



## THE WAR ON COVID-19★

*★It's not a war.*



THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE  
Published by Fröken ehf.  
Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík  
[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)  
Member of the Icelandic Travel  
Industry Association [www.saf.is](http://www.saf.is)

Cover illustration by Art Director  
based on isomorphic illustrations by  
Macrovector / Adobe Stock

**PUBLISHER**  
Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson  
[hilmar@grapevine.is](mailto:hilmar@grapevine.is)  
+354 540 3601  
[publisher@grapevine.is](mailto:publisher@grapevine.is)

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Valur Grettisson  
[valur@grapevine.is](mailto:valur@grapevine.is)

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Sveinbjörn Pálsson  
[sveinbjorn@grapevine.is](mailto:sveinbjorn@grapevine.is)

**NEWS/WEB EDITOR**  
Andie Sophia Fontaine  
[andie@grapevine.is](mailto:andie@grapevine.is)

**CULTURE/LISTINGS EDITOR**  
Hannah Jane Cohen  
[hannah@grapevine.is](mailto:hannah@grapevine.is)

**PHOTO EDITOR**  
Art Bionick  
[art@grapevine.is](mailto:art@grapevine.is)

**COPY EDITOR**  
Catharine Fulton

**INTERNS**  
Sam O'Donnell  
[samuel@grapevine.is](mailto:samuel@grapevine.is)  
Poppy Askham  
[poppy@grapevine.is](mailto:poppy@grapevine.is)

**SALES DIRECTORS**  
Aðalsteinn Jörundsson  
[adalsteinn@grapevine.is](mailto:adalsteinn@grapevine.is)  
Helgi Þór Harðarson  
[helgi@grapevine.is](mailto:helgi@grapevine.is)

**CONTACT US:**  
—> Editorial  
+354 540 3600  
[editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)  
—> Advertising  
354 540 3605  
[ads@grapevine.is](mailto:ads@grapevine.is)  
—> Distribution  
& Subscriptions  
+354 540 3604  
[distribution@grapevine.is](mailto:distribution@grapevine.is)  
—> Press releases  
[listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)  
—> General Inquiries  
[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

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

Nothing in this magazine may be  
reproduced in whole or in part without  
the written permission of the publishers.  
You may not like it, but at least it's not  
sponsored (no articles in the Reykjavík  
Grapevine are pay-for articles.  
The opinions expressed are the writers'  
own, not the advertisers').

# The Coronavirus Is Not War

By Editor-In-Chief **Valur Grettisson**

For an Icelander, with almost no historic ties to war, to analogize the fight against COVID-19 to a war seems not only absurd, but flat out wrong.

It's an analogy most often used by male leaders, and perhaps first employed to better help themselves understand the gravity of the situation. It's a very alpha way of understanding the world.

But when you look at the current state of affairs, it becomes pretty clear that war and pandemic have almost nothing in common. COVID-19 is not an enemy that you can win by force, but with patience and knowledge.

\*\*\*

In the pandemic, you have nurses and doctors on the frontline, and it's nothing less than insulting to call people that who have sworn an oath to save human lives, but certainly didn't sign up for the long and difficult slog they're currently on.

Secondly, if you are going to simplify the Coronavirus as an enemy, you are essentially saying that nature is our enemy. With the same logic, you could say that we are at war with a flood or an erupt-

ing volcano. Even if we put current events in the context of extreme weather, then even then it is not simply an act of nature. We are in some ways battling our own behavioural patterns and our invasive behaviour when it comes to nature.

\*\*\*

Another important difference is in how we fight the virus versus how we'd fight a flesh and blood enemy. Here, our minds are our strongest weapon. You have to take responsibility for yourself, for the good of society. Adhere to social distancing regulations, wash your hands and respect healthcare guidelines. Nothing could be further away from the chaos of the war.

For those countries that have done well in the fight against the virus, they all have one in common—their governments have trusted science and knowledge from the start. On the other hand, more militaristic countries, like the UK and the United States have been harder hit by the chaos of it all. We see the same situation unfolding in Russia, the rising epicentre of the pandemic, and in Brazil. It doesn't take a political scientist to ascertain what these

countries have in common.

We will beat this thing with science, knowledge, flexibility and keeping the public well informed so they can protect themselves and others. Nothing is further from the reality of the wars of the last centuries, which have relied upon "shock and awe" and covert tactics. In war, the human toll is often hushed, while in fighting the coronavirus death rates are broadcast daily to keep the public informed and involved.

\*\*\*

It would seem that Iceland has gotten the better of the virus. This has been achieved by trusting science and listening to specialists. Our reward is that we are now, after almost three months, slowly reclaiming our daily routines. The borders are even opening again soon—on June 15th, to be precise.

