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The Lighter Side Of Winter

It wasn’t too long ago that winter was the “off season” in Iceland, even in our fair city of Reykjavík. Guesthouses and hotels alike were virtually empty from November to May, and the country’s natural wonders were bereft of visitors. This, of course, has not been the case since about 2010, when the Eyjafjallajökull eruption, which shut down air traffic across Europe, ironically enough began to attract more tourists to the country during the wintertime. Today, there is virtually no “off season,” whether in Iceland in general or in Reykjavík in particular.

This is quite fortunate, as Iceland’s capital has plenty to offer, all year round. Food and drink, both perennial general or in Reykjavík in particular. Most importantly, we want to thank you, fair visitor, to Iceland, for being our guests. Reykjavík has plenty to offer, any time of year, and we always endeavour to point out the very best spots to see the Northern Lights (p. 44)—something entirely possible even within city limits. We would be remiss if we did not also point out that you can pick up a free copy of The Reykjavík Grapevine at any number of locations all around town. You would also do well to book the tours you’re interested in, whether here in Reykjavík or anywhere else in the country, through our booking site, gotravel.grapevine.is.

Icelandic winters are actually milder than you might think, so there are still plenty of outdoor activities to engage in while in Reykjavík. This includes the very best spots to see the Northern Lights (p. 44)—something entirely possible even within city limits.

Andie Fontaine, News Editor
The word “conclusion” is a little strong in this case. We have argued, fought and interviewed panels, tried blind tastests, and, in one case, consulted what we believe to be an oracle. This was not an easy or scientific endeavour.

The best comparison is glíma, or Icelandic wrestling. It’s not flashy or well produced like WWE. It’s not exactly graceful like Olympic wrestling, especially Greco-Roman. It’s two people in weird leather underwear, staring into each other’s eyes and trying to hip-check each other while simultaneously attempting an atomic wedgie.

We’ll be honest. Some of the winners are just outright winners, but some are a matter of debate and controversy. Like in any other country, there are cliques or special interest groups. The bar most liked by a 22-year-old noise music fanatic might seem a little off-putting to a bespectacled jazz enthusiast. We’re not saying those two groups can’t overlap. Maybe they can. Jazz people are good at improvising and noise music definitely needs more fans.

The thing is, this is a guide. It’s a work in progress. It’s an attempt at letting people know where we think they should go. We didn’t all agree on everything, so the runners up could end up being more palatable to you, and the winners could be your third favourite. Yikes.

If this lack of certainty is too much for you: Imagine being the original tourist to Iceland. A wandering tax-evader from Norway who decides to settle on a rock almost uninhabited by animal life. A land that occasionally explodes, with geysers that burst scalding sulphur-scented water from the ground like a cannon ball at Satan’s pool party. It’s the kind of place where people would invent glíma.
Dining

Delicious even if you can’t pronounce it

Watching Iceland come into its own as a dining destination over the past five years has been a joy. The Icelandic restaurant scene is diversifying, and the definition of what may be deemed “Icelandic cuisine” is broadening and taking on new shapes. Thanks to this new-found culinary confidence—and the added footfall of tourism—this tiny scene is experiencing a moment of opportunity. Whether it’s carefully-pleated Sichuanese vegan dumplings or exploratory tasting menus at Nordic fine dining houses, the bandwagon has room for demanding diners.

Our hand-picked panel of discerning gourmands have sought out the very best of Reykjavík dining to help you navigate the gastronomic waters of the capital area. From budget bites to fanciful fare, we’ve got you covered.

Best burger

Le Kock & Búllan

Joint Winners

Le Kock, Snorgabraut 58

Despite their fast-expansion and subsequent opening of a new main outpost at their current location, Le Kock’s burgers have, thankfully, remained consistent. The house-made potato rolls hold their own until the very last bite. No soggy bottoms here. You may want to ask them to be light handed with the sauce, though. Insider tip: their veggie burger (vegan optional) gives meat patties a serious run for their money.

Búllan, Hofsvallagata 52

Búllan’s meteoric rise to fame with multiple locations across Europe isn’t really surprising when you bite into one of their luxuriously decadent ‘Steak Burgers’—a glorious, juicy mix of tenderloin, rump and rib-eye, with the perfect meat-to-fat ratio. Búllan is a solid burger that seals Iceland’s reputation as a worthy burger destination.

Runner Up

Roadhouse Reykjavík

Snorrabraut 56

When the panel praises a vegan burger as a “divine guilty pleasure,” you better believe it. Roadhouse’s celery root burger is a beacon of vegan-friendly hope in a mock-meat world. Relying on the inherent blandness of celery root, the grill lends it an unexpected smoky complexity. Simply delicious.

Best Vegan Burger

Veganæs

Snorgabraut 22

Veganæs has answered the prayers of those yearning for diner fare that also happens to be cruelty free. Despite towing the seitan line, the Spicy Seitanic Burger is crunchy, spicy, greasy and oh so satisfying. Vegan cheese meltiness issues aside, this is a toothsome burger and the accompanying fries are fancy with their herby frills. The cocktail sauce is also on the money, so mayo-deprived vegans can shed tears of joy. Who knew a vegan dive-bar could be this much fun?

Runners Up

Roadhouse Reykjavík

Snorrabraut 56

Hafnarstræti 15

Eldofninn

Eftstaland 28

Eftstaland 28

This out-of-the-way family-run pizzeria has a wood-fired oven, creating generously topped pies with a good crust. The panel pick is the egg pizza—jammynolks on pizza is an underrated thing of beauty. While they seem to service half of Reykjavík with their deliveries, it’s also a cosy spot for a family dinner.

Best Pizza

Flatey

Grandagarður 11

A year after opening, Grandi’s Flatey easily stole the winner slot here. Along with their beloved leopard spotted Napoli-style pizzas, they have a Pizza of the Week offer to keep things fresh—and they are always great. Since Flatey opened, our keen-eyed panel suspects some alterations have been made to the original pizza crust recipe—however, Flatey remains uber popular with families, friend groups and couples. The pizzas come quick, there’s a pie to please everyone, and “customisations for picky palates” are done with a smile.

Runners Up

Eldofninn

Eftstaland 28

Grandagarður 11

Flatey

Hornið

Hafnarstræti 15

Eldofninn

Eftstaland 28

With thin crust pizzas and a no-frills cosy flair in the decor, this is a local treasure. We swear by their Quattro斯塔traditional wood-fired frozen pizza base and gioni, but recently more Icelandic faves have joined the toppings list—smoked lamb or hangikjöt, cream cheese, and—wait for it—bananas. Banana pizza meet pylsu sushi. Your culinary tour of Iceland is now complete. You’re welcome.
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<td>Likely the Northernmost Ramen joint, this family-run business is small in size, but delivers big on flavour. Reykjavík’s first Ramen bar has springy house-made organic noodles, and they’ve recently levelled up the broth. We’re suckers for their creamy Tantanmen—a deeply flavoured soup with Tonkotsu adding heft to the more sesame paste and hoisin-cooked pork. Add a drizzle of spicy chilli oil and you’ve got yourself the best bowl in town. There are six soups on the menu, including vegetarian options, and don’t miss out on their zingy dumplings or ‘Korean’ house-made tea.</td>
<td>One of a handful of places serving fresh Icelandic wasabi—the others being G1 and Grillmarket—Fish Market was also one of the first Icelandic restaurants to serve sushi. While the maki rolls are popular, we recommend the roe gunkan rolls—seaweed collared beauties generously topped with lightly cured fish eggs. The sashimi platter is an assortment of fresh seafood with a mound of crunchy wakame. Get a seat at the sushi bar, pair your food with the wasabi cocktail, and let keta be damned.</td>
<td>No other country comes close to Iceland’s preferred ratio of bread surface to butter thickness. And marrying the two loves in loaves is local institution Sandholt. With their recent expansion, the lines are bearable, drawing 101 rats back to this beloved bakery. Their signature sourdough continues to be the envy of open-crumb bakers while their mastery of buttery viennoiserie is unparalleled. Try their Danish topped with rhubarb, or the Escargot—a rolled pastry stuffed with raisins. Gourmet sandwiches to go will make any journey that much better and their house-made sodas are a treat.</td>
<td>Roasters has your geeky caffeine addiction covered. With their biffin-like obsession with the perfect roast, one of our panelists said: “this is your typical curated roast.” Roasters offer the millennial coffeehouse experience without the Berlin sangfroid—it’s the quintessentially Scandi coffee house experience. Visit Kárastigur for take-outs, Brautarholt to work away from your desk, and Ásmundursalur to experience some gorgeous exhibitions.</td>
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<td>This central ramen bar became an instant favourite for many. With a slow-cooked, temperature controlled broth, the chef—Chen—is aiming to consistently deliver his carefully designed recipes. The portions are a little modest, best order some dumplings on the side of your Dan Dan if you’ve a big appetite. Vegan option available.</td>
<td>Fish Company’s lunchtime-only sushi is perfect for crummy days when only an elegant meal will cure workday blues. FC cleverly packages our pet peeve—pýlsu sushi (read below)—as a Lobster Maki Roll, with deep-fried langoustine insides, cuddling dates and peppers for a true Icelandic style sushi.</td>
<td>This Danish style reluctant bakers bakery has been the talk of the town ever since they first opened their doors. An express speed expansion hasn’t been kind to their consistency, but thankfully, the dense rugbrauð—Danish-style bread—is stellar as always. Keep your eyes peeled for their ‘bolla.’</td>
<td>“It’s the perfect coffee house for different age groups and vibes,” said our panel of this all-purpose neighbour-hood coffeehouse and café. If you’ve had your first kid and you know your Muuto from your Ferm Living, this is the spot to grab a slice of carrot cake after a splash in the Vesturbæjarlaug pool.</td>
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<td>Noodle Station Laugavegur 103</td>
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<td>Before the ramen revolution of the two soup joints above, there was Noodle Station, serving vegetable, beef and chicken noodle soups with a pungent chilli-garlic aroma that floods the street outside. It’s a thoroughly Western take on noodle soup... but damn, it’s satisfying on a cold day.</td>
<td>Sushi Social is a no-holds barred ode to the evolution of sushi on this island—a pýlsu sushi. Embrace the joys of island sushi, and assuage any guilt via the cocktail menu. Check out the surf and turf rolls, and keep an eye out for their Tuna festival.</td>
<td>Barring kleina and the odd US chain, we’ve been a doughnut starved nation. But thanks to Deig, fresh fried doughnuts are now a reality. Should we push about the custard filled creme brulée doughnut or cry for the now discontinued surmjölk and Cheerios doughnut? (Bring it back!) They make pretty good bagels too. Past... they open at 7am.</td>
<td>Pallett is an airy, cheery little café filled with mismatched chairs, plants, and worn armchairs. There, every latté is a double-shot, the filter coffee is lovingly brewed, and an Americano comes with the water on the side, so people can dilute the espresso to taste. Don’t miss their famous vegetarian sausage rolls either.</td>
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**Best Indian**

*Austur-Indíafjélagið*

Hverfisgata 56

A tried and tested local favourite, *Austur-Indíafjélagið* has single-handedly steered an entire generation to embrace spices and curries. Their small curated menu reflects regional Indian cuisine and their no-nonsense attitude toward “uncompromising authenticity” brings a freshness most on display with dishes like the Adraki Chaamp—bone-in lamb grilled to smoky perfection, transporting one to the streets of India. Instead of ordering an entire curry, do like their kheer—a slow cooked rice pudding like dessert—is an undiscovered gem.

