and expresses an important part of Christmas for most who work year round—the simple significance of taking a break. "I'm happy with this place," she says. "I'm done taking my work home with me."

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Lose Yourself To Swants

A small stretch for sweaters means a giant leap for pantskind



Nanna Dís

Words

Alex Baumhardt

It takes a keen eye and a bold character to see a sweater as “sassy.” It takes scissors, a tapestry needle, some safety pins, waste yarn and eight simple steps to see a sassy sweater as sassy sweater pants. “Swants,” as they’ve been affectionately dubbed by their creator, 25-year-old knitting guru Stephen West, are both an essential article of clothing and a verb. Swants are a sweater, flipped upside down with your legs in the sleeves and a bit of cutting and stitching to tailor them into fitted pants. The act of making swants is “swantsing” and when you’ve got them on your gams it’s time to do Stephen’s “swants dance.”

“Everything about Swants makes you want to dance,” Stephen says. “They’re stretchy, they heat your legs, they’re comfortable, so they make your legs want to do articulated movements, like kicks and splits, definitely.”

Step one: Take off your pants

Stephen was likely not the first person to stick his legs through sweater sleeves and wear them around like Indian Harbinger pants, but he was the first to sit for 12 hours cutting, stitching and developing a formula for tailored sweater pants. He posted the simple step-by-step instructions on his website westknits.com, and started making more of them himself, donning swants at coffee shops and even at night clubs in Amsterdam, his base city.

The formula allows for the average knitter, sewer or craft maven to make a pair of swants in about an hour. Stephen can crank out a pair in about 20–30 minutes now, and he estimates he has made 20 or more pairs for himself.

Through West Knits, Stephen sells knitting patterns and designs, and travels extensively teaching knitting workshops. His work has repeatedly brought him to Iceland, a Mecca of knitting culture and his favourite place in the world to visit.

Swants dance if you want to

His most recent jaunt to Reykjavík was over last month’s Iceland Airwaves festival with two of his best friends, Kyli Kleven and Steve May. Together, the three of them are the Fun Squad and they make videos of themselves knitting, dancing and exploring while knitting and dancing. In Reykjavík, they made a swants dance video, a “Places Where You Can Knit: Reykjavik!” video and went around cat bombing a number of Reykjavik’s strays (Relax! Cat bombing is taking little knit bits and putting them on cats). While swants dancing, they were spotted by a CNN photographer who posted a picture of them on CNN’s website along with an article on “How to be a Reykjaviker.” Over the last month, swants have been featured on a morning news shows in the U.S., on cosmopolitan.com and on the Fusion network. People from all over the world are sending Stephen photos of themselves in their swants, their swoveralls (sweater overalls) and their swonsies (a sweater onsie).

Cut of a different cloth

Dancing and knitting are stitched into Stephen’s everyday life. He went to university in both the United States and the Netherlands for choreography, but strayed from both to pursue his insatiable knitting habit. Swantsing and swants dancing have become the marriage of his two foremost passions.

Swants have spread particularly fast in the U.S., where Stephen says knitting trends are met with unmatched enthusiasm. It’s also where he’s received a trickle of laughable criticism for what a few see as destroying the sanctity of a beautifully made sweater. “Swants are about being sassy and confident and having fun,” he says, “and if those are things you can’t appreciate, then I just can’t have anything to do with you.”

“You know, some people wake up and make the decision to wear khakis every day.”

Stephen prefers to make swants from sweaters that have wild patterns and bright colours, which, when worn in public, tend to attract wide eyes either in admiration or confusion. For those who don’t understand the desire to make such a bold statement with their pants, Steven offers that it’s about colouring the world how you’d like to see it. “You know, some people wake up and make the decision to wear khakis every day,” he says.

Stephen has no interest in making swants and selling them on a large scale. He claims he has neither the patience nor the mechanical focus it would take to make them en masse. Some of his friends in the U.S. are hoping to make and sell them at shops and online, but his mind is already running with new patterns to create, ideas to try out and places to cat bomb and swants dance. “I want to see a swakini [sweater bikini]; I want to see a sweedo [sweater Speedo],” he says enthusiastically. “There’s really no end to what can be made.”

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Melting Kittens And Imprecise Clocks

We visit designer Þórunn Árnadóttir at Spark Design Space



Words

Kristján Leitma

Melting kittens, radiators that blush red when hot, clocks that stop time—welcome to the weird and wonderful world of Icelandic designer Þórunn Árnadóttir. After finishing her MA in product design at the Royal College of Arts in London in 2011, she moved back to her hometown of Reykjavík where she has been busy working on new designs. Amongst them is her newest PyroPet, 'Kisa,' a kitten-shaped candle that melts to reveal a charred aluminium skeleton.

Over the years, Þórunn has received numerous awards for her product designs, most recently being selected this year by Icon Magazine as one of 50 talents shaping the future. We met up with her at Spark Design Space, where she works when she's not teaching product design at the Iceland Academy of the Arts and ceramic design at the Reykjavík Visual Arts School.

You recently launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund your PyroPet project, and in just 10 days you raised more than double your goal of 40,000 USD. Did you anticipate such rapid success?

Not at all. I showed the PyroPet series two years ago in Milan and after that people posted photos of it on some blogs. Then it recently exploded on Tumblr. I didn't know it was a sellable product because I thought it was a silly idea. I found it surprising when loads of people were actually interested in buying it.

Where does the idea come from?

When I was at the Royal College of Arts I was working on the theme of losing something and I was thinking about objects, such as candles, which just disappear after they melt. So I was thinking, what is the purpose behind the candle? I was fascinated by how we make them in all sorts of different shapes, but they always just melt away. I wanted to make something more of it.

Why did you choose the colours pink and grey? Will there be other colours available later?

I like the contrast between the cheesy pink colour and the metal skeleton. A lot of people find it difficult to buy something pink so they've asked for black, but I think it's too dark. Light grey still works.

Will you be including other animals in the PyroPet series?

That's the idea, to keep adding to it. I've almost got a bird ready now called Phoenix. That will be launched later. We've got the first prototypes ready.

When will the production of the candles start?

January or February. We're starting to take orders from shops now.

Tell me about your Sasa Clock, which is also a necklace.

Sasa is Swahili and it describes the concept of time. In a lot of African countries there is a different attitude towards time. Of course they have clocks, but they're not used to relying so much on clocks as we are. For them it's more natural to live in the moment and not plan everything down to minutes and seconds. For example, in Ethiopia you wouldn't say it's 5:22. That would be too specific. They have a more relaxed concept of time there. So the Sasa Clock has an element of African time, being a necklace that you can take off and forget about the time altogether or you can use it to tell time, but it's not more accurate than five minutes.

How did you come up with that?

I really like to push myself into thinking differently about objects. What is a radiator? Does it resemble something else, like a vascular system? Then I link these two things together and see what happens. Can the house be a living organism? That's how I came up with the idea for my Sasa clock. I was thinking about whether there is another way that we tell time, and if it is different in other cultures than it is in Iceland.

So what's next for you?

I'm actually working on two other projects at the moment. One is a project in East Iceland in collaboration with three other artists. The project is called Austurland Designs From Nowhere. We are working with local materials and production in East Iceland. We're making the products from materials such as stone, seaweed, driftwood, fishing nets and antlers. We're showing them at Spark Design Space during DesignMarch next spring and the plan is to go to the London Design Festival after that. I can't say what we're making yet.

The other is a Christmas window display for the Geysir shops in Reykjavík and Akureyri. It has to do with jólakötturinn, or the Yule Cat, who is the Christmas fashion police. It will be launched mid-November when the Icelandic designer Erna Einarsson launches her new clothing line. The Yule Cat will be wearing clothes from her collection.



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Trading Reykjavík For Reindeer

Leaving the hordes in Reykjavík for the herd in East Iceland

Alex Baumhardt



EXPLORING ICELAND, THE FAROE ISLANDS OR GREENLAND IT'S EASY WITH AIR ICELAND





© Alex Baumhardt

Words

Alex Baumhardt

The novelty of a reindeer tour in the Icelandic countryside is the novelty of almost all 'tours' that take place in the Icelandic countryside: being in those pockets of remote beauty and getting the fuck out of Reykjavík for awhile.

I took a late afternoon flight from Reykjavík to Hornafjörður in East Iceland and was picked up by Magnús Guðjónsson (Maggi), who runs a farm and guesthouse in nearby Hólmur with his wife Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir (Gunna). Like much of Iceland's expanding tourist economy, they've chosen to run a guesthouse and tour service alongside their sheep farm. In the wintertime, this includes a tour of Iceland's wild reindeer, which are unique to the east of the country and leave their summer homes in the mountains to the grasslands and tundra of Hólmur.

Reindeer in Iceland are also a novelty in and of themselves. They didn't get here until the 18th century, when the king of Norway brought them over from Norway's Hardangervidda Mountains. He thought the Icelanders could raise them for food, but instead, they let them run free. Today, nearly all of the estimated 6,000 reindeer in Iceland are wild.

Get up and slow down

Before we hopped into a Range Rover to tear up land chasing down reindeer herds, Maggi and Gunna welcomed me into their guesthouse with cookies and tea. Their farm and the others around them about glaciers that are tongues of the massive Vatnajökull glacier and are wrapped in mountains

along the sides. The entrance to the farm faces the sea and the silence is only ever interrupted by gusts of wind blowing off the coast or a rare passing car.

After walking around the place, I was invited to a dinner replete with trout from a nearby stream, skyr with mountain blueberries and potatoes covered in fjallagrass, a wild moss that the reindeer and some Icelanders collect and eat in the late summer. It is rich in calcium and helps the reindeer grow big, sturdy antlers.

I fell asleep in a food-filled coma and awoke to a searing red sunrise. The earth out there is covered in a delicate sheet of ice and the mountains are dusted in snow. If you came to Iceland for peace of mind, Hólmur is that sweet spot where you rediscover time moving slowly and space vast enough to hear yourself think. Around 9:00, Maggi sauntered out of the house with sleepy eyes and a soft smile, telling me that he and Gunna take it very easy in the wintertime and there is no guilt in sleeping in.

After a breakfast that included Gunna's homemade bread and smoked trout, Maggi and I went through the livestock barn that they've branded as a petting zoo for tourists. They have several types of rabbits, loads of sheep and goats, chickens from China, and even two hens and a goat that will make cameos in the soon-to-be-re-

leased film "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" starring Ben Stiller. Various scenes meant to appear as Nepal were shot around Hornafjörður.

The last stop on the tour of the petting zoo was the little wooden cabana of Álfur (Elf) the reindeer, who scrambled up onto his knobby legs when he saw Maggi. Maggi is, by all of the little reindeer's knowledge and experience, his father.

Flying Reindeer

Álfur was a calf (a baby reindeer) when he was discovered by a reindeer inspector in the mountains east of Hólmur this past June. He was hungry, his mother was nowhere near and the man brought him to Maggi and Gunna where he was taken in and nourished with a mixture of milk, eggs and fish oil.

Prior to Álfur's arrival, Maggi and Gunna had petitioned the Environment Agency of Iceland (UST) for a permit to have a domesticated reindeer. Typically the permits are only given out to zoos, but Maggi and Gunna had wanted a reindeer of their own for foreign tourists to visit, snap Christmas photos with and get close to. Having a domesticated reindeer like Álfur is particularly advantageous to Maggi and Gunna's tourism business given holiday traditions in many parts of the world that actually developed out of the Arctic.

"In what amounts to a continuation of the magical trip, images of flying reindeer are central to Christmas tales in North and South America, Oceania and parts of Europe even today."

Historically, in the reindeer-filled regions of Norway, Siberia and Mongolia, people and reindeer shared a love of the Amanita Muscaria 'berserker' mushroom. Nordic shamans and Laplanders often claimed to have seen reindeer flying across the sky after consuming the fungi. On the 3,000-year-old mummified limbs of the nomadic Pazyryk people of Mongolia's Altai mountains, archaeologists have even identified tattoos of flying reindeer. In what amounts to a continuation of the magical trip, images of flying reindeer are central to Christmas tales in North and South America, Oceania and parts of Europe even today.

In Iceland, there are only three spots where you can see domesticated reindeer, one of which is the Reykjavík Zoo, the other is in Jökuldalur and the third is at Maggi and Gunna's place. In all there are an estimated six to eight domesticated reindeer in Iceland.

Herding reindeer with a Range Rover

We took Álfur outside to play and then Maggi, Gunna and I hopped into the SUV to get up close to a few herds Maggi had spotted on the horizon. The car rattled most of the encompassing peace while it dashed across their land, but the reindeer seemed unthreatened by it. It wasn't until I quietly crept up to them by foot that they took a keen awareness of another presence and, when I got within 100 meters, they all bolted.

We followed them with the car and snapped some pictures, tried more creeping up by foot and got closer each time. In all we spent about an hour going after two different herds while Maggi and Gunna filled me up with reindeer knowledge.

In the wintertime, Maggi wears a leather coat made of reindeer hide, which makes sense given the extreme warmth of the animals' pelt. Reindeer can handle temperatures of up to -70 C because they're covered in two layers: a thick, woolly skin topped with hairs that are hollow and can trap and heat air. Reindeer are fast, and can run between 40-60 kilometres per hour and they are fuelled by mosses and tiny white sprouts called reindeer grass. They have such a strong sense of smell that they can sniff out the white grass even when it's covered by white snow. In North America, a wild reindeer is called a caribou. They aren't called reindeer until they've been taken captive, so the term 'reindeer' in North America actually refers to a domesticated caribou.

Maggi pulled out his telescope so we could see the details of the reindeer from afar. One herd of about 14 had the faces of arctic cows, with long beards and terrifyingly heavy looking racks of bone atop their heads. In December, the males will lose their antlers and Maggi will go look for them to add to his collection.

We spent another hour or so visiting the Hólmsá River, getting up close to the glacier and learning about the history of the land. We heard ravens and tried to spot foxes that sometimes lay in front of rocks by the glacier, taking in the sun.

Perhaps it was looking for napping foxes that made our eyes heavier and we returned to the farm to relax, feast more and visit with Álfur who has the demeanour of a five-year-old and lives to play and love. The sun was beginning to set on the drive to the airport and by the time the plane landed, the streetlights of Reykjavík illuminated the walk home, a reminder that time was picking up again and moving on.



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Christmas Time With The Grumpiest Man In Reykjavík



Alisa Kalyanova

Words

Alex Baumhardt

In order to curb the disgusting amount of holiday cheer you all have, we wanted to get some perspective from the grumpiest person in Reykjavík. We put out the call for Grumps on Facebook and you delivered us a familiar friend: 30-year-old Malcolm Kenneth Fraser, from Lille, France, who has lived in Iceland for the past seven years. Below are his thoughts on Christmas, New Years and what 'grumpy' really means.

On Iceland

M: Whose idea was this?

A: It came up at an editorial meeting. We were pitching stories and the idea was presented so we cast the net on Facebook to find the grumpiest. Some said it might be you.