Perhaps because of Iceland's lack of an army, not once did we ever consider this as a war. It's been more like a long-lasting storm; nature taking charge again. Which is something that Icelanders know very well, living on a volcanic island that can be life-threatening if underestimated. 🇮🇸



**Hannah Jane Cohen** is based out of Iceland by way of New York. She's known for her love of Willa Ford, David

Foster Wallace, and other such "intellectuals." Her visionary work is known for expanding the definitions of emotion, introspection, and above all else, taste. Hannah is also the current Drag King of

Iceland, Hans.



**Samuel O'Donnell** Sam is an English major from The United States. He has

his Bachelor's Degree, and keeps telling himself that this is the year he will begin pursuing his Master's. In his spare time, he enjoys playing video games, writing short horror stories, listening to all

kinds of metal, and reading.



**Andie Sophia Fontaine** has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been reporting since

2003. They were the first foreign-born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience they recommend for anyone who wants to experience a workplace where colleagues work

tirelessly to undermine each other.



**Poppy Askham** is a languages student, fledgling writer, and lover of flared

jeans who has fled to the wonderful nation of Iceland in a desperate bid to escape Boris' Brexit Britain whilst she still can. Looking for a new adventure, she's swapped her hometown

Bath with its crowds of tourists and famous hot springs for ... Reykjavik.





*“I’m a bit  
too shy  
to be  
on stage  
so I tell  
jokes  
through my  
knitting.”*









# Putting Smiles Back On Faces

## Ýrúrarí reimagines medical masks

Words *Poppy Askham* Photos *Art Bicnick*

You'd likely be a little taken aback if your doctor turned up with green lips, vampire fangs and dental braces or a giant tongue covered in a dozen other tinier tongues—although maybe not in these strange times. Few have managed to capture the surreal nature of life during the coronavirus pandemic as perfectly as Ýr Jóhannsdóttir. The Icelandic textiles designer and art student, also known as Ýrúrarí, is boldly re-imagining the humble surgical mask in her eye-catching new collection.

Sitting in a chair with huge, menacing knitted hands reaching over its back, against a backdrop of tongue-emblazoned sweaters whilst toying with a length of red yarn, Ýr is the picture of calm in a surreal setting. This epitomises her whole approach to the pandemic.

Ýr's project has been a runaway success and her masks have proved a potent tool for spreading positivity and raising awareness of public health across the world, yet all the while, Ýr remains resolutely humble and objective.

"It's super unexpected," Ýr explains when asked about her success. She has now amassed almost 60,000 followers on Instagram and her playful designs have won fans around the world. She has been featured in style magazines and national newspapers from Mexico and Bolivia to France and the UK. "Everyone's everyday lives have changed dramatically at the same time. It's something we're all experiencing at a certain level, so I think we can all relate to [the project] in some way," she muses.

### Keeping sane

Ýr never had a global vision for her project, it simply started as a way for her to deal with the personal

impact of COVID-19. The mask project was born out of disappointment following the postponement of Reykjavik's Design March Festival. Like many of the city's designers, Ýr had poured all her energy into preparing for the annual event, in which she was hoping to exhibit a collection of sweaters in collaboration with the Red Cross. "I'd been planning for months," she explains. "We'd just finished the photo shoot when everything closed down. I'd had it all planned out in my mind and all of a sudden it wasn't happening. I was supposed to be making more sweaters for the festival when it's held in June, but I wasn't even sure that it would happen so I started doing something completely different." "It's my way of coping," Ýr tells the Grapevine. She is painfully aware that many across the world are being affected far more severely by the virus, but knitting is helping her "keep sane" in these strange times whilst she studies for her Masters degree. "I feel a bit better when I'm knitting whilst watching something dumb," she admits.

Each mask takes hours of hard work to create. The masks' bases are created on her enormous knitting machine in her studio, but Ýr explains that "the majority of the elements are knitted by hand." She prefers the freedom of knitting manually; "there's more sculpturing you can do with your hands". Anxious observers have been quick to comment on social media that the masks are not suitable protective equipment – they don't all cover the nose and aren't made of appropriate medical materials. But that was never Ýr's aim, the masks are decorative rather than practical. All Ýr wanted was to "bring some joy" whilst she tried to cope with the personal impact of the pandemic.

Her work is quietly humorous, just like the artist herself. "I'm a bit too shy to be on stage so I tell jokes through my knitting," she says. "I don't think I could ever say anything super wise, but I might knit something that makes people smile".