**Runners Up**

**Shalimar**

*Austurstræti 4*

Shalimar’s daily rotation of weekday thalis still have our hearts skipping a beat. A grilled-to-perfection tandoori chicken, alongside an assortment of vegetables and meat, naan and rice is a meal fit for a queen, and all her minions. Our panelist shares that “what most don’t know, is that their keer—a slow cooked rice pudding like dessert—is an undiscovered gem.”

**Hraðlestin**

*Lækjargata 8*

This small local chain has a few branches, but the mothership is the *Lækjargata* location, where you can sit in a calm environment and blast your face off with a rich, decadent, tasty vindaloo or a spot-on madras. Follow them on Instagram for Tuesday specials.

**Previous Winners**

2018-8: *Austur-Indíafjélagið*
2014-5: *Gandhi*
2013: *Austurlandahraðlestin*

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**Best Chinese**

*Fönix*

*Bildshófði 12*

Don’t be fooled by the industrial location—*Fönix* is a no-nonsense family joint that caters to blue collar workers, as well as homesick Chinese expats. The owners are a couple from the Sichuan province, and rightfully play to their strengths—the Mapo tofu, available as a vegan dish or with pork, is a study in extracting big flavours from few ingredients. Ignore the deep-fried shrimp and discover the joys of the steamed dumpling—each one is a treasure chest of flavour and texture. Vegans aren’t ignored here and the place is fantastic for groups big and small.

**Runners Up**

**Tian**

*Grensásvegur 21*

Pad Thai may have been what imprinted Thai cuisine in the minds of most in the Western world, but Ban Thai continues to surprise, delight and coax even the most reluctant palate to embrace the breadth of Thai cuisine. Northern fiery curries or creamier Southern offerings, with a smattering of street-fare, Ban Thai is the quintessential Thai restaurant in town. A die-hard loyalist recommends getting the “green thai curry with roti, which is a meal in itself, even though it is listed under appetisers.”

**Previous Winners**

2013: *Yummi Yummi*
2014-8: *Ban Thai*

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**Best Thai**

*Ban Thai*

*Laugavegur 130*

Pad Thai may have been what imprinted Thai cuisine in the minds of most in the Western world, but Ban Thai continues to surprise, delight and coax even the most reluctant palate to embrace the breadth of Thai cuisine. Northern fiery curries or creamier Southern offerings, with a smattering of street-fare, Ban Thai is the quintessential Thai restaurant in town. A die-hard loyalist recommends getting the “green thai curry with roti, which is a meal in itself, even though it is listed under appetisers.”

**Runners Up**

**Krua Thai**

*Skólavörðustígur 21*

The little Thai restaurant recently moved to Skólavörðustígur and they’ve never been better. Their deeply flavoured curries are “redolent with fresh galangal, chillies and spices to warm cold days,” said the panel. If you’re in a rush, stop for a nourishing bowl of soup at the bar.

**Previous Winners**

2013: *Yummi Yummi*
2014-8: *Ban Thai*
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**Best Goddamn Restaurant**

**Snaps**

Þórsgata 1

Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boatload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own, we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that beg to be a meal on their own, and a textbook crème brûlée topped with an envious snap. As one panellist concluded, “they are also that rare joint with a 3,000 ISK bottle of wine.” It isn’t only the food that makes Snaps such a beloved institution; it’s that hard to pin down the je ne sais quoi that simply works.

**Runners Up**

Mat Bar

Hverfisgata 26

Mat Bar’s rapid menu changes make it hard to pin down a favourite dish to return for, but hey, change is fun, too. Consistently experimental, the kitchen’s focus on the open fire grill has translated to successful winners like the scallops, grilled carrots and cabbage and recently, the dumpling variations.

SKÁL!

Hlemmur Mathöll, Laugavegur 107

SKÁL! is the street-food avatar of the famed restaurant Sippurinn. Located in Hlemmur Mathöll, it’s a stylish and dazzling eatery that’s much easier to get to than its Westman Islands mothership. With locally-sourced and foraged ingredients whipped up into ingenious recipes, SKÁL! simply never fails.

**Previous Winners**

2018: Mat Bar
2017: Snaps / Matur og Drykkur
2014-6: Snaps

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**Best Place For A Fancy Meal**

**Óx**

Laugavegur 28

Forget dropping in at Óx, for this place only takes eleven guests from Wednesday to Saturday. Visitors are instructed to arrive at 19:00 sharp for a two and a half hour food journey, which combines Icelandic traditional cuisine with a European flair. You pay upfront and everything is included—even wine pairings. It’s truly an intimate experience unlike anything else you’ll find in the city. Foodies, don’t miss it.

**Runners Up**

Grillð

Hotel Saga, Hagatorg

Winner winner, five digit chicken dinner. We are delighted to pay our long-overdue respects to the grand mama of Reykjavík fine dining. “Their tasting menu takes you on this whole journey that makes you lose all track of time,” said one of our dreamy-eyed panellists. When it comes to swank, there is nothing like a 300° view of the cityscape whilst having your senses assailed by a menu that celebrates seasonality, complexity and depth without ever giving in to fussiness. This is old school glamour meeting a truly innovative kitchen that blazes a path for ambitious dining.

**Runners Up**

Mat Bar

Hverfisgata 26

This stylish Hverfisgata restaurant offers a constantly rotating small plates menu comprising ingenious takes on familiar ingredients. The best way to try a few at once is to go for the chef’s choice tasting menu—everyone gets to try everything, so the conversation will flow as smoothly as their excellent wine and cocktail selections.

**Previous Winners**

2017-8: Dill

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**Best Tasting Menu**

**Grillmarket**

Lækjargata 2a

The locally-sourced menu of Grillmarket have been a hit with diners since this place opened its doors. A favourite ‘fancy place’ for locals, the restaurant also upped its game by offering fresh, locally grown Icelandic wasabi. Our panel suggested pairing the wasabi with a steak, and something decadent from the exhaustive wine list.

**Previous Winners**

2014-8: Bill

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**Apótek**

Austurstræti 16

Apótek’s tasting menu takes quality Icelandic ingredients and serves them with refreshing and interesting twists from the kitchen. The service is excellent, the plating is aesthetically pleasing, and the whole experience is reliably high quality. A carefree meal at Apótek is the perfect medicine for a tiring week.
PIZZA NAPOLETANA

MARGHERITA

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GRANDAGARDUR 11
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HLEMMUR FOOD HALL
+354 5882666
Icelandic Street Food
Laekjargata 8 & Laugavegur 85

You can't beat the prices at this tiny spot with a big heart. All the soups are available in a bread bowl with—wait for it—unlimited refills! You can choose from a lamb soup, a buttery traditional plokkfiskur and a veggie soup, and your refill can even be a taste of another dish. Iceland prides itself on the quality of its lamb and fish, so kjötsúpa and fiskisúpa are safe bets. If you'd like to try affordable local food, and you're very, very hungry, this is the spot.

Runners Up

Chicken Soup at Vietnam
Grandi Mathíoll, Grandagardur 20
In a foodhall environment packed full with tempting choices, this chicken soup is a clear stand-out dish. The serving is generous, and best of all, it comes in at well under 2,000 ISK. "There's a whole chicken thigh in there," said the panel. "The broth is slow-cooked for that deep, rich comfort-food flavour. I'll be coming back for this one."

Lamb Street Food
Grandagardur 7
Food wrapped in a flatbread is a universally-loved thing of beauty. At Lamb, they take things a few steps further and make everything from scratch. Anything you order sits under the 2,000 ISK tag. What's lesser known however, is that their wraps are perfect for sharing, making it the cheapest meal in town by far.

Previous Winners
2018: Icelandic Street Food
2017: Bike Cave
2016: Noodle Station

Best Family Restaurant

Hamborgarafabrikkan
Lauganesvegur 28

The Hamborgarafabrikkan burger chain is a kids' favourite, and it's ideal for a lunch outing with the family. There are plenty of distractions for young diners, including borrowed iPads and headphones to keep the kids entertained and distracted. The child-friendly vibe explains why it continues to be a popular haunt for birthday parties, so don't be surprised by the chorus of "hún á afmæli í dag" wafting around the room every now and then.

Runners Up

Kaffi Laugalækur
Laugarnesvegur 74a
For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Lækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids' corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto 'litla gula hænan' and the 'shawarmabaka' are our top lunch picks. The parents will love this spot, and there's plenty for kids, too.

Hard Rock Café
Laekjargata 2A
A good family place needs to be appealing to parents and kids alike. The Hard Rock Café caters perfectly to the needs of a family group, with a diverse menu, special kids plates, colouring menus, free drink refills, and lids on drinks to help contain spills.

Previous Winners
2018: Jamie’s Italian
2017: Hamborgarafabrikkan
2016: Laundromat
2015: KEX Hostel

Best Vegan Meal

Sumac
Laugavegur 28

One of the persistent faves with the local vegan community, despite not catering solely to vegans, Sumac’s Middle Eastern-inspired fare makes it the vegan destination to beat. No insipid ‘nut steaks’ in sight here; instead, the kitchen treats vegetables as the star of the show, eggplants are grilled to silkiness, the cauliflower roasted whole; often draped with bright pomegranate arils, it’s a treat for anyone. Ask for the Lebanese wine; the interesting backstory of its harried continuation seals the outing.

Runners Up

Gló
Laugavegur 20b
Healthy hot-spot Gló’s Laugavegur location is 100% vegan, and completely delicious. Their signature skál (bowl, in English) menu comes in several variations—from an Indian dahl bowl with a side of mango chutney, to the fad-pleasing keto bowl to keep your net carbs in check—and the burgers and mainstay spinach lasagna are always tasty.

Veganæs
Tryggvagata 22
One of our few exclusively vegan places, Veganæs shows how vegan food can be just as down-and-dirty as a burger joint. "You don’t need to have a yoga mat under your arm when you go there," said the panel. It’s in a lively spot: catch a drag show while you’re dining.

Previous Winners
2018: Skal and Mat Bar
2016-7: Kaffi Vinyl (RIP)
2015: Teni (RIP)
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**Best Brunch**

**Coocoo’s Nest**  
Grandagarður 23  

Family-run restaurant Coocoo’s Nest offers a memorable brunch, with options ranging from a filling, spicy breakfast burrito to green eggs on sourdough bread. Located out on Grandi (they’ve been out there since before it was cool), the walk along the harbour will clear your head on the way; in summer, you can sit outside and catch the sun, and in winter, the cozy interior feels almost like a secluded fairy-light-strung yard. The service is right, the food spot on, and the healthy beetroot mimosa is a fresh and tasty hair of the dog.

**Runners Up**

**Snaps** Pörgata 1  

Snaps serves up the perfect laid-back brunch for your Sunday morning recovery session. Choose from various omelettes, classic eggs benedict, and croque monsieurs, and add a mimosa if the mood strikes you. If that isn’t your tipple of choice, they have a great recovery session. Choose from various soft serves, assortment of dips and toppings with fruit to candy ratio being 1:100 and the hyper-local bragðarefur topping with fruit to candy ratio being 1:100.

**Cafe Paris** Austurstræti 14  

Cafe Paris is a bright bistro with casual panache with food to match. The panel praised the fried chicken and waffles, and the stacks of pancakes with bananas and almonds. They lamented, however, the cancellation of table service, which diminishes the Parisienne vibe and kept this otherwise excellent joint off the top spot.

**Previous Winners**  
2018: Coocoo’s Nest  
2017: Snaps  
2016: Cafe Paris

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**Best Lunch Place**

**Hlemmur & Grandi Mathöll**  
Hlemmur & Grandagarður 16  

When it comes to lunch, Reykjavík’s two food halls are top of the pile. It is, after all, a major increase over the zero food halls we had in 2016. As you might expect, the main attraction is the variety on offer. Members of a group can mix-and-match their dishes and drinks from the different concessions to fit anyone and everyone’s hunger level, budget, vegetarianism, allergies, etcetera. Chase your heart’s desire, be it Nordic, Thai, Mexican, Korean, a pastry, a panini, or just a plain ol’ pile of lamb meat.