M: Yeah, I thought that it might have been directed at me.

A: Why do you think people see you as the grumpiest?

M: I don't know? I don't think I'm grumpy, I think I'm just very enthusiastic about the things I don't like. I'm just very critical.

A: So you think there's a distinct difference between being critical and being grumpy. Do you find yourself having to explain this to people?

M: Oh yes. Well, I'm often called negative, which I never understood because I consider myself quite enthusiastic in general. I mean, negative to me would be someone who is always depressed, which I'm not.

A: What are the things you're particularly positive about?

M: There are a lot of things I'm particularly positive about, I just talk more about the things I don't like, but usually for humorous purposes. I get easily irritated by things that most people don't. Some things just set me off - like pictures of food on Facebook - I can't deal with that.

A: Who inspired your grump?

M: I'm not sure. My dad is Scottish and he's been living in France for 45 years or so, and he's still very critical of the French, and I used to ask him, "Why do you live in France if you don't like it?" and I've often been asked that about Iceland, and I don't know - criticizing something doesn't mean you don't like it.

A: Ok, so after seven years you don't 'love' Iceland

M: No, I wouldn't say I do. I just happen to live here because you have to live somewhere and I'd rather live here than Uzbekistan or something.

On Christmas

A: What is your happiest Christmas memory?

M: I guess any Christmas before I was of age to buy stuff for other people.

A: So the time when you were just receiving.

M: Yeah, and now it's just tedious. I mean, I've never been a big fan of Christmas since that point when you had to start thinking about other people and gifts and so on. I've never liked Christmas. I guess now I see it as a family gathering and I enjoy it for that, more or less. I go back [to France] every year to see my relatives and I couldn't imagine celebrating Christmas in Iceland.

A: Have you ever spent a Christmas in Iceland?

M: Never. I wouldn't. I think there's something particularly dreadful about that.

A: How do you feel about Christmas music?

M: Hate it.

A: So you've never gone caroling or anything?

M: No, no, no. This time last year, my flatmate subletted her room for a few weeks and I was on holiday in Malta. I got an email from Vodafone saying that I had reached my download limit. So I emailed the guy subletting the room and asked, "What's going on? We've reached the limit," and he said, "Oh, well I've been downloading Christmas music."

He had downloaded 15 fucking gigabytes of Christmas music. How could anyone download 15 gigabytes of Christmas music?

On The New Year

A: What about the New Year?

M: New Years is just the worst party ever. It's that time of the year where everyone is supposed to go out or party or celebrate nothing in particular, you know? They're not celebrating anything.

A: Well they're celebrating the start of the New Year.

M: Yeah but what does that mean?

A: You have probably been to worse theme parties than a New Year's party.

M: Actually no. The thing is, everyone is celebrating and I think what happens - and why I find New Year's Eve so shitty - is that this includes people who usually don't celebrate, people who usually do not go out and party, and they just kind of tone down the party for everyone else. Like, the party is shitty because the people at the party are really shitty.

A: So it would be better to not have them?

M: Might as well, yeah. But you do it anyway and it's just stressful. I'll celebrate in Poland this year. Last year, I was stuck in France because I lost my passport so I stayed there, which wasn't planned, and usually I organize a party every year...

A: Wait, wait - that goes against EVERYTHING you just said.

M: Yeah, well, it's because I don't want to go to a shitty party. So I prefer organizing the shitty party myself

On The Meaning Of It All

A: What is the most gracious or generous thing you've done over the holidays for someone?

M: Must one wait for Christmas to do gracious things? Sounds like something people do in American sitcoms.

A: What do you hope people remember this holiday season?

M: Don't expect anything special from anyone.

A: What do you believe is the true meaning of Christmas?

M: It's to alleviate the emotional pains of winter with some paltry entertainment.

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Laugavegur 54

Six Icelandic Christmas Songs That Don't Suck

By Óli Dóri and Davíð Roach

The holidays can be hard on the ears for most people with a modicum of taste for decent music. It's a well-known fact that most Icelandic Christmas songs suck pretty hard, but of course there are always some exceptions. We present to you some of those:

1. Alli Rúts – “Grýlupopp”

Alli Rúts was a car dealer who moonlighted as an entertainer in the '70s and in 1972 he recorded a four-song Christmas album. It included a cover of the electronic instrumental song “Popcorn” made famous by Hot Butter that year. He replaces the synthesizer bleeps of the original with a bassoon and melodica and sings some hilarious lyrics about Grýla and Leppalúði buying some popcorn for Christmas.

2. Amaba Dama – “Yo La La”

There's something wonderful about juxtaposing reggae music that is usually associated with sunny Caribbean beaches with the Disney idea of a white Christmas. Amaba Dama, one of the stalwarts of the Icelandic reggae scene, made this little gem of a Christmas song two years ago and we like it so much that we started blasting it already in the middle of November.

3. Björk – “Jólaötturinn”

“Jólaötturinn” (“The Christmas Cat”) is a beast that, according to Icelandic folklore, eats children who don't receive new clothes in time for Christmas. The song is Björk's contribution to the ‘Hvit Er Í Borg og Bæ’ Christmas compilation, issued on the Hljóðaklettur label in 1987. “Jólaötturinn” is one of few real Icelandic Christmas songs in which the song and lyrics are both performed and written by Icelanders. The lyrics were written by the Icelandic poet Jóhannes úr Kötlum and the song is by Ingibjörg Þorbergs.

4. Bogomil Font – “Hinsegin Jólátré”

Bogomil Font is the crooner alter ego of Sigtryggur Baldursson, former drummer of the Sugarcubes and a whole lot more. In 2006, he teamed up with Stórsveit Reykjavíkur to record ‘Majones Jól,’ an album full of swing jazz renditions of classic Christmas staples. Our favourite is “Hinsegin Jólátré,” sung from the first person perspective of a gay Christmas tree dreaming of having a disco ball on its point instead of the star.

5. Haukur Morthens – “Aðfangadagskvöld”

“Aðfangadagskvöld” is the opening song of Iceland's first Christmas LP—‘Hátíð í bæ’ by the late great Haukur Morthens (the Frank Sinatra of Iceland). The album was recorded in Copenhagen with Danish musicians and the Icelandic guitar player Ólafur Gaukur and released two months later in December 1964 by Hljóðfæraverzlun Sigríðar Helgadóttur (HSH).

6. Stafrænn Hákon – “Glussasnjór”

The Icelandic musician Ólafur Jósephsson (Stafrænn Hákon) loves Glussi (Hydraulic fluid) so much that, shortly before Christmas in 2010, he released a Christmas themed album called ‘Glussajól.’ “Glussasnjór” is Stafrænn Hákon's take on the Christmas classic “Let It Snow.” He makes the song his own with a beautiful arrangement and very funny lyrics about hydraulic fluid snow, Tony Danza's chin and many other Christmas-related topics.

We put these songs into a Youtube playlist for you. Find them at our Youtube page, www.youtube.com/user/reykjavikgrapevine.



Straum.is has been active since last summer, with writers Óli Dóri and Davíð Roach documenting the local music scene and helping people discover the best new music. It is associated with the radio show Straumur on X977, which airs every Monday evening at 23:00.



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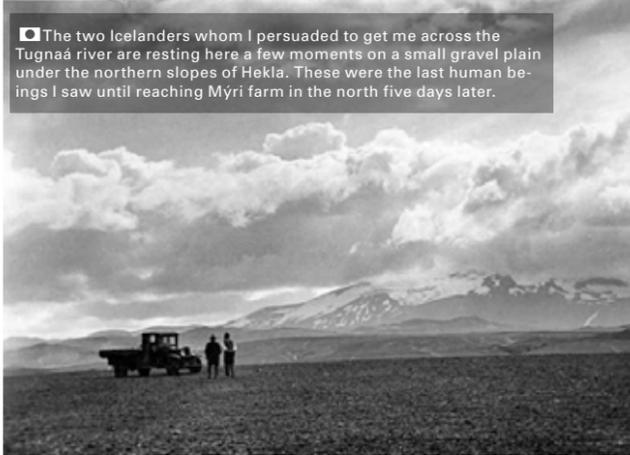
Words by Helgi Hrafn Guðmundsson
Photos by Horace Dall

Horace Dall (1901–1986) lived on a hill in Luton, England. He pointed telescopes towards the stars and photographed the planets of the outer region of the solar system. He was an optician and an innovator of scientific instruments.

But he was also interested in this planet and travelled all around the world with a camera. In the summer 1933, he made an impressive bicycle trip around Iceland. Travelling in Iceland was a different experience in the 1930s. Roads were bad and there was almost no infrastructure for tourists. A cyclist had to cross very difficult terrain practically everywhere, and especially in the mountainous regions.

Dall made a remarkable crossing of Sprengisandur on his three-speed Raleigh roadster. The photographer and cyclist Ben Searle wrote about Dall's trip: "Sprengisandur is the virtually trackless volcanic and glacial wasteland of central Iceland and probably the bleakest area of Europe. Dall made the first crossing of the Sprengisandur wilderness by any wheeled vehicle."

As is evident, Dall was a gifted photographer and in his captions, written in the form of a travelogue on the backs of his photos, provide wonderful descriptions and impressions of this strange country.



☐ The two Icelanders whom I persuaded to get me across the Tugnaá river are resting here a few moments on a small gravel plain under the northern slopes of Hekla. These were the last human beings I saw until reaching Mýri farm in the north five days later.



☐ The "road" to Reykholt goes through much wild and barren country.



☐ I spent the fourth night in the wilderness on a ledge in sight of the river with the unpronounceable name (Skjálfandafjót) which runs into the Arctic.



☐ The "road" to Reykholt goes through much wild and barren country.



☐ I took this photo at the memorable moment when two white specks—unmistakably farmhouses—came into sight after topping a hill. Still 8 miles away and several bad rivers and gullies to cross, but I was in great spirits, and very touched at the success of my navigation across the wilderness.



☐ The beautiful ponies have crossed an overgrown lava field and the crater is only 1/4 mile away.

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STUFFED WITH STUFF

Issue 18

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P.6

“If we found a suitable man, with the right skills, we would hire him. But I think that would take a very confident and self-assured man. There is a dynamic here with these women.”

In Iceland, the women are from Marz, the men are from Mars and the fish are still from the sea.



P.22

“Swants are about being sassy and confident and having fun,” he says, “and if those are things you can’t appreciate, then I just can’t have anything to do with it.”

In Iceland’s sweater/dance scene, you can have it all—if you’re willing to take a Swants.



P.28

“I don’t think I’m grumpy, I think I’m just very enthusiastic about the things I don’t like.”

Meet the grumpiest man in Reykjavík.



P.26

“The novelty of a reindeer tour in the Icelandic countryside is the novelty of almost all ‘tours’ that take place in the Icelandic countryside: being in those pockets of remote beauty and getting the fuck out of Reykjavík for awhile.”

In East Iceland, you can eat grass, chase reindeer and meet a Chinese hen named Tina Turner.



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iNFO

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Issue 18 - 2013

www.grapevine.is

Your essential guide to life, travel and entertainment in Iceland



The Jungle Drum Strikes Back

Emiliana Torrini

Harpa | December 6, 19:00 & 22:30 | 4,900 ISK

There are many artists in Iceland but only a few which you can consider real stars, and Emiliana Torrini is up there with Björk and Sigur Rós. Don't let her Italian-sounding name fool you, Emiliana sings with such a thick Icelandic accent that she puts Jónsi to shame. Emiliana's song "Jungle Drum" was a worldwide hit that made people all over dance to its infectious beat. Now she is back in Iceland to play two major shows back-to-back at Harpa. Tookah our word for it, Emiliana is amazing live. JK

Photo by Ari Magg

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

December 6 -
January 9

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

Friday December 6

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Ellen & KK Christmas Concert
Dillon
22:00 The Vintage Caravan
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Bellstop Record Release Concert
Harlem
22:00 DJ KGB & Elements: Smokin Joe, 45M1R, Viktor Birgiss, No Class
Harpa
19:00 Emilfana Torrini
22:30 Emilfana Torrini
Hressó
22:00 Kaleo

Saturday December 7

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Spaðar
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Aeterna / ITCOM / Ophidan I Hallgrímskirkja
17:00 Christmas Concert with the Motet Choir and Diddú
Harlem
22:00 Bronx #3 - Sleazy McQueen (US) / Steindor Jónsson
Hressó
22:00 Baggabandið
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Jesús
Loft Hostel
21:00 Anatomy of Frank / VAR
Neskirkja
17:00 Christmas Concert Of The Reykjavík Queer Choir
Nordic House
20:00 Markowitz, Andersson & Mogensen

Sunday December 8

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Raggi
Hressó
22:00 Live Jazz Jam Session
KEX Hostel
14:00 Cozy Sunday with the Reykjavík Boys' Choir
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Troubadour Haraldur Einarss

Monday December 9

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Sigurður Guðmundsson & guests
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadours Hjalmar & Dagur
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Jesús

Tuesday December 10

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Roland
KEX Hostel
20:30 Christmas KEXJazz
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Troubadour Haraldur Einarss

Wednesday December 11

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Jana María & Band
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Hreimur

Thursday December 12

Dillon
22:00 dj Flugvél og Geimskip
Harlem
22:00 Halleluwah, Vök & Good Moon Deer
Háskólabíó
20:00 One time showing of "The Nut Cracker" performed live from London's Royal Opera House
KEX Hostel
20:30 Tilbury Album Release Concert
Loft Hostel
20:30 Sóley

Friday December 13

Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Sisi Ey / Halleluwah
Harlem
22:00 Ojba Rasta Record Release
23:30 RVK Soundsystem reggae night
Hressó
22:00 Próban
KEX Hostel
20:00 Megas & Uxi with Ágústa Eva
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Halifax & SandalaGústala

Saturday December 14

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Brother Grass Band



Jazzy, Dark Winter Night American/Danish Jazz Trio

Nordic House | 20:00 | 2,500 ISK

Richard Andersson's journey to Iceland and to jazz bass has been an unconventional one. At the age of 14, he became blind after toying with homemade fireworks in his native Denmark. He didn't let this hold down his love for music, but has studied jazz at the Manhattan School of Music and collaborated with Phil Markowitz, a legendary jazz great. Andersson moved to Iceland this autumn and this performance at Nordic House with Markowitz (on piano) and Anders Mogenson (on drums) will be the last stop on their European winter tour. **AB**



Troubadour Madness! Troubadours all over the place

All across town | Every day of the week | Free!