### Global appeal

Ýr's work has done far more than put a smile on her fans' faces, it's also being used to promote crucial public health advice. Encouraging people to wear face masks has been a challenge for many governments in western countries, but Ýr's light-hearted designs are helping to encourage more positive attitudes towards personal protective equipment. After seeing one of her wacky knitted creations, wearing a plain blue surgical mask suddenly doesn't seem so strange. "There's this group in London that's trying to influence people to use masks and they've been using images of my work to persuade people that masks can be cool," Ýr enthusiastically tells us. Several of her creations have been showcased by Artists4Masks, a British initiative to raise funds for personal protective equipment for medical staff and normalise the use of face masks. "Iceland's doing pretty well," she remarks, so she's glad her work is helping people in worse-affected countries like the UK, where masks are even more vital. Ýr is understandably thrilled with the accidental positive impact her project is having. "It's great that they're doing some good". Although she has no plans to sell her creations, she's considering holding a virtual exhibition from her studio. In the meantime, Ýr intends to continue spreading smiles across the world with her knitting. 🧶





**“I’ve always  
an overshad**



been  
rrier."







Your browser does not currently recognize any of the video formats available.

[Click here to visit our frequently asked questions about HTML5 video.](#)



## Growing Pains

### Special-K Discusses Her New EP, LUnatic thirST

Words **Poppy Askham** Photos **Kristín Helga Rikharðsdóttir**

Special-K soars to new realms of musical, lyrical and emotional maturity in her latest avant-garde pop offering, 'LUnatic thirST'. As she puts it, if her debut album "I Thought I'd Be More Famous Than This By Now was a teenager", this EP is an adult".

Katrín Helga Andrésdóttir made her debut as a solo artist in 2018 under the name Special-K with a playful lo-fi exploration of millennial culture accompanied by an ambitious video project. But her new EP, 'LUnatic thirST' sees her adopt a more polished, musically adventurous style. In her most intimate recording yet, Katrín overcomes her self-confessed dependency on visual storytelling to let her incisive lyrics speak for themselves.

In the run-up to the EP's release, Katrín spoke with the Grapevine about emotional vulnerability, creative slumps and her ever-evolving musical style.

#### Finding strength in Weakness

'LUnatic thirST's' listeners embark on a "very intimate journey with someone who's trying to navigate who they are when it comes to relationships and is struggling because they want intimacy, but also don't want to give up any independence," Katrín tells us. "There's painful growth in it."

Katrín has written about love before, principally as a member of Kriki, but she explains that her old songs "were more juvenile and focused on the external, whereas this record focuses more on the internal. It's a very introspective EP."

"I've always been an oversharer. I enjoy people's art that is very personal and vulnerable", Katrín confides. She uses the song-writing process therapeutically "when thoughts get stuck in a loop in [her] head. I try to structure them and figure out how I can best convert them into a form that others can relate to," she explains. "I don't know if it actually helps, but at least it gives me something else to focus on."

Inspired by Brené Brown, Katrín seeks to show that although vulnerability is often thought of as a weakness, it actually requires enormous emotional strength. She was particularly struck by Brené's concept of the "vulnerability hangover" which Katrín describes as "the feeling you get the day after you share something very personal;" that moment when you begin to wonder "did I give too much away?"

Katrín reveals that "it's something I'm very familiar with, in fact I experience it after almost every concert."

#### Out of the garage, into the studio

'LUnatic thirST' is the first studio

recording that Katrín will release with Street Pulse, a new Berlin-based label. Transitioning from home-produced lo-fi to studio finesse proved a difficult decision. "Moving towards a more polished studio sound and mixing it professionally was a challenge for me," she explains. "I like the home-made feel of the music that I made before. I really like to have the imperfections, the human things, the airplane sounds."

However, enlisting professional help has proved a huge advantage for Katrín in other ways. Not only has it let her swap her "out-of-tune keyboard" for a real piano, it has also helped her overcome creative slumps. Close friend and audio engineer, Salka Valsdóttir (best known as a member of CYBER) has become a crucial voice of reassurance in the recording studio when Katrín gets "stuck in a self-critical place."

Collaboration has been the solution when Katrín hits a creative roadblock. For instance, when she experienced "a little bit of an identity crisis" whilst experimenting with ironically heavy auto-tuning and "basic pop chord progressions" in Dinner 4 1. "It was just so hard not to make it sound like a cliché or too cute because I have always wanted to avoid the cute label. I wanted there to be some element of experimentation", she explains. "It's different when I've





**Your browser does not currently recognize any of the video formats available.**

**[Click here to visit our frequently asked questions about HTML5 video.](#)**



got another human so that when I'm thinking 'this is terrible I have to throw it away', there's someone to say 'no, let's just keep going.' That's what I really needed."

### **A foot in both camps**

Katrín is well known for elaborately crafted videos that draw on her expertise as an art school graduate. Her background in art has a strong influence on her musical style – many of her favourite musicians, including Egill Sæbjörnsson, double as artists.

"There's something about the music plus visual art way of thinking that really interests me," she explains. "So I'm very happy to have one foot in both camps."

