

Editor: Bjarni Brynjólfsson. Deputy and picture editor: Páll Stefánsson. Contributing writers: Mica Allan, John Boyce, Catharine Fulton, Ben H. Murray, Sari Peltonen and Deb Smith. Art director: Erlingur Páll Ingvarsson. Proofreader: Jane Appleton. Contributing photographers: Johannes Kjartansson, Áslaug Snorradóttir and Brian Sweeney. Contributing illustrator: Lilja Gunnarsdóttir. Production: Erlingur Páll Ingvarsson. Color production: Páll Kjartansson. Publisher: Benedikt Jóhannesson. Advertising sales: Helga Möller, helgam@heimur.is. Editorial/advertising offices: Borgartún 23, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland, Tel: (+354) 512-7575, Fax: (+354) 561-8646, atlantica@heimur.is, www.icelandreview.com. Printing: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, Iceland. ATLANTICA is published in Reykjavík, Iceland, by Iceland Review, a division of Heimur Ltd. Copies of ATLANTICA can be obtained from the publisher at USD 10 per copy (airmail, worldwide). No articles in this magazine may be reproduced elsewhere in whole or in part without the permission of the publisher.

atlantica

PHOTO ON THIS PAGE BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON. BOLLYWOOD STARS, SURYA SIVAKUMAR AND NAYANTHARA AT THE BLUE LAGOON, ICELAND, FILMING THE MOVIE ADHAVAN.

3 Welcome to Iceland

A letter from the editor.

4 On the Fly

Old houses in Ísafjörður town, traditional Icelandic food and the best of Iceland.

16 Winter Wonderland

Iceland in winter can be a wonderful place. John Boyce finds out what to do and where to go to enjoy winter to the hilt.

14 Horizontal Rain

It might be rainy and the rain might be falling horizontally because of the wind. Deb Smith still found plenty to do in Reykjavík which she describes as a charming place under the odd rainbow.

18 The Majesty of Esja

Esja is the capital's mountainous jewel in the crown. Mica Allan gazed at it, researched its history and finally climbed to the top.

22 Goal to Africa

Our photographer Páll Stefánsson directs his Hasselblad at the Africa Cup of Nations.

24 Passion and Delight

Icelanders have a passion for good coffee and hunt for it the world over. Mica Allan interviews Adalheidur Hédinsdóttir, Iceland's lady of caffeine.

26 Guiding Light

Exploring Iceland's nature can be wonderful. But make sure you've got the right guide who knows his stuff. John Boyce talks to Iceland's most prominent travel guides. Photos by Páll Stefánsson.

30 Voluntourism

More and more people choose to travel and do voluntary work on their travels. Catharine Fulton writes about the socially conscious way to see Iceland.

34 Design

Sister Act clothing by Einvera and the notorious Uggi cod lamp. By Sari Peltonen.

Perfect Planning

Photographer Páll Stefánsson roams the country day and night for the best shots of Iceland.

38 A Cultural Treasure

Seven different museums in Reykjavík and neighbor towns. By John Boyce.

46 Blonde Ambition

Eliza Geirsdóttir Newman is one of Iceland's most versatile female singers. She has just released the album *Pie in the Sky*. By Ben H. Murray.

52 Blue Bollywood

Bollywood's biggest stars in the Blue Lagoon. Photos by Páll Stefánsson.

56 Your Guide to Good Eating and More

The Atlantica guide to excellent dining, drinking and shopping while you are in Iceland.

S
T
N
E
T
N
O
U

Cover photo by Páll Stefánsson. Ice cube, at black lava sand on Breidamerkursandur beach.

ICELAND REVIEW

ICELAND REVIEW

47.03 2009

HAVE A GREAT FISH DAY

THE MAN OF A MILLION TREES
CREATIVE CUT
WILD AT HEART
THE ALUMINUM LADY



THE BIG SWITCH

HOW ICELAND CAN BECOME
GREEN AND ORGANIC

ISK 899
USD 7.50
DKK 89



www.icelandreview.com

2009

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS VISIT www.icelandreview.com OR PHONE +354 512 7575

ALL NEW SUBSCRIBERS ENTER OUR SWEEPSTAKES FOR A FREE TRIP TO ICELAND WITH ICELANDAIR



atlantica



TRAVEL MAGAZINE

Head Office, Advertising:

HEIMUR Ltd.
Borgartún 23
IS-105 Reykjavík
Iceland
Tel: (354) 512 7575
Fax: (354) 561 8646
atlantica@heimur.is
helgam@heimur.is
www.icelandreview.com

Overseas Advertising Representatives:

DENMARK:
JB Media International
Kongevejen 84,
DK-2840 Holte
Denmark
Phone: (45) 33 85 30 00
Fax: (45) 33 24 28 23

SWEDEN:
SAS Media AB
SE-195 87 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel. (46) 8 797 03 00
Fax (46) 8 728 85 38

BENELUX:
Media Partners
Stroombaan 4
NL-1181 VX Amstelveen
The Netherlands
Tel. (31) 20 547 3600
Fax (31) 20 647 5121

FRANCE:
Inflight Media Marketing (IMM)
80 Rue Montmartre
F-75002 Paris - France
Tel: (33) 1 40 13 00 30
Fax: (33) 1 40 13 00 33

GERMANY:
IMM Germany
Herrengaben 68
20 459 Hamburg
Germany
Tel: (49) 40 41 11 50 70
Fax: (49) 40 41 11 50 69

USA:
Airgroup One
19 West 36th Street
Suite 7
New York, NY 10018
USA
Tel. (1) 212 244 5610
Fax (1) 212 244 5321



These days there is very little light. During one of the darkest days in December a little boy asked his mother in Reykjavík, “Mom, is the darkness stuck?” Although we had an amazing December with calm days which felt like spring, January and February can really get on our nerves. These are the coldest months

of the year. But look at the bright side, the days are getting longer and there are plenty of winter activities to free our souls.

In the town of Ísafjörður where I grew up the sun disappears for two months behind the mountains for the darkest time of the year, but when it peeks again over the mountain tops after January 25 the townspeople celebrate by baking pancakes which are eaten with blueberry jam and whipped cream. This custom celebrating the rising sun is practiced in many towns and villages around the island. In Reykjavík at least we see the sun the year around although it disappears quickly below the horizon in the dead of winter.

We enjoy the winter and go skiing, sledding and skating until the snow disappears in the spring. Last winter we had a very good season with plenty of snow until after Easter.

But who can predict the weather these days, when it snows in Madrid while it is warm like Spain here in the north?

If you have the chance, we recommend that you try our winter specialties which we call *thorramatur*, the old food of Iceland. This recommendation comes with a warning: this food is only for those with strong gastronomic nerves—the dried fish, putrefied shark, ram’s balls, soured whale blubber and an assortment of lamb innards soured in whey even turn *some* Icelandic modern noses away. There is an ongoing argument about whether or not this is food fit for human consumption. I would say that some of it is simply delicious whilst some is best kept as distant memory. Luckily tastes differ. I am certainly a fan of good putrefied shark but not such a big fan of soured sheep intestines.

There is plenty to do in Iceland in winter. Go skiing, skating or join the kids on the sled slopes. Visit our geothermal pools in the evening and embrace the darkness—it really is soft like blue velvet. Look out for the wonders of the north, the aurora borealis, the stars and the moon which grace us on clear nights. Go outside in any weather like true northerners do, even in a blinding blizzard. But be prepared and dress according to the weather. Enjoy your stay with us in the north.

Bjarni Brynjólfsson
Editor

on the fly ➤

Houses of Danish Monopolists



Any visitor to the town of Ísafjörður in the West Fjords should visit the Maritime Museum housed in the old wooden houses built by the Danish monopolist merchants in *Nedstikaupstadur*. The oldest house was built as a home for the station manager, the Factor, in 1765. Then two large pack houses were built to store the merchandise: the Tar House in 1781 and then the Tower House in 1784. These are among the oldest houses still standing in Iceland. Built by Danish carpenters from logs lain horizontally on a foundation of clean washed sea pebble gravel, the houses have been preserved remarkably well. They are identical to houses built in Greenland by the monopolist merchants appointed to the colonies by the Danish King in the 18th century.

Business in Ísafjörður was lucrative and the Danish merchants who ruled commerce there lasted long, some for decades. In 1787, an association of

merchants from Altona took over commerce in *Nedstikaupstadur* and ran it for six years until two Danish merchants took over; Jens Lassen Busch and Henrik Christian Paus did business there for 30 years. Then Matthias Wilhelm Sass took over and ran his commerce in *Nedstikaupstadur* for nearly sixty years, from 1824 to 1883.

The Danish monopolists bought fish, wool and other products from farmers and fishermen, and sold necessities such as sugar, grain, tobacco and 'black death' liquor but also household items, hardware, fine clothes and fishing equipment. In 1900 there were about 100 houses in *Nedstikaupstadur* but only a few have survived.

The Maritime Museum houses all sorts of historical fishing equipment and also has renovated old wood boats on display. *BB*

A taste of Iceland.
Anywhere.



Icelandic webstore with a large portfolio of Icelandic products online.

Icelandreview.com

DAILY NEWS
FROM
ICELAND

Traveller
2009
READERS' SPAs AWARDS
WINNER
HEALTHY THERMAL GEOTHERMAL SPA
BLUE LAGOON
ICELAND

**BLUE LAGOON
ICELAND**

Energy for life
through forces of nature

Blue Lagoon is open daily www.bluelagoon.com

HVITA MUSEID / SA - 09-0704

Step into the Viking Age

Reykjavík
871^{±2}

Landnámssýningin
The Settlement
Exhibition

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.

Multimedia techniques bring Reykjavík's past to life, providing visitors with insights into how people lived in the Viking Age, and what the Reykjavík environment looked like to the first settlers.

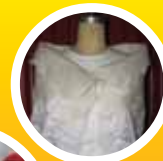
Aðalstræti 16
www.reykjavik871.is



www.alafoss.is



ÁLAFOSS



ÁLAFOSSVEGUR 23, MOSFELLSBÆR
OPEN: MON. - FRI. 9:00 - 18:00 AND SAT. 9:00 - 16:00



WARMTH FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY!
WOOL SWEATERS, TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND MODERN ART

on the fly

Traditional Fare

By Bjarni Brynjólfsson
Photo by Páll Stefánsson



A traditional smoke house in North Iceland.

The Thorrablót festival is a feast for any gastronomic daredevil.

January and February are months of great festivities in Iceland. The *Thorrablót* is a festival that celebrates tradition and strengthens communities all over Iceland. This is the most popular gathering of the year for many towns and villages. In many places people dress up in traditional costumes, eat traditional Icelandic food, sing and are entertained by local theatrical acts or choirs.

People usually bring their own food to the *Thorrablót* in a traditional wooden trough. The fare consists of *hangikjöt* (smoked lamb), *hardfiskur* (dried fish), *kaestur hákarl* (putrefied shark), *svid* (singed lamb's head), *hrútsprungar* (ram's balls), *slátur* (haggis-like sausages made from blood and liver), *súr hvalur* (sour whale blubber) and all sorts of dishes made from lamb's intestines soured in whey, which was the traditional way of storing meat before freezing and refrigeration became available.

Most of this food is not healthy at all for modern people, because it is extremely fatty, salty and smoked, but Icelanders love this fare

in the coldest months of the year. This is food designed for hardship; for people who really had to eat a lot of animal fat to survive the harsh conditions and manual work.

And most of these dishes have a strong odour (putrefied shark smells like the strongest of cheeses) and are probably nothing for the squeemish. Even some Icelandic gourmets do not dare to taste some of this food although they will snobbishly nibble on any musty cheese made in France. But gastronomic daredevils will have a field day at any *Thorrablót* because although completely strange, the food is delicious and offers a new range of flavors for the tastebuds.

If you don't have the chance to go to a *Thorrablót* you can find this food in supermarkets like Nóatún.

Smoked lamb, served with potatoes, peas, red cabbage and white flour sauce is traditionally served on Christmas day in many households and is probably also the most popular dish served at *Thorrablót*.

You can buy smoked lamb to take home. It is excellent raw, sliced thin like carpaccio or dried ham, but you can also cook it the traditional way—boiled for one hour per kilo, with one cup of brown sugar in the water. Then you refrigerate the meat and slice it when it's cold. But by all means have a slice or two while it is still warm. The taste is simply marvelous. Many serve strong mustard, like Dijon, with the smoked lamb which is excellent.

WHITE FLOUR SAUCE:

150 g butter
3 tbsp white flour
Fresh milk
Salt and sugar

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour whilst stirring. Pour in the milk and stir continuously until the sauce is thick enough. Add salt and sugar to taste. (Icelanders usually prefer this sauce to be quite sweet.)

EIDERDOWN DUVETS



WELCOME TO OUR EIDERDOWN COMFORTER FACTORY SHOP IN THE CENTRE OF REYKJAVÍK.

We offer the largest selection of quality white goose-, swan-, duck-, and eiderdown comforters and pillows in all international sizes.

Wholesale - Retail - Taxfree world wide export



DÚN & FIDUR

Laugavegur 87 - 101 Reykjavík
Tel. +354 511 2004
Mobile: +354 861 4186
Fax + 354 511 2003
E-mail: dunogfidur@dunogfidur.is

www.dunogfidur.is

E L M D E S I G N



DESIGNED BY WOMEN FOR WOMEN

ICELANDIC DESIGN

Laugavegur 1 • 101 Reykjavík • Tel. 511 0991 elm@elm.is • www.elm.is

What's On In Reykjavík



For a complete guide to Reykjavík's restaurants, pick up a free copy of *What's On In Reykjavík*.

Icelandic Design Jewelry



Lavastones



Icecold 14 kt. Gold Collection

Jón & Óskar
JÓN & ÓSKAR

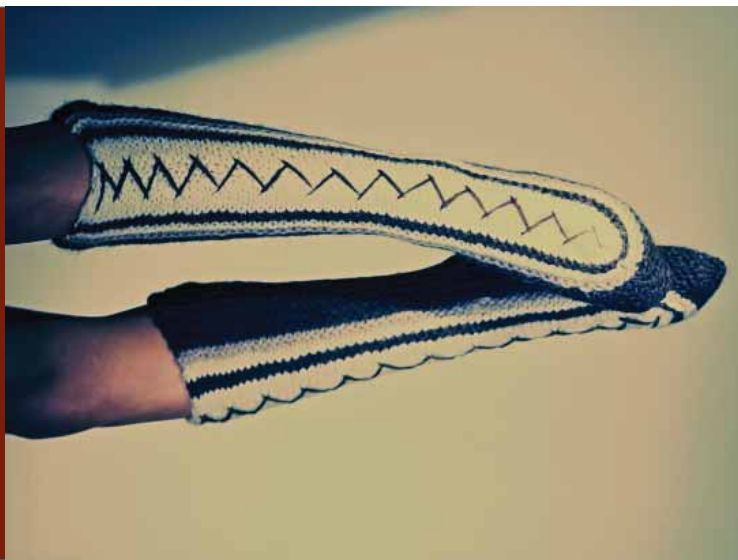
www.jonogoskar.is

Laugavegur 61 / Smáralind / Kringlan

Icelandreview.com

DAILY NEWS FROM ICELAND





THAT TIME OF THE YEAR

A bright red scarf for December, a head band with a broach for January, smiley toed slippers for February. Now may be the high season for curling up on the couch with a pair of knitting needles and a ball of lopi (Icelandic wool) but why not make knitting a year-round sport? Textile teacher Kristín Hardardóttir's *Prjónadagar 2010* wall calendar features instructions on a separate project for each month of the year. In addition to the classic mittens and socks, the calendar includes a bag for a girl and a (gift) bag for a bottle. For now, the instructions are in Icelandic only—but these, for knitters on my level at least, are no more cryptic than knitting shorthand in any other language.

CALLING GLACIER

For *Vatnajökull (The Sound of)*, Scottish conceptual artist Katie Paterson sank a microphone deep in the waters of *Jökulsárlón* lagoon, the iceberg-filled outlet off of Vatnajökull then hooked up an amplifier and a mobile phone. 40,000 people from 47 different countries called the number +44(0) 775 7001122 to connect to the glacier and listen to the rattle and hum. The work was first exhibited in the Slade Gallery, London, in 2007. Paterson has since plugged into *Langjökull*, *Snaefellsjökull* and *Sólheimajökull* glaciers. With water collected from all three glaciers, Paterson flew back to London and stored the deposits in her home freezer while she learned how to cast the ice into an audio record. The glacial-cast disc played until it melted, but the sound lives on online at katiepaterson.org.



SWEET HEARTS

A year ago, to welcome her firstborn, Andrea Róberts received the gift of a little white heart. The heart was made by the late Jórunn Brynjólfssdóttir, owner of the Jórunnarbúð shop at the crossroads of Klapparstígur and Skólavörðustígur, in which she worked every day until passing away last year at the age of 98. Out of respect for the lady of hearts, Róberts has taken up the tradition. Named Jórunn after their inspiration, Róberts' hearts are handmade from drapes, tablecloths and bed linens—the same materials that Mrs. Brynjólfssdóttir sold in her shop. Each heart comes with a pine tree seed, so that the receiver of the present can tend a sapling just like a friendship, marriage or child.

Look for the hearts in selected gift and design stores.

The Frozen Trove

Downtown Reykjavík **Sari Peltonen** collects the unusual, entertaining and hip from the green pastures of Icelandic culture.



MADAME LAUGA'S LEGUMES

The first of its kind, Reykjavík farmers' market *Frú Lauga* is a treasure chest for the food enthusiast. *Raudkál 390 ISK st frá Engi í Biskupstungum, Bláskel frá Hrísey 1190 ISK/kg*, the handwritten signs declare. Heaps of organic turnips and green tomatoes, piles of sundried salt cod...and then there is the mackerel pate, which my household consumes in alarming quantities. The shop is run by Arnar Bjarnason along with his wife Rakel. The name is both a reference to the location on Laugalaekur and a tribute to the couples' grandmothers: Sigurlaug, Gudlaug and Áslaug. What the fourth grandmother Elin would have said about this is another matter—maybe there is good reason to open a second shop? frulauga.is



BRING YOUR OWN SKYR

Not in Iceland? Weimar in Germany offers the next best thing. The Iceland room in Andreas Taut's Labyrinth hostel is a labor of love for Taut's sister, who missed the country dearly after a blissful year working on Icelandic farms. The room features a huge projection of Hallgrímskirkja on its wall and a window opening onto a beach on the south coast of Iceland—or at least a photo of it. The color scheme is the blue and white of hotpots, glaciers, sea and wide skies, and the furniture is wooden, old and atmospheric in keeping with the cozy cafes of Reykjavík. EURO 17 / USD 24 / ISK 3,100 per person/night during the winter season. labyrinth-hostel.de



TREMENDOUS DRESS

Is it a dress? A pair of pants? Maybe a shirt? Emami started with one hard-to-categorize, multifunctional dress. Designed in 2007, it has been a tremendous hit: 6000 have been sold in Iceland alone—a whopping two percent of the population owns it. Now, the magic dress has a full collection of multifunctional viscose styles to accompany it. Adding grist to the mill, Emami recently opened its first flagship store on the main street Laugavegur, featuring an extra large fitting room—the essential venue for experiments in discovering just how many ways there are to wear the clothes. emami.dk

Winter Wonderland

By John Boyce Photos by Páll Stefánsson

In recent years Iceland has experienced an explosion in the number of tourists visiting the country. The vast majority of these venture north in the short summer season from May to September when the sun barely sets and the mild temperatures provide a modicum of climatic comfort. Many, however, come for the unique sights, events and activities that only a winter trip can afford. And to help you make the most of your chilly trek to the near arctic, Atlantica has put together a comprehensive guide to arctic adventure and urban events.