What would Reykjavík be without the lovely troubadours putting their all into entertaining us simple folk, every evening of the week? That is a hard question to answer seeing how people generally fall into one of two groups - they either love or hate the lot of them, with no middle ground to be found. So we at the Grapevine recommend that you discover for yourself which group you fall into. Go out and have an unforgettable night chasing down the perfect rendition of that song you know inside out. Maybe you will find a performer that you think is siick, or maybe they'll just make you sick. Either way, we humbly suggest washing it down with a few beers. **JK**

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Den Danske Kro
21:00 Troubadour Tryggvi
Dillon
22:00 Camp keighley
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Lay Low, Snorri Helgason & My
Bubba
Harlem
22:00 RVK DNB #3
Hressó
22:00 Dixon
KEX Hostel
21:00 Adda Ingólfs Record Release
Concert
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Rúndrés

Sunday December 15

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Brother Grass
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Raggi
Hressó
22:00 Live Jazz Jam Session
KEX Hostel
14:00 Cozy Sunday
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Troubadour Haraldur Einarss

Monday December 16

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadours Hjálmar & Dagur
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Katla

Tuesday December 17

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Gunni
Dillon
22:00 The Vintage Caravan
KEX Hostel
20:30 Christmas KEXJazz
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ.ÓK

Wednesday December 18

Café Flora
20:30 Brother Grass Band
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Hreimur
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Pete Uhlenbruch and Owls of
the Swamp

Thursday December 19

Bar 11
21:30 Jessica Delfino (US) & Dirty
Folk Rock
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Pétur
Dillon
22:00 Ojba Rasta DJ Night
KEX Hostel
20:30 Berndsen
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Skemmtanastjórinn

Friday December 20

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Svavar Knútur, Kristjana
Stefáns & Ragnheiður Gröndal –
Christmas concert
Den Danske Kro
21:00 Troubadours Tryggvi & Hreimur
Dillon
22:00 Epic Rain
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Kaleo Christmas Concert
Harlem
22:00 FM Belfast / Hermigervill &
Terrordisco
Hressó
22:00 Norah Jones Tribute Concert

Saturday December 21

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Troubadours Ingi Valur & Biggi
Harlem
22:00 Record Records festival: Mul-
der & Scully / Benni B-Ruff / Pedro
Pilatus
Hressó
22:00 Dalton Christmas Concert
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Anna Brá

Sunday December 22

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Raggi
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 Frost Christmas Concert
KEX Hostel
14:00 Cozy Sunday
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Holy

Monday December 23

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadours Hjálmar & Dagur
Harpa
22:00 Bubbi Morthens – Annual De-
cember Concert
Hressó
21:00 Kósý Jóla Jazz

Tuesday December 24

At Home
12:00 Enjoy Möndlugrautur Pudding
15:00 Deliver last christmas presents
18:00 Eat hearty Christmas meal
20:00 Open presents, don't give a
fuck if the children are hyper, drink
too much wine



6
December

Pop 'n' Roll
Kaleo

Hressó | 21:00 | Free!

Some light-hearted music for the dark season is what the doctor ordered. Kaleo are a four-piece indie-rock band that combines the sound of '60s rock 'n' roll with the party spirit of noughties indie-pop. Their gigs are fuelled by rocking guitar sounds and vigorous lyrics that imitate Credence Clearwater Revival. This lively event can help you get rid of the melancholy that accompanies the seasonal shortage of sunshine during the Icelandic winter with some mindless fun-sounding songs. Join in, sing along and you might have a great time with Kaleo. **JK**



7
December

The Most Awesome Christmas Concert
Christmas Concert of the Reykjavík Queer Choir

Neskirkja | 17:00 | 3,200 ISK

As any resident of Iceland can tell you, winters can be quite rough in Iceland. If the cold temperature and wet snow don't get you, the howling wind will. Around Christmas, it can start to feel as if you are trapped inside a freezer, which is why it's important to go out and enjoy heart-warming events. One of the most exciting ones to catch is the Christmas concert of the Reykjavík Queer Choir. The ensemble is known for its stylistic diversity, so be prepared to hear classical Christmas songs mixed with contemporary pop music, adapted and further developed by this outstanding group. **JK**

Wednesday December 25

At Home
10:00-16:00 Lounge around in your
PJs, enjoy presents and hangover
The English Pub
16:00 Have a cheeky Christmas
beer in the only place that's open

Thursday December 26

Harlem
22:00 Hits & Tits karóki party! with
Steindor Jonsson
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Anna Rakel

Friday December 27

Dillon
22:00 Blær / Hide your Kids
Harlem
22:00 Pedro Pilatus
Hressó
22:00 Playmó
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Anna Brá

Saturday December 28

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Troubadours Tryggvi / Hjálmar
& Dagur
Harlem
22:00 B.G. Baarregaard, Yamaho,
Exos, Frimann, Arni Grétar, Arni
Vector
Hressó
22:00 Tandoori Johnson
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ.ÓK

Sunday December 29

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Hjaltalín
Hressó
22:00 Live Jazz Jam Session
KEX Hostel
20:30 KEXJazz

Monday December 30

Harlem
22:00 Festivus!
Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Jesús

Tuesday December 31

Den Danske Kro
23:00 Troubadours Hjálmar & Dagur
Hressó
22:00 CELEBRATING NEW YEAR
Lebowski Bar
21:00 Áramótamadness

Wednesday January 1

Den Danske Kro
20:00 Troubadour Ingi Valur

Thursday January 2

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Troubadour Pétur
Harlem
22:00 DJ Unnur Andrea

Saturday January 4

Harlem
22:00 Ewok & co.
Dillon
22:00 Björgvins Halldórsson



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December 6 -
January 9`

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Opening

ART 67

December 1

Painter Martina Guðsteinsson and her photographer husband were working as tour guides and traveling around Iceland all year. They were inspired by all kinds of light and weather conditions. Enjoy the ride and reliving their memories at this exhibition that reinforces the variability and unpredictable nature of Iceland's skies.

Runs until December 31

i8 Gallery

Hörður Ágústsson, Camilla Löw, Sergio Sister, Thór Vigfússon
December 19

This show combines the work of three artists coming from different generations. It focuses on the differences and similarities in matters of style and the ideas behind their projects. They will be working with various mediums that are interpreted through their perception of them given differences in age and style.

Runs until February 1

Hverfisgallerí

Exhibition by Tumi Magnússon

Jan. 9

Mixed media artist Tumi Magnússon will display paintings and videos which focus on phones and phone calls.

Runs until February 22

Kunstschlager

Christmas Bazar

December 14

If you are still looking for unique Christmas presents for your friends and families, Kunstschlager's Christmas Bazar might be the right place to have a look. Special Christmas music and decorations emphasise the atmosphere and vendors selling all sorts of Iceland-sourced goods will be there showing their wares.

Runs until December 23

Inform - A solo exhibition of Sæmundur Þór Helgason

December 28

This exhibition consists of a performative installation that contains photographic and video work. The title of the show refers to the way the works function together in a shared space.

Runs until January 8

Museum of Design and Applied Art

Paradigm

December 7

Paradigm consists of works by 18 Norwegian artists working in glass, ceramics and metals. The exhibition includes works by some of the most outstanding Norwegian artists in these fields.

Runs until March 3

Wind and Weather Gallery

Spun Mustard Silkrock

January 4

This exhibition is an assemblage of different media. The composition is in itself a conversation between texture and colours, the cyber and the organic.

Runs until March 4

Ongoing

Árbær Museum

A guided tour in English through this open air museum, which consists of twenty buildings happens daily at 13:00. Admission 1,100 ISK.

On permanent view

The Einar Jónsson Museum

The museum contains close to 300 artworks including a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works

On permanent view

Gallerí Ófeigur UPPÍMÓTI

ART

OPENINGS AND ONGOING



Man Making Breakthrough On Novel At Café Claims MacBook is magic carpet on his ride to literary infamy

Any fucking café in Reykjavik | All day | Price of a coffee

In another show of creative gusto, a man at a café in Reykjavik is claiming to have made a huge breakthrough in his new novel. Last week, he had a brilliant idea and swiftly put pen to paper in his black leather Moleskine ©, the only notebook proper for recording his notes and ideas. "This one is going to be really good," he told other patrons while tapping away at the keyboard of his MacBook ©, face aglow with the artificial light from the screen. Sometimes he takes a break to listen to mid-nineties alternative rock or to scoff at patrons ordering anything other than black coffee. **AB**

An exhibit by Gugga, two years in the works. She uses oil and canvas to explore the magnitude of Icelandic waterfalls.

On permanent view

Gallery Sign (Skilti)

Skirt

Alison Willoughby displays new photographic work on the cultural iconography of the British Kebab Shop.

Runs until December 20

Hafnarborg

Beside The Deep Water

Exhibition by Rína Sigrún Guðjónsdóttir that focuses on her life and diverse career. Features paintings as well as sculptures. Familiar motifs of Rína's work are landscape, nature and female figures.

Runs until January 5

i8 Gallery

Solid Stars And Other Conditions

The exhibition will feature new sculptures and installations by Berlin-based Polish artist, Alicja Kwade. Kwade has been written about in the New York Times where her playfulness with questions of time and space were presented as unique and original.

Runs until December 14

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum

The museum contains a collection of more than two hundred and fifteen penises and penile parts belonging to almost all the land and sea mammals that can be found in Iceland.

On permanent view

Knitting Iceland

Whether you are a beginner or pro, you can come knit at Laugavegur 25, 3rd floor, every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00. Knitting is an Icelandic pastime and there will be plenty of native needle mavens to help you create your woolly masterpiece.

Ongoing

The Living Art Museum

Ten students from the fine art department of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts showcase works resulting from a 15 week long workshop relating to time based media. In the workshop the students explored film making, performance, audio and video work and various aspects of time based works.

Runs until December 8

The National Gallery

CREATIONS

Kristín Gunnlaugsdóttir's art works are shaped by the contrast of erotics and religion. Her consummate draughtsmanship and exquisite handling of materials is in stark contrast to the bold, even shocking way in which she presents her works.

Runs until January 19

TREASURES - Beasts in Cages

This exhibition gives a good insight into the variety of Icelandic art in modern and contemporary periods. In addition to the National Gallery's collection, prints by Edvard Munch, whose 150th anniversary will be celebrated on December 12, are on display as well.

Runs until January 19, 2014

The National Museum

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

Icelandic Silverwork

Various silver items that have been made in Iceland over the last 150 years. A Part-Time Silver Smith, a separate exhibition, will run simultaneously and display a silversmith's workshop from the turn of the century.

Runs until December 31

Sigfús Eymundsson Photography
A pioneer of Icelandic photography, an exhibit that taps into the cultural heritage of Iceland.

Runs until January

The Old Harbour

Iceland Expo Pavilion

Every day from 10:00 to 22:00, Sagafilm projects a film of Icelandic scenery inside their Iceland Expo Pavilion which provides a unique 360 degree movie experience.

On permanent view

Reykjavík Art Museum - Ásmundarsafn

Tales From the Vault - Sculpture Inspired by Literature

A collection of Ásmundur Sveinsson's sculptures tied together by a common literary thread. The exhibit presents key works inspired by Icelandic folklore, myth, and poetry.

Runs until December 30

Anna Hallin: Interplay

In her exhibition Interplay, Swedish-Icelandic artist Anna Hallin explores the threads that form connections in history, art, culture, time and between one artist and another. The exhibition includes sculptures by Anna, as well as drawings and an installation.

Runs until January 5

Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús

Fountains

Lithuanian artist Žilvinas Kempinas installed reels of magnetic tape that ripple like waves with the help of industrial fans.

Runs until January 5



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

IN YOUR POCKET

WHAT'S INSIDE

Reykjavík Map | Happy Hour Guide | Places We Like | Best Of Reykjavík | Practical Info

December 6 - January 9

Keep it in your pocket

Five Weeks

The Grapevine picks the events, places and what to experience in the next four weeks

12-24
DECEMBER

You know what time it is
Have A Cruel Yule



The devious Yule Lads are coming to town
All over Iceland

According to Icelandic Folklore, the 13 Yule Lads will descend from their trollish mountain homes to scare children and prank all. They are known for both their cheap tricks like stealing skyr and leftovers as well as being homicidal, child-eating monsters. They typically travel with their ruthless Yule Cat, who also delights in eating children who have not received new clothing for Christmas. Capitalism couldn't have produced a more perfect character. **AB**

December 20 **CHRISTMASIER THAN THOU** In case all the crazy city decorations haven't gotten you into the merry Christmas spirit, then seeing **Svavar Knútur, Kristjana Stefáns** and **Ragnheiður Gröndal** perform live at **Café Rosenberg** will surely do the trick. Head out and merry out.

December 25 **THE ONLY BEER IN TOWN** Iceland is a lot of things. It's a cold, dreary and dark place during the winter season, but it is not a place where it is difficult to find a pint of lager. Except today, on Christmas day. Thankfully, the guys over at **The English Pub** have our backs and know that sometimes that fresh tap lager beer is just what you need. Check 'em out, they're purportedly the only place open today.

December 31 **DROP EVERYTHING AND JUST REFLECT** If you are lucky enough to be in Iceland for New Year's Eve, then you are in for a treat. Don't bother bringing your camera, and don't worry too much about what pub you want to go to. When the clock strikes twelve, just start wandering around town, enjoy the show, and reflect on the year that has passed.

17
DECEMBER

Take a trip with me
Last chance to hop on
The Vintage Caravan

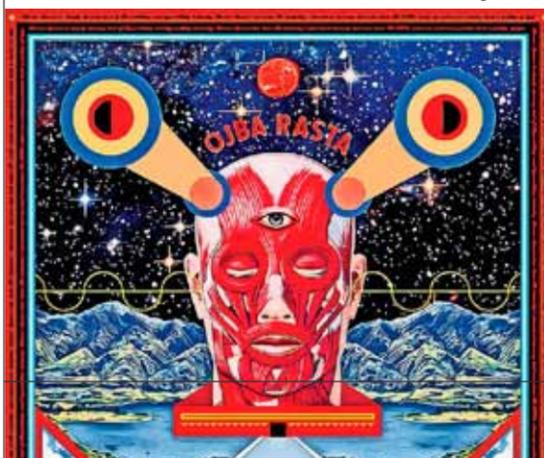


Vintage Caravan's last performance of the year
22:00
Dillon Admission: Free

This will be the last chance this year to catch the Vintage Caravan. They've signed a monumental contract with German record company Nuclear Blast and will be touring through Europe after the New Year. If you've just finished your exams, or are, in general, hoping to shake out some winter blues this is your night to catch some '70s hard rock and lose your shit. **AB**

13-14
DECEMBER

Only Players In The Reggame
Ojba Rasta Record
Release Party



Ojba Rasta Celebrate Release of FRIDUR 22:00
Harlem 1,500 ISK

Ojba Rasta leads Iceland's reggae lution with the release of their new record 'FRIDUR,' a transporitive body of work that will have you dreaming of Jamaica while you curl up next to your radiator with closed eyes waiting for winter to pass. Friends Grísalapalísa will open the show and prepare you for the impending reggpocolypse. **AB/JK**

January 4 **SEE THE POP KING** Bo Hall, the star of our feature article, is playing live at Dillon. So what are you waiting for? Pop out!