**Runners Up**

**Hannesarholt**  

The historic Hannesarholt culture building has gotten a new lease of life. Formerly a quiet coffee spot, it reopened as a restaurant focusing on locally sourced produce. It’s a concise selection: we tried the juicy, crisp salmon on with wholesome beets and quinoa. Vegans can rejoice too; there’s always one option on the menu.

**Newcomer**

**Minisbar**  

Rather than a limp slice of pizza or re-heated soup. Mimir has a Michelin-level kitchen and two handsome portions of colourful, Nordic deliciousness for under 2,000 ISK (at the time of writing) in a swanky but unpretentious dining hall. “Mimir,” FYI, is the disembodied brother of the Norse god Odin. Pretty metal.

**Previous Winners**  
2017: Snaps  
2016: Ústabúðin (RIP)

---

**Best Ice Cream**

**Skúbb** Laugarársvegur 1  

Ice cream is one of those ethereal pleasures that encapsulates the mantra of living—be present. Unlike the sugar crazed concoctions in every supermarket aisle, Šlúbb elevates the ice-cream games with their flavour-forward, dense, creamy scoops. Seasonal favourite mango is an absolute treat, while the dark chocolate brownie is lusciously bitter. The non-dairy sorbets are intensely fruity, indicating the absence of imitation flavours. Every scoop is a downright treat, especially with the promise of summer looming large.

**Runners Up**

**Ísblú Huppu** Álfheimar 2-6  

The non-dairy sorbets are intensely fruity, indicating the absence of imitation flavours. Every scoop is a downright treat, especially with the promise of summer looming large. The non-dairy sorbets are intensely fruity, indicating the absence of imitation flavours. Every scoop is a downright treat, especially with the promise of summer looming large.

**Grillmarket** Lækjargata 2a  

Grillmarket is still the go-to place for many locals looking for a fancy evening out. For most, it means ordering the lamb and a bottle of wine. And rightfully so. The lamb chops or charcoal grilled steaks are always a winner—the smoky char is but a natural foil to the grassy meat.

**Previous Winners**  
2018: Skúbb  
2013: Valdís

---

**Best Lamb**

**Matarkjallarinn** Ádalstræti 2  

Icelandic lamb is raised simply—all summer long, the sheep are left outside to graze, and come fall, the lamb makes a bee-line to the plate. It’s only fitting that Matarkjallarinn honours Icelandic lamb in the most unpretentious fashion. Grassy and intense, Icelandic lamb needs to be handled delicately for its unique flavour to shine through—do too much and you’ll overshadow this tender meat. By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself.

**Runners Up**

**Matarkjallarinn** Ádalstræti 2  

Icelandic lamb is raised simply—all summer long, the sheep are left outside to graze, and come fall, the lamb makes a bee-line to the plate. It’s only fitting that Matarkjallarinn honours Icelandic lamb in the most unpretentious fashion. Grassy and intense, Icelandic lamb needs to be handled delicately for its unique flavour to shine through—do too much and you’ll overshadow this tender meat. By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself.

**Apotek** Austurstræti 18  

Whatever lamb is being served here, rest assured it’ll be a meal to remember. With experienced chefs who share an unbridled passion for meat and fire, all the plates come out perfectly executed. Currently, they have a rack of lamb that’s a visual treat—get it while it lasts.

**Previous Winners**  
2018: Matarkjallarinn  
2013: Valdís
WE COULD HAVE USED THIS ADVERTISING SPOT TO CONVINCE YOU HOW DELICIOUS OUR GRANDMOTHER'S FOOD IS.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO.

BECAUSE SHE IS RANKED #1 ON TRIPADVISOR

COME AND TASTE FOR YOURSELF

- ICELANDIC STREET FOOD STAFF

LÆKJARGATA 8 // 101 REYKJAVIK // #ICELANDICSTREETFOOD
Dining
Greasy burger, or glazed, torched cod head?

Must-Try Dining Experience

**Skál**
Hlemmur Mathöll

Helmed by one of Iceland’s finest chefs—Gísli Matthias Auðunsson—anything you order here will be your definitive culinary memory of Iceland. “Seasonal” and “local” aren’t just clickbait terms at Skál. Be it smoked carrots on sourdough or crispy seaweed with cured roe, nothing is as simple as it seems. From Icelandic lamb to Arctic char or a scrumptious vegan meal, Skál has you covered. They boast a natural wine selection, cocktails on tap, and they debut new drinks regularly, like the Sultuslaukur rhubarb cider. A culinary adventure like no other, Skál also won’t break the bank.

Runners Up

**Cod Head at Matur og Drykkur**
Grandagarður 2
Shock value aside, Matur og Drykkur elevated Icelandic cooking with this singular dish—a whole, butterflied cod head, simmered in chicken stock and glazed. “The deep fried cod tongues are the best part,” said the panel. “And the fish head is basically prime cod cheeks.” An unmissable treat.

**ÕX**
Laugavegur 28
õX is Iceland’s first chef’s table dining experience for only 11 diners each night. Determined to be discreet, the restaurant is housed in the far end of Sumac; it is an intimate dining experience where the walls between the chef and diner are dissolved over an intimate and leisurely tasting menu.

**Italia**
Laugavegur 11
Italia has the dual distinction of being run by actual bona fide Italians and being the second-oldest Italian joint in town (1991). This is a place for fried eggplant parm, seafood pastas, and decor cheesier than their rigatoni. And don’t forget—bring the whole family.

Previous Winners
2017: Snaps
2015-6: Ústabúðin (RIP)

Best Italian

**La Primavera**
at Marshall House Bar + Restaurant - Grandagarður 20
25-years ago, Leifur Kolbeinsson introduced Icelanders to fresh pasta at his iconic eatery La Primavera. It closed a few years later, but Icelanders still reminisce about it. Now, Leifur is back in the kitchen at the Marshall House Restaurant, with the same focus on simplicity. “I didn’t even know cod roe could be so...sophisticated,” mused the panel as we dined at the anniversary pop-up. Thanks to diner pressure, La Primavera made a comeback as a permanent fixture at Marshall House. A delicious full circle, if ever there was one.

Runners Up

**Hornið**
Hafnarstræti 15
It might not be fancy, but O.G. Italian joint Hornið is still going strong. The thin-crust pizzas are 100% satisfying—we recommend the prawn-covered seafood option—and you can get all kinds of hearty comfort-food pasta dishes, should your heart so desire. Support a true classic and drop by.

**Ítalía**
Laugavegur 11
Ítalía has the dual distinction of being run by actual bonafide Italians and being the second-oldest Italian joint in town (1991). This is a place for fried eggplant parm, seafood pastas, and decor cheesier than their rigatoni. And don’t forget—bring the whole family.

Previous Winners
2018: Marshall House

Best Italian

**Fiskfélagið**
Vesturgata 2a
With a band of talented chefs in the kitchen, Fish Company is the definitive seafood restaurant in Iceland. Banging out consistently great dishes ever since they opened, the restaurant has grown beyond their reputation for fusion kitschiness. Today, their Japanese-inspired cod, swimming in a charred onion dashi, or the North African style wolf-fish with perfectly cooked black chickpeas, all enunciate a finesse and understanding of ingredient, region and technique that other restaurants can only aspire to.

Runners Up

**Fish Market**
Aðalstræti 12
“They seem to take the extra step for freshness,” said one panelist of Fish Market’s seafood. This upscale eatery serves everything from lightly salted cod to controversial minke whale—details like ponzu dipping sauce, and fresh Icelandic wasabi takes the experience up a notch. Booking recommended, but impromptu sushi bar stools are sometimes available.

**Messinn**
Lækjargata 6 & Grandagarður 8
Messinn has been so popular since opening that they now boast a large buffet style branch in Grandi. Continuing to serve ‘fish-in-pans’, Messinn’s once-generous portions have dwindled, our panel noted. Thankfully, the taste and consistency have remained largely unchanged. We also adore their plokkfiskur (although the panel suspects the recipe has changed recently).

Previous Winners
2018: Fish Company and Fish Market
2016-7: Fish Company

Previous Winners
2017: Snaps
2015-6: Ústabúðin (RIP)

Best Seafood

Best of Reykjavík 2019

Best of Reykjavík 2019

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Laugavegur 77

2014: KEX
2015-8: Tapas barinn
2019: Skelfiskmarkaðurinn (RIP)

Previous Winners

moment of popularity.

in advance, it’s having a honeymoon

service, and big tables for groups. Book

rant with truffle-themed menu, perfect

Eiriksson is a high-end restau-

markaðurinn, another large, glitzy

corner. Eiriksson is a high-end restau-

restaurant opened just around the

markaðurinn, another large, glitzy

restaurant opened just around the


Apóték

Austurstræti 16a

Housed in a stunning downtown space, Apóték, meaning “pharmacy” in English,

was once an actual drug store. A wall

plaque with the names of its long gone

patrons remains. New patrons, however,

are likely to drop by for their regular
dose of cocktails, finger foods, small

plates, cakes... and eye candy. Who

doesn’t love a “hottie bartender”? The

service is amiable and the staff usually
go out of their way to ensure everyone

is having a good time in this lovely,

spacious dining room.

Runners Up

Tapas Barinn
Veiturgata 3b

It’s a non-traditional take on tapas, but
the atmosphere is on point. With food
served for the whole table, the selec-
tion is huge, with langoustine, puffin,
lamb, and more global fare. If you’re
looking for a place where the food and
drinks keep coming and the service
never falters, you’ve found it.

Newcomer

Eiriksson Brasserie
Laugavegur 77

This fancy dining room occupies the
space of an old bank, and still has a
certain moneyed feel. However, the
prices aren’t at all bad, especially if
you pop in for an after work cocktail on
happy hour. The menu runs the gamut
of firm favourites, from seafood pasta
to potato pizza, lamb dishes and fries
with bearameine—but everything is done
to perfection, served quickly, and more
often than not comes with a truffle
flavour. We approve—so much so that
we’re slowly returning to try the whole
menu.

Runners Up

Brewdog
Frakkastígur 8

A pair of newcomers changed the
gastropub game in 2018. The first is
Brewdog, whose menu transcends bar
food. Using Icelandic ingredients with
touches from the Brewdog chain, you
can get a range of delicious burgers,
seafood, sides and a mouth-watering
battered Mars bar for dessert. Guilty
pleasure heaven.

Runners Up

Mandi
Veltusund 3b

Mandi can’t possibly be a controver-
sial choice. A Syrian kebab spot that’s
universally loved in Reykjavík, check
out the crispy falafel, lamb wraps and
fries covered with a mystery white
sauce. Newly renovated with increased
seating, and reliably open into the early
hours, you won’t find a better place to
pass out first into a plate of lamb
shawarma at five in the morning, or
stumble home with that hangover-bat-
ting late night bite.

Runners Up

Hi Noodle
Ingólfstorg

If you can’t decide between chicken,
beef, shrimp, teriyaki or veggies for
your drunk munch, stop by Hiollabátar,
where they serve up literally anything
you can imagine on a hero sub. Pick up
the Syslumambátur with extra cucumber—
you won’t regret it.

Runners Up

Eiriksson Brasserie
Laugavegur 77

This fancy dining room occupies the
space of an old bank, and still has a
certain moneyed feel. However, the
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flavour. We approve—so much so that
we’re slowly returning to try the whole
menu.