WINTER ACTIVITIES

MOUNTAIN SKIING

It is a common reaction of the first time visitor to register surprise that Iceland is neither as cold nor as snowy as they had imagined. Indeed in recent years, rising temperatures have meant that snow has, in fact, been in rather short supply. Nevertheless, Iceland still offers high quality mountain skiing until March at a number of locations. Bláfjöll is Iceland's largest and most popular skiing resort, a mere 30 kilometers from the capital and ideal for the short stay tourist. Bláfjöll provides a large number of well groomed pistes that cater for both learners and the more experienced skier, with the larger pistes also illuminated at night. If you have more time on your hands, then Hlíðarfjall, seven kilometers from the northern town of Akureyri, is a must. This is Iceland's premier ski resort with twelve immaculate pistes ranging from beginner to upper intermediate. For the more adventurous, or indeed cash strapped, there is also the option of off-piste mountain skiing. The almost complete absence of trees on the Icelandic landscape makes for relatively obstacle free natural slopes.

SNOWBOARDING

For enthusiasts of winter sports, the rise of snowboarding in the last twenty years has been a phenomenon. Cheaper in terms of equipment required and less demanding in technique than skiing, snowboarding is extremely popular with Icelanders, particularly the under 30s. There are a total of twelve resorts in Iceland from which to choose. As with mountain skiing, the most popular locations are again Bláfjöll and Hlíðarfjall. For the complete novice, help is at hand at both resorts with private and group snowboarding lessons, as well as on-the-spot equipment hire. Further afield for the more adventurous and experienced is Iceland's and indeed Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull. The glacier is a favorite with dedicated native snowboarders, encompassing as it does Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur. Rising to 2,113 meters, the peak affords spectacular views of the Icelandic lunar landscape. It takes about six hours of steady hiking to reach the summit of Hvannadalshnjúkur, but those less inclined to such strenuous activity can make their way by four wheel drive to Jöklael, situated right at the base of the glacier.



ICE CLIMBING

If careering down the slopes of Bláfjöll or Hlíðarfjall is not enough rush, you can always turn your hand to a spot of ice climbing. It is not an activity to be taken lightly and certainly not for the faint hearted. Similar in technique to the more commonly executed rock climbing, with sheer cliffs of ice thrown in for good measure, ice-climbing routes are accessible from November to mid April, though February is undoubtedly the best month as one is almost guaranteed ideal conditions. The most popular site for this activity is Múlafjall, both for its kilometer long sheer face cliff and its relative proximity to Reykjavík. Múlafjall lies about fifty kilometers to the east of the capital with dozens of routes to choose from and catering to all grades of difficulty. Múlafjall is climbable only between the months of November and March. Further afield is the world-renowned Glymsgil canyon. It is named after the waterfall that occupies it, which at 200 meters is the highest in the country. Leading sports publication *Rock and Ice* has likened it to the famous Box Canyon in Colorado, a Mecca of the ice-climbing sport. The months of December, January and February provide the most ideal conditions for those brave enough to tackle Glymsgil.

SNOW MOBILE

For those lacking the requisite experience or time to tackle Iceland's ice cliffs, snowmobiling offers a relatively risk free rush. For the adrenaline junkie, racing across a twinkling white landscape on motorized scooters is a perfect outdoor winter experience. Memorably described as jet-skiing on snow, snowmobiles reach a maximum speed of 65 kilometers per hour and are capable of tackling terrain ranging from the flattest of trails to near vertical mountain faces. Mýrdalsjökull, a 600 square meter mass of ice about three hours drive from Reykjavík, is one of the most popular locations for snowmobile trips. The glacier provides excellent conditions all year round and majestic views from the top. It is also the most accessible glacier in the country. A myriad of Icelandic tour companies offer package trips to Mýrdalsjökull and provide all the gear necessary for a trip in sub-zero temperatures.

GLACIAL HIKING

Approximately 11 percent of Iceland's surface area is covered with glaciers, providing the ideal location to explore these giants of nature. The aforementioned Mýrdalsjökull is also the most popular destination for glacial hiking in Iceland and caters to the novice as well as the more experienced hiker. Most tour companies offer trips to the frozen glacial tongue Sólheimajökull for a day-long trek across ancient and ever-changing frozen water. Opportunities also abound for a spot of ice caving in one of the many crevices beneath the surface of the glacier. Strictly for the experienced glacial hiker is the spectacular Snaefellsjökull to the west of the island. This glacier encompasses the volcano of the same name, the mythical gateway to the centre of the earth made famous in the literature of Jules Verne. The glacier itself contains vast crevices and so a mountain guide and the right equipment are essential. The challenging hike to the top is more than rewarded by stunning views of the entire peninsula.

AURORA BOREALIS

One of the most impressive of natural geological wonders in the Nordic world is surely that of the aurora borealis or 'northern lights'. In classical mythology Aurora was the Roman goddess of the dawn, while borealis is Latin for northern. In scientific terms, auroras are formed by the presence of aurora oval belts that exist around the magnetic poles. Iceland is in the most active region for the aurora ovals and so is best placed of all the Nordic countries for viewing. The northern lights are almost always visible as long as there is a clear sky, the exception being the summer months when the long hours of daylight make viewing impossible. Though it is often possible to catch a glimpse of the phenomenon in the capital on a clear, cool winter night, for more spectacular sightings a trip to the countryside is recommended. Package bus tours are available to optimal viewing locations at optimal times of the day. Northern lights activity is usually most concentrated in the hours around midnight and a spectacular display releases energy levels equivalent to a small nuclear explosion.

On the Fly

CULTURE



SAFETY FIRST

Thousands of tourists and thrill seekers enjoy exhilarating winter sporting experiences every year in Iceland without incident. But engaging in robust physical activity in challenging winter conditions should not be taken too lightly. Indeed for many tours, participants are required to sign a waiver stating that they recognize that all outdoor activity involves some inherent risk. A small number of visitors each year underestimate the conditions of their chosen activity. The Icelandic coastguard takes care of most air and sea rescue missions. However, observing a few simple rules enables you to return home safely to tell your holiday tale!

While it is essential to be informed of the weather forecast beforehand, this is often of limited value as conditions are often subject

to rapid and inexplicable change, beyond the predictive skills of even the most experienced meteorologist. With ice climbing, or indeed any other robust outdoor activity, it is particularly important to follow the age old advice of the boy scouts and be prepared for any eventuality. When skiing or snowboarding there are particular hazards to be mindful of, the biggest of which is avalanches. It is recommended that one always be accompanied by someone familiar with the terrain, particularly if one is attempting off-piste activities. One should always carry and know how to use an avalanche beeper.

As a general rule of thumb for all mountain activities, it is advisable to stick to mountains close to centers of population before Easter. After the holidays, it becomes safer to venture to more remote locations when the weather has become more stable. And finally, err on the side of caution. Be aware that the temperature combined with wind chill factor can make the mountains and glaciers significantly colder than home base. Better to return home having had a slightly less exciting holiday than not return at all!

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS

FINAL TASTE OF CHRISTMAS

After exhausting immersion in the glaciers and snowy peaks of rural Iceland, the intrepid traveler can relax at the various winter events taking place in the coming weeks in Reykjavik and around the island. If you just missed the spectacular New Year's fireworks celebrations, a final taste of Icelandic Christmas comes on January the sixth when Icelanders celebrate the twelfth and final night of Christmas. Tradition has it that the mythical creatures, elves and trolls, come out of hiding to dance, sing and celebrate with the human population, and the bonfires and fireworks of New Year's Eve are reprised on a smaller scale.

THORRABLÓT

Eat like the Vikings of old in February as Icelanders celebrate the ancient ritual of feasting on traditional Icelandic dishes such as fermented shark, dried fish, sheep's head, pickled ram's balls and various sheep innards. The annual feast of *Thorablót* takes place from January 19 to February 19 when urban and rural communities all across the island gather in large numbers to re-enact the ancient meat feasts of the Vikings. These culinary gatherings are liberally garnished with dancing, singing and drinking long into the night.

FESTIVAL OF FOOD AND FUN

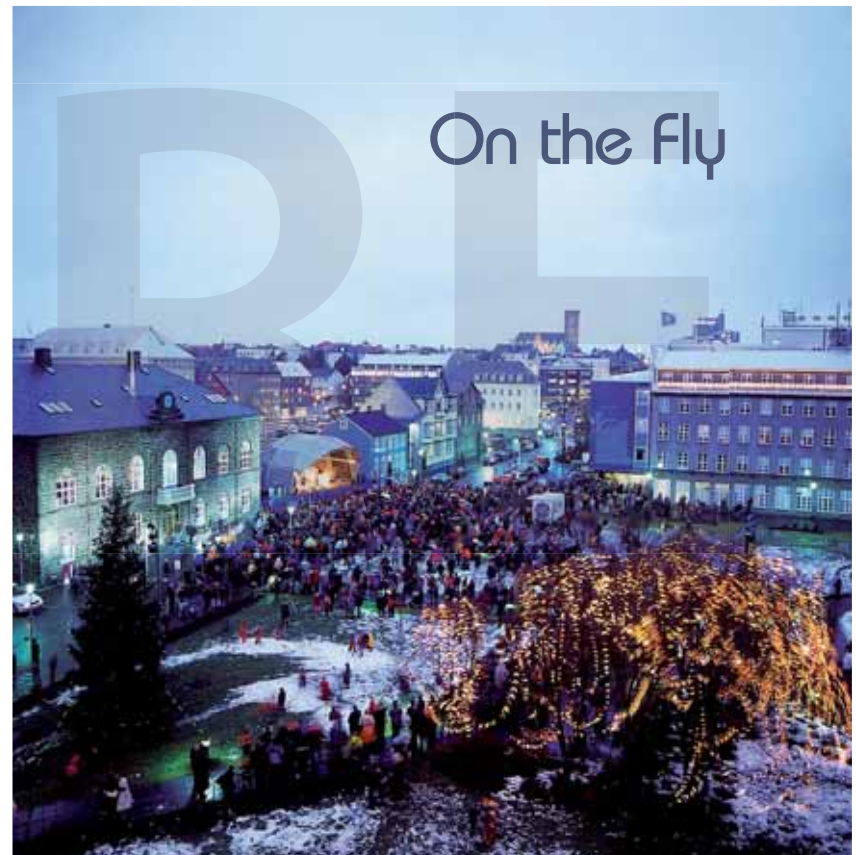
If modern culinary delights are more your bag, then check out the Food and Fun festival, February 21-25. Renowned chefs from all over the world congregate in Reykjavik to create finger-licking delicacies at appointed restaurants around the city. Using only Icelandic ingredients, these culinary masters put together a mouth watering menu at a fair price which is then presented all week in the participating restaurants. On the final day of the festival is the grand cook-off. The chefs, who have never before worked with exclusively Icelandic ingredients, have three hours to quickly shop and whip up a three course Icelandic meal.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Towards the end of February, as Icelanders began to emerge from the darkest time of year, the Festival of Light is celebrated all over the city. Activities include sporting events, concerts, exhibitions, ghost story readings, masses, fireworks and parades as Icelanders attempt to shake off the torpor of the winter months. The festival is truly a community effort with the participation of a myriad of associations, art museums, clubs and galleries, and is organized in conjunction with the University of Iceland, the National Museum, kindergartens and elementary schools throughout the city.

NATIONAL BEER DAY

Believe it or not, Iceland's prohibition era outlasted the more famous American experiment by forty years, at least in the arena of beer. A seventy-five year ban on the brown stuff was only officially lifted on March 1, 1989. Since then, throughout the country, beer has been drunk in great quantities on this date. High spirited celebrations are held in the bars, restaurants and clubs in Reykjavik and beyond.



On the Fly

Horizontal Rain

By Deb Smith Photos by Páll Stefánsson

Rain
Rain
Rain
Rain
Rain

When my son and I spent six days in Iceland, the weather was often gray and cloudy: with rain, peeks of sun, wind, more rain, a rainbow, maybe snow and finally night —still cloudy and rainy.



on the fly

Don't laugh. Sometimes a whole day in Reykjavík really *is* like this. Visiting this Viking land on the thin crust of the earth at 66 degrees north takes a sense of adventure to brave the elements. It also takes a bathing suit, a warm waterproof coat and a sense of humor when yet another morning brings horizontal rain.

But Iceland serves up something good for each struggle you have. *Kolaportid*, the weekend community flea market, offered a delightful indoor look at Icelanders' penchant for collecting, local color and some of the best coffee and cream puffs around. Who cares if it's raining? Outside by the port always snaked the line for *pylsur* (frankfurters) dressed with fried and fresh onions, ketchup, mustard and remoulade sauce at the *Baejarins Bestu* ('The Town's Best') hot dog stand. Good coffee and a good hot dog can make a perfect Saturday, if you ask me.

On the food front, Icelandic fish soup—loaded with cream and calories—is instantly surpassed by *fiskibollur* (fish balls served with boiled potatoes), the round, tasty Icelandic answer to fish sticks. Water and fish are particularly good in Iceland. Coming from glaciers and fresh out of the sea, respectively, they make you forget a glass of wine here costs more than both combined.

Since Prince has *Purple Rain*, your own home movie of the capital isn't complete without Reykjavík's famous horizontal rain...or snow...or whatever's coming out of the skies, blown parallel to the ground at gale force. Strolling becomes an athletic sport in Iceland. I'm not a lightweight, but one evening I was nearly blown off my feet while walking back across the capital to my room. Reykjavík city is very safe: it was well after 10 p.m. as I wound my way—undisturbed—to the other side of town.

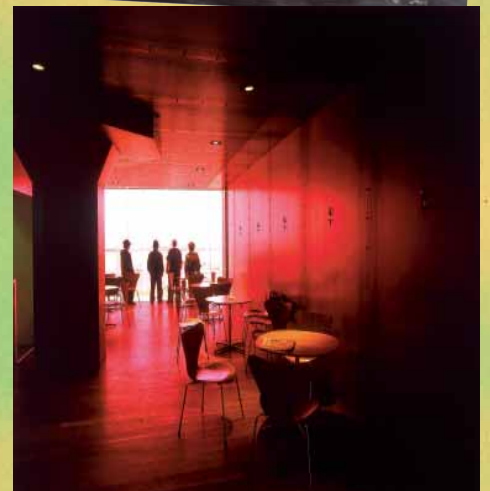
To counter the rains, my son and I bought 72-hour Reykjavík Welcome Cards. For about USD 20 each, we had unlimited use of a fine city bus system to take us far and wide, admission to major museums and free run of the city's seven thermal pools.

Most Reykjavík city pools are outdoors, geothermally heated and sheer bliss. While our hair froze into icicles above the water, we could swim, soak in the hotpots, hear local conversations in Icelandic and watch the lifeguards—bundled up in heavy winter parkas—against a stunning background of homes and snow-covered mountains.

In Iceland, tours are always available to natural formations like the waterfall Gullfoss and the geysers, or to the surreal beauty of the Blue Lagoon. It's worthwhile to see them and say you've been there. But in February, when the sun doesn't rise until 9:30 in the morning, other treats appeared if we looked: a rainbow over Hallgrímskirkja; the addictive taste of *skyr* (a yogurt-like milk product) or a dish of juicy mountain lamb; the rush of cozy warmth when we went inside our guesthouse or settled down with a cup of coffee; the beauty of a handmade sweater. Icelandic crime thrillers allowed me to open my book or fire up my Kindle in a nation of voracious readers and marvelous bookstores. What a country!

Wear layers, bring a bottle of Icelandic water and your detective novel. Get on the bus, go to the pools, roam far and wide. Iceland is not easily defined by simple images. It is a place where contrast makes the trip. ◻

In Iceland, tours are always available to natural formations like the waterfall Gullfoss and the geysers, or to the surreal beauty of the Blue Lagoon. It's worthwhile to see them and say you've been there.



On the Fly

DEB'S TIPS



CONNECTIONS to Reykjavík City Airport and BSI bus terminal from Keflavík Airport (flugstod.is) are provided by taxi and the **Flybus** (re.is/Flybus). One way Flybus tickets start at ISK 1.950 (about USD 18) and round trip tickets start at ISK 3000 (about USD 24).

ICELANDIC GUESTHOUSES and Hotels are listed on the Reykjavík Capital Area website: visitReykjavik.is.

TOURS to the Blue Lagoon, Gullfoss and Geysir are provided by several tour companies. **Reykjavík Excursions** (re.is) operate tours throughout the year.

REYKJAVÍK WELCOME CARDS are available at the Tourist Information Center (Adalstraeti 2) and most city hotels. They cost approximately USD 11 (24hrs), USD 15 (48hrs) and USD 20 (72 hrs).

THE REYKJAVÍK THERMAL POOLS are listed with prices at itr.is; admission free with the Welcome Card.

HALLGRÍMSKIRKJA CATHEDRAL is at the crest of Skólavörðuholt. Open 9 a.m.-8 p.m. daily, free organ recital Fridays at noon. Admission to the church tower USD 5. hallgrimskirkja.is

KOLAPORTID weekend flea market: open Saturday and Sunday only, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tryggvagata 19, Old Harbor, ph: 562 5030

BAEJARINS BESTU hot dog stand across the street from Kolaportid. Look for the line from 10 a.m.-12:30 a.m. Sun-Thu, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Fri-Sat. A dog with everything—*eina með öllu*—costs ISK 260 (about USD 2).

FISKIBOLLUR (fish balls) are available at many restaurants in Iceland. At the supermarkets you can buy them frozen and cook them yourself, or follow the recipe at home from one of the many Icelandic cookbooks for sale.

COFFEE and good coffeehouses populate the streets of the capital.

ICELANDIC MOUNTAIN LAMB While it's listed as a seafood restaurant, **3 Frakkar** (Three Overcoats) on Baldursgata 14 also serves to-die-for lamb, followed by a knockout skyr brulee for dessert. Ph: 552 3939, 3frakkar.com 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6-10 p.m. Mon-Fri; 6-11 p.m. Sat-Sun.

ICELANDIC SWEATERS at Álafoss Wool Factory Shop: Álafossvegur 23, Mosfellsbaer. Open 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon-Fri; 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat. Helpful staff, lovely goods in an old woolen mill set against the mountains outside the city center, but still reachable by bus. The staff here turned my teen son onto the Icelandic rock group **Sigur Rós**.