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Hálfarstræti 104 • Akureyri
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www.theviking.is



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Kraum
icelandic design

A

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John Wesley 1778



B

Café Loki
in front of Hallgrímskirkja



Enjoy some solid homemade Icelandic food
Open 9-21 Mon-Sat and 11-21 Sundays

C

MAP

Places We Like

Food

1 The Grill Market

Lækjargata 2a

Grillmarkaðurinn (The Grill Market) is renowned chef Hrefna Rósa Sætran's latest culinary venture (you might recognise her from Fish Market). With a specially crafted grill made to withstand extreme heat, Hrefna and team serve up juicy Icelandic dishes to the carnivore's delight.

2 Gamla Smiðjan

Lækjargata 8

This welcomed addition to Reykjavík's pizza palette has been steadily winning over fans since it opened for business, and with good reason. Gamla Smiðjan seems to handle every single order with care, love and respect. As the dining area is sparse, locals usually opt for take-out.

3 Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

The Fish Company (Fiskifélagið) is acclaimed as one of Reykjavík's best 'fancy' restaurants. Located in a charmingly dark space underground at Vesturgata 2a, this bustling, cave-like locale provides fine sanctuary from the cold winds outside in the winter, and respite from the powerful sunshine of summer.

4 Tapas Barinn

Vesturgata 3b

For those with a bit of time on their hands, the evening is well spent at Tapas Barinn, where you can indulge yourself feasting on course after delicious course of miniature dishes served in true Spanish style. There is also a lounge for those who want to hang out and sip a fine glass of red.

5 Santa Karamba

Laugarvegur 55b

Blow your nose and toss your cap out the window, Santa Karamba has brought the fire from south-of-the-border down Mexico way! They're willing to share it with you at Laugavegur 55. This fine establishment features classic Mexican dishes, domestic beers, and a colourful candy skull mural. Viva comida! Viva Islandia! Viva México!!

Drinking

6 Litli Bóndabærinn

Laugavegur 41

If it's a hot shot of strong java you need, this take-away joint will dose you up with some of the finest caffeinated beverages in town. The small digs are dressed up in authentic farm threads and the service will charm you into wishing you could move in for a while. Their international staff makes it especially visitor-friendly.

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 Prikið

Bankastræti 12

Prikið is a place that shape-shifts. It's a warm café lined with photographs of its senior frequenters on weekdays, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in the daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike.

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 Lág-múla 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 Stúdentakjallarinn

Háskólatorg, Sæmundargata 4

The University of Iceland's newly built student lounge has quickly become the place to be on campus. They boast a solid menu of tasty and inexpensive pub-grub, a nice selection of drinks and beers on tap to help unwind after classes, and regularly host concerts to help you rock out with your meal.

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 04:30 on weekends.

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

9 Stofan

Aðalstræti 7

Voted the best place to read a book in the Grapevine Best of Reykjavík 2012 awards, this old-timey coffee house is something straight out of a Carl Larsson painting. A perfect place to spend the day sitting on antique furniture and sipping delicious drinks, both alcoholic and otherwise.

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.

DON'T FORGET

We open at 15.00 on Christmas Day and on December 26th.

Remember our famous and Free New Year's Eve Party on December 31st.

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D

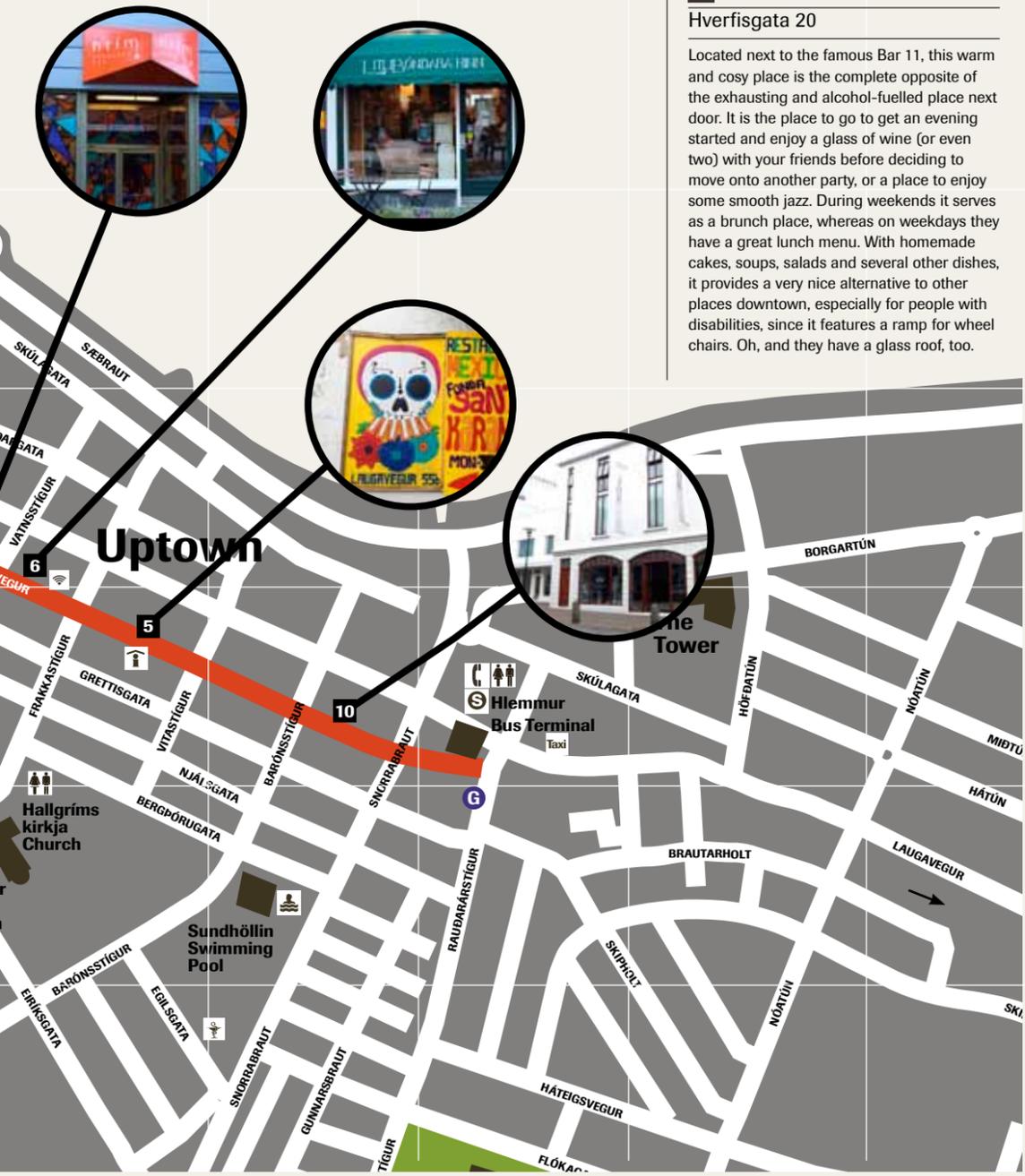
New In Town



13 Bast

Hverfisgata 20

Located next to the famous Bar 11, this warm and cosy place is the complete opposite of the exhausting and alcohol-fuelled place next door. It is the place to go to get an evening started and enjoy a glass of wine (or even two) with your friends before deciding to move onto another party, or a place to enjoy some smooth jazz. During weekends it serves as a brunch place, whereas on weekdays they have a great lunch menu. With homemade cakes, soups, salads and several other dishes, it provides a very nice alternative to other places downtown, especially for people with disabilities, since it features a ramp for wheel chairs. Oh, and they have a glass roof, too.



Venue Finder Music & Entertainment

- | | |
|---|--|
| Amsterdam
Hafnarstræti 5 D3 | Harlem
Tryggvagata 22 D3 |
| Austur
Austurstræti 7 E3 | Hressó
Austurstræti 20 E4 |
| B5
Bankastræti 5 E4 | Kaffi Zimsen
Hafnarstræti 18 D4 |
| Bar 11
Hverfisgötu 18 E5 | Kaffibarinn
Bergstraðastræti 1 E5 |
| Bjarni Fel
Austurstræti 20 E4 | Kaldi Bar / Café
Laugavegur 20b E5 |
| Bió Paradís
Hverfisgata 54 F6 | Kofinn
Laugavegur 2 E5 |
| Boston
Laugavegur 28b F6 | Loft Hostel
Bankastræti 7 E5 |
| Bunk
Laugavegur 28 E5 | Mánabar
Hverfisgata 20 E5 |
| Celtic Cross
Hverfisgata 26 E5 | Ölsmiðjan
Lækjargata 10 E4 |
| Den Danske Kro
Ingólfsstræti 3 E4 | Ölstofan
Vegamótastígur E5 |
| Dillon
Laugavegur 30 F6 | Prikið
Bankastræti E4 |
| Dolly
Hafnarstræti 4 D3 | Reykjavík Beats
Hverfisgata 46 E5 |
| Dubliner
Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3 | Röenberg
Klapparstígur 25 E5 |
| English Pub
Austurstræti 12 E3 | Stofan Café
Aðalstræti 7 D3 |
| Gamli Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22 D3 | Thorvaldsen
Austurstræti 8 D3 |
| Glaumbar
Tryggvagata 20 D3 | Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4 E6 |

Museums & Galleries

- | | |
|---|--|
| ART67
Laugavegur 67 F7
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat 12 - 16 | The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is |
| Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum
Bergstraðastræti 74
Mon-Fri through Sept. 1 | Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 30 E7
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18
www.artmuseum.is |
| The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgata G6
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is | Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 D3
Open 10-17
Thursday 10 - 20
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24
Open 10 - 17
Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
Open 10 - 17
www.listsafnreykjavikur.is |
| Gallerí Ófeigur
Skólavörðustígur 5 E5
ofeigur.notando.is | Reykjavík City Library
Tryggvagata 15 D3
www.borgarbokasafn.is |
| Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
www.hafnarborg.is | Reykjavík City Museum - Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhylur 4
Open daily 10-17
Settlement Exhibition
Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 E3
Open daily 10-17 |
| Hannesarholt
Grundarstígur 10 E5
www.hannesarholt.is | Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 B2
www.maritime-wv-museum.is |
| Hitt Húsið
Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 E4
www.hitthusid.is | Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Tryggvagata 16 D3
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17
www.ljosmyndasafn-reykjavikur.is |
| Hverfisgallerí
Hverfisgata 4 E4
www.hverfisgalleri.is | Saga Museum
Perlan, open daily 10-18
www.sagamuseum.is |
| i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 D3
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is | Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugamestangi 70
www.lso.is |
| The Icelandic Phalological Museum
Laugavegur 116 F8
www.phallus.is | SÍM
Hafnarstræti 16 D4
Mon-Fri 10-16
www.sim.is |
| Kirsuberjatræð
Vesturgata 4 C2
www.kirs.is | Spark Design Space
Klapparstígur 33 E5
Mon-Fri 10-18
Sat 12-16
www.sparkdesign-space.com |
| Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 E6
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
www.this.is/klingogbang | Wind & Weather Gallery
Hverfisgata 37 E6
Open daily 09-02
www.windandweather.is |
| Knitting Iceland
Laugavegur 25 E6
www.knittingiceland.is | POKA
Laugavegur 25 E5
www.thoka.is |
| Kunstschlager
Rauðarárstígur 1 G8
Mon-Sat from 15-18
www.kunstschlager.com | |
| Living Art Museum
Skúlagata 28 E7
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nylo.is | |
| Mokka Kaffi
Skólavörðustígur 3A E5
www.mokka.is | |
| The National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7 F4
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listsafn.is | |
| The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 G2
Open daily 10-17
www.natmus.is | |

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G

Hornið
Restaurant - Pizzeria

Hornið opened in 1979 was the first restaurant of its kind in Iceland, a restaurant with a true Italian atmosphere. Hornið is known for good food made out of fresh raw materials, good pizzas baked in front of the guests, good coffee and comfortable service.

Lunch offers every day.
Open every day from 11.00 to 23.30
For reservations call 551-3340

POKA
Laugavegur 25 | E5
www.thoka.is

F

Shopping

10 IDA Zimsen

Vesturgata 2a

If you are the type to enjoy a warm cuppa with your new book, then IDA Zimsen is definitely the place to go. So comb that moustache, put on your empty frames, wrap that scarf inventively around you, and head on over before it becomes too mainstream.

11 JÖR

Laugarvegur 89

This high-end men's fashion boutique caters to those whose bodies only tolerate the finest fabrics and most delicate of tailoring. Head designer Guðmundur Jörundsson, who honed his craft in the exclusive haberdasher Kormaks & Skjaldar, gives impeccable attention to each item, leaving the wearer feeling like a million bucks.

12 Hrímm

Laugavegur 25

Unlike other design shops in town, this one goes beyond the local borders to bring some of the most innovative and stylish creations from designers around the world. They are also the official sales point of Lomography in Iceland, so get yourself a Diana camera and start snapping.

Public phones

There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportíð, 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

The National and University Library, Arngrímsgata 3

Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2
Reykjavík Backpackers, Laugavegur 28

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, Ingólfstortorg, 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.

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E



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Best Of Reykjavík

Every year around the beginning of July, we make a BEST OF REYKJAVÍK ISSUE celebrating some of what makes Reykjavík-life worthwhile, posting some good entries into a hopefully never-ending discussion. The primary purpose of BEST OF REYKJAVÍK is celebration! It's about big-upping stuff, giving mad props to it and patting it on the shoulder. The following are some nice tips we pulled from BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2013 which you can read in full at www.grapevine.is



BEST HANGOVER MEAL: THE HANGOVER COMBO AT PRIKIÐ



Our panel of hard-drinking, hard-partying 101 rats fervently voted in Prikid to come back as the monarchs of hangover country. When you wake up feeling rough, slurp down a Bruce Willis shake (it's got Jack Daniels, Treo painkillers and yummy ice cream!) and scarf up an American breakfast. You'll quickly find yourself invigorated and inspired to hunt down your next hangover.

Located at Bankastræti 12



BEST PLACE TO READ A BOOK: STOFAN



If your living room isn't good enough, Stofan is really the next best thing with its vintage parlour décor, antique furniture that cradles you like a hug, mix-and-match wall hangings and unobtrusive music picked by the warm and lovely staff. It's the ideal spot to really plow through those last chapters of that novel you can't put down, whether its by day with their great coffee or by night with their even better whisky selection. Our book-reading, whisky sipping contingent gave this one out hands-down.

Located at Aðalstræti 7



BEST PLACE TO BUY A WOOL SWEATER: HANDPRJÓNASAMBANDIÐ



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Bar 11
Thursdays to Saturdays from 21:00-00:00. Beer 500 ISK.

Bjarni Fel
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Boston
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Bunk Bar
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Celtic Cross
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Every day from 16:00-19:00. 2 for 1 Beer 950 ISK, 2 for 1 Guinness 1000 ISK and 2 for 1 wine 1000 ISK.