Runners Up

Bastard Brew & Food
Vegamótastígur

Just around the corner, the homegrown
Bastard Brew & Food brew pub is giving
Brewdog a run for its money. You can
grab a medley of burgers, sharing
plates and comfort food from around
the globe. As one of our panellists
slurred: “I’ve somehow never been
there without hitting a happy hour.”

Previous Winners

2018: Skáli
2017-8: Mandi
2016: Ali Baba

Previous Winners

2018: Skólaskmárakvæðið (RIP)
2017: Hlemmur Mathöll / Mat Bar
A Little Cove of Cornucopia

Downtown gains a neighbourhood fresh fish and veggie store

Words: Shruthi Basappa Photo: Art Bicnick

There was a collective sigh of despair when Kjót og Fiskur downed shutters on Bergrstastræti. In a short span of time, the neighbourhood had seen Frú Lauga, Kjót og Fiskur and Matarbúr Kaja open and close; each opening met with cheers and each subsequent closure with disappointment that yet another downtown business favoured by the locals was done for.

Hoping to break the curse, is Gnægtahornið. “We are not only a fish store,” store owner Gunnar Guttormur Kjeld emphasises. The opening has been met with wide enthusiasm, especially by the local residents. In a quickly changing urban landscape, where commercial needs of tourism are often at loggerheads with residents, it is understandable why the opening of a neighbourhood store garners this attention.

The basement store is simply furnished — there are rows of locally brewed Kombucha, preserves, and spreads from Vellir Svarfaðardal, various fish products and a smattering of organic vegetables. Further ahead, there is cod in an olive tapenade marinade, Arctic char with capers, fresh cod and a full basket of oysters at just 350 ISK per piece sits invitingly. Vegans and vegetarians are considered and a handful of salads and patties are on offer.

Behind the store, is a work room where fresh catch of the day is processed to be sent off to restaurants and to sell instore.

Community ecosystem

Gutti, as Gunnar is known, has long felt the need for more variety of produce. With his background in wholesale seafood supply, he has been behind the scenes in the supply chain industry. But why retail? “Honestly, I wanted to diversify,” Gutti laughs, going on to add, “Supermarket choices are all the same, you know,” he explains. “What one sells, the others do, too. The fish in the same marinades, the same vegetables, seasonal or not.”

“Take the oysters for instance,” he continues. “I’m in the position of offering them to people, in small quantities at a reasonable price. It is a unique thing given their short shelf life, and removes the hassle of buying oysters if you weren’t a restaurant.” Having tried them myself, I have to concur that the fanciful feeling of eating oysters in your pajamas at home is vastly underrated.

Fresh, local, abundant

Gnægtahornið refers to the horn of plenty in Icelandic. In an effort to offer more than what the supermarkets currently do, Gutti is working closely with Seyðisfjörður initiative, Austurlands Food Coop, to bring hitherto unavailable fresh produce to Reykjavík residents.

To minimise food waste, in-house soup for lunch is also on the cards. The no-food waste principle extends to the seafood as well. The traditional ýsa í raspi is made with leftover sourdough bread crumbs. The fiskibollur too, gets an update with the addition of vegetables.

“Being creative can be challenging and not falling back on the established norms is very challenging because it is so tempting to fall back on what’s been done before.” It is early days yet, but Gnægtahornið might just be the corner of plenty 101 has been waiting for.

Info: Gnægtahornið
Visit the store at Bergstastræti 14, 101 Reykjavík
Facebook: /Gnaegtahorn
NOT TO BRAG ......... BUT :)

Tryggvagata 22, Reykjavík 101      Opening hours: 16:00-21:00      Closed on Mondays

Cruelty Free Comfort Food, 100% Vegan, Restaurant & Take Away

Speciality Coffee Shop & Small-Batch Bakehouse
PALLETT
Strandgata 75
Hafnarfjörður

The Observer's Book of COMMON INSECTS & SPIDERS
E. F. Linssen & L. Hughes
322 ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR AND BLACK AND WHITE

Slow Food
#PALLETTKAFFI
Located just 15 km from downtown Reykjavík, Hafnarfjörður has been a thriving independent entity for a long time, thanks in no small part to the fierce loyalty of its inhabitants, “Hafniróðgar”, show to local businesses and institutions. And they’ll welcome you with open arms as long as you don’t do anything crazy like call them a Reykjavík suburb or speak ill of either of their handball teams.

The elephant in the room (if elephants wore tusks on their heads)

Icelanders generally aren’t shy to flaunt their Viking heritage, but Hafnarfjörður took it to another level with its annual Viking Festival and a permanent miniature Viking settlement called The Viking Village—both of which sprang from the loins of a small group of private Viking enthusiasts in the 90s.

The village is essentially a hotel and gift store built around the Viking theme restaurant Fjörukráin. As far as them restaurants go, Fjörukráin is quite ambitious—far more elaborate than the Finnish Viking restaurant chain Harald, but less so than Medieval Times (unless you count the annual staged Viking brawl). It exhibits a pleasant lack of anachronistic building materials and an abundance of elaborate woodwork, which has only gotten better with age—for the weathering of time is kind to Viking theme restaurants in ways that space age theme restaurants can only dream of.

The food itself, well, it’s about what you’d expect from a theme restaurant, but there’s something for all tastes, everything from classic Icelandic lamb stew to a “Viking banana split”.

Food Wars: A New Hope

Located on Strandgata, just up the road from Fjörukráin, Von has quickly secured its spot as the best Hafnarfjörður has to offer in fine dining. The name means “Hope” and it is well-earned as the town wasn’t brimming with fine dining options before their arrival four years ago.

Fortunately, Von more than holds its own against the best in Reykjavik and does so without breaking the bank. Go there for fresher-than-fresh fish plucked from the harbour just across the road—the firm-but-delicately cooked fish with tarragon mayo and polenta and the incomparable ling ceviche are two standouts. And don’t miss the rotating cocktails on tap and 650 ISK beers for a happy hour which, at least on the night of our visit, extended well into the night.

Coffee and Cakes

Next door to Von is the town’s finest coffee house, the vegetarian and generally friendly Pallett. It may also very well be the coziest coffee house in the greater Reykjavik area. This is the place to grab a random book from the shelves and plomp down in a pillowy nook with a classic scone, a hand pie and a cup of hot chocolate or full-flavoured coffee.

Further along, Strandgata is the oldest part of downtown Hafnarfjörður. As in parts of downtown Reykjavik, the building styles are charmingly discordant, and void of frivolity like city planning. This will eventually lead you to coffeehouse Súfístímm, which led a step forward in Iceland’s artisan coffee scene in the 90s and has felt at ease in that decade ever since—a place to enjoy creamy cakes and cheesy lasagnas to the sounds of smooth jazz.

Where Strandgata ends, the controversial Norðurbakki apartment blocks of Norðurhúsið take over, housing book café Norðurbakki and popular soup-and-sourdough bakery Brikk.

Hot dog burgers

No Icelandic town is complete without its signature burger and Hafnarfjörður is no exception. In that category, there is no competing with the madness at Pylsubarinn (“the hot dog bar”). Sure, you could go there and order a normal hot dog or an average burger but who has time for that!? This is home to a deep-fried hot dog with a slice of melted cheese and french fry seasoning served over french fries, baked beans or literally anything they have laying around in their burger hut, because we live in a democracy, dammit!

But to really go “full Hafnarfjörður” you will want their Fjardarborgari (“fjord burger”) served with hot dog mustard, ketchup, fried onions and pickled red cabbage. It is basically an Icelandic hot dog with a floppy 90gr burger instead of a weiner, making it the most Icelandic burger in existence.
Hjá Höllu is a cozy restaurant located in the town of Grindavík where you can enjoy many healthy dishes in just five minute drive from the Blue Lagoon. Fresh fish from the harbour, chicken, salad and vegetarian/vegan options.

We are also located in Keflavík Airport where you can get a healthy meal to enjoy or take away in time before your flight.

Wood-oven pizza ready 5 minutes
Fresh local health food
Healthy meal for your flight

www.hjahollu.is
Drinking
Tipsy or wasted, the choice is yours

There is one thing abundantly clear from our very scientific drinking research: craft beers and gastropubs have arrived in force. You can’t throw a stone without hitting someone washing down a dry-aged chilli burger with a local IPA. After a few stable years, Reykjavík’s bar scene seems to be shifting in general, with more wine, cocktails and fancy beers available than ever before. Some facts of life, however, remain the same: alcohol is expensive, but that doesn’t stop us from partying. Bottoms up, babe.

Best Goddamn Bar

Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

“Kaffibarinn!” said the panel, in unison, when the category was announced. The mothership of Iceland’s nightlife has stood firm while the competition rises and falls. A reliably great drinking hole, it has happy hour prices by day, a diverse DJ lineup by night, and charming staff to welcome you at all times. “Kaffibarinn has always been my favourite bar,” said one panelist. “I’ve been going there forever. The staff are me you at all times. “Kaffibarinn has always been my favour- ite bar,” said one panelist. “I’ve been going there forever. The staff are amazing—they put up with your shit. Maybe the most fun part is the randomness you meet. It’s the place where everybody knows your name.”

Previous Winners

2018: Kaffibarinn
2017: Húrra
2016: Prikíð

Best Place To Start The Night

VEDUR
Klapparstígur 33

This charming, low key hole-in-the-wall bar is a firm favourite: with comfy seating or bar stools where you can watch the friendly bartenders get to work mixing your cocktail of choice. “You can watch the street life going by through the big windows,” said the panel. “It’s in a vibrant spot.” The great location and happy hour mean it’s the perfect place to begin a night out on the town. “You can be dressed up or down there,” said the panel, “and it’s right downtown, so you can head anywhere afterwards.”

Previous Winners

2018: Mat Bar
2016-7: KEX Hostel
2015: Loft Hostel
2014: Kaldi Bar

Best Place To End The Night

Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

This classic party place is still the late-night hangout of choice in 101 Reykjavík. The raucous local crowd is a mixture of Iceland’s fashion folks, artists, hipsters and intelligentsia—as seen in the KB “Barflies” photo book. “It’s a perfect meeting point where you can go for the dancefloor, space out in the back, or chat all night in the smoking area,” said the panel. “The staff are always genuinely nice to you, even if you’re pretty drunk. Everyone goes there. It’s the only place I’d go after putting a friend in drag and end up having my numerology done by a stranger.”

Previous Winners

2018: Prikíð
2017: Kaffibarinn
2016: Húrra
2014-5: Paloma Basement (RIP)
### Best Sports Bar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bar Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>American Bar &amp; English Pub</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Slippbarinn</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Apótek</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mikkeller &amp; Friends (RIP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Microbar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Mikkeller &amp; Friends (RIP)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**American Bar & English Pub**

American Bar, Austurstræti 8-10

With screens as far as the eye can see, a long bar that goes on for days, all the burgers and snacks of your junk food dreams, a dedicated big-screen viewing room in the back, and a “sun” terrace to smoke on at half time, American Bar is the perfect place to watch the big game. Whether it’s boxing, NFL or Premier League, they always have a wide range of screenings. Grab yourself a brewski and prepare to shout at the screen in some kind of vicarious catharsis of random victory or loss.

**Runners Up**

- Lebowski Bar
- Microbar
- Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)

### Best Craft Bar

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Frakkastígur</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Veggúhústíðarinn</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Brewdog Frakkastígur 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Klaustur Kirkjutorg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Port 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skúli Craft Bar**

Fögetagarður

This cozy drinking hole has a great selection of local and guest craft brews, with the option of a flight of beers for the indecisive or curious. Set on a ground floor with giant windows around most of the bar, one may prefer the open feeling or feel a bit exposed, but it’s a lovely place. “The staff are real beer nerds,” said the panel. “There are board games, good snacks and food vans out back. It has that dude energy, but it’s perfect for a quiet drink.”