ICELANDIC DETECTIVE NOVELS (in bookstores and Amazon.com in English translation).

My favorites:

Arnaldur Indridason's Inspector Erlendur series:

Jar City

Silence of the Grave

Voices

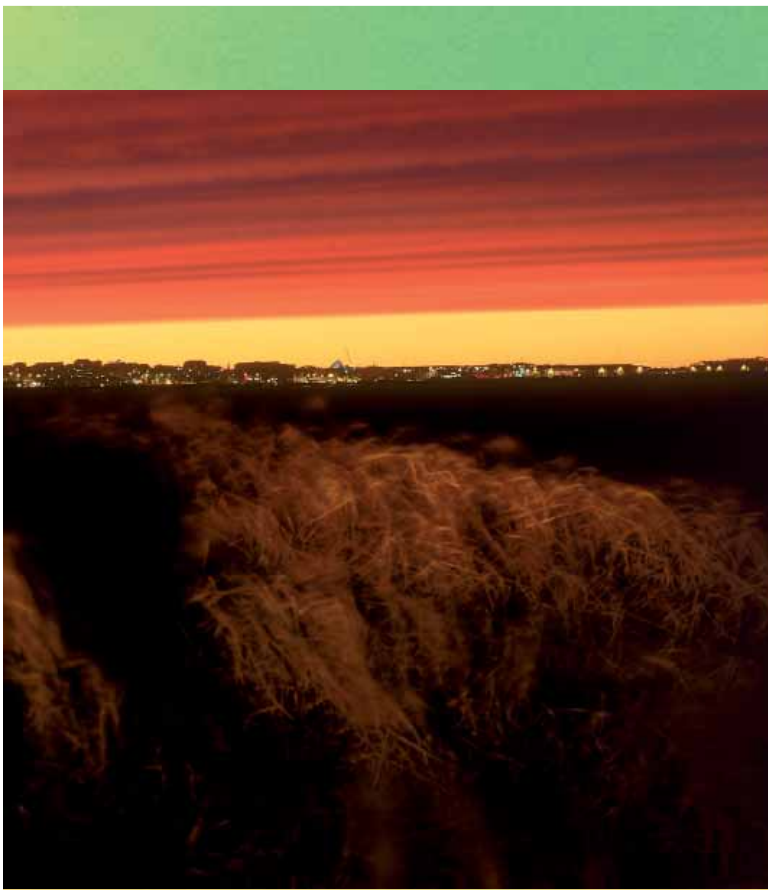
The Draining Lake

Arctic Chill

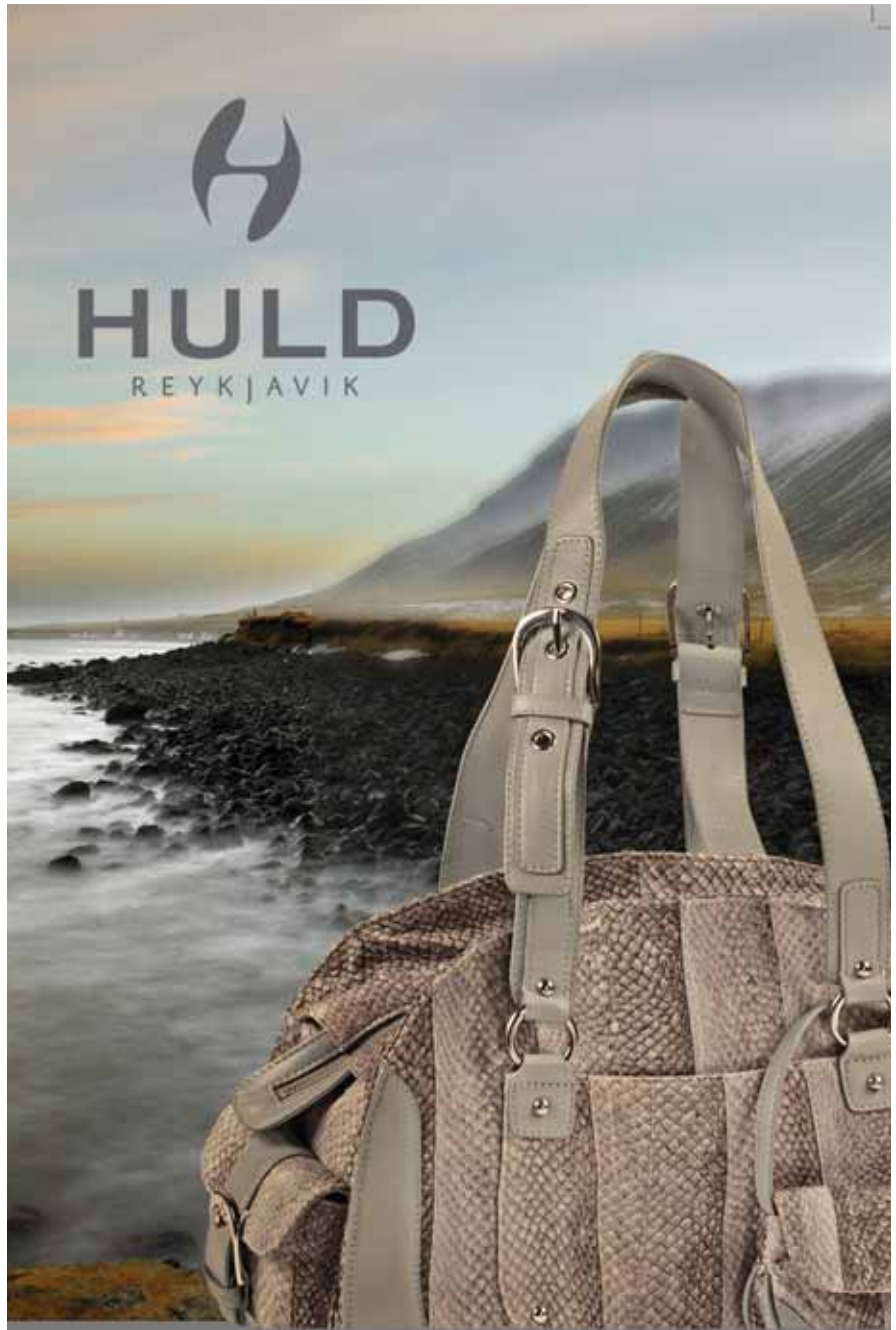
Yrsa Sigurdardóttir's Thora Gudmundsdóttir series:

Last Rituals

My Soul to Take



Sun Sun
Rain Rain
Sun Sun
Rain Rain



HULD
REYKJAVIK

HAND IN HAND
WITH NATURE

BAGS AND ACCESSORIES IN FISH SKIN

*The collection is available at Huld Store
Skólavörðustígur 4. - 101 Reykjavík
tel. +354 551 7015*

www.huld.is

The Majesty of Esja

BY MICA ALLAN

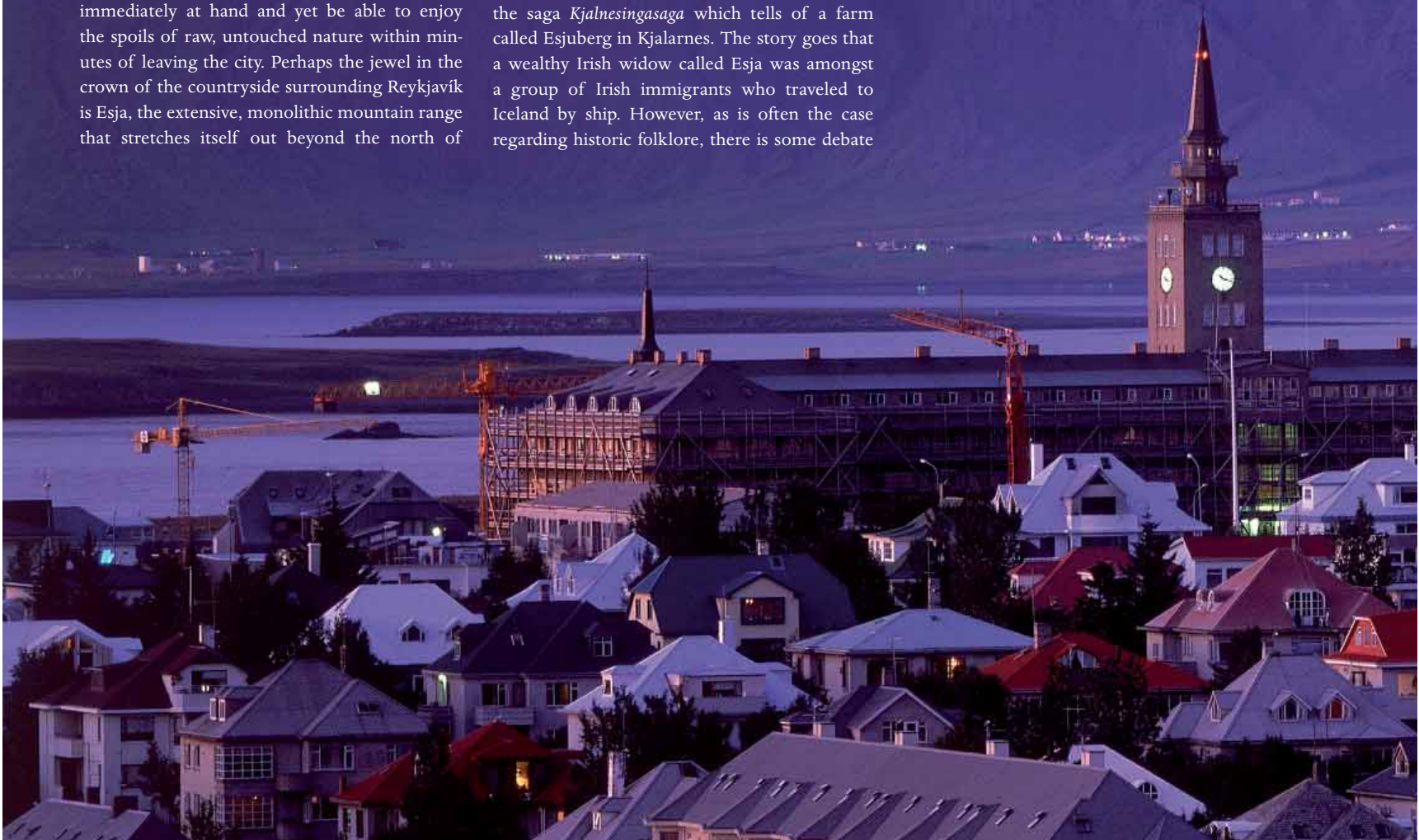
PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

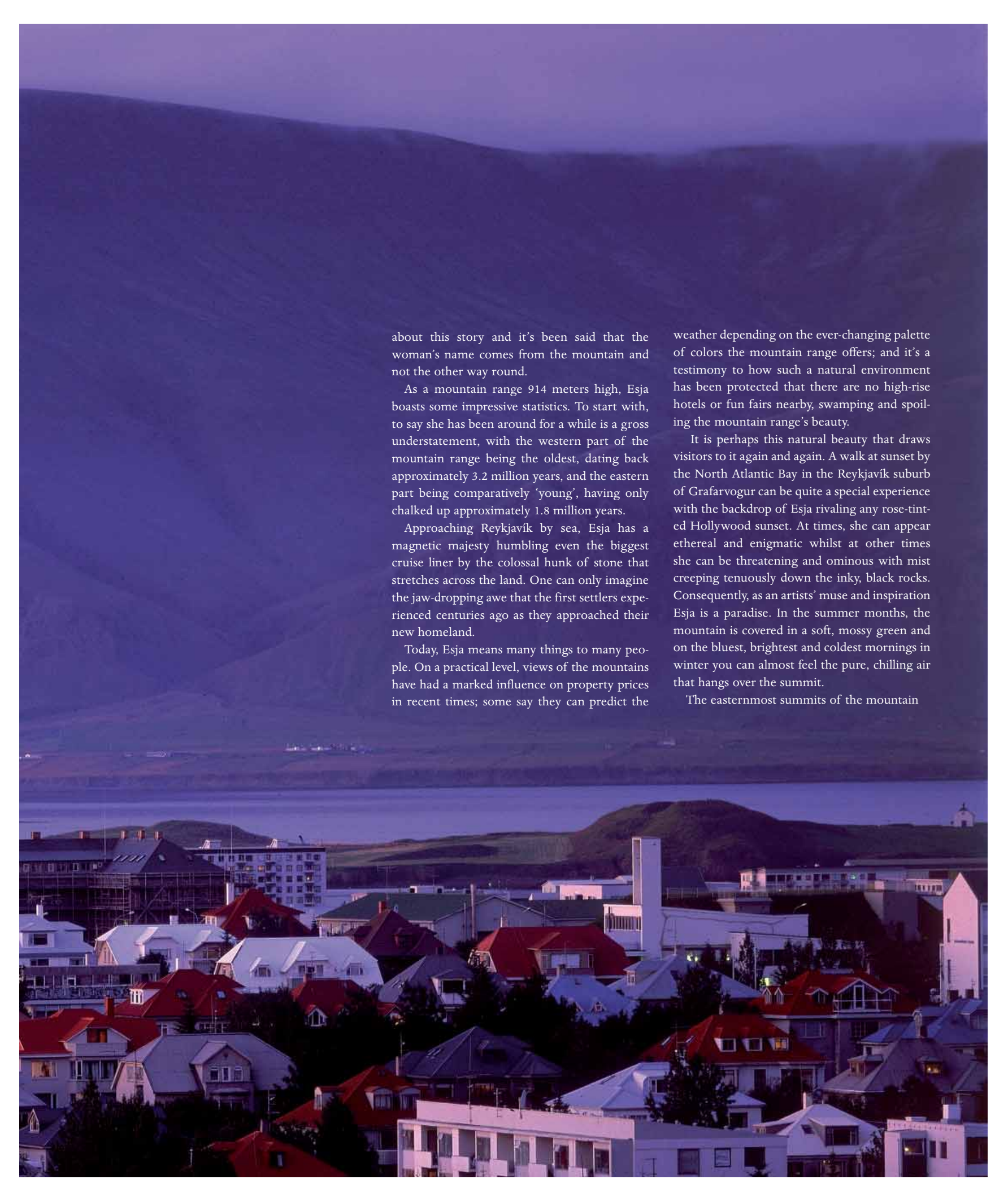
Esja is Reykjavík's mountainous jewel in the crown. Spectacularly dominating the skyline it flanks the north of Europe's most northern capital, providing a stunning display of color, light and rock.

One feature that often takes visitors by surprise when they visit Reykjavík is its proximity to nature. It is a rare treat to have a capital city with all its modern facilities immediately at hand and yet be able to enjoy the spoils of raw, untouched nature within minutes of leaving the city. Perhaps the jewel in the crown of the countryside surrounding Reykjavík is Esja, the extensive, monolithic mountain range that stretches itself out beyond the north of

Reykjavík from the edges of the Atlantic towards Thingvellir National Park in the west.

The name 'Esja' is said to have come from the time of the settlement of Iceland and from the saga *Kjalnesingasaga* which tells of a farm called Esjuberg in Kjalarnes. The story goes that a wealthy Irish widow called Esja was amongst a group of Irish immigrants who traveled to Iceland by ship. However, as is often the case regarding historic folklore, there is some debate



A photograph of a town at dusk with a large mountain in the background. The town features numerous houses with red roofs and some taller buildings. The sky is a deep purple, and the mountain in the background is dark and silhouetted against the twilight sky.

about this story and it's been said that the woman's name comes from the mountain and not the other way round.

As a mountain range 914 meters high, Esja boasts some impressive statistics. To start with, to say she has been around for a while is a gross understatement, with the western part of the mountain range being the oldest, dating back approximately 3.2 million years, and the eastern part being comparatively 'young', having only chalked up approximately 1.8 million years.

Approaching Reykjavík by sea, Esja has a magnetic majesty humbling even the biggest cruise liner by the colossal hunk of stone that stretches across the land. One can only imagine the jaw-dropping awe that the first settlers experienced centuries ago as they approached their new homeland.

Today, Esja means many things to many people. On a practical level, views of the mountains have had a marked influence on property prices in recent times; some say they can predict the

weather depending on the ever-changing palette of colors the mountain range offers; and it's a testimony to how such a natural environment has been protected that there are no high-rise hotels or fun fairs nearby, swamping and spoiling the mountain range's beauty.

It is perhaps this natural beauty that draws visitors to it again and again. A walk at sunset by the North Atlantic Bay in the Reykjavík suburb of Grafarvogur can be quite a special experience with the backdrop of Esja rivaling any rose-tinted Hollywood sunset. At times, she can appear ethereal and enigmatic whilst at other times she can be threatening and ominous with mist creeping tenuously down the inky, black rocks. Consequently, as an artists' muse and inspiration Esja is a paradise. In the summer months, the mountain is covered in a soft, mossy green and on the bluest, brightest and coldest mornings in winter you can almost feel the pure, chilling air that hangs over the summit.

The easternmost summits of the mountain



range, called Mósárdshnjúkar, are of an especially unusual light color. Legend has it that in the nineteenth century an Icelandic artist gazing up at the summit thought he saw the sun after a period of heavy rain. However, on closer inspection it was only the mountain tops with their magical colors. In reality, what the artist was viewing was rhyolite stone, which is often found in Icelandic nature near dormant and active central volcanoes.

As a volcano, although Esja has been in retirement for quite some time, she did have an impressive resume in her younger years. Parts of the mountainous region, namely Kjalarnes and Stardal, were active volcanoes for over a million years, however, Esja's last eruption was some 2.8 million years ago. Since then the shape of Esja as we know it has been formed by at least ten glacial periods, consequently pushing it slowly

westwards, moving a centimeter a year to its current position 30km northwest of the active fault that separates the two tectonic plates in Thingvellir National Park.

Such tumultuous drama firmly in the past, today's visitors to Esja find their own sense of adventure and it's a popular place to both walk and hike. At its busiest there are many hundreds of people enjoying the spectacular nature it has to offer and walking novices can enjoy the lower walks whilst those more experienced can venture higher.

There are two established hiking paths that reach the summits, Thverfellshorn and Kerhólakambur (851 meters), and these can take between one and three hours depending how far walkers choose to hike and the speed at which they undertake the adventure. There are simple and clear markings that divide the hike into sec-




tions. Each sign has a number of boots marked on it, indicating the degree of difficulty each path offers. Consequently, one boot means the walk is easy with three boots meaning it's a hard climb, suggesting that porridge for breakfast might have been a good move that morning.