Dillon
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
2 for 1 Beer 900 ISK.

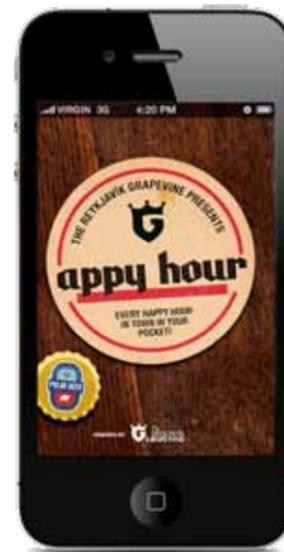
Dolly
Tuesday to Thursday from 20:00 to 22:00, Friday and Saturday from 17:00-22:00. Beer 500 ISK, wine 500 ISK.

Dubliner
Every day from opening - 22:00. 2 for 1 Tuborg 1000 ISK, 2 for 1 wine 1000 ISK, Shot of Jameson 900 ISK.

Einar Ben
Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
Beer 500 ISK.

Gamli Gaukurinn
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to Saturday 21:00 - 4:30. Beer 390 ISK.

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Hilton Hotel Bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
All drinks half price.

Hótel 1919
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 575 ISK, Cocktail of the Day half price.

Hótel Holt Gallery Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 650 ISK, wine 750 ISK, cocktail of the day 1200 ISK

Hótel Natura
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
50 percent off all drinks, beer 475 ISK (Tuborg), wine 625 ISK.

Hótel Plaza Bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.

Iða Zimsen
Coffee happy hour every day from 8:00-10:00.

All coffee 300 ISK Alcohol from 19:00-22:00
Beer (Gull, Tuborg) 445 ISK

Kaffi Kompanið
Thursday to Sunday from 14:00 to 17:00.
2 for 1 beer 850 ISK, wine 700 ISK.

Kaffi Zimsen
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00. Beer 550 ISK.

Kaldibar
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
2 for 1 on beer and wine.

Kiki Queer Bar
Thursdays from 20:00 to 22:00.
Beer 450 ISK, wine 600 ISK.

Kolabrautin
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 450 ISK, Wine 700 ISK, Cocktails from 1000 ISK, Champagne glass 1500 ISK.

Lebowski Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
2 for 1 Beer 900 ISK and wine for 1100 ISK.

Loft Hostel Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 500 ISK, cider 500 ISK, wine 700 ISK.

Micro Bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.

Miðgarður Bistro bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks half price, Beer 500 ISK, Wine 600 ISK.

Nora Magasin
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Viking Beer for 500 ISK, House Wine for 600 ISK.

Prikið
Monday to Friday from 16:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 Viking 750 ISK, Viking Classic 850 ISK.

Roadhouse
Friday and Saturday 22:00 to 23:00.
2 for 1 Beer 895 ISK, Wine 895 ISK.

SKY Bar & Lounge
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

Slippbarinn
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 500 ISK, selected cocktails 950 ISK.

Stofan
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
Beer 650 ISK and Wine 800 ISK.

Þingholtsbar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.

Thorvaldsen Bar
Monday to Friday, 16:00 to 20:00. 2-4-1 on beer 900 ISK and wine 1,000 ISK

TRIO Restaurant
Monday to Sunday 17:00 to 18:00. Wine 600 ISK, cocktail of the day 1,200 ISK.

Vínsmakkarinn
Mondays to Saturday 17:00 to 20:00. Tuborg Christmas Beer 600 ISK, Wine of the month 700 ISK

ART ONGOING

– continued –

Creature

Lithuanian artist Tomas Martišauskis translates the notion of traditional sculpture by translating an object into various mediums. The object itself will not appear in the exhibit.

Runs until January 12

Icelandic Video Art 1975 - 1990

This exhibition explores the first steps taken by Icelandic artists to use video as an artistic medium. The works shown were first exhibited in Iceland between 1980 and 1990 and only a few have been shown since then.

Runs until January 19

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 Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn

This vessel sailed through all three Cod Wars and also served as a rescue ship to over 200 ships.

On permanent view

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Combined space

Exhibition by the Norwegian photographer Nils Olav Bøe who creates artificial scenarios in his studio, imbedding his photographs into films. His latest works includes captions from news photography as well as political statements.

Runs until December 31

Contemporary Landscape

This exhibition consists of 12 works by Icelandic Photographers who are focussing on nature in Iceland. It is not about "post card photography" but the connection between human beings and nature itself.

Runs until January 12

Saga Museum

A Viking Museum that intimately recreates key moments in Iceland's history, giving a compelling view into how Icelanders have lived for more than a millenium. From the time of the earliest settlers, history is brought to life in a unique and exciting way with life-like figurines.

On permanent view

Spark Design Space

Linda Árnadóttir, the founder and creative director of Scintilla, will open a show of MIRRORS. Scintilla, which has always emphasized progressive graphics and patterns will, on the 21st of November, unveil a new collection of mirrors.

Runs until February 28

Volcano House

The exhibition gives a brief overview of Iceland's geological history and volcanic systems, and there are superb photographs of volcanic eruptions and other magnificent aspects of Icelandic nature. A large collection of semi-precious rocks and minerals from around the country are also on display.

On permanent view



Pink New Year's Eve: Bubbly, Bonfire and the Blow-out Pink Iceland New Years Celebration

Various spots in Reykjavík | Dec. 31 - Jan. 01 | 36,104 ISK

Reykjavík on New Years is two fireworks shy of a Vesuvial eruption. Whether this is symbolic of blowing last year to pieces or launching into the New Year, Pink Iceland, the LGBTI travel gurus will be leading a group through the mayhem. Bonfires will be followed by dinner, drinks, fireworks, drinks, dancing, drinks and a house party. New Year's resolution: take care of ear drums. **AB**



Kamikaze in PØST-Los Angeles Reykjavík Reykjavík Kamikaze Art Exhibition

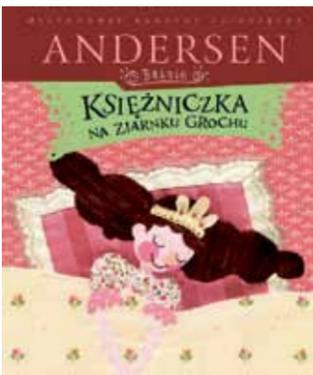
Icelandic Ocean Cluster (Sjávarklasinn) | Dec. 06 | Free!

The English translation of the Japanese word kamikaze means "God wind" or "divine wind." Inspired by transience, the PØST Los Angeles Kamikaze Series fashions itself as something ephemeral and fleeting – a swell passing over Reykjavík and whipping up art and artists that work with ideas of impermanence. Eight artists using various mediums will be showing their work on this one night as PØST juxtaposes the irony of everything Los Angeles in wintertime Reykjavík. Afterwards, take one of the artists out for the universal bartender's translation of "kamikaze" – equal parts vodka, triple sec and lime juice. Be sure to toast to your own impermanence before your drink is gone. **AB**

Photo by Esther Mathis



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**Six Ways You Can't Go Wrong
This Holiday Season**

Food wise, that is.

Compiled by Larissa Kyzer & Tómas Gabríel Benjamin

No one loves a good Christmas feast more than we do, but four straight days with family and increasingly unappetizing leftovers can occasionally be trying. So if you need a night away from the fam and want be sure of having a nice meal out, here are snippets from six glowing restaurant reviews we've printed in the past year.

watching the waiter cater to our every whim. Our waiter, Gu mundur, might just be the finest waiter I've witnessed at work in Iceland. He's been working there since the late '70s—in a field notorious for its high employee turnover. He was attentive but never overbearing, alert but never anxious and had a chameleon-like ability to adapt to the atmosphere of each table. He really has mastered this ambiguous craft.

up on the counter, including one filled with Pink Lady apples, my crunchy favourite.

(Fun fact: Pink Ladies mature on the tree for 200 days before picking. For more arguably useless information, check out the walls of this otherwise inviting establishment).

- Patricia Pomar

The Great Grillsby

Grillið, Hagatorg 1, 107 Reykjavík

Flavour: Nouvelle French, modern Spanish, seasonal local ingredients
What We Think: Fine dining done right
Rating: 5/5



Grilli has embraced the kabuki spectacle of the exhibition kitchen, they combine flavours and culinary traditions in novel ways, they source locally as much as possible, shirts and ties are optional and of course some of the plates are made out of bits of wood and lava rocks...There was a heavy whiff of old money and being seated next to the doppelganger of Roger Sterling didn't help.

But you'd never recognise us for the working class bozos we are from

- Ragnar Egilsson

A Fresh Squeeze

Lemon, Laugavegur 24, 101 Reykjavík
What We Think: A fast, fresh pick-me-up
Flavour: Crunchy, fruity, juicy
Rating: 4/5



Forget hamburgers and greasy fries—this is a terrific spot to set yourself right after a hard night's drinking. Step aboard the fruit express and order your meal at the juice bar, which coincidentally looks a bit like a metro station with its white-tiled pillars and industrial lamps. But the distinguishing factor would have to be the fruit baskets lined

The Friendly Foodhouse

Bergsson Mathús, Templarasund 3, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think: You won't find a cosier place for lunch/brunch. Terrific coffee.
Flavour: Simple, but hearty
Rating: 4/5



The staff was also happy to pour us another ladle of soup because it was so damn delicious and I just had to ask for another taste. The soup was exactly the right consistency, neither too thin nor artificially thickened. It was rich and tingling and warmed me to the very core.

The most memorable highlight, however, was my double-shot mac-

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Alisa Kalyanova

chiato. Finally, finally, the perfect ratio of coffee and milk has been found! These two ingredients came together seamlessly in a wonderfully smooth brew with an almost sweet aftertaste. I came back the next day for more because I couldn't get it out of my head.

-Patricia Pormar

Cougar Town

Gló, Engjateigur 17-19, 105 Reykjavík

What we think: In the words of my dining partner: "This was fuck good."
Flavour: Raw food, Mediterranean, Japanese, vegetarian, vegan
Rating: 5/5

The kelp noodles were these opalescent strands that resembled sauerkraut and had been tossed with courgette and lemongrass. The "tabouleh" was mostly made up of barley and parsley. Both were far more delicious than they had any right to be. I washed this down with a beer and a sparkling rhubarb drink.

My rugged longshoreman of a friend had the raw food pizza, kelp noodles and mixed roasted veggies (1790 ISK). This world of raw food is alien territory to me. I'm a decent home cook but I'm fumbling in the dark trying to guess how they make these things. From what I could gather, the "pizza crust" is made from sundried tomatoes and crushed seeds



that have been dehydrated into a kind of jerky. This was then topped with cashew cheese (don't ask me), rucola and garlic. This may sound nightmar-

ish to many of you, but let me assure you that this was entirely edible—not as good as the chicken, but far better than I would ever have expected. He enjoyed this with a sparkling ginger drink and a beer but at this point we would both have been ready to give the green mystery juice a try had they not run out of it.

-Ragnar Egilsson

Dayhawks At The Diner

Prikið, Bankastræti 12, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think : As for comfort food classics, Prikið will satisfy your needs. Hangover destination par excellence
Flavour: Comfort food, dinner, Americana
Rating: 4/5



Prikið is one of the oldest dining establishments in Reykjavík that is still in operation. Much like so many other downtown establishments of its kind, it suffers—or benefits, perhaps—from a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde syndrome, being a quiet, cosy café by day, and a loud, sweaty place of drinking yourself into oblivion by night. Therefore, if Prikið is to be enjoyed as a dining destination, I recommend that you visit during lunch—or whenever you manage to wake up on a given weekend. Brunch offers are on hand at any given time but otherwise the menu consists of diner classics: steaks, sandwiches and burgers, with milk shakes (even spiked, if the mood should strike.

-Björn Teitsson

Smooth And Sofisticated

Sjávargrillid (Seafood Grill), Skólavörðustígur 14, 101 Reykjavík

What we think: An underrated gem in Reykjavík
Flavour: Savoury, French/Icelandic fish-fare
Rating: 4.5/5



Our main courses left little to be desired: the grilled fish combo of perch and cusk was deliciously savoury and the same could be said of my salt cod and grilled pork belly. The vegetables were highlights in their own right and not merely supplementary colorations (the creamed barley and carrot mousse were particularly exciting). If I had one quip about food, it would have to be that my salt cod was, ironically, just a teensy bit too salty. I might have been overly sensitive to this, however, as the starter had left me subtly but surely satiated.

We finished off our meal by sharing dessert (a relief since we were so full). The creamy white chocolate mousse with raspberry meringue would have been perfectly pleasing on its own, but it came with a dill sorbet that could only be safely described as interesting. My mother didn't enjoy it, but I found it innovative and refreshing.

-Patricia Pormar



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The Sun Born Again: Ásatrú's Jól Celebrations

—By Larissa Kyzer

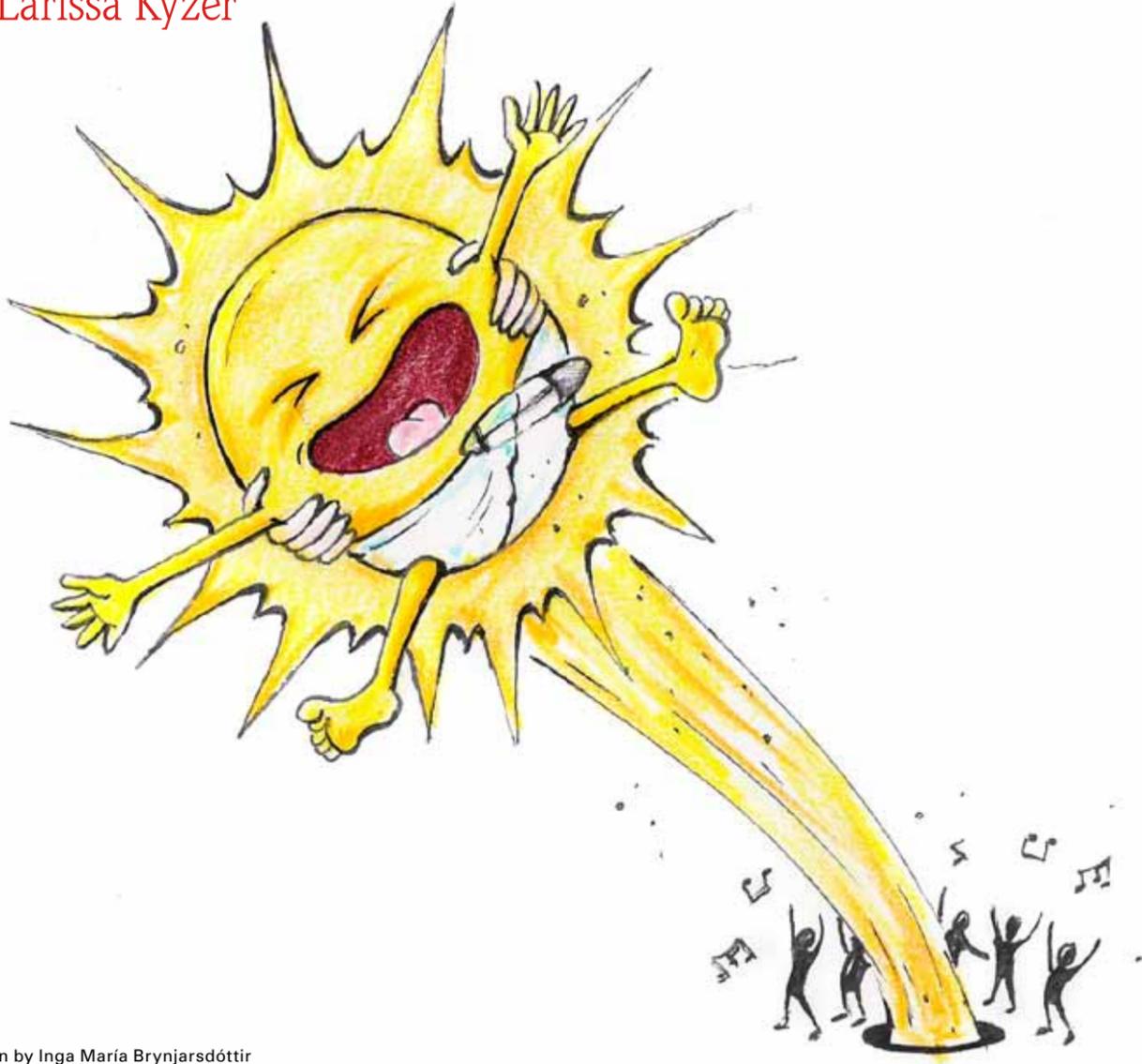


Illustration by Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

For practitioners of Ásatrú, a contemporary form of Norse paganism whose beliefs are based in an abiding respect for nature, as well as ancient Norse culture, folk belief, and mythology, Jól is the most important holiday of the year. A celebration of the winter solstice, rebirth, and the start of the new year, Jól—from which the Icelandic word for Christmas is derived—dates back much earlier than the Christian holiday, but has been absorbed by Christmas in the intervening centuries.