But when asked what she considers herself to be first and foremost, she responds without hesitation: "a musician."

Fans may be shocked to learn that Katrín's latest EP will not be a visual record and that just two of its four tracks currently have videos. This is partly due to a lack of time and resources. Katrín wanted to focus on quality rather than quantity, something Margrét Bjarnadóttir's mesmerising Post-coital video attests to. But crucially Katrín has also decided to let her songs speak for themselves to a greater extent.

"I very much enjoy visuality and I really like crafting the image and creating characters and everything. But I also feel like it's a bit of a crutch. I always play with videos projected behind me and I feel like I don't really have the courage to play without them or I would feel very naked," she confesses.

Before COVID-19 struck, Katrín intended to challenge this insecurity by opening for JFDR with a performance on a bare stage, but these plans are now on hold.

This is not to say that in the future she won't create visual albums or shoot the missing videos from this EP. She simply wants to challenge herself to overcome this obstacle and achieve greater versatility as a performer. "I'd like to be able to do both - to let the music stand on its own and also have a whole universe around it," she clarifies.

### **Musical maturity**

'LUnatic thirST' showcases Katrín's pedigree as a classically-trained musician to a far greater extent than any of her previous Special-K recordings. "In the first album I wanted things to be very, very simple, but now I want to tap into this bank of knowledge that I've built up in my head by learning so many classical pieces," she tells us.

Quest To Impress, Katrín's favourite song to record, is a clear example of the EP's greater musical complexity. "The piano melody was a fun little challenge to try to make something rhythmic and kind of 'baroquey.'"

The harpsichord-heavy number was inspired by an evening of binge-watching Joanna Newsom videos. The American star not only inspired the track's medieval theme, she also motivated Katrín to push herself musically. "I was watching her play live and even though I've been listening to her for a decade, it was the first time I felt this real fan energy. She plays such compli-

cated pieces, both musically and rhythmically, with amazing lyrics. I was just so impressed by the skill, that I wanted to challenge myself to go a little more in that direction."

Katrín doesn't intend to stop here, she has lofty ambitions for her next project. "I want to take it way further, I want to do something way more complex next time. My next project is going to be even more instrumental and more focused around piano."

Release season is in full swing for Katrín. Reykjavíkurdætur, of which she is a founding member, is coming out with a new album and Katrín is also debuting a new band (yes, another one, we don't know how she fits it all in either). She recently paired up with Norwegian singer Farao to form an 80s-soviet-aerobics-inspired disco duo named Ultraflex.

When we asked how she intended to celebrate the release of 'LUnatic thirST,' it became rapidly clear that, between photo shoots and interviews for her three releases, she'd barely given a second's thought to the matter. Katrín gazes into the distance, brow furrowed with concentration. "I want to gather everyone who's been involved and have a concert with a full band when it's possible again," she decides. However, Katrín is going to have to keep her immediate plans a little more low-key. "I'm going to call a few good friends and I'm going to make cocktails and we're going to sit in my garden and listen to the album." 🍷

*'LUnatic thirST' is available on all major streaming platforms from May 15th*



WHAT IS THE MOST  
DIFFICULT PART OF  
THESE TRYING TIMES?







**ART**

## Gramming the Joy

Two artists document the pandemic through a lens of positivity

Words: **Sam O'Donnell** Images: **Provided by subjects**

Two artists—an illustrator and a photographer—have chosen to see the glass as half-full. The duo has taken to Instagram to share content that highlights the silliness of these times and infuse some colour into the murkiness of COVID-19.

### A bright cartoonist

National treasure, comic artist, FM Belfast frontwoman, and a longtime contributor to the Grapevine, Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir has been using her characteristic humour and wit to reflect on these dark times purely by coincidence.

Lóa had already challenged herself on January 1st to produce one drawing per day to post on Instagram

(@loaboratorium), in an attempt to get more creative direction in her life. Then COVID-19 arrived in Iceland and the tone of her previously lighthearted comic project changed. Still, she can't help but make light of the situation. Tapping into the global adjustment to a life spent mostly within the confines of our own homes, one of her comics features a woman in workout gear saying, "Welcome to my incredibly interesting TV channel. Now we have the morning gym class, and during lunch, I'll interview myself about soup."

"It's hard to be political and funny; warm and not sappy. I'm always trying to find a balance," she tells the Grapevine.

### Change and growth

Lóa's illustrations currently feature bright colours and stark contrasts, but they weren't always like that. "I don't like marrying one style for the rest of my life," she says. "The only thing that's constant is probably the noses."

She believes that change and growth as an artist are good things. "My favourite thing is if I flip through old work and I find it awful," she says. "It means that something changed. It would be so weird to look at something you did twenty years ago and still think it's great. That means you're stuck in place."