**Runners Up**

- Frakkastígur 8
- Klaustur Kirkjutorg
- Port 9

### Best Wine Bar

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Skúli Craft Bar</td>
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<td>Port 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mikkeller &amp; Friends (RIP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Skúli Craft Bar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Port 9**

Veggúhústíðarinn 9

Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a hidden gem with an extensive wine list. From the house selections, to the by-the-bottle list, to the endless handwritten book of rare and fine wines, there can be only one winner here. “You can barely find it,” said the panel. “It’s intimate, and the customers have gone out of their way to end up there.” It’s not too stuffy or formal though: “I’ve been there in my pyjamas and nobody said anything,” said one panelist. “It’s also the only place in Reykjavik for that special Tinder date.”

**Runners Up**

- Veggúhústíðarinn 9
- Port 9

### Best Place For Cocktails

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Slippbarinn</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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**Vinstükun Tíu sopar**

Laugavegur 27

Aiming to fill the market for wine bars in Reykjavik, Vinstükun Tíu Sopar features natural wines from small producers at affordable prices. While “Vinstükun” is an old Icelandic term for wine bar, “Tíu Sopar” is a play-on-words for ten sips, riffing on the bar’s location in the spot at Iceland’s current most infamous bar.

**Runners Up**

- Vinstükun Tíu sopar
- Vinstükun Tíu sopar

### Previous Winners

- **Best Sports Bar**
  - 2018: American Bar
  - 2017: Lebowski Bar
  - 2016: American Bar
  - 2015-6: Apótek
  - 2014: Slippbarinn
  - 2013: Borg, Hotel Borg

- **Best Craft Bar**
  - 2018: Skúli Craft Bar
  - 2017: Frakkastígur 8
  - 2016: Veggúhústíðarinn
  - 2015: Brewdog Frakkastígur 8
  - 2014: Slippbarinn
  - 2013: Skúli Craft Bar

- **Best Wine Bar**
  - 2018: Skúli Craft Bar
  - 2017: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)
  - 2016: Microbar
  - 2015: Skúli Craft Bar
  - 2014: Microbar
  - 2013: Skúli Craft Bar

- **Best Place For Cocktails**
  - 2018: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
  - 2017: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
  - 2016: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
  - 2015: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
  - 2014: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
  - 2013: Vinstükun Tíu sopar
**IDNÓ**

Vonarstræti 3

This beautiful, classic concert hall has been rejuvenated into the new heart of the 101 music scene. From release concerts to collaborative gigs to one-day festivals and all-out parties, the kool kids of Reykjavík are putting their concerts on here; the creative, buzzing atmosphere and varied events have made it into a thrilling creative hub for the city. “People who chase music are going to IDNÓ,” said the panel. “There’s room to move, and it’s labyrinthine inside. It’s having a real moment. It’s been a slow transition, but IDNÓ is just where the music scene is right now.”

**Runners Up**

Gaukurinn

Tryggvagata 22

The smoking area at Gaukurinn is pretty legendary. An enclosed area separate from the main room, covered with a ceiling and heaters—how is this legal, by the way—it has fine benches and tables to sit around working on your lung cancer. Come watch young poets, grungy rockstars, and dolled-up drag queens meet up for a drinking competition to Faith No More.

Hressó

Austurstræti 20

With a massive, well-ventilated tent area featuring picnic tables, ashtrays and countless heaters, you might well forget you’re outside at all when you go for a cigarette at Hressó. Smoke your face off and get lost in your conversation without feeling like you’re in the arctic—and rejoice!

**Runners Up**

MENGI

Óðinsgata 2

Kaffibarinn

Borgstaðastraeti 1

Kaffibarinn’s tiny, unassuming smoking area is one of the best you’ll find for conversation. “It only seats seven asses, and it’s a total bottleneck,” said the panel. “People huddle like penguins in the arctic—that’s how we Icelanders get through the winter. But that’s where some of my most fascinating 3 a.m. situations have happened.”

**Previous Winners:**

2018: Boston (RIP)  
2017: Hressó  
2016: Café Rosenberg (RIP)  
2015-6: Húrra  
2014: Café Rosenberg (RIP)
REYKJAVÍK
WE SALUTE YOU!

THANKS FOR THE WARM WELCOME, WE ARE THRILLED TO BE HONORED AS THE BEST NEWCOMER.
**Best Newcomer Bars**

**Brewdog**
Frakkastígur 8

With a glut of new bars to choose from, the attention to detail of Brewdog pushes them to the top of the pile. Turns out, being part of the Brewdog chain played out positively in this instance, with a professionally put-together bar that maintains a laudable consistency. “They have such strict standards,” said the panel. “They had protocols about who they hired, the training, and making sure the staff are all educated about the beers. They delayed opening to make everything perfect—they really took the time and did the work.”

**Slippbarinn**
Mýrargata 2

This unusual drinking spot in the Grandi neighbourhood certainly has a lot of character. Referred to as a “gypsy bar”—or, preferably, a “witch bar”—it’s a cozy room that feels like a wooden shack hidden deep in the forest. It’s full of crystals, intriguing decor and—most importantly—absolutely kick-ass cocktails. It’s not yet firmly on the map in the minds of many, so you can drink there in peace, far from the packed out bars downtown. It’s a secret between us. Don’t go telling everyone about it, y’hear?

**Luna Flórens**
Grandagarður 25

For your next tipple, head up Austurstræti in the direction of Laugavegur. If Slippbarinn fired the opening salvo, Apótek may have entrenched itself as Reykjavík’s current favourite cocktail spot. Apótek is a spacious, upscale restaurant whose cocktail creations have picked up a bundle of local awards. With regular guest bartenders, diverse cocktails, and head ‘pharmacists’ Hrafnkell and Sean fixing to shake up the menu, this is the place to try something new. We recommend the spicy Stranger Tides (2890 ISK) with an amaro and whisky base.

**Miami Hverfisgata**
Hverfisgata 33

Take a slight detour off the main drag to Hverfisgata and you’ll find yourself transported to a land of pink cocktails and rolled-up blazer sleeves. Decorated like the bastard child of John Waters and Don Johnson, Miami Hverfisgata isn’t the place for subtlety, so grab a velvet ottoman and forget all about it, whether it be the UnFortunate Mistake (2590 ISK) with Mozart-kügel and coldbrew coffee, or the period-appropriate Punch Bowl (2590 ISK) with rum, tequila and Carmen Miranda’s weight in mixed fruit.

**Veður**
Klapparstígur 33

Straight up Klapparstígur from Miami, on your left-hand side, sits Veður. You will be in safe hands with any of the resident bartenders there, but if you catch Tomas on a shift, he may just make you the best cocktail of your trip. No food or frills here, grab a seat by the bar and ask for a recommendation. If in doubt, order their take on the classic Paloma.

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**GUIDE**

**Reykjavík In 4 Cocktails**

A pub crawl for the debonair souse

Words: Ragnar Egilsson
Photos: Art Bicnick, Timothée Labrecq & Alísa Kalyanova

The winter darkness has descended, so I venture into the night in search of something fancy to wet my whistle and lift my spirits. Follow in my footsteps with this shambolic cocktail pub crawl that takes you from the rim of the Grandi area, through the ground zero of Iceland’s nightlife, sampling some of the best Icelandic cocktails along the way.

**Veður**
Klapparstígur 33

The fancy new restaurant on the block also has a beautiful seating area at the front of the house where you can order an expertly made cocktail and watch Laugavegur life go by through the giant windows. There’s a happy hour with a range of beers and a cocktail of the week for a good price. These guys know what they’re doing.

**Beljandi Bar**
Mathóll Höfða, Bíldshöfði

East Iceland’s best craft brewery comes all the way from Breiðdalsvík to Mathóll Höfða. Although they have beers on a few taps around town, now you can try a wider range of their delectable drinks. It’s a little far out of town—but dine at Hipstur while you’re there to make it worth your while.

**Previous Winners**

2017: Pablo Discobar
2018: Veður
2019 (Spring): Brewdog
Plastic’s not fantastic

Life on an island brings with it two inherent problems. Many things have to be imported and thus don’t only come with an inflated carbon footprint but also come wrapped in plastic. There are, though, some options for green grocery shopping.

Frú Lauga on Laugalækur offers a variety of both local and unpackaged products, and in Heiðsúður in Kringlan, you can refill your brought-from-home containers at the bulk-booth. For you caffeine-heads, pick up some coffee in aesthetically-pleasing paper bags at Reykjavík Roasters.

While not everyone can afford splashing the extra cash on green choices, we can all refuse plastic bags when shopping. It won’t hurt your fruit or veg to be bare on the counter. It’s all about baby steps. For instance, if you’re a regular nammiland visitor on Saturdays, keep your candy bag and reuse it. You should also bring containers for take-away goodies. This has already become an established habit in other countries—let’s be part of that change.

New Old is always better

We all know that the prices of goods in retail stores do not represent their true cost. Most products come with externalised costs that are neither paid directly by customers nor by producers, but in the long-run, manifest in pollution and the exploitation of unskilled labourers.

If you want to get off the capitalist treadmill, Reykjavík offers a variety of second-hand stores that will not only resolve your crisis of conscience but also save you some cash. Extraloppan in Smáràlind satisfies every fashionista’s heart and the multiple Red Cross stores even donate their profits to a good cause. For pre-loved furniture, head to Góði Hrólfrinn in Sævar-höfði or browse the Facebook page Gefins, allt Gefins.

Vegan is the new meat

It’s now widely acknowledged that veganism is the most sustainable diet. Vegan dishes require way less water than a beef-burger, and don’t result in cow farts full of potent methane, which accelerates global warming. Gló on Laugavegur, Veg-延安es in Gaukurinn, and Burro on Veltusund are only some of the best vegan restaurants in town.

I am a passenger

Admittedly, making green-choices in transport can be a toughie. That said, the recently introduced scooter rental Hopp is a viable alternative to cars and buses when getting around the city. Environmentally friendly long-distance travel is hindered by the fact that Iceland lacks a railway system, but you can still reduce your emissions by finding someone headed your destination on car-sharing platforms like Samferða. Who knows, if you’re very lucky you might even hitch a ride in a Tesla.
Icelandic style and design has escalated in scope over recent years, with an ensuing explosion of local stores. While high prices mean that you probably aren’t going to be going on a shopping spree in Reykjavík, there are plenty of unique products to be found that are worth your hard-earned cash. From obscure rarities by long-broken-up Icelandic bands to the perfect vintage hand-knitted lópapeysa, here’s your essential guide to shopping in Reykjavík. Remember to make responsible financial decisions. Good luck out there.

Best Goddamn Store

Fischer

Fischersund 3

For most categories, one of the first questions out of the mouths of panel members was “does Fischer qualify?” From packaging-free shampoo, to frequent art openings, to a special perfume section, the store—which has only been around for just over one year—serves up a sensory, highly aesthetic shopping adventure. “They are paving the way for a new type of store in Reykjavík,” the panel determined, praising the stores out-of-the-box thinking, and their careful focus on customer experience: “This is a place I barely want to mention,” one panellist continued. “It’s so good I don’t want it to win and get crowded!”

Runners Up

Haf Store

Geirsgræta 7

The HAF Studio store is a pristine renovation filled with highly desirable homewares, from stylish lamps to light fittings worth renovating for. “HAF is a place to watch right now,” said the panel. “They have an amazing space and everything is well picked.” Watch your wallet: you’ll want it all.

Runners Up

Hönnunarsafn Íslands

Gardabær

This store, located within the Museum Of Design and Applied Art, serves up a quirky array of design objects and books, some related to the exhibits within, some completely random. “They have a workplace in the store when you can watch artists create right in front of you,” one panellist praised.