“Christians got Christmas from us,” says Jóhanna Harðardóttir, the Ásatrú Association’s Deputy High Priestess, although, of course, the reason for the

celebration obviously changed quite a bit. But although Ásatrú believers have their own special observances during the holiday season, Jóhanna

says that most people still share many common Christmas traditions, such as sending cards and exchanging gifts. And, of course, wishing each other a “Gleðileg Jól!”

Like many of the blóts, or ritual observances which Ásatrú practitioners hold each year, Jól is deeply connected to the seasons. “Jól is when the sun is born again,” says Jóhanna, noting that Jól celebrations in Iceland are particularly well attended by many who don’t belong to the Ásatrú religion. For Icelanders, with their notoriously dark winters, she says, the winter solstice has particular resonance: “it’s in our souls to be happy when the sun begins to rise again.”

Jól celebrations begin with an outdoor Jólablót on the first of December. During the ceremony, attendees

circle together around a fire with candles, and listen to what Jóhanna calls “our Christmas story,” or how Freyr, the god of fertility and growth, fell in love with the Jötunn maiden Gerður, and made great sacrifices in order to win her as his bride. As Jóhanna explains, during the darkest hours of the winter, “Freyr falls in love with the daughter of a giant—Gerður—who is beautiful and light, a token of the sun.” When Gerður agrees to marry Freyr, the sun begins to rise again, bringing with it “a promise of longer and better days to come.”

After listening to this story, those who wish to can gather together to share a drink from a sacred drinking horn. Hangikjöt, or smoked lamb which is traditionally served at the holidays, is also eaten. Following the blot, a lavish feast is held. Children help to make a sun out of candles and receive small gifts, and music performances and other entertainment is enjoyed. It is a very family-oriented celebration, Jóhanna says, and “a very good place to be with children.”

In pagan tradition, night is understood to precede the day, and so many important celebrations begin at nightfall. (This is actually the reason that Christmas celebrations in Iceland begin at 18:00 on Christmas Eve here in Iceland.) On December 1 this year, five Jólablóts were held simultaneously at 18:00 around the country—one at Þingvellir, the site of Iceland’s first parliament, and one in each quarter of Iceland: North, South, East, and West.

The Ásatrú Jól Story

Each year, the story of the Vanir god Freyr and his love for the Jötunn maiden Gerður are told at Ásatrú Jólablóts. Although the story sometimes reads as a romantic one, it is also one of sacrifice and self-destruction; in order to woo Gerður, Freyr must give up his magic sword. It is said that if he had kept this weapon, he would have survived the battles of Ragnarök.

The story of Freyr and Gerður is related in The Prose Edda, recorded by Snorri Sturlason around the year 1200. Below is an excerpt from the tale, translated by the English scholar Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur in 1916.

“A certain man was called Gýmir, and his wife Aurboda: she was of the stock of the Hill-Giants; their daughter was Gerdr, who was fairest of all women. It chanced one day that Freyr had gone to Hlidskjálf [Odin’s seat, from which he can see all worlds] and gazed over all the world; but when he looked over into the northern region, he saw on an estate a house great and fair. And toward this house went a woman; when she raised her hands and opened the door before her, brightness gleamed from her hands, both over sky and sea, and all the worlds were illumined of her. Thus his overweening pride, in having presumed to sit in that holy seat, was avenged upon him, that he went away full of sorrow. When he had come home, he spake not, he slept not, he drank not; no man dared speak to him. Then Njördr [Freyr’s father] summoned to him Skírnir, Freyr’s foot-page, and bade him go to Freyr and beg speech of him and ask for whose sake he was so bitter that he would not speak with men. But Skírnir said he would go, albeit unwillingly; and said that evil answers were to be expected of Freyr.

But when he came to Freyr, straightway he asked why Freyr was so downcast, and spake not with men. Then Freyr answered and said that he had seen a fair woman; and for her sake he was so full of grief that he would not live long if he were not to obtain her. ‘And now thou shalt go and woo her on my behalf and have her hither, whether her father will or no. I will reward thee well for it.’ Then Skírnir answered thus: he would go on his errand, but Freyr should give him his own sword—which is so good that it fights of itself—and Freyr did not refuse, but gave him the sword. Then Skírnir went forth and wooed the woman for him, and received her promise; and nine nights later she was to come to the place called Barrey, and then go to the bridal with Freyr...

This was to blame for Freyr’s being so weaponless, when he fought with Beli, and slew him with the horn of a hart. Then said Gangleri: “’Tis much to be wondered at, that such a great chief as Freyr is would give away his sword, not having another equally good. It was a great privation to him, when he fought with him called Beli; by my faith, he must have rued that gift.”

The Ásatrú Association’s office is located at Síðumúli 15, and is open weekdays from 13:00 to 16:00, as well as every Saturdays 14:00 - 16:00. The office has rotating art exhibitions on view, and members often hold open coffee chats, lectures, and movie screenings on the weekend. More info at www.asatru.is.

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Step into the Viking Age

Experience Viking-Age Reykjavík at the new Settlement Exhibition. The focus of the exhibition is an excavated longhouse site which dates from the 10th century AD. It includes relics of human habitation from about 871, the oldest such site found in Iceland.

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The Encyclopaedia of Icelandic Holidays

The A-Ö of the Icelandic holiday season

By Haukur S Magnússon

With additional reporting from Paul Fontaine, Sveinn Birgir Björnsson, Páll Hilmarrson and Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir

Illustrations by Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

AÐFANGADAGUR

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

Six o' clock marks the official start of Christmas in Iceland, and this is when most households sit down to enjoy a pleasant holiday meal. After dinner, most people commence opening their presents. They then hang out and indulge until bedtime.

ADVENTA

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



AÐVENTUKRANS

(Ath-ventou-kraans)
See: Adventa.

AÐVENTULJÓS

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

ANNAR Í JÓLUM

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

ÁRAMÓT

(our-a-mowt)
See: Gamlársdagur/Gamlárskvöld.

ÁRAMÓTASKAUPIÐ

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

ATTIRE

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

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

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



CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

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



DECORATING

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

DRINKING

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

EATING OUT

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

FAMILY

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



FLUGELDAR

(flug-oeld-arrrrr)
See also: Gamlársdagur/Gamlárskvöld
Flugeldar ("fireworks") are an essential part of the Icelandic New Year's Eve experience, in fact, the sale and deployment of fireworks is only legal in Iceland between December 28—January

6. Like everything else Icelanders are fond of, they take their fireworks seriously—most of those who have witnessed the mass employment of fireworks at New Year's will agree that the act is far beyond over-the-top. But most will also attest that the display is striking and beautiful. An added bonus is that most of the places selling them are doing so for charity, or to fund rescue teams.

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

GAMLÁRS DAGUR/GAMLÁRSKVÖLD

(gaaml-ouwr-s-daager / kvoeld)
See also: Fireworks, drinking, Áramótaskaup, Áramótaannáll, Áramótábrenna [Note: Gamlársdagur refers to New Year's Eve's Day, and Gamlárskvöld refers to New Year's Eve itself]

The coming of the New Year is celebrated pretty heavily in Iceland. Drinks are drunk, fireworks are lit and vomit is, eventually, spewed. Although there is no rule, most folks like to gather for a nice dinner feast with family and/or friends at the start of the evening (or late in the afternoon). They hang out, drink drinks, play board games and watch the TV recap of the preceding year. Many head out to their local New Year's bonfire, a complete list of which is published in local newspapers on the days leading up to the 31st.

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

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



HANGIKJÖT

(Hownge-kjoet)
See also: Jólamatúr
Hangikjöt—literally meaning "hung meat"—is smoked Icelandic lamb which takes its name from the old tradition of smoking food in order to preserve it by hanging it from the rafters of a smoking shed. Hangikjöt is traditional Christmas meat, often served with potatoes in a sweet white sauce and pickled red cabbage. It's pretty awesome. See story on page 7

HAMBORGARHRYGGUR

(Haam-bouwrger-hreggrurr)
See also: Dining
A traditional Christmas food eaten on the 24th at six o'clock. It is pork, usually with a honey glazing and pineapple, cooked in an oven for a few hours. This is a pretty heavy meal, resulting in the number of heart attacks increasing around Xmas when people who really shouldn't eat fatty meat gorge themselves almost to death. See story on page 6



HEITT SÚKKULAÐI

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

into boiling milk. Enjoy.

JÓLABALL

(yo!-la-boll)
See also: Jólaboð
The jólaball, or Christmas dance, is a long-standing tradition where children are herded by their parents or schools to hang out, eat cake and candy and dance around a decorated tree while singing some classic Christmas tunes. More often than not, one or more of the Yule lads will make an appearance and disburse small gifts of candies.

JÓLADAGATAL

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

JÓLADAGUR

(yo!-la-daguer)
See also: Jólaboð
Jóladagur—Christmas Day—is the big day for family gatherings and Christmas parties. Many like to sleep in and relax before putting on formal attire and heading out to a friend's house to indulge in some hangikjöt or hot chocolate. Everything is closed. A very relaxed day, for most.



JÓLAGLÖGG

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

JÓLAHLÆÐBORD

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



JÓLAKORT

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



JÓLAKÖTTURINN

(yo!-la-koett-ur-enn)
To avoid, as the saying goes, "going to the Christmas cat," children are required to receive at least one piece of new clothing in time for Christmas each year. Otherwise, the cat will eat them.

JÓLAMATUR

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



JÓLAÖL

(yo!-la-oe)
See also: Christmas dining
The ultimate Christmas drink, Jólalög (or: "Christmas ale") is created by mixing an elusive ratio of Malt and Appelsín orange soda. Although you can now buy this drink premixed, it's way more fun to mix it yourself, according to taste. Note that it contains no alcohol. Which is nice for a change.

JÓLASMÁKÖKUR

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



JÓLASVEINAR

(yo!-la-svain-er)
The Icelandic Jólásveinar (Yule Lads) have little to do with the international Santa Claus. They are descended from trolls, and were originally bogeymen who scared children. During this century they have mellowed, and sometimes don red suits. Their number varied in old times from one region of Iceland to another. The number thirteen was first seen in a poem about Grýla (the Lads' mother) in the 18th century, and their names were published by Jón Árnason in his folklore collection in 1862.

On December 12, the Yuletide Lads begin to come to town one by one on each of the 13

days before Christmas.

The first is Stekkjastaur (Sheepfold Stick), who tries to drink the milk from the farmers' ewes.

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

Next comes Stúfur (Shorty) on December 14. His name implies that he is on the small side. He is also known as Pönnuskefill (pan-scraper), as he scraped scraps of food off the pans.

On December 15, Þvörusleikir (Spoon-licker) comes down from the mountains. He steals wooden spoons that have been used for stirring. When he visits the National Museum, he goes looking for wooden spoons.

On December 16, Pottasleikir (Pot-licker) comes visiting. He tries to snatch pots that have not been washed, and licks the scraps from them.

Askasleikir (Bowl-licker) arrives on December 17. He hides under beds and if someone puts his wooden food-bowl on the floor, he grabs it and licks it clean.



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

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

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

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



On December 22 Gáttaþefur (Sniffer) comes calling. He has a big nose, and loves the smell of cakes being baked for Christmas. He often tries to snatch a cake or two for himself.

December 22 is sometimes called hlakandi (looking forward), because the children had started looking forward to Christmas.

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



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

During the thirteen days before Christmas, the National Museum presents actors

dressed as the old-school Jólásveinar. They show up around 11 AM each day. National Museum, Suðurgata 41, 101 Reykjavík. Tel. 530 2200.

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JÓLATRÉ

(yo-la-tr-yeah!)

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



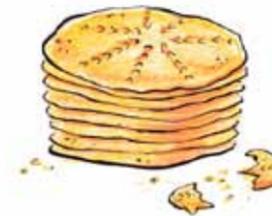
KÆST SKATA

(kjae-st skaaa-taaaa)

See also: Þorláksmessa

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

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



LAUFABRAUÐ

(loi-fa-brau-eth)

See also: Aðventan

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

NÝÁRS DAGUR

(knee-ouwr-da-guer)

See also: Drinking

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



PRESENTS

See also: Aðfangadagur, jólatré

Of course Xmas is all about the presents, and a lot of debt is incurred during the season, even though we've yet to discern completely how the act of spreading goodwill through gifts is affected by the full impact of the Kreppa. There are no specific guidelines for Xmas gift giving in Iceland, but a good rule of thumb is to avoid being extravagant in your gift choices, unless maybe something extravagant is called for or expected on the other end.

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



RELIGION AND CHURCH

Even though around 80% of them are enrolled in the State Church, Icelanders have never been known

to be particularly enthusiastic churchgoers or observers of religious customs. Indeed, Christmas isn't a particularly religious holiday in Iceland. However, many folks like to attend Church services and concerts during the holidays, particularly on the 24th and the 31st. Check with your tourist information centre for complete church listings.