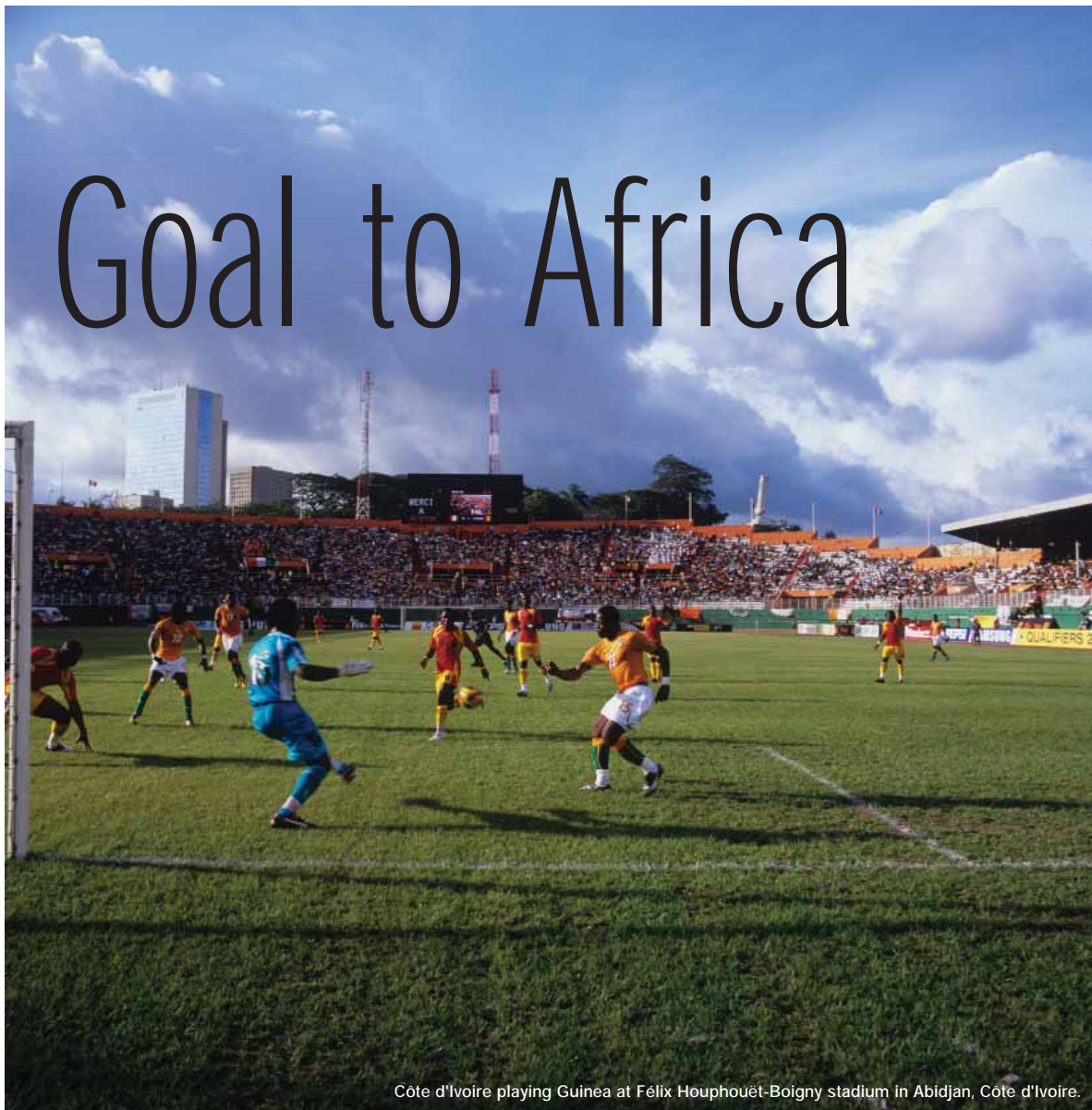
Hence, the 'three boot walk' is for the intrepid climber clearly with the summit in their sights, and these fit and hardy climbers can choose to climb directly to the top, instead of following the path which goes off to the right, which is for those walkers opting for the route with 'less boots.' Approximately 200 meters below the top, there is a large rock called *Steinn*. It is here that less experienced climbers often choose to go down again, as the path becomes increasingly more challenging from this point. If, however, such sport does not hold enough adrenalin, then in winter months the advent of ice climbing on

Esja provides another exhilarating way to experience the mountain.

Alternatively, for those who wish to savor the view of the summit but don't feel the need to sweat it out through a climb or a frozen waterfall, the trip can be done in a fraction of the time in a helicopter ride from Reykjavík's domestic airport. This route to the top ensures that the only thing that will need serious battery power is your camera to capture the spectacular views.

Whether Esja is to be experienced through exercise, marveled at from Reykjavík or simply a location for a scenic picnic, it offers something for everyone, all within easy access from Reykjavík. Getting in touch with Icelandic nature has never been so easy and for these reasons Esja hits a high note. 


Goal to Africa



Côte d'Ivoire playing Guinea at Félix Houphouët-Boigny stadium in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

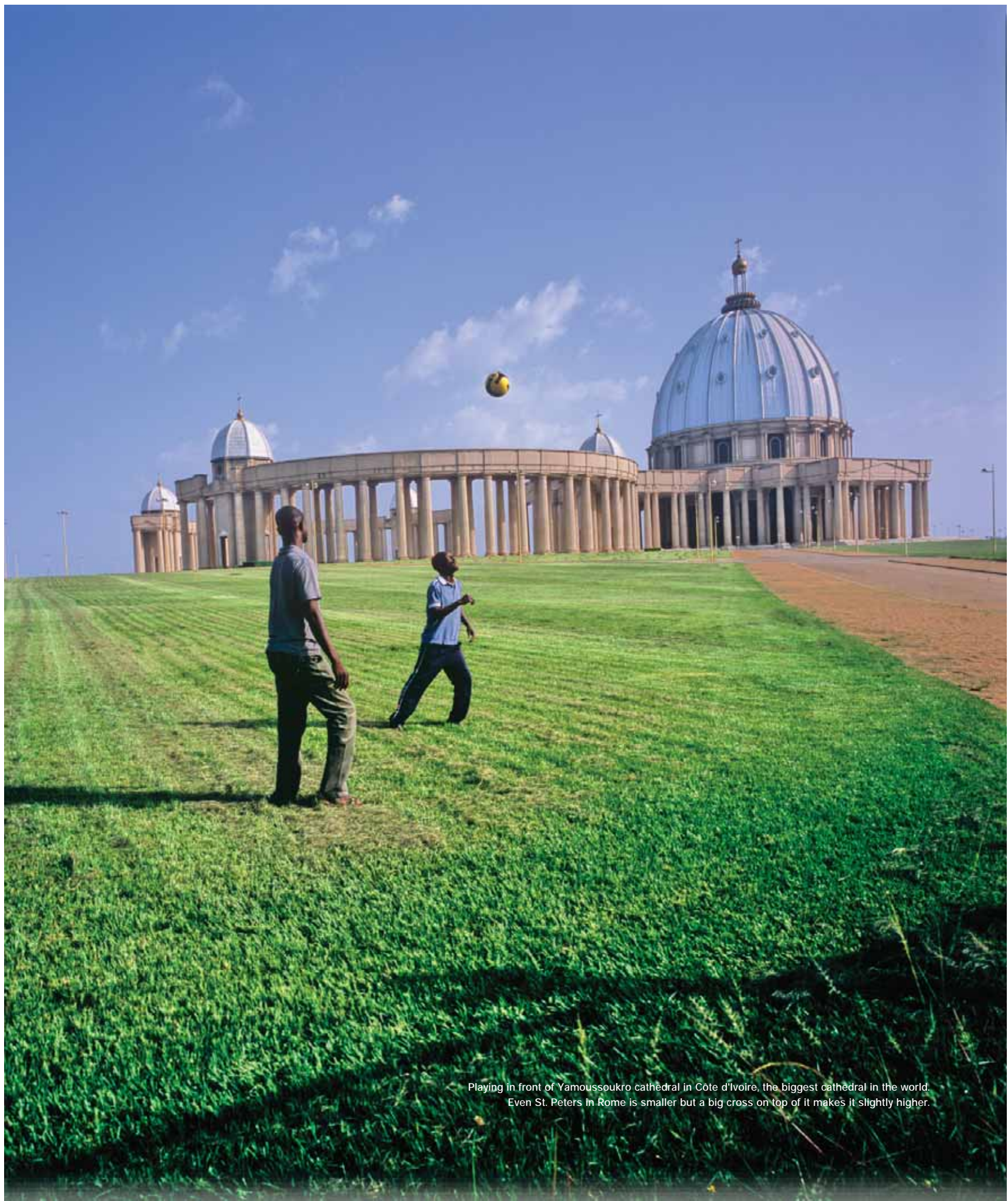
The Africa Cup of Nations is a soccer tournament, held biannually on the continent. Current champions are Egypt and they are the most successful country with six wins. This year the games will be staged in Angola, a good pre-test for the World Cup that will be held for the first time in Africa this spring, in South Africa. For the first time an African team has a chance to win, with three very strong teams competing: Ghana, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast. My bet is on the Ivory Coast or Ghana. Both teams have star players.

Former world footballer of the year, George Weah, believes an African team is likely to win next year's World Cup in South Africa. An African team has never advanced beyond the quarter-finals of a World Cup, but Weah claims the 2010 tournament could change that. "We hope for that. It's a difficult task but not impossible," Weah told reporters. Ghana won Africa's first ever under-20 World Cup last month. It's just the beginning. *PS* 



Future football stars in Abidjan, capital of Côte d'Ivoire.





Playing in front of Yamoussoukro cathedral in Côte d'Ivoire, the biggest cathedral in the world. Even St. Peter's in Rome is smaller but a big cross on top of it makes it slightly higher.

Passion and Delight

PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

Fresh back from Brazil, where she was one of 28 international judges at the 'Cup of Excellence' awards, Kaffitár founder and owner *Adalheidur Hédinsdóttir* sat down with **Mica Allan** in Kaffitár's Bankastraeti cafe to talk about her passion and delight: coffee.



MICA ALLAN: How do you think Icelanders' relationship and experience with coffee has changed over the last few tumultuous years?

ADALHEIDUR HÉDINSDÓTTIR: During the boom before the crisis people wanted to have their own coffee machines and were buying imported coffee. After the crisis people are turning more to Icelandic products and we see that reflected in their choice of coffee. Icelanders in general have a good coffee knowledge and reasons for this are the range of wonderful cafes in Reykjavík and the quality of beans. It also makes all the difference to have skilful baristas. Kaffitár has been fairly successful at teaching baristas and the quality of coffee in Iceland has greatly improved.

MA: What would you say is the Icelandic palate for coffee?

AH: Well, it's hard to generalize, but I like coffee that is clean, has high acidity and sweetness. When Kaffitár started, these were the coffees I introduced from Central America. I think palates have now moved towards darker roasts that have more body because popular espresso machines usually call for coffee that is slightly more roasted than high acidic coffee.

MA: You have 110 employees. Can you tell me about your business model?

AH: Firstly, we use the finest coffee beans available from the main coffee-growing countries, and Kaffitár is run prudently so that everyone can afford good coffee. Direct trade is also part of our business model. We have two divisions: the roastery, distributing the coffee to the wholesale market and making all the cakes and pastries we sell in the cafes; and then we have our eight cafes.

After our board was formed there were some changes. For example, I'm not general manager anymore. Three years ago when I was about to go crazy, I was either going to sell the company and get out or hire someone and continue, and so I hired our general manager, Stella Marta, who is fantastic and very smart with a PhD in engineering. This means I can now focus on sourcing the coffee.

MA: Can you tell me more about the values Kaffitár has?

AH: These values resulted from exploring our brand image. The first value is being passionate and having passion in everything that you do. The second one is professionalism. It's not good enough to have great coffee and baristas, it has to be consistent throughout the company. Our third value is 'a woman's touch'. Our cafes have hand-written signs and little feminine touches, for example when we teach the baristas to clean the tables you have to do it like this *[motioning cleaning over the table's edge*



"And our fourth value is multiculturalism, because it's important we recognize both where the coffee beans come from and the farmer, so we try to teach the Icelandic consumer about the coffee and its origins".

with hands]. And our fourth value is multiculturalism, because it's important we recognize both where the coffee beans come from and the farmer, so we try to teach the Icelandic consumer about the coffee and its origins.

However, it's also saying we are Icelandic and are proud of that. All our coffee brands are in Icelandic and that's very important to us. One of our coffees is Sudurnesjakaffi [Southern peninsula coffee] and when I tried to sell this to Hagkaup supermarket chain 18 years ago, their men in suits told me, "We can't have that, it's such a lame name." I told them this is an Icelandic company, this is the product's name and we are proud of that. They now sell our coffee.

MA: You opened the business in 1990 and the first cafe in 1994. What are your dreams for Kaffitár now?


AH: I would like to sell more coffee in Iceland because then I can buy more of the really good coffee, so we are continuing on the quest to have our coffee available to the consumer at a range of retailers. People have criticized this and said we're diluting our brand but our philosophy has always been that good coffee is for everyone. Also, we have the highest brand positioning for coffee companies in Iceland, which is great, however, we have the challenge of maintaining that reputation.

MA: How do you do that?

AH: By being honest and asking our customers where we are doing a good job. For example, previously, people told us they were satisfied with our coffee drinks but that they wanted healthier food choices and longer opening hours. In this particular cafe, people weren't pleased with the noise levels, so we put insulation in the ceiling.

MA: What have been some of the most important lessons you've learned?

AH: That it's important for the staff we hire at Kaffitár to be a cultural fit. Many of our baristas are high school or University students and may only stay with us for eight or nine months, however we value having them because they bring their own clear ideas to Kaffitár. Recently all the staff got together to explore how we can celebrate our twentieth anniversary next year focusing on involving our staff, customers, community and the ethnic origins of coffee and they came up with the most amazing ideas.

It's also important to continually delight and surprise the customer, to offer high-end, quality coffee through our cafes and of course to be able to work directly with farmers who have the same ethical standards that Kaffitár has. 

Guiding Light

BY JOHN BOYCE

PHOTOS BY PALL STEFÁNSSON

From its humble origins in the 1960s, Icelandic tourism has grown to become one of the leading sectors of the country's economy. More competitive flight deals and increased interest in environmental and adventure tourism have seen the industry grow exponentially over the last fifteen years. Currently Iceland attracts about 500,000 foreign visitors each year, a figure comparable to other, much longer established destinations such as Ireland.

The vast majority of visitors cite enjoying the country's unique landscape as their reason for visiting Iceland. That being the case, visitors are in need of considerably more professional guidance than a mere crawl of the bars and restaurants of the capital would require. The tourist guide profession has a long and respected tradition in Iceland, one that goes hand in hand with respect for the power of Icelandic nature. The training of guides was first initiated as far back as 1960 under the auspices of the Icelandic Tourist Board. Sixteen years later, the Iceland Tourist Guide School was founded in 1976. Since then, guide training has developed and expanded to the point where three schools in Reykjavík now offer a one year full-time course for prospective tourist guide professionals. The courses are taught in the evenings and at weekends as many students also hold down full-time jobs. According to Stefán Valsson, former head of the Icelandic Guide School, tourist guide trainer and current editor of the Icelandic Tourist Guide Association's website and newsletter, these three schools have, to date, trained approximately 1,500 professional guides for Iceland.

The training of guides is run in conjunction with the Icelandic State Travel Agency and the National Tourist Board with a curriculum supervised by the Ministry of Education. Such tripartite involvement ensures a comprehensive training program for aspiring guides. Mike Kissane, an American expatriate of long standing, who runs his own small tour guide business, is a recent graduate. I asked him about his impressions





Dyngjujöll mountains by lake Askja in the central north highlands. Askja and hot pot Viti which translates as Hell is unique in Iceland's landscape. It was here the first astronauts trained for their moonwalk, 40 years ago.



of the course. “If I had to describe the course in a few words I would choose rigorous and diverse. The program entails instruction in Icelandic geology, biology, history, sociology and statistics, art, literature, orienteering, first aid and group management.” And that’s only the academic side. Interspersed with the study program are numerous field trips and practice tours as well as a course in public speaking. “Our final requirement was a complete ring road tour of Iceland to complete the graduation process.”

Most tour guides are quick to try their hand at guiding soon after their graduation. However, building up a solid year-round itinerary, given the shortness of the Icelandic summer season, can be a slow and arduous process. According to research by the Tourist Guide Association, the average graduate typically makes less than EUR 500 in their first year.

Whatever the financial vicissitudes of the job, both Valsson and Kissane are in agreement about the other less tangible rewards of the guiding profession, namely the chance to enrich the experience of the people they guide and the opportunity to share their knowledge with those enthusiastic to learn. They have each had many interesting experiences over their years on the road. Valsson recounts for me the ten day tour he undertook as a driver and guide with eight English speaking guests from three different countries. “A few weeks after the end of the tour I received a letter from an unfamiliar address. It turned out to be a wedding invitation from a British electrician who had fallen in love with a German air hostess from a parallel German speaking tour. For me guiding has been replete with heart warming and interesting incidences such as this.”

An experience that stands out for Mike Kissane relates to a guiding trip for three leading nature photographers from North America, lodging at the Hotel Skaftafell. The weather was dreadful, with constant rain and wind. One of the photographers, Tom Mangelsen, braving the elements



Tom Mangelsen braving the grey, but great day at Jökulsárlón lagoon, South East Iceland.



Soft midnight light at Hafursey, Myrdalssandur, South Iceland.

“A few weeks after the end of the tour I received a letter from an unfamiliar address. It turned out to be a wedding invitation from a British electrician who had fallen in love with a German air hostess from a parallel German speaking tour. For me guiding has been replete with heart warming and interesting incidences such as this.”

in suitable attire, went to get some shots of the lagoon at Jokulsárlón. “And who should he meet coming up the hill but Iceland Review’s own Páll Stefánsson, wearing nothing more than Bermuda shorts and sleeveless t-shirt. It was only after Stefánsson joined us to shoot the breeze that Tom became convinced that he was not freezing to death.”

Undoubtedly the rapid growth of tourism has led to a general increase in the numbers of guides being trained and graduating. However, the tourist boom has had other more specific effects on the world of professional guiding, as Stefán Valsson explains. “Perhaps the biggest change that has occurred is in the nature of the job and its increasing professionalization. What used to be a job for people with language skills has developed into a career for bread winners. Guides no longer regard gratuity as an insult but as a token of appreciation for a job well done.” But the changes, in Valsson’s view, have not all been for the better. “An unfortunate side effect of the tourist boom is an ever increasing number of foreign tour leaders/managers ‘guiding’ in Iceland. Unlike professional guides they require no general qualifications, nor do they possess area-specific qualifications that are usually issued by the appropriate regional authority.” This trend has tended to reduce the amount of work available to professional Icelandic guides and also means that the tourists are receiving a poorer quality, less informed service. According to Valsson, the severe economic downturn has also had knock-on effects on the industry. As unemployment soars across the island, increased interest has been spurred in the guiding profession and a record number of students are currently enrolled in the various guiding schools around the capital.