“If I don’t stop biting my nails now, I never will”



“People are forced to look at the world upside down”



“New solutions”



“It’s like someone pressed the reset button, everybody has time to think and recognise what really matters”



“Glad to be rid of tourists—although I kind of miss them”



“More time for the extra practice”

“If you’re stuck as a middle-aged person [with the personality of] some 16-year-old from the 90’s, it’s not a good fit,” she laughs, noting that her aesthetic used to skew darker and more cynical.

Lóa last attempted a conic-a-day challenge six years ago, but it petered out after a couple of months. This time, she has her sights set on continuing through to January 2021. “The best thing about doing small assignments is nothing matters,” she says. “Your idea can be shit, but because you did 30 things in a month, if 20 are awful, and 10 are okay or good, then that’s good. I like those odds.”

### Light and dark

In contrast to her art’s darker origins, Lóa admits she wonders

why her comics are so light-hearted these days. “I’m constantly thinking, ‘what if I accidentally cause a car crash,’ or ‘what if this plane crashes?’ I’m like a disaster machine,” She says, “Maybe it’s lighthearted now because I’m not super miserable.”

In the past, she notably collaborated with Hugleikur Dagsson, the comic author famous for such collections as ‘My Pussy Is Hungry,’ ‘You Are Nothing,’ and ‘I Hate Dolphins.’

“When I was working in his universe, because that’s very dark, I felt like I was speaking someone else’s language, and I liked that a lot.” While she is more comfortable working within her own realm, she enjoys occasionally visiting other people’s universes.

As far as creating in the age of

a global pandemic, Lóa admits to enjoying it, in a sense.. “I really liked not being able to go out of my house,” she says. “I didn’t have to do anything that I didn’t want to do. I didn’t have to go to meetings, didn’t have to go to unnecessary dinner parties and things that I hate, so I was pretty happy at home.”

To be clear, it’s not that Lóa dislikes other people... she just really likes her pyjamas.

### Humans of Reykjavík

Baldur Kristjánsson has taken a more active approach to documenting the pandemic. Since social gathering restrictions were put in place, the photographer has walked the streets of Reykjavík by day, photographing passersby with his phone and challenging them to name one





“Almost no chance of being hit by a car”



“More tranquillity”  
“Less pressure”  
“Woof!”



“Less traffic in the morning”



“Silence”



“I have a great family and this will all pass”



“Við munum sigra þetta”

positive thing about the situation.

Baldur is a regular cover photographer for the Grapevine, and also works with such international titles as The New York Times and Der Spiegel, and clients like Nike. But when a pandemic was declared, many of Baldur’s projects were postponed or cancelled. In an effort to keep his head clear, he decided he would walk five kilometres a day. What he noticed was far fewer people out and about, but those he encountered were particularly friendly. “They were probably doing the same thing I was doing,” he says.

The inspiration for Baldur’s project struck when he saw an old man with his adult daughter and her child spending time together. He thought to himself that this moment might not have happened if not for the current situation. “I

went up to them and said, is it okay to take a picture on my phone? I don’t know what I’m gonna do with it, but I wanna ask you one question: can you mention one positive thing about the situation?” He took the picture and carried on. Then he met another person, and another, and he kept meeting people who all had something positive to say. “It kind of surprised me how easy it was for people to mention one positive thing,” he smiles.

**Accentuate the positive**

To date, Baldur has posted more than 500 images to his CovidPositive series of Instagram stories (@baldurkristjans), and he plans to continue until he no longer feels joy in the act. The one positive thing he

says he would take out of this situation is the project itself. He’s been a photographer for 15 years and says this is his favourite thing he’s done.

While the pandemic has inflicted a lot of harm on individuals, businesses, and the global economy at large, Baldur reminds us that it’s important not to zero in on the loss. “You can’t focus on those things,” he says. “You have to be informed, but it doesn’t help you as an individual to get sucked too deep into it. You have to put it into perspective sometimes and make the best out of it.”

“That is,” he concludes, “the only thing we can do.” 🍷





"Icelandic shops have realised the potential of online shopping"



"The weather has been fantastic these last days"



"More room to skate"



"Forces you to be more creative"



"Mother Earth is bitchslapping us—and that's how our hearts will open"



"Reynir á geðheilsuna - en mér líður nokkuð vel"  
"Það hægist á öllu"



"Tinni never has to be alone at home and gets a lot of walks"



"So many positive things, where to start?"



"You can hear the ocean when you walk on Sæbraut"





Words: [Hannabae Cohen](#)

Send us your previously-unsolvable quandaries and get enlightened by poor journalists totally banking on writing a hit novel to pay for their retirement. Btw, while you're here, please join my Patreon and watch me stream Stardew Valley on Twitch. I need to pay for my wisdom teeth removal.