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

RETURNING GIFTS

See also: Commerce

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



RJÚPUR

(ryooe-purr)

See also: Jólamatúr

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

SANTA CLAUS

See also: Jólásveinar

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

ÞORLÁKSMESSA

(thoe-r-louwks-mess-a)

See also: Kæst skata

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

ÞRETTÁNDINN

(thu-rhett-ouwn-din-n)

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

Holiday Opening Hours Your Grapevine Guide

If you are a tourist stranded in Iceland over the holiday season, you may find yourself hard pressed to find activities as the country practically shuts down in December. Most of the shops are closed, tour operators run a limited schedule and many of our favourite restaurants close down. Rather than let you depend on dumb luck, we at the Grapevine compiled a list of what's open and when for your convenience. Restaurants will be closed for the most part, and hotels may have reduced service, but rest assured there are things to do in Reykjavík.

We've tried to make sure it is as comprehensive as possible, but there may be changes from when we print the issue. For a complete list, check out The Official Tourist Information Centre.

Travel

Strætó:

23: Regular schedule
24: Saturday schedule until 14
25: No Service
26: Sunday schedule
31: Saturday schedule until 14
1: No service

Reykjavík Excursions:

24: Reduced service
25: Reduced service
26: Normal schedule
31: Normal schedule
1: Normal schedule

Iceland Excursions:

24: Reduced service
25: Reduced service
26: Normal schedule
31: Reduced service
1: Reduced service

The Official Tourist Information Centre:

24: Open 09-12
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 10-14
1: Open 09-18

The Blue Lagoon:

23: Open 10-17, restaurant closed
24: Open 10-13, restaurant closed
25: Open 10-15, restaurant closed
26: Open 10-20
31: Open 10-16, restaurant closed at 15
1: Open 10-20

Pools

Árbæjarlaug:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Open 12-18
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Closed

Breiðholtslaug:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Closed

Grafarvogslaug:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Closed

Laugardalslaug:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Open 12-18
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Open 12-18

Sundhöll Reykjavíkur:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Closed

Vesturbæjarlaug:

24: Open 08-12:30
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 08-12:30
1: Closed

Museum/Galleries

The following museums are open on the following days:

26: Ásmundarsafn, Hafnarhúsi , Kjarvalssta ir, The National Museum, The Settlement Exhibition, The Phallic Museum, Volcano House
31: Hafnarhúsi , Reykjavík Museum of Photography, The Settlement Exhibition, The Phallic Museum, Volcano House
1: Hafnarhúsi , Kjarvalssta ir, The Settlement Exhibition

Stores

Kolaportið

24: Closed
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Closed
1: Closed

Kraum

24: Open 09-12
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 09-15
1: Closed

Kringlan

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

Laugavegur & Downtown

23: Open 10-23
24: Open 10-12
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 10-12
1: Closed

Smáralind

23: Open 11-23
24: Open 11-13
25: Closed
26: Closed
31: Open 10-12
1: Closed

Thirteen Things About Þrettándinn

—By Larissa Kyzer



Illustration by Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

Often known as the Twelfth Night in the English-speaking Christian world, Þrettándinn (directly translated as “the thirteenth”) marks the end of Iceland’s epic Christmas season. The last of 24 straight days of Christmas merry-making, January 6th is the season’s last gasp—and not just because it’s the last day that you can legally shoot off fireworks in Iceland, or the last day you can purchase Christmas beer. No, according to folk traditions and tales, Þrettándinn is much, much weirder, and gloriously so: it is a time of talking animals, aquatic metamorphoses, naked dancing, supernatural gifts, and precognitive dreams. It is what Helga Einarsdóttir, the Museum Educator at the National Museum of Iceland, calls a liminal time or “a border between two worlds”—namely the holy season around Christmas and the back-to-normal New Year which is just beginning. So here are thirteen things you should know about Þrettándinn:

1. Þrettándinn is “Old Christmas”

Around 1528, the Roman Catholic Church decided to shift from the Julian calendar, which was instituted by the Romans around 46 BC, to the Gregorian calendar, which is still in use today. The Julian calendar attempted to approximate the solar year, but minor inaccuracies in the calendar structure—basically, a few minutes not accounted for in the solar rotation—lead to a gain of roughly three or four days every four centuries. This meant that important Catholic holidays, like Easter, tended to drift over time, which the church didn’t like at all. Thus the shift to the Gregorian calendar, which has fewer leap years, and which, by the time it was finally implemented in Iceland in 1700, had 11 fewer calendar days than the Julian calendar.

In practical terms, what this means is that holidays shifted significantly after the arrival of what 18th century Icelanders referred to as the “new style” calendar. So Christmas went from taking place on January 6th to taking place on December 25th. And so, as late as the end of the 19th century, Þrettándinn was known as “Old Christmas.”

2. Þrettándinn is also Second New Year’s Eve

What with all the confusion about calendar shifts and dates, a lot of holiday-related folklore got muddled along the way. So many of the supernatural occurrences and traditions originally associated with New Year’s Eve in Iceland have shifted over time to Þrettándinn. “The last day of Christmas has also often served as second-string New Year’s Eve,”

writes ethnologist Árni Björnsson, “when celebrations can be held if the weather on New Year’s Eve is unfavorable.”

3. It’s time for bonfires and elf dances

Icelanders make the most of New Year’s Eve and Þrettándinn, indulging their pyrotechnic sides: large bonfires are regularly held on both New Year’s Eve and Þrettándinn. The bonfires celebrate all of the fairies and elves who are said to be departing on Þrettándinn, and many local celebrations elect Fairy Queens and Kings who lead ‘elf dances’ around the fire. Elf dance traditions may originate with a popular play called “Nýársnóttin,” or ‘New Year’s Eve,’ which was written by Indriði Einarsson in 1907 and first featured the King and Queen of the elves.

4. Þrettándinn is a good time for dreams

Þrettándinn also marks the start of Epiphany, the Christian holiday that commemorates the night in which Jesus’s birth was revealed to the Three Wise Men in a dream or vision. And so, in some local traditions, such as on the Northern island of Grímsey, Þrettándinn is known as “The Great Dreaming Night.” The dreams that you have on this night must be taken very seriously, as they may hold clues to the future.

5. Cows talk on Þrettándinn

On the evening of Þrettándinn, many folktales say that cows can suddenly speak. But while there are many

variations on this story—in some versions, for instance, they specifically speak Hebrew—one thing is for sure: if the cows are talking, you don’t want to be listening. In one version collected by Jón Árnason (Iceland’s one-man Brothers Grimm), a cowhand hangs around in the barn after his work is done on Þrettándinn. Around midnight, the cows all stand up and begin to speak to each other in nonsensical rhyming couplets, which are supposed to drive anyone who overhears them crazy. The cowhand escapes before he fully loses it, but is obviously unable to prove his tale to anyone the next day. In other variations, however—such as one taking place on New Year’s Eve—the cowman is not so lucky, and goes mad listening to creepy bovine poetry.

6. Seals take on human form, get naked and get down

There are many folktales about seals transforming into humans on New Year’s Eve and Þrettándinn. In one fascinating variation, seals are actually the animal incarnations of an ancient Pharaoh’s army, drowned in the Red Sea while chasing Moses and the Jews out of Egypt. The drowned soldiers became seals, but their bones remain much like human bones. So once a year, they become human, shedding their skins and dancing naked on beaches.

In one very famous tale (also collected by Jón Árnason), a man goes walking on a beach and sees many seal skins lying on the shore. He takes one home with him and locks it in a chest. Later, he discovers a beautiful naked woman crying on the same beach because he’s taken her skin and she cannot return to the

Folklorist Terry Gunnell will give an English-language talk about Icelandic Christmas and New Year’s traditions at the National Museum on December 15 at noon.

sea. He takes her home, marries her, and they have many children, but he keeps the seal skin locked away so that she can never escape. One day, however, he forgets to take the key to the chest, and the woman retrieves her skin and returns to the ocean.

7. Þrettándinn is moving day for fairies and elves

Þrettándinn is often thought to be the day in which fairies and elves leave their current dwellings and find new homes. In some traditions, residents walk around the home asking for the family’s continued well-being while those spirits who have arrived to come in, and those who want to leave go on their ways.

8. It’s the last day to see a Yule Lad

Þrettándinn is a time to “say goodbye to the spirits,” says Folklorist Terry Gunnell. So as the fairies take their leave and the elves move house, so also is the last Yule Lad leaving town. Iceland’s twelve Yule Lads arrive one by one on the days leading up to Christmas, and then also leave one at a time on the twelve days following. The last Yule Lad to leave is Kertasníkir, or “Candle Beggar.”

9. It’s a good time to sit at a crossroads

If you want a chance to meet one of the magical beings flitting around on Þrettándinn, your best bet is to sit at a crossroads and wait. In many folktales, people who sit at crossroads are met by elves who give them gifts of gold, food, or second sight. In some stories, the elves will tempt you with gifts all night, but you must not accept them. If you can last the night having accepted nothing, the elves will leave all their treasures behind for you. If you take the gifts before daylight, you may go mad. But usually, Terry says, “if you treat them well, they’ll treat you well. It’s a business transaction.”

10. Water is magic

Some folktales have it that water will turn to wine on Þrettándinn, while others suggest that dew is particularly potent and powerful on this day.

11. The unknown is made visible, sometimes at a cost

“If something is hidden from you,” says Helga, “it will open up to you on Þrettándinn.” In one exemplifying tale, a shepherd has particular success keeping his animals through the winter. He repeatedly disappears throughout the season, never telling anyone where he has been. One Þrettándinn, a curious farmer follows the shepherd, and finds that he has been travelling to a hidden mountain valley, which is still green even in the dead of winter. But this discovery comes at a cost: one of the valley dwellers curses the farmer for his curiosity and he dies three days later.

12. It’s the last day for Christmas decorations

You’re probably tired from all the bonfires and merry-making, but don’t slack off and leave your Christmas trees and decorations hanging around the house for the next month. It is considered bad luck by some to keep your Christmas paraphernalia up after January 6th.

13. It’s time to burn out, eat up, and play out Christmas

Traditionally, Þrettándinn is the last day for people to get their fills of Christmas decadence. So Icelanders would “burn out” Christmas by finishing off the remains of their candles, “eat up” the season by finishing all the leftovers, and “play out” the day with long card games.

Naughty Or Nice, Icelandic Style

By Tómas Gabriél Benjamin



For Icelandic children, the twelfth of December holds special significance as it marks the first visit of the thirteen Yule Lads. One by one they make their visit, with the final one making his appearance on Christmas Eve.

Formerly known as sinister tricksters who made their way from monstrous homes to plague children by slamming doors, stealing food and candles, and peeking through windows, they have grown nicer and more gift-oriented over the years.

As a nation unaccustomed to chimneys and unwilling to hang up perfectly good apparel, Icelanders instead leave shoes in their bedroom windows for the Yule Lads. Those deemed nice are rewarded with a small treat, but those judged naughty get a raw potato. Yes, that’s right, a potato. Not coal, but a nutritious and perfectly edible potato.

At the munchkin age of five, I sought to test exactly how judgmental the Yule Lads were. I didn’t listen to what my mother asked me to do, refused to go to bed on time, and was by all accounts a misbehaving brat. To my mother’s surprise, the following morning I wasn’t upset at finding a potato in my shoe, but asked her joyfully if I could cook and eat it for breakfast.

Christmas Shopping in Reykjavík

Open 10-22 from December 12

Advertisement

Kirsuberjatréð



Vesturgata 4
www.kirs.is
+354 562 8990

Kirsuberjatréd is a gallery run by 11 women in the heart of the city. With different backgrounds and an individual approach to materials and fields of interest they approach the subject in their own way but join efforts in displaying their outcomes. Whether it be a single item or a series of objects, the focus is on the magic of reflection and the curiosity behind looking, viewing and experiencing what is seen.

ELLA



Ingólfsstræti 5
Ellabel.com
+ 354 551 53 00

Sophistication, respect and responsibility are an integral part of ELLA - a Slow Fashion brand created by Elinros Lindal and a team of talented women who understand and appreciate elegance and quality.

Every day we think how to design, produce, consume and wear fashion (and also care for it) better. How to create modern luxury in a thoughtful way, causing the least damage to the environment

Hrím Design Store



Laugavegur 25
http://www.hrim.is
+354 553 3003

At Hrím Design Store in Laugavegur 25 you can find the very best of Icelandic design along with beautiful design items from all around the world. With products ranging from Icelandic wool blankets to eccentric and unique lomography cameras it is safe to say you can find something for everyone in Hrím. You can also visit the website www.hrim.is for inspiration or inquiries.

Farmers Market



Hólmaslóð 2, Fishpacking district
www.farmersmarket.is
+354 552 1960

Farmers Market is an Icelandic design company and clothing brand, founded in 2005 by a young artist couple, a designer and a musician.

With strong ties to the vibrant Icelandic music and design scene, the Farmers Market design concept and inspiration draws from Icelandic roots, combining classic Nordic design elements with chic modernity.

Macland



Laugavegur 17
www.macland.is
+354 580 7500

For all your Apple needs, for purchase and repair, you won't go wrong with Macland. Their new digs on Laugavegur are bigger and better than ever, ready to offer the best service yet.



Geysir



Skólavörðustígur 16
www.geysir.com
+354 519 6000

This shop gathers memorabilia, clothing and gift items from all over Iceland at a convenient location. Great for loading up at the last minute, as their stock is diverse and high-quality.

SPARK Design Space



Laugavegur 17
www.sparkdesignspace.com
+354 552 2656

SPARK is a platform for excellent design projects with a focus on local initiatives that involve collaboration between designers and other professions. Each exhibition lasts for two to three months. After the exhibition we stock items from the show in our shop part of the space and very slowly we are building up a stock of things we love.

Kraum



Aðalstræti 10
www.kraum.is
+354 552 1960

The Kraum Iceland design store features the best from the latest trends in Icelandic design. Kraum sells unique, Icelandic takes on everyday items like stationary, wooden children's toys, plastic zip-lockable handbags and raincoats, and clothing and jewellery made from wool and other materials.

GuSt



Ingólfsstræti 2
www.gust.is
+354 551 7151

In a beautiful old house just a few steps up from the mainstreet Laugavegur, you'll find the Icelandic fashion brand GuSt. It is well known among Icelandic women for the unique and timeless design, and very popular for the fashionable woolen sweaters, which are made from Icelandic wool in the workshop on the second floor. You will most likely be welcomed by the designer herself, so don't miss out on this original Icelandic design experience.

JÖR by Guðmundur Jör



Laugavegur 89
www.jorstore.com
+354 546 1303

This new high-end men's fashion boutique caters to those whose bodies only tolerate the finest fabrics and most delicate of tailoring. The exclusive attention given to each item of clothing will leave the wearer feeling their best, most privileged self.