Runners Up

Aftur

Laugavegur 39

Having dressed everyone from up and coming artist Jófr to grand dame Björk, Hildur Yeoman is a star of the local fashion scene. Her trademarks are busy prints on fine fabrics, cut into flowing shapes; she also dabbles in extravagant evening wear such as her striking mirror-ball effect gown. The store also spotlights interesting stuff Hildur has encountered on her travels, from jewellery to exotic tea. “You can’t see an awards show without someone wearing Yeoman,” said the panel. “Her pieces are uplifting.” Influenced equally by nature and the occult, inside her patterns you’ll find icons and imagery that in endlessly fascinating combinations.

Previous Winners

2017-2018: Aftur
2016: Kraum (RIP)
2015: Spark Design Space (RIP)
2013-4: Kraum (RIP)

Best Fashion Boutique

Fischer

Fischersund 3

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Previous Winners

2017-2018: Aftur
2016: Kraum (RIP)
2015: Spark Design Space (RIP)
2013-4: Kraum (RIP)

Best Design Store

Akkúrat

Aðalstræti 2

This local design mecca has a fascinat- ing and ever-evolving range of prod- ucts on sale from local designers, but also brings cherry-picked Nordic and international pieces to Iceland. “They have Icelandic design you can’t find anywhere else,” said the panel, “but also so much Scandinavian design.” From day one, Akkúrat was known for carefully curated shelves filled with works from promising and emerging designers, many of whom are still in the early stages of their career. So, who knows—take a punt on a striking hood- ie or handmade cup, and you could have a future classic on your hands.

Runners Up

Haf Store

Geirsgræta 7

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Previous Winners

2017-2018: Aftur
2016: Kraum (RIP)
2015: Spark Design Space (RIP)
2013-4: Kraum (RIP)
2017: Húrra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 50 & 78

“They single-handedly changed the scene and changed 101 Reykjavík,” the panel said of Húrra Reykjavík. From their inception only two years ago, the store has cemented itself as the go-to locale for the trendiest foreign streetwear brands. Each of their locations—one for men and one for women—have stayed relevant, always on brand with the latest trends and always selling lines you never thought you’d see in the city. They are also credited for sparking a sneakerhead scene—one that got so crazy that teenager boys actually slept outside during the last Yeezy release.

Runner Up

GeySír
Skólavörðustígur 17b

You can’t talk about shopping in Reykjavík without mentioning GeySír. Chock-full of elegant woollen staple pieces, the store has striking billboards dotted around the town depicting an old world, arcadian vision of Iceland—pick something up and feel that halcyon fantasy in your day to day urban existence.

Newcomer

Kvartýra №49
Laugavegur 49

This minimalist, Bauhaus-esque spot took the Icelandic fashion scene by storm upon opening in 2018, with its eclectic streetwear selection. “They have designers that no one else has, designers you wouldn’t know about before going there,” said the panel. “I love them—I really hope they last.”

Previous Winners
2018: Kvenfatabærslun Kormáks & Skjaldar
2017: Húrra Reykjavík

Best Clothing Store

Húrra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 50 & 78

Best Secondhand Shop

Hértex
Bárastraeti 6

A true-blue second-hand shop, you never know what you’re going to find at this Salvation Army outlet. “Their selection is bizarr, the prices are fair, and the service is amazing,” raved the panel. “The ladies there will help you so much.”

The stark store, covered with clothes of all shapes and colours, is a delight for all senses that’ll have you alternating between, “Who would throw that away?” to “Who would buy that?” Each of the panelists had found something spectacular there, or at least something with a good story. Get ready to start digging.

Runner Up

Spúútnik
Laugavegur 28 & Kringlan

More of a downtown boutique than a second-hand store, Spúútnik’s well-curated selection has defined 101 Reykjavík-style for almost a generation. With most pieces being imported from abroad, expect top quality streetwear brands, for jackets, and everything you see your favourite Instagram influencer wearing...before they’re wearing it.

Runners Up

Stefánssúð/P3
Ingólfsstraeti 2b

Stefánssúð/P3’s selection of second-hand is radically different than those at other Reykjavík vintage locales. Their rack of old high-end designer clothing is unlike what you’ll find anywhere else in the city. “For me, I don’t want old clothes, I want vintage pieces,” one panelist explains. “They’re doing something different and it’s beautiful.”

Previous Winners
2018: Fatamarkaðurinn
2017: Spúútnik
2016: Kolaportið
2015: Hértex

Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater

Handprjónasambandið
Skólavörðustígur 19

Many Icelandic wool sweaters, or lópapeysa, are mass-produced outside of Iceland and shipped back in for sale. So where to find the real-deal? The answer is handprjónasambandið, Iceland’s hand-knitting association. Stacked from floor to ceiling with cosy woolly goodness, the store offers sweaters, gloves and more, in every colour of the rainbow. You’ll usually find the name of the person who made it attached to the sweater. How’s that for authenticity?

Runners Up

Rauði Krossinn
Laugavegur 12 & 116 & Skólavörðustígur 12

The Red Cross is not only the cheapest option for a lópapeysa, but it’s also one of the more unusual. “It’s very old Iceland. You search around and you feel like you’re getting someone’s Grandpa’s sweater,” one panel member says, before smiling. “And you are. It’s lovely”

Runners Up

Farmers Market
Hólmaslóð 2

For a more stylish take on the Icelandic sweater, look no further than Farmers & Friends. Their designs update the traditional lópapeysa into a fitted and distinctly high-street getup. Pair it with fitted trousers and heels and you’ll blend in at any Scandinavian fashion event.

Previous Winners
2018-2018: Handprjónasambandið
2015: Red Cross
2014: Handprjónasambandið

Best Jewellery Shop

Orrifinn
Skólavörðustígur 17b

Orrifinn was decided, unanimously and almost instantaneously, by the panel as the best jewellery shop in Reykjavík. There was no debate. The beloved storeroom presents sensual, raw, detailed and carefully crafted pieces that manage at once to be timeless while still distinctly modern. “Were I to get engaged or married, this is where I would buy the ring, no question,” one panelist exclaimed. “There’s no other place doing what they do, and it’s very trendy and well-made.”

Runners Up

Hildur Hálfstein
Klapparstígur 40

Slightly hippy, full of mystical symbols and teaming with craftsmanship, Hildur Hálfstein has created a niche all her own in the Icelandic jewellery community. “Her works are very Egyptian and spiritual,” one panelist explained. Her shop, tucked away just off Skólavörðustígur, is chock full of long, delicate necklaces, textured horns and gorgeous stones.
**Best Homeware Shop**

**Geysir Heima**  
Skólavörðustígur 16

If you’re into Scandinavian style, you should probably grab an inhaler before entering Geysir’s Skólavörðustígur homeware shop. From its iconic wool blankets to woody-scented candles to minimalist glassware, the store contains a diverse and tasteful selection of Nordic style that’s bound to energise you. For a break from the stimulation, head down to their basement exhibition space. As one panel member put it: “Geysir is a part of Reykjavík, and everything they do, they get it right.”

**Runners Up**

**Epal**  
Hjarðargata 8 & Skólfan B & Laugavegur 70

Epal has been a mainstay of the Reykjavík design scene for more than 30 years. “They are the only one that sells Scandinavian style like this, and I am at the age where I want to collect pieces for my home,” one panel member explains. “For selection and price, Epal is the best place for that.”

**Bóksala Stúdenta**  
Sæmundargata 4

Located within the main building of Hóskóli Islands, this university bookshop runs the gamut from speciality academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. “They have everything you need there and you often end up picking up new books as you’re walking around,” one panel member explained. Another plus? The on-site coffee shop serves up what are potentially the fairest priced coffees in town, as does the Háskóli Islands cafeteria next door.

**Runners Up**

**NORR11**  
Hverfisgata 18A

NORR11 is expensive, but even if you can’t afford it, the shop is worth a trip for the inspiration. The showroom presents works from a multitude of Nordic designers. “It’s like an art gallery at times,” one panelist says. “I go in there and leave with so many ideas for projects.”

**Previous Winners**

2018: Geysir Heima  
2017: Mál og Menning  
2016: Eymundsson Austurstræti  
2015: Björgvin Lind

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**Best Bookstore**

**Bókin**  
Klapparstígur 25-27

Bókin is not a shop one goes to for the newest, best-seller releases. No, it’s a collectors-only locale made to wander around and dig through. “It’s an adventure. There are definitely ghosts in there,” one panel member said. “You walk around and wait for something to call out to you.”

**Books In The Back**  
Fregjúgata 1

Reykjavík’s only dedicated art book shop is located in the back of the Harbinger gallery. Stocked with a well-curated selection of independent and self-published pieces, it fills a much needed gap in the Reykjavík scene. Stop by for everything from the newest Icelandic poetry to local children’s books.

**Previous Winners**

2018: Bókin  
2017: Mál og Menning  
2016: Eymundsson Austurstræti  
2015: Björgvin Lind

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**Best Record Store**

**Reykjavík Record Shop**  
Klapparstígur 35

Reykjavík Record Shop is a haven created by music nerds, for music nerds. Presenting the best of the Icelandic and international scenes, every piece has been meticulously curated to ensure that you’re getting the crème de la crème of music, be it contemporary or classic. The real beauty of the shop, though, comes from its workers—local musicians, DJs, and tastemakers who’ll give you a customised experience. While the panel contained everyone from LP collectors to casual listeners, they all had positive tales about the store. As one panel member put it: “There’s no place like Reykjavík Records.”

**Previous Winners**

2018: Reykjavík Record Shop  
2017: Lucky Records  
2015-2016: Reykjavík Record Shop  
2013-2014: Lucky Records

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**Shopping**

**Stuff is better than money anyway**
**Fresh fish daily**

**Fiskbúðin Vegamót**

Nesvegi 100, 170 Seltjarnarnes
tel. 562-1070

**OPEN:** Mon–Thu 10:00–18:30, Fri 10:00–18:00

Fiskbúðin Vegamót

Fresh fish daily
selection of marinated fish ready for you to cook at home.

**Galley Flea Market Reykjavik**

Visit the GALLERY for products handmade by local artists and inspired by the beauty of Icelandic nature.

→ Volcanic lava jewellery
→ Wool, leather and stone products

We're passionate about our products and about helping you find something you'll treasure.

WE'RE OPEN DAILY
Best prices in the city!

GALLERY FLEA MARKET
101 REYKJAVÍK, GARDASTRÆTI 2

Shop a little differently in Reykjavík
Best of Reykjavík 2019

**Shopping**

Stuff is better than money anyway

**Best Grocery Store**

**Krónan Grandi**
Fiskislóð 15-21

For the third year in a row, Krónan has proven that it is the best grocery store in town. “If you’re looking for fruits, vegetables, or fish, Krónan at Grandi is unequivocally the best,” the panel determined. They also praised its selection of vegan and international products, which, all emphasised, you just can’t find anywhere else. “Other places might have vegan and vegetarian products, but nowhere is it as cheap as at Krónan,” one panel member—a vegetarian—emphasised. For downtown rats without cars, Krónan might seem like a bit of a trek, but the panel urged that the prices and selection are so far beyond that of downtown grocery spots, it is absolutely worth it.

**Runners Up**

**Melabúðin**
Hagamel 39, 107

Foodies need look no further than Vesturbær’s Melabúðin, where the shelves are packed with artisanal deli meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses and all sorts of unexpected, hard-to-find treats (bloody mary fans: get your celery salt here). “When I have an event, I go to Melabúðin,” one panelist said. “Everything there feels special.”

**Frú Lauga**
Laugalækur 6, 105

Just outside of the 101 bubble in nearby Laugardalur, Frú Lauga is the only exclusively local and organic shop in Reykjavík. With a greenhouse on the premises, it’s also the only place you can buy fruits and herbs that might have been picked earlier that day from a plant right beside you.