### **How do I keep my apartment clean when I'm a lazy ass?**

Adderall, obviously. But if your lame-ass doctor won't cough up the prescription, homemade meth will help you do the dishes, or better yet, scrub your bathtub grout out with a toothbrush until your fingernails fall off. But who needs fingernails? Just another thing to clean, as far as we're concerned.

### **How come it's called Peanut Butter and Jelly and not Jelly and Peanut Butter as the alphabet would suggest?**

For legal reasons, we must unequivocally state that everything you are about to read is a joke. We have no beef with the Peanut Butter Lobby™,

in fact, we love them. Do you hear that, Peanut Butter Lobby™? We're big fans. We pay homage. Gulp.

But all we can say is follow the money. What is recommended in every single dietician's guide—vegan or keto—as a good source of “protein”? Certainly not jelly. “JK”.

### **How do I find motivation on days when it's sunny?**

Were you ever bullied in high school? Of course, you were, you're reading the Grapevine's advice column. Sit back and ruminate on that trauma. Remember the quiver in Kyle's voice when he told everyone in math class you were adopted and had lice? The look of pure disdain in his emerald orbs as he set your science project on fire? The way he methodically seduced and married your Mom post-graduation, breaking up your family and ultimately causing the life-long depression and drug addiction of your little brother?

Get Kyle in your head. Viscerally feel his presence. Now, every time you lie in the sun while you should be doing the dishes, just imagine Kyle is next to you, whispering in your ear, “Yeah, you WOULD act like that, you fucking simp.” If proving Kyle wrong doesn't give you the motivation to do the damn thing in nice weather, perhaps you deserved to be cyber-bullied.

### **How do I avoid the “hot tub” conversations when the pools open up again?**

Pretend you are mute. Bonus points for cutting off your tongue as evidence.

### **I think my cat can understand me but I've been saying some sensitive stuff in front of her. How do I make sure she won't snitch on me?**

Obviously, you've gotta get some dirt on her. We can't reveal our sources, but we're 99% sure your cat attacked a nest of baby starlings last week, effectively putting an end to a genealogical line travelling back to the first prokaryote. While starlings aren't legally projected in Iceland—so you couldn't send the bitch to jail for this genocide—you could def ruin her social standing in the neighbourhood were this information to be “accidentally released on Facebook”. Those forest rangers who live in the apartment next door will never again give her tuna knowing her crimes. Voilá! Perpetual silence. 🐾





*“I used to fangirl over Birgitta Haukdal when I was a kid, so taking pictures of her would be good for my 12-year-old soul.”*





PERFECT DAY

# Berglaug Petra Garðars- dóttir

Summertime... and the livin' is easy

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen**

Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Artist **Berglaug Petra Garðarsdóttir** has probably taken photos of every interesting person in the city. Check out her work at **@berglaug** on Instagram and read on to learn how she'd spend the perfect day in Reykjavík.

## First thing in the morning

I wake up early-ish. It's Friday and I start my day with some lazy breakfast on the balcony. The weather is good—it's sunny outside so I can eat and work on my nonexistent tan. I like spending time alone in the mornings. I'm grumpy, so I definitely can't meet any friends before lunch! I get ready while listening to a good podcast or music.

## Mid-morning

On a perfect day, I'd definitely have some cool shoot planned

in the morning. Maybe it's with **Vigdís Finnbogadóttir**—I've always wanted to photograph her! We're somewhere amazing, maybe her house, and it goes amazingly and we become great friends. Afterwards, hmm, who else would I photograph? Maybe **Birgitta Haukdal**. I used to fangirl over her when I was a kid so taking pictures of her would be good for my 12-year-old soul.

## Afternoon

After the shoot, I call my friends. The weather is still perfect, so we stop at **Vínbúðin**, get a few beers and head over to Klambratún or Austurvöllur to sit and chat in the sun. Later, we walk to a basketball court and play for a while.

## Dinner

We'd definitely be hungry at this point so it's time for a late lunch or early dinner.

Right now, I love the baked camembert at **Bastard Brew & Food**, so we'd go there and order five. Obviously, I'd pay for all my friends.

## Evening

Then we'd head over to **Gallery Port** or **Listasafn Reykjavíkur** for some art show. Afterwards, we sit outside, relax, and chat with old friends and make new ones.

There's a concert at **Prikið** that night, so we head there from the gallery. I don't care who's playing, but I have my camera and get some good shots of it. After the show, we dance until they take the trash out—which is us as well.

It's summer so when the bars close, the sun is still shining and we head out to find a cool spot—a roof or something—to hang out on. We know some secret ones! Then we talk until we are tired enough to go home to sleep. Is that the perfect day? 🍷







NEWS

# Iceland Opens Again

You can visit, but how?

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Gudellaphoto/Adobe Stock**

After weeks of uncertainty and despair, Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir announced some changes to Iceland's travel restrictions that have been widely praised by Icelanders, especially those working in the travel industry. As reported, at some point after May 25th and no later than June 15th, anyone visiting the country will be given a choice: go into two-week quarantine, submit to a coronavirus test, or have a clean bill of health from your home country on hand. Chief epidemiologist has even suggested that the current restriction—that everyone visiting go into immediate two-week quarantine—may be lifted as early as late May. At the same time, popular social spots like swimming pools opened on May 18th, and the gathering ban ceiling has been raised to 200 people.

The government's reopening announcement has raised one important question: even if the country is opened wide, how are all these people supposed to get here?

## The airline question

Icelandair operates the lion's share of flights to and from Iceland. Since last March, however, they have had to drastically cut back the destinations they fly from. They've laid off about 95% of their crew, and have had to engage in salary negotiations with pilots and remaining flight crew. They are, in fact, on the brink of bankruptcy.

Some, such as Social Democrat MP Ágúst Ólafur Ágústsson, have offered the obvious solution: nationalise the airline, in whole or in part. Doing so would hardly be anomalous—Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and France are

amongst the European countries who, in whole or in part, hold ownership stakes of their largest airlines.

However, Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktsson is decidedly against the idea. Speaking from the neoliberal view of economics that Bjarni champions, he has gone on the record stating that it would be better for Icelandair to find “market-based solutions” to their financial problems, even if it means the airline goes bankrupt.

## New airline, or more airlines?

These remarks were well received by members of the opposition. Reform Party chair Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir directly asked Bjarni in session, “How does the government plan to get involved to ensure this important connection between us Icelanders and the rest of the world?”

Bjarni replied that the government is prepared to offer conditional support if Icelandair can rescue itself, and failing that, perhaps a brand new airline could fill the void.

That is certainly an option, but it also raises the question of how expensive that would be compared to simply bailing out Icelandair. In addition, costs could perhaps be lowered, or economic incentives offered to international airlines to play a more active role at Keflavik International Airport.

## Don't forget the second wave

There is also another side to the idea of opening the country up again: the so-called second wave

of infections from the coronavirus. Lilja Dögg Jónsdóttir, an economist and an advisor at the Prime Minister's office, recently told reporters that if Iceland opens up and a new wave of infections arises that forces the country to clamp down again, this would be damaging to the reputation of the country on the international stage.

Lilja also correctly points out that there are a number of unanswered questions that remain. There has not, as yet, even been a plan established for how authorities would respond if a tourist in Iceland tests positive for COVID-19. Chief Epidemiologist Þórólfur Guðnason has said that it is unlikely such an individual would be deported, but rather than their travel insurance would pay for a hospital stay or quarantine. There are also questions as to for how long the government is going to pay for border testing, what markets are going to open up and when, and what level of demand even exists for the tourism industry to take advantage of.

No doubt, many of these questions will be answered in the days or weeks to come.

There is little point in putting the cart before the horse—when we open Iceland again, everyone involved wants to be sure we are well

prepared ahead of time, instead of playing the whole thing by ear. If we open too soon, on some hopes of rescuing the economy at the start of the tourism high season, all of our efforts could be undermined and set us back to square one. 🍷

**“The gathering ban ceiling has been raised to 200 people.”**



TRAVEL

# Ghosts On The Wind

The eerie beauty of Snæfellsnes

Words **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos **Art Bicnick**



Snæfellsnes is often touted as “Iceland in miniature,” and not for nothing—in a single day’s drive north from Reykjavík, you can experience heaths, beaches, lava fields, mountains and glaciers. It’s easy to forget, however, just how special this place is when you’re shouldering your way through throngs of tourists or desperately searching for a place to put down your tent that’s far enough away from your neighbours.

Which is what made our recent journey along the southern coast of Snæfellsnes so special. It was a weekend, on a beautiful sunny day, but there was hardly another

soul to be seen apart from the people who actually live there. So my wife, Ada, our trusty photographer, Art, and I were all able to absorb the eerie beauty of this region.

## The spiritual fathers

Our first stop was Búðir. Like many places in Iceland, especially on the southern coast of Snæfellsnes, this place was once a bustling fishing hub under Icelandic and later Danish control. Today, in lieu of fishing, there is the gorgeous Hótel Búðir, a church with a curious history, and

many beautiful paths through the surrounding lava fields, some of which extended down to the sea.

The church, Búðarkirkja, although locked tight when we visited, is indeed worth a look. Painted a stark, jet black and adjacent to a graveyard that must look pretty scary in the light of the moon, the location of this church was determined in 1701 by literally firing an arrow into the air and seeing where it landed. Although the church was decommissioned by the colonising Danes in 1816, a guy named Guðmundur fought to get it reinstated—albeit to no avail, and he never lived to see

Búðarkirkja open its doors again. However, his wife, Steinunn, took up the cause, and the church was reinstated in 1847. Nonetheless, she had little financial help from the church authorities to complete the restoration, and today, the heavy metal ring on the front door is still inscribed “kirkjan er endurreist ár 1848 án styrks þeirra andlegu feðra” (“this church was resurrected in 1848 without the support of the spiritual fathers”).

## Perhaps the Icelanders will come

At the time of our trip, the Prime





Minister had not yet announced that the country would effectively re-open to tourism no later than June 15th. As such, the general feeling we heard from Icelanders we spoke with in the region was that while foreign visitors to the area would probably be non-existent this summer, there was some anticipation that there would be more Icelanders than usual.

The sentiment is understandable. Icelanders have spent weeks in social isolation, reduced to groups of no more than 20, with many of their favourite leisure activities—such as public swimming pools, gyms and pubs—

completely closed. Now that the weather is improving and the government is beginning to relax social restrictions, stir-crazy locals are probably itching to get out of their homes, out of town, and into the wide-open space again. Not in numbers great enough to make up for the lack of foreign guests, but probably enough to breathe some renewed life into the country’s favourite natural sites.

**Half ogre, half man, all fun**

Our next stop was Arnarstapi, a quaint seaside village just west of

Búðir. Here, you begin to see some of the mysticism associated with Snæfellsnes in general, as you can’t help but notice the imposing sculpture standing by the shore. This anthropomorphic pile of stones, sculpted by Ragnar Kjartansson, represents Bárður Snæfellsás.

Bárður is in many ways the spirit of Snæfellsnes. This character, reportedly half human and half ogre, has his very own saga, Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, which recounts his adventures. His life events culminate in his wife being set adrift on an iceberg by his son, getting in a horrible fight with him, and then Bárður

making the totally understandable decision to make his new home in the icecap atop Snæfellsjökull. From there, he became known to locals as the “guardian spirit” of Snæfell—an appellation he carries to this day, as he is described as such on the sculpture.

Today you’d be hard pressed to witness a fist fight between two half-trolls, but in lieu of that, Arnarstapi boasts a cute little tourist cottage village, and the surrounding area is something to behold. There are numerous hiking trails through the surrounding lava fields, and down at the shore there are some truly





breathtaking cliffs, replete with basalt formations twisted into impossible spirals. The nearby ravine of Rauðfeldsgjá is especially worth a look.

### The café by the cliffs

Just a bit farther west is Hellnar, probably the second-most metal place name in Iceland (after Dimmuborgir, of course). This is another former fishing and farming village that has since turned to tourism, as the many newly-built cabins attest. Looming overhead just north of the location, is the distinct snow-covered peak of Snæfellsjökull.

It is often pointed out that this mountain marked the entrance to the center of the earth in the eponymous Jules Verne novel, but

it is also considered in New Age circles to be one of the planet’s “power centres,” imbued with potent energy. This is certainly easy to believe when you take in its beauty, which, on a clear day, you can see all the way from Reykjavík.

I was very keen on showing my wife the little café tucked into a steep hill overlooking the sea but, as was unfortunately expected, it was closed. Not to worry, though: just a stone’s throw away is a basalt cave that has been tunneled through by water and wind, and it is a truly magical place to sit and stare at the waves (provided the sea birds don’t harass you). Just overtop, there are seemingly endless trails through moss-covered lava fields that you could spend all day exploring. For the truly adventur-

ous, farther east across an extensive meadow stands a statue of the Virgin Mary over a natural pool. An inscription at the foot of the statue informs the visitor that the Virgin Mary appeared on this spot in the year 1230, Bishop Guðmundur Arason asked her to bless the water at this spot, and the statue was put in place in 1989.

### Snæfellsnes stays

Soon it was time to return home. The day had been brilliantly sunny, though cold, and I was pleased to have shown my wife a little bit of one of my favourite regions of Iceland. As we headed east by car, I thought about other places in Snæfellsnes I wanted to show her—Ólafsvík, Grundarfjörður, Stykkishólmur, the mountain

passes, beaches and lava fields. It made me feel impatient, in a hurry to bring her back to this magical region again.

But as we took the turnoff that connects again to Route 1, dropping almost immediately into Borgarnes, I recalled a bit of advice I heard years ago: Iceland isn’t going anywhere. Snæfellsnes has been here long, long before we were born, and it will continue to be here for centuries or millennia to come. Likewise, neither my wife nor I are leaving Iceland any time soon. Snæfellsnes is always waiting for you to pay a visit and it is always happy to see you again. 🇮🇸

Car provided by: [gocarrental.is](https://gocarrental.is)





**Your browser does not currently recognize any of the  
video formats available.  
[Click here to visit our frequently asked questions about  
HTML5 video.](#)**