Kormákur & Skjöldur



Laugavegur 59
www.herrafataverslun.is
+354 511 1817

Located on the main shopping street at Laugavegur 59, Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar is a unique menswear shop that offers a great variety of clothing and accessories. In addition to brands such as Barbour, Filson, Ben Sherman, Loake Shoemakers & Hackett of London, they have an in-house brand that offers suits, shirts and more. The shop has a feel-good decorative atmosphere and a staff that treats each person in a personal and gentle manner.

Handprjónasambandið



Skólavörðustígur 19
www.handknit.is
+354 552 1890

Handprjónasambandið is as authentic as can be. Everything is made from Icelandic wool and knitted by Icelanders: The store features pullover sweaters, cardigans and other wool accessories.

The Christmas Creatures are back!



Take part in the game!



Join the Hunt for the Christmas Creatures

The Yule Lads are amongst some of the most curious Christmas Creatures of Icelandic folklore and are said to come down from the mountains every December to cause all sorts of havoc in the name of Advent.

Each year the City of Reykjavík plays host to a number of these Christmas Creatures, who take up residence in animated form on some of the city's most prominent

buildings. As usual, both visitors and residents are invited to take part in the annual 'Hunt for the Christmas Creatures' with the chance to win a fantastic prize. Pick up a booklet in selected shops and join the Hunt!

Find out more about what's all wrapped-up in Reykjavík this Christmas at christmas.visitreykjavik.is.

Reykjavík
visitreykjavik.is



SPRING TERM 2014

First Courses start January 13th



Study Icelandic at Mimir-símenntun

Quality – Experience – Dedication

The Mimir-símenntun Icelandic language programme offers a wide range of Icelandic courses at six different levels. Training focuses on developing the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, as well as working on grammar and building vocabulary.

Specialised courses

Specialised beginner's courses are offered for students who speak Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish, Polish, Lithuanian and Russian. Special courses in writing and speaking are offered as well.

Hours

Both morning and evening classes are available. Each session is 2 and a half hour with short breaks.

Placement test

A placement test to evaluate what level best suits each student is offered at the beginning of each term and upon request at mimir@mimir.is or tel.: 580 1800.

Studying Icelandic at the workplace

Mimir offers Icelandic courses at the workplace that are designed according to the needs of the company. Teaching material is included and there is emphasis on spoken Icelandic.

Icelandic courses are offered during the autumn, spring and summer terms. At Mimir everyone is welcome and the atmosphere is relaxed. Courses are based on the curriculum of Icelandic as a second language published by The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Course fee

- 60 class hours 38.500 IKR.
- 30 class hours 21.500 IKR.

Note: Most unions refund (partly) Icelandic courses upon proof of payment and a diploma.

According to the government's policy on legal domicile in relation with Icelandic for foreigners there are different prices for students with and without legal domicile.

- Course fee for students without registered legal domicile for 60 class hour Icelandic: 65.000 ISK.



SPRING TERM 2014

First Courses start January 13th

Ofanleiti 2



Öldugata 23



Mímir-símenntun is a centre for lifelong learning in Reykjavík, Iceland, the largest of its kind in the country. The centre is a private corporation, owned by the Icelandic Confederation of labour (ASI).

The main purpose of Mímir-símenntun is to offer courses for adults, develop educational opportunities and to encourage people in the labour market to practice continuous education and job development.

The centre focuses on those who have not completed the upper secondary level of education. The objective is to enable individuals from the target group to obtain an education and improve their position in the labor market. Another target group is immigrants where Mímir offers Icelandic language and orientation programmes with a wide range of courses at six different levels.

Mímir-símenntun is in 2 locations in Reykjavík. Ofanleiti 2 that is across the street from Kringlan shopping mall and Öldugata 23 that is in the old city centre.



From left to right: Guillermo, Danielle, Zilvinias.

Students making progress

Mímir-símenntun has students from all over the world studying Icelandic on six levels.

Danielle Neben from Canada, **Zilvinias Balkevicius** from Lithuania and **Guillermo Carlos Alvarez** from USA have all been taking the 5 week intensive course this autumn semester.

Danielle is married to an Icelander and works in international banking. She has been in Iceland since July this year but has been in and out of the country since 1992. "I heard about Mímir on the radio and I decided to take the 5 weeks intensive course. It suits me perfectly. Going to school four times a week is much better than once or twice a week." Now she is just about to finish level 4, and is pleased with the course. "Learning Icelandic is vital to intergration into Icelandic society. I treasure living in Iceland in spite of the economical hardship that the country is not out of yet. We live in a wonderful neighborhood in Mosfellsbær which is a perfect environment for family life."

Zilvinias teaches portrait drawing and has lived in Iceland for six years. He loves the nature and open spaces the country has to offer. "This is my first time here at Mímir but I have taken classes in other schools. The five week course could be even more intensive in my opinion but this is an excellent course. I have learned more in the last few weeks than I have learned for the last six years" He is now on level 3 and is happy with the teachers at Mímir. "Ingibjörg, my teacher, is amazing. Always cheerful and full of energy... that inspires and motivates me to learn."

Guillermo from Minneapolis, Minnesota, arrived in Kópavogur only six months ago and is coaching gymnastics at Gerpla. "I started on level 2 since I had already been studying Icelandic and some Old Norse on my own. I love everything about Iceland and I love learning the language". He brought his hybrid bike with him to Iceland. „Hybrid bike is a mix between a mountain bike and a road bike. I ride my bike as much as I can but the Reykjavík area is not very bike friendly although, as I am told, there have been a lot of improvements lately." In his group there are people with diverse backgrounds such as Germany, Denmark, Ukraine, Russia and the Philippines. „I really like my group and we get a lot of support from each other". He is also very happy with the good resources the teachers have access to. „Whenever there is something I want to study further the teachers always show me a website that is helpful or give me work books that I can use to practice my Icelandic."

Career guidance

Free of charge

Are you interested in:

- Increased possibilities in work and the labour market?
- Looking into possibilities for education?
- To get information about education or the labour market?
- To receive help with finding your areas of interest and strengths?
- To set yourself goals and to make plans for education or work development?
- To get help in managing barriers preventing studying?

Mímir-símenntun offers educational and vocational guidance at the company's premises in Ofanleiti 2, 103 Reykjavík. Book an interview.



No time? No money? No problem!

Learning at Mímir-símenntun suits those who work full time.

Evening courses and shorter intensive courses.

Most courses are partly refundable by your labor union or The Directorate of unemployment.

Do you have knowledge and experience but not formal education?

One of the services that Mímir-símenntun offers **free of charge** is a so called **Validation of non-formal and informal learning**.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is based on the idea that learning does not only take place inside the formal school system but in all kinds of situations and in all kinds of contexts. All learning is seen as valuable and should therefore be documented. In the last few years the concept of validation of real skills and competence has attracted increasing attention in the western world.

Non-formal learning is a competence that is acquired through studies outside the formal educational system, for example at public educational centres or courses taken at the workplace. Informal learning is a competence that the individual has acquired during daily routine in relation to his/her work, family or leisure time.

Through the validation process an overview will be compiled that can be used in many ways such as shortening of formal learning, strengthening the position in the job market or as a tool when choosing a learning path or applying for a job.

How is the validation done?

The first step for the individual is to call Mímir-símenntun and book an interview with a career counsellor. The career counsellor will guide the individual through the whole process. The validation process is in five steps. At the beginning the career counsellor informs about the goal of the validation, role of the assessors and possible outcome of the process. In the next step the individual gathers appropriate documents such as job descriptions, certificates, samples and projects. The individual then validates him/herself in accordance with the qualification requirements. After the document phase there is an interview with professional assessors where the status of the individual is considered. The career counsellor is present to assist the individual during the interview. When it has been decided which competences are eligible for validation the confirmation of competence is done according to a confirmation plan, accepted by the assessor and counsellor. If the outcome fulfills the requirements made the individual receives a valid document to confirm validation.

The course that helped me learn more than just Icelandic

Icelandic Language and Society Course at Mimir-símennntun

Norbert Farkas is a 36 year old Hungarian who has lived in Iceland for 5 years. He finished Icelandic Language and Society Course *Landnemaskólinn* at Mimir-símennntun in 2012.

Why did you decide to start studying at *Landnemaskólinn*? I wanted to improve my Icelandic, especially in writing and speaking the language. I also felt I needed to learn more about Iceland in general.

What did you learn? Not only did I improve my Icelandic but I also learned a lot about the Icelandic society, the culture, the institutions and social structure. The computer skills class was very helpful and we learned how to make a CV, not to mention a so called competence portfolio. In the competence portfolio I gather all the skills and knowledge I have acquired through the years in education and work experience that I can use when applying for work here in Iceland.

What did you enjoy the most? I really liked visiting the Icelandic parliament and the Reykjavík City Theater. Romeo and Juliet was really interesting to see in Icelandic.

What was your least favorite part? I enjoyed everything about this course, honestly, I had the time of my life.

How was your group? I made many permanent friends in my group and got to meet people from many countries like Catalonia, Bulgaria and Kosovo.

What were the teachers like? They were friendly and their Icelandic was easy to understand since they have the training to speak in a clear and direct manner to people who are still learning the language.



Has the course improved your life in Iceland? Yes, definitely and I encourage those who want to improve their skills and options in this country to check out this course.

Icelandic Language and Society Course - *Landnemaskólinn*

The Icelandic Language and Society Course at Mimir-símennntun is an orientation course for immigrants. The objectives of the course are to boost immigrants self-confidence and knowledge of Icelandic. That will give them more options in the labor market and help them to intergrate into Icelandic society. The course is for people who have finished 180 class hours of Icelandic or have similar proficiency. The class subjects are Icelandic language, society and history, confidence training and computer skills.

Tourism Service Course



For those who want to work in the tourism sector?

100 hour course – taught in English

Course objectives:

- Preparation for jobs in the tourism sector
- Customer service training
- Local geographical, historical and cultural knowledge
- Information technology
- Training in teamwork and independent work

Course subjects:

- Customer service
- Geographical, historical and cultural orientation
- Environmental awareness
- Icelandic and English
- First aid

The course is based on the curriculum *Færni í ferðapjónustu* of The Education and Training Service Centre (www.frae.is). The Education and Training Fund subsidizes the studies which can be evaluated according to the ECTS credit system. The course is for people 20 years old and over, and have finished 180 class hours of Icelandic, or have similar proficiency.

Part of the course fee is refundable by labor unions.

Grunnmenntaskóli

Basic secondary school for people with Icelandic as a second language

**Do you want to improve your basic education?
Did you drop out of secondary school?**

300 hour course – taught in Icelandic

Teaching methods and material are adjusted to diverse groups of students with various levels of knowledge of Icelandic.

Course subjects:

- Math
- Icelandic
- English
- Information technology
- Study-skills

The course is for people 20 years old and over and is based on the curriculum *Grunnmenntaskóli* of The Education and Training Service Centre. The studies can be evaluated to the ECTS credit system.

Food handling and preparation skills

Do you want to acquire or improve your food handling skills?

This course covers various subjects that are useful and practical for those who want a career in the food industry

The course subjects are:

- Food handling practices
- Creating procedural guidelines
- Health hazard prevention, food safety standards, and bacterias
- Public health policy and workers responsibilities
- Organizational skills and safety inspection protocols

The course includes on-the-job training

**60 hour course
weekdays / mornings
and afternoons**

SPRING TERM 2014

First Courses start January 13th



MORNING COURSES

Courses at Ofanleiti 2

5 weeks – 60 class hours

Intensive courses, 13. Jan. to 13. Feb.

-Icelandic 1	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 3	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 4	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 5	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20

Intensive courses, 24. Feb. to 27. March

-Icelandic 1	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 3	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 4	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 5	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20

Courses at Öldugata 23

5 weeks – 60 class hours

Intensive courses, 13. Jan. to 13. Feb.

-Icelandic 1	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20

Intensive courses, 24. Feb. to 27. March

-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 3	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20

EVENING COURSES

Courses at Ofanleiti 2

10 weeks – 60 class hours

From 13. January to 19. March

-Icelandic 1	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 1	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 2	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 2	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 3	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 3	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 4	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 4	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 5	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 6	Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25

-Icelandic 1 – Vietn.	Mon. & Wed.	17:30-19:40
-Icelandic 2 – Vietn.	Mon. & Wed.	19:50-22:00
-Icelandic 2 – Lithu.	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 2 – Russ.	Mon. & Wed.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 1 – Polish	Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 2 – Polish	Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 1 – Russ.	Mon. & Wed.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 1 – Span/Port.	Mon. & Wed.	19:35-21:45

Courses at Öldugata 23

5 weeks – 30 class hours

Speaking in Icelandic

Mon. & Wed. 17:15-19:25 20. January to 19. February

Speaking in Icelandic

Mon. & Wed. 17:15-19:25 3. March to 2. April

Emphasis on pronunciation, and spoken language in different situations. Required proficiency in Icelandic that equals 120 class hours (2 levels) in Icelandic for foreigners.

Written Icelandic – 30 class hours

Mondays 17:15-19:25 20. January to 24. March

Emphasis on writing various kinds of texts in Icelandic and grammar revision. Diverse teaching methods. Assignments suited for individual needs. Required proficiency in Icelandic that equals 180 class hours (3 levels) of Icelandic for foreigners.



Reading and writing in Icelandic

- a new course

Do you know anyone who needs to learn how to read and write?

A 120 class hour course for illiterate students who want to learn how to read and write in Icelandic, or to improve their reading skills. The course is based on a new curriculum *Að lesa og skrifa á íslensku*, published by the Education and Training Service Centre.

Course subjects are:

- Reading
- Writing
- Computer training
- Self-confidence

SUMMER TERM 2014

MORNING COURSES

Courses at Ofanleiti 2

5 weeks – 60 class hours

Intensive courses, 7. April to 15. May

-Icelandic 1	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 3	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 4	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20
-Icelandic 5	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-11:20

July Courses at Öldugata 23

4 weeks – 60 class hours

Intensive courses, 30. June to 23. July

-Icelandic 1	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-12:10
-Icelandic 2	Mon. to Thu.	9:10-12:10

EVENING COURSES

Courses at Ofanleiti 2

7 and 1/2 weeks – 60 class hours

From 7. April to 2. June

-Icelandic 1	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 1	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 2	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 2	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 3	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 3	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 4	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 5	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icelandic 6	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45

-Icelandic 1 – Lithu.	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icelandic 2 – Vietn.	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45
-Icel. 1 – Pol + Russ.	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	17:15-19:25
-Icel. 2 – Pol + Russ.	Mon. Tue. & Thu.	19:35-21:45



Courses at Öldugata 23

5 weeks – 30 class hours

Speaking in Icelandic

Mon. & Wed. 17:15-19:25 14. April to 19. May

Emphasis on pronunciation, and spoken language in different situations. Required proficiency in Icelandic that equals 120 class hours (2 levels) in Icelandic for foreigners.