Perhaps in the long run, this can only be a good thing, producing more top quality guides to compete with those from abroad and pushing up standards to better service an industry set to become ever more important to the Icelandic economy.



H Voluntourism

the socially conscious way to see Iceland

BY CATHARINE FULTON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LILJA GUNNARSDÓTTIR

There's a new breed of traveler roaming the globe these days. Set on doing more than going to location x, snapping a few memorable photographs of the tourist traps therein, and returning home with some knick-knacks for their mantle, voluntourists are spending longer periods of time in their destinations of choice, giving back to their host communities and getting lifelong memories in return.

When most people think of voluntourism, or volunteer travel, what typically comes to mind is a twenty-something on a gap year equipped with a long-haul backpack venturing out to a remote charity site in rural Africa, or some equally off-the-grid location. While this is one type of voluntourism, the reality is that volunteers are needed everywhere and Iceland is no exception. This country is ripe with opportunities for wannabe voluntourists, keen on spending extended periods in Iceland while working to improve local communities and lending a hand to non-profit organizations.

SEE BEYOND BORDERS

SEE beyond borderS (SEEDS) Iceland is one such organization that each year brings hundreds of globally minded people of every age and background to Iceland to work on community infrastructure projects and for such popular events as the Reykjavik International Film Festival. Chairman, Executive Officer and co-founder of SEEDS, Oscar-Mauricio Uscategui, initially came to Europe from his native Colombia as a volunteer in Germany, so founding a non-profit, non-governmental organization that fosters a volunteer culture within Iceland—a country that he has found to be lacking a volunteering

tradition—is something that he was, and still is, passionate about.

“There is a lot of work to be done in Iceland and it wouldn't be done if it wasn't for volunteer work,” says Uscategui of the importance of SEEDS. “When we started SEEDS in November 2005 everything was booming, unemployment was very low in the country so a lot of things weren't being done within the voluntary framework.”

The projects that SEEDS typically undertakes are those generated by the traditional tourism industry, for instance the impact of mass tourism on Icelandic nature. “Places where hoards of people are brought by buses are heavily affected—Landmannalaugar, Gullfoss, Geysir, for example. We see this in many places to different extents so that is our first focus of work: conservation work, trying to preserve Icelandic nature and trying to raise awareness of Icelandic resources.”

As SEEDS has evolved it has increased its scope to provide volunteers for long-standing cultural events in Iceland, like *Menningarnótt* (‘Culture Night’), Reykjavik International Film Festival (RIFF) and the Gay Pride Parade. Projects are selected specifically with the organization's two key goals in mind: environmental preservation and intercultural understanding. “We try to bring groups of international volunteers with

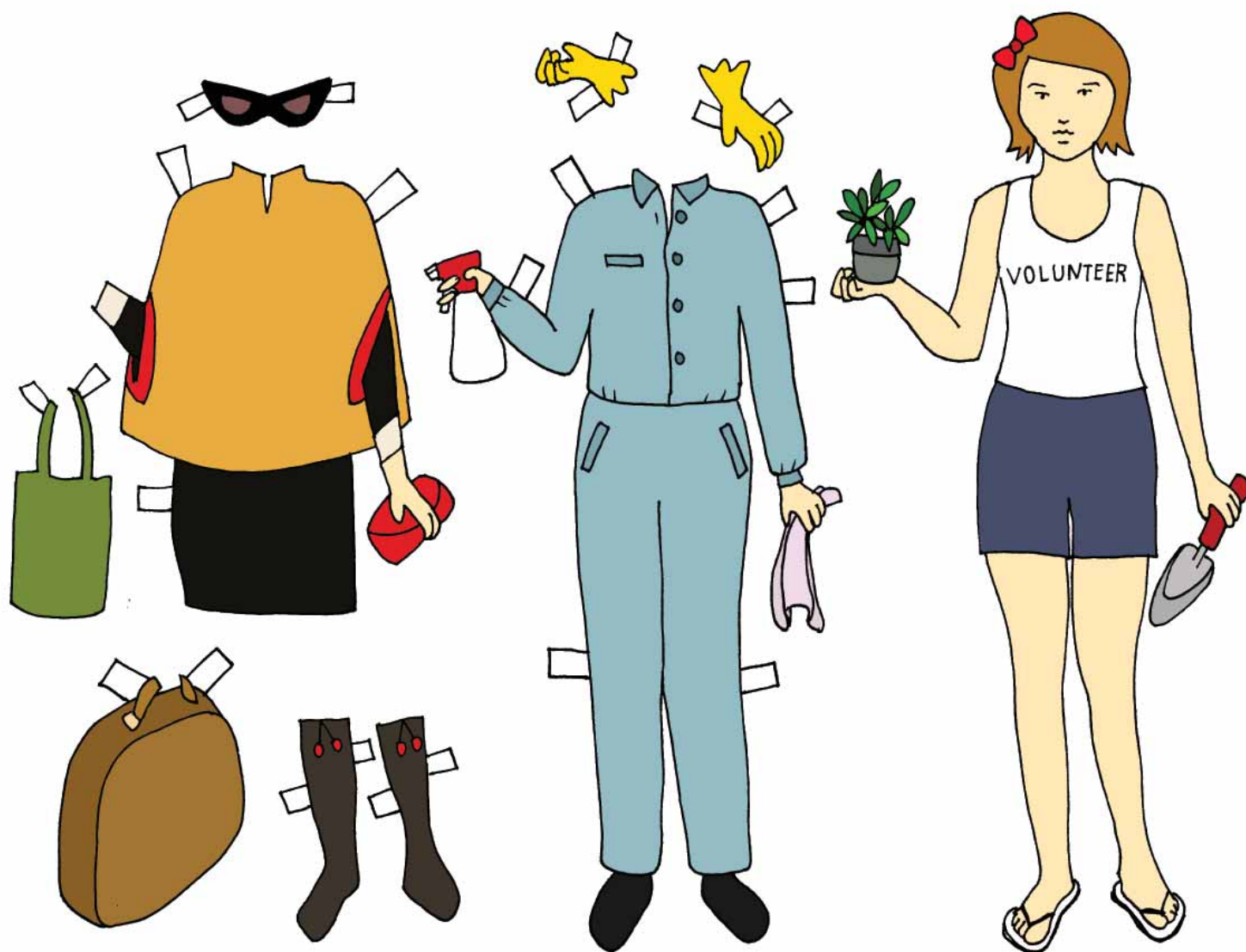
different backgrounds, different ages, and we put them in a project to live and work together. Living together is one of the most important parts of the experience.”

Voluntourists traveling to Iceland to work with SEEDS' projects typically volunteer for two weeks, but stay in Iceland longer to travel and see the more typical tourist sights. During their volunteer period in Iceland SEEDS provides room and board and often arranges outings, such as excursions on a fishing boat or horseback riding, to keep the volunteers entertained.

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY OF ICELAND

Another Icelandic organization working to foster a volunteering tradition in the country is *Umhverfisstofnun*, the Environment Agency of Iceland. Working under the direction of the Ministry for the Environment, *Umhverfisstofnun* promotes the protection and sustainable use of Iceland's natural resources.

Since 1978 the volunteering wing of *Umhverfisstofnun*, Iceland Conservation Volunteers (ICV), has been working in the nation's national parks and nature protection areas. Volunteer Coordinator Chas Goemans organizes volunteer groups and develops proj-



ects for the more than two hundred volunteers that travel to Iceland annually to lend a hand between May and October. “Volunteers work alongside staff and seasonal rangers and the volunteer program is an important part of protected area management in Iceland,” he explains. “Icelandic volunteers join us for weekend projects and work alongside international teams who are with us for longer. We are currently working on new projects with opportunities for more Icelanders to get involved next summer.”

Like Uscategui from SEEDS, Goemans first came to Iceland as a volunteer, working in Skaftafell National Park in 2003, after which time he stayed in the country to help build the national parks’ volunteer program into what it is today.

Umhverfisstofnun volunteers are typically in their twenties, but the program accepts participants 18 years of age and older and has welcomed international volunteers in their 60s previously. While in Iceland the volunteers tack-

le practical nature conservation, from building and maintaining hiking trails to building timber bridges and boardwalks, marking mountain trails and arranging stones for drainage. This past summer alone ICV volunteers completed an astounding 630 weeks’ worth of working time.

CULTURAL YOUTH EXCHANGE

Alþjóðleg ungmennaskipti (AUS) is the Icelandic contingent of the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) and has been active in the country for nearly fifty years. “ICYE is an international, non-profit youth exchange organization promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service,” explains Sabine Leskopf, the director of AUS, charged with communicating with existing projects and developing new ones. “I participate in our training sessions for incoming and outgoing volunteers and present AUS to young

Q VOLUNTOURISM



people and organizations here in Iceland. I also need to travel a lot since communication with our partner organizations all over the world is essential.”

Through ICYE, AUS organizes long and short-term exchanges allowing volunteers to involve themselves with a variety of community projects while participating in a home stay in one of 34 countries worldwide.

“The great thing about ICYE is that internationally we work as an exchange program which also gives young people from poor countries the opportunity to spend a year in Iceland which they otherwise might never have,” says Leskopf. “The special thing about AUS here is that it is run by former volunteers, so the board consists of young people who have been abroad and are actively involved in our training or are mentors to our incoming volunteers, so this is a great companionship which is very much alive. We also try to promote the positive sides of a multicultural society by actively taking part in peace or multicultural events here in Iceland.”

Volunteers typically come to AUS twenty at a time in September, January, March and May for 6 or 12 month periods of time to work with such organizations and projects as Red Cross shelters, in the eco village of Sólheimar, at Club Geysir, Ásgardur in Mosfellsbaer or the Salvation Army. According to Leskopf the plan is to broaden the area of work available to the volunteers so that they have the opportunity to be even more involved in other areas of social and intercultural work. European volunteers are generally in their early twenties, while volunteers from Africa and Asia tend to be in the latter half of the same decade.

In addition to welcoming international volunteers to Iceland, AUS arranges to send Icelanders abroad, 10 to 15 at a time, for volunteer work of their own choice. “Eastern Europe seems to welcome Icelanders now; South America is always popular, Costa Rica, Ecuador; also Asia, mainly India and Vietnam; and Africa, Mozambique, Ghana and Kenya have been most popular, but we have also newly added Tanzania which must be such an exciting place to see; as well as New Zealand.”

As seems the norm for people in her line of work, Leskopf has a long history of volunteerism and being socially aware, having worked with immigrants abroad and at the Intercultural Centre in Reykjavík. She is also the chairperson of W.O.M.E.N., an organization of foreign women in Iceland. “Working for AUS was somehow a consequence of this work since cross-border volunteering promotes so many of the values of multicultural society, both by giving Icelanders an opportunity to be involved in another country and also bringing positive impulses to the multicultural society that Iceland has become through these fabulous young people who come to Iceland to dedicate up to a year of their lives to help people in need here.”

“I hope that AUS can promote the value of voluntary work for chances later in life—check out any job ad and the demands made there are exactly what you learn and acquire through cross-border volunteering: intercultural communication, adaptability, team spirit, foreign languages, the courage to face extreme challenges and so much more,” says Leskopf.

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

Possibilities for voluntourism in Iceland are many. SEEDS, Umhverfisstofnun and AUS/ICYE are three of a large number of organizations operating in the country that welcome international volunteers on a long or short-term basis, dedicating their time to charitable, cultural and environmental projects that are imperative to the ongoing wellbeing of the island.

Voluntourism is tourism that gives back, rather than taking from the planet. With global borders shrinking and mobility increasing exponentially, volunteer-enthusiasts are going to continue to look outside their own backyard for opportunities to give back to the global village. Luckily for Iceland, it is ripe with chances for such people to come, enjoy the unique nature, hot springs, geysers and waterfalls, while doing something good for the country. It truly is a mutually beneficial arrangement.



SEEDS

- > SeedsIceland.org
- > seeds@seedsiceland.org
- > +354 845 6178
- > Klapparstigur 16, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland

Environment Agency of Iceland

- > ust.is
- > ust@ust.is
- > +354 591 2000
- > Sudurlandsbraut 24, 108 Reykjavik, Iceland

AUS

- > aus.is
- > +354 517 7008
- > Pósthússtraeti 3-5, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland

WWOOF – World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms

- > wwwoof.org
- > No office in Iceland, but there are four participating organic farms in Iceland that take WWOOF volunteers for weeks at a time.

Worldwide Friends

- > wf.is
- > +354 552 2214
- > Einarsnes 56, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland

United Planet

- > UnitedPlanet.org
- > 1-800-292-2316
- > This is a United States based non-profit organization that actively sends volunteers to Iceland.

SPECIAL PROMOTION

UNFORGETTABLE EXCURSIONS

Reykjavik Excursions offer a wide range of unique
and adventurous journeys in Iceland.

Nocturnal Bliss

Fall and winter is the time of the Aurora Borealis. On clear frosty nights the sky is lit with moving blankets of the most amazing colors.

Winter arrives in Iceland and northern lights rage in the sky in all their glory, green, pink, blue and red waves of light that illuminate the clear, frosty Icelandic nights. Because of the clean air the visibility can be stunning and you can see the aurora borealis flowing through the sky like highways made of this incredible light. However you need to get out of the electric buzz created by human existence to enjoy this spectacle. This is an experience best enjoyed in dark places where human-made electric bulbs do not dilute the natural light presented by nature itself.

According to specialists the activity of the aurora borealis has been quite low in recent years but because of solar storms increasing it is expected to rise significantly in coming years.

That does not mean these stunning waves of electricity have vanished from the sky in the last few years. In fact enthusiasts have been quite lucky in spotting them all over Iceland. You can even see them in Reykjavik on starry nights but then you need to be extremely lucky because the city lights dilute them.


Reykjavik Excursions offers special nighttime tours, with daily departures at 9 p.m. to see this amazing phenomenon. The locations visited are different every tour since they go where the aurora borealis are most likely to be seen. The tour is dependant on weather and sightings are not guaranteed as on some nights the divine lights do not always appear in the sky, even if it's crystal clear. But then again you can always enjoy the beautiful arctic sky filled with glittering stars. A tour not to be missed.

Sister Act

BY SARI PELTONEN

PHOTOS BY JÓHANNES KJARTANSSON

AND SAGA SIGURDARDÓTTIR



It was all very homey, with jewelry in the refrigerator and so on," says Katrín Alda Rafnsdóttir about her and sister Rebekka's start in fashion—a second hand shop in the basement of their house. Despite moving on and up, with their own label and downtown store *Einvera*, the cozy beginnings are something the sisters have not lost touch with.

"It is all still very personal—whatever we like ourselves, and we maybe only stock ten of each item." The shop is a mix of handpicked vintage, design labels and their own *Kalda* label. "We try to make individual clothes with elements you don't find elsewhere," Rafnsdóttir explains.

The sisterly co-op runs smoothly as silk. The girls have a similar sense of style, saving the pair from arguments over what to stock in the shop, and the communication is open.

Peace is maintained on the home front too. "We live together and share our whole wardrobe—whatever one buys, the other is allowed to wear," the sisters declare.

Einvera, Laugavegur 35



DESIGN Q



EINVERA

Switch on the Cod

BY SARI PELTONEN

Fanney Antonsdóttir and Dögg Gudmundsdóttir channeled their homesickness to give a new life to the national fish snack.

Uggi (fish fin) lights take inspiration from the Icelandic pendant for drying whole fish. Traditionally the fish were hung outdoors and the drying left to the arctic winds, a method that has remained unchanged since the settlement period.

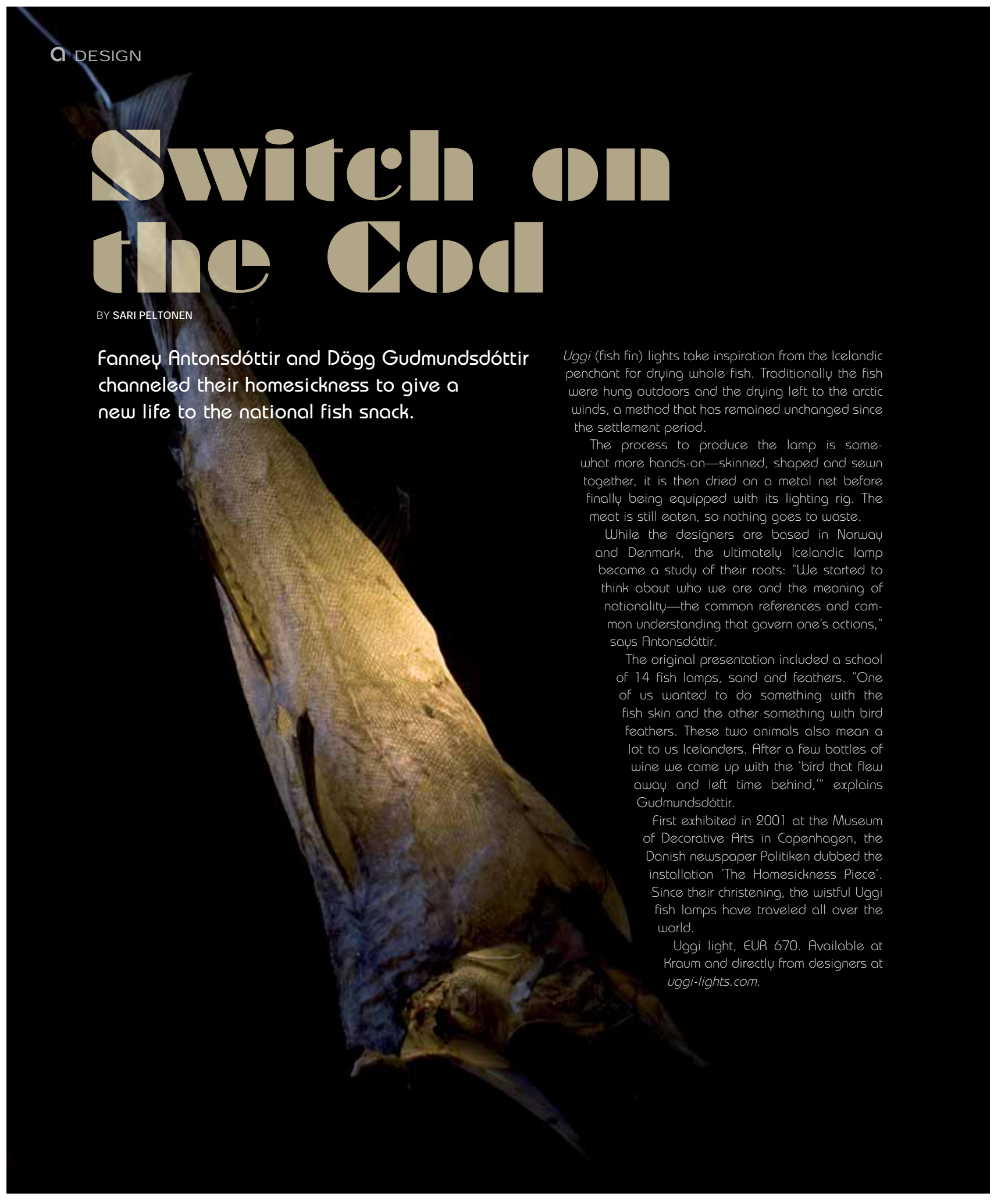
The process to produce the lamp is somewhat more hands-on—skinned, shaped and sewn together, it is then dried on a metal net before finally being equipped with its lighting rig. The meat is still eaten, so nothing goes to waste.

While the designers are based in Norway and Denmark, the ultimately Icelandic lamp became a study of their roots: "We started to think about who we are and the meaning of nationality—the common references and common understanding that govern one's actions," says Antonsdóttir.

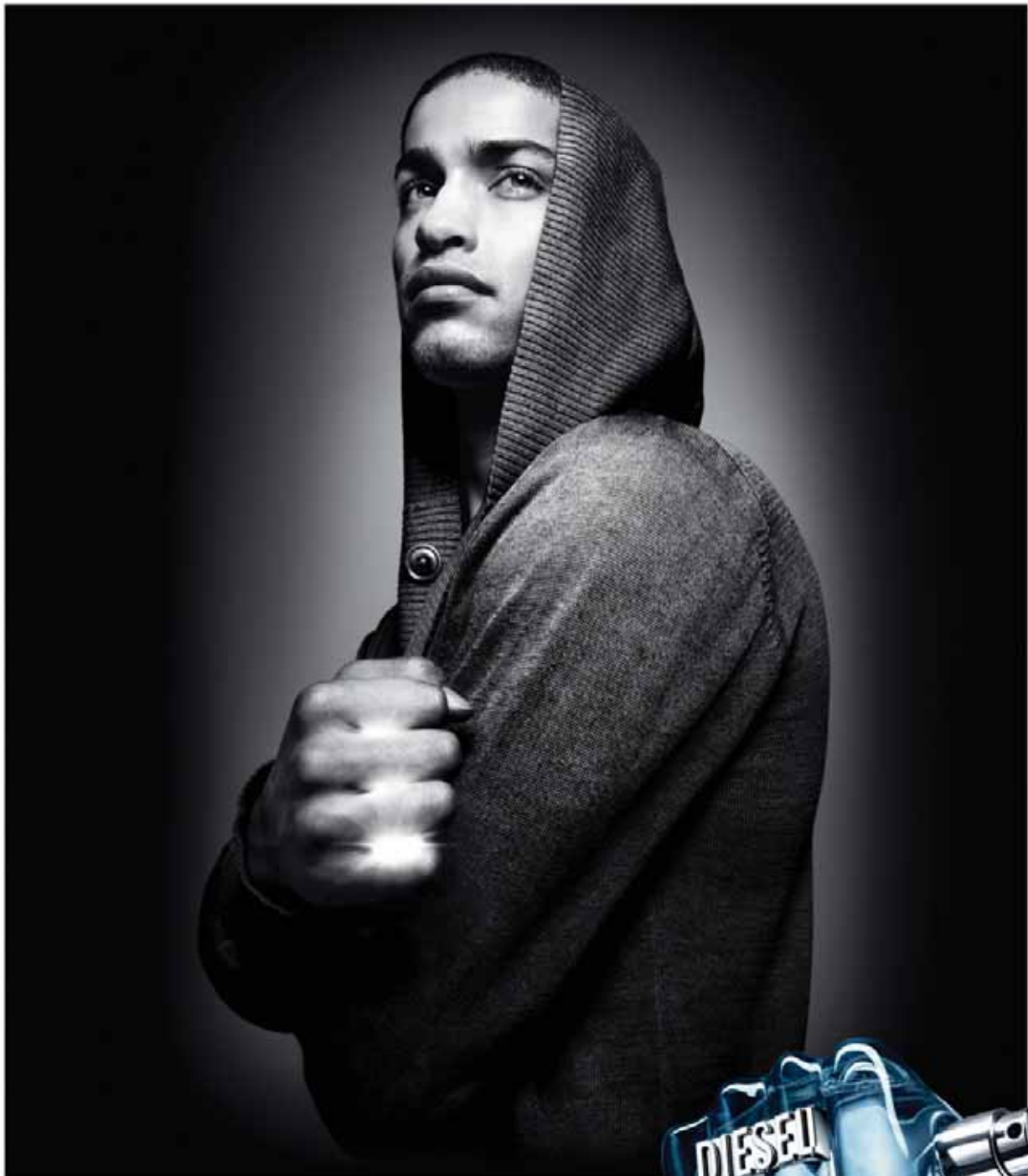
The original presentation included a school of 14 fish lamps, sand and feathers. "One of us wanted to do something with the fish skin and the other something with bird feathers. These two animals also mean a lot to us Icelanders. After a few bottles of wine we came up with the 'bird that flew away and left time behind,'" explains Gudmundsdóttir.

First exhibited in 2001 at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Copenhagen, the Danish newspaper *Politiken* dubbed the installation 'The Homesickness Piece'. Since their christening, the wistful *Uggi* fish lamps have traveled all over the world.

Uggi light, EUR 670. Available at Kraum and directly from designers at uggi-lights.com.



DIESEL



ONLY THE BRAVE
THE NEW FRAGRANCE



WWW.DIESEL-PARFUMS.COM

DUTYFREE
KEFLAVIK AIRPORT



Perfect Planning

PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

What shall I do? Where is the best place to be alone in Iceland, to get one hundred minutes of solitude? Or the best places to get attacked by the Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*? It is my favorite bird. Don't be afraid of it. It has a wonderful lifestyle. It flies from its Arctic breeding grounds to the Antarctic and back again annually. This 19,000 km (12,000 mile) journey each way ensures that this majestic bird sees two summers per year and more daylight than any other creature on the planet. The average Arctic Tern will travel a distance in its lifetime equal to going to the moon and back—about 800,000 km (500,000 miles).

The ring road around Iceland is about 1,450 km, and if you include detours to the West Fjords, Melrakkaslétta and Snaefellsnes peninsula, you will add about 1,500 km more. And you should. Where would I go? Here are some tips for the perfect journey. *PS*



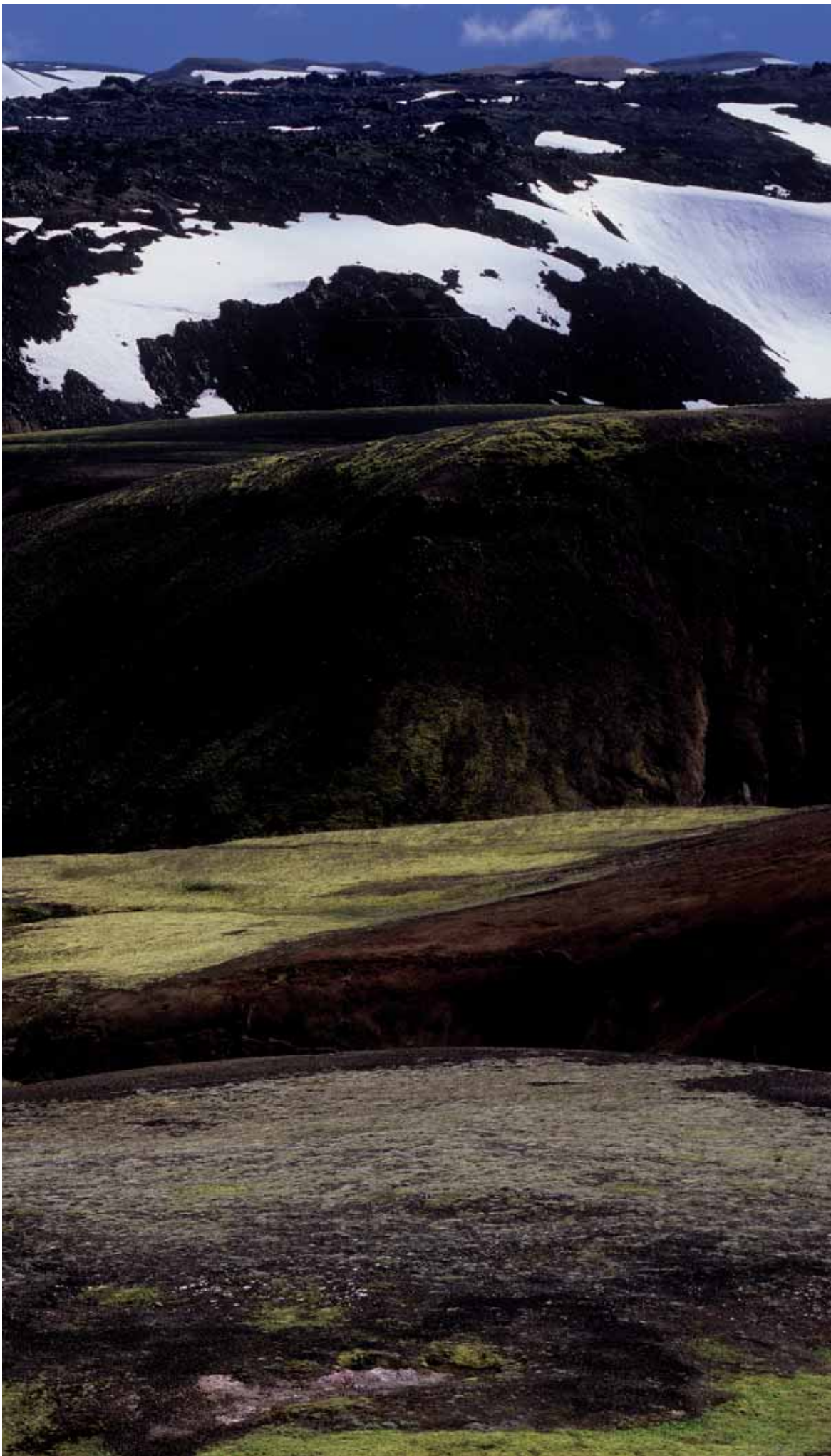
52 KILOMETERS, PLUS A FERRY. The Westman Islands are a unique archipelago, south of Iceland. One of the islands is Surtsey, one of the planet's youngest islands. Heimaey is the biggest and the only one inhabited. It has two active volcanoes, one of which was created in a huge eruption in 1973 when a third of the town went under lava. The walk to the top is easy and then you are standing on a very active volcano. Best time to visit: all year round.

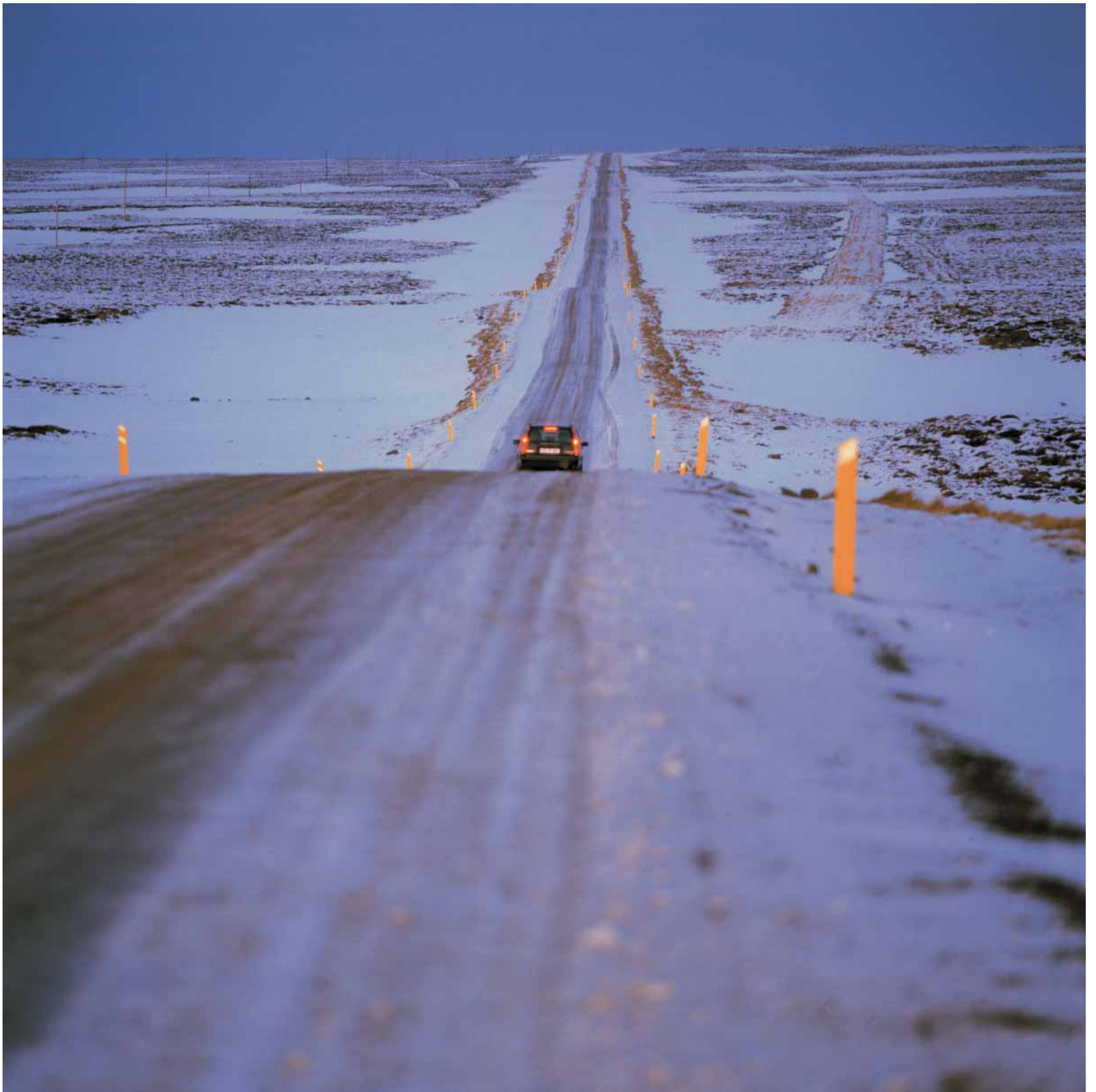
375 KILOMETERS. Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon. Magic world of ice. Never the same as the lagoon changes constantly. Occasionally you can see Arctic foxes, seagulls and seals swimming between ice bergs or just relaxing on the beach. Best time: September to January.





205 kilometers. Hrafninnusker, central south highlands, where Iceland's contrasts are the biggest: boiling earth, ice caves and, in between, the greenest moss on earth. This is the place to hike. The road to this place is only open for about 45 days and only for 4x4. But it is unique. Best time: late July and August.





615 KILOMETERS. Melrakkaslétta is the northernmost place on the Icelandic mainland. It's the only place where you can actually touch the Arctic Circle. This is the place to be if you seek solitude. It's also the perfect place for the midnight sun or, during the dark winter, for the magnificent aurora borealis. Best time, late June or early January to experience the darkest of nights with a glorious natural light show.



THREE KILOMETERS. To take a bath, but not in the hot springs or swimming pools dotted around continental Iceland. No, the best place to take a dip is at Nauthólsvík in Reykjavík—to be a real man and swim in the North Atlantic. You can soak in the hot tub afterwards. An excellent changing room is provided by the city. Best time: all year round.



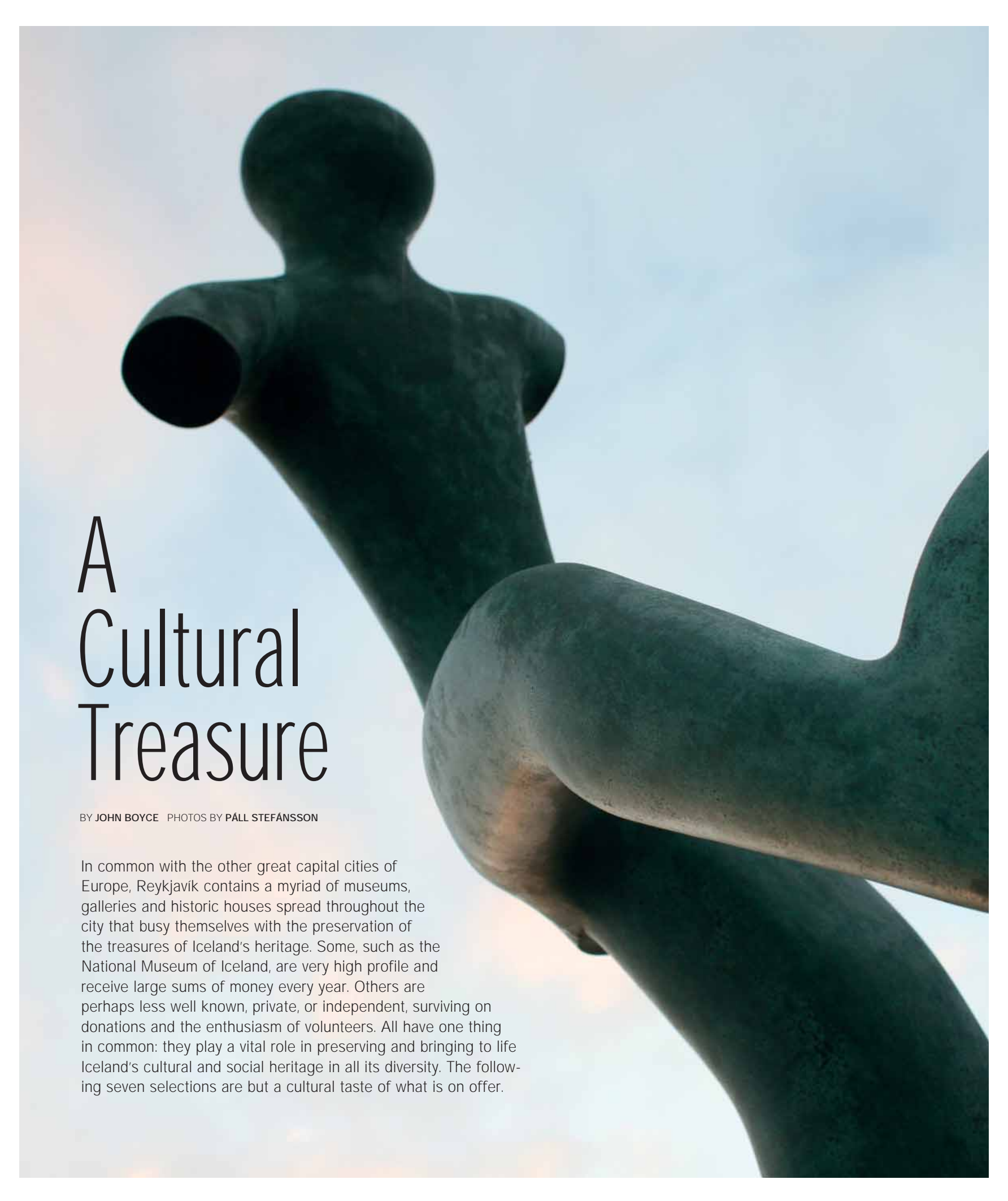
193 KILOMETERS. The best place to see the Arctic tern is at Snæfellsnes peninsula. Go to the village of Rif at the end of the peninsula or to Arnarstapi harbor. Thousands, no hundreds of thousands of Arctic terns nest in these colonies. Terns are extremely skilful flyers and like being in the air. There is an Icelandic adage about restless people: 'to sit like a tern on a stone'. It means sitting down for no more than a second or two. The terns only attack because they are protecting their eggs and chicks. That's why these young women have hats on. They are protecting their heads from the terns' sharp beaks. Best time to experience this is from late May until mid July.



648 KILOMETERS. Bakkafjörður, as far as you can go from the capital. Iceland as it was, or is. A small fishing village with big nature. Best time: March to July.



756 KILOMETERS, BORGARFJÖRDUR EYSTRI, EASTFJORDS. Great and different landscape, colorful mountains on three sides, and open sea with millions of seabirds during the summer. One of the best places in Iceland to see puffins up close. Unbeatable midnight sun. But what is best about Borgarfjörður Eystri is that this is Iceland's hiking paradise. Best time, late May to late September. Or if you want to see darkness, be alone, then go now in January, February.



A Cultural Treasure

BY JOHN BOYCE PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

In common with the other great capital cities of Europe, Reykjavik contains a myriad of museums, galleries and historic houses spread throughout the city that busy themselves with the preservation of the treasures of Iceland's heritage. Some, such as the National Museum of Iceland, are very high profile and receive large sums of money every year. Others are perhaps less well known, private, or independent, surviving on donations and the enthusiasm of volunteers. All have one thing in common: they play a vital role in preserving and bringing to life Iceland's cultural and social heritage in all its diversity. The following seven selections are but a cultural taste of what is on offer.



LISTASAFN SIGURJÓNS ÓLAFSSONAR

Laugarnestangi, Laugarnes seafront.

Opening Hours: 2010 schedule to be announced.

This museum is dedicated to the work of one of Iceland's most renowned artists, the sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson. Born in 1908 in South West Iceland, Ólafsson went to study at the Royal Danish Academy in 1928 before returning to Iceland after the Second World War. His work was largely experimental and brought a unique vision to a variety of materials including clay, plaster, wood, metal and stone. There are eighteen public monuments by the artist around Reykjavík alone and his work can be found in private collections and museums across Scandinavia, Italy and the US. Upon his death, his widow, Birgitta Spur, converted his seaside art studio to house his large collection of sculptures, drawings and sketches. As well as exhibiting the artist's works the museum facilitates a variety of cultural programs, and the series of weekly summer concerts has become a fixture on the Icelandic cultural calendar.

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor, 101 Reykjavík.

Admission free. Opening hours: 12 – 7 p.m. weekdays; 1 – 5 p.m. weekends.

Founded as a private enterprise in 1981, *Ljósmyndasafn* is Iceland's only independent photography museum. For the last 30 years the museum has dedicated itself to collecting, cataloguing and preserving photos, glass slides, negatives as well as articles and documents relating to photography. To date the museum has amassed more than 1.7 million items from professional and amateur photographers. The aims and ambitions of the museum are not limited merely to preservation. The museum plays an important role in improving understanding of photography as a medium and as a form of culture, and also provides both professional and amateur photographers with facilities for a wide range of activities. The museum also plays a formal educational role, organizing regular school and college tours. *Ljósmyndasafn* usually mounts three exhibitions a year. Currently showing is the *Ma France* exhibition from one of the greats of twentieth-century photography, Bulgarian born André Kertész.





REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Grandagardur 8, 105 Reykjavík.

Admission ISK 700. Opening hours: June 1 to Sept 15 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. every day; Sept 15 to June 1 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues-Fri, 1 – 5 p.m. weekends.

Discounts: Senior citizens, teenagers (13 to 18) and groups of ten or more.

Given the centrality of the fishing industry to Icelandic society and its economy, it is perhaps surprising that the Reykjavík Maritime Museum opened as recently as 2005. It is, of course, located in the harbor area of the city in a building intimately associated with Icelandic maritime history, the old Reykjavík trawler company building which affords a superb view of the harbor. Relive Reykjavík's maritime past as the museum exhaustively chronicles the seafaring history of Iceland from the early twentieth century to the present day. For boating enthusiasts, currently on exhibition is the Ódinn, the vessel owned and operated by the Icelandic coast guards for almost half a century. Built in 1960 in Denmark, the vessel has been preserved in its original state and remains equipped with state-of-the-art maritime technology.

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

Admission free. Opening hours: Hafnarhús 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Kjarvalstadir 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Ásmundarsafn 1 – 4 p.m.

First established in 1973, the Reykjavík Art Museum is Iceland's largest repository for the visual arts. The museum is divided into three different locations. Hafnarhús is situated in the heart of downtown, serving as the city's institute of contemporary art, and is largely dedicated to new developments on the scene. On permanent exhibition is the collection by internationally acclaimed pop artist Erró. These works were a gift to the city by the artist in 1989. Kjarvalstadir exhibition hall has been situated in Miklatún Park since 1973 and focuses on sculptures and paintings by established Icelandic and international artists. On permanent exhibition are the major works by Iceland's most famous landscape artist, Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885- 1972). The museum contains a bright, spacious restaurant and books in English on Icelandic art are available. The third location is the Ásmundur Sveinsson sculpture museum and park at Sigtún, dedicated to the work of the sculptor of the same name. Designed by the artist himself in the 1930s, the museum features work spanning his entire career. The surrounding gardens display about thirty of the artist's sculptures.



GERDARSAFN ART MUSEUM

Hamraborg 4, Kópavogur.

Admission free. Opening hours: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues-Sun.

Situated in the town of Kópavogur, 15 minutes south of Reykjavík, Gerdarsafn was established in 1994 to house art works amassed over the previous thirty years by the cultural fund of Kópavogur. The museum is dedicated to exhibiting progressive, modern and contemporary art. There are three exhibition halls in all, which together host around twenty exhibitions each year. The museum is named after Icelandic abstract art pioneer Gerdur Helgadóttir. Helgadóttir was also a renowned stained glass artist and examples of her glass work can be seen in churches in Kópavogur and Skálholt. Over 1400 pieces by the artist are on permanent display, donated by her family to the town of Kópavogur after her premature death in 1974, and represent the most significant part of the museum's collection. The museum also houses works by other significant Icelandic artists, including an extensive collection of drawings and paintings by Jóhannes S. Kjarval as well as the private collection of works collected by the couple Thorvaldur Gudmundsson and Ingibjörg Gudmundsdóttir.



HAFNARBORG CENTRE OF CULTURE AND FINE ART

Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður.

Admission free. Opening Hours:

11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon; 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. Thurs.

Hafnarborg museum was made possible by the generosity of Dr. Sverrir Magnússon and his wife Ingibjörg Sigurjónsdóttir, an artistically minded couple who donated their extensive art collection and their house to the town of Hafnarfjörður in 1983. Formally opened in 1988, its treasures have expanded rapidly through purchase and donations. With three spacious exhibition galleries in all, the museum mounts more than twenty exhibitions every year, in addition to installations and art exhibits in the museum café. Hafnarborg also runs an artist-in-residence program for visiting artists and guided tours are available on request. Over the years, the cultural centre has become an increasingly popular venue for concerts and hosts a free lunchtime concert on the first Thursday of every month. The centre has two upcoming exhibitions running until early March. In *Sverrissalur*, the award-winning creations of Ingunn Fjóla Inghórsdóttir are on display. A graduate of the Icelandic Academy of Fine Arts, her work is notable for its abstract use of color. The second exhibition features the Icelandic contribution to the Venice biennale, a collection titled *The End* by Ragnar Kjartansson.



THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Eiríksgata, 101 Reykjavík.

Admission: Adults ISK 500 (concessions for students, the disabled and the elderly).

Opening hours: June to Sept 15 2 – 5 p.m Tues-Sun;

Sept 16 to May 31 2 – 5 p.m. weekends.

Born in 1874, Einar Jónsson was Iceland's first sculptor. Drawing inspiration from Icelandic folklore he completely rejected classical traditions to pursue his own groundbreaking and abstract style. After many years abroad he settled permanently in Iceland in 1920 and was responsible for creating some of Reykjavík's most well known public monuments. In 1909 Jónsson offered his entire body of work as a gift to the nation on condition that a museum was built to house it. The result was the construction of the Einar Jónsson Museum situated at the highest point of the city at the time, and officially opened in 1923. The museum contains over 300 artworks spanning a 60-year career. The penthouse apartment with its panoramic view of the city is also part of the museum and has been preserved in its original condition. Out back is a beautiful tree-laden garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's work. Its relaxed environs remain a favorite summer haunt with Icelanders and visitors alike.





Blonde Ambition

PHOTOS BY BRIAN SWEENEY

Elíza Geirsdóttir Newman is one of Iceland's most enduring and versatile female singers. International success with Bellatrix—an all-female punk band with a string of hits in Iceland and Europe to their name—and alt rockers Skandinavia lead to a successful solo career and two albums. **Ben H. Murray** spoke to her about her newly released album, *Pie in the Sky*, and how she went from being a teenage punk singer to the writer of delicate ballads and a master of the ukulele.



The cliché of blonde singer-songwriter is not one that, despite her Nordic yellow locks and wide smile, could be applied to Eliza Newman. Just listening to the first song on *Pie in the Sky*, the aptly named 'Ukulele Song For You,' will enforce the notion that she is a fine lyricist, a musician of vision and a strong personality, but this isn't surprising when you learn her musical past is an excellent demonstration of versatility and, you can assume, no small amount of determination.

Noting that Eliza plays a lot of her own instruments on the album, I started by asking how her musical education led her to be such a multi-instrumentalist, as well as a punk singer. "I started music school when I was six, started playing the violin at eight but it wasn't really what I wanted to do. It was rather something I was made to do. I didn't really get into music until I started a band in my teens. I wanted to be a painter when I was younger!"

So I ask her how she went from wanting to be a painter to singing in a band. "I was so bored at school so we decided to try forming a band. We thought forming a band would be the best way of attracting maximum attention and cause maximum disturbance. And it was just so much fun that I completely lost interest in art."

Although those early gigs might be a distant memory, the band evolved into Bellatrix and became successful in Iceland and Europe. "We did 'Battle of the Bands' at sixteen, we won and got signed straight away. We had a record out within six months of winning," is how she sums up their overnight success.

Going into more detail, she reveals an obvious determination that must have helped drive her career from the start: "We toured around and we went to the US and did a release there. It was our dream to play in London so we decided to do that. We got a deal with the indie label Global Warming and had a good crack at it, then took a break. That was seven years ago. Then I went back to study opera and so on and released my first solo album in 2007. But before that I did an album with the rock band Skandinavia."

The aforementioned band, likened to The Breeders and The Flaming Lips, provides an obvious contrast to most of her solo material, although you could argue there's a certain *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* element to the mildly-psychedelic moments on *Pie in the Sky*.

So how does she view those albums now? "It was very different, completely different. But I like doing different things and my last solo album was very different as well, compared to my new one."

I ask whether that is a case of taste in music changing over a few years or if she has always been keen to keep her work pointing in several different directions. "I don't think it's a case of my taste

changing. I get bored if I just do the same thing. It's a challenge. That's how you keep it interesting."

The album is certainly interesting, from the gentle twee strumming of the ukulele that opens the record to the complex post-rock tinged psychedelia of 'Awakening' and 'In the Beginning' through to the simpler (but no less effective) 'Pie in the Sky' and 'Hopeless Case'. They all confound any predictions you might make given only a rudimentary knowledge of Eliza Newman's work and all have one thing in common—a voice that is clear as spring water but still has character and emotion combined with faultless song-writing.

"I did the album with a friend of mine, Gísli Kristjánsson, and it was great fun. It was one of the easiest I've ever done. Gísli came out with this kind of soundscape background which I thought was brilliant."

So as well as being modest, Eliza Newman is also prodigiously talented for it's certain that a great deal of the brilliance displayed on this album can be rightfully attributed to her as well.

**Pie in the Sky* is out now.

myspace.com/elizanewman



Blue Bollywood

PHOTOS BY PALL STEFÁNSSON





Nayanthara on set.

Surya Sivakumar is a megastar in his homeland, India. Last year he won the Tamil Nadu State Film Special Award for Best Actor for his movie *Vaaranam Aayiram* and won the Best Actor of the Year prize at the Reliance Mobile Vijay Awards. Last spring he came to Iceland to record a music video for the song 'Eno Eno Panithuli' with co-star, singer and actress, Nayanthara. The song is part of a movie, *Aadhavan*.

Iceland's Glacier Lagoon, black lava sands of the south coast and the Blue Lagoon form backdrop landscapes for the song.

The director of *Aadhavan*, K.S. Ravikumar, is known for his comedies and action thrillers. He comes from Chennai (Madras) like the stars in his movie. Chennai is India's fourth largest city. This is the first video he has produced on foreign soil, but not his last. "I am very, very happy about the Icelandic landscape. Maybe one day I will do a film here. Everything is so different," he said.

Surya Sivakumar, who in *Aadhavan* stars as a bad guy for the first time in his career, was equally impressed with the locations chosen for the movie. *PS*

Bollywood megastar Surya Sivakumar puts on the leading actor's charm whilst filming for action thriller Aadhavan in Iceland's Blue Lagoon.





"They put on such a beautiful meal for us. We had the most amazing freshest fish I've ever had in my life. It was all so perfectly cooked too... Beautiful!"

Jamie Oliver's Diary

L A P R I M A V E R A
R I S T O R A N T E

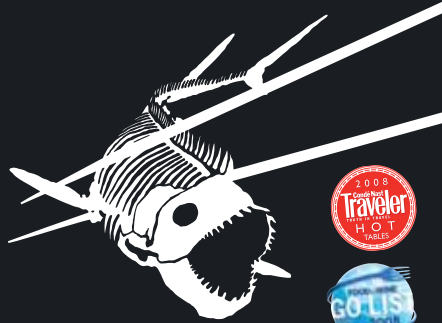
Austurstræti 9, Reykjavík Tel: 561 8555
www.laprimavera.is

FISH MARKET

FISKMARKAÐURINN

Taste the freshness of a farmer's market

Housed in one of the city's oldest buildings, Fish Market uses ingredients sourced directly from the nation's best farms, lakes, and sea to create unforgettable Icelandic dishes with a modern twist.



ADALSTRÆTI 12 | +354 578 8877
LUNCH WEEKDAYS 11:30 - 14:00
EVENINGS 18:00 - 23:30
FISHMARKET.IS



THE LOBSTER HOUSE

HUMARHÚSIÐ

The Lobster house takes pride in giving you the best, with top-class cuisine and highly praised service.

Our menu consists of a variety of meat and fish dishes, and lobster is our speciality.



HUMARHÚSIÐ
Amtmannsstíg 1 / 101 Reykjavík / Tel: +354 561 3303
www.humarhusid@humarhusid.is



Daily News from Iceland

icelandreview.com



The Ageless Luxury of ELM

Inspired by Iceland's dramatic landscape, art and culture, ELM Design's exquisite clothing, designed by women for women, is guaranteed to make a subtle statement. ELM Design is a favorite with intellectual women of all ages who like to dress in a sophisticated manner, albeit with an edge. Its timeless pieces instantly become wardrobe staples. Originally a knitwear company, ELM Design was founded in Reykjavik eleven years ago by textile designer Erna Steina, artistic painter Lísbet, and drama therapist Matthildur. An immediate success, ELM Design soon began offering a comprehensive collection including jackets, suits, dresses, accessories and knitwear. Fabric basics include jersey and Peruvian wool, complementing all body shapes and sizes. The ELM Design autumn/winter 2009-10 collection is down to earth, nostalgic and romantic, but with a hint of rock and roll. Luxury leather jackets and coats made of soft Italian leather are this season's must-have items. In addition to the flagship store on Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, ELM is now available at 150 prestigious stores worldwide, such as London's Browns and Liberty as well as New York's Takashimaya.



Style 101

Located in the heart of Reykjavik's city center, surrounded by restaurants, bars, theaters and shops, 101 hotel gets its name from the city's most stylish postal code. A world-class boutique hotel and also a member of Design Hotels, 101 hotel features thirty-eight spacious rooms and suites with in-room amenities providing every modern comfort. After enjoying all that the city has to offer, relax in the hotel's luxurious basement gym and spa, which features a steam bath and a Jacuzzi, or unwind at the 101 Bar and Restaurant, which with its casually cool ambience, ultra-modern black and white decor, sleek lines and sky window is one of the trendiest places in town. Its menu offers an effortless fusion of contemporary Icelandic and international cuisine with Indian influences. The hotel lounge is a wonderful place to relax by the fireplace, browsing through art and design books and enjoying the hotel's ever-growing collection of contemporary art. 101hotel.is



A Scaled Friend for Life

It is water resistant, stronger than animal leather and incredibly fashionable. We are talking about the fish leather Hulda Kristinsdóttir uses for her refined HULD Design bags and accessories. The fish leather is processed in a factory in Saudárkrókur town and is a by-product of the Icelandic fish industry which aims at utilizing every last bit of fish taken out of the water. Kristinsdóttir mainly uses three types of fish leather for her hip designs: perch, salmon and wolf-fish. Some of the hides are used with their natural colors but others are colored to suit her artistic taste. Kristinsdóttir's designs can be purchased at Embla, the store she runs on Skólavörðustígur 4. She used to be one of the finest dressmakers in Iceland but says she got tired of it and wanted to try her hand at something else. She learned the craft of bag making in London and has since been working on her own design line. "I chose fish leather because it is so Icelandic and there's simply no stronger leather available," she says.

All her bags are named after her female friends and relatives and bear strong Icelandic names. The only accessories in her line that bear a male name are her extraordinary key wallets. "I thought it needed a bit of a stronger name and called it Gissi," she muses.

Her bags and accessories are so well made that they make perfect scaled friends for life.

the sea
and a delicious lobster
at Fjörubordid in Stokkseyri



The seashore restaurant in the village of Stokkseyri is an enchanted place of delight



<Only 45 minutes drive from Reykjavik
tel. +354-4831550 • www.fjorubordid.is

©2014 Magnús Magnússon

icelandic
FISH & CHIPS

Organic bistro

Creating
a tradition

Tryggvgata 8/Geirsgata, 101 Rvk
Tel: 511-1118
Open: mon-sat 11:30-21:00/sun 17:00-21:00
www.fishandchips.is



MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE



hotel • restaurant • bar

101 hotel

hverfisgata 10 • tel: 5800 101 • fax: 5800 100
101hotel@101hotel.is • www.101hotel.is



BOOKS | PHOTOS | SUBSCRIPTIONS | CD

SHOP ONLINE
icelandreview.com



RESTAURANT
Jómfrúin

DANISH
OPEN SANDWICHES

Offers a large selection of traditional Danish open sandwiches "smáttreð" combined with innovative Icelandic gastronomy.
Restaurant Jómfrúin is located in Lækjargata 4, in the heart of the city.
Open 11 - 18. Tel.: 55 10 100



What's On
In Reykjavík

For a complete guide to Reykjavík's restaurants, pick up a free copy of *What's On In Reykjavík*.