**Previous Winners**

2017-2018: Krónan
2016: Bónus

**Hidden Gem**

**Nexus**
Alfheimar 74

Size-wise, Nexus is more flagship than hidden gem, but it’s still off the beaten path for downtown rats and those visiting Iceland. A local hub for the culture surrounding comics, sci-fi, role-playing games, table-top games, and everything related, the panel credits Nexus with encouraging geekdom to flourish in Iceland. “Nexus has built an empire and created a culture,” said the panel. “And it all started with a small, nerdy specialist shop.” Nowadays, they have Warhammer, Manga, D&D, movie screenings, and much more. “To be honest,” one panelist said. “I’ve read many Grapevine Best of Reykjavik awards, and always wondered: where is Nexus?”

**Runners Up**

**S/K/E/K/K**
Hofsvallagata 16

S/K/E/K/K’s offbeat selection features a mixture of unusual, eclectic home decor and collectible high end design products. Tucked away in an unassuming spot in downtown Reykjavik, you could walk past and never know it was there. “Everything they have is so well-chosen,” said the panel.

**Geislaskabinett Valda**
Laugavegur 64

Valda is by far the most obscure shop in the city. “They’ve been around forever and have never changed,” one panel member said. From old gameboy games to bootleg metal cassettes to DVD seasons of shows long cancelled, this packed-to-the-brim gem is full of curiosities.

**Previous Winners**

2018: Hyalin Reykjavík

**TARAMAR Purifying Treatment**

Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir, a professor at the University of Iceland, started Taramar to create high quality skincare products with natural Icelandic ingredients. Spent a little too much time indulging last weekend? This purifying treatment is the best way to detox. Made with Icelandic kelp, seaweed and Vitamin E, the oily blend will firm your skin and replenish it back to its bright and radiant self. Trust us: this stuff is incredible.

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Our super—focused apps for Apple and Android guide you through happy hour offers, music & art listings, and the best Reykjavik and Iceland have to offer so you can be merry even if you are on a budget.
Reykjavík's Fashion-Forward Fancies

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen Photos: Art Bicnick

Fancies is a Grapevine segment in which we feature the best of Reykjavík style, telling you where those with amazing aesthetics shop and what they’re currently loving. In this Best Of edition, learn the style secrets of a DJ, a musician, and a real-life pageant queen.

Mellorka Þorkelsdóttir
DJ

Describe your style in 5 words: Bubbly, gothesque, adorably stupid glitterclown.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: Wasteland has some cute picks. It’s like Nammiland made out of pigmented denim and suede. Sometimes I cruise Húrra Reykjavík to window shop luscious shoes, but mainly to feel my inferiority complex kick in at the sight of the perfectly stylish modesque kids working there.

Guðrún Ýr Eyfjörð Jóhannesdóttir
Musician

Describe your style in 5 words: Comfortable. Turtlenecks. Flashy but stripped down.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: I often shop at Yeoman, Spútnik, GK Reykjavík, and Húrra Reykjavík. Those are my go-to shops.

Favourite piece: Quite recently, I bought these shoes that have LED lights in them. I felt like a five-year-old when I found them. I was so happy. They are really bright and can be static or blink—I’m kind of afraid I’m going to give someone a seizure.

Hulda Vigdisardóttir
Queen Beauty Iceland 2020

Describe your style in 5 words: My friend once described me as “a genius at getting ready in a short amount of time.” I could be wearing pyjamas and in 30 minutes be full glam. But I like trying different things with my style, mixing this and that together.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: I love AndreA by AndreA. That’s probably my favourite. I also love COS and Monki. Hildur Yeoman is beautiful, too.

Funny fashion story: I actually got my pageant gown just the day before the event and tried it on for the first time at the pageant. I’m very tall so there had to be adjustments—my Mom actually did them. She was awake the whole night sewing it for me! The funny thing is that Sunneva, who won the Queen Beauty Iceland title last year, also tried on her dress for the first time on the same day of the show. There must be something with this title. I was so glad it fit!

FUR SHOP & WORKSHOP

Located on Snorrabraut 56, just a few minutes walk from Laugavegur shopping street.
Morning: I wake up around 8:00, having slept exactly eight hours. I’m feeling rested as fuck. I head to the gym—I go to World Class—and only do bicep curls and maybe a little shoulders to get my daily dose of swoleness. Right after the gym, I go to Sundlaug Seltjarnarness for a little splash in the hot tub and then the cold pot. Because this is my perfect day, a lot of random people compliment me on how good I look as I walk to the pool.

Ásró Helga Guðmundsdóttir
musician

Mid-morning: I’d do some exercises and afterwards, take a hot shower and sing like there is no tomorrow. Then I’d drive downtown, ideally in some eco-friendly car, to a set where I am about to act for a cool Icelandic movie. I work until the afternoon but before I head back home I go shopping. Unfortunately, there are barely any plastic packaging-free options when it comes to food in Iceland, but I’d try to get as much as possible from stores like Heilsuhúsð in Kringlan.

Lunch: My favourite food is sushi, so I’d head to Osushi for lunch. They’d have a special train just for me. I’d just sit in the middle with a virgin mojito, and they’d know my specials, so I don’t get the boring bites. It’s so sunny and warm out that I’d have to wear my shades inside.

Sigrún Ásta
stylist

Late at night: After dinner, we head to a concert—FM Belfast are performing. We dance wildly into the night. What a show! We continue on to Kaffibarinn, where DJ Margeir is playing his awesome tunes. We wrap the night up with a pizza and head home.

TRUST THE LOCALS
Perfect Day

Photos: Art Biencik & Birta Rán Björgvinsdóttir & Monika Konarzewski & Ásró Helga Guðmundsdóttir

No one who knows Reykjavik better than the locals—no matter what that one suburban Mom on TripAdvisor might tell you. To help you out, we asked some of our favourite locals how they’d spend a perfect day in the city.

Evening: I would catch a movie marathon at Bió Paradís. It’s ‘The Matrix Trilogy,’ of course. I would get a big bucket of popcorn and a SodaDream, because in a perfect world they offer SodaDream in Bió Paradís. Then, after the movies, despite only consuming things all day, I am still hungry, so it’s time for dinner. So I go to Hverfisgata 12, which never closed, and I get the potato and truffle pizza and it’s the best version of itself that it has ever been.

Ragga Hól
rapper

Cala Noir
drag queen

Afternoon: Let me put on a dress and favourite pair of high heels for my Reykjavik Vintage Walk. We start at Hlemmur. While we are here, let’s grab a chai latte at Te & Kaffi. First, we head to Fatamarkaðurinn—they have amazing vintage stuff. The Icelandic Red Cross is nearby and we’ll check it out as well. Afterwards, we’ll take a walk along Laugavegur to Spútnik.
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**Save That Cash, Get Some Culture**

**How to enjoy art for free in Reykjavík**

Words & photos: Lea Müller

Culturally immersing yourself in Iceland can be an expensive undertaking. But it doesn’t have to be. You can discover artistic masterpieces and cultural curios free of charge while wandering the streets of Reykjavík. So if you’re an art-enthusiast on a budget, let us take you on a two-hour stroll through town.

Start at the Einar Jónsson Museum, which is located in the heart of Reykjavík, right next to Hallgrímskirkja and presents a great place to learn about Icelandic art history. While there’s an entrance fee for the museum, the serene sculpture garden around back is free to visit. It includes 26 statues placed there by Einar Jónsson and his wife, who used to live on the top floor of the museum. Pro-tip: Don’t miss out on the mysterious “King of Atlantic” sculpture, as well as the figurative representation of spring.

**Al fresco art**

After leaving the sculpture garden head over to Skólavörðustígur to check out some of the gallery shops lining the street. If you’re interested in photography swing by at Fotógrafí, a tiny space crammed with a camera collection and cool black and white prints on the walls. You can buy some artwork for yourself but if you want to make it a no-spending day, just skim.

**Tiny spaces of inspiration**

As you venture on, you will soon notice that Reykjavík also offers a great deal of contemporary street art, so take a jaunt to the corner of Laugavegur and Klapparstígur to discover a building entirely covered in a mind-boggling mural. The work was commissioned for Iceland Airwaves 2015 and is called ‘Ode to Mother,’ inspired by the Ylja song ‘Óður til Móður’ (other murals from that Airwaves series can be seen by along Laugavegur, by Hlemmur, on the backside of Gamla Bío, and in the old harbour). Keep your eyes open for smaller murals and graffiti, which change the face of the city as you continue your stroll.

**Mural, Mural on the wall**

Next, head downhill to the shores of Tjörnin to marvel at statues by various artists. One of the most popular is Halla Gunnarsdóttir’s likeness of Tómas Guðmundsson perched on a city bench, an Icelandic poet famous for praising the city’s beauty. So sit down on the bench next to him and enjoy the view over the pond while reflecting on his poem ‘Hotel Earth’ from 1933: “It’s a curious journey this human life we lead, we are the guests and our hotel is the earth. While some check out, others arrive instead.”

**The Nordic House**

On your final stop, enter the university district where you can kill two birds with one stone by visiting the Nordic House. Firstly, the building is a masterpiece designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. Inside though, you can enjoy more art for free. The venue is notorious for providing a platform for Nordic artists, hosting several exhibitions each year ranging from design awards to Greenlandic photographers.

So there you go! Are you feeling more cultured? Now, take that money you just saved on your artistic afternoon, and buy yourself an ice cream. You deserve it.

“It’s a curious journey this human life we lead, we are the guests and our hotel is the earth. While some check out, others arrive instead.”

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**WASTELAND**

**SECOND HAND CLOTHING**

Ingólfsstræti 5
101 Reykjavík
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Faxi waterfall
Geysir geothermal area
Gullfoss waterfall
Þingvellir National Park

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Activities

Get off the internet already!

So, you’ve shopped in the shops, drank the drinks, and eaten all the foods. And whilst those things are all super fun, culture and the outdoors are the missing pieces of the puzzle for a perfect trip. Whether it’s a gleaming museum or a grimy artist-run gallery, a springtime hike or a trip to try and glimpse the aurora, here’s where to do it.

Best Pool

Vesturbæjarlaug
Hofsvallagata 107

West-side bathing haven Vesturbæjarlaug has it all. There’s a diverse variety of hot tubs from the social to the secluded, a steam bath, a sauna, optional outdoor changing rooms for summer, a sunlamp with chairs for wintertime sunbathing, friendly staff, and—last but not least—it has an unbeatable retro charm. You’ll find tourists mingling with Icelandic VIPs as they relax and talk about their day in the best goddamn pool in Reykjavík. To top it off, Kaffi Vest is just across the street, so grab a coffee and snack in a cosy atmosphere afterwards.

Runners Up

Sundhöllin
Barðnastigur 45a
The classic-yet-contemporary Sundhöllin is Reykjavík’s oldest swimming pool. It was thoroughly renovated in 2017, and while it kept its beautiful old-school men’s changing rooms, it emerged with refreshed female changing facilities, a new outdoor pool, a new reception area, and a big communal hot pot for chilling and chatting.

Laugardalslaug
Sundlaugavegur 105
Although Laugardalslaug is the largest pool in Reykjavík, it’s often crowded by tourists. “It has become the tourist pool,” says the panel. “They all get sent there while the locals enjoy the other pools of Reykjavík.” It does, however, have a huge range of hot pots and facilities, also used by the post-workout crowd from the World Class gym.

BERG Contemporary
Klápparstígur 16
Located in a building that was formerly a glass factory, Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir’s BERG Contemporary constantly contains a kick-ass roster of Icelandic and international artists, and an ever-growing reputation to match. It’s right in the heart of downtown, too, so it’s easy to drop by for a look as you meander through the streets.