SPECIAL PROMOTION



Unforgettable Saga Circle Tour



The Icelandic Sagas and their heroes spring to life on Reykjavik Excursions' Saga Circle Tour, offered on Saturdays all year round.

The Saga Circle Tour takes you to the historical Borgarfjörður district where some of the most famous Icelandic Sagas took place. The tour guide talks passionately about the infamous Egill Skallagrímsson, the main hero of *Egils Saga*. Egill was a berserk and a strongman who committed his first homicide at the age of seven, when he killed a playmate who beat him at an ice hockey game. When Egill grew up he became a Viking warrior and sailed all over Scandinavia and the British Isles. When back in Iceland with his loot he struck fear into his neighbors and fellow countrymen. Although he would be considered a mass murderer today, Egill also had a softer side to him, being a poet whose poems have lived more than 1,000 years.

On the tour you will hear many stories of the wicked Egill, pointing out the places where the events took place. Other sagas will follow, telling of heroes that rode through the district on golden-maned horses, the story of Helga the fair who swam with her two sons to save their lives; of Búi Andriðarson



UNFORGETTABLE EXCURSIONS

Reykjavik Excursions offer a wide range of unique
and adventurous journeys in Iceland.



and Kolfinnur who fought over a woman, Ólöf the handsome; and of Hen-Thórir, the unpopular rascal who deserved to be beheaded.

A visit to the Icelandic Settlement Centre exhibition in Borgarnes is our first stop and from there the bus heads to Reykholt, a famous historical site where the poet and Middle Ages historian Snorri Sturluson lived and worked.

Our next stop is Hraunfossar waterfalls and the largest hot spring in the Northern Hemisphere: Deildartunguhver.

This is a great tour for visitors who have read or heard about the Icelandic Sagas and their characters. Moreover this tour will take you through incredibly scenic landscapes, small towns and farmlands with a glimpse of the famous waterfalls, glaciers and lava fields that make this land of Sagas so unforgettable.

Included is bus fare, guidance in English and Scandinavian, light lunch at the Settlement Centre and entrance fees to the museums. *re.is*

Eat, Meat & Fish

Reykjavík's chefs know how to feed their people. Here is a guide to the *vie gourmande* in the capital and beyond.

101 HÓTEL Vogue, GQ, Elle and Condé Nast all agree—when you come to Reykjavík there is only one destination for a truly hip night out: the restaurant and lounge at 101 Hótel. Deriving its name from the most stylish postal code in the North Atlantic, 101's casual dining room is a chic but relaxed getaway with clean, elegant lines, heated oak floors and a sizeable communal fireplace—the ideal spot for a pick-me-up before the opera next door, one of the more adventurous three-course meals in the capital or even fabulous drinks to kick-start a big night on the town. Much like Indian/Icelandic chef Gunnvant Ármannsson, the kitchen at 101 represents the best of Iceland infused with intriguing flavors from abroad. This winter Ármannsson puts his spicy roots into the menu with warm flavors like Vindaloo chicken, homemade mango chutney and even coconut and ginger crême brûlée. 101 also maintains strong ties to the harbor and local farmers, meaning the kitchen offers the freshest catch of the day, along with superior Icelandic lamb, arctic char and langoustine lobster. Unique food, swish design, laid-back atmo... this place is a dish. Kitchen open until 11—kicking bar after hours. 580 0101. 101hotel.is

FISH MARKET Take the sophistication of New York and pair it with the elegance of Paris and the trendiness of Tokyo, and you have the formula for Fish Market's unbeatable atmosphere. Match that with its equally spectacular haute cuisine with an Asian flair and you have the recipe for a restaurant that's here to stay. The crown jewel of its kitchen is the nine-course tasting menu whose highlights include a miso-marinated black cod served with tiger prawns and apricots, king crab with chili and lemongrass, and arguably the most tender quail on the planet complemented with a just-delicate barbecue sauce. The restaurant has also earned a well-deserved reputation for its sushi and sashimi, as fresh as it is elegant. Located in the heart of downtown, no detail is spared. Tea lights illuminate the soft, rich furnishings, and highlights of bamboo and Asian flora create a trendy atmosphere to which the city's glitterati come flocking. Save room for the sorbet: green tea, lychee and blood orange. The perfect scoops are almost too beautiful to eat. 578 8877. fishmarket.is

FJÖRUBORDID Lobster. That's what the dining experience at Fjörubordid (The Seashore) is all about, where Icelandic lobster, or langoustine, is served delicately grilled and drizzled with melted herb butter and a spritz of lemon. As a starter, its flavor infuses the delicate creaminess of the lobster soup, the self-proclaimed 'Best in the Republic of Iceland.' Although you can also find a tender lamb filet or vegetable-filled puff pastry on the main course menu, lobster is what makes this seaside cozy eatery in the village of Stokkseyri, 60 kilometers from Reykjavík, so popular with locals and visitors alike. 695 9588. fjorubordid.is

HÓTEL RANGÁ You could start with the seafood soup, laden with chunks of fresh salmon, monkfish and prawns. Maybe you'll sip some of the hotel's own-label beer, Hrammur. Then you could try Hótel Rangá's take on the surf and turf, featuring scallops drizzled in lobster oil and Icelandic mountain lamb. But whatever you do, leave room for the chocolate and skyr cake, a signature concoction of rich chocolate and velvety skyr-based cheesecake for which locals are happy to drive the 100 kilometers from Reykjavík to taste. After your gourmet meal, do like the King of Sweden on his visit and enjoy a drink in one of the hotel's outdoor hotpots. Then sit back, relax and start planning your next trip to this luxurious enclave in south Iceland. 487 5700. hotelranga.is

HUMARHÚSID From its perch in a historical timber house on the hill overlooking bustling Laekjargata, the haute cuisine kitchen of Húmarhúsid (The Lobster House) brings you its namesake in every delectable form: bisque, pan fried and grilled. The menu offers up a host of other local ingredients prepared to highlight delicate, complex flavors, including arctic char, smoked eel, lamb and reindeer. Enjoy the candlelit dining room decorated with antique furniture and accent pieces that speak to the house's historical provenance. A romantic evening begins with a glass of Veuve Clicquot, creamy lobster soup, followed by beef confit and the pièce de résistance: the house's grilled lobster tails on the shell served with drawn garlic butter. Add an extensive wine cellar and sinful pistachio crême brûlée and it's clear that Húmarhúsid brings Iceland's best to the fine dining table. 561 3303. humarhusid.is

ICELANDIC FISH & CHIPS The humble cod just got trendy. Icelandic Fish & Chips, a self-styled 'organic bistro' by Reykjavík's harbor, has garnered a loyal following since it opened two years ago. It's obvious what this simple eatery, with both eat-in and take-away service, features on its menu. But it's the details that make it so popular. The fish itself, not just cod but catfish, haddock, plaice or whatever the fisherman has just hauled in, is battered in spelt and barley flour and cooked in canola oil, rich in Omega 3 fatty acids. The chips are Maldon-salted wedges of baked potatoes, cooked in olive oil and herbs. And instead of fat-laden tartar sauce, patrons can choose from a variety of *skyronnais-es*—creamy dips made from Icelandic skyr. Those interested in a larger meal will enjoy both whatever rich soup of the day is on offer (served with spelt bread and hummus), and the whipped skyr and berry dessert, served in a champagne flute. This is healthy, tasty food at a good price in a charming environment. 511 1118. fishandchips.is

JÓMFRÚIN If Gallup was to poll Reykjavíkians about their favorite Danish open-face sandwich restaurant, Jómfrúin would win hands down. Walk down Laekjargata street at lunch, peek into Jómfrúin's windows and see for yourself: the restaurant that is a little touch of Denmark is packed. "It's popular because of Iceland's relationship to Denmark," says Jakob Jakobsson, the restaurant's owner, referring to Iceland's former status as a Danish colony. "We have quick service, great food, and the location is good." Don't take Jakobsson's word for it. Try it yourself, but make sure to order the 'H.C. Andersen': rye bread with crisp bacon, liver pâté, port aspic, horseradish and the ubiquitous butter spread across most of Jómfrúin's open-face sandwiches. *Laekjargata 4*. Tel: 551 0100

LA PRIMAVERA "Start with the beef carpaccio," says Leifur Kolbeinsson, owner and chef of La Primavera. "It's been on the menu since we started." An excellent choice, and good to know that as the Italian restaurant's menu evolves, this old standby will remain. When you dine at La Primavera, located in the heart of town on Austurstraeti, you can totally rely on their seasonal offers of the best Icelandic fish and meat available at any given time. La Primavera's choice of fresh seafood is mouthwatering and their Icelandic lamb is simply adorable. This is an Italian restaurant with a soul and as good as they get. 561 8555. laprimavera.is

Lindt



OF SWITZERLAND

Lindor tubes on special offer in our Duty Free Store



DUTYFREE
KEFLAVIK AIRPORT

DAY TOURS

WE'LL TAKE YOU THERE!

DAY TOURS TO ALL THE MOST EXCITING PLACES IN ICELAND



RE-04 - 09:00

The Golden Circle

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 09-17

PRICE **9800** ISK

Don't miss out on the fascinating experience the Golden Circle gives you. On this tour, you can walk around the world-famous Geysir area, a geothermal field where hot springs are in abundance, geysers explode and pools of mud bubble. Visit the magnificent Gullfoss waterfall along with a visit to Þingvellir national park, the original site of the oldest existing parliament in the world. There the great Atlantic rift is clearly visible, a rift that is slowly pulling Iceland apart along tectonic plates.

Book now on www.re.is

Book now by calling 580 5450



Relax at the Blue Lagoon

There is no better way to start or end your Iceland adventure than by bathing in the famous Blue Lagoon. You can either board the bus at BSÍ Bus Terminal in Reykjavík or at Keflavík Airport. The drive takes about 40 min. from Reykjavík and 20 min. from Keflavík Airport.

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year Return bus fare **3200** ISK

Return bus fare and admission **6300** ISK

Timetable

From Reykjavík to Blue Lagoon	From Blue Lagoon to Reykjavík	From Blue Lagoon to KEF Airport	From KEF Airport to Blue Lagoon
09:00	10:00	12:00	16:45
10:00	11:15	14:15	
11:00	14:15		
13:00	15:15		
14:00	18:00		
17:00	19:00		
18:00	21:00		

Book now on www.re.is

Book now by calling 580 5450



Special Internet Offer**
Online discount code: **31030210**



RE-05 - 13:00
Reykjavík Grand Excursion

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 13-15:30

Price **3900 ISK**
~~Price 4900 ISK~~

Get to know the capital with an expert by your side. We take you around Reykjavík with a guide and show you the highlights of the city. The tour ends at the National museum of Iceland where you can see Icelandic culture at its best.

[Book now on www.re.is](#)



RE-62 - 21:00
Northern Lights Tour

❄️ Winter SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 21-24

Price **4900 ISK**

On a chilly Icelandic winter night there is nothing more breathtaking than seeing the Northern Lights dancing in beautiful colours around the sky - an unforgettable experience. This tour depends on weather and sightings are not guaranteed.

[Book now by calling 580 5450](#)

Special Internet Offer**
Online discount code: **31794710**



RE-08 - 09:00
Saga Circle

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year SAT 09-18

Price **14000 ISK**
~~Price 17500 ISK~~

This tour is perfect for all Saga enthusiasts. We take you around the area where one of many of the Icelandic Sagas took place. En route you will enjoy spectacular landscape, hot springs and waterfalls. Come and follow in the footsteps of the Vikings with us.

[Book now on www.re.is](#)



RE-24 - 12:30
Gullfoss - Geysir Direct

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year 12:30-18

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

In one afternoon you spend your time encountering across-section of Iceland's natural wonders and geological phenomena: the historical Þingvellir national park, Geysir geothermal area and the amazing Gullfoss waterfall. Don't miss out on this one.

Price **8600 ISK** [Book now by calling 580 5450](#)



RE-44 - 09:00
Gullfoss - Geysir & Langjökull Snowmobiling

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 Seasonal 09-19

SUN THU FRI SAT

Get in touch with some of Iceland's most famous and exciting natural phenomena. Pièce de resistance - a exhilarating 1 hour snowmobile tour across the endless white snowfields will not leave you intact.

Price **24500 ISK** [Book now by calling 580 5450](#)

Special Internet Offer**
Online discount code: **31750210**




RE-15 - 09:00
South Shore Adventure

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 09-19

Price **12300 ISK**
~~Price 15400 ISK~~

Iceland's South coast is ideal for nature lovers of all kind. Spectacular scenery, striking waterfalls, stunning views of glaciers, black lava sand coastline, charming villages and impressive rock formations.

[Book now on www.re.is](#)



RE-80 - 09:00
Glacier Adventure

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year 09-19

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

Take a ride to the top of the world on a snowmobile and see the amazing Sólheimajökull from above the larger Mýrdalsjökull glacier and be pleasantly surprised by the magnificent views. Being on top of a glacier is a unique and thrilling experience!

Price **28900 ISK** [Book now by calling 580 5450](#)



RE-81 - 09:00
Take a Walk on the Ice Side

☀️ ❄️ 🌿 🍷 All Year 09-19

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

Want to see and feel something completely different? Why not take a walk on a glacier and experience a surface that you have never been able to walk on before! Take a tour with us and try something new - a once in a lifetime experience for most.

Price **19900 ISK** [Book now by calling 580 5450](#)

* In order to activate the special internet offers you need to enter the online discount codes when booking on www.re.is. Special internet offers on this page can be booked through 28 February 2010.

For further information & details on tours please refer to our brochures.

flybus

flybus+



Reykjavik Excursions
KYNNISFERÐIR



Facts about Iceland

LAND: Iceland is an island of 103,000 square kilometers (39,756 square miles) and 4,970 kilometers of coastline, making it the 16th largest island in the world. Only Madagascar, Britain and Cuba are larger single independent island states. The country's highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, rises 2,110 meters above sea level. Roughly ten percent of the country is covered in glaciers, including Vatnajökull, the largest in Europe. But get here quick before the glaciers melt: Sólheimajökull, an outlet glacier of the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap, south Iceland, is presently retreating at a rate of approximately 100 meters per year.

ENERGY: Because of its location on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is a hotbed of volcanic and geothermal activity: thirty volcanoes have erupted in the past two centuries. Natural hot water supplies the majority of the population with inexpensive, pollution-free heating.

PEOPLE: Iceland's population is about 313,000, about six percent of which are foreign-born. It's growing at a rate of 2.6 percent per year. Only 2 percent of Icelanders live in rural areas, the rest live in urban areas, and the majority, about 75 percent, live in the capital area of Reykjavík. But Iceland's population more than doubles every year thanks to the more than 500,000 travelers who visit the country annually.

TIME: Despite its mid-Atlantic location, Iceland observes Greenwich Mean Time year-round.

HISTORY: It is believed that the first permanent settler in Iceland was Ingólfur Arnarson, a Norwegian Viking who settled in A.D. 874 and named his home Reykjavík (smoky bay) after the steam rising from the surrounding countryside. In 930, Icelanders founded Althingi, which still functions as the legislative body, making it the world's oldest parliament. In 1262, Iceland lost its independence to Norway and in 1380 came under Danish control with Norway. On 17 June 1944, Iceland became independent of Denmark in a ceremony that took place at Thingvellir, the old site of Althingi, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

GOVERNMENT: The country is governed by Althingi (parliament), which sits in Reykjavík, whose members are elected every four years. The President is also elected every four years, but the Prime Minister is primarily responsible for the day-to-day politics. Jóhanna Sigurðóttir is Iceland's current PM (2009) and Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson (1996) is serving his third term as president.

LANGUAGE: Icelanders are of Norse and Celtic ancestry, and have lived for more than a millennium far away from other countries, which has provided geneticists with a key body of DNA. The language, Icelandic, is close to that of literature (the Sagas) in the 12th century. Most people can also speak English. Icelanders maintain a patronymic naming system, which means that someone's first name is followed by his or her father's name and the suffix 'son' or 'dóttir'. For example, Kolbrún Pálsdóttir is Kolbrún, the daughter of Páll.

CHURCH: Church and state are not separated in Iceland. The National Church of Iceland, a Lutheran body, is the state church to which 82 percent of Icelanders belong. There is, however, one Roman Catholic cathedral in Reykjavík to serve the just over 2 percent Catholic population.

ECONOMY: Iceland's GDP per capita is USD 45,000. Aside from fishing and fisheries products, the country's other main export is aluminum, while primary imports include machinery and equipment, petroleum products, and food and textiles. Less than one percent of the land is arable (most is used for grazing) and between one and two percent of Iceland's population is engaged in agriculture. Iceland produces vegetables, meat, fish and dairy, but imports other foodstuffs. Iceland's currency is the Icelandic Króna (ISK).

HEALTH: Life expectancy for women is 83.0 years and 79.4 for men, one of the highest in the world. a



Purity Herbs

100% NATURE
FROM ICELAND

Treat your skin with pure Icelandic nature

The Rose Wonder

A wonderful, luxurious anti-aging cream enriched with the goodness of rose. This is Purity Herbs most popular moisturizer, containing carefully selected oils, herbs and vitamins (A, C & D) that together work to reduce the signs of aging.

The Rose Wonder strenghtens, tightens and brightens the skin, giving it a healthy, youthful glow. Hydrates, protects and evens skin tone. It diminishes spider veins and is suitable as a day and night cream for all skin-types.

Fire of Love

Aphrodisiac massage oil for lovers, enriched with exotic aromatic oils that stimulate your body and mind. Increases circulation and nourishes the skin. Fantastic as a lubricant.



100% nature from Iceland For those who (skin) care

At Purity Herbs, we create 100% natural, high quality skin care products using synergistic blends of Icelandic herbs, natural spring water and genuine essential oils. Each handcrafted product is a unique formulation working to deliver visible results.

Purity Herbs uses only earth friendly ingredients that provide maximum effectiveness. Not tested on animals.

Today you can get a complete range of skincare products suited for all skin types. Visit www.purityherbs.is

DUTYFREE

Available at Keflavík
Duty Free Store

WE'LL TAKE YOU THERE!

RELAX AND ENJOY YOUR TRIP!

Fast, frequent and on schedule every day of the week.

flybus+

PRICE
2500
ISK
O/W

Transfer from Keflavík Airport to most hotels and guesthouses in Reykjavík or vice versa.

flybus

PRICE
1950
ISK
O/W

Transfer from Keflavík Airport to BSÍ Bus Terminal or vice versa.



BSÍ Bus Terminal
101 Reykjavík
☎ + 354 580 5400
main@re.is / www.flybus.is

Book now on www.re.is

Book now by calling 580 5450

flybus