Previous winners
2018: Sundhöllin
2017: Lágafellslaug
2016: Neslaug
2014-15: Vesturbæjarlaug

Best Gallery

i8
Tryggvagata 16

The internationally lauded i8 gallery was instrumental in putting Icelandic art on the map, and remains a mainstay in keeping it there. Although it’s a commercial gallery, the works on show are rarely conservative—expect to see conceptual cutting-edge museum-sized displays, rather than conservative and conventionally appealing wall-based work. The gallery is home to many of Iceland’s finest contemporary artists and also brings international names to Reykjavík. Best of all, there’s a sharp wit and a sense of fun running through the gallery’s roster, in sharp contrast to the often academic or po-faced offerings of the contemporary art scene.

Runners Up

Kling & Bang
Grandagarður 20
After finding its new home in the well-received Marshall House art museum complex, the Kling & Bang collective have done their very best to continually make people smile with wonder at their creative, ambitious, vibrant and varied solo exhibitions and groups shows. Keep it up!

Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgata 3

Despite the stunning beauty of its sculpture garden, The Einar Jónsson Museum still feels like a secret gem in the very heart of Reykjavík. There are epic sculptures on subjects such as life, death, birth, society and religion, and Einar’s apartment is lovingly preserved inside. It’s guaranteed to bring a little magic into your life.

Previous winners
2015-18: i8
2014: Kling og Bang
2011-13: National Gallery

Best Art Museum

Reykjavík Art Museum
Various Locations

Boosting with three different locations scattered through Reykjavík, you will be able to discover anything you could be looking for there, whether you fancy Icelandic sculpture at Ásmundarsafn, Kjarval paintings at Kjarvalsstaðir or various contemporary exhibitions at Hafnarhúsið. “With one ticket, you get it all,” says the panel. We’d like to give a particular shoutout to Kjarvalsstaðir, which has been on a laudable hot streak of mounting exciting contemporary exhibitions alongside the Kjarval collection; Ásmundarsafn also sets contemporary work in conversation with Ásmundur Sveinsson’s classic oeuvre.

Runners Up

The Marshall House
Grandagarður 20
This fairly recent addition to Reykjavík’s art museum scene has captured locals’ hearts. Hosting three galleries—NÝLÓ, Kling og Bang, and an Ólafur Elíasson workshop—it can be found in Reykjavik’s constantly developing and hip Grandi district. The mixture of its location, the variety of its offerings and the beautiful interior design make it worth every visit.

Previous winners
2018: The Marshall House
2016-7: Hafnarhúsið
2012-15: Reykjavík Art Museum
### Best Artist-Run Space

**Gallery Port**

Laugavegur 23

This humble gallery and workshop is hidden in plain sight on Reykjavík’s largest shopping street, Laugavegur. Along with Harbinger, Gallery Port has done a lot for the emerging art scene, with a fast-moving and diverse exhibition program. “It has this ‘happening vibe,’” says one of the panellists. “It is very international and based on more than money-making.” This is your perfect anti-art-snob gallery and promises to surprise you again and again with every visit.

### Best Museum

**Wonders Of Iceland**

Perlan, Öskjuhlíð

Have you ever wanted to walk safely through a 100m long ice cave? With the new “Wonders Of Iceland” exhibition in Perlan, an immense glass dome that sits on top of six hot water tanks, it is finally possible. This highly interactive exhibition will let you experience (and feel) the power of volcanoes and earthquakes, while also offering a realistically built bird cliff and the aforementioned ice cave. “It is kid-friendly and highly educational,” says the panel. “Plus it is situated in a really interesting building.” It truly is a great adventure for people of all ages.

### Best Cinema

**Bió Paradís**

Hverfisgata 52

Bió Paradís is THE local cinema. They shows alternative films in many different languages whilst also screening blockbusters. They have many special screenings (party screenings, cult classics, or worst film series.) There’s always the smell of popcorn when you enter (their popcorn machine, Kamilla, just turned twenty), and they have always had great music playing, which makes it a great place to just hang out in general. The great staff serve beer, pizza and sweets, the posters are made by local artists... the list is endless.

### Best Place To Take The Kids

**Tjörnin**

City Centre

What could be cooler than playing football in one of the many parks and fields around the Tjörnin city pond on a beautiful, bright summery day in June? Not much. Situated right next to the city hall, it offers everything that kids love. “You can feed the ducks and swans, and in winter you can walk right across to the other side when it’s frozen, or play ice hockey,” said the panel. There are also benches for hardworking parents to get their well-deserved rest while the kids are playing, or the nearby ÍDÓ for a coffee and cake break.

### Runners Up

**Wind and Weather Window Gallery**

Hverfisgata 37

Being both unique and impressively casual, this gallery is accessible for everyone. “I’ve walked by a million times before I noticed it was a gallery,” said one of the panellists. It is truly a hidden gem of the city, while being mockingly obvious. It’s like window shopping but with art.

**Whales Of Iceland**

Fiskislöð 23-25

This is another museum which uses modern technology in the right way—life-sized whales that you can touch, audio guides, touchscreens with all the information and even virtual reality glasses are available. “It’s really different from everything else,” said one of the panellists. It’s an educational playground for kids and adults alike.

**Smárabíó**

Hagasmári 1, Kópavogur

Situated in one of Reykjavík’s shopping malls (the one that looks like a phallic structure), Smárabíó deserves appreciation because of their high-end equipment. “Smáralind has the best projectors and amps,” said the panel. “It is the place to go to see films in the best blockbuster quality.”

**Lasertag Kópavogi**

Salavegur 2, Kópavogur

Kids acting up? Teen tantrums? Vent your frustration as a parent by blasting them with a harmless laser beam. Located in one of Reykjavík’s surrounding suburbs, Lasertag Kópavogi can be reached via a short drive or a 30-minute bus ride, and the panel unanimously agreed: it’s worth it.

**The National Museum Of Iceland**

Suðurgata 41

This museum makes history fun and adventurous, covering everything from early culture to clothing, metalsmithing, religion and more. It’s expansive, interactive and well curated. “It also has a great bookshop,” says one of the panelists, adding one more reason to go and visit this gem.

**Egilsstóri**

Fossasælanir 1

Boasting with the biggest screens of Reykjavík, Egilsstóri is worth the trip, even though it is situated in the outskirts of town. It is the best place to get junk food before seeing a trashy blockbuster with high production values, and you can go bowling afterwards in the same building.

**Salavegur 2, Kópavogur**

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**Völlum**

Hagarðri 1, Kópavogur

“Nauthólsvík has it all,” said one panellist. “The cold ocean, a hot tub, sand, trees and lots of space.” Need we say more? Reykjavík’s one and only beach is a great place to take the kids, and whoever else wants to join in the fun—and the nearby café is perfect to relax with some lunch or a drink.
Activities

Seriously, try the pools, it’s not like back home.

Best Day Tour
Snowmobil/ATV
Sólheimajökull

From the reception building near Sólheimajökull you can either go snowmobiling on the top of Myrdalsjökull, or motoring over the black sands of Sólheimajökull on an ATV. Both are just stunning—highlights include a view of the distant Westman Islands if you go snowmobiling, or motoring through existing sand canyons to the famous DC-3 plane wreck, if you opt for the ATV.

Best Hike
Mount Esja

Across the bay
Situated only 10 km north of Reykjavik, it offers hikes of various lengths for both beginners and advanced hikers and absolutely gorgeous views on the landscape below. “You also get a stunning glimpse of the city,” says the panel. When you go there in winter, make sure to bring hiking poles and crampons, if the conditions demand it, and be ready for ice and deep snow. You can get to the trailhead by public transport, making it the only proper hike you can do in Reykjavik without a car.

Previous winners

Runners Up

Loft Hostel
Bankastræti

There are so many great things to be said about Loft Hostel. It has a balcony from which you can watch people/tourists on Laugavegur. It has regular events such as concerts and yoga classes, and water colouring nights where all kinds of people get together (to watch other people). Last but not least, it is also a hostel (surprise) and brings together locals and people from all over the world. Really, could there be any better spot to watch people? The panel does not think so at least.

Best People-Watching Spot

Runners Up

Fossvogur and Óskjuhlíð
City Centre Area

This walk leads you along the creek that divides Reykjavik and Kópavogur. “It’s right by the ocean,” says the panel. “Nobody ever goes there, it’s so peaceful!” Additional perks include a mystical graveyard and, if you walk a little further, Reykjavik’s only “city forest” up on the Perlan-topped hill of Óskjuhlíð.

Best Place To See The Aurora

Runners Up

Agissila to Grótta
Vesturbær to Seltjarnarnes

Agissila is literally the west coast of Reykjavik. Running along the sea, this walk is sheltered from traffic and light pollution and thus perfect for a peaceful and romantic walk of any duration. In winter, it becomes even more magical with some of the best chances to see northern lights in Reykjavik. If you walk long enough, you’ll end up at Grótta at the tip of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula with its iconic lighthouse.

Platforms
Pre-booking is required. Book online at bluelagoon.com
Do your friends worry about your obsession with shawarma? Have some of your friends stopped eating with you, because you always suggest eating at Mandi? If you answered ‘yes’ to either of these questions, don’t worry, it’s perfectly normal for people living in Iceland. And there’s good news! A new Syrian place called Zorbian has opened in the JL Húsið (where XO used to be). They serve wraps, hummus, and shawarma, but hamburgers and pizza are also on the menu. Bring the kids! SPO

Laundromat Café
Austurstræti 9
Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You’re in luck. The Laundromat Café on Austurstræti is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Best of all, the staff is friendly and know the menu so well, they could recite it to you with their eyes closed (please don’t ask them to do this). SPO

NEW IN TOWN

Eat, Drink, Virtual Fly
New activities, dining and drinking in 101 Reykjavik
Words: Hannah Jane Cohen, Samuel O’Donell
Main photo: Art Bicnick

FRAKTAL
Hringbraut 119
In mathematics, a fractal is a non-regular geometric shape that presents a seemingly infinite series of patterns at every level of magnification. You often find them in nature, like clouds, snowflakes, blood vessels, and cauliflower. In Reykjavik, a FRAKTAL is a democratic, worker-run space that has taken up residence in the former Listastofan gallery. The cooperative offers work desks for artists to rent, event spaces, and there are plans for a vegan café, kitchen, and print shop. No math classes yet, though. HJC

Gummi Ben
Tryggvagata 22
From the velvet curtains that hang at the entrance to the cool-coloured lights illuminating the bar to the dozens of beers on tap, the new Gummi Ben sports bar was custom created for watching the big game. In addition to a cozy atmosphere they have a total of 20 TVs and projectors, so you can watch whatever match you want. Just ask the bartender. SPO

FlyOver Iceland
Fiskislóð 43
Iceland is a relatively small place, but seeing all its wonders during your week-long vacation might prove a tad difficult. Enter FlyOver Iceland. On this virtual ride, soar over glaciers, mountains, lava fields and more, all from the comfort of an amusement ride seat. Now, no matter the weather, you can tell all your friends you saw the Northern Lights. General tickets are 4,000 ISK for adults and 2,000 ISK for children 12 and under. HJC
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LAUGAVEGUR 120, 105 REYKJAVÍK

FRIDAYS | 19.00-22.00
LIVE JAZZ @ LÓA BAR - BISTRO
LAUGAVEGUR 95-99, 101 REYKJAVÍK

SATURDAYS | 20.00-23.00
DJ @ LÓA BAR - BISTRO
LAUGAVEGUR 95-99, 101 REYKJAVÍK

SATURDAYS | 18.30-20.30
